

# What do you know about Laveen?

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Starting with this newsletter, we'll be publishing a series of articles giving you information and stories about our Laveen heritage. There are some interesting and colorful things to know about Laveen and we hope you'll enjoy this feature.

The community of Laveen had residents for nearly 30 years before it was given a name. The oldest records show people living here as early as 1884. In the early 1900's the Laveen family homesteaded land that encompassed all four corners of what is now 51 Ave. & Dobbins Rd. The Laveens built the first general store on the southeast corner and also donated land for the first school buildings. In March 1918, Walter Laveen was appointed our first postmaster and the area eventually came to be known as Laveen. The first post office was in the back of the general store.



During cotton harvesting, the population would swell with the addition of migrant farm laborers who picked the cotton crop by hand. Nearly all the farms furnished housing for the farm workers who traveled here to work the harvest. Keep in mind that prior to 1911, when Roosevelt Dam was built, the only bridged crossing of the Salt River was on Central Avenue which made Laveen an isolated community.

Laveen became a gathering place for people living south of the Salt River. In the early 1930's it was a bustling place with two general stores, two pool halls, a barber shop, blacksmith shop, auto repair garage, cotton gin and a women's club. It's reported that there were horse races on 51 Ave., Saturday night dances on a platform outside the Laveen Store and later in the Women's Club building and poker games in the back of the pool halls. The general stores sold groceries, dry goods, hardware, gas, ice, wood, clothing and if they didn't have it, they would order it for you.

Fresh drinking water in Laveen came from wells. The deepest well was at the school and it also supplied the two general stores. There was a hydrant on the south side of the Laveen's store which was for public use. Many of the shallow wells in the area pumped water that was very salty

and not very tasty for drinking. Consequently, many people would come to the public hydrant to get their drinking water. This included the members of the Maricopa and Pima tribes who would come with their wagons full of milk cans to get water and sell fire wood to the stores in exchange for groceries. The stores would then sell any excess wood to the wood lots in the Phoenix area all winter.



As bridges were built, Laveen became less isolated. Additionally, with the advent of machines to harvest the cotton, the migrant population dropped off. The oldest store, of wood frame construction, burned down along with a pool hall and barber shop. Roger Laveen demolished the remaining pool hall. He later was elected to public office as County Recorder. The Women's Club donated their building to the community and it was moved by the WPA to the west side of the school campus and a basement was put under it. It was used as an auditorium and cafeteria and is now our 'Building A Auditorium' which was restored by the Laveen Community Council Barbecue funds along with Federal grant funds.

Future articles will describe Laveen as people started moving here in the middle of the 1900's, major changes in the area and highlights from pioneering families.

*\*\*excerpts from: 'Laveen Centennial History' compiled by Betty Accomazzo and published by the Laveen Community Council in 1984*

*Submitted by Shelley Fletcher*

