

RAIL



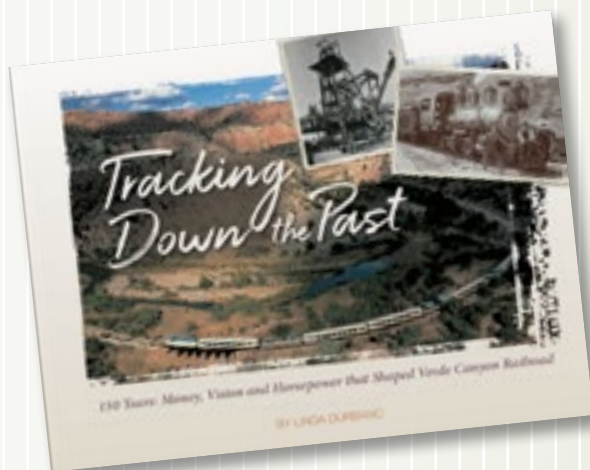
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE VERDE CANYON RAILROAD

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For more in-depth information about the 150-year history of Verde Canyon Railroad, visit the Boxcar Gift Store inside the depot to purchase the 516-page book *Tracking Down the Past* about the vision of two men and the horsepower that shaped Verde Canyon Railroad. You also can order one by contacting us at info@verdecanyonrr.net.



In 1988, Verde Canyon Railroad founder Dave Durbano took his first look at the Verde Canyon from the front of a GP7 locomotive



Although we have operated Verde Canyon Railroad for 35 years, I am still awestruck at the natural beauty through which we pass every day the train travels through the Verde Canyon. We are close to celebrating the ridership of our three-millionth passenger, and this tiny slice of Arizona still captivates over 90,000 passengers each year, including me.

In 1988, without first riding the rails, I purchased the rail line from Clarkdale to Drake based on freight figures alone. Like many of the railroads built at the turn of the last century, I knew that this one had played a crucial role in the nation's Industrial Revolution. I didn't know that it would successfully transcend into another millennium and be designated by Arizona's governor as one of "Arizona's Treasures."

When I made my first trip through the Verde Canyon on the front of a GP7 locomotive, I was mesmerized by the undisturbed wilderness through which we passed. The ancient geology and archeology of the region were eternal. Time was frozen and ethereal remains beckoned us to venture deeper into the chasm. From that moment, I knew that others would want to see the Verde Canyon in this same unique way, where railroad history was only a fragment of the journey.

In 2025, we commemorate over 114 years since the first rails were laid through the Verde Canyon and over 35 years since the birth of Verde Canyon Railroad. This publication is designed to celebrate these milestones, enhance your rail experience, and share an ongoing evolution that has shaped the rail travel you enjoy today.

I know that you will relish your journey through one of Arizona's most scenic inner canyons, our Canyon, just as I did over three decades ago. The accomplished people who guide you on your rail trip have the same pioneering spirit of their forbearers. They are dedicated to the Railroad's legacy, which includes making your rail adventure pleasurable, so I'm confident that you will enjoy your ride through Arizona's longest-running nature show.

Thanks for choosing to ride Verde Canyon Railroad.

—Dave Durbano, owner

WE'VE COME ABOARD!

TRACKS THROUGH TIME



United Verde Copper Company's Marion Shovel in action, Jerome, AZ

Even though Jerome, Arizona, would become known as the “Billion Dollar Camp,” reflecting its prodigious copper output, lack of a railroad almost doomed mining operations from the beginning.

When word went out of a rich copper discovery in the wild southwestern country, prominent Eastern financiers dispatched mining expert Dr. James A. Douglas, Sr. to evaluate the quality and marketability of the ore unearthed in the mountainside camp on Cleopatra Hill. Douglas arrived in 1880, just four years after the first claims had been filed. He liked the color of the ore very much but not the forbidding terrain, the distance to market, and the difficulty in delivering the ore.

At the time, the nearest railroad station was in Pueblo, Colorado. Even wagon roads didn't exist. People got to the camp by walking, or if they were affluent enough, on horseback. Douglas's advice to the money men back east: Don't invest.

It wasn't until 1882, that two torturous wagon roads were built connecting Jerome with the world at large. Both routes traversed rugged terrain and were frequently made impassable by winter squalls and summer rains, but the addition of the wagon ways allowed Verde Valley farmers to transport locally-grown produce, honey, wine and other goods to the tiny burg balancing precariously on the side of Mingus Mountain.

In 1883, when United Verde Copper Company (UVCC) built the first smelter (a plant that utilizes extreme heat to separate and purify metal from raw ore), all materials were hauled in by wagon from Prescott or Ash Fork. The following year, the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad arrived in Ash Fork, some 60 miles northwest of Jerome, bringing rail service a little closer

to this isolated little town. By 1884, when the modest price of copper plunged 50 percent, the mine temporarily closed.

During that same year at the New Orleans World's Fair, one of the exhibits showcased a collection of fine copper ore from the United Verde Mine. William A. Clark, a successful entrepreneur from Butte, Montana, was impressed by what he saw. The 5-foot 8-inch, finely dressed man with unruly dark red hair and coiffed beard parted in the middle, had already made his fortune in the Montana copper basin. It wasn't until 1888, however, that

Clark leased the UVCC mine with an option to buy for \$30,000 and immediately fired up the operation, clearing \$180,000 in the first 90 days. In 1890, Clark ultimately acquired the majority of United Verde Copper Company's stock with an investment of \$275,000. It proved to be a shrewd move, as it became the richest individually owned copper mine in the world.

By 1892, Clark's company was netting one million dollars each month. Being an astute businessman who understood the extended value of a railroad, he sought to bring an iron road into Jerome. Begun in 1894, and completed on January 24, 1895, a twisted, corkscrewing narrow gauge railroad connected Jerome directly through rail travel. The United Verde & Pacific Railway was 26 miles long with 186 curves (most over the last half of the line), and was known as the *crookedest line in the world*.

1912, the newly completed Verde Valley Railway through the Verde Canyon



Clarkdale Smelter, 1920s



Timeline



♦ 1876 ♦

FIRST MAJOR MINING CLAIMS
REGISTERED ON MINGUS MOUNTAIN

♦ 1883 ♦

FIRST SMELTER BUILT IN JEROME BY UNITED
VERDE COPPER COMPANY, AND TWO WAGON
ROADS WERE BUILT INTO JEROME

♦ 1884 ♦

FIRST NARROW-GAUGE RAILROAD,
ATLANTIC & PACIFIC RAILROAD, LINKED
ASHFORK TO JEROME

♦ 1884 ♦

NARROW-GAUGE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD,
UNITED VERDE & PACIFIC RAILROAD,
WAS ABANDONED BECAUSE OF A SERIES
OF MISHAPS, INCLUDING FIRES

♦ 1887 ♦

PRESCOTT & ARIZONA CENTRAL RAILROAD IS
COMPLETED FROM SELIGMAN TO PRESCOTT

♦ 1888 ♦

SENATOR WILLIAM A. CLARK LEASED THE
UNITED VERDE COPPER COMPANY (UVCC) MINE
FOR \$30,000 WITH A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT

♦ 1890 ♦

CLARK PURCHASED THE MAJORITY OF THE
UVCC STOCK FOR \$275,000

♦ 1895 ♦

NARROW GAUGE UNITED VERDE & PACIFIC
RAILWAY WAS COMPLETED FROM JEROME
JUNCTION TO JEROME, DEEMED THE
CROOKEDEST LINE IN THE WORLD

♦ 1911-1912 ♦

38-MILE STANDARD-GAUGE RAILROAD,
FINANCED BY SENATOR CLARK AND OPERATED
BY SANTA FE, PRESCOTT & PHOENIX RAILWAY,
WAS COMPLETED FROM DRAKE TO CLARKDALE

♦ 1914-1953 ♦

SMELTER IN CLARKDALE OPERATED

♦ 1900-1929 ♦

U.S. CONSUMPTION OF REFINED COPPER GREW,
CORRESPONDING TO THE GROWTH IN THE
GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRICITY

♦ 1930 ♦

YAVAPAI COUNTY (MOSTLY JEROME) WAS
THE SIXTH LEADING COPPER PRODUCING
REGION IN THE U.S.

♦ 1962 ♦

LAST STACK FROM THE OLD SMELTER WAS
BLOWN, SIGNALING THE END OF AN ERA

♦ 1988 ♦

CLARKDALE ARIZONA CENTRAL RAILROAD
PURCHASED THE 38-MILE STANDARD-GAUGE
LINE FROM ATCHISON, TOPEKA &
SANTA FE RAILWAY

♦ 1990 ♦

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, THE PASSENGER
EXCURSION OF VERDE CANYON RAILROAD
MADE ITS MAIDEN VOYAGE



Jerome Junction

1911, H.C. Tibbitts, a renowned photographer of the West, published this photograph of the Verde Canyon in Union Pacific Railroad's *Sunset* magazine

With the coming of the iron horse, Jerome prospered. Men and equipment poured into town and shipments of ore rolled out. Of course, even with the completion of the railroad, the wagon did not slip into obscurity. The train depot sat one mile northwest of town and hundreds of feet higher on the mountain slope. After disembarking from the train, passengers were loaded into horse-drawn wagons called hacks where they plunged down a sheer and sudden slope into the center of town, the ride inducing screams and white knuckles from women and men alike.

Unfortunately, the narrow-gauged railroad had to transfer cargo and passengers to the standard gauge Santa Fe, Prescott & Phoenix Railroad (SFP&P) at Chino Valley (then called Jerome Junction). Labor costs eventually worked against the Jerome line, and the fires that continued to rage uncontrollably for years in the underground caverns slowed progress. Eventually, Clark's geologists helped make the decision to move the Jerome smelter because the largest lode of copper ore was located directly beneath it. The railroad that ran through the Jerome mines was abandoned because of a series of mishaps, including fires, and a new open-pit operation was instigated.

