



**City of Phoenix**  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

**Staff Report: Z-44-15-3**  
**October 9, 2015**

**INTRODUCTION**

Z-44-15-3 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property known historically as the Hilgeman House, located approximately 450 feet west of the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and Loma Lane [333 West Loma Lane]. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-44-15-3 be approved.

**BACKGROUND**

In February 2015, the City HP Office received a message from John Spellman, owner of the Hilgeman House, requesting HP overlay zoning for the property. The following month, staff visited the site and received a Historic Property Inventory Form prepared by Mr. Spellman. After evaluating the property, staff recommended it eligible for listing on the Phoenix Historic Property Register (PHPR). At Mr. Spellman's request, the City's HP Commission formally initiated HP overlay zoning for the Hilgeman House on April 20, 2015.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PHPR are set forth in Section 807.D of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance. To qualify, a property must demonstrate significance in local, regional, state, or national history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture, according to one or more of the following criteria:

- A. The property is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
- B. The property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. The property has yielded or may likely yield information integral to the understanding of our prehistory or history.

In addition to the significance requirement, the property must also be at least 50 years old or have achieved significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional

importance. The property must also possess sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Built ca. 1923, the Hilgeman House is significant under Criterion A for its association with early 20th century agricultural development in Phoenix, representing the historic context "Agricultural and Rural Estate Development in North Central Phoenix, 1895-1959," as outlined in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) titled "North Central Phoenix Farmhouses and Rural Estate Homes, 1895-1959." It is also significant under Criterion C for its vernacular design and unusual building materials, representing the historic context "Architectural Styles in North Central Phoenix, 1895-1959," as outlined in the previously referenced MPDF.

### **Criterion A: Agriculture**

In the late 1880s, the Arizona Improvement Company introduced citrus growing to the Salt River Valley and it was instantly popular. By the end of the century, early settlers in the rural areas outside of Phoenix were hopeful that citrus agriculture would allow them to reconcile the yeoman farmer ideal of self-reliance and rural virtue with the often-harsh reality of rural life, such as loneliness, lack of culture, and poor educational opportunities. This ideology was in keeping with the Rural Life Movement, promoted by such prominent figures as Theodore Roosevelt, who believed that rural circumstances could be changed so that, at least for those farmers living near cities, life could be reformed and improved, perhaps resulting in an end of the persistent exodus of young rural people to the cities.

In Southern California, which was a model for much of the community development ideas taking place in the Salt River Valley, the link between the reformist rural ideal and citrus agriculture was most strongly made. A mature citrus orchard could be amazingly productive, offering the potential to earn or supplement a living from a relatively small amount of acreage. With the exception of a limited period of harvest, which relied on hired labor, citrus growing did not involve the backbreaking labor associated with wheat, corn, or other crops in the pre-mechanical era. In theory, once an orchard matured, the owner would have time and income to enjoy the finer things in life, which made citrus attractive to both the middle- and upper-class farmer. However, citrus farming also required capital or alternative employment to sustain a family through the early years until the trees began to yield abundantly.

These circumstances must have been attractive to Frank & Sarah Hilgeman, who moved to the Phoenix area from Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1919. Frank had been a real estate developer and was the senior partner of the firm of Hilgeman & Schaaf. He participated in the partnership for a number of years as both an investor and an officer. He remained an officer in the partnership until 1924, although Schaaf kept Hilgeman's name associated with the firm throughout its lifetime.

One of the reasons why the Hilgemans chose to come to Arizona, and the Sunnyslope area in particular, was because Sarah suffered from tuberculosis. According to oral histories provided by family members, Frank and Sarah and their three children—Robert, Virginia, and Ruth—set up camp in the area of Dunlap and 7th Avenues in November of 1919 and stayed there for seven months. Sarah's health improved, so they purchased property near the current intersection of Butler Drive and 15th Avenue and lived in a frame house in that location for approximately two years.

