

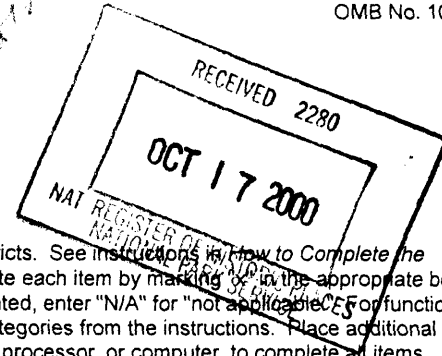
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

Owner objection

1368



1. Name of Property

historic name Atascadero Printery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 6351 Olmeda not for publication

city or town Atascadero vicinity

state California code CA county San Luis Obispo code 079 zip code 93422

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Danny Abeyaratne 10/11/00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
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] Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 12/1/2000

Atascadero Printery
Name of Property

San Luis Obispo Co, CA
County and State

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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry: Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation: Sports Facility

Social: Meeting Hall

Commerce: Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof asphalt

walls brick, stucco

other _____

Narrative Description

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

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

(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 _____

Exploration/Settlement _____

Community Planning and Development _____

Period of Significance

1916-1924 _____

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bliss, Walter D. _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Atascadero Printery
Name of Property

San Luis Obispo Co, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	711760	3929930	3	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marjorie R. Mackey, Historian

organization Atascadero Historical Society date Feb. 15, 2000

street & number 6351 Olmeda telephone (805) 466-1811

city or town Atascadero state CA zip code 93422

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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 the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

Atascadero Printery
6351 Olmeda Av
Atascadero, CA 9

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

ATASCADERO PRINTERY

About 1989 John Snyder, an Architectural Historian prepared a report on the history of Atascadero as a background for the proposed new route for State Highway 41. During his very comprehensive study of the Atascadero Colony Plan he wrote the following for the Cal-Trans report: " The Printery (now Masonic Temple, 6351) Olmeda Avenue, Walter D. Bliss; Bliss & Faville, 1915-16, Annex, 1917.

The two story Printery is rectangular in plan with a medium hipped roof. Like the nearby Administration Building it draws upon Italian Renaissance design sources. The centrally-placed main entrance in the south side is dominated by a Roman arch supported on two simple Doric columns; the arch is ornamented with elaborate terra cotta. The recessed doorway is accessed by a short flight of steps. A prominent terra cotta beltcourse divides the upper and lower stories. Windows are separated by brick pilasters with simple terra cotta capitals. The interior contained printing equipment on the ground floor, with offices located on the second story. The entrance lobby still contains original murals by Ralph Holmes, a Chicago artist who relocated to Atascadero during the colony years; the murals depict stylized oak trees on a pastel background, and were in place by 1919, as verified by Bulletin #9. (Bulletins #1 through #10 were issued from 1913 to 1920 explaining the progress in developing the Atascadero Colony) A single-story hip roofed annex was added at the rear in 1917, and contained the bindery and stock room. Compatible in styling and materials, it significantly increased the working space of the facility in response to the rapid increase in the demand for high quality printing. The Printery was said to have had the only rotogravure press west of the Mississippi at that time.(W. Lewis, p.11) and produced Lewis' magazines and promotional literature for the colony, as well as supplements for the San Francisco Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times. The Printery was served directly by a spur of the railroad, accomodating the large volume of incoming newsprint and outgoing products. The Printery is now used as a Masonic Temple.

At the rear of the 1917 Annex is a non-historic addition made of concrete and clad on one elevation in wood siding.

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Section number 7 Page 2

ATASCADERO PRINTERY

CURRENT CONDITION OF BUILDING:

The building is currently in fair to good condition for its age. The part of the upstairs which is used by the Masons is good, several other rooms are just used for storage and need cosmetic attention such as cleaning and painting. The rooms downstairs are being used and show some wear. One room which used to have a swimming pool (from the Boys' School days) has been filled with dirt and is only used for minimal storage. A Karate Studio and a photo studio occupy opposite corners of the building. Some needed maintenance has been done such as asbestos removal recently along with some plumbing and electrical upgrading but more is needed.

The brick face on the west side (or Olmeda Av. side) shows some water marks because of years of sprinklers hitting the lower part of the building. The biggest problem for the future of the building is that it has been determined to be unreinforced masonry which makes it an endangered building. Altogether it is an impressive structure and adds much to the history of Atascadero.

DESCRIPTION: In addition to John Snyder's description the building has a number of functional attributes; a usable kitchen, restrooms on each floor, a 43' x 70' gymnasium, several storage areas on both the first and second floors. Two areas are income generating, the Karate area, and the photo studio. The gymnasium has been used as a youth center for several years and a skateboard park has been installed immediately to the north on the grounds.

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Section 8 Page 1

Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

The Printery is significant because it is linked to the early settlement of Atascadero as a real estate venture masterplanned by Edward Gardner Lewis. Lewis had had a career in publishing and other activities in the midwest before coming to California in 1913. Purchasing 23,000 acres in the Atascadero area he hoped to create a community which would combine "all the advantages of country life with city conveniences." Consulting prominent experts in fields such as engineering, architecture and agriculture, Lewis laid out a model community he called the "colony" with residential buildings in one area and a series of civic buildings planned for another. The streets were laid out and completed in a curvilinear plan and two of the civic buildings were actually built. The first built was the Printery, which began printing the local newspaper right away. The operations of the Printery, which had a rotogravure press, helped to finance the operations of the community. The Printery published the colony's promotional journal, the *Illustrated Review*, but also did special work for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times*. The Printery building is significant as one of only two non-residential buildings to be constructed in the colony phase of Atascadero's history.

