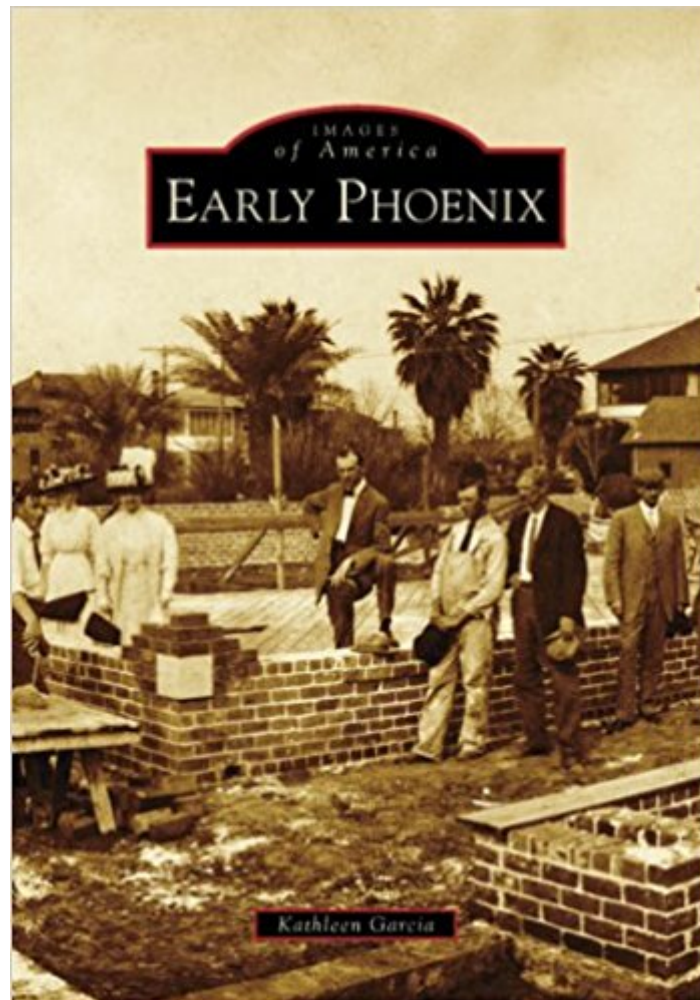




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Early Phoenix (Images Of America: Arizona)



Synopsis

Like the mythical bird it is named after, Phoenix rose from the desert heat to become a prosperous and vital city. Settled on the lands of the ancient Hohokam Indians, Phoenix began as an agricultural community in the 1860s. It was appointed county seat of Maricopa County in 1871 and territorial capital in 1889. By 1900, town boosters were calling Phoenix an "Oasis in the Desert" and the "Denver of the Southwest." By 1920, Phoenix was on its way to being a metropolitan city with a population of 29,053 and sporting an eight-story "skyscraper." Many farsighted individuals documented this development through photographs, allowing today's residents to see the community's amazing growth from small town to big city.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With a master of arts in Southwest and Arizona history, author Kathleen Garcia has worked at the Phoenix Public Library for 20 years, the last 13 in the Arizona History Room. During her time there, Garcia has worked on a digitization project of Phoenix photographs from the public library's James H. McClintock Collection and the Phoenix Museum of History's image collection. It is from this digitization project that the majority of photographs for this book have been drawn.

This very ordinary book outlines the routine origins of Phoenix in an impressive collection of photographs ranging from the city's origins in 1866 to the beginning of "developer" growth in the

1950s, admirably compiled by an astute city librarian. It shows the "golden years" of Phoenix, when local business leaders and conscientious citizens worked to improve their community -- and, of course, their own fortunes. The result was a very ordinary, prosperous and largely self-contained community; confident in its setting as an oasis in the Sonoran Desert, and blithely smug about its future. It's an era which came to an end after World War II when the emphasis switched to growth at any price, regardless of the cost. Instead of pride in quality, the emphasis switched to building the most at the least possible cost; instead of vibrant business districts, the emphasis switched to enclosed little mall-ettes within the blank confines of mid-rise office clusters. As a result, this is a remembrance to a distant almost forgotten city. There are a few inevitable errors; the copper dome was not the "crowning glory of the building" when the state capitol building was dedicated in 1901, the dome was original but the polished copper sheeting for the dome and classic copper roofing for the building itself was not added until the 1970s. There's the inevitable "movers and shakers" chapter about early civic leaders; and, perhaps quite unusual, there's a chapter about prominent early women. Most of early Phoenix is like many cities of a century ago; the major difference is shown in the chapter on irrigation. Much to my surprise, there's no mention of the Luhrs projects -- one of the few 1920s projects not yet turned into parking lots. It's a warm, fuzzy, comfortable book for nostalgia fans; as a picture book, there's little or no hint of the crass opportunism that generated the postwar booms and recurrent bubbles in real estate and construction. After the comfortable era covered in this book, Phoenix became a city where progress was spelled only with bulldozers, bullish enthusiasm and "bull" under it all. By all means, it's a good nostalgia. For a superb view of the architectural havoc caused by endless boosterism and mindless bulldozing, read 'Vanished Phoenix' by Robert Melikian. For a general history, read Brad Luckingham's 1989 book, 'Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis'.

Loved learning about the history of Phoenix, Arizona, quite an agricultural town back in the day. Definitely planning a visit to see all the places I read about in the book, make it come to life.

Nice historic read.

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