

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF+ HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

**HISTORIC NAME:** White, R. L., Ranch  
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** NA

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** REDACTED

**CITY OR TOWN:** Helotes

**VICINITY:** N/A

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A

**STATE:** Texas    **CODE:** TX

**COUNTY:** Bexar

**CODE:** 029

**ZIP CODE:** 78023

**3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ( ☒ nomination ) ( ☐ request for determination of eligibility ) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ( ☒ meets ) ( ☐ does not meet ) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ( ☐ nationally ) ( ☐ statewide ) ( ☒ locally ). ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of certifying official**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

**State or Federal agency and bureau**

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting or other official**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency and bureau**

**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Keeper**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Action**

\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** District

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:**

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
9	3	BUILDINGS
4	0	SITES
16	2	STRUCTURES
0	0	OBJECTS
28	5	TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC: single dwelling, secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility, storage, agricultural field  
TRANSPORTATION: air-related, road-related  
INDUSTRY: Waterworks (dam, reservoir)

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC: single dwelling, secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility, storage, agricultural field  
TRANSPORTATION: air-related, road-related  
INDUSTRY: Waterworks (dam, reservoir)

**7. DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** NO STYLE, OTHER: Rustic Style

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS WOOD, METAL, STONE  
ROOF ASPHALT, METAL  
OTHER

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-14).

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- ☐ **A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- ☒ **B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- ☒ **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUES, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- ☐ **D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** NA

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Industry, Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1926-1958

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1926, 1940

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** White, Ryall Luther

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Edwards, Builder

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-15 through 8-24)

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-25).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: *R.L. White papers, in the possession of Myfe Moore, Helotes, Texas*

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 3500 acres

<b>UTM REFERENCES</b>	<b>Zone: 14</b>	<u><b>Easting</b></u>	<u><b>Northing</b></u>
		1. 524686E	3283740N
		2. 525194E	3278437N
		3. 524148E	3278427N
		4. 524356E	3276410N
		5. 524219E	3276247N
		6. 523142E	3276430N
		7. 522588E	3276852N
		8. 521501E	3278346N
		9. 522177E	3281160N
		10. 524164E	3283563N

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** (see continuation sheet 10-26)

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** (see continuation sheet 10-26)

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME/TITLE:** Imogen Cooper

**ORGANIZATION:** Preservation Matters

**DATE:** April 1, 2008

**STREET & NUMBER:** REDACTED

**TELEPHONE:**

**CITY OR TOWN:** San Antonio

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 78229

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see continuation sheet Map-27 through 36)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-39 through Photo-41)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** (see continuation sheets Figure-37 through Figure-38)

**PROPERTY OWNER**

**NAME:** Myfe White Moore

**STREET & NUMBER:** REDACTED

**TELEPHONE:**

**CITY OR TOWN:** Helotes

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 78023

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**National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

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R.L. White Ranch  
Helotes, Bexar County, Texas

### **Narrative Description**

The R. L. White Ranch comprises the original complex of thirty buildings, structures, and sites, plus its remaining 3500 acres, of an approximately 10,000-acre ranch that was assembled, purchased, and developed by Ryall Luther White (1878-1962), beginning in ca.1926. R. L. White was a very successful businessman and he used his ranch for entertainment purposes, hosting street and highway contractors for hunting parties as part of his Texas-wide road paving business. In 1943, R. L. White divided his business assets, including his ranch real estate, among his three children which ultimately resulted in three, approximately 3300-acre, adjacent tracts.<sup>1</sup> The central tract, now called the R. L. White Ranch, or "Rancho Blanco," is owned by White's granddaughter, Myfe White Moore. The ranch and its built resources are closely associated with White; they reflect his interest in water resource management and engineering as well as his desire to impress his guests with Texas Rustic-style architecture on a grand scale. This is best expressed by the ranch's Lake Pavilion, the major contributing resource in this historic district, which White built in 1939-1940. The Lake Pavilion has retained its historic integrity in terms of design, setting, and workmanship and is used today by the family as a family gathering-place for recreational purposes.

The 33 resources on the ranch can be divided into three groups: (1) the principal guest and residential compound, comprised of the Lake Pavilion, Gertie's House, the Red Cottage, and guest cottage; (2) the secondary agricultural features including two large barns, grazing fields, and sheds located throughout the property; and last (3) the engineering/water-retention features, which are designed to manage scarce water resources and are comprised of windmills, wells, cisterns, man-made dams, three of which are still impounding water for the man-made lakes. Of the thirty buildings, structures, and sites that comprise the historical resources of the ranch, twenty-five are contributing due to their unaltered state, continued historic integrity, and construction during the ranch's period of significance (1926-1958).

The R. L. White Ranch was once one of the largest ranches in northwest Bexar County. Shaped like an arrow head that points due North, the current entry gate to the property is located at the southern end of the ranch. None of the ranch's man-made lakes, water-retention dams, sites, or structures can be seen from the highway. After passing through the gate, an asphalt road leads north and up and over steep hills and then down into the Hill Country valley below, where the road makes a T-intersection. To the left, or southwest, the road leads to the Big Barn and Lencho's House and to the right; the road leads to man-made dams, including the Pavilion Lake dam which creates a large lake and setting for the primary resource on the property, the Lake Pavilion. At the Lake Pavilion is another T-intersection where the road turns left, or west, to the Gertie's House, and its compound of the Red Cottage, guest house, and the Main Barn, or it continues north from the Pavilion to the Upper Lake and the Upper Upper Lake.

Entrance to the R.L White Ranch is through a simple ranch gate, the road travels up through winding hills before a steep descent to the Lake Pavilion. Views north out over the steep Hill Country give glimpses of pastures and clutches of Live Oaks near rocky outcrops. Bexar County, in the interior belt of the Coastal Plain of South Central Texas, is crossed by the Balcones Escarpment. The area northwest of the escarpment, called the Edwards Plateau, is where the ranch is located, and lies in high, hilly country; the source of numerous springs as well as artesian and underground wells. The R. L. White Ranch houses the headwaters of the east fork (of two forks) of the never dry, always running San Geronimo Creek; an important creek in the recharging process for the Edwards Underground Aquifer. The San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek originate in springs from this aquifer. The San Antonio River is the county's principal river,

<sup>1</sup>Bexar County Records, Vol. 2479, Page 7-9.

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and into it flow a number of smaller streams, including the Medina River and Medio, Leon, Helotes, Salado, and Calvares creeks. The county seat and largest city is San Antonio. Bexar County comprises 1,248 square miles. The altitude of Bexar County varies from 600 to 1,700 feet. In the far northwestern corner of the county are the Glenrose Hills, in which the R. L. White Ranch is found, and has some of the highest elevations of the county. This undulating to hilly terrain has alkaline soils over limestone and limy earths with shallow to deep loamy soils. Also, this northern quarter of the county has Edwards Plateau vegetation of tall and medium-height grasses, live oak, juniper, and mesquite as well as redbuds, native Black Walnuts, pecans, and Spanish Oaks.

Driving down into the valley, the arrival at the Lake Pavilion (Property 1) (1938-1940) is impressive. Guests drive up and park under the Rustic-style, covered parking shed (Property 2), or in the large parking lot adjacent to the Lake Pavilion. Positioned to impress guests with its size, the Lake Pavilion is a large, three-part, rectangular-shaped building, designed in the Rustic style, and set parallel with its long side to the near shore of Pavilion Lake. Serving as a lodge and guest quarters for hunters visiting the ranch, the building is symmetrical in appearance and faced with the local cream-gray limestone. The building's major feature is its large shed roof of grey asphalt shingles with multiple stone chimneys. The central portion of the Lake Pavilion sits on a concrete platform, while its wings are supported by concrete piers that rest in the water, so that the building ends extend out over Pavilion Lake. The man-made lake was created by a large dam at the southern end of the thirty-five acre body of water created in the late 1920s or early 1930s. On the lakeside of the Pavilion, double staircases flank a diving board and lead down to the water. There, from the Pavilion's large, sweeping deck that runs the full length of the south façade of the building, one can enjoy Hill Country vistas.

