



The Amazing Story of Tovrea Castle

Timetable

ARHS

Arizona Capitol Museum
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ

The AZ Capitol Museum is
open **Monday thru Friday**,
9:00am - 4:00pm

Events

Beat The Heat Train Show

Saturday August 6, 2022
9:00am - 1:00pm

Embry Riddled Aeronautical
University
3700 Willow Creek Rd
Prescott, AZ 86301
www.CAMRRC.com

NMRA Pacific Southwest Regional Meeting

September 7-11, 2022

Four Points by Sheraton
San Diego in Kearny Mesa
8110 Aero Drive
San Diego, CA 92123
<https://www.sandiegodivision.org/index.php/convention-2022>

ARHS Swap Meet

Saturday Nov. 12, 2022
9:00am - 1:00pm

Glendale Christian Church
9661 N 59th Avenue
Glendale, AZ 85302



Photo by Beyond My Ken-Wikimedia

By Dennis Ranke

In 1903 Frederick and Lizzie Warner homesteaded 160 acres of land and built their home on a beautiful hilltop in the desert southeast of Phoenix along Van Buren Avenue and 52nd street. Along with their son they eventually held title to 320 acres and in 1928 Lizzie sold 277 acres of that homestead to Alessio Carraro.

Carraro, an Italian immigrant and San Francisco businessman came to Phoenix with his family in 1927. Carraro had hoped to develop a prestigious hotel and resort when he purchased 277 acres of prime desert land from the Warner family east of Phoenix in 1928. He saw great potential in the property, which offered beautiful mountain views.

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President - Don Stewart
Vice President - Craig Faris
Secretary - Dave Brown
Treasurer - Dan Kubarych
Director - Dennis Ranke
Director - Dewayne Koltin
Past President - Jesse Poole

The Desert Dispatch is a publication of the Arizona Railroad Historical Society. Views expressed by guest authors are their own and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the ARHS.

Editor - Bob Bridges
rkbridges611@gmail.com

Mission Statement

The **Arizona Railroad Historical Society** strives to create a world class railroad experience which includes history, education and railroad operations centered around the state of Arizona.

We are honored and excited by the opportunity to create an exciting experience in the Arizona State Capitol Museum in downtown Phoenix.

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Tovrea Castle and the Shattered Dreams of the Man Who Built It

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Carraro's plan for the land was to build a grand hotel and use it as the center piece of a first-class residential development that would be called "Carraro Heights." The hotel, he dreamed, would provide him a steady flow of potential home buyers.



baseament.
 Alessio Carraro and family

The hotel, which took the shape of a three-tier castle, was built without any specific plans. Carraro made it up as he went along. Two granite knolls were leveled with dynamite and a third was blasted open to form the bed for the

Much of the granite was crushed and made into concrete blocks for the foundation. The building was framed with wood and covered with stucco sheathing.

Inside, Carraro went for many recycled materials. The maple flooring throughout the hotel came from a house in Phoenix that was being torn down. The kitchen cabinets were made from mahogany and oak salvaged from the Phoenix National Bank, which was being remodeled, and a vault from the bank was turned into a basement wine cellar.

Outside, Carraro had developed a spacious desert garden, filled with more than 300 different varieties of desert plants.

The hotel was just about finished as the 1930 Christmas season approached. Carraro celebrated by installing 1,000 red, green, yellow, and blue lights on the split-rail fence that surrounded the property and topping the arched gateway with a 10-foot electric tree.



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The display won The Arizona Republic Newspaper's holiday decorations contest, and the newspaper called the entry a "brilliantly lighted castle in the desert." It was the first time the building was publicly referred to as a castle, a label that would last to this day.

Alessio Carraro's dream of a resort hotel and a subdivision of fine homes was shattered a few months later. For some time, Carraro had tried unsuccessfully to buy the 40 acres adjacent to his land that

would serve as an important buffer between his property and a stockyard and the meat packing plant of Edward Tovrea. Edward Tovrea and his wife Della secretly wanted to buy Carraro's castle and use it for their home. When the acreage finally was sold, it went not to Carraro, but to the owner of the nearby packing company, Edward Tovrea.