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Atascadero Printery

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Atascadero, Ca 93422

Section number 8 Page 2

ATASCADERO PRINTERY

E.G.Lewis, Founder of Atascadero

The Atascadero Printery was built as the leading industry for E.G. Lewis' Colony of Atascadero. Mr. Edward Gardner Lewis was born in Connecticut on March 4, 1869 into a family of Episcopalian clergymen. He dropped out of Trinity College after several years as an unenthusiastic student and became a travelling salesman which seemed to be his natural calling. He met Mabel Gertrude Wellington in Baltimore. After their marriage they settled down in St. Louis where he bought the St. Louis STAR, a newspaper. Several years later he had added THE WINNER, THE WOMENS' FARM JOURNAL and THE WOMAN'S MAGAZINE. He was interested in helping the women get to vote so he started the American Womens League which was patterned after the United States government, with representatives from each state. He promised that whenever any town or city had a certain number of members he would build a chapterhouse in that town. There were thirty eight chapter houses actually built in cities of a variety of sizes including one in Corning, Calif. From all his promotions he developed a large mailing list. While in St. Louis he purchased land on its outskirts before the 1904 Exposition there. He developed a Tent City where he rented tents to visitors to the Fair when it was hard to find sleeping facilities. He was also creating University City at this location; near Forest Park and Washington University. This became a thriving city. Mr. Lewis was the first Mayor and held that office for several years. He eventually ran into trouble and was charged with mis-use of the mails. The trial drug out for several years during which time he could not even receive his personal mail. He was acquitted on 31 counts in a case which was called The Dreyfus case of America. By the time he was exonerated he was wiped out financially and broken in spirit, but not for long. He had great optimism and always looked on the bright side. (One of the quotes on the Administration Building is "Keep Your Face to the Sunshine and You can't See the Shadows")

In 1912 he and his wife came to California to start over. He had been telling his supporters that he would start a Colony where they could have country living with City amenities. He searched all over California and found Atascadero Ranch, a 23,000 acre cattle ranch owned by J.H. Henry, a part-time rancher who also lived in San Jose. Mr. Lewis said it was half way between Los Angeles and San Francisco, on the state highway and the railroad, it was just far enough from the ocean so it would have a minimum of fog and It Was For Sale!

When he bought the ranch, he had only \$500. He is reported to have said, "If I had \$1,000 I probably could have bought the whole county". He issued a call and his supporters came up with the necessary money to close the deal.

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ATASCADERO PRINTERY (contd)

E.G.Lewis, Founder of Atascadero

The deed to Atascadero exchanged hands on July 4, 1913 in a ceremony in the courthouse in San Luis Obispo. Mr. Lewis immediately started things moving with surveyors and engineers platting the whole 23,000 acres creating probably the largest sub-division of all time. Roads were built, water lines installed, trees removed, cattle rounded up and sold in Santa Margarita. On June 11, 1914 the cornerstone was laid for the Administration Building by Mrs. Lewis in an impressive ceremony with Mr. Henry, the former owner of the ranch, as the main speaker. Many people came by special train from San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles and other nearby cities. A tent city for prospective property owners had been established in the early part of June so many of those people were present for the ceremony; " Approximately two thousand people attended the ceremonies, every state in the United States being liberally represented. ("p.22, Bulletin #6)

In 1915 Mr. Lewis gave the go-ahead to home building and also to work on the Civic Center buildings. By late 1915 the Printery was finished so the Bulletins could be printed here as well as the newspaper, the Atascadero News; and the ILLUSTRATED REVIEW, a rotogravure news magazine of world news, similar to LIFE in later years, there was always an editorial by Mr. Lewis and at least one page extolling the virtues of living in Atascadero. Both the forementioned papers were started in 1916.

Because of the success of the Illustrated Review plus the many other mailings put forth by the Lewis enterprises Atascadero became a first class post office in 1917, making it the first First Class post office in the county. The Illustrated Review had over five hundred thousand subscribers which required mailings to that many addresses each month. In addition, Mr. Lewis was in constant contact with many prospective land purchasers through personal letters and Bulletins.

When the land was purchased in 1913 the beach was only available by a horseback trail or by going around through San Luis Obispo, a lengthy journey. Mr. Lewis spearheaded the build- of the first road, then Morro Road, now Highway 41 or E.G.Lewis Highway. He purchased several thousand acres of ocean front land going east into the hills overlooking present Morro Bay. At that time it was a small fishing village with Morro Rock surrounded by water. Mr. Lewis built the Cloisters, a hotel with a good restaurant and small beach houses which could be rented by the day, week or month. The High School bus was also used to take day visitors to the beach. He built an early golf course at the north end of the property near where he had his own beach cabin. The Cloisters was located on the beach at the end of San Jacinto Ave. There is a tree lined entrance to the site but the building was destroyed after being used to house troops during World War II. This he also promoted with material from the Printery.

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ATASCADERO PRINTERY (contd)

After some years of success with Atascadero being known as Convention City with many diverse organization coming here to enjoy our wonderful climate and the hospitality of Mr. Lewis and his gracious staff. He had a fleet of over thirty automobiles which he dedicated for the use of visitors. Some of the conventions were YMCA Secretaries, Southern Calif. Editors (in 1916 and 1920), Elks 1921, Episcopalian Clergymen, National Letter Carriers Association, 1916, L.A. Chamber of Commerce, Santa Barbara Area Boy Scouts and Farm Advisors 1919.

Hundreds of homes were built between 1915 and 1924 with Atascadero achieving a population of around 2000 in the early 1920's. Many of these homes are still standing and are used for homes or offices.

