

AGUILA TIDBITS

These are a few Aguila, Arizona historical tidbits as told to us by Leon Powell, a 4th generation Aguilan!!

When we were taking an oral history from Leon Powell on 3-9-06, these were what we gleaned...Aguila came into being about 1905 or 06 as the railroad was established. It was actually on the other side of the RR tracks we know now. That is also where the California Highway ran....prior to becoming US Route 60. All the businesses were over there, churches (still are) etc. He said there was a Section Foreman's house over there and a lot of the RR workers were Mexican. Then after a period of time, the RR hired Indians instead of the Mexicans. He did not know if the Indians were Yavapai or what tribe....just Indians. The town of Aguila also bought all of their water from the RR up until approximately 35-40 years ago. He said there were probably only 15 to 20 taps in the town in that time frame. Passenger service was stopped in Aguila in 1955 and the Aguila Depot was sold to the McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale in 1972, where it is now a "General Store". The RR is currently the California and Arizona Railroad but it has been owned by various Railways in its lifetime.

The first school was started in 1911. There was a Territorial "Board of Education" and they stated a school could be started if there were six (6) children. When his father, Alton Powell, turned 6 on October 4, 1911, he was the sixth child and the school was opened. In later years, Leon's mother Lorene, was the school teacher. He said he could remember going with her to downtown Phoenix in a Model T car. They had to go to Central and Third Avenue to purchase school supplies. He said it was a small wooden building and it is where every teacher in the Territory had to purchase school supplies. He related the road was dirt until they got to Peoria and then it was paved. He said he could hardly wait to get to the smooth road. The school was a one room school; having usually 9-15 students, grades 1-8. His mother made good money as a teacher, \$110. a month....This would have been in the mid-late 30's and maybe early 40's. He said that money and his father's garden kept them going pretty well. He said his father could grow anything!!!

He spoke of the "farms", we presume this is when maybe Martori Farms came in to being. He did not call anything by name though. Said the farms came in to being in the 50's and the Mexicans worked for a dollar an hour, 7 days a week and 12 hours a day. The only time they had off was if it rained, then could do work at home, get a haircut etc. The women worked the same way and they had a program in the summers for the older children to work, did not know what they did though. He mentioned thinning cotton and such. It was to teach them work ethic and give them some money also. The program had a name but alas, did not write it down.

One of the earliest Mexican workers was a fellow by the name of Lopez, he is still working as a dispatcher for the fire department and is about 88 y/o. Leon said he was 10 years or so older than himself!!

He relates that a fellow by the name of Frank Lapham built a restaurant and tourist cobblestone cabins about the time US 60 was paved. Later, when the business went out, Leon's grandfather bought some of the cabins for storage sheds. There is still one either on his property or the adjoining property. There was a General Store, but did not catch the name.

He told us his father used to tell him about the grass; how lush and green it was and so tall that when you rode a horse through it, its legs would get tangled up!!!

When we mentioned Golden Depot, he stated that he remembered going to "Golden" with his folks to a friend's home for dinner. Said he was 7 y/o or 8 y/o. He said it was just a small community, did not elaborate. He did not know why there was another RR depot in such close proximity to Aguila. Golden is approximately 7+ miles West of Aguila.

He told us about having owned a business in Williams, Arizona, and selling it to a well driller. We were discussing the water situation at the time. He owned a construction company at some time, doing a lot of government jobs. Said he still occasionally runs a "hoe", just to keep in practice. He is currently rebuilding a 1916 truck that was owned by his grandfather and father. He seemed to not think it a "big deal" that this truck was still in the family!!

If I remember correctly, the great-grandfather owned most of what is now Aguila and his father (Leon's) owned directly behind that to the base of the Eagle Eye Mtns. He said you used to be able to go up in the mountains and find all sorts of big pieces of pottery and sometimes whole pots. We forgot to ask about the dam up there. He said his Grandfather's name was "Veenie" (he spelled it for me), however, his tombstone reads Venia. I asked about a Julia Powell, as this was the name given to me last spring when I called the Wickenburg Historical Society. Julia was Leon's maiden aunt, 11 years younger than his father. She died six years ago!!!

Hopefully, we have another source, a rancher south of Aguila, whom we may be able to interview. He inherited the ranch from his father and surely might have some interesting information also.

*Oral History from Leon Powell
March 9, 2006*

*Transcribed by Dawn Clark
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