Clark began buying up farms in the Verde Valley located just below Jerome, and by 1911, 750 men descended into the wild and isolated Verde Canyon equipped only with dynamite, picks, muscle and mules.



Passengers disembarking the United Verde & Pacific Railway in Jerome, circa 1900

These gandy dancers (railroad workers) spent solitary nights camped alongside rails and ties to build the 38-mile standard-gauge line from Drake through the remote canyon to Clarkdale. One year later in 1912, the Verde Valley Railway was completed, a miraculous accomplishment of the time considering that equipment included only mule-drawn Fresno scrapers. The total cost of the railroad was \$3.5 million, financed by Clark and operated by the Santa Fe, Prescott & Phoenix Railway. The first official train would roll over the new rails on November 20, 1912.



H.C. Tibbits' photo of the tunnel, circa 1915

The building of a new smelter and the railroad were huge feats that were facilitated by the need for copper, a necessary commodity used to fuel an industrialized nation exploding in growth. Through 1930, which marked the decline of Verde district mining, Yavapai County (mostly Jerome) was the sixth leading copper producing region in the country. It is likely that the U.S. government was a customer as the mines were active during both WWI and WWII. The majority of copper produced during this era was cast into wirebar, the precursor to electric wire.



Climax engine used to build track from Jerome to Clarkdale

2-6-6-2 501 Mallet engine used to build track between Hopewell and Clarkdale

The new railroad, which is now Verde Canyon Railroad, became known as the *Verde Mix* because it carried a diverse mixture of product and people. Senator Clark often came to Clarkdale via the railroad in his 73-foot private car, dubbed the *Pullman Palace*, which always proved to be a local attraction.

An unusual variation of steam engines, the heartbeat of the railroad, graced the Verde tracks but few proved more efficient than the Climax. The direct-drive Climax engine was used to build the line from Clarkdale to Jerome because it was very efficient on tight curves. The Mallet engine (pronounced Mal-ee) was purchased in 1920 and sold in 1942. Unfortunately, the Mallet took two weeks to make its maiden voyage from Clarkdale to Jerome because its weight kept kicking out the rail.

The new Verde Valley smelter initiated the construction of Clarkdale, named after Senator Clark, built adjacent to the smelter just below the Jerome mine. It originally covered almost 200 acres with more than 30 buildings on the site. Over 13 miles of standard-gauge rail was laid to move ore cars around within the smelter yard.

Unfortunately, golden years don't stay golden forever. Clark died in 1925. The stock market crash of 1929 pushed copper prices down, and by 1932, the price of copper had sunk to five cents.



The United Verde mines slowed as the copper wave waned. After the death of Clark's grandson, Tertius, who was supposed to take over management of the mining operation, Clark's two daughters, Mary and Katherine, sold the operation to the Phelps Dodge Mining Corporation in 1935 for \$20.8 million. Phelps Dodge renewed the smelter operation until 1953, at which time the smelter complex, including the town of Clarkdale, was put up for sale. All equipment that could be used was shipped to other Phelps Dodge properties, and what was left was thrown into the open pit mine in Jerome. The last of two smelter stacks was blown in 1962, signaling the end of an era and an industry on which a community had been built and prospered.



Livestock seen by track crews in the Verde Canyon, 1911

1911, management surveying railroad construction from a putt-putt



The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway (now Burlington Northern/Santa Fe or BNSF) provided rail service to the Salt River Materials Group (once Phoenix Cement Company) until 1988. At that time, the rail line was purchased by Clarkdale Arizona Central Railroad, which still hauls coal, cement and biproducts for the Group.

The Verde Valley Railway functioned long after the horses and wagons were gone, even long after the mines ceased operations. Through boom and bust times, the railroad did what other modes of transportation could not: It endured. Eventually it became Verde Canyon Railroad, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the Southwest.

Today, the same isolated and rugged landscape that proved so challenging to early pioneers is what makes Verde Canyon Railroad such an unforgettable experience to tens of thousands of visitors each year. The train rumbles into country as wild and untamed as when men and mules struggled to lay track. Passengers marvel at the pristine scenery and remote location as they travel through a narrow river-carved, high-walled canyon stretching through the foothills of brutishly beautiful mountains.



1920s, the Canyon has changed very little as witnessed in this vintage postcard



1920, the management team of the United Verde Copper Company

CLARKDALE: ONE OF THE FIRST MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITIES IN ARIZONA



Money was no object to Senator Clark, and he was a progressive thinker. He also believed that his employees should work and live in a company community. In 1911, he began construction of the rail line that was to become Verde Canyon Railroad.

Clark also purchased a plethora of Verde Valley farms and ranches for the construction of a larger and more modern smelter in the Verde Valley, which would become operational in 1914. The site already had a fine water supply from nearby Haskill Spring.

Pretentiously, Senator Clark named the new town *Clarkdale*. Unlike other company towns of the period that grew haphazardly, Clarkdale was designed and built from a unified master plan. The main town site was located on a ridge overlooking the industrial smelter complex and was developed with residential homes, including upper and lower-income housing, a commercial area, administrative center, churches, recreational and cultural facilities, and parks. The two grade schools and one high school were as worthy as any in the nation.

Clark built a brick-making plant nearby to supply bricks for the sturdy new homes, which were equipped with the most modern plumbing and sewage systems of the time. Streets were wide and paved. The proverbial landmark of a small town, a bandstand or gazebo, beckoned visitors to come enjoy the spacious park in the center of town. Everything was owned by Clark's United Verde Copper Company – homes were rented to workers and commercial properties were leased to business owners.

The Clubhouse, which served as a community center with an auditorium, library, bowling alley, billiard room and swimming pool, was not built until after Senator Clark's death. He left \$100,000 in his will to have it erected, and his heirs honored his wishes.

Clarkdale depot, 1931



Clarkdale, prior to 1911

Communally, however, the town was segregated by economics. The white-collar supervisors lived on the hill near the center of town. The blue-collar smelter employees lived on the intermediate level where the new smelter was built, and all other workers, including the Hispanic and Chinese populations lived on the lower hill near the river in an area now known as Patio Park. Today, Clarkdale, gateway to Sycamore Wilderness Area, is an integrated community of retirees, artisans and cold-climate transplants – those wishing to live where small community values endure.

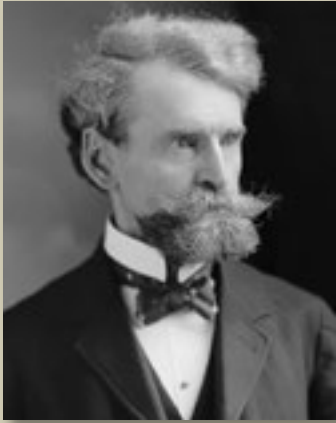
Early on, the rich foliage that normally shades yards or festoons the roadside was absent. The unfiltered residue from the smelter kept vegetation levels low. Today, the charming 1912 to 1930 appearance of the town still remains, only with the added texture of greenery favorable to this climate. Thanks to the vision of a handful of citizens, Clarkdale is now on the National Register of Historic Places.



Clark Memorial Clubhouse, 1927



William A. Clark



William A. Clark, born January 8, 1839, in Pennsylvania, worked his way to Montana from Iowa during the Gold Rush. He made moderate strides in placer mining, but achieved an astounding fortune in banking, smelters, electric power companies, newspapers and railroads. Clark was known as one of three *Copper Kings* of Butte, Montana (along with Marcus Daly and F. Augustus Heinze).

Clark visualized himself as a statesman and used his newspaper, the *Butte Miner*, to push his political ambitions. His long-standing dream of becoming a United States Senator resulted in scandal in 1899, when it was revealed that he bribed members of the Montana State Legislature in return for their votes. At the time, U.S. Senators were chosen by their state legislators. The corruption contributed to the passage of the U.S. Constitution's 17th Amendment. The U.S. Senate refused

to seat Clark because of the bribery scheme, but he was the victor in another senate campaign, and served a single term from 1901 until 1907. In responding to criticism of bribing members of the Montana legislature, Clark is reported to have said, "I never bought a man who wasn't for sale."

Even with the controversy that surrounded him, Clark left a positive legacy. In addition to broadening United Verde Copper Company's holdings to fuel the Industrial Revolution, and the creation of Clarkdale, he was responsible for building the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Las Vegas, Nevada, had its beginnings as a maintenance stop on the railroad. In recognition, Clark County was named in his honor. He donated great works of American and European art to museums, and his heirs continued philanthropy from his acquired wealth. Clark died from pneumonia on March 2, 1925, at the age of 86, in his mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York City, one of the 50 wealthiest Americans at the time.

Main Street, downtown Clarkdale, 1920s



ANCESTRY *of the* VERDE CANYON



Perkins Ranch, Perkinsville, Arizona, 1928

Located geographically in the center of Arizona, the Verde Valley is nestled between two protected lands: Prescott and Coconino National Forests. The balance between the past and present is evident in every community situated within the Valley's boundaries.

Many historic sites are reminders of the struggles, sacrifices and rewards attained by early tribes, Spanish explorers and hardy immigrants who first settled this handsome dell. Verde Valley and Verde River got their names from early Spanish explorers who called them *Verde*, which translates in English to *green*, the color of the lush vegetation that dominates the river banks. Passengers riding the rails are fortunate to view a medley of ancient civilizations blending with that same picturesque palette.



SINAGUA CLIFF DWELLINGS

The Verde Valley is regarded as an aboriginal melting pot where at least four Native American cultures are believed to have intermingled. Sinagua, from the Spanish words *sin* (without) and *agua* (water), is a name given to these pre-Colombian people by archaeologists who first studied them in the dry area north and east of Flagstaff. It is thought that a number of Sinagua moved into the Verde Valley area between 1100 and 1125 A.D. They gradually displaced a small population of pit-house dwelling Hohokam people, but not before learning irrigation farming from their predecessors.

