

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin,

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: El Dorado Lodge

Other names/site number: Stone Ashley; Mountain Oyster Club

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 6400 E. El Dorado Circle

City or town: Tucson State: AZ County: Pima

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

	October 17, 2023
<hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<u>State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks and Trails</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>Title:</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s).
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1 (landscaping)</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>1 (sculpture)</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling  
DOMESTIC: Hotel  
COMMERCE: Restaurant  
SOCIAL: Clubhouse

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Clubhouse  
COMMERCE: Restaurant  
COMMERCE: Business  
RECREATION/CULTURE: Works of Art  
RECREATION/CULTURE: Monument/Marker  
LANDSCAPE: Gardens/Plaza

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals

Other: Italian Renaissance (includes Landscape Design)

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Custom Brick

Native Stone

Roof: Flat Roof on Wood Framing

Other:

Windows: Wood and Steel Sash; Glass

Doors: Wood (Includes Custom Design Front Door-1932)

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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Figure. 1. Main Entrance of Mountain Oyster Club (current name) / Stone Ashley (1936-1947) / El Dorado Lodge (1948-1972). Statue “The Cowboy” in front.

AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0001

### SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

El Dorado Lodge is the preferred historic name for the residence originally known as Stone Ashley and the social club now known as the Mountain Oyster Club, that name being used for the majority of the property’s period of significance and reflecting its primary historic association. El Dorado Lodge is a large, 3-story building located on nearly four landscaped acres. The original 2-story residence was designed by architect Grosvenor Atterbury and constructed between 1934 and 1936 by M.M. Sundt Construction Company. The architectural style is Italian Renaissance Revival with complementary landscaping including the entry drive lined by Italian Cypress trees. It was constructed of local native fieldstone and hand-hewn brick (Figure 1). A partial third story was added when the property became a social club, El Dorado Lodge, in 1949. The property includes two additional contributing buildings: the original Bathhouse (1934) and the B Building also added during the conversion to the lodge (1949). Three non-contributing structures, A Building (1982) and two parking pavilions (1982), and the majority of the parking lots are not included in the nominated parcel. In addition to the main building, there are 5,928 square feet of terraced patios on the southern and western sides with views of the Rincon and Santa Catalina Mountain ranges to the north and east. The property retains a high level of integrity conveying both the significance of its original architectural character and its function as an important social venue in Tucson (see Section 8, Statement of Significance).

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### Location and Setting

The El Dorado Lodge, now the Mountain Oyster Club, is sited on 3.9834 acres on the eastern edge of midtown Tucson, Arizona (Figure 2). It is located at 6400 East El Dorado Circle, one block northeast of the major intersection of Speedway Boulevard and Wilmot Road. Originally set in open desert in the 1930s, the surrounding area has since urbanized. Neighboring midtown properties consist of one-story commercial businesses, two-story residential complexes and several three-story office buildings, including the El Dorado Health Complex, a small community-based medical facility, all of which are on what was originally part of the historic parcel (Figure 3). The National Register-listed Harold Bell Wright Estates Historic District, a residential neighborhood developed after 1950, is located to the south of Speedway Blvd.

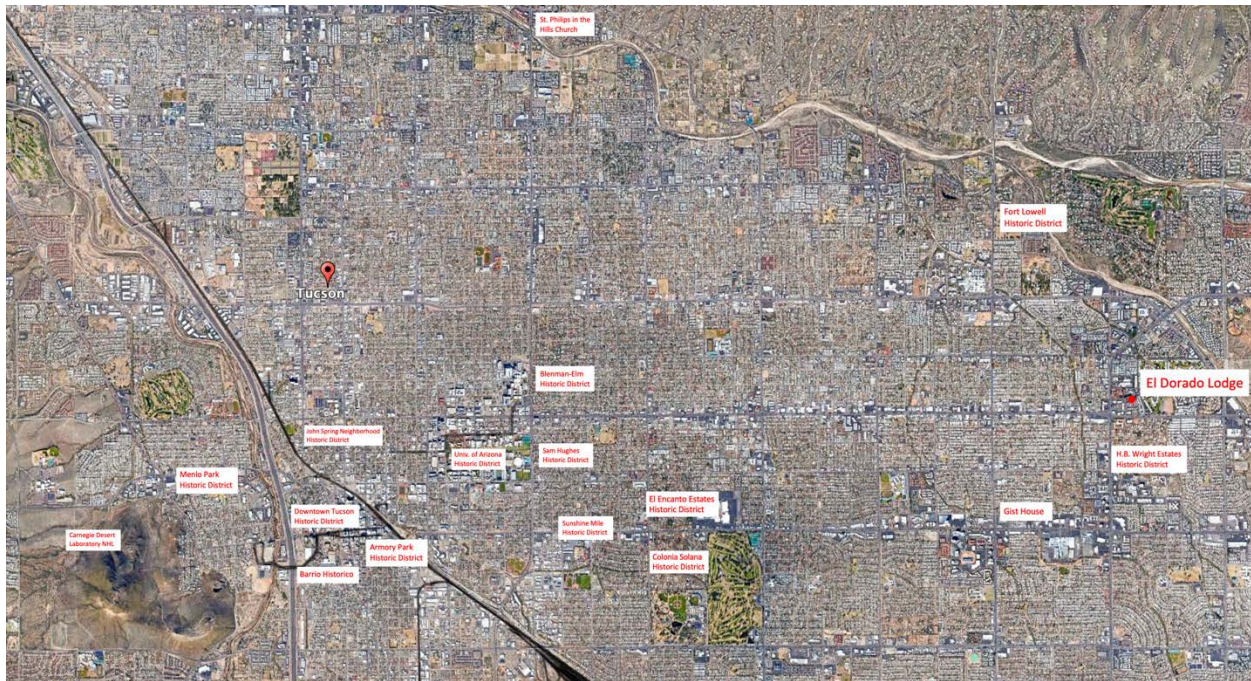


Figure 2. El Dorado Lodge in relation to notable National Register-listed properties in Tucson. Source: Google Earth, 2023.

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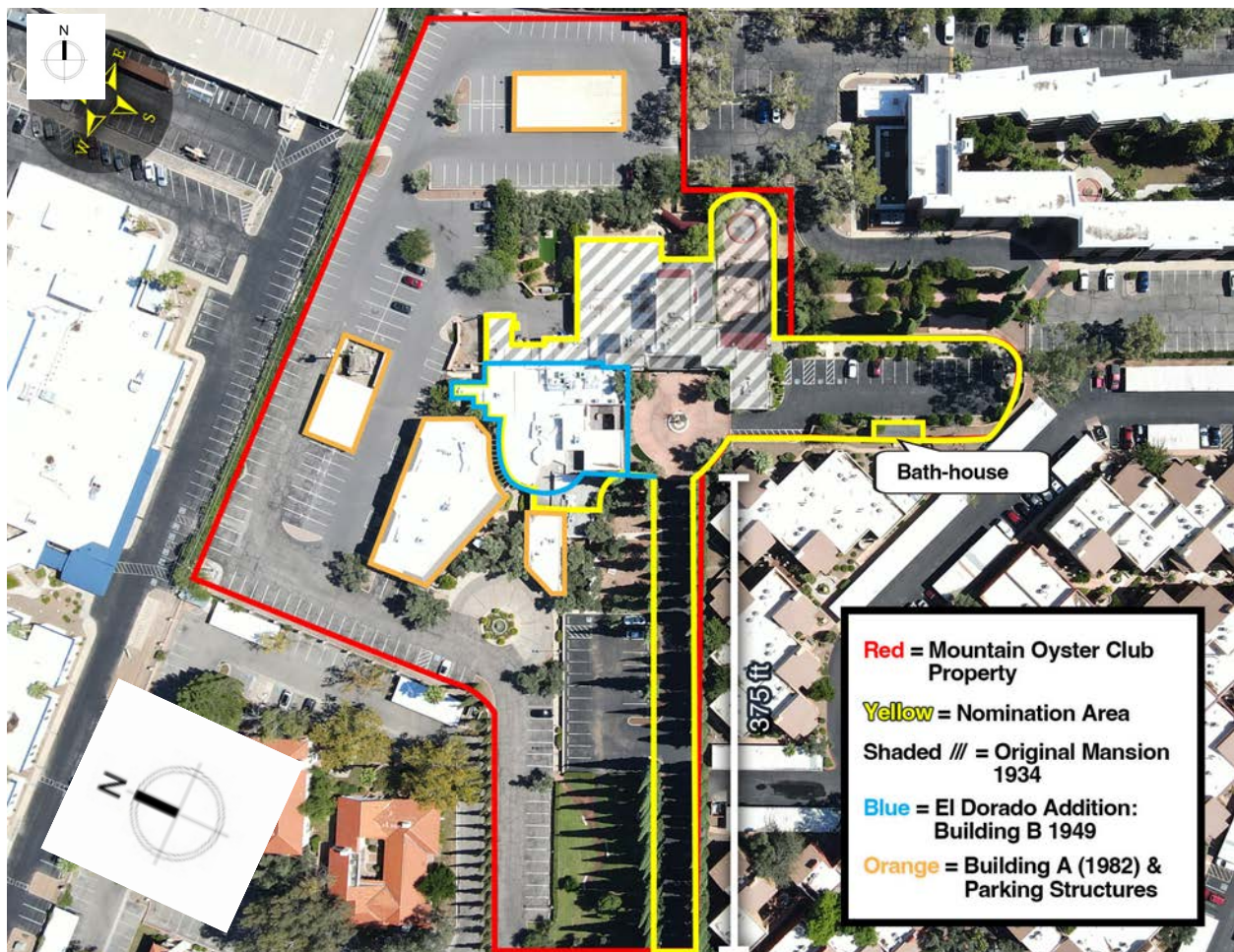


Figure 3. Aerial perspective overlaid with outline of Mountain Oyster Club property and nominated area. Source: Google Earth, 2023.

### Materials and Exterior Form

El Dorado Lodge is designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival Style, one of the historically-inspired motifs of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Period Revival movement. The three-story front façade features a three-arched loggia and covered second-story porch facing the historic landscaped entry drive. It is constructed of native fieldstone and hand-hewn brick arranged in horizontal bands of alternating stone and brick with concrete grout which creates a rectilinear exterior definition. The bands are finished at each intersection of the doors, windows and walls with caps of brick trim and large decorative pieces of fieldstone. The masonry arrangement appears from a distance as if the walls were formed in full story “blocks.” Both arched picture windows and iron casement windows with heavy wooden lintels are featured throughout the structure’s eastern exterior walls while both rectangular and arched picture windows enhance the southern and western exterior walls, providing tremendous visual access to the surrounding landscape and the Rincon and Santa Catalina Mountain ranges in the distance. The flat roof, present over all three stories of the building, creates a simple but imposing appearance of the

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residence as it rises from the desert. Significant features include the handmade heavy wooden door with colored glass panels at the Main Entry, the second story porch above the entrance on the eastern face of the building, and the decorative iron gates and grilles that complement the ironwork in the terrace walls.

The distinctive architectural attributes of El Dorado Lodge have been well preserved. The primary building, a former residence, is in its original condition as are the two contributing buildings, the Bathhouse and the B Building. The original floor plans of the mansion, designed in the style of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival of Italian Renaissance, have been largely unaltered. The exteriors of both of the contributing buildings exist in their original condition except where raised by a third story in 1949.

The main entry is within a portico containing three arches, the middle of which is the location of the heavy, hand-crafted wood entry door with decorative leaded glass (Figure 4). The portico runs the length of the building's eastern exposure. The portico and arches offer a dramatic entry and shady respite from the Southwestern sun.

