

WOMEN OF WINSLOW



Mary Giragi Ferguson

(born 1890, died 1976)

“It was a family business. I worked from seven o’clock in the morning to often past midnight every day, just stopping long enough to eat a meal, then I’d be back to work.”

– Mary on the family work ethic while they owned the Tombstone newspapers.

Mary Giragi Ferguson was Winslow’s postmaster for fifteen years as well as an energetic businesswomen and community leader.

Mary Giragi was born on October 16, 1890, in Arizona Territory, to parents who had immigrated to Clifton from Sicily. The family moved to Tombstone right after Mary was born, the only girl of five children. The rest of the family went to work after her father became disabled, and Mary was employed at the Maconich Mercantile Company.

In 1913, her brothers George, Carmel, and Columbus bought the daily *Tombstone Prospector* and weekly *Tombstone Epitaph* with savings from their mother’s home baking business. After graduation, Mary went to work for them as a manager, reporter, and typesetter.

Mary married Homer Ferguson in 1916 and helped him manage the same mercantile she worked for as a teenager. Her brothers moved to Winslow in 1925, purchased the Winslow and Holbrook newspapers, and built the Chief Hotel on Second Street. Mary and Homer followed in 1929 and managed both the hotel and the *Winslow Mail*, which operated out of the bottom floor.

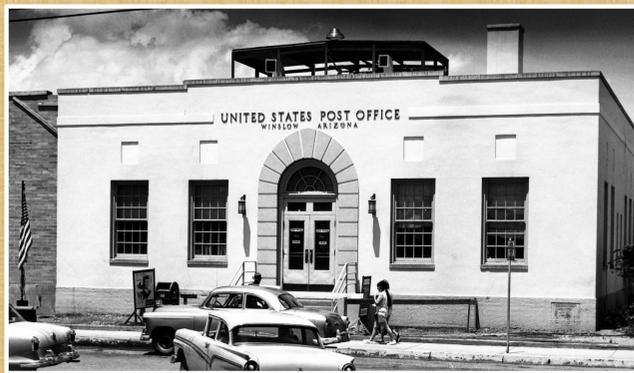
Sadly, Mary lost both her husband and her only child during this period. Homer died in 1936, and Homer Jr. died in an Air Force plane crash during World War II. Despite these personal hardships, Mary continued to manage the *Winslow Mail* until Columbus sold it in 1945. She continued working for the new owners until 1951, when she applied to be the town’s acting postmaster.

As a life-long Democrat, she experienced some opposition because of the political climate at the time. After her brothers’ friend, prominent Arizona Republican Barry Goldwater, intervened, Mary was appointed Winslow’s permanent postmaster in 1954. Mary worked “day and night” managing the mail-handling, staff, and finances. She also oversaw the building’s expansion and modernization, a five-year process completed just prior to her retirement banquet in 1966 at age 75 (photo upper left).

Mary was a member of the National Association of Postmasters of the United States and the Winslow Business and Professional Women’s Club (charter member). She served as their president in 1944 and was named their first Woman of the Year in 1955.

She was a member of numerous community groups including the American Legion Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Catholic Daughters of America (charter member), Soroptimist International, and the Winslow Women’s Club.

Mary died on February 9, 1976, in a Prescott hospital, and was buried with her husband at Desert View Cemetery in Winslow.



Top Left: The Hotel Chief in 1955

Middle Left: The renovated Winslow Post Office in 1965

Bottom Left : Mary (far left) with Zada Purdy (standing third from right) and Florence Beck Olmstead (standing far right) at the Winslow BPW’s “Antique Tea” in 1945