Patterned after the Grand Canyon Lodge, North Rim, of Grand Canyon National Park, the building's interior is meant to impress guests by its great Main Room, featuring an open vault of space, all supported by large logs forming its truss and beam work, and designed in the Rustic style. The Main Room is heated by opposing, oversized fireplaces located at either end of the building's enormous central room. The building contains a total of ten fireplaces and each is uniquely decorated with very large, wrought-iron fixtures, including oversized decorative fire screens and andirons. Next to each Main Room fireplace is a rustic-style staircase that leads up to the bedrooms in the building's two-story wings. Each bedroom also contains a substantial fireplace with oversized wrought-iron work. Downstairs again, and in the wings under the bedrooms are a kitchen with dining room and, at the opposite end, a recreation room with pool table, ping pong table, and bar.

North of the Lake Pavilion, and up a gentle drive, is a complex of buildings that comprise the ranch headquarters of R. L. White and his wife, Ethel Gertrude Smyth White (1882-1957). Surrounded by a Coyote fence, and known, in later years as Ethel's house, or "Gertie's House," (short for Gertrude) is the Main House (Property 3) (ca. 1926). This single-story, stone house, was also designed in the Rustic style but was constructed earlier than the Lake Pavilion.<sup>2</sup> Rectangular in shape, the front façade is dominated by a massive, centered, stone chimney. The east façade is the more informal entrance to the house and features steps up to a bricked patio which masks a huge rainwater collection system for the house cistern. Inside, the interior again features the oversized, Rustic wrought iron work, including a large stone fire place, oversized andirons, and screen, all decorated with cowboy scenes, and similar in workmanship to the Lake Pavilion.

Adjacent to Gertie's House is Gertie's Guest Cottage, also Rustic in style (Property 4), the Horse Tie-up Stand (Property 5), the Red Cottage (Property 6) which was once the ranch manager's house. Also in the compound are three Red Sheds for storage of ranch equipment (Property 7), and a non-contributing, doublewide mobile home (Property 8). At the north edge of this enclave is the Main Barn (Property 9). Surrounding this area are wells and two stone cisterns

<sup>2</sup> John A. Bitter, III, grandson of R.L. White, in interview with author, October 18, 2006.

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(Property 10) that served the Main Barn. To the north of the Lake Pavilion is the Upper Lake and the Upper Upper Lake, all retained by man-made dams as well as berms and terracing which is all designed to retain water and direct it towards cisterns or the lakes as well as recharge the wells and springs on the ranch. Other significant structures on the ranch include another barn, the Big Barn (Property 12), used to feed R. L. White's registered Hereford's in the 1930s, and Lencho's House (Property 13) as well as wind-mills (Property 21, 22) and three large fenced fields (Property 29).

Most of the ranch property is in its natural state, which is hilly, rolling and very rocky with many Live Oaks and juniper, or Mountain Cedars. It is ideal as a retreat and for hosting guests who are intent on hunting deer and turkeys, which was the full vision of R. L. White for his ranch; to entertain his business guests during the hunting season and so further his very successful highway and road paving business with Texas municipalities and the Texas Highway Department, now called the Texas Department of Transportation.

## INVENTORY OF PROPERTIES

Of the thirty resources discussed in this nomination, only five are considered noncontributing, and this is due to their construction or introduction to the property after 1957, which is based on the period of significance (1926-1957) and the fifty year mark. For example, the Gate Guard House (ca. 1940s) was moved onto the ranch in the 1980s and is therefore considered noncontributing. None of the contributing properties have been seriously altered.

Individual property descriptions, organized by property number, are listed below. Each individual property is depicted on Area maps (Maps 7, 8, 9 & 10) by property number. A basic inventory of contributing and noncontributing properties, accompanied by the property maps, follows the more detailed property descriptions.

### 1. Lake Pavilion (1938-1940; Contributing) (Photo 3, 4, 5)

**Description:** 2-story rectangular, symmetrical stone structure designed in the Rustic architectural style. This three-part building is characterized by matching two-story wings that flank a seemingly lower, central section which is completely dominated by its large and sweeping, gray roof, made up of composition, asphalt shingles and large, rectangular stone chimneys. The Pavilion is built on a concrete foundation, and placed on concrete piers at the very edge of the 35-acre, man-made lake. Constructed of rubble-filled stone walls, the structure uses the locally available gray and cream-colored limestone to face the walls, inside and out. Entry is at the center of the structure through double, French doors, which lead immediately into the enormous, but inviting living space, called the Main Room. Patterned after the lodges of the National Park Service, in the nation's National Parks, the Lake Pavilion's main room is open to the rafters and at least two and half stories high, all supported by a great network of whole pine logs that form the trusses and crossbeams so typical of the Rustic style. At either end of this enormous room are oversized fireplaces with large wrought iron fire screens decorated with western scenes and oversized andirons which employ the R.L. White's registered cattle brand. Flanking each fireplace is a Rustic-style staircase that leads up to bedrooms and bathrooms on the second floor, each with its own oversized fireplace. Downstairs again, and on the lakeside of the building, the façade is edged by a large, long deck that runs the entire length of the building. Twin, concrete staircases, flanking a diving board, lead down to the lake.

**Significance:** Constructed by R.L. White, with assistance from a German carpenter from San Antonio, known as "Mr. Edwards" by the family, the design of the Lake Pavilion was inspired by a trip that White took to the Grand Canyon, where he visited the Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim, designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood in 1927.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>3</sup> John A. Bitter, III, grandson of R.L. White, in interview with author, October 23, 2006.

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chimneys, staircases, timbered ceilings, and employment of wrought iron all recall Underwood's dramatic use of the Rustic style. White, also owner of Southern Lumber Company, a wholesale lumber company, would have had easy access to the heavy East Texas pine logs used as the building's beams and cross beams. The Lake Pavilion lies at the heart of the R.L. White Ranch and was built by White as a hunting lodge to host his paving company customers in a grand yet comfortable style during the hunting season for deer and turkey. The property is in excellent condition and retains its historic integrity. It is a good example of the Rustic style in southwest Texas.

### **2. Lake Pavilion Carport. (c. 1940, Contributing)** **(Photo 6)**

**Description:** An open, rectangular, gable-end structure, constructed of wood in the Rustic style, with a concrete floor, capable of sheltering four cars or trucks. Supporting posts on the sides of the structure are either cypress or cedar trunks. The front gable end is decorated with the R.L. White brand in large wrought iron letters.

**Significance:** Associated with the R.L. White Ranch at the middle of the 20th century when White had it built as part of his vision to build a successful business and use it to entertain many guests, customers and visiting family members.

### **3. Main House or Gertie's House. (c. 1926, Contributing)** **(Photo 7)**

**Description:** A rectangular, single-story, end-gabled, stone house designed in the Rustic style with gray, asphalt shingles. Gertie's House was the ranch headquarters and main house for many years. Carefully sited on terraces that step back from Pavilion Lake, the front (southern) façade is symmetrical, and features a massive and centered, stone chimney that dominates the front of the house. One enters directly into the living area that runs the full length of the front of the house. The living room contains the same style Rustic fire place as the Lake Pavilion with the same quality of craftsmanship. The living room also contains large, exposed beams, done in the Rustic style.

**Significance:** Associated with R. L. White from the earliest years of the ranch's development. Here is where the family first gathered and stayed while visiting the ranch. In later years, the house is associated with Ethel, R. L. White's wife, and became known as "Gertie's House" because of Ethel White's middle given name was Gertrude. The house is dated by the construction date of its well (1926) and by the tile work in its bathrooms, fashionable in the mid-1920s.

### **4. Gertie's Guest House (c. 1926, Contributing)** **(Photo 9)**

**Description:** A small, square, one-story stone guest house matching in miniature the Rustic style and workmanship of Gertie's House, featuring an oversized, centered stone chimney on the west façade and fenestrated living space on the southwestern side, designed to catch breezes from the lake.

**Significance:** Associated with Main House from the earliest time and the hospitality extended to guests of the White family visiting the ranch.

### **5. Horse Tie-up Stand (c. 1926, Contributing)** **(Photo 10)**

**Description:** A long, open, gable-end rectangular roof supported by sturdy cedar or cypress trunks with a wooden tree trunk down the center. Used to tie horse reins to and provide shade to horses while the riders go inside and eat lunch or dinner at the Main House.



