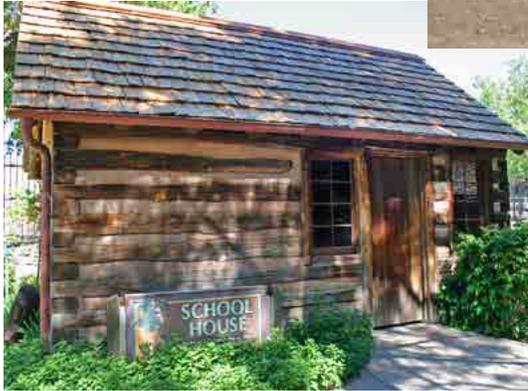


From Days Past, a Glimpse...

Prescott's and Northern Arizona's First School

By **Fred Veil**, executive director
Sharlot Hall Museum



Built in 1868, the one-room schoolhouse was the first in Northern Arizona. A replica was built at Sharlot Hall Museum after the original tragically burned down.

Although schools existed in private homes in early Prescott, the hand-hewn log cabin built at the corner of Granite and Carleton Streets in 1868 or 1869 by Samuel Curtis Rogers provided the first schoolhouse for Prescott's children.

Rogers used borrowed books and his own library to teach his students. The log building served as Northern Arizona's first schoolhouse and remained in use until 1873, when it was replaced by a new, larger structure.

The old schoolhouse stood until it tragically burned to the ground in

1948. The Rotary Club built a replica in 1962 on the Sharlot Hall Museum grounds, where it stands today. During the 1870s, Prescott schools (both public and private) underwent growth. The Prescott School District was created in 1871. In 1878, Sisters Mary Martha and Mary Rose established a small school (which became St. Joseph's Academy) in a hospital teaching Prescott's Catholic children.

That same year, the West Prescott School opened in Miller Valley, where the Lone Star Baptist Church held its first services. In 1876, Prescott's school board called for a bond election to raise money for larger school facilities, the first of its kind in Arizona, requiring authorization from the Territorial Legislature.

Proponents of the new school found an ally in Governor Anson P.K. Safford, who campaigned for a public school system:

"Next in importance to the Indian question, none will capture your attention over that of devising some plan for the education of the youth in our Territory." - Gov. Anson Safford, 1876

Construction costs reached almost \$12,000, but the school heightened the importance of learning. On October 30, 1876, Prescott Free Academy was dedicated with much fanfare.

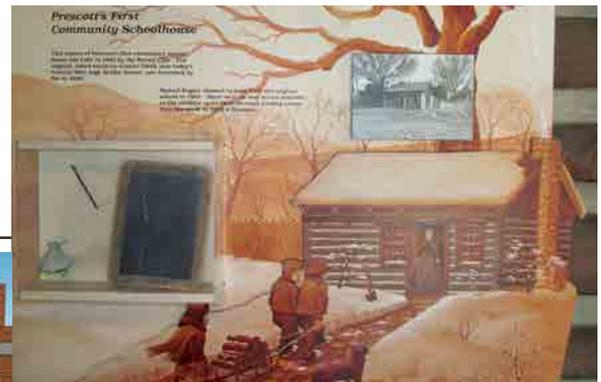
This was the first school in the Arizona Territory to use

different rooms for different grades. Built on Gurley Street east of the Courthouse Square, it provided four classrooms on the first floor and offices on the top floor.

Principal Moses Sherman administered this academy and taught the three upper grades while his sister, Lucy, taught the three lower ones.

By 1900, the Academy was considered too small for the town's growing population. The school district hired architect David Kilpatrick to design a larger, modern building; Washington School. Constructed in 1903 on the corner of Alarcon and Gurley Streets, it stands on the same site as had been occupied by the Prescott Free Academy.

Both Washington and Lincoln Elementary School (built in 1909) are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Gurley Street building houses the Prescott Unified School District offices.



NOTE: Sharlot Hall Museum recently began construction of its new Education Center that will greatly expand the outreach program to Quad Cities schools. The building will include a multi-purpose auditorium, class rooms and conferencing facilities to provide more educational opportunities for our school children. For more information, contact the Museum manager of education at 928-445-3122.



Panel in museum exhibit displays image of original school house, and slate tablet used for instruction. Rendering of new Education Center being built at Sharlot Hall Museum.