This ancient society built their rough stone masonry structures in caves perched precariously above what are now the tracks of Verde Canyon Railroad. The Sinagua were primarily farmers growing corn, beans, squash and peas; supplementing their diet with hunting. They used stone tools to grind their food. Small rock particles were left in grains that wore their teeth down to the nerves. The life expectancy for the Sinagua was only 35 to 40 years.

By the early 1400s, all early inhabitants of the Verde Canyon, Montezuma Castle, Tuzigoot, Mogollon and Mesa Verde disappeared. Folk tales speak of war, space or spiritual travel and even cannibalism. However, many archaeologists believe that they moved to Hopi villages in north-eastern Arizona and were absorbed into that culture.

PACKARD RANCH

Three families are noted early settlers in the remote Verde Canyon. The first remnant of a homestead seen from the Verde Canyon Railroad is tucked into the trees at the mouth of a creek. It was settled between 1890 and 1895 by Mr. and Mrs. Packard. They irrigated 35 of their 100 acres to produce fresh vegetables for 1,500 miners and residents of Clarkdale and Jerome. Mr. Packard was a known philanderer, but it was Mrs. Packard who got the last laugh. She forged his name on a quit-claim deed for \$1,800.00, purchased two horses and a rifle, and disappeared to places unknown.

Phelps Dodge Mining Company bought the property in 1950, after being tied up in a lawsuit since 1928. The Perkins family leased the property from Phelps Dodge and, in turn, leased the cabin. The occupants in the '60s and '70s raised a lot of local eyebrows as several controversial *hippies* took up residency and entertained hikers in nothing but their birthday suits. Unfortunately the Packard cabin burned down in September 2004, leaving only its red rock foundation to close out a 110-year history. All that remains of the Packard property are a few dilapidated old ranch buildings located on private property.



Packard cabin, built circa 1895



Alvarez Ranch, circa 1980

ALVAREZ RANCH

The Alvarez Ranch was a long thin stretch of land on the northern shore of the Verde River. Rosendo Alvarez, a Jerome miner, negotiated the ranch from the Forest Service in 1908. While the railroad was being built from 1911 to 1912, the Alvarez family developed a mutually beneficial relationship. Many of the structures on the ranch were built with a framework of salvaged railroad ties and remnants of the demolished Sycamore Siding section house. The family earned income from selling farm products to railroad workers, and one of the Alvarez sons, Domingo, worked for the railroad. The line also provided transportation for the family to and from town for 25 cents a ride.



Alvarez adobe rock house, built circa 1918

Domingo Alvarez, 1980

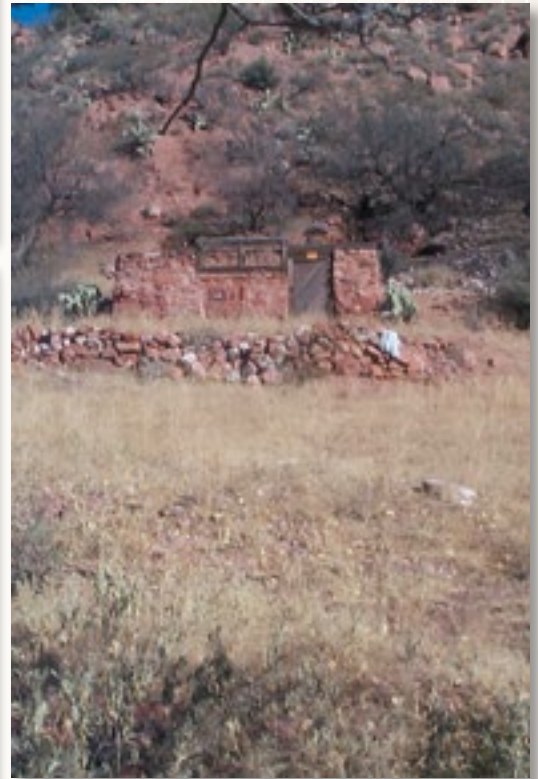
The Alvarez children attended school in the section house at Sycamore Siding just across the river from their cabin. When the section house closed in the mid-1930s, the school moved to Perkinsville. It wasn't until 1940 that the family began construction of a road using a tractor and hand tools. The first truck came into the ranch via the new road in the early 1950s. Prior to that, they had to park at the top of the hill and walk two and one-half miles to the ranch.

The family raised 38 head of cattle and assorted vegetables. Almost everything that came from the garden was canned – once they filled 400 jars in a single day. Produce the family didn't use was taken on a horse-drawn cart to be sold in Clarkdale.

Although 15 children from two generations were raised in the Canyon, this rural ranch never had electricity, telephone or running water. Even so, they hosted many drifters, cowboys, spelunkers and hippies before a devastating 1993 flood caused the remaining Alvarez family to vacate the property. In 1995, it became part of the Chino Valley Ranger District of Prescott National Forest.



Alvarez Ranch, 1970s



*Clockwise from top left:
Alvarez barn, built circa 1918
Alvarez rock house, built circa 1925
Domingo Alvarez on horseback*

PERKINS RANCH

The land at the turn-around of Verde Canyon Railroad (Perkinsville) was originally settled in 1885 by James Baker who named it the 76 Ranch. On July 5, 1899, Marion Alexander (M.A.) Perkins purchased the squatter's claim to the vacant Baker and Campbell's 76 Ranch. The 770-square-mile open range of native grama grass, located just 25 miles below the headwaters of the Verde River, had a year-round stream and enough acreage to support 10,000 head of cattle.

M.A. was born on March 6, 1848, on a farm near Coffeyville, Mississippi. His older brothers served in the Confederate Army, leaving him to work his parents' farm. The South was in ruins following the war, so sixteen-year-old Marion left home on horseback with a 20-dollar gold piece in his pocket. He settled about five miles from Fort Worth in Oak Grove, Texas, where he managed a mercantile, but his heart wanted to be outdoors. After a few years, M.A. married Annie York, a girl from back home, and they began their trek westward across the Texas frontier, ranching and building a cattle herd along the way.

In 1899, Texas passed a new homestead act that encouraged land development. The thought of so many people settling in his part of Texas caused Marion to move farther west. He sold his ranch holdings, some of his cattle, and loaded up his family. On July 5, 1899, after an Independence Day celebration, M.A., wife Annie, three sons, Rob, Ben and Nick, and three daughters, Annie, Valerie and Fannie, and several neighbors started on another cross-country odyssey through New Mexico to Arizona. They arrived at the 76 Ranch on November 13, 1900, but not without consequences and incidents that plagued the journey.

*Top: Marion, Fannie and Annie Perkins pose at their 76 ranch
Bottom: Perkinsville as it appeared in the 1940s before the
water tower was destroyed*



Top left: Perkinsville as “Gold City” in the 1962 film How The West Was Won

Right: Vintage water tower

Bottom left: Perkinsville bridge being built, circa 1912



In six weeks they had trailed the herd four hundred miles with few layovers. With no fencing along the way, a wrangler was days behind the outfit, hunting for lost horses and cattle. Men constantly had to ride the perimeter of the herd to keep them from straying. They had gone two days without water before they reached Chevelon Creek, just south of Winslow, Arizona. Many of the cattle, crazed with thirst, drank from standing pools of water along the creek and died of alkali poisoning. Throughout the entire 10-month sojourn, feed was short and water was scarce. Unfortunately during the second spring in Arizona, the Perkins' eldest two daughters died of scarlet fever, leaving young Fannie and the three boys.

True to his inherent ranching spirit, Marion Perkins attended the organizational meeting of the Arizona Cattle Growers in Tucson in 1903. A year later, he helped to write their by-laws. In 1904, he was elected to the Territorial Legislature of Arizona, and in 1905, he was appointed to the Arizona Livestock Sanitary Board. M.A. also was involved as a territorial legislator in the writing of Arizona's constitution. After Arizona became a state in 1912, Perkins served two terms as a state legislator.

During this same period, M.A. sold slaughtered beef to the soaring mining population of Jerome. In 1911, when the Santa Fe, Prescott & Phoenix Railway built the Drake to Clarkdale line through Perkins' ranch, the little depot constructed near the ranch headquarters was named *Perkinsville*, which became a tiny town rather than just prime grazing land. (See page 51, *Milepost by Milepost*.)

M.A Perkins died on June 30, 1927, at the age of 79, leaving behind a great ranching legacy that continues to this day. Over 125 years later, the Perkinsville Ranch on the Verde River remains part of the Perkins family.

EVOLUTION *of a* RAILROAD



Verde Canyon Railroad Depot, May, 2024

In the glory days of the iron horse, the train station was a bustling hub in small towns across the West. Those times have passed, but Verde Canyon Railroad is making sure that they are not forgotten. From the time you step onto the grounds until you board the comfortable coaches, the journey is as much about yourself as the place and equipment.



Clarkdale depot, 1968

DEPOT COMPLEX

Tucked into a hillside on a site where two depots previously stood (the first burned to the ground, the second was dismantled and moved in 1932) are several buildings making up the depot complex of Verde Canyon Railroad.



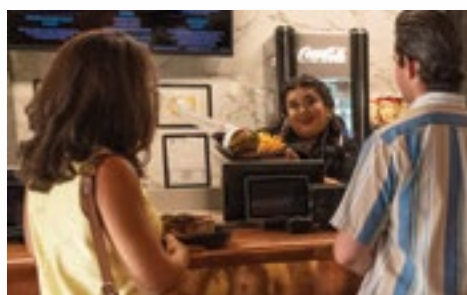
Boxcar Gift Store

The museum, located in an remodeled boxcar, houses artifacts from the Railroad's storied past, much of it collected by John Bell, for whom the museum is named. Bell was a retired newspaper owner and historian who, for seven and one-half years until his death in 1998, related timeless insights to willing listeners riding the rails.

Nostalgia is not the only reason to spend time at the depot, which first opened its doors on July 4, 1997. The depot is home to the Copper Spike Café and Boxcar Gift Store, where Southwestern flavors abound, and railroad memorabilia and works of art from talented local artists are showcased.



