

Mountain Dell

(Southwest of Flagstaff, Arizona)



A brief history of the community of
Mountain Dell

by Thomas Lee Palmer

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Mountain Dell

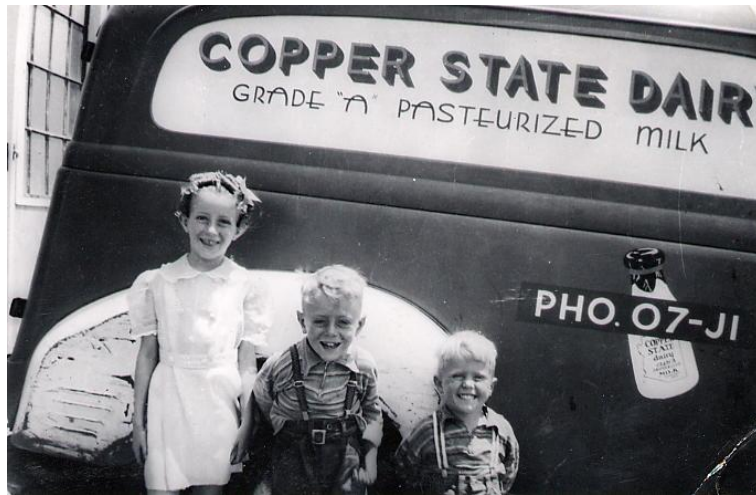
The community of Mountain Dell, just southwest of Flagstaff, Arizona, has been “home” for many wonderful families and individuals – the history of this community is a story worth telling. I have compiled this history from my own records, records and photos from Cline Library’s Special Collections and with valuable contributions from David Haynes, Pete Reznick, Barbara Goodman Klug, Don Perry, and my siblings. Ruth Palmer’s photo collection and personal histories of Ruth and Gus Palmer were especially helpful. This brief history of Mountain Dell, covering a time-span of 77 years from 1939 to 2016, captures memories of early years with some current photos.

DAIRY

In about 1939, Gilbert Harris (who had been working in the copper mine in Jerome, Arizona) purchased the Milk Depot route in Flagstaff, and formed the Copper State Dairy which he operated in Mountain Dell with his brother, Leonard, until 1944. The dairy had about 33 cows. Leonard was drafted into the army and was killed in the Philippines in 1945.



Gilbert and Leonard Harris



Anne, Jack and David with delivery truck in front of dairy barn – David was born in Flagstaff in 1939. Anne’s (Anne Harris Haynes) son, David Haynes, helped uncover much of this early history.



Anne, Jack and Gil in front of original home in Mountain Dell in about 1939 – The Harris family owned the home until their sale to the Palmers in 1944

In February 1944, Gus Palmer purchased the 40 acre parcel of land now known as Mountain Dell that included a few buildings and the dairy from the Gilbert Harris family. He changed the name of the dairy to Service Sanitary Dairy. Gus and Ruth owned and operated the Service Sanitary Dairy for about 2 ½ years. Developing a market in a small community and harsh winters made it difficult to make a living and the dairy business closed at a loss of \$12,000 in mid-1946.



Gus at dairy processing barn with son, Bob, and the ambulance-converted milk delivery truck



Two other dairies operated in the area – the Flagstaff Dairy, owned and operated by the Frank and Sallie Zanzucchi family, and the Pinewood Dairy, owned and operated by the Andy and Mait Matson family. Photos of each dairy are shown below:



Zanzucchi's Flagstaff Dairy in 1958

The Zanzucchi dairy was in operation from 1904 thru 1979 (presently the location of the Flagstaff Ranch Golf Course)

[With children of common ages, the Zanzucchi and Palmer families became close and enjoy to this day a wonderful relationship]



The Pinewood Dairy was located just ½ mile from Flagstaff High School

MAKING MOUNTAIN DELL “HOME”

When the Palmers first came to Mountain Dell, Gus and Ruth Palmer with all of their belongings on a 1 ½ ton truck, arrived in Mountain Dell on March 1, 1944 – greeted by three feet of snow on an unplowed road. The Palmer family (Gus, Ruth and their two boys, Bob and Tom, and later Mel and Marena) settled in and made this peaceful valley “home”. The only buildings in Mountain Dell at that time were at the far west end of the valley at the end of what is now Palmer Avenue.



