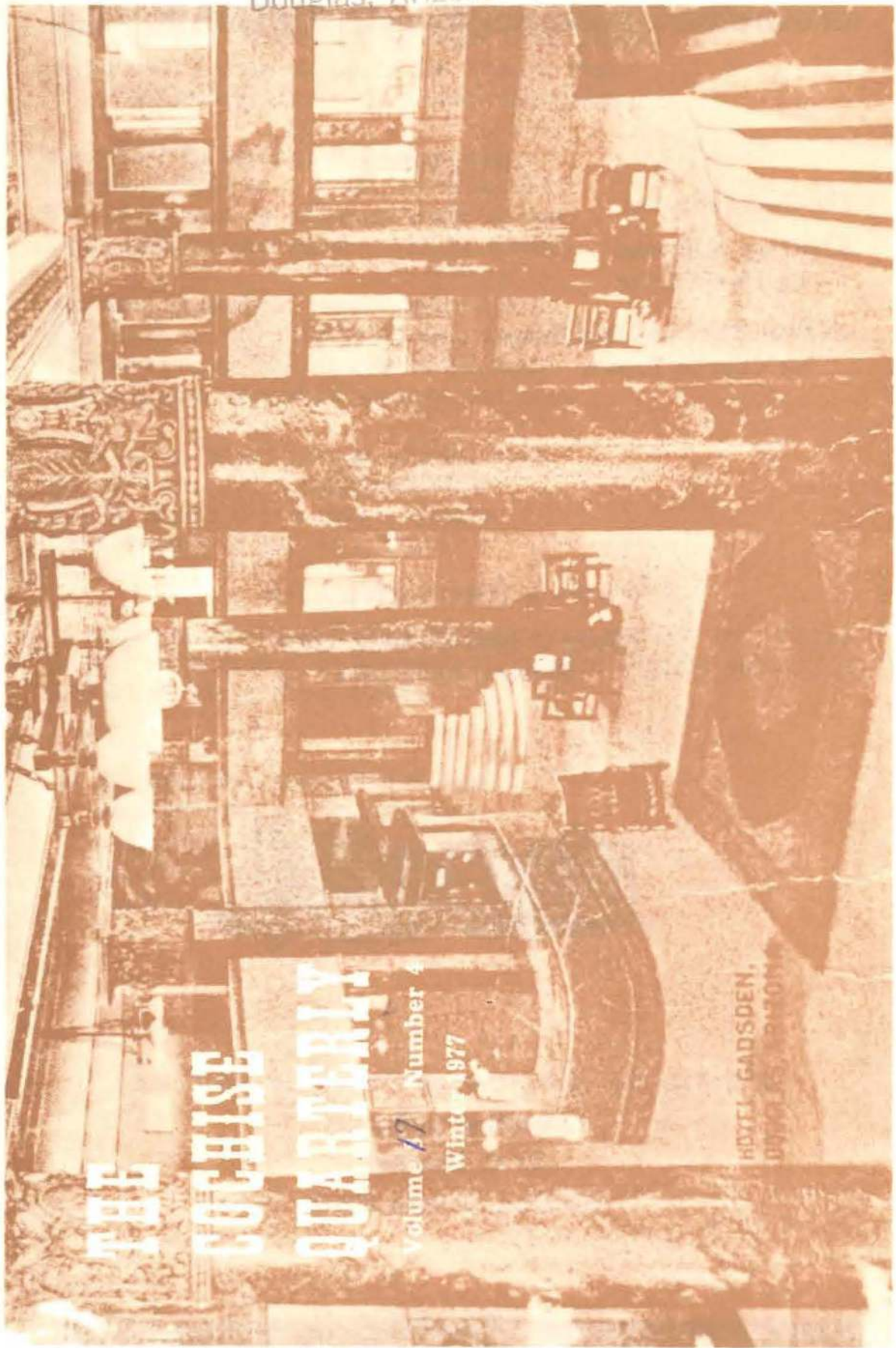


Cochise College  
Learning Resources Center  
Douglas, Arizona 85607



# THE COCHISE QUARTERLY

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HOTEL GADSDEN,  
DOUGLAS, ARIZONA

