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PRESERVATION

STAFF REPORT

Tempe Historic Preservation Office

From: Joe Nucci, Historic Preservation Officer

Date: October 13, 2005

DSD# HPO-2005.87

Centennial House Historic Property Designation

Background + Status

On August 11, 2005, the Tempe Historic Preservation Office received a nomination for historic property designation for the **Sampson Tupper Van Horn Harter House** located at 601 West Third Street as a Tempe Historic Property and a request for listing on the Tempe Historic Property Register.

Centennial House [the Sampson/Tupper House] is identified in the Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update as Not Eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places due to INTEGRITY. This evaluation is based on the house having been moved from its original location in the University Hayden Butte Redevelopment Area.

The applicant requests designation of the house on the Tempe Historic Property Register. The following report recommends listing Centennial House on the Tempe Historic Property Register and argues that the act of moving the house, as a last resort to its preservation, should be recognized as an event itself significant to broad patterns of history, specifically to the early organization and development of the Tempe Historic Preservation program.

History + Context

Built in 1888-89, Centennial House [the Sampson/Tupper House] is significant for its contribution to Tempe's architectural heritage as the oldest remaining brick residential building within the Multiple Resource Area.

As a last resort to avoid demolition, pioneer preservationist Susan Harter financed moving the house to a lot owned by her family on West 3rd Street. The house was relocated in 1988, one hundred years after the house was built. Susan Harter renamed it the Centennial House.

Centennial House, including changes and modifications to date, remains an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style of residential architecture popular at the time of construction. Changes, including change of location, contribute to the historic evolution of the house, which continues to be well maintained with a significant amount of its 1888-89 architectural integrity intact.

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♦ ♦ ♦

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

Joseph G. Nucci, RA



The City of Tempe is a Certified Local Government, in association with the United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service



Tempe Historic Preservation Office
Development Services Department
21 East 6th Street, Suite 208
P.O. Box 5002
Tempe, AZ 85280

♦ ♦ ♦

480.350.8028
8579 FAX; 8913TDD





Photo THM1987.1.68 courtesy Tempe Historical Museum

Association with events significant to broad patterns of history:

Built in 1888-89, Centennial House [the Sampson/Tupper House] is significant for its contribution to Tempe's architectural heritage as the oldest remaining brick residential building within the Multiple Resource Area. At the time of construction, Tempe was in the first year of a development boom under the vigorous promotion of the Tempe Land and Improvement Company. Use of brick construction in Tempe had previously been limited to the 1886 Tempe Normal School Building (demolished), but with the 1888 construction boom of the commercial district, new local brick kilns made the material more accessible and affordable. The Sampson House was built during the same months as the first substantial commercial buildings in Tempe which included the Ellingson Block (demolished), the Andre Building (NRHP), and the Tempe Bakery (NRHP). The new brick buildings brought a sense of permanence to the fledgling settlement and left a legacy of community identity that would endure for over one-hundred years.

In March 1983, Tempe's initial Historic Property Survey and Multiple Resource Area Nomination (Janus 1983), evaluated House (the Sampson House) including changes and modifications to date. The survey noted these changes as "contributing to the historic evolution of the house" and found the house to be well maintained with a significant amount of its 1888-89 architectural integrity intact.

On May 7, 1984, Centennial House (the Sampson House) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, along with a number of other properties as part of the Tempe Multiple Resource Area nomination.

Circa 1988, Centennial House was moved, 100 years after it was built, to make way for what would eventually become the Centerpoint redevelopment project. Taken by truck from its original location at 109 West Sixth Street, the house was set down in the same orientation (front entry facing north) at the property located at 601 West Third Street.

Circa 1989, Centennial House was delisted from the National Register of Historic Places.

Association with lives of persons significant in our past:

The Sampson House was built in the winter of 1888-89 for Mrs. Lulu Sampson, a widow and teacher in the Tempe School System. Mrs. Sampson moved from the house in 1894 when failing health forced her retirement from teaching. The house was occupied throughout its historic period by several Tempe notables including; C. H. Jones, Normal School Professor C. M. Frizzell, and Tempe's first postal carrier Lyle Weir.

The Sampson House was purchased in 1924 by Mrs. Cordelia E. Tupper who made extensive repairs to the home, added sidewalks and a front porch. The Sampson/Tupper house continued to be used as a rental throughout this period.

The Sampson/Tupper House was occupied in 1934 by Mr. Howard Van Horne who moved his family from their home at 121 East Seventh Street. In 1951, Van Horne acquired the property from the Tupper Estate. Van Horne sold the house in 1971 and for the next fifteen years the home changed ownership several times without undergoing significant changes.

In 1985, the City of Tempe announced plans for the University Plaza redevelopment project, now known as Centerpoint. This project created mixed-use redevelopment on a 21.5-acre site northwest of Mill Avenue and University Drive. New Centerpoint buildings of varying height and density envelop the reconstructed Ellingson Warehouse and the historic Brown-Strong-Reeves House, but the project also displaced many of Tempe's oldest homes west of Mill Avenue.

When Centerpoint planning began in 1985, Susan Harter, a fourth generation Tempe native, worked to save some of the familiar old houses. Susan regularly attended City Council meetings, and became one of the most outspoken advocates for historic preservation. Recognizing that the best way to save historic buildings was to preserve and improve the old neighborhoods where they were located, Susan began organizing citizens to form the first neighborhood associations in Tempe.

Susan Harter grew up surrounded by reminders of Tempe's history and the role that her family had in building the town. As a teenager, her family moved into the Petersen House, a grand Victorian farmhouse that is now a city museum. Her mother, Helen Harter, was a founding member of the Tempe Historical Society. Susan's great grandfather, James W. Woolf, was a pioneer builder who settled in Tempe in 1888. Nearly one-hundred years later, Susan further showed her commitment to preservation by personally moving one of Tempe's oldest houses from path of destruction.

The City of Tempe acquired the property including the Sampson/Tupper parcel in December 1987, for redevelopment, and the house was scheduled for demolition. Susan borrowed from her family's estate to pay for moving the house to a lot on West 3rd Street. The house was relocated in 1988, exactly one hundred years after the house had been was built. Susan renamed it the Centennial House.

Susan Harter proved that one person could make a difference in preserving Tempe's historic buildings. In 1992, she received the President's Award for Historic Preservation from the Arizona Preservation Foundation.

SUSAN HARTER: VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

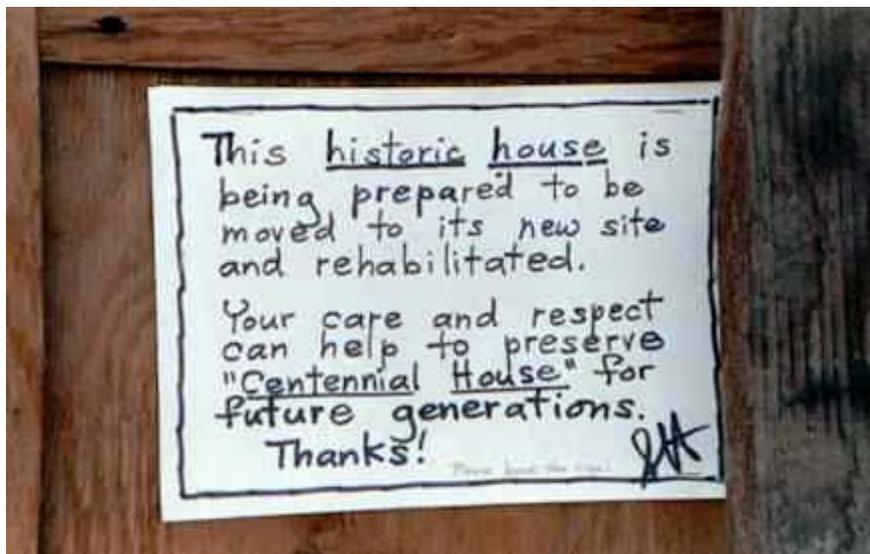
- text courtesy Tempe Historical Museum from the exhibit "Three Tempe Women" 02/12/00-12/31/2000
- photos 24:24 courtesy Vic Linoff Those Were The Days

Born November 18, 1933

Died January 18, 1993

Susan Harter was the elder daughter of Tom Harter, an ASU art professor, and Helen Harter, an art and elementary school teacher. She had strong roots in the community because her mother's family, the Wolfs, came to Tempe in 1889. Harter was best known as a community activist who was interested in preserving the historic character of Tempe. However, she also was an accomplished artist and teacher.

Susan Harter earned a Bachelor of Arts from Arizona State University and a Master of Arts from Claremont College in California. She also completed the coursework for a master's degree in English at Arizona State University. She taught locally in the Roosevelt, Kyrene and Tempe Elementary School Districts as well as in California, Europe and Japan. Harter also taught at ASU and Mesa Community College.



"They say that Frank Lloyd Wright played with blocks until he was 12. Well, I did, too. Even my dreams have architectural backgrounds."

A FASCINATION WITH ARCHITECTURE

Susan Harter's fascination with architecture was linked to her family roots and life experiences. As a fourth-generation Tempean, she was surrounded by visible reminders of her family's role in the development of the town. Her great-grandfather, James Woolf, was a prominent rancher, director of the Tempe National Bank and member of the 19th Territorial Legislature. He also was Tempe's first concrete block manufacturer and built many homes. When she was 18, her family moved to the Victorian era Petersen House where her parents were caretakers for 17 years. Harter lived there on and off throughout the 1950s and 1960s. While teaching overseas, she admired architecture and photographed many of the buildings she discovered during her travels.



"I have roots in this community that go back 100 years and most of the physical evidence is no longer here. I want to see what's left preserved. I want us to do right by it."

GROWING UP IN TEMPE

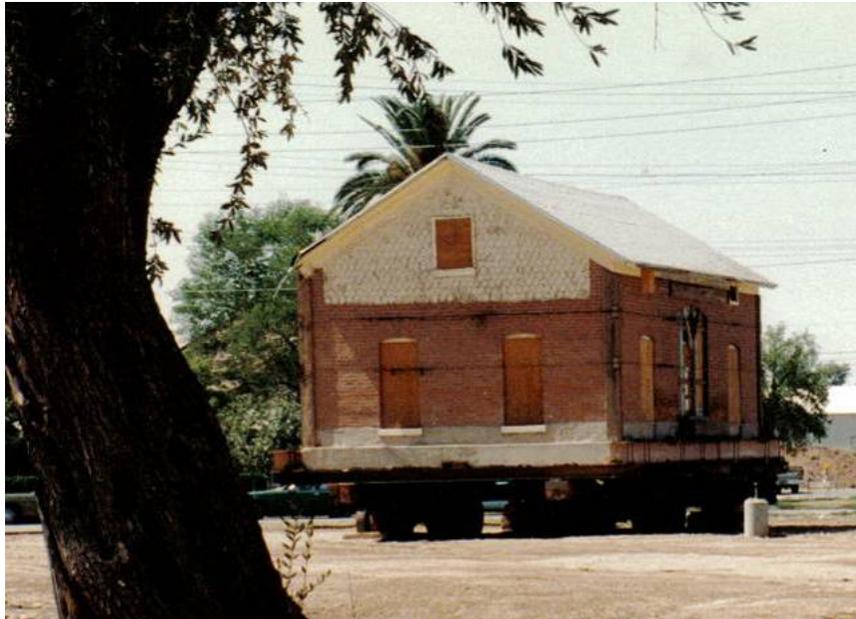
Susan Harter fondly remembered a happy childhood in a small town with quiet, tree-lined streets, where children could walk and ride their bicycles anywhere in town. In the 1960s, Arizona State University began acquiring the residential neighborhoods around campus. Harter's former homes were taken, along with the home her great-grandfather built for his family. Schools she had attended also were gone. Her memories of Tempe and the losses she experienced were the motivating factors in her passion for community activism.



"I can't give it up and let somebody else do it. I *am* somebody else."

ADVOCACY

Susan Harter was passionate about preserving the historic character of the community. Harter believed that the only way to accomplish this was to keep the neighborhoods intact. She was a pioneer in the development of neighborhood associations and participated in early efforts to bring together residents from neighborhoods throughout Tempe. Harter was a regular at City Council meetings, keeping abreast of the issues and voicing her opinion on projects that would impact the history and quality of life in Tempe.



“I was appalled by the intensity of the University Plaza plans...I thought, ‘I really need to express these ideas, to get somebody to hear what I’m saying, to have them really listen to some of these concerns.’”

A PERSONAL CRUSADE

Susan Harter took on her role as community crusader in 1985 when plans were announced for the development of University Plaza, now known as Centerpoint. The proposed project would destroy many historic houses and completely change the character of the west side of the downtown area.

In 1986, ASU announced its intentions to build a 10,000 square foot expansion of the College of Architecture at University Drive and Forest Avenue. The Frankenberg House, built out of concrete block in 1910 by Harter’s great-grandfather, James Woolf, stood in the way. Harter became concerned that it would soon be demolished. She lobbied heavily for saving the Frankenberg House, taking her case to ASU President J. Russell Nelson. The house was eventually dismantled and moved to Olde Towne Square.



“I admit I fussed and fumed and I carried on. But the way they have done it is the best solution.”

Tempe architect Stu Siefer formed a partnership to install five historic homes on 1.4 acres at First Street and Ash Avenue: the Woolf-Cole; Long; Frankenberg; Woolf-Sachs; and Newton-Warner homes. They would be rented out for professional offices. At first, Susan Harter was opposed to this project because the houses would be removed from their original settings. However, once she realized that this approach was the only way to save them, she became a supporter. Stu Siefer credits her persistent lobbying with getting the city’s approval for the project.

A PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Susan Harter proved her personal commitment to historic preservation by moving the Sampson-Tupper House, Tempe’s oldest brick residence, out of the path of destruction. She persuaded the city to give her \$10,000, and borrowed money from the family estate to move the house to a family lot. She nicknamed it Centennial House because it was moved one hundred years after it was built in 1888.

THE ARTIST

Susan Harter also was an accomplished artist. She won second prize in printmaking at the Arizona State Fair at the young age of 20. Harter won first prize in watercolor at the Arizona State Fair the following year. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from Arizona State University and a Master of Arts from Claremont College in California. Harter continued to paint throughout her life.

IN MEMORIUM

Susan Harter died in 1993 at the age of 59. Many fellow Tempeans gave tribute to her lasting legacy.



“She was a very persistent advocate. Generations of Tempeans will be indebted to her and the work she did.” Harry Mitchell, then Mayor of Tempe

RECOGNITION

Susan Harter received the President’s Award for Historic Preservation from the Arizona Preservation Foundation in 1992. In January of 1993 immediately following her death, Mayor Harry Mitchell signed a proclamation honoring her role as a community activist. In 1998, Harter was posthumously awarded a Leadership Award “in recognition of exceptional vision, dedication and service” by the Newtown Community Development Corporation. The annual historic preservation award that is given to a Tempe citizen by the Historic Preservation Commission is named in Harter’s honor.

Distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction:

Centennial House is a brick structure, rectangular in plan, measuring 35 feet wide by 20 feet deep. A segment-style wood shingle roof slopes to the front and rear from a ridge running parallel to the width of the house. A modest cornice molding is applied at the fascia and the enclosed eaves. Gable ends are finished in segment-style or scalloped wood shingles and feature a centrally placed wood sash window. Attic ventilators are located below the eaves on the front and rear masonry walls. Double-hung wood sash windows and French doors occur in the original, symmetrically-located segmented-arched masonry openings. The original front entry door and sidelight arrangement has been maintained providing a focal point formal entry into the symmetrical arrangement of rooms.

A central hall divides the house and links each room to the kitchen in the rear addition. The original house did not include plumbing and the original kitchen was probably located outside the main house or in a shed at the rear.

Circa 1893, Centennial House was modified by a rear addition 10 feet deep extending the width of the structure with its roof built as a continuation of the rear roof slope. Originally built as a sleeping porch with canvassed, screened openings, it was subsequently enclosed with shiplap siding and modest wood sash windows.

Circa 1925, Centennial House was again modified and the c1893 rear porch was enclosed. A second rear addition was constructed extending further out and doubling the area under roof behind the original brick masonry wall. A small front porch with a gently sloping roof supported by two brick piers, was also added using details and proportions that were sympathetic to the original structure and which, taken together, do not significantly alter its original architectural integrity.

Described in the Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update (Ryden 1997) as a Colonial Revival style custom home, Centennial House provides a modest example of this widely popular, albeit often extravagant turn-of-the-century style. The Colonial Revival style became popular in the late nineteenth century and draws inspiration from Georgian Colonial architecture. Buildings of this type have strictly symmetrical facades that are usually rectangular in plan with minimum projections. Eaves have classical detailing. Windows are usually double-hung sash except when Palladian windows are used for accent. Following on the heels of America's Centennial celebrations, the Colonial Revival emerged in the early 1880s borrowing heavily from early American architecture - particularly Georgian style buildings – giving expression to a new pride in America's past and a rapidly growing interest in historic preservation.

As with Centennial House, the Colonial Revival building is often a combination of various Colonial styles and contemporary elements. Generally the Revival house is larger than its Colonial counterpart and some of the individual elements are exaggerated or out of proportion with other parts of the house. Some Revival houses, however, are executed with such historical accuracy that they are difficult to distinguish from original houses.

Attributes of Centennial House fitting the Colonial Revival classification include;

- Symmetrical façade
- Rectangular plan
- Gable roof
- Pillars and columns
- Multi-pane, double-hung windows with shutters
- Paneled doors with sidelights and topped with rectangular transoms or fanlights
- Center entry-hall floor plan
- Fireplaces
- Made of brick or wood
- Simple, classical detailing

Colonial Revival Style attributes originally missing from Centennial House include;

- Dormers
- Temple-like entrance: porticos topped by pediment

Circa 1992, Centennial House was remodeled and a new porch added subsequent to the move. A pediment style or low-pitched triangular gable entry porch was added in place of the circa 1925 shed roof porch in keeping with the Colonial Revival style.

Likely to yield information important in prehistory or history:

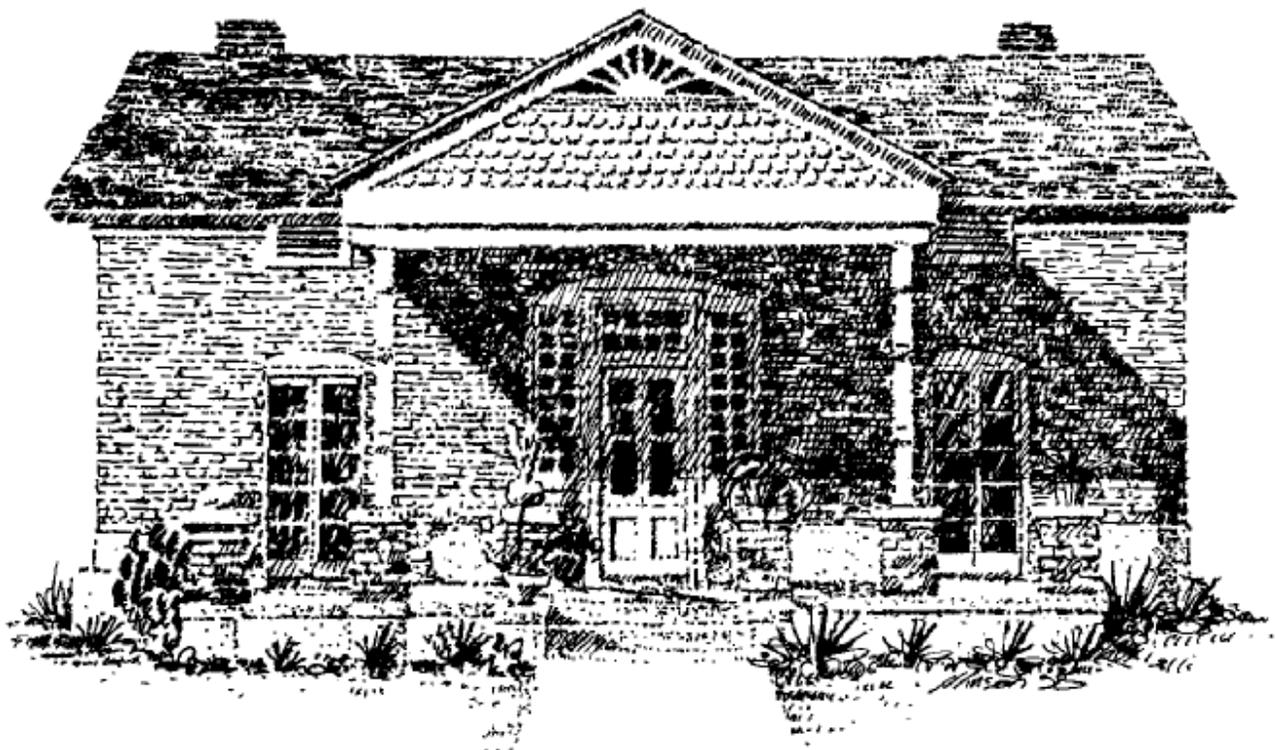
Centennial House is not located in an area considered to be archaeologically sensitive by the City of Tempe.

