

The Profit Made From Phoenix Mountains  
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Phoenix, Arizona has been able to claim one of the largest urban parks in the United States. The Parks and Recreation Department of Phoenix maintains 47,612 acres of almost a dozen mountains, public parks, and desert preserves.<sup>1</sup> A great portion of this area is the numerous mountains that span across Phoenix including; South Mountain, North Mountain, and Piestewa Peak (formally known as Squaw Peak). South Mountain sits approximately eight miles south of downtown Phoenix, with the Salt River sitting between the two. It is the second largest city park in the United States covering 16,306 acres, trailing only behind McDowell Sonoran Preserve as the largest city park just a few miles away in Scottsdale, Arizona.<sup>2</sup> North Mountain and Piestewa Peak lay twelve miles north of Phoenix at the heart of a range known as the Phoenix Mountains. Preservation of the mountains around Phoenix dates back to the 1920s, but the affects of these mountains date back even further. The mountains have attracted individuals for personal gains in the form of mining and housing developments, to that of public gains generated by health-seekers and tourism. They have a unique quality apart from that of other landscapes. Whereas forests may be regrown or dams destroyed to let a river flow again, restoring mountaintops can be a bit of an added challenge. The excavation of mountains for houses, roads, and mining eliminates the possibility of reusing the land for other purposes. National trends indicate preservation of these unique locations for social and cultural reasons: for example abolishing poverty and minimizing crime.<sup>3</sup> Phoenix entrepreneurs and government officials have often used this uniqueness for personal economic gains, with social and cultural reasons being a secondary factor. However, even though private ownership of the mountains provided economic success for individuals in Phoenix, preservation of the mountains as public

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Harnik, Abby Martin, and Matthew Treat, *2016 City Park Facts*, The Trust for Public Land, (2016), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Harnik et al., *2016 City Park Facts*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Terence Young, "Modern Urban Parks," *Geographical Review* 85, no. 4 (1995): 535-51, doi:10.2307/215924, 537.

parks had a far greater impact on the urban development and economy of Phoenix because of their unique physical features.

The development of public parks in America span back to the creation of Boston Common in 1634 and the Massachusetts's Great Ponds Ordinance of 1641, establishing that all ponds not being used by a town were to be open to the public for fishing and hunting.<sup>4</sup> However, a concerted effort to set aside large landscapes would not happen until much later. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, urban parks started to sprout up across the United States. The motivation for creating urban parks has largely been connected to the priorities and values held by the culture at that time. Architectural sociologist, Galen Cranz, has identified four stages of park design between 1850 and 1980. Starting with the pleasure ground (1850-1900), parks were seen as a response to the bleak industrialized city and made to be aesthetically pleasing for mental relief.<sup>5</sup> For example in 1860, the designer of Central Park in Manhattan — Frederick Law Olmsted — enforced park laws with a park police force that didn't allow "fishing or swimming in the park lake, picking flowers, sports, or music on the Christian Sabbath."<sup>6</sup> Urban parks were to be quietly seen and walked through, not used for recreational purposes.

In the 1850s, Arizona was far from the point of creating urban parks to offset the bleak industrialized city. In many cases it was still in the process of developing urban communities. Settlement near the juncture where the Gila River and Salt River meet would have a nearly four hundred-year gap between the mysterious disappearance of the Hohokam and the agricultural revival accredited to Jack Swilling. An opportunity was in place to profit from agricultural

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas R. Cox, "From Hot Springs to Gateway: The Evolving Concept of Public Parks, 1832-1976," *Environmental Review*: ER 5, no. 1 (1981): 14-26, doi:10.2307/3984530, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Galen Cranz, "Women in Urban Parks," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 79-95.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/3173808>, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Fisher, "Nature in the City: Urban Environmental History and Central Park," *OAH Magazine of History* 25, no. 4 (2011): 27-31, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/23209954>, 29.

production in response to the large number of Wickenburg miners searching for gold and federal troops stationed at Fort McDowell to protect miners from Indian raids. In many accounts, historians have believed that the development of farmland was due to the ingenuity of Swilling to convince a group of miners to dig out what was believed to be formally Hohokam canal systems.<sup>7</sup> The canals were re-opened, becoming known as Swilling Ditch, and by 1871 the ditch was "carrying 200 cubic feet of water per second and could irrigate 4,000 acres."<sup>8</sup> Access to water for agriculture had played a vital role in the rise of Phoenix, as both the Wickenburg miners and federal troops were having great difficulty developing farmland in those areas. Swilling and his partners were able to set into motion the resettlement where two rivers meet by moving fifty miles southeast from the mining camps. Most accounts of the development of Phoenix have focused on Swilling's ability to defeat the adversity of the harsh desert and take control of the landscape. When the Swilling Irrigating and Canal Company started development around the Tempe and Papago buttes, a large rock form that diverted subterranean water to the Gila River blocked their route; forcing them to move further downstream and attempting it again.<sup>9</sup> After renewed success, the company continued to grow both in farmland and population. At one point, it was boasted that the canals were supplying "nearly every demand of man, beast and crop" and Swilling decided he would experiment by planting the Irish potato — largely believed not to be able to grow in the arid, desert weather.<sup>10</sup> Swilling had shown a distinctive ability to not only adapt to an area that so many others had struggled, but he was able to use that environments water source to his benefit.