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## COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Lobby of first Gadsden Hotel  
Picture made 1924



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## **THE GADSDEN HOTEL— DOUGLAS' MOST ENDURING, MAGNIFICENT FRONTIER SHOWPLACE IN THE WEST**

On an October day some seventy seven years ago, the border community of Douglas, Arizona was born. This new community came as the direct result of a steady growth of the town of Bisbee, the outdated and inadequate smelter located at Bisbee, and the rough and almost impassable terrain of northern Sonora, Mexico between the two communities of Nacozari and Bisbee. Careful planning went into the establishment of this new community. Areas were set aside for schools, churches and parks for the residents of this new community. Large streets were plotted out and good parcels of land were layed out and sold for homes for those adventurous individuals who first made their homes here.

Because Dr. James Douglas had done much in the establishment of this community, it seemed only fitting that this community bear his name—Douglas, Arizona.

Two years after the town of Douglas had been incorporated, Dr. Douglas (who owned two banks) and the Douglas Investment Company decided that now was the time to build a badly needed hotel in Douglas. The site chosen was on the main street of Douglas—G Avenue—and this new structure was to tower five stories high. No expense would be spared in the construction of this fine piece of architecture.

The exterior of the building was of brick face and wood construction. Block and tackle and horses were used to pull up the beams. Once the wooden framework was in place, steam engines were used to hoist up the materials. Needless to say, accidents were quite common and workmen fell off the scaffolding with regularity.

Dr. Douglas wanted only the best for this construction job. He hired another Canadian, John C. Morrison noted for his skills in woodworking, to come to Douglas and supervise this construction job as the superintendent. One must remember that back in those days, all carpentry was done by hand and getting good skilled labor was a big problem, so Yaqui Indians were brought in to do the hard labor work. Skilled artisans from France and Italy came to Douglas to do the marble and glass work. Jane Morrison, granddaughter of John C. Morrison, recalled a story that was told to her by an uncle who worked on this project:

“One day an Irish foreman got ticked off at an Indian laborer and beat him with a shovel. Nothing much happened that day, but later that night the foreman's body was



found with his heart cut out. No one was charged with the crime, and needless to say, the Indians received no more of that kind of treatment!"

The interior of the new construction was just as elegant and enduring as the exterior. Marble columns that stood two stories high were used to support the lobby ceiling. These columns had to be rolled into place on a mammoth lathe and then finished by some Italian artisans that had been brought to Douglas especially for this job. To ornament the high lobby ceiling, \$14,000 worth of goldleaf was used in intricate stone scrollwork. A huge, imposing staircase capped with white marble led up to the ballroom on the mezzanine.

On one of the walls, two buffalo heads were hung.

The spacious lobby was furnished with leather upholstered chairs and lounges. The floor was of tile overlaid with rugs.

Adjoining the lobby were the bar, dining room, barber shop with curios and souvenirs from both Mexico and Arizona. There was also a clothing store for men.

On the mezzanine, many of the professional and business men, including the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, had their offices.

The rooms were furnished quite comfortably for the weary traveler with a large brass bed, lace curtains at the windows. The rent for the rooms ranged from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per night.

The hotel was named Gadsden from the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. The hotel soon became a gathering place for ranchers, farmers and their families from southern Arizona and northern Arizona who came to town to shop and negotiate their business.

The grand opening of the hotel was celebrated with a large party, including dancing and refreshments for all. This was the first of many gatherings to be held at the Gadsden to observe the growth and progress of Douglas. The long awaited Statehood Day was announced on February 14, 1912 and the grand celebration developed spontaneously at the Gadsden.

In 1915, the roof of the Gadsden became observation post of many Douglasites as they watched the battle for Agua Prieta between the forces of Pancho Villa and the Federales. They stayed at this location until a stray shot hit the elevator shaft behind them and drove them inside to safety.

During World War I, the Gadsden became a meeting place for the soldiers from Camp Harry J. Jones, their friends and members of their families. On Armistice Day, the whole town turned out in celebration. Men shot off guns and fireworks from the roof of the bank buildings. Everyone who had a car went up and down



G Avenue honking the horn—other people paraded up and down the sidewalk. The lobby and bar of the Gadsden soon became the center of the celebration.