A dehydrating and canning plant was built and was successful for several years, handling the local produce in a number of conventional and some unique methods. One unique product was pumpkin flour for making pumpkin pies...just add water for the filling! Mr. Lewis obtained government contracts to supply canned products for the Army. He purchased much new equipment for the plant just as the war was over so the government cancelled the contract! That was just one of the misfortunes for Mr. Lewis at this time. He got involved in oil wells and mining with the hope of paying off his creditors. His oil wells often were dry or went to water. He was just too early: he was involved in Signal Hill in Los Angeles, in Cat Creek in Montana, in Grey Bull in Wyoming, and many others, all successful oil fields shortly after he had lost his money. He was the original developer of Palos Verdes Estates but always took on more than he could handle. In 1928 Frank Moran purchased the Printery and the Administration Building as the California Campus for Moran Prep and Junior College. Mr. Moran had a successful Boys' School on Bainbridge Island on Puget Sound. The school was here until about 1933 during the depths of the depression when it closed. Around 1950 the Masonic organization purchased the building and has used much of the building. In the meantime they have rented parts of it to the School District, to the Sheriff's Department, and to some non-government organizations.

In the last few years, with advent of the Unreinforced Masonry law and an opinion that it would cost one million dollars to retrofit the building the Masons gave it to the City, retaining a one percent ownership with the right to continue to hold their meetings and activities there.

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ATASCADERO PRINTERY

In 1919 Mazie Adams (then Townsend) arrived with her family in Atascadero. She was a young woman of 19 so she needed a job. She went to work at the Printery and did many different operations there. She met her husband Russell during her four and a half year tenure. She wrote this description of the Printery in 1981 for inclusion in the first edition of **RECALLING ATASCADERO** which was produced by the Atascadero Historical Society.

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Section 8 Page 6

Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

The following is taken from "The Printery" by Mazie Adams:

The big brick building facing Olmeda Ave. was the first to be built in the Civic Center in 1915. It was owned by the Woman's Publishing Co. and Atascadero Press. To promote the growth and activities of the young Atascadero Colony a voice was needed and the printed word was chosen. The main brick building was rushed to completion. The first issue of the Atascadero News was published January 22, 1916. Cost of the building was listed over \$33,300 without equipment.

The plant was soon enlarged by extensions to the back. They included a large stucco building parallel to the main building with a connecting link between them later used for the News press. Farther back was a long corrugated sheet metal paper shed, connected to the bindery by an outdoor ramp. The completed complex raised the cost to \$250,000 including machinery and furnishings.

The last issue of the Woman's National Weekly was printed here in 1916. It was formerly produced in University City, Mo. The volume was so great that a mail car was spotted on the spur track at the end of the plant. The mailing was done under the supervision of the Chief Clerk of Railway Mail Service of San Francisco.

The first issue of Illustrated Review was produced in September 1916. It was printed by the rotogravure process and this plant was the first on the west coast. The magazine was somewhat a fore-runner of the LIFB type of publication in that it was mostly pictures and carried world-wide news coverage. The process required the etching from photographic film onto copper cylinders with acids. Knowing how the fumes and odors spread into other rooms, it must have been a very hazardous occupation for the ones doing the work. The used cylinders were put in a lathe and a very thin layer of copper was removed so they could be used again. The rotogravure section of the plant occupied the first floor of the brick unit with the machinists located in the basement.

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Section 8 Page 7

Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

The Review began with a built-in mailing list. The prepaid subscriptions to the by-then defunct Woman's National Weekly were automatically extended to the Review. The first subscription price was then ten cents per year! Renewals were fifty cents a year. It was published monthly not weekly as Woman's Magazine had been. Due to rising costs, the price was increased to \$1.00 in 1919. It was the policy to take no advertising until the circulation reached a million copies. That goal was met Sept. 1917. Magazines went to addresses and news stands all over the world. The effects of World War 1 were beginning to be felt and by 1920 the circulation had begun to drop and publication ceased in 1924.

For two years the Sunday rotogravure supplement of the San Francisco Chronicle was produced here, entirely designed, etched and printed in the Printery. Numerous other booklets were produced; some being Atascadero promotionals, others advertising other areas as well as the Movie Industry of Thos. H. Ince, Inc.

Numerous types of job printing were done in other departments. A large flat-bed press turned out four-color printing such as the covers for the early Sunset Magazine down to the pretty packages for Pumpkin Flour from the dehydrator. The foreman of the bindery was an expert at book-binding including leather and gold leaf. For many years the ledgers for the County Courthouse, as well as those used by the Colony operations, were done in the bindery. Even the pages were ink-ruled on a big machine.

Management, a picture filing system and a huge circulation department, occupied the upstairs. It is difficult for the average mind to comprehend the work involved in handling changes of address, expirations, and subscriptions for hundreds of thousands of names. The mailing labels were produced upstairs.

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Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

The stucco building at the back housed the composing department in the West Mall end through during the early days no doors opened to the street there. The editor and proofreader were in a corner surrounded by type fonts, three linotype machines and as many small hand-fed presses. The bindery department occupied the center of the room, where the Illustrated Review was saddle stitched until the last couple of years of it's life when it was changed form magazine form to newspaper sized tabloid. There was a huge paper cutter and a trimmer that trimmed the edges of the pages after they were stitched. The size of that operation alone was of staggering proportions. It required one operator almost full time. These trimmings produced quantities of bales, which were shipped out from the paper shed at the back. When the plant was in full operation over one hundred people were employed.