Summary

Built in 1888-89, Centennial House [the Sampson/Tupper House] is significant for its contribution to Tempe's architectural heritage as the oldest remaining brick residential building within the Multiple Resource Area.

As a last resort to demolition, pioneer preservationist Susan Harter financed moving the house to a lot owned by her family on West 3rd Street. The house was relocated in 1988, exactly one hundred years after the house had been was built. Susan Harter renamed it the Centennial House.

Centennial House, including changes and modifications to date, remains an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style of residential architecture popular at the time of construction. Changes, including change of location, contribute to the historic evolution of the house, which continues to be well maintained with a significant amount of its 1888-89 architectural integrity intact.



Significance

The Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance provides criteria for historic property designation at Section 14A-4 as follows.

Sec. 14A-4. Designation of landmarks, historic properties and historic districts.

(a) The following criteria are established for designation of an individual property, building, structure or archeological site:

- (1) It meets the criteria for listing on the Arizona or national register of historic places;
- (2) It is found to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character, resulting from:
 - a. A significant portion of it is at least fifty (50) years old; is reflective of the city's cultural, social, political or economic past; and is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history; or
 - b. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of an area of the city, due to a prominent location or singular physical feature; or
- (3) If it has achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years, it shall be considered eligible for designation as a landmark if it is an integral and critical part of an historic district or demonstrates exceptional individual importance by otherwise meeting or exceeding the criteria specified in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this subsection above. At such time as a landmark becomes fifty (50) years old, it will automatically be reclassified as an historic property.

HPO has revised the Staff Report on Centennial House designation to reflect eligibility under paragraph (a) criterion (3), the so-called "Landmark Provision" which applies if a property has achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years. In such cases, properties shall be considered eligible for designation as a landmark if it demonstrates exceptional individual importance by otherwise meeting or exceeding the criteria specified at either criterion (1) or (2) of Section 14A-4.

HPO submits that Centennial House demonstrates exceptional individual importance by possessing significant portions fifty (50) years old and that Centennial House is additionally reflective of the city's cultural, social, political or economic past and is associated with a person and events significant in Tempe history.

In accordance with the Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance, at such time as a landmark becomes fifty (50) years old, it will automatically be reclassified as an historic property.

Recommendations

The political and popular awareness created by Susan Harter in her tireless campaign for historic preservation has resulted in numerous achievements; however, it is the continued existence of Centennial House that provides the most tangible evidence of the depth of her commitment to this cause.

Staff recommends that the Tempe Historic Preservation Commission approve the nomination and recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council that Centennial House be designated as Tempe Historic Property (#28) and that Historic Overlay Zoning be applied to the property.



REFERENCES:

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- Janus Associates, 1983 *Tempe Historic Property Survey: and multiple resource area nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*. Tempe Historical Society.
- Linoff, Vic, 1988 photographs used by permission from collections of *Those Were The Days* negative series 24 and 28.
- Patterson, Ann, 1989 "History at Stake: 'Joan of Arc' leads crusade for Tempe homes", in *Arizona Republic Sun Living* 01/22/1989.
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- Tempe Historical Museum, 1987
Historic photograph THM1987.1.68 from the Photographs and Archives collections of the Tempe Historical Museum.
- Vinson, Mark, 2004 Sketch of the Sampson Tupper (Centennial) House - image also screened as background on the Susan Harter Award.

ATTACHMENTS:

application
vicinity map
site plan
photographs