The first Palmer home in about 1947



Home in 2016



Dairy barn in 2016



Tom and Bob enjoying a puddle
in front of first Palmer home
(abt. 1947)



Bob pulling Tom and Mel abt. 1947
(home in background is just
east and down the hill from first Palmer home)



Mel and Tom with dairy
barns in background



Palmer family in about 1952 (Gus and Ruth,
Mel, Bob, Marena, Tom) in front of original home



Gus Palmer standing just south of Palmer home in abt. 1947
(Just to the left of the old truck once stood a large chicken barn that
was destroyed by a fire in the early 1950s)

SNOW

Snow provided a major challenge to living and doing business in Flagstaff. The photos below show some of the affects of snow and harshness of early winters in Mountain Dell:

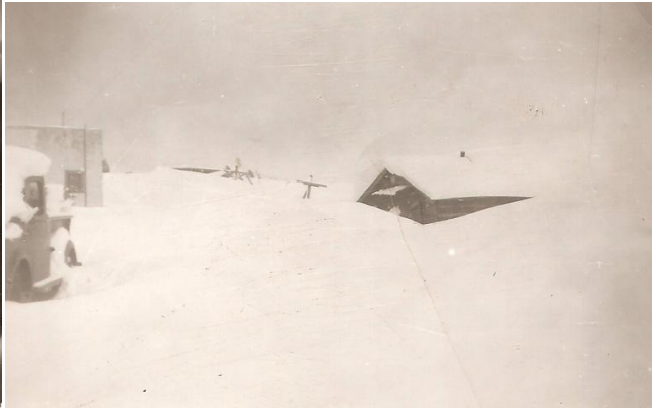


Early Mountain Dell photo showing dairy
barn at center and rabbit shed to right



View looking north from location of present
Palmer home – abt. 1957

Two major snow storms hit Mountain Dell hard. The Arizona Daily Sun reported in a 2014 article, “From Dec. 22, 1948, through the end of January 1949, it snowed nearly every day. Storms dumped a total of 104.8 inches of snow, “the heaviest snowfall in northern Arizona in weather bureau history,” and more came in February.” Gus Palmer recalls standing on top of his pickup cab and not being able to reach the top of a snow drift in Mountain Dell, he remembers about 9 feet of snow on level ground and 14 foot drifts.



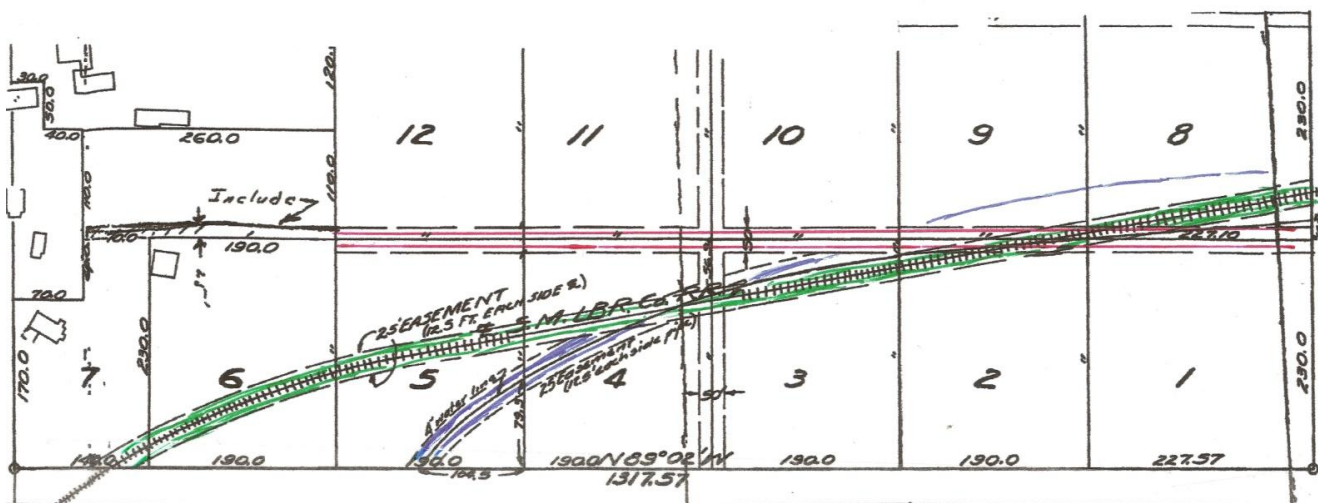
Many can remember the snow storm of December 1967, when 84 inches of snow fell in just 8 days – the largest single snow storm in Flagstaff history. Many of us shoveled snow from roofs and then walked off the roof onto the snow just shoveled.