In 1923, the Hilgemans purchased 20 acres of land on the north side of Northern Avenue, stretching from present-day 3rd to 7th Avenues. The land already contained citrus trees, which Frank kept, except for an area he cleared where he would begin work on a new house. The oral histories suggest that he may have started work on the house prior to purchasing the property in 1923. He built the basement first, and the family lived in it while he finished the living room above. The bedroom wing and porte-cochere were constructed later; in all, the house took about 3-4 years to complete.

Frank was very much involved in the Phoenix and Sunnyslope communities from 1922 until his death in 1944. He was a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1934 but lost in the primary to Isabella Greenway. Frank was also instrumental in working with local women's groups to create Sunnyslope's annual Christmas program. Each year he would dress as Santa Claus and deliver many Christmas baskets to needy families in his decorated truck.

It is unclear how long the Hilgemans lived in the rock house, but they appear to have moved out between 1940 and 1941. City directories show them with a Northern Avenue address through 1940 and a 7th Avenue address starting in 1941. The oral histories state that the family suffered significant losses after the stock market crash of 1929, which continued into the Great Depression. A survey map was recorded in 1941, splitting the 20-acre lot in half. The Hilgemans lost the east half, which contained the rock house, but kept the west half, where they had "a house, a barn, a Jersey cow, some chickens, and a pot-bellied stove." After Frank and Sarah passed away—in 1944 and 1947, respectively—the property was subdivided for residential use.

The Hilgeman property is representative of the history of citrus ranching in the Phoenix area. Although one of Arizona's five "C's," the economic value of citrus was always several orders of magnitude less than that of cotton, cattle, copper, and climate-related tourism. Moreover, its importance in the immediate vicinity of Phoenix was largely restricted to the decades between 1910 and 1940. By the end of World War II, established groves, which had recently reached maturity, were being replaced by subdivisions. Citrus production moved to the outskirts of Mesa, Glendale, and Deer Valley, where production levels remained steady for a time. However, by the end of the twentieth century, citrus production had virtually disappeared from the Salt River Valley. Although there is very little citrus remaining on the Hilgeman property, it retains its integrity of setting and feeling, and is one of the largest lots remaining in the area.

### Criterion C: Architecture

The Hilgeman House is significant as a vernacular house incorporating malapai rock as the primary building material. The term “vernacular” is derived from the Latin *vernaculus*, which traces its roots to *verna*—a home-born slave, or a native. Typically used as an adjective for describing indigenous language, dialect, or literature, in architecture, vernacular refers to designs of a specific place or determined by informal local tradition. The terms “vernacular” and “folk” architecture are often used interchangeably.

The earliest vernacular residences built in the Phoenix area were one-story structures designed by owners and builders and were constructed of local materials, primarily adobe. Adobe construction was based on sun-dried mud bricks, which, due to their natural insulation factor, were quite suitable to the climate of the Southwest. Because of their simplicity and accessibility, adobe bricks had long been used by inhabitants of the region.

By 1878, oven-fired clay bricks were being created in Phoenix and adobe was no longer the predominant building material. However, there were few practicing architects, so owners and builders continued to design their own buildings. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s increased the supply and variation of building materials and resulted in an influx of educated craftsmen and architects. Nevertheless, vernacular construction continued into the 20th century and still occurs today. These homes continue to be small, economically built, constructed of local materials, and designed by their owners instead of professional architects.

The Hilgeman House is an excellent example of a vernacular dwelling built with an unusual but locally available material—malapai rock. According to the oral histories, Frank and Robert Hilgeman and a helper by the name of Coley L. Duncan hauled rocks from Sunnyslope Mountain on the same flatbed truck that Frank drove to Phoenix from Indiana. Frank and his associates also collected rocks from the Salt River that were used as the footings. The chimney, window sills, and lintels were constructed with rock of a contrasting color to give the home more visual interest. In a 1985 interview, Duncan reminisced that Frank Hilgeman was a “German powerhouse” who could “slap up rocks faster than Coley could haul them.”

