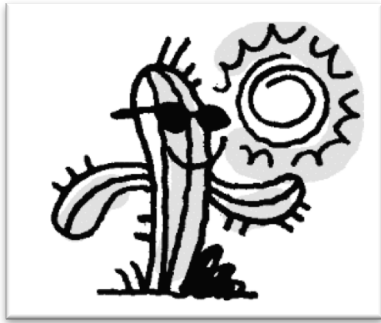


# INTRODUCTION

## Pima County Today & Pima County's Past



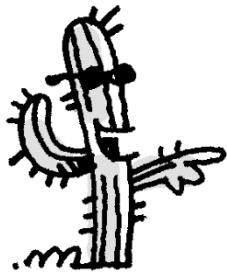
Pima County, one of fifteen Arizona counties, lies in the southeastern part of the state. The Sonoran Desert gives it its distinctive natural landscape featuring the saguaro, a mighty monolith among cactuses of the world. The Arizona Sonora Desert Museum is world famous for reflecting the rich habitat and plants and animals and the Coronado and Ironwood National Forests, Saguaro National Park-East and Saguaro National Park-West exemplify a natural desert environment unique in the world.

Pima County today embraces a colorful heritage of Spanish, Mexican, Native American Indian cultures – mixed with the culture that flowed to the western frontier by stage coach and covered wagon from the East. The flow became a torrent after the Southern Pacific Railroad reached Arizona in 1882.

Pima County is home to two Native American tribes, the Pascua Yaqui and the Tohono O’odham, federally authorized Nations. The tribes that preexist much of the local government structure in place today are a link with the long and unique history of Southern Arizona. Their casinos have grown to be a major economic resource for the tribes and Pima County.



Pima County has 5 incorporated cities and many growing communities that have not incorporated but are important population centers. However, growth in



the county present public authorities with important challenges including strains on infrastructure, especially in a desert environment with limited water. Despite a healthy economic expansion, the tax base remains anemic. Low wage levels and a diminished taxable land base dampen government revenues. Eighty-three percent of the county’s lands are tax –free. Native American reservations occupy 42% of the county, State Trust Land occupies 15% and federal lands (forests, monuments, parks, and the military) occupy 29%. This leaves only 14% of land that can be taxed by local governments.

Most of the nontaxable land is in unincorporated areas, where 35% of the county’s population lives.

The Tucson League of Women Voters offer this information to help Pima County’s growing number of residents understand better the formal structures of the local governments. We hope that citizens will be encouraged to participate more and gain a greater grasp of the realities of governing.

### *Did you know...*

There are more than seventy-one governing entities/local governments in Pima County?

## Pima County's Past

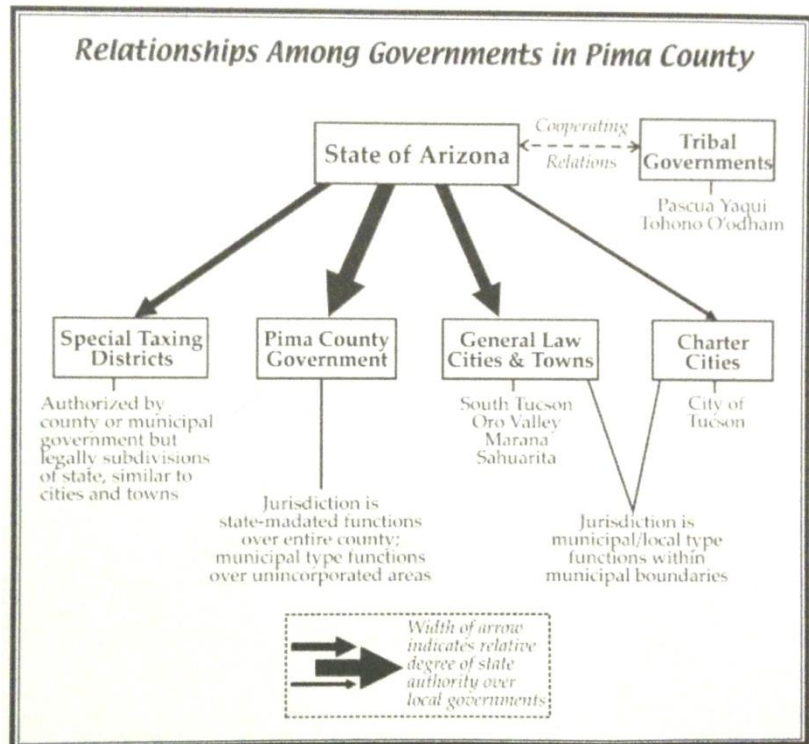
Archeological excavations indicate that the area around Tucson is one of the oldest areas of human occupancy, beginning more than 12,000 years ago. It is believed that continuous habitation started with the settling of farmers and artisans in the region over 2,000 years ago. Modern Tohono O'odham Indians, formerly known as Papago, are likely descendants of these Hohokam, the "Ancient Ones."

Written history of Southern Arizona begins with petroglyphs, calendar sticks, and the diaries of sixteenth century explorers and missionaries. Settlement in the region of

nonindigenous people goes back to the arrival in the 1690s of the Spanish. Silver and gold were discovered in the mid-eighteenth century, and prospectors from Mexico came into the area, together with ranchers. The Royal Presidio de San Augustin del Tucson, completed in 1781, was the northernmost outpost of Mexico. "Anglo" settlers did not come until the mid-nineteenth century when Mexican land south of the Gila River was sold to the United States in the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. American soldiers arrived in 1856 and populated the Presidio. Some "American" civilian presence existed during the Civil War, and increasing numbers of farmers and ranchers moved into what was then considered western New Mexico Territory. The separate Arizona Territory was created in 1863. Its remoteness and the difficulties with Apache raids, gambling, and getting supplies prevented its elevation to statehood until 1912.



The original Pima County was much larger than it is today, being just one of four counties set up by the territorial legislature when the Arizona Territory was established in 1864. Mining discoveries and the introduction of cattle ranching led to the establishment of railroads, and when the last link on the Southern Pacific line between California and Texas was built through Tucson



in the 1880s, possibilities opened for a much larger influx of people, products, and ideas. The present-day boundaries of Pima County were established thirty years later, on February 14, 1912, when Arizona became a state.

Copper, cotton, cattle, and climate have all been important in the history of the county's economy. One single factor explains much of the history of this region and its development – the availability of water. Its presence or absence has been a recurring theme throughout the past and will remain a key factor in Southern Arizona's destiny.

Both Pima County and the City of Tucson use to depend on underground aquifers. After a long lobbying effort by Arizona, the federal Congress passed the Colorado River Basin Project Act in 1968. Over 300 miles of canals have been built from the Colorado River to Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima counties to provide a source of water and relieve stress on groundwater aquifers. The Central Arizona Project (CAP) built and operates the canal. It is also responsible for reimbursing the federal government for much of the construction cost. Arizona must share Colorado River water with California and Colorado. Reuse of effluent water through reclamation will be increasingly important with the diminishing water resource from the Colorado River.

