



Board Agenda Item 54

DATE: December 11, 2018

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Kelley Worman-Landano, County Librarian
Nick Yovino, Chair, Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission

SUBJECT: Historic Place - Palm Bluffs Water Tower

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1. Approve designation and placement of the Palm Bluffs Water Tower on the County's Register of Historic Places; and**
- 2. Authorize the Chairman to execute the certificate for a Historic Place.**

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions, which will allow the Palm Bluffs Water Tower to be placed on the County's List of Historic Places. The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission recommends historic and prehistoric sites and structures to be listed on the Fresno County's List of Historic Places. Approval by your Board encourages preservation of the County's history. This item pertains to a location in District Two.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Your Board could choose to not approve these actions, which would result in the Palm Bluffs Water Tower not being placed on the County's Register of Historic Places at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions.

DISCUSSION:

The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission, with the support of the Mehmet and Cathy Noyan Living Trust, recommend your Board approve the application to add the Palm Bluffs Water Tower to the County's List of Historic Places. The inclusion of this structure may add to local public knowledge and boost area interest for recognition, preservation, and study.

The Water Tower is all that currently remains on the site of a once sprawling collection of buildings. The Water Tower has been a landmark for North Fresno since its construction and marks the site of many significant events in local and national history.

The Sugar Pine Lumber Company was in operation from 1921 until 1933 using some of the most modern sawmill and logging equipment at the time. The mill complex was completed in June 1923. The water tower was designed to support the fire suppression needs for the mill. At its peak, the company produced an average of 100 million board-feet of lumber annually. Unfortunately the operation lost money from its inception and was adjudged bankrupt on June 13, 1933. After bankruptcy, the entire site was purchased by

the Pinedale Compress and Warehouse Company which used it as a storage facility.

After the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, all persons with Japanese ancestry were ordered relocated from the West Coast of the United States. The Army officially acquired the site on March 24, 1942 and designated the location as the Pinedale Assembly Center. At the time of acquisition, there were 21 warehouses and 11 other buildings which had been used to store cotton, sugar, and machinery. Over the next 3 months, from May 7 to July 23, 1942, the Pinedale Assembly Center processed and temporarily housed a total of 4,823 internees, with a maximum of 4,792 housed at the site at one time. The internees were from Sacramento and El Dorado Counties as well as Oregon and Washington State. Ten barracks blocks were constructed for the internees; a separate block was built for military police and administration.

On August 1, 1942, after all internees were relocated to more long-term housing elsewhere, the site was re-designated as Camp Pinedale, and became home to the Western Signal Aviation Unit Training Center, which began receiving soldiers selected for training. The Training Center comprised approximately 380 acres. By the end of World War II, 25,000 soldiers had been trained at the Camp as electronics specialists and for allied army assignments as clerks, truck drivers, chemical warfare specialists, camouflage specialists, ordnance technicians, and cooks.

In July of 1944, Camp Pinedale also became the home of the 840th Army Air Forces (AAF) Specialized Depot. The Depot comprised an additional 190 acres for storage, salvage, and a reconditioning depot that was used by the Air Service Command to store clothing, parachutes, equipment, office supplies, and salvage material. The Camp also included a rifle range and its own railroad facilities.

After the war, from June to December 1946, Camp Pinedale's operations were rapidly drawing to a close. Effective December 3, 1946, approximately 380 acres of the installation were declared surplus. The camp was deactivated in February 1947, when the Corps of Engineers assumed custody of the base and began preparations for the disposal of the post's buildings and other installations. The remaining 190 acres occupied by the 840th AAF Specialized Depot were declared surplus effective March 1, 1947. Finally, in October of 1947, the property reverted to its previous owner, the Pinedale Compress and Warehouse Company. Four years later it was sold to the California Cotton Cooperative Association Ltd.

The Water Tower is all that remains of the site and is currently used as a landmark and serves as a cell tower. There is the Remembrance Plaza just east of the water tower on Alluvial Ave. that is open to the public which includes benches and a fountain and much of the history of the area is displayed there on storyboards.

The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission first reviewed information on this structure during its May 11, 2017 meeting. The item was tabled for further research and application development. The application was brought forth and needed revisions discussed during the March 8 and May 17, 2018 meetings. During the September 13, 2018 meeting, the Commission reviewed a final application and unanimously voted to recommend that the structure be listed on the Fresno County's List of Historic Places.

OTHER REVIEWING AGENCIES:

Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Historic Place Certificate

CAO ANALYST:

Samantha Buck