The building underwent an extensive interior and exterior renovation in 2023, and an expansive outdoor pergola was added to give valued passengers shade and seating before boarding. The entire train is visible from the depot grounds, and passengers are encouraged to walk along the rails to photograph and memorialize their pending journey.



Eye-catching storyboards, installed along the quarter-mile length of the depot's loading platform, enhance the visitor experience with details about the Canyon, flora and fauna, pioneer spirit and railroad lore. Facts about the many animals, plants and people that have imprinted the Verde Valley and the Canyon through which the train passes enrich the journey.

Storyboards along the loading platform



PASSENGER COACHES

Verde Canyon Railroad passengers, seated in vintage cars powered by husky locomotives, are whisked back to another century while enjoying the luxury of a modern era. All passenger cars are either Pullman-Standard or Budd Chair Cars. Most coaches, named for a prominent city or town in Arizona, have an interior motif which reflects a region of the state.



Clarkdale car

George Pullman, who died in 1897, designed and built the first railroad sleepers. After his death, Robert Todd Lincoln (son of Abraham Lincoln) became company president. In 1930, the Pullman Company purchased the Standard Steel Car Company. Pullman-Standard remained in the rail car manufacturing business until 1982. The Pullman-Standard coaches on this line, built in 1946 and 1947, were originally used in a commuter capacity along the eastern seaboard.

Prescott car





Open-air viewing car



Some of the Budd Chair Cars, built in the late 1930s and 1940s, carried passengers along Santa Fe's El Capitan route between Chicago and Los Angeles. Others were part of the Kansas Cityan and Chicagoan service from 1946 until 1960.

All coaches on Verde Canyon Railroad have living room-style seating or bistro-style tables for two, with restrooms, beverage service and snack bars in every car. A charcuterie tray and complimentary sparkling wine toast upon boarding set the stage for a magnificent journey. All indoor cars access open-air viewing platforms constructed from flat cars, which are normally used for hauling industrial materials. They have innovative bridged walkways that were custom-designed specifically for the tight turns on this rail line.





CLASSIC CABOOSE

The most exclusive class of service offered by Verde Canyon Railroad is the historic 1929 refurbished American Car & Foundry (AC&F) caboose. Now a luxury car, the caboose was not originally intended for passenger transportation. In 1899, 13

car-building companies combined to form the AC&F. Our caboose, #999373 steel waycar, was built for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway and rebuilt in 1969. The working caboose was used on this track until it was transferred with the sale of the rail line in 1988. Renovated to luxury-class in 2005, the converted waycar still has cupola seating with an aerial view of the train in the Canyon, and two private terraces. There are less than 100 of these cars still in existence; many of them are *captive*, or mounted in fixed locations.



*Clockwise from top left:
Passengers enjoy beverages on
the private terrace; cupola seating
offers an aerial view of the Canyon;
private valet welcomes you aboard.
Luxurious private caboose
accommodates six passengers
in one party*



1.



1. Original livery photo, Alaska Railroad, Anchorage, Alaska, 1966

2. Second livery photo, Alaska Railroad, Anchorage, Alaska, 1971

3. Alaska Railroad, Anchorage, Alaska, 1983

4. Mountain Diesel, Centennial, Wyoming, 1988

LOCOMOTIVE POWER

Vintage FP7 locomotives, only two of 10 remaining in service in North America, are the mainstay of the excursion train. After three months of restoration, the classic iron horses debuted on March 8, 1997, on Verde Canyon Railroad.

The FP7 engine was originally built by the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors to increase distances between water stops for both passenger and freight services. The then-new design also utilized new traction motors, new fuel injectors and improved engine-room ventilation. The car body was extended by four feet to provide room for a 2500-pound steam generator, together with 1750 gallons of water (if dynamic brakes were not installed).

Verde Canyon Railroad engines #1510 and #1512 were originally built in 1953 for the Alaska Railroad. The first photograph taken on February 10, 1966, shows the delivery paint scheme, or livery. When the engines were painted blue and yellow, the logo was omitted from the nose. The second livery photograph was taken on August 16, 1971. In honor of Alaska's bicentennial, the engines were draped in a red, white and blue patriotic paint scheme. The photograph was taken on September 15, 1983, showing the second nose light.

Mountain Diesel, a Colorado-based firm, purchased the engines to exhibit at a California museum before leasing them to Wyoming-Colorado Railroad in 1988 to pull their tourist train.



2.



3.



4.

The engines were photographed on June 19, 1988, in Centennial, Wyoming. After the Wyoming-Colorado Railroad purchased the engines, they were painted twice between 1988 and 1995. The excursion season was very short, so when the freight business disappeared, the Wyoming-based branch closed its doors. In November 1996, the engines were moved to Clarkdale, Arizona, home of Verde Canyon Railroad.

Prior to becoming the muscle of Verde Canyon Railroad, the two FP7 engines were meticulously renovated with modern features added for safety. Exclusive to the railroad industry is the distinctive paint scheme of the engines. Originally, renowned wildlife artist Doug Allen brought the engines to life with his detailed and distinctive representation of bald eagles in flight. In 2009, California artist Damien Pezzi rejuvenated the symbolic eagles with a fresh coat of paint and slight redesign. The rolling billboards once again received a cosmetic makeover by local artist John Alvey and his team in January 2019.

The engines continue to play an essential role in the historic journey of the Railroad. Almost daily, they lead the way into the remote wilderness of the scenic Verde Canyon.

Photographs were taken by Alan Miller, photographer and avid railroad enthusiast, and Ellen J.D. Roberts, Verde Canyon Railroad group coordinator and noted Clarkdale artist



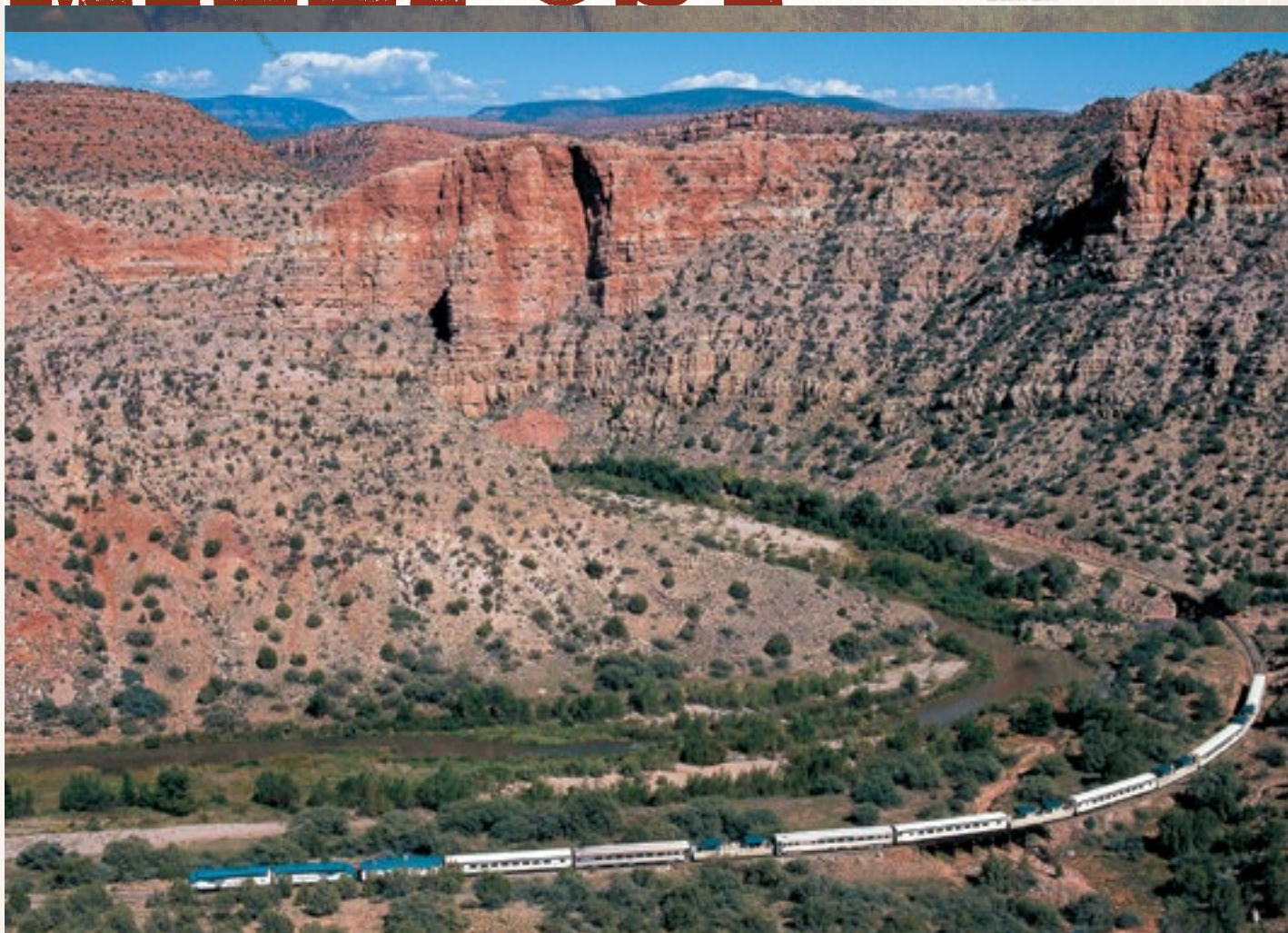
5. Wyoming-Colorado Railroad, Laramie, Wyoming, 1990

6. Wyoming-Colorado Railroad, Laramie, Wyoming, 1994

7. Verde Canyon Railroad engines debut, Clarkdale, Arizona, 1997

8. Verde Canyon Railroad, Clarkdale, Arizona, 2019

MILEPOST *to* MILEPOST



From markers 38 to 18, distance is identified by “mileposts” along the Verde Canyon Railroad route. Serving as a countdown, each numbered milepost notes the passage of 5,280 feet of track, and acts as an indicator for interesting features along the route. What follows is a milepost-to-milepost tour of 20 spectacular miles of scenery, geology, archeology and history through the Verde Canyon.