### **INTEGRITY**

While there have been several notable alterations to both the lot and house, the overall property retains sufficient integrity to merit historic designation. Specifically, the lot has been split multiple times resulting in the Northern Avenue frontage being lost and the property now having a Loma Lane address. The home has been modified so that the once-open central porch between the living room and bedroom wing is now enclosed (this appears to be an early modification) and a new rear porch and storage room has been constructed (1964 building permit). Additionally, the original single-pane wood windows have been replaced with matching dual-pane units and the roof supports on

the porte cochere have been replaced. Rather than replace the fake rocks on the porte cochere (which were actually colored stucco over chicken wire), the owner used split cedar shakes. Despite these changes, the house and lot still retain their key character-defining features and are recognizable as historic.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Section 807.E states that, when applying the evaluation criteria in Section 807.D, the boundaries of a historic district should be drawn as carefully as possible to ensure that:

1. The district contains documented historic, architectural, archaeological or natural resources;
2. The district boundaries coincide with documented historic boundaries such as early roadways, canals, subdivision plats or property lines;
3. Other district boundaries coincide with logical physical or manmade features and reflect recognized neighborhood or area boundaries; and
4. Other non-historic resources or vacant land is included where necessary to create appropriate boundaries to assist in meeting the criteria in Section 807.D.

The proposed HP zoning boundary follows the current parcel boundary. It includes the rock house, a contributing accessory building, and associated landscape features. The total area to be rezoned is 1.28 acres. This boundary is recommended by staff and supported by the property owner.

### **CONCLUSION**

The rezoning request Z-44-15-3 to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the subject property should be approved for the following reasons:

1. The property meets the significance, age, and integrity requirements for HP overlay zoning set forth in Section 807.D of the Zoning Ordinance; and
2. The proposed boundaries meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 807.E.

#### Writer

K. Weight

10/6/15

#### Team Leader

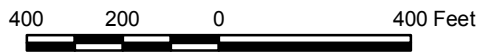
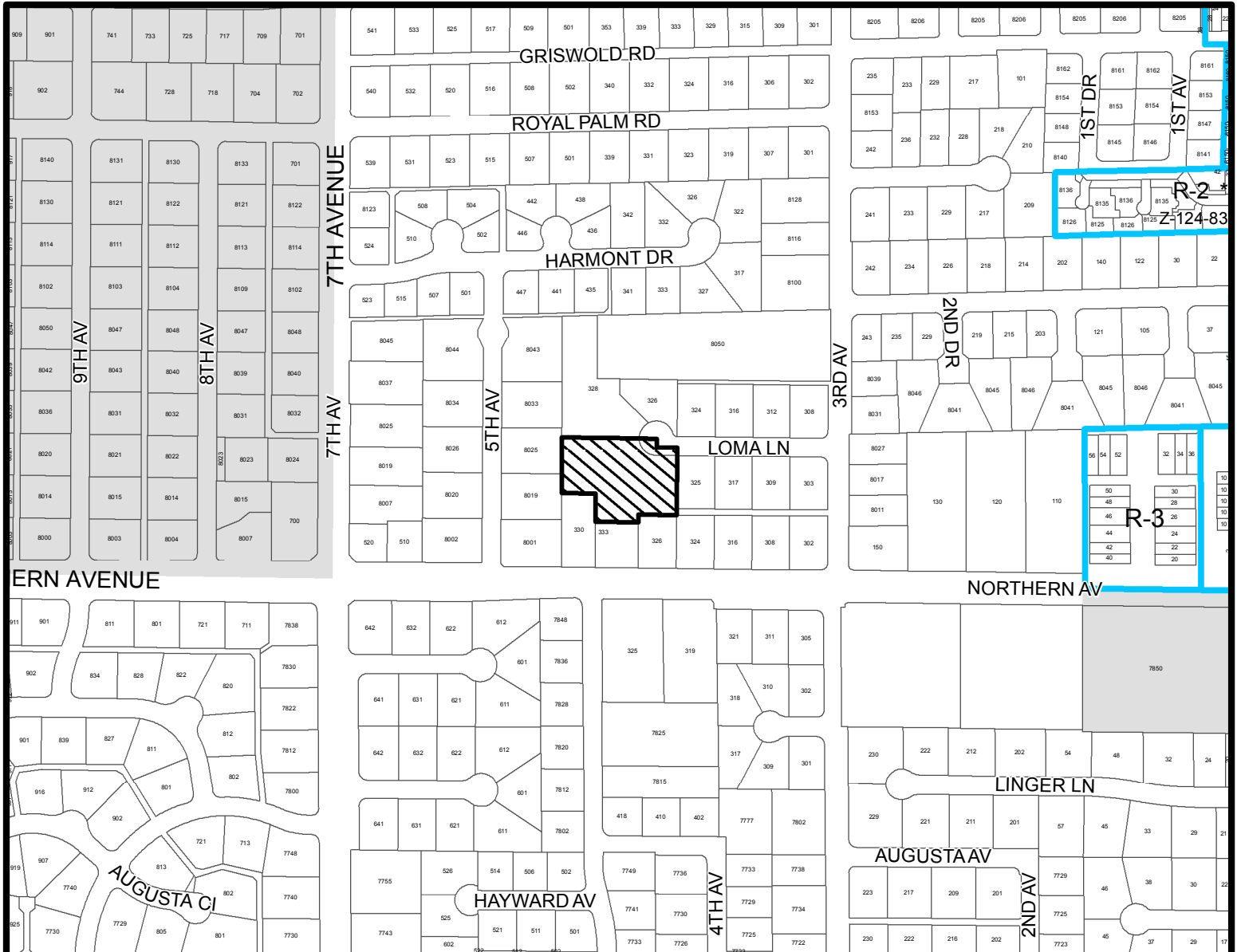
M. Dodds

