

Groom Creek Fire District Presents:



Our First Issue...

Revived Groom Creek Chronicle!

Groom Creek old-timers will fondly remember the Groom Creek Chronicle which ran from 1989-1999. Each issue was chock-full of a variety of interesting articles: area history, Fire District news, safety tips, upcoming community events, tips from Robert Sullins (aka Sully), nature articles and more.

A group of GCFD volunteers decided to work with GCFD staff to revive the Chronicle. There were so many wonderful stories in the old newsletters that we will be reprinting some of those. We will also welcome stories from Groom Creek residents about your experiences—past or present—about life in Groom Creek. You may send articles to chroniclegroomcreek@gmail.com for consideration. As the purpose of this newsletter is to bring positive and helpful Fire District and community news as well as stories of the past, only related articles will be considered. In addition, no commercial or political messages will be printed.

The newsletter is located on the Groom Creek Fire District's website, groomcreek.org, under the "District News" menu and will be published quarterly beginning January 2017.

Dee Shultz, Margie Navarro and Ann Reynolds

Inside this issue

The Formation of GCFD
Part 1

A Word from Chairman of
the Board

A Firefighter's Story

Groom Creek Stories

GCFD Volunteers Needed

Thank a Firefighter

Visit us on the web at groomcreek.org

The Saga of the Groom Creek Volunteer Fire Department

“The Formation”



Based on information furnished by Millie Clatt, long-time Groom Creek resident and the Department's first Secretary/Treasurer.

On June 13, 1970 a general meeting was held for Groom Creek residents at Prescott Pines Baptist Camp to discuss fire protection for the Groom Creek area.

As a result of this meeting, Bud Brown of Friendly Pines Camp was elected general chairman of the project. His first action was to circulate a letter to all property owners. John Clatt was asked to set up a program which was to result in the development of the Groom Creek Fire District. Officials of Yavapai County, Prescott National Forest and the newly formed Central Yavapai Fire Department assisted by providing lists of homeowners, addresses, property values and maps of the area.

By June 19 of that year, Helen Dewey and Millie Clatt developed the format for petitions and Millie typed them. At a July 24 meeting, petition circulators were trained. Then Velma Berry, Mr. Durran of the Mormon Camp area, Mr. Schumacker of Pinehurst and John Clatt of the central area collected names on the documents, and residents began to contribute money to the program. Of the eight potential signers John Clatt contacted, six of them offered contribution totaling \$35.

Clatt next contacted the Yavapai County Attorney to be sure that everything was being done in a legal manner. He also talked with Chief Stark of CYFD and Tom Bates of the Prescott National Forest concerning boundaries. He and Bud Brown went to Walker to confer with Mae Russell who was the "power" of the Walker Fire Department.

Then Clatt set up an account in the name of "Groom Creek Fire Protection Fund" at the Valley National Bank in Prescott. Halbert Yost was named Secretary and Don Klemmedson Treasurer. This was on November 4. During this period, Millie wrote, "Lots of talk but very little action."

On November 9, Yavapai County Board Secretary, Lucille Johnson, was contacted. She informed the group that everyone who signed the petitions had to be a registered voter. So, John Clatt was appointed Deputy Registrar, and he scurried about the community registering voters. According to the December 18 entry in Millie Clatt's record she exhibited frustration when she stated, "This thing is really moving very slowly."



However, on January 19, 1971 an election for the Groom Creek Volunteer Fire District was held at the home of (who else) John and Millie Clatt. Frances Haber, Herb Hirst, Velma Berry, Marge Schuller, Halbert Yost, and Faith Klemmedson served as the Election Board. Forty-four (44) of the 45 registered voters cast their ballots, all "Yes" votes, and so GCFD was legally established.

