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BONELLI HOUSE

A peek at the past... preserved for the future.

The House Yesterday: Built in thirty days at the end of 1894; George A. Bonelli paid \$40 for the spacious property in Kingman. This original house was a gift for his bride, Effie E. Tarr, who he wed on January 1, 1895, in the Methodist Church directly across the street. George desired the latest innovations so he had the two-story house wired for electricity.



Twenty years later, January 1915, a suspected electrical short in the wiring on the second floor brought the house down in flames. All escaped to safety but the Bonelli family lost most of their possessions. A few items that did survive that fire are displayed.

The House Today: Located at the corner of 5th and Spring Streets, this second home built by George and Effie Bonelli was completed in October 1915 after nine months'



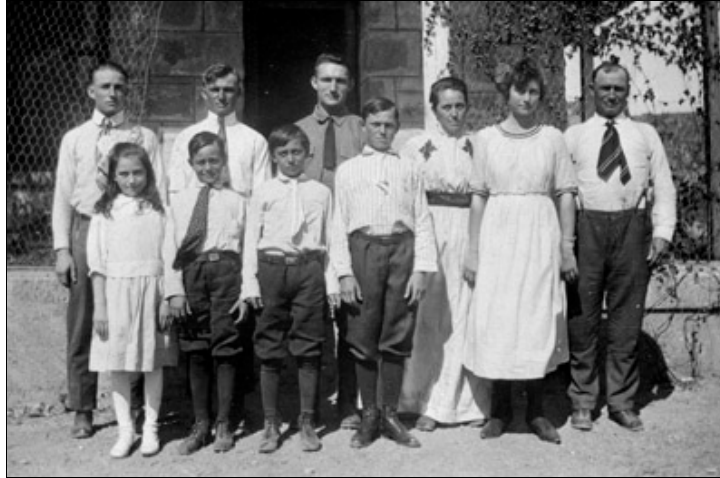
labor. Now preserved, the House provides us with an excellent example of Anglo-territorial architecture as well as the lifestyle of a prominent Arizona family at the turn of the 20th century.

Contractor, Mr. Pendergrast, used local stone for its thick exterior walls and on the inside a fire-resistant mixture of plaster and lime was applied to all walls.

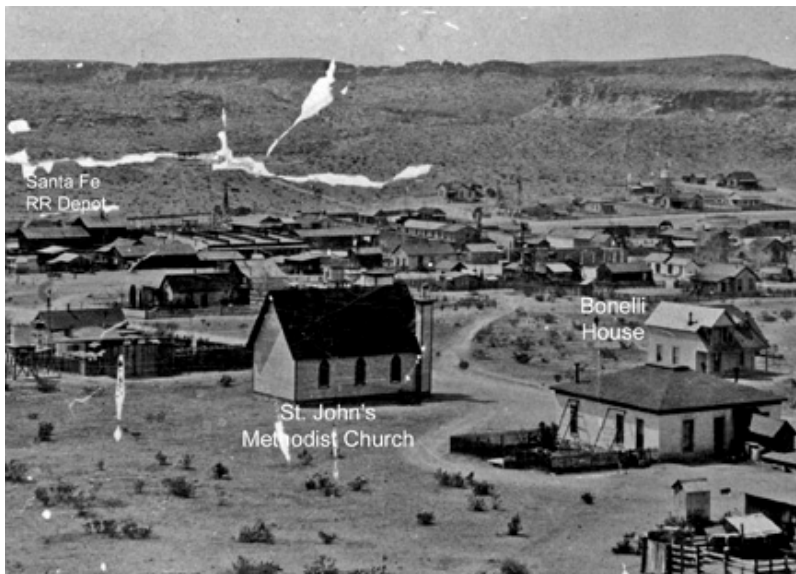
To increase its fire safety, George and Effie designed their home with exit doors to the veranda in each room, on both levels. A system of passive air-conditioning was provided in two ways: Leafy vines grew upward on chicken wire stretched from the eaves to anchors at ground level and gave excellent shade cover for the wrap-around veranda; and, the cupola (captain's tower), which is accessible only through the ceiling of an upstairs bedroom, served as a chimney to draft the hot desert air upward and out the roof. The

cupola was also used as a look-out for the Bonelli boys at play... girls were not allowed!

