



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING SERVICES

### MEMORANDUM

**Date:** October 10, 2017  
**To:** The Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB)  
**From:** Ken Lyon, RA, Associate Planner *Ken Lyon*  
**Subject:** HSPB Work Plan for FY 17/18

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Each summer, staff and members of the HSPB develop a Work Plan to focus the Board's efforts and activities through the coming fiscal year. It is time to develop the work plan for FY 17/18. Typically the work plan has two parts: (1) identification of sites to study for possible Class 1 designation recommendations and (2) Education and Outreach. Staff seeks input from members of the HSPB in developing the FY17/18 HSPB Work Plan with the goal of finalizing the work plan at the November 2017 HSPB meeting.

In recommending and prioritizing possible sites to pursue Class 1 historic site designation, consider:

- Sites that further the purpose of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.<sup>1</sup>
- Sites that are "one-of-a-kind", possess notable characteristics, or are uniquely "Palm Springs".
- Sites that are historically significant but under-recognized, or little known by the public.
- Sites vulnerable or threatened by demolition or are otherwise "at risk".
- Sites that, through designation, can become catalysts for economic development and/or neighborhood improvement / revitalization.
- Sites that reflect a unique period or event in Palm Springs' history.
- Sites with archaeological, biological, cultural or ecological significance.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIORITY SITES TO PURSUE CLASS 1 DESIGNATION FOR FY 17/18.

1. Korakia Pensione (carry-over from FY 16/17).
2. Las Palmas Liquors (carry-over from FY 16/17).
3. 606 Oleander (Animal Hospital).

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<sup>1</sup> 8.05.010 Purpose and authority of the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

*This chapter is adopted pursuant to the authority of Government Code Section 37361 for the purpose of preserving areas and specific buildings of the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, architectural and archaeological history. This chapter is intended 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. (Ord. 140 § 1, 1981)*

4. Temple Isaiah (E.Stewart Williams 1946 sanctuary only).
5. Tennis Club Historic District.
6. Araby Rock Houses.
7. 545 South Calle Palo Fierro ("Concrete log house").
8. Union Bank of California Building.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATION & OUTREACH FOR FY 17/18:

1. Host the 2018 National Preservation Month Symposium.
2. Staff / Board presentation to the Realtor's Board about Historic Preservation and real estate activities.
3. Hosting in winter 2017 State Office of Historic Preservation Workshop. (date and topic to be determined).
4. Participation in Modernism Week Modernism Show at the Convention Center. (October 2017 and February 2018).
5. Participation in Citywide neighborhood picnic (table, handouts, etc.).
6. Outreach to owners of properties identified in the Citywide Historic Resource Survey. (required, staff).
7. Outreach to owners of properties identified in the revised boundaries of the Las Palmas Business Historic District. (required, staff).
8. Launch a web-based platform for public access to the Citywide Historic Resource Survey Content. (coordination with City IT Department).

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER INITIATIVES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR FY 17/18:

1. Define a project and pursue an application for a grant from the Certified Local Government program through the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), list of eligible project types attached.
2. HSPB Subcommittee participation in City Council subcommittee to explore reuse opportunities for the Plaza Theater.
3. HSPB Subcommittee participation in the final phases of the Welwood Murray Memorial Library renovation.
4. Board member and/or Staff training / workshops / seminars / conferences, etc.
5. Ordinance revisions regarding demolition process.

FY 16/17 WORK PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Class 1 historic sites designated or in progress in FY 16/17:<sup>2</sup>

1. HSPB 84 – "The Palm Springs Racquet Club (2743 NICD) (Pending re-hearings).
2. HSPB 99 – "The Tram Way Shell Gas Station" 2796 NPCD.
3. HSPB 100 – Bel Vista Residence I; 1164 N Calle Rolph.
4. HSPB 102 – "The Desert Star Apartments" 1750 – 1844 South Araby Drive.
5. HSPB 103 – HD 6 – "The Park Imperial South Historic District".

<sup>2</sup> The following sites from the 16/17 Work Plan were not started:

1. Las Palmas Liquor, Vista Chino at North Palm Canyon Drive.
2. Korakia Pensione, 257 South Patencio Road.
3. The Burnham Art Colony, 137-47 Tahquitz Drive.
4. The Coachella Savings & Loan, 383 SPCD.
5. The Park View Mobile Home Park Sign (393 West Mesquite Avenue).

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6. HSPB 105 – “The Albert Frey Bel Vista Residence II” 1520 Tachevah Drive.
  7. HSPB 106 - 401 Merito Place.
  8. HSPB 107 – “The Carl Haymond Residence” 1415 North Camino Centro (Pending City Council action).
  9. HSPB 108 “The Steve McQueen Residence” – 2203 Southridge Drive (In process)
  10. HSPB 10 – “The Oasis Hotel Dining Room” 211 – 219 SPCD. (in process).
  11. HSPB 109 – “The Crocker – Citizens National Bank” 1711 EPCD (Pending City Council action).<sup>3</sup>

Education & Outreach efforts achieved in FY16/17:

1. National Preservation Month Symposium.
2. Participation in Modernism Week Modernism Show (October & February)
3. Participation at the Citywide Neighborhood picnic.
4. Individual member participation in conferences.

Attachments:

Photos and data sheets from the Citywide Historic Resource Survey on recommended Class 1 properties.

Projects/initiatives eligible for consideration for CLG Grants.

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<sup>3</sup> HSPB 100, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, were initiated by others.

1. Korakia Pensione - 257 South Patencio Road.



Other Listings  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 3

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Korakia Pensione

**P1. Other Identifier:**

**P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

a. County Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palm Springs Date 1996 T \_\_\_\_\_ ; R \_\_\_\_\_ ; 1/4 of \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec \_\_\_\_\_ ; B.M. \_\_\_\_\_

c. Address 257 South Patencio Road City Palm Springs Zip 92262

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11 ; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

City of Palm Springs Section 15

Parcel No. 513 132 005

**P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Korakia Pensione is located at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains in the area of the old Palm Springs village and is comprised of two adjacent villas with surrounding bungalows and guesthouses. The Moroccan villa, originally named Dar Maroc, was built in 1924-25 by Scottish painter, Gordon Couitts. Inspired by Couitts' experiences in Tangier, Dar Maroc incorporates elements of the North African and Moorish idioms. It was visited by noted dignitaries and artists during its early years. The Mediterranean villa across Patencio Road was built for early screen star J. Carroll Nash in the 1930s and exhibits characteristics of both Southern European and Northern African design. The Moroccan Villa and its surrounding bungalows and guest suites are built around a generally rectangular-shaped plan. The east (main) façade has two volumes. The north volume is distinguished by an elaborate keyhole entrance that houses a pair of ornately carved wooden doors; the roof on this volume is flat with a crenellated parapet on the northeast corner. The southern volume is recessed and distinguished by a projecting corner bay crowned by a cupola; the roof on this volume is flat with an arched band at the roofline. The exterior walls are finished in white stucco. Windows are generally arched with multi-lites and a wood sash. The north and south volumes are separated by a tall arch of uncoursed stone around a carved wood entrance gate. There is a large courtyard in the middle of the complex with gardens and a pool. A low white stucco fence with an uncoursed stone gate encircles the property. A sign announcing "Korakia" is set atop a stone base.

