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CREATING KEARNY
Forging a Historical Identity for a Central Arizona Mining Community

by
Douglas Seefeldt

As you may recall, John Galbreath (Swaps, Pittsburg Pirates, and real estate) has built and is adding to Kearny (pronounced Carney), Arizona, located halfway between Ray and Hayden. Its name is based on General Kearny who passed here on November 5, 6 and 7, 1846. He is making a strong effort to build a historical background for the town and the region based on this very real and interesting bit of history.

Orme Lewis to Barry Goldwater, July 15, 1963

The town of Kearny, located on the north bank of the Gila River between Hayden and Superior on State Highway 177, scarcely seems out of the ordinary. A forty-year-old development nestled high in the copper-rich hills of east-central Arizona, the small community boasts the usual schools, shops, churches, and a public monument to its namesake. The monument, a simple cairn-like stone structure with a bronze plaque affixed to one side, commemorates the significant military achievements of Brevet Maj. Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny, who is best remembered for leading part of the Army of the West through the region on his way to engage Mexican forces in California during the Mexican-American War. “On November 7, 1846,” the plaque proclaims, “they journeyed down the Gila, passing near this marker and camped that night at the junction of the Gila River and a creek named by Lt. [William H.] Emory as ‘Mineral Creek’ on which the now famous mines of Ray, Arizona are located.” Dedication of the monument on May 12, 1962, transformed an ordinary town, if only for a moment, into something extraordinary.

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While it is not unusual to find towns named for founders and prominent citizens, it seems odd that a “George Washington slept here” figure like Stephen Watts Kearny should become not only a namesake but also an integral part of a mid-twentieth-century Arizona community’s past, present, and future—in short, part of the very fabric of its identity. In selecting the name and erecting the monument, Kearny’s founders articulated only one potential past—a vision created and promoted by a handful of executives who controlled the mining operations, as well as the process of memory-making, in this time and place. As a result, naming the new town after General Kearny and dedicating a monument to his legacy becomes an intriguing example of the subjective nature of public memory.
Kearny is situated in a region colloquially known as the Copper Basin, a mineral-rich zone that lies between two ecological regions—the Tonto Transition section of the Colorado Plateau semi-desert province to the north, and the Sonoran Desert section of the American semi-desert and desert province to the south. The townsite nestles between the 3,500- to 5,500-foot Dripping Springs and Tortilla mountain formations. While situated firmly in what is today known as the Basin and Range physiographic province, the stones upon which the Kearny memorial plaque is mounted have witnessed dramatic change over deep geological time. Some 75 million years ago, during a series of events at the close of the Mesozoic Era geologists refer to as the Laramide Orogeny, the North American continent moved northwestward and collided with an active part of the Pacific floor. From this collision, magma rich in copper minerals rose up through the earth’s crust and cooled just below the surface, over 25 million years of mountain building, into the Cenozoic Era. This process left veins and chunks of rock rich in copper. Not unlike the human prospectors that would mine the land, Arizona was in the right place at the right time.2

The mining camps and towns that sprang up in the territory after the Gadsden Purchase attracted a diverse population of treasure-seekers, lured by tales of lost Spanish mines, from Asia, the Middle East, and North America. Prospectors in the 1870s targeted Mineral Creek on the Gila River, and by 1878 Tom Haley and William Souffrien had organized the Mineral Creek mining district. Soon, two companies were formed to work claims in the area: the Mineral Creek Mining Company in 1880, and the Ray Copper Company in 1883. These small-scale undertakings quickly went through the richest deposits. By 1888, they confronted financial and engineering obstacles that precluded their development of profitable large-scale operations.3

Foreign capital arrived in 1898 when the Globe Exploration Company, Ltd., of London, England, took over many of the claims in the area. The following year, another British firm took over the Globe Exploration Company and reorganized it as Ray Copper Mines, Inc. The new operation founded the town of Kelvin, six miles south of the future site of Ray. It replaced the little stage-stop town of Riverside, established in 1877, which moved a few miles up
the Gila River. At Kelvin, the company constructed a mill, shops, office buildings, and a narrow-gauge railway linking the mine and the mill. Still, the main Southern Pacific line was sixty miles away at Red Rock, meaning that ore and supplies had to be transported by wagon over a road built at company expense. Strikes by Mexican and Mexican-American laborers demanding eight-hour shifts and a wage increase to $3.00 per day forced closure of mine operations in February of 1901 and again in May of 1902. Kelvin’s population peaked at around 1,000. Despite the infusion of outside funding, the operation failed within three years. The British investors pulled out when the predicted four-to-five percent copper ore turned out to be closer to two percent.4

In 1906 an American investment group headed by Daniel C. Jackling took over the English holdings. Jackling’s innovative techniques had made mining of low-grade copper ore profitable in Utah. The new investors set up two companies to work the district—the Ray Copper Company and the Gila Copper Company. In 1910 the companies merged to form the Ray Consolidated Copper Company, or “Ray Con.” As a part of the Guggenheim syndicate, the company would acquire other local operations and dominate the district until 1926. Ray Con established the town of Hayden, near the water supply at the confluence of the Gila and San Pedro rivers, in 1909, and located their smelting operations there in 1911. Other company towns would follow.5

