

Hayden Flour Mill Archaeology Update

In the spring of 2006, the city of Tempe hired Archaeological Consulting Services, Ltd (ACS) to conduct a testing project at the historic Hayden Flour Mill, one of Tempe's most valued landmarks. The project was well underway when the city approved Avenue Communities to redevelop the site. ACS' project grew to include consultation with the developer to help insure that the historic resource will be sensitively preserved. The mill and, in time, the silos will be the centerpiece of the new development.

ACS historians delved into records preserved at the Tempe Historical Museum and other repositories. Historic photos and documents, and a thorough canvass of prior archaeological research in the area were used to develop a sound plan for archaeological testing and excavation, as well as to reconstruct the history of the property and the Hayden Flour Mill itself. In addition, a professional preservation architect, Don Ryden, AIA, has been conducting an assessment of the mill's construction and integrity and identifying preservation priorities. The developer has indicated that they intend nominate the historic mill to the Tempe and federal historic property registers.

In mid-July, archaeologists placed 35 test trenches in the study area, and carefully recorded information about archaeological remnants of historic structures on the property. They located the edge of the "calaboose" (a small 1890s jail) and a ca. 1920s-1960s gas station. They recorded the historic Phoenix & Eastern Railroad tracks between the mill and silos. A predictable find was a length of stone wall to the north of the complex that appears in historic photos. In some instances, only foundations or footings of former buildings remained. Concrete warehouse pads from the mid-20th century were documented and removed to allow investigation beneath them. Several prehistoric features, including two Hohokam canals, were found. At the close of testing, ACS submitted a report of its preliminary findings to the City of Tempe, including a proposal for Phase 2 data recovery excavations.

ACS returned to the field in November to investigate the key features that were identified during testing and some additional areas that were not previously accessible due to historic concrete at ground level. Several techniques were employed by the crew, including backhoe trenching, stripping and fill removal, and hand-excavated units within features. Soil removed from features was screened, with the exception of midden (trash) deposits and historic fill which were scientifically sampled.

A number of exciting discoveries were made during the three weeks of excavation. Along the east side of the mill building, the field crew uncovered several walls that had directed water from the Hayden Canal in order power the machinery before electricity was available. Foundation walls for the original adobe mill building were also discovered, which demonstrated that the water which originally powered the mill had flowed inside the building along its eastern wall.

ACS archaeologists learned that the foundation of the calaboose was more intact than had been expected. Historic coins were uncovered that could help to corroborate the structure's late 19th to early 20th century date with information on historic maps. Limited work (due to environmental safety issues) was done at the historic gas station on the south end of the site.

On the north side of the mill building, more prehistoric features were examined and a new feature – a thermal pit— was uncovered. Prehistoric canals and a possible reservoir were analyzed in greater detail. The removal of the mid-20th century concrete pads from the A & Sack and the Sack Storage buildings that were uncovered during the Testing phase allowed archaeologists to expose a historic trash dump beneath them. And closer to the historic building, archaeologists exposed a historic stone arch some 24 feet below ground where the Hayden canal exited the mill. Several rock-and-mortar and masonry foundations and walls were discovered on the north side of the building: these appear to correlate with the original, adobe Hayden Flour Mill. ACS' preliminary report concludes that "the features investigated during Phase 2 data recovery cover all aspects of the history of the mill site, and have provided important data useful for understanding the prehistoric use of the property and the changes that occurred to the flour mill from the late 1800s to the 1950s."

Now that the archaeological fieldwork is complete, analysis of the data recovered during excavation is underway at ACS' office in Tempe. Activities include examination of the artifacts recovered and analysis of more than 150 samples taken from different features. Study of the equipment that currently remains in the mill was recently

completed, as has structural and integrity analyses of the building by the historic archaeologist. In the year ahead, ACS will continue to gather archival information and also has begun to acquire oral histories from individuals who were once involved with the mill. The final report, including a historic preservation plan, is due in April, 2008.

Photos to accompany ACS update for Tempe website, March 16, 2007

Photos by ACS.

For information, please contact Victoria Vargas (480.894.5477) or Susan Shaffer Nahmias (480.496.0978)

PHOTO 1



Caption Photo 1: Several alignments of the Hayden Canal head race and diversion ditch as viewed from the roof of the mill. The stone walls mark the earliest canal that was associated with the adobe building; the concrete edges mark later changes.

Photo 2



Caption for Photo 2: The foundation of the calaboose (jail) after excavation was complete.

PHOTO 3:



Caption Photo 3: A view of the stone arch that archaeologists uncovered during excavation.

PHOTO 4:



Photo 4 caption: ACS historic archaeologist Tom Jones at work on the site.