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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement January 30, 2015

**HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP**

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Citywide Historic Context Statement

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	4
Purpose	5
Methodology	6
Guidelines for Evaluation	10
Historic Context: Overview	19
Context: Native American & Early Settlement (Pre-1884-1918)	25
Theme: Native American Settlement (Pre-1884)	26
Theme: Early Settlement (1884-1918)	29
<i>Eligibility</i>	37
Context: Palm Springs between the Wars	40
Overview	41
Theme: Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)	42
Introduction	43
Sub-theme: Single-family Residential Development (1919-1929)	48
Sub-theme: Depression-era Single-family Residential Development (1930-1941)	67
<i>Eligibility</i>	83
Theme: Multi-family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941)	88
<i>Eligibility</i>	92
Theme: Trailer Park/Mobile Home Community Development (1939-1979)	96
<i>Eligibility</i>	108
Theme: Commercial Development between the Wars (1919-1941)	110
<i>Eligibility</i>	115
Theme: Civic & Institutional Development between the Wars (1919-1941)	119
<i>Eligibility</i>	121
Context: Palm Springs During World War II (1939-1945)	124
Theme: The War Effort in Palm Springs (1939-1945)	125
<i>Eligibility</i>	126

50% DRAFT – WORKING DRAFT FOR REVIEW & COMMENT

# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Context: Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1979)	129
Overview	130
Theme: Post-World War II Single-family Residential Development (1945-1979)	132
Sub-theme: Single-family Residential Development (1945-1969)	140
Sub-theme: Golf Course Single-family Residential Development (1960-1979)	193
Sub-theme: 1970s Single-family Residential Development (1970-1979)	206
<i>Eligibility</i>	209
Theme: Post-World War II Multi-family Residential Development (1945-1979)	214
<i>Eligibility</i>	240
Theme: Post-World War II Commercial Development (1945-1979)	244
<i>Eligibility</i>	252
Theme: Post-World War II Civic & Institutional Development (1945-1979)	256
<i>Eligibility</i>	260
Context: Entertainment Industry (1915-1979)	263
Theme: Entertainment Industry Commercial Development	266
Theme: Entertainment Industry Residential Development	271
<i>Eligibility</i>	286
Architectural Styles	288
Bibliography	314

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## Introduction



Aerial photograph of downtown Palm Springs, c. 1950. Source: Eric G. Meeks.



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the ongoing efforts to identify and evaluate the City's historic resources, in 2014 the City of Palm Springs embarked on a citywide historic resources survey and development of a comprehensive historic context statement. This outline will form the basis of the historic context statement, which will continue to be developed as the project progresses. It was developed by Historic Resources Group, including Christine Lazzaretto, Principal; John LoCascio, Senior Architect; and sub-consultants Sian Winship, Architectural Historian; and Alan Hess, Architect and Architectural Historian. All staff meet the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications in historic preservation.<sup>1</sup> The City Planning Department is responsible for management coordination of the project with input and periodic review provided by the City's Historic Site Preservation Board.

### Purpose

In order to understand the significance of the historic and architectural resources in the City of Palm Springs, it is necessary to examine those resources within a series of contexts. The purpose of a historic context statement is to place built resources in the appropriate historic, social, and architectural context so that the relationship between an area's physical environment and its broader history can be established.

A historic context statement analyzes the historical development of a community according to guidelines written by the California Office of Historic Preservation and the National Park Service, as specified in *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* and *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys*. Bulletin 16A describes a historic context as follows:

Historic context is information about historic trends and properties grouped by an important theme in pre-history or history of a community, state, or the nation during a particular period of time. Because historic contexts are organized by theme, place, and time, they link historic properties to important historic trends. In this way, they provide a framework for determining the significance of a property.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal Register, Vol. 48, No. 190, p. 44738-44739, September 29, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

A historic context statement is linked with tangible built resources through the concept of “property type,” which is a grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics.<sup>3</sup> It should identify the various historical factors that shaped the development of the area, including:

- Historical activities or events
- Historic personages
- Building types, architectural styles, and materials
- Patterns of physical development

This historic context is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the City of Palm Springs. Rather, its purpose is to highlight trends and patterns critical to the understanding of the built environment. It identifies the various historical factors that shaped the development of the area, including historic activities or events, important people, building types, architectural styles, and patterns of physical development. The historic context provides a framework for the continuing process of identifying historic, architectural, and cultural resources in the city. It is meant to serve as a guide to enable citizens, planners, and decision-makers to evaluate the relative significance and integrity of individual properties and neighborhoods. Specific examples referred to in this context statement are included to illustrate physical and associative characteristics of each resource type; the final survey findings will indicate which properties appear eligible for designation under each context and theme.

### **Methodology**

The Palm Springs historic context will use the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property (MPS) approach, and will cover all phases of the area’s built environment, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the recent past. Existing studies, contexts, and survey evaluations were used in the development of this document. These were supplemented by additional research using both primary and secondary sources to further develop the overall history of Palm Springs, along with significant individual properties, tract developments, and neighborhoods.

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys,” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1977; revised 1985.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Following an initial research period to review existing documentation about historic resources in the city, including the City Historical Resource Database, the project team conducted a citywide, street-by-street reconnaissance survey. The reconnaissance survey helped to inform the development of the context statement and was used to identify specific local conditions, the number and type of extant resources in the area, and the overall character of the commercial and residential neighborhoods within the city. The development of evaluation criteria, integrity thresholds, and registration requirements for evaluating historic resources in Palm Springs for eligibility at the federal, state, and local levels was also informed by information gathered during the reconnaissance study. The registration requirements will be further refined as additional fieldwork and documentation are undertaken during the next phase of the project.

The City initially requested the study of potential historic resources constructed prior to 1969. The project team has expanded the study to include resources constructed in the 1970s. During the reconnaissance survey for this project, noteworthy examples of 1970s architecture (some by significant architects) were identified that are potential historic resources. These resources are approaching the 50-year threshold and many have not been previously documented.

Research efforts to date include:

- Literature review of published and online sources for property-specific information about potentially architecturally or culturally significant properties in Palm Springs. Review includes books on Palm Springs architecture, history, and celebrities.
- Review of 2004 Survey and other studies of potential historic resources in Palm Springs.
- Review of relevant building permits, tax assessor data, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and aerial photographs.
- Development of study maps illustrating the growth of Palm Springs by decade in order to review development and settlement patterns, and identifying those properties identified during previous surveys, the city, or the reconnaissance survey that have potential historic significance.
- Mapping exercise for all tracts in Palm Springs subdivided prior to 1980 using the Riverside County Land Information system, tract maps, and survey records.
- Research on ownership of all tracts individual, developer or investor consortia.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



- Search of the *Palm Springs Villager* for key developments, owners, architects, and other historic personages.
- Search of the clippings files at the Palm Springs Historical Society.
- Search of the clippings files at the Palm Springs Library.
- Search of Palm Springs Historical Society Photo Collection.
- Online and manual searched of Palm Springs City Directories up to 1970 as available online and in book form at the Palm Springs Library.
- Selected reading and research of the *Desert Sun* on microfilm.
- Review of *Palm Springs Life*; selected years 1950-1979.
- Online searches of the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals and review of articles generated.
- ProQuest searches of the *Los Angeles Times* and other periodicals, including period trade publications.
- Searches of the *Desert Sentinel*, *San Bernardino County Sun*, and other Inland Empire newspapers available online.
- Review of American Institute of Architects (AIA) Membership Files.
- Review of all HOA websites and outreach to selected HOAs for historical information.
- Review of selected neighborhoods in U.S. Census.
- Field trips to relevant architectural archives including the Getty, University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), Cal Poly Pomona, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), University of Southern California (USC), and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.
- Review of photo databases including Calisphere, Los Angeles Public Library, the Mott Collection, USC Digital Archive, UCLA Digital Archive, and Getty Images.
- Email outreach to architects William Krisel, Paul Thoryk, Roger Bray, Peter Munselle, and B3 Architecture Studio.
- Outreach (email/in person) for the residential development sections includes: Peter Moruzzi, Chris Menrad, Nicole Wenzell, and Renee Bron. Outreach/consultation for the architectural history sections includes: Palm Springs Modernism Committee (Chris Menrad, Peter Moruzzi, Gary Johns, Barbara and Bernie Cain, Robert Imber); Palm Springs Art Museum/Architecture + Design Center (Sidney Williams, JR Roberts, Beth Edwards Harris); Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (Ron Marshall, Barbara Marshall, Tracy Conrad); Palm Springs historians, preservationists, architects: Jim West; William Kopelk; Michael Stern; Brad Dunning; Volker Welter; Eric Williams; William

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Krisel, architect; Hugh Kaptur, architect; Donald Wexler, architect; Cal Poly Pomona (Lauren Bricker, archivist); and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (Jessica Holada, archivist).

The historic context statement provides a narrative historical overview of the overarching forces that shaped land use patterns and development of the built environment of the City of Palm Springs, and provides a framework for the identification and evaluation of historic resources in the city. Within each context is an identification of the relevant themes associated with that context. The themes outline the historical development patterns, significant events or activities, and significant individuals and groups in Palm Springs' history in order to establish the potential historical significance of properties associated with each context and theme. The context is organized chronologically; the relevant themes organized by type of development (single- and multi-family residential, commercial, and civic/institutional); each context also includes a discussion of the important architects and architectural trends that were influential during that period. Palm Springs has a remarkable collection of architecturally significant properties, so this is an important component of the historic context statement. Separate contexts are included to evaluate properties that are potentially significant for an association with the entertainment industry or with the LGBT community in Palm Springs.

Each context and theme also includes a discussion of the relevant criteria and integrity considerations, and registration requirements for determining whether a property may be eligible for designation at the federal, state, and local levels. Note that the development of the registration requirements is ongoing; it is expected that they will be revised and refined pending additional fieldwork.

Note that this document constitutes a 50% draft of the context statement; research and fieldwork is ongoing and additional information obtained as a result of those efforts will be reflected in subsequent drafts. Due to the large number of single-family residences and residential neighborhoods in Palm Springs, the team focused primarily on the residential development of Palm Springs for this draft; other contexts, themes, and property types (particularly in the commercial and institutional development sections) will be further developed in subsequent drafts. Fact checking is also ongoing, in particular in relation to construction dates, architects, and confirming residences associated with people in the motion picture industry. Additional maps, photographs, and other graphics will be included in future drafts of this document. When the documentation phase of the field survey is complete, the context statement will be supplemented with specific survey results, highlighting eligible properties identified within each context and theme.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

A property may be designated as historic by National, State, and local authorities. In order for a building to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register, or as a local Class 1 structure, it must meet one or more identified criteria of significance. The property must also retain sufficient architectural integrity to continue to evoke the sense of place and time with which it is historically associated. This historic context statement will provide guidance for listing at the federal, state, and local levels, according to the established criteria and integrity thresholds.

### **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is an authoritative guide to be used by Federal, State, and local governments, private groups, and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment.<sup>4</sup> The National Park Service administers the National Register program. Listing in the National Register assists in preservation of historic properties in several ways, including: recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state, or the community; consideration in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects; eligibility for federal tax benefits; and qualification for Federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

To be eligible for listing and/or listed in the National Register, a resource must possess significance in American history and culture, architecture, or archaeology. Listing in the National Register is primarily honorary and does not in and of itself provide protection of a historic resource. The primary effect of listing in the National Register on private owners of historic buildings is the availability of financial and tax incentives. In addition, for projects that receive Federal funding, a clearance process must be completed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. State and local regulations may also apply to properties listed in the National Register.

The criteria for listing in the National Register follow established guidelines for determining the significance of properties. The quality of significance in American history, architecture,

<sup>4</sup> 36CFR60, Section 60.2.

archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.<sup>5</sup>

Standard preservation practice evaluates collections of buildings from similar time periods and historic contexts as historic *districts*. The National Park Service defines a historic district as “a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.”<sup>6</sup>

#### Integrity

In addition to meeting any or all of the designation criteria listed above, the National Park Service requires properties to possess historic integrity. Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period.”<sup>7</sup>

The National Register recognizes seven aspects or qualities that comprise integrity, which are also referenced in the City’s local ordinance: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These qualities are defined as follows:

<sup>5</sup> 36CFR60, Section 60.3.

<sup>6</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15*. (5)

<sup>7</sup> *National Register Bulletin 16A*.

*Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event took place.

*Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

*Setting* is the physical environment of a historic property.

*Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

*Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

*Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

*Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.<sup>8</sup>

In assessing a property's integrity, the National Park Service recognizes that properties change over time. *National Register Bulletin 15* provides:

To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. It is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features or characteristics. The property must retain, however, the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity.

A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15*.

A property that has sufficient integrity for listing at the national, state, or local level will typically retain a majority of the identified character-defining features, and will retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The required aspects of integrity are dependent on the reason for a property's significance. Increased age and rarity of the property type are also considerations when assessing integrity thresholds. For properties that are significant for their architectural merit (Criterion C), a higher priority is placed on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. For properties that are significant for their association with important events or people, integrity of feeling and/or association may be more important.

For properties which are considered significant under National Register Criteria A and B, *National Register Bulletin 15* states:

A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s).

A property important for illustrating a particular architectural style or construction technique must retain most of the physical features that constitute that style or technique.<sup>10</sup>

#### **California Register of Historical Resources**

The California Register is an authoritative guide in California used by State and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the State's historical resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change.<sup>11</sup>

The criteria for eligibility for listing in the California Register are based upon National Register criteria. These criteria are:

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history.

<sup>10</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15*.

<sup>11</sup> California PRC, Section 5023.1(a).

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.
4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

The California Register consists of resources that are listed automatically and those that must be nominated through an application and public hearing process. The California Register includes the following:

- California properties formally determined eligible for (Category 2 in the State Inventory of Historical Resources), or listed in (Category 1 in the State Inventory), the National Register of Historic Places.
- State Historical Landmarks No. 770 and all consecutively numbered state historical landmarks following No. 770. For state historical landmarks preceding No. 770, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) shall review their eligibility for the California Register in accordance with procedures to be adopted by the State Historical Resources Commission (commission).
- Points of historical interest which have been reviewed by the OHP and recommended for listing by the commission for inclusion in the California Register in accordance with criteria adopted by the commission.<sup>12</sup>

Other resources which may be nominated for listing in the California Register include:

- Individual historical resources.
- Historical resources contributing to the significance of an historic district.
- Historical resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys, if the survey meets the criteria listed in subdivision (g) of Section 5023.1" of the Public Resources Code.
- Historical resources and historic districts designated or listed as city or county landmarks or historic properties or districts pursuant to any city or county ordinance, if the criteria

<sup>12</sup> California PRC, Section 5023.1(d).

for designation or listing under the ordinance have been determined by the office to be consistent with California Register criteria.

- Local landmarks or historic properties designated under any municipal or county ordinance.<sup>13</sup>

### **Local Designation**

The seven-member Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB), established by the Palm Springs City Council in May 1981, identifies, nominates, and recommends potential historic sites and districts to the City Council while fostering public awareness and appreciation of the City's rich cultural and architectural heritage. The purpose and authority of the HSPB as outlined in section 8.05.010 of the Municipal Code is to stabilize and improve buildings, structures or areas which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological or ecological value, to foster civic beauty, to strengthen the local economy and to promote the use of specific buildings for the education and welfare of the citizens of Palm Springs.<sup>14</sup>

In 2014, the City of Palm Springs became a Certified Local Government (CLG). The CLG program is a preservation partnership between local, state, and national governments focused on promoting historic preservation at the grass roots level. The program is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) in each state, with each local community working through a certification process to become recognized as a CLG. CLGs then become active partners in the Federal Historic Preservation Program and the opportunities it provides.

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance is codified in section 8.05.010 of the Municipal Code. The Historic Preservation Ordinance defines the criteria for designating historic resources in the City:

(a) Historic Site. An historic site is any real property such as: a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar architectural elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect and:

<sup>13</sup> California PRC, Section 5023.1(e).

<sup>14</sup> City of Palm Springs, "Historic Resources," <http://www.ci.palm-springs.ca.us/index.aspx?page=495> (accessed January 2015).



- (1) That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or
- (2) That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or
- (3) That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or
- (4) That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or
- (5) That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value; or
- (6) That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (7) That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

(b) Historic District. Any area of the city of Palm Springs containing a number of structures, natural features or sites having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic significance and designated as an historic district under the provisions of this chapter. (Ord. 1320 § I, 1988; Ord. 1140 §I (part), 1981).

Designations are made by the City Council by categorizing nominated sites and districts into one of the following classifications and such other categories as may be designated by resolution:

Class I. Structure/site qualified for city designation; may be qualified at the federal, state and/or county level. Archival file will be maintained. Structure/site may not be modified nor objects removed without the approval of the city council; usage may be limited by the city council to the extent that it may impair the integrity of the site. Site will be plaqued. (Intended for use when the structure or site still exists as it did during the historical period or is restorable).

Class 2. Site qualified for city designation; may be qualified at the federal, state and/or county level. Archival file will be maintained. Site is eligible for plaquing. (Intended for 348 use when

the site is not occupied by a modern structure or use which is different than that of the historical period or if structure is unusable, nonconforming, unrestorable or the like).

Class 3. Structure/site was constructed before 1969, or a year to be determined by the city council, or construction date cannot be confirmed. Eligible for a six-month stay of demolition. Action of the HSPB may include recommendation to reclassify. All structures built prior to the subject date would be automatically so classified.

Historic District. Qualified for city designation; may be qualified at the federal, state and/or county level. Archival file will be maintained and shall contain a map delineating contributing and noncontributing structures or sites. Contributing structures/sites shall be subject to Class I regulations until such time that they may be reclassified. Noncontributing structures/sites shall be subject to review by the HSPB before demolition or construction. A specific plan, containing special regulations pertaining to the subject area, may be adopted for each district. (Ord. 1320 §5, 1988; Ord. 1140 § I (part), 1981).

In order to complete the designation process, the City Council must make a finding according to 8.05.160 of the Municipal Code:

If the city council shall find that the purposes of this chapter are furthered by designation of property as an historic site or district, such findings shall be stated in a resolution designating such property within such historic site or district. From and after the adoption of such resolution, all property within such historic site or district shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the demolition, preservation, rehabilitation or alteration of historic sites. (Ord 1140 § 1, 1981).

As of August 2014, Palm Springs had approximately ninety designated or pending Class 1 and Class 2 structures, and three historic districts.<sup>15</sup> A list of designated resources within the City is attached in Appendix A.<sup>16</sup> There are five properties in Palm Springs listed in the National Register of Historic Places; these include buildings, natural sites, and archaeological sites. The list of properties listed in the National Register is included in Appendix B.

<sup>15</sup> This is based on the last version of the list provided by the City; this information will be updated as more properties are designated during the course of this project.

<sup>16</sup> Appendices will be included in the next draft.

### **Palm Springs Historic Resources Surveys**

The City initiated its first comprehensive historic resources survey in 1976 as a result of the community's desire to identify and document its rich architectural heritage. During that effort, primarily Native American sites were identified. Citywide surveys undertaken in 1983 and 1987 resulted in the creation of a base list of potential architectural and historical resources throughout the city. These surveys were updated in 2001 and 2004. As a result of these previous surveys and a variety of other efforts, the City has a list of approximately 700 properties included in the "City Historic Resources Database." This survey project will review all properties on the City's list for potential significance, as well as identify additional properties and neighborhoods that may be eligible as historic resources to create an updated inventory of properties with potential historic significance.

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## **City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement**

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## Historic Context: Overview



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

#### HISTORIC CONTEXT: OVERVIEW

Palm Springs is located in Riverside County, California. It is approximately 60 miles east of the City of Riverside, and 100 miles east of Los Angeles. It is located in the Coachella Valley, with the Mojave Desert to the north. Access to Palm Springs from the west is via the I-10 Freeway which passes through the San Geronio Pass. Palm Springs is one of nine adjacent cities that make up the Coachella Valley, and is sheltered by the San Bernardino Mountains to the north, Santa Rosa Mountains to the south, San Jacinto Mountains to the west, and Little San Bernardino Mountains to the east. The earliest inhabitants of the Coachella Valley were the Cahuilla Indians, who established summer settlements in the palm-lined mountain canyons around the valley, moving each winter to thatched shelters clustered around the mineral hot springs on the valley floor.

In the early 1860s, the Bradshaw stagecoach line began to cross the desert from Banning en route to the Arizona territories, bringing visitors to the oasis of palm trees and hot springs that the line's operators called *Agua Caliente* ("Hot Water"). By the mid-1860s the name "Palm Springs" came into common usage when the land was first surveyed by U.S. Government surveyors who noted that a local mineral spring was located at the base of "two bunches of palms."<sup>17</sup> John McCallum was the Valley's first permanent Anglo settler. His efforts ultimately led to the area's transformation into a health resort based on the "dry healing climate." A health spa/hotel was constructed and called the Palm Springs Hotel. Some visitors decided to settle in the area permanently, and soon the small town of Palm Springs began to develop around the hotel and the McCallum ranch.

During World War I, wealthy Eastern families, unable for the duration of the conflict to take their customary travels in Europe, searched for a new destination and discovered the exotic spa town set amidst the beauty and solitude of the surrounding desert. Another wave of well-heeled visitors came during the lethal post-war influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, fleeing the contagion of the big cities for the dry, healthy desert air. After the war, Palm Springs completed its transformation from a health resort to an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do.

In the 1920s, the town's growing reputation as a premier winter luxury resort was cemented. During that same period, Hollywood discovered Palm Springs when the surrounding desert

<sup>17</sup> "Palm Springs," Los Angeles Public Library.

was used for location shooting of numerous silent films. By the end of the decade Palm Springs was becoming a favored winter weekend retreat for the burgeoning film industry; only a few hours by car from Los Angeles, the isolated desert village offered privacy and relaxation, warm winter sunshine, and stunning natural beauty.

Palm Springs as a Hollywood playground continued in the 1930s when stars such as Ralph Bellamy, Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Farrell, Clark Gable, Paulette Goddard, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, Rudy Vallee, and John Wayne all frequented the Hotel El Mirador (HSPB-1). So many of the stars built weekend homes in the area surrounding the El Mirador that it became known as the Movie Colony. The fame of these celebrity residents inevitably made the town itself famous.

As Palm Springs grew, the need for infrastructure improvements, zoning restrictions, and other controls became apparent. In November 1936, a committee to study incorporation was formed. On the 30-man committee were early pioneers, developers, and other prominent citizens including Earl Coffman, Fred Markham, Warren Pinney, Alvah Hicks, Ralph Bellamy, Phil Boyd, Culver Nichols, and Jack Williams.<sup>18</sup> Harold Hicks, selected as committee chairman, called a meeting on August 14, 1937, to finalize city boundaries, divide the area into seven wards, and draw up an incorporation petition to be signed by property owners.<sup>19</sup> Voters approved incorporation on April 1, 1938. Philip Boyd served as the first mayor. In 1938, the first high school opened, and in 1939 the public library was established. A 1939 census numbered 5,336 year-round residents with a seasonal jump to over 8,000 people. That same year, the first high school opened its doors to students.

Palm Springs both participated in the evolving trends of architecture in California throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and developed its own character based on the specific climatological, topographical, cultural, and economic conditions found there. Its architecture reflected a similar range of styles found elsewhere in California, including Spanish Colonial Revival, Ranch, and Modern, each of which had many variations. Though it was a relatively small town, Palm Springs' Modern architecture reflected international Modern architectural trends in a highly sophisticated manner; it also led those trends in several notable examples. In

<sup>18</sup> Frank M. Bogert, excerpted from *Palm Springs First Hundred Years*, <http://palmsprings.com/history/50years.html> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Bogert, *Palm Springs First Hundred Years*, <http://palmsprings.com/history/50years.html> (accessed January 2015).

particular, Palm Springs' role as a resort community led its architecture to emphasize Modernism's leisure and recreational aspects, in terms of design and types.

The city's pleasant winter weather, hot springs, natural scenery, and its proximity to Los Angeles fostered its resort character from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when small resorts catered to vacationers and people seeking relief from ailments in the dry climate and hot springs. In the 1920s, wealthy people began building winter homes there. This included many from the movie industry, launching a long association between Palm Springs and Hollywood.

Most of the architecture for homes and resorts in these early decades reflected historical revival designs, including adobe construction, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean Revival styles. Even these historical styles, however, reflected the influence of the local climate; they drew on historical models to emphasize indoor-outdoor living in the benign climate; courtyards, terraces, and landscaping oriented the houses to the views and climate; thick walls and deep set windows moderated the sun's heat. Beginning in the early 1920s, a few local community leaders began to hire Modern architects from Los Angeles to design resorts and houses. These Modern architects, in turn, found the challenges of designing in the desert appealing as they applied Modern concepts, materials, and spatial plans in new ways to address environmental conditions.

This trend grew during the 1930s. Avant garde Modern architecture had become established in Southern California since the 1910s; this included the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Irving Gill, Lloyd Wright, R. M. Schindler, and Richard Neutra. By the 1930s it ranged in concept from Organic Modernism to the International Style; these architects explored the potential of materials from wood to concrete, steel to glass. All of these trends were given fresh applications in Palm Springs.

Beginning in the 1930s, a number of talented architects began to migrate to Palm Springs to establish their offices. This trend grew after World War II, resulting in a strong local architectural community designing every building type required for an expanding community, including schools, churches, apartments, single family homes, commercial, and civic buildings. As elsewhere in California, Modern architecture predominated in these designs in this period. This growth in population was matched by Palm Spring's expansion as a resort community; where before the war, development catered primarily to the wealthy, improved economic conditions after World War II allowed more middle-class Americans to travel on vacation, and to build second homes. This emphasis on recreation also encouraged the development of golf

courses, tennis clubs, sightseeing, and other recreational activities, all of which were reflected in Palm Springs. These casual lifestyles fostered Modern architecture; its emphasis on indoor-outdoor living, and its freedom from the formal restrictions of traditional life, proved particularly appealing to many clients in Palm Springs. Pleasure became an important element to be considered in designs. This Modern architecture was also frequently used to express community values and identity in civic buildings such as schools, libraries, and the airport.

The notable talent of these local architects, supplemented by several of Los Angeles' best architects, resulted in the development of an extraordinary body of work in the 1950s and 1960s. There was not one single "Palm Springs Modern style;" instead, the range of architects practicing there explored a wide range of Modern ideas, from experimental avant garde forms and spaces, to more moderate, mainstream Modernism. The concentration of such innovative designs in a relatively small area was extraordinary among California cities.

Even if Palm Springs' architects arrived at different solutions, they were responding to similar conditions characteristic of Palm Springs: the desert climate and the harsh sun heat of summer, the culture of recreation and pleasure, the materials, colors, and textures of the desert, the use of modern materials and mass production to solve problems, the freedom to experiment provided by wealthy clients and good budgets, and a spirit of toleration seen in California Modern architecture elsewhere. The responses to these local conditions united an otherwise diverse group of architects.

Though this developing architectural community was rarely publicized in the national architectural journals, the quality of the designs, and their innovations in design and use of materials, bear comparison from a national perspective with the development of other focused centers of Modern architectural exploration and innovation in recreational locations, including Sarasota, FL, and Long Island, NY. These areas were nurtured by the growing recreational industry in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. All attracted architects and clients willing to try new concepts, and became laboratories for evolving Modern concepts.

Though Palm Springs was a distinct city and not a suburb of a metropolitan area, it's car-oriented, low-scale, low-density character paralleled the national urban trend of suburbanization. On one hand, Palm Springs retained its historic city center as a social and retail district with close-in residential neighborhoods; on the other, development in the 1950s and 1960s reflected national trends by orienting commercial activity along its major arterials,



particularly Highway 111. Palm Springs' development also reflected -- and contributed to -- the planning and building of large-scaled mass-produced housing tracts, as seen in suburban areas.

While growth continued in Palm Springs into the 1970s, it tapered off as "down valley" communities developed, including Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Desert. By the late 1990s, however, a renewed interest in buildings constructed between the 1930s and 1970, by then labeled as "Mid-century Modern," led to a revival of interest in Palm Springs Modern architecture, its preservation, and its restoration.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

# Native American & Early Settlement (1884-1918)



Ramada and outside fireplace at the Desert Inn, no date. Source: Calisphere.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT (PRE-1884)**

The earliest inhabitants of the Coachella Valley were the Cahuilla Indians, a Native American people who occupied the mountain and desert regions of south central California. Cahuilla communities established summer settlements in the palm-lined mountain canyons around the valley; archaeological evidence indicates that they settled in Tahquitz Canyon at least 5,000 years ago.<sup>20</sup> They moved each winter to thatched shelters clustered around the natural mineral hot springs on the valley floor.<sup>21</sup> The Cahuilla name for the area that is now Palm Springs was *Sec-he*, “boiling water.” The springs provided clean water, bathing, and a connection to the spiritual world, and were used for ceremonial and healing purposes.<sup>22</sup> The Cahuilla used the leaves of the palm trees that grew around the springs to weave baskets, sandals, and thatch roofing.<sup>23</sup> They hunted some game but subsisted primarily on gathered local food plants including acorns, mesquite beans, seeds, wild fruit, agave and yucca, and had an extensive trading system with neighboring tribes.<sup>24</sup>

The Cahuilla lived far enough inland to avoid early contact with Spanish explorers and colonists. Gaspar de Portolà led the first European land expedition into Alta California in 1769-70, traveling with Franciscan missionaries headed by Father Junipero Serra to establish the first of California’s missions, San Diego de Alcalá and San Carlos Borromeo, and the presidio of Monterey. In 1776 Juan Bautista de Anza led the first overland colonizing expedition of 30 families, totaling approximately 240 men, women, and children, from the Tubac Presidio in what is now Arizona to found a settlement at San Francisco Bay.<sup>25</sup> Both expeditions bypassed the Coachella Valley, Portolà following close to the coast and de Anza passing to the west of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountains, and the Cahuilla of *Sec-he* were left largely to themselves until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1860s the Bradshaw stagecoach line began to cross the desert from Banning to the Arizona territories, stopping at

<sup>20</sup> Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, “Cultural History,” *Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, A Sovereign Tribal Government*, <http://www.aguacaliente.org/content/History%20&%20Culture/> (accessed January 9, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> City of Palm Springs, “History,” *City of Palm Springs*, <http://www.ci.palm-springs.ca.us/index.aspx?page=115> (accessed January 9, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, “Cultural History.”

<sup>23</sup> C. Michael Hogan, PhD, “California Fan Palm, *Washingtonia filifera*,” *iGoTerra*, [http://www.igoterra.com/artspec\\_information.asp?thingid=90942](http://www.igoterra.com/artspec_information.asp?thingid=90942) (accessed January 9, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, “Cultural History.”

<sup>25</sup> National Park Service, “The Story of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail,” *National Park Service*, <https://www.nps.gov/iuba/historyculture/index.htm> (accessed January 12, 2015).

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# City of Palm Springs

## Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

the oasis of palm trees and hot springs that the line's operators called *Agua Caliente*, "Hot Water," from which the local band of Cahuilla took its name.<sup>26</sup> In 1876 the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its line through the desert to Los Angeles, dividing the land for ten miles to either side of the tracks into a checkerboard of one-mile-square sections allotted alternately to the railroad and the federal government. On May 15, 1876 President Ulysses S. Grant issued an Executive Order setting aside Section 14 and a portion of Section 22, including Tahquitz Canyon, as the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation.<sup>27</sup> The reservation occupies 32,000 acres; of these 6,700 acres lie within the city limits, making the Agua Caliente band the city's largest landowner.<sup>28</sup>

In 1877, the U.S. Government had given the Southern Pacific Railroad title to odd-numbered parcels of land for 10 miles on either side of the tracks that run through the desert around Palm Springs. The even-numbered parcels were held in trust for the Agua Caliente by the federal government. Early Palm Springs settlers, such as Judge John Guthrie McCallum, purchased land from the Southern Pacific. However, federal law prohibited the Agua Caliente from selling the land or leasing it for income. This resulted in the "checkerboard" pattern of land in Palm Springs where development was either permitted or prohibited.

In 1891, Congress passed the Mission Indian Relief Act. This authorized the Secretary of the Interior to make individual allotments from reservation lands. However, it wasn't until the tribe took their case to the U.S. Supreme Court (*Lee Arenas v. United States*, 1944), that they would win the legal rights to have allotments approved. The success was short-lived, however, due to the need for equalization of allotments and federal laws denoting the length of leases on Indian lands.<sup>29</sup>

#### **NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT (PRE-1884): ELIGIBILITY**

There are no known built resources from the early Cahuilla settlement of the Palm Springs area; therefore, registration requirements for the evaluation of resources from this period have not been developed. However, archaeological artifacts discovered from this period, such as rock art, house pits, and food preparation areas, are likely to yield information about the life

<sup>26</sup> Lynn J. Rogers, "Pioneer Courage Built Desert Center," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1939, E2, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, "Cultural History."

<sup>28</sup> "Palm Springs," Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>29</sup> These land struggles of the Agua Caliente came to an end when President Eisenhower signed the Equalization Law in 1959. The tribe and tribe members (allottees) could now realize profits from their lands and developed the ninety-nine-year lease.

and culture of the Cahuilla and neighboring Native American cultures. The study of archaeological resources is outside the scope of this project.



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: EARLY DEVELOPMENT (1884-1918)**

This context explores the first Anglo-American settlers of Agua Caliente, the founding of the town called Palm Springs, and its subsequent development into a winter health spa for patients afflicted with asthma, tuberculosis, and other respiratory diseases. Three early settlers were particularly important in the founding and development of the town and its promotion as a health resort: John Guthrie McCallum, Welwood Murray, and Nellie Coffman.

The Coachella Valley's first permanent Anglo settler was John Guthrie McCallum, a San Francisco attorney and former State Legislator who arrived with his wife Emily and their five children in the spring of 1884. A typhoid epidemic five years earlier had left the McCallums' eldest son, Johnny, with tuberculosis; the family doctor had advised that the boy's only hope for recovery was to relocate to a warm, dry climate. The family moved first to Los Angeles and later to Banning, from which a local Indian guide named Will Pablo led John McCallum through the San Geronimo pass to the Cahuilla village of Agua Caliente.<sup>30</sup> McCallum was not a farmer but "saw, from the sunshine, rich soil and abundant life-giving waters that flowed from the canyons, a vast future development not only for abundant crops, but for the earliest fruits in the world."<sup>31</sup> He purchased an initial 64 acres of railroad land<sup>32</sup> and employed local Indians to build him a small adobe house at what is now the southwest corner of North Palm Canyon Drive and East Tahquitz Canyon Parkway. When the adobe was complete McCallum fetched his family from Banning, with the youngest, four-year-old daughter Pearl, perched on the back of his saddle.<sup>33</sup> With Indian labor McCallum dug a 19-mile, stone-lined irrigation ditch to carry the waters of the Whitewater River to his orchards of apricot, orange, and fig trees, his fields of alfalfa, and his vineyards nestled at the base of Mt. San Jacinto.<sup>34</sup>

The McCallum ranch flourished for several years, and young Johnny McCallum's health improved in the desert climate. Firmly believing, in the words of his daughter Pearl, that the

<sup>30</sup> Jane Ardmore, "Memories of a Desert Pearl," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 1966, W54-56, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> W.H. Bowart with Julie Hector, Sally Mall McManus and Elizabeth Coffman, "The McCallum Centennial – Palm Springs' founding family," *Palm Springs Life*, April 1984, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/April-1984?The-McCallum-Centennial-Palm-Springs-039-founding-family/> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Bowart et al., "The McCallum Centennial." Sources differ on the total amount of land McCallum ultimately acquired, ranging from approximately 1,800 to 6,000 acres.

<sup>33</sup> Ardmore, "Memories," W51.

<sup>34</sup> Ardmore, "Memories," W56.

“dry healing climate [was] the answer to his prayers that his son might be cured,” the elder McCallum promoted Palm Valley, as he called Agua Caliente, as “an absolute cure for all pulmonary and kindred diseases.”<sup>35</sup> In 1886 McCallum persuaded a Scottish-born friend from Banning, Dr. Welwood Murray, to establish a health resort at Palm Valley.<sup>36</sup> Murray purchased a five-acre parcel across the road from the palm-fringed mineral hot springs, planted the land with oranges, ornamental shrubs, and trees, and built a one-story, wood-framed hotel with a wraparound veranda and accommodations for 20 guests.<sup>37</sup> He later built a house for himself on the property, using railroad ties salvaged from the abandoned Palmdale Railroad.<sup>38</sup> Murray called the place the Palm Springs Hotel. A bathhouse was built at the springs, which Murray used as a treatment for his guests, many of whom suffered from respiratory diseases and sought relief in the warm, dry desert air.<sup>39</sup> He also promoted the place by purchasing a camel and hiring a local Indian, Willie Marcus, to dress in Arab robes and stand with the camel at the Seven Palms train station, handing out brochures.<sup>40</sup> Though a seven-mile ride across open desert from the train station, the hotel was soon attracting visitors, including such noted personages as Fanny Stevenson, widow of Robert Louis Stevenson; John Muir; and Vice President Charles W. Fairbanks. Some of the visitors stayed and settled the little village that began to develop around the hotel and the McCallum ranch.<sup>41</sup>

McCallum had founded, with O.C. Miller, H.C. Campbell, and Dr. James Adams, the Palm Valley Land and Water Company and in 1887 surveyed and platted 320 acres of his land into a township that corresponds to what is today downtown. An auction on November 1, 1887 sold 137 parcels for a total of more than \$50,000.<sup>42</sup> Houses were built, orchards planted, and more visitors and seasonal residents arrived each winter.<sup>43</sup> Although McCallum called the place

<sup>35</sup> Bowart et al., “The McCallum Centennial,” quoted in John LoCascio, “A Different Kind of Eden: Gay Men, Modernism, and the Rebirth of Palm Springs” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 2013), 8.

<sup>36</sup> Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends: Creation of a Desert Oasis* (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, Inc., 2006), 43. Murray was not a licensed physician; his title was honorary, granted for outstanding medical service rendered to wounded sailors on a battle ship during the American Civil War.

<sup>37</sup> Western Resort Publications, *Palm Springs Area Yearbook* (Palm Springs: Ferris H. Scott, 1954), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Niemann, 46. The house, later owned by Cornelia White, was relocated to the Village Green in 1979.

<sup>39</sup> Renee Brown, “Palm Springs History: Mineral springs are for healing,” *The Desert Sun*, May 16, 2014, <http://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2014/05/15/agua-caliente-palm-springs-hot-mineral-springs-healing/9156853/> (accessed January 13, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24-25.

<sup>41</sup> *Palm Springs Area Yearbook*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Bowart et al., “The McCallum Centennial.”

<sup>43</sup> *Palm Springs Area Yearbook*, 15.

Palm Valley, it soon came to be known as Palm Springs after Murray's hotel. In 1898 David Manley Blanchard, a tubercular auctioneer from Minneapolis, opened the town's first general store;<sup>44</sup> and Mrs. Lavinia Fryatt Crocker opened the town's second sanatorium, the Green Gables Health Resort, with tent houses to accommodate her patients.<sup>45</sup>

In 1890 Johnny McCallum relapsed, and died the following January at the age of 26. Three years later, torrential rains caused a flood that wiped out the family's fields and orchards, followed in 1894 by the start of a devastating drought that would last eleven years. The village's water sources in Whitewater and Tahquitz canyons dwindled and eventually dried up completely.<sup>46</sup> Palm Springs withered as houses and orchards were abandoned. The McCallum's second son, Wallace, died in 1896 at the age of 29; emotionally broken and financially ruined, John Guthrie McCallum died in 1897. Daughter Pearl, away at school in Chicago, returned to the family's Los Angeles home to care for her widowed mother while her only surviving brother, Harry, tried to maintain the ruined ranch. After Harry's death in 1901 at the age of 30, Pearl McCallum and her by-then invalid mother returned to Palm Springs.<sup>47</sup> Pearl had the dead trees in her father's apricot orchard cut down and sold for firewood, sold her family's shares in the Palm Valley Land and Water Company, and periodically sold pieces of land to pay debts and taxes.<sup>48</sup>

Nellie Coffman, the daughter of hoteliers and wife of a Santa Monica physician, first visited Palm Springs in 1908 and was immediately impressed with the village's potential as a winter health resort. At that time the town's permanent population was 14.<sup>49</sup> The following year Nellie, her husband Dr. Harry Coffman, and their sons George Roberson<sup>50</sup> and Earl Coffman, bought a bungalow on two acres just up the road from the McCallum adobe and opened a boarding house, the Desert Inn and Sanatorium. Nellie rented the bungalow's three bedrooms to guests, mostly respiratory patients escaping harsh winters, and put up a tent for herself and her family, adding more tents for additional guests as needed.<sup>51</sup> Dr. Coffman cared for the

<sup>44</sup> Niemann, 91.

<sup>45</sup> Niemann, 75.

<sup>46</sup> *Palm Springs Area Yearbook*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Bowart et al., "The McCallum Centennial."

<sup>48</sup> Ardmore, "Memories," 56.

<sup>49</sup> "Mrs. Coffman, Palm Springs Developer, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1950, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Roberson was Nellie Coffman's son by her first marriage.

<sup>51</sup> *Palm Springs Area Yearbook*, 15.



medical needs of their guests while Nellie managed the housekeeping and the books.<sup>52</sup> She soon gained a reputation for her culinary skills after stuffing two traveling reporters from the *Los Angeles Times* with chicken soup, lamb chops, hot biscuits and strawberry jam.<sup>53</sup>

Visitors were still few, and the Coffmans' early years in Palm Springs were a struggle. Unlike his wife, Dr. Coffman could not envision a successful future in the desert. The couple divorced in 1917 and Dr. Coffman moved to Calexico. That same year their two eldest sons, George and Earl, went off to Europe to fight in World War I.<sup>54</sup> It was the war that turned things around for Nellie Coffman and for Palm Springs; wealthy Eastern families, unable to take their customary travels in Europe, searched for new destinations and discovered the exotic spa town set amidst the beauty and solitude of the desert. Another wave of well-healed visitors came during the lethal post-war influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, fleeing the contagion of the big cities for the dry, healthy desert air; many Los Angeles doctors sent their own families to Palm Springs for safety.<sup>55</sup> Nellie Coffman began acquiring more land, including the adjacent Green Gables. When George and Earl returned from the war in 1918 they, like Nellie, saw the town's full potential, not as a health spa for asthmatics and consumptives but as an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do, and went into business with their mother.<sup>56</sup> They dropped "Sanatorium" from the boarding house's name and over the next decade set about expanding and reconstructing the Desert Inn into a first-class resort hotel, a "vast grassy haven"<sup>57</sup> with a luxurious main building and 29 bungalows in the popular Spanish Revival style, designed by architect Charles Tanner and set amidst 35 acres of lush gardens (HSPB-17).<sup>58</sup> The main building featured a spacious lounge and bar and a branch of Bullock's department store, while the grounds included tennis courts and the village's first swimming pool.<sup>59</sup> The Desert Inn quickly became one of the most famous hotels in the country, transforming the "hot little

<sup>52</sup> Ernie Pyle, "Persistence for Eight Years," *Daily Boston Globe*, March 27, 1942, 23, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Bess M. Wilson, "Noted Desert Hostess Traces Rise to Fame," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1941, D10, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Niemann, 62-63.

<sup>55</sup> Pyle, "Persistence," 23.

<sup>56</sup> Pyle, "Persistence," 23.

<sup>57</sup> Ernie Pyle, "Never Undignified," *Daily Boston Globe*, March 30, 1942, 11, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>58</sup> Frank S. Nugent, "It's No Mirage, It's Palm Springs," *New York Times*, December 14, 1947, SM36, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Niemann, 63, and Starr, 26.

hamlet from obscurity to world fame” and earning Nellie Coffman the title “Mother of Palm Springs.”<sup>60</sup>



The lodge at the Desert Inn, c. 1920. Source: Calisphere.

A number of other settlers contributed to the development and growth of Palm Springs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1913 Dr. Florilla White, a physician originally from upstate New York, and her sister Cornelia, a former teacher at the University of North Dakota, purchased the Palm Springs Hotel from Welwood Murray. Dr. White had stayed as a guest at the hotel the previous year before joining her adventurous younger sister in Mexico, where she was then living. Forced to return to the United States to escape the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, the sisters settled in Palm Springs to manage the hotel and invest in real estate, buying entire blocks of what would become downtown Palm Springs. Cornelia White moved into Murray's

<sup>60</sup> Ed Ainsworth, “Desert Misses ‘Mother’ of Gay Palm Springs,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1950, A5, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

“Little House” of railroad ties. Dr. White served as the village’s health officer during World War I and organized The Nightingales, a group of volunteer nurses from Riverside, to help in the 1918 influenza pandemic.<sup>61</sup>

Carl Gustav Lykken, a mining engineer from North Dakota, knew Cornelia White from her teaching days and later in Mexico, where he worked as a surveyor. He fled the Mexican Revolution with the White sisters and at their suggestion settled in Palm Springs in 1913. With a partner, J.H. Bartlett, Lykken purchased David Blanchard’s general store and in 1914 moved the operation to a new building across Main Street to what is now 180 North Palm Canyon Drive. Originally called Lykken and Bartlett, the store became known as Lykken’s Department and Hardware Store after Lykken became the sole operator. For many years the store housed the town’s post office, telegraph service, and only telephone, with an extension to the Desert Inn.<sup>62</sup>

Master carpenter Alvah Hicks also arrived in Palm Springs in 1913, with his wife Tess and their two young sons. Originally from New York, Hicks had moved to Los Angeles in 1912 and then to the desert, looking for building and contracting work. He quickly gained a reputation for high-quality work and built houses for many of the village’s early settlers. In the 1920s Hicks developed some of the village’s premier neighborhoods including Old Las Palmas and Little Tuscany, and bought control of the Palm Valley Land and Water Company founded by John Guthrie McCallum.<sup>63</sup>

Ed Burns and his wife Zaddie, a native of Missouri, arrived in Palm Springs with their young daughter in 1914 and opened the village’s first automotive garage in a corrugated metal shed on the west side of Main Street (Palm Canyon Drive, at Andreas Road). After Ed left and the couple divorced, Zaddie continued to run the garage and purchased additional land across the street. During World War I Zaddie took over the transportation of mail and visitors from the train station, which had been the responsibility of George Roberson, and became the first woman issued a chauffeur’s license in California.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Niemann, 77-79.

<sup>62</sup> Niemann, 95-96. The store was remodeled in Spanish Revival style in the 1930s.

<sup>63</sup> Niemann, 129-130.

<sup>64</sup> Niemann, 81-83. Zaddie Bunker would become one of Palm Springs’ wealthiest landowners and at the age of 60 obtained her pilot’s license.

Colorado cattleman Prescott Thresher Stevens and his wife Frances, a teacher, moved to Hollywood in 1912 and to Palm Springs in 1914, hoping to improve Frances' respiratory problems. They settled first at the Desert Inn and eventually built a house in what is now the 900 block of North Palm Canyon Drive. Frances Stevens was an early leader of the local school Board. P.T. Stevens almost immediately began buying land and would become one of the village's most important developers, building housing tracts and the Hotel El Mirador in the 1920s.<sup>65</sup>



El Mirador, c. 1937. Photograph by Frank Bogert. Source: *Herald Examiner* Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>65</sup> Niemann, 85-86.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**EARLY DEVELOPMENT (1884-1918): ELIGIBILITY<sup>66</sup>**

Property Types: Single-family Residence, Commercial Building, Remnant Feature

Properties eligible under this theme represent the earliest built resources in the city's history. Resources from this period are associated with the Anglo-American settlers of Agua Caliente, the founding of the town called Palm Springs, and its subsequent development into a winter health spa and tourist destination. Resources from this period are rare, and all extant resources are likely already known. Resources eligible under this theme may include buildings (residential and commercial), along with ancillary features such as John McCallum's irrigation canal and other infrastructure, or other remnant features.

Rare surviving properties from this period include the McCallum Adobe (HSPB-4), the oldest remaining building in Palm Springs; and Miss Cornelia White's "Little House" (HSPB-5). Both buildings have been moved from their original locations and reconstructed at the Village Green Heritage Center. Lykken's Department Store (HSPB-9) was completely remodeled in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in the 1930s. Bunker's Garage was remodeled in 1929 and became the Village Pharmacy; it was among the buildings demolished in 1967 to make way for the Desert Fashion Plaza.

A building or remnant feature from this period may be eligible:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>67</sup>	As a rare example of early residential or commercial development, or a remnant feature representing the first built resources associated with the Anglo-American settlement of Palm Springs.
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person in the early history of Palm Springs. Significant persons within this theme include the earliest Anglo-American settlers who were influential in the establishment and development of Palm Springs.

<sup>66</sup> Note that research and fieldwork is ongoing; the registration requirements will be revised and updated specific to Palm Springs as needed throughout the project.

<sup>67</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

CRITERIA	REASON
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction, particularly adobe construction, from the period; or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.

#### **Early Development (1884-1918): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme. Properties and features from this period are extremely rare and represent some of the earliest development in Palm Springs.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property or feature from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with the city's early Anglo-American settlement. It is expected that integrity of setting may have been compromised by later development. Due to the importance and rarity of resources from this period, a property may remain eligible if it has been relocated.
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>68</sup> A property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible under this theme. In adobe structures, the adobe walls should remain largely intact, and the building should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with an adobe structure of its age. Alterations that are consistent with upgrades typically seen in early adobe structures, including later wood frame additions and replacement windows within original window openings, are acceptable. It is expected that the setting will have been compromised by later development.

#### **Early Development (1884-1918): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- display sufficient character-defining features of the construction method or architectural style to convey its historic significance;
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

<sup>68</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

## Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)



View of Palm Springs from above the Casa Palmeras apartments, c. 1930. Source: Steve Vaught, [paradiseleased.wordpress.com](http://paradiseleased.wordpress.com).

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



**CONTEXT: PALM SPRINGS BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)****Overview**

This context explores the transformation of Palm Springs from a modest spa town into a luxury winter resort in the years between the First and Second World Wars. In 1918 Nellie Coffman and her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, saw the town's potential, not as a health spa for asthmatics and consumptives, but as an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do, and transformed their sanatorium into the luxurious Desert Inn, one of the most renowned hostelrys in the country. Their success inspired the development of two equally spectacular hotels in the 1920s and cemented the town's growing reputation as one of the country's premier luxury winter resorts: the Oasis Hotel, designed by Lloyd Wright and built in 1924 by Pearl McCallum McManus; and the grand Hotel El Mirador, designed by Walker and Eisen in a sumptuous Spanish Colonial Revival style and opened in 1928.<sup>69</sup> El Mirador quickly became the favorite retreat of Hollywood film stars, who had discovered the joys of winter in Palm Springs. The 1930s saw Palm Springs blossom, as more and more celebrities made it their winter weekend getaway and more and more development sprang up to house and entertain them. Architecturally, the Spanish and Mediterranean Revival styles were the town's dominant architectural expression during this period. In addition, there are examples of simplified Ranch houses from this period featuring rustic details and board-and-batten exterior walls, along with Early Modern and Modern styles. Beginning in the 1930s, prominent Modernist architects began making significant contributions to the architectural landscape in Palm Springs.

<sup>69</sup> There was a New Years' Eve party held at El Mirador on December 31, 1927; however, the hotel officially opened for business on January 1, 1928. Burton L. Smith, "Miracle Hotel Graces Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1928.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1919-1941)<sup>70</sup>**

**Introduction: Residential Architecture in Palm Springs between the Wars**

There are a range of architectural styles seen throughout the residential neighborhoods of Palm Springs from this period. In the desert environment of Palm Springs, traditional southwestern adobe, hacienda, and wood ranch vernacular types were believed to be the best styles and types. The city also has a small collection of 1920s and 1930s Craftsman bungalows. The Craftsman bungalow is a product of the American Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an outgrowth of the British Arts and Crafts movement first championed by William Morris, the movement's evolution in Southern California reflected the realization that even by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Kevin Starr notes, "some relationship to the outdoors, to nature, had been fixed as part of the Californian identity... Californians became interested in questions of diet and exercise and the possibilities of integrating themselves into a natural way of living."<sup>71</sup>

The California bungalow was a simple, garden-oriented house uniquely suited for the climate and lifestyle of the region. "The use of this woodsy Craftsman style was no simple coincidence of time and fortune. It has an ideological, even moral significance. On one level the material and fusion of the styles indicate a feeling for the environment of the Arroyo, an attempt to associate well known picturesque human contrivances with the picturesque natural landscape."<sup>72</sup>

The term bungalow typically refers to a modest, one- or one-and-a-half-story house with an informal floor plan. The Victorian entry hall and formal parlor were replaced with an open plan, welcoming guests directly into the cozy living room from the spacious front porch. The exteriors were generally simple, to fit with the rugged lifestyle of the inhabitants, and the use of natural materials was important to the design aesthetic. Wide, overhanging eaves not only emphasized the horizontal emphasis of the small bungalow, but were also practical in shading the house from the hot California sun. Structural members were exposed, particularly at the

<sup>70</sup> Multi-family residential development is discussed in a separate theme, below.

<sup>71</sup> Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 204.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Winter, "The Arroyo Culture," in *California Design 1910*, Tim Andersen and Eudorah Moore, ed., (Santa Barbara: CA: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1980), 14.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

roof line. Brick or stone foundations supported the wood frames, which were clad either in wood shingles or stucco, and heavy supports define the deeply recessed front porch.

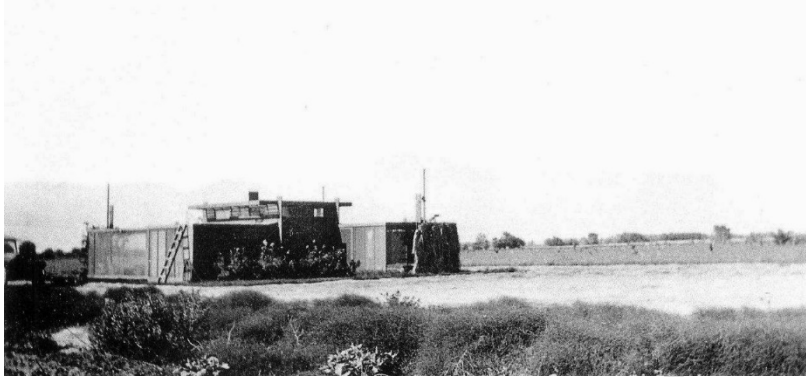
In the 1920s, the Arts and Crafts movement was largely replaced by an eclectic array of period revival styles, inspired in part by the Panama-California Exposition and the burgeoning film industry. “Just as everything grew in the Southern California garden, so too did every architectural tradition take hold as well,” wrote Kevin Starr.<sup>73</sup> As the focus on regional expression through architecture evolved, period and exotic revival styles took hold throughout the region. Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival examples prevailed, in large measure due to the Panama-California Exposition, held in San Diego in 1915. The lead architect was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who was assisted by Carleton Winslow. Goodhue chose an eclectic Spanish style for the exposition buildings, setting it apart from the more formal European Renaissance and Neoclassical styles which were being employed at the San Francisco World’s Fair the same year. Goodhue’s architecture featured stylistic references to the Catholic missions and churches of Southern California and Mexico, as well as to grand palaces of Mexico, Spain, and Italy. Well suited to the region’s warm, dry climate, the Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival styles in particular appealed to many Southern California residents for their exotic appearance and sense of history. “Here were two styles supported by the regional myth of California as the Mediterranean shores of America and even, in the case of Spanish Revival, supported by a slight degree of historical justification.”<sup>74</sup>

The earliest known Modern building to be built in the Palm Springs area was the Popenoe Cabin (1922, demolished) by R. M Schindler.<sup>75</sup> Schindler, who studied architecture in his native Austria as well as with the American Frank Lloyd Wright, is recognized as a major innovator in Modern architecture in the United States. The Popenoe Cabin was located in what is now Palm Desert, but was a significant early Modernist work in the Coachella Valley.

<sup>73</sup> Starr, *Material Dreams*, 187.

<sup>74</sup> Starr, *Material Dreams*, 191.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Popenoe (1888-1979) was born in Kansas but grew up in California. He was the founder of modern marriage counseling in the United States. Popenoe and his wife lived in the Coachella Valley from 1920 to 1926; in 1926 they moved to Los Angeles. Designs for the Popenoe Cabin show Schindler playing with composition, proportion, and space.



Popenoe Cabin, 1922. R. M. Schindler, architect. UC-Santa Barbara Architecture and Design Collections, Schindler Papers.

Several architects who would be central to the development of Palm Springs Modern architecture arrived in the city in the 1930s, launching a fertile and innovative era. In addition, several important out-of-town architects who built in Palm Springs also began their association with the city in the 1930s. Though not all clients wanted Modern design, the commitment of these architects to Modern concepts helped lay the foundation among private and civic clients and the general public for the growth of Modern design later. The presence of these architects demonstrates that environmental and economic conditions in Palm Springs were, and continued to be, conducive to innovative architecture. It also reflects the variety of Modern architectural concepts, from Organic to Streamline Moderne to International Style, would be characteristic of Palm Springs Modernism.