It is impossible to imagine a generic company town. Some mining towns were segregated, while others were racially mixed; some allowed workers to build their own homes, while others leased accommodations to employees. According to labor historian Philip Mellinger, “recent European immigrants, Mexican immigrants, and U.S.-born Hispanics outnumbered Anglo-American and other northwest-European-ancestry groups at every large copper mine, mill, and smelter in the Southwest, Utah, and Nevada.” The Arizona Hercules Copper Mining Company, one of the outfits eventually absorbed by Ray Con, built the town of Ray in 1909 to house the mine’s Anglo and Irish employees and their families. A one-block business district, with daily passenger train service, sprang up to serve the cosmopolitan community of 2,000 people. Mexican mine workers, recruited from the State of Sonora, began arriving in the area around 1906. By 1912, they had formed a thriving com-
community of more than 5,000, which they named Sonora. With the exception of a few Syrian families, who spoke fluent Spanish, the population was homogeneously Mexican. By 1911, European miners from Spain had created their own 1,000-person enclave next to Sonora and named it Barcelona. A 1912 fire destroyed much of the Ray business section, but it was quickly rebuilt and the town continued to grow along with Sonora and Barcelona.6

Ray Con maintained a strong grip on labor activism in the 1910s. Consequently, neither the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) nor the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were very effective in organizing workers in the region. Still, the company’s operations were not entirely isolated from the intense labor strife that afflicted the country during this period. Mellinger, for example, points out that “Arizona’s First World War-era labor activism began with a series of incidents at Ray.” In 1915, mine workers

[5]
struck for equal wages and for the right to organize without the threat of losing their jobs, or worse. "Ray, Sonora, and Barcelona became a hornet's nest of social activism," Mellinger contends, "which would not subside until after the First World War."7

An anti-Mexican social climate, perpetuated by Ray Con, created the tension that led directly to the 1915 strike. On June 15, some 1,000 to 1,500 men walked off the job. The strike lasted a little more than a month and produced a sixty-cent-an-hour increase in wages. The federal mediation commission order forbidding strikes kept Ray miners on the job through the turbulent spring and summer of 1917. In fact, the three little central-Arizona communities thrived until the bottom dropped out of the copper industry after the war. Operations at the Ray mine were cut back fifty percent in 1919-1920, and shut down completely from April 1921 to April 1922. Many miners left in search of steady work elsewhere, while others stuck it out and hoped for better times.8

In 1926, four years after production resumed at the Ray mine, the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company absorbed Ray Consolidated. The following year, it bought out the Arizona Hercules Copper Company. The new owners enjoyed only a few years of productive operations before feeling the effects of the Great Depression. The Hayden mill and smelter were shut down in 1931, and in March of 1933 the poor economy forced Nevada Consolidated to close the Ray mine and the rest of its operations, selling their interests to the Kennecott Copper Company later that year. Many Ray residents had already left the region. In the 1930s Kennecott honored an agreement in which Ray Con had promised to send Mexican miners home at company expense should mining operations ever cease. By the middle of the decade, Sonora's population had dwindled to 600 people.9

Workers new and old returned to the three little towns when Kennecott reopened the Ray mine in April of 1937. The Civilian Conservation Corps established a camp just south of the Gila River, near Hayden, that same year. Young men from across the country constructed roads and flood-control projects, in addition to performing forest and wildlife conservation activities. The mining industry experienced yet another upturn in the boom-and-bust cycle as war in Europe and domestic preparedness increased the demand for copper and created new jobs. In 1948, Kennecott engi-
neers began to investigate the feasibility of converting the Ray underground mines to an open pit. The first open-pit operations commenced about 1950. Kennecott changed the area landscape forever when it ceased all underground activity in January of 1955.10

At one point, the Kennecott Copper Corporation owned at least ten towns in four western states. “Kennecott is significant to the history of company towns,” historian James Allen writes, “because its story includes the full cycle of company-town history: from the random mining community, to the planned smelter town, to the selling of entire communities to residents and private merchants.” When the copper giant acquired the Nevada Consolidated holdings in 1933, it also obtained the company town of Hayden, along with its smelter and scattered residential neighborhoods, as well as the Ray, Sonora, and Barcelona business districts surrounding the Ray mine. Kennecott’s commitment to open-pit operations sounded the death knell for the three small communities. Each year, the mouth of the pit crept closer to miners’ homes.11

In the mid-1950s, Kennecott also decided to get out of the company-town business. Its reasons were economic, social, operational, and technological. First of all, it had become prohibitively expensive to operate company towns as corporations like Kennecott struggled to reduce overhead in a competitive market. In an interview with James Allen in 1961, a Kennecott executive revealed another reason: “some company officials felt continued paternalism was morally wrong, and further it was thought that company-town ownership did not make for the best labor relations.” Moreover, running a company town was a business unto itself that diverted energy and resources away from mining operations. The fourth factor, Allen posits, can be attributed to technological advances in road construction and automobile affordability that made it easier for miners to commute to work from greater distances.12

In 1954, Kennecott took the first steps toward ridding itself of its company towns. Late the following year, the company announced that it had sold its residential communities to the John W. Galbreath Development Corporation of Columbus, Ohio. Galbreath’s one-man real estate business had weathered the Great Depression and took advantage of the post-WWII economic upturn by brokering a coalition of property owners who bought up foreclosed homes
and business properties, and then turned them around at a tremendous profit. Galbreath bought his first company town in 1941, when he acquired McDonald, Ohio, from a steel manufacturer. He began buying towns in the West in 1947, when his company purchased the WWII coal mining community of Dragerton, Utah, from the War Surplus Administration.