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995), 199.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History*, 199.

<sup>9</sup> Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 49.

<sup>10</sup> "On Salt River," *The Weekly Arizona Miner*, September 3, 1870.

However, water was not the only reason for the success of the Swilling business endeavor. Between 1849 and 1886, over forty major U.S. Army camps and forts were established in Arizona. Fort McDowell functioned from 1865 to 1890 at the junction of the Verde and Salt River with the intended purpose to "operate against the Indians of the surrounding mountains."<sup>11</sup> As miners started to settle in mining camps, it created more frequent interactions with local Indian tribes. Fort McDowell was set up to provide that protection, yet the army struggled with the problem of "too few soldiers confronting too vast a land."<sup>12</sup> Swilling, miners, and others residing in the Salt River Valley could not always depend on the soldiers to protect them and without the protection of the Army; setting up a large structural enterprise would not have been possible. Phoenix was chosen in part because of the lack of inhabitants, but even more so because of the protection the mountains provided from attacks. While developing his ditches, the *Arizona Miner* praised Swilling for picking a "body of land [that] lies several miles from any mountains, and therefore [was] comparatively safe from Indian depredations;" not allowing raiders to get "away with their booty" because of the settlers ability to overtake them on the plains before the mountains.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the mountains were just the right distance from the river allowed his organization to fully develop the area without the fear of raids. The mountains had influenced the decision of where and how Swilling would prosper when finding ways to feed miners and soldiers.

Over the next couple of decades, a number of federal policies would slowly eliminate the threat of confrontation coming from the mountains altogether. In 1868, President Grant progressed his "Peace Policy", which called for peacefully moving tribes onto reservation land.

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<sup>11</sup> Ray Brandes, "A Guide to the History of the U. S. Army Installations in Arizona, 1849-1886," *Arizona and the West* 1, no. 1 (1959): 42-65, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/40166912>, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> "On Salt River," *The Weekly Arizona Miner*, September 3, 1870.

Fort McDowell was given \$150,000 to move the Yavapais, a tribe to the west of Phoenix, and the Apaches, a tribe to the east, onto Camp Verde together.<sup>14</sup> Not realizing the distinction between the two tribes and forcing them onto reservations provided even more challenges because of the skirmishes that would take place. With the failure of the reservations in 1887, the Dawes Act was passed in an attempt to give tribal members land based on an individual basis. When the Yavapais returned to their land, they were "forced to settle on the rocky slopes of the valley" while the white settlers were given first choice of the richer bottomland further down the mountainside.<sup>15</sup> A pattern of personal economic gain was beginning to produce momentum for the future development of Phoenix. Settlers were now in a position to further explore the environment around them and expand their economic reach. The exploration into those unique mountainous areas intensified as the threat of confrontation with Indians subsided. Settlers were now using these mountains for their pleasure, but not with the same purpose as those walking through Manhattan's Central Park. For settlers of Arizona the purpose was an economic benefit.

The national trend of preserving these unique lands for the purpose of tranquility would soon gain a greater cultural and social purpose in the second phase. The reform park (1900-1930) was used to provide organized activities for the working-class that had been excluded from the "pleasure ground" in an attempt to solve the moral problems of society.<sup>16</sup> For Phoenix, the concerns pertaining to moral problems of society was less of a focus than trying to attract more people to settle. Between 1900 and 1930, Phoenix would struggle with the conflict between using the mountains for personal gains and creating a greater impact on the urban economy through preservation. In 1890, the population of Phoenix was 3,152 and by 1910 it jumped to

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<sup>14</sup> William R. Coffeen, "The Effects of the Central Arizona Project on the Fort McDowell Indian Community," *Ethnohistory* 19, no. 4 (1972): 345-77, doi:10.2307/481440, 347.

<sup>15</sup> William R. Coffeen, "The Effects of the Central Arizona Project on the Fort McDowell Indian Community," 349.

<sup>16</sup> Galen Cranz, "Women in Urban Parks," 79.

11,134.<sup>17</sup> Phoenix could still not claim to be the largest community in Arizona. That privilege belonged to Tucson, having a few thousand people more. Both communities were agriculturally based, yet neither had gained a clear marketing advantage prior to the twentieth century. Miners had thought with the threat of raids being removed that the mountains of Phoenix would provide just as much success as those areas that originally attracted them to Arizona. In 1872, they had taken a number of prospecting tours on South Mountain, but had failed to find the valuable metals.<sup>18</sup> The lack of gold, silver, or copper deterred miners from settling in an area that provided no income. The appeal of personal gain had subsided for the time being and the city of Phoenix would have to find another way to profit.

