



The 1800's Exhibit Collection©

Tucson Gay LGBTQ Museum And Library

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Text, Audio, And Photographic Format Exhibit

Far out in the wild territories of the 1800's which Tucson was definitely considered being a part of, and very rightly so, the settlement maintained its very small population of 395 people in 1821 mostly made up of soldiers and others directly related to the Presidio (fortification) with their structures built adjoining the forts walls. Ten years later in 1831 the population of the Old Pueblo had risen to 465.

By 1864 with the arrival of United States and other citizens, soldiers, merchants, con artists, miners, gamblers, and fortune hunters after winning of the United States war with the still struggling United Mexican States from 1846-1848, as Tucson's population had quickly grown to 1,568.



1857 Around Town

Again by the time of 1870 the town had grown to 3,224 people within the town limits of two (2) square miles who faced other far more pressing daily life concerns than who did what with whom and when out of public view.

Daily life was extremely hard in and around the Old Pueblo, and a person's lifespan often very much depended on their abilities to find just the basics of adequate food, water, and shelter.

Hostile Indians, dust storms that could block out the sun, oppressing hot weather, cowboys, adventurers, gamblers, assorted bandits, highwaymen, horse and cattle thieves, and a veritable host of poisonous desert creatures were also a very serious real and constant daily concern.



1891 Around Town

One traveler remarked about his visit to Tucson in 1858, *"It is very dirty and smelly, dead animals lay out in the streets where they fell or were thrown and the people throw their garbage right out their front doors. Everyone there is armed to the teeth, and daily gunfights and knife fights are just common place. It is a real haven for the damned."*



1894 Around Town

Same Sex Relationships thus formed and sometimes flourished within an almost anything goes atmosphere in Tucson during much of the era of the 1800's. As one Spanish Military Officer assigned at the Presidio commented publicly to one of his non-commissioned officers in 1820 shortly before being recalled to Spain after the founding of the First Mexican Republic as its own entity, *"Tell the people they can do as they wish as long as they do not disturb the horses, Bullocks a.k.a. ox carts, or wagons out in the plaza."*

The 1800's also brought about many very new ideas and attitudes toward homosexuality. Before then those who had same sex relations with others usually had not been viewed as people who were homosexual, but instead as people who happened to engage in sexual acts with members of their own gender. In other words, homosexuality was something one did, and not something one was.



1886 *Around Town*

Those believing in this thought that people consciously chose to perform homosexual acts, rather than that they suffered from disease or psychological deviancy. But, both of those public opinions would become popular later on in history. As a result any homosexuality was considered a crime which was in some cases punishable by death in some places in the world.

During the years between 1800 and 1835, over one hundred (100) men were executed by public hanging in England alone for committing sodomy. In the 1830's in Imperial Russia the word 'muzhelozhstvo' which means men lying with men and basically having anal sex was punishable by up to five years of exile in Siberian labor 're-education' camps.

Being a Lesbian did not escape the public's wrath either when in the summer of 1810, two teachers Marianne Woods and Jane Pirie were both accused of improper and criminal conduct by one of their student's mother. Elsewhere over in Europe a more liberal stance was popular. It was the year 1804, when France updated its *Code of 1791* (which was later renamed The Code Of Napoleon). It decriminalized all private sexual acts between consenting adults. Even with all the changes elsewhere, England in 1828 with its *Offenses Against the Person Act* made it very simple to get the amount of proof needed for anyone to be convicted of sodomy.



1848 *James Buchanan*

Although persecution of homosexuality in the 1800's, combined with no standard terminology, made it impossible for unified and visible sub-cultures to exist. Still some individual same sex relationships did occasionally surface to the public forefront. In the America of 1834 a forty-three (43) year old attorney named James Buchanan, who would later become President of the United States, met William Rufus De Van King.



1848 William King

The President and his friend became inseparable companions for many years with both living together in Buchanan's home. Buchanan and William King's relationship was very well known in political circles. General Andrew Jackson referred to "Mr. King as Miss Nancy" while others called William Rufus De Van King, "*Buchanan's Better Half*."



1889 Around Town

In 1862, then Confederate States of America President Jefferson 'Jeff' Finis Davis signed a bill of the Confederate Congress recognizing Arizona as a Territory of the Confederate States Of America. His presidential act took effect on Friday February 14, 1862 which was ironically exactly 50 years before the Arizona Territory would become a state of the United States.

The Arizona Territory had originally been claimed by the Confederate Army on Thursday August 1, 1861 with the support of many of Tucson's citizens and inhabitants, following the Confederate victory at the 1st Battle of Mesilla when retreating Union Colonel Edward Richard Sprigg Canby and his troops surrendered to Confederate Lt. Colonel John Robert Baylor.

On Thursday February 27, 1862 the Confederate Captain Sherod Hunter in command of Company A of the Arizona Rangers entered Tucson with 247 men, and very few women or any other diversions anywhere to be found. The sudden abandonment of Tucson by all of the posted U.S. Federal Army Troops earlier after the start of the Civil War left the residents unprotected from the constant Apache Indian attacks and their supply raids. That in itself set the stage for the Confederate Troops to be warmly welcomed by many of Tucson's citizens simply as more guns available for protection and less interest about their politics.



*Confederate \$5 Currency
Part Of Cache Found
After Civil War In Tucson*

In the Americas, the Europeans and Americans studying Native Americans discovered the presence of Berdaches, who were men who dressed in typical female garb and assumed the duties of women. Berdaches (a.k.a. Two Spirits) also served an important spiritual role in the life of almost all Native American societies.

In the Tohono O'odham (previously called the Papago) tribe in and around Tucson Berdaches were highly prized to give special good luck names to both children and adults. One of the more famous Berdaches, We'wha of the Navajo, traveled to Washington, D.C. in 1886 where he charmed many there including the then President Grover Cleveland.

In 1860 an American Poet Walt Whitman (see Walt Whitman Archives) published his book titled 'Leaves of Grass' that contained many references to the bonding & love that happens between men.



1800's Berdache Appreciation Dance

The American Public both loved the book, while others called it obscene and hated it. Regardless, its printings continued to be completely sold out one after another very quickly upon being placed on the shelves or ordered by mail. In time his book titled *Leaves of Grass* found a wide acceptance in Europe and became an International Sensation right along with his many poems. Toward the last years of the 1800's sexologists began practicing around Europe.

Being mostly men, they analyzed sexuality and were considered some of the first to create a basic vocabulary of words that would be used to define homosexuality for many years in the future. It was later in 1869 when **Karl Maria Kertbeny** coined the term 'homosexuality.'

The word 'Homosexuality' was first used in an anonymously published pamphlet, in which Kertbeny advocated the repeal of Prussia's sodomy laws. Sexologists would go on to debate the nature of homosexuality for many years after Kertbeny's book and the pictures inside it were published.

On Saturday March 20, 1880 the Union Pacific Railroad steamed into Tucson driven by Engineer Jack Bruce (see article) and belching fire & smoke at its new train station as a continuing part of the United States program of the Intercontinental Railway to link the country together. By that time Tucson's population had grown to 7,007 as it began taking its place as the major supply center for the area.

Along with the arrival of the railroad to the city in 1880 came the delivery of huge blocks of ice in insulated freight cars which other than the once a year limited ice hauled down by horse drawn wagons from Mt. Lemmon was Tucson's first real dependable refrigeration source for both food use and in the saloons to provide cold drinks supplied by the Arctic Ice Company under the ownership of Royal A. Johnston with its office located at 20 S. Church Street.



1868 Around Town

On Wednesday August 19, 1857 the first scheduled Pony Express style mail to come into the dangerous Arizona Territory arrived in Tucson with the mail pouch carried on horseback. Mail rider James E. Mason had left San Antonio, Texas, on Thursday July 9, 1857 but did not arrive in Tucson until Wednesday August 19 after he was delayed by a Comanche Indian attack occurring just east of El Paso, Texas.

