



news from yuma visitors bureau

Contact: Ann Walker, 928-376-0100 (office), 928-210-9044 (cell), ann@visityuma.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 5/5/2011

'3:10 to Yuma' delivers the goods: Prison to unveil Gatling gun replica

YUMA, ARIZONA – As summer temperatures settle in, Yuma's historic Territorial Prison will once again be "packing heat," with a **replica Gatling gun to be unveiled at 10 a.m. Friday May 13th.**

The lucky day for the state historic park is thanks to the "huge success" of the "3:10 to Yuma" fundraiser in April, said Charles Flynn, executive director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, which now operates it under a lease from Arizona State Parks.

"We asked the community to step up and the citizens of Yuma delivered," Flynn said. **"Now we're delivering on our promise to restore a part of local history, which you could say was delivered by the modern version of the '3:10 to Yuma'."**

Flynn added that supporters are receiving an annual report and "shareholder's certificate" this week, and can show their certificates for a free visit May 13-15.

During the 33 years that the Yuma Territorial Prison held Arizona's worst desperados (1875 to 1909), a Gatling gun on the guard tower provided a deadly deterrent to escape attempts. Legend has it that the rapid-fire weapon was even used by a warden's wife to foil one attempted break-out.

A replica Gatling gun was long one of the most popular features at the prison when it was preserved as a museum by the citizens of Yuma and then became one of Arizona's first state parks. At some point, the weapon disappeared, but was never absent from the memories of visitors, Flynn said.

"Since we took over operation of the Prison in April of 2010, we heard over and over that people missed seeing the Gatling gun," Flynn said. "So we made that a goal of our fundraising efforts this year, and hit that target with a bang."

In fact, the prison park will soon have the original outgunned, with a second replica Gatling gun due to be delivered and mounted on the guard tower later this summer. In the meantime, the first weapon, mounted on an authentic replica carriage, will be displayed in the (air-conditioned) prison museum. Both will be capable of simulating a burst of firepower by means of black-powder caps, a feature Flynn predicts will be a favorite with young visitors to the prison.

Razzle-dazzle – or rat-a-tat – aside, the Heritage Area also has more serious work planned for the summer, including cleaning and resealing all the wood on the guard tower with stain and preservative, a project that will necessitate the park closing for the weeks of August 8 and 15. The prison otherwise will remain open five days a week through the summer, closing Tuesdays and Wednesdays beginning June 1.

The Heritage Area also just announced that Arizona State Parks has committed \$147,000 toward restoration of the sally port, the Prison original adobe gateway, and that it will begin interim stabilization work while a full structural analysis and design are completed and additional grant funds are sought for full restoration.

It was just over a year ago that Arizona State Parks announced it would close the famed local landmark at the end of March 2010 because of the state's budget crisis. In just sixty days, the local community organized into "Chain Gangs" that raised more than \$70,000 to support local operation of the Territorial Prison park and museum. Thanks to that effort, the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area took over operations on April 1, 2010 and has since made major renovations to the entire park and refreshed and updated its museum.

Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area is an independent nonprofit corporation governed by a local board of directors. It was among the first national heritage areas in the West to be officially designated by the U.S. Congress. The Heritage Area's master plan projects earned the Governor's Arizona Preservation Award in 2009. For more information, call 928-373-5198 or visit www.yumaheritage.com.

Yuma Visitors Bureau markets the Yuma area within the travel and tourism industry and to the general public. Direct travel spending in Yuma County totaled more than \$577 million in 2009 and supported nearly 6,000 jobs. Travel spending in the county also generated more than \$36 million in state and local taxes. For more information, call 928-376-0100 or visit www.visityumacom.com.

CONTACT:

Media contact: Ann Walker, 928-376-0100 (office), 928-210-9044 (cell), ann@visityuma.com
Visitor Information Center: 1-800-293-0071