

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION FOR GABLES RESTAURANT IN FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

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Cornerstone Environmental Consulting, LLC  
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In 2015, Cornerstone Environmental conducted archival research and provided historic preservation services to Shephard-Wesnitzer, Inc. for 700 and 702 S. Milton Rd., Flagstaff, Arizona, which are currently occupied by SuperPawn and Lu Mandarin Buffet, respectively (Edwards 2015). This work was performed per specifications in the City of Flagstaff Zoning Code prior to demolition of the two buildings to construct a CVS pharmacy at the site. The SuperPawn building was constructed in 1983 (Coconino County Assessor's Office) by the owners of Gables Restaurant as a disco/sports bar (R. Sean Evans, pers. comm. to Josh Edwards, February 23, 2015). The building was not over 50 years old and was not researched further since it is not historic. The building at 702 S. Milton has a long history, starting as the Golden Drumstick restaurant at the Park Plaza Motel, which is summarized below.

## Park Plaza Court (1942-1978)

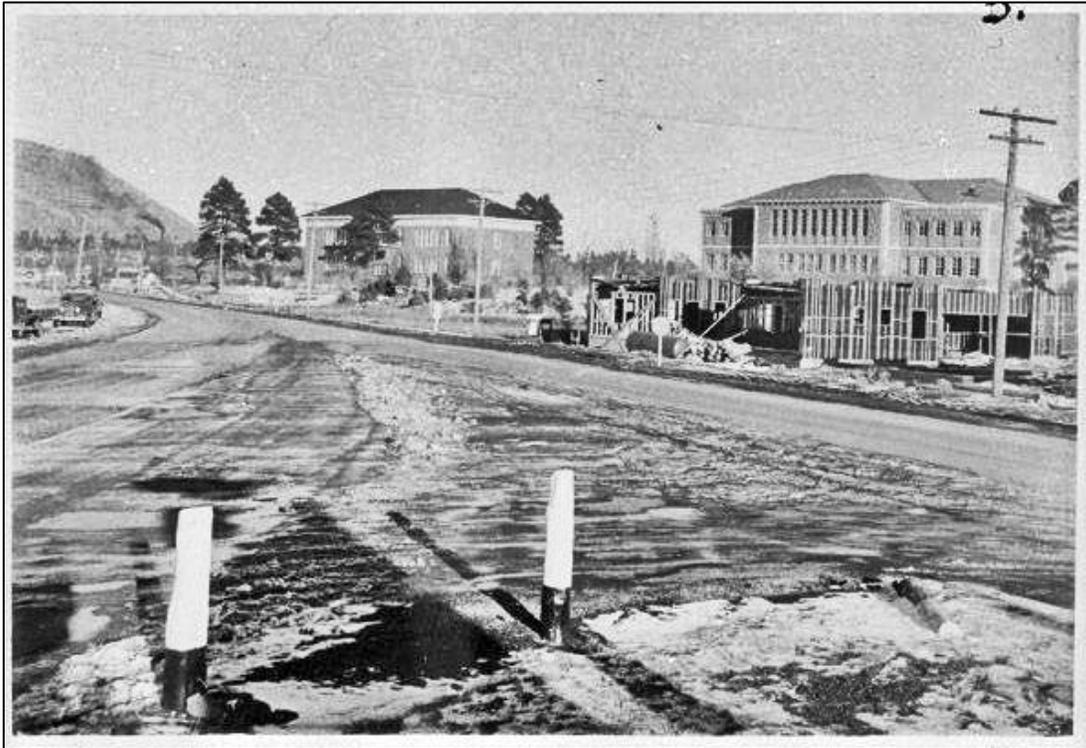
The Park Plaza Court in Flagstaff was constructed in 1941 (Figures 1 and 2; Arizona Daily Sun references a 1941 lawsuit against the Strouds for partly obstructing Milton Rd., Column 2, page 8, September 26, 1946) and is listed in the 1943 telephone directory white pages at 601 Mike's Pike. The Park Plaza Court in Flagstaff was north of 702 S. Milton Rd., occupying the lot where SuperPawn is today.