Town-buying made Galbreath a wealthy man. He spent his fortune on thoroughbred horses—including the 1955 Kentucky Derby winner “Swaps”—and the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball club, as well as his expanding real estate empire. Galbreath immediately began disposing of the former Kennecott town assets in each of the four states where the company operated. In Arizona, he sold some of the homes in Ray and Sonora to individual owners, with the understanding that they might have to move in the relatively near future, as Kennecott still owned the land on which their houses stood.13

Besides converting company towns to private ownership, John Galbreath also was involved in building new communities in close proximity to the operations of their former corporate owners. Kearny was one such project. Begun in 1958 on two-and-one half sections of land sold to Galbreath by Kennecott, twelve miles south of the Ray mine operation in the foothills of Steamboat Mountain, according to one company official “Kearny is Galbreath’s development, Kennecott has no connection with it. We ran company towns for years. We want no more of it. All Kennecott wants to do is mine copper. These workers can live anywhere they want.” But they could not live anywhere they pleased. The Ray pit was expanding. So long as Kennecott was mining copper ore at nine-tenths of one percent, the strip-mining process created a tremendous amount of waste material that simply had to go somewhere. Ray, Sonora, and Barcelona were in the way. Eventually, they would be obliterated from the landscape and replaced by Galbreath’s new town.14

In a 1983 memo to the Arizona Historical Foundation in Tempe, Orme Lewis, a partner in Lewis & Roca, the Phoenix law firm hired by Galbreath to oversee the new town’s incorporation, provided some background to the business relationships of the main players. “I had a close connection with the development as our firm represented the developer from the time immediately preceding the subdividing of the property,” Lewis explained. “The legal
work was referred to me by Dick Fennemore of the Fennemore firm, that firm being attorneys for Kennecott and thus being in a position [from] which it could not take care of the Galbreath end of the development.” Lewis drew up a multi-million-dollar agreement between Kennecott and Galbreath for the construction of Kearny. He also oversaw the conversion of Ray and Hayden into incorporated municipalities, and shepherded Kearny through the incorporation process in 1959.15

Plans to memorialize Stephen Watts Kearny emerged early in the development process. On December 30, 1957, Paul M. Roca, the other principal in the law firm handling the real estate issues for the project, enthusiastically informed Gerald H. Galbreath, Jr., vice president of the John W. Galbreath Development Corporation: “I can think of no more appropriate name, and I am delighted to furnish you with information respecting Major General Stephen Watts Kearny, after whom your town is to be named.” Roca went on to suggest that a close reading of Lt. William Emory’s report might well connect the Kearny expedition with the townsite. “The Emory report contains in the back flap a very excellent topographic map
Paul Roca and children. AHS/SAD #54392.
of the Gila River with day to day latitude and longitude of campsites," Roca explained, "and an examination of the map together with your own engineering surveys in preparation for the building of the town would probably reveal the exact day on which the Kearny party (which was guided, incidentally, by Kit Carson) passed by the site of Kearny, Arizona." The lawyer also suggested, "depending on just what you plan in the way of a town hall, you might give some thought to making a copy of Emory generally available for local residents who may be interested in the name of their town."  

For Galbreath’s edification, Roca enclosed a rough two-page biographical sketch of Stephen Watts Kearny based on materials from his personal library of Western Americana. He sent courtesy copies of the letter to University of Arizona history professor Russell Ewing and U.S. Senator Carl Hayden. Hayden, himself a keen history buff, responded, "I have read with great interest the copy of your letter . . . to Mr. Gerald H. Galbreath, Jr., and am highly pleased to know that the new town is to be named Kearny, whose command camped there for the night on November 7, 1846." Hayden enclosed photostats from the Library of Congress of passages in the Emory report pertaining to the vicinity of the new townsite.

The record showed that on November 7, 1846, a company of about 150 dragoons, their mules, and two mountain howitzers rested for the night on the banks of Mineral Creek, near the spot where the town of Kearny stands today. While General Kearny is remembered as the “father of American cavalry” and the “conqueror of New Mexico and California,” there is little significance to his stopover at this particular spot; it was merely a brief pause on his way somewhere else. Kearny and these few members of his “Army of the West” had departed Santa Fe on September 26, bound for California. The command included, besides the dragoons, a topographical detachment comprised of three officers and two civilians (one of whom was the artist John Mix Stanley) under Lieutenant Emory. Emory served on Kearny’s military staff and was charged with collecting information on the physical and human geography of the Southwest.

Before turning west, Kearny’s entourage had encountered Kit Carson on the Rio Grande. The famous frontiersman was on his way to Washington, D.C., with news from the California front. Kearny ordered Carson to turn around and guide the dragoons directly
to California. They left the Rio Grande on October 14 and reached the headwaters of the Gila six days later. Kearny’s route along the Gila followed a grueling trail over rough terrain that consistently challenged the men pulling the two artillery pieces. Emory described his surroundings at the campsite two miles from the confluence of the Gila and San Pedro rivers: “Our camp was on a flat sandy plain, of small extent, at the mouth of a dry creek, with deep washed banks, giving the appearance of containing at times a rapid and powerful stream, although no water was visible in the bed. At the junction, a clear, pure stream flowed from under the sand. . . . From the many indications of gold and copper ore at this place, I have named it Mineral creek.” Emory predicted that “a few years will see flat-boats descending the river from this point to its mouth, freighted with precious ore.” More than a century later, Carl Hayden observed to Paul Roca that “the ‘precious ores’ were found[,] but time did not provide the ‘flat boats.’”

If Emory’s journal was the raw material from which Kearny, Arizona’s identity would be shaped, then it was Senator Carl Hayden who mined the first bits of historical ore from its veins. Characterized by a recent biographer as “Builder of the American West,” Hayden (1877-1972) served his state and nation for seven terms as a U.S. representative from 1912-1927, and for seven more terms as U.S. senator from 1927-1969. His fifty-six-year congressional tenure spanned the administrations of William Howard Taft to Lyndon Baines Johnson.

