



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of  
**Planning Services**  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm  
Springs, CA 92262  
Telephone: 760-323-8245  
Fax: 760-322-8360

## **HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION**

The City of Palm Springs allows for the local designation of historic buildings, sites or districts within the City (Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.) This application packet is to be completed in order to request a historic designation. For additional information, please contact the Department of Planning Services at 760-323-8245 or [planning@palmspringsca.gov](mailto:planning@palmspringsca.gov).

### **APPLICATION**

The completed application and required materials may be submitted to the Department of Planning Services. The submittal will be given a cursory check and will be accepted for filing only if the basic requirements have been met. A case planner will be assigned to the project and will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and all exhibits to ensure that all required information is adequate and accurate. Incomplete applications due to missing or inadequate information will not be accepted for filing. Applicants may be asked to attend scheduled meetings pertaining to their project. These will include the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and the City Council.

### **HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD (HSPB)**

Once the application has been determined to be complete, the HSPB will review the application to determine whether the site meets the minimum qualifications for designation pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. If such determination is made, a public hearing will be scheduled for a future meeting.

A public hearing will be held by the HSPB to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the HSPB will make a recommendation to the City Council. Notice will be provided as indicated below.

### **CITY COUNCIL**

After receiving the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board, a public hearing will be held by the City Council to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the requested Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the City Council will then conditionally approve, deny, or approve the application as submitted. The City Council's decision on the application is final.

### **NOTIFICATION**

Prior to consideration of the application by the HSPB and the City Council, a notice of public hearing for a Historic Site Designation request will be mailed to all property owners within 400 feet of the subject property a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the hearing dates.



**Office Use Only**

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS  
Department of Planning Services**

**HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION**

**TO THE APPLICANT:**

Your cooperation in completing this application and supplying the information requested will expedite City review of your application. Application submitted will not be considered until all submittal requirements are met. Staff may require additional information depending upon the specific project. Please submit this completed application and any subsequent material to the Department of Planning Services.

This form is to be used to nominate individual properties for Class 1 or 2 historic designations, or to nominate the formation of historic districts. Applicants are encouraged to review two bulletins from the US Department of Interior for additional information:

- "How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form" (National Register Bulletin 16A / <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>); and
- "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (National Register Bulletin 15; <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions in the Bulletins.

**1. Property Information**

Historic name: Paul Dougherty Residence  
 Other names: Not applicable  
 Address: 1860 North Vista Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262  
 Assessor Parcel Number: 504202010  
 Owner's Name: Michael F. Fleming & Luis A. Lavin  
 Owner's Address: 1860 North Vista Drive  
 City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92262  
 Telephone: [REDACTED]  
 Fax number: Not applicable  
 E-mail address: [REDACTED]

---

## 2. Classifications

---

Ownership of Property. Fill as many boxes as apply.

- Private
- Public - Local
- Public - State
- Public - Federal

Category of Property. Fill only one box.

- Building (Note can include site)
- District
- Site (Exclusive of Structures)
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property. TOTAL must include at least One (1) in Contributing Column.

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	2	Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	2	<b>Total</b>

If the building or site is part of a larger group of properties, enter the name of the multiple-property group; otherwise enter "N/A".  
"N/A"

---

## 3. Use or Function

---

Historic Use or Function: Private residence

Current Use or Function: Private residence

---

## 4. Description

---

Architect: John Porter Clark

Construction Date and Source: 1942 (Multiple sources)

Architectural Classification: International Style - Desert Regional Variation

Construction Materials:

Foundation: Concrete slab on grade & native stone and concrete stem walls

Roof: Tile

Walls: Frame wood construction covered with stucco & native stone and concrete walls

Other:

Building Description: *Attach a description of the Building/Site/District, including all character defining features, on one or more additional sheets. (See pages 19-22)*

---

**5. Criteria (Fill all boxes that apply for the criteria qualifying the property for listing.)**

---

**Events**

■ (1) Fill this box if the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**Persons**

■ (2) Fill this box if the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**Architecture**

■ (3) Fill this box if the property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, State or local history, or

■ (4) Fill this box if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or

■ (5) Fill this box if the property represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or