Arthur Bourne House (1933, Wallace Neff). Source: Alson Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, p. 163.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

The growth of Palm Springs as an exclusive resort area brought architects more opportunities to build vacation homes. The Arthur Bourne House (1933) by Wallace Neff is a Spanish hacienda style, but the simplicity of its forms and its integration of indoor spaces with exterior terraces reflects this important architect's move toward Modernism later in the decade. In 1933, William Gray Purcell designed a house at 252 Ocotillo Avenue.<sup>76</sup> This house is an important example of the work of this architect at the end of a distinguished career which began with Adler and Sullivan, one of the seminal offices in Modern architecture. With his partner George Elmslie, Purcell and Elmslie were among the most prolific architects of the Prairie Style in the first two decades of the century. The house Purcell designed in Palm Springs is an example of how those American Modern concepts evolved into the 1930s, when Purcell moved to the desert area for health reasons.



House designed by William Gray Purcell (1933). Source: Alan Hess, *Palm Springs Weekend*, p. 34.

<sup>76</sup> Purcell designed the house with Van Evera Bailey (1903-1980), from Portland, OR; interiors were designed by Bailey's wife, Rachel Bailey.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



John Porter Clark House (1939, John Porter Clark). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1947. Source: Getty Research Institute.

Two key Palm Springs architects, Albert Frey and John Porter Clark, worked together for more than 15 years. They were partners from 1935 to 1937, although their work at this time was published under the name Van Pelt and Lind; they worked together under the firm name Clark and Frey from 1939 to 1952.<sup>77</sup> Though clients were still favoring traditional styles (with which Clark, who had trained at Cornell and worked for the firm of Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury, was familiar), Clark and Frey continued to promote Modern design, seen in the Guthrie House (1935-37, altered), Halberg House (1935-37, extant?), and particularly in Clark's own house (1939). This house expresses the freedom of design and freedom from convention embodied in Modernism: its materials include steel columns and corrugated metal siding (a material previously confined to industrial uses), and its unusual plan lifting the small

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey, Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1990), 150. This information will be confirmed using AIA records.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

house off the ground, leaving the ground floor open as a shaded patio, shows the architect's response to environmental conditions.

The Ship of the Desert (1936) is one of the few Streamline Moderne buildings in Palm Springs (HSPB-47); as such it represents one important expression of Modern design reflecting the machine imagery of automobiles, steamships, and airplanes. Its architects, Adrian Wilson and Erle Webster, were established Los Angeles architects known for several major public commissions into the 1960s. In addition, the Ship of the Desert marks the first work in Palm Springs by California School artist Millard Sheets, who consulted on the house's colors. A year later, another facet of global Modern design, the International Style, was built by Richard Neutra in the Grace Lewis Miller House (1937; HSPB-45). This small house combined a home with a dance studio for the owner. It is a good representative of Neutra's use of simple, flat-roofed forms arranged and adapted to the sun, outdoor space, and the need for coolness and ventilation in the desert.



Grace Lewis Miller House (1937, Richard Neutra). Photographed by Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**Sub-theme: Single-Family Residential Development (1919-1929)**

If [Herodotus] were to visit this modern “Occidental Araby” at Palm Springs which is becoming world famous for its beauty and wonderful winter weather conditions...he would find flora and fauna of infinite variety and kind...he would find that men of wealth had preceded him to enjoy the natural beauty, the perfect winter climate, the rejuvenating elevation and the curative spring waters by building fine homes and establishing here a winter community.<sup>78</sup>

From the start, Palm Springs owed much of its residential development to tourism. Guests who came to the Desert Inn (able to accommodate 200 guests by 1925), the Oasis Hotel (opened in 1925), and El Mirador (opened in 1928) came for the warm desert air and positive health effects.<sup>79</sup> Those same guests began to consider the value of residency in Palm Springs and as author Lawrence Culver points out, “...Hollywood vacationers-turned residents portended the future of the resort.”<sup>80</sup>

The transition from resort to residential development began in earnest in 1923. In January of that year, Prescott T. Stevens developed Vista Acres, a twenty-seven parcel subdivision west of Palm Canyon Drive along W. Chino Drive. In March of that same year, Pearl McCallum McManus, daughter of early Palm Springs settler John Guthrie McCallum, subdivided Tahquitz Park. Tahquitz Park was bordered by Baristo Road on the south, Tahquitz Drive on the west, the north side of Arenas Road to the north, and Patencio Road on the east. McManus built herself a Mediterranean villa-inspired home, “The Pink House” at 281 S. Tahquitz Drive (demolished) that became a local landmark.<sup>81</sup> However, building was generally slow in both developments. Architecturally significant homes in Tahquitz Park include:<sup>82</sup> the Burnham

<sup>78</sup> *Brochure for the Araby Tract, 1925.*

<sup>79</sup> The development of these hotels is discussed in greater detail in the Commercial Development theme; they are mentioned here as catalysts for residential development during this period.

<sup>80</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 156.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs* (Johannesberg, CA: The Shady Myrick Research Project, 2007), 109.

<sup>82</sup> Palm Springs architecture and significant architects are discussed separately in each chronological period of development; however, significant works of architecture located in a residential tract are noted in the discussion of each tract.



Residence (1927; Alfred Heineman) at 147 Tahquitz Drive;<sup>83</sup> the Roberson Residence (1926) at 385 W. Tahquitz Drive;<sup>84</sup> and the Bourne Residence (1933, Wallace Neff) at 466 W. Patencio Road.

Both McManus and Stevens would go on to shape residential development in the city for several years. Pioneer Properties, founded by McManus and of which she was president, “played a major role in Palm Springs’ development.”<sup>85</sup> Austin McManus, Pearl McManus’ husband, had been a realtor in Pasadena.<sup>86</sup> By 1929, the McManus Realty Co. was the “largest owner and developer of fine business and residential properties...and had built many fine homes, an apartment and one of the beautiful hotels.”<sup>87</sup> Pearl McManus had a great deal of power, and “ruled the roost in the sale of anything she owned with an iron glove – insisting that plans for development had to have her approval.”<sup>88</sup> According to more than one account, “[Pearl] scrutinized the people and the plans – for purchase or construction – turning them down if she didn’t like them for any reason.”<sup>89</sup> As a result, builders and real estate brokers went to see her “with fear and trembling” when presenting sales offers.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>83</sup> This is based on David Gebhard’s research, but it has also been attributed to H. Palmer Sabin in 1929 in the architectural trades. Any connection between Sabin and Heineman is not currently known.

<sup>84</sup> David Gebard and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1982), 389.

<sup>85</sup> Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 156.

<sup>86</sup> “Pearl McCallum Was a Product of the Desert,” *Riverside Press Enterprise*, November 22, 2003, B4.

<sup>87</sup> “Ad for Austin G. McManus,” *Palm Springs California Magazine*, 1929, 27.

<sup>88</sup> “Pearl McCallum McManus,” No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.

<sup>89</sup> “Pearl McCallum McManus,” No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.

<sup>90</sup> “Pearl McCallum McManus,” No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.



*One of the Homes We Have Built*

IN 1884, while searching for the finest climate in California, John Guthrie McCallum was told by his friends, the Cabuilla Indians, of a sheltered nook on the edge of the desert, nestling at the foot of the snow-capped San Jacinto mountains.

The first view of this lovely valley so strongly impressed him that he decided to make this his winter home, and during the next three years purchased approximately 6,000 acres on which has developed the now world famous winter resort of Palm Springs.

The village is built on and around the original McCallum Ranch, and the old adobe ranch house, built by the Indians, still remains to form a part of the delightful Oasis Hotel.

From this foundation has developed the McManus Realty Co., largest owners and developers of fine business and residential properties, all located within the sheltered area.

This firm has built many fine homes, an apartment and one of the beautiful hotels.

Sales consummated during recent years have totaled over \$400,000. At this time several newly completed cottages and larger residences designed especially for sunshine and desert conditions, are available for lease or sale.

A new schedule of prices, as a result of lower building costs, now prevails.

Satisfactory terms and financing can be arranged.

**AUSTIN G. McMANUS**  
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

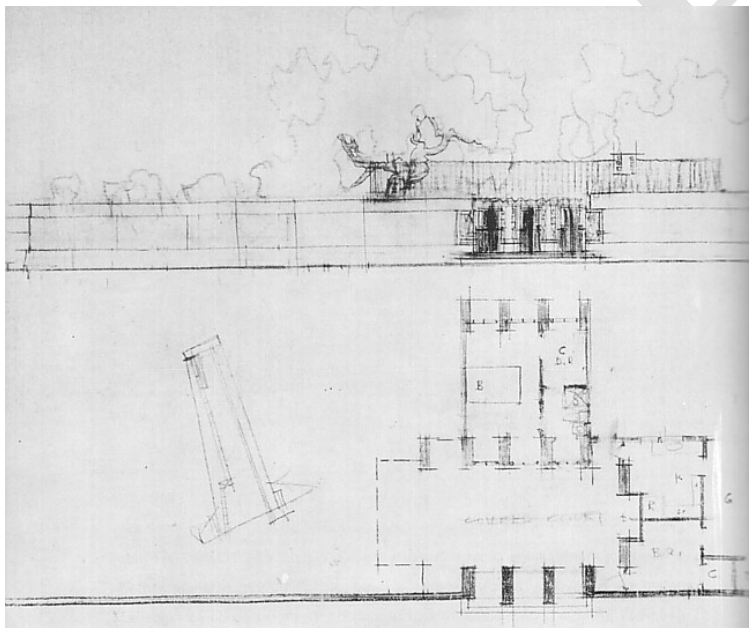
Advertisement from a 1929 issue of *Palm Springs, California* magazine features Pearl McManus' "Pink Mansion in the Tahquitz Park" development as an example of the homes Pioneer Properties and McManus Realty Co. have developed. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Part of McManus' vision for the development of Palm Springs during this period included the idea for the first residential subdivision in Palm Springs utilizing modern architecture. In 1925, she approached Lloyd Wright whom she had engaged to design the Oasis Hotel (1925) to design a "prototype house" for a subdivision that McManus, herself, described as "very modern."<sup>91</sup> Wright's designs for the model house reveal the expressive modern, yet pre-Columbian influenced forms and decoration he used in the Samuel-Navarro Residence in Los Angeles (1926-1928). Yet, it is unclear from the drawings if the geometric decoration was intended as textured concrete block or stenciled detailing. Regardless, the plan for "prototype house for Palms Springs" features rooms organized around a walled-in and covered patio integrating interior and exterior space.<sup>92</sup> Whether it was due to construction costs or other factors is unknown, but the homes were never built.



Lloyd Wright designed this prototype Palm Springs house for Pearl McManus in 1925-1926 as part of Pearl's vision for a subdivision of houses. Source: *Lloyd Wright Architect*, p. 22.

<sup>91</sup> Interview of Pearl McManus to Melba Bennett, April 26, 1948, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>92</sup> David Gebhard and Harriett Von Breton, *Lloyd Wright Architect*, Hennessey and Ingalls, Santa Monica, 1998, 22.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Pre-World War II residential development was largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts: “the sheltered area.”<sup>93</sup> Development to the west of Palm Canyon Drive at the base of the foothills provided shelter from wind and blowing sand as well as vistas of the surrounding mountains and desert landscape. Less expensive tracts clustered on the east side of the Palm Canyon/Indian Canyon spine that bisected the village. However, the developments south of El Mirador catered to guests of the hotel that cultivated a distinctly Hollywood clientele.<sup>94</sup> Many hotel guests later bought homes in the area around El Mirador earning the nascent neighborhood the name “The Movie Colony.”<sup>95</sup>

The other major area of prewar residential development in Palm Springs was to the south along the spine of South Palm Canyon Drive around Tahquitz Creek. With the exception of Smoke Tree Ranch, south Palm Springs remained largely undeveloped until the late 1950s and 1960s. Before World War II, there was no development east of Sunrise Way.

The rise of the automobile in Southern California was an important factor in the development of Palm Springs. The Los Angeles press made a significant contribution to the prewar residential development of Palm Springs as well. During the 1920s the society pages of the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers extensively covered the arrivals and departures of wealthy industrialists from all over the country who opened their homes for the season or took up winter residency in Palm Springs. Social occasions in Palm Springs were also widely covered—be they parties in private homes or one of the many public events (e.g., Desert Circus, dog shows, fashion shows). With the arrival of the Hollywood actors, writers, producers and directors, photographs of stars enjoying the desert playground were distributed nationally.

Development in all of Palm Springs’ pre-World War II residential tracts was sparse and in-fill construction continued in virtually all of them throughout the postwar period. As a result, the period revival style residences from before World War II often sit side-by-side with Ranch and

<sup>93</sup> “Ad for Austin G. McManus,” Palm Springs California Magazine, 1929, 27.

<sup>94</sup> The El Mirador was the only one of the Palm Springs hotels that welcomed Jewish guests. This and purposeful cultivation of Hollywood through publicist and free accommodations for the press made it popular with actors, writers, directors, and other Hollywood notables.

<sup>95</sup> Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 157.

Mid-century Modern designs from later periods. Many early homes were constructed on multiple parcels with ample space for landscaped private gardens.

Following is a discussion of the significant residential subdivisions recorded during this period.<sup>96</sup> The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded.

#### Palm Canyon Mesa (1924)

Palm Canyon Mesa (also known as Tahquitz Desert Estates) is a development nestled in the foothills of the southern end of the city. Palm Canyon Mesa is bordered on the east by S. Palm Canyon Drive and includes Ridge Road to the north, Crestview Drive to the west, and Camino Descanso to the south. The subdivision was the vision of Edmond T. Fulford (1890-1936). Fulford and his wife Marion took up residency in the desert in 1921. The founder of the successful Builders Supply Company in Palm Springs, Fulford's development was planned as a self-contained community accessed through a common main entrance.<sup>97</sup>

The development was created in two phases: phase I included 172 parcels in 1924, followed by an additional 71 parcels to the south in 1927. Development in Palm Canyon Mesa was not instantaneous; Sanborn maps from 1929 show just ten homes had been constructed in the development by that time; however, development continued in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>98</sup> A gate for the community still stands at the corner of South Palm Canyon Drive and El Portal.

In 1925, Fulford engaged renowned architect Paul R. Williams (1894-1980) to build him a residence at 152 El Camino Way – one of the architect's earliest residential commissions.<sup>99</sup> In 1936, Fulford died unexpectedly from a heart attack. At the time of his death, his civic work included his role as one of the founders and manager of the Palm Springs Field Club.<sup>100</sup>

One of the earliest homes constructed in Palm Canyon Mesa was a home for the inventor of the safety razor, King Gillette at 324 West Overlook Road (1923). The Spanish Colonial

<sup>96</sup> Note that each subdivision will be reviewed by the survey team to determine which may be eligible for designation as historic districts.

<sup>97</sup> Howard Johns. *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 233.

<sup>98</sup> In 1934, two hillside streets adjacent to Palm Canyon Mesa No. 2 Tract were developed as "Palm Canyon Estates" by Los Angeles real estate man, Herbert W. Stanton and his son Forrest O. Stanton, a building contractor. Forest O. Stanton built himself and his wife a house at 2097 Camino Barranca.

<sup>99</sup> "Desert Home to be Built at Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 22, 1925, part IV, 3.

<sup>100</sup> "E.T. Fulford, Palm Springs Leader, Dies," *San Bernardino County Sun*, April 7, 1936, 12.

Revival residence and guest cottage were surrounded by an acre of landscaped gardens and "...a cactus garden of several hundred varieties."<sup>101</sup>

The architectural firm of A.S. Heineman and Associates, the partnership of brothers Arthur (1878-1972) and Alfred (1882-1974) Heineman purchased several parcels in the tract with the intent to build homes.<sup>102</sup> The brothers are best known for their Craftsman designs in Los Angeles and Pasadena; however, the firm is responsible for designs in numerous architectural styles spanning their 30-year partnership. At Palm Canyon Mesa, the Heinemans envisioned Spanish Colonial Revival Style homes, including the Louis R. Davidson Residence at 272 Camino Buena Vista.<sup>103</sup>



An undated perspective drawing of a Spanish Colonial Revival style residence envisioned by the Heinemans for their property in Palm Canyon Mesa/Tahquitz Desert Estates. Source: Steve Vaught, <http://paradiseleased.wordpress.com>.

<sup>101</sup> "Many Homes Built on Gay Desert Oasis," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1934, B5.

<sup>102</sup> The Heineman brothers worked together from 1909 until 1939, producing an estimated one thousand designs for residential and commercial buildings, primarily in Southern California. In 1925 they opened the Milestone Motel, the country's first motel and brainchild of Arthur Heineman.

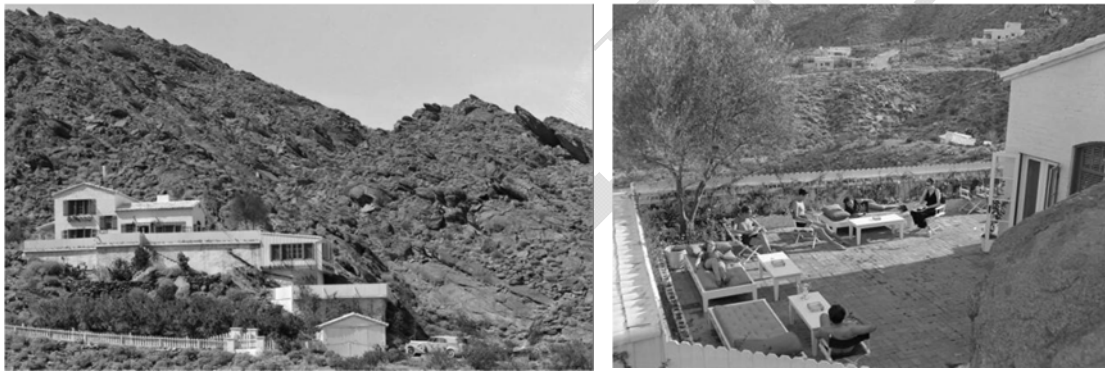
<sup>103</sup> Alfred was never a registered architect, however, he is generally regarded by historians as primary designer, while Arthur was the businessman and ran the firm.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Several properties along Ridge Road have an association with the motion picture industry. In 1937 screen actress Anita Stewart built a home in Palm Canyon Mesa at 1752 Ridge Road. The property was purchased by film director, screenwriter, songwriter, composer, and producer Edmund Goulding.<sup>104</sup> Goulding engaged actor and designer Tom Douglas to design and decorate four guest cottages around the main house at 1716, 1718, 1755, and 1765 Ridge Road, along with “a little stone bridge across a ravine to create the feel of a Cornish village.”<sup>105</sup> 1752 Ridge Road was utilized as a retreat for Clark Gable as he divorced his second wife and avoided fans after *Gone with the Wind* was released in 1939. Goulding’s Ridge Road estate became the property of Henry J. Emard between 1946 and 1947. Emard was a banker and a pioneer in the Alaskan salmon canning business, owning the largest cannery in Alaska.



L: The Mediterranean Revival-style Tom Douglas Residence at 356 Ridge Road, photographed by Maynard Parker in 1938. The house was featured in *California Arts and Architecture* in February 1939. R: Looking south from the Tom Douglas Residence, photographed by Maynard Parker in 1938. Palm Canyon Mesa was sparsely developed at this time. Elizabeth Gordon, editor of *House Beautiful*, is seen here on the patio. Source for both: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.

Douglas also designed his own home in Palm Canyon Mesa, the Douglas Residence at 356 Ridge Road. The house was featured in *California Arts and Architecture* in February 1939. Douglas lived there until 1947. At that time, Al J. Wertheimer, a former member of Detroit’s

<sup>104</sup> Sources are unclear about the exact date the property was purchased by Goulding; according to City Directories, he owned the property by 1939.

<sup>105</sup> Eric G. Meeks, Palm Springs Celebrity Homes, <http://pscelebrityhomes.com/celebrity-index-g-i/edmundgoulding2-5/> (accessed January 2015).

infamous Purple Gang, bought the house, and established the first casino in the Palm Springs area in Cathedral City (gambling was not legal in Palm Springs).<sup>106</sup>

Palm Canyon Mesa is home to the iconic residence the “Ship of the Desert,” or Howard Davidson Residence (1936, Wilson and Webster; HSPB-47) at 1995 South Camino Monte. This Streamline Moderne-style residence was restored following a fire in 1998.<sup>107</sup> Other architecturally significant residences in Palm Canyon Mesa include: the F.H. Batholomay Residence (Gerard R. Colcord) at 282 Camino Carmelita, and the J.E. French Residence at 282 El Camino Way.



The Ship of the Desert (1936, Wilson and Webster) at 1995 South Camino Monte. Photo by Herman Schultheis, c. 1938. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>106</sup> Subsequent owners include: 1948-1950, John Harnish, an engineer; 1951, A. Ronald Button, a Republican senator, significant Rancho Mirage developer, and war buddy of Ronald Reagan; and 1952, Herbert R. Mennell, who owned Burt and Rene's Candy Store.

<sup>107</sup> Erin Weinger, “A Bright Shiny Day,” *Palm Springs Life*, May 2011.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



### Araby Tract (1925)

South and east of the village of Palm Springs, H.W. Otis and Son, owners/sub-dividers began marketing and selling “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs.”<sup>108</sup> The 138-parcel tract of irregularly-shaped lots included graded streets, electrical service, and 10,000 feet of water pipe with “city pressure.”<sup>109</sup> The Los Angeles-based Otis “fell in love with the area and purchased this property for development as a community of desert homesites have in mind a completed whole which will be artistic and charming...in keeping with the natural beauty of the surroundings and thoroughly protected by sensible racial and building restrictions.”<sup>110</sup>



A view of the Araby Tract office and water tower as featured in the Araby Tract sales brochure, *Our Occidental Araby*. A key selling feature of the tract was the 10,000 feet of water pipe improvements that delivered good water pressure. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>108</sup> “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>109</sup> “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>110</sup> “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

The sales brochure explained Otis' vision for an attractive community, "Bear in mind, however, that the building of expensive homes is not required or expected. Suitable artistry is the keynote of this development."<sup>111</sup> However, development was not instantaneous and Otis' vision of a cohesive community never came to fruition. Otis did, however, build himself a home at 2200 Mesquite Drive.



View of the Araby Tract as presented in the tract's sales brochure, *Our Occidental Araby*. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>111</sup> "Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs" Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

### Merito Vista (1925)

Prescott T. Stevens (1846-1932) was ultimately Palm Springs' largest pre-World War II residential real estate developer. Stevens, a successful Colorado cattle rancher, relocated with his wife Frances to California in 1912 to seek refuge from her respiratory problems. They first settled in Hollywood, where he invested in Hollywood real estate, then moved to Palm Springs for the better air. By 1920, Stevens had purchased a large amount of land north of downtown Palm Springs. He also bought several thousand acres from the Southern Pacific Railroad to the east and the north of the village to ensure a steady supply of water for his holdings. He bought shares in the original Palm Valley Water Company and then formed the Whitewater Mutual Water Company and the Palm Springs Water Company.

With his colleague Alvah Hicks, a carpenter and nascent homebuilder, they subdivided many of Palm Spring's earliest developments: the Merito Vista tract (1925), Las Palmas Estates (1926), and Palm Springs Estates (1927). Recognizing the best way to sell homes was through tourism, Stevens, Hicks and other developers built the legendary El Mirador Hotel in 1927 (which opened in 1928). Before long, Stevens was convincing tourists to trade up to home ownership.

Merito Vista was advertised for its "natural beauty," its status as a playground for the wealthy, and its subdivision into "small estate parcels" for those who "...do not necessarily care to erect pretentious homes here."<sup>112</sup> Indeed the parcel sizes for the 125 lots in Merito Vista are narrow and deep. However, the design of the subdivision deviates from a basic grid pattern to include curving and rounded streets evocative of the suburban residential community plans of Frederick Law Olmstead.<sup>113</sup> Merito Vista was a success as it reportedly "...practically sold out during the first season."<sup>114</sup> Sanborn maps from 1929 reveal that sales may have been brisk, but building was far slower; just twelve parcels in the development had structures associated with them by 1929.<sup>115</sup> Even as late as 1952, aerial photographs show significant numbers of undeveloped parcels within the tract.

<sup>112</sup> "Display Ad 109," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1926.

<sup>113</sup> Olmsted was America's pre-eminent landscape designer in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He designed the Columbian Exposition of 1893, New York's Central Park and the improvements to the White House grounds of 1902.

<sup>114</sup> "Desert Acres Jump to \$1500," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1926, E7.

<sup>115</sup> Sanborn Maps online Los Angeles Public Library Database, Palm Springs Feb 1929, Sheet 8-9.

**PALM SPRINGS**  
**"OUR ARABY"**

If you have not been to Palm Springs, now is the time to go, in order to fully enjoy its sheer natural beauty, its delightfully ideal winter climate and its invigorating elevation.

Men of wealth have always been quick to find and appreciate the beauty spots of America and convert them to their own pleasure, and in the past the development of Palm Springs has been confined to men of large means who pioneered this treasure spot.

With the subdividing, however, of Merito Vista into small estates, its privileges have been made available to those who do not necessarily care to erect pretentious homes here.

Go to Palm Springs this month and while there, investigate Merito Vista, one of the most unique of the exclusive California subdivisions.

(By auto, via the Los Angeles-Imperial Valley Route. Daily stage from Union Stage Depot, Los Angeles to Palm Springs.)

**MERITO VISTA**  
**EVANS-LEE CORPORATION**  
 Exclusive Los Angeles Agents  
 514 California Bank Bldg.  
 Metropolitan 3148  
**CREE & CHAFFEY**  
 Exclusive Palm Springs Agents  
 Palm Springs, California

Advertisement for the Merito Vista subdivision. "Display Ad 109," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1926.



Aerial view of the Merito Vista subdivision in 1952. As a result of sparse residential development in the Merito Vista subdivision even twenty-five years after the original subdivision, Spanish Colonial Revival style homes from the 1920s and 1930s often sit alongside postwar Mid-century Modern-style residences. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1952.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Homes in Merito Vista were chiefly Spanish Colonial Revival, other period revival styles, or early iterations of the California Ranch style. More than twenty of them were reportedly built by carpenter turned general contractor, Alvah Hicks, who developed a reputation for quality building. Often these houses were built on speculation, then quickly sold.<sup>116</sup>

Architecturally significant residences in Merito Vista include the A. Rosenfeld Residence (c. 1939, Paul Laszlo) at 840 Prescott Drive, the Howard Edgerton Residence (Edward H. Fickett) at 777 N. Patencio Road, and a residence by Howard Lapham at 670 W. Stevens Road.

### Las Palmas Estates (1926)

On the heels of his success with Merito Vista, Prescott T. Stevens immediately began subdividing a large parcel of land directly to the north he called Las Palmas Estates. Las Palmas Estates is bordered by Palm Canyon Drive on the east, Stevens Road on the north, Via Monte Vista on the west, and Via Lola on the south. Under the name Evans-Lee Corporation<sup>117</sup> of Los Angeles, the land was purchased for \$150,000 and subdivided into 165 parcels of one-fourth to one-third acre.<sup>118</sup>

Once again a layout of gently curving streets evoking Olmsted's ideas for gracious neighborhood development was employed. The large lots and groups of native palms made it a sentimental favorite of local developer Raymond Cree.<sup>119</sup> Warm weather, recreational amenities, and good schools were featured selling points in advertisements to Los Angeles residents. With ads pronouncing "A Home in Palm Springs is Well within Your Means," Stevens marketed the accessibility of these homes.<sup>120</sup> Hollywood celebrities, Los Angeles businessmen, and Eastern and Midwestern snowbirds soon were building homes in Las Palmas Estates. Despite tremendous growth in Palm Springs after World War II, Las Palmas Estates was

<sup>116</sup> Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends* (San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, 2006), 130.

<sup>117</sup> Evans-Lee was a big Los Angeles Developer; however more research is needed to confirm the relationship with Stevens and Cree.

<sup>118</sup> "Desert Acres Jump to \$1500," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1926, E7.

<sup>119</sup> In the Riverside Community Book, Cree called it "His crowning achievement." Additional research is needed to confirm the role of Cree in the development. Often, the owners, developers, builders, and realtors played multiple roles in multiple developments. For example, someone might be the owner on one tract, the real estate agent on another, or in cases of builders, just build the houses independent of any ownership. In this case, Prescott T. Stevens is listed on the tract map, the *Los Angeles Times* mentions the Evans-Lee Corporation, and Cree is quoted in the Riverside Community Book.

<sup>120</sup> "Display Ad 41," *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1930, B2.

still regarded by Los Angeles society columnist Joan Winchell as “The Bel-Air section of Palm Springs.”<sup>121</sup>

Significant personages known to reside in Las Palmas Estates included radio personality Edgar Bergen at 1575 N. Via Norte, film director Howard Hawks at 1455 Vine Avenue, actress Debbie Reynolds at 670 Stevens Road, and author Sidney Sheldon at 1294 N. Rose Avenue.

Architecturally significant homes in the subdivision include: Spenser Kellogg Residence and Studio (John Porter Clark) at 321 W. Vereda del Sur, H.I. Sparey Residence (Gerard B. Colcord) at 345 Via Las Palmas, the Mrs. Grace F. Robert Residence (Cliff May) at 1133 Camino Marisol, and the Tom and Anita May Residence (1952, William F. Cody) at 424 W. Vista Chino.<sup>122</sup>



The Mrs. Grace F. Robert Residence at 1133 Camino Marisol (Cliff May), photographed by Maynard Parker in 1945 for the *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine*. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.

<sup>121</sup> “Joan Winchell,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1958, A1.

<sup>122</sup> Tom and Anita May were the owners of the namesake Southern California department store chain.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Palm Springs Estates (1927)

In 1927, Prescott T. Stevens once again subdivided a large parcel of land – this time east of Indian Canyon Drive. The smallest of the Stevens subdivisions to date, the curving streets of Palm Springs Estates held just eighty-three lots. The subdivision was bordered by Tamarisk Road to the north, Via Miraleste to the east, Indian Avenue (present-day Indian Canyon Drive) on the west, and the lots just south of Via Colusa on the south.

To support tourism and residential sales, Stevens built Palm Springs' first golf course near the El Mirador hotel, as well as a landing strip to bring visitors by air to the desert community. The Great Depression was hard on Stevens, however. The golf course closed, the hotel was sold, and he died in 1932. Ultimately, Palm Springs Estates would become part of the larger area associated with residences of Hollywood stars known as "The Movie Colony."<sup>123</sup>

By 1939, Palm Springs Estates was well populated with vacation homeowners from Los Angeles, the East, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest. The neighborhood was popular with members of the Los Angeles social circles featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and frequently included wives of wealthy businessmen.<sup>124</sup> Residences from the prewar period in Palm Springs Estates were dominated by the Spanish Colonial Revival and other period revival styles, with postwar infill development in Mid-century Modern and Minimal Traditional styles. Architecturally significant residences within this subdivision include the William T. Walker Residence (Charles O. Matcham)<sup>125</sup> at 635 Via Valmonte.

### Three Tract Neighborhood (1927-1937)<sup>126</sup>

The Three Tract Neighborhood comprises the Vista Santa Rosa, Indian Trail, and Warm Sands Tracts. These tracts were subdivided by various owners, including Pearl and Austin McManus,

<sup>123</sup> The "Movie Colony" was not a tract development, rather a neighborhood name that developed to describe the high concentration of Hollywood personages residing in the area around the El Mirador Hotel. According to *Palm Springs Confidential* author Howard Johns (page 133), the area is located "east of Indian Canyon Drive and extends from Tamarisk Road south to Alejo Road and east all the way to Sunrise Way. It includes the area just north of Tachevah Road known as El Mirador and Ruth Hardy Park between Via Miraleste and Avenida Caballeros." For purposes of this report, tract names are used to discuss development patterns and "Movie Colony" is used when referring to the broader social history of the area.

<sup>124</sup> *1939-40 Palm Springs City Directory*, 87-96.

<sup>125</sup> Include information about Charles O. Matcham.

<sup>126</sup> Based on preliminary fieldwork, there are three adjacent tracts dating to this period that appear eligible as a single historic district, based on the period of development and similar development patterns and architectural styles. Until a more formal moniker for the district is identified, Three Tract Development is being used to identify this area.

over a ten-year period, but have the physical appearance of an early residential subdivision in Palm Springs, related by architectural style and period of development.

In 1927, former Riverside County educator turned real estate investor Raymond Cree (1875-1967) subdivided the Vista Santa Rosa tract into 131 60 x100 foot parcels.<sup>127</sup> Vista Santa Rosa is bordered by Ramon Road on the north, S. Indian Canyon on the west, Calle Palo Fierro on the east, Camino Parocela west of Calle Encilia, and the south side of Calle Rock east of Calle Encilia.

In 1960, Cree described the venture: “One day Nellie Coffman dropped by [my] office and wondered why [I] couldn’t develop a subdivision for the town’s working people.”<sup>128</sup> “Well, we did,” recalled Cree,” and before we knew it, we were selling to people with lots of money who built nice homes.”<sup>129</sup> Lots were priced from \$300 to \$500. Cree’s partner in the Vista Santa Rosa tract was John R.E. Chaffey (1901-1976),<sup>130</sup> an investor in Smoke Tree Ranch as well as developer of the 1934 La Rambla tract (phases one through six) at the southeast corner of Tachevah Drive and Avenida Caballeros. Chaffey was also the founding publisher of the *Palm Springs Limelight*. A review of the 1940 U.S. Census shows the Vista Santa Rosa tract sparsely populated mostly with the middle-class residents of the city. The houses were primarily modest, Spanish Colonial Revival-style residences.

Raymond Cree moved to Palm Springs in 1920 and was appointed the first President of the Palm Springs Union High School District. Cree’s first wife Margaret was a realtor and together they purchased a great deal of land in Palm Springs and in nearby communities. Cree was actively involved with several Palm Springs developments as “...either developer, owner, selling agent or all three.”<sup>131</sup> Among the tracts he was involved with in some capacity other than direct ownership are Palm Canyon Mesa, Merito Vista, and Las Palmas Estates. Cree appears as part owner for the 60-parcel Winterhaven Manor tract (1931-34) along with Elliot M. Bank and Evelyn Bank.

Directly adjacent to the Vista Santa Rosa Tract, on its east side, lies the Indian Trail Tract (1933). This three-street subdivision consists of the east side of Calle Palo Fierro, Indian Trail,

<sup>127</sup> The tract map for this development does not list Cree as an owner, however, various sources indicate Cree was the developer behind this early residential neighborhood. Add citation.

<sup>128</sup> “Date Groves and Palm Trees, Feuds and Sidewinders in the School Yard,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960, 15.

<sup>129</sup> “Date Groves and Palm Trees, Feuds and Sidewinders in the School Yard,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960, 15.

<sup>130</sup> *Riverside Community Book*, 439. Clippings File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>131</sup> “School Ceremony to Recognize Early California Educator,” *Desert Sun*, March 1, 1968.



and Vista del Oro between Ramon Road and Sunny Dunes Road. Subdivided by Pearl McManus and husband Austin McManus into 90 parcels, it was envisioned as an upscale neighborhood with an entrance from Ramon Road on Indian Trail. The tract map for the development shows the design of a bridle path on the median along Indian Trail and large frontage lots along the street. Pearl McManus was a lifelong horsewoman who was a member of the Desert Riders. Incorporating a bridle path into the development was consistent with her vision of the Palm Springs lifestyle. The development was also close to Arol's Buckskin Stables at 1680 E. Ramon Road. In 1936, McManus had Lee Miller<sup>132</sup> construct what is now referred to as the "Casablanca Adobe" (HSPB-68), a vernacular-style adobe home that was occupied in the 1940s by the Hollywood writer Harold Koch. In 1939, the City Directory lists just nine homes on Indian Trail.

Directly adjacent to the Indian Trail Tract is the Warm Sands Tract (1937).<sup>133</sup> Consisting chiefly of Camino Real between Ramon Road to the north to Sunny Dunes Road to the south, construction in this single-family residential tract came swiftly: 12 houses were occupied by the 1939-40 season.<sup>134</sup>

#### Palos Verdes Tract (1928)<sup>135</sup>

The Palos Verdes Tract was initially subdivided by Harriet Dowie Cody and Reta McDowie with Prescott T. Stevens as mortgage holder. The subdivision was developed in three phases. The first series of 43 parcels between Mesquite Avenue and Palos Verde Avenue were the narrowest at only 60 feet wide. The second and third phases included wider parcels of 75 feet. Harriet Dowie Cody (1885-1954) was the wife of architect Harold Bryant Cody. Harold Bryant Cody had respiratory ailments, so the couple moved to Palm Springs in 1916 for the favorable climate. When the Codys were unable to make ends meet, Harriet turned to horse trading, then ultimately to real estate. She began to engage in profitable Palm Springs real

<sup>132</sup> Will add more information about Lee Miller pending additional research, including clipping files at the Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>133</sup> Pending additional information about the subdivider; only the bank is listed on the tract map.

<sup>134</sup> *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1939-40, 89.

<sup>135</sup> Based on preliminary fieldwork, the Palm Highlands Tract and Palos Verdes Tract may be considered as a single residential historic district from the pre-World War II period.

estate deals and eventually used the money to build an inn, Casa Cody, at 175 South Cahuilla Road (HSPB-59).<sup>136</sup>

Significant personages who resided in this neighborhood included Dr. William M. Scholl (the foot care products maker) at 211 East Morongo Road (1941, architect unknown).

Architecturally significant residences in this tract include the Purcell Residence (1933, W.G. Purcell and James Van Evera Bailey)<sup>137</sup> at 252 Ocotillo Avenue.

<sup>136</sup> Greg Norman, *Palm Springs Legends* (San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, 2006), 87-88.

<sup>137</sup> William Gray Purcell, FAIA (1880- 1965) earned his degree in architecture from Cornell University in 1903 and briefly worked for Louis Sullivan in Chicago. He is best known for his work as partner in the firm Purcell and Elmslie, including the Third Church of Christ Scientist in Portland, Oregon. In 1930, Purcell was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis. First he moved to a sanatorium in Banning, then to Palm Springs. James Van Evera Bailey was a young architect who worked with Purcell beginning in 1925 and mostly on his Portland-based projects.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### **Sub-theme: Depression-Era Single-Family Residential Development (1930-1941)**

The popularity of Palm Springs with the Depression-proof movie industry surely provided more economic stability for real estate than in most other cities in the United States. There were also plenty of vacant lots available in existing tracts for those who wished to invest or build a house. New subdivision development, however, did not resume in earnest until the mid-1930s, and when it did, it tended to be smaller tracts than those developed in the 1920s. Like other cities in the country, economic recovery from the Great Depression and residential development and expansion in Palm Springs was halted by the advent of World War II.

Following is a discussion of the significant residential subdivisions recorded during this period.<sup>138</sup> The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded.

#### Smoke Tree Ranch (1931-1980)

Whatever you seek in housing, Palm Springs now has it...those who prefer the familiar are found in the villas and haciendas. Life in levis [sic] revolves around such districts as Smoke Tree Ranch. And the Modernists may lounge on chromium and nylon before houses of glass and steel. These are the houses that Palms Springs built.<sup>139</sup>

Smoke Tree Ranch is a 375-acre resort and housing development located at 1800 South Sunrise Way. Smoke Tree Ranch was one of the few subdivisions developed in Palm Springs during the Great Depression. Originally developed as a dude ranch resort, the “guest ranch” was started in 1930 by L. Mac Blankenhorn and named after the characteristic trees that dot the landscape.<sup>140</sup> A syndicate of investors including C.F. Doyle, developer George Alexander, Nicholas Harrison, architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. (1879-1972), and Blankenhorn purchased the property for \$500,000 and invested another \$100,000 into improvements.<sup>141</sup> Blankenhorn was a successful Pasadena-based realtor/investor during the 1920s.

<sup>138</sup> Note that each subdivision will be reviewed by the survey team to determine which are eligible for designation as historic districts.

<sup>139</sup> Tony Adams, “The House That Palm Springs Built,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1949, H5.

<sup>140</sup> Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, *Palm Springs* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 82.

<sup>141</sup> “Company Buys Property for Development,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1930, D2.

In 1887, prior to its incarnation as a guest ranch, a group of land promoters selected the site for a city called Palmdale, which was connected to the Southern Pacific Railroad by a narrow gauge railway. Residents were to grow “melons, grapes and citrus in the mineral rich soil” with water provided by a stone-lined irrigation ditch.<sup>142</sup> The Ranch still contains adobe ruins from this early period of development. A dig at the site in 1983 yielded artifacts that dated fruit packing activity to 1895. Drought combined with a shutdown of Native American-controlled water caused the Palmdale dream to collapse shortly before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The railway tracks were taken up and the adobe cannibalized and/or abandoned.<sup>143</sup>



This 1941 image of the Smoke Tree Ranch shows the pool as well as the water tower emblazoned with the Smoke Tree Ranch brand. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Early advertisements for the guest ranch emphasized an exclusivity that continues to this day: “Designed for those wishing to escape from the turmoil of weekend resorts...introductions or satisfactory references are required.”<sup>144</sup> The ranch featured cottages, stables, and a school for grades two through eight. Three school buildings and a playground were located along the western border of the ranch. Facilities included the Ranch Rodeo Field, stables, and the pool. The ranch house building contained two dining rooms, kitchen, lobby, and storerooms. There were 15 cottages for guests, two buildings for servant’s quarters, and a twenty-car garage. These buildings were designed by Pasadena-based architect Garrett Van Pelt (1879-1972).<sup>145</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>143</sup> Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>144</sup> Display Ad 9, *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1931, 6.

<sup>145</sup> *Building and Engineering News*, July 5, 1930.

[https://archive.org/stream/buildingengineer30230cont/buildingengineer30230cont\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/buildingengineer30230cont/buildingengineer30230cont_djvu.txt) (accessed January 2015).



The common swimming pool at Smoke Tree Ranch, circa 1957. Source: Calisphere.

In 1936, Fred and Mazie Belle Markham (operating as the Mardo Corporation) bought Smoke Tree Ranch. Whereas Blankenhorn and his syndicate of investors may have been overextended at Smoke Tree Ranch, Markham was able to bring financial stability to the venture. With the help of local educator and real estate investor, Raymond Cree, Markham subdivided the ranch into parcels for single-family residences.<sup>146</sup> This occurred in three phases: 52 parcels in the northern portion of the ranch in 1936; 30 parcels in spring of 1937; and 24 parcels in summer of 1937.

Under the Markhams, the guest ranch did not advertise or seek publicity. The Smoke Tree way of life (for guest ranch patrons as well as homeowners who are historically known as “Colonists”) was simple without the need to impress as, “most who have come here have been

<sup>146</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 99.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

every place, seen everything and done most things.”<sup>147</sup> The gated community also provided hotel-like amenities, including meals in the clubhouse restaurant, a pool, tennis courts, and maid service; “care of property by a capable all-year organization and innumerable services the lack of which makes the ownership of a resort property a burden.”<sup>148</sup>

During incorporation discussions for the city of Palm Springs in 1936, Charles F. Doyle, Vice President of Mardo Corporation, protested against the inclusion of Smoke Tree Ranch within the proposed city boundaries. In 1945, the Markhams sold the entire Ranch operation to the Colony as a group. Colonists retained ownership of their homes and home sites.

Of the approximate 400 acres, 300 acres are devoted to the home sites for the Colonists and twenty acres for the guest ranch. The remaining land was leased for the present-day Smoke Tree Village Shopping Center at the corner of East Palm Canyon Drive and La Verne Way, and for the stables at the southern end of the property. Smoke Tree Ranch purposefully maintained a rustic atmosphere. Homes were required to be one story and sit apart on large lots with no large lawns or non-native shade trees.<sup>149</sup> They were to be built in a traditional Ranch style with a pitched shingle roof.<sup>150</sup> Streets were intentionally left as dirt roads groomed by a sprinkler wagon and scraper. The compound was originally encircled by barbed-wire fencing.

In his book *The Frontier of Leisure*, historian Lawrence Culver identifies Smoke Tree Ranch as looking unlike much of Palm Springs architecture of the time and having a seminal influence on Ranch-style architecture in California and across America. “They were clear early examples of the ranch house—the domestic architectural style that would carpet the floor of the San Fernando Valley after World War II, “ writes Culver, “and appear in every community in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.”<sup>151</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>148</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 166.

<sup>149</sup> Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 166.

<sup>150</sup> Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 74.

<sup>151</sup> Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 167.



This contemporary aerial view of Smoke Tree Ranch looking northwest across the development shows the emphasis on the natural scrubby desert terrain. Source: Mary Macgregor, [activerain.trulia.com](http://activerain.trulia.com).



The California Ranch style Donald Gilmore Residence (1944, Clark and Frey) in Smoke Tree Ranch. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Residents of Smoke Tree Ranch tended to be wealthy industrialists such as the Wyerhaeuser family (of the Washington-based forestry and paper company), King Gillette (of safety razor fame), and Milo Bekins (Bekins Moving and Storage).<sup>152</sup> Another prominent resident was the Reverend Charles E. Fuller, whose house was constructed in 1940-41 and designed by Rose Connor.<sup>153</sup> The Fuller Residence and studio are of adobe construction, reflecting the resurgence of adobe as a contemporary building material in the 1920s and 1930s as advocated by Southern California architects such as John Byers and Clarence Cullimore, Sr. The thermal properties and western heritage of adobe made it a logical choice for Smoke Tree Ranch.<sup>154</sup> The home's owner, Reverend Fuller, gained renown as the radio host and speaker of *The Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, a weekly Sunday broadcast that aired from 1937 to 1968.

The architect Rose Connor (1892-1970), is one of the earliest and most successful woman architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1948, the AIA identified her as one of only ten women architects in California with their own practices.<sup>155</sup> The Iowa-born Connor was educated at the *Ecole Colarossi* in Paris, France, the Municipal School of Art in Birmingham, England, and the New York School of fine arts where she probably began her architectural education.<sup>156</sup> Prior to establishing her own firm in Pasadena in 1937, she worked for Soule & Murphy, Reginald B. Johnson, and Allison & Allison. Her work consisted primarily of small residential commissions for professional women and a series of tract home developments in the post-World War II period for Yardley and for Sturtevant in Lakewood, Downey, and Anaheim.<sup>157</sup>

The Reverend Charles Fuller was Connor's most important patron. In addition to the Smoke Tree Ranch house, Fuller had Connor design two rental residences in South Pasadena (1940), three more houses in South Pasadena (1941-47), the Fuller Residence (1950) in Newport Beach, and the Fuller Residence (1952) in San Marino. Connor worked as an associate

<sup>152</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 250.

<sup>153</sup> *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, April 19, 1940, 43.

<sup>154</sup> One other adobe building by Connor is currently known of in San Gabriel. Connor's work in more traditional materials was documented in several articles in the *Los Angeles Times*. Connor was admitted to the AIA in 1944 and her residential work was published in *Architectural Record* in 1948.

<sup>155</sup> Mary Ann Callan, "Women Succeed As Architects," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1948, B1.

<sup>156</sup> Sarah Allaback, *The First American Women Architects* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 68.

<sup>157</sup> Architects Roster Questionnaire, Rose Connor, AIA, February 14, 1953.



architect for the Fuller Theological Seminary (1952-53) in Pasadena with the firm of Orr, Strange and Inslee.

A rare bit of national publicity for Smoke Tree Ranch occurred in 1954 when Paul Helms and his wife welcomed then President Dwight D. Eisenhower to stay at their home. The President was in Palm Springs for a golfing vacation. The location was selected for its low profile and ability to house the secret service on-site at the guest ranch.<sup>158</sup> Paul Helms was the owner of Los Angeles' Helms Bakery and its famed fleet of yellow neighborhood delivery trucks that were staples of Los Angeles life until the fleet was dismantled in 1957.<sup>159</sup>

One of Smoke Tree Ranch's most famous residents was Walter E. Disney. Disney purchased his first Smoke Tree Ranch home in 1948.<sup>160</sup> In 1954, Disney sold the home to raise money for the creation of Disneyland in Anaheim. According to a 1977 interview with Smoke Tree's Vice President Brad Poncher, Disney's "studio set designers were responsible for the design of some of the ranch's guest cottages."<sup>161</sup> The Disney's purchased their second Smoke Tree Ranch home in 1957, two years after Disneyland opened and Disney's movie and television empire was well established.

<sup>158</sup> "Helms Home to Charm Eisenhowers on Visit," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1954, 17.

<sup>159</sup> Brad Geagley, "Out of the Shadows," *Palm Springs Life*, August 2013. <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/August-2013/Out-of-the-Shadows/> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>160</sup> Allene Arthur, "When the Desert Was Disney's Land," *Palm Springs Life*, December 1977. <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/December-1997/When-the-Desert-Was-Disney-s-Land/> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Confirm source.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



The Markham Residence (1941, 1950, Clark and Frey) reflects Modernist architects Albert Frey and John Porter Clark's preference for clean, simple lines in the traditional language of the ranch house. Source: *Albert Frey, Architect*, p. 73.

Many Smoke Tree Ranch homes were built by the noted local Modernist architect Albert Frey.<sup>162</sup> Frey's preference for modern architecture is evident in the houses he designed at Smoke Tree, where his eye for proportion and simplicity created elegant modern ranch houses. Frey's design for the Lyons Residence (1948, Clark and Frey) was, in fact, deemed "too modern" and the architect was banned from building there for almost three years.<sup>163</sup> Between 1941 and 1983, Albert Frey designed houses and additions for 30 Smoke Tree Ranch residences. Examples include the Markham Residence (1941; 1950), the Overly Residence (1941, 1947, 1948, 1983), Gilmore Residence (1944, 1947, 1956, 1966, 1977), Turner Residence (1948, 1956, 1986), and the Armstrong Residence (1964). Frey also designed additions to the Administration and Dining Room Building (1967) and was responsible for further work on the Smoke Tree Ranch Office in 1983.

<sup>162</sup> There are residences in Smoke Tree Ranch by the both the partnership of Clark and Frey, along with later residences designed by Frey individually.

<sup>163</sup> Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey, Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 74.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



The Lyons Residence (1948, Clark & Frey) was deemed “too modern” for the rustic community the Board of Directors banned Albert Frey from building in Smoke Tree Ranch for three years. Source: *Albert Frey, Architect*, p. 100.

Other architects known to have worked in the Smoke Tree Ranch development include William Cody, Harold B. Zook, Alan G. Siple, and Wallace Neff. Siple designed the Paul Trousdale Residence c. 1950, which was featured in *House Beautiful* magazine.<sup>164</sup> Neff designed the Smoke Tree Ranch home for Mr. and Mrs. George Miller (c. 1950).

<sup>164</sup> Famed industrial and furniture designer Greta Magnusson Grossman (1906-1999) did the interiors for this residence.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Paul Trousdale's California Ranch style residence (c. 1950, Allen G. Siple) in Smoke Tree Ranch, photographed by Maynard Parker for *House Beautiful* magazine. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.



The George Miller Residence (Wallace Neff) in Smoke Tree Ranch. Photograph by Hal Waltz. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### La Rambla (1934-1936, 1945)

In Palm Springs, the lines between selling agents and owner/developers was often blurred. Local real estate agent John R. Chaffey (who had partnered with Raymond Cree in the development of the Vista Santa Rosa tract) developed La Rambla (1934-36, 1945). This neighborhood bordered by Tachevah Drive on the North, Tamarisk on the south, Hermosa on the east, and Avenida Caballeros on the west was developed in six small phases totaling more than 70 parcels. Chaffey experimented with different parcel sizes and frontages in the different phases, with larger frontage lots appearing in later phases. Such lots were often more accommodating of the Ranch-style homes popular in the Palm Springs area. A less ambitious venture by fellow real estate agent John W. Williams, the Ramon Tract (1937), at the south west corner of Ramon Road and Calle de Los Amigos offered twenty four parcels of 50 x 80 foot parcels.



This publicity shot for the *Los Angeles Times* features many prominent agents and developers in Palm Springs. From left to right, J.G. Munholland, R.L. Edwards, Mrs. R.L. Edwards, John Chaffey, Jack Williams, Harold Vorse, Herbert Samson, Harold Hicks, A.G. McManus, and Mrs. William Seaton. Image courtesy of "Realty Prospects Chased on Bicycles," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1933.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Little Tuscany/Chino Canyon Mesa (1935)

Builder and real estate developer Alvah Hicks (1884-1944) worked extensively with Prescott T. Stevens during the 1920s to develop residential neighborhoods in Palm Springs. However, in summer of 1936, Hicks decided to create a subdivision of his own, "Little Tuscany," in a short rocky wash in the north end of Palm Springs. The Little Tuscany tract includes Chino Canyon Road, Lombardy Road and Panorama Road, Vista Drive, W. Cielo Drive, Tuscan Road, and Leonard Road west of Via Monte Vista. Hicks gave the area the name Little Tuscany, "because it reminded him of the Tuscan Hills of Italy."<sup>165</sup> In total, it includes sixty-two large, irregularly-shaped parcels, the first forty of which were subdivided by Hicks and his wife Teresa (Tess) Hicks in 1936-37.

In 1938, Bullock's department store furnished a "Demonstration House"<sup>166</sup> in Little Tuscany that was featured in *California Arts + Architecture* and promoted in the *Los Angeles Times*.<sup>167</sup> The original Ranch-style home with wood construction was a showcase for Hicks, the former carpenter turned homebuilder.

The second phase of Little Tuscany, including the western most portions of Chino Canyon Road and West Cielo Drive, were developed in 1948, by Harold Hicks (1909-1997) and Caroline Hicks, the couple's son and daughter-in-law. Harold carried on the prominence of the Hicks name in Palm Springs by being active in insurance and real estate. While some construction in Little Tuscany took place before World War II, the majority of homes were constructed after the war. Common styles include Mid-century Modern and Hollywood Regency.

As told by Harold Hicks to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1967, "Residents had laughed when his father had been forced to buy 250 acres of what looks like a veritable sea of stones from the Southern Pacific Railroad in order to utilize a few acres as a reservoir site...(he) used mules

<sup>165</sup> "Sand Traps and Sun Lure Outdoor Types to Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1967, J1.

<sup>166</sup> No documentation verifies the location of the Demonstration House, but it may be the property listed as "vacant" in the 1938-39 Palm Springs City Directory at 926 Panorama Road.

<sup>167</sup> "Bullocks Demonstration House," *California Arts + Architecture*, February, 1938, 34.

pulling timber sleds to remove the rocks in a pyramid-like operation.”<sup>168</sup> Later, the younger Hicks used bulldozers to move the stones.

Colloquially the term “Little Tuscany” has also come to reference the Chino Canyon Mesa Tract,<sup>169</sup> which was developed by local realtor Rufus J. Chapman (1907-1970) in 1935, the year prior to Hicks creating his Little Tuscany. This forty eight-parcel subdivision was developed in two phases during 1935-36 and is bordered by Vista Chino on the north, Stevens Road on the south, Wawona Road on the east, and a line mid-block on the west at approximately 500 Wawona Road.

Architecturally significant homes in the area include the iconic Kaufmann Residence (1947, Richard J. Neutra) at 470 W. Vista Chino, Palevsky Residence (1968-69, Craig Ellwood Associates) at 1021 Cielo Drive, the residence for famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy (1946, Albert Frey) at 600 Panorama Road (HSPB-33), residence for business tycoon William Edris (1954, E. Stewart Williams) at 1030 Cielo Drive, the Hill Residence (140, Clark and Frey) at 877 Panorama Road, the Hollywood Regency-style George Hearst Residence (1962, James McNaughton)<sup>170</sup> at 701 Panorama Road, the Freylinghuysen Residence (1959, William F. Cody) at 707 W. Panorama Road, and the Shapiro Residence (1969, William F. Cody) at 711 W. Panorama Road.

#### Vista Del Monte (1935)

Vista del Monte, one of the larger developments of the 1930s, was an extension of the Palm Springs Racquet Club that opened in 1934. Racquet Club owners Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy subdivided the forty six-parcel Vista del Monte tract (1935), just north of the resort in the area bordered by San Rafael Drive to the north, Santa Clara Way to the south, Indian

<sup>168</sup> “Sand Traps and Sun Lure Outdoor Types to Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1967, J1.

<sup>169</sup> The Palm Springs City Directory for 1938-9 does not list the streets contained in the Chino Canyon Mesa tract as being in “Little Tuscany” in the street directory section.

<sup>170</sup> James McNaughton originally got his start as a Hollywood set designer for ABC Television during the 1950s and won a Look Award, a Christopher Award, a Peabody Award, and was nominated for several Emmys. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, McNaughton is credited with “...some of the most spectacular sets in the history of [television] medium.” McNaughton is known for his self-described “Modern Palladian” residences in Palm Springs, as well as the Theodore Jacobs Residence in Las Vegas, and 4002 E. Lamar Road, Paradise Valley Arizona (1974). His architecture is noted for its expressive abstracted forms.

Avenue (present-day Indian Canyon Avenue) to the east, and Virginia Road to the west. At the time, Vista del Monte was the northernmost residential neighborhood in Palm Springs.

