



## Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

DATE: February 13, 2018

PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: AN AMENDMENT TO THE CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION FOR "THE OASIS HOTEL" TO LIST THE OASIS HOTEL DINING HALL LOCATED AT 211-219 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE AND THE COMMERCIAL STOREFRONT AND CASITA BUILDINGS LOCATED AT 121 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE AS CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS; DESIGNED BY MASTER ARCHITECT LLOYD WRIGHT; ZONE CBD, (CASE HSPB #10 AMND).

FROM: Department of Planning Services

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### SUMMARY

The Oasis Hotel was designed by master architect Lloyd Wright in 1923 for Palm Springs pioneer Pearl McManus. Completed in 1925, it is recognized by many architectural historians as one of the most important works of early modernist architecture in the state of California.

In 1952, learning of the intent of the new owners of the Oasis Hotel to demolish the northerly portion of the hotel, Pearl McManus had the McCallum Adobe and the Wright-designed dining hall moved to property she owned south of the hotel that is now the Village Green Park.

In 1985, the City Council granted "Class 7" (now Class 1) historic site designation to the Oasis Hotel, however the designation focused only on the tower and the two-story building to which it is attached. The 1985 staff report noted the commercial storefronts, and casita building – both integral components of the Wright-designed hotel – had been "significantly altered", however no analysis was provided to substantiate that assertion. The dining hall was also not given consideration or evaluation at that time.

In 2016, as part of its annual work plan, the City's Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") initiated study on the Oasis Hotel to determine whether the Class 1 designation for the Oasis Hotel should be amended to recognize the storefront, casita building, and dining hall as "contributing" to the historic significance and public understanding of the Oasis Hotel; all of which are integral to Wright's original design and contribute to the historic significance and understanding of the importance of the Oasis Hotel.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open the public hearing and receive public testimony.
2. Close the public hearing and adopt Resolution HSPB 10 AMND: “A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL AMEND THE CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION OF THE OASIS HOTEL, APN 513-143-009, 513-143-008, AND 513-153-017, CASE HSPB 10 AMND, ZONE CBD.”

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

On October 6, 2016, the HSPB included the Oasis Hotel Dining Hall and storefront in its top six work plan priorities for the coming year. The Planning Services Department secured the professional consultant Architectural Resources Group (“ARG”) to analyze the Oasis Hotel fragments to determine any possible historic significance. ARG conducted research including review of the Lloyd Wright archives at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Their work is summarized in a report dated August 23, 2017 (“the ARG report”), attached.

A previous historic resources report was written by architect Andrea Urbas in November 2004 as part of the CEQA analysis for a Conditional Use Permit for renovation of the Oasis Hotel for a restaurant<sup>1</sup>. That report addressed the hotel tower, commercial storefronts and casitas. A detailed discussion of the Oasis Hotel in the book “A Palm Springs Weekend” by architectural historian Alan Hess and Andrew Danish are also provided as reference for the analysis that follows. No formal survey or historic analysis was conducted as part of the 1985 Class 1 designation of the Oasis Hotel.

In the 1923 site plan for the Oasis Hotel (shown below), one can see the original McCallum adobe in the upper right corner (north is up on this site plan). That building was given Class 1 designation in 1984. The dining hall (denoted by the grid of white square posts) was attached to back side of the adobe and connected by covered paseos to the hotel’s tower and guest rooms to the south. The commercial storefronts, which still exist along Palm Canyon Drive, are at the lower right side of the site plan. The circles denote trees, including two cottonwood trees that, during the construction of the dining hall, were preserved in place and the dining hall was built around them (as seen in early photos). A fruit tree orchard is seen at the left (west) side of the site.

The hotel was conceived as a carefully planned group of buildings that encircled the site and provided a sense of refuge and protection from the surrounding open desert and harsh climate. The original plans by Lloyd Wright denote the name of the hotel as “The Hacienda”; referring to the early Spanish colonial building typology in which the buildings were constructed with thick adobe walls that typically surrounded a courtyard with generous covered paseos and open air passages connecting the various buildings or spaces. The Oasis Hotel was Lloyd Wright’s

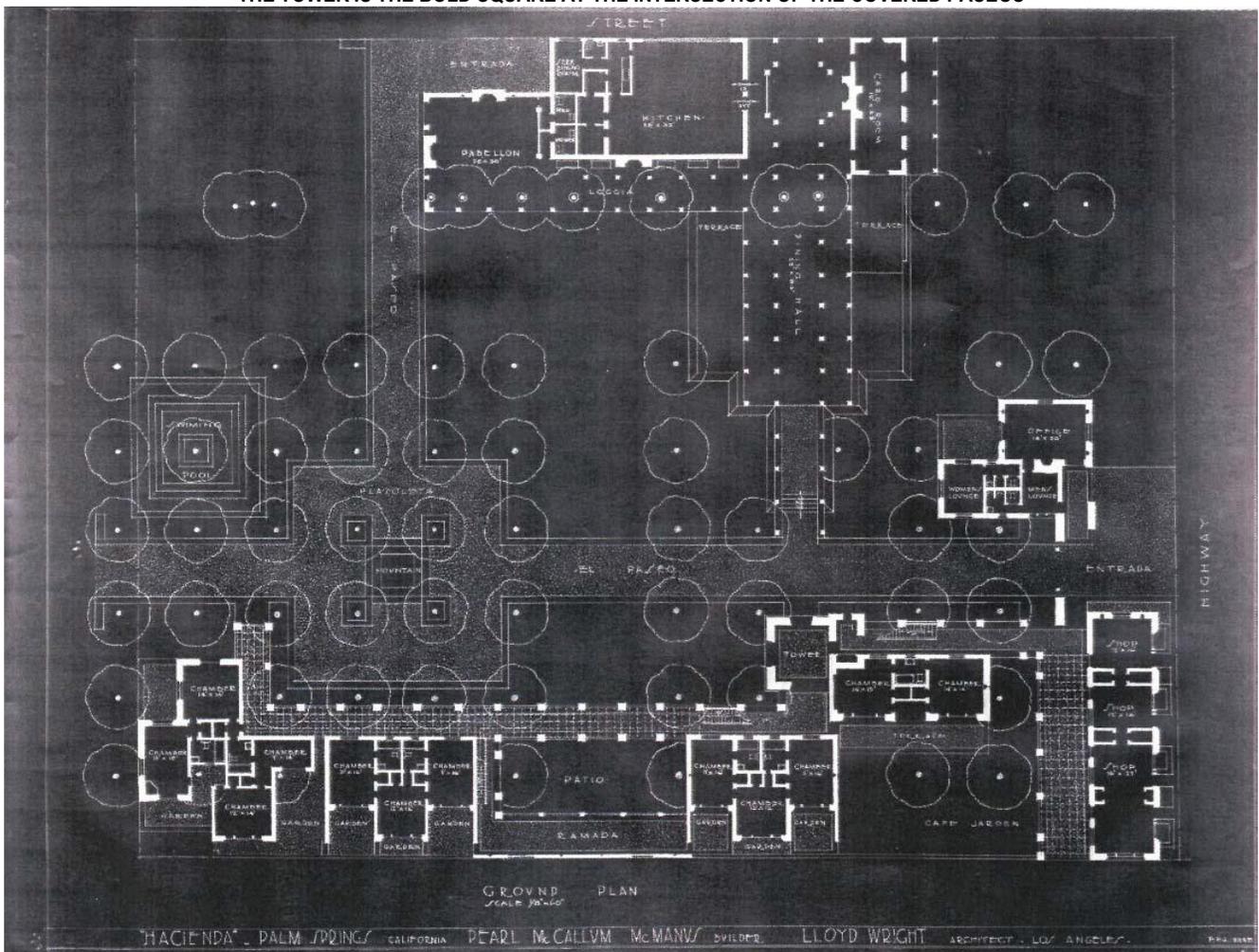
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<sup>1</sup> The project, Case 5.1076 CUP was approved but never developed and the entitlement expired.

modern interpretation of a colonial hacienda, with thick walls of poured concrete, and covered paseos.

The Oasis Hotel was a combination of wood frame and reinforced poured concrete construction. Wright created a “campus” of separate buildings connected by covered walkways and paseos. The dining hall, kitchen and McCallum adobe, formed the northwest part of the campus. The commercial storefronts and reception / office were located along the east side, fronting Palm Canyon Drive, and the hotel rooms were located along the south side of the courtyard. Covered porches and paseos from each side of the courtyard converge at the tower, which was the focal point of the campus.

**KITCHEN AND DINING HALL AT THE TOP, MCCALLUM ADOBE TOP RIGHT,  
ADMINISTRATION AND COMMERCIAL STOREFRONTS AT THE RIGHT,  
CASITAS AND GUEST ROOMS ALONG THE BOTTOM.  
THE TOWER IS THE BOLD SQUARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE COVERED PASEOS**



**OASIS HOTEL SITE PLAN C 1923 (courtesy of the Palm Springs Historical Society)**

The components of the Oasis Hotel that survive today are the tower, the storefronts, a portion of the casita / guest rooms, the dining hall and the McCallum Adobe.

**THE CONTEMPORARY RENDERING BELOW BY JOHN ANTHONY RIVERA SHOWS THE MCCALLUM ADOBE AT THE FAR RIGHT, THE DINING HALL IS IN THE MIDDLE ATTACHED TO THE TOWER AND THE RECEPTION OFFICE AT THE LEFT IS WHERE THE OASIS COMMERCIAL BUILDING IS PRESENTLY LOCATED. (VIEW LOOKING SOUTHEAST).**



As noted in the historic resources reports and other documentation on the Oasis Hotel, despite its current neglected state, it stands as one of the most important buildings in Palm Springs for the following reasons:

1. It is the only building in Palm Springs designed by master architect and landscape architect Lloyd Wright.
2. It demonstrates Wright's design theories on the integration of structure and architectural ornament as seen in the trusses of the dining hall roof and the geometric ornament cast into the concrete of the hotel tower.
3. It is an excellent example of Wright's "organic Modern architecture" incorporating design motifs inspired from indigenous Aztec and/or Mayan cultures of the region, rather than borrowing on "classical revival" styles from Europe.<sup>2</sup>
4. It is one of the earliest built examples of Wright's principals of "integrating nature and architecture", in which his design responds to both the existing landscape and the intense climatic conditions of the desert – the Oasis Hotel precedes his father's application of organic Modern architectural principals in the Arizona desert at Taliesin West by at least fifteen years.
5. Its unique method of construction – that of slip-form poured-in-place reinforced concrete --was revolutionary at the time.
6. It is associated with Pearl McCallum McManus, an early pioneer, developer, and philanthropist, whose father, John Guthrie McCallum, was the first non-native settler in Palm Springs.
7. The Oasis Hotel, (c. 1925) was one of three "catalyst hotels" that included Nellie Coffman's Desert Inn (c. 1909) and Prescott Stevens' El Mirador Hotel (c. 1927) that

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<sup>2</sup> Although frequently labeled "Art Deco", given Wright's career-long focus on developing a uniquely "American" style architecture, his integration of local indigenous design motifs and resistance in adopting European styles, it is unlikely Wright would have considered the Oasis "Deco"; rather "Organic Modern" may be a more appropriate descriptor for the building.

contributed to the transformation of Palm Springs from a refuge for those seeking relief from respiratory ailments to its international reputation as a premier resort destination.

<i>Related Relevant City Actions by HSPB, Planning, Fire, Building, etc...</i>	
1970	The McCallum Foundation donated the Village Green Park including the McCallum Adobe and the fragments of the Oasis dining hall to the City.
February 6, 1985	City Council designated the Oasis Hotel tower and related structure as a Class 7 (now Class 1) historic site.
1925 to 2006	Various building permits are issued for work on the Oasis Hotel Dining Hall and related structures.
March 1, 2006	City Council approved Case 5.1076, a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for proposed adaptive reuse of the Oasis Hotel for a restaurant. The project was never implemented and the entitlement expired.
August 13, 2013	HSPB approved maintenance repaint and repairs and installation of a series of interpretative displays along the paseo between the Oasis Hotel and the Oasis Commercial Building.
October 8, 2016	HSPB included the Oasis Dining Hall & storefronts in its annual work plan.
February, 2018	Site inspection by members of the HSPB and City staff.

<i>Ownership Status</i>	
1970	Village Green, on which the fragments of the Oasis Hotel dining hall are located was donated to the City of Palm Springs by the McCallum Desert Foundation (which managed the McManus estate after Pearl’s death in 1966)
2004	The Oasis Hotel tower, commercial storefronts and guest rooms purchased by Brandenburg Oasis Plaza LLC.

ANALYSIS:

Quoting architectural historian Alan Hess in the ARG report:

*“There was no precedent for using a distinctly Modern design for a resort anywhere in the country before the Oasis... Resorts contemporary to the Oasis, built for the burgeoning car tourism industry, boasted exotic, historically based designs ... The Oasis was boldly unique.”*

*“The Oasis Hotel is one of the first defining statements about a Modern architecture in the desert.”*

As noted in the ARG report, on page 23, hiring Wright to design the hotel was a bit of gamble, since it was Wright’s largest commission at the time. Embracing Wrights “organic modern designs” was also risky because it would be a significant departure from the rustic ranch and romantic Spanish Colonial Revival styles that dominated Palm Springs and most of southern

California and much of the country at that time. With the passage of time, it has become clear that McManus' "risky venture" and Wright's unique approach to building and architecture yielded one of the most significant turning points in modern American architecture.

The purpose of this analysis is to consider a two-part amendment to the Class 1 historic site designation of the Oasis Hotel: (Part 1:) re-defining the commercial storefront building and the surviving casita building as contributing elements at 121 South Palm Canyon Drive, and (Part 2:) adding the dining hall at the Village Green to the Class 1 designation.

For clarity, the two parts are evaluated separately in the analysis that follows.

In 1985, the HSPB and the City Council granted Class 1 historic site designation to the Oasis Hotel tower "and attached structure"<sup>3</sup>. Those structures do not require further evaluation at this time. The February 1985 City Council staff report asserted that:

*"The tower, a landmark for many years, has remained basically unaltered although it will require some renovation. The remaining original buildings are in good condition but have been significantly altered and, therefore are not being recommended for historic designation..."*

This 1985 staff report failed to analyze the alterations using the CEQA guidelines for evaluating historic resources and also lacked any evaluation of the hotel components against the definition of a historic site as defined in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Palm Springs Municipal Code Section 8.05.020). The CEQA guidelines note that a "significant adverse change" to a historic resource (i.e. to define it as "significantly altered") is one that "materially impairs" the physical characteristics that convey its historic significance and that justify its inclusion in a local register of historical resources. The conclusion drawn from the following analysis would suggest that the assertion in the 1985 staff report that the remaining buildings have been significantly altered was incorrect.

#### Part 1: Evaluation of the commercial storefront and casita buildings:

##### *Definition of an Historic Site*

Section 8.05.020 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code ("PSMC") provides the definition of a historic site. The historic resources report provides an evaluation of the subject property in accordance with this definition which is summarized below.

##### *(a) Historic Site.*

*An historic site is any real property such as: a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar architectural elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its*

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<sup>3</sup> The two-story "attached structure" is also constructed of slip-formed poured concrete integral to the tower and contained two hotel guest rooms per floor, a stairway, a covered paseo and second floor open walkway.

*location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect.*

The commercial storefront building.

Below are photos showing the commercial storefront building in its original condition (left) and its present condition (right).



This building was an integral part of Wright's design for the Oasis Hotel. Contrary to the statement in the 1985 staff report, the commercial storefront building does convey historic significance and has not been significantly altered because:

1. It retains its association with master architect Lloyd Wright and with local pioneer Pearl McCallum McManus.
2. It retains visual evidence of the same slip-form method of construction used on the tower.
3. It continues to be used for commercial / retail functions for which it was originally designed.
4. It retains a high degree of integrity. Both the addition on the back side of the building and the alteration of the storefront display windows are removable and reversible; and the structure could be restored based on archival photos and drawings to further strengthen the historic integrity of the site.

For these reasons the current evaluation concludes that the storefront building has not been significantly altered and in fact, retains sufficient integrity to convey historic significance.

The casita building.

This building lies to the southwest of the Oasis Hotel tower and directly west of the commercial storefront building. It is two stories in height, originally contained six hotel rooms and was constructed of the same "slip-form" concrete method Wright employed in other parts of the Oasis Hotel. It is the only surviving set of free-standing hotel rooms from the Oasis Hotel.

BELOW LEFT, CASITA BUILDING IS DENOTED IN THE GREEN CIRCLE, STOREFRONTS AT THE BOTTOM.  
BELOW RIGHT VIEW OF CASITA BUILDING LOOKING FROM THE PARKING LOT WEST OF THE BUILDING  
(THE TOWER CAN BE SEEN IN THE BACKGROUND).



Contrary to the statement in the 1985 staff report, the casita building has not been significantly altered and does convey historic significance because:

1. It retains its association with master architect Lloyd Wright and with local pioneer Pearl McCallum McManus.
2. It retains visual evidence of its slip-form method of construction and its physical association with the other surviving buildings on the Oasis Hotel site that also employed this innovative construction technology.
3. Although poorly maintained, it has not been modified by additions or alterations.
4. It retains a good degree of integrity.

For these reasons the current evaluation asserts that the casita building has not been significantly altered and in fact, it too retains sufficient integrity to convey historic significance.

The commercial storefronts and casita buildings are further evaluated against the seven criteria found in PSMC 8.05.020 that establish the definition of a historic site or district as follows:

*Criterion 1. That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or*

Although it attracted many celebrities and socialites, no known events are associated with the Oasis Hotel. Therefore it does not meet this criterion.

*Criterion 2. That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*

The storefronts and casita buildings were designed and constructed as an integral part of the Oasis Hotel. As noted on page 45 of the ARG report, the Oasis Hotel is significant for its association with Pearl McCallum McManus. McManus' vision of a modern luxury hotel that

would be a tribute to her father’s legacy was the impetus for its development. Pearls’ long association with Palm Springs is well documented as is her vision of the town growing to become an important world-renowned resort destination. The Oasis Hotel storefront and casita buildings both meet the definition of a historic site as defined in Criterion 2.

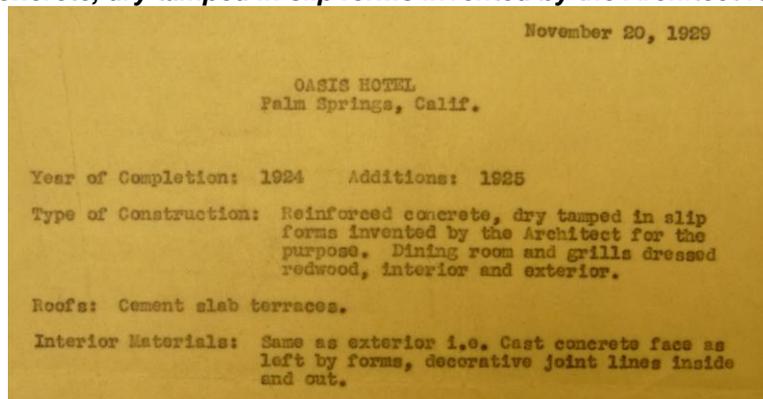
*Criterion 3. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history;*

As described in the historic resources report, the commercial storefront and casita buildings both exemplify the early Modern period in architectural history and thus meet the definition of a historic site as defined in Criterion 3.

*Criterion 4. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;*

As noted above, these two structures are an integral part of the Oasis Hotel and were both constructed at the same time, using the same reinforced poured concrete “slip-form” method as the Oasis Hotel tower. The horizontal “joints” created by the slip-form method are clearly evident in the exterior of both buildings. Contrary to the 1985 report, both buildings retain a high degree of integrity. The additions on the back of the storefront building are removable and the changes at the display windows are reversible. The casita building, although long vacant and poorly maintained remains unaltered and clearly conveys its unique slip form method of construction and its association with the Oasis Hotel.

**BELOW, A 1929 EXCERPT OF A TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OASIS HOTEL,  
NOTE UNDER “TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION”  
“Reinforced concrete, dry tamped in slip forms invented by the Architect for the purpose.”**



*Criterion 5. That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value;*

The commercial storefronts and casita building were designed by Lloyd Wright as an integral part of the Oasis Hotel at the same time as the tower. They employ the same slip-form construction technology. They demonstrate Wright’s interest in minimal ornamentation and in a clear expression of the building’s structure and material. Thus the storefront building and the

casita building meet the definition of a historic site as outlined in Criterion 5 and the Oasis Hotel historic site designation could be amended to include both buildings as “contributing elements” to the historic significance of the site.

*Criterion 6. That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;*

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

*Criterion 7. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

Part 2: Evaluation of the Dining Hall fragments. Pursuant to Municipal Code 8.05.195, the board may only consider the exterior of buildings when evaluating historic significance, and may not consider the interiors except in the case of public buildings. Since the dining hall fragments are owned by the City of Palm Springs and are thus “public buildings”, both the exterior and the interior of the dining hall have been included in this analysis. The ARG report asserts that the dining hall fragments of the Oasis Hotel, meet the definition of a historic site because

- Its unique design reflects the work of master architect Lloyd Wright.
- It is a unique, surviving example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Modern architectural design.
- It reflects Wright’s aesthetic principles of integrating ornament and design motifs found in regional indigenous cultures.
- It exemplifies a tenet of Modern architecture in which the building’s structure becomes expressed as ornament.
- On page 49 the ARG report assesses the historic integrity of the dining hall. The report notes that although location and setting has been compromised by its dismantlement and relocation, it still retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association primarily on its intact interior roof trusses and related features.

The dining hall fragments are further evaluated against the seven criteria found in PSMC 8.05.020 that establish the definition of a historic site or district as follows:

*Criterion 1. That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or*

Although it attracted many celebrities and socialites, no known events are associated with the Oasis Hotel. Therefore it does not meet this criterion.

*Criterion 2. That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*

The ARG report notes, “*McManus’ enduring attachment to this building (the Oasis Hotel), reflects both her regard for Lloyd Wright’s architectural design and the ruthless practicality for which she was known...*” As the report states, among the building’s significant characteristics is a handwritten “McManus” signature on the underside of a roof truss on a portion of the dining hall. The dining hall fragments thus meet the definition of a historic site as defined by Criterion 2.

*Criterion 3. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history;*

On page 45 the ARG report notes that the dining hall was an integral part of the Oasis Hotel complex, and that the hotel was particularly significant in the development of Palm Springs as a resort destination in the 1920’s. On page 46, the ARG report suggests that because portions of the Oasis Hotel such as the dining hall had been dismantled, moved, and repurposed in the 1950’s, the dining hall fragments no longer convey significance relative to that earlier period in Palm Springs history.

However staff would assert that those portions of the Oasis Hotel that have survived, even in their fractured condition, are critically important in conveying an understanding of the broader period of innovative, creative architectural experimentation with new technologies from the 1920’s. It reflects the principles, tenets and theories of the Modern era in architectural history that began in the early 1920’s and reached its zenith in the 50’s and 60’s. The Oasis Hotel, including the dining hall exemplifies this “first chapter of the story” of the Modern period in architecture in Palm Springs and in California in general. As such, the Oasis Hotel dining hall fragments meet Criterion 3 in conveying the significance of the early period of development of a uniquely American style of Modern architecture.

*Criterion 4. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;*

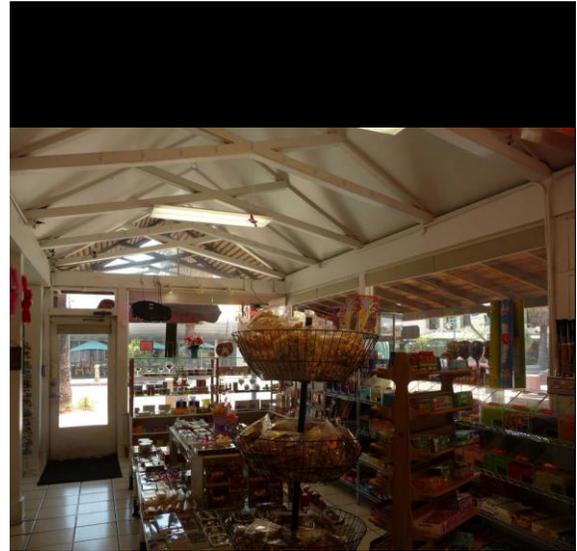
On page 46, the ARG report evaluates the Oasis Hotel dining hall fragments, particularly the complex scissor truss system of the dining hall roof. The report notes “*the interior’s exposed scissor truss roof system, which incorporates 30 and 60 degree angles as seen in natural forms like snowflakes, crystals, and tree branches reflects a type of architectural thinking which was still relatively new in the early 1920’s; the early Modern tenet that structure should also serve as ornament.*” As such the dining hall embodies the distinctive characteristics of a unique type and method of construction and meets the definition of a historic site as defined by Criterion 4.

*Criterion 5. That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value;*

The ARG report outlines on page 47 the significance of Lloyd Wright as a master architect

whose work influenced his age and possesses high artistic value. The exposed interior roof system of the dining hall comprised of spaced wood slats over compound scissor trusses created a visual effect similar to tree branches overhead. The integration of two living cottonwood trees into the construction of the dining room further strengthened this effect.

**BELOW LEFT DINING HALL c.1930 SHOWING EXISTING TREE INTEGRATED INTO THE DINING HALL, BELOW RIGHT, CURRENT CONDITION SHOWING TRUSSES STILL INTACT**



The complex truss geometry culminates in four separate gables that converge in a “crossing” in the center of the dining hall shown below:



Wright used the wood slat motif to visually unify and integrate each component of the Oasis Hotel, as seen in the dining hall roof (above), the screens at the tower and railings at second floor passages and balconies as seen in the following photos.

**THE IMAGES BELOW SHOW THE INTEGRATION OF THE WOOD SLAT MOTIF ON THE TOWER AND RAILINGS**



**IMAGES BELOW SHOWING THE SCISSOR TRUSSES AND THE WOOD SLAT MOTIF APPLIED TO THE LOGGIA CONNECTING THE DINING ROOM TO THE TOWER.**



Wright's use of complex wood structural systems as architectural ornament can be seen in his later works as outlined in the ARG report on page 35 in reference to his Wayfarer's Chapel (1951), and it seems plausible that his work may have also inspired the work of architect E. Fay Jones in his design of Thornhill Chapel (1980) in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The report concludes that the Oasis Hotel dining hall truss system demonstrated Wright's creative talent as an architect and inspired later works by both Wright and other architects and thus meets the definition of a historic site as defined by Criterion 5.

*Criterion 6. That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;*

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

*Criterion 7. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

## INTEGRITY

Dining Hall Fragments. Beginning on page 49, the report analyzes the dining hall components of the Oasis Hotel relative to the seven aspects or qualities of integrity, as recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. The seven aspects or qualities include location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

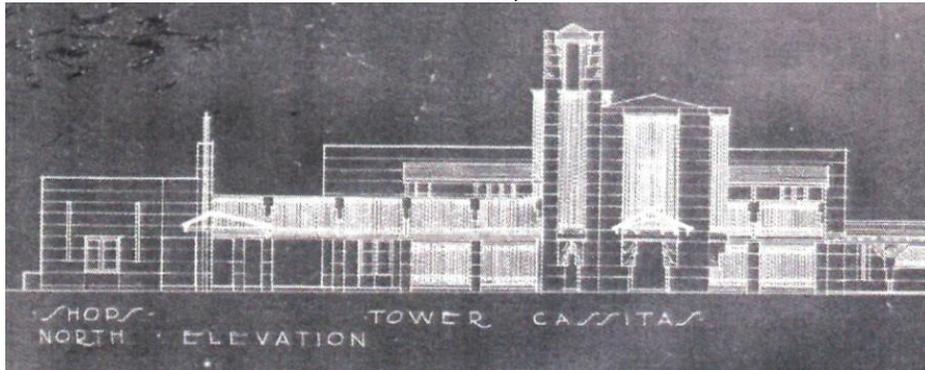
The report concludes that although the location and setting have been altered, the dining hall – particularly the complex interior geometry of the roof and truss system -- retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Commercial Storefronts and Casita Buildings. Both these buildings retain a high degree of integrity: Their location of each building remains as original constructed. The integrity of setting has been mostly lost due to encroaching surrounding development, additions on the back of the commercial building and the demolition of much of the hotel for construction of the Oasis Commercial Building in 1953. The integrity of the design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association of both buildings remain intact. Thus staff would assert that the historic designation of the Oasis Hotel could be amended to include these two buildings as “contributing” because they continue to possess a high degree of historic integrity.

