

## STREET SMARTS

## Street Smarts: General Hitchcock Highway remembers a man whose influence went from D.C. to Tucson and back



9 HOURS AGO • BY DAVID LEIGHTON FOR THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The road from Tucson to Mount Lemmon was named for a man whose national and local contributions include starting airmail and creating the Saguaro National Monument.

**Frank Harris Hitchcock** was born in Amherst, Ohio in 1867 to **Henry and Mary (Harris) Hitchcock**. During his youth he spent weeks traveling the Southwest practicing ornithology, the study of birds.

He graduated from Harvard in 1891 and the George Washington University Law School in 1894. During his time at Harvard he met **Theodore Roosevelt** at the Audubon Society, both sharing a passion for the study of birds. Hitchcock credited Roosevelt for his success at the national level:

From 1897 to 1905 Hitchcock served in the departments of Agriculture and Commerce. From 1905-08, he was assistant postmaster general.

Hitchcock managed **William Howard Taft's** 1908 presidential campaign and the victory resulted in Hitchcock being named **postmaster general**. Under his leadership from 1909 to 1913, the U.S. Post Office began airmail, made mailboxes as a condition of delivery and ended Sunday mail delivery. Hitchcock always thought his role in the creation of airmail was one of the most important acts of his life. Two decades after the event, he repeated the inauguration ceremonies at the airport in Tucson, handing a bag of airmail to **Earl Ovington**, the first aviator to fly airmail in the U.S.

In **1910**, along with **James T. Williams** and **Allan B. Jaynes**, Hitchcock purchased the **Tucson Daily Citizen**. In 1928 he moved to Tucson and was influential in creating the Saguaro National Monument and securing federal funds to expand the University of Arizona.

He was a power player in the Republican Party until the end of his life — just a few months before Hitchcock's death, former president **Herbert Hoover** came to consult him on political issues.

Hitchcock never married. He died on Aug. 5, 1935.

**General Hitchcock Highway begins at the base of Mount Lemmon and goes to Summerhaven.**

Hitchcock received this honor as result of his work in obtaining funds and labor for the construction of the mountain road that bears his name.

### **Suggest a story**

Each Tuesday, historical writer David Leighton shares the story behind Tucson street names. Contact him at [streetsmarts@azstarnet.com](mailto:streetsmarts@azstarnet.com)