



# Williams Main Street Association, Inc.

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- **Organization Committee**

Open Chair

- **Design Committee**

Thad Johnson

- **Business Enhancement**

Open Chair

- **Promotion-Merchants**

Chuck Coleman

## Supporting Members

APS  
 Arizona State Railroad Museum  
 Arizona Engineering Co.  
 Arizona 9 Motor Hotel  
 Best Value Inn  
 Best Western Inn of Williams  
 CarQuest  
 Colors of the West  
 Christmas Tree Gallery  
 Clover Hill Shell  
 Days Inn  
 Downtowner on Route 66  
 Eastman Fine Arts Studios  
 Farm Bureau Insurance  
 Glassburn Rentals  
 Gracie's Clothing and More  
 Grand Canyon Log Homes  
 Highlander Motel  
 Holiday Inn  
 Howard Johnson  
 James Wurgler  
 Kim Kadletz  
 L.P.'s Excavating  
 Matt Ryan  
 Maverick/Airstar Helicopters  
 McDonald's of Williams  
 Motel 6—East  
 Mountain Joy Treasures & Gifts  
 National Bank of Arizona  
 Pancho McGillicuddy's  
 Pine Country Restaurant  
 Pioneer Title  
 Pizza Factory  
 Pouquette Real Estate  
 Red Garter Bed & Breakfast  
 Red Raven Restaurant  
 RE/MAX Great Northern  
 The Lodge on Route 66, LLC  
 Williams Grand Canyon News  
 Williams Wear

## May 2009

### Mainly Main Street

May, 2009

(This month I'm turning "Mainly Main Street" over to Williams' own Jim Harvey. He made a presentation to our Board of Directors last month and they wanted it to be shared more widely. While you may not agree with every one of Jim's well-chosen words, they offer appetizing food for thought... Jean-Ellen)

### The Lessons of History

History teaches that tourists have been part of the Williams economy since 1884 when the first stagecoach began carrying sightseers from here to the Grand Canyon. Over the years, while ranching and timber cutting declined as significant creators of jobs and business, they became an economic mainstay. By tourists, I mean people who travel for the pleasure of seeing interesting places. When

they come to a town, they want to be treated in a welcoming manner and they want something to see and do.

Photo opportunities are important attractions for tourists who want to take snapshots as a record of their travels and to show family and friends back home. They've been taking pictures here since 1900 when Eastman's Kodak Brownie camera, which cost one dollar, came on the market.

The history of tourism success and failure teaches that gloom and drabness do not please vacationing visitors. Bright, cheerful colors do. The impression a town makes depends on how spiffy, clean and neat things are.

Critics of tourism complain that it's bad on the environment. The historical fact is that a healthy environment is essential to successful tourism. Success requires entertainment for visitors, which means that a good part of tourism is show

business. That's why, in 1902, a Williams community band was organized to give concerts. Other entertainment included silent movies at the Opera house.

A year later, in 1903, a Williams saloon hired a classical violinist to entertain highbrow tourists. Other saloons hired pianists, guitarists and vocalists to play and sing the popular tunes of the day. Also in 1903, the first two souvenir stores for tourists opened. The first automobile arrived in Williams in 1904. A few years later, people began to push for better roads, all of which were unpaved at that time

That led to the creation of U.S. Route 66 across northern Arizona, and that brought a huge change in the local economy.

The following, I guess, would be considered history in the making, and there's no indication when it will end. I'm not sure when it started, except that it was in rather recent times. (cont. on back)

## Agenda for May 11th - noon at City Council Chambers

- |                        |                        |                               |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Call to order       | 7. Committee Reports   |                               |
| 2. Roll Call           | Organization—          | 9. Historic Commission Update |
| 3. Intro. of Guests—   | Promotion -            | 10. Old Business              |
| Members Comments       | Business Enhancement   | 11. New Business-             |
| 4. Approval of Minutes | Design                 | 12. Adjourn                   |
| 5. Treasurer's Report  | 8. Discussion / Focus: |                               |
| 6. Manager's Report    | Karen Peters w/ VISTA  |                               |

