

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 96000309

Date Listed: 3/28/96


Tovrea Castle  
Property Name

Maricopa  
County

AZ  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
for Signature of the Keeper

3/28/96  
Date of Action

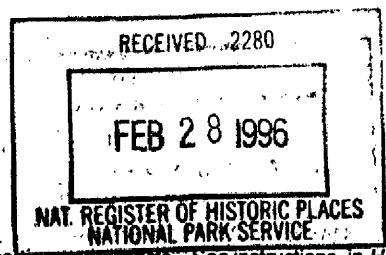
=====  
**Amended Items in Nomination:**

Tovrea Castle is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. It is not eligible for listing under Criterion D, as the nomination includes no description of archeological resources or research questions.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being nominated, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tovrea Castle (pronounced TOE-vree)  
other name/site number Originally "Carraro Heights"; "El Castillo"

2. Location

street & number: 5041 E. East Van Buren not for publication  
city/town: Phoenix vicinity  
state: Arizona code: AZ county: Maricopa code: 013 zip code: 85008

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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

JAMES W. SWAN AZEAPD 2/22/96  
Signature of certifying official Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Bertram J. Felt 3/28/96

**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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
6	2 buildings
3	0 sites
18	3 structures
0	0 objects
27	5 Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel = hotel  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling = house

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling = house  
WORK IN PROGRESS- adaptive reuse  
RECREATION& CULTURE/outdoor  
recreation = park  
RECREATION& CULTURE/museum =  
interpretive exhibit

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

MODERN MOVEMENT  
Other: Vernacular

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete masonry unit (manuf. on site)  
walls stucco on wood frame  
roof built-up roofing,  
  
other granite fieldstone, sheet metal, concrete,  
river cobbles

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet 7-1

**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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
Landscape Architecture; Archaeology

**Period of Significance**

1928 - 1945

**Significant Dates**

1928, 1930, 1931

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Not Applicable

**Cultural Affiliation**

Not Applicable

**Architect/Builder**

Alessio & Leo Carraro, designer and builders  
M. Moktatchev ("Mokta" the Russian gardener), landscape  
designer and builder  
H.D. Frankfurt, architect of schematic rendering

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

- State historic preservation office

**Name of Repository:**

City of Phoenix, Historic Preservation Office

Tovrea Castle  
Name of Property

Maricopa County, Arizona  
County, State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property 35.16

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
A	<u>12</u>	<u>409935</u>	<u>3701500</u>	C	<u>12</u>	<u>409525</u>	<u>3701060</u>
B	<u>12</u>	<u>409935</u>	<u>3701000</u>	D	<u>12</u>	<u>409525</u>	<u>3701505</u>

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet 10-1

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet 10-1

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Don W. Ryden, AIA - historical architect and Richard Lynch, historian and John Jacquemart, researcher  
organization Ryden Architects date June 1995  
street & number 645 N. 4th Ave., Suite A telephone 602/253-5381  
city or town Phoenix state: AZ zip code 85003

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative Black and White photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Phoenix (contact Historic Preservation Officer - Deborah Edge Abele)  
street & number 200 W. Washington, 4th Floor telephone 602/261-8699  
city or town Phoenix state Arizona zip code 85003

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**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instruction, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

#### SUMMARY

Anchored atop a rocky knoll in a 36-acre desert setting, the Tovrea Castle is a four-story tower constructed in stepped tiers whose parapet walls are surmounted by battlements. It is octagonal in plan and built on a basement excavated from the hilltop. The Castle is topped with a flagpole mounted upon a copper dome. The building is a vernacular interpretation and idealized image of a medieval European castle. The plaster-on-wood-frame exterior walls are smooth having almost no ornamentation. The simple wood casement windows are set flush to the wall surface and are not articulated with any details. A terrazzo staircase leads up a few steps to the front door, an unpretentious entry of glass and wood panels with matching narrow sidelights. Surrounding the Castle is a narrow concrete terrace with a rough stone wall at its outer edge.

The interior of the Castle simple as the exterior. Only the first floor living areas have decorative plaster embellished with stencilled designs on the walls and ceilings. A false fireplace is the focus of the Great Room. Wood floors are found throughout the building. The upper floors contain the bedrooms and bathrooms. The basement consists of a single large ballroom and a vault. Three tunnels allow exit from the basement through the hillside. Drawn plaster "stalagmites" finish the basement ceiling giving it the feeling of a natural grotto.

Built as an attraction and site amenity, an extensive cactus garden, highlighted with over 500 densely-planted saguaro cacti, covers the knoll below the Castle. Plants from arid regions throughout the world at one time were collected

here. Two other adjacent and lower knolls were levelled and their slopes veneered with smooth river cobbles. Numerous outbuildings and small cottages surround the Castle on the desert grounds. The entire site is lined with a masonry wall breached at the north and south by wrought iron gates. The property is in generally good condition and has had very little alteration since its construction.

#### THE CASTLE

The Tovrea Castle is a unique structure. Its "wedding cake" form and surrounding saguaro cactus garden have become parts of a landmark site which is identified with Phoenix's image. Although built as a hotel, it has always been used as a single family residence. Its high visibility and inaccessibility to the public for over 65 years have cloaked the crenelated tower with mystery and legend. Its true origins, purpose, and twists of fate are as intriguing as the myths.

#### Architectural Style

From a stylistic standpoint, the Tovrea Castle is difficult to describe; it appears quite out-of-step with the styles of homes and buildings which are its contemporaries. The Castle was built in 1930 at a time when Period Revival styles were popular. But the Castle does not neatly fit into the Spanish Colonial, Tudor, or any other well-known revivalist styles.

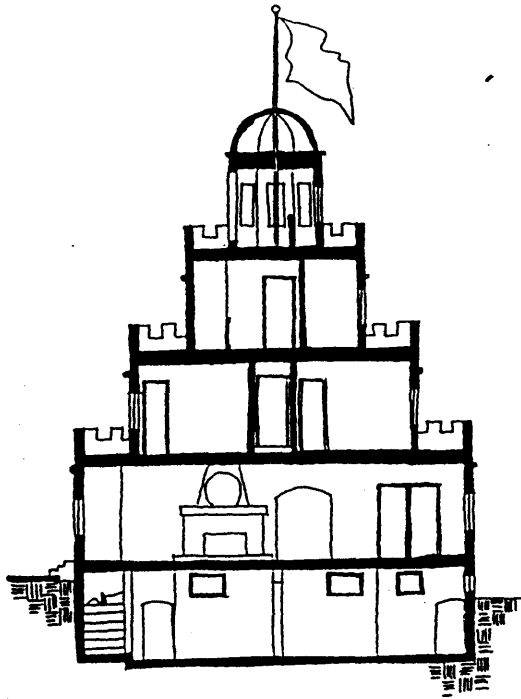
A preliminary sketch of the Castle was prepared by local architect H. D. Frankfurt for Alessio Carraro, owner, early in the development of the property. It appeared as a captioned illustration in the Phoenix newspaper, The

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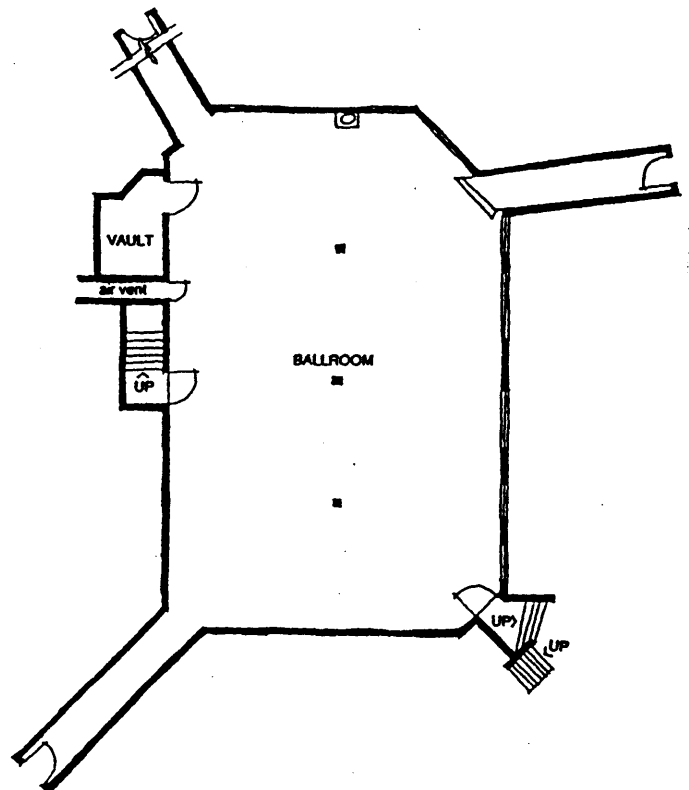
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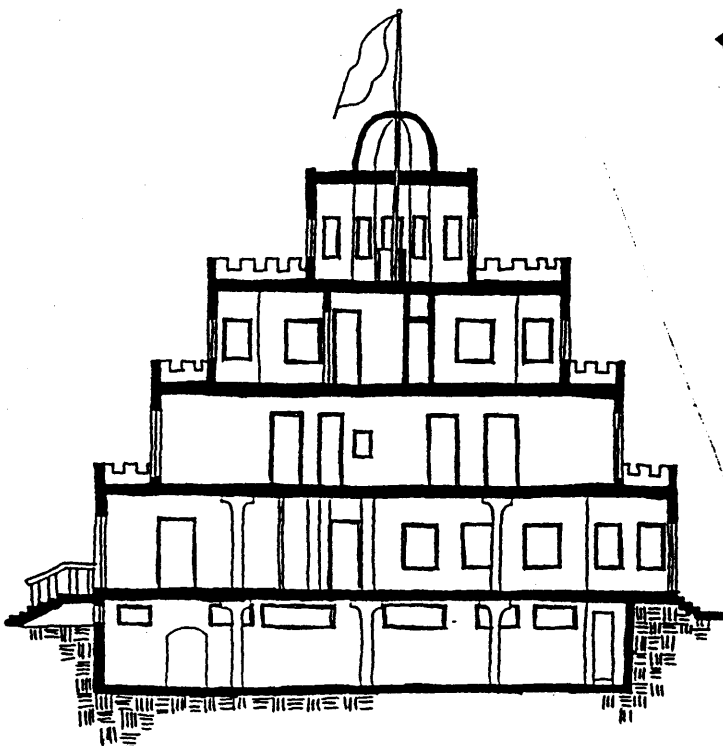
Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ



SECTION A-A



BASEMENT



SECTION B-B



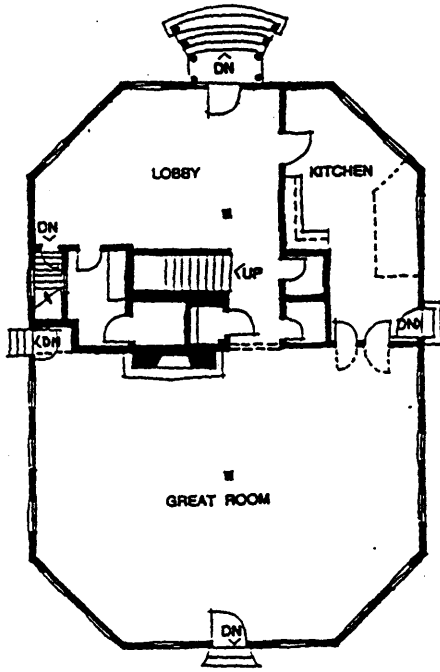
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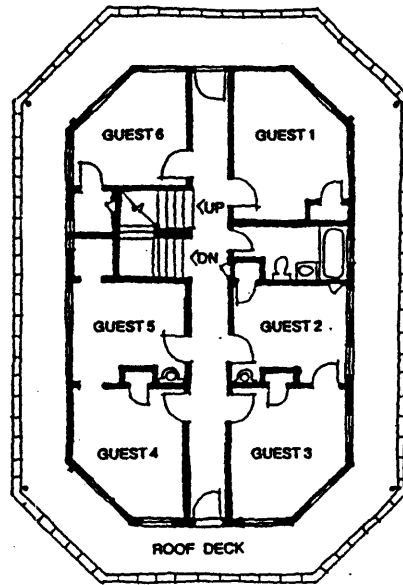
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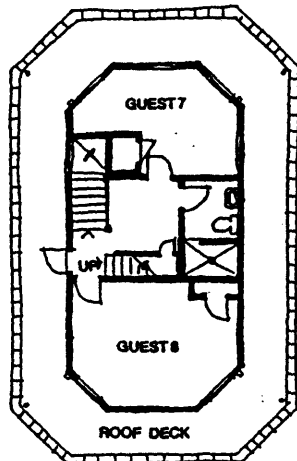
Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ



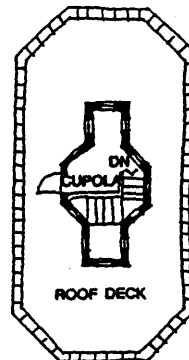
FIRST FLOOR



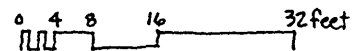
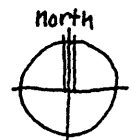
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR





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Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

Arizona Republican (10 November 1929, Sec. 2, Pg. 12), announcing Carraro's intention to develop a small hotel. The drawing of what appears to be a three-tiered Italian Renaissance Revival palace bears little resemblance to the building actually constructed. Carraro evidently adopted the essence of the design concept, a bi-axially symmetrical ziggurat, without executing the stylistic details. Carraro built the Castle without benefit of professionally prepared construction drawings.

