

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**DRAFT**

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association  
Other names/site number: Coachella Valley Savings #2 (preferred); Washington Mutual, Chase Bank  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 499 South Palm Canyon Drive  
City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
A B C D

<hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <hr/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<b>Date</b>
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In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> <u>does not meet</u> the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b> <hr/> <b>Title :</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL:steel, aluminum, CONCRETE, GLASS

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2 (CVS #2) is located on the northwest corner of South Palm Canyon and Ramon Drives in Palm Springs. The commercial bank building is a blend of International Style modernism, Classical symmetry, and sculptural monumentality. Completed in 1961, it is of steel and concrete construction engineered for both seismic safety and to provide a single enormous banking space without interior columns. Its primary elevation is symmetrically arranged with inverted arches as columns supporting the flat roof. The composition is raised above a reflecting pool with fountains, emphasizing the building's monumentality and giving the appearance that the massive structure is floating above the water. Although the interior has been remodeled and the exterior modified for disabled access and the addition of an ATM, it retains sufficient historic and architectural integrity to convey its significance.

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### Narrative Description

E. Stewart Williams was the architect of this impressive sequel to the first Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association building (CVS #1) that he designed for the banking institution six years earlier a few blocks north. Completed in 1961, Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2 (CVS #2) was substantially larger than the previous building with a multilevel parking structure at the back and an enormous two-story interior space with mezzanine. Clearly intended to be a strong architectural statement on a prominent corner in Palm Springs' banking district, CVS #2 blended the International Style's principle of form following function with the

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expressive, sculptural possibilities of reinforced concrete. Further, in a nod to the New Formalism, the building's façade would be arranged with Classical symmetry.<sup>1</sup>

Williams was tasked with designing a building that would be sculpturally monumental, seismically safe, and highly functional. In accomplishing this, he went beyond typical post-and-beam systems by embracing the possibilities of more advanced structural forms using reinforced concrete. The site's 10-foot grade variance presented a challenge. Williams' solution was a split-level parking structure at the rear of the building with retail entrances on both levels. These led to either the main lobby below or the mezzanine above. The parking structure and main building were of steel and concrete construction, engineered for both seismic safety and to provide a single enormous banking space without interior columns. The roof was precast concrete with post-tensioned T-beams that spanned ninety feet across the first-level banking floor and loan department. The mezzanine floor was hung from the ceiling structure allowing the banking floor below to be completely column free.

Williams wrapped the building in an anodized ribbed aluminum skin with clerestory windows on the top and shallow windows on the bottom, which would provide sufficient light to prevent the interior from feeling confining. For seismic strength, Williams designed inverted arches that tapered into columns attached to the projecting horizontal T-beams supporting the flat roof. Despite the façade's resemblance to the well-publicized 1956 Alvorada Palace by Oscar Niemeyer in Brasilia, Williams insisted that his design had no relation to the Brazilian Modernist's designs. The bank's inverted arches widen at the bottom for seismic stability. For his demonstration of the advanced use of concrete with CVS #2, Williams won a creativity award from the Portland Cement Company.

In enhancing dramatic effect, Williams placed a full-width reflecting pool and fountains in front of the building at street level. The pool continued under the cantilevered terrazzo floor slab where the arches touched the ground. At night, with the row of uplit fountains and recessed lighting behind the arches, it appeared that the massive building was floating above the water. The identifying "COACHELLA VALLEY SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION" metal lettering appeared on the concrete monument sign perpendicular to, and intersecting, the reflecting pool near the southeast corner of the property. The top logo portion has since been replaced with the Chase Bank logo. At the rear of the building, a pair of automobile access ramps leads to the upper floor of the multilevel reinforced concrete parking structure. A vehicular street level entrance on the structure's south side leads to two more levels of parking. Rear entrances provide customer access to the bank from the parking structure's street and mezzanine levels.

Exterior modifications related to disability access include a concrete ramp with metal railings that was constructed on the south side of the building leading to the cantilevered terrazzo slab fronting the façade. The railing continues behind the inverted arches to the main entrance. Similar non-original railings flank the terrazzo entry steps, although the center railing is original.

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<sup>1</sup> New Formalism is an architectural style of the mid-1950s through the 1960s that exhibits many Classical elements including strict symmetrical elevations, Classical columns, and highly stylized entablatures and colonnades. It was primarily used for high-profile cultural, institutional, and civic buildings.

