

# Arizona Women's Heritage Trail

By Elisabeth Ruffner

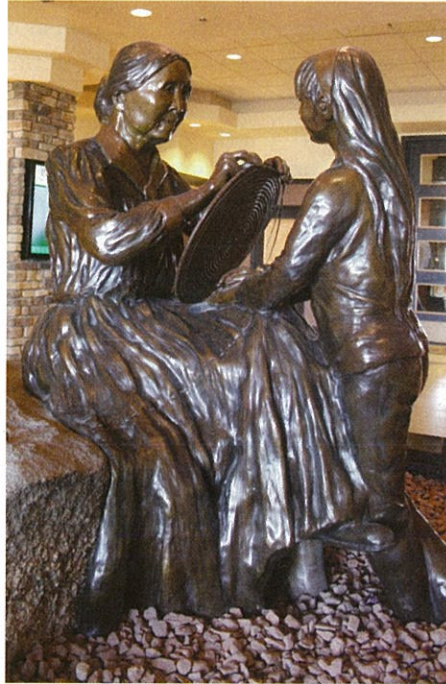
The Arizona Women's Heritage Trail will become a reality in Prescott with the recognition of individual women and sites with which they were associated. A driving and walking tour with photographs of the distinguished women and places will give all residents and visitors the opportunity to learn more about the settling of the West through the activities and lives of Prescott area residents.

This Arizona Centennial Legacy Project was inaugurated with walking and driving tours in both Tucson and Phoenix, and now Prescott will be honored as the first and third Territorial capital, and the home of many remarkable women, illustrating the parts they played in the history of the region and the state.

Among the earliest residents was an American Indian woman, Viola Jimulla, the first female tribal chief in the North American West, a position she held for 26 years. Jimulla is recognized today in an heroic bronze statue created by artist Pat Mathiesen, which is located in the lobby of The Prescott Resort on The Yavapai -Prescott Indian Reservation. The piece is titled "Viola", but with her grandmother is depicted Patricia Ann McGee, who served also as chief of the tribe. The statue portrays the grandmother Viola showing a basket she is weaving to the young McGee, who is also honored with a plaque as President of the tribe, 1972- 1988, 1990-1994. Another plaque on the base of the statue bears a quotation from Pat: "Our Grandmothers are the teachers of life".

A later resident of Prescott was the first public school music teacher in the Territory, Mary Ward Ruffner (nee Mary Ethelyn Ward) who, as a graduate of the Chicago Conservatory of Music was lured to the West in 1910. The school board was skeptical, but the board president, Moses Hazeltine, local banker, prevailed, and the teaching of

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"Viola", Pat Mathiesen



Mary Ward Ruffner, Ruffner Family Collection

the arts became a fixture of Arizona first school district upon statehood in 1912. Ruffner is closely linked with The Elks Opera House, where she performed more than any other person to date, writing and directing skits and plays and accompanying all and sundry as a popular pianist. Two residences in which she resided are still occupied as private residences on Park Avenue and Country Club Drive in Prescott.

Joining the list of opportunities to celebrate women and sites on the Prescott Area Women's Heritage Trail are Sharlot Hall and the Sharlot Hall Museum on West Gurley Street; Mar Ramos and the building known as Fort Misery on the Sharlot Hall Museum campus; Florence Yount MD, whose offices were in the Masonic Temple Building, but whose home is still occupied as a private residence on Park Avenue; The Sisters of Mercy Convent on Grove Avenue; the Carnegie Library and the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Prescott Monday Club; the Lenox Maternity Home, now a private residence on South Mt. Vernon Avenue; the Sewall House on North Mt. Vernon Avenue, now a private residence previously occupied by Frances Willard Munds and Pauline O'Neill; Grace M. Sparkes for whom the former National Guard Armory on East Gurley Street is named, which is now used as a Prescott activity center.

Work is continuing on the Prescott tour, and as women of note and sites associated with them are identified, they will be added.

Learn more about the  
**Historic Women of Prescott!**  
Join the Arizona Women's Heritage Trail on  
a Free Walking Tour of  
Downtown Prescott  
**Saturday Oct. 15, 2011 • 1:00 pm**  
**Granite St. Parking Garage**  
Tour will last about one hour and will  
end with reception at Sharlot Hall Museum  
**More information call: 480-471-7792**