#### Attachments:

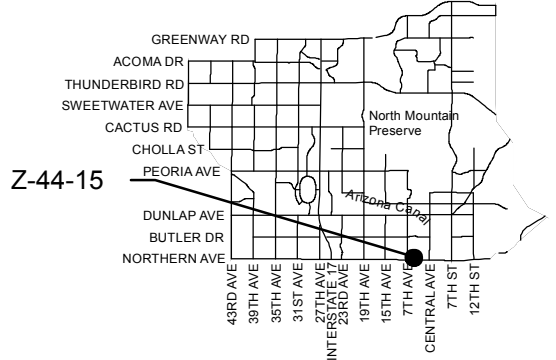
Sketch Map (1 page)

Aerial (1 page)

Photos (3 pages)



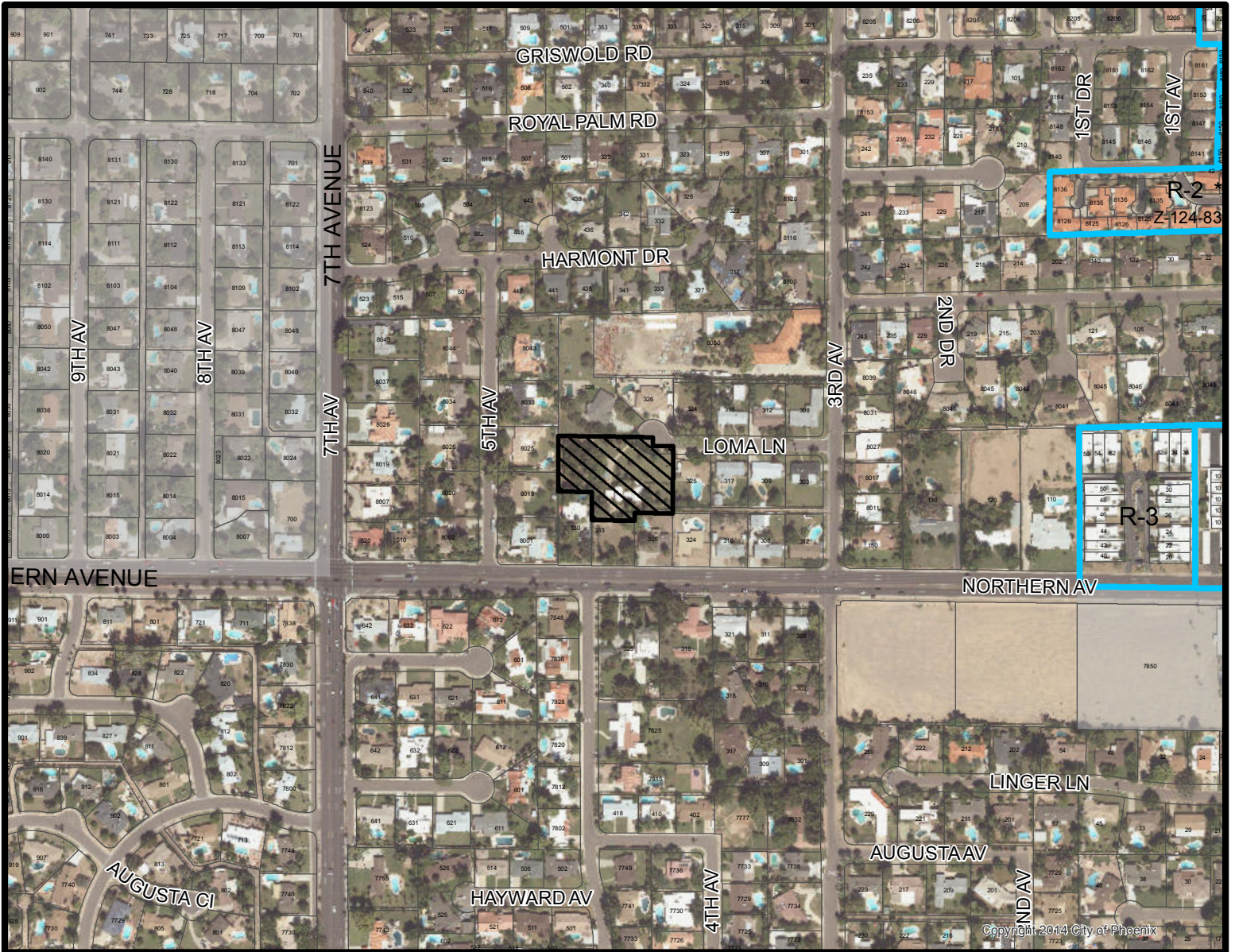
CITY OF PHOENIX PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
**NORTH MOUNTAIN VILLAGE**  
 CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3



<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b> City of Phoenix Hist Pres Commission		<b>REQUESTED CHANGE:</b> FROM: R-10 (1.28 a.c.) TO: R-10 HP (1.28 a.c.)	
<b>APPLICATION NO.</b> Z-44-15	<b>DATE:</b> 8/19/15	<b>REVISION DATES:</b>	
GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX. 1.28 Acres	<b>AERIAL PHOTO &amp; QUARTER SEC. NO.</b> QS 25-27	<b>ZONING MAP</b> J-8	
<b>MULTIPLES PERMITTED</b> R1-10 R1-10 HP	<b>CONVENTIONAL OPTION</b> 4 4	<b>* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION</b> 5 5	

\* Maximum Units Allowed with P.R.D. Bonus



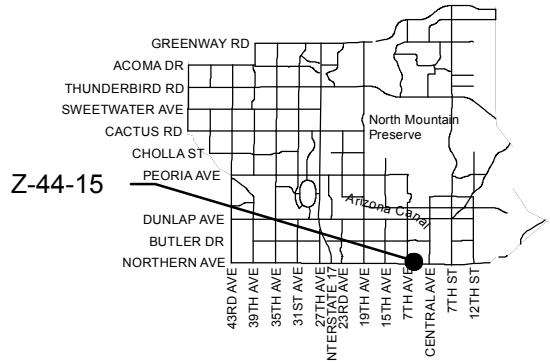


400 200 0 400 Feet

CITY OF PHOENIX PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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**MULTIPLES PERMITTED**