A meteorologist from the Pulliam Airport station of the National Weather Service stands outside the building after an 8-day storm in December 1967 dropped 84 inches of snow on Flagstaff. (Photo courtesy of the NAU, Cline Library, Special Collections and Archives, Fronske Collection)

RAILROAD

The logging railroad and trains were a part of the early history of Mountain Dell. Trains hauling logs from the Happy Jack area came regularly through the Mountain Dell valley to the Saginaw and Manestee Lumber Mill, which later became the Southwest Lumber Company Mill. The south part of an early 1947 plat map for the proposed Mountain Dell Subdivision shows the location of the early railroad through Mountain Dell:



1947 Plat Map of proposed Mountain Dell Subdivision – not formally approved until mid-1950s
[Red line represents Palmer Avenue; Blue line represents old water main from Pump House Well;
Green line represents railroad]

The original railroad crossing was just below and to the southwest of the original Palmer home as the main road to town went south and west of the original home, down through Sinclair Wash, and then east to U.S. Highway 89A. Later, Palmer Avenue was created and the railroad crossing was moved with the railroad crossing current Palmer Avenue just west of the present Palmer home.



The train engineer would blow the whistle for long periods of time at each railroad crossing – one crossing being just below the Palmer home. The train would come about 4 each morning on the way to Happy Jack and the sound of the long whistle blow was very annoying (and at that hour of the day very unnecessary). Gus Palmer went into the offices of the lumber company and asked that they not blow the whistle at that early hour – they agreed, but the train engineer continued to blow the whistle. Gus again went to the company and told them if it continued he would blow the whistle off with a rifle – they said, well, maybe that’s what it will take. The next morning at 4 am the engineer blew the whistle loud and long, but as he made the turn to the south just below the Palmer home Gus stepped out onto the porch with his 30-40 Krag hunting rifle and fired two shots (intentionally missing the train and engineer), ringing loud and clear in the cold air of the early morning. The next day he approached the engineer at a stop near Lake Mary Road and told him that was a warning and that next time the whistle would go. Mountain Dell and all of southwest Flagstaff was grateful for this warning as the whistle was very scarce during early morning hours thereafter.



1952 Saginaw and Manestee Lumber logging train

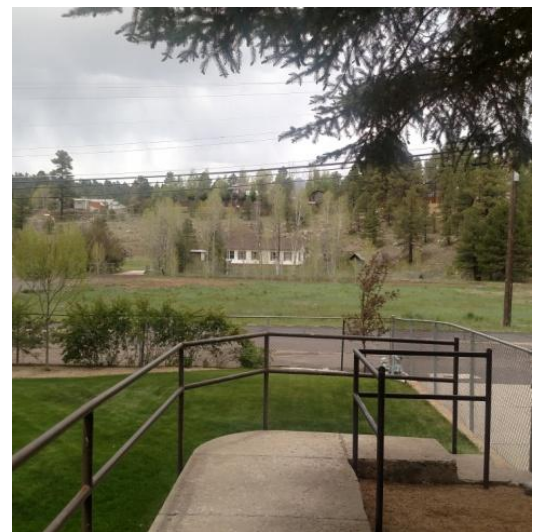


1956 Southwest Lumber Company logging train

The railroad provided excitement to the Palmer children and on one occasion Tom (about age 11 at the time) felt he could easily jump onto one of the empty train cars because it looked liked the train was going quite slow. He ran and made his mighty jump, but the train was going much faster than it appeared and his shin hit the edge of the train car bed and threw him away from the train – all he got for bragging rights was a good scar on his shin. When the Palmers moved to their new home on Lot 1, the railroad track was even closer as shown by the photo below taken in about 1957. This photo also shows the view of Mountain Dell in 1957 looking north from the current Palmer home.



