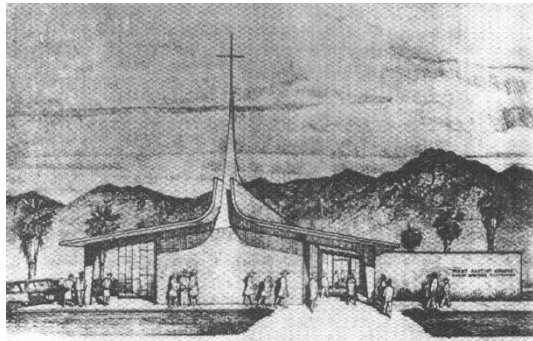
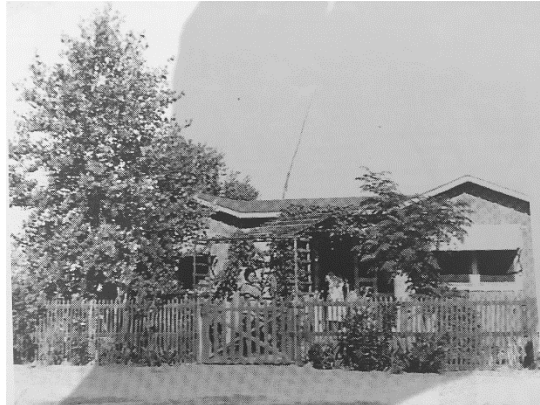
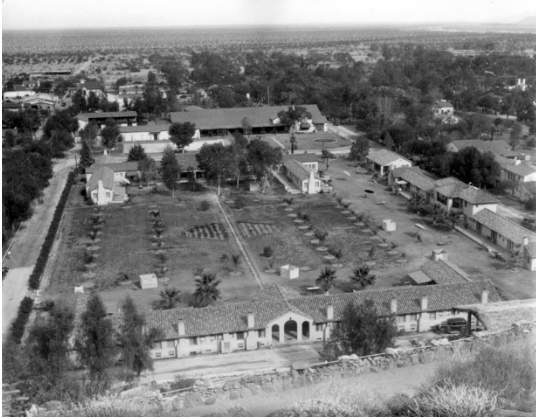


Context: Ethnic Minorities in Palm Springs



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CONTEXT: ETHNIC MINORITIES IN PALM SPRINGS

Introduction

This context about minority populations in Palm Springs was developed after the completion of the Draft Palm Springs Historic Context and Survey Update in 2016. It is meant to provide additional information about development patterns associated with people of color who lived and worked in Palm Springs. There is some overlap in the discussion of residential developments included in the main context narrative and in this chapter; the information contained here provides an additional layer of history for those areas.

Overview

The natural wonders and favorable climate of Palm Springs lured people from varied backgrounds. In an undated manuscript (c. late 1880s), African American social reformer, abolitionist, writer, and statesman Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) visited none other than Dr. Welwood Murray, and recalled:

With the pleasant memories of the happy day spent in the Palm Canyon lulling me to sleep early in the evening ... I forgot fatigue and awoke refreshed. ... The delightful sunny atmosphere made it possible for a resident of a cold climate to remain in doors. There were trees to examine, green plants to collect. Flowers to put in the press before the welcome noonday bell called the family to enjoy the cooking of the China man [sic] presiding in the kitchen. So the work of the Indian is the laundry, who made the table linens, and that of the Irish maiden from the far-distant Massachusetts in the dining room – what else was there to desire? On the arrival of the daily mail, letters from home and the newspapers interested the residents whether they hailed from Mexico or Oregon. Racking coughs were forgotten for a time at least and life seemed worth living. At breakfast the following morning, Dr. Murray notified us that he was prepared to drive to the foot of another canyon. By lessening the walk over the arid plain he deemed the ascent easy for us.⁷⁸⁰

Frederick Douglass, "Palm Canyon"

Throughout the document, Douglass recounts visits to Native American homes and expresses fascination with the desert flora and fauna. Indeed, the beauty, health benefits, and topography of Palm Springs transcended the interest of any one community and, ultimately, the desert became home to a diverse population of residents.

This context maps the key social and economic drivers for communities of color and the subsequent patterns of development that emerged in the City of Palm Springs. What follows is an exploration of the residential, institutional, and commercial development patterns associated with the communities of

⁷⁸⁰ Frederick Douglass, "Palm Canyon," Washington D.C., Library of Congress, 7-8.

color other than the Native American population. While the social and cultural development of African American, Latino, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino communities are inextricably linked with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the purposeful focus here is to document the non-Native American historic context to aid with the identification of potential historic resources.

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THEME: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ETHNIC MINORITIES (c. 1900-1969)

Residential development patterns for the communities of color in the City of Palm Springs are unique and differentiated from other established patterns of development in the village. The discussion begins with an examination of their role in the resort industry, migration and the growth of Section 14, the period of urban renewal and dispersion, and ends with the period of community outreach and housing development.

Residential development associated with Resort Industry workers, 1900-1930

Whether it was constructing the buildings and infrastructure or filling the service jobs that kept the resorts humming, the Latino, African American, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino residents of Palm Springs served as the backbone of the resort industry at the beginning of the 20th century.



Chinese Cook at the Desert Inn c. 1930.
Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

The earliest non-Native American people of color to reside in Palm Springs were closely tied to the city pioneers. In the 1910 U.S. Census, two Chinese cooks, Sin Ham Chin and Yan Lee, are enumerated as part of Nellie Coffman's "sanitarium" staff. The township also counted four male Japanese residents: two were servants working and living in the homes of private families, and two were farm laborers.⁷⁸¹ Although no Latinos or African Americans were enumerated in the 1910 Census for Palm Springs, the greater San Geronio township was home to many Latinos who worked either for the railroad or as day laborers. Latinos became the laborers of choice for the railroads after restrictions on Chinese immigration were imposed.

⁷⁸¹ Because of the seasonal nature of the Palm Springs community, census data can be skewed. The 1910 U.S. Census was taken in Palm Springs in April and as such, reflects the presence of some 20 lodgers at Coffman's.

During the Mexican Revolution (c. 1910-1920), many families left Mexico for the Coachella Valley. According to author and archivist for the Palm Springs Historical Society, Renee Brown "...the first Mexican families in Palm Springs came to work on the construction of the road that climbed up the mountain behind the Desert Inn."⁷⁸² These workers set up tents on the area presently occupied by the O'Donnell Golf course.

By the 1920 census, Nellie Coffman's staff had grown. She now employed five Chinese (two cooks, a servant, and two gardeners) and the first enumerated African American resident, Augustina Williams, who was also a cook. Although the census taker for the 1920 roll did not identify addresses associated with residents, it appears that at least one Latino family and one Japanese family lived side by side with the Caucasians. They included Ernesto Palico, a cement mason, his wife Adela and their three sons. Also enumerated were J. Fujimoto and his wife, living with his business partner Rokichi Kowase and his wife, and Fusarichi Yamasaki, all involved in "market gardening."⁷⁸³

The 1920 Census also enumerates dozens of "Palm Springs Mission Indians," which included 60 individuals of Mexican heritage. Although it is not known from the data exactly where these people lived, they may have been among the first non-white, non-Native American residents of Section 14. Nevertheless, it is the first evidence of the development pattern of Native Americans and Latinos sharing a residential community. On June 30, 1925, the first known Mexican American infant, Pasqual Quiroz (1925-2014), was born to parents living in the makeshift structures in the early tent community near the Desert Inn.⁷⁸⁴ Latinos were predominantly employed as laborers helping to construct the many new buildings in the village.



L: Pasqual "Paul" Quiroz c. 1950. R: Salazar Family, c. 1929. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁷⁸² Renee Brown, "The History of Mexican Families in the Coachella Valley," *The Desert Sun*, April 20, 2017.

⁷⁸³ U.S. Census, 1920.

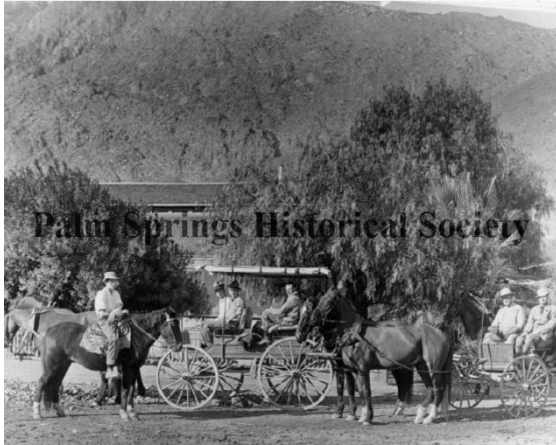
⁷⁸⁴ Renee Brown, "The History of Mexican Families in the Coachella Valley," *The Desert Sun*, April 20, 2017.

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L: This image was taken in front of the Desert Inn on the northwest corner of Tahquitz Drive and North Palm Canyon Drive. The building visible in the background is part of the Desert Inn that housed Filipino employees and became known as Manila. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society. R: Looking eastward at the Desert Inn showing employee dorms at rear. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

During this period, the resorts employed large numbers of people of color, especially Asian men. In 1930, five Korean men (porters), 12 Chinese men (kitchen help), and 17 Filipinos (in a variety of service positions) were employed at the Desert Inn. The Oasis Hotel also employed several Filipinos, as did the El Mirador.⁷⁸⁵ All three hotels provided housing for their employees. Employee dorms at the El Mirador were located on the southeast corner of Indian Avenue and Tachevah Drive in two separate buildings. At the Desert Inn, a number of small buildings were used to house employees, with one group designated especially for women.⁷⁸⁶ One building at the Desert Inn became known as “Manila” due to the large number of Filipino residents.⁷⁸⁷ The Oasis Hotel provided housing away from the resort itself in four buildings located on the east side of present-day S. Cahuilla Road between E. Tahquitz Canyon Way and W. Arenas Road.⁷⁸⁸ None of these structures are extant.