(6) Fill this box if the property represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**Archeology**

(7) Fill this box if the property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Other Criteria Considerations (Check all the boxes that apply.)**

the property is owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

the property has been removed from its original location.

the property is a birthplace

the property is a grave or cemetery.

the property is a reconstructed building, object, or structure

the property is commemorative

the property is less than 50 years of age or has achieved significance within the past 50 years

---

## 6. Statement of Significance

---

### Summary

The Paul Dougherty Residence, first owned by famous marine painter Paul Dougherty, was designed by Palm Springs architect John Porter Clark and constructed by local builder Alvah Hicks in 1942.

### First Owner(s), Paul (and Paula) Dougherty

Ownership Information. The grant deed to "PAUL DOUGHERTY AND PAULA DOUGHERTY" for 1860 North Vista Drive, was recorded on April 27, 1942 in Riverside County. The 1942 title document is in Book No. 540 of Official Records, page 275, et seq., Records of Riverside County, California. The grant deed describes the property in full and is provided at Appendix II. The property was previously owned by Milton H. Bren, Marian N. Bren, M. R. Schaker and Bluma B. Schaker. Interestingly, Milton H. Bren (1904-1979) was a Hollywood movie producer (whose credits include the 1937 movie *Topper*) and a real estate developer.



**Artist Paul Hampden Dougherty (1877-1947)**  
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

A local documentary mention of Dougherty appears in the December 1944 California Water & Telephone Directory (which included Banning, Beaumont, Palm Springs and Twenty-Nine Palms) under the entry "Dougherty Paul r150 Via Olivera [bell symbol]8477" with the "r" prefix identifying Dougherty as a "roomer." The first mention of Dougherty (and his wife Paula) at the 1860 North Vista Drive address appears in the 1946-1947 Palm Springs [City] Directory with the entry "Dougherty Paul (Paula) h1860 (1660) Vista dr[sic] [bell symbol]4902". The "h" prefix identifies the Dougherty's as "householders." As might be expected, the published telephone directory entries during and immediately after the wartime period were almost always a few months (or years) behind in accuracy and are only a secondary source for research purposes. A review of *Palm Springs Villager* magazines during this period revealed no mentions of the Dougherty's. This is not unexpected as the *Villager* primarily chronicled the local social

scene. The Dougherty's were likely not involved with the local social scene in view of Paul's declining health.

Biography. Famous seascape painter Paul Dougherty (one source cites the pronunciation of "Dougherty" as "'DOG-er-tee") was born on September 6, 1877 in Brooklyn, New York. Dougherty graduated from Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute in 1896. Significant biographical information exists concerning artist Paul Dougherty who is variously identified with the California Plein-air and American Impressionist movements.

The most complete biographical information on Paul Dougherty has been compiled by Spanierman Galleries in New York City (the following is provided with the permission of Spanierman Galleries, LLC):

Once described as among "the greatest marine painters of our time," Paul Dougherty garnered widespread acclaim for his powerful portrayals of the sea. Acknowledged as an heir to Winslow Homer, it was said that "breakers riding the swell [and] white water boiling around the rocks . . . was Paul's natural habitat."

The son of J. Hampden Dougherty, a noted attorney, Dougherty grew up in privileged circumstances in Brooklyn, New York. Primarily a self-taught artist, he began sketching and drawing as a young child. This activity continued into his teenage years, during which time he received some rudimentary lessons in perspective and form from Constantin Hertzberg. At the age of eighteen, he had a painting accepted at the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, a considerable achievement that no doubt encouraged him to pursue his interest in art. In October of 1896, Dougherty spent three weeks in Robert Blum's painting class at the Art Students League of New York, an experience that constituted his only formal training.

Dougherty attended Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and then New York Law School, passing the state bar examinations in 1898. Although many expected him to follow in his father's footsteps, he decided to become a professional artist instead (his brother Walter, also eschewed family tradition by becoming an actor and eventually president of the Players Club in New York). In 1900 he made his first trip abroad, studying independently in major art centers such as London, Paris, Munich, Florence and Venice. By 1901, his skills were such that he had a picture accepted at the prestigious Paris Salon. Returning to America in 1904, he settled in New Jersey. Shortly thereafter, Dougherty made a three-month trip to Monhegan Island, Maine, where he painted his earliest seascapes. In the ensuing years, he would make regular excursions to Monhegan, as well as to Brittany, France and St. Ives, on England's Cornish seacoast.