Park Plaza Courts were a chain of six motel courts built by Milton Stroud, Sr., and his brother Lemuel Stroud of Waco, Texas, with the first location opening in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1942 (Figures 3-6). Lemuel supervised construction at each site while Milton stayed in Waco and managed the business. Park Plaza Courts were architecturally similar to the Alamo Plaza motels since E. Lee Torrance (owner of Alamo Plaza motels, who suggested that Milton and Lemuel start the chain) provided the Strouds with access to Alamo's architect and design. However, Park Plaza Courts were an independent chain that shared neither name nor ownership with the main Alamo Plaza chain, and they merely sported an Alamo-like façade (Scott 2001).

Park Plaza locations were chosen to be roughly at one-day travel intervals by motorcar, and four of the six locations (St. Louis, West Tulsa, Amarillo, and Flagstaff; from historic Park Plaza Courts promotional brochure) were in Route 66 cities. The remaining two Park Plaza Courts were in Raton, New Mexico, and Texarkana, Arkansas. The Strouds' goal was to create a chain where "A salesman taking the four-day drive from St. Louis to Flagstaff via Raton could stay in Park Plaza Courts all the way" (Scott 2001:122). The St. Louis location, which opened in 1948



**Figure 1.** Photo of the Park Plaza Court under construction, ca. 1941 (from Fronske Studio, Cline Library Special Collections).



**Figure 2.** Photo of the Park Plaza Court under construction from Intersection of Route 66 and US 89A, ca. 1941 (from Fronske Studio, Cline Library Special Collections).



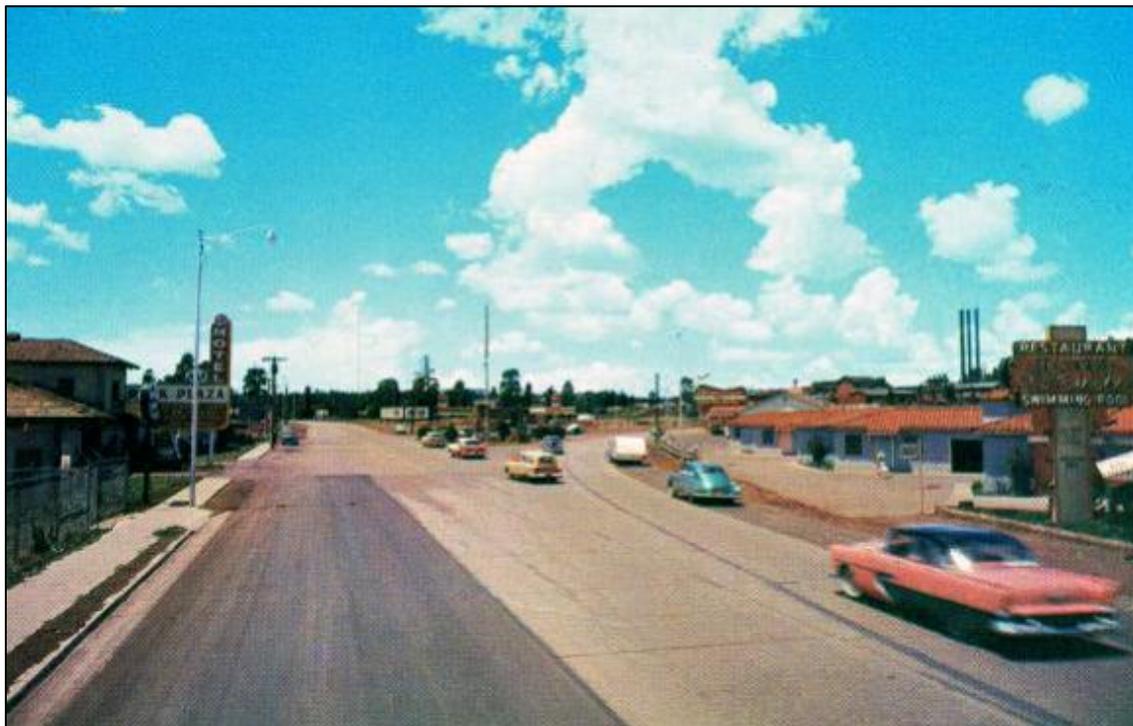
**Figure 3.** Photo of the Park Plaza Motel, Flagstaff, ca. 1950s.