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Building permits confirm that a metal structure with tinted glass was erected in 2005 on the south end of the façade behind the arches to shelter the ATM machines inserted into the ribbed aluminum cladding. At some point the solid double entry doors were replaced with glazed versions and the surrounding glazing was exchanged for tinted glass within non-original metal frames. The Chase Bank corporate logo above the double doors has replaced the original “CV” logo. Building permits related to the 2009 remodel of the bank following its transition from Washington Mutual to Chase Bank do not provide details of the work completed. On the interior, the dramatic curving staircase that once linked the main floor to the mezzanine was removed sometime in the mid-1990s; the city was unable to locate permits documenting this alteration.<sup>2</sup> No other building permits were located by the city.

These alterations do not materially affect the overall integrity of the subject property. The south exterior ramp and various railings, while visible, are modest alterations within the context of the massive building as viewed from the public right-of-way. Similarly, the replacement of the original solid doors with glazed doors, along with the non-original surrounding tinted glass, are not significant modifications that substantially affect integrity of design, materials, or workmanship. A comparison of historic and contemporary photographs reveals that the key architectural elements integral to the design of CVS #2 retain a high level of integrity: the structurally dynamic reinforced concrete building, flat roof, ribbed aluminum cladding with clerestory and floor level windows, inverted concrete support arches, center entrance, raised and cantilevered terrazzo slab with arched supports, terrazzo entry steps, full-width reflecting pool with fountains, and rear multi-story parking structure. The removal of the dramatic interior staircase is indeed dispiriting; however, its loss does not significantly lessen the overall physical integrity of the property.

As relates to other aspects of integrity, CVS #2 retains integrity of location, setting, and, in its continued use as a bank, integrity of feeling and association. As a result, Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2 is able to convey its architectural significance because it exhibits key character defining features associated with the design work of E. Stewart Williams for commercial buildings and educational institutions of the early-1960s. Specifically, it is influenced by form follows function International Style modernism with its flat roof, deep overhangs, steel frame construction, and absence of applied ornamentation. In addition, the building reflects Williams’ invocation of the Classical symmetry of the New Formalism combined with the expressive sculptural qualities available with reinforced concrete.

Of Williams’ achievements with Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2, architectural historian Elizabeth Edwards Harris, PhD, wrote, “Individually, Williams’ banks showed his capacity to adapt to changing business programs and expand on aesthetic trends, while always maintaining his core values and design principles. Even with buildings as utilitarian as banks or offices, Williams sought to ‘uplift the human experience,’ a goal he was able to accomplish because of his long and sustained commitment to community and place.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Photographic access to document the interior was not granted.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Edwards Harris, PhD, “Dignity and Delight: Modern Banks” in *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*, ed. Sidney Williams (Palm Springs: Palm Springs Art Museum, 2014), 109.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1961

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1961

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Williams, E. Stewart

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Coachella Valley Savings #2 is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century commercial architecture as interpreted by E. Stewart Williams. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1961.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2 exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of the International Style that E. Stewart Williams adapted to commercial buildings in the early 1960s. It is similar to his design approach for buildings associated with educational institutions such as the Palm Springs Unified School District Educational Administrative Center<sup>4</sup> also of 1961. These characteristics include form following function, a flat roof, deep overhangs, steel frame construction, and an absence of applied ornamentation. In the case of CVS #2, Williams also melded the expressive sculptural potential of reinforced concrete with the Classical symmetry of the New Formalism in creating a monumental bank building on a prominent corner. The former can be seen in the dramatic inverted arches of the bank’s façade, the latter in the center entrance and symmetrical arrangement of the inverted arches as they rise to columns supporting the flat roof. After the mid-1960s, Williams embraced the possibilities of New Brutalism.

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan Association #2 is significant within the oeuvre of E. Stewart Williams as an example of Williams’ brief foray into designing pure International Style buildings in the early 1960s. The property fits within the historic context presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” CVS #2 is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of E. Stewart Williams. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial buildings associated with master architect E. Stewart Williams, FAIA in the early 1960s.

<sup>4</sup> 333 South Farrell Drive in Palm Springs.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.816114                      Longitude: -116.547273

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property is located at 499 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California between W Baristo Road and W Ramon Road. The property fronts 150 feet of South Palm Canyon Drive. Its legal description is POR LOT 9 BLK 18 MB 009/432 SD MAP OF PA. APN 513-213-005

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Coachella Valley Savings #2.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114  
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039  
e-mail: petermoruzzi@gmail.com  
telephone: (213) 706-0151  
date: February 2016

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Coachella Valley Savings #2  
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs  
County: Riverside  
State: CA  
Photographer: Peter Moruzzi  
Date Photographed: February 2016  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 9 East elevation, camera facing southwest

