

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Armory Park Historic District (Amendment)

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SECTION 8: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

Armory Park Historic District is architecturally significant as a neighborhood illustrating the transition in architectural styles following the arrival of the railroad in Tucson in 1880. It is nominated under Criterion A for its association with the broad patterns of history and Criterion C as embodying the distinctive characteristics of several periods of architectural history. It is nominated at the local level of significance.

TUCSON: FROM THE MEXICAN PERIOD TO 1945

By the mid-eighteenth century, the northern rim of the Spanish empire in North America extended into the southern portion of what is now the State of Arizona. Small missions, presidios, and settlements clung along the Santa Cruz River as it flowed north out of Sonora to its confluence with the Gila River in Arizona. The mission sites included the landmarks Tumacacori and San Xavier del Bac. Small military garrisons at Tubac and Quiburi provided some protection against bands of raiding Indians. Presidios were walled fortifications which in times of trouble provided a place of refuge for Mexican settlers. Spanish authorities found the Garrison at Tubac to be inadequate to its task of protecting settlers and friendly Indians. An inspector in 1769 recommended that the garrison move down the Santa Cruz River (to the north) to the site just south of the Santa Catalina Mountains of a Sobaipuri and Pima Indian village called Tucson. Led by Colonel Hugo O'Connor, an Irish mercenary in Spanish service, the presidio of Tubac moved north to Tucson late in 1776; across the river from the Indian village, construction on adobe walls of Presidio San Agustín del Tucson began. The new settlement remained a small village throughout the Spanish and later Mexican period.

Aside from an occasional fur trapper, the first major Anglo-American intrusion into Tucson came during the Mexican-American War. The Mormon Battalion, an element of Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West, was led by Co. Philip St. George Cook to open a wagon road from Santa Fe to California. He entered Tucson "the Old Pueblo," on December 16, 1846 after the Mexican garrison fled. However, it was not until the Gadsden Purchase that the town became permanently American controlled.

As a neglected part of New Mexico Territory, Tucson remained a largely Mexican village with few Anglo-American settlers, significant mainly as a rest stop on the southern overland route to California after 1849 and as a stage stop for the Butterfield Overland Stage. The few Americans there, however, exercised disproportionate economic and political power. Some of them and some of the more prominent Mexican-American residents pushed for separate territorial status for Arizona in the 1850s. Noted for the Southern sympathies of its residents, Tucson was denied the status of Territorial capital in favor of the new community at Prescott. The site of the Territorial capital changed several time. Tucson held it from 1867 to 1877, only to lose it again to Prescott before it moved permanently to Phoenix. Tucson remained, however, the most populous town in the territory for many years until surpassed by Phoenix.

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After the war, people and business moved increasingly to and through Tucson. The town provided the central supply point for mining expeditions throughout southern Arizona. The decision to incorporate came in 1871. After a survey patent rights were applied for section 11 and parts of 12, 13, and 14. Prescott Territorial officials denied the application for so much land, so Mayor DeLong and the council petitioned and received a patent to sections 12 and 13. In 1873, the American military contingent stationed at Camp Lowell, on the old Military Plaza, left to set up a new site at what became Fort Lowell; most of the early settlement of what is now Armory Park was around this old Military Plaza. In 1880, the Southern Pacific built its railroad through Tucson to later connect with the Santa Fe in Demming, New Mexico, thereby completing the second transcontinental railroad system. While the present Armory Park area was surveyed as a part of the 1872 town plan, it was the construction of the railroad through Tucson that had the greatest impact on the development of the area. The Southern Pacific arrived in Tucson March 30, 1880, stimulating an economic boom and bringing greatly increased American influence: people, material culture, and ideas, thus effecting the start, or at least the intensification, of Tucson's transition from a Mexican to an American community [Giebner 1974:4, 12, 16; Hibbert and Gin 1978: 4].

From 1880 until approximately 1920, the Armory Park residential area grew from the original Military Plaza to a progressive neighborhood, comprised mostly of railroad men. Its blocks were continually divided into 66' x 184.4' lots. With its stations just to the north and the maintenance area immediately on the east side of Armory Park, it is not surprising that subsequent building by railroad men and their families spread from this northeastern corner down 3rd and 4th Avenues [Hibbert and Gin 1978:4]. The district developed into a stable, cohesive neighborhood of multiple and single family detached houses with a mixture of architectural styles. It is the mixture of these styles and their adaptation as well as social-cultural cohesiveness that form the basis for the historic district. [Armory Park 74 ff, page 2.]

Tucson, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, was in a period of architectural transition, with the Anglo styles influencing the previous Mexican traditions. This started out with a cosmetic treatment of the old local style. The railroad now afforded the prosperous Tucsonans access to Victorian detailing, classical Greek revival, and a craving for the Queen Anne style. The Armory Park neighborhood grew primarily along 3rd and 4th Avenues in the late 1880s, in close proximity to the railroad. In 1902, as the neighborhood began to establish itself, portions of the Military Plaza were sold by the City and the remainder was converted into a public park with its new Carnegie Library. Scattered construction had already reached 17th Street and by 1909 the area had been developed just past 18th Street.

The trolley played a very important part in the development of Armory Park district. It was started in the early 1900s, beginning its route from the downtown business district south on Stone Avenue to 17th Street. It proceeded on 17th to 4th Avenue and then north on 4th to the downtown area. In this simple loop, the residents of Armory Park had complete access to the business district, social activities, churches, and the University of Arizona.

Safford School is the hub of the Armory Park area. It has been a school site since 1884. The original building was a brick Victorian of two stories and was some distance from the built-up portions of the

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city at the time. Parents were disturbed by the walking distance.