The layout, massing, and simple, handmade quality of the Castle at Carraro Heights, being the personal expression of its builder, give the structure a sense of the Vernacular more than of any other identifiable high style. Except for a few cast plaster cartouches applied above entry doors and the terrazzo stairs and porch, the stuccoed building is virtually devoid of any decorative details. Its visual impact relies primarily on its silhouette seen from a distance rather than on finely crafted details with historical associations. Seen from afar the building inspires the romantic connotations of a medieval castle without actually replicating one in detail.

### Building Massing

The Tovrea Castle is located atop a small rock knoll rising from the rolling desert floor which drains to the dry Salt River bed one-half mile to the south. The building takes the form of a four-tiered tower, with each tier smaller than the one below, creating a series of roof decks enclosed by crenelated parapets.

The castle is well-integrated into the hilltop. A concrete terrace immediately adjoins the building on all sides, enclosed by a stone wall. Outside the stone wall, the site drops steeply, accessed by any of several sets of steps. This area outside the wall is landscaped with stone river

cobbles bordering the walks and drives and facing parts of the hillside. This area is also the site of the extensive cactus gardens. At the east side of the house, near the base of the hill, are several landscape elements, including a patio, reflecting pool, aviary, and other features such as a game court.

### Floor Plan, Exterior, and Interior Features

The floor plan of the building can be described as an elongated octagon. The uppermost story is topped with a sheet metal dome with side vaults, capped with a flagpole. Additionally, the building has a full basement roughly the same size as the first floor.

The simple exterior has wood multi-light casement windows placed around the building on each floor. Wall surfaces are, as a rule, stuccoed. Wide terrazzo steps lead up to the first floor entry, which faces north toward Van Buren Street. Three other minor entries are provided as well.

From the basement, three "tunnels" lead to the outside partway down the hill. A fourth exit leads up a short run of stairs to the terrace level.

Structurally, the Castle is built of wood frame platform construction. Each floor is built directly atop the "roof" of the one below, which is treated as a platform to support all the stories above. Because of this approach, very few structural elements align vertically, and plumbing and electrical systems must take circuitous routes to travel between floors.

The first floor of the building contains the common public spaces, and is the most decorative. First floor rooms include the reception room, a spacious lobby/dining

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Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

room, the kitchen, separate lavatory and toilet rooms, and several closets. The interior finishes at the first floor include wood trim features artificially grained and wall and ceiling surfaces of heavily textured plaster and embellished with stencilled borders. The remarkable ceiling and wall finish has a deep, rich coloration achieved by mixing and overlapping several coats of integrally colored plaster. Decorative Art Deco light fixtures are found throughout the first floor. A large, decorative fireplace graces the interior wall of the lobby/dining room. Its terrazzo and patterned stucco imitate coursed stone. Above the fireplace is a large relief sculpture medallion of a 1920s dancing flapper.

A three-foot-wide wooden stairway leads up to the second floor. The character of the second floor is much simpler than the first with fewer decorative elements. Second floor rooms include six guestrooms, with several arranged in suites, and a bathroom. The floor plan takes the form of a double-loaded corridor. A door at each end of the corridor leads to the roof deck which circumscribes the second floor.

A narrower stairway leads up to the third floor. This floor is comprised of only a common bathroom and two guestrooms arranged around a central circulation space. Finishes and character are similar to those of the second floor. A single door from the central hall accesses the roof deck, which once again circumscribes the floor.

Mounting yet another flight of stairs, one reaches the fourth floor cupola. The fourth floor includes only a tiny interior landing with an access door to the uppermost roof deck. A stroll around the deck presents unobstructed panoramic views of the entire distant horizon. From this deck the flag is hoisted and lowered on the dome's eight-

foot steel pipe flagpole.

The interior access to the basement is through the reception room by a concrete stairway. The basement consists mostly of one large room, interrupted only by three plastered wood columns with brackets which support the first floor. The floor is concrete and the ceiling is covered with heavy, pulled plaster which looks like thick meringue. The walls are simply plastered concrete block. There are four exits out to the hillside. Each tunnel is vaulted, with head clearance in the center just over six feet high. A black, steel bank vault door, complete with working combination lock, is found on the west wall securing the storage room/wine cellar.

### Integrity of the Castle

The interior of the castle is virtually as Alessio Carraro constructed it in 1930. The remarkably intact interior is marred only by areas of deterioration from water or vandalism damage and, in a few cases, by removal of a minor element such as door hardware.

The building exterior is generally intact, but suffers from poor maintenance prior to recent acquisition by the City of Phoenix. Most of the window sashes have been replaced with single pane reflective glass. Two additional generations of stucco surfacing have been applied to the original walls. Otherwise the building's exterior has sustained only minor alterations such as the loss of light fixtures which have not substantially affected its integrity.

Most alterations, except for window replacements and removal of site fencing, were made by Della Tovrea at an early date, probably prior to World War II. The Tovrea additions to the site include the reflecting pool, pergola, rose garden, aviary and concrete patio. Della also had

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Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

the original hilltop rail fences replaced with stone walls and the decomposed granite terrace paved with concrete. Leo Tovrea remembers that Mrs. Tovrea often called on him and his father, Alessio, to come back to the property to make repairs for her or to help her maintain the cactus gardens. Thus even after Carraro had sold the Castle to the Tovreas, he continued to work on it in a limited way.

### SITE FEATURES

#### Landforms

The Sonoran Desert setting of the Tovrea Castle is generally characterized by graded knolls and by more than 500 giant saguaros that remain today from the once extensive cactus gardens. The knolls and the tall saguaros combine with the Castle itself to result in one of the most visually unique historic resources in Phoenix. Surrounding the knolls are rolling washes and interfluves sparsely covered with native palo verde trees, and creosote bushes.

The prominent granite ridge of the site was dramatically altered by the earthmoving activities of Alessio Carraro who created three large earthen platforms by leveling granite knolls, one of which serves as the building pad of the Castle itself. The other two platforms are void of development, but remain as important forms in the landscape of the site.

The driveway grade is another visually prominent landform on the site. It is a long earthen ramp about 300 feet in length shaped from the natural granite ridge. The driveway ramp makes the grade transition from the street to the top of the knoll upon which the Castle is sited.

These four landforms are the most significant topographical features on the site. The surrounding rolling desert remains largely undisturbed except for the clearing of some native vegetation that once grew there and some minor backfill.

As a method of erosion control and as a highly visible landscape feature, the slopes of the platforms and the driveway ramp were veneered by hand with large river stone cobbles gathered from the nearby Salt River bed. Randomly placed gaps in the cobblestone surface served as planters for individual specimen cacti. Originally painted white, this rip-rap stone surface now exhibits a natural finish due to weathering of the oil-base paint. Except for its color, the rip-rap veneer surface retains its original integrity.

### ROADS AND PATHS

Carraro's decorative treatment of the borders of certain roads and paths give them particular architectural character. Additionally the manner of integrating the entry driveway and upper and lower loop roads into the knolls are very important to the character of the Castle and cactus gardens. The roads and paths consist of smoothly graded decomposed granite native to the site. Many of them are edged with cobblestones or tan concrete bricks made by Carraro on site from native crushed granite. The roads and paths are generally in good condition with a moderate amount of erosion which can be readily repaired and controlled. These features retain their original integrity.

### PERIMETER WALLS AND GATES

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Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

Features which are as prominent as the Castle and cactus garden are the perimeter walls and gates. Masonry walls surround the entire 36-acre parcel. The walls are about five feet high and undulate vertically with the topography. Local mason Lawrence Powers was hired by Carraro to build the perimeter walls as well as other site retaining walls and the Castle's basement walls. Powers gathered rough granite stones from the desert for the two street frontage walls. For the less visible east and west walls Powers salvaged broken chunks of concrete slabs removed from Washington Street during a road improvement project.

At the two entrances to the property, the walls are laid out in semicircles which terminate in large rock pillars approximately four feet square and seven feet high forming an opening of twelve feet for vehicular access. The pillars are crowned with a corbelled stone coping. A pair of wrought iron gates secure the opening between the pillars.

The low-strength mortar originally used in construction of the walls has contributed to serious deterioration of several sections. The City of Phoenix has recently restored the fallen walls and has established a maintenance program. The walls now are in good condition and retain their original integrity.

### LANDSCAPING

#### Cactus Gardens

The densely planted stand of giant saguaros and remnants of the extensive cactus gardens, created by Carraro and M. Moktatchev the gardener, rival the Castle itself for their aesthetic and cultural value. The historic significance of the Castle is substantially increased by the

unparalleled character of the gardens both in their original appearance and in today's matured context. While planting the young giants, the garden's creators must have imagined the future visual effect of full-grown saguaros. It is remarkable that the gardens were completed before the Castle was begun, for it was, and still is, customary in the construction trade to finish the building before installing the landscaping.

The main cactus gardens were originally constructed around the Castle site below the upper terrace and extending to the entrance driveway at the foot of the knoll. Additional gardens were also placed in the vicinity of other accessory buildings. The original gardens totaled about 1-1/2 acres and included a wide variety of transplanted cacti, primarily Sonoran Desert natives such as the giant saguaro, ocotillo, barrel, prickly pear, organ pipe, and cholla, and, reportedly, imports from deserts around the world.

A cactus inventory in 1994 counted 536 surviving saguaros. This densely planted cactus forest of 12- to 20-foot tall adult plants are the survivors from the many hundreds of 1- to 5-foot tall saguaros transplanted by Carraro and Mokta. Saguaros can live to be over 200 years old. They usually do not sprout their characteristic "arms" until at least 50 years of age. Saguaros in nature seldom grow so close to one another as found at Tovrea Castle because of competition for precious desert rainwater. The remaining giant cacti have an important botanical value as a rare example of long-surviving saguaros densely transplanted onto a single site.

Many of the exotic imported cactus species have perished because they came from other biotic communities and could not survive the site's conditions without extensive

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Tovrea Castle  
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human care and maintenance. In addition to dehydration, many of the plants were lost to bacterial infection and forage predators such as jackrabbits and pack rats. The saguaros currently are in moderately healthy to unhealthy condition.

The City of Phoenix has embarked on a landscape stabilization program to save the surviving plant materials in anticipation of a garden restoration/interpretation project. In spite of the loss of most of the smaller, more fragile plants, the cactus gardens have retained a high level of integrity by virtue of the size and density of the saguaros and the good condition of the landscape features such as paths and rock borders.

### **Ponds**

In the cactus garden two small, free-formed concrete-lined pools (6'x10'x2' deep) flank the driveway. These rock-edged water features resemble natural desert pools and were likely built by Carraro to attract wild birds and small mammals to the gardens. The concrete lining of the pools has cracked, but they nonetheless retain their original integrity.