#### El Mirador Estates (1935-1936)

Following the demise of the golf course at El Mirador, El Mirador Estates (1935-36) was subdivided by Prescott Stevens' daughter Sallie Stevens Nichols and her realtor husband Culver Nichols, along with local developer Ernest Off.<sup>171</sup> These large parcels continued the elite residential development agenda for the area around the El Mirador Hotel. Given its prime location and large parcels, the tract quickly became home to prominent Villagers who built architecturally significant homes. These include the James V. Guthrie Residence (1935, Clark and Frey) at 666 Mel Avenue, Frey House #1 (1940, Clark and Frey; demolished), the Halberg Residence (1936, Clark and Frey) at 723 E. Vereda del Sur, the Williams Residence (E. Stewart Williams) at 1250 Paseo El Mirador, and the Sieroty Residence (1941, Clark and Frey) at 695 E. Vereda del Sur.

Residents of El Mirador Estates included a number of historically significant personages including movie star Eddie Cantor (720 Paseo El Mirador), bandleader and television personality Lawrence Welk (730 Paseo El Mirador), singer Keely Smith (1055 Paseo El Mirador), MGM Screenwriter Irving Brecher (723 E. Vereda Sur), famed interior designer William Haines (651 Paseo El Mirador), and artist Dale Chihuly (1250 Paseo El Mirador). Local Racquet Club owner and actor Charles Farrell lived at 630 E. Tachevah Road. As a result, El Mirador Estates contributed significantly to the larger area's reputation as the "Movie Colony."

#### Desert Sands (1935-1936)

One of the most interesting tract developments of the mid-1930s is that of Desert Sands (1935-36). It was developed by real estate broker Edmond F. Lindop (1901-1968), who was also a distributor for General Houses, Inc., a company specializing in prefabricated steel houses. General Houses was a pioneer in the production of prefabricated houses, which were designed by Chicago-based architect Howard T. Fisher. The company received national media attention in 1932, and a prototype steel house was exhibited at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

<sup>171</sup> The golf course was developed by Prescott T. Stevens. The Great Depression was hard on Stevens, however. The golf course closed, the hotel was sold, and he died in 1932.



Desert Sands, a 104-parcel development subdivided in three phases is bordered by Tachevah Drive on the north, Tamarisk Road on the south, Sunrise Way on the east, and Hermosa Drive on the west; there is a large parcel in the northeast corner that is not included in the subdivision. In November of 1936, Lindop erected a steel house from General Houses, Inc. in the subdivision. Originally from Chicago, Lindop worked in real estate and became aware of the work of Howard T. Fisher. It is unclear from currently available materials if Lindop envisioned Desert Sands as an entire development of steel houses or a mix of traditional and prefabricated construction.<sup>172</sup> By 1936, Lindop operated three offices: Chicago, Palm Springs and downtown Los Angeles.<sup>173</sup>

Lindop was not the first to erect a prefabricated steel house in Palm Springs. Ralph A. Nesmith, a sales representative for Palm Steel Buildings, Inc. built a Palmer Steel House in Palm Springs circa 1935. As reported in the *Desert Sun* in December of 1936, "Palm Springs now has two or three steel buildings and it is reported a number of people are considering the construction of steel."<sup>174</sup>

#### Palm Springs Village (1936-1937)

Another large tract west of the Racquet Club, the Palm Springs Village Tract (1936-7) with 230 parcels. Local real estate man John Munholland was sales agent for these lots with "100-foot frontage overlooking the entire desert."<sup>175</sup>

#### Palm Highlands Tract (1936)<sup>176</sup>

Just to the south of the Palos Verdes tract, the thirty-acre Palm Highlands Tract (1936) was another small parcel tract. Located in the elbow of the bend at South Palm Canyon Drive, the irregularly-shaped tract is bordered by Tahquitz Avenue to the north, East Palm Canyon Drive and Avenida Moraga to the south, Calle Palo Fierro to the east, and Via Soledad to the west. The entrance to the neighborhood was planned at Via Entrada and Palm Canyon.

<sup>172</sup> Lindop's own house is at 1320 Tamarisk Road; county information indicates it was built in 1937 of wood frame construction. Building permit research is needed to confirm construction method.

<sup>173</sup> "Expansion: Now Three Offices," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1936, 16.

<sup>174</sup> "Steel Houses Growing in Popularity," *Desert Sun*, December 25, 1936.

<sup>175</sup> "Other 28," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1939, A18.

<sup>176</sup> Based on preliminary fieldwork, the Palm Highlands Tract and Palos Verdes Tract may be considered as a single residential historic district from this period.

Parcels in this tract were small for Palm Springs, with most measuring 70 x 100 feet deep. The tract was marketed in 1940 as a “residential and residential-income subdivision” with new selling agents.<sup>177</sup> This push appears to have been only marginally successful in that the Palm Springs City Directory for 1946-47 shows only seventeen residents within the tract (most of whom are local to Palm Springs and not seasonal visitors). However, six homes are listed as “under construction,” many of which are located on Avenida Ortega. A late 1940s real estate ad for the tract indicates the ongoing struggle with the availability of an “entire block in the Palm Highlands Tract zoned for bungalow courts. Room for over thirty units. Worth over \$25,000. Will take \$16,500 for quick sale.”<sup>178</sup> Homes in Palm Highlands tend to be modest period revival or minimal traditional houses.

<sup>177</sup> “Two Beverly Hills Buildings Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1940, A10.

<sup>178</sup> *Palm Springs Villager*, no date.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Single-family residence; Historic District

There are significant residential developments in Palm Springs dating to the period between the First and Second World Wars. These include several large residential subdivisions that were recorded in Palm Springs in the 1920s. Residential growth and development continued through the 1930s, unlike in many cities in the United States; however, in general the large residential subdivisions of the 1920s were replaced by more modest developments. Architecture in Palm Springs from this period largely reflected wider trends in Southern California, including a prevalence for period revival styles; however, there are significant local works of Modern architecture dating to the pre-World War II era.

Although there is infill development throughout many of Palm Springs’ residential tracts, and most early tracts were developed over several decades, residential neighborhoods are typically cohesive in scale and development pattern.<sup>179</sup> Tract features, such as original landscape features and street lights should be considered when evaluating residential neighborhoods.

A **residential property** or **neighborhood** from this period may be significant under this theme:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>180</sup>	As an excellent example of residential development representing a known association with the pre-World War II growth of the city. Residences may be eligible as the earliest examples of residential development in an area; or for their association with significant tracts established during this period. It is unlikely that a single-family residence will be individually eligible solely for its association with a significant residential tract; however, one may be eligible as a model home, or as the first or last remaining residence constructed within a significant or early residential tract. It is anticipated that residences from this period eligible under Criterion A will be eligible primarily as contributors to historic districts.

<sup>179</sup> Multi-family residential development is discussed in a separate theme; however, districts from this period may include single- and multi-family residences.

<sup>180</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

CRITERIA	REASON
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Significant persons within this theme include members of the community who may have been influential in the development of Palm Springs, or who gained significance within their profession. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of residences that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district; eligible districts may span several periods of development. Residences from this period may also contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes. District boundaries may represent original tract boundaries, or they may comprise several adjacent tracts, or a portion of a tract or neighborhood. The district must be unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, and architectural quality. Tract features, including street lights, landscaping, parkland, and other amenities may contribute to the significance of the district.

### Single-family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>181</sup> A residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. <sup>182</sup>
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

<sup>181</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>182</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	<p>A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style, or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique.<sup>183</sup> A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.</p>
A/1/6 (District)	<p>In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district’s historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement roof materials, replacement garage doors, and replacement of windows may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. Major alterations such as substantial additions that are visible from the public right-of-way or alter the original roofline would not be acceptable. Original tract features, such as street trees, street lights, and other planning features may also be contributing features to the historic district under this theme. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.</p>

<sup>183</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Single-family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in residential development from this period, including tract development; an association with an important developer; the increasing importance of the automobile; or a direct association with tourism in Palm Springs;
- represent an excellent, rare, or influential example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- reflect planning and design principles from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)**

This theme explores the design and construction of early 20<sup>th</sup> century multi-family residences in Palm Springs. Despite the city's growing reputation as a tourist destination during the 1920s,<sup>184</sup> multi-family residential development did not begin in earnest until the 1930s when a number of "new and luxurious apartments" were constructed.<sup>185</sup>

Unlike densely populated urban areas of Southern California where duplexes, four-plexes, and large multi-storied apartment buildings flourished during the teens and twenties, multi-family residential development in Palm Springs generally took three forms: mixed use commercial and residential, bungalow courts, and two-story apartment buildings. In most cases, these multi-family configurations were listed as "apartment-hotels" with "housekeeping apartments"<sup>186</sup> where renters could rent by the day, week, month, or season. They were also distinguished from hotel/resort accommodations by the presence of kitchens or kitchenettes and a lack of common congregating areas and/or recreational amenities.

The bungalow court was an adaptation of the Craftsman bungalow as an innovative solution for higher density housing for Southern California's growing middle class. The courts promoted a specific style of living, providing the amenities of a single-family residence – privacy, gardens, and porches – with the convenience of an apartment – affordability, community, and security in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The courtyard form was quickly embraced by advocates for better housing conditions for the working class. For a small sum, the courts provided greater comfort and independence than apartment living, while also providing its residents with a sense of community. The courtyard house grew directly out of the California bungalow tradition – a regionally suitable, moderately priced, and carefully designed domestic architecture. The courtyard type would persist into later periods of development, with Spanish Colonial Revival examples in the 1920s, and simplified Minimal Traditional examples, in the 1930s and 1940s, and Modern courts in the post-World War II era.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>184</sup> According to Sanborn maps from 1929, the larger resorts (e.g., El Mirador) provided their own on-site residential accommodations for workers. The seasonal nature of the tourism business in Palm Springs also meant that many workers were likely not full-time residents.

<sup>185</sup> "Building Active in Desert Area," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1930.

<sup>186</sup> "Display Ad 33," *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1936, B2.

<sup>187</sup> The bungalow court led directly to the development of the motel, established in 1925 in San Luis Obispo by Arthur Heineman and designed by his brother and business partner Alfred. The Heinemans adapted the bungalow court type





The two-story El Encanto Apartments (1928, Marshall P. Wilkinson) at 415 S. Palm Canyon Drive in an elegant Monterey Revival style. Source: Mott Collection, California State Library.

One of the first of apartments to open in Palm Springs was El Encanto,<sup>188</sup> (1928, Marshall P. Wilkinson) with its bachelor, double, and triple apartments at 415 S. Palm Canyon Drive.<sup>189</sup> The Sakarah Apartments (c. 1936) at 220 W. Baristo Road featured bungalows accommodating “two to four persons each and consist[ing] of a large living room, dressing room, bedroom with twin beds, kitchen and breakfast nook.”<sup>190</sup> The Town House and Bungalows (c. 1936) at 359 S. Belardo Road offered an apartment in the two-story main building or in one of its surrounding bungalows.<sup>191</sup> Sunshine Court at 343 N. Palm Canyon Drive (demolished) offered 26 individual units with proximity to the McDonnell golf course.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>188</sup> El Encanto was owned in part by Mrs. Gaylord Wilshire, wife of the land developer and publisher from which Wilshire Boulevard and the Gaylord Apartments in Los Angeles take their names.

<sup>189</sup> “Building at Resort to Open Soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1929, D4.

<sup>190</sup> “Sakarah Offers Home in the Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1939, B10.

<sup>191</sup> “Display Ad 33,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1936, B2.

<sup>192</sup> “Display Ad 36,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1941, B5.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

In the 1939-40 *Palm Springs City Directory*, 37 apartments are listed. The majority of these were clustered along Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drive, or a short distance from those main thoroughfares on streets such as Tamarisk Road, Baristo Road, Belardo Road, and Andres Road. For example, a twelve-unit apartment fronting on the corner of Palm Canyon and Baristo Road (believed to be Casa de Beverly at 296 Palm Canyon Drive) contained eight-single and four-double apartments by architect Joseph Miller of Los Angeles.<sup>193</sup> Due to expanding commercial development during the post-World War II period, many of these prewar multi-family residential buildings were demolished or significantly altered.



The Casa Palmeras Apartments (c.1930, Paul R. Williams) at 175 E. Tamerisk Road. This one, with distinctive Moroccan influenced tower details, shows the preference for fanciful Spanish Colonial Revival style apartments. Source: Mott Collection, California State Library.

<sup>193</sup> Combining a description of the location from the *Los Angeles Times* with the 1939 Palm Springs City Directory, this is believed to be Casa de Beverly.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Spanish Colonial Revival was the predominant architectural style associated with multi-family residential buildings in Palm Springs from this period, although there were some Monterey Revival and other period revival examples. Architecturally significant apartments from the period include the El Encanto Apartments (1928, Marshall P. Wilkinson)<sup>194</sup> at 415 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Casa Palmeras Apartments (c.1930, Paul R. Williams) at 175 E. Tamarisk Road/783 Indian Canyon Drive, and Mira Monte Apartments (c. 1930, Paul R. Williams) at 265 E. Ramon Road. Other known works from this period include a Retail/Apartment Building (1936, Floyd E. Brewster)<sup>195</sup> and a 2-story, 14-unit Spanish Colonial Revival-style apartment building (1937, Edith Northman),<sup>196</sup> both at undetermined locations. El Encanto was published in the July 1932 issue of *Architectural Record*. Other more Modern-style apartments included the Chaney Apartments (1939, Clark and Frey) at 257 Tamarisk Road, and La Siesta Court (1936, Clark and Frey published as Van Pelt and Lind) at 247 West Stevens Road, and the Town House and Bungalows (c. 1937).<sup>197</sup>



Mira Monte Apartments (c. 1930, Paul R. Williams) at 265 E. Ramon Road was a one-story courtyard apartment house in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Source: Mott Collection, California State Library.

<sup>194</sup> Marshall P. Wilkinson (1892-1969) was a Los Angeles-based designer of traditional period revival style homes from the 1920s through the 1940s. His work was widely published in *Architectural Digest* and *Architectural Record*. Wilkinson also designed several commercial buildings in Hollywood including the General Services Studios (1937), and the Bell and Howell Company Building (1931).

<sup>195</sup> Floyd E. Brewster, AIA (1888-1971) was a practicing architect in Riverside starting in 1918. In 1922, he went to work for George Washington Smith. Brewster also worked with architect Carlton Winslow, Sr. on the Spanish Colonial Revival design of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (c. 1926).

<sup>196</sup> Danish born-architect Edith Norman, AIA (1893-1956) is best known for her multi-family residential buildings around Los Angeles, including the New Jersey Street Apartment Building (1928-29). Northman studied architecture at USC from 1927-1930. Northman's designs spanned the full spectrum of popular revival styles including Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Colonial Revival, etc. According to the Library of Congress, she was responsible for the design of some 200 buildings in and around Los Angeles between 1926 and 1938. Northman also worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the war and beginning in 1945 taught drafting at the Los Angeles Adult Education Center.

<sup>197</sup> The architect of the Town House and Bungalows is pending further research.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Multi-family residence (mixed use commercial and residential, bungalow court, two-story apartment building); Historic District

Multi-family residential development did not begin in earnest in Palm Springs until the 1930s. Many early multi-family residences in Palm Springs have been demolished to accommodate new development; therefore, early examples are relatively rare. The predominant architectural style of apartment buildings from this period is Spanish Colonial Revival; however other period revival styles are also represented. There are numerous architecturally significant examples designed by prominent architects.

A **multi-family residential property** from this period may be significant under this context:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>198</sup>	As an excellent example of early multi-family residential development reflecting the growth of Palm Springs during the pre-World War II era. Eligible examples may represent the earliest extant multi-family residences in Palm Springs.
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period; as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect; or as an excellent, rare, or threatened multi-family residential property type. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

<sup>198</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of multi-family residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. It is more likely that multi-family residences will contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes.

### Multi-Family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>199</sup> A multi-family residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. <sup>200</sup>

<sup>199</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>200</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>201</sup> A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement roof materials, replacement garage doors, and replacement of windows may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. Major alterations such as substantial additions that are visible from the public right-of-way or alter the original roofline would not be acceptable.

<sup>201</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Multi-Family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a multi-family residential property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in multi-family residential development from this period; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; or
- represent an important or rare multi-family residential property type;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- reflect planning and design principles from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1939-1979)<sup>202</sup>**

Palm Springs is said to be the “jeweled showcase of mobile living.” Probably nowhere else has this latest American phenomena reached such perfection in terms of simplified luxury and informal elegance. Here the mechanics of business have out-run lexicography. New words and terms are needed to describe what goes...it is a bit of a contradiction to apply the term “mobile home” to the many establishments where sturdy cabanas, car ports, fountains and stone walls enclose the central living unit. Hundreds of these homes can be seen in our many “super deluxe” parks.”<sup>203</sup>

Trailer and mobile home parks were largely a post-World War II phenomenon, but they have their roots in pre-war America. The growth in automobile ownership, combined with a post-World War I restlessness led to the rise of family camping trips as a popular past time during the mid-1920s. Enterprising car campers began building their own canvas tent trailers on wooden single-axle platforms. The idea caught on and soon several manufacturers were making recreational tent trailers; these were called “travel trailers” or “trailer coaches” by the nascent industry. Soon manufacturers began to build larger trailers and add amenities such as camp stoves, cold-water storage, and fold-down bathroom fixtures.<sup>204</sup>

The Great Depression proved a boon for the travel trailer industry as thousands of migrants from the Dust Bowl made their way to California – many in modified travel trailers – and with housing for the new migrants scarce, many turned to travel trailers as full-time living accommodations.<sup>205</sup> Campgrounds that accepted the trailers were referred to as “trailer parks” and their more urban concrete counterparts became known as “trailer courts.” By 1938, the American Automobile Association calculated the number of travel trailers at 300,000 and estimated ten percent of them were being used for extended full-time living, not recreational travel.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>202</sup> The period of significance for this theme may be revised pending additional research on the date of the Ramon Trailer Park. Although trailer parks became more common in the post-World War II era, the first trailer park in Palm Springs was established in the 1930s; therefore, the Trailer Park theme is included in this section of the historic context.

<sup>203</sup> Vollie Tripp, “Jewelled Showcases,” *Palm Springs Villager*. No date or page.

<sup>204</sup> John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, WA: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 15.

<sup>205</sup> Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 15.

<sup>206</sup> Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 15.



Some citizens reacted to the trailer parks and courts as unsightly and argued they were occupied by people of questionable character. In response, many cities passed zoning ordinances designed to keep the trailer villages out: banishing them from the city limits, prohibiting the use of such trailers for living, or requiring that they be moved every few days. Far from being reviled, Palm Springs' affection for the trailer park dates back to this pre-World War II period. In 1937, trailer manufacturers sponsored a caravan to Palm Springs. Over sixty trailers left Los Angeles but by the time they reached Palm Springs, some 275 trailers were part of the group.<sup>207</sup>



The Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road as featured in a postcard.

<sup>207</sup> "Rolling Homes Go Into High," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1937, 14.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

In the 1930s, Ramon Trailer Park was established as the city's first trailer park development.<sup>208</sup> The Ramon Trailer Park was a 256-unit park featuring a clubhouse, swimming pool, and recreational courts at the center.<sup>209</sup> The park's design included a system of curving streets and use of the "town-house" layout for trailers in which the mobile home faces away from the street and is placed "in depth" to maximize privacy.<sup>210</sup> The use of diagonal spaces (vs. rectilinear) spaces also created a more attractive community and efficient use of land. Automobile parking was located next to the trailer unit and not relegated to clustered parking areas as it was in some trailer park developments around the country. By 1940, the Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road offered room for 150 trailers and even offered furnished trailers for rent.<sup>211</sup>

Come for a day, a week or for the season!

**RAMON**  
Trailer Park

In Palm Springs

For **SUNSHINE ALL WINTER**

RAMON TRAILER CAMP gives you unexcelled accommodations in beautiful surroundings, THE FINEST IN WESTERN AMERICA! Room for 150. Private baths if desired. Advance reservations desirable. Write for information.

FURNISHED TRAILERS FOR RENT

J. R. HENDERSON, P.O. Box 760, Palm Springs, Calif., or Phone 7900

1940 ad for Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road with space for 150 trailers. *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1940, B5.

<sup>208</sup> Ramon Court appears as the lone entry in the 1939 City Directory. Additional research is needed in prior directories to determine if the court was established prior to this date.

<sup>209</sup> The number of units represents current spaces, not historical spaces which may have been combined over the years to accommodate larger homes.

<sup>210</sup> Frederick H. Bair, Jr., *Regulation of Mobile Home Subdivisions*. Chicago, IL: American Society of Planning Officials, April 1961, <https://www.planning.org/pas/at60/report145.htm> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>211</sup> "Display Ad 42," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1940, B5.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Contemporary plan of Ramon Trailer Park features 256 spaces with clubhouse and amenities located at the center. It is currently unknown if the historical number of spaces was the same.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Shuffleboard tournament at Ramon Trailer Park, featured in the *Palm Springs Villager* in the mid-1950s.

Other trailer parks established in the 1930s include the Desert Trailer Village at 432 E. Andreas Road, Hatchitt's Auto Court at 196 S. Indian Avenue, and Mountain View Trailer Park and Furnished Rooms at 279 S. Indian Avenue.

The dire need for postwar housing in many communities changed the perceptions of trailer living after World War II. The industry responded quickly to the need and designed the first true house trailer: a 22-foot long, eight-foot wide trailer with a canvas top that included a kitchen and a bathroom. The U.S. Government purchased 35,000 of these units and constructed 8,500 trailer parks to hold them. As the demand for postwar housing increased and people began to migrate to the west to live, demand for house trailers that could be towed by the family car and used for year-round living increased. Once the industry was freed from wartime materials restrictions, it responded with a number of new models using metal siding and larger bathrooms and kitchens.

As described by author Lawrence Culver, "Though perhaps tainted by negative connotations elsewhere, in Palm Springs a trailer park was simply an extension of the resort's vacation

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

atmosphere.”<sup>212</sup> For the 1946-47 season, the *Palm Springs City Directory* listed four options: Desert Trailer Haven at 601 E. Andreas Road, Desert Trailer Village at 432 E. Andreas Road, Orchard Trailer Villa at 1862 S. Palm Canyon Drive, and the Rancho Trailer Park at 1563 S. Palm Canyon Drive.

In 1950, Palm Springs became home to the Annual Trailer Rally, organized by the director of the Palm Springs Circus, Jimmy Cooper. By 1954, the event drew over 500 trailers and 1,000 “trailerites” from Arizona, Oregon, Nevada, Florida, and California.<sup>213</sup> The weekend event included a parade of new-model trailers along Palm Canyon drive, chuck wagon breakfasts, dinners, and other western-style parties.



Another view of this month's cover "home." Trailer sits on concrete foundation which doubles as storage space

A unit at Bing Crosby's upscale Blue Skies Trailer Home Village as featured in *Popular Mechanics*, July 1960, 94.

<sup>212</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

<sup>213</sup> "100 Trailer Fans Meet in Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1954, A20.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

One of the most upscale trailer parks in the Coachella Valley, the 1952 Blue Skies trailer park (1952, William F. Cody), was developed by Bing Crosby and contained streets named for film stars. Blue Skies offered "...a bit of Hollywood aura at a decidedly downscale price."<sup>214</sup> It was also marketed as "America's most luxurious trailer park."<sup>215</sup> The travel trailer phenomenon was even immortalized on film by two seasonal Palm Springs residents, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz who were depicted as a honeymooning couple seeing America by trailer in 1954's *The Long, Long Trailer*. So popular was the idea, the *Los Angeles Times* had their own "Times Trailing" column and beat reporter, Jean Jacques.

Realizing that the sales of travel trailers depended upon quality places to park them, manufacturers formed a trade organization that provided developers with trailer park designs and issued an annual ratings guide for customers. These sites had sewer connections and utility hook-ups. Despite these regulations, some communities rallied another round of zoning efforts to eliminate the trailer developments altogether, sometimes classifying the trailers as buildings that inherently did not meet local building codes and outlawing them. Other cities declared trailer parks commercial businesses and relegated them to non-residential zones, industrial areas, and along highway corridors.<sup>216</sup>

In contrast, the Palm Springs area embraced the trailer; it sported a culture that celebrated outdoor living, its seasonal nature, and modern modes of transportation. Down valley, Henry Gogerty's Desert Air Hotel and Cottages offered fly-in accommodations and the ability to "taxi right up to your cottage."<sup>217</sup> Both the Desert Air and the Blue Skies Trailer Park adopted the Country Club approach to trailer transportation-based accommodations with exclusive resort amenities such as clubhouse facilities and swimming pools.<sup>218</sup> Blue Skies even had maid service available.

Far from the image of slum encampments, the *Villager* called Palm Springs "the jeweled showcase of mobile living."<sup>219</sup> Space rentals varied from a low of \$25 per month to \$100 per

<sup>214</sup> Lawrence Iver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

<sup>215</sup> Peter Moruzzi, *Palm Springs Holiday* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 134.

<sup>216</sup> John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, Washington: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 18.

<sup>217</sup> Peter Moruzzi, *Palm Springs Holiday* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 134.

<sup>218</sup> Thomas E. Stinson, "Trailers Join the Country Club," *Popular Mechanics*, 94.

<sup>219</sup> Vollie Tripp, "Jewelled Showcases," *Palm Springs Villager*. No date or page.

month. The larger parks had their own stores, cafes, barber shops, and beauty parlors. Shuffleboard courts were also popular amenities, as were horseshoe courts and even hot mineral water bathing. In the early 1950s, a seasonal population of 6,000 people was estimated to occupy the desert communities' trailer parks.<sup>220</sup>

Around 1953, the 182-unit<sup>221</sup> Horizon Trailer Village opened at 3575 E. Palm Canyon Drive.<sup>222</sup> It was featured as a model of upscale trailer park living in the *Los Angeles Times*. Horizon featured a clubhouse, swimming pool, shuffleboard courts and other amenities. The original owners were Al Olsen and Jack Colt. Significant personages known to have lived at Horizon Trailer Village included singer and actress, Lillian Roth.<sup>223</sup>



Postcard of the 284-space Rancho Trailer Park which was located at 1563 South Palm Canyon Drive.

<sup>220</sup> Vollie Tripp, "Jewelled Showcases," *Palm Springs Villager*. No date or page.

<sup>221</sup> The number of units represents current spaces, not historical spaces which may have been combined over the years to accommodate larger homes.

<sup>222</sup> The Horizon Mobile Home Village website dates the founding of the park to 1958; however, *Los Angeles Times* articles reflect that it was already open by April 1954.

<sup>223</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, Inc., 2008), 276.

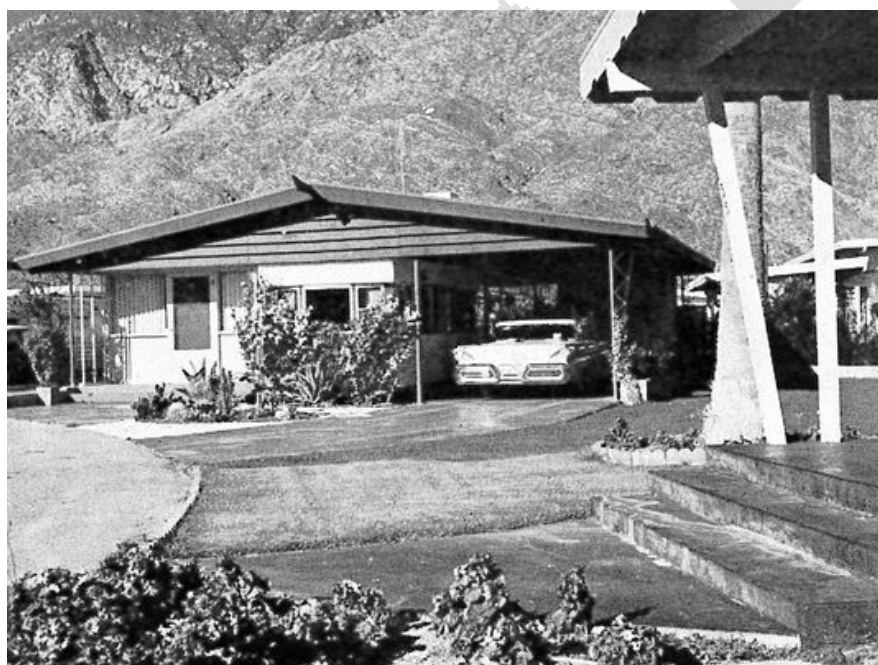
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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

A 1957 syndicated article in the *New York Herald Tribune* cemented Palm Springs' place in the pantheon of trailer park culture. "In the world's jazziest trailer park on the fringe of this upholstered oasis the one word you may not use," wrote the author Horace Sutton, "is 'trailer.' They are not trailers, they are 'mobile homes,' see?"<sup>224</sup> The article goes on to discuss trailers with color coordinated cars, grass lawns, golf carts, and evening activities.

Palm Springs trailer communities of the mid-1950s included the 284-space Rancho Trailer Park located at 1563 South Palm Canyon Drive, a fully landscaped park that featured a grocery, grill, barber shop, beauty shop, recreation hall, shuffleboard, and horseshoe court. Other trailer communities in Palm Springs at the time included the Horizon Trailer Village at Highway 111 and Araby Point, McKinney's Palm Canyon Court and Trailer Park<sup>225</sup> at 634 S. Palm Canyon Drive, the Orchard Trailer Villa and Motor Court at 1862 S. Palm Canyon Drive, the Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road, and the Springs Trailer Court at 174 N. Indian Avenue.



The home of Harlie and Helen Kugler at Sahara Park. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>224</sup> Horace Sutton, "A Traveler's Diary," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1957, F12.

<sup>225</sup> The proprietor Oliver McKinney also ran Palm Spring's first nursery.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



In the mid-1950s, the 254-unit Sahara Trailer Park opened at 1955 S. Camino Real.<sup>226</sup> The Sahara Trailer Park was featured nationally in *Popular Mechanics* in *National Geographic* for distinctive new features such as cabanas and room annexes built around mobile homes that had become immobile.<sup>227</sup> The semi-permanent cabana or ramada became a common feature in trailer homes in Palm Springs. The ramada was “a kind of three-way roof, one over the patio, a higher roof over the trailer, and another to make a carport.”<sup>228</sup> The Sahara Trailer Park also featured in the *Palm Springs Villager* as one of the showcase communities. Sahara had a clubhouse, shuffleboard courts, pool, and spa centrally located within the community. As in the Ramon Trailer Park, diagonal (instead of rectilinear) spaces created a more attractive community, an efficient use of land, and a more pleasant visual cadence for the streetscape. Trailer parks were also apparently good businesses. In 1963, Roy Smith sold his one-half interest (over \$500,000) in the Sahara Trailer Park to Jud and Lorna Sessions, owners of the 35-acre Rancho Trailer Park.<sup>229</sup>



Image of a ramada in the Sahara Trailer Park as featured in *Popular Mechanics*, July, 1960, 99.

<sup>226</sup> Pending additional City Directory research to determine the date this park was established.

<sup>227</sup> Rene Brown, “Palm Springs a Trail Blazer in RV Style,” *Desert Sun*, March 27, 2014.

<sup>228</sup> “Trailer Fans Lead Blissful Relaxed Life,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1954, B1.

<sup>229</sup> “Sahara Park Interest Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1963, O22.

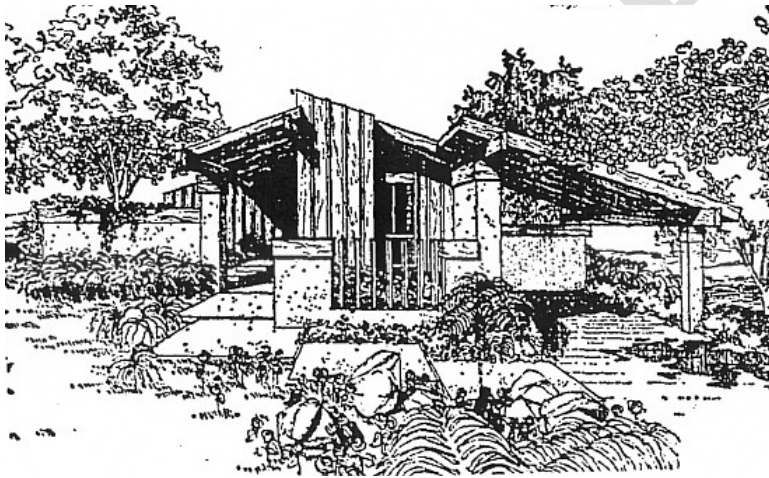
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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

During the 1950s and 1960s, “mobile homes,” as they had become known, were growing longer and wider. During the 1950s the length grew from 38 feet, to 40 feet, then 50 feet and finally upwards to 55 feet. Then Wisconsin manufacturer Elmer Frye broke the mold with the first ten-foot wide trailer that now required special transport permits; by 1960, the “ten wide” had over 90% market share.<sup>230</sup> By 1963, the industry split into mobile homes and recreational travel trailers (later to be known as RVs).<sup>231</sup>

In 1970, Accent Enterprises, a Fullerton-based developer of mobile home parks developed a forty-two acre site on Palm Canyon Drive between Linden Drive and Bogie Road for a \$1.3 million, 244-space mobile home park with extensive recreational facilities. The development featured architecturally designed ramada shelters in a shed-modern style popular at the time.<sup>232</sup>



Ramada design by Accent Enterprises for a 42.3-acre site of a mobile home community on Palm Canyon Drive between Linden Drive and Bogie Road. *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1970, J31.

<sup>230</sup> John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, Washington: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 18.

<sup>231</sup> Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 19.

<sup>232</sup> It is unclear if the plans for this park were realized; pending further research.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Nationally, mobile home sales soared in the early 1970s. They reached a historic high of 575,000 in 1972 then sank to 230,000 annually in 1979. In 1974 in response to news stories of poorly constructed mobile homes, Congress passed the National Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standards Act that formally recognized the industry and directed them to develop safety standards. By this time, many mobile homes were not very mobile, and the recession and gas crisis of the early 1970s brought American's love affair with trailers to an end. However, trailer homes continued to prove popular with the retirees who flooded into Palm Springs during the 1970s. Lower housing costs and a vibrant social community appealed to those on fixed incomes.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1939-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Property type: Historic District

The development and rise in popularity of the trailer park/mobile home community reflects the growth in automobile ownership, combined with a post-World War I restlessness that led to camping as a popular past time during the mid-1920s. The trailer park was embraced in Palm Springs unlike in many other cities. Eligible mobile home communities will be early examples of the type (likely dating to the 1930s or early 1940s), or must display innovative characteristics or distinctive design details.

A **trailer park/mobile home community** may be significant under this theme as a historic district:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District) <sup>233</sup>	As an early and excellent example of a trailer park/mobile home community in Palm Springs. Eligible trailer parks must represent an early example of the type, display unique or innovative design or planning characteristics, and have distinctive and cohesive design details.

<sup>233</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### **Trailer Park/Mobile Home Community Development (1939-1979): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a trailer park/mobile home community to be eligible for designation as a historic district, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. The trailer park must retain its original layout, street pattern, and planning characteristics, and the individual trailers must predominantly date from the original period of development. Original accessory buildings and amenities, including manager's office, pool, clubhouse, recreational, and other facilities should be present. An eligible trailer park/mobile home community will retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association.

### **Trailer Park/Mobile Home Community Development (1939-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a trailer park/mobile home community must:

- represent an early example of a trailer park/mobile home community in Palm Springs;
- reflect unique or innovative design or planning characteristics;
- display distinctive and cohesive design details;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

**THEME: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)**

Commercial buildings in Palm Springs, c. 1925. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

Following the conclusion of World War I, Palm Springs completed its transformation from a health resort to an exclusive winter resort. Several resort hotels were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, cementing Palm Springs' reputation as a first-class resort community. Commercial development during this period included facilities that catered to the tourist and seasonal community, along with a growing number of commercial establishments to serve the permanent residents. The main commercial thoroughfares in Palm Springs are along Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drive; the Las Palmas Business Historic District was designated by the City in 1986.<sup>234</sup>

In an era when architecture was dominated by traditional styles, certain styles were considered appropriate for specific uses: Gothic, for example, was for churches, Beaux Arts and Classical

<sup>234</sup> The Las Palmas Business Historic District is bounded by Alejo Road to the south, El Alameda to the north, and includes most properties fronting N. Palm Canyon and N. Indian Canyon Drives on both sides. The district will be reviewed by the project team to determine whether the period of significance for the district should be revised to incorporate buildings constructed in the post-World War II period, and if there are additional buildings that could be considered contributors to the district.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

was commonly used for business and civic buildings. In the desert environment of Palm Springs, traditional southwestern adobe, hacienda, and wood ranch vernacular types were believed to be the best styles and types, both for residences and commercial buildings. Palm Springs' Desert Inn was an example of this, and later the larger El Mirador Hotel reflected an even more elaborate use of Spanish-derived styles.

Development in the small town was influenced largely by local landowners. Among these, Pearl McCallum was part of a long established local family; her connections to the movie industry in Los Angeles introduced her to architect Lloyd Wright. Wanting to develop the resort industry in Palm Springs, in 1925 McCallum hired Wright to design a new resort in the center of Palm Springs – the Oasis Hotel (partially demolished). Between Schindler (who designed the 1922 Popenoe Cabin) and Lloyd Wright, the early influence on Palm Springs of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic design concepts can be seen. The Oasis Hotel is the first of many innovative Modern concrete buildings in Palm Springs.



The Oasis Hotel Tower, c. 1937 (HSPB-10). Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

Lloyd Wright had moved to Southern California in 1911 after training with his father, Frank Lloyd Wright, in Chicago and Europe. Working in San Diego and Los Angeles with the Olmsted brothers and Irving Gill, Wright was committed to Modern architecture, which involved the exploitation of modern construction materials and techniques, and adapting the design to an expression of their characteristics, rather than repeating traditional styles and details. This is seen in his design for the Oasis, an original and significant example of Modern architecture in the United States. For its construction Wright selected concrete for its high insulation value in the desert climate, and used an advanced system of slip-form concrete, expressing its layered construction method in its architecture. The poured concrete system involved building one-foot high wood form boards that outlined the walls; as the first layer dried, the form boards were "slipped" up to serve as the form boards for the second layer of the wall, and so forth until the building and its landmark tower were completed. Wright

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

expressed the horizontal lines of each set of form boards, and each poured layer, in incised lines left on the surface. Poured concrete ornament was also integrated into this process. Gaps for vertical slit windows were also integrated into the construction process to provide natural light.

The plan of the Oasis Hotel, as a resort, responded to the desert climate. It included single and multi-storied wings around a large courtyard. A dining room incorporating scissor trusses for its roof and surrounded by French doors on three sides responded to the desire for indoor spaces to experience the outdoor climate; for chilly nights, braziers held fires to warm the space. Existing trees were left in place and rose through the dining room ceiling.



The Oasis Hotel, c. 1937. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



The result is a very early example of concrete Modern architecture which vividly expresses its modern construction. The Oasis Hotel was a confident and mature use of Modern design concepts that compares favorably with other Modern buildings of its times. Though his father became known for his desert architecture in Arizona, Lloyd Wright's Oasis Hotel is an earlier architectural response to the potentially harsh desert climate. R. M. Schindler became noted for his use of the slip form technique at the same time in the Puebla Ribera apartments in La Jolla, CA, but the Oasis deserves similar recognition. Though it is an ancient material, technical advances in the strengthening and application of concrete made it a material of great interest and exploration among Modern architects, especially in the United States. Alongside such examples as Frank Lloyd Wright's concrete textile block house in Los Angeles (developed with Lloyd Wright), and R. M. Schindler's monolithic concrete frame Lovell Beach house (1926), the Oasis Hotel's slip form concrete deserves recognition as a major expression of Modern construction and design.



Kocher-Samson building (1934-35). Source: Gloria Koenig, *Frey*.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Though Palm Springs was still a small, remote town in the 1930s, it attracted two innovative examples of Modern design and planning. As in the 1920s when the Oasis Hotel was built, commercial buildings made significant, innovative contributions to Modernism. One was the Kocher-Samson office (1934-35; HSPB-79), an example of the International Style (a style that had been identified by the influential Museum of Modern Art in New York only three years previously by curators Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson), built by Albert Frey (who had first visited Palm Springs the year before) and his New York partner A. Lawrence Kocher (HSPB-79). The other example is La Plaza (1936), an innovative multi-use, car-oriented shopping center in the center of the Palm Springs commercial district, designed by Harry Williams, who had recently relocated to Palm Springs from Ohio.<sup>235</sup> As Richard Longstreth has documented, Southern California developed a number of new architectural types to respond to the increasing use of the automobile. La Plaza is a sophisticated example of this, integrating retail, apartments, hotel, theater, garage, and parking areas. Though it was designed in a Spanish style, the planning and concept was entirely modern.



La Plaza shopping center, 1938.  
Photograph by Herman Schultheis.  
Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>235</sup> "Plaza Opening Set in Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1936, 10.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY****Property Types: Commercial Building, Commercial Block, Historic District**

Examples of commercial buildings from this period may include hotels, motels, theaters, retail stores, banks, restaurants, commercial storefront buildings, and automobile-related resources including auto dealerships, gas stations, and drive-ins. Commercial properties in Palm Springs associated with this period include the remains of the Oasis Hotel, now wrapped by later development; La Plaza (1936), the town's first shopping center and one of the first automobile-oriented retail developments in Southern California; and a number of other office and retail buildings such as El Paseo (1927) and the Pacific (1936). There are also several small hotels and motor court hotels such as the Colonial House Hotel (1936; now the Colony Palms), the Ambassador Hotel (Spanish Inn, Triada Hotel), and the Orchid Tree Inn (HSPB-72).

A **commercial property** from this period may be significant:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>236</sup>	As an early example of commercial development in Palm Springs. Commercial buildings may be eligible as remaining examples of the original commercial core; as a rare example of an important commercial property type (including theaters, automobile-related types, or neighborhood commercial development); or for a direct association with the tourism industry in Palm Springs.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction from the period. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of commercial buildings that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. A potential commercial district in Palm Springs will likely span several periods of development.

<sup>236</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

**Commercial Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property’s significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	<p>A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s).<sup>237</sup> A commercial property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city’s commercial development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.<sup>238</sup> Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.</p>

<sup>237</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>238</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>239</sup> A commercial property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alteration to individual buildings, such as replacement of storefronts is acceptable. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

<sup>239</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Commercial Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in commercial development from this period, including representing the original commercial core, early automobile-related development, a direct association with tourism; or
- represent a unique or rare commercial property type; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- display the original planning features of a commercial enclave or corridor; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)<sup>240</sup>**

As Palm Springs grew, the need for infrastructure improvements, zoning restrictions, and other controls became apparent. In November 1936, a 30-member committee was formed to study the possibility of incorporation. The committee included early pioneers, developers, and other prominent citizens including Ralph Bellamy, Phil Boyd, Earl Coffman, Alvah Hicks, Fred Markham, Culver Nichols, Warren Pinney, and Jack Williams.<sup>241</sup> Harold Hicks was selected as committee chairman. At its meeting on August 14, 1937 the committee fixed the city boundaries, divided it into seven wards, and drafted the incorporation petition.<sup>242</sup> On Election Day, April 1, 1938, voters approved incorporation by a vote of 442 to 211. Council members were elected to represent each of the seven wards; included in that first Palm Springs City Council were pioneers Alvah Hicks and Austin G. McManus. Philip L. Boyd was appointed the city's first mayor.<sup>243</sup> The city's permanent population in 1938 was 5,336, with a seasonal jump to 8,000, and the city's incorporated area covered 20 square miles.<sup>244</sup>

The first civic building constructed in the new city was the Welwood Murray Memorial Library, constructed in 1941 at the southeast corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and E. Tahquitz Canyon Way. It was named in honor of pioneer hotelier Welwood Murray. Concerned about the lack of reading material in the village, Murray had constructed a small adobe building at the rear of his hotel to house his private library, and loaned out his own books. In 1938, when the city was incorporated, Murray's son George Welwood Murray donated land for the construction of a public library in memory of his father.<sup>245</sup> Albert Frey submitted a Modern design but the library board, led by Nellie Coffman, preferred a more traditional Mediterranean Revival design by John Porter Clark.<sup>246</sup> The Welwood Murray Memorial Library served as the city's main public library until the completion of the new Palm Springs Library Center (300 S. Sunrise Way; William Cody) in 1975.

<sup>240</sup> Note that for the 50% draft the project team focused on the Residential Development themes; other contexts and themes will be further developed in the next draft.

<sup>241</sup> Frank M. Bogert, *Palm Springs First Hundred Years*, <http://palm Springs.com/history/50years.html> (accessed January 2015).

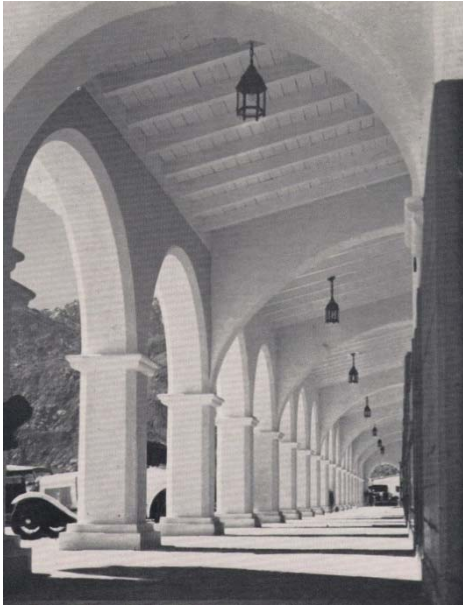
<sup>242</sup> Bogert.

<sup>243</sup> Niemann, 144.

<sup>244</sup> "Your City Hall," commemorative brochure published for the dedication of Palm Springs City Hall, November 8, 1957 (Palm Springs Public Library).

<sup>245</sup> Niemann, 46. The historic site marker on the building today notes that an "additional strip of property on the eastern end of the site" was donated by Miss Cornelia White.

<sup>246</sup> Roger C. Palmer, PhD, *Then & Now: Palm Springs* (Palm Springs: Palm Springs Historical Society, 2011), 15.



Palm Springs High School (1938, G. Stanley Wilson). Source: The Living New Deal, <http://livingnewdeal.org/projects/palm-springs-high-school-palm-springs-ca/>

The Depression-era domestic policies of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, popularly called the New Deal, allocated funds for the construction of public works projects across the country, created jobs for workers improving their own communities. The New Deal marshaled direct government investment to alleviate the problems of poverty, unemployment, and the disintegration of the American economy during the Great Depression. The Public Works Administration (PWA), which began in 1933 and the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA), which began in 1935, funneled significant financial resources to communities across the United States for the construction of roads, bridges, parks, and civic and institutional buildings. In Palm Springs, the Palm Springs High School was constructed with New Deal funding. The high school was designed by G. Stanley Wilson and completed in 1938.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP





Welwood Murray Memorial Library (1938-41, John Porter Clark).

Modern design was used for civic buildings in the 1930s, beginning a trend that would find the civic realm largely defined by Modernism in the 1950s. The Welwood Murray Memorial Library (HSPB-3) by John Porter Clark (1938-41) was one of the first. Clark used the modern material of concrete for the structure. The building shows the influence of Mediterranean and Georgian Revival architecture, but like many PWA Moderne buildings of the 1930s the forms are simplified in a modern way, and the concrete material is used as the finish material both inside and out.



California Telephone & Water Building (1934). Source: *Palm Springs Then and Now*, p. 80.

**CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY****Property Types: Civic or institutional building, Civic improvement**

Civic property types include city halls or other offices for public agencies, post offices, fire and police stations, schools, and libraries. Infrastructural improvements and other civic amenities may also be eligible under this theme, including significant roadways, bridges, and other improvements. Non-governmental institutional property types include churches, meeting halls, and buildings associated with social organizations. Civic and institutional buildings constructed in the 1930s may have an association with New Deal funding programs including the WPA or PWA. Important works of public art were also funded by New Deal-era programs.

Institutional properties associated with this theme include the Frances B. Stevens School (1927, now the Palm Canyon Theater; HSPB-7) at 538 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church (1930) at 151 W. Alejo Road, the California Telephone & Water Building (1934), the Community Church of Palm Springs (1936, Charles Tanner; north addition by Harry Williams) at 284 S. Cahuilla Road, the Welwood Murray Memorial Library (1938-41, John Porter Clark) at 100 S. Palm Canyon Drive, and Palm Springs High School (1938, G. Stanley Wilson; later additions in 1957/1958) at 2248 E. Ramon Road.

A **civic or institutional property** or **civic improvement** from this period may be significant:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event)	As an early example of civic or institutional development from this period, representing some of the earliest institutional buildings in Palm Springs and reflecting area's growth during this period. Civic buildings from this period represent the first government buildings constructed following the incorporation of Palm Springs in 1938. Properties may also be significant for an association with important New Deal era programs.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

### **Civic & Institutional Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>247</sup> A civic or institutional property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's civic and institutional development during this period.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>248</sup> A civic or institutional property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

<sup>247</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>248</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Civic & Institutional Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- reflect important civic or institutional development from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## Palm Springs during World War II (1939-1945)



Looking west from Palm Springs Army Air Field, c. 1943. Barracks line what is now Tahquitz Canyon Way. Source: *Desert Sun*.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: THE WAR EFFORT IN PALM SPRINGS (1939-1945)<sup>249</sup>**

This context explores the development of World War II-related military facilities in Palm Springs. The period of significance under this context begins in 1939, when the Palm Springs Airport was established. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 significant material resources and labor were dedicated to the war effort, and nearly all private construction ceased for the duration of the conflict.

What is now Palm Springs Airport was established by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1939 as an Air Corps landing field, in anticipation of the United States' eventual entry into the war.<sup>250</sup> The air field had an A-frame terminal building and two runways. Concrete parking pads or "tie downs" were built in other parts of the city to disperse aircraft away from the field in case of enemy attack. In March of 1942 General George S. Patton established the Desert Training Center at Fort Young, an hour east of Palm Springs, to train his army for combat in North Africa. In Palm Springs itself, the Hotel El Mirador was purchased by the Army in 1942 and converted to Torney General Hospital, a 1,600-bed facility for wounded troops returning from overseas. An adjoining detention camp housed approximately 200 Italian prisoners of war who worked at the hospital.

Resources associated with this context are scarce. The airport has been expanded and upgraded a number of times. Desert Regional Medical Center now occupies the former El Mirador/Torney site. However, some remnants of World War II-era development may remain on both properties. A surviving tie down is located on Easmor Circle near the airport (HSPB-40).

<sup>249</sup> Note that for the 50% draft the project team focused on the Residential Development themes; other contexts and themes will be further developed in the next draft.

<sup>250</sup> There were two airports/airstrips: one further west in Section 14 and the main airport. There may still be some Quonset huts around the outskirts of the airport property from the WWII era.

**THE WAR EFFORT IN PALM SPRINGS (1939-1945): ELIGIBILITY****Property Types: Commercial, civic, or institutional building; structures, sites, or objects**

Property types significant under this context include commercial, civic, or institutional buildings co-opted or developed specifically to support the war effort; structures, sites, or objects developed specifically for the war effort or in response to the onset of World War II (examples may include tie downs, air raid sirens, Quonset huts). Resources associated with this theme are rare.

A **building, structure, site, or object** from this period may be significant:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event)	For a specific association with the World War II war effort in Palm Springs.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### The War Effort in Palm Springs (1939-1945): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>251</sup> A property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the war effort during World War II in Palm Springs.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>252</sup> A property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

<sup>251</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>252</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*



**The War Effort in Palm Springs (1939-1945): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- have a direct association with the war effort during World War II;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1979)



Palm Springs City Hall (1952, Clark, Frey & Chambers). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1958. Source: Getty Research Institute.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**CONTEXT: POST-WORLD WAR II PALM SPRINGS (1945-1979)****Overview**

This context explores the post-World War II boom and related development that left Palm Springs with what many consider the largest and finest concentration of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Modern architecture in the United States. Hollywood film stars and Eastern industrialists were joined in the postwar decades by ever-increasing numbers of tourists. The growing prosperity of the postwar years and the rise of the car culture created a leisured, mobile, middle class that sought, in Palm Springs, the “good life” that had previously been available only to the wealthy. This surge of visitors and seasonal residents - by 1951 the city’s winter population swelled to almost 30,000 from a permanent population of 7,660 - coincided with the peak of Modernism’s popularity.<sup>247</sup>

The population growth accelerated in the 1950s, bringing a demand for civic necessities such as schools, libraries, museums, a city hall and police headquarters, as well as offices, stores, and housing. Palm Springs’ growth as a tourist destination brought a demand for inns, resorts, and tourist attractions. It also introduced a demand (already developing in suburban areas of larger cities, especially Los Angeles) for mass produced housing tracts to provide affordable second homes for a growing middle class. This economic climate provided many opportunities for Palm Springs’ small group of local architects (as well as several Los Angeles architects) to explore and develop a wide range of architectural types and ideas.

The desert climate and casual lifestyle all but demanded unconventional design, and clients were more accepting of, even sought out, a more adventurous style in the resort atmosphere of Palm Springs than they would have in their permanent homes.<sup>248</sup> In the two decades after the war Palm Springs was transformed with new commercial and institutional buildings, custom homes, and a large number of housing tracts.

This context examines influences on the built environment in Palm Springs following the conclusion of World War II. The first section provides an overview of the important developments in architecture during this period and a brief discussion of some of the

<sup>247</sup> Western Resort Publications, “Yearbook,” 16.

<sup>248</sup> Jeff Book, “Palm Springs Revisited,” *Departures*, October 2000, <http://www.departures.com/articles/print/palm-springs-revisited> (accessed October 2014).

significant architects. Following the introductory section are the themes and sub-themes, divided by property type: single-family residential development, multi-family residential development, commercial development, and civic and institutional development. At the conclusion of each theme are registration requirements for evaluating resources under that theme.<sup>249</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Following theme discussions of Palm Springs' post-World War II development are separate contexts for the Entertainment Industry and the LGBT community in Palm Springs. Both of these contexts span several periods of development and overlap with other contexts and themes.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979)****Introduction: Postwar Residential Architecture in Palm Springs**

Following precedents started in the 1930s, the decade of the 1940s further reinforced the prominence of Modern architecture in defining the growth of Palm Springs after World War II. This paralleled the trend throughout California; as prosperity returned with the war, and as the peacetime return of soldiers brought a demand for new development, a young generation of architects exposed to Modernism in their training or travels before and during the war wanted to put those ideas into practice. Though many clients still preferred traditional style, their architects, committed to Modern ideas, championed its cause. In one prominent example, Frank Sinatra asked architect E. Stewart Williams for a Colonial house in 1947; Williams was able to convince him to build a Modern house. Residential designs in the 1940s established the pattern of a wide range of interpretations of Modern architecture. The decade brought the Palm Springs building which was, and remains, its most famous in terms of international recognition. More architects who would become central figures in the Palm Springs School moved there to settle in the 1940s. William Cody, a graduate of USC School of Architecture, moved to Palm Springs in 1946 for health reasons. After serving in the war, E. Stewart Williams joined his father, Harry, and his brother Roger to begin their joint practice.

Albert Frey had worked with Le Corbusier in Paris in 1929 before immigrating to the United States. He worked first in New York, but after visiting Palm Springs in 1935, the Swiss-born architect determined to settle there. Though trained in European Modern ideas, he quickly adapted them to the desert conditions which appealed to him, arriving at a varied an original expression of Modernism. While exploring the potential of new materials such as corrugated steel, trusses made of thin pipe, and concrete block, Frey used them to adapt his designs to the desert climate, landscape, vegetation, and colors. He also adapted flexibly to the Palm Springs culture. As an architect in a small town, he was given a wide range of buildings to design. His own house, Frey I (1941; demolished) was experimental. A small house for a bachelor, it used minimal walls and a flat roof to create living space that opened to a patio and (eventually) a pool. The vacation home Frey designed with industrial designer Raymond Loewy celebrated the modern desert lifestyle by bringing the swimming pool into the living room (HSPB-33). In contrast, the Markham house (1941) and the Lyons house (1948), two of several Frey built over the decades in Smoke Tree Ranch had to conform to the design guidelines calling for ranch style. The simple, low scale roof forms helped blend the houses into the natural landscape, as intended by the Smoke Tree Ranch planning guidelines.

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## Citywide Historic Context Statement

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Yet another approach to Modern residential design is seen in the work of William Cody. Cody trained in progressive Modernism at the USC School of Architecture and graduated in 1942, but also worked with Cliff May; May's houses were influenced by vernacular historic architecture in California, and developed a strong attitude toward houses that were convenient and comfortable, as proven in the widespread popularity of his designs. Cody's own house (1947) showed both his interest in innovative structures and details, and his interest in developing interesting livable spaces that incorporated openness, views, and a variety of living spaces. His house was organized by a series of pavilions and courtyards that brought in light, views and natures. The thin sections of roof and walls demonstrates his search for clean, elegant structures.