By the 1930s, the village was becoming more popular than ever as a resort destination. New hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and support services were on the rise and vacation homes in the city were increasing in popularity. Job opportunities in the service and construction industries were plentiful in Palm Springs and a steady stream of people arrived to fill those positions. Those not associated with the larger resorts with employee housing had to find convenient and affordable places to live.

⁷⁸⁵ Filipinos first migrated to the Riverside area circa 1910 as agricultural labor.

⁷⁸⁶ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1929.

⁷⁸⁷ Palm Springs Historical Society, Online Photo Collection.

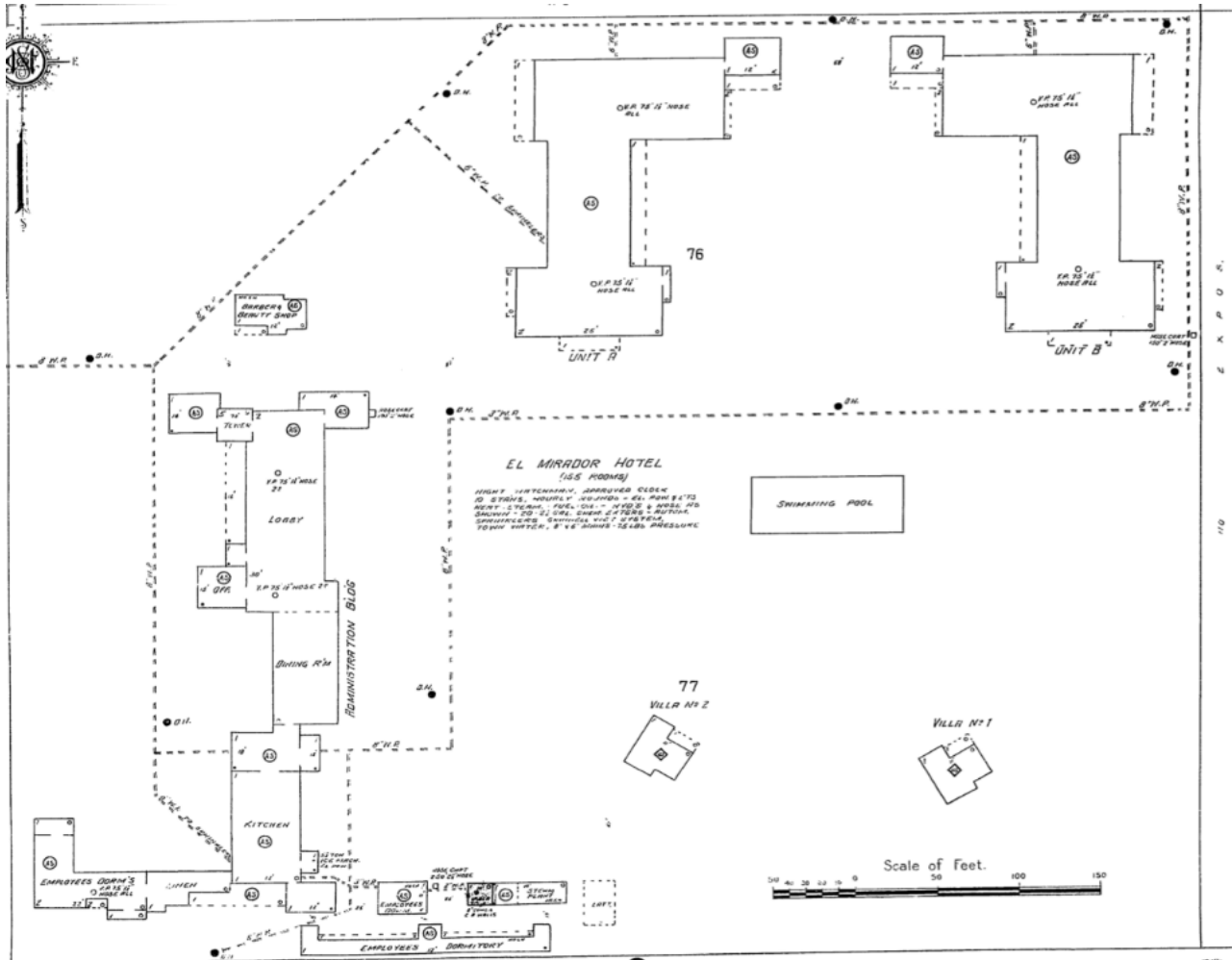
⁷⁸⁸ 1929 Sanborn Map of the Desert Inn shows living quarters for employees.

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1929 Sanborn Map of the El Mirador Hotel shows employee dorms adjacent to kitchen. Source: 1929 Sanborn Map of Palm Springs, 1.

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During the 1930s, while resort life was in full swing, new development patterns also began to emerge. Taken in April, the 1930 Census reflects both the presence of minorities employed by the hotels, along with those working in households of wealthy village residents. The census shows that African Americans were employed as housemen, chauffeurs, cooks, and maids; Latinos continued to work as gardeners or construction laborers; and a small group of Japanese continued agricultural pursuits typically operating small truck farms.

The Growth of Section 14, 1931-1950

People in Texas thought of California as a dream state where you could go into your backyard and just pick dollar bills off the tree.

Ivy Pellum Wilson, on her family's migration to Palm Springs in 1943

During the Great Depression, when people were out of work with virtually no job prospects, many African Americans from the south and the Dust Bowl migrated westward. Fueled by vacationers from the Depression-proof entertainment industry, Palm Springs was one of the few places where there was opportunity for low-skilled workers. As a result, more people of color came to Palm Springs during this period. Unlike the three main resorts that offered dormitory living for their employees, many newcomers had no choice other than to settle on centrally located Section 14, where they could rent land from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Rental opportunities off the reservation were not offered and deed restrictions prevented the purchase of land.

Officially, Section 14 was the one square mile section bounded by Alejo Road on the north, Ramon Road on the south, Sunrise Way on the east, and Indian Canyon Avenue on the west. It was one of 51 sections of 640 acres each that belonged to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians under the Mission Indian Act passed by Congress in 1891. Without transportation infrastructure in the city, Section 14 was one of the only places open to settlement for people of color which provided easy proximity to jobs. The Bureau of Indian Affairs restricted the terms Native Americans could lease their plots to just five years — effectively restricting any long-term investment.



Aerial view of Section 14, c. 1935, just east of the Plaza. Source: Palms Springs Historical Society.

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Section 14 was devoid of the infrastructure and services of the city proper. Water and electricity service were limited, and natural gas service was non-existent. There were no sewers, trash pickup, or fire protection, and there were no paved roads through Section 14. The area had no formal planning. The structures built by the lessees varied in value and amenities and were scattered haphazardly across the acreage. Some residents built homes of brick, wood, or cinder blocks. Many of these homes were simple, vernacular structures that improved as money and means became available. Structure valuations in the Census ranged from as little as \$100 to as much as \$4,000.⁷⁸⁹ Trailers were also commonplace. Some residents offered rooms for short-⁷⁹⁰ or long-term rental.⁷⁹¹



Ortega Home on Section 14 land built by Merced Ortega, c. 1930. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society, "We Were Here Too," 63.

A large number of Latino families moved to Section 14 in the 1930s.⁷⁹² Initially, they lived in tents; however, families soon began helping one another construct homes.⁷⁹³ Many of the men were carpenters, stone-masons, or part of the construction trades. As described in *We Were Here, Too*, written by the surviving members of the early Latino community, "stick by stick, nail by nail..." they built houses.⁷⁹⁴ The houses were iterative, vernacular dwellings that evolved with means and opportunity. One of the many builders, Merced Rosario Ortega (1880-1958), was a carpenter and adobe builder who found a lot of work in Palm Springs. His work was published in *Sunset* magazine in 1930. Friends and family on Section 14 asked Ortega to help them erect dwellings. By the late 1930s, a number of Latino family homes were constructed along a footpath south of unpaved Arenas and El Segundo Roads. The Julian Reyes house on Section 14 initially had a dirt floor and a palm-frond roof.⁷⁹⁵ Early important

⁷⁸⁹ U.S. Census 1940, "Palm Springs Section 14."

⁷⁹⁰ In his oral history, former Section 14 resident Charles Jordan recalled how Louis Armstrong and his band mates had rented rooms from his aunt during a gig at one of the hotels. The many entertainers of color that frequented the resorts were not permitted to stay in the hotels.

⁷⁹¹ "Businesses on Palm Springs Indian Reservation," September 1938, 1-9.