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R.L. White Ranch  
Helotes, Bexar County, Texas

**Significance:** Associated with the White family and ranching from the earliest time of the ranch's establishment, when horses were used not only for recreational riding but for herding stock, such as R. L. White's prize Hereford's during the 1930s, the Horse Tie-up Stand is one of the family's favorite structures on the ranch. It's also a good example of the Rustic style, put to work.

## 6. Red Cottage. (c. 1926, Contributing) (Photo 11)

**Description:** A square, one-story, front end gabled, wood frame house with painted wood siding (red) and standing seam metal roofing. Like all the houses of the complex, this house also features a large, centered stone chimney with entry doors on either side and a full covered porch along the front façade. Traditionally, the house was always the home of the Ranch Manager, and like all the utilitarian buildings and structures on the ranch, except the barns, it is painted red.

**Significance:** Associated with the earliest working aspects of the ranch when R. L. White was first keeping horses on the ranch to sell to the U. S. Army and the raising registered Herefords in the 1930s. The house retains integrity and is unaltered. It is now used to provide housing for ranch hands.

## 7a, 7b. and 7c. Red Sheds. (3) (c. 1926, Contributing)

**Description:** Three simple, open sided, painted, wood-framed sheds, used to house farm and ranch equipment.

**Significance:** Associated with the working aspects of the ranch when White was raising stock and still in use to house ranching equipment and repair it.

## 8. Double-wide Mobile Home. (c. 1985, Noncontributing)

**Description:** A single story, rectangular, gable-end, double-wide mobile home with metal siding.

**Significance:** Brought to the ranch in the 1980s, the double-wide provides housing for the current ranch manager. The property does not meet recommended age criteria and its design and materials are incongruous with other historic buildings on the ranch.

## 9. Main Barn. (c. 1926, Contributing) (Photo 12)

**Description:** An elongated, metal, rectangular building with standing seam metal roof serving as hay loft, atop an open area forming ten plus stalls and Tack Room, attached to the barn is a cinder block addition with a shed roof, serving as an office, called the "Workshop." Behind and north of the Main Barn are back sheds, numerous pens, and small acreage "traps" (5-20 acre little pastures for short term holding of livestock).

**Significance:** Built about the time of the Main House, the Main Barn was the headquarters' barn, tack room, and hay storage for the eastern end of the ranch; it was the center for all ranching operations. The attached "office" served as the Workshop. The structure has strong association with the ranch throughout its period of significance.

## 10. Main Barn Cisterns. (c. 1926, Contributing) (Photo 13)

**Description:** Two handmade circular limestone structures, approximately ten feet deep and twenty feet across that were once covered with wooden shake roofs. Part of an elaborate watering system of underground clay piping to provide water to approximately seven livestock troughs within a quarter mile radius, the cisterns were typical of the clever water management and conservation techniques used throughout the ranch.

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R.L. White Ranch  
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**Significance:** Strong association with R. L. White and his interest in water management and engineering techniques for water conservation on his ranch. Unchanged except for loss of roofs, the structures retain their integrity and contribute to the historic integrity of the ranch

**11. Helicopter Hanger. (c. 1975, Noncontributing)**

**Description:** A one-and-a-half-story prefabricated metal hangar building with large sliding doors and front facing gable-end metal roof with open wing additions on either side. Building is now used for hay storage.

**Significance:** Introduced to the ranch after the period of significance by R. L. White's son, John H. White, the building is associated with later ranch operations.

**12. Big Barn. (c. 1930, Contributing)**

**(Photo 14)**

**Description:** A very large, two-part metal building, the front part being two-story and side-gabled and the rear part a long rectangle with an end-gable, all covered with a standing seam metal roof. Designed to store hay above and having a clever grain-slot feeding system to the cattle pens below, the barn was designed for feeding, care and management of R. L. White's herd of registered Herefords during the 1930s.

**Significance:** Primary barn associated with R. L. White during the period that he raised registered Herefords on the ranch. Unchanged since built, the structure retains integrity and contributes to the historic character of the ranch.

**13. Lencho's House (or Lorenzo's House). (c. 1926, 1939; Contributing)**

**(Photo 15)**

**Description:** A single-story, rectangular, frame house with a metal roof and wood siding having many additions, including an enclosed porch to the north and west. Central (original) chimney is corbelled. The rear of the house also had a curious addition made with double fire places and chimneys that recall the style of the Red Cottage, perhaps dating this addition to construction date of Gertie's House. The house is open close to ruin, but the roof is intact.

**Significance:** The house was the residence of many ranch hands who worked for R. L. White and in particular a cowboy named Lorenzo, so the house is known as "Lencho's House." Dating it by style (early 20<sup>th</sup> century Queen Anne cottage), the core of the house appears to be older than any other structure on the ranch, with the rear addition possibly dating from the time of Gertie's House or later. The house is unaltered from the period of significance and is closely associated with R. L. White's ranching activities due to its proximity to the Big Barn.

**14. First Dam. (1928, Contributing)**

**(Photo 16)**

**Description:** A concrete and earthen dam located in Pavilion Lake and usually underwater, this is the first dam to be built in Pavilion Lake and was built by R. L. White's eldest son, R. L. White, Jr., while the younger man was home on summer break from MIT in 1928, as discussed in family correspondence between the two men.

**Significance:** Closely associated with early work of White in building a system of water retention features on his ranch to impound and conserve water for his stock.

**15. Filled in Dam. (c. 1935, Contributing)**

**(Photo 17)**

**Description:** A concrete dam, now abandoned and located off road, completely filled in, and retaining no water.

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**Significance:** While no longer functioning as a water retention feature, this dam retains significance because of its association with White and his system of water conservation on the ranch.

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## 16. Pavilion Lake Dam. (c. 1935, 1940; Contributing)

### (Photo 18)

**Description:** Built in two parts and constructed of concrete and earthworks, the Pavilion Lake Dam is the largest extant dam on the ranch and creates the thirty-five acre Pavilion Lake. Construction was timed so that the Pavilion's piers could first be driven into bedrock (those that support the Pavilion wings), then the second phase of the dam was completed.

**Significance:** The Pavilion Lake Dam is the most noticeable dam on the ranch and one of the more ambitious engineering undertakings by White. It is significant for its close association with White and with the Lake Pavilion, as without it, the Pavilion would not have its setting.

## 17. Upper Lake Dam. (c. 1935, Contributing)

**Description:** A dam that impounds water above Pavilion Lake for the Upper Lake Dam.

**Significance:** Associated with R. L. White and his system of water retention and conservation on his ranch.

## 18. Upper, Upper Lake Dam. (c. 1935, Contributing)

**Description:** A dam that impounds water above the Upper Lake for the Upper, Upper Lake.

**Significance:** Associated with R. L. White and his system of water retention and conservation on his ranch.

## 19. a, b, & c Man-made Lakes. (3) (c. 1935, Contributing)

**Description:** Pavilion Lake, Upper Lake, and Upper, Upper Lake are the three lakes linked in a series that are man-made lakes created on the ranch by R. L. White. The largest is Pavilion Lake, which when full, covers over thirty-five acres of area.

**Significance:** The largest water retention features on the ranch and closely associated with White in his interest in water conservation and water management on his ranch.

## 20. Terracing. (c. 1935, Contributing)

**Description:** A system of gentle swales found all over the ranch, but particularly around the ranch headquarters compound, that is man-made and designed by White to hold and retain rain water for recharge into the ranch's system of natural springs and artesian wells found all over the ranch. One system of terracing fed into fish ponds near Gertie's house. Another watered her extensive gardens. White also designed many cistern systems to help water his livestock, as discussed above, and the terracing assisted in this kind of water conservation.

**Significance:** The terracing is a landscape feature that is closely associated with White in his interest in water conservation and water management on his ranch.

## 21. High Hill Wind Mill. (1981, Noncontributing)

**Description:** Constructed to pump water from a 650 deep well to water livestock at the southern end of the ranch, the windmill is no longer operational and is partly dismantled, missing its blades but still having its tower. (The well is pumped by solar power to water livestock.)

**Significance:** Constructed after the ranch's period of significance, the windmill is associated with later ranch operations.

## 22. Lencho's House Wind Mill. (1970, Noncontributing)

**Description:** Constructed to pump water from a well to water livestock, the windmill is no longer operational and is partly dismantled, missing its blades but still having its tower.

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**Significance:** Constructed after the ranch's period of significance, the windmill is associated with later ranch operations.

**23. Lencho's House, Smoke House. (c. 1926, Contributing)**

**Description:** A simple, square, stone shed with corrugated metal roof.

**Significance:** Served utilitarian cooking purposes during the period of significance.

**24. Lencho's House Artesian Well. (c. 1926, Contributing)**

**Description:** Cap of a still charged artesian well in front of Lencho's House.

**Significance:** Served utilitarian watering purposes during the period of significance.

**25. Gate Guard House and Out Buildings. (c. 1980, Noncontributing)**

**Description:** A single story, square, frame dwelling with an asphalt single roof on cedar post foundation, probably built ca. 1935. Adjacent detached wooden garage.

**Significance:** Moved onto the ranch in the 1980s and after the period of significance, the buildings are associated with later ranch operations.

**26. Spillway. (c. 1935, Contributing)**

**(Photo 17)**

**Description:** Concrete spillway designed by R. L. White to direct creek overflows and prevent erosion of creek bank and adjacent roadbed of main road into the ranch.

**Significance:** The large water management feature on the ranch and closely associated with White in his interest in water conservation and water management on his ranch.

**27. Old Stand-by Water Pump. (c. 1935, Contributing)**

**Description:** A black metal pump, much like an oil well pump, that was assembled as a stand-by water pump in case the natural water system for the Pavilion Lake failed and the lake went dry. This has never occurred and the pump has never been used.

**Significance:** Equipment associated with White and his interest in water management and water conservation on the ranch.

**28. Earth Moving Equipment. (c. 1935, Contributing)**

**Description:** Various pieces of road building and earth moving equipment used in road and dam building projects throughout the ranch and now in a state of disrepair.

**Significance:** Equipment associated with White and his interest in water management and water conservation on the ranch.

**29. Cattle Fields (#1, #2, #3). (c. 1930, Contributing)**

**(Photo 20)**

**Description:** Three large fields located near the Big Barn that were cleared and fenced and supplied with water for the care of White's herd of registered Herefords.

**Significance:** Strongly associated with White and the period of significance for the ranch in its historic agricultural operations.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation SheetSection 7 Page 14R.L. White Ranch  
Helotes, Bexar County, Texas**30. Rock Asphalt Paved Roads. (c. 1930, Contributing)**

**Description:** Single lane rock asphalt paved roads built by hand over the ranch's steep hills and throughout the ranch property but mainly to connect the ranch headquarters to the main gate and to the Big Barn (a distance of approximately 5 miles).

**Significance:** The roads contribute to the character of the ranch and are unimproved from when they were constructed by White's road crews using his cold mix rock asphalt.

The RL White ranch remains in the White family and the resources of the ranch have had minimal alterations since their construction. Noncontributing resources, which post-date the period of significance are relatively few and do not detract from the historic setting. Although, close to San Antonio the ranch retains the feel of a rural retreat as RL White had intended it. The manipulations of the landscape for water management remain intact and an important feature of the property. The buildings, designed to blend with and compliment the landscape remain true to their original design intent. The RL White Ranch retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to a high degree

## INVENTORY OF PROPERTIES

Map ID No.	Property Name	Type	Status	Date/Date of Alterations
1	Lake Pavilion	Building	Contributing	1939-1940
2	Lake Pavilion Carport	Building	Contributing	c.1940
3	Gertie's House	Building	Contributing	c. 1926; 1940s
4	Gertie's Guest Cottage	Building	Contributing	c. 1926
5	Horse Tie-up Stand	Building	Contributing	c. 1926
6	Red Cottage	Building	Contributing	c. 1926
7 a, b, & c	Red Sheds (3)	Buildings	Contributing	c. 1926
8	Double Wide Mobile Home	Building	Noncontributing	c. 1985
9	Main Barn	Building	Contributing	c. 1926
10	Main Barn Cisterns	Structures	Contributing	c. 1926
11	Helicopter Hanger	Building	Noncontributing	c. 1975
12	Big Barn	Building	Contributing	c. 1930
13	Lencho's House	Building	Contributing	c. 1926; 1940s
14	First Dam (Pavilion Lk)	Structure	Contributing	1928
15	Filled in Dam	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
16	Pavilion Lake Dam	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
17	Upper Lake Dam	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
18	Upper, Upper Lake Dam	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
19 a, b, & c	Man-made Lakes (3)	Structures	Contributing	c. 1935
20	Terracing	Site	Contributing	c. 1935
21	High Hill Wind Mill	Structure	Noncontributing	1981

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Map ID No.	Property Name	Type	Status	Date/Date of Alterations
22	Lencho's House Wind Mill	Structure	Noncontributing	c. 1970
23	Lencho's Smoke House	Building	Contributing	c. 1926
24	Lencho's House Artesian Well	Structure	Contributing	c. 1926
25	Gate Guard House	Building	Noncontributing	c. 1980
26	Spillway	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
27	Old Stand-by Water Pump	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
28	Earth Moving Equipment	Structure	Contributing	c. 1935
29 a, b, & c	Cattle Fields (#1, #2, #3)	Sites	Contributing	c. 1930
30	Rock Asphalt Paved Roads	Structure	Contributing	c. 1930

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R.L. White Ranch  
Helotes, Bexar County, Texas

### **Statement of Significance**

The R. L. White Ranch is significant for its long association with its original owner and developer, Ryall Luther White, who was a successful San Antonio entrepreneur, businessman, and Texas-wide street and highway paving contractor, as well as for its intact and architecturally significant examples of Rustic-style buildings and structures. Beginning in the 1920s, the ranch was assembled and developed by R. L. White primarily as a guest ranch to entertain his business customers during the hunting season and thus promote his business interests. However, White was not just a local paving contractor, he was also the developer, owner and operator of the unique White's Uvalde mines, in Uvalde County, Texas, that supplied tons of a naturally-occurring limestone rock asphalt paving material used by the Texas Department of Transportation to pave Farm to Market roads and highways across Texas as well as by Texas municipalities to pave their city streets.<sup>4</sup> The ranch is also significant for its fine examples of Rustic-style architecture, particularly the 1939-1940 Lake Pavilion which served as a very grand hunting lodge for White's business guests during the deer and turkey-hunting seasons. Thus, the R. L. White Ranch is nominated to the National Register under Criteria B and C as a rural historic landscape district at the local level of significance.

The period of significance for the R. L. White Ranch is from ca. 1926, which is the estimated date of White's construction of the Main House, or Gertie's House, and extends to 1958, the fifty year mark. White died in 1962, but the ranch was still being used at that time to host business guests in what was, by then, a family business with R. L. White's son, John H. White, and his sons-in-law, John A. Bitter, Jr. and Frederick L. Thomson. The ranch and the buildings are unaltered, intact, and still being used and enjoyed by R. L. White's grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The R. L. White Ranch, located in northwest Bexar County, is found in an area of Texas that has long been the site of human habitation. During historic times, the area was occupied by the Coahuiltecs, Tonkawas, and Lipan Apaches.<sup>5</sup> The first Europeans to explore the region came with an expedition in 1691 led by Domingo Terán de los Ríos and Fray Damián Massanet, who evidently reached the San Antonio River near where San Juan Capistrano Mission was later founded.<sup>6</sup> The founding of San Antonio, now the largest city in Bexar County, dates from its Spanish colonial period in the 1720s, when its presidio and villa were mere outposts on the northern edge of Spain's new world empire. During this time the town never gained a population of more than 2,000. Only during the time that San Antonio was an outpost for the Mexican Republic (1821-1835), then as a notable settlement in the Republic of Texas (1836-1845), and finally as a major city in the State of Texas, did the town and its surrounding areas begin to witness serious population growth due to the immigration of Anglo-Americans and Western Europeans. It is estimated that by 1860, San Antonio's population was about 8,000, making it the largest city in Texas.<sup>7</sup> North of the city limits, in the Texas Hill Country area,

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<sup>4</sup> White's Uvalde Mines was purchased by Vulcan Materials of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1987, which still mines and produces the limestone rock asphalt, known as "cold mix" asphalt, which is used as road paving material. This "cold mix" asphalt occurs naturally in which the tiny cracks in the limestone are full of bitumen, the thick, oily substance made from hydrocarbons. *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Uvalde County Limestone Rock Asphalt," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/article/UU/gpul.html> (accessed November 4, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Bexar County" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/hcb7.html> (accessed November 6, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> T.R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Collier Books, 1968), 320.



