The Garfield Historic District contains primarily modest bungalows and Period Revival style homes but it also includes a noteworthy concentration of older turn-of-the-century structures, including the largest concentration of “Pyramid Cottages” in Phoenix. The neighborhood provides a sampling of architectural styles from the earliest vernacular homes in Phoenix to the early Ranch-style homes that would become prevalent following World War II.

Garfield was developed from 1883 to 1955. The neighborhood was one of the first additions to the original Phoenix townsite. It is also an excellent example of a “streetcar subdivision,” where residential development was directly related to the establishment of a streetcar line through the neighborhood.

Before becoming a residential area, the Garfield Historic District was part of an extensive agricultural tract. The area was farmed by John T. Dennis, a pioneer settler who emigrated from Ohio in 1868. As Phoenix grew, Dennis saw the value of his land for future residential development. The original subdivision was platted with a rectilinear street grid clearly based on the original townsit layout. The Dennis Addition was recorded with Maricopa County on Nov. 16, 1883, and was annexed into Phoenix in 1899.

Many municipal improvements stimulated development in the Dennis Addition during the late 1800s. The first city well and pumping plant was located on a block of land at the northeast corner of 9th and Van Buren streets. One vernacular brick building related to the pumping station is still standing at the northwest corner of Verde Park near the corner of 9th and Polk streets. The Phoenix Street Railway built the first powerhouse just to the west of the pumping plant. In 1895, the Phoenix Street Railway extended their streetcar line through the Dennis Addition. Called the Brill Line, it ran along Pierce Street to 10th Street and then north to the Brill Addition, which was located just north of the Dennis Addition. Both Dennis and Frederick Brill, the owner of the Brill Addition, were investors in the extension of the line. Virtually all of the early streetcar lines were backed by large landholders in order to promote land sales in the new subdivisions. The Dennis Addition itself was subdivided repeatedly in the following decades.

The growth of the neighborhood as a solid residential area in the 1920s encouraged the establishment of local businesses and other institutions. Six of the seven churches located in the Garfield neighborhood were constructed between 1925 and 1931. Commercial establishments and small businesses also flourished at that time, particularly at the corner of 10th and Pierce streets where the streetcar line turned north.
Ownership within designated historic districts in the city of Phoenix carries with it both benefits and responsibilities. Exterior modifications and new development are subject to design review and approval through the Historic Preservation Office before permits can be issued. The Office also provides technical assistance to historic property owners and administers grants, when funds are available, for the preservation of historic properties.

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