



# Beaver Creek Preservation and Historical Society

*Working to gather, preserve and share the history of the  
Beaver Creek area*



P.O. Box 1322, Rimrock AZ 86335

[www.beavercreekhistory.com](http://www.beavercreekhistory.com)

January 2020

## Happy New Year

Another year has rolled around offering up new possibilities and adventures. BCPHS is looking forward to sharing some of these with you. We appreciate you supporting our efforts with your membership and participation.

## Rock School Update

### Rock School Window Project

Thanks to the fund-raising efforts of Bob and Audrey Erb and Ron and Darla Melcher, generous donations were received from Window World of Northern Arizona and local residents, businesses and organizations, to upgrade the eight windows (96 panes) at the 1932 Rock School building on the Beaver Creek School campus. Installation was completed on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Check out the new double-paned, tinted windows! Many thanks to all donors! Public recognition will be held at BCPHS's **Annual Meeting** to be held on **March 13, 2020, 10 a.m. at the Rock School. Mark your calendars! Hope to see you there!**



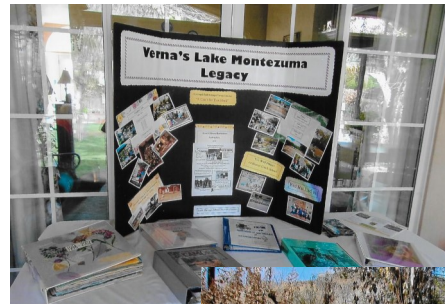
Old Windows Front Room



New Windows Front Room

## Remembering Verna Afternoon Tea

Although the weather was chilly, sunshine appeared just in time for those attending the tea to enjoy the comfortable and beautiful environment of Verna Shafer's garden on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Many thanks to Verna's daughter, Vicki Womack, and sons Chris and Craig for allowing us to acknowledge Verna's birthday and her love of entertaining. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported our fundraising efforts.



## Upcoming Presentations — 2020

- Jan. — Steve Ayers—Sleuthing the Verde Valley
- March — Rob Estrada — More about Lulu
- May — Victoria Clark — Postcards that made Arizona famous

## "The Road Runs Through It"

By Bill Cowan



Eugene McGuire's Gas Station  
Photo Courtesy Bill Cowan



Midge Pigman's General Store  
Photo Courtesy Jennie Hall

Eugene McGuire arrived near the confluence of Wet and Dry Beaver Creeks in 1910 with son Gene. They met John Taylor, who owned a homestead entry there. Eugene liked the location because of the junction in the road. He bought Taylor's claim which then became known as McGuireville. In 1930 he leased land to Midge Hall who arrived on the Jerome Narrow Gauge in 1917. ©William [Bill Cowan](#)

Few people today appreciate the history of the road from McGuireville to Montezuma Well and beyond, but from the earliest times this route was one of the main arteries of transportation in Northern Arizona. Many of the earliest settlers in the Verde Valley came from the east past Stoneman Lake down what was known as the Chaves Wagon Road or the Verde Cut-Off. They would often rest at Montezuma Well before making it on into the heart of the Verde or pass on over the Black Hills toward the gold fields of the Bradshaw Mountains or on to Prescott – the first territorial capitol.

Eugene McGuire's establishment in McGuireville catered to an ever growing trade that used that route when coming from Flagstaff or Winslow or from the south and west. Zane Grey was writing extensively about Arizona nurturing early tourism, the dude ranches were booming and there were many people drawn to see the ancient Indian ruins at Montezuma Well or Montezuma Castle.

Besides that, there was also a small but thriving community scratching out a living on ranches or farms along Beaver Creek, Dry Beaver Creek or Walker Creek. Unlike tourists, these people generally made regular trips to Flagstaff, Cottonwood, Clarkdale or Jerome for supplies. One impediment to this routine, particularly in the springtime, was getting across the Dry Beaver Creek ford in McGuireville when the spring snowmelt was occurring. In the twenties as the country was evolving from horse and buggy to the horseless carriage a remedy for this situation came with the construction of several bridges here in the Verde including the Dry Beaver Creek Bridge. Even with this bridge it was still a long way from the V Bar V and other local ranches to Cottonwood, Clarkdale or Jerome.

Midge Hall married Whitey Montgomery about a month before Black Tuesday, (October 24, 1929,) the beginning of the depression. When she came to live at the V Bar V ranch along Beaver Creek, the depression was generally setting in and ranch life was being aggravated by an extensive period of drought. Cattle prices had been barely holding their own since the end of World War I and that along with the drought forced many local ranchers into bankruptcy. In January of 1932, just as Whitey Montgomery was losing his holdings in the cattle business at the V Bar V, Midge approached Gene McGuire with the idea of opening a full fledged market in McGuireville so people didn't have to make the trip all the way across the Verde. The idea seemed sensible to Gene who was barely scratching out a living with what amounted to a convenience stop. He agreed to lease Midge two acres across from his home and along the new alignment of the road that had been in place since the construction of the new Dry Beaver Creek bridge. He continued to sell gasoline and a few sundries, but the beginnings of what became known as The Beaver Creek Store had its beginnings in that agreement.

Ever resourceful, Midge found an opportunity when she made a deal on enough to wood to build the store for almost nothing. The Humbolt hospital was being torn down to make way for a bigger one and she got a lot of the building materials at an unbelievable discount. The store had no foundation, it was only built on a perimeter of rocks stacked up without mortar and laid flat on the ground. Through sheer grit and determination Midge had the store open and ready for business on February 8th, 1932. She financed finishing supplies and part of the inventory through a bank loan and by borrowing from friends and others willing to gamble on her paying them back.

### **Beaver Creek Preservation and Historical Society Board of Directors**

**Officers:** **Judy McBride**, President and acting Treasurer 567-4648; jamcbride1@hotmail.com

**Betty Hart**, Vice President, 567-2946;

**Ruthann Kroese**, Secretary, 567-9619 rkroese1@msn.com

**Directors:** **Darla Melcher**, 592-0782, rjmel1@msn.com,

**Rosemary Reay**, 928-451-2475, reayranch@hotmail.com

**Sharon Olsen**, 567-2539, petroglyphlady@hotmail.com

Website: [beavercreekhistory.com](http://beavercreekhistory.com)

Remember we are a 501(c)3 so all dues and donations are tax deductible