

BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE
Grand Canyon National Park
Grand Canyon Village, South Rim
Grand Canyon National Park
Coconino County
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-136

HABS
ARIZ
3-GRACAN,
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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3-GRACAN,
12-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE

HABS No. AZ-136

Location: South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, in Grand Canyon Village, Coconino County, Arizona

Present Owner: National Park Service
Grand Canyon National Park
Grand Canyon, Arizona

Present Occupant: Transient

Present Use: Hotel and guest cabins

Statement of Significance:

Bright Angel Lodge is of regional significance as a complex of buildings associated with and the product of architect and interior decorator Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter. Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter was a significant architect in the history of the American Southwest and one of the few women to enter that field around the beginning of this century. Colter designed and/or decorated the interiors of important Fred Harvey Company hotels and other facilities during a career which stretched from 1902 to 1949. Examples of her work can be found from Chicago to Los Angeles along the system of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway.

The lodge is also of regional significance as a complex of buildings that embody the distinctive characteristics of the rustic architecture of the Depression era.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Bright Angel Lodge cabins comprise part of the lodge complex designed by Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, who worked for the Fred Harvey Company as an architect and interior designer from 1902 to 1949. The lodge is actually the lineal descendent of the Bright Angel Hotel, a frame, gable-roofed building constructed near the rim of the Grand Canyon in 1896, connecting on the west with an earlier log cabin built by William O. ("Bucky") O'Neill, a notable Arizonan who was killed in the Spanish-American War in Cuba. Later purchased by the Fred Harvey Company, by 1916 the hotel was dilapidated, obsolete, and inadequate. The Company assigned Mary Colter to design the replacement. What she designed was a "cottage village" near the head of the Bright Angel Trail. This was two years before the establishment of Grand Canyon National Park.

The year 1917 encompassed the United States entry into World War I and nationalization of the railroads, and at Grand Canyon plans to develop new accommodations came to a halt. After the war, the company and its architect were busy elsewhere, and then in 1929 the Depression intervened, imposing still further delay. But in 1932 the National Park Service engaged in talks with the Fred Harvey Company about upgrading accommodations and replacing the hotel on the rim. After exploring the idea of a single stone hotel building, frowned upon by the National Park Service, Mary Colter dusted off her 1916 plans for a group of cabins, and construction of these, together with a central lodge, began in 1933. The new Bright Angel Lodge opened to the public in 1935. In the design of this lodge complex, Mary Colter reached the pinnacle of her career as an architect working in the "rustic" style in the Southwest. She produced buildings that blended, not only within the group but even within a single structure, a variety of pioneer architectural styles once common to the Grand Canyon region of northern Arizona in historic and even prehistoric times.

She mixed personally the pilot batch of each color and shade of paint to be used on different parts of the new cabins, selecting colors that were harmonious with the environment and the styles represented. Furthermore, architect Colter herself sited each cabin carefully amid the outcroppings of limestone and the native pinyon and juniper of the South Rim, leaving native grasses and trees in place as natural landscaping. The result is a complex of buildings in harmony with each other and with their environment. In this complex the architecture of the Pueblo Indians, the colonial Spaniards, and the pioneer American settlers combined to create a new blend. The result was something quite different than anything else Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter designed, and a triumph of "rustic" architecture.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Bright Angel Lodge is a complex of buildings consisting of a main lodge, seven separate guesthouses connected to the main lodge by covered walkways, fifteen entirely separate cabins, some single and some duplex, and some small service buildings. The main lodge is at the east end of the complex; the guesthouses connected by walkways extend to the west, with the individual separate cabins located on the southwest.

The main lodge is a gable-roofed building constructed of stone and log, with

some walls constructed entirely of stone, some entirely of log and some walls constructed with a masterfully handled composite of both materials. All log rafter ends are exposed, enhancing the rustic qualities of the structure. The gable roof of the lobby, with north-south ridge orientation, extends on the south elevation to create a large front entry porch. The log ridge and purlins supporting the roof are received at the front porch in the natural fork of six enormous log columns. The walls of this porch are of native stone. The lobby has walls of rough sawn planks with a flagstone floor and a ceiling with exposed log rafters and beams and rough sawn sheathing. A stone fireplace or inglenook is on the north or rear of the lobby. Perhaps the most significant interior detail is the "geological" fireplace which is located in a room of the lobby that originally was the lounge. The fireplace was made of stone from the strata that formed the canyon itself.

