



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING SERVICES

### MEMORANDUM

**Date:** November 14, 2017  
**To:** The Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB)  
**From:** Ken Lyon, RA, Associate Planner *Ken Lyon*  
**Subject:** Case HSPB 108 – The Steve McQueen Residence at 2203 Southridge Drive  
Historic Resources Report

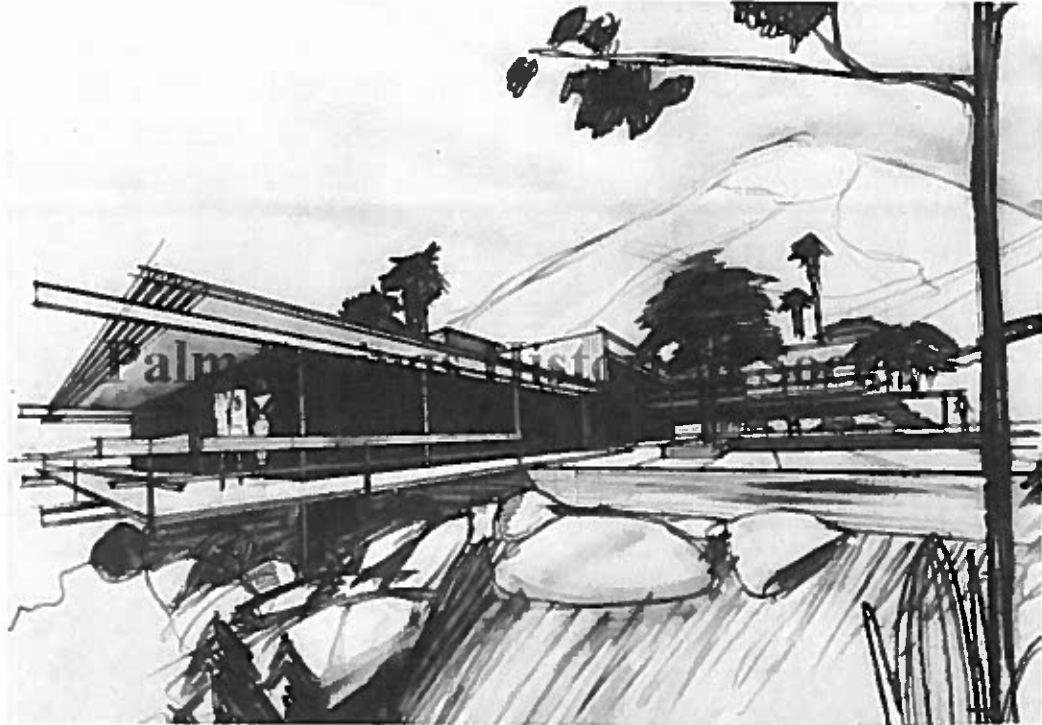
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Please find attached the historic resources report prepared by the professional consulting firm of Historic Resources Group (HRG) on the subject site.

Recommendation:

Receive the report and direct staff to schedule a noticed public hearing of the HSPB to consider the report.

The availability of the site for visits by staff and members of the HSPB will be confirmed after consultation with the property owner.



**HISTORIC RESOURCES ASSESSMENT – SCREENCHECK DRAFT NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION**

**2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**  
**October 25, 2017**

**HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP**

**PREPARED FOR**

**City of Palm Springs  
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Road  
Palm Springs, CA 92262**

**HISTORIC RESOURCES ASSESSMENT – SCREENCHECK DRAFT NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION**

**2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**

**HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP**

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## INTRODUCTION

At the request of the City of Palm Springs Planning Department, Historic Resources Group (HRG) has evaluated 2203 Southridge Drive in the City of Palm Springs, California, for potential historic significance. The conclusions of this report are based on a review of the relevant historic contexts, including an analysis of the eligibility criteria for designation as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site. HRG was unable to conduct a site visit of 2203 Southridge Drive for this report.<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

The single-family residence located at 2203 Southridge Drive was originally built as a speculative venture for Thomas Griffing and the Southridge Development Corporation in 1964. Owners of the property include music executive Edwin Morris (from 1965-1969), and Steve McQueen (from 1969-1976). The one-acre parcel (APN 510-250-034) is located on the northwest side of Southridge Drive. The building is Mid-century Modern in style and was designed by architect Hugh Kaptur. The building is associated with several contexts in Palm Springs: residential development, including Palm Springs' association with the entertainment industry in general, and the development of Southridge Estates specifically; and Modernism in Palm Springs, including the Mid-century Modern architectural style, and as the work of prominent architect Hugh Kaptur.

### Residential Development

#### The Entertainment Industry in Palm Springs

During the early days of movie making, Palm Springs was a favored location for silent films set in Middle Eastern or African locales and it wasn't long before members of the Hollywood community were coming out to the resort to vacation. 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>2</sup> By the end of the 1920s, the village had become a favored winter weekend retreat for the burgeoning film industry, offering privacy and relaxation, warm winter

<sup>1</sup> The property is located in Southridge Estates, which is a gated community. It is not visible from the public right-of-way, and access to the site was not granted as part of this project.

<sup>2</sup> City of Palm Springs, *Draft City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement*, prepared by Historic Resources Group, November 2015, 168.

sunshine, and stunning natural beauty just a few-hour drive from Los Angeles. This allowed actors to get away while complying with the “two-hour rule,” the contractual obligation to be available on short notice for filming or publicity purposes. Many of the Hollywood celebrities and executives who vacationed in Palm Springs eventually rented or bought seasonal homes in early neighborhoods including Las Palmas Estates (Old Las Palmas); and the area south and east of the Hotel El Mirador that housed so many celebrities it became known as the Movie Colony.

Palm Springs’ popularity as a favorite destination for the entertainment industry crowd continued after World War II and through the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> A number of celebrities became intimately associated with the town and helped to promote its growth and popularity during this period. Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, and Dinah Shore all maintained homes in the desert and actively promoted golf tournaments and the city’s “postwar swank image.” By the post-World War II period, celebrity vacation homes were found throughout many neighborhoods in Palm Springs, in addition to the Movie Colony and Las Palmas Estates. These include Deep Well Ranch Estates, the Mesa neighborhood, Little Tuscany, and Smoke Tree Ranch. In the late 1950s, Vista Las Palmas, a tract developed by the Alexander Construction Company, began to attract celebrity residents. With the expansion of the village southward in the 1960s, the gated community of Southridge Estates became attractive to celebrities as well.

The city actively cultivated its glamorous Hollywood image through marketing efforts and even promoted the individual homes of celebrities on tourist postcards which were then mailed all over the country. One compilation touted the Palm Springs as “The Playground of the Stars.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Southridge Estates

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 desirable for homebuilders and buyers. Southridge Estates capitalized on these trends to create an exclusive neighborhood in the City

<sup>3</sup> City of Palm Springs, *Draft City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement*, prepared by Historic Resources Group, November 2015, 336.

<sup>4</sup> Judy Artunian and Mike Oldham, *Palm Springs in Vintage Postcards* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia), 2005, 105.

of Palm Springs. On land sold to them by realtor Russell Wade, developers E. Allan Petty, Richard E. Rahn, and William Anable established the tract, which consisted of 22 parcels.

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 unequalled anywhere in the desert...underground utilities, A-1 engineering of the streets and lots and proper deed restrictions.”<sup>5</sup> An artist’s rendering of the development shows Mid-century Modern homes on commanding lots with mountain and city views. The first home constructed in what would become Southridge Estates was the Max Stoffel Residence (1961-62, Ross Patton and Duke Wild). According to the *Desert Sun*, Patton and Wild, general contractors, were “appointed by owners Richard Rahm, Alan Petty and William Anable to design and build Southridge Homes.”<sup>6</sup>

2203 Southridge Drive was built as a speculative home by developer Thomas Griffing, who already lived in Southridge Estates in a Patton and Wild-built home.<sup>7</sup> Griffing never occupied 2203 Southridge Drive;<sup>8</sup> the house was advertised in the 1965 *Desert Sun* as an “executive showplace” with “a forever view.”<sup>9</sup>

A burgeoning Palm Springs population had made it harder to maintain the privacy that had traditionally been afforded the wealthy and famous residents of the city. As a result, the gated and guarded Southridge Estates appealed to those residents seeking maximum privacy, and the neighborhood became home to several celebrities. The development also boasts work by prominent architects of the post-World War II era. Among them are the David Jansen Residence (Edward Giddings, 1968), Arthur Elrod Residence (1968, John Lautner), the William Holden Residence (1977, Hugh Kaptur), and the Bob Hope Residence (1979, John Lautner). By February 1970, ads for Southridge lots in the *Desert Sun* leveraged the celebrity cachet: “Southridge...City’s finest area 6 remaining lots reduced to sell at \$17,000 to \$50,000. Some of your neighbors? Steve McQueen, Bob Hope, David Janssen and Arthur Elrod.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Residents of 2203 Southridge Drive**

#### Edwin H. “Buddy” Morris (1906-1996)

Edwin H. “Buddy” Morris, the second owner and first occupant of 2203 Southridge Drive, lived there from about 1965 until 1969. The Pittsburgh-born Morris was a music-publishing executive who began his career with Warner Brothers Pictures. In 1940, Morris established Edwin H.

<sup>5</sup> Ad for Southridge, *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> “Untitled,” *Desert Sun*, November 3, 1961, no page.

<sup>7</sup> “Advertisement,” *Palm Springs Life*, May 1964, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Kaptur, interview by Sian Winship, July 6, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> “Advertisement,” *Desert Sun*, March 12, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> “Advertisement,” *Desert Sun*, February 6, 1970.

Morris & Co. which was responsible for a stable of the most popular songwriters in America: Ira Gershwin, Sammy Cahn, Jule Styne, Jimmy Van Heusen, and Johnny Mercer. Among the hit songs that Morris published were "Tenderly," "Sentimental Journey," "The Christmas Song," "The Man That Got Away," and "One for My Baby." Morris was also associated with musical theater and published such Broadway musicals as *Guys & Dolls*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *Bye, Bye Birdie*, *Hello Dolly*, *Mame*, *Grease*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Annie*.

