



CORNVILLE COURIER

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Welcome President Marcia Karasek

On April 23, the Board of Directors was delighted to welcome Page Springs resident, Marcia Karasek, as a new Board member and promptly elected her as President of the Cornville Historical Society for the coming year! Marcia brings her diverse background as a landscape architect, avid gardener, non-profit organization leader, property manager and realtor. She has been a resident since 2021 and a member of the CHS since 2023. She is energetic! Marcia's previous experience as a non-profit executive director will help CHS access a variety of technology resources. She is passionate about sharing awareness of our deep agricultural history. "The more you know about the natural and cultural history of Cornville, the more you appreciate this beautiful place."

Leveraging funding resources, streamlining newsletter delivery, event announcements and membership signups are especially important as the community welcomes new residents. Since its founding in 2005, the Society has gathered a growing volume of digital and paper records, in the form of oral histories, extensive research about Cornville's first pioneers, historic site inventories and more—all of which can be more accessible to members. Expertise is needed to maintain and manage records, respond to inquiries, and develop information materials. The Society looks forward to Marcia's leadership as it strives "to gather, preserve and share" Cornville's history.



Let's Celebrate in July!

Independence Day
 America's 250th Birthday
 Cornville's 141st Birthday
 Old Post Office Open House
 2-6 pm, Thursday, July 9, 2026

SEE inside the Old Post Office,
 EXPLORE Historic Square, LEARN
 about the Cornville Historical Society

(More Inside)

Annual Membership Meeting

The Society's 21st annual meeting on March 26 drew a quorum of members to hear reports, approve a budget, and elect board members. Brunch was served while members were encouraged to "think outside the box" for a conversation about successes, current issues, and future outlook for the Society. Many ideas were shared and new projects are in the works. The meeting was an opportunity to honor outgoing president Cheryl Chamberlain, for her twenty years of service to the Society—as a charter member, director, long-time secretary and the inspiration behind fifteen years of gift basket raffles at Holiday events, many at local ranches, over the years. It was a special pleasure to give Cheryl her very own gift basket of mementos and say



THANK YOU Cheryl Chamberlain!

*Once Upon a Creek:
 Semiquincentennial Feature
 What was Cornville
 Like in 1776?*



Holiday Success at Busich Ranch

The Cornville Historical Society Holiday Event was held at the Busich Family Ranch, in the Bridgeport area of Cottonwood on Sunday, December 7, 2025. The event attracted about 100 attendees on a beautiful afternoon and raised almost \$1,000 to help sustain Historical Society operations. "The Story of the Busich Ranch" was introduced by Don Godard, and

ranch owner Rob Busich described the 45-acre ranch history, as its third-generation owner. The ranch is the largest single-owned parcel remaining in the Bridgeport neighborhood. The family raises about 40 head of cattle, goats, and chickens; and plan to maintain operations and host more activities in the future. The program also included a raffle of holiday baskets featuring gift certificates and themed items; and refreshments were served. Special appreciation is extended to all the donors of gift items, including Alcantara Vineyard & Winery, Cornville Mercantile, Cove Mesa Vineyard Winery, Divine Pies-Home for New Beginnings, Javelina Leap Vineyard & Winery, Page Springs Cellars & Vineyards, Robbers Roost, Uphoria Beauty Company, Up the Creek Bistro & Wine Bar and Verde River Growers.



CHS Joins Community Easter Egg Hunt

This year, the Historical Society decided to be a part of the popular Cornville Easter Egg Hunt, held annually at Oak Creek School. In keeping with Cornville's rural history, members Cindy & Bob Snyder and Sharon Riffle handed out free stuffed



farm animals to kids and provided coloring pages with rural themes, along with a place to color! Almost 100 animals were distributed to youngsters, along with information about the Society for their parents! It was a wonderful way for CHS to show appreciation for our community and it may well become an annual project!

Old Post Office Fixed Up ...

The Historic structure has two rooms—one an exhibit and the other used for storage. In March, the Board decided to "close in" the storage room, using grant funds from the Arizona Preservation Society and make it more useable for storing the Society's records and supplies. Hardware cloth was installed around the entire building; and the new storage room was ready for use.



New PO Storage Room

Society Records & Supplies Moved ... and

The next step was to gather a crew and empty everything from the commercial storage unit and haul it to the new space. That was accomplished in April.