The other end of the bindery room held the mailing department. About 1920 an extension was built toward the spur track and the mailing department was moved out there, where three mailers were usually employed. Not all of the Review mailing was done directly into cars on the spur track. Some was hauled by horse teams to the old depot near Curbaril Ave. One time the depot agent told the driver not to bring any more mail that day because it held the train up too long to load it all. Mail sacks were weighed in the mailing room by staff from the Post Office.

The mailing room addition made it possible for the bindery to expand into the area vacated by them. About that time much of the stamping, stuffing and mailing of Mr. Lewis' promotional correspondence was moved from the Rotunda Room of the Administration Building to the Printery. Mr. Lewis was deep into his oil ventures by then and some envelopes contained as many as nine or ten enclosures. Also for a time, sample packets of pumpkin flour were mailed from the facilities though they had brought their own staff.

Another small house near the spur track was for ink storage. Shipments were loaded right from the railroad cars into the Ink house, as it was called.

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Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

When the first issue of Atascadero News came off the press in 1916 it was for 100,000 copies. 90,000 copies required a one-cent postage stamp. Atascadero Post Office was only six months old and fourth class. That was a staggering amount of stamps for it to provide. It took three weeks to get an order of stamps from Washington D.C. A form of permit was soon developed. The Postal Dept. also had difficulty getting enough mailing sacks for the News.

Early in 1924 it was apparent that all of the Colony operations were in financial difficulties and that bankruptcy was near at hand. The Illustrated Review ceased to exist and on May 15, 1924 there was a mass layoff of printery employees. A staff of seven remained to publish Atascadero News, which was purchased by Ted Bishop, then sold to Montgomery Brown with Mr. Teglund as a later co-owner. The News Office was moved to its present location on El Camino about 1946. It was purchased by Keays and Porter in 1949 so for 62 years there has always been an Atascadero news.

The brick building has been called by various names including Review Building and Atascadero Press. We old-timers still call it The Printery. Between 1926 and 1950 the plant was privately owned and operated by several Boys' schools among them Moran Schools, Miramonte and Amerivet Academy; all of which catered to rich men's sons. Due to the depression and other factors they too declined until they were closed. In 1950 the Masonic Lodge purchased the building from the Colonel Aldrich estate. Since then it has been known as the Masonic Temple. The Sheriff's Substation occupies a section of the building facing West Mall; the School District Offices rented this section for several years; the Naval Reserve also met in one of the rooms.

No doubt there will be discrepancies in facts and figures contained in this article. The printed word has been researched, people's memories have been probed and personal experience gained from four and a half years of employment have been the basis for this attempt to tell only a portion of the history of the "Atascadero Printery".

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Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

The following is taken from a report prepared by architectural historian John Snyder for the Caltrans Determination of Eligibility Study prepared for a highway project in Atascadero in 1987:

In the United States, the concept of planning and building an entire community in the 19th century usually focused on either the company town, or upon the religious or utopian community. In these early years of the 20th century, two of the earliest plans combining the beaux-arts with the picturesque were indeed company towns- - Ajo, Arizona (Kenyon and Maine, architects) and Tyron, New Mexico (Bertram Goodhue, architect). But Atascadero was neither company town nor religious or utopian in concept; though it had utopian overtones, it was, in fact, a speculative real estate scheme.

In 1925, Sunset, in an article entitled "The Champion Borrower of Them All," told the story of Edward Gardner Lewis and his Atascadero scheme. The son of a New England Episcopal clergyman, Lewis entered Trinity College in 1886 and began his moneymaking schemes there. Between 1888 and 1898, he launched five businesses in such diverse fields as bug repellents, candy, and medicine; all failed. Lewis followed these up with involvement in a scheme involving chain letters, which gained him a Post Office indictment for fraud. He then turned his interest to publications in the period 1899-1907. He began publication of The Winner in St. Louis; in 1901 he bought Woman's Farm Journal. In 1902 he changed the name of The Winner to Woman's National Weekly; he had selected a new target for his future endeavors.

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Atascadero Printery
San Luis Obispo County, CA

During this period, Lewis dabbled in real estate, buying 85 acres adjoining the grounds of the St. Louis Exposition, on the western limits of St. Louis University, under the name of the University Heights Realty Company in 1902. In 1904 he launched the Peoples United States Bank, receiving and paying out deposits exclusively by mail for rural areas, coming under indictment in 1905 for this operation. By 1907 Lewis was under indictment once more by the Post Office for fraud, and lost his magazines. Low postal rates. Still, between 1909 and 1913 Lewis published his projected plans for a model city in Woman's National Weekly.

Having declared bankruptcy in St. Louis in 1912, Lewis came to California in 1913 with \$2000 in borrowed money, and grandiose plans for a model garden city community. He and his wife traveled throughout California, finally selecting a 23,000-acre tract owned by J.H. Henry, and known as the Atascadero Rancho. At the time of the purchase, Lewis was later to remember, there was a single dirt road through the estate and one house and some sheds, occupied by Henry, five "vaqueros" and "a Chinaman to wait on him." In response to Henry's price of \$1 million, Lewis wired east to friends and others with promotional descriptions, raising \$250,000 in 19 days. Borrowing almost directly from Howard's Garden City credo, Lewis proclaimed his Atascadero motto to be: "All the Advantages of country life with city conveniences." Atascadero was under development.

Selecting his team, Lewis hired Professor H. T. Cory as Engineering-Chief; University of California Professor E. J. Wickson as horticultural and agricultural advisor; Walter D. Bliss, of the San Francisco firm Bliss and Faville, as architect; Judge Frank James as legal advisor; and L. G. Sinnard of the southern pacific Railroad as soils expert.

