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The City of Tempe is a  
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# Tempe Historic Preservation Office Staff Report

TEMPE [HAYDEN] BUTTE

Tempe Historic Property Register #34 HPO 08002

Tempe Historic Preservation Commission

Revised at Public Hearing June 19, 2008

As specified in the Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance, upon receipt of an application for historic designation the Historic Preservation Office shall compile and transmit to the commission a complete report on the subject property or district. This is the research that will be condensed to produce the required report for the commission public hearing. As required, the report will address the location, condition, age, significance and integrity of historic features and identify potential contributing and noncontributing properties and other relevant information, together with a recommendation to grant the application for reasons stated herein.

## LOCATION –

Located east of Mill Avenue between Rio Salado Parkway at Fifth Street and Veteran’s Way, Tempe (Hayden) Butte is arguably our city’s most recognizable and iconic topographic feature. The site of the Hayden Butte Preserve Park at 222 East 5th Street, it is this unique geology which resulted in the establishing the historic settlement of Hayden’s Ferry that has grown to become the City of Tempe.

## CONDITION –

Hayden Butte Preserve is a valuable recreational venue that includes Sonoran desert vegetation, wildlife, rock outcrops, and archaeological, paleontological and historical resources. The butte itself is a fairly large feature which accommodates many uses and features while still maintaining its overall historic character and identity much as it has through many different cultural periods.

## AGE –

The Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance uses 50 years as criterion for historic property designation. By ordinance definition, landmark designation may be applied to a property that has achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years and which expresses a distinctive character worthy of preservation and which otherwise fulfills or exceeds the criteria for designation as an historic property. The period of significance for the butte predates even the settlement of the community and therefore the landmark designation provided by local ordinance does not apply to this property. Unlike the National Register of Historic Places, the Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance does not have provisions for designating Traditional Cultural Properties or Historic Landscapes. Rather, the options available by ordinance for designation are an historic property or an historic district. By ordinance definition, an historic district may also include or be composed of one or more archeological sites. As the butte obtains eligibility for designation under multiple criteria, district designation most closely satisfies the intent of the ordinance.

### **SIGNIFICANCE –**

There are two essential qualities that a property must possess to be eligible for listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register – significance and integrity. These two characteristics are dependent upon each other. Eligibility criteria provided in the Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance states that a building or place is significant if it maintains integrity and is associated with our community history or culture. In the case of the butte, the inverse is particularly true – this place has integrity because people still consider it to be significant. Today, the butte as a place has cultural significance to three communities: the people of Tempe, Arizona State University, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. This place accommodates many uses and features while still maintaining its historic character and identity much as it has through many cultural periods. By this measure, its significance is extraordinary. People have lived at its base for nearly 2,000 years and all of them have considered it to be a very special place. Indeed, it is rare to find a place with such long-established and continuing cultural meanings and associations. Accordingly, this report concludes that Tempe (Hayden) Butte clearly meets Ordinance criteria for listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register.<sup>v</sup>

### **INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC FEATURES –**

The butte is a somewhat unconventional district. As a well defined geographic area and geologic feature, it has over 500 petroglyphs. It is a complex district containing natural, historic, and archaeological features, along with intangible attributes that also bring meaning.

### **CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS –**

The proposed historic district consists of the landform of the butte itself and several individual sites, objects, and structures indicated as elements herein.

- Archaeological sites – a wide array of archaeological resources, including compound structures, free-standing structures, petroglyphs, middens, terraced gardens, bedrock mortars, grinding sticks, and artifact scatters have been identified and reported.
- Letter – The concrete letter “A” on the south face of the butte was constructed in 1955.<sup>vi</sup>
- Reservoir Site – the foundation of the city’s first reservoir (1902-1948) is located near the top of the south side of the butte.
- Sandstone Quarry – the remains of a sandstone quarry are located on the northwest foot of the butte.
- Transmitter House – the Salt River Project transmitter house was built in 1949.
- Water Tank – two steel water tanks are located midway up the south face of the butte. The smaller tank on the east was constructed in 1950 and is considered to be a contributing element.
- Historic Canals – Buried at the base of the butte is a series of interrelated irrigation canals known variously as the San Francisco Canal, the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch, Wormser’s Ditch, Hayden’s Canal, and the Tempe Canal.<sup>vii</sup>

### **NONCONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS –**

- Leonard Monti Trail – an improved trail dedicated in 1994.
- Water Tank – two steel water tanks are located midway up the south face of the butte. The larger tank on the west was added about 1965 and is not considered to be a contributing element.
- Other historic resources have been identified however they are poorly documented or defined and are of relatively minor importance.

**RECOMMENDATION –**

Tempe (Hayden) Butte survives with its essential character and extraordinary significance intact. Therefore, the Tempe Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Tempe Historic Preservation Commission conditionally approve this application.