Files & Supplies Moved in

The Old School Piano has a New Home!

In the process, the Society had a challenge to move an old piano to free up space. It was a job getting it out, but the crew was up to it. The piano was once used at Oak Creek School and passed along to the Society several years ago, but needed a home. Now it will have new life with Marcia Karasek on her patio at the river rock "Hopi House", which happens to be on the historic Frey Ranch property in Page Springs. The old piano now has a new home!



July Celebration in the Works

An inaugural open house will be held at Cornville's restored Historic Post Office from 2 to 6 pm, Thursday, July 9, 2026.

Members of the Society will be on hand to conduct "walk-thru" tours of the restored structure and talk about Cornville's "historic square", which has included five post office sites, a notorious Cornville Dance Hall, Ma Greenwell's Store (*later iconic Maxfield's*), Vince's Little Star Restaurant, and the Cornville Ditch passing nearby to historic ranches and a pioneer school. The Society plans to place historic markers and publish a brochure for the area. While we cele-

brate our 141st birthday, we will also recognize America's 250th Anniversary "Semiquincentennial" by considering what was happening in the place we now call Cornville, during the American Revolution in 1776. Please join us and explore the historic heart of Cornville!



Old PO Decked out for a holiday!

Mark your Calendar. Stop By. Learn more. Be a part of Cornville History!

Why Join the Historical Society?

The Cornville Historical Society needs you! When we look at our roster, we realize that many of the original charter members have passed on. Our new target audience has changed! Our dues are low; and we have long had a policy that anyone who has lived in Cornville for "fifty years or more" is eligible for an Honorary membership, free for the asking! We know there are many who grew up here and have stayed. A quick review of social media postings shows the pride that people have in the community and want to share—and that's what the Society is about—gathering and sharing historical information about the area. We have a large volume of records, a comprehensive website and a storeroom of items that need to be managed. With a recent upgrade of the Old PO, we are now hoping to host regular open houses for residents and visitors to stop by and learn about Cornville History. An inaugural event is planned on Thursday, July 9 from 2 to 6 pm, to celebrate the 141st birthday of the Post Office, established in 1885. It will be an opportunity to gain some visibility and try something new. Mark your calendar. Fill out the attached membership application. We welcome you!

In Memoriam: Nancy (Frey) Self



A Long-time Cornville resident and honorary member of the Cornville Historical Society passed away in March. Nancy (Frey) Self was born in Flagstaff in 1934, and spent her childhood at the Page Springs Fish Hatchery, Sliphers Ranch and later on the Frey Ranch. She married Clinton Self in 1953 and they were married for over 60 years before his passing. Nancy attended schools in Cornville and Clemenceau, graduating from high school in 1952. She was the daughter of Theodore and Arba Frey, and granddaughter of Jacob Frey, who received the last homestead issued in Page Springs in 1949. She is survived by brother Calvin Frey, daughter Karen Tavasci; two sons Keith and Bryan and all their families—including 8 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, and 2 great great grandchildren! She adored them all. She loved hosting people in her home on the original Frey Ranch land in Page Springs, where everyone was welcome. The Society is fortunate to have an oral history record of an interview with Nancy and Clint that recounted their life together in Cornville.

Cornville Historical Society 2026-27 Board of Directors

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While America celebrates its 250th Anniversary "Semiquincentennial" this year, it's interesting to take some time to realize what the place we call home was actually like back then. In 1776, the place we now call Cornville, where the first pioneers settled along the banks of Oak Creek a century later, was an indigenous territory on the northern frontier of the Spanish Empire, entirely separate from the events of the American Revolution unfolding on the East Coast.

What Was (what is now known as) Cornville Like in 1776?

An Overwhelmingly Indigenous Territory. The vast majority of the region was controlled by native nations who had lived on and managed the land for centuries. Evidence of human occupation in what is now known as the Cornville-Page Springs area dates back to mammoth hunters 13,000 years ago. The Sinagua were here from about 650-1400 AD. The Yavapai arrived by 1300 & the Apache after that. Nations like the Hopi, Navajo, Yavapai, and Apache had very little to no contact with Europeans. They pursued their traditional ways of life, governed themselves, and utilized established trade systems. The Yavapai people were first contacted by Spanish explorers in the late 1500's. In 1871-75, Cornville was part of the Rio Verde Indian Reservation. Yavapai-Apache Tribal lands are still part of the Verde Valley. At the time of the American Revolution, indigenous peoples in the Southwest couldn't point to Arizona on a map. That's because there was "no such thing as Arizona in 1776," said Maurice Crandall, a member of the Yavapai-Apache Nation, who's a history professor at Arizona State University. The land was overwhelmingly indigenous."

