

# STAFF REPORT

## to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

By: Eric M. Hansen, Urban Design Studio + Historic Preservation

Thru: Mark Vinson, Historic Preservation Officer (HPO)

Meeting Date: 3 May 2001  
Agenda Item #: III  
DSD# HPO #2001.29

Re: **Tempe Hardware Building Historic Designation**  
**520 S. Mill Avenue, Tempe, AZ 85281**

### Background + Status

The Tempe Hardware Building property owner, Stuart Siefer, submitted an application for designation to the Tempe Historic Property Register on 17 March 2001. This submittal was in response to staff's recent notification of proposed "Historic Eligible" (HE) property classification and request for nomination for formal designation.

The Tempe Hardware Building is identified in the *Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update* (MRA) survey (#244) and is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### History + Context

Constructed in 1898 the Tempe Hardware Building was an important focus of the commercial, social, political, and religious life in Tempe in the early twentieth century.

The cornerstone of the Old Fellow's Building was laid with great ceremony on April 14, 1898. The Odd Fellows, and other fraternal organizations, were a favored method of community fellowship in Tempe, and both men and women often belonged to several groups at once. The ballroom in the new building was used by the Masonic Lodge, Pythian Sisters, American Legion, Rotary Club, Good Templars, and many other groups. The ballroom and its weekly dances became central to the early social life of the community. It was used for political meetings and speeches, City Council chambers, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and the Salt River Valley Water Users Association.

The first businesses to occupy the ground floor of the building ere short-lived hardware companies, but in 1906, M.E. Curry, George L. Compton, and Dr. B.B. Moeur formed the Tempe Hardware Company. The Curry family ran the business for 75 years, finally closing in 1976. In 1985, the ballroom served as the Fine Arts Center, and houses a salon today. The remainder of the building is currently leased as office and commercial space. The **Tempe Hardware Building** was added to the National Register of Historic Places on 26 June 1980.

### Architecture

The Tempe Hardware Building is the oldest remaining three-story brick commercial building from the Territorial period in Maricopa County. The proportions and details of the building façade are the work of a master architect using the Panel Brick Commercial Style. James M. Creighton, a well-known Arizona architect, is responsible

for its design. Rectangular in plan, the main façade is on Mill Avenue. The façade is divided into three bays with a continuous brick cornice across the top. The north and south edges of the façade are articulated with brick pilasters on the upper stories and stone on the ground piers. Brick rises from the springline of the arch with paired, arched, double-hung windows on the second and third floors. Original double entry doors no longer remain, but the original transom light frame is intact. The remaining north and south bays are identical and recessed.

There is a store front on each ground level bay with the original wood and glass elements replaced with aluminum and brick. Original elements on the second and third floors consist of smooth brick wall planes, rusticated brick band courses at the sill lines, triplicated double-hung windows with rusticated brick flat arches on the second floor and round arched double-hung windows with rusticated brick on the third floor. Internally, the ground floor is divided into two 21-foot bays with a six-foot bay to the north occupied by the second floor stairway. The second floor consists of an office area and the two-story meeting hall/ballroom.

### **Significance**

The subject property appears to meet the following criteria for designation, as found in section 14A-4 (a) of the Tempe City Code.

1. It meets the criteria listing on the Arizona or National Register of Historic Places;
- 2a. It is found to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character, resulting from:
  - A significant portion of it is at least 50 years old
  - It is reflective of the city's cultural, social, political or event significant in local, state or national history.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Historic Preservation staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the nomination and recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council that the Tempe Hardware Building be designated as a Tempe Historic Property (#20).

Note: Per Chapter 14-A of the Tempe City Code, the application, if approved by HPC, will be forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) for public hearing and action.

references: *Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update*, survey #244  
Arizona State Historic Property Inventory, survey #244 (Janus, 1985)

attachments: application  
vicinity map  
site plan  
photographs