Lewis quickly got the attention of the local press, for in November 1913, Architect and Engineer of California published "A Model Civic Center for the Woman's Republic Community, Atascadero"; clearly, Lewis' earlier focus on a female audience was reaching fruition. This article described the plan for the town, with its civic center and residential areas on one side of Atascadero Creek, which was to be the dividing line between the former development and the

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industrial area, the two to be joined by a broad boulevard which would extend to the state highway where elaborate gates would mark the entrance to the colony. Italian-style architecture was selected as "...best adapted to the brilliant coloring of the native flowers, shrubs and foliage, and the clear southern light." Lewis was nothing if not a promoter, and he knew the value of tourists, for the article noted that the Chamber of Commerce in the Administration Building would exhibit the products of the colony, "...since tens of thousands of tourists pass through the property over the great state highway, and will stop for a greater or less time at the Civic Center."

Planned also (but never built) was a university, which would conduct free courses for residents, including horticultural and agriculture. The university would also have had experimental gardens and the colony's nurseries, dairy, and creamery. All of the colony's industries were to be under supervision of the faculty.

Intended for a site between the public school and the university, and prominent in the civic center, was to be the building of the Woman's Republic, which was to house the headquarters of the national organization. It was to house the offices of the organizations of the various states, as well as the national offices. The article enthusiastically stated that Atascadero "will undoubtedly be one of the model civic centers of the world when completed." This building was also never completed and the Woman's Republic offices were housed in the Administration Building instead.

Forming Atascadero Estates Incorporated, in which he owned 87 ½ % of the stock, Lewis purchased 16,000 unsold acres of Atascadero land; control was vested in the Anglo-California Trust company of San Francisco, which held a \$750,000 mortgage on the purchase. Under a plan developed by Oscar Willett, Lewis' attorney, Atascadero Estates, Inc. bought the claims of it's creditors for Real Estates Receipts which could be applied to any parcel of Atascadero land at up to 80% of the price, with the balance to be paid in cash. The Receipts if not used within three years became worthless.

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Final plats for the project were filed on October 21, 1914. Several individuals and firms carried out design of the various elements of Atascadero. For the plan of the civic center and the Printery, Lewis selected Walter D. Bliss of Bliss and Faville, San Francisco, while the Atascadero Inn was the work of John J. Roth of Roth and Study, St. Louis. The platting of the residential section was undertaken by Sinnard, who was put forth as "...a subdivision expert of high reputation."

Lewis' choice of Bliss for the beaux-arts elements of the plan was a good one. Both Bliss and partner William Faville had trained in the offices of McKim, Mead and White, one of America's pre-eminent architectural firms with a strong background in beaux-arts planning and design. Concurrently with the planning for Atascadero, Bliss and Faville were hard at work on the plan for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, to be held in San Francisco in 1915, and for several of that fair's major buildings. This fair, as noted earlier, was yet another exercise in beaux-arts planning and designs.

But Bliss' involvement was not confined to just the firm's architectural and planning commission. Records reveal that he was also a member of the Board of Directors and Commissioners of the Colony Holding Corporation. As Commissioner of Architecture, he had final approval of all plans for business and residences. Bulletin No. 4 of the California Colony of the American Woman's Republic stated, "Mr. Bliss will at all times be pleased to render any assistance possible to those intending to build in the colony, suggesting improvements, making plans and undertaking the supervision of the construction of any houses or bungalows and rendering any other reasonable assistance."

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In Lewis' original concept, the civic center and public buildings were to be completed before any residential construction took place. In actuality, Lewis found it necessary to promote lot sales and residential construction from the outset to finance the project. The costs of roads, water system, and civic center were applied to the costs of the lots in the subdivision. The survey divided the community into a Residential District, with its picturesque Olmsteadian curvilinear street plan, and a larger encircling area of orchards and agricultural estates. The residential sections were selected from that land least suitable for cultivation, and in proper Garden City concept, surrounded the landscaped civic center. The business section was to adjoin the civic center, and was to contain all factories, warehouses, and processing plants for the colony's agricultural products. (The business section was temporarily placed on Administration Park along Traffic Way, and never did revert to its intended location on the railroad.) The parks and reserves, totaling 5000 acres throughout the colony, were located on land entirely unsuited for cultivation, and along streams and springs.

By mid-1915 Bliss and Faville were well along with plans and construction work for what was being touted as "... Colony Holding Corporation's Model City at Atascadero..." In May 1915 the F. O. Engstrum Company of Los Angeles had just received the \$200,000 construction contract for the Administration Building and the Printery while the architects were just completing the plans for the Department store. The two-story brick Printery had its own railroad spur connecting it with the Southern Pacific main line. At a later date, its entrance hall and great staircase were painted with elaborate murals of local scenery by Chicago artist Ralph Holmes, who had moved to Atascadero.

At the same time, Bliss and Faville were busy preparing plans for a 3-4 story hotel, the powerhouse, and the opera house (none of which were ultimately to be built). By late 1915 and early 1916, a large number of builders and carpenters were hard at work on the many residences "... in the course of construction or contemplated." Later in 1916 work was begun on the Department Store, with the Atascadero Inn on its second floor, and on the school, and plans were under development for the hospital.

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The first civic building completed was the Printery in 1916, with the first printing of the Atascadero News issued on January 22, 1916. The Department Store-- known as La Plaza—opened on March 4, 1917, with the Inn on its second floor. (The store eventually failed and the building was converted entirely to an Inn in 1925; the building burned in 1934.) The Administration Building opened during the week of June 21, 1918, and contained the offices of the Colony Holding Corporation, a bank, the telephone exchange, an insurance company, the water company, seed company, post office, cashiers, and colony information.