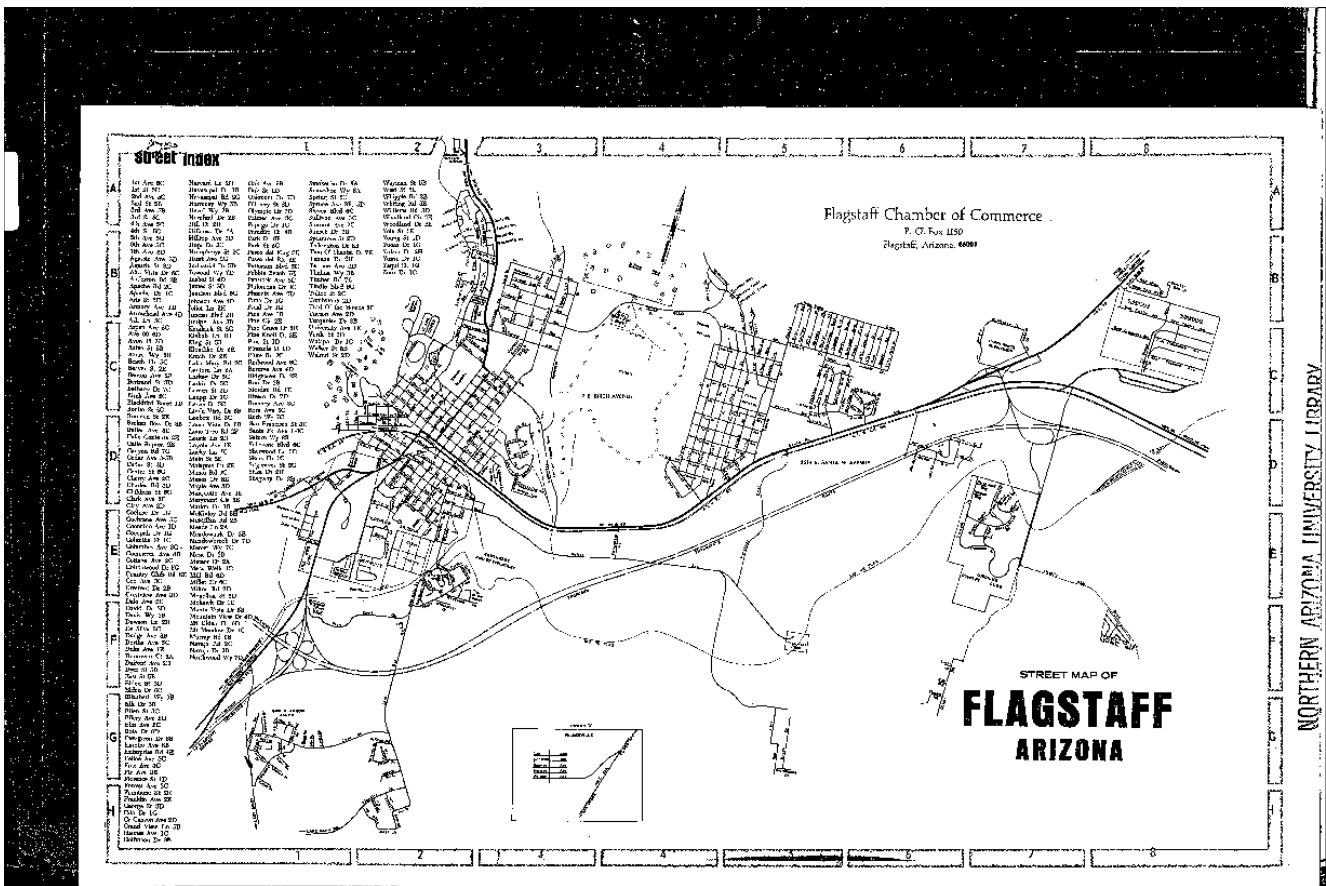
Railroad running just north and parallel to Palmer Avenue (1957)



Same view in May 2016 without railroad

“PALMERVILLE”