On the basis of his deftly rendered marines, Dougherty rapidly made a name for himself on the national art scene. He was a regular contributor to the annuals of the National Academy of Design, where he was elected an associate in 1906 and an academician the following year. In 1907 he acquired a first-rate dealer, William Macbeth, who helped promote his reputation as an important marine painter through numerous solo exhibitions. Dougherty's oils were subsequently acquired by many prominent museums throughout the United States. His standing in the art world was also enhanced by the coveted awards and honors that came his way, among them the National Academy's Inness Gold Medal (1913) and a gold medal at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco (1915). Contemporary critics lauded his skills in capturing the moods of the sea as well as his distinctive style, in which he combined a bold Realism with aspects of Impressionism; his penchant for straightforward, carefully structured designs and his ability to evoke the elemental strength of the sea prompted many to compare him to the aforementioned Homer. Yet while his famous predecessor often focused on the struggle between man and nature, Dougherty took a different approach, imbuing his canvases with a sense of buoyancy that prompted the critic James Hunker

to call him a "virile optimist....Life is worth living in his outdoor pictures."

Dougherty belonged to the leading art and cultural organizations of his day, including the National Arts Club, the American Water Color Society, the Century Association, the Lotos Club, the Salmagundi Club and the American Institute of Arts and Letters. While marine painting was his forte, he was versatile and also produced still lifes, nudes, landscapes and the occasional sculpture. In addition to working in oil, he often used watercolor, especially during his trips to Puerto Rico (1916) and the Orient (1916).

Dougherty resided in Paris from 1920 to 1927. Returning to America in 1928, he settled in Tucson, Arizona, hoping that its temperate climate might provide relief from his arthritis. In 1931, he moved again, this time to Carmel, California. Responding to the vivid luminosity of the West Coast, he painted brightly colored seascapes and coastal scenes that he exhibited at the Carmel Art Association and at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. During these years, he continued to retain a strong presence in the East, exhibiting in the major annuals and winning the National Academy's Palmer Memorial Prize in 1941.

**Dougherty died in Palm Springs, where he spent his winters, on January 9, 1947.**

Examples of his work can be found in public collections throughout the United States and elsewhere, including the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Fort Worth Art Museum, Texas; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Minneapolis Institute of Art; the Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, N.Y.; Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Arts Club, New York; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City; the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Smithsonian National Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the St. Louis Art Museum; and the Toledo Museum of Art. (Note: emphasis added in bold)

## **Second Owner(s), William (and Marjorie) Edris**

Ownership Information. According to First American Title, William Edris came "on title" December 21, 1953 (First American Title apologizes that copies are not available). However, the title company confirms that the 1953 title can be found in Book No. 1537 of Official Records, page 209, Records of Riverside County, California.

Additional Documentary Information. The 1950 Palm Springs Telephone Directory entry reads "Edris Wm (Majorie[sic]) h1860 Vista Dr. [bell symbol]4902" showing that William and Marjorie Edris had moved into the Paul Dougherty Residence property and inherited the Dougherty's original phone number. The 1951, 1952 and 1953 Palm Springs Telephone Directories repeat that entry. The 1954 Palm Springs Telephone Directory reflects a move by the Edrises to "1030 [West] Cielo Drive" in Palm Springs.