A general community meeting was held on January 28, 1971 at Prescott Pines Camp to elect a permanent Chief and Secretary/Treasurer. Speakers were Ted Beck, County Attorney, Abia Judd, Superintendent of County schools, Bruce DeVault of the State Forest Service—Flagstaff; Tom Bates, Prescott National Forest and Tom and Mae Russell from Walker. The first elected Chief was Les Vendella. Millie Clatt was elected Secretary/ Treasurer, while Jack May, Herb Hirst and John Clatt were named Asst. Fire Chiefs. Now the District had a legally constituted and organized fire department. But it had taken a great deal of effort by many people for whom we still owe a debt of gratitude. (To be continued in the next issue.)

Bob Pond (Reprinted from August 1993 Groom Creek Chronicle)

Editor's Note: Bob and Rose Pond were instrumental in the formation and operation of GCFD for over 20 years. Bob was also a prolific writer and contributor of numerous articles for the Chronicle. Rose passed away in 1996. At age 97, Bob currently resides at a retirement home in Prescott Valley.



GROOM CREEK FIRE DISTRICT
1110 Friendly Pines Road - Prescott, AZ. 86303

A Word from the Chairman of the Board

Happy New Year on behalf of the Groom Creek Fire District Governing Board

Along with wishes for a prosperous and healthy 2017, we would like to thank the entire fire crew and all of our Groom Creek supporters for your hard work, volunteered time and donations during the past year. We are blessed to have Interim Chief Ernesto Manzanedo who has worked tirelessly to fill the very important chief position without remuneration. He and the Shift Captains have taken on many additional duties. The good news is, so many of you have expressed your grateful thoughts to them. Those encouraging words go a long way toward making the guys feel wanted and valuable to our community. A special thanks, goes to the Sky-Y and Friendly Pines camps for their support of our many events. We simply could not provide all the food and services which the camps provide at each of our large events. The Prescott Pines yard sale was a tremendous effort and an appreciated boost to the District Budget. Finally, a giant thank you to Pat DeGraff for her assistance to Ernesto in the office and to Ann Reynolds, Dee Shultz, and Margie Navarro for reviving the Groom Creek Chronicle.



Once again, HAPPY NEW YEAR... YOU ARE Groom Creek!

Terry Hammon, Chairman of the Board

A Firefighter's Story



Hi my name is Nate Hallowell. I have lived in the Prescott area since 2008. I have a wife and 2 children both girls ages 2 & 3. In my free time I like to mountain bike and be outdoors. I started at the Groom Creek Fire District in 2012 as a volunteer. I then acquired a full-time spot on the fuels crew, and later became a full-time firefighter and years later was promoted to captain. Since I have been at Groom Creek I have been at one time the apparatus specialist tasked with fixing and maintaining all the trucks we have here at Groom Creek. I also in the past was in charge of the AZ Firefighter Chili Cookoff, a charity event for our firefighters association as well as others. I have since been switched to facilities maintenance and am in charge of the

Groom Creek Classic Run charity event. I have received many qualifications since I have been here. In the future I hope to be able to receive my paramedic certification as well as my technical rescue certification. I would also like to acquire my wildland engine boss certification. One of my favorite things about working at Groom Creek are the people, from community members to my fellow firemen. It is always a pleasure for me to serve with and for such great people.

A Bit About Groom Creek

The following article uses information from an article by Suzanne Samuels in Prescott's Weekly, October 22, 1981 titled "A Journey to Early-Day Groom Creek."

Les Eckert, who was 79 in 1981 must be quite a guy. At that time he was looking forward to canning several quarts of pears off his trees, drying black walnuts to feed the squirrels in the winter months, chopping enough firewood to keep his wood burning stove going and telling stories of his early days in Groom Creek.

Mr. Eckert was born in Groom Creek on June 12, 1902 and spent most of his life here. He has seen many changes in Groom Creek in those years.