**Figure 4.** Photo of the Park Plaza Motel, Flagstaff, ca. 1950s.



**Figure 5.** Photo of the junction of Route 66 and US 89A, pre-1954.



**Figure 6.** Photo showing Park Plaza Motel and Rt. 66, ca. 1950s.

as the fifth Park Plaza Court, had an adjacent Golden Drumstick restaurant operated by the same owners. Most of the original Park Plaza buildings no longer exist.

Milton Stroud, Jr., and his wife Mickey were involved with the chain after 1950 (Scott 2001). They left their home in Waco, Texas soon after being married and traveled Route 66 working as substitute hotel managers while the resident managers took their annual two-week vacations. The Arizona Daily Sun (August 28, 1946, Page 3, Column 7) notes that "Mr. and Mrs. Lem Stroud and baby daughter, Susan, came Sunday from Raton, NM, to spend several days here [in Flagstaff] on business. Mr. Stroud recently completed building a large auto court in Raton. He is owner of the Park Plaza Courts here."

Northern Arizona University's (NAU) Stroud Hall was originally associated with the Park Plaza Motel. Construction began in 1959, and Stroud Hall was created with a unique motel/dormitory use in mind. Stroud Hall, named after the owners of the Park Plaza Motel, was owned by the Strouds and was leased to Arizona State College (NAU; Arizona Daily Sun, September 23, 1960). Thirty-eight weeks out of the year the hall was a hotel; the rest of the year it was a dorm (Arizona Daily Sun, September 30, 1959). This suggests that although the Golden Drumstick/Gables no longer existed in 1960, the Strouds (LL Stroud Enterprises) still owned the hotel.

A brief interview with Delia Muñoz revealed that she used to go to work with her mother Eugenia Ceballos who was a maid at the Park Plaza Court. Delia's aunt and Eugenia's sister, Francis Campo Ramirez, also a maid, was fired from the Park Plaza in the late 1940s or early 1950s for speaking Spanish (pers. comm. to Josh Edwards on March 2, 2015).

## **Golden Drumstick Restaurant (1952-1958)**

The building located at 702 S. Milton Rd. was originally constructed as a Golden Drumstick Restaurant in 1952 by William and Louis White (Figure 7). The first Golden Drumstick Restaurant was located at 11th & Yale in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was built by the Stroud brothers in 1948 and was followed by other establishments in Youngstown, Ohio, Phoenix, Arizona, Long Beach, California, and Hot Springs, Arkansas. The Golden Drumstick in Phoenix was on the west side of Central Avenue a few blocks south of Indian School Road and was forced out by high-rise construction in the area and closed in the early 1970s. There was also a Golden Drumstick restaurant in Tucson, at 2701 E. Broadway, which was "purchased by B. J. Mihlethaler, owner and operator of several Tucson restaurants" (Tucson Daily Citizen, July 7, 1959, Page 3). The seller of the Golden Drumstick was W. C. White, of Phoenix, and Mihlethaler indicated that he would continue to specialize in chicken, sea foods, steaks, and barbecue foods.

The Flagstaff location is listed in the 1958 telephone directory at Mikes Pike Flagstaff—PR 4-3151. The KEOS radio station is cited as moving into the old Golden Drumstick Restaurant building in 1958 (Arizona Daily Sun, This Week in Flagstaff History, 50 Years Ago, December

5, 2008). The Golden Drumstick, Ohio Corporation, was incorporated October 15, 1969 (File# 389714) and three principals are listed: Charles J. Zidian, Samuel Karam, and William J. Jacob.



