

10-500 (Rev. 10-74)

PH0671967

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECEIVED  
OCT 25 1974  
DATE RECEIVED NOV 25 1974

**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  PAINTED ROCKS

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Thesea vicinity, W of Thesea  
T55 P9W Sec 2 92 NE4 NE4

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

STATE  
Arizona

VICINITY OF  
CODE 04

COUNTY  
Maricopa

CODE  
013

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input 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 Arizona State Parks Board

STREET & NUMBER 1688 West Adams

CITY, TOWN Phoenix

VICINITY OF

STATE 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

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCR

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

The Painted  
end have be  
piled in a  
and Sauced  
annual rain  
The boulder  
have been f  
rock beneat  
approximate  
Some early  
pecked figur  
since worn

# DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Painted Rocks (actually petroglyphs) present a striking appearance and have been a landmark on the Gila Trail for centuries. They are piled in a heap in the midst of a plain surrounded by the Gila Bend and Saucedo Mountains. The elevation is about 600 feet and the annual rainfall varies from three to six inches. The boulders have acquired a dark desert varnish and the petroglyphs have been formed by scraping the varnish away to reveal the lighter rock beneath. The rock pile is about 50 feet high and covers approximately one acre. Some early observers mention that there were painted as well as pecked figures on the rocks, but whatever paint there was has long since worn off.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	ARCHAEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING
		<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION

SPECIFIC DATES \_\_\_\_\_ BUILDER/ARTIST \_\_\_\_\_

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE \_\_\_\_\_

The origin and meaning of the petroglyphs are unknown. There are geometric figures and animals as representations of people and animals. The site has numerous petroglyph sites, Painted Rocks is a well-preserved site and would certainly be a Rosetta Stone for scholars if the Rosetta Stone of petroglyphs were discovered.

Painted Rocks is a conspicuous formation naturally served as a landmark as well as a record center. Spanish travelers noted its existence early as 1749, when Jesuit missionary Father Kino noted its existence. The Spanish name for the site was simply translated as Painted Rocks after the Anglo travelers were intrigued by the site in some detail. Many of them propounded theories about the mysterious figures.

Lt. W. H. Emory, on a military expedition during the Mexican War, arrived at Painted Rocks and believed the signs were intended to communicate with the Indians.

John Russell Bartlett, who represented the Boundary Commission after the Mexican War, noted the petroglyphs in the early 1850s. He noted that many other such figures he had seen, were of "historical value." Peripatetic author John W. Poston noted that the Pima believed the petroglyphs were prehistoric, probably Hohokam. Poston noted that the pictures were more recent and related to the treaties between Gila and Colorado tribes.

R. J. Hinton, gathering material for his book, speculated that the boulders had been piled up to decide the symbols were intended as a record and "to express all the facts of human life."

\* There is no evidence as yet that the petroglyphs are a language.

# SIGNIFICANCE

CHECK ONE

CONTINENTAL SITE  
 MONTH DATE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> DESIGN	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1500-1600	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1800	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1700-1750	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1750-1800	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
1800-1850	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
1850-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICAL/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES: \_\_\_\_\_ BUILDER/ARCHITECT: \_\_\_\_\_

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The origin and meaning of the petroglyphs at Painted Rocks are unknown. There are geometric figures and abstract designs as well as representations of people and animals. Although the Southwest has numerous petroglyph sites, Painted Rocks is an unusually large and well-preserved site and would certainly provide abundant material for scholars if the Rosetta Stone of petroglyphs were ever discovered.\*

Painted Rocks is a conspicuous formation along the Gila Trail and has naturally served as a landmark as well as (presumably) a message and record center. Spanish travelers noticed the petroglyphs at least as early as 1749, when Jesuit missionary Jacob Sedelmayr recorded their existence. The Spanish name for the site, Piedras Pintadas, was simply translated as Painted Rocks after the Anglo occupation. Early Anglo travelers were intrigued by the cryptic symbols and described the site in some detail. Many of them sketched pictures of it and propounded theories about the mysterious collection.

Lt. W. H. Emory, on a military expedition to California during the Mexican War, arrived at Painted Rocks in November of 1846. He believed the signs were intended to commemorate some great event.

John Russell Bartlett, who represented the U. S. on the international Boundary commission after the Mexican War, made several sketches of the petroglyphs in the early 1850s. He concluded that these, and the many other such figures he had seen, were "apparently without meaning" or "historical value." Peripatetic author J. Ross Browne viewed Painted Rocks in 1864 in company with the famed Arizona pioneer Charles Poston. Browne noted that the Pima believed the petroglyphs to be prehistoric, probably Hohokam. Poston and Browne decided, however, that the pictures were more recent and probably were records of treaties between Gila and Colorado tribes.

R. J. Hinton, gathering material for his Handbook to Arizona in 1877, speculated that the boulders had been left by a great flood. He decided the symbols were intended as a record of important events and "to express all the facts of human life, fighting and passion alike."

\* There is no evidence as yet that the petroglyphs are a written language.

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An archaeological survey in the early 1960s suggested that the site was probably Hohokam because "the major occupation of the area was by the Hohokam; (2) many of the petroglyph designs are the same as those used on Hohokam pottery; (3) petroglyphs sites are often near Hohokam villages." The evidence, however, is not conclusive and the report pointed out that Painted Rocks is not associated with any village sites. Furthermore, "although a few plainware sherds have been found around the boulder pile, they are not distinctive enough to allow the assignment of petroglyphs to any one time period or cultural group."

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CONTINUATION SHEET Painted Rocks

Arizona State Parks Board

Bartlett, John Russell. Painted Rocks  
Incidents . . . with  
Volume II. 1854.

Browne, J. Ross. Adventure

Cooke, Philip St. George, Painted  
Rocks Reservoir. 1846-1854. 1938.

Hinton, Richard. Handbook

Wasley, W. W. and Johnson. Painted  
Rocks Reservoir . . .

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CONTINUATION SHEET Painted Rocks ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Arizona State Parks Board files on Painted Rocks State Historic Park.

Bartlett, John Russell. Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents . . . with the . . . Boundary Commission . . . .  
Volume II. 1854.

Browne, J. Ross. Adventures in the Apache Country. 1864.

Cooke, Philip St. George, et al. Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846-1854. 1938.

Hinton, Richard. Handbook to Arizona. 1878

Wasley, W. W. and Johnson, A. E. Salvage Archaeology in Painted Rocks Reservoir . . . . 1965.

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12 ST

As the criteria

STATE

TITLE

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DATE

BY

ATTN

PHONE

1977

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# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached list.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	308660	365955.0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The site consists of the fenced petroglyph concentration at Painted Rocks State Historic Park as shown on the accompanying aerial photo (#5).

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

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

## 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Dorothy H. Hall*

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

10-12-76

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

*Robert B. Rattig*

DATE 11/25/77

DATE 11-22-77



ARIZONA  
STATE  
PARKS

NATURAL  
CULTURE  
RESERVATION  
CONSERVATION  
SECTION

1688 WEST ADAMS STREET  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85001  
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RAUL H. CAS  
GOV.

MICHAEL A. RAY  
DIR.

DOROTHY H. HALL  
SECTION  
STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION OFFICER

MARJORIE H. WILSON  
ASST. DIR.

JAMES W. GARRISON  
HISTORICAL ARCHIVIST

PATRICIA BERGTHUM  
NATURAL AREA  
TRAILS COORDINATOR