

MEMORANDUM



TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Zachary J. Lechner, Senior Planner/Historic Preservation Officer (ex. 8870)
DATE: 02/14/2023
SUBJECT: Agenda Item 7: American World War II Heritage City Designation

Staff will provide the HPC with information on the National Park Service's (NPS) 2023 designation of Tempe as an [American World War II Heritage City](#) (AWWIIHC).

Attachments:

- 1.) Justifications for Tempe's Selection as an AWWIIHC
- 2.) Mayor Corey Woods, Letter to NPS Director in Support of Tempe's AWWIIHC Designation

Description of How the City of Tempe, Arizona, Meets Criteria 1 and 2
American World War II Heritage City Application
Deadline: September 1, 2023

Criterion 1: Contributions by a City and Its Environs to the World War II Home-Front War Effort

Criterion 1, Example #1: Tempe lost 28 men, nearly 1% of its population (2,906 in 1940) while in military service during World War II. Many more, of course, were wounded. (Source: *"They Paid the Supreme Sacrifice,"* Tempe Daily News, May 26, 1974)

Criterion 1, Example #2: The ranks of Tempe war dead included three Escalantes: brothers PFC Cipriano R. Escalante and PFC George R. Escalante, and their cousin PFC Gabriel V. Escalante. Gabriel, in late 1944, was the first Tempe Escalante to die in service to his country. Cipriano was killed in March 1945 during the Battle of Iwo Jima, while George was killed in Luzon in July 1945 during the battle for the Philippine Islands.

Criterion 1, Example #3: During World War II, many Mexican Americans from Tempe like the Escalantes served in the armed forces. Several were counted among the dead. After the war, returning veterans of color, fueled by their victory over fascism abroad, challenged discriminatory laws and policies in Tempe and elsewhere in the United States. In Tempe, Mexican American families scored their first postwar civil rights victory in 1946, when they won the right to swim at the previously whites-only Tempe Beach pool. In this way, Mexican American service in the war helped to contribute to a rights revolution in the area, a microcosm of a larger trend that swept across postwar America.

Criterion 1, Example #4: The people of Tempe faithfully contributed to the war effort in other ways beside military service.

- In 1942, Tempe was one of the first small cities to open a servicemen hospitality center. As one 1942 report stated, "Servicemen from various valley fields now frequent the center, including British boys from Falcon Field, Chinese from Williams and Thunderbird fields, as well as American boys." (Source: *"Center Is Aid to Army Men, Arizona Republic, November 22, 1942"*)
- More than 500 Tempeans signed up when the city's civil defense program was announced. (Source: *"Tempe Drills for Defense," Arizona Republic, November 22, 1942"*)
- Residents bought war bonds, participated in salvage drives, and complied with rationing measures. (Source: *"Tempe Drills for Defense," Arizona Republic, November 22, 1942"*)
- Throughout the war, Tempe residents participated in war loan drives. A 1943 news story reported that the city has surpassed its quota for the year. (Source: *"Tempe Exceeds War Loan Quota," Arizona Republic, October 3, 1943"*)

Criterion 1, Example #5: Camp Papago Park near Tempe was established in 1943 by the US military largely to house prisoners from the German navy (*Kriegsmarine*). The camp had a capacity of 3,000 prisoners. Unlike Axis and some other Allied POW camps, prisoners at Camp Papago Park were not compelled to work or study. In December 1944, 25 German POWs attempted to escape through a 176-foot tunnel they had dug but were foiled by the harsh Arizona environment; most of the escapees returned to the camp within a few weeks. As some prisoners alleged, the attempted breakout was more of a prank than a real escape attempt, and they were not treated harshly upon their return to camp, an unimaginable circumstance in an Axis POW camp.

Criterion 1, Example #6: Tempe, which features an ideal climate for growing irrigation-assisted crops, provided a substantial amount of cotton for use in the American war effort.

Criterion 1, Example #7: Students, staff, and faculty of Arizona State Teachers College (now Arizona State University) assisted the war effort in numerous ways.