R1-10

R1-10 HP

**CONVENTIONAL OPTION**

4

4

**\* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION**

5

5

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**Z-44-15-3**  
**Frank & Sarah Hilgeman House**  
**333 W. Loma Lane**



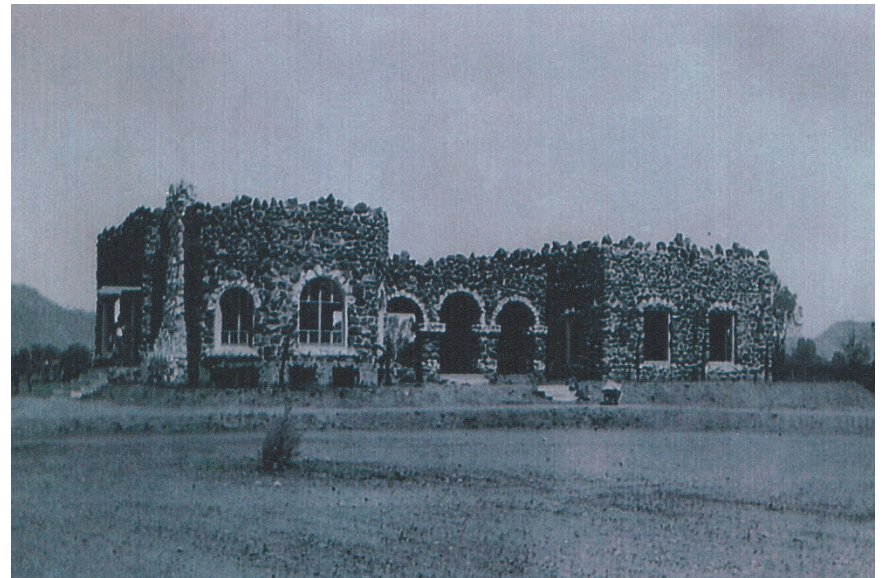
1. Front view of house, looking north from driveway.



2. Front view of house, looking northeast from front yard.



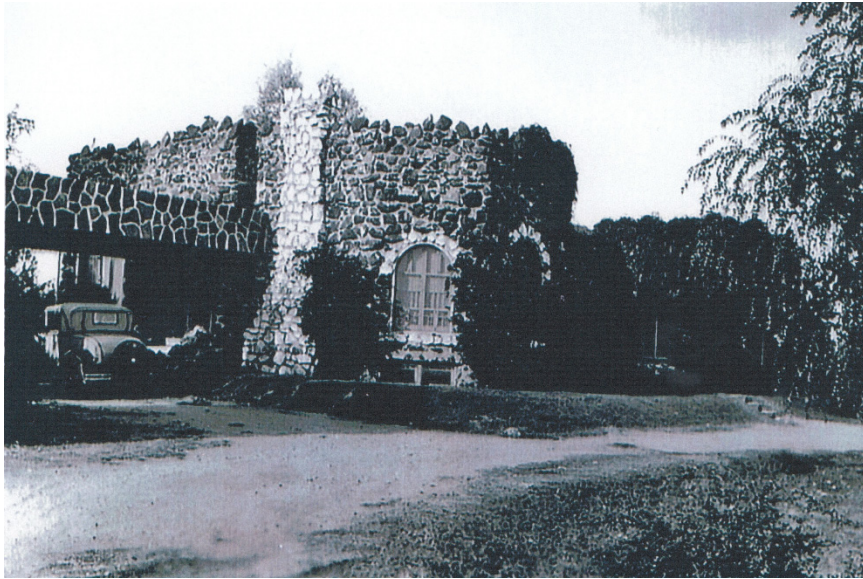
3. Rear view of house, looking south from driveway.



4. Front view of house, looking north from front yard, ca. 1924.



Z-44-15-3  
Frank & Sarah Hilgeman House  
333 W. Loma Lane



5. Front view of house, looking north from driveway, ca. 1928.



6. Interior view of house, inside living room, looking south.



7. View of accessory building, looking west from rear yard.



8. View of acreage, looking northwest from rear yard.