

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 20 1977  
DATE ENTERED JAN 5 1978

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  Niels Petersen House  
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Southern and Priest St  
CITY, TOWN Tempe VICINITY OF 1  
STATE Arizona CODE 04 COUNTY Maricopa CODE 013  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
STREET & NUMBER P.O. Bin 71  
CITY, TOWN Globe VICINITY OF Arizona

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Maricopa County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Phoenix STATE Arizona

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Niels Peterson House, a two story Queen Anne Victorian of brick and frame, stands on the northwest corner of Priest and Southern in Tempe, facing East. A one-story wing in the rear (west) houses the kitchen, downstairs bedroom, bathroom, and a small storeroom as well as an an odd-shaped room between kitchen and dining room which may have been a breezeway connecting the two-story house with a one-story detached kitchen. If it was, it must have been enclosed very early in the life of the house, judging from the interior detail.

The house was specifically designed for the low-desert climate of the Salt River Valley. East and West side porches shaded the building from the morning and afternoon sun while the bay windows on the South side gathered the sun's heat in the winter and contributed to the well-designed cross-ventilation system in the summer. The high, complex attic arrangement was part of the ventilating system and numerous large trees in the yard also helped. Two small balconies on the East side provided a breezy place to sit upstairs. Ceilings have decorated ventilation grills. Some of the elaborate exterior detail disappeared when the Deckers remodeled in the 1930s. The original wooden front porch had slender turned posts, light spandrels, and a delicately patterned railing. The present porch is concrete with wide curved steps, square concrete pedestals, tapered square wooden columns, a heavy boxed spandrel, and a denticulated cornice. The porch ceiling is tongue and groove.

The original roof had metal cresting and finials and the gable above the South bedroom had lacy bargeboards. The railing of the false balcony of this room has been removed.

The side entry now has cement steps instead of wood and a shingled shade has been added by the window. The back porch is U-shaped around the kitchen and has been screened in. The pillars are square but not tapered nor as heavy as those in the front. Three of the upstairs windows are flanked by pilasters and crowned by pediments.

The house contains about 6,000 square feet. The downstairs, with its 12 foot ceilings, includes a kitchen, bedroom, bath, study, parlor, dining room, front hall, and the odd room between the dining room and kitchen.

The upstairs rooms have 10 foot ceilings. There are three bedrooms, a bath, a sitting room, and a small storeroom. The two-story section containing the downstairs study and the upstairs bath and storeroom were added about 1930 by Decker.

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There's maple flooring throughout the house. Baseboards are 10 inches high. Door moldings are decorated and picture moldings throughout the house, except in the parlor, are elaborately detailed, as is the door hardware. Ceiling light fixtures include 3 chrysal chandeliers. These and the other ceiling fixtures appear to date from the Decker remodeling about 1930. The house originally had gas lighting. The wallpaper has not been dated. There is a small dirt cellar with rock walls under the kitchen. Entrance is gained from the outside on the South side of the house. The kitchen is on the West side and is roughly square with vertical board wainscoting, one-over-one windows, and transoms over the doors. One built-in cupboard appears to date from 1930.

The back bedroom opens onto the interior hall, a storeroom (really an enclosed portion of the porch), the porch, and an early bathroom with vertical wood wainscoting.

The kitchen opens onto an odd-shaped room which may have originally been a breezeway between the dining room and a detached kitchen. The exterior of the room between the kitchen and the main house is frame. The picture molding has a different decoration from those in the other rooms. There is also a wide plate shelf around the room and a mysterious niche in the East wall about 4 feet above the floor, 3 feet high, 6 inches deep, with an arched top.

The dining room is connected to the parlor by a wide archway and back-to-back fireplaces of brick. These are no longer in use. This room has a bay window. The parlor has an elaborate embossed plaster decoration applied to the wall above the fireplace. There is a large window on the East side and french doors opening onto the porch on the South side.

The parlor is connected to the spacious front hall by a double sliding door. The hall is roughly square and connected to the small entry by an archway with turned wooden corner guards. The front door is flanked by glass panels and a long window extends over the door and the panels. The door itself has a design in wood molding.

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Opposite the door on the West side of the hall is an arch leading to the stairway. This passage is now closed by a wrought-iron gate.

A door on the North side of the hall leads to a study which, with the bath and storeroom above it, was added by Decker. The study also has an outside entrance, so that visitors to the Minister would not have to go through the house. In the Southwest corner of the room is a stained glass window, originally on the outside wall of the house and opening onto the stair landing. Decker left it in place when he added the room. An identical window was placed in the added upstairs storeroom and had probably been removed from the North wall of the hall when a door was cut through for the study. The whole addition is frame, painted to match the brick.

The stairway has a large square newel post and turned balusters. The upstairs landing leads to 3 bedrooms, a sitting room, and a bath. The sitting room is connected to the landing by a wide arch (with turned wood corner protectors) and to the Southeast bedroom by double doors. These two rooms have small balconies. The sitting room has a large one-over-one window, the top half of which is stained glass. The bedrooms evidently had stoves in them at one time.

The south bedroom, which is above the dining room, also has a bay window. The northwest bedroom is plain.

The exterior brick walls have apparently been painted dark red at least since the 1930s. The trim is now light green and cream. The original colors are not known.

The setting of the house has been drastically altered. Some of the large trees remain but the ash lined circular carriage drive is gone.