Clarkdale Smelter, circa 1950s



MILEPOST 38

The journey begins at milepost 38, slightly north of the train depot in Clarkdale (see page 10, *Clarkdale, One of the First Planned Communities in Arizona*). Milepost 0 is at the other end of the line where the Verde Canyon Railroad line meets the Santa Fe/ Burlington Northern (BNSF) track at Drake. Since construction of the railroad started from that end, the milepost numbers begin there as well. Our trip today will take us as far as milepost 18 and the old Perkinsville station. The 40-mile round trip takes approximately four hours.

As we leave the depot complex, behind you about halfway up the side of the mountain is the old mining town of Jerome. Copper ore from the Jerome mines was brought to the Clarkdale smelter northwest from the depot (See page 3, *Tracks through Time*).

As we begin our journey, notice the mountains to the west-southwest. They are known as the Black Hills. Gazing in the direction of Sedona, you can see the south rim of the Colorado Plateau known as the Mogollon Rim. This was named after Juan Luis Ignacio Flores Mogollon, one of the first governors of New Mexico. The Colorado Plateau is a 130,000-square-mile mesa that extends into Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. The Mogollon Rim is 300 miles long, but the red rocks for which Sedona is famous are only exposed for about 25 of these miles.

Drake depot, March 26, 1964



*Top left: Passengers on an open-air viewing car get an up-close look at the mountain of slag
Top right and bottom: Sinagua Indian Ruins*



Leaving the station, the railroad passes through the old slag dump. Slag is part of the waste material from the smelter, and was actually poured in a molten state. The rusted iron pipes and sheet iron originally formed a barrier to keep the molten waste from the tracks while the slag cooled into the very hard material it is now. The mountain of waste covers about 40 acres, averages 40 feet in depth and represents almost 40 years of operation. Stories are told by long-time residents of seeing red hot ribbons glowing in the dark when the smelter was active.



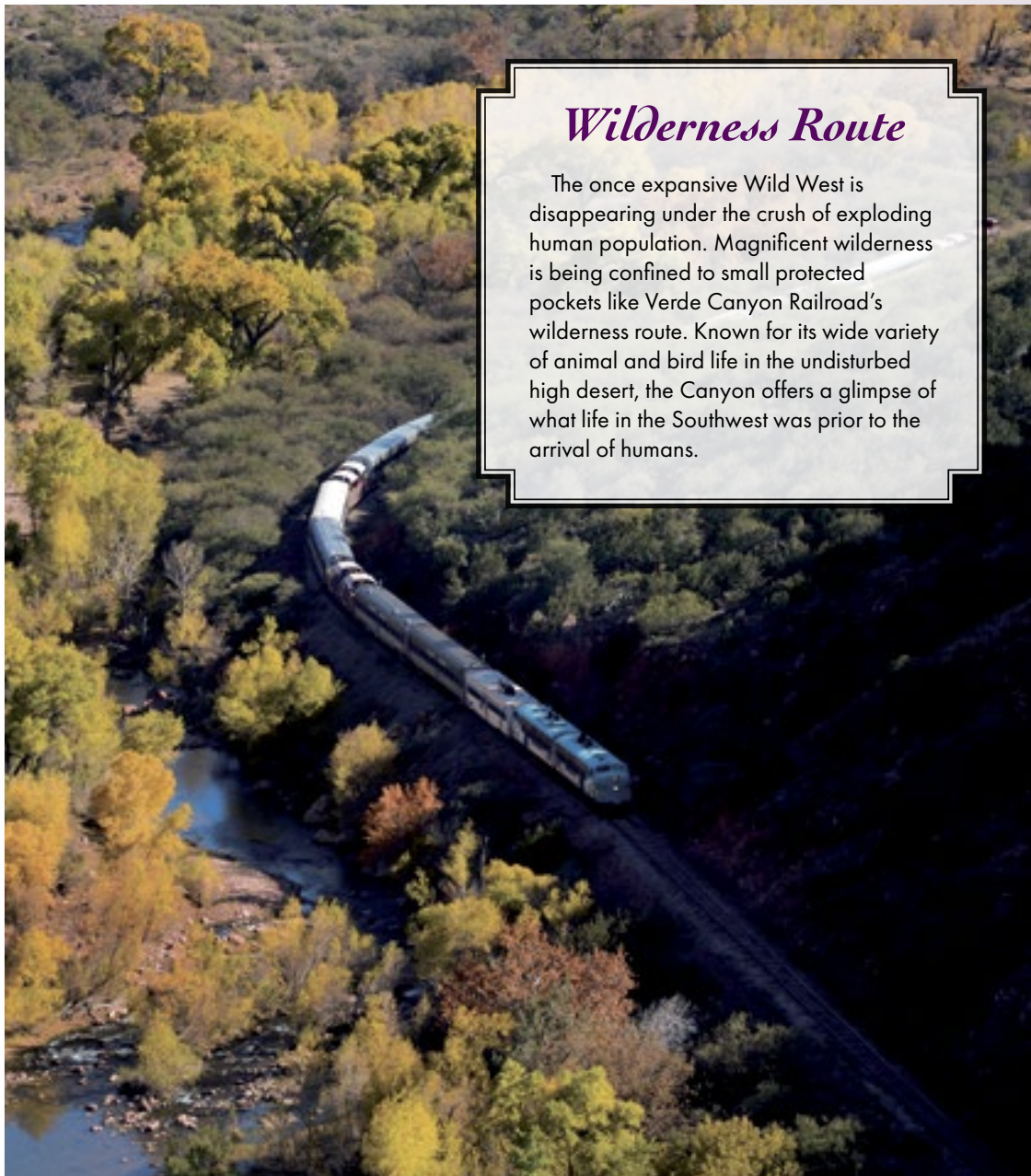
MILEPOST 37

On the left side of the train, Sinagua cliff dwellings cling to the walls of the Canyon almost halfway up the cliff face. (See page 14, *Ancient Ancestry of the Canyon*.) A black area around the roof of the first ruin remains visible; soot from cooking fires indicate the likely location of living quarters. The cave is about six feet high in the front, but the doorway was originally very small and low. Unfortunately, the elements have taken their toll on the structure. The second ruin is tucked back into a long horizontal cave only three to four feet high. This structure may have been used for storage. A small square window in the front wall must have provided a spectacular view of the river below.

MILEPOST 36

The deteriorating rock wall (about two feet high) on the left side of the train is built on a hog-back and drops into the arroyo. The wall (originally eight feet tall) built by the Sinagua was used to force game into the arroyo where hunters were sure to capture the animals.

The tall smokestack on the right is a trace of the original TAPCO power plant (aka The Arizona Power Company). The plant was finished in 1918, just as World War I was ending. Originally providing electrical power to mines in Jerome and the smelter in Clarkdale, the plant's role changed as the push for copper production declined with the end of the war. Instead, it supplied power to the Verde Valley and also Phoenix during peak seasons. Oil hauled on these tracks fueled TAPCO. The plant closed during the 1960s, and was supplanted by a substation that can be seen on the far side of the valley from Milepost 32.



Wilderness Route

The once expansive Wild West is disappearing under the crush of exploding human population. Magnificent wilderness is being confined to small protected pockets like Verde Canyon Railroad's wilderness route. Known for its wide variety of animal and bird life in the undisturbed high desert, the Canyon offers a glimpse of what life in the Southwest was prior to the arrival of humans.

MILEPOST 35

The first railroad bridge you travel over has been recycled. The trestle was actually constructed utilizing an old turntable from the Prescott roundhouse.

Just beyond this point, the Verde River emerges from its inner gorge and becomes entrenched below the tracks in a narrow steep-walled canyon. The dark rock that forms these sheer cliffs is basalt, a form of cooled lava. The train will be traveling on top of this layer of volcanic rock for the next three miles.





MILEPOST 33.5

The highest and longest bridge on the route is the one that spans S.O.B. Canyon, approximately 125 feet above the river. Building this trestle was an engineering feat accomplished by men and mules. The name has had many connotations throughout the years, but it actually stands for *Superintendent of Bridges*.







The River



The 170-mile Verde River, named by early Spanish explorers, has been flowing through the Verde Canyon for more than five million years, providing sustainable resources to ancient cliff-dwelling and pueblo cultures and farmers and cattlemen of the last century. The river originates from the Big Chino Aquifer northwest of the Canyon between Paulden and Chino Valley. According to local Native American lore, the Verde River is female. The oasis which surrounds her is in stark contrast to the arid uplands through which she meanders. She is principally gentle and receiving, as she gathers water from eight creeks that flow down from the Colorado Plateau. As rain falls on the plateau, these tributaries come roaring through gorges, loaded with life-giving debris which deposit into the Verde. She then creates an emerald swath of land nourished by her waters as she winds her way through the Verde Valley. The train only passes two of these tributaries: Sycamore Creek and Big Springs. The river is restricted just north of Phoenix at Horseshoe Dam, empties into Bartlett Lake, and finally flows into the Salt River.

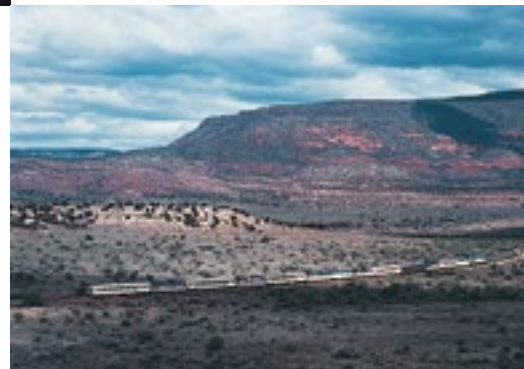




MILEPOST 32.5

The Verde Valley was once a large shallow lake; the light-colored limestone deposits that are so prevalent throughout the valley were formed from sediments deposited in this prehistoric lake. Across the valley on the right, you can see a point where the limestone ridge ends abruptly and butts up against a red sandstone formation. This point marks the edge of the prehistoric lake.