**P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP5 - Hotel/Motel

**P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

**P5a. Photo or Drawing** (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



**P5b. Description of Photo:**

(View, date, accession #)

View Southwest

August 2003

**P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Historic  Prehistoric  Both

1925: Palm Springs HSPB List (1987)  
same per owner information

**P7. Owner and Address:**

G D Smith  
257 South Patencio Road  
Palm Springs CA 92262

**P8. Recorded by:**

Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson  
*Architectural Resources Group*  
Pier 9, The Embarcadero  
San Francisco, CA 94111

**P9. Date Recorded:** August 2003

**P10. Survey Type** (Describe)

Reconnaissance Survey

**P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Architectural Resources Group, City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report, 2004.

**Attachments:**

None  Continuation Sheet  District Record  Rock Art Record  Other (List)  
 Location Map  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Linear Feature Record  Artifact Record  
 Sketch Map  Archaeological Record  Milling Station Record  Photograph Record

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

Page 2 of 3

NRHP Status Code 553

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Korakia Pensione

B1. Historic Name: Dar Marroc/Baristo Castle

B2. Common Name: Korakia Pensione

B3. Original Use: Residential

B4. Present Use: Hotel

B5. Architectural Style: Mediterranean and Moroccan villa

B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

*The Moroccan villa was constructed in 1924; the Mediterranean villa was built in the 1930s.*

B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

B8. Related Features:

Related features include a large central courtyard with gardens and a pool.

B9a. Architect: Owner/Builder

b. Builder: Owner/Builder

B10. Significance: Theme residential / hotel architecture

Area Palm Springs

Period of Significance 1920s-1930s

Property Type hotel

Applicable Criteria A, C

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

For centuries the habitat of the Agua Caliente band of Cahuilla Indians, Palm Springs, site of natural hot springs and sunny desert climate, drew its first non-Indian visitors in the late 19th century. For reasons of improved health and recuperation, the first settlers established early hotels and inns. Not until 1938 did the village of Palm Springs incorporate, setting out a gridded street plan and zoning controls. By then Palm Springs had already acquired an identity as a winter retreat for Hollywood stars and the wealthy, as evidenced by the exclusive older neighborhoods of Old Las Palmas, the Movie Colony, Little Tuscany, and the Tennis Club quarter, initially built for winter residents. Defined by elegant, grand architecture in predominantly Spanish and Mediterranean styles, these and other neighborhoods were later filled in with mid-century Modern homes by the end of the 1960s.

During the post-WWII era, the City of Palm Springs prospered, relying on tourism, resorts, and the appeal of golf, tennis, polo, and other sports to fuel the economy. During the Palm Springs heyday, tourists and Hollywood discovered the desert oasis and full-scale hotels, smaller inns, nightclubs and restaurants prospered. Concurrently, from the 1940s through the 1960s, Palm Springs was transformed into an increasingly urban environment, building schools, hospitals and an airport and other civic amenities. The commercial core of the City, long concentrated along the main thoroughfares of Palm Canyon Drive and Indian Canyon Drive, flourished. Expanding residential development began in the early 1960s when large tracts of popular, reasonably priced, Modernist-style homes were constructed by Jack Meiselman and later, George and Robert Alexander throughout Palm Springs. Tract subdivision development was followed by the establishment of condominiums, initially as second-homes in the 1960s. (See Continuation Sheet)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: HP5 - Hotel/Motel

B12. References:

Architectural Resources Group, *City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report*, 2004. (report contains full bibliography)

B13. Remarks:

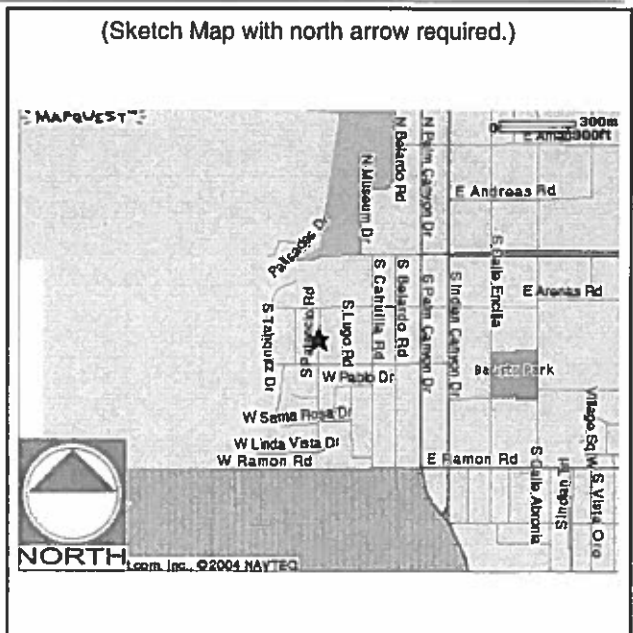
Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson

B14. Evaluator: Architectural Resources Group

Date of Evaluation: August 2003

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)





**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Page 3 of 3

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Korakia Pensione

Recorded by Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson Arch. Resources Group Date August 2003  Continuation  Update

**B10. Significance Continued**

Korakia Pensione is comprised of two previously unrelated villas that were built across the street from each other in 1924 and in the 1930s. They were restored and incorporated into a resort in the late 1980s and 1990s. Both villas reflect the context of residential development in this area from the 1920s through the 1930s, a context that was informed by architectural eclecticism. Though both buildings have changed in use from single-family residence to hostelry, other aspects of integrity, the location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, appear to remain unchanged. The inn retains a high degree of integrity. In addition, because most of the buildings surrounding the properties are consistent in age, scale, and use, the setting of the inn is intact.

The inn at 257 South Patencio appears to meet the level of significance necessary for individual National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources eligibility at the local level. The two separate villas are especially significant as they display architectural styles unique for Palm Springs, Moroccan and Mediterranean, but typical of the architectural eclecticism that flourished in the 1920s and 30s. Consistent with the pattern of residential development that occurred in the City of Palm Springs, the inn is an excellent example of residential buildings of their type, period, or method of construction.

Because of the building's visual quality, history, intact setting, and high integrity, and as a good example of unique residential architecture, the building represents the overall residential development of this neighborhood since the 1920s and conveys the character of early Palm Springs.

vault. The interior features plaster walls, polychrome coffered ceilings, and tiled fireplaces. That same year, Dodd & Richards designed a twin of The Willows for Roland P. Bishop (468 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way). Bishop was a prominent Los Angeles businessman who headed Bishop & Co., Southern California's largest confectioner and purveyor of baked goods, which was acquired by the National Biscuit Co. (NABISCO) in 1930.



Dar Maroc (1924), one of the most exotic designs in Palm Springs, was the home of painter Gordon Coultts. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

One of the most exotic Mediterranean-inspired houses in Palm Springs is Dar Maroc (now the Korakia Pensione at 257 Patencio Drive), the home of Scottish-born painter Gordon Coultts, who after a lifetime of wandering the world spent his last years in Palm Springs. Coultts was born in Aberdeen in the mid-1860s and studied art at the *Académie Julian* in Paris, where he distinguished himself with his landscapes and portraits; he later spent ten years as an art instructor in New South Wales, Australia, and some of his works now hang in the Australian National Art Gallery, the Adelaide National Gallery, and the Melbourne Art Gallery.<sup>101</sup> Coultts moved to San Francisco with his American wife Alice about 1900; after their divorce in 1917, he spent several years living in Spain and North Africa with his second wife, Gertrude.<sup>102</sup> In the early 1920s ill health ended Coultts' travels and brought him to Palm Springs, then a budding artists' colony whose climate and light reminded him of North Africa. He built Dar

<sup>101</sup> Anne Sullivan, "There's A Real Castle in the Desert," *Desert Sun*, May 12, 1978, D1.

<sup>102</sup> "Biography," *Gordon Coultts (1865-1937) Painter*, <http://www.gordoncoultts.com> (accessed July 21, 2015).

SCREENCHECK DRAFT—OCTOBER 13, 2015

## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Marroc in 1924, complete with crenellated walls, horseshoe arches, tiled patios, and tinkling fountains. Coutts settled there with his wife and daughters and hosted a bohemian salon of artists that included *American Gothic* painter Grant Wood, the great English portrait artist Sir John Lavery, and film stars like Errol Flynn and Rudolph Valentino.<sup>103</sup> Coutts died in Palm Springs in 1937.<sup>104</sup> After his death, Dar Marroc was converted into an apartment building.<sup>105</sup>



Willard House (1929). Source: <http://twinlakesgallery.com/history/willards-story/>.

In 1929 photographer Stephen H. Willard built an exceptional Spanish Colonial Revival house at 1701 S. Palm Canyon Drive. Willard was raised in Corona and learned photography in high school. After graduating in 1912 he made photographic trips through the Sierra Nevadas and the deserts of the Southwest. In 1922 he and his wife Beatrice settled in Palm Springs and opened a studio and gallery, and Willard continued his travels to photograph the Colorado and Mojave deserts. His photos, donated to the Palm Springs Desert Museum in 1999, are "not only valuable artistic masterpieces but also a historic record of the desert and mountain

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Carney, "Korakia Dreaming," *Architectural Digest*, May 1996, 144-45; and Niemann, 114.

<sup>104</sup> Sullivan, D1.

<sup>105</sup> Carney, 144. Dar Marroc was purchased by designer G. Douglas Smith in 1989 and rehabilitated as the Korakia Pensione.

SCREENCHECK DRAFT—OCTOBER 13, 2015

## City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

2. Las Palmas Liquor (Vista Chino at Palm Canyon Drive.



**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary# \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI# \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
NRHP Status Code 7R

**Other Listings**

Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 1

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Las Palmas Liquors (Germain Bros. Liquor)

**P1. Other Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

**P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

a. County Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palm Springs Date 1996 T \_\_\_\_\_ ; R \_\_\_\_\_ ; 1/4 of \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_ B.M.

c. Address 1595 North Palm Canyon Drive City Palm Springs Zip 92262

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11 ; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

City of Palm Springs Section 10

Parcel No. 505 165 010

**P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Las Palmas Liquors at 1595 North Palm Canyon, originally Germain Bros. Liquors, is designed in the Modern Style. This commercial building has a boxy envelope and a rectangular footprint with two principal elevations; the shorter, street-facing, east elevation and the longer, glazed north elevation, where five massive piers of natural stone break up the expansive window wall. The north facing elevation consists of floor-to-ceiling windows with the main entrance door in the center and parallels a long, narrow parking lot. The most distinguishing and notable feature of this commercial structure is the broad curvilinear roof that sweeps down from the south side of the building in a smooth curve turning upward where the roofline meets the north wall; it cantilevers outward, sweeping upward, several feet beyond the wall plane. Eight heavy glu-lam beams support the curving roof. The building's dominant horizontal lines are offset by a tall, vertical element that anchors the southeast corner of the building and balances the east elevations; constructed of concrete block, this feature rises several feet above the roofline. Also at the east elevation is a low masonry planter box that spans the façade and contains some plantings. Adjacent to the planter box, a small set of cement steps leads to main entrance of the liquor store.

**P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP6 - 1-3 story Commercial Building

**P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

**P5a. Photo or Drawing** (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



**P5b. Description of Photo:**  
(View, date, accession #)

View Southwest  
March 2004

**P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
c. 1960: Visual Inspection; no year given on Riverside Co. Metroscan

**P7. Owner and Address:**

Germain Bros Inc.  
P.O. Box 2659  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

**P8. Recorded by:**

Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson  
Architectural Resources Group  
Pier 9, The Embarcadero  
San Francisco, CA 94111

**P9. Date Recorded:** March 2004

**P10. Survey Type** (Describe)

Reconnaissance Survey

**P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Architectural Resources Group, City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report, 2004.

**Attachments:**

- None
- Continuation Sheet
- District Record
- Rock Art Record
- Other (List)
- Location Map
- Building, Structure, and Object Record
- Linear Feature Record
- Artifact Record
- Sketch Map
- Archaeological Record
- Milling Station Record
- Photograph Record

3. Temple Isaiah, 1946, E. Stewart Williams Sanctuary.



4. Animal Hospital (606 Oleander)



NEW animal hospital, 606 Oleander Street at Camino Parcela, is shown getting a final check before its official opening. Shown are Warren Coble of Press Construction, contractor, left; Dr. and Mrs. M. S. Jackson, center, who will operate the new hospital for Dr. Paul C. Lockhart, right, owner of the new and modern concept in animal hospitals. Dr. and Mrs. M. S. Jackson also operate their own animal hospital in Rancho Mirage. Architect of the modern building is Robert Ricardi.



## PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #

HRI #

Trinomial

NRHP Status Code 7R

Other Listings

Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Page 1 of 1

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Veterinary Medical Building

P1. Other Identifier:

P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricteda. County Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palm Springs Date 1996 T \_\_\_; R \_\_\_; 1/4 of \_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec \_\_\_; B.M.c. Address 606 South Oleander Road City Palm Springs Zip 92262d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11; mE/ \_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

City of Palm Springs Section 19Parcel No. 680 094 001

P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Located in a busy area characterized by light industry in the vicinity of the airport, the building at 606 South Oleander houses a full-service animal hospital and clinic with a surgery and open-air kennels at the rear. Distinguished by a unique architectural style, this circular single-story building has a steeply pitched folding roof with deep valleys and very deep overhangs making for a quite unusual roof treatment. The exterior walls are composed of regular square concrete block punctuated by aluminum-framed doors and windows. Triangular clerestory windows fill in the space at the top of the walls between the zigzag roofline. Freestanding wing walls extend from the circular geometry of the façade in lines parallel to the streets. A deeper projecting overhang marks the simple double-door entrance, which is angled toward the street corner. The entrance is flanked by floor to ceiling fixed panes. A pair of single doors, one glazed, one solid, are located on either side of the main entrance on the north and west elevations. All fenestration throughout is colored reflective glazing. Simple signage affixed to the building just east of the main entrance spells out, Animal Medical Center. The light gray roll roofing material and light colored exterior block work well together to provide a harmonious appearance but contrasted by colored reflective glazing throughout. Though not located on a main thoroughfare, the building is located on a corner lot and benefits from a pleasant setting with a deep semi-circular sweep of grass at the corner. Parking spaces are perpendicular to the north and west elevations of the building.

P3b. Resource Attributes: HP39 - OtherP4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photo or Drawing (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



P5b. Description of Photo:

(View, date, accession #)  
View Southeast  
March 2004

P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:

 Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
c. 1960  
Visual Inspection

P7. Owner and Address:

K/R  
606 South Oleander Rd  
Palm Springs, CA 92264

P8. Recorded by:

Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson  
Architectural Resources Group  
Pier 9, The Embarcadero  
San Francisco, CA 94111P9. Date Recorded: March 2004

P10. Survey Type (Describe)

Reconnaissance Survey

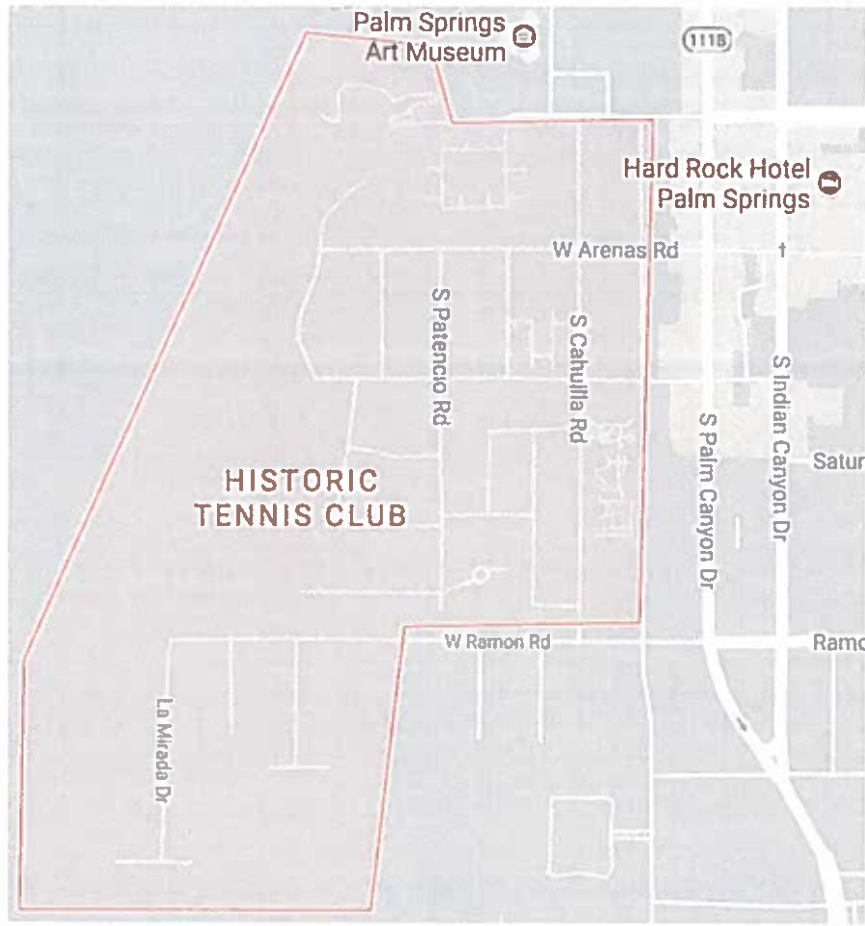
P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Architectural Resources Group, City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report, 2004.

Attachments:

 None  Continuation Sheet  District Record  Rock Art Record  Other (List)  
 Location Map  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Linear Feature Record  Artifact Record  
 Sketch Map  Archaeological Record  Milling Station Record  Photograph Record

5. Tennis Club Historic District





6. Araby Rock Houses.



# The Hidden World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses

californiadesertart.com /

By Ann Japenga

2/1/2015

If you walk the levee behind the Palm Springs PetCo and look toward the mountain you'll see them, but barely: four little rock houses. It looks like boulders tumbled down the hillside and assembled themselves into a hamlet out of a children's story. Aside from one new roof—suggesting occupancy—you'd think the structures were vacant and about to be bulldozed to make way for luxury homes.



The Araby rock house called Casa Contenta. The woman is possibly Perle Wheeler Martin.

I'd puzzled over the hamlet many times over the years. Then I puzzled some more when I heard that Christina Lillian, the glamorous arts patron and friend of Agnes Pelton, had once owned them and rented to artists such as Burt Procter. These four miniature houses are at an intersection where desert art and architecture meet. As I began to search, I discovered that our own Hopi Village (as the builder called it) is in danger of disappearing altogether due to its very hiddenness.

Longtime desert resident Les Starks told me that the houses were built by an unknown master of 1920s and '30s organic architecture in Palm Springs: R. Lee Miller. Les forwarded some old newspaper clippings and encouraged me to try and find out more. "Miller worked in extremely difficult areas to build on and left us some amazing places that are unlike anything else," he said. "His buildings are some of the most unique, well-designed labors of love in the desert. Frank Bogert [the late Palm Springs cowboy mayor] described him as an artist who carved and painted the massive beam structures in old Las Palmas digs for Alvah Hicks and other builders."



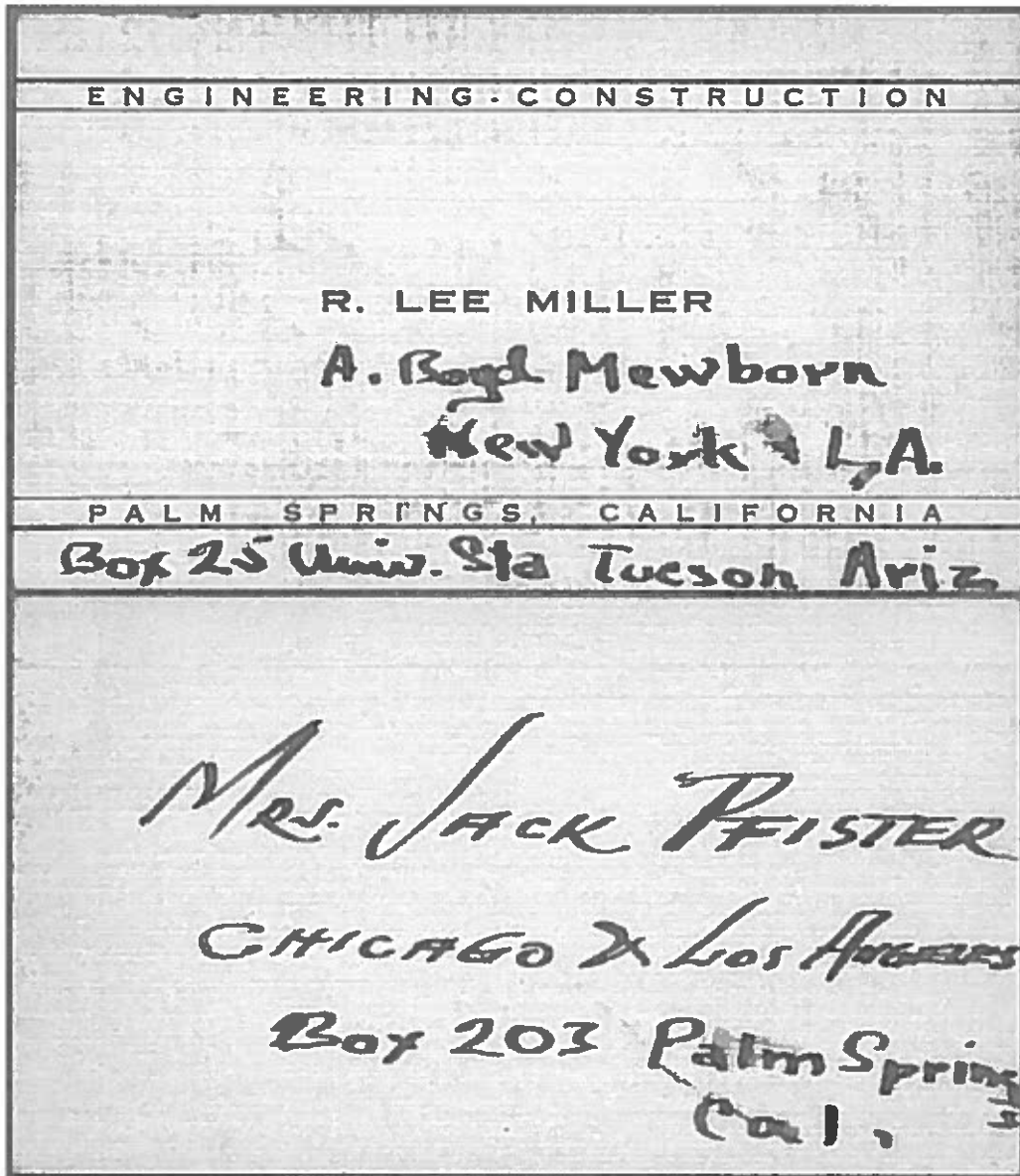
Andreas Canyon Club

In addition to Araby, Miller built homes in the secretive enclave above the Indian Canyons, the Andreas Canyon Club. The private community, founded in 1923, features dwellings that grow right out of the rock, camouflaged like reclusive desert animals. “No one knows they exist because of the way Miller built the houses there—they literally disappear on the hillside,” Les says.

If there is an architecture native to Palm Springs, I’ll vote for Miller’s twin creations: the Araby rock houses and the Andreas Canyon Club. (Miller purchased 330 acres above Ramon Road from the photographer Fred Clatworthy and had a plan to build yet another hillside village there, but it was never completed.) Why, then, in an era of unprecedented architecture worship, is R. Lee Miller forgotten? One reason is that his own story is elusive. Like his hillside dwellings, he was good at disappearing.

Robert Lee Miller was born in Hill, Texas in 1887. He served in World War I and trained in civil engineering, then turned to carpentry when he came to Palm Springs—according to the Palm Springs Citywide Historic Survey (link below). He had no formal training in architecture, yet built many early Palm Springs residences, including the Lawrence Davidson home in the Mesa, constructed for the president of US Steel. This was once the residence of nursery owner Earl Neel and is now home to talk radio personality Joey English.

He built a home next to present-day Moorten’s Botanical Garden for the actor Reginald Owen, and the Casablanca adobe for Pearl McManus, as well as many others. But we’ll leave it to an architecture fan to document the full range of Miller’s contributions. Here we’re interested in his Indian houses, as they were called. The first house was completed by 1925; in 1929 the Desert Sun announced that Miller was building his Hopi Village on 20 acres of hillside he owned in Araby.



Before I say more, please be advised that there is no public access to the rock houses. Once you come to the gated dirt road, you are trespassing and the local residents are quick to call police. The best way to get a glimpse of Miller's creation is from the Araby wash or the levee behind the Smoke Tree Commons shopping center.

The structures look too squat for standard humans, a feature that has led to various Lilliputian legends that are passed down in Palm Springs high schools. A student who wrote a paper on the topic, Ariel Zepeda, says the four-home village reminds him of The Shire, J.R.R. Tolkien's idyllic hobbit town. Why did Lee Miller build a Hopi-hobbit colony of Araby rock? Because he left so few clues, we simply don't know.

We do know that Cabot Yerxa later built his own Hopi-style house in Desert Hot Springs and that he was friends with Burt Procter, so he must have visited the Araby houses. Cabot may have even borrowed the idea from Miller. The borrowing from Hopi and Navajo culture was common at the time. Many local artists were also going off to seek inspiration with the tribes.

The enigmatic Miller does show up now and then in early society columns. In one entry from 1940, we're told that he had long worn an ancient hat ("wide and floppy and discolored") and there was quite a stir around town when he replaced it. "Lee Miller has a new hat...a big and splendidly white new Stetson."



R. Lee Miller and Mrs. Jack Pfister

An archival photo shows R. Lee Miller, "noted artist-architect", with Mrs. Jack Pfister of Chicago: "Sun bathers inaugurate the winter season at Palm Springs, America's Sahara." They are seated on Miller's patio, with Miller dressed in crisp resort wear. Both the photo and the society columns suggest Palm Springs gentry.

Miller's Araby houses were more boho than garden party in style. They featured handcrafted doors, windows and shelves, handcrafted ironwork for the door latches, and handmade fireplace tools and anvils, according to an article in the June, 1992, Palm Springs Life. Writer Margo Matteas talked to Toni King, a New York hairstylist who served a celebrity clientele at her salon in downtown Palm Springs. King lived in one of the Araby cottages for more than 30 years.

Some of the masonry around the houses was stamped with Hopi designs. There's also an equestrian motif, with horseshoes and tie rings embedded in the concrete. The floors were a psychedelic swirl of green, yellow, blue and pink rock. "It's still a mystery as to his method," resident Toni King said.



The rock home of Clarence and Betty Reed in 1953, courtesy of Palm Springs Historical Society

Miller admired the Indians of California, Arizona and New Mexico. He learned Indian ways, King said, "until he, too, could leap up the side of the mountain behind the rock houses like a deer or an antelope. Legend has it he could sprint straight up Tahquitz Falls, all the way to Idyllwild."

