

Context: Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)



O'Donnell House, *Ojo del Desierto*, 447 W. Alejo Road, 1925. Listed in the National Register; HSPB-19. Source: Steve Vaught, Paradise Leased.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

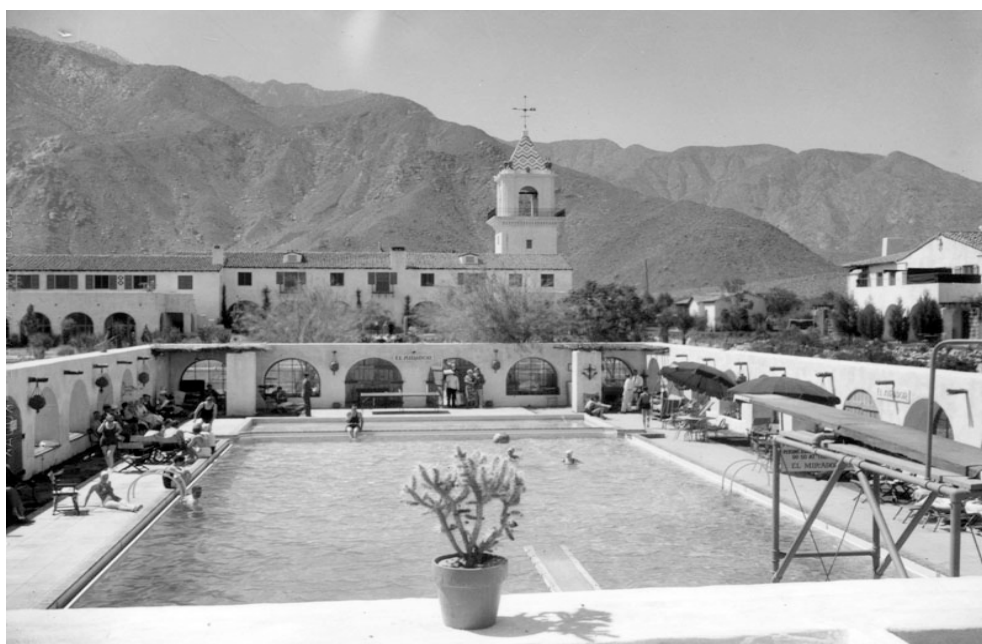
Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

CONTEXT: PALM SPRINGS BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)

Overview

This context explores the transformation of Palm Springs from a modest spa town into a luxury winter resort in the years between the First and Second World Wars. By 1918 Nellie Coffman and her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, understood the town's potential, not as a health spa for asthmatics and consumptives, but as an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do, and set about transforming their sanatorium into the luxurious Desert Inn, one of the most renowned hostleries in the country. Their success inspired the development of two equally spectacular hotels in the 1920s and cemented the town's growing reputation as one of the country's premier luxury winter resorts. These were the Oasis Hotel (121 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-10), designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (known as Lloyd Wright) and opened in 1925 by Pearl McCallum McManus;⁹⁷ and the grand Hotel El Mirador (1150 N. Indian Canyon Drive), designed by Walker and Eisen in a sumptuous Spanish Colonial Revival style and opened in 1927.⁹⁸



El Mirador Hotel, photographed c. 1933. Source: Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

⁹⁷ The Oasis Hotel opened on a provisional basis in 1924, but the official opening was in 1925.

⁹⁸ There was a New Year's Eve party held at El Mirador on December 31, 1927; the hotel officially opened for business on January 1, 1928. Burton L. Smith, "Miracle Hotel Graces Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1928.

Automobile tourism played an early and important part in the success and growth of Palm Springs as a resort destination. In 1914, highway bonds were passed in Riverside County for extensive road improvements and construction of new routes. As part of these efforts, the highway connecting Los Angeles and Palm Springs was completed in October 1916.⁹⁹ Pavement of the highway through to Indio was completed in 1924, allowing travelers to drive all the way from Los Angeles to Palm Springs in less than 4 hours, all on paved roads.¹⁰⁰

The first residential subdivisions were recorded in the early 1920s on tracts largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts. Several tracts were subdivided by Prescott T. Stevens, along with other prominent early Palm Springs settlers including Pearl McManus, Raymond Cree, and Harriet Cody. There are extant properties from this period associated with some of the village's most prominent citizens, including Ted Fulford, Carl G. Lykken, Zaddie Bunker, Alvah Hicks, Harold Hicks, Katherine Finchy, Earle Strebe, Phil Boyd, and many others.

In the 1920s, business tycoons, industrialists, and other wealthy businessmen, along with the Hollywood elite, discovered the desert and began to transform Palm Springs into an international resort. While the movie stars primarily stayed at the resort hotels when visiting Palm Springs, other wealthy residents and seasonal visitors started building architect-designed estates and drawing increased attention to the growing resort town. Wealthy capitalists who came to Palm Springs in the 1920s include King Camp Gillette; Carrie Humphrey Birge, widow of George K. Birge, the wallpaper & Pierce-Arrow magnate; businessman and philanthropist William Mead; Frederick W. Stevens of the American Locomotive Company; Chicago capitalist John Burnham; steel magnate Louis R. Davidson; and cereal king S.K. Kellogg, who began wintering in Palm Springs as early as 1926.

The 1930s saw Palm Springs blossom, as more and more celebrities made it their winter weekend getaway, and more development sprang up to house and entertain them. By the start of World War II, Palm Springs had so long been thought of as a movie star's playground that some of the neighborhoods were described as "Beverly Hills in the desert." One section was so filled with film notables, the neighborhood was ultimately dubbed the "Movie Colony."

In the 1930s important figures in finance and business continued to flock to the desert in the winter, helping to cement the village's reputation as one of the nation's top winter resort destinations. Internationally famous names such as Walter P. Chrysler; Alfred Vanderbilt; Herbert F. "Hib" Johnson of the S.C. Johnson Co.; John Jakob Raskob, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, head of finance for both General Motors and Dupont de Nemours, and builder of the Empire State Building; auto magnate Walter Marmon; Julia S. Carnell of National Cash Register; Arthur K. Bourne of Singer Sewing Machine fortune; Franklyn Hutton, James S. Kemper and his brother Hathaway of the

⁹⁹ Steve Lech, "Back in the Day: Jackrabbit Trail was a first link between Moreno and Redlands," *The Press Enterprise*, February 27, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Steve Lech, "Back in the Day: Jackrabbit Trail was a first link between Moreno and Redlands," *The Press Enterprise*, February 27, 2014.

insurance giant, Kemper Insurance Group; Russell Vought of Vought Aircraft; and Lawrence Mario Giannini, who made the Bank of America into one of the world's largest financial institutions.

Architecturally, the Spanish and Mediterranean Revival styles were the town's dominant architectural expression during this period. In addition, there are examples of simplified Ranch houses featuring rustic details and board-and-batten exterior walls. Beginning in the 1930s, prominent Modernist architects began making significant contributions to the architectural landscape in Palm Springs.¹⁰¹

This context examines influences on the built environment in Palm Springs between World War I and the onset of World War II. The first section provides an overview of the important developments in architecture during this period and a brief discussion of some of the significant architects. Following the introductory section are the themes and sub-themes, divided by property type: single-family residential development, multi-family residential development, commercial development, and civic and institutional development. At the conclusion of each theme are registration requirements for evaluating resources under that theme.

¹⁰¹ Discussion of Modern architectural trends in Palm Springs largely derived from Alan Hess, "Historic Context of Modern Architecture: Residential, Commercial and Civic Architecture," for Historic Resources Group, January 23, 2015 and revised June 9, 2015.

THEME: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)¹⁰²

Residential Architecture (1919-1941)¹⁰³

This sub-theme explores the important role of architecture in the development of single-family housing in Palm Springs, and discusses buildings that are significant examples of particular architectural styles or the work of important architects. In the early 1920s the utilitarian structures built to serve the basic needs of early settlers began to give way to more stylish housing designed for the pleasure of seasonal residents and visitors. There are a range of architectural styles seen in the residential neighborhoods of Palm Springs from this period, including period revival, Ranch, and early Modernist works.



Early aerial view of Palm Springs, showing sparse development in 1920s. Photograph is taken above present-day Tennis Club. Indian Avenue (now Indian Canyon) is the tree-lined street at the top of the photo; the perpendicular street is Arenas Road. The open space on the left is the Desert Inn Mashie Golf Course. Source: *Palm Springs, CA: Images of America*, p. 68.

¹⁰² Multi-family residential development is discussed in a separate theme, below.

¹⁰³ This section includes an overview discussion of the predominant architectural styles from this period. A more detailed description of each style, including character-defining features, is included in the Architectural Styles section.

Early 20th Century & Period Revival Styles

There is a small number of 1920s and 1930s “California bungalows” influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement in Palm Springs. Although these examples are rare, tenets of the style reflect the lifestyle of Palm Springs (rugged/rustic setting, use of natural materials, connection to outdoors), and the modest, one-story, bungalow type is seen throughout the early neighborhoods, albeit with varying stylistic details. The California bungalow was a simple, garden-oriented house uniquely suited for the climate and lifestyle of the region. The term bungalow typically refers to a modest, one- or one-and-a-half-story house with an informal floor plan. The exteriors were generally simple, to fit with the rugged lifestyle of the inhabitants, and the use of natural materials was important to the design aesthetic. Wide, overhanging eaves not only emphasized the horizontal emphasis of the small bungalow, but were also practical in shading the house from the hot California sun. Structural members were exposed, particularly at the roof line. Brick or stone foundations supported the wood frames, which were clad either in wood shingles or stucco, and heavy supports define the deeply recessed front porch.

Residential design in the 1920s displays an eclectic array of period revival styles, inspired in part by the Panama-California Exposition and the burgeoning film industry. As the focus on regional expression through architecture evolved, period and exotic revival styles took hold throughout California. Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival examples prevailed, in large measure due to the Panama-California Exposition, held in San Diego in 1915. The lead architect was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who was assisted by Carleton Winslow. Goodhue chose an eclectic Spanish style for the exposition buildings, setting it apart from the more formal European Renaissance and Neoclassical styles which were being employed at the San Francisco World’s Fair the same year. Goodhue’s architecture featured stylistic references to the Catholic missions and churches of Southern California and Mexico, as well as to grand palaces of Mexico, Spain, and Italy. Well suited to the region’s warm, dry climate, the Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival styles in particular appealed to many Southern California residents for their exotic appearance and sense of history. “Here were two styles supported by the regional myth of California as the Mediterranean shores of America and even, in the case of Spanish Revival, supported by a slight degree of historical justification.”¹⁰⁴

In the 1920s and 1930s a number of architects and designers from Los Angeles and elsewhere worked in Palm Springs, designing Spanish and Mediterranean Revival-style residences primarily as winter homes for seasonal residents. Many of these were constructed of cast-in-place concrete, likely in response to the desert climate. Architects working in Palm Springs during this period included: Paul R. Williams, the talented and prolific “Architect to the Stars” and first African American member of the American Institute of Architects; Gerard Colcord, a Beverly Hills architect best known for his sprawling “Country Colonials;” Wallace Neff, whose highly refined, distinctive interpretations of traditional styles made him one of Southern California’s most sought-after residential architects; John Porter Clark, a young designer who,

¹⁰⁴ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 191.

after working in Pasadena for Garrett Van Pelt, moved to Palm Springs and worked under the license of Van Pelt and Lind until securing his own certification; and William Charles Tanner, an artist and draftsman based first in Riverside and then Hollywood, who was not a licensed architect but who managed to secure some of the most important projects in Palm Springs in the 1920s, including the revamped Desert Inn and the house called *Ojo del Desierto* (“Eye of the Desert”).

Ojo del Desierto (447 W. Alejo Road, HSPB-19 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places), the winter home of oilman Thomas O’Donnell, a Desert Inn regular, and his wife Dr. Winnifred Willis Jenney, is one of the best examples of the Spanish and Mediterranean Revival in Palm Springs. Constructed in 1925 on the hillside above the Desert Inn, *Ojo del Desierto* was designed by Tanner, who was simultaneously working on the Desert Inn, and built by Alvah Hicks on land that had been owned by Nellie Coffman. The house was built of reinforced concrete, clad in plaster to resemble adobe, and topped with a clay tile roof. Cantilevered wood balconies shield the house from the sun, and French doors open to tiled patios and a large stone terrace with a commanding view over the city. The interior features tile floors, hooded fireplaces, exposed wood trusses, wrought iron balconies, and *Mudejar*-style paneled wood doors.

Other high-style examples include The Willows (412 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way, HSPB-34), originally constructed in 1925 as the winter home of businessman, philanthropist, and Los Feliz developer William Mead and designed by architect William J. Dodd of Dodd & Richards.¹⁰⁵ It is built into the lower slopes of Mt. San Jacinto at the west end of Tahquitz Canyon Way. The house is a cluster of simple rectangular volumes finished in plaster, with clay barrel tile roofs, wrought iron balconies supported on elaborate plaster brackets, and an elevated, arched loggia with a plaster groin vault. The interior features plaster walls, polychrome coffered ceilings, and tiled fireplaces. That same year, Dodd & Richards designed a twin of The Willows for Roland P. Bishop (468 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way). Bishop was a prominent Los Angeles businessman who headed Bishop & Co., Southern California’s largest confectioner and purveyor of baked goods, which was acquired by the National Biscuit Co. (NABISCO) in 1930.

One of the most exotic Mediterranean-inspired houses in Palm Springs is Dar Marroc (now the Korakia Pensione, 257 Patencio Drive), the home of Scottish-born painter Gordon Coutts, who after a lifetime of wandering the world spent his last years in Palm Springs. Coutts was born in Aberdeen in the mid-1860s and studied art at the *Académie Julian* in Paris, where he distinguished himself with his landscapes and portraits; he later spent ten years as an art instructor in New South Wales, Australia, and some of his works now hang in the Australian National Art Gallery, the Adelaide National Gallery, and the

¹⁰⁵ “The History,” *The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn*, <https://thewillowspalmsprings.com/press-history-of-the-willows/> (accessed June 23, 2015).

Melbourne Art Gallery.¹⁰⁶ Coutts moved to San Francisco with his American wife Alice about 1900; after their divorce in 1917, he spent several years living in Spain and North Africa with his second wife, Gertrude.¹⁰⁷ In the early 1920s ill health ended Coutts' travels and brought him to Palm Springs, then a budding artists' colony whose climate and light reminded him of North Africa. He built Dar Maroc in 1924, complete with crenellated walls, horseshoe arches, tiled patios, and tinkling fountains. Coutts settled there with his wife and daughters and hosted a bohemian salon of artists that included *American Gothic* painter Grant Wood, the great English portrait artist Sir John Lavery, and film stars like Errol Flynn and Rudolph Valentino.¹⁰⁸ Coutts died in Palm Springs in 1937.¹⁰⁹ After his death, Dar Maroc was converted into an apartment building.¹¹⁰



L: Dar Maroc (1924), one of the most exotic designs in Palm Springs, was the home of painter Gordon Coutts. Source: Los Angeles Public Library. R: Willard House (1929). Source: <http://twinlakesgallery.com/history/willards-story/>.

In 1929 photographer Stephen H. Willard built an exceptional Spanish Colonial Revival house at 1701 S. Palm Canyon Drive. Willard was raised in Corona and learned photography in high school. After graduating in 1912 he made photographic trips through the Sierra Nevadas and the deserts of the Southwest. In 1922 he and his wife Beatrice settled in Palm Springs and opened a studio and gallery, and Willard continued his travels to photograph the Colorado and Mojave deserts. His photos, donated

¹⁰⁶ Anne Sullivan, "There's A Real Castle in the Desert," *The Desert Sun*, May 12, 1978, D1.

¹⁰⁷ "Biography," *Gordon Coutts (1865-1937) Painter*, <http://www.gordonscotts.com> (accessed July 21, 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Carney, "Korakia Dreaming," *Architectural Digest*, May 1996, 144-45; and Niemann, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Sullivan, D1.

¹¹⁰ Carney, 144. Dar Maroc was purchased by designer G. Douglas Smith in 1989 and rehabilitated as the Korakia Pensione.

to the Palm Springs Desert Museum in 1999, are “not only valuable artistic masterpieces but also a historic record of the desert and mountain environments.”¹¹¹ The Willards lived in the house, with its sprawling plan, exterior staircase, and second-story wood balcony, until 1947.¹¹² The property is now part of the Moorten Botanical Garden.



L: Arthur Bourne House (1933, Wallace Neff). Source: Alson Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, p. 163. R: The Richards House in Smoke Tree Ranch reflects the rustic Ranch-style seen in Palm Springs. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

High style Spanish and Mediterranean Revival examples such as *The Willows*, *Ojo del Desierto*, and *Dar Maroc* are comparatively rare in Palm Springs, where the simpler, more rustic style of traditional southwestern adobe, hacienda, and wood ranch vernacular types were believed to be better suited to the desert climate and casual lifestyle. These tended to be informal one-story houses finished in plaster, brick, or board-and-batten siding, with irregular or rambling plans, low-pitched tile or wood shake roofs, wood or steel windows, and minimal ornamentation. The Ranch-style house proved particularly popular both before and after the war, combining as it did modernist ideas of space and function with traditional elements of working ranches and Spanish ranchos. This minimalist trend continued into the post-World War II years; the city has a collection of 1940s bungalows that feature red clay tile roofing and steel casement windows. The Arthur Bourne House (1933, 486 S. Patencio Road; altered) by Wallace Neff is a Spanish-style hacienda built around a central courtyard and swimming pool, but the simplicity of its forms and its integration of indoor spaces with exterior terraces reflects this important architect's attempt to “fuse the Mediterranean Revival with the modern style.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Palm Springs Art Museum, “Stephen H. Willard Photography Collection & Archive,” *Palm Springs Art Museum*, <https://www.psmuseum.org/palm-springs-art-collection/photography/stephen-h-willard-photography-collection-and-archive/> (accessed August 17, 2015).

¹¹² Niemann, 111.

¹¹³ Alson Clark and Wallace Neff, *Wallace Neff, Architect of California's Golden Age* (Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press, 1986), 162.

The Advent of Modernism

The International Style – an architectural aesthetic that stressed rationality, logic, and a break with the past – emerged in Europe in the 1920s with the work of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) in France, and Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in Germany, where the Bauhaus School trained a future generation of Modern architects. For these early 20th-century Modernists, the machine was “the great vehicle of aesthetic transformation not only for its suggestion of cleanliness and efficiency, but also for the new materials and techniques it introduced,”¹¹⁴ including steel, glass, and concrete. Their buildings were minimalist in concept, stressed functionalism, and were devoid of regional characteristics and nonessential decorative elements. Modern architects were working to establish a new architectural style that was reflective of the Modern era.

Crucial to the development of the International Style was Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret’s 1926 “Five Points Towards a New Architecture,” which outlined their principles for modern design: *piloti* (columns which raised the building above the ground), a free plan (possible through the use of concrete construction), free façades (because the exterior walls are no longer load-bearing), flat roof with roof garden (replacing land lost underneath the building), and ribbon windows. These ideas are most fully expressed in Le Corbusier’s 1929 Villa Savoye, located in Poissy, France.

Mies van der Rohe espoused a slightly different interpretation of the International Style, based upon the aphorism that “less is more.” Mies focused upon the concept of enclosing open and adaptable “universal spaces” within a clearly arranged structural framework of pre-fabricated steel members infilled with glass. This concept was expressed in three Miesian subtypes: the glass-and-steel pavilion, the all-glass curtain wall, and the modular building.¹¹⁵

In 1932, New York’s Museum of Modern Art hosted an architecture exhibition curated by Henry Russell-Hitchcock and Philip Johnson entitled “The International Style: Architecture Since 1922.” The accompanying publication was the first to name and define the style, introducing the American public to the new European approach to design and highlighting its major practitioners. This helped promote the style, which was critical to the development of Modernism before World War II. Hitchcock and Johnson identified the primary aesthetic principles of the International Style as: “an emphasis upon volume – space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and lastly, dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 137.

¹¹⁵ City of Riverside, “Modernism Context Statement,” November 3, 2009, 15.

¹¹⁶ Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: H. W. Norton & Company, revised edition with new foreword published in 1995), 29.

The Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933, and Gropius and Mies van der Rohe fled to the United States, by which time they had both established international reputations as pioneers of Modern architecture. Mies taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and Gropius at the Harvard School of Design. This meant that the tenets of International Style Modernism were now being promoted in the United States by two of its leaders. Two Austrian immigrants, Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler are credited with introducing International Style architecture to Southern California. Both worked briefly for Frank Lloyd Wright before settling in Los Angeles and embarking on their own careers, contributing to the development of a distinctly regional interpretation of Modern architecture.

The earliest known Modern building to be built in the Palm Springs area was the Popenoe Cabin (1922, demolished) by Schindler.¹¹⁷ The Popenoe Cabin was located in what is now Palm Desert, but it is notable here as a significant and early Modernist work in the Coachella Valley.



Popenoe Cabin (1922, R. M. Schindler). Source: UC-Santa Barbara Architecture and Design Collections, Schindler Papers.

Several architects who would be central to the development of Palm Springs Modern architecture arrived in the city in the 1930s, launching a fertile and innovative era. In addition, several important out-of-town architects began their association with the city during this period. Though not all clients wanted Modern design, the commitment of these architects to Modern concepts helped lay the foundation among private and civic clients and the general public for the acceptance of Modern design in ensuing decades. The presence of these architects demonstrates that environmental and economic conditions in Palm Springs were, and continued to be, conducive to innovative architecture. It also reflects the variety of Modern architectural concepts, from International Style, to Streamline Moderne, to Organic, which would be characteristic of Palm Springs Modernism.

Two key Palm Springs architects, Albert Frey and John Porter Clark, worked together for more than 15 years. They were partners from 1935 to 1937, although their work at this time was published under

¹¹⁷ Paul Popenoe (1888-1979) was born in Kansas but grew up in California. He was the founder of modern marriage counseling in the United States. Popenoe and his wife lived in the Coachella Valley from 1920 to 1926; in 1926 they moved to Los Angeles. Designs for the Popenoe Cabin show Schindler playing with composition, proportion, and space.

the name Van Pelt and Lind; they worked together under the firm name Clark & Frey from 1939 to 1952.¹¹⁸ Though clients were still favoring traditional styles (with which Clark, who had trained at Cornell and worked for the firm of Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury, was familiar), Clark and Frey continued to promote Modern design, seen in the Guthrie House (1935-37, 666 E. Mel Avenue; altered), Halberg House (1935-37; demolished), and particularly in Clark's own house (1939, 1200 E. Paseo El Mirador). Clark's house expresses the freedom of design and freedom from convention embodied in Modernism: its materials include steel columns and corrugated metal siding (a material previously confined to industrial uses), and its unusual plan lifting the small house off the ground, leaving the ground floor open as a shaded patio, shows the architect's response to environmental conditions.



L: John Porter Clark House (1939, John Porter Clark) at 1200 E. Paseo El Mirador. Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1947. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection. R: The Davidson Residence/Ship of the Desert (1936, Earle Webster & Adrian Wilson; HSPB-47) at 1995 South Camino Monte. Photo by Herman Schultheis, c. 1938. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

The Davidson Residence/Ship of the Desert (1936, 1995 Camino Monte; HSPB-47) is one of the few Streamline Moderne buildings in Palm Springs; as such it represents one important expression of Modern design reflecting the machine imagery of automobiles, steamships, and airplanes. It was designed by the architectural firm of Earle Webster & Adrian Wilson; Bashford and Barlow were the landscape architects; and Earle Webster's wife Honor Easton did the interiors, for which she received an award from the Southern California Chapter of the AIA. In addition, the Ship of the Desert marks the first work in Palm Springs by California School artist Millard Sheets, who consulted on the house's colors. The home was featured on the cover of *Sunset* magazine in October 1937.

¹¹⁸ Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey, Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1990), 150.

Richard Neutra interpreted the International Style in his design for the Grace Lewis Miller House (1937, 2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-45). This small house combined a home with a dance studio for the owner. It is a good representation of Neutra's use of simple, flat-roofed forms arranged and adapted to the sun, outdoor space, and the need for coolness and ventilation in the desert.



Grace Lewis Miller House (1937, Richard Neutra; HSPB-45). Photographed by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Sub-Theme: Single-Family Residential Development (1919-1929)

If [Herodotus] were to visit this modern ‘Occidental Araby’ at Palm Springs which is becoming world famous for its beauty and wonderful winter weather conditions...he would find flora and fauna of infinite variety and kind...he would find that men of wealth had preceded him to enjoy the natural beauty, the perfect winter climate, the rejuvenating elevation and the curative spring waters by building fine homes and establishing here a winter community.¹¹⁹

From the start, Palm Springs owed much of its residential development to tourism. Guests who stayed at the Desert Inn (able to accommodate 200 guests by 1925), the Oasis Hotel (officially opened in 1925), and El Mirador (opened with a New Year’s Eve Party in 1927) came for the warm desert air and positive health effects.¹²⁰ Those same guests began to consider the value of residency in Palm Springs and as author Lawrence Culver points out, “...Hollywood vacationers-turned-residents portended the future of the resort.”¹²¹

Pre-World War II residential development was largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts: “the sheltered area.”¹²² Development to the west of Palm Canyon Drive at the base of the foothills provided shelter from wind and blowing sand as well as vistas of the surrounding mountains and desert landscape. Less expensive tracts clustered on the east side of the Palm Canyon/Indian Canyon spine that bisected the village. However, the developments south of El Mirador catered to guests of the hotel that cultivated a distinctly Hollywood clientele.¹²³ Many hotel guests later bought homes in the area around El Mirador.

