

GODDESSES OF THE SUN

Hacienda del Sol
Out West School for Girls
1929 - 1941



IAN CAMPBELL WILSON

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John W. Murphey took a deep breath as he stood on a patch of open desert in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains. The cool water from a canteen refreshed him as he gazed south towards the small city of Tucson, some 8 miles distant. He knelt on one knee and ran his fingers through the desert. "Lovely land," he thought to himself as he rubbed the dirt between his fingers while surveying the Saguaros, Palo Verde trees and greasewood that abounded on the property.

A perfect spot for the school.

In 1928, Tucson was more of a big town than a city. Murphey's view that day was one of mostly open desert, the foothills rolling down south to the Rillito River, followed by a flat, lush desert basin extending for miles to the city limits. At almost 30,000 residents, the Old Pueblo had experienced explosive growth in the "golden decade" of the 1920s.

With his wife Helen and his father Walter along for the ride, John Murphey had wrestled his car up the bumpy, dusty foothills road to the land he aimed to explore. It was hardly a road, but more of a trail for farm wagons and meandering cattle. A short hike brought them to an open area within a 160-acre tract of land that was soon to be auctioned by the State of Arizona. He was toying with the idea of buying the land. John Murphey at that moment, age 29, was the talk of the town.

The confident -- even brash -- young Tucson builder had just been tapped to take on his largest project yet, the magnificent El Conquistador Hotel on Broadway Boulevard. Tucson's answer to Phoenix's Royal Palms resort and the new, lavish Hotel San Carlos, the El Conquistador (the Conqueror) was troubled from its inception. The chief architect had quit, construction had stalled and the hotel was flirting with bankruptcy when Murphey was hired to finish the project. He actually lobbied to take on the work, knowing that he was stepping into the middle of a Tucson "family feud" over the fate of the hotel -- a sign of his supreme confidence.

Team Murphey



Helen and John W. Murphey

"Team Murphey" would finish the El Conquistador in time for its grand opening in November 1928. "Team Murphey" refers to John *and* his wife Helen because they truly worked as a team in life, love and in the business. John was so smitten with Helen when they first met at the University of Arizona, that he would walk away from an offer to study in London under a Rhodes Scholarship so he could marry her. They were married in October 1920.



The magnificent El Conquistador Hotel. Looking north from Broadway Blvd. c. 1929

Helen was also hired by the new owners of the El Conquistador to provide interior design expertise, and to lead in the furnishing of the hotel on a \$50,000 budget.

At the John W. Murphey Building Company, started while still an undergraduate at the University of Arizona, he led the business; John was the builder, the construction tradesman, the general contractor and, most importantly, the marketing guru of the firm (a skill in which he excelled). Helen, an artist at heart, provided the creative energy for the company. This included interior design, choosing colors, furnishings and selecting authentic materials (i.e., windows, doors, tile, etc.) which often required travel to Mexico, New Mexico, and California.



The Murpheys would firmly establish their Tucson legacy in 1928 by hiring a young, unknown Swiss-born architect named Josias “Joe” Joesler to join their team. The powerful troika of John and Helen Murphey and Joe Joesler would take Tucson by storm over the next few decades, leaving an impressive wake of unique and memorable

residences, schools, churches and commercial buildings -- many of which still stand today.

A Foothills Vision

John Murphey was thinking big thoughts in 1928. He had a vision to transform the foothills of the Santa Catalinas into an exclusive, rural home development. The real estate market for seasonal investors (wealthy snowbirds looking to trade the harsh winters of the Midwest and east for the warm Arizona sun) in Tucson was taking off, and Murphey wanted a piece of the action.

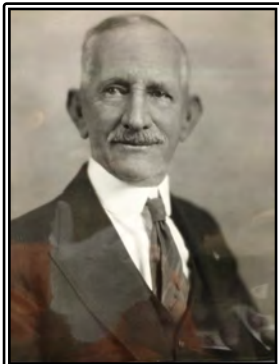
A subdivision in the foothills had never been attempted -- and for good reason. First, it was remote, being miles north of the city and the university. Access to the foothills was also complicated. The few dusty roads and wagon trails that did exist in 1928 could not easily reach the land Murphey had in mind. The Rillito River was a major natural barrier. It essentially cut off the Catalina foothills from the rolling mesas and flatlands north of Tucson. The primary bridge across the Rillito in 1928 was at Oracle Road, several miles to the West. The few other rough paths and "at grade" bridges across the Rillito were treacherous to heavy vehicles, and often would be swamped during the summer monsoons.

Most importantly, unlike the gentle mesas and flat lands of the Tucson basin, the rolling foothills cut by arroyos, craggy ravines and rocky outcroppings, may have been fine for cattle grazing, but less than ideal for building houses. Murphey's vision, in 1928, boarded on outrageous, maybe even crazy.

But, John Murphey was a marketing genius. To be successful, he had to offer more than beautiful houses. He needed to offer investors a community that they could join. Murphey's vision for the foothills in 1928 included a church, restaurants, retail establishments (including, of course, a real estate office) and schools.

A Patriarch's Advice

John Murphey's idea for starting an exclusive private school for girls was hatched partly because of his deep appreciation for education, but mostly because it was a perfect lure to attract wealthy parents to come to Arizona and be captivated by the beauty of the foothills. While their daughters attended a Murphey school, they could also be enticed to buy some



Murphey land and perhaps build a Murphey house!

Despite his confidence, John and Helen Murphey were looking to the patriarch of the family, Walter, for support and consent. Walter E. Murphey, a soft-spoken southerner from Georgia, at age 69, could not have been better equipped to provide thoughtful advice and counsel to his son and daughter-in-law. There were few in Arizona at the time that knew that value of land better than Walter Murphey.

Walter Murphey landed in Arizona in Territorial times, in 1894. Being seduced by the opportunities opening up in the untamed West, he would put everything on the line, including his family's well being, to find fortune in Arizona. Using his connections as a banker to lobby powerful elected men from Georgia, Murphey would land an appointment as Chief Clerk to the Surveyor General of the Territory of Arizona.

The Surveyor General's office was the "tip of the spear" for land-related issues within the federal government's General Land Office (GLO). It possessed enormous land-related responsibilities and powers in the Territory, including carving up the state into counties, surveying and recording the boundaries of every township, and approving land grants under federal laws like the Homestead Act of 1862; the Mining Act of 1866; the General Mining Law of 1872; the Timber Culture Act and, the 1877 Desert Lands Act, among others. The Surveyor General's office acted as referee for the thousands of land and resource (mine) claims filed every year in the Territory. The GLO's objective, to separate the legitimate from the fraudulent.

Walter's boss was Levi H. Manning, a resident of Tucson, a future mayor and one of its leading citizens. Murphey's position was the number two man to "General" Manning (as he was known) and to the other Surveyor General's who would follow over the next 10 years.

In short, Walter Murphey was an Arizona land warrior. After leaving the GLO in 1903, Walter Murphey amassed his own impressive land empire over 25 years, focusing his real estate dealings in and around the growing University. At his peak, Walter Murphey lorded over more than one thousand acres of buildable lots in Tucson -- the equivalent of about 50 city blocks today.

A visionary himself, Walter warmed to the grand idea that John and Helen Murphey had for the foothills. Tucson was on a roll in the late 1920s. Its population was growing rapidly. The automobile was providing unprecedented mobility, and vastly altering the build-out of towns and cities. The economy was strong and money was flowing. The timing seemed ideal.

A New Tucson Land Warrior

On Tuesday, April 24, 1928, the State of Arizona held a land auction on the steps of the Pima County Courthouse in downtown Tucson. State-sponsored land auctions were a regular events in the early 1900s (as they are today), where the highest bidder could win ownership of State Trust Lands sanctioned for sale.

State Trust Lands were a "gift" from the U.S. Congress, used as an enticement for prospective states to enter the Union. Federal lands would be granted to the new state in a trust agreement (thus State Trust Lands) to be sold or leased with the monies used to support state institutions, primarily public schools.

