

I LOVE A PARADE

This year, on or near February 14, 2012, we are celebrating a century of statehood. That does call for a BIG celebration. Part of the celebration will be a special parade held February 11th at 11 starting at the Courthouse and ending on Main and 3rd Avenue.

Parades are wonderful events where people of all ages from several close communities can come together, mingle, join in the fun and hopefully have a good time. It is often a time for some type of celebration. It is also a time for reminiscing about days gone by or being excited about events to come. Everyone can find some fun in a parade.

What of the some of the parades that have occurred in Graham County? Fortunately there are a few pictures around that show some of the entries of days long gone by.

Parades generally included local high school bands or some other musical groups. Here is a picture of the Safford High School band marching down Safford Main Street in October of 1961. This was probably the homecoming parade that year.



See if you can identify where this is on our main street today. One can surmise that the El Charro site today was once Western Auto. You can see the windows at the top of the store that are still there today. Or perhaps you may find yourself there if you played in the band that year!

Also included is a picture of the Thatcher Band performing in Thatcher circa 1950s.



Look closely and you can see the Thatcher Drugstore as well as the Thatcher Market. These building are gone and only the memories of good times remain.

An earlier parade photo shows some type of airplane being paraded down Safford's Main Street. Apparently this airplane, with its wings off for the parade, was produced and marketed post World War II. Circa 1955.

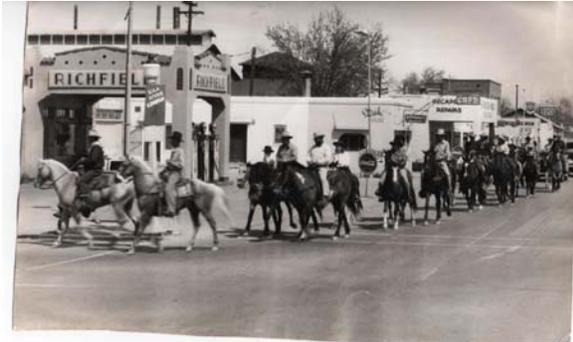


This photo is offered by the Graham County Historical Society. The site is the SW corner of Main and Central. The Young and Ridgway building is still there although it has been renovated a few times and housed several other businesses since that time. Currently it is vacant.

Parades in the southwest must have horses, cowboys and often rodeo queens. In earlier days they even had wagons and buggies. Note the next photos showing the horses in Safford parades.

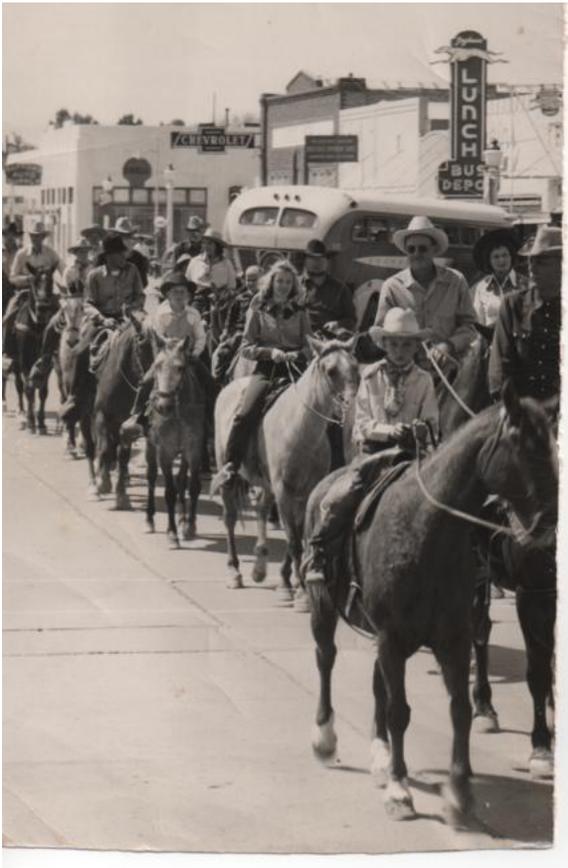
The following photo shows part of the old parade route which started across the railroad tracks on the Bowie Highway (currently known as Highway 191) by the current Arizona Cotton Growers Gin, crossed the railroad tracks and turned west on 8th street

until it came to Central Avenue, traveling north until it reached main street and turned west at the SW corner of Main and Central. The parade ended at the Courthouse. Circa 1945.