The mountain to the left of the prehistoric lake bed is called Black Mountain due to the dark basalt cap on the top. The gentle slope of this basalt mountain was caused by volcanic activity. Basalt is affected by erosion differently than other rock formations, like those that make up Sedona's skyline. The volcanic rock in the soil seems to encourage more vegetation which makes the rock less susceptible to erosion. Black Mountain was actually the low point in the river valley some 11 million years ago; volcanic material flowed from the plateau and filled the area and protected it. As the surrounding region eroded, Black Mountain remained almost 1,000 feet higher than the rest of the valley. The red sandstone layer about half way up Black Mountain is part of the Schnebly Hill Formation, the same geological strata that results in the beautiful rock formations around Sedona.



MILEPOST 31.4

As the train starts down the grade, on the left side of the tracks is an old telegraph line. In the early years of the railroad, this was the only means of communication the train crews had with the outside world from this remote and inaccessible area. They always carried a transmitter and could tap into the telegraph line to send a message.

On the right looking to the bottom of the canyon, you can see a large green pipe-like structure against the red cliff. This is a gauging station operated by the U.S. Geologic Survey to measure the flow of water in the river, and determine how much can be removed for irrigation downstream. Near the top of the structure is a small platform. During the 500-year flood in February 1993, the level of the river was within about one foot of that platform.

Across the river on the point of the hill, you will see stones stacked in a circle. This is believed to be a centuries-old pit-house dwelling of the Hohokam Indians. It is believed that the Sinagua used it as a lookout.



Precious Ecosystem

The Verde Canyon is a riparian area, defined as narrow strips of land on either side of streams with flowing water (underground or surface). They are very precious ecosystems especially in Arizona. Under tremendous pressure from grazing and recreational use, less than two percent of the land of Arizona makes up riparian areas, however 70 to 80 percent of wildlife and waterfowl depend on these habitats either directly or indirectly. Riparian areas also support a wide variety of vegetation exclusive from the native desert landscape.





MILEPOST 31

Proceeding down the grade into the canyon, a basalt cliff face is on the left. At the end of the basalt cliff, the horizontally-layered sandstone is tilted at a sharp angle, with layers standing almost on end. Geologists refer to this kind of formation as a *monocline*, one example of what is called a *fold*. Buried deep under the earth's crust, these layers of rock were heated to a point where they were bent and twisted by a tremendous geological force. When rock layers are cooler and more brittle, these same forces cause the strata to break and fracture, creating what geologists call a *fault*. *A fold is a bend, a fault is a break.*

MILEPOST 30.7

Looking toward the monocline, the whole shelf of red rock slides right down into the railroad tracks and underneath.



MILEPOST 30

From the Clarkdale depot to Perkinsville, the train will descend in elevation almost 500 feet. As the train passes Sycamore Canyon, called *Little Grand Canyon*, all roads past the parking lot located on top of the basalt ridge are private. There are four homes on the river opposite the track, a result of two homesteads and a mining claim that predate the establishment of national forests. From this point on both sides of the river, excluding Railroad land, all ground is part of the Coconino or Prescott National Forests.

As the train passes the confluence of Sycamore Creek and the Verde River, it enters the beautiful Verde River Canyon. Charred ruins of the Packard Ranch are barely visible. (See page 15, *Ancestry of the Verde Canyon*.) From a distance, the cliff faces of the canyon appear to be as tall as Black Mountain. This is an optical illusion, as Black Mountain is at least 700 to 800 feet higher; 5,500 feet above sea level. The tallest cliffs in the Canyon are not more than 4,800 feet above sea level.

Mistletoe

Many of the trees along the route have a parasite called mistletoe which attaches to its host and penetrates its branches to absorb water and nutrients. Mistletoe is seen as rounded clumps of growth, slightly different in color from the trees' foliage. These are especially noticeable in winter as they stay green and stand out distinctly on otherwise bare branches.



MILEPOST 29

The Sycamore Wilderness area is visible from this point. The area holds a lot of lore, legend and mystery. Many Indian dwellings, petroglyphs and old mines remain. Legend speaks of a lost gold mine five to ten miles east of Perkinsville. In the 1760s, conquistadors found a rich vein of gold in this very rugged and remote area. It is said they were discovered by Apache and picked off one by one. Two survivors escaped, but the mine was never rediscovered.

As the train passes Sycamore Canyon, a purplish-brown rock becomes visible on the right side of the train. It is particularly visible behind the first home. This is called Tapeats Sandstone. It also can be found above Jerome, 2,500 feet higher, where rich ore deposits have been found. In 1900, miners from Prescott staked a claim behind this house and started mining for gold, calling it the *Gold Tooth Mine*. We now know it is unlikely to find gold, silver, zinc, copper or any metals in sedimentary rock, but it didn't seem a ridiculous idea at the time.

The grayish-blond rock above the Tapeats Sandstone is Martin Limestone, with large horizontal and vertical lines creating a block appearance. Deposited during the Age of Fishes, some layers of this rock contain a lot of organic materials. When banged together they smell like oil. In the early part of the last century, the smell lured many to spend millions of dollars in search of an oil reservoir in the central Verde Valley, to no avail.

Above the Martin layer, the Redwall Limestone is a reddish-pink color and appears jumbled, so the texture is called *mottled*. This is the rock excavated by Salt River Materials located west of the train depot. The plant was originally built to make cement for Glen Canyon Dam, which created Lake Powell. Most of the caves seen are in Redwall Limestone. The Supai Sandstone, above the Redwall layer, is the most unstable.



Plant Life



The Canyon is abundant with cactuses and wildflowers. On higher ground around the tracks, the tall stick-like ocotillo and prickly pear, from which jellies and hand creams are made, are found. Banana yuccas, which Native Americans used for food, soap and braided rope for sandals and baskets, also are prevalent. Most of these indigenous plants have sharp thorns and survive with little water.



MILEPOST 28.3

As the train starts into the curve, a large gray rock outcrop on the shoulder of the hill across the river has a remarkable resemblance to the head of an elephant seen in profile, with its trunk to the left, curved and pointing into the air. Perhaps it will be no surprise that this is called *Elephant Rock*.



Elephant Rock

MILEPOST 28

At midpoint in the trip to Perkinsville, the train passes by Sycamore siding, the only railroad siding in the Canyon. Just beyond the siding across the river is the Alvarez Ranch. (See page 16, *Ancestry of the Verde Canyon*.)



Turtle Rock

MILEPOST 24

At the end of a bluff on the right side of the train across the river is *Turtle Rock*. He has a head, shell and even a little turtle tail. Those who traveled through the Canyon as early as the 1920s remember this rock formation having the name.



MILEPOST 22.5

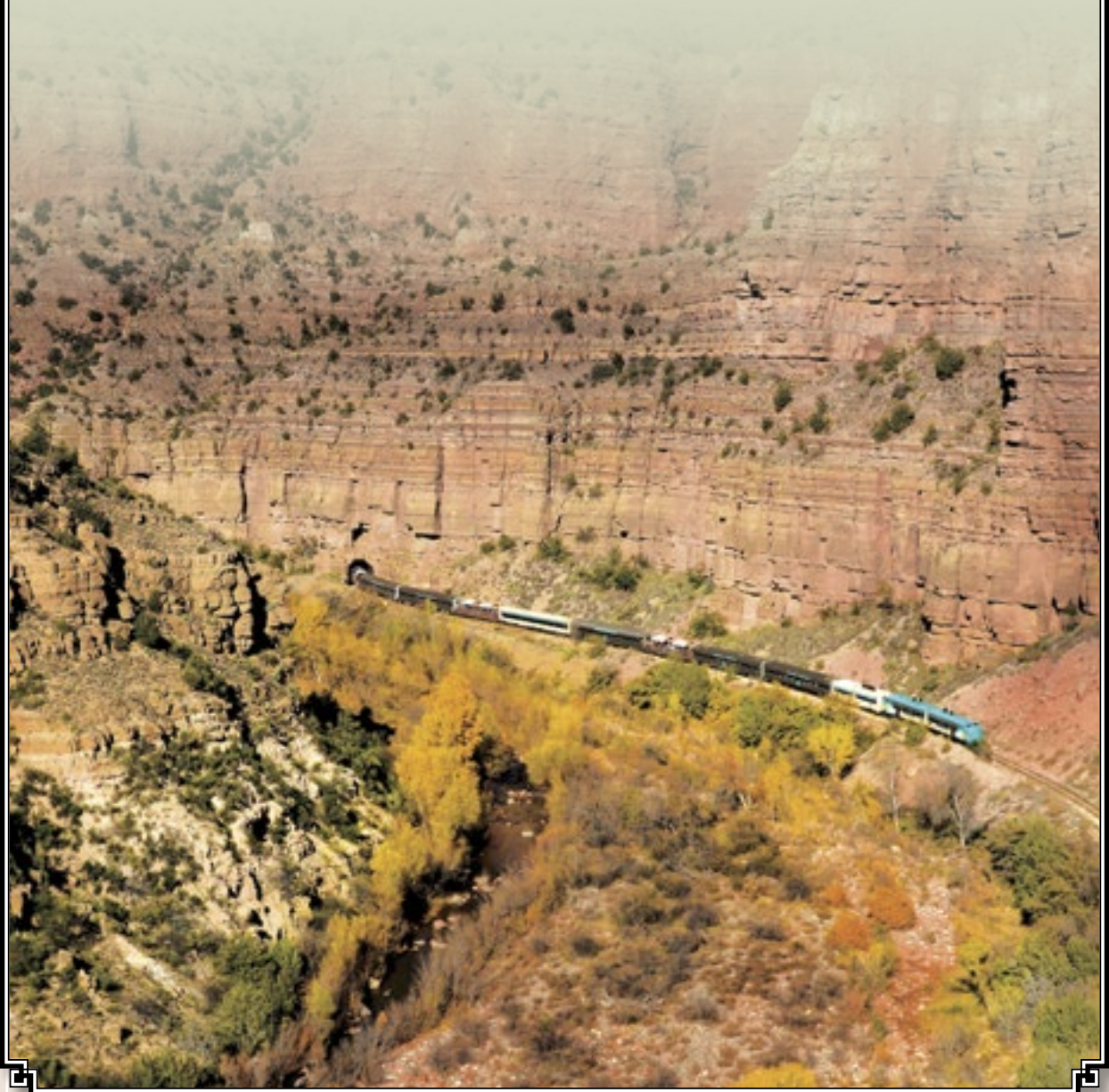
Very few excursion trains provide passengers the thrill of passing through a tunnel. Our manmade tunnel is 734-feet long and curved, so the exit cannot be seen from the entrance. At some points, the train comes within six inches of the tunnel walls, which were created by blasting through solid limestone and supported by timbers for only about 30 feet at each end. In 1911, a crew of 25 Swedes completed the project in just six months.



