

## **THE WOMEN OF THE ARIZONA TERRITORIAL PRISON**

The Arizona Territorial Prison opened its doors in July 01, 1876. During its 33 years of operation, 3,069 captives marched through its gates and were forced to take residency here. An often overlooked population of prisoners were the 29 women!

It was two years and four months after the prison first opened its doors, when the first woman was convicted of a crime and sentenced to the Arizona Territorial Prison in Yuma. As there were no provisions made for women at that time, the first woman convict spent most of her time at a county jail. Then, according to her prison diary, she was brought to the prison where she served about 56 days before being pardoned by the Governor. The first four women prisoners were kept in the main guard tower while serving out their sentence. However, later on one, of the small unused guard towers was remodeled for use by women prisoners. This was located on the northwest corner of the prison yard, next to the superintendent's home.

### **LIZZIE GALLAGHER**

First woman prisoner, Prisoner # 26, Age 20--November 1878

Lizzie hailed from Yuma County when she received Manslaughter charges for stabbing and ultimately killing a drunken soldier, Private James Moriarty from Camp Grant (near Tucson). Lizzie and Moriarty were at a dance hall when the stabbing occurred. There had already been 25 male prisoners at the prison when Lizzie arrived to serve her one year and three month sentence at the Arizona Territorial Prison, of which she served a total of one year.

### **MAY WOODMAN**

Second woman prisoner, Prisoner # 168, Age 27 --May 1883

May and friend Billy Kinsman were victims of a practical joke that ended in tragedy. Friends, or pranksters put an announcement in a Tombstone newspaper stating that Billy Kinsman intended to marry May Woodman (Tombstone is in Cochise County, southeastern AZ). When Billy read, or heard about this, he put in a retraction, stating he had no intention of joining hands in matrimony with May. When May read this she became furious and set out to get him with a loaded gun. She found him in front of the Oriental Saloon where she shot and killed him. The charge she received was Manslaughter and she was sentenced to five years in the Arizona Territorial Prison. May served ten months and was then pardoned by the Governor on a "conditional pardon". The condition was to leave, beyond the limits of the territory and to NEVER return! May did this, taking the first train to California and was never heard of again.

## **ALLEGRACIO de OTERO**

Oldest woman prisoner, Prisoner # 401, Age 55 or 70--October 1886

The records state both ages 55 and 70. Whichever age she really was, she was still the oldest woman to serve time at the Arizona Territorial Prison. Allegracio's crime was "Selling Liquor to Indians", of which was a federal crime. Allegracio was fined \$100.00 and sentenced to two months in prison. Sentence was actually for two separate crimes of "Selling Liquor to Indians". Allegracio hailed from Pima County in southern Arizona.

## **PREPARING FOR WOMEN IN PRISON**

It was a few years after the first few women were held at the Arizona Territorial Prison before women actually received their own, formal quarters. Three womens cells were excavated on the west side of the south bank, to also include a 30' X 30' private yard. The women prisoners were separated from the male prisoners by a high fence and there was to be NO CONTACT between men and women prisoners, whatsoever. Contact was strictly forbidden and punishable by solitary confinement. The record stated that the female population never exceeded more than six at any given time.

Assistant Superintendent Frank Aspinwall was the man responsible for the needs and wants of the female convicts, of which included their wardrobe. Aspinwall saw to it that the ladies were as well dressed as possible under the circumstances, however he said that they were to leave off the frills of fashion until after prison life.

NOTE: In 1923, the coming of the railroad destroyed  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the prison grounds on the west side, hence the women's section of prison IS NOT able to be seen today.

## **JENNIE McCLEARLY**

Prisoner # 919, Age 27--November 1893

Jennie attacked another woman with a straight razor, earning her "Aggravated Assault" charges, which was more serious than common assault. Sentencing was for 18 months in the Arizona Territorial Prison; Jennie was conditionally pardoned by Governor Hughes one year after starting her sentence. Jennie was from Coconino County in southern Arizona.

## **GEORGIE CLIFFORD**

Prisoner # 947, Age 20--March 1894

The physician's report describes this young woman as a morphine addict and under treatment for it. Clifford was convicted of poisoning a man's drink with her own drugs; she stated that she did not do it and that she was wrongfully blamed. The jury

did not believe her and charged her with Manslaughter and was given three years and six months sentence at the Arizona Territorial Prison. Clifford served eleven months before being pardoned by the Governor. In all fairness, however, the records show that there was another woman involved with the case but she had left town and was never found. So, they put Georgie to blame. Nevertheless, after her release, she continued getting in trouble and wound up in a county jail, as well as a mental institution. Georgie was from Coconino County in northern Arizona.

## **ISABELLE WASHINGTON**

Prisoner #1103, Age 19--November 1885

Isabelle was an unmarried young woman whom threw her own newly born baby into an irrigation canal in Tempe. She was charged with Manslaughter and given one year sentence in the Arizona Territorial Prison. Washington served 10 months. Tempe is in Maricopa County, in central Arizona.

## **MARIA MORENO**

One of the two youngest females prisoners, Prisoner # 1224, Age 16-October 1896

The records state that this young girl had an ungovernable temper. She was having a heated discussion with her brother over something, or someone at a dance. She left and came back with a loaded shotgun. She shot and killed her brother, Alberto<sup>15</sup>. The charge Moreno received was Manslaughter and after conviction was sentenced to one year and one month in the Arizona Territorial Prison; of which she served eleven months. Moreno was found to be demented and not responsible for her actions. The records quote a newspaper article stating that this young girl had a very brief life herself; she did at age 20, a couple years after she left the prison. Maria Moreno was from Yuma and actually lived just a few blocks from the prison at Maiden Lane and 5th Street.

