

WASHINGTON PARK

(Armory Park)

Bounded by East 12th Street, South 5th Avenue, East 13th Street,  
and South 6th Avenue

Tucson

Pima County

Arizona

HALS AZ-22

*HALS AZ-22*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

# HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

## WASHINGTON PARK (Armory Park)

HALS NO. AZ-22

Location: Bounded by E. 12<sup>th</sup> St. on the North, E. 13<sup>th</sup> St. on the South, S. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave on the West, and S 5<sup>th</sup> Ave on the East; Tucson, Pima County, Arizona.

32.21984, -110.96852 (northwest corner of park - corner of S 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. and E 12<sup>th</sup> St., Pima Maps, WGS 84).

Significance: Armory Park, formerly Washington Park, is significant as a site of long-term military history that culminated with the establishment of the first state armory in Arizona. In the early part of its military history, the site of present-day Armory Park was primarily used as a base of operations for troops participating in the Civil War and counter-operations against Apache raids<sup>1</sup>. In 1914, the first state armory was constructed for the Arizona National Guard and the area was baptized as Armory Park in response. Traditionally, most military installations in the United States detached themselves from their host city and the resident civilian population. With the construction of the armory, however, the park also developed significance as one of the few places, if not the only place, to incorporate military and social activities into single location. Defying convention, Armory Park entrenched itself in Tucson history as an area in which military drills and events such as parades and political rallies took place<sup>2</sup>. Although the armory itself was demolished on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1975 and replaced with the Armory Park Center, Armory Park maintains its social spirit and sense of community by continuing to host events and serve as a rallying point for political activities.

Description: Armory Park is a 3.63 acre park located in downtown Tucson, Arizona. The only building on the park grounds is the Armory Park Center. The official address for the Amory Park Center is 222 South 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Tucson, AZ. The park lies within the borders of Armory Park Residential District which received the distinction of being listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Tucson, at an elevation of 2,888 feet, is in southern Arizona and within the Basin and Range physiographic province of southwestern Arizona in the Sonoran Desert. It is also located about 73 miles north of the Mexican border. Winters are mild with few frosts and daytime temperatures ranging from the mid-50s at the lowest to mid-60s at the highest. Summer temperatures averages from high 90s to low 100s. The summer heats are offset by monsoon rains that start in mid-June and continue to late September. Five major mountain ranges surround the

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<sup>1</sup> Berniece Coulich. "Tucson Resumes Military Tradition that is Inherent in Community's Whole Story." Arizona Daily Star.

<sup>2</sup> Genevieve Doyle. "First of Kind in State: Armory's 46- Yr. History Covered Two World Wars."

City of Tucson: the Santa Catalina's, Tortolitas, Tucson, Santa Rita's, and Rincon Mountains. Both the Tucson and Santa Catalina ranges are visible and important view sheds from Armory Park.

Washington Park was established as a City of Tucson park in 1900 and remains a public park today under the jurisdiction of the City Parks and Recreation department. Sanborn maps from 1901 and 1909<sup>3</sup> show the 3.63-acre parcel outline of the park with a lack of built structures or a defined park landscaping. By 1919, Sanborn maps exhibit the first mapped circulation pattern of a formal outline of the park with a central circle with four pathways radiating out to each corner. Washington Park, based on historic pictures, demonstrated the establishment of a structured design and formal landscaping through the use of large tree allées outlining pathways that converged on the central circle. Similarly, historic pictures show a grass landscape laid out in between the circulation pattern of walkways.

Change came to Washington Park in 1914 when it was chosen as the location of the first state Armory and became known as Armory Park. Built by local contractor Jay J. Garfield, Tucson's Armory was built in a fortress-like style where the exterior clearly conveyed its military purpose. We can infer based on Sanborn Maps that at some point after 1909 and 1914 when the Armory was built, a formal cast concrete band stand was erected in Armory Park. Sanborn maps (1919 to 1948) outline the band stand on the map as part of the Armory building structure; however we know the band stand predated the Armory based on the following historic newspaper story.<sup>4</sup> A 1913 Arizona Daily Star article entitled *Park to Surround New Tucson Armory* came in response to citizens' concerns over the building of the Armory in Washington Park. To clarify intentions, a statement was made by a local official stating "the only portion of the park that which would be occupied by the proposed building would be that in the rear of the bandstand and extending 45 feet beyond it at each end." The article further explained that great care was taken not to take too much of the park land to build the Armory, and the design was built to fit in with the bandstand.