Integrity Discussion: Hotel Tower and attached structure. The 1985 staff report provided no evaluation of integrity of the tower and attached structure. Staff notes that although the tower and attached structure retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, its setting has been lost to over ninety years of encroaching commercial development and the demotion in 1953 of the northern part of the hotel.

The tower and attached building have also lost some design integrity due to the removal of the vertical wood slatted screens seen in the photo on page 13 of this report and in the photos on the following page. Similarly the covered paseo attached to the tower has been boarded up and wood screens and railings in the “attached building” have been partially removed. Restoring these wood elements would strengthen the integrity of the tower and attached building.

**BELOW ELEVATION FROM ORIGINAL WRIGHT DRAWINGS  
SHOWING SLATTED SCREENS ON THE TOWER, ATTACHED STRUCTURE AND PASEOS**





ABOVE COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGE BY JOHN ANTHONY RIVERA  
CREATED FROM ORIGINAL LLOYD WRIGHT DRAWINGS



ABOVE SHOWING CURRENT CONDITION OF THE TOWER  
AND THE ATTACHED STRUCTURE.



ABOVE PHOTO SHOWING SLATTED SCREENS AND RAILINGS AT THE TOWER,  
ATTACHED STRUCTURE AND CASITA BUILDING (RIGHT)

## DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

The physical character-defining historic features include the following:

### Dining Hall Fragments:

- The exposed scissor truss structural system in both parts of the dining
- The handwritten “McManus” on the underside of one of the trusses.
- The general roof configuration of a “compound gable” reflecting the angles of the scissor trusses below.
- The narrow slat roof sheathing.

### Commercial Storefront Building:

- The exposed (painted) concrete exterior walls, including the horizontal “reveals”.
- The narrow slot window on the north façade.
- The general 4-part structural module expressed in the Palm Canyon façade.

### Casita Building:

- The exposed (painted) concrete exterior walls, including the horizontal “reveals”.
- The general 3-part structural configuration expressed in the south façade.

Tower and Attached Structure:

Although the 1985 staff report provided no identification of the character-defining features, staff recommends that any amendment to the historic designation of the Oasis Hotel include identification of the entire tower and original elements of the attached structure as character-defining features contributing to the historic significance of the Oasis Hotel.

NON-CONTRIBUTING TO THE HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE:

Dining Room Fragments:

- All exterior materials, pole ramada, storefronts, doors, shake roof shingles (not original)
- All interior finishes except the exposed scissor trusses and related roof structure.

Commercial Storefronts:

- The additions on the west side of the building.
- The “renovated display windows” and associated “cornice”.
- The interiors.
- Signage.

Casita Building:

- The interiors.

Tower and attached structure:

- The interiors.
- Non-original elements (surface-mounted conduit, infill panels on the paseo and tower, etc.)

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Pursuant to PSMC Section 8.05.145, following the public hearing, the HSPB shall make findings upon which it shall base its recommendation to the City Council asserting historic significance of the site or district. As noted in the analysis above, the Oasis Hotel dining hall, the commercial storefront building, and the casita building meet the definition of a historic site as outlined in PSMC Section 8.05.020 including Criterion 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Based on the findings above, the Class 1 historic site designation of the Oasis Hotel (HSPB #10) could be amended to include the dining hall fragments (specifically the roof structure and trusses.), the commercial building and the casita building as “contributing” to the historic significance of the Oasis Hotel.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposed historic site designation is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical changes to the environment, directly or indirectly.

## NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to section 8.05.140 of the Municipal Code of Palm Springs, All property owners within five hundred (500) feet of the subject property have been notified and notice was made in a newspaper of general circulation.

## CONCLUSION:

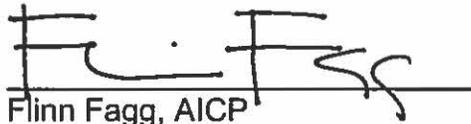
Based on this analysis, the dining hall, commercial storefront building and casita building of the Oasis Hotel meet the definition of a historic site as outlined in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Oasis Hotel Class 1 historic site designation is recommended to be amended to include these components as "contributing elements" to the historic significance and understanding of the hotel.

A draft resolution is attached to this staff report for the Board's consideration.



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Ken Lyon, RA,  
Associate City Planner



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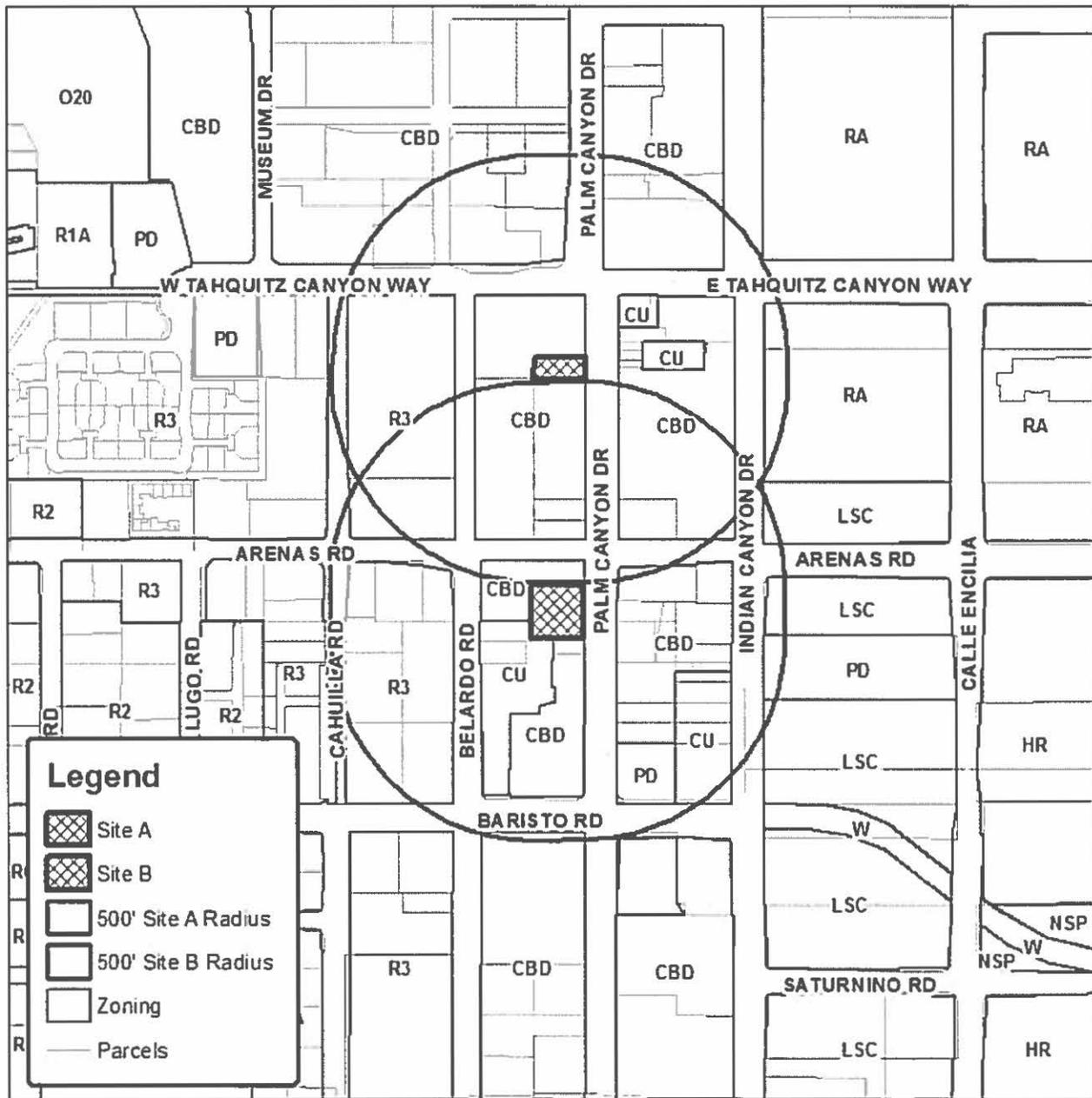
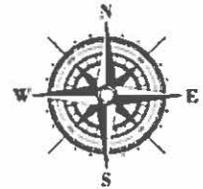
Flinn Fagg, AICP  
Director of Planning Services

### Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Draft Resolution
3. Historic Resources Report dated August 23, 2017 by Architectural Resources Group (ARG).
4. Excerpts from the Historic Resources Report dated 2004 by Andrea Urbas
5. Excerpts from the book, "A Palm Springs Weekend, the Architecture and Design of a Mid-Century Oasis", Hess & Danish, 2001, published by Chronicle Books.
6. City Council Resolution 15424 and related staff reports, minutes, and public comment from the 1985 historic site designation of the Oasis Hotel.



# Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS  
HSPB 10 OASIS HOTEL



# Oasis Hotel Dining Hall

211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive

## Historic Resources Report

*Prepared for:*

City of Palm Springs  
Department of Planning Services  
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, California 92263

*Prepared by:*



Architectural  
Resources Group

Pasadena, California

August 23, 2017

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## Appendix A. Historic Photographs

## 1. Introduction

At the request of the City of Palm Springs' Department of Planning Services, Architectural Resources Group (ARG) has prepared this Historic Resources Report for a building that was originally the Oasis Hotel Dining Hall, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California.<sup>1</sup>

The property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive is a one-story commercial building in Village Green Heritage Park; it is owned by the City of Palm Springs and has the APN 513-153-017. Originally the dining hall of the Oasis Hotel at the corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and W. Tahquitz Canyon Way, the 1924 building was designed by master architect Lloyd Wright. In 1952, its original owner Pearl McCallum McManus had it moved a block south and reconfigured for new uses at her Village Green retail complex. ARG has evaluated the building's eligibility for listing as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site.

Completion of this assessment involved a site visit and visual inspection of the building on July 14, 2017; compilation and review of historic building permits and project documents obtained from the Palm Springs Department of Planning Services; primary and secondary source research conducted through various local and online repositories, including the Palm Springs Historical Society Research Library and UCLA's Lloyd Wright Papers in Special Collections; development of applicable historic contexts and themes; evaluation of the property's eligibility under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site criteria; and evaluation of the property's historic integrity. This report was prepared by Katie E. Horak, Principal and Mary Ringhoff, Associate, both of whom meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* for Architectural History.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, ARG finds that the property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive is eligible for listing as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, on the basis of its intact interior features. The following report provides a contextual basis for analysis and a detailed discussion of how this determination was made.

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<sup>1</sup> Amending the designation of the Oasis Hotel (HSPB #10) to include the surviving portions of the hotel's wood frame dining hall and the poured-in-place concrete commercial storefronts along Palm Canyon was part of the HSPB's 2016/17 annual work plan priorities.

<sup>2</sup> Katie E. Horak is a Principal and Architectural Historian in ARG's Pasadena office, with 13 years of experience in the field. She is a graduate of the Master of Historic Preservation (now Heritage Conservation) program at the University of Southern California. Mary Ringhoff is an Associate in ARG's Pasadena office, with eight years of experience in the field. She is also a graduate of USC's Master of Historic Preservation program.

## 2. Architectural Description



Site map. The subject property is outlined in red. Base map from maps.google.com.

### 2.1 Site and Setting

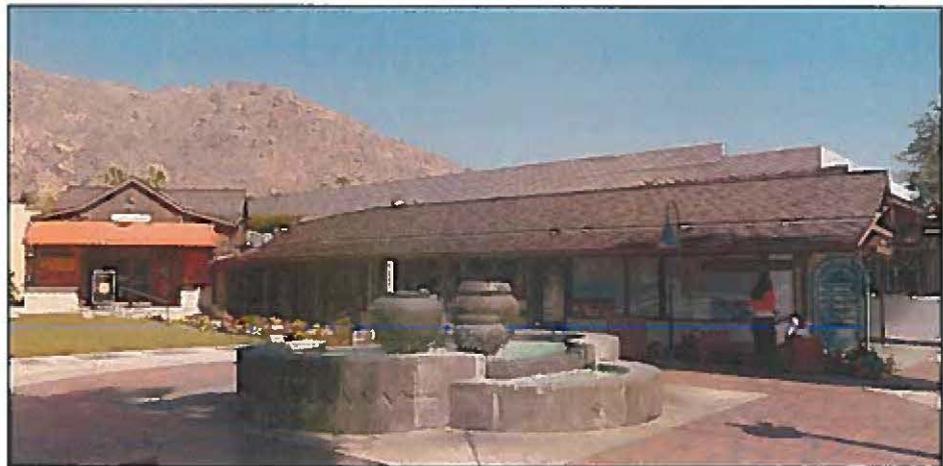
The subject property, 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive, is located within the City-owned Village Green Heritage Park, on the west side of S. Palm Canyon Drive south of W. Arenas Road. This area adheres to a rectilinear street grid, and has a wide array of lot sizes. The topography of the immediate area slopes gently to the east, down from the San Jacinto mountain range. The Village Green complex is surrounded by one- and two-story commercial properties representing construction dates from the 1920s to the 2010s. Most of the surrounding buildings' main volumes are set back from the sidewalk, fronted by attached covered dining patios. Some buildings are flush with the sidewalk.

The Village Green complex contains four buildings arrayed around a central landscaped plaza: the subject property (currently containing the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and Palm Springs Fudge and Chocolates); the McCallum Adobe (Palm Springs Historical Society Museum); the Cornelia White House; and Ruddy's General Store. The subject property occupies the north and northwest portions of Village Green. All of the complex's buildings face inward toward the plaza, which is landscaped with lawn and flowers and crossed by concrete walkways, some of which have terrazzo "Palm Springs Walk of Stars" insets. The concrete walkway along the south façade of the subject property is shaded by the building's

projecting porch roof. A large concrete fountain sits at the east edge of the plaza, within a hardscaped circle of embossed commemorative bricks. Other Village Green features include light standards, boulder-mounted historical markers, freestanding signage, a flagpole, and concrete benches. The west and south parts of the complex, including the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum volume of the subject property, are elevated from street level and accessed via a set of concrete steps at the north side and a gently sloping concrete ramp/walkway at the south side. The north side of the subject property directly abuts the commercial building to the north (205 S. Palm Canyon Drive, originally Haggarty's clothing store and currently Kaiser Grill). Surface parking lots lie beyond the west side of the Village Green complex.

## 2.2 Building

Overview of subject property from the street. All existing conditions photos were taken by ARG on July 14, 2017.



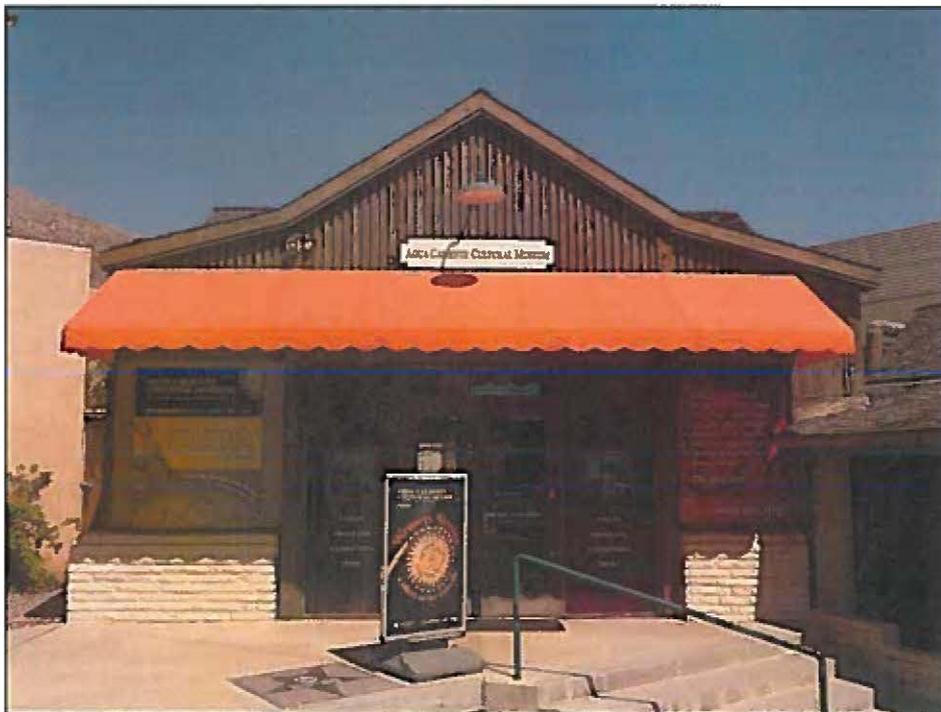
Key to building volumes. Volumes 1-3 represent the reconfigured Oasis Hotel dining hall, while Volume 4 is a later addition. Base map from maps.google.com.



The building comprises three primary attached volumes; all three volumes were originally part of the Oasis Hotel dining hall, but they have been separated, moved, and reattached to each other in a new angled configuration on the Village Green. A fourth volume, a flat-roofed, concrete block addition to the north side of the property, is not part of the original dining hall building. Each volume is described in

turn below, with the arbitrary descriptors of Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4. The building as a whole is characterized by an irregular plan, gabled roofs covered with wood shake, and a mix of wood siding, stucco, and concrete block cladding. It represents wood frame construction, with the exception of the Volume 4 concrete block addition to the north side. Volumes 1 and 2 are fronted by a projecting wood porch roof with simple wood post supports and open eaves; the porch roof shades a poured concrete slab floor/walkway. As discussed below, Volumes 1, 2, and 3 retain much of their original interior wood slat ceiling and exposed roof scissor truss system.

### Volume 1: 219 S. Palm Canyon Drive (Agua Caliente Cultural Museum Entrance and Gift Shop)

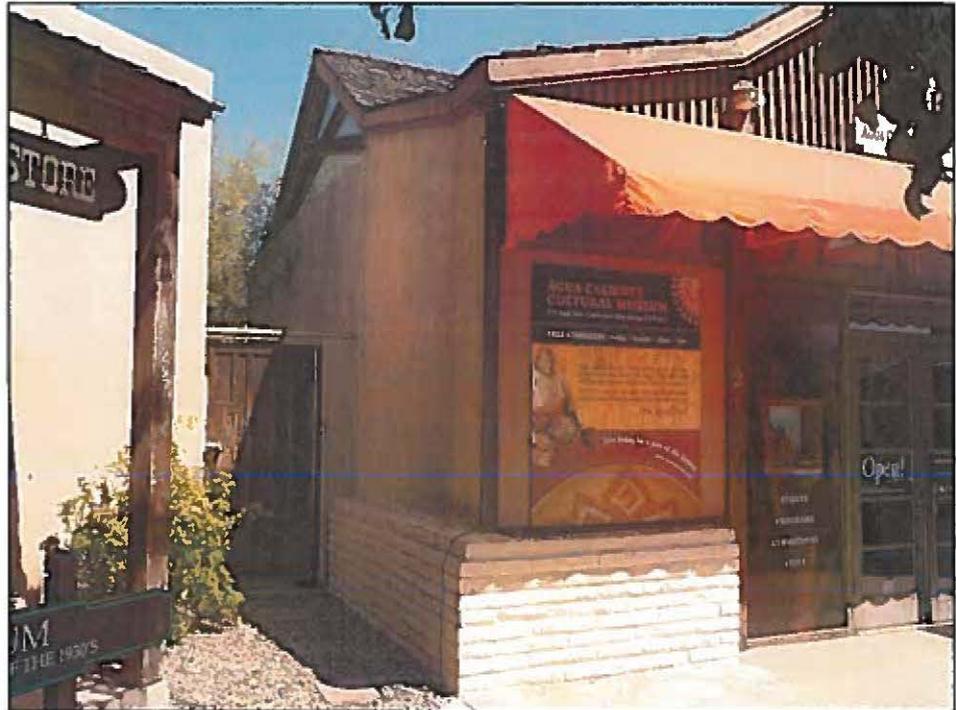


Volume 1 primary (southeast) façade, view to northwest.

#### *Volume 1 Exterior*

Volume 1 is elevated above the other volumes and accessed by a set of concrete steps and by a gently sloping concrete walkway/ramp. It currently contains the main entrance and gift shop for the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. The volume has a square footprint and a distinctive cross-gabled roof with wood shake and simple wood bargeboards. Each of its four façades has a “broken gable” roofline. The primary (southeast) façade is nearly symmetrical, with cladding of painted concrete block at its lower part (forming a kneewall), and vertical wood slats fronting wood boards under the gable. The façade contains a centered glazed storefront with wood French entry doors with divided lights and a transom. The

doors are flanked by large, fixed, single-light wood sidelights, which are in turn flanked by two fixed, single-light wood windows. The window to the right is slightly narrower than the one to the left due to the point of attachment between Volumes 1 and 2; a small portion of the façade here is clad with vertically scored plywood. The concrete block kneewall projects slightly from the rest of the façade under each of these windows. The entirety of the storefront is topped by three large, fixed, single-light transoms. Wood support posts with large metal bolts frame the storefront and extend to the roofline. A fabric awning, gooseneck light fixture, and signage have been added to this façade.



Volume 1  
southwest façade  
and portion of  
southeast facade,  
view to northwest.

The southwest façade is primarily clad in textured stucco, with the concrete block kneewall wrapping around the corner from the southeast and extending across the entire façade. No window or door openings are present. The area under the roof gable is glazed, with crossed wood board dividers mimicking the exposed wood scissor trusses visible at other gables and in the volume's interior. The exact nature of these dividers is difficult to discern (hanging decorations obscure them from the interior), but they do appear to be different from the scissor trusses seen at other facades. A wood gate with wood and stucco surround is attached to this façade, leading to the rear of the property.

The volume's northwest façade is clad in vertically scored plywood. The area under the roof area is glazed, with exposed wood scissor trusses. This façade contains a set of fully glazed metal doors and a sliding aluminum window. An accordion-style security gate has been added to the entry. The façade's northern portion contains

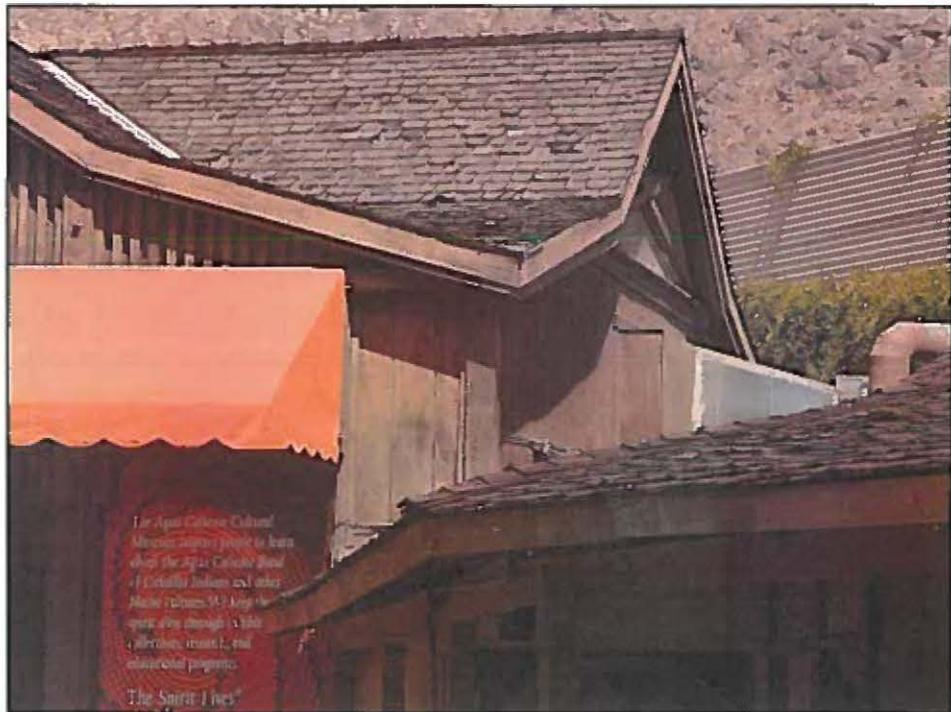
a projecting shed addition with the same plywood cladding and a set of plain metal doors; the addition projects from both the Volume 1 façade and the north end of Volume 4 (which extends behind all three of the building's older volumes and is only partially visible here). Both the main façade and the shed addition are fronted by a low, curving brick step. A non-original pole ramada projects from the northwest façade, shading a small brick patio bordered by outdoor exhibits.



Volume 1  
northwest façade,  
view to southeast.

Volume 1's northeast façade is only partially visible, as Volume 2 attaches here at an angle; Volume 2's porch roof is notched to fit Volume 1 here, and the interface under the porch roof is a stucco wall with a wood window opening containing a perforated metal screen with a photographic image printed on it. The visible portion of Volume 1's northeast façade is clad in vertically scored plywood. The area under the roof area is glazed, with exposed wood scissor trusses. Exterior HVAC equipment sitting on the Volume 4 roof has a metal vent extension entering Volume 1 at this façade.

Volume 1 portions  
of northeast and  
southeast façades,  
view to northwest.



### *Volume 1 Interior*

The interior of Volume 1 contains a single open room with a high ceiling, stucco wall finishes, and a carpeted floor. The room's shape reflects the roughly square footprint and cross-gabled roof of the exterior, containing a central space with four projecting bays (one under each roof gable). The bays join the central space with chamfered corners topped by stucco-covered timber vertical supports with large bolts; the supports extend to the upper wall plate. The roof assembly is completely exposed, comprising painted wood scissor trusses supporting a ceiling finish of painted wood slats. Each gabled bay has its own truss system, all meeting at the centerpoint of the roofline in a complex system of triangular cross-members.

The north portion of the room contains a doorway with wood folding doors leading to a small modern kitchen with particleboard cabinets/counters. This carpeted room leads to a small anteroom with a set of steps and a wood hopper window which has been painted over. A partially glazed (obscure glass) wood door leads to additional steps, down to a storage room with a tile floor and freestanding metal shelving. Both the kitchen and the storage room have painted concrete block walls, presumably part of the Volume 4 concrete block addition, and painted wood board ceilings with exposed beams. The partially glazed wood door has hardware more 1920s than 1950s in appearance and may be original to the building, or represent salvage from elsewhere (possibly somewhere within the dining hall building).

The west portion of the room contains another doorway with curtains, leading to a private office space; this room was not accessible during the site visit. The east portion of the room contains a wood-framed opening with steps leading down to the exhibit gallery in the interior of Volume 2.



Volume 1 interior, typical scissor trusses and wood slat ceiling.

Volume 1 interior,  
central meeting  
point of roof system  
(object in center is a  
hanging decoration).



