



The barroom fight in Steve McQueen's western *Junior Bonner* was filmed at Prescott's Palace Saloon, where stuntmen recreate Western brawls today.

★ GUN TOWN, USA ★

PRESCOTT, ARIZ., IS LIKE NO OTHER CITY WHEN IT COMES TO A GUN-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT. WHETHER IT'S MAKING GUNS, SELLING THEM OR USING THEM, MOST OF THE TOWN IS INVOLVED.

By Richard MacLean

Scores of cities can rightfully claim to be (now or in the past) prominent centers of America's gun industry. One of the earliest hubs was Springfield, Mass., and the towns along the Connecticut River Valley. Today major manufacturers are spread nationwide in cities such as Geneseo, Ill., (ArmaLite), Madison, N.C. (Remington), and Titusville, Fla. (Knight's Armament). But it takes much more than the presence of a major gun manufacturer for a city to land the title of Gun Town, USA. As this article explores, the clear winner is Prescott, Ariz.

Figures Don't Lie

Prescott's claim to being Gun Town, USA is based on a number of elements, some of which are subjective and difficult to quantify, such as local culture and history. More about these later; first let's explore the undisputable quantitative information. Yes, it hosts a manufacturing facility for a major arms producer, Sturm, Ruger & Co. It is also located in one of the most gun-friendly states in the Union. In March 2013, James Tarr of *Guns & Ammo* ranked all 50 states and the District of Columbia relative to their gun laws. Arizona is at the top and Washington, DC, dead last.

However, one set of statistics stands out among all the others. As illustrated in the accompanying table, within a five-mile radius of downtown Prescott there are more Federal Firearm License holders per capita than any other city in the USA.

FFL DENSITY*	
City	FFLs/10,000 residents
Prescott, Ariz.	17.5
Burlington, Vt.	4.0
Phoenix, Ariz.	1.3
Los Angeles, Calif.	.21
Washington, D.C.	.15
Boston, Mass.	.12
New York, N.Y.	0.042

*FFL data source: <http://fflgundealers.net/>, Population source: United States Census Bureau

The differences are breathtaking. Large metropolitan areas such as New York, Boston, and Washington, DC, have an FFL density that is two orders of magnitude less than that of Prescott. According to antigun logic, the crime rate must be out of control in Prescott. In fact, the crime rate is a fraction of the rate in these gun-restrictive areas. John Lott's book *More Guns, Less Crime* could be subtitled *More FFLs, Less Crime*.

Burlington, Vt., was included in the table because it is around the same size as Prescott (42.2 vs. 41.0 thousand), and the state is ranked No. 2 according to the *Guns & Ammo* rankings.

The point is that just being in a top state relative to gun laws is not enough to attract gun businesses. Phoenix is in gun-friendly Arizona, yet the FFL density is an order of magnitude less relative to Prescott. There might be a few cities somewhere in the country that could rival Prescott in FFL density, but, again, this is just one of many factors under consideration.

Guns from the Beginning

Prescottians love their guns and are willing to support these FFLs for dealers, manufacturers, and gunsmiths. Why? To answer that question we must explore the history of the region, the evolution of the local gun culture, and the impact of the state's laws.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) was signed with the Republic of Mexico creating New Mexico. Arizona was administered as part of the Territory of New Mexico until it seceded as the Confederate Territory of Arizona in 1861. Washington declared Arizona a territory in 1863.

The Prescott area was selected as the territorial headquarters, and around the same time, miners found gold and silver deposits in the nearby Bradshaw Mountains. Prescott became a boomtown and the governing center in Arizona, complete with a Governor's Mansion and Courthouse Plaza with public hangings in the square.

Prescott was a magnet for gunslingers, gamblers, cowboys, miners, prostitutes, and bordellos. The bars along



Prescott reenactors Bob Anderson and Karl Nusser belly up to the very same carved mahogany bar that served some of the most famous gunslingers in the West.



More than 100 early westerns were filmed in Prescott. Tom Mix, one of the most highly paid actors of the time, owned Bar Circle A Ranch in Prescott. (Chuck Anderson)

“Whiskey Row” next to the courthouse catered to some of the most famous gamblers and gunslingers. One of these establishments, The Palace, is the oldest and most well-known saloon in Arizona.

Their advertising tag line, “Serving Arizona’s toughest customers for over 100 years” is not hyperbole. In the late 1870s, Wyatt Earp, Virgil Earp and Doc Holliday were frequent customers of The Palace. Virgil was Town Constable, and he and his wife lived in Prescott, where Virgil owned a sawmill. Wyatt and his other brother Morgan visited Virgil in Prescott before they left for Tombstone.