Morris and his artist wife, Carolyn, moved to Palm Springs in 1952, commuting frequently to New York to direct the activities of his firm.<sup>11</sup> At the time Morris purchased 2203 Southridge Drive, he was publishing the music for five Broadway shows including *Hello Dolly*, *Golden Boy*, *I Had a Ball*, *Ben Franklin Goes to Paris*, and *Bajour*.<sup>12</sup>

Morris was also active in the development of the Bob Hope Desert Classic. He was recruited by founder Milt Hicks to be one of the first financial backers of the golf tournament in 1960. Morris joined the Classic's Board of Directors in January of 1969.<sup>13</sup> Morris sold his publishing company to Paul McCartney in 1976.<sup>14</sup> He passed away in Thousand Oaks in 1996 at the age of 89.

Morris sold 2203 Southridge Drive to actor Steve McQueen in 1969.

#### Steve McQueen (1930-1980)

The Hollywood actor known as "The King of Cool" was born Terrence Steven McQueen on March 24, 1930 in Beech Grove, Indiana. McQueen inherited his love of speed and danger from his father, who worked as a stunt pilot. He spent much of his troubled youth in reform schools and was remanded to the California Boys Republic in Chino, California. At the age of 16, he left Chino and worked his way across the country doing odd jobs. McQueen served in the United States Marine Corps from 1947-1950.

In 1955, McQueen was accepted at the exclusive Lee Strasberg Actors Studio and used funds from the G.I. Bill to pay for his training. McQueen got his first real break in the low-budget movie *The Blob* (1958). From 1958 to 1961, McQueen starred in the television show *Wanted*

<sup>11</sup> "Classic Gets New Director," *Desert Sun*, January 11, 1969.

<sup>12</sup> "Morrises Are Entertaining New Yorkers," *Desert Sun*, February 13, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> "Morrises Are Entertaining New Yorkers," *Desert Sun*, February 13, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> "Edwin 'Buddy' Morris; Found Music Publishing Firm," *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1996.



*Dead or Alive*. These early projects led to starring film roles in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *Hell Is for Heroes* (1962), and *The Great Escape* (1963). McQueen's fame continued to rise through the mid-1960s with *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), and what many consider his signature role, that of "maverick, taciturn detective" in *Bullitt* (1968).<sup>15</sup> McQueen received an Academy Award nomination for *The Sand Pebbles* in 1966. That same year, McQueen was asked to add his foot and handprints to the legendary court of Graumann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. According to cumulative box office receipts, the top grossing actors of 1968 were, in descending order: Dustin Hoffman, Faye Dunaway, Steve McQueen, Warren Beatty, Peter Fonda, Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda and Natalie Wood.<sup>16</sup>

McQueen's association with action films was reinforced by his own interest in auto racing and motorcycles. McQueen was fond of saying, "Racing is life; anything before or after is just waiting."<sup>17</sup> McQueen's interest in motorcycle racing and outdoor activities made Palm Springs and the Mojave Desert an attractive getaway. His first home in the area was at 811 Grace Circle, where he boasted he could "get on his bike in the nearby wash and ride away."<sup>18</sup> His love of motorcycles earned him the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in August 1971. In 1978, McQueen was inducted into the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame.

In 1956, McQueen married his first wife, Broadway star Neile Adams. Prior to the arrival of their first child in 1959, they purchased their first Los Angeles home on Skyline Drive in Laurel Canyon. By 1960, they had moved to a Mid-century Modern style home at 2419 Solar Drive (1958, Buff, Straub and Hensman). In 1961, McQueen purchased the Palm Springs Grace Circle property, designed by Palmer and Krisel for the Alexander Construction Company.

With his fame and fortune on the rise, McQueen upgraded both his Los Angeles and desert homes. In February 1963, the McQueens moved to 27 Oakmont Drive in the exclusive Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles.<sup>19</sup> In August of 1969, he purchased 2203 Southridge Drive as his desert getaway. The large carport and parking area surely appealed to McQueen's

<sup>15</sup> IMDB, Steve McQueen biography, <http://www.imdb.com/stevemcqueen> (accessed June 27, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Marc Eliot, *Steve McQueen: A Biography*, (New York, NY: Crown Archetype, 2011), 212.

<sup>17</sup> IMDB, Steve McQueen biography, <http://www.imdb.com/stevemcqueen> (accessed June 27, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Robert F. Jones, "Harvey on the Lam," *Sports Illustrated*, August 23, 1971.

<sup>19</sup> Neile McQueen Toffel, *My Husband My Friend*, (New York, NY: Athenaeum, 1986), 117.

love of cars and motorcycles. According to Neile, by this time, McQueen's fame necessitated that his homes be isolated from the general public.<sup>20</sup> In her memoir, she says:

*We bought a new vacation house in Palm Springs, a much bigger and grander one than I cared to own in the desert. The house was in a new development called Southridge, which was located on a private road with a guardhouse at the entrance to the development. Since Steve had become a giant star it had become necessary to isolate our houses from the general public. Otherwise we found ourselves at the mercy of crazies who thought it was their right to come to our house and demand to meet Steve because "I'm a big fan and I came all the way from Michigan to meet him!" – which happened many a time.<sup>21</sup>*

For additional privacy, McQueen also purchased the empty lot next door. The McQueens hired interior designer Peter Shore – with whom they had worked in Brentwood – to design the interiors of the Southridge house. In her memoir, Neile recalled that McQueen requested the design of the desert home reflect his interests and personality.<sup>22</sup>

McQueen gave his famous *Sports Illustrated* interview at Southridge Drive. The reporter described the house as "... some decorator's dream come surrealistically true. There are kongoni skulls and zebra skin pillows, the mounted head of a Boone and Crockett-class bighorn sheep, and a gold-plated Winchester 30-30 'presentation model' hanging on one wall."<sup>23</sup>

In 1972, following his divorce from Neile, McQueen retained the Southridge residence. In 1973, he married actress Ali MacGraw (b. 1939); the couple met on the set of *The Getaway*. When not at their secluded beach house in Trancas, north of Malibu, the couple frequented 2203 Southridge Drive. McQueen owned 2203 Southridge Drive until December of 1976.<sup>24</sup> During the period McQueen lived at 2203 Southridge Drive he appeared in seminal films such as *The Reivers* (1969), *Le Mans* (1971), *The Getaway* (1972), and *Papillon* (1973).

McQueen and MacGraw's marriage ended in 1978. In 1979, McQueen was diagnosed with pleural mesothelioma, a rare lung cancer associated with asbestos exposure. By February 1980, the cancer had metastasized. McQueen sought non-traditional treatments in Mexico. When large

<sup>20</sup> Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential*, (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 271.

<sup>21</sup> Toffel, *My Husband, My Friend*, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Toffel, *My Husband, My Friend*, 178.

<sup>23</sup> Robert F. Jones, "Harvey on the Lam," *Sports Illustrated*, August 23, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> Deed from Steven T. McQueen to Harold E. Plummer and Irene M. Plummer, dated December 1976. Doc.# 1976-189604, Riverside County Recorder.

tumors developed in his abdomen, he again sought treatment in Mexico. He died in Ciudad Juarez after surgery on November 7, 1980 at the age of 50.

### **Modernism in Palm Springs**

#### Mid-Century Modern Architecture

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 ornamentation on the exterior. 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.

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 Arts and Architecture magazine’s pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966). The style gained popularity because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials allowed for 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.

Mid-century Modernism proved especially popular as an architectural style in Palm Springs. Architects who would be central to the development of Palm Springs modern architecture arrived in the city during the 1930s, launching a fertile and innovative era. 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 growth of Modern design in ensuing decades. The environmental and economic conditions in Palm Springs were conducive to innovative architecture in custom, tract home, and commercial projects.

Architect Hugh Kaptur, AIA (b.1931)<sup>25</sup>

2203 Southridge Drive was designed by architect Hugh Kaptur, AIA (b. 1931). Kaptur is a prolific Palm Springs-based architect whose work includes more than 200 residences and over 40 commercial projects. Kaptur's reflection on his work that "he didn't want all of [his] buildings looking the same" accurately represents a design legacy that evolved over fifty years of practice.<sup>26</sup> Kaptur's designs are rooted in a modern design aesthetic, but reveal the architect's appreciation for the Organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, indigenous architecture, Arizona modernism, and expressive volumetric forms.

Hugh Michael Kaptur was born on May 22, 1931 in Detroit, Michigan. Kaptur's father was a design engineer in the Packard and General Motors (GM) studios. Encouraged by his mother to pursue a career in architecture, Kaptur took drafting classes at Denby High school, graduating in 1949. He furthered his architectural and engineering education at Lawrence Institute of Technology from 1949-1951 and 1954-1956. His studies were interrupted by his enlistment in the United States Marine Corps from 1951-1954. During his service, Kaptur was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California but also traveled to Hawaii, Japan, and Korea.

In May of 1953, Kaptur married Rosemarie Hutton in Orange, California. The same year, Kaptur's in-laws were responsible for the designer's first commission: a new San Clemente office building for their growing real estate business. After his honorable discharge from the Marines in 1954, Kaptur worked briefly in a nursery in Orange County, then returned to Detroit to work in General Motors' styling division. At GM, he did not work in automotive design, but rather in the exhibit and design division that was responsible for traveling exhibits (such as Motorama), and for Frigidaire appliances.

During a 1956 trip to Palm Springs, Kaptur decided to stay in the desert community where building opportunities were plentiful. He found employment at the local firm of Wexler and Harrison,<sup>27</sup> where he was introduced to a rigorous post-and-beam architecture of steel and glass.<sup>28</sup> After about six months, however, he was laid off due to a recession. To support his young family, Kaptur provided design and drafting services for local builders and developers — including plans

<sup>25</sup> AIA refers to the American Institute of Architects.

<sup>26</sup> *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh M. Kaptur*; This and That Films, LLC, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Frank M. Lopez, Hugh M. Kaptur Collection Finding Aid, Palm Springs Art Museum, Updated May 2017, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh M. Kaptur*; This and That Films, LLC, 2014.

for Noel Clarke's Ranch Club Estates, an ambitious 500-acre development on the north side of the city.