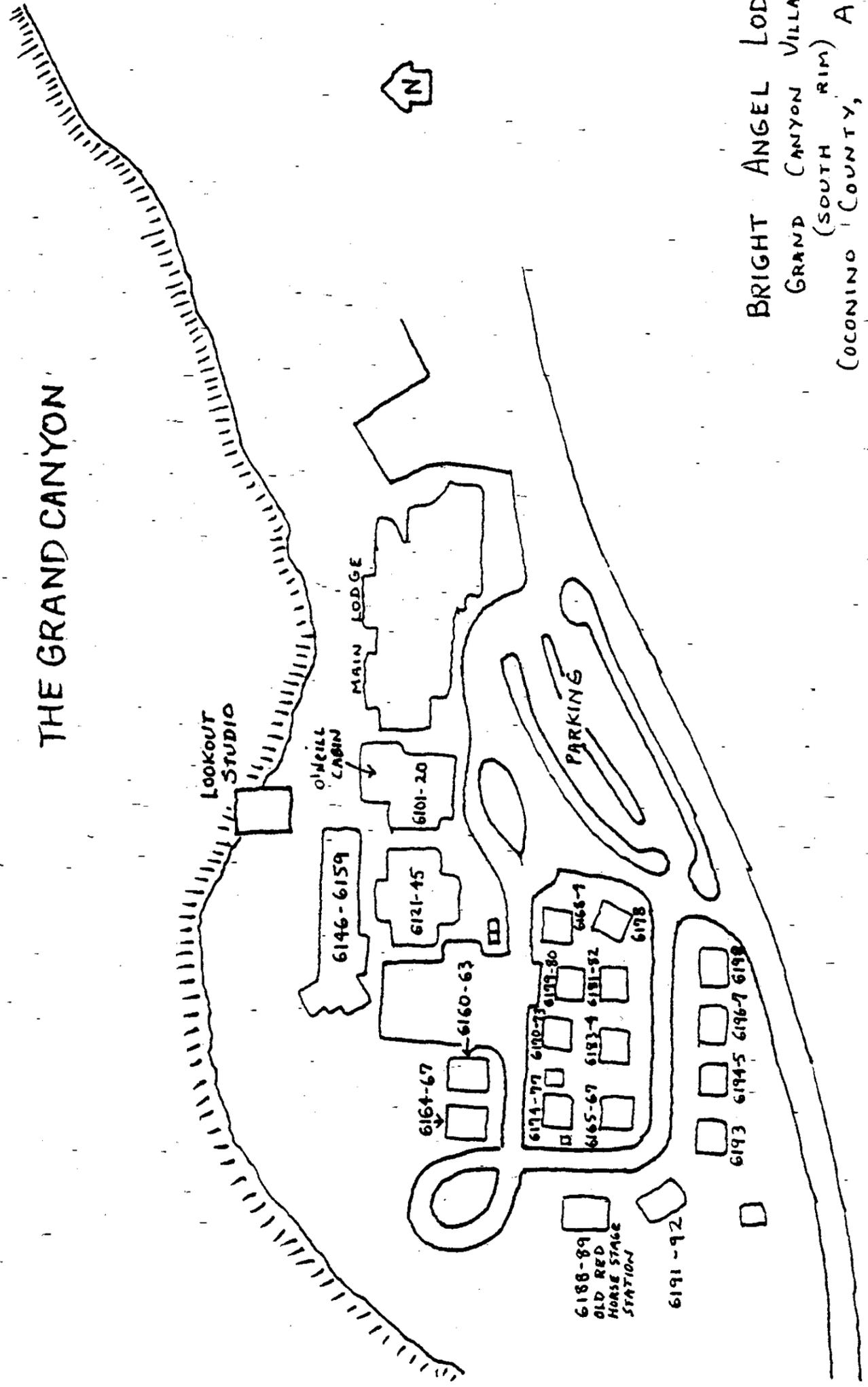
Seven buildings extending to the west of the main lodge are constructed of logs or stone or plastered frame, reflecting styles indigenous in the Southwest. These buildings house multiple guest rooms and are tied to the main lodge with log column and beam covered or enclosed walkways, creating a guest house complex. The roofs are mostly gable and are covered with shakes laid with every fifth course doubled. As in the main building all log rafter ends are exposed. Gable ends are enclosed with weather boards or board and batten siding. Log and plastered adobe walls appear in the complex butting against each other. The Bucky O'Neill cabin has been incorporated as part of this complex.

The fifteen separate single and duplex cabins are constructed in a combination of the "pueblo" style plastered adobe with flat roofs, log with gable roofs, board and batten, and stone, using western and southwestern design sources. A variety of roof forms are used on these structures, including gable, shed, and flat. Gable and shed roofs are covered with shakes, while flat roofs are constructed in the pueblo style with extending vigas and low parapet walls. All rafter ends are exposed in gable and shed roofs. Log and board siding are used both vertically and horizontally, sometimes both in the same wall. Pueblo-style structures are plastered in the traditional pueblo style. Large coursed rubble stones are used for foundations and chimneys in all buildings, and are used for wall construction in some buildings. In some cases a particular building is inspired by a single pioneer style, such as a gable-roofed log cabin, or a stone cabin. In other instances a variety of styles is blended into a single building, again as inspired by examples in early southwestern architecture. In the most unique of the buildings, exemplified by a number of the individual cabins, several historic styles are blended in a way that does not have any historical precedent to create a new and original architecture which derives from the past and blends with the other buildings in the lodge complex.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Historic American Buildings Survey documentation of the Bright Angel Lodge cabins was undertaken in the fall of 1982. Measured drawings were produced by architects Steven M. Wiesenthal and Marian Dombroski. Large-format photographs were taken by National Park Service photographer Richard Frear. Written historical and descriptive data were excerpted from the National Register of Historic Places nomination form written by National Park Service historian Gordon Chappell.