- The College educated military service members, opening its dormitories and classrooms, as well as newly built Quonset huts for their use. Midway through the war, it selected as one of the US colleges where Army cadets would be trained. Military personnel tasked with flying were trained in science, aeronautics, and other topics relevant to flight training at the College. Specifically, Tempe residents Rayma and Lewis Neeb taught classes/programs that involved aviation maintenance and training. (Source: *Tempe History Museum*)

- More than 300 AZ State Teacher's College students signed up for the peacetime draft in 1940. (Source: *"Tempe Registers 300 for Draft,"* Arizona Republic, October 22, 1940)
- The College welcomed a German Jewish refugee, Ruth Rosenau, as a student. Rosenau had fled the Nazi regime, which killed her parents. (Source: *"Tempe College Is Quiet Haven for Former German Refugee,"* Arizona Republic, November 17, 1941)
- So many Arizona State Teachers College students served in the war that, in 1943, the school had to pause its sports program due to the lack of available student athletes. (Sources: *"Tempe College Teams Hit by War Service,"* Arizona Republic, January 22, 1942, and *"Tempe Gives Up Sports Program,"* Tucson Daily Citizen, February 27, 1943)
- The College offered special defense arts training courses as US war preparations ramped up in 1941 prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. (Source: *"Defense Arts Study Offered,"* Arizona Republic, April 6, 1941)
- Finally, shortly after World War II concluded, Arizona State Teachers College installed a 50-trailer makeshift "dormitory" known as Victory Village. ASU's enrollment skyrocketed after the war, and these trailers provided temporary housing for married students and their families.

Criterion 2: Achievements by a City and Its Environs to Preserve the Heritage and Legacy of the City's Contributions to the War Effort and to Preserve World War II History.

Criterion 2, Example #1: Tempe's efforts to commemorate World War II and to instill knowledge of the conflict in the next generation began even before the war ended. On May 8, 1945, a Pacific War veteran spoke to students at Tempe Grammar School as part of a VE ("Victory in Europe") Day Assembly. (Source: "Tempe Students Told about War," Arizona Republic, May 9, 1945)

Criterion 2, Example #2: The Tempe Roll of Honor monument, erected in a prominent location at the corner of Mill Avenue and 5th Street, was another World War II-era commemoration, recognizing the Tempeans (as well as individuals in the unincorporated surrounding areas) who served in the military during the conflict.



Roll of Honor Monument. c. 1945 (Photo: Shirley Blanton, Tempe [Arcadia Press, 2007], p. 54)

Criterion 2, Example #3: In 2005, the Tempe Historic Preservation Foundation raised money to save from demolition two barracks used to house Germans officers and enlisted men imprisoned at Camp Papago Park. These barracks are currently located on land owned by the City of Tempe. (Source: Joe Kullman, "Tempe Group Saves Papago POW Barracks," East Valley Tribune, October 6, 2005, updated October 7, 2005, https://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/tempe-group-saves-papago-pow-barracks/article_b60ebb09-d894-5440-a560-d89c6a3bfaa4.html)



One of the POW barracks saved from demolition by the Tempe Historic Preservation Foundation (Photo: East Valley Tribune)

Criterion 2, Example #4: The Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe features a permanent exhibit on World War II and its Tempe connections, and the museum has presented past exhibits like “Rebuilding Home Plate,” which “explores how baseball served and saved the Japanese Americans imprisoned in Arizona’s incarceration camps during World War II.” (Source: *Arizona Heritage Center website*, <https://arizonahistoricalociety.org/museum/arizona-heritage-center/>)

Criterion 2, Example #5: The Tempe History Museum has preserved hundreds of items (artifacts, photos, documents, and posters) from the World War II era, pertaining to both the military conflict and life and people on the home front.

