

**Navajo County Historical Society Museum**  
**Holbrook Arizona**  
**Guide to Museum**

A visit to the Historic Navajo County Courthouse that serves as an official Arizona Information Center and houses the Navajo County Historical Society's Museum, is definitely a trip in the past. Some visitors even relate that it is like visiting Grandma's attic.

Entering the front entrance of the courthouse and to the right is the sheriff's office that features photographs of those sheriffs who served Navajo County from this office beginning in 1898, including Marlin Gillespie in 1976, who then continued to serve as sheriff in the new county jail. L. Ben Pearson, sheriff in the late 1950s and his friend, Roy Downing, were instrumental in organizing the Navajo County Sheriff's Hashknife Posse, as a search and rescue group. They are represented to the left with Downing wearing his leather Hashknife shirt and Sheriff Pearson is to the right, in a photo where he is riding his favorite mount in a local parade.

The roll top desk is originally from T.J. Koury's store, established around 1900 south of the railroad tracks.

Adjacent is the jail that was in use until 1976, when the county moved into their new governmental complex on SR 77. This jail was constructed in Kansas City and loaded on a flatbed train car in 1898. In Holbrook it was then put in place and the rest of the courthouse was built around the cells. Cost of the original courthouse structure was \$12,000 and adding the \$3,000 for the jail, it brought the total to \$15,000.

The Visitors' Center Desk is in the main lobby area, and to the left, is Room A and displays of skulls and fossils from more than 200 million years ago: The exhibits then cover from the Anasazi, Apache, Hopi and Navajo cultures and their crafts; Hispanic, and an old Hashknife chuck wagon.

There also is a post office that once served Holbrook's closest neighbor, Woodruff, and then the communications and early telephone switchboard exhibits.

Across the hall is Room B, where a collection of early kitchen items are displayed, many of which people remember their mothers or grandmothers using. Across from this exhibit is an earlier era living room collection that includes a late 1800s pump organ and a 1927 Victorola.

A drug store exhibit features a collection of notions and OTC products popular in the 1800s through the 50s and 60s.

The A & B Schuster Store display window highlights a collection of clothing and miscellaneous goods from the turn of the century through to the 1940s. Schuster's was a general merchandise establishment that served the community for more than 80 years.

A walk down the annex hallway brings visitors to a variety of collections from Milly's Flowers, various early restaurants, tools, railroad, glassware, cameras and Route 66. The Route 66 Auditorium features eating establishments, lodging, service stations and other businesses that flourished during the Mother Road's lifetime.

Back at the main lobby area is the stairway to the second floor. At the first landing a school room exhibit is dedicated to all teachers. It features textbooks, desks, miscellaneous items and a collection of student and school photographs that includes Holbrook's first school house and other facilities that over the decades educated young people in Holbrook. Esther Hess Henning was one of the teachers in Holbrook and some of her materials are on display, as well as her original teaching 1908 teaching certificate.

At the top of the stairs to the right are display rooms that include a collection of antique office equipment, law libraries, the Navajo County Sheriff's Hashknife Posse's annual Pony Express Ride memorabilia, the WPS and CCC programs of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and projects that were completed in Holbrook and the neighboring Petrified Forest National Park, and a military exhibit that covers World Wars I and II, and more recent conflicts and wars.

The old court reporter's library features additional law books, as well as the book collections of Lloyd Henning, Max Green and Walter "Tuffy" Carpenter. In an adjoining room early bedroom furniture, part of Lucy Thompson's hat collection and other articles are displayed.

The Judges' Chamber is adjacent to the courtroom where photographs of those judges who served in this courtroom are displayed. Arizona was a territory until 1912, so the bench was presided by Arizona Territorial Judges until statehood on February 14, 1912.

In the back of the courtroom are displays of office materials from early businesses, a law display and an exhibit telling the story of George Smiley, a convicted murderer. Then Sheriff Frank Watron, a man of humor had issued an invitation to Smiley's hanging. President Wilson and the Arizona Territorial Governor reprimanded Watron, who then issued a second invitation that was more prim and proper. Smiley was hung with little fan fair on January 5, 1900.

There also is a display on the story of the Blevins Shootout when Sheriff Commodore Perry Owens served an arrest warrant for Andy Cooper and the event blossomed into a shootout leaving Andy and his friend Mose Roberts dead and a third victim died shortly after. During an inquiry into the shooting, some witnesses said Andy did not fire at the Sheriff, while other witnesses said the Sheriff was defending himself, leaving a divided account of the shootout. A model of the Blevins Home, where the shootout took place is in the hallway.

The Navajo County Courthouse served citizens for seventy-eight years, dispensing justice, collecting tax levies, recording public records and issuing marriage licenses.

Today the Historic Courthouse is a story teller, sharing the collections and memorabilia that has been donated to the museum by some of those same citizens or their families.

We hope that you have enjoyed your visit among the memories of many and invite you to come again. We appreciate your support and comments.