THE GRAND CANYON



BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE
GRAND CANYON VILLAGE
(SOUTH RIM)
COCONINO COUNTY, ARIZONA
(GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK)

DETAIL WITHIN THE EXISTING BOUNDARY
OF GRAND CANYON VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT

LOOKOUT STUDIO

O'NEILL CABIN

MAIN LODGE

PARKING

6146-6159

6121-45

6101-20

6164-67

6160-63

6174-77

6170-73

6165-67

6178

6179-80

6181-82

6183-84

6185-86

6188-89

OLD RED HORSE STAGE STATION

6191-92

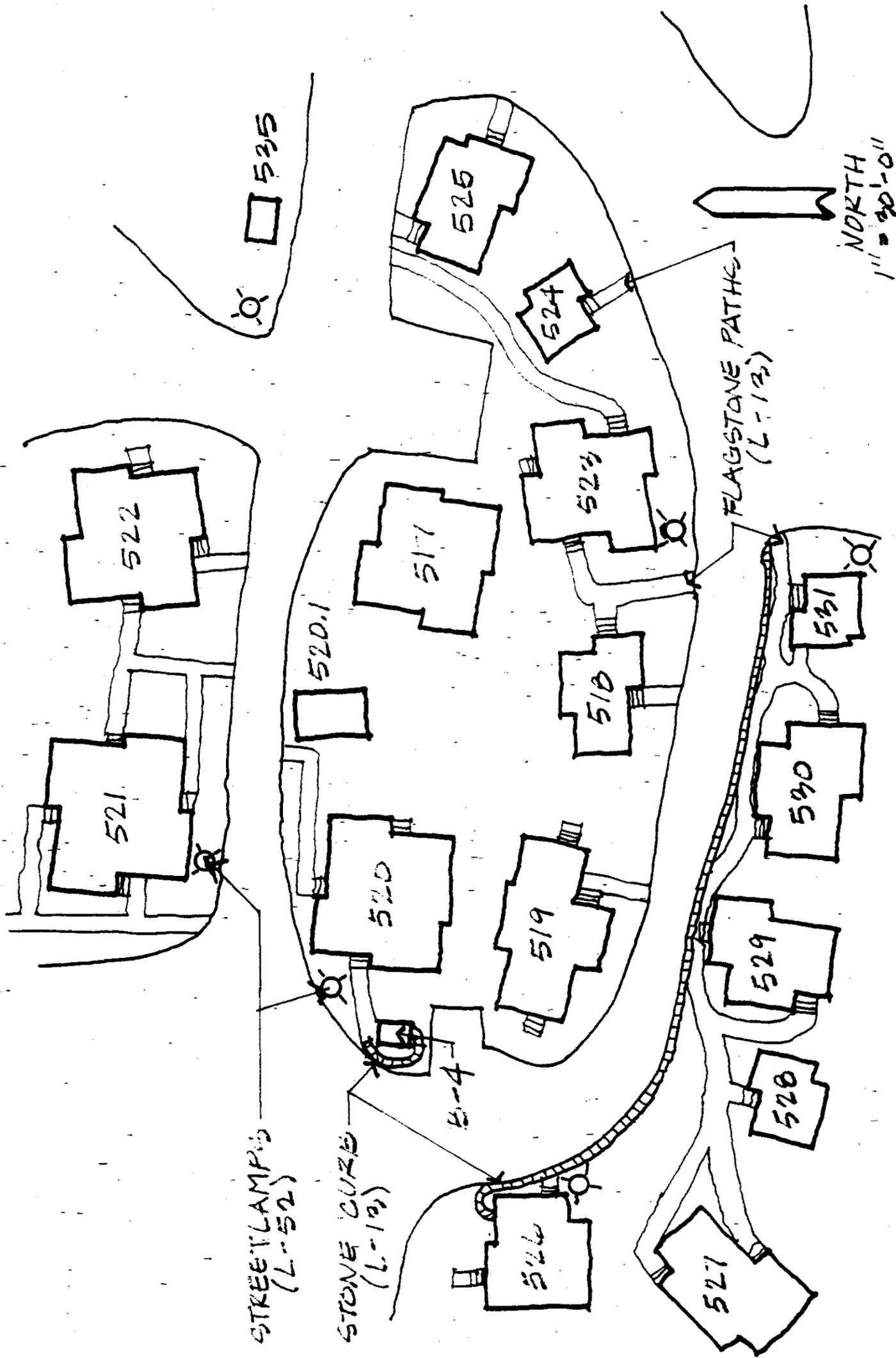
6193

6194-95

6196-97

6198

SKETCH MAP



BRIGHT ANGEL CABINS
GRAND CANYON VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT