

# LAND OF COOL PINES: Cloudcroft, New Mexico, and the Western Resort Tradition

by Sally Kabat

The Lodge at Cloudcroft, represents one of New Mexico's best examples of a resort tradition. The hotel and the community reflect aspects of American culture, American economic conditions, and late nineteenth century American resort communities.

The end of the Civil War ushered in a period of growth in American leisure activities, and the development and expansion of American resorts. Freed from the restraints of a country at war, Americans discovered the pleasures of relaxation and recreation. They flocked in great numbers to the resorts and spas that had been built during the early years of the nineteenth century. The popularity of the vacationing trend was quickly recognized by investors, resulting in the construction of a great number of new hotels in the eastern United States. It was this development and expansion of vacation spots that formed the basis of the American nineteenth-century resort tradition.

In keeping with this resort tradition, the Lodge capitalized on its geographic location. For decades, it has offered cool, healthy mountain air as an alternative to the hot and humid summers of near-by El Paso. At the turn of the century, El Paso was a major transportation center with a population of more than 20,000.<sup>1</sup>

The community was economically stable enough to provide the Cloudcroft resort with a sufficient and affluent clientele, and geographically close enough to allow vacationers access either by excursion train or a long, rough carriage ride.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was also a time of great expansion and growth in the national railroad network. The Southern Pacific was building its transcontinental road from San Francisco south-eastward through Southern Arizona, and the completed line arrived at El Paso in May of 1881.<sup>2</sup> El Paso became the hub for many railroad companies. In the 1890s the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad Company (owned by Colonel Charles B. Eddy) began construction of a new route which was to run from El Paso northward through Carrizozo and Vaughn, to Tucumcari. As the construction crews headed

north they ran out of timber for cross-ties. The result of this shortage was the creation of the Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountain Railway Company, a line that climbed into the Sacramento Mountains to valuable stands of virgin pine which provided the required lumber.

As the railroad was being constructed, Eddy and his attorney, William Ashton Hawking, recognized not only the economic possibilities of the harvested lumber, but also the potential for a mountain resort community. Cloudcroft was planned and built by Eddy under the auspices of the Alamogordo Improvement Company which he established in 1897.<sup>3</sup> The railroad line was completed from El Paso to Cloudcroft on January 25, 1900.<sup>4</sup> Before it was finished, a railroad station was built by the company, as well as a large pavilion. This latter structure, measuring approximately 170' by 50' was officially opened on June 16, 1899.<sup>5</sup> The pavilion contained a kitchen, dining room, reception area, and ballroom, and served the summer tourists who were housed in nearby rented cabins and tents. Most of the first summer tourists came from El Paso by excursion trains which ran every Friday. Women and children would often stay for several weeks—even the entire summer "season" while husbands and fathers paid the \$3.00 round trip fare for a long weekend escape from the heat of El Paso.<sup>6</sup>

During the last half of the nineteenth century, certain architectural styles came into vogue. They were very popular choices for residential architecture in such well known resort communities as Newport, Cape May, Bristol, and Nantucket. These styles are generally referred to as Victorian, but are technically defined as Queen Anne, Shingle, and Stick styles. The architectural elements most often associated with these styles are wood construction with a variety of surface textures, broad expanses of roof with connecting planes, a strong horizontal emphasis, verandas and balconies built within the envelope of the building, and hipped roofs with eyebrow dormers.<sup>7</sup> As

*"The Lodge—1900-1901"—from The Lodge, 1899-1969, Cloudcroft, New Mexico by Dorothy Jensen Neal.*





styles that were popular for many contemporary seaside resorts they would have been recognized as an appropriate "resort" image by well traveled, wealthy El Pasoans, the most likely clientele to spend the sweltering summer months among the cool pines of Cloudcroft.

