



AN HISTORICAL BUILDING AT THE PIONEER LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM.

Wild West

Explore an authentic western town at the Pioneer Living History Museum.

Arizona has long had a fascination with the Old West. Just look at shows like *Little House on the Prairie*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Lawman*. Experiencing the Old West is one of today's most popular and critically acclaimed shows. In this sci-fi show, visitors can travel in time at a futuristic amusement park populated by Old West characters. Although there aren't any live-action shows, the Pioneer Living History Museum has volunteers who dress in period costumes and offer educational talks to the entire family. The Pioneer Living History Museum was founded in 1956 by The Pioneer Arizona Historical Society, which consisted of former Fannin and Wesley County, Georgia, residents Carl Hayden and Barse. These visionaries wanted to preserve Arizona history and its cultural space for future generations to discover, and learn about. They were going to lose Ari-

zona's history, and the buildings were being bulldozed and torn down," says Lynn Krieger, the Pioneer School coordinator. The official grand opening of the Pioneer Living History Museum was in 1969. "They transferred old buildings from all over Arizona—Prescott to Jerome to the Mogollon Rim—even from downtown Phoenix," she says.

The Pioneer Living History Museum is over 100 acres, about 93 of which visitors can walk around. There're 10 original buildings and 15 reconstructed duplicates. Many of the buildings were too damaged once they came to Pioneer, but they've since made replicas. The Victorian House, an original from the 1890s, came from 7th Street in Phoenix. John Marion Sears, a cattle rancher and homesteader, acquired it. The Opera House, also original, was owned by the Goldwater Family in Prescott. It went through many changes, including a second hand store and a firehouse.

"We have receptions there and a church

Pioneer Living History Museum

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Julie Carlson is a local freelance writer and an aspiring screenwriter.

that meets weekly," says Krieger. "And different organizations rent it out. We also have the Gordon School from Payson that was a schoolhouse from 1880 to 1922."

A small staff and a retired group of volunteer educators run the nonprofit museum. At the Gordon School, a volunteer pretends to be a schoolmarm showing kids who participate in field trips what it was like to go to school during the 1800s. The schoolhouse was the first completely restored historical building at Pioneer. A dedication reads: "Faith, Foresight, and Fortitude Equal Pioneer Spirit."

Every year the Pioneer Living History Museum celebrates Arizona's statehood. They have games, gunfights, and food items like hotdogs, hamburgers, kettle corn, and snow cones from their Chuckwagon Grill. For field trips, schools can also order lunch out if they want. The museum also features gold panning.

"We have a set-up right down from the miners' cabin to show how miners used to pan for gold," explains Krieger. "Kids can take home a vial of pyrite. It's a hands-on experience for visitors."

The museum also has a mock town with gunfight shows. Volunteers talk to kids about what to do if they found a gun, as well as other gun safety tips. A hay maze is also available for kids to run through and a trolley tour pulled by an old tractor.

Many of the museum's buildings can be rented out for events such as weddings and birthday parties. After Memorial Day, the museum has summer hours due to the heat, so make sure to check the website. People from all over the world have visited the museum from England to New Zealand.

"Twice a year we have a Civil War reenactment," says Krieger. "Made up of local people, they come usually around the first of November and January or February. They actually camp on the property, bring cannons, and showcase how they lived during the Civil War. We also have the Rebels and Redcoats, who come from all over the country once a year and camp for a few days. They wear English dress and have English accents. George Washington also makes an appearance."

Visitors can watch for no extra charge. For the Civil War reenactment, a volunteer will discuss Arizona's own participation. One thing the museum is really excited about is the addition of the Phone Museum, which was relocated to Pioneer from downtown Phoenix. It's a hands-on exhibit featuring Morse code machines, switchboards, phone booths, dial phones, and more.

"If you want to learn and know how Arizona was started and how it was during that time period you should come see the Pioneer Living History Museum," says Krieger.



VOLUNTEERS DRESS IN PERIOD COSTUMES AND OFFER EDUCATIONAL TALKS.