In what was merely one of his many official actions, in 1937 Hayden had instigated a collaborative project between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Arizona and New Mexico highway departments to retrace the route of Kearny’s march through the Southwest. The idea arose during a conversation between Hayden and U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. Malin Craig at the funeral for Secretary of War George Dern the previous summer. Hayden recalled suggesting to Craig “that modern cavalry be sent on an extended march which would duplicate as exactly as possible the route followed by General Stephen W. Kearny when he took the Army of the West from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego in 1846.” One reason for Craig’s interest in Hayden’s proposal may have been the fact that Craig had spent part of his childhood at Fort Huachuca in southern Arizona.
Following a meeting in the army chief of staff’s office, Hayden prepared a memorandum in which he outlined the purpose of the project. “The cavalry officers should make a map of the route which they travel to indicate all points where Kearny’s route crosses a modern highway,” Hayden suggested. “This information should be conveyed to the State Highway Departments with a view to having suitable markers erected.” The Arizona senator even provided a sample text for the marker to be placed near the mouth of Mineral Creek in Pinal County: “MINERAL CREEK, named by General Stephen W. Kearny, commanding the advance guard of the Army of the West, who camped near here on November 7, 1846, with 100 (?) men, 400 (?) animals, and 2 pieces of artillery,
en route to California during the Mexican War.” General Craig responded that he had read Hayden’s memo “with great interest,” and passed it along to the army’s chief of cavalry.22

In the meantime, Hayden dispatched a series of personal letters to state officials. On the same day he heard from the Office of the Chief of Cavalry, Hayden informed Arizona State Highway Engineer T. S. O’Connell that a letter was being drafted to implement the project. He also asked New Mexico senator Carl Hatch to contact his state’s highway engineer, G. F. Conroy, on behalf of the project. Conroy assured Hatch that his staff and workers would cooperate with the cavalry as it crossed the Land of Enchantment.23

On March 27, 1937, the Chief of Cavalry’s office issued a plan entitled “Verification of Route of the Army of the ‘Army of the West, 1846.’” In it, the War Department instructed Maj. Gen. H. J. Brees, commanding the Eighth Corps Area at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to compile a report on Kearny’s precise route between Santa Fe and the Colorado River. Paraphrasing Hayden’s memorandum, the plan specified “of particular significance is the determination of all points where Kearny’s route crosses a modern highway with a view to having suitable markers erected by the state highways departments.” General Brees would arrange with Arizona State Highway Engineer O’Connell and New Mexico State Highway Engineer Conroy to begin the project as soon as possible. To expedite the process, the War Department forwarded copies of official documents and maps from the Library of Congress related to Kearny’s march. Army engineers were directed to use motorized transportation whenever possible, supplemented by animal transportation where conditions dictated. The War Department was making available additional funds for the project. “This opportunity to obtain practical experience transporting cavalry personnel with horses and pack mules in trailers and trucks, and supplying them in the field, should be utilized to the utmost,” Adjutant General Robert Collins suggested.24

Hayden followed up with a letter of his own to General Brees. “If there is any way that I can be of assistance to you or your staff in connection with this project please do not hesitate to call on me,” he offered. “I am most anxious that your march be a success and that the exact route followed by General Kearny be preserved.” Brees assured Hayden that preliminary work was underway and
that his office had been in touch with Arizona highway engineer O’Connell.25

At the same time, newspapers across the country picked up an Associated Press wire story that announced the mapping exercise. “Obscure documents of that famous trek, unearthed by Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona, so interested General Malin Craig, chief of staff, that he directed the Eighth Corps area commandant at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to send out a mapping party to chart Kearny’s trail as nearly as possible from Santa Fe, N.M., to San Diego and Los Angeles,” the San Antonio Light reported. Unfortunately, the report misrepresented Hayden’s role in the project as that of meticulous researcher rather than visionary architect. The story also mistakenly implied that the army would retrace the trail all the way to California, rather than stopping at the Colorado River near Yuma. Cultural heritage tourism, under the convenient guise of a field training exercise for the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. cavalry, was Hayden’s primary objective in retracing Kearny’s route.26

Several letters of support arrived at Hayden’s office immediately after the announcement. Some correspondents offered copies of Emory’s report and maps. An army reservist volunteered for active duty so that he might accompany the engineers. Other individuals simply wanted to let Hayden know that they were anxious to follow the project’s progress. In a brief cordial note, Stephen W. Kearny of San Antonio, the grandson of Stephen Watts Kearny, offered to share his knowledge and resources with the army engineers before they set off for New Mexico and Arizona. Hayden expressed appreciation and directed Kearny to General Brees, who he suggested “will be most anxious to have any information that may be in your possession with reference to the route followed by your grandfather.”27

Other correspondents sought information from the Arizona senator. Elizabeth Ford, a freelance writer in Washington, D.C., wrote to General Craig on March 30, inquiring about opportunities to publicize the retracing of Kearny’s route. Craig referred her to Senator Hayden, who suggested that she speak with Paul Roca. Thomas Kearny, a grandson of Gen. Philip Kearny—a nephew of Stephen Watts Kearny—requested information about the “obscure documents” alluded to in the newspaper article. Kearny explained
that his biography of Philip Kearny was in press and he hoped to include a footnote referencing Hayden’s discovery. The senator assured the author that there was nothing new in the material he had brought to General Craig’s attention.28

On June 15, General Brees completed his final report on the Kearny route verification project. He informed the adjutant general that an engineering detail from Fort Logan, Colorado, had met with representatives of the New Mexico and Arizona highway departments. Together, they had carefully matched Kearny’s route as described in historical documents and maps with modern maps to ascertain precisely where it intersected major modern-day highways in each state. A field party had established temporary markers at these junctions, and provided both state highway departments with maps and descriptions of each location. “It is not known to what extent either state will avail itself of the opportunity to place permanent markers,” Brees concluded.29