Without the mining success, Phoenix was trying to make headwind with political power. In 1871, the rising community was named county seat in the newly created Maricopa County. A majority of the time the territorial capital was placed in Prescott because of its strong connections with mining, with a brief move to Tucson. As Prescott went through a slump and slowed production, the capital was moved to Phoenix in 1889 in what one newspaper would call "the handsome 'Coup de tat' of the Maricopa delegation."<sup>19</sup> The capital would stay in Phoenix from that point on and became the state capital in 1912 with the introduction of Arizona to statehood. It was through this process that Phoenix boosters realized their success and the power in marketing. Phoenix knew that it would not depend on the mining industry, but could use the mountains for something more than camping or hideouts.<sup>20</sup> The unique physical features of the mountains would begin to be used as a marketing tool in future development.

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Decennial Census Population of Arizona, counties, cities, places: 1860 to 2000," Arizona Department of Commerce, <http://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/cdm/ref/collection/statepubs/id/13688> (accessed March 20, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> "From Maricopa County," *The Arizona Weekly Miner*, November 23, 1872.

<sup>19</sup> J.C. Martin, "Editorial Notes," *The Arizona Weekly Journal-Miner*, February 6, 1889.

<sup>20</sup> "Miller's Murderer," *Arizona Republican*, October 27, 1895.

While miners were having trouble taking from the mountains and the city of Phoenix was establishing itself as a political power with the power of marketing; the weather created by the mountains would bring an influx of health-seekers to the Salt River Valley. Those diagnosed with tuberculosis, rheumatism, and asthma made their way to the West to live in the dry, arid weather for therapeutic effects. Moving west for health reasons was nothing new to the movement of settlers from the East coast. In 1844, Dr. Elijah White wrote, "Residence there had convinced him that it was the healthiest climate he had ever known."<sup>21</sup> Arizona would become an ideal place for health-seekers to find relief for their ailments. Starting in 1877, Enoch Conlin took a trip across Arizona documenting his experiences and observations about the state. Publishing *Picturesque Arizona* in 1878, he reported a doctor's assessment that his patients had not become ill in the hillsides of the Phoenix Mountains and those "there in the last stages of renal and lung affections slept out of doors all and every night with perfect freedom."<sup>22</sup> The message was quickly spreading of the healing powers of the environment for those with respiratory problems. The reason for this healing power was largely unknown for some time until studies showed just how the mountains were affecting them.

One such study took place on the southern side of North Mountain with a village of tent homes in an area known as Sunnyslope. As the story goes, William R. Norton, an architect, was riding his buggy by the slopes of North Mountain and commented, "Isn't that a beautiful sunny slope?"<sup>23</sup> Due to the rising number of desert dwellers who could not afford much more after an exhausting trip to Arizona and a ban on tent houses in city limits in 1903, Norton would develop

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<sup>21</sup> John E. Baur, "The Health Seeker in the Westward Movement, 1830-1900," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46, no. 1 (1959): 91-110, doi:10.2307/1892389, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Enoch Conklin, *Picturesque Arizona: being the Result of Travels and Observations in Arizona during the Fall and Winter of 1877*, (New York: Mining Record Printing Establishment, 1878), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Reba Wells Grandrud, *Sunnyslope*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 8.



a subdivision in 1911.<sup>24</sup> He would go on to name this subdivision Sunny Slope. Many of these dwellers came to Sunnyslope for the specific reason of recovery and in 1921, research on the mountains would be published giving them a greater understanding as to why they were there. James Gordon of the Weather Bureau published his findings entitled "Temperature Survey of the Salt River Valley, Arizona" in the *Monthly Weather Review*. Gordon found this particular location to have had unique qualities. The report details how a majority of the valley floor was not ideal for the elderly and those health-seekers because of the extreme range of temperature and high humidity of the early morning. However, on the hillside of North Mountain the temperature would be nearly ten degrees lower and lacked the humidity levels that the rest of the valley experienced. In his opinion, "few places in the world can offer a more nearly ideal winter climate than these hillsides with the abundant, healing sunshine and warm days of the desert, but without its great temperature"<sup>25</sup> This was created by the cooling effect in the evenings and warming affect in the mornings by the winds moving up and down the mountain side. More health-seekers would see this report and make their way to North Mountain. Eventually Sunnyslope had become known as a place for the sick and two health-seekers took it upon themselves to help those with similar problems. Marguerite Colley and Elizabeth Beatty worked together and became known as the "Angels of the Desert." By 1929, multiple non-profit and religious organizations had come together to create Desert Missions to offer medical support, food, and supplies.<sup>26</sup> Health-seekers with respiratory ailments started off migrating to the Phoenix area because of the environmental benefits provided by the mountains. It quickly turned

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<sup>24</sup> Philip R. VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix:1860-2009*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 34.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred J. Henry, "Temperature Survey of the Salt River Valley, Arizona," *Monthly Weather Review* 49, vol. 5 (1921), 273.

<sup>26</sup> Reba Wells Grandrud, *Sunnyslope*, 8.

into a campaign to attract a healthier population. Phoenix boosters, who had realized their capabilities to market through political power, turned their attention to marketing the mountains.