E. Stewart Williams helped launch his long career with the Frank Sinatra house (1947). The design is an early and important step in Williams' evolution as a designer of houses. Though he had not been trained in Modernism at Cornell's School of Architecture, his travels in Europe introduced him to many of the varied approaches to Modern design there. The organic forms and natural materials used in Scandinavian Modern design influenced him the most. The Sinatra house shows his commitment to Modernism; it is a composition of asymmetric forms and shed roofs organized by the need to frame views of the mountain and to provide easy access to the backyard and its pool. Built-in furniture continued to be an important part of Williams' designs.



Kaufmann House (1946, Richard Neutra). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

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One of the most significant Modern works in the city is the 1946 Kaufmann House (HSPB-29B). At that time, Pittsburgh department store owner Edgar Kaufmann, already known for building another world famous house, Fallingwater (designed 1935; main house constructed 1936-38, followed by the guest house in 1939) by Frank Lloyd Wright, asked Richard Neutra to design his winter vacation home. The design summarized Neutra's ideas at the time. The flat roof, steel frame, and glass walls embodied one prominent version of Modernism by using sharp, clean, minimalist, machine-made lines contrasting with the backdrop of the beauty of the open, natural site with the rugged slopes of Mt. San Jacinto. In its use of stone and wood finishes, it represented an evolution of Neutra's ideas as seen in the earlier Miller house. When photographed and disseminated worldwide by Julius Shulman, the Kaufmann house became an iconic image of Modern architecture.

In the 1950s, with the town's expansive growth, Palm Springs architects are able to explore a wide range of residential architectural ideas with willing clients interested in Modern design. These respond in various ways to the demands of the location: controlling the sun's heat, respecting the natural landscape, and creating homes of pleasure and recreation. Most of these are custom homes, allowing for sizable budgets that allow bold experiments. The distinctive solutions of several local architects show a high quality of concept and execution that matches the quality of the more widely publicized Los Angeles Modern architects of the same period.

Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison formed a partnership in 1952 after meeting at the William Cody office where both worked. Wexler, a graduate of the University of Minnesota architecture school, had worked with for Richard Neutra in Los Angeles before moving to Palm Springs. Wexler and Harrison's early house designs show the influence of both Neutra and Cody, but also the beginning of a distinctive approach to design. Wexler's interest in engineering leads to simple wood post and beam and steel designs expressing their structure. This is seen in three particular houses: for developer Sam Martin Zalud, Wexler and Harrison designed two houses as part of a small planned neighborhood around a communal park, named Lilliana Gardens. The floor plans of these two houses were the same, featuring a central open air atrium next to the living room that opened to the patio; the two houses were differentiated by their front walls, one faced in rubble stone, and one with slump block, which William Cody often used. At the same time, Wexler built a house (1955) for his family. It is also wood post and beam, but smaller and simpler, and designed to be expanded as his family grew. William Cody continued to explore simple forms with flat or gently sloping shed

roofs which reduced the dimensions of column and roof structures to a minimum, creating light profiles. The Perlberg house (1952) is an example.



Edris House (1953, E. Stewart Williams). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

E. Stewart Williams developed his interest in natural materials including stone, which tied his designs visually to the desert site. The Edris house (1953; HSPB-46) by E. Stewart Williams is one of his best. Sitting on a boulder-strewn slope overlooking the Coachella Valley, the house's inverted truss roof rests on pillars of natural stone, with glass infill. His own house (1956) responds to a very different, flat site. A long, gentle butterfly roof is supported on steel columns allowing the walls of the public areas to be mostly glass. This also allows the garden

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



landscaping and stone walls to extend from outside to inside and then outside again to create an especially open and light filled house.

In the 1950s Albert Frey's approach to Modernism with partner John Porter Clark led to an exploration of new, light weight building technologies, including light weight composite wall panels. His houses were often raised off the ground in order to disturb the desert ground minimally. This is seen in the Carey-Pirozzi house (1956) and the Cree house II (1955-56). His exploration of materials and structures is seen in a major expansion of Frey's own house (1953), where he added a turret-shaped second story with circular windows shaded by circular metal sun shades; Frey would consistently chart the sun's path in order to orient his houses, and to design their windows and overhangs and sunshades.

Among other locally-based architects, Herbert Burns designed Late Moderne houses similar to his inns, which emphasized volumes and streamlined forms rather than structure, as seen in the Crockett house (1956). Hugh Kaptur, trained in Detroit at Lawrence Technological University, brought the simple frame construction he used in multiple housing tracts he designed to the William Burgess house (1958). Walter White's design for the Franz Alexander house (1955) exhibits an upswept, curving roof on a two-story house.

Palm Springs continued to expand its collection of Modern architecture in the 1960s. Other than the international attention afforded Richard Neutra's Kaufmann house (1946), however, little note of Palm Springs architecture was taken outside the area. Nonetheless, the innovations and varied expressions of residential design continued in the 1960s with major works by its local architects, as well as Los Angeles architects. The results showed several extraordinary designs that stand out even in a period when Southern California residential design became internationally recognized.

The Elrod house (1968) by Los Angeles architect John Lautner exemplifies the work of this Organic architect by using concrete to blend the home into its rocky cliffside site. Designed for Palm Springs interior designer Arthur Elrod, the house is on a prominent ridgeline above the city. The site was excavated to reveal rock outcroppings which helped to shape the living room space. A concrete roof with skylights, engineered with a compression ring, created a large living room space.



Frey House II (1963, Albert Frey). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

Frey II (1963; HSPB-33), Albert Frey's second house for himself, was an equally striking design on another ridge overlooking the central business district. Instead of the Elrod house's Organic concrete structure, Frey II was an essay in a minimalist steel and glass structure perched lightly on a mountainside boulder field, bringing together nature and modern technology. Like the Elrod house, however, a rock outcropping also divided the main living space between living area and bedroom.

Donald Wexler's Dinah Shore house (1963) is representative of several of his custom homes, combining large glass-walled pavilion structures for living and dining areas, and more intimate, enclosed wings for bedrooms. The range and variety William Cody's custom house design is seen in the Shamel house (1961) using extraordinarily thin wall and roof sections to create a sense of lightness, and the large Abernathy house (1962) which uses more a formal plan and pyramid-shaped roofs. While continuing to design large commercial and institutional buildings,

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

E. Stewart Williams designed several custom houses, including the Sutter house (1960) using striated concrete block.

In yet another distinctive Modern variation, James McNaughton's Kramer house (1963) reflects historic elements that were modernized. Since the 1930s and the development of the Hollywood Regency style, Southern California architects integrated historical elements with modern aesthetics through simplification; designers and architects including Paul R. Williams, Tony Duquette, Caspar Ehmcke, and John Elgin Woolf continued this exploration in Los Angeles, McNaughton and others brought it to Palm Springs. Both custom homes and mass produced developments reflect this style in the use of symmetry in facade and plan, and in the use of columns, mansard roofs, and traditional decorative elements such as carriage lamps. One custom example is the house that Arthur Elrod remodeled and added to at 350 W. Via Lola. Similar design concepts appeared nationally in public and institutional buildings in the same period in the Neo-Formalist designs of Edward Durell Stone, Minoru Yamasaki, and others.

Notable Los Angeles architects who built houses in Palm Springs are Harold Levitt, Craig Ellwood, and William Krisel, each with a distinct interpretation of Modern design to expand the wide range of Modern expressions in Palm Springs. Krisel's Alexander house (1960) used a symmetrical plan of three hexagons which were adapted according to the sloping site, and the interior uses for living room, master bedroom, and kitchen. As the Southridge subdivision developed, several large speculative houses were built, including one by Hugh Kaptur (1964) which was later inhabited by actor Steve McQueen.<sup>250</sup> The two-story post and beam structure created indoor-outdoor spaces on a steep site. Craig Ellwood designed the Max Palevsky house (1968) in the spare rectilinear style for which he was known in the Case Study program houses of Los Angeles. Harold Levitt, who designed many homes in Los Angeles and Beverly Hills for movie industry figures, designed a house for Lew Wasserman (1962) with expressionistic exposed angular structural elements.

During the 1970s, other Coachella Valley communities grew at a faster rate than Palm Springs. Undeveloped land, larger pieces of properties, and new golf courses and resorts in the areas outside the city attracted developers. In spite of this competition, Palm Springs produced several major buildings in the decade which reflected the high level of design quality and

<sup>250</sup> Tract development, including a detailed description of Southridge, is included in the Residential Development discussion, below.

innovation seen in earlier decades. Architecture in the 1970s reflects how Modernism grew and changed over the decades; from the minimalist steel and glass buildings of earlier decades, Modernism evolved to use newer materials, such as striated broken-face concrete block. These reflected the trends in architecture nationally.

Kaptur's William Holden house (1977) on Southridge combined a concrete foundation creating a building platform on a precipitous site, with a wood post and beam structure. The largest and most prominent house in this decade, however, is the Bob and Dolores Hope house (1979), by John Lautner. Though plagued with delays due to a fire during construction, and client-approved alterations to the original design, the Hope house's concept is the equal of this architect's best work. Originally designed with a large shell-like roof that continued the shape of the surrounding mountains, the large house with indoor and outdoor spaces for entertaining reflected Lautner's blending of nature and modern technology in his best work.

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### **Sub-theme: Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1969)**

The postwar boom, a prosperity beyond imagination, combined with surging population growth and the democratization of privilege, would change Palm Springs forever.<sup>251</sup>

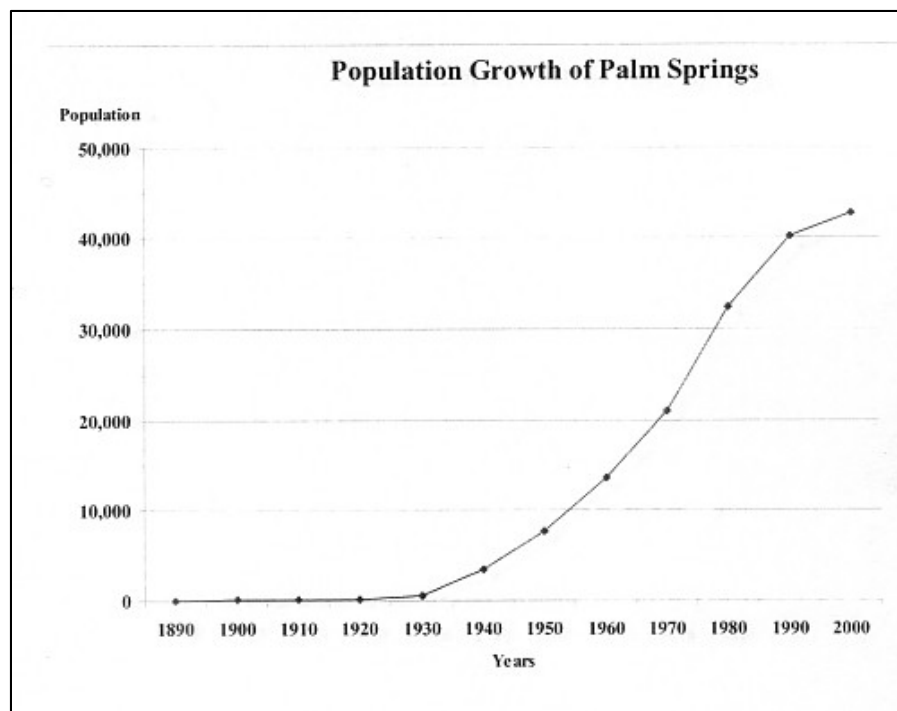
In the immediate post-World War II era, California in general experienced a period of unprecedented growth. Many individuals who came west to participate in the war effort, including former military personnel, decided to settle permanently. Between 1940 and 1950, California's population increased by 53 percent, which was partially accounted for by the 850,000 veterans who took up residence after the war.<sup>252</sup> As a result, development in the post-World War II era focused primarily on the construction of residential properties. The immediate and widespread need for housing inspired a variety of responses. For communities that were largely built out, land previously considered "unbuildable" became more attractive. For newer communities, large new tracts were developed.

Development in Palm Springs during this period reflected these wider trends. The permanent population of Palm Springs rose 292 percent between 1940 and 1960, from 3,434 to 13,468 people. Charting population growth shows this steep growth lasted in Palm Springs for decades after the war.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>251</sup> Peter Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs*. (Johannesburg, CA: The Shady Myrick Research Project, 2007), 62.

<sup>252</sup> Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 193-194.

<sup>253</sup> Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs*, un-numbered page.



Population growth chart for Palm Springs shows dramatic increases in the decades after World War II. Source: Peter Wild's *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs*.

In Palm Springs, postwar single-family residential development followed several patterns. First, expansion/tract development occurred eastward, and then southward into the flat exposed parcels of the desert floor with the creation of homes for middle-class and upper-middle class residents. Second, empty parcels within existing developments were subject to in-fill development. Third, previously “unbuildable” parcels in the foothills were now economically viable for the development of luxury homes. Fourth, after 1959, new laws permitted the lease and development of the checkerboard of open parcels owned by the Agua Caliente tribe. This offered developers a wide variety of opportunities previously denied within the city. By the 1970s, density began to increase as the condominium craze took Palm Springs by full force --

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

especially in the eastern part of the city.<sup>254</sup> Large new subdivisions were relegated to the southern part of the city and small cul-de-sacs of new homes became the norm.

Immediately after the war, between 1945 and 1949, some 20 new tracts were recorded in and around Palm Springs. The largest of these were found in what would colloquially become known as “The Veterans’ Tract” – the area located south of the airport and east of Farrell Drive.<sup>255</sup> The Veterans Tract area was actually composed of several tracts. Among them the 96-parcel Desert Tract (1946), the 200-parcel Vista Del Cielo Tract (1946), and the 54-parcel Val Vista Tract (1947). The developers involved in these ventures tended to be early citizens of the city who now saw potential in the traditionally less desirable real estate on the eastern side of town. These parcels were more exposed to the wind and the elements than the areas sheltered by the mountains. At the Vista Del Cielo tract, over 200 modest six-room homes designed to appeal to returning GIs who qualified for loans through the GI Bill were built by R.H. Grant Construction Company.

Among the investors in Vista Del Cielo (referred to sometimes as the Sunny Dunes Development Corporation) were Henry Lockwood and John W. Williams. Lockwood was a local lawyer for the Mt. San Jacinto Winter Park Authority promoting the development of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway project. John W. Williams was a long-time resident/developer who owned the pre-war Mira Monte Apartments and also invested in the nearby Val Vista tract.

In addition to entry-level homes for GIs, developers also rapidly began extending the city’s offerings of custom home developments. In 1946, two enterprising postwar investors subdivided Desert Palms Estates, a 122-parcel development bordered by Alejo Road on the north, Amado Road on the south, Sunset Way on the east, and Fountain Drive on the west. Paul B. Belding (1912-1968) head of an airplane parts manufacturing company during World War II, and his partner, prominent Los Angeles attorney Russell D. Garner (1904-1993) shaped the tract by taking a page from the book of Prescott T. Stevens. The development, a series of gently curving streets, was entered via Desert Palms Drive. Belding and Garner

<sup>254</sup> 1970s development is covered in a separate theme.

<sup>255</sup> There is no actual “Veteran’s Tract” as subdivided with Riverside County. The colloquial reference takes its name from the burst of new development in the area among several tracts that were designed to cater to the needs of returning GIs.

established sales office in Los Angeles to lure people in the market for second homes.<sup>256</sup> Desert Palms Estates was unusual in that it required that “building plans must be approved by architectural committee.”<sup>257</sup> Garner and his wife built a “modern house” in Desert Palms Estates. Other architecturally significant residences in the tract included the Dorothy Levin Residence (1950, William F. Cody) at 1940 McManus Drive, and the Hugh M. Kaptur Residence (1963, Hugh Kaptur) at 1897 Belding Drive.

Another planned development that featured curving streets with a prominent entrance was San Jacinto Estates (1946). Located southeast of Tahquitz Road and Sunrise Way, the 77-parcel subdivision was developed by Elliot M. Bank and attorney Harold H. Licker of New Jersey. However, the venture appears to have been less than successful as ads appear in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1949 for parcels at “liquidation pricing.”<sup>258</sup>

During this period, developers keen on selling vacation homes often created a symbiotic relationship between the mountain and desert communities. Two known examples of this pattern exist in Palm Springs. One small subdivision, Luring Sands Park (1946) was developed by the Luring Development Company. A forty-six parcel subdivision developed by Ray A. Luring was the desert equivalent to his simultaneous Luring Pines Development in the San Bernardino Mountains.<sup>259</sup> Another desert/mountain developer, E.E. Spaulding, of the Spaulding Development Corporation subdivided Spaulding’s Palm Springs Estates (1946-49). Developed in two phases, the first unit included 103 parcels, the second an additional forty-five lots. Spaulding operated as a real estate broker in the Lake Arrowhead area as far back as the 1920s.<sup>260</sup>

Prior to World War II, Palm Springs had been a tourist and vacation home destination for the wealthy. Postwar prosperity brought a new group of tourists and second home-owners to the city: the upper-middle and middle class. This gradual democratization of Palm Springs would irrevocably change the city during the 1950s and 1960s. First with expansive single-family

<sup>256</sup> “Display Ad 3,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1947, 5.

<sup>257</sup> “Display Ad 3,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1947, 5.

<sup>258</sup> “Classified Ad 35,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1949, A14.

<sup>259</sup> Stanley E. Bellamy, *Running Springs* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 78-9.

<sup>260</sup> “Big Bear Lake Region Reports Record Season,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1927, E4.



residential development and ultimately through the creation of innovative forms of multi-family residential development and ownership options.<sup>261</sup>

A more practical, yet important factor in residential development in Palm Springs and the entire southwest was the accessibility of air conditioning. Although individual residential air-conditioning units were available as early as 1939, widespread acquisition and use was delayed by the war. In 1947, British scholar S.F. Markham wrote, "the greatest contribution to civilization in this century may well be air-conditioning – and America leads the way."<sup>262</sup> In the 1950s, residential air conditioning became another way to keep up with the Joneses. More than 1 million units were sold in 1953 alone.<sup>263</sup> For communities like Palm Springs, air conditioning meant the "season" could be extended and year-round living was practically viable for the first time.

By the 1950s, demand for quick-to-market, inexpensive houses for returning GIs and their families inspired many architects in Southern California and throughout the country to develop ideas about prefabrication and design. One of these architects, Cliff May (1909-1989), collaborated with his friend and fellow architect Christian E. Choate (1908-1981) on a low-cost panel system for ranch houses. The prototype was called Factory Model and the erection of the first one in Pacific Palisades spawned both large orders from developers and media attention from the professional trade publications and national magazines like *Sunset*, *House Beautiful*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*.

By 1952, May and Choate's Ranch House Supply Corporation standardized the "Cliff May Ranch House" and by 1953, the architects had a growing network of distributors around the country. By fall of 1953, Palm Springs was added to the list of franchisees when Palm Valley Associates became the exclusive distributors of "Cliff May *Desert Homes*." Palm Valley Associates, a partnership between L.E. Manseau, Norman A. Ostberg, and Tony Burke, advertised the prefabricated homes for building on "Your lot or subdivision" using the standard advertisements provided by the Cliff May Company that emphasized the houses had earned on magazine covers and the showcase homes known as the "Magic Money House."<sup>264</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Post-World War II multi-family residential development is discussed in a separate theme.

<sup>262</sup> Amanda Green, "A Brief History of Air Conditioning," *Popular Mechanics* <http://www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/electrical-plumbing/a-brief-history-of-air-conditioning-10720229> (accessed January 15, 2015).

<sup>263</sup> Green, "A Brief History of Air Conditioning."

<sup>264</sup> "Cliff May Desert Homes," *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1953, 24.

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L: Advertisement for "Cliff May Desert Homes" from the *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1953. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society. R: Cliff May Homes advertisement from the Orange County Register, Sunday April 25, 1954. Source: *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House*, 185.

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

While Palm Valley Associates erected a model home on Thunderbird Country Club, the designs were available to anyone throughout the Valley. The locations of any prefabricated Cliff May Ranch Houses in Palm Springs is currently unknown; however, given the popularity of the California Ranch-style home in the desert community, it is likely that some were built.<sup>265</sup> There were two- and three-bedroom plans that evolved over time. It should be noted that some of the distributors around the country modified or added touches to the homes, such as brick detailing in the south, to increase sales.<sup>266</sup>

Ultimately, a lack of uniform building codes across the country undermined the fundamental premise of the business. May and Choate dissolved their partnership in 1955, but continued to receive royalties on houses built until 1961. It is estimated that nationwide, approximately 18,000 Cliff May Ranch Homes were built.<sup>267</sup>

During the 1950s, residential development in Palm Springs continued to expand eastward and southward. Like other locations in Southern California, it was a period in which large developers dominated the scene; among them were William Grant, Noel B. Clarke, A. R. Simon, George and Robert Alexander, Roy Fey, and Jack Meiselman. However, a series of small developers still flourished. Examples included Roy W. Burton's Burton Tract (1957), and auto salesman-turned-real estate developer Sam Janis who subdivided Janis' Hilltop Estates (1958). Another small developer, David M. Benjamin (1894-1987), who developed the El Mirador Park tract (1946) and Mountain View Estates (1956), found himself in a difficult way by 1957, when his wife divorced him after placing all of his landholdings in her name to avoid a \$170,000 claim for back taxes.<sup>268</sup>

Another trend in development was investor consortia, such as that for El Camino Estates (1956) a large 110-parcel tract development in north Palm Springs that included no fewer than sixteen owners. A smaller consortium of ten owners subdivided Palm Vista Estates (1953). Promoted as "wind free half acre sites" Palm Vista Estates played off the reputation of its neighbors Little Tuscany and Las Palmas Estates.<sup>269</sup> In 1956, Howard Lapham designed a

<sup>265</sup> Examples in Palm Springs pending further research at the UCSB Cliff May archives.

<sup>266</sup> Jocelyn Gibbs and Nicholas Olsberg, *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, Santa Barbara and Rizzoli International Publications, 2012), 186-7.

<sup>267</sup> Confirm source.

<sup>268</sup> "Move to Avoid Tax Claim Told in Divorce Suit," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1953, 4.

<sup>269</sup> "Harold Hicks Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1954, 11.

speculative residence in Palm Vista Estates at 787 Stevens Road.<sup>270</sup> At the time, it was the only residence in the development after nearly two years of sales.

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Advertisement for Palm Vista Estates (1953) promoted as "wind-free half acre sites" in proximity to tony subdivisions such as Las Palmas Estates and Little Tuscany. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1954, 11.

<sup>270</sup> "Your Dream of Perfection," *Palm Springs Villager*, May 1956, 10.

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

By the close of the 1950s, big changes were afoot for Palm Springs residential development. New communities to the south and east including Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage were beginning to overshadow Palm Springs as the chic desert destination for home ownership. Another important factor was the 1959 Equalization Law signed by President Eisenhower that equalized allotted Indian lands, thereby setting the stage for development of Indian lands within the City of Palm Springs. The tribe and tribe members (allottees) could now realize profits from their lands and developed the 99-year lease. For developers, this represented new opportunities for projects throughout the city. From large (Canyon Country Club) to small (Tract 2812, along Madrona Drive), residential projects on leased land were often attractive for their location and lower sales prices (made possible because the purchase of land was not involved).

With increased demand, economic prosperity, air conditioning, and availability of new land for development, Palm Springs became home to a number of custom and tract home developments by prominent Southern California developers and wealthy speculators. From early on, many of these subdivisions emphasized architecture and/or the glamour associated with Palm Springs.

Following is a discussion of the significant residential subdivisions recorded during this period.<sup>271</sup> The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded. The Alexander Construction Company, arguably the most significant and certainly the most prolific of Palm Springs' postwar developers, is discussed separately at the end of this section.

#### Tahquitz River Estates (1947)

In response to the need for postwar housing, well-known developer Paul Trousdale teamed up with Pearl McCallum McManus on a Palm Springs development. In a 1948 interview, McManus remembered, "When I built the Oasis Hotel I had dreams of a project like Trousdale's... Frank [sic] Lloyd Wright had drawn plans... very modern."<sup>272</sup> As previously discussed, these plans never came to fruition; however, McManus clearly saw in Trousdale a man of similar vision. By this time, Trousdale had already built over 1,700 tract homes in Southern California.

<sup>271</sup> Note that each subdivision will be reviewed by the survey team to determine which may be eligible for designation as historic districts.

<sup>272</sup> Interview of Pearl McManus To Melba Bennett, April 26, 1948, Clippings Files, Palm Springs Historical Society.

The area that became Tahquitz River Estates was bordered by Sunny Dunes Road on the north, Calle Palos Fierro on the west, Mesquite Avenue on the south, and Sunrise Way on the east. At the time, it was the largest and most ambitious standardized tract housing development that had been attempted in Palm Springs; it was also the first large postwar development of tract homes by a major developer.


In 1947, Trousdale subdivided the land into 213 one-hundred-foot wide parcels averaging 10,000 square feet each. In 1948, he added another forty-nine parcels to the far western end of the subdivision in a second unit. "Outdoor living" was promoted including patios, and mountain and garden vistas. Another featured amenity was the location adjacent to schools and shopping centers.<sup>273</sup> The fact that they were architect-designed homes also featured prominently in the marketing materials.

The first part of the project was to construct the Tahquitz Creek Channel storm drain, which divided the development from east to west. On September 22, 1947 the first earthmovers appeared and the \$100,000 flood channel project began. Pearl and Austin McManus were photographed on the earthmover and the picture appeared on the front page of the next day's *Desert Sun*.<sup>274</sup> At some point, the McManuses sold their interests in the project to Trousdale.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>273</sup> Display Ad 66, *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1948, F14.

<sup>274</sup> Renee Brown, "Palm Springs History: Homes Bloomed Along Tahquitz Wash," *Desert Sun*, September 11, 2014.

<sup>275</sup> The reason for the McManus selling their interest in the development is unknown.



 Capital of Sunshine and resort haven for people from all over the world, Palm Springs, California offers more incentives to enjoy better health and continual pleasure in a single season, than can be found anywhere else in a lifetime.

Beautiful new resort homes in the world-renowned playground: PALM SPRINGS.

You will be privileged to inherit these resort luxuries in beautiful TAHQUITZ RIVER ESTATES. Expressively styled by Allen G. Siple and Stephen A. Stepanian, A. I. A., architects. To capture the elegance of its exotic surroundings, your home with optional patio, garden vista and Peddock swimming pool, will become an architectural salute to "Outdoor Living" and a compliment to your exquisite taste.

# Tahquitz River Estates


In a setting of desert beauty with the majestic San Jacinto mountains creating a tapestry background, every home parallels its surroundings with quality. Exclusive Tropic-Kolor Block walls and White Pebble heat resistant roofs, guarantee year-round comfort. Your selection of several floor plans, 100 ft. lots, and preference as to the number of bedrooms and baths in your home, assure you of realizing your desire for deluxe living.




To complete the enchanting story of Tahquitz River Estates, you will enjoy:

- Living adjacent to schools, and just four blocks from Palm Springs ultra-smart shopping center.
- Visit the model home, artistically furnished by Barker Brothers.
- For illustrated brochure and floor plans in color, call or write: TAHQUITZ RIVER ESTATES; 850 So. Palm Canyon Drive • Palm Springs 7534

LOS ANGELES OFFICE: 830 North Sepulveda • BRANDBEE 34129 - AREA 56179



  
 ANOTHER *Paul W. Frousdale* & ASSOCIATES  
 DEVELOPMENT

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Ad features model home rendering by architects Allen G. Siple and Stephen A. Stepanian who are mentioned by name in the ad copy. Source: Display Ad 66, Los Angeles Times, January 18, 1948, F14.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Pearl McCallum McManus and Austin McManus sitting on the earthmover at the beginning of the channel project at Tahquitz River Estates. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Trousdale engaged architects Allen G. Siple and Stephen A. Stepanian to design eight models with two- and three-bedroom floor plans. Edward Huntsman Trout, a frequent collaborator with Trousdale was brought on as landscape architect. According to the *Desert Sun* and the sales brochure, “the models were designed so that each home would be situated on the lot in such a way that it allowed for complete privacy while enjoying the pool.”<sup>276</sup>

Eight different floor plans were created for the two-bedroom/two bathroom models and two floor plans for the three-bedroom/two bathroom homes. Each plan makes the most of its outdoor space by featuring large lanais and/or porches with large expanses of glass to the backyards and the desert vistas beyond. Breezeways were also common features on these plans, “...a fashionable, convenient addition nearly doubles the size appearance of your home.” Each model also featured a large fireplace.

<sup>276</sup> Renee Brown, “Palm Springs History: Homes Bloomed Along Tahquitz Wash,” *Desert Sun*, September 11, 2014.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP





Model Plan 1 from 1949 features a Modern Ranch style home by architects Alan G. Siple and Stephen Stepanian. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure. Private Collection.

As described in the sales brochure, eighteen different exterior designs created “a unique and personalized pattern of deliquescent charm.”<sup>277</sup> Variety in tract home styles within a subdivision was a reaction to the Levittown model of postwar America that were decried for their relentless cookie-cutter streetscapes. Renderings from the sales brochure for Tahquitz River Estates show the design of the houses to be Contemporary Ranch-style with restrained facades of stucco, Tropic-Kolor cement block, and vertical wood siding. The houses featured steel reinforced concrete slabs and heat reflecting roofs. As described by Allen G. Siple’s sponsor for AIA Fellowship, noted architect A. Quincy Jones, “the houses of masonry and heavy timber in the planned community of Tahquitz River Estates provide[d] comfortable living in the desert

<sup>277</sup> “Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure,” Private Collection.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

with an unusually high degree of protection against the hot, windy days and cold, windy nights.”<sup>278</sup> The sales brochure went a step further claiming that the houses were designed to be “earthquake proof.”<sup>279</sup> While the supporting evidence for this claim remains a mystery, Siple’s ongoing interest in building science and seismic protection are consistent with this idea. Lots in Tahquitz River Estates were landscaped with native desert plants including athel, cottonwoods, and palms.<sup>280</sup>



The long low Ranch-style design incorporates vertical wood siding and privacy walls for pool and side yard area. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>278</sup> “Allen G. Siple, Fellowship Nomination Form,” August 29, 1962.

<sup>279</sup> Tahquitz River Estates” Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>280</sup> Tahquitz River Estates” Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

By March of 1948, half of the first unit of seventy-two homes had been sold.<sup>281</sup> By August, the first unit was completely sold out. In 1949, two new model homes were added. The subdivision received national acclaim when the March 1950 issue of *House Beautiful* featured a Tahquitz River Estates model home.



L: Exterior of one of the Tahquitz River Estates models by architect Allen G. Siple; Edward Huntsman Trout, landscape architect; interiors by Neblett & Williams. R: Rear porch of one of the Tahquitz River Estates models. Photographed by Maynard Parker c. 1950. Source: The Huntington Digital Library.

<sup>281</sup> "Real Estate: Program Costing Nears Completion," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1948, 23.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Paul Whitney Trousdale (1915-1990) was a second-generation developer. Trousdale was responsible for the development and creation of more than 25,000 homes throughout Southern California.<sup>282</sup> Born near Gallatin, Tennessee, he attended Los Angeles High School and completed one year at USC. A born salesman, he dabbled in advertising, selling gum and other products, then switched to real estate. During World War II, he built large houses for movie stars and executives, as well as 3,000 more modest houses, including seven large housing projects.

A 1949 *Los Angeles Times* ad for Trousdale and Associates featured the Palm Springs development of Tahquitz Canyon Estates with a valuation at \$1,500,000, which was the second smallest of the organization's holdings. Trousdale would later embark on two of his best-known developments: Baldwin Hills Estates in Los Angeles and Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills.

Prior to designing for Tahquitz River Estates, Michigan-born architect Allen G. Siple (1900-1973) worked with Trousdale on model homes for his 1,200-unit Westdale subdivision in Los Angeles (1946-47). These simple, one-story Ranch-style homes had early American architectural details. Siple's practice was primarily residential in nature and his designs were published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *House Beautiful*, and *Architectural Digest*. Siple was noted for his achievement in building science for his development of a method of "reinforced stone masonry that meets the difficult and stringent seismic requirements of the California Code."<sup>283</sup> The system was similar to slip-form concrete construction methods except local canyon stone was laid up on both wall faces and the void was filled with concrete in two foot-lifts. Steel reinforcement was embedded in the foundation and horizontally with each concrete pour.<sup>284</sup>

Siple was inducted into the American Institute of Architect's College of Fellows in 1969 for his contributions to the built environment and his service to the profession for his writing/editing of the *Southern California Chapter Bulletin*. Under his oversight the *Bulletin* became a force for national dialogue. The Michigan-born Siple graduated from USC with a degree in architecture in 1923 and is best known for his designs for the Albert O. Farmer Residence (1954, Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills), the Webb School Dining Hall and Dormitories

<sup>282</sup> "Paul Trousdale, Developer and Innovator, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1990.

<sup>283</sup> Confirm source.

<sup>284</sup> Allen G. Siple Fellowship Nomination Form, August 29, 1962.

(1961-62) in Claremont, and the Richard M. Nixon Residence (1962, Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills).

Beverly Hills-based Stephen A. Stepanian (1911-2007) received his Bachelor of Architecture from the College of Engineering at Ohio State University. He started his career in 1934 as a set designer for Metro Goldwyn Mayer studios. In 1934, he joined the Los Angeles architectural firm Plummer, Wurdeman & Becket, where he stayed until 1940, rising through the ranks from Junior to Senior to Chief. In 1940 he established his own practice.<sup>285</sup> During World War II, he served in the Army and designed several defense housing projects.<sup>286</sup> After his work with Trousdale at Tahquitz River Estates, Stepanian went on to design traditionally styled homes for developers such as the “American Country” home for the luxury Royal Oaks development in Encino in the San Fernando Valley. Stepanian was also known for his custom homes, including the Bob Hope Residence in Los Angeles (1952). Stepanian’s work was published in *House Beautiful* and *Architectural Digest*.

Tahquitz River Estates was home to many prominent residents. According to *Los Angeles Times* society columnist Joan Winchell, “. . .the mailboxes on San Lorenzo read like a Palm Springs Who’s Who: Al Hunt, Owen Churchill, John McClure, Norma Pagano and Maury Smith.”<sup>287</sup> John McClure became a millionaire in 1920, having inherited his father’s estate; McClure’s father was “the largest vinyardist in California.”<sup>288</sup> Owen Churchill was one of the foremost figures in Southern California and East Coast yachting circles, an Olympian in the 1928, 1932 (where he won a gold medal), and 1936 games.<sup>289</sup> Alabama-based Maury Smith was general counsel to George Wallace during his tenure as Governor of Alabama.<sup>290</sup>

#### Venable Tract (1947)

Proving that post-war real estate development in Palm Springs was not just for the professional developers, the Venable Tract was subdivided in February of 1947 by Commander Reginald Venable and his wife Fay Bainter Venable (1893-1968). It is located adjacent to the prewar

<sup>285</sup> Stephen A. Stepanian, AIA Application for Membership,” August 24, 1944, 2-3.

<sup>286</sup> *AIA American Architects Directory*, 1956, 534.

<sup>287</sup> Joan Winchell, “Resorts and Travel,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1954, C8.

<sup>288</sup> “Weds Millionaire Today,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1920, 111.

<sup>289</sup> “Owen Churchill Returns From Trip,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1929, B2.

<sup>290</sup> “King Pleads Case for Right to Marcn,” *Los Angeles Times*, Marh 12, 1965, 2.

Palos Verdes Tract (1929). The 35 parcel development is bordered by Mesquite Road to the north, Morongo to the South, Via Grande Boulevard (present-day S. Camino Real) to the east, and the Palos Verdes Tract to the west.

The Venable Tract was marketed from the beginning using Bainter's association with Hollywood. The three-time Academy Award nominee won Best Supporting Actress for "Jezebel" in 1938. "This tract is owned and being developed by a famous stage and screen star," reads an early advertisement for the tract in the *Palm Springs Villager*.<sup>291</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s, Bainter worked extensively in television theatre including *Lux Video Theater* (1950-55), *Robert Montgomery Presents* (1952-55), and *Kraft Theater* (1956). She received her final Academy Award nomination for *The Children's Hour* (1961).

The Venable Tract boasted large lot sizes of 120 x135 feet and its prime location "...adjoining the new Biltmore Hotel property, Deep Well Guest ranch...and the new Cahuilla School"<sup>292</sup> in the "close-in South"<sup>293</sup> were key selling points. Lots were offered for custom home development or speculation. According to ads in the *Villager*, sales and improvement of the lots were slow. The hefty price tag of \$3,250 may have been a factor. In 1948, Bainter built a "beautiful model house" at 679 Palo Verde Avenue<sup>294</sup> to draw interest in the property with the promise that "several new houses are planned for the fall."<sup>295</sup> In 1953, real estate ads suggested lots were still available for speculative builders.<sup>296</sup>

Before turning to real estate, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Reginald Venable (1890-1964) enjoyed an illustrious military career. He is most remembered, however, for a violation of Navy rules when "while engaged to Miss Bainter in 1920, Mr. Venable attracted some attention by an unconventional naval maneuver. At sea in his destroyer, the Ingram, he met the White Star liner Olympic, on which his fiancée was returning to New York from a

<sup>291</sup> "Palm Springs for Solid Real Estate Values in 1948 as in the Past," *Palm Springs Villager*, December 1947, 21.

<sup>292</sup> "Muriel E. Fulton Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1947, 22.

<sup>293</sup> "Palm Springs for Solid Real Estate Values in 1948 as in the Past," *Palm Springs Villager*, December 1947, 21.

<sup>294</sup> *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1948-49.

<sup>295</sup> "Muriel E. Fulton Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, September XX, 22.

<sup>296</sup> "Foster Features Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, June 1953, 3.

European vacation."<sup>297</sup> Navy secretary Daniels was lenient and smilingly said that Reginald was just "a young man courting."<sup>298</sup>

### Lilliana Gardens (1948)

In 1948, Sam Martin Zalud and his wife Lillian subdivided a small six-acre tract west of South Palm Canyon Drive known as Lilliana Gardens. Composed of sixteen parcels around Lilliana Drive, the Zaluds engaged local architect William F. Cody to design the houses on spec and advertised the subdivision as Cody-designed. Early plans called for fifteen homes surrounding a community park on a central parcel.<sup>299</sup> In April of 1951, the model house was open for viewing and additional houses were under construction;<sup>300</sup> the model house is located at 250 Lilliana Drive.<sup>301</sup> According to architectural historians Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, two homes in Lilliana Gardens were designed by Wexler and Harrison (the firm of Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison): 210 and 231 Lilliana Drive for Joe Pauling [sic] in 1954.<sup>302</sup> Wexler and Harrison both worked in Cody's office prior to forming their own firm.



Advertisement for Lilliana Gardens (1948) features architect-designed homes by William F. Cody as well as the image of a ranch house with desert and mountain vistas. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, March 1951, 37.

<sup>297</sup> "Reginald S.H. Venable, 74, Was Fay Bainter's Husband," *New York Times*, September 29, 1964, 43.

<sup>298</sup> Find-A-Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=86293353> (accessed December 21, 2015).

<sup>299</sup> "Display Ad 37," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1951, B3.

<sup>300</sup> "Ad for Lillian Gardens," *Palm Springs Villager*, March 1951, 37.

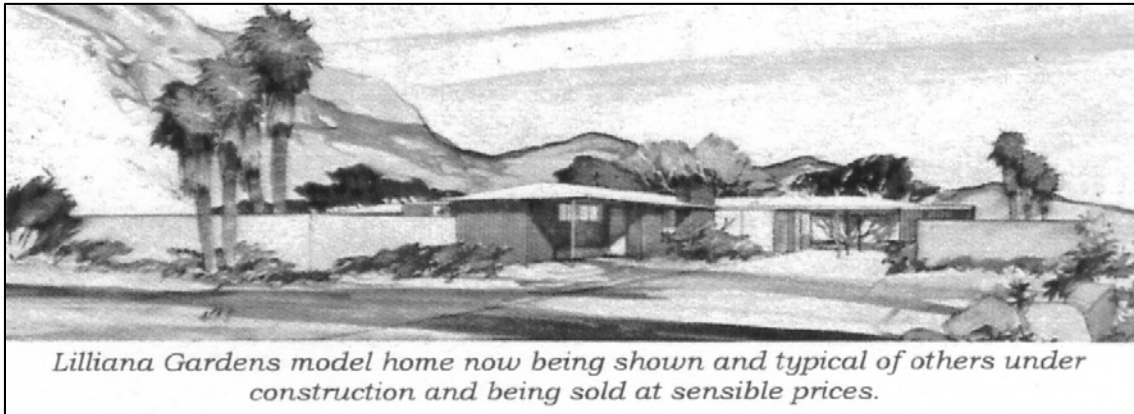
<sup>301</sup> Riverside County Land Information website lists the construction date for this house as 1952, although documentation shows it was open for visitation in 1951.

<sup>302</sup> Confirm if this is the same person as Joe Pawling the designer? Pending confirmation from Wexler's office.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



A Mid-century Modern model home for Lilliana Gardens (1948, William F. Cody) located at 250 Lilliana Drive. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1951, 4.

### Deep Well Ranch Estates (1951)

Deep Well Ranch Estates (also known as Deep Well Estates or Deepwell Ranch Estates) is bordered by Mesquite Avenue to the north, the east side of Sagebrush Road to the east, Primavera Drive to the west, and the south side of Deep Well Road to the south with an extension at Palm Tree Drive on the southern end of the development.

Deep Well Ranch Estates had its origins in the Deep Well Ranch and guest ranch. After unsuccessful farming efforts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by two previous owners, Henry Parsons (a scientist and authority on rubber) purchased the property in 1926. He drilled a well and found water close to the surface. After drilling further he found water again at 630 feet and the property became known as Deep Well Ranch.<sup>303</sup>

In 1928, Pearson sold the Ranch to Charles Doyle who converted an old apricot shed and ranch house to guest accommodations and called it Deep Well Guest Ranch. In 1929, Doyle sold the property to Major and Mrs. Everett and Everett's brother-in-law, Carol Smith. They significantly improved the property when, in 1930, they engaged architect Paul Williams (1894-1980) to design hacienda-type buildings around patios.<sup>304</sup> In fall of 1931, Frank and

<sup>303</sup> Mabel Bennett, "Story of Deepwell," *Palm Springs Villager*, February 1952, no page. <http://www.ourdeepwell.com/index.php/about-deno/your-neighborhood/history/18-history/28-deno-palm-springs-villager?showall=1> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>304</sup> Bennett, "Story of Deepwell (sic)."



Melba Bennett of Beverly Hills bought the property along with Phil Boyd (local banker and first mayor of Palm Springs) and operated the guest ranch for sixteen years.



Aerial view of Deep Well Estates circa 1955. Looking westward from Calle De Maria. Major east-west street is Mesquite Avenue. Development to the right of Mesquite Avenue is Tahquitz River Estates by Paul Trousdale. Source: *Palm Springs Life*.

By 1951, residential subdivisions were beginning to encroach on the land around the Deep Well Guest Ranch and it became clear that there was money to be made in real estate. William Grant, a local builder for the Rancho Royale, Sun View Estates (immediately adjacent to Deep Well Ranch estates just east of Sagebrush Road), and Thunderbird Ranch and Country Club developments, purchased a significant portion of Deep Well Ranch and subdivided it for custom-home development that became Deep Well Ranch Estates.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

According to an article in the *Villager*, “One enters from the Palm Springs-Indio Highway over a beautiful new divided roadway, landscaped and decorated at the attractive entrance.”<sup>305</sup> Grant formed an architectural review committee for Deep Well Ranch Estates that included architects Cliff May and Phil Boyd. The ensuing long, low, one-story houses were a mixture of Spanish Colonial Revival, Ranch, and Mid-century Modern styles.

The 231-parcel development was subdivided in ten units between 1951 and 1955. The earliest unit was developed by Grant; however, the subsequent units were developed in conjunction with Harry A. Dart and his wife Gladys M. Dart of Dart Properties.<sup>306</sup> Properties south of Mesquite Avenue were subdivided in 1952, and the majority of the area was subdivided by 1953. In June of 1963, the remaining 22-acre Deep Well Guest Ranch was sold to a Los Angeles syndicate with the intent to make it “an exclusive sportsman’s club.”<sup>307</sup> In 1969, the former guest ranch property was transformed into condominiums by another developer.

Deep Well Ranch Estates attracted its share of prominent residents and significant architecture. Architect Hugh Kaptur remembers designing several homes in the Deep Well Ranch Estates prior to becoming a licensed architect.<sup>308</sup> Deep Well homes by E. Stewart Williams include the 1958 home designed for noted interior designer Arthur Elrod, who lived at 1207 Calle De Maria. Wexler and Harrison built a residence at 1344 S. Calle De Maria, and the Zen House (c.1959) at 1368 S. Calle de Maria. Deep Well Ranch Estates also contains residences by Stan Sackley at 1131 S. Driftwood Drive, and 1475 S. Paseo De Marcia.<sup>309</sup> There are also residences by Stan Cowan (c.1973) and Leland Oliver (c.1970).<sup>310</sup>

During the mid-1960s, film comedian Jerry Lewis lived at 1349 Sagebrush Road. In 1967 Oscar-winning actor William Holden established permanent residency at 1323 S. Driftwood Drive. Two homes in Deep Well Ranch Estates are associated with the pianist Liberace. The first at 1516 Manzanita Avenue is where the performer lived circa 1957. The second, at 1106

<sup>305</sup> Bennett, “Story of Deepwell (sic).”

<sup>306</sup> More information on Dart Properties pending further research.

<sup>307</sup> “Palm Springs Ranch Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1963, N7.

<sup>308</sup> ModernismWeek.com, <http://www.modernismweek.com/hugh-kaptur-from-mid-century-to-our-century-part-one/> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>309</sup> More research needed on the work and career of Stan Sackley.

<sup>310</sup> More research is needed to confirm these properties and their original owners.

Driftwood Drive was built for his beloved mother, Frances. Noted television actor/producer Jack Webb lived at 1255 S. Manzanita Avenue next door to his first wife and actress, Julie London at 1297 S. Manzanita Avenue.<sup>311</sup>

#### Ranch Club Estates/Desert Park Estates (1955)

In 1955, developer Noel B. Clarke (1896-1964) embarked on the most ambitious postwar tract development ever undertaken in Palm Springs: Desert Park Estates (also known as Ranch Club Estates). The 500-acre development was in the flats of northeast Palm Springs as bordered by Joyce Drive on the north, Vista Chino on the south, the golf course and Whitewater Club Drive on the east, and Sunrise Way on the west. Developed in twelve phases between February of 1955 and November of 1958, the southwest portion of the development was bordered by Racquet Club Drive to the north and N. Farrell Drive to the east, and employed a street pattern evocative of the earlier Prescott T. Stevens developments like Las Palmas Estates and Merito Vista in which gently curving streets were favored over a rigorous grid pattern. The final five phases (seven through twelve) abandoned the curving street pattern in favor of a more efficient grid pattern.

Developer Noel Clarke was a hospitality man turned developer. Having owned clubs in southern Orange County during the 1920s, he invested in Walnut Estates, which was located near Encino and was one of the first San Fernando Valley suburban housing developments. Clarke and his wife Joyce then turned their talents to the desert playground and took over the Ranch Club in 1955. By 1961, they turned the basic nine-room hotel-club operation<sup>312</sup> into Ranch Club enterprises: the Ranch Club Hotel of more than 250 rooms, the Ranch Country Club (the 18-hole golf course designed by Joe Caldwell in the north east section of the city),<sup>313</sup> and Ranch Club Estates, the homes near the golf course built by Clarke's Ranch Construction Company.<sup>314</sup>

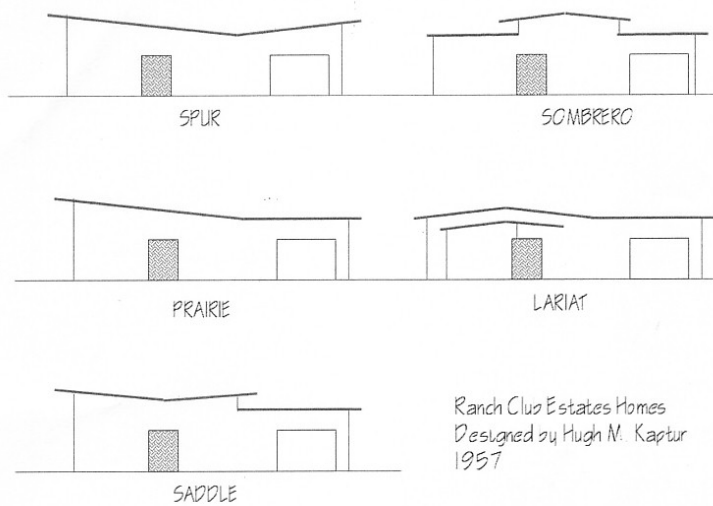
<sup>311</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Barridade Books, Fort Lee, NJ, 2004), 213-216.

<sup>312</sup> Located at Paseo El Mirador and Sunrise Way.

<sup>313</sup> The Ranch Country Club Board of Directors also included Bob Kelley, broadcaster for the Los Angeles Rams; Raymond Parkhurst, a Hughes Aircraft executive; movie producer Bob Waterfield; local attorney Arthur Crowley; Gerald Sanborn, mayor of Palm Springs; and Joe Kirkwood, golf professional.

<sup>314</sup> Joan Winchell, "Real Whingdinger at Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1961, A7.

In 1957, Ranch Construction Company foreman Tom Sills approached a young Hugh Kaptur to design the home plans.<sup>315</sup> In the documentary *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, Kaptur remembers, “I filled the void for builders who didn’t want to spend thousands of dollars for plans. They were using draftsmen or building designers. I started doing work for contractors...that’s how I came to do houses out at Ranch Club Estates.” Five designs were created: the “Spur,” “Lariat,” “Saddle,” “Prairie,” and “Sombrero.” The Mid-century Modern designs abstracted adobe and indigenous architecture to create solid expressionistic forms with a variety of rooflines. The homes were noted for masonry at the center of the façade designed to, in Kaptur’s own words, “anchor the designs to the earth.”<sup>316</sup>



Elevations of the five Hugh Kaptur designs from 1957 for Ranch Club Estates show the variety of rooflines. Each elevation is anchored by a strong masonry element in the center of the design. Source: <http://www.desertdreaming.com/ranch-club-estates-homes.html>.

<sup>315</sup> Additional fieldwork and research needed to confirm extant examples of Kaptur’s work in the subdivision.

<sup>316</sup> John C. Brown, *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, CD-ROM (This N’ That Films, 2014).

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

The development was envisioned to include between 800-1,000 homes. But sales were slow, and by 1961, only 250 homes had been built. Instead of building the homes in clusters and creating neighborhoods, the homes were built “scattershot” around the development in hopes that it would increase the value of the land between.<sup>317</sup> Unfortunately, this was not a successful strategy. In February of 1964, Clarke died of a heart attack after a year of illness.<sup>318</sup> In 1967, Clarke’s widow Joyce sold the Ranch Club proper and it was ultimately razed. The Ranch Construction Company went bankrupt and the undeveloped properties were sold to other developers who built more tract homes in the 1970s and 1980s.



L-shaped tract in foreground is Ranch Club Estates (a.k.a., the Desert Park Estates Tract). Note how homes were constructed scattershot around the 500-acres, as opposed to clustered in sequential units like most developments. Homes visible in the photo are likely Hugh Kaptur designs from 1957 or “knock-offs” of those designs. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>317</sup> Brown, *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*.

<sup>318</sup> “Clarke Services,” *Redlands Daily Facts*, February 17, 1964, 6.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Sunmor Estates (1955)

During WWII, the area now occupied by Sunmor Estates was part of the Palm Springs Army Airfield as a site for several “Tie Down” or hardstand stations for aircraft.<sup>319</sup> In 1955 the local Sands Realty and Development Corporation consisting of Abram Robert (A.R.) Simon and Merrill Brown subdivided the first phase of Sunmor Estates, a 55-parcel tract including the eastern portion of Playmor Avenue and Livmor Avenue, Morsun Circle, and Arline Drive.<sup>320</sup> Simon was a realtor in the city and Merrill Brown was a Judge in the Indio Superior Court.<sup>321</sup>

The vision for Sunmor Estates appears to have been much larger than the reality. *The Los Angeles Times* reports the venture as a “\$50,000 project.”<sup>322</sup> The July-August issue of the *Villager* describes the development as 213-acres, and the tract map refers to the area as “Sunmor Estates No. 1;” however, no subsequent tracts were ever registered. A 1955 *Villager* advertisement identifies areas of planned future construction north of Tahquitz Canyon (formerly McCallum Way) almost as far west as Sunrise Way; and south of Tahquitz Canyon as far south as Ramon Road. Yet only the initial twenty acres were built out, and Simon’s plan to follow the initial 55 homes with 100 more was never realized.<sup>323</sup> Sunmor Estates was notable for its paved streets and rolled curbs, which were not standard in Palm Springs developments subdivided before the war.

Sunmor Estates was envisioned by A.R. Simon as part of a combination residential and commercial development with a modern, \$10,000,000, 22-acre landscaped pedestrian mall and shopping center at Tahquitz Canyon and Ferrell Drive.<sup>324</sup>

<sup>319</sup> Historic Site Preservation Board #40 Plaque.

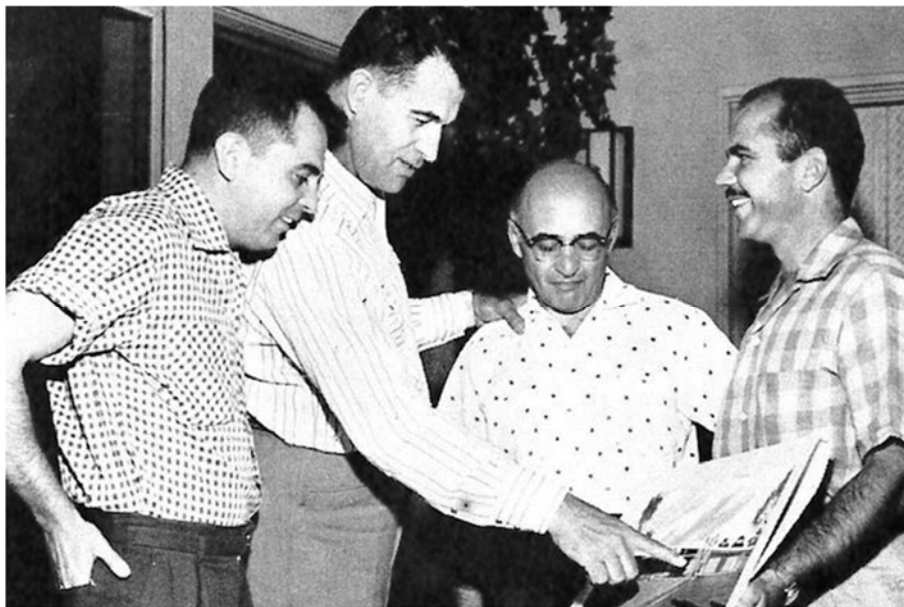
<sup>320</sup> Although Sunmor Estates is often colloquially referred to as including The Alexander Company houses developed as the Enchanted Homes tract, this sub-theme refers only to the original Sunmor Estates homes.

<sup>321</sup> Judge Merrill Brown would later be one of three judges criticized for the handling of Agua Caliente lands in the late 1960s, “Equal Rights for Agua Caliente Indians Asked,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1968, B1.

<sup>322</sup> “Palm Springs Home Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1955, F15.

<sup>323</sup> “Palm Springs Home Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 1955, F15.

<sup>324</sup> “Center Planned at Resort City,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1958, F12.



Left to right, architect Donald Wexler, architect Richard Harrison, Frank Bogert, and developer A.R. Simon examine the rendering for Sunmor Estates. Source: <http://www.sunmorestates.com/#!about/cjn9>

Local builder Robert “Bob” Higgins was engaged to build “a neighborhood of affordable modernist tract homes.”<sup>325</sup> Sunmor Estates included two-, three-, and four-bedroom plans.<sup>326</sup> According to the *Palm Springs Villager*, Wexler and Harrison designed the Mid-century Modern-style homes.<sup>327</sup> The post-and beam homes featured colored rock roofs, extra-wide overhangs, large expanses of glass and sliding glass doors, and large covered patios.<sup>328</sup>

<sup>325</sup> Sunmor Neighborhood, [www.sunmorestates.com/#!about/cjn9](http://www.sunmorestates.com/#!about/cjn9) (accessed December 5, 2014).

<sup>326</sup> Additional research is needed to confirm the number of models, plans, and layout of the development.