Mountain Dell provided a great place for the Palmer children to grow up. They remember raising chickens, rabbits, pigs, horses, dogs and cows (including a family milk cow for many years of their growing up – long after the dairy was history). The Palmers did some farming in the valley – growing oat hay for animals and potatoes for the family in the area later occupied by the swimming pool and miniature golf course. Because the valley was occupied mostly by the Palmers for many years it became know by residents of Flagstaff as “Palmerville”. There was a Forest Service sign on Woody Mountain road that read, “Palmerville – 3 miles”. The sign remained for many years after Mountain Dell Subdivision was formally approved. A 1960 Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce street map for Flagstaff shows an inset for the streets in Mountain Dell, but has it identified as “Palmerville” (see map below).



Small Box near bottom of map above was labeled “Palmerville”

In time, the name Mountain Dell caught on and the Palmers went to the Forest Service and suggested they might want to update their marker to reference “Mountain Dell”, rather than “Palmerville”.

WATER

In 1955 – 56, Flagstaff was in a drought resulting in the city sending a letter of intent to cut off the water supply to Mountain Dell residents – the provision of water to Mountain Dell was voluntary on the city’s part and the city retained the right to terminate the privilege at any time. At this time



Pump House facility at Kachina Village



Likely Mountain Dell connection to pipeline

Mountain Dell received water from the O'Neal Springs pipeline, which brought water from the 1882 Pump House water facility at Kachina Village to the city of Flagstaff until 1959. This arrangement of spring, wash, pump house and cistern once fed water into an 8 1/2-mile long wrought-iron pipeline to Flagstaff, which was just establishing itself as a railroad town and needed water for the steam engines. The pipeline followed the natural curves of the land and was pumped no more than 75 feet in elevation to Fort Tuthill before descending following Sinclair Wash to downtown Flagstaff. The Palmers paid the city for water from this pipeline - \$2 for the first 1,000 gallons and \$1 for each 1,000 gallons thereafter.

In 1956, the Palmers decided to drill a well in Mountain Dell in hopes of securing their own water supply.



Drilling of first well with railroad in background



George Perry Sr. and Ralph Don Perry at Mountain Dell Well 1956



Don Perry I, Elzy Perry Sr., and George Perry Sr. - 1945. Elzy is the father of Perry Brothers - George, Lloyd and Don



Lloyd Perry at site of Woody Mountain Well #1 in 1954 (he was in Navy when above 1945 photo was taken)

The Palmers contracted with Perry Brothers Drilling (George, Lloyd and Don) to drill the well just north of the railroad at the location of the present water storage tanks on Palmer Avenue in Mountain Dell. Perry Brothers did a lot of drilling for the City of Flagstaff and others in Arizona. They hit water at about 1,000 feet and drilled a little deeper to secure an adequate water supply. The city of Flagstaff was excited about the new well and considered acquisition of the well from the Palmers to help remedy the serious water shortage being experienced by the city as shown in the following article in the Arizona Daily Sun on September 11, 1956:

Arizona Daily Sun

Tuesday, September 11, 1956

Palmer Property South Of Flag FROM PRIVATE WELL

Order Pump For Test On Perry Work



Wet Gold Pours From Well

By BILL DEEVER

City Council Monday night gave the go-ahead for a rush-order on a new water pump and ordered City Attorney Neil Christensen to draw up an ordinance whereby a rezoning program can get underway as soon as possible.

Councilman Ralph Bilby, water commissioner, said a 200 gallons-per-minute pump would be ordered immediately from the Reta Pump Company of Bartlesville, Okla., and would be installed in a 995-foot well drilled by Perry Bros. 2½ miles south of Flagstaff.

The well, on the 40-acre property of Gus Palmer off the Oak Creek Highway, required but 10 days drilling time and was sunk to 1,200 feet. It is a 12-inch well that Bilby said would not require a special liner-casing.

Palmer said he would be more than willing to dicker with the city on the well. He has given Council permission to run a test once the pump is installed. The city can expect to draw at least 100,000 to 150,000 gallons daily, and the consumption may top 200,000.

The well, pump installed and a test made, could be supplying water into nearby city lines within a week-and-a-half, Palmer believes.

