

## Early Arizona

Arizona's story began long before it became a state. Many different groups of people have called this land home. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples built communities and thrived while living in the desert. The land we now call Arizona was later claimed by different nations: first Spain, then Mexico, and finally, the United States. Towns like Tombstone, Bisbee, and Prescott grew during the frontier days, mostly because of mining. In 1912, Arizona finally became the 48th state. This exhibit shows how Arizonans have lived, worked, and made history every day.

[Image description: Black and white photo of male mannequins dressed in late 1800s western outfits with cowboy hats placed in a circle in a dusty corral yard. End image description.]

Tombstone is known for the 1881 gunfight at the O.K. Corral. This display uses mannequins to recreate the famous event (1980). Photo 03-5118a. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

[Image description: Townsfolk sitting outside the Bank of Bisbee next to several horses and wagons tied to a hitching post at the front of the building. The growing city and panoramic hills surrounding it are visible in the background. End image description.]

Territorial Arizona settlements grew around mining camps, ranches, trading posts, and water. Bisbee, founded in 1880, became one of the most important mining towns, fueling Arizona's economy and shaping its territorial identity. This photo shows the Bank of Bisbee, circa 1890. Photo 04-0070. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

[Image description: Portrait of eight White Mountain Apache Scouts wearing a mixture of western and traditional clothing. The men in the lower left and top right corners of the formation are holding rifles, and the man in the bottom right corner is wearing a feathered headdress. End image description.]

White Mountain Apache scouts. Ha-Teth-la (top left) and Mickey Free (front center) are identified (1880 - 1889). Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

[Image description: President Howard Taft sits at a desk covered in stacks of paper as a crowd of men wearing suits stands behind him. End image description.]

President William Howard Taft signs the bill making Arizona a state on February 14, 1912. Arizona officially became the 48th state. Photo courtesy of Harris & Ewing - Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

[Image description: Wide-angle shot of a row of wooden buildings on a dirt road with a few people and horses milling about. End image description.]

Prescott was Arizona's first territorial capital. The town grew as people arrived for gold, trade, and new opportunities (1870 - 1879). Photo 96-3353. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

## Arizona & the Military

Arizona has played an important role in America's military history. Long ago, Spanish soldiers built forts called *presidios*. Later, frontier forts and Buffalo Soldiers helped protect the region. During World War II, Arizona was home to many airfields where pilots trained. In the Cold War, missile sites were built in the desert. Arizona's wide-open land and climate made it an important place for training and defense.

[Image description: Black and white photo of the grand battleship the *U.S.S. Arizona* with a large tower, two gun turrets, and dozens of soldiers standing on the deck sailing through the open sea. End image description.]

The battleship USS Arizona, named for the state of Arizona. The ship became a lasting symbol of service and sacrifice during World War II (1931). Photo 01-9011. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

[Image description: Scaffolding wraps around the metal hulls of submarines as they are being built. End image description.]

The new USS Arizona submarine honors the WWII battleship sunk at Pearl Harbor in 1941. It will be commissioned in 2029, continuing the legacy of 1,177 fallen heroes. Photo provided by the General Dynamics Electric Boat.

[Image description: A group of soldiers wearing tan uniforms walk across a concrete runway to a military helicopter with desert landscape in the distance. End image description.]

U.S. Marines and Sailors with India Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/5, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embark a CH-53E Super Stallion during a raid as part of Realistic Urban Training (RUT) at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, Nov. 12, 2025. Photo provided by DVIDS, courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps.

[Image description: A top-down view of a nuclear missile standing within its metal silo. End image description.]

Titan Nuclear Missile in ICBM Launch Silo stands in its original underground silo in Arizona. During the Cold War, missiles like this were built to protect the United States (2018). Photo courtesy of Zcobb99, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA.

[Image Description: African American soldiers carrying rifles over their right shoulders march in four orderly rows amongst military barracks in Fort Huachuca. End image description.]

Black soldiers served at Fort Huachuca during World War II. Their work helped support the nation during a time of war, even before the U.S. military began integration in 1948 (1940s). Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

## Shaping the Landscape

Arizona's landscape has been shaped by people and nature for thousands of years. Indigenous peoples cared for the land while also adapting it. The Ancestral O'odham built 500 miles of canals, inspiring modern water access systems. As Arizona became a state, mining provided copper, silver, and other minerals. Railroads connected deserts to busy cities. Over time, many different communities shaped the environment in ways that helped Arizona grow.

[Image Description: Steam billows from a train engine as it travels through a rail yard. End image description.]

Railroad lines helped Arizona grow in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Trains brought new people, jobs, and opportunities (1900–1901). Photo 02-9145. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

[Image description: A sunset with clouds painted in shades of orange and purple over a panoramic view of the Grand Canyon. End image description.]

A winter sunrise lights up the Grand Canyon. Changing weather can bring rain and snow to the canyon throughout the year (2014). Photo courtesy of Grand Canyon National Park Service, Grand Canyon NPS.

[Image description: View from downstream side of dam showing spillway, workers build and strengthen Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River in 1936. End image description.]

The dam helps control floods and supplies water to central Arizona. Photo courtesy of U.S. National Archives / NARA.