Biographical Information. As a well-to-do and socially-prominent Seattle family, the comings and goings of William and Marjorie Edris while in Palm Springs were well-chronicled (the *Palm Springs Villager* magazine even reported his hole-in-one at the O'Donnell Golf course in the social column). The June 12, 1956 edition of the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* gave some substantive information on his business connections when the newspaper reported that, "Mr. Edris is the former owner of the Olympic hotel in Seattle and the Davenport hotel in Spokane. He also operated the Dennison Food Packing Company and now owns theaters in Seattle and Tacoma." However, the most



Portraits of William and Marjorie Edris by Local Artist O. E. L. "Bud" Graves  
 (Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

complete biographical information about William Edris appears in his November 30, 1969 obituary entitled "William P. Edris Dies in California" in the *Seattle Times* newspaper:

"William P. Edris, 76, Seattle capitalist and former operator of the Olympic and Roosevelt Hotels, died Friday night in Palm Springs, Calif., of complications following a lung operation last year....Mr. Edris sold the Olympic Hotel to Western Hotels in 1955. He sold the Roosevelt nine years earlier....He also at one time owned the Davenport Hotel, Spokane, and the Fourth and Pike Building, the Model Laundry and the Pioneer Securities Co. in Seattle. The securities company owned the Liberty and Venetian Theaters, the Broadway Market and Von's Restaurant in Seattle, the Roxy Theater in Tacoma and theaters in Enumclaw and Great Falls, Mont. Mr. Edris also had owned interests in the Seattle Ranier[s] baseball team, the Seattle Hockey Club, the Puget Sound Bridge & Dredging Co., and Dennison Foods, Oakland and Seattle. Mr. Edris was born in Eugene, Ore., and came to Seattle to attend the University of Washington. He graduated with a law degree in 1922, after spending two years in the Army during World War I. He later joined the Skinner-Eddy Co. Mr. Edris had remained active in the Edris Co., which operated his business holdings....Funeral services are pending....Mr. Edris is survived by his wife, Marjorie, and two daughters, Mrs. Jeanette Rockefeller, wife of the governor of Arkansas, and Mrs. Arthur Morganstern, Hong Kong.

William and Marjorie Edris made a splash in Palm Springs when they "bought all" of local artist O. E. L. "Bud" Graves paintings (a mention of this purchase is made in the April 1955 *Palm Springs Villager* magazine). Bud Graves is best remembered locally for his many modernist cover illustrations of *Palm Springs Villager* magazines. More importantly, in 1953, William and Marjorie Edris commissioned their friend, local architect E. Stewart Williams, to design a new residence at 1030 West Cielo Drive in



Palm Springs. The modern home was an architecture *tour de force* on the part of architect Williams and was effusively praised in the November 1954 issue of *Palm Springs Villager* magazine. The Edris Residence was ultimately designated a Class 1 Historic Site by the city of Palm Springs, and today is celebrated as one of the finest examples of midcentury "organic" architecture in California. As testament to how much the family enjoyed this area of Palm Springs, the Edris Residence was constructed only 800 feet from the Paul Dougherty Residence.

### Later Owner, Warren Magnuson



**Senator Warren Magnuson (1905-1989)**  
(Official U.S. Government Photograph)

Ownership Information. According to First American Title, Magnuson came "on title" March 30, 1964. The extremely poor (but best available) paper copy of the title indicates only the name Warren Magnuson (i.e., it does not include his wife Jermaine).

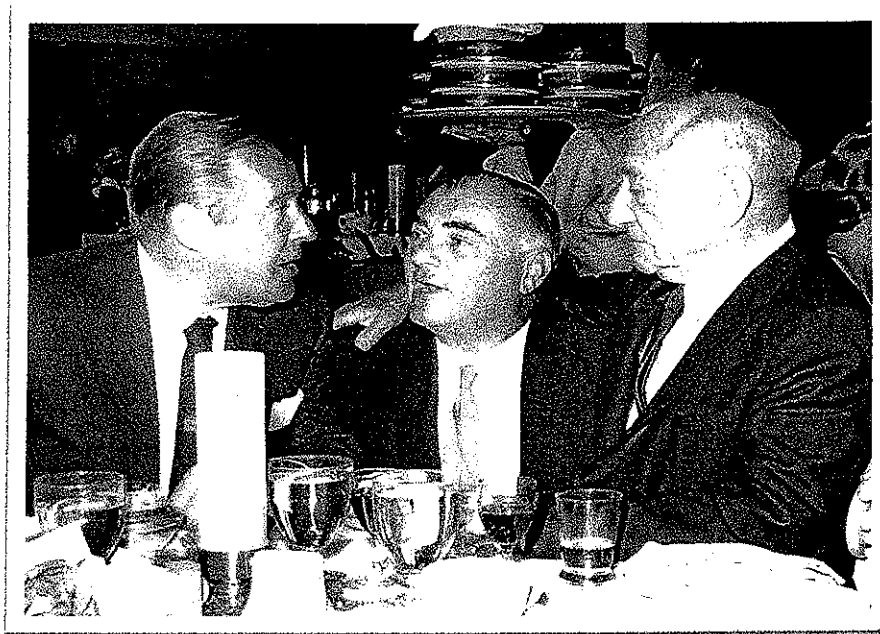
Biographical information. One of the most complete biographies of Warren Magnuson can be found in an essay by author Kit Oldham for the *Encyclopedia of Washington State History*.