Also in 1916, Lewis placed the statuary group which stands in the Mall park in front of the Administration Building. Titled "The Three Bathing Girls," the group had been carved from a single block of Carrarra marble, and had been the Italian government's chief exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1903. (It is unclear as to just when Lewis obtained the group, but it seems likely that he may have had it in storage.)

In September 1916, Lewis invited Leonard Coates of Morgan Hill Nurseries to lecture residents on suitable landscaping. Among Coates' recommendations were those regarding street trees. For broad avenues, Coates recommend elms, plane trees, black walnuts, and black locusts. For the narrower residential streets, the recommended species were silver or scarlet maple, locust, western catalpa, mountain ash, silver poplar, and evergreens such as acacia, California pepper, coast redwood, Monterey pine, and Arizona cypress. Coates' choices were good ones, and mature examples of these trees line the streets of Atascadero today.

The year 1917 saw the school completed in the civic center area, and an annex added to the Printery. At this time the Printery contained the only rotogravure plant in California, and handled printing for special supplements of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Lewis began publication of the *Illustrated Review* that year from the Printery, and all must have seemed well as Governor William E. Stevens chose Atascadero as the site for the annual Fourth of July speech. The town even boasted a motion picture theater on Traffic Way. A building boom in 1919 followed, with more houses, a

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lumber mill (converted from the brick plant which had furnished brick for the civic center buildings), and groundbreaking for the hospital.

Early promotional articles in *Woman's National Weekly* were supplemented by the colony-published *Illustrated Review* over the next few years describing the development in glowing terms. It was cited as lying at an altitude of 1000 feet, protected by a chain of mountains, and having an average annual rainfall of 26 inches. Turning to the romantic past, Lewis noted that the land had been preserved intact since its earliest days as a Spanish land grant, explaining that the name meant "place of many springs" or "much water" in Spanish. These articles boasted of the expected 20,000 to 30,000 people who would populate this latter-day Eden, and illustrated the emerging civic center, with the Department Store, the Printery, the first unit of the \$20,000 school, and the Administration Building. The holding company owned all of the public buildings. Also shown were typical houses; by 1917 some 200 houses had been built at costs ranging from \$1500 to \$5000 in the 2400 acres surrounding the civic center which were designated for residential development. Houses had to conform to local restrictions, as administered by Bliss in his role as Commissioner of Architecture, and these early examples were considered modest in light of projected mansions costing up to \$25,000. Interestingly, *Architect and Engineer* articles seem to imply that these early houses were the work of Bliss; indeed, the firm published plans for at least three designs intended specifically for the Atascadero Colony. However, Lewis had also involved his niece's husband, John Roth, in the design work for Atascadero; in 1920 Lewis wrote that in 1914, with Bliss firmly involved in the project, "Mr. John Roth, formerly of the architectural firm of Roth & Studie (sic), St. Louis, came out to live with us, and designed the great store building and the schools, as well as most of the more than four hundred beautiful homes that have since been built." Thus we have the interesting scenario of Bliss passing judgment on Roth's designs (though the record reveals no note of professional dispute or jealousy).

Unique in the early plans for the town were the Permanent Residence Apartments, intended to be completed by Spring of 1915. Essentially a precursor of condominiums, the units were to be held for the life of the owner, with cost predicated upon age at the time of purchase, and life expectancy. The

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purchase price included the use of all facilities, as well as cost of burial and cemetery plot upon death. The facility was to be operated by the Permanent Residence Apartment Corporation, which included Bliss on its Board of Directors.

The colony was big news in 1917, when the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an article entitled "Building an Empire at Atascadero." The article told Chronicle readers of the 40 square mile estate, a veritable wilderness three years prior when purchased, but which would be transformed into a model community. Located sixteen miles inland, the town would nevertheless own three miles of beach front for the enjoyment of its residents. It was claimed that 3000 families had already purchased homes, though this was clearly promotionalism on the part of the holding company, since only about 200 houses had been completed by that time; another 700 to 1000 were expected to be completed during 1917. The town plan included over 70 miles of streets and roads. By this date, the company had expended \$2,000,000 on the development, though it is not clear if this figure included the initial \$1,000,000 cost of the 23,000 acre estate.

The colony was well under way in the 1917-20 period. Lot sales and residential construction were brisk. A Federated Church had been established, where 14 different sects worshipped together. The department store was in operation by the Atascadero Mercantile Company as a cooperative, and part of its profits reverted to each share holder. In order to finance continued civic center development, part of the price of each lot was pro-rated for this purpose. The future looked bright. But it was not to be.

America's entry into World War I brought with it a government halt on all non-essential building; Lewis' scheme began to go awry. Because of this, the opera house, power plant, and residential apartments were never built. A steel mill planned for the industrial section never got off the ground, nor did a proposed factory to produce fiber corks from paper pulp (due to a wartime shortage of European corks). A local doll factory opened during the war, eventually branching out with a plant in Vancouver, British Columbia, before failing. A dehydrating plant began operation with a wartime government contract, and at peak production, the colony had a branch plant in Arroyo

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Grande. This, too, failed due to low prices after the war, bad crop production, and mismanagement.

The *Sunset* article in 1925 went on to describe Atascadero as "...a community with a bold front hiding cobwebs, blasted hopes and shattered dreams." By this time there were 300-400 families living there, mostly elderly. The printing plant was still functioning (though barely), but the cannery and fruit drying plant had closed. The hotel still served a few guests, and the department store still operated. "The four story administration building in the heart of the civic center...was the Mecca of men and women walking slowly and with drooping shoulders to see the attorney for the creditors." Clearly, Lewis' scheme was dying, and was taking with it those who could ill afford the cost. "Despite the promise of white blossoms against green hills, despite the jubilant song of nesting birds, Atascadero had the forlorn, wistful air of a mining camp who ore veins are pinching out."