### **Putting Green/Pool Table**

At the northeast edge of the cactus garden, Carraro built an unusual game court. A low, rectangular concrete block wall forms the sides of what essentially is a small putting green played as a large-scale pool table. Golf cups serve as the six pockets of the pool table. The original playing surface was a carefully manicured lawn. Although the southeast corner has collapsed and its lawn has died, the putting green/pool table retains its original integrity.

### **Retaining Walls**

At several locations around the Castle's hill and along the

driveway, Carraro had retaining walls constructed to hold the earth in place. These walls of various dimensions were built of site-manufactured concrete block of the same type used for the Castle basement and other outbuildings. The block was painted. The retaining walls are in good condition and have retained their original integrity.

### **Stairways**

Several wooden stairways were built by Carraro to link the highest terrace of the Castle knoll to lower driveways, patio, and the desert floor. The stairways consist of 2x12 stringers with similarly sized treads let into the wood. Wooden handrails on posts are anchored to the stringers. In most cases these stairways are set directly on the surface of the hillside and anchored to a concrete landing at head and foot. One such stairway at the south face of the Castle knoll has a lower concrete landing on which can still be seen the inscription "A. Carraro - 1929". The creator of the Castle signed his work on this slab. Although the wooden stairs have suffered deterioration from weathering they have retained their original integrity.

### **East Patio and Aviary**

Soon after acquiring the Castle in 1931, E.A. and Della Tovrea made additions and alterations to the gardens and adjacent grounds. The precise construction dates for the Tovrea-built features have not been determined, but physical evidence implies that they were completed before World War II.

A 30'x50' concrete patio was created on the east slope of the Castle platform by removing a portion of the cactus garden and hillside. The concrete slab is scored in a random pattern of rectilinear joints. At the center of the

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patio is a 4-foot diameter firepit made of granite masonry. Four benches surrounding the fire pit were fashioned from 12"x16" timbers. A concrete urn is found on each side of the stone/concrete steps that lead down to the driveway. The patio is bordered by low stone walls. At the four corners of the patio, mounted atop the walls, were decorative concrete lamp posts. Only one lamp post remains. At the south end of the patio a large shaded, wood frame aviary stands, where Della Tovrea kept many of her beloved birds.

### Reflecting Pool, Rose Garden, and Pergola

Across the loop road and below the patio a stone stairway leads down to the reflecting pool. Flanking the foot of the stairs were two cast concrete benches. The vandalized south bench lies in pieces at the east end of the garden.

The most prominent feature of Della Tovrea's east garden is the reflecting pool. Red clay bricks with site-manufactured tan concrete bricks were laid up as a low masonry rectangle, 12 feet by 60 feet, to create a shallow concrete-lined pool. Decorative cast concrete urns graced each corner. The pool served as a cool refuge and watering hole for Della's peacocks, a fish pond, and water lily garden.

The pool is in fair condition, having suffered from deterioration of the mortar joints, vandalism of the urns, and cracking of the concrete lining. In spite of these readily repairable deficiencies, the reflecting pool retains its character and integrity.

Immediately east of the reflecting pool on an axis perpendicular to it, can be seen twelve concrete post footings defining a rectangular area about 12 feet by 84

feet. These concrete footings indicate the likely presence of a lightweight pergola, shade structure, or bird aviary. It has been said that Della Tovrea kept as many as 200 birds and peacocks in cages in the garden. This missing structure may well have been such a birdcage. To date no documentary or photographic evidence can verify the true nature of this feature. Thus the surviving footings are important remnants which may help solve the mystery of this feature.

To complete the Tovreas' landscaping additions to the Castle, a rose garden was planted within concrete brick-lined beds flanking the length of the reflecting pool. No flowers have survived but the borders are intact. Mrs. Tovrea's oasis-like landscape creation was a dramatic contrast to Mr. Carraro's cactus concept.

### Castle Terrace and Stone Walls

Another Tovrea alteration to Carraro's landscape design was the introduction of a concrete slab atop the original gravel terrace embracing the Castle and the replacement of wood rail fences with rough granite walls around the terrace and beside the driveway.

Except at the north side of the Castle, the green-painted, scored concrete slab hugs the ziggurat's base. A narrow planter filled with cobbles separates the terrace slab from the base of the building. Likewise a wider planter forms an outer boundary of the terrace. Saguaros and other cacti fill the perimeter planters. The outer edge of the slab is defined by concrete bricks set in a sawtooth pattern.

Surrounding the terrace at the very edge of the Castle platform, stands a low granite wall of random rubble construction. It is capped with a concrete coping. Like the original rail fence, the stone wall is fitted with electrical

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conduit and ceramic light sockets. The wall was erected around several saguaros, some of which have been removed, leaving curved niches. Cast concrete lamp posts and urns are integrated into the wall as decorative elements. Other features built into the wall include a school bell, cast concrete benches, and stones with imitation petroglyphs. A pair of cylindrical marble bollards separate the terrace from the driveway turnaround. The terrace and stone walls are in fair to good condition, retaining their historic integrity.

### Cactus Nursery

Located near the historic construction and maintenance area on flat land northwest of the Castle is the cactus nursery where "Mokta" the gardener stockpiled his cacti before again transplanting them to the garden. The dozens of saguaros here today evidently never were moved to the cactus gardens. This feature is significant as evidence of the methods used in creating the extensive gardens.

### Dovecote

Carraro built an elaborate wooden dovecote in which to raise pigeons for food. It contained scores of nesting boxes arranged in several layers. Although the dovecote has fallen into ruins, the pieces are sufficiently intact to allow documentation of the feature for a future reconstruction.

### Animal Cage

The hexagonal animal cage, built of wood and wire mesh, stands about six feet high. It is divided into two tiers, the upper compartment contained Carraro's pet squirrel brought from San Francisco, and the lower section was home for the desert jackrabbit captured on the site. The animal cage now lies on its side at the edge of the rose

garden. The damaged, overturned cage retains its original integrity and could be restored.

### Concrete Foundation at the North Platform

At the center of the north platform is a square concrete foundation whose original function remains uncertain. The type of concrete and its weathered condition makes it appear to have been constructed shortly after the completion of the Castle. Tovrea family tradition and documentary evidence implies that it may be the abandoned remnant of E.A. Tovrea's personal pyramid mausoleum project.

E.A. Tovrea's last will and testament, dated 7 March 1931, specified that he be buried in a blue granite mausoleum constructed at Greenwood Cemetery in Phoenix. Tovrea died unexpectedly in the Castle, on 7 February 1932, several months after he and Della moved there. He was buried at Greenwood Cemetery beneath a large stone monument.

An unrecorded plat dated 17 May 1932 delineated a large parcel at the north end of the property (which included the north platform) to be dedicated as a memorial park for his mausoleum. Although the plat did not identify the location of a proposed memorial structure, it appears that the center of the platform would be the most likely placement for such a monument. One would naturally suppose that his widow, Della, initiated the pyramid mausoleum and memorial park and constructed its foundation (if that indeed is what it is). Why the project was abandoned is not known.

### Integrity of the Garden and Landscape Features

Much of the plant material of the gardens has been lost to drought and lack of maintenance, however the largest and

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most hardy cactus have survived. The forest of saguaros was historically, and is presently, the most visually significant character-defining element of the Carraro native plant gardens. The saguaros, barrel cacti, and organ pipe cacti retain the essence of the Castle's historic setting.

The path borders and hillside veneers of river cobbles are virtually unaltered from their date of construction. Only the dazzling white paint has weathered from the rocks' surface. Other cactus garden features such as ponds, putting green/pool table, and stairways have weathered to varying degrees but retain their original integrity from the Carraro era.

Likewise, most of the Tovrea additions and alterations to the Carraro garden features have survived intact but with minor damage. The patio and rose garden complex at the east side of the Castle knoll retains its historic integrity. The roses and other plants introduced by Della Tovrea have died, but the planters, pool and site walls remain to define the extent of her lush garden of non-native species.

Based upon existing documentary information, restoration of the extant Carraro and Tovrea landscape features and re-establishment of the historic plant species could readily be accomplished.

## OUTBUILDINGS

### North Wood Frame House

The north house is one-story and rectangular in plan. It is of wood frame construction and sheathed with painted boards and battens. The house has a low-pitched side-gable roof sheathed with rolled asphalt roofing. There are two wood paneled entry doors accessed from an entry

porch. The porch, now missing, was supported on 4-inch-square wood posts. The windows of this house are wood casement. The building has retained most of its original integrity and is in fair condition. At the rear of the house is the site of its privy. Trash from this feature may offer clues to the identity of the occupants of the house.

### Well House

Of vital importance to the development of the property was reliable, pure water. The water well house is a one-story, square building with a pyramidal roof. It is located on a river cobble-faced terrace west of the Castle. The primary construction material is concrete block which was manufactured on the site. The roofing consists of standing V-seamed galvanized sheet metal. A wood frame, louvered ventilator crowns the apex of the pyramidal roof. The wood casement windows are set in openings spanned by segmental arches. The window glass is broken. The five-panel wood entry door is weathered. Portions of the original well pump still stand inside. The building has retained its original integrity and is in good condition.

### Machine Shop

The machine shop is a large, one-story wood frame building sheathed with galvanized corrugated sheet metal. The roof is a medium-pitched front gable with metal roofing matching the wall sheathing. A wood vent appears in each gable end. The main entry is a pair of large, hinged doors sheathed with corrugated metal. The building retains its original integrity and is in good condition.

### Storage Shed

The collapsed storage shed was a one-story, single-room building. It was constructed of wood frame sheathed with



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corrugated metal. The roof is a low-pitched gable with corrugated metal roofing. The building is now a ruin, but enough of the building elements are intact to allow measurement and documentation of its original form.

### Gasoline Pump House

Early in the initial construction project Carraro built a gasoline pump house and underground tank for the fueling of his earthmoving equipment and perhaps for his rock crusher and concrete block machine which were once located in the clearing north of the pump house and machine shop.

The small building is constructed of site-manufactured concrete blocks and is roofed with flat-seamed galvanized sheet metal. The faded ghost of a sign painted on the south slope of the roof once advertized "Red Crown Gasoline." No pump equipment remains in the building, but the exterior retains its original integrity.

### South Wood Frame House

The south house is a one-story, single-room building. It is constructed of wood framing sheathed with boards and battens. The roof is pyramidal with standing V-seamed, galvanized metal roofing which matches that on the well house. The double-hung wood windows have a one-over-one pattern. The house retains its integrity and is in poor condition. Its associated privy pit and animal pen or garden plot may contain archaeological evidence related to the subsistence and lifeways of the house's inhabitants.

### Dynamite Dugout

At the west edge of the property and isolated from the rest of the maintenance and residential areas are the ruins of the dynamite dugout. Excavated from the head of a small wash, the dugout was framed with heavy timbers

and roofed with wood sheathing and corrugated sheet metal. This is where Carraro stored the explosives he used for rock blasting at the site. The roof has collapsed into the dugout. Archaeological testing of this feature may provide artifacts which verify the oral histories which described the materials and methods of constructing the Castle.

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**EVALUATION OF EXISTING ELEMENTS**

**Contributing Elements**

(Carraro-built elements are contributors to the Commerce and Landscape Architecture contexts.)

**Hotel/Castle**

**Perimeter masonry wall and entry gates**

**Roads and paths**

Entry driveway to hilltop  
Upper and lower loop roads  
Rock-lined roads and paths

**Cactus gardens and associated elements**

Cactus garden  
East and west ponds  
Animal cage  
Putting green/pool table  
Retaining walls and stairways

**Outbuildings and site elements**

North wood frame house and privy  
Well house  
Machine shop  
Gasoline pump house  
Cactus nursery area  
North stone-veneered platform  
South stone-veneered platform  
South wood frame house and privy

(Tovrea-built elements are contributors to the Landscape Architecture context.)

