

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED **MAY 22 1980**  
DATE ENTERED JUN 20 1980

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC El Conquistador Water Tower  
AND/OR COMMON "El Con"

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Near the intersection of Broadway and Randolph Way  
CITY, TOWN Tucson VICINITY OF Pima  
STATE Arizona CODE 04 COUNTY Pima CODE 019

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Tucson, Arizona (Department of Water and Sewers)  
STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 27210  
CITY, TOWN Tucson VICINITY OF Arizona 85726

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. City of Tucson, Office of Water & Sewers and/or City Clerk  
STREET & NUMBER City Hall, 250 West Alameda Street  
CITY, TOWN Tucson STATE Arizona 85701

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The El Conquistador Water Tower consists of a 50,000 gallon-capacity water storage tank supported by steel girders, encased in a Spanish Colonial Revival style outer shell. The structure, which assumes the form of a truncated obelisk topped by an octagonal cupola, measures 30' square at the base and stands 90' tall. The exterior walls of the tower are constructed of sheet rock applied to a steel frame which is independent of the steel girders supporting the water tank, and are finished with tannish-brown colored stuccoed plaster.

Entry to the structure is by two large double doorways, one positioned at the center of the north facade at ground level, and one occupying a similar position on the south facade. Each set of double doors is framed by a rectangular surround embellished with Baroque ornamentation centered around a cartouche. The north and south facades each contain three rectangular, multi-paned windows spaced at regular intervals in a vertical alignment, while the east and west facades contain no openings. The top of the obelisk-shaped portion of the structure is marked by a parapet. Atop the obelisk is an octagonal cupola that features four semi-circular arched windows facing east, west, north and south. Each window rests on a balconet supported by scroll-shaped brackets, projecting from the parapet of the obelisk. Each window is framed by spiral columns topped by Corinthian capitals and elaborate finials, and embellished by ornate cartouches. Interspersed between the windows are four curvilinear-arched niches.

A terra-cotta tiled roof divided into eight segments covers the cupola, and rising from the apex of the roof is a 75-pound, four-feet-tall wrought iron weather vane depicting a prospector and his burro. The weather vane was removed by the City in 1978 after high winds weakened its bearings. A few months later, community outcry persuaded the City to replace the weather vane. The original weather vane, with a new mounting created from the front axle assembly of a 1955 Buick station wagon, is now back in place atop the "El Con."

The structure has remained substantially unaltered since 1932, and is in fairly good condition.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

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SPECIFIC DATES	1928	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Josias T. Joesler (architect) John W. Murphey (builder)
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The El Conquistador Water Tower, constructed in 1928, is a rare example of the application of Spanish Colonial Revival architectural design elements to an essentially ordinary and utilitarian engineering structure. Built to serve the water supply needs of two early Tucson residential areas, the "El Con" nurtured the growth of the Colonia Solana and El Encanto subdivisions. Neighborhood residents today are returning the favor by fighting to preserve this local landmark, which provides a strong identity to the surrounding neighborhoods although it no longer supplies them with water.

Tucson's existence has always been dependent on groundwater to supply the needs of its residents and businesses; in fact, it is the largest city in the country entirely dependent on groundwater for its survival. As desert land gave way to city streets, new wells had to be drilled and water storage facilities built to accommodate the citizens' needs. The "El Con" was constructed in 1928 near the intersection of Broadway and Randolph Way to provide water for the new subdivisions of Colonia Solana and El Encanto, under development by John W. Murphey, and the now-demolished El Conquistador Hotel, a prominent early resort located to the north of Colonia Solana. Murphey was a well-known Tucson land developer, who was particularly important in the development of the area west of the University of Arizona.

In addition to its obvious function as a water tower, the "El Con" was intended as a promotional device to attract attention to the new subdivisions and to facilitate the sale of lots and homes in the area. Complaints from neighborhood residents that the water tower was an eyesore prompted Murphey to effect cosmetic improvements to the structure. As a result, prominent Tucson architect Josias T. Joesler was engaged to design an exterior shell for the structure to make it compatible with the character of the adjacent neighborhoods, which boasted many stately Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival style homes. In 1932 the structure was encased with a Spanish Colonial Revival style outer shell, creating the appearance that the "El Con" essentially presents today.

Although the "El Con" has not functioned as a water storage facility since 1944, the City of Tucson Department of Water and Sewers continued to maintain the structure and uses it for equipment storage. Occasional threats to demolish the structure, prompted by rising maintenance costs, have been met with, and thwarted by, large-scale public opposition because the community considers the "El Con" to be an important local historic and architectural landmark worthy of preservation.



FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Interview with Mr. Lloyd Gay, May 13, 1980.

Arizona Daily Star, 2-29-29  
6-20-70  
10-31-75  
10-5-78  
10-28-78

Tucson Citizen, 10-16-75  
10-31-75  
1-20-76  
1-27-76  
5-16-78  
6-16-78