A circular planter located at the east end of the cypress-lined entry drive, in front of the main entry door, contains a non-contributing life-size bronze statue by Tucson sculptor Buck McCain. In addition to the original decorative wrought iron light fixtures on the exterior of the mansion, ironwork creates the super structures for the fountains and fills the arches in the terraced garden walls of a desert playground created to enhance the southern and western exposures. The statue does not date to the period of significance and is classified as non-contributing.

South of the main entrance, access is given to the southern face of the mansion and a small parking lot where the Bathhouse is located (Figure 5). The original masonry walls and remainders of the grove of citrus and Italian Cypress trees surround the Bathhouse and perimeter of the parking lot's western wall.



Figure 4. Hand-hewn Main Entry door of wood, iron and colored glass.

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A wrought iron gate at the western end of the southern façade provides access to the back patio entrance and the terraced western exposure of the mansion. The back patio entrance is located directly east of the Arizona Room and offers handicap accessibility into the mansion.

From the main entry circle, just twenty feet to the north on the driveway, a circle head wrought iron gate opens into a small courtyard entrance of the B Building that contains a fountain, a staircase to the offices on the second story and doors providing access to the office suites and the vacant dining area.

The entire building is set on a site that slopes down from the ground level at the western front to the back eastern face almost an entire story. There is a partial basement stairwell halfway through the building (as shown in the floor plan for the first story plan between the Main Dining Room (Rm. #4) and the Slate (Lower) Dining Room (Rm. #1). There are two exterior entry doors on the eastern basement perimeter into the space. There are two adjoining partial basement spaces that have separate entrances and are now used for storage, dating to the original 1934 construction period.



Figure 5. The Bathhouse, Eastern Perimeter of South Parking Lot. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0006



Figure 6: South Façade of the Mountain Oyster Club. Parking Lot. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0007

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### Interior Features

The building has 11,048 square feet of interior space on the First Story. Throughout the first floor's public use areas, the surface appearance of the interior walls is that of the hand-hewn masonry, which was created by the building's exterior construction materials. One wall in most rooms is smooth plastered, providing contrast to the stone and serving as display space for art. Referring to illustrations of current floor plans for the Mountain Oyster Club (Appendix), the public spaces within the Mountain Oyster Club are:

- 1 Lower (Slate) Dining Room
- 2 Foyer with Accessible Bathroom
- 3 Card Room
- 4 Main Dining Room/Adjoining Restrooms
- 5 Board Room
- 6 Bar
- 8 Arizona Room
- 9 Catalina Room
- 11 Covered Patio
- 13 Suite

Heavy wood beam ceilings are exposed throughout the large rooms: the Main Dining Room, the Lower (Slate) Dining Room, the Catalina Room, and the Bar as well as two smaller spaces which are the Foyer and the Boardroom. A dropped ceiling exists in the Foyer and the Card Room; a wood ceiling adorns the Arizona Room ceiling. The flooring is green Italian slate throughout the first story except in the carpeted Main Dining Room, Card Room and Board Room and the mesquite flooring in the Bar and Catalina Room. Three walls of the Catalina Room are dedicated to expansive arched picture windows and two walls of the Arizona Room are largely committed to floor to ceiling rectangular windows. Oversized fireplaces are prominent in the Main Dining Room, Lower (Slate) Dining Room and Card Room.

All areas of the first story are open to the members who belong to the Mountain Oyster Club, their guests and members of the public that have reserved event space within the building. Only the staff are allowed in the three rooms designated as service space.

Service space on the first story includes:

- 7 Kitchen and Staff Quarters
- 15 Staff Office
- 16 Dining Service Station

The Second Floor contains 2,008 square feet and the Third Floor is comprised of 2,460 square feet of interior space. The interior space of these two stories is dedicated to leased private offices and restrooms serving those offices. The offices have been carpeted and painted to the specifications of each tenant.

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The Ground Floor is accessed from three exterior doors in the back of the building which are not for public use. As the mansion was built on a site that has a slight slope, the three areas created by the concrete foundation of the building are accessed by the staff down a flight of stairs inside the mansion. The spaces are used for administrative offices, art storage and art workshop and general storage.

Used primarily for dining, dancing, social events and art exhibits, the interior of the First Floor is comprised of two large dining areas running parallel to each other through the mansion from the eastern lobby entrance west to the rear of the building. The smaller of the two dining rooms, the Lower (Slate) Dining Room, is south of the larger main dining area and sunken two steps below it. Masonry fireplaces are placed back-to-back in the two dining rooms. (Figures 7 and 8)

Adjoining the dining rooms on the southern and the western exposure of the mansion are two great Arizona Rooms, long narrow dining and meeting spaces with floor to ceiling windows through which the immediate desert and distant mountains are observed.

The flooring of the Foyer, Lower (Slate) Dining Room and southern Arizona Room, is green Italian slate. The Main Dining Room, Card Room and Board Room are carpeted in red and gold, with the logo of the Mountain Oyster Club. The largest of the two Arizona Rooms, the Catalina Room on the western exposure, and the Bar have flooring of mesquite wood.



Fig. 7: Main Dining Room with Arch Entrance to Slate (Lower) Dining Room.  
AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0010



Fig. 8: Slate (Lower) Dining Room with Original Italian Green Slate Floor.  
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Smaller adjoining rooms stretch across the eastern perimeter of the mansion adjoining the Foyer: the small square Card Room with an additional fireplace on the southern perimeter with views of both the main and rear patio entrances and a long Board Room on the northern perimeter which provides access to the kitchen from the dining rooms.

The kitchen and bar on the northern perimeter of the building are adjacent to the Main Dining Room and Kitchen.

The Bar's current location adjacent to the kitchen space was established to accommodate a restaurant tenant in the 1970s after the sale of the Lodge. It was re-located from the space currently occupied by the Board Room. (Figure 14)

The kitchen is located in the northwestern quadrant of the mansion. The culinary area expansion in 1949 allowed the Lodge to serve 150 guests at each sitting.

The Catalina Room is the second of the "Arizona Rooms" which runs the length of the back of the mansion from the northern perimeter of the bar to the southern edge of the Main Dining Room. It joins the other Arizona Room as it steps down after passing an arch entrance to a small beverage station. (Figure 15)



Figure 13. Front Lobby with Arch Doorways into Lower Dining Room.

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Figure 14. Northern Wall of Bar/Lounge with Mesquite Floor.

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Off the kitchen complex on the northwest corner of the mansion, stands the B Building which was attached to the original structure when Stone Ashley was converted to the El Dorado Lodge in the late 1940s. (Figure 16) Entry is through the arched wrought iron gates on the circular drive. The inner paved courtyard offers entry to two distinct spaces: the largest known as the Regency Room (B-120) with adjoining spaces (B-150 and B-350) attached to serve as offices, and another small office space on the opposite side of the entry patio (B-400). Only Suite B-400 is in current use as a commercial office.



Figure 15. Southern Half of the Catalina Room with Mesquite Floor.

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Figure 16. B Building of Mountain Oyster Club – Front façade with arched gate.

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Figure 17. Cypress-lined Entry Drive to Mountain Oyster Club.  
AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0002

### Landscaping and Site Features

The property, exhibiting characteristics of landscape design in the style of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Italian Renaissance Revival, maintains its original garden walls, terraces, steps, and fountains composed of the stone and brick materials used in constructing the residence. The primary site planning of the mansion employs a strong north-south axis to arrange the original building and landscaping. Major elements added to the landscape and a majority of the garden features added at the time of the mansion's site preparation in 1936 still persist, although the surrounding parcels have changed. The property was featured in the December 1938 issue of *House and Garden Magazine*, and in many articles in Tucson's *Arizona Daily Star* in the 1930's. The estate was an eclectic style of Italian Renaissance Revival design popular during the first quarter of the century. It fits solidly within a design and historic timeframe for the period.

The front of the building (eastern face) features a covered porch accessed by a stone set of steps and defined by three arches. The center arch leads up to the Main Entry of the mansion.

The southern and western exterior faces of the original residence are wrapped with 5,928 square feet of terraced patios that open the interior spaces to the precisely organized site. The wrought

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iron ornamentation at the building's windows and within the outer walls provides an exotic air to the streamlined exterior walls and windows.

The property is approached via a long driveway west from El Dorado Circle and Speedway Blvd. that is outlined by 50 Italian Cypress trees and ends in a circle drive, directly in front of the main entrance (Figure 17). The circular planter at the end of the drive contains a life-size bronze sculpture of "The Cowboy" by Tucson resident and Mountain Oyster Club member Buck McCain. The statue placed in the raised bed at the mansion's front entrance replaces the former annual vegetation. The non-contributing statue complements the Mountain Oyster Club's renowned collection of western art and artifacts and saves a good deal of precious water.

A wealth of the existing old trees when the parcel was landscaped (tamarack, cottonwood, mesquite and eucalyptus) and flowering desert vegetation including multiple varieties of cactus, is augmented by Atterbury's landscape design in keeping with the Italian Renaissance structure. Filled with old-world plantings that include cypress, citrus, and olive, Atterbury's design and tree plantings of those varieties as well as Japanese privet still accent the desert plantings surrounding the mansion as well as the two contributing buildings adjacent to it – the original Bathhouse and the B Building attached on the western wall of the mansion's kitchen. The non-contributing A Building beyond B Building is landscaped in an identical fashion.

The contributing Bathhouse sits on the eastern perimeter of the parking lot south of the entry circle, surrounded by the vestiges of one of several groves of citrus trees on the site. The rejuvenation of the citrus trees has occurred at least once due to a severe winter freeze in 1949 but never disturbed the mansion's landscape design.

On the Northeast corner of the residence, the contributing B Building is attached to the original mansion and heavily landscaped with flowering desert vines and olive trees. Entrance into the B Building is only available through the semi-circular wrought iron gate, centered in the B Building's south facing fieldstone and masonry wall. Inside the iron gate, a set of stone steps allows visitors access to the offices on the eastern half of the B Building. The non-contributing A Building lies beyond (west) the B Building and is landscaped in the same manner.

The original, contributing, Italianate landscaping design of the mansion's eastern exposure, behind the building, features two patios, upper and lower, with two fountains bubbling up against the upper back patio and east in the middle of the lower patio. A second level of patios and terraced walls of hand-hewn brick and native field stone step down from the western exposure's upper patio to the lower patio and desert floor. The tall, multi-tiered upper fountain remains a focal point of both patios and continues to wear its wrought iron crown. The lower fountain is at the center of a large circular brick pool which originally housed the water-cooling tower. The garden walls surrounding the entire area are, once again, constructed of the original masonry materials of the mansion with iron decorative inserts, as Atterbury originally placed them, and a wrought iron gate leading to the east parking lot.

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Important Renaissance site design elements present on this property which articulate the Italianate built structures are the water catchment in artificial pools and fountains, canals that connect basins and fountains, and geometric elements that include terraces, porticos, arches and other forms. Water was employed not only to provide evaporative cooling of the interior spaces of the mansion but also to create a calm and refreshing garden, drawing guests out to arid land that was previously uninviting. A guest for a night in November 1953, Eleanor Roosevelt, praised the El Dorado Lodge for its “beautiful Italian gardens...dropped right in the midst of the desert.”

### **Historic Development of El Dorado Lodge (Originally Stone Ashley)**

Stone Ashley served as a second residence for Detroit native Florence Pond from 1936 to 1947. Florence was the daughter of railroad attorney Ashley Pond, Sr. who purchased the 319-acre parcel for his daughter and engaged Grosvenor Atterbury to build her the first home of her own. She moved into the nearly completed Stone Ashley in 1935 at the age of 67 years old as the landscaping was commencing. Florence hosted many friends and community groups during the 10 years that she resided in the mansion. When she decided to move back to Detroit in 1947, the mansion was listed by Tucsonan Roy Drachman and sold in 1948 to three new owners from New York—Arthur Bittker, Jack Taub and David Kluger - and their wives. They had the intention of converting the property and mansion into a luxury Western guest lodge which would serve Jewish tourists.