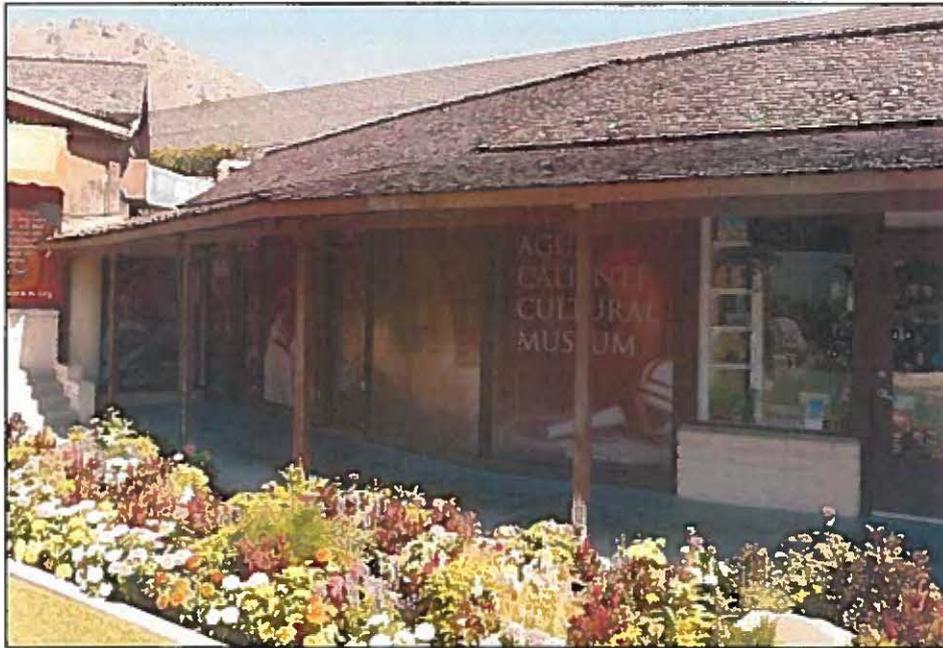
## Volume 2: 215 S. Palm Canyon Drive (Agua Caliente Cultural Museum Gallery)

### *Volume 2 Exterior*

Volume 2, which currently contains the gallery for the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, serves as the connector between Volumes 1 and 3. It has a roughly rectangular footprint (though it is angled to meet the volumes on either side of it) and a side-gabled roof with wood shake and simple wood bargeboards. The volume is fronted by a projecting porch shared with Volume 3, as described above.

The primary (southwest) façade has wood framing around large openings that once contained storefront windows; these have been enclosed with perforated metal screens with photographic images printed on them. The screens appear to be backed by the interior walls and do not cover windows. The façade also contains two wood doors with openings for full glazing and transoms (the openings and transoms now contain perforated metal screens with printed photographic images). The left door has a metal mail slot at the bottom and its frame contains metal "215" lettering. This door has no hardware and does not appear operable. The right door has hardware and is opened as needed for wheelchair access to the gallery.

Volume 2's northwest and southeast façades are now the points of attachment to Volumes 1 and 3. Its northeast façade is covered by the Volume 4 addition.



Volume 2 primary  
(southwest) façade,  
view to northwest.



Volume 2  
connecting  
Volumes 1 and 3,  
view to north.

### *Volume 2 Interior*

The interior of Volume 2 is a long, rectangular open room with a carpeted floor and painted drywall wall finishes fronted by interpretive exhibit panels. Its southern portion, reflecting the exterior's gabled roof, exhibits the same ceiling seen in Volume 1's interior: an exposed roof assembly with painted wood scissor trusses and a ceiling finish of painted wood slats. Its northern portion has a different, lower

ceiling finish: painted wood boards with exposed beams, as seen in the kitchen and storage room volumes of Volume 1. This indicates that the room's northern portion is part of the Volume 4 concrete block addition. This northern portion has a modern partition wall dividing it into two open display areas; to the south, the wall becomes a header that spans the width of the interior. A scissor truss meets this header at an angle and has been partially incorporated so it appears to pierce it. A similar header with piercing truss is present at the west end of the room, in the area where Volumes 1 and 2 join. This joining area has the same ceiling type as the northern portion of the Volume 2 interior, indicating the attachment point of the two volumes at the current angle.



Volume 1 interior, showing roof trusses and partition wall.

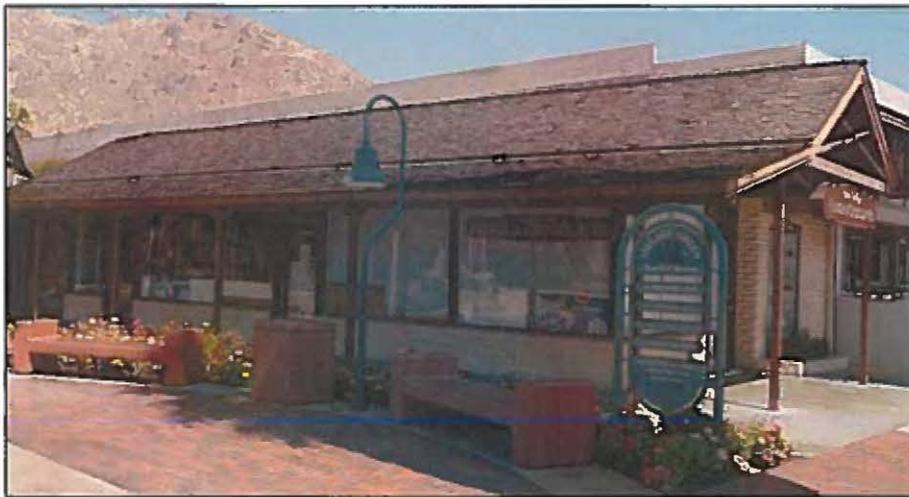


Volume 2 interior, showing detail of scissor truss piercing modern header.

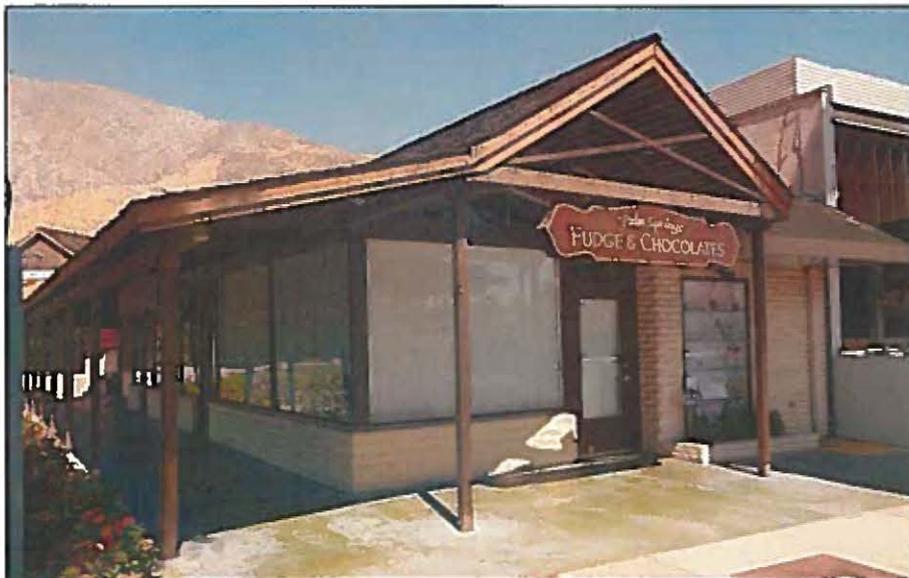
### Volume 3: 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive (Palm Springs Fudge and Chocolates)

#### *Volume 3 Exterior*

Volume 3, which currently contains Palm Springs Fudge and Chocolates, has a roughly rectangular footprint and a gabled roof with wood shake and simple wood bargeboards. As described above, the volume is fronted by a projecting porch shared with Volume 2. The volume's south façade is almost entirely glazed with large, fixed, wood storefront windows. The windows sit above a painted concrete block kneewall very similar to the one on Volume 1. This façade also contains two fully glazed wood doors with transoms, of the same type on Volume 2.



Volume 3 south façade, view to northwest.



Volume 3 east and south façades, view to northwest.

The east façade faces S. Palm Canyon Drive and contains the volume's primary entrance: a fully glazed wood door with transom at the north edge of the façade. The rest of the façade has a large, fixed, wood storefront window of the same type on the south façade. Above the storefront, the area under the gable is glazed, with exposed wood scissor trusses and a metal muntin. The steep gable of the roof projects beyond the east façade to become a porch roof with wood scissor trusses and open eaves, supported by simple wood posts. The underside of the porch roof retains wood slats backed by plywood. This is the same type of ceiling finish seen in the intact interiors of Volumes 1 and 2, indicating this porch underside was originally an interior ceiling. One of the scissor trusses here bears the handwritten "McManus" of the original owner, as well as two dangling lengths of iron chain.



Detail: McManus signature on underside of porch roof at Volume 3 east façade.

Volume 3's west façade is now the point of attachment to Volume 2, and its north façade is now obscured by the Volume 4 addition.

### *Volume 3 Interior*

Most of Volume 3's interior is a single, open, rectangular room with tile floors. Its south and east walls are mostly glazed, with painted wood framing at the interior, and the other walls are finished with painted drywall. The southern portion of the room reflects the exterior's gabled roof, with a similar ceiling to that seen in Volumes 1 and 2: an exposed roof assembly with painted wood scissor trusses. However, the original ceiling finish of wood slats has been covered with drywall. The northern portion of the interior has a dropped, boxed ceiling with simple support columns, indicating that it is part of the Volume 4 addition to the north. The north part of the room also includes retail counters, built-in wood shelving, and food preparation areas, as well as a doorway to an additional room or rooms not accessible during this site visit.



Volume 3 interior showing intact trusses.

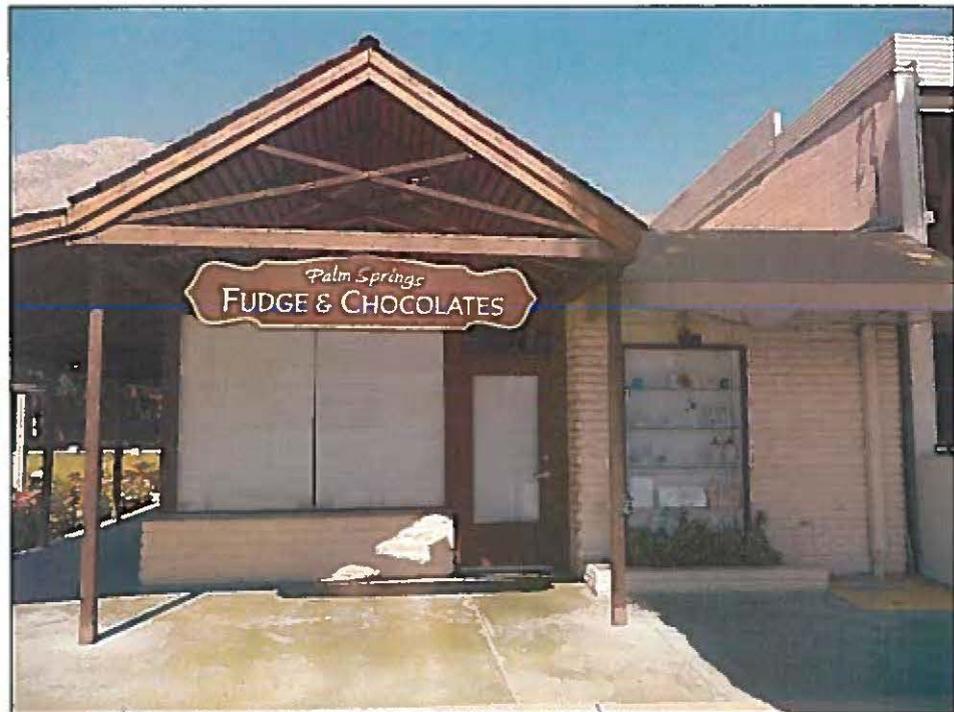


Volume 3 interior showing dropped ceiling and retail built-ins in northern portion.

## Volume 4: North Addition

### *Volume 4 Exterior*

Volume 4 is a concrete block addition to the north side of the building; irregular in plan, it extends all the way from Volume 3's west façade to the rear of Volume 1, and provides additional interior space for all of the other volumes. This volume does not have its own exterior entrance. It has a flat roof covered with an unknown material, atop which sits HVAC equipment. Comprising a northern extension of Volume 3's west façade, Volume 4's east façade (its only visible one) is clad in painted concrete block of a different, narrower type than that seen on Volumes 3 and 1. It contains a single, fixed, wood single-light display window fronted by a low concrete block planter. The façade is shaded by a metal awning with Plexiglas sheets on its underside, suggesting the current or past presence of fluorescent lighting.



East façades of  
Volumes 3 and 4,  
view to east.

The north façade of Volume 4 directly abuts the building to the north and is not visible. Aside from a glimpse of concrete block wall visible at the northwest façade of Volume 1, Volume 4's west façade is also not visible.

### *Volume 4 Interior*

As Volume 4's interior appears to be fully integrated with that of the other volumes, it is discussed in tandem with Volumes 1-3 above.

### 3. Alterations and Chronology of Development

Upon review of historical building permits, newspaper sources, photographs, and drawings, ARG created the following chronology of development for the Oasis Hotel Dining Hall. This chronology provides a summary of the property's development as well as a summary of all documented alterations.

#### Oasis Hotel Dining Hall (1924-1952)

- 1924: The Oasis Hotel multi-building complex, including the dining hall, is constructed at the southwest corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and W. Tahquitz Canyon Way. Architect: Lloyd Wright. Owner: Pearl McCallum McManus and Austin McManus. The dining hall was a 28' x 90' (2,520 sq. ft.) gable-roofed wood structure, with the existing McCallum Adobe house attached to its northeast corner and used as a lounge.<sup>3</sup> A concrete kitchen volume was attached perpendicularly to its northwest corner, and concrete cladding detail continued across the dining hall's north façade.
- 1925: A second residential unit, comprising a large two-story building, is added to the northwest corner of the Oasis Hotel parcel. This added about 28 guest rooms to the existing 22.<sup>4</sup>
- 1925-1927: The property is operated by lessee W.E. Hanner.<sup>5</sup>
- 1927: The McManuses sell the property to Hobart Garlick, who operates it until his death in 1940.
- 1941: A swimming pool and two guest cottages are added to the complex.<sup>6</sup>
- 1944: Dewey Metzdorf, senior vice president of Western Hotels Inc., purchases and operates the property.<sup>7</sup>
- 1952: Metzdorf sells the property to Western Hotels, Inc. The new owner constructs a new commercial building in the northern part of the property, necessitating the removal or demolition of the existing buildings there as well as part of the hotel itself.

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<sup>3</sup> Hacienda (Oasis) Hotel drawings, Lloyd Wright papers (Collection 1561). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

<sup>4</sup> "Oasis Hotel, Palm Springs, Calif." Typewritten notes on construction of first and second units, 20 November 1929, Lloyd Wright papers, UCLA; Sanborn Map Company, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends: Creation of a Desert Oasis* (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, Inc., 2006), 68.

<sup>6</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Oasis Hotel Completes Improvement Program," 14 February 1941.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolette Wenzell, "Palm Springs History: The Garlicks Built Up Oasis Hotel," *The Desert Sun* 1 May 2014.

Pearl McCallum McManus, having retained the right to the McCallum Adobe and apparently the dining hall building as well, removes them from the property.

#### Dining Hall Building at Village Green Location (1952-Present)

**1952:** McManus has the dining hall building cut into three pieces and moves at least two of them (Volumes 1 and 2) to the McManus-owned property down the street, later known as Village Green; she also has the McCallum Adobe disassembled, moved, and rebuilt there. Volumes 1 and 2 are set in their current places. Volume 3 may also have been moved here at the same time, but newspaper references indicate that a portion of the Oasis Hotel dining hall was first moved to the new Palm Valley School, where it was remodeled and served as a dining hall; Volume 3 is the most likely candidate.<sup>8</sup>

Volume 1 was used as a chapel and retail space, and usually used the address 219 S. Palm Canyon Drive. Volume 2 was converted to commercial storefronts, with the address 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive. The 1952 permit notes "four store rooms and chapel, 8' concrete block, frame and stucco, shake and shingle roof."<sup>9</sup>

**1953:** Concrete block addition (Volume 4) constructed to add a kitchen and bathroom and to join Volumes 1 and 2.<sup>10</sup>

**1953-1955:** If Volume 3 was not moved to Village Green previously, McManus moves it now from Palm Valley School to the Village Green, setting it at its current location and attaching it to Volume 2 (and possibly extending Volume 4); its earliest occupant was Ruth Bibo's Acoma Indian Shop.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Twenty Entered at Palm Valley School in First Year of Activity," 13 November 1952; "Modern Cafeteria Feature of Palm Valley School," 14 September 1953. The exact address of Palm Valley School is unclear; the November 1952 article describes it as "located on the property formerly owned by the Marsden Foundation some four miles east of downtown Palm Springs, just off Highway 111." In 1992, the school moved to a new campus in Rancho Mirage.

<sup>9</sup> Palm Springs Building Department (PSBD), Permit 5806, 9/22/52. Plumbing and electrical permits from 1952-1953 also exist (day and month illegible), but despite their use of the address 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive, it is not clear which Village Green building(s) they are for. See PSBD, Permit 4864, 12/3/52; Permit 6223, [month illegible]/21/52; Permit 4762, [month illegible]/23/52; Permit 5304, 12/1/53; Permit 5724, [month illegible]/18/53. There is a great deal of address fluctuation during this early period, and 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive sometimes refers to up to three different buildings.

<sup>10</sup> PSBD, Permit 6466, 11/4/53.

<sup>11</sup> *The Desert Sun*, Ad for Hostess House, 24 December 1953; "Mary Booth Killed, Two Injured in Auto Crash," 3 April 1957; "Art Center Has Tea at Opening," 22 November 1955; "Real Joy on Tahquitz" (Adele Joan Brott letter to the editor), 11 February 1987. Bibo's shop was noted being at Village Green as early as December 1953, but if Volume 3 was in fact moved a year or two later than Volumes 1 and 2, the shop would have occupied Volume 2 first and then moved to, or expanded into, the larger Volume 3.

- 1956-1958 The exteriors and interiors of Volumes 1, 2, and 3 are extensively altered for commercial use, including window and door opening modifications; door and window replacement; addition of concrete block cladding to Volumes 1 and 3; and addition of the projecting porch. Fabric awnings are added to Volumes 1 and 3.<sup>12</sup>
- 1957-1958: Electrical work in Volume 1 for occupant Claudette Pressman (Colbert).<sup>13</sup>
- 1958: Electrical work in Volume 1 for occupant Jolie Gabor.<sup>14</sup>
- 1976: "Renewal of roofs and minor remodeling of Village Green Buildings" (unknown which buildings).<sup>15</sup>
- Upgrade of electrical and mechanical services to accommodate new air conditioner (unknown which buildings).<sup>16</sup>
- 1987 Flat roof of Volume 4 repaired in Volume 2 area, at location of air conditioning equipment.<sup>17</sup> Occupant at that time: Gabrielle Dress Shop.<sup>18</sup>
- 1988 Village Green landscaping altered: grading changed, fountain and brick plaza added, walkways altered, steps to Volume 1 reconfigured and ramp added to one side.<sup>19</sup>
- 1991 Minor interior alterations for conversion to Agua Caliente Cultural Museum: bathroom area altered, 10' long track light added, display areas and dioramas installed.<sup>20</sup>
- 1992 Major interior alterations for museum conversion: new opening with steps placed between Volumes 1 and 2, headers and partition walls added.<sup>21</sup>
- 1995: Volume 3 tenant improvements for fudge-making shop with retail sales; alterations include addition of the current retail counters

<sup>12</sup> Palm Springs Historical Society photos of Jolie Gabor and other Village Green shops ca. 1958 and 1970; *The Desert Sun*, "Continental Charm Now Added to Village Green by New Shops," 28 November 1958, "Art Gallery to Open Today with Exhibit and Tea," 1 November 1956.

<sup>13</sup> PSBD, Permit 8741, 10/16/57; Permit 146, 1/6/58.

<sup>14</sup> PSBD, Permit 950, 12/12/58.

<sup>15</sup> PSBD, Permit B10409, 8/17/76.

<sup>16</sup> PSBD, Permit A8428, 8/17/76; Permit M3960, 8/17/76.

<sup>17</sup> PSBD, Permit 11886, 12/3/87.

<sup>18</sup> Newspaper ads and historic photos show Gabrielle Dress Shop at 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive (Volume 3); it is unknown whether the business extended into Volume 2 at 215 S. Palm Canyon Drive, or if the permits just have the incorrect address.

<sup>19</sup> Larry Boodry, "The Road to Fame Paved with Good Intentions," *The Desert Sun* 19 February 1988.

<sup>20</sup> PSBD, Permit B20264, 3/21/91.

<sup>21</sup> PSBD, Permit 23477, 8/28/92.

and food preparation area, and may include addition of the dropped boxed ceiling and covering of the wood slats at the ceiling of the original volume, though the permit does not specify.<sup>22</sup>

1999: Volume 3 reroofed "per city project 9748, bid schedule C."<sup>23</sup>

2009: Existing non-lit sign removed from Volume 3; new internally lit can sign installed.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned alterations, ARG noted the following additional alterations to the rear (northwest) façade of Volume 1 that are not documented in building permits, photographs, or other source materials. These alterations were identified by visual inspection of the building conducted by ARG staff on July 14, 2017.

- Addition of projecting shed with vertically scored plywood cladding and double metal doors (attached to Volumes 1 and 4)
- Addition of a sliding aluminum window
- Addition of vertically scored plywood cladding
- Addition of double fully glazed metal doors with security gate
- Addition of pole ramada

The aluminum window likely dates to the late 1950s-late 1960s, while the rest of the alterations most likely date to the volume's conversion into the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum in the early 1990s.

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<sup>22</sup> PSBD, Permit B28886, 5/31/95.

<sup>23</sup> PSBD, Permit B37604, 9/8/99.

<sup>24</sup> PSBD, Permit C23998, 4/24/09.

## 4. Historic Contexts

### 4.1 Hotel and Resort Development in Palm Springs, 1919-1952<sup>25</sup>

Originally inhabited by the people of the Cahuilla tribe, later known as the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Palm Springs was settled by European Americans starting with John Guthrie McCallum in the 1880s. While McCallum brought his family there for health reasons and envisioned a community that would draw other health-seekers, others focused first on its agricultural potential. The new inhabitants took advantage of the region's warm weather to grow produce which ripened sooner and could reach Los Angeles markets earlier in the season. However, the town's agricultural aspirations were short lived. A flood in 1894, followed by years of drought, devastated the local farming industry. By the early 1900s, Palm Springs' agricultural ambitions were overshadowed by its emergence as a resort destination, a quality that would come to define the desert city.<sup>26</sup> New arrivals like Nellie Coffman shared McCallum's enthusiasm for the warm, dry climate, though they focused on developing Palm Springs as an exclusive winter resort for a well-heeled clientele rather than just a health destination for people seeking relief from physical ailments.

In 1918, Coffman and her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, converted their existing sanatorium of small tent cabins into the luxurious Desert Inn, on a parcel eventually covering 35 acres and fronting on Palm Canyon Drive (originally Main Avenue, until 1930).<sup>27</sup> Over time, they transformed the Desert Inn into a lushly landscaped complex with a large main building, concrete bungalows, tennis courts, and the community's first swimming pool.<sup>28</sup> It was a massive success, drawing a great deal of attention to the sleepy village of Palm Springs and triggering rapid commercial development that would continue to be resort-focused for decades to come. Two new hotel properties followed the Desert Inn's lead and became iconic destinations in their own right: Pearl McCallum McManus' Lloyd Wright-designed Oasis Hotel (completed 1924) and Prescott Thresher Stevens' Walker and Eisen-designed Hotel El Mirador (1928). The Oasis Hotel was particularly notable for its innovative Early Modern design and slip-form concrete construction method, distinguishing it from the more traditional Spanish Colonial Revival styles of the

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<sup>25</sup> The following historic background is closely patterned on the Palm Springs citywide historic context statement and uses its themes: Historic Resources Group, *City of Palm Springs Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* (City of Palm Springs: Department of Planning Services, 2016). The date range for the Hotel and Resort Development context is extended here to 1952, to reflect the time period relevant to the Oasis Hotel dining room building.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend: The Architecture of a Midcentury Oasis* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 22-24.

<sup>27</sup> Historic Resources Group, 109.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Desert Inn and the El Mirador and announcing it as the future of Palm Springs architecture.

The Desert Inn, El Mirador, and Oasis Hotel dominated Palm Springs's resort environment through the 1930s, drawing wealthy guests looking for desert warmth in the dead of winter.<sup>29</sup> They served as resort hotels in every sense of the word, providing dining facilities and other services to the community at a time when Palm Springs had relatively few stand-alone restaurants and retail businesses. Taken by the leisurely atmosphere of the desert oasis, hotel patrons often considered buying a residence. Most of Palm Springs' early residents were prominent industrialists and Hollywood moguls who bought second homes in the town. The new residents' exclusive parties and various social occasions were often covered and popularized in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers throughout the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> A number of smaller hotels and resorts appeared to accommodate a wider variety of visitors; these included properties like Sunshine Court (1919), the Ramona Hotel (converted into the Palm Springs Hotel in 1921), the Del Tahquitz Hotel (1928), the Ingleside Inn (1935), and numerous small bungalow courts.<sup>31</sup> The community's desirable climate meant that health resorts maintained a presence among the other hotels, with the best-known property being the Reid Solarium (later known as the Reid Clinic and Hospital).<sup>32</sup> Many of the city's hotel and resort properties reflected a Spanish Colonial Revival style meant to evoke the mythical romance of old California, with the grander properties boasting ornate decorative elements, towers, and colonnades.

As Palm Springs' resort economy grew and residential development continued, commercial operations appeared to cater to both seasonal and permanent residents. Most were concentrated along Main Avenue/Palm Canyon Drive, with commercial storefronts spreading north from Tahquitz Canyon Way (originally Spring Street) and south from there to a lesser degree.<sup>33</sup> Local developer Julia Shaw Patterson Carnell's Carnell Building (1935) and La Plaza shopping center (1936) heralded a new era of commercial growth in the city. The concentration of businesses along Palm Canyon Drive made them easily accessible by the hotels lining the thoroughfare, as well as early residential developments directly adjacent to it. Nightclubs like the Chi Chi (1935) and private clubs like the Palm Springs Racquet Club (1933) and Pearl McManus' Tennis Club (1937) expanded the range of recreational opportunities available.<sup>34</sup> Palm Springs and its resorts weathered the Great Depression in comparatively good shape; even the palatial El Mirador

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<sup>29</sup> Historic Resources Group, 58; Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, *Palm Springs* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 8.

<sup>30</sup> Historic Resources Group, 58-59.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115, 150-151.

survived thanks to its Hollywood clientele, who made it “one of the most prosperous, orgiastic symbols of extravagance in the midst of national poverty.”<sup>35</sup> By the time Palm Springs incorporated in 1938, it had become famous worldwide as a “winter playground for Hollywood stars, European royalty and business tycoons, all who came to enjoy the endless sunshine and serenity of the desert.”<sup>36</sup>

Most development halted during World War II, aside from the rapid improvement of Palm Springs Municipal Airport and the establishment of other military facilities like the Palm Springs Air Base. The famous El Mirador was converted to an Army hospital in 1942 and was maintained partially by Italian prisoners of war living in an adjacent detention camp.<sup>37</sup> At war’s end, Palm Springs was poised for the growth spurt that would change the face of the city’s built environment, centered once again on hotel development.