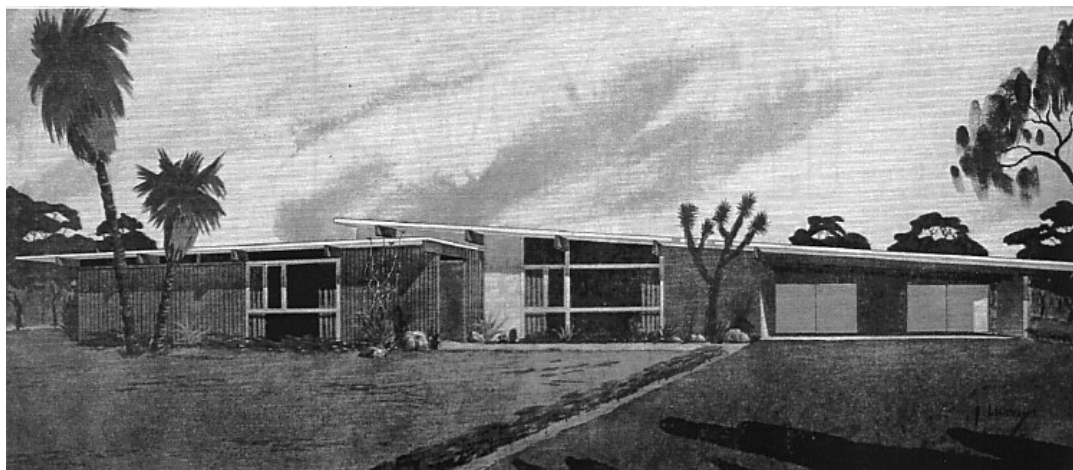
<sup>327</sup> *Palm Springs Villager*, July-August, 1955.

<sup>328</sup> Sunmor Estates Advertisement, *Palm Springs Villager*, October, 1955, 4.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Rendering for Sunmor Estates (1955, Wexler and Harrison) featuring a Mid-century Modern-style home of post-and-beam construction. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1955, 9.

Although Sunmor Estates was clearly envisioned as a series of tract homes, ads tout the houses as “individually designed and decorated.”<sup>329</sup> Ads also suggest that the developers were willing to sell unimproved property in the subdivision. In 1957, the Sunmor Estates property was sold to fellow developers George and Robert Alexander of the Alexander Construction Company; the property became part of the Alexander’s adjacent Enchanted Homes tracts (subdivided in 1957).<sup>330</sup> The reason for the sale is currently unknown. Simon may have decided that he preferred commercial instead of residential development, or he may have needed the cash to fund new projects.<sup>331</sup> He expanded the nearby commercial shopping center in 1964, creating the first air-conditioned mall with an ice skating rink in Southern California.<sup>332</sup>

<sup>329</sup> Sunmor Estates Advertisement, *Palm Springs Villager*, September, 1955, 9.

<sup>330</sup> In his book *The Alexanders*, James R. Harlan refers to the Alexander development here as Sunmor Estates, rather than its official tract name Enchanted Homes. There is currently no evidence that the Alexanders ever marketed them under the Sunmor name.

<sup>331</sup> Additional research needed to confirm.

<sup>332</sup> “Shopping Centers Showing Surge,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1964, K1.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



### The Crossley Tract (1956)

This twenty-acre tract was subdivided by Palm Springs' earliest African-American resident, Lawrence Crossley (1899-1962). It was located in an area that was east of the city limits at the time of its subdivision. It was bordered by 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, Martha Street to the south, the west side of Lawrence Street to the west, and the east side of Marguerite Street on to the east. As remembered by Frank Bogert, Crossley traded a Buick to Pearl McManus for the land that became the Crossley Tract.<sup>333</sup> The 77-parcel development was composed of a series of modest Minimal Traditional-style homes.

Crossley intended the subdivision to be for African-American families who were largely barred from living in other Palm Springs developments by racial restrictions. As a result of these restrictions, prior to the subdivision of the Crossley tract, African-Americans and Mexican Americans all lived in Section 14 (also known as "the reservation") "...in a cluster of unpaved streets, jumbled shacks, no street lights and outside toilets."<sup>334</sup> When "the reservation" was closed by the city and county health department in the early 1960s, African-Americans in Palm Springs migrated to outlying areas such as the Desert Highland Estates Tract (1951) north of the city where homes were relatively inexpensive and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) offered low-interest loans.<sup>335</sup> By 1984, Desert Highland Estates and nearby Gateway Estates (1960) had become the heart of the African-American residential community in Palm Springs.<sup>336</sup>

Crossley came to Palm Springs in 1925 and went to work for Prescott T. Stevens as a chauffeur and handyman. Crossley eventually became Steven's right hand man, designing and building the El Mirador Golf Course and managing the Whitewater Mutual Water Company.<sup>337</sup> He also became owner of the Tramview Water Company. He built and lived in the Crossley Court at 1543 Ramon Road.<sup>338</sup>

<sup>333</sup> Mark Henry, "Black Pioneer Linked Palm Springs to Golf," *Riverside Press Enterprise*, February 26, 2002, B01.

<sup>334</sup> Wendell Green, "Plan Negro Eviction from Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 5, 1961, A1.

<sup>335</sup> "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

<sup>336</sup> "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

<sup>337</sup> Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends* (San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, Inc., 2011), 184.

<sup>338</sup> Pending additional research on the type of court development.

Crossley also befriended the Agua Caliente and was welcomed into tribal circles. From a recipe provided by his Native American associates, he created the Palm Springs Desert Tea Company. Crossley was instrumental as a liaison between the Agua Caliente and Judge McCabe's efforts to restore land promised to them by the federal government.<sup>339</sup>

#### Meiselman Developments (1956-1959)

An important postwar developer in Palm Springs was Jack I. Meiselman (1899-1994). In the mid-to-late 1950s, Meiselman developed hundreds of Mid-century Modern style tract homes in the city. Jack I. Meiselman (1899-1994) was born in New York City to Jewish parents who had immigrated to the United States in 1891.<sup>340</sup> One of six children, Jack was involved in the family business of linen manufacturing and sales, specifically handkerchiefs.<sup>341</sup> During the 1920s, Meiselman relocated to Chicago and continued in the handkerchief manufacturing business but broadened his interests into construction.<sup>342</sup> He did well financially as evidenced by owning homes in an affluent neighborhood in north Chicago. In Chicago, Meiselman also met and married his wife Berne "Babe" Meiselman (1903-1991). Meiselman and his wife were always listed as co-owners/sub-dividers of Meiselman tracts.<sup>343</sup> In 1944, the Meiselms moved to California.<sup>344</sup> They appear in the Palm Springs City Directory in 1946 at 1276 Indian Avenue.<sup>345</sup> By 1948, the Meiselms had moved to 1240 Monte Vista Avenue.

By 1960, the Meiselms had a home in Beverly Hills at 509 N. Beverly Drive. In their later years, they were known for their philanthropic efforts in expanding services for low-income elderly populations – specifically the donation of a \$3 million, 240-unit apartment complex on forty acres in Cathedral City to Casa Colina Hospital for elder care.<sup>346</sup>

<sup>339</sup> "Well Known Palm Springs Realty Developer Dies," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 15, 1962, A10.

<sup>340</sup> U.S. Census, 1920.

<sup>341</sup> U.S. Census, 1920.

<sup>342</sup> "\$3 million Gift for Casa Colina," *Progress Bulletin*, February 16, 1976, 11.

<sup>343</sup> Some online sources have erroneously identified Meiselman's wife "Berne" as "Bernie"--a brother to Meiselman. Meiselman family 1920 census records show no Bernard Meiselman in the family at that time. It is more likely a misattribution of Berne's name.

<sup>344</sup> "\$3 million Gift for Casa Colina," *Progress Bulletin*, February 16, 1976, 11.

<sup>345</sup> *Palm Springs Season 1946-7 Directory*, 50.

<sup>346</sup> "Casa Colina Hospital," *San Bernardino County Sun*, February 21, 1976, 28.

Some accounts indicate that Meiselman may have originally worked with developers George and Robert Alexander, but there may have been a falling out between the men.<sup>347</sup> Regardless, documentation shows Meiselman began building in the desert as early as 1951.<sup>348</sup> The first documented action of Meiselman as a developer on his own was recounted by local Palm Springs real estate agent George Gannon in the November 1956 issue of the *Palm Springs Villager*:

In 1953 Jack Meiselman came into my office and wanted to invest in Palm Springs real estate. I suggested that homes were needed within the reach of the average working man. At the time, I couldn't have shown you anything less than \$15,000 and you would have had to have a minimum of \$6,000 to \$7,000 down. That very afternoon, I sold him 10 lots in the Val Vista tract. He handled his own financing. By the time the 10 homes were up I had them sold. They were two-bedroom, one bath homes and sold for \$7,975, \$975 down and \$75 per month.<sup>349</sup>

In 1955 Meiselman approached architect William F. Cody to design a development for him.<sup>350</sup> Meiselman and his partner Sam B. Rosenbaum engaged the architect again at least one other time.<sup>351</sup> However, Meiselman homes were typically not attributed to an architect. Plans were often created by a draftsman and based on other competitive offerings such as those seen in Alexander developments. In particular, Meiselman's use of the post-and-beam technique for tract home construction was likely inspired by the Alexander approach. Designs in Meiselman tracts are typically a simplified Mid-century Modern style that was less expressive and refined than their Alexander counterparts. Common elements of Meiselman homes are their tongue and groove ceilings, clerestory windows, scored stucco, concrete block, and walls of glass at the rear.<sup>352</sup>

<sup>347</sup> "Palm Springs Meiselman Reborn," [www.paulkaplanrealtor.com/Meiselman.php](http://www.paulkaplanrealtor.com/Meiselman.php) (accessed December 7, 2014). This information is pending confirmation from additional sources.

<sup>348</sup> "Gannon Realty Company Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, c. 1956.

<sup>349</sup> "Interviewing Our Realtors: George Gannon," *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

<sup>350</sup> "Guide to William F. Cody Papers, 1918-1980," Special Collections Department, Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Poly Technic State University, San Luis Obispo.

<sup>351</sup> Confirmation and additional information pending further research.

<sup>352</sup> Pending additional research on the design details commonly found in Meiselman tracts.

Meiselman was a builder as well as a developer; therefore, he also constructed homes (presumably primarily on speculation) in tracts that he did not develop. In 1953, the firm completed the construction of the Carl Schroder Residence designed by Walter White (1917-2002) in the Luring Sands Park tract.<sup>353</sup> Other tracts where Meiselman constructed homes included: Vista Del Cielo, Desert Tract, Deep Well, Ramon Rise, Winterhaven Manor, Palm Springs Addition No. 1, and Desert Palm Estates. By November of 1956, Meiselman had built and sold 198 homes in Palm Springs ranging in cost from \$8,000 to \$30,000.<sup>354</sup> George Gannon was the exclusive buying and selling agent for Meiselman.



George Gannon, realtor and Jack Meiselman, developer, review plans for a subdivision. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

<sup>353</sup> *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1953, 35.

<sup>354</sup> "Interviewing our Realtors: George Gannon," *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### *Karlisa Cove and Palm Lane (1956)*

In June of 1956, Meiselman established two subdivisions in Palm Springs. The first, Karlisa Cove, was a small seven-parcel tract of homes in the Karlisa Cove cul-de-sac off Paseo de Caroleta in the area popularly known as the Veterans Tract. These irregularly shaped parcels are unique among Meiselman developments. The second, Palm Lane, was a 49-parcel subdivision bordered by Amado Road on the north, the south side of Andreas Road on the south, Sunset Way on the east, and the west side of Michelle Road on the west. These houses were three-bedroom/two-bathroom plans with “spacious living rooms with fireplace, glass sliding doors leading to patio and pool areas, and Youngstown engineered kitchens...” priced at \$23,200.<sup>355</sup>

### *Chino Palms Estates (1958)*

In 1958-59, Meiselman embarked on the largest of his developments, Chino Palms Estates. This eighty-five parcel development consists of two tangential property areas. The first, developed in 1958, is south of Via Escuela. The second, developed in 1959, consisted of the east side of via Miraleste, all of Berne Street, and all of Jacques Street. The second phase is comprised of smaller parcels than the first (100 x100 feet vs. 125 x 150 feet in phase one). The timing and the odd configuration of the land suggests that this may be the property purchased from the Bureau of Indian Affairs the previous year.

<sup>355</sup> “Gannon Realty Company Ad,” *Palm Springs Villager*, c. 1956.

### *Alejo Palms Estates (1959)*

In late 1959, Meiselman developed the area known as Alejo Palms Estates, a 57-parcel development boarded by Tamarisk Road on the north, Alejo Road on the south, Juanita Drive on the east, and the west side of Monterey Road on the west. These three-bedroom, two-bath plus family room designs were marketed for their quality construction, for being “worry-free,” and as the only Palm Springs housing development with concrete driveways.<sup>356</sup>



Alejo Palms advertisement stresses the quality of a Jack Meiselman home.

<sup>356</sup> Advertisement, “Ask the Man Who Owns One,” [NEED URL](#).

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### El Rancho Vista Estates (1960)

In 1960 Roy Fey, one of Palm Springs' most prolific developers and builders, looked eastward from the village and established the tract that would become El Rancho Vista Estates (1960-61, Wexler and Harrison). The "Barbara Tract" as it is officially known on the maps, was developed in three quick, successive phases from north to south and included a street named after the developer himself, Avenida Fey. The development consisted of 92 parcels bordered by Vista Chino on the north, Chia Road on the south, North Gene Autry Trail on the east, and Avenida Fey on the west.<sup>357</sup> El Rancho Vista Estates sat virtually isolated in the northeastern part of Palm Springs.

Roy Fey (1915-2000) was one of Palm Springs' most important developers. By some estimates he built over 1,200 homes in the Palms Springs area.<sup>358</sup> Born to Ukrainian Jewish immigrants, Fey grew up in Chicago and became an accountant. In 1940, at age 25, he formed his own accountancy group, and then moved into residential housing development after World War II. He built at least 3,000 houses in Chicago prior to moving to Palm Springs in 1955 with his wife Ethel who suffered from asthma.<sup>359</sup> Upon arrival, Fey founded a real estate company, Fey's Canyon Realtors, and a construction company, Fey Construction Company. Immediately he began developing residential property.

One of Fey's earliest single-family residential projects was El Rancho Vista Estates, but he would go on to develop Canyon Vista Estates (1976), Canyon Estates (1969-72), Mesquite Canyon Estates (1978), Canyon West (1979), Caballero Estates (1981), and many others. He was also instrumental in the city's early co-operative apartment and condominium development. Taking a page from the Alexanders' book, Fey brought his son Robert M. Fey into the business and together they created a family legacy in real estate, banking, and philanthropy.<sup>360</sup> Roy Fey was also a founder of the Bank of Palm Springs in the early 1980s.

Seeing the potential of what the Alexander Construction Company was doing with modern architecture in housing tracts, Fey engaged the local architecture firm Wexler and Harrison to design homes in El Rancho Vista Estates; the subdivision was the first single-family residential

<sup>357</sup> The adjacent parcels in the tract (780 along Chia Road and the southern cul de sac of Avenida Fey North) were subdivided in 1979 by Canadian-based Fairport Corporation and were not part of the original El Rancho Vista Estates.

<sup>358</sup> "The History of Desert Skies," [www.desertskies.com/history.htm](http://www.desertskies.com/history.htm) (accessed November 18, 2014).

<sup>359</sup> "The History of Desert Skies," [www.desertskies.com/history.htm](http://www.desertskies.com/history.htm) (accessed November 18, 2014).

<sup>360</sup> The Alexanders are discussed in detail below.

development by Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison in Palm Springs.<sup>361</sup> Donald Wexler resided in the house at 1593 Avenida Robert Miguel.

Three basic floor plans included three-bedroom/two bath and two-bedroom/two bath versions that were priced at \$16,995.<sup>362</sup> These homes were marketed to Los Angeles residents as part of “Balanced Power Homes” program by the Southern California Gas Company that positioned the combined use of gas and electric power as less expensive than “All Electric Homes” that were popular in Southern California during the period.<sup>363</sup>

#### Tract 2812 - Madrona Drive Tract (1964)

Tract 2812 (also referred to as the Madrona Drive Tract), is a 55-parcel tract of custom single-family residences bordered by Caliente Drive to the north, the southern side of Madrona Drive to the south, Cadiz Circle to the east, and Canyon Country Club to the south. Subdivided in 1964 by two San Fernando Valley-based developers, R. M. Myer and Victor T. Koozin, the tract includes five cul-de-sacs: Fuego Circle, Luz Circle, Plato Circle, Rojo Circle, and Cadiz Circle. Homes in the tract are typically Mid-century Modern in style.<sup>364</sup>

R. “Mike” Myers (1914-2007) and Victor T. Koozin (b. 1914) were active real estate developers in the Encino area of the San Fernando Valley during the early 1960s.<sup>365</sup> Projects included the rezoning and development of seven acres of Ventura Boulevard near Louise Avenue as well as the development of a professional building. Myers’ residential development activities included apartment houses in Los Angeles. Myers and Koozin were both active in the Encino Chamber of Commerce, with Myers serving as its president in 1962. Koozin, the son

<sup>361</sup> Fey, Wexler, and Harrison would continue to collaborate on projects over the years, including five speculative houses for Fey in the Caballeros Estates tract (1960) at 615, 681 and 755 Avenida Caballeros and 620 and 641 N. Camino Real. Fey also engaged the architects to design the clubhouse at Canyon Country Club (1961).

<sup>362</sup> “Classified Ad 15,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1962, D14.

<sup>363</sup> Display Ad 312, *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1962, P15.

<sup>364</sup> Additional research required to determine whether these were custom or tract homes; if they were tract homes, need to determine the number of models and additional information about the design features.

<sup>365</sup> The development of TR2812 was handled under the corporate name of Sunrise Estates, Inc., of which Myers and Koozin were president and secretary, respectively. This is not to be confused with the Sunrise Estates development marketed as such by the Alexander Construction Company farther to the north in Palm Springs.

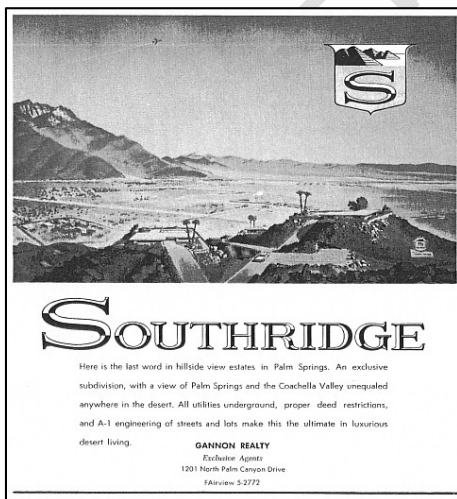


of Russian immigrants, came to America in 1923 and settled in Seattle, Washington. In 1940, he relocated to Los Angeles as an aircraft engineer.<sup>366</sup>

### Southridge Estates (1965)

During the 1960s, Southern California residential development turned to the hillsides. As flat, convenient parcels became scarcer and engineering advances made hillside development more feasible and economical, developers increasingly looked to the hills for property. The views associated with hillside properties also made these sites more desirable for homebuilders and buyers. Southridge Estates capitalized on these trends to create an exclusive neighborhood for an elite group of Palm Springs residences. On land sold to them by realtor Russell Wade, developers E. Allan Petty, Richard E. Rahn, and William Anable established the twenty-two parcel tract (Tract 2928) in January of 1965.

A burgeoning Palm Springs population had made the traditional privacy afforded the wealthy and famous residents of Palm Springs harder to manage. As a result, the gated and guarded Southridge Estates appealed to those residents seeing maximum privacy. Advertisements for the community, which appeared exclusively in local media like the *Palm Springs Villager*, touted the “view of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley unequaled anywhere in the desert... underground utilities, A-1 engineering of the streets and lots and proper deed restrictions.”<sup>367</sup>

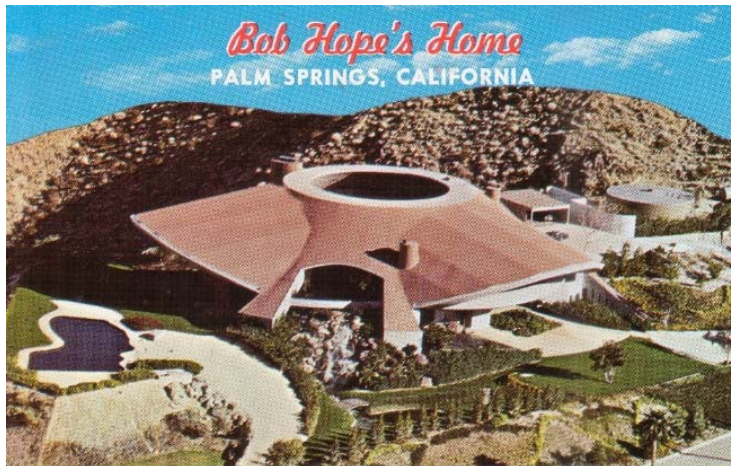


Advertisement features an artist’s rendering of Mid-century Modern-style homes on commanding lots with mountain and “city” views. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

<sup>366</sup> U.S. Census, 1940.

<sup>367</sup> Ad for Southridge, *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

As a result, Southridge is home to several celebrity residences and architecturally significant homes. They include the iconic Arthur Elrod Residence (1968-69, John Lautner) at 2175 Southridge Drive, the Bob Hope Residence (1972-75, John Lautner) at 2466 Southridge Drive, the Stanley Goldberg<sup>368</sup> Residence (1964, William F. Cody) at 2340 Southridge Drive, and the David Janssen Residence “La Piedra” (1971, Edward Giddings)<sup>369</sup> at 2399 Southridge Drive.



The Southridge home of Bob Hope (1972-75, John Lautner) at 2466 Southridge Drive. Source: *Palm Springs in Vintage Postcards*, 115.

<sup>368</sup> Chicago-based industrialist and inventor.

<sup>369</sup> Edward Giddings, AIA (1929-1993), a Newport Beach-based architect is noted for his expressive forms and use of stone and rustic Mexican materials. Trained in architecture at the University of Washington, he designed and developed Club Cascadas de Baja and Ocho Cascadas in Mexico and designed several houses for wealthy clients in Southern California—including the Roy E. Klotz Residence (1970) in Newport Beach which received a certificate of merit from the Orange County Chapter of the AIA.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

In the documentary *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, architect Hugh Kaptur remembers “courting the developers up at Southridge.” These efforts resulted in the Edwin H. Morris Residence (1964, Hugh Kaptur) at 2203 Southridge Drive and the Mid-century Modern style William Holden Residence (1977, Hugh Kaptur) at 2433 Southridge Drive. The Morris Residence was eventually purchased by the film actor Steve McQueen shortly after the release of his film *Bullitt* in 1969.

#### Orchid Tree Lane Development (1966)

In 1966 noted local designer Howard P. Lapham (1905-2008) subdivided a single street of single-family residences: Orchid Tree Lane between Alejo Road and Amado Road.<sup>370</sup>

#### George and Robert Alexander Developments (1955-1964)

George's vision for his construction company changed in 1956 when his health took a turn for the worse and, under his doctor's advice to seek a warmer, drier climate, he decided to relocate his George Alexander Company base of operations to Palm Springs. The Alexanders had already been enamored of the desert where they had been spending many weekends each winter. The timing couldn't have been better for the firm as the popularity of the desert resort was ready to explode. It would be there where he and his son Bob, and Bill Krisel would form the desert team that would go down in Palm Springs Modernism history.<sup>371</sup>

Through the Alexander Construction Company, George Alexander (1898-1964) and his son Robert “Bob” Alexander (1925-1964) were prolific Southern California developers of tract homes. Their company was responsible for thousands of homes in the San Fernando Valley and over 1,200 homes in Palm Springs. Before becoming a developer, George Alexander was an accountant who saw firsthand the profits made by his construction company clients.<sup>372</sup> Over time, the Alexanders earned a reputation for building quality homes of architectural merit, engaging licensed professional architects to do the designs. George actually began

<sup>370</sup> Pending additional research to confirm whether Lapham also provided the designs for the residences in the subdivision, and whether they were custom or tract homes.

<sup>371</sup> John Crosse, *Southern California Architectural History Blog*, January 13, 2011 (accessed January 2015).

<sup>372</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 8.

investing in Palm Springs in 1930, as one of the original developers of the Smoke Tree Guest Ranch along with L. Mac Blankenhorn, C.F. Doyle, Nicholas Harrison, and architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr.<sup>373</sup> The Alexanders were also active in Palm Springs society, civically engaged and known for their philanthropic work. Tragically, their lives were cut short by a plane crash that killed George, Robert, and their wives in 1965.

Since the days of Prescott T. Stevens and El Mirador, and Pearl McManus and the Oasis Hotel and Smoke Tree Ranch, the Palm Springs' recipe for real estate and housing development focused on the building of a resort where people could experience the Palm Springs lifestyle then transition to home ownership. Recognizing this, George and Robert Alexander applied the same recipe to the south end of the city and built the Ocotillo Lodge (1954-55, Palmer and Krisel). The main building or "clubhouse" featured recreational and fine dining amenities for the more remote south end of Palm Springs, surrounded by the "individual villas" that would be stepping stones to home ownership. As described in the *Los Angeles Times* "the Boy Wonder Builders from Los Angeles," George Alexander and Joseph C. Dunas rented half the villas as hotel rooms and leased half to executives for entertainment purposes.<sup>374</sup>

#### *Twin Palms Estates (1955)*

The first Alexander Construction Company residential development in Palm Springs was Twin Palms Estates, also known as Smoke Tree Valley Estates, El Camino Estates, and Royal Desert Estates. The Alexanders, who were Jewish, chose to create their first residential subdivision in the south end of Palm Springs. The reason for this, according to author and architectural historian Peter Moruzzi, was that "...up that time, much of the city had been effectively rendered off-limits to Jewish ownership, due to restrictive covenants and de facto segregation."<sup>375</sup>

Palm Springs estates was subdivided in 1955; the homes were constructed between 1957 and 1958 and designed by the architectural firm Palmer and Krisel. Sited on 10,000 square foot lots and assembled on 40 x 40 foot concrete pads, the 90-home tract was built in three

<sup>373</sup> "Company Buys Property for Development," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1930, D2.

<sup>374</sup> "Joan Winchell: Co-Ops Catch On in Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1958, D8.

<sup>375</sup> Peter Moruzzi, "Palm Springs Holiday" (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 90.

phases.<sup>376</sup> Two variations (plans A&B) on essentially one square floor plan with a utility core at the center were offered; exterior options included several Mid-century Modern designs with differing rooflines.<sup>377</sup> This provided construction efficiency, the appearance of individuality for the buyer, and an engaging visual architectural cadence for the streetscape of the neighborhood.<sup>378</sup>



Aerial photo of Twin Palms Estates (1957-58, Palmer and Krisel) shows the proximity to the Ocotillo Lodge in upper right of photograph. Source: *The Alexanders*, 53.

<sup>376</sup> This number comes from the Harlan book and appears to include a branch of another tract.

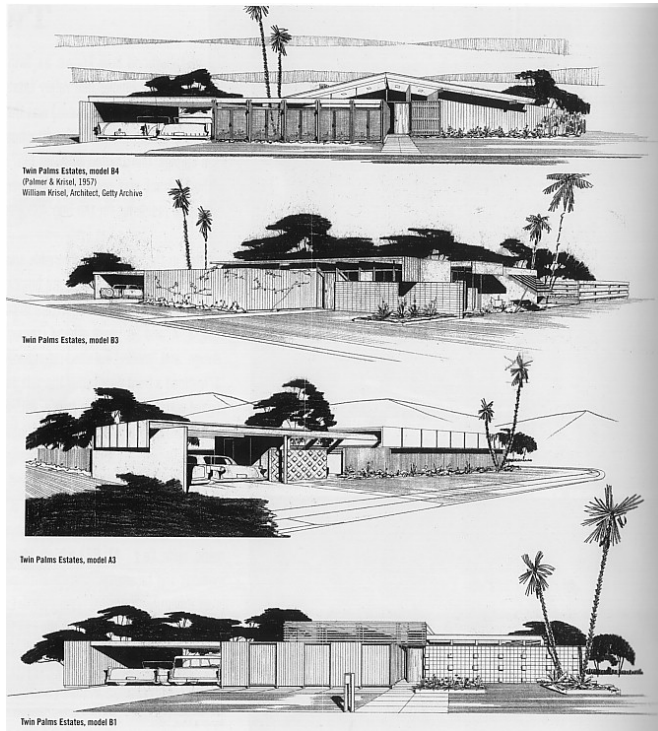
<sup>377</sup> More information about the number of models and design features pending a visit to the Getty archives.

<sup>378</sup> Sian Winship, "Quality and Quantity: Architects Working for Developers in Southern California, 1960-1973 (MHP Thesis, University of Southern California, 2011), 192. This technique was a classic feature of Palmer and Krisel-designed developments, including Midland La Mirada (1955) in Fullerton, California that won the National Association of Home Builders Award (NAHB) of Merit in January 1956, as well as awards from the Home Building Institute and *American Builder* magazine.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Four of the many combinations of elevations created by rotating the plans and combining with different rooflines. Source: *The Alexanders*, 28.

George and Robert Alexander's first project with Palmer and Krisel had been in the San Fernando Valley when George had provided Robert some land (which would become Corbin Palms, developed in 1954-55) on which he could experiment with tract housing design. Robert engaged William Krisel (b. 1924) and Dan Saxon Palmer (1920-2007) to design the homes. To the elder Alexander's surprise, the houses were both aesthetically successful and made a better profit than previous Alexander developments. A significant factor in the tracts

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

created by the Alexanders was that the developers did not seek FHA loan approval<sup>379</sup> and therefore, the designs did not have to conform to limiting Minimal Property Standards.<sup>380</sup>

As author James R. Harlan notes, “The techniques that the Alexanders used to build their projects set the Alexander Construction Company apart from other Palm Springs builders.”<sup>381</sup> Materials for Alexander homes were all standardized, pre-cut, labeled, and transported to the site as a kit, not to be customized. This enabled quick assembly by the Alexander’s crew of tradesmen. Standardization and efficiency were as much a part of the Palmer and Krisel design as was the artistry. As William Krisel remembered, “...every line I drew cost money.”<sup>382</sup> Yet the designer’s philosophy was that “the good tract house is not assembly line living, it improves both the physical shelter and the way of life of the people.”<sup>383</sup>

The square floor plan was also key to Palmer and Krisel’s economical work for the Alexanders in Palm Springs. After visiting a concrete tradesman, Krisel learned that a flat slab with only four corners would be the least expansive to construct. Although his Los Angeles designs were rectangles, Krisel remembers, ““When I went to Palm Springs they became squares. Square was more efficient than a rectangle because it encompassed more square footage with the least amount of perimeter with four corners.”<sup>384</sup>

Twin Palms received national recognition in the architectural trade press. It was lauded by *Progressive Architecture* in March of 1958 for artfully addressing the profession’s issues with much postwar tract home design by flopping the plans, and using variations in orientation and fenestration to “...consciously minimize the tract look.”<sup>385</sup>

<sup>379</sup> FHA and VA-insured loans were not the only types of loans available. Lenders offered buyers “conventional financing” with less favorable terms on down payment, interest rate, and fee waivers. Conventional financing also typically required borrowers to have excellent credit, job stability with sufficient income, a sizable down payment, and low debt to income ratios. Some developers (including the Alexanders) kept their own loans for deferred profits. As such they were not beholden to FHA Minimum Property Standards that also favored construction methods that added to the construction cost of single-family residences.

<sup>380</sup> These standards prohibited houses with a flat roof, a butterfly roof, or slab on grade construction without a double slab pour and a waterproof membrane between the pours. The latter requirement eased over the years, partially through the lobbying efforts of builders’ organizations such as the NAHB.

<sup>381</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 14.

<sup>382</sup> Sian Winship, “Quality and Quantity: Architects Working for Developers in Southern California, 1960-1973 (MHP Thesis, University of Southern California, 2011), 193.

<sup>383</sup> Esther McCoy, “What I Believe,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1956, Q4, <http://proquest.com> (accessed May 24, 2011).

<sup>384</sup> “William Krisel Oral History, Interview and Transcription by John Crosse,” 2009, 69.

<sup>385</sup> “Speculative Builders Houses: Palm Springs, California.” *Progressive Architecture*, March 1958, 146.

### *Vista Las Palmas (1956)*

In December of 1956, the Alexanders subdivided the first phase of Vista Las Palmas (1956-59). This included the area bordered by the north side of Via Las Palmas to the north, the south side of Regal Drive to the south, Via Monte Vista to the east, and Rose Avenue to the West. Because of its central location and adjacency to Las Palmas Estates, this development was targeted to a more upscale clientele than Twin Palms.

Vista Las Palmas was developed in three phases and these phases appear to be loosely tied to their architectural heritage. The first phase, in 1956, is the northern portion of the development to the south side of Camino del Sur. Most of these designs are attributed to architect Charles Dubois. Phase II, in March of 1960 includes Rose Avenue and the southwestern bend of Abrigo Road with houses all attributed to Palmer and Krisel. Phase III was subdivided in 1959 and included Fairview, Tuxedo, and Cornet Circle along with Regal Drive; these houses are also attributed to Palmer and Krisel.<sup>386</sup>

The three-bedroom plus maid's room designs for the Palmer and Krisel-designed homes in Vista Las Palmas included three rectangular floor plans and again, a variety of exterior designs and rooflines.<sup>387</sup> One design included "...a striking porte-cochere option."<sup>388</sup> Placement of the carport on these designs varied from street facing to at a right angle to the residence – contributing to a distinctive visual architectural cadence for this neighborhood. The long, distinctive, horizontal Mid-century Modern lines of these post-and-beam designs contributed to the upscale feeling of the neighborhood, as do the varying rooflines of the butterfly, long low-pitch, and folded plate. The model home was located at the corner of Via Las Palmas and Via Monte Vista. A second model home was located at 1215 Via Paraiso.

The DuBois-designed homes in Vista Las Palmas featured "...floorplans with the living rooms angled at forty-five degrees and complementary stone walls likewise extended at that angle."<sup>389</sup> DuBois is also credited with the design of the "Swiss-Miss" houses that are dotted throughout Vista Las Palmas and its sister development to the south. These designs feature a distinctive A-frame roofline that project above the rooflines of the surrounding houses.

<sup>386</sup> Inexplicably, the tract map for Las Palmas Number 3 predates the map for Las Palmas Number 2.

<sup>387</sup> The rectangular floor plans for Vista Las Palmas did not accommodate the rotation of the plans as had been designed for Twin Palms.

<sup>388</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

<sup>389</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 34.





“Swiss Miss” home in Vista Las Palmas (c. 1956, Charles Du Bois). Source: *Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern*, 22..

Historically significant personages associated with the Vista Las Palmas development include singer and film stars Tony Martin and Cyd Charisse at 697 Camino Sur, actress Kim Novak at 740 Camino Sur, actor and Rat Pack member Peter Lawford at 1295 North Via Monte Vista, songwriter Sammy Cahn at 1303 Via Monte Vista, and singer Dean Martin at 1123 Via Monte Vista. The Robert Alexander Residence “House of Tomorrow” (1960, Palmer and Krisel) at 1350 Ladera Circle is also known as “The Elvis Presley Honeymoon House” because it was rented for a year by Elvis Presley and his bride Priscilla after their 1967 nuptials.

#### *Ramon Rise Estates (1956)*

Ramon Rise Estates (1956-58, Palmer and Krisel) consisted of a 106-parcel development bordered by Ramon Road to the north, Sunny Dunes Road to the south, Cielo Road to the east, and Compadre Drive to the west. The tract was subdivided by George R. Goldberg and Maurice Horner, Jr.<sup>390</sup> Goldberg, a Los Angeles-based real estate man, engaged the Alexander

<sup>390</sup> Tract map for this subdivision is illegible. The name may be Maurice Homer, Jr.

Construction Company to build houses in this subdivision. The same plan and designs were used at Ramon Rise as those in the Enchanted Homes tract.

### *Enchanted Homes (1957-1958)*

The Enchanted Homes tract is located in the former Sunmor Estates which the Alexanders purchased from Sunmor developer A.R. Simon. It included three phases of Alexander development between December 1957 and February 1958. The development included Jill Circle, Lyn Circle, Leslie Circle, Helena Circle, the western part of Easmor Circle, the eastern part of Sunset Way, Burton Way, Orchid Tree Land, Monterey Road, and Western Ferrell Drive between Amado Road and Andreas Road.

The Enchanted Homes tract featured a single 1,200 square foot, three bedroom/two bathroom floor plan with an open kitchen designed by Palmer and Krisel.<sup>391</sup> These Mid-century Modern style post-and-beam homes also featured multiple roof designs (flat, shed, butterfly, and low-pitch gable) and exterior materials such as stone and concrete block.

### *Racquet Club Road Estates (1958)*

Racquet Club Road Estates (1958, Palmer and Krisel) was, by far, the largest Palm Springs development by the Alexanders. Totaling 360 homes, it was developed in six phases and was bordered by Francis Drive to the north, the south side of Glen Circle and Via Escuela to the south, Avenida Caballeros south of Racquet Club Road, and Aurora Drive north of Racquet Club Road; the western boundary extends almost to Indian Canyon Drive.

The irregularly-shaped development (punctuated by Victoria Park and a school) was first developed at the northwest end, then the southeast, then the southwest, and finishing in the summer of 1960 to the northeast – just in time for the beginning of the 1960-61 season. In May of 1958, the Alexanders purchased a forty-acre site from the Bureau of Indian Affairs “near the Racquet Club” which may have been the portion of the development east of Victoria Park School.<sup>392</sup> The design employed a series of streets and cul-de-sacs of 100-foot wide lots.

<sup>391</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 44.

<sup>392</sup> “Indian Land Bids Total \$794,963 for 82 Acres,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1958, B6.

Once again, the Alexanders turned to Palmer and Krisel for the Mid-century Modern post-and-beam designs. In the sales brochure, they were billed as the “nationally famous architectural firm of Palmer and Krisel.”<sup>393</sup> Of course, proximity to the legendary Racquet Club and views of the mountains were also key selling points.

Using the super-efficient square plan, Krisel devoted the full expanse of the rear of the plan to living and dining space and moved the kitchen to the center of the plan. According to author James Harlan, two basic floor plans were used at the development and two additional plans were experimented with and abandoned.<sup>394</sup> A later marketing brochure for the development shows a plan with a kitchen now integrated into the living-dining space at the rear of the plan.

Five different rooflines (butterfly, gable, low-pitch gable, side-gable, and flat) incorporated a street-facing carport and breezeway into the design creating a series of long, low horizontal elevations to the street. Clerestory windows captured mountain views to the west. Palmer and Krisel laid out the specific combinations of floor plan and roofline on each parcel for maximum privacy, views, and to maintain an engaging visual architectural cadence from the street.

Model homes for the development included 325 Francis Drive and 289 Racquet Club Road (Palmer and Krisel architects, interiors by Arthur Elrod, landscape design by Don Crabtree).<sup>395</sup> Sales were brisk and a marketing brochure for later phases of the development reads, “Here your neighbors will number among them world famous personalities in the entertainment, business and professional world – people who have complete freedom of choice.”<sup>396</sup>

Racquet Club Estates received national attention in the architectural trade press with a feature in the June 1961 issue of *House and Home*. The development also earned several awards, including the National Home Builders Association Award of Merit, 1961. Historic personages known to have lived in Racquet Club Road Estates include actor John Payne at 407 Laurel

<sup>393</sup> Racquet Club Estates Sales Brochure, [www.racquetclubestates.com](http://www.racquetclubestates.com) (accessed January 2015).

<sup>394</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 38.

<sup>395</sup> O.R. (Don) Crabtree was a locally based, award winning landscape designer. In 1967 Crabtree was recognized by the California Landscape Association with a Trophy award for his work on the grounds of the W.A. Bushman Residence in Palm Springs. He was also involved in the 1974 expansion of the Palm Springs Riviera.

<sup>396</sup> Racquet Club Road Estates Brochure, Private Collection of Donna Sherwood. [www.racquetclubestates.com](http://www.racquetclubestates.com) (accessed January 10, 2011).

Circle, film producer Alex Gottlieb at 581 Laurel Circle, actress Ruta Lee at 315 Desert Holly Circle, actress Debbie Reynolds at 757 East Racquet Club Road, actor Steve McQueen at 811 Grace Circle, and actor Stubby Kaye at 2108 George Drive.

### *Golden Vista Estates (1960)*

In a new variant on the “resort stay to home sales” recipe, the Alexanders purchased the Desert Inn in 1950. In 1960, to promote their new residential venture, Golden Vista Estates, they erected a model home on the grounds of the Desert Inn.<sup>397</sup> Golden Vista Estates (1960, Palmer and Krisel) expanded the Vista Las Palmas offerings to the south; the tract is bordered by W. Lures on the north, the south side of Leisure Way on the south, Via Monte Vista to the east, and Rose to the west. Here the developers offered three floor plans: two modified versions of the Twin Palms plan and a larger four-bedroom/three bath plan that included a courtyard at the entryway.<sup>398</sup> New roof designs included an “innovative folded plate roof and a quirky barrel roof.”<sup>399</sup> A second model home for the tract was constructed at 963 Via Monte Vista.

### *Steel Development Houses/Calcor Prefabricated Homes (1961-1962)*

The advantages of prefabricated steel homes in the desert climate had been on developers’ radars in Palm Springs since the 1930s. Now experiments in steel home construction on a mass scale were born out of an ethos of factory-based production which developed as part of the war effort and which continued into the postwar years. As described in *Architectural Forum* in 1951:

Today these three features: industrialization, flexibility and modular order are found only in a handful of custom-designed houses. Years from now they may well be found in half the houses in the United States – and the home-building industry will be able to point to higher quality, lower cost and better living as a result.<sup>400</sup>

Despite ambitious predictions, the building industry was slow to embrace the steel house for tract housing development. In 1955, noted developer and proponent of modern architecture,

<sup>397</sup> According to James R. Harlan, the model home was moved in 1961 to the Corner of Anza Drive and Joshua Tree Place.

<sup>398</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

<sup>399</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

<sup>400</sup> “Preview of the Future,” *Architectural Forum*, November 1951, 214-215.

Joseph Eichler, commissioned the architectural firm Jones and Emmons (A. Quincy Jones and Frederick E. Emmons) to design an experimental exhibition house, the X-100, to explore the potential of residential steel frame construction for middle-class housing developments. While Eichler did not intend to put the X-100 into production, it garnered national media attention.<sup>401</sup>

In 1962, noted Palm Springs developers George and Robert Alexander made a foray into steel housing development. Local architect Donald Wexler approached the Alexanders with the idea for using the Calcor steel wall system he had been introduced to by Bernard Perlin, a Calcor engineer. The Alexanders decided to work with Wexler to develop seven parcels with forty-eight designated lots in their 1961 tract north of their Racquet Club subdivision with steel tract housing. As a result, the Steel Development Houses, also known as the Calcor Prefabricated Homes and Alexander Steel Homes, project was born in partnership with the Columbia-Geneva Division of U.S. Steel and Calcor (a.k.a., Rheem Manufacturing Company) of Huntington Park, California. The 1,400 square foot homes were priced at \$13,000-\$17,000 plus the cost of the land.<sup>402</sup> Landscape architecture was by David Hamilton.

Architecturally, the use of steel freed interior walls from being load bearing and enabled an open plan. A 9 x 36 foot central core contained the kitchen and bathrooms, however the rest of the plan was flexible. Composed primarily of steel and glass, the houses feature eight-foot high glass sliding doors and stationary panels and the designs are quintessentially Mid-century Modern in style. The houses were designed with three different rooflines (flat roof, raised with clerestory, and a zig-zag folded roof plate) to give the identical pre-fabricated house development an interesting visual architectural cadence from the street.

With the use of the Calcor system, the homes utilized a unique combination of factory prefabrication and on-site assembly or “a factory in the field.”<sup>403</sup> The cores were prefabricated in the factory at the same time that concrete slabs were poured to a steel template. Non-load bearing walls came in large sections and were bolted into the concrete slab foundation. The result was a practical construction process that required only three days to complete.

<sup>401</sup> Brooke Hodge, Ed. *A. Quincy Jones: Building for a Better Future* (Hammer Museum (Los Angeles; CA), 2013, 164.

<sup>402</sup> Adele Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (Rizzoli, New York: NY), 1999, 142.

<sup>403</sup> *Journeyman Architect: The Life and Work of Donald Wexler*, Jonamac Productions, 2009.

The Alexanders planned to develop 35 of the lots with steel housing.<sup>404</sup> The first three of the seven model homes were started in late 1961 and opened to the public in March of 1962;<sup>405</sup> the remaining four houses were constructed in phase two.<sup>406</sup> During the construction of the second phase, Calcor was purchased by a larger firm and the price of steel was raised. According to Donald Wexler, “The Alexanders wouldn’t have any of it – they refused to pay more...someone had to be the pioneer. They were very powerful and all the other developers were watching them to see what would happen.”<sup>407</sup> Ultimately, the higher cost of steel priced them out of the market and the plans for the tract were derailed.<sup>408</sup> The Steel Development Houses were published in *Architectural Record* and named Record House of 1963.

In 2001, the City of Palm Springs made the seven Steel Development Houses a Class 1 Historic Site. In 2012, Steel Development House No. 2 (3125 North Sunny View Drive) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

### *Las Palmas Summit (1962)*

In October of 1962, Las Palmas Summit<sup>409</sup> (1962, Charles Dubois), a tract of twenty homes including the north end of Los Robles Drive, Friar Court, and Capistrano Court, was developed by Alexander partner Joseph C. Dunas (1900-1987). Advertisements for the homes differentiated them from other Palm Springs offerings by evoking popular culture’s increasing interest in Hawaii as a vacation destination: “Where island living meets desert living, the “all seasons” home designed for year round living.” Sales agent, “Aloha-Bob Paine” was on hand to provide “Hawaiian Hospitality.”<sup>410</sup> The Mid-century Modern style designs for Las Palmas Summit homes also included what have come to be known colloquially as “Swiss Misses” scattered throughout. Based on the marketing materials, however, the steeply pitched

<sup>404</sup> Oscar Lopez, “AD Classics: Steel Pre-Fab Houses / Donald Wexler,” *ArchDaily*, August 20, 2011, <http://www.archdaily.com/?p=155411> (accessed December 8, 2014).

<sup>405</sup> Racquet Club Estates, <http://www.racquetclubestates.com/Steel%20History.html> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>406</sup> The seven houses were constructed at 290 E. Simms Road; 300 and 330 E. Molino Road; and 3100, 3125, 3133, and 3165 N. Sunny View Drive.

<sup>407</sup> Adele Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1999), 142.

<sup>408</sup> On the remaining lots in the tract, the Alexanders built Riviera Gardens (1963-64). These were more traditional wood-frame Ranch-style houses. The model home was located at 370 Simms Road. James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 42.

<sup>409</sup> Also known as Tract 2421.

<sup>410</sup> “Aloha Las Palmas Summit Ad,” *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

A-Frame elements which some have interpreted as alpine, may in fact, draw more inspiration from Tiki or Polynesian architecture. According to author James R. Harlan, 1211 Los Robles was likely the model home for the development.<sup>411</sup>

For this development Dunas selected Los Angeles-based architect Charles E. DuBois (1903-1996). The Rochester-born DuBois was educated at UCLA and MIT. He worked in the offices of Walker & Eisen and Henry Gogerty. During World War II, DuBois worked as a Senior Screen Set Designer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios.<sup>412</sup> After the War, he specialized in tract housing for developers—mostly in traditional or ranch styles. His best known designs include Hollywood Riviera Estates (1955) in Palos Verdes, Riviera Beach Estates (1955) in Torrance, and Santa Anita Estates (1955) east of Pasadena. He was a frequent collaborator of developer J. George Wright and Don-Ja-Ran Construction Company on such projects as Fairwood Estates (1964) in Granada Hills and the Kingswood Series of Woodland West (1961) in Woodland Hills. Between 1958 and 1962, DuBois designed fifteen houses for George Alexander in Vista Las Palmas.

### *Farrell Canyon Estates (1963)*

By February 1963, the Alexander Construction Company had built over \$50 million worth of homes.<sup>413</sup> In December 1963, following the continued eastern movement of residential development in Palm Springs, the Alexanders subdivided Farrell Canyon Estates (1963). The fifty-seven parcel development featured six elevation designs that evoked the exotic and international including Parisian, Mediterranean, Granada, and Tiki.<sup>414</sup> The Parisian featured a distinctive mansard roof. Farrell Canyon Estates was frequently cross-promoted with other Alexander developments in Palm Springs including Araby Estates and Sunrise Estates, both subdivided in 1964. Ads for the subdivisions reveal the pressure on residential developments within city limits from encroaching developments in other desert communities, and the higher cost of the land ownership model in comparison to the less expensive developments on leased tribal lands.

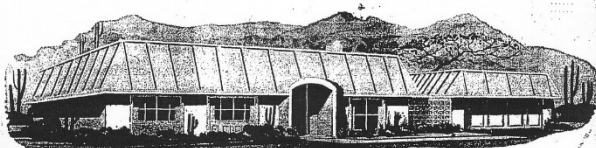
<sup>411</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 34.

<sup>412</sup> AIA Application for Membership, Charles E. DuBois, August 27, 1946, 4.

<sup>413</sup> "Display Ad 11," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1963, 13.

<sup>414</sup> "Farrell Canyon Draws Visitors from Far Away," *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1965, 120.

Your own luxurious  
3-Bedroom, 2-Bath Home  
in the City of Palm Springs  
(land included!) Complete from  
**\$29,450**  
ONLY \$1950 DOWN



The "PARISIAN"

Choose From Six Different Attractive Exteriors... This is the way to live in Palm Springs! You live within the city limits—close in and enjoy all municipal services and advantages. Your home has 3 bedrooms; 2 baths, lanai, a big double closed garage. And it's your home and your land—easy to buy, easy to finance and you gain by future value increases. These are luxury homes with refrigerated air-conditioning; gas forced-air heat; wall to wall carpeting; built-in ranges and ovens; disposal and dishwasher. Your large view lot is fenced, the driveways are cement, the streets and sidewalks are paved and utilities are underground. Visit Palm Springs this weekend. See these Alexander-built homes. They are real values and you'll want one.



Other Alexander-built values:

In Palm Springs also see the few remaining homes at Farrell Canyon Estates (\$1950 down.) The Alexander man will give you directions when you visit fabulous Araby Estates.

**Araby Estates** Close to Everything in Palm Springs  
San Bernardino Freeway to Palm Springs Off-Ramp. Follow Palm Canyon Drive then North at Araby Drive.  
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Almost a Third of Palm Springs' Permanent Home Owners Have Bought Alexander-Built Homes. There's a reason—THEIR!

Ad for Araby Estates (1964-66) shows the Parisian-themed model. Source: "Display Ad 41," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1965, B9.

### *Araby Estates (1964)*

Araby Estates, a small 40-parcel tract bordered by Sonora road on the north, Avery Drive on the south, Beverly Drive on the east, and the west side of La Brea Road on the west, featured a wide range of Mid-century Modern exterior designs similar to Farrell Canyon Estates. The three-bedroom/two-bath plans featured lanais and enclosed, detached garages. Two model homes were located at 2996 Avery Drive and 2988 Avery Drive.<sup>415</sup>

### *Sunrise Estates (1964)*

At \$19,900, homes in Sunrise Estates were at a lower price range than other Alexander Homes available during this period. Sunrise Estates' 21 homes are based on the same floor plans as the Golf Club Estates homes.<sup>416</sup> Sunrise Estates include the cul-de-sacs at Buttonwillow Circle and Cibola Circle, with six homes on Biskra Road and three on Cerritos (Tract 2809).

<sup>415</sup> "Display Ad 28," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1965, B3.

<sup>416</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 52.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Had the lives of the Alexanders not been tragically cut short, additional residential projects would have been realized by the Alexander Construction Company in Palm Springs. Projects on the boards at the time of their deaths included the redevelopment of the twelve-acre Desert Inn property into a combination hotel/residential development and a restoration of the Racquet Club facility and the construction of condominiums.<sup>417</sup>

<sup>417</sup> James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 52.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### **Sub-theme: Golf Course Residential Development (1960-1979)**

While Palm Springs had long been known as a spot for “fun in the sun” and active outdoor recreation, in the years following World War II the desert became synonymous with the sport of golf.<sup>418</sup> By 1972, the *Los Angeles Times* had proclaimed the area the “Golf Capital of the World.”<sup>419</sup>

Prior to 1950, the city of Palm Springs was home to only two golf courses: the small nine-hole course that had been laid out by the Desert Inn in 1926 by Thomas O’Donnell; and Cochran Ranch, a nine-hole course opened in 1944.<sup>420</sup> The scarcity and high cost of water made golf courses an expensive proposition.<sup>421</sup> That changed in 1951 when a group of investors that included golfer Johnny Dawson, realtors Barney Hinkle and Tony Burke, and Frank Bogert created Thunderbird Ranch in Cathedral City. According to historian Lawrence Culver:

The key to the Thunderbird scheme was to use real-estate revenue to fund construction of the golf course. Lots were sold along the fairway and around each green. Now a golf course itself would be a place of residence, merging family life and leisure into a form of urban planning and landscape design instantly recognizable in much of postwar suburbia.<sup>422</sup>

Thunderbird quickly became the premier postwar housing development in the Coachella Valley. It was distinctive in that residential parcels were integrated into course design. In addition to fairway vistas, the homes came with private country club membership. This innovative business model was also enabled by the simultaneous development of golf carts, air conditioning, jet-age travel, and increased media exposure. The golfing habits of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and, ultimately, the creation of the Palm Springs Desert Classic tournament in 1960 popularized the sport across the nation.<sup>423</sup> By 1967, *Golf Digest*

<sup>418</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 189.

<sup>419</sup> Shav Glick, “A Dream Come True: Golf is Not Just a Game, It’s a Way of Life in the Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1972, H1.

<sup>420</sup> The failed golf course associated with the El Mirador resort was replaced by housing starting in the mid-1930s.

<sup>421</sup> The discovery of a vast underground reservoir beneath the Whitewater River channel also enabled the development of golf course communities in Palm Springs.

<sup>422</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 190.

<sup>423</sup> The tournament was held at five clubs: Thunderbird, Bermuda Dunes, Indian Wells, Eldorado, and Tamarisk.

magazine reported that “communities that have been purposely planned and developed with a golf course as the focal point of neighborhood life have taken hold in this country with 125 locations in over twenty states.”<sup>424</sup> As of 1967, 400,000 people were living in these communities.<sup>425</sup>

By 1965, golf was “the major attraction in the Palm Springs area.”<sup>426</sup> Golf lured thousands of visitors to Palm Springs. Once there, they soon “started thinking of owning a home or a condominium.”<sup>427</sup> And while some of the communities were planned for the very wealthy, many were created for people with middle-class incomes. The advent of golf carts also meant that the elderly could easily play the sport.

### Palm Springs Golf Club (1958-1975)

One of the early residential golf communities in Palm Springs, the Palm Springs Golf Club (now the Tahquitz Creek Golf Resort), dates back to 1958 (although it was not fully realized until the 1970s). The vision for the \$15,000,000 project included residential areas bordering the fairways of the golf course, a hotel and a shopping center. The 332-acre parcel along Highway 111 had been purchased in 1956 from Pearl McManus by the Palm Springs Capital Company (a holding company for the Palm Springs Turf Club) as a site for a horse-racing track.<sup>428</sup> At the time it was east of the Palm Springs city limits. When the California Horse Racing Board refused to grant the Turf Club a license in 1957, the holding company changed plans and partnered with Morton B. Zuckerman, President of the Westview Development Corporation, to turn it into a residential golf community. Zuckerman was a noted residential and commercial developer from Chicago. Frank Bogert was executive vice president of the Westview Development Corporation.

The vision for the development included the eighteen-hole championship golf course (1958-59, Lawrence Hughes), 240 single-family residences, plus 300 “garden cottages” that would feature swimming pools, and recreation and sports facilities. Owners were to automatically

<sup>424</sup> *Golf Digest*, November 1967.

<sup>425</sup> *Golf Digest*, November 1967.

<sup>426</sup> George Lundgren, “In Palm Springs Fun Comes First,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1965, 12.

<sup>427</sup> Shav Glick, “A Dream Come True: Golf is Not Just a Game, It's a Way of Life in the Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1972, H1.

<sup>428</sup> “Land Sold for Race Track,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1956, 25.

become members in the private country club.<sup>429</sup> Ads in the *Palm Springs Villager* not only touted these amenities, they featured a green map of the course and integrated home sites. On July 1, 1959 Westview turned over control of the course to the City of Palm Springs<sup>430</sup> and it became a public course.<sup>431</sup>

For the housing development, Westview turned initially to architect William M. Bray for the design of 350 units. Between 1961 and 1965,<sup>432</sup> Westview constructed the houses along Broadmoor Drive, Brentwood Drive, Bob O Link Drive and Cherry Hills Drive, Menlo Circle, and Oswego Circle.<sup>433</sup> William M. Bray (1905-1998) earned his B.A. in art at the University of California, Berkeley in 1928. Upon graduation he worked for a series of architects including Theodore R. Jacobs, Vern Houghton, Arlos Sedgley, Mott Montgomery, and Harry Hadyn Whately.<sup>434</sup> Bray also worked briefly as an architect for the firm of Wurdeman & Becket in Los Angeles in 1942 and again in 1945. The Los Angeles-based Bray established his own practice in 1949.<sup>435</sup> Bray's practice specialized in working with Southern California developers on postwar tract housing developments. By the firm's own count, Bray was responsible for over 33,500 housing units throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and Ventura Counties, as well as the state of Nevada. Bray worked with developers such as Mark Taper, George Ponty, Nels G. Severin, and M.J. Brock. Bray's subdivisions were characterized by a large number of plans and façade designs. For example, Grandview Park in Downey was a 117-unit subdivision with 39 different façade designs; Alhambra Hills was a development with 33 façade designs and ten floor plans. Bray's designs are most often characterized by traditional styles such as "Cape Cod," "Farmhouse," "Semi-Ranch," "Swiss Chalet," "Bermuda Modern," "Colonial," "English," and "California Ranch."