Even before Desert Missions was created, the want to attract healthy tourist instead of tubercular patients had been brewing. In 1909, the *Arizona Republican* reported and made the argument that the city should no longer have to care for the ill. It was showing its support for a housing development between Piestewa Peak and Camelback Mountains that would house patients and would be self-sufficient. A farm within the development would provide both food and profit for the cost of living expenses. To the reporter, it was “hardly a fair proposition” to ask the citizens of Phoenix “to care for the indigent sick who come here in large numbers from other states.”<sup>27</sup> However, the idea of a self-sufficient retreat that could bring a profit to the community appealed to the city government. The model city that the *Arizona Republican* reporter showcased would turn from a focus on recovery to one of rest and relaxation.

As Phoenix boosters tried to market their community as one of rest and relaxation, they found it necessary to capitalize on the unique landscapes that engulfed the city. North Phoenix had been underdeveloped up to 1920, but the South Mountain area was starting to expand quicker than expected. Between 1910 and 1920 the population rose from 11,134 to 29,053.<sup>28</sup> As the population increased, so did the buying of land by private citizens and enterprises. It was the fear of losing this land for public use, and profit, that would eventually lead to the city of Phoenix purchasing over 16,000 acres from the national government. The rapid growth on South Mountain was aided by two major developments.

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<sup>27</sup> “Will Build Model City,” *Arizona Republican*, April 18, 1909.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Decennial Census Population of Arizona, counties, cities, places: 1860 to 2000,” Arizona Department of Commerce, <http://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/cdm/ref/collection/statepubs/id/13688> (accessed March 20, 2017).

The first was the renewed interest in mining. Starting in the 1870s South Mountain would not produce major reports of mining until 1893. The *Phoenix Daily Herald* announced, “Gold, Gold, Gold!” with excitement that many have “hunted, sweat, and bled for gold and they are finding it in quantities about the margins of the Salt River Valley.”<sup>29</sup> The amount of gold actually in South Mountain was a bit inflated, but it did create a rise in the number of mining organizations looking to stake their claim. In the early 1900s, George McClarty obtained several properties on South Mountain, including one of the larger mines, the Max Delta mine. The deepest shaft was 600 feet and the longest being 1,800 feet, producing about \$30,000.<sup>30</sup> Newspapers across the country were reporting on the development of the Max Delta mine, attracting even more miners to the area. The *El Paso Herald* reported in 1915 that the mine was adding a mill and would be employing at least 300 more men.<sup>31</sup> The increased mining population would further complicate future attempts to preserve South Mountain.

The second development was a change in ownership of the land below by diverse populations. A number of large-scale floods would cause affluent citizens to move further north in the 1890s. The *Arizona Republican* described the Salt River as an “angry, raging stream carrying destruction in its wake”<sup>32</sup> Many of those within the affluent population moved closer to North Mountain, causing further tension with health-seekers. Hispanic, African-American, and Japanese immigrant families were able to purchase homes and land on the hillside of South Mountain as the prices decreased in this area. In 1910, Dwight Heard hired the Colored American Realty Company to “recruit African Americans from Texas, Oklahoma, and other

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<sup>29</sup> Todd W. Bostwick, "GOLD—GOLD—GOLD: The Rise and Fall of Mining in Phoenix's South Mountain Park," *The Journal of Arizona History* 42, no. 1 (2001), 59-80, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/41696626>, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Philip McKaig, *Mining Engineer Report, April 1909*, on file in Arizona Department of Mines and Mineral Resources (ADMMR). <http://docs.azgs.gov/SpecColl/1986-01/1986-01-0184-1.pdf> (accessed March 21, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> “Max Delta Company to have a Mill in a Year,” *El Paso Herald*, December 1, 1915.

<sup>32</sup> “With a Crash,” *Arizona Republican*, February 20, 1891.

states” to work on 6,000 acres of ranch land in South Phoenix.<sup>33</sup> The population of African Americans would rise from 328 in 1910 to 1075 in 1920.<sup>34</sup> In the span of those ten years the Japanese population also rose from 113 to 246.<sup>35</sup> The Kishiyama family, creating a flower enterprise, would look for "a particular type of soil and climate, before finally settling in an area sheltered from frost near the base of South Mountain."<sup>36</sup> Again, the mountains had created a unique climate compared to the rest of the desert that allowed the Kishiyama family to grow a large and productive flower business. The family would later be interned during World War II and lose this land. It wasn't until after the war that the family was able to move back to the land and repurchase a plot nearby.

The rapid growth of population, spread of mining sites, and housing developments on South Mountain worried Phoenix residents that a limited amount of land would be available in the near future for what they claimed for recreational purposes. In 1923, the city commission started to look into the purchasing of South Mountain. Although cultural and social motivation for preservation was a factor, the loss of this land due to economic prosperity by private citizens was just as great. The City Planning Committee had done an exploration and had come to the conclusion that this would be an ideal location for a mountainside resort. The Committee had seen how health-seekers had flocked to North Mountain facilities and saw the impact of mountainside amenities. They marketed it to the community by expressing the growing trend of East Coast visitors to the West Coast mountains where they could play and would have the

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<sup>33</sup> City of Phoenix, Historic Preservation Office, *African American Historic Property Survey*, by David R. Dean and Jean A. Reynolds, Athenaeum Public History Group, (Phoenix, Arizona, 2004), 15.