The first Lodge was officially opened on June 1, 1901 and was a two story log building. It incorporated many of the elements which are typical of the Shingle, Queen Anne, and Stick styles, having a low profile with a strong horizontal emphasis, porches and verandas, the extensive use of wood for construction and decorative detailing, and eyebrow dormers. The blending of the structure with the landscape and nature was in the Picturesque tradition, another appropriate architectural choice for the Lodge.

Fire was a constant threat to the wooden resorts and hotels of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Gaslights and inadequate fire fighting equipment were two contributing factors to the blazing destruction of many fine examples of Victorian architecture. Some of the most notable were the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, the Tremont Hotel in Chicago, the Broadmoor Casino in Colorado Springs, and the Montezuma Hotel in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The log Lodge at Cloudcroft was completely destroyed by fire during the night of June 13, 1909. Fortunately without loss of life. A defective flue was blamed for the conflagration and railroad officials estimated the loss at \$60,000 to \$70,000. None of the nearby buildings were damaged so it was possible for vacationers to stay at Cloudcroft in cabins and cottages owned by the railroad. Every attempt was made to continue the summer season at Cloudcroft, and the excursion trains continued serving the community for the rest of the summer as scheduled.<sup>8</sup>

The destruction of the Lodge was a drastic blow to the community of Cloudcroft and a threat to its economy and survival. The arrival of the summer tourists had provided the only "green" or "hard money" in the area and the possibility that the railroad would not rebuild the Lodge was a devastating prospect for the town. But, by the summer of 1910, construction had begun on the new Lodge located on a much higher site, with spectacular panoramic views of the Tularosa Basin below. The railroad, knowing now that the resort was a financially successful ven-

ture, extended a spur from the existing station to within 1,000 feet of the new Lodge location and connected the new hotel to the spur with a wooden boardwalk. The boardwalk mimicked a well established Victorian tradition popularized by the famous American promenade at Atlantic City, New Jersey. The boardwalk provided a socially acceptable stage on which to see and be seen.

The new Lodge at Cloudcroft opened June 1, 1911 and continued for more than forty years as a summer resort under the direction of a variety of owners and managers. It provided the elite an environment for exclusive interaction in socially acceptable activities such as golf, tennis, horseback riding, picnics, dances, plays, charades, cards, lectures, concerts, gambling as well as a place to promenade and porch sit. These were popular activities at the Lodge that mirrored the social world of the summer resorts of the eastern United States. The architecture and interior arrangement of the Lodge provided the necessary areas for these activities to take place. It had a covered porch, an open veranda, card room, generous lobby, and a variety of other public spaces that changed in appearance and use over the years.

A Chicago architectural firm was commissioned by the railroad to design the new Lodge. Its form can generally be described as Jacobean, one of the Renaissance revival styles. The central building was designed with a tower element flanked by two lower sections of different size but equal mass. This part of the building was designed to contain the two story lobby, the offices of the resident manager off of the mezzanine, a two story dining room, and kitchen facilities. On the third floor was a large dormitory which could accommodate 75-80 men. Connected to the main building, on the north side, was a two story wing which contained fifty guest rooms, twelve private baths and four guest baths. A basement was constructed only under the central portion of the building. The original exterior was of a grey stucco, which was described as "fireproof".<sup>10</sup> The three projecting bay windows gave light to the interior and spectacular views for the dining room guests. Although the main building, which contained the public spaces, was physically attached to the guest wing, which contained the private spaces, they were quite separate visually. The roof, as well as fenestration and architectural elements were quite different on each section of the





building; however, the original third floor dormers and cupolas on the main building and the wing were identical.

During the following forty years the history of the Lodge was uneventful. The depression years reduced the number of resort and vacationing Americans at Cloudcroft as well as across the United States. From 1932 to 1935 Conrad Hilton leased the Lodge from the railroad, and operated both the hotel and dining room for three seasons. In 1936 the Southern Pacific Company sold the Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountain Railroad, the Cloudcroft Lumber Reservation, and the Lodge to the Southwest Lumber Company under the control of Louis Carr. He owned and operated the Lodge with modest success from 1936 to 1942 when World War II depressed the national resort economy. <sup>11</sup>By this time automobile travel had replaced the train as the most common mode of travel. During war-time gasoline rationing limited the range of even the most affluent traveler. It wasn't until the post-war years that tourists "hit the road" and the economy of the Lodge took another upswing.

