



HISTORY

The Harvey Girls

They weren't allowed to hunt for husbands, wear makeup or chew gum, but Fred Harvey's "girls" made a mark on the West.

IN THE LATE 1800S, rail travel included many of the hazards that plagued the rest of the West: train robberies, buffalo stampedes, Indian raids and a shortage of supplies — should a locomotive break down in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps the greatest threat to rail passengers, however, was the lousy food served along the train route. Facing rough country was one thing, but facing a plate of rancid bacon and week-old coffee served by filthy waiters in even filthier surroundings bordered on terrifying. Even for non-germaphobes.

Fred Harvey changed all of that when he opened his eating and hotel establishments, known as Harvey Houses, along the Santa Fe Railroad, which stretched from Kansas to California. And while

Harvey's menus boasted the freshest and finest dishes in the West, the success of his restaurants was due largely to the troops of fresh-faced young women he employed — the Harvey Girls.

In 1889, Harvey placed an ad in a newspaper: "Wanted — young women, 18 to 30 years of age, of good moral character, attractive and intelligent as waitresses in Harvey Eating Houses on the Santa Fe Railroad in the West. ..." The ladies answered. With few job options outside of teaching or the family farm, many saw Harvey's ad as a chance for adventure, and they came from Boston, Chicago and Kansas City to find their fortunes — and husbands — in the Wild West.

Today's businesses have nothing to do with Fred Harvey, who pioneered corporate training programs



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Prim and proper Harvey Girls await the next train passengers to arrive at Winslow's La Posada, circa 1910.

when he mandated specific rules for the Harvey Girls. Doing their jobs the "Harvey Way" meant following a strict code of conduct that addressed everything from their style of dress to the way they served the customers. All Harvey Girls wore identical black uniforms, the same hairstyle and crisp white pinafores. What's more, Harvey didn't allow gum chewing, nail polish, makeup or jewelry. And the women signed work contracts that stipulated they wouldn't marry as long as they were employed as Harvey Girls. But that didn't stop many from husband-hunting. Even cowboy

humorist Will Rogers said of the Harvey Girls, "... they've kept the West supplied with food and wives."

In all, Fred Harvey operated 84 Harvey Houses, including seven in Arizona. And even though rail travel isn't as popular as it was 100 years ago, Harvey's influence can still be experienced at two of his finest Arizona establishments: El Tovar at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and La Posada in Winslow.

■ *Information: El Tovar, 888-297-2757 or grandcanyonlodges.com; La Posada, 928-289-4366 or laposada.org.*

— Sally Benford

50

years ago
in arizona highways



Among other things, our January 1958 issue featured a piece on the Sombrero Playhouse in Phoenix, the city's first stage theater — Kirk Douglas, Mickey Rooney and Imogene Coca performed there in the 1950s and 1960s. We also did stories on bird photography and Arizona's future as "America's Rose Garden."

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

- In the early morning hours of January 28, 1903, the Southern Pacific's *Sunset Limited* passenger train heading west to Tucson collided head-on with the eastbound No. 8 *Crescent City Express* near Esmond Station, killing at least 14 passengers and employees and sparking a huge fire that could be seen for miles.
- The city of Phoenix recorded its heaviest snowfall ever on January 21 and 22, 1937, when 1 to 4 inches of snow fell in the city and didn't melt for several days.
- In 1868, Thomas Hunter brought the first herd of cattle to graze in the Salt River Valley.