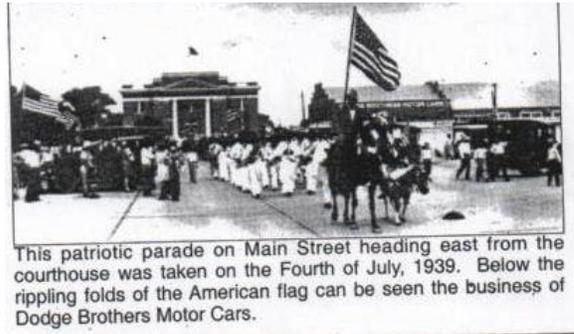


See if any of the businesses along this route look familiar or can you identify what business has taken its place today.

Here is another picture of our local cowboys in about 1947 starting from the courthouse going east down Safford's Main Street.



We must include a couple of photos of very early parades down Safford.



We found a photo of a 4 of July parade in 1912. Nearly every parade has firemen and fire engines. Here is one of the earliest fire machines that Safford had:



The above picture is from the Independence Day Parade in 1912. Sam Hambee, City Marshall, carries the flag. Safford firemen walk in front of their two wheeled hose cart bought August 1907. Cart is hitched to the saddle of the parade marshal. Notice the dress uniforms of the firemen. This picture was taken near the J.T. Owens Building, shown center, which faced today's Highway 70.

Here is a picture of an old fashioned fire engine used in a 1954 parade down Safford Main Street.



The location would be at the intersection of Main and Central. Notice Richards Music Company and next to it was Bellman's Department Store.

Of course a parade may include bicycles, 4-wheelers, tractors and other modes of transportation. Occasionally we even see clowns that add to the fun. Here we have a man traveling on a bicycle in Thatcher in the very early days.



The road looks a bit rough, but it would beat walking!

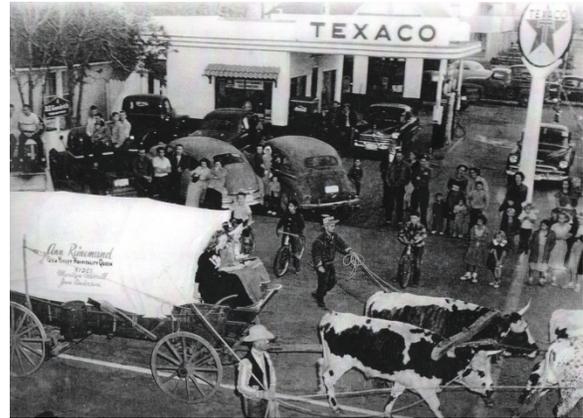
We enjoy seeing the color guard pass by. Here some of the scouts lead a parade in Thatcher on July 4, 1983.



Pictures of parade entries often capture a special moment in time. I have saved the next picture for last because it does show so many things. The date was 1953, the place, the SE corner of Main and Central.

See if you can identify what is there today.

The Woolsey Texaco Station is shown in this photo. South of the station was the Safford Inn Hospital At the left was Dr. Spencer Ellsworth's Clinic Also notice the interesting vehicles. Here of course, we have a covered wagon entry.



Joe Woolsey Service Station, 1953

I love a parade! Hope to see you at the 2012 Century of Progress parade. After all, there won't be many of us alive for the next century parade, that is for sure.

P.S. You can view a larger picture of this scene on the next page.



On the SE corner of Central and Main Street was Joe Woolsey's Texaco, circa 1953. If you look closely at the top of the photo beyond the gas station is the Safford Inn Hospital. Across the street was the Buena Vista Hotel. The parade is traveling from east main street to the Courthouse.

Submitted by Sue Dette Reed