His first known independent building for the desert community was the Impala Lodge (a.k.a., Triangle Lodge, 1957-58, 555 E. San Lorenzo Road), which features strong geometric forms. This commission was followed by a series of residences, including a period of experimentation with post-and-beam architecture influenced by the work of Palmer and Krisel.<sup>29</sup>

In the documentary *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, Kaptur remembers "courting the developers up at Southridge." These efforts resulted in the commission for the design of 2203 Southridge Drive for builder Thomas Griffing.<sup>30</sup> Kaptur's plans for this residence (built in 1964) date to 1962. Kaptur recalls, "I was pretty young then, and I was still learning by looking at other architects. Here I was experimenting with the Neutra look, with a lot of floor-to-ceiling glass and floating elements."<sup>31</sup> Kaptur also remembers the design as his "...venture into the LA influence...most of the people who came to the desert in those days came from Los Angeles..."<sup>32</sup> Yet, Kaptur's plan for 2203 Southridge Drive also drew inspiration from Frank Lloyd Wright, with the hearth as the core and the wings of the house radiating from it.<sup>33</sup>

2203 Southridge Drive was the subject of a five-page article in the August 1965 issue of *American Journal of Building Design*.<sup>34</sup> The article explained how the 5,000 square-foot, two-level home was built on a precarious site located 325 feet above Palm Springs. The article described the house as a "...bold, straightforward approach in design and construction technique to conquer a rugged, highly precipitous building site."<sup>35</sup> Built at a cost of \$25 per square foot, it also included 1,200 square feet of parking area, 1,600 square feet in decks, and 1,600 square feet in patios. The article observed that Kaptur's design made it possible to economically expand the building area and frame the house in three days.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Morris Newman, "Modern Master," *Palm Springs Life*, January 31, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Kaptur partnered with developer Thomas Griffing on another speculative residence at 521 Via Lola in Palm Springs, which was featured in the April 1964 issue of *Palm Springs Life*.

<sup>31</sup> Alison Engel, "The Great Escape," *Palm Springs Life*, November 18, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Hugh Kaptur, interview by Sian Winship, July 6, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Hugh Kaptur, interview by Sian Winship, July 6, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> "Technical Skills Conquer Rugged Mountains for Spectacular View," *American Journal of Building Design*, August 1965, 7-11.

<sup>35</sup> "Journal Spots P.S. Home Sites," *Desert Sun*, August 26, 1965.

<sup>36</sup> "Journal Spots P.S. Home Sites," *Desert Sun*, August 26, 1965.

Kaptur was able to use more expensive construction materials (including steel framing) on Southridge Drive, reflecting the speculative nature of the commission targeted at high-end buyers.<sup>37</sup> His design included extra strong welds at the column and beam connections, and holes cut into the steel beams to accommodate building systems while expressing the structure and maintaining the appearance of a thin floor plate.<sup>38</sup>

From the beginning of his career in Palm Springs through the mid-1960s, Kaptur worked without an architecture license. In 1961-1962, Kaptur formed a partnership with licensed architect Robert Ricciardi (b. 1935) that enabled him to secure the municipality's commission for Palm Springs Fire Station #3.<sup>39</sup> Kaptur and Ricciardi's partnership was less collaborative than his later partnership with Lawrence Lapham; Kaptur and Ricciardi worked separately on their own projects.<sup>40</sup>

In the documentary film *A Quiet Elegance*, Kaptur described how he became a licensed architect. During a visit by a deputy from the California Architects Board, Kaptur conveyed he lacked the required two-years of experience working with a licensed architect; however, the deputy encouraged him to take the exam anyway. Kaptur passed, and was licensed in 1966; he joined the AIA in 1968.

From 1965-1975, Kaptur formed a partnership with Lawrence Lapham under the firm name Kaptur, Lapham & Associates.<sup>41</sup> During this period, Kaptur's projects included several high-end private residences in Thunderbird Ranch (located in Rancho Mirage), and Eldorado Country Club (located in Indian Wells). Many of Kaptur's designs from this period reflect his preference for desert architecture inspired by Arizona, as opposed to the glass and steel International Style Modernism of Los Angeles.

Kaptur's later designs reflect greater experimentation with opaque, abstract forms and volumes. This is reflected in the Tahquitz Plaza (HSPB #97) at 600, 650, 700 and 750 East Tahquitz

<sup>37</sup> Kaptur's other hillside commissions, including those along Palisades Road, were primarily wood frame construction.

<sup>38</sup> "Technical Skills Conquer Rugged Mountains for Spectacular View," *American Journal of Building Design*, August 1965, 7-11.

<sup>39</sup> Frank M. Lopez, Hugh M. Kaptur Collection Finding Aid, Palm Springs Art Museum, Updated May 2017, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Hugh Kaptur, interview by Sian Winship, July 6, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Kaptur's partnership with Lapham is documented in the Hugh Kaptur collection of the Palm Springs Art Museum and numerous articles in the *Desert Sun*. The firm is also referred to as Kaptur-Lapham & Associates in the business statement that appears in the *Desert Sun*, April 10, 1972. The name used here reflects the firm as listed in the *AIA Historical Directory*, 1970.

Canyon Way, which was designated as a city of Palm Springs Class I Historic Site in December of 2015.

Over the years, Kaptur was active in public service in many of the desert communities. In December of 1967, he was appointed to the Desert Hot Springs architectural committee.<sup>42</sup> By 1971, Kaptur was serving on the City of Palm Springs architectural advisory committee. In February of 1975, Kaptur was appointed to the Palm Springs Planning Commission; however, he resigned in December of that year due to a potential conflict of interest as he submitted a design proposal for a downtown parking structure. By 1977, he returned to a post on the architectural advisory commission. Kaptur also was a member of the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, Lion's Club, and Police Aero Squadron.<sup>43</sup>

During the 1980s, Kaptur entered a partnership with another local architect, James Cioffi. Kaptur semi-retired in 1992. In recent years, Kaptur's work has been rediscovered. His work has been celebrated at Palm Springs Modernism Week, and in 2014 he was the subject of a documentary film.

#### Interior Designer Peter Shore (1914-2004)

Peter Shore was a Los Angeles-based interior designer with a distinctly Hollywood clientele. His clients during the late 1960s and 1970s included Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood, Rock Hudson, Henry Fonda, Richard Crenna, Stefanie Powers, Gene Kelly, Groucho Marx, and film producer John Foreman. Born Earle Laverne Shore in Illinois, little is currently known about his early life. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Shore's background "in the motion picture industry" made him "attuned to the problem of pleasant and well-balanced light."<sup>44</sup>

Steve and Neile McQueen became acquainted with Shore while living on Solar Drive in the Hollywood Hills. The couple hired Shore to decorate their house on Oakmont Drive in Brentwood, which was featured in *Architectural Digest*. It was logical, therefore, for them to engage the interior designer for the work on their new vacation home in Southridge Estates.

Shore's designs reflected the decorative excesses popular with the Hollywood set in the 1960s and 1970s. Deeply saturated colors, bold patterns, exotic objects, and ornamentation were characteristic of the period and of Shore's work. His work was published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *House Beautiful*, and *Architectural Digest*. Shore passed away in Palm Springs in 2001.

<sup>42</sup> "Panel Switch Set," *Desert Sun*, December 28, 1967.

<sup>43</sup> "Kaptur is Named to City Post," *Desert Sun*, February 22, 1975.

<sup>44</sup> "Mood Lighting, Mellow Living," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1965, 52.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION<sup>45</sup>**

The residence at 2203 Southridge Drive is located on an irregularly-shaped, sloping hillside parcel on the north side of Southridge Drive. Due to the topography, the residence is sited close to the street. The one- and two-story house has an irregular plan composed of three distinct volumes: a two-story central volume; a one-story volume projecting to the east; and a covered walkway and carport to the west. The house is of exposed steel post-and-beam construction with infill panels of Roman brick, stucco, pecky cypress,<sup>46</sup> and glass. It has a flat roof with composition roofing, a Roman brick interior chimney, and wide, overhanging eaves supported on exposed steel beams. The eave soffits have recessed can light fixtures. Some eaves terminate in wood slat arbors. A covered walkway leads to a carport at the western end of the property.

The primary entrance is asymmetrically located on the east facade and is accessed from street level via a concrete and steel staircase. The entrance consists of a pair of paneled wood doors flanked by large decorative wall fixtures. The doors open onto the landing of a floating steel and terrazzo staircase that leads down a half-level to an open living-dining area with large expanses of glass that afford uninterrupted views of the valley below. To the south of the entry landing are the guest room/maid's quarters and what was labeled a "rumpus room" on the original plans. The master bedroom suite and an additional bedroom and bath are located on the second story of the south wing, over the guest room and rumpus room.

Large sliding glass doors open all interiors to patios or to balconies with horizontal wood guardrails. The central portion of the house wraps around two sides of a rectangular swimming pool and a concrete patio with a Roman brick retaining wall.

**Alterations**

Permit documentation suggests few alterations have been made to 2203 Southridge Drive. In 1965, a 37-foot masonry wall was added to the property (location unknown). The most significant alteration was the conversion of the original carport to a maid's room and the addition of a "frame and metal carport and breezeway," designed by Hugh Kaptur in 1966.

<sup>45</sup> The architectural description was completed using photographic evidence, as the site is not accessible from the public right-of-way, and permission to visit the property was not granted for this project.

<sup>46</sup> Pecky cypress is cypress that is marked by pockets of decay caused by decay; it is commonly used as an ornamental material, including as wood paneling.



Pecky cypress panels have been added in the entry, dining room, and fireplace areas; the original light fixtures flanking the entrance door have been replaced, likely during the McQueen-Peter Shore redecoration. Shore also replaced the simple steel stair railing with a bronze railing.<sup>47</sup>

Permits show that in April 1970, repairs were made to “fire damaged electrical wiring” in the swimming pool equipment room. Other alterations include re-roofing on two occasions (1979 and 1993), and swimming pool work in 1993.

#### **Character-defining Features**

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements, constructed during the property’s period of significance, that give the building its historic character and contribute to the integrity of the property. Character-defining features can identify the building as an example of a specific building type, usually related to the building’s function; they can exemplify the use of specific materials or methods of construction, or embody an historical period or architectural style; and they can convey the sense of time and place in buildings associated with significant events or people.

Significant character-defining features of 2203 Southridge Drive include:

- Simple geometric forms
- Exposed steel post-and-beam construction
- Projecting, cantilevered volume capturing expansive views in three directions
- Flat roof with wide overhanging eaves, wood arbors, and projecting exposed steel beams
- Unadorned wall surfaces of Roman brick, stucco, and pecky cypress
- Large expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass
- Flush-mounted metal frame fixed windows and sliding doors
- Double-height entry with paneled wood doors
- Steel post-and-beam shade structure linking the main house with the carport addition
- Large pool patio with exterior staircase
- Terrazzo flooring
- Floating steel and terrazzo interior staircase

<sup>47</sup> Per a comparison of photographs taken shortly after completion in 1965 and realtor promotional photos from the listing of 2203 Southridge in 2016.