All of the outbuildings have been removed. The last to go was 1880s pumphouse of redwood and oregon pine. The little graveyard, with its marble headstones, remains, but is in the area used as a city park. Although 3 1/2 acres remain, the house is enclosed by an intrusive block wall and the subdivision of suburban ranch houses is totally out of harmony with the verticality of the Victorian house.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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            1892                                    BUILDER/ARCHITECT    James Creighton

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Queen Anne style Victorian farm house built for pioneer Niels Petersen by James Creighton is one of the best remaining examples of the Phoenix architect's residential design. The house was built for a man who was involved in almost every aspect of the development of the Tempe area.

Niels Petersen (1845-1923) was born the son of a farmer in Vilsen, Pors Ribi, Denmark. At the age of 16 he joined the German Merchant marine and later served on British ships, becoming fluent in several languages. He came to the United States in 1865 and spent a few years in the state of New York until he became interested in the West, traveling to California in 1870 and to Arizona the following year. Petersen had originally intended to prospect for gold in Arizona, but quickly realized the potential of agriculture in the Salt River valley and homesteaded 160 acres southwest of Tempe in 1872.

The main road to Maricopa Wells passed just West of where the house now stands about 1/4 of a mile. The modern freeway follows this route roughly but passes between the Double Buttes rather than West of them as the old road did.

Petersen later acquired over twelve hundred acres on which he raised hay, grain, and cattle. He was necessarily interested in irrigation and served for many years as treasurer of the Tempe Canal Co.

As Petersen prospered, he branched out into other pursuits. He invested heavily in the development of downtown Tempe, was president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, served on the local school board, on the County Board of Supervisors (1887-1889), and in the territorial legislature (1895-1896), and was one of 5 men who organized the Tempe Methodist Church in 1888. He was also noted for his charities.

The first house on the Petersen Ranch was an adobe and it was here that Petersen lived with his first wife (Isabel Dumphy of Duluth) and infant

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached list.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.92

UTM REFERENCES

A	12	419620	3695120
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Parcel 117

Beginning 466 ft. westerly from SE corner easterly 466 ft. northerly 350 ft. west 466 ft. South 388.6 ft. in SE quarter except South 40 ft. in irrigation tract in SE corner.

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, National Register Contract Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arizona State Parks Board

DATE

7/8/77

STREET & NUMBER

1688 West Adams Street

TELEPHONE

(602) 271-4174

CITY OR TOWN

Phoenix

STATE

Arizona 85007

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE XX

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Brookings H. Hall*

TITLE

DATE

7-11-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles A. ...*

DATE

1.5.78

DATE

7.4.78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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son, John, who both died in the mid 1870s. The ruin of the adobe house, West of the present building, was removed in the 1960s.

In anticipation of his second marriage, Petersen engaged prominent Az. architect James Creighton to design a comfortable new home.

James Miller Creighton (1856-1946), a Canadian of Scottish descent, came to Arizona 1881 after some years of experience in carpentry and contracting. He became immediately successful as a designer of public buildings in the territory, many of which are still in use, including such National Register sites as Old Main at the University of Arizona and several buildings at Fort Huachuca. In addition to public and commercial buildings, Creighton designed a number of substantial homes for prominent Arizona citizens.

Construction began in March of 1892 and the house was completed when Petersen brought his bride (Susanna Decker, South Montrose, Pennsylvania) home in late September.\*

When Petersen died in 1923, he was buried at nearby Double Butte on land which he had given to the City of Tempe for a cemetery. Mrs. Petersen, however, had a private plot prepared near the house so they could be buried together at home. She died in 1927.

The property then passed to Mrs. Petersen's nephew, Edward Decker, a Methodist minister in Pennsylvania. Decker inherited the farm and received the house and grounds as a lifetime trust. He moved to Arizona and married a local woman, Anabelle Hanna. The Deckers renovated the house extensively.

\*On August 2, Tom Graham, the central figure in the Pleasant Valley War, was ambushed and murdered on Petersen's land less than a mile from the new house.

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When Decker died in 1948, his wife moved to Tempe and the house stood empty. Local artist Tom Harter and his wife were much concerned as they watched vandalism and deterioration gradually destroying the building. In 1951 they persuaded Mrs. Decker to lease the house to them. From that time until 1968, the house was not only protected, but repaired and restored by the Harters and was the subject of numerous paintings by the artist. When Mrs. Decker died in 1968, she willed the property to the Arizona Grand Lodge of the International Order of Oddfellows to be held in trust. Petersen had been an active member of the lodge.

The farm was subdivided in 1962 and only 3 1/2 acres around the house remain. Most of that is leased to the city for a park. The house is set off from the park by a cement block wall built by the city.

The house is used by the lodge as a museum and is designated the Oddfellow Rebekah Historical Society Petersen Memorial Estate.

The Petersen House exemplifies a pattern of Anglo development in the Salt River Valley. First it was open desert, cut in the 1860s and 1870s by a road between the small settlement of Phoenix and the stage stop and telegraph line at Maricopa Wells. The road remained, but changed gradually until it became a major freeway.

Then a determined pioneer homesteaded, built an adobe house, irrigated the land, and prospered steadily by hard work and an intelligent understanding of how the area would develop. Prosperity and a bride meant a grand new house which stood in the midst of its farm acres for 70 years. The post World War II boom brought the suburbs which have steadily swept around, over, and past most of the pioneer farms in the area. The house stands incongruously in the midst of the sprawl.

The Petersen House was saved by the attachment its owners felt for it so that it was held in trust and saved from the bulldozer.



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