During the immediate postwar period, Palm Springs experienced a massive increase in both tourists and seasonal residents reflecting the general prosperity of the period. By 1951, the city’s winter (peak) population had increased from 7,660 to almost 30,000.<sup>38</sup> The year-round population also increased, not least because of the new availability of affordable air conditioning systems that ameliorated some of the summer’s climate challenges. A number of new hotels appeared, ranging widely in size but almost uniformly boasting the latest Modern architectural styles designed by local architects as well as those from Los Angeles and across the region.

The city’s older hotels made dramatic upgrades to keep up with the pace of change. The El Mirador, back in private hands, saw major renovations by architect Paul R. Williams in association with the local firm Williams, Williams & Williams.<sup>39</sup> Western Hotels, Inc., new owner of the Oasis Hotel, reconfigured the resort’s expansive site plan in 1952 by removing some buildings at the north end of the property (the dining hall and McCallum Adobe, reclaimed by Pearl McManus and moved to the Village Green) and demolishing others (including the kitchen attached to the dining hall and a stand-alone office). This made way for a large new commercial building designed by Williams, Williams & Williams, as well as a broad expansion west across S. Belardo Road that featured guest quarters and a new restaurant designed in a flamboyant Modern style. In 1964, the Oasis Hotel added another Williams, Williams & Williams-designed volume to the western part of its property, today

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<sup>35</sup> Dennis McDougal and Mike Meenan, “It’s Check-Out Time for Palm Springs’ El Mirador,” *Los Angeles Times* 27 July 1989, cited in Historic Resources Group, 112.

<sup>36</sup> *Draft Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, March 2003), 3-5.

<sup>37</sup> Historic Resources Group, 58.

<sup>38</sup> Western Resort Publications, *Palm Springs Area Yearbook* (Palm Springs: Ferris H. Scott, 1954), 16 cited in Historic Resources Group, 162.

<sup>39</sup> Historic Resources Group, 272.

much altered and part of the Palm Mountain Resort & Spa. The postwar changes to the Oasis Hotel were among many along Palm Canyon Drive at this time, as the thoroughfare saw the construction of Mid-Century Modern department stores, Googie restaurants, and New Formalist banks, along with other new projects on various scales. The postwar development of Palm Springs continued in full swing through the 1960s, resulting in the distinctive Modern built environment that continues to dominate the City's commercial, residential, and civic buildings to this day.

## 4.2 The Oasis Hotel

In 1923, Palm Springs landowner Pearl McCallum McManus teamed with her husband Austin and Los Angeles architect Lloyd Wright to develop a hotel worthy of her pioneer father's vision for the city. She wanted a distinctive resort that would become a landmark to pay homage to John Guthrie McCallum and to draw guests to the small village of Palm Springs. McManus sited it at the location of her family's 1884 adobe house, nestled in a cottonwood and orange grove at the southwest corner of Main Avenue (now S. Palm Canyon Drive) and Spring Street (now Tahquitz Canyon Way). The hotel that would gain fame as the Oasis Hotel was called the Hacienda before completion, and that is the name on all of Lloyd Wright's drawings for the property. A 1923 handwritten note for an unknown promotional purpose outlined McManus' goals for the hotel:

NEW Hotel now under construction in Palm Springs.

It is to be in fact a "Hacienda" with all the old traditional spirit of generous hospitality in sympathy with the great traditions of the century.

The Hotel is the idea of Pearl McCallum McManus Builder and Owner whose father, Judge McCallum, founded Palm Springs and to whom this work is dedicated.

Built with heavy concrete walls with towers and enclosed courts patios and pavillions, it will be a rugged and dignified monument to the work of Judge McCallum, one of the first lawmakers of California.<sup>40</sup>

Hiring Wright to design the hotel was a bit of a gamble for McManus; though he was an experienced and highly regarded architect and landscape architect, Wright had only completed a few residential designs since moving back to Los Angeles in 1919, and the Oasis was by far his largest project to date.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, his organic modern designs, expanding on the work of his famous father, would be a significant departure from the rustic ranch and romantic Spanish Colonial Revival

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<sup>40</sup> Author unknown, "Cut of 'Hacienda'" handwritten note, 1923, Lloyd Wright papers (Collection 1561) (UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA).

<sup>41</sup> Hess and Danish, 27.

architecture that dominated Palm Springs at that time. The hire was even risky in national terms, as discussed by historian Alan Hess:

There was no precedent for using a distinctly Modern design for a resort anywhere in the country before the Oasis...Resorts contemporary to the Oasis, built for the burgeoning car tourism industry, boasted exotic, historically based designs like the Taos-inspired La Fonda by Rapp and Rapp in Santa Fe, or the rustic luxury of the Ahwahnee Lodge in Yosemite Park. The Oasis was boldly unique.<sup>42</sup>

Wright's design was unique indeed: a complex of attached buildings and landscaped courtyards dominated by a three-story concrete tower topping the main 20-room hotel volume. The complex had green lawns, flowering trees, shaded terraces, and a fountain creating a lush respite from the surrounding desert. The northern part of its Palm Canyon frontage was set back from the street and obscured by trees, while the southern part included integrated commercial storefronts attached to the main hotel building and set flush with the sidewalk.<sup>43</sup> With its carefully landscaped, courtyard-focused site plan, the Oasis Hotel complex reflected the influence of historic Spanish forms as translated into a new organic modern idiom.

Most of the complex's buildings, including an office, lobby, shops, and kitchen in addition to the main hotel, used an innovative "slip-form" concrete construction technique creating decorative joint lines left visible on the exterior walls. Other ornamentation included redwood slat grilles, stepped piers, and areas of abstract patterning in cast concrete. Although Rudolf Schindler was regarded as the first to use the slip-form construction method (as seen at his 1923 Pueblo Ribera apartments in San Diego), the Oasis Hotel design shows that Wright was also using the technique at the time.<sup>44</sup> The concrete buildings reflected the architect's design aesthetic, using massive, exposed structural forms and naturalistic materials to create connections between the built environment and the site. Wright's form of organic expressionism sometimes incorporated indigenous-inspired design motifs to lend an Aztec- or Mayan-like feel to his buildings, and the Oasis Hotel (particularly its dramatically stepped tower) is one of the best examples.

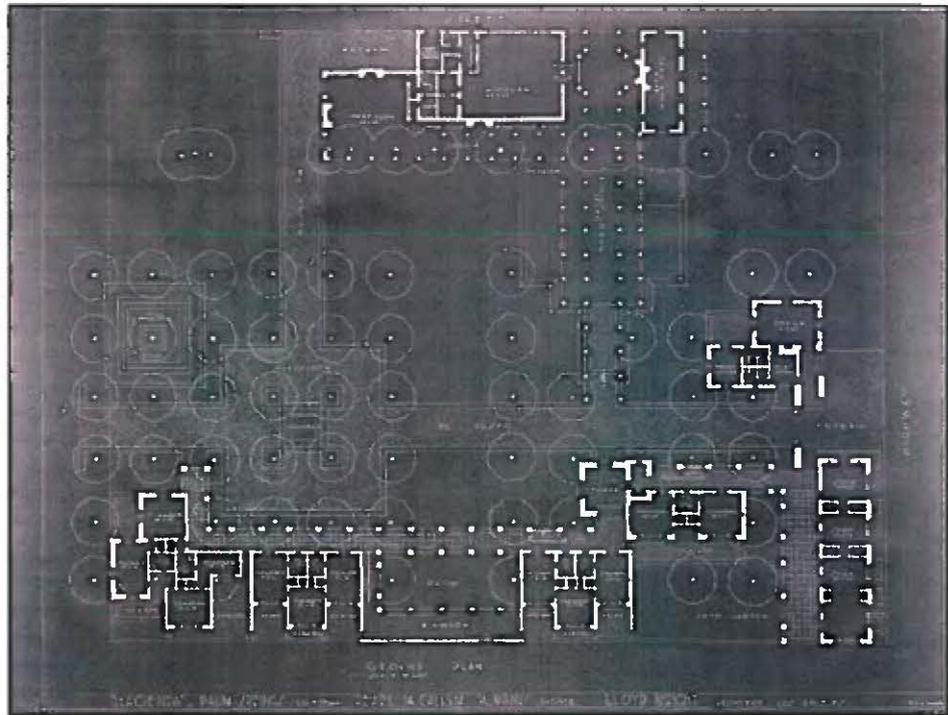
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<sup>42</sup> Hess and Danish, 31.

<sup>43</sup> These storefronts are intact but were not included as part of the Class 1 designation for the Oasis Hotel and Tower (HSPB-10).

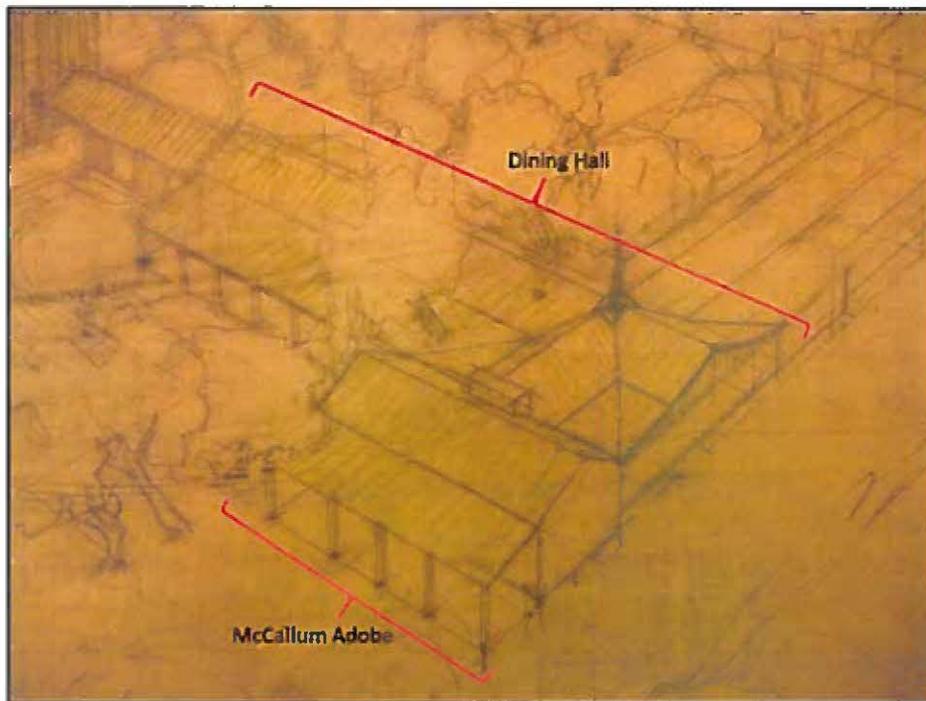
<sup>44</sup> Hess and Danish, 28.

Lloyd Wright's  
Hacienda Hotel site  
plan, 1923.  
Courtesy Palm  
Springs Historical  
Society.



Hacienda Hotel  
rendering, 1923.  
Courtesy UCLA  
Library Special  
Collections.





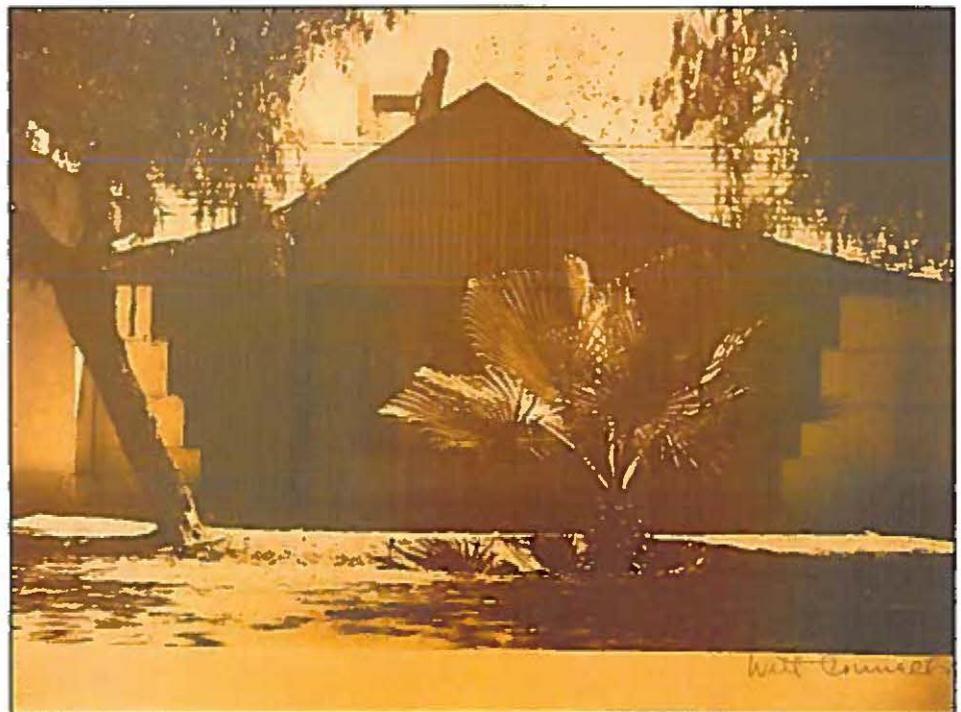
Detail of the 1923 rendering showing the dining hall building. Base image courtesy UCLA Library Special Collections.

The resort's non-concrete buildings, at the north part of the property, included a wood-framed, gable-roofed dining hall volume; this volume's northeast corner attached to the 1884 McCallum Adobe house, which served as a lounge. The dining hall building also connected to a slip-form concrete kitchen building, covered terraces (including a pole-roofed ramada on the east façade), and a covered walkway leading to the main hotel building. The majority of the dining hall's side façades consisted of repeating sets of French doors set into simple wood framing; the two end façades had expanses of vertical wood slat cladding that visually integrated the dining hall building with the wood grilles and balcony railings on the hotel building. The north façade (facing Spring Street/Tahquitz Canyon Way) also included stepped slip-form concrete at its corners, connecting it to the buildings on either side. This kind of juxtaposition of vertical wood slats and horizontal slip-formed concrete, seen in several areas of the overall complex, helped to unify the different building types into a harmonious composition, illustrating Wright's thoughtful use of natural materials.

Oasis Hotel dining hall west and south façades, view northeast, ca. 1924. Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.



Oasis Hotel dining hall north façade, view south, ca. 1924. Courtesy UCLA Library Special Collections.



The 90-foot-long dining hall was a single, open space with exposed structural elements that gave it a pavilion-like feel and constituted the bulk of its ornamentation; these included exposed roof scissor trusses, wood slat ceilings, simple wood columns, and French doors on three sides. The building was designed to incorporate two standing cottonwood trees, which pierced the roof and

enhanced the hall's rustic feeling. Photographs show that the interior was further decorated with an open brazier, decorative fabric hangings, and dried desert shrubs tucked into the roof trusses.



Oasis Hotel dining hall interior, ca. 1924. Courtesy UCLA Library Special Collections.

With its single open space, wood framing, exposed roof trusses, and incorporation of natural elements, the dining hall reflected the same aspects of Lloyd Wright's organic expressionist design philosophy that the massive concrete buildings did, just in a different medium. Its roof assembly was particularly emblematic of Wright's designs, hinting at the essentially all-roof Wayfarers Chapel to come nearly 30 years later. The building's scissor trusses reflect 30-60 degree angles, the same angles that occur in nature in snowflakes, crystals, and tree branches; like that of his father Frank Lloyd Wright, Lloyd Wright's organic designs consciously used these oblique angles whenever possible.<sup>45</sup> The trusses' wood flanking elements extend below the gentler slope of the gabled roof at the same angles, helping to emphasize the roof structure as the interior's primary ornamentation. Both the Oasis Hotel dining hall and Wayfarers express, albeit on vastly different scales, Wright's devotion to exposed structure as a means to bring the outdoors inside.

The completion of the Oasis Hotel in 1924 and official opening in 1925 was cause for much celebration, though the cost of the property's construction left McManus

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<sup>45</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Wayfarers Chapel, Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County, California, National Register # 20050711.

without sufficient funds to actually operate it. McManus leased the hotel to Los Angeles-based operator W.E. Hanner for several years, who successfully promoted it as a hotel that “combines beauty, recreation and creature comforts to a remarkable degree. A visit to this fascinating spot will be one long remembered, one whose haunting memories will ever be inviting a repetition.”<sup>46</sup> The Oasis Hotel became a desirable destination for the movie stars, wealthy industrialists, and tastemakers who shaped Palm Springs as a winter destination during the 1920s. In 1927, McManus sold the hotel to Hobart Garlick and his wife Isabel, prompting a letter to Garlick from Lloyd Wright, who was apparently unsatisfied with the way the project had turned out:

...I learn you have taken over the Oasis Hotel and understand you intend to develop it properly and thoroly [sic].

Having designed the group I am particularly interested in its fate and obviously would like the opportunity to properly develop and complete it.

The Hotel having changed hands, I am now at liberty to call attention to the fact that it was built at a remarkably low cost. For obvious reasons an opposite position has been maintained by the owners for general consumption.

Through lack of funds and vision additions and repairs required to make it a practical and livable hotel have been neglected.

May I have the privilege of a conference with you in the near future.<sup>47</sup>

It is unknown exactly what Wright had in mind, or whether any of the proposed additions and repairs took place during the Garlicks’ tenure. The full extent of Wright’s involvement with the property’s 1920s design is unclear in one other respect: in 1925, the Oasis added a second unit, comprising a large two-story building at the northwest corner of the parcel that added about 28 guest rooms to the existing 22.<sup>48</sup> This building does not appear on any original drawings and it is unknown whether it was designed by Wright. The 1926 Sanborn map does not show it as concrete construction, so it is assumed to have been wood-framed with stucco or wood cladding.

The Garlicks brought the Oasis Hotel to even greater success and wide recognition, operating it for over a decade with the help of assistant manager George Linde. Isabel died of a prolonged illness in 1937, and Hobart committed suicide on the premises in 1940.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Oasis Hotel promotional booklet, Lloyd Wright papers, UCLA.

<sup>47</sup> Wright letter to Hobart Garlick (8 April 1927), Lloyd Wright papers, UCLA.

<sup>48</sup> “Oasis Hotel, Palm Springs, Calif.” Typewritten notes on construction of first and second units, 20 November 1929, Lloyd Wright papers, UCLA; Sanborn Map Company, 1926.

<sup>49</sup> Wenzell, “The Garlicks Built Up Oasis Hotel.”

Linde and his wife took over management of the property after Garlick's death; the ownership of the hotel at the time is unclear. The Lindes added a swimming pool and two guest cottages to the complex in early 1941.<sup>50</sup> The property was briefly owned by Mrs. Dudley Alberts and her son J.H. Alberts, who sold it to Dewey Metzdorf, senior vice president of Western Hotels Inc., in 1944.<sup>51</sup> The Alberts' manager George Thompson stayed on, and later became a part owner with Metzdorf.<sup>52</sup> In 1952, Metzdorf sold the hotel to his own company. Western Hotels, Inc. wished to increase the property's commercial potential, and to that end had the firm Williams, Williams & Williams (in association with Clark and Frey) design a two story non-hotel building for the parcel's northeast corner. It also expanded the Oasis to the west, constructing new guest quarters and a new dining room/restaurant. The changes necessitated the removal or demolition of several buildings, including the dining hall and McCallum Adobe. Having reserved the right to the buildings, Pearl McManus moved these buildings from their original location to what is now the Village Green, a block to the south.

### The Former Oasis Hotel Dining Hall at the Village Green

Pearl McManus had obvious sentimental reasons for moving her family's historic adobe home to the nascent Village Green (one of her many holdings fronting on Palm Canyon Drive) in 1952. Her move of the Oasis Hotel dining hall building to the same property appears to have been for purely commercial reasons. McManus had a keen sense of how she wanted Palm Springs to grow and change, and she saw the establishment of Palm Canyon Drive as a popular shopping destination as key to its postwar success. Village Green, first referred to as such in 1953, was one of her earliest retail ventures on Palm Canyon; its open lawn encircled by a hodgepodge of small repurposed buildings represented a transition between the genteel, rustic Palm Springs of the 1920s and 1930s and the bustling city of the space age.<sup>53</sup>

McManus planned the Village Green as an indoor-outdoor marketplace for arts and crafts and western shops, "with the old adobe as the center of interest...in that immediate and compact area" to tell the story of her family's founding of Palm Springs.<sup>54</sup> The adobe had to be carefully disassembled and then reassembled brick by brick at the new site. The Oasis Hotel dining hall appears to have been cut into three pieces for the move, and at least two of the pieces (today's Volume 1 and Volume 2) were placed at their current locations in 1952.<sup>55</sup> The third piece (today's

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<sup>50</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Oasis Hotel Completes Improvement Program," 14 February 1941.

<sup>51</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Hotel, The Oasis, Bought by Hotel Man from Alaska," 7 April 1944.

<sup>52</sup> Wenzell, "The Garlicks Built Up Oasis Hotel;" *The Desert Sun*, "Hotel The Oasis Re-Opens for New Season Wednesday," 3 November 1944.

<sup>53</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Hostess House to Open Monday in Historic Old McCallum Adobe," 24 December 1953.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Palm Springs Building Department (PSBD), Permit 5806, 9/22/52.

Volume 3) may have been moved there at the same time, but several contemporaneous newspaper articles state that the “former Oasis Hotel dining room” (clearly only a portion of it given the 1952 presence of Volumes 1 and 2 at the Village Green) had been donated by McManus to the new Palm Valley School for use as a dining hall.<sup>56</sup> Volume 3 is the most likely candidate. Historic photographs of the private school’s buildings at that time show multiple gable-roofed wood buildings, several of which could have been Volume 3.<sup>57</sup> Whether it was moved with the other two pieces or a year or two later, Volume 3 was present at its current location by 1955 at the latest.

In the earliest Village Green years, Volume 1 was used as a chapel and retail space, usually listed at the address 219 S. Palm Canyon Drive. The attached Volume 2 was used for one or more retail occupants, with the address 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive. Volume 3 also contained retail occupants, with the same address as Volume 2; the 215 S. Canyon Drive address does not seem to have been used by Volume 2 occupants until the 1970s. In 1953, the Volume 4 concrete block addition was constructed to help attach Volumes 1 and 2 and provide space for a kitchen and bathroom.<sup>58</sup> The extent of other alterations to the dining hall volumes upon their initial move is unknown; most of the exterior alterations that resulted in their current appearance (including the matching concrete block kneewall on Volumes 1 and 3) likely happened between 1956 and 1958. In 1956, McManus started using the McCallum Adobe as an art gallery for the Desert Art Center and Volume 2 as an art supply store for the same organization.<sup>59</sup> Originally established in Cathedral City, the Desert Art Center opened a Palm Springs branch on N. Palm Canyon Dr. in 1955 and apparently used the Village Green buildings as a secondary location providing indoor-outdoor exhibit space.

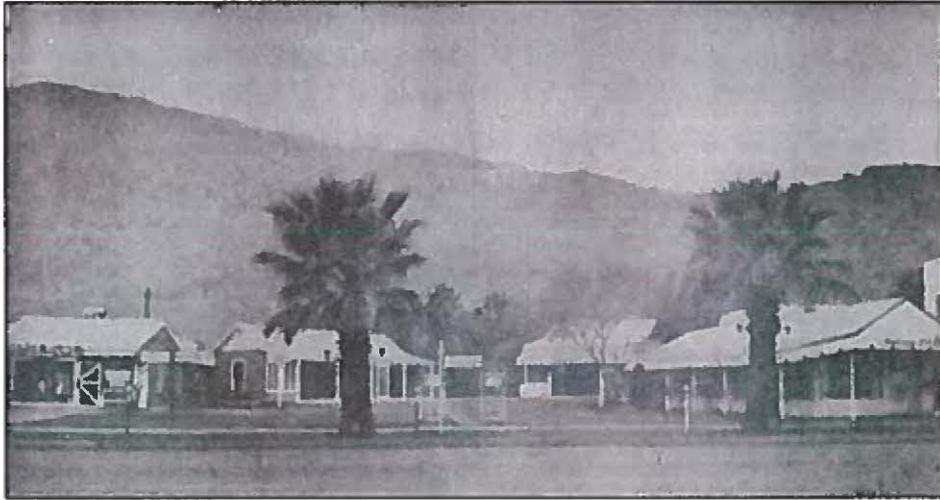
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<sup>56</sup> *The Desert Sun*, “Twenty Entered at Palm Valley School,” “Modern Cafeteria Feature.”

<sup>57</sup> See *The Desert Sun*, Aerial photo, 21 September 1953 p. 4; Photo, 1 October 1953 p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> PSBD, Permit 6466, 11/4/53.

<sup>59</sup> *The Desert Sun*, “Art Gallery to Open Today with Exhibit and Tea,” 1 November 1956; ads for art supplies at 211 S. Palm Canyon Drive and art exhibit at 223 S. Palm Canyon Drive, 29 November 1956.



Village Green in 1958 (Oasis Hotel volumes at right). *The Desert Sun*, 11/28/58.

The Village Green buildings remained a collection of eclectic local craft shops and Desert Art Center facilities until 1958. In that year, Pearl McManus unveiled a new continental theme for the complex, with its former Oasis Hotel dining hall volumes sporting new awnings and a unified white paint scheme. A new filigreed entry gate appeared at the (completely open on either side) entrance to the green, and highbrow tenants like Jolie Gabor's Pearl Salon, Madelyn Fio Rito Italian Imports, Le Rouge Interior Designs, and an espresso shop joined the McCallum Adobe and the resolutely rustic Marge Riley's Western Shop.<sup>60</sup> The complex maintained the same general look, with tenant turnover and minor exterior repairs and alterations, for over a decade.

In 1970, the McCallum Desert Foundation (which managed McManus' estate after her 1966 death) donated Village Green and its buildings to the City of Palm Springs for use as a city park. The complex began shifting from a retail complex to a heritage park operated by the Palm Springs Historical Society, aided by the 1979 addition of the Cornelia White house and the repurposing of the McCallum Adobe as a museum. In 1987, Ruddy's General Store (a modern building) was added. The next year, the City altered the Village Green's landscaping to add a fountain and brick plaza celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation; the work changed the grading and walkways as well. The former dining hall buildings continued to be used primarily for retail purposes, with some office tenants, until Volumes 1 and 2 were converted to the Agua Caliente Museum in 1991-1992. The early to mid-1990s saw the majority of the property's interior alterations since the 1950s, with major alterations for the museum spaces and for the fudge shop that has occupied Volume 3 since 1995.<sup>61</sup> Exterior alterations seem to have been limited to

<sup>60</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Continental Charm Now Added to Village Green by New Shops," 28 November 1958.

<sup>61</sup> PSBD, Permit 23477, 8/28/92, Permit B28886, 5/31/95.

removal/change of awnings, paint color changes, roof material replacement, and signage updates.

As of 2017, the former Oasis Hotel dining hall volumes continue to be owned by the City of Palm Springs, and occupied by two tenants: the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and Palm Springs Fudge and Chocolates. The building's exterior is nearly unrecognizable as a component of the historic hotel, though its interior retains original elements like exposed scissor trusses, chamfered corners, and wood slat ceilings as striking evidence of Lloyd Wright's innovative design.