Today, the 20,000 sq. ft., Armory Park Center is the only building on the property. Attached to the north side of the building are public restrooms open for park and community use. Extant circulation features include the western half of the historic diagonal sidewalks with tree allées (Figure 1) on the NW and SW corners of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Starting from the western corners of the park, these sidewalks connect at the center of the park where a large central cement courtyard begins. The courtyard stands adjacent to the back entrance of the Armory Park Center and is accessed by maintenance drives at E. 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

<sup>4</sup> Arizona Daily Star. "Park to Surround New Tucson Armory." October 11, 1913.

Streets (Figure 2). Most of the contemporary style metal single unit park tables and seating are located within the confines of the central courtyard. Based on tree height, this area has the youngest trees in the park which provide the only shade in the immediate area of table seating.

The park retains a mix of both historic and contemporary small-scale features such as a drinking fountain (recent - date unknown) and eight trash receptacles (contemporary). Similarly, the park manages three types of lighting that include six interior lights (double globe, historic), eight shuffleboard lights (date unknown), and perimeter streetlights (contemporary). Previous known work on this area includes changes to street lighting to be more compatible with historic lighting present. In 2005, the Tucson Historic Preservation Zone for the Armory Park District accepted a proposal to install 12 lights (six on each street) to match the historic lighting in the park.<sup>5</sup> The proposed lights were installed on the Right-of-Way (ROW) on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue<sup>6</sup>.

Due to the possibility of subsurface remains from the Camp Lowell Military Plaza, Desert Archaeology recommended archaeological monitoring of the new light installation. One of Desert Archaeology's report project maps<sup>7</sup> documents existing city of Tucson lights as well as Tucson Electric Power streetlights along all streets except on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets. Thus, the lighting project was not just a project about restoring the historic fabric to the area but it was an improvement for street safety.

As one of the last remaining open green spaces in downtown Tucson, Armory Park holds unique views and vistas of the city and neighborhoods. Notably, Armory Park has views of Tumamoc Hill (Figure 3) and the Tucson Children's Museum which occupies the original location of the historic Carnegie Library (Figure 4). Large-scale features include a band shell structure that serves as a speaking and musical platform (Figure 5). Standing on the western edge of the park and overlooking S. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue are four memorials, two of which are shown in Figures 6 and 7, commemorating servicemen of the World War I, the Spanish-American War, World War II and the Mormon Battalion that served during the Mexican-American War. The Spanish-American Memorial depicts a soldier of that war in bronze and on a stone base with details of the war and where the servicemen went. The World War I memorial is a bronze plaque (with the words "Lest We Forget") embedded in cement and on a stone base. The Mormon Battalion memorial is a bronze plaque (detailing the service record of Battalion) with a cement base. The front of the World War II memorial is a bronze plaque (with the symbols of the armed forces and a message discussing the service members and the war) in a cement base and a bronze eagle perched on top of the

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<sup>5</sup> Letter dated Nov. 10 2005 from City of Tucson Zoning Administration, Development Services Department to Mary Muszynski, Parks & Recreation

<sup>6</sup> Historic Preservation Zone/Rio Nuevo Downtown Review Application. Applicant Mary Muszynski for City of Tucson Parks & Recreation.

<sup>7</sup> A Cultural Resource Survey for a Streetlight Project at Armory Park, Tucson, Pima County Arizona.

memorial. The back also holds a bronze plaque depicting the names of Tucsonans who died during the war.