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

This evaluation is to determine whether 2203 Southridge Drive meets the definition of a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, as defined in the City Municipal Code, Section 8.05.020. The definition of a historic site includes seven criteria:

- (a) Historic Site: A 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 affect and:
  - (1) That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community;
  - (2) That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history; or
  - (3) That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history; or
  - (4) That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or
  - (5) That represents 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.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

The residence at 2203 Southridge Drive was identified as potentially eligible for designation during the City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey Update of 2016. However, because the property is not visible from the public right-of-way, it was assigned a California Historical Resources Status Code of 7R, indicating that additional information was needed to complete a formal evaluation.

2203 Southridge Drive is evaluated here to determine whether it is eligible for designation under the defined criteria, and therefore meets the definition of a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site. The evaluation includes an analysis of potential significance under each of the City's criteria for designation. A full evaluation of the resource's historic integrity cannot be made at this time due to the inability to access the property. Based on photographic evidence and building permits, it appears that there have been few substantial alterations to the building and that it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance.

### Criterion 1 (association with events)

Based on a review of the development history of 2203 Southridge Drive, there is no evidence that the property is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. Therefore, it is not significant under Criterion 1.

### Criterion 2 (association with lives of important persons)

According to guidance from the National Park Service for evaluating properties that are significant for an association with an important person, properties eligible under this criterion are typically those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.<sup>48</sup> Sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both the person's field of endeavor and his or her contribution to that field. Due to the nature of Palm Springs as a tourist destination and Hollywood getaway, many residences in Palm Springs significant for an association with a person in the entertainment industry are likely second homes; these properties may be eligible locally for reflecting this important facet of Palm Springs history.

2203 Southridge Drive is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to the entertainment industry. It was home to Edwin "Buddy" Morris from 1965-1969, during which time Morris published the music for five significant Broadway shows. From 1969-1976, the property was Steve McQueen's desert home. The actor's association with the desert and motorcycles was an essential part of McQueen's public persona and reputation, and

<sup>48</sup> City of Palm Springs, *Draft Citywide Historic Context Statement*, 296.

McQueen's association with the house was well-documented in the national press. During the period McQueen lived at 2203 Southridge Drive he achieved continued success in the entertainment industry and appeared in seminal films.

2203 Southridge Drive is significant under Criterion 2, and therefore meets the definition of a Class 1 Historic Site.

Criterion 3 (reflects or exemplifies a particular period of history)

Individual residential properties significant for their association with an important person in the entertainment industry are more appropriately evaluated under Criterion 2. Therefore, 2203 Southridge Drive is not significant as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4 (embodies characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction)

2203 Southridge Drive embodies both the characteristics of Mid-century Modern architecture and steel frame construction. It is an excellent example of the style, embodying significant character-defining features of the style, including the double-height entry; cantilevered volume capturing expansive views; flat roof with wide overhanging eaves, wood arbors, and projecting exposed steel beams; large expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass; flush-mounted metal frame fixed windows and sliding doors; and Roman brick, stucco, and pecky cypress wall surfaces.

2203 Southridge Drive embodies was built using exposed steel post-and-beam construction. It represents advances in steel construction in the 1960s, as evidenced by its appearance in the national media and documented as best practice by the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. It was featured in *American Journal of Building Design* in 1965, which touted the construction technique that allowed for building on a "rugged, highly precipitous site."<sup>49</sup> The article observed that Kaptur's design made it possible to economically expand the building area and frame the house in three days.<sup>50</sup>

2203 Southridge Drive is significant under Criterion 4, and therefore meets the definition of a Class 1 Historic Site.

<sup>49</sup> "Journal Spots P.S. Home Sites," *Desert Sun*, August 26, 1965.

<sup>50</sup> "Journal Spots P.S. Home Sites," *Desert Sun*, August 26, 1965.

### Criterion 5 (work of a master)

2203 Southridge Drive was designed by local architect Hugh Kaptur, AIA, who worked in Palm Springs from 1956 until his semi-retirement in 1992. Kaptur became a licensed architect in 1966, and was responsible for the design of more than 200 residences and over 40 commercial projects over the course of his long and prolific career. 2203 Southridge Drive represents an early phase of Kaptur's career, reflecting a period of experimentation with what he described as the "Neutra look," and the rigorous post-and-beam architecture of steel and glass that he was introduced to while working for Wexler and Harrison.<sup>51</sup> For Kaptur, the circumstances of designing a speculative house in an exclusive subdivision gave him freedom in the design and the budget to use expensive construction materials. Kaptur's design for the steel frame structure was widely publicized at the time of construction.

Kaptur's importance in the Palm Springs architectural scene has been widely documented at Modernism Week, through documentary film, and through previous Class 1 Historic Site designations.

2203 Southridge Drive is significant under Criterion 5, and therefore meets the definition of a Class 1 Historic Site.

### Criterion 6 (district)

2203 Southridge Drive is located in the residential development of Southridge Estates. Southridge Estates was not evaluated as a potential historic district.

### Criterion 7 (likely to yield information)

Criterion 7 typically applies to archaeological resources, which is outside the scope of this study.

### CONCLUSION

2203 Southridge Drive meets the definition of a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site. This conclusion is based on a review of the relevant historic contexts, and an evaluation of the building's potential significance under local designation criteria. The property's historic integrity was not formally assessed, as the property was not accessible for a site visit for this review; however, based on historic and current photographs, it appears to retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. It is significant under Criterion 2 for its association with important

<sup>51</sup> *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh M. Kaptur*, This and That Films, LLC, 2014.

persons; and under Criterion 4 and 5 as an excellent example of steel frame, Mid-century Modern architecture by master architect Hugh Kaptur.

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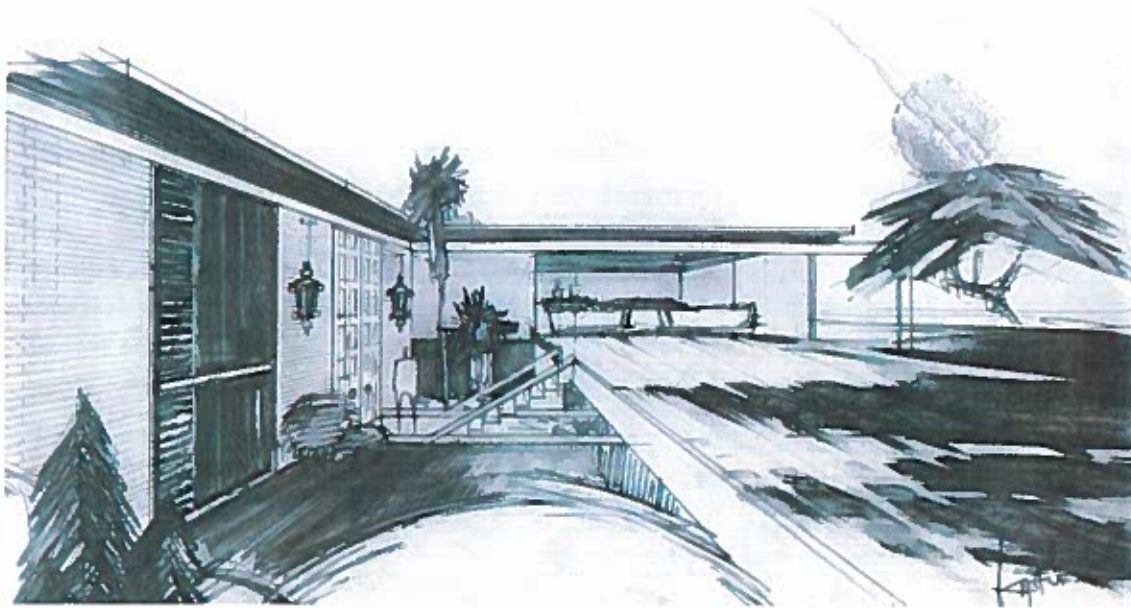
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**APPENDIX 1: HISTORIC IMAGES**

1962 architectural rendering of entrance to 2203 Southridge Drive by Hugh Kaptur features double height entry and open carport. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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## **2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**

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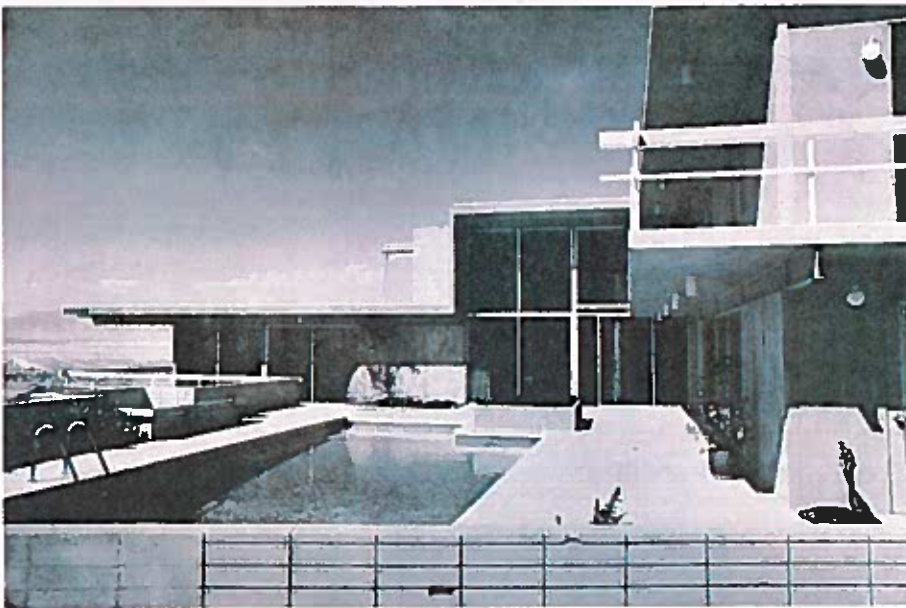
Rear elevation of 2203 Southridge Drive as rendered by the architect in 1962. Cantilevered volume at left. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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## 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



A Desert "Shangri-La" at Palm Springs, California

JUNE, 1964

## a STEEL FRAMED HOME story

*one of a series  
presented for your information*



**BETHLEHEM STEEL COMPANY**  
PACIFIC COAST DIVISION

June 1964 press release for Bethlehem Steel Company featuring 2203 Southridge Drive's use of steel construction. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Construction photos show extensive use of Bethlehem Steel in Kaptur's framing design. Steel allowed buildable square footage to be increased without bulldozing a flat pad on the site, preserving the natural topography. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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**2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**

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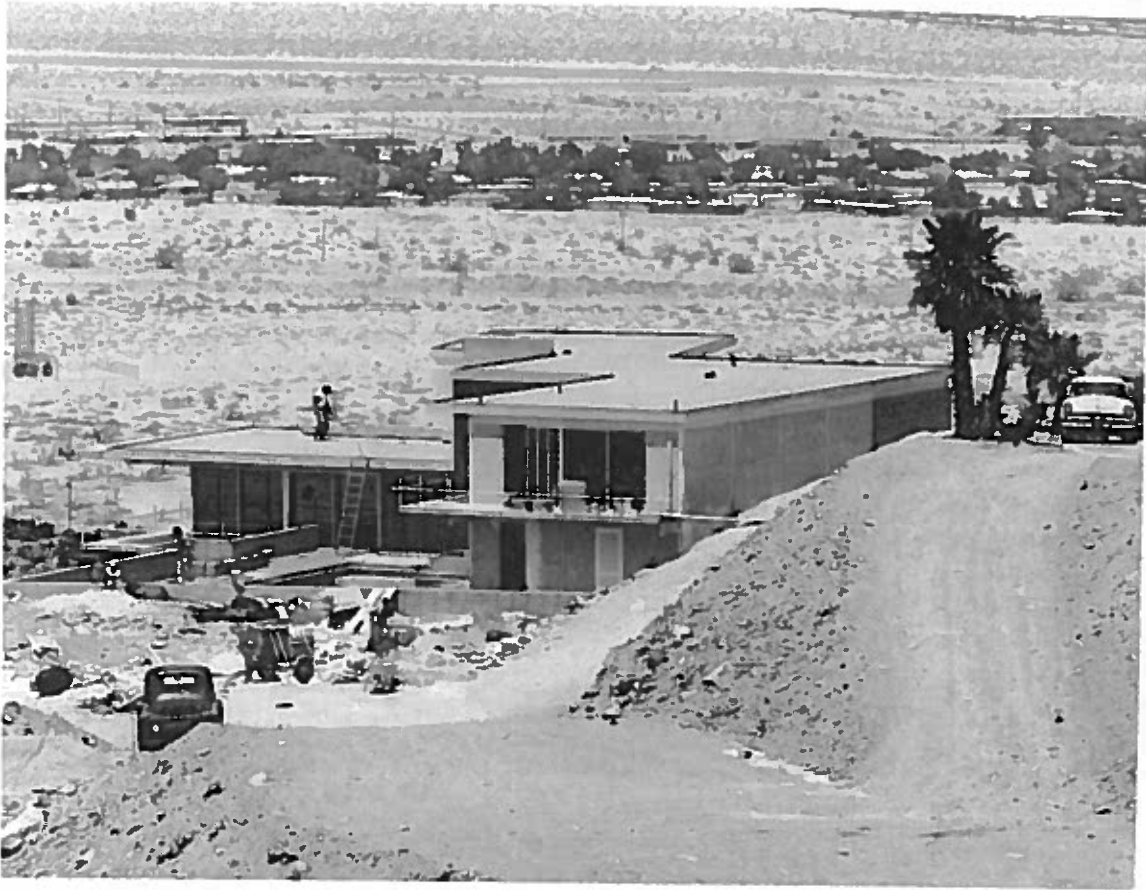


Construction of cantilevered living room volume. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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West façade of 2203 Southridge Drive during construction. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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East façade. Original open carport is visible at far left. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Contact sheets of 2203 Southridge shortly after its completion in 1964. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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## 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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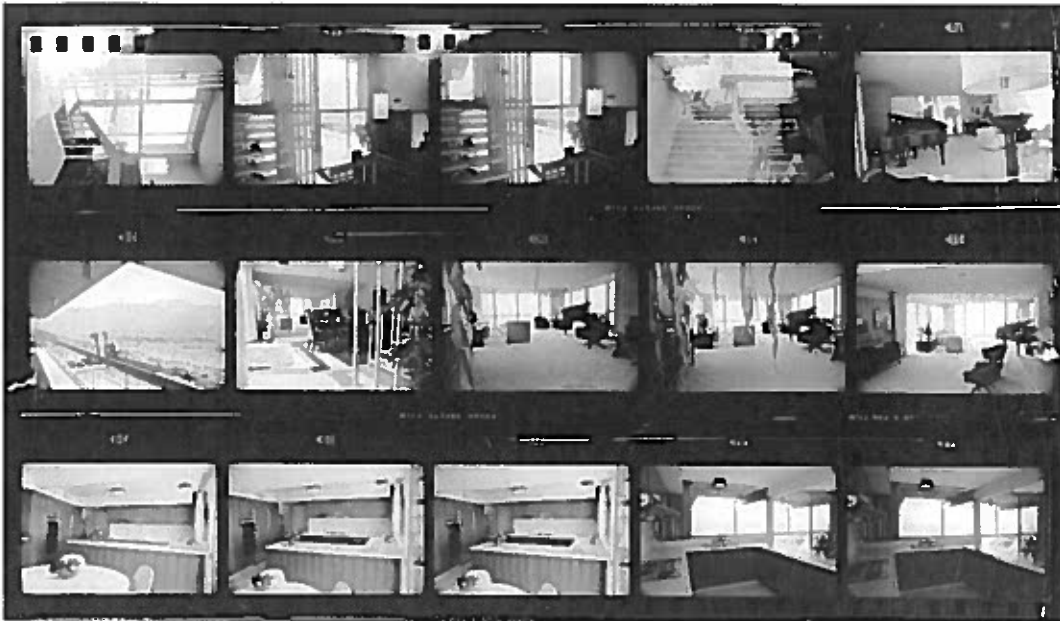


Contact sheets of 2203 Southridge shortly after its completion in 1964. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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## 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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Contact sheets of 2203 Southridge shortly after its completion in 1964. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Undated photo of south façade entrance showing steel staircase and double height front door. Patrick McGrew Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Undated photo of north façade and patio. Patrick McGrew Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Undated photo of north façade. Steel post-and-beam breezeway to carport addition is also visible at the right of the photograph. Patrick McGrew Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Undated photo of patio and west façade. Patrick McGrew Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Undated photo of cantilevered living room volume. Patrick McGrew Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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Steel post-and-beam breezeway to new carport addition from 1966. Alison Engel, *Palm Springs Life*, 2008.

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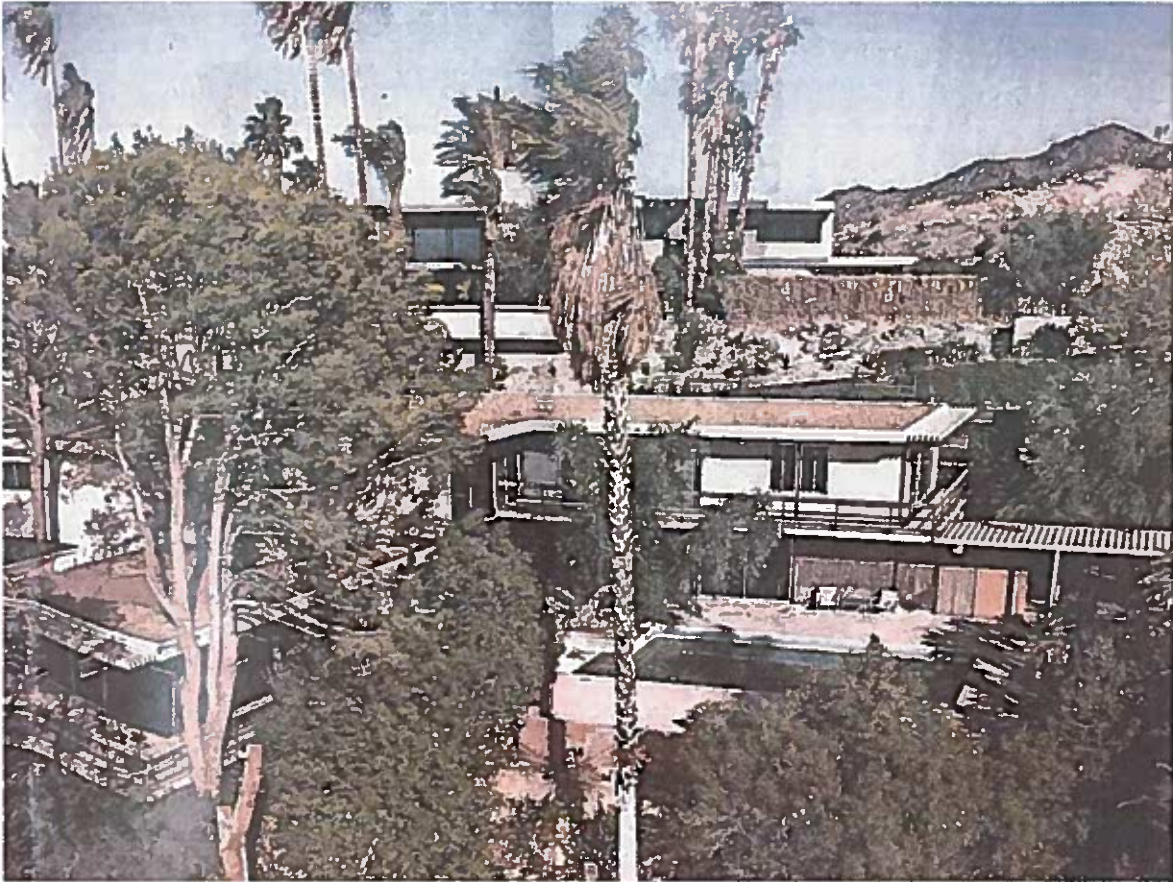


Looking eastward from patio. Cantilevered living room volume is visible at left. Alison Engel, *Palm Springs Life*, 2008.

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Undated aerial view of 2203 Southridge Drive looking southward. *Architectural Digest*, March 23, 2016.

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Living room photo looking north, c. 2000, interior design by Peter Shore. Photo: Alison Engel, *Palm Springs Life*, 2008.

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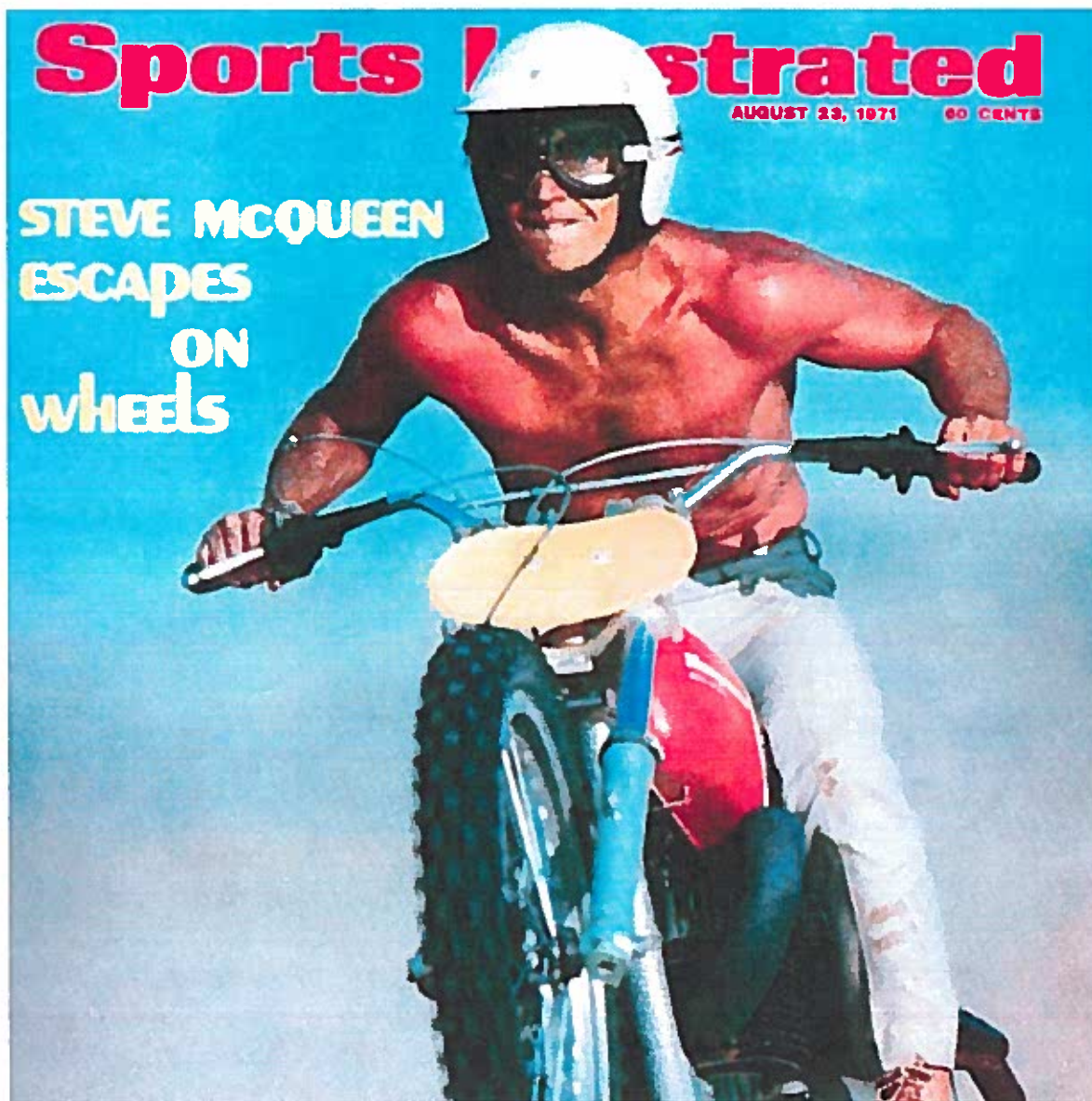


Undated photo of split level staircase with handrail and pecky cypress panel added by interior designer Peter Shore. Photo: Alison Engel, *Palm Springs Life*, 2008.

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August 23, 1971 issue of *Sports Illustrated* featuring Steve McQueen at home and at play in the desert.

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Ad for Southridge development featuring Steve McQueen's residency as a selling point. *Desert Sun*, February 6, 1970.

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**2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**

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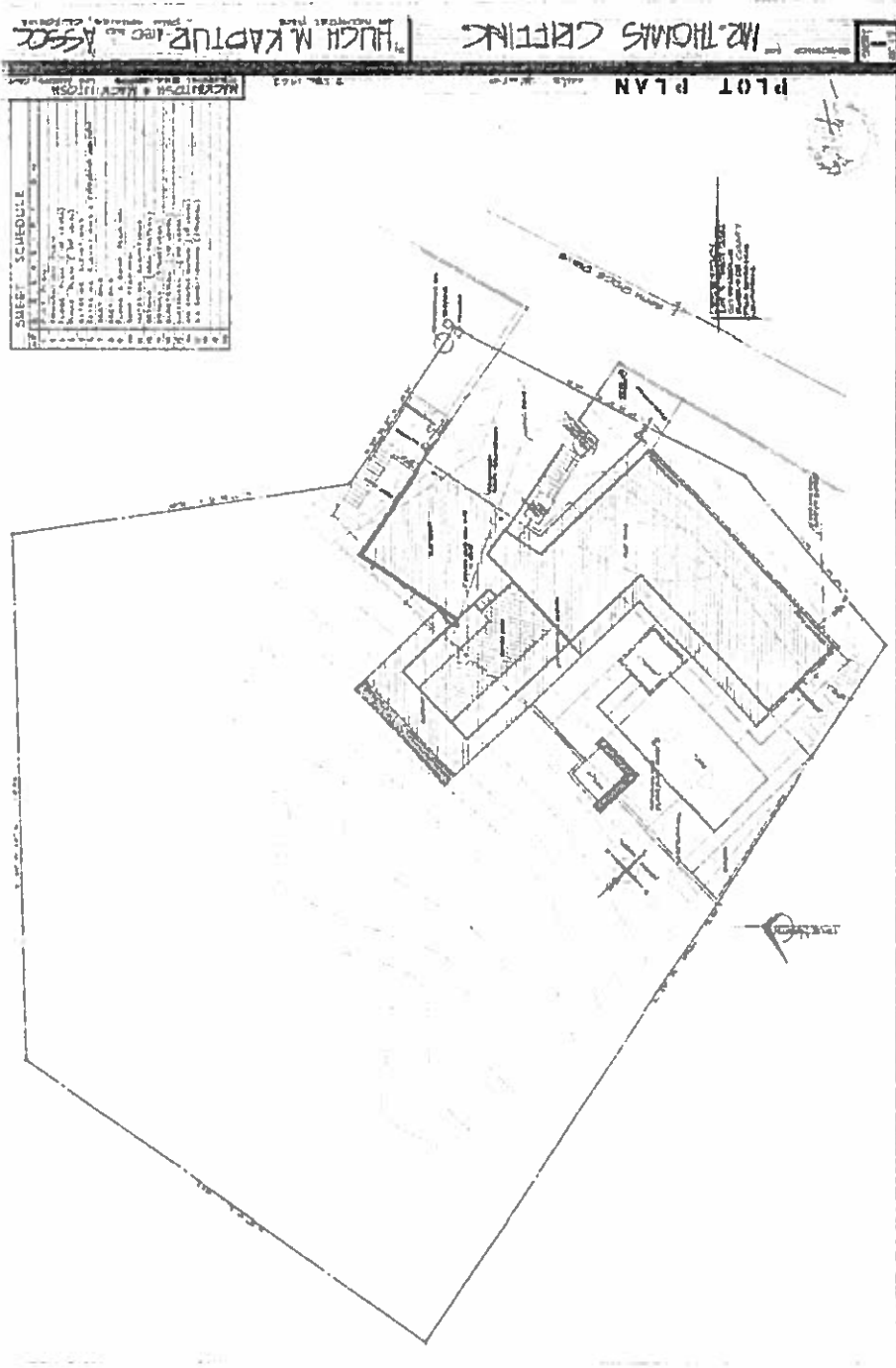
Palm Springs postcard, c. 1970 featuring Steve McQueen's house at 2203 Southridge Drive. Source: Card Cow.

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## **2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs**

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APPENDIX 2: ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS



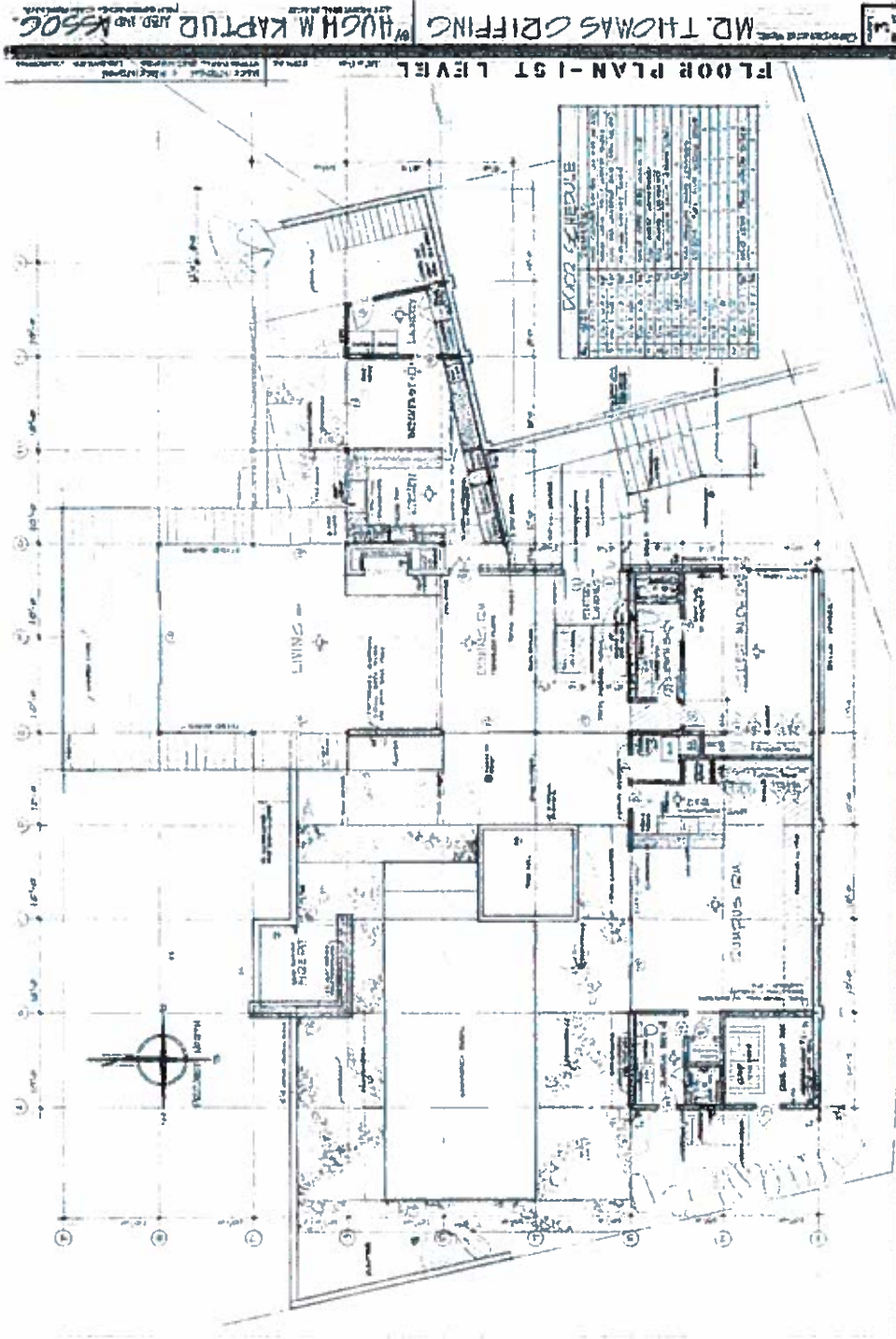
Original L-shaped plan with carport can be seen in this 1962 plot plan. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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# 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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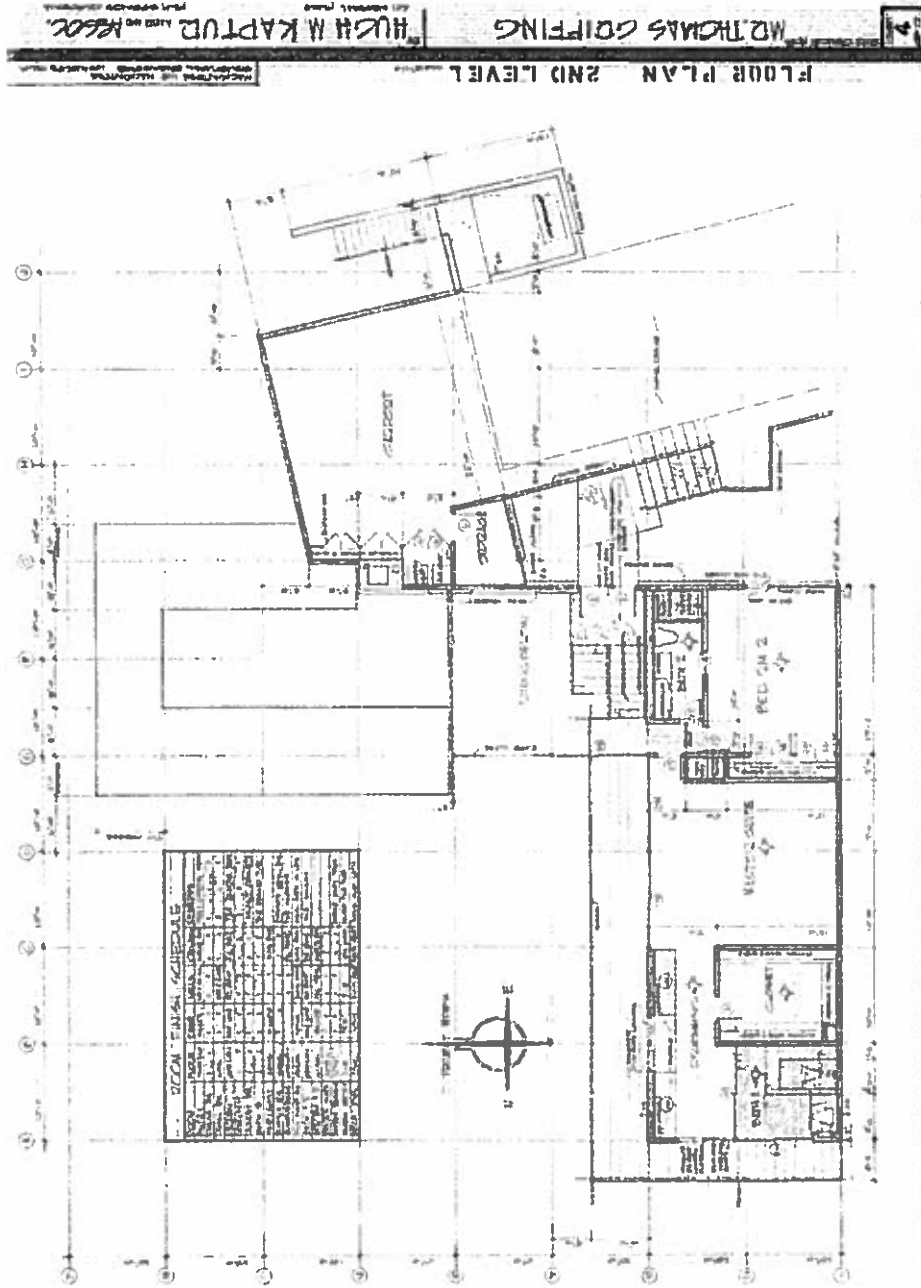


Floor Plan - First Level. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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# 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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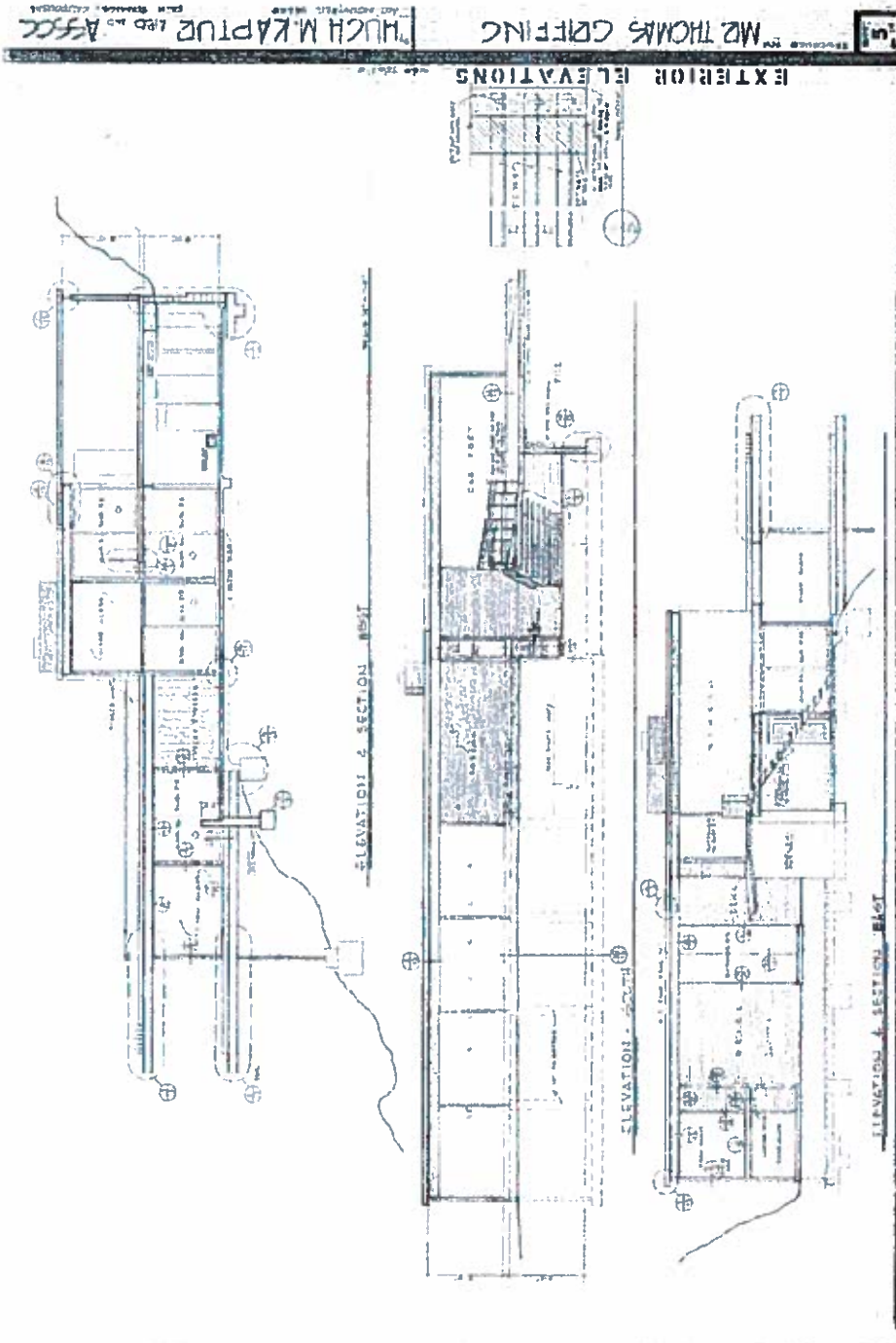