**Landscape and site elements**

East patio and aviary  
Reflecting pool and rose garden  
Stone walls and terrace at Castle  
Concrete foundation atop north platform

**Non-contributing Elements**

(Modern element)

**Billboard**

(Carraro-built elements which are in ruined condition)

**Outbuildings and site elements**

Storage Shed  
Dynamite dugout  
Dovecote

(Tovrea-built element which is mostly missing)

**Landscape and site elements**

Pergola footings

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EXISTING ELEMENTS

Carraro-built elements

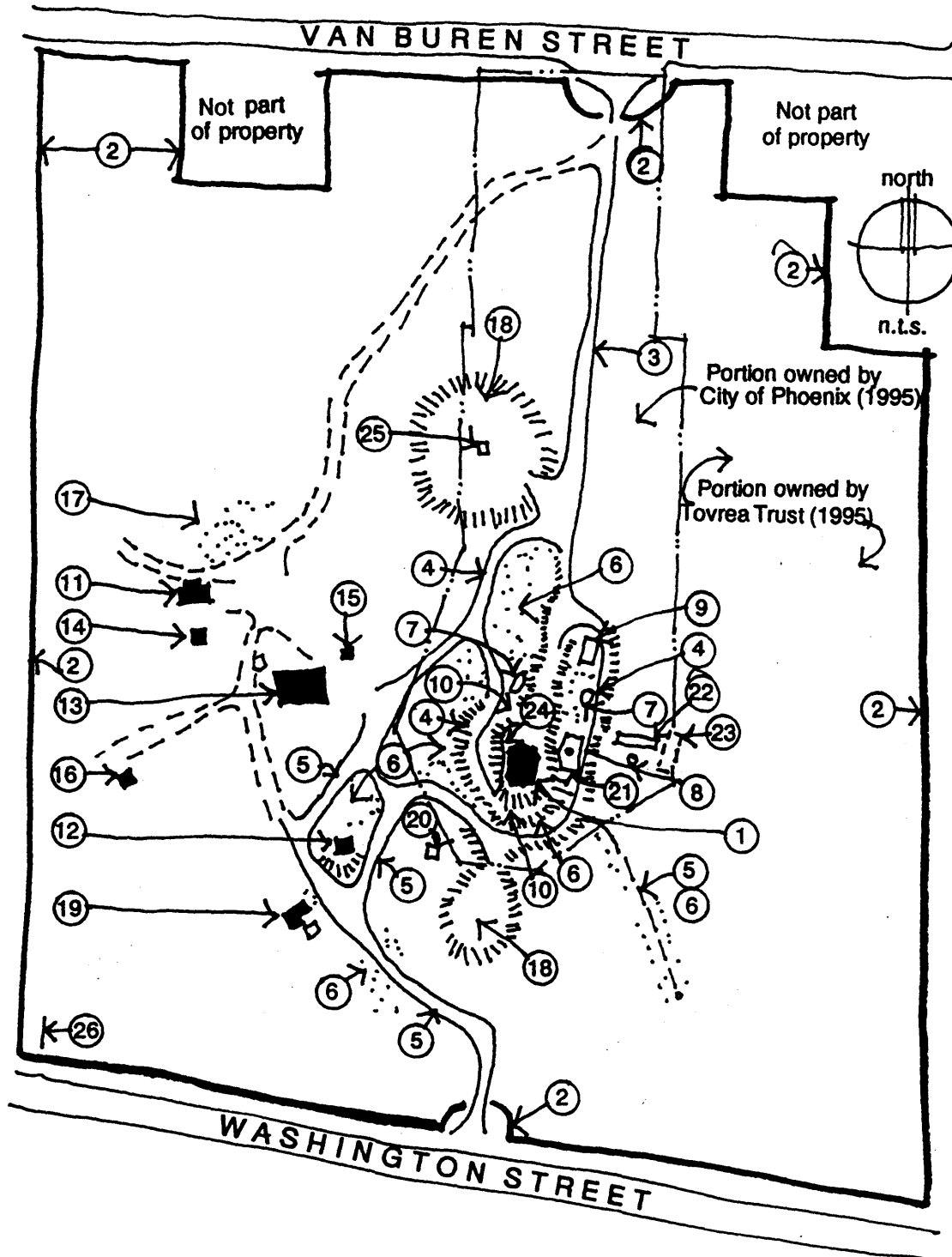
1. Hotel/Castle
2. Perimeter masonry wall and entry gates
3. Entry driveway to hilltop
4. Upper and lower loop roads
5. Rock-lined roads and paths
6. Cactus garden
7. East and west ponds
8. Animal cage
9. Putting green/pool table
10. Retaining walls and stairways
11. North wood frame house and privy
12. Well house
13. Machine shop
14. Storage shed
15. Gasoline pump house
16. Dynamite dugout
17. Cactus nursery area
18. North and south stone-veneered platforms
19. South wood frame house and privy
20. Dovecote

Tovrea-built elements

21. East patio and aviary
22. Reflecting pool and rose garden
23. Pergola footings
24. Stone walls and concrete terrace around Castle
25. Concrete foundation atop north platform

Modern element

26. Billboard



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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### SUMMARY

The Tovrea Castle, its cactus gardens, and its associated site features, constructed by Alessio Carraro between 1928 and 1930, are significant under the National Register Criterion "A" as an example of the resort real estate developments which competed for success in the Salt River Valley during the first half of the twentieth century.

The property's development was based on the concept of a destination resort hotel adjacent to residential parcels offered for sale. This development project emulated other successful resorts such as the Arizona Biltmore and, as such, is important to the history of real estate development in Phoenix and the Valley. That the concept was executed on a shoestring budget and that it was never completed as originally envisioned illustrates the hardships many landowners faced in the competitive land development market and in the cyclical nature of growth in the Salt River Valley.

The original Carraro cactus gardens and the additions and alterations to the gardens and grounds, as initiated by E.A. and Della Tovrea between 1931 and 1945, are significant under Criterion "C" as an example of private landscape architecture design in Arizona during the first half of the twentieth century. The design approach of the Tovrea landscape development, in which a formal layout and non-native plants were employed, is in dramatic contrast with the original Carraro design concept of informal site plan and low-water-use native plants. This single site demonstrates two distinct approaches found in Arizona to landscape architecture in a private setting

during the early and mid-twentieth century.

Furthermore, the site's archaeological features and ruined architectural features related to both contexts, real estate development and landscape architecture, are significant under Criterion "D" for their likelihood of providing additional information supporting those contexts.

Tovrea Castle is nominated at the local level of significance.

#### INTRODUCTION

Tovrea Castle, one of the most unusual buildings in Arizona, is surrounded by mystery and legend. Although its association with the Tovrea name is well-known, the circumstances of the Castle's construction, the identity of its creator, and the original intention of its function are commonly unknown. The true story of the Castle's connection with the Tovrea family has been obscured by many delightful folkstories. Contrary to one oft-repeated romantic tale, the building was not built as a replica of their wedding cake by Mr. Tovrea as a gift for his new bride. The paradox of this fantasy castle's high visibility and its 65 years of public inaccessibility has made the building a well-known, much-loved, and misunderstood local landmark.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESORT REAL ESTATE CONCEPT IN THE SALT RIVER VALLEY

It was April 1928 when the "Sunbelt" states were in the

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embrace of the national economic boom and land developers were creating destination resorts in Florida, California, and Arizona. In Florida, the resort hotels of Miami, Miami Beach, Palm Beach, and Coral Gables had newly appeared creating an "American Riviera" along sixty miles of Gold Coast beaches. In southern California, the Santa Barbara Biltmore had opened in January of 1928, and Charlie Chaplin and Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle had recently opened their Montecito Inn on the Old Coast Road near the palatial Biltmore.

In Arizona agricultural and copper production reached the highest levels since the World War I. In Phoenix the \$2,500,000 Hotel Westward Ho had begun to rise on Central Avenue, and the \$350,000 Hotel San Carlos had been open for two months. Outside of town Paul Litchfield planned to open the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company's Wigwam Resort to the public for the first time. The McArthur Brothers announced their intention to construct the Arizona Biltmore on six hundred acres of irrigated desert near the foot of Squaw Peak.

Phoenix' future looked promising in 1928 with its new hotels and resorts, new public buildings, and new subdivisions. The Southern Pacific main line had arrived in 1926, and tri-weekly air service to Los Angeles had begun in 1927. Downtown already had been graced by new monuments to commerce such as the Heard, Walker, Ellis, Luhrs, and Mountain States Telephone buildings. The Security Building, the Orpheum Theater, and the Phoenix/Maricopa County Building were under construction. Between 1925 and 1929 more than 2,100 new homes would stretch the boundaries of the city.

In addition to the Wigwam and the Arizona Biltmore, the Valley already boasted of the Ingleside Inn, the first resort

in the Salt River Valley (1909); the stately San Marcos Hotel in Chandler (1912); and the Jokake (pronounced joe-COCK-ee) Inn and Tea Room, which had opened to winter visitors in the fall of 1927. Growing numbers of rich winter visitors were buying homes and becoming winter residents. In response to this trend, the Biltmore, San Marcos, and Ingleside all had real estate developments associated with them.

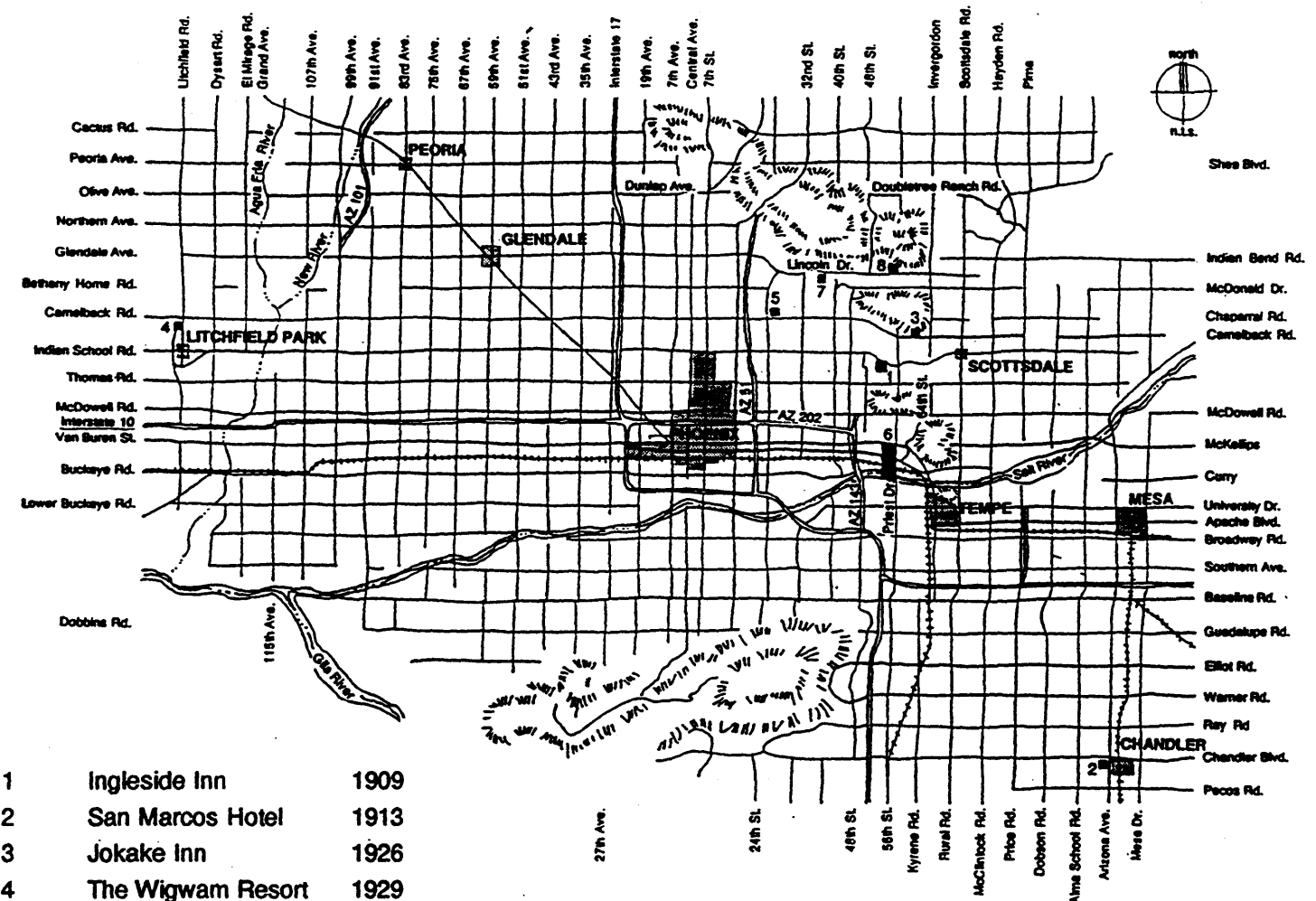
For the country as a whole, and for Phoenix and the "Valley of the Sun" in particular, it was a time for optimism and opportunity. It seemed to Alessio Carraro to be just the right moment to enter the booming real estate development market of Phoenix. So in April of 1928 Carraro, with his fifteen-year-old son Leo, drove from San Francisco to Phoenix in his 1927 Buick to have a look at some acreage recommended by a friend.