The other major area of prewar residential development in Palm Springs was to the south along the spine of South Palm Canyon Drive around Tahquitz Creek. With the exception of Smoke Tree Ranch, south Palm Springs remained largely undeveloped until the late 1950s and 1960s. Before World War II, there was no development east of Sunrise Way.

In addition to the rise of the automobile, the prewar residential development of Palm Springs was influenced as well by the Los Angeles press. During the 1920s, the society pages of the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers extensively covered the arrivals and departures of wealthy industrialists from all over the country who opened their homes for the season or took up winter residency in Palm Springs. Social occasions in Palm Springs were also widely covered—be they parties in private homes or one of the many public events (e.g., the Desert Circus, dog shows, fashion shows, or other events). With

¹¹⁹ *Brochure for the Araby Tract, 1925.*

¹²⁰ The development of these hotels is discussed in greater detail in the Commercial Development theme; they are mentioned here as catalysts for residential development during this period.

¹²¹ Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 156.

¹²² “Ad for Austin G. McManus,” *Palm Springs California Magazine*, 1929, 27.

¹²³ The El Mirador was the only one of the Palm Springs hotels that welcomed Jewish guests. This and purposeful cultivation of Hollywood through publicist and free accommodations for the press made it popular with actors, writers, directors, and other Hollywood notables.

the arrival of the Hollywood actors, writers, producers and directors, photographs of stars enjoying the desert playground were distributed nationally.

Development in all of Palm Springs' pre-World War II residential tracts was sparse, and in-fill construction continued in virtually all of them throughout the postwar period. As a result, the period revival style residences from before World War II often sit side-by-side with Ranch and Mid-century Modern designs from later periods. Many early homes were constructed on multiple parcels with ample space for landscaped private gardens.

Residential Subdivisions from the Period

Following is a discussion of select residential subdivisions that were recorded in the 1920s. The narrative discussion is intended to provide an overview of residential development during this period, including the earliest recorded tracts, those that were particularly significant in the development of Palm Springs, or those that were associated with an important developer. The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded. The Overview of Tract Development in Appendix B includes a list of the residential subdivisions in Palm Springs that were studied as part of the survey effort, including any information compiled about additional tracts not included in the narrative. The information included in the table is intended to provide additional data about residential development in Palm Springs and inform future researchers about this facet of Palm Springs history; a complete history of each tract is outside the scope of this project.

FIGURE 2: RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS RECORDED IN THE 1920S

NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
Las Hacienditas	1923	J.J. Kocher
Vista Acres	1923	Prescott T. Stevens
Tahquitz Park	1923	Pearl McCallum McManus
Palm Canyon Mesa	1924	Edmond T. Fulford
Araby Tract	1925	H.W. Otis and Son
Merito Vista	1925	Prescott T. Stevens
Las Palmas Estates	1926	Prescott T. Stevens
Palm Springs Estates	1927	Prescott T. Stevens
Vista Santa Rosa	1927	Raymond Cree & John Chaffey
Palos Verdes Tract	1928	Harriet Dowie Cody and Reta McDowie

Vista Acres, Las Hacienditas, Tahquitz Park (1923)

Palm Springs' transition from resort to residential development began in earnest in 1923. In January of that year, Prescott T. Stevens developed Vista Acres, a twenty-seven parcel subdivision west of Palm Canyon Drive along W. Chino Drive. This was quickly followed in March by the subdivision of Las Hacienditas, immediately to the south of El Mirador, developed by Dr. J.J. Kocher.¹²⁴ Las Hacienditas was bordered by Tachevah Drive to the north, Tamarisk Road to the south, N. Indian Canyon to the west, and N. Via Miraleste to the east. Today, Las Hacienditas is part of what is known as the Movie Colony.

In March of 1923, Pearl McCallum McManus, daughter of early Palm Springs settler John Guthrie McCallum, subdivided Tahquitz Park (colloquially known as the Tennis Club neighborhood).¹²⁵ Tahquitz Park was bordered by Baristo Road on the south, Tahquitz Drive on the west, the north side of Arenas Road to the north, and Patencio Road on the east. McManus built a Mediterranean villa-inspired home, "The Pink House" at 281 S. Tahquitz Drive (demolished) that was a noted local landmark.¹²⁶ However, building was generally slow. To boost sales at the tract, McManus and her husband built a speculative house known as "The Tahquitz Park Demonstration House" (a.k.a. Tahquitz House; 1937-38, Charles O. Matcham) on Valmonte del Norte. Interiors were furnished by Barker Brothers "in the soft subtle shades of desert color."¹²⁷ The Minimal Traditional-style house was featured in the November 1938 issue of *Arts + Architecture* magazine along with ads by the McManus Realty Co. for its sale. There are a number of architecturally significant residences in Tahquitz Park, including the Roberson Residence (1926; 385 W. Tahquitz Drive; HSPB-21); the Bourne Residence by Wallace Neff (1933, 486 W. Patencio Lane; altered), and the Burnham Residence by H. Palmer Sabin (1929, 147 S. Tahquitz Drive).¹²⁸

The Burnham property was the site of an artists' colony founded by John Burnham, the son of Chicago architect Daniel Burnham (1846-1912). The elder Burnham was famous as the supervising architect of the Chicago World's Fair and the designer of the Flatiron building in New York City. The younger Burnham was a banker and investor who founded the nationwide investment firm of Burnham & Co. He was also an amateur painter and a patron of the arts. Burnham retired in 1924 and shortly after

¹²⁴ Dr. J.J. Kocher was the brother of architect A. Lawrence Kocher. In 1934, Kocher and Frey designed the Kocher-Samson Building for Dr. Kocher.

¹²⁵ The residential area now known as the Tennis Club Neighborhood is home to several historic stacked stone walls. Source: Steve Vaught, *Sentinels in Stone: Palm Springs' Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood and its Iconic Walls* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2015).

¹²⁶ Peter Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs* (Johannesberg, CA: The Shady Myrick Research Project, 2007), 109.

¹²⁷ Barker Brothers Ad, *Arts + Architecture*, November 1938, 11.

¹²⁸ Although architectural historian David Gebhard attributed this building to Alfred Heineman in the 1982 edition of *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles*, trade publications and archival papers indicate that the designer was H. Palmer Sabin.

began spending winters in the desert. In 1929, Burnham commissioned architect H. Palmer Sabin to design a Spanish-style estate (147 S. Tahquitz Drive).¹²⁹



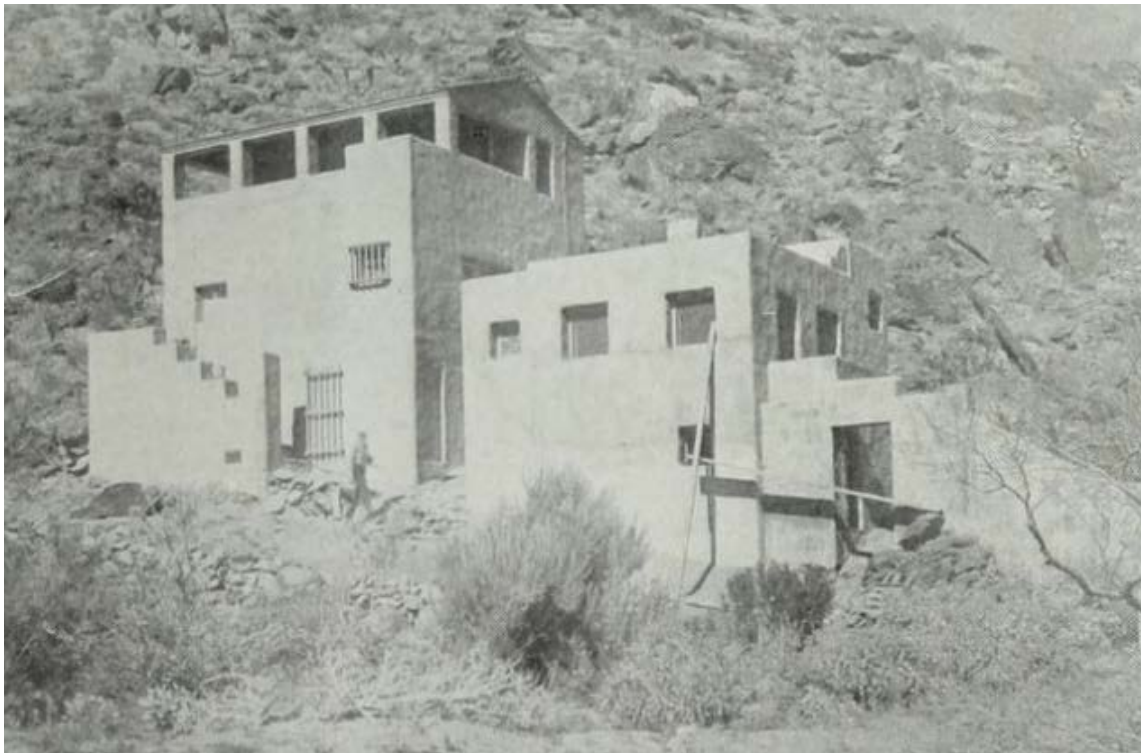
Burnham House, completed in 1929. Part of a group of buildings on S. Tahquitz Drive that comprised an artists' colony.
Source: Colony 29 website.

Known as the "Street of Spain" for its European-style architecture, the Burnham estate included a guest house and three bungalows to house Burnham's painter friends and protégés, including Alson Clark, Maynard Dixon, Carl Eytel, Nicolai Fechin, Clyde Forsythe, John W. Hilton, and Jimmy Swinnerton.¹³⁰ The complex of buildings was not all constructed at the same time. The 1929 Sanborn map shows the three northernmost guest houses, which may have been built by Burnham prior to the construction of

¹²⁹ Steve Vaught, "Biographical Sketches of the Founding Committee of Twenty-Five," 94.

¹³⁰ Scott Brassart, "Soul in the City," Palm Springs Life, May 2008, www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/May-2008/Soul-in-the-City/ (accessed August 15, 2015).

the main house.¹³¹ The earliest reference to the complex appears in a 1927 *California Southland* article that refers to one of the buildings as the Alson Clark studio.¹³² In addition to his own artists' colony, in 1930 Burnham co-founded, with Pearl McManus, the Desert Art School, housed in the old McCallum adobe (HSPB-5). He also served as director of the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery.¹³³ In the 1950s, Burnham sold the main house and two of the bungalows to Francis Crocker, the "Father of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway."¹³⁴ However, the site remained an artists' colony as late as the 1960s or 1970s, as several artists were still living there at that time.¹³⁵



The desert studio of Alson Clark, as published in *California Southland*, 1927.

¹³¹ The main house is believed to have been completed in 1929, but it may have been too late to be included on the 1929 Sanborn map. The house is mentioned in an April 1930 article in the *Los Angeles Times* that notes a studio occupied by Nicolai Fechin next to Burnham's residence.

¹³² Per local historian Steve Vaught.

¹³³ Vaught, 94.

¹³⁴ Brassart.

¹³⁵ Per local historian Steve Vaught.



One of the Homes We Have Built

IN 1884, while searching for the finest climate in California, John Guthrie McCallum was told by his friends, the Cahuilla Indians, of a sheltered nook on the edge of the desert, nestling at the foot of the snow-capped San Jacinto mountains.

The first view of this lovely valley so strongly impressed him that he decided to make this his winter home, and during the next three years purchased approximately 6,000 acres on which has developed the now world famous winter resort of Palm Springs.

The village is built on and around the original McCallum Ranch, and the old adobe ranch house, built by the Indians, still remains to form a part of the delightful Oasis Hotel.

From this foundation has developed the McManus Realty Co., largest owners and developers of fine business and residential properties, all located within the sheltered area.

This firm has built many fine homes, an apartment and one of the beautiful hotels.

Sales consummated during recent years have totaled over \$400,000. At this time several newly completed cottages and larger residences designed especially for sunshine and desert conditions, are available for lease or sale.

A new schedule of prices, as a result of lower building costs, now prevails.

Satisfactory terms and financing can be arranged.

AUSTIN G. McMANUS
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Advertisement from a 1929 issue of *Palm Springs, California* magazine features Pearl McManus' "Pink Mansion in the Tahquitz Park." Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Both McManus and Stevens would go on to shape residential development through the 1920s. Pioneer Properties, the real estate sales company founded by McManus and of which she was president, "played a major role in Palm Springs' development."¹³⁶ Austin McManus, Pearl McManus' husband, had been a realtor in Pasadena.¹³⁷ By 1929, the McManus Realty Co. was the "largest owner and developer of fine business and residential properties...and had built many fine homes, an apartment and one of the beautiful hotels."¹³⁸ Pearl McManus had a great deal of power, and "ruled the roost in the sale of anything she owned with an iron glove – insisting that plans for development had to have her approval."¹³⁹ According to more than one account, "[Pearl] scrutinized the people and the plans – for purchase or construction – turning them down if she didn't like them for any reason."¹⁴⁰ As a result, builders and real estate brokers went to see her "with fear and trembling" when presenting sales offers.¹⁴¹

Part of McManus' vision for the development of Palm Springs during this period included the idea for the first residential subdivision in Palm Springs utilizing modern architecture. In 1925, she approached Lloyd Wright, whom she had engaged to design the Oasis Hotel (1925) to design a "prototype house" for a subdivision that McManus, herself, described as "very modern."¹⁴² Wright's designs for the model house reveal the expressive modern, yet pre-Columbian influenced forms and decoration he used in the Samuel-Navarro Residence in Los Angeles (1926-1928). Yet, it is unclear from the drawings if the geometric decoration was intended as textured concrete block or stenciled detailing. Regardless, the plan for the "prototype house for Palms Springs" features rooms organized around a walled-in and covered patio integrating interior and exterior space.¹⁴³ Whether it was due to construction costs or other factors is unknown, but the homes were never built.

¹³⁶ Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 156.

¹³⁷ "Pearl McCallum Was a Product of the Desert," *Riverside Press Enterprise*, November 22, 2003, B4.

¹³⁸ "Ad for Austin G. McManus," *Palm Springs California Magazine*, 1929, 27.

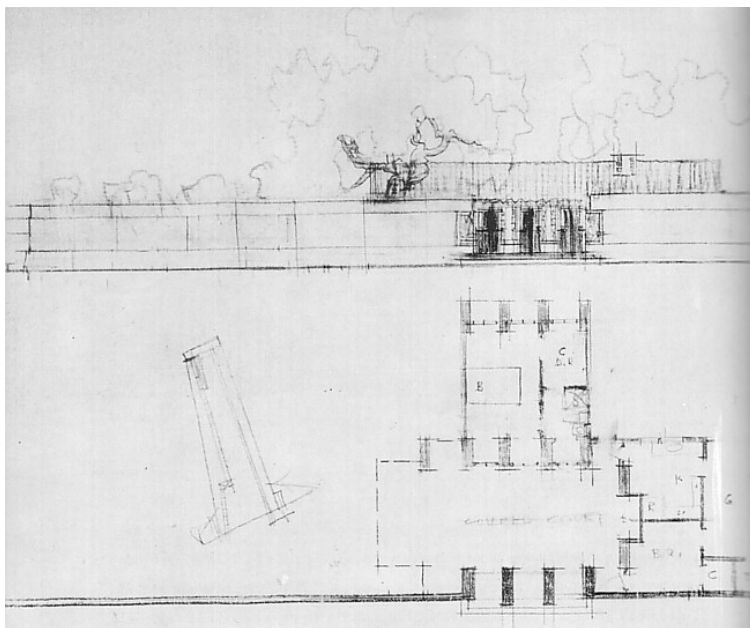
¹³⁹ "Pearl McCallum McManus," No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.

¹⁴⁰ "Pearl McCallum McManus," No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.

¹⁴¹ "Pearl McCallum McManus," No date, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society, 4.

¹⁴² Interview of Pearl McManus to Melba Bennett, April 26, 1948, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁴³ David Gebhard and Harriett Von Breton, *Lloyd Wright Architect*, Hennessey and Ingalls, Santa Monica, 1998, 22.



Lloyd Wright designed this prototype Palm Springs house for Pearl McManus in 1925-1926 as part of Pearl's vision for a subdivision of houses. Source: *Lloyd Wright Architect*, p. 22.

Palm Canyon Mesa (1924)

Palm Canyon Mesa (a.k.a. Tahquitz Desert Estates)¹⁴⁴ is a development nestled in the foothills of the southern end of the city. Palm Canyon Mesa is bordered on the east by S. Palm Canyon Drive and includes Ridge Road to the north, Crestview Drive to the west, and Camino Descanso to the south. The subdivision was the vision of Edmond T. Fulford (1890-1936), the founder of the successful Builders Supply Company in Palm Springs.¹⁴⁵ Fulford and his wife Marion took up residency in the desert in 1921.

Palm Canyon Mesa was planned as a self-contained community accessed through a common main entrance.¹⁴⁶ The development was created in two phases: phase one included 172 parcels in 1924, followed by an additional 71 parcels to the south in 1927. Development in Palm Canyon Mesa was not instantaneous; Sanborn maps from 1929 show just ten homes had been constructed in the

¹⁴⁴ The *Palm Springs Limelight* of December 26, 1936, the *San Bernardino County Sun* of April 7, 1936, and the *Los Angeles Times* of April 7, 1936 refer to the Edmond T Fulford and Edmund Goulding estate on Ridge Road as being in "the former Tahquitz Desert Estates."

¹⁴⁵ Per HSPB, the Purcell family was associated with the Builders Supply Company. The *Desert Sun* notes that Frank Purcell, Jr., was associated with Builders Supply as early as January 1963.

¹⁴⁶ Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 233.

development by that time; however, development continued in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴⁷ A gate for the community still stands at the corner of South Palm Canyon Drive and El Portal (HSPB-14).



Palm Canyon Mesa entry portal, southwest corner of W El Portal and S Palm Canyon Dr (HSPB-14). Photograph 2015, Historic Resources Group.

One of the earliest homes constructed in Palm Canyon Mesa was for King Gillette, the inventor of the safety razor, at 324 West Overlook Road (1923). The Spanish Colonial Revival style residence and guest cottage were surrounded by an acre of landscaped gardens and "...a cactus garden of several hundred varieties."¹⁴⁸ That same year, Edmond T. Fulford engaged renowned architect Paul R. Williams to build a residence at 152 El Camino Way – one of the architect's earliest residential commissions.¹⁴⁹ Fulford died unexpectedly from a heart attack. At the time of his death, his civic work included his role as one of the founders and manager of the Palm Springs Field Club.¹⁵⁰ Other significant properties in the Mesa include: the iconic Howard Davidson Residence/Ship of the Desert (1936, Earle Webster & Adrian Wilson; HSPB-47) at 1995 South Camino Monte; the F.H. Bartholomay Residence (c. 1936, Gerard R.

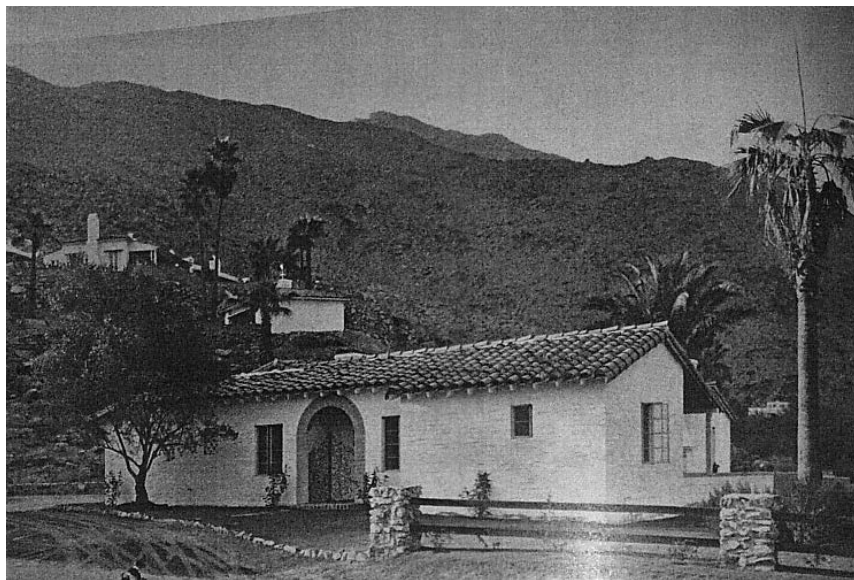
¹⁴⁷ In 1934, two hillside streets adjacent to Palm Canyon Mesa No. 2 Tract were developed as "Palm Canyon Estates" by Los Angeles real estate man, Herbert W. Stanton and his son Forrest O. Stanton, a building contractor. Forest O. Stanton built a house at 2097 Camino Barranca for himself and his wife.

¹⁴⁸ "Many Homes Built on Gay Desert Oasis," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1934, B5.

¹⁴⁹ "Desert Home to be Built at Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 22, 1925, part IV, 3.

¹⁵⁰ "E.T. Fulford, Palm Springs Leader, Dies," *San Bernardino County Sun*, April 7, 1936, 12.

Colcord; landscape architect Millard Wright) at 282 Camino Carmelita; and the J.E. French Residence (1936, Charles O. Matcham; 1940 addition by John Porter Clark) at 282 El Camino Way.



Bartholomay House (c. 1936, Gerard Colcord). Source: *Arts and Architecture*, September 1936.

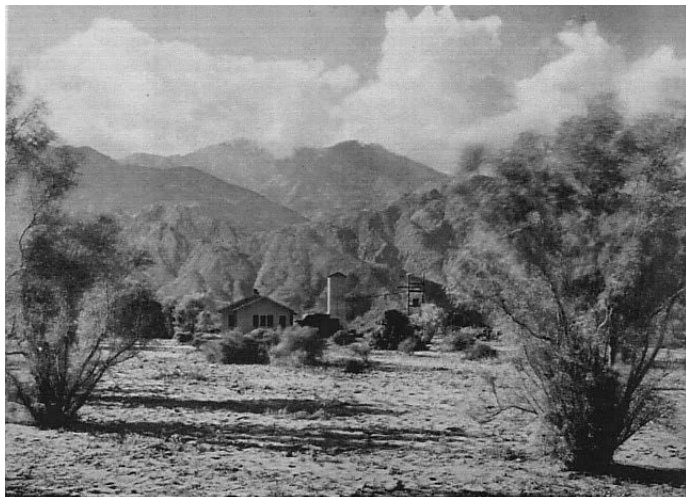
Araby Tract (1925)

South and east of the village of Palm Springs, H.W. Otis and Son, owners/sub-dividers began marketing and selling “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs.”¹⁵¹ The 138-parcel tract of irregularly-shaped lots included graded streets, electrical service, and 10,000 feet of water pipe with “city pressure.”¹⁵² The Los Angeles-based Otis “fell in love with the area and purchased this property for development as a community of desert homes-sites have in mind a completed whole which will be artistic and charming...in keeping with the natural beauty of the surroundings and thoroughly protected by sensible racial and building restrictions.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁵² “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁵³ “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs” Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.



A view of the Araby Tract office and water tower as featured in the Araby Tract sales brochure, *Our Occidental Araby*. A key selling feature of the tract was the 10,000 feet of water pipe improvements that delivered good water pressure. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

The sales brochure explained Otis' vision for an attractive community, "Bear in mind, however, that the building of expensive homes is not required or expected. Suitable artistry is the keynote of this development."¹⁵⁴ However, development was not instantaneous and Otis' vision of a cohesive community never came to fruition. Otis did, however, build his own home at 2200 E. Mesquite Drive.



View of the Araby Tract as presented in the tract's sales brochure, *Our Occidental Araby*. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁵⁴ "Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs" Sales Brochure, Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

Adjacent to the Araby Tract, R. Lee Miller owned twenty acres of desert hillside. Miller, a civil engineer/contractor built a compound of rock houses referred to as a “Hopi Village” in the 1920s.¹⁵⁵ The distinctive, circular, stone R. Lee Miller Residence (c. 1925)¹⁵⁶ and the stone “Casa Contenta, Perle Wheeler Martin” Residence (c. 1933) were among them. Wheeler resided in her “Araby rock house” well into the late 1930s.¹⁵⁷ Four extant rock structures located at the end of the present-day private drive at 2540 S. Araby Drive match historic images of the Miller Residence and the Wheeler Martin Residence.¹⁵⁸ Miller was responsible for the construction of many early Palm Springs residences, including the Casablanca Adobe (590 S. Indian Trail, 1936; HSPB-68) for Pearl McManus in the Indian Trail Tract.



Little Araby Rock House. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

Merito Vista (1925)

Prescott T. Stevens (1846-1932) was ultimately Palm Springs’ largest pre-World War II residential real estate developer. Stevens, a successful Colorado cattle rancher, relocated with his wife Frances to California in 1912 to seek refuge from her respiratory problems. They first settled in Hollywood, where he invested in real estate, then moved to Palm Springs for the better air. By 1920, Stevens had purchased a large amount of land north of downtown Palm Springs. He also bought several thousand acres from the Southern Pacific Railroad to the east and the north of the village to ensure a steady supply of water

¹⁵⁵ No Title, *The Desert Sun*, October 7, 1929 reprinted in *The Desert Sun*, October 7, 1959.