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- 2 of 9 East elevation, camera facing northwest
- 3 of 9 East elevation, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 9 East elevation, camera facing north
- 5 of 9 Raised plinth above decorative water feature, camera facing south
- 6 of 9 Detail, support posts and beams, east elevation, camera facing northwest
- 7 of 9 South elevation, camera facing northeast
- 8 of 9 Rear, west elevation, parking structure, camera facing southeast
- 9 of 9 North elevation, camera facing south

**Index of Figures; Photos by Julius Shulman, 1963**

- Figure 1 East elevation, looking west
- Figure 2 South and east elevations, looking northwest
- Figure 3 East elevation, looking northwest
- Figure 4 East elevation, looking northwest
- Figure 5 East elevation, looking southwest
- Figure 6 East elevation, looking southwest
- Figure 7 Interior, looking northeast

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

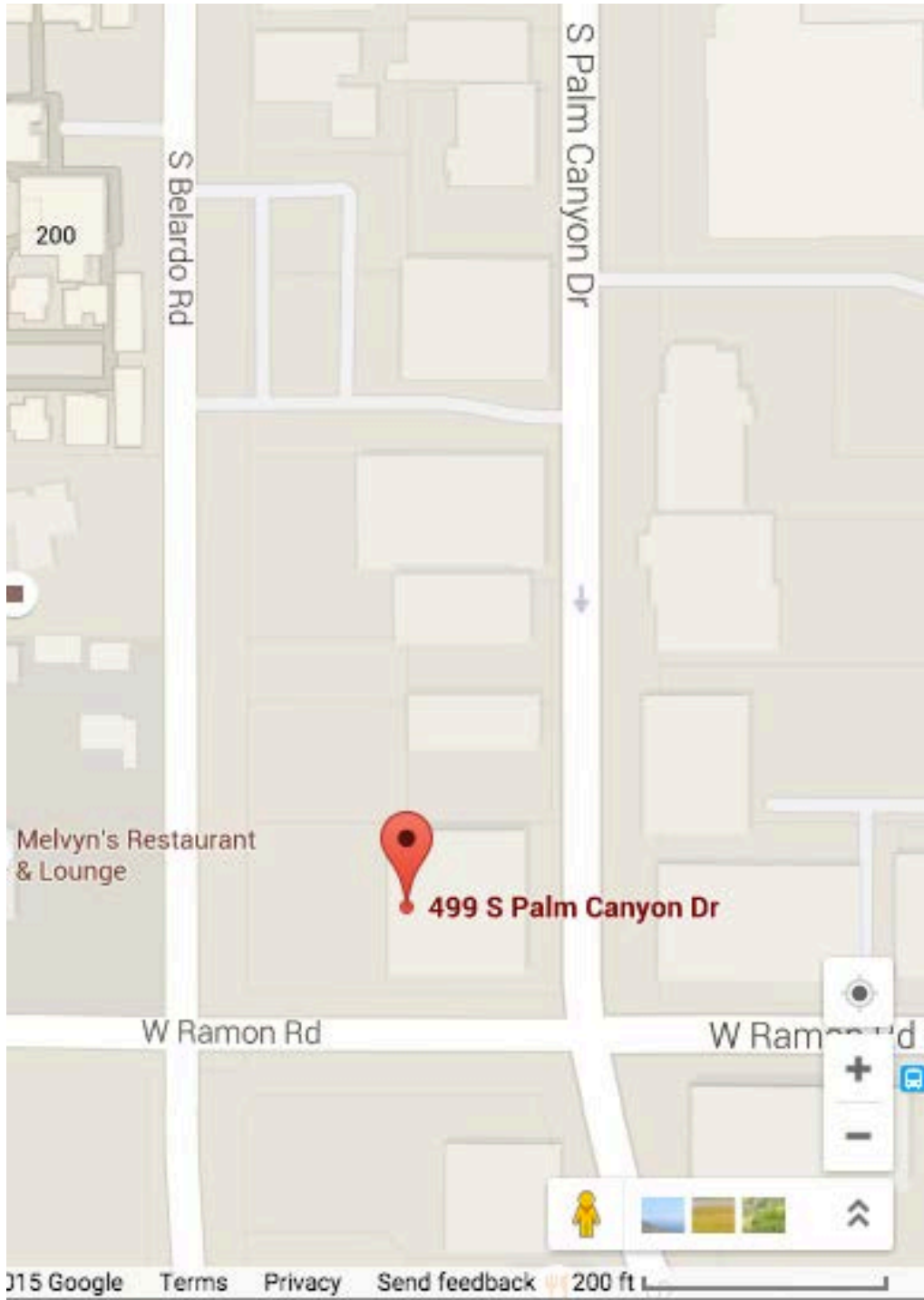
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### Location Map

