

HORSETHIEF BASIN, DANCEHALL PAVILION  
Prescott National Forest  
7 miles southeast of Crown King  
Crown King vicinity  
Yavapai County  
Arizona

HABS AZ-158-L  
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AZ-158-L

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
PO Box 728  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

### HORSETHIEF BASIN RESORT, DANCEHALL PAVILION

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**Location:**

The Dancehall Pavilion is located at the Horsethief Basin Resort in the Bradshaw Mountains about seven miles southeast of Crown King, Arizona.  
Crown King vicinity  
Yavapai County,  
Arizona

USGS Crown King Quadrangle (7.5)  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
12.381170.3782060

**Significance:**

The Dancehall Pavilion at Horsethief Basin Resort is one of a group of related buildings and structures built in 1936-37, and is significant for its association with the extensive Depression-era development of parks and recreational services and facilities undertaken by the City of Phoenix between 1933 and 1937.

**Description:**

The Horsethief Basin Resort Dancehall Pavilion is a one story wood frame Rustic style building with an octagonal plan, a moderately pitched pyramidal roof and a ventilator cupola. The pavillion is symmetrical in plan and measures 48'-3" between opposing walls. The raised wood floor structure of the building rests on 12" square concrete foundation piers constructed on a 6'-8" square grid. The exterior walls are finished with 12" redwood bevel siding nailed to wood stud framing. The roof and cupola are covered with asphalt shingles.

The entrance to the building is centrally located on the south-facing wall and is approached from a raised concrete platform with nine concrete steps. The platform is located under a partially enclosed entry porch. The doorway contains a two leaf batten door with random width boards and wrought iron strap hinges. With the exception of the north and east sides, the remaining walls of the octagonal building are each fitted with three evenly located large wood sash double-hung windows with four lights per sash. A small ell, measuring 5'-6" deep x 16'-10" long, extends along the east wall of the pavillion and contains the men's and women's restrooms. Both rooms are accessed from the outside through 2'-8" wide wood batten doors. Two small wood sash double-hung windows are located on the east wall of the restroom wing.

The roof structure is built of eight, three panel modified Howe trusses. The trusses span from a 10" x 10" post at the center of the building to the eight corners of the exterior walls. Each truss also rests on an intermediate 8" x 8" wood post located 17'-7" from the central post. Parallel chord Howe trusses, approximately 12' -0" long, span between the main trusses at the intermediate post locations, providing the roof structure with lateral stability. The roof is covered with 1" x 8" solid wood

sheathing nailed to 2" x 6" roof rafters spaced at 24" on center, which are framed in between the trusses.

The interior of the Dancehall Pavilion contains a single room divided into three areas: A promenade extending around the perimeter of the space, a central dance floor separated from the promenade by the 8" x 8" posts and railings, and the orchestra, located along the north wall and defined by small wood wing walls on each side and composition board ceiling nailed to the underside of the trusses. The interior of the pavillion is finished with a hardwood tongue-in-groove strip floor, wood sided wainscotts and unfinished open-framed walls. Interior restroom walls are finished with composition board. The wood strip floor is laid out in a four-way pattern of concentric squares symmetrical about the central post. The wood trusses and 2" x 6" framing members are exposed, creating an interior volume nearly 19'-0" high at the roof peak.

Since the building was constructed, the original wood shingles have been replaced and the roof surfaced with asphalt shingles. The Dancehall Pavilion is in fair condition, and has suffered from some vandalism in recent years.

**History:**

The Dancehall Pavilion was built between September 1936 and May 29, 1937, when the City of Phoenix officially opened the Horsethief Basin Resort to the public. The pavillion was one of a number of buildings and structures constructed at Horsethief Basin by the City in their efforts to develop recreational facilities for the citizens of Phoenix in a cooler climate, and to help offset the annual summer exodus from Phoenix. Located in the Bradshaw Mountains, the Horsethief Basin recreational area was the "...closest climatic relief (in linear miles) to the Phoenix metropolitan area." Park promoters argued that the development of a public resort in the area would "...keep Phoenix money in Arizona during the summer vacation period". Federal legislation enacted on August 27, 1935, authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to designate no more than 4,000 acres within the Prescott National Forest for use by the City of Phoenix for a recreational area.

The development of Horsethief Basin was part of a larger effort by the City of Phoenix to expand their parks and recreation system. Begun in 1933 and completed in 1937, that effort was the largest municipal parks expansion and development program in the history of Phoenix. When the program was completed, the City had increased the number of its public parks from three to fourteen, which represented an increase in recreational lands from forty five and a half acres to about 300 acres, which did not include the 2,600 acres within the Horsethief Basin recreation area. The entire program represented an expenditure of about \$1 million, most of which was administered or financed by the Public Works Administration.

Between April 1935 and May 1936, two separate sets of plans were prepared for the City of Phoenix for the developments at Horsethief Basin. The partnership of Vere O. Wallingford and Orville A. Bell, Architects, prepared the first set of plans, which were not built, in the spring of 1935. Their ambitious plans included a resort hotel, twenty cabins and a dancehall pavilion, all constructed of stone. After the

contractors bids on the Wallingford and Bell plans were rejected in early 1936, the architectural firm of Lescher and Mahoney was hired to prepare a second set of plans. Their drawings were completed and approved on May 28, 1936, and the buildings at Horsethief Basin were constructed during the course of the next year. Lescher and Mahoney's plans were similar in design to the original Wallingford and Bell plans, but were more conservative. Wood frame construction was used instead of the more expensive stone, the number of cabins was reduced from twenty to ten, and the resort hotel was replaced by a more practical general store. With the exception of the change in materials, the octagonal plan of the dancehall pavilion remained essentially the same.

Royal W. Lescher and Leslie J. Mahoney began their association in 1917 and by the late 1920s had become one of the leading architectural firms in the state. In addition to the Dancehall Pavilion, the firm prepared plans for the ten cabins, a rest-room building and general store at Horsethief Basin. Royal W. Lescher was the supervising architect for the project.

In June 1936, the City of Phoenix awarded the contracts for the Horsethief Basin resort development, with bids for the entire project totalling \$90,272. Contractors C.O. Johnson and Son of Phoenix were awarded the contract to build the cabins, general store and dancehall pavilion. Their bid was \$32,568. The entire project took eleven months to build with construction completed during the last week of May, 1937. The Horsethief Basin Resort was officially opened on May 29, 1937 with a weekend event culminating on the evening of the 29th with a "grand ball" at the Dancehall Pavilion.

**Sources of  
Information:**

**A. Architectural Drawings:**

The location of the original Lescher and Mahoney drawings is unknown. Micro-filmed copies of the original drawings, dated May 28, 1936, are located at the City of Phoenix Engineering and Architectural Services Department, Central Files.

**D. Bibliography:**

Arizona Republic, 1933-1967. Various Issues.

Cane, A. Francis, "A Survey of Municipal Recreation in Phoenix, Arizona." Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1944.

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Phoenix Gazette, 1933-1937. Various Issues.

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Historic American Building Survey, Horsethief Basin Resort, HABS No. AZ-158, Prepared by Woodward Architectural Group, December, 1992.

Yavapai County: Horsethief Basin File. Located in the Arizona Room at Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

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