Arizona, as it entered the Union as the 49th state in February 1912, would be the beneficiary of a massive slug of public lands -- almost 10.5 million acres designated as State Trust Lands. This gift of land to Arizona was equivalent in land area of about five Yellowstone National Parks. About 14 percent of Arizona's total land area was designated State Trust Lands.¹

The State Auction on April 24, 1928 was massive in scope. Hundreds of square miles of "improved and unimproved State School and Institutional Lands," in about 75 land parcels were up for grabs. The land for sale was large swaths of mostly barren, open desert cutting across about 30 miles of Pima County, stretching from where Marana and Oro Valley are today to the where the Pima County Fairgrounds Southeast of Tucson would be located in the future.

Murphey was focused on land located north of the Rillito River, in what is today known as the Catalina Foothills (Township 13S/R14E). He had done his research. Having surveyed the targeted parcels of land by foot, horseback, and car in the rugged terrain, he was well-prepared for the auction penciling "good" and "fair" on at least sixteen parcels from the auction notice.²

At the auction, Murphey would buy 3,206 acres in total, in seven distinct parcels ranging in size from 160 acres to a full "Section" of land at 640 acres (one mile square in size). The purchased land parcels covered a large swath of the foothills, including a 326-acre parcel East of Oracle Road where Tohono Chul Park would be created some 50 years later. Murphey's acquisition also included three entire consecutive land Sections (each one mile square), that today, extends from where the Orange Grove Middle School on Orange Grove Road is located, three miles East to the area near today's intersection of Swan and Sunrise Roads. In the 1980s, Helen Murphey would sell a large piece of this land purchased in 1928 to developers who would create the La Paloma Resort and Country Club.

With a five percent cash down payment required, Murphey would take on about \$40,000 in debt (an enormous sum in 1928, equivalent to about a \$560,000 loan in 2015 dollars) for the land in a 15-year loan agreement with the Arizona State Land Department. Murphey paid on average \$13.64 an acre for 3,206 acres of foothills land "deemed worthless." There were old-timers in Tucson who shook their head at the young Murphey's perceived reckless purchase saying that they would have not taken the land as a gift!³

The most expensive foothills land Murphey acquired in 1928, was a 160-acre parcel in "Section 16" for about \$31.50 per acre. Section 16 clearly had a special appeal to Murphey, along with the fact that it had a "extra good" road accessing the property from the West

¹ History of Trust Land Grants. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

² "Notice. Public Land Sale NO. 159, State Land Department, Arizona." *Arizona Daily Star*, February 13, 1928.

³ William C. Barrow. "The Settlement of the Foothills." *The Desert Leaf*. October 1987.

Sabino Canyon Road (River Road today). He had a specific purpose in mind for this expensive real estate.

In 1929, the Murpheys would build an exclusive girls preparatory school near this land, called Hacienda del Sol, *Dwelling in the Sun*. The actual site for the school would be on land owned by the State which Murphey would lease until the fall of 1930. In September 1930, the Murpheys cemented ownership of the school land when they acquired an additional 480 acres of Section 16 from the state for \$67,000 (an amount equal to the improvements on the property -- the school buildings -- claimed by Murphey).⁴

A Modern Dwelling of the Sun

The Murpheys wasted no time in laying the groundwork for establishing the *Dwelling of the Sun*, their “Out West Ranch School for Girls.” They targeted the fall of 1929 to open, and energetically worked on multiple paths to make it happen. They needed to design and construct a schoolhouse, recruit school leaders (Principals) and a support team, and actively market the new school nationwide for pupils.

Ranch schools were part of a popular American education movement in the early 1900s. It was a movement influenced by President Theodore Roosevelt who believed that spending time in the rural, unspoiled West built character, health and leadership traits for young men and women. Ranch schools that could offer the “development of strong bodies and clear minds within an outdoor setting” attracted the attention of elite families in the East and Midwest. In fact, by the 1930s, Arizona had more Ranch Schools than any other state.⁵

Hacienda del Sol would be Arizona’s first private school dedicated to girls with no religious affiliation. Despite being dedicated Episcopalians, the Murpheys decided not to affiliate the school with the Anglican Church, or any religion for that matter. No religious affiliation would broaden the pool of prospective applicants. Students that attended Hacienda del Sol were encouraged to attend religious services of their own choosing in Tucson on Sundays.

The setting for the schoolhouse was spectacular.

Perched on an open terrace of desert land at about 2800 feet, with rocky canyons on either side, the location boasted impressive 360-degree views. With Pusch Ridge, the massive south face of the Santa Catalina Mountains rising to 6,000 feet as a backdrop, a literal forest of tall and stately Saguaros spread out in all directions as far as you could see. Dazzling starlit nights, sunrises and sunsets would continually impress and delight the students, staff and visitors. “The mighty Santa Catalinas can be seen in their various moods each hour of the day,” stated the school brochure.

⁴ “Notice. Public Auction Sale NO. 173, State Land Dept.” *Arizona Daily Star*. June 30, 1930.

⁵ National Park Service. *The Little Outfit Schoolhouse*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Nov. 26, 2008. Page 6.

The Murpheys would create a unique, romanticized setting for the girl's school choosing to create an enclave using old Spanish and Indian traditions. Despite having recently hired Josias "Joe" Joesler in 1927 as their company architect, the Murpheys apparently encouraged a architectural collaboration between Joesler and another Tucson architect and friend, Herman Figgé, to design the *Dwelling of the Sun*.⁶

Herman Einer Axel Figgé, Scandinavian by birth, was active in Tucson architectural circles in the 1920s and early 1930s. Like Joesler, Figgé brought a unique international flavor to his design work, including having spent time in Mexico studying Spanish-styled architecture before immigrating to Arizona. Joesler and Figgé could draw on personal and professional experiences outside the realm of most architects working in America at the time. Globetrotters themselves, the Murpheys valued this type of international perspective, and used it actively in their projects.

Figgé worked with the Murpheys on their building projects in the late 1920s, including designing several homes for Murphey's *Old World Addition* project on the corner of Campbell Avenue and Speedway. Figgé also designed homes for the wealthy at El Encanto, Tucson's "Beverly Hills" neighborhood. Figgé is perhaps best known for designing the 1930s era *Shrine of Santa Rita in the Desert*, a small Catholic church in Vail, Arizona. The church still stands and is actively used today.⁷

An early school pamphlet provides insight into the Murpheys romantic vision for the school, and was likely the inspiration for Figgé and Joesler to design the schoolhouse. Tucson "...conjures up a thousand romances of the early days when fine gold and the love of adventure beckoned to those dauntless spirits to penetrate into the Unknown Land." The brochure continued. "The pioneer spirit still prevails, and the Indian still clings to his "hogan," celebrates his ancient festival days, worships the great God of the Sun and is not much concerned with the onward march of progress."

Building on the connection to Native American traditions, the Murpheys introduced the school as "...a new and modern Dwelling of the Sun -- Hacienda del Sol -- Ranch School for Girls -- a structure of Spanish-Indian type -- a twentieth century Montezuma's Castle." ⁸

Listening to the Murpheys vision, and taking inspiration from the schoolhouse location, Figgé and Joesler partnered to design a simple, elegant building that combined the old with the new.

⁶ John Murphey Projects. *Project 250*. University of Arizona Library. Special Collections.

⁷ Anne M. Nequette and R. Brooks Jeffrey, *A Guide to Tucson Architecture* (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 2002), 252.

⁸ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun), Out West School for Girls, Tucson, Arizona* (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

Building Hacienda del Sol



Hacienda del Sol Road, c. 1930s

The John W. Murphey Building Company went into high gear in the Summer of 1929, building the new girl's school and some support buildings in under four months. The "rush" to construct Hacienda del Sol (as reported by local newspapers) was impressive considering the remoteness of the property, and the relatively poor roadways leading to the site. Special deals had to be negotiated with Tucson's electric, gas and telephone companies, so that they could extend service lines to the far-away school.

In 1929, with the exception of wandering cattle from the Flying V Ranch near Sabino Canyon, the Foothills were largely empty of people and buildings.

From early in June 1929 until opening day in October, a small army of contractors, artisans and building professionals descended onto the remote patch of desert

land in the Foothills to build the girls school. The workers would also do battle with the unrelenting elements of a Sonoran Desert summer, including brutal heat and monsoon rains that would turn dirt roads into rivers of mud.

Joesler had a recognized talent for optimizing the orientation of a building on a piece of land. Skill for maximizing outdoor views with natural, indoor light -- without compromising a comfortable living temperature in the structure -- is a vital consideration, especially in the extreme climate of the desert Southwest. Joesler, Figgé and Murphey carefully examined all aspects of the terrain before deciding how to orient the building. They chose to have the entrance face West (a notable, and likely practical, departure from the Indian hogan entrance which faces East to greet the rising sun).

For the main building, Figgé and Joesler used an eclectic blend of Pueblo Revival and Spanish Colonial styles of architecture for the design. If you happened to hike by the building in late 1929, not knowing it was a school, you might think you were in Santa Fe or Taos, New Mexico passing by a rehabilitated and modernized Spanish outpost.

The main square-shaped building would be a single-story Pueblo-style design, inspired by visits by the Murpheys to the historic Taos Pueblo in Taos, New Mexico (a Pueblo-style

stepped-back, second story on the North side would be added in a 1938 remodel). Classrooms, bedrooms, living and dining spaces would be arranged around a spacious private, inner courtyard with grass, native plants and a central fountain. It was designed with an inner cloister (covered walkway) on two sides, so that every room would open onto a private, covered patio overlooking the center courtyard.

Special efforts were made to use local building materials as much as possible to underscore the desire for creating a native, old Spanish feel to the schoolhouse. Natural-colored stucco on mud adobe (made on site) was used for the walls. Flat roofs with parapets, exposed vigas (six to 12-inch peeled, round logs harvested from the summit of nearby Mount Lemmon), would protrude from the exterior walls. Simple metal casement windows with wood headers (lintels), would add light and elegance to the structure. High ceilings provided a sense of space and airiness inside.



The interior patio area of the Hacienda del Sol Girls School. c. early 1930s

The Murpheys paid special attention to the furnishings of the school in order to conjure up a feel of earlier Spanish haciendas. Indian rugs, tin lamps and adornments came from Santa Fe, New Mexico. A California company was contracted to make custom furniture for the school in the Old Spanish style. Spanish, Saltillo tile (purchased in Nogales, Mexico), along with brick and smooth, stained concrete were used for the hallways and floors. And, several massive, open fireplaces in the Santa Fe style would be built inside the main building and

out in the courtyard, to add ambience and enchantment. The sweet smell of mesquite or eucalyptus logs burning in an open fire creates a delightful aroma that one never forgets.

The building was designed in such a way so that every girl would have a private room for study and sleeping. Inspired by the bright colors of homes in Santa Fe, the rooms were painted in Southwest hues of green, blue, red and yellow.⁹ Bathrooms with modern fixtures were built between rooms, so that two girls could share the space. And every room had windows with desert views, doors that opened up to the interior, and a patio space which served as an outdoor study space.

The schoolhouse, in many ways, is a reflection of the styles and tastes of John and Helen Murphey, who traveled extensively during their lives, especially to California, New Mexico and Mexico. Their travel was research for their many building projects. Their travel was also a vital source of inspiration for their work.

Figgé, Joesler and the Murpheys would also add outbuildings for the workers, stables for the horses, and garages for vehicles and storage. The “new and modern” would come in the form of steam-heat for all the rooms, private bathrooms, spacious lounges, roof gardens, and a first-class kitchen outfitted with the latest appliances.

Leading Ladies

With construction underway at Hacienda del Sol ranch school, the Murpheys needed energetic leaders to fulfill their vision for the girls’ school. They found it in two local women, Elizabeth Angle and Doris Choate Oesting. Both came from “prominent Tucson families” and were active in community social circles.¹⁰

Elizabeth Angle was also well known in Tucson’s educational circles. A graduate of the San Diego Teacher’s College, and active in graduate studies at the University of Arizona, Angle had been a teacher in the Old Pueblo for many years, and in 1929, was Principal of the Elizabeth Borton school in Tucson.

The 28-year-old Oesting, a lover of languages and travel, was a Professor of Spanish at the University of Arizona, and had held various teaching positions in Mississippi and South Dakota before returning to Arizona.¹¹ Oesting had also spent several years in Europe working as an interpreter, and time in the business world, working for a corporation in New York City that needed language support for its overseas dealings.¹²

⁹ “Local Young Women to Open Select Girls’ School Soon,” *Arizona Daily Star*, August 11, 1929.

¹⁰ “Local Young Women to Open Select Girls’ School Soon,” *Arizona Daily Star*, August 11, 1929.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, August 11, 1929.

¹² “Alumnae of U. of A. Will Operate Tucson’s First School for Girls,” *Arizona Daily Star*, June 14, 1929.

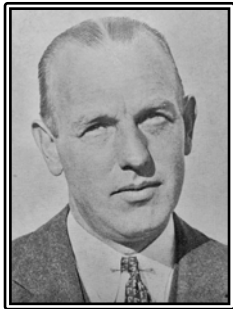


Doris Choate Oesting,
Co-Principal, c. 1937

Oesting was the only child of Edyth Choate Young, also a passionate traveler and entrepreneur, who would start Tucson's first a travel business, the *Hyways and Byways Travel Service*. Originally from California, Edyth Choate would relocate to Arizona with Doris, to marry William J. Young, Jr. in 1918. Young was a mining businessman who, with his brother Courtland, founded the *Great Western Copper Company* in Courtland, Arizona (named for the brother), located about 100 miles southeast of Tucson in Cochise County. After the mine closed in 1925, Edyth and her husband moved to Tucson and built a sizeable home in the new, elegant subdivision called El Encanto.¹³

Edyth Choate Young and the Murpheys were friends. In fact, she was an early collaborator with the Murpheys in building the school for girls. Young helped to create a plan for the school, and is credited with suggesting that the school be named Hacienda del Sol. Given her involvement, it would be a logical for Young to recommend that the Murpheys consider her daughter, Doris, for a prominent role at the school.¹⁴

Angle and Oesting were named as co-principals of the school, with Angle having responsibility for the younger girls and Oesting for the older ones. Because "health building" was also considered a "primary consideration" at the school, the Murpheys recruited Gladys Franklin Carroll to serve as Director of Health at Hacienda del Sol. Carroll, also from Tucson, held a Masters from Wellesley College in Hygiene and Physical Education. Carroll would direct all the outside, physical activities at the girls school.



Rev. George W. Ferguson

Murphey would set up the school as its own corporation, and name Doris Oesting as its President. To keep a guiding hand in its operations, John Murphey reserved the position of Vice President of Hacienda del Sol, Inc. for himself.¹⁵

In 1935, as the school grew, Murphey would bring on a new friend, the Rev. George W. Ferguson as a co-owner of the school and as its President. The Murphey's would collaborate with Ferguson in 1936 in building St. Philip's-in-the-Hills church in the Foothills. In addition to managing the day-to-day operations at the girl's school, Ferguson would also become the first Rector at St. Philips.¹⁶

¹³ Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.

¹⁴ *A History of Us*. (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.) Promotional pamphlet.

¹⁵ Leo B. Keith letter to R.G. Dun & Company. Feb. 17, 1932. AHS. MS 0568.

¹⁶ Mary Huntington Abbott, *The Holiness of Beauty, St. Philip's In The Hills Episcopal Church* (Tucson, 1986), 2.