On Saturday September 16, 1882 before a 'raucous and semi-sober crowd' the first water was pumped up from the Santa Cruz River and began flowing through the pipes and finally out the nozzles of the Tucson Water Company's Main Water Lines at the corner of Congress and Main Streets in Tucson for residential or commercial customers at a charge of 2 cents per bucket filled to its top.

Many residents were astounded by the high price of the "delivered water" and instead continued to manually fetch their water in buckets, bags, and pouches from down at the river's edge and carry it home themselves.

Men in Tucson, Arizona could discretely meet other men at a few selected saloons, cafes, and cigar stores which offered very private 'sampling and club rooms' such as Rossi's Cigar Store & Club under ownership of Alexander Rossi located at the corner of Stone Avenue & Congress Street, the Arizona (Saloon) Club under ownership of Thomas McDermott and Fredrick Dale located at 102 Congress Street, the Reception Saloon under ownership of O.J.H. (Skinny) Johnson located at 112 W. Congress Street, the Depot Park Hotel & Saloon under the ownership of George Sicocan located at 36 5th Avenue right across the dirt street from the train depot, and the Cactus Saloon located at the corner of Toole Avenue & 5th Avenue under ownership of partners Mr.'s Bohn and Heidel.

In society and legally during the time period at large, however, Homosexuality was still considered a crime.

In one of the most notorious trials of the 1800's, the flamboyantly Gay British author and playwright **Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde** was charged and tried for sodomy and indecent behavior in 1895.

Despite Wilde's lengthy, heartfelt, and seemingly convincing appeals to the court about the love between men he was convicted, sentenced, and served two years in horrible unsanitary prison conditions and worked daily in forced hard labor.

The great and very talented author of novels such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Canterville Ghost*, and plays including *The Importance of Being Earnest*, that once dashing Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, later died in complete poverty penniless in a Paris flop house converting to Catholicism on his deathbed on the 30th day of November in the year 1900.

Around the Tucson area in the latter 1800's same sex seeking persons often inconspicuously met or went on dates far north of the city limits at the privately owned **Pastime Park** (later in the early 1900's the land would become the area's first Veterans Hospital when returning WW1 veterans began squatting on the property and putting up their tents) was located along the west side of the dirt Oracle Wagon Road heading north to Phoenix.

The private park was part 24 hour open bar with many bringing their own bottles of liquor, part pleasure park-amusement park with some rides, dancing, bowling, skating, carnival games, and others popular in the era, and part neutral zone far away from the reach of Tucson and Pima County officials and their law enforcement departments.



1863 Around Town

Around Tucson itself during the latter 1800's the saloons (a.k.a. private men's clubs as they were sometimes called) were men congregated and discretely established private relationships in an era long before the advent of radio and television as entertainment diversions at places such as **Hanson's Place** owned by John F. Hanson which took up the property and addresses from 11 to 23 W. Congress Street, the **Occidental Hotel** under ownership of S.W. Sutherland located at 62 S. Meyer Street which was the stop for the daily stagecoach and favorite stopover of lawman Wyatt Earp and his brothers when they in town on business, or **The Conductor Rooming House** a very discrete all male rooming house located at 191 S. Stone Avenue under ownership of F.L. Willson who was known to provide boarders with complete privacy and discretion.

By 1898 Tucson had its own horse drawn ambulance wagon, and a Health Department/Board of Health that oversaw those matters within the city limits. In its 1898 Annual Health Report the city population was listed at around 10,000, a total of 118 babies born, 44 cases of scarlet fever, 17 visits to the city jail, and 35 visits to the Pest House were made where those with communicable diseases were Quarantined away from the public. While the sexologists of the later 1800's made it easier for same sex interested people to find the words to describe their lives, it did not convince society in general that Homosexuality especially in Male on Male Love was still not a crime against nature.



1889 Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde

It was Oscar **Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde's** sensational court case, his very harsh imprisonment, and the equally tragic circumstances he suffered for only loving a person of the same sex that would sadly begin the next upcoming decade of the 1900's.



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