On July 14th, 1900, The Palace was destroyed by the Whiskey Row fire. The original ornately carved mahogany bar weighing nearly a ton was carried to safety across the street to the Courthouse Plaza. When Prescottians unite in an effort, the seemingly impossible happens.

The current Palace Saloon was rebuilt in 1901 on the same location. When you “belly up to the bar,” you are placing your beverage of choice on a bar where some of the most infamous western gunslingers and gamblers imbibed.

The Cowboy Culture

The cowboy culture runs deep—Prescott was the location of the first rodeo in the world in 1888. Continuing with the tradition of the “World’s Oldest Rodeo” (<http://www.worldsoldestrodeo.com>), the Prescott Frontier Days celebration attracts the best professional rodeo performers from around the country. The annual Fourth of July parade, the rodeo grounds, and The Palace were the

setting for Sam Peckinpah’s 1972 movie *Junior Bonner*, starring Steve McQueen.

Prescott was also a focal point of the western movie industry from the 1910s through the 1930s. More than 100 westerns were filmed in and around Slaughter House Gulch and the Granite Dells area. Tom Mix, the western superstar of the era, signed a contract and moved his family to the Bar Circle A Ranch in this area. In 1913, he took part in the rodeo, where he won first prize in the steer riding and bulldogging competition.

Prescott’s “Wild West” legacy is carried on by professional actors and stuntmen, such as Chaz Lee of Six Gun Entertainment (www.sixgunent.com) and reenactors such as the Prescott Regulators (www.prescottregulators.org). Individuals such as Bob Anderson and Mike Pulley meet and greet customers at The Palace and provide a sense of what Prescott was like 100 years ago.

What sets these reenactors apart is the attention to detail in the clothing and firearms they carry. For example, Jim Lockwood, a local holster manufacturer (<http://www.legendsinleather.com>), was voted the best gun leather artisan in America by *True West* Magazine in 2013. No rubber stage props here. Bob Anderson carries an original 1903 Husqvarna 12-gauge shotgun.

The cowboy culture and a gun-friendly mindset are embedded deep into Prescottians. For example, the walls of John Olvera’s downtown barbershop are lined with antique rifles, hunting artifacts, and period pictures. Original period Winchesters are mounted above The Palace bar. The local newspaper, *The Daily Courier*, accepts firearm-related classified ads. Peddler’s Pass, Northern

Arizona’s largest swap meet located in Prescott Valley, allows the sale of firearms.

Guns, History, and the Law

The Sharlot Hall Museum (www.sharlot.org) is the repository for much of the history on the early settlers and cowboys. To state the obvious, guns were an essential tool on the frontier and marksmanship was a matter of life and death. Indeed, the Arizona State Flag traces its history to the 1910 National Rifle Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio, before Arizona became a state.

The visiting Arizona Rifle Team noticed that all of the other rifle teams carried flags or emblems of their state. The Arizona team had no such banner. The team captain, Arizona National Guard Col. Charles Wilfred Harris, with Carl Hayden, Arizona’s first representative in Congress, conceived of a team flag that was carried to the 1911 matches and later became the basis of the state flag.

In the state’s territorial days, there were few restrictions on guns, although some towns, such as Tombstone, passed ordinances prohibiting carrying within the town’s limits—a factor that led up to the legendary shootout at the O.K. Corral. Open carry was allowed outside restricted areas, and in 1994 a “shall-issue” permit system was enacted for concealed carry.

In 2010 the laws were again changed to allow concealed carry without a permit. As a further irritant to the country’s antigun forces, in 2012 Gov. Jan Brewer signed into legislation a law that removed restrictions on the use of suppressors for hunting.



The cowboy culture and guns are evident everywhere, including John Olvera’s barbershop on Cortez Street where there’s an ample supply of gun magazines.



Fred Wells, custom gun builder, was a major influence on bringing gun businesses to Prescott. Here he is in 2005, a year before his death. (Rachel Wells)



David Wolfe Prescott when he founded Wolfe Publishing Co. in 1969. He died in 2001, but his business continues today with *Handloader* and *Rifle*.

National Firearms Act (NFA)-controlled items such as suppressors and machine guns are allowed in Arizona. But as many readers are well aware, while they may be allowed by state law, there may be a de facto ban because the chief law enforcement officer (CLEO) refuses to sign the required ATF forms. Not so in Prescott.