¹⁵⁶ Image 200850441, Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁵⁷ “Premieres Intrigue Desert Folk,” *The Desert Sun*, November 14, 1937, D6.

¹⁵⁸ Historic addresses for these properties include the Martin Residence at 2540 and 2450 S. Araby (*Desert Sun*) and the Miller Residence at 2350 S. Araby (Palm Springs Historical Society).

for his holdings. He bought shares in the original Palm Valley Water Company and then formed the Whitewater Mutual Water Company and the Palm Springs Water Company.

PALM SPRINGS
"OUR ARABY"

If you have not been to Palm Springs, now is the time to go, in order to fully enjoy its sheer natural beauty, its delightfully ideal winter climate and its invigorating elevation.

Men of wealth have always been quick to find and appreciate the beauty spots of America and convert them to their own pleasure, and in the past the development of Palm Springs has been confined to men of large means who pioneered this treasure spot.

With the subdividing, however, of Merito Vista into small estates, its privileges have been made available to those who do not necessarily care to erect pretentious homes here.

Go to Palm Springs this month and while there, investigate Merito Vista, one of the most unique of the exclusive California subdivisions.

(By auto, via the Los Angeles-Imperial Valley Route. Daily stage from Union Stage Depot, Los Angeles to Palm Springs.)

MERITO VISTA
EVANS-LEE CORPORATION
Exclusive Los Angeles Agents
514 California Bank Bldg.
Metropolitan 3148

CREE & CHAFFEY
Exclusive Palm Springs Agents
Palm Springs, California

Advertisement for the Merito Vista subdivision. "Display Ad 109," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1926.

With his colleague Alvah Hicks, a carpenter and nascent homebuilder, they subdivided many of Palm Spring's earliest developments: the Merito Vista tract (1925), Las Palmas Estates (1926), and Palm Springs Estates (1927). Recognizing the best way to sell homes was through tourism, Stevens, Hicks and other developers built the legendary El Mirador Hotel in 1927. Before long, Stevens was convincing tourists to trade up to home ownership.

Merito Vista was advertised for its "natural beauty," its status as a playground for the wealthy, and its subdivision into "small estate parcels" for those who "...do not necessarily care to erect pretentious homes here."¹⁵⁹ Indeed the parcel sizes for the 125 lots in Merito Vista are narrow and deep. However, the design of the subdivision deviates from a basic grid pattern to include curving and rounded streets evocative of the suburban residential community plans of Frederick Law Olmsted.¹⁶⁰ Merito Vista was a success as it reportedly "...practically sold out during the first season."¹⁶¹ Sanborn maps from 1929 reveal that sales may have been brisk, but building was far slower; just twelve parcels in the development had structures associated with them by 1929.¹⁶² Homes in Merito Vista were chiefly Spanish Colonial Revival, other period revival styles, or early iterations of the California Ranch style. More than twenty of them were reportedly built by carpenter-turned-general-contractor, Alvah Hicks, who developed a reputation for quality building. Often these houses were built on speculation, then quickly sold.¹⁶³ Homeowners also purchased multiple parcels for their estates – contributing to relatively low-density

¹⁵⁹ "Display Ad 109," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1926.

¹⁶⁰ Olmsted was America's pre-eminent landscape designer in the late 19th century. He designed the Columbian Exposition of 1893, New York's Central Park and the improvements to the White House grounds of 1902.

¹⁶¹ "Desert Acres Jump to \$1500," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1926, E7.

¹⁶² Sanborn Maps online, Los Angeles Public Library Database, Palm Springs Feb 1929, Sheet 8-9.

¹⁶³ Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends* (San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, 2006), 130.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

development. Even as late as 1952, aerial photographs show significant numbers of undeveloped parcels within the tract.



Aerial view of the Merito Vista subdivision in 1952. As a result of sparse residential development in the Merito Vista subdivision even twenty-five years after the original subdivision, Spanish Colonial Revival style homes from the 1920s and 1930s often sit alongside postwar Mid-century Modern-style residences. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1952.

Las Palmas Estates (1926)

On the heels of his success with Merito Vista, Prescott T. Stevens immediately began subdividing a large parcel of land directly to the north which he called Las Palmas Estates. Las Palmas Estates is bordered by Palm Canyon Drive on the east, Stevens Road on the north, Via Monte Vista on the west, and Via Lola on the south. Under the name Evans-Lee Corporation of Los Angeles,¹⁶⁴ the land was purchased for \$150,000 and subdivided into 165 parcels of one-fourth to one-third acre.¹⁶⁵

Once again a layout of gently curving streets evoking Olmsted's ideas for gracious neighborhood development was employed. The large lots and groups of native palms made it a sentimental favorite of local developer Raymond Cree (1875-1967).¹⁶⁶ Warm weather, recreational amenities, and good schools were featured selling points in advertisements to Los Angeles residents. The tract also boasted "underground utilities and [an] abundance of meterless irrigation water."¹⁶⁷ With ads pronouncing "A

¹⁶⁴ Evans-Lee was a big Los Angeles Developer; however more research is needed to confirm the relationship with Stevens and Cree.

¹⁶⁵ "Desert Acres Jump to \$1500," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1926, E7.

¹⁶⁶ In the Riverside Community Book, Cree called it "His crowning achievement." Often, the owners, developers, builders, and realtors played multiple roles in multiple developments. For example, someone might be the owner on one tract, the real estate agent on another, or in cases of builders, just build the houses independent of any ownership. In this case, Prescott T. Stevens is listed on the tract map, the *Los Angeles Times* mentions the Evans-Lee Corporation, and Cree is quoted in the Riverside Community Book.

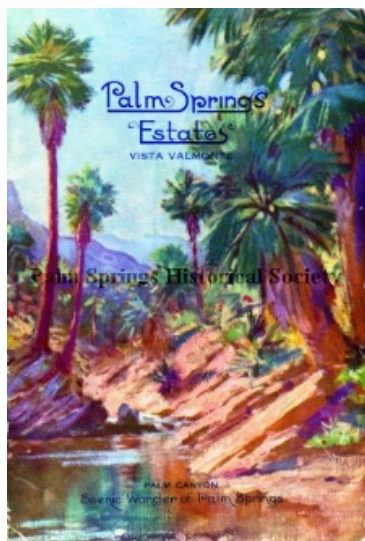
¹⁶⁷ "Fine Homes Rise in Las Palmas," *Palm Springs News*, December 17, 1936, 6.

Home in Palm Springs is Well within Your Means,” Stevens marketed the accessibility of these homes.¹⁶⁸ Hollywood celebrities, Los Angeles businessmen, and Eastern and Midwestern snowbirds soon were building homes in Las Palmas Estates. As a result, the tract was referred to by Los Angeles society columnist Joan Winchell as “The Bel-Air section of Palm Springs.”¹⁶⁹

One of the common sales techniques for Palm Springs real estate was the building of “demonstration homes.” Homes built on speculation were furnished by department stores in the latest interior designs and furnishings. Demonstration homes became fashionable tourist destinations where potential real estate (and hence, home furnishings) buyers could envision their own piece of the Palm Springs lifestyle. Bullock’s was a common partner in these demonstration homes, cross-promoting them in the furniture departments of their Los Angeles stores. Las Palmas Estates was home to two demonstration homes: Bullock’s Demonstration Home #1 (1935-36) at 339 Vereda del Norte, and Bullock’s All-Electric Demonstration Home (1936-37, Brewster and Benedict) at 201 Vereda Del Norte. The latter house, a self-described “modern interpretation of a French New Orleans type residence” drew 1,000 visitors on opening weekend, January 30-31, 1937.¹⁷⁰

Palm Springs Estates (1927)

In 1927, Prescott T. Stevens once again subdivided a large parcel of land – this time east of Indian Canyon Drive. The smallest of the Stevens subdivisions to date, the curving streets of Palm Springs Estates held just eighty-three lots. The subdivision was bordered by Tamarisk Road to the north, Via Miraleste to the east, Indian Avenue (now Indian Canyon Drive) on the west, and the lots just south of Via Colusa on the south.



Brochure for Palm Springs Estates, subdivided by Prescott Stevens in 1927. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁶⁸ “Display Ad 41,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1930, B2.

¹⁶⁹ “Joan Winchell,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1958, A1.

¹⁷³ “Inspect Home,” *Palm Springs News*, February 4, 1937, 1.

To support tourism and residential sales, Stevens built a golf course near the El Mirador hotel, as well as a landing strip to bring visitors by air to the desert community. The Great Depression was hard on Stevens, however. The golf course closed, the hotel was sold, and he died in 1932. Ultimately, Palm Springs Estates would become part of the larger area associated with residences of Hollywood stars known as “The Movie Colony.”¹⁷¹

By 1939, Palm Springs Estates was well populated with vacation homeowners from Los Angeles, the East, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest. The neighborhood was popular with members of the Los Angeles social circles featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and frequently included wives of wealthy businessmen.¹⁷² Prewar residences in Palm Springs Estates were designed predominately in the Spanish Colonial Revival and other period revival styles, with postwar infill development in Mid-century Modern and Minimal Traditional styles.

Vista Santa Rosa (1927)

There are three residential tracts (Vista Santa Rosa, Indian Trail, and Warm Sands) developed in the 1920s and 1930s that are immediately adjacent to each other and form a small neighborhood at S. Indian Canyon and E. Ramon Road. These tracts were subdivided by various owners, including Pearl and Austin McManus, over a ten-year period, but have the physical appearance of an early residential subdivision in Palm Springs, related by architectural style and period of development.

In 1920, former Riverside County educator Raymond Cree moved to Palm Springs and was appointed the first President of the Palm Springs Union High School District. Cree’s first wife Margaret was a realtor and together they purchased a great deal of land in Palm Springs and in nearby communities. Cree was actively involved with several Palm Springs developments as “...either developer, owner, selling agent or all three.”¹⁷³ Among the tracts with which he was involved in some capacity other than direct ownership are Palm Canyon Mesa, Merito Vista, and Las Palmas Estates. Cree appears as part owner for the 60-parcel Winterhaven Manor tract (1931-34) along with Elliot M. Bank and Evelyn Bank.

¹⁷¹ The “Movie Colony” was not a tract development, rather a neighborhood name that developed later to describe the high concentration of Hollywood personages residing in the area around the El Mirador Hotel. Although a wider area is sometimes claimed, the boundaries of the Movie Colony as recognized by the City of Palm Springs, the Palm Springs Board of Realtors, and the Movie Colony Neighborhood Association are: Tachevah Road on the north, Alejo Road on the south, Avenida Caballeros on the east, and Indian Canyon Drive on the west (source: The Movie Colony Neighborhood Association, <http://www.themoviecolony.org/history.php>). This boundary corresponds to the Palm Springs Estates and Las Hacienditas tracts, and to the potential district assessed in the 2015 survey. For purposes of this report, tract names are used to discuss development patterns and “Movie Colony” is used when referring to the broader social history of the area.

¹⁷² *1939-40 Palm Springs City Directory*, 87-96.

¹⁷³ “School Ceremony to Recognize Early California Educator,” *The Desert Sun*, March 1, 1968.

In 1927 Cree subdivided the Vista Santa Rosa tract into 131 parcels measuring 60 x100 feet each.¹⁷⁴ Vista Santa Rosa is bordered by Ramon Road on the north, S. Indian Canyon on the west, Calle Palo Fierro on the east, Camino Parocela west of Calle Encilia, and the south side of Calle Rock east of Calle Encilia.

Cree described the venture: “One day Nellie Coffman dropped by [my] office and wondered why [I] couldn’t develop a subdivision for the town’s working people.”¹⁷⁵ “Well, we did,” recalled Cree, “and before we knew it, we were selling to people with lots of money who built nice homes.”¹⁷⁶ Lots were priced from \$300 to \$500. Cree’s partner in the Vista Santa Rosa tract was John R.E. Chaffey (1901-1976),¹⁷⁷ an investor in Smoke Tree Ranch as well as developer of the 1934 La Rambla tract (phases one through six) at the southeast corner of Tachevah Drive and Avenida Caballeros. Chaffey was also the founding publisher of the *Palm Springs Limelight*. By February of 1937 lots in the tract were almost entirely sold out and eleven homes were under construction.¹⁷⁸ A review of the 1940 U.S. Census shows the Vista Santa Rosa tract sparsely populated mostly with the middle-class residents of the city. The houses were primarily modest bungalows.

At least one of the houses in the Vista Santa Rosa tract was experimental in its construction method. The Lee Humbard Residence (1936, Van Evera Bailey) was built with the Van Guilder System of hollow concrete blocks. The system was deemed desert appropriate by the architect for its economy, fire resistance and insulating properties.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ The tract map for this development does not list Cree as an owner, however, various sources indicate Cree was the developer behind this early residential neighborhood. Add citation.

¹⁷⁵ “Date Groves and Palm Trees, Feuds and Sidewinders in the School Yard,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960, 15.

¹⁷⁶ “Date Groves and Palm Trees, Feuds and Sidewinders in the School Yard,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960, 15.

¹⁷⁷ *Riverside Community Book*, 439. Clippings File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁷⁸ “Rush Building to Meet Needs,” *Palm Springs News*, February 27-March 5, 1936, 6.

¹⁷⁹ “Building Idea,” *Palm Springs News*, March 12-March 19, 1936, n.p.

Sub-theme: Depression-Era Single-Family Residential Development (1930-1941)

The popularity of Palm Springs with the Depression-proof movie industry surely provided more economic stability for real estate than in most other cities in the United States. There were also plenty of vacant lots available in existing tracts for those who wished to invest or build a house. New subdivision development, however, did not resume in earnest until the mid-1930s, and when it did, it tended to be smaller tracts than those developed in the 1920s. Like other cities in the country, economic recovery from the Great Depression, and residential development and expansion in Palm Springs, were halted by the advent of World War II.

Residential Subdivisions from the Period

Following is a discussion of select residential subdivisions that were recorded in the 1930s. The narrative discussion is meant to provide an overview of residential development during this period. The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded. The Overview of Tract Development in Appendix B includes a list of the residential subdivisions in Palm Springs that were studied as part of the survey effort, including any information compiled about additional tracts not included in the narrative. The information included in the table is intended to provide additional data about residential development in Palm Springs and inform future researchers about this facet of Palm Springs history; a complete history of each recorded tract is outside the scope of this project.

FIGURE 3: RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS RECORDED 1930-1941

NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
Smoke Tree Ranch	1931	L. Mac Blankenhorn
Indian Trail Tract	1933	Pearl and Austin McManus
La Rambla	1934	John R. Chaffey
Chino Canyon Mesa	1935	Rufus J. Chapman
Vista Del Monte	1935	Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy
El Mirador Estates	1935	Sallie Stevens Nichols and Culver Nichols
Desert Sands	1935	Edmond F. Lindop
Racquet Club Colony	1935	Walter N. Marks
Little Tuscany	1936	Alvah Hicks
Palm Springs Village	1936	John Munholland
Palm Springs Desert Estates	1936	Mason Case and Company
Palm Highlands	1936	Robert Ransom
Ramon Tract	1937	John W. Williams
Palm Springs Palisades	1937	Frank Meline Company
Warm Sands	1937	None listed

Smoke Tree Ranch (1931)

Whatever you seek in housing, Palm Springs now has it...those who prefer the familiar are found in the villas and haciendas. Life in levis [sic] revolves around such districts as Smoke Tree Ranch. And the Modernists may lounge on chromium and nylon before houses of glass and steel. These are the houses that Palms Springs built.¹⁸⁰

Smoke Tree Ranch is a 375-acre resort and housing development located at 1800 South Sunrise Way. Smoke Tree Ranch was one of the few subdivisions developed in Palm Springs during the Great Depression. Originally developed as a dude ranch resort,¹⁸¹ the “guest ranch” was started in 1930 by L. Mac Blankenhorn and named after the characteristic trees that dot the landscape.¹⁸² A syndicate of investors including C.F. Doyle, developer George Alexander, Nicholas Harrison, architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. (1879-1972), and Blankenhorn purchased the property for \$500,000 and invested another \$100,000 in improvements.¹⁸³ Blankenhorn was a successful Pasadena-based realtor/investor during the 1920s.



This contemporary aerial view of Smoke Tree Ranch looking northwest across the development shows the emphasis on the natural scrubby desert terrain. Source: Mary Macgregor, activerain.trulia.com.

¹⁸⁰ Tony Adams, “The House That Palm Springs Built,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1949, H5.

¹⁸¹ Dude ranch development is discussed under the Commercial Development context.

¹⁸² Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, *Palm Springs* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 82.

¹⁸³ “Company Buys Property for Development,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1930, D2.

In 1887, the Smoke Tree Ranch site had been selected by a group of land promoters for development of a city called Palmdale, which was connected to the Southern Pacific Railroad by a narrow gauge railway. Residents were to grow “melons, grapes and citrus in the mineral rich soil” with water provided by a stone-lined irrigation ditch.¹⁸⁴ The Ranch still contains adobe ruins from this early period of development. An archaeological investigation at the site in 1983 yielded artifacts that dated fruit packing activity to 1895. Drought combined with a shutdown of Native American-controlled water caused the Palmdale dream to collapse shortly before the turn of the 20th century. The railway tracks were taken up and the adobes cannibalized and abandoned.¹⁸⁵



This 1941 image of the Smoke Tree Ranch shows the pool as well as the water tower emblazoned with the Smoke Tree Ranch brand. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Early advertisements for the guest ranch emphasized an exclusivity that continues to this day: “Designed for those wishing to escape from the turmoil of weekend resorts... introductions or satisfactory references are required.”¹⁸⁶ The ranch featured cottages, stables, and a school for grades two through eight. Three school buildings and a playground were located along the western border of the ranch. Facilities included the Ranch Rodeo Field, stables, and the pool. The ranch house building contained two dining rooms, kitchen, lobby, and storerooms. There were 15 cottages for guests, two buildings for servant’s quarters, and a twenty-car garage. These buildings were designed by Pasadena-based architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. (1879-1972).¹⁸⁷

In 1936, Fred and Maziebelle Markham (operating as the Mardo Corporation) bought Smoke Tree Ranch. Whereas Blankenhorn and his syndicate of investors may have been overextended at Smoke

¹⁸⁴ Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

¹⁸⁵ Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

¹⁸⁶ Display Ad 9, *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1931, 6.

¹⁸⁷ *Building and Engineering News*, July 5, 1930. https://archive.org/stream/buildingengineer30230cont/buildingengineer30230cont_djvu.txt (accessed January 2015).

Tree Ranch, Markham was able to bring financial stability to the venture. With the help of local educator and real estate investor Raymond Cree, Markham subdivided the ranch into parcels for single-family residences.¹⁸⁸ This occurred in three phases: 52 parcels in the northern portion of the ranch in 1936; 30 parcels in spring of 1937; and 24 parcels in summer of 1937.

Under the Markhams, the guest ranch did not advertise or seek publicity. The Smoke Tree way of life (for guest ranch patrons as well as homeowners who are historically known as “Colonists”) was simple without the need to impress, as “most who have come here have been every place, seen everything and done most things.”¹⁸⁹ The gated community also provided hotel-like amenities, including meals in the clubhouse restaurant, a pool, tennis courts, and maid service; “care of property by a capable all-year organization and innumerable services the lack of which makes the ownership of a resort property a burden.”¹⁹⁰

During incorporation discussions for the city of Palm Springs in 1936, Charles F. Doyle, Vice President of Mardo Corporation, protested against the inclusion of Smoke Tree Ranch within the proposed city boundaries. In 1945, the Markhams sold the entire Ranch operation to the Colony as a group. Colonists retained ownership of their homes and home sites.

Of the approximately 400 acres, 300 acres were devoted to the home sites for the Colonists and twenty acres for the guest ranch. The remaining land was leased for the present-day Smoke Tree Village Shopping Center at the corner of East Palm Canyon Drive and La Verne Way, and for the stables at the southern end of the property. Smoke Tree Ranch purposefully maintained a rustic atmosphere. Homes were required to be one story and sit apart on large lots with no large lawns or non-native shade trees.¹⁹¹ They were to be built in a traditional Ranch style with a pitched shingle roof.¹⁹² Streets were intentionally left as dirt roads groomed by a sprinkler wagon and scraper. There were no street signs, and instead roads were indicated with rock markers. The compound was originally encircled by barbed-wire fencing. Prior to 1946, there were no private pools at Smoke Tree Ranch. Instead, colonists used the communal pool area which became a focal point of social activity.¹⁹³ The pool and tennis courts were designed by architect Harold J. Spielman.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 99.

¹⁸⁹ Smoke Tree Ranch Website, <http://www.smoketreeranch.com/history.html> (accessed November 22, 2014).

¹⁹⁰ Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 166.

¹⁹¹ Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 166.

¹⁹² Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 74.

¹⁹³ Billy Stanek, “Walt’s Hidden Hideaway,” November 16, 2011. <https://d23.com/walts-hidden-hideaway/>

¹⁹⁴ “Subdivision of New Unit Started in Ranch Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 1937.

In his book *The Frontier of Leisure*, historian Lawrence Culver identifies Smoke Tree Ranch as looking unlike much of Palm Springs architecture of the time and instead reflecting the Ranch-style architecture in California and across America. “They were clear early examples of the ranch house—the domestic architectural style that would carpet the floor of the San Fernando Valley after World War II, “ writes Culver, “and appear in every community in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁹⁵



The California Ranch style Donald Gilmore Residence (1944, Clark & Frey) in Smoke Tree Ranch. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.

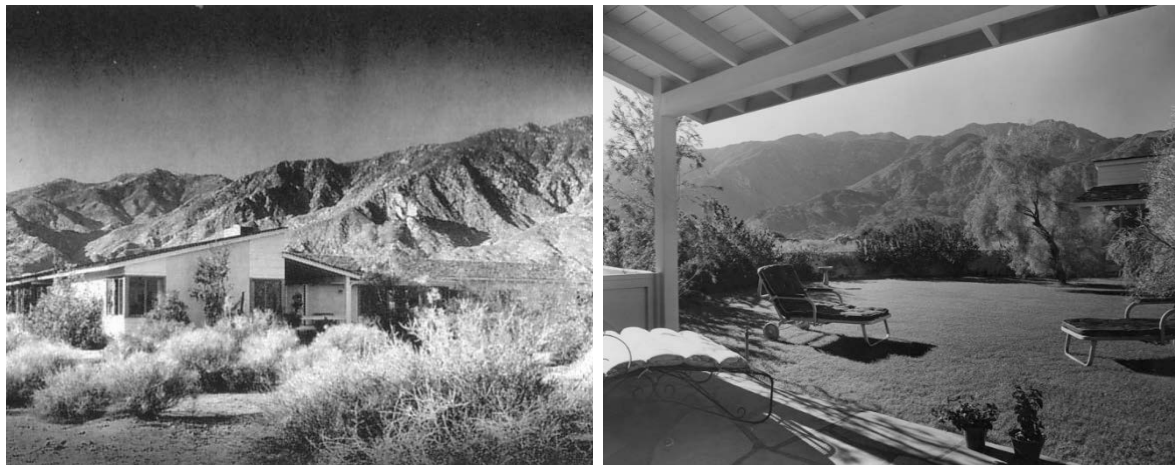


The common swimming pool at Smoke Tree Ranch, circa 1957. Source: Calisphere.

¹⁹⁵ Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 167.

The first house in Smoke Tree Ranch was built by Ted and Isabel Slocum.¹⁹⁶ Residents of Smoke Tree Ranch tended to be wealthy industrialists such as the Weyerhaeuser family (of the Washington-based forestry and paper company), King Gillette (of safety razor fame), and Milo Bekins (of Bekins Moving and Storage).¹⁹⁷ Another prominent resident was the Reverend Charles E. Fuller,¹⁹⁸ whose house was constructed in 1940-41 and designed by architect Rose Connor.¹⁹⁹ The Fuller Residence and studio are of adobe construction, reflecting the resurgence of adobe as a contemporary building material in the 1920s and 1930s as advocated by Southern California architects such as John Byers and Clarence Cullimore, Sr. The thermal properties and western heritage of adobe made it a logical choice for Smoke Tree Ranch.

One of Smoke Tree Ranch's most famous residents was Walt Disney. Disney purchased his first Smoke Tree Ranch home in 1948.²⁰⁰ In 1954, Disney sold the home to raise money for the creation of Disneyland in Anaheim. According to a 1977 interview with Smoke Tree's Vice President Brad Poncher, Disney's "studio set designers were responsible for the design of some of the ranch's guest cottages."²⁰¹ The Disneys purchased their second Smoke Tree Ranch home in 1957, two years after Disneyland opened and Disney's movie and television empire was well established.



L: The Markham House (1941/1950, Clark & Frey) reflects Modernist architects Albert Frey and John Porter Clark's preference for clean, simple lines in the traditional language of the ranch house. Source: *Albert Frey, Architect*, 73. R: 1947 photograph of the Markham House showing the integration of interior and exterior space. Photo: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

¹⁹⁶ *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life* (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad (Digital Rain Films, www.digitalrainfilms.com).

¹⁹⁷ Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2004), 250.