Bray was also known for his custom residential homes. Bray's work was published nationally in *House and Home* and *Architectural Digest* Bray's tract housing earned numerous awards

<sup>429</sup> "Huge Development Set for Palm Springs Area," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1958, F8.

<sup>430</sup> More research needed to confirm why the course was turned over to the City.

<sup>431</sup> "In Black and White," *Corona Daily Independent*, April 21, 1959, 6.

<sup>432</sup> Pending confirmation of dates.

<sup>433</sup> The project team is in contact with the architect's son, Roger Bray, to locate historic material on the plans for these houses.

<sup>434</sup> William M. Bray AIA Membership Application, December 24, 1949, 3.

<sup>435</sup> "Encino Architect Awarded AIA Presidential Citation," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1997, <http://articles.latimes.com/1997/jul/15/business/fi-12818> (accessed November 19, 2015).

including a “Homes for Better Living Award of Merit” in 1962. In 1997, Bray was awarded the Presidential Citation from the American Institute of Architects.

### *Green Fairway Estates (1964)*

In early 1964, Robert and George Alexander subdivided the easternmost streets of the Palm Springs Golf Club subdivision: Pebble Beach Drive and Lakeside Drive.<sup>436</sup> Their development consisted of 55 parcels that they named “Green Fairway Estates.” In marketing materials and advertising, the Alexanders turned the lack of exclusivity associated with being on a public (vs. private) golf course into a selling point: “because it is a municipal course, there are no membership charges – only low green fees when you play.”<sup>437</sup> Other selling points included “golf-course living...with a golf course as your backyard,” a “bi-functional floor plan” with “quiet areas separated from active living area,” and oversized garages to accommodate an electric golf cart.<sup>438</sup>

For the design of these homes, the Alexanders worked with Wexler and Harrison, who designed a three-bedroom and a four-bedroom plan along with nine different exterior designs. In plan, the designs are identical and divided into two distinct pavilions: one public and one private linked by a central entry. The four-bedroom plan includes the simple addition of another bedroom and bathroom completing the square of the public pavilion.

Six of the nine exterior designs reflect a simple Mid-Century Modern style (Gleneagles, St. Cloud, Wentworth, Hague, Maracaibo, and St. Andrews plans); there were three more “exotic” designs that evoke resort destinations (the Hawaiian-influenced Belhi and Royal Singapore models, as well as the eclectic Southwestern/Tunesian style Capilano). With such a high ratio of designs to developed units (6:1), the streets of Green Fairway Estates resembled a custom home development instead of a standardized tract. According to Wexler, it was his architectural partner Richard Harrison who “provided the tropical touch.”<sup>439</sup> The designs also prominently feature stone masonry accents.

<sup>436</sup> Green Fairway Estates was one of the last subdivisions built by the Alexanders before their tragic death in a plane crash in November of 1964.

<sup>437</sup> “Display Ad 18,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1965, 19.

<sup>438</sup> “Green Fairways Estates Sales Brochure,” Private Collection.

<sup>439</sup> Jack Levitan, “Green Fairway Estates,” [www.eichlernetz.com/green-fairway-estates-palm-springs](http://www.eichlernetz.com/green-fairway-estates-palm-springs) (accessed November 19, 2014).

### *Mountain Shadows (1971)*

The residential areas at the Palm Springs Golf Club directly adjacent to Golf Club Drive (as envisioned in the original 1958 Westview plan) were not realized until the 1970s. The first of these, Mountain Shadows (1971-72) accessed from 200 Golf Club Drive, was developed by the Christiana Development Corporation. The 186-unit townhouse community on a 75-acre site completely surrounded by the golf course included two-, three-, and four-bedroom plans. A community-maintained clubhouse was at the center of the plan and featured six swimming pools and lighted tennis courts. Mountain Shadows consists of 27 buildings each containing between six and eight attached units.

Christiana Development Co. was an offshoot of Christiana Oil Co., a Delaware-based oil exploration company founded by Lewis W. Douglas. Beginning in the 1950s, Christiana began purchasing and developing real estate in Southern California. One of its largest and most famous projects was the Huntington Harbour (1960-1976), a residential development at the marina in Huntington Beach. Christiana had a history of engaging significant architects in its projects. William L. Pereira & Associates, Ladd & Kelsey, William F. Cody, Richard L. Dorman, William Krisel, Abraham Shapiro, and A. Quincy Jones were all engaged for Huntington Harbour.

### *Villa de Las Flores (1973)*

Villa de Las Flores (c.1973-74) is another residential community within the Palm Springs Golf Club; it is accessed from Golf Club Drive via Los Santos Way. It was developed by the Helen Investment Co. and Sunbeam Homes, Inc., companies both owned by Elias Miller. Miller was also affiliated with Milgee Investment Co. that built over 1,500 homes in the Huntington Beach area.<sup>440</sup> Villas de Las Flores consists of 79 buildings containing between two and four units per building arranged in eleven clusters around eleven common pool areas. Four tennis courts are located at the center of the community plan.

<sup>440</sup> "Revision Suggested in Home Sale Law," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1968, OC1.

### *Los Pueblos (1975)*

Los Pueblos (1975, Paul Thoryk & Associates), located at 2300 Golf Club Drive, is the final residential development on the Palm Springs Golf Club course. The 83-unit town house project was developed by a partnership of Amfac Properties,<sup>441</sup> Ski Park City West, Inc., and Vista del Verde Co. The project received the “Grand” Gold Nugget award for innovation in 1975 from the Pacifica Coast Builders Conference, the Gamma Alpha Delta award, and first place among planned communities from the Society of Environmentalists of California (SEC).<sup>442</sup> Architectural design, the golf course setting, artificial lakes, swimming pools, and tennis courts were all featured prominently in advertisements for the development.<sup>443</sup>

The one- and two-story units were designed by architect Paul Thoryk, who was based in Del Mar at that time. Twenty-two buildings (mostly with four units per building) reflect a shed-style, Spanish-influenced modernism with textured stucco and tile roofs – these distinctively in blue instead of the more traditional red clay tile. Following graduation from architecture school, architect Paul Thoryk (b. 1941) taught at the Laguna Beach School of Art and Design.<sup>444</sup> Circa 1971 he established his architectural practice as Paul Thoryk & Associates.<sup>445</sup> Thoryk’s practice included commercial and residential projects, with an emphasis on working for developers. His early projects include the Peppertree in Northridge, Kaufmann and Broad’s first venture into apartment development (1971), for which Thoryk provided both architectural and master planning services. Thoryk’s designs for multi-family residential projects earned dozens of awards from the Pacific Coast Builder’s Conference. In the architectural trade press, Thoryk is best known for the design of his own residence in La Jolla (1971-72) that was featured in both *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*.

Thoryk described his philosophy of design for planned communities: “The process usually starts with a theme. This theme usually relates to something of historical significance...the

<sup>441</sup> AMFAC is the renamed American Factors, one of the original Big Five agricultural entities in Hawaii that became a major developer of the islands. By the 1960s, the company’s development activities had moved to the mainland.

<sup>442</sup> “Condominiums Honored,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1976, F5.

<sup>443</sup> Display Ad 350, *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1975, OC10.

<sup>444</sup> The project team has contact Paul Thoryk to confirm information about his educational background; we are also awaiting receipt of his AIA membership application.

<sup>445</sup> Confirmation of date pending additional information from the architect.

contemporary Spanish is the most prevalent and desired style in Southern California.”<sup>446</sup> Combining cultural heritage and contemporary detail with Thoryk’s aesthetic of “rustic seclusion” was visible in his own home and several multi-family residential projects where rusticated woods are prevalent and the units are placed in landscaped grounds so that no units directly face one another.<sup>447</sup> By 1973, Thoryk had projects in progress in a dozen states around the country. Throughout his career, Thoryk established practices in San Diego, Newport Beach, Del Mar, and La Jolla.

#### Canyon Country Club (1961-1965)

Another of the early residential golf communities in the city of Palm Springs was Canyon Country Club.<sup>448</sup> The clubhouse (Wexler and Harrison) opened on New Year’s Eve 1961. The 368-parcel subdivision (1961-1965) was developed by the Golf Club Sales Company. It is located on Agua Caliente land and cost \$50 million. The Canyon Country Club was the culmination of efforts by Andrew Catapano and Harold M. Simon of the Palm Canyon Country Club, Inc. after years of complicated negotiations with the tribe. Ultimately, it was the largest Indian land lease in American history.<sup>449</sup>

The Golf Club Sales Company was a subsidiary of the New York-based First National Realty & Construction Corporation owned by Robert Grundt. Grundt started out building residential developments on Long Island shortly after the war; he built the business to a publically held corporation and by 1963 had developed more than 4,000 apartments in fourteen buildings in Manhattan.<sup>450</sup> Grundt was a long-time winter resident of Palm Springs. In 1963, Grunt established a West Coast office in Los Angeles and began developing high rise apartment buildings along the Wilshire corridor in the Westwood neighborhood of Los Angeles, and in Phoenix, Arizona. Grunt described the process for Canyon Country Club:

Our introduction to Southern California in Palm Springs was one of the most fascinating and challenging experiences in my career. We

<sup>446</sup> Paul Thoryk, “The Architect’s Viewpoint,” [www.thorykarchitecture.com/architects-view.html](http://www.thorykarchitecture.com/architects-view.html) (accessed October 15, 2014).

<sup>447</sup> S. Gate Gets First Major Dwelling Project in Years, *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1972, L1.

<sup>448</sup> The original name of the club was “Wind Free” but it was quickly changed to Canyon Country Club.

<sup>449</sup> “Canyon Country Club,” Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

<sup>450</sup> “Reach for the Sky,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1963, 11.



were finally successful in arranging the first utilized lease on property owned by the Agua Caliente Indians...it was owned by no less than twenty five families and it took more than a year of negotiations before we finally concluded all the details of the master lease—which was about three inches thick...<sup>451</sup>

The custom home development was built in four phases: after the initial 168 parcels within the golf course were subdivided, parcels along the perimeter streets were subdivided annually in 1963, 1964, and 1965. The Canyon Country Club was the only 18-hole course in the city of Palm Springs. The original homes in the subdivision (along Caliente Road) were designed by Stan Sackley;<sup>452</sup> the 1963 homes along Yosemite Drive were designed by Belden Crist.<sup>453</sup>



View of Canyon Country Club (1961, Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison) from Murray Canyon Road looking northwest shows integrated homes and fairways. Source: Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

<sup>451</sup> Reach for the Sky," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1963, 11.

<sup>452</sup> Stan Sackley (1937-2001) graduated from USC with Bachelor of Architecture in 1961. In the early 1960s, prior to forming his own firm, Sackley partnered with Herman Charles Light in the firm Sackley and Light. Sackley was never licensed but maintained a successful design firm in Palm Springs. He received national press coverage for a home for James Hollowell which was featured as a "Playboy Pad" in the April 1966 issue of *Playboy*. Sackley is best known for his speculative homes constructed along Caliente Drive which are all in the Mid-century Modern style. His Donald E. Williams Residence at 38681 Bogert Trail was featured in the 31<sup>st</sup> annual Home Tour by the American Association of University Women in 1987.

<sup>453</sup> "Canyon Country Club," <http://www.architecturalproperties.net/neighborhoods/canyon.html> (accessed November 17, 2014). Belden Crist (1923-1986) was the son of a Los Angeles area homebuilder/contractor. Both the elder and junior Crist first appear in Palm Springs in the 1946 City Directory. Although Belden Crist was never licensed, he had an active Palm Springs-based design firm through the 1970s. Additional information on Crist pending further research.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Initially, due to its remote location, Canyon Country Club had a difficult time drawing members. However, a partnership with the Palm Springs Racquet Club helped boost its popularity and draw celebrities and politicians. Famous residents included Walt Disney, who purchased properties along the second hole of the course and donated a copper fountain to the club erected between the ninth and eighteenth holes. During the 1960s, the course became the location for the annual Frank Sinatra Invitational golf tournament. In 1963, the public south course was opened.

### *Kings Point (1969)*

In 1969, Canyon Country Club developer and chairman of the Board of First National Realty, Robert Grundt along with Club Manager John B. Quigley subdivided Kings Point (Palmer and Krisel), a relatively small forty five-parcel development of forty-four tract homes.<sup>454</sup> Designed in the Mid-century Modern Style, these one-story, horizontal houses with several three-bedroom and two-bath plans.<sup>455</sup>

### Golf Club Estates (1961)

In the early 1960s, the Alexanders embraced the new trend of golf course based residential development. To capitalize on general proximity to the golf course, in April of 1961 the Alexanders subdivided Golf Club Estates (1963-64, L.C. Major and Associates). Marketed as “accessible to the greens by golf cart” ads also refer to Palm Springs as “the nation’s winter golf capital.”<sup>456</sup>

This group of 52 homes is bordered by the north side of Par Drive to the north, the south side of Eagle Way to the south, the east side of Birdie Way to the east, and Bogie Road to the west. Construction followed the familiar pattern of one three-bedroom floor plan and seven different designs for the exterior. Photographs indicate the plan may be the same as that used for Araby Estates.<sup>457</sup> Designs for Golf Club Estates were modest, contemporary Ranch style, often with decorative concrete block fencing.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>454</sup> Additional research pending at the Getty.

<sup>455</sup> Additional research pending at the Getty.

<sup>456</sup> “50 Dwellings at Spa Planned,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1963, O11.

<sup>457</sup> More information pending additional research at the Getty.

<sup>458</sup> “50 Dwellings at Spa Planned,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1963, O11.

The Downey-based architectural firm of L.C. Major and Associates billed itself as the nation's largest community coordinator and home design firm.<sup>459</sup> Comprehensive builders' services were offered to developers including market research, building cost analysis, planning, home design, landscaping, sales promotion, and merchandising. The company worked on projects in Indiana, Texas, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and California.<sup>460</sup> A review of projects indicates that architectural styles featured in these developments tended towards traditional styles or California ranch. Architect Barry Berkus worked for L.C. Major while attending college.



Seven Lakes Model House #2 (1964, Richard Harrison) as photographed in March of 1967 by Maynard L. Parker. Units were designed with extensive use of glass on the rear façade to capture the golf course and mountain vistas. Source: Maynard L. Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.

<sup>459</sup> "Home Design Firm Names H.G. Stewart," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1962, 116.

<sup>460</sup> Other projects include Apache Country Club Estates (1962) in Mesa, Arizona; Whispering Lakes (1962) in Ontario; Park West (1962) in Bakersfield; Walnut Estates (1963) in Walnut; Shadow Palms (1965); Guaranty Homes (1964) in Corona; and Woodland West (1961) in Arlington, Texas.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Seven Lakes Country Club Estates (1964)

One of the most distinguished residential golf communities in the city of Palm Springs was Seven Lakes Country Club Estates (1964, Richard Harrison) at 4100 E. Seven Lakes Drive. Another Johnny Dawson-owned and built venture, this self-contained, multi-million dollar development consisted of 400 condominium units on 120 acres built around an 18-hole course. The attached buildings are Mid-century Modern in style; they are low profile, rectilinear, flat-roofed buildings placed at angles throughout the course to capture views of putting greens, mountains, and the course's namesake seven lakes. The units were available in one-bedroom and two-bedroom models. Images of Velma Dawson's residence (interior designer, artist, creator of *Howdy Doody* and wife of the developer Johnny Dawson) were published in *House Beautiful*. Seven Lakes Country Club Estates also contained a clubhouse (1965, William F. Cody), restaurant, and a swimming pool and sauna for each group of condominiums.

### Canyon Estates (1969)

Noted Palm Springs developer Roy Fey also capitalized on the trend of residential golf course communities with Canyon Estates (1969-1972, Charles E. DuBois). Fey's Canyon Estates are bordered by Sierra Way to the north, Via Estrella to the south, Toledo Avenue to the east, and Cliente Drive to the west. The \$21 million joint venture included the Wallace Moir Group, Roy Fey Construction Co., and the Great-West Life Assurance Company of Canada.<sup>461</sup> The development included the construction of a 9-hole, 3-par executive golf course, tennis courts, clubhouse, eleven swimming and therapeutic pools, and landscaped medians. Residential options included attached condominium units on the fairway as well as off-course lots for custom homes.<sup>462</sup>

The 173 condominium units consisted of attached, semi-attached, and stand-alone units. Designs included a two-bedroom/two bath and a three-bedroom/two bath model. They were developed in six units from the southern portion of the development northward.<sup>463</sup> The units are attached at the garage for maximum privacy. Two basic exterior designs dominate the

<sup>461</sup> "Moir Group Record Set During 1969," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1970.

<sup>462</sup> Ad for Roy Fey's Canyon Estates, undated, [www.pscanyonstates.com/history/](http://www.pscanyonstates.com/history/) (accessed November 2014).

<sup>463</sup> The number of units is inconsistent with newspaper information that suggests that by June of 1975, 246 of the constructed 254 condominiums had been purchased.

development with variations in stone and masonry to differentiate one design from the other. Four masonry types are featured: lava stone, grey flagstone, a cream-colored flagstone, and large slump brick.<sup>464</sup>

As part of Canyon Estates, Fey also offered a limited number of “executive homes.” Although not directly adjacent to the fairways, these three-, four-, or five-bedroom single-family residences offered all the amenities of Canyon Estates membership with walled lots for added privacy. These homes were on land directly adjacent to the Canyon Estates Condominiums to the north and east (Tracts 3137 and 2812). Two models for this part of the development still stand at 1937 Toledo Avenue (1970) and 1596 Canyon Estates Drive (1974).<sup>465</sup> The concept of the executive home merges condominium-style amenities with the single-family residence. The owner enjoyed all the advantages of condominium ownership including exterior maintenance and upkeep for the structure as well as the use of the nearby clubhouse, gymnasium, golf course, and tennis courts for payment of a monthly fee.

In 1975, Fey expanded the development of his executive homes even further to include 26 homes in the area north of Laverne Way as Canyon Vista Estates (Tract 6839). The model home featured in advertising still stands at 1642 La Verne Way (1976).<sup>466</sup>

#### Cathedral Canyon Country Club (1973-1989)

In 1973, Palm Springs’ final residential golf course community was realized with Cathedral Canyon Country Club and Condominiums (1973-1989) at 34567 Cathedral Canyon Drive. The \$50 million, 450-acre project envisioned 991 homes, an 18-hole championship golf course, and a 9-hole executive length course.<sup>467</sup> The courses were designed by David Rainville (b.1936) and Billy Casper (b.1931). Casper was one of the most prolific tournament winners on the PGA Tour from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Rainville has been a practicing golf course architect since 1961 and is credited with the design of over 50 courses, many of which are in Southern California.<sup>468</sup>

<sup>464</sup> Pending confirmation in the field that all four types were utilized.

<sup>465</sup> The architect(s) of these residences is unknown at this time.

<sup>466</sup> Architect unknown at this time.

<sup>467</sup> “Earth Broken for Palm Springs Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 1973, K14.

<sup>468</sup> American Society of Golf Course Architects, <http://golfarchitects.lib.msu.edu/rainvilled/rainvilledbio.htm> (accessed November 20, 2014).

The private country club included a clubhouse, cocktail lounge, fourteen lakes, 9.5 miles of bicycle paths, tennis club, and seven tennis courts all located within a secure gated community with its own security force. The one- and two-bedroom/two bathroom condominium units were strategically organized into eleven “mini-neighborhoods” with their own swimming pool, therapy pool, and sundecks.

The Club was originally developed by the Oxnard-based Cathedral Canyon Country Club Properties; however, in 1977, the development was sold to Falcon Lake Properties. Under Falcon Lake, development of the area skyrocketed and in 1979 construction was underway on 780 units.<sup>469</sup> In 1978, Falcon Lake was the 36<sup>th</sup> largest homebuilder in Southern California.<sup>470</sup> In 1989, the company opened the Lakeview Village section of the club which had 96 units divided into three floor plans.

<sup>469</sup> “Condos Slated in Desert Tract,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1979, H11.

<sup>470</sup> “Southland Building Leaders,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1979, 11.

**Sub-theme: 1970s Single-Family Residential Development (1970-1979)**

By the 1970s, the large tracts of land in Palm Springs had largely been built out and there was a shift in the marketplace towards condominiums and town homes. Because available large parcels were often bordered by other developments, developers increasingly took to the creation of residential cul-de-sacs to optimize the number of parcels and create sheltered neighborhoods. Once again, the history of air conditioning played a major factor as central air conditioning replaced individual units as an economically viable form of cooling. The units consisted of a condenser, coils, and a fan. Air was drawn, passed over coils, and blasted through a home's ventilation system. R-12, commonly known as Freon-12, was used as the refrigerant.<sup>471</sup>

One example of cul-de-sac development was Desert Dorado (1972-76) developed by L.B.C. Enterprises. The development includes a series of cul-de-sacs north of Alejo Drive and east of Sunrise Way, eastward to Orchid Tree Lane. The first of the cul-de-sacs to be developed was twelve lots on Saturmino Drive (Tract 4527-1). Begun in fall of 1972, Desert Dorado was "...the first major single-family development in five years."<sup>472</sup>

L.B.C. Enterprises was a partnership of Lawrence A. Lapham (1935-2004), whose company Kaptur-Lapham and Associates was designer for the three- and four-bedroom homes. Hugh Kaptur was the project architect.<sup>473</sup> The University of Oklahoma-educated Lapham was the son of the noted local architect Howard Lapham and was, himself, an architectural designer. In 1964, he opened an office in the Alan Ladd Building and "earned a reputation for being the one to see for definitive desert architecture;" Lapham is credited with being "an innovator of the 'Palm Springs Look'"<sup>474</sup> In later years Lapham operated his practice out of his residence at 503 Lujo Circle.

<sup>471</sup> Amanda Green. "A Brief History of Air Conditioning, *Popular Mechanics*.

<http://www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/electrical-plumbing/a-brief-history-of-air-conditioning-10720229>  
(accessed January 15, 2015).

<sup>472</sup> "Single Family Homes Rise in Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*. September 24, 1972, 122.

<sup>473</sup> "Single Family Homes Rise in Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*. September 24, 1972, 122.

<sup>474</sup> Palm Springs Look Architect Aims new designs at Park Escoba," *Desert Sun*, April 30, 1995. Clipping file from Palm Springs Historical Society.

Lapham developed another series of cul-de-sacs under the Desert Dorado banner all accessible from Avenida Caballeros to the east and west, between Via Escuela on the north, and Vista Chino on the south.

Other examples of this kind of cul-de-sac based development include the 1970 projects of developer Richard Erlich (Tract 4620 and 9416); John Wessman<sup>475</sup> (Tract 9667); and the development of Twin Palms III by Jerry Nathanson with three cul-de-sacs off Andee Drive.<sup>476</sup>

Andreas-Hills-in-the-Canyon was one of the few large single-family residential developments of the 1970s. It was envisioned as a \$20 million development of homes, high-rise condominium apartments, and a resort hotel by Chicago real estate developer and owner of the Palm Springs Tennis Club, Harry F. Chaddick (1903-1994). Chaddick purchased the 700-acre tract from John Green & Co.

John Green and his syndicate of investors approached Chaddick in 1966 with an equity proposition to urgently pay off a \$350,000 loan<sup>477</sup> from American Standard (the plumbing company) and save the investors from foreclosure.<sup>478</sup> After negotiation, Chaddick purchased the land and his Carnegie Construction Company graded the property building shelves that were three hundred to four hundred feet deep.<sup>479</sup> Composed of granite, terraced plots for 200 homes were excavated as a result of this effort.

To complete his vision, Chaddick engaged architect William F. Cody to design the subdivision and prepare the site plans. The hotel was never realized and the high-rise condominiums were shelved in favor of a more garden-style development that is more compatible with the neighboring custom homes.

<sup>475</sup> Wessman owned a construction firm, Wessman Construction Co., and acted as a developer of residential and commercial projects in Palm Springs and the surrounding desert communities during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. His projects include Plaza de las Flores downtown, El Paso Square in Palm Desert, and the Villages of Rio de Sol in Cathedral City. More information on Wessman appears in the postwar multi-family residential development section, below.

<sup>476</sup> More information about this tract is pending further research.

<sup>477</sup> The \$350,000 was used to build a road to the Andreas Hills property.

<sup>478</sup> Harry F. Chaddick, *Chaddick: Success against All Odds* (Chicago, IL: Harry F. Chaddick Associates, 1990), 131.

<sup>479</sup> Chaddick, *Chaddick: Success against All Odds*, 132.



Chaddick, who founded American Transportation Co. in 1924, first visited Palm Springs in the winter of 1946.<sup>480</sup> Although Chaddick immediately saw the opportunity for development in Palm Springs, he was unable to “buy sufficient acreage for homes or any kind of development.”<sup>481</sup> Chaddick returned to Chicago, but continued to make annual winter visits to Palm Springs. In 1957 he divested himself of his trucking interests and began venturing into real estate and urban planning, ultimately directing the rezoning for the City of Chicago and Cook County. As a result, he became interested in land development and developed the Ford City Mall project in 1961.<sup>482</sup>

Around this time, Chaddick and two Chicago business associates, Henry Crown and Steve Healy, made an unsuccessful bid for the Balaban Estate in La Quinta. Although his early efforts in Palm Springs were thwarted, Chaddick became an important residential developer in the city of Palm Springs. He went on to acquire the Palm Springs Tennis Club from Pearl McManus; the San Jacinto Golf Course (also known as the Whitewater Country Club and the Palm Springs Country Club); as well as the Andreas-Hills-in-the-Canyon project. At one time, his First American Realty Co. owned more than 1,000 acres in Palm Springs. Chaddick is credited with over \$250 million in property development causing the *Desert Sun* to call Chaddick, “...the largest single investor in the history of Palm Springs.”<sup>483</sup>

<sup>480</sup> Chaddick, *Chaddick: Success against All Odds*, 102.

<sup>481</sup> Chaddick, *Chaddick: Success against All Odds*, 105.

<sup>482</sup> “Chicago Developer Harry F. Chaddick,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1994.

<sup>483</sup> Chaddick, *Chaddick: Success against All Odds*, 145.

**POST-WORLD WAR II SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Single-family residence; Historic District

To accommodate the growing population in Southern California following World War II, there was a great deal of single-family residential development in Palm Springs during this period. This included large and small tract development, infill construction in existing neighborhoods, construction on previously unbuildable lots, and the lease and development on tribal lands. This coincided with the peak of Modern architecture's popularity in Southern California, and Palm Springs has a vast number of architecturally significant single-family residences from this period. Subdivisions and neighborhoods from the postwar era retain a strong sense of time and place. Tract features, such as original landscape features and street lights should be considered when evaluating residential neighborhoods.

A single-family residence may be eligible under this theme:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>484</sup>	As an excellent example of residential development representing the growth of the city during this period; for an important association with a significant tract subdivided during this period; for an association with an innovative type of housing development or method of construction; or as a rare example of housing for a particular ethnic group. It is unlikely that a single-family residence will be individually eligible solely for its association with a significant residential tract; however, one may be eligible as a model home, or as the first or last remaining residence constructed within a significant residential tract. It is anticipated that residences from this period eligible under Criterion A will be eligible primarily as contributors to historic districts.

<sup>484</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

CRITERIA	REASON
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Significant persons within this theme include members of the community who may have been influential in the development of Palm Springs, or who gained significance within their profession. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent example of an architectural style or method of construction from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Residences from this period may also contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes. District boundaries may represent original tract boundaries, or they may comprise a portion of a tract or neighborhood. The district must be unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, and architectural quality. Original tract features, including street lights, landscaping, parkland, and other amenities may contribute to the significance of the district.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1979): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme. Palm Springs has numerous residential tracts and individual single-family residences from this period; therefore, integrity of these resources should be considered carefully in their evaluation.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>485</sup> A residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. <sup>486</sup>
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

<sup>485</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>486</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	<p>A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique.<sup>487</sup> A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.</p>
A/1/6 (District)	<p>In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Original tract features, such as street trees, street lights, and other planning features may also be contributing features to the historic district under this theme. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development. The district overall should convey a strong sense of time and place.</p>

<sup>487</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in residential development from this period, including tract development; an association with an important developer; an association with innovative trends and patterns in residential development and construction; or an important association with a particular ethnic group important in Palm Springs' history; or
- represent an excellent example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- reflect planning and design principles from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: POST-WAR MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979)****Overview**

This theme explores the design and construction of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century multi-family residential development in Palm Springs from the immediate postwar period through the 1970s. Significant architects and designers associated with multi-family residential development from this period include A. Quincy Jones, Wexler and Harrison, William Krisel, Paul Thoryk, Hai Tan, Goodkin, Ruderman and Valdiva, H.W. Burns, and many others. Developers include Rossmoor Corporation, Phillip Short and Associates, and Jack and Richard Weiss.

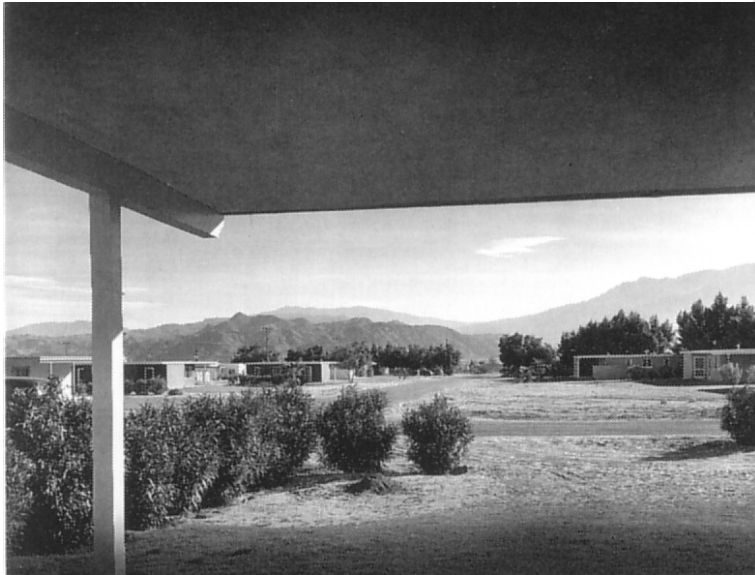
As a result of increased demand, post-World War II multi-family residential development in Palm Springs took virtually every form under the sun: from garden apartments to large, low-rise multi-building communities (including early condominium projects), to spilt-level attached townhomes, to attached and semi-attached residences in clusters as small as two and as many as eight. In virtually every configuration, the focus of the design was around the pool (or pools as the scale of the developments increased). During the 1970s, the warm climate and the prevalence of inexpensive condominiums on leased land drew retirees to Palm Springs. As author Lawrence Culver describes, during the late 1970s the complexion of the city began to change; it became a haven for retirees and tourism receded. “The new Palm Springs convalescent hospital...looked like an oversized ranch home,” suggests Culver. “It was depicted in advertising photos with mountain vistas beyond, offering a comforting residential image—old age as a vacation, rather than simply a decline.”<sup>488</sup>

Competition from other desert communities for tourism and glamour was also a contributing factor as Palm Springs population increases failed to keep up with the high growth rates of previous decades. The supply of multi-family residential development gradually outpaced demand. Spared redevelopment, many of the city’s apartment, condominium, and townhouse communities awaited new generations of visitors.

<sup>488</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 194.

### Post-War Multi-Family Residential Development (1945-1979)

Throughout the country, wartime housing projects were invariably the only building projects not stalled by the onset of World War II. In Palm Springs, Bel Vista (1945-47, Clark and Frey) was one such project. Bordered by E. Chia on the north, Sunrise Way on the east, Tachevah Drive on the south, and N. Paseo De Anza on the west, the tract was first subdivided into multi-family residential housing units in 1945 by Sallie Stevens Nichols and her husband Culver Nichols.<sup>489</sup>



View of Bel Vista (1945-47, Clark and Frey). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: *Albert Frey: Architect*, 74.

Bel Vista was designed as war workers' housing and its construction was subsidized by the government. As such, it had to meet specific design guidelines. Fifty-one wood frame and stucco units all conformed to the same floor plan. To prevent the development from having a repetitive visual presence, the lead architect, Albert Frey, flipped the plan on each lot and varied the setbacks—creating an inviting architectural rhythm on the street. Each house also

<sup>489</sup> Sallie Stevens Nichols was the daughter of early Palm Springs landholder and developer Prescott T. Stevens.



had a “distinct and individual color scheme.”<sup>490</sup> The commission was an ideal project for Frey who was interested in economical and pre-fabricated housing.<sup>491</sup>

In contrast, the Modern-style Villa Hermosa (1945, Clark and Frey) is located at 155 Hermosa Place. This project was designed not as wartime housing but as a collection of postwar apartment units with a pool and recreational facilities. Here, three separate unit types were designed with the final building containing 21 units. According to author Joseph Rosa, the design is an “assembly of stacked and terraced apartments that forms a partial enclosure around a garden and a pool that is oriented to a mountain view...with access to all apartments through the garden.”<sup>492</sup> Villa Hermosa was featured twice in *Architectural Record*.



The Villa Hermosa (1945, Clark and Frey) is located at 155 Hermosa Place. Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

<sup>490</sup> “Residential Bel Vista,” *Architect and Engineer*, April 1951, 11.

<sup>491</sup> Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey: Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 75.

<sup>492</sup> Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey: Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 75.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

While the emphasis in residential construction in Palm Springs following World War II was decidedly in favor of single-family homes, a number of apartment buildings were constructed in the immediate postwar period. Apartments were typically found on Palm Canyon Drive, Indian Avenue, Arenas Road, and Tamarisk Road. As before the war, combined retail and multi-family usages were common along Palm Canyon Drive. The upper story of the Potter Clinic (1947, Williams, Williams and Williams; HSPB-58) at 1020 N. Palm Canyon Drive housed an apartment unit that the architect E. Stewart Williams lived in during 1949. This urban design did not come at the expense of the Palm Springs indoor-outdoor lifestyle: the floor plan included an outdoor dining terrace accessible from the kitchen.<sup>493</sup>



Potter Clinic (1947, Williams, Williams and Williams) located at 1020 N. Palm Canyon Drive. The combination retail and residential apartment building was, according to Julius Shulman, where architect E. Stewart Williams lived in 1949. Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

<sup>493</sup> Julius Shulman, "Palm Springs Penthouse," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1949, G6.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

A character-defining feature of postwar apartment construction in Palm Spring is the placement of the swimming pool as a central, unifying element in the design. In addition to being a social gathering place, a pool firmly cemented the Palm Springs' lifestyle as one of leisure and outdoor recreational activities. An early example of this is the Town & Desert Apartments (1948, H.W. Burns)<sup>494</sup> at 360 W. Arenas Road. These apartments were featured in national trade publications including the May 1948 issue of *Architectural Record*.



The one-story Town & Desert Apartments (c.1948, H.W. Burns) at 370 W. Arenas Road features an L-shaped Mid-century Modern design oriented toward the swimming pool. Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

<sup>494</sup> H.W. Burns (Herbert W. Burns, 1900-1988) was a Los Angeles-based contractor-builder who appears to have relocated to Palm Springs after World War II to carry out his design/build work. Burns is best known for his multi-family residential designs, and specifically, the Town & Desert Apartments. However, several of his Palm Springs homes were published in the *Los Angeles Times* including the Edith Eddy Ward/Margaret M. Ward Residence (c. 1948) and the Stuart Weiss Residence (c. 1951). Architectural historian Robert Imber describes Burns' work as "recognizable from the infusion of gracious, elegant features such as low, sleek roof lines; a floating double soffit; extended thin brick or stone planters; and built-in wall clocks."

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

In 1956 developer Roy Fey built the Desertaire Apartments (1956, Claude A. Powell),<sup>495</sup> a 38-unit apartment building at 2290 S. Palm Canyon Drive. At a cost of \$420,000, the two C-shaped, Mid-century Modern style buildings created a patio with pool(s).<sup>496</sup> Fey's original intent was to market the units with one-year leases; however, in 1957 he changed his mind and renamed the building "The Desert Skies Apartment Hotel."<sup>497</sup>

Another example of the purposeful orientation of the apartment complex around the swimming pool was the Premiere Apartments (1957-58, Frey and Chambers). The L-shaped plan of this building wrapped around the pool and each unit was recessed into the overall volume creating exterior corridors on the outer façade and private balconies facing the pool and mountains. The elegant Mid-century Modern design also featured Frey's signature round windows, suspended stairways, and use of corrugated metal planes.

Multi-family residential development played an important role in transforming Palm Springs from a resort town to a residential community. That transformation occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, but its roots can be seen as early as 1955 when the Los Angeles Home Show featured a full-scale model unit exhibit for an "own-your-own" cooperative apartment planned for the Palm Springs area."<sup>498</sup> Although the 100-unit garden apartment complex designed by John C. Lindsay was outside the city limits (between Tamarisk and Thunderbird Country Clubs), it set the stage for the type of development that would characterize Palm Springs in the coming decades. The apartments were presented as suitable for full time living or as vacation residences that could be leased when not in use. This clearly positioned Palm Springs as a second home/vacation home paradise.

Fast-forward fourteen years and the vacation home trend was in full swing – especially for Angelenos. The 1969 *Los Angeles Times* article "How to Turn a Playing House into a Paying House," emphasized strategies for defraying rent and upkeep through renting out a vacation home. According to the article, "the vacation-house-for-rent concept is one off the most important developments in our recreational habits since the American family took to the

<sup>495</sup> More information on this architect pending further research.

<sup>496</sup> "Attention Goes to New Items," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1956, G15.

<sup>497</sup> "The History of Desert Skies," <http://desertskiesps.com/history.htm> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>498</sup> "A Desert Apartment," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1955, 118.

road.”<sup>499</sup> Another key factor in increased demand for second homes/vacation homes in Palm Springs was the establishment of direct airline service to Palm Springs by transcontinental air carriers in December of 1967. This made the resort community more directly accessible to residents of the east coast and Midwest than ever before. And indeed, by 1967, Palm Springs was growing from a population of 20,000 in the off-season to 50,000 during the winter tourist season.<sup>500</sup>

The City of Palm Springs was the first in the state and one of the first resorts in the nation to legalize condominiums as a new form of vacation housing.<sup>501</sup> Condominiums diverged from co-op apartment arrangements in that residences were not technically owned collectively: each unit was owned individually but common areas were subject to collective ownership. Typically homeowners’ associations were established and monthly ownership dues funded maintenance of the common areas.

The popularity of the condominium in Palm Springs hinged on an aging population of empty nesters and retirees who liberated themselves from single-family residences in the suburbs. They fled to vacation condos or full-time residency in condos where upkeep and maintenance were low and amenities were built-in. Amenities included tennis courts, pools, and/or country club membership. The rise in popularity of timeshare arrangements (where a property could be shared across a consortium of “owners” lowering costs even more) contributed to the growth of condominiums in Palm Springs. As described by author and historian Lawrence Culver, “the ‘condo-ization’ of Palm Springs was quickly followed by the popularity of condominiums at new ski resorts such as Vail and Aspen.”<sup>502</sup>

A lack of financing for the new ownership concept, however, suppressed development until 1964. In 1961, the FHA was authorized to insure mortgages on condos for 85 percent of the appraised value. Yet, it wasn’t until September 1963 that tax appraisal methods for condominium was settled and developers began building condominiums in force.<sup>503</sup>

<sup>499</sup> Dan MacMasters, “How to Turn a Playing House into a Paying House,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1969, T16.

<sup>500</sup> “Palm Springs Ponders Plan to Revitalize Desert Resort,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 1967, E7.

<sup>501</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

<sup>502</sup> Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 194.

<sup>503</sup> Dan Mac Masters, “Condominiums—The Most Exciting Housing Development in 15 Years,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1964, 44, <http://proquest.com> (accessed March 14, 2011).

As noted by architectural historian David Gebhard, many of the condominium developments were built on the eastern side of town.<sup>504</sup> Opening the floodgates to multi-family residential housing resulted in the construction of various new building typologies: multi-story/multi-unit low and mid-rise developments, attached homes, semi-attached homes, split-level townhomes and even the conversion of existing apartment buildings to condominium ownership.

An early condominium project in Palm Springs was an apartment conversion at the hands of local developer Roy Fey: Fey's Palm Springs Desertaire Apartments also known as the Desert Skies Apartment Hotel (1956, Claude A. Powell).<sup>505</sup> In 1963, Fey decided to convert the apartment building into co-operative apartments. In an unusual move (and likely to protect him from future liability claims), Fey "sold" each unit separately to his wife Ethel for \$9,100. When sales began in the summer of 1963, the price for one-bedroom units was \$14,495.<sup>506</sup> In a 1980 interview, Roy Fey claimed he was "...the first person to introduce the concept of condominium building to the area by converting Desert Skies."<sup>507</sup> This is a bit of an exaggeration as several other projects were built in 1960 specifically as condominiums, including the Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler and Harrison; HSPB-73) at 1774 South Palm Canyon Drive.<sup>508</sup>

Another early condominium project was the Royal Air Condominiums<sup>509</sup> (1958, Wexler and Harrison) at 389 W. Tahquitz Drive (demolished) for real estate mogul and later philanthropist, Joseph Drown. These elegant, two-story Mid-century Modern-style garden apartments featured steel-frame construction that resulted in thin wall and roof planes with walls of glass on the ground floor that opened to the outdoors. Innovative finishes included

<sup>504</sup> David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide To Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1982), 387.

<sup>505</sup> Palm Springs-based Claude A. Powell (c.1908-unknown) is best known for his Mission Revival-style Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church (1948, Claude A. Powell) in Twentynine Palms. In 1940, Powell was an artist for an advertising agency in Los Angeles. By 1948, Powell was a draftsman in the office of H.W. Burns. The high school-educated Powell was not a member of the American Institute of Architects.

<sup>506</sup> "The History of Desert Skies," <http://desertskies.com/history.htm> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>507</sup> "Roy and Bob Fey: When It Began," *Palm Springs Life*, May 1980, 55.

<sup>508</sup> Other earlier co-ops or condos include Villa de las Palmas Co-operative Apartments at 1201 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Desert Holly Co-operative Apartments (1957) at 2244 E. Tahquitz Way, The Desert Lanai (1962) at North Sunrise Way and East Tachevah Drive, and the Sandcliff Condominiums (1963) in the 1800 block of South Barona Road.

<sup>509</sup> The authors of the monograph on Donald Wexler, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, list the project as Royal Air Condominiums; however, ads in the *Villager* call it the "Royal Air Apartments."

ceramic tile exterior wall panels.<sup>510</sup> The building was to be part of a larger complex on the old Mashie Golf course property that would include swimming pools, putting greens, tennis, badminton and croquet courts.

Paul W. Trousdale, one of Southern California's most prolific developers and an early postwar developer of Palm Springs, was not to be left behind during Palm Spring's apartment-hotel-condominium boom. In the late 1950s, Trousdale built the Racquet Club Cottages West (1959-60, William F. Cody; HSPB-88) as a series of attached and stand-alone units designed for "people who wish to visit Palm Springs regularly for the weekend or those who wish to make Palm Springs their permanent winter home."<sup>511</sup> Originally, Cody designed 57 Mid-century Modern style units on an eight-foot module utilizing four plans: "The Bachelor," "The Bedroom Suite," "The Living Room Suite," and the "Full Cottage."<sup>512</sup> All offered maintenance-free living and the amenity of the Racquet Club privileges. In March 2014, the City of Palm Springs designated the development now known as "Racquet Club Garden Villas" as a historic district (HD-3).

In 1961 Chicago-based developer Henry F. Chaddick paid Pearl McManus \$1 million for her beloved Palm Springs Tennis Club, and Chaddick's own Carnegie Construction Company was assigned to finish projects started by McManus. Although the developer's initial vision for the property included a hotel, in 1961 he oversaw the development of 39 condominium units, Tennis Club Estates (1963, William F. Cody)<sup>513</sup> and a number of bungalow units that increased the club's capacity from twenty in McManus' day to 110 units.<sup>514</sup>

In 1966, Chaddick bought the San Jacinto Golf Club, a failed golf course development in the northern section of Palm Springs. By the time Chaddick took possession of the property it had "deteriorated beyond its economic potential."<sup>515</sup> Yet, what had attracted the developer to the property was the island of 28 vacant acres in the center of the course. Here Chaddick developed the Country Club Condominiums (1971, William F. Cody). Chaddick later

<sup>510</sup> Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler* (Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011), 79.

<sup>511</sup> City of Palm Springs, "City Council Staff Report," November 20, 2013, 2.

<sup>512</sup> City of Palm Springs, "City Council Staff Report," November 20, 2013, 3.

<sup>513</sup> More information on this development pending further research.

<sup>514</sup> Harry F. Chaddick. *Chaddick: Success Against All Odds*, (Chicago, IL: Harry F. Chaddick Associates, 1990), 126.

<sup>515</sup> Harry F. Chaddick. *Chaddick: Success Against All Odds*, (Chicago, IL: Harry F. Chaddick Associates, 1990), 128.

renamed the project the Palm Springs Country Club. 122 condominium units were constructed and sold in five phases between 1972 and 1977.<sup>516</sup> The units along the southwestern portion of Whitewater Club Drive were developed first, in 1972, with the units immediately to the west (south of Easy Street) developed in 1974. Units north of Easy Street were developed after 1977 and the western-most units after that. The one-, two-, and three-bedroom, one- and two-story condominiums were dubbed “Fairway Condominiums.”<sup>517</sup> Plans ranged from 1,794 to 2,310 square feet.<sup>518</sup> Chaddick even built a new clubhouse (1972).<sup>519</sup> The development was never a big success; however, it did provide a golf amenity for owners in Chaddick’s other developments.<sup>520</sup>

In 1969, Chaddick embarked on his plan to transform the Tennis Club into a hotel. Chaddick’s plan, however, ran afoul of the city’s two-year moratorium on the construction of high rises. After unsuccessfully lobbying the City for a zoning change, Chaddick built the 100-room, two-story Tennis Club Hotel (1971, William F. Cody). In 1980, the property was sold to Watt Industries (Raymond A. Watt and Guilford Glazer)<sup>521</sup> and transformed into a time-share condominium venture.<sup>522</sup>

Chaddick’s other venture into condominium development in Palm Springs was in his Andreas Hills development. As discussed in the single-family residential development theme, the development included single-family residences but also included the Andreas Hills Condominiums (1971, William F. Cody). These units were recognized with an Award of Excellence by the Inland California Chapter of the AIA in 1973-74.

Another important condominium developer of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Palm Springs was William Bone (b.1943). In 1963, the twenty-year old Bone founded Sunrise Company. Seven years later the *Los Angeles Times* called him “...a highly successful Century

<sup>516</sup> A review of Google images indicates that not all units may conform to the original Cody design. Please note that the one tract map is missing from the county archives online so dates are approximate. Individual parcels at the northwestern tip of the area were subdivided in 2005.

<sup>517</sup> Harry F. Chaddick. “*Chaddick: Success Against All Odds*,” (Chicago, IL: Harry F. Chaddick Associates, 1990), 128.

<sup>518</sup> “Golf Course Units Available at Site,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1982, OC, D16.

<sup>519</sup> Architect of the clubhouse is unknown at this time; pending further research.

<sup>520</sup> Chaddick eventually sold the Club along with a condominium unit to an automobile dealer from Chicago.

<sup>521</sup> Watt Industries were the first time=share developers in Southern California with successful San Diego County Estate and Laguna Shores.

<sup>522</sup> “Tennis Club Swings into Time Sharing,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1980, 11.



City Entrepreneur in real estate investments and development involving subdivisions, shopping centers and motels.”<sup>523</sup> Bone’s first Palm Springs project was the \$10 million, 111-unit Deep Well Ranch Condominiums (1969-72, B. A. Berkus and Associates), located on the property of the former Deep Well Guest Ranch. A joint venture with Tennessee-based ALODEX Corporation, the development included five detached home plans and one- and two-story condominium units. All units opened onto a central park and recreation area. Berkus’ designs for the project, including the Cabrillo and Riviera models, were contemporary Californian/Spanish ranch with slump-stone masonry, red clay tile roofs, open beam ceilings, and Spanish-inspired wooden details such as large articulated carved front doors and garage doors.<sup>524</sup>



Sunrise Alejo (1972). Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

<sup>523</sup> “Retreat for Stars in New Role,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1979, J1.

<sup>524</sup> “Retreat for Stars in New Role,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1979, J1.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Bone went on to develop Sunrise Alejo (1971, B. A. Berkus and Associates) at 1200 S. Sunrise Way. The 40-acre, \$10 million development featured 239 units. These shed-style modern buildings featured accents of “wood, masonry and blue-green tile roofs.”<sup>525</sup> Noted architectural historian David Gebhard identified the project as an exemplary “little stucco and shed roof village” in the *Guide to Architecture in Southern California*.<sup>526</sup> The complex also featured ten swimming pools. At least two models, the Nassau and the San Juan, featured a glassed-in atrium or enclosed garden court. Bone continued his Palm Springs ventures with “maintenance-free” Sunrise Alejo (1972)<sup>527</sup> on the east side of Sunrise Way, south of Tamarisk Road and north of Tahquitz Canyon Way;<sup>528</sup> and Sunrise East.<sup>529</sup> Sunrise Alejo featured two-bedroom units, whereas, Sunrise East offered larger, three-bedroom models. A much larger community, Sunrise East also featured six swimming pools, six therapy pools, and three tennis courts.<sup>530</sup>

In 1965, the City passed zoning changes that allowed for greater density. As a result, multi-family residential development for either rental or sale ran rampant in Palm Springs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1969, 309 units were constructed. In 1970, 2,413 units were constructed and in 1972 another 2,000 units.<sup>531</sup> As a result, the city imposed a 120-day moratorium on building permits in December of 1972. An example of the condominium gold rush that gripped the city was the conversion of the golf course at the Biltmore Hotel to the Palm Springs Biltmore Condominiums (1972, Goodkin, Ruderman & Valdiva).<sup>532</sup> In 1973, the Biltmore Condominiums were featured in *House and Home* magazine as one of the excellent condominium developments in the country.

One of the important planning concepts in multi-family residential developments of the period was cluster planning. An early example of this technique is the Amfac Canyon Sands Villas (1972, Dick Finnegan) at 4300 E. Palm Canyon Drive. Combining the best aspects of

<sup>525</sup> “Apartments Beckon Sun Seekers,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1971, 11.

<sup>526</sup> David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide To Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1982), 391.

<sup>527</sup> Architect unknown; pending further research. Contacted Berkus’ firm but so far no response.

<sup>528</sup> “Display Ad 51,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 1972, B7.

<sup>529</sup> Date, architect, and location unknown at this time. Pending further research.

<sup>530</sup> “Palm Springs Condominiums,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1973, 28.

<sup>531</sup> Kenneth Reich, “Palm Springs Voters Approve Plan to Contain City Growth,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1972, 3.

<sup>532</sup> Pending additional research on these architects.

condominium ownership with single-family residences, this planned community of homes featured recreational facilities and freedom from exterior maintenance through homeowners' association dues. Ads for the development prominently featured "no shared walls in living areas" and "privacy."<sup>533</sup> However, the otherwise single-family residences were connected by common garages connecting two units. Recreational facilities included six tennis courts, putting green, swimming and therapy pools, sauna, cabana, and clubhouse.

Richard "Dick" Finnegan (1927-2011) was an award-winning designer based in Santa Clara who is known for his trademarked "Finnegan Clusters."<sup>534</sup> Finnegan Clusters efficiently group six residential units around a common driveway plaza area. Amfac Canyon Sands Villas employs this planning module and is one of the earliest known applications of Finnegan's concept. Finnegan would go on to use the concept in Hidden Creek in Oakland (1974), Casa de Arroyo in Petaluma (1975), and in New Horizons West (1979) in Palm Springs at 2400 Bogie Road. For Amfac Canyon Sands Villas, Finnegan designed two exterior styles, "Early and Contemporary California."<sup>535</sup>

The Hawaiian-based Amfac Communities was the home-building arm of Amfac, Inc., the agricultural giant that turned to real estate and hospitality in the Hawaiian Islands. The first phase of Amfac Canyon Sands Villas consisting of 74 homes opened in December of 1972 and sales were brisk. By February, the first phase was sold out and the second unit of 75 homes was opened.<sup>536</sup> Ultimately, the 299-unit development was one of the largest built during the period.

Developer Ed James, a retired automobile dealer, and builder John Wessman also made their mark on the Palm Springs landscape with the \$3.5 million, 112-unit townhome project, Ranch Club Estados (1971, Gared N. Smith)<sup>537</sup> at 1445 N. Sunrise Way. The Rossmoor Corporation,

<sup>533</sup> "Display Ad 44," *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1972, C17.

<sup>534</sup> Dick Finnegan, Inc. trademarked the term "Finnegan Cluster" on March 1, 1973.

<sup>535</sup> The cluster concept was later incorporated into projects by many architects including Newport Crest Condominiums (1973, Richard Dorman) and Beverly Glen Canyon (1976, Barry A. Berkus).

<sup>536</sup> "Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1973, L18.

<sup>537</sup> The Newport Beach-based Gared N. Smith, AIA (b.1925) earned his B.Arch at the University of Oregon. Early in his career, he worked as a draftsman in the office of Heitschmidt & Riley & Levanas, Associates. In 1961 he established his own firm and designed a number of commercial and residential buildings. He is best known for the Amberwood Fullerton (1975) townhomes in Fullerton, California; the Bay Lido Office Building (1958); Mawana Apartments (1959); and Richards Market and Drugs (1961), all in Newport Beach.

a pioneer in the field of planning and operating adult communities, launched The Fairways By Rossmoor (1974, Paul Thoryk),<sup>538</sup> a 194-unit project found at the northwest corner of Golf Club Drive and 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The contemporary shed-style stucco buildings with red clay tile roofs and self-described “pueblo-styled one story villas” were clustered in innovative circular plazas designed by Thoryk.

Other multi-family residences in Palm Springs designed by prominent architects between 1945 and 1979 include: The Desert Riviera Apartments (1951, H.W. Burns) at 610 Highway 111, Desert Hills Cooperative Apartments (1953-64, Palmer and Krisel) for Albert Levitt, The Country Club Apartments (1953-64, William Krisel) for Milt Hicks, The Four Hundred (1956, H. W. Burns) at 400 West Arenas Road, and the Apartment and Office Building for Boris Gertsen (1963, William Krisel); Twin Springs Condominiums (1971-73, Donald Wexler) at 2696 S. Sierra Madre, Palm Canyon Village (1971, William F. Cody), Sagewood (1972, Donald A. Wexler Associates) for Levitt and Sons at 1400 N. Sunrise Way, Palm Springs Village Apartments (1972-73, Danielian, Moon, Sampieri and Ilg),<sup>539</sup> Sunflower Condominiums (1973, Craig Combs),<sup>540</sup> Casa Sonora (1974, Kaptur and Lapham), and The Rose Garden (1977-79, Donald Wexler) at 110 Baristo Road for H. Kassinger Development Company. Developer Roy Fey continued his real estate endeavors with twenty garden-style apartments, Canyon Apartments by Roy Fey (1978, Robert Richard),<sup>541</sup> at 1580 S. Palm Canyon Drive.

<sup>538</sup> For more information on architect Paul Thoryk, please see the sub-theme Residential Golf Course Development.

<sup>539</sup> Additional information about this architectural firm pending further research.

<sup>540</sup> Newport Beach-based Craig Combs (b.1941) is best known for his design of the Douglas Oil Company Headquarters #2 (1973-4) in Costa Mesa, California and the Newport Equity Funds Corporate Headquarters in Newport Beach (1978).

<sup>541</sup> Additional information about this architectural firm pending further research.

Following is a discussion of some of the most significant multi-family residential developments from this period.<sup>542</sup> The developments are listed chronologically.