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R.L. White Ranch  
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many Western European immigrants, particularly Germans, settled in the Helotes and Grey Forest area, near the ranch, beginning in the 1840s, either farming the rocky lands or founding Hill Country towns.

Ranching in northwest Bexar County preceded any town-founding and subsequent Statehood. Rather, it stretched all the way back to Spanish Colonial days prior to the Mexican Revolution, which had freed the area from Spanish rule. Miguel Menchaca (1771-1813) built a homestead, La Quinta de Las Piedras in 1850 near Helotes in the Grey Forest area. A historical marker for the town of Helotes references farms, cattle and sheep ranches were established in the area of Helotes in the 1880s.<sup>8</sup>

Another ranch of note sprawls to the west and over the boundary between Medina and Bexar County. The Peter Gallagher Ranch, “next door” to the R. L. White Ranch, is known as the oldest “dude” ranch in Texas. Established in the 1830s, the ranch and the rambling Mexican-style ranch house were purchased by millionaire Mrs. Amy Shelton McNutt in 1927. By 1946 Gallagher's Ranch was being run as a dude ranch. Its visitors have included the Ziegfeld Follies Cuties, Prince William of Sweden, and Will Rogers..<sup>9</sup>

### **R.L. White Ranch**

Thus, R.L. White's idea of creating a rustic retreat and hunting ranch for his business customers in the beautiful Hill Country was not an unusual one, considering that the Gallagher Ranch was operating as a dude ranch and hospitality business just a few miles further up the road. Beginning in ca. 1926, R. L. White began to assemble land for what was eventually to become a 10,000 acre ranch. While not considered a large ranch in some other parts of Texas, in Bexar County, a ranch this size was once considered sizable.<sup>10</sup> White's idea for developing it as a game and hunting ranch dates from at least 1930, as expressed in correspondence to someone asking for permission to hunt on his property.<sup>11</sup> Here he states that he is trying to build up his herd of deer, implying that he's building it towards a future hunting preserve.

Prior to that time, and while assembling tracts of land to enlarge the ranch, White was constructing dams, buildings, and wells on the property. Construction of the Main House, which was the ranch headquarters and later called “Gertie's House,” occurred about 1926, as that is the construction date of a well that serves the house.<sup>12</sup> At this time, White was also beginning construction of small water retention dams on the property. Perhaps one of the first to be constructed was one built by R. L. White, Jr. in the summer of 1928, when White, Jr., was home from college for the summer.<sup>13</sup> (White, Jr., was R. L. White's eldest child.)

<sup>8</sup> Kyle Cunningham, Texas Historical Marker: Helotes, Texas, Background paper on file at San Antonio Conservation Society Library.

<sup>9</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “Gallagher's Ranch, Texas,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/hrg68.html> (accessed November 9, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> White even had a lookout platform built for himself to admire the views, called “The Buzzard's Roost,” from which he could survey many of the ranch's lovely vistas.

<sup>11</sup> R.L. White business correspondence with Mr. Henri Bovy, Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, September 5, 1930, expressing regret that Mr. Bovy can't hunt on his Helotes ranch as “there are very few deer...and I am protecting those in hope that they will multiply. As to the mines, I have no hunting privileges whatsoever there as I have from the land owners only the mining rights.” White, in his reference to the hunting privileges at the mines, is referring to his ranch in Uvalde County, which surrounded the mines and is the location of the famous White's Uvalde Mine.

<sup>12</sup> Author's correspondence with ranch owner, Myfe Moore, November 10, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> R.L. White, Sr.'s correspondence with his son, R.L. White, Jr., October 19, 1928. White, Jr. was studying engineering at MIT, and the letter references the dam, now submerged in the middle of Pavilion Lake, as well as samples of road materials that Jr. had tested in the MIT laboratories. Tragically, the young man was killed in a boating accident on the Charles River at MIT the following spring, dashing his father's hopes and stated ambitions for his son to eventually manage the business upon his graduation.

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References to summertime residence and construction projects on the ranch infer that R. L. White also saw the ranch, in its early years, as a place for family recreation. This is confirmed by his grandson, John A. Bitter, III.<sup>14</sup> In San Antonio, the family had settled into their large home at 203 Bushnell in the fashionable Monte Vista neighborhood in about 1918. So, the ranch might have started off as a summer retreat for the family because by 1925, "cold mix" rock asphalt production was doing very well at the White's Uvalde Mines Company and production was up to nearly 60,000 tons per year, then considered a vast amount, and thus providing a comfortable income for the family.<sup>15</sup>

The development of the Lake Pavilion as a family recreational center and then as a guest entertainment center occurred nearly ten years later, after the completion of the Lake Pavilion dam, which was done in three phases. After R.L. White Jr.'s dam was complete, another dam was built further south, perhaps as an additional coffer dam while the first stage of the current dam, "the big dam," was built. At this point, the footings and foundation or platform of the Pavilion were constructed. The lake water rose to the foot of the steps leading from the Pavilion into the lake, then another ten feet were added to the dam and the water rose to the top step of the Pavilion's staircases.

The Pavilion was enclosed and completed in about 1940, and "Triple" Bitter, as the family calls him, who is R. L. White's eldest grandson, recalls riding his tricycle, as a toddler, on the Pavilion's platform before it was enclosed.<sup>16</sup> He also states that the Pavilion was a place for the grandchildren to play where they could not bother their grandfather, who was a bit nervous with them all underfoot.

During the 1930s, many other suburban ranches beside the R. L. White Ranch were being built or modified from former working ranches in Bexar County by well-to-do families. The trend was just beginning in the 1930s; White was at the forefront of that suburban settlement pattern. San Antonio families with the means began to purchase old ranch properties in outlying areas of Bexar County and convert the main houses into large suburban homes while commuting daily to downtown San Antonio for employment. Other well-to-do families in San Antonio also purchased outlying acreage in unincorporated areas of Bexar County and built very large homes as permanent residences.<sup>17</sup>

By the late 1940s, R.L. White was living at the ranch full-time and commuting to his office in San Antonio, while his wife preferred to continue living in San Antonio.<sup>18</sup> White continued to live at the ranch until he began to decline, in

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<sup>14</sup> Author's interview with John A. Bitter, III, October 18, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas A. White, "A Brief History of Discovery, Use and Growth of White's Uvalde Mines," TM (photocopy), from family papers of Triple Bitter, ca. 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Triple Bitter also noted that the Pavilion was one more place for all the numerous grandchildren to play and not be underfoot as they made their grandfather nervous.

<sup>17</sup> South of the R.L. White Ranch is the Huebner-Onion Homestead, home of Judge John F. "Pete" Onion, Sr. who purchased the Huebner Homestead as a weekend home for his family from Judge George B. Taliaferro.<sup>17</sup> Judge Onion was a prominent lawyer and Justice of the Peace serving in Bexar County at that time. He and his wife, Harriet Onion, with their five-year old twin sons, John Jr. and James took possession of the homestead on April 30, 1930. In 1936, John Onion, Sr. was elected Judge of the 73<sup>rd</sup> District Court of Texas in Bexar County. He served there until his retirement in 1949. Nearby, lies the suburban ranch and former home of Betty Slick Moorman (1918-2000), sister of Thomas Baker Slick, Jr. (1916-1962), the founder of the Southwest Research Institute. Betty Moorman and her husband, Lewis, purchased 1,100 acres and the 100-year old ranch house of the Leon Creek Ranch in ca. 1948 as the permanent home for their children, operating it first as a dairy farm and then in the breeding of Appaloosa horses. All but seventy acres were sold in the 1970s for the development of the Dominion Estates on IH 10 north of Loop 1604. Closer to town, Gilbert Denman, Jr., well-known art patron and founder of the Ewing Halsell Foundation, built the Rosemont estate in the 1930s, which is still located on Mockingbird Lane near Interstate 10 and Loop 410 in the Oak Hill Subdivision. Designed by the firm of Ayres and Ayres, as were other structures in that outlying subdivision, it is a settlement pattern that deserves serious scholarly study.

