

the rise, fall & rise



Written and Compiled by Jim Ross

Dotch Windsor established the Painted Desert Trading Post around 1940. He and wife Alberta sold fuel, curios, and Navajo rugs and jewelry, and tended a small herd of cattle stamped with their "Quarter-Circle X" brand. They divorced in 1948, and in 1950 Dotch married Joy Nevin, who was destined to later become one of Holbrook, Arizona's most famous citizens. That marriage ended as well in 1956, and in 1958, a new alignment of US 66 bypassed Dotch's property, forcing him to close his doors. He later moved to Holbrook, where he died in 1964 at age 68.

The trading post sat vacant on a decaying stretch of highway for the next fifty years. Over time, soil erosion and the pull of gravity gradually caused the foundation to crumble and the walls to slump.

In 2018, the property was purchased by the Route 66 Co-Op, a non-profit formed by like-minded preservationists to save the building from collapse. They secured a National Park Service grant and initiated other fund-raisers. Work by dozens of volunteers began in November 2018, and continued for the next three years.

The images that follow chronicle that effort. Almost all of them were taken by co-op members or volunteers. They are not individually credited.

In April 2018, Route 66 Co-Op members Mike Ward, Rich Dinkela, and Jim Ross journeyed to the site to make an initial assessment. Here is what they found.



Slumped and bowed walls, a disintegrating foundation, and a rotted roof had brought the trading post to the brink of collapse.

The roof, far beyond repair, would have to be completely rebuilt.



Exposed rafter tails had decayed and window openings were skewed.

The bottom of the east wall had been pushed out roughly 8" due to the crumbling foundation.



The foundation had completely pulled away from the building's northwest corner.

Damage done by cattle had caused large sections of stucco to fall away.





Very little support remained at the northeast corner.

Cattle had destroyed the wall and window opening to the left of the front door.



Water coming through the roof caused the sheetrock to fall, which was then pulverized by cattle, leaving a mix of granulated drywall, cow dung, and other debris covering the floor.

The worst structural damage was at the southeast corner, where the collapsing foundation had caused the walls to drop 16" below the level of the concrete slab.



Interior view of the building's northwest corner.



The roof sagged dangerously where the partition wall meets the east exterior wall.



In their NPS grant application, the Co-Op proposed an ambitious approach to stabilizing the building, which would be done in three phases: 1) raise and straighten the walls; 2) completely replace the roof structure; and 3) install a new foundation.

Phase I was an eight-day work session that began on November 4, 2018. Because the trading post was isolated and without water or electricity, everything had to be transported to the site. Throughout the project, most of the materials were obtained in either Albuquerque or Gallup, New Mexico.



Loading lumber to begin Phase I.

Cleanup was the first order of business on day one.





Jamie Jessop of
St. Louis, Missouri.

Brian Ross and Jerry
Holmes haul rubble.



The nests of several
ravens had to be
removed.

Loose sheet metal
is stripped from
the roof.



Old Glory was
raised on the
first day.

Jeff Jensen of Huntsville,
Alabama, and Co-Op mem-
ber Jim Ross of Oklahoma.





A humorous attempt at lifting the southeast corner.

Jamie Jessop, Brian Ross, and Jerry Holmes prepare the southwest corner to be repositioned.



Jackposts and screw jacks used to lift the southwest corner are put in place.

Co-Op founder Rich Dinkela secures the stucco prior to lifting the southwest corner.



Co-Op member Richard Walker removes unsupported concrete flooring.

Brian Ross and dad Jim Ross trim jack-posts for wall lifting.





A temporary “shear” wall holds the adjusted southwest corner in place.

Multiple jackposts are positioned on the more severely displaced southeast corner.



The building rises as members slowly turn the screw jacks.

Materials for fencing were available in nearby Holbrook.



Keeping cattle out was another goal during the first work session.

BLEED STOP. It helps to be prepared when handling barbed wire.





Kristy and Brian Ross demonstrate their fence building skills.

Crew members assemble corner posts.



Volunteers Sandy King and Kristy Ross.

