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Have you ever wondered about the history of the Yuma Territorial Prison?

The Yuma Territorial Prison was an old prison from the Old West that received its first inmates on July 1, 1876. It is located on one of the hottest places on the country at 220 Prison Hill Rd, Yuma, AZ 85364. It is located in this position because the " Gila River to the east, the fast-moving Colorado River to the north, the town of Yuma to the west, and the barren, harsh, desert to the south would certainly discourage escape." (Marti Murphy, The Prison Chronicle: Yuma's Territorial Prison's Colorful Past). It was surrounded by in hospital wasteland. Back in the 1880s, it made the perfect location for a prison. Throughout the years, the prison was noticed to not be effective, helped a lot the local community, and was recognized for its harsh rules inside the prison. The prison was being allowed in 1875 and \$25, 000 were given to built the prison. The Yuma Territorial Prison was given many nicknames because of its modern technology, such as electricity, running water and flush toilets. The construction of the facility began on April 28, 1876. The Yuma Territorial Prison was completed by July and had seven inmates. The first inmates accepted in the Yuma Territorial Prison had to built the first cells by their own, but they were provided with tools by the prison. Although in 1882, more security was provided by the Guard Tower that was being built, I believe the Yuma Territorial Prison did not do a good job on security because of all the escapes from a prisoners that were successful. The prison owners should of had more security guards surrounding the area all day long. The Yuma Territorial Prison was not an effective prison because of its overcrowding problem that made the prison close soon. The Yuma Territorial Prison was closed on September 15, 1909 forever. There were various attempts on escaping around 140. Twenty-six

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escape attempts were successful. The problems that the guards faced dealing with prisoners was that prisoners were very aggressive. The prisoners were locked inside the Yuma Territorial Prison for murder, theft, and for polygamy. Twenty-nine women were prisoners at the Yuma Territorial Prison out of the 3, 000 inmates. The Yuma Territorial Prison was home to many people from at least twenty-one different countries. Pearl Hart, an inmate at Yuma Territorial Prison, was so famous because she tried to act and was bad at it and because she made a stagecoach robbery. 111 prisoners died at the Yuma Territorial Prison. 104 of them were buried at the Yuma Territorial Prison. The other seven bodies were claimed by their family or are unknown. Most prisoners died from tuberculosis, which was very common inside the prison back in the days when the Yuma Territorial Prison was functioning. The Yuma Territorial Prison helped the local community a lot by many ways. After many years of the prison functioning, the prisoners were moved to another facility in Florence, Arizona. It was used as a school by the Yuma High School because their school burned. The local school district needed some place to teach and it was located near the prison. The school rented four structures from 1910 to 1914. The Yuma Territorial Prison helped a lot the local community around there. It was like a resource for the people living near around the Yuma Territorial Prison. Homeless families lived inside the cells too. Also, the Yuma Territorial Prison was used as a hospital. Besides being used as a school, refuge for homeless people, and as a hospital, the Yuma Territorial Prison was used as many movie scenes. In the 1900s, a new yard was being opened and had more better space for the inmates at the Yuma Territorial Prison. In 1941, a museum opened up at the prison. I believe the owners of the Yuma Territorial Prison after its closure did

a good job allowing the prison to the local community for help. Prison life at the Yuma Territorial Prison was very harsh for the prisoners. There were many bad punishments for the prisoners. There was a fifteen by fifteen feet room called the " Dark Cell" which was known for its punishment. The Dark Cell was being built in 1894 and it was a better way to punish for the guards. The Dark Cell is an excavation in the South hill side. It has a cage in the center of the room where the prisoners were put in. It had no toilet and bed. The longest time spent inside the Dark Cell was 104 days. Two prisoners left the Dark Cell to be transferred immediately to a mental institution in Phoenix. Prisoners suffered mental problems because they were in a dark cell with nobody to talk to. This relates to the prisoners trying to escape because they had the same punishments which led them to get sick. An inmate had to be sent to the hospital because he got crazy inside the Dark Cell. There were more than 3, 000 prisoners at the Yuma Territorial Prison. The youngest age in the prison was fourteen years old. The oldest inmate was eighty-eight years old. The Yuma Territorial Prison first opened on July 1st, 1876. The Yuma Territorial Prison first got electricity in 1885. The prisoner's cell had only six men. They inmates inside the cell had only one bucket to use the bathroom. There were cockroaches inside. The cells stank and were very dirty. The prisoners were locked inside the Yuma Territorial Prison for murder, theft, and for polygamy. The Yuma Territorial Prison was known a lot for its strict rules. It was 115 degrees fahrenheit inside the cells. Only one baby was born inside the Yuma Territorial Prison and it was because men and women were put together inside the Dark Cell and men would rape the women. I believe the prison was too harsh on the punishments because it led to prisoners to go in need of help by a doctor. In

conclusion, it is important to keep intact important historical places like the Yuma Territorial Prison so we can know how history has been changing throughout the years. Throughout the years, the prison was noticed to not be effective, helped a lot the local community, and was recognized for its harsh rules inside the prison. If you ever wonder of visiting the Yuma Territorial Prison, be sure to: view the deck because it provides an excellent view of the Colorado River, check the guard tower because it was the commanding view of the area, visit the sally port because it is one of the last remaining original adobe structures, visit the museum because it has a new digital exhibit on the Mormon prisoners, and last but not least, visit the cell block because it is the original section of the prison, which provides a vivid sense of what it was like to be incarcerated at the Yuma Territorial Prison.