

“William Clark House” Rehabilitation

The William Clark house is a classic example of late transitional and American-Victorian architecture due to its pyramidal hipped roof, Sonoran adobe walls and highly decorated timber entrance. The home also showcases a sophisticated level of cultural fusion in architecture with its



louvered bay window and “four square” floor plan. This house was built in 1883 for William Clark, a prominent figure in Florence who was a mining engineer for the Silver King Mining Companyⁱ. Mr. Clark started building this house for his bride-to-be, Ella, and completed it shortly after their wedding. The second floor was used as an office with access by the exterior timber stair. Mr. Clark was later responsible for a detailed official study of the mineral potential of Pinal County’s various mining districts developing east of Florence. Many recall that the Clark House was a focal point in Florence during its time because of being a social and musical hub, with recitals, a literary society and hosting opera singers. The olive trees currently standing in front of the Clark House are said to be 100 years old and originally planted as seeds from California. Later, the Clark House was inhabited by Richard E. Sloan, a judge and Arizona’s last Territorial Governor. The Clark House was last inhabited by Ella Clark’s nephew, Knott Guild, who died in the house in 1956. The house was left vacant and deteriorated until the 1980s.



After the building was vacant for many years and suffered mass deterioration with two of the walls almost entirely

collapsing, in 1994 the Town of Florence received a \$105,000 grant to stabilize the building from the Arizona Heritage Fund Historic Preservation program. The Florence Preservation Foundation took part in saving this building, documenting its original fabric, in conjunction with a registered architect, and allowing for accurate reconstruction of the dilapidated building. The State Historic Preservation Office, through the Heritage Fund, obtained the grant to help document the existing structure before it was lost through any rehabilitation/reconstruction effortsⁱⁱ. The

town obtained a clear title to the house the following year and sought a buyer who could pay a \$45,000 match to receive the grant.

Donovan Kramer, Sr., president of Casa Grande Valley Newspaper, Inc. eventually agreed to complete the restoration and use the building to house his Florence newspaper, the Florence Reminder & Blade-Tribune.

After the old structure was thoroughly documented, and restoration efforts were coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office, design reviews were then coordinated and approved by the Historic District Advisory Commission in Florence. The William Clark House serves as one of many models of how different parties can come together with the Historic District Advisory Commission to restore one of Florence's many historic properties.



ⁱ Staff Report. "Clarke House restored, appears on home tour." *The Eloy Enterprise*. Thursday, February 6, 2003.

ⁱⁱ Don W. Ryden, AIA Architects, Inc. *Documentation of the Historic Clark House*. Phoenix, AZ.