### 4.3 Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (more commonly known as Lloyd Wright) was born on March 21, 1890 in Oak Park, Illinois to Catherine Lee Tobin and prolific architect Frank Lloyd Wright. His mother, who ran a nursery school in their home, introduced Lloyd to art, music, and drama at an early age. As a teenager, Lloyd was exposed to the creativity and intensity of his father's Oak Park studio, where he learned from some of his father's most talented associates, including Marion Mahony Griffin and William Drummond. From 1907 to 1909, Wright attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he majored in engineering and agronomy, played in chamber music groups, and rowed on the crew team. His time at the university was cut short when he received an invitation from his father to join him in Italy (where the elder Frank had escaped with the wife of one of his clients).<sup>62</sup> Though angry at his father, Lloyd agreed to travel to Italy and help his father develop the drawings that came to comprise the highly-regarded Wasmuth portfolio, published in Europe in 1910.<sup>63</sup>

Upon returning to the United States, Lloyd Wright was determined to make a name for himself. After briefly working at the Harvard Herbarium in Boston, he was hired by Olmsted and Olmsted, the renowned landscape architecture firm that designed New York's Central Park and originated landscape design in America.<sup>64</sup> In 1911, Wright moved to California with the Olmsted brothers to assist in designing the landscape of the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. In 1912, the Olmsteds resigned from their work on the Exposition, upset that Bertram Goodhue, rather than noted San Diego architect Irving Gill, had been appointed as chief designer of the Exposition. Wright resigned from his duties at the Exposition as well and took up practice with Irving Gill. Gill gave Wright full control over the landscape designs of his architectural commissions. Together, Wright and Gill designed a plan for the

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas S. Hines, "The Blessing and the Curse: The Achievement of Lloyd Wright," in *Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.*, ed. Cathryn Drake (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ernest O. Martin, *The Beauty of Holiness: Story of the Wayfarers Chapel* (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company Publishers, 2007), 19.

<sup>64</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Wayfarers Chapel, Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County, California, National Register # 20050711.

City of Torrance, in south Los Angeles County. When work at Gill's office slowed in the mid-1910s, Wright partnered with Paul Thiene, a colleague from the Olmsted firm. Along with creating the garden designs of several residences, Wright and Thiene developed the landscape design for the La Brea Tar Pits, including the original prehistoric animal sculptures at the site.<sup>65</sup>

In 1916, Lloyd set up his own practice in downtown Los Angeles. It was during this time that he became a set designer at Paramount Pictures, creating a number of classical and medieval sets. During World War I, Wright, along with his new wife, actress Kira Markham, moved to the East Coast to work as a draftsman for the Standard Aircraft and Curtis Aircraft companies. While there, he created sets for the well-established theater group the Provincetown Players on Cape Cod.<sup>66</sup>

In 1919, after his marriage to Kira had begun to fail, Wright moved back to Los Angeles to assist his father with the landscape design for the Hollyhock House (one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most celebrated works of his career).<sup>67</sup> Lloyd continued to work with his father on a number of projects, including the Doheny Ranch Resort (1923), before venturing out on his own again. By the early 1920s, Lloyd was employing new and innovative construction methods in his residential designs. Though he drew inspiration from some of this father's design principles, Lloyd applied his own unique point of view to his creations. His use of the "knit-block" system (in which double walls of four-inch-thick blocks are tied together by steel rods) in the Henry Bollman house (Hollywood, 1922), and "slip-form" concrete construction in the Oasis Hotel and the Martha Taggart House (Los Angeles, 1922; Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #521), exemplified Wright's creative construction techniques.<sup>68</sup>

Wright became known for his Expressionist designs, through which he blended modern architectural modes and construction materials with indigenous design motifs. Some of his most notable examples include the Sowden House (Los Angeles, 1926; Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #762), the Derby House (Los Angeles, 1926), and the Samuel-Navarro House (Los Angeles, 1928; Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #130).<sup>69</sup> Although the Oasis Hotel was one of his earliest large commissions and reflected his Expressionist design philosophy, it is less well-known than his residential work due to the 1950s alterations to the complex; the construction of the new Oasis commercial building largely obscured the hotel's primary façade, visible now only through a walkway between the two buildings.

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<sup>65</sup> Hines, 15.

<sup>66</sup> Hines, 15-16.

<sup>67</sup> Martin, 20.

<sup>68</sup> Hines, 19-21.

<sup>69</sup> Hines, 21.

In the late 1920s, Wright was commissioned to design the stage for the Hollywood Bowl. Though he created two acoustically successful shells for the Bowl, both were replaced (for different reasons) with a design by Allied Architects, which lacked the fine acoustical qualities of Wright's creations. Despite his misgivings with the Hollywood Bowl project and his unchosen forward-thinking design for the Los Angeles Civic Center, Wright's career flourished through the 1920s.<sup>70</sup> Many of his residential works were published in magazines such as *Popular Mechanics*, *Architectural Record*, and *California Arts and Architecture*.<sup>71</sup>

In 1926, Lloyd married actress Helen Taggart. Lloyd and Helen met in Los Angeles theater circles in the early 1920s, and Helen recommended that her mother, Martha Taggart, commission Lloyd to design her house (which he did in 1922). Helen Taggart once had a home in Palm Springs, during her previous marriage, and it is likely that her connection to the city had something to do with Pearl McManus hiring Wright to design her Oasis Hotel.<sup>72</sup> Helen brought her son Rupert from a previous marriage with her, whom Lloyd gladly accepted as his stepson. In 1929, Helen and Lloyd had their own son, Eric Lloyd Wright, who would go on to become an established architect and landscape designer as well.

With the 1929 stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression, Wright's commissions began to wane. Most of his projects during this time were smaller residences and lacked the creativity of his earlier works. One exception was his design for the Griffith ranch house (Woodland Hills, 1936), a prelude to the postwar California Ranch style, and through which Wright revived his talent for integrating landscape and dwelling through trellises, porches, and garden elements.<sup>73</sup> In the late 1930s, Wright received commissions for two federally sponsored Los Angeles Housing projects. In both Aliso Village and Ramona Gardens, Wright's main contributions were to the landscape designs.<sup>74</sup>

Wright obtained what many consider to be his most noted commission in the postwar era for the design of Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. Following its completion in 1951, the chapel received recognition for its organic, yet indisputably modern design. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Wright explained that "in this modern age of glass we can turn outward to the beauty of the world, to the tree groves which were Man's first chapels."<sup>75</sup> Wright integrated natural as well as modern materials to create a structure that was open to and effortlessly blended with its surrounding environment. This contrasted greatly with traditional churches, which were largely separated from their outside environment

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<sup>70</sup> Hines, 27-28.

<sup>71</sup> Hines, 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> Hess and Danish, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Hines, 31.

<sup>74</sup> Hines, 33.

<sup>75</sup> "Glass Chapel Challenges Church Designs of the Past: Modernistic Edifice in Palos Verdes Hills Readied for Formal Dedication May 13," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 April 1951, B1.

by thick walls and lack of natural light. In 1952, Wayfarers Chapel was included in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition titled "Built in the USA: Post-War Architecture," and in 1956, it was chosen as one of the 18 most excellent church buildings in America by the National Council of Churches' Commission on Architecture. Wright continued to serve as the chapel's consulting architect, later along with his son, Eric, up to his death in 1978.



Wayfarers Chapel,  
Rancho Palos  
Verdes, California.  
ARG, 2015.

As in the 1920s, single-family residences comprised many of Wright's projects in the postwar era. Wright's designs during this period still represented his own brand of Expressionism. Projects such as the Moore House (Palos Verdes, 1956), the Bowler House (Palos Verdes, 1963), and the Lombardi House (Palos Verdes, 1965), represented a blending of space age imagery and organic architectural philosophy through their spatial configurations, oblique angles, sweeping rooflines, and natural materials.<sup>76</sup> In 1966, the Architects and Engineers Service Building Center in Los Angeles presented an exhibit on Wright's work titled, *Five Decades of Living Architecture: Lloyd Wright, Architect*, and in 1971, an exhibit on Wright was displayed at the University of California, Santa Barbara titled *Lloyd Wright: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture in an Organic Exhibition*.

In Wright's later years, he became involved in Los Angeles' burgeoning preservation movement, helping to prevent the demolition of buildings such as Bertram Goodhue's Los Angeles Public Library (1926), and guiding the restoration of some of his father's works, including the Storer and Hollyhock houses in Los Angeles. Weakened from a long battle with pneumonia, Lloyd Wright died of a heart attack on May 31, 1978. Though often overshadowed by his prodigious father, Lloyd Wright proved successful at creating his own unique designs,

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<sup>76</sup> Hines, 34.

incorporating innovative construction techniques while maintaining a sense of place and harmony with the surrounding environment.

#### 4.4 Pearl McCallum McManus

Pearl McCallum was born in 1879 in San Francisco to John Guthrie McCallum and Emily McCallum. Her father was an Indiana native who came to prominence as a lawyer and political figure in San Francisco; he first moved his family to Southern California to serve as Indian agent in San Bernardino, and in 1884 made another move to the Coachella Valley, settling near the Cahuilla village of Agua Caliente in 1884. The McCallum family, who hoped the desert climate would improve the health of their tubercular son Johnny, were the first Euroamerican settlers in the area that would become Palm Springs. Pearl McCallum was the youngest of the five McCallum children (and the only one who would live past the age of 30) and later said she fell in love with the desert on this very first trip.<sup>77</sup>

The family established a ranch centered on their new home, a small adobe building sited near a creek, and John McCallum pursued land development as well as ranching.<sup>78</sup> Employing members of the local Cahuilla tribe, McCallum built a ditch system, planted alfalfa, grapes, oranges, and apricots, and began to buy up property; he also founded the Palm Valley Water Company.<sup>79</sup> He eventually consolidated thousands of acres and worked hard to promote his vision of a new community called Palm Valley. McCallum envisioned Palm Valley (soon to become known as Palm Springs) as a haven for anyone seeking a climatic cure for respiratory health problems.

The McCallums also established a residence in the West Adams neighborhood of Los Angeles, where Emily McCallum and the children spent much of their time and Pearl attended school. The family met with a number of tragedies in the 1890s, including the deaths of two sons, water use issues, and a flood and massive drought that wiped out the ranch's plantings and caused many in Palm Valley to abandon their holdings. John McCallum died in 1897, but not before admonishing his three surviving children to "pay the taxes...hold onto the land."<sup>80</sup> Pearl took that request to heart, and dedicated much of her adult life to fulfilling her father's vision of a new community in the desert.

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<sup>77</sup> Renee Brown, "Pearl McCallum McManus Continued Father's Legacy," *The Desert Sun*, 7 March 2015.

<sup>78</sup> The McCallums' 1884 home was later incorporated into the 1924 Oasis Hotel complex and moved to its current location at Village Green Heritage Park in 1952; it is designated as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site and is known to be the oldest building in the city.

<sup>79</sup> *Palm Springs Life*, "The McCallum Centennial—Palm Springs' Founding Family," April 1984, reprinted 19 August 2010.

<sup>80</sup> *Palm Springs Life*, "The McCallum Centennial."

Following McCallum's death, surviving son Harry tried to keep his father's Palm Springs interests alive while Pearl returned from school in Chicago to care for their ailing mother in Los Angeles; Harry died in 1901. In dire financial straits, Pearl and Emily moved back to the family adobe in Palm Springs. After Emily McCallum died in 1914, Pearl assumed control of the family's land holdings, which by then comprised between 5,000 and 6,000 acres, and committed herself to Palm Springs.<sup>81</sup> She married Pasadena real estate agent Austin G. McManus and the two moved into the family adobe. They established Pioneer Realty, with Pearl as president and Austin as secretary, and proceeded to develop the family holdings (as well as new property) into a "real estate dynasty."<sup>82</sup> In a prescient move, Pearl "insisted on making the deeds to her properties reversible for architectural reasons, putting restrictive covenants on the use of the land she sold."<sup>83</sup> A covenant of this type gave her the right to salvage the Oasis Hotel dining hall building and the McCallum Adobe when Western Hotels, Inc. decided to construct a new commercial building at their location in 1952.

Pearl McManus's 1924 establishment of the Oasis Hotel on the original McCallum homestead heralded a new era in Palm Springs development, one that set a high standard for commercial architecture and resort hotels in the city. Her other properties, including the Tennis Club (1937, remodeled 1947), multiple apartment buildings (including the first in Palm Springs, the ca. 1923 La Hacienda), and housing developments like Tahquitz River Estates (1947) were crucial shapers in the development of Palm Springs' built environment from the 1920s through the 1940s. McManus saw herself as a guiding force in the development of Palm Springs, and used her quickly expanding finances and influence to ensure the city grew in the right direction.

McManus was particularly instrumental in the development of Palm Canyon Drive as a shopping destination during the post-World War II period. She owned much of the frontage along the thoroughfare, and was careful about whom she sold it to and for what purpose; her overall goal was developing Palm Canyon as a high-end shopping district, and to that end she selected buyers and projects that would produce architecturally notable properties like Robinson's department store (1958).<sup>84</sup> As *The Desert Sun* noted,

The beautiful building on Palm Canyon at Baristo, built by Mrs. McManus and leased to Robinson's for 25 years, is concrete evidence of the philosophy which its owner has built up over the years. It is a philosophy which has kept her from disposing of her property in small plots for just

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<sup>81</sup> Renee Brown, "Pearl McCallum McManus Helped Shape Palm Springs," *The Desert Sun*, 29 April 2016.

<sup>82</sup> Brown, "Helped Shape Palm Springs."

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Pearl McManus Sells 'Big Corner' for Saks Store," 21 February 1958; "Progress of City Is Aim of Village's First Lady," 9 January 1958.

any kind of commercial venture, holding it instead for something that will be good for Palm Springs.

"It doesn't cost any more to design something beautiful than something ordinary," Mrs. McManus always says, and this pioneer citizen has consistently put the love of the Village and consideration for its future ahead of more mundane considerations.<sup>85</sup>

Regarding McManus's sale of a large parcel at Palm Canyon Drive and Ramon Road to developers planning to build the Saks Palm Springs department store, *The Desert Sun* reported:

During the past decade Mrs. McManus has refused many offers for this valuable piece of property, preferring to hold it and pay thousands of dollars in taxes, until something big came along that she considered an asset to the Village.

In discussing the sale with a *Desert Sun* reporter, Mrs. McManus said that she feels this is one more step toward establishing Palm Canyon Drive as one of the smart shopping centers of the world.

One of the largest property owners in Palm Springs, it is generally recognized that Mrs. McManus' insistence on nothing but the best has helped mould Palm Springs into the smart growing city it is today.<sup>86</sup>

One of McManus' first commercial ventures on Palm Canyon Drive reflected a mix of the rustic Palm Springs of earlier times and the burgeoning high-end goals of the postwar period. This was the property to which she moved the McCallum Adobe and the Oasis Hotel dining hall volumes, first referred to as the Village Green in 1953.<sup>87</sup> Its development is discussed above.

Thanks to her judicious sale of valuable parcels during the postwar period, Pearl McManus grew even wealthier and more influential. As historian Renee Brown put it, "She entertained lavishly many of the world's leading social and financial figures. There were many who feared, and a few who genuinely loved Pearl McManus, but there was none who secretly did not admire and respect the fierce lady sitting in her pink mansion upon the hillside."<sup>88</sup> McManus expanded her existing philanthropic efforts in the last decades of her life to help local organizations from the Palm Springs Woman's Club to the Pathfinders. Before her death in 1966, she created the McCallum Desert Foundation in memory of her father, ensuring that

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<sup>85</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Progress of City."

<sup>86</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Sells 'Big Corner'."

<sup>87</sup> *The Desert Sun*, "Hostess House to Open."

<sup>88</sup> Brown, "Helped Shape Palm Springs."

her estate would continue to help the institutions of her beloved Palm Springs long after she was gone.

## 5. Regulations and Criteria for Evaluation

### 5.1 City of Palm Springs Historic Site

The City of Palm Springs administers a local designation program in which individual properties and concentrations of properties can be designated as Historic Sites and Historic Districts, respectively. The designation of Historic Sites and Districts is governed by Title 8, Chapter 8.05, Article III (Procedure for Designation of Historic Sites or Districts) of the Palm Springs Municipal Code, which establishes and authorizes a seven-member Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) to identify, nominate and recommend potential historic sites or districts to the City Council. To facilitate this process, the Ordinance establishes requirements that a property must meet in order to qualify for designation as a historic site.<sup>89</sup>

Per the Municipal Code, a Historic Site is defined as “a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect.”<sup>90</sup> A property may be designated a Historic Site if it satisfies one or more of the following seven evaluative criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or
2. It is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history; or
3. It reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or
4. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or
5. It 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. It represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

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<sup>89</sup> The City of Palm Springs is also a designated Certified Local Government (CLG), which is a preservation partnership between the National Park Service (NPS), the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and local communities with a goal to create local commitments to historic preservation.

<sup>90</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.020 – Historic Preservation, General Provisions, Definitions.

7. It has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.<sup>91</sup>

In order for a property to qualify as a City of Palm Springs Historic Site, it must not only be significant under one or more criteria but also retain integrity, which the National Park Service defines as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.”<sup>92</sup> While the City of Palm Springs Historic Sites Ordinance does not explicitly include language about integrity, it does state that a historic site’s uniqueness and significance can be determined through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect.<sup>93</sup> In nominating historic sites to the local register, the City of Palm Springs follows guidelines on integrity established by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register has identified seven aspects of integrity as follows:

1. **Location:** the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
2. **Design:** the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
3. **Setting:** the physical environment of a historic property.
4. **Materials:** the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
5. **Workmanship:** the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
6. **Feeling:** a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
7. **Association:** the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

To convey historic integrity, a property will possess several, if not most, of these aspects.<sup>94</sup>

Should a property satisfy one or more of the aforementioned criteria and retain integrity, it is categorized into one of the following classifications by the Palm Springs City Council:

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<sup>91</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.020.

<sup>92</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1990), 44.

<sup>93</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.020.

<sup>94</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin #15*, 44.

**Class 1.** Structure/site qualified for city designation; may be qualified at the federal, state and/or county level... (Intended for use when the structure or site still exists as it did during the historical period or is restorable).

**Class 2.** Site qualified for city designation; may be qualified at the federal, state and/or county level... (Intended for use when the site is not occupied by a modern structure or use which is different than that of the historical period or if structure is unusable, nonconforming, unrestorable, or the like).

**Class 3.** Structure/site was constructed before 1969, or a year to be determined by the City Council, or construction date cannot be confirmed. Eligible for a six-month stay of demolition.<sup>95</sup>

Class 1 Historic Site designation serves as the highest level of local designation in Palm Springs, ensuring that a “structure/site may not be modified nor objects removed without approval of the city council,” while its usage may also be regulated or limited to “the extent that it may impair the integrity of the site.”<sup>96</sup>

In most cases, local designation applies only to the exterior features of properties, but the Palm Springs municipal code states that the interior features of designated public buildings may be regulated:

The historic site preservation board shall consider and pass upon only the exterior features of a structure and may not consider the interior arrangement of the structure, except in the case of public buildings.<sup>97</sup>

This means that the interiors of public buildings (including places like government buildings, libraries, and museums) may be considered and addressed when evaluating properties for eligibility under City of Palm Springs criteria.

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<sup>95</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.125 – Created by Council.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.195.

## 6. Evaluation of Significance

### 6.1 Previous Surveys and Designations

The property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive has not been formally designated at the local, state, or federal level. In its *City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings* report drafted 2015-2016, Historic Resources Group (HRG) identified 219 S. Palm Canyon Drive as a potential historic resource. A footnote in the historic context statement further notes “Several interior features [of the Oasis Hotel dining room] were relocated to the ACBCI Cultural museum and the Ice Cream shop at the Village Green Park. These features were not evaluated as part of the survey, as interiors are outside the scope of the project; however, the City could consider local designation.”<sup>98</sup>

A portion of the Oasis Hotel still standing on its original site has been designated a Class 1 Historic Site (Oasis Hotel and Tower, designated as HSPB-10 in 1985), but the moved dining hall property is not included in that designation. Neither is the easternmost part of the original hotel building, containing Palm Canyon Drive-fronting commercial storefronts that are an integral and original part of Lloyd Wright’s design for the Oasis Hotel.

### 6.2 City of Palm Springs Historic Site

Upon evaluation of 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive against City of Palm Springs Historic Site eligibility criteria, ARG finds that the property appears eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, as follows:

***Criterion 1:*** *It is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community.*

The property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive is not associated with a singular event that has made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. Research did not indicate that any significant events occurred at the subject property, either at its original location or its current location. Therefore, ARG does not find the subject property eligible as a Class 1 Historic Site under City of Palm Springs Criterion 1.

***Criterion 2:*** *It is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history.*

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<sup>98</sup> Historic Resources Group, *City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* (City of Palm Springs: Department of Planning Services, 2016), 272.

The subject property was originally owned by Pearl McCallum McManus, an early pioneer and major shaper of Palm Springs who is significant for her meaningful contributions to local history. She commissioned the construction of the 1924 Oasis Hotel complex, and retained the rights to move the dining room building (along with the McCallum Adobe) in 1952 when the hotel's owner decided to construct a new building at their location. McManus owned a number of parcels along Palm Canyon Drive, and moved the subject property to one of them; she envisioned the repurposed building as part of a retail commercial complex that would help draw visitors and shoppers to the burgeoning retail district.

Pearl McManus owned a number of commercial and residential properties in Palm Springs, some of which, like her "pink mansion" personal residence, the McCallum Adobe, and her beloved Tennis Club, were more directly and substantially associated with her. However, her mansion is no longer extant and the condition of most of her other major properties, excepting the extant Tennis Club, is unknown. The property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive has a well-documented association with McManus. Although it has experienced major alterations, the most prominent were directed by McManus herself, in the service of repurposing the building for new uses. Among the building's significant characteristics is a handwritten "McManus" signature on the underside of a roof truss at Volume 3.

McManus' enduring attachment to this building reflects both her regard for Lloyd Wright's architectural design and the ruthless practicality for which she was known, best manifested in her covenants retaining some rights to buildings like these after selling them. Her establishment, moving, reconfiguring, and repurposing of the Oasis Hotel dining room building is also a clear indication of her vision for Palm Springs commercial development as it evolved from the resort hotel-focused 1920s to the Palm Canyon retail-focused 1950s. Because of the subject property's strong association with significant individual Pearl McManus, ARG finds the property eligible as a Class 1 Historic Site under City of Palm Springs Criterion 2.

***Criterion 3:*** *It reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history.*

When it was at its original location, the Oasis Hotel dining hall clearly exemplified the resort-focused commercial development of Palm Springs during the 1920s. However, its move to the Village Green in the early 1950s severed its association with that pattern of development. Furthermore, the extensive exterior alterations it endured as part of its repurposing into retail space greatly reduced its ability to convey its association with 1920s development. At its new location and with its new function, the building was part of a general 1950s push to turn S. Palm Canyon Drive into a glamorous shopping destination. However, the bulk of the 1950s development focused on the construction of new Mid-Century Modern buildings and the renovating of older buildings to reflect this newer idiom. While 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive and the Village Green in general were clearly associated with

Pearl McManus' 1950s commercial endeavors as discussed above, the building does not exemplify this particular period of local history on a broader scale. As a result, ARG finds the property not eligible as a Class 1 Historic Site under City of Palm Springs Criterion 3.

***Criterion 4: It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.***

The subject property was originally part of the Oasis Hotel complex, parts of which embodied the distinctive characteristics of the slip-form concrete construction method pioneered by master architects Rudolf Schindler and Lloyd Wright. The dining hall was not constructed using this method, but instead was wood-framed and had a gabled roof with a scissor truss system. This type and method of construction is not unusual or distinctive, but leaving the complex truss system exposed on the building interior is both. Although the building was moved to a different location in 1952 and experienced extensive alterations changing its overall layout and exterior appearance, a substantial portion of its interior is intact. The building's interior may be considered in the evaluation of its eligibility under local criteria because this City-owned property is considered a public building.<sup>99</sup>

The interior's exposed scissor truss roof system, which incorporates 30 and 60 degree angles as seen in natural forms like snowflakes, crystals, and tree branches, reflects a type of architectural thinking which was still relatively new in the early 1920s: the early Modern view that structure should also serve as ornament. This idea was derived partly from practitioners like Frank Lloyd Wright, who emphasized the importance of natural materials and organic form. The purposeful revealing of structure was embodied in the work of Lloyd Wright, as well as California contemporaries like Schindler and Richard Neutra, and represented a clear break from the Period Revival idiom in vogue at the time. The exposed interior roof system of the dining hall building reflects a critically important period of early experimentation with Modern ideas (as well as the individual genius of Lloyd Wright, discussed below), and embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction.

Despite its many alterations, the subject property retains enough of its original interior elements to strongly convey its historical appearance and its association with early Modernism. As a result, ARG finds the property eligible under City of Palm Springs Criterion 4.

***Criterion 5: It represents the work of a master builder, designer artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or it possesses high artistic value.***

The Oasis Hotel complex was designed by master architect Lloyd Wright, and was one of his earliest and largest independent commissions. Wright is widely

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<sup>99</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.195.

recognized as an innovative and influential architect who built on the work of his father Frank Lloyd Wright to create his own unique design philosophy. His Expressionistic designs, which often incorporated naturalistic elements and indigenous motifs, aimed to tie buildings to sites and vice versa, blurring the lines between the indoors and outdoors. The Oasis Hotel exemplifies his design philosophy, and the Class 1 Historic Site designation of the Oasis Hotel and Tower (HSPB-10) testifies to the significance of the building historian Alan Hess called “one of the first defining statements about a Modern architecture for the desert” and “one of the great neglected buildings of California architecture.”<sup>100</sup>

Wright’s design for the Oasis Hotel dining hall differed from his design for the rest of the complex in that it featured wood construction and finishes rather than slip-form concrete. It also incorporated the existing McCallum Adobe, as owner Pearl McManus envisioned her new resort hotel as a tribute to her pioneer father as much as anything else. Wright’s use of wood framing, a simple rectangular plan, a gabled roof, wood slat cladding, and repeating French doors that opened to create a pavilion-like feel served to seamlessly connect the 1884 adobe to the 1924 hotel and to enhance the indoor-outdoor feel of the property. Although the dining hall building was moved to a different location in 1952 and experienced extensive alterations changing its overall layout and exterior appearance, a substantial portion of its interior is intact. The building’s interior may be considered in the evaluation of its eligibility under local criteria because this City-owned property is considered a public building.<sup>101</sup>

The most visible and evocative evidence of Wright’s individual genius is the exposed interior roof system, including a wood slat ceiling and scissor trusses. This system is most intact in Volumes 1 and 2, and exhibits the greatest complexity and aesthetic effect in Volume 1. There, the trusses from four separate gables meet at the center of the room in a complex configuration, and the four meeting points of the gables themselves extend down to the floor at chamfered corners with bolted vertical timber supports. It is easy to see why Pearl McManus intended this part of the former dining hall to become a chapel at Village Green, and it is likewise easy to see the connection between Volume 1’s roof system and those in later Wright designs like Wayfarers Chapel. In Volume 3, the roof’s interior visual impact is lessened by the covering over of the slat ceiling, though the scissor trusses are extant; however, a portion of the original roof projects beyond the volume’s east façade and retains all of its wood slat finish and original trusses (including one bearing McManus’ signature). As this portion was originally part of the building’s interior and retains its original features, for the purposes of evaluating eligibility and integrity it is considered to be an interior rather than an exterior feature.

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<sup>100</sup> Hess and Danish, 28-29.

<sup>101</sup> City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.195.

Despite its many alterations, the subject property retains enough of its original interior elements to strongly convey its historical appearance and its association with master architect Lloyd Wright. As a result, ARG finds it eligible under City of Palm Springs Criterion 5.

