



# Pueblo Grande Museum and Archaeological Park

---

## *A Brief History of Pueblo Grande Museum*

The central portion of the Hohokam village of Pueblo Grande was first preserved in 1924. In that year, Thomas Armstrong, former president of the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, purchased the Pueblo Grande platform mound and surrounding three acres with his own money and donated the property to the City of Phoenix. It was his and others' hope to preserve some of the ancient history of the Salt River Valley that was being rapidly destroyed by farming and development. Later, that same year, Omar Turney, City of Phoenix Engineer, convinced the City to purchase nearly 10 acres of property south of the platform mound known as the Park of Four Waters. This land contained the preserved remains of major irrigation canals that supplied water to most Hohokam villages on the north side of the Salt River.

Once the City of Phoenix acquired the platform mound at Pueblo Grande and the Park of Four Waters, it was faced with the question of what to do with it. In 1929 the City hired Odd Halseth as the first Museum Director and City of Phoenix Archaeologist, (the first city archaeologist in the nation), and the wheels were set in motion for what Pueblo Grande would eventually become. Odd Halseth's vision for Pueblo Grande included an outdoor museum in the platform mound itself, an archaeological laboratory with exhibits, and ongoing archaeological investigations, all surrounded by a park sporting ethno-botanical gardens. Halseth's designs were to incorporate professional archaeological investigations of the site, coupled with education programs for schools and visitors.

In 1933 Halseth began the construction of the first museum building at Pueblo Grande. Using salvaged material from City projects, volunteer labor, and adobe blocks made on site from material excavated from the mound, Halseth completed the Museum in 1935 for the cost to the City of \$14.95 for nails. Up until his retirement in 1960, Halseth mostly promoted Pueblo Grande as a museum and cultural park. But there was also a vast amount of archaeological work conducted under the auspices of the Public Works Administration (PWA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and Works Progress Administration (WPA), all Depression Era work programs.

During Halseth's tenure, Pueblo Grande acquired approximately 14 additional acres of land to the west and north of the platform mound, effectively doubling the size of the park. The property to the north of the mound was purchased from the Tovrea Stockyards and contained the ballcourt, excavated by Donald Hiser in the mid-1950s, as well as the Tovrea Zoo. Besides expanding the size of Pueblo Grande, Halseth was also instrumental in the revitalization of Maricopa pottery in the 1930's.

Upon the retirement of Halseth, Donald Hiser became the Museum Director and City Archaeologist. A few years after Hiser became Director, the National Park Service recognized the Pueblo Grande platform mound and surrounding compound, and the Park of Four Waters as two separate National Historic Landmarks, the former in 1964 and the latter in 1963. Between 1968 and 1986 the City acquired an additional 72 acres surrounding the site, bringing the total acreage of Pueblo Grande Museum and Cultural Park to over 102 acres. These land acquisitions brought together into one unit the original donation of the platform mound in 1924 and the Park of Four Waters, which until the 1970s had been separated by private property. Due to the proposed construction of the Hohokam Expressway and the imminent expansion of Sky Harbor Airport, the two National Historic Landmarks at Pueblo Grande were combined into one all encompassing landmark in 1974, covering the entire 102+ acres of the park.

Also in 1974 the old Museum building constructed by Halseth, forty years earlier, was replaced by the present main Museum building. Designed to represent a truncated pyramid, hinting at the relationship between the Hohokam and Mexican cultures, the new Museum building was more than just functional, it was also considered handsome. Red-colored Hohokam-inspired ceramic designs in bas-relief were incorporated into the outside walls of the building at the front entrance portal and at the east patio entrance portal and pillar. Two wooden double entry doors with Hohokam pottery designs, hand carved in Mexico, were installed at the front and patio entrances. A beautiful plaque in the shape of a Hohokam palette listed the various individuals involved in the design and construction of the building, and dedicated the Museum to the "Ancient Hohokam." This plaque is now in the lobby on the north wall east of the front entrance. In addition, a plaque was placed on a boulder in the patio in commemoration of Odd Halseth.

The first annual Indian Market was held at the Museum in 1977, and has now become the largest in the state. In that same year the Museum Auxiliary was established, creating a badly needed volunteer organization. The early 1980s were spent attempting to raise money for an archival project, collections maintenance, and ruin stabilization with limited success.

In 1984 David E. Doyel, Ph.D., became the third Museum Director and City Archaeologist. Doyel continued the projects begun by Hiser and in 1988 the National Park Service began evaluating the erosion of the site's ruins and conducting stabilization on the ballcourt and platform mound. This project included the establishment of a trail system complete with interpretive signage. In 1989 the Pueblo Grande Museum Archival Project was finally begun, establishing a set goal and procedures for the study, organization, and preservation of the Museum's archives.

In 1990 Doyel resigned as Museum Director and City Archaeologist and the Museum went through reorganization. Because of the overwhelming responsibilities the position held, it was decided to split the position of the

Museum Director and City Archaeologist into two separate positions. Roger Lidman became the new director and Todd Bostwick became the new City Archaeologist. A new 20 year master plan was begun and in 1995 two additional buildings were added, a community room and permanent collections storage, effectively doubling the size of the Museum complex.

In 1999 Pueblo Grande Museum was accredited by the American Association of Museums. Out of 17,500 museums nationwide only 779 currently have the honor of being accredited. Accreditation is a lengthy process of self reviews, evaluations and site visits by a review team.

One of the frequently heard questions from visitors has been, "Where did the Hohokam live?" To answer that question, Pueblo Grande constructed full-scale replicas of a Classic Period compound and a Pre-Classic pit house cluster along the expanded interpretive trail system. These replicated houses were completed in 2000.

Other museum campus changes include a second museum collections storage facility and archaeological office area known as Building 3 in 2004. In 2005 due to the construction of the Metro light rail maintenance and storage facility, Pueblo Grande Museum's acreage was reduced from 102 acres to 95 acres in 2005; no archaeological resources were located on the property involved in this transfer. In 2009, the Native Plant Oasis, an additional interpretative stop along the trail, was added to enhance discussion of the desert plants along the trail. Plant identification signs were also placed along the trail to help with this subject.

2009 marked the 10 year anniversary of accreditation through the American Association of Museums and a chance to renew the accreditation. Staff, volunteers, Board Members and City of Phoenix staff all worked together to complete the re-accreditation evaluations, self study and site visit. The museum was awarded re-accreditation in 2009.

In November 2010, Dr. Todd Bostwick retired after 21 years as the City of Phoenix Archaeologist. In May of 2011, Laurene Montero was hired on as the newest City Archaeologist.

The current improvement project in the works for Pueblo Grande Museum is a Percent for Arts Project which will provide money to hire an artist and landscape architect to design a walkway which would start at the corner of 44th and Washington Streets, and lead directly to the front entrance of the Museum, providing direct access for pedestrians coming to visit by light rail.