<sup>18</sup> Author's interview with John A. Bitter, III, October 18, 2006.

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the late 1950s, when he moved into a small duplex at 211 Ridgewood Court in San Antonio, Texas.<sup>19</sup> White died on May 11, 1962.

However, until 1963, the ranch was still regularly used to host contractors during the hunting season. After that date, however, tax laws were changed regarding the reporting of trips and gifts to public officials, all of which resulted in a decline in the use of the ranch as a hunting venue.<sup>20</sup> Now, the ranch is used by the family solely for recreation.

## Ryall Luther White: Entrepreneur and Businessman

Ryall Luther White (1878-1962) was from Jasper, Texas, and he was born on July 20, 1878, to John Luther Calvin White (1850-1934) and Texanna Priscilla Ryall White (1853-1901). He was the third of six children born to John and Texanna. All of the family, except the R. L.'s youngest brother, Thomas Andrew White (1892-1975), is buried in the Ryall family cemetery in Jasper, Texas. Also, spouses of White's siblings are buried in the Ryall Cemetery; only Tom White and R. L. White left Jasper and found new lives and fortunes beyond Jasper and East Texas.<sup>21</sup> Some of White's early life is briefly mentioned in a family history written by his wife's older sister, Mae Smyth West, where she states that White met his wife, Ethel Gertrude Smyth White (1882-1957), in Beaumont, Texas, where she was a school teacher. "Auntie Mae" states that it is because Ethel White was a school teacher, and educated at the George Peabody College for Teachers, in Nashville, Tenn., that she met R.L. White.<sup>22</sup> Little else has been discovered at this time about this period of time spent in Beaumont. The Whites were married on March 27, 1907. R. L. White may have had some training in the law but his educational background is unknown.<sup>23</sup>

White began working for his father-in-law, Joseph Grigsby Smyth, at the Uvalde Rock Asphalt Company, based in Dabney, Texas, (also known as White's Mine). The history of the White's Uvalde Mines is outlined in a short paper written by R. L. White's brother, Tom White, in 1958. R. L. White started work for his father-in-law in 1915, as the manager of Uvalde Rock Asphalt Company.<sup>24</sup> Then, in 1920, he resigned that position and opened his own paving company, the Alamo Paving Company in San Antonio, paving exclusively with what Tom White calls "rock asphalt." According to the *Handbook of Texas Online*, White concluded an agreement with the remainder of the Smyth Ranch owners on September 14, 1923, that permitted his White's Uvalde Mines Company to mine and remove rock asphalt. In

<sup>19</sup> White did not live in Gertie's house during his years of living at the ranch; rather, he lived in the "Cline Place" on the ranch which is now the Thomson family's portion of the ranch, and just west of the R. L. White Ranch. Sometime after the untimely death of his son, R. L. White, Jr., and prior to living at the ranch, White moved into and lived at the St. Anthony Hotel until 1947. Grief over the loss of their eldest son, R. L. White, Jr., caused estrangement between R. L. White and his wife, Ethel, a loss from which neither would truly recover. Author's interview with John A. Bitter, III, October 23, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The family tradition is that R.L. White left Jasper, Texas, with just a milk cow in tow, but the discovery of the rather extensive Ryall family cemetery, which contains nearly fifty plots and is located in the Ryall Subdivision, just west of Jasper, implies that R.L. White's mother, Texanna, might have come from a family of means. R.L. brother, Albert Edwin White (1882-1936) was a medical doctor, and his sister, Evelyn White Barton, was married to a minister who held a doctorate of divinity. Other family members were also medical doctors, one of whom founded a Methodist hospital in Houston. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) regarding Ryall Cemetery (accessed November 9, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> The college is now part of Vanderbilt University. R. L. White also recognized the value of education and sent his younger brother, Tom, to school to become an engineer and so better manage the mining operation in Uvalde County. John A. Bitter, III, grandson of R.L. White, in interview with author, October 23, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Obituary of R.L. White states that he practiced law while living in Beaumont, Texas, but research with Center for Legal History State Bar of Texas revealed no record of his passing a State Bar exam or being licensed to practice law in Texas.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas A. White, "A Brief History of Discovery, Use and Growth of White's Uvalde Mines," ca. 1958.

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1923, R. L. White open his own rock asphalt mine, so as to have a supply of the raw material. The mining company was called the Uvalde Company, with Tom White, his brother, as the mine manager. Beginning in 1923, the Asphalt Belt Railroad transported the raw material to the San Antonio, Uvalde and Gulf Railroad. By 1928, White's Mine Corporation had developed a new process to manufacture on site a cold-mix paving material and the company began to market the product in a serious way during the Great Depression.<sup>25</sup>

At this time, the mining of rock asphalt was accomplished entirely by hand – drilling and blasting – then hand sledging the blasted rock to produce what was known as “man-sized stone” – stone in sizes that could be handled by men – which were carried and loaded into a truck, and then dumped into railroad cars. It was not until 1925 that steam shovels and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cubic yard clam-shells were purchased for the mining process. In 1928, the company's first plant did mixing and shipping of “premixed rock asphalt” instead of shipping it in a rubble form to either a hot mix plant or a “pugmill” type for a cold-mix.<sup>26</sup> During that year, the company also placed its first salesmen on the road, promoting paving projects in Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. Virtually all business secured during the years 1925 through 1938 required the salesmen to act as engineer, as well as superintendent of construction. Tom White also reports that during the Great Depression, the company developed forty separate city projects (all were W.P. A. jobs, which employed five men, each at a dollar a day). All the work could be done by hand, with one man putting down tack oil out of a perforated can, asphalt was then hand raked and floated, rock asphalt was rolled with a hand roller, weighing some 250 pounds, and operated by two men.

By 1935 White had brought the mine to full production and he provided many jobs during the Great Depression through the W.P.A (Works Progress Administration) and small Texas municipalities. Tom White writes that of the four hundred and twenty-five Texas cities with populations of 1,000 or more, 196 were customers of White's Asphalt Paving Company. The *Handbook of Texas Online* states that other companies also provided paving services with rock asphalt. White, to achieve even higher production from the Uvalde Mines, ended up in a famous lawsuit with his father-in-law that eventually went all the way to the Texas Supreme Court and was settled in 1947. The *Handbook* states that from 1920 to 1935 there were a total of six firms engaged in this work, but not all at the same time, and peak production resulted in recovery of 1.25 million tons of rock asphalt. However, production during the 1930s average about 125,000 tons per year. Over the year millions of tons have been produced and used by cities of Texas and the Texas Department of Transportation.<sup>27</sup> By 1970 there were just two firms remaining in operation-Uvalde Rock Asphalt Company (continuous since 1912) and White's Uvalde Mines (since 1923), and both were owned by White family interests.<sup>28</sup> Their combined production during the late 1960s was one and three-quarter million tons or more yearly. In the early 1980s White's Uvalde Mines bought controlling interest in the Uvalde Rock Asphalt Company. Subsequently, White's was sold by its parent company, R. L. White, to Vulcan Materials of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1987.<sup>29</sup>

Rock asphalt mining and paving were not R. L. White's only business interests. He also diversified into lumber, and into land purchase, but only for mineral rights. With a number of investors, he was the owner of the Southern Lumber Company of San Antonio, a wholesale lumber company that was headquartered on the near Eastside of San Antonio off of

<sup>25</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Dabney, Texas," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/hrg68.html> (accessed November 9, 2006)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Dabney, Texas," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/hnd1.html> (accessed November 9, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Author's interview with John A. Bitter, III, October 18, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Uvalde County Limestone Rock Asphalt," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/article/UU/gpul.html> (accessed November 4, 2006).