Within 150 feet of the well is an old four-inch line into the city. It was explained that if all goes well, as expected, another line could be installed into a connecting line at Ft. Tuthill and another into the line which serves Flagstaff Municipal Airport.

Bilby said any water the city could get from Palmer's well

(Continued on Page 2)



WET GOLD — Gus Palmer (left) and George Perry, Jr. don't mind splashing water coming from bail after hauling up 50 gallons of wet stuff from Palmer's 1,200 foot well south of Flagstaff. It appears as though city may swing a deal with

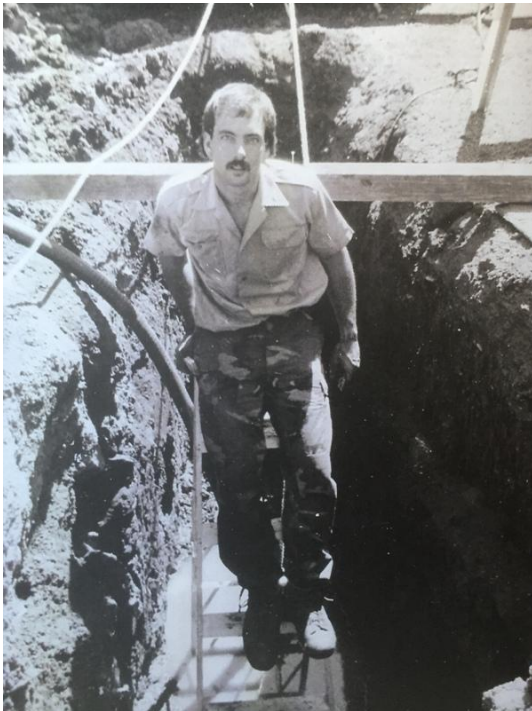
Palmer to pipe the water into city lines within 1½ weeks at which time City Council feels Upper Lake Mary's supply will become totally exhausted. See Story (SUNfoto by Bill Deaver)

The city wanted a well that would produce at least 50 gallons per minute and the Palmer well tested 35 gallons per minute so the city decided not to buy the well. The Palmers developed the well and provided water to Mountain Dell residents, drilling a second well many years later on the northwest corner of Palmer Avenue and Sinclair Street, which also proved successful as shown in the photo below:



Gus Palmer at 2nd well drilled in Mountain Dell in 1975

In 1982, Mountain Dell Water Company was sold to Jack Graham, who sold the company to Pete and Nick Reznick, brothers, in early 1985. Pete Reznick moved to Mountain Dell in 1976, initially living in the old dairy barn – then a rental. Nick Reznick was a partner in Mountain Dell Water, Inc. until he was killed in a plane crash in Utah in 2013. The Reznicks have successfully provided water to Mountain Dell residents for over 30 years.



Nick Reznick shown working on a water leak on Romney Avenue on a water main 4 1/2 feet deep.



Nick leveling gravel to install a new 10,000 gallon water storage tank.

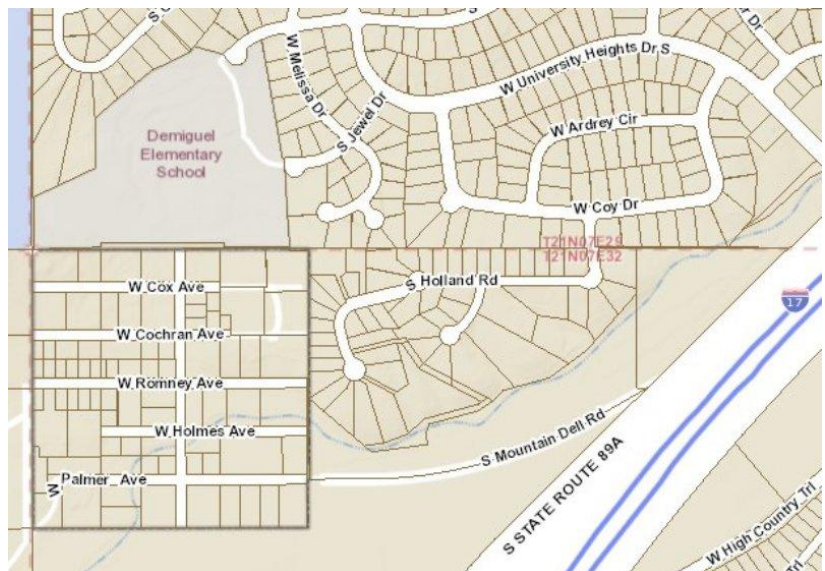
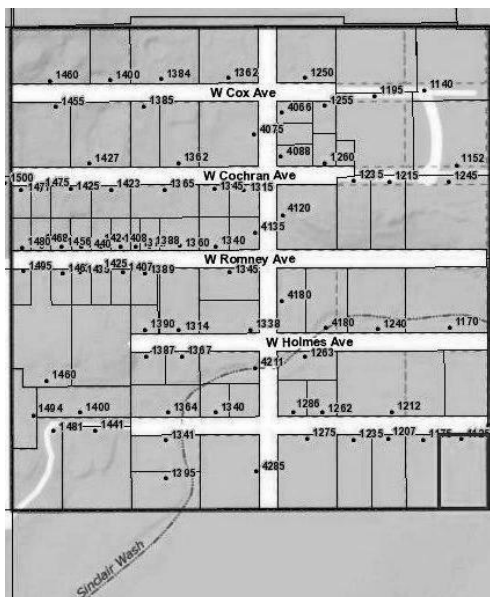