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- |   |                   |      |
|---|-------------------|------|
| 1 | Ingleside Inn     | 1909 |
| 2 | San Marcos Hotel  | 1913 |
| 3 | Jokake Inn        | 1926 |
| 4 | The Wigwam Resort | 1929 |
| 5 | Arizona Biltmore  | 1929 |
| 6 | TOVREACASTLE      | 1930 |
| 7 | Hermosa Inn       | 1935 |
| 8 | Camelback Inn     | 1936 |

Note: Shaded areas indicate approximate city limits of 1930.

RESORT-RELATED RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT 1909-1936

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### DESIGN FORMULA FOR HOTEL/HOMESITE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Alessio Carraro, who had already successfully developed one property in California, undoubtedly was familiar with the formula for success employed by the resort hotel/homesite developers in California and Arizona when he evaluated the raw property which would someday become known as Tovrea Castle. With the natural, rolling desert site shimmering before him, Carraro could readily imagine all the design elements typically found at luxurious resort hotel/residential real estate developments. It appeared to him that this site possessed exactly what he needed to make a real estate marketing success.

The proven development formula began with a visually stunning natural setting which likely was associated with a well-known local landmark. The large property should be on the outskirts of a thriving city with easy access on a good road. A reliable source of pure water would be essential. The site should have a prominent location for the centerpiece hotel. The location of the hotel usually took advantage of visibility inward from its approach as well as expansive views outward from the hotel.

The hotel itself would set the tone and quality for the entire development through its architectural style, theme or motif, and craftsmanship. The hotel would be enhanced by special landscaping and site features which extend the design motifs throughout or around the entire property. Often the appeal of the resort hotel would be augmented by the addition of recreational amenities.

Once the hotel and its immediate grounds were established as the initial attraction for winter visitors, homesites would be offered for those same would-be

winter residents. Residential parcels of various sizes and prices would be surveyed and staked out surrounding the hotel in a sensitive manner which responded to the topography and views. Sometimes a fence or landscaping barrier would be built around the residential area, probably more for a sense of exclusivity than for security.

If all were to go well, the parcels would be sold for a lucrative profit and luxurious homes would soon appear. Design guidelines, or at least minimum requirements for size and construction cost, would be established to assure high-quality design. Hopefully each new homeowner, trying to outdo his previously established neighbor, would build a bigger and better home. This escalation of opulence would assure that the project's quality and its property values be maintained or even increased.

Carraro had seen this development formula work in California and locally in the Salt River Valley after his first visit to Phoenix in 1923. Now, in the Phoenix boom times of the late 1920s, he saw an opportunity for hotel/homesite development, slightly down-scaled, which could satisfy an untapped market of potential homebuilders. Using the finest Sunbelt resorts as models for his more modest approach to development, and relying solely on his personal bankroll for funding, Carraro self-assuredly and naively entered the competitive Phoenix real estate development game.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOVREA CASTLE PROPERTY

#### Carraro's Dream

In 1928 Alessio Carraro came back to the Valley a second time to look at another property recommended by his

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Phoenix friend Ben Pasqualetti. Carraro had met the Phoenix man when Pasqualetti came to visit his daughter who rented an apartment from Carraro in San Francisco. Carraro owned the building at 3401 Mission where the young Miss Pasqualetti resided and where he operated his sheet metal business, New Mission Sheet Metal Works, on the ground floor. Alessio, his wife Sylvia, and their two sons, Olivio (Leo) and Louis, lived on the second floor next to Miss Pasqualetti. When Ben Pasqualetti came to visit, the two Italian fathers became acquainted and then friends.<sup>1</sup>

When Pasqualetti wrote to Carraro in 1923 recommending the purchase of land in Phoenix, Alessio came to investigate. He was very interested in development, but this property did not suit his needs. And so he returned to San Francisco to continue building his sheet metal business into the second largest of its kind in that city. He sold the business in 1925 and semi-retired, playing the stock market and working on the development of a canyon property in California which he had bought. He completed extensive site work to clear trees, install a sewer, and backfill the ravine creating a flat piece of ground for a subdivision. Without further development, Carraro sold it and moved on to other interests.<sup>2</sup>

### The Natural Setting and Site Features

In 1928 Pasqualetti wrote again about more acreage. This time Carraro drove to Phoenix with his son Leo to measure the possibilities of the property east of Phoenix on the Tempe Road. The granite knolls down the middle of the property presented outstanding viewpoints in all directions of the mountains surrounding the Salt River Valley. Brush-filled drainage courses required grading to create homesites. He reasoned that the natural desert terrain with granite knolls would be easy to develop for a

subdivision compared to the deep ravine he had just leveled.<sup>3</sup>

Alessio Carraro saw great development potential here near the Papago Saguaro National Monument, a tourist destination which would attract many visitors to the vicinity of his development project. The Papago Saguaro National Monument was discontinued by the National Park Service in the 1930s, after Carraro sold the Castle, and the land was turned over to the State of Arizona. Today this property contains, among other uses, the Desert Botanical Gardens, the Phoenix Zoo, and Papago (Municipal) Park.

Carraro decided to enter the Phoenix real estate market and to invest some of the money earned from the sale of his business and the profitable trades made in the stock market. For an average cost of \$245 per acre, he purchased two parcels of land totaling 277 acres that stretched from the Tempe Road, the eastern extension of Van Buren Street, south to the middle of the dry Salt River bed. A significant piece of the property, which included the granite knolls and offered the most interesting and immediate development possibilities, was an approximately 40-acre parcel with 1,320 feet fronting on East Van Buren and already partially subdivided into a property called Warner Heights.<sup>4</sup>

The daughter of the original subdivider of the property, a Mrs. Warner-Smith, lived with her son and granddaughter in a simple frame house atop the small central knoll. She invited Carraro to have a drink of water from her well when he came to inspect the property, and that act of courtesy effectively sealed the bargain; it was some of the finest, purest water Alessio had ever tasted.<sup>5</sup>



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### The Subdivision Survey and Sitework

Once Carraro had purchased the property, he hired Harry Jones, a local civil engineer, to resurvey the forty acres containing Warner Heights into a new subdivision. The new subdivision was to be named Carraro Heights, and Carraro's son, Leo, worked the transit pole in assisting Jones with the new survey. Although Leo Carraro remembers the plotting of approximately 160 lots, a plat map of Carraro Heights was apparently never filed with the Maricopa County Recorder.<sup>6</sup>

Word of a new developer in the valley traveled quickly, and salesmen of all manner of goods came to call. A Caterpillar tractor salesman arrived one day with a slightly used machine and a potential method to pay for it. The Arizona Biltmore Hotel was then under construction on the desert eight miles northeast of Phoenix, and a construction contract had been let for a new 18-hole golf course for the resort. The hotel contractor needed earth-moving equipment, and Carraro could rent his CAT to him for \$30 a day. Alessio bought the tractor and took the advice, renting his machine to the golf course builder. To look after his investment, Carraro hired Barney Webb as driver-mechanic for the term of the project. Within sixty days the tractor had paid for itself.<sup>7</sup>

Carraro then turned his attention to the Carraro Heights property and retained Barney Webb to clear, level, shape, and fill the ground for homesites. He graded the rolling desert immediately around the knolls which themselves presented unique problems as homesites. A large quantity of dynamite was ordered to loosen the tops of the granite knolls for working into flat pads. Carraro bought a rock crusher to reduce the granite rubble to a usable size and made plans both to sell the crushed rock and use it on the grounds.<sup>8</sup>

About this time another salesman appeared and sold Alessio a machine to make building blocks out of the local decomposed granite. These blocks would be used in the forthcoming construction of the well house and the basement walls of the three-story hotel which would be the centerpiece of the new development. In addition the blocks would be used to build retaining walls and to line the driveway to and around the proposed hotel.

Within six months of his purchase of the real estate, Alessio Carraro learned that Maricopa County officials wanted to extend Washington Street eastward through his property. The new road would become the southern boundary of his new subdivision and would bisect the bulk of the remaining land giving him significantly more frontage on a major road. He welcomed the new thoroughfare, feeling it gave his property greater value.<sup>9</sup>

In developing Carraro Heights, the leveling of two knoll sites and the creation of the elaborate cactus gardens came first. Carraro blasted both the small knoll to the south of the central hill and the much larger knoll to the north of the central hill with dynamite and had them leveled with the Fresno scraper. The blasted material was separated, and the granite crushed and mounded for the mixing machine. Other loose material was scraped and moved to widen the knolls into oval platforms, and river cobbles were brought from the bed of the Salt River near the river bottom and 40th Street. Leo Carraro and Vernon Powers, the son of a local brick mason, collected the cobbles and put them in place on the sloping sides of the platforms to give them definition and to keep the loose fill in place. The largest cobbles surrounded the base of the two platforms and progressively smaller stones were added as they approached the platform lip. When they were finished laying the stones, the cobbles were painted

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with white oil-based paint. For this and all other applications of river cobbles in the development of the property, Leo and Vernon hauled 2,600 truckloads of stones from the river.<sup>10</sup>

### The Cactus Gardens

During the early stages of the development of Carraro Heights, quite likely the summer of 1928, a Russian gardener arrived at Carraro's doorstep with another proposal for the developer. His name was "Mokta", a pronounceable nickname for M. Moktatchev, and he proposed adding large, extensive cactus gardens to the development as a drawing card for tourists, winter visitors, and interested residents, who all were potential homesite buyers. Cacti are a natural landscape element in the desert southwest; they would thrive in their natural element on the property; and they would provide a dramatic, eye-catching tableau in massed formal gardens around the central knoll. Again, Carraro liked the idea and hired Mokta to be his landscape architect, gardener, and cactus procurer.