In Yavapai County, where Prescott is located, Sheriff Scott Mascher has a procedure that includes completion of a "Law Enforcement Certification Request" form in addition to the federal forms. In essence, if there is no history of mental health issues or arrests for crimes of violence and drug use or trafficking, the federal CLEO statement is signed.

What about guns in bars such as those frequented by reenactors? Alan Korwin, author of *The Arizona Gun Owner's Guide*, states, "Laws vary significantly among states and they change occasionally. So if you have a weapon, you need to be very aware of state and local regulations. As for Arizona, guns are legal in restaurants and bars serving alcohol as long as there is no official sign properly posted prohibiting them, the weapon is con-



Janelle and Jeff Cooper, founder of Gunsite Academy, pose in 1978 during the construction of their new home, "The Sconce," at Paulden, Ariz. (Janelle Cooper)

cealed, the armed person has a valid CCW license and the person is not drinking alcohol. Employees and others, such as reenactors working for the establishment with the owner's permission, are also exempted."

The Evolution of Prescott's Firearms Industry

Prescott's firearms industry developed because of its mild climate, friendly business environment, and modest cost of living. The latter two are not surprising, but mild climate? Arizona is perceived by many as a vast sweltering desert filled with rattlesnakes and cactus—that is, depending on the elevation and season. Prescott, at 5,000 feet and with its low humidity, is surprisingly cool year-round, especially at night. The area has large stands of Ponderosa pines as well as oak and juniper trees and can receive up to several feet of snow during the winter.

This winning trifecta—weather, business climate, and cost of living—attracted several very talented individuals who founded world-renowned gun shops after World War II. They, in turn, attracted more gun-related businesses. Of course, none of this would have happened in the "quad city" area (Prescott, Prescott Valley, Dewey-Humboldt, and Chino Valley) if Arizona did not have gun-friendly laws.

Indeed, several businesses grew here because they either escaped from or did not want to be located in the highly regulated, high cost of living, and gun-restrictive states such as California. Ransom International, famous for its Master Series Rest that has become the international standard for accuracy testing, was such a company.

The current owner, Ken O'Brien, states, "In 1984 Chuck Ransom was looking for a more favorable business climate than the one offered in California where he originally developed the concept for the Ransom Rest. Prescott offered both a good labor market and favorable weather."

In the late 1950s, the population was less than 7,000, and there were less than a handful of stores selling guns, including Prescott Gun & Tackle, Sam Hill Hardware, Richards Sports Store, and Bucky O'Neill's. Only Bucky O'Neill's remains in business today, under new ownership.

Fred Wells was one of the pioneers in custom rifle building, which drew attention to the area. Fred started building his own guns during the Depression out of sheer necessity. His skill with firearms was so evident that he became an armorer during World War II. He lived alternately between Prescott and Montana and eventually settled in Prescott, where he went to work for the Richards Sports Store in 1946 as a gunsmith.

Jack Ashearst owned a barrel making shop, and Mrs. Richards ended up with his equipment when the shop closed in the early 1950s. Richards sold the business in the late 50s, and Fred acquired the barrelmaking equipment and renamed the business Wells' Sports Store. Prescott was becoming a center of excellence in gunsmithing, with the addition of other early craftsmen, including Lester Womach, Harold McFarland, and Mervin Corbett.

It was also attracting such notables as Jim Wilkinson, one of the world's most famous big-game hunters and owner of The Rifle Ranch, who, in 1946, settled near the Prescott airport.

Another key figure, also from Montana, was Joe DeSaye, the founder of J&G Rifle Ranch, later to become J&G Sales in 1949. Through savvy product procurement and distribution techniques, as well as advertising in SHOTGUN NEWS, the business grew to the point where they needed to relocate to better serve their customers, especially those in California.

Joe loved the San Diego area, but even back then, it was obvious that California would present long-term problems because of its restrictive laws. He seriously considered New Mexico, but while passing through Arizona, he bumped into Rachel Wells, wife of Fred Wells, who recommended the high desert community of Prescott.

He drove up to Prescott and met Dave Wolfe and Neal Knox, publisher and editor, respectively, of *Rifle* maga-



Yavapai College gunsmithing student Austin Laney fits a custom stock for a Winchester Model 70. Demand is so high that there is a two-year wait. (Yavapai College)

zine. The two gave him some real estate leads, and in 1977 he bought the tract of land where his business still stands.