In 1953 John Ritter purchased the Lodge and immediately embarked on a renovating and remodeling plan that salvaged the sadly neglected structure. His efforts included the badly needed updating of the physical plant, and the drilling of a well. Ritter kept the hotel open that first winter and it has remained open year round since then. One of his most noteworthy accomplishments was the painting of the building in what was described as "a soft Broadmoor Pink". <sup>12</sup>Certainly a significant attempt to form a visual association with the successful and prominent resort of the same name located in Colorado Springs.

Tragically, John Ritter was killed in an automobile accident August 19, 1954. However, the family retained ownership and with competent managers continued to promote and expand the facility.

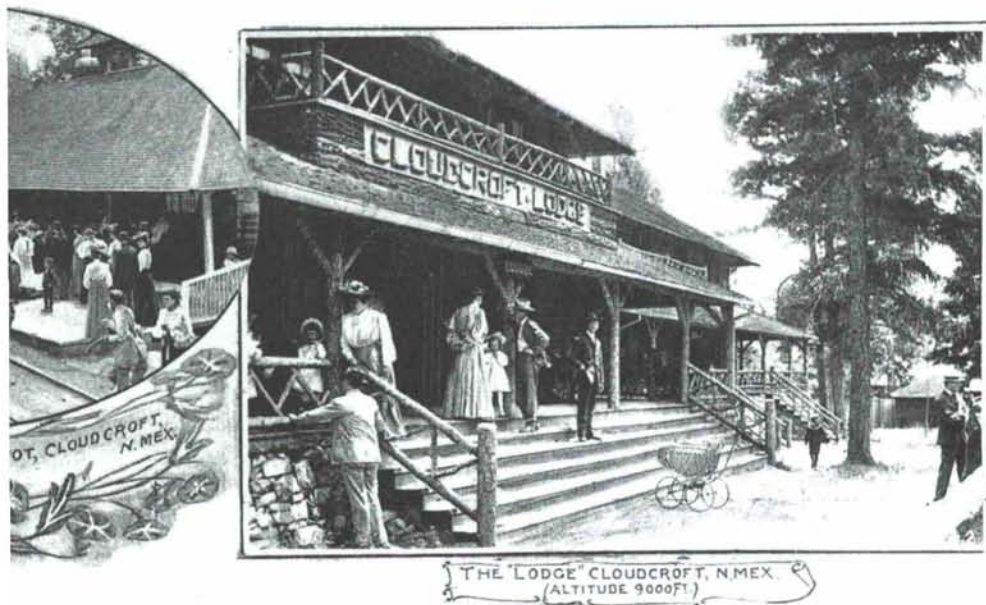
Several remodeling projects altered the Lodge. In 1957 the dining room was enlarged by enclosing the open veranda with plate glass windows. About this time another window was also added to the central tower, just above the copper-domed oriel window. <sup>13</sup>The third floor dormers were enlarged reflecting the interior expansion of this space which included ten additional guest rooms and five new public rooms created on the mezzanine level. Many of the public spaces were "modernized" during the

1950s with fashionable changes made in decor and furnishings, as well as modification of the two brick fireplaces; one in the main lobby area and one in the dining room. In 1965, the roofed porch was enclosed ending the era of "front porch sitting".

On Thanksgiving Day 1963, "Buddy" Ritter, the son of the late John Ritter, opened his dream venture and a major contribution to the history of the Lodge; a downhill ski area he named Ski Cloudcroft. The expansion of winter activities gave additional impetus for year 'round operation. The 1970s began another period of change in the visual image of the Lodge. The expanse of plate glass windows in the dining room were replaced by casement windows with stained glass decoration. Nationally, it was a time of renewed interest in things of the Victorian period and style; a time when Americans appeared to be looking for symbols of a more elegant and relaxed era. Many Victorian images were used to express this desire for a grand and luxurious lifestyle, and the Lodge followed the trend.