<sup>34</sup> City of Phoenix, Historic Preservation Office, *African American Historic Property Survey*, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Walz, "THE ISSEI COMMUNITY IN MARICOPA COUNTY: Development and Persistence in the Valley of the Sun, 1900-1940," *The Journal of Arizona History* 38, no. 1 (1997): 1-22, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/41696317>, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Eric Walz, "THE ISSEI COMMUNITY IN MARICOPA COUNTY: Development and Persistence in the Valley of the Sun, 1900-1940," 5.

financial backing to do so.<sup>37</sup> In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge signed legislation turning over Salt River Mountains to Phoenix. The city of Phoenix was allowed to purchase nearly 14,000 acres at \$1.25 per acre to use the land for a municipal “park, recreation, playground, or public convenience purpose.”<sup>38</sup>

It is often believed that the use of South Mountain for enterprise had been eliminated because of the purchase by Phoenix. One major stipulation remained in place. The national government reserved the right to prospect for the mining of all oil, coal, or other mineral deposits found at any time in the land.<sup>39</sup> This provision would be tested in 1932 at the height of the Great Depression. As the Roosevelt administration was trying to find ways to spur economic growth, a request was made to the Secretary of the Interior Ray L. Wilbur and Arizona congressman Lewis Douglas to authorize gold mining in the park. With the support of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, City Manager Joseph Furst pleaded to the Secretary that the city could not justify “spending a great deal of money developing and improving the area, building roads and trails therein, if somebody can come in, locate mining claims, [and] tear up our roads and trails.”<sup>40</sup> To the relief of Mayor Paddock, the national government had denied this request.

Phoenix Council members knew that the mining industry would decrease the local revenue from benefits of owning the mountain. Along with the resort, the Council was quickly discussing ways in which the city could benefit economically from South Mountain. According to J.C. Dobbins of the city commission, the high valley of the mountain was “admirably adapted

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<sup>37</sup> “A Mountain Park,” *The Arizona Republic*, April 6, 1924.

<sup>38</sup> *An Act Granting certain public lands to the city of Phoenix, Arizona, for municipal, park, and other purposes*, Public Law 256, U.S. Statutes at Large 43 (1924): 644-645.

<sup>39</sup> *An Act Granting certain public lands to the city of Phoenix, Arizona, for municipal, park, and other purposes*, Public Law 256, U.S. Statutes at Large 43 (1924): 644-645.

<sup>40</sup> Todd W. Bostwick, “GOLD—GOLD—GOLD: The Rise and Fall of Mining in Phoenix's South Mountain Park,” 69.

to the construction of a 36-hole golf course” and could be “one of the finest in the country.”<sup>41</sup>

The campaign to attract tourists was going national. Phoenix boosters spread advertisements of an image of “delightful Phoenix, the Garden spot of the Southwest” throughout national magazines such as the *American Golfer*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Time*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*.<sup>42</sup> Phoenix wanted to become known as the “playground” in which tourist could find the ideal climate, outdoor activities, and luxurious hotels.

The marketing of Phoenix Mountains was assisted by increased popularity and ownership of automobiles. The decreasing prices of automobiles and expansion of roadways, like U.S. Route 89 bringing travelers south from Route 66, helped in creating both a sense of adventure and ease in taking a vacation to Phoenix. Maricopa County auto registration went from 14,707 in 1922 to 41,164 in 1930.<sup>43</sup> Phoenix commissioners utilized the ownership of automobiles to advertise South Mountain. From the start, they had planned on building a scenic drive across the park and another through the Telegraph Pass. The *Arizona Republican* highlighted the many activities motorist could do in this “playground” by running a full-page spread with an ideal destination being a run to the Max Delta gold mine.<sup>44</sup> Drawing attention to the expansion of roadways was quickly made into a tourism opportunity. In 1921, the Arizona Department of Transportation released a pamphlet entitled *Arizona Highways*. It originally set out to let its citizens know what the department was doing with the money provided through a federal grant. Over time it developed into a campaign to highlight the many tourist spots to travel to. Automobile owners were suggested must see spots in the first official magazine publication in

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<sup>41</sup> “A Mountain Park,” *The Arizona Republic*, April 6, 1924.

<sup>42</sup> Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 104.

<sup>43</sup> Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Warren Mcarther, “The Playground of Motorists,” *Arizona Republican*, May 23, 1915.

1925. The city had shown a deep understanding of the impact that tourism would have on profits and how the mining of South Mountain would upset that.