**Figure 7.** Photo of the Golden Drumstick Restaurant and Park Plaza Motel, ca. 1956.

Although little information exists about the restaurant chain, the Golden Drumstick in Long Beach, California, is known to have accommodated large crowds, with customers arriving by car to park in large adjacent lots (Jakle et al. 2002b). Like the Flagstaff location, the building sat close to the highway with a front entrance that enticed passersby. Inside, both counter service and table service was available, the latter filling several large rooms and capable of accommodating hundreds of customers, especially on Sunday. "The Golden Drumstick also promoted a carryout trade at a counter just inside the front entrance" (Jakle et al. 2002b:213). The Golden Drumstick in Tulsa "served chicken dinners from the late 1940s through the 1960s. The cafe met immediate success, due in part to Bob Latting, the 'first Tulsa television personality' who was one of the restaurant owners" (Clark 200:74). Additionally, Golden Drumstick restaurants are said to have "had three clocks on one wall, set to different times around the world" (MOB 2015).

## **Gables Restaurant (1959-1993)**

Gables Restaurant celebrated its grand opening on June 6, 1959, at the intersection of Highways 89A & 66W (Arizona Daily Sun, May, 1959). Jim Davis, of the City of Flagstaff's Utilities Department, worked at Gables in the early 1970s and identified Gables as a "high-end steak and seafood restaurant, one of the best in town" (pers. comm. to Josh Edwards on February 26, 2015). For some time, "If you wanted something really nice to do you went to The Gables. ...you

went in there and just packed in solid and danced until you had to be in by eleven o'clock" (NAU Special Collections, Oral History Interview with Francis Hollis, 2009). Advertisements in the Sun in 1960 list Max Penton as Head Chef (October, 1960) and Galen Larson as Manager of the Cameo Room (January, 1960). Later, on July 6, 1962, the Sun advertises Bud Husten as the baker.

The entrance to Gables' bar and entertainment hall, the Cameo Room, was located beneath where the Lu Mandarin Buffet sign is currently (Figure 8). The Cameo Room must have shut down for a period after 1960, because the NAU Lumberjack (January, 1975) states that the Cameo Room opens Friday, January 31, 1975. Then in 1978, K. Joseph Nackard, President of Consolidated Investment Company, Inc., completed an extensive two month remodel of the restaurant and reverted the then Mad-Dogs Speakeasy back to the old Cameo Room style (Arizona Daily Sun, May 14, 1978).



**Figure 8.** Photo of Gables Restaurant and Cameo Room, ca. 1970.

A large Park Plaza Motel/Gables Restaurant billboard that was "seen by motorists driving under the Sitgreaves Street underpass for more than 30 years, was removed" on May 25, 1978 (Arizona Daily Sun, May 25, 1978). Also of note, was a "freak" collision that occurred when Charles L. Bullmore crashed a refrigerator truck into the west wall of the Daddy Morebucks discotheque (formerly the Cameo Room) building after the truck's brakes failed (Arizona Daily Sun, May 15, 1979).

In 1985, NAU considered the purchase of The Gables-Old Towne Tavern restaurant complex, and the associated 5 acres of land, from George Nackard of Consolidated Investment Company,

Inc., but they withdrew their offer. The original purchase price had been around \$3 million and the property was to be used as a laboratory for the new School of Hotel and Restaurant Management. The reason given was that they would have to spend too much money on the existing property and that constructing a new facility would be more financially sound. The university was also interested in improving the appearance of that part of campus, controlling what would be developed on the lots, and to control what was developed on that property in coming years.

Gables is advertised in the Arizona Daily Sun (Sun) in 1959 and 1960 as being at the intersection of "Highways 66 and 89A." In 1965, the State Telephone and Telegraph Co. (a.k.a., Mountain Bell Yellow Pages) lists George Nackard as President, Najla Engstrom as Vice President, and Phillip (or Phyllis) Nackard as Secretary Treasurer, with offices at 15 E. Phoenix Ave. Directories for 1970-1980 list only Mikes Pike as the address. The 1980 Johnson Publishing Co. directory shows the address as "Junction I-17 & Rt66," but the 1982 edition lists Joe Kruger as Manager and has 601 Mikes Pike as the address. In 1983 and 1984, the address listing changes to 602 Mikes Pike, and is shown as 555 S. Blackbird Roost St. in the 1985-1989 editions, after which Gables is no longer listed.