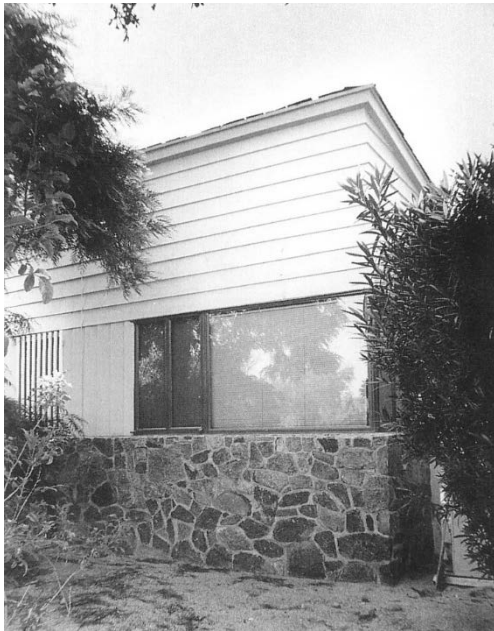
¹⁹⁸ Reverend Fuller gained renown as the radio host and speaker of *The Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, a weekly Sunday broadcast that aired from 1937 to 1968.

¹⁹⁹ *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, April 19, 1940, 43.

²⁰⁰ Allene Arthur, "When the Desert Was Disney's Land," *Palm Springs Life*, December 1977. <https://www.palmspringslife.com/when-the-desert-was-disneys-land/> (accessed January 2015).

²⁰¹ Arthur, "When the Desert Was Disney's Land," *Palm Springs Life*, December 1997.

Many Smoke Tree Ranch homes were built by the noted local Modernist architect Albert Frey.²⁰² Frey's preference for modern architecture is evident in the houses he designed at Smoke Tree, where his eye for proportion and simplicity created elegant modern ranch houses. Frey's design for the Lyons Residence (1948, Clark & Frey) was, in fact, deemed "too modern" and the architect was banned from building there for almost three years.²⁰³ Between 1941 and 1983, Albert Frey designed houses and additions for 30 Smoke Tree Ranch residences. Examples include the Markham Residence (1941; 1950), the Overly Residence (1941, 1947, 1948, 1983), Gilmore Residence (1944, 1947, 1956, 1966, 1977), Turner Residence (1948, 1956, 1986), and the Armstrong Residence (1964). Frey also designed additions to the Administration and Dining Room Building (1967) and was responsible for further work on the Smoke Tree Ranch Office in 1983.



The Lyons Residence (1948, Clark & Frey) was deemed "too modern" and "too tall" for the rustic community and the Board of Directors banned Albert Frey from building in Smoke Tree Ranch for three years. Source: *Albert Frey, Architect*, p. 100.

²⁰² There are residences in Smoke Tree Ranch by the both the partnership of Clark & Frey, along with later residences designed by Frey individually.

²⁰³ Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey, Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 74.

Other architects known to have worked in the Smoke Tree Ranch development include William Cody, Harold B. Zook, Allen G. Siple, E. Stewart Williams, and Wallace Neff. Siple designed the Paul Trousdale Residence (c. 1950), which was featured in *House Beautiful* magazine.²⁰⁴ Neff designed the Smoke Tree Ranch home for Mr. and Mrs. George Miller (c. 1950). Carl W. Denney, AIA is credited with the design of Walt Disney's second house.²⁰⁵



Paul Trousdale's California Ranch style residence (c. 1950, Allen G. Siple) in Smoke Tree Ranch, photographed by Maynard Parker for *House Beautiful* magazine. Source: Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Digital Library.



The George Miller Residence (c. 1950, Wallace Neff) in Smoke Tree Ranch. Photograph by Hal Waltz. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*.

²⁰⁴ Famed industrial and furniture designer Greta Magnusson Grossman (1906-1999) did the interiors for this residence.

²⁰⁵ Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad (Digital Rain Films, www.digitalrainfilms.com).

Chino Canyon Mesa (1935-36)

Chino Canyon Mesa was developed by local realtor Rufus J. Chapman (1907-1970) in 1935. This forty-eight parcel subdivision was developed in two phases during 1935-36 and is bordered by Vista Chino on the north, Stevens Road on the south, Wawona Road on the east, and a line mid-block on the west at approximately 500 Wawona Road. A third phase of the tract consisting of twelve parcels bordered by Chino Canyon Road to the north, Vista Chino to the South, and Via del Norte to the east was subdivided in 1945 by W.J. Reynolds and Charles J. Burket (who at one time served as Palm Springs School Board president).

Vista Del Monte (1935)

Vista del Monte, one of the larger developments of the 1930s, was an extension of the Palm Springs Racquet Club that opened in 1934. Racquet Club owners Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy subdivided the forty six-parcel Vista del Monte tract (1935), just north of the resort in the area bordered by San Rafael Drive to the north, Santa Clara Way to the south, Indian Avenue (present-day Indian Canyon Avenue) to the east, and Virginia Road to the west. At the time, Vista del Monte was the northernmost residential neighborhood in Palm Springs.

El Mirador Estates (1935-1936)

Following the Depression-era demise of the golf course at El Mirador, El Mirador Estates (1935-36) was subdivided by Prescott Stevens' daughter Sallie Stevens Nichols and her realtor husband Culver Nichols, along with local developer Ernest Off.²⁰⁶ These large parcels continued the elite residential development agenda for the area around the El Mirador Hotel. Given its prime location and large parcels, the tract quickly became home to prominent villagers who built architecturally significant homes. These include the James V. Guthrie Residence (1935, Clark & Frey) at 666 Mel Avenue; Frey House #1 (1940, Clark & Frey; demolished); the Halberg Residence (1936, Clark & Frey) at 723 E. Vereda del Sur; the Williams Residence (1956, E. Stewart Williams; demolished) at 1250 Paseo El Mirador; and the Sieroty Residence (1941, Clark & Frey) at 695 E. Vereda del Sur.

Residents of El Mirador Estates included a number of historically significant personages including movie star Eddie Cantor (720 Paseo El Mirador, 1941; substantially altered); singer Keely Smith (1055 Paseo El Mirador; substantially altered); MGM Screenwriter Irving Brecher (723 E. Vereda Sur, 1941, Clark & Frey); famed interior designer William Haines (651 Paseo El Mirador; demolished); and artist Dale Chihuly (1250 Paseo El Mirador). Local Racquet Club owner and actor Charles Farrell lived at 630 E. Tachevah Road (1934; HSPB-80).

²⁰⁶ The golf course was developed by Prescott T. Stevens. The Great Depression was hard on Stevens, however. The golf course closed, the hotel was sold, and he died in 1932.

Desert Sands (1935)

One of the most interesting tract developments of the mid-1930s is that of Desert Sands (1935-36). It was developed by real estate broker Edmond F. Lindop (1901-1968), who was also a distributor for General Houses, Inc., a company specializing in prefabricated steel houses. General Houses was a pioneer in the production of prefabricated houses, which were designed by Chicago-based architect Howard T. Fisher. The company received national media attention in 1932, and a prototype steel house was exhibited at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Originally from Chicago, Lindop worked in real estate there and may have become aware of the work of Howard T. Fisher in that capacity. Lindop continued to diversify his business holdings during this period, expanding into the insurance business.²⁰⁷ By 1936, Lindop operated three offices: Chicago, Palm Springs and downtown Los Angeles.²⁰⁸

Desert Sands is a 104-parcel development subdivided in three phases. Initially, Lindop envisioned the tract as traditionally constructed homes. To ensure high architectural standards, Lindop formed a review board for Desert Sands by which all designs had to be approved. The board consisted of Lindop himself, Hollywood architect William C. Rich,²⁰⁹ and local designer/builder Van Evera Bailey.

In 1935, Lindop erected a Ranch-style tract sales office at the corner of Hermosa Avenue and Tamarisk Road. He commissioned Van Evera Bailey to design and build a Model Home (1935, Van Evera Bailey), and then enlarge it six months later.²¹⁰ In late 1935 he constructed a speculative home in the "Bavarian style" and in early 1936 began construction on a "New England Colonial" type home fashioned in plan as a "Maltese cross" where each wing was designed as an entity: den, bunk room, fireplace, and dinette.²¹¹ Around this time, Lindop expanded his firm's services to include architectural design services and general contracting (headed by Myron H. Lewis). These services were also made available to homebuyers not purchasing in the Desert Sands tract.²¹²

By spring of 1936, lots in the first phase were nearly sold out. In October of 1936, Lindop was appointed the California Distributor for General Houses, Inc. and in November of 1936, Lindop erected a General Houses steel house in the subdivision at 1320 Tamarisk Road (1936, General Houses, Inc.). Advertised as "The House That Science Built" the public was invited to observe the unique building process. The house had a steel framework with panels of compressed asbestos composition on the exterior, sheet aluminum insulation and plywood panel on the interior wall.²¹³ Sales rhetoric advised buyers that due

²⁰⁷ "Large Offices," *Palm Springs News*, November 14, 1935-November 21, 1935, 18.

²⁰⁸ "Expansion: Now Three Offices," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1936, 16.

²⁰⁹ This name may have been altered by OCR scanning of original materials. This may be the Pasadena-based architect William Richards (1871-1945).

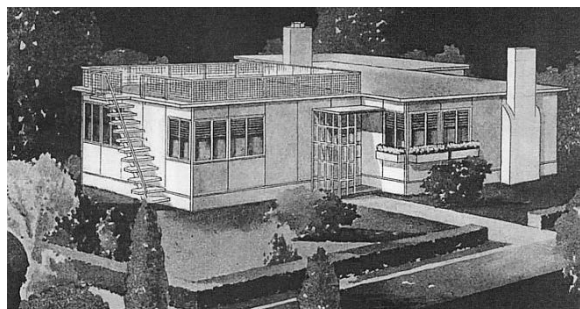
²¹⁰ "Enlarge Model Home," *Palm Springs News*, December 12-to December 19, 1935, 4.

²¹¹ "Start Work on Unusual Home," *Palm Springs News*, February 27, 1936-March 5, 1936, 3.

²¹² "Start Work on Unusual Home," *Palm Springs News*, February 27, 1936-March 5, 1936, 3.

²¹³ "Different," *Palm Springs News*, December 7, 1936, 13.

to this construction technique space equivalent to an extra room was retained vs. standard construction methods. Notably, the house was also an all-electric home and “the first house of [General Houses, Inc.] to be erected in California.”²¹⁴



L: Rendering of a General Homes, Inc. model house constructed by Edmund F. Lindop at 1320 Tamarisk Road (HSPB-87). There were many different style model houses, including period revival styles. Source: Ladies Home Journal, 1934. Rendering by Earl Horter.
R: 1320 Tamarisk Road in 2012, <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/riverside/steel-modern-a-history-of-steel-houses-in-palm-springs.html>.

In an attempt to appeal to a wider market, by January 1937, Lindop was featuring another architecturally unique home in the tract. Known as the “Pink Oasis,” it was located on Verbena and built for Fred C. Baker with a distinctive octagon-shaped living room.²¹⁵ By April of that same year, Lindop was featuring a “modern-ranch style all-gas home” located on San Jacinto Way between Hermosa Drive and Paseo De Anza.²¹⁶ Lindop’s construction of model homes was supported by an extensive local advertising campaign that served him well. Lots sold quickly.²¹⁷

Racquet Club Colony (1935)

The Racquet Club Colony is a small, but notable subdivision. It was developed beginning in 1935 on land located directly north of the Racquet Club. The developer of the tract was Walter N. Marks of Beverly Hills. Marks was heavily involved in Southern California real estate development for decades and was, along with his wife Doris, actively involved with the desert community and a major figure in the creation of the Palm Springs Desert (Art) Museum, among other civic and charitable endeavors.

²¹⁴ “Steel House Now Being Erected,” *The Desert Sun*, November 20, 1936, 1.

²¹⁵ “Home Sold,” *Palm Springs News*, March 11, 1937, 5. The address could not be confirmed.

²¹⁶ “Many Inspect Ranch Home,” *Palm Springs News*, April 29, 1937, 9.

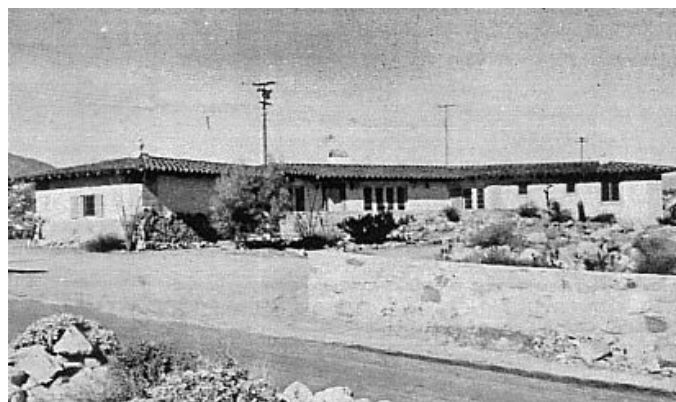
²¹⁷ Lindop was not the first builder to erect a prefabricated steel house in Palm Springs. Ralph A. Nesmith, a sales representative for Palmer Steel Buildings, Inc. built a Palmer Steel House in Palm Springs circa 1935. The Palmer product used steel sections developed for commercial buildings that were in regular production. The method of “cellular steel construction” was deemed unique among steel systems. As reported in the *Desert Sun* in December of 1936, “Palm Springs now has two or three steel buildings and it is reported a number of people are considering the construction of steel.” Additional Palmer Steel Buildings were constructed in Palm Springs: a multi-family residential complex of Palmer Steel Buildings was built along S. Indian Canyon Drive (behind the Tahquitz Vista Apartments, 418 S. Palm Canyon Drive, demolished) in 1937 (demolished).

Marks was also an avid tennis player and one of the original founding members of the Racquet Club. He was the third person to sign up for club membership just behind actors Paul Lukas and Charles Butterworth. Shortly after the club's opening, Marks purchased the property to the north and laid out streets in a grid. The main thoroughfare was Santa Catalina Road and Marks had an ornamental gateway constructed at the tract entrance just off Indian Canyon Drive.

Marks took an active hand in the tract's development, and the first eight houses were built under his supervision. The first three were for his friends and fellow Racquet Club members Paul Lukas, Charles Butterworth, and I. Rubin. The three houses were built together along what was originally known as La Puerta Del Sol (presently Puerta del Sol). They were designed by Los Angeles architect John P. Pedersen and built by Harvey Maclean. Marks engaged architect Roland E. Coate to design his home (174 W. Santa Catalina Road, 1936; extensively altered).²¹⁸ The tract was advertised as having generous three-quarter acre lots and the Marks-built homes were sold completely furnished with interior decoration by Mrs. Thelma Wertheimer, owner of the Colonial House Hotel. The tract's development slowed during the war years but resumed in the late 1940s. Although there are a few exceptions, most homes in the tract were constructed by 1952.

Little Tuscany (1936)

Builder and real estate developer Alvah Hicks (1884-1944) worked extensively with Prescott T. Stevens during the 1920s to develop residential neighborhoods in Palm Springs. However, in summer of 1936, Hicks decided to create a subdivision of his own, "Little Tuscany," in a short rocky wash in the north end of Palm Springs. The Little Tuscany tract includes Chino Canyon Road, Lombardy Road and Panorama Road, Vista Drive, W. Cielo Drive, Tuscan Road, and Leonard Road west of Via Monte Vista. Hicks gave the area the name Little Tuscany, "because it reminded him of the Tuscan Hills of Italy."²¹⁹ In total, it includes sixty-two large, irregularly-shaped parcels, the first forty of which were subdivided by Hicks and his wife Teresa (Tess) Hicks in 1936-37.



Bullock's Demonstration House in Little Tuscany, as published in *Palm Springs News*, December 1937. Photograph by Frank Partridge, Jr.

²¹⁸ The home bore stylistic similarities to another residence the architect designed around the same time for actor Gary Cooper in the Brentwood Highlands in Los Angeles.

²¹⁹ "Sand Traps and Sun Lure Outdoor Types to Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1967, J1.

In 1938, Bullock's department store furnished another "Demonstration House" in Little Tuscany (1937-38, Brewster and Benedict) that was featured in *California Arts + Architecture* and promoted in the *Los Angeles Times*. The original Ranch-style home, located at 1725 Tuscan Road, was a showcase for Hicks, the former carpenter turned homebuilder.

The second phase of Little Tuscany, including the westernmost portions of Chino Canyon Road and West Cielo Drive, were developed in 1948 by Harold Hicks (1909-1997) and Caroline Hicks, the couple's son and daughter-in-law. Harold carried on the prominence of the Hicks name in Palm Springs by being active in insurance and real estate. While some construction in Little Tuscany took place before World War II, the majority of homes were constructed after the war. Common styles include Mid-century Modern and Hollywood Regency.

As told by Harold Hicks to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1967, "Residents had laughed when his father had been forced to buy 250 acres of what looks like a veritable sea of stones from the Southern Pacific Railroad in order to utilize a few acres as a reservoir site... (he) used mules pulling timber sleds to remove the rocks in a pyramid-like operation."²²⁰ Later, the younger Hicks used bulldozers to move the stones.

²²⁰ "Sand Traps and Sun Lure Outdoor Types to Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1967, J1.

SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY**Property Types: Single-family residence; Historic District**

There are significant residential developments in Palm Springs dating to the period between the First and Second World Wars. These include several large residential subdivisions that were recorded in Palm Springs in the 1920s. Residential growth and development continued through the 1930s, unlike in many cities in the United States; however, in general the large residential subdivisions of the 1920s were replaced by more modest developments. Architecture in Palm Springs from this period largely reflected wider trends in Southern California, including a prevalence for period revival styles; however, there are significant local works of Modern architecture dating to the pre-World War II era. There is infill development throughout Palm Springs' early residential tracts, as most early tracts were developed over several decades; as a result, there are few pre-World War II tracts that are eligible as historic districts. Tract features, such as original landscape features and rock walls should be considered when evaluating residential neighborhoods. Remnant rock walls that are not part of historic districts should be given special consideration for local planning purposes.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A residential property or neighborhood from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ²²¹	As a good and intact example of 1920s or 1930s residential development reflecting an important period of growth and transition in the city. Due to development patterns in Palm Springs, there are few tracts developed during this period that are eligible for historic designation; therefore, intact examples that are scattered throughout the prewar neighborhoods are eligible for individual designation.
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Significant persons within this theme include members of the community who may have been influential in the development of Palm Springs, or who gained significance within their profession. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are typically those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.

²²¹ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REASON
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of residences that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district; eligible districts may span several periods of development. Residences from this period may also contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes. District boundaries may represent original tract boundaries, or they may comprise several adjacent tracts, or a portion of a tract or neighborhood. The district must be unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, and architectural quality. Tract features, including street lights, landscaping, parkland, and other amenities may contribute to the significance of the district.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ²²² A residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships,

²²² *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
	<p>proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. There is a relatively large number of prewar single-family residences, particularly from the 1930s, scattered throughout the early residential subdivisions. Therefore, individually eligible examples identified in the survey typically retain all or most of their original windows, particularly on the primary façade, original wall cladding, and do not have additions that are visible from the public right-of-way.</p>
B/2/2 (Person)	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	<p>A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style, or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique.²²³ A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.</p>
A/1/6 (District)	<p>In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement roof materials, replacement garage doors, and replacement of windows may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. Major alterations such as substantial additions that are visible from the public right-of-way or alter the original roofline would not be acceptable. Original tract features may also be</p>

²²³ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
	contributing features to the historic district under this theme. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

Single-family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent important patterns and trends in residential development from this period, including representing 1920s and 1930s development and settlement patterns; an association with an important developer; an association with Palm Springs as an artists’ enclave; an association with tourism in Palm Springs; or
- represent an excellent, rare, or influential example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a significant concentration of the contributors dating from the period of significance;
- reflect planning and design principles from the period;
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)

This theme explores the design and construction of early 20th century multi-family residences in Palm Springs. Unlike densely populated urban areas of Southern California where duplexes, fourplexes, and large multi-story apartment buildings flourished during the 1910s and 1920s, multi-family residential development in Palm Springs generally took three forms: mixed use commercial and residential, bungalow courts or courtyard apartments, and two-story apartment buildings. In most cases, these multi-family configurations were listed as “apartment-hotels” with “housekeeping apartments”²²⁴ where renters could rent by the day, week, month, or season. They were also distinguished from hotel/resort accommodations by the presence of kitchens or kitchenettes and a lack of common congregating areas and/or recreational amenities.

The bungalow court was an adaptation of the Craftsman bungalow as an innovative solution for higher density housing for Southern California’s growing middle class. The courts promoted a specific style of living, providing the amenities of a single-family residence – privacy, gardens, and porches – with the convenience of an apartment – affordability, community, and security in the early 20th century. The courtyard form was quickly embraced by advocates for better housing conditions for the working class. For a small sum, the courts provided greater comfort and independence than apartment living, while also providing residents with a sense of community. The courtyard apartment grew directly out of the California bungalow tradition – a regionally suitable, moderately priced, and carefully designed domestic architecture. The courtyard type would persist into later periods of development, with Spanish Colonial Revival examples in the 1920s and 1930s, simplified Minimal Traditional examples in the 1930s and 1940s, and Modern courts in the post-World War II era.²²⁵ The bungalow court naturally evolved into other types of courtyard housing, including one-story courts with attached units and two-story courtyard apartments oriented around a swimming pool. All courtyard housing types share the common characteristic of a space-oriented, rather than object-oriented, approach, with the outdoor space as the central, defining element.²²⁶

A small number of notable apartment buildings were constructed in Palm Springs in the 1920s. Spanish Colonial Revival was the predominant architectural style associated with multi-family residential buildings in Palm Springs from this period, although there were some Monterey Revival and other period revival examples.

²²⁴ “Display Ad 33,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1936, B2.

²²⁵ The bungalow court led directly to the development of the motel, established in 1925 in San Luis Obispo by Arthur Heineman and designed by his brother and business partner Alfred.

²²⁶ Stefanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles: Typological Analysis*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 9.



The two-story El Encanto Apartments (1928, Marshall P. Wilkinson) at 415 S. Palm Canyon Drive (demolished) in an elegant Monterey Revival style. Source: Mott Collection, California State Library.

The first apartment building in the city was La Hacienda Apartments at 259 South Palm Canyon Drive, built by Austin and Pearl McManus.²²⁷ The first apartment court, Sunshine Court (a.k.a. Las Salinitas; demolished), at 343 N. Palm Canyon Drive was built by Dr. J.J. Kocher about 1919.²²⁸ This board-and-batten complex consisted of several individual units, each with its own fireplace. Ads from 1941 feature the court's proximity to the O'Donnell golf course as an amenity.²²⁹ Another of the early of apartment complexes in Palm Springs was El Encanto, at 415 S. Palm Canyon Drive²³⁰ (1928, Marshall P. Wilkinson; demolished) with its bachelor, double, and triple apartments.²³¹ El Encanto was published in the July 1932 issue of *Architectural Record*.

In 1928, master architect Paul R. Williams designed the Mira Monte Apartments for Ralph Pomeroy (1928, demolished)²³² at 265 E. Ramon Road.²³³ It was one of a set of Palm Springs commissions

²²⁷ "Palm Springs Destiny Placed in Good Hands," *Palm Springs News*, April 14, 1938, 10.

²²⁸ Photo 7-103, Palm Springs Historical Society.

²²⁹ "Display Ad 36," *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1941, B5.

²³⁰ El Encanto was owned in part by Mrs. Gaylord Wilshire, wife of the land developer and publisher from which Wilshire Boulevard and the Gaylord Apartments in Los Angeles take their names.

²³¹ "Building at Resort to Open Soon," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1929, D4.

²³² The Mira Monte was built on the site of the second home of Palm Springs pioneers, the McKinneys; their first home was on the Deep Well Ranch. When the house on Ramon Road burned to the ground in 1925, the McKinneys rebuilt elsewhere. Spanish American War veteran Oliver S. McKinney, who had fought in Cuba as a Rough Rider under Teddy Roosevelt, moved to Palm Springs in 1916 with his wife Rose and their five children. McKinney had constructed a steam-powered rig to dig wells on his Little Morongo Canyon Ranch, and was hired by rancher Raymond Cree, the Riverside Superintendent of Schools, to dig wells on Cree's Palm Springs property. The McKinneys stayed in Palm Springs and had three more children. In addition to digging wells, McKinney found steady work planting large palms and cacti in the growing village. In 1925 the McKinneys opened the Desert Nursery on South Palm Canyon Drive, along with a 20-unit tourist court and a trailer park. Sources: Niemann, 101 and Renee Brown, "Explore Palm Springs: Oliver S. McKinney," *Palm Springs Life, Desert Guide*, June 2015, www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/Desert-Guide/June-2015/Explore-Palm-Springs-Oliver-S-McKinney/ (accessed August 16, 2015).

²³³ *The Desert Sun*, October 4, 1949.

designed by Williams at this early part of his career, which included the original Deep Well Ranch buildings, the Tahquitz Vista Apartments, the Del Tahquitz Hotel, and Casa Palmeras. The Mira Monte was a one-story courtyard apartment in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.²³⁴



L: The Casa Palmeras Apartments (1928, Paul R. Williams) at 175 E. Tamarisk Road. R: Mira Monte Apartments (c. 1930, Paul R. Williams) at 265 E. Ramon Road (demolished). Source: Mott Collection, California State Library.