Outside the front entrance of the Armory Park Center is a tiled mural (Figure 8) and a hand painted mural adorns the southern wall of the building. Shuffle board courts (Figure 9) located on the northeastern location of the park played a big part of the recreation activities of seniors in the early days of the Club 1 after it moved to the Armory Park Center.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the vegetation within the park ranges from formal historic plantings (ca. early 1900 Italian Cypress tree allées) and Fan Palm trees (ca. 1920s) in the western half of the park to mature desert landscaping in front of the Armory Park Center (mid 1970s). Selected tree varieties used historically that have survived or been replaced in kind include: Date Palm, Sycamore, Velvet Ash, and Mt. Atlas Pistache. Desert Vegetation in front of the Armory Park Center includes accent plants such as Agave, Ocotillo, Saguaro, and Barrel cactus, with Mesquite, Palo Verde and Acacia trees serving as shade.

History:

Throughout its history of use, Armory Park maintained its role as the bridge between a robust military tradition and a resolute influence on the social history of the area. At the same time, the park served and continues to serve as one of Tucson's major staging points for political rallies and social events.

Armory Park's place in Anglo-American history begins in the midst of the Civil War. During the early stages of the war, U.S. army regulars stationed in the southwest were called to deal with the rising insurgence in the east. But this decision placed the territory in an extremely precarious position as it had little defense against incursions. Jefferson Davis, meanwhile, observed an opportunity for the Confederacy to gain an advantage in the war. Seizure of the southwest and northern Mexico meant that the Confederacy would have access to posts on the Pacific, funds gained from silver and gold mines, and, more important, recognition from European powers. If the Confederacy seized the territory, then it had the potential to become "a power to rival the United States."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, rebel forces from Texas launched a series of raids into the New Mexico Territory—present-day New Mexico and Arizona. These operations led to the seizure of several major military posts, such as Fort Bliss in Texas and Fort Fillmore in New Mexico, and the disruption of the Southern Overland Mail Route. In 1861, General George Wright ordered the formation of the California Column to assist in recapturing all forts in the territory and to "drive the rebels back to Texas."<sup>10</sup> Under the command of Colonel James H. Carleton, the newly formed army was ordered to march from California to the Rio Grande and join Colonel Edward Richard Sprigg Canby in pushing back the rebels.

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<sup>8</sup> "Shuffle Board takes Keen Eye, Strategy" in Presenting the History of the Senior Citizens Club 1 December 1959 to December 1994" on file at Armory Park Senior citizens facility, Tucson, AZ.

<sup>9</sup> Brad Melton, "Hardship and Courage Symbolize a Desert March: The Civil War Saga of Colonel Carleton and the California Column" *Arizona Highways*, May 1999, 33

<sup>10</sup> Melton, "Hardship and Courage Symbolize a Desert March: The Civil War Saga of Colonel Carleton and the California Column", 34

Unfortunately, Canby's army of New Mexican and Colorado volunteers were defeated by the Texans on 18 February 1862 before the California Column left. Meanwhile, Confederate Captain Sherod Hunter and two hundred mounted riflemen occupied Tucson.

But Carleton still had a mission to complete. So Carleton and his men – fifteen infantry companies, five cavalry companies, an artillery battery, and a supply train—began their march into scorching desert and limited water supplies. Gradually, through hardship of the desert and skirmishes, the Californians slowly reached Tucson. Hunter, understanding the disadvantages they held, chose to withdraw from the city and joined the retreated Confederate army—who had just lost the Battle of Glorieta Pass at Santa Fe. Sixteen days after Hunter abandoned Tucson, Californians under the command of Col West arrived and liberated it. While in Tucson, the Californian Column would camp on the southeastern edge of the city—at present day Scott and 14<sup>th</sup> and referred to the location as “The Post at Tucson.”<sup>11</sup> After liberating the city, the California Column used the Post at Tucson as a base of operations for dealing with the Chiricahua Apaches and for completing their original mission. In the latter portion of the Civil War, the camp was temporarily abandoned when troops were called out to New Mexico but it was once again reoccupied near the end of the war. The Post at Tucson became a permanent encampment in 1866 and was designated as “Camp Lowell” in honor of Brig. General Charles R. Lowell of the Sixth U.S. Calvary. In the war era, Camp Lowell was established to protect Tucson from Apache raids and to supply other army outposts south of the Gila River. At this point in time, Camp Lowell consisted primarily of tents, a poorly constructed building that served as a kitchen, and a rented building as a hospital. The encampment, however, would be forced to relocate to its present-day site at the Pantano and Tanque Verde Wash when sanitization, availability of supplies and disputes with the town became overwhelming. After the move, Camp Lowell became “Fort Lowell”. As the Apache raids gradually decreased, the need for a military post in the area likewise lessened. As a result, soldiers based at the fort were reassigned and the fort abandoned.