The design of forty guest cottages to be built on the eastern perimeter of the property by Tucson architect Bernard J. Friedman was in keeping with the original exterior construction materials with rustic Southwestern interior features. Friedman was also charged to enhance the mansion itself with a third story, creating an apartment for the partners, the Bittkers. Further modifications to the residence were the enclosure of a covered patio that ran across the entire back of the mansion, now known as the Catalina Room, to serve as the primary dining room for guests. In addition, six bedrooms dedicated to the Stone Ashley mansion staff were refurbished for use as El Dorado Lodge guest rooms and 16 new rooms, created on the ground floor under the Catalina Room, became the staff quarters.

The El Dorado Lodge owners directed the development of several recreational attractions on the property for guest use: a solarium, horse stables, tennis and badminton courts, and a putting green, in addition to walking and bridle paths throughout the property which eventually provided access to the El Dorado Community golf course.

In 1968, the El Dorado Lodge was sold to three new owners—Tilton and Edna Newell and Rex Nicholson. The new owners did not change any exterior features of the mansion and continued to operate the El Dorado Lodge as its previous owners had. They did add a movie theater for Lodge guests located adjacent to the staff quarters on the ground floor, under the dining room. In 1972, the Lodge owners sold a parcel of the property for the construction of 40 homes to a Tucson-based developer, Marvin Volk of Marved Company which removed the 40 casitas added by Friedman from the parcel.



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### **Integrity of the Property**

In 1973, following the end of the period of significance, Marved developed a tract of 40 homes and several commercial enterprises on the property that were no longer a part of the El Dorado Lodge parcel. No account has been published detailing the demise of the recreational attractions related to the Lodge but the stables, walking paths and other attractions were removed by Marved along with the string of 40 casitas.

During the same period in 1973, following the end of the period of significance, Allan and Midge Elias purchased the remaining piece of the El Dorado property, including the Stone Ashley mansion, making some exterior modifications to accommodate their intention to create several intimate dining establishments. The Eliases:

- Removed the swimming pool on the south side of the El Dorado Lodge,
- Replaced the pool with a parking lot,
- Removed the iron cool tower in the back patio,
- Filled in and paved over the canal that carried water to and from the building, and
- Installed a modern HVAC in the mansion.

The El Dorado Lodge property that the Eliases purchased still included several restaurants, one of which was the Regency Room, when it changed ownership in 1975. Under their ownership, the Golden Bee and the Regency Room were refurbished, as well as the Palm Court Restaurant in the mansion.

Jerome Shull and Associates, a Tucson firm, purchased the parcel from the Eliases in 1975. In 1978, a fire destroyed the Regency Room in the B Building. The rest of the building continued to serve as offices leased to a variety of tenants.

In 1979, the mansion was leased to a Tucson restaurateur of note and became the site of four dining rooms as well as the Camelot Lounge. Upgrades to refresh the new spaces included the removal of paint from the ceiling beams as well the acoustic ceiling tile. Restoration of the fireplaces and green slate floor returned those spaces to their original condition. The restaurant became a modern French restaurant in 1998, continuing to do business as such until 2002.

The Mountain Oyster Club purchased the property in 2003. No modifications to the mansion's exterior were made except for the installation of outdoor lighting and a handicap-accessible ramp in the back garden (see attached image) where an outdoor staircase had existed.

Interior alterations to the building under the Mountain Oyster ownership include a handicap-accessible bathroom in the front hall, plumbing upgrades, kitchen reorganization and a current remodel in the Suite on the back patio. The Regency Room has never been renovated or used as a public space under the Mountain Oyster Club's ownership. All but one of the rental offices is occupied by outside entities.

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Two statues were placed on the grounds by the Mountain Oyster Club—the Buck McCain bronze sculpture, “The Cowboy” in the island adjacent the Main Entry and a historic monument on the back lawn, outside of the back wall on the northwest corner of the lawn. These are classified as noncontributing objects.

### **Impact of Building Alterations**

The alterations made by the Eliases in 1973 consisted of removal of the pool and installation of a modern HVAC system for the mansion as the property. The area which had held the swimming pool was paved for a parking lot for the commercial eateries and offices on the property, including handicap parking.

The installation of a modern heating and cooling system in the mansion was necessary to prepare the building for dining clientele and office workers. As the water-cooling system had become obsolete, a central HVAC replaced it. The fountains remained operational and a vital part of the site. The canal connecting the two fountains was filled in and covered with pavers to create an outside patio for outdoor events.

In 2003, as the Mountain Oyster Club assumed ownership of the mansion and the nearly four acres on which it was sited, no exterior modifications were made except to convert an outdoor staircase that existed on the southern border of the anterior gardens between the upper patio and lower patio to a handicap-accessible ramp with a hand railing. A handicap-accessible bathroom was added inside at the same time, per local building requirements. As a good percentage of the Mountain Oyster Club’s membership and guests are age 65 and older, the club could not have operated without either of them.

### **ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN OYSTER CLUB**

The Mountain Oyster Club opened for business November 1, 1948, in the basement of the Santa Rita Hotel in downtown Tucson, a cantina formerly known as “The Passion Pit.” The club was formed by a group of ranchers, cowboys, racehorse owners and polo players looking for a casual meeting place when they came to town, in contrast to the stuffy business club downtown. The club was soon relocated to the nearby Pioneer Hotel but was forced to find a new location ten years later when the Pioneer Hotel burned. After extensive renovations, in November of 1975, the club reopened in the leased historic Jácome home at the corner of Stone and Franklin. The location was the home of the Mountain Oyster Club for the next 30 years. In 2003, faced with a lease renewal, the Club looked for a permanent location and purchased its current home, the former El Dorado Lodge.

The Mountain Oyster Club prides itself in holding true to its rich Southwestern heritage. Many of the original “Los Viejos” have passed away, but the M.O. Club has attracted a colorful array of westerners that observe the Club’s traditions. These customs include recognizing the traditions of the “Old Pueblo”, welcoming good old boys in the bar

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who are willing to share a story or two, wearing western hats inside (but only in the bar), wearing boots and blue jeans throughout the Club and parking one's pickup or stock truck outside. Hallmark decorations include the woven carpet (featuring the Club's logo) as well as the bar's prominent display of the motto ***cerveza y huevos para todos***. Changing times are dealt with by applying swift justice, as those who allow their cell phones to ring are required to pick up the tab for a round of drinks for everyone in the house.

A significant asset of the Club is its permanent collection of fine western art and a nationally recognized annual western art show where a membership is given to an artist in the show each year in exchange for an addition to the Club's original art collection.

The Club's membership continues to stress contacts with the livestock industry, although changing times now include representation of Southwestern endeavors and the local ranching business community. The Club welcomes male and female members equally.

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### Narrative Description

#### 8. Statement of Significance

##### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

##### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
Ethnic Heritage – Jewish Community

**Period of Significance**

1936-1972  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Atterbury, Grosvenor; New York, NY. Architect/Stone Ashley  
M. M. Sundt; Tucson, AZ. Builder/Stone Ashley  
Friedman, Bernard J.; Tucson, AZ. Architect/El Dorado Lodge  
M.I. Poze Construction; Tucson, AZ; Builder/El Dorado Lodge

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

El Dorado Lodge (a.k.a. Stone Ashley/Mountain Oyster Club) is eligible under Criteria A in the area of significance of Ethnic Heritage. With its opening in 1949, the Lodge was one of two of the earliest guest lodges/hotels to play a critical and unique role in the development of the resort experience for Jewish tourists and, later, Jewish residents in Tucson, Arizona. The level of significance is high, due to the original development intended to attract and cater to Jewish tourists exclusively, providing one of the finest Southwestern venues for three decades, and contributing to the founding of one of the strongest Jewish communities in the West. El Dorado Lodge is eligible under Criteria C in the area of Architecture. The period of substantial local and national significance was from 1936 to 1972, spanning the years from its original design and opening as Stone Ashley, a private residence, through its conversion to a guest lodge/hotel in 1949, renamed and repurposed as the El Dorado Lodge which closed in 1972. The level of significance is high, due to its outstanding Italian Renaissance architectural and complementary landscape design by renowned New York architect Grosvenor Atterbury.

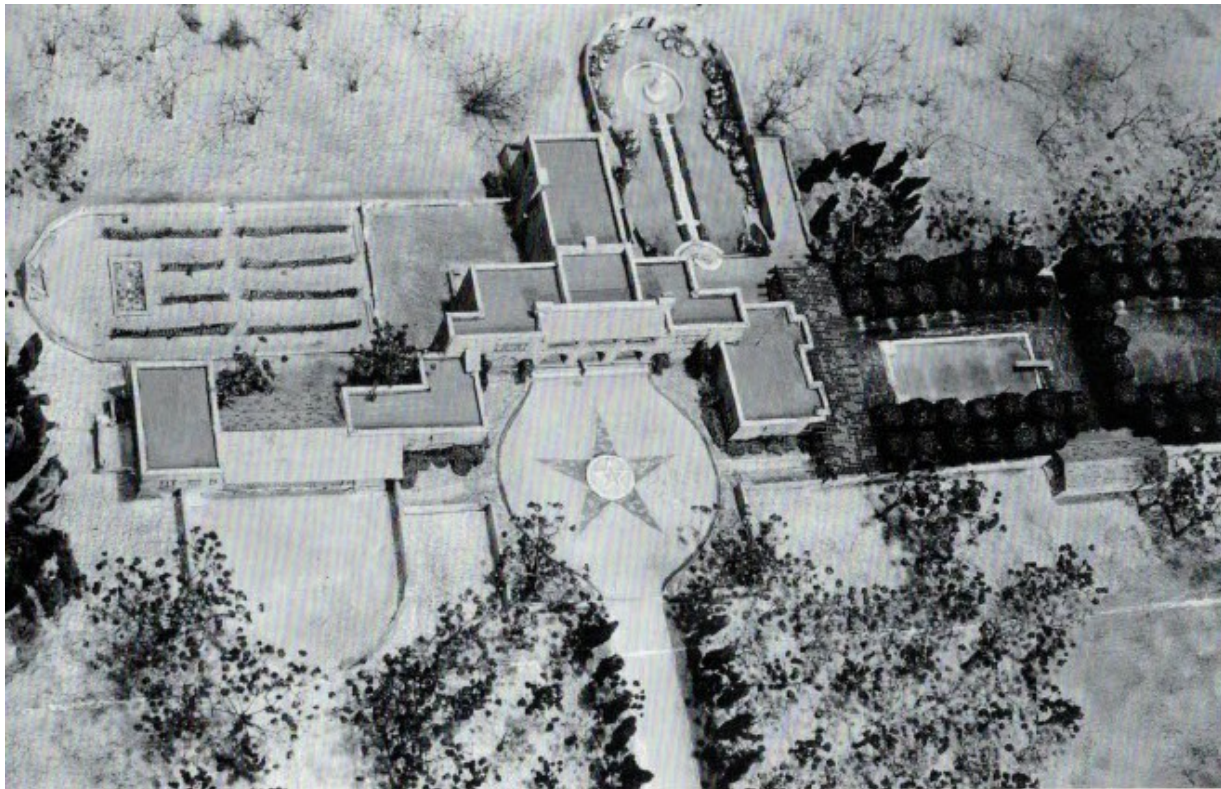


Figure 18. Aerial View of Stone Ashley; Atterbury's Stone Ashley Plan, Circa 1936

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criteria A: Ethnic Heritage: El Dorado Lodge 1949-1972**

During the same historical period as the establishment of the Lodge in 1949, the tracts of desert land on the outskirts of Tucson were not included in any widespread development which attracted visitors from across the United States. With the end of World War II and the expansion of rail and air travel in the United States, Southwestern destinations became recognized for the availability of alternative health solutions for respiratory and other chronic diseases. As a result of several factors, families migrating to healthier environs were attracted to the desert to vacation and live. Tucson became a popular alternative to the Eastern and Midwestern industrial cities for middle class families with children as well as older health seekers. The properties in Tucson that welcomed visitors and new residents were also less expensive than those in other parts of the country. Unfortunately, prior to the El Dorado Lodge's establishment in 1949, Jews were only accepted as guests in a couple of Tucson establishments on the outskirts of the city. The El Dorado Lodge initiated activities that introduced travelers to the Tucson Jewish community which was gradually carving out a welcome place in the desert.