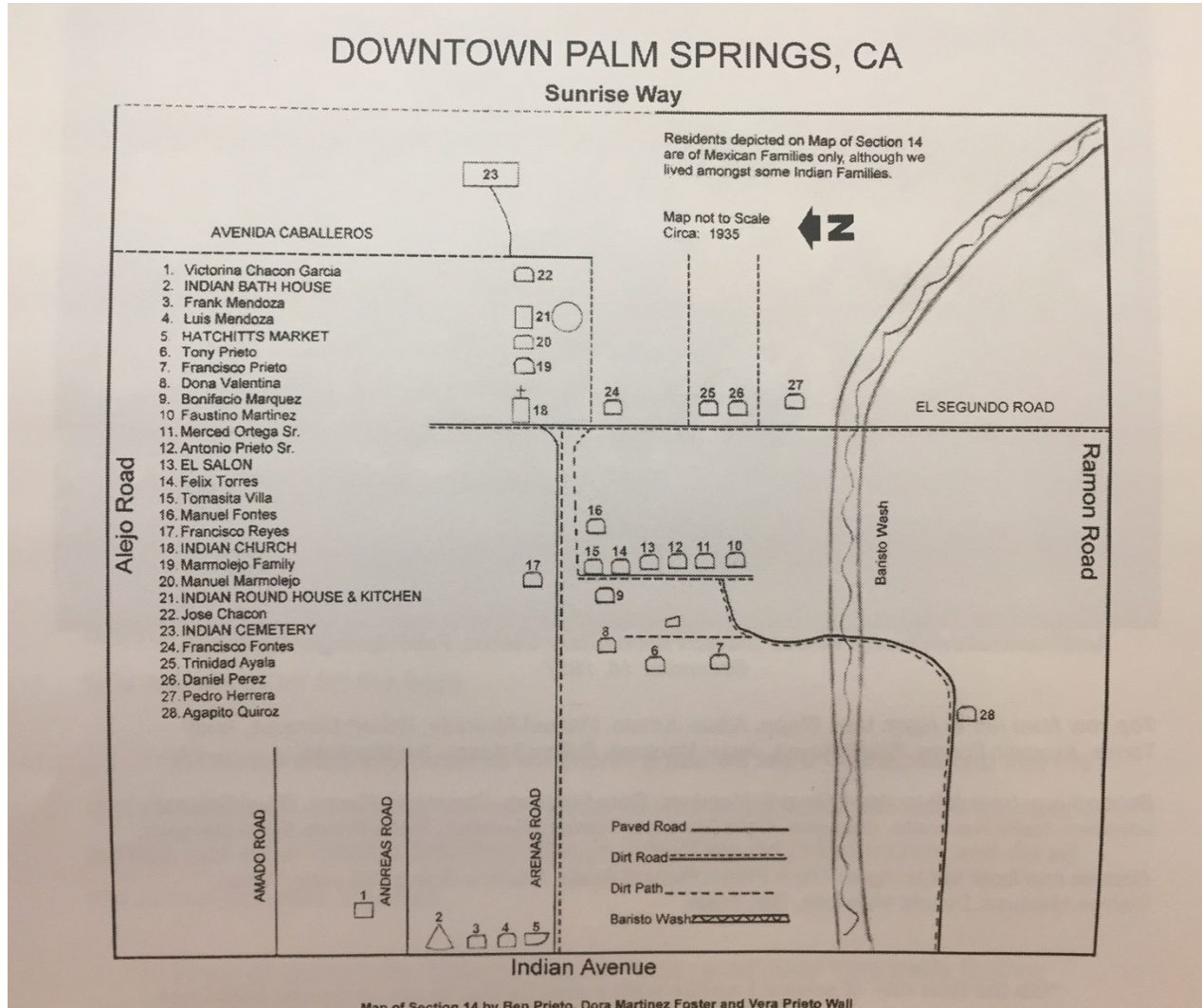
⁷⁹² Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez, and Vera Wall, "We Were Here, Too," (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 11,

⁷⁹³ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez, and Vera Wall, "We Were Here, Too," (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 6.

⁷⁹⁴ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez, and Vera Wall, "We Were Here, Too," (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 6.

⁷⁹⁵ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez, and Vera Wall, "We Were Here, Too," (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 82.

Latino families included the Fontes, Chacon, Salazar, Ayala, Herrera, Marmolejo, Marquez, Ortega, Martinez, Mendoza, Perez, Prieto, Quiroz, Reyes, and Torres families.



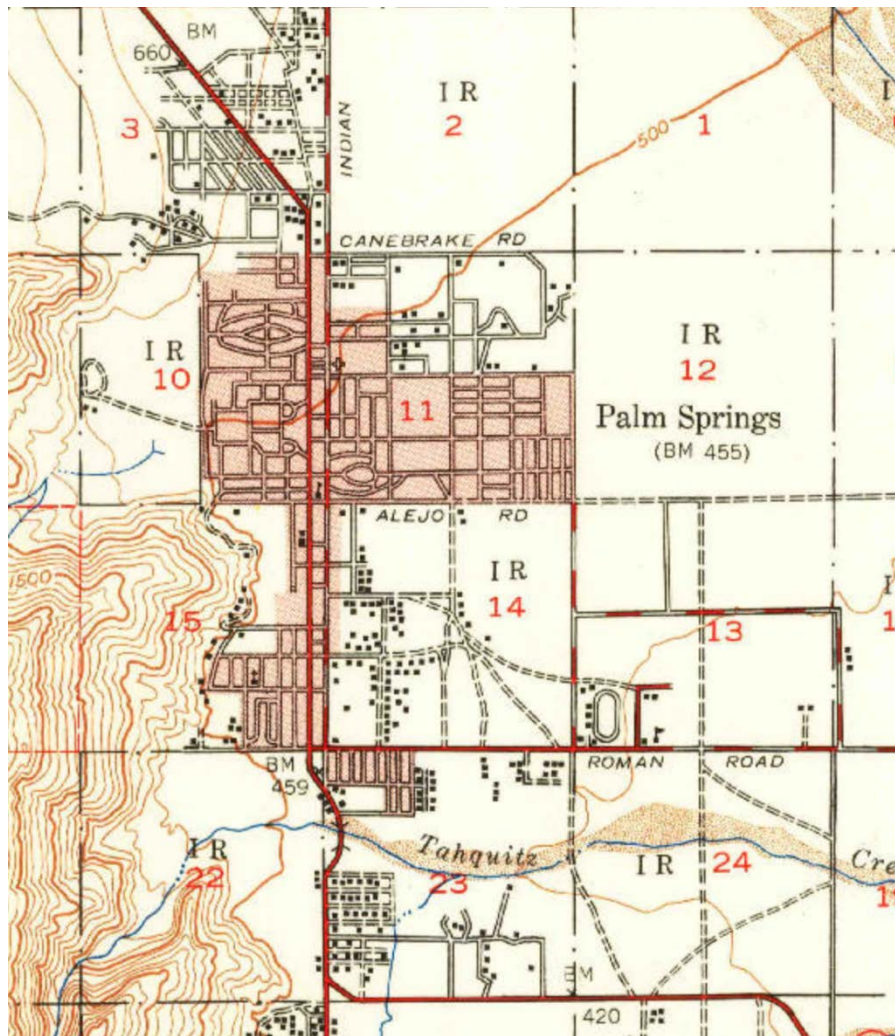
The western portion of Section 14, c. 1937 as retroactively mapped in the oral history, "We Were Here Too." Source: Palm Springs Historical Society, "We Were Here, Too," 8.

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A 1937 survey by the U.S. Department of the Interior concluded that approximately 1,000 buildings, shacks and tent houses occupied half of Section 14.⁷⁹⁶ It can be assumed that the presence of seasonal workers added even more to that figure.⁷⁹⁷ With no organized planning or zoning, buildings evolved organically on the property. The *Desert Sun* described the phenomenon as being laid out in a “haphazard” or “crazy-quilt” manner.⁷⁹⁸ Other small pockets of Mexican residents included those who resided at a ranch on Ramon Road where the Desert Inn kept their horses.⁷⁹⁹ Trailer camps were also present on Sections 22 and 26.



1940 Topographic map of Section 14 depicts a fraction of the structures located on the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation but shows concentration of residents on the western portion of the acreage. Note misspelling of Ramon Road as “Roman Road.” Source: U.S. Geological Survey, 1940.

⁷⁹⁶ “1000 Buildings on Indian Reservation,” *The Desert Sun*, March 5, 1937.

⁷⁹⁷ Ryan M. Kray, “Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs,” (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 222.

⁷⁹⁸ “1000 Buildings on Indian Reservation,” *The Desert Sun*, March 5, 1937.

⁷⁹⁹ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez and Vera Wall, “We Were Here, Too,” (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 78.

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During the 1930s, two leaders within the community, Refugio Salazar, a native of Mexico, and Lawrence L. Crossley, an African American, attempted to establish alternatives to Section 14 living.

The Louisiana-born Lawrence L. Crossley (1899-1962) came to Palm Springs in 1925 and worked for Prescott T. Stevens, owner of the El Mirador Hotel. Back in New Orleans, Crossley had been a musician and was “well-known in golf circles.” Crossley worked his way up from chauffeur to help Stevens design and maintain the El Mirador’s golf course during the 1920s. During the late 1930s, Crossley also built a small café (run by Mexico-born Marcus Caro) with rooms for rent on Section 14.⁸⁰⁰ In the early 1940s, Crossley began marketing a “mystery tea” using an ephedra-based Native American recipe.⁸⁰¹ The Palm Springs Desert Tea Co. was a success and Crossley’s tea was sold as far away as the East Coast.⁸⁰²

Crossley’s business acumen was also on display in his role as the owner/watermaster of the Whitewater Mutual Water Co. (which served the north end of Palm Springs), and his ownership of the Tramview Water Co. He parlayed those investments into real estate development in Cathedral City including the Tramview Village and Eagle Canyon Trailer Village. Crossley was an advocate for better housing for Palm Springs’ African American community and was publicly acknowledged for his efforts in the early 1960s by the *Los Angeles Sentinel*.⁸⁰³ Crossley, “a long-time confidant of the tribe,” also assisted in the development of Native American lands and was appointed as guardian for ten members of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. At the marriage of his daughter Yvonne in 1953, Crossley and his wife Martha were acknowledged as one of the southland’s “distinguished families.”⁸⁰⁴ Crossley died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 62. Former Palm Springs City Council member Wally Waring paid tribute to Crossley in *The Desert Sun* for “his steadfast work for the good of the city.”⁸⁰⁵

During the early 1930s, Lawrence Crossley acquired approximately five acres of land south of Section 14, near the southwest corner of East Ramon Road and South Sunrise Way. This would become Crossley Court (a.k.a, Crossley Acres and Crossley Trailer Park). It is the first known example of land ownership by an African American in Palm Springs.

Prior to 1936, Crossley erected a house for himself and his extended family at 1543 East Ramon Road (not extant) valued at \$4,000. Over time he invited others to lease and build on the land, ultimately forming a compound. Various newspaper accounts alternately refer to the property as the “Crossley Trailer Court,” “Crossley Acres,”⁸⁰⁶ and “Crossley Court.” In 1939, Albert Gauff, Crossley’s African American brother-in-law, received a building permit for a \$300 residence at the same address. In 1938,

⁸⁰⁰ “Businesses on Palm Springs Indian Reservation,” September 1938, 3.

⁸⁰¹ “Desert’s Mystery Tea Gives Village New Place in the Sun,” *The Desert Sun*, February 12, 1943.

⁸⁰² Crossley established a manufacturing facility for the tea in Los Angeles.