Wanted - Elite Girls With Chaps and Boots



First arrival at the Hacienda del Sol School, c. 1937

The Murpheys wanted the school to be small in size, only 20 to 25 students at the most. Students as young as 10 and as old as 18 were eligible for admission. The school would fill "...a long-felt need; that is, a winter home and school in a dry, mild climate where health-building might be combined with the usual private school course," and preparation for College Board Examinations.¹⁷

In addition to a first-class education, the Murpheys wanted the school to provide an unforgettable Western experience for every girl. The school's promotional pamphlet described the girls they were after. "...the girl who likes to don chaps, sombrero and boots, likes to ride a cow-pony, throw a lariat and climb the summits of jagged mountains inhabited by deer and coyotes." Girls, ages 10 to 18, were wanted; girls who "...like to sit about the campfire under a great white moon and hear of the wild adventures of "Billy the Kid," Cochise, Indian Chief, or "Coyote Smith."¹⁸

Just arriving for the first time in 1930s Arizona was likely deeply memorable for every girl on their way to the Hacienda del Sol school. Most of the girls came from wealthy families with homes in or near big cities like New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis and Los Angeles. Arriving in small, dusty Tucson by train, coach or plane, and greeted by the school's own cowboy chauffeur, W.D. Richards, surely only increased the anticipation.¹⁹

Perhaps the most memorable part of the trip for the girls was the long, bumpy ride across open desert, through arroyos and washes, past too many giant Saguaro to count, to the remote Foothills school. Eyes and jaws must have been wide open at the desert scenery as Cowboy Richards maneuvered the school's International station wagon (a classic woody

¹⁷ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

¹⁸ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

¹⁹ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937). School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.

with “Hacienda del Sol” emblazoned on its side), to the front door of school, braking in a cloud of dust.

Each girl was warmly greeted by the principals Doris Oester and Elizabeth Angle, and introduced to a staff of about 10 at the school, including three additional teachers (all women), a secretary, a full-time housekeeper, a maintenance man, a gardener and the husband and wife team of Francis and Nona Chandler, janitor, chief waiter and maid at the school. The Chandler’s, who were African Americans, lived on the grounds with their two children.²⁰



Cowgirl outfitting session at the School, c.1937

One of the first rituals upon arriving at the school was a school uniform outfitting session. Adding to the Western experience, each girl was fully outfitted in Western cowgirl apparel, including hats, boots, school bandanas, blouses, custom split riding pants, leather chaps and spurs.

Every girl that attended was also required to buy a horse and saddle. A few brought their own horses, but most girls purchased their steeds locally for about \$50

from Lloyd Fletcher, manager of Rincon Stables. The Murpheys knew Fletcher from the El Conquistador Hotel project, where Fletcher also managed the horses and stable for guests at the resort. Fletcher worked with W.D. Richards to help manage the horses, and guide the girls on rides.²¹

Society Girls ‘Go Native’

The Murphey’s wanted the school to have a reach that was far and wide and that did not discriminate. Except, of course, for the price of admission. Starting at \$2000 for tuition, room and board (raised to \$2500 a year later), the Hacienda del Sol School Ranch School for Girls was among the priciest in the country in when it opened in October 1929. The total cost for a seven-month school year was higher than a typical American family could earn in an entire year in 1930.

The Murpheys were not interested in marketing the school to average American families, or to Tucson residents for that matter (although the school offered a non-boarding day school

²⁰ Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1940 U.S. Census*, Tucson, Arizona, Hacienda del Sol.

²¹ Lloyd Fletcher. Lloyd Fletcher to John W. Murphey, *October 2, 1929*. Letter. From the University of Arizona Library, Special Collections. *John Murphey Project Files*.

for \$800). They were interested in wealthy patrons who could afford the high price of admission at the school and be prospects for future sales of Catalina Foothills land and homes. In 1936, school President George W. Ferguson reminded Murphey that it was a “great advantage” for real estate sales to have the school.²²



ARIZONA
RANCH SCHOOL
 for GIRLS

A modern school amid 5,000 acres of Desert Wonderland, four miles from Tucson. Spanish-Mission structures. Modern equipment. Fourth Grade to College. Accredited. Tutoring system. Sun-bathing. All sports—riding, pack-trips, hiking, golf. Every girl has a horse. Address: The Principals, Box S,

HACIENDA
DEL SOL
 TUCSON
 ARIZONA



School advertisement, c.1932

Elizabeth Angle and Doris Oesting were dispatched to New York City in the Summer 1929 to hire agents to promote the school to targeted groups of wealthy Americans. In a series of September 1929 telegrams sent to John Murphey, Oesting reported that a “splendid” advertising campaign was underway to build enrollment for the opening of the school on October 1. She also advised the Murpheys to expect “last minute enrollments” since many of their key prospects were still “summering at fashionable resorts.”²³

The Murpheys would advertise the school as a “modern school amid 5,000 acres of Desert Wonderland,” in big city newspapers and in influential lifestyle magazines like *Vogue* and *Fortune*. In fact, *Fortune Magazine* would feature the Hacienda del Sol school in a 1931 article that left little room for misinterpretation of the Murphey’s marketing goals, “Schools to Which Rich Men Send Their Daughters.”²⁴

Agents were hired in other large cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Milwaukee, to find wealthy candidates. Typically, agents for the Hacienda del Sol school would be prominent educators, who would target prospective students, and receive a commission if an enrollment was secured.

Tucsonans and local newspapers understood the exclusive nature of the school. Articles on the school and its events almost always referred to the school as “exclusive” or “select” and as a haven for girls from the East, whose parents were part of the “American social register.”²⁵ In April 1933, the *Arizona Daily Star* published photographs of the girls in their western attire with an article headline, “Society Girls ‘Go Native’ at School.”

²² Rev. George W. Ferguson. Rev. George W. Ferguson to John W. Murphey, *July 21, 1936*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, MS 0658.

²³ Doris Oesting. Doris Oesting to John W. Murphey, *Sept. 3 - 6, 1929*. Western Union Telegrams. From the University of Arizona Special Collections, *Murphey Papers*.

²⁴ “Schools to Which Rich Men Send Their Daughters,” *Arizona Daily Star*, May 17, 1931.

²⁵ “Girls’ School Has Gymkhana,” *Arizona Daily Star*, February 1, 1932.

By various accounts, the targeted marketing of the school was a success. In a 1932 letter to Murphey's accountants, Leo B. Keith, Murphey's business partner, reported that the school "has been filled to capacity and has made money" in its first three years of operation. Keith indicated that the school was debt free, had \$20,000 in cash reserves, and claimed that \$100,000 had now been invested in the main school buildings, outbuildings, and grounds.²⁶

Also, the student ledgers at Hacienda del Sol School were liberally sprinkled with names of the rich and famous in America. Girls with household family names like Campbell, Pillsbury, Maxwell, Westinghouse and Vanderbilt were on the list, along with young ladies like Ellen



Wilson McAdoo, daughter of the U.S. Senator from California William Gibbs McAdoo, and the granddaughter of U.S. President Wood Wilson (Senator McAdoo was married to Wilson's daughter Eleanor). Deborah C. Spalding, daughter of Silsby M. Spalding, a prominent businessman, and the first mayor of Beverly Hills, California, was enrolled in the school in 1935-36.²⁷

The success of the early years of the school was all the more impressive given the fact that it opened its doors on October 1, 1929, just weeks before

Classroom studying at the Hacienda del Sol, c.1937
the U.S. Stock Market tanked, resulting in the Great Depression.

Rigorous Academics

Due to the extreme heat of the desert Southwest, the school year started the first week of October and concluded by the first week of May with a graduation ceremony. Classes would start at 9am with a mid-morning recess of "milk and fruit." Lunch would be served at 1pm, followed by a siesta hour, relaxation and, of course, a little sunbathing. The afternoon was reserved for physical, health-building activities, including a horseback ride (which was a daily regimen).

Understanding the importance of a good education, the Murpheys insisted on high academic standards at the school, and a rigorous set of courses. The co-principals Oesting and Angle adopted "modern methods of individual instruction" for the school, which meant that each girl could advance in her studies "as rapidly as she is able." The very low student to teacher ratio at the school (4:1) allowed for individualized attention and support for every student.