Even the impending failure at Atascadero had not kept Lewis from other schemes. The early 1920s also witnessed his last audacious scheme, in which he attempted to purchase 16,000 acres of rolling hills on the Palos Verdes peninsula, 30 miles from Los Angeles. Using his mail order lists, he attempted to raise \$5,000,000 to buy the land in 1923. Again enlisting an impressive planning staff, Lewis this time had the Olmstead Brothers handling landscape architecture and subdivision, Myron Hunt undertaking city planning chores, with John J. Roth as supervising architect, and Professor C.B. Wing of Stanford University on the engineering staff. The plan included two Beaux-Arts civic centers and typically picturesque Olmsteadian residential areas. Lewis even offered the Regents of the University of California \$1 million plus a grant of 1000 acres to relocate the Southern Branch of the University (today U.C.L.A.) to Palos Verdes. As an adjunct, and intended to finance both Atascadero and Palos Verdes, Lewis also began side ventures into oil on Signal Hill in Long Beach. But by 1924 time had run out and Lewis' creditors caught up with him, and he filed for bankruptcy with 11,000 claims totaling \$13 million against him. By 1925 the Palos Verdes project, reduced to 1/5 of its original size, had been taken from him and placed in the hands of conservative local businessmen. Lewis was convicted of using the mails to defraud, and was sentenced to Federal prison at McNeil Island,

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Washington; the schemes of Edward Gardner Lewis were ended. Parolled, Lewis eventually returned to Atascadero, where he died on August 10, 1950 at age 81.

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Atascadero Printery
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ATASCADERO PRINTERY has been located on Parcel 029-331-003 since 1915. The property has remained virtually unchanged in all those years.

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The photos were all taken in 1999 by Lon Allan, P.O. Box 956, Atascadero, CA 93423. Negatives are with the photographer.

RECREATION CENTER

CITY OF ATASCADERO, CA.

F.L. Henderson & Associates, Inc.
 DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTION

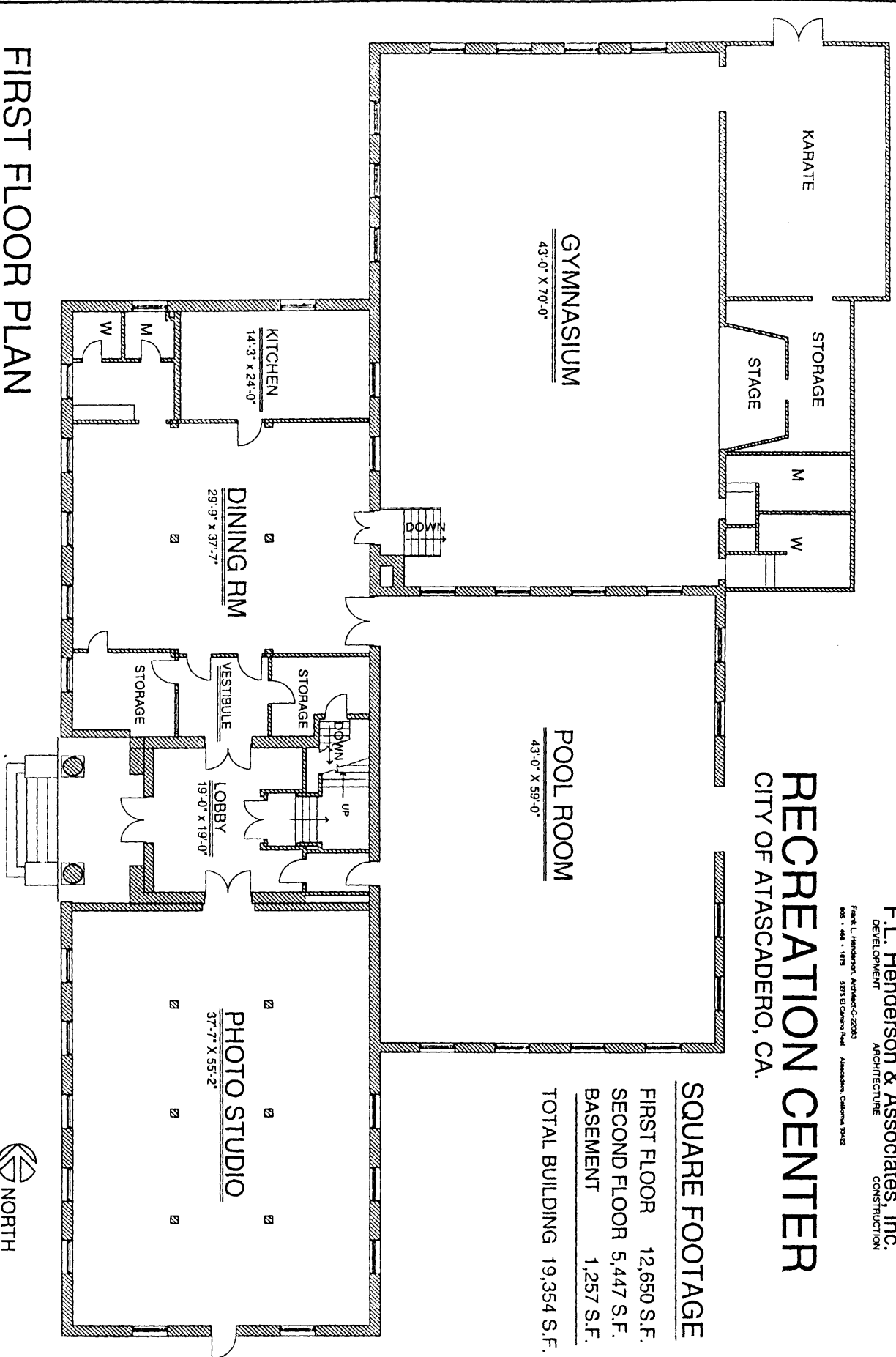
Frank L. Henderson, Architect-C-22083
 INC. • 444 • 1879 5275 E Camino Real Atascadero, California 93422

SQUARE FOOTAGE

FIRST FLOOR 12,650 S.F.
 SECOND FLOOR 5,447 S.F.
 BASEMENT 1,257 S.F.
 TOTAL BUILDING 19,354 S.F.