Latitude: 33.816114

Longitude: -116.547273



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**Sketch Map/Photo Key**



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**Figure 1. East elevation, looking west, 1963**



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**Figure 2. South and east elevations, looking northwest, 1963**



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**Figure 3. East elevation, looking northwest, 1963**



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**Figure 4. East elevation, looking northwest, 1963**



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**Figure 5. North and east elevations, looking southwest, 1963**

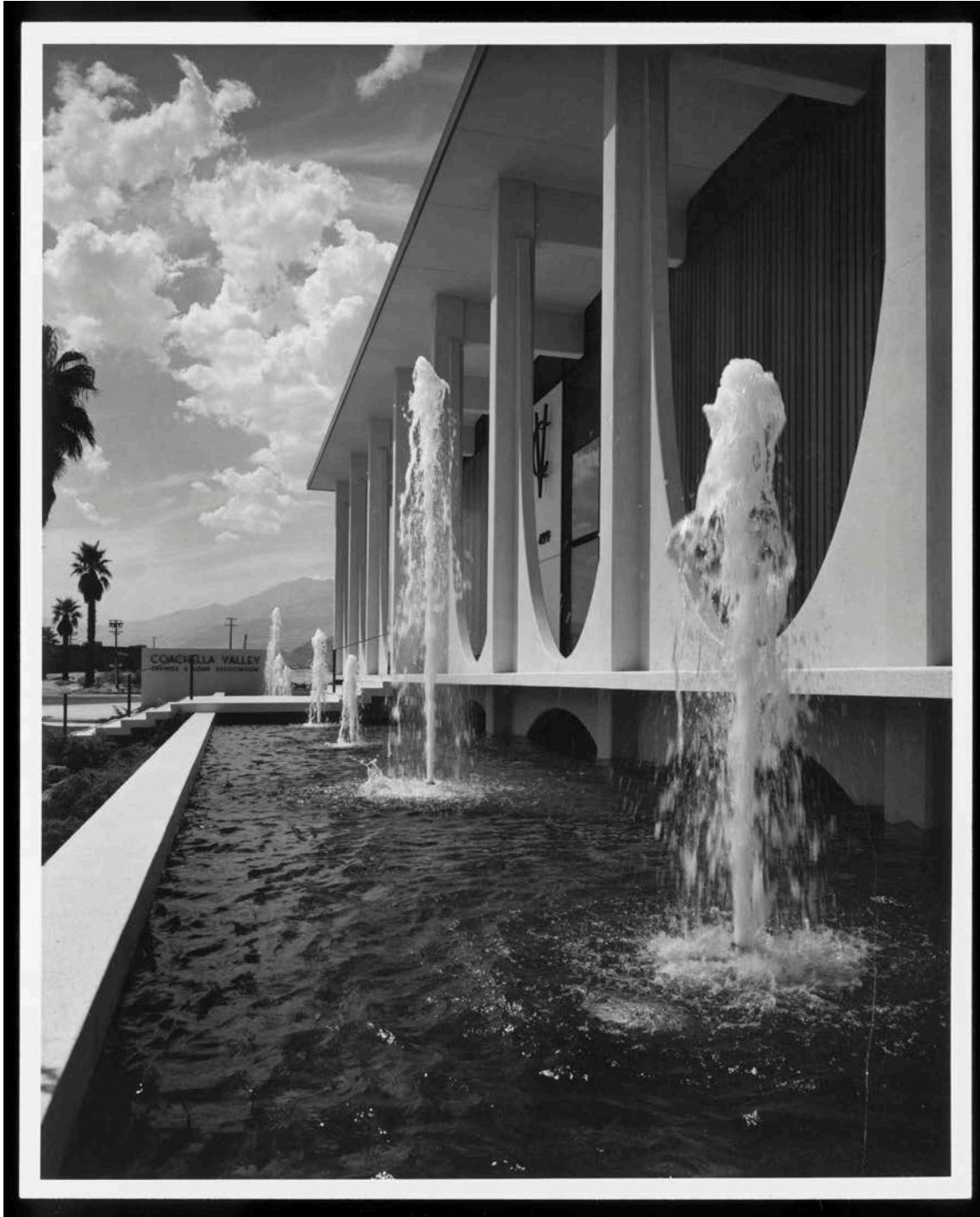


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**Figure 6. East elevation, looking southwest, 1963**



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**Figure 7. Interior, looking northeast, 1963**



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