The importance of image in successful marketing and promotion is well known. The Lodge has always made an effort to capitalize on a particular, if not consistent, image. It began with the log Lodge and its Picturesque influence, followed by the use of "Broadmoor Pink" color for the exterior of the new Lodge, the current use of four seasons images created by Tom Darrah, and the newest logo with a distinct Victorian flavor. An illusion has been created, over the years, that would hopefully appeal to the desired potential patrons. Darrah's four paintings illustrating the seasons at the Lodge are a wonderful example of marketing's visual appeal. The winter scene with pristine snow and warmly glowing windows suggests the appeal of a snow-filled vacation at the Lodge, especially to the hardy winter sports enthusiast.

Sports have had an important role in the story of the Lodge, especially golf. The game of golf came to America from Scotland in 1888 and by 1892 the fashionable eastern resort areas of Newport and Southhampton were offering this new sport to their wealthy summer residents. The early courses were either six or nine holes. The first eighteen hole course was built in Wheaton, Illinois, twenty-five miles outside Chicago. In 1897 the Lake Champlain Hotel built the first hotel course and Van Cortland Park, in New York City opened the first public course. By 1900 there were more than 1,000 courses in the country-at



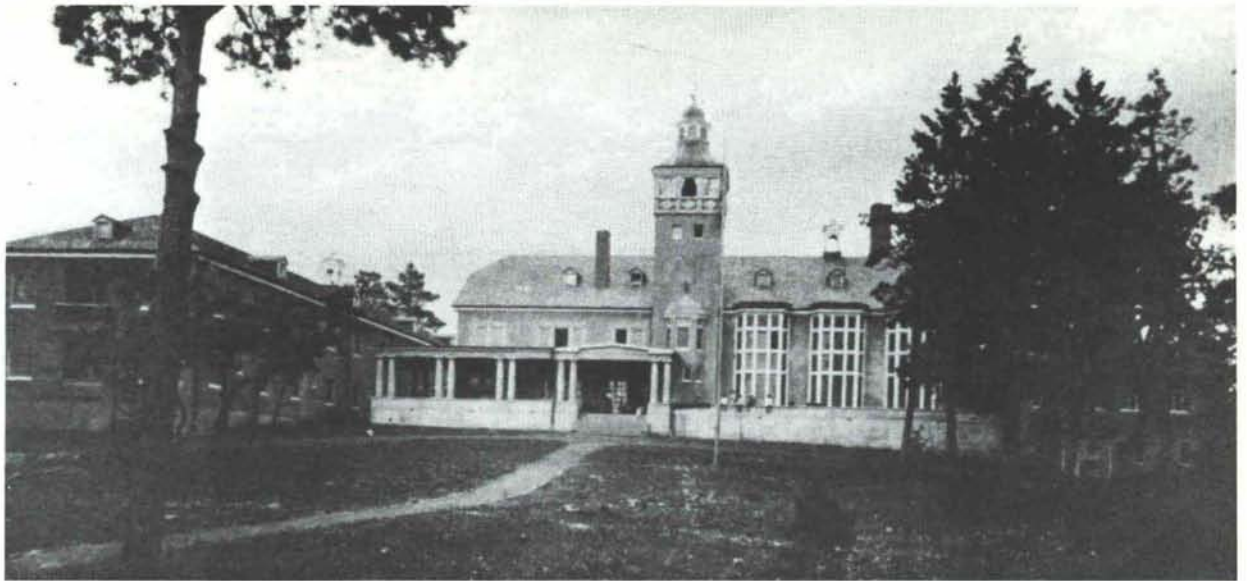
A postcard from the early years of the Lodge. (John P. Conron Collection)