While I appreciate this Nature Boy portrayal of Miller, it doesn't quite fit the society dandy in the photos. It's possible the flamboyant Toni King was building her own mythology—or it's possible R. Lee Miller was exactly as described: an ecstatic shaman-architect making mad leaps up Tahquitz Falls.

The rock village seemed to have a special draw for women. One of the original residents, Perle Wheeler Martin, lived in the *Casa Contenta* house for years. After her came the stylish Swedish artist and arts patron Christina Lillian. Then there was Toni King, an expert horsewoman who threw big parties at the house she called *The Cave*. Another resident of 25 years, Virginia Moore, was a Chicago transplant and former fashion model. Both she and Toni King enjoyed sleeping on the roofs of their houses (there's even a rooftop barbecue grill) and carrying around shotguns to chase away intruders. Toni King would arise from her rooftop boudoir and go horseback riding at dawn on her big bay, Abner.



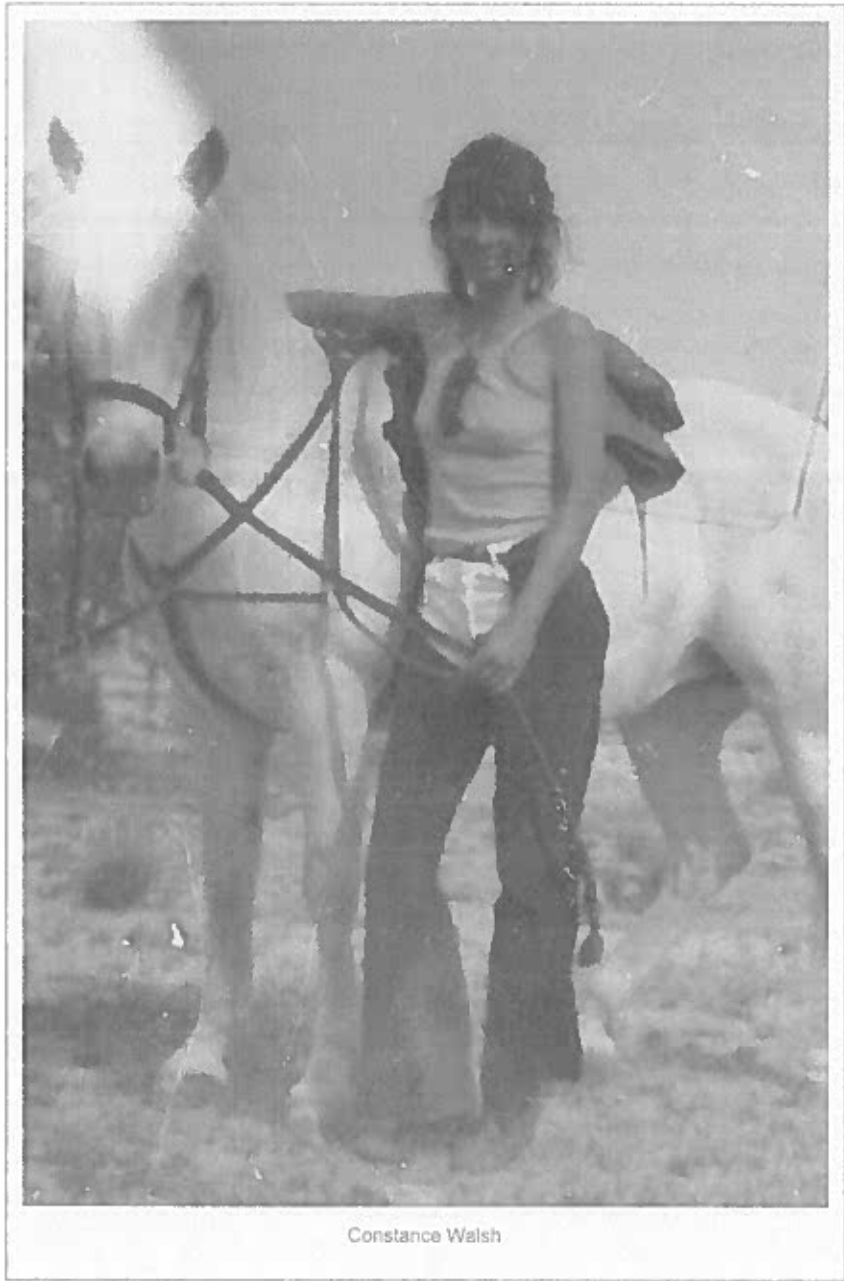


The rooftop barbecue at Casa Contenta

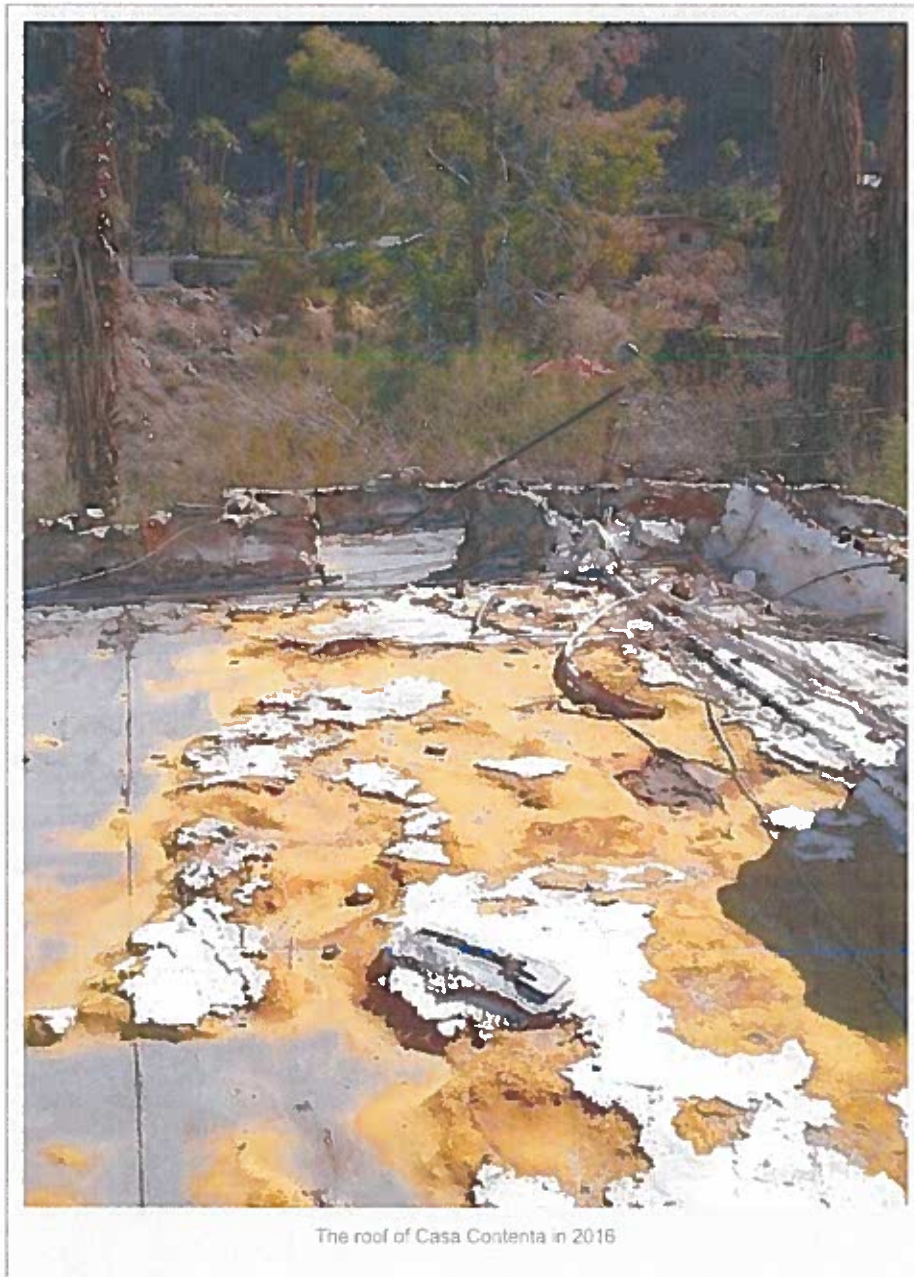




In the years since, a variety of equally vivid residents have made their own rockhouse myths. Constance Walsh, a Joshua Tree artist and writer, lived there in the late 1970s. The gun-toting Toni King gave her a horse, Mucho Gusto. "I loved living there in the eight-by-twelve foot little structure that held everything I needed," she says. "When scorpions the size of baby lobsters started trotting into my room, it was time to go. "



Constance Walsh



The roof of Casa Contenta in 2016

I finally got to visit The Shire one day, after years of ruminating on the colony from afar. A current owner allowed me access and I was both charmed and dismayed by the view up close. It was clear that all but one of the houses had been neglected for some time, with boarded-up windows, crumbling rock walls, dead landscaping and shredded roofs. Palm Springs—the City that mobilizes to save everything midcentury—seems not to have noticed this handmade hobbitville slipping away.

But since that visit in the spring of 2016, hope has arrived in the form of actor and artist Rudy de Rooy. It was local artist Terry Masters (owner of the Desertpainter Gallery at 370 N. Palm Canyon Drive) who suggested Rudy take a look at the rock houses. Rudy contacted the owner and started trimming away brush until a beautiful little stone cottage emerged from the undergrowth. Rudy moved into Burt Procter's former home after hauling out tons of debris and "more dead animals than I've ever seen in my life." For now, Rudy de Rooy is the able custodian of R. Lee Miller's vision.

"These places need to be preserved at any cost and brought back to what they were before," Rudy says. "They deserve to be lived in. They deserve to have a fire in the hearth."



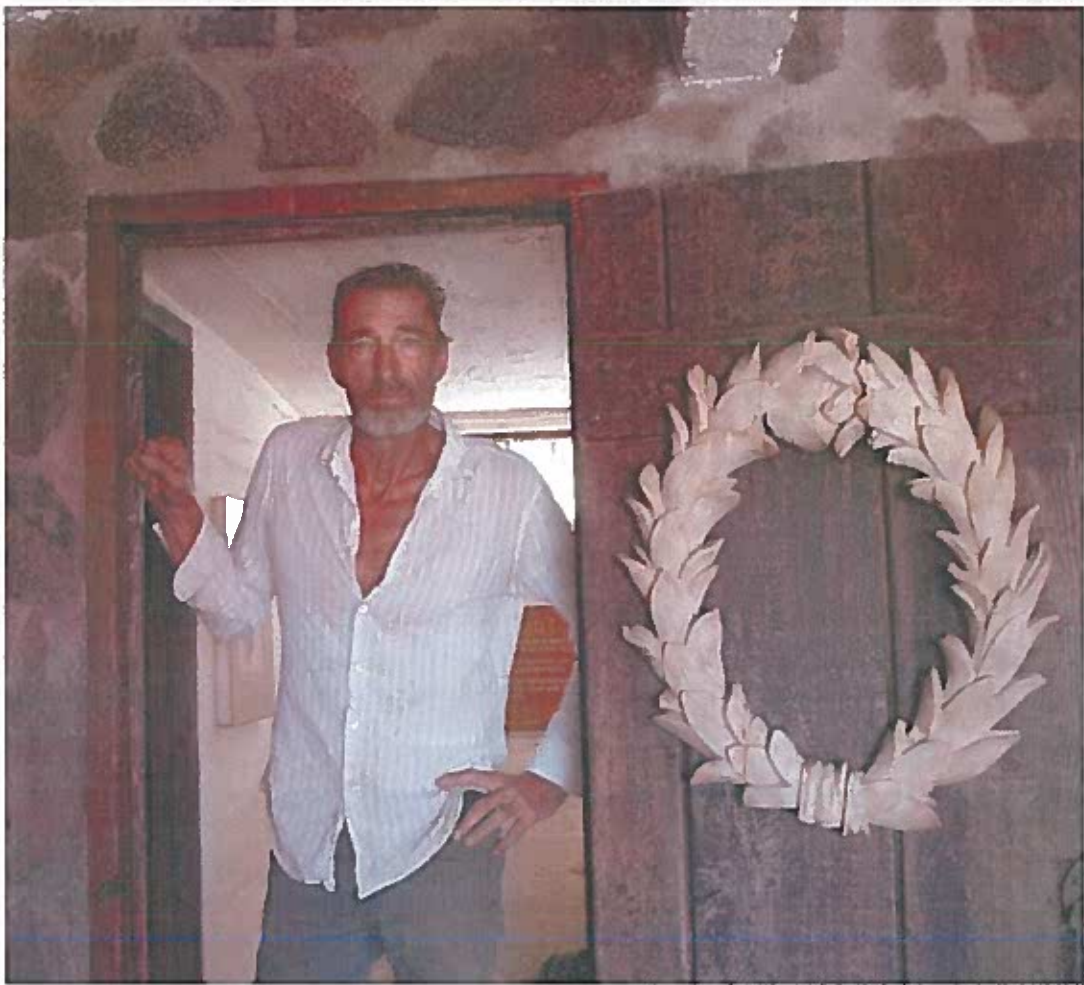
You can find more homes built by R. Lee Miller in Palm Springs' Historic Survey : <http://www.palmsprings-ca.gov/government/departments/planning/historic-resources/draft-historic-resource-inventory>



Rudy de Rooy at Burt Procter's window



Burt Procter's photo of the rock house where he lived.



Rudy de Rooy in the rock house, after clean-up.