***Criterion 6:*** *It represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

As the subject property is not part of a district, it does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Therefore, ARG concludes the property is not eligible as a Class 1 Historic Site under City of Palm Springs Criterion 6.

***Criterion 7:*** *It has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

An archaeological assessment was not conducted as part of this study. As a result, the subject property is left unevaluated under Criterion 7.

## 7. Integrity Analysis

The National Register and California Register have specific language regarding integrity. Both require that a resource retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. In accordance with the guidelines established by the National Park Service, integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The City of Palm Springs' Historic Preservation Ordinance does not explicitly include language regarding integrity, though it specifies location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and aesthetic effect as qualities that convey the significance and uniqueness of a historic site. In nominating historic sites to the register, the City of Palm Springs follows National Register guidelines on integrity.

Following is an evaluation of these aspects at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive:

### Location

*The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.*

The building has been moved from its original location, in the Oasis Hotel complex at the southwest corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and W. Tahquitz Canyon Way. It does not retain integrity of location.

### Design

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

As the subject property was cut into pieces and reattached in a new configuration with a new rear addition, its overall plan and form have been altered. Exterior alterations including creation of storefronts/windows; replacement of all doors; addition of concrete block and stucco cladding; addition of a projecting porch; and addition of an awning and new signage have also compromised integrity of design. However, the building retains intact interior features that strongly reflect the design intent of its architect, particularly its exposed scissor trusses, wood slat ceilings, and wood framing that includes bolted vertical timber supports. As a result, the combination of elements that create the form, space, structure, and style of the interior remain intact. The building retains its integrity of design; while it has been somewhat compromised, it is not lost altogether.

### Setting

*The physical environment of a historic property.*

The building has been moved roughly a block south from its original location at the southwest corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Tahquitz Canyon Way; as a result, its

setting since 1952 has differed from its original setting. The current setting has remained relatively unchanged since the 1950s: an open landscaped area within a more densely developed commercial district, featuring small moved/repurposed buildings facing inward onto the green. While the Village Green's integrity of setting is intact, the removal of the Oasis Hotel dining hall from its original place in the Lloyd Wright-designed complex (and the construction of new buildings on the site in the 1950s) means the character of the place in which the property played its historical role has been lost. The subject property does not retain integrity of setting.

### **Materials**

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

Due to alterations as described above, particularly the creation of storefronts/windows, replacement of all doors, and addition of new cladding, the building's integrity of materials has been reduced. However, the retention of intact interior materials like unique wood trusses, timber supports, and wood slat ceilings means that it has not been lost entirely. Volume 1 also retains its original wood slat cladding on its primary exterior façade, and all three of the original volumes have appropriate (replacement) wood shake roofing material. As a result, the property's integrity of materials, though compromised, remains intact.

### **Workmanship**

*The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory... [expressed through] both technological practices and aesthetic principles.*

The property's original workmanship is evident through its intact interior features, predominantly its exposed scissor truss roof system (which culminates in a notably complex configuration in Volume 1). The original trusses are also present in the projecting porch at Volume 3's east façade, which was originally part of the building interior. The intricate, exposed roof system exhibits the aesthetic principles and technological practices that drove Lloyd Wright's design work, and is clearly the product of skilled craftsmen. The property retains integrity of workmanship.

### **Feeling**

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

Due to alterations, most of the property's exterior no longer expresses the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. However, the building's intact interior elements clearly express the innovative aesthetic of Lloyd Wright as developed through the 1920s, and evoke the rustic elements of early Palm Springs

resort development. The exposed scissor trusses, wood slat finishes, and bolted timber supports continue to convey the period of time during which the building was constructed, as well as an aesthetic sense specific to that time. The property retains integrity of feeling.

#### **Association**

*The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property type.*

The building was originally designed and built as the dining hall for the 1924 Oasis Hotel; its move and reconfiguration/repurposing in the early 1950s severed the physical and geographical link between it and the rest of the historic hotel complex. However, its retention of intact, distinctive interior features link it to a particular time period and enable the continued conveyance of the design association with master architect Lloyd Wright. As a result, the property retains integrity of association.

#### **Summary of Integrity**

In summary, to be eligible for listing, a resource must retain enough of its historic character or appearance to be recognizable as a historical resource and to convey the reasons for its significance. The property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association based primarily on its intact interior features. Its integrity of location and setting have been lost due to its 1950s move and subsequent reconfiguration/exterior alterations. Despite these modifications, the property's interior is still able to convey its overall design, historical period, and association with master architect Lloyd Wright. Therefore, the subject property retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

## 8. Conclusion

Documentary and archival research, site analysis, the development of historic contexts, and an evaluation against local eligibility criteria indicate that the property at 211-219 S. Palm Canyon Drive meets City of Palm Springs Historic Site eligibility Criteria 2, 4, and 5. The subject property also retains sufficient integrity, primarily with respect to its interior features, to convey its significance. Therefore, the property appears eligible for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site in the City of Palm Springs' Official Register of Historic Sites and Districts.

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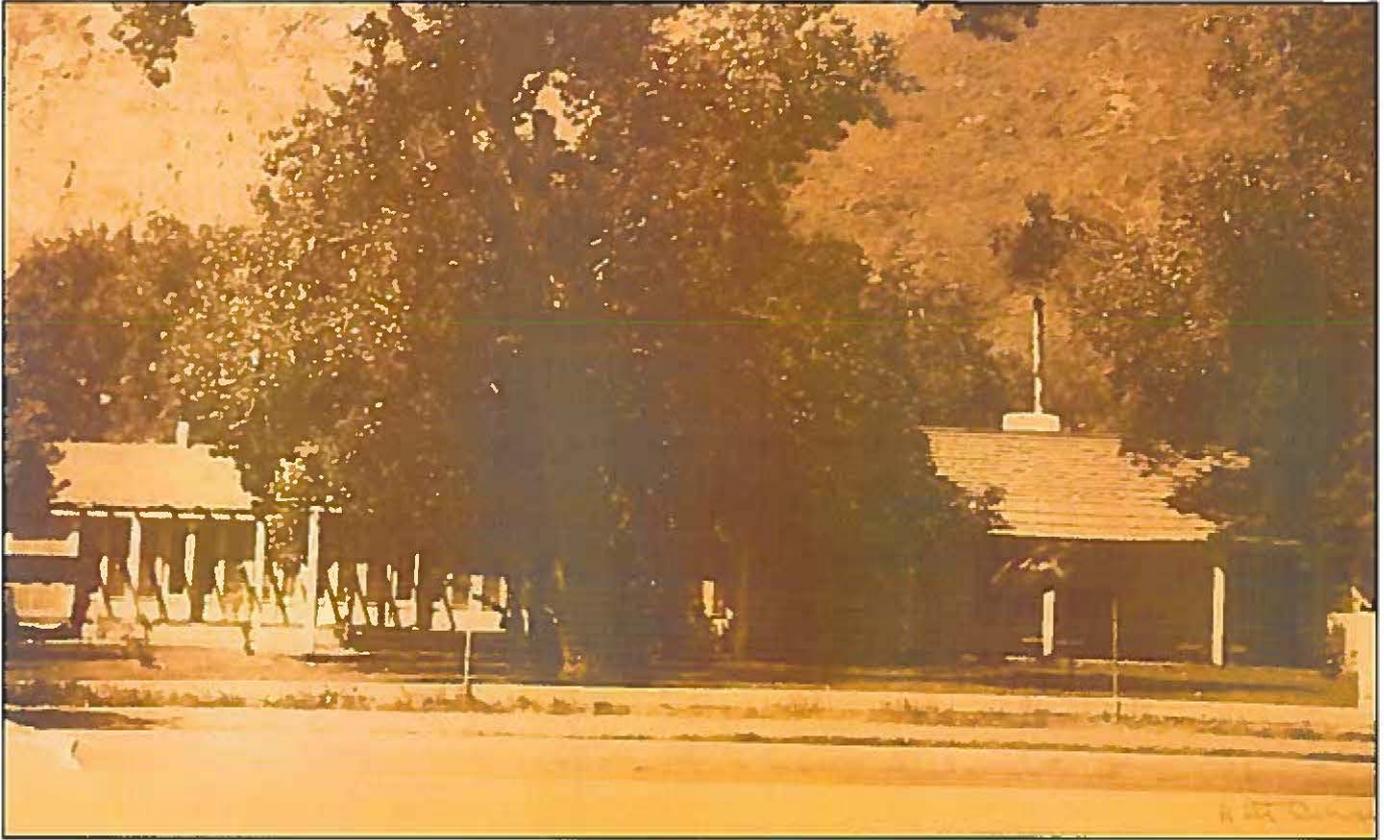
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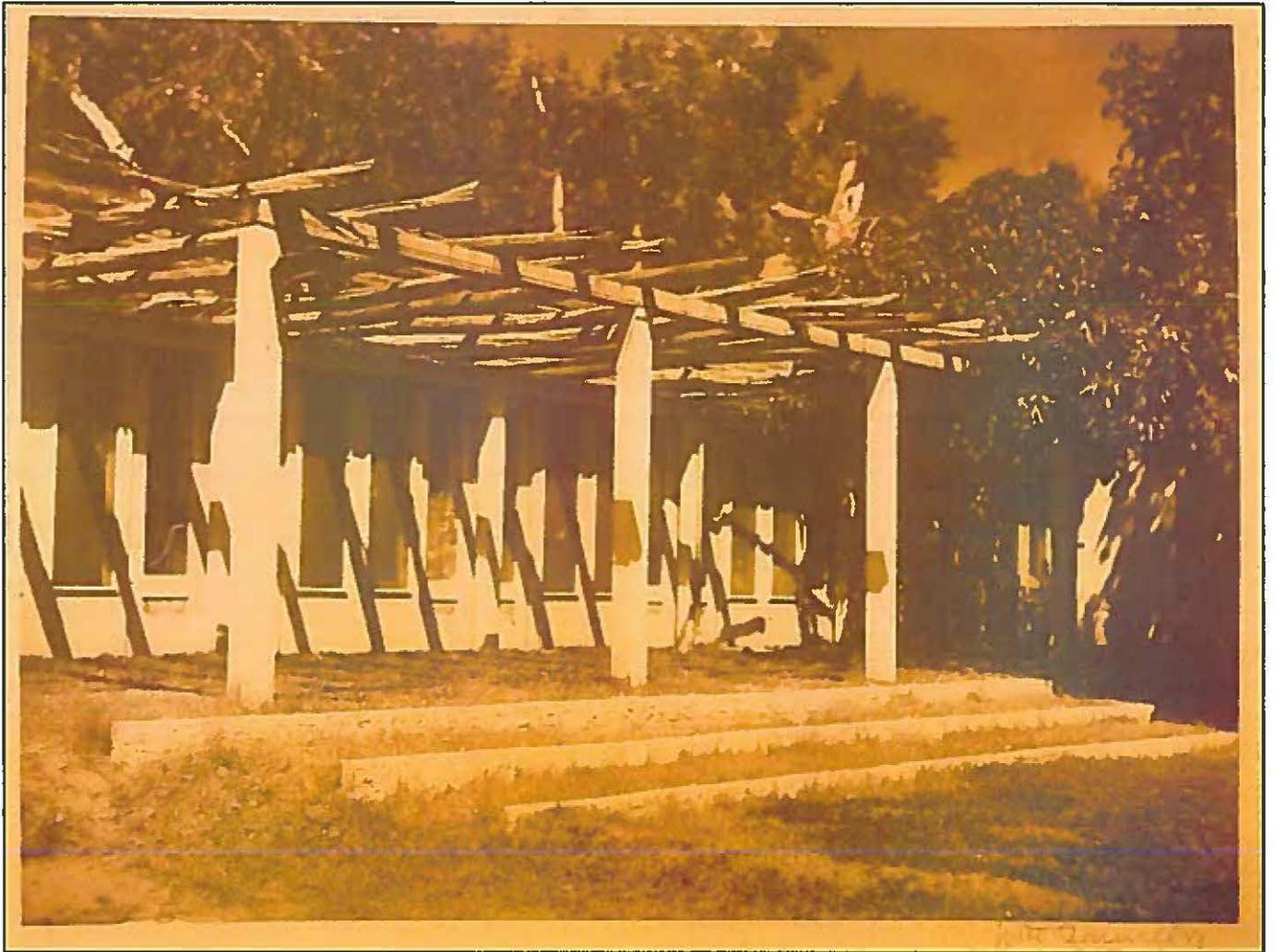
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## **Appendix A.**

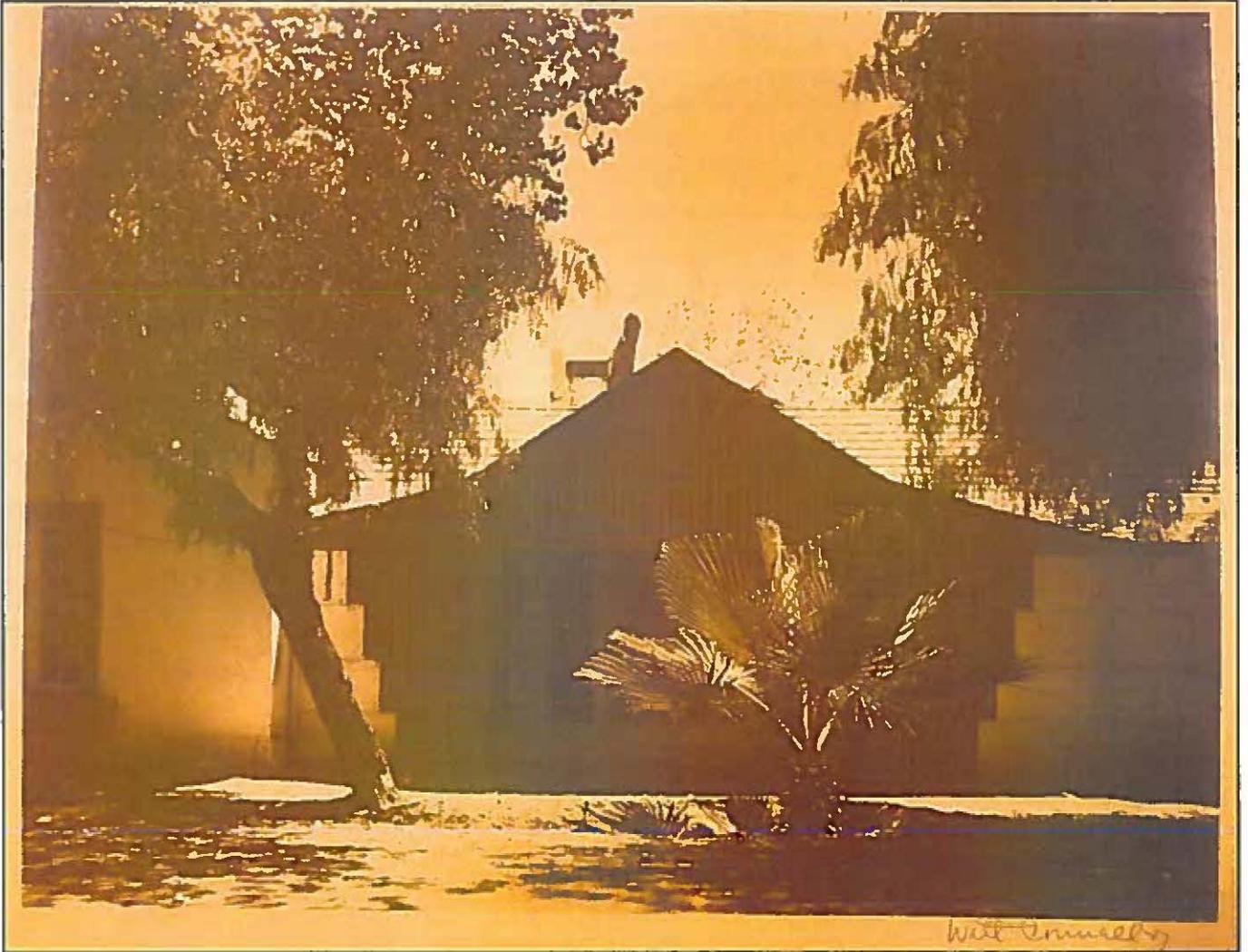
**Historic Photographs of the Oasis Hotel Dining Hall, ca. 1924  
Lloyd Wright Papers, UCLA Library Special Collections**



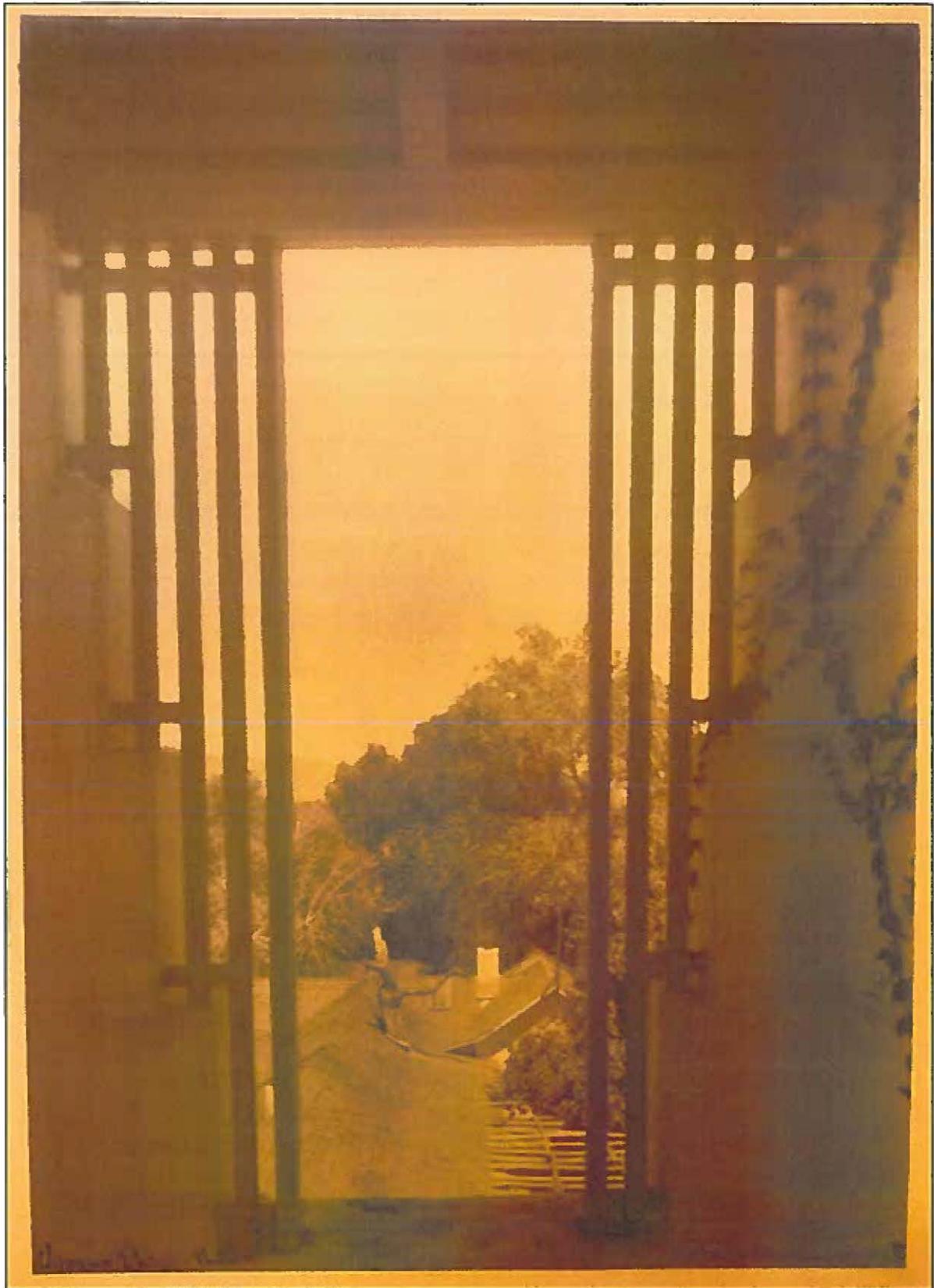
**East façade, view west from Palm Canyon Drive. The portion on the right is the McCallum Adobe.**



**East façade, view northwest showing ramada-shaded terraces and repeating French doors.**



**North façade, view south. The McCallum Adobe is at left.**



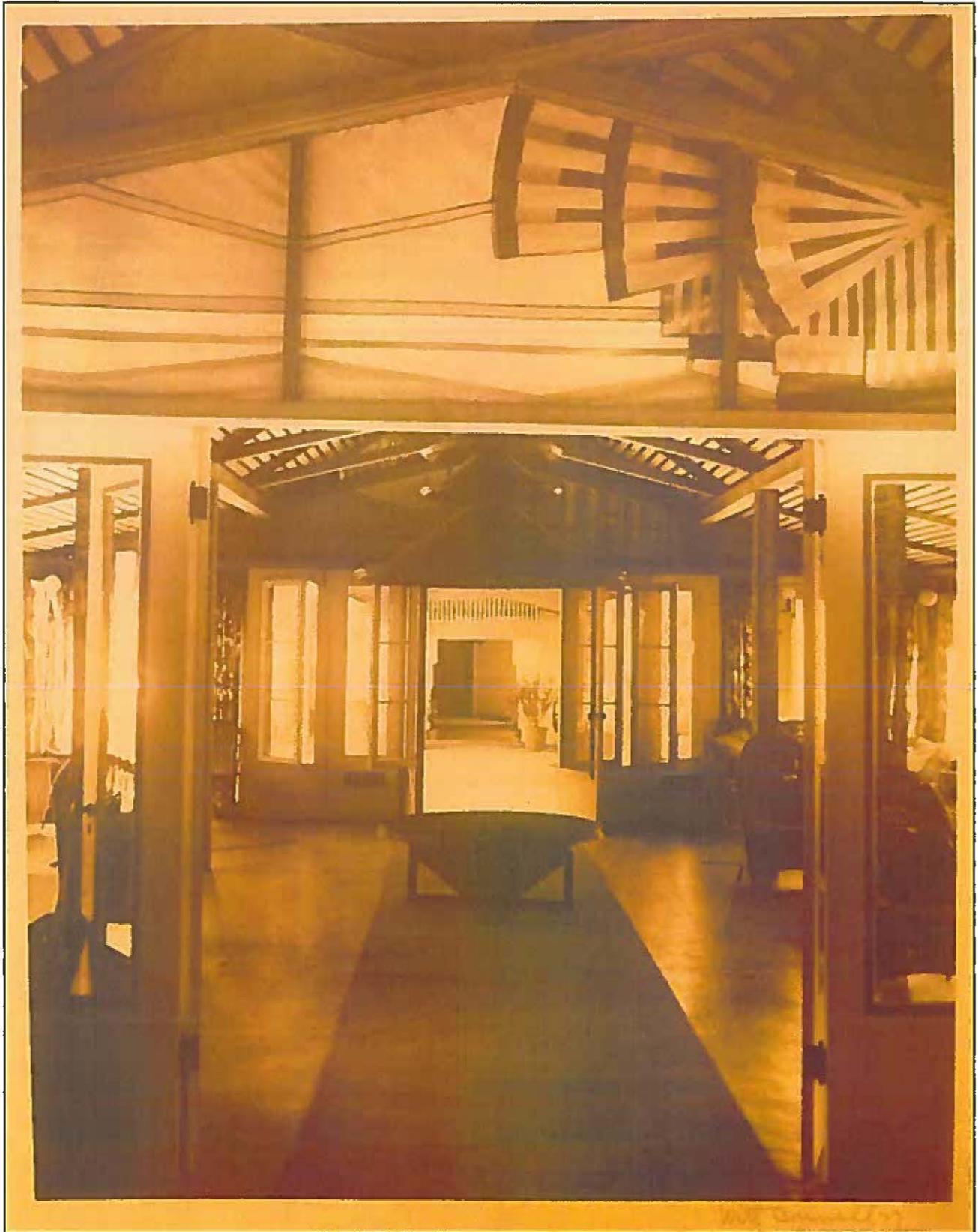
**Roofs of Dining Hall and McCallum Adobe, view north from the hotel tower.**



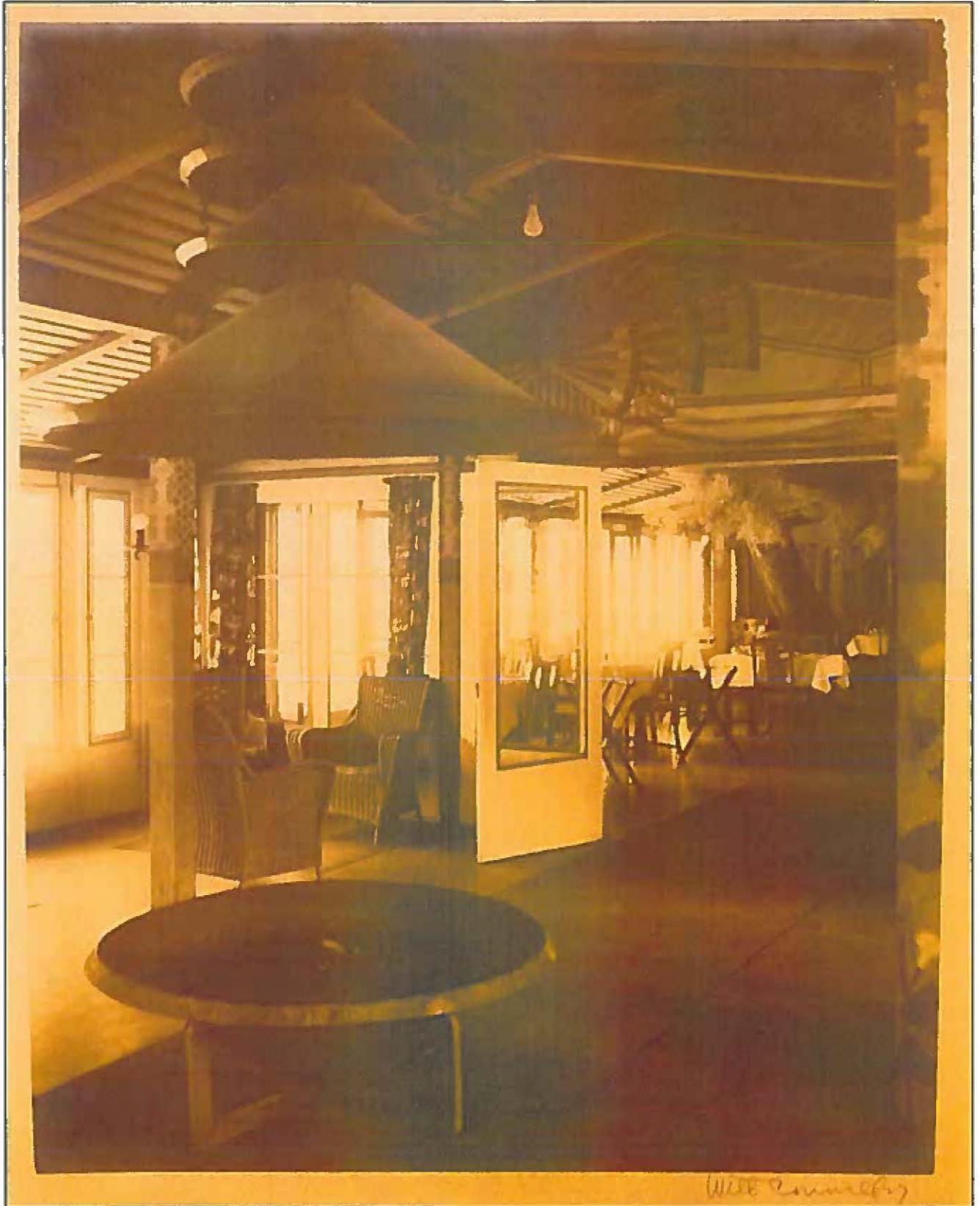
Interieur, view north.



