



David's Web Wonder

Ormand Family Activity

[Top Level](#)

Archives:

- [Ten State Tour](#)

October 2006: Spending the Night at the Gadsden Hotel

We have an ongoing family project to see our native state of Arizona. You wouldn't think this would be so hard, but whenever a vacation opportunity comes up, we have to balance the Arizona Project with visiting family in other states. But for a two-day holiday, we decided to try out one of the Famous Old Hotels in Arizona: The Gadsden, in Douglas.

To get to Douglas from Tucson, you have to go through Benson, then Tombstone, then Bisbee. Bisbee is very picturesque; we've been there before (another Famous Old Hotel, the Copper Queen, where we will hopefully go again) (and be less fearful of ghosts, but that is a different story). We've been in Tombstone before, also, but we never had seen the OK Corral. Which next to Boot Hill is most of the reason Tombstone is still inhabited. So we stopped to see it.

Mostly, the OK Corral is a western stunt show. For the most part, you've seen one, you've seen them all. There are gradients in talent and R-ratedness. Trail Dust Town and Old Tucson rate low on talent and okay on R-ratedness. Other shows in Tombstone (we had seen before) rate low on talent and high on R-ratedness. A show we saw in Williams while boarding the steam train to the Grand Canyon rated okay on talent and off-the-chart for R-ratedness. I guess it's part of the American entertainment scene to think you can draw a crowd with sex jokes and innuendo. The OK Corral was okay on talent and okay on R-ratedness. But they didn't let you take pictures, so you'll have to come and see for yourself.



"The elder shall serve the younger."

Tombstone was once the major city in southeastern Arizona, and therefore the seat of Cochise County. I guess there was an idea to put the capital here, but maybe all of Arizona's old towns make that claim; only Prescott, Tucson, and Phoenix actually made out. But the old courthouse is now a state historical park. Up the spiral wooden

staircase are the courtrooms. One is preserved/restored to period form, the others are exhibits.



Outside the Cattlemen room is a saddle for use by small people. These people aren't so small, but they had to try out the saddle anyways.



In the yard of the courthouse is a reconstructed gallows.



Charity attends a necktie party. Seems awful happy about it.

The founder of Tombstone was Ed Schieffelin, a prospector who operated out of Fort Huachuca. The soldiers told him, "all you'll find out there is your tombstone." He found silver instead. In his honour, his brother constructed a large adobe meeting hall/theatre, Schieffelin Hall, finished in 1881 (same year as the famous gunfight), and still in service today.



Also the masonic lodge. Pretty imposing for an adobe structure. The car lot behind used to be occupied by other historic structures. Arizona and Arizonans are not kind to their historic structures. Note the overcast that accumulated toward the end of the day. It rained on us pretty good just as we got back to our car.



Three tough characters take aim with their deadly ice-cream cones on the streets of the Town Too Tough To Die!

We left Tombstone late in the afternoon, passed through Bisbee, made our way around the interesting roads-to-all-points traffic circle just outside of the Copper City, and arrived in Douglas in fading daylight. The Hotel is the largest structure in town, but it was a bit hard to find our way in. It used to have a grand entrance, but not so much anymore. The lobby is just as fantastic as ever! Unfortunately, it was late, it was cloudy, it is lit dimly with period lighting fixtures, it is made of mostly dark stained wood, and it is too big for feeble camera flashes to do much. The stained-glass skylight is between the wings of the building, and apparently receives light mostly on clear days around noon. Doubtless larger cities in more developed states could boast finer Famous Old Hotel lobbies, but this one was (a) functioning and (b) charmingly impressive.



The Grand Staircase leads up to the gallery around the lobby and access to the first level of guest rooms. The stained glass window behind the tourists shown admits most of the light.

I understand Grandpa and Grandma Welch spent their honeymoon night at the Gadsden in the early part of the 1900s.

It turns out the Gadsden also has ghosts. We never saw ghosts (there's some question whether they will even appear to Christians), but for some reason I sleep poorly (or not at all) with just the prospect. I don't know why the Gadsden bothered me, since the

ghosts are never seen anywhere but the basement, but I couldn't sleep. It's a comfortable hotel, too. Or for the most part: It's also an old hotel, and I didn't wonder too much about the patches in the ceiling, but at 1:00 in the morning, I was hearing "tick, tick, tick". After a while, I turned on the lights and observed that a pipe in the ceiling was leaking through the plaster! Onto Jerri's side of the bed! There was no way to effectively move the bed, and the ceiling was high enough that catching the drip in a trashcan made an awful racket, so I went down to the desk and asked for another room. On the corner, and even nicer, but I still couldn't sleep. Oh, well. It was an interesting adventure, for all that. Highly recommended.