Tourists continued to flock to Phoenix and quickly moved across the city, creating further developments towards the mountains in north Phoenix. The mountain ranges were at one point referenced to as a place that would “outshine [the] alps,” and there was no need to go to the “northern wilds” to find a thrilling experience.<sup>45</sup> The Phoenix Mountains had fully become incorporated into the tourism industry as the “playground” that all can enjoy excitement and relaxation. The health-seeker was quickly changing from someone who was sick to someone who wanted to fully enjoy life. The Arizona Biltmore Hotel opened in 1929 at the base of Piestewa Peak with more than 600 acres of hotel and golf course. The next year the chewing-gum tycoon and owner of the Chicago Cubs, William Wrigley, Jr., purchased the Biltmore and developed his own mansion nearby. Wrigley would go on to advertise the Biltmore as the "Jewel of the Desert", making it a hot spot for celebrities and politicians. Ironically, one of the main architects, Frank Lloyd Wright, would be diagnosed with pneumonia and permanently have to live in Phoenix. On February 23, the *Arizona Republican* devoted a whole section of the newspaper to the beautiful sunset colors and mountain views seen from the Biltmore Hotel. Those colors and views from the mountainside would help create an 813% increase in population over the next thirty years.

However, the mountain views would quickly be diminished by housing developments. In 1960 Phoenix would have 439,170 residents and 552,043 residents in the greater metro area.<sup>46</sup> Phoenix had differed from the trend Galen Cranz had described for the second phase of park design, but quickly began the process of purchasing parkland covering North Mountain and

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<sup>45</sup> “Mountain Peaks in City Limits Outshine Alps,” *Arizona Republican*, August 20, 1922.

<sup>46</sup> Philip VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising: the Making of a Desert Metropolis*, (Carlsbad: Heritage Media Corp., 2002), 37.

Piestewa Peak to more closely fit the third and fourth phase. In the third phase, recreation facility (1930-1965), parks were seen to increase public leisure activities and often "filled with standardized equipment, paved with asphalt, administered by bureaucrats, and again aimed at middle-class users."<sup>47</sup> Between this phase and the next a major national environmental movement began to take a dramatic affect on how society saw both the environment and the landscapes that were being used. The open-space system (1965-present) created urban parks to solve problems of decay and riots to make cities "safe and attractive."<sup>48</sup> Cities saw value in undeveloped spaces that allowed them to control the accelerated pace of urban development and overcrowding while protecting the ecosystem. As Phoenix developed into a true urban environment, the development of city parks more closely alleged with those social and cultural factors. However, land ownership and economic interests involved complicated the situation in Phoenix. Phoenix had requested to purchase the land from the state, but Arizona had already leased land around Piestewa Peak to the Arizona Biltmore and a private citizen. Both had assigned this land to the county parks, but it was being reported that the land was being held back by the state land commissioner Obed Lassen in order to sell the extra land to real estate speculators. Lassen quickly wrote back to the governor to clarify that the state had "no intention of doing anything with the 138 acres" that were being leased to the private citizen.<sup>49</sup>

Special interest groups brought some of the confusion about the use and intention of the land around Phoenix Mountains. Dorothy Gilbert, who had once worked for Newsweek Magazine and Time Magazine, moved to Phoenix in 1953 and would be a founding member of the Phoenix Mountain Preservation Council. She had also been a member of the Arizona State

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<sup>47</sup> Sally McMurry, review of *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*, by Galen Cranz, *New York History* 67, no. 4 (1986): 466-67. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/23177405>, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Galen Cranz, "Women in Urban Parks," 80.

<sup>49</sup> "Letter to Governor Paul Fannin from Obed L. Lassen," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.



Horsemen's Association, which used the open lands for trail riding, rodeos, and breeding of the famous Arabians. One local family had imported their Arabian horses from Poland and sold one mare for a record \$185,000 in 1976.<sup>50</sup> Even though the tone of this organization would be along the lines of the "open-space system", there was a clear financial motivation and connection to preserving the natural lands around these horse stables. She reasoned to Governor Fannin that the "citizens of the city and the Biltmore's wish to keep it for the recreation enjoyment of winter visitors" was far greater than real estate prospects.<sup>51</sup> She felt that with the rate of housing development, it was time that North Phoenix have a park to enjoy as much as South Phoenix was able to enjoy South Mountain. The Horseman's Association created a trail committee recommending that Phoenix acquire as much land as possible to keep horse trails from being destroyed by housing developments. The city government had no protest to the wishes of Dorothy Gilbert, but she would quickly find out that the problem was much more complicated than the transfer of lands from the state to the city. The city had already drawn up a proposed park development plan for the area around Piestewa Peak, but private ownership of this land was making it financially difficult to acquire all of the mountain area. In 1961, she had called a real estate agency and found out that some of the land around Piestewa Peak was already going for \$3,500 per acre and another 20 acres being sold for \$7,500 per acre.<sup>52</sup> Her first simplistic solution was for a wealthy citizen to buy this land and then make a gift donation to the city.

