



ARIZONA

Arizona has such an interesting and colorful past, I think everyone who lives here should learn as much as they can about this wonderful state. Arizona was the last of the contiguous states to join the Union, becoming the 48th state on February 14th, 1912. The name “Arizona” comes from a Pima Indian word meaning “place of little springs.” Native American Indian civilizations were flourishing in Arizona around 1000 A.D.

The first European to reach Arizona was a Franciscan friar, Marcos de Niza, in 1539. He traveled from Mexico, which was then ruled by Spain. In 1540, the Spanish explorer Coronado came looking for gold and the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola. He didn't find any, but he claimed the land for Spain. This was 76 years before the settlement of Jamestown, 80 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, and 236 years before the Declaration of Independence.

Spanish attempts to colonize the region were largely unsuccessful, mostly because of Indian attacks. In 1692, Father Francisco Kino, a Jesuit priest, founded several missions in the area and converted many Indians to Christianity. However, early settlers faced other difficulties as well. The mountains and plateaus were too cool and rugged for farming, and the broad plains and valleys were too hot and dry.

After belonging to Spain for nearly three centuries, the region became part of Mexico when Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1810. In 1848 at the end of the Mexican-American War, most of what is now Arizona became a United States Territory (part of the Territory of New Mexico), and the rest was bought in the 1853 Gadsden Purchase.

Hardy pioneers began to move into the Arizona territory. They were trappers looking for furs, ranchers needing large areas of land for raising cattle and sheep, and prospectors searching for silver and gold. The fiercely independent Navajo and Apache Indians fought to keep newcomers away. Then copper was discovered in 1854, followed by gold in 1863. Homesteaders came in far greater numbers than before. In 1863 the Navajos were subdued, and by 1886 the Apaches surrendered to the U.S. Army.

The scarcity of water was still a great handicap to farming. Irrigation was the solution to that problem. In the early 1900's, dams, reservoirs, and a canal system were built to bring water to many parts of the state. Cotton, wheat, lettuce, melons, oranges, grapefruit, and dates were planted in irrigated fields. Irrigation turned Arizona into an important agricultural state.

The dams were also made to produce electricity. This, along with the invention of air conditioning, allowed for modern industrial and residential development in addition to the traditional occupations of farming, ranching, mining, and lumbering. Consequently, Arizona soon became one of the fastest growing states.

Despite its tremendous population growth, Arizona is still a relatively unpopulated state. This is because over half of the state's land is government-owned (in the form of national parks, national forests, wilderness areas, national monuments, recreation areas, and military installations), and approximately one-fourth of the state's land is held in Indian reservations.

For a long time, Arizona earned most of its money from the four C's – cotton, cattle, copper, and climate. Today, manufacturing (i.e. electronics, aerospace, metal fabrication) is the leading industry, while tourism is also very important. The warm, sunny weather together with a wide variety of natural wonders attracts large numbers of visitors.

Some of the many interesting sites there are to see in Arizona include: the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, Hoover Dam, Meteor Crater, Ponderosa pine forests, giant saguaro cacti, extinct volcanoes, ancient cliff dwellings, old Spanish missions, ghost towns, copper mines, and astronomical observatories.

To learn more about Arizona, visit www.ArizonaEdventures.com for informative articles, field trip ideas, books to read, and annotated links to hundreds of online lessons.

Indian Fry Bread (Navajo Taco)

If Arizona had a state food, this would probably be it!

Ingredients:

4 cups flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups water
1 handful of powdered milk
2 cups vegetable oil for frying

Directions: In a large bowl, mix the flour, baking powder, and salt. Add the water and powdered milk to the flour mixture. Mix together with your hands until it's not sticky. (Add more water if it's too dry, or add more flour if it's too sticky.) With your hands or a rolling pin, mold the fry bread into flat circles, each about 6 inches across. Put a hole in the middle of the dough with your finger. Heat the oil (it should be about 1 inch deep) in a large frying pan on high heat. Cook the fry bread until it's golden brown on both sides. (Caution: The oil is very hot! This should be done with an adult's help.) Remove the fry bread from the oil with tongs and set on paper towels to absorb the oil. Serve hot covered with honey, powdered sugar, or cinnamon sugar; or top with grated cheese, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes, refried beans, and cooked ground beef or chicken. Serves 4-6.