Douglas was a popular convention city, especially during the prohibition days. Douglas and the Gadsden were especially favored because of the proximity to Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico with its many bars and clubs where liquor flowed unrationed.

In February, 1928, disaster struck as this beautiful building was destroyed by fire that was believed to have started in an empty room where paint and turpentine was being stored. One life was lost in this fire—that of a bell boy.

The owners, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Mackey, were determined to rebuild the Gadsden and to make it one of the finest hotels in the Southwest and also to make it as fireproof as possible.

This new building was to be constructed according to the original plans of the first Gadsden Hotel. The only exception would be that the building would be made of steel and concrete with steel studding with lath between the rooms. In the inside lobby, visitors would be able to see sunlight streaming through stained glass windows that reached high across the east side of the room. The window reflects a desert scene; many kinds of cactus and desert plants pictured in the foreground, tinted mountains under a blue Arizona sky in the background. These windows were made to order by Tiffanys of New York. They were designed by an El Paso artist, Audrey Jean Nichols who also painted the picture of the Chiricahua Mountains which hangs beneath the window.

The four large columns were faced with amber colored marble and again were used in the support of the high ceiling of the lobby. Seven thousand dollars worth of gold leaf was used to decorate the inset panels that surround the skylights and capitals of the columns. A handsome chandelier of brass hangs in the center of the room. Large comfortable leather chairs and sofas grouped around the lobby offer places of rest for the weary.

The mezzanine forms around the balcony on three sides and ends in two marble stairways that meet under the big window and descend to the main floor in one big sweep. On either side of the carved staircase twin statues of Spanish Conquistadores stand on pedestals and serve as the key to the Spanish style of decor.

The main dining area contains heavy Mediterranean furniture that helps to carry out the Spanish theme. An old world picture executed in ceramic tile covers one entire wall.



The lobby becomes a lively place when receptions for visiting VIP's, cocktail parties for conventions and banquets too large for the dining room spill over to the lobby. At rodeo time, the lobby resounds to the stomp and clapping of cowboy music and dancing.

For those unfortunate ones who forgot, the Vigilantes held their Kangaroo Court in the lobby.

During World War II, the hotel buzzed with the comings and goings of the flyers who were training at the airbase. Special suite of rooms were used by the Naval Intelligence for their hush-hush activities.

A movie was filmed at the Gadsden—THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JUDGE ROY BEAN, starring Paul Newman. Shelly Winters and Joseph Cotton, along with countless crew members and stage hands, stayed at the Gadsden during the filming of the UNTAMED FRONTIER.

The Gadsden Hotel, through the years, has hosted a variety of celebrities—Thornton Wilder lived here while writing part of his last novel. Erle Stanley Gardner also stayed at the Gadsden while gathering material for one of his thrillers. The late Carl Hayden was a frequent visitor as was Senator Barry Goldwater. When cowboy star Tom Mix was killed in an auto crash north of Tucson, he had begun his ill-fated trip after a stay at the Gadsden.

Perhaps the most popular place at the Gadsden Hotel is the "Saddle and Spur" tavern. Some of the biggest deals in the West took place over a friendly drink. The walls of the tavern are covered with brands of well-known ranches and the owners would pay a fee of \$5.00 just to have their brands displayed for all to see.

There are many stories told about various incidents that happened at the Gadsden. In 1960 there was a customer who tried to register a horse. The horse didn't get the room but the rider did. Then there was the rodeo clown who rode a trained bull through the lobby and into the bar.

In its heyday, old timers say that patrons had to wait as long as three weeks for reservations.

Today, the Gadsden Hotel is more than just another hotel. The Gadsden has the distinction of being the second historical designated landmark for the City of Douglas. Through the years, the Gadsden witnessed many of the firsts that the residents of Douglas could boast of—the stories the Gadsden could tell if it could only talk.

At one time, the Gadsden was a place of pride and of beauty. It was a place where one could meet friends or family and enjoy a good meal and then visit for a while before going on. Today, the pride of the Gadsden has vanished along with the civic pride of the community.

