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Louisiana Places—
Strange Sounding Names

Arizona

Arizona, La., was incorporated on March 1, 1869, and the name was taken from the Territory of Arizona.

The persistent belief that the word Arizona derives from Spanish "arida zona" calls for inclusion, as Jack Reynolds says, merely for the purpose of refutation. The origin of the word Arizona advanced by James McClintock in his "History of Arizona" and accepted by all modern historians says: "There is no doubt that Arizona (Territory) was named after some springs near Banera eight miles south of the border and about 85 miles below Tucson. These springs were called Alelzon by the Papago, meaning small spring."

In the days before its incorporation, Arizona boasted of the largest flour mill in the state and of the first cotton mill operating west of the Mississippi River. The flour mill was abandoned after it was discovered that wheat could not be grown profitably here. And the cotton gin, too was abandoned as economically unfeasible because it was some 30 miles from a navigable stream and there were no railroads to haul its products.

In 1869 James W. Nicholson established the Arizona Seminary which was considered one of the best colleges in the state. After two years he left the school to return to teaching at Homer College. The seminary at Arizona began to wane after his departure. So after two years at Homer College he returned to Arizona to place his school on a sound basis. He stayed at Arizona Seminary until 1877 when he was offered a chair of mathematics at LSU which he felt he could not turn down. (He had married the previous year.) He left the Airzona Seminary for good this time. He remained at LSU until his retirement and in the interim of his service he was LSU's president from 1883-1884 and from 1886-1896.

With Nicholson's departure the Arizona Seminary again began to decline. And like the flour mill and the cotton gin before it, the Arizona Seminary was finally abandoned. The town continued its slow decline. There was an unsuccessful attempt to revitalize the town by making it oil-rich — but only dry holes were drilled. By 1953 the Arizona post office served only 14 star route boxes. So in 1954 the post office was discontinued, officially ending the story of Arizona.—Clare D'Artois Leeper.

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