Sigmund Davidson, owner of Davidson's (www.davidsonsinc.com), one of the largest firearm distributors in the country, was doing business deals with Joe DeSaye and faced similar issues relative to the need to service the California market. He too did not want to locate in California. Davidson was also friends with Bill Ruger, who was in the process of expanding his western operation to accommodate the production of the new P-85 pistol.

According to Bryan Tucker, CEO and the current owner of Davidson's, Bill Ruger convinced both him and Sigmund to buy Bill's manufacturing site after he moved to a much larger facility vacated by U.S. Motors. Davidson's opened for operation in late 1988 in a nearby rented facility and later moved into the Ruger building as soon as it was vacated. Since then, the original Ruger building has been expanded and converted to a business office and call center with over 50 sales representatives. A new warehouse was later acquired nearby, bringing their total facilities in the area to more than 75,000 square feet.

Today Davidson's is one of the top five distributors in the country and is the No. 1 distributor for Ruger. Hundreds of thousands of guns are distributed each year to more than 14,000 retail gun shops. They are very influential in the industry, enabling them to offer "Davidson's Exclusives," essentially special runs from manufacturers based on input from customers. They also offer, through their firearms retailers, a lifetime replacement warranty called Davidson's GuaranteedD.

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Gun distributor Davidson's moved its headquarters to Prescott from North Carolina. Bryan Tucker and Tim Mulder stand in an aisle containing 3,000 new handguns.



Buck Pope (l) shows off his “community gun” made by local craftsmen including master barrel maker Dan Pederson. The local craftsmanship is awe-inspiring, such as the engraving by Ka’imiloa Chrisman on the stock’s grip cap (insert).



Master stockmaker Robert Szweda, with stock duplicating machine, was one of the first students of the Yavapai College gunsmithing school in the early 1980s.

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Davidson’s pioneered home shopping for guns with *Davidson’s Gallery of Guns*, airing on the Sportsman Channel.

Bill Ruger’s connection with Prescott originated from a similar combination of business contacts and the temperate climate. In the early 1980s, Ruger purchased property in Young, Ariz., and spent many enjoyable camps there with the likes of writer Pete Brown, gunsmith Bill Atkinson, local ranchers and business folk.

He subsequently purchased a medium-sized ranch in Kirkland and a small manufacturing plant by the airport in Prescott. Arizona’s dry, warm weather offered relief to his arthritis.

Bill Atkinson and Paul Marquardt came to Prescott in 1953 from the gunsmithing school in Trinidad, Colo. They bought barrel making equipment and started Atkinson & Marquardt (“A&M”) Rifle Company. This was later split into Marquardt Precision and Atkinson Gun Company, which became HS Precision in late 1980s. Atkinson later went to work for Bill Ruger in the 1990s.

Building, Gunsmithing, Firearm Training, and Publishing Expertise

Another key addition to the area was the development of the gunsmithing school at Yavapai College (www.yc.edu) in the 1970s. The original plan was to have a general machine shop practice, but the school did not attract much interest. Fred Wells recommended that it specialize in gunsmithing, and the school became a hit, currently with a two-year waiting period for admission. Today the two-year associate’s program run by Al Lohr admits 50 new students each fall, and there are more job opportunities than graduates.

The technical school at Yavapai College has made this area a hub of skilled gunsmithing craftsmen. The addition of Gunsite Academy has also made this area the hub of firearm training. Gunsite, operated today by Buz Mills, was founded by Jeff Cooper in 1975.

Jeff’s widow, Janelle Cooper, provides some perspective on the move to the Prescott area, “We were living in Big Bear Lake, Calif., after Jeff left the Marine Corps. He was starting his training institute and soon recognized that a larger facility was needed. The restrictive regulations and the cost of property eliminated California as a possible location. Jeff and his father had traveled throughout the Southwest, and he had a particular fondness for Arizona.

“We found the property in Paulden (about 20 miles north of Prescott) by luck in 1975. A local developer had gone under, and what was called the “Eleven Lakes” development had become available at a price that was within our budget. It had all the essential features Jeff needed and ironically no lakes. Although Jeff knew many of the local gun-related individuals in the area, it was the

weather, location, and friendly business and gun regulations that cinched the deal.”

Gunsite has grown from the original 500 acres devoted to personal defense training where Jeff was the primary instructor to 65 instructors and a sprawling complex of over 2,000 acres with a variety of shooting ranges, including 12 indoor and outdoor live-fire simulators, 20 outdoor ranges, a fully stocked Pro Shop, and a full-service gunsmith operation for clients. Each year more than 2,500 students from around the world, including private individuals, security, military, and police, are trained at Gunsite.

