



History of Sedona

Our namesake: Sedona Miller Schnebly

By the turn of the century about 15 homesteading families called the area home. In 1899, Theodore Carlton (Carl or T.C.) Schnebly and his wife Sedona Miller Schnebly joined T.C.'s brother, Ellsworth in the Oak Creek Area.

T. C. Schnebly was an enterprising young man. He had 80 acres with a general store and hotel, which was also his house, where Tlaquepaque and the Los Abrigados resort are now located. Schnebly saw the need for regular mail service in the little community and organized its first post office. He first suggested the names "Oak Creek Crossing" and "Schnebly Station" to the Postmaster General in Washington.

These names were considered too long by the postmaster, so both were rejected. Ellsworth then suggested that Theodore submit the name of his wife, Sedona. Theodore did, and on June 26, 1902, the postmaster approved the name for the community.

Photo: Statue of Sedona Schnebly, created by local artist Susan Kliewer and donated by the Red Rock Arts Council.



The land

Elevation 4,350 ft at City Hall.

19 square miles, 51 percent privately owned; the remainder is Coconino National Forest.

Highest point 5,600 feet at Coffee Pot Rock. Lowest point 4,000 feet at Oak Creek along Back O' Beyond Road.

Geology and early history

Natural setting and geological history. Geologically, the history of Sedona began about 500 millions years ago. Over a period of 300 million years, the land was alternately ocean bottom and coastal plain. Sedimentary layers of sandstone formed. Between 200 and 65 million years ago, dinosaurs roamed the land. From 65 to 20 million years ago, there were uplifts in southern Arizona and down faulting and wind erosion in northern Arizona. From 20 to 12 million years ago, volcanic activity caused the Verde Valley to down fault into a deep basin with lakebeds, creating the Mogollon Rim.

About 3 million years ago, the Colorado Plateau uplifted. Since then, erosion by wind, rain and snowmelt has created Oak Creek Canyon and exposed the layers of sediment (Schnebly Hill Formation sandstone) to form the spectacular red rock formations we now see in Sedona. Vegetation and wildlife evolved and migrated. The process continues today, however slowly.

Native American. Human prehistory began here about 4000 years BC when hunter-gatherers roamed and settled in the Verde Valley and Prescott areas. Between 900 and 1350 AD, a more advanced civilization began building pueblos and cliff houses. Known as the Sinagua, they were proficient in farming, had an understanding of astronomy, and made baskets, pottery and jewelry. They established trade routes with the peoples of the Pacific coast, Mexico and Central America.

Archaeological evidence in Sedona's immediate environs is meager, but a few fine pots, some stone tools and baskets have been found nearby. The pueblo builders had moved on by 1400 AD, about the same time that the Yavapai and Apache peoples began to move into the area.

Spanish period. The first European exploration of the Verde Valley was in 1583, when Antonio de Espejo searched for gold. In 1598, Marcos Farfan de los Godas also came searching for gold. There is no evidence that either visited the greater Sedona area. They did try some prospecting in Jerome, but found only copper. The area was in the hands of Spain until Mexico gained its independence in 1821. With the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the Arizona Territory became part of the United States.

Early settlers and homesteading

The need to control mineral resources during the Civil War led to the creation of the Territory of Arizona in 1863. After the establishment of Fort Whipple in Prescott and Camp Lincoln (later named Fort Verde), the first real influx of settlers began to arrive in Arizona.

The first Anglo settler in Sedona was John James Thompson in 1876. He had the advantage of finding an abandoned Yavapai garden, still bearing crops, hence the name "Indian Gardens" in Oak Creek Canyon. Three years later, the family of Abraham James arrived. James had been an acquaintance of Thompson in Utah and he married Thompson's daughter, Margaret.



Photo: James Homestead on Oak Creek, 1879. Copper Cliffs is located here today.

A few more settlers came to the Oak Creek Canyon area in 1880, including Jesse "Bear" Howard, also known as Charles Smith Howard. Others who arrived in the 1880's included Jack Robinson, John L.V. Thomas, William Dyer, Henry Schuerman, Adolph Willard, and John H. Lee. They settled along Oak Creek, one of the few streams in Arizona that runs all year.