**Interior, view south/southeast.**



**Interior south portion with brazier, view south.**



**Interior south portion with brazier, view northwest.**

# THE OASIS HOTEL

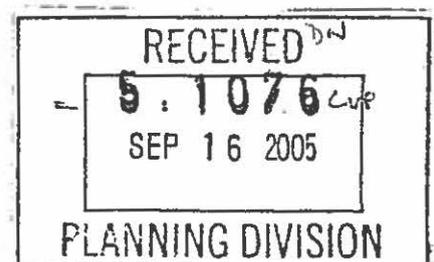
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

AN ASSESSMENT OF CHARACTER-DEFINING  
FEATURES



The Oasis Hotel, 4000 The Oasis Palm Springs, California

FINAL: NOVEMBER 20, 2004



*Existing Conditions:*

**EXTERIOR**

**Palm Canyon Elevation (east)**



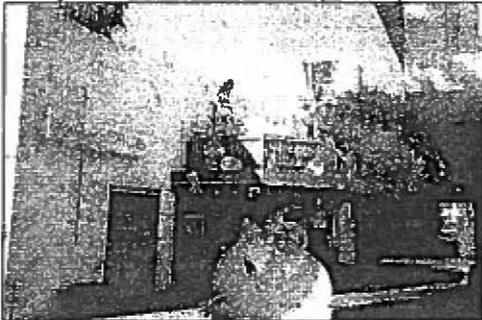
*Condition:* Good

*Character-defining feature:* Concrete façade

*Modifications:* Major modifications to original storefronts (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove intrusions, and restore to original

**Alley/Paseo Elevation (north)**



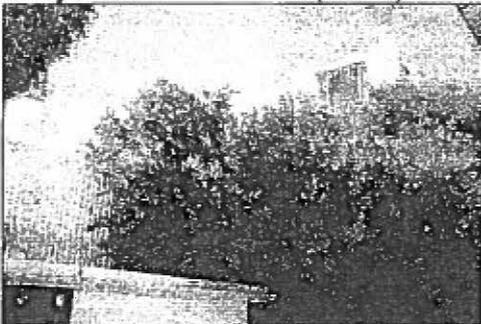
*Condition:* Good

*Character-defining feature:* Concrete façade.

*Modifications:* Major modifications including addition (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove and restore; open vista to tower.

**Alley/Paseo Elevation (north)**



*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining feature:* Wood balcony (P)

*Modifications:* Insensitive addition (I)

*Recommendation:* Repair if feasible, or replace.

**Alley/Paseo Elevation (north)**



*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining feature:* Wood balcony (P).

*Modifications:* N/A

*Recommendation:* Repair

**Alley/Paseo Elevation (north)**



*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining features:* Stepped concrete molding (P)

*Modifications:* Security gate, door, signage (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove door and signage, and replace with a more compatible design.

**Alley/Paseo (north)**



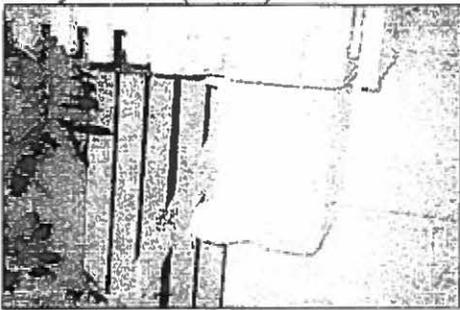
*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining features:* Balcony (S), original door (T) and hardware (T)

*Modifications:* In-window AC unit; boarded doorway

*Recommendation:* Repair; remove board and AC.

**Alley/Paseo (north)**



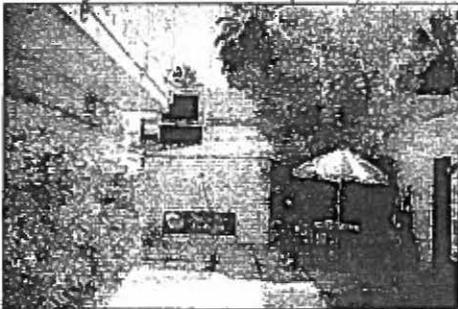
*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining features:* Concrete ornamentation (P)

*Modifications:* Covering of Art Déco ornamentation (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove and restore.

**Courtyard Elevation (west)**



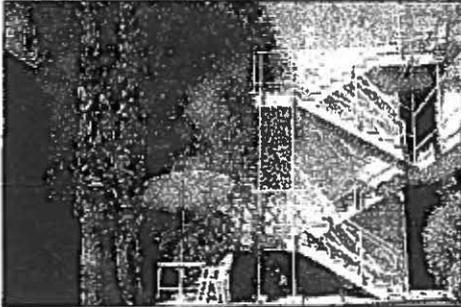
*Condition:* Good

*Character-defining features:* N/A

*Modifications:* Additions to rear of commercial building (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove; reopen courtyard, consider restoring fenestration

**Courtyard Elevation (west)**



*Condition:* Poor

*Character-defining features:* N/A

*Modifications:* Metal stair (non-original) (I)

*Recommendation:* Remove

**Courtyard Elevation (south)**



*Condition:* Poor

*Character-defining features:* original doors (including screen doors) (S) and windows (S)

*Modifications:* Second-story balcony (I); door replacements (I)

*Recommendations:* Replace balcony with more compatible design (consider that existing on north elevation). Retain original doors/windows wherever possible.

### Courtyard Elevation (south)



**Condition:** Poor

**Character-defining features:** original doors (including screen doors) (S), windows (S) and light fixtures (S)

**Modifications:** Second-story balcony (I); door replacements (I)

**Recommendations:** Replace balcony with more compatible design (consider that existing on north elevation). Retain original doors/windows and light fixtures, wherever possible.

### Courtyard Elevation (southeast)



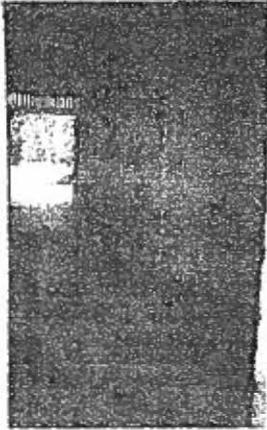
**Condition:** Poor

**Character-defining features:** original doors (including screen doors) (S) and windows (S)

**Modifications:** Second-story balcony (I); door replacements (I), fire escape (I), and single-story addition (I)

**Recommendations:** Replace balcony with more compatible design (consider that existing on north elevation). Retain original doors/windows wherever possible. Remove fire escape and consider reopening courtyard to alley.

### Corridor between South Cassita and Tower



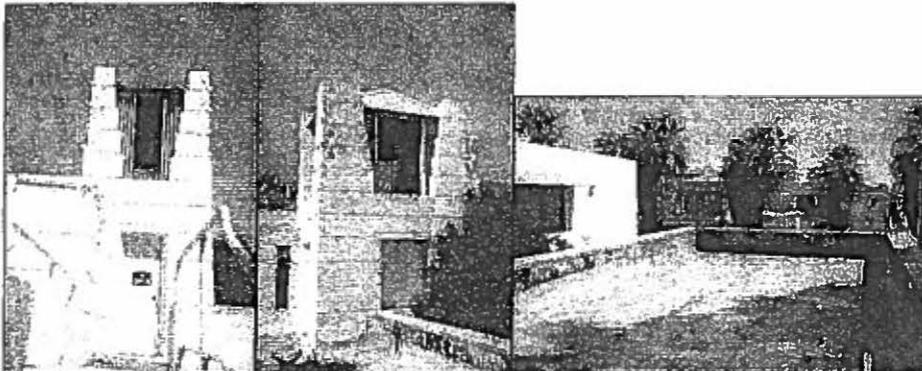
*Condition:* Fair

*Character-defining features:* N/A

*Modifications:* Replacement doors (I) and hardware (I)

*Recommendations:* Replace doors with more compatible units; restore entrance to Tower.

### Tower



*Condition:* Good

*Character-defining features:* Concrete walls (P), pyramidal roof (P), exterior terrace (T), and grillwork at bell opening (S)

*Modifications:* Infill of doors and window openings

*Recommendations:* Restore original openings, and reuse terrace for outdoor living space

### INTERIOR

#### Retail Shops

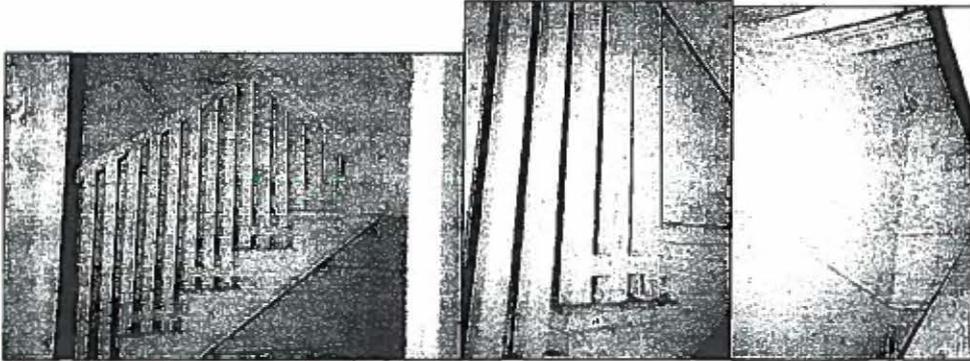
*Condition:* Good

*Character-defining features:* N/A

*Modifications:* New interiors

*Recommendations:* Modify, as desired.

## Tower



**Condition:** Poor, extensive water damage

**Character-defining features:** Original stair and railing (P)

**Modifications:** N/A

**Recommendations:** Retain and repair

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### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Oasis Hotel is a very good example of 1920s <sup>ORGANIC MODERN</sup> Art Deco, and the only local example of the work of the master-architect, Lloyd Wright. Furthermore, it is significant as one of the few examples of his commercial, or resort projects. Due to the property's designation as a "Class 7 historic site", (Class I, according to Doug Evans' November 7, 2004, handwritten notation), the Oasis must be preserved. I applaud the efforts of its developer.

Although, the exterior of the Tower is the most significant portion of the site, other features of note must be treated with great sensitivity, wherever possible. As Wright's work during the 1920's was characterized by concrete designs, simple volumes, and geometric details, such features should also remain in-place. Elements described as having secondary significance further add to the historic character of this historic property, and minimally, examples of these should be incorporated within the rehabilitated facility.

Historic photographs appear to indicate that some of the ornamental detail was polychromatic, as such, I would encourage consideration of undertaking a paint/color analysis (scraping at a minimum) to determine the original color palette. I would recommend identifying the original finish color of the concrete, doors, windows, and surrounds, in addition to the decorative elements.

Intrusions identified were modifications and later additions, which detract from the purity of Wright's original design. Every effort should be made to remove them. Once removed, either the original should be restored, or a more compatible addition should be sought.

In planning for the rehabilitation of this site, all effort should be made to conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, as follows:

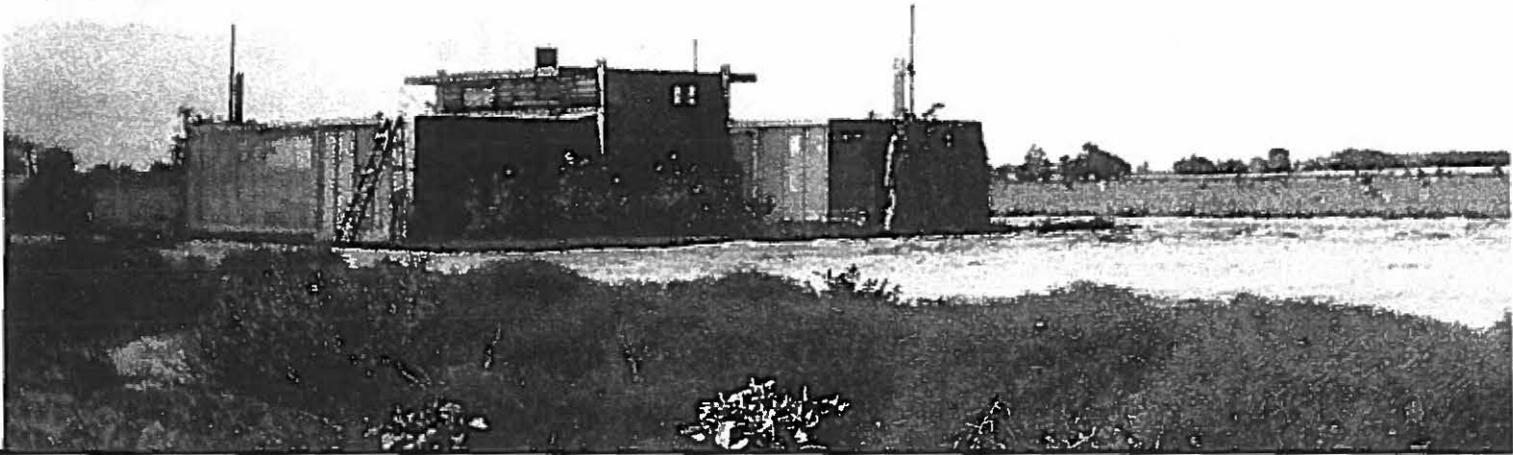
1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

# Palm Springs <sup>\*</sup>Springs Weekend

The Architecture and Design of a Midcentury Oasis



EXCERPT  
PALM SPRINGS WEEKEND



at the distance. Though Austrian by birth, Schindler took to the desert and the Southern California climate; many of his designs had outdoor sleeping porches and outdoor courtyards for cooking and entertaining. The first design, in May 1922, was a light and adventurous structure with wood scissor trusses balanced by diagonal outriggers and roofed in canvas that kept the sun off the walls. A tight circular staircase wound around the fireplace inside the central chimney block, leading to a roof terrace.

The small house on which Popenoe began construction in September 1922 was scaled back. A 1070-square-foot house sheathed in one-by-ten horizontal shiplap siding, it was surrounded on three sides by screened sleeping porches which extended out onto the flat, undistinguished site at the corners, like a pinwheel, a precursor to Neutra's Goussmann house design twenty-five years later. The cabin was described as a "temporary" house for the Popenoes, who lived in Pasadena. A central room, including fireplace, with a roof higher than the rest of the house was extended by two bays, with separate bed-

rooms for the Popenoes divided from the bays by screens. Colors were pale olive tan and dark cottonseed stain on the wood and wallboard. Flagpoles and palm leaves spread on the porches' screened roofs ornamented the design. Finished by November, the building cost \$2000 ("a trivial sum for a house these days," wrote Popenoe), and Schindler's fee was \$100. The house was destroyed in the 1930s.

Though the first design was typically adventurous for Schindler, the cabin as built did not match the creativity of his own home on Kings Road in Los Angeles and other designs of the early 1920s, and it had little impact on Palm Springs or Schindler's reputation. The first important Modern structure in Palm Springs would be an example of American, organic design; the Oasis Hotel by Lloyd Wright, eldest son of Frank Lloyd Wright. Though it still stands today, poor treatment and remodelings—as well as its location off the beaten path in Palm Springs—conspired to keep this building, one of the greatest Modern designs of the 1920s in California, virtually unknown. It began a series of strong organic designs in Palm Springs

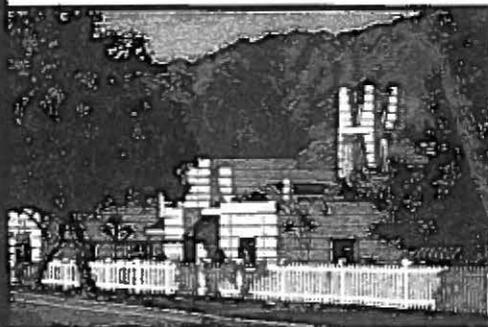
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stretching to William Cody's 1947 Del Marcos motel and 1958 Springs restaurant, Armét and Davis' Denny's restaurant on Highway 111, John Lautner's 1968 Elrod and 1972 Hope houses, Kendrick Kellogg's 1978 Charthouse restaurant, and Michael Black's 1978 bank building in Palm Desert.

Pearl McCallum McManus was a confident woman who knew her own mind; she would still be riding horses at age seventy-nine. She took the lead in the family real estate business with husband Austin. Hiring Lloyd Wright was a bold step. The other hotels in town were conventional, the Desert Inn reliably and charmingly Spanish, the Palm Springs Hotel still Victorian. McManus had more in mind than comfortable rooms as marketing points. It was the image of Modernism that formed as much of the appeal of the Oasis as the accommodations themselves. The choice of Modernism was also one of real estate rivalry: Pearl and Austin McManus owned land on the north side of town, while Nellie Coffman, the town's other great landowner, ran the stucco, tile-roofed Desert Inn. McManus went on from this auspicious beginning as a patron to hire Paul Williams to design the Tennis Club opening in February 1937 (Lloyd Wright designed an unbuilt version), and Pereira and Luckman to design the Robinson's department store on Palm Canyon in 1953.

Pearl and Austin McManus hired Lloyd Wright to create a distinctive resort. They met while Lloyd was courting his future wife, Helen Taggart; when she had been married to actor Reginald Pole, they lived in an adobe house in Palm Springs in the early 1920s. In the small community it was inevitable that Pearl and Lloyd would meet. What wasn't inevitable was that she would hire him. Though he had worked with his father, with Irving Gill, and with the Olmsted brothers—Lloyd was also an accomplished landscape architect—he had built only a handful of houses since returning to Los Angeles in 1919. The Oasis would be his largest and most impressive commission when it opened in 1925.



Visitors pulled their cars into the Palm Canyon Drive entry to Lloyd Wright's Oasis Hotel. The advanced slip-form concrete construction created one of the most modern buildings in California, while the wood filigree screens and ornamental pots on the roof (a Lloyd Wright trademark) added a new romance to the desert locale. Maxfield Parrish could not have conjured a more exotic scene. The tower and shops to the left still stand.



The Oasis was built around the original adobe ranch house that Pearl's father, John McCallum, built in the center of town. The town was mostly a grove of trees and vacant lots in 1924, the trees being necessary protection from the wind and heat. In one of these cottonwood groves, Pearl and Lloyd turned over the first spade of dirt for the Oasis in 1924. Memorialized in a photo, Lloyd wears jodhpurs and a tie, the image of the artist architect; for the thirty-four-year-old architect, getting his first large commission out of the ground was a hopeful moment. The boards for the concrete forms are already in place for the innovative slip-form method of construction. In this system, a twelve-inch layer of wall was poured in form boards. When it dried, the same forms were "slipped" up to form another tier, and so on, up to the top of the two-story

room wings and four-story tower. Thin vertical slits were left open and set with glass to balance light in the cool, solid rooms. R. M. Schindler also used this construction method effectively at his Pueblo Ribera apartments in 1923, and became famous in the architectural history texts for this innovation, but the Oasis shows that Lloyd was using the same technique at virtually the same time. Lloyd had already proven himself an innovator in concrete, helping to develop the textile block system that his father used in a series of concrete block houses in Los Angeles in the early 1920s.

The Oasis is one of the great neglected buildings of California architecture. Begun before his famous father first visited Arizona, five years before the elder Wright designed the Arizona Biltmore with Albert Chase McArthur, and more

than a dozen years before Wright the elder designed his own desert retreat, Taliesin West, in Scottsdale, Arizona, the Oasis was indeed a sheltering oasis in the desert. Warm and solid, filled with trees and flowers, and with roof terraces and pent-houses from which to drink in the spectacular panorama of mountain, desert and sky, it was one of the first defining statements about a Modern architecture for the desert.

Borrowing its craggy silhouette from the mountains, a tall, square tower in the middle of the property formed a promontory around which the buildings gathered. Along Palm Canyon Drive, Lloyd constructed a series of small shops and a separate hotel office; between them a drive brought cars past a two-story room wing, faced in a distinctive, simple vertical-slat screen, to the entry at the foot of the tower on the left. To the right lay the entry to the dining room. This gabled wood structure was more of a ranch style than the concrete room wings, and connected to the original McCallum ranch buildings, turned into rooms, lounges and a kitchen. The ninety-foot-long dining room showed Lloyd's affinity with the Southern California weather, seen throughout his work in courtyards open to the outdoors. French doors on three sides of the dining room could be opened, turning it into an airy pavilion. Two cottonwood trees grew up through the center of the room and through the roof. A colorful wheel-patterned fabric hung over the entry door. With dried desert plants hanging from the scissor trusses, Lloyd's vision drew intimately on the natural surroundings, on the plants, materials, forms and weather. A brazier stood at one end of the hall to take the chill off cold evenings.

The dining wing formed a line through the property creating two courtyards, one on Palm Canyon Drive, another more sheltered by structures, and with a square pond, citrus trees and trellis draped in wisteria. French doors opened from

the rooms onto common balconies along the two-story concrete room wings. Above it all rose the tower, its pinnacles of poured concrete molded in an ancient, erosive abstraction that echoed the form of the mountains themselves, rubble fields of erosion from eons of rain and landslides. Evocative of thunder cloud mesas and the mountain itself, the soft character of the decoration distinguished Lloyd's from his father's rigorous geometric ornament. It was a technique he would later use in another of his great designs, the Sowden house in Hollywood. Lloyd, as part of the Hollywood artistic intelligentsia, expressed the interest in exotic romance seen in many of the movies filmed in the Palm Springs area in the Silent Era. Theda Bara starred in *Salome*, and Rudolph Valentino fought as a tragic French Foreign Legionnaire; Frank Capra filmed *Lost Horizon*, a tale of another isolated paradise, in Palm Springs in the 1930s. Softer, more naturalistic, equally romantic compared to the abstracted geometries of the Wright père's textile block houses in Southern California in the same period, these expressive elements tied the building to the site and the site to the building.

As daring as but more pragmatic than his father, Lloyd still captured the exotic atmosphere of the desert site and desert myths. Solid forms and ornament created an exotic vision in the small, dusty town of Palm Springs in 1924, an undeniably Modern and progressive vision. He would go on to design houses for Palm Springs in the 1920s, though none was built. One was a collection of rookeries, canvas and stone platforms dramatically inserted into mountainside niches; others were A-frame haciendas turning their back to the wind to protect sunken, outdoor gardens sheltered by earthen berms. Lloyd's work asserted that a strong Modern architecture could be developed out of the cultural and natural character of a specific site; even the sand for the concrete was shoveled from



the desert washes. It would stand apart from later designs by Frey, Neutra and Wexler that emphasized technological expression.

With twenty rooms and several buildings, the unusual hotel was a risky move, of course, and the McManuses found themselves without the funds to operate the hotel once it was built, prompting them to bring in W. E. Hammer, operator of a downtown Los Angeles hotel, to take over the operation. It became popular and thrived for many years as a Palm Springs fixture.

Though today hemmed in with later construction and defaced by the demolition of the dining room wing, the original Oasis was a sophisticated Modern design. Before Neutra had arrived in Los Angeles, seven years before the International Style was codified at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the character of Modernism was still up for grabs, especially in California. Though the elder Wright had fallen on hard times in the aftermath of the Taliesin scandal in 1914 when a servant killed the woman he had left his wife and family for, the forgiving, progressive millionaires and middle-class clients of Los Angeles had allowed Lloyd's father the opportunity to develop the concrete block houses, those lush outcroppings, twentieth-century pueblos rising as small moun-

tains out of the arroyos and hilltops of Southern California. R. M. Schindler in California was clearly on a different path than his European compatriots, with edgy, expressive spatial compositions. Irving Gill's rational building systems and clean forms were rooted to the earth and to history with their echoes of the Spanish Missions. Lloyd contributed to this exploration of Modernism at the Oasis.

There was no precedent for using a distinctly Modern design for a resort anywhere in the country before the Oasis.

The last great era of resort building, in the latter nineteenth century, produced Victorian extravaganzas such as the Coronado in San Diego and the glorious Hispanic-style Mission Inn, not far from Palm Springs in Riverside. Resort contemporary to the Oasis, built for the burgeoning California tourism industry, boasted exotic, historically based design like the Taos-inspired La Fonda by Rapp and Rapp in Santa Fe, or the rustic luxury of the Ahwahnee Lodge in Yosemite Park. The Oasis was boldly unique.

Recorded 10/17/86  
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RESOLUTION NO. 15424

OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS,  
CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE OASIS HOTEL TOWER AS  
A CLASS 7 HISTORIC SITE.

WHEREAS the Oasis Hotel Tower and its associated personages have contributed substantially to the history of the City of Palm Springs; and

WHEREAS Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code allows for the designation of historic sites; and

WHEREAS on October 8, 1984 the Historic Site Preservation Board initiated proceedings to designate the Oasis Hotel Tower as an historic site; and

WHEREAS on January 14, 1985, the Historic Site Preservation Board held a public hearing on said designation and unanimously recommended to the City Council designation of said property as a Class 7 Historic Site; and

WHEREAS the City Council concurs in the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board regarding the historic value of the Oasis Hotel Tower; and

WHEREAS the designation of the Oasis Hotel Tower shall further the purposes and intent of Chapter 8.05; and

WHEREAS the designation of the Oasis Hotel Tower shall promote the sensitive preservation of said site.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Palm Springs, California as follows:

Section 1. The Oasis Hotel Tower, along with the attached structure, as shown on attached Exhibit A, shall be designated a Class 7 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.

Section 2. No permit for the exterior alteration to the Oasis Hotel Tower, or the attached structure, shall be granted without the prior approval of the City Council.

Section 3. The Oasis Hotel Tower may be suitable for adaptive reuse and the owner(s) of the subject structures are encouraged to investigate potential uses and to enter into discussion with the City regarding said reuse.

ADOPTED this 6th day of February, 1985.