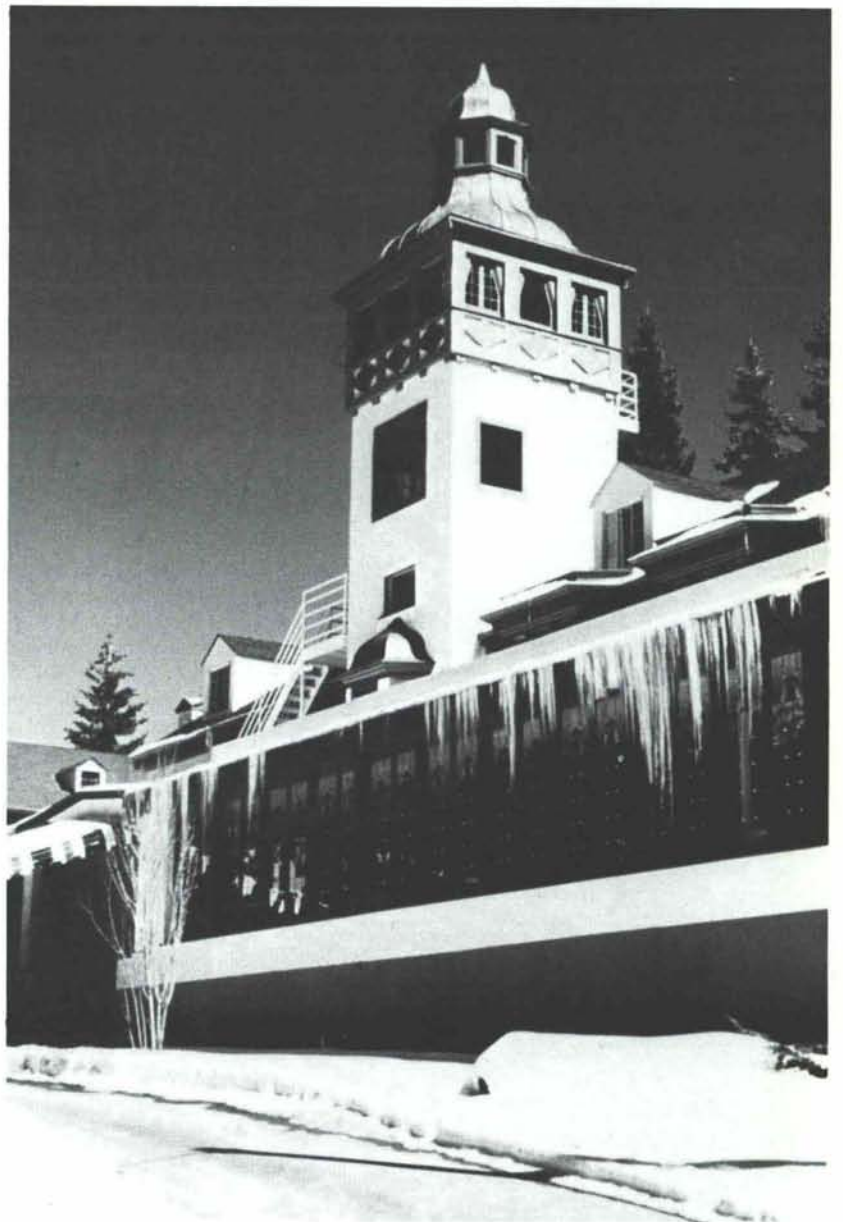


*The fire on the night of June 13, 1909, above left, only these remnants remain. (Postcard collection-UNM)*





*The lodge shortly after its rebuilding in 1911. (The Lodge-1899-1969 Cloudcroft, New Mexico by Dorothy Jensen Neal.)*



*The Lodge during the winter of 1987. (photograph by Sally Kabat.)* ➔





*"Winter at the Lodge" a painting by Tom Darrah (photograph by Sally Kabat)*

least one in every state-and twenty-six in the Chicago area alone.<sup>14</sup> The golf course at Cloudcroft was built in 1900 at Zenith Park but was moved to the new Lodge location in 1911.<sup>15</sup> The course and the game of golf has always been an important promotional tool for the Lodge, being touted, truthfully or not, as either the highest or the second oldest course in North America.