"Magnuson was born in Moorhead, Minnesota, where he grew up as the adopted son of William and Emma Magnuson. Magnuson's birth date is given as April 12, 1905, but the actual records of his birth are sealed....Magnuson left the Midwest for Washington [state] [where he] enrolled at the University of Washington (UW) on October 2, 1925... After graduating from law school in 1929, Magnuson landed a job [at] the Seattle Municipal League, which enabled him to establish close relationships with Seattle business and civic leaders, many of them Republicans. He first ran for office in 1932, winning a state House of Representatives seat from Seattle....From the Legislature, Magnuson moved on to become King County Prosecutor, winning a post that had long been held by Republicans, with the support of his Seattle business contacts including prominent Republicans. He served only two years, 1934-1936, before another opportunity arose....Marion Zioncheck (1901-1936), a law school colleague of Magnuson's who had held Washington's First District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1932, was showing signs of serious mental instability. With Zioncheck vacillating on whether to run again, Magnuson entered the race. Two days later Zioncheck announced he would not seek re-election; within the week he committed suicide by jumping from his office window. Magnuson likely felt some guilt; he delivered an emotional speech in his friend's memory. Supported

by left and right...[he] easily won the Democratic primary and the general election.

Magnuson won assignment to the Naval Affairs Committee, where he secured millions of dollars in appropriations for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, at the time the state's largest employer. Magnuson served eight years in the House, easily winning reelection in 1938, 1940, and 1942....By 1944, Representative Magnuson was one of the leading Democratic politicians in Washington state. When Roosevelt appointed Magnuson's mentor Senator Homer Bone to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Magnuson ran for the open Senate seat....Bone waited until Magnuson won the election, then resigned his seat before his term ended so that Magnuson could be appointed ahead of other newly elected senators and gain crucial seniority.

....As throughout his career, Magnuson was careful not to neglect the interests of his businessmen friends. He got the legislature to pass a bill that authorized pari-mutuel betting on horse racing, paving the way for his good friends Joe Gottstein and **Bill Edris** to establish Longacres Race Track. Magnuson also participated in the establishment of a major national corporation, serving as a lawyer and lobbyist for Northwest Airlines, which Bill Stern and another Fargo businessman, Croil Hunter, were organizing.



**Senator Warren Magnuson, William Perlberg (producer of the film *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* and many others) and Joseph Schenk (the film executive that helped launch Marilyn Monroe's career) at the Palm Springs Racquet Club.**

(Photograph by Bill Anderson copyright Palm Springs Art Museum)

In his 36 years in the Senate, Magnuson achieved a record of legislative accomplishment matched by few who served in that body.....He succeeded in part because his long tenure came during an era when seniority and chairing committees carried enormous power. Magnuson chaired the Commerce Committee for many years, and was a key member of the powerful Appropriations Committee, which he eventually chaired. Magnuson's power in Washington, D.C., was enhanced by his close friendships with many of the eight presidents he served under. He regularly played poker with Roosevelt and his successor, Harry S. Truman (1884-1972). The night before John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) was inaugurated, Magnuson was the only guest of the newly elected president and his family -- neither man revealed what they discussed. Magnuson was closest to Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-1973). They were friends and allies from the time they served together on the House Naval Affairs Committee. Even after Johnson be-

came president, Magnuson addressed him as "Lyndon," and Johnson took time from his presidential duties to be Magnuson's best man at his 1964 wedding.

With his Senate legislation, Magnuson changed the face of Washington state. Even before entering Congress, he supported construction of dams on the Columbia River to provide both public hydroelectric power and water to irrigate the fertile but arid Columbia Basin. By 1954, thanks... to Magnuson's work in the Senate, there were eight federally subsidized dams on the Columbia....Magnuson and [Senator] Jackson, who served together for 28 years from Jackson's election in 1952 to Magnuson's defeat in 1980, gave their state one of the most powerful Senate duos in history..."Scoop and Maggie," as they were known, brought a steady stream of contracts for leading state employers, especially Boeing. While Jackson was labeled, often derisively, the "Senator from Boeing," Magnuson also played a key role on the aircraft maker's behalf.

Along with health care, Magnuson is identified with consumer protection, a cause he embraced following his near-defeat in the 1962 election. Magnuson won his first re-election campaign in 1950 and in 1956 he crushed Governor Arthur Langlie, who denounced Magnuson's lifestyle....The focus on consumer protection did not reduce Magnuson's efforts in other areas. He shepherded through a deeply divided Congress the most controversial section of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 — Title II, which outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodation....Magnuson was particularly sensitive to the social and economic dimensions of the Pacific Rim, especially as they affected his home state...[but] Magnuson may have derived the most personal satisfaction from his work to protect the marine environment....Of the many bills for which he was responsible, the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act is one of two (the other is the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act) that bears his name. The Magnuson Act, which increased the government's ability to manage and control fisheries by extending U.S. territorial waters to a 200-mile limit, helped save the American fishing industry. Magnuson also sponsored laws that imposed safety standards for oil tankers and established the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Magnuson won re-election easily in 1968 and 1974...however, the 75-year-old senator was showing the effects of his age and worsening diabetes....And 1980 was a disastrous year for Democrats across the country, as Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) won a landslide victory over deeply unpopular Jimmy Carter and Republicans took control of the Senate. Magnuson lost decisively.

He did not look back. Unlike many former lawmakers, Magnuson did not hang on in Washington, D.C. Instead, after spending some time in their **Palm Springs home**, Warren and Jermaine Magnuson moved into a house on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill....[where] Magnuson led a productive retirement. (Note: emphasis added in bold)

## The Architect

Architect John Porter Clark (1905-1991) remains one of the seminal figures in the history of Palm Springs early modernist architecture, and yet for many, he remains the least known and possibly the most unappreciated. John Porter Clark and his elder sister Ellen were born in Fort Dodge, Iowa to John and Mary Boehn Clark. His father was born in Vermont in 1881; his mother in Germany. By 1920 his family had relocated to Pasadena, California where his mother worked as a nurse, and his sister as a dry goods salesperson. The 1920 census lists his father as unemployed.

Clark completed his high school education (1919-1923) in Pasadena. During those years he worked part-time for Pasadena architects Marston, Van Pelt & Mayberry

(MVM); it was Silvanus Marston, a Cornell graduate who suggested that Clark study architecture at Cornell. Clark was accepted at Cornell (located in Ithaca, New York) and pursued a degree in architecture, graduating in 1928 with a Bachelor of Architecture. By the time he had returned to Pasadena, the MVM partnership had been dissolved, and from 1932 to 1935 he completed his apprenticeship in the office of Garrett Van Pelt now a principal in the architectural firm of Van Pelt and Lind. The MVM firm was known for their traditional, but "emergently modern," designs and Clark's apprenticeship with Van Pelt served him well.