Gables was a popular Flagstaff destination for food and entertainment, and many groups and organizations met there, including:

- ASC (NAU) Western Civilization class students (NAU Lumberjack, May, 1965),
- The Student Council for Exceptional Children all-day conference on March 30, 1968 (NAU Lumberjack, March, 1968),
- The Cardinal Key Big Sis's, a junior women's honorary who treated their Little Sis's to breakfast (NAU Lumberjack, March, 1968),
- Banquet honoring the homecoming dedicatee, sponsored by the Honors Board (NAU Lumberjack, October, 1968),
- Dr. James Tamte, Dean of Student Affairs at NAU, spoke to Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity, an international Jewish fraternity (NAU Lumberjack, March, 1969),
- The 1972 Homecoming Dedicatee Banquet sponsored by Honor Board was held at Gables on Wednesday October 14, where Dr. Baseman and Dr. Walkup, and other officials, spoke, and Jim McCarthy resided as master of ceremonies (NAU Lumberjack, October, 1972), and
- The Blue Key honor fraternity smoker was held at Gables March 14, 1973 (NAU Lumberjack, March, 1973).

One of the most interesting groups to have frequented Gables was the U.S. Geological Survey Astrogeology Division's Project Apollo trainees (1960-1973). Within months of President John F. Kennedy's initiation of the "space race" in May of 1961, the "New Nine" astronauts were

deployed to Flagstaff for training. The group included Neil Armstrong (Gemini 8 and Apollo 11), James Lovell (Apollo 13), Charles "Pete" Conrad (Apollo 12), Frank Borman (Apollo 8), Jim McDivitt (Apollo 9), Elliot See (killed during training), Ed White (killed in Apollo 1 test) and John Young (Apollo 10).

During their initial training, Lovell, Conrad, and Borman were taken to Flagstaff High School and paraded in front of cheering students, where two girls fainted when Borman was introduced. They ate lunch at Gables Restaurant, and Lovell later went with several local leaders to Arizona Snowbowl and rode the Agassiz chairlift (Arizona Daily Sun; Neil Armstrong Returns to Flagstaff, July 17, 2012). Armstrong spent less time training in Flagstaff as crews did for the later Apollo missions that needed more substantial field science experience.

While having dinner at Gables on March 27, 1962, with planetary scientist Gene Shoemaker, Danny Milton is credited with suggesting to Shoemaker that "this is really where you should move the headquarters of the Branch" (Schaber 2005:34). For the next few years Gables was a favorite hangout and meeting place for early Branch of Astrogeology personnel. Don Elston recalled swearing in "Jack McCauley in a motel room behind the old, Gables Restaurant in Flagstaff. The motel was crummy, but it was about the best in town. This was February 1963, and it was cold" (Schaber 2005:48).

## **Fiddlers (1994-2002)**

Fiddlers Restaurant, or a derivate thereof, occupied the building at 702 S. Milton Rd from 1993-2002. In 1993, Scott Prubakoff considered replacing Fiddlestix nightclub with a Mulligan's Sports Pub and Grub with off-track betting. The building underwent an extensive remodel in June of 1993, after which Prubakoff planned for an early July opening (Arizona Daily Sun, June 13, 1993). A brief interview with Rudy Karlovits, Manager of Lu Mandarin Buffet (pers. comm. to Josh Edwards on February 23, 2015) confirmed that Fiddlers Restaurant Bar & Grill was operating in the building by 1994 and that 702 S. Milton Rd. has been occupied by Lu Mandarin Buffet since 2002.