Williams' Palmair/Casa Palmeras, completed in 1928, is perhaps the most prominent and distinctive multi-family residence from the period.²³⁵ Located at 175 E. Tamarisk Road, it is a fanciful Spanish Colonial Revival design with Moroccan-influenced tower details. Casa Palmeras may have been developed by Ralph Pomeroy.²³⁶ In 1936, an addition to Casa Palmeras was made by Charles Chamberlain, a major figure in the building trade in Palm Springs. Edna V. Keefe took over Casa Palmeras in 1951. She retained Los Angeles-based landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr., FASLA to design the grounds.²³⁷ Casa Palmeras is locally designated as a contributor to the Las Palmas Business Historic District.²³⁸

Despite the city's growing reputation as a tourist destination during the 1920s,²³⁹ multi-family residential development did not begin in earnest until the 1930s when a number of "new and luxurious apartments" were constructed.²⁴⁰ In the 1939-40 *Palm Springs City Directory*, 37 apartments are listed. The majority of these were clustered along Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives, or a short distance

²³⁴ The Mira Monte was expanded by H. Lawrence Plymrie in 1939, at which time the orientation was changed to front Indian Avenue and the address became 524 S. Indian Canyon (then Indian Avenue). The Mira Monte was demolished in the 1950s and replaced by the South Palm Springs branch of the Security-First National Bank, which opened to the public in September 1959.

²³⁵ Casa Palmeras appears in the 1929 Sanborn map, which was published in February 1929, indicating a completion date by 1928.

²³⁶ Steve Vaught, correspondence with project team, August 15, 2015. This association has not been confirmed. Some sources credit John Chaffey (of Cree and Chaffey) with its construction, but Chaffey did not purchase the building until 1941.

²³⁷ Steve Vaught, correspondence with project team, August 15, 2015; confirmed by landscape historian Steven Keylon.

²³⁸ A number of well-known people lived at Casa Palmeras in the 1930s, including Clifton Webb, Ann Sothern, Alice Faye, Joe Penner, Bert Wheeler, and cinematographer Karl Struss, among others.

²³⁹ According to Sanborn maps from 1929, the larger resorts (e.g., El Mirador) provided their own on-site residential accommodations for workers. The seasonal nature of the tourism business in Palm Springs also meant that many workers were likely not full-time residents.

²⁴⁰ "Building Active in Desert Area," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1930.

from those main thoroughfares on streets such as Tamarisk, Baristo, Belardo, and Andreas Roads. The apartments and bungalow courts were built primarily to accommodate seasonal visitors, rather than as long-term multi-family housing, and most were designed in the prevailing Spanish Colonial Revival style. Due to expanding commercial development during the post-World War II period, many prewar multi-family residential buildings were demolished or significantly altered.

Examples include the bungalow court of Los Arboles at 784 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1935; altered), the Ambassador Apartment Hotel, currently the Triada Hotel, at 640 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1937, Edith Northman; HSPB-49), and the Colonial House (1936, Charles O. Matcham), later Howard Manor and currently the Colony Palms Hotel, at 572 N. Indian Canyon Drive. The Colonial House was planned to occupy the entire block. The first unit of this Spanish Colonial Revival-style complex was built in 1936 along the lot frontage with two large wings to the rear enclosing a large landscaped patio and pool. The lower floor contained seven apartments with the second floor one huge apartment.²⁴¹ It was built for casino owner Al Wertheimer and allegedly featured an underground gambling den accessed only by a secret passage.²⁴² The second-floor unit was occupied by owner/manager Thelma Wertheimer (1907-1974).

As a byproduct of the interest in steel housing in Palm Springs and elsewhere, in 1937 construction began on the Palmer Steel Court (completed 1938, Vincent Palmer; demolished) which consisted of nine duplex units of Palmer Steel Buildings.²⁴³ These units, constructed for Rose Dugan, fronted on Indian Avenue but were located directly behind the Tahquitz Vista Apartments at 418 S. Palm Canyon Drive. Dugan, recognizing that “low-rental homes should be provided for employees of Palm Springs establishments,” elected to construct these units. According to the *Desert Sun*, Mr. Spenser of Carl’s restaurant arranged to lease the court with plans to rent them only to local employees with “no apartments for tourists.”²⁴⁴ As such, the Palmer Steel Court was one of the first projects to function purely as housing for local employees. It was featured in *Architectural Forum* in February 1938.



Palmer Steel Court, 1938, Vincent Palmer (demolished).
Source: *Architectural Forum*, February 1938, p. 165.

²⁴¹ “New Building Started Here,” *Palm Springs News*, April 23, 1936-April 30, 1936, 1; 10.

²⁴² Historic Site Preservation Board, “Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories,” undated, 7.

²⁴³ “18-Apartment Court to Be Built Here,” *The Desert Sun*, January 1-January 8, 1934, 2.

²⁴⁴ “18-Apartment Court to Be Built Here,” *The Desert Sun*, January 1-January 8, 1934, 2.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY**Property Types: Multi-family residence (mixed use commercial and residential, bungalow court, courtyard apartment, two-story apartment building)**

Although there are some examples of multi-family residences dating to the early 20th century, multi-family residential development did not begin in earnest in Palm Springs until the 1930s. Many early multi-family residences in Palm Springs have been demolished to accommodate new development, and therefore extant examples from this period are rare. The predominant architectural style for multi-family residences from this period is Spanish Colonial Revival. There are several extant architecturally significant examples designed by prominent architects, including the Chaney Apartments at 275 E. Tamarisk Road (1939, Clark & Frey).

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A multi-family residential property from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ²⁴⁵	As an excellent example of early multi-family residential development reflecting the growth of Palm Springs during the pre-World War II era. Eligible examples represent some of the earliest extant multi-family residences in Palm Springs.
B/2/2 (Person)	For its association with a significant person. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are typically those associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period; as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect; or as an excellent, rare, or threatened multi-family residential property type. There are a small number of bungalow courts that have infill buildings added to the site that obscure the original court; due to the rarity of this property type, these may be eligible if the original court configuration is still intact. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

²⁴⁵ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ²⁴⁶ A multi-family residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city's residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. ²⁴⁷
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

²⁴⁶ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

²⁴⁷ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ²⁴⁸ A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

Multi-Family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a multi-family residential property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent important patterns and trends in multi-family residential development from this period; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; or
- represent an important or rare multi-family residential property type; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

²⁴⁸ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

THEME: TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1917-1944)

Palm Springs is said to be the “jeweled showcase of mobile living.” Probably nowhere else has this latest American phenomena reached such perfection in terms of simplified luxury and informal elegance. Here the mechanics of business have out-run lexicography. New words and terms are needed to describe what goes...it is a bit of a contradiction to apply the term “mobile home” to the many establishments where sturdy cabanas, car ports, fountains and stone walls enclose the central living unit. Hundreds of these homes can be seen in our many “super deluxe” parks.”²⁴⁹

Trailer and mobile home parks were largely a post-World War II phenomenon, but they have their roots in prewar America. The growth in automobile ownership combined with a post-World War I restlessness led to the rise of family “autocamping” trips as a popular pastime during the mid-1920s. Enterprising car campers began building their own canvas tent trailers on wooden single-axle platforms. The idea caught on and soon several manufacturers were making recreational tent trailers; these were called “travel trailers” or “trailer coaches” by the nascent industry. Soon manufacturers began to build larger trailers and add amenities such as camp stoves, cold-water storage, and fold-down bathroom fixtures.²⁵⁰

In the early days of autocamping, following the end of World War I, the most common practice was for campers to stop by the side of the road or in a farmer’s yard for the night. In the early 1920s, municipalities developed specially designed campgrounds made available at no charge to travelers, with potable water, toilets, electric lights, showers, and laundry.²⁵¹ During the mid-1920s, motels often sought to capitalize on the phenomenon by renting space between their cottages to autocampers. Many of these facilities were small family-run operations where the owners lived in a house or unit on the property.

The Great Depression proved a boon for the travel trailer industry as thousands of migrants from the Dust Bowl made their way to California – many in modified travel trailers – and with housing for the new migrants scarce, many turned to travel trailers as full-time living accommodations.²⁵² Campgrounds that accepted the trailers were referred to as “trailer parks” and their more urban concrete counterparts became known as “trailer courts.” By the mid-1930s, developers began planning luxury trailer parks that offered paved parking pads, individual service lines, toilet facilities and recreational amenities.²⁵³ By 1938, the American Automobile Association calculated the number of travel trailers at 300,000 and estimated ten percent of them were being used for extended full-time living, not recreational travel.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Vollie Tripp, “Jewelled Showcases,” *Palm Springs Villager*, no date or page.

²⁵⁰ John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer’s Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, WA: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 15.

²⁵¹ Allan D. Wallis, *Wheel Estate* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 39.

²⁵² Grissim, *The Complete Buyer’s Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 15.

²⁵³ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 41.

²⁵⁴ Grissim, *The Complete Buyer’s Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 15.

Nationally, many citizens reacted to the trailer parks and courts as unsightly and argued they were occupied by people of questionable character. In response, many cities passed zoning ordinances designed to keep the trailer villages out: banishing them from the city limits, prohibiting the use of such trailers for living, or requiring that they be moved every few days. In Palm Springs, the travel trailer's early identity as a vacation vehicle and the city's popularity as a vacation destination were a natural match. Here, trailer parks were far from reviled, and instead the trend of autocamping was embraced from the earliest days of the small family-run parks through the later establishment of planned trailer parks. In 1937, trailer manufacturers sponsored a caravan to Palm Springs. Over sixty trailers left Los Angeles but by the time they reached Palm Springs, some 275 trailers were part of the group.²⁵⁵ During the 1930s, Palm Springs even developed its own specialized newsletter, *The Trailer Chronicle*, for the large numbers of trailer travelers to the city. In addition to the parks themselves, an important site associated with prewar trailer culture in Palm Springs was Pavy's Butane and Trailer Supply Store (1001 S. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished). Pavy's sold trailers, accessories, and replacement parts.



Orchard Trailer Park named for the adjacent apricot orchards and advertised as “the shadiest trailer park in Palm Springs.” Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

The first known accommodation in Palm Springs for trailer campers was McKinney's Palm Canyon Court and Trailer Park at 634 S. Palm Canyon Drive. It was established by Rose and Oliver McKinney²⁵⁶ soon after their arrival in the city in 1916.²⁵⁷ This property included 33 trailer spaces and 18 cottages. The site was razed in 1972 for new commercial development.²⁵⁸ Other early trailer courts include Hatchitt's Auto Court at 196 S. Indian Avenue (demolished); Mountain View Trailer Park and Furnished Rooms at 273 S. Indian Avenue (demolished); and Orchard Trailer Park at 1862 S. Palm Canyon Drive, which took its name from the adjacent apricot orchards. Touted as “the shadiest trailer park in Palm Springs” Orchard Trailer Park included guest cottages and spaces for trailer parking by the day, week,

²⁵⁵ “Rolling Homes Go into High,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1937, 14.

²⁵⁶ The proprietor Oliver McKinney also ran Palm Springs' first nursery.

²⁵⁷ “Hotel to Replace Landmark,” *The Desert Sun*, January 21, 1971.

²⁵⁸ “Office Building Proposed for McKinney Site,” *The Desert Sun*, February 17, 1972.

or month.²⁵⁹ Another early and important example of a trailer court was the Crossley Trailer Court at 1543 E. Ramon Avenue. Owned by early African-American Palm Springs businessman Lawrence Crossley, he sold the site in 1953 to help fund his development of the Crossley Tract east of the city.²⁶⁰



Postcard of the Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road.

Although Palm Springs already had small facilities that welcomed trailer camping, in 1936 the city established Ramon Trailer Park (1441 E. Ramon Avenue), which was the city's first comprehensively-designed trailer park development. It was touted as the "first modern stopping place for those that have their home on wheels,"²⁶¹ and regaled as the equal of the best trailer camps in the United States and "the finest one on the Pacific Coast."²⁶² The Ramon Trailer Park was established by Jack Williams on two-and-one-half acres with 50 trailer lots.²⁶³ A *Desert Sun* ad from 1937 touts Ramon Trailer Park as the "most modern and up-to-date park on the Pacific Coast."²⁶⁴ In 1937, the park was enlarged and

²⁵⁹ "Advertisement," *The Desert Sun*, September 18, 1942.

²⁶⁰ Crossley was involved in other trailer park developments, including Tramview Village (which was located outside of the city). Crossley was also an investor/board member in the Mobile Hacienda Park, a \$600,000 trailer park built in October 1958.

²⁶¹ "De Luxe Trailer Park Is Busy Place," *The Desert Sun*, January 29, 1936.

²⁶² "De Luxe Trailer Park Is Busy Place," *The Desert Sun*, January 29, 1936.

²⁶³ Although some have attributed the development of Ramon Trailer Park to Lawrence Crossley, Williams was the developer. During the Park's expansion in 1953, however, Ramon Trailer Park absorbed the adjacent land that was Crossley Court (a.k.a., Crossley Trailer Court) at 1543 Ramon Avenue.

²⁶⁴ "Ramon Trailer Park Ad," *The Desert Sun*, January 29, 1937-February 5, 1937.

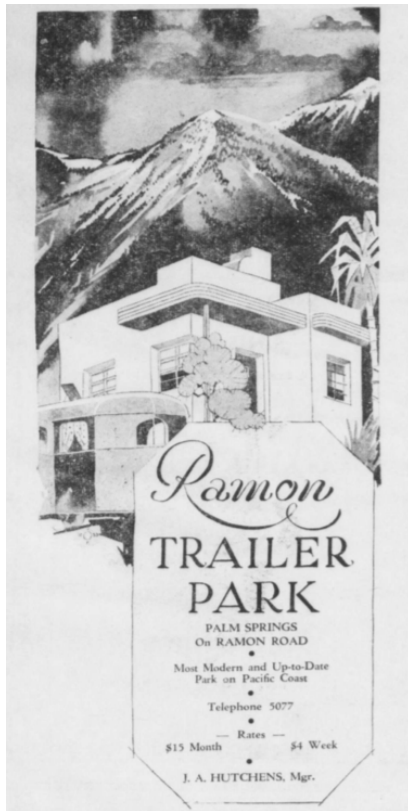
playgrounds for adults and children were added, including a large ramada with outdoor fireplace for BBQs, and shuffleboard and croquet courts. That same year, the first-ever private baths with hot and cold running water were constructed at Ramon.²⁶⁵ It was also distinguished by its landscaping, as every lot had its own planting and small lawn. In 1938, the Ramon Trailer Park was awarded “The Finest Trailer Park in Western America” by Travel Data, a national travel organization.²⁶⁶ That same year, the owners leased an additional five acres to expand operations even further. In late 1943 or early 1944, a new operator for the park installed a grocery store, lunch counter, and gas and oil station on the property.



Shuffleboard tournament at Ramon Trailer Park, featured in the *Palm Springs Villager* in the mid-1950s.

²⁶⁵ “Palm Springs Has Finest Trailer Park in West,” *The Desert Sun*, January 14, 1938. By 1939, Ramon was only one of five in the U.S. that offered private bath facilities.

²⁶⁶ “Palm Springs Has Finest Trailer Park in West,” *The Desert Sun*, January 14, 1938.



Ramon Trailer Park ad, *The Desert Sun*, January 29, 1936.

From the beginning, Ramon Trailer Park was regarded as a popular and elite destination. In February 1937, the *Desert Sun* reported 67 trailers at the park, with some of the “new trailers like palace Pullman cars, having every convenience and costing as much as \$10,000.” The clientele included “many important people who are touring the country” who, while in Palm Springs, “dined at the best hotels, cafes and spent much money with local business establishments.”²⁶⁷ In the late 1930s the *Desert Sun* began to cover visitors to the Ramon Trailer Park in the society pages. Noted personages documented to have stayed at Ramon Trailer Park included one of the founders of the Mayo Clinic Hospital;²⁶⁸ Walter A. Austin, former mayor of San Diego;²⁶⁹ and Clarke Painter, Hollywood playwright.²⁷⁰ By 1938, guests at Ramon Trailer Park were covered by the *Desert Sun* alongside visitors to the El Mirador and other resorts. A 1939 account of activities reported in the *Desert Sun* indicated that the park maintained a social director/hostess who planned two trips per week for the “trailerites” and a large lounge that featured nightly entertainment along with special lectures and film screenings.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ “67 Trailers at Ramon Park Over Week End,” *The Desert Sun*, February 26, 1937.

²⁶⁸ “250 Trailers to Arrive Here Tomorrow,” *The Desert Sun*, March 19, 1937.

²⁶⁹ “Two PS Men Drawn for Grand Jury,” *The Desert Sun*, December 10, 1937.

²⁷⁰ “Tourist Rush Breaks Records in Southern California,” *The Desert Sun*, December 24, 1937.

²⁷¹ “Ramon Trailer Park Attracts Many Guests,” *The Desert Sun*, March 10, 1944.



Ramon Trailer Park clubhouse, c. 1936. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

The Ramon Trailer Park ultimately grew to a 256-unit park featuring a clubhouse, swimming pool, and recreational courts at the center.²⁷² The park's design included a system of curving streets and use of the "town-house" layout for trailers in which the mobile home faces away from the street and is placed "in depth" to maximize privacy.²⁷³ The use of diagonal (instead of rectilinear) spaces also created a more attractive community and efficient use of land. Automobile parking was located next to the trailer unit and not relegated to clustered parking areas as it was in some trailer park developments around the country.



1940 ad for Ramon Trailer Park at 1441 E. Ramon Road touting it as "the finest in Western America." *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1940, B5.

²⁷² The number of units represents current spaces, not historical spaces which may have been combined over the years to accommodate larger homes.

²⁷³ Frederick H. Bair, Jr., *Regulation of Mobile Home Subdivisions*. Chicago, IL: American Society of Planning Officials, April 1961, <https://www.planning.org/pas/reports/report145.htm> (accessed January 2015).



Contemporary plan of Ramon Trailer Park features 256 spaces with clubhouse and amenities located at the center. It is currently unknown if the historical number of spaces was the same.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

In addition to Ramon, prewar Palm Springs was also home to the Rancho Trailer Park located at 1563 South Palm Canyon Drive (demolished). The 284-space facility included a fully landscaped park that featured a grocery, grill, barber shop, beauty shop, recreation hall, shuffleboard, and horseshoe court.²⁷⁴



Postcard of the 284-space Rancho Trailer Park which was located at 1563 South Palm Canyon Drive.

²⁷⁴ "Mr. and Mrs. Illick Acquire Rancho Trailer Park," *The Desert Sun*, March 3, 1944.

TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1917-1944): ELIGIBILITY**Property type: Historic District**

The development and rise in popularity of the trailer park/mobile home community reflects the growth in automobile ownership, combined with a post-World War I restlessness that led to autocamping as a popular pastime. The trailer park was embraced in Palm Springs unlike in many other cities, and has a particular significance related to the city's early growth and development as a tourist destination. The Ramon Trailer Park appears eligible under this theme. Although there were ad hoc family-operated trailer parks in Palm Springs as early as 1917, the Ramon Trailer Park represents the first comprehensively designed trailer park in the city. It reflects a new breed of upscale, planned/developed parks and is significant as an early and important example of this trend.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

The Ramon Trailer Park is eligible for historic designation as a historic district:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District) ²⁷⁵	As an early and excellent example of a trailer park community in Palm Springs. It is the first comprehensively designed park in the city, and at the time was lauded as the finest trailer court on the Pacific Coast. It has innovative design characteristics, including the street pattern, landscape features, and other amenities for residents.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

²⁷⁵ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a trailer park/mobile home community to be eligible for designation as a historic district, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. The trailer park must retain its original layout, street pattern, and planning characteristics. Original accessory buildings and amenities, including manager's office, pool, clubhouse, recreational, and other facilities should be present. An eligible trailer park/mobile home community will retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association.

Trailer Park/Mobile Home Community Development (1917-1944): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a trailer park/mobile home community must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent an early example of a trailer park/mobile home community in Palm Springs; and
- reflect unique or innovative design or planning characteristics; and
- display distinctive and cohesive design details; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)



Commercial buildings in Palm Springs, c. 1925. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

In the years following World War I, Palm Springs was transformed from a health resort for respiratory patients into an exclusive winter resort for the wealthy. Several resort hotels were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, cementing Palm Springs' reputation as a first-class resort community. Commercial development during this period included facilities that catered to the tourist and seasonal community, along with a growing number of commercial establishments to serve the permanent residents. Throughout the inter-war years Palm Canyon Drive (until 1930, Main Avenue) remained the primary commercial thoroughfare in Palm Springs, growing north and, to a lesser degree, south from the village's historic center at Tahquitz Canyon Way (formerly Spring Street).

In an era when architecture was dominated by traditional styles, certain styles were considered appropriate for specific uses: Gothic, for example, was for churches, Beaux Arts and Classical were commonly used for business and civic buildings. In the desert environment of Palm Springs a simplified, rustic interpretation of the popular Spanish Colonial Revival style and traditional southwestern adobe, hacienda, and wood ranch vernacular types were believed to be the best styles and types, both for residences and commercial buildings. Palm Springs' Desert Inn was an example of this, and later the larger El Mirador Hotel reflected an even more elaborate use of Spanish-derived styles.

Broad development patterns in the inter-wars period include the continued emphasis on tourism and tourist-related resources. The most prominent examples of hotels and resorts from the pre-World War II period – the Desert Inn, Oasis, and El Mirador - had a significant impact on the overall commercial development in Palm Springs and the continued investment in the city. This resulted in the construction

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

of a number of hotels and apartment hotels within the city's commercial center, along with retail, office, and entertainment-related development (represented by a variety of commercial property types), and resources that represent the growing influence of the automobile.

Sub-Theme: Hotel and Resort Development 1919-1941

In 1918 Nellie Coffman and her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, began expanding and reconstructing the Desert Inn into a first-class resort hotel. They purchased more land until the hotel grounds consisted of a "vast grassy haven"²⁷⁶ of 35 acres, occupying the entire block on the west side of Palm Canyon Drive between Andreas Road and Tahquitz Canyon Way, extending north behind the storefronts above Andreas Road and west into the foothills of Mount San Jacinto. The old tent cabins were gradually replaced with reinforced concrete buildings designed by William Charles Tanner in a simplified Spanish Colonial Revival style, including 29 bungalows and a luxurious main building with a lounge and dining room.²⁷⁷ The lushly landscaped grounds included tennis courts and the village's first swimming pool. Square plastered piers on Palm Canyon Drive framed the main entrance, and a boutique on the grounds housed a branch of Bullock's department store.²⁷⁸



Desert Inn, photographed c. 1930 (demolished). Source: Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

The Desert Inn quickly became one of the most famous hotels in the country, transforming the "hot little hamlet from obscurity to world fame" and earning Nellie Coffman the title "Mother of Palm Springs."²⁷⁹ As she upgraded, Coffman relocated the Desert Inn's original bungalows to a large parcel immediately south of the Oasis Hotel. There she operated the Village Inn, a more economical alternative

²⁷⁶ Ernie Pyle, "Never Undignified," *Daily Boston Globe*, March 30, 1942, 11, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

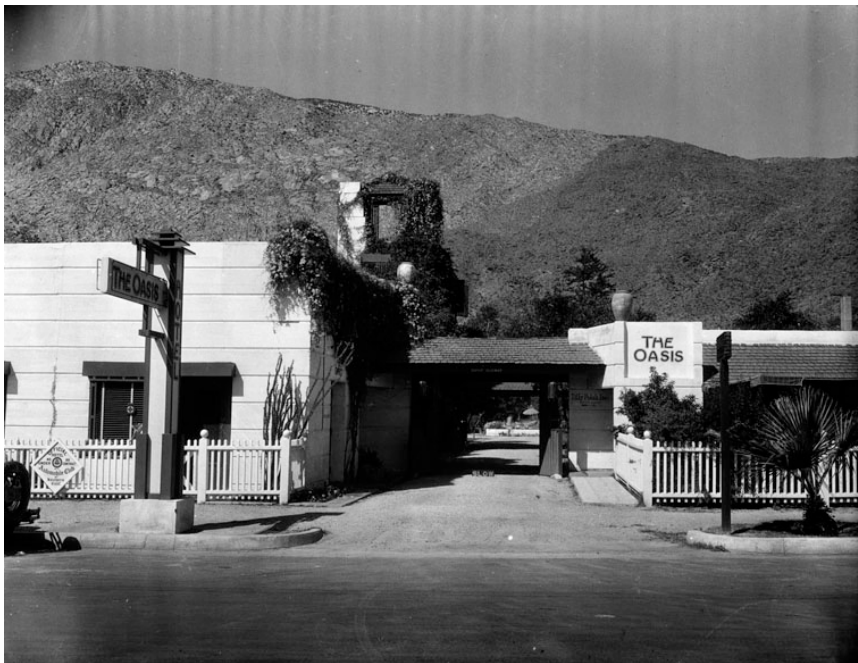
²⁷⁷ Frank S. Nugent, "It's No Mirage, It's Palm Springs," *New York Times*, December 14, 1947, SM36, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012). Sanborn maps and archival photographs indicate that the original frame bungalow remained at the corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Tahquitz Canyon Way until after World War II.

²⁷⁸ Niemann, 63, and Starr, 26.

²⁷⁹ Ed Ainsworth, "Desert Misses 'Mother' of Gay Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1950, A5, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 25, 2012).

to the posh Desert Inn, until the mid-1940s when the site was sold and cleared for construction of Bullock's department store.²⁸⁰

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 (121 S. Palm Canyon Drive, HSPB-10), opened in 1925 on the site of the McCallum family homestead.²⁸¹ In 1914, Pearl McCallum had 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.²⁸² 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.²⁸³



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

²⁸⁰ Palmer, 20, and 1929 Sanborn fire insurance map. These department stores specialized in resort wear and helped popularize that style of clothing.