Hayden first became aware of the completion of his project through an article in the New York Times on June 20, 1937. Under the headline “Kearny Trail Gets Markers,” the piece announced that “motor tourists journeying through central and southwestern New Mexico and southern Arizona from now on will find a new historical interest in that rugged and romantic region. Thirty-one markers—twenty in New Mexico and eleven in Arizona—have been set up by United States Army engineers at important intersections of that area’s national and State highways with the old Kearny Trail, over which General Stephen W. Kearny ninety-one years ago led his small and heroic band to aid in the conquest of California.” The Times reminded readers “that march ranks as one of the most stirring and hazardous in American military annals,” before introducing them to each of the New Mexico markers, noting its location and historical significance. However, it only skimmed across Arizona before ending up in Yuma in the final paragraph.30

Two days later, Hayden wrote to General Brees in regard to the article. “I shall appreciate your advising me in detail as to your progress and plans respecting the retracing of the march of the ‘Army of the West’ led by General Kearny,” he tersely concluded. On June 25, Army Chief of Staff Malin Craig forwarded to Hayden a copy of Brees’s report and returned the senator’s copy of Lieutenant Emory’s “Notes of a Military Reconnaissance,” which
Hayden had loaned for the project. Brees replied personally to Hayden’s letter on June 29, and informed the senator that his engineers had identified nine points (not eleven as reported in the New York Times article) in Arizona.31

Correspondence between Paul Roca and Carl Hayden late in 1945 suggests the state highway departments had done very little officially to mark Kearny’s route for tourists, as the senator had intended. Roca informed Hayden that Steve Shadegg, a writer and Arizona history buff, was requesting access to the senator’s files so that he could write a feature story on the Kearny project for a national publication. Hayden passed on carbon copies of his Kearny materials to Roca. “It will soon be a hundred years since General Kearny passed through what is now Arizona, and I hope that he [Shadegg] can write a story that will indirectly encourage the erection of markers properly placed along the route,” Hayden reflected. “Steve might find out what the Arizona Highway Department has done or expects to do in that respect.” Events taking place near the Ray mine a little more than a decade later would help soothe Hayden’s disappointment.32

Plans for the new community, designed by Galbreath to be nearly self-sufficient, originally envisioned 214 homes, a motel, apartment buildings, a shopping center, a swimming pool, an elementary school, and a high school—all served by a modern paved highway. A Kennecott advertisement heralded the town’s significance to residents and to the State of Arizona. “In an area that two years ago had a population of only a few stray cows, there now stands the new Town of Kearny,” the company announced. “The transformation of this desert wasteland into a thriving community has provided more than homes for Kennecott employees and other Pinal County residents. . . . This conversion of barren wasteland into a lively community of over 800 people has spread its benefits far beyond the narrow limits of Kearny. In the same manner, the production of copper from rock buried in the Arizona desert spreads its benefits throughout the state.”33

Two-, three-, and four-bedroom ranch-style houses, ranging in price from $10,800 to $14,250, sprang up on streets named for Connecticut towns. Galbreath promoted the community in glowing terms. “Kearny is a living symbol of the New West!” he proudly proclaimed. “Combining the best of two eras, Kearny blends the
rich heritage of the pioneering past with today’s opportunities for a bright future. Uniquely isolated from the frenzied pace of the space age, Kearny’s rolling desert setting is reminiscent of the historic West yet is in perfect harmony with present day living.” Promotional slogans touted “The Community that Combines Old West Relaxation with New West Modern Living and Opportunity,” and assured potential residents that “Kearny is a truly modern oasis in the ‘wide open spaces.’” Like the mythical Phoenix, Kearny rose up from the ashes of the era of the company town and underground mining to mark the beginning of the post-WWII-era bedroom community.34 Kearny held its formal dedication on May 12, 1962, four years after its founding. Orme Lewis, Richard Fennemore, and Gerald Galbreath compiled the list of dignitaries invited to the public ceremony. In addition to Galbreath Development and Kennecott Copper Company officials, the roster included Governor Paul Fannin; former governors Dan Garvey, Howard Pyle, and Ernest McFarland; U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall; Arizona senators Carl Hayden and Barry Goldwater; Congressmen John Rhodes and Morris Udall; University of Arizona president Richard Harvill; Arizona State University president G. Homer Durham; and Arizona State College president J. Lawrence Walkup, along with other state and county officials.35 Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Galbreath, Jr., invited “all the politicians in the state” to attend a private cocktail party honoring Dwight L. Clarke, the author of the recent biography Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West, on the evening prior to the public ceremony. Orme Lewis, who knew that his law partner was a serious western history buff, urged Paul Roca to attend the social gathering. At the same time, Lewis revealed something of the extent to which the developers were consciously appropriating a past for their new town. “They [Galbreath Corporation] are going all out on the historical aspects and Clarke has already furnished them with copies of innumerable instruments having to do with Kearny,” he informed Roca. “The motel’s name is being changed immediately to The General Kearny Inn and the dozen or so signs in various areas are being changed to indicate this.” Lewis also mentioned that Gerald Galbreath recalled a commemorative stamp issued in 1946 on the one hundredth anniversary of Kearny’s occupation of Santa Fe. Gal-
breath asked the lawyers for help in obtaining the original artwork for display in the town. “It occurs to me that you might start a push on Senator Hayden because of his background in this, to see if these can’t be obtained, particularly for the May 12th celebration, but, in any event, at some time,” Lewis suggested.36