POOL ROOM
 43'-0" X 59'-0"

GYMNASIUM
 43'-0" X 70'-0"



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

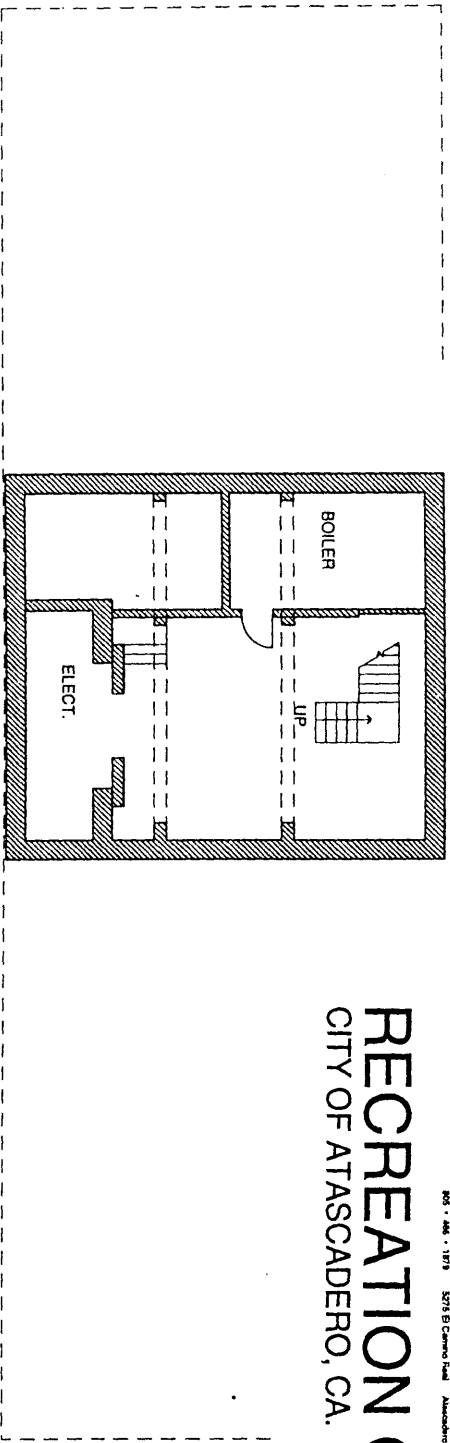


Atascadero Printery

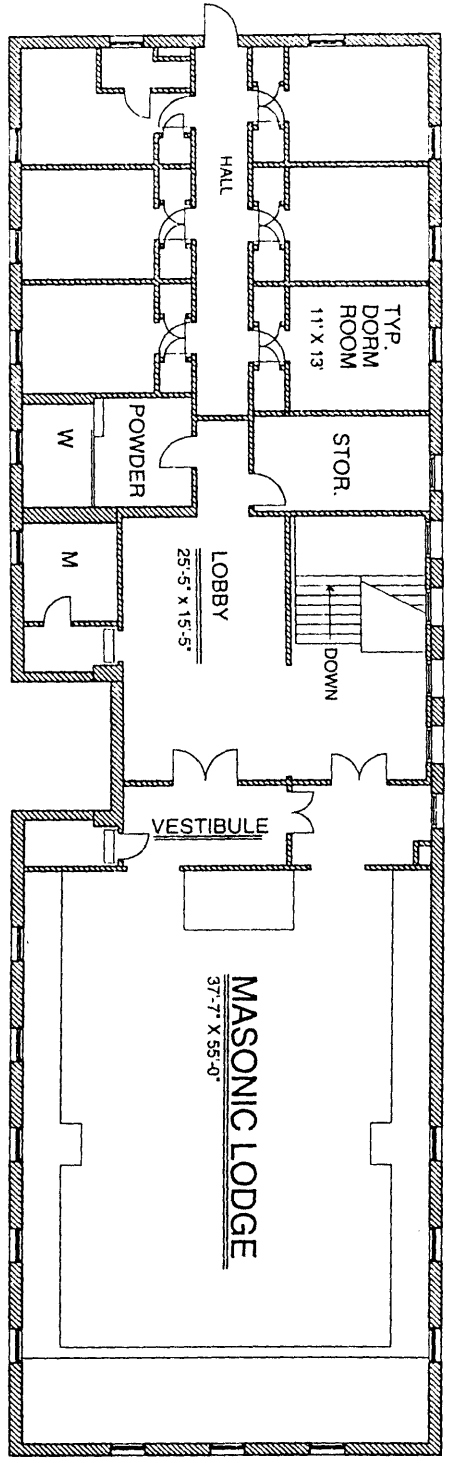
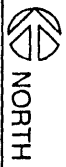
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RECREATION CENTER
 CITY OF ATASCADERO, CA.



BASEMENT / BOILER ROOM



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