In clearing the forty acres of brush and desert foliage, cacti were spared and either left in place as plantings for platted homesites or transplanted to a nursery area on the property to be used later at other homesites or in the formal gardens. During the summers of 1928 and 1929, the gardens themselves were developed. This was the only time of year Mokta would transplant cactus. During the other three seasons, cacti absorb and store more moisture than they transpire, and are therefore heavier and susceptible to internal damage if moved. During the summer, however, the stored water is utilized and transpired, leaving the plants lighter and more easily moved. Mokta worked his magic during the dry, hot Phoenix summer.<sup>11</sup>

Always seen about with a pipe hooked from the right corner of his mouth, the Russian gardener began gathering every type of cactus indigenous to Arizona's deserts. Carraro obtained a collection permit from the State of Arizona, and Mokta scoured the desert around Phoenix, along the Verde River near crumbling Fort McDowell and up the old Black Canyon highway toward Mayer. Alessio and Leo also became involved in the hunting expeditions, learning about cactus from Mokta and excavating specimens wherever they found them. Old Fort McDowell proved an especially good location for saguaros and provided many young plants for the gardens and the nursery.<sup>12</sup>

Leo Carraro remembers driving his father along the Black Canyon road looking for cactus and being admonished not to drive over twenty-five miles per hour. It was an all-day trip into the foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains, and the Carraros spent the night in the White House Hotel in Mayer before returning to Phoenix the next day.<sup>13</sup>

Coming back from a trip to California, Alessio Carraro spotted a night-blooming cereus next to the highway near Arlington. Since it was in the right-of-way and not on private property, they stopped and immediately dug up the huge bulb with its telltale, blackish-green stalk that protruded above the dirt as evidence of the rare, delicate cactus hibernating below.<sup>14</sup>

During the summer of 1929, when Sylvia Carraro and younger son, Louis, came to Phoenix to spend time with the other half of the family and appraise the local living conditions, Mokta took Louis on a cactus-gathering trip to old Mexico. They crossed the border at Nogales and made a large, southwestern-curving arc along Route 15 past Magdalena to Santa Ana and Route 2. From there

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they headed west to Altar and Caborca before Route 2 swung northwest toward the border at Lukeville. The border guards of neither country questioned the full truckload of northern Sonoran spiny desert plants, and new specimens were added to the growing spectacle and grandeur of the Carraro Heights cactus gardens.<sup>15</sup>

Mokta was an educated man, well-read and a published author, who had developed extensive personal contacts in the botanical field all over the world, and in addition to acquiring cacti from California, Colorado, and New Mexico, he also used those contacts to gather specimens from Australia, South America, and west Africa's Sahara Desert. He traded varieties with Mrs. Delos Cook, who had one of the most complete and extensive cactus gardens in the Southwest adjoining her Camelback Mountain home, the nucleus for today's Royal Palms Inn. In all, Mokta and the Carraros assembled some three hundred varieties of cactus, and the Russian gardener prepared metal nameplates for each one with both its Latin and popular name inscribed in white paint and attached each to a wooden stake with broad-headed tacks. A "Welcome Visitor" sign soon graced the entrance to Carraro Heights on Sundays, and curious tourists and residents alike flocked to see the remarkable gardens where Alessio, Leo, and Mokta acted as botanical guides to the wonders within.<sup>16</sup>

The rambling cactus gardens around the central hill where the hotel was planned also required much scraping and moving of dirt. A driveway from Van Buren south to the central knoll was scraped and shaped, and its path was blasted and shaped below the crest of the hill and around it to give automobiles better ingress and egress. Dirt was moved to create tiered terraces around the hill, and Lawrence Powers, a local brick mason, installed walls of

concrete block made from local crushed granite to keep the terraces in place. In addition, sloping garden areas below the block walls were covered with river cobbles to keep the hillside in place, with small openings left in the cobble coverings for planting cacti. Gardens were also shaped along both sides of the driveway and around the base of the hill. Walkways were designed and cleared winding through the gardens and were lined with river cobbles as were the garden plots themselves. All of these cobbles were also painted in place with white, oil-based paint. To create additional interest, Carraro added a concrete-lined fish pond to the gardens on the west side of the main driveway.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, Mokta designed and built a unique lawn game for the gardens which he installed on the flat on the east side of the central knoll. The game was a cross between miniature golf and pocket billiards and was to be played in a large, rectangular box rimmed with a lip of cast concrete brick, filled with crushed and compacted decomposed granite, and containing six round holes. The desert lawn table was configured like a billiard table, but one stood on it, not beside it, and used golf balls and a putter instead of ivory balls and a cue stick. The rules of the game have been lost, but the game table still resides beside the central knoll.<sup>18</sup>

### The Water Well

During the shaping of the grounds and the installation of the block machinery, Carraro also set about expanding the capacity and the flow of his water well. He invited the University of Arizona to test the quality of his water and received the gratifying and affirming news that it ranked among the purest in the state. The original well shaft was 5x5 feet and 90 feet deep, but Alessio needed a much greater flow for his proposed development than had been

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created to that time. The water in the well percolated through the decomposed granite ridge, and Alessio decided to go deeper through the ridge to find the source. Using a Chicago Neumatic (sic) Compressor to power the drilling equipment, Carraro deepened the well to 140 feet and created a large chamber at the bottom to accommodate the drilling equipment and the long drill bits which began piercing laterally into the wall of decomposed granite. At between 10 and 15 feet, he struck a strong flow, and Carraro had his necessary water supply. The large chamber at the bottom of the well acted as a cistern, and Alessio built a new well pump house on the surface with his growing supply of decomposed granite blocks.<sup>19</sup>

### The Machine Shop

The housing for the large Chicago Neumatic Compressor was a 30 x 60-foot machine shop that sat below and to the west of the central knoll. It was a general workshop with various applications for the new development, but one little-known use concerned the Italian artisans who were working on the interior design elements for the Orpheum Theater in downtown Phoenix. Being fellow countrymen, Alessio welcomed them to use his machine shop to cast the plaster of paris decorations for the theater's proscenium. As a thank you to their host, the artisans cast an additional identical decorative medallion for his new development. The medallions feature a 1920s era dancing flapper.<sup>20</sup>

### The Hotel

The Great Bull Market of the 1920s came to a crashing end on October 29, 1929, when sixteen million shares changed hands at ever lower prices. Less than two weeks later, Alessio Carraro announced his plans for a three-story hotel, Carraro Heights. Phoenix architect H.D.

Frankfurt drew the preliminary design plans. The local Arizona Republican published a captioned drawing describing the Castle as a small, oval hotel which would contain twelve bedrooms, eight on the second floor and four on the third, each with a private bath and a commanding view of the surrounding valley. Both upper floors would also have accessible, balustraded balconies surrounding each for even better sightseeing. The first floor was given over to the lobby, dining room, kitchen, offices for the owner, and rest rooms. The actual hotel differed markedly from the published drawing. Working plans had not been prepared and Frankfurt awaited Alessio Carraro's return from San Francisco. Carraro never proceeded with construction documents and, according to his son, built the Castle from his own imagination.

Following the successful examples of William J. Murphy at the Ingleside Inn, Dr. A.J. Chandler at the San Marcos Hotel, and the McArthur brothers and William Wrigley, Jr. at the Arizona Biltmore, Alessio Carraro planned to incorporate a hotel into his real estate development to help sell his homesites. The scale may have been less grand, but the concept was right on track.<sup>21</sup>

The Great Depression, however, forced plans to be altered along the way. Without utilizing the services of Frankfurt any further, Carraro went forward on his own in early 1930. During the previous contouring of the grounds and the knolls and the installation of the cactus gardens, Carraro had two guest cottages built, one for himself and Leo and one for their cook and Mokta, when he was there. All of the Warner-Smith home had been dismantled except for the kitchen; which continued in use. Now, on the top of the central knoll next to the existing kitchen, Carraro began the construction of his hotel.<sup>22</sup>

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Improvising and planning as he proceeded, with no drawings to work from, he added a basement or subfloor to the hotel and brought back Barney Webb to handle the excavation. With dynamite he began blasting a 40x60-foot hole in the top of the knoll with a deep, wide trench on three corners that emptied into the cactus gardens on the northwest, northeast, and southwest and a short opening onto the driveway on the southeast. The trenches would provide below ground level tunneled entrances to the gardens from the hotel and good cross ventilation during the summer. He next brought back Lawrence Powers to lay the decomposed granite blocks for the subfloor walls and installed a pneumatic hoist powered by his Chicago Neumatic Compressor to lift pallets of blocks onto the knoll. He also used the hoist to install the bank vault door and door frame which he salvaged from the remodeling of the Phoenix National Bank at First Avenue and Washington. Carraro used his genuine bank vault in the basement for a wine cellar and to hold his valuables.<sup>23</sup>

From the remodeling of the Phoenix National Bank, Carraro also salvaged mahogany teller cages and wainscoting that his carpenter used in building all of the kitchen cabinets for the hotel. For many years thereafter, the machine shop stored a good deal of salvaged mahogany awaiting additional uses. From a home being razed in Phoenix, Carraro bought all the maple flooring he used in his new building. Carraro also acted as his own contractor and supervised a crew of about fifteen men, including carpenters, masons, painters, plumbers, and electricians. In addition he reduced the number of guest rooms to eight, six on the second floor and two on the third. Instead of each room on the second floor having its own bathroom, two rooms had a small corner sink, and four were plumbed for sinks for future installation. The second floor contained one bathroom, and the third floor,

a half bath with a large concrete shower stall. Although he was by no means destitute, he had to watch his expenditures during the first year of the Great Depression.<sup>24</sup>

Instead of balustraded balconies around the second and third floors, Carraro substituted battlements and added a small cupola above the third floor. The battlements were made out of eight-foot lengths of sheet metal and contained thousands of feet of wiring for lighting fixtures installed on the exterior surfaces of the crenellations. Although he had been in the sheet metal business, he did not do the sheet metal work himself, contracting with a local tinsmith to supply what he needed.<sup>25</sup>

The cupola was reached by way of a narrow, internal staircase from the third floor and was also surrounded by a sheet metal battlement. With windows on all sides, the cupola was added to provide the highest and best views of the Salt River Valley for guests of the hotel. The electrician wired the topmost battlement for lights and completed his work by wiring the entire hotel for radio, which would have been run from a master receiver on the first floor, with speakers in each room.<sup>26</sup>

The first floor followed Frankfurt's concept most faithfully. The floor was dominated by a 30x40-foot dining and sitting room on the south half of the floor and included a kitchen, small lobby, small office, and rest room on the north half. The dining and sitting room had a decorative fireplace with the large, circular medallion hung over the mantle. The hotel contained neither heating nor cooling devices, and the only nod to cooling was an innovative air shaft on the west side of the basement in the center of the wall which encouraged air circulation through a below-ground-level tunnel to alleviate the summer heat of

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Phoenix.<sup>27</sup>

During the construction of the hotel, Carraro also added two final structures to the grounds. He had one of the carpenters design and build a huge dovecote to house pigeons for the dining room table. Carraro enjoyed squab, and the young pigeons in his cote grew fat on ensilage at the nearby Tovrea packinghouse corrals. Alessio also had a small, hexagonal, two-tier cage built for his pet California tree squirrel, which he had brought with him from San Francisco, and for an Arizona desert jackrabbit captured on the property. The tree squirrel had been a family pet for many years with the run of the San Francisco apartment and was housed in the upper tier of the cage, while the Salt River Valley jackrabbit occupied the lower level. It had been assumed in recent years that Mrs. E.A. Tovrea had built these two structures for bird-watching since she was such an avid bird fancier and kept many peacocks on the property while she lived there. These elements, however, which are currently in great disrepair, were added by Alessio Carraro, the latter most likely as a curiosity for visitors strolling the hotel grounds.<sup>28</sup>

### Electrical Spectacle

In addition to wiring the hotel for radio and the battlements for decorative lights, Carraro installed light receptacles along the split rail fence that bordered the circular drive around the hotel. There were more than 10,000 feet of wiring in this decorative scheme, and 1,000 bulbs lit the complex at night. The hotel was nearly finished for the Christmas season of 1930, and Alessio celebrated the season by installing red, green, yellow, and blue lights in all the receptacles and topping the cupola with a ten-foot, electrically lit Christmas tree. The festively lit hotel brightened the night and could be seen from miles

around. It thrilled travelers on the Tempe Road, Washington Street, and those who made a special trip to see it throughout the holiday season.<sup>29</sup>

As an official entrant in the Arizona Republican's Phoenix Spirit of Christmas electrical outdoor decorations contest for 1930, Carraro kept the lights burning past midnight throughout the holidays and helped generate a festive spirit for a city worried by local and national economic news. For his extraordinary efforts and community spirit, Carraro was awarded the newspaper's sweepstakes prize. In announcing the winners, the paper called the hotel "a brilliantly lighted 'castle' in the desert." It was the first time the three-story hotel had been called a castle in print, but the image portrayed was an apt one, and the name has persisted through the years.<sup>30</sup>

### The End of Carraro's Dream

From the time of his initial purchase, Alessio Carraro had been interested in the forty acres that adjoined his property on the west. It was owned by a clothing store operator from Globe named Bates who made regular trips to Phoenix to purchase goods for his store. On his way back to Globe, he always stopped at Carraro's place for dinner and to fill two five-gallon water cans from Alessio's excellent well. Carraro wanted those forty acres quite badly as a buffer between himself and the stockyards and packing plant to the west of Delano Avenue (48th Street) and repeatedly offered Bates \$400 an acre for them. Bates wanted \$1,000 an acre and refused to take less; however, in 1931 he settled for \$400 an acre but sold to E.A. Tovrea who ran the Arizona Packing Company and stockyards to the west of Carraro.<sup>31</sup>