**Southern Arizona Jewish Settlement History Notes**

According to 1917 United States population figures, 75% of all Jewish Americans at that time lived in the fifteen largest U. S. cities, not one of which was located in Arizona. At that time, approximately 40 adult Tucson residents, transplants from Eastern states/refugees from Europe, declared themselves as having Jewish origins. Most of those Jewish resident families had migrated from Poland and Lithuania to the United States in the early 1900's in search of a better life for their families and new business opportunities in which to establish themselves. Having landed in Eastern cities originally, they continued their quest for financial stability and affordable land on which to establish businesses and residences in the West. Several of the most successful Arizona pioneers traveled from the East Coast to San Francisco and then continued into Arizona. It was not uncommon for the wives and children to stay in California, receiving visits from their husbands several times a year until the breadwinner of the family had established a business and reliable income. One of the two original Drachman brothers to immigrate to Arizona from Poland, had eight of his ten children while his wife resided in California, before he brought his family to Tucson permanently. One of his sons, Harry Arizona Drachman, was the first male Anglo child to be born in Arizona.

By the mid 1930s, the number of Jewish residents of Tucson was approximated to be slightly more than 100 of 40,000 adult inhabitants, many of whom were the children of the original Arizona Jewish pioneers. This population included an increasing number of young Jewish residents but primarily was comprised of older "health seekers" who had migrated to Arizona to find a healthier climate for their respiratory issues, referred by their physicians in the East. The

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first generation of Jewish pioneer families who came to Tucson and nearby rural border settlements experienced successes and failures in mercantile endeavors from uniforms and supplies for the military to cartage and jewelry as well as tailoring and banking for the city folk.

Following World War II, increased numbers of Jewish soldiers who had served in the United States military were returned from overseas to the three military bases located in Phoenix and Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson. Many decided to remain in Arizona, take up residency and raise families as it was a healthy and an affordable environment but the intense summer heat was a deterrent.

It seems apparent that the antisemitic atmosphere in Arizona following World War II in both Phoenix and Tucson actually began during the Depression. Jobs were difficult to find in the under-developed state, or “Baby State” as it was known. Businesses that were created but struggled to survive prior to WWII did not readily accept their new Jewish residents nor did they welcome competition for employment or in business following the war. Although Tucson was not a prime Jewish community before and during the war, it experienced a growth spurt in the early 1950s as young Jewish former military members settled in Arizona. Expansion of the railroad and new aviation enterprise in the 1940s also spurred growth in Southern Arizona, creating greater access to the Western United States. Although there was a deficit of Jews residing in Tucson that were providing basic professional services to the Jewish community (barbers, butchers, doctors, dentists, rabbis, and kosher purveyors), a network of Jewish legislative leaders, Jewish members in several houses of worship and Jewish educators began to build in Tucson. Not only was there a dearth of Jewish community resources to support the growing migrant population, but there were also some prohibitions on owning residential property through deed restrictions, and certainly on membership in social and recreational groups that excluded Jews. Entities such as Tucson’s renowned Arizona Inn banned Jews, along with most of the Tucson golf clubs, including the Tucson Country Club, except the less popular desert courses. Even the University of Arizona had a “New York” quota for applicants applying from the East who had Jewish-sounding names. The same antisemitic policies applied to the Arizona Biltmore and the Camelback Inn among other hotels of renown in Phoenix which were closed to Jewish tourists and prohibited Jews from being employed there—the San Marcos in Chandler being another prominent example.

Arizona “pioneer” Jewish families had been drawn from Midwest and East via California and engaged in merchandising, medicine, law and service professions. Oral histories of prominent Jews from that era describe challenges and rewards of this period of growth in Southern Arizona. Some of those early Jewish residents of Southern Arizona who were pioneer family members became influential community leaders and legislators, including: Hyman and Dora Capin, tailor of military uniforms and dry good retailer/Nogales and President of Congregation Anshei Israel (formerly Stone Avenue Temple)/Tucson; the Jacobs Brothers, Tucson’s first bankers; Samuel and Philip Drachman, cartage and retail dry goods/Tucson; Albert Steinfeld, mercantile developer/Tucson; Michael Goldwater, dry goods retailer/Phoenix; Florence and Samuel Mansfeld, jeweler/Tucson. More contemporary first-generation Arizonans include



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Stanley G. Feldman, Chief Justice/Member of Arizona Supreme Court who migrated with his parents from Lithuania to New York to Arizona, arriving in 1938, and David Bloom, clothing retailers and Jewish community leader who assumed a position of great influence after immigrating to Tucson, having been born in Lithuania. David and his wife, Clara, personally created the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives now held in the University of Arizona Special Collections, comprised of secondary source material that they collected and compiled, regarding the period of 1870-1970 in Tucson.

### **El Dorado Lodge History**

The partnership of three New York businessmen and their wives—Arthur Bittker, David Kluger and John Taub—purchased the Stone Ashley mansion on its 20-acre parcel in 1947 after a visit to Tucson. They opened it as the El Dorado Lodge in 1949, creating a new ethnic heritage for the property. The Lodge not only encouraged Jewish travelers to enjoy the Western way of life, but its new owners personally recruited them. Evelyn Bittker, Arthur's wife, had been employed at Grossinger's, one of the largest resorts in the Catskills, for many years and had substantial records of their patrons' names and addresses. Evelyn reached out to all of her contacts from Grossinger's and her personal connections, inviting them to travel to Tucson and sample the wonders of the El Dorado Lodge. The Lodge offered the finest food in town and a range of recreational opportunities on the grounds as well as Western trail rides, barbecues in local State parks, nature walks in desert environs, and educational experiences/lectures headlined by prominent nationally known Jews on current events. When Edna Newell, the former business manager and co-owner of the Lodge following the Bittkers/Taub/Klugers was interviewed in 1985 by Blainey Korff, she reported that 100 percent of the Lodge's business during that period was Jewish tourists. The Lodge developed educational interactions for Jewish travelers that drove social interaction with members of their own faith in the recreational and leisure realm as well.

*Note:* Jewish families who had settled in the Eastern United States by the mid-century became acquainted with family vacations in pastoral settings that represented a place where Jews could partake in the distinctly American concepts of leisure and consumption while still maintaining their religious practices. By the late 1950's, the grand resorts of the Catskills still maintained their devotion to the Jewish faith and they were tremendously popular for Jewish families coming from homelands where rural excursions were the norm.

Creating such a mecca for Jewish tourists in Arizona was a splendid idea and El Dorado became the most popular Jewish resort in Arizona. Many introduced to the Southwestern desert through the Lodge between the 1940s and the 1960s were instrumental in founding the robust Jewish community in Tucson and in smaller rural communities, including Nogales and other Mexican border towns adjoining Arizona. In addition, the Lodge was a draw for famous people who were not familiar with the "Baby State". Liberace, Jack Benny, Justice William Douglas, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Henry Crown (owner of the Empire State Building) were all guests at the Lodge, along with hundreds of adventurous Jewish travelers. For twenty-four years under the

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management of the Bittkers, Jewish tourists coveted family vacations that were focused on wellness, were long on leisure and rich in ethnically profound associations.

In 1968, the Bittkers sold the property to a syndicate of six Tucson businessmen. Edna and Tilton Newell took over the management, residing in the mansion's third floor apartment. They opened the dining rooms and event space to the local Jewish population, creating a Jewish Country Club of sorts. Local members of Arizona's Jewish communities were welcome to dine and participate in educational lectures and social events. El Dorado Lodge was renowned for its excellent food prepared by chefs trained in Europe and its classic entertainment. The Lodge flourished until 1972 when Marvin Volk, a member of the Tucson Jewish community, purchased the property and began subdividing it. The restaurants were sold off separately and the El Dorado Hospital, El Dorado Country Club Estates, and other commercial enterprises were developed on the remainder of the property. The original mansion remained intact in the 1947 expansion to become El Dorado Lodge, retaining the structure as it was built in the mid-1930s.

As the Lodge became more renowned nationally and popular with local members of the Jewish community, its existence served to stimulate the migration of Jewish families from other parts of the country. Proud of their Jewish heritage and an opportunity to live in newly developing environs where they could share health and wellness priorities, Jewish associations multiplied and opportunities for community action were amplified.

In accepting guests of the Jewish faith and creating an environment which cultivated and enriched their Jewish identity, the Lodge became not only a coveted leisure venue it also became an early Jewish community center of sorts. The Lodge hosted political meetings, charitable groups and social occasions for Tucsonans that fostered organizations and political strategies to advance issues that were of concern to them. During its period of operation from 1949 to 1972 El Dorado Lodge served to highlight and nurture the need for the Tucson Jewish Community Center and Jewish Foundation of Southern Arizona which were both founded following its opening and still thrive today.



Figure 19. Publicity poster for 1952 Israel Bond Celebrity Gala hosted at El Dorado Lodge; circa 1952.

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The Lodge earned a sterling reputation and, as was noted by Bonnie Henry in an article in the *Arizona Daily Star* in 2010, was unique in Tucson at the time as the Lodge catered to Jewish guests.



Figure 20. El Dorado Lodge Aerial View, 1950.

### **Criteria C: Architecture: El Dorado Lodge/The Mountain Oyster Club**

El Dorado Lodge is an outstanding example of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival of Italian Renaissance Architecture, designed by renowned New York Architect Grosvenor Atterbury during the mid 1930s. Constructed on the rural fringe of the eastern city limits of Tucson, Arizona, eight miles from the city center, the original Stone Ashley mansion was built between 1934 and 1936 to serve as a personal residence, a country estate for Florence M. Pond, the daughter of a prominent Detroit attorney Ashley Pond, Sr. Having never been commissioned to build west of the Mississippi River, Atterbury was taken by the strong desert light when he visited Tucson. Arriving by train in the small desert town to view the property and meet Miss Pond for the first time, Atterbury chose a sloping site of approximately 20 acres of a 319-acre parcel of virgin desert that Pond, Sr. had purchased. The architect was respected for the agility with which he moved between the two worlds of providing tasteful, appropriate, and artistic

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design to the moneyed set and utilizing low-cost materials, making an indelible imprint on American architecture of the period. The mansion was destined to be a two-story, eventually a three-story, rectilinear building, of Italian Renaissance influence with adjoining pool and Bathhouse. (Figure 21)