Floor Plan - Second Level. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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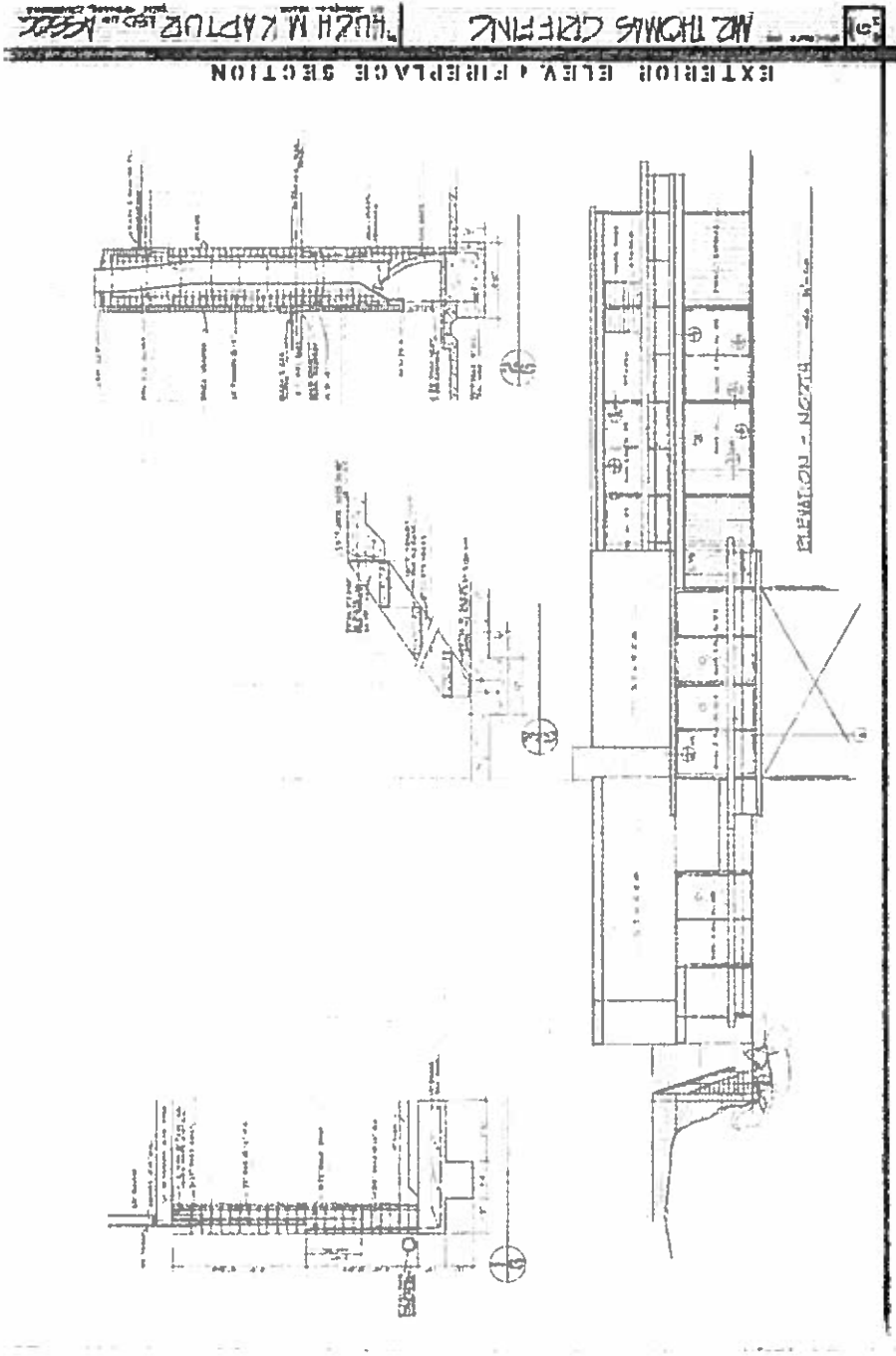


West, south and east elevations of 2203 Southridge Drive. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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# 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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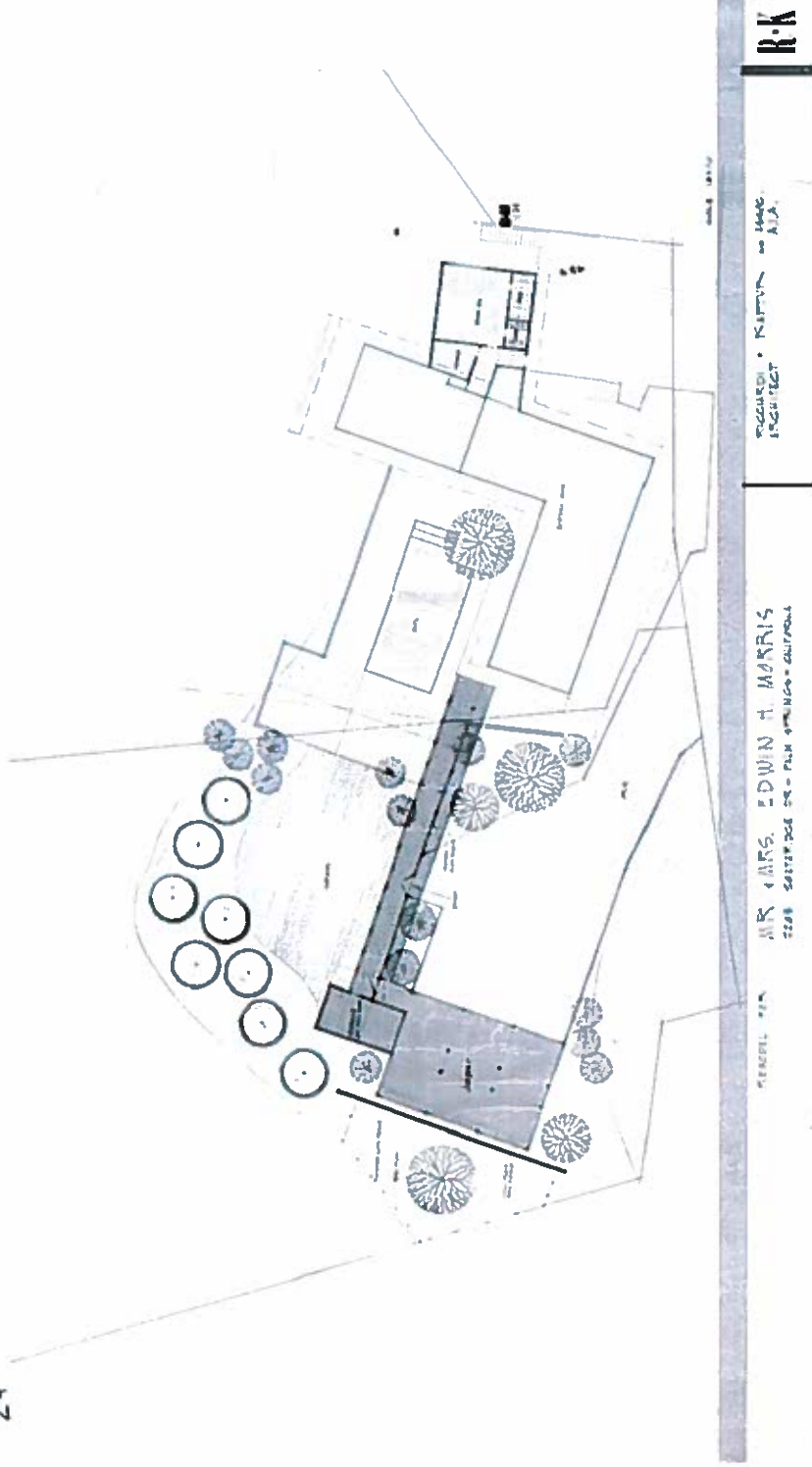
North elevation of 2203 Southridge Drive. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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# 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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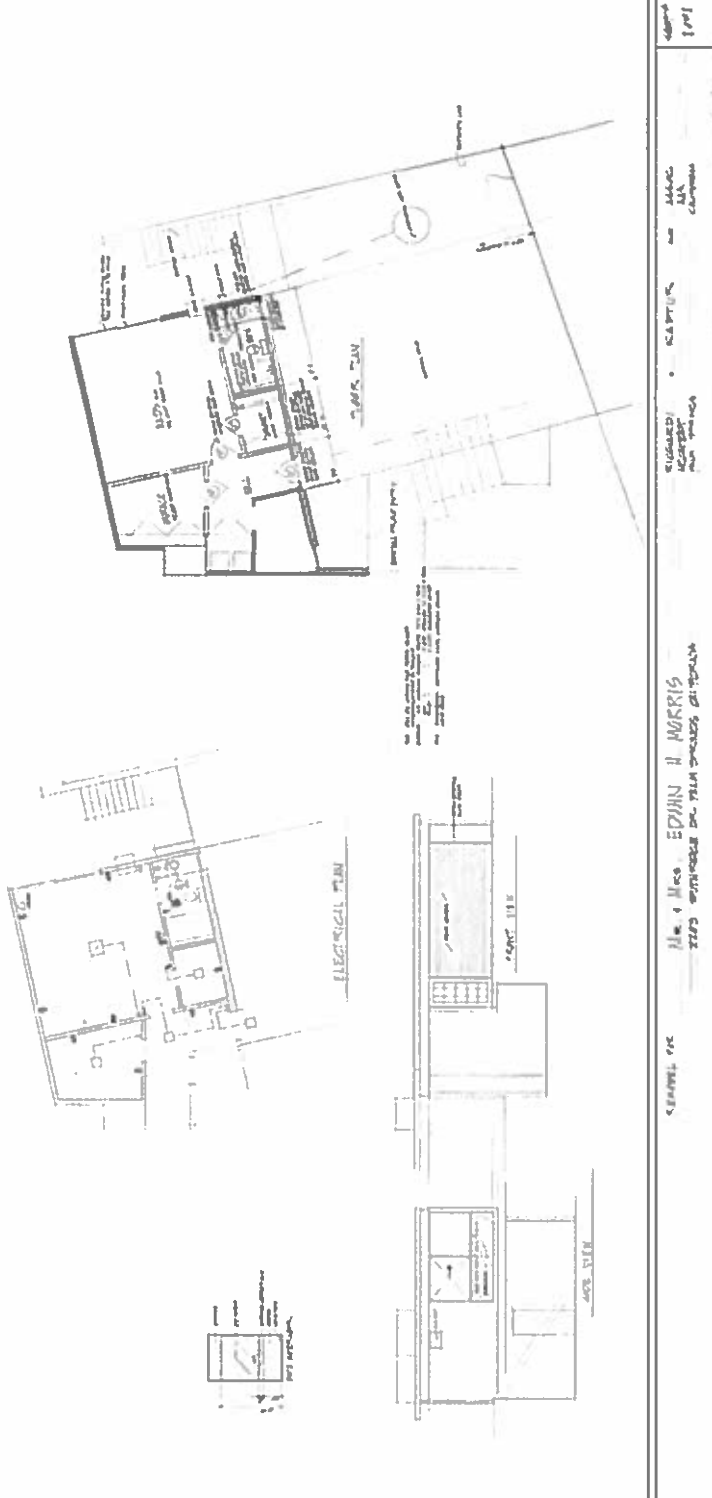


Plan showing 1966 carport addition with breezeway at west end of the property for Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Morris as designed by Hugh Kaptur, at Kaptur and Ricciardi. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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# 2203 Southridge Drive, Palm Springs

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Plan for 1966 conversion of original open carport into maid's quarters for Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Morris as designed by Hugh Kaptur, Kaptur and Ricciardi. Hugh Kaptur Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum.

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