

Memorial to Pioneer Women 100th Anniversary
Rededication Speech, July 14, 2015
Gwenn Gallenstein

Good morning! My name is Gwenn Gallenstein. I'm the Museum Curator/Archivist for the Flagstaff Area National Monuments, which includes Walnut Canyon. Thank you so much for joining us. Before I get started, I want to thank Ben Carver for his excellent research on this topic.

The unassuming dirt road behind me, on which you either walked or drove this morning, is connected to the national history of road building in this country and tourism in the early 1900s. But before I tell you about the road, I'd like to take you back in time to slightly before it was built. Back in the 1880s close to where we are sitting right now is the entry way to where early tourists would access the prehistoric cliff dwellings of Walnut Canyon. The old path to the canyon is literally behind you. The cliff dwellings were advertised as a point of interest by the Atlantic and Pacific (A&P) Railroad, practically from day one when the railroad passed within a few miles of here and through Flagstaff in 1882. Railroad tourists and locals accessed Walnut Canyon from a stagecoach road built in 1884. The stagecoach road is immediately northwest of the Cliffs Ranger Station, what we refer to today as Ranger Cabin. These cliff dwellings were known to tourists and locals alike and were **almost loved to death** by several hundred people a year who left their trash, marked graffiti on the walls, and heavily looted and damaged the archaeological sites. So serious was the vandalism of the cliff dwellings that the Bureau of Forestry that managed the canyon since 1898 as part of the San Francisco Mountains Forest Reserve decided to place a ranger here in 1904 to look over the sites. Importantly, this was two years **prior** to the 1906 Antiquities Act, a federal law which was passed to protect archeological sites on federal land. The Flagstaff community, although **themselves** participating in the vandalism, were early supporters of protecting the cliff dwellings as a tourist destination. And since Flagstaff lacked a history of its own, community members claimed the cliff dwellings as their own history.

Beginning in 1904, rangers who lived here seasonally at Ranger Cabin were able to provide some protection, although **far** from today's standards. The message rangers gave to visitors was that **it was not** okay to dig, although surface collecting **might** be permissible.

Shortly after the railroad came through Flagstaff in 1882, the first automobile appeared in the United States. That year was 1893. In 1908, Henry Ford developed the Model T. In 1913, he began mass producing the Model T on an assembly line. This enabled the automobile to become more affordable to the middle class. Being adventurous, independent types, Americans wanted to travel on their own schedule in their own space. However, the country lacked transcontinental highways. A National Good Roads Movement which had already been started by bicyclists,

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expanded in popularity with the advent of the automobile. As Carol just explained – in walked the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to this movement. Their interest in roads was patriotic, commemorative of women's roles in westward expansion, historic, and scenic. Their thought was to have one of the transcontinental highways connect important historic sites and follow pioneer trails, encouraging Americans to "See America First," rather than travel to Europe. They lobbied Congress for the funding. By 1913, they had realized the National Old Trails Road as far west as Santa Fe. But where it would go through Arizona was debated. The DAR preferred the northern route as more historic and scenic. Advocates from northern Arizona sent delegates to a National Good Roads Conference in Kansas City in 1913 and won the northern route by one vote.

The National Old Trails Highway was built through northern Arizona, as opposed to southern Arizona, connecting existing roads with one another, roughly following what was to become Route 66 and Interstate 40. The National Old Trails Highway passed near Flagstaff. East of Flagstaff, near Winona, however, the route turned off to the north towards Elden Pueblo. There, a sign directed travelers to the Grand Canyon, bypassing Flagstaff. The Flagstaff Board of Trade was concerned and, by July 1915, they had what was referred to as the "Cliffs Cutoff" section of the National Old Trail Highway built to divert tourists to the Walnut Canyon cliff dwellings and then into Flagstaff. The Cliffs Cutoff road is the dirt road that you see behind me. It then connected with the old stagecoach road that I mentioned from 1884.