#### CoCo Cabana (1959/1978)

CoCo Cabana (also known as Coco Cabana and Co Co Cabana) (1959) is a 31 unit multi-family residential property located at 1881 Araby Drive.<sup>543</sup> It was bordered by a private driveway on the north, Morongo Trail to the south, Araby Drive on the east, and an alley on the west. Constructed in 1959, the CoCo Cabana was original a hotel. The CoCo Cabana Hotel was famously host to Mr. and Mrs. H.R. Haldeman<sup>544</sup> from November 11-15, 1960 for some rest and relaxation after working on Richard M. Nixon's 1960 presidential campaign.<sup>545</sup>

CoCo Cabana was developed by Los Angeles businessman Skipper Baumgarten (1946-2008). Baumgarten amassed considerable wealth in the surety bond business. His associated companies included Surety Associates Holding Company (of which he was president) and its subsidiary American Contractors Indemnity Corporation. Baumgarten was also a holder of a number of land investments including the 1983 sale of Pacific Telephone Co-workers camp to the state of California in 1983 to house prison inmates.<sup>546</sup>

In plan, the attached units are in a U-shaped configuration anchored at the southern section of the parcel with additional attached units at the center of the parcel. Walls for each unit angle slightly to provide some privacy given the large expanses of common walls between the units. All units open onto a lushly landscaped garden area with recreational facilities including the pool and two tennis courts. The Mid-century Modern-style complex featured two-bedroom/two bath and one-bedroom/one bath plans. The simple, flat-roofed designs of the buildings eliminated windows on the front elevations in favor of views towards the garden interiors. Many units also had private patios enclosed by lush landscaping with mature citrus

<sup>542</sup> Note that each subdivision will be reviewed by the survey team to determine which may be eligible for designation as historic districts.

<sup>543</sup> Confirmation of the architect is pending further research.

<sup>544</sup> H.R. Haldeman (1926-1993) is best known for his service as White House Chief of Staff to President Richard M. Nixon, his involvement in the Watergate scandal and his subsequent imprisonment.

<sup>545</sup> Hotel Folio for H.R. Haldeman from Co Co Cabana, Box 45, Folder 10, Richard Nixon Presidential Library.

<sup>546</sup> "Prison Bill Calls for Buying Desert Land," *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1983, B3.

trees. Palm trees dotted the landscape throughout the parcel. Carports were supported by elegant steel columns.

In 1978, Coco Cabana was converted from a hotel into condominiums with the assistance of Fey's Canyon Estates Realty.<sup>547</sup> CoCo Cabana appears to have functioned as an apartment hotel well into the 1980s.<sup>548</sup>

### Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960)

Although the tropical destinations of Hawaii and Polynesia may not be the first setting that comes to mind when thinking about a vacation home in the desert of Palm Springs, however exotic tropical destinations, and their food, culture, and architecture were popular with Americans in the world of jet age travel. Polynesian bar-restaurants like Don the Beachcombers and Tiki-inspired architecture were all the rage in the 1960s. To capitalize on this trend, local realtor Philip Short created Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler and Harrison). It blended "the enchantment of the islands with the magic of sun drenched desert life."<sup>549</sup> Just as Joe Dunas had leveraged the concept at Las Palmas Summit for the Alexander Construction Company, an island theme was applied here to a multi-family residential development. The island theme in the desert proved popular; by February of 1962, the development was 60 percent sold.<sup>550</sup> In 2009, Royal Hawaiian Estates was designated a historic district by the City of Palm Springs.

Clearly targeted to be vacation homes, as described in the *Los Angeles Times*, "among the many advantages of the co-operative plan is the services of a resident manager who administers the property maintenance program to which the homeowners subscribe. In addition to relieving owners of maintenance problems, the program also provides several tax benefits."<sup>551</sup>

Bordered by Twin Palms Drive on the north, an alleyway to the east, and S. Palm Canyon Drive to the west, Royal Hawaiian Estates positioned 40 attached single-family residences in a symmetrical complex plan on one parcel. A total of twelve buildings are clustered together in groups of three or four units, with three different two- and three-bedroom floor plans of 1,500

<sup>547</sup> "Open House This Week," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1978, J14.

<sup>548</sup> Advertisement for Palm Springs, California, *Orange Coast Life*, August 1985, no page.

<sup>549</sup> "Luxury Homes Selling Fast," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1962.

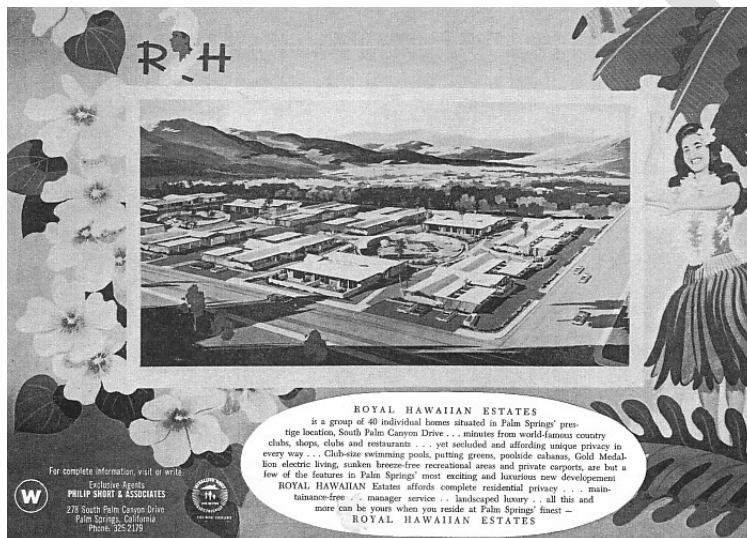
<sup>550</sup> "Desert Development Employs Unique Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1962, M23.

<sup>551</sup> "Desert Development Employs Unique Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1962, M23.

square feet. The combination of rectangular and L-shaped plans in these clusters created both a varied visual appearance for the buildings and privacy for the occupants.

From a planning standpoint, parking was relegated to the perimeter of the development both in a nod to the importance of the automobile in postwar culture, but also to leave the interior gardens free for the recreational activities central to the Palm Springs lifestyle. The units overlooked “sunken recreational areas with pool and game courts.”<sup>552</sup>

Architects Wexler and Harrison used Tiki-style outriggers or “Flying sevens” (the angled beams that connect the patios and roofline), and Tiki-inspired “apexes” and clerestory windows to provide occupants with light and shade. These design elements create an expressive form of the Mid-century Modern style. Materials used by the architects included stained wood siding, concrete block, and natural rock walls in a palette of desert colors.<sup>553</sup>



Advertisement for the Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler and Harrison) shows site plan for clustering of units around recreational amenities and relegation of parking to the perimeter of the site to preserve the garden feeling of each unit. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

<sup>552</sup> “Photo Stand Alone,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1962.

<sup>553</sup> Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, 81.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Sandcliff (1960)

In 1960, the area bordered by Sandcliff Road on the north, E. Morongo Trail to the south, an Alley on the east, and Barona Road on the west was subdivided.<sup>554</sup> In 1964, the western half of the parcel was developed first with 42 attached units clustered in groups of three or six units per building as Garden Villa. Half of the units were arranged in a circular pattern on the northern half of the parcel, and half in a circle on the southern half of the parcel. This allowed each two- or three-bedroom unit to open up into the enclosed garden area and one of two private swimming pools and cabanas.

Decorative concrete block walls on the street-facing façades contrasted with the volumetric Mid-century Modern design of Garden Villa and provide privacy patios for residents and shield the units from parking facilities that were integrated into the perimeters of the overall plan. Period post and frosted-globe light posts dotted the richly landscaped grounds.

In 1966, the eastern parcel of the tract for Garden Villa was developed as Sandcliff in a design mirroring the original plan and architecture. 1965 advertisements in the *Los Angeles Times* confirm this moniker for the western part of Garden Villas, as does existing signage from the period at the complex.<sup>555</sup>

By 1967, Garden Villa had two sister “garden condominium” developments in Palm Springs: Villa Roma (subdivided in 1964 with units constructed in 1967), and Villa Riviera (subdivided in 1966 with units constructed c. 1967). All three developments were advertised as having amenities such as “...imported Italian marble fireplaces, roman baths in master suites and dramatic genuine terrazzo entries.”<sup>556</sup>

Villa Roma is composed of 62 attached homes, located on a parcel bordered by Avenida Granada on the north, alleys on the south and east, and Sierra Madre on the west.<sup>557</sup> In this development the Mid-century Modern design<sup>558</sup> of the units was contrasted with a classical open columned rotunda with statue and cypress trees at the northwest corner of the parcel.

<sup>554</sup> Pending additional research to confirm developer and architect.

<sup>555</sup> “Display Ad 9,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1965, I2.

<sup>556</sup> “Display Ad 172,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1967, C50.

<sup>557</sup> “Display Ad 277,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1967, M16.

<sup>558</sup> Architect unknown at this time.



Villa Roma boasted putting greens, pool, Jacuzzi and cabana with showers, as well as the standard year-round maintenance plan.<sup>559</sup>

Villa Riviera, a 6.5-acre development located at 1855 E. Ramon Road, consisted of 30 units clustered in two circle patterns of ten buildings each, much like Garden Villas. Similar to Garden Villa in design and planning, Villa Riviera featured a private swimming pool at the center of each circle of units and richly landscaped grounds. Some of the two-bedroom/two-bath units contain atriums.

and now Palm Springs presents

# Villa Roma

*...prestige garden homes*  
beautifully furnished by W. & J. Sloane

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Luxurious carefree homes for adults ■ Surpassing Palm Springs residential offerings ■ A haven of seclusion for enduring pleasure and privacy ■ Villa Roma abounds richly in unusual facilities and costly materials inherent in the custom residence ■ Cullied from distant corners of the earth are statuary, marble, other authentic elements brought here to blend with supreme Romanesque architecture and landscaping ■ Villa Roma presents a plan of living without care for most mundane gardening and maintenance problems ■ Phone: Palm Springs — 327-3586 ■ Santa Ana — KI 2-2334

Next to Canyon Country Club on SOUTH Palm Canyon Drive

■ Visit Villa Roma to view distinctive display homes ■ Open daily

Advertisement for Villa Roma features the contrasting classical Roman sculptural elements of the entry with the Mid-century Modern architecture of the complex itself. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

<sup>559</sup> "Homes Have Front Walls for Privacy," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1968, 113.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Park Imperial South (1960-1961)

Park Imperial South (1960, B. A. Berkus and Associates) was developed by the Trudy Richards Company (the father and son developer team of Jack Weiss and Rickard L. Weiss). The 30-unit attached-home development on a triangular parcel was bordered by Araby Drive to the west and a small private driveway cul-de-sac on the north.

Advertised as a “resort home” in a “country club community,” Park Imperial South represented the Trudy Richards Company’s venture into condominium development along with its sister Palm Springs development, Park Imperial North. Exclusivity was a hallmark of Park Imperial marketing, emphasizing that the “private garden, swimming pool and lounging areas... may be used only by the owners of the individual residences and their invited guests.”<sup>560</sup> As with other developments of the time, the “maintenance free” aspect and “virtually complete hotel service (maid, linen, clean up)” clearly positioned Park Imperial South for the resort home market.<sup>561</sup> Further, the tax benefits of homeownership, “including use for rental income or business purposes,” emphasized the economic benefits of such an investment.<sup>562</sup>

Condominium development represented a significant departure for the Trudy Richards Company. The company built its brand on postwar single-family homes that were “refined... with the Housewife in mind.”<sup>563</sup> Featured amenities included “All Electric Color Kitchens,” children’s play rooms, menu planning desks, large expanses of medicine cabinets, and cubbyholes for cookbooks. Trudy Richards Family Homes were built in Palos Verdes, Covina Knolls, Covina, and Anaheim. They received national press attention in *Sunset, House & Garden*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *American Builder*, and *Architectural Digest*. Early home designs were by architect Charles O. Matcham, although it appears that the developers took architectural design in-house for a period of time.

For the design of Park Imperial South and North, the Weisses turned to young architect Barry Berkus for the designs. In Park Imperial South, the architect clustered units in groupings of three or four units around a central landscaped garden. Each two-bedroom+den/two-bathroom floor plan was designed for entertaining with a large living room, bar, enclosed

<sup>560</sup> Park Imperial South Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>561</sup> Park Imperial South Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>562</sup> Park Imperial South Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>563</sup> “Display Ad 129,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1955, G18.

private patio, and a garden dining court. Floor to ceiling glass windows and sliding doors looked out to the garden, while clerestory windows allowed for light and privacy.

The Mid-century Modern style, post-and-beam units featured long low-lines, folded plate rooflines, and concrete block. In the design, Berkus also incorporated the emerging technology of “stress skin panels”<sup>564</sup> with sheer properties permitting greater expanses of glass to be used. The last of the Park Imperial South units were completed in December of 1961.<sup>565</sup>

The sister complex, Park Imperial Riviera or Park Imperial North (1960, B. A. Berkus and Associates) was subdivided in 1959 into 50 units and employed larger clusters of attached units (typically seven or more) in a linear fashion; this resulted in less garden space and privacy than Park Imperial South. Bordered by Louise Drive on the north, Vista Chino on the south and Via Miraleste on the west, the post-and-beam Mid-Century Modern design here employed flat rooflines, clerestory windows, stucco and slump brick.

#### Canyon View Estates (1961-1963)<sup>566</sup>

Attached Mid-Century Modern style homes designed by William Krisel for well-known Palm Springs developer Roy Fey of Feybor, Inc.<sup>567</sup> The design includes landscaped common areas and amenities such as spas and swimming pools.

#### Country Club Estates (1965)

Country Club Estates (1965, A. Quincy Jones of Jones & Emmons) is a 31-unit attached condominium complex on a triangular parcel bordered by a public utility easement on the north, Laverne Way on the south, Camino Real on the east, and another public utility easement on the west. It was developed by Mr. and Mrs. Roy E. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. George

<sup>564</sup> [www.B3architects.com](http://www.B3architects.com) (accessed September 29, 2014).

<sup>565</sup> “Final Units in Project Ready,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1961, 17.

<sup>566</sup> Discussion of Canyon View Estates pending a visit to the William Krisel archives at the Getty.

<sup>567</sup> To be confirmed whether this was Krisel on his own, or with partner Don Saxson Palmer.

M. Blezard, and Bert A Randall. The Philbert Corporation served as construction partners on the project.<sup>568</sup>

Los Angeles-based Roy E. Smith (1903-1995) and his wife Mattie appear in the Palm Springs City Directory in 1946. By 1947, Smith, who had owned a service station in Los Angeles, took up sales of another kind – as a real estate broker.<sup>569</sup> English-born George M. Blezard (1898-1975) and his wife Frances appear at 1563 S. Palm Canyon Drive (the Rancho Trailer Park) in the 1951 City Directory. Little is currently known about Bert A. Randall.

The long, low horizontal lines of Jones' elegant Mid-century Modern design is emphasized by the incorporation of carports at both ends of the primary street façade, with a unifying raked concrete brick wall at the center. Flat rooflines also contribute to the overall horizontality of the design. The units are primarily clustered in four units per building, with some two-unit clusters. Units range from 1,450 to 1,811 square feet; each unit was designed around a private garden that separates the public and private spaces.<sup>570</sup> Eleven-foot ceiling heights distinguish the units from other local examples from the period. Each unit opens at the rear onto the lushly landscaped garden area with an oversized swimming pool and a private pitch-and-putt golf course. Modern pole-globe lights dot the landscape.

#### Tropic Hills Estates/Rimcrest (1964)

A year prior to the development of the nearby single-family residential development of Southridge, Tropic Hills Estates (1964-67, LeRoy Rose and Harold A. Carlson)<sup>571</sup> located at 2000-2155 Southridge Drive was established midway down the ridge south of Highway 111. Tropic Hills Estates was also known by the name Rimcrest as early as 1967. Although the reason for the change in development name is currently unknown, by 1970, Rimcrest was being advertised as “luxurious penthouse condominiums with unsurpassed views of the quite desert.”<sup>572</sup> Marketed to businesses and retirees alike “...as a helpful business retreat or your final superb home...” the presence of a rental management company to leverage tax benefits was also a key selling feature.<sup>573</sup>

<sup>568</sup> Additional information pending visit to the A. Quincy Jones Archives at UCLA.

<sup>569</sup> *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1947, 86.

<sup>570</sup> “Desert Condominium Living,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1965, 16.

<sup>571</sup> Robert Imber, Palm Springs Modern Tours, <http://www.palmspringsmoderntours.com/faqs.html> (accessed January 17, 2015).

<sup>572</sup> Display Ad 275, *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1970, P4.

<sup>573</sup> Display Ad 275, *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1970, P4.

Tropic Hills Estates/Rimcrest was subdivided by Success Builders, Inc. a partnership between Orange County-based businessmen C.R. Wolven and Kenneth H. Slimmer. C.R. Wolven was a Garden Grove realtor and Kenneth H. Slimmer (1929-2013) was a lawyer/real estate agent who was also later a member of the Garden Grove Planning Commission and the Garden Grove School Board.

As their architect, the developers selected local Anaheim-based LeRoy Rose (1927-1996). Little is known about Harold Carson, Rose's co-architect on the project.<sup>574</sup> The New York-born Rose was educated at Los Angeles City College and received his B.S. Arch from Cal State Polytechnical College in 1955; he attended UCLA for one year.<sup>575</sup> Between 1964 and 1969, he formed the partnership of Rose & Fears. Rose is best known for his commercial works: Garden Grove Federal Savings and Loan (1961) in Garden Grove, the Uncle John Pancake Houses (1961) in Garden Grove, Anaheim General Hospital (1964), and the Garber and Sokoloff Office Building (1967) in Fullerton. He also designed the Orange County Hall of Administration (1978, LeRoy Rose & Associates).

Rose also designed multi-family residential condominium projects including a \$14 million multi-family residential project for Larwin Multi-Housing Corporation in 1973 in Canoga Park and Las Vegas, Nevada.<sup>576</sup> During the 1980s, Rose established an office in Palm Springs. Here he designed a new entry for Parc Andreas (1987, LeRoy Rose and Mark McBride Hileman & Associates).

The 51-unit complex consists of single-story stand-alone and attached homes in groups of one, two, three, and four units as could be clustered onto the rocky ledge. Located within a gated and secure community, each unit was terraced to provide maximum view corridors. A terraced stone water feature and swimming pool were centrally located in the complex amid lushly landscaped grounds with dozens of Palm Trees, a nod to the original name of the development.

<sup>574</sup> Information about this architect pending additional research.

<sup>575</sup> *American Architect's Directory*, 1970, 779.

<sup>576</sup> In 1979, Rose was convicted along with former Orange County Supervisor Ralph Diedrich for a 1974 conspiracy case involving the removal of development restrictions on Anaheim Hills land and sentenced to prison. "Judge Lightens Rose Term in Bribery Case," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1982, OC\_A1.

The simple Mid-century Modern designs for the units included minimal exterior decoration, flat roofs, and large expanses of glass to the rear of the units. Plans consisted of two-bedroom/1.75 bath, 1,600 square-foot units.<sup>577</sup> The original model home for the development, decorated by Arthur Elrod and Eva Gabor Interiors was located at 2110 Southridge Drive.<sup>578</sup>

#### Palo Fierro Estates (1965)

Palo Fierro Estates (1965) was designed as a group of 34 two- and three-bedroom garden apartments.<sup>579</sup> The project was bordered to the north by Aloha Drive, to the south by East Laverne Way, to the East by Calle Palo Fierro, and to the west by South Lagarto Way. The \$1 million project featured Mid-century Modern-style apartments ranging in size from 1,710 to 2,000 square feet with atriums and sunken living rooms with Swedish fireplaces. The flat roof, post-and-beam buildings use slump block and stone in an alternating pattern to differentiate the units. The site was also lushly landscaped with palm and olive trees and dotted with modern, frosted pole-globe landscaping lights.

As with many of the garden-style multi-family residential complexes in Palm Springs, groupings of two and four attached homes with carports were arranged around a rolling green area that featured a nine-hole putting green and two heated pools.<sup>580</sup> Although originally designed as rental/leasable apartments, in 1969 the owners filed a condominium tract map to transform the complex into individual unit ownership.

#### Mariposa Private Drive Development (1971)

This small grouping of duplex garden apartment units was developed in 1971 by the Palm Springs Canyon Country Club, Inc.<sup>581</sup> It is bordered by Mariposa Drive to the north, San Jose Road to the south, and Calle Palo Fierro to the east. The parcel contained five duplex buildings for a total of ten units. The rear façades of all ten units faced the common landscaped garden area and pool. These late Mid-century Modern style duplexes combined

<sup>577</sup> Additional information about the design pending further research.

<sup>578</sup> <https://www.redfin.com/CA/Palm-Springs/2110-Southridge-Dr-92264/unit-3/home/3059672> (accessed January 17, 2015).

<sup>579</sup> Architect unknown at this time.

<sup>580</sup> "Apartments to Open in Palm Springs Area," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1965, M11.

<sup>581</sup> Architect unknown at this time.

post-and-beam construction with stucco and slump block walls. The site was landscaped with grass, palm trees, and desert plantings and dotted with modern, pole-globe lights.

Sub-Theme: Marabelle Estates (1971)

Marabelle Estates (also known as Marabella Estates) is a 26-unit development of duplexes on a 5.25-acre parcel.<sup>582</sup> The property was subdivided in January of 1971 by C. Dean Olson and Junius H. Smart. Marabelle Estates is on a triangular-shaped parcel bordered by Jacaranda Road to the north, Barona Road to the west, and Marabella Lane to the south.

Marabelle Estates, Inc., was a partnership between Junius H. Smart (1898-1985), a Bishop in the Beverly Hills Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and C. Dean Olson (1907-1993) a wealthy businessman from Beverly Hills. In the 1930s, Olson co-founded the Sherman Oaks-based Olson Farms, Inc. with his brother H. Glenn Olson. The company became a leading national producer, processor, and distributor of eggs.<sup>583</sup> Olson served as a Beverly Hills councilman from 1948-1952 and as the mayor from 1951-52. He was also chairman of the Beverly Hills Planning Commission.<sup>584</sup> He served as a bishop, high councilor, and high priest group leader in the Beverly Hills Westwood Ward Congregations of the Mormon Church where he became associated with Smart. Olson was a leader in the church during the groundbreaking for the construction of the Mormon Temple on Santa Monica Boulevard.<sup>585</sup> Olson resided in a unit at 2253 Marabella Lane.

Construction began immediately on the attached Mid-century Modern-style duplexes. The units were placed within a lushly landscaped parcel so that each duplex unit is surrounded by garden on three sides. The plan for the development called for the placement of the duplex units in two circles, with a private pool at the center of each. Palms and olive trees were planted throughout the complex, and there are modern post and globe light fixtures. A private tennis court was located at the intersection of Jacaranda Road and Marabella Lane. The long-low horizontal planes of the Mid-Century Modern-style architecture were punctuated by a low-mansard-style roof. Slump brick accent walls on exterior and interior

<sup>582</sup> Architect unknown at this time.

<sup>583</sup> In the mid-1980s, Olson traded egg production to focus exclusively on the Styrofoam cartons they came in, along with other Styrofoam containers for buyers like McDonalds.

<sup>584</sup> "C. Dean Olson: Egg Producer and Beverly Hills Civic Leader," *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1993, [http://articles.latimes.com/1993-12-20/news/mn-3749\\_1\\_beverly-hills](http://articles.latimes.com/1993-12-20/news/mn-3749_1_beverly-hills) (accessed December 28, 2014).

<sup>585</sup> "Article 7," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1951, A3.

and floor to ceiling glass sliding doors integrated the interior and exterior spaces. Each three-bedroom/three-bathroom unit featured a shaded patio facing the interior garden landscape.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



**POST-WORLD WAR II MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Multi-family residence, including apartment house, courtyard apartment, garden apartment; Historic District

Palm Springs has an extensive collection of multi-family residences and multi-family residential developments from the post-World War II era. Many of these properties are the work of significant architects.

A **multi-family residential property** from this period may be significant under this context:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>586</sup>	As an excellent example of multi-family residential development reflecting the growth of Palm Springs during the post-World War II era; as an excellent, rare, or early example of new trends and patterns of multi-family residential development from the period.
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period; as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect; or as an excellent, rare, or threatened multi-family residential property type. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of multi-family residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. It is more likely that multi-family residences will contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes.

<sup>586</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

### Post-World War II Multi-Family Residential Development (1945-1979): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>587</sup> A multi-family residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. <sup>588</sup>
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

<sup>587</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>588</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>589</sup> A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement roof materials, replacement garage doors, and replacement of windows may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. Major alterations such as substantial additions that are visible from the public right-of-way or alter the original roofline would not be acceptable.

<sup>589</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Post-World War II Multi-Family Residential Development (1945-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a multi-family residential property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in multi-family residential development from this period; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; or
- represent an important or rare multi-family residential property type;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- reflect planning and design principles from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979)**

Commercial architecture in Palm Springs from this period expressed a wide range of Modern interpretations as it increasingly served two purposes: the need for tourist-oriented buildings for occasional residents and visitors, and the need for practical services in daily for permanent residents, such as banks, shops, and gas stations, as found in any city.

Several significant retail buildings were constructed in the years immediately after the war. The city's wealth and leisure class had always attracted exclusive shops. In 1947, Bullock's, one of Los Angeles' fashionable department stores, built a branch in Palm Springs in a new building by Los Angeles architects Walter Wurdeman and Welton Becket; it reflected the Late Moderne style they used the same year at Bullock's Pasadena to attract a stylish, suburban clientele. The Late Moderne evolved in Los Angeles in the late 1930s as an aggregate of Streamline Moderne's emphasis on taut stucco wall surfaces that flowed in dynamic, curving lines, combined with elements of the International Style.



Bullock's Palm Springs (1947, Wurdeman & Becket). Source: Flickr.

Two other notable Los Angeles architects, Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones, used the same style to create the Town and Country Center (1948), a two-story collection of restaurants, offices, and shops around a landscaped courtyard in the center of the block off the main retail area on Palm Canyon Dr. By incorporating courtyards and forecourts in their designs, both Bullock's and Town and Country exhibited urban design features that tied them into the small but active central business district.

The growth of business also prompted new office buildings in the 1940s, such as the Clark and Frey Office Building (1947) where those architects had their own second floor office. Frey also designed the Nichols Building (1945-47) for one of his real estate clients.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

With the return of peace, the growth of tourism prompted a number of inns, hotels, and recreational buildings. The Hotel Del Marcos (1946-47; HSPB-78) by William Cody was an early building that demonstrates Cody's exploration of form suited to the desert. While he was later known for his own personal interpretation of Modernism emphasizing the minimal structure allowed by materials such as steel, the Del Marcos drew from Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic architecture by using natural stone as a major feature in walls whose angled profiles seemed to grow out of the ground. The stone was combined with wood structures. Another local designer, Herbert Burns, was active building small vacation inns like the Town & Desert (1947), a Late Moderne vacation residence with small efficiency apartments, including kitchens, for stays of several weeks or months. With the growth of tourism, older resorts like El Mirador Hotel and the Racquet Club were joined by the Palm Springs Tennis Club (1947) by Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones, a recreational facility including hotel rooms, restaurants, a pool and tennis courts.

Inns and lodges for visitors remained relatively small in scale; outdoor spaces to enjoy the sun, air, and scenery were key elements shaping these designs. Several of the local architects designed these for both short term and longer term occupancy. While the program for these were similar, the designs reflected the individuality and innovations of each architect. Among the many small inns and lodges built in the 1950s, several stand out for their architectural designs. L'Horizon Inn (1952) by William Cody was a collection of duplex and triplex one-story modern bungalows around a broad landscaped greenspace and swimming pool. Designed for film and television producer Jack Wrather and his wife, actress Bonita Granville, Cody used an unusual geometric grid of oblique angles, contrasting with the usual rectilinear geometries of most Modern architecture. The structure expressed a combination of wood post and beam and slump block brick with the direct, simple character of Modernism. In such designs, Cody demonstrated the innovative side of Palm Springs architecture which pushed Modernism beyond its own conventions.

The Bissonte Lodge (demolished) by E. Stewart Williams was a single structure with the units set back like a sawtooth to provide each with privacy and mountain views. The units of the Four Hundred inn (1956) by Herbert Burns were also contained in a single L-shaped structure wrapped around a landscaped pool terrace, and reflected Burns' Late Moderne designs by emphasizing the unity of the structure with a continuous eave canopy. Like Cody at L'Horizon, Hugh Kaptur at the Impala Lodge (1957) used an unusual structural geometry. Timber doglegs created sloping walls with glass infill.



Ocotillo Lodge (1954-56, Palmer and Krisel). Photograph by Julius Shulman.  
Source: Getty Research Institute.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Larger hotels also began to be built in Palm Springs, reflecting the city's growing success as a vacation destination. One of the largest since El Mirador opened in 1928 was the Ocotillo Lodge (1954-56) by Palmer and Krisel. It was built by builders George and Robert Alexander as part of their prominent entry into the Palm Springs residential market. Sensing a demand for second homes, they planned the Twin Palms housing tract (also by Palmer and Krisel), and built Ocotillo next to it to provide convenient lodging for potential homebuyers. Besides the lobby and restaurants, the lodge included two story motel room wings, and one-story bungalow units for longer stays. The landscaping was by noted Los Angeles landscape architect Garrett Eckbo.

Continuing the trend to larger hotels, the Cahuilla Tribe decided to develop its small, rustic mineral hot springs near the center of Palm Springs into a large bath house and hotel development. The Spa Bath house and Hotel was designed by William Cody, Donald Wexler, Richard Harrison, and Philip Koenig. It was an exceptional example of Modern design and planning; a long arcade of domed aediculae, prefabricated of concrete and rising out of a blue ceramic tile decorative pool, connected the town center diagonally from the corner of Indian Canyon Dr. and Tahquitz Canyon Dr. to the lobby of the bath house. The bath house's concrete frame structure allowed for broad spans. Natural stone in a highly textured chinked pattern infilled the walls.

Several larger motels were constructed in the 1960s, including the Tropics Motor Lodge (1964), which used the popular Tiki style. A large A-frame entry reminiscent of South Pacific lodge houses served as the porte cochere to the two-story motel wings around a pool terrace landscaped with tropical planting and tiki statues.





Robinson's (1958, Pereira and Luckman). Photograph by Julius Shulman.  
Source: Getty Research Institute.

Other commercial buildings serving tourists and local residents included shops along Palm Canyon Dr. While Spanish style buildings were still built, Modern design was featured in numerous small retail buildings throughout the center of town. These ranged from small stores like the Palm Canyon/Arenas building by William Cody, to the larger, free-standing Robinson's department store (1958; HSPB-84) by the Los Angeles firm of Pereira and Luckman. It is a pavilion structure, with a high roof made up of connected diamond trusses supported by slender pipe columns strengthened by tapered stiffening fillets. This structure allowed for a large column-less interior span, and a large expanse of floor to ceiling glass to reveal the store's interior to passing motorists.

Numerous restaurants were added to the commercial corridors during this period as well. Mirroring the trend in suburban, car-oriented districts of Los Angeles, restaurants along Highway 111 entering and leaving the center of Palm Springs were designed in the Googie style, a Modern style using boldly expressed structural elements and signs reflecting the scale of the automobile and meant to be noticeable through the windshield of passing cars. The

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Springs restaurant (1957) by William Cody was one of the most sophisticated examples in the nation of this Modernist type. Also on Highway 111, a Denny's coffee shop by Los Angeles architects Armet and Davis used an extended version of the Denny's prototype design as part of a motel complex. Other Googie style restaurants include La Mirasol restaurant at 140 E. Palm Canyon.

Another commercial type which became a notable example of Modern architecture in Palm Springs was the bank. Bank architecture across the nation adopted Modern design (including drive-through service) to attract customers in the economic expansion after 1945; Palm Springs boasts an extraordinary collection of custom designs which were also, by their size, position and design, *de facto* civic landmarks celebrating the town's wealth. Notable examples in the 1950s were Coachella Valley Savings & Loan (1956) and Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan (1960; HSPB-55), both by Williams, Williams & Williams, and City National Bank (1959; HSPB-52) by the Los Angeles firm Victor Gruen Associates.

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan (HSPB-53) reflected an International Style influence in using a two-story rectangular box for the main lobby, lifted above the ground to accommodate the entry and parking of cars. City National, designed by Gruen associate Rudi Baumfeld, was an exuberant expressionistic design suggested by the Ronchamps Chapel (1954) by Le Corbusier in France. A large curving roof was set on three solid ovoid shapes. The design was not a copy, however; where Le Corbusier's ecclesiastical design carefully controlled light to evoke mystery and contemplation, Baumfeld's design opened an entire wall of this commercial building for glass facing the mountain view. To control sunlight he hung an extruded aluminum screen over this window, and added a fountain and planters to greet customers at the entry. To his two earlier banks, E. Stewart Williams added another major and distinctive bank design for the second Coachella Valley Savings & Loan (1961). It emphasized its public role with dramatic concrete columns with curved bases, lifted above a pool of water with a strong of fountains.

As Palm Springs grew, more office buildings were required. Once again, local architects designed many of these (often for real estate, builder, or developer clients), each expressing the creativity and variety of design that characterizes Palm Springs Modern architecture. The Oasis Building (1952; HSPB-54) by Williams, William & Williams incorporated a ground floor shaded, inset patio on Palm Canyon Dr. as an entry to several small retail stores, including a Kreis Drugstore with interior by Paul R. Williams (demolished.) The second story was a large rectangular block which seemed to float above the ground floor, and contained office space (including the Williams, Williams and Williams offices.)

Other Modern offices added to the impact of Modern design in the central commercial district. These included 577 Sunny Dunes by Howard Lapham, the Harold Hicks Real Estate office (1958) by Williams Williams and Williams, the Welmas Building (1959) by Wexler and Harrison, and a medical office building (1959) by John Porter Clark 1959. As part of their organized system of constructing large housing tracts, The Alexander Company asked Palmer and Krisel to design a central storage warehouse on West San Rafael Dr. at N. Puerta del Sol; the Alexanders required contractors to store all their construction materials here before a project started in order to avoid construction delays.

Partnering with local architect Howard Lapham, Los Angeles architect Haralamb Georgescu designed a two-story office building at 666 N. Palm Canyon Dr. Typically these offices features multiple suites accessed via outdoor corridors. Designs varied; known for his International Style of Modern design, Georgescu's design emphasized rectilinearity in a large frame facing the street. The open air stairs, flat surfaces decorated with colorful tile, and street numbers were used as occasions for decorative elements. In contrast, Hugh Kaptur's Heritage Plaza Offices used canted and rounded shapes expressing the organic earthen shapes of indigenous Southwestern architecture; the stucco walls were curved outward to form deep sunshade frames around windows. Another variation on organic forms can be seen in Robert Ricciardi's Gas Company building (1969) which uses tall, curving concrete walls finished in a rugged hammered texture.

Most of the local architects had chosen to remain small in size and work locally into the 1960s. Nonetheless, the variety and quality of innovative ideas applied to the buildings of everyday life remained high. For example, Albert Frey, William Cody, and Donald Wexler each designed a gas station in Palm Springs between 1963 and 1966. Frey's Esso station (1963-65, now the Palm Springs Visitors' Center; HSPB-33) at the north end of the city featured canted concrete block walls supporting a hyperbolic paraboloid steel roof which created a wide canopy over the pump area. Situated at the corner of the main highway into town and the turnoff to the new Palm Springs Tramway, it served as a landmark to this new tourist attraction. Nearby, William Cody designed a Shell gas station (1964) which created a high canopy of thin, tapered concrete slabs. Donald Wexler's gas station (1966, demolished) used concrete in a post and beam construction.

Other commercial architecture included Frey and Chambers' Alpha Beta market and shopping center (1960). In response to Palm Spring's strong sunlight and heat, this public shopping center incorporated lightweight steel canopies on tubular steel columns to provide shaded

walkways. Such simple commercial buildings as liquor stores also gained Modern architectural design.

Tourism, Palm Springs' main industry, introduced attractions, golf courses, and more motels in the 1960s. The premier attraction was the opening of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, a major engineering feat which constructed pylons on the side of rugged and steep Mt. San Jacinto to support a cable cars to take tourists 8,500 feet from the valley floor to the alpine mountain top. Frey and Chambers designed the lower tramway station (1963; HSPB-33), and Williams, Clark and Williams designed the mountain station. Both included restaurants and viewing platforms. Frey and Chamber's design reflected their technological approach to design by incorporating a large triangulated truss to span a natural wash; the structure's triangular shapes were expressed on the exterior of the building. In the alpine environment which had snow in winter at the top of the mountain, Williams, Clark and Williams used heavy timber post and beam construction, allowing for tall windows to frame the panoramic views of the valley floor.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**POST-WORLD WAR II COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Commercial Building, Historic District

Examples of commercial buildings from this period may include hotels, motels, theaters, retail stores, banks, restaurants, commercial storefront buildings, and automobile-related resources including auto dealerships and drive-ins. Commercial properties in Palm Springs associated with this period include the remains of the Oasis Hotel, now wrapped by later development; La Plaza (1936), the town's first shopping center and one of the first automobile-oriented retail developments in Southern California; and a number of other office and retail buildings such as El Paseo (1927) and the Pacific (1936). There are also several small hotels and motor court hotels such as the Colonial House Hotel (1936; now the Colony Palms), the Ambassador Hotel (Spanish Inn, Triada Hotel), and the Orchid Tree Inn (HSPB-72).

A **commercial property** from this period may be significant:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event) <sup>590</sup>	As an early example of commercial development in Palm Springs. Commercial buildings may be eligible as remaining examples of the original commercial core; as a rare example of an important commercial property type (including theaters, automobile-related types, or neighborhood commercial development); or for a direct association with the tourism industry in Palm Springs.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction from the period. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of commercial buildings that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Potential commercial districts in Palm Springs will likely span several periods of development.

<sup>590</sup> Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

### Post-World War II Commercial Development (1945-1979): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	<p>A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s).<sup>591</sup> A commercial property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's commercial development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.<sup>592</sup> Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.</p>

<sup>591</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>592</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>593</sup> A commercial property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alteration to individual buildings, such as replacement of storefronts is acceptable. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

<sup>593</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Post-World War II Commercial Development (1945-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent important patterns and trends in commercial development from this period, including representing the original commercial core, early automobile-related development, a direct association with tourism; or
- represent a unique or rare commercial property type; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- display the original planning features of a commercial enclave or corridor; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



**THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II CIVIC AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979)**

As Palm Springs' population grew, so did the need for civic buildings. Usually designed by local architects, they reflected the progressive symbolism of Modernism in schools, churches, fire stations, and especially in a new city hall. For the first few months after incorporation the City Council met on the second floor of old Fire Station No. 1 (377 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished). From 1939 to 1944 Council meetings were held in the Guatiello Building (482 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished) and from 1944 to 1948 in the El Paseo Theater in the El Paseo Building (800 N. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-27). From 1938 to 1948 municipal offices were located in the Chamber of Commerce building (363 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished), a small bungalow built in 1919 by Dr. J.J. Kocher. In 1948 the administrative offices and City Council meetings were relocated to three buildings at the airport that had recently been vacated by the Federal Government. In 1949 the 100-acre parcel was deeded to the City.<sup>594</sup>

In 1952 the firm of Clark, Frey and Chambers was selected to design a new City Hall building to accommodate the growing city's administrative needs (HSPB-33). Various sites were considered, including Tamarisk Park and Torney General Hospital (El Miradero), before the city selected a ten-acre site within the vacated Federal land, avoiding the costs of land acquisition. On December 15, 1953 the city transferred \$300,000 from the Capital Outlay Fund to a dedicated City Hall Construction Fund to begin the process. The entire cost of the building, which totaled \$408,318, was financed through sales tax revenues, without resorting to bond issues or increased property taxes. Final working drawings were submitted on January 18, 1956 and the bid was awarded to Kretz and Wilson of Indio on February 21.

Construction began on March 6, and the new city hall was dedicated on November 8, 1957. By that time the city's permanent population was 12,225, with a seasonal increase to 45,000, and the city's area had expanded to 36,125 square miles.<sup>595</sup> The new city hall formed the nucleus of a civic center that now includes the Police Department headquarters, Riverside County Civil Court, and the U.S. Post Office.

<sup>594</sup> "Your City Hall."

<sup>595</sup> "Your City Hall."

For the design of City Hall, Clark, Frey & Chambers collaborated with Williams, Williams & Williams. The building used a Modern vocabulary to convey the symbolic role of a city hall; the main entrance to administrative offices was defined by a large freestanding aedicula, while the city council chambers was given definition in a separate, attached wing. The windows of the office wing were shaded by deep eaves and a screen of deep tubular sections that allowed views out, but shut out direct sunlight. The city council wing was constructed of concrete block integrally tinted a rose color; the blocks were slightly offset to create a distinctive geometric pattern on the flat walls, especially when raked by sunlight.

In 1960s public architecture, the civic center begun the previous decade with the city hall was broadened and strengthened with the addition of several other public uses. The plan of the area at the west end of Tahquitz Canyon Way unified it as a civic center; all new structures were in the Modern style, all were set back from the street. The anchor and largest addition to the civic center was Donald Wexler's Palm Springs Airport (1966; front façade HSPB-70) at the end of Tahquitz Canyon Way. A major project for a local architect, the modern airport evoked the swept lines of a jet plane. Outdoor waiting rooms for the gates celebrated the weather that awaited arriving passengers. Also included in the civic center was the Palm Springs Police Building (1962) by John Porter Clark, and the Riverside County Courthouse (1962) by Williams, Clark and Williams.

As elsewhere in California as populations and birth rates rose, Palm Springs needed new schools in the postwar era. Williams Williams & Williams added a new auditorium (1956) and library (1958) to the original Spanish style Palm Springs High School. For a major expansion of Palm Springs High School (1958), Wexler and Harrison, working with engineer Bernard Perlin, utilized a prefabricated steel construction system to reduce costs; the simple rectilinear shapes reinforced their Modern style.

Several churches and other institutional buildings were constructed in the city during this period. Temple Isaiah (1947-8) by Williams Williams & Williams accommodated a growing congregation. Clark and Frey's American Legion Post #519 (1948) was a small building, but was as carefully designed using simple Modern forms as any of their work. The Palm Springs Christian Science Church (1957) by Frey and Chambers used a collection of simple rose-tinted concrete block forms topped with gentle shed roofs. This interpretation of Modernism used simplicity and modern technological materials composed not on a strict grid, but with oblique angles. For the desert climate, direct sunlight was moderated in the main auditorium with small garden courts to filter the light.

The design of St. Theresa Catholic Church (1968) by William Cody demonstrated an expressionistic facet of his design ability. He used thick concrete walls with a curved section to create a protected precinct; in the middle of it sat the sanctuary enclosed with glass walls, and topped by a sweeping pyramid echoing the curved section of the surrounding walls.

During the 1970s, other Coachella Valley communities grew at a faster rate than Palm Springs. Undeveloped land, larger pieces of properties, and new golf courses and resorts in the area attracted developers. In spite of this competition, Palm Springs produced several major buildings in the decade which reflected the high level of design quality and innovation seen in earlier decades.

Strong designs by major local architects Stewart Williams, William Cody and Donald Wexler in the 1970s for public buildings demonstrate the continuity of Modern architecture in Palm Springs. They also demonstrate how Modernism grew and changed over the decades; from the minimalist steel and glass buildings of earlier decades, Modernism evolved to use newer materials, such as striated broken-face concrete block. These reflected the trends in architecture nationally.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

The Palm Springs Desert Museum (1976) by E. Stewart Williams, a major civic institution, reflected Williams' use of concrete as a structure, blended with exposed reddish-brown stone to connect the building to the site (HSPB-35). The Palm Springs Public Library (1975) by William Cody echoed his design for St. Theresa's church by creating an exterior battered concrete wall that enclosed a central skylighted interior. The Desert Water Agency (1978) by Donald Wexler also used concrete, rendered in expressionistic, sculptural shapes quite different from his steel frame buildings. Fire station #4 (1971) by Hugh Kaptur also used sculptural shapes with curved corners echoing the adobe forms of the Southwest desert. This is also seen in Kaptur's Curtis-Keiler Professional Building (1973.)



Palm Springs Art Museum (1976, E. Stewart Williams). Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: Getty Research Institute.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**POST-WORLD WAR II CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Civic or institutional building

Civic property types include city halls or other offices for public agencies, post offices, fire and police stations, schools, and libraries. Non-governmental institutional property types include churches, meeting halls, and buildings associated with social organizations.

A **civic or institutional property** or **civic improvement** from this period may be significant:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event)	As an excellent example of civic or institutional development from this period, representing the significant growth in Palm Springs following World War II.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Post-World War II Civic & Institutional Development (1945-1979): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>596</sup> A civic or institutional property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's civic and institutional development during this period.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. <sup>597</sup> A civic or institutional property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

<sup>596</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

<sup>597</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*

**Post-World War II Civic & Institutional Development (1945-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- reflect important civic or institutional development from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## The Entertainment Industry (1915-1979)



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



**CONTEXT: THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (1915-1979)**

This context explores the influence of the Hollywood film industry on the development and growth of Palm Springs.<sup>598</sup> Hollywood first discovered Palm Springs as early as 1915, when author-turned-director Edmund Mitchell filmed a silent adaptation of his 1901 novel *The Lone Star Rush*, the first motion picture to be filmed in Palm Springs.<sup>599</sup> Throughout the 1910s and 1920s the desert around Palm Springs was used for location shooting of numerous silent films set in Middle Eastern or North African locales, including *Salome* (1922) starring Theda Bara and, according to some sources, *The Sheik* (1921) with Rudolph Valentino in his most famous role.<sup>600</sup> In 1922 Valentino honeymooned at the Palm Springs Hotel with his second wife, Natacha Rambova, only to be arrested for bigamy because his divorce from his first wife was not yet final.<sup>601</sup> Syndicated gossip columnist Louella Parsons dispatched a number of columns from the Desert Inn during a 1926 visit, drawing wider attention to Palm Springs.<sup>602</sup> By the end of the decade the isolated desert village had become a favored winter weekend retreat for the burgeoning film industry, offering privacy and relaxation, warm winter sunshine and stunning natural beauty, just a few hours' drive from Los Angeles. This allowed actors to get away while complying with the studios' famous "two-hour rule," the contractual obligation to be available on short notice for filming or publicity purposes.

In the 1920s the film stars and studio moguls stayed primarily at the Desert Inn or the Oasis; beginning in 1928 they flocked to the extravagant Hotel El Mirador as well. Irving Berlin and Shirley Temple (with her parents) were Desert Inn regulars; Loretta Young favored the uppermost room in the Oasis' tower, which was named in her honor.<sup>603</sup> Hollywood's patronage saved El Mirador from bankruptcy at the onset of the Great Depression. In just its first two months of operation the hotel's guest list included such Hollywood luminaries as

<sup>598</sup> Specific examples referred to in this context are included to illustrate physical and associative characteristics of each resource type; the context is not intended to be an exhaustive list of associated properties. The final survey findings will indicate which properties are eligible for designation under each context and theme. There is overlap between properties and residential neighborhoods discussed in this context with other context and theme.

<sup>599</sup> Niemann, 168.

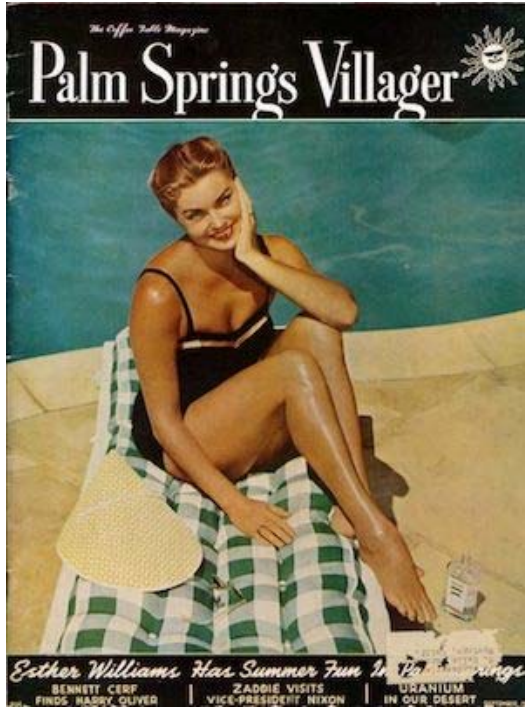
<sup>600</sup> Niemann, 169-169 and Starr, 25. Other sources claim that exterior locations of *The Sheik* were filmed in other places including Guadalupe Dunes in Santa Barbara County and the Walking Dunes on Long Island.

<sup>601</sup> Gloria Greer, "Bringing Fame to Palm Springs," *Palm Springs Life*, January 2013, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/January-2013/Bringing-Fame-to-Palm-Springs/> (accessed January 22, 2015). Valentino was acquitted after Dr. Florilla White testified that the couple had not shared a bed at her hotel.

<sup>602</sup> Greer, "Bringing Fame to Palm Springs."

<sup>603</sup> Niemann, 64 and 68.

Eddie Cantor, Lillian Gish, Pola Negri, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, and Gloria Swanson.<sup>604</sup>



Esther Williams on the cover of the *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1955. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Publicist Tony Burke fostered the hotel's air of Hollywood exclusivity with photos of celebrities lounging and sunning themselves amidst El Mirador's lush grounds – Lucille Ball, Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich, Clark Gable, Paulette Goddard, Olivia de Havilland.<sup>605</sup> Johnny Weissmuller, Duke Kahanamoku, and Esther Williams – swimming champions turned film stars – swam and posed for photographers in El Mirador's pool. Each winter for several years, radio stars Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll broadcast their popular program *Amos n' Andy* from a small studio in the hotel's iconic tower.<sup>606</sup> The fame of

<sup>604</sup> Niemann, 123.

<sup>605</sup> Niemann, 126, and Bob Colacello, "Palm Springs Weekends," *Vanity Fair*, June 1999, 205.

<sup>606</sup> Dennis McDougal and Mike Meenan, "It's Check-Out Time for Palm Springs' El Mirador," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1977, P120, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed July 29, 2012).

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

these celebrity visitors inevitably made the town itself famous. “Through radio broadcasts, fan magazine layouts, movies and publicity shots,” writes historian Alan Hess, “Palm Springs was defined by the media in the national consciousness to a degree out of proportion with its size or the number of people who had actually visited it.”<sup>607</sup> On winter weekends in the 1930s the village’s streets were jammed with ordinary day tourists from Los Angeles, hoping to catch a glimpse of a movie star.<sup>608</sup>

Palm Springs’ popularity as a favorite destination for the entertainment industry continued after World War II through the 1960s. A number of celebrities became intimately associated with the town and helped to promote its popularity and growth. Among these the most prominent were Bob Hope, the town’s first honorary mayor, and patron of the annual Bob Hope Golf Classic tournament (now the Humana Challenge) that has donated more than \$50 million for local non-profits since its inception in 1960;<sup>609</sup> Frank Sinatra, whose “Rat Pack” image personified the city’s post-war swank; and Dinah Shore, patron of the Colgate Dinah Shore Championship (now known as the Kraft Nabisco Championship), the premier women’s golf tournament and one of the Coachella Valley’s biggest annual events.<sup>610</sup>

**Theme: Entertainment Industry-related Commercial Development**

As Palm Springs grew in popularity with members of the entertainment industry, hotels, sports facilities, restaurants, nightclubs and retail establishments were developed to accommodate the demand for recreation and diversion. Some of these establishments were owned by celebrities. In 1928 silent film actress Fritzi Ridgeway built the Del Tahquitz Hotel at the southeast corner of what is now South Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road. Ridgeway’s film career did not survive the advent of talking pictures, and she sold the Del Tahquitz in 1931. The Pueblo Revival-style hotel featured wide balconies, a courtyard swimming pool, and the Saddle Bar Cocktail Lounge, with saddles as barstools. The Del Tahquitz was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan building.<sup>611</sup>

<sup>607</sup> Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 38-39.

<sup>608</sup> Starr, 27.

<sup>609</sup> Humana Challenge, “Quick Facts,” *Humana Challenge*, <http://www.humanachallenge.com/Quick-Facts> (accessed January 23, 2015).

<sup>610</sup> Niemann, 166.

<sup>611</sup> Niemann, 248-249. See also IMDb, “Fritzi Ridgeway Biography,” *IMDb*, [http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0725904/bio?ref=nm\\_of\\_bio\\_sm](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0725904/bio?ref=nm_of_bio_sm) (accessed January 26, 2015).



Del Tahquitz Hotel, 1928. Photograph c. 1933. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

In 1933 actors Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy, frustrated at the difficulty of securing a tennis court at El Mirador, built two of their own on a plot of land at the north end of town that they had purchased from Alvah Hicks.<sup>612</sup> The courts proved so popular with their Hollywood friends that the following year Farrell and Bellamy built additional courts, a swimming pool, dining room, and guest bungalows and offered memberships in the new Palm Springs Racquet Club (2743 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-83). The club's Bamboo Bar became the social center of Palm Springs, with four seats permanently reserved for Farrell and his friends Clark Gable, William Powell, and Spencer Tracy.<sup>613</sup> In 1948, soon after he was elected mayor of Palm Springs, Farrell hired Alfred Frey to enlarge the Racquet Club with new Modernist bungalows.<sup>614</sup> Farrell became known as "Mr. Palm Springs" for his decades of work as a local businessman, city promoter, councilman, and mayor.<sup>615</sup>

<sup>612</sup> Niemann, 132.

<sup>613</sup> Colacello, 205.

<sup>614</sup> Colacello, 206.

<sup>615</sup> Niemann, 135.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Pearl McManus opened her competing Tennis Club (701 W. Baristo Road) at the south end of town in 1937, on a boulder-strewn hillside at the west end of Baristo Road. Charter members included actors Ray Milland, Frank Morgan, Reginald Owen, and MGM musical star Jeanette MacDonald.<sup>616</sup> Originally modeled after a monastery on the Amalfi coast, the club was remodeled in 1947 by Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones. They designed a new clubhouse and restaurant that followed the irregular contours of the site, with angled glass walls looking over the rocky hillside and landscaped terraces around an elegant oval swimming pool.<sup>617</sup>



Photograph of the world-famous Palm Springs Tennis Club pool, as it appeared in the 1950s. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

The village's most popular and most famous nightclub, the Chi Chi, opened in 1935 on Palm Canyon Drive, just north of the Desert Inn, on land leased from Zaddie Bunker. Beginning as a waffle house, it was converted by its owner, Irwin S. Schuman, first into a restaurant called the Desert Grille, and then into a full-fledged nightclub with dining, dancing, and live entertainment. It was expanded in 1938 and again in 1950 with the addition of the 750-seat Starlight Room. The Chi Chi was the premier nightspot of the Hollywood crowd into the

<sup>616</sup> Greer.

<sup>617</sup> Hess and Danish, 116-118. It is unclear if the oval pool was part of the original 1937 construction or the 1947 remodel. Hess credits Pearl McManus with the pool's design.

1960s, and its headliners were frequently interchangeable with its clientele – Louis Armstrong, Desi Arnaz, Pearl Bailey, Milton Berle, Nat “King” Cole, Vic Damone, Sammy Davis, Jr., Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, Gypsy Rose Lee, Peggy Lee, Liberace, Jerry Lewis, Tony Martin, the Mills Brothers, Patti Page, Louie Prima and Keeley Smith, Sophie Tucker, and Mae West. The Chi Chi closed in 1966 and, after a decade of failed attempts at a revival, the building was demolished in 1977.<sup>618</sup>

The Doll House (1032 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished) was another industry favorite for dinner, drinks, and dancing. It was opened in 1945 by Ethel and George L. Strebe, the brother of local theater owner Earle C. Strebe. Among the regulars who enjoyed the restaurant’s famous steaks, icebox cake, and entertainment by the Guadalajara Boys were Marlene Dietrich, Doris Day, Ava Gardner and Frank Sinatra, Dick Haynes, Ida Lupino, Howard Hughes, Rosalind Russell, Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher, Jack Warner, and Daryl Zanuck. Joan Crawford once traded places with a look-alike waitress at the Doll House, and singer Peggy Lee was allegedly “discovered” there.<sup>619</sup> The Doll House closed in 1959 when the Strebés divorced. In 1966 it was converted to an Italian restaurant, Sorrentino’s (a favorite of Frank Sinatra and Kirk Douglas) which closed in 2002.<sup>620</sup>

Several celebrities invested in Palm Springs businesses. After purchasing his Old Las Palmas house in 1955 (see below), actor Alan Ladd made a large purchase at the local hardware store but was informed that the store would not deliver. When he threatened to go elsewhere he was told there was only one hardware store in town.<sup>621</sup> So he opened his own in partnership with local contractor Robert Higgins, a high school friend. The store was originally called HigginsLadd and was located at 533 South Palm Canyon Drive (demolished). Ladd himself frequently waited on customers there until his death in 1964. Ladd’s family maintained the store, later known as Alan Ladd Hardware, and in 1968 moved it to a purpose-built two-story building, the Alan Ladd Building, at 500 South Palm Canyon Drive, designed by local architect

<sup>618</sup> Niemann, 255-258.

<sup>619</sup> Niemann, 252. See also Peter Moruzzi, *Palm Springs Holiday* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 106. There is a discrepancy in the accounts of Peggy Lee’s “discovery;” sources claim this occurred in about 1941, yet current research indicates that the Doll House was opened in 1945.

<sup>620</sup> Niemann, 253.