²⁸¹ 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.

²⁸² Bowart et al., "The McCallum Centennial."

²⁸³ Bowart et al., "The McCallum Centennial."

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP



Oasis Hotel Tower (HSPB-10),
photographed c. 1937. 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."²⁸⁴ The Oasis opened in early 1925.²⁸⁵ 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.²⁸⁶ The hotel grounds featured a lush lawn with a large brazier, surrounded by lounge chairs, where bonfires were lit each night;²⁸⁷ and a "Persian" swimming pool set amidst the surviving fruit trees of the McCallum orchard.²⁸⁸ 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 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,"²⁸⁹ but its radical modern aesthetic would not be repeated in Palm Springs for a decade.

The city's third major resort of the 1920s, the grand Hotel El Mirador, was built in sumptuous Spanish Colonial Revival style by local developer Prescott Thresher Stevens, who spent the then-astronomical

²⁸⁴ Alan Weintraub, *Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 239.

²⁸⁵ "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1925, G12. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

²⁸⁶ "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1927, F10. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

²⁸⁷ "Resort Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1926, G12. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed October 6, 2012).

²⁸⁸ "Resort Notes," November 1, 1925, G12.

²⁸⁹ Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 28-29.

amount of \$1 million on the resort.²⁹⁰ 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; 1150 N. Indian Canyon Drive; 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.²⁹¹



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

El Mirador was launched with an extravagant party on New Year's Eve, 1927, and officially opened for business the next day.²⁹² Less than two years later the stock market crashed, throwing the country into the Great Depression and wiping out many of the Midwestern and Northeastern industrialists who were the hotel's targeted clientele. El Mirador teetered on the brink of bankruptcy but was ultimately saved by its popularity as the favorite retreat of Hollywood film stars, who had discovered the joys of winter in Palm Springs and made the hotel "one of the most prosperous, orgiastic symbols of extravagance in the midst of national poverty."²⁹³ In 1929 El Mirador opened a garage (HSPB-12) at the southeast corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Tachevah Drive to provide automotive service and chauffeurs' quarters for hotel guests.

²⁹⁰ 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).

²⁹¹ Jenifer Warren and Scott Harris, "Fire Destroys Palm Springs' El Mirador Hotel," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-07-27/news/mn-184_1_el-mirador (accessed July 29, 2012).

²⁹² Burton L. Smith, "Miracle Hotel Graces Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1928, A9.

²⁹³ McDougal and Meenan, "It's Check-Out Time," P120.

The Desert Inn, Oasis, and El Mirador remained the preeminent hotels in Palm Springs through the 1930s, but as the village grew in popularity a number of smaller hostleries sprang up to accommodate visitors of various means. In about 1919 Dr. J.J. Kocher built Sunshine Court (demolished) on a parcel in the 300 block of N. Palm Canyon Drive (then Main Avenue) that ran through to Belardo Road (then Palm Avenue). It consisted of a cluster of board-and-batten cottages around a central garden area, and its location near the O'Donnell Golf Club made it popular with vacationing golfers.²⁹⁴ In 1921 the Foldesy family purchased the Ramona Hotel, on a large parcel north of the Desert Inn, and converted it into the Spanish Colonial Revival-style Palm Springs Hotel, the second hostelry to bear that name.²⁹⁵ In 1928 silent film actress Fritzi Ridgeway built the Pueblo Revival-style Del Tahquitz Hotel (demolished in 1960) at the southeast corner of South Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road.²⁹⁶ In 1935 Ruth Hardy, an Indiana businesswoman, purchased the Birge estate (200 W. Ramon Road; HSPB-25), built by Alvah Hicks in the 1920s for the owners of the Pierce Arrow Motor Car Company. Hardy added bungalows and converted the property, a 20-room hacienda on two acres, into the exclusive, invitation-only Ingleside Inn. In 1948 Hardy became the first woman elected to the Palm Springs City Council, and is credited with the planting and lighting of palm trees along Palm Canyon Drive.²⁹⁷



Sunshine Court, c. 1919 (demolished). Source: *Images of America: Palm Springs*.

Many of the smaller hotels constructed in Palm Springs in the 1920s and 1930s, like Sunshine Court, took the form of the bungalow court. From about 1910 through the 1930s, the bungalow court flourished throughout Southern California. Composed of a series of individual dwelling units (bungalows) oriented around a central courtyard, the bungalow court promised much of the quiet and privacy of a single-family house with the flexibility and affordability of rental housing. Characteristics of the bungalow court include detached one-story bungalows usually symmetrically arranged around a central open space; the unified appearance of

individual units; separate unit entrances with front porches; and high quality interiors, including many built-ins. Often a larger multi-unit building was situated at the end of the courtyard, creating a U-shaped configuration and providing a visual terminus to the courtyard itself. The Spanish Colonial Revival-style

²⁹⁴ Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, *Images of America: Palm Springs* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 73. One of Sunshine Court's bungalows later housed the Chamber of Commerce and the City's first municipal offices.

²⁹⁵ Henderson, 74.

²⁹⁶ Niemann, 248-249. See also IMDb, "Fritzi Ridgeway Biography," *IMDb*, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0725904/bio?ref_=nm_of_bio_sm (accessed January 26, 2015).

²⁹⁷ Niemann, 146-147.

Orchid Tree Inn (261 S. Belardo Road; HSPB-72) constructed in 1930 is one of the best remaining examples of this property type in Palm Springs.

Sub-Theme: Retail and Entertainment Development 1919-1941

In addition to new hotels and resorts, the rapid increase in tourism in Palm Springs between the World Wars fueled additional commercial development, including shops, restaurants, theaters, and office buildings, to serve the growing populations of both seasonal and permanent residents. In the 1920s, Zaddie Bunker replaced the corrugated metal shed that had originally housed her garage with a substantial Mission Revival-style building, complete with an *espadaña*, a vent in the shape of a barbed quatrefoil, and a clay tile awning over the sidewalk. The Bank of America and retail shops occupied the street frontage, while the garage itself moved to the back of the building, off of Andreas Road (then Lawn Street). By the early 1930s the building was occupied by the Village Pharmacy, whose lunch counter was a popular local gathering spot.²⁹⁸

In 1930 Bunker's daughter, Frances, married Earle Strebe, who had arrived in Palm Springs during the 1926-27 season. Strebe worked at the Desert Inn as a bellman, night clerk, and projectionist, showing movies for guests in the Inn's lobby. These screenings were soon opened to the public, and as they became more popular Strebe relocated them to the auditorium of the Frances S. Stevens School. Strebe became a businessman and developer and helped his mother-in-law manage her properties. In 1932 Strebe constructed the Village Theatre on Andreas Road, just behind the Village Pharmacy, the first of eight theaters he would ultimately own or operate.²⁹⁹

The Indianoya building (HSPB-16) at 232 N. Palm Canyon Drive is characteristic of the simplified Spanish Colonial Revival style of retail development that proliferated in downtown Palm Springs in the early 1930s. The building is composed of one- and two-story volumes framing a small entrance court, with rustic brick walls and exposed wood lintels (now partially plastered). It housed an "Indian Trading Post" specializing in tourist souvenirs crafted by the local Cahuilla.

In 1933 actors Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy built two tennis courts on a plot of land at the north end of town that they had purchased from Alvah Hicks.³⁰⁰ The courts proved so popular with their Hollywood friends that the following year Farrell and Bellamy built additional courts, a swimming pool, dining room, and guest bungalows and offered memberships in the new Palm Springs Racquet Club (2743 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-83, partially damaged by fire in 2014). Pearl McManus opened her competing Tennis Club (701 W. Baristo Road) at the south end of town in 1937 on a boulder-strewn hillside at the west end of Baristo Road. The original building, altered and expanded in 1947

²⁹⁸ Palmer, 59; Henderson, 79; and 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

²⁹⁹ Niemann, 138-139.

³⁰⁰ Niemann, 132.

with a design by Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones, was modeled after a monastery on the Amalfi coast.³⁰¹ The club included an elegant oval swimming pool on a stone terrace, flanked by palm trees.

The village's most popular and most famous nightclub, the Chi Chi (217 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished), opened in 1935 on Palm Canyon Drive just north of the Village Pharmacy, on land leased from Zaddie Bunker. Beginning as a waffle house, it was converted by its owner, Irwin S. Schuman, first into a restaurant called the Desert Grille, and then into a full-fledged nightclub with dining, dancing, and live entertainment. It was expanded in 1938 and again in 1950 with the addition of the 750-seat Starlight Room. The Chi Chi was the premier nightspot of the Hollywood crowd into the 1960s, and its headliners were frequently interchangeable with its clientele.³⁰²



Carnell Building (1935, Harry J. Williams; HSPB-11).
Source: Mott Studios Collection, California State Library.

In the early 1930s Desert Inn regular Julia Shaw Patterson Carnell began investing in Palm Springs real estate. Carnell, the widow of the co-founder of the National Cash Register Company (NCR) of Dayton, Ohio, was a prominent businesswoman and philanthropist in her home town. In 1919 she helped establish the Dayton Art Institute by donating a number of artworks and a mansion in which to house them; when the Institute outgrew its first home, Carnell donated \$2 million to build a new Renaissance Revival-style museum, completed in 1930.³⁰³ In 1921 Carnell, along with other members of the Patterson family, donated \$250,000 in NCR stock to endow The Dayton Foundation, a community foundation supporting non-profit organizations in the region.³⁰⁴ Turning her attention to her annual winter retreat, Carnell purchased the Community Church property at the southeast corner of N. Palm

³⁰¹ Hess and Danish, 116-118.

³⁰² Niemann, 255-258.

³⁰³ Victor J. Danilov, *Women and Museums: A Comprehensive Guide* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005), 93.

³⁰⁴ "Founders: The Beginning of The Dayton Foundation in 1921," *The Dayton Foundation*, <http://www.daytonfoundation.org/founders.html> (accessed March 12, 2015).

Canyon Drive and E. Andreas Road and commissioned Dayton architect Harry J. Williams of Schenck and Williams, who had designed the NCR headquarters building, to design a two-story mixed-use building in Spanish Colonial Revival style.³⁰⁵ The Carnell Building (196 N. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-11) was constructed in 1935 and featured multiple shops on the ground floor, fronting onto Palm Canyon Drive and Andreas Road, with 13 offices and five apartments on the second floor.³⁰⁶ Carnell's purchase allowed the congregation to construct a new sanctuary, a striking concrete structure designed by William Charles Tanner, at 284 S. Cahuilla Road (HSPB-23).³⁰⁷



La Plaza and the Plaza Theatre (1936, Harry Williams; HSPB-22). Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Carnell also purchased from Cornelia White a three-and-one-half acre parcel that comprised most of the block bounded by S. Palm Canyon Drive, W. Tahquitz Canyon Way, S. Indian Canyon Drive, and W. Arenas Road.³⁰⁸ There she constructed La Plaza and the Plaza Theatre (1936; HSPB-22), an innovative, multi-use, car-oriented shopping center designed by Harry Williams. Its central drive and parking area run through the block from Palm Canyon to Indian Canyon, flanked by picturesque Spanish Colonial Revival-style buildings with irregular volumes, plaster walls, tile roofs, overhanging wood balconies, and arcaded *corredores*. Williams and his son Roger, also an architect, reportedly flew to Santa Barbara to study examples of “Spanish” design there, and engineers incorporated the latest structural technology developed after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake.³⁰⁹ The development included 38 shops, 24 bungalows, eight penthouses, a market, and a 137-car garage with chauffers’ quarters.³¹⁰ The Plaza Theatre, operated by Earle Strebe, featured interior walls “depicting lighted homes, [giving] one the

³⁰⁵ Stuart Lavietes, “E. Stewart Williams, 95, ‘Desert Modern’ Architect, Dies,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2005.

³⁰⁶ Palmer, 57. The Carnell Building was seriously damaged in a 2012 fire. After the fire, the upper floor, originally apartments, was rebuilt as a false façade.

³⁰⁷ “Memorial Service Honoring Mrs. Carnell Held At Community Church; Tribute Paid Memory of Prominent Village Developer,” *The Desert Sun*, February 18, 1944, 3. See also “Community Church of Palm Springs-283 South Cahuilla Road,” Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, http://www.pspreservationfoundation.org/community_church.html (accessed March 12, 2015).

³⁰⁸ Janice Kleinschmidt, “It Takes a Village,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 2011, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/December-2011/It-Takes-A-Village/> (accessed March 12, 2015).

³⁰⁹ Palmer, 21.

³¹⁰ The garage, accessed via Arenas Road, was primarily subterranean.

impression of sitting in an amphitheater.”³¹¹ As Richard Longstreth has documented, Southern California developed a number of new architectural types to respond to the increasing use of the automobile. La Plaza is a sophisticated example of this, integrating retail, apartments, hotel, theater, garage, and parking areas.

Sub-Theme: Las Palmas Business Historic District 1919-1941

The Las Palmas Business Historic District was designated by the City in 1986.³¹² It is bounded by Alejo Road to the south, El Alameda to the north, and includes most properties fronting N. Palm Canyon and N. Indian Canyon Drives on both sides. The district boundaries are illustrated in Figure 4. Through the 1920s the commercial center of Palm Springs remained clustered along a few blocks of Palm Canyon Drive (then Main Drive) primarily between Tahquitz Canyon Way (then Spring Street) and Amado Road (then Lemon Street). The area north of Alejo Road (then North Street) remained sparsely developed and almost exclusively residential through the end of the 1920s, dotted primarily with single-family residences and one notable courtyard apartment building, the Palmaire Apartments, now the Casa Palmeras (HSPB-82), designed by Paul R. Williams and located at the southwest corner of Tamarisk Road and Indian Canyon Drive. The Sanborn map from 1929 is included in Figure 5, illustrating the sparse development in the area during this period.

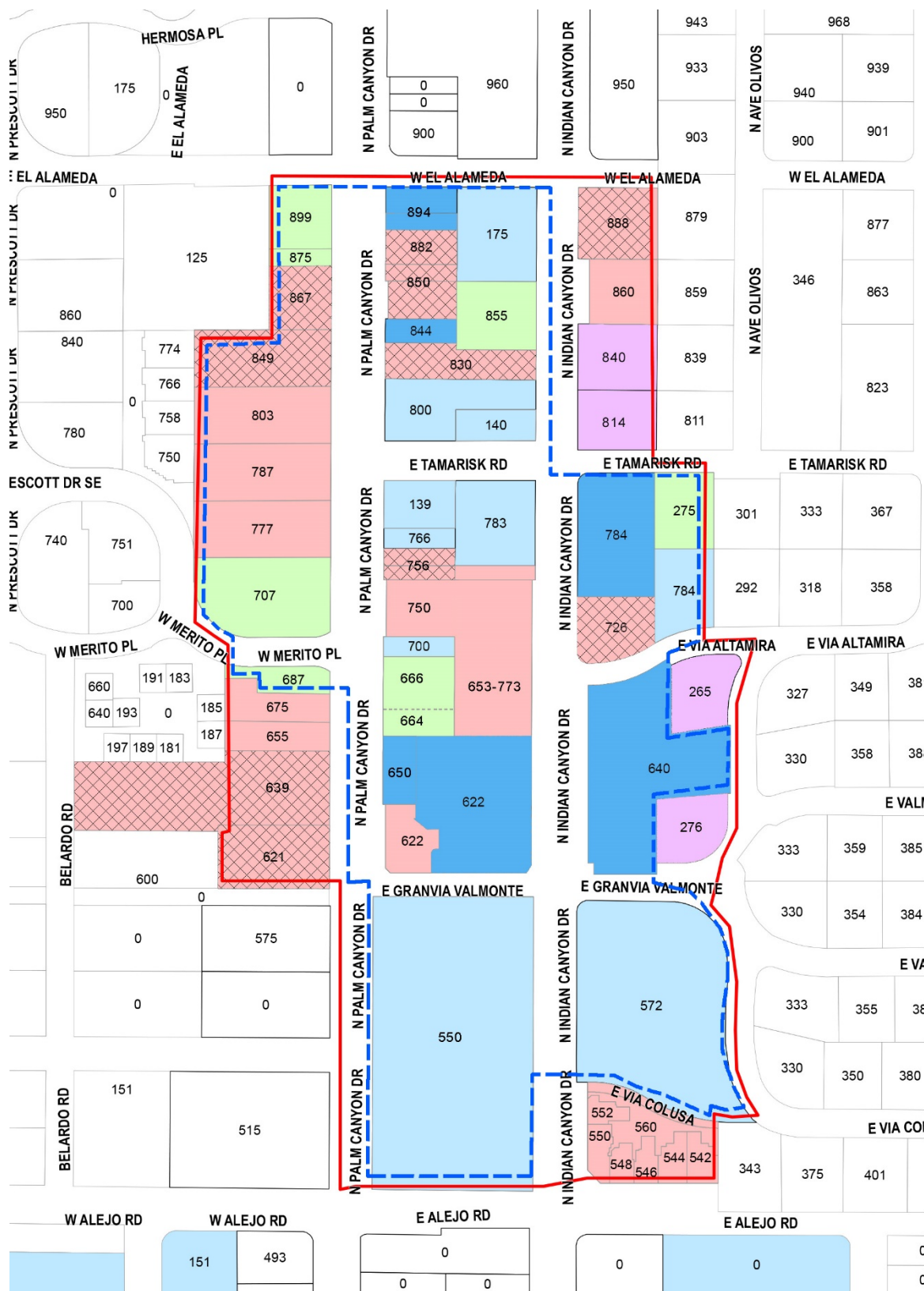


Casa Palmeras (1928, Paul R. Williams; HSPB-82). Source: California State Library.

³¹¹ “Plaza Opening Set in Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1936, 10.

³¹² Although the district was designated in 1986, a historic context for the district was developed and a re-evaluation of the contributing and non-contributing buildings was undertaken as part of this project. The survey findings are included in Appendix E.

Figure 4: Las Palmas Business Historic District 2015 Study Map



Las Palmas Business Historic District - 2015 Study Map

LEGEND

- Las Palmas Business Historic District Boundary
- 2015 Proposed Las Palmas Business Historic District Boundary Revision
- 1986 Contributor
- 1986 Contributor Recommend Reclassify as Non-contributor
- 2015 HRG & HSPB Recommended Contributor
- 2015 HSPB Recommended Contributor
- 2015 Recommended Non-Contributor
- Single-family Residence



Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1929

Las Palmas Business Historic District - 1929



The few exceptions to the scattered residential development in the north end of town in the late 1920s were the Hotel El Mirador and Garage; the Frances S. Stevens School (HSPB-7) occupying the entire block between Alejo Road and Granvia Valmonte; and the Reid Solarium and Clinic (HSPB-24) at what is now 648-650 N. Palm Canyon Drive and 645 N. Indian Canyon Drive.

The Reid Solarium represents Palm Springs as a health resort in the early 20th century. Dr. Henry Squire Reid was a New York native and a 1919 graduate of the University of Colorado Medical School. By 1927, when he obtained his California medical license, he was living in Palm Springs.³¹³ Reid constructed a “Solarium and Clinic” north of Granvia Valmonte, on a large parcel that fronted both N. Palm Canyon Drive (then Main Avenue) and N. Indian Canyon Drive (then Indian Avenue). The facility consisted of two Spanish Colonial Revival buildings – a rectangular one-story office building on Palm Canyon, and a U-shaped two-story building on Indian Canyon containing guest rooms and apartments; between them was a third building containing “sun rooms” and dressing rooms. Before 1936 Reid expanded the office building with an addition to the north that included a two-story octagonal tower.³¹⁴ Reid became “widely known in medical circles for his research on the curative values of sunlight using his Palm Springs solarium as a winter laboratory” to measure the healthful effects of ultra-violet light.³¹⁵



The Reid Clinic and Hospital (HSPB-24). Photograph c. 1938. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

³¹³ California State Archives, Sacramento, CA, *Directory, 1933*, D-273, Ancestry.com (accessed March 13, 2015).

³¹⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1929 and 1962, and archival photographs. The office and guest buildings remain but have been altered.

³¹⁵ “Ultra Violet Rays Measured,” Los Angeles Times, December 29, 1932, A5.

The uptown stretch of Palm Canyon Drive began to develop as a commercial district in the early 1930s. The popularity of Palm Springs with the Depression-proof movie industry provided more economic stability than in most other cities in the United States; as a result, there was continued commercial development during this period, and there are numerous buildings within the district constructed in the 1930s. The predominant architectural style in the district from this period is Spanish Colonial Revival; however, there are also notable Modernist examples.

Contributing buildings constructed in the 1930s represent the expansion of the city's original commercial core to the north as Palm Springs continued to grow during this period. Commercial development in the Las Palmas Business Historic District in the 1930s was partly a response to the increased pace of development in that decade in the flanking residential tracts that were originally established in the 1920s. Sparsely developed through the 1920s, these neighborhoods experienced a surge of residential construction in the following decade. (Parcel development by decade shown in Figure 5). This was likely due, at least in part, to their proximity to the popular El Mirador Hotel, which opened in 1928.³¹⁶ Several of these neighborhoods generally represent high end residential development of custom homes on large lots; Las Hacienditas and Palm Springs Estates became part of what would become known as the Movie Colony. Many of the businesses that concurrently sprang up along the adjacent stretch of Palm Canyon Drive – a market, a pharmacy, a movie theater, retail stores, and medical offices – catered to the growing residential neighborhoods to the east and west.

³¹⁶ Burton L. Smith, "Miracle Hotel Graces Desert," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1928, A9.



View of the Pacific Building (c. 1936; HSPB-13) and the El Paseo Building (1930; HSPB-27). Photograph c. 1954. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

One of the most prominent buildings constructed during this period is the El Paseo Building (HSPB-27) designed by architect Jonathan Ring and constructed in 1930 at the northeast corner of N. Palm Canyon Drive and E. Tamarisk Road.³¹⁷ The Spanish Colonial Revival-style building surrounds a central courtyard and originally featured a columned *corredor* encompassing the sidewalk along Palm Canyon Drive and cantilevered wood balconies overlooking Tamarisk Road. Tenants included the El Paseo Market and Earl Strebe's El Paseo Theater.³¹⁸

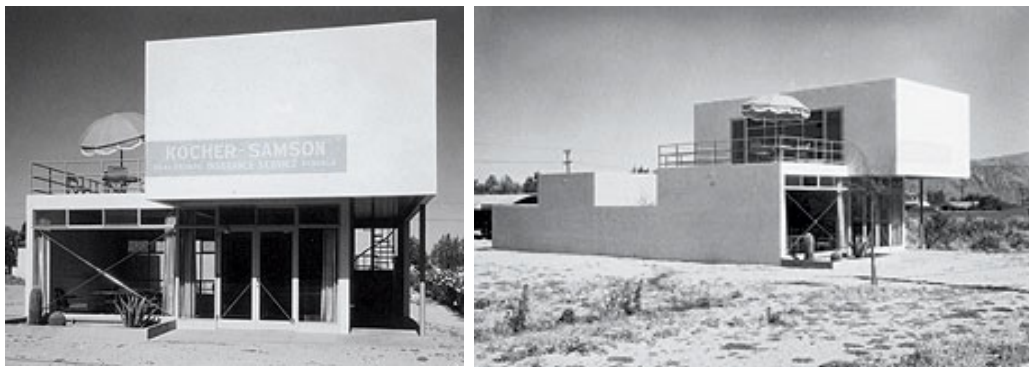


El Paseo Building (1930, Jonathan Ring; HSPB-27). Source: Mott Studios Collection, California State Library.

³¹⁷ Although several sources note 1926 as the construction date for the El Paseo Building, it is not shown in the 1929 Sanborn map. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* dates the building to 1930. "El Paseo Opens Tuesday," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1930, A10.

³¹⁸ Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board, "Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories," (undated), 30. The El Paseo Building was extensively altered in the 1950s and partially rehabilitated in 2009.

International Style modernism made its first appearance in Palm Springs in 1934, with the construction of the Kocher-Samson Building (HSPB-79) on a lot north of the Reid clinic (766 N. Palm Canyon Drive). The two-story mixed-use building, with medical offices on the ground floor and an apartment above, was designed by the firm Kocher and Frey, which was composed of New York architect A. Lawrence Kocher and his Swiss-born business partner, Albert Frey. The building was designed for Kocher's brother, Dr. J.J. Kocher.³¹⁹ In the late 1920s Frey worked briefly in Paris for Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 1887-1965), one of the leading modernist architects in Europe, who espoused formal, proportional compositions and declared the house “a machine for living.”³²⁰ Frey immigrated to the United States in 1930 and soon afterward began working with Kocher.³²¹ Frey designed the Kocher-Samson building in response to its desert setting as a cluster of square and rectangular forms enclosing a series of patios and small gardens. Frey traveled to Palm Springs at the end of 1934 to supervise its construction and was instantly attracted to the desert landscape. The partnership with Kocher was amicably dissolved, and in 1935 Frey formed a partnership with a young California architect, John Porter Clark, which was to last for nearly 20 years.³²² Clark and Frey are known as two of the founders of the “Desert Modern” style of architecture.³²³



Kocher-Samson Building (1934, Kocher and Frey; HSPB-79). Source: *Palm Springs Life*, Desert Treasures Gallery.

