

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, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association

Other names/site number: Coachella Valley Savings #1 (preferred)

Name of related multiple property listing:
The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams

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

2. Location

Street & number: 383 South Palm Canyon Drive

City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 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 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 local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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

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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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel, aluminum, CONCRETE,
STONE: granite, GLASS

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.)

Summary Paragraph

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #1 (CVS #1) is located on the west side of South Palm Canyon Drive between West Baristo and West Ramon Roads at the north end of the Palm Springs banking district. Designed by E. Stewart Williams and completed in 1956, the two story with mezzanine International Style steel-framed, reinforced concrete building was clearly influenced by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in France. The building appears as a rectangular box of painted white stucco floating above a wide driveway and a small lobby. It is raised on piloti to create a covered driveway with parking spaces beneath the upper floor and around the west and south sides of the building. The east elevation frames a wall of glass with aluminum mullions fronted by vertical metal louvers to control the light. The rear, west side of the building is characterized by two rows of ribbon windows sheltered by metal awnings at the second floor and mezzanine levels. Although no longer used as a bank, CVS #1 exhibits sufficient architectural integrity to convey its significance.

Narrative Description

The first bank commission that the Williams office received was for a new branch of Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association. The lot for the new bank was located on the west side of South Palm Canyon Drive and was relatively small for the program of a reception area, teller stations, offices, conference rooms, lunch room, two vaults, and automobile parking. Stewart's

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solution was to raise the building on piloti in creating a covered driveway with parking spaces beneath the upper floor and around the west and south sides of the building. The overall design was similar to the Villa Savoye-influenced Oasis Commercial Building that the firm had completed the previous year.¹ Of Williams' stylistic choice, architectural historian Elizabeth Edwards Harris PhD wrote, "Although Williams never directly ascribed to any particular school of modernism, the International Style did lend itself well to building in the desert. In addition, it was a style that at this time conveyed both an efficient and au courant sensibility appropriate for his first financial institution clients."²

The building's steel reinforced concrete construction allows the rectangular box to be supported primarily by slender piloti. The small glazed entry lobby with its polished concrete floor serves to welcome customers, and is primarily designed to direct them up the floating staircase to the second floor. Behind the entry lobby reception desk was a large polished steel vault with a twin vault immediately above it on the second floor. A previous owner removed the steel doors of both of these vaults and added stucco bezels to frame the openings. Native rock clads the former vaults on both floors, softening the straight lines and man-made materials of the International Style. This integration of natural materials from the local environment with modern design precepts is a hallmark of Williams' architectural philosophy.

Entering the second floor from the lobby staircase finds the customer in an enormous, double-height open space. Filling the room with light is a wall of glass with aluminum mullions on the east elevation. Apparently, it was soon discovered that the east-facing glazing provided too much interior light. In response, adjustable vertical exterior metal louvers designed by Williams were installed to cover the windows. Teller windows and offices that were on the west side of the room have since been removed and replaced by a wall of offices. Directly above, unpainted vertical wood slats enclose the mezzanine, providing a visual contrast to the smooth white walls by bringing warm natural materials into a very modern space. Behind the circular former vault, a staircase leads to the mezzanine level where a conference room and break room are located.

The rear, west side of the building differs substantially from the east elevation in that ribbon windows sheltered by metal awnings provide light to the second floor and mezzanine levels. In maintaining the illusion of a floating box, Williams cantilevered the south end over tan-colored brick cladding. The brick wraps around the south elevation to the west side where a glazed rear entrance is located. This use of unpainted brick was yet another example of Williams contrasting the white box with warmer materials.

Both CVS #1 and the Oasis Commercial Building share elements of Le Corbusier's interpretation of the International Style. However, Williams' had concluded during his European travels as a young man that pure International Style buildings could be disagreeably austere. It was therefore Williams' intention to soften and humanize modern architecture by incorporating natural materials into his designs when appropriate. For his early houses, wood and natural rock

¹ 101 South Palm Canyon Drive.

² Elizabeth Edwards Harris, PhD, "Dignity and Delight: Modern Banks" in *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*, ed. Sidney Williams (Palm Springs: Palm Springs Art Museum, 2014), 90.

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were generously applied. For the International Style commercial buildings that he designed in the mid-1950s, Williams often introduced natural rock cladding on ground floor elevations as well as interior surfaces. It was architecture that expressed the local environment.

As relates to physical integrity, building permits document unspecified interior alterations during a remodel in 1967, a few years after Coachella Valley Savings had relocated to their new, larger Williams-designed location a few blocks south (CVS #2). In 2006, the Prudential Company as the new owner remodeled the second story interior to house its Palm Springs real estate office. Also in 2006, another owner replaced the original boiler and air conditioning machinery with contemporary equipment. No additional building permits were located by the city.

A comparison of historic and contemporary photographs demonstrates that exterior alterations have been minimal. On the interior, the removal of the vault doors on both floors has lessened the feeling of the building having been a bank. The enclosure of the teller area with offices is unfortunate. Nonetheless, this loss of integrity is not sufficient to suggest that the property is unable to convey its significance because the overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of the former bank, interior and exterior, remains high. In addition, location and setting have not changed. As a result, Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #1 is able to convey its architectural significance, retaining the characteristic physical features associated with the work of E. Stewart Williams, namely, the integration of natural materials expressing the local environment into his modern architectural designs.

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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

Period of Significance
1956

Significant Dates
1956

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Williams, E. Stewart

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Coachella Valley Savings #1 is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century commercial architecture as interpreted by E. Stewart Williams. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1956.

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

Coachella Valley Savings #1 exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of the commercial buildings E. Stewart Williams designed in the mid-1950s. Specifically, Williams adapted the International Style to the environment of the Coachella Valley by integrating natural materials into the design. Consistent with the style, Williams rejects historical references with emphasis placed on form following function. The flat-roofed, steel-framed CVS #1 features a rectangular second-story volume with smooth exterior surfaces and large expanses of east facing glazing. Vertical metal louvers control the bright sunlight. Supported by piloti, the upper story shelters a driveway, parking area, and a small lobby. Fenestration at the rear, east elevation consists of two rows of ribbon windows shaded by slatted metal awnings. By cladding ground floor and second story bank vaults in natural rock sourced from nearby mountains, Williams underscores his design philosophy that modern architecture should express the local environment.

Coachella Valley Savings #1 is significant within the oeuvre of E. Stewart Williams and fits within the historic context presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The property is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of E. Stewart Williams. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial buildings associated with master architect E. Stewart Williams, FAIA in the mid-1950s.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

As indicated in *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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 of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.817835 Longitude: -116.547084

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property is located at 383 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California between W Baristo Road and W Ramon Road. The property fronts 143 feet of South Palm Canyon Drive. Its legal description is POR LOT 5 BLK 18 MB 009/432 SD MAP OF PA. APN 513-203-006

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Coachella Valley Savings #1.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian
organization: _____
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039
e-mail: petermoruzzi@gmail.com
telephone: (213) 706-0151
date: April 2016

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.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Coachella Valley Savings #1
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: CA
Photographer: Peter Moruzzi
Date Photographed: April 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 13 East elevation, camera facing northwest

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- 2 of 13 East elevation, camera facing southwest
- 3 of 13 East elevation, main entrance, camera facing west
- 4 of 13 South elevation, camera facing northwest
- 5 of 13 West and south elevations, camera facing northeast
- 6 of 13 West elevation, camera facing northeast
- 7 of 13 Ground floor parking area, native rock wall, glazed entrance lobby on left, camera facing southwest
- 8 of 13 Ground floor parking area, glazed entrance lobby, camera facing southwest
- 9 of 13 Interior view, glazed entrance lobby, camera facing north
- 10 of 13 Interior view, second story, camera facing northeast
- 11 of 13 Interior view, second story, camera facing south
- 12 of 13 Interior view, second story, camera facing northwest
- 13 of 13 Interior view, second story, camera facing southwest

Index of Figures; Photos by Julius Shulman, 1957

- Figure 1 East elevation, looking southwest
- Figure 2 East elevation, looking southwest
- Figure 3 West and south elevations, looking northeast
- Figure 4 Interior staircase, looking south
- Figure 5 Interior staircase and second floor, looking northwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

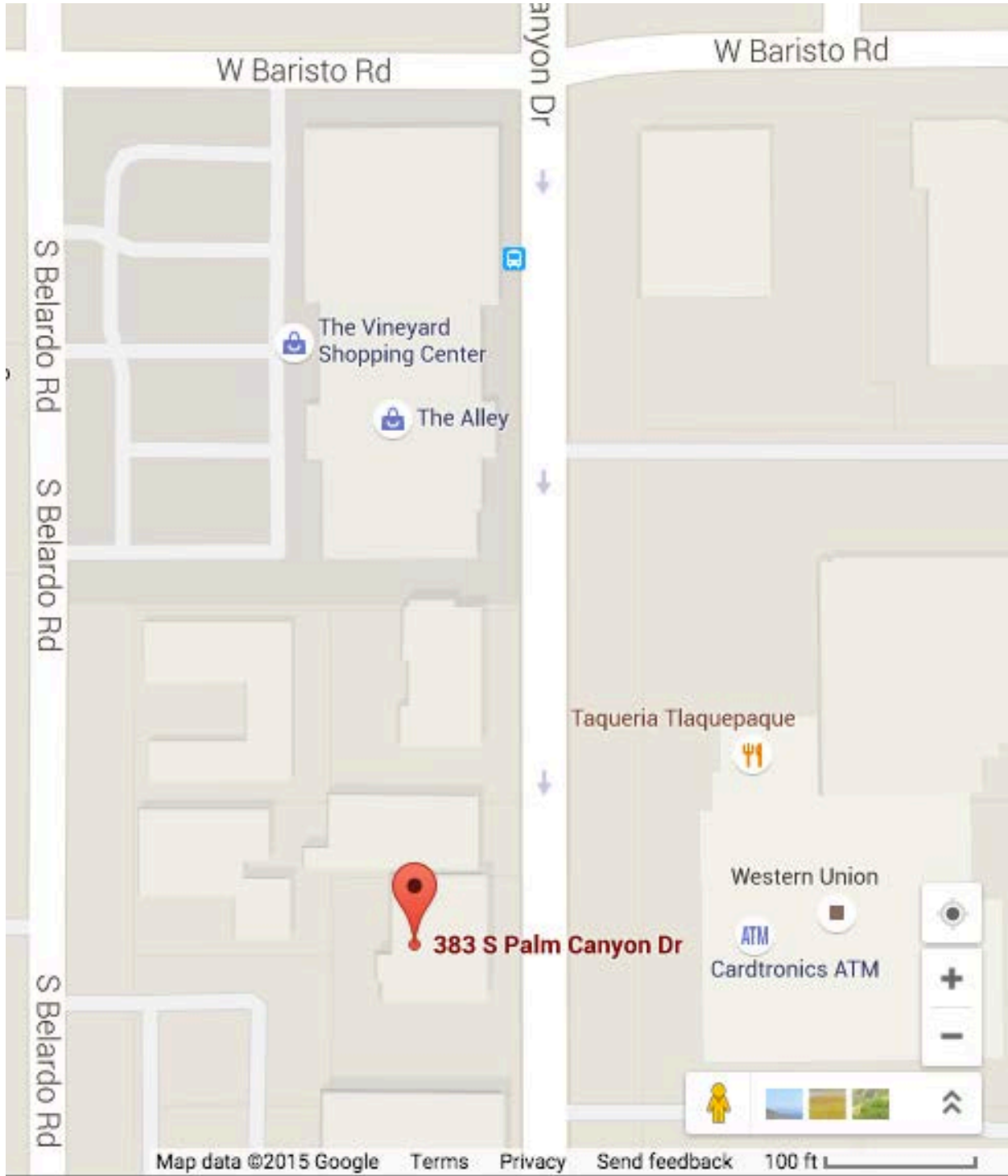
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Location Map

Latitude: 33.817835

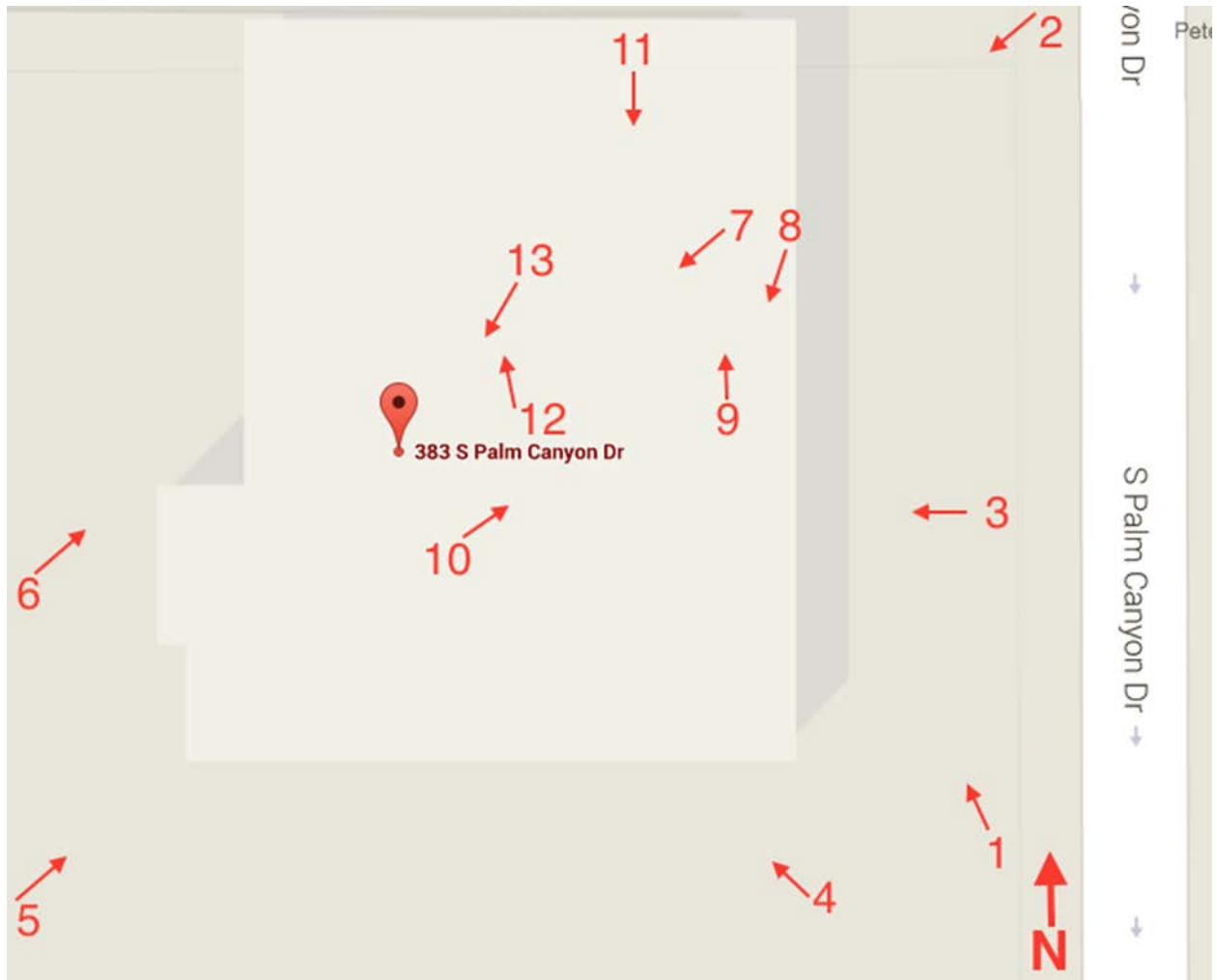
Longitude: -116.547084



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Sketch Map/Photo Key



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Figure 1. East elevation, looking southwest, 1957



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Figure 2. East elevation, looking southwest, 1957



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Figure 3. West and south elevations, looking northeast, 1957



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Figure 4. Interior staircase, looking south, 1957



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Figure 5. Interior staircase and second floor, looking northwest, 1957



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