Brian and Kristy Ross.



End of Phase I.

Pronghorn antelope are common to the area.



The seven-day **Phase II** work session began on March 16, 2019. The rear wall of the trading post, which had not yet been straightened, was adjusted while removal of the entire roof structure got underway.



Roof decking to match the old was cut at a specialty sawmill in Albuquerque.

Workers disassemble the old roof structure.





For safety, ladders were used to remove the old decking.

Jamie Jessop secures a new rafter.



New ceiling joists are assembled as old ones come down.

The original rafters were severely deteriorated.



Brian Ross and Lonnie Jessop install new rafters.

Nails were evidently plentiful when the trading post was built.





Shellee Graham keeps work spaces free of scrap.

Rafters for the rear section of the building are ready to go up.



Teamwork came naturally to the entire crew.

Jamie Jessop.



Jamie and dad Lonnie brought their own lodging.

Lonnie Jessop.





Bird's eye view.

Brian Ross.



Honorary crew member Bill Hozie entertains Melissa Beasley.

Richard Walker
and Brian Ross.



Work progresses on
the new decking.

Application of a
vapor barrier is the
last step before
sheet metal.





The same style of sheet metal was used for the new roof.

Kristy Ross.



Final phase of the new roof.

Roamin' Rich Dinkela and Mark Norman.



Completed roofing.

Group photo at the conclusion of Phase II.



Phase III of the rescue effort took place May 23-29, 2019. With the walls raised and the roof replaced, the trading post was ready for a new foundation. To accomplish this, the entire building had to be levitated so that a trench could be dug around the perimeter.



Shellee Graham with Cindy Jaquez, co-owner of the Jackrabbit Trading Post. Cindy baked pastries for the crew during each work session.

Beams through openings were used so that all remaining supports beneath the walls could be removed.





Volunteers Angie Lavendar and Tammy Lambert came from North Carolina to get their hands dirty.

Sheathing and stucco is trimmed to allow for a new sill plate on the bottoms of the walls.



Volunteers Mike and Jessica May were regulars during the rescue effort.

Co-Op member Jim Ross gets blamed for injuries caused by a brace he installed.



Mark Norman was the first casualty.

Mike May took it on the nose.





Co-Op member Pat Maloney helps prep the footing for concrete .

Reinforcing steel bars are used for additional strength.



Volunteer Sandy King and Co-Op member Shellee Graham.

A new sill plate is attached to the bottoms of the walls.



Mark Norman, Gene Shepherd, and Scott Wallace install concrete forms.

Foundation forms were backfilled with earth for support.





The first of two trucks arrived at 9:00 a.m.

Concrete was trucked 50 miles, from Joseph City, Arizona.



Concrete filled the footing to the bottoms of the walls, surrounding the rebar and "J-bolt" anchors secured to the sill plate.

Co-Op member Frank Maloney.



Pat Maloney scrapes concrete from the forms.

The second truck arrives.





A bucket and auger designed by Co-Op member Rich Dinkela makes dispensing concrete efficient.

Missing sections of slab inside the building were also replaced.



Rich Dinkela, Richard Walker, and Gene Shepherd.

Forms are removed from the hardened concrete.



The trading post now sits on a reinforced foundation.

The new foundation after backfilling.



With the three-phase rescue effort completed, attention was turned to exposed areas of the building. The **4th work session** took place October 13-19, 2019, and focused on sheathing replacement, preparing for stucco repair, and adding metal screens to window openings to keep out birds and small animals.



Sheathing is replaced under the rear windows.

Jim Ross and John Jimenez.





Heavy duty screens were installed on all window openings.

Adela Windsor, daughter of Dotch Windsor, poses with her dog Gracie and son Mick during a visit.



Professor Bill Hozie lived in the area, and stopped by regularly.

Local (Holbrook) volunteers Sandy King and John Jimenez.



Completed sheathing replacement.

Co-Op member Mike Ward paints a window screen.





The parapet walls required labor intensive prep for stucco repair and capping.

The work crew raises a toast on the last day of the work session.