7. 545 Calle Palo Fierro





**P1. Other Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

**P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted a. County Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palm Springs Date 1996 T \_\_\_\_\_; R \_\_\_\_\_; 1/4 of \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec \_\_\_\_\_; B.M. \_\_\_\_\_

c. Address 545 South Calle Palo Fierro City Palm Springs Zip 92264

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

City of Palm Springs Section 23

Parcel No. 508 125 016

**P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The single-story residence at 545 South Calle Palo Fierro was constructed in 1928. Built around a generally rectangular-shaped plan, the house has a side-gabled roof with a street-facing gable on the south side of the east (main) façade; the roof is covered by arched red-clay tile; a large gable wall chimney is set into the center of the north elevation. A cut-away porch on the east façade is supported by concrete posts resembling tree trunks. The exterior walls are clad in concrete formed to resemble logs, giving this structure a unique log-cabin character. Windows are a combination of original single-lites with multi-lite transoms and replacement windows. The main entrance door is located in the center of the east façade under the porch; the door is paneled wood, perhaps a replacement, with a small fan-lite at the top. Much of the house is obscured from street view by mature vegetation; there is a small lawn between the house and the sidewalk; a driveway to the north of the house runs from the sidewalk to a garage in the northwest corner of the site. A fence, formed to resemble logs and tree-trunks, buffers the property from the sidewalk; two gates are set into the fence: one accesses a short path leading to the front door and another opens onto the driveway. An interior fence of posts and plastic mesh separates the grass from the driveway area.

**P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP2 - Single Family Property

**P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

**P5a. Photo or Drawing** (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



**P5b. Description of Photo:**

(View, date, accession #)

View West  
August 2003

**P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1928: Palm Springs HSPB List (1987) &  
Riverside Co. Metroscan Datasheet

**P7. Owner and Address:**

Judy A. Munday  
557 South Calle Palo Fierro  
Palm Springs CA 92264

**P8. Recorded by:**

Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson  
*Architectural Resources Group*  
Pier 9, The Embarcadero  
San Francisco, CA 94111

**P9. Date Recorded:** August 2003

**P10. Survey Type** (Describe)

Reconnaissance Survey

**P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Architectural Resources Group, City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report, 2004.

**Attachments:**

- None  Continuation Sheet  District Record  Rock Art Record  Other (List)  
 Location Map  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Linear Feature Record  Artifact Record  
 Sketch Map  Archaeological Record  Milling Station Record  Photograph Record

8. Union Bank of California.



Other Listings

Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 1

Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Security First National Bank

P1. Other Identifier:

P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

a. County Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palm Springs Date 1996 T \_\_\_\_\_ ; R \_\_\_\_\_ ; 1/4 of \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec \_\_\_\_\_ ; B.M. \_\_\_\_\_

c. Address 500 South Indian Canyon Drive City Palm Springs Zip 92262

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11 ; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

City of Palm Springs Section 23

Parcel No. 508 121 001

P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Sited at the prominent corner of two busy thoroughfares, this single-story commercial bank building houses Union Bank of California. Built in 1958 as Security First National Bank, the building exhibits stylistic influence of its era and the modern idiom, such as strong horizontals and geometrics, a series of intersecting volumes, a flat roofline, absence of ornament, and a cantilevered flat overhang supported by a perpendicular wall adorned with highly decorative, deeply carved panels. Though the building initially appears boxy, angled elements and varied volumes combine to create an irregular footprint, resulting in a building of subtle visual interest. The building's two principal elevations are the shorter, north elevation, facing Ramon Road and the longer, more massive, windowless west elevation looking to Indian Canyon Drive, where the bold sans serif capital lettering on the wall creates a powerful street presence and conveys the reliability of the banking institution. The north elevation's cantilevered overhang wraps the building at the northeast corner and the covered walkway leads to the east side of the building. The main entrance door is a window wall with aluminum framing set with a pair of glazed doors. Raised a few steps over ground level, the east elevation entrance is shaded by a deep flat overhang that follows the building's contours at the northeast corner. Notable for its use of materials, the building incorporates courses of regularly laid masonry units of light, but slightly variegated, color, smooth stucco finish painted pink, and accents of natural stone as in the pier adjacent to the entrance and as a landscaping element. Native stone is used below the slightly elevated walkway that wraps the corner. Mature palms and native desert plants complement the architecture.

P3b. Resource Attributes: HP6 - 1-3 story Commercial Building

P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photo or Drawing (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



P5b. Description of Photo:

(View, date, accession #)

View Southeast  
March 2004

P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:

Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1958: Palm Springs Modern Committee;  
no year given on Riverside Co.

P7. Owner and Address:

Sierra Nevada Developers LLC  
600 South Arlington Ave  
Reno, NV 89509

P8. Recorded by:

Maley/Petrin/Tinsley/Watson  
*Architectural Resources Group*  
Pier 9, The Embarcadero  
San Francisco, CA 94111

P9. Date Recorded: March 2004

P10. Survey Type (Describe)

Reconnaissance Survey

P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Architectural Resources Group, City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Summary Report, 2004.

Attachments:

- None  Continuation Sheet  District Record  Rock Art Record  Other (List)  
 Location Map  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Linear Feature Record  Artifact Record  
 Sketch Map  Archaeological Record  Milling Station Record  Photograph Record

October 10, 2017 – Historic Site Preservation Board, Annual Work Plan FY17/18

Following is a summary from the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) of projects or initiatives eligible for Certified Local Government (CLG) grants. Further detail is available on the OHP Website.

#### HOW MUCH MONEY IS AVAILABLE?

The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) is required by federal law to pass through at least 10% of its annual Federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) allocation to Certified Local Governments (CLGs) for Historic Preservation Fund-eligible activities. California has elected to distribute this money to CLGs through the competitive CLG grant program. As of the publication date of this guide, the federal government had not approved the 2017-2018 Heritage Preservation Fund (HPF) appropriation. The exact amount of money that will be available for CLG grants is contingent on the amount OHP receives from the Federal Government. Based on previous appropriations, OHP anticipates that, at a minimum, \$150,000 will be available to fund grants for CLG projects in amounts from \$2,500 - \$40,000.

#### WHAT WILL BE FUNDED?

OHP will consider applications for the following types of projects as well as projects which involve new or innovative approaches and activities intended to promote the identification, evaluation, and preservation of historic resources and facilitate the integration of historic preservation planning into broader land-use planning activities and decisions making:

- General Plan Historic Preservation Elements
- Ordinance Revisions
- Historic Contexts and Surveys
- National Register of Historic Places
- District or MPD Nominations
- Archaeological Preservation Plans
- Ordinances
- Design Guidelines for Historic Properties
- Preservation Education and Outreach Programs
- Historic Structure Reports/HS Preservation Plan
- Information Management and Technologi

#### WHAT WILL NOT BE FUNDED?

Due to limited funds, OHP will not fund proposals for the following types of projects:

- Construction, restoration, rehabilitation, or stabilization of buildings and structures
- Acquisition of historic properties
- Purchase of computers, or other equipment costing more than \$5000
- National Register nominations for individual properties
- Travel or registration costs for staff or commissioner training.