Cottonwoods, Willows & Sycamores



The rich blend of deciduous trees, including sycamores, walnuts, cottonwoods, willows, box elders, ashes, alders and oaks, is unique to the Intermountain West. As the train makes its way deeper into the Canyon, trees along the river provide a canopy for the riparian habitat of the Verde. These indigenous species can transpire more than 100 gallons of water each day. The cottonwoods have dark rough bark and heart-shaped leaves that tremble in the summer breezes, much like their relative, the aspen, which grow at higher elevations. They are mixed with desert juniper and mesquite. Large shrubs found along the route include canotia, barberry, greythorn, fourwing saltbush, creosote bush, manzanita, fendlerbush, ephedra (aka Mormon Tea), cliffrose and Apache plume. Smaller shrubs include winterfat and snakeweed.





MILEPOST 19

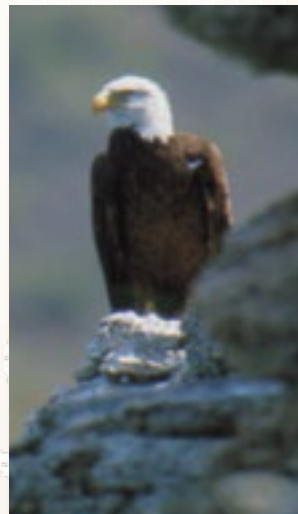
The canyon walls drop away on both sides as the train crosses a covered steel bridge as we emerge into the Perkinsville valley. On the left side of the train is a large cave that was excavated in the 1960s by geologists from the Arizona State Museum, revealing evidence that this cave was utilized by Native Americans as living quarters. There also are a number of pit-house sites near Perkinsville, but early excavation of these sites by grave robbers didn't leave much for preservation or historic value.

Wildlife Diversity

The Verde River is home to a diversity of wildlife. Mule deer, antelope and Javelina (collared peccary) are sometimes visible. Occasionally an elk, fox or coyote can be seen. Mountain lions, black bears, bobcats and ringtail cats also have been spotted, but rarely. The small population of elk that reside in the Canyon are not native to Arizona. That species was irradiated by hunters during the early part of the last century. Today, the elk seen in Arizona are relations that were transplanted from Wyoming.

Bald eagles, golden eagles, red-tail hawks, black hawks, ducks, wild turkeys, ravens and a variety of other birds are regularly visible from the train. Great Blue Heron, large wading birds standing three to four feet tall and bluish-gray in color, are often seen along the rails. Gliding along on a wingspan that can reach close to six feet, the Heron is one of the most graceful birds in the world.

The waters of the Verde are generally so clear that large fish can often be spotted. The River is not considered a good trout stream, as water temperatures are too warm most of the year. Carp, catfish, large-mouth and smallmouth bass, and bluegill thrive in the river, as do beaver and otter.



MILEPOST 18.5

In 1912, the Railroad put a station on the Perkins' ranch and called it Perkinsville. (See page 19, *Ancestry of the Verde Canyon*.)

The structures remaining in "downtown" Perkinsville were all built by the railroad. The first building on the left was the section house (bunkhouse). Just beyond it is the base of the old water tower, used until the last steam engines came through this valley in 1952. Beyond the tower's base are remains of a house, which was originally occupied by the Santa Fe station master, but burned down during the last decade. The last building is the original depot that also served as a post office and schoolhouse.

On the right behind the old cattle pens, some whitish-colored tailings can be seen at the base of the hill. This was the site of a limestone quarry and kilns for converting the limestone into slaked lime. The lime was transported to the Clarkdale smelter where it was used as flux in the smelting process.

Vintage water tower, 1962



Ranch outbuild



What remains of the original depot, now a storage unit on the ranch



At its peak, Perkinsville had 10 to 12 families living in the immediate area. For a brief period, there was a small school, general store and post office. The smelter closed in the early 1950s, eliminating the need for slaked lime, and the railroad switched to diesel locomotives, which made the water stop unnecessary. Soon after, Perkinsville became a ghost town.

In the 1960s, a few scenes from the classic Western film *How the West Was Won* were shot here. George Peppard, Debbie Reynolds and Eli Wallach were featured next to the depot. Rumor has it that the water tower was blown up during filming, only to have the footage end up on the cutting room floor.

The railroad tracks go on another 18 miles beyond Perkinsville to Drake to meet the Santa Fe/Burlington Northern line. This part of the railroad is still used for hauling freight by the Clarkdale Arizona Central Railroad.

At Perkinsville, the engines on the excursion train will disconnect, run around the train on the track to the right, hook onto the other end of the train and take us back to Clarkdale. The return trip provides the same spectacular scenery and opportunity to spot sights missed on the first leg of the journey. No matter how many times these tracks are traveled, the chance to see exceptional and fascinating occurrences in nature never ends.



EYE on the SKY



As the green foliage in the Verde Canyon vanishes with winter, resident raptors become more visible. The fall migration of fresh water birds also makes the Canyon swell with waterfowl during winter and early spring.



variety of ducks dot the river as the Great Blue Heron stands motionless, awaiting prey to come within striking distance. The most impressive guests are the bald eagles who have shared the Canyon with trains for well over a century.

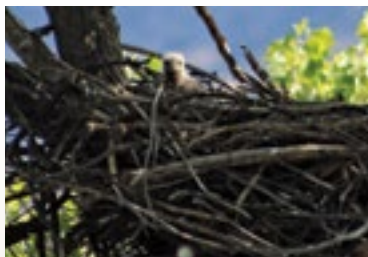
Over 500,000 bald eagles used to rule the skies in the contiguous states. During the 20th century, eagles were nearly extinct in the lower 48 states. After World War II, they suffered great losses in the birth rate due to the use of the pesticide DDT. In 1940, they were federally protected under the precursor to the 1967 Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which became part of the 1973 Endangered Species Act. It wasn't until 2007 that our national bird was removed from the nation's threatened wildlife list. Today, over half of the eagles in Arizona are part of the Verde River and Salt River watersheds. Even though they are not federally protected, they are still monitored by the Game and Fish Department as treasures in the Southwest.



Of North America's 70,000 remaining bald eagles, half reside in Alaska and 20,000 live in British Columbia. Most eagles migrate south in the winter as rivers and lakes freeze. Approximately 3,000 breeding pairs, up from 400 in the 1960s, still thrive in the lower 48 states; a frightening drop from the hundreds of thousands that once soared above America's wilderness. Despite a disappearing habitat, the Verde Canyon still provides a viable nesting site for multiple pairs of eagles, and supports the migration of bald and golden eagles from December through March.

In 1993, a pair of bald eagles built a nest in the Canyon and hatched one eaglet which fledged the nest in May of that year, the first sighted by railroad crews since 1968. Since then, pairs have continued to reproduce yearly with the exception of the year following the 1993 500-year flood. New pairs have begun to build nests throughout the Canyon. Unlike most eagles that generally expand their nest year after year, Verde Canyon eagles seem to rotate and change nests, possibly due to insect infestation or weather-related damage to the site. The nests (which can be as wide as 10 feet and weigh 1,000 pounds) are generally built precariously on cliffs or on high tree tops along the train's route. Both parents participate in nest-building. The male gathers materials while the female is the homemaker and architect. Caring for the young also is a shared responsibility. In the spring, passengers may be privileged to see eaglets bobbing up and down above the rim of a nearby nest.





The Verde Canyon's lively riparian habitat is clearly the invitation that stimulates the migration of these mighty birds of prey. The lush riverside vegetation of the Verde River, the clear clean waters, and

food chain relative to the Canyon are important components in making this an impressive destination for migrant raptors. Eagles are often seen perched in cottonwood or sycamore trees whose branches cast a vast skeletal umbrella over the river's still waters. Sometimes, they are seen soaring high above the desert floor or plunging downward, with speeds up to 65 mph, to seize a fish from shallow waters.

The bald eagle (America's symbol since 1782), along with other aerial residents and feathered guests, are seldom bothered by the train's presence as it passes through this isolated ecosystem. As a result, passengers are often treated to a natural sanctuary, one more facet of the rail journey.

In addition to the eagles seen in the Verde Canyon, Liberty Wildlife has teamed up with Verde Canyon Railroad to give passengers an up-close and personal experience next to a real bald eagle. Twice monthly, the Phoenix-based rescue brings education birds that couldn't be released back into the wild to the depot for interaction with passengers. Throughout the year, Liberty Wildlife also brings a host of other raptors or reptiles to the depot for passenger enjoyment.