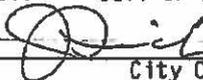
AYES: Councilmembers Birer, Foster, Smith and Mayor Bogert

NOES: None

ABSENT: Councilmember Maryanov

ATTEST: CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

By

  
City Clerk

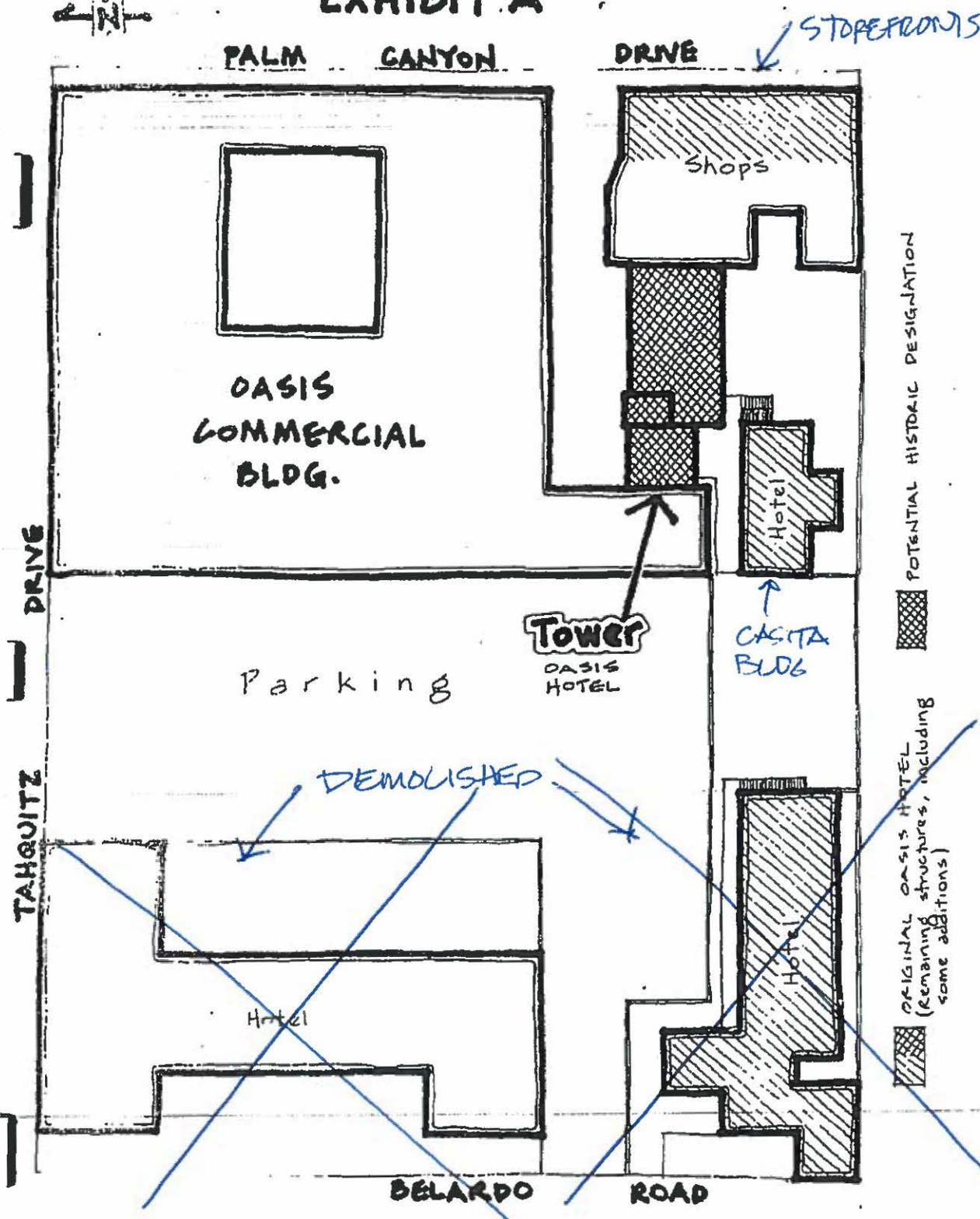
  
City Manager

REVIEWED & APPROVED: 

HSPB 10

Resolution 15424

# EXHIBIT A



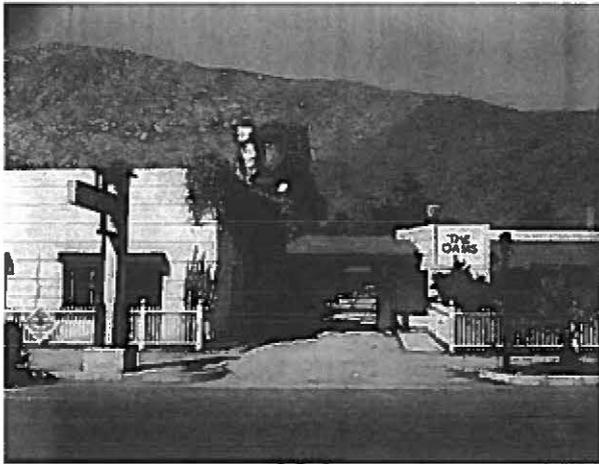
POTENTIAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION



ORIGINAL OASIS HOTEL (Remaining structures, including some additions)



The success of the Desert Inn inspired the development of two equally remarkable hotels in the 1920s and cemented the town's growing reputation as one of the country's premier luxury winter resorts. The first of these was the Oasis Hotel (HSPB-10), opened in 1925 on the site of the McCallum family homestead.<sup>282</sup> Pearl McCallum had in 1914 married Pasadena real estate mogul Austin G. McManus; as Palm Springs grew McManus encouraged and guided his wife as she evolved into an astute businesswoman, developing or subdividing the McCallum acreage piece by piece.<sup>283</sup> But Pearl kept the McCallum homestead, and in 1923 the McManuses became the first patrons of Modern architecture in Palm Springs when they hired Lloyd Wright to design a 20-room hotel on the property and incorporate the family's adobe into the complex as a memorial to Pearl's father.<sup>284</sup>



Oasis Hotel (1924, Lloyd Wright; tower HSPB-10). Photographed in 1927. Source: Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>282</sup> Bowart et al, "The McCallum Centennial." Portions of the Oasis were demolished in 1953 to make way for the construction of the Oasis office building designed by Williams, Williams and Williams.

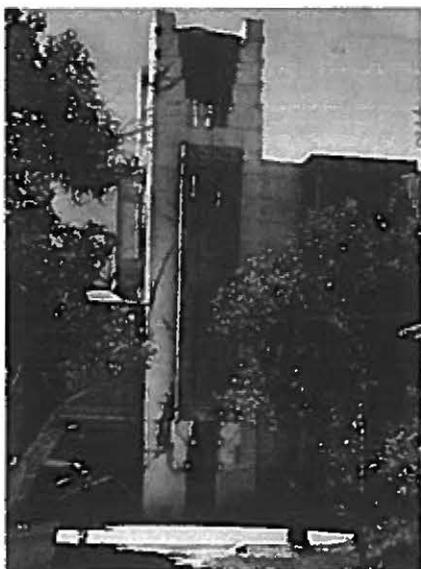
<sup>283</sup> Bowart et al, "The McCallum Centennial."

<sup>284</sup> Bowart et al, "The McCallum Centennial."

SCREENCHECK DRAFT - OCTOBER 13, 2015

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

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



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

Wright, who had previously experimented with concrete techniques while working on his father's textile block houses in Los Angeles, used a novel "slip-form" construction technique for the Oasis: twelve-inch courses of concrete were poured between wood forms and, when the concrete had set, the forms were "slipped" up and the next course poured until the full height of the wall was completed. Pearl McManus later remembered that "It took a year to complete and was so beautiful that many people offered to buy it or lease it before it was finished."<sup>285</sup> The Oasis opened in early 1925.<sup>286</sup> Its plan and design responded to the desert climate, with one- to three-story wings clustered around landscaped courtyards, and concrete walls to insulate the interiors from the desert heat. Windows were screened with wooden grilles reminiscent of Spanish ironwork.

The entrance to the hotel's main building was marked with a four-story tower topped with stepped corner piers, decorated with abstract patterns cast into the concrete and supporting a pyramidal roof that echoed the profile of Mt. San Jacinto beyond. The glass-walled dining room was built around two pre-existing cottonwood trees, which grew through openings in the roof; the adjacent McCallum adobe served as the hotel's lounge, with comfortable chairs clustered around the hearth.<sup>287</sup> The hotel grounds featured a lush lawn with a large brazier, surrounded by lounge chairs, where bonfires were lit each night;<sup>288</sup> and a "Persian" swimming pool set amidst the surviving fruit trees of the McCallum orchard.<sup>289</sup> The Oasis Hotel was the first of many innovative Modern concrete buildings in Palm Springs and is an original and significant example of Modern architecture in the United States. Author and

<sup>285</sup> Alan Weintraub, *Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 239.

<sup>286</sup> "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1925, G12. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

<sup>287</sup> "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1927, F10. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

<sup>288</sup> "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1926, G12. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

<sup>289</sup> "Resort Notes," November 1, 1925, G12.

historian Alan Hess has called the Oasis “one of the great neglected buildings of California architecture” and “one of the first defining statements about a Modern architecture in the desert,”<sup>290</sup> but its radical modern aesthetic would not be repeated in Palm Springs for a decade.

The city's time and money in the 1920s, the Spanish Revival style by local developer Prescott Thresher Stevens, who spent the then-astronomical amount of \$1 million on the resort.<sup>291</sup> Designed by the Los Angeles firm of Walker & Eisen, who also designed the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, the pink-walled El Mirador was set in lush gardens a mile north of the center of town on Indian Canyon Drive (then Indian Avenue) at Tachevah Drive. It featured an eye-catching bell tower (reconstructed; HSPB-1) topped with Moorish tiles, two hundred luxurious guest rooms filled with hand-carved furniture, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a tennis court, stables, and private golf course.<sup>292</sup>



El Mirador Hotel, photographed in 1953.  
Source: Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

<sup>290</sup> Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 28-29.

<sup>291</sup> Dennis McDougal and Mike Meenan, “It’s Check-Out Time for Palm Springs’ El Mirador,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1977, P120, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed July 29, 2012).

<sup>292</sup> Jenifer Warren and Scott Harris, “Fire Destroys Palm Springs’ El Mirador Hotel,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1989, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed July 29, 2012).

SCREENCHECK DRAFT-- OCTOBER 13, 2015

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

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



# Palm Springs History: The Oasis Hotel

Nicolette Wenzell Published 9:52 p.m. PT April 24, 2014



*(Photo: Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society. All rights reserved)*

43CONNECTTWEETLINKEDINCOMMENTEMAILMORE

In 1924 construction began on the Oasis Hotel, one of the most recognizable and architecturally distinctive buildings in Palm Springs.

Commissioned by Pearl McCallum McManus to be built on family land, the unique building was said to have been a tribute to her father's legacy. Her father, John Guthrie McCallum, was the first white settler to make his home in Palm Springs and subsequently, Pearl felt a strong and lasting responsibility to keep Palm Springs a thriving community.

An important element of Pearl's vision for Palm Springs was beauty.

She desired that the structures encompassing downtown be of the utmost quality and that aesthetics be paramount. The architect she deemed appropriate to bring life to her image was Lloyd Wright, son of iconic Frank Lloyd Wright. The building was to be a handsome high-class hotel. The piece of land Pearl chose to place it on was none other than the site where her father had constructed their family home upon their arrival to Palm Springs.

At what is today the southwest corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Palm Canyon Drive, the location was hallowed ground for Pearl and at the time of construction, remained the site of the McCallum family home. Pearl spent a great amount of time consulting with Wright in her quest to create a building that lived up to her expectations. To Pearl, one of the most important components of the building's design was a tower that was to rise from the desert floor as a beacon of respect for her father.

Another sign of her emotional connection to the land was made apparent by the effort to save as many of the trees growing on the property as possible. Portions of the hotel building were constructed around the trees, so that they could continue to remain on the land. It is estimated that to do so cost Pearl an additional \$1,000 per tree; in today's money, that's an estimated \$16,000 to save each tree.

The structure was built of concrete, with a distinctive pattern created during the implementation of the slip-form technique. It was constructed in the moderne style of the 1920s and drew much attention and admiration upon its completion.

In the end, the Oasis Hotel, as it was called, was a showpiece that boasted Palm Springs' first swimming pool, lush landscaping, striking interiors and the statuesque tower Pearl dreamed of. Pearl was even able to integrate part of her family home into the design.

However, the hotel claimed only 24 guest rooms. Pearl would soon find out that having 24 rooms was "woefully inadequate." In fact, in her near obsession with the hotel's creation she neglected to consider the profitability of such an enterprise.

Pearl's many efforts to make the hotel a stunning tribute to her heritage caused her to exceed her original cost estimate by nearly three times its initial figure; there simply was not enough money to incorporate additional rooms.

Pearl moved forward with the leasing of the hotel, as her plan had always been to do so. Unfortunately, her first lessee lasted only two years. After some consideration, Pearl made the difficult decision to sell the Oasis Hotel to someone who could build the necessary additional guest rooms and run the hotel at a profit.

As part of the selling agreement, Pearl kept the right to move her family home from the property if it should ever be threatened with demolition.

Next week's column will look at what happened after the hotel was sold.

Nicolette Wenzell is associated curator for Palm Springs Historical Society

# Palm Springs History: The Garlicks built up Oasis Hotel

Nicolette Wenzell 7:04 p.m. PT May 1, 2014

*(Photo: Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society. All rights reserved.)*

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**PALM SPRINGS** – In 1927, Hobart Garlick moved to Palm Springs with his wife, Isabel. Garlick came to California from his native Ohio in 1917 with the hope of getting into the hotel business. Upon his arrival, he found a job at a hotel in San Francisco and later, as manager of the Darby Hotel in Los Angeles, where he built a reputation as a respected hotelier.

Garlick sought to further his hostelry career and when he heard of the Oasis Hotel's listing, he purchased it from Pearl McCallum McManus. Garlick ran the Oasis successfully and built a name for himself in the Palm Springs community as a generous humanitarian. Garlick sent food baskets to those in need, volunteered with the Boy Scouts and served on the school board.

The Garlicks enjoyed a decade of success in Palm Springs until tragedy struck the couple. Isabel battled illness for several months before dying in December 1937 at the age of 46.

After her death, Garlick suffered greatly. His health also began to fail and the weight of managing the hotel became too much for him. On the night of March 24, 1940, Garlick retired to a "remote cottage of his hotel," and took his own life with a revolver. He was 56.

In 1944, Dewey Metzdorf, senior vice president of Western Hotels Inc. (today's Westin Hotels and Resorts), bought the Oasis. Metzdorf was visiting Palm Springs from Anchorage, Alaska, where he suffered frozen hands and feet. The desert climate afforded him a full recovery and he and his wife bought the hotel because they "wanted a good excuse for staying here."

In 1952, Metzdorf said of purchasing the Oasis, "I've been in the hotel business all my life ... and in order to settle down here, I just had to have a hotel to operate." Metzdorf ran the hotel until February 1952, when he sold it to Western Hotels Inc., "of which he (was) executive in charge of operations." The list price for the hotel was \$600,000.

Following the sale, the hotel was altered and expanded. The plans done by the architecture firm of Williams, Williams and Williams, with associate architects Clark and Frey, called for the demolition of some of the original hotel structure and a new commercial building to be constructed on the corner of Palm Canyon and Tahquitz, partially on the site where Pearl McCallum McManus' family home remained.

Because Pearl had always retained the right to move the building, she did so in December 1952. Brick by brick, the adobe home was deconstructed and reconstructed on the site where it remains today at 221 South Palm Canyon Drive.

By 1964, a multistory, 44-unit addition was added. The extension, designed by Williams and Williams architects, was located just west of the already existing hostelry at the southwest corner of Belardo Road and Tahquitz Canyon Way. Today, the location of the addition is home to the Palm Mountain Resort & Spa. The structure's facade has been altered but the pool and spa maintain their original shape.

By the 1990s, the original Oasis Hotel buildings stood vacant and in a state of disrepair. It came to be known as "one of the great neglected buildings of California architecture." The structures became a place for transients to find refuge.

In 2005, in an effort to breathe life back into the vacant building, a 280-seat, multimillion-dollar restaurant honoring the site's storied past was proposed. The plan was to pay homage to some of Hollywood's elite who had vacationed at the Oasis Hotel. Those reported to have stayed there include Loretta Young, Clark Gable, John Wayne and Shirley Temple. Though some of the original structures were demolished to make way for it, the restaurant, to be called Loretta's Hideaway, never came to fruition.

Today, the tower remains a vacant beacon in downtown Palm Springs, designated a Class One historic site. A small portion of the original Lloyd Wright slip-form building also remains; mostly vacant, it is situated just east of the tower's location.

Nicolette Wenzell is Palm Springs Historical Society associate curator

Jing Yeo

---

From: Eric Lloyd Wright [elwright@elwright.net]  
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2005 12:17 PM  
To: jingy@ci.palm-springs.ca.us  
Subject: Oasis Hotel

To: Jaing Yeo, Palm Springs Historic Sites Preservation Commission  
Re: The Oasis Hotel, Palm Springs  
From: Eric Lloyd Wright, Architect  
Date: April 11, 2005

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing this letter of concern regarding the Oasis Hotel. The building was designed by my father Lloyd Wright. It was the only project my father designed that was built in Palm Springs. It is a unique building in many ways. It's architecture and construction were ahead of their time. It was the first slip form concrete building built in the United States. It's architectural form was very unique and one of the major examples of organic architecture practiced by his father, Frank Lloyd Wright. The building is also a vital element in the history of Palm Springs, since it was commissioned by Pearl McCallum McManus, and represented the first major modern building in that city.

For all of the above reasons any alterations or additions have to be done with great care not to lose the original fabric and sense of architectural form and space. I'm sure the commission is as concerned as I am to preserve as much of the architectural history of Palm Springs as possible. Thank you for your attention this matter.

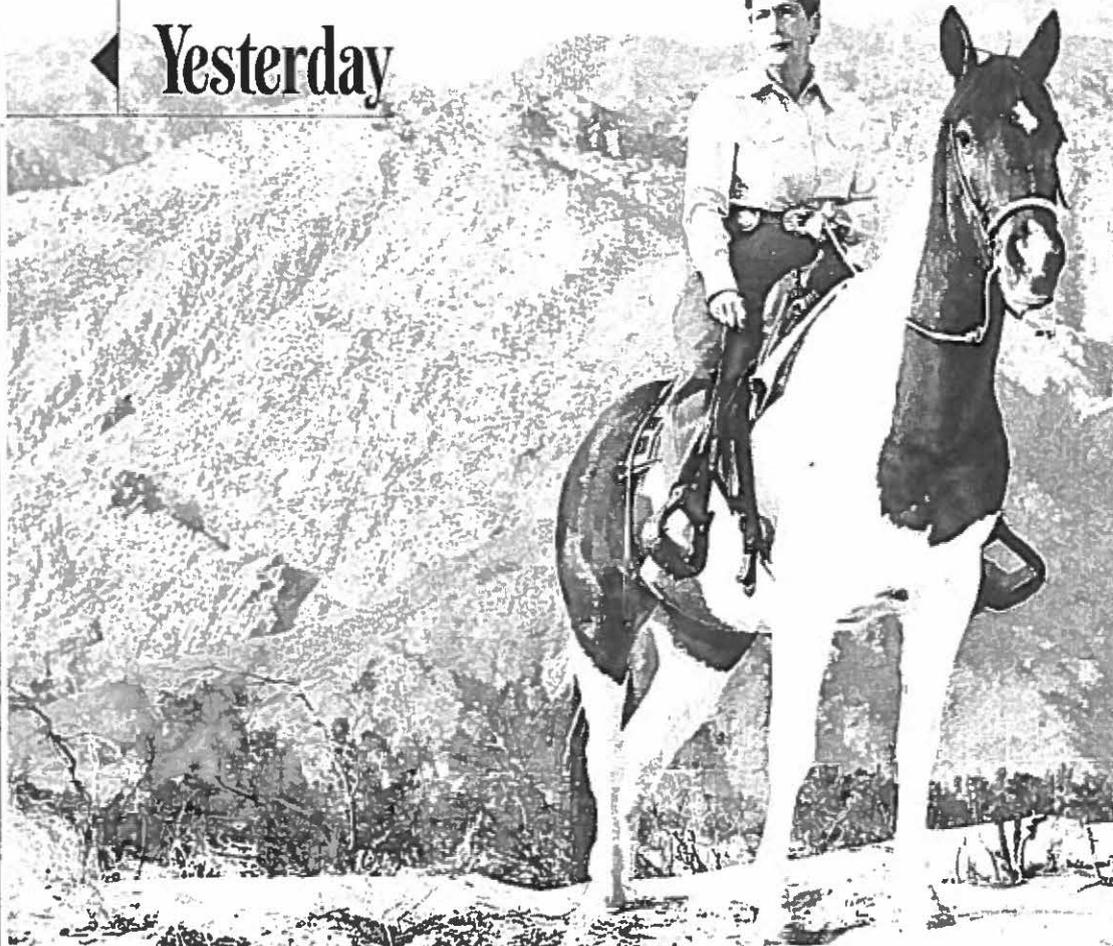
Sincerely,

Eric Lloyd Wright

--

RECEIVED  
APR 11 2005  
Planning & Zoning

◀ Yesterday



# Pearl McCallum McManus

Although a century has passed since her father first planted fruit trees at the foot of Mount San Jacinto, Pearl McCallum McManus' influence in the Coachella Valley continues to enhance our quality of life today.

Among the first to understand and imagine the possibilities of a gracious life in our desert setting, Pearl's father was visionary. But he would not survive to see the valley's transformation into the dreamy irrigated landscape he imagined. He did, however, firmly inculcate that vision into his daughter Pearl, and she spent the remainder of her long life bringing it to fruition.

## SETTING THE TONE

With lush green golf courses and world-class resorts situated today from one end of the valley to the other, it's difficult to imagine in their place endless dunes and scrub. Yet it was in this sand-swept setting that Pearl and her husband Austin McManus took the fearless step of commissioning Lloyd Wright, the son of Frank Lloyd Wright, to build the Oasis Hotel.



TOP: A devoted equestrienne all her life, valley pioneer Pearl McCallum McManus rides through the desert scrub with towering Mount San Jacinto in the background.

ABOVE: On November 26, 1953, opening night at the Tennis Club that she built, McManus shows her softer side in tulle and lace. Fancy dresses were said to be her only extravagance.

Situated at the corner of what is now Tahquitz Canyon and Palm Canyon Way in Palm Springs, the couple's project was built of slip form concrete, which ensured a continuous, cast-in-place structure. When completed, the Oasis was the first architecturally designed building in the desert.

Suddenly, the adjacent Desert Inn's tent and clapboard housing looked inferior. It was a situation that spurred Nellie Coffman, the inn's owner, into a massive building project in order to compete. Thereafter, the standard for hotels in the desert was forever lifted from rough camping grounds to proper hotels.

#### A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

From the onset, Pearl understood that the transformation she sought was difficult: she wanted nothing less than to literally change desert desolation into hospitable housing supported by civic institutions and the trappings of life in real cities. Accordingly, she continued to bring talented professionals to work on her projects.

Among the McCallum holdings was an area now known as the Tahquitz River Estates neighborhood, but originally called Palos Verdes Estates. After facing challenges developing this tract of land, which was prone to flooding along the channel, Pearl collaborated with famed Southern California builder Paul Trousdale—who not only developed Beverly Hills' fashionable Trousdale Estates, but in his lifetime built more than 25,000 Southern California homes—and architect Allen Sipe.

With stabilization of the river's course, the collaborators built affordable, attractive and thoroughly modern houses on both sides of the banks. The houses featured a lanai, a breezeway and a "crystal clear wall of glass" in the living room. Paul Trousdale's own house in Smoke Tree Ranch survives today and has the same architectural features on a slightly grander scale.

To build the Tennis Club in Palm Springs, Pearl hired architect-to-the-stars Paul R. Williams to build an iconic, modern entertaining pavilion. Opening in 1937, the Tennis Club featured an elegant oval-shape pool with two palm trees, a setting that became the scene of many memorable dinner parties. Celebrities and socialites flocked to the unusual new building.

#### BUSINESS SAVVY

Owning thousands of acres and adhering to her vision, Pearl retained architectural control over her land by writing into the deeds her right of reversion for architectural reasons. It was tested when she gave 30 acres in the middle of Palm Springs to the city for a desert preserve and equestrian center.

Pearl had ridden since childhood and remained an avid horsewoman her entire life. However, the city decided that the land would be better used as a golf course even though the gift provided that if the city did not use the land as directed, it would revert to the ownership of the Living Desert Reserve. The difficult transaction ultimately resulted in litigation between Palm Springs and the Living Desert, finally resulting in the creation of Tahquitz Creek Golf Course.



TOP: "Auntie Pearl's" Pink Palace, an early California mansion, featured a large covered porch.

ABOVE: McManus with Palm Springs' dapper mayor Frank Bogert and Los Angeles socialite Paquita Machris (Mrs. Maurice Machris) at the season opening of the El Mirador 1960. BELOW: A rare view of the Lloyd Wright Oasis Hotel courtyard in the 1930s; photo courtesy the Palm Springs Historical Society.



January 14, 1985

HSPB MINUTES

3A4  
Page 2

AGENDA ITEMS

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Oasis Hotel Tower/Historic Site Designation (Case #HSPB-10). Staff presented its recommendation, historical photographs of the Oasis Hotel, and copies of the original plans for the Hotel by Lloyd Wright.

The public hearing was opened with Nathan Cohen, the majority owner of the Tower property, presenting a letter to the HSPB in support of the designation of the Tower as an historic site. The public hearing was closed with no further comment.

Motion: M/S/C unanimously (McKinney/Henderson; Kitty Hayes absent) to recommend to the City Council that they designate the Oasis Hotel Tower and the adjoining structure as a Class 7 Historic Site.

Staff will donate the copies of the original plans of the Oasis Hotel to the Palm Springs Historical Society once this case is closed.

Pacific Building/Historic Site Designation (Case #HSPB-13). Staff reviewed the discussion which had taken place at the December 10, 1984, meeting and presented its recommendation.

The public hearing was opened with Rose Mihata, an owner of the Pacific Building, stating that her partner, T.J. Haga, is opposed to the proposed historic designation because he feels that there are no benefits to the property owners. Mrs. Mihata stated that she, herself, is not opposed to such designation and that it is her intention to preserve the historical character of the Pacific Building and has already taken steps to renovate certain features; she commented, however, that there is no financial aid available to her for renovation purposes.

Janice Lyle stated that it is the Board's responsibility to insure that the City's needs for preserving its history are met and that, although there may not be a particular benefit for one individual, there is a long term benefit for the community.

Discussion ensued regarding the responsibility of the purchaser of an older building to check into the possibility of historic designation. Mrs. Mihata stated that she had contacted City staff in this matter and had been told that the building was not being considered; she also stated that they would not have purchased the building had they known it was on the survey. Janice Lyle stated that the Board should, then, be angry at some City staff for not providing the proper information. (Note: Planning Division/Redevelopment Agency staffs working with historical preservation activities were not contacted prior to the public hearing process.)

Discussion ensued regarding the potential limitation of use within this building. Staff assured Mrs. Mihata that neither the HSPB nor the City Council have yet acted to limit use beyond that which is regulated by other City ordinances and that this case would be no different.

Mrs. Mihata suggested that cooperation from the private sector in historic preservation matters might be easier to achieve if the City could offer some incentives to the property owner. She stated that she is in favor of what the



financial management consultants, inc.

10990 RIVERSIDE DRIVE/SUITE 110 TOLLUCA LAKE, CALIFORNIA 91602

TELEPHONES 213 789 7822 and 877 4845

NATHAN W. COHEN  
PRESIDENT

HON. ROBERT E. DONFELD  
OF COUNCIL

January 14, 1985

Historic Site Preservation Board of the City of Palm Springs  
Palm Springs, California

Re: Designation of Oasis Hotel Tower as Historic Site

Dear Honorable Board Members:

As owner of the property on which the Oasis Hotel Tower is located, I fully support its designation as an Historic Site by the City of Palm Springs, and I heartily endorse your recommendation to the Palm Springs City Council to that effect.

The City has been aware that it has long been my intention to develop my property to its highest and best use, and accordingly, I want to express my great concern about three matters which are related to the Oasis Hotel Tower. First, it is important that only those structures adjoining the Tower, as indicated in your Site Plan, and which are necessary for its physical support, be designated Historic Sites. Second, I should not be restricted from renovating or improving those adjoining structures as long as the Tower is itself preserved. Third, it may be necessary to move the Tower to some other location within the property, such as to the middle of a new shopping center development, or to some other location outside of the property. My information is that this should present no problem as long as adequate care is taken to avoid harm to the Tower, and of course, I would expect to take all of the necessary appropriate precautions.

I am hopeful that your recommendations to the Palm Springs City Council concerning the Oasis Hotel Tower will specifically refer to and be consistent with my three expressed concerns.

Very truly yours,

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, INC.

Nathan W. Cohen  
President

NWC:mah

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