Just prior to 1900, Groom Creek, named after Robert Groom, engineer and surveyor of Prescott, was spotted with small pines as most of the big trees had been cut down as lumber and used to build the mines. Most of the people in Groom Creek were miners and ranchers then. Mining was the main occupation. Les's father Fred Eckert came to the area from Irontown, MO via California and Prescott and worked as a blacksmith for the Storm Cloud Mine. His sons Harold, Clarence and Vernon worked the mines, but unlike his brothers Les never went underground.

Mining was a dangerous business and according to Les Eckert and Les Mackin, Mackin's father Pete was fatally injured when a four-ton boiler fell on him. That was November 25, 1917 said Mackin and "I remember it like it was yesterday."

It was not too dangerous apparently to discourage 100 people at the Empire Mine, whose ambitions were to find silver and gold. John C. Schaeffer, Groom Creek postmaster, was a placer miner at the Hassayampa Mine and on a good day according to Les, would bring in \$13-\$15, a lot of money compared to prices of the day. Several kinds of mining were done in Groom Creek—underground, placer and panning, for instance.

Cowboys were another prominent group. The Eckerts had cattle and cowboys often stopped by for dinner. Registered brands in the area included the Stevens’ “V dot,” Burtons’ “Seven Y Seven L,” and Lang’s “P Bar.” The cowboys and miners got along pretty good and some of the out of a job cowboys would make good miners.

Entertainment on a Saturday could find dancing at the Miners Hall or drinking at the Halfway House and Saloon, the latter owned and operated by Peter Mackin as a stage stop and saloon while living with his family across the road.

The entertainment heated up sometimes at the saloon and the cowboys and miners went at it. Ed Wicks would pick fights at the saloon according to Eckert and not many people got the best of him. But Pete Mackin was a whopper of a man and would take care of Wicks.

When Senator Highway was built, things changed. The new road bypassed the Halfway House and business began to drop, said Eckert. Eventually, the Groom Creek Halfway House and Saloon was forced out of business.

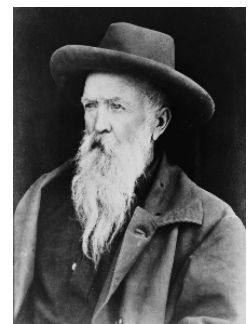
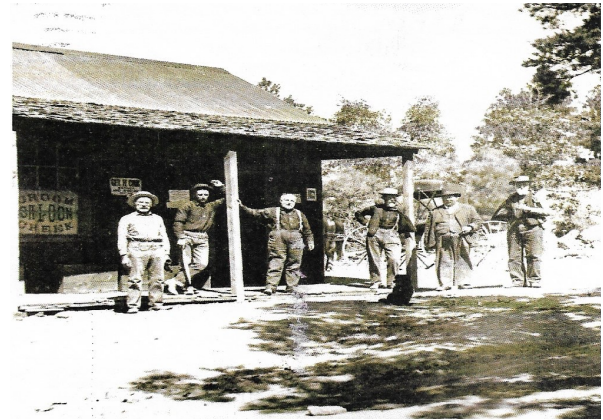
Groom Creek has changed—the trees have grown up and restrict the view, the miners have left, the old-timers are mostly gone, but a description of Groom Creek published in the *Weekly Arizona Miner* dated June 18, 1880 still is not far off the mark. “The stream is lined with bright and beautiful blossoms of every hue — while the adjacent hills and mountains are covered with stately pine, fir and spruce timber in such abundance as to be practically inexhaustible for all the purposes for which miners use timber. The water is cold, pure and sweet as ever ran from mountain springs.”

Time has moved on. That description may be a bit poetic, but I have to tell you Groom Creek is still one heck of a grand place to hang your hat.