Tovrea promptly built sheep and goat pens on the 40 acres right next to Carraro's castle. That was the end for Carraro's dream. He realized that no one would want to stay in a hotel, buy land and build a nice home next to a flock of sheep. All attempts to negotiate with Edward Tovrea and his wife Della were futile. In June of 1931, Carraro accepted an offer from a real estate agent for his castle, the hotel and much of the property. Unknown to him, the buyer was none other than Della Tovrea.



Edward and Della Tovrea

The Tovreas quickly turned the castle hotel into their home and moved in before the end of the year. The following year however, Edward Tovrea suddenly died. Della later married William Stuart, the publisher of the Prescott Courier, and they lived in the home until his death in 1960.

Della stayed on living in the castle alone. She always had a terrible fear of someone breaking in and locking her in the big safe that Carraro had gotten from the Phoenix National Bank. Della had workmen remove the doors from that safe so she could never be locked inside.

One dark and cold winter night in 1969 two men did break into the castle and surprised Della in her kitchen. Della struggled and was beaten and one of the men fired a shot at her which thankfully missed. The bullet hole can still be seen today in the kitchen. Della in a panic ran outside in the frigid cold and rainy night to ring the caretakers bell. Then she hid for hours outside in the elements. Della caught pneumonia that night and died a few weeks later on January 19th, 1969.

Relatives of Edward Tovrea moved into the castle following Della's death and lived there for many years.

Today, the interior of the castle is virtually as Carraro constructed it. It appears to have been marred only by areas of deterioration from water damage, vandalism and, in some cases, the removal of small items such as door handles. The exterior, too, is generally intact, but suffered from years of neglect

In 1994 the city of Phoenix drew up development plans for the castle to include a fully restored first floor that would illustrate how each room would have been used as a hotel and how it actually was used as a home.



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Historical artifacts were obtained as they were located. Today there are tours and exhibits of the castle for visitors.

For nearly 90 years now, the grand Tovrea Castle has stood out among Phoenix historical and architectural wonders. Thousands have admired it from afar, but few were ever beyond its fenced surroundings and permitted inside its granite walls. Today, visitors can enjoy the castle in all its splendor.

The city of Phoenix, which acquired the landmark and some of its adjacent property in 1993, came up with a plan to open the three-tiered castle and the surrounding Carraro Cactus Gardens to the public.

Work to restore two of the historic garden sections at the Tovrea Castle was completed in August 2000. The city restoration has transformed one of the sections back to the Carraro era with its dense cactus plantings and varied species. The other garden area has been restored back to the Tovrea area featuring a reflecting pool, patio, and formal garden.

The garden restoration work was completed in 2000. Exterior restoration of the Castle itself was completed in 2001.

Alessio Carraro, an Italian immigrant saw great potential for development and tourism in 1928 when he visited the area east of Phoenix in search of a business venture. His dream was shattered by a flock of sheep and the Tovrea-Stuart family left a historic landmark for everyone to enjoy today.

Editor’s Note: *A scale model of Tovrea Castle is under construction for display on the Arizona Capitol Railroad layout. Completion is expected in late 2022.*

President’s Message

By Don Stewart, ARHS President

The Grand Canyon area has been started. About the first of August, the Grand Canyon north rim photo mural will be installed on the large panels at the south end of the layout. This gives the room a finished look.



This is a portion of the photograph that will be installed on the large blue walls at the south end of the layout.

The Grand Canyon South Rim has been rough cut and the details of the streams and the Bright Angel trail are being added.



Ken Nelson applies texture to the South wall of The Grand Canyon under the watchful eye of Jesse Poole.



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President's Message

continued

The scenery focus continues at the Grand Canyon area of the layout with the standard gauge and narrow-gauge tracks laid out. The mountainous terrain is being added as well.



View of the top of the South Rim area shows the standard and narrow-gauge tracks laid out and the basic scenery installed.

Ray Rumble built the Stockman's Bank that will be installed near the stockyards. It has a distinctive Kiva shape for the vault area. Very nice work! The entrance is just to the left of the stonework.



The Stockman's Bank built by Ray Rumble. This was a Bank of America bank in the 1980s and 1990s.

Ken Nelson has finished the city of Tucson so he could work on the Grand Canyon South Rim. The city looks great!



Tucson

There have been many changes to the layout in the last six months. Come on down and see them.