2016 - Pete Reznick at first well site (original home in background)

The Pete and Zaira Reznick family have owned much of the west end of Mountain Dell for many years, including the old home occupied by the Harris and Palmer families and the old dairy barns. They have contributed much to Mountain Dell and its residents and have made Mountain Dell their home for 30+ years – living just southwest of the subdivision itself and raising their children, Alisa and Walker in the calm of Mountain Dell.

MOUNTAIN DELL SUBDIVISION

A subdivision plat was prepared in 1947 for Mountain Dell, but until water became available after the formation of Mountain Dell Water Company in 1956 it could not be approved. A plat was finally approved, later revised in 1963. “Palmerville” gave way to the formal title “Mountain Dell Subdivision”. The subdivision as of May 2016 per the records of Coconino County is shown below:



Mountain Dell Swimming and Tennis Club

The Palmers had a swimming pool built by Mullen Pools and built a bathhouse and table tennis patio, with a grand opening for the “Mountain Dell Swimming and Tennis Club” on 30 May 1958. In 1962 a tennis court and miniature golf course were installed just west of the swimming pool. Admission was granted with a club membership for each season, with guests of club members paying a daily entry fee. Many familiar Flagstaff names were on the membership list, including Babbitts, Croziers, Calls, Dowells, Ellsworths, Fronskes, Frosts, Gabaldons, Goodmans, McEuens, Mickelsons, Nackards, Prestons, Rices, Romneys, Richards, Wrens, Whitings, and Zanzucchis. It was a fun community gathering place, where many Flagstaff residents learned to swim and enjoyed wholesome family recreation. The facility continued in operation until about 1967 when other community-related swimming pools entered the picture and made the club membership impractical for many. A few photos, flyers and ads tell the story:



Swimming pool looking to the southwest



Miniature Golf Course with Richard Mow home (now Charles Spining home) in background



Swimming pool looking to the northeast before homes were built on the hill



Swimming pool with Felix home in the background

MOUNTAIN DELL Swimming & Tennis Club

(3 miles south of the City — Hwy 89A)



Bring the Family

—and—


Swim in the beautiful
HEATED Pool.

- PING PONG
- HORSESHOES
- TENNIS

Swimming Instructions —
Daily — Register Now


Limited Season
Tickets Available

Parties by Reservation
PHONE PR 4-4271



MT. DELL RECREATION CLUB
Flagstaff, Arizona

MT. DELL RECREATION CLUB OFFERS
TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SUMMER
RECREATION AND FUN FOR ALL



HEATED POOL

Tennis Courts

MINIATURE GOLF
"GOOFY GOLF"

Lifeguard

Wading Pool

Diving

Parties by Reservation

POOL OPENED TWO EVENINGS
PER WEEK FOR TEENS AND
FAMILIES

PICNIC AREA

Ping Pong

SOUND LIKE FUN?????????

