

City of Mesa Historic Preservation

What's Happening?

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Buckhorn Baths

Some things happen for a reason. Sadly, in early February, the covered porch on the front of the Buckhorn Baths collapsed after several decades of minimal maintenance and poor construction detail. Wooden posts were originally laid directly on concrete without flashings to prevent wicking and the posts had begun to deteriorate and buckle.

One might think that the original features are now gone. First, most of the clay tile on the roof was saved as were posts for future use. However, when early photographs of the Baths are examined, one can see that the porch was not original. In a 1948 aerial photograph, the porch and neon sign weren't there; a porte cochere was. A similar photograph taken the following year, 1949, does show the porch and sign. Just around the corner on the east wall (see illustration below), the pre-1949 look is still visible, showing vegas in their proper position. Those on the front had become dysfunctional due to the porch. So maybe, the porch collapse helped the front elevation return to its original look!

The new owner is keen on paying attention to these details and utilize them in the restoration and preservation of the Buckhorn Baths for its future use.



Mesa Volunteers Rock!

Volunteers are clearly the unsung heroes of Historic Preservation here in Mesa. Whether the 18th Annual Historic Home Tour, our two Federal Pass-Through grants or the efforts required to define an historic district, their success is due to the unselfish volunteers who give their time and expertise to preserve our neighborhoods and retain the essence of Mesa's history. These efforts aren't about a building here or a tour there; they are about retaining the economic vitality that gives Mesa a sense of place.

The Mesa Historical Museum's 18th Annual Historic Home Tour celebrated the West Second Street and Glenwood-Wilbur Historic Districts on January 27, 2018. Hundreds of visitors enjoyed touring Mesa homes built in the early 1900s and featuring Craftsman, Period Revival and Wood Frame and Batten Bungalow architectural styles as well as the more formal styles of Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Queen Anne. The Museum was pleased to again include Mayor Giles Mitten House, also known as the Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration House on the tour. The Sistine House, Irving School and Mesa Historical Museum comprised the Tour's three Special Stops.

None of this would have been possible without the home owners who opened their historic houses and to the wonderful tour volunteers, whose positive attitude and knowledgeable interactions with tour-goers reflect the museum's active dedication to historic preservation.

The surveying of neon signs and downtown buildings is nearly complete, thanks solely to volunteers who diligently examined neon signs and buildings. In the midst of their work, they made a handful of discoveries of neon signs not previously known. While these signs aren't historic (50 years of age) at the moment, this knowledge helps to create a strong sense of neon in Mesa over time. Out of sheer love for Mesa's neon, one volunteer has created a neon webpage to help promote our neon: <https://i68636.wixsite.com/mesaneon>

Volunteers are also helping to define two potential historic districts and one heritage neighborhood. More news on this as it develops. Mesa volunteers rock and are greatly appreciated!!

Interest in Oral History Resumes

As the Mesa Historic Preservation Office interacts more and more with our historic districts and other historic areas suitable for nomination, a list is growing of older residents who can speak to our early history. Time is ticking as these residents have never been approached to collect their oral history and recollections of a time now passed. Several were original landowners who subdivided their land into the districts we know today; others were stationed at Williams Field during WWII; and still others can speak to change in the downtown.

To encourage these oral histories to be gathered, Sarah Moorhead at the library's Mesa Room has been offering educational workshops for anyone interested. Please contact her on Tuesdays from 10am - noon in the Mesa Room at 480-644-3730 for more information.