**David Haines-**  
President  
Red Raven  
Restaurant

**Chuck Coleman-**  
Vice-President  
Pizza Factory

**Carol Bultema**  
Banker's Real  
Estate

**Al Richmond**  
Arizona State  
Railroad Museum

**Patty Williams**  
Williams Wear

**James Wurgler,**  
M.D.  
Williams City  
Council

**Debi Zecchin**  
Treasurer  
RE/MAX Great  
Northern

**Sierra Miller**  
Christmas  
Tree Gallery &  
Williams Realty

**Teresa Rodriguez**  
Holiday Inn of  
Williams

**Kim Kadletz**  
Goldie's Diner

**Jean-Ellen Kegler**  
Williams Main  
Street Manager

**Sue Atkinson**  
Events & Main  
Street Coordinator

## Dates to Remember for May

- **May 8 Ambassador Mixer - Elephant Rocks Golf Course 5-7pm**
- **May 12 Clean & Beautiful Retreat 10am-2pm Williams Rec.Ctr.**
- **May 14 City Council Meeting 7pm**
- **May 18 Main Street Board Meeting**
- **May 23 Memorial Day Parade 11am**
- **May 28 City Council Meeting 7pm**
- **May 29 - 31 Disney Movie Promotion**

What I'm referring to is a body of opinion that Williams should be kept small and that economic development and tourist attractions are bad things because they can increase the population. The people who believe that never say what they mean by small. A population of about 3,000, as there is now? Or 1,000? Should the tax base be so small that it can't support a city government? How small is small? Not having grocery and hardware stores? Or a medical clinic?

Successful efforts to stay small eliminate opportunities to create new enterprises and new and better jobs. Stagnation results. That destroys incentives, wipes out ambition. If there's not enough business, there aren't enough resources to keep a town in good repair.

Williams already has been through that, beginning in 1956. That's when, after 30 years of two-lane traffic passing through downtown, the federal government announced it was going to close Route 66 and bypass Williams with a four-lane interstate highway called I-40 just north of town.

In 1959, the Santa Fe Railroad began work to relocate 44 miles of its transcontinental east-west main line away from Williams instead of through it. The work was completed in late 1960 and east-west train service had bypassed the town. Nine years later, the Grand Canyon Railway was closed after 67 years of continuous operation. The train depot and the old Fred Harvey restaurant and hotel were boarded up.

As Al Richmond put it in his Grand Canyon Railway history, the Santa Fe main track relocation, the end of the Grand Canyon line, and the planned abandonment of Route 66 as a federal highway had "virtually sealed the town off from the traveling public."

People who wanted smallness must have been pleased. By the 1970s, the local economy was in a tailspin. Businesses closed in anticipation of the replacement of Route 66 with Interstate 40. The tax base shriveled up and maintenance of the municipal infrastructure was neglected because of lack of funds. One-third of the population gave up and moved away. I still remember seeing downtown Williams in 1987 or 1988. Landlords had stopped caring for their buildings and downtown was in such bad shape it looked like a war zone.

That's what happens when dysfunctional smallness is thrust upon a community. It took a revitalization of hope and a mighty effort of years duration to repair the damage. The revitalization came with the reopening of the Grand Canyon Railway in 1989. And then, historical preservation and Main Street programs were started to save old buildings, improve downtown's appearance, and stimulate business.

New motels and restaurants were built. So were a youth center and a municipal swimming pool. Nine holes were added to the golf course. Grand Canyon Railway built a new hotel and restaurant, much larger than the originals. The rodeo grounds were improved and enlarged.

Now we're told by some that little is better, that we should not let economic development happen. What they're saying is that we should ignore the lesson of modern history, of this high-tech internet world. It's a lesson taught by the intense competition with other towns and places for tourist dollars. And it goes like this?

*Slow and steady gets you creamed.*

Jim Harvey