⁸⁰³ “Wash’s Wash,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 19, 1961, A6.

⁸⁰⁴ “Prominent California Families Joined by Nuptial Ceremony,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1953, C1.

⁸⁰⁵ “Letters to the Editor,” *The Desert Sun*, March 19, 1962.

⁸⁰⁶ “Building Permits,” *The Desert Sun*, August 28, 1942.

another African American from Crossley's home state of Louisiana, Robert Rieux, received a permit to build a residence there for his family, as did Hewitt Crossley, for \$500 and \$300, respectively.⁸⁰⁷ These structures may have been *ramadas* for trailers. Another Crossley brother-in-law, Lloyd Gauff, built at 1571 E. Ramon Road (not extant). The 1940 Census indicates that several Latino families lived in the compound and a U.S. Geological Service Map from the same year suggests as many as 15 structures were located there. By 1953, 37 homes had been erected on Crossley's acreage.⁸⁰⁸

In September of 1953, Lawrence Crossley sold the five-acre compound to the adjacent Ramon Trailer Park and simultaneously announced plans for "...a new subdivision two miles east of the city and a mile south of Ramon Road."⁸⁰⁹



L: Undated photo of Refugio Cuco Salazar. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society. R: Pioneer Club ad featuring "Cuco" Salazar as the boss. Source: *The Desert Sun*, October 4, 1944.

⁸⁰⁷ "Building Permits Total \$321, 702 Past 6 Months," *The Desert Sun*, December 9, 1938.

⁸⁰⁸ "Land Deal to Ease Housing Situation," *The Desert Sun*, September 14, 1953.

⁸⁰⁹ "Land Deal to Ease Housing Situation," *The Desert Sun*, September 14, 1953.

Refugio “Cuco” Salazar (1907-1962)⁸¹⁰ arrived in Palm Springs in the early 1920s and built a gardening and landscape business. He married his wife Grace in the mid-1920s and rose to prominence within the Latino community, becoming president of the Mexican Colony association in 1938.⁸¹¹ In 1942, he became the owner/operator of the Pioneer Club at 178 East Andreas Road (not extant). The Pioneer Club offered food, beer and wine. It was closed by the city in 1948 citing a continuing “police problem.”⁸¹²

After the closing of the Pioneer Club, Salazar returned to gardening and landscape design. Salazar lived at 1523 Ramon Road (not extant) well into the 1950s. In 1962, Salazar was killed tragically by a hit and run driver on Christmas Eve. At the time of his passing he was living at 226. S. Indian Avenue (not extant).

In August of 1938, Salazar led a movement to establish a colony of homes for Latino residents “on a 20-acre tract a short distance north of Ramon Road and about three-quarters of a mile east of the high school.”⁸¹³ Salazar had an option on the land and Latinos could finance their own homes. However, they needed a loan of about \$3,000 to bring water and other utilities to the property. According to *The Desert Sun*, 27 “Mexican” families from Section 14 or on the Crossley Acres property “declared they wish to build on the new tract.”⁸¹⁴ It appears that the money was never secured, as the 1940 Census shows several members of the Salazar family living on the Crossley property in the 1500 block of Ramon Road.

⁸¹⁰ Rudy Salazar, his brother, was also a notable early resident of Palm Springs involved in landscaping.

⁸¹¹ “Circus Plans Forge Ahead,” *Palm Springs News*, March 3, 1938, 6.

⁸¹² “Pioneer Club to Stay Closed,” *The Desert Sun*, August 6, 1948.

⁸¹³ “Remember When,” *The Desert Sun*, August 19, 1968.

⁸¹⁴ “Mexicans Wish to Form Colony Here on 20-Acre Tract; Seek \$3,000 Loan,” *The Desert Sun*, August 19, 1938.

By the 1940s, there was a small number of Asian American residents in Palm Springs, most of whom did not live on Section 14. By 1940, residents included a Filipino community of fewer than 100 people,⁸¹⁵ the vast majority of whom were employed and residing at either the Desert Inn or El Mirador. Filipinos were also employed as servants for the village's wealthy residents and typically resided with them. One of the few Filipino families with other living arrangements was the family of Emilio Hilario, who resided at the Crossley Court on Ramon Road. Approximately 15 Chinese Americans were enumerated in the 1940 Census, most of whom were chefs or kitchen workers in the resorts. Two well-known chefs include D.S. Yee who started at the Desert Inn in 1921 and worked there for over 30 years while living on site;⁸¹⁶ and Frank Li, of the Cantonese Kitchen at the Hotel Luau in 1940.⁸¹⁷ The prewar Japanese community in Palm Springs was never very large and was composed primarily of domestic servants who resided with their employers. However, based on city directory information, the few Japanese businesses likely included living quarters at the rear, as was a common custom of the time.

World War II transformed Palm Springs from a tourist haven to the army headquarters for the North African Offensive, bringing army personnel and exacerbating the need for low cost housing. Nurses were housed at the hospital; however, there was no place for over 1,100 officers, soldiers, and civilian employees.⁸¹⁸ Between 1940 and 1950, the year-round population of Palm Springs increased 123 percent from 3,334 to 7,660, with a typical winter population of about 16,000 during the season.⁸¹⁹ By 1948, it was estimated that over 6,000 individuals lived on the reservation.⁸²⁰ Only 50 were members from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the rest were African Americans, Latinos, and some Caucasians.

Filipinos continued to migrate to Palm Springs after the war, as was the case for Santos de Jesus (1902-1995). De Jesus and his wife arrived in the city in 1946, where he became a renowned bartender at the Palm Springs Tennis Club. After two years, he rose to catering manager. He left in 1950 to open his own catering business — first on Indian Avenue — and then in the Sun Center on South Palm Canyon Drive. Santos rose to the top in the local catering industry and was the caterer of choice for local society and the Hollywood elite. He was an active member in the philanthropic 100 Club.⁸²¹

After World War II, overcrowding, its proximity to downtown, and rising land values raised the profile of Section 14 within the community — ushering in a new era for Palm Springs' communities of color.

⁸¹⁵ U.S. Census, 1940.

⁸¹⁶ "World Famous Desert Inn Opens Tuesday," *The Desert Sun*, October 8, 1943. Palm Springs City Directory, 1952.

⁸¹⁷ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, October 18, 1940.

⁸¹⁸ Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs," (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 240.

⁸¹⁹ Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs," (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 247.

⁸²⁰ "Indian Affairs Committee Sends Report on Lands to Washington," *Limelight*, March 23, 1949.

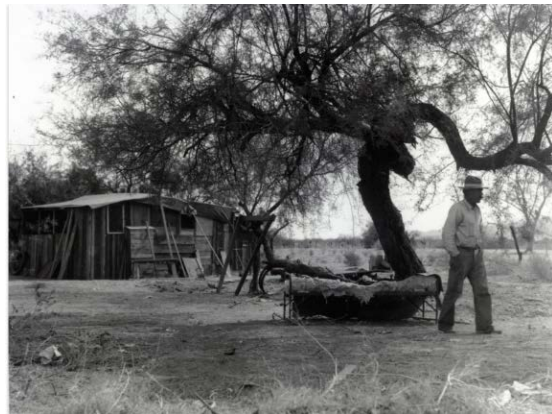
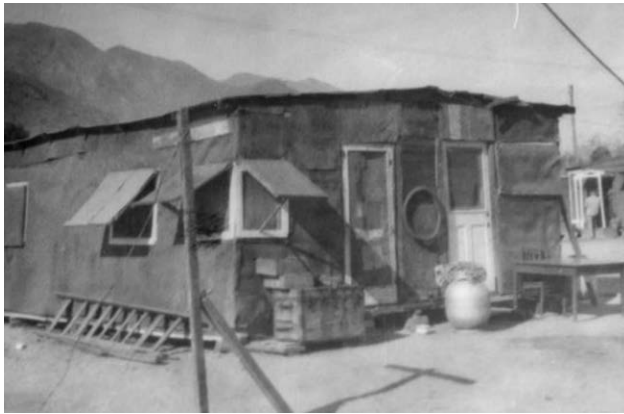
⁸²¹ After World War II, De Jesus purchased a home at 3761 Camino San Miguel in the Vista Del Cielo tract (also known as the Veteran's Tract).

Urban Renewal, Displacement, and Dispersion, 1951-1966

The opportunities were [in the] west...We moved to a reservation...a real reservation. Because in Palm Springs there weren't many places for people of color: Mexicans, Native Americans and Blacks. We either had to live on the reservation or there was a piece of land called Crossley Tract. The majority of us lived on the Indian reservation...No mansion could have given me what I got off the reservation. The experience of people coming together and really making a community. The village concept really worked for us.⁸²²

Charles Jordan Oral Interview, 2001

Against the national backdrop of the civil rights movement, strained race relations, and urban renewal programs, a local movement to expand development and clean-up the Section 14 took hold. By this time, there was a wide range of structures in Section 14, from shacks to trailers to homes built in compliance with the standard building code. However, the lack of utilities remained a problem; one report cited as many as 17 families hooked up to a single electricity meter.⁸²³ The lack of natural gas service meant that most families resorted to butane for cooking and heating. Water remained a significant challenge and privies were commonplace. Those living in shanties or trailers could use communal shower and restroom facilities at the center of Section 14.⁸²⁴



L: Salvaged metal trailer home on Section 14, c. 1950. R: Vernacular wood residence with Latino resident in front, c. 1945. Source for both: Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁸²² Charles Jordan, "Interview with Charles Jordan," interview by Clark Hanson, Oregon Historical Society, April 6, 2001.

⁸²³ Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs," (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 250.

⁸²⁴ Charles Jordan, "Interview with Charles Jordan," interview by Clark Hanson, Oregon Historical Society, April 6, 2001.

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In 1951, the Bureau of Indian Affairs approved a city abatement program and eviction notices were served to the residents of Section 14. In her oral history, former Section 14 resident Ivy Pellum Wilson remembers city officials meeting with the residents and telling them of their plans to redevelop the area.⁸²⁵ Some families elected to move before they were forced to leave.

