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PRESERVATION

STAFF REPORT

Tempe Historic Preservation Office

From: Joe Nucci, Historic Preservation Officer

Date: April 7, 2005

DSD# HPO-2005.31

Kirkland McKinney Ditch Historic Property Designation

Background + Status

On February 14, 2005, Barbra Worthington, Chair of the University Heights Neighborhood Association, submitted an application for designation of the historic 1871 Kirkland McKinney Ditch on the Tempe Historic Property Register. This submittal was in response to a presentation by the Tempe HPC to approximately 20 Neighborhood Association Members on February 10, 2005, where the eligibility of the structure was communicated to property owners who reached consensus to bring forward an application.

The Kirkland McKinney Ditch is identified in the Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update as eligible for designation as an historic property.

History + Context

In late 1867, J. W. "Jack" Swilling and several other men living in Wickenburg formed a canal company to build a channel on the north bank of the Salt River. These men would be the first to irrigate in the Valley during the historic period, and this project, along with a few others that followed next year, helped precipitate the founding of the Phoenix townsite.

By about 1869, a pair of homesteaders, William H. Kirkland and James B. McKinney were directing the construction of the first irrigation ditch on the south side of the Salt River to irrigate their lands on the east side of Tempe Butte in Sections 15 and 22. Both men had been part of the original Swilling company.

The success of the Swilling projects prompted other pioneers, including Charles Trumbull Hayden, to claim rights to lands along the Salt River and to begin construction of additional canals. On November 17, 1870, Hayden gave notice of the formation of the Hayden Milling and Farming Ditch Company, and recorded his claim to portions of Section 15, noting work had begun on the project. On December 6, 1870, the Hardy Irrigating Canal Company was formed by Swilling and others to provide water for other farming ventures south of the river, which by their prosperity would come to ensure the success of Hayden's flouring mill operation.

On January 28, 1871, the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company was formed to develop the Kirkland McKinney Ditch into a network of canals to bring thousands of acres to the south under cultivation. About the same time, Mexican farmers a few miles to the west completed the San Francisco Canal and began irrigating lands to the south and west, toward the Salt River Mountains (South Mountain). By 1871, this south-side area, which included several small settlements, was known as Tempe or Rio Salado.

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The City of Tempe is a Certified Local Government, in association with the United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service



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On January 28, 1871, the Hardy Canal Company was reorganized as the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company, with Granville H. Oury, a territorial legislator and friend of Hayden's from Tucson, as its president. In the spring of 1871, the three separate ventures combined their efforts to construct canals to all of their lands and to the mill site. This unincorporated association of irrigators would last more than fifty years. Both Hayden and the Kirkland-McKinney party abandoned their plans for separate canal heads on the river. Instead the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company built a canal head about five miles upstream from the butte, and the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch was made a private right-of-way branch of the Tempe Canal. Water supply to power the Hayden flourmill was provided by an extension of the Kirkland-McKinney ditch west around the butte. These early agricultural improvements, together with the construction of Hayden's store on the west side of the butte in late 1871, constituted the beginning of the Tempe settlement.

Association with events significant to broad patterns of history

The Kirkland-McKinney Ditch is significant for its association with the earliest agricultural efforts undertaken in the Tempe vicinity, and as the oldest remaining original manmade waterway still in use in the Salt River Valley today. The canal was built circa 1870 as one of the first organized attempts to irrigate lands south of the Salt River.

In 1872, a new community was established just east of Hayden's Ferry by Mexican laborers who had worked on the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch. William Kirkland donated the 80-acre townsite. The Arizona Citizen reported: The Tempe people, not satisfied with Hayden's Ferry, have laid out a new town just along side named San Pablo and the proceeds of the sale of the town lots is to be devoted to the building of a Catholic church.

By 1872, three branches had been extended off of the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch: the Hayden Ditch, which brought water to the site where Hayden's Flour Mill was being built; the Western Branch, which served the area to the southwest; and the Spanish Ditch, which started one and a half miles down the Western Branch and went to the settlement of San Pablo.

Association with lives of persons significant in our past

William H. Kirkland (1832-1910) was a well known Arizona pioneer who played an important role in the founding of Tempe. He arrived in Tucson in January of 1856, just as the United States was taking possession of the area from Mexico after the Gadsden Purchase. Kirkland had a contract to supply army camps with lumber and provisions. He raised cattle in the Santa Cruz Valley for a few years, but often lost most of his herd to raiding Apaches. Kirkland left the Tucson area and traveled throughout the Southwest. He discovered gold in 1863 in the area now known as Kirkland Valley.