²⁶ Leo B. Keith. Leo B. Keith to to R.G. Dun & Company, *Feb. 17, 1932*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, Collection MS 0568.

²⁷ "Society Girls 'Go Native' at School," *Arizona Daily Star*, April 2, 1933.

Teaching positions at Hacienda del Sol were coveted. In the summer of 1936, Doris Oesting interviewed 40 applicants for just two instructor openings, in Latin and Math.²⁸

In its first few years, the school offered studies to girls in grades 4 to 8, and one year of high school. But, by the mid 1930s, the school expanded its offerings to include four years of high school, and formally adopted a college preparatory track for its attending girls. The school would also expand its offering to include graduate courses by the mid 1930s, including a seminar on “the development of the novel,” and advanced French and Spanish.

In 1936, Elizabeth Angle was elected to the board of the Educational Review Bureau (ERB), a national nonprofit that set admission and achievement standards for 200 of most prestigious private schools in the country. Angle’s appointment to the ERB underscored how impressive her reputation was among leading academics in the country. It also highlighted the seriousness of academic achievement at the Hacienda del Sol School.

“How proud I have become of Hacienda del Sol,” beamed the Rev. George W. Ferguson in a letter to John Murphey. Ferguson was clearly delighted with Angle’s appointment, and reveled at the school being part of “the charmed circle,” a national short-list of elite schools.²⁹

In its early years, the school accepted girls from age 10 to 16, which was later expanded to ages eight to 18. But, it was clear that the school preferred enrollees’ age 16 or younger, so that they could count on retaining girls for successive school years, and having a better chance to prepare the girls for finishing schools or college.

Academic options for the “lower school” (grades 4 through 8) differed from the “upper school” (high school). English, history, arithmetic, geography, science, modern languages (French and Spanish), and courses in art and music appreciation were offered as the core curriculum in the lower school. Similar core subjects were also offered to students in the upper school, but at a deeper level. Latin studies were also offered in the upper school, with studies on Caesar, Cicero and Virgil.

Manners and Etiquette

Hacienda del Sol also marketed itself as a “finishing school,” preparing young women to enter society with training in etiquette and social graces. “The greatest care will be given to manners as well as to mental habits,” touted the school brochure.³⁰

²⁸ Rev. George W. Ferguson. Rev. George W. Ferguson to John Murphey, *July 21, 1936*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, Collection MS 0568.

²⁹ Rev. George W. Ferguson. Rev. George W. Ferguson to John Murphey, *July 21, 1936*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, Collection MS 0568.

³⁰ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

Hacienda del Sol also offered the girls courses and personalized instruction in painting, modeling, piano, voice, fencing, ballet, acrobatic dancing and sewing.³¹ Parents were also required to provide for a \$30 monthly spending allowance for each girl. The allowance would pay for tickets for local theatre, music and polo events, as well as cover expenses for cleaning, telephone and telegraph, laundry, school supplies and, of course, hairdressing.³²

Enrolled students were encouraged to bring personal items from home to make their rooms feel comfortable and attractive. The school offered an annual prize for the room judged to be “the neatest and most attractive.”³³

Outdoor Life Emphasized

At every opportunity, the school highlighted the benefits and healing nature of Arizona’s plentiful sun and favorable winter climate.

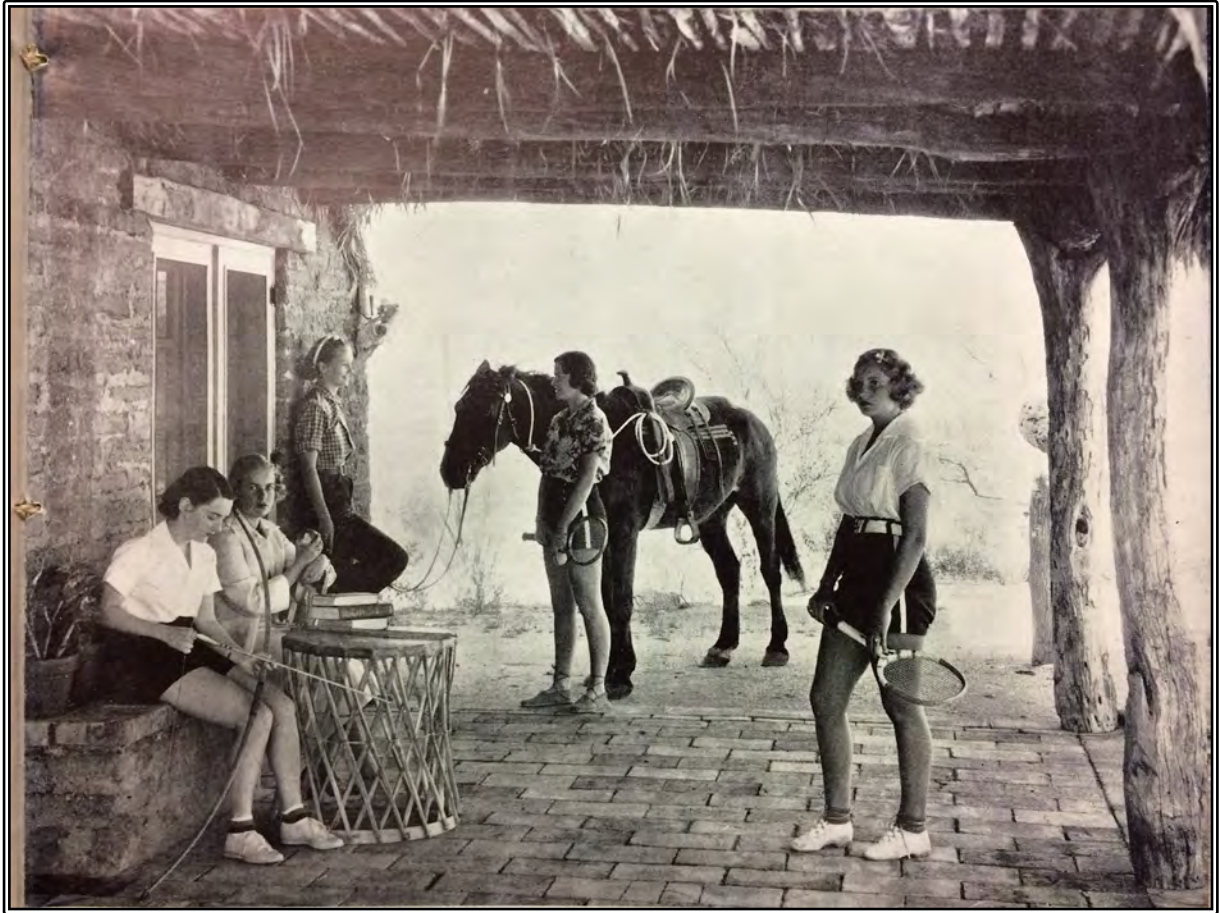
The school’s location and extensive private lands provided “every opportunity for hiking, riding and other forms of western life.” Even the design and layout of the school, encouraged using the outdoors for study and play. “Terraces, patios and roof gardens afford opportunities for outdoor studies and windows are so arranged that bedrooms, class rooms and lounges can be converted into open air rooms.”³⁴

³¹ *Arizona Daily Star* article. February 1930. Hacienda del Sol School Located in Foothills.

³² *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

³³ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

³⁴ “Hacienda del Sol School Located in Foothills,” *Arizona Daily Star*, February 1930.



"Outdoor Life Emphasized," at the Hacienda del Sol. In front of the Clubhouse, c.1937

Like the academics, physical training was also individualized. Tennis courts were built, and a small three-hole golf course was carved into the desert on the school grounds so the girls could practice their swings. Instruction in basketball, swimming, and archery were offered. Classes in modern dance and ballet could be taken.

And, what Western experience would be complete without horses? Both John and Helen Murphey were lovers of horses, and accomplished riders. In later years, the Murpheys would buy and manage several large guest ranches in Arizona and New Mexico that centered on horses and horseback riding.