Co-Op friend Bill Hozie and Jim Ross on departure day.

Stucco repair began with the **5th work session**, which took place September 10-16, 2020. An interior wall was also paneled in preparation for the installation of interpretive panels.

An aviation buff duplicated an actual emergency landing that took place here in the 1950s.



Visitor James Gelet took this dazzling photo between the 4th and 5th work sessions.

Wonderboard was used to cover large areas of exposed sheathing.



It was hard to predict who might stop by.

Stucco mix and trowels were used for the majority of the repairs.





Crew members take a brief break.

Volunteer Jerry Holmes made the journey from Oregon multiple times.



Stucco repair was a tedious and multi-step process.



All of the stucco was hand-troweled.



Rafter tails and surrounding trim were painted as stucco repair progressed.

Large areas of the front wall required new stucco.





Volunteers pose for another group photo.

The Quarter-Circle X brand has been returned to the property.



A drone photo illustrates the isolation of the site.

Abner Cadaver, alter-ego of roadie Meredith Edwards, stopped by in between work sessions, but had trouble getting past the gate.



Abner made the best of it by "hanging" out for awhile.

Stucco repair was completed during the **6th work session**, which took place May 17-21, 2021. Window casings were also added to keep water from seeping inside the walls, and lettering outlines were begun by artist Jerry McClanahan.

Steve Rider, David Wickline, and Jim Ross.



Mike and Jessica May's Tesla getting some high test fuel.



Co-Op members David Wickline and Judy Walker.





Jerry Holmes mixes more mud.

Jerry Holmes, Judy Walker,
and Richard Walker.



New window casings
are installed on the
back wall.

David Wickline.



Bruce Mejia.

Richard Walker getting sun screen from wife Judy.





Stucco repair on the parapet walls is done from the roof.

Judy Walker, Debbie Mejia.



Work crew privvy fabricated by Steve Howell.



Co-Op members Steve Rider and Frank Maloney.



John Gerald Jimenez.

Steve Howell.





Heloise Mnr, Ryan Maloney,
and Pat Maloney.

Jeff Jensen.



The Arizona sky.



David Wickline, Chef.



Dinner at the PDTP.



Debbie Pope Mejia.





Jim Ross.

Jeff Jensen, David Wickline.



Parapet wall with new stucco and aluminum cap.



Mark Norman.



Ryan Maloney, Jeff Jensen,
and Frank Maloney.

Steve Howell.





Co-Op members David Wickline and Richard Walker.

Judy Walker, Shellee Graham, and Sandy King.



Group photo at the end of work session No. 6.

The **7th** and final work session took place September 19-24, 2021. Tasks included painting the entire building, completing the ghost lettering, and a thorough clean-up of the site.



Co-Op founder Rich Dinkela acquired and installed these old pumps between the 5th and 6th work sessions.

Steve Howell after a long day.





Mariko Kusakabe and Sandy King.

A full moon rises over the trading post.



Stencils prepared ahead of time were used for the small lettering.

Shellee Graham shows off the interpretive panels.



Scaffolding was needed for lettering on the upper walls.

Jim Ross and Richard Walker.





Painting and lettering consumed most of the work session.

Artist Jerry McClanahan (far right) works on lettering while lighting conduit to match the original is installed.



Lettering is given a "distressed" look.

Jerry Holmes and Mariko Kusakabe.



Painting and lettering nears completion.



Mike Ward and Judy Walker view the progress.





Shellee Graham shares a private moment with Bill Hozie, who had recently suffered a stroke.

Mike Ward and Jessica May.



Mike Fabisiak panels an interior wall.

Artist Shellee Graham ghost-letters the Windsor brand where it once was.



Jerry McClanahan and Mariko Kusakabe after several hours in the sun.

John Gerald Jimenez and Jerry Holmes.





Shellee Graham, Bill Hozie, and Judy Walker.

The completed east wall of the trading post.



The finished product.

The final work session ends with a group photo.



A birds-eye view to the north.

A parting shot with a view to the west.