Tovrea promptly began installing sheep pens on his new acreage and effectively put an end to Alessio Carraro's

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development plans. Who would want to build a new home next to sheep pens? On a trip to San Francisco to visit his wife and son, Carraro received a telephone call from a Phoenix real estate agent named Kellogg offering \$21,500 for his Carraro Heights subdivision, and Alessio readily accepted, not knowing the buyer was Della Tovrea. It is a moot point whether knowing who the buyer was would have made any difference. The transaction was completed on June 24, 1931. Alessio Carraro was not bankrupt; he was just disgusted. Over the next five years, he sold the balance of his 277 acres to Tovrea, with the exception of 10 acres on the south side of Washington near 56th Street which he later traded for citrus acreage in Mesa.<sup>32</sup>

On his return from San Francisco, Alessio and his son Leo went prospecting in the Huachuca Mountains of southeastern Arizona. After two years of roughing it, they returned to Phoenix, and Alessio turned to a profession for which he had a special gift, water witching. He had known how far to drill to improve his well on Carraro Heights, and he had sunk five additional wells on the property to test and hone his special skill. Now he began finding water in earnest, and his services were always in demand. Farmers, ranchers, and communities employed him, and his reputation grew throughout the southwest. In later years he retired to Yarnell south of Prescott and bought four acres in the boulders along Shrine Road. He had always loved to work with rock, and he spent many years designing and building Carraro's Grotto not far from the Shrine of St. Joseph. A postcard from that period identified the grotto as "The Zoo of Rocks", built by Alessio Carraro, a man of great artistic imagination." It was an enjoyable project for the builder of Carraro's Castle, and it kept him happily occupied until he died in 1964.<sup>33</sup>

E.A. Tovrea had already built an impressive beef empire by the time he and Della took possession of Carraro Heights in 1931. The same year Alessio Carraro had started his sheet metal business in San Francisco, 1919, Tovrea had founded the Arizona Packing Company and built stockyards and packing plants in the Salt River Valley. Near his packing plant on East Van Buren, he built a spacious California bungalow where he lived with his wife Della, but Della was attracted to the castle on the hill, bought Carraro Heights, and shortly thereafter moved with E.A. into it. For Christmas in 1931, Della Tovrea repeated Alessio Carraro's electric light display and won the sweepstakes award for residential entrants. A Phoenix landmark was becoming a Christmas tradition.<sup>34</sup>

### A Castle for Della

E.A. Tovrea passed away in the castle on February 7, 1932, but Della Tovrea remained a part of the castle's history for the rest of her life. E.A. had already purchased a summer home in Prescott on Pleasant Street before they occupied the castle, and Della continued to spend her summers in the "mile-high city." During the winter, however, she lived in the house on the hill in Phoenix and made improvements to the grounds. Within a short time she had a concrete patio constructed below the knoll on the east side which contained a central fire pit for cool winter days and evenings. She added electric lights and concrete urns for decorations but purchased no outdoor furniture. If you wanted to sit outside, you carried a chair with you.<sup>35</sup>

Della Tovrea kept quite a number of peacocks on the property, she said they were good sentries, and according to a family member, within another year had two rectangular tanks built to water them. One tank, constructed primarily of river boulders and concrete, was

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built in the cactus gardens on the east side of the driveway from Van Buren, while the other much longer tank, now referred to as a reflecting pool, was constructed of decomposed granite bricks on the flat to the east of the gardens and the patio. These tanks also had goldfish in them, and it appears more likely that their main purpose was decorative with an auxiliary function of bird watering.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to peacocks, it is reported that Della kept hundreds of birds in cages. There is evidence of a long, narrow structure at the east end of the reflecting pool which may have been a large aviary or a pergola. Flanking the pool were brick-bordered planters for scores of rose bushes. Symmetrically placed cast concrete benches and urns enhanced decorated the pool and rose garden. The same urns were incorporated into the rubble field stone wall which Della had built around the Castle terrace as a replacement for the original wood rail fence. Both fences were lighted by a series of porcelain-based fixtures.

The layout of the Tovrea modifications to the cactus gardens and terrace introduces a formality of landscape architecture not seen in the earlier Carraro gardens. The reflecting pool, pergola/aviary, and surrounding rose gardens were arranged in a symmetrical, geometric plan on the flat, cleared desert east of the knoll.

Although Della Tovrea continued to serve on the board of directors of Tovrea Meat Packing Co. after her husband's death, she did not hold a controlling interest nor was she involved with the management of the business. E.A.'s son from a previous marriage, Phil Tovrea, Sr., became president and general manager of the company.

In 1936 Della married William P. Stuart, the publisher of the Prescott Courier and collector of Internal Revenue for Arizona. The Stuarts spent most of the year in Prescott, but every winter they lived in the castle on the hill. With its proximity to the Tovrea meat-packing operations, its brief association with Della Tovrea Stuart, the tiered house on the hill became known as the Tovrea Castle.<sup>37</sup>

The Stuarts lived in the basement of the castle because of its generally more pleasant temperature and used the first floor for dining and recreation. The basement was partitioned into sleeping area and living area, with the living area containing two chairs with reading lamps, many stacks of newspapers and magazines, and twenty rolltop desks. Della turned the lobby of the hotel into her dining area, where she kept a number of boy and girl dolls in high chairs around the room and named them for E.A. Tovrea's deceased relatives. In the hotel dining room, she kept twenty or more jigsaw puzzles in various stages of completion to occupy her time.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1930s and 1940s, Della Tovrea Stuart became a major player in the Democratic Party in Arizona. She served as a delegate to the party's national convention in 1936 and was elected Democratic National Committeewoman for Arizona in 1940, serving for six years. She also worked on the staff of the Courier until it was sold by her husband in 1958. The Stuarts continued their migration between Prescott and Phoenix until 1960 when William Stuart died. Della Stuart remained on the grounds of the castle, rarely leaving them, until 1969 when a burglar severely beat her during a robbery attempt. She did not recover from the beating and died two months later.<sup>39</sup>

The lights on the crenelated battlements still burn brightly



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each evening, and motorists on Van Buren, Washington, and the new Red Mountain Freeway cannot help but see the castle glowing on the hill as they speed by. It is still one of the most distinctive landmarks in the Valley of the Sun and always calls to mind the Tovrea name and the cattle and meat-packing empire associated with it. It would seem only appropriate that in the years to come the name of Carraro would once again be associated with the hotel among the cacti and play its rightful role in the history commemorated in the "brilliantly lighted castle in the desert".

### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN EARLY ARIZONA

#### Spanish Missionaries

The earliest Europeans to influence landscape architecture and horticulture in Arizona were the Spanish missionaries in the late 1600s. They brought with them plants and seeds from Spain and the Mediterranean area. As these learned men established missions in the Pimeria Alta (as present day southern Arizona and northern Sonora were called), they planted gardens and fields. They also brought new farming techniques to teach the native peoples who they intended to Christianize. In return, the local people introduced to the Spanish many previously unknown native plants for food and medicine. These plants were well adapted to cultivation in the arid region. At the missions, plants were cultivated primarily for their food value rather than for aesthetic purposes, although cloister courtyards were often landscaped to create a beautiful, peaceful environment for contemplation. The Spanish padres approached landscape architecture with the same formal Baroque styles as their church architecture. One would have seen both native and exotic

plants in a geometrically arranged courtyard.

#### American Ranchers and Farmers

When the Americans began settling southern Arizona in the 1850s and 1860s, their influence on landscape architecture also centered on survival and crop production. In Phoenix of the 1870s and 1880s, the restoration and improvement of the prehistoric Hohokam Indian irrigation canals was the beginning of a second agricultural empire in the Salt River Valley. Once again the focus of plant cultivation was for food and cash crops. Settlers and farmers had little time or use for landscape architecture in solely an aesthetic context, although they did plant shade and fruit trees and vegetable gardens with flowers near their houses.

Sheriff John Slaughter's San Bernardino Ranch on the Mexican border near Douglas, Arizona was one such no-frills working cattle ranch. Although his holdings were considerable and his ranch compound was extensive, there was virtually no aesthetic consideration given to landscaping around the ranch buildings. Limited irrigation was possible at the site, but its success was closely related to local rainfall amounts. A stone wall and picket fence enclosed the group of buildings which stood on bare earth raked and cleared of vegetation. A few fruit trees were introduced in the ranch house compound. A small kitchen vegetable garden tended by the Chinese cook provided fresh vegetables and a few flowers for the dining table.

A short distance from the fenced residential compound was a two-acre pond ringed by towering cottonwood trees, cattails, and shrubs. The character of this oasis-like landscape was vastly different from the barren yard and scrubby range. The number of ranch buildings grew

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considerably from the 1880s into the 1920s, but the stark, dry character of their setting hardly changed. The harsh landscape was softened with dense foliage only at the pond and ditch where water was found in abundance.

By contrast, well-irrigated ranches in the Salt River Valley owned by gentlemen farmers tended to have more opportunity for landscape architecture design throughout their property. One of the earliest large private gardens in the Salt River Valley was established by William Bartlett, a wealthy Midwestern businessman, at his Sahuaro Ranch homesteaded near Glendale in 1884. His ranch was significant for many horticultural experiments and successful agricultural developments. Bartlett approached the design of his private grounds by transforming the arid desert environment into an image similar to his Illinois landscape.

The verdant setting of his large Midwestern-type brick residence and guest house was enhanced by a formal, one-acre rose garden and a wisteria-covered pergola with a fountain. Lawns were not features found around the ranch; grassy horse pastures served the visual equivalent. The entrance gate to the ranch was flanked by two saguaro cacti. The two driveways from the section line roads to the house were lined with ash trees and with palm trees. As a terminal focus for a long straight driveway Bartlett had a gazebo built on a small island centered in an irrigation reservoir.

### Public Landscapes

The earliest public landscapes in Arizona were seen beginning in the 1880s as settings for governmental and institutional buildings such as courthouses, libraries, and schools. The site plans of these landscapes generally were as formal and symmetrical as the Neoclassical

buildings which they complemented. The plant palettes often included a combination of both native and imported species. Surviving examples of such public landscapes are seen at the Arizona State Capitol, Yavapai County Courthouse, the Carnegie Libraries in Phoenix and Tucson, and the University of Arizona. The formality of the designs portrayed a character of respectability, power, and longevity. Often landscapes of upper-class residences also used symmetry and formality as design elements to create the same feeling of respectability.

### Cactus Collectors

When the Southwest was opened to the rest of the country in the 1880s by the railroads, the native plants of the Sonoran Desert became readily available to collectors of botanical oddities for the first time. At that time a surge of interest in the West occurred in popular culture. Artists such as Frederic Remington and Charles Schreyvogel depicted the drama and romance of the Indian Wars in their action-packed drawings, paintings, and bronzes. The settings for their compositions often showed the stark and strange deserts of the Southwest with their unusual plant life.

During the 1920s Western adventure novels and movies, cowboy art, Indian crafts, and tourism advertizing by the Santa Fe Railroad fostered a renewed popular interest in the American Southwest. Unusual plants of the desert, particularly cacti and succulents, became an important popular icon of the Old West. Even the federal government recognized the uniqueness of cactus and the significance of Arizona's natural landscapes through the establishment of the Saguaro and the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monuments.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s there was a revival of

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interest in indoor potted cactus gardens as indicated by articles in popular magazines such as Sunset and The American Home. Individuals, community groups, and universities established clubs and research departments. They also created desert botanical gardens for the purpose of collecting, studying, displaying, and propagating cacti. A Cactus and Succulents Society was founded in southern California. The University of Arizona planted a cactus demonstration garden as did several private residents in the Salt River Valley. Private collections, as augmented by community interest, evolved into currently popular cactus gardens such as the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix and the Sonoran Desert Museum near Tucson.

Here one can see natural layout of low-water native plants as well as geometric layout of imported plants.