<sup>621</sup> Sharon Apfelbaum, “Business Profile: Alan Ladd Hardware and Gifts closes after 33 years,” *The Public Record*, June 18, 2002, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-128453801.html#> (accessed January 26, 2015).

Hugh Kaptur.<sup>622</sup> The store closed in 2002 and the building, now called The 500, was remodeled in 2013.<sup>623</sup>

In 1961 Gene Autry, the “Singing Cowboy,” who had recently purchased the California Angels baseball team, bought the Holiday Inn at 4200 East Palm Canyon Drive to house his players during spring training. Autry enlarged the hotel and changed its name first to Melody Ranch and then to the Gene Autry Hotel. Autry sold the hotel in 1992 and it was transformed into the Versailles-inspired Givenchy Spa Hotel. The Givenchy was purchased by talk show host Merv Griffin in 1998 and became the Merv Griffin Hotel and Givenchy Spa. Griffin sold the property in 2002 and in 2004 it reopened as the Parker Palm Springs.<sup>624</sup>

Sonny Bono, formerly half of the pop duo Sonny and Cher, moved to Palm Springs after the duo’s 1974 divorce.<sup>625</sup> In 1986 he opened an eponymous Italian restaurant and tennis club at 1700 North Indian Canyon Drive.<sup>626</sup> The 5 ½-acre property had once been part of the adjacent Riviera Hotel.<sup>627</sup> It was Bono’s frustration over bureaucratic hurdles required to install signage at the restaurant that prompted his successful bid for mayor in 1988. Bono was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, serving until his death in 1998.<sup>628</sup>

<sup>622</sup> Morris Newman, “Modern Master: Architect Hugh Kaptur’s Designs Were Among The Most Creative And Innovative Of The Era,” *Palm Springs Life*, February 2014, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/February-2014/Modern-Master/> (accessed January 27, 2015). The text does not mention the Alan Ladd building but it is included in accompanying photographs of Kaptur’s work.

<sup>623</sup> “The 500 Comes to Downtown Palm Springs,” *CoachellaValleyNews.com*, <http://www.coachellavalleynews.com/news-desk/the-500-comes-to-downtown-palm-springs> (accessed January 26, 2015).

<sup>624</sup> Niemann, 239-240.

<sup>625</sup> Louis Sahagun, “Hopes to Become Palm Springs Mayor in April 12 Election: Sonny Bono Seeks to Headline a Political Act,” *Los Angeles Times* Home Edition, March 28, 1988, 3, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/292841368?accountid=14749> (accessed July 19, 2012).

<sup>626</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential: Playground of the Stars* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books Inc., 2004), 109.

<sup>627</sup> Shawn Hubler, “Bono Selling His Popular Restaurant, Tennis Club,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1991, [http://articles.latimes.com/print/1991-04-14/news/mn-337\\_1\\_tennis-club](http://articles.latimes.com/print/1991-04-14/news/mn-337_1_tennis-club) (accessed January 28, 2015).

<sup>628</sup> Bernard Weintraub, “Sonny Bono, 62, Dies in Skiing Accident,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 1998, A.16, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/430912208?accountid=14749> (accessed July 19, 2012).

**Theme: Entertainment Industry-related Residential Development**

The Movie Colony

Many of the Hollywood celebrities and executives who vacationed in Palm Springs eventually rented or bought seasonal homes there. So many of them settled in the area south and east of the Hotel El Mirador that the neighborhood became known as the Movie Colony. Celebrity residents included film star Eddie Cantor (720 E. Paseo El Mirador), writer Truman Capote (853 E. Paseo El Mirador), actor and singer Bing Crosby (1011 E. El Alameda Drive), Racquet Club owner, Palm Springs mayor, and actor Charles Farrell (630 E. Tachevah Drive), former actor and renowned interior designer William Haines (651 E. Paseo El Mirador; demolished), singer Dinah Shore and actor George Montgomery (877 N. Avenida Palos Verdes), singer Keely Smith (1055 E. Paseo El Mirador), bandleader and television personality Lawrence Welk (730 E. Paseo El Mirador), and producer Daryl Zanuck (346 Tamarisk Road). Bob Hope owned two Movie Colony houses, the first at 1014 Buena Vista Drive and the second at 1188 El Alameda Drive. Cary Grant honeymooned at 796 Via Miraleste with his second wife, heiress Barbara Hutton; he later purchased the Kocher estate at 928 Avenida Las Palmas (HSPB-75).<sup>629</sup>



Designed in 1927 by architect John Byers, this was the longtime residence of Cary Grant, who purchased it in 1954. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>629</sup> Niemann, 162-163. See also "Cary Grant's Former Palm Springs Estate," iamnotastalker, <http://www.iamnotastalker.com/2011/07/27/cary-grants-former-palm-springs-estate/> (accessed January 28, 2015).

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Among the most renowned celebrity homes in the Movie Colony is Twin Palms (originally 1148 East Alejo Road; now 1145 East Via Colusa; HSPB-77), the estate of singer and actor Frank Sinatra. Sinatra famously walked into the offices of Williams, Williams and Williams one day in May 1947 and asked for a Georgian Revival-style house to be completed by Christmas. E. Stewart Williams instead designed a low, sprawling Modern house with shed roofs, clerestory windows, and walls of stone, stucco, and redwood siding. A wall of sliding glass panels opens at the push of a button to a central patio with a piano-shaped swimming pool and cabana.<sup>630</sup> A pergola with cutouts in its roof casts noontime shadows resembling piano keys along one edge of the pool – an unintentional effect, according to Williams.<sup>631</sup>



Frank Sinatra's Twin Palms (1947, E. Stewart Williams). Photograph by Julius Shulman.  
Source: Getty Research Institute.

<sup>630</sup> Colacello, 205, and Adèle Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1999), 72-82.

<sup>631</sup> Johns, 182.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Old Las Palmas

Old Las Palmas (Las Palmas Estates) was another popular Hollywood enclave in Palm Springs. Significant entertainment industry figures who had homes in Old Las Palmas include ventriloquist Edgar Bergen (1575 North Via Norte), actor Clark Gable (222 W. Chino Drive), actor Kirk Douglas (515 Via Lola), producer Samuel Goldwyn (334 Hermosa Place), director Howard Hawks (1455 Vine Avenue), actor Alan Ladd (323 West Camino del Norte), pianist Liberace (501 Belardo Road), actor William Powell (383 West Vereda Norte), actress Debbie Reynolds (670 Stevens Road), and studio mogul Jack Warner (1050 Cahuilla Road).<sup>632</sup>

### Vista Las Palmas

Vista Las Palmas is a tract of Mid-century Modern houses developed by the Alexander Construction Company in the late 1950s, immediately west of Old Las Palmas (Las Palmas Estates). Significant entertainment figures associated with Vista Las Palmas include songwriter Sammy Cahn (1303 Via Monte Vista), dancer Cyd Charisse and her husband, singer Tony Martin (697 Camino Sur), actor and Rat Pack member Peter Lawford (1295 North Via Monte Vista), singer Dean Martin (1123 Via Monte Vista), actress Kim Novak (740 Camino Sur).<sup>633</sup>

While the established centrally-located neighborhoods of the Movie Colony, Old Las Palmas, and Vista Las Palmas attracted the highest concentrations of celebrity residents, many chose to live in other areas of Palm Springs. Deep Well Ranch Estates attracted many celebrities, including actor William Holden (1323 S. Driftwood Drive), comedian Jerry Lewis (1349 Sagebrush Road) and television actor and producer Jack Webb (1255 S. Manzanita Avenue). Two homes in Deep Well Ranch Estates are associated with the pianist, Liberace. The first at 1516 Manzanita Avenue is where the performer lived circa 1957. The second, at 1106 Driftwood Drive was built for his beloved mother, Frances.<sup>634</sup> Other celebrities were drawn to the more secluded Mesa neighborhood, including entertainer, mayor, and congressman Sonny Bono, who purchased the former home of razor baron King Gillette at 294 W. Crestview Drive, and actors Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood, who lived at 303 W. Crestview.<sup>635</sup> Singer

<sup>632</sup> Niemann, 159-160.

<sup>633</sup> Niemann, 160-161.

<sup>634</sup> Johns, 213-216.

<sup>635</sup> Johns, 225-231.

Elvis Presley owned a home at 845 West Chino Canyon Drive in Little Tuscany.<sup>636</sup> Walt Disney owned two homes at Smoke Tree Ranch (1800 South Sunrise Way), purchasing the first in 1948 and building the second in 1957. The ranch's dining room is named in his honor.<sup>637</sup>

In 1973 Bob Hope began construction on his third Palm Springs house, located at 2466 Southridge Drive. The partially completed house was destroyed by fire that summer, and was not completed until 1979. The 25,000-square-foot house, designed by Los Angeles architect John Lautner, is constructed primarily of concrete, steel, and glass. Its mammoth domed roof dominates the landscape and has been likened to both a spaceship and the Houston Astrodome.<sup>638</sup>

<sup>636</sup> Niemann, 161.

<sup>637</sup> Johns, 250-251.

<sup>638</sup> Johns, 272-274.

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## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (1915-1979): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Single-family Residence, Multi-family Residence, Commercial Building, Film Location, Historic District

Starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Palm Springs was a get-away for members of the entertainment industry, including movie stars, directors, composers, and other members of the upper echelon of the industry. Members of the entertainment industry became part of the fabric of the city. Properties significant under this theme include residents and commercial establishments with specific associations with the entertainment community. Commercial establishments may be eligible for a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs. There are also identified concentrations of residential properties that are associated with famous residents.

A **property** or **district** may be significant under this theme:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event)	Residential properties significant under this criterion (as opposed to B/2/2) may represent the first property constructed for a member of the entertainment industry in a specific area of Palm Springs that was a catalyst for further development. Commercial properties may be eligible under this theme for representing a known association with the Hollywood social scene. Film locations may be eligible as the site of an early or iconic motion picture production.
B/2/2 (Person)	<p>For its association with an important person(s) in the entertainment industry. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance. Properties associated with living persons are usually not eligible for landmark designation. Sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both the person's field of endeavor and his or her contribution to that field.</p> <p>Note that many of these properties may not be visible from the public right-of-way. For survey purposes, these properties have been flagged and assigned a status code indicating that additional evaluation is needed due to lack of visibility.</p>

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# City of Palm Springs

## Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of residences associated with members of the entertainment industry that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Residences eligible under this theme will likely contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes; an association with members of the entertainment industry represents one layer of an area's history.

### **The Entertainment Industry (1915-1979): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property under this theme eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**The Entertainment Industry (1915-1979): Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- represent a known association with an important person or persons in the entertainment industry; for commercial properties, represent a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs; a film location must represent an early or iconic location;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- retain a majority of the contributors with a known association with members of the entertainment industry; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## LGBT History in Palm Springs (1969-1989)



El Mirasol Villas (1947), 525 S. Warm Sands Drive. Photograph 2014, Historic Resources Group.



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**CONTEXT: LGBT HISTORY IN PALM SPRINGS (1969-1989)<sup>639</sup>**

This context explores the growth of the LGBT community in Palm Springs in the 1970s and 1980s, when openly gay women and men began to discover the city's warm weather, stunning desert scenery, relaxed atmosphere, and affordable real estate, all less than two hours from Los Angeles. Associations with the LGBT community in Palm Springs prior to the 1969 Stonewall riots are largely undocumented, and written accounts consist primarily of rumor and innuendo.<sup>640</sup> Should documentation of LGBT sites prior to 1969 be discovered, they would be evaluated under this context.

There have undoubtedly always been gay men and women in Palm Springs. Hollywood lore is rife with rumored same-sex couplings involving many of the celebrities who frequented and lived in the desert resort during its heyday. But because the social and professional mores of the times forced them to live closeted lives they did not identify, publicly or (as far as we know) privately, as "gay" and therefore could not form a distinct and articulate community. The brave few who defied the Hollywood closet and lived openly gay lives generally paid with their careers. At least two of these had direct connections to Palm Springs.

One was actor William Haines, one of MGM's most popular leading men in the 1920s and early 1930s, who lived quietly but openly with his lover, Jimmy Shields. In 1932 Haines was ordered by his boss, Louis B. Mayer, to immediately leave Shields and marry a woman to avoid scandal. Haines refused and was fired, effectively ending his acting career. Known among the film crowd for his style and impeccable taste, Haines opened an interior design business and, patronized by his former colleagues, quickly became the leading interior designer in Hollywood. In 1957 Haines and Shields, who were frequent visitors to Palm Springs, bought a house in the Movie Colony (651 E. Paseo El Mirador; demolished). Among Haines's most significant works in later years were the interiors of Sunnylands, the A. Quincy Jones-designed winter residence of Ambassador and Mrs. Walter Annenberg in nearby Rancho Mirage.<sup>641</sup>

<sup>639</sup> Excerpted and adapted from John LoCascio, "A Different Kind of Eden: Gay Men, Modernism, and the Rebirth of Palm Springs" (Master's Thesis, University of Southern California, 2013), 33-46.

<sup>640</sup> In July 1969, the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City was a significant turning point in LGBT consciousness, when patrons at the Stonewall Inn, an LGBT bar in Greenwich Village, resisted arrest following a routine bar raid.

<sup>641</sup> David Wallace, *A City Comes Out: How Celebrities Made Palm Springs a Gay and Lesbian Paradise* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books Inc., 2008), 151-56.



James Whale, director of the 1930s film classics *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *Showboat*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, was eventually ostracized in the film industry because of his unapologetic, militant homosexuality. Whale's film career was over by the 1940s. He spent his remaining years traveling, painting, and investing in real estate. In about 1953 Whale reportedly purchased the Town & Desert resort (370 W. Arenas Road; now the Orbit In's Hideaway) a small 8-unit Mid-century Modern hotel around a 40-foot swimming pool, designed and built by Herbert Burns. There Whale painted and hosted nude swimming parties for handsome young men. In 1957, depressed and debilitated after a series of strokes, Whale drowned himself in the swimming pool of his Pacific Palisades Home.<sup>642</sup>

In Haines' and Whale's day there was almost no public expression of the gay experience, in Palm Springs or anywhere else. The Stonewall Riots of 1969 and similar protests around the country mark the start of a public activism that began to allow gay men and women to live openly. The Coachella Valley's first gay-oriented establishments opened in the late 1960s in then-unincorporated Cathedral City, which was far less restrictive than conservative Palm Springs. Bars such as the Gaf and Gloria Greene's His & Hers,<sup>643</sup> and resorts like the Desert Palms Inn<sup>644</sup> catered to a small, quiet contingent of gay and lesbian tourists and residents. Among the earliest gay establishments in Palm Springs itself was The Desert Knight, a lesbian-oriented motel opened in the Deepwell neighborhood in 1969 by a lesbian couple, Eadie Adams and Pat McGrath (435 East Avenida Olanca; now the Queen of Hearts Resort).<sup>645</sup>

In 1972 big-band singer, film star, television personality, and golf enthusiast Dinah Shore, a longtime Palm Springs resident, lent her name and patronage to the Ladies Professional Golf Association to launch one of the country's first major women's sporting events, the Colgate Dinah Shore Golf Tournament (later known as the Nabisco Dinah Shore and today as the Kraft Nabisco Championship). From its inception the tournament, played at the Mission Hills Country Club near Shore's home in Rancho Mirage, quietly attracted a small following of lesbian golf fans. Primarily older and not publicly open about their sexual orientation, they gathered discreetly to watch top female athletes perform and, as their numbers grew, began to

<sup>642</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential: Playground of the Stars* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books Inc., 2004), 125-26.

<sup>643</sup> Wallace, *A City Comes Out: How Celebrities Made Palm Springs a Gay and Lesbian Paradise*, 30.

<sup>644</sup> Jeff Dillon, "Desert environment has always extended an open invitation," *The Desert Sun*, April 31, 1996, A8.

<sup>645</sup> Wallace, *A City Comes Out: How Celebrities Made Palm Springs a Gay and Lesbian Paradise*, 31.

augment the four-day tournament with private parties and gatherings around the Coachella Valley.<sup>646</sup>

As word spread in the lesbian community over the next ten years the small, private following of lesbian golf fans grew into an annual inundation of gay female spring tourists, increasingly younger, more affluent, and more open lesbians who lacked entrée to the exclusive private gatherings accompanying the sporting event. One of these young women was Caroline Clone, who managed a Los Angeles dance club and first attended the Dinah Shore in 1982. Clone was surprised by the lack of lesbian-oriented nightlife in the Coachella Valley, and the following year she organized the first public, lesbian party associated with the Dinah Shore Tournament. She rented a Cathedral City restaurant, organized a party which anyone could attend for a cover charge, and promoted the event to the tournament's lesbian fans. Clone expected a crowd of 300-400 women, but on the appointed evening 1,000 lesbians turned out.<sup>647</sup>

By the early 1990s the annual extended weekend of lesbian-oriented public events associated with the tournament had become known as "Dinah Shore Weekend" and annually attracted to the Coachella Valley as many as 10,000 lesbians who paid \$10 to \$30 per event to attend the various dances, concerts, stand-up comedy shows, and other events.<sup>648</sup> With professional event promoters booking entire hotels and the Palm Springs Convention Center as venues, the events had no actual connection to the golf tournament, other than scheduling and the (by that time) late star's name. Dinah Shore Weekend was significant as a safe and open environment for the lesbian community.<sup>649</sup>

While Dinah Shore Weekend was attracting increasing numbers of lesbian visitors to the Coachella Valley, the Warm Sands neighborhood of Palm Springs was at the same time growing into a popular vacation destination for gay men. Located south of downtown Palm Springs off of Ramon Road, the area was originally developed in the 1920s as a modest residential neighborhood.<sup>650</sup> By the late 1940s Warm Sands was sprouting dozens of small

<sup>646</sup> Steve Pokin, "Lesbian links: Desert an oasis for gay women at Dinah Week," *The Press-Enterprise*, March 28, 1993, E1.

<sup>647</sup> Pokin.

<sup>648</sup> Pokin.

<sup>649</sup> Jeff Dillon and Steve DiMeglio, "Sunshine, fresh air, great views and Acceptance," *The Desert Sun*, March 31, 1996.

<sup>650</sup> Warm Sands Neighborhood Organization, "Neighborhood Profile," *Warm Sands Neighborhood Organization*, <http://www.pswarmsands.com/profile.html> (accessed July 10, 2012).

hotels, motels, and vacation apartments that catered to the city's growing number of middle-class winter tourists, for whom the larger, more lavish hotels would have been off-putting or out of reach.<sup>651</sup> The little family-run hostelries of Warm Sands were hit hard when Palm Springs slid into its decline; and when large new resorts began to open in Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage, and Indian Wells, many of these small, modest accommodations went out of business. By the mid-1970s the neighborhood was severely blighted and considered an eyesore.<sup>652</sup>

One of these rundown Warm Sands hostelries was El Mirasol, a collection of stucco bungalows and pools set within a walled garden (525 S. Warm Sands Drive). El Mirasol was built in 1947, allegedly by Howard Hughes in order to discreetly accommodate his friends and mistresses.<sup>653</sup> In 1975 an entrepreneur named Bob Cannon took advantage of the area's depressed real estate values to purchase El Mirasol and rehabilitate it;<sup>654</sup> he reopened the renovated property as El Mirasol Villas and catered exclusively to a clientele of gay men.<sup>655</sup>

El Mirasol Villas was a success, but for eight years remained an isolated bright spot in the otherwise still-seedy Warm Sands neighborhood. In 1984 a second gay hotel opened on Warm Sands Drive and the area began a dramatic turnaround. A Los Angeles couple, Bob Mellen and Peter Tangel, purchased a small apartment complex down the block from El Mirasol and converted it into the Vista Grande (574 S. Warm Sands Drive), Palm Springs's second exclusively gay hotel.<sup>656</sup> It was also the city's first clothing-optional hotel.<sup>657</sup> Mellen and Tangel both held weekday jobs in Los Angeles and originally operated the Vista Grande as a weekend-only establishment, but demand grew so great that the couple soon moved to Palm Springs full-time and opened the hotel seven days a week.<sup>658</sup>

As gay tourism and the corresponding demand for gay-oriented accommodations increased steadily through the 1980s and into the 1990s, more investors were drawn to Warm Sands. Attracted by the low prices and inspired by the success of El Mirasol Villas and Vista Grande,

<sup>651</sup> Wallace, 29.

<sup>652</sup> Jeff Dillon, "Community builders: gay hoteliers revive Warm Sands area," *The Desert Sun*, April 1, 1996, A8.

<sup>653</sup> Wallace, 29.

<sup>654</sup> Donald Ettinger, telephone interview by author, July 19, 2012.

<sup>655</sup> Wallace, 29.

<sup>656</sup> Tom Gorman, "Palm Springs makes bid for gays' dollars," *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 1993, 3, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed July 10, 2012).

<sup>657</sup> Wallace, 29.

<sup>658</sup> Gorman, "Palm Springs makes bid for gays' dollars."

they renovated more and more of the area's old hotels. Mellen and Tangel themselves bought two more properties in order to expand their offerings at the Vista Grande. By 1996 there were fifteen attractive, well-kept hotels clustered just around Warm Sands Drive catering exclusively to gay men, transforming Warm Sands into a safe and desirable area.<sup>659</sup>

The transformation of Warm Sands was only one among many significant and lasting effects of increased gay tourism in Palm Springs beginning in the 1980s. Many of the gay tourists who vacationed in the city took advantage of the area's depressed real estate market and purchased property, becoming full- or part-time residents. By 1989 it was estimated that between 20,000 and 30,000 gay men and women lived in the Coachella Valley.<sup>660</sup> They supported, and in some cases operated, gay-friendly businesses of every variety - hotels, restaurants, bars, shops, art galleries - which created an accepting, welcoming environment that drew more gay visitors to the city, many of whom, in turn, became residents themselves.<sup>661</sup> In at least one sad respect, this migration echoed Palm Springs's early days as a health resort for tubercular patients; many of the gay men who moved to Palm Springs in the 1980s were HIV-positive or had AIDS, and were drawn to the desert by the warm, healthful climate, affordable housing and readily available medical services.<sup>662</sup>

The growth of this active and highly visible community gave rise within the decade to not only hundreds of gay-owned and -oriented businesses but also three gay churches, several magazines and newsletters, a bowling league, the Desert AIDS Project, the lesbian-oriented Desert Women's Association, and the Desert Business Association, a sort of chamber of commerce for the Coachella Valley's gay-owned and gay-friendly businesses.<sup>663</sup> The Desert Business Association sponsored the Coachella Valley's first Gay Pride celebration in June of 1986. Gay Pride had been celebrated annually in major cities across the United States since June of 1970, when gay rights groups in New York City and Los Angeles organized marches to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The 1986 event in Palm Springs was a comparatively modest affair, a cocktail party and variety show held in the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel (400 East Tahquitz Canyon Way). Proceeds from the event were divided

<sup>659</sup> Dillon, "Community builders."

<sup>660</sup> Kelle Russell, "Desert's gays grow in stature...and pride," *The Desert Sun*, July 28, 1989, A1.

<sup>661</sup> Dillon, "Desert environment."

<sup>662</sup> Mark Henry, "Another desert scene," *The Press-Enterprise*, July 10, 1994, A1.

<sup>663</sup> Russell.

between the Desert Business Association and local charities.<sup>664</sup> Subsequent events were expanded into annual Gay Pride Weekends, with parades and festivals held each June or July in various locales in Cathedral City and Palm Springs and attracting crowds of up to 2,000 visitors.<sup>665</sup> In 1995 organizers sensibly moved the event to November to avoid the blistering summer heat; attendance more than doubled to 5,000.<sup>666</sup> By 2001 the three-day celebration was attracting some 50,000 attendees - three-quarters of them out-of-town visitors - and injecting an estimated \$7 million to \$17 million into the local economy.<sup>667</sup>

In 1988 Jeffrey Sanker, a successful New York City party promoter who had recently relocated to Los Angeles, attended a Dinah Shore Weekend lesbian party organized by his friend Caroline Clone at the Palm Springs Marquis Resort.<sup>668</sup> This inspired Sanker to launch his own event – the White Party Palm Springs. Sanker modeled his White Party (named after the event’s required attire) on the series of parties then becoming popular in a string of cities on the East Coast. Beginning in the mid-1980s as an effort to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and raise funds to combat the disease, the events had grown into a “circuit” of professionally-produced all-night dance parties, bracketed in the days before and after by affiliated parties and events and drawing tens of thousands of gay and bisexual men.<sup>669</sup>

About 1,000 people attended Sanker’s first White Party at the Palm Springs Marquis over Memorial Day weekend, 1989; the following year he moved the event up to Easter weekend to avoid the heat.<sup>670</sup> Thereafter it grew bigger and more popular each year through the 1990s; the 1999 White Party drew more than 23,000 attendees from around the world, with events spread out over four hotels and the Palm Springs Convention Center, and generated nearly \$1 million dollars in bed taxes alone for the city.<sup>671</sup>

<sup>664</sup> “Gay Pride Day to make its local debut,” *The Desert Sun*, June 25, 1986, A3.

<sup>665</sup> See Tracy C. Correa, “Gays show unity in desert festival,” *The Press-Enterprise*, July 31, 1989, B3; and Cecilia Chan, “Gay Pride parade a big draw,” *The Desert Sun*, November 13, 1995, A3.

<sup>666</sup> Chan.

<sup>667</sup> Nadia T. Villagran, “Pride event generates millions for economy,” *The Desert Sun*, November 21, 2001, E1.

<sup>668</sup> Mona M. de Crinis, “The boys are back in town,” *Desert Post Weekly*, April 12, 2001, 16.

<sup>669</sup> Amin Ghaziani, “The Circuit Party’s Faustian Bargain,” *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 4, July/August 2005, 21, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed July 18, 2012).

<sup>670</sup> de Crinis.

<sup>671</sup> Gregory V. Harris, “Weekend expected to generate \$1 million,” *The Desert Sun*, April 23, 2000, B1.

By the late-1980s Palm Springs city officials estimated that gay tourists spent nearly 25 percent more per person, per day than the city's average tourist.<sup>672</sup> Palm Springs began to officially promote itself to the gay market in 1992 when the city's Tourism department partnered with the independent Palm Springs Gay Tourism Council, a newly-formed trade association, to produce and distribute the "Gay Guide to Palm Springs." The Guide included articles on local gay and lesbian tourism, an events calendar, advertisements for local gay-oriented businesses and a welcome letter from the City's mayor.<sup>673</sup> Within a year the city's tourism director was reporting that 25 percent of all requests for visitor guidebooks were for the Gay Guide.<sup>674</sup> By the mid-1990s Palm Springs was annually attracting almost 80,000 gay tourists who spent more than \$13 million each year on hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment,<sup>675</sup> and the city ranked with Provincetown, Massachusetts and Key West, Florida as one of the top gay resort destinations in the United States.<sup>676</sup>

Among the tens of thousands of gay men drawn each year to the White Party and as tourists to the resorts of Palm Springs were architects, artists, designers, and photographers who cast their discerning eyes on the city's still reasonably-priced residential neighborhoods and discovered there the long-neglected architectural gems from its storied past. In a fortunate coincidence, this corresponded with a national re-evaluation of the art and architecture of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a trend which continues to this day. It was this union of gay men and Modernism that would by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century complete the rehabilitation of Palm Springs and restore the city to its historic place as one of the world's premier resorts.

<sup>672</sup> Leyva, "Palm Springs."

<sup>673</sup> Cecilia Leyva, "New trade group busily promoting city," *The Desert Sun*, December 20, 1992, E1.

<sup>674</sup> Gorman.

<sup>675</sup> Leyva, "Palm Springs."

<sup>676</sup> Jeff Dillon, "Gays feel welcome in valley," *The Desert Sun*, March 31, 1996, A7.

**LGBT HISTORY IN PALM SPRINGS (1969-1989): ELIGIBILITY**

Property Types: Single-family Residence, Multi-family Residence, Commercial Building, Institutional Building

The LGBT community in Palm Springs played a significant role in the growth and development of the city, particularly in the recent past. Known associations with the LGBT community in Palm Springs prior to the 1969 Stonewall riots are largely undocumented, and written accounts consist primarily of rumor and innuendo.<sup>677</sup> Should documentation of LGBT sites prior to 1969 be discovered, they would be evaluated under this context. Note that properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years must be “exceptionally important” to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Among the earliest gay establishments in Palm Springs was The Desert Knight (now the Queen of Hearts Resort). In 1976 the first of several exclusively gay male resorts, El Mirasol Villas, opened on Warm Sands Drive, transforming what had been a derelict neighborhood. El Mirasol Villas and other early gay-oriented hostleries in the Warm Sands area may be eligible under this context. The city’s first gay pride festival was held in 1986 at the Hilton Hotel, and the launch of the spectacularly successful annual White Party in 1989 cemented the city’s reputation as a premier gay and lesbian destination.

A property may be eligible under this context:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Event)	As a significant or early residential or commercial property associated with important events in LGBT history; as the site of significant political action related to LGBT history in Palm Springs; for a specific association with an important LGBT business or social gathering place; or for an association with a pioneering institution or organization.
B/2/2 (Person)	As the residence of a person who is significant within the LGBT community.

<sup>677</sup> In July 1969, the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City was a significant turning point in LGBT consciousness, when patrons at the Stonewall Inn, an LGBT bar in Greenwich Village, resisted arrest following a routine bar raid.

### **LGBT History in Palm Springs (1969-1989): Integrity Considerations**

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Event)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). <sup>678</sup> A property under this context eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 (Event) should retain integrity of location, design, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's LGBT community.
B/2/2 (Person)	A property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

### **LGBT History in Palm Springs (1969-1989): Integrity Considerations: Registration Requirements**

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance;
- reflect a significant or early association with important events in LGBT history; or represent an important gathering place for the LGBT community;
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of integrity.

<sup>678</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15.*



## Architectural Styles



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# City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

### Introduction

For each significant architectural style there is a discussion of the origins and a list of character-defining features intrinsic to each. A property that is eligible for designation as an excellent example of its architectural style retains most - though not necessarily all - of the character-defining features of the style, and continues to exhibit its historic appearance. For guidance on the proper treatment of historic resources and appropriate alterations to specific architectural styles, refer to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*.

This section may be revised and updated as necessary once fieldwork is complete. Illustrative local examples of each style will be included in the next draft.

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION & ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

### **Adobe Construction**

Early adobe buildings were typically small, single-story structures, with thick adobe walls, low sloping tile roofs, and wood detailing. Adobe construction consists of thick walls composed of large sun-dried bricks, usually made from clay, sand, and straw and covered with whitewash. The unreinforced adobe walls typically vary from one and one-half to six feet thick, resting on a dirt or rock foundation. Roofs are typically tile or wood shingle, resting on wooden roof timbers. Door and window openings are normally surrounded by heavy timbers, often with a prominent timber lintel above the openings. Adobe construction demonstrates a continuation of indigenous building traditions that were passed down from generation to generation of craftsmen. Adobe construction used locally available resources, and was appropriate for the climate in the Southwest, staying cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Following California's annexation to the United States in 1850 there was a migration of settlers from the east. During this period many adobe structures were destroyed to make way for new development. Many were altered during this period, with the addition of wood siding, composition roofing, and exterior finishes that may have obscured the adobe structure beneath. Clapboard siding was commonly used to protect adobe blocks from weathering, or to create a more stylish, ornamental appearance. In some cases, adobes were covered with a stucco or plaster finish.

Character-defining features include:

- Rectangular plan
- Thick masonry walls of adobe brick
- Simple, unadorned exteriors (often with stucco cladding)
- Few, small window openings
- Simple arrangement of interior spaces

### **Residential Vernacular**

The term "Residential Vernacular" is used to describe simple houses or cottages with little or no distinguishing decorative features. These buildings are characterized by their simplicity and lack of any characteristics of recognizable styles.

Character-defining features include:

- Simple square or rectangular form

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

- Gabled or hipped roof with boxed or open eaves
- Wood exterior cladding
- Simple window and door surrounds

#### **Commercial Vernacular**

Although not an officially recognized style, “commercial vernacular” describes simple commercial structures with little decorative ornamentation, common in American cities and towns of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are typically brick in construction, with minimal decorative detailing.

Character-defining features include:

- Simple square or rectangular form
- Flat roof with a flat or stepped parapet
- Brick exterior wall surfaces, with face brick on the primary facade
- First-story storefronts, typically with a continuous transom window above
- Wood double-hung sash upper-story windows, often in pairs
- Segmental arch window and door openings on side and rear elevations
- Decorative detailing, if any, may include cornices, friezes, quoins, or stringcourses

#### **Mission Revival**

The Mission Revival style is indigenous to California. Drawing upon its own colonial past, Mission Revival was the Californian counterpart to the Colonial Revival of the Northeastern states. Never common beyond the Southwest, its regional popularity was spurred by its adoption by the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railways as the preferred style for train stations and resort hotels. Features of the California Missions were borrowed and freely adapted, often in combination with elements of other revival styles.

Character-defining features include:

- Red clay tile roofs with overhanging eaves and open rafters
- Shaped parapets
- Stucco exterior wall cladding
- Arched window and door openings
- Details may include bell towers, quatrefoil openings or patterned tiles

## PERIOD REVIVAL STYLES

### Spanish Colonial Revival

The Spanish Colonial Revival style attained widespread popularity throughout Southern California following the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, which was housed in a series of buildings designed by chief architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue in the late Baroque *Churrigueresque* style of Spain and Mexico. The *Churrigueresque* style, with areas of intricate ornamentation juxtaposed against plain stucco wall surfaces and accented with towers and domes, lent itself to monumental public edifices, churches, and exuberant commercial buildings and theaters, but was less suited to residential or smaller scale commercial architecture. For those, architects drew inspiration from provincial Spain, particularly the arid southern region of Andalusia, where many young American architects were diverted while World War I prevented their traditional post-graduate “grand tour” of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. The resulting style was based on infinitely creative combinations of plaster, tile, wood, and iron, featuring plaster-clad volumes arranged around patios, low-pitched tile roofs, and a sprawling, horizontal orientation. It was a deliberate attempt to develop a “native” California architectural style and romanticize the area’s colonial past, though it drew directly from Spanish and other Mediterranean precedents and bore little resemblance to the missions and rustic adobe ranch houses that comprised the state’s actual colonial-era buildings.

The popularity of the Spanish Colonial Revival style extended across nearly all property types, including a range of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, and coincided with Southern California’s population boom of the 1920s. It shaped the region’s expansion for nearly two decades, reaching a high point in 1929 and tapering off through the 1930s as the Great Depression gradually took hold. Like other revival styles, the Spanish Colonial Revival style was often simplified, reduced to its signature elements, or creatively combined with design features of other Mediterranean regions such as Italy, southern France, and North Africa, resulting in a pan-Mediterranean *mélange* of eclectic variations (see Mediterranean Revival Style).

Character-defining features include:

- Asymmetrical façade
- Irregular plan and horizontal massing
- Varied gable or hipped roofs with clay barrel tiles
- Plaster veneered exterior walls forming wide, uninterrupted expanses
- Wood-sash casement or double-hung windows, typically with divided lights

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

- Round, pointed, or parabolic arched openings
- Arcades or colonnades
- Decorative grilles of wood, wrought iron, or plaster
- Balconies, patios or towers
- Decorative terra cotta or glazed ceramic tile work

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### **Mediterranean Revival**

The Mediterranean Revival style is distinguished by its eclectic mix of architectural elements from several regions around the Mediterranean Sea, including Spain, Italy, southern France, and North Africa. Much of the American architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be broadly classified as ultimately Mediterranean in origin, including the Beaux Arts, Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles. By the 1920s, the lines between these individual styles were frequently blurred and their distinguishing characteristics blended by architects who drew inspiration from throughout the Mediterranean region. These imaginative combinations of details from varied architectural traditions resulted in the emergence of a distinct Mediterranean Revival style.

In contrast to the more academic and literal interpretations such as the Andalusian-influenced Spanish Colonial Revival style or the restrained Italian Renaissance Revival style, the broader Mediterranean Revival frequently incorporated elements of Italian and Spanish Renaissance, Provençal, Venetian Gothic, and Moorish architecture into otherwise Spanish Colonial Revival designs. The Mediterranean Revival style is often more formal and usually more elaborately composed and ornamented than the simpler, more rustic Spanish Colonial Revival style, and often more flamboyant than the sober Italian Renaissance Revival style. Typical features of the Mediterranean Revival style include arched entrance doorways with richly detailed surrounds; arcades and loggias; stairways and terraces with cast stone balustrades; and Classical decorative elements in cast stone or plaster, including architraves, stringcourses, cornices, pilasters, columns, and quoins.

Character-defining features include:

- Frequently symmetrical façade
- Rectangular plan and two-story height
- Hipped roof with clay barrel tiles and wide boxed or bracketed eaves, or eave cornice
- Exterior walls veneered in smooth plaster
- Wood-sash casement windows, typically with divided lights; sometimes double-hung windows
- Palladian windows or other accent windows
- Arched door or window openings; elaborate door surrounds
- Arcades, colonnades, or loggias
- Terraces and stairs with cast stone balustrades

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

- Cast stone or plaster decorative elements including architraves, stringcourses, cornices, pilasters, columns, and quoins
- Decorative grilles of wood, wrought iron, or plaster
- Balconies, patios or towers
- Decorative terra cotta or glazed ceramic tile work

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



### Monterey Colonial Revival

The Monterey Colonial Revival style is based upon the distinctive style of residential architecture that developed in California beginning in the 1830s, as more and more Yankee merchants and settlers arrived in Alta California and adapted the Anglo building traditions of the East Coast to local Hispanic customs. As its name implies, the style developed in and around Monterey and combined vernacular adobe construction with elements of American Federal and Greek Revival architecture, including multi-light sliding sash windows, louvered shutters, paneled doors, and Classical details executed in wood. The style's most distinguishing characteristic is a second-floor covered wood balcony, often cantilevered, extending the length of the primary façade and sometimes wrapping one or two sides as well. The best-known example of the style, and one of the earliest, is the Thomas Larkin adobe, constructed beginning in 1834 and one of the first two-story dwellings in Monterey.<sup>679</sup>

The style was revived beginning in the mid-1920s and was favored by architects and homeowners who perhaps found the fantastical Spanish and Mediterranean revivals too exotic and too different from the building traditions familiar to most Americans. The Monterey Colonial Revival style replaced adobe construction with wood framed walls veneered in smooth plaster and devoid of surface ornament, and featured second-story balconies, low-pitched gable or hipped roofs, and double-hung wood windows.

Character-defining features include:

- Usually asymmetrical façade
- Two-story height
- Rectangular or L-shaped plan
- Low-pitched hipped or side gable roofs with wood shakes or clay tiles
- Plaster-veneered exterior walls devoid of surface ornament
- Second-floor covered wood balcony, sometimes cantilevered, across primary façade and occasionally wrapping one or more sides, with simple wood posts and wood or metal railing
- Wood-sash double-hung windows, typically with divided lights
- Louvered or paneled wood shutters
- Recessed entrances with paneled wood doors

<sup>679</sup> Monterey County Historical Society, "Monterey's Larkin House Adobe and Garden," <http://www.mchsmuseum.com/larkinhouse.html> (accessed September 17, 2014).

## EARLY MODERNISM

### International Style

The International Style – an architectural aesthetic that stressed rationality, logic, and a break with the past – emerged in Europe in the 1920s with the work of Le Corbusier in France, and Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in Germany. The United States became a stronghold of Modern architecture after the emigration of Gropius, Mies, and Marcel Breuer. Two Austrian emigrants, Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, helped introduce modern architecture to Southern California in the 1920s. Their buildings were minimalist in concept, stressed functionalism, and were devoid of regional characteristics and nonessential decorative elements. In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art hosted an exhibition, titled simply "Modern Architecture," that featured the work of fifteen architects from around the world whose buildings shared a stark simplicity and vigorous functionalism. The term International Style was coined by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in the accompanying catalog.

The early impact of the International Style in the United States was primarily in the fields of residential and small-scale commercial design. The economic downturn of the Depression, followed by World War II, resulted in little architectural development during this period. It was not until the postwar period that Americans embraced Modernism, and its full impact on the architectural landscape is observed. Within the International Style, two trends emerged after World War II. The first emphasized the expression of the building's function, following the early work of Walter Gropius, who created innovative designs that borrowed materials and methods of construction from modern technology. He advocated for industrialized building and an acceptance of standardization and prefabrication. Gropius introduced a screen wall system that utilized a structural steel frame to support the floors and which allowed the external glass walls to continue without interruption.

The second postwar trend in the International Style is represented by Mies van der Rohe and his followers. Within the Miesian tradition there are three subtypes: the glass and steel pavilion, modeled on Mies' design for the Barcelona Pavilion (1929); the skyscraper with an all-glass curtain wall like his Seagram Building (1954) in New York; and the modular office building like his design for Crown Hall (1955) at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). While "form follows function" was the mantra of Gropius, "less is more" was the aphorism of Mies. He focused his efforts on the idea of enclosing open and adaptable "universal" spaces with clearly

arranged structural frameworks, featuring pre-manufactured steel frames spanned with large sheets of glass.

Character-defining features include:

- Rectangular massing
- Balance and regularity, but not symmetry
- Clear expression of form and function
- Steel frame structure used as an organizing device
- Elevation of buildings on tall piers (piloti)
- Flat roofs
- Frequent use of glass, steel, concrete, and smooth plaster
- Horizontal bands of flush windows, often meeting at corners
- Absence of ornamentation
- Column-free interior spaces

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Art Deco

Art Deco originated in France in the 1910s as an experimental movement in architecture and the decorative arts. It developed into a major style when it was first exhibited in Paris at the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, from which it takes its name. The Exposition's organizers had insisted on the creation of a new, modern aesthetic. The architecture of the Art Deco movement rejected the rigid organizational methods and classical ornamentation of the Beaux Arts style. It emphasized a soaring verticality through the use of stepped towers, spires, and fluted or reeded piers, and embraced highly stylized geometric, floral and figurative motifs as decorative elements on both the exterior and interior. Ornate metalwork, especially aluminum, glazed terra cotta tiles, and bright colors were hallmarks of the style.

Art Deco was the first popular style in the United States that consciously rejected historical precedents. It was instead a product of the Machine Age and took its inspiration from industry and transportation. Art Deco was employed primarily in commercial and institutional buildings, and occasionally in multi-family residential buildings. It was rarely used for single-family residences. By the mid-1930s, in the depths of the Great Depression, the highly decorated style was already viewed as garish and overwrought, and it was soon abandoned in favor of the cleaner, simpler Streamline Moderne style.

Character-defining features include:

- Vertical emphasis
- Smooth wall surfaces, usually of plaster
- Flat roofs with decorative parapets or towers
- Stylized decorative floral and figurative elements in cast stone, glazed terra cotta tiles, or aluminum
- Geometric decorative motifs such as zigzags and chevrons
- Stepped towers, piers, and other vertical elements
- Metal windows, usually fixed or casement

### **Streamline Moderne**

The constraints of the Great Depression cut short the development of Art Deco architecture, but replaced it with a more pure expression of modernity, the Streamline Moderne. Characterized by smooth surfaces, curved corners, and sweeping horizontal lines, Streamline Moderne is considered to be the first thoroughly Modern architectural style to achieve wide acceptance among the American public. Inspired by the industrial designs of the period, the style was popular throughout the United States in the late 1930s, particularly with the Federally-funded projects of the Works Progress Administration; buildings executed under those programs are often referred to PWA Moderne. Unlike the equally modern but highly-ornamental Art Deco style of the late 1920s, Streamline Moderne was perceived as expressing an austerity more appropriate for Depression-era architecture, although Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were not necessarily opposites. A Streamline Moderne building with a few Deco elements was not uncommon, but the prime movers behind the Streamline Moderne style such as Raymond Loewy, Walter Dorwin Teague, Gilbert Rohde, and Norman Bel Geddes all disliked Art Deco, seeing it as falsely modern.

The origins of the Streamline Moderne are rooted in transportation design, which took the curved form of the teardrop, because it was the most efficient shape in lowering the wind resistance of an object. Product designers and architects who wanted to express efficiency borrowed the streamlined shape of cars, planes, trains, and ocean liners. Streamline Moderne architecture looked efficient in its clean lines. It was in fact relatively inexpensive to build because there was little labor-intensive ornament like terra cotta; exteriors tended to be concrete or plaster. The Streamline Moderne's finest hour was the New York World's Fair of 1939-1940. Here, the "World of Tomorrow" showcased the cars and cities of the future, a robot, a microwave oven, and a television, all in streamlined pavilions.

Character-defining features include:

- Horizontal emphasis
- Asymmetrical façade
- Flat roof with coping
- Smooth plaster wall surfaces
- Curved end walls and corners
- Glass block and porthole windows
- Flat canopy over entrances
- Fluted or reeded moldings or stringcourses

- Pipe railings along exterior staircases and balconies
- Steel sash windows

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

### Ranch

The Ranch style emerged from the 1930s designs of Southern California architect Cliff May, who merged modernist ideas with traditional notions of the working ranches of the American West and in particular, the rustic adobe houses of California's Spanish- and Mexican-era *ranchos*. Early Ranch houses feature board-and-batten exterior cladding and low-pitch gable roofs with wood shakes. The Ranch house accommodated America's adoption of the automobile as the primary means of transportation with a two-car garage that was a prominent architectural feature on the front of the house, and a sprawling layout on a large lot. Floor plans for the tracts of Ranch houses were usually designed to meet the FHA standards so that the developer could receive guaranteed loans.<sup>680</sup>

Character-defining features include:

- One-story
- Sprawling plan
- L- or U-shaped plan, often with radiating wings
- Low, horizontal massing with wide street façade
- Low-pitched hipped or gable roof with open overhanging eaves and wood shakes
- Plaster, wood lap, or board-and-batten siding, often with brick or stone accents
- Divided light wood sash windows (picture, double-hung sash, diamond-pane)
- Wide, covered front porch with wood posts
- Attached garage, sometimes linked with open-sided breezeway
- Details such as wood shutters, attic vents in gable ends, dovecotes, extended gables, or scalloped barge boards

<sup>680</sup> The post-World War II iteration of the Ranch House is included in the "Modern Architecture" theme below.

**MINIMAL TRADITIONAL**

The Minimal Traditional style is defined by a single-story configuration, simple exterior forms, and a restrained use of traditional architectural detailing. The Minimal Traditional house was immensely popular in large suburban residential developments throughout the United States during the 1940s and early 1950s. The style had its origins in the principles of the Modern movement and the requirements of the FHA and other Federal programs of the 1930s. Its open plan reflected the developer's desire for greater efficiency. Modern construction methods addressed the builder's need to reduce costs and keep homes affordable to the middle class. Conventional detailing appealed to conservative home buyers and mortgage companies. In Southern California, the style is closely associated with large-scale residential developments of the World War II and postwar periods. Primarily associated with the detached single family house, Minimal Traditional detailing may also be applied to apartment buildings of the same period.

Character-defining features include:

- One-story configuration
- Rectangular plan
- Medium or low-pitched hip or side-gable roof with shallow eaves
- Smooth stucco wall cladding, often with wood lap or stone veneer accents
- Wood multi-light windows (picture, double-hung sash, casement)
- Projecting three-sided oriel
- Shallow entry porch with slender wood supports
- Wood shutters
- Lack of decorative exterior detailing

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## POST-WORLD WAR II MODERNISM

### Regency Revival

The Regency Revival style, also known as Hollywood Regency, is indigenous to Los Angeles. It is seen almost exclusively in the design of single-family and multi-family residential architecture from about the mid-1930s until about 1970; most examples in Palm Springs date to the 1960s. It was occasionally utilized for smaller commercial buildings. The style references in part the architecture and design that developed in Britain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the years 1811 to 1820 when the Prince of Wales, later King George IV, served as Prince Regent during the long, final illness of his incapacitated father King George III. Like the original Regency style, Regency Revival includes elements of Neoclassical and French Empire design; however, its attenuated classical ornament and simple surfaces reflect the influence of the Modern Movement.

The style first appeared in the United States in the mid-1930s as a stripped-down version of Neoclassicism that exhibited both the influence of Moderne styles and the simplified yet exaggerated qualities of Hollywood film sets. Its early development was interrupted by World War II and the resulting halt of construction. It resumed after the war with the work of architects such as John Elgin Woolf in Southern California, whose designs emphasized symmetry, privacy, exaggerated entrances and prominent mansard roofs. Post-World War II Regency Revival buildings are characterized by theatrical arched entrances with an exaggerated vertical emphasis, usually positioned in projecting pavilions with high, steep roofs; symmetrical, largely blank primary façades; and eccentrically detailed, unconventionally proportioned Classical columns and ornamentation juxtaposed against large expanses of blank wall.

Character-defining features include:

- Symmetrical façade
- Tall, steeply pitched mansard, hipped or gable roofs, especially over entrance; frequently a flat roof over remainder
- Blank wall surfaces veneered in smooth plaster; some examples may have brick veneer or wood
- Vertically exaggerated arched entrance doors, sometimes set in projecting pavilions
- Tall, narrow windows, often with arched tops

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- Eccentrically detailed and unconventionally proportioned Neo-Classical features including double-height porticoes, thin columns, pediments, fluted pilasters, niches, and balconettes with iron railings
- Exaggerated applied ornament, such as large lanterns or sconces

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### Mid-century Modern

Mid-century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in both residential and commercial design. The International Style was characterized by geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an absence of exterior decoration. Mid-century Modern represents the adaptation of these elements to the local climate and topography, as well as to the postwar need for efficiently-built, moderately-priced homes. In Southern California, this often meant the use of wood post-and-beam construction. Mid-century Modernism is often characterized by a clear expression of structure and materials, large expanses of glass, and open interior plans. In Palm Springs, the use of concrete block, perforated concrete, and other forms of wood, concrete, and metal screens to shield against the intense desert sun while allowing for air flow, was an important component of Mid-century Modern design.

The roots of the style can be traced to early Modernists like Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, whose local work inspired “second generation” Modern architects like Gregory Ain, Craig Ellwood, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Pierre Koenig, Raphael Soriano, and many more. These postwar architects developed an indigenous Modernism that was born from the International Style but matured into a fundamentally regional style, fostered in part by *Art and Architecture* magazine’s pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966). The style gained popularity because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. It became the predominant architectural style in the postwar years and is represented in almost every property type, from single-family residences to commercial buildings to gas stations.

Character-defining features include:

- One or two-story configuration
- Horizontal massing (for small-scale buildings)
- Simple geometric forms
- Exposed post-and-beam construction, in wood or steel
- Flat roof or low-pitched gable roof with wide overhanging eaves and cantilevered canopies
- Unadorned wall surfaces
- Wood, glass, plaster, stucco, concrete, steel, brick or stone used as exterior wall panels or accent materials
- Flush-mounted metal frame fixed windows and sliding doors, and clerestory windows
- Concrete, wood, or metal screens

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- Little or no exterior decorative detailing
- Expressionistic/Organic subtype: sculptural forms and geometric shapes, including butterfly, A-frame, folded plate or barrel vault roofs

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

## Ranch

The Ranch house that emerged in the 1930s became increasingly popular in the post-World War II era. The architectural style – characterized by its low horizontal massing, sprawling interior plan, and wood exterior detailing – embodied the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ideal of “California living.” The Ranch style enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the United States from the 1940s to 1970s. It epitomized unpretentious architecture and dominated the suburbs of the post-World War II period. It was more conservative than other modern residential architecture of the period, often using decorative elements based on historical forms and capitalizing on the national fascination with the “Old West.” The underlying philosophy of the Ranch house was informality, outdoor living, gracious entertaining, and natural materials.

The most common style of Ranch house is the California Ranch. It is characterized by its one-story height; asymmetrical massing in L- or U-shaped plans; low-pitched hipped or gabled roofs with wide overhanging eaves; a variety of materials for exterior cladding, including plaster and board-and-batten; divided light wood sash windows, sometimes with diamond-shaped panes; and large picture windows. Decorative details commonly seen in California Ranch houses include scalloped bargeboards, false cupolas and dovecotes, shutters, and iron or wood porch supports. The California Ranch house accommodated America’s adoption of the automobile as the primary means of transportation with a two-car garage that was a prominent architectural feature on the front of the house, and a sprawling layout on a large lot. Floor plans for the tracts of Ranch houses were usually designed to meet the FHA standards so that the developer could receive guaranteed loans.<sup>681</sup>

Another variation on the Ranch house was the Modern Ranch, which was influenced by Mid-century Modernism. Modern Ranches emphasized horizontal planes more than the California Ranch, and included modern instead of traditional stylistic details. Character-defining features included low-pitched hipped or flat roofs, prominent rectangular chimneys, recessed entryways, and wood or concrete block privacy screens. Other stylistic elements resulted in Asian variations.

Character-defining features include:

- One-story
- Sprawling plan

<sup>681</sup> The pre-World War II iteration of the Ranch House is included in the “Early Modernism” theme above.

- L- or U-shaped plan, often with radiating wings
- Low, horizontal massing with wide street façade
- Low-pitched hipped or gable roof with open overhanging eaves and wood shakes
- Plaster, wood lap, or board-and-batten siding, often with brick or stone accents
- Divided light wood sash windows (picture, double-hung sash, diamond-pane)
- Wide, covered front porch with wood posts
- Attached garage, sometimes linked with open-sided breezeway
- Details such as wood shutters, attic vents in gable ends, dovecotes, extended gables, or scalloped barge boards
- Modern Ranch sub-type may feature flat or low-pitched hipped roof with composition shingle or gravel roofing; metal framed windows; wood or concrete block privacy screens

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

**Googie**

Googie has been described as Modernism for the masses. With its swooping lines and organic shapes, the style attempted to capture the playful exuberance of postwar America. Named for the John Lautner-designed Googie's Restaurant in Los Angeles, the style was widely employed in roadside commercial architecture of the 1950s, including coffee shops, bowling alleys, and car washes.

Character-defining features include:

- Expressive rooflines, including butterfly, folded-plate, and cantilevers
- Organic, abstract, and parabolic shapes
- Clear expression of materials, including concrete, steel, asbestos, cement, glass block, plastic, and plywood
- Large expanses of plate glass
- Thematic ornamentation, including tiki and space age motifs
- Primacy of signage, including the pervasive use of neon

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**New Formalism**

New Formalism is a sub-type of Late Modern architecture that developed in the mid-1950s as a reaction to the International Style's strict vocabulary and total rejection of historical precedent. New Formalist buildings are monumental in appearance, and reference and abstract classical forms such as full-height columns, projecting cornices, and arcades. Traditional materials such as travertine, marble, or granite were used, but in a panelized, non-traditional form. In Southern California, the style was applied mainly to public and institutional buildings. On a larger urban design scale, grand axes and symmetry were used to achieve a modern monumentality. Primary in developing New Formalism were three architects: Edward Durrell Stone, who melded his Beaux Arts training with the stark Modernism of his early work; Philip Johnson; and Minoru Yamasaki. All three had earlier achieved prominence working within the International Style and other Modernist idioms.

Character-defining features of New Formalism include:

- Symmetrical plan
- Flat rooflines with heavy overhanging cornices
- Colonnades, plazas and elevated podiums used as compositional devices
- Repeating arches and rounded openings
- Large screens of perforated concrete block, concrete, or metal

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HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



**Brutalism**

Brutalism was another architectural movement that developed in the 1950s in response to the International Style. In contrast to the International Style's often light and skeletal appearance, Brutalism created massive, monolithic structures that stretched the limits of concrete construction. More properly known as "New Brutalism," the name was derived from *béton brut*, the concrete casting technique that left a roughly finished surface bearing the imprint of the formwork, used by Le Corbusier in the *Unité d'Habitation*, Marseille, France (1952). One of the style's most significant American promoters was John Portman, who designed several enormous atrium hotels and office clusters known for their spectacular spatial effects, including the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. The style was particularly popular in the construction of government, educational, and financial buildings. Other well-known examples of the style in Southern California include the Salk Institute in La Jolla (1959) by Louis Kahn and the Geisel Library at the University of California, San Diego (1969) by William Pereira.

Character-defining features of Brutalism include:

- Bold geometric shapes
- Sculptural façade articulation
- Exposed, roughly finished cast-in-place or pre-cast concrete construction
- Window and door openings as voids in otherwise solid volumes
- Raised plazas and base articulation

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**Late Modernism**

Late Modern is a blanket term used to describe the evolution of Modern architecture from the mid-1950s through the 1970s. It is typically applied to commercial and institutional buildings. Unlike the straightforward, functionalist simplicity of International Style and Mid-century Modernism, Late Modern buildings exhibit a more deliberate sculptural quality with bold geometric volumes, uniform surfaces such as glass skin or concrete, and a sometimes exaggerated expression of structure and systems. Significant architects who produced works in the style include Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, Cesar Pelli, Piano and Rogers, and John Portman.

Character-defining features of Late Modern style include:

- Bold geometric volumes
- Large expanses of unrelieved wall surfaces
- Uniform use of cladding materials including glass, concrete, or masonry veneer
- Exaggerated expression of structure and systems
- Hooded or deeply set windows
- Little or no applied ornament

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Welwood Memorial Library, interior. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

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