Knowing the valuable life lessons that can be taught while caring for a horse, the Murpheys insisted that horseback riding be a signature activity for the school and the attending girls. And, not just easy-going trail riding, but all manners of serious riding including equitation and jumping. Even the primary advertising adopted by the Hacienda del Sol School featured girl on a horse, outfitted in Western apparel, with the headline, "Outdoor Life Emphasized."³⁵

³⁵ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.



Getting ready for a Gymkhana event at the Hacienda del Sol School, c.1937

In 1931, the school would host its first annual “Gymkhana,” a competitive event designed to highlight the skills and precision of horse and rider in timed races. The girls would typically compete in 10 events, including jumping fences; obstacle, bareback and trotting races, and events that would highlight saddling techniques and general horsemanship. For fun and to encourage audience participation, the Gymkhana would also include potato sack races and games like musical chairs.

As the popularity of the Gymkhana grew, hundreds of invited spectators would crowd into a “natural amphitheater” located just south of the school grounds to watch the girls compete against each other. “Clad in blue jeans, cowboy boots, hats, spurs and ‘kerchiefs,” the girls would blaze across the desert on horses named Whiskey, Moose, Chamayo, Indian Girl, Blackbird, Big Shot, Socks and Sugar.³⁶ At the conclusion of the Gymkhana, John and

³⁶ *Arizona Daily Star*, Feb. 1, 1932, and April 5, 1934.

Helen Murphey would hand out the prizes, ribbons and trophies. And, invited guests would retreat to the schoolhouse to enjoy tea and snacks.

Work Hard. Play Hard.

Many Western ranch schools in the 1920s and 1930s had either “boot camp” or religious approaches to educating and shaping the lives of young men and women. Not so at the Hacienda del Sol school.

Co-principals Oester and Angle made certain that students worked hard at their schoolwork. But, they also understood that a full social schedule of fun, play and cultural enrichment was necessary to maximize the life experience at Hacienda del Sol.

The school would be quiet during morning classes and study time. But after that, laughter, singing, dancing, the sounds of piano and violin lessons, Fred Astaire singing ‘Cheek to



Girls relaxing and taking in the Arizona sun, c.1937

Cheek’ on the radio and the chatter of girls would fill the air in the interior patio of the school. Nona Chandler, the school’s maid, was impressive on the piano. She would play the piano, and sing songs and old spirituals for the girls. Nona had learned the music from her mother, while helping her pick cotton in the fields of Texas.³⁷

The school grounds were also alive with foreign languages, particularly Spanish and French. Doris Oester, being a former Professor of

Spanish at the University of Arizona, would lead the girls in Spanish language discussions and word-building contests. The school also prominently employed “a native French woman,” Madame Bertrand La Croix Turner, to teach the girls to speak French, and to learn about French culture.³⁸

The girls even enjoyed fine food and cuisine at the school. For a period of time, Oester and Angle employed a chef from Norway, Arne Hoelli, who spent the winter’s cooking for the school, and the summers preparing dishes on the yacht of Norway’s King Olav V. But food “fit for a King” was not always on the agenda for the girls. Picnics and cookouts in the desert

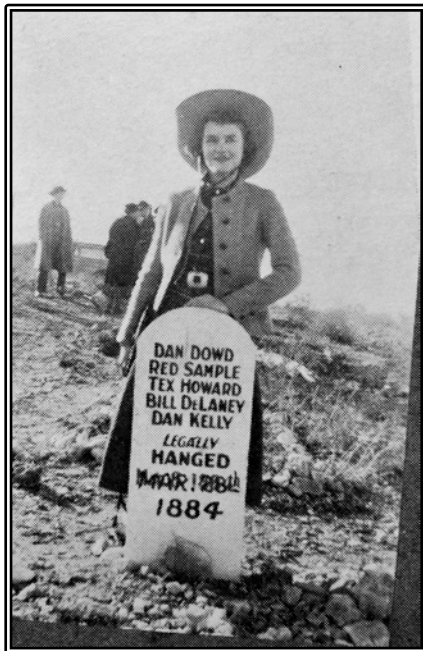
³⁷ “Oral History Interview with Nona F. Chandler conducted by Mary Melcher in Tucson, Arizona.” Audiocassette recording. Arizona Historical Society, AV-0401-05

³⁸ “Local Young Women to Open Select Girls’ School Soon,” *Arizona Daily Star*, August 11, 1929.

were regular activities, and included singing by the campfire, stargazing, and bringing in local entertainment, including a Mexican Mariachi band.³⁹

Dances were popular. The girls would be on the top invite lists for local schools like the Evans School, the Fresnal Ranch School and the Southern Arizona School for Boys, for an evening dinner, games and dancing.

A favorite activity for the girls was transforming the Hacienda del Sol into their own fantasy nightclub, which included a special dinner, dancing with local boys and invited University students and entertainment such as a blues singer. On Halloween, the school was transformed into a haunted house, replete with witches, black cats and carved jack o' lanterns. Invited boys (who dared to come) would enjoy a special seasonal dinner, and an evening of dancing and games.



A school trip to Tombstone

On weekends, the girls would often travel into downtown Tucson to shop, attend University of Arizona football games, and take in cultural events of visiting artists and musicians. In the school year 1936-37, the girls attended a performance of the Paris-based Ballet Russe, and concerts featuring famous Danish tenor Lauritz Melchior, the National Orchestra of Mexico, the German contralto Sigrid Onégin, and a show featuring the handsome Richard Crooks, singer and host of the popular national radio show, *The Voice of Firestone*. The girls were so excited to see Crooks that they arranged to meet him backstage and get his autograph. Polar explorer and aviator, Admiral Richard E. Byrd, also came to Tucson in March 1937. A group of Hacienda del Sol girls attended Byrd's lecture, and noted, "we like him," in their yearbook.

School excursions were organized to visit places like Nogales and Tombstone, Arizona. Tombstone is almost 80 miles distant from the school, and a long, rough ride in the 1930s. On the way, the girls stopped to buy "cake, candy, crackers and peanut butter" to better survive the drive. Lunch was provided at Tombstone's Bird Cage Theatre, an infamous landmark for 26 murders in its eight years of business. Visits to Tombstone's Boothill Cemetery and the offices of the local newspaper, *The Epitaph*, were highlights before the long drive back to the school.

³⁹ *Catalina Foothills Estates Newsletter*, Fall 2008. 1 and 9.

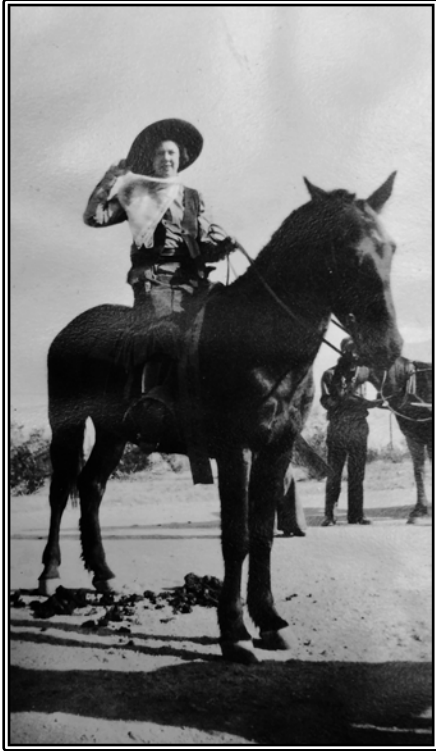
La Fiesta de los Vaqueros



Hacienda del Sol Drill Team, dressed to ride in Tucson's La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, c.1937

February was an exciting time at the school. Family and friends would arrive to cheer on the girls as they would march with their horses in Tucson's La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, an annual celebration of the cowboy, started in 1925. The day before the parade, the girls would saddle up and ride their horses six miles to the Arizona Inn, where owner, and school champion, Isabella Greenway would open her stables to board the Hacienda del Sol school horses for the night. On Parade Day, the girls would rise early, dress in their parade costumes of blue divided Gaucho-style skirts, bright yellow satin shirts and blue ties, don their hats and spurs and "canter through the desert" to the parade starting point on Congress Street in downtown Tucson.