In June of 1951, Palm Springs Councilman Jerry Nathanson suggested the partially occupied veterans housing project on the Field Club grounds known as Lienau Village be rented to Section 14 residents whose homes had been condemned; however, Nathanson's plan never came to fruition. Even African American veterans were refused as renters at Lienau Village, resulting in a lawsuit by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). After many delays, the Palm Springs Housing Authority cut ties with the State Housing Board and moved to dismantle and sell the buildings at Lienau Village. The final buildings were removed from Lienau Village during the summer of 1957.⁸²⁶

After receiving numerous complaints from employers and residents, a six-month moratorium on evictions was imposed in 1953. Inexplicably, building continued in Section 14 as evidenced by the case of Homer Manning, a janitor who rented a piece of land and constructed a home in 1955 that he later converted into a two-unit apartment building with a city permit valued at \$8,000.⁸²⁷

Most displaced African American residents from Section 14 moved to Banning, Beaumont, or West Garnet (about 10 miles west of Palm Springs). At least one former Section 14 resident moved her house from the reservation to a lot in West Garnet. Displaced residents often maintained their construction or service jobs in Palm Springs and made the daily commute.

Displaced Latino residents moved to Banning, San Bernardino, and Riverside. At least 32 Latino families saved for a down payment or pooled their resources and bought homes in the Veteran's Tract on the eastern edge of the city; others moved to the Dream Homes development in Cathedral City.⁸²⁸ Racial restrictions, however, prohibited purchase by African Americans in these tracts.⁸²⁹ Some Latinos physically moved their homes to other locations. Eugene Ramon Prieto recalled that his grandfather moved their home from Section 14 to the northwest corner of Saturnino Road and South Calle Encilia (not extant).⁸³⁰

⁸²⁵ Bill Bell, article for Banning Record Gazette, Banning Public Library, <http://www.banninglibrarydistrict.org/banning/documents/the%20black%20pioneers,%20part%201.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2017).

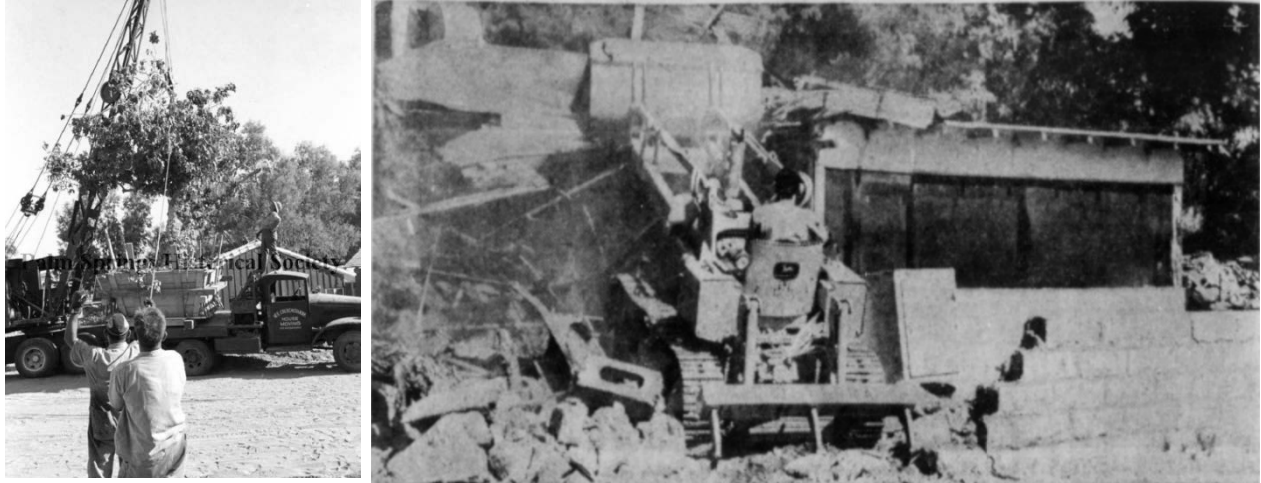
⁸²⁶ The relocation sites of these buildings are currently unknown.

⁸²⁷ "Section 14 Cleanup Under State Probe," *The Desert Sun*, April 3, 1967.

⁸²⁸ Interview with Eugene Ramon Prieto, Renee Brown, November 13, 2012.

⁸²⁹ Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs," (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 335.

⁸³⁰ Interview with Eugene Ramon Prieto, Renee Brown, November 13, 2012.



L: Some Section 14 residents were able to relocate their houses to other locations. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society. R: Bulldozed house in Section 14 as shown in the *The Desert Sun*, March 14, 1966.

Residents who remained on Section 14 endured more than a decade of forced removals and clearances. Destruction of the condemned homes began in 1956. Evicted families were often taken in by other residents of Section 14, resulting in the doubling and tripling of occupants in the houses left on the reservation. The 1959 ruling that Native American land could be available for long-term leasing made Section 14 development opportunities even more attractive. By 1961, the population of Section 14 had decreased to around 1,000 residents.⁸³¹ Clearance activities continued during the early 1960s. The final clearance of Section 14 began in October of 1966, approximately one month after the Watts Riots in Los Angeles, a watershed event in race relations felt throughout the country. What had been a tightly-knit, racially-diverse community for more than 30 years was now scattered throughout the valley area.

The Palm Springs Filipino community was affected by the housing crisis as well. When resorts closed that provided housing for workers, many relocated to Banning or Cathedral City; those with means relocated to the tracts on the east side of the city.

Savvy businessmen, including Lawrence Crossley, anticipated the need for low-income housing and began developing residential tracts outside the Palm Springs city limits starting in the 1950s. However, a dearth of financial institutions willing to lend to people of color made the transition difficult. These

⁸³¹ Population estimates vary depending upon source material. Sources suggest as many as 1,700 families were left and as few as 500 remained.

tracts (Crossley Gardens, Desert Highland Estates, and Gateway Estates) would eventually become part of the City of Palm Springs through the annexation process.

The Crossley Tract (a.k.a., Crossley Gardens and Crossley Estates)

Concurrent with the sale of the Crossley Court acreage, Lawrence Crossley announced the subdivision of a new tract two miles east of Palm Springs and one mile south of Ramon Road in what was then Cathedral City. It was a 77-parcel subdivision bordered by 34th Avenue on the north, Martha Street on the south, the east side of Maguerite Street on the east, and the west side of Lawrence Street on the west.

The new subdivision would accommodate the displaced tenants of Crossley Court. Original plans called for 32 of the 37 homes from the Ramon acreage to be relocated to the new subdivision of 79 lots.⁸³² Crossley also purchased one building from Lineau Village to “provide sufficient living space for seven families.”⁸³³ The Lineau Village building burned down in 1956 shortly after its relocation to the Crossley tract.

Crossley appears to have developed a partnership with the Sun-Spa Development Corporation. President of Sun-Spa Development, Al Casey, explained, “We’re particularly interested in providing immediate, low-cost housing for residents forced to move from Section 14 because of the new Indian Land Leasing Agreements.”⁸³⁴



Lawrence and Martha Crossley take possession of the keys to their home at 34-321 Lawrence Street. Source: *The Desert Sun*, September 19, 1958.

The Crossley Tract (which is also referenced in early press as Crossley Estates and later Crossley Gardens) consisted of a series of modest, three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath Minimal Traditional Style homes. Grading began in spring of 1958 and the first home was ready for occupancy by September.

⁸³² It is currently unknown how many buildings may have been moved to the Crossley Tract.

⁸³³ “Land Deal to Ease Housing Situation,” *The Desert Sun*, September 14, 1953.

⁸³⁴ “Low Cost Housing Project Announced East of Village,” *The Desert Sun*, March 27, 1958.

Amenities included paved streets, natural gas, and school bus service — all services not available at Section 14. The homes were built to F.H.A. Standards and available for down payments of \$50 with monthly payments of \$65. Ads from the period suggest that buyers were allowed to pick their lots as well as the plan. A model home was located at 34-126 Lawrence Street.⁸³⁵ Lawrence and Martha Crossley lived at 34-321 Lawrence Street.⁸³⁶

In 1959, the Crossley Tract was annexed into the City of Palm Springs.⁸³⁷ By 1961, approximately 30 homes had been built in the tract.⁸³⁸ The project faltered after Crossley's untimely death in 1962. In late January of 1969, Crossley Gardens was hit by a flash flood that buried the tract's homes in several feet of mud and caused more than \$145,000 in residential damages and \$2.8 million in damages to the Whitewater Flood Control Channel.⁸³⁹

Ad for Crossley Gardens Tract, featuring testimonial by African American owners. Source: *The Desert Sun*, April 5, 1963.

⁸³⁵ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, April 5, 1963, 15.

⁸³⁶ Addresses are the historic addresses, before the tract was annexed by the City of Palm Springs.

⁸³⁷ "Council Orders Annexation of Sections, 20, 29," *The Desert Sun*, March 24, 1959.

⁸³⁸ "Plan for Negro Eviction from Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 5, 1961.

⁸³⁹ "Crossley Residents Claim \$145,000 Flood Damages," *The Desert Sun*, May 2, 1969.

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Desert Highland Estates

Desert Highland Estates was a 281-parcel subdivision bordered by Tramview Road on the north, Las Vegas Road (present-day Rosa Parks Road) on the south, Indian Canyon Avenue on the east, and the west side of Avenida Cerca on the west. At the time of its development in 1951, the tract was outside the Palm Springs city limits. After the final evictions and razing of Section 14 in 1963, the newly displaced families often turned to friends and residents in Desert Highland Estates to take them in. Nearby Gateway Estates also became a relocation destination.