This need not happen. The Gadsden could become again the center of the life of Douglas if we would only let it.

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Cover Picture donated by Erwin Bond



## **A HISTORY OF BENSON**

**Written in 1958 by David Dyer**

As early as 1860 Benson's site was famous as the spot where the old Butterfield Stage Line crossed the San Pedro River. Benson's birth was dated by the establishment of the Butterfield Trail as a stage depot between Dragoon Pass and Tucson. An old list of stage stations, dated 1880, shows this depot as "Benson City, William Ohnesorgen, owner and keeper." He established the stage line between Tucson and Tombstone in 1879 and operated it until the railroad came through Benson.

Indian raids in Benson were not frequent but there were a few in the outlying regions near Benson. The early ranchers were a friendly and cooperative group of people. They were ready to help their neighbors whenever Indians would strike a ranch nearby. When such raids would occur the inhabitants would seek protection at Fort Benson which is now just a ruin along the San Pedro north of Benson. After such raids the Minute Men of Benson, both Anglo-American and Mexicans, would be ready in fifteen minutes to ride after the renegades.

On October 19, 1881 Peter Church and Jacob Horsch homesteaded the original townsite and area around it. On March 17, 1882, they deeded the townsite of Benson to the Pacific Improvement Company which is a sub-division of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

Benson didn't truly become known until the completion of the Southern Pacific Line through Benson. To quote Jess Wien, "Benson wasn't Benson 'til they put the railroad through."



Benson was justly called the "Hub City" because it was the junction of all railroad lines; like spokes in a wagon wheel.

There were three hotels in Benson. They were the Grand Central Hotel (the only American hotel), owned by S. Friedman; The Virginia, owned by Jose Miguel Castaneda; and the Mansion Hotel. Each enjoyed considerable business considering that all three had a barroom. The Mansion House Restaurant adjoined the Grand Central and was owned by Charley Hoy. In addition to the three hotels on front street there were four saloons, one of which was owned by P. J. Delahanty, the Post Office, two grocery stores; one owned by Hi Wo, a drug store, owned by H. Walker, two Chinese restaurants, and a livery stable.

The worst tragedy in the history of Benson occurred on October 1, 1896, when there was a cloud burst in the vicinity of the present new cemetery, accompanied by very heavy rain and hail. The on-rushing water struck the home of William Zeek. The house was washed away and Mrs. Zeek and two children, Mrs. Ashburn and two children, who were visiting the Zeeks, were all drowned. Almost the entire town was under water and the western portion was nearly stripped of buildings. The force of the water was so terrific that it washed railroad cars off the tracks.

Nearly all the buildings within the limits of Benson were erected by H. Gerwein, who owned the Benson Lumber yard.

Stephen Roemer became the Wells-Fargo Express Company agent in 1897 with his headquarters in Benson. He was also a member of the first legislature of Arizona, as a territory. In this capacity he introduced the bill for the establishment of the reform school in Benson; also his influence was a leading factor in the passing of the bill. Stephen Roemer also introduced a bill that changed the name of the reform school to the Territorial Industrial School. The Industrial School opened November 30, 1903. It was built in Benson on the site of the present oldest high school building. It was considered one of the best schools in the Territory for incorrigible youths. It was abandoned in 1910 for its present location at Fort Grant. The grey stone near the bottom of the present old high school building was taken from the old reform school building. There was a grade school earlier that taught first through fifth reader, but there was no high school. The University of Arizona provided for the need by having a preparatory department for the teaching of high school subjects.

In 1903, the Benson Press carried advertisements for most of the businesses in town. There were a few additional saloons and general stores. Most of the news in the paper was news from other towns and not much local news. By 1903, there were three chur-



ches, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist. At the close of 1903, the business and growth for the next year looked very prosperous. A smelter was to be in operation at the first of the year; farming interests had prospered during the year due to the artesian wells; a two story hotel having 40 rooms was to be completed in the spring of 1904; businesses and residences had grown in number and the school attendance had also grown due to the increase in population. A bottling works dealing in carbonated drinks was doing a good business at the close of 1903. There were three fraternal lodges in Benson, the Fraternal Brotherhood Lodge Number 298, San Pedro Lodge Number 8, and the Benson Lodge of the Knights of Pythias Number 5. From 1904 to 1910, Benson enjoyed an era of prosperity.

