

Central Hotel (Park Avenue Hotel)  
Clifton Townsite  
53 Park Avenue  
Clifton  
Greenlee County  
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-188

HABS  
ARIZ  
6-CLIFT,  
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CENTRAL HOTEL  
(Park Avenue Hotel)

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**Location:**

Clifton Townsite, 53 Park Avenue, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

**Significance:**

Associated with commerce in Clifton and the development of Clifton.

**Description:**

This two-story masonry building was constructed in several phases. Overall, the building has a rectangular front. The original single-story building, at the northwest end of the facade, was constructed of slag bricks from the local smelter. An early one-story addition of brick with a denticulated cornice was constructed to the southeast of the original building. A brick second story was later built over both of these elements. A sheet metal cornice extends across the front parapet, visually unifying the dissimilar sections of the building. The cornice is quite ornate, with turned finials at each end and brackets supporting the overhang. Window openings are boarded up, and have segmentally-arched heads. A second floor porch has been removed and replaced with a shade cover for the first floor.

**History:**

The Central Hotel was constructed ca. 1890 by George Hormeyer. His wife Julia was the proprietress of the hotel until 1940. The building was first constructed as a one story structure using slag bricks from the smelter. In 1901 a second story of brick was added and the building remodeled.

"Judge" George Hormeyer arrived in Clifton during the 1880s and by 1889 moved into a house in the Chase Creek area. By 1890 he had constructed his Central Hotel, using slag bricks from the Arizona Copper Company smelter. As one of only two hotels in Clifton, the Central was considered "Clifton's Finest Hotel" because of its solid construction and large dining room at the rear of the building. While Judge Hormeyer attended to his business enterprises, his wife Julia operated the hotel. By 1893 demand for lodging in Clifton led the Hormeyers to build a separate one story frame building to the south of the hotel. In 1898 they announced plans to build an addition on the south side. Judge Hormeyer completed the addition of rooms and an office by 1900 and established the "Hormeyer Banking Company" in the new space. Contractor W. A. Pitt was in charge of the work.<sup>1</sup>

The small additions proved to be only stopgap measures against a steady demand for lodging in Clifton. Early in 1901 the Hormeyers determined to undertake a complete renovation of the hotel by adding a second story of brick and expanding the building to the south. The new construction would add fifteen rooms to the building. Contractor C. Dodson began to stockpile brick at the site in June of 1901 and by July the second story was "going up as if by magic." Judge Hormeyer never got a chance to reap the fruits of his labor, for he died less than a year later. He is buried

in Clinton, Missouri.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the shock of her husband's death, Mrs. Hormeyer continued to operate the hotel. Of hardy pioneer stock, she once tackled a burglar in the hallway of the hotel who had been going through rooms stealing items from the guests. However, she was still in need of companionship and so in December of 1903 she married contractor William A. Pitt. Mr. Pitt constructed many of the commercial and residential buildings in Clifton. After their marriage, the couple settled into a routine of each looking after their own business enterprises. Mrs. Pitt continued to run the hotel and Mr. Pitt devoted his energies to his construction business. Mrs. Pitt sold the hotel in 1940 to W. B. Matlock and the couple retired to Phoenix where Mr. Pitt died in 1945. The building has been in continual use as a hotel since that time.<sup>3</sup>

Hotels in early Clifton and other mining towns in the American West had functions besides simple lodging. At the Central Hotel, a room in the center of the building was known as the "sample room." In this room "drummers" (traveling salesmen) showed their wares to prospective customers. This was a type of showroom that had shelving to display goods. After the Town of Clifton was incorporated in 1909, rooms in the Central Hotel were converted into town offices. Town official moved the Town Hall to the Spezia Building Chase Creek in 1917, but a year later moved town offices back to the Central Hotel where they stayed until 1920.<sup>4</sup>

#### Sources (endnotes):

1. Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1893, 1901; Clifton Clarion June 19, 1889 (I, 3: 1); Arizona Daily Citizen (Tucson) December 27, 1890 (I, 1: 3); Arizona Republican (Phoenix) January 29, 1898 (I, 3: 1) and January 11, 1900 (I, 3: 1).
2. Copper Era June 13, 1901 (I, 3: 1); July 11, 1901 (I, 3: 1); May 6, 1902 (I, 3: 7).
3. Copper Era (March 19, 1903 (I, 3: 1); December 24, 1903 (I, 3: 3); December 31, 1903 (I, 3: 1); January 3, 1904 (I, 3: 1); May 13, 1909 (I, 1: 1-7); March 12, 1913 (I, 1: 6); Republic February 24, 1945 (II, 1: 1); Gazette February 24, 1945 (I, 4: 7).
4. Interview with Al Fernandez, former Mayor of Clifton, December 16, 1993.

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