These early settlers lived a precarious existence, hunting, fishing, and farming a few acres to keep food on the table. Improvements came slowly. By the end of the 1880s, Margaret Parlee "Maggie" James, Abraham's widow, irrigated 20 acres; her son Dave, another 20; Jim Thompson irrigated 15 acres; Adolph Willard 25 acres; and Henry Schuerman about 72 acres.

The early pioneers took "pre-emption" homesteads, known as "squatters rights." By 1889, enough people had settled in the area that the General Land Office dispatched surveyors to locate the township and range lines.

The first homestead in the Sedona area actually "proved up" was by Frank Owenby in 1901. Others included Elija Lay, Ambrosio Armijo, Manuel Chavez, and Jess Purtymun. The difficulty of establishing a homestead in

the rugged and isolated region meant that some left before they could prove up. Others took their place. The new settlers continued the same economic pursuits, wrestling a living by diverting water from Oak Creek to irrigate small patches of land and water a few head of cattle. The homesteads were small, self-sustaining operations. By the end of the first decade, Lay irrigated 30 acres; Owenby, 25; Armijo, 30; Chavez, 10; and Purtymun, about eight.

By the turn of the century, about 15 homesteading families called the area home. In 1899, Theodore Carlton (Carl or "T.C.") Schnebly, and his wife, Sedona Miller Schnebly, joined T.C.'s brother, Ellsworth (D.E.), in the Oak Creek Area. T. C. Schnebly was an enterprising young man, who had 80 acres and a general store and hotel in his home where Tlaquepaque and the Los Abrigados resort are now located. He saw the need for regular mail service in the little community and organized its first post office. He suggested the names "Oak Creek Crossing" and "Schnebly Station" to the Postmaster General in Washington, but both came back rejected. Ellsworth then suggested submitting Sedona's name for the honor. On June 26, 1902, the Postmaster approved the name "Sedona."

The first decade of the 20th Century saw more and more settlers arrive in the Sedona area to take up homesteads. Many were lured to the Verde Valley area by the growing mining economy of nearby Jerome. These early homesteaders earned a living by a wide variety of means. Some trapped during the winter and sold pelts to traders back East. The men would fish in Oak Creek and sell the fish in Jerome, traveling by night to keep their stock fresh.

The homesteading era in Sedona continued until the 1930s, although fewer settlers were arriving by the end of the period. The last land acquired by homesteading was a claim by Chauncey Leroy Piper in 1942 on land south of the present Chapel of the Holy Cross. Some of the original homesteads changed hands, as owners moved away and others arrived to take their place. Sons and daughters took up residence near the family homesteads, and carved out a patch of ground for their own. They were then further divided and subdivided. Today, the names and locations of several early homesteads are kept alive as the names of Sedona subdivisions.

Agriculture

Using water from Oak Creek, the homesteaders irrigated small patches of ground to raise fruit and vegetables. Some made wine, for which the Schuerman family became well known. Every homestead had a collection of chickens, turkeys, and geese, for the family table and to sell in Flagstaff. Cattle provided beef for the table and market, as well as dairy products. Most men also took advantage of the opportunities presented by the forests in the area to cut railroad ties, lumber, shingles, and firewood. Men often left the homestead for the women and children to manage while they took paying jobs in the mines or smelters. Roe Smith mowing on George Black Ranch



Photo: Roe Smith mowing on George Black Ranch (now Doodlebug area)

Most of the agricultural pursuits in Sedona were for home consumption, or a limited seasonal market in Flagstaff or the mining area of Jerome. However, fruit growing-particularly apples and peaches-played a significant part in the early Sedona economy and thus is an important historic theme.

Will Jordan first began growing fruit in the Verde Valley near Clarkdale, but the smoke from the smelter damaged the trees, so Jordan moved to Sedona in 1927 and settled near

Oak Creek. George and Walter Jordan took over for their father in 1930. One of the most difficult tasks was getting water to the orchard. In 1929, Walter Jordan and his brother George improved an irrigation ditch and

built a water wheel to pump water from Oak Creek to the trees. George Jordan later added wells and pumps; his system provided the first commercial water supply to Sedona residents.

The Jordans drove their fruit to markets in Jerome, Prescott, Wickenburg, and Phoenix. They also shipped fruit to Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Paul, Minnesota. Local residents and tourists purchased fruit at George Jordan's retail store. Walter and Ruth Jordan sold most of their orchard land in 1972 for a subdivision; and the remainder is now the City's Jordan Historical Park.



Other Sedona residents also grew peaches and apples. Henry Schuerman, Jr., son of 1885 homesteader Henry Schuerman, grew peaches near the Red Rock Crossing. His nephew, Fred Schuerman, had an even larger peach orchard. Other growing locations in the Sedona area included the Charles Allen homestead (now Junipine Resort). His son-in-law, Tom Anderson, grew fruit to sell at a roadside store. Tom Pendley grew Red and Golden Delicious apples on the homestead of his father Frank (now Slide Rock State Park).

Cattle ranching also played a significant role in Sedona's history. Herds were driven to high ground on the Mogollon Rim to graze in summer and returned to the Red Rock area in winter. Cattlemen leased grazing right on the National Forest lands.

Transportation

For the most part, the earliest settlers simply followed old trails to and from Sedona.

The first settler, J. J. Thompson, blazed a steep trail from Indian Gardens to the top of the rim; this became known as "Thompson's ladder." He left his wagons at the top where they could be loaded for trips to Flagstaff. Later he built a road where Jordan Road is today, and on around Steamboat Rock across Wilson Canyon and on to his homestead.

In 1902, John Loy and Ellsworth Schnebly wanted to build a road up out of the canyon. Following an old cow path, it was first called Munds Road. The county allocated \$600 for the project, and the residents pitched in with money and labor. It has since been known as Schnebly Hill Road. In 1914, two crews built the bridge at Oak Creek Falls, completing a direct link to Flagstaff.

Improved transportation gave the settlers access to markets for their agricultural products in Flagstaff, Jerome, and elsewhere. The increased access to the world at large also worked in reverse - the miners, other workers and tourists found opportunities for relaxation in Oak Creek and Sedona.

Road work also brought new residents to Sedona. The completion of the Midgely Bridge over Oak Creek and the highway in 1939 opened up the Sedona area to tourist traffic.

Photo: Oak Creek Canyon Highway - 1930s

Great Depression and the wars

The impact of the Great Depression (1930-39) was not felt as much in Sedona as in most of the United States. Life was already basic and hard, so the contrast was not as great as in more affluent and developed

parts of the country. Most people here were relatively self-sufficient, raising crops and cattle that they could use and barter for other needs.



Photo: CCC Camp 1930s. Site of today's Kings Ransom and Quality Inn.

Some found work at the Smelter in Clarkdale. Many local men worked on various county, state and federal projects such as the building of roads. Albert Purtymun was a foreman for the State of Arizona building Highway 79 North through Oak Creek Canyon, and Roe Smith worked for the P.D. Construction Co., which finished the job in 1939. Roe's brother, Ira, and other locals provided teams and wagons. Parts of Highway 79 were soon rerouted and rebuilt, and in 1941 the road was re-designated as Highway 89A.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a federal program that created jobs during the depression era, built a large camp that later was converted to become the Sedona Lodge, now the site of the Kings Ransom motel. The CCC worked on Schnebly Hill Road, built the U.S. Forest Service barn in 1934, and other public works, bringing men in from other parts of the nation.

Most of the local men also worked on construction of Page Springs Road, alternating two weeks per month. Myron Samuel Loy helped to build Midgely Bridge as a worker for another federal organization, the WPA (Works Progress Administration). Roy Owenby, Roe Smith and others found work at the Clemenceau smelter in the Verde Valley.

The USFS Pump House, on Oak Creek on the northwest side of the bridge, was built by the CCC. This river rock structure was built in the 1930s to pump water from the creek to supply farmers, who hauled it in drums to their crops; to serve homes along the creek; and, the U.S. Forest Service who also used it to fill a tank that supplied its buildings and the Sedona School.

In the 1930s, hundreds of "dust bowl refugees" migrated through the area on their way to California. A few of them settled in Sedona, including the Cook and Newton families.

Sedona experienced its most dramatic changes after World War II. The tremendous growth that accompanied this change has obliterated many of the early historic landmarks, necessitating plans to preserve those that remain. There were few structures in Sedona in 1950-much of the built environment of the area is a recent phenomenon. A few buildings and sites from the early years of Sedona do remain, but some have been altered.



Photo: Saddle Rock Ranch

In 1948, the Verde Valley School was established west of the present Village of Oak Creek, exposing the area to many potential new residents. The following year, citizens organized the Sedona-Oak Creek Chamber of Commerce. Hollywood used the red rock region as a backdrop for numerous movies during the Golden Age of Westerns.

The discovery in 1951 of a groundwater aquifer under West Sedona opened the way for several new housing developments. Retirees became attracted to the area. Other new residents came for the spiritual and reflective atmosphere, and formed an artistic community. The Chapel of the Holy Cross was built in 1955-56. Later visitors came for more secular reasons, lured partly by the building of the Tlaquepaque shopping center in 1971. Between 1970 and 1987, population in the Sedona area increased from 2700 to 9000.

Forest Service / Government

U.S. Forest Service. The federal government had recognized the scenic and recreational aspects of the general area as early as 1898, when it established the San Francisco Mountains Forest Preserve, which was enlarged in 1902.

In 1905 the U.S. Forest Service appointed William Wallace as the first ranger in the Sedona area, and two years later changed the name of the preserve to the San Francisco Mountains National Forest. This forest, including lands in the Sedona area, was transferred to the Coconino National Forest in 1908.

The Sedona Ranger Station house on Brewer Road was built in 1917 for District Ranger Jesse Bushnell. In the 1920s, the station was occupied only during the winter months. The ranger's duties included fighting fires, managing lumber cutting, and riding herd on ranchers who leased the forest land for grazing cattle. In later years, as tourism and recreation played a greater role, the ranger was posted full-time to look after campers, hikers and fishermen.

In addition to forest management, the Forest Service had another impact on Sedona history. As homesteading declined after 1940, land exchanges became the only way to open new land for development. The first exchange was in 1940, when Dr. V. M. Slipper gained title to an 80-acre tract that is now the Sky Mountain subdivision.

Between 1945 and 1960, the U.S. Forest Service exchanged 16 parcels into private hands in the Sedona area. USFS officials felt they were simply meeting the needs for more homes and commercial development here. As development grew, Sedonans began to lobby for preservation of forestland to protect the area's scenic and natural values.

Photo: U.S. Post Office 1949, now 219 N. SR 89A, current site of Cowboy Corral.

Post office. Another government operation, which impacted Sedona's history, was the post office. The area's first U. S. Post Office was established by T. C. Schnebly in his general store in 1902. After that, the post office migrated up and down the canyon following the population patterns. There have been seven locations, up to the present main post office at the Y, built in 1979.

For many years Sedonans relied on a volunteer fire department. The first was established in 1950, with Carl Richards appointed as Chief by the Sedona-Oak Creek Chamber of Commerce.

Law enforcement in the Sedona area was handled by the county sheriff prior to 1891, when Yavapai County was divided and Coconino County was formed. George Ruffner was sheriff until 1899, when Johnny Munds took over until 1901. In 1940, Coconino County assigned a full-time deputy sheriff named Sylvester McDowell, who died soon thereafter. He was replaced by Bill Steele, who stayed on the job until 1951 when his son Will became the deputy from 1951 to 1982.

Perry Francis was a notable Coconino county sheriff in the early 1950s and reported having eight deputies. If the need arose, the sheriff would deputize men. In 1952 the Coconino Sheriff Volunteer Posse was formed. They were popular for exhibitions and parades as they were very good horsemen. One year, when a movie company was in town filming, the posse deputized several of the movie stars to ride with them in a parade. The first highway patrol officer in the Sedona area was Officer Vidrene in 1944. Roe Smith was deputized by the USFS Fish and Game Department from 1942 to 1954 to patrol the area around Sedona and up Oak Creek. With the incorporation of the City of Sedona in 1988, law enforcement was localized with the first chief, Bob Irish.



Until 1988, government in Sedona was divided between Coconino and Yavapai Counties. Local people wished to have more control over local affairs, and an incorporation drive was started. In December 1987, an election was held and the majority of the people approved incorporation. This was implemented in January 1988, with June Cornelison as the first appointed mayor.

Schools and motion pictures

Schools. The Sedona area's earliest schools were built and run by residents without government support. The first school was a one-room building at the Schuerman property on Lower Red Rock Loop Road in 1892. Olive Welch was the teacher and there were seven children.



Photo: Brewer Road School 1930s, destroyed by fire.

In 1899, a one-room log school became the first in Oak Creek Canyon. In the early days, some ranchers and USFS employees migrated to high country and up the canyon in summer. In the winter they moved back to Red Rock so the children could attend school. By 1912 the Sedona area had enough students to merit a third school. The land for the Brewer School was leased from homesteader Frank Owenby. This building was expanded in 1930 to three rooms with an auditorium and a bathroom with indoor plumbing.

Sedona had no high school. Yavapai County students went to Cottonwood, and Coconino students were bused up the icy switchbacks to Flagstaff. By special act of the state legislature, Sedonans were able to vote for their own school district, and in 1995 the Sedona Red Rock High School opened to students.

Motion Pictures. During the film heyday of the 1940s, the CCC camp buildings were converted into the Sedona Lodge (on the site of the current day King's Ransom Inn) and the Sedona Sound Stage was built next door. Other new businesses cropped up to cater to the needs of movie crews. The movie industry provided a small economic boom for the community as local residents were employed as carpenters, extras and livestock wranglers.

To date, nearly 100 films and numerous television productions have been shot partially or entirely on location in Sedona. Development of the city now limits the scenes and backdrops available to film crews. More recent films have been *The Karate Kid*, *The Quick and the Dead*, *Nobody's Fool*, and *Midnight Run*.

Photo: Sedona movie set for the film Johnny Guitar starring Joan Crawford. The set was removed shortly after filming in 1959. It was located at the site of Posse Grounds Park today.



Tourism

Soldiers from Camp Verde were early tourists to Sedona, enjoying the beauty, cooler temperatures and Oak Creek as a break from the camp.

As early as 1895, Lou Thomas turned Bear Howard's cabin into a two-story hunting fishing lodge. It was there that Zane Grey was inspired to write his book *Call of the Canyon*, which he turned into Sedona's first movie. In 1925, the property was sold to Carl Mayhew who operated it as Mayhew's Lodge. It became a favorite destination for prominent movie stars, politicians, and writers. Guests included Lord Halifax, President Herbert Hoover, Clark Gable, Susan Hayward, Cesar Romero, Jimmy Stewart, Walt Disney, and Maureen O'Hara.

The U.S. Forest Service acquired the property and made plans to renovate the structure, but tragically the lodge burned to the ground in 1980.

Photo: Oak Creek Tavern 1940s.

Miners and smelter workers from Jerome and Clarkdale continued to find the area attractive for hunting and fishing. The Hart Store, built in 1924, was a sort of general store and community center that became the nucleus of the growing community. In 1930, the Harts constructed a dairy to supply the store and the needs of Sedona's residents and tourists.



With improved transportation during the 1930s, others discovered the beauty of Sedona. Local residents catered to the tourist trade by building small cabins along the road and creek for overnight stays.

After World War II, increased leisure time and greater mobility led to a boom in the tourism industry. In 1945, the Sunset Court and the Cook Cabins were constructed to meet the residential needs of the traveler. The Oak Creek Tavern and Oak Creek Market were also constructed in 1945.

Also typical of this tourist development was Purtymun's Adventure Motel and "Venture Inn" Café, opened in 1952. Other homesteading families also took advantage of the tourist trade. Frank Pendley built several cabins along Oak Creek. The opening of the Sedona Airport in 1957 brought still more visitors.

Even though improved access opened the Sedona area to greater numbers of visitors, in the early 1960s it was still a location of seclusion and privacy. Some came to the area just to get away from it all and to spend their time in quiet contemplation to work on their writing or art. Sedona residents worked hard to maintain the beauty of their area so that it would remain an attractive destination. In the mid-1960s, the Sedona-Oak Creek Chamber of Commerce began a successful campaign to remove billboards from roads in the area.

The real boom in Sedona tourism came in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Local ranchers and homesteaders sold property to developers. The Doodlebug Ranch and the Jordan orchards were transformed into homes designed for retirees. Shopping centers and resorts were built for a new type of tourist who came as often for shopping as to view the magnificent scenery. The Tlaquepaque complex was built by Abe Miller beginning in 1971.