**Architect John Porter Clark**  
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

While working in Pasadena, Clark was invited by P. T. Stevens' daughter Sally and her husband the successful Pasadena realtor Culver Nichols, to relocate to Palm Springs. Because of the Depression, there was actually more work going in in the desert than in Los Angeles; in time the Nichols' and their families became Clark's most important clients. Clark, who was still unlicensed at the time, was able to utilize Van Pelt & Lind's license (with their permission). As a result, Clark became the first of the important regionalist Modernists to open an office in Palm Springs. In 1935 Palm Springs was still a very small town, so it was inevitable that two gifted young architects, Clark and the visiting Albert Frey, would meet. Frey was in town to supervise the construction of the Kocher-Samson Office Building. With the completion of that building, Frey's existing partnership with Lawrence Kocher came to an amicable end due to a lack of work. Clark and Frey then established a tentative partnership based upon a shared compatibility and aesthetic. Among the eight projects that Clark & Frey did together from 1935 through 1937, under the firm name Van Pelt & Lind, were the Guthrie Residence and the San Jacinto Hotel. Offered an opportunity by Phillip Goodwin to return to New York and work on the Museum of Modern Art, Frey left the partnership in April of 1937 and Clark continued his practice as a sole proprietor.

Upon Frey's return to Palm Springs in 1939, the two resumed their partnership. Clark had completed his Architect's Licensing Exam in 1940 and continued to design residential projects but as a licensed architect could also pursue commercial projects and municipal commissions like libraries and schools. The Welwood Murray Memorial Library (1941) was one of the first and most important of his early municipal commissions. As one of the few architectural firms then practicing in Palm Springs,

Clark & Frey were well positioned to receive numerous commissions throughout the region. Frey did not appear on the title blocks as a partner until he completed his licensing exam in 1943. The work produced by Clark, and subsequently by the partnership, was largely modernist, a style that dominated the American architectural scene into the 1960s.

It is safe to say that, regardless of which partner was designing, "Clark & Frey's projects, both before and after WWII were important contributions toward placing Palm Springs architecture on the map as a new frontier for the modern spirit." The influx of post-WWII soldiers and their families led to a building boom in Palm Springs; Clark & Frey received numerous commissions for houses and commercial projects from war workers who relocated to the desert and started small businesses.

Smoke Tree Ranch, a private resort community was also the location of many Clark & Frey houses. Design guidelines for the development required all private residences to be built in traditional ranch style with a pitched shingle roof. However, many of the homes utilized a simple shed-roof concept that became one of Clark's hallmarks.

Clark was a charter member of the Palm Springs Planning Commission between the years 1939-42. During the World War II years of 1942-45, he suspended his practice while serving in the Corps of Engineers of the U.S. Army. In 1945 he reopened the partnership and in 1949 he returned to the Planning Commission where he continued to serve until 1958.

The Clark & Frey partnership expanded in 1952 when Robson C. Chambers (1919-1999) who had been an employee of the firm since 1946, was made a partner. The Los Angeles-born Chambers was raised in Banning, and received his Bachelor of Architecture from USC in 1941, after which he began his apprenticeship with Clark & Frey. Four years later, in 1956, Clark withdrew from the partnership during the firm's most lucrative year of the nineteen years of the partnership. Clark, who had been largely responsible for the administrative and project management aspects of the firm, decided to focus on the more profitable commercial, public and institutional projects. During that last year, the Palm Springs City Hall (today a Palm Springs Class 1 historic site), the firm's largest project was completed. Although the title block on the City Hall drawings credits "Williams, Williams, Williams & Clark, Frey, Chambers, Architects A.I.A.," the design is generally attributed to Albert Frey. Although they were no longer business partners, Clark and Frey remained warm friends as evidenced by their appearance together in 1986 in the "Prickly Pear [Video] Interview Series," a history project sponsored by the Palm Springs Public Library.

Starting in 1956 once again a sole proprietor, Clark designed new offices for his practice in a commercial building located on Luring Drive where he completed a number of important projects, one of which was the Cabazon Library (1958).

In 1972, after 16 years on his own, Clark partnered with Stewart and Roger Williams, practicing under the architectural firm name of Williams, Clark & Williams. Stewart Williams praised Clark, "not just as a designer, but as a salesman, engineer...John Clark was the most trusted man in the Valley...he made people recognize that architects

were an important part of the community.”

John Porter Clark died on June 22, 1991, leaving a superb legacy of important Palm Springs architecture.