After completion of the Cliffs Cutoff bypass, Flagstaff boosters, Mrs. H.D. Evans of the DAR, and Father Cyprian Vabre, a long-time advocate for preserving Walnut Canyon and a powerful good roads supporter, convinced the DAR to place their plaque to pioneer women, which was recommended to be situated somewhere along the National Old Trails Highway in each state, along the Cliffs Cutoff bypass at Flagstaff's prime tourist location, Walnut Canyon. On **July 14, 1915**, the DAR did just that with a dedication ceremony attended by between 100 to 500 people by some accounts. One hundred is more likely when looking at old newspaper pictures. Arizona's first state governor, George Hunt, gave a speech, along with others; the national anthem was sung; and Flagstaff Mayor Francis declared a half holiday for Flagstaff businesses. American flags shrouded the monument, similar to today, and Mrs. Etta Gifford Young recited Sharlot Hall's *Santa Fe Trail* poem, which will also be recited today. A few weeks later, Forest Supervisor John Guthrie proposed national monument status for Walnut Canyon to further protect it due to the new presence of the DAR plaque and growing visitation to the cliff dwellings, now measuring in the thousands of people with the building of the Cliffs Cutoff bypass. With what would **today be considered lightning speed** for a federal action, on **November 30, 1915**, Walnut Canyon was declared a national monument under the United States Forest Service due to the convergence of these factors.

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But the story of the DAR plaque does not end there. Including today's rededication ceremony, this plaque has been dedicated **four** times in one hundred years. **Is this a record?!** By 1942, the administrative center of Walnut Canyon National Monument, by then under the National Park Service, had shifted to its current location of today's visitor center. The monument had increased in size incorporating Ranger Cabin within its boundaries. Early custodian Paul Beaubien had a boundary fence built (the split rail fence that you saw on your right coming in today) to keep cattle out of the monument and to route visitors outside of the monument to the new visitor center. No longer were visitors entering the canyon from the trail behind you. They went down the newly built Island Trail by the current visitor center. Visitors completely bypassed Ranger Cabin and the DAR plaque. The Cliffs Cutoff section of the National Old Trails Highway became a monument service road.

In 1953, the head of the Coconino Chapter of the DAR, Laura Runke, was not pleased that the plaque was no longer being seen by visitors. It was in the state of neglect. It had been shot at by hunters. Look at the plaque closely and you can see bullet impressions. Going over the head of then superintendent, Meredith Guillet, who I might mention was Kayci's grandfather, Mrs. Runke had the plaque moved to the current visitor center parking lot, divorcing it from its association with the National Old Trails Highway, but with the intention that it be seen by visitors. The October 3, 1953, rededication ceremony, which was lightly attended, included a speech by Dr. Tinsley, the head of the Arizona State College history department. He spoke about specific Arizona pioneer women.

Part of Superintendent Guillet's objection to the marker being moved to the visitor center was because of future development in the area and the potential of further damage to the plaque. He was correct. The plaque was damaged during construction work in the early 1980s. It was removed from the parking lot and placed in the maintenance area. In 1988, Arizona State Society DAR Historian Varva Mumford Steele initiated a project to photograph all of the DAR monuments in the state. Aiding in the project, Mrs. Dolores Black went looking for the plaque at Walnut Canyon but was unable to find it. Steele urged then Superintendent Sam Henderson to find the plaque and restore it, calling the National Park Service's lack of attention to the plaque "extremely deplorable." He was able to find the boulder and disassociated plaque, reunite them, and reinstall the monument at the visitor center once more. The Coconino Chapter of the DAR decided to rededicate the plaque for the 80th anniversary of Walnut Canyon National Monument in November of 1995, but due to the government shut down at that point, it was rescheduled for September 22, 1996. At the plaque's **third** and more grand dedication ceremony, music was provided by the NAU Brass Ensemble, and speeches were given by Flagstaff Mayor Chris

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Bavasi and Superintendent Sam Henderson, among others. Again, the focus was on specific pioneer women.

When Susan Olberding of the Coconino Chapter of the DAR approached me last year to discuss the possibility of speaking at a centennial rededication of the plaque, I was pleased to do so because of the complexity of its history and how interconnected the plaque is to the foundation of Walnut Canyon as a national monument. The wording on the plaque, honoring Arizona pioneer women, although important, barely begins to cover its full story. We knew we had funding to produce wayside exhibits focused on Walnut Canyon's history. Our plan was to place an interpretive sign near the plaque, which was still in front of the Visitor Center, overlooked by visitors and lacking context. But over the course of a few months and with the knowledge of the planned reopening of the recently renovated Ranger Cabin, it became clear to us and to the Coconino Chapter of the DAR that the plaque needed to go back to its original context. Since May of 2015, visitors have been able to see the plaque here and learn about the connection between it, Ranger Cabin, and the National Old Trails Highway through Ranger talks. Next year, our interpretive wayside exhibits will be installed. No longer, **at least not on our watch**, will the DAR plaque need explanation as to what it is and why it is here. We know the role it played with the national road system, the history of Arizona, Flagstaff tourism, and to how Walnut Canyon became a national monument, and we want our visitors to understand this history. **If the plaque had ears**, I would tell it – Welcome Home! Thank you!