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Nolan Street and operated by his son, Jack H. White, as part of a housing construction business during and right after the Second World War. Also, with his great understanding of mineral rights, he bought and sold land all over Texas but often retained their mineral rights through a company called White and West, thus increasing the family fortunes. Working with his wife's brother-in-law, Judge West, he would buy tax delinquent properties, pay the taxes and sell them, but retain mineral rights.

However, it was always the continuous improvement of his beautiful Hill Country ranch, with all its water conservation and retention projects that seemed to please him most in the later years of his life. That is when he chose to commute, on a daily basis, the twenty-five miles from the ranch to his office in downtown San Antonio until failing health no longer permitted such a long drive.

### **Texas Roads and Rock Asphalt**

Only during the time that San Antonio was an outpost first for the Mexican Republic (1821-1835), then as a notable settlement in the Republic of Texas (1836-1845), and finally as a major city in the State of Texas, did the town and its surrounding areas first begin to witness serious population growth, commerce, and the need for good roads. It is estimated that by 1860 San Antonio's population was about 8,000, making it the largest city in Texas.<sup>30</sup> Of this population, over five thousand were German-born citizens, living in San Antonio, and giving it its "first large mercantile and financial patriciate."<sup>31</sup> By 1880, San Antonio's population was over 20,000 and it was a center of freighting and commerce for south central Texas and points west to California and south to Mexico.

However, the lack, or inadequacy of improved roads, ports, and railroads, which is the backbone of successful commerce, was striking. The largest ports were Galveston and Matagorda, high on the Texas coast and away from the interior of the state. Indianola, which was completely destroyed by a hurricane in 1875, was the only port even near western Texas.<sup>32</sup> It was hard enough to get goods ashore but shipping them inland over Texas "roads" was a nightmare. In 1860, only a few miles of road were actually graded and a mere twenty miles were planked or in anyway improved.<sup>33</sup> All the "roads" were merely cow trails; easy to find and difficult to traverse. Most travel was by horseback and, because of the enormous distances to be covered in Texas, good saddle horses, with easy gaits, were a sought-after stock. Goods were hauled in giant-sized wagons – some carried 7,000 pounds – and were drawn by mules or oxen.<sup>34</sup> On a good day, oxen could cover, perhaps, six miles of road, so trips inland from Texas ports could take weeks or months.<sup>35</sup> Railroads, which began to link the east coast of the nation with northern areas of the mid-West, were nonexistent in Texas until 1852.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 320

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Indianola, TX," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/H/hvi11.html>> [Accessed Thu Nov 4 21:48:01 US/Central 2004].

<sup>33</sup> Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 296.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 319.

<sup>35</sup> Life history interview with Max Richter, German Pioneer, 1936. American Memory Project, Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

Mr. Richter emigrated from Germany in 1881 and was a farmer living near Fredericksburg, Texas. He reports that neighboring farmers would band together and ship their produce by ox cart to either Houston or San Antonio. Trips to Houston by ox cart and wagon train in the 1880s took weeks or months. The wagon trains were subject to robberies and bad roads, which were mere cow trails, and had to be hacked out by the farmers.

<sup>36</sup> The first railroad to reach San Antonio was not until 1877, an entire decade and then some after the Civil War.

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Even when railroads reached major cities in Texas, populations were still spread out on ranches and in small towns with immense distances between them, unserved by rail lines. Since hundreds of miles separated small farming and ranching communities, farmers were still left to use muddy trails to get their goods to market. At the beginning of the last century, they sometimes had to haul cotton over one hundred miles to be ginned. When finally available and affordable, the truck and automobile replaced the horse quickly, symbolically and in social function: Texas went from a horse culture to something resembling an automobile culture in one swoop.<sup>37</sup> Before 1910 there were 14,286 vehicles in the 180 counties in Texas that registered cars, by the time there was the first statewide registration, seven years later, the number had grown to over 200,000.<sup>38</sup>

Hence, the Texas *obsession* with good roads; all these cars and trucks, trying to get to market, or wherever, needed good roads. While Texans might not have agreed on spending money on public services, such as public schools, they spent enormous amounts of money on their roadways. Whether urban or rural, all Texas interests agreed on expenditure of funds for the state's road system. So, when Congress, in 1916, passed the Federal Aid Road Act, for the same reasons it passed legislation for the Interstate Highway system forty years later, to create a national roadway system, it insisted that each state establish a state highway commission to ensure good engineering and maintenance of the system. The State of Texas established its highway department in a few months during 1917, due to the federal mandate.<sup>39</sup> And, although the progress was hardly uniform – some Texas counties got their first paved roads as late as the 1940s – by the 1950s, even the rural, farm-to-market roads in under populated areas were superior to most U.S. highways in the East.<sup>40</sup>

Such obsession with good roads also included an obsession with roadway *paving materials* and the search for the perfect road-surfacing material. R. L. White, as the consummate entrepreneur, not only recognized that naturally-occurring rock asphalt in Uvalde County was an ideal material for surfacing Texas roads, but that marketing it in such a way as to fit with the times, especially during the Great Depression, would build for him a family business for future generations.

The only limestone rock asphalt found in Texas in sufficient quantity and of marketable quality is located on the 75,000 to 100,000 acres in the southwest portion of Uvalde County and the southeast part of Kinney County. The bitumen that fills each interstice of this sedimentary limestone rock in this area varies from 1 to 20 percent, and commercial applications of rock asphalt generally require bitumen contents of between 5 and 12 percent.<sup>41</sup> There are only seven other locations in the world like this where limestone contains sufficient bitumen to make asphalt paving.<sup>42 43</sup>

This Texas location was first mined by a British firm named the Lathe Carbon Company from 1885 to 1895 and they mined the area to extract the bitumen from the stone and then extract a substance called ichthyol from the bitumen.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Feherenbach, *Lone Star*, 649.

<sup>38</sup> Hilton Hagan, *An Informal History of the Texas Department of Transportation* (Austin: TX Department of Transportation, 1991), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Feherenbach, *Lone Star*, 649.

<sup>41</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "UVALDE COUNTY LIMESTONE ROCK ASPHALT," <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/UU/gpu.html> (accessed June 2, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Author's interview with Myfe Moore, R.L. White's granddaughter.

<sup>43</sup> Bitumen is a mixture of organic liquids that are highly viscous, black, sticky, entirely soluble in carbon disulfide, and composed primarily of highly condensed polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Bitumen is used primarily to pave roads, but is also used in production of roofing felt. Its common name is also asphalt. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Bitumen," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitumen>, (accessed December 4, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Ichthyol was a highly valued substance that is still used to treat skin diseases such as acne and eczema. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Ichthyol," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichthyol>, (accessed November 18, 2006).

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Later, other sources of bitumen were found, including oil-rich sulphur shale, which were much less expensive to mine than the limestone asphalt rock. So, the English entrepreneurs closed the Uvalde mine. However, a group of Beaumont and San Antonio businessmen, including Beaumont capitalist John Smyth, probably Ethel Smyth's father and R. L.'s father-in-law, reopened the mine in 1913 to use the asphalt rock as a road paving material. It had been noted that the roads over which the crushed rock asphalt had been hauled, from quarries to plant, had developed into naturally hard-surfaced, all weather roads.<sup>45</sup> Why not mine rock asphalt to sell it as a road paving material?