## **PEARL HART**

Most popular woman ever held at prison, Prisoner # 1559. Age 28--November 1899

Pearl Hart and then boyfriend Joe Boot robbed a stagecoach that was traveling between Globe and Florence in Pinal County. Joe got 30 years for armed robbery, while Pearl, depending on the source, either charmed the jury or told them a sad story about her sick mother. Pearl was found innocent and got off scott free! The judge was outraged and had her re-arrested for stealing the stage coach driver's gun. The judge then convened a second jury and this time was found guilty of Robbery and was sentenced to five years at the Arizona Territorial Prison. Pearl served three years and one month and was pardoned by the Governor. Joe Boot, however, only served one year and three months, as he made a successful escape from the Arizona Territorial Prison and was never recaptured. It is believed that this was the last stagecoach

robbery in Arizona Territory. While Pearl was in prison, she built up a large following of admirers and intended to capitalize on the following by becoming an actress, however, she failed this endeavor. Reportedly she married a rancher in central Arizona and lived peacefully after this. Pearl was Canadian and had lived in Toledo, Ohio before moving out West.

## **ELENA ESTRADA**

Prisoner # 1685, Age 25--October 1900

This woman had the honor of having served the longest sentence of any of the women sentenced to the Arizona Territorial Prison. Estrada was sentenced for stabbing a man in a dark alley. She claimed he fell against the knife she was holding in her hand, The jury of course, did not believe her. Estrada was charged with Manslaughter and given seven years. She served four years and one month before being paroled by the Governor. This was the longest time served by any of the women prisoners. In addition, Elena had the distinction of being one of the only two women to serve time in the dark cell. She spent five days in the "Hellhole" for fighting. Elena was from Pima County in southern Arizona.

## **ROSA DURAN**

The second youngest female prisoner, Prisoner # 1818, Age 16--November 1901

Back in the late 1800's and early 1900's, property, or money stolen that exceeded \$50.00 in value was considered Grand Larceny. Rosa was sentenced to three years at the Arizona Territorial Prison and after serving one year and one month she was paroled by the Governor. Estrada is the other woman with the unique distinction of having served time in the Dark Cell; Estrada received three days for fighting. Rosa was from Yavapai County in Northern Arizona.

NOTE: Elena Estrada, Pearl Hart and Rosa Duran took a photograph together and it has now been converted into a postcard that is available in the YTP gift shop.

## **ALFRIDA MERCER**

Prisoner # 1816, Age 37--November 1901

This married woman became involved with a much younger man. Both were convicted of Adultery and sentenced to the Arizona Territorial Prison. Mercer and her lover were found to have broken a federal law called the Edmunds' Act. Historical research found that George Franklin Edmunds, an American lawyer, was the man responsible for the Act. This was an act, or law passed by Congress in 1882 to root out polygamy in Utah. Mercer was sentenced to six months, of which she served five. The records state her husband and children stood by her side to the last. Mercer's companion, Fred Crosley, Prisoner # 1713, was 18 years of age and also served his

time at the Arizona Territorial Prison. Alfrida hailed from Phoenix in Maricopa County.

### **JESUS CHACON**

Prisoner # 1933, Age 19--October 1902

This 19 year old young lady burned down a house. The charge, of course, was Arson. Chacon was given a one year sentence, of which she served 10 months. Three days after her arrival she came down with Smallpox, which created a big scare at the prison; prompt and courageous measures were taken to prevent the spread of the disease and if was confined to the female section if the prison. Jesus was from Graham County in Southwestern Arizona.

### **KATE NELSON**

Prisoner # 2219, Age 38--December 1904

This married woman and her partner B. W. Birch (Prisoner # 2220) were charged with adultery. Kate served eighteen months for this and was was one of the few women who served her entire prison term as the the only female. Nelson was from Cochise County in southeast Arizona.

### **SAFERINA GARCIA**

Prisoner # 2757, Age 25--May 1908

Saferina attempted to liberate some prisoners from a county jail and wound up in prison herself. Her crime was listed as a Felony and was given a sentence of one year and one day in the Arizona Territorial Prison; she served ten months of her sentence. Garcia was from Graham County in southwestern Arizona.

### **PINKIE DEAN**

Prisoner # 2842, Age 20--October 1908

Her crime was Assault with a Deadly Weapon. Under the influence of alcohol, Pinkie slashed a minor who entered her tent; it is believed to have occurred in the now abandoned mining town North of Yuma in the Kofa's. Pinkie was sentenced to two years and six months at the Arizona Territorial Prison, of which she served two years. Pinkie was one of the three women whom were transferred to the prison in Florence after the Arizona Territorial Prison had closed.

### **FANNIE KING**

Last woman to enter the prison, Age 19--June 1909

Records state that King and another young Indian woman were fighting over a young Indian man. Under the influence of alcohol, Fannie pulled out a knife and stabbed and killed 18 year old Pheobe Hunt. The motive was jealousy and the charge was Manslaughter. King was given a two year sentence at the Arizona Territorial

Prison. Fannie served 2 and ½ months at the Arizona Territorial Prison before being transferred to the prison in Florence, Arizona. Having served a total time of one year and six months, King was paroled in December of 1910. Something unusual about this case, these two young women were both very emotionally involved with this young man despite the fact that they were both married to someone else and each had their own husband. Fannie was from Gila County in central Arizona.

## **MUSEUM DISPLAYS OF WOMEN IN ARIZONA TERRITORIAL PRISON**

There are three women's displays in the museum which highlight some of the women whom were housed at the Arizona Territorial Prison. One exhibit focuses on a handful of women, the second display is specifically on Pearl Hart (the most infamous female prisoner held at the prison), while the third, and last display, is digital and highlights all 29 women that were housed at the Arizona Territorial Prison.