A Spanish Imperial Frontier. For Spain, this region was the absolute edge of its empire. Spanish presence was sparse, heavily militarized, and restricted almost entirely to the southern river valleys, where Tucson was founded. In August 1775, Spanish officials chose a site near an O'odham village called *Shook Son* to build a new fort. By late 1776, Spanish soldiers and their families officially occupied the newly built Presidio San Agustín del Tucón. The fort was a walled, 11-acre adobe square designed to protect 75 soldiers and their families from intense Apache raids. Life inside was harsh and basic; families lived in small, windowless, dirt-floored adobe rooms that used animal hides instead of glass or wooden doors. The presidio became modern-day Tucson. Franciscan missionaries, who replaced the expelled Jesuits a decade prior, operated historical hubs like the Tumacácori Mission and San Xavier del Bac. Meanwhile, the settlement at Tubac served as a crucial jumping-off point for Spanish expeditions. The year 1776 was a time of major Spanish exploration across the Arizona desert: Renowned explorer Juan Bautista de Anza led a massive expedition across southern Arizona and the Colorado River, arriving on the coast to establish the presidio of San Francisco in 1776. Intrepid missionaries traveled with indigenous guides, exploring overland routes from southern Arizona up through Mojave territory to connect the Arizona desert with California missions.

Awaiting Westward Expansion. Quests for gold, the transcontinental railroad, and the opportunity to homestead free land later led to rapid migration across America and settlement of the West. The United States acquired what is now the State of Arizona under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Arizona became a United States Territory on February 14, 1862. Congress passed the Homestead Act the same year, offering 160 acres of free western land to any citizen willing to farm and improve it. Migrants settled in Arizona Territory and began arriving in "Lower Oak Creek" (now Cornville) in the 1860's. Cornville was a stop along a post route from Fort Verde to Jerome. Large copper deposits were discovered in the 1870's in Jerome. Smelters brought more settlers to the area. The first homestead patent along Oak Creek was issued in 1880; and the Cornville Post Office was established July 9, 1885. Arizona became a State on February 14, 1912.

Now, 250 Years Later. The Cornville postal community is still defined by the meandering course of Lower Oak Creek. The creek that once attracted pioneer farmers now attracts retirees & those seeking a slower pace of life. The surrounding topography provides a natural buffer and protection from urban lights and sounds. The green valley that first brought settlers is attracting immigrants and folks from the East, Midwest, back from California and elsewhere, to make Cornville, Arizona their home.



Cornville Historical Society, Inc.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Cornville Historical Society, Inc. was established in 2004 to communicate the history of Cornville through inventory, preservation and presentation. In honor of the community's 120th Birthday celebrated in July 2005, the Society established a membership base, where the first 120 members are considered founding members. The Society filled its 120-member "Charter Roster" in March 2012. Families who have been in the Cornville area for 50 years or more will be given an honorary membership for the asking. Please join the Cornville Historical Society and be a part of this historic moment in time for Cornville, Arizona! Tax- deductible donations are also greatly appreciated.

Dues are payable by January 1 for each calendar year. Membership categories, with applicable annual dues or contributions, are shown below. Please check appropriate items.

RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP:

- Individual (\$15)
- Family (\$25)
- Business/Organization (\$50)
- Contributing Membership (\$100)

NEW MEMBERSHIP:

- Individual (\$15)
- Family (\$25)
- Business/Organization (\$50)
- Contributing Membership (\$100)

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION:

- Cornville History Facility Fund
- Old Post Office Restoration Fund



Date: _____

Name/Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Physical Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Comments? Interests? Services to offer? Contributions? We welcome your ideas!

Please send this application and payment to:
Cornville Historical Society, P.O. Box 1200, Cornville, AZ 86325
Please see the website: www.cornville-historical-society.org and select the "Contact Us" section to submit questions. We will respond as soon as possible.