

Salinas River

41

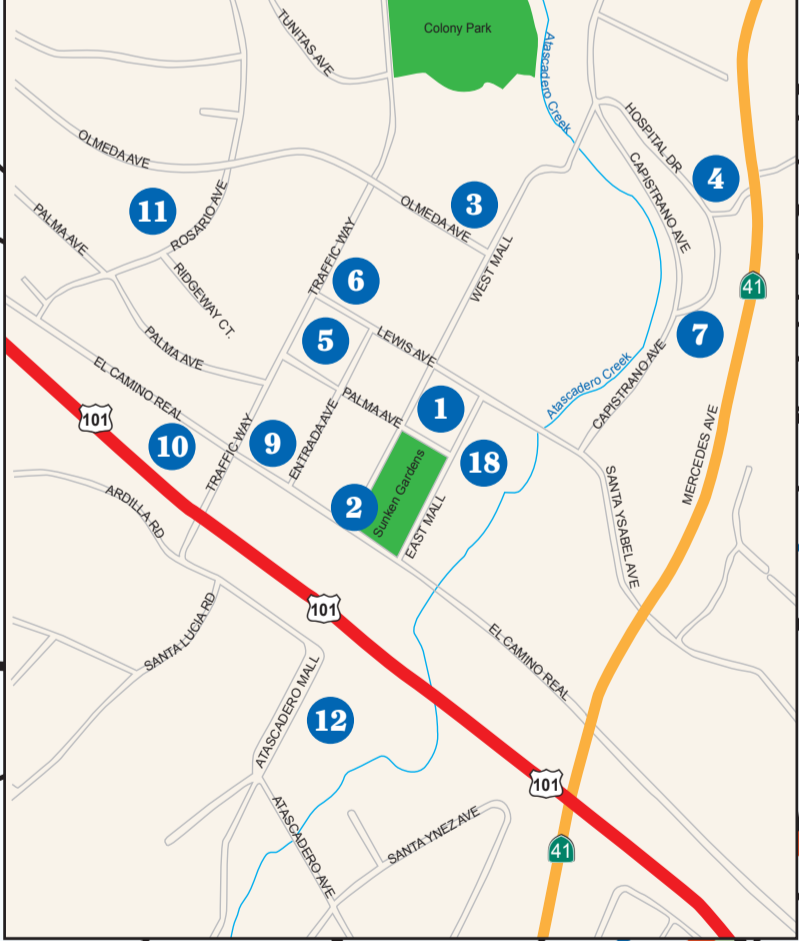
101

Stadium Park

Pine Mtn

Chalk Mtn Golf Course

See Inset



11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 18, 12, 16, 17

City of Atascadero
**GUIDE TO
HISTORICAL SITES**



E. G. Lewis



The Printery



Administration Building

1. City Administration Building

6500 Palma Avenue

The cornerstone for what would become Atascadero's city hall was laid in June 1914, but the four-story structure was not occupied until 1918. The building was designated California Historical Landmark No. 958 in 1984. The building has served as a junior college, a school for at-risk youth, public library, courthouse and more. Seriously damaged by an earthquake in 2003, the building was completely restored in 2013. Tours are available of the interior. Today, the building serves as the seat of Atascadero's municipal services and meeting place for city council and planning commission. The building was designed by Bliss and Faville of San Francisco.

2. Sunken Gardens and Statue

On El Camino Real between West and East Mall

The grounds in front of City Hall, flanked by East and West Mall and El Camino Real, was created in the very earliest development as the city's first public park. Founder E.G. Lewis took the "Sunken Gardens" concept from the World's Fair which was held in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904. The 24,000-pound statue known as "The Wrestling Bacchantes" was created from a single piece of Carrara marble. It was submitted to the St. Louis Exposition by the Italian government. Following the world fair, Lewis purchased the art piece for his new Colony here in Atascadero.

3. Atascadero Printery

Corner of Olmeda Avenue and West Mall

The first of the Lewis "civic center" buildings to be completed was The Printery. The building was pressed into service in 1916 printing the Atascadero News. Also printed here was the "Illustrated Review," newspaper/magazine long on pictures and short on text. The Printery was home to the largest rotogravure presses west of the Mississippi River, and the first such press on the west coast. The building has served as the Masonic Temple, junior college classrooms and home to the sheriff's North County command. The building is now owned by a non-profit corporation that is working to restore the structure for public uses, including a performing arts center and museum.

4. William H. Lewis Memorial Hospital

5575 Hospital Drive, off Capistrano

Atascadero's founder believed his Colony residents would need their own hospital. So in 1921 this facility was completed and named for Lewis' father, William H. Lewis. The hospital was "...built for the people and not for profit" according to an advertising brochure about the new community. The hospital featured most services including X-ray, maternity and operating rooms. The hospital contained 30 beds and was used up until 1978 when a large regional hospital replaced it. If you remove the square box added onto the front, the building would look very much like it did when it was opened. The building is currently owned by San Luis Obispo County, which provides health clinic services.

5. Atascadero's first Fire Station

[5815 Traffic Way](#)

Atascadero's brick firehouse on Traffic Way was built in 1926 and used until the early 1960s when a new station was built eastward just up the street (at Lewis Avenue). Before the station was built, the engines were housed in warehouses in the industrial complex of buildings on Traffic Way. Now in private ownership, the brick structure looks pretty much like the original building except for the missing doors. The building was upgraded to meet seismic requirements following the San Simeon Earthquake in 2003.

6. Atascadero Inn/Mercantile Building

[5700 block of Traffic Way tucked in behind fire station No. 1](#)

Here you will encounter the steps, fountain and retaining wall, which is all that remains of "The Mercantile" a large two-story retail store that included a hotel on the second floor. It was Atascadero's single shopping center with all services from barbershop to soda fountain inside. In 1926 the building was turned into the Atascadero Inn, a prestigious stop for motorists traversing the state highway only a block away (El Camino Real). The 42,000 square foot building was destroyed by a major fire in 1934.

7. Stadium Park

[Entrance on Capistrano Avenue at Hospital Drive](#)

Stadium Park, located below Pine Mountain, is a natural bowl with excellent acoustics, which served as Atascadero's first public meeting place. About 1,200 feet from the City Hall, the Stadium was the very center of this young community. Founder E.G. Lewis' "Tent City" was very near the Stadium, providing a gathering place for those living in the tents. Theatrical pageants, picnics, dances, weddings and more were conducted here. This is also the birthplace of the Federated Church in 1915.

8. Atascadero Cemetery

[Entrance onto Cemetery Road off Highway 41](#)

The Colony's original cemetery was in a small canyon on the backside of Pine Mountain, overlooking the Salinas River. Southern Pacific Railroad had put its tracks at the very base of the cemetery property in 1886. Burials were done in the small canyon between 1917 & 1920 and then the cemetery grounds were expanded to the site you see today. Situated on a "shelf" of Pine Mountain, the cemetery grounds provide a spectacular view of the land to the east of this utopian community. Atascadero's founder and his wife, E.G. and Mabel G. Lewis, are buried here. Upon turning onto Cemetery Drive follow the main road and bear right and stop next to the first grave markers. The Lewises are buried across the street from the "Y" Section marker.

9. Hotel Annex/Carlton Hotel

Corner of El Camino Real and Traffic Way

The original Carlton Hotel was built in 1929 and commensurate with its opening, three nation-wide retailers were part of the original building – J.C. Penney, Safeway and Sprouse-Reitz. The two-story brick structure was first known as “The Annex,” referring to being connected to the larger Atascadero Inn two blocks east on Traffic Way. Originally built to serve as headquarters to a redevelopment agency (ADS). Originally begun as a two story, a third floor was added which included a 52-room hotel. The rooftop sign went up in 1932. The two outside walls from the original building were incorporated into today’s Carlton Hotel.

10. Original Downtown

5000 block of El Camino Real

Many of the buildings in the original business block are still standing and many in daily use. These buildings (all on El Camino Real) were constructed in the 1920s and '30s and look very much like they did upon opening day. Driving north, starting at 5940 is the very first business building that was constructed by J.A. Hier-Johnson in 1923. It was designed by Colony architect John Roth. Next door at 5900 is the original post office. It was constructed in 1924 and built by Hier-Johnson. In 1925 the two story Atascadero Market building was built at 5850. Traveling further north you find the Keetch Building at 5760. It was constructed in 1929. Then at 5680 is the large automotive garage that housed two businesses at the same address – Winters and Ward. Across the street from the Hier-Johnson building is the Bakery Building at 5915. At the time these buildings were erected El Camino Real was then U.S. 101 or the “State Highway.”

11. Atascadero’s “Nob Hill”

Begin at Rosario Avenue and El Camino Real

A two-block stretch of Rosario Avenue ending at Fresno Avenue, contains several 1920s-era homes that were considered the young Colony’s “Nob Hill.” These homes were built by officers of the Colony Holding Corporation, an engineer, a physician, an accountant and others. Today these homes are undergoing restoration by their owners and/or being meticulously cared for as you can plainly see: 5825 Ridgeway Ct. (1916), owned by R.P. O’Connor; 5800 Rosario (1916) built by Kase sisters; 5763 Rosario, (1916) built by E. C. Sears; 5735 Rosario (1917), built by Dr. J.B. Banker; 5705 Rosario (1918) home of Bill & Carolyn Peck; 5680 Rosario (1916), built by Colony architect John J. Roth; 5672 Rosario (1921), built by Clara Remington, sister to Mable G. Lewis.

12. Community Building/Federated Church/ABC Church

Next to U.S. 101 and Atascadero Mall

Atascadero's first "community center" was also home to the Federated Church of Atascadero. The building was used for church services on Sunday and for public events during the week. Founder E.G. Lewis is convinced more than 20 denominations of worshipers that if they met as one group, he would provide them with a meeting place. The congregation was formed in 1915 in Stadium Park. The new two-story building was completed in 1921. The building had meeting rooms, a library, gymnasium and a swimming pool. The original building, currently a part of ABC Church, looks very much today as it did when it was opened.

13. Doll and Toy Factory

4900 block of Traffic Way

This building was home to two Atascadero toy companies. The first in 1919 was a doll company founded by Terrence Edward Dooley. The company's most famous output was the "Dunk Me Doll" and the "Twistums," a variety of animals with moveable and poseable limbs. By the 1930s the company came under the ownership of Dr. H.T. Chinn, a retired dentist. His product – "Scary Ann" – was one of the most popular toys in the United States in the '30s and '40s according to some doll and toy experts. This is the same building you see today, which has been converted into apartments

14. Estrada Adobe and Adobe Springs

3000 block of Traffic Way – this one has a marker

This site dates to the California Mission period. The Rancho Atascadero land grant was the most southern boundary of Mission San Miguel. Built by Tulare Indians in the early 1800's, the adobe has served as a stage stop, storehouse, home for railroad workers and finally the residence of Pedro Estrada, who was granted the Mexican Land Grant by the Governor in 1860. Estrada eventually sold the ranch to James Harrison Henry who in turn sold it to E.G. Lewis in 1913. Across the street is the Adobe Springs. This natural spring (hidden from view by the extensive foliage) has been flowing non-stop for more than 200 years.

15. J.H. Henry Ranch House

2930 Ramona Road

The Henry ranch house is the oldest structure in Atascadero. The little two-story house was used by Mr. Henry until he built a larger home for his daughter on a downtown site. That home became known as "Headquarters House" where E.G. and Mabel Lewis lived. It stood about where Vons Market is now. Lewis used the Henry house and grounds as one of several work camps spread throughout the ranch as he developed his planned community.

16. Atascadero Lake and Charles Paddock Zoo

Take Morro Road and follow the signs

Atascadero Lake was here before the community that was built around it. The U.S. Army enhanced the early lake site. It is located on the flatlands that lead to the Santa Lucia Mountains. Lewis improved the lake and it became a jewel for his young community. A bandstand was built next to the lake by 1915. In the 1960s Park Ranger (SLO County) Chuck Paddock began to collect animals, which he housed in abandoned kennels that were near the lake park. From his very first “critter,” an opossum named Cosmo, the zoo has grown into what you see today. The zoo that bears his name is a nationally accredited facility.

17. Arcade Building/Eaglet

8400 block of El Camino Real

This was the “center” of the community of Eaglet which bumped right up to the southern portion of Atascadero. I.L. Mitchel was the developer of Eaglet, which was comprised of ranchland originally owned by Baron Von Schroder, owner of the famous Eagle Ranch. Mitchell and Atascadero founder E.G. Lewis were bitter rivals. The arched building was the focal point of Eaglet, in addition to a lumber yard and open range. Eventually lots were created behind the building. The Eaglet land was purchased by the Atascadero Development Syndicate in 1928, completing Atascadero as we know it today.

18. Historical Society Colony House Museum

Next to City Hall's parking lot and the creek

This modest little Colony-era (1915 to 1924) residence was built in 1919 by L.H Thornburg. The home was also the family home to Earl Henderson. The structure originally stood about a block away on El Camino Real, where Mechanics Bank is currently located. It was moved to this location in 1965. This house is presently headquarters for Atascadero Historical Society. Inside you will discover artifacts from the city's history, publications on the local history and thousands of photos from Atascadero's early days.