Many people of importance in the early development of Tucson lived in the Armory Park area. Henry Trost arrived in Tucson in 1898 and lived in the 500 block of South 6th Avenue. George Roskrug came to Tucson in early 1874 and was a surveyor by trade. He was Surveyor General of the Territory and was responsible for the grid pattern of the city as it was laid out in 1902. Roskrug married Lanna Wood in 1896. She was the daughter of pioneer Judge John S. Wood, who built his home at 327 South 4th Avenue, just around the corner from the Roskrug house. Next door was the home of William and Catherine Kitt at 319 South 4th Avenue. In 1908 Territorial Senator Eugene F. Ives built his home at 600 South 5th Avenue. Many families moved to the Armory Park area because of their work with the railroad. Constant Weinzapfel, Ramon Pesquiria, José Highera, and Lewis Menager are just a few of the railroad men whose families still live in the district.

Most of the buildings are residential in nature—houses, apartment buildings and boarding houses—and many were built to house Southern Pacific employees and their families, as well as those who worked downtown. Most of the businesses and public structures are at the north end and the southern portion of 6th Avenue and along Stone Avenue; most of this development is part of the old Central Business District of Tucson [Giebner 1974: 83], extending along major arterials to the south. The original functions of these properties include hotels, a theater and musical arts complex, related buildings, a public library, a park, a medical clinic, a major fraternal organization, automobile salesroom, gas station, and several small businesses. Deeper within the district, away from the major western arterial are other historic business and public buildings such as schools, another church, several corner grocery stores, a bakery, and a gas station.

Of these property types, the proposed expansion area includes houses and apartments and a hotel on the north; houses, apartment buildings, rooming houses, the medical clinic, the auto salesroom and gas station, and small business on the west; and houses, rooming houses, and a gas station on the south.

Structures in the expansion area on the north pick up the few remaining historic buildings with architectural integrity; beyond these are a mixture of modern and extensively modified old buildings and commercial structures of downtown Tucson. The current ragged edge on the west has been filled out to include all structures within the district—both residential and business—along a street that has always been predominantly commercial. The picture is less obvious to the south. While the residential character of the neighborhood historically continued to the south, many homes have been razed to build modern apartment buildings, and post-World War II infill of Ranch Style homes has been more frequent.

Subsequent development in Armory Park was a continuation of previous trends of Americanization and increased population and building, but with newer and different architectural styles and materials, until the Southern Pacific yards were closed at the downtown location in 1962. While this event did not cause the slow deterioration of the neighborhood, which was part of a broader inner city decline, it undoubtedly contributed to it. Effects on the architectural fabric included reduced maintenance and the subdivision of single-family residences into rooming houses. On the other hand, few buildings suffered modernization and most new houses were built on the peripheries. In no small part due to

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the efforts of historic preservation activists, the neighborhood has stabilized since the 1970s and begun to recover. The threat of freeways and the encroachment of high-rise construction have been stopped. Heavy commercial trucks and buses have been rerouted away from the residential streets. Many of the homes have been or are being restored. The neighborhood has retained its vitality and its character.

By 1974 it could be said, "Part of the rich architectural fabric is not just the buildings which characterize a pure architectural style, but also the many unpretentious little dwellings which were continuously being grafted with new modes of architectural details. Thus we have a showplace, which not only exemplifies the evolution of styles in single buildings representing the pure style in themselves, but also many structures which exhibit several stylistic qualities and the evolution thereof." [Giebner 1974: 39].



This simple ca. 1939 house illustrates the transition from the Period Revival to post-World War II tract houses. The basic plan of the Ranch Style (or Minimal Traditional) can be detected while it still conveys the flavor of Spanish Colonial Revival.

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This map by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. from 1901 shows a great many empty lots remaining.

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By the end of the historic period, the neighborhood had all but filled out.

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All Zone 12

	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>		<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
5.	503030	3564650	19.	503300	3563450
6.	503120	3564650	20.	503300	3563300
7.	503120	3564610	21.	503100	3563300
8.	503160	3564660	22.	503100	3563450
9.	503230	3564660	23.	503240	3563450
10.	503230	3564610	24.	503240	3563600
11.	503380	3564610	25.	503100	3563600
12.	503380	3564730	26.	503100	3563550
13.	503450	3564660	27.	503040	3563550
14.	503460	3564030	28.	503040	3563750
15.	503600	3564030	29.	502930	3563900
16.	503600	3563900			
17.	503670	3563900			
18.	503670	3563450			

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SECTION 10: GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Armory Park Historic Residential District, a National Register district, is located in Tucson, Pima County, Arizona. The proposed expansion area is contiguous with the north, west and south borders of this district, as follows: North side: North of 12th Street, the current north boundary, expansion areas include the east half of Block 94, the southwest quarter of Block 93, and the west two-thirds of the south third of Block 256. West side: Beginning on the north end and including all of Block 217, the west boundary is extended to Stone Avenue for its entire length south to 18th Street, where the west boundary becomes 6th Avenue. South side: to the south of the current boundary (on the west) of 18th Street, the expansion area includes all of Blocks 130 and 131 and the northwest third of Block 144; to the south of the current boundary (on the east) of 19th Street, it includes the east half of Block 145, all of Blocks 146 and 147, the west half of Block 148, and between 20th and 21st Streets, the east half of Block 153 and all of Block 152.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The amended boundary takes in the area developed in the twenty years prior to 1945 which filled out the neighborhood. The official historic district will now encompass the full development of the neighborhood.