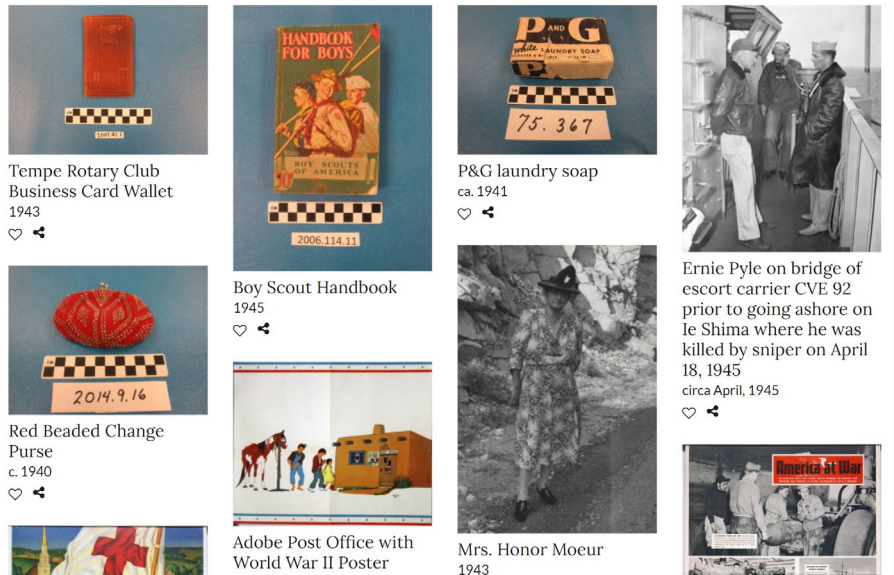
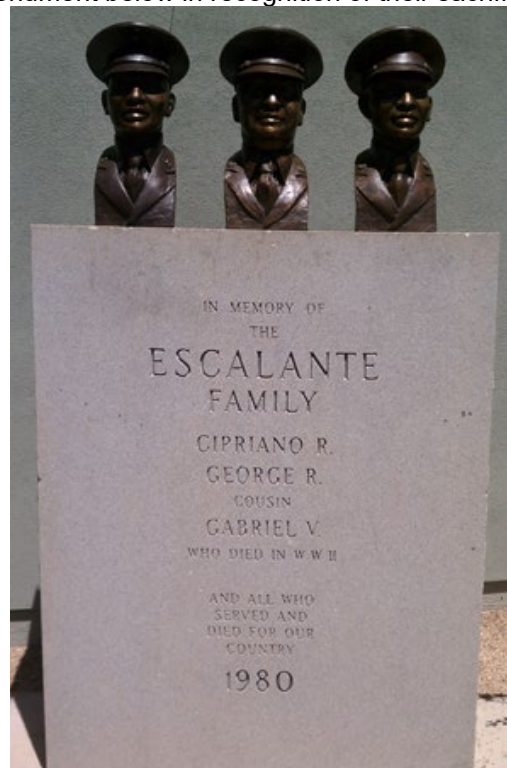


Photo: *Tempe History Museum website*,

<https://emuseum.tempe.gov/advancedsearch/Objects/beginDate%3A1940%3BendDate%3A1946>

Criterion 2, Example #6: Tempe’s Escalante Park is named for the Escalante kin (two brothers and a cousin) who were killed overseas in 1944-45. The city’s Escalante Multi-Generational Community Center is also named for these men and features the monument below in recognition of their sacrifice.



Escalante Monument

Criterion 2, Example #7: The first panel of a forthcoming Veterans Memorial near Tempe Beach Park features a marker dedicated to the memory of World War II veteran Adolph Weeks, an Army corporal who was awarded the Bronze Star.



Tempe Veterans Memorial panel and marker honoring Adolph Weeks

Criterion 2, Example #8: The original play *Escape from Papago Park* was performed at the Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe, and broadcast live on KTAR Radio 92.3, on February 14, 2015. (Source: Jay Mark, “*Tempe History: When German POWs Escaped from Papago Park*,” Arizona Republic, February 5, 2015, updated February 6, 2015, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/mesa/2015/02/05/mesa-history-german-escape-papago-park/22922467/>)

Criterion 2, Example #9: In 2019, Arizona State University in Tempe and the World War II National Museum created an online master’s-level World War II studies program, the first and only program of its kind. (Source: <https://asuonline.asu.edu/online-degree-programs/graduate/world-war-ii-studies-ma/>)