IT'S FUN FOR ALL THIS SUMMER----DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BRINGS LONGER EVENINGS AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY TO PARTICIPATE IN SUMMER Recreation - CLOSE TO FLAGSTAFF, YET AWAY FROM THE "HUSTLE BUSTLE OF THE CITY. ALL OF THIS FOR ONLY:

\$60.00 Per Year - Family Membership

\$25.00 Per Year - Single Membership

THE POOL IS OPERATED ON A RESTRICTED MEMBERSHIP BASIS. YOU MAY GET YOUR FAMILY TICKET BY CALLING 774-4271, or we will be contacting YOU.

DON'T BE LEFT OUT THIS SUMMER!!! IT'S GOING TO BE LOADS OF FUN!!!!!!



Mountain Dell Pool looking south with railroad and Goodman home in background

Mountain Dell

In addition to the snow that smothered Mountain Dell from time to time, flooding was a major issue for the community on a few occasions.



Flooding in 1950s



Barbara and Virginia Goodman in 1950s

Official Newspaper City of Flagstaff and Coconino County

ARIZONA DAILY SUN

Publication No. 030560

Vol. 33 — No. 116

PHONE 774-4545

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

Tuesday, December 19, 1978

PRICE 20¢



Lots of Water

FLOOD WATERS RUSHED through low-lying areas of Mountain Dell Monday afternoon, forcing some residents to leave their homes and others to paddle around in boats and canoes. Several in-

ches of rain inundated the Flagstaff area and other portions of the state, creating hazardous travel, washed-out bridges, and the flooding of some rivers and streams. The rain in Flagstaff turned to

snow overnight with accumulations of up to 12 inches expected by Wednesday. See related photos page 8.

(SUNfoto)

Two dams were built upstream and culverts under roadways were improved and enlarged to help remedy the flooding. A small dirt tank dam is located about 1 mile upstream and a larger rock dam has been erected about 2 miles upstream from Mountain Dell.



This rock dam with a cement spillway and a large retention basin has proved successful in slowing the water flow in lower Sinclair Wash



This Dirt Tank just downstream from rock dam provides a small retention basin to catch overflow from the rock dam

In 1956, the Palmers built a home on the southeastern lot of Mountain Dell and Phil Harris (Gilbert's brother) and his wife, Elva, and their family moved into the old homestead. Marena Palmer remembers going to the old home and learning to sew from Mrs. Harris, who was their 4-H leader. Phil operated the Pinewood Dairy route from Mountain Dell, while operating a dairy in Camp Verde.

Marena Palmer, Donna & Carol Harris in front; Mel and Tom Palmer in back (near railroad in front of Palmer home at 1125 W. Palmer (abt. 1957)



In 1986, the Palmer home built in 1956 was destroyed by a fire while Gus and Ruth were serving a mission in Nigeria, Africa - upon their return they built a new home on the same location – 1125 W. Palmer Avenue.



1956 cinder block home destroyed by fire in 1986



Frame home built in 1986

In 2010 Gus and Ruth Palmer moved from the mountain due to health and the home was purchased by their son, Tom, and his wife, Gretna, who still live in the home.



Palmer Home in 2016

In recent years, many residents have taken pride in this quiet little community and have built nice homes, repaired and remodeled homes and apartments, and cleaned up yards and lots – making Mountain Dell a place many want to call “home”. Pete and Zaira Reznick continue to provide water to the community through Mountain Dell Water Company and its two deep water wells – a great service to the community. Many who have lived in Mountain Dell yearn to return to this quiet little valley.



2016 photo of Mountain Dell taken from northwest corner of Mountain Dell



2016 photo taken from southwest corner of Mountain Dell

Ready access to the urban trail, close proximity to Demiguel Elementary School and Northern Arizona University, and nearby shopping help make Mountain Dell a desirable place to live – a county island in the midst of the city of Flagstaff.

In addition to the Harris and Palmer families, early families who moved to Mountain Dell include: Phil and Velma Hart family, Gene and Thelma Goodman family, Gerald and Ila Olmstead family, Dick and Grace O’Dair family, Jim and Esther Felix family, Richard and Golda Mow family, and Lee and Pearl Romney family. Since those early days, many other wonderful individuals and families have helped make Mountain Dell the wonderful community it now is.