A large mixed-use building, the Mediterranean Revival-style Pacific Building (784 N. Palm Canyon; HSPB-13), was constructed in 1937 at the southeast corner of N. Palm Canyon Drive and E. Tamarisk Road, immediately north of the Kocher-Samson Building and opposite the El Paseo Building.³²⁴ It was built by local contractor Charles Chamberlin, who also constructed the Welwood Murray Memorial Library.³²⁵

³¹⁹ Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey, Architect* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1990), 35.

³²⁰ Spiro Kostoff, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 700-701.

³²¹ Rosa, 26.

³²² Rosa, *Albert Frey*, 36.

³²³ “Albert Frey,” PS Modcom, <https://psmodcom.org/albert-frey/> (accessed March 2015).

³²⁴ *Palm Springs News*, April 8, 1937. “Just completed and now ready for occupancy is the attractive Pacific Commercial building...”

³²⁵ “Pioneer Village Builder, Charles Chamberlin Dies,” *The Desert Sun*, XXVII, 77, May 16, 1955, 1a.

The building, with its central courtyard and four-story tiered corner tower, contained retail spaces and offices on the ground floor with apartments above. The Pacific Building is distinctive for its size and its strong Italian Renaissance Revival design elements, including wide overhanging eaves, corbeled balconies, Tuscan columns, and decorative quoins.

More typical of 1930s commercial development in the area are the one- and two-story Wilson-Sorum Building immediately north of the Reid Clinic at 664 N. Palm Canyon Drive (1937, Charles O. Matcham), built around a central courtyard; and the modest, one-story Clifton Dental Building (1936) at 700 N. Palm Canyon Drive designed by Brewster & Benedict.³²⁶ The original design of the Clifton building appears to have been in the Moderne style, with plaster walls and steel sash casement windows that wrap the building's corners.



Pepper Tree Inn, previously the Reid Solarium (constructed c.1927; currently the Alcazar Hotel) designed in the prevailing Spanish Colonial Revival style.

A number of small hotels, apartment hotels, and bungalow courts were constructed in the Las Palmas Business Historic District in the 1930s along N. Indian Canyon Drive. The apartments and bungalow courts were built primarily to accommodate seasonal visitors, rather than as long-term multi-family housing, and most were designed in the prevailing Spanish Colonial Revival style. Representative examples include the bungalow court of Los Arboles (later the Indian Manor Hotel) at 784 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1935), the Ambassador Apartment Hotel (later the Spanish Inn and currently the Triada Hotel) at 640 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1936), and the Colonial House Hotel, later Howard Manor and currently the Colony Palms Hotel, at 572 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1936). The Colonial House occupies the entire block bounded by N. Indian Canyon Drive, E. Granvia Valmonte, Via Chica, and E. Via Colusa. It was built for casino owner Al Wertheimer.³²⁷ The San Jacinto Hotel, currently the Movie

³²⁶ This was attributed to John Porter Clark per the Historic Site Preservation Board, "Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories," undated, 22. That attribution is incorrect, and it has been confirmed as the work of Brewster & Benedict. It appears that John Porter Clark designed the covered drive that was added to the property.

³²⁷ Historic Site Preservation Board, "Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories," undated, 7.

Colony Hotel, at 726 N. Indian Canyon drive (1935; altered) was designed by Clark and Frey.³²⁸ The distinctive building features clusters of minimalist, plaster-clad cubist volumes that later had to be altered with the addition of covered porches and awnings to block the desert sun.³²⁹



Bottom: San Jacinto Hotel (1935, Clark & Frey; now the Movie Colony Hotel) designed in a minimalist, Modern style. Source: Patrick McGrew.

³²⁸ Due to alterations, the Movie Colony Hotel was identified as part of this study as a non-contributor to the district.

³²⁹ Rosa, 36-37.

SUB-THEME: DESERT GUEST RANCHES AND WESTERN-THEMED RESORT ACTIVITIES (1929-1969)

In the past ten years a new institution has developed in American recreational life: the desert guest ranch. Its clientele is no longer limited to the adventurous few who seek hardships in the back areas. The modern guest ranch lures the discriminating of all ages who seek to escape the complicated existence of city life.

Smoke Tree Ranch Brochure, undated³³⁰

During the 1920s, the prevalence of “dude ranches” – working cattle ranches transformed by “the guest business” - increased across the United States. Driven by financial hardship, cattle ranchers joined forces with the railroads to promote a new kind of vacation experience. A 1928 article in the *Los Angeles Times* posed and answered the question “What is a Dude Ranch?” by defining it as “a resort where life on a ranch is offered without the frequent makeshifts for ordinary comforts...the main feature of entertainment is a stable of good horses where the able may ride to their heart’s content...”³³¹ With its rural, agricultural roots and its continued reliance on horses for transportation well into the 20th century, Palm Springs was especially well suited to the creation of western-themed resorts and activities that showcased ranch living.

Deep Well Guest Ranch

Among the first of these resorts was the Deep Well Guest Ranch located at 1020 Highway 111 (a.k.a. Indio Road).³³² After unsuccessful farming efforts in the early 20th century by two previous owners, Henry Parsons (a scientist and authority on rubber) purchased the property in 1926. He drilled a well and found water close to the surface. After drilling further he found water again at 630 feet and the property became known as Deep Well Ranch.³³³

In 1928, Pearson sold the Ranch to Charles Doyle who converted an old apricot shed and ranch house to guest accommodations and called it Deep Well Guest Ranch. A 1929 ad in the *Los Angeles Times* describes the nascent resort as “A desert dude ranch 10 minutes from Palm Springs with its own 400-foot well offers a children’s paradise.” Daily and weekly rates were available, however, the ranch’s unique identity as resort and not a sanitarium was reinforced by the fact that “no tubercular people are accepted.”³³⁴ Attractions included an archery course, rifle and pistol range, trap shooting, horseback rides, and “hot and cold water and electricity.”³³⁵

³³⁰ Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad (Digital Rain Films, www.digitalrainfilms.com).

³³¹ “Arizona Resorts Popular,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1928, A1.

³³² Note that several of the dude ranches discussed in this section were later converted to residential subdivisions; that history is discussed under the relevant Residential Development themes.

³³³ Mabel Bennett, “Story of Deepwell,” *Palm Springs Villager*, February 1952, no page. <http://www.ourdeepwell.com/index.php/about-deno/your-neighborhood/history/18-history/28-deno-palm-springs-villager?showall=1> (accessed January 2015).

³³⁴ “Display Ad no 9,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1929, 6.

³³⁵ “Resort and Hotel Notes,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1956, F12.



Deep Well Guest Ranch Long Room. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

In 1929, Doyle sold the property to Major and Mrs. Everet and Everet's brother-in-law, Carol Smith. They significantly improved the property when, in 1930, they engaged architect Paul R. Williams to design hacienda-type buildings around patios.³³⁶ Major Everet died in 1929, and by fall of 1931 Frank and Melba Bennett of Beverly Hills had purchased the property along with Phillip Boyd (local banker and first mayor of Palm Springs). They operated the guest ranch for almost 20 years. In 1948-49, encroaching residential development made maintaining the rural atmosphere of Deep Well difficult and the Bennetts retired and sold the Guest Ranch and twenty acres surrounding it to experienced hotelier Yoland Markson³³⁷ of Boston and Beverly Hills.³³⁸ By 1952, Deep Well boasted 52 lodging units.³³⁹ In 1963 Deep Well Guest Ranch was sold to a Los Angeles syndicate headed by Howard Green, Harry Dodson, and Arthur Glesby who intended to make improvements to the ranch resort.³⁴⁰ However in 1965, demolition of the structures began in preparation for the construction of apartments on the site.³⁴¹ In 1968, the former Guest Ranch property was sold at public auction.³⁴²

³³⁶ Bennett, "Story of Deepwell (sic)."

³³⁷ "Deep Well Ranch Leased to Noted U.S. Hotel Man," *The Desert Sun*, October 21, 1949.

³³⁸ Renee Brown, "Deep Well Guest Ranch Provided True Western Experience," *The Desert Sun*, April 11, 2015. <http://www.desertsun.com/story/news/local/palm-springs/2015/04/11/deep-guest-ranch-history/25577725/>

³³⁹ "Gala Gathering at Deep Well Ranch for Opening Event," *The Desert Sun*, December 4, 1952.

³⁴⁰ "Palm Springs Ranch Sold," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1963, N7.

³⁴¹ "Deep Well Owners Lose Court Fight," *The Desert Sun*, July 14, 1965.

³⁴² "Display Ad 100," *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1968, SF2.

Smoke Tree Ranch

Smoke Tree Ranch, developed by Mac Blankenhorn and his group of Pasadena-based investors, opened in January 1931. From the beginning, Smoke Tree Ranch was unique: “Palm Springs newest dude ranch...[was] neither a resort nor public hotel.”³⁴³ Early advertisements for the guest ranch emphasized an exclusivity that continues to this day: “Designed for those wishing to escape from the turmoil of weekend resorts...introductions or satisfactory references are required.”³⁴⁴ The ranch featured cottages, stables, and a school for grades two through eight. Three school buildings and a playground were located along the western border of the ranch. Facilities included the Ranch Rodeo Field, stables, and the pool. The ranchhouse building contained two dining rooms, kitchen, lobby, and storerooms. There were 15 cottages for guests, two buildings for servant’s quarters, and a twenty-car garage. These buildings were designed by Pasadena-based architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. (1879-1972).³⁴⁵ The property was also home to “historic adobe ruin relics” believed to date back to the 1880s and the failed efforts to establish the city of Palmdale.³⁴⁶

Blankenhorn sold part of his investment to Charles Doyle and in 1936, Fred and Maziebelle Markham (operating as the Mardo Corporation) bought Smoke Tree Ranch. Whereas Blankenhorn and his syndicate of investors may have been overextended at Smoke Tree Ranch, Markham was able to bring financial stability to the venture. The Markhams also brought many improvements. In 1936, they constructed an Olympic-sized swimming pool, five new cottages and the first tennis courts.³⁴⁷ According to Smoke Tree Ranch Chief Executive Officer Tracy Conrad’s film *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life*, Maziebelle Markham regarded the Ranch as an expanded version of a well-run home with houseguests. Guests (and ultimately resident “Colonists”) were accepted by invitation only. There was no advertising. Ranch buildings were shielded from the highway and detached guest cottages provided maximum privacy for the patrons who consisted primarily of wealthy industrialists. According to a 1977 interview with Smoke Tree’s Vice President Brad Poncher, Disney’s “studio set designers were responsible for the design of some of the ranch’s guest cottages.”³⁴⁸ Celebrities were purposefully discouraged.

Smoke Tree consisted of a working ranch with stables and a corral for instruction. Each guest (including each child) was assigned a horse upon check-in.³⁴⁹ Popular events included breakfast rides, steak dinners, periodic rodeos, and gymkhanas.³⁵⁰ Communal meals in the dining room, square dances and performances by well-known cowboy musicians such as Johnny Boyle or Cliff Campbell added to the authentic western flavor and social scene. Swimming, sunbathing, badminton, and lawn bowling were

³⁴³ “Resort and Hotel Notes,” Los Angeles Times, December 28, 1930, B15.

³⁴⁴ Display Ad 9, *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1931, 6.

³⁴⁵ *Building and Engineering News*, July 5, 1930.

https://archive.org/stream/buildingengineer30230cont/buildingengineer30230cont_djvu.txt (accessed January 2015).

³⁴⁶ “Remember When,” *The Desert Sun*, December 13, 1960; referencing an issue of *The Desert Sun* from December 13, 1930.

³⁴⁷ *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life* (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad (Digital Rain Films, www.digitalrainfilms.com).

³⁴⁸ This information also appears in the film *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life* (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad.

³⁴⁹ *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life* (2007), produced by Tracy Conrad (Digital Rain Films, www.digitalrainfilms.com).

³⁵⁰ Gymkhana generally refers to games or races on horseback.

included in the non-western themed recreational activities popular at Smoke Tree. In 1945, ownership of the Guest Ranch was transferred from the Markhams to the Colonists and it continues to operate as a resort to this day.



Postcard of La Paz Guest Ranch, c. 1948. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

La Paz Guest Ranch

Another Palm Springs guest ranch was the Spanish Colonial Revival-style La Paz Guest Ranch (1939, John Porter Clark, landscape design by Millard R. Wright; demolished) located at 1150 State Highway (now E. Palm Canyon Drive). Opened on November 6, 1939, La Paz consisted of 22 rental units, owners' quarters, and several recreational facilities. It was located on a six-acre plot fronting Indio Road near Deep Well Guest Ranch.³⁵¹ During WWII the La Paz served as an Air Force Officer's Club.³⁵² James R. Fouch³⁵³ purchased La Paz from Mrs. L.J. Mooney and William Heiser in 1945. By then, the resort offered "deluxe accommodations, swimming pool, tennis and horseback riding in a secluded oasis of Western Charm and Hospitality."³⁵⁴ The La Paz featured Sunday Ranch Suppers with Western Dancing and encouraged people to "Wear your western togs or come with a western spirit."³⁵⁵ Noted guests at

³⁵¹ "La Paz Guest Ranch Palm Springs Product; Opens for Season Nov. 6," *The Desert Sun*, October 27, 1939.

³⁵² "Its Patriotic to Keep Fit, Rest and Relax at a Resort," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1943, 17.

³⁵³ Fouch was the founder of Universal Microphone Company in 1928.

³⁵⁴ Ad, *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1946-7, 104.

³⁵⁵ Ad, *The Desert Sun*, February 22, 1946, 3.

La Paz over the years included many movie stars including academy-award winning actress Olivia De Havilland.

In 1946, the La Paz was “thoroughly redecorated inside and out” including the creation of a mural by noted Hollywood artist Paul Lutz.³⁵⁶ In 1954, the La Paz was sold to Mr. and Mrs. William Halloran of Seattle who immediately embarked on plans to enlarge the existing facilities and build additional units.³⁵⁷

Rogers Stables

With horses the focal point of activity, Rogers Stables (a.k.a. Rogers Ranch Club, Rogers Ranch Club Stables) at 1600 Chia Road near N. Sunrise Way (a.k.a. 1441 N. Sunrise Way) did not provide lodging but was a hub of western resort activity. During the day, owner Trav Rogers provided horses for trail riding. An arena held exhibitions and rodeos. At night, it became a dining venue and nightclub with square dancing. The lower floor of the two-story Pueblo Revival-style building was also home to the Mink and Manure Club with horse stalls on both sides where ladies could throw their mink coats on the long table and mingle with the locals. Hollywood stars also frequented the establishment including actors Peter Lorre and Judy Garland.³⁵⁸ By the mid-1940s, the property was purchased by Charley Morrison and renamed “The Stables.”³⁵⁹



Rogers Stables.
Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

³⁵⁶ “La Paz Will Open for New Season on October 1 is Word,” *The Desert Sun*, September 27, 1946.

³⁵⁷ “Guest Ranch Sold in Palm Springs,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1954, F13.

³⁵⁸ “Tattletale,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1941, D5.

³⁵⁹ “Nothing To It,” *The Desert Sun*, October 1, 1946.

The popularity of the desert dude ranch phenomenon is further evidenced by the fashion of western wear promoted in Los Angeles as well as in the city of Palm Springs. A 1931 ad for Dyas Resort Clothes at 7th and Olive in Los Angeles features “Smart and Practical Clothes for Desert Dude Ranches.” Western shirts, hats, riding pants, and skirts are promoted “for lazy happy hours out of the saddle.” The ad even features a line of clothing specifically for “Smoke Tree Ranch...Dude Ranch Sports Clothes and whatever you like best to wear in the evening.”³⁶⁰ In Palm Springs itself, popular sources for western wear included Marge Riley’s Westerns at 227 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Spaulding’s at 278 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Rasmussen’s Frontier Shop at 1995 Highway 111 (a.k.a. Rogers’ Frontier Shop at Rogers Stables) and later Rasmussen’s Saddlery & Western Wear at 1151 N. Indian Avenue.



Rasmussen’s Western Wear float in the Desert Circus. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society and *Palm Springs Life* Archives.

³⁶⁰ “Display Ad 30,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1931, B6.

Dyas

SEVENTH AT OLIVE

Resort Clothes

Bound for Tropical Playgrounds

Don't let yourself get bored with things—Go places. Enjoy a Cruise somewhere. Ships are going out and fares are not high. Get out on the Desert and let your soul breathe the limpid air of eternal summertime. Dress up in Sports Togs and let your imagination run wild. You'll be better for it—happier too. Here are brand new things that spell spring itself—See them at once and get an unexpected thrill out of the holiday season.

Palm Springs
Full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress.

Caliente
Sleeved, short, Caliente, with collar, for home and party dress.

Hawaii
Sleeved, short, for afternoon, dinner and party, collar, for afternoon and dinner.

Havana
Sleeved, short, hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress.

Death Valley
Full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress.

Smoke Tree Ranch
Full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress.

Smart and Practical Clothes for Desert Dude Ranches

Riding clothes, of course, are ever important—“Tanager” slipper Jersey \$2.95
 Breeches in Bedford color \$10.00
 Canvas breeches \$5.00
 Boots, top and heels \$13.50

For busy hours out of the saddle... the new series of women's slacks with all-around trim in black color \$12.95
 Good house slacks in white and olive \$7.95

Charming, full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress \$19.50
 Full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress \$35.00
 Full length, sleeve and hemmed, with collar, for home and party dress \$49.50

1931 ad for Dyas Resort Clothes at 7th and Olive in Los Angeles features “Smart and Practical Clothes for Desert Dude Ranches.” Source: *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1931.

The Desert Circus, a western-themed parade, began in 1936 and was the biggest event of the season every year until it was discontinued in 1983.³⁶¹ By 1946, some 30,000 people lined the street for the event.³⁶² The parade included dozens of floats, bands, and equestrian units. It quickly grew into a week's worth of social activities including a "Kangaroo Court" during which anyone found not wearing western wear was "hauled into court" and made to pay a fine or to entertain.³⁶³ Other activities included ranch dinners, dances, a fashion show, the Village Insanities, and the Big Top Ball. Another popular event was the "hat parade" for which Melba Bennett, co-owner of the Deep Well Guest Ranch contributed to the local fashion scene with the creation of the "palm springs hat" (a cowboy hat decorated with ribbons and flowers).



Palm Springs Desert Circus, 1940. Source: *The Desert Sun*.

Another annual western-themed event was Western Week begun in 1941 by Los Compadres riding club. The event featured a parade down Palm Canyon Drive, a rodeo, a carnival street dance and a deep pit barbecue.³⁶⁴ Tourists and villagers alike sported western clothing during the week-long celebration which was held every October and marked the beginning of the season. Western Week attracted the participation of riding clubs from all over Southern California. Local stables from the pre-World War II period include Arol's Buckskin Stables at 1680 Ramon Road; Cowboy Stables on Arenas

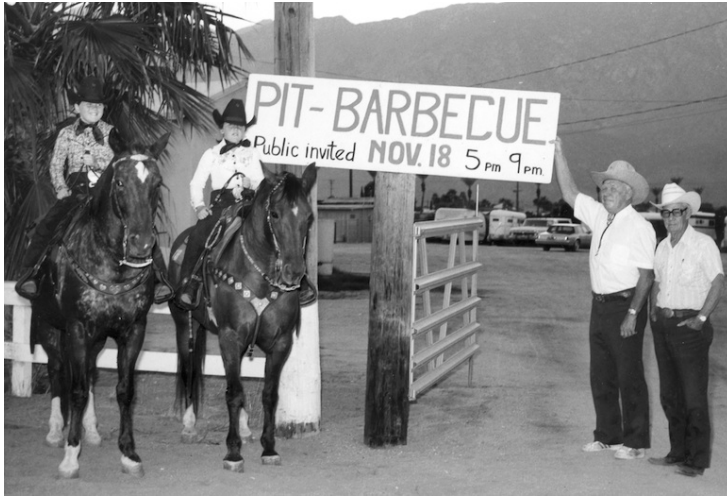
³⁶¹ It was briefly and unsuccessfully revived in 1985.

³⁶² "Thousands Cheer Biggest Circus Parade," *The Desert Sun*, April 12, 1946.

³⁶³ Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, Palm Springs (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 112.

³⁶⁴ "Explore Palm Springs: Western Week," *Palm Springs Life*, October 2014.

Road; McDonald Stables at 1205 E. Ramon Road; and the Araby-Palm Springs Stables at 190 Avenue de Los Caballeros.



Barbeque at Los Compadres.
Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Los Compadres originally began as the Palm Springs Riding Club in the late 1930s with about 40 members. The club would often stage breakfast rides, moonlight rides and weekend campouts accompanied by a chuck wagon.³⁶⁵ After World War II, the club purchased land at 1849 S. El Cielo Road and built Los Compadres Ranch complete with stables and a clubhouse. In 1952, the clubhouse was damaged by fire. In 1968, club members began an annual deep pit barbecue event at the Ranch.³⁶⁶

Other prominent Palm Springs riding clubs included the Desert Riders (formed in 1931) that counted the elite of Palm Springs society as members, including Pearl McManus, Charles Farrell and celebrities Don Ameche, Dennis Day, Henry Fonda, Clark Gable, Gary Grant, Olivia de Haviland, William Holden, Hugh O'Brien, and Robert Taylor.³⁶⁷ Rides into such areas as Andreas Canyon, Deep Canyon and even to visit more urban locations such as the Mission Hills Golf and Country Club³⁶⁸ were commonplace in the postwar period. The Desert Riders' Oasis, a place for cookouts for that riding club, was located off Bogert Trail (formerly San Benito Way).

³⁶⁵ "Explore Palm Springs: Los Compadres Deep Pit Barbecue," *Palm Springs Life*, October 2013.

³⁶⁶ "Explore Palm Springs: Los Compadres Deep Pit Barbecue," *Palm Springs Life*, October 2013.

³⁶⁷ "Desert Riders, Early Palm Springs," *Palm Springs Life*, March 1995.

³⁶⁸ "Pause for Lunch," *The Desert Sun*, April 23, 1971.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY**Property Types: Commercial Building, Commercial Block, Historic District**

Examples of commercial buildings from this period may include hotels, motels, theaters, retail stores, banks, restaurants, commercial storefront buildings, and automobile-related resources including auto dealerships, gas stations, and drive-ins. Examples of commercial properties in Palm Springs associated with this period include the remains of the Oasis Hotel, now wrapped by later development (1925); La Plaza (1936; HSPB-22), the town's first shopping center and an early example of automobile-oriented, multi-use retail development in Southern California; and a number of other office and retail buildings such as El Paseo (1930; HSPB-27) and the Pacific building (1937; HSPB-13). There are also several small hotels and motor court hotels such as the Colonial House Hotel (1936; presently the Colony Palms), the Ambassador Hotel (presently the Triada Hotel; HSPB-49), and the Orchid Tree Inn (HSPB-72).

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A commercial property from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ³⁶⁹	As an early or excellent example of commercial development in Palm Springs. Commercial buildings may be eligible as rare remaining examples of the original commercial core; as an example of a particular trend in commercial development or growth during this period; or for a direct association with the tourism industry in Palm Springs (including hotels and related tourist amenities, along with dude ranch properties). Commercial buildings eligible under this criterion must represent a trend or pattern of development, they cannot simply have been constructed during the pre-World War II era.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of commercial buildings that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. A potential commercial district in Palm Springs will likely span several periods of development.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an

³⁶⁹ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ³⁷⁰ A commercial property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling in order to reflect the important association with the city's commercial development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. ³⁷¹
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ³⁷² A commercial property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.

³⁷⁰ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

³⁷¹ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

³⁷² *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alteration to individual buildings, such as replacement of storefronts is acceptable. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

Commercial Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent important patterns and trends in commercial development from this period, including representing the original commercial core, early automobile-related development, dude ranch development, or a direct association with tourism; or
- represent a unique or rare commercial property type; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance; and
- display the original planning features of a commercial enclave or corridor; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)

This theme explores the development of public services and infrastructure, schools, libraries, churches, and other local institutions in Palm Springs in the 1920s and 1930s. As the village grew in popularity and population, the ad hoc provision of services could not meet the increased needs of residents and visitors, leading in the late 1930s to a push for incorporation.

Prior to Palm Springs' incorporation in 1938, the village's services were managed by the volunteers of the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, originally founded in 1918 as the Board of Trade. The Board's founding president was Dr. J.J. Kocher, and the organization's offices occupied one of the bungalows of Kocher's Sunshine Court on North Palm Canyon Drive (then Main Drive).³⁷³ Next door, at 365 N. Palm Canyon, was the California Water and Telephone Company (HSPB-26), a reinforced concrete building constructed in 1935.³⁷⁴ The two-story, Spanish Colonial Revival-style building was finished with plaster walls, a clay barrel tile roof, and a second story balcony. Just to the north another Spanish-style building was constructed in 1936 to house the village's fire station and police department. The all-volunteer Palm Springs Fire District had been formed in 1931 after a fire destroyed a local grocery store.³⁷⁵



Frances S. Stevens School (HSPB-7). Source: City of Palm Springs.

³⁷³ Palmer, 71.

³⁷⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

³⁷⁵ City of Palm Springs, "Fire Department History," <http://www.ci.palm-springs.ca.us/government/departments/fire-department/history> (accessed June 19, 2015).

