

## TOMBSTONE'S SEMI-CENTENNIAL

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It was a good show, and well patronized. Date, October 24-27, 1929. The citizens of Tombstone extended a royal welcome to their visitors and were unstinted in their hospitality and courteous consideration for all. The comparatively small band of patriots residing in the old mining camp **undertook a stupendous task**, and how well they succeeded is best indicated by the fact that the throngs that gathered within the Helldorado area from day to day, went away gratified with their reception and with the entertainments that had been provided for them—as well as the moderate prices that prevailed.

Several blocks, covering the old business section of the city, were set apart as the arena wherein to re-enact the scenes and happenings of fifty years ago. The section was completely inclosed and was popularly referred to as the "Helldorado Area". Two graceful and artistically decorated arches were erected on Allen Street, and these served, respectively, as the East and West entrances to the big show.

The Helldorado band consisted of twenty thoroughbred Yuma Indians attired in red shirts and gaudy, feathered war-bonnets. The leader sometimes used a sixshooter as a baton, but the players broadcast smiles with their music and were persistently on the job. And they knew their music.

The "Big Parade" represented much thought and labor and was thoroughly enjoyed by the throngs of spectators. In the column each day were delapidated "covered wagons" and ancient buggies and rattling buckboards and husky cowboys and trail-weary prospectors and attractive women in the costumes of their grandmothers and many children garbed as children were wont to be fifty years ago, and, also, there was the menace of scores of bearded men with rough shirts and broad hats and big bandanas and high-heeled boots and deadly sixshooters. The "Big Parade" pleased the crowds immensely and was the dominating feature of the Helldorado "doin's."

The daily daring holdup of the old "Modoc" stage, followed by the dashing charge of the sheriff's posse upon the surprised robbers and the resulting rip-roaring gun-battle, was the most realistic and spectacular event on the Helldorado "bill of fare," and tickled the crowds pink.

Another daily Helldorado stunt was the killing of an unfortunate prospector by a drunken desperado, and the prompt lynching of the killer by the infuriated mob.

The famous old Bird Cage Theater proved to be one of the "best sellers" within the Helldorado area. In fact, at the first show the full capacity of the house was sold out within ten minutes. The gambling resorts were well represented—and well patronized. The free open-air entertainments included rope twirlers, fancy shooting, dancing and a variety of high-class exhibitions by athletes and acrobats, besides boxing and wrestling and fortune tellers and mysterious side shows. In fact, the Helldorado program offered a variety of good entertainments that were rendered promptly on schedule, with only brief intermissions.

The one deplorable number on the Helldorado program was the mock street battle—pretending to re-enact the unfortunate and fatal clash which occurred between the city police and the rustlers on October 26, 1881. This grim act could well have been omitted.

Personally, I have always deprecated the sort of publicity that emphasizes and exaggerates the worst features of the social and political life of any community at any period. Lawlessness and crime have existed since the days of Cain. It is deplorable that there are as many criminals and as much crime existing today as existed fifty years ago. Criminals and crime existed in Tombstone during those so-called "hectic days" when it was a booming mining camp. But dissipation and disorder and lawlessness and murder were not the chief occupations of the citizens of Tombstone when I was a resident there in the early 80's, —although that impression was emphatically conveyed by the high spots in the Helldorado publicity and the Helldorado program. This is not fair simply because it is not true.

The Helldorado celebration—barring the one grim act—was a success as an **entertainment**. It was a bully show. It amused the throngs of spectators. But it utterly failed to represent the actual conditions of life as they existed in Tombstone when that city was the center of a rich and prosperous mining district fifty years ago,—utterly failed by the widest margins.

On "Pioneer Day" a goodly company of the friends of the late Ed Schieffelin assembled at the monument that has been erected at the grave of that famous prospector, and joined in an impressive ceremony to the memory of the discoverer of Tomb-

stone. Judge Sames presided and delivered a brief eulogy. Colonel Breakenridge followed with an appropriate address extolling the achievement of the deceased, after which a wreath, provided by a sister of Ed Schieffelin and who was present at the ceremony, was placed upon the grave. This was the one serious and impressive feature of the Helldorado program.

Not a single case of disorder fell under my observation. The throngs of visitors were universally good-natured. All seemed to appreciate the courteous hospitality of their hosts, and everyone displayed a happy disposition to contribute to the mutual enjoyment of the spectacular Helldorado carnival.