## **Architecture**

Architecturally, the Strouds broke the facade of the Park Plaza Court "into three elements, a long, two-story center element that tapered to a single story at the sides and two single-story facades on either side" (Scott 2001:122). Behind the facades, the motel resembled a hacienda with blocks of rooms set at various angles along the drive and one long room block across the rear of the complex, typical of roadside architecture of Route 66. The manager's office and residence were located in the two-story center portion (*see* Figures 3 and 4). Guests would enter the complex through flat arches on either side of the office. At some point, however, the arches were cut away and the facade was broken into five sections; this design was repeated at each site (Scott 2001). Although roadside architecture of the 1930s and 1940s varied widely and owners

drew their models from regional houses (Jakle et al. 2002a), Park Plaza Courts were "to the Spanish Mission design what the Coral Court was to the Streamline Moderne" (Scott 2001:122).

The Golden Drumstick in Flagstaff was built circa 1952 as a Ranch-inspired restaurant. The simple yet functional style afforded by the Ranch form led to its popularity in residential architecture during the years following World War II and it was one of the most popular housing types by 1950 (NCHRP 2012). Despite the ubiquitous occurrences of Ranch-style residences, the form was minimally adapted into commercial buildings and was almost exclusively used for residential construction in midcentury subdivisions and neighborhoods. As a result, commercial examples of the Ranch form are uncommon, even in large western cities such as Phoenix (CPHPO 2010).

The Golden Drumstick was constructed as a large-scale one and a half story building, with a low horizontal silhouette and a layout consisting of a simple, rectangular massed plan and asymmetrical façade. The building is oriented in true Ranch fashion, with the long ridge of the side-gabled roof running parallel to Route 66 and deep eave overhangs along the façade (*see* Figures 5, 6, and 7; McAlester 2013). The absence of dormers along the low-pitched roof is characteristic of the Ranch form, with the unique half story indicated by the double-hung, wood frame windows with horizontal panes (2/2) in the gable ends. Other Ranch elements include an entrance sheltered by the main roof, simple wood post porch supports, large focal windows on the front façade, a closed rake in the gable ends, and a colonnaded wraparound porch along the west and south elevations. Complementary Ranch-inspired elaborations include broad corner windows, slant roof overhang below the gable, and a mix of exterior materials, including wood shake roofing, concrete block, and a distinctive change in wall cladding evidenced by wood boards affixed horizontally in the gable ends (McAlester 2013; Lutes 2015).

By 1970, Gables had undergone a substantial remodel, with a large, broad addition constructed for added seating in the dining area (*see* Figure 8). Built perpendicular to the broad, rectangular massed floor plan of the original layout, the extension created an asymmetrical floor plan in a Contemporary form, a type closely related its Ranch counterpart. Contemporary elements include the flat roof with a long continuous overhang, open eaves with enclosed rafters, and broad exterior surfaces characterized by uninterrupted patterns of natural stone. These uncut battered stone walls showcase the Contemporary preference of using natural construction components while maintaining the Ranch-inspired mix of materials.

Aspects of the extended dining area retain Ranch-style elements at this time, including deep eave overhang and the construction of long, masonry planters in the uncut sandstone battered walls along the west and south elevations of the addition. This phase of the Gables restaurant maintains its roadside orientation with its front entrance along Route 66, complemented by the addition of small pediments situated over the doors. The windows were single paned and grouped in fours, with diagonal muntins (or a diamond grille). A stone extension was also added to the north side of the building, perhaps to expand the famed Cameo Room based on interpretation using a postcard from the 1970s. A similar type of stone used to construct the battered stone walls and

north addition was used to fill in the north entrance, suggesting the entrance was closed off at this time.

Sometime after 1970, a half story was added to the extended dining room, with a large, steep-pitched roof and front-facing gable design replacing the flat roof above the battered stone walls, giving an A-frame-like appearance when viewed from the street. The roof has boxed eaves with deep overhangs, boxed eaves, wide fascia angled inwards, and a series of differently scaled gables that attempt to maintain continuity between new and old but are instead poorly detailed and unbalanced.

