

GERALDINE E. "JERRI" WAGNER

A Reminiscence by
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Jerri Wagner and I were in perfect synch when the decision was made by the Prescott City Council to locate the new library downtown all those years ago.

She, as a longtime member of the Prescott Monday Club, an affiliate of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs (GFWC), and I, as chairman of the library board, had been associated by inclination and temperament on this project for a long time.

We proceeded to mount a campaign to furnish and landscape the new structure, which was to be built on the corner of East Goodwin and South Marina Streets.

Libraries were a common interest between the two of us and also one of the founding principles of the GFWC, of which Jerri was to become president of between her two stints as Mayor of the City of Prescott.

One of the features of the campaign was to sell 'life' memberships in the newly organized "Friends of the Library," for \$100. As in all of her endeavors, this remarkable woman was eminently successful. At the ceremonial opening of the new building in 1975, Jerri dedicated the wall hanging bearing the names of all the donors to the people of Prescott.

During her first term as Mayor - the first woman elected to that office in the State of Arizona - Geraldine Wagner appointed an economic development committee



long before the term became popular. Her goal? To support Prescott as we emerged from complacency as an accidental tourist destination, to the recognition that planning must be an integral part of progress. From that committee's discussions emerged the first historic preservation authority for Prescott and the "Townscape Conservation Commission," accompanied by city ordinances establishing the protection of historic properties as an integral part of Prescott's future. The successor city commission, now The Prescott Preservation Commission, oversees proposed changes to buildings and sites to ensure that the historic fabric of the city will be maintained.

Jerri Wagner's far-reaching vision is

now being recognized daily as visitors and residents enjoy the setting in this mountain basin of Prescott, Arizona's first Territorial Capital.

Wagner traveled widely both in the United States and abroad, as President of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, and enjoyed a two year residence in a Washington D.C. townhouse - which was Federation headquarters - with her husband Harry.

Works of art, especially heroic bronzes, always caught Jerri's eye and her imagination in her travels. Bearing out her deep commitment to the arts, Wagner founded the Prescott Community Art Trust, dedicated to commissioning sculptures in and around Prescott. Notable among these is the "Early

Settlers", by Prescott artist Bill Nebeker, CAA, placed in 1985 at the east entrance to Prescott.

Although she did not commission the Solon Borglum bronze on the Courthouse Plaza, dedicated to the Spanish American War heroes of Yavapai County, Wagner not only arranged for the lighting of the statue, she spent many hours researching the techniques of protecting bronze surfaces from the elements, bringing the best technologists to Prescott in her quest.

This remarkable woman died in Prescott in 2002, but her memory will live on in the many business and charitable activities and works of art in which she was involved throughout her years in Prescott.