



OIL PAINTING - SPRINGTIME IN PRESCOTT BY STEVE ATKINSON
 PAINTING COMMISSIONED BY YAVAPAI COUNTY SUPERVISOR CRAIG BROWN AND HIS WIFE SANDI

LOST HISTORY OF THE YAVAPAI COUNTY COURTHOUSE



PHOTO BY STEVE ATKINSON

by Drew Desmond, Contributing Writer, Prescott Western Heritage Foundation, Inc.

Had it been challenged, the construction of the Yavapai County Courthouse would not have stood up in court. When bids were received for the job, all were over budget. In response, county supervisors worked solely with the lowest bidder, changing specifications to reduce the cost.

The county attorney declared this illegal, as state law required a new solicitation of bids. Yet, so desperate was the need for a new building, that no one ever challenged the matter in court.

The fireproof building would be made of reinforced concrete floors and walls encapsulated by over 25,000-cubic yards of native granite weighing over 57,000 tons.

The granite for the Courthouse was quarried locally at the Larkin Quarry, northwest of Rock Lane in Miller Valley. Preparatory operations to extract the granite were extensive.

These included a large line of power machinery, derricks, erecting shops and buildings. Expert masons from Scotland were brought in to handle the detailed work.

It turned out that this native stone made exceptional building material. Blocks were cleaved without explosives. Instead, holes were drilled and a splitting wedge was used to separate them. The rough-cut stones were then taken to finishing sheds using a narrow-gauge tram.

Every stone was formed to exact specifications, and each has an individual number still painted on its backside to identify where it would be placed during the construction.

As digging was underway for the foundation, flecks of gold were found mixed in the dirt. Out of curiosity, this dirt was assayed and it was discovered that a single ton would net two ounces of gold. The city's founders seemed to

have unwittingly plotted out Prescott's downtown over an ancient and rich placer gold field. Since the discovery of gold brought rise to the city, residents thought it appropriate.

The breadth and depth of this field has never been fully ascertained, but if old Capitol Hill, just east of the Courthouse, was the ancient bank of Granite Creek, the entire downtown district might be resting on this rich gold field.

To us, the Courthouse is an antique, but taking the perspective of the building's own lifetime, she's just now emerging from adolescence. Undoubtedly, the "Belle of the Downtown Ball" has bones sufficient to become a very old lady, indeed. Long may she stand!

SOURCES: JOURNAL-MINER, APRIL 1916, YAVAPAI MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 1917 AND SHARLOT HALL MUSEUM ARCHIVES.

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