Every year, a girl was chosen to lead the Hacienda del Sol School team in the parade. She would carry the school standard, an image of the Sun God, past the review stand of judges and officials. The girls of Hacienda del Sol, in 1937, would also win a trophy for best girls school entry in the parade.



Principal Doris Oester dressed to lead at the 1930 parade

Even the staff would join in on the fun of rodeo week. The school's Principal, Doris Oesting, dressed in full Western cowgirl attire, would join the Hacienda del Sol drill team past cheering spectators. In the 1937 parade, the singing Cowboy, Powder River Jack, rode Ms. Oesting's horse at the head of the team, while serenading the crowds with his trail songs about the wild West.

The girls would spend as much time as possible at the rodeo each day, having fun, eating cotton candy, debating who was the most handsome cowboy and riding the fairground rides like the loop-o-plane. Special dinners were served at the schoolhouse for visiting family and friends. And, rodeo-themed games, entertainment and dancing were organized. In 1937, the singing husband-wife duo of Powder River Jack and "Pretty" Kitty Lee were invited guests at Hacienda del Sol during rodeo week. Jack and Kitty Lee would perform their songs fully regaled in classic Western outfits. Sing-a-longs were encouraged and the schoolhouse girls would join in for Western trail songs like Powder River, Home on the Range, Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail, and Let 'Er Buck.⁴⁰

Easter in Mexico

Every Easter, the school organized a trip for the girls to visit Mexico, to take in the sights, smells, culture and beauty of our neighbor to the south. The destination was often Guaymas, a small, easy-going Mexican city situated on the east coast of the Gulf of California (aka the Sea of Cortez).

With "mountains of luggage, fish poles, tennis rackets, two box lunches apiece, dozens of apples and oranges," a caravan of Hacienda del Sol station wagons would set out on the 335-mile trek to Guaymas. The girls noted that once across the Mexico border at Nogales, the "foreign chatter sounded like the beginning of a revolution."

The staff of the luxurious resort hotel, the Playa de Cortez (which is still in business today), would greet the weary and dusty travelers and settle them in spacious rooms overlooking the bright blue waters of the tropical bay of Miramar. After a good night's sleep, and a hearty breakfast of local fruit, the girls would set out to explore the community, or "the fairy-land of color" as they called it. The food of Guaymas was a special treat, with sumptuous Mexican

⁴⁰ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937). School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.



Hacienda del Sol girls on Easter Break in Guaymas, Mexico

dinners and plenty of fresh, local seafood to eat, including lobster, crab, swordfish, oysters and clams.

Picnics on the beach, deep-sea fishing and excursions to local historic and cultural sites were organized for the girls. School administrators and chaperones also made sure there was plenty of free time for sunbathing, swimming, tennis, walking the beaches and shopping in Guaymas. Mexican hats, colorful serapes, bracelets of shells, snails and desert seeds, and handcrafted folk art from the local curios shops were favorite purchases.

The last month of school awaited the girls on their return from Mexico, which meant hitting the books once more and preparing for final exams.⁴¹

Tears, Laughter & Flowers

Respecting the climate of Tucson and the Sonoran Desert, academics and exams were finished at the school by the end of April each year. Commencement for graduating students was typically held the first Saturday of May on school grounds.

Commencement was a small, intimate ceremony for the graduates, family and friends. In the early years at the school, sometimes only two or three students would receive diplomas. The size of the graduating classes would increase in later years, but would rarely be more than five to 10 students. The entire enrollment of the school, after its first year, only averaged between 20 and 25 students.⁴²

The graduation ceremony was typically held in the open air, inner courtyard of the school -- an ideal setting for hearing the music, speeches and performances that were a part of the graduation. Wearing long, white dresses and carrying a bouquet of flowers, graduates accompanied by their teachers would slowly march into the courtyard to the triumphal sounds of classical music, played by local musicians. Wagner's *March from Tannhauser* and

⁴¹ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937). School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.

⁴² *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937). School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358. Alumnae page.

Moszkowski's *Bolero* (Spanish Dance No. 5) were school favorites. An invocation would follow with an invited pastor from a local church.

At the school's commencement in 1931, the event included presentations of "two clever plays" directed by a local theatre director, Miss Betty Fennemore. At the 1935 commencement, Dr. Frank C. Lockwood, professor of English at the University of Arizona and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, gave an address on *Life as a Fine Art*. Diplomas would be handed out to graduates by John and Helen Murphey, Isabella Greenway, owner of the Arizona Inn, and in later years, the school's President, the Rev. George W. Ferguson.

Following the commencement, a reception and lavish dinner was held at the school for the graduates, family and friends. The next day, Sunday, the graduating girls would say their final goodbyes to the teachers and staff at the school, and depart with their families for the return home.

Fire and Renewal



The Hacienda del Sol Girls School campus after the rebuild in 1938. Note the new step-back, Pueblo-style second floor classrooms built on the north side of the main building.

In April 1938, just prior to commencement, the Hacienda del Sol School suffered a major setback. A devastating fire swept through parts of the main school building. The main entrance area, along with the school's living room, and offices of Principal Oester and the staff were largely destroyed. Fortunately, none of the students or staff were injured in the blaze; all escaped without incident, to watch in disbelief as the school burned and smoldered.

Given the success of the school to date, there was no question that a rebuild was in order. The school's President, the Rev. George Ferguson, worked closely with the Murpheys and their accomplished architect, Joe Joesler, to fine tune plans to dramatically expand the school's physical footprint, and its capacity for future enrollees. It was reported that the Murpheys spent about \$50,000 to rebuild the schoolhouse, and to refurbish some of the outbuildings. This investment is equivalent to about \$856,000.00 in 2016 dollars.

The plan called for providing enough additional space to accommodate up to 30 boarding students, living quarters for as many as 10 teachers, and rooms for up to eight staff members and servants. Joesler would provide a design that added several new wings off of the main building. One wing would provide space for six new classrooms and a second would provide for a new, enlarged dining room (that could seat 60), kitchen and food service areas. Elegant, hand-carved beams decorated the ceiling of the dining room, and tiled floors, reminiscent of old Mexico, were installed.

In keeping with the Pueblo-inspired architecture of the main building, Joesler's design for the new classroom wing would be two stories. It would feature a traditional step-back, Pueblo-style, second floor on the north side of the schoolhouse. The second floor classrooms would be reachable by stairs from the interior patio area.



The new school library and study area, as designed by Joesler in 1938. A beam hand-carved by Helen Murphey is visible at the top of the photo.

Joesler's plan would also call for restoring the school's main entryway and living room as they were before the fire. A new library and study area would be added off the living room, "finished in the old Santa Fe style, with (a) hand-carved wooden ceiling, built in book stacks for many thousand volumes, study tables...and a lounging space on the west overlooking the Tucson valley."⁴³

With chisel and mallet in hand, Helen Murphey would leave her mark on the school's rebuild by hand-carving 11 of the 12 wooden poles that would become beams in the new library. Working with a young Mexican boy (likely the son of a contractor), Helen had the poles laid out on sawhorses, so she could carve and chisel a Mexican-style design she liked, while the young boy turned the poles. The story goes that Helen was so appreciative of the young boy's help, that she allowed him to carve the final pole.⁴⁴

In a final design flair for the school, Joesler would add covered porch areas, an eight-foot wide cloister between the girl's bedrooms and the interior courtyard, and a formal landscape plan for the courtyard area. He would also use a patio wall and landscaping to unite the Clubhouse that he had designed in 1932, with the main school building.⁴⁵

All of the new construction was completed prior to the start of the new school year, set to begin October 1, 1938.

Final Years & Closing

Following the major investment by the Murpheys to rebuild and expand the school in the summer of 1938, the Hacienda del Sol Ranch School for Girls operated for only two more years. It closed in June 1941, never to re-open again as a girl's school. The school was a victim of World War II, succumbing largely to the double-whammy impacts of hard-to-find labor (including teachers), and gas rationing.