One of the most prominent institutional developments prior to Palm Springs' incorporation is the Frances S. Stevens School (HSPB-7) occupying the entire block between Alejo Road and Granvia Valmonte, in what is now the Las Palmas Business Historic District. Prescott T. Stevens, developer of the El Mirador Hotel, donated the site and the funds to build the school, in memory of his wife and her interest in education.³⁷⁶ The first two rooms were completed in 1927. Katherine Finchy, who arrived in Palm Springs in 1922, became the school's first administrator. Palm Springs' first bond issue provided additional classrooms, a library, indoor plumbing, a cafeteria, an apartment for the principal, and a large auditorium. The Spanish Colonial Revival-style complex features a traditional layout with rooms arranged around an open courtyard. In the late 1920s local resident Earle Strebe began showing movies in the auditorium which was eventually converted into the village's first theater.

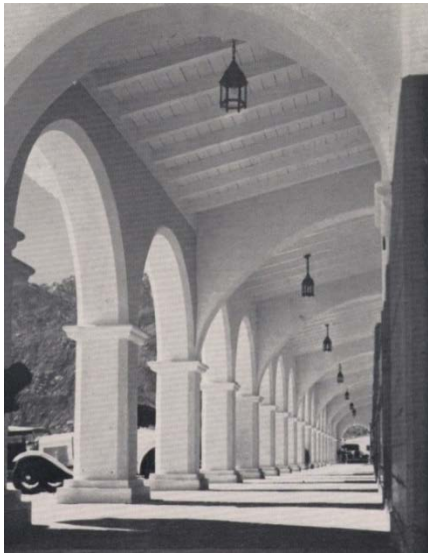
Until 1930 the Community Church remained the sole church in the village. The only other house of worship in the area was the little adobe chapel of St. Florian, built out on the Agua Caliente Reservation in 1912.³⁷⁷ In 1926 Father Philip LaVies, who traveled weekly to Palm Springs from the mission school in Banning, began planning a permanent Catholic sanctuary in the village. In 1928 LaVies, with the assistance of P.T. Stevens, obtained from the Southern Pacific Railroad a parcel at the southeast corner of Alejo and Belardo Roads and engaged Los Angeles architect Albert C. Martin to design a church inspired by the California missions. The church, Our Lady of Solitude (151 W. Alejo Road; HSPB-15) was constructed by Alvah Hicks and completed in 1930.³⁷⁸ In 1935 the Community Church, having outgrown its little white frame chapel at the corner of North Palm Canyon Drive and Andreas Road, sold the property to Julia Carnell for construction of the Carnell Building (HSPB-11). The Church used the proceeds to purchase from Pearl and Austin McManus three parcels at the northeast corner of Cahuilla and Baristo Roads. A new sanctuary (284 S. Cahuilla Road; HSPB-23), designed by William Charles Tanner in a pared-down English Gothic Revival style, was completed in 1936.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Site history from the HSPB plaque.

³⁷⁷ Renee Brown, "Catholics flocked to Palm Springs' St. Florian's," *The Desert Sun*, August 21, 2014, <http://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2014/08/21/catholics-palm-springs-church/14424193/> (accessed June 19, 2015). The site on North Calle El Segundo is now occupied by Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church.

³⁷⁸ Historic Sites Preservation Board plaque, Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church.

³⁷⁹ *Class 1: A Guide to the Designated Class 1 Historic Sites of Palm Springs* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, undated, <http://content.yudu.com/Library/Azvt3/Class1/resources/10.htm> (accessed June 19, 2015).



Palm Springs High School (1938, G. Stanley Wilson). Source: The Living New Deal, <http://livingnewdeal.org/projects/palm-springs-high-school-palm-springs-ca/>

The Depression-era domestic policies of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, popularly called the New Deal, allocated funds for the construction of public works projects across the country and created jobs for workers improving their own communities. The New Deal marshaled direct government investment to alleviate the problems of poverty, unemployment, and the disintegration of the American economy during the Great Depression. The Public Works Administration (PWA), which began in 1933 and the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA), which began in 1935, funneled significant financial resources to communities across the United States for the construction of roads, bridges, parks, and civic and institutional buildings. In Palm Springs, the Palm Springs High School (2248 E. Ramon Road) was constructed with New Deal funding. The high school was designed by G. Stanley Wilson and completed in 1938.

As Palm Springs grew, the need for infrastructure improvements, zoning restrictions, and other controls became apparent. In November 1936, a 30-member committee was formed to study the possibility of incorporation. The committee included early pioneers, developers, and other prominent citizens including Ralph Bellamy, Phillip Boyd, Earl Coffman, Alvah Hicks, Fred Markham, Austin McManus, Culver Nichols, Warren Pinney, George Roberson, and Jack Williams.³⁸⁰ Harold Hicks was selected as committee chairman. At its meeting on September 22, 1937 the committee fixed the city boundaries, divided it into seven wards, and authorized the drafting of an incorporation petition.³⁸¹ On Election Day, April 12, 1938, voters approved incorporation by a vote of 442 to 211.³⁸² Council members were elected to represent each of the seven wards; included in that first Palm Springs City Council were pioneers Alvah Hicks and Austin G. McManus. Philip L. Boyd was appointed the city's first mayor.³⁸³ The city's permanent population in 1938 was 5,336, with a seasonal jump to 8,000, and the city's incorporated area covered 20 square miles.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ "Incorporation Committee to Meet Dec. 1," *The Desert Sun*, Volume X, Number 17, November 27, 1936, 1.

³⁸¹ "Incorporation Plans Now Underway," *The Desert Sun*, Volume XI, Number 8, September 24, 1937.

³⁸² "Incorporation Wins," *The Desert Sun*, Volume XI, Number 36, April 12, 1938.

³⁸³ Niemann, 144.

³⁸⁴ "Your City Hall," commemorative brochure published for the dedication of Palm Springs City Hall, November 8, 1957 (Palm Springs Public Library).



Postcard of the Welwood Murray Memorial Library (1938-41, John Porter Clark; HSPB-3).

One of the first civic buildings constructed in the new city was the Welwood Murray Memorial Library (100 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-3), constructed in 1941 at the southeast corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and E. Tahquitz Canyon Way. It was named in honor of pioneer hotelier Welwood Murray. Concerned about the lack of reading material in the village, Murray had constructed a small adobe building at the rear of his hotel to house his private library, and loaned out his own books. In 1938, when the city was incorporated, Murray's son George Welwood Murray donated land for the construction of a public library in memory of his father.³⁸⁵ Albert Frey submitted a Modern design but the library board, led by Nellie Coffman, preferred a more traditional Mediterranean Revival design by John Porter Clark.³⁸⁶ The Welwood Murray Memorial Library served as the city's main public library until the completion of the new Palm Springs Library Center (300 S. Sunrise Way; William Cody) in 1975.

Several important cultural and social institutions were founded during this period as well. The Palm Springs Desert Museum (now the Palm Springs Art Museum) was founded in 1938 and was originally located in one of the buildings of La Plaza. The Museum at that time focused on Native American artifacts, the natural sciences, and the environment of the surrounding Coachella Valley.³⁸⁷ The museum's programming included exhibits, lectures, and hiking excursions.³⁸⁸

Mrs. Warren Pinney, wife of Palm Springs' city clerk and manager of the El Mirador Hotel, invited sixty women to attend a luncheon on December 10, 1938, to discuss the formation of a woman's club.³⁸⁹ At

³⁸⁵ Niemann, 46. The historic site marker on the building today notes that an "additional strip of property on the eastern end of the site" was donated by Miss Cornelia White.

³⁸⁶ Roger C. Palmer, PhD, *Then & Now: Palm Springs* (Palm Springs: Palm Springs Historical Society, 2011), 15.

³⁸⁷ Palm Springs Art Museum, "About Us," *Palm Springs Art Museum*, www.psmuseum.org/about-us/ (accessed August 16, 2015).

³⁸⁸ Steven Biller, "Art of the City," *Palm Springs Life*, December 2013, www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/December-2013/Art-of-the-City/ (accessed August 16, 2015).

³⁸⁹ Palm Springs Women's Club History largely adapted from Jenny McLean and Judy Sumich, "History: The Beginning," Palm Springs Woman's Club, 2011, <https://www.pswomansclub.com/history-1> (accessed August 2015).

the luncheon, a nominating committee was named to develop bylaws and a list of officers for the next meeting, two days later. On December 12, 1938, Nellie Coffman invited the potential woman's club to lunch at the Desert Inn. Seventy-three women signed on as charter members of the Palm Springs Woman's Club at this lunch, and their first official meeting was held on December 19, 1938. The Woman's Club completed its incorporation in 1939, affiliated with the Federation of Women's Clubs, but chose to become an independent organization in 1953.

Land for the clubhouse at 314 S. Cahuilla Road was donated by Pearl McManus, and John Porter Clark donated his services to design the building. The plans were accepted at the March 20, 1939 meeting.³⁹⁰ \$12,000 was raised for construction, and contractors Wilson and Sorum won the bid to build the clubhouse.³⁹¹ Construction commenced in mid-April, and was completed on November 17, 1939.³⁹² The building consists of an auditorium with a stage, a large walled patio, sun lounge, entrance hall, dressing rooms, and kitchen.³⁹³ Landscape architect Katherine Bashford designed a "far-reaching plan for planting," which was executed by landscape gardener Millard Wright.³⁹⁴



Woman's Club (1939, John Porter Clark; landscape architect Katherine Bashford). Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

³⁹⁰ "Woman's Club House to be Reality," *The Desert Sun*, March 24, 1939.

³⁹¹ "Woman's Club to be Ready in October," *The Desert Sun*, September 1, 1939.

³⁹² "Woman's Club Moves into New \$12,000 Home," *The Desert Sun*, November 17, 1939.

³⁹³ "Woman's Club House to be Reality."

³⁹⁴ Margaret Cree, "Landscaping Grounds Occupies Attention of Woman's Club," *The Desert Sun*, November 10, 1939; "Woman's Club Moves into New \$12,000 Home."

CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY

Property Types: Civic or institutional building, Civic improvement

Civic property types include city halls or other offices for public agencies, post offices, fire and police stations, schools, and libraries. Infrastructural improvements and other civic amenities may also be eligible under this theme, including significant roadways, bridges, and other improvements. Non-governmental institutional property types include churches, meeting halls, and buildings associated with social organizations. Civic and institutional buildings constructed in the 1930s may have an association with New Deal funding programs including the WPA or PWA. Important works of public art were also funded by New Deal-era programs.

Institutional properties associated with this theme include the Frances B. Stevens School (1927, now the Palm Canyon Theater; HSPB-7) at 538 N. Palm Canyon Drive; Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church (1930; HSPB-15) at 151 W. Alejo Road; the California Telephone & Water Building (1934); the Community Church of Palm Springs (1936, William Charles Tanner; north addition by Harry Williams; HSPB-23) at 284 S. Cahuilla Road; the Welwood Murray Memorial Library (1938-41, John Porter Clark; HSPB-3) at 100 S. Palm Canyon Drive; Palm Springs Women’s Club (1939, John Porter Clark) at 314 S. Cahuilla Road; and Palm Springs High School (1938, G. Stanley Wilson; later additions in 1957/1958) at 2248 E. Ramon Road.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A civic or institutional property or civic improvement from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ³⁹⁵	<p>As an early example of civic or institutional development from this period, representing some of the earliest institutional buildings in Palm Springs and reflecting the area’s growth in the pre-World War II era. Civic buildings from this period represent the first government buildings constructed following the incorporation of Palm Springs in 1938. Properties may also be significant for an association with important New Deal era programs.</p> <p>Note that there are particular requirements for listing religious properties in the National Register of Historic Places, which are outlined in National Register Criteria Consideration A.</p>

³⁹⁵ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REASON
	<p><i>National Register Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties</i></p> <p>Note that a religious property is eligible for listing in the National Register if it derives its primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.</p> <p>“A religious property requires justification on architectural, artistic, or historic grounds to avoid any appearance of judgment by government about the validity of any religion or belief. Historic significance for a religious property cannot be established on the merits of a religious doctrine, but rather, for architectural or artistic values or for important historic or cultural forces that the property represents. A religious property's significance under Criterion A, B, C, or D must be judged in purely secular terms. A religious group may, in some cases, be considered a cultural group whose activities are significant in areas broader than religious history.”³⁹⁶</p>
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	<p>As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.</p>

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property’s significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

³⁹⁶ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ³⁹⁷ A civic or institutional property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association in order to reflect the important association with the city's civic and institutional development during this period.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ³⁹⁸ A civic or institutional property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

Civic & Institutional Development between the Wars (1919-1941): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- reflect important civic or institutional development from the period; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

³⁹⁷ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

³⁹⁸ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

Theme: The Influence of the Entertainment Industry (1919-1941)

This theme explores the influence of the Hollywood film industry on the development and growth of Palm Springs in the 1920s and 1930s. Hollywood first discovered Palm Springs as early as 1915, when author-turned-director Edmund Mitchell filmed a silent adaptation of his 1901 novel *The Lone Star Rush*, the first motion picture to be filmed in Palm Springs.³⁹⁹ Throughout the 1910s and 1920s the desert around Palm Springs was used for location shooting of numerous silent films set in Middle Eastern or North African locales, including *Salome* (1922) starring Theda Bara and, according to some sources, *The Sheik* (1921) with Rudolph Valentino in his most famous role.⁴⁰⁰

The movie industry brought additional attention to Palm Springs in 1922, when Valentino honeymooned at the Palm Springs Hotel with his second wife, Natacha Rambova, only to be arrested for bigamy because his divorce from his first wife was not yet final.⁴⁰¹ Syndicated gossip columnist Louella Parsons dispatched a number of columns from the Desert Inn during a 1926 visit, drawing wider attention to Palm Springs.⁴⁰² By the end of the decade the isolated desert village had become a favored winter weekend retreat for the burgeoning film industry, offering privacy and relaxation, warm winter sunshine and stunning natural beauty, just a few hours' drive from Los Angeles. This allowed actors to get away while complying with the studios' famous "two-hour rule," the contractual obligation to be available on short notice for filming or publicity purposes.

Perhaps the earliest house associated with movie people was the Reginald Pole adobe (1916, 175 S. Cahuilla Road; HSPB-59), which was said to have been visited by Charles Chaplin and exotic Russian silent screen star Nazimova.⁴⁰³ It was one of the few homes associated with entertainment figures in Palm Springs in the teens and twenties, as almost everyone else congregated at the various hotels.

In the 1920s the film stars and studio moguls stayed primarily at the Desert Inn or the Oasis; beginning in 1928 they flocked to the extravagant Hotel El Mirador as well. Irving Berlin and Shirley Temple (with her parents) were Desert Inn regulars; Loretta Young favored the uppermost room in the Oasis' tower.⁴⁰⁴ Hollywood's patronage saved El Mirador from bankruptcy at the onset of the Great Depression. In just its first two months of operation, the hotel's guest list included such Hollywood luminaries as Lillian Gish, Pola Negri, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, and Gloria Swanson.⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁹ Niemann, 168.

⁴⁰⁰ Niemann, 169-169 and Starr, 25. Other sources claim that exterior locations of *The Sheik* were filmed in other places including Guadalupe Dunes in Santa Barbara County and the Walking Dunes on Long Island.

⁴⁰¹ Gloria Greer, "Bringing Fame to Palm Springs," *Palm Springs Life*, January 2013, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/January-2013/Bringing-Fame-to-Palm-Springs/> (accessed January 22, 2015). Valentino was acquitted after Dr. Florilla White testified that the couple had not shared a bed at her hotel.

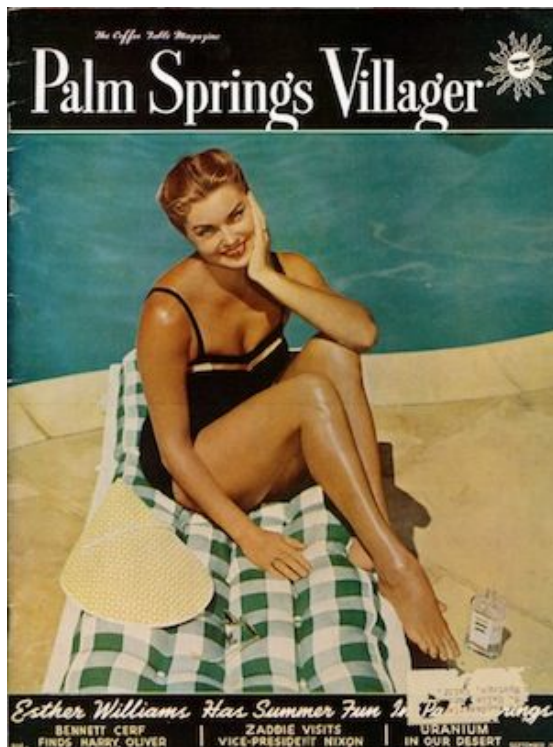
⁴⁰² Greer, "Bringing Fame to Palm Springs."

⁴⁰³ Steve Vaught, correspondence with project team, September 29, 2015.

⁴⁰⁴ Niemann, 64 and 68.

⁴⁰⁵ Niemann, 123.

A number of movie people who did not take houses, but wanted a more permanent place to stay while wintering in the desert, rented apartments. There were several high-end apartments catering to well-to-do visitors, beginning with the Casa Palmeras in 1928. Casa Palmeras residents included Clifton Webb; Ann Sothorn; Joe Penner; Bert Wheeler; Oscar-winning cinematographer Karl Struss; Harold Lloyd; and Joan Leslie. The El Encanto (completed in 1929), located across from the Tahquitz Vista and Hotel Del Tahquitz; the Colonial House (1936), and the Key Club (1938; demolished) were also popular apartment rentals for the Hollywood set.



Esther Williams on the cover of the *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1955. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

There was an early influx of significant radio personalities during this period as well, some of whom took their shows on the road and broadcast from Palm Springs. Each winter for several years, radio stars Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll broadcast their popular program *Amos n' Andy* from a small studio in the El Mirador Hotel's iconic tower (HSPB-1).⁴⁰⁶ Radio giants Eddie Cantor and Al Jolson both started coming to the Desert Inn in the 1920s and then constructed more permanent winter homes in the 1930s.

⁴⁰⁶ 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).

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

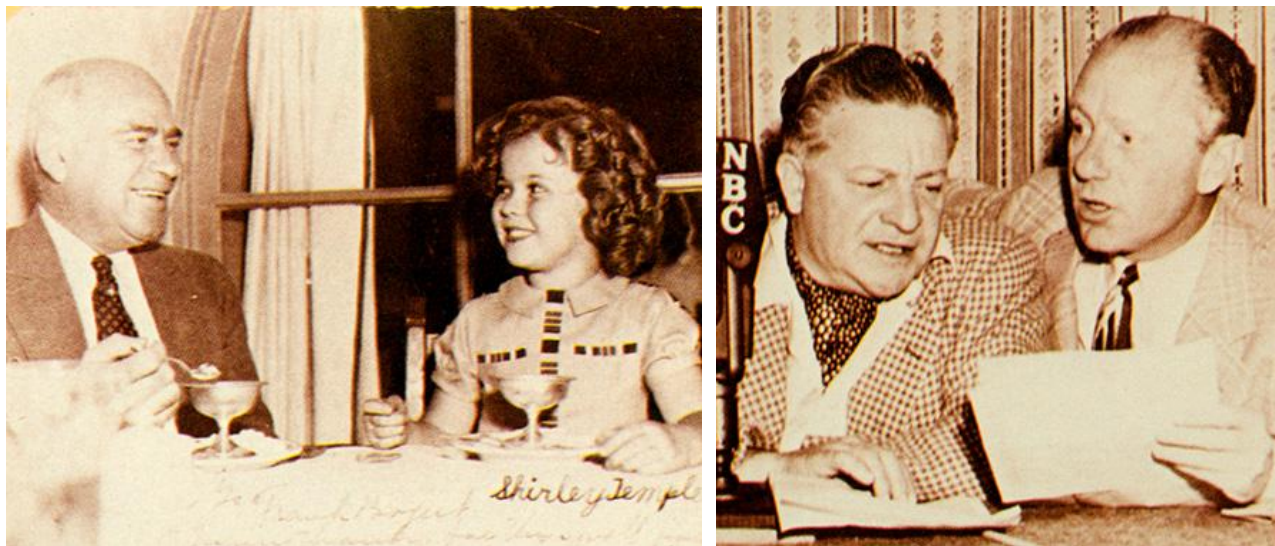
City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Other Hollywood notables associated with Palm Springs during this period include Harold Lloyd; Adolphe Menjou; William Powell; studio chief Joe Schenck; producer Bryan Foy; Richard Arlen; Robert Woolsey; Tarzan author Edgar Rice Burroughs; George Bancroft; Reginald Owen; William Gargan; Chuck Morrison; Charles Butterworth; Paul Lukas; Ralph Bellamy; and Charles Farrell.

Publicist Tony Burke fostered the hotel's air of Hollywood exclusivity with photos of celebrities lounging and sunning themselves amidst El Mirador's lush grounds – Lucille Ball, Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich, Clark Gable, Paulette Goddard, Olivia de Havilland.⁴⁰⁷ Johnny Weissmuller, surfer Duke Kahanamoku, and Esther Williams – swimming champions turned film stars – swam and posed for photographers in El Mirador's pool. Frank Bogert, manager of the El Mirador Hotel and future Mayor of Palm Springs, also supplied and widely distributed images of stars at play in Palm Springs. The fame of these celebrity visitors inevitably made the town itself famous. "Through radio broadcasts, fan magazine layouts, movies and publicity shots," writes historian Alan Hess, "Palm Springs was defined by the media in the national consciousness to a degree out of proportion with its size or the number of people who had actually visited it."⁴⁰⁸ On winter weekends in the 1930s the village's streets were jammed with ordinary day tourists from Los Angeles, hoping to catch a glimpse of a movie star.⁴⁰⁹



L: Photograph of New York Governor Herbert Lehman and Shirley Temple having lunch at the El Mirador, arranged by Frank Bogert and distributed to over 1,200 newspapers. R: Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden broadcasting *Amos n' Andy* from the El Mirador tower (HSPB-1). Source for both: *Palm Springs Life*, "Bringing Fame to Palm Springs."

⁴⁰⁷ Niemann, 126, and Bob Colacello, "Palm Springs Weekends," *Vanity Fair*, June 1999, 205.

⁴⁰⁸ Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 38-39.

⁴⁰⁹ Starr, 27.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

As Palm Springs grew in popularity with members of the entertainment industry, hotels, sports facilities, restaurants, nightclubs and retail establishments were developed to accommodate the demand for recreation and diversion. Some of these establishments were owned by celebrities. In 1928 silent film actress Fritzi Ridgeway built the Del Tahquitz Hotel at the southeast corner of what is now South Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road. Ridgeway's film career did not survive the advent of talking pictures, and she sold the Del Tahquitz in 1931. The Pueblo Revival-style hotel featured wide balconies, a courtyard swimming pool, and the Saddle Bar Cocktail Lounge, with saddles as barstools. The Del Tahquitz was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan building (HSPB-54).⁴¹⁰



Del Tahquitz Hotel, 1928. Photograph c. 1933. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

In 1933 actors Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy built two tennis courts at the north end of town, on a plot of land that they had purchased from Alvah Hicks.⁴¹¹ The courts proved so popular with their Hollywood friends that the following year Farrell and Bellamy built additional courts, a swimming pool, dining room, and guest bungalows and offered memberships in the new Palm Springs Racquet Club

⁴¹⁰ Niemann, 248-249. See also IMDb, "Fritzi Ridgeway Biography," *IMDb*, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0725904/bio?ref_=nm_of_bio_sm (accessed January 26, 2015).

⁴¹¹ Niemann, 132.

(2743 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-83). The club's Bamboo Bar became the social center of Palm Springs, with four seats permanently reserved for Farrell and his friends Clark Gable, William Powell, and Spencer Tracy.⁴¹²

Pearl McManus opened her competing Tennis Club (Ormsby and Steffgren, 701 W. Baristo Road) at the south end of town in February 1938, on a boulder-strewn hillside at the west end of Baristo Road. Charter members included actors Ray Milland, Frank Morgan, Reginald Owen, and MGM musical star Jeanette MacDonald.⁴¹³ Pearl was heavily involved in the design of the Tennis Club, which was originally modeled after the Hotel Cappuccini, a former Capuchin monastery on the Amalfi coast from which she drew the inspiration for the stone-walled terraces above the club's elegant oval swimming pool.⁴¹⁴



L: Racquet Club built by Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy. Photographed in 1955. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

R: Photograph of the world-famous Palm Springs Tennis Club pool, as it appeared in the 1950s. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

The village's most popular and most famous nightclub, the Chi Chi, opened in 1935 on Palm Canyon Drive, just north of the Desert Inn, on land leased from Zaddie Bunker. Beginning as a waffle house, it was converted by its owner, Irwin S. Schuman, first into a restaurant called the Desert Grille, and then into a full-fledged nightclub with dining, dancing, and live entertainment. It was expanded in 1938 and again in 1950 with the addition of the 750-seat Starlight Room. The Chi Chi (217 N. Palm Canyon

⁴¹² Colacello, 205.

⁴¹³ Greer.

⁴¹⁴ Steve Vaught, *Sentinels in Stone: Palm Springs' Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood and its Iconic Walls* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2015), 13.

Drive; demