

# **Historic Significance and Integrity Assessment Report for Listing Scottsdale Grammar School on the Scottsdale Historic Register**

**Scottsdale Grammar School**  
7333 Scottsdale Mall, Scottsdale, Arizona  
Scottsdale Historic Register No. SHR-00-1  
Resolution No. 5550

## **Background**

In July of 1999 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 5324 and Ordinance No. 3242 which established the Scottsdale Historic Register, the City's official list of historic and archaeological resources with special significance in the United States, Arizona and Scottsdale history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. The first group of properties to be considered for designation were those properties that had previously received HP overlay zoning under an earlier City Historic Preservation (HP) program. The building popularly known as the "Little Red School House" was zoned HP on February 1, 1983 in case 9-Z-83. It is a City-owned property currently housing the offices and collections of the Scottsdale Historic Society.

## **Historic Context: Early Town Building, 1908 – 1933**

Scottsdale's historic development followed a pattern typically found in Western communities. Like other Arizona cities and towns, the provision of a reliable water supply was critical to sustaining the community's viability after its initial settlement in the late 1800s. With the construction of Granite Reef Dam in 1908, followed by Roosevelt Dam in 1911, Scottsdale shared in the population boom that transformed the Salt River Valley. A main line rail connection to the national railway system completed into the Valley in 1924 provided further impetus for growth and development. During this period Scottsdale grew slowly, but steadily, as a small market town principally providing services for families involved in agricultural pursuits.

Within the core of the original Scottsdale town site are several extant buildings that represent this early period of the community's development. The dates of their construction, the types of buildings, their uses as well as their locations illustrate the traditional pattern of community development which occurred in Scottsdale, Arizona and throughout the nation in the early twentieth century.

## **Description**

The schoolhouse is a one-story red brick building with a full basement set upon a concrete base. The building faced Main Street on a lot about 80' square that is now part of a larger 3.55-acre City-owned Scottsdale Mall property, parcel 130-23-217.

It is laid out in a symmetrical plan with a hipped roof over the main body of the building and gabled roofs over the two projecting bays at each end of the building. The roof is sheathed with concrete tiles intended to emulate wood shingles and is trimmed with simple wood fascia. The school building features stylistic treatments found in the architecture of both Victorian Cottages and Bungalows. The gable ends of the projecting bays are decorated with wooden forms of half arches divided into square panels, some with round openings for ventilation. The primary facade on the north face contains a central entry door with sidelights capped with a clerestory window and a concrete lintel. Two pairs of large, rectangular double hung wood windows with concrete lintels and sills flank the entrance. The east and west facades contain four double hung wood windows set to the south of the elevation. The rear facade has two sets of three double-hung wood windows. The steps on the north facade were eliminated when the Scottsdale Mall replaced Main Street with a raised pedestrian oriented mall at the first floor level.

### **History**

On May 1, 1909 the residents of the growing community of Scottsdale held a bond election to provide funding for the construction of a new school building to replace the wooden, one room schoolhouse that originally served the town. At this point in time the school age population had grown to 32 children. Further, town founder, Winfield Scott had urged the construction a substantial brick building to provide testimony of Scottsdale's permanence as a community and stimulate its continued growth. The election passed without a contrary vote.

On August 7, 1909 the trustees of the Scottsdale School district selected A. H. Coats to prepare the plans and specifications for the new school and issued a call for bids for its construction. The construction contract was awarded to C.H. Kunselman for the amount of \$4526. Mr. Kunselman sublet the contact to George Amsier of Phoenix. E.O Brown was in charge of excavating for the structure. The *Arizona Republican* reported regularly on the building's progress throughout the following months. The architect and School Board accepted the building on January 13, 1910 and all bills related to its construction were paid. Plans were made for a picnic to dedicate the building on February 19, 1910. However, on February 17<sup>th</sup> those plans were postponed, according to a 2/19/10 article in the *Arizona Republican*, "until the weather is more settled and ranch work is not so pressing. Several parties concerned in the welfare of the school are just finishing up their crops and any delay at this time of the year might be critical for crops. It was thought that all concerned would enjoy the picnic more when we feel we have a little time to spare."

Constructed with bricks from Phoenix and sand and gravel hauled from the Salt River bed, the handsome building was dedicated with great fanfare in an occasion marked by "speech-making and oratory." "NEW SCHOOL HOUSE SCOTTSDALE'S PRIDE' announced the *Arizona Republican* in a February 27, 1910 article on the building's dedication. As was predicted in the article, the dedication "marked the beginning of the usefulness of a fine school building." It was the hub of community activities for decades. When the community's growth dictated the construction of an even larger elementary school in 1928, the school was converted to the Coronado School. It held first to third grade classes for Mexican-American students who had not yet mastered English. It also became an important community center for the Scottsdale's Hispanic population during this time.

The building subsequently housed a number of municipal functions, serving as the town hall, justice of the peace court and city library. In the late 1906s the building was threatened with demolition as plans moved forward on the downtown redevelopment efforts. Community-wide support saved the building and it was converted to the offices for the Scottsdale Chamber of Commerce for which it was used several decades. In 1992 it became the Scottsdale Historical Museum and headquarters for the Scottsdale Historical Society, who led the fight to preserve the building.

### **Significance**

The first Scottsdale Grammar School is historically significant as one of the initial buildings of the community dating from the its earliest period of its development. It was constructed in response to the growing number of families with children in and around Scottsdale in the first decade of the century. The willingness of the local citizenry, which for the most part relied upon the uncertainty of agricultural production for their livelihood, to provide funding for its substantial construction tangibly illustrates the pride and aspirations that they had for their community.

Architecturally the building is significant as one of the few remaining examples of Victorian styling within Scottsdale. Its eclectic mix of Victorian and Bungalow stylistic treatments also is typical of building within Arizona during this time.