Gerald Galbreath announced unequivocally “it is our desire to publicize the Kearny Celebration as much as possible.” Consequently, planners went to great lengths to inform Arizonans of the dedication of the new town. The schedule of events included several holdovers from the previous year’s inaugural Pioneer Day—a parade, crowning of the Pioneer Day queen, a barbecue luncheon, a rodeo, bingo, a melodrama, exhibits, a street dance, and other amusements. But to Galbreath and town officials, the centerpiece of the celebration would be the unveiling of a bronze plaque honoring the community’s namesake.37

Orme Lewis and Paul Roca were instrumental in shaping Kearny’s public image. In 1959, Lewis had contacted Elizabeth Kearny Hubbard, a descendant of Stephen Watts Kearny, for permission to use the general’s likeness on a plaque that would be mounted on a boulder in the center of town. “I am the last survivor
of my generation and you have my hearty endorsement for such a project,” Hubbard enthusiastically responded. “I only hope that some day I shall have the good fortune to be in the West and see what you have accomplished.” The May 3, 1962, edition of the Copper Basin News announced that “Gov. Paul Fannin has accepted the invitation of the Kearny Booster Club to attend Pioneer Days as the guest of the city” and supervise the “dedication of a bronze plaque to General Stephen Watts Kearny.” Headlines on May 10 proclaimed “Kearny Plans Day-Long Pioneer Hoedown: Governor Fannin Tops List of Notables.” A related page-one article explained “Galbreath Creator of City Monument.” The unveiling was scheduled to take place immediately after the crowning of the Pioneer Day Queen at 10:30 A.M. on May 12. Following a few words from distinguished guests, Kearny mayor Jay Shelley turned the proceedings over to Governor Fannin.38

Not much changed the following year, as founders continued to develop the town’s identity. Orme Lewis again wrote letters urging prominent political figures to attend a celebration on the anniversary of General Kearny’s November march through the region. In July of 1963, he notified Senator Goldwater that John Galbreath “is making a strong effort to build a historical background for the town and the region on this very real and interesting bit of history.” Goldwater’s presence at the anniversary commemoration “would mean a great deal and I think be helpful to you, if you need any help at all, if you could find time to be the speaker. It has all the elements of history and unsubsidized development.” Goldwater regretfully declined, explaining that while Galbreath was a personal friend, “the uncertainty of our fall schedule caused by civil rights legislation” made it impossible for him to commit.39

John Nix, of the Galbreath Development Corporation, extended an invitation for the 1963 event to the Arizona Department of Library and Archives in Phoenix. “Each year, at this time, we commemorate General Kearny’s march and try to stimulate more current interest in this period of our state’s history,” Nix explained. This year’s main event would be the official installation of General Kearny’s Sheriff’s Posse and the ceremonial Kearny’s First Dragoons organization. Arizona Pioneers’ Historical Society assistant director Ray Brandes and Arizona Historical Foundation

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executive director Bert Fireman were scheduled to preside over the festivities. Historian Arthur Woodward would be guest speaker at a semi-formal banquet held in the Memorial Room of the General Kearny Inn. In this manner, town and company officials button-holed relatives, historians, and politicians to help construct a viable past and create the identity they envisioned for the new community.40

But there were other conceptions of what kind of past the town of Kearny should commemorate. Residents of the new community had already established their own tradition a year prior to the official dedication ceremony. On April 29, 1961, Kearny held the first Pioneer Day festival at the Kearny Plaza. Proceeds from the event, sponsored by the Kearny Women’s Club, went into the town coffers for construction of a public swimming pool. Festivities included a parade, crowning of the Pioneer Day queen, a calf-roping contest, a historical comedy skit, and a beard-growing contest. High school junior Judi Butler reigned as the inaugural Pioneer Day queen, and Mountain States Telephone Company won the prize for “prettiest” float.41

The town’s official dedication may have arisen from dissatisfaction over the previous summer’s community promotion. By June of 1961, the Kearny Booster Club was working “to form the nucleus of an all-embracing organization for the young community.” In July, the Copper Basin News announced “Kearny Council Urges Promotion for Town,” and reported that, “reflecting widespread public sentiment that those responsible for full-scale promotion of the town have not followed through with their early plans, the council unanimously adopted a resolution urging new action.” The resolution, forwarded by Mayor Jay Shelley to Kennecott and Galbreath officials, called for the development of “a new dynamic promotional program to tell potential and eligible residents that, indeed, Kearny is a good place to live.” While the Galbreath group was putting together its list of VIP invitations in March, the first press coverage announced the second annual Pioneer Day celebration, but failed to mention the pending dedication ceremony. Clearly, different agendas were at work in planning and promoting the two events.42

The “Pioneer Edition,” a four-page supplement to the Copper Basin News published two days prior to the Pioneer Day celebration
and town dedication, shows a young community actively appropriating its past. The eleven articles include two pieces on General Kearny-related topics—“Town of Kearny Named for True Pioneer” and “Conquer California: Kearny Orders Reflect ‘Manifest Destiny’”; three stories on contemporary mining—“Technical Know-How is the Key to Kennecott’s Growth,” “Hayden Home of the Smelter,” and “How Kennecott Got Its Name”; and three essays devoted to historical mining topics—“Times were Lively in Camp”; “Authentic Report: What Was Mining 50 Years Ago?”; and “1919 Christmas Lives Prohibition Scene.” Advertisements in the commemorative issue reflected the dominant theme of the community dedication: the Kennecott Corporation ad featured the Kearny memorial plaque, and the General Kearny Inn reminded visitors that it was “Now Featuring Eastern Beef.” Although reports of the event dutifully mentioned the Pioneer Day contest winners—Queen Sharon Beuford, champion beard-grower Hal Harris, and the Kearny Catholic Guild’s Father Kino float—the plaque unveiling was clearly the focal point of the celebration. “Highlight of the day’s activities was the unveiling and dedication of the monument to Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny, after whom the town is named,” the Copper Basin News proudly noted.
Kearny’s developers, along with mine workers and their families, together faced the challenge of creating an identity for the new town, establishing its place in the region, and promoting its particular destiny. But, as the juxtaposition of the official dedication ceremony and the community’s Pioneer Day celebration suggest, each had a different historical context in mind. Despite these competing traditions, ultimately the public image of the young town reflected the vision of a relatively homogenous group—developer Galbreath, attorneys Lewis and Roca, Senator Hayden, and Kennecott upper management. The uniformed Kearny Dragoons would win first prize in the Mounted Rider Division of 1964’s fourth annual Pioneer Day parade.44