However, the wish for a simple donation became even more difficult, as it would only obtain a small portion of the land not owned by the state. The U.S. Department of Interior had

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<sup>50</sup> Tobi Lopez Taylor, "'A LANDMARK IN SCOTTSDALE— A HALLMARK IN THE ARABIAN WORLD": Ed Tweed, Brusally Ranch, and the Development of Arabian Horse Breeding in Arizona," *The Journal of Arizona History* 50, no. 4 (2009): 339-64, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/41697245>, 360.

<sup>51</sup> "Letter to Governor Paul Fannin, Ben Avery and Others," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>52</sup> "Exchange of letters concerning the acquisition of 599 acres of federal land," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

been in possession of the land directly north of Piestewa Peak. In a letter from the Department of Interiors in 1962, Fred Weiler explained that this land was “involved in considerable controversy” because of “general mining laws, an application for exchange, and an application for selection, both filed by the State of Arizona," as well as "applications under the provisions of the Small Tract Act.”<sup>53</sup> Not only were there governmental, private, and tourist interest involved, they now had to sort out mining claims. Some of the earliest discovery of mercury occurred in 1875 and since that point a number of different mining companies had taken hold of the area. The Rico Group had mined nearly 21 claims around Piestewa Peak between 1916 and the mid-1930s.<sup>54</sup> Mineral patents were given out during the 1950s, but mining interest had largely ceased after the 1940s.

In 1966, after mining operations were found to be abandoned and shut down, the Phoenix City Council approved an Open Space Plan creating the goal to make the Phoenix Mountains a "second wilderness park within the city.”<sup>55</sup> Four years later in an interview between the Phoenix Mountains Conservation Council and Assistant City Attorney Ed Reeder, the council expressed disappointment about the cities lack to implement anything within the plan. During the interview, Gilbert suggests everything from using the power of eminent domain, trading land, selling other lands to buy the mountains, using zoning authority on private lands, borrowing federal funds, hillside development ordinances, and flood plain control in order for the city to obtain the land for the creation of a park. Each and every solution either was dismissed as outside the powers of the city or required city funds. After the interview, Mayor John Diggs expressed to

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<sup>53</sup> “Exchange of letters concerning the acquisition of 599 acres of federal land,” in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>54</sup> Arizona Department of Transportation, *An Archaeological and Historical Evaluation of Mercury Mining and Ore Processing Sites in the Phoenix Mountains of Central Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona*, by Lyle M. Stone, Archaeological Research Services, Inc. (Tempe, Arizona, 1990), 14.

<sup>55</sup> “Resolution 12376” in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

Mrs. Gilbert that the city was doing everything in their power to accomplish the purchase of Phoenix Mountains. The next step for the city was hiring Paul Van Cleve to develop a plan for the preservation of the mountains. Van Cleve was to take a more detailed look at economic viable options, some of which were suggested by Dorothy Gilbert. Releasing the plan in 1971, it outlined steps for specific stakeholders to do in order to make the preservation of the Phoenix Mountains possible. The first major finding was that the city needed to work with landowners and update hillside development regulations. The second major finding relied on the success of the acquisition on the general public's willingness to fund it through a bond.<sup>56</sup>

The Phoenix Mountain Preservation Commission proposed a \$23.5 million bond that would allow the city to purchase 12,000 acres in Phoenix; including North Mountain, Piestewa Peak, and not yet purchased lands around South Mountain. However, to incentivize the greater community \$13.5 million in federal grants, revenue sharing, donations, and land trades would go towards water system improvements and expanding the airport. The voters showed a 3-to-1 margin of support in 1973, allowing 70% of the goal to be accomplished within the first two years.<sup>57</sup> With all the excitement, the Preservation Commission still felt that the battle was not yet over. The original plan had been a twenty-year plan and they understood that the mountains would not be completely bought for many more years. In a flyer sent out to supporters they warned that forces were still “at work to boost land values out of [their] reach, to weaken zoning on surrounding lands, to use lands which should belong to the Preserve for roads and flood control, perhaps even to overdevelop the Preserve in the name of recreation.”<sup>58</sup> The fear was

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<sup>56</sup> City of Phoenix, *An Open Space Plan for the Phoenix Mountains*, Van Cleve Associates, (Phoenix Arizona: Maricopa Association of Governments, 1971), 71.

<sup>57</sup> “ASHA's presentation to Phoenix Parks Commission,” in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>58</sup> “Exchange of letters concerning the acquisition of 599 acres of federal land,” in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

connected again to personal economic gains. There was also a worry that the city would align more closely with the third phase of park development and overuse the land by placing jungle gyms, asphalt courts, and other recreational equipment.