In like fashion Alessio Carraro and M. Moktatchev planted the cactus gardens at the Castle as a public attraction and visual amenity for the hotel. The two men not only sought wild cactus in the Sonoran desert of Arizona and Mexico, but also were reported to have traded with private collectors in the area and around the world. The layout of their cactus garden followed the curving topography of the hillside in an informal, rambling manner. It is an example of the popular interest in desert plants as seen in historic private gardens and botanical demonstration gardens.

By contrast, Della Tovrea altered a small portion of the Carraro cactus garden by adding a formal terrace, reflecting pool, and rose garden. These additions represent the formal approach to landscape architecture most often found in historic Arizona in public landscapes and upper-class residences.

The historic Tovrea Castle gardens are significant for the juxtaposition of two contrasting approaches to landscaping in the Arizona desert at a single historic site.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Leo Carraro, interview by Harriett Haskell, 21 Mar. 1983, transcript, City of Phoenix Planning Department, Historic Preservation Section, Phoenix, AZ; Mr. and Mrs. Leo Carraro, interview by P. Martinelli, 9 July 1976, transcript, City of Phoenix Planning Department, Historic Preservation Section, Phoenix, AZ.
2. Carraro, Haskell interview.
3. Leo Carraro, interview with author, Phoenix, AZ, 14 Dec. 1991.
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5. Ibid; Arizona Republic, 6 Oct. 1929, 3:16:1.
6. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991 and 4 Feb. 1992. A search of the subdivision filings for Maricopa County in the county recorder's office failed to unearth a platting for Carraro Heights.
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12. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Carraro, Haskell interview; Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
16. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991 and 4 Feb. 1992; Arizona Republic, 6 Oct. 1929, 3:16:1; Carraro, Martinelli interview.
17. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
18. Ibid.
19. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991; Arizona Republic, 6 Oct. 1929, 3:16:1.

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20. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
21. Arizona Republic, 10 Nov. 1929, 2:12:2-4.
22. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
23. Ibid; Carraro, Haskell interview.
24. Carraro, Haskell interview; Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
25. Carraro, interview with author, 4 Feb. 1992; Arizona Republic, 1 Jan 1931, 1:2.
26. Carraro, Haskell interview.
27. Ibid; Carraro, interview with author, 4 Feb. 1992.
28. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
29. Arizona Republic, 1 Jan. 1931, 1:2.
30. Ibid.
31. Carraro, interview with author, 14 Dec. 1991.
32. Ibid; Carraro, Haskell interview.
33. Ibid.
34. Cindy L. Myers, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form for the Carraro/Tovrea House, Phoenix, Arizona" (1986), 8:4; Arizona Republic, 1 Jan. 1932, 2:1:1.
35. Myers, "Nomination for the Carraro/Tovrea House", 8:4; Dura Tovrea, telephone conversation with author, 11 Mar. 1992.
36. Dura Tovrea, telephone conversation with author.
37. Myers, "Nomination for the Carraro/Tovrea House", 8:4; Dura Tovrea, telephone conversation with author.
38. Dura Tovrea, telephone conversation with author; Helen Adele Tovrea, telephone conversation with author, 28 Mar. 1992.
39. Myers, "Nomination for the Carraro/Tovrea House," 8:4 and 8:5.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1,2,3,7,8,9,10 and the West Half of Lot 11 of Block 4, all of Warner Heights, according to the plat of record in the office of the County Recorder of Maricopa County, Arizona, in Book 15 of Maps, page 5 thereof; and Commencing at the Southeast corner of said Warner Heights, which is a point on the East line of the northwest Quarter of Section 8, Township 1 North, Range 4 East, of the Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian, a distance of 510 feet southerly from the North Quarter corner of said Section 8; THENCE South (assumed bearing) on the East line of the said Northwest Quarter of Section 8, a distance of 1154.03 feet to the intersection of the North right of way line of Washington Boulevard; thence North 81 degrees 56 1/2 minutes West on the North right of way line of Washington Boulevard a distance of 1332.93 feet to the intersection of the West line of the East Half of said Northwest Quarter of Section 8; thence North 0 degrees 03 minutes West on the West line of the said East Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 8 a distance of 974.48 feet to the intersection of the South line of said Warner Heights; thence South 89 degrees 41 minutes East on the South line of Warner Heights a distance of 1320.64 feet to the point of beginning, containing 32.254 acres, more or less.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Register boundary coincides with the property lines of the Tovrea Castle parcel as encompassed by the perimeter masonry wall and described in the legal description. This boundary includes the significant historic resources constructed during the Carraro and Tovrea eras of ownership and occupancy.

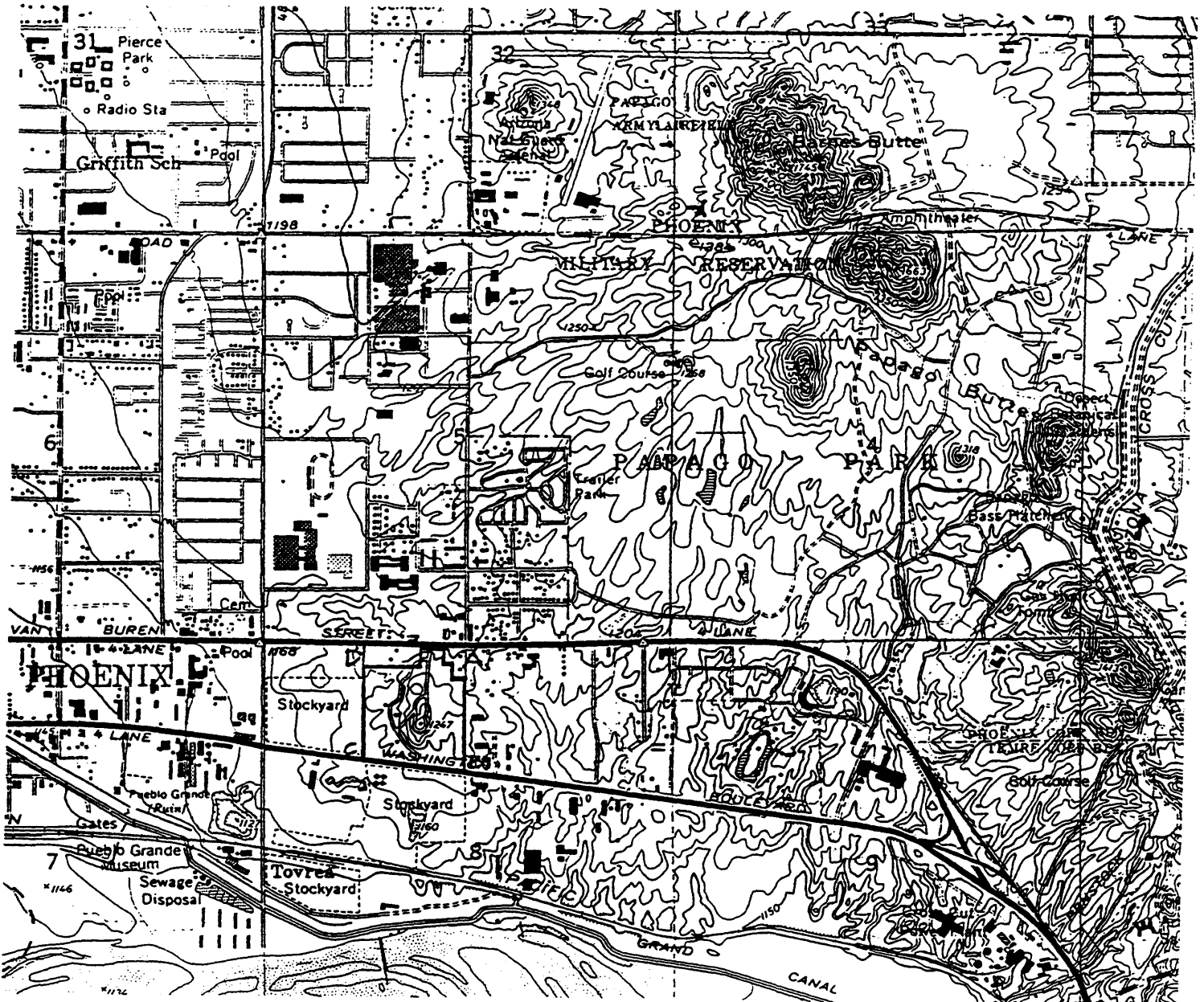
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	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>12</u>	<u>409935</u>	<u>3701500</u>	C	<u>12</u>	<u>409525</u>	<u>3701060</u>
B	<u>12</u>	<u>409935</u>	<u>3701000</u>	D	<u>12</u>	<u>409525</u>	<u>3701505</u>





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### INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Tovrea Castle

Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona

Modern photographs (1 - 16) by Don W. Ryden, AIA taken in March 1995. Original negatives filed at Ryden Architects

Historic photographs (17 -23) from Leo Carraro Collection taken between 1928 and 1931. Copy negatives on file at Phoenix Historic Preservation Office.

**PHOTO 1 - view toward south**

North entry gate and perimeter stone wall at Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 2 - view toward east**

Tovrea Castle and cactus garden with concrete block retaining wall supporting loop road.

**PHOTO 3 - view toward north**

Approach up wooden stairway to terrace at south side of Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 4 - view toward south**

West side of hilltop terrace surrounding Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 5 - view toward southwest**

Terrazzo entry stairs to Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 6 - view toward northwest**

False fireplace with painted, cast-plaster medallion in great room of Tovrea Castle. Polychromatic stencilled design on wall and ceiling.

**PHOTO 7 - view toward west**

Plaster covered post with stenciled designs at great room of Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 8 - view up toward northwest**

Art Deco light fixture at great room of Tovrea Castle. Polychromatic stencilled designs on plastered walls and ceiling.

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**Tovrea Castle  
Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ**

**PHOTO 9 - view up toward north**

Heavy pulled plaster texture at ceiling of basement ballroom at Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 10 - view toward north-northeast**

Portion of the cactus gardens of Tovrea Castle built by Alessio Carraro and M. Mokatchev. River cobble border at road and paths, putting green/pool table, and fish pond are seen amid the saguaros, organ pipe cactus, and ocotillos.

**PHOTO 11 - view toward south**

Looking down from Tovrea Castle to south platform veneered with river cobbles. North gate through perimeter wall opens to Washington Street. Across the street is site of former Tovrea stockyards. The dry Salt River bed and South Mountain are seen in background.

**PHOTO 12 - view down toward east-northeast**

Looking down from Tovrea Castle to the landscape features introduced by Della Tovrea. In the foreground are the patio and fire pit lighted by concrete light standards and aviary. Beyond loop road are the reflecting pool and pergola foundations flanked by the rose garden brick borders.

**PHOTO 13 - view toward northeast**

Looking from front door of the south wood frame house toward Tovrea Castle. At left is the well house built of site-manufactured concrete blocks.

**PHOTO 14 - view toward northwest**

Well house and machine shop at Tovrea Castle.

**PHOTO 15 - view toward northwest**

South wood frame house at left, machine shop at center, and well house at right.

**PHOTO 16 - view toward west-northwest**

Collapsed storage shed at left and north wood frame house at right.

**PHOTO 17 - historic view toward north**

Cobble-lined path through newly completed cactus gardens of Carraro Heights. North platform veneered with painted river cobbles seen in background.

**PHOTO 18 - historic view toward northwest**

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Alessio Carraro with an unidentified gentleman (left) at the completed cactus gardens before hotel/castle was constructed.

**PHOTO 19 - historic view toward east**

Foundation construction incorporating a salvaged bank vault door.

**PHOTO 20 - historic view toward northeast**

Alessio Carraro and son, Leo, with explosives stand in front of the concrete block-making machine.

**PHOTO 21 - historic view toward south**

Leo Carraro in front of the castle under construction. Diagonal spaced sheathing has been nailed to the wood framing.

**PHOTO 22 - historic view toward southeast**

Completed hotel/castle and cactus gardens of Carraro Heights.

**PHOTO 23 - historic view toward southwest**

Completed hotel/castle and cactus gardens of Carraro Heights. This view shows original layout of east side of gardens before alterations by Della Tovrea.