The picture changed in 1910 when the Southern Pacific built a line from Tucson directly to Nogales. This new line hindered the business interests of Benson. Even so, the population was 1200. Also there were a number of inquiries about land and business opportunities in Benson. Bids were accepted by Benson for the building of a jail on June 18, 1912.

In 1918 there was a flu epidemic in Benson. Doctor James N. Morrison, Benson's first doctor, probably helped to cure the flu victims. Doctor Morrison came here in 1898 via team and wagon. He was a lawyer, politician and doctor, but the people of Benson respected him most as their doctor. To quote Mrs. Jess Wien, "He was a wonderful doctor." He also is remembered as having the first automobile, a Model T Ford. He used this car for making house calls. At the time of his death his records revealed many unpaid bills from various patients. Truly he was a great man in his capacity as both doctor and friend.

In 1919, work began on the Benson Smelter, owned by Charles E. Goetz. The smelter processed copper ore. There was a slag dump on the smelter ground.

The newspaper in 1919 carried the news of World War I. Two of the organizations to help the cause of the war were the United War Work Fund, to which citizens of Benson gave their contributions, and the Red Cross. The Red Cross carried out a program for the adoption of French fatherless children.

Due to the invention of the automobile and the number of cars in town, a Mechanic Shop and Garage was operated by E. A. Brown. Other new businesses were H. W. Etz & Company, a Cold Storage Meat Market, a Cash Second-Hand Store, operated by C. R. Musgrave, and numerous grocery stores, one of which was the K & H Grocery, owned & operated by George Kempf and Harold

Holcomb. Their specialty was fresh vegetables. There were two drugstores in Benson; the Moss Pharmacy and the Walton Drug Store. The Cochise County State Bank also served here.



## Arizona. The Land God Forgot.

The devil was given permission one day,  
To select for him a land of his own special sway.  
He hunted around for a month or more,  
And fussed and fumed and terribly swore.

But at last was delighted a country to view,  
Where the prickly pear and the mesquit grew.  
With a survey brief, without further excuse,  
He stood on the banks of the Santa Cruz.

He saw there were some improvements to make,  
For he felt his own reputation at stake.  
An idea struck him and he swore by his horns,  
To make a complete vegetation of thorns.

He studded the land with prickly pear,  
And scattered the cactus everywhere.  
The Spanish dagger, sharp pointed and tall,  
And at last the cholla, to out-stick them all.

He imported the Apaches direct from Hell,  
The size of his sweet-scented ranks to swell.  
And a legion of skunks with foul loud smell,  
To perfume the country he loved so well.

And then for his life he could not see why,  
The river should any more water supply.  
And he swore if he gave it another drop,  
You might have and use his head for a mop.

He filled up the river till it was almost dry,  
And poisoned the land with alkali.  
And promised himself on its slimy brink,  
The control of all who from it should drink.

He saw there were more improvements to make,  
He imported the scorpion, tarantula and rattlesnake.  
That all who might come to his country to dwell,  
Would be sure to think it was almost Hell.

He fixed the heat at one hundred and eleven,  
And banished forever the moisture from heaven.  
And remarked, as he heard his furnace roar,  
That the heat might reach five hundred or more.

And after he fixed things up so well,  
He said, "I'll be d - - - if this don't beat hell".  
The he flopped his wings and away he flew,  
And vanished from earth in a blaze of blue.

And now, no doubt in some corner of Hell,  
He gloats o'er the work he has done so well.  
And vows that Arizona cannot be beat,  
For scorpion, tarantula, snakes and heat.

With his own plans that are filled so well,  
He feels assured it surpasses Hell.  
But he thinks it is a great mistake,  
That Arizona is not yet a State.

Arizona, The Land God Forgot, was written by Charlie Brown, proprietor of the Congress Hall, 'gambling and saloon', in Tucson, Arizona, about 1878.

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