Just as the early craftsmen drew gunsmiths to the area, Gunsite has also spun off trainers with unparalleled expertise. The most notable local is the Yavapai Firearms Academy (www.yfainc.com), founded by Louis Awerbuck, which provides worldwide training services. Jeff Cooper sponsored Louis, a native of South Africa, when he first came to the States and worked at Gunsite. Yet another training organization is American Small Arms Academy, founded by Chuck Taylor in nearby Mayer, Ariz. (www.chucktayloramericansmallarmsacademy.com).

Yet another key addition was the establishment of a gun-related publishing business. The previously mentioned Dave Wolfe came to Prescott in 1969 to establish Wolfe Publishing Company (www.riflemagazine.com). Wolfe Publishing, most noted for *Handloader* and *Rifle* magazines, is still in business today and owned by Don Polacek. Not surprisingly, the area has attracted a number of well-known writers and editors such as Chuck Taylor, Jim Carmichael, Rick Jamison, Ken Howell, Tom Gresham, Al Miller, and Buck Pope.

It has also attracted such notables as Bob Corbin, former NRA President and Arizona State Attorney General, who chose Prescott for a summer home in 2001. “Back in 1972, I bought a summer place in the Prescott National Forest, near Walker, while living in Phoenix. I was attracted to the good people and the gun-friendly environment. In 1999, the summer home became my permanent residence and I love it.”

The Retail Industry Today

Monty Shepherd, owner of Prescott Valley Guns, attributes much of the recent

growth in the retail firearms business to the significant population increase over the past 20 years. Prescott Valley Guns is one of the older retail dealers in the “quad city” area. It also has one of the largest gun inventories on view, typically 500 or more firearms in racks and display cases.

“The issue today is obtaining products because of the current imbalance in supply and demand. We are able to compete because we have a longstanding relationship with the major new gun suppliers and also with the community for buying used guns. For example, we do all the transfers for Ruger’s local employees who wish to buy Ruger products.”

Dave Mazy, owner of Mazy’s firearm sales and gunsmithing business (www.mazys.com), expresses a similar view. “I moved here from San Diego in 1990 after an 11-state search for a more friendly business environment. I am able to compete because I’ve been in the business 40 years and have excellent relationships with suppliers. I am also a full-service store with onsite gunsmithing services. My used firearms come with a guarantee few are able to match.”

The Master Craftsmen of Today

Fred Wells’ son Rube Wells, and his son Todd, continue the legacy of producing high-end custom hunting rifles. Rachel Wells, Fred’s widow, is a master engraver, one of only several hundred in the world who can claim that distinction. “I have been an artist all my life and when I married Fred back in 1965, I would often spend time at the shop.

“Fred basically said to me, ‘If you are going to be around here, I may as well put you to work.’ At first I worked on

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Master engraver Rachel Wells works at her bench. Yavapai students are fortunate to learn not just theory, but current, in-demand hands-on skills.



Prescott Valley Guns, has been in business since 1983. The current location has one of the largest gun inventories on view, typically 500 or more firearms.



R. Lee Erme touches off a Thompson at the Big Sandy Shoot in nearby Wikieup, Ariz. More than 2 million rounds a year are fired at the shoot. (Kenton Tucker)

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finishing stocks, and through good fortune we were given engraving equipment from a friend. I just seemed to have a knack for engraving and the rest is history, as they say.”

Rachel teaches engraving at the Yavapai College using a self-published instruction book, *Rachel Wells on Engraving*. Another protégé of Fred’s is Dan Pederson of Classic Barrel and Gun Works (www.cutrifle.com). He graduated from the gunsmithing school and worked for Fred for nearly a decade before starting his own business.

Robert Szweda, owner of RMS Custom Gunsmithing (www.customstockmaker.com), was one of the first students of the Yavapai College gunsmithing school in the early 1980s. In 1985, he became a lab assistant and continues his relationship with the college as a part-time instructor on custom stockmaking. Fred Wells recognized his talents early on and used Robert for such work as custom checking for large magnum-action African-safari-style stocks.

These are but a few of the local craftsmen. Other locals include engravers Joseph Forte, Ka’imiloa Chrisman, and Mark Swanson and gunsmiths Gregg Bardsley and Tim Putman. Writer Buck Pope gave recent tribute to the local talent in the building of what he called a “community gun” in the 68th edition of *Gun Digest*, 2014, pages 204–8.