Originally subdivided by Mary Jacobs and Lilian E. Broudy, the plan of the subdivision was designed as a series of concentric ovals bisected by Granada Avenue. The majority of the parcels were 75' x 100' with irregular parcels slightly larger. The development was not an immediate success and many parcels remained undeveloped well into the early 1970s.⁸⁴⁰ Newspaper accounts from the early 1960s indicate that well-known Palm Springs contractor and City Councilman Leonard Wolf may have been interested in developing homes for people of color in this area.⁸⁴¹

For African Americans evicted from Section 14, Desert Highland Estates became the favored residential development.⁸⁴² In his oral history, Billy Pellum remembered a developer, Harmony Homes, who built homes for those residents, "You would buy the property and they would use the property for a loan to build the house...and then once built you were only paying about \$60 per month...You were doubling or more what it cost you to live per month at Section 14."⁸⁴³ Banning-based Dunes (a.k.a., Dumes)⁸⁴⁴ Construction Co. was the local builder of New York-headquartered Harmony Homes. Dunes Construction Co. was founded in 1958 by Gerald V. Anderson and James C. Armstrong. The company specialized in the construction of homes for working class people and built 600 residences in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties. The company built from a roster of simple standardized plans and plain styles.⁸⁴⁵ Dunes Construction Co. also arranged for loans for many African American families through San Gregornio Bank in Banning and Sterling Savings and Loan in Riverside.⁸⁴⁶ Palm Springs financial institutions would not lend to African Americans at the time.

A 1958 ad for the company in the *Desert Sun* depicted a minimal, pared-down Modern design with two-bedrooms and a carport for \$3,995.⁸⁴⁷ A 1959 ad touted standard features such as aluminum windows, Birch cabinets, central hall plan, and white rock roof.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁰ Historic Aerials.com, 1972.

⁸⁴¹ "What is Behind This Tirade," *The Desert Sun*, October 3, 1961.

⁸⁴² Amanda Covarrubias, "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

⁸⁴³ Billy Pellum, Oral History, Palm Springs Historical Society, March 16, 2011.

⁸⁴⁴ Historical sources also reference "Dumes Construction," as the name of the company.

⁸⁴⁵ "Shake Roof and Old Brick Front Feature Doctor's Home," *The Desert Sun*, October 30, 1964.

⁸⁴⁶ Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs," (PhD diss., University of California Irvine, 2009), 334.

⁸⁴⁷ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, May 1, 1958.

⁸⁴⁸ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, January 16, 1959.

Gateway Estates

Gateway Estates was a 76-parcel, irregularly-shaped tract bordered by parcels to the north of Las Vegas Road on the north, a series of cul-de-sacs south of Gateway Drive on the south, Eastlake Road to the east, and Video Road to the west. F.H.A. and G.I. financing packages were available for these homes and the sales office was located at 3500 N. Palm Canyon Drive. By mid-1960, 22 permits for homes on Juan Circle, Gateway Drive, Juanita Circle, Ashley Circle, and Gladys Circle had been issued.⁸⁴⁹

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Gateway Estates touted its proximity to the new Aerial Tramway. Source: "Display Ad 132," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1962, D16.

In September of 1966, the City of Palm Springs annexed the "Desert Highlands" neighborhood.⁸⁵⁰ The move added 1,200 residents, many of whom were African Americans evicted from Section 14.⁸⁵¹ By 1984, the "Desert Highland-Gateway Estates" neighborhood had become the heart of the African American residential community in Palm Springs.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁹ "City Building in Week Tops Half Million," *The Desert Sun*, April 26, 1960.

⁸⁵⁰ "Highland Estates Annexation Approved," *The Desert Sun*, September 21, 1966.

⁸⁵¹ "Highland Estates: Annexation Approved," *The Desert Sun*, September 21, 1966.

⁸⁵² Amanda Covarrubias, "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

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Original Desert Highland-Gateway Estates residents Joseph and Ruby Abner in front of their home in 1984. Source: *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

Silver Top Apartments

Prior to annexation, the area north of the city was home to the Silver Top Apartments. In 1959, Louis Lenzer (1896-1977), a Long Beach jeweler-turned-real estate investor built what he originally intended to be an “own-your-own-apartment” project at 63-521 Las Vegas Road.⁸⁵³ By 1959, the apartments were advertised for lease as “designed for the working community to live in luxury at lowest cost.”⁸⁵⁴ The *Los Angeles Sentinel* reported, “...from the time [Lenzer’s] resort opened, it welcomed all visitors and citizens, regardless of race, creed and color.”⁸⁵⁵

The one-story buildings were clustered around a large heated pool. Unfurnished units were available for \$75 per month with the intent that renters would stay year around, “preferably people who work on hotel staffs, in drug stores, at department stores, school teachers, nurses and the like.”⁸⁵⁶ By 1961, prices had come down to \$60 per month for an unfurnished unit. After moving to Palm Springs, African American residents Nona and Billy Pellum, a house cleaner and cook at a resort, resided at Silver Top.⁸⁵⁷ Some displaced residents of Section 14 also found housing at the Silver Top.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵³ Lenzer also operated a jewelry store at 398 N. Palm Canyon Drive.

⁸⁵⁴ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, September 22, 1959.

⁸⁵⁵ Leon H. Washington, Jr., “Wash’s Wash,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 19, 1963, A6.

⁸⁵⁶ “Silver Top Apartments Have Unusual Situation,” *The Desert Sun*, March 24, 1959.

⁸⁵⁷ Nona Pellum, Oral History, March 16, 2011, Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁸⁵⁸ The property was part of the annexation of Section 32. However, in the late 1960s, the property was demolished.

Community Outreach and Housing, 1967-1969

The late 1960s was a period of racial tension in cities across America. The deterioration of race relations at Palm Springs High School was reported by *The Desert Sun* during this period. As a result, the City of Palm Springs created a community outreach position focused primarily on the northern part of the city. In 1968, Charles Jordan (1937-2014) was appointed as Assistant to the City Manager in what was essentially a community relations position. He represented the city on issues of education and on the Palm Springs Housing Committee, and he was active in the development of Desert Highland Park.⁸⁵⁹



L: Charles Jordan, former Assistant to the City Manager in Palm Springs. Source: City of Portland. R: Groundbreaking for Seminole Gardens. Left to right, Tom Essen, Director of Public Works; Richard Smith, Director of Planning and Development; Charles Jordan, Administrative Assistant to the City Manager; Stanley Nerman, attorney; Joseph F. Sanson, Investor; Dudley Smith, contractor. Source: *The Desert Sun*, August 22, 1968.

Jordan, a former Palm Springs High School basketball star, had lived on Section 14 before his family relocated to Banning. After earning a college scholarship and graduating from Gonzaga University, Jordan returned to Palm Springs. In 1961, Jordan was hired to become the Recreation Supervisor for the city, making him the first African American to serve in local city government. While he held this position, he lived at 63-800 Bon Air Drive in Desert Highland Estates.⁸⁶⁰

Jordan was instrumental in bringing the city its first medium-income, Federally-funded residential project, Seminole Gardens, on 10 acres at 2607 S. Linden Way (extant) in 1969. As reported in the *Desert Sun*, Jordan indicated “persons displaced as a result of the Urban Renewal Program demolition of Section 14 would have top priority on the homes.”⁸⁶¹ The \$500,000 Seminole Gardens project featured 60, two- and three-bedroom apartments on nearly three acres with heated pool, laundry and landscaped areas. Despite this investment, demand for low-income housing far exceeded supply. In 1970, Jordan relocated

⁸⁵⁹ “Palm Springs Loses a Good Man,” *The Desert Sun*, July 2, 1970.

⁸⁶⁰ Address corresponds to historic address, before Desert Highland Estates was annexed by the City of Palm Springs.

⁸⁶¹ “Work Starts Here on Medium-Income Units,” *The Desert Sun*, August 22, 1968.

to Portland, Oregon where he served as Portland's first African American commissioner and long-time parks director.

Summary: Residential Development

In summary, residential development patterns for Palm Springs' communities of color reflected the development of one of Southern California's most popular resorts. The unique checkerboard of land ownership in the area contributed to the development of a diverse, yet segregated, community. For African Americans, Latinos, Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese residents seeking to improve economic opportunity for themselves and their families, Palm Springs provided much coveted jobs in the pre- and post-World War II periods. Whether it was building the infrastructure or supporting the hospitality industry, communities of color made vital contributions to the city.

THEME: RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ETHNIC MINORITIES (c. 1917-1969)

Palm Springs' communities of color developed their own religious, social, and cultural institutions. Meeting places for these groups included private homes as well as communal buildings. The following provides an overview of some of these significant institutions.

In addition to residences, Section 14 was home to the first place of worship in the village.⁸⁶² In 1911, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians donated land to the Catholic Church, and St. Florian Chapel, the vernacular-style adobe⁸⁶³ structure was built there in 1917⁸⁶⁴ as a mission church by the Franciscan Order. It was located at the corner of East Arenas Road and South Calle El Segundo.⁸⁶⁵ After years of dormancy,⁸⁶⁶ the church was to be reactivated in 1948 by Father Ramon "Raymond" Klumbis (1914-1991) as part of the first annual Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (a.k.a., fiesta).⁸⁶⁷ Klumbis' plans were thwarted, however, when an earthquake rendered the structure uninhabitable and the mass and fiesta were moved to St. Theresa's. By August of 1949, the condemned structure was demolished and the name of the parish was changed to Our Lady of Guadalupe.



The vernacular St. Florian's Chapel constructed c. 1917 at the corner of East Arenas Road and South Calle El Segundo. Source: Our Lady of Guadalupe website.

⁸⁶² "Little Reservation Church, First in Village, Re-Opens Sunday for Active Services," *The Desert Sun*, December 7, 1948.

⁸⁶³ "Fr. Klumbis Announces Intention to Resign Pulpit," *The Desert Sun*, January 21, 1952.

⁸⁶⁴ According to the history section of the church website, a new church was erected in 1930, but no evidence of this was found in the *Desert Sun*.

⁸⁶⁵ "Churches Play Major Role in Desert," *The Desert Sun*, March 27, 1965.

⁸⁶⁶ According to the book *We Were Here, Too*, during the period that the early Mexican residents were housed in tents on the McCallum golf course, they attended Our Lady of Solitude Catholic church at 151 W. Alejo Road.

⁸⁶⁷ The film actor Ramon Navarro was the Mast of Ceremonies for the first two fiestas.

