



HERITAGE GUIDE

George Pusch and Arizona Statehood

Many Oro Valley residents are familiar with the historic Steam Pump Ranch and its original owner, George Pusch. Pusch, a German immigrant, along with his partner John Zellweger, a Swiss immigrant, established a ranch in 1874 in what is now the heart of Oro Valley. By 1902 Pusch Ridge was named after him because of his pioneering role in territorial ranching and his Tucson business endeavors. What isn't as well known about George Pusch is that he was twice a member of the Arizona Territorial Legislature (1891 and 1899) and he served as a member of the Arizona Constitutional Convention in 1910.

An entry for GEORGE PUSCH in records of Arizona history states:

“Republican from Pima County”. “Cattleman and owner of a butcher shop. Partner in firm of Pusch & Zellweger whose cattle brand was well known throughout the area. Director of the Arizona National Bank. Member of the city council, Tucson. Served in the house of representatives 1891, 1899. Refused to sign the finished constitution. Died Tucson, August 20, 1921.”

Pusch's refusal, noted above, to sign the Constitution is part of the broader picture of Arizona politics in the early 1900s. Arizona's progress toward statehood was a lengthy one and the territory was not proclaimed a state until February 14, 1912, the last of the contiguous 48 states.

Fifty-two delegates were elected to the 1910 Arizona Constitutional Convention held in Phoenix. Forty-one were Democrats and eleven were Republicans. The large majority of Democrats was attributed to voter dissatisfaction with a territorial government that gave considerable power to large corporations. Pusch was one of the few Republicans at the Phoenix convention as were the other four representatives from Pima County.

The 1910 Constitutional Convention lasted 60 days. The Democrats wrote a constitution that contained measures for the recall of all public officials, including judges, who were often viewed as being controlled by large companies and the railroads. They anticipated that Congress would approve it. The Convention Republicans disagreed with the proposed state constitution and all except one refused to sign it. George Pusch and the other Pima County delegates went home so Pima County had no signatures on the state constitution document sent to Congress for ratification.

Congress did not approve the Constitution for two years, until Arizona removed the provision specifying that public officials, including judges, were subject to recall. Arizona voters finally complied and on February 14, 1912 President Taft signed a proclamation admitting Arizona to the Union. Later that year Arizona voters amended their constitution to reinstate the provision for recall of judges. An independent state from the beginning!

George Pusch's records of his participation in the 1910 Constitutional Convention were donated to the Oro Valley Historical Society by his grandson, Henry Zipf. They will be displayed at Steam Pump Ranch in the future. *By Patricia Spoerl (2016).*



**Members of the Arizona Constitutional Convention
Phoenix, Arizona --October 10 to December 9, 1910**

George Pusch signed the above photograph (No. 12, above the center arch). He is seated in the front row, the first person on the right. (The woman in the photo was not a delegate).



**President Taft signed the Proclamation officially making Arizona a state
on Valentine's Day, 1912.**