



Tucson's Old Tucson

Old Tucson is an American movie studio and theme park just west of Tucson, Arizona, adjacent to the Tucson Mountains and close to the western portion of Saguaro National Park.

Old Tucson was originally built in 1939 by Columbia Pictures on a Pima County-owned site as a replica of 1860s era Tucson for the movie *Arizona* (1940), starring William Holden and Jean Arthur. Workers built more than 50 buildings in 40 days. Many of those structures are still standing.

After *Arizona* completed filming, the location lay dormant for several years, until the filming of *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945), starring Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman. Other early movies filmed on this set included *The Last Round-Up* (1947) with Gene Autry and *Winchester '73* (1950) with James Stewart and *The Last Outpost* (1951) with Ronald Reagan. The 1950s saw the filming of *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *The Lone Ranger and the Lost City of Gold* (1958), *Cimarron* (1960) and *Rio Bravo* (1959) among others.

In 1959, entrepreneur Robert Shelton leased the property from Pima County and began to restore the aging facility. Old Tucson re-opened in 1960, as both a film studio and a theme park



Old Tucson served as an ideal location for shooting scenes for TV series like NBC's *The High Chaparral* (1967–1971) with Leif Erickson and Cameron Mitchell where the ranch house survived the 1995 fire: The 1970s-1980s series *Little House on the Prairie* with Michael Landon, and later *Father Murphy*, featuring Merlin Olsen and Petrocelli (1974–76) used the site. *Three Amigos* was a popular comedy movie shot there in the 1980s with Steve Martin, utilizing the church set. From 1989 to 1992, the western show *The Young Riders* filmed here and at the Mescal, Arizona sister site. The main street appears prominently in 1990s westerns such as *Tombstone* (1993) with Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer. A partial mirror set exists at Mescal and is featured in *The Quick and the Dead* (1995), with Sharon Stone and Gene Hackman which filmed all of the town of Redemption scenes at the studios.

On April 25, 1995, a fire destroyed much of Old Tucson Studios. Old Tucson re-opened its doors on January 2, 1997. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Tucson_Studios]