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As a replacement place of worship for the congregation, Father Klumbis repurposed a barracks building previously constructed as a hospital ward for Tourney Hospital. With the volunteer labor of the parishioners, many of whom were Latinos living on Section 14, the building was transformed into a church. The whole neighborhood contributed; women in the community raised the funds and the men provided the construction skills. The new church was officially dedicated on March 11, 1950. In 1951, seasonal resident Rosemary Frey gifted a marble statue of the Virgin Mary sculpted by the Italian artist Giovanni Battista Barsanti to the church as a result of being “charmed by the simple little church on the reservation.”⁸⁶⁸ Father Klumbus was also responsible for the building of a playground on Section 14.

In 1952, Father Klumbis left and Father Thomas J. Flahive (1900-2000) became pastor. The growth of the parish during the 1950s resulted in the building of a larger church in 1963-64 for \$130,000.⁸⁶⁹ Again, parishioners provided much of the labor. The church, located at 204 S. Calle El Segundo, remains standing today as one of the few Section 14 buildings that survived the final clearance.



Our Lady of Guadalupe church under construction in December of 1963.
Source: *The Desert Sun*, December 13, 1963.

⁸⁶⁸ “Statue Presented to Little Church on the Reservation,” *The Desert Sun*, November 8, 1951.

⁸⁶⁹ “Ready Soon,” *The Desert Sun*, December 13, 1963.

In addition to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Section 14 was also home to The Full Gospel Church (Assembly of God), and the First Baptist Church of Palm Springs. The Full Gospel Church was located at Andreas Road and Indian Avenue (present-day Indian Canyon Avenue),⁸⁷⁰ next to Hatchitt's Trailer Camp; the congregation was active in the late 1930s. It was co-pastored by two women, Mrs. Ruth Williams and Mrs. E. W. Watson. In 1944, C.H. Austin took over as pastor.⁸⁷¹ By 1950, Charles L. Farmer was in charge.⁸⁷² In 1951, the church building was moved from its location on Section 14 to 1290 East Ramon Road (not extant) under Reverend Walter C. Hanneman.⁸⁷³

The First Baptist Church of Palm Springs was founded by Rev. W.P. White in 1946. Services were initially conducted in a tent. Around 1948, under the direction of Rev. T.H. Reagans, a 130-seat church was built on Section 14.⁸⁷⁴ A parsonage was built in 1948.⁸⁷⁵



African American Church congregation, likely the First Baptist Church of Palm Springs on Section 14, c. 1950. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

In 1958, former Texan, Reverend Jeff Rollins (1918-2004) became pastor. In 1963, he announced the building of a new church seating 210 congregants in the north end of the city at 63-540 Las Vegas Road (also 588 Las Vegas Road and present-day 588 Rosa Parks Road). The expressive Modern-style church (1965, Lawrence Lapham) was designed at a cost of \$90,000. In addition to the sanctuary, the church had 17 classrooms and fellowship rooms. The built edifice appears to have deviated from the original design, likely due to budgetary considerations. The church was also later the home to the Palm Springs Child Center, providing child care for working mothers and low-income families of the

⁸⁷⁰ Later, the address for the location became 216 S. Indian Avenue.

⁸⁷¹ "Former Engineer Takes Pastorate at Local Church," *The Desert Sun*, November 10, 1944.

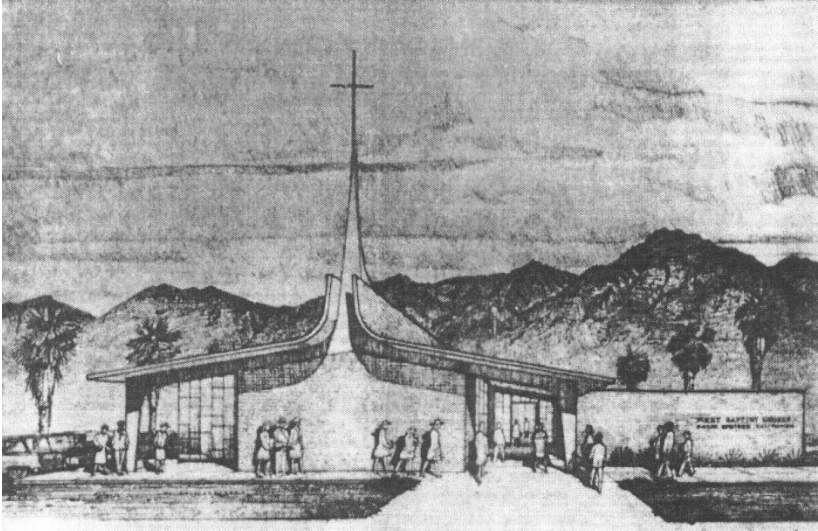
⁸⁷² "Advertisement," *The Desert Sun*, December 30, 1949.

⁸⁷³ "Church Is Moved to New Location," *The Desert Sun*, December 6, 1951.

⁸⁷⁴ "New Church Building Slated for Palm Springs," *The Desert Sun*, April 8, 1963.

⁸⁷⁵ First Baptist Church of Palm Springs Website, <http://www.firstbaptistpalm Springs.org/church-history/> (accessed August 20, 2017).

community. In 1967, groundbreaking was held for a new child-care facility (1968, architect unknown) on the church property.



Rendering of First Baptist Church of Palm Springs at 588 Rosa Parks Road as envisioned by architect Lawrence Lapham. Source: *The Desert Sun*, April 5, 1963.



Church congregants celebrate groundbreaking. Reverend Jeff Rollins kneeling at right. Source: *The Desert Sun*, November 22, 1963.

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Children of color who lived on Section 14 during the 1930s attended school at the “Americanization Room” at the corner of present-day Alejo Road and Indian Canyon Drive at the rear of Frances Stevens Elementary School. Students were mainstreamed in the 4th grade. By the late 1970s, the building had been relocated to Van Fleet Street, north of Third Street in Cathedral City (Officer David Vasquez Road and Monty Hall Drive). The school has since been demolished. High school students attended Banning High School until the creation of Palm Springs High School (1938, G. Stanley Wilson) in 1938. Although the building of a school on the reservation was discussed briefly in 1957, it never came to fruition.⁸⁷⁶



The “Americanization Room” after moving to Cathedral City as it appeared in the late 1970s. Source: *The Desert Sun*, February 15, 1977.

During the 1930s, the Latino community formed a mutual aid society known as the *Alancia* to assist families with benefits, life insurance, death benefits, and other needs.⁸⁷⁷ When the *Alancia* faded, it was replaced with the more socially-oriented *La Colonia Mexicana*, also known as the Mexican Colony Club. The Club was active during annual Desert Circus Week; they sold souvenirs and food, crowned the Mexican Colony Queen, and entered a Mexican Colony float in the parade. The Colony was also active during World War II, visiting hospital patients of Mexican descent recuperating at Tournay Hospital.

In *We Were Here, Too*, the construction of a communal building on Section 14 known as “El Salon” or “the Hall” (not extant) was identified as an important gathering place.⁸⁷⁸

In 1945, Palm Springs Lions Club member Frank S. Partridge, Jr. (1893-1954)⁸⁷⁹ suggested the idea of a Boys Club. Partridge was named executive director, and in 1948, the Club purchased a war surplus hospital building from Tournay Hospital and leased a parcel of land on East Andreas Road on the

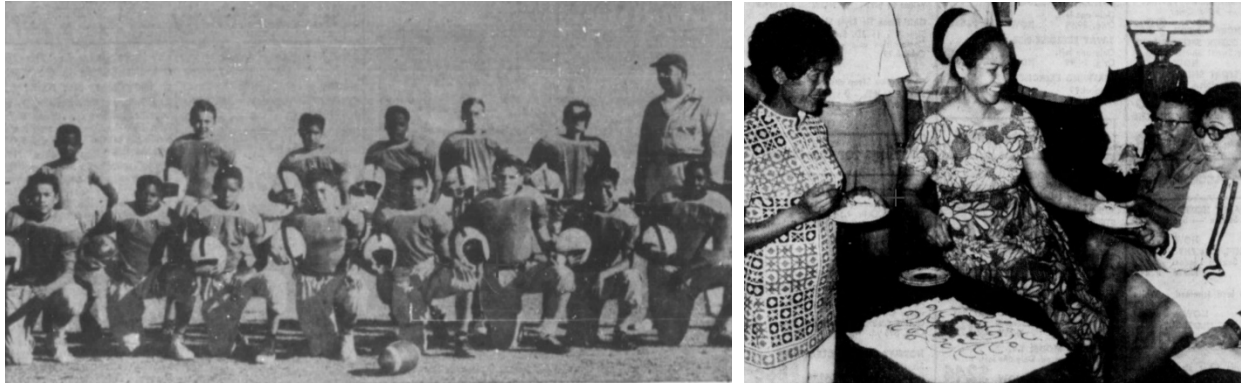
⁸⁷⁶ “Section 14 School, Top Heavy Salaries Are Budget Protests,” *The Desert Sun*, August 9, 1957.

⁸⁷⁷ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez and Vera Wall, “We Were Here, Too,” (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 12-13.

⁸⁷⁸ Barbara Eves, Cydronia Valdez and Vera Wall, “We Were Here, Too,” (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Historical Society), 74.

⁸⁷⁹ Partridge was also a well-known photographer in the Village.

reservation.⁸⁸⁰ Community labor transformed the building into a clubhouse. In his oral history, Charles Jordan remembered the Boys Club as the only social institution available to young residents of Section 14.⁸⁸¹ Partridge was beloved throughout the community of Section 14 and the programs he founded continued to benefit the youth in Palm Springs for years after his passing. One hundred “underprivileged” boys between the ages of 8 and 16 years old were members of the Boy’s Club in 1954.⁸⁸²



L: Boys Club football team from 1955 with many players who lived on Section 14. Source: *The Desert Sun*, December 8, 1955. R: Mrs. Robert Broer, Ned Alejandro, Taquing Alejandro, Tony Biavishi, John Rondares, Ellen Biavashi and Dela Cruz discuss annual Filipino Fiesta. Source: *The Desert Sun*, June 24, 1971.