[Image description: Workers harvest leaf lettuce by hand near Yuma, Arizona. End image description.]

The region is one of the most important farming areas in the country, providing about 90% of leafy vegetables for the U.S. and Canada during the winter (2012). Photo courtesy of Jeff Vanuga, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[Image description: Panoramic view of an open pit mine displaying the layers of red rock and teal-colored copper ore. End image description.]

The Morenci copper mine is one of the largest open-pit mines in the world. Copper mining has played a major role in Arizona's economy (2012). Photo courtesy of Stephanie Salisbury, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.

## Leadership, Innovation, & Social Change

Arizona has a strong history of leadership and change. When Arizona became a state in 1912, it passed new laws that gave people more power, like voting on new rules such as citizen initiatives. Arizona was one of the first states to give women the right to vote. People across the state continue to work for civil rights and fairness. Arizona later produced leaders like Sandra Day O'Connor and John McCain.

[Image Description: Sandra Day O'Connor wearing a vibrant pink suit as she stands behind a wooden podium. End image description.]

Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Raised in Arizona, she believed strongly in fairness, civic responsibility, and education. "It is the citizens of our nation who must preserve our system of government." - Sandra Day O'Connor. Photo 02-0296. Provided by Arizona Memory Project courtesy of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

[Image description: A crowd of people at a train station surround Teddy Roosevelt, who is riding a white horse. End image description.]

President Theodore Roosevelt at the Grand Canyon. Roosevelt visited the Grand Canyon several times. Noting its beauty and significance for human, animal, and plant life, he designated the Grand Canyon as a national monument in 1908. It would become a national park in 1919, inspiring others to protect important places across the country. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

[Image description: Barry Goldwater looking out over the Grand Canyon. End image description.]

Arizona Senator and Presidential Candidate Barry Goldwater was one of the first people to navigate the length of the Colorado River in 1940. Goldwater filmed his trek, introducing millions to the Grand Canyon for the first time. Goldwater became one of the first nationally well-known politicians from Arizona. Photo provided by the personal and political papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, Greater Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Library.

[Image description: Portrait of John McCain. End image description.]

John McCain served Arizona as a U.S. senator for many years. A Navy veteran and former prisoner of war, he was known for independence and public service. “We are Americans first, Americans last, Americans always.” - John McCain (2004 Republican National Convention speech. Official portrait of Senator John McCain (R-AZ), 111th U.S. Congress. United States Congress, 2009.

[Image description: Cesar Chavez (left) speaks at a labor rally in Arizona in 1972. End image description.]

He worked to improve rights and working conditions for farmworkers. “We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community.” - Cesar Chavez. Photo provided by Stephen C. Shadegg Papers, Greater Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Library

# Indigenous Arizona

Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, each with their own deep history and vibrant culture. For thousands of years, Indigenous nations have cared for this land. By sharing their stories and teaching the next generation their cultural practices, the Native peoples of Arizona remain resilient, overcoming decades of adversity. Today, their traditions continue through language, art, storytelling, and dance.

[Image description: Diné (Navajo) Silversmith at work surrounded by his finished pieces, ca. 1930. End image description.]

It is unclear how long Diné people have been silversmithing, but silversmithing became a vital trade when Diné people were allowed to return to their homelands following their forced removal to Bosque Redondo. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

[Image description: A silver and turquoise squash blossom necklace on a white background. End image description.]

A squash blossom necklace, made in the 1970s. An iconic piece of southwestern silversmithing, the squash blossom combines Spanish fashion with Diné (Navajo) vision and craftsmanship. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society Collections 92005.9.2.

[Image description: Two fiddle players and one guitar player from an unidentified band performing at 2003 Waila Festival. End image description.]

Waila is a Tohono O'odham musical tradition, blending O'odham, Mexican, Spanish, and European styles and instruments. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

[Image description: Yavapai woman sitting beside her home and weaving a basket (1940s). End image description.]

Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society

[Image description: A wide, shallow woven basket with a warm brown base color and ornate black design across the surface. End image description.]

This basket, dating from the 1920s, is an early example of Tohono O'odham miniature basketry, made specifically as a souvenir. A gift for Elsie Prugh Herndon, a teacher at the Tucson Indian School, this basket features a “whirling log” or stylized sun motif. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society Collections T91.14.

[Image description: Native American performers wearing traditional outfits play traditional handheld instruments on a stage at the Arizona State Capitol. End image description.]

Chi'Chino Spirit O'Odham Group performs at Two Lights for Tomorrow on April 18, 2025 at the Arizona State Capitol. Their songs, dances, and stories keep traditions alive and show why it's important to carry culture forward for future generations. Photo provided by the Arizona America250 Commission.

# Arts, Architecture, Film, & Culture

\*\*\*video???

Arizona is known for its creativity and culture. Architects like Frank Lloyd Wright designed buildings that fit the desert landscape. Native artists continue to create powerful works today. Arizona's missions, towns, and landmarks tell stories from the past. The state has also played a big role in movies, especially Westerns filmed in places like Monument Valley. See how art, design, and film help tell Arizona's story.