Don

Layout Progress Summer 2022

Photos by Bob Bridges



Flagstaff "Mayor" Dennis Ranke applies ground cover in Flagstaff.



The city of Flagstaff has taken shape over the last few months.



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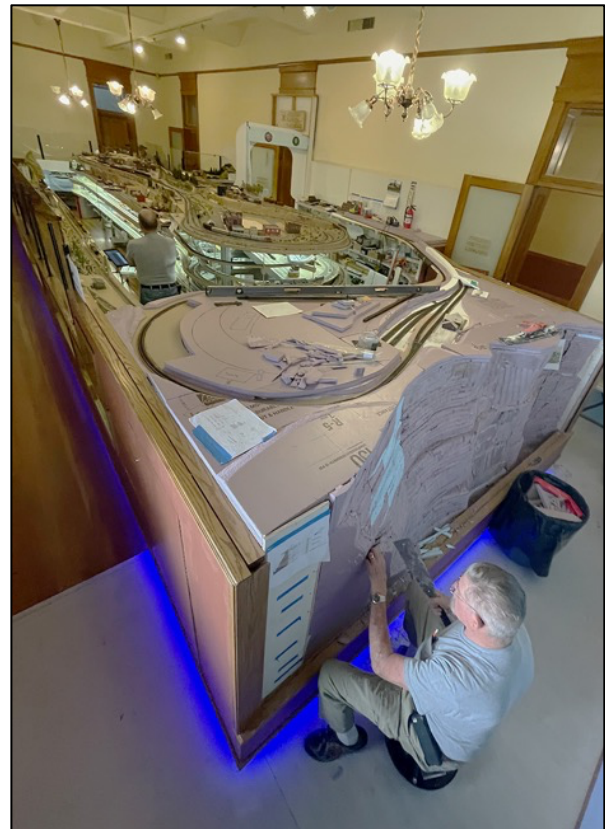
Flagstaff, Grand Canyon, Tempe, and Tucson are Focus of ARHS Layout Work



Dave Brown, Craig Faris and Dennis Ranke at work on the Flagstaff level



Don Stewart applies joint compound to the foam contours that form the scenery base on top of the South Rim of The Grand Canyon



Ken Nelson carves the foam layer base of the south rim. By mid-July the plaster texture was applied. Final rock carving and color come next.

The ARHS brain trust contemplates construction of the south Rim of the Grand Canyon In late April. From left are: Ken Nelson, Don Stewart, Dave Brown, and Jesse Poole



Dee Koltin lays brick paver sidewalks in downtown Tempe.



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ARHS News 2022 Election Results

During the July 11, 2022, Arizona Railroad Historical Society general membership meeting elections were held for the following offices. Craig Faris was re-elected Vice President, Dan Kubarych was re-elected Treasurer, Dennis Ranke was elected to the Board of Directors and Dee Koltin was appointed to a 1-year term on the BoD replacing Bob Bridges who will be moving later this year.

In other news, the Fall Swap Meet is scheduled for Saturday November 12th, 2022. A structure lighting clinic will be held in September. Social Chairman Dennis Ranke is planning the annual ARHS banquet for late September at the Spaghetti Factory in Phoenix.



Pacific Southwest Region – NMRA Convention to be held in San Diego

Back on Track in 2022, the annual Regional Convention of the Pacific Southwest Region of the NMRA will be held September 7-11 at the Four Points by Sheraton, 8110 Aero Drive, San Diego, CA 92123.

The convention will include clinics (workshops), layout tours, prototype tours, swap meets, hobo auctions, raffles, guest speakers, dinning, visiting the San Diego Model Railroad Museum and more. Our model train convention will not only be a great place to learn more about model railroading but will be a place you can relax around people with the same interest in model railroading as you do. The convention will also allow you to see current friends, reconnect with old friends and meet new people in the hobby.

Several clinics will be led by ARHS members: Basic Electrical Engineering for Model Railroads *by John Mick, LCC* – Is it the Right Choice for My Layout? *by Jesse Poole* and Making Plastic Look Like Wood *by Don Stewart*.

More information can be found at the convention website:

<https://www.sandiegodivision.org/index.php/convention-2022>



Tight Squeeze! Craig Faris squeezes between levels to install a tortoise motor for a turnout underneath the ice dock.