

ARIZONA
Env. folder

rec'd 7-10-81 from Wm. J. Perreault,
Arizona State Parks.

History of the Valley of the Moon

JUL

Valley of the Moon is a fantasy-fairy land designed to stimulate and entertain the imaginations of children in all age groups. Opening in 1932, Valley of the Moon delighted Tucson residents for over thirty years before closing in 1963. Valley of the Moon is now being restored under the auspices of Valley of the Moon Restoration Association, a non-profit organization devoted to the re-opening of this fantasy land.

The history of the Valley of the Moon is also, to a large extent, the history of one man, George Phar Legler. Acquiring the land upon which Valley of the Moon is situated as a gift in 1916, George Leglar spent over fifteen years constructing his dream before opening to the public. The main goal of his project was to provide free access to the peace, quiet and relaxation found at Valley of the Moon, as well as to create an exciting and informative atmosphere for children, including the development of folklore and magic shows.

In the 1940's Valley of the Moon Memorial Association was founded in order to maintain and add to Valley of the Moon's fascinating collection of towers, caves, pools and miniature scenes. Their work is evident in the Valley of the Moon's ability to blend in with the desert vegetation and wildlife, an ability due largely to its "non-professional" construction. It was in this early period that George Legler initiated plans for tours and magic shows which eventually were seen by thousands of Tucsonans. These first tours were guided through Valley of the Moon by the mysterious Mountain Gnome (Legler) whose stories and magic displays captivated his audiences.

In 1948, Legler started keeping and training wild and domestic animals at Valley of the Moon. This hobby blossomed in 1950 into the development of a trained rabbit show, whose success was witnessed throughout the Southwest. This added dimension to Valley of the Moon, served to acquaint youngsters and adults alike with Arizona's wild and domestic animals. In 1953, Life Magazine presented a pictorial essay on Valley of the Moon. Many other national and local magazines and newspapers have printed articles.

Perhaps the most unique and important characteristic of Valley of the Moon which has been evident throughout its existence, is its philosophy. In over thirty years of putting on tours and magic exhibitions, no fees were charged. Donations were asked for in order to keep up the land and vegetation. George Legler's goal of giving happiness to people did not correlate with a money-making operation. The chance that Valley of the Moon might make a better person out of a young child was enough reward for Legler.

It was in part due to lack of money and in part to Legler's inability to maintain such a large operation, that Valley of the Moon closed down in 1963. Today, under the direction of George Legler, who is presently eighty-nine years of age, Valley of the Moon Restoration Association hopes to restore, rebuild and re-vitalize Valley of the Moon and the philosophy behind it. Once again, Tucsonans will be able to escape the harsh reality of their world and venture into another world, that of fantasy, George Legler, and Valley of the Moon.

August, 1974