Reprinted from August 1995 Groom Creek Chronicle

Revisiting Robert W. Groom

You may be aware that our community of Groom Creek was named after Robert W. Groom; however, we may know little about him. Robert Groom was born in Kentucky in the early 1800s. He was a prospector, miner and surveyor where he received his surveying skills in the U.S. Army in 1824. He came to the Bradshaw Mountains in 1862. In 1864 he was assigned to perform the original surveying or



laying out the town of Prescott by the territorial Governor John Goodwin. Robert Groom used an old fashioned spy-glass, prospector's skillet and a tripod he built himself. He designed and laid out the original streets of Prescott perfectly. Robert Groom did a tremendous amount of prospecting up in our community.

Here in Groom Creek, Oakdale, as it was first named in July 1901, soon changed to Groom City and then Groom Creek in August 1901 with the establishment of a Post Office. The first school of record at Groom Creek was established about 1896. The Groom Creek Schoolhouse was established and was originally constructed of wood. In the 1930s the schoolhouse was rebuilt of native stone and was an active school until 1952. The building is now registered as a National Historic Place in the Prescott National Forest. If you have not seen the ole schoolhouse, you need to. It is right on the Senator Highway just south of Friendly Pines Road.

Robert Groom died in Wickenburg in 1899, at the age of 75, still in possession of mining claims estimated at \$25,000.

There are many more interesting stories about our wonderful community—this is just one of them.

Jerry Shultz

Old Timer's Tips By Sully



Use a spray can of silicone to coat your snow shovel which helps keep snow from sticking. Also spray padlock and door lock key openings to keep the insides from collecting water which will freeze. A tube of silicone can be used to coat the fingers of gloves. When dry it will repel water and also make less slippery when using tools, shovel, etc. Keeps fingers warmer when picking up wood. Reapply when it starts to wear off on gloves. Use the inexpensive cotton gloves when driving, which are warm and will grip wheel well.

Reprinted from February 1998 Groom Creek Chronicle

Editor's Note: Robert Sullins, aka Sully, was the beloved "Mayor" of Groom Creek for decades. He was a dedicated volunteer for both the Fire Department and Groom Creek Water Company. Sully passed away in 2011 at the age of 81.

The Red Fox

The prettiest of all the critters we have as visitor on a fairly regular basis are the red foxes. Beautiful and dainty, they are quite shy, but they do come to our back porch occasionally to nibble on the dog food that the Raccoon's believe is theirs.

We generally have two foxes, one larger, but not really very large and the other a bit smaller. Originally I thought they were a mother and her young one, but now I am more inclined to believe they are a male and female pair.



The red fox is by far the most common species of fox. They run 36 to 42 inches long from nose to the white tip of their tails and weigh around 15 pounds. This fox is distinguished by black ears and feet. The coat is some shade of rusty-red or reddish-brown sprinkled with light-tipped hairs. In North America they range from northern Mexico to the Arctic. The ones further north are larger with thicker and darker coats and those to the south are smaller with lighter-colored coats. Even the silver fox, which is valued for its black, frosted fur is a variant of the red fox.

The alertness of the red fox and its keen sense of smell, hearing and sight, enable it to live close to human habitation without being noticed. They like rodents and when red foxes have been eradicated from rural areas, the population of rodents swell substantially.

A pair of foxes occupy a territory of 1.5 to 3 square miles. They mate in mid-winter and following a 49 to 56 day gestation period, the vixens bear two to eight cubs in a den. The cubs are born with their eyes closed and are looked after by both parents for about five weeks. By fall the young leave or are driven from the territory. Red foxes are believed to pair for life with a lifespan of about twelve years. In some areas, such as our Southwest, the fox may adapt itself to its surroundings where the kit fox has evolved a sand-colored coat and can go long periods without water. They have large ears which disperse body heat without water being lost through panting or sweating.

A lovely and valuable animal of our great forests is the red fox.

Joe Jackson

Editor's Note: Joe Jackson was Chairman of the Groom Creek Fire District Board for several years. Joe and his wife Jane also edited and published the Groom Creek Chronicle. Joe passed away in 2015 at the age of 84. Jane and her son reside in Williamson Valley.