The advent of the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880 revolutionized Tucson and altered the course of its history. With the arrival of previously unobtainable goods and the replacement of adobe, the architectural styles changed significantly.<sup>12</sup> This also led to houses that served both railroad bosses and workers springing up around Washington Park.

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<sup>11</sup> Byrd Howell Granger, “Lowell, Fort”, *Arizona's Names (X Marks the Place)* (Tucson: The Falconer Publishing Company, 1983), 255.

<sup>12</sup> Sonnichsen, C. L., “Tucson, the life and times of an American city,” Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (1987).

By this time, remnants of Tucson's military tradition survived when the area—by now a park— was renamed Military Plaza. The original boundaries of Military Plaza are encompassed by the present-day streets of Broadway and 14<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> and Scott Ave. Yet, around the turn of the century, Armory Park and the surrounding neighborhood experienced a development boom caused by the arrival of the railroads and the goods that it brought from the east. At the same time, the City of Tucson auctioned off a portion of Military Plaza and forged a city park from the remaining remnants of the Plaza. The development of the area led to the park being renamed as Washington Park.<sup>13</sup> Despite the name change, Washington Park continued to acknowledge its military history in three memorials. The oldest of the World War I monument that was erected in 1918. The second is a monument to the Mormon Battalion of the Mexican-American war and was erected in 1937 to commemorate the Mormon forces that first raised the American flag in Tucson.<sup>14</sup> The third of the trio memorializes the servicemen from the Spanish American War—serving in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and China. In 1914, the National Guard relocated to Tucson and constructed the state's armory.<sup>15</sup> With the newly constructed armory in 1914, Washington Park became known as Armory Park.

The Armory landscape served as the intersection between military, political and social activity. For his presidential campaign in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt planned to stop at Armory Park to give a speech “on a stand that had been erected a day or two earlier for the Mexican Independence Day celebration” but “a note from his physician said the ex-colonel was forbidden to speak in the open air, forcing the location to be changed.”<sup>16</sup> The band stand served both Federal and local performances,<sup>17</sup> and Armory Park supported community activities, University of Arizona athletic games, USO shows, and political rallies.<sup>18</sup> As well as serving as a locale for concerts and influenced the careers of prominent musicians such as Luísa Ronstadt Espinel who attended Sunday afternoon concerts in Carrillo's Gardens and Armory Park.<sup>19</sup>

After World War II, the National Guard deemed the building to be inadequate

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<sup>13</sup> Michelle B. Graye, *Greetings from Tucson: a postcard history of the Old Pueblo*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> William S Collins. 1995. National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Amended Nomination Form: Armory Park Residential District. National Park Service, United States, Department of the Interior.

<sup>15</sup> Genevieve Doyle . “First of Kind in State: Armory's 46- Yr. History Covered Two World Wars

<sup>16</sup> David Leighton, “Roosevelt Campaigned here in 1912,” *Arizona Daily Star*. Accessed 30 March 2017. [tucson.com/news/local/street-smarts-roosevelt-campaigned-here-in/article\\_56d77a38-1684-519a-898b-669b78810ed8.html](http://tucson.com/news/local/street-smarts-roosevelt-campaigned-here-in/article_56d77a38-1684-519a-898b-669b78810ed8.html)

<sup>17</sup> Ford, Susan Jezak. 2002. National Register of Historic Places Inventory -Nomination Form: National Guard Armories of Kansas. National park Service, United States Department of the Interior