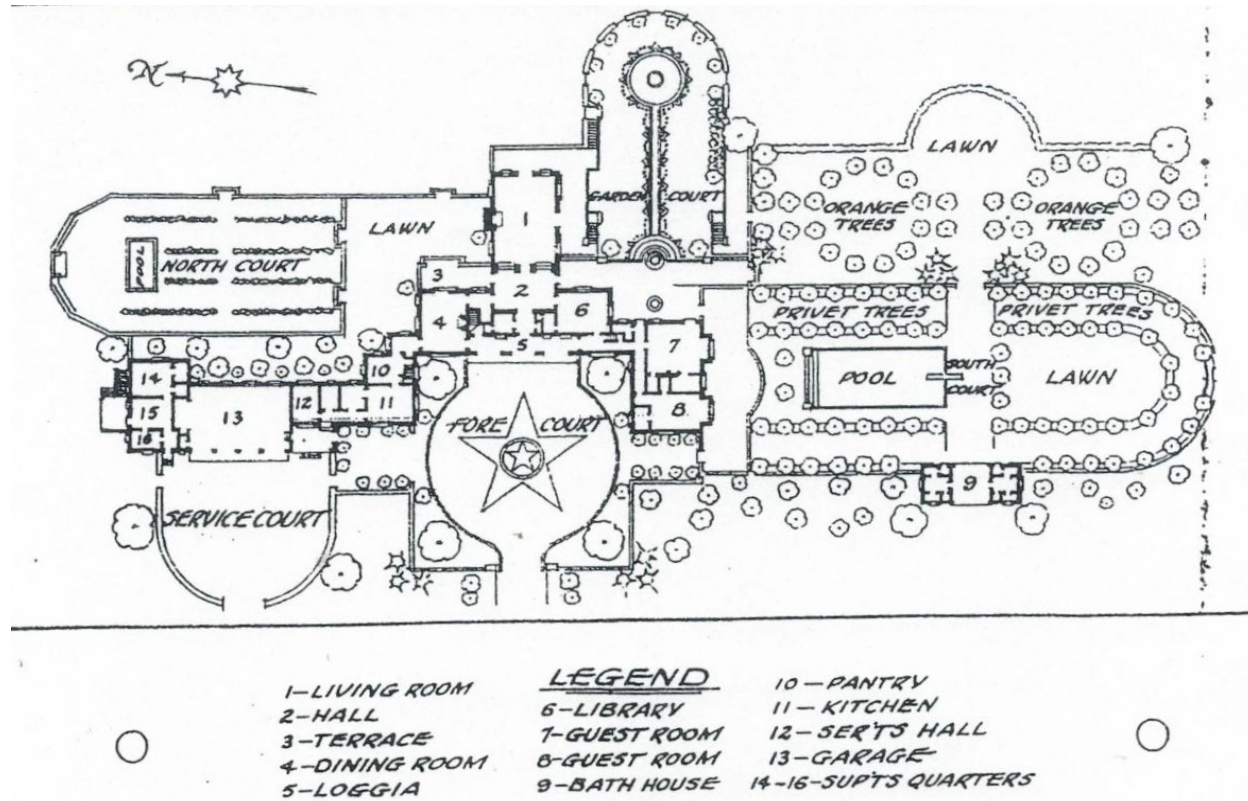


Figure 21. Grosvenor Atterbury's original floor plan/site plan for Stone Ashley, circa 1934.

Returning to his New York office to commence the design project after his visit to Tucson, Atterbury exercised great care in selecting two basic building blocks for the entire building and its terrace walls: local stone, quarried and hewn to his project specifications, and custom handmade bricks generated from the desert foothill sands. He had previously worked with native fieldstone on several similar projects in the East, researching their qualities and frailties extensively. Working on a vast palette of sand, Atterbury purposefully designed walls for the residence that are striations of the two materials, creating a decorative quality with the coursed brick and stone. The striated walls emphasize the home's boxy silhouette and serve as a welcoming backdrop for the exterior gardens and fountains. In a nod to the Sonoran climate and tradition, the residence was fitted with flat roofs with parapets to present a simple line against the blue sky. The natural field stone, custom made bricks and ornate wrought ironwork strengthen the Atterbury's artistic and ambitious design of Stone Ashley estate.

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Both the residence and garden walls were designed to be notably striking due to the architect's choice of desert materials from the region for construction of the dwelling. which complemented the natural environment of the Sonoran Desert. Atterbury had worked on several Eastern country homes employing popular ideas from the Italian Renaissance movement and exercised the use of classical orders (such as arches), mathematically precise ratios of height and width, symmetry, proportion and harmony in designing this striking Italian Renaissance home. The unique Renaissance characteristics of the design, constructed in desert masonry were embellished with wrought iron gates and window grilles, decorative "crowns and cages" over the fountains and iron exterior light fixtures. *Note:* Desert masonry, in this case, can be defined as concrete and stone mixture later used to build the structures of Taliesin West north of Phoenix by Frank Lloyd Wright in the next decade.

Atterbury was a purist and an inventor. His ability to communicate his design initiative to the residence's craftsmen was stellar. Amazingly, in an era when travel from New York was a three-day train trip and documents traveled by mail, Atterbury counted on the craftsmanship of the men on-site to see that his design was not only reflected in the final construction but enhanced in many details. Noteworthy examples that still exist in the Lodge, due to excellent workmanship, include the:

- Elegant wood entry door, constructed of complex wood joinery,
- Wrought iron decorative features and iron casement windows which provided security and ventilation,
- Water-cooling system, including an iron cool tower, that served as air conditioning, and
- General care taken in the layout and composition of natural stone and brick.

Atterbury's pattern of fenestration was varied depending on the degree of privacy each of the mansion's exposures required. Large arched picture windows were placed behind the cover of trees on the eastern face and opened onto a vast expanse of the Sonoran Desert and the Santa Catalina Mountain range on the western faces of the residence. Iron casement windows featuring 8" x 10" panes were placed in the smaller rooms on the east and south sides of the mansion to provide for natural lighting, views of the site and security. Hand-hewn hardwood lintels were placed over the square exterior windows to function both structurally and decoratively. A hand-hewn hardwood Main Entry door with colored glass panels set in iron work clearly defined the home's entrance and welcomed all who entered.

### **Interior Design Features**

Atterbury's reliance upon the texture and color of desert materials creates attractive interior spaces with the walls of native field stone and handmade brick. Carefully planned windows set in every room offer spectacular views of the surrounding Sonoran Desert, the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains. Flooring of green Italian slate throughout both interior and exterior spaces, was chosen to contrast and soften the masonry walls.

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Entrance into the mansion, through the Garden Court, is the Loggia/Front Lobby, complete with beamed ceiling and fireplace. The First Floor currently features two large rooms parallel to each other that were originally designed as the Living Room, Dining Room and Library in the private residence of Florence Pond. They were combined during the El Dorado Lodge era, intended for dining, indoor leisure and events. In the north wing, the kitchen, pantry, and servants' hall were originally housed leading into the garage and Superintendent's Quarters. Post-era of significance, amplification of the food service areas occurred, expanding into the garage and administrative quarters and allowing the Bar/Lounge to be re-located closer to the dining rooms for commercial restaurant use. In the south wing, the Library and guest rooms were located off the Loggia originally and were later converted to a Card Room and suite of offices. The suite is currently being remodeled to provide further entertainment space.

On the Second Floor, the original Master Suite of a bedroom with fireplace, porch and three maids' room with bathrooms are in use as offices.

The Third Floor, constructed to be identical with the Italian Renaissance Revival original design, was added in 1948 to serve as the Lodge's administrative residential and office spaces. Like the Second Floor, it has been employed as leased office space since 1973. The third story has been vacant during the Mountain Oyster Club's ownership.

Due to the sloping property on which the building is built, two partial basement areas exist in the building. The space under the southwest side of the structure was used for staff housing and laundry during the era of significance. That space, known as the Dungeon by the staff, is club storage. The larger space under the northwest side of the building was used for staff housing during the Stone Ashley decade, a movie theater during the Lodge era and now serves as administrative offices and a workroom for the annual Western Art Show.

Other features for which Atterbury was responsible are the Otis automatic electric elevator from the first to second story, a 30,000-gallon water storage tank, septic tanks, a water softening plant, intercommunicating telephones as well as oil unit heating and innovative evaporative air cooling systems.

*Note on the Cooling System:*

Miss Pond's intention to live in Stone Ashley year-round required Atterbury to explore methods for effective air conditioning. Ultimately, he employed an age-old device, the water-cooling tower, in an innovative fashion as a part of a circulatory system of radiators and ducts to cool the house and water the lush gardens. Upon discovering that air conditioning the building would require circulation of 150 gallons of water per minute, Atterbury designed a system that would use outdoor fountains to drive water to the cool tower and canals to transport it to the mansion. The architect located the decorative iron cool tower in one of the sunken gardens on the east, declaring that "it seemed a shame not to get some fun out of it all." The system, comprised of a set of semi-circular steps down which water flowed to the wrought iron tower embellished with flowers and suns, was to pay homage to the desert. A picturesque and practical solution to

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several problems also created attractive features in the gardens and probably cooled the outdoor spaces as well. Today, the water-cooling tower has been removed and conventional heating and air conditioning exists throughout the mansion. The fountains currently still exist but the wrought iron cooling tower has been removed.

### **Conversion to El Dorado Lodge**

In 1949, when the Stone Ashley mansion was purchased by New York investors with the intention of expanding the significance of the property by creating a Western Winter Retreat for world travelers, they hired Tucson architect Bernard J. Friedman to design the additions required for the opening of El Dorado Lodge in 1949. Friedman's team had the vision to build upon the architectural vocabulary in place, strictly in line with Atterbury's Italian Renaissance-influenced design and original building materials.

Friedman's design work included:

- Addition of Third Floor to the mansion,
- Addition of B Building to the mansion for offices and restaurant,
- Addition of 40 new guest cabins to accommodate 80 guests,
- Alterations to interior of the mansion for a lounge/bar, commercial kitchen, dining room, and
- Addition of public restrooms in the mansion.

The interior wall surfaces of the original Stone Ashley—natural fieldstone and handmade brick—were not altered, as only the rooms were repurposed where necessary to serve the building's new commercial clientele. The original appearance and architectural design of the building were not altered. The site design was preserved as terraced gardens, fountains and landscaping remained intact, as well. Some outdoor recreational attractions such as picnic grounds and walking paths were adjoined to the back of the property. The built structures remained the same; their architectural integrity was never compromised. The mansion's beauty and charm reflect a modern sensibility in a vernacular vocabulary that has stood the test of time while many of the original adjoining properties of that era have been destroyed and the parcels redeveloped.

### ***Site Design***

El Dorado Lodge's, originally Stone Ashley's, Italian Renaissance Architecture was embellished with wrought iron ornament, terraced gardens, lush lawns and water features that were unusual for a Southwestern desert locale. Sited on a 20-acre parcel of the property originally covered with tamarisk, cottonwood, and mesquite trees and cactus, the landscaping imposed on this site and Atterbury's use of sightlines and more controlled geometrical forms was in keeping with the Italianate building design and complemented the native vegetation. To set the stage for the reveal of the Italian Renaissance building, Atterbury lined the driveway with 50 Italian Cypress trees imported from California nurseries and shipped to Tucson by rail. He surrounded the entire 20 acres where the residence was sited with high terrace walls, steps, pools, and fountains of the stone and brick materials used in building Stone Ashley.

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Within the terrace walls surrounding the mansion's southern exposure, the Southwest Court, a rectangular swimming pool and Bathhouse with an adjacent U-shaped lawn were placed. The lawn was lined with double rows of Japanese Privet trees to create a secluded, green space on more than one third of the property. To the east of the pool and lawn, Atterbury planted an orchard of nearly 40 citrus trees and a small semi-circular lawn.

On the opposite side of the residence, the Northwest corner, Atterbury concealed the service court, garage and staff quarters behind large trees on the front face of the building. To further the symmetry of the gardens, he created another U-shaped lawn, small pool and garden within the North Court, facing east into the desert and the Rincon and Santa Rita mountains. In the Tuscan tradition, water movement was an important design tool. A Garden Court with the water-cooling tower was created behind the mansion, with fountains at each end of the lawn. A canal carried the water between an iron cool tower and the mansion for air conditioning.

The original wrought iron cooling tower has been removed from the lower fountain but the water display in the center of the pool is still a feature for guests on the patio. The two main fountains currently remain as do a significant number of ornamental cypress and fruit trees.

Through the conversion of the Stone Ashley residence to the El Dorado Lodge, preservation of the architectural elements of the Italian Renaissance Revival period were a major focus of the accommodations made to the interior spaces. Not only were the large common areas of the first floor adapted for commercial use, but also the smaller rooms such as guest bedrooms and staff quarters were repurposed to meet commercial dining and meeting needs of the Lodge. The original decorative wrought iron ornamentation and light fixtures were preserved and are still in use today. The elevator still functions between the first Floor and second stories.

Not only were the original design features and floor plan maintained during the conversion to El Dorado Lodge in the late 1940s, the mansion survived the sale of the Lodge in 1972 and its post-significance transition to serve as a restaurant with adjoining office spaces until the present. As a brief overview of the modifications made to the structure in 1948-1949, historical photographs show that where the new spaces were created, they were in keeping with the original mansion's architectural style and existing materials.

All other exterior features and landscaping have been preserved to this day, including the terracing and iconic planting of cypress, citrus and mesquite trees. The masonry walls that marked the original boundaries of the residence and the long cypress-lined entryway currently remain.

With very few alterations, during the past fifty years, the integrity of the building itself can be witnessed in many photographic examples of the "original" and "existing" structures and landscaping. Some prime examples are illustrated in Figures 22 – 26.



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Figure 22. Original Wrought Iron Water-Cooling Tower, Circa 1946.

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Figure 23. Existing site of Water-Cooling Tower on the Lower Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0017.

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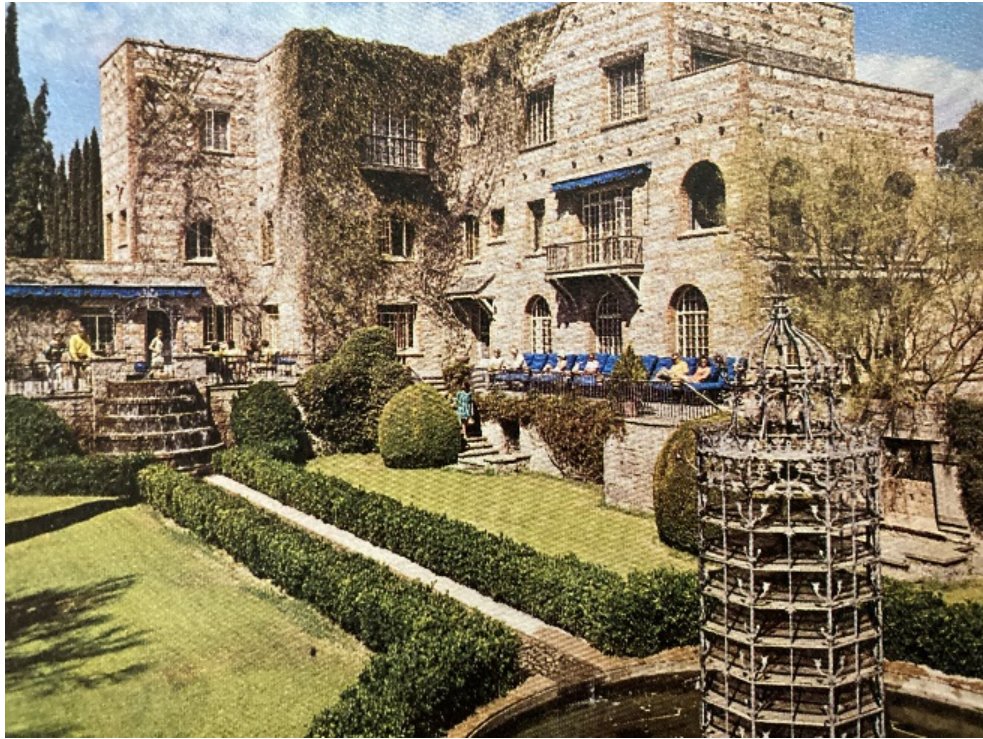


Figure 24. Original Water-Cooling Tower Behind the El Dorado Lodge.



Figure 25. Lower Back Patio and Anterior of Mountain Oyster Club with Upper Water Fountain. Facing West. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0004

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Figure 26. Anterior of El Dorado Lodge with Cooling Canal and Upper Fountain.

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Figure 27. Terraces and Gardens on the Southeastern Quadrant of the El Dorado Lodge 1960.

Atterbury created a spectacularly refreshing structure and site for a country estate in the Sonoran Desert. Although the use of both has transitioned from their original purpose as a residence to a guest lodge and now a social club, the structural integrity of both the buildings and the landscaping have remained undisturbed. For 85 years, thousands of visitors—private guests of Miss Pond, members of the military and their families, dignitaries, Jewish Tucsonans and tourists from all over the world or members and guests of the Mountain Oyster Club have thrilled to the Italian Renaissance mansion and its gardens. Through a half dozen owners of the property, the

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architecture has been cherished and preserved for our continued pleasure today. Much thought and care were given to the development of this estate, with fine materials and workmanship employed.

#### **ABOUT THE ARCHITECT/Grosvenor Atterbury for Stone Ashley**

Grosvenor Atterbury was educated at Yale University, Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux Art in Paris, where he completed his education in 1895. His contemporaries at Columbia were Charles Platt and James Greenleaf, both of whom were designers of elegant residences. Following graduation, he maintained a successful practice in New York City where his clients included both Yale and Cornell Universities. He worked with Greenleaf on several Long Island residential designs as well as taking responsibility for planning and design of the sophisticated residential development, Forest Hill Gardens in Queens with the Olmsted Brothers, renowned landscape architects. Atterbury designed numerous estates for, among others, the Rockefeller and Whitney families. Those estates and grounds almost always employed planning practices, materials and layouts influenced by the Italian Renaissance. Atterbury was personally and stylistically conservative but loved creating ingenious solutions to architectural problems. He often worked with natural fieldstone, approaching the scientific aspects of building materials with great relish. His primary passion, professionally, was to create housing for the less advantaged in the Eastern United States. He authored several papers about the use of poured concrete in low-cost residential construction.

Atterbury came to Tucson via train in 1933 to meet Florence Pond for the first time. Stone Ashley was apparently his first and only project in the West. Atterbury was, in his words, enchanted by the desert site, the vistas and quality of desert light. The Stone Ashley mansion represented a departure for him as he sought to develop a simple silhouette against the stark, Sonoran sky. The decorative quality of the walls, bands of native rock and a custom brick coursing, added interest while making the architecture a backdrop for the grounds and view beyond. Atterbury was intrigued by the dry climate and embraced the challenges it presented. Since Miss Pond intended to reside in Tucson year-round, his design for cooling in 1935 uniquely made use of the radiators and ducts to circulate water that was cooled by an evaporative “cooling” tower.

Grosvenor Atterbury was one of the most prolific architects and town planners of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, designing more than 100 residences. His friend and client John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for whom he designed a half dozen estates, was entranced by the manner “in which the house and grounds were tied in with their desert mountain surroundings,” when he visited the mansion in 1947. The *New York Times* pronounced it “one of the most beautiful homes in the region.”

#### **THE ARCHITECT/Bernard J. Friedman for El Dorado Lodge**

Tucsonan Bernard J. Friedman was the architect, at an early point in his career, for the additions and alterations necessary for the conversion of Stone Ashley to the El Dorado Lodge. It was an important commission for him. While his firm went on to do numerous significant works in

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Tucson, including several distinctive synagogues, the Music Hall at the Tucson Community Center, the University of Arizona Main Library, and the new Pima County (now Kino) Community Hospital, El Dorado Lodge was his own design work. In the most public areas, including the new administrative areas on the north edge of the circular drive, Friedman hewed closely to the stone/brick striated block pattern, fenestration and landscaping employed by Atterbury.

None of Friedman's architectural drawings or correspondence concerning the Lodge's metamorphosis from Stone Ashley to El Dorado Lodge were preserved. He was identified in numerous local newspaper articles as the architect of record, however. His considerable effort to maintain the property's architectural excellence while not disturbing its complementary Italianate site and landscape is widely recognized as one of his early successes.

#### **ABOUT THE ORIGINAL STONE ASHLEY OWNER: Florence Pond (1867-1955)**

Stone Ashley was designed and built for Florence L. Pond, the only daughter of Harriet and Ashley Pond, Sr. of Detroit, Michigan, when she was in her mid-60's. Her father, the namesake for the Italian Renaissance style residence, was a very successful railroad attorney who lost his wife and only two sons to illness when Florence was a young woman. Florence studied at the Detroit Conservatory of Music and the Ogontz School for Young Women (Philadelphia) and became an accomplished pianist. Following her graduation and her mother's death, Florence traveled extensively in Europe and returned to reside in New York City, where she was frequently noted in the press as a Society Leader. She was involved with the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC) as a trustee as well as being a prominent member of the Garden Club of America and a participant in American Kennel Club Shows as she raised Cairn Terriers.



Figure 28. Florence L. Pond.

Miss Pond became familiar with the Sonoran Desert as a young woman when her brother Ashley Jr. contracted typhoid fever during the Spanish-American war and came to the Southwest for treatment of his lifelong health problems. Following several winter visits to Tucson in the early 1930's, she became enamored with the climate and convinced her father to build a residence for her here. Following the purchase of a 319 acre tract of desert outside the city limits, the Ponds contracted with New York architect Grosvenor Atterbury to build a 17-room Italianate mansion to be her first home. Although she was familiar with Atterbury's architectural work as he had

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designed dozens of estates in New York, Florence did not meet him until he arrived with his wife in Tucson by train from New York in 1933. Stone Ashley was constructed in 1934, Florence moved into the mansion in 1935 and the landscaping was completed in 1936. By 1947, Miss Pond had decided to return to New York and asked real estate magnate, Roy Drachman, to put the residence on the market.

Although Florence Pond's residency in the desert was short-lived, her impact on the community was profound. During her eleven years in Tucson, she invited members of the military stationed in Tucson and their families to Stone Ashley for recreational events on the lawns and swim parties in her pool, reputedly the first private pool built in Tucson. She entertained many nationally known celebrities and employed and housed a large service staff that hailed from a variety of European countries. She offered Stone Ashley to community members for civic affairs and church gatherings, concerts and gala events which benefitted the Tucson community. Florence was a major source of support for Tucson events like the Fiesta de Los Vaqueros rodeo each year, sharing Western traditions with national celebrities who were guests in her home while celebrating with her fellow Tucsonans. General Pershing and associates joined her for the rodeo in 1940. (See photograph below) Note: It is rumored that Florence Pond never spent a night alone at Stone Ashley. Although she had an extensive staff that lived on the property, when guests were not present, she spent the night at the El Conquistador, Arizona Inn or Westerner Hotel downtown.

Florence Pond died at age 88 in New York having left Stone Ashley and Tucson at age 70. She is buried with her family in New York. Florence's philanthropic contributions to Tucson organizations and willingness to share her resources at Stone Ashley were well known in the community. The mansion was an invaluable asset to the Tucson community.



El Dorado Lodge

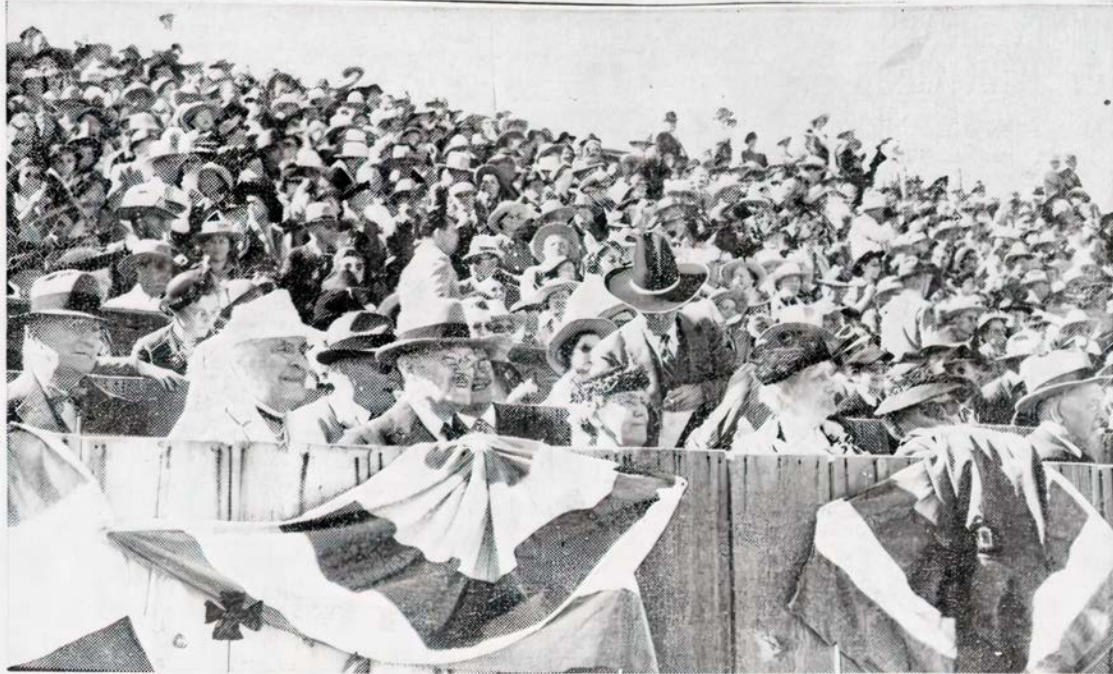
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DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 25, 1940

The Arizona Daily Star



**IT LOOKED LIKE ARMY DAY** in this section of rodeo arena boxes yesterday as Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of World war expeditionary forces, and friends watched cowboy show. "X" at lower left indicates place where crazed bucking bronco later plunged head through fence. Seated front row, left to right, are Gen. James G. Harbord, Mrs. Charles Sumner Bird, General Pershing, Miss Florence Pond, Mrs. W. R. Mathews and Gen. Charles G. Dawes. Behind Pershing and Miss Pond are Gen. Leon B. Kromer, Dr. Roland Davison and Mathews. (Photo by J. Robert Burns).

Figure 29. Florence Pond in Tucson, 1940. Source: *Arizona Daily Star*, February 25, 1940.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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### IMAGES

Cornell University Library Digital Collections; Pond/Tucson, Arizona; pp. 1-2.  
<https://speccoll.library.arizona.edu/collections/stone-ashley-el-dorado-lodge-drawings>

El Dorado Lodge  
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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University – University of Arizona, University of Cincinnati, Cornell University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.2608 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**  
Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Latitude: 32.238460                      Longitude: -110.854500

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)  
Pima County Parcel ID 133-14-459C. Part of the Southwest quarter of Section 6, Township 14 South, Range 15 East, Fila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian

**Boundary Justification:**  
The nominated property is the remaining segment of the formerly 20-acre site of the El Dorado Lodge containing the three significant contributing buildings on the remaining contributing site/landscaping, while omitting modern parking areas and a modern Mountain Oyster Club-owned building immediately to the north of the historic property.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Lacy/Mountain Oyster Club Board President;  
Karen Young/Member (w additional editing by William Collins, SHPO)  
organization: Mountain Oyster Club  
street & number: 6400 N. El Dorado Circle  
city or town: Tucson state: AZ zip code: 85711  
e-mail: jlacy@dmyl.com / zeker04@yahoo.com  
telephone: (520) 322-5000/(520) 906-0895  
date: October 4, 2023

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Appendix: Mountain Oyster Club floorplans. Floor Plans First LLC, 2011.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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## Photographs

### Photo Log

Name of Property: El Dorado Lodge/Stone Ashley/Mountain Oyster Club

City or Vicinity: Tucson

County: Pima

State: Arizona

All photos by Karen Young and Courtesy of Mountain Oyster Club

1 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0001

Date Photographed: May 2022

Main entrance of the Mountain Oyster Club; Eastern face and portico of Mountain Oyster Club at head of Circle Entry Drive. Facing East.

2 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0002

Date Photographed: May 2022

Cypress-lined Entry Drive from Mountain Oyster Club front steps. Facing East

3 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0003

Date Photographed: June 2022

Wrought iron crown at Upper Fountain on Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Northwest

4 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0004

Date Photographed: May 2022

Lower Back Patio and Anterior of Mountain Oyster Club. Facing West

5 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0005

Date Photographed: May 2022

Hand-hewn Main Entry door of wood, iron and colored glass, Mountain Oyster Club. Facing East

6 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0006

Date Photographed: June 2022

Bathhouse on eastern perimeter of South Parking Lot, Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Southwest

7 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0007

Date Photographed: May 2022

South façade of the Mountain Oyster Club from parking lot. Facing North

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8 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0008

Date Photographed: July 2022

Back Patio entrance into Mountain Oyster Club Lobby. Facing North

9 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0009

Date Photographed: May 2022

B Building. Arched wrought iron entrance to Inner Courtyard at Mountain Oyster Club.  
Facing Northwest

10 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0010

Date Photographed: May 2022

Main Dining Room of Mountain Oyster Club with arched entrance to Slate (Lower) Dining  
Room. Facing West

11 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0011

Date Photographed: May 2022

Slate (Lower) Dining Room of Mountain Oyster Club with Italian green slate floor. Facing  
West

12 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0013

Date Photographed: August 2022

Front Lobby of Mountain Oyster Club with arch doorways into Lower Dining Room. Facing  
Northwest

13 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0014

Date Photographed: July 2022

Northern wall of Bar/Lounge of Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Northwest

14 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0015

Date Photographed: July 2022

Southern half of the Catalina Room of the Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Southwest

15 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0016

Date Photographed: June 2022

B Building of Mountain Oyster Club. Front façade with arched entry. Facing Northwest

16 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0017

Date Photographed: May 2022

Existing site of Water-Cooling Tower on the Lower Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club.  
Facing West

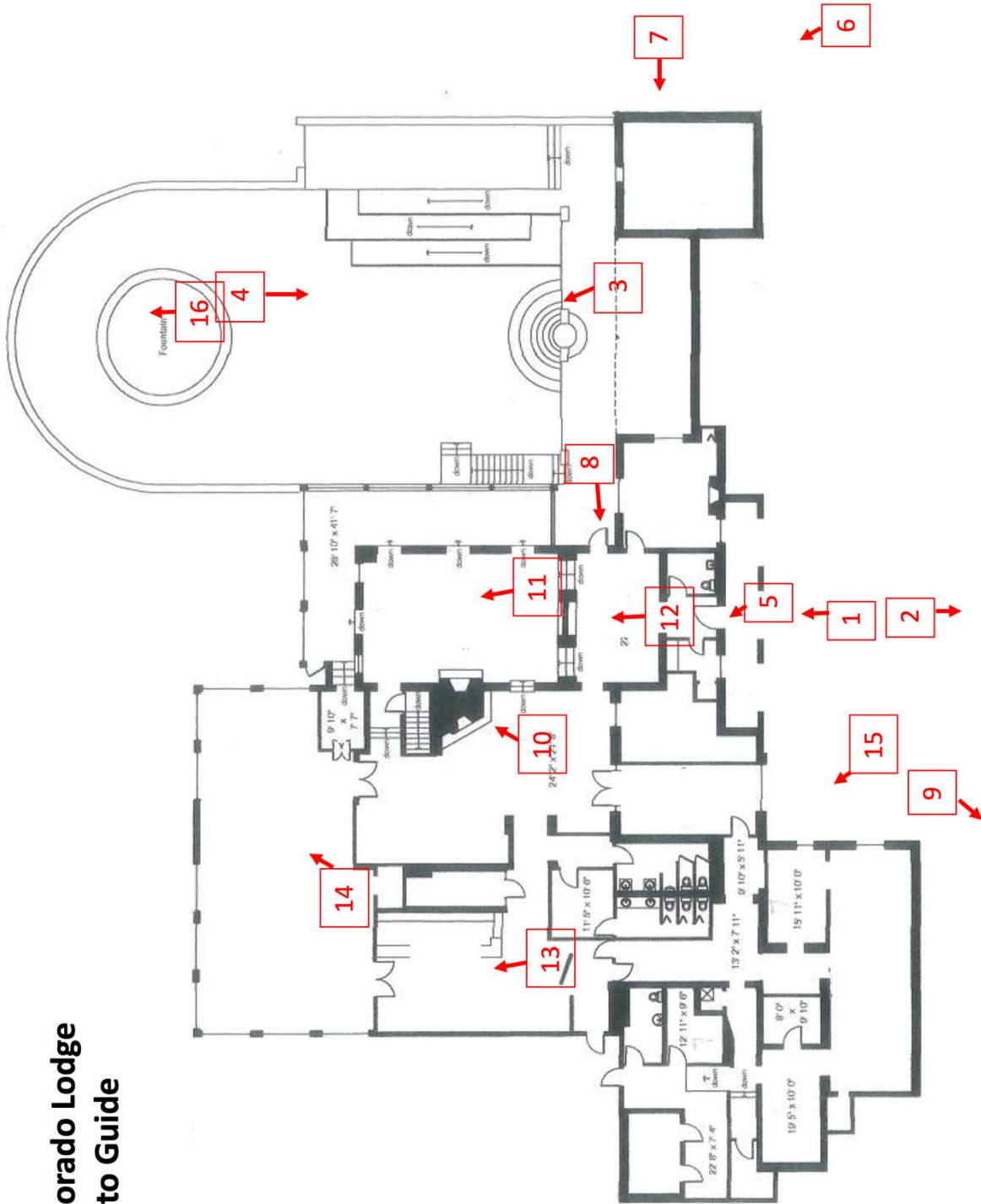
17 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0017

Existing Handicap Accessible Ramp in Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club, Facing East.

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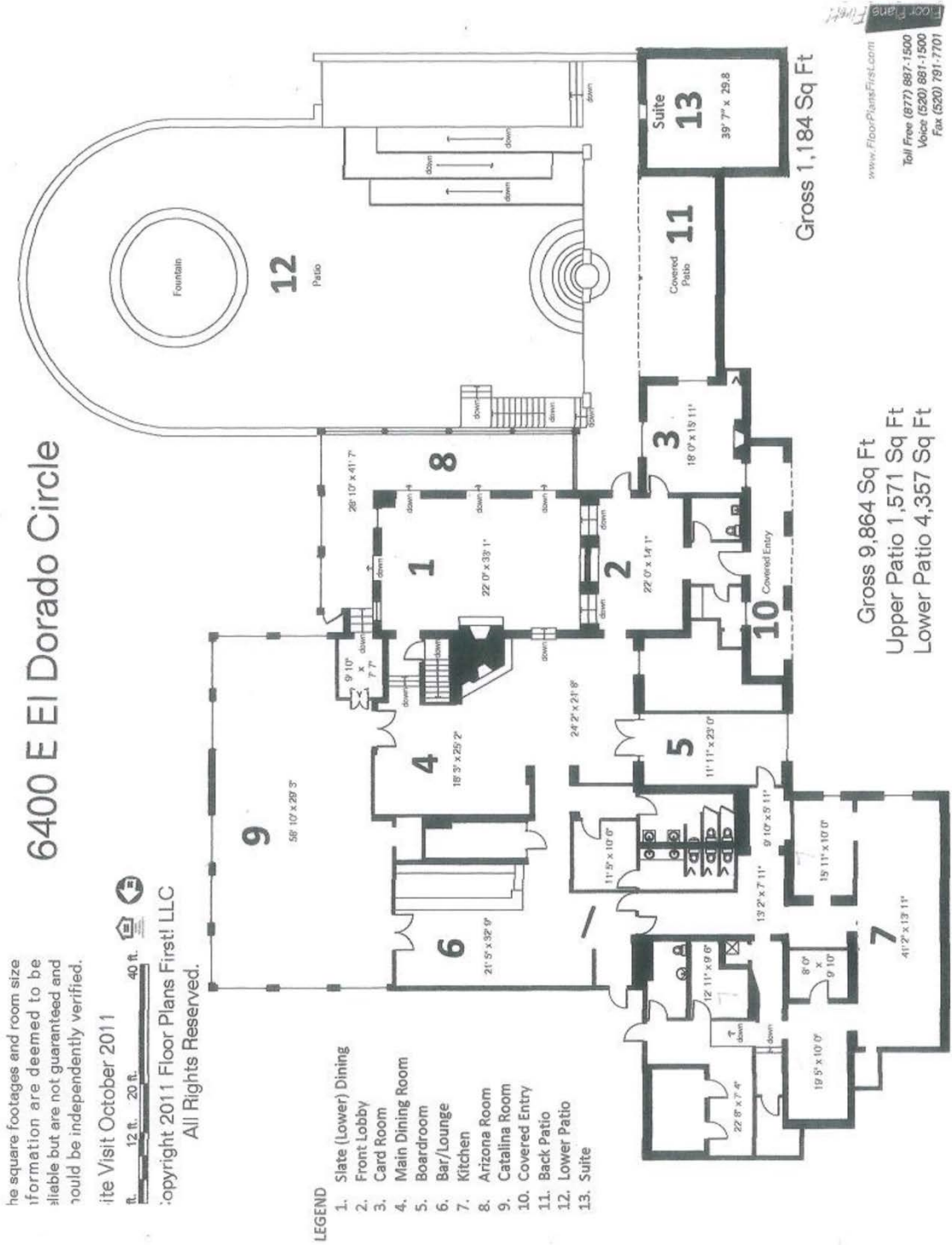
**El Dorado Lodge  
Photo Guide**



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**Appendix: Mountain Oyster Club Floor plans**





El Dorado Lodge

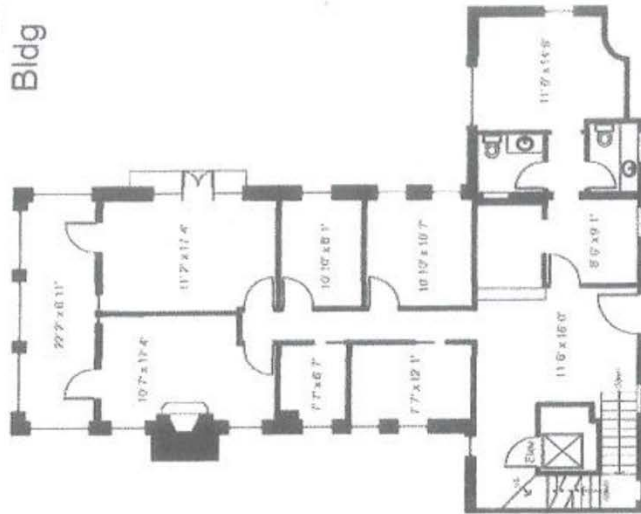
Name of Property

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6400 E El Dorado Circle  
Bldg 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

The square footages and room size information are deemed to be reliable but are not guaranteed and should be independently verified.



LEGEND

Second Floor rooms are designated for commercial office space and restrooms serving the offices. All offices are occupied.

Gross 2,008 Sq Ft

Site Visit July 2011



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All Rights Reserved.

For more information, call  
Toll Free (877) 827-1300  
Voice (520) 991-1500  
Fax (520) 791-7721

El Dorado Lodge  
 Name of Property

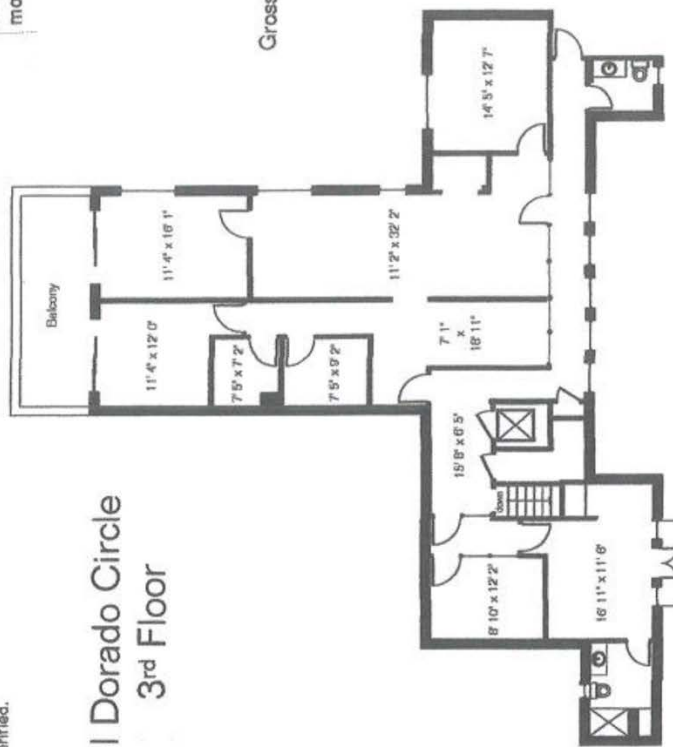
Pima, AZ  
 County and State

**LEGEND**  
 Third Floor rooms are designated for commercial office space and restrooms serving the offices, most of which are vacant.

The square footages and room size information are deemed to be reliable but are not guaranteed and should be independently verified.

6400 E El Dorado Circle  
 3rd Floor

Gross 2,460 Sq Ft



Site Visit July 2011  
 0 ft. 8 ft. 10 ft. 20 ft.  
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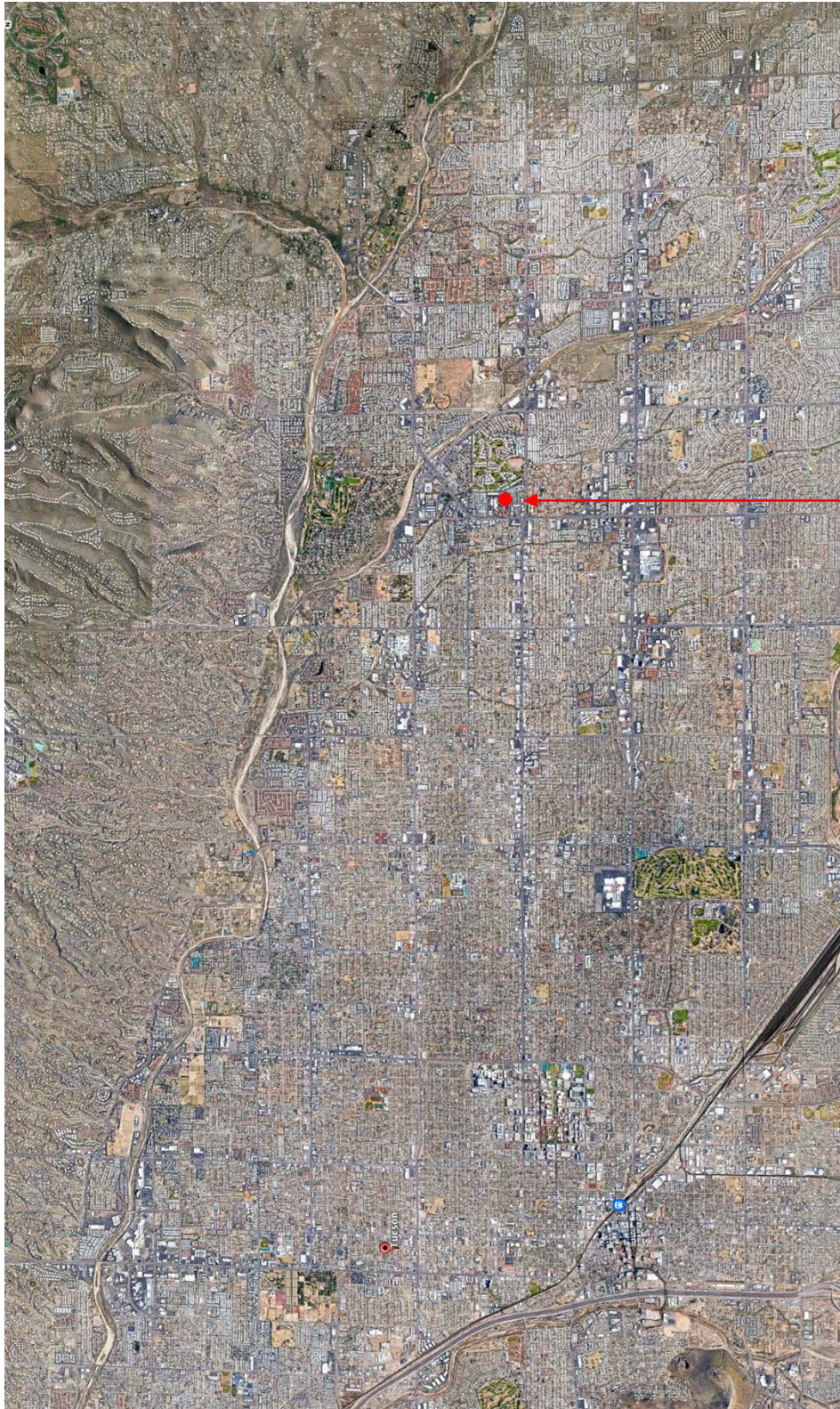
www.FloorPlansFirst.com  
 Toll Free (877) 857-1500  
 Mobile (520) 851-1500  
 Fax (520) 791-7701

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El Dorado Lodge

6400 E. El Dorado Cir.,  
Tucson, AZ

Latitude: 32.238460

Longitude: -110.854500

Google Earth imagery  
12/18/2020



El Dorado Lodge

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## PHOTOGRAPHS



1 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0001

Main entrance of the Mountain Oyster Club; Eastern face and portico of Mountain Oyster Club at head of Circle Entry Drive. Facing East.

El Dorado Lodge  
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2 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0002  
Cypress-lined Entry Drive from Mountain Oyster Club front steps. Facing East

El Dorado Lodge

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3 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0003

Wrought iron crown at Upper Fountain on Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Northwest

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4 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0004

Lower Back Patio and Anterior of Mountain Oyster Club with Upper Water Fountain. Facing West

El Dorado Lodge  
Name of Property

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5 of 18. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0005  
Hand-hewn Main Entry door of wood, iron and colored glass, Mountain Oyster Club. Facing East



El Dorado Lodge

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6 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0006  
Bathhouse on eastern perimeter of South Parking Lot, Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Southwest

El Dorado Lodge

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7 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0007  
South façade of the Mountain Oyster Club from parking lot. Facing North

El Dorado Lodge  
Name of Property

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8 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0008  
Back Patio entrance into Mountain Oyster Club Lobby. Facing North

El Dorado Lodge

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9 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0009  
B Building. Arched wrought iron entrance to Inner Courtyard at Mountain Oyster Club.  
Facing Northwest

El Dorado Lodge

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10 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0010

Main Dining Room of Mountain Oyster Club with arched entrance to Slate (Lower) Dining Room. Facing West

El Dorado Lodge

Name of Property

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11 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0011  
Slate (Lower) Dining Room of Mountain Oyster Clube with Italian green slate floor. Facing West

El Dorado Lodge

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12 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0012  
Front Lobby of Mountain Oyster Club with arch doorways into Lower Dining Room. Facing Northwest

El Dorado Lodge  
Name of Property

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13 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0013  
Northern wall of Bar/Lounge of Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Northwest



El Dorado Lodge

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14 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0015  
Southern half of the Catalina Room of the Mountain Oyster Club. Facing Southwest

El Dorado Lodge

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15 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0015  
B Building of Mountain Oyster Club. Front façade with arched entry. Facing Northwest

El Dorado Lodge

Name of Property

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16 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0016  
Existing site of Water-Cooling Tower on the Lower Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club.  
Facing West

El Dorado Lodge  
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17 of 17. AZ\_PimaCounty\_ElDoradoLodge\_0017  
Existing Handicap Accessible Ramp in Back Patio of Mountain Oyster Club, Facing East.