The Family: The parents of George A. Bonelli (1869-1933) were Daniel Bommeli (Switzerland) and Ann Haigh (England) —pioneers who met aboard ship in 1860 on their way to America. The Bommeli family name had been changed by Daniel's father (Hans Georg Bommeli) to Bonelli in Switzerland when he became a Mormon. After



much difficulty, this plucky couple ultimately founded the town of Rioville, in Nevada Territory, a town that now lies beneath the waters of Lake Mead. Rioville is where George Albert Bonelli and his six siblings were born—and several died—one brother as a result of rattlesnake bite! College-educated, and innovative like his father, George became a major cattle rancher in Mohave County with 250,000 acres of spring-fed land to graze his herds. Effie and their children were fully involved in these pursuits, and to the cattle business they added four successful retail shops as well as active involvement in church and civic organizations. “Wealthy but grounded” might be a good synopsis of the Bonelli family life and times in Kingman.



Effie E. Tarr Bonelli (1875-1961) was the daughter of W.A. L. and Addie C. Wyman Tarr. Mr. Tarr was the Santa Fe Railroad station master in Kingman in the early 1900's. Effie, an energetic and progressive young woman, was employed at the Kingman depot as telegraph operator for two years before

she and George were married. The couple became the parents of nine children while they lived in their first house, one of whom died in 1905 (Alfred) during a scarlet fever epidemic.

The eight remaining children made their own unique mark in history. Though most moved from Kingman to live in other places, the Bonelli House remained the epicenter of happy family gatherings for two generations. The Bonelli's seventh child, bachelor Joseph (1907-1974), was the last of the family to live in the House. With the help of his nephew

Ben Bonelli, an attorney in San Francisco at the time, Joseph and the City of Kingman reached an agreement. The deal closed at the end of December 1973, with the stipulation that the House would be maintained as a historical site.

The Restoration: The City of Kingman, in cooperation with the Daughters of the Mohave County Pioneers, turned the Bonelli House into a museum as part of the United States Bicentennial Project. In April 1975 it was placed on the National Register of Historical Places and the first floor of the house was open to the public in 1978. But it took ten more years before the upper floor could be opened.

In 2008-09 the interior walls and exterior wood trim were repaired and repainted, display items were cleaned or restored by Kingman volunteers. Maintenance and further restorative projects are scheduled and completed as funds become available.

The Features: Three antique clocks grace the house with historic significance and quality craftsmanship. The Seth Thomas Regulator clock (circa 1875) was the first timepiece in Kingman. Purchased in Chicago by George Bonelli it was put on loan in the railroad depot office until Mr. Tarr retired. Also on display is a mantle clock (circa 1895) and an Iconic Ingram calendar wall clock (circa 1884), which boasts an “interactive” mechanism between its two (timepiece and calendar) faces.



The original kitchen stove appears ready for use, along with its amazing twenty-gallon hot water tank. Coal was the fuel and Effie was a superb cook, known for her gingerbread treats and fruit pies. The Bonelli family



was privileged to enjoy indoor plumbing with hot and cold running water at a time when most homes in the community utilized outhouses and hand-pumped cold water at the kitchen sink.

The Furnishings: The Bonelli House is furnished with period pieces (circa 1900-1955) comprised of original items, mainly on the lower level, as well as items donated by individuals, organizations, or businesses in Kingman. Clothing and accessories—some that belonged to family members—art, crafts and collectibles; books, and remnants of family

treasures—are all on display for the education and enjoyment of visitors.

The Bonelli House attracts visitors from around the world who learn of life in Mohave County when the family spent evenings together on the veranda or in the living room, where music, games, and conversation filled the air; and Effie’s good food drew folks in from all directions.

See the House: Tour guides are at the House weekdays to conduct personal tours, provide historic background, share stories, and answer questions about pioneer life and activities of the day.

Stop in for a tasty slice of real western history



in the “hidden jewel” of Kingman
located just three blocks north off of Route 66.

VIEW PHOTOS OF [BONELLI FAMILY](#)

Bonelli House

430 East Spring Street
Kingman AZ 86401
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City of Kingman, Arizona
Mohave Pioneers Historical Society, a private non-profit
corporation

Built 1915, Opened to Public 1978
Kingman Arts & Humanities Council, made possible by a National
Historic Preservation Grant, with technical assistance from
Daughters of Mohave County Pioneers

Open for Tours

Monday-Friday, 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

(Closed Saturday, Sunday & Major Holidays)

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