Today tourism is the largest sector of Sedona's economy. In 1990, researcher Teresa O'Neill estimated that three million tourists visited the town that year. This massive influx changed the character of Sedona, as merchants designed and constructed facilities to cater to the tourist trade. From 1976 to 1986, the number of tourist-oriented enterprises in Sedona grew from 75 to more than 175. The 1997 estimate was more than four million visitors, drawn by the magnificent scenery of Sedona and the outdoor activities available.

Arts and religion

Sedona has long served as a lure to the artistic and religious community who found inspiration and guidance in the red rocks for their activities. The theme of arts and religion is a prominent one in Sedona for the period following World War II.

One person responsible for initiating the emphasis on spirituality for which Sedona is known today was Margurite Brunswig Staude. An artist by inclination and training, Staude was a devout Catholic and found herself inspired to capture her spirituality in a church patterned after the cross. A frequent visitor to Sedona in the 1940s, she decided to build the Chapel of the Holy Cross in memory of her parents.

Photo: Sedona Arts Center, late 1950s.

Working with designs inspired by her vision and of an earlier work by Lloyd Wright, son of Frank Lloyd Wright, Staude collaborated with the architectural firm of Anshen and Allen to design the structure. After getting permission to construct the Chapel on government land with help from Senator Barry Goldwater, and approval for the plans from Bishop Espelage, William Simpson Construction Company broke ground in April 1955. The Chapel was completed one year later. A remarkable work of art and architecture, the Chapel of the Holy Cross is one of Sedona's most visible landmarks today.



The Chapel and its magnificent surroundings inspired others to construct religious monuments in Sedona. In 1961, Barry Goldwater dedicated the Shrine of the Red Rocks on Airport Mesa as a monument to cooperation and religious beliefs. The idea originated with Walter Nelson and Howard Miles of the Sedona Masonic Club who started the project in 1957. This shrine constructed of native red rocks is a popular location for Easter sunrise services.

The spirituality of the Sedona area also encouraged less traditional practitioners of religion. As early as 1958, alternative personal development and self-help religions called Sedona home. In 1974 Lester Levinson founded the Sedona Institute to help others improve their self-awareness. In the early 1980s, the Sri Aurobindo Center for Indian religious thought opened. By the last half of the decade Sedona had become known as a center for New Age consciousness. Mary Lou Keller, who moved to Sedona in 1957, dates the beginning of the New Age movement in Sedona to 1963 when the "Ruby Focus" arrived in their quest for energy. They, and many others later, found it in what they called *vortex energy centers* here. The New Age movement hit its peak in Sedona in 1987 when thousands of believers descended on the town to witness the harmonic convergence of the planets.

Sedona serves as a location for all kinds of artistic interpretations. Hundreds of well-known artists have called the red rocks home. One of the first was Nassan Gobran of Egypt who arrived in 1950. Gobran was instrumental in organizing the Summer Art Institute at the Sedona Arts Center. In the 1960s, cowboy artist Joe Beeler arrived in Sedona and provided a different emphasis. During an organizational meeting held at the Oak Creek Tavern in 1965, Beeler and artists Charlie Dye, George Phippen, Robert MacLeod, and John Hampton formed the Cowboy Artists of America. Other internationally known artists who worked here in the 1940s-1960s included Max Ernst and Bela Horvath. By 1986, Sedona had dozens of art galleries.

Historic preservation in Sedona



Photo: Hart Store, 1930s, located at Ranger and Brewer Roads.

The city has a Historic Preservation Program and Historic Preservation Commission. For information visit the city's website browse through the listing of historic landmarks.

The Sedona Historical Society, a non-profit organization whose purpose includes promoting historic preservation in the greater Sedona community, plays an important role in our community. Society

members help display and interpret local history for the benefit of citizens and visitors, with a mission to

collect, restore, preserve and display artifacts, histories, maps, structures and other memorabilia relating to the history of the Sedona/Oak Creek area so they might be preserved for future generations.

The society organized in 1982 and began meeting informally with programs of old-timers relating local history. In the early 1990s it initiated the first survey of historic properties both in Sedona and nearby areas. When the city purchased the Jordan farmstead, the society worked in partnership to preserve and develop the site of what is now the Jordan Historical Park. The society opened the Sedona Heritage Museum in the Jordan farmstead historic landmark structures and operates the museum seven days a week, offering educational programs to schools and community members.