But what other local memories and traditions had been passed over in favor of the dominant imagery of General Kearny’s fleet ing 1846 visit? What important events did the people of Ray and Sonora celebrate? These ethnically distinct communities certainly embraced different views of the past than the one espoused by Kearny’s developers. Were they considered and incorporated into the newly created public memory?

Ray, with its mix of European nationalities, was a cosmopolitan company town. Its baseball team competed in the Tri-Copper
League and in its early years (1910-1920) residents kept abreast of news in the pages of the Arizona Copper Camp. Children attended Lincoln Elementary School and Ray High School, and families worshiped at one of the community’s four churches. The Ray-Con Club was the social hub of the community, but residents also participated in bowling leagues and enjoyed motion pictures at the local movie theater. Townspeople came together to celebrate national holidays, as well as John Henry Pruitt Day. Held annually on November 10, the distinctive local commemoration honored the former Ray resident and WWI Marine Corps hero who died in action on his twenty-first birthday in 1918.45

Sonora was described as “a little bit of old Mexico in Arizona,” even though by the 1960s many of its residents were second-generation American citizens. The town also fielded a popular baseball team, families attended St. Helen’s Catholic Church, and begin-
ning in 1914 *El Eco De Sonora* published the local news. Children attended Washington Elementary School, and traveled to Ray for high school. The community center, the Sonora Copper Club, was founded in 1951 and quickly consolidated many of the town’s social events. The Juarez Theater showed English-language movies six evenings a week and Spanish-language films on Saturday nights. While Anglo and Hispanic residents and coworkers from Ray and Sonora mingled from the beginning, segregation officially ended in 1953 through the efforts of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. As the copper industry enjoyed a post-war boom, many new workers and their families came north from Mexico and moved into Galbreath homes in Ray. Social organizations like the Ray-Sonora Recreational Association reflected the change. Founded in 1955, the 400-member benevolent group assisted local baseball and basketball teams, swimming pools, the
library, and other cross-cultural endeavors, including the annual "Kiddies Christmas Stockings" project, until its dissolution at the end of 1964.46

Sonorans came together throughout the year to commemorate Catholic Holy Days, as well as Cinco de Mayo and other Mexican fiestas. Every year from 1912 until 1964, Sonora residents celebrated Mexican Independence Day on September 15 and 16. The 1961 festivities, held at the Civic Center park, featured the Alma Jalisciense mariachis, races for children, food booths, and a free dance to the music of Tucson's Luis Leon Orchestra. Within four months, twenty-six houses would be moved from Sonora to the new town of Kearny, accelerating a process that would eventually eliminate such distinctive ethnic events and create a homogeneous new community.47

From their founding, Ray and Sonora were two distinct communities separated by a large hill. But even geography changed as Kennecott commenced open-pit mining operations in 1950. As one newspaperman reported in 1959, "gradually the pit expanded. The Old Man of the Mountain, the great stone face on the hill between Sonora and Ray, disappeared one day in a thunder of dynamite. Bulldozers and shovels crawled all over it." Longtime Sonora residents like John Rodriguez could hardly believe their eyes as they gazed at Ray across the open pit. "My father used to say that was the highest mountain around here," Rodriguez recalled. "And now look. You can see Ray. Look what they've done." In 1962, Kennecott sent eviction notices to the approximately 2,700 residents and business owners of Ray and Sonora, effective December 31, 1965. Ray's business district was razed in 1963 to make way for expansion of strip-mining operations east of Mineral Creek. Unlike so many mining towns that simply faded away when the boom turned to bust, the very industry that had created Ray and Sonora was now destroying the communities piece-by-piece and family-by-family.48

The initial 216 homes that Galbreath began building for his new development in November of 1958 did not replace all the housing lost to the expanding pit mine. Between 1955—when Kennecott committed entirely to open-pit mining—and eviction in 1965, the 1,468 primarily Anglo residents of Ray and 1,244 Mexican and Mexican-American residents of Sonora knew they would have to move somewhere else. Some Ray residents, who could
afford to buy one of Galbreath’s new homes, moved to Kearny; others, whose structures were deemed worthy of relocation, secured loans from the developer to cover the $1,000 cost of moving their houses twelve miles to the new community. Miners who chose not to live in Kearny relocated to Hayden, Superior, and other nearby towns, while others commuted to work from as far away as Mesa and Apache Junction. Even so, by autumn of 1964 Ray and Superior together had lost only 400 occupants. Kearny, on the other hand, consisted of only about 600 homes when the final evictions took place—nowhere near enough to accommodate all the former residents of the two towns.49

