

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 02 1975
DATE ENTERED MAR 26 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

T 2 S, R 12 E, Sec. 6, 7

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Superior

VICINITY OF

4

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Arizona

04

Pinal

021

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Superior

VICINITY OF

STATE

Arizona

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Pinal County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Florence

STATE

Arizona

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Visually, the Arboretum is dominated by Picket Post Mountain (4400 ft.). Queen Creek and Arnett Canyons, with their intermittent streams, cut from east to west through the center of the area.

There is a great variety of soil types, plant life, and animal life. The terrain includes sharp peaks, steep canyons, rolling hills, and mesas, with an elevation which ranges from 2300 to 4400 feet. The average annual rainfall is 17 inches and is distributed fairly evenly between winter and mid-summer. There are two hot, dry seasons: spring-early summer and late summer-fall. The mean annual temperature is 69° F with a low of 25° and a high of 112°. The area lies between the upper and lower Sonoran vegetation zones.

The land was unimproved except for a small area in Queen Creek Canyon which had been farmed and had a small cave house originally occupied by Apache and later by a homesteader. Some old fruit trees and vines remained.

In 1924 an irrigation system from Queen Creek was installed and a well was dug by the creek for the dry season. The well was 45 feet deep and connected with a tunnel 25 feet under the creek bed. All of this was dug out of solid rock. The top of the tunnel was blasted so water could seep in. Three hundred yards away, a 3,680,000 gallon storage reservoir was built, to be filled with water pumped from the creek. Four-inch underground pipes with 2-inch laterals handled the gravity flow irrigation water.

In the first months before permanent buildings were constructed, temporary sheds and frames were set up near the cave house, but these were plagued with rodents and once were trampled by mountain lions. Permanent structures for the plants were completed in the fall of 1925.

Brick and stucco houses for the director and assistant were built in 1924, and in 1926 an administration building of native rock was added. The interior walls of the lobby were lichen-covered rocks and the floor was of flagstones. The rest of the building contained offices, laboratories, a library, an herbarium, a seed room, a photography room, a fireproof vault, and supply rooms. The basement contained a soft water cistern.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1923

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Boyce Thompson was a western mine owner and businessman who had long been interested in the role of plants in man's development. The plantlife of the subarid regions, he believed, had not been sufficiently studied. The Arboretum was intended to fill that need.

In 1917 Thompson financed and led a Red Cross expedition into Russia. Because of the revolution, the party was forced to enter Russia through Siberia and this desperately poor and arid land caused Thompson to reflect on the lack of real knowledge about plant life.

When Thompson retired in 1923 he built a winter home, Picket Post House, on land which later became part of the Arboretum. He had founded the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at his home in Yonkers, New York, and now turned his attention to establishing a similar institution devoted to desert flora. In the fall of 1924 he commissioned Franklin J. Crider, head of the University of Arizona Department of Horticulture, to organize and direct the new arboretum. Crider's work here led to the establishment of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service.

Thompson's house was built on 20 acres of Crook National Forest land, for which he had obtained a special use permit. In April of 1928 he got a permit to use 273 acres for the Arboretum. In the meantime he had purposely bought land desired for the Coconino National Forest which he exchanged for a permanent deed to 293.45 acres for the Arboretum. He also purchased 35 acres of patented land from Magma Copper Company. This had been the Robert Clevenger Ranch in Queen Creek Canyon, south of Picket Post House. In June of 1928 he deeded all 328.45 acres to the Arboretum.

In November 1928 he purchased 73 acres of patented land from Palmer Stockwell for the Arboretum and thereafter received a special use permit for several hundred more acres. Picket Post House was deeded to the Arboretum in 1928 for use as a plant museum and quarters for students and scientists.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arizona State Parks Board files
 Wm. Boyce Thompson, letter to Gov. Geo. W.P. Hunt, 10 April 1929.
 Hunt Papers, Az. St. Library and Archives
 Boyce Thompson S W Arboretum, Inc. "Purpose, History, and
 Dedication" a manuscript. July 1930
Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum Summary Progress Report. 12-31-31

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1221.45

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,2	48,674,0	3,68,262,0	B	1,2	48,674,0	3,68,000,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,2	48,390,0	36,800,0	D	1,2	48,390,0	36,826,20
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Arboretum runs roughly along the highway on the north. On the south it skirts Picket Post Mountain. The east and west boundaries are determined, not by topographical features, but by the long use of the land for botanical experiments.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marjorie Wilson, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arizona State Parks

DATE

April 23, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1688 West Adams

TELEPHONE

(602) 271-4174

CITY OR TOWN

Phoenix

STATE

Arizona

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ SIGNATURE

Dennis McCarthy
 DENNIS MCCARTHY

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

April 23, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

3/26/76

ATTEST:

Charles A. ...
 acty

DATE

3-28-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Arboretum ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The same year, two greenhouses and another residence were added and the cave was converted into a three-room building. Also completed were service buildings, a garage, a workroom, a tool room, and a storage house. For visitors, two palm-thatched pergolas were constructed and a natural outdoor amphitheater. The entire Arboretum was fenced and several miles of graveled roads, walks, and trails were put in.

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CONTINUATION SHEET **Arboretum** ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

When the Arboretum was established, there was no provision in the Arizona Statutes for a non-profit, tax-exempt scientific research corporation. Fortunately, Governor George W. P. Hunt was an ardent horticulturist and he used his influence to get a special act passed. Arizona's first law to protect native plants was prepared by the Arboretum at the request of the Governor.

The Arboretum had ten main purposes: education, plant introduction and general plant studies, desert plant studies, native plant studies, propagation studies, climatological studies, fundamental plant studies, plant utility determination, public service, and publication. The program included exchanges of plants with institutions all over the world. Facilities are available for visiting scientists.

Professor E. E. Merrill, of the University of California, stated at the official dedication in 1929 that the arboretum was "the first large privately endowed institution of its kind in any arid or sub-arid region" of the world.

There are several archaeological sites at the Arboretum. These include two small Salado pueblos, a mesa-top village ruin, several sherd areas, and bedrock mortars. The sites are unexcavated and almost unvandalized.

During the territorial period, there was some homesteading on the land. The area which is now occupied by the main gardens of the Arboretum was successfully farmed and planted to orchards by Robert Clevenger. There was also some evidence of Indian gardens at this spot.

Part of a homestead of Jimmie Herron is also included in the Arboretum lands. This portion has remained in its natural condition and is, for the most part, a saguaro forest.

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CONTINUATION SHEET **Arboretum** ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

When the mines opened in the Superior area, much of the surrounding land was ravaged for wood for the smelters. One of Thompson's motives in establishing the Arboretum was to restore this land to its original condition. As a mining magnate himself, he regarded this as a personal obligation.

The Arboretum has been largely successful in fulfilling its original purposes and has made a major contribution to arid land plant science.

At present an agreement is being negotiated between the Arboretum and the Arizona State Parks Board whereby the site will become a state park and the land will be leased from the corporation.