

# THE VIEW FROM HERE

## JOHN WESLEY NEWMAN

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As we approach the Arizona Centennial on February 14th, 2012, it is good to look back and recognize our heritage here in Munds Park and appreciate that our history is truly a thing to celebrate and be proud of.

When pioneers like William Munds forged their way west, public land was free for the taking, so citizens felt this was truly "Our Land." Any American citizen could homestead up to 160 acres, build a home and run their animals on the public land, and our forefathers truly felt ownership of all, and worked hard to take care of it. When the Munds family immigrated here, William Munds homesteaded in the Verde Valley first in Cottonwood but later along Oak Creek. Both his son James and his daughter Melvina, who married local cattleman Myron Carrier, homesteaded here in Munds Park. All spent their time here in what was known as the Mogollon Mountains when the weather was hot and the grass dried up down in the Verde Valley. While the Munds family took up claims to Munds Park the community was much larger than just Munds Park.



working together to make their homeland better. Everyone worked, men, women, even children and it didn't take too long for their cattle to interbreed and families to intermarry.

As the community evolved there were a number of local families, including William Munds with his three sons Jim, Neil, and John and daughter Melvina here in Munds Park; John Woods who homesteaded what would come to be Fox Ranch in Woods Canyon, later replaced by Con Fredricks; Lee VanDeren



Getha and Jenny Munds - daughters of James & Hattie Munds - courtesy of Frank Benedict



Original Munds Cabin in Munds Park - Courtesy of Frank Benedict



Harvesting potatoes at Munds Park - Courtesy of Frank Benedict

who ran cattle at Clay Park; the Willard Brothers at Willard Springs; later Earl Van Deren who lived in the south end of Newman Park; Ira Smith who lived in the north end of Newman Park; the Blacks who lived in East Newman Park and Dutch

There were essentially no fences and everyone's cattle and horses ran freely together. Local cattlemen including the Munds, Willards, VanDerens, Newmans, Dickinsons, Dickisons, Fains and many others would gather together each spring and fall to round up the animals, brand new calves and generally herd



The community working together branding calves in Clay Park - 1914 photo courtesy of Sedona Heritage Museum

them together to market or down to or from the winter home in the Verde. This made for a very tight community with each family depending on the others and

Through time there were plenty of others as cattle might range as far east as Mor-mon Lake, as far north as Flagstaff and clear into the Apache Maid Country to the southeast. Each clearing or park where there was grass was homesteaded by a family. Practically all the private property in and around Munds Park was originally a homestead. All of the parks that are not privately owned today were originally homesteaded but the land may have been traded back to the Forest Service.

Each family had a brand which they put on their animals. Calves who weaned themselves before they were branded and missed in the roundup were basically free for the taking. Many a young man got his start in the cattle business by riding the rough country finding animals that had been missed in the roundups. Wild mustangs ranged freely throughout this area as well. They were also free for the taking and were often rounded up and sold to the quartermaster at Fort at Verde or herded east for sale to farmers as far away as Kansas.

Until 1905 when the Forest Service was established to try to bring some controls over usage, men did as they saw fit on our public land. The homestead law was not repealed until 1935 so folks continued to have access to free land until then. This was truly an idyllic time, but there was no safety net, as we know it today, and neighbors depended on each other in a much more meaningful way as they worked together on "Our Land."

So it is that as we approach this time of celebrating the Arizona Centennial and the heritage of Munds Park, it is a time to call again for caring for "Our Land" by taking care of each other in this community and our environment and generally making this place better as we passed through.

Enjoy Northern Arizona!!

Questions or comments welcome.  
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I want to thank all the folks who have emailed me about their love for Northern Arizona