*(The foregoing is based on research conducted by architectural historian Patrick McGrew)*

### **The Builder**

Master builder Alvah Hicks (1884-1944) was a very significant figure among the early Palm Springs pioneers. Hicks achieved extraordinary importance in his adopted town during his lifetime, and he continues to be known through successive generations of his family that still reside in Palm Springs. A New Yorker by birth, Hicks moved to Los Angeles in 1912, and in 1913 resettled in Palm Springs with his wife Theresa and his two small sons, Harold and Milton. The growing village had few skilled carpenters, so the industrious and hard-working Hicks became known for the quality of his work leading to a successful career as a contractor; he soon began investing in desert land. Partnering with Prescott Stevens, the two were among the town's earliest developers, building and selling quality homes. In the Las Palmas-Merito Vista tract alone, Hicks built about twenty of the area's most beautiful extant Spanish Colonial Revival homes.



**Alvah Hicks at work in the desert**  
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

Specific to this nomination, Alvah Hicks developed Little Tuscany in the 1930s and early 1940s around the same time he was building in Las Palmas. Hicks had just visited Tuscany in Italy and decided that the homes would be built like Tuscan villas on the rocky hillsides with spectacular views.

The home Hicks built for his family ("Villa Theresa" at 501 North Belardo Road) is today better known as the one-time home of the flamboyant concert pianist Wladziu Liberace.

Hicks has also been credited as the builder of the Desert Inn, The Thomas O'Donnell Residence, the George Roberson Residence (today Le Vallauris) and the Carrie Birge Residence (today the Ingleside Inn). Starting in the early 1920s, Hicks built correctly detailed Spanish Colonial Revival buildings throughout the developing village. An oral history given by Hicks' son Harold in 1967 details those early years (Harold Hicks' interview is archived at the Palm Springs Historical Society). In the interview Harold talks about his father's contracting business and the water problems facing the village due to an absentee water company owner. Harold Hicks recalled that his father: "...worked as a carpenter in the small village and built many of the Desert Inn buildings; he didn't have a great deal of money but he had an admirer in Mr. Tom O'Donnell. My father built his house and he was very much attracted to my father." He recalls that O'Donnell said to Hicks: "Why don't you buy the water company and get everything squared away?" Hicks replied: "That's a good idea but I don't have any money." O'Donnell loaned Hicks the money to buy the company which, at the time, had only 125 customers; in time the company was sold in 1968 for \$6,000,000 and became the Desert Water Agency. "He was a very good businessman," said James Hicks, Alvah's grandson. "He came out here with very little. He got by with his ability as a home builder. It helped that he was the only man in the area who had all the equipment needed for home construction." In an article by writer Shannon Starr entitled "Alvah Hicks Constructed His Palm Springs Destiny," the author asserts that, "His [Alvah Hicks'] gasoline-motor cement mixer and scaffolding helped him build many homes that still stand in Palm Springs." Hicks became a prominent civic leader who served on Palm Springs' first City Council and helped with the village's incorporation in 1938.

*(The foregoing is based on research conducted by architectural historian Patrick McGrew)*

## **Local Historical Context**

According to architectural historian Patrick McGrew:

Important Clark projects from early in this period include five similar Ranch houses in the Little Tuscany neighborhood that constitute a virtual John Porter Clark historic district: all are one-story homes with tile roofs, cement plaster walls, stone chimneys, etc. – but few have any overt Spanish details and express a modern sensibility. Included in this group are the Andrew Jurgens Residence; the Mrs. Louis W. Hill Residence; the [Paul] Dougherty Residence and two residences built for John Hamrick.

The Paul Dougherty Residence is identified as a "Model Home" on a floor plan produced by architect John Porter Clark (that floor plan is provided in the "Architecture" portion of this nomination). As such, it is doubtful that Paul Dougherty had any significant input into the design of the house. Additionally, one of the John Porter Clark blueprints of the residence (annotated with the date "9/2/41") bears the typed notation "WILSON & SORUM House No. 2." "Wilson and Sorum" may have been the general contractors in the effort and "Sorum" is most certainly Raymond Sorum, a locally prominent businessman who also served as the city manager of Palm Springs (see Vol. X–No. 49 of the *Palm Springs Limelight News* of March 24, 1944). "Wilson and Sorum"