



A TIME LINE TRIP THROUGH YUMA HISTORY

16,000 and 10,000 BCE – The first indigenous peoples arrive in the area now known as Arizona.

1540 – Spanish expeditions led by Hernando de Alarcon and Melchior Diaz arrive in Yuma by sea from the Gulf of California, noting the natural crossing of Colorado River as a potential site for settlement. The explorers find members of two tribes, the Cocopah and the Quechan, living and growing crops along the river banks. The explorers called the Indians the Yumas, from the Spanish word for smoke (*humo*), because cooking fire smoke filled the valley as the Spaniards viewed the Crossing from "Indian Hill."

1687 – Father Eusebio Kino arrives in Sonora to establish missions and convert the Indians. His expeditions throughout Arizona, New Mexico and California mapped an area 200 miles long and 250 miles wide, including what is now Yuma County. He led the first land expedition to Baja California, confirming that it is a peninsula, not an island.

1774 – Juan Bautista de Anza, captain of the Presidio of Tubac (near present-day Tucson), arrives in Yuma in January, seeking an overland route from Sonora to northern California on behalf of the Viceroy of New Spain. His friendly relations with the Quechans prove critical to his men's survival when the expedition becomes lost in the sand dunes and is forced to retrace its steps. Anza and a portion of his forces finally arrive at Mission San Gabriel (near present-day Los Angeles) at the end of March, opening the way for greater Spanish settlement of Alta (northern) California.

1781 – Quechans rebel against Spanish oppression, injustice and a significant loss of their crops and food stores. The Spanish settlement at the Crossing is destroyed with many Spaniards killed and taken captive. The Spanish retreat and never again try to dominate the Quechan or control the Yuma Crossing.

1821 – Mexico wins its independence from Spain, but decade of war destroys the silver-mining industry and leaves new country bankrupt; northern missions and presidios begin to wither as mountain men and other pioneers from the United States increasingly move into the area.

1846-1847 – Mexican-American War begins; U.S. Army uses Mormon volunteers under the command of regular Army officers to blaze a southern wagon trail to California, crossing the Colorado River at Yuma. The Mormon Battalion's grueling march of nearly 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs, Iowa to San Diego remains one of the longest infantry marches in history. After the U.S. Army occupies Mexico City, Mexico is forced to give up its northern territories, including much of present-day Arizona but not (yet) the lands south of the Gila River.

1848 – Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally ends war, requires the U.S. to pay \$15 million in compensation for the territories ceded by Mexico.

1849 – More than 60,000 travelers en route to California gold rush pass through Yuma, crossing the Colorado using a rope ferry that ran from the riverbank at the end of the Gila Trail (now Main Street).

1850 – Camp Independence established near crossing by U.S. Army (settlement where Yuma now stands known as Colorado City).

1852 – Fort Yuma established by U.S. Army.

1854 – Gadsden Purchase ratified; Yuma and lands south of Gila River and west of Rio Grande become part of United States territory. (Interestingly, the original agreement called for U.S. to pay Mexico \$10 million, but Congress only agreed to \$7 million – and when payment arrived in Mexico City, another \$1 million had gone missing!)

1857 – First stage road is built from San Diego to San Antonio through Yuma. Butterfield signs overland mail contract. First post office established in Colorado City.

1862 – Colorado City washed away by the Colorado River. The rebuilt town is renamed Arizona City.

1863 – Arizona territorial government set up; President Lincoln signs bill.

1864 – Pioneer pony express is established through Arizona City.

1864-1883 – Thousands of tons of Army supplies are offloaded from ships steaming up the Colorado River from the Gulf of California. These supplies are then staged out of the Quartermaster Depot and transported by 20-mule teams to forts and Army installations throughout the Southwest. Men of the local tribes are valued as steamboat pilots because of their knowledge of river navigation.

1866 – Arizona City town site is laid out. Right of way for Main Street is established at 100 feet to accommodate heavy wagon traffic and to promote commercial development along the frontage.

1871 – Arizona City is formally incorporated.

1873 – Arizona City renamed Yuma.

1875 – The Signal Corps establishes a telegraph and weather station at the Yuma Quartermaster Depot, remaining at the site until 1891. The U.S. Weather Service is later made a separate agency and operated there until 1949.

1876 – Arizona Territorial Prison built (in operation until 1909).

1877 – First railroad crossing of Colorado River (at Madison Street alignment); first train enters Arizona from California; the line across Arizona is built west to east, reaching Tucson in 1880.

1884 – Quechan Indian Reservation established.

1893 – Quechan tribe forced to auction much of its land.

1900 – City Hall constructed on 1st Street.

1903 – Yuma County Water Users' Association established; the abandoned Fort Yuma Military Reservation is set aside for use by the newly established U.S. Reclamation Service (created in 1902 within the U.S. Geological Survey, the agency became independent bureau in 1907).

1904 – The Yuma Project is authorized; it is one of the first significant undertakings for the Reclamation Service.

1905 – Construction begins on the Laguna Dam, which will become the first dam on Colorado River.

1905-1907 – Colorado River leaves its banks and breaks into the Imperial Valley in California, creating the Salton Sea.

1909 – Laguna Dam is completed. Yuma Territorial Prison closes. Yuma High School established. Original county courthouse built (this building burned in 1927 and was rebuilt soon after at same site). The Chicago White Sox become the first major league baseball team to play in Arizona (territory), taking the field against a local Yuma team on March 30.

1910-1914 – After a fire destroys its building, Yuma High School moves into the Territorial Prison. Classes are held in the cell blocks, assemblies in the old prison hospital. Students later turn taunting after a victory against a Phoenix rival into a unique – but proud – mascot name, the Yuma Criminals.

1911 – Boston Red Sox play their first exhibition game “outside the United States” here on March 27 – part of a grueling preseason barnstorming trip of 68 games. The Yuma hosts were unable to find a full squad of players “with nerve enough” to face the major leaguers, so the Sox loaned them pitcher Hugh Bedient, catcher Red Kleinow, infielder Duffy Lewis and center fielders Billy Purtell. Those players accounted for nine of Yuma’s 14 hits off Sox starter Eddy Cicotte (of later Chicago “Black Sox” fame) – but Bedient was battered for 17 runs by his teammates.

1911 – First airplane to land in Arizona, a Wright Model B biplane with an engine rented from the Wright Brothers, touches down at the present-day site of the Yuma Landing restaurant en route from Santa Monica, Calif., to the East Coast.

1912 – On Valentine’s Day, Arizona becomes the 48th state of the union.

1912 – Construction of Yuma Siphon, which moves irrigation water from California to Arizona through a tunnel dug *underneath* the Colorado River, is completed. The tunnel, a 14-foot diameter concrete tube built in the sandstone 50 feet below the river bed, stretches 955 feet between a vertical shaft 76 feet deep on the California side and an exit shaft 74 feet deep on the Arizona side. The first water is delivered via the Siphon on June 29.

1914 -- City of Yuma is chartered as a city under the laws of the new state of Arizona state on April 7.

1915 – First highway crossing of Colorado River via Ocean-To-Ocean Bridge; opening of bridge drives the rope ferry out of business.

1916 – Flood pours down Gila River into the Colorado; waters sweep into Yuma, destroying many downtown buildings. (Frequent flooding combined with adobe construction is the reason that very few buildings from Yuma’s earliest days have survived. The buildings atop Mission and Prison hills and those on the higher ground of the Quartermaster Depot are notable exceptions.)

1917 – Cocopah Indian Reservation established.

1917 – Gandolfo Theater built, becomes place to go for vaudeville performances.

1920s – Many new buildings constructed downtown, old facades remodeled in the popular Spanish Colonial style.

1925 – Main Street is paved for the first time.

1927 – County courthouse burns, is rebuilt at same site.

1928 – Federal government leases 640 acres from Yuma County to establish Fly Field at site of present-day Marine Corps Air Station Yuma; Fly Field serves as stopover point for 25 planes competing in New York to Los Angeles air race.

1929 – The famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart runs off the end of the runway in Yuma while competing in the first Women's Air Derby from Santa Monica, Calif., to Cleveland (Earhart had a new propeller flown in, continued the race and finished third).

1930s – Depression stalls growth, construction. U.S. Post Office on Main Street (now Gowan Company headquarters) is one of the few buildings completed (1933) during this period.

1938 – Coronado Motel – now known as the Best Western Coronado – opens for business. It is Arizona's first "modern" style motel – with side-by-side rooms in a connected building rather than separate buildings or cabins in an "auto court."

1939 – Kofa National Wildlife Refuge established.

1941 – Imperial National Wildlife Refuge established.

1941 – Civil Aeronautics Administration authorizes permanent runways at Fly Field.

1942-1944 – Major Gen. George S. Patton establishes Desert Training Center (later known as California-Arizona Maneuver Area) across a huge swath of desert straddling the state line and extending from Mexican border to tip of Nevada; more than 1 million men trained for combat under the harshest conditions possible at four camps in Arizona and seven in California (Hyder, Horn, Laguna and Pilot Knob are located near Yuma).

1943 – First classes of pilots graduate at what is now Yuma Army Air Base; it becomes one of the busiest flying schools in the nation, training pilots to fly AT-6 single-engine trainers, T-17 multi-engine trainers and B-17 Flying Fortresses.

1943 – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opens Yuma Test Branch near present-day site of Yuma Proving Ground to test bridging equipment; Italian prisoners of war captured in North Africa are used to help construct facilities (and are allowed to visit town of Yuma once a week).

1944 – Medjool dates introduced into Bard Valley.

1945 – With war's end, flights cease at Yuma Army Air Base and the area is partly reclaimed by desert; land controlled by War Assets Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

1946 – Coronado Motel becomes one of the charter affiliates of the Best Western brand; until dropping the affiliation recently, the property was the oldest operating Best Western in the country.

1949 – As a publicity stunt to spotlight Yuma's perfect flying weather, the Jaycees stage a record-setting endurance flight. The "City of Yuma," an Aeronca Sedan, flew nonstop for nearly 47 days – from August 24 to October 10, 1949. The plane's record-setting 1,124 hours aloft were made possible by volunteers who passed food and fuel to pilots Woody Jongeward and Bob Woodhouse from a Buick convertible as it sped along the runway, with the plane flying just above it and matching speed. (The plane now hangs in Yuma City Hall – see below.)

1950 – Yuma Test Branch closes.

1951 – Test Branch site reopens – with greatly expanded mission – as Yuma Proving Ground.

1951 – U.S. Air Force reactivates Yuma Air Base, and the 4750th Air Base Squadron resumes training as part of the Western Air Defense Forces.

1956 – Yuma Air Base renamed Vincent Air Force Base in memory of Brig. Gen. Clinton D. Vincent, a pioneer of bombing techniques who died in 1955.

1959 – Vincent Air Force Base signed over to the Navy Jan. 1; nine days later, Col. L.K. Davis became the first commanding officer of the newly designated Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Station.

1962 – Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Station is renamed Marine Corps Air Station Yuma.

1963 – Arizona Western College established.

1964 – Cibola National Wildlife Refuge established. Cocopah Indian Tribe adopts first constitution.

1969 – Main Street Mall is created, blocking traffic on Main Street.

1978 – 25,000 acres restored to Quechan Indian Tribe, reversing action of 1893.

1983 – City adopts North End Redevelopment Plan, committing to revitalization of downtown.

1985 – The Cocopah Tribe gains an additional 4,200 acres for its reservation through the Cocopah Land Acquisition Bill.

1985 – 224 Shops downtown are built as a reminder of 1950s-era shops that once stood in their place.

1987 – Cocopah Tribe opens convenience store, gas station, smoke shop and bingo hall near location of present-day casino.

1988 – Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge is closed to vehicle traffic.

1994 – Quechan Tribe opens bingo hall.

1995 – City workers and community volunteers clear underbrush, plant grass and install portable toilets to create “Madison Beach Park” in the historic river crossing area. This informal, *ad hoc* park provides the only public beach and access to the Colorado River within city limits.

1996 – The Cocopah Museum and Cultural Center opens.

1997 – The City of Yuma and Arizona State Parks work together to build and open “Yuma Crossing State Historic Park” at the site of the original Quartermaster Depot.

2000 – Millennium Grove planted at West Wetlands, first step toward reclaiming town dump as a park.

2000 – Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area is officially designated under federal law.

2000 – Fountain installed at Third and Main Street.

2001 – Main Street Cinemas (now Regency Main Street Cinema) opens downtown.

2002 – Through partnership of Quechan Indian Tribe, City of Yuma and Yuma County, historic Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge is restored and reopened.

2002 – Phase one of West Wetlands Park opens; new City Hall building on Giss Parkway opens.

2003 – Habitat restoration begins in Yuma East Wetlands; non-native vegetation is cleared and replaced with native willows, cottonwood, grasses and other plants.

2003 – Cocopah Indian Tribe opens its new (current) Cocopah Casino. County opens courthouse parking structure and breaks ground for new Justice Center.

2004 – Yuma Art Center complex opens downtown, with restored Historic Yuma Theatre as keystone.

2005 – New Yuma County Justice Center opens adjacent to historic courthouse. Yuma East Main Canal bike path is completed between 40th Street and the riverfront.

2007 – Thousands of volunteers turn out to build Stewart Vincent Wolfe Memorial Playground at West Wetlands Park. Renovations to historic Yuma County courthouse are completed. Main Street is reopened to traffic. Gateway Park, at the site of historic crossing and rope ferry, is dedicated. Ground is broken for Pivot Point conference center and hotel, a \$32 million riverfront development that is the first private investment in the area along the river north of 1st Street since 1927.

2008 – General Motors, U.S. Army announce joint-use agreement to develop \$120 million hot-weather testing track at Yuma Proving Ground. A 1907 Baldwin steam engine is moved to future site of Pivot Point interpretative plaza on riverfront. Pivot Point Conference Center opens.

2009 – GM test track opens. Hotel development continues apace, bringing total rooms in the Yuma area to nearly 4,000. City voters give stamp of approval to continuing development of parks, riverfront and tourism by extending hospitality tax for 15-year term. City and Heritage Area agree to lease and operate Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park, averting its closure. YVB Visitor Information Center relocates to Quartermaster Depot main entrance building.

2010 – Yumans step up to “save” their second state park, raising more than \$70,000 in private donations to keep the Yuma Territorial Prison from closing. Pivot Point Interpretative Plaza opens at spot where first train entered Arizona in 1877, including panels that detail the historic role of the Yuma Crossing, a “ghost train” audio system and lasers that trace path of the original tracks across the river.

2011 – YVB kicks off major agritourism initiative with field tours and more. Herb Guenther Overlook opens on the banks of the Colorado, providing panoramic views. Quechan Indian Tribe opens public park just east of the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge. Ground is broken for new federal courthouse on riverfront. Major renovations continue at Territorial Prison and Quartermaster Depot. For Arizona Centennial, YVB renews promise of “free board every day the sun doesn’t shine” for a year.

2012 – Arizona celebrates 100th birthday. New Centennial exhibit showcasing the construction of the Yuma Siphon opens at Yuma Quartermaster Depot (Yuma Siphon first brought irrigation water to the Yuma Valley in 1912, still operates largely unchanged today). Waylon’s Water World water park opens. Centennial promotion promising “free board every day the sun doesn’t shine” wraps with “sunbelievable” finish: 365 straight days of sun, zero meals given away. City of Yuma endurance plane and exhibits installed in Yuma City Hall, Founders Plaza dedicated at Yuma Quartermaster Depot. First Yuma Medjool Date Festival is held in downtown.

2013 – New granite timeline unveiled at Yuma Territorial Prison. Yuma Visitors Bureau moves its administrative offices to historic Old City Hall building. Multi-purpose trail is extended along Yuma East Wetlands. Agreement for 50 years of irrigation and maintenance of East Wetlands restoration area announced. Property acquired for development of new youth sports complex near East Wetlands and

downtown. Arizona Western College celebrates 50th anniversary; Northern Arizona University Yuma campus celebrates its 25th anniversary. New master plans for Yuma's state parks is developed.

2014 – City of Yuma celebrates 100th anniversary of its charter as a city under the laws of the new state of Arizona; its Centennial celebration earns a Governor's Tourism Award as the state's best special event (cities of 75,000 or greater population). New "Gateway of the Great Southwest" signs erected downtown, Centennial Beach dedicated at West Wetlands Park. Stewart Vincent Wolfe Memorial Playground at West Wetlands Park named one of the top 30 most "impressive, accessible and inclusive" playgrounds in the world. John M. Roll United States Courthouse is dedicated.

2015 – Sanguinetti House Museum and gardens renovated as part of master plan to revitalize Arizona Historical Society campus on Madison Avenue. Improvements continue at Yuma's two state parks, now operating under local management. City dedicates new soccer field complex in the Yuma Valley, boosting opportunities to host out-of-town tournaments. Travel spending in Yuma sets all-time record of nearly \$665 million for the year.

2016 – Tunes & Tacos Festival wins best special event in its category at Arizona Parks and Recreation Association. Sanguinetti House renovation and related projects earn Governor's Tourism Award for Arizona Preservation. Frontera United, Yuma's own semi-pro soccer team, begins play in United Premier League. Development of new Pacific Avenue Athletic Complex for softball and baseball is approved and moves into planning stages. Reconstruction of 16th Street & 4th Avenue "Center Pointe" intersection begins, new development to include Sprouts specialty grocery store.