For many Sonorans moving was difficult. “They just don’t want to live anywhere else,” said Father Esteve Angel in a 1959 newspaper interview. Most had no choice but to move farther away. “There is no place for them to go in Sonora, and they don’t have money enough to buy one of the new homes in Kearny,” Father Angel explained. As of June, only one local family had moved to Kearny. Thomas Meisel, Jr., and his wife, Armida, told a similar story in 1964. “Sure, I’d like to live in Kearny,” said Thomas, “for me and my wife it’s a simple case of economics. We can’t afford to buy a $9,000 house.” By 1965, new house prices in Kearny had risen. John Nix, general manager for the Galbreath Development Corporation, explained “that is an indication of how the copper industry is upgrading its employees. More and more college graduates are being used in positions that pay higher salaries than in the old days.”50

In retrospect, developers were particularly creative in their efforts to shape a past for their new town. And shape it they did. The creation of Kearny—and a past to go with it—tells us a great deal about the climate of Arizona’s mining industry in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But those attorneys, politicians, and corporate officials who mined the past to create Kearny also transformed the geographic and cultural landscape of the Copper Basin itself. Regardless of how the end came for Ray, Sonora, and Barcelona, each community was affected in different ways by the drastic expansion of Ray Mines Division operations and the development of Galbreath’s community. When the Sonora Club of Los Angeles held its reunion at Sonora on Labor Day 1964, they—along with former residents of Ray and already defunct Barcelona—knew that it would
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be their last gathering at this place. After 1965, Sonorans would have to take their sense of place with them, because there would be nothing to come back to. Thirty-five years later, Sonora was long gone but it was not forgotten. In 1999, the Arizona Department of Transportation erected at the ASARCO public overlook, on the very edge of the pit, a simple marker to the community. Someone painted “Viva Sonora” on the inside of a huge earthmover bucket near the marker. Memories, it would seem, are more difficult to strip away than landscapes.51

NOTES

1. Orme Lewis to Barry Goldwater, July 15, 1963, folder 1, box 2, John W. Galbreath Development Corporations Records (GDCR), Arizona Historical Foundation (AHF), Arizona State University Library (ASUL), Tempe.


3. Ray Copper Mines, Inc., established the Ray Copper Mines Railroad on the east side of Mineral Creek in 1899. This narrow-gauge line extended five and one-half miles from the Ray mine to the mill at Kelvin. Ray Consolidated later converted it to standard gauge, and in 1910, entered into an agreement to take the Arizona Eastern Railroad Company ore cars from Ray Junction [Kelvin] to their smelter at Hayden. The Phoenix & Eastern Railroad, incorporated in 1901, was another important line to the Ray Mining District. It ran ninety-five miles along the Gila River from Phoenix to Winkleman. G. W. Irvin, “A Sequential History of Arizona and Railroad Mining Development, 1864-1920,” in J. Michael Canty and Michael N. Greeley, eds., History of Mining in Arizona (Tucson: Mining Club of the Southwest, 1987), pp. 255-56.


8. Ibid., pp. 145-47, 188, 190-91; Parker, “Sonora Retained Its Name and Identity.”

11. Allen, The Company Town in the American West, p. 38. The Kennecott towns were: Ruth and McGill, Nevada; Copperton and Garfield, Utah; Ray, Sonora, Barcelona, and Hayden, Arizona; and Santa Rita and Hurley, New Mexico.
12. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
16. Paul M. Roca to Gerald H. Galbreath, Jr., December 30, 1957, folder 3, box 2, GDCR.
18. The small detachment was further depleted when Lt. James W. Abert became ill and was left behind at Bent’s Fort to recuperate. Lt. William G. Peck waited for Abert at Santa Fe. Frank N. Schubert, Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980), p. 41. See also, William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 128-90. Emory brought along as references copies of John C. Frémont’s 1843-44 expedition report; Mitchell’s Map of Texas, Oregon, and California; Josiah Gregg’s Commerce of the Prairies; and a map that he had made himself. Emory’s scientific records were extremely valuable during this era of expansion and conquest. L. David Norris, James C. Milligan, and Odie B. Faulk, William H. Emory: Soldier-Scientist (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), p. 36.
20. For recent biographies, see Jack L. August, Jr., Vision in the Desert: Carl Hayden and Hydropolitics in the American Southwest (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998); and Ross K. Rice, Carl Hayden: Builder of the American West (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994).
25. Hayden to Brees, April 3, 1937; Brees to Hayden, April 9, 1937, folder 1, box 782, ibid.


31. Hayden to Brees, June 22, 1937; Craig to Hayden, June 25, 1937; Brees to Hayden, June 29, 1937, folder 1, box 782, Hayden Papers.

32. Roca to Hayden, November 20, 1945; Hayden to Roca, December 5, 1945, ibid.


34. “Kearny: Arizona’s Newest Community,” brochure; “Kearny, Arizona,” brochure, folder 9, box 2, GDCR.

35. Lewis to Richard Fennemore and Gerald H. Galbreath, Jr., March 22, 1962, folder 1, ibid.


37. Galbreath to Lewis, April 23, 1962, folder 1, box 2, ibid.


39. Lewis to Goldwater, July 15, 1963; Goldwater to Lewis, July 19, 1963, folder 1, box 2, GDCR.


49. Fuller, "Where We Live—Kearny," reports that a Phoenix builder prefabricated eighty-seven wood-frame houses and delivered them ninety-some miles to their owners in Ray. A number of these new homes were then moved to Kearny and permanently fixed onto foundations. Parker, "Splendid Isolation"; Mahoney, "The Deadline is Final."

50. Smith, "Death of a Community"; Fuller, "Where We Live—Kearny."

51. Plans were made to hold the following year’s reunion at Del Webb’s Phoenix townhouse. Lopez, *Forever Sonora, Ray, Barcelona*, p. 25.