The view from the outside, from a little park with a gazebo, tended by Department of Correction inmates in orange jumpsuits with leaf blowers in the early morning hours.

On the other hand, there is **nothing else** in Douglas. I can't understand how it operates. The Entrance to Mexico is there, a state prison is up the road, and there's a little agriculture in the area, but nothing to justify the not-insignificant size of Douglas. We had half an idea to visit the Chamber of Commerce for a clue, but decided to get on with our adventure, and visited the Slaughter Ranch instead.

Texas John Slaughter arrived in the 1890s, when Tombstone had pretty much gone bust and the Apache Wars were pretty much over, but before Pancho Villa and the U.S. Army started tangling. In addition to his successful San Bernardino Ranch, he was Sheriff of Cochise County, and developed a reputation for bringing 'em back dead more often than alive.



The surrounding desert is quite barren, but San Bernardino Ranch enjoys artesian springs. Beautiful place, but probably more lawn now than in John Slaughter's day.



Inside the ranch house, which was actually smaller than you'd think for the size of family that occupied it. But then, Grandma Welch's house on Drachman St. was pretty small for mom and her brothers/sisters. Different standards. We're so spoiled...

After leaving the Slaughter Ranch, we drove back along the reasonably-good dirt road to Douglas, passing many Border Patrol vehicles. Turns out this road parallels the border, and Douglas/Agua Prieta is a major crossing point for illegals. The Slaughter Ranch headquarters is 200 yards from the Mexican border. Then we headed north, past the prison/airfield complex (Jerri thought that was convenient), and through the towns of Cochise County. Don't expect to find much on the way! We bought our lunch from the gas station in Elfrida.

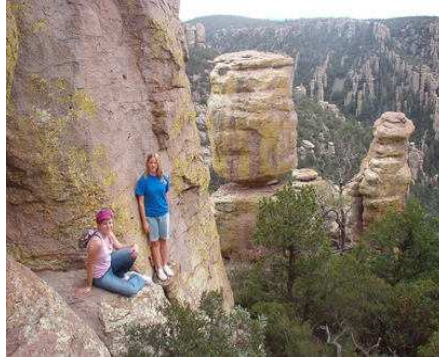
We arrived at the Chiricahua National Monument visitor center around 5:00, just in time for Jerri to get her National Parks stamp and to watch a film about the Chiricahua Mountains (and their millions of years history) narrated by "famous" Wilcox cowboy, Rex Allen Sr. Hey, local color. We then drove through the park to the end of the road at Massai Point and looked around.



Mom and her kid viewing the Wonderland of Rocks. You can see the Dragoon mountains and Cochise Stronghold in the distance. It was raining in the valley between, and that rainstorm would arrive here shortly.



A closer view of the spires and columns. This place is amazing, and calls for a longer return visit. Maybe a camping trip.



There are many balancing rocks in the Wonderland. This was close to the path; to see the more spectacular instances requires a 2-3 mile hike, and we didn't have the time for that today.



Do you see Cochise' face?

There are footpaths all over the place up there, including one (apparently) from Massai Point to Echo Canyon. Charity and I proposed hiking over there, supposedly just over half a mile, but mom and Faith decided to drive over there and wait for us. After half a dozen false starts down various paths and an attempt to cut across without a path, we decided it would be smarter to give up and walk back on the road. Good call. The clouds kept on piling up, and a cold rain started falling before we made it to the Echo Canyon parking lot, where mom was anxiously watching the trailhead for our emergence "the right way". So we got into our warm(er) car and left down the mountain road again, stopping a few times to see such sights as China Boy, The Sea Captain, and Organ Pipes as the rain picked up. As we left the Monument in a full downpour, we agreed that this would be a place we wanted to revisit.

The rain stayed with us on the valley road until we drew near Dos Cabezas town, and the late afternoon sun glared out from under the roof of the clouds and off the wet road right into our eyes. But soon we turned north again, and passed through Wilcox, still celebrating Rex Allen Days, and got back on the freeway.

We returned to Tucson that evening and decided to eat at the Triple-T Truck Stop diner, famous for deep-dish apple pie. Unfortunately, after dinner, we were full enough and tired enough that we passed on the pie, and just went on home. A delightful Arizona holiday!