By 1870, he moved to Salt River Valley and joined with James B. McKinney to direct construction of the first irrigation ditch on the south side of the Salt River. He joined the original Hardy Irrigating Canal Company that was formed in 1870 to extend the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch, and then became a member of the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company, which eventually completed the job of developing a network of irrigation canals throughout the area. Kirkland built a home in the Tempe area, and started a farm just east of Tempe Butte. In 1872 he donated an 80-acre site on the south side of Tempe Butte for a new Hispanic settlement called San Pablo. He served as the local justice of the peace, and was elected to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, but two years later he resigned his posts and moved on to Silver City, New Mexico, and then on to Texas, where he went into the cattle business. Kirkland later returned to Tempe shortly before his death in 1910. He is buried in Double Butte Cemetery.

William Kirkland married Missouri Ann Bacon in 1860. He was the father of three sons and four daughters. His first daughter, Lizzie Kirkland Steele, was always considered to be the first white child born in Arizona.

Distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

The Kirkland-McKinney Ditch is a manmade channel constructed for conveying and distributing water. The original earth structure varied in depth from 6 feet to 12 feet, and was approximately 20 feet wide. The length of the original canal was about 2070 feet and extended from the culvert mouth on the west side of McClintock Road westward along the south side of the Bankhead Highway (HPS-229). In the mid-20th Century, Salt River Project began an extensive piping campaign placing most of the system underground. The subject section is one of only two small segments of the waterway remaining as open ditch.

The water in the open ditch was diverted into culverts below two road crossings, one at Una Avenue, and one at Gary Drive. Adjacent canal segments have been placed underground, however, the integrity of the open canal location and setting, including extant flora, fauna, and related structures, still conveys its historic associations as the oldest manmade waterway in the Salt River Valley. Several of the approximately 30 to 40 mature cottonwood trees that originally lined the banks of the canal survive and are significant character defining features of the property. Additional vegetation, sometimes growing in dense clusters, provides the setting for a small riparian community at portions of the ditch. Significant structures appurtenant to the canal included the original concrete bridge for the Bankhead Highway crossing (near McClintock Road), two additional concrete slab bridges, two wood plank bridges approximately 8 feet in width, the ruins of the concrete and cobble bulkheads of a third wood plank bridge, and a concrete lock with two steel gates.

Likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

The ditch exists in an area known to be archaeologically sensitive to the City of Tempe. This site occurs within the boundaries a large, previously recorded prehistoric habitation site called La Plaza (AZ U:9:165 [ASM]), portions of which are known to contain buried cultural remains associated with the Hohokam culture. Additionally, the continued presence of the historic structures in situ and relatively undisturbed indicates potential to provide additional information about this brief period in Arizona settlement history, the historic establishing of the earliest communities on the south banks of the Salt River.

Summary

The Kirkland McKinney Ditch is significant for its association with the earliest agricultural efforts undertaken in the Tempe district, and as the oldest remaining original manmade waterway still in use in the Salt River Valley. The ditch was built by Tempe Pioneers concurrent with a series of events which marked the beginning of the first organized attempts to irrigate lands south of the Salt River. This ditch represents a unique and rare example of early waterway construction, is both important and highly significant and should be protected and preserved.

Significance

The subject property meets the following criteria for designation, as found in section 14A-4 of the Tempe City Code.

(a) The following criteria are established for designation of an individual property, building, structure or archeological site:

(1) It meets the criteria for listing on the Arizona or national register of historic places;

(2) It is found to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character, resulting from:

a. A significant portion of it is at least fifty (50) years old; is reflective of the city's cultural, social, political or economic past; and is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history.

and

b. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of an area of the city, due to a prominent location or singular physical feature.

Recommendations

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the nomination and recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council that the Kirkland McKinney Ditch designated as a Tempe Historic Property (#25) and Historic Overlay Zoning be applied to the property.

REFERENCES:

- Andersen, Fred, 1989 *Tempe Canal Historic American Engineering Record*, National Park Service, San Francisco.
- Janus Associates, 1983 *Tempe Historic Property Survey: and multiple resource area nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*. Tempe Historical Society.
- Lewis, Christine, 1965 *Early History of the Tempe Canal Company, Arizona and the West, Vol. 7 No. 3*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- Ryden Architects, 1997 *City of Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update*. City of Tempe Historic Preservation Office.
- Solliday, Scott, 2001 *Post World War II Subdivisions Tempe, Arizona: 1945-1960; Neighborhood & House-type Context Development*. Tempe Historic Preservation Commission.
- , 2002 *Mexico/Arizona Biographical Survey*
online at <http://www.mexicoarizona.com/t-tempe.htm>
- Zarbin, Earl, 1980 *Salt River Valley Canals; 1867-1875*, Salt River Project, Phoenix.

ATTACHMENTS:

application
vicinity map
site plan
photographs