Criterion 2, Example #10: In 2019, Arizona US Representative Greg Stanton recorded an oral history with 99-year-old veteran and Tempe resident Major Fannie Griffin McClendon, “one of nearly 800 women in the Army’s first and only all-Black, all-female battalion to serve overseas, for the Library of Congress’s Veterans History Project.” (Source: “*Stanton Records Local 99-Year-Old World War II Veteran’s Story for Library of Congress*,” <https://stanton.house.gov/2019/11/stanton-records-local-99-year-old-world-war-ii-veteran-s-story-library-congress>)

Criterion 2, Example #11: To mark Veteran’s Day 2012, Arizona State University Libraries digitized vinyl recordings made by World War II correspondent and later Arizona governor Howard Pyle, including “brief ‘Hometown’ interviews with [34] Arizona soldiers and nurses in the Philippines.” (Source: Corbin Carson, “*Restored Recordings Share Greetings from Arizonans Serving in World War II*,” Cronkite News, November 9, 2012, <https://cronkitenewsonline.com/2012/11/restored-recordings-share-greetings-from-arizonans-serving-in-world-war-ii/index.html>)

Criterion 2, Example #12: An area of Tempe was dubbed Victory Acres after World War II in tribute to the US role in the Allied victory and the special feeling of “victory culture” that pervaded postwar US society.

Criterion 2, Example #13: The City of Tempe has been an active partner in the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project and offers information on how to participate in this program, which has preserved the memories of many World War II veterans.

August 30, 2023



Mr. Charles F. Sams III, Director
National Park Service
US Department of the Interior
900 Ohio Dr SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Director Sams:

I am writing to nominate Tempe, Arizona, as an American World War II Heritage City. While today, Tempe is a mid-size city of nearly 200,000 residents, on the eve of the war, it was still a relatively small agricultural community, with a population of less than 3,000. As it did everywhere in America, World War II fundamentally transformed Tempe, ushering in a population boom that not only greatly expanded the population of our desert city, but transformed it into a technological and knowledge hub, driven in no small part by the growth of Arizona State University (ASU) into a world-class research institution.

World War II-era Tempe, though small, contributed mightily to the American war effort, as detailed in our application's supporting documentation. More than two dozen Tempeans were killed in the service during the war. Most notably, the Escalante family lost three male relatives, a stark reminder of both the grave sacrifices demanded of the American people during the war—even from those who faced persecution in their communities—and their willingness to render those sacrifices selflessly. The city's contributions to the American and Allied war effort were notable in other ways. Its environs housed a prisoner of war camp in which prisoners were treated civilly, a marked contrast with conditions in Axis POW camps. Tempe also contributed natural resources like cotton to make US military uniforms and accoutrements, and its diverse residents, composed primarily of people of European and Mexican heritage, supported the war effort through war bond and salvage drives and training courses at Arizona State Teachers College (later ASU).

In the nearly 80 years since World War II ended, Tempe has worked diligently to preserve and publicize its proud World War II history. For example, the City of Tempe created Escalante Park as a living memorial to the young men whose sacrifice left their family bereft but the nation richer. More broadly, museums in the city have featured both permanent and temporary exhibits focusing on Tempe's unique contributions to the war effort. An ongoing Veterans Memorial project pays tribute, in part, to the wartime service of Tempe residents, including Bronze Star awardee Adolph Weeks, who fought against Axis fascism. And the Tempe Historic Preservation Foundation, a local nonprofit committed to preserving the city's history and built environment, saved two POW barracks from destruction so that future generations can learn about both the triumphs and tragedies of the war.

In short, Tempe, Arizona, is an ideal community to represent Arizona as an American World War II Heritage City. Tempe's contributions to the war effort were substantial and indelible, and its postwar commemoration and preservation work have helped ensure that the Greatest Generation's sacrifices will never be forgotten. By receiving this notable recognition, I hope that the rest of the country will be able to learn about and share our community's pride in Tempe's impressive record of service and commemoration relating to the defining event of the twentieth century.

Please see the supporting documentation for evidence of how Tempe meets the program's criteria for designation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Corey D. Woods, Mayor
City of Tempe, Arizona