The most recent statistics available show that the Lodge, with forty-seven rooms, operates at an average annual occupancy rate of 61-62% and is completely booked most weekends. The continuing appeal of Cloudcroft to its eastern neighbor is evident with 38% of the guests coming from Texas, 22% from New Mexico, 8% from the eastern United States and 4% from other western regions. The remaining 28% is composed of international guests and tour groups originating in Florida, California and New York.<sup>16</sup>

The current logo being used by the Lodge was introduced in 1983 by the present owner, Jerry Sanders. The representation of the tower section of the building, certainly its most recognizable architectural feature, has been surrounded by a decorative oval shape, giving it a "Victorian" feeling. Other recent changes in the image of the Lodge reflect a continuation of the Victorian style. The exterior has been painted in a "decorator" color combination of grey, white, and mauve, and a colorful canvas canopy has been placed over the entrance. There has been another change in the fenestration of the tower. The two small windows have been made into one larger casement window. Additional openings have been created in both the north and the south sides of the tower. The new windows and fire escape indicate an adherence to more current building codes and a more frequent public use of the tower space as an occasional summer-time bar and observation deck with a magnificent view.

Older aluminum-framed doors have been replaced with wood ones accentuated with stained glass. A gazebo has been added to

the grounds at the back of the hotel, near the swimming pool, drawing on another Victorian symbol. Leaded glass windows have been added to the main lobby area. The original hotel safe has been exposed and is visible from the lobby and gift shops. Old-time stories of the Lodge have included a ghost named Rebecca. In order to capitalize on this legend, an image of this red haired vision graces the bar and lounge, and the hotel's fine restaurant has been named after her.

The days are now gone when the Lodge and Cloudcroft provided the hotel guest with an entire vacation "experience". Mobility has become the way of the tourist of today; automobile tourists demanded a variety of activities at sites in the nearby area. Promotional material about White Sands, the Mescalero Indian Reservation, Carlsbad Caverns and Alamogordo now fill display racks in the lobby of the Lodge.

The spur built by the railroad in 1911 has become part of the most recent trend in the resort tradition-the world of condominiums. Townhouses named Spur Landing now stand where railroad tracks once stood, providing modern year 'round living in Cloudcroft. Some units are occupied by permanent residents of Cloudcroft, others are used as summer or winter vacation homes. These "Mountain Condos" architecturally resemble the millions of other townhouse and condominium complexes covering the mountainsides of American resort areas.

Changes seem to be taking place in the American attitude regarding leisure time and the vacation experience. The world of the real estate broker has moved into the world of the innkeeper. Sales, promotion and development are directed toward the present trend in leisure-time experience. Ownership of a few days or weeks in a resort condominium complex tends to isolate the vacationer within individual mini-homes where eating, parties, and other social interactions take place. Few vacationers become involved in the activities and group experiences of the old resort hotels which included dressing for dinner, card parties, charades





A sketch by Terrance J. Brown AIA, of the Cloudcroft Lodge, 1984, used as a postcard by the Lodge management.

and other games. The continually mobile American has been divided into two groups; the camping set that travels like the turtle with portable personal housing in a variety of materials ranging from canvas to aluminum, and the resort vacationer experiencing leisure time at condominiums and massive hotel complexes. There seems to be a trend—an attempt to return to the splendor and gracious living represented by the luxurious hotels and resorts of the late nineteenth century, but without the social elitism associated with those times.

The Lodge at Cloudcroft seems suspended in time—a foot in the old world and one in the new. But, above it all...

Despite a checkered history which has reflected shifts in American economy, society, life, and culture...

In spite of changes, alterations, and facelifts...