Over 100 girls and young ladies, ages 10 to 18, passed through the doors of the school, and were forever changed by their experiences at Hacienda del Sol. There is a belief in the Southwest that once you get desert in your blood, it never leaves you. The sights, sounds and smells of the remote school in the unspoiled 1930s desert foothills would be unforgettable. The memories would be imprinted on the soul of each girl that attended Hacienda del Sol.

While the school surely changed lives, the war also changed and redirected the lives of those responsible for the school's success. The Great Depression forced the Murphey's building company into bankruptcy in the early 1930s, and threatened to derail their vision of

⁴³ "Hacienda Work Near Finished," *Arizona Daily Star*, 1938.

⁴⁴ "Oral History Interview with William Hawes Smith, 1994." Audio Cassette. Arizona Historical Society, AV 0658.

⁴⁵ "Hacienda Work Near Finished," *Arizona Daily Star*, 1938.

building an upscale community in the Catalina Foothills. The Murpheys demonstrated their resiliency by finding ways to hang onto their land and holdings, until the financial freeze began to thaw in Tucson. By 1935, the Murpheys were again selling land and building houses in the Catalina Foothills Estates. And, when America entered the war, John Murphey and Joe Joesler redirected their efforts to new, bigger adventures, becoming major contractors to the U.S. Army, designing and building airports, runways, troop barracks and storage facilities in the Southwest. Helen Murphey had a growing family to manage. She would be delighted to learn that she was pregnant in the fall of 1929, soon after the opening of the Hacienda del Sol Ranch School for Girls. The Murphey's would celebrate the birth of their first baby boy, Robert Conrad, in May 1930. Two additional children would quickly follow in 1931 (Patricia) and in 1932 (John Michael). The school's president, the Rev. George Ferguson, volunteered for the U.S. Army as a Chaplain in March 1941 -- apparently to everyone's surprise. Ferguson, however, was rejected for service due to a blister on his lung found in a health examination. Not only did he not go to war, Ferguson was confined to home and serious rest for the next 15 months.⁴⁶

The dynamic duo of the Hacienda del Sol co-principals, Doris Oester and Elizabeth Angle, came to an end. Angle left the school in 1936 to pursue a Master of Arts degree at Columbia University in New York City. In 1938, Angle was appointed to lead academics at the fashionable Fermata School for Girls in Aiken, South Carolina.⁴⁷ The Fermata School also closed in 1941.

Doris Oester remained principal until the school's closing in 1941. Oester would leave the education community, to join her mother Edyth Choate Young in her travel business, the *Hyways and Byways Travel Service*. Doris would author travel books, and even start her own travel business, *Indian Trails Ltd*.

Following the closure of the school, it remained vacant until early 1944 when the Murpheys and the Rev. George W. Ferguson agreed to lease the buildings and property to a retired businessman from Chicago, who had a plan to run the former school as a guest ranch. The plan for the guest ranch did not pan out as hoped so, in March 1945, just before the Nazi surrender in Europe, the Murpheys and Ferguson sold the school buildings and 80 acres to a Tucson couple, Howard and Rita Morgan, for \$110,000. The Morgan's owned El Encanto Apartments in Tucson, and planned to convert the school to a seasonal desert resort hotel.⁴⁸

From the late 1940s until today, the Hacienda del Sol has shown its resilience. It has survived multiple owners, many renovations and the ups and downs of the hotel resort business. In the late 1940s and 1950s, it became a desert favorite of Hollywood stars like John Wayne, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. Hacienda del Sol was

⁴⁶ *Diamond Jubilee, 1936 - 2011, St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church*, (Tucson, Wheatmark, 2011). 10-11.

⁴⁷ *Arizona Daily Star* article. Miss Angle Named Academic Head of School for Girls. April 29, 1938.

⁴⁸ *Arizona Daily Star* article. Former School Becomes Hote. March 18, 1945.

also used as a Hollywood movie set in 1946 for filming “Duel in the Sun,” a drama-romance starring Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotten, Jennifer Jones, Lionel Barrymore and Lillian Gish.⁴⁹

In 2016, the Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch is a thriving business. It is a Tucson landmark property, and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in Arizona. And, very fortunately, the core structure and many delightful features of the old schoolhouse have been preserved and are well worth visiting.



In one of the last years at the school, the ladies of the Hacienda del Sol pose in their best Western attire.

The western sun empurples all the mountains;
The sahuaro shadows lie dark along the sands;
Here in the fragrant Arizona twilight,
The school that you loved still proudly stands.

⁴⁹ IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038499/?ref_=ttmd_md_nm

Within the patio garden where you lingered;
The yellow jasmine flower slowly falls.
You nevermore will pluck them for your curls;
You nevermore will scamper down the hall.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ A "Farewell to Seniors." Hacienda del Sol 1937 Yearbook, The Sun God.

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- ¹² “Alumnae of U. of A. Will Operate Tucson’s First School for Girls,” *Arizona Daily Star*, June 14, 1929.
- ¹³ Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.
- ¹⁴ *A History of Us*. (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.) Promotional pamphlet.
- ¹⁵ Leo B. Keith letter to R.G. Dun & Company. Feb. 17, 1932. AHS. MS 0568.
- ¹⁶ Mary Huntington Abbott, *The Holiness of Beauty, St. Philip’s In The Hills Episcopal Church* (Tucson, 1986), 2.
- ¹⁷ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.
- ¹⁸ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.
- ¹⁹ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937). School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.
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- ²¹ Lloyd Fletcher. Lloyd Fletcher to John W. Murphey, *October 2, 1929*. Letter. From the University of Arizona Library, Special Collections. *John Murphey Project Files*.
- ²² Rev. George W. Ferguson. Rev. George W. Ferguson to John W. Murphey, *July 21, 1936*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, MS 0658.
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- ²⁵ “Girls’ School Has Gymkhana,” *Arizona Daily Star*, February 1, 1932.
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- ²⁷ “Society Girls ‘Go Native’ at School,” *Arizona Daily Star*, April 2, 1933.
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- ²⁹ Rev. George W. Ferguson. Rev. George W. Ferguson to John Murphey, *July 21, 1936*. Letter. From the Arizona Historical Society, Collection MS 0568.
- ³⁰ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc.), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.
- ³¹ *Arizona Daily Star* article. February 1930. Hacienda del Sol School Located in Foothills.
- ³² *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.
- ³³ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.

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- ³⁵ *Hacienda del Sol (Dwelling of the Sun)*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1930), Arizona Historical Society, MS 1358. Edyth Young Collection.
- ³⁶ *Arizona Daily Star*, Feb. 1, 1932, and April 5, 1934.
- ³⁷ "Oral History Interview with Nona F. Chandler conducted by Mary Melcher in Tucson, Arizona." Audiocassette recording. Arizona Historical Society, AV-0401-05
- ³⁸ "Local Young Women to Open Select Girls' School Soon," *Arizona Daily Star*, August 11, 1929.
- ³⁹ *Catalina Foothills Estates Newsletter*, Fall 2008. 1 and 9.
- ⁴⁰ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937).School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.
- ⁴¹ *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937).School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358.
- ⁴² *The Sun God*, (Tucson, Hacienda del Sol, Inc., 1937).School Yearbook, Edyth Choate Young, Arizona Historical Society, Collection Summary, MS 1358. Alumnae page.
- ⁴³ "Hacienda Work Near Finished," *Arizona Daily Star*, 1938.
- ⁴⁴ "Oral History Interview with William Hawes Smith, 1994." Audio Cassette. Arizona Historical Society, AV 0658.
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- ⁴⁸ Arizona Daily Star article. Former School Becomes Hotel. March 18, 1945.
- ⁴⁹ IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038499/?ref=ttmd_md_nm
- ⁵⁰ A "Farewell to Seniors." Hacienda del Sol 1937 Yearbook, *The Sun God*.