The west gable end facing Route 66 is “stepped,” forming a closed rake with a small triangular louver in the gable with an overlapping reduced gable element placed above an eight-pane vertical glass panel window that replaced the earlier sash glazing pattern seen in the 1970 postcard. The east gable end, facing the modern-day parking lot, has an open rake with a fixed rectangular wood louver in the gable. Below this is a small-scaled, offset entryway with exaggerated knee brackets supporting a small front-gabled roof. Large beams project from the gables at the sidewalls (projecting beams at the roof ridge are absent), with the same lap wood siding used on the front of the gable elements in order to maintain conformity across the various scales represented.

In addition to the addition of a half story, the original entrances to the restaurant were closed (one filled in with uncut stone), and the windows on the south side of the building were relocated to accommodate the main entryway. The characteristic colonnaded Ranch patio and walkway were filled in and roofed over, creating a lower pitched, extended secondary roof along the Route 66 right-of-way. With the relocation of the main entrance, the focus of the restaurant was no longer on the famed “Mother Road,” as patrons would subsequently enter from the side via the parking lot. Here, a tall, large-scale, nearly full-height gabled entryway welcomes diners with two smaller cross gables along the roofline.

The main entrance is offset, with a heavy and short front-gabled element seemingly held aloft by under-scaled entry support beams, with a similar triangular louver at the top of the gable. The entrance appears top heavy due to the slab foundation. The smaller cross gables attempt to maintain the emphasis on steep angles, with rooflines that drop below the main roofline. Similarly, the reduced, overlapping gable element in the gable end along Route 66 mimics the same “dropped” form, mirroring the steep pitch of the roof with edges that drop below the end of the lap siding in the gable. This type of gable element is seen in the midcentury neighborhoods around Flagstaff, particularly Greenlaw Estates.

Over time, the Golden Drumstick evolved from a simple, rectangular massed plan to a compound plan with irregular additions and alterations that developed as the restaurant space was continually remodeled and expanded to accommodate additional diners and service areas.

## Conclusions

Eating establishments not only provide sustenance to customers, but they also often facilitate social interactions and act as meeting places for all types of people involved in automobile travel, tourism, and western development. Auto travelers became a consistent source of revenue for the numerous business that sprung up along Route 66, and local communities like Flagstaff offered amenities from campgrounds to motels with diners to fashionable restaurants. Increasingly, in the 1930s, restaurants were associated with gas stations and motels (Cassity 2004; Rothman 2000). The history of the Golden Drumstick, and to a lesser extent, the Gables Restaurant, is characterized for much of the period of significance by its independent ownership, unregimented appearance, and frequently casual approach to business.

Many Route 66 cafes began as lunchrooms with a lunch counter and stools as well as tables and chairs, and later, booths, and larger dining spaces were typically separated from the cooking area by a service window. The 1940s and 1950s saw the prevalence of more substantial standardized franchises that were less defined by family roles and size and tended toward menu uniformity (NPS 1995). The independent operations that retain their vernacular designs remain as distinct from the chain restaurants and are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66 (Cassity 2004). The locations, designs, and materials used to build these diners reflect the circumstances that gave purpose to a particular building.

The overall design of recent and historical alterations to the building at 702 S. Milton diminish the original 1952 Ranch form of the Golden Drumstick. The simple details in the gables, grouped windows, gabled entryways, and simulated exposed roof beams coupled with the battered stone walls suggest a stylized commercial adaptation of the Craftsman influence seen in the New Traditional form of residential construction popular in Flagstaff midcentury. Yet, these poorly scaled elements and infill of original Ranch-style spaces (i.e., covered entryways, porches/patios) are carried out with awkward proportions.

Additions to 702 S. Milton Rd. between 1956 and 1970 when it functioned as Gables Restaurant, specifically, the battered stone walls and extended dining area (Figure 9), do not detract from the building's Ranch form. However, the countless renovations and alterations of the building since 1970, specifically, the side gables on the west elevation of the building and the enclosure of the porches that destroyed the defining characteristics of a Ranch-style building, have significantly affected the degree of retention of most aspects of integrity. The poorly scaled elements and awkward infill of original Ranch-style spaces (i.e., covered entryways, porches/patios) are carried out with awkward proportions.



**Figure 9.** Photo of Lu Mandarin Buffet at 702 S. Milton Rd., 2015, facing east.

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