The warning had come true in 1975. The city had halted funding because of a revenue gap and pressure from developers to construct mountain properties. The council felt that another voter-approved bond was needed. Dorothy Gilbert described the land that had been acquired by 1975 as so rough that "even a billy goat can't hang on."<sup>59</sup> The mountain had placed a natural limitation on the expansion of development and the cost to developers was so great that many would not even attempt to construct a building on them. Yet, the 3,000 acres still remaining would remain vulnerable and be reliant on the voters to show support again. On April 29, 1975 the bond failed. As a result, the city created a new plan that eliminated the 3,000 acres and looked for ways to trade and sell the land. When the Parks Board held a public meeting in September, the people unanimously supported continuing to fight for the original 1972 plan.<sup>60</sup>

A bond would pass in 1979, but again federal funds would never materialize and a campaign was developed for 1984. This fourth attempt was passed by the people of Phoenix along with an amendment that stipulated that property within the Mountain Preserve could not be sold, traded, re-designated, or deleted without approval of a majority of electors. Yet a loophole was inserted that allowed trade of land by the City Council before January 1, 1989.<sup>61</sup> The Council did not take long before trying to create a profitable deal within this loophole. Two proposed deals were being formed for South Mountain and North Mountain by the end of 1985.

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<sup>59</sup> "Exchange of letters concerning the acquisition of 599 acres of federal land," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>60</sup> "General Open Space Plan, The Phoenix Gazette," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>61</sup> "Phoenix Mountain Lookout showing Gosnell's request," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

At first it was believed that Gosnell Development Corporation was going to use 564 acres of privately held property to construct a golf course. The Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council found out that the golf course would actually be operating on parkland.<sup>62</sup> The second proposed deal would trade land from the hillside of North Mountain — near 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Thunderbird Road — for a housing development. Yet again in 1988, the voters endorsed eliminating the ability of City Council members to trade this land.<sup>63</sup>

However to a greater extent, the ability to get the public to continue to support the preservation of the mountains dealt with more than protecting the land from the economic success of individuals. Phoenix and the rest of Arizona could feel how these unique landscapes impacted public profits. One study found that in 1975-1976, automobile and airline tourists and instate travelers created \$2.2 billion in direct expenditures across the state.<sup>64</sup> Tourism had surpassed the agricultural industry and quickly impacted every part of the state. One estimate has shown tourism to contribute \$1.6 billion in 1978 just to Phoenix.<sup>65</sup> It would be nice to say that preservation was being done for moral or cultural significance only, but that simply wasn't true. Dorothy Gilbert showed a high level of urgency to protect these lands, knowing that once they were developed they would never return to their natural state. However, even she saw the economic value in the horse industry and its reliance on having a trail system in Phoenix.

South Mountain, North Mountain, and Piestewa Peak have been vital components of the development of Phoenix. It has attracted settlers for gold, health, profit, and tranquility. The impacts by these mountains are not finished. They will continue to have a roll in the growth of

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<sup>62</sup> "Phoenix Mountain Lookout showing Gosnell's request," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>63</sup> "Letter from Jack Rasor," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen C. Hora and M.E. Bond, "New Evidence Regarding Tourism in Arizona," *Journal of Travel Research* 16, no 1 (1977): 5-9, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, 167.

this southwest urban environment. It would be comforting to think that the 1988 vote would be the end of the encroachment on the mountains. In the early 1990s, the state used the power of eminent domain to build a highway through the Phoenix Mountains. One mall developer endorsed the highway, requesting that "a few hundred horse-lovers [not] hold 200,000 residents hostage in Paradise Valley Village."<sup>66</sup> Another interstate has started construction in 2016 around the south side of South Mountain, with plans to demolish parts of the mountain to the west to circle back north and reconnect.

The creation of the Phoenix Mountain Preserve and park system did not venture too far from the four phases of park development. However, one criticism of Cranz was the "lack of a detailed account of the funding of the park systems in different cities"<sup>67</sup> Whereas Cranz provides ample evidence that cultural and social motivations are the causes to the creation of urban parks on a national level, Phoenix has demonstrated that economic prosperity within the tourism industry, local businesses, housing development, and private enterprise have been critical factors for how the preservation of the mountains came about. This urban society has used the mountains for economic advantages, working in conjunction with cultural reform and preservation. Natural preservation was withheld if man-made projects created greater economic prosperity.

On the other hand, urban development was limited if preservation added to the economic prosperity of the city. This is not to say that nature has not played a vital role in the actual use of the mountains. In short, Phoenix has tried to use their natural resources to their advantage. Historian Michael Logan stated that "Phoenix boosters were more aggressive in transforming their desert environment" instead of living "within the constraints of their natural

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<sup>66</sup> "Letter from Jack Rasor," in Dorothy Gilbert Collection, Arizona State University Digital Repository.

<sup>67</sup> Helen Meller, "The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America," by Galen Cranz, *The Town Planning Review* 56, no. 3 (1985): 382, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/40112209>, 382.

environment."<sup>68</sup> However, in some cases the very nature of the mountains prevented this development. The relationship between nature and humans are interconnected. Scholars have studied this interconnection extensively within the Salt River Valley, many of whom having a focus on water. Phoenix Mountains have been mentioned as side note when telling the narrative of this urban rise. As Phoenix becomes more abrasive in their transformation of the desert environment, the mountains will continue to place limitations on personal gains. The next phase for Phoenix will be to find a greater balance between the impacts made by public profits on the created environment and the preservation of the natural environment.

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<sup>68</sup>Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, 3.

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