In 1960, the local Filipino community formed the Filipino Club under the leadership of Lawrence “Larry” Aglipay (1908-1978). With a roster of 59 members and a “potential of 200,” the community was still small relative to the Latino or African American communities.⁸⁸³ One of the cultural events established during this period was the “Filipino Fiesta” which became an annual fundraiser benefiting St. Theresa’s Catholic Church. It featured Filipino culture, food, and entertainment. By 1965, the Filipino Community Association of Palm Springs was quite active in the community in philanthropic pursuits; they also entered a float in the Desert Circus Parade. In 1969, the Luz-Vi-Minda Association for local Filipino women was formed.⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁸⁰ “Boys Club Could Use More Furnishings,” *The Desert Sun*, March 11, 1949.

⁸⁸¹ Charles Jordan, “Interview with Charles Jordan,” interview by Clark Hanson, Oregon Historical Society, April 6, 2001.

⁸⁸² “Frank Partridge, Veteran Village Photographer Dies,” *The Desert Sun*, April 1, 1954.

⁸⁸³ “New Filipino Club Seeks Clubrooms,” *The Desert Sun*, December 26, 1960.

⁸⁸⁴ “New Filipino Club Forming on Desert,” *The Desert Sun*, October 8, 1969.

In 1961, the Desert Improvement Committee was formed to “generally raise the status of negroes within the community.”⁸⁸⁵ The organization was founded by Reverend George Scott, Jr., a Pentecostal minister affiliated with the Palm Spring Church of God and Christ; and Joseph M. Jackson, a local developer, both of whom were local activists against the forced evictions from Section 14.⁸⁸⁶ Scott went on to be a provocative figure within the community, orchestrating Los Angeles television coverage for a local rezoning hearing on affordable housing.

In 1968, the Desert King Dreamers Club was founded as a women’s organization to support employment, culture, and civic progress in the desert region. The club held a number of cultural, philanthropic, and social events in the late 1960s, usually at the Palm Springs Child Development Center. Around this same time, another African American club known as the Ashanti Club was formed among students at Palm Springs High School, to promote African American history and culture.⁸⁸⁷

The American-Mexican Political Society (AMPS) was formed in 1968 at the home of its president, Frank P. Hernandez, at 4433 E. Sunny Dunes Road (extant). The group was founded as a non-violent, peaceful activist group to encourage civic-engagement among Latinos. Another important club from the 1960s was the Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA).

Summary: Religious, Educational, and Cultural Institutions

Religious, educational, and cultural institutions provided social support, fellowship opportunities, and a means of expressing cultural identity for the communities of color in Palm Springs. During times of hardship, these institutions were rallying points for the close-knit communities and a vehicle for connecting to the larger political, social, and ideological issues of the times.

⁸⁸⁵ “Negro Booster Group Formed Today,” *The Desert Sun*, June 20, 1961.

⁸⁸⁶ “Negro Booster Group Formed Today,” *The Desert Sun*, June 20, 1961.

⁸⁸⁷ Pearl Taylor Deavers, “Interview with Pearl Taylor Deavers,” interview by Oceana Collins, Palm Springs Historical Society, September 9, 2011.

THEME: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ETHNIC MINORITIES (c. 1930s-1969)

Although most people of color in Palm Springs were employed by the resorts, a few business owners emerged during the 1930s. One of the earliest and most colorful operators in the village was Arturo Arguelles of Pedro and Arturo's (102 E. Andres Road, 122 E. Andreas Road in the 1930s; later at 203 N. Palm Canyon Drive; not extant). Started in 1936, the shop sold leather goods from Mexico.⁸⁸⁸ Pedro was a straw dummy on display in the shop. For several years, Arguelles split his season between Palm Springs and Catalina.

Although several businesses operated on Section 14 (a paint and second-hand store, a general store, cafes, repair garage, markets, and a bakery), the majority of these commercial enterprises appear to have been run by Caucasians.⁸⁸⁹ A notable exception was the Marcus Café (not extant) owned by Lawrence Crossley and operated by Marcus Caro (1907-1977).⁸⁹⁰

Many early Japanese Americans living in Palm Springs who were not employed as domestic workers were involved in the floriculture and produce business. Tek Nishimoto managed the produce department at the El Paseo Market in the village, and George Kurata managed the produce department at the Murray Brothers' market on Section 14 in the late 1930s. Risuke (Yoshiye) Muramatsu (1906-2000) and his wife Doris arrived in Palm Springs in 1936 and operated the Palm Springs Florist and Greenhouse at 156 S. Indian Avenue;⁸⁹¹ they employed Frank Matsushita and K.H. Yoshida. The Muramatsus spent each off-season in Los Angeles where they also operated a floral shop.⁸⁹² The business thrived and by October of 1941, they occupied a building at North Palm Canyon Drive and El Alameda.⁸⁹³ After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Muramatsus were forced to sell their business and were incarcerated at Poston, Arizona along with approximately 200 other Japanese residents from the Coachella Valley.⁸⁹⁴ After the war, Muramatsu returned to Los Angeles to rebuild but does not appear to have returned to Palm Springs.

Another prewar Japanese businessman was K. Yoshimoto who started the Chop Suey and Sukiyaki House at 415 N. Palm Canyon Drive (in the Pacific Building) in 1938. Billed by the *Desert Sun* as "One of the most charming and distinctive of Palm Spring's wide variety of eating places," by 1940 it was under the management of Hiro Uchiyama.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸⁸ "That Amiable Hombre from Mexico," *The Desert Sun*, October 17, 1941.

⁸⁸⁹ Business operators in Section 14 as of September 1938 included Joe Schreider, Murray Brotgers, Simon Abdunnur, Max Ransom, C.E. Bunker, A. Rosenbaum, Purnel Brothers, and Max Rowland.

⁸⁹⁰ According to the January 12, 1945 *The Desert Sun*, the Caros purchased and managed La Hacienda Apartments at 259 South Palm Canyon.

⁸⁹¹ The 1939 Palm Springs City Directory does not list a residential address for the Muramatsus. It was common for Japanese merchants to live at the rear of their businesses during this period.

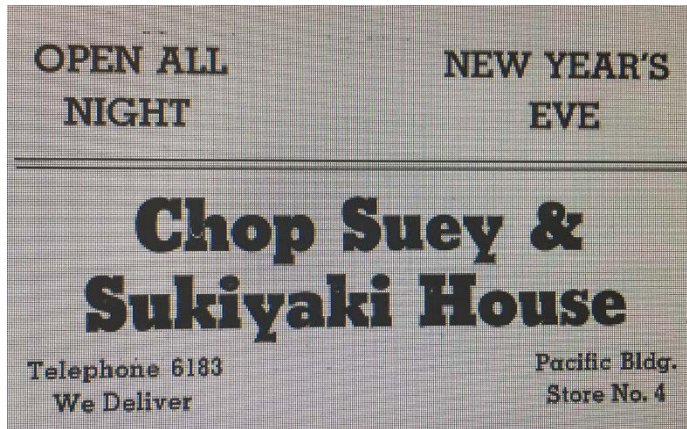
⁸⁹² "P.S. Florist and Greenhouse Opens Next Week," *The Desert Sun*, September 29, 1939.

⁸⁹³ "Sole Green House in Village Opens This Week for the Season," *The Desert Sun*, October 10, 1941.

⁸⁹⁴ "Japs Excluded from East Half of County by Fourth Army Order," *The Desert Sun*, May 15, 1942.

⁸⁹⁵ "Oriental Foods Are Palate Pleasers," *The Desert Sun*, March 1, 1940.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL**City of Palm Springs****Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings****HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP**



L: Advertisement for K. Yoshimoto's Chop Suey and Suki-yaki House, *Palm Springs News*, December 29, 1938. R: La Casita Restaurant, 361 East Andreas Road, 1947. Owner, Rafaela Mormolejo at tableside. Source: *The Desert Sun*, October 14, 1947.

Another restaurant entrepreneur was Rafaela Mormolejo, the co-owner and co-manager of Palm Springs' first Mexican restaurant, La Casita Café located at 361 E. Andreas Road (not extant). Opened in 1947 with her brother-in-law Manuel Villegas, the restaurant featured Mormolejo's home cooking in a café setting. As previously discussed, Refugio "Cuco" Salazar was also a relatively successful hospitality provider with his "Pioneer Club."

Aside from Lawrence Crossley, African American businessmen typically did not flourish in Palm Springs in the same way as other ethnic groups. In 1963, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* lamented "there is no negro business of any nature" and "not even a Negro barber...not to mention the absence of other professional services, negro Doctors or lawyers."⁸⁹⁶

Although the commercial development history for communities of color is relatively modest when compared to the tremendous growth of Palm Springs, these examples provided inspiration to other community residents.

⁸⁹⁶ Leon H. Washington, Jr., "Wash's Wall," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 13, 1963, A6.

CONCLUSION

Communities of color made significant contributions to the history and culture of Palm Springs which is often overlooked in written histories of the city. Many of the African Americans, Latinos, and Asians came to the city to build a better life for themselves and their families. In the process, they contributed to the growth of one of the most revered resorts in Southern California, created a strong community, and withstood inequities. This chapter is meant to introduce these stories as part of the layered history of Palm Springs, and to identify potential historic resources that may have significance for an association with one of the communities of color in the city. It is anticipated that new information about these communities, along with additional information about individual properties and neighborhoods will be identified by future researchers.

Potential historic resources that are eligible under this context will typically be eligible under National Register Criterion A, California Register Criterion 1, and/or City of Palm Springs Criterion 1 for an association with events/patterns of development that have made a significant contribution to history; or National Register Criterion B, California Register Criterion 2, and/or City of Palm Springs Criterion 2 for an association with a person who has made a significant contribution to history. Individual properties and potential historic districts that are significant for an association with ethnic minority communities in Palm Springs may also be eligible under other contexts/themes associated with the development of the city.