**CONDITIONS –**

In recognition of the fact that Hayden Butte Preserve is a valuable natural resource that includes archaeological and historical resources, and also in light of the objectives of conservation and preservation common to both Tempe Preservation and the Tempe Parks & Recreation Board, on Wednesday, February 20, 2007, Preservation and Parks jointly agreed to the following conditions of designation:

- 1) Designation on the Tempe Historic Property Register or on the National Register of Historic Places will not supersede the primary jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Board regarding management and use of the Tempe Butte Preserve.
- 2) The Historic Preservation Commission would not need to be consulted about routine maintenance of the paths, including resurfacing, or regarding improvements for accessibility.
- 3) The Historic Preservation Commission and the Tempe Parks & Recreation Board will share information about any proposed expansions to the trail system.
- 4) The Historic Preservation Commission does not propose to fence off any part of the preserve.

Staff recommends approval of historic property designation for Tempe (Hayden) Butte and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register subject to the above conditions.

ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> Tempe, City 2008 “*Tempe City Code*” in Chapter 14A – Historic Preservation Ordinance <http://www.tempe.gov/citycode/14aHistoricPreservation.htm> Landmark means a designation, in the form of overlay zoning, applied to an individual property, as a result of formal adoption by the city council, which has achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years and which expresses a distinctive character worthy of preservation and which otherwise fulfills or exceeds the criteria for designation as an historic property. Historic district means a designation, in the form of overlay zoning, applied to all properties within an area with defined boundaries, as a result of formal adoption by the city council, which express a distinctive character worthy of preservation. An historic district may also include or be composed of one or more archeological sites.
- <sup>ii</sup> From National Park Service “Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties” <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38/nrb%2038%20page%207.htm> The National Historic Preservation Act, in its introductory section, establishes that “the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people” (16 U.S.C. 470(b)(2)). The cultural foundations of America's ethnic and social groups, be they Native American or historical immigrant, merit recognition and preservation, particularly where the properties that represent them can continue to function as living parts of the communities that ascribe cultural value to them. Many such properties have been included in the National Register, and many others have been formally determined eligible for inclusion, or regarded as such for purposes of review under Section 106 of the Act
- <sup>iii</sup> From National Park Service “National Historic Landmarks Program” <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/> National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction. Working with citizens throughout the nation, the National Historic Landmarks Program draws upon the expertise of National Park Service staff who work to nominate new landmarks and provide assistance to existing landmarks.
- <sup>iv</sup> From PALEOMAP Project <http://www.scotese.com/moreinfo15.htm> Tempe (Hayden) Butte is estimated to have formed approximately 20 million years ago during the Middle Miocene era – the phase of continental collision that raised high mountains by horizontally compressing the continental lithosphere. The goal of the PALEOMAP Project is to illustrate the plate tectonic development of the ocean basins and continents, as well as the changing distribution of land and sea during the past 1100 million years.
- <sup>v</sup> Solliday, Scott 2004 “Context Study” in: *Tempe (Hayden) Butte & Environs Archaeological & Cultural Resource Study*, City of Tempe Historic Preservation Office [http://www.tempe.gov/historicpres/Tempe\[Hayden\]Butte.htm](http://www.tempe.gov/historicpres/Tempe[Hayden]Butte.htm)
- <sup>vi</sup> From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia “Tempe Butte” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempe\\_Butte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempe_Butte) The “A” – Originally, the letter on Tempe Butte was an 'N', built by Tempe Normal School's class of 1918. The school changed its name to Tempe State Teacher's College in 1925, and the 'N' was adapted into a 'T'. Subsequently, three years later, the school would change its name again to Arizona State Teacher's College, but the letter 'A' would not appear on Tempe Butte until 1938. This 'A' was destroyed by a bomb blast in 1952, prompting the construction of the current 'A' in 1955. The letter is made from reinforced steel and concrete, and is an external structure rather than being carved into the mountain or whitewashed directly on the rock. Due to the existence of a preexisting "A Mountain" for the University of Arizona (Sentinel Peak), students from these rival schools often attempt to paint the other's 'A' in their school colors. Guarding the A is an annual ritual in the week leading up to the annual ASU-UA football game, the Territorial Cup.
- <sup>vii</sup> Kwiatkowski, Scott M. and Thomas E. Wright 2004 “Literature Review” in: *Tempe (Hayden) Butte & Environs Archaeological & Cultural Resource Study*, City of Tempe Historic Preservation Office p.42. Although unrelated to the historic significance of Tempe (Hayden) Butte, discussion at the Tempe Historic Preservation Commission meeting on May 8, 2008, specifically asked that elements of the historic canal system be included in the list of contributing elements where present within the boundaries proposed for designation.