Tom White, R. L. White's brother, wrote a short history of White's rock asphalt business and he notes that in 1898, the City of San Antonio paved three blocks on Crockett Street, from St. Mary's to Losoya Streets, as a test area, with rock asphalt and found it to be a long wearing surface. In 1912, San Antonio passed a large street-paving bond issue and many types of street paving materials were used by various contractors: brick; concrete; wood blocks; "vibrolithic;" "bitulithic," and rock asphalt. Rock asphalt secured forty percent of all contracts under the 1912 bond issue.<sup>46</sup> Tom White's history goes on to note that rock asphalt operations also started in cities like Beaumont, Houston and Shreveport during 1912. He also records that up until 1917, all rock asphalt surface work was of the "hot mix" method – which necessitated moving and erecting a rather large plant, as portable plants were unknown. Then, right before World War I, White's company tried a "cold mix project" on New Braunfels Avenue at the entrance to Fort Sam Houston which held up very well under the strain of World War I troop movements and artillery shuffling in and out of Fort Sam.<sup>47</sup>

As noted earlier, rock asphalt production from the Uvalde mines in 1925 was only 50,000 to 60,000 tons as compared to a production of over 600,000 tons by 1955, and all this asphalt was sold to both Texas municipalities as well as to the Texas Highway Department for road paving. Where did all that rock asphalt go? The explanation is simple. The new highway department, established in 1917, was constructing new roads. Of the 18,000 miles of Texas roads in 1928 there were: 96 miles of concrete pavement, 1,060 miles of asphalt, 5,000 miles of gravel, shell or stone, and 10,000 of just plain dirt.<sup>48</sup> What was needed was an easily-handled, low-tech paving material to cover all those dirt roads, and a process that could also employ a large unskilled workforce as required by federal work relief programs, the source of much road work during the Great Depression. Clearly, R. L. White saw the entrepreneurial opportunity to pave Texas roads with his unique rock asphalt were enormous and he set about to take advantage of that opportunity with typical Texas energy. Today, the Texas highway and roadway system, alone, covers, nearly 80,000 centerline miles and contains the largest highway system in the nation. Part of that legacy belongs to White's Asphalt Paving Company and White's Mines.

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<sup>45</sup> T. White, "A History."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> **Hot Mix Asphalt Concrete** (commonly abbreviated as HMA) is produced by heating the asphalt in order to decrease its viscosity and drying the aggregate to remove moisture from it prior to mixing. Paving and compaction must be performed while the asphalt is sufficiently hot. In many states paving is restricted to summer months because in winter the compacted base will cool the asphalt too much before it is packed to the optimal air content. HMA is the form of asphalt concrete most commonly used on highly trafficked pavements such as those on major highways and airfields. **Cold Mix Asphalt Concrete** is produced by emulsifying the asphalt in water with (essentially) soap prior to mixing with the aggregate. While in its emulsified state the asphalt is less viscous and the mixture is easy to work and compact. The emulsion will break after enough water evaporates and the cold mix will, ideally, take on the properties of cold HMA. Cold mix is commonly used as a patching material and on lesser trafficked service roads. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Asphalt concrete," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asphalt\\_paving](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asphalt_paving), (accessed November 20, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Hagan, *Informal History of TXDOT*, 8.

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### **The Rustic Architectural Style and the R. L. White Ranch**

Family tradition holds that White took a trip to the Grand Canyon National Park sometime in the 1930s, and, while there, he was inspired by the Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim (1927, 1936). The lodge, which had been partly destroyed by fire in 1932, was originally designed by architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood (1890-1960) in the Rustic architectural style. Underwood was a Yale-trained architect who worked for the National Park Service and designed not only the Grand Canyon Lodge but also the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park (Photos 20 & 21). His masterful use of the Rustic style gave the style a whole new meaning and it is understandable that his work would inspire R. L. White in his vision to design and build the Lake Pavilion. The massive, stone chimneys on the exterior of the Ahwahnee and heavy beam and truss work displayed in the interior of the Grand Canyon Lodge are all reflected in the Lake Pavilion.

For some, the Rustic architectural style is less of a building design style and more of a romantic movement based that is based on a "back-to-nature" ethic that was first made popular at the turn of the last century. At its best, a building in this style was seen as "an accessory to nature" and "non-intrusive." In each case, natural and local materials were used and always had the appearance of being hand-built. The high point of this "rustic" design aesthetic occurred in the late 1920s and spread throughout the nation during the work relief and conservation building programs of the Great Depression. The National Parks Service defines the span of time when the style was popular for use by NPS for its lodges and buildings as 1916-1942. However, for the National Parks Service, the style was often more than just "an accessory to nature."

In the West, the National Parks were in partnership with the railroads to bring visitors to the nation's parks. At first, accommodations in the parks could have been from anywhere, but all that changed when the Great Northern Railroad constructed Old Faithful Inn (1903-1904) at Yellowstone National Park. This was new. The Old Faithful Inn had soaring public spaces and gnarled log balconies. It was a grand building set in a grand and wild place. Suddenly, the Rustic style was not so "non-intrusive."

The same can be said for the Grand Canyon Lodge, as designed by Underwood more than twenty years later. 1982 HABS pictures mentioned above depict the Grand Canyon Lodge with typical limestone walls, timbered ceilings and massive open beam truss work as well as use of wrought iron fixtures so typical of this style. The light fixtures and hanging wrought iron fixtures of the Lake Pavilion, as well as the timbered ceiling and truss work certainly recall the lodge.

Triple Bitter states that White talked over the plans with "an old German carpenter, known as Mr. Edwards." Edwards was a builder and craftsman who did much of the construction work at the ranch, and must have supervised the many workers who were available from the mines to build the pavilion as well as the dams at the ranch. White would also have had easy access to logs and timber as he owned the Southern Lumber Company in San Antonio, a wholesale lumber company that bought wood from East Texas. The result of all this construction work was the Lake Pavilion, the Lake Pavilion Carport, and the Horse Tie-up Stand, as well as Gertie's House. Each structure shows the same characteristics and sure use of materials and craftsmanship in the Rustic style. All these buildings and structures retain their historic integrity and are unaltered.

In contrast, the town home of R. L. and Ethel White, located at 203 Bushnell, in San Antonio, while still extant, has been altered.<sup>49</sup> And while census records show that White may have lived there "on paper" in 1930, family tradition holds that after the death of his eldest son, in 1928, he and his wife became estranged and he eventually moved out,

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<sup>49</sup> Correspondence with Myfe White Moore, December 4, 2006.



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moving first to the St. Anthony Hotel, in San Antonio, and then to the ranch.<sup>50</sup> The ranch head quarter's, or Main House, then became known as "Gertie's House," while R. L. White lived at the "Cline Place" nearby on the ranch, and now part of the Thomson portion of the ranch.

The R. L. White Ranch and the Lake Pavilion are significant under Criterion B at the local level in the area of Industry for their association with R. L. White, a San Antonio road-paving contractor, businessman, and owner of the White's Uvalde Mines. White was its original owner and builder of the Lake Pavilion, which he designed and developed for family and business recreational uses. The ranch is the only property that survives intact and unaltered, retaining its historic integrity and its close association with White.

The ranch and its collection of built resources also meets Criterion C, significant at the local level in the data area of Architecture because of the ranch's fine examples of Rustic architecture and their direct association with their original owner and builder, R. L. White.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Triple Bitter, October 23, 2006.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

**REDACTED**

**Boundary Justification**

The 3500-acre parcel that is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places follows the metes and bounds of the original ranch deeded first to R. L. White and then to his son, Jack L. White, Jr. It includes the Main House ("Gertie's House"), the Lake Pavilion, barns, fields, water retention facilities (such as dams and berms, and windmills) that are associated with the ranch being a business entertainment venue for the R. L. White business enterprises. Although the original 10,000 acre ranch was eventually equally divided among White's three children, this central portion retains the significant sites and structures associated with R. L. White's business activities and life as a San Antonio entrepreneur. It also contains the architecturally significant structures that contribute to the history and story of the R. L. White ranch. The boundary justification for this historic district is based on the current boundaries for the ranch as owned by R. L. White's granddaughter, Myfe White Moore, and not the original, and much larger, boundaries of the ranch. This ranch still contains the heart and core of the original ranch, including the ranch headquarters and the Lake Pavilion which were so closely associated with R. L. White.

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## Map 8: Area 2 Lake Pavilion Area

Source: Google Earth





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## Map 9: Area 3 Lake Pavilion Area

Source: Google Earth



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## Map 10: Area 4 Big Barn Area and Lencho's House

Source: Google Earth



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**Figure 1** Lake Pavilion viewed from lake



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**Figure 2** Grand Canyon Lodge



**Figure 3** Interior Photo to Dining Room of Grand Canyon Lodge, North Rim of Grand Canyon  
Designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood

*Source:* 1982 HABS Photographs, Library of Congress, American Memories Online Collection

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