<sup>18</sup> Doyle, Genevieve. “First of Kind in State: Armory's 46- Yr. History Covered Two World Wars”. N.P., N.D, accessed via Armory Park Center Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Sheridan, Thomas E., and Joseph Noriega. "FROM LUISA ESPINEL TO LALO GUERRERO: Tucson's Mexican Musicians Before World War II." *The Journal of Arizona History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 285-300. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41859599>.

for its needs and returned the land to the city for a total of \$1.00. Subsequently, in March 1963, the city remodeled the Armory to serve as the new Club No. 1 Senior Center and, within the year, dedicated the building as the new Club #1 Clubhouse.<sup>20</sup> This decision arose from two major needs: a need for a new home for the senior center and from a desire to “develop a physical place to accommodate a balanced social service and recreation program in Armory Park.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, with the support of the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department, the Armory Park Center continues to provide and set-up community programs and functions. With the construction of the Armory Park Center, the usage of the park shifted from a balance between military, social and political aspects to focusing more on social and political activities.

During the 1960s period of urban renewal in Tucson, changes came to the Armory Park landscape. When the Armory was built in 1914, aspects of the formal designed landscape were kept as part of the design footprint and the Armory was built into the existing landscape. However when the decision was made to demolish the Armory and bandstand in 1975, the design of the new Armory Park Center removed the two-corner eastern tree allées, cutting the designed landscape in half. The addition of the modern band shell stage may have been a nostalgic nod to the original band stand, but functionally it could not serve as a replacement due to lack of scale, setting and acoustics. The addition of diagonal parking by the city removed historic Ash trees that once lined the park perimeter. The location itself in downtown Tucson is one of the biggest significant remaining characteristics of Armory Park. Further documentation on changes to the landscape over time should be made, and any new changes to this landscape should be carefully reviewed.

Armory Park, in the new millennium, has continued its political tradition and exhibited an energetic return as a political rallying point. Many of the civic demonstrations that had swept through our nation for close to two decades – Black Lives Matter, the Women’s March, the Occupy Movement, immigration protests – echoed within the boundaries of the park, in a place in which the very landscape has been shaped by the beliefs and politics of the people and, in turn, shaped those beliefs. It is fitting that when the ideals that formed this nation are threatened, people gather at Armory Park. Cathy Wilson, a participant at a recent protest rally said it best: “We are a community of many, many people and many types of cultures. We need to respect them all.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> City of Tucson, “Armory Park Center,” *Our History*, Accessed 2 March 2017, <https://www.tucsonaz.gov/parks/armory>.

<sup>21</sup> Armory Park Senior Citizen’s Facility. “Presenting the History of the Senior Citizens’ Club 1, December 1959 to December 1994”, Tucson: Az.

<sup>22</sup> Monica Grimaldo, “Peaceful Anti-Trump Protest Takes Over Downtown Tucson.” *Tucson News Now*, last updated 13 November 2016, accessed 30 March 2017; <http://www.tucsonnewsnow.com/story/33695690/peaceful-anti-donald-trump-protest-takes-over-downtown-tucson>.



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July 27, 2017

Entry – 2017 HALS Challenge: Documenting City or Town Parks



Figure 1. Sidewalk with historic Cypress tree allée. Corner of S. 6th Ave and 13th St. View looking northeast. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 2. Maintenance driveway behind Armory Park Center. View looking south towards 13th St. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 3. Tumamoc Hill from the corner of S. 6th Ave and E 13th St. View looking west. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 4. Tucson Children's Museum at 200 S. 6th Ave. View looking west. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.





Figure 5. Band shell structure built with the new Armory Park Center in 1975. View looking south. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 6. Spanish American War Memorial. View looking northeast. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 7. World War II Memorial. View looking east. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.



Figure 8. Tile mural outside the Armory Park Center entrance on S. 5th Ave. View looking west. Stephanie Badurski, 2017.





Figure 9. Shuffle board courts. View looking south. Susan Bierer, 2017.