She still stands...

The Lodge...

The Queen of the mountain, and  
Ruler of the Land of Cool Pines.

(See a continuation of the Lodge story on page 19)

#### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Sally Kabat, a native of Ft. Lauderdale, lived in Minneapolis for forty years, and has been in the Albuquerque area for the past three years. She received a B.S. degree in Design (1983) and a M.A. degree in the History of Decorative Arts (1985) from the University of Minnesota. She is currently completing a Ph. D. degree at the University of New Mexico in American Studies specializing in nineteenth-century Southwestern hotels. In addition to her academic endeavors, Sally owns her own design business, is a part-time employee in the Special Collections Department of the General Library at UNM, and is the president of the West Mesa Branch of American Association of University Women.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> John L. Androit, editor, *Population Abstracts of the United States*. (Androit Associates, 1983), p. 765
- <sup>2</sup> Vernon J. Glover, *Logging Railroads of the Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico*. (USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region: Report 1984), p. 1
- <sup>3</sup> Dorothy Jensen Neal, *The Lodge 1899-1969, Cloudcroft, New Mexico*. (Alamogordo Printing Company, 1969), p. 2
- <sup>4</sup> Glover, p. 4
- <sup>5</sup> Neal, p. 2
- <sup>6</sup> Neal, p. 8
- <sup>7</sup> Carole Rifkin, *A Field Guide to American Architecture*. (New American Library, 1980), p. 65
- <sup>8</sup> *The Alamogordo News*, Vol. XIII, No. 26, Thursday, June 17, 1909.
- <sup>9</sup> Neal, p. 14
- <sup>10</sup> Neal, p. 14
- <sup>11</sup> Neal, p. 26
- <sup>12</sup> Neal, p. 35
- <sup>13</sup> John J. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*. (American Association for State and Local History, 1977), p. 30
- <sup>14</sup> Nevin H. Gibson, *The Encyclopedia of Golf with the Official All-Time Records*. (A.S. Barnes and Company, 1958), p. 18
- <sup>15</sup> Neal, p. 15
- <sup>16</sup> Interviews with Glynda and Ted Bonnell, February 27-28, 1987



# AGP

Home of the  
Concrete Giant!

ALBUQUERQUE GRAVEL PRODUCTS COMPANY

DEDICATED TO QUALITY  
AND SERVICE

100 Iron Avenue, SE Tel. (505) 242-5265  
P.O. Box 829 Albuquerque, NM 87103

With Your Imagination  
We Can Create  
Concrete Structures of  
Distinction



Ferreri Concrete Structures, INC.

2340 Alamo SE • Suite 106  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106  
(505) 247-0391

## ESTIMATORS... Who Needs 'Em!

Architects — Engineers — Developers  
Owners — Banks — Insurance Companies  
The Government — The Army — The Navy  
THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Construction  
Cost  
Management

- Conceptual estimates
- Detail estimates
- Change order evaluation
- Disbursement supervision
- Insurable values
- C.A.C.E.S.

2413 NORTH MAIN • FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76106  
(817) 625-4271 • FAX (817) 625-0920

*Certified Professional Estimators*



SANTA FE  
LIGHTS

ARCHITECTURAL  
LIGHTING FIXTURES  
IN SOUTHWEST  
ADOBE STYLE

INDOOR & OUTDOOR  
WALL, CEILING AND  
HANGING LIGHTS,  
CHANDELIERS &  
GARDEN LIGHTS

SANTA FE LIGHTS

Rt. 10, Box 88Y, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501  
(505) 471-0076 / Brochure Available

## CORONADO WRECKING & SALVAGE CO.

(505) 877-2821

"25 years experience"



Southwest Abatement

Asbestos Removal  
(505) 873-2967

"... In partnership working together  
for your protection"

4200 Broadway, SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

INTERIOR LANDSCAPING DESIGN  
LEASING • MAINTENANCE



The Professional Plant People  
(505) 888-5821