A Place to Shoot

Arizona offers wide expanses of open public land on which to shoot. Just over an hour’s drive is the Ben Avery Shooting Facility, site of the 1970 World Shooting Championships and one of the largest publicly operated shooting facilities in the country.

Closer to home is The Prescott Sportsmen’s Club, operating an outdoor range five miles northwest of the downtown area. This facility is gradually being replaced by a facility in nearby Chino Valley built in 2013. Prescott Valley also offers an indoor range, the High Noon Indoor Shooting Parlour, and the Prescott Trap and Skeet Club.

Under construction is a new indoor facility near downtown Prescott, the Prescott Gun Club (<http://prescottgunclub.com>), offering eight 25-yard lanes using the Meggitt Training Systems’ range components and bullet traps. On track to be completed in January 2014, the facility will offer gun rentals, classroom instruction, and defensive training courses.

But Wait, There’s More

Aside from the national competition matches at Ben Avery, there are several other gun-related attractions within a few hours’ drive. The SHOT Show, held annually in Las Vegas, is the largest and most comprehensive trade show for all professionals in the shooting sports, hunting, and law enforcement industries. It draws visitors

from all 50 states and more than 100 countries. Run by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (www.nssf.org/shot), there are more than 1,600 exhibitors filling booth space covering 630,000 net square feet.

The combined Crossroads of the West and Small Arms Review Gun Show (<http://www.sarwest2013.com>) held each year in December at the Arizona State Fairgrounds in Phoenix is one of the largest gun shows west of the Rocky Mountains.

Finally, MG Shooters (www.mgshooters.com) holds what is billed as the largest machine gun shoot in the country in nearby Wikieup, Ariz. Held twice each year, there are around 200 shooters with over 2,000 NFA weapons lined up on a quarter-mile firing line.

On average, 2 million rounds are fired downrange. What sets this shoot apart from other machine gun shoots is the use of radio-controlled target airplanes, thousands of impact reactive targets, and hundreds of aerial fireworks used as ground targets. Between 1,500 to 2,500 spectators watch the jaw-dropping spectacle.

Open for Business

Cities and towns across the country are vying for new tax-revenue-generating businesses. But not all welcome gun-related businesses because of their policies built on irrational hoplophobia. Witness the closing of the Great Western Gun Show in Pomona due to the County Board of Supervisors banning gun sales on Los Angeles County property.

The attitude by elected officials in Prescott is decidedly different. Mayor Marlin Kuykendall states, “As far back as 1962, when I first met Bill Atkinson at a Kiwanis Club meeting, I have been impressed with the talent, inventiveness, and craftsmanship of those in the gun business. At every opportunity I have helped facilitate bringing this industry into our community.”

Donald Grier, co-owner of the Prescott Gun Club states that this positive attitude extends beyond the mayor, “We worked closely with City officials such as George Worley, Tom Guice, and Ruth Traxler during the preplanning and construction stages and with the City Council.”

The word gets around. Duane Liptak, Director of Product Management and Marketing at Magpul Industries Corporation states, “Magpul has been evaluating gun-friendly and business friendly states for relocation out of Colorado since the passage of HB 1224 and related legislation this spring. Arizona, and specifically the Prescott area, was one of the locations in our list of sites to consider, for what should be very obvious reasons.” Duane goes on to report that the final location decision will be first shared with employees and then released to the public before the end of 2013.

Some Things Never Change

This article started with the story of a carved mahogany bar that was saved during the 1900 fire that devastated Whiskey Row. One hundred and thirteen years later, a forest fire devastated the nearby town of Yarnell and killed 19 firefighters with the Prescott Fire Department’s interagency Granite Mountain Hotshots. Immediately, the gun community united to provide what support they could, such as Jim Marnell, co-owner of Bucky O’Neill Guns, one of Prescott’s original gun stores, running a fundraiser barbeque. That is the nature of this closely knit gun community, evident by the interrelationships and personal connections that transformed the area into Gun Town, USA.

For those readers living elsewhere, you might consider placing Prescott on your vacation list. It’s a great relocation destination for gun-minded individuals in places like California. And finally, for those who live in gun-restrictive areas, this article may provide some inspiration that it really does not have to be that way. It is proof positive that a “gun-crazed” city can be safer than a “gun-free” city and at the same time be a magnet for new business and talented individuals. ©

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