A TRAIN *for all* SEASONS



Whether it's a smooth glide through a cool summer night's breeze or a brisk foray to gaze at the changing leaves of autumn, Verde Canyon Railroad offers something spellbinding during each new season. The train is a beautiful vantage point from which to enjoy the stunning rebirth of spring, the striking long shadows and gentle rains of summer, the lively colors of autumn or the quiet solitude of winter.



SPRING

A patchwork of color blankets the Canyon floor as high desert wildflowers are in bloom March through June. The bright blossoms of prickly pear and ocotillo add another dash of color. Mother Nature masterfully showcases her towering cliffs in desert reds with a sapphire sky dancing on their pinnacles. The sparkling green waters of the Verde River embrace the shoreline in a season full of new beginnings. Seeing wildlife and waterfowl in their natural surroundings simply adds to the floral masterpiece.



“Rose all day?” How about “Rose all May?” This is the month that Verde Canyon Railroad unleashes its **Uncorked** wine festival at the depot every day that the train runs. Visitors can swirl, sip and savor a huge selection of fine wines prior to an amazing train adventure through the glory of a scenic, red-rock wilderness. The senses are fulfilled by a wide range of color, nose, notes and lingering finishes paired with the perfect complement: Springtime in Arizona’s other grand canyon.



*Easter Bunny Express
each Saturday before
Easter Sunday*



SUMMER

Large canopies of cottonwood, sycamore and mesquite trees envelop the meandering river where Great Blue Heron can be seen gliding across the waterway. Late summer and early evening thunderstorms drape waterfalls over glistening crimson parapets.

Wildlife comes alive on **Saturday Starlight Tours** as the engine's articulating headlight casts a glow across the evening landscape ahead. In the colorful chasm, daylight diminishes as the western sky burns from a vivid Arizona sunset. The moon soon unveils its radiance and stars glisten across the evening sky.

Traveling this wild canyon on a summer evening encompasses daylight, sunset, twilight, star shine and moon glow aboard the popular **Grape Train Escapes**, wine-tasting affairs highlighting different wine regions on select Saturday evenings. Wine tasting to the sound of the clickety-clack on the rails takes one back to a time when relaxing train travel was recognized as a hallmark of sophistication.



AUTUMN

As the mercury begins its yearly dip, the jeweled tones of autumn magnify the geological beauty of the Verde Canyon. It is a season of mild temperatures when wildlife becomes more active and visible on the Railroad's **Fall Color Tours**. Cameras are drawn to the open-air viewing cars to capture the kaleidoscope of color as passengers inhale the earthy richness carried on soft breezes.





From mid-September through October, the Oktoberfest-style **Ales on Rails** party begins with a scratch-made lunch and beer samplings on the patio. Award-winning craft beers on tap at the depot are enjoyed by the taste or by the glass before boarding the train for an authentic Arizona adventure.

On weekends in October, Verde Canyon Railroad hosts **Fright Night**, Northern Arizona's only haunted house located inside phantom rail cars permanently parked below the train's Clarkdale depot. For those brave enough to enter, or for those who love the entire month of Halloween, or for those who just love to be terrified, these eerily furnished railcars, long forgotten by the living, are open to explore. A bloodthirsty werewolf, eerie circus clowns, and a spine-chilling wedding party with only skeletal remains are but a few of the shocks and jump-scares that greet or eat those who dare to enter this fresh spin on a classic haunted house.





WINTER

From January through March, mild weather highlights winter in the Verde Canyon, one of few areas in the Southwest where bald and golden eagles can be viewed in their natural habitat during **Eagle Watch**. Because the Canyon's predominantly deciduous foliage is absent in winter, the archeological bone structure of the canyon is on full display. The magnificent birds of prey, along with many other migratory birds, are fully visible from the train. From early winter through late spring, the Canyon's amazing raptors thrill passengers with their aerobatic courting rituals and hunting proficiency as they play and prey along the Verde River.



During February, the Railroad salutes Valentine's Day with its **Chocolate Lovers' Festival** by serving a sumptuous plate of delectable pastries and desserts tableside to each passenger delighting in the season. Specialty drinks, prepared just for romantic moments, accompany the masterful display of decadent chocolate works of art.



THE MAGICAL CHRISTMAS JOURNEY™

Nothing can prepare one for the mystical encounter aboard Verde Canyon rails in December. The **Magical Christmas Journey™** to the North Pole is an exciting holiday event for the entire family, starting at the depot where the spirit of the season is aglow and visible from afar. Holiday food and libation is enjoyed while perusing the festively decorated grounds. There is plenty of time for family photos with a real bald eagle and Princess Noel before touring the miniature Bird's-Eye Village.





Once the conductor yells, “All Aboard,” the train whisks passengers through a magic tunnel onto Santa’s private tracks illuminated with canyon critters that are leading the train to the North Pole. The cars are festooned in holiday splendor, with elves and wacky car attendants helping to make the trip jolly.

As the train rolls past the North Pole, it’s met by Santa, Mrs. Claus and energetic elves. Passengers soak in the Christmas spirit as the train slowly passes by an exquisite collection of life-size buildings including Santa’s Workshop, Mrs. Claus’ Bakery, the Reindeer Flight School and Ugly Sweater Factory, all embellished in twinkling lights and seasonal color. Santa hops onboard for the return trip to Clarkdale, gifting each child with a small memento of his or her unforgettable holiday adventure.



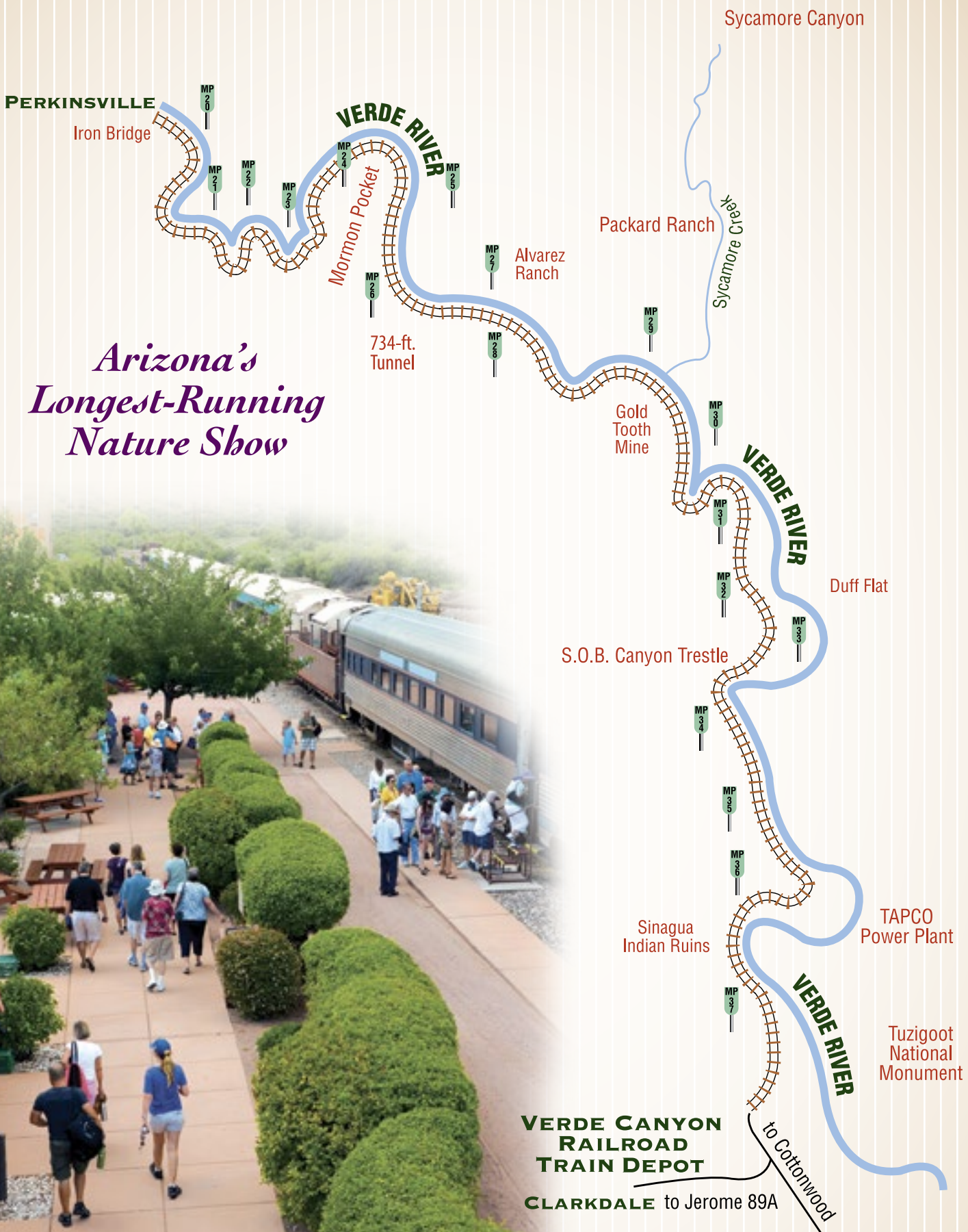


ALL YEAR LONG

Verde Canyon Railroad is ideally situated above the heat of the desert and below the cold of Arizona's high country, so weather conditions are usually favorable no matter what time of year one travels. The Railroad takes passengers across distinctive railroad bridges (one used to be a turntable and one has a steel canopy); past a huge mountain of slag, near Sinagua Indian ruins, through a 734-foot manmade tunnel, past a monocline fold, and close to rock formations millions of years old. History, archaeology, geology, legend and lore of the Verde Canyon come alive through expert narration.

Raptors at the Depot are crowd favorites several days each month throughout the year thanks to the educational efforts of Phoenix's Liberty Wildlife program. As breathtaking as it is to see an eagle in flight, a face-to-face encounter with a raptor is equally as astounding. Everyone has the opportunity for personal interaction with these majestic creatures at the depot before the train departs. It's all part of the journey aboard Verde Canyon Railroad.





*Arizona's
Longest-Running
Nature Show*

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