

**Sunnyslope Rock Garden  
Grover Cleveland Thompson Museum  
10023 North 13th Place  
Phoenix, AZ 85020**

July 31, 1992

Dear Seymour,

I've put together this summary of recent events which have taken place concerning the Garden. If sympathy for the underdog is effective, this might be useful, don't you think? At least my side is presented. There are a couple more points for me to make, but then you need a few in reserve.

I can hardly believe that school will start in three weeks!

In February, 1992 the Sunnyslope Rock Garden was brought into a process called "determination of eligibility". At that time I presented the Phoenix Commission on Historic Preservation a letter from Seymour Rosen, Director of S. P. A. C. E. S. (Saving Arts and Cultural Environments). His organization is based in Los Angeles and Mr. Rosen has spent the last thirty years locating sites all over the United States and the world, advocating for their preservation. The commission's response to his letter (copy enclosed) was that it was meaningless to them because they were not familiar with the sites he mentioned.

My response was to create a portfolio with the story about each site along with pictures and the status and the date of recognition. This ended up being an eighty-three page binder which also held letters of support for the Garden, copies of which are also enclosed.

I had submitted my materials to the commission early in May, and the next meeting was not scheduled until June 8th. I had asked Deborah Abele if there were any other kinds of reports needed to enable the commission to make an informed decision. Her answer was that I had adequately responded to their questions.

Although a reception was prepared for the members of the commission at the Sunnyslope Rock Garden, none attended and unfortunately, they were forced to make a decision about the value of the Garden without the benefit of having seen it first-hand.

On June 8th they decided in a three to two vote that the Garden is not eligible for consideration for historic status. I have attached a summary of the arguments used against the Garden. I feel that their line of reasoning is faulty and the standards they applied to the Garden are not generally applied to sites in Phoenix.

I would appreciate your opinion.

Sincerely,

*Marion*

Marion Blake

Statement by Marion Blake.

June 8, 1992 Meeting of the Commission on Historic Preservation  
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS PRESENTED:

1. The Sunnyslope Rock Garden is not fifty years old.
  2. According to the Gasowski letter, it is established that there is a site in France which is of greater stature than the Sunnyslope Rock Garden.
  3. It is possible to officially recognize and grant historic status to the Sunnyslope Rock Garden only after fifty years have passed from the time it was first recognized.
  4. None of the sites listed by Seymour Rosen in his December, 1991 letter were recognized before they were fifty years old.
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Responses to these issues:

1. Although the Garden is not yet 50 years old, it can be recognized prior to that date because it is an outstanding example in it's genre.
2. We are discussing historic status in the City of Phoenix. It is inappropriate to insist upon a world standard of greatness when other sites, already recognized in Phoenix do not meet such a standard.
3. More information is needed on this standard. Describe the initial form of recognition. Has this standard been applied elsewhere?

I do appreciate the thrust of this question; How does one date an effort which has taken nearly a quarter of a century to complete? I do not believe that the artist or his work should be penalized because of the artist's tenacity and insistance upon doing every aspect himself. Because of the fine quality of the work, the Sunnyslope Rock Garden should be recognized as an outstanding example of work in it's genre.

4. Although I do not know specifically the ages of the sites at the time they were recognized, my understanding from Seymour Rosen is that some of the sites were between twelve and fouteen years old when recognized. I will check again with Mr. Rosen. However, the age of the sites already recognized is not the question here. We are discussing the Sunnyslope Rock Garden and it's nomination to be recognized as an historic landmark within the City of Phoenix.

COMMENTARY:  
In general, I see the Commission on Historic Preservation to have been established for the purpose of fascilitating the preservation of landmarks in the City of Phoenix. I do not believe that there is a question as to the quality of the Sunnyslope Rock Garden. Grover Cleveland Thompson created a jewel! Experts in the field have written letters supporting recognition of the Garden. Over 500 citizens have signed petitions expressing their concern for the future of the Sunnyslope Rock Garden.

On June 8th, the Commission on Historic Preservation voted three to

that the Garden did not qualify for consideration as an historic site in the City of Phoenix. Many of these same members who voted against the Garden had never made the effort to visit the Garden although the owner had made the special effort by holding a reception for them. Strangely enough, Marion Blake was asked to compare the Sunnyslope Rock Garden with Louis Lee's Rock Garden. It was never explained why this line of questioning had any significance to the matter at hand.

Together with the four examples of argument presented at the meeting, I feel that the commission has done a disservice to the cause of the Sunnyslope Rock Garden.

As the owner and caretaker of the Garden, I have concern for it's future. I am interested in taking steps at this time which would guarantee increased protection for the Garden. I am only too aware that the Garden is a heartbeat away from being lost. My efforts are for those provisions which will allow the Garden to become fifty years old.

If it is not possible to recognize the Garden at this time, I urge the Office on Historic Preservation to create a secondary level of recognition which would put a site such as the Garden on track for recognition. Such a process would be a benefit to many sites which otherwise would be lost. This process would guarantee continued enrichment of the City through facilitated preservation of its landmarks.

I must make one further point: On July 14th Deborah Abele sent me a packet containing resources and guidelines which would have been helpful if I had received them prior to my meetings with the commission, which commenced in February, 1992. It is unfortunate that I had not been made aware of these resources at an earlier date.

Therefore I request two actions on the part of the City of Phoenix: First, the Sunnyslope Rock Garden to receive official recognition. And Second, the demapping of the frontage on the East side of North Thirteenth Place between Cinnabar and Ceryl Drive. I have been assured by several city officials that there is no plan to widen the street and that the only likelihood that the street might be widened would be in the case of an Improvement District, which requires the vote of those in the immediate area. If the city does not plan to widen the street, they should have no problem returning the frontage. This action would remove the threat for the Sunnyslope Rock Garden of losing one whole section of Art Work!