

Cornville Historical Society E-MAIL NEWS

P.O. Box 1200, Cornville, AZ 86325

CENTENNIAL COUNTDOWN EDITION

March 2011

The mission of the Cornville Historical Society is to gather, preserve and share information about the history of rural life within the Cornville postal area from 1860 to the present. Beginning this month, the Society will share stories about Cornville's past as part of the "Centennial Countdown" to Arizona's 100th Birthday on February 14, 2012.

REMEMBERING ARIZONA'S STATEHOOD DAY: The Girdner name is certainly well-known in Cornville's history. J.P. (Jim) and Nola Girdner purchased land from Captain Andrew Jackson, one of the first homesteaders in the area (known back then as "Lower Oak Creek"), settling on Swinging Bridge Road in 1908. They planted orchards and gardens and raised their family there. One son, Stanley, was twelve years old when Arizona became a state in 1912. At the age of 86, he wrote a story that appeared in the *Arizona Republic* on February 15, 1987. He died at the Pioneer Home in Prescott at the age of 100. Here is his story:

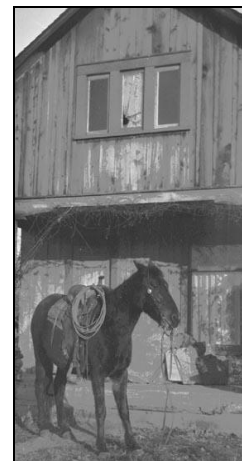
'I am glad that I was there'

Arizonan recalls the day statehood news reached his rural area: 'We must celebrate!'

By Stanley Girdner

There were about 25 families living along lower Oak Creek in 1912 who, on Feb. 18, got the news that Arizona Territory had become a state.

The news traveled slowly in those days, taking four days from Phoenix. Immediately, my mother told my brother Dale to get on our black horse and go tell Lee Johnson, Uncle Henry, the Tilsons, the Coxes and the Dickinsons that Arizona is a state now and we would be celebrating down by the creek below the Schnebly place.



LEFT PHOTO: The Girdner Home on Swinging Bridge Road in 1911; Stanley Girdner on left, Age 11
RIGHT PHOTO: The black horse that likely helped Stanley Girdner deliver his message of statehood!

"Tell everybody that you see, and act fast for we must celebrate today! Tell them to bring anything that they might have on Arizona's territory, history or progress, or anything of interest to our new state. Bring a picnic dinner and prepare for making history in a formal and hilarious manner."

My mother quickly made dresses for my sister, Eva, and Loris Tilson, using red, white and blue material, which my sister still has today. They really looked nice and fit the occasion so beautifully. She also picked out some appropriate songs and poetry for them, which they spoke most eloquently.

Our school of about 15 kids dismissed after the teacher explained the importance of the occasion. She coached some of the better orators to make some good fundamental speeches that might even help form a foundation for our new state.

By noontime we had gathered for a gorgeous picnic. We ate homegrown meats, vegetables and fruit. Then followed our National Anthem and patriotic speeches intermingled with words of wisdom and hopes for a better land.

At 12 years old, I heard some of the Constitution of the United States read for the first time, which really meant something to me.

Next was the hilarious part as we quickly moved into a homemade rodeo. George Dickinson, Gene Lee and Frank Flores made their burros buck furiously. Even the burros seemed to know that now Arizona was a state.

We had sack races that seemed like they would never quit. Everybody enjoyed themselves.

There were races of all kinds, even foot-and-burro races. Sometimes the runners would beat the burros because the burros were so keyed up they would stop running to buck awhile. This was not planned but was plenty funny.

With few people in the country those days, everybody was important. We shouldered our responsibilities well; even the kids were important and most certainly anything but slouches. They knew what work was. They were educated and grown when they finished the eighth grade. They made the very finest citizens that any state could be proud of.

I am glad that Arizona is a state and I am glad that I was there to help celebrate its statehood day. Look what Arizona is now, with the admiration of almost (e)very citizen of every state.



Stanley Girdner, lower right, Age 100 at Pioneer Home in Prescott, AZ