

Evidence of human occupation in the Cornville-Page Springs area (Cornville) dates to the mammoth hunters around 13,000 years ago. The Sinagua were here from about 650 – 1400 AD, with the Yavapai arriving by 1300 and the Apache after that. From 1871 – 1875, Cornville was part of the Rio Verde Reservation.

Settlers started arriving in Cornville, simply known as Lower Oak Creek then, in the Spring of 1876. Since the mission of the Cornville Historical Society is to research these early settlers, the focus of this tour is the sights related to them and to that time forward. The tour will start at the intersection of Cornville Rd. and 89A, heading east, and end at the intersection of Page Springs Rd. and 89A.

Start at Cornville Rd. and 89A:

1. Drive east about .2 miles, look right. The wash along Amante's homes marks the western edge of Cornville.
2. **The Confluence.** The confluence is where Oak Creek empties into the Verde River. It allows the most southern public access in Cornville. The land south and west of the confluence was homesteaded by Peter Crum (1921) and Prospero Bignotti (1926) and is now owned by Alcantara



Vineyards. You can see the vineyard from this vantage point, but it is on private property. Directions: Drive 1 mile from 89A, turn right on Tissaw Rd. Drive 3.2 miles to Thede Ln. Turn left, go .65 miles to roughly a 3-way fork. Take far right fork (FR 9811) .4 miles to the overlook. The middle fork (FR 9813) takes you close to the Atkeson Pueblo Ruins in .2 miles. The ruins are on private land but you get a good view from this point. The left fork is private property, stay off. Source for directions: Joe Bartels at www.hikearizona.com/decoder.php?ZTN=83. Note this is mainly dirt road but fairly accessible in good weather.

3. **Oldest Commercial Corridor.** Return to Cornville Rd., turn right, go through switchbacks (Chick Hill), and arrive at the oldest commercial corridor in Cornville, starting at the U.S. Post Office on the left and ending with the 1909 Post Office across from Loy Rd. The current U. S. Post



Office is near the site of the infamous Cornville Dance Hall which operated from the 1930s to the 1970s. The 1909 Post Office was built and owned by Charles

S. Chick, Cornville's 5th postmaster. He is credited with having the 1st stand-alone post office and store in Cornville; previous postmasters used their private residences. In 1914, when Charles S. Chick married

Jessie Mae Cox, the post office moved to the south side of Cornville Rd., where Banker Insulation is located. Historic Signs commemorate these post office sites, on each side of the road. Mr. Chick was postmaster until his death in December 1931 and his wife, Jessie Chick took over as postmaster, serving until she retired in 1961. The official post office then moved west, to the building where Vince's Little Star was located. In 1975, the post office moved across the street to a space between Cornville Market and the Cornville Mercantile. In 1985, it moved to its current location. Since the early post office served as a post office, store and stage stop, most of the commercial activity took place in this area. Charles Chick homesteaded all the land in this commercial area in 1901. In 2012, the 1909 post office was moved a 4th time back to within about 20 feet of its original location, as a local historic site.



4. **Loy Rd.** Turn right on Loy Rd. In ½ mile, white fencing on the left marks Indian Creek Ranch. The ranch is on land originally owned by William Powell (1888) on the north and William Dickison (1896) on the south. From 1921 – 1979, part of it was owned by Frank and Louise Gyberg. Several buildings on the property date (and possibly, pre-date) the Gybergs. Near the south end of the ranch, close to the road, is an old house that was brought to the property in 1917 by William and Nellie Loy. The Loy family, for whom the road is named, including 2 sons, a daughter and their spouses settled on Loy Rd. from 1917 onward. Loy family members still own property here. Drive



south, to Rafter Ln., look to the left, you can see the old Loy Barn (red). Passing Rafter Ln., looking left again, is the site of the Cornville School (1917 – 1946).

The old swing set from the school is between 2 houses. There is room to turn your car around by this site. Before turning, look southeast and see Sugar Loaf Mountain. This was a controversial sight from 1990 – 1994 when a builder unearthed a Sinagua burial site. The land is now owned by The Archeological Conservancy. Return to Cornville Rd., turn right. Notice the vacant lot on the southeast corner of Loy Rd. and Cornville Rd. In the past, this was the location of Ma Greenwell's Store and later Maxfield's Produce Market. Across the road, west of the 1909 post office, was the long-time site of a gas station and store owned by Dave and Patricia (Greenwell) Sobley.

5. **2nd Commercial Corridor.** At the intersection of Cornville Rd. and Page Springs Rd., turn left. Robber's Roost Restaurant, on your left was known as Casey's Corner, a service station and store, opened in the 1950s by Casey Schwab. His store was the beginning of this commercial center. In 1970, the Cornville-Page Springs volunteer fire department was formed, and their first building opened in 1972. In 2002, The Verde Valley Fire District, replaced the volunteer department. The building was renovated in 1983 and in the early 1990s, growing from a one-story, one-garage building to what it is today. This commercial corridor is part of the Jesse F. Derrick (1905) and Edwin Meek (1900) homesteads. Head north on Page Springs Rd.



6. **El Rancho Bonito.** Turn left on El Rancho Bonito, drive to Oak Creek School. Turn left on Swinging Bridge Rd., for about ½ mile, until you reach S. Coyote Ln. the land on the left is part of the original John D. Lay homestead (1899). Henry Mortimer Cone applied for a homestead on this same property in 1884, but never "proved up." From many accounts, Cornville was to be named Coneville for Henry. Turn back at S. Coyote Ln., the land on your left is part of the original Andrew Jackson homestead and was home to the Girdner family from 1908. The property had the first school located in Cornville, dating back to at least 1881 and a teacher's cabin on it. Just past S. Waddup Ln., on the right is a small rock building. This is the 1st church (we believe) built as a separate building in Cornville. It was



built by the Girdner family circa 1909 and in use for about 40 years. It was used as a school occasionally, as well as a church. Arriving back at Oak Creek School, look toward the parking lot across from the

school. This is the site of the two-room, red schoolhouse that was in use from 1914 to 1955. It replaced the school on the Girdner property and was replaced by the current school in 1955. Turn left onto E. Willow Point Rd.; you will come to Mormon Crossing. We've been told it was named by a Forest Service employee, Louis Peterson, who supervised the construction of the bridge in the 1950s. Go over the bridge, head left, in about ½ mile, where the road makes a sharp left, you have reached the northwest corner of land owned by Abraham Kiewe, the 1st person to get a land patent (1st land owner) in Cornville in 1880. Turn back, before the crossing, make a left on Blackhawk Dr., follow the road to the end, you will see a stone house

and an old red barn. The barn dates to at least 1906. Turn back, on your left is Iris Spring Ranch, originally named El Rancho Bonito, and best known for its natural, artesian swimming pool. Head back to Mormon Crossing, the last house on the left, and all the way across the creek and up Stewart Hill, marks the southwest corner of the Kiewe land. Return to the school, continue (on El Ranch Bonito), back to Page Springs Rd., turn left.

7. **Panorama.** On the right side of the road you will come to Panorama. This 80-acre site was obtained in a Forest Exchange, by Daniel and Jacqueline Norton in 1981. Some roads and utilities have been developed and building is currently underway.
8. **Stewart Family Cemetery.** Drive about ¾ mile, turn right on Rattlesnake Dr. Immediately on your left is the Stewart/Thompson family cemetery. David W. Stewart patented 40 acres southwest of this land in 1916 and purchased 54 acres of the adjacent Kiewe homestead in 1911. Standing on this hill, you can see 3 corners of the Kiewe homestead. Looking southwest, to the top of Stewart Hill, is the southwest corner; looking northwest, in the distance, is E. Willow Point Rd., the northwest corner; and looking southeast, a hill in front of the house with a brown roof, is the southeast corner. The northeast corner is just north of the entrance marked "Mary R" on Page Springs Rd.
9. **Wineries.** Several of our early settlers knew the Verde Valley had an elevation and climate suitable for growing grapes for wine-making and did so. A resurgence of vineyards started in the early 2000's and we now have at least 4 active wineries on Page Springs Rd.: Page Springs Cellars, Javelina Leap, Oak Creek Vineyards and DA Ranch wines. The 1st three are located on land originally owned by Abraham Smith (1911) and Benjamin Cople (1885).
10. **Page Springs Fish Hatchery.** James Page, for whom the Page Springs area is named, came to Cornville in 1885.



By 1901, he and his wife, Julia, owned 280 acres of adjacent land, including Benjamin Cople's 1885 homestead. Page had 1,000 head of cattle at one time, and in 1928

started a trout farm. The trout farm became the present-day hatchery; the rock building, by the entrance, was the Page's summer kitchen. Near the building, a Historic Sign commemorates the Page homestead. Arizona Game and Fish now owns the hatchery.

11. **DA Ranch.** Drive north on Page Springs Rd.; Dancing Apache Rd. is on the right. The ranch dates to 1910, when Gertrude Lewis Gates purchased land from

homesteaders Andrew Downing (1901), George Moore (1911) and Rudolph Willard (1902). She added her own homestead and by 1920 had 360 acres in this area. This property was the DA Ranch, then became known as Dancing Apache Ranch. Today, in part (almost 200 acres), it is known again as the DA Ranch, with vineyards featuring DA Ranch wines and a lodge for special events. Most of the ranch is reserved for private use, but you can drive north on the Dancing Apache Rd. and view the ranch from above or attend a wine tasting on-site.

12. **Up the Creek Bistro Wine Bar.** Return to Page Springs Rd., drive north. The restaurant, on the right, dates to the 1950s, when James Page's grandson, Jim Page, and his



wife Fanita, opened a service station and store, on Page land, which later became Page Springs Restaurant. The right side of the building is the original store. In the front of the building, a Historic Sign commemorates the Page Springs Store and Gas Station.

13. **Verde Valley Fire District and West Oak Creek School site.** The fire house, on the left, was the 2nd station built by the volunteer fire department, in 1976. It is now owned by the Verde Valley Fire District. Across the road is the site of West Oak Creek School (1921 – 1930), now a private residence. The school building was moved to Old Schoolhouse Rd. and is also a private residence. This area was patented by Rudolph Willard and purchased by Jacob B. Frey in 1920.



14. **Hidden Valley.** Just before 89A, on the right is Hidden Valley Rd. In this area, patented by James Munds (1889), there are 4 private residences and Tom's Hidden Valley Treasures, owned by Linda and Garry Kappel, open by appointment with lots of rocks, jewelry, crystals, etc.

15. **End of Tour.** Turn left on 89A and return to start.

Note: This tour did not include the eastern edge of the 86325-zip code area (on Beaverhead Flat Rd) or the most northern point on Angel Valley Rd. It focused on sites accessible from Cornville Rd. and Page Springs Rd.

A Drive Through Cornville History



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