Tracing the Footsteps of a Mineral Surveyor in Groom Creek

If you ever get a chance to go by the big old oak tree next to the mail boxes south of Groom Creek on Stagecoach & Peter Mackin Roads, you will notice towards the bottom of the tree on the creek side, a deep cut in the bark. Look inside and you will see the number 6. This was carved into the tree or “scribed” into the tree by a surveyor back in 1903. His name was William H. Merritt. He was a mineral surveyor staking out the Mineral Survey No.1862, also known as the Webfoot Mine. This was one of many mining claims by Ellen & Peter Mackin. Surveying to corner number 4, Merritt mentions in his field notes a 10” oak tree where he scribes X-B-T-4-W-1862. The number “6” is the only thing that is still legible.

Groom Creek is full of mining claims and the remnants of miners gone by. These types of surveys where they would monument trees, granite stones etc. are becoming extremely rare to find. If you are fortunate to discover one, enjoy it, take photos but please do not disturb them. They are still significant today when a modern surveyor has to follow, tracing the footsteps of their predecessors.

Thanks, Gary Williams, for pointing out this wonderful piece of our Groom Creek history.

Jerry Shultz



GCFD Volunteers Needed

The Fire Department is looking for volunteers with experience in the following areas:

- Website Design
- Researching competitive insurance rates
- Grant writing
- Communication, such as typing past Groom Creek Chronicle stories and researching Groom Creek history at Sharlot Hall Museum
- Newsletter formatting



Thank a Firefighter

Do you have a story about a time a Groom Creek firefighter helped you? We would love to regularly recognize our heroes in this newsletter. Whether they dug your car out of the snow, administered medical treatment, or put out a fire in your home, please share your story and send it to admin@groomcreek.org

Christmas Miracle

It was very cold that Christmas day in 2007, but clear and sunny with a bright blue sky. No snow on the ground. I thought it would be fun to drive up to the top of Spruce Mountain, which is 1000 ft. higher than Groom Creek, and take some pictures of the vista on that beautiful day. So I took off in my All-Wheel-Drive Subaru. It's a long drive up a narrow dirt road to the top and as I drove higher, I started seeing snow and ice. I figured my Subaru could handle it, but pretty soon the road became sheer ice and I got scared. I said to myself, "I've got to get out of this car before it slides off the road." Unfortunately, I stopped right next to a tree stump.



I had a cell phone with me, so I hiked the rest of the way to the top of the mountain and called 911 who connected me with Groom Creek Fire Station. Imagine my relief when I heard Assistant Chief Ernesto Manzanedo's cheerful voice! He was the only firefighter on duty that Christmas day. He said, "I'll be there in 20 minutes."

When he arrived and surveyed the situation, he said because of the tree stump he couldn't get around my car to tow it. He walked around looking at every angle to see how he could help. Finally, he said the only thing he could do was slowly back my car down the mountain to a safe spot. He jokingly asked me not to sue him if he slid off the mountain and wrecked my car. Perish the thought! He left his truck running where it was, got in my car and started the trek downhill.

Ernesto was gone for what seemed like an eternity. It was getting late and was much colder now. After waiting for almost an hour, I began to be afraid something had happened. I called 911 again, but they didn't understand the situation. I was really, really scared, exhausted and shaking. Finally, I saw his tall silhouette in the distance, trudging up the hill. My heart leapt for joy. When he reached me, he had a big grin on his face and said, "That's a better workout than a treadmill!" Who else would joke about such a grueling situation than my kind-hearted friend Ernesto. We got in his truck and drove to the top of the mountain to turn around and go down the hill. That's when I saw that he had had to back my car halfway down the mountain and walk back up!

Ernesto has been a cherished friend ever since that day, and I am eternally indebted to him for the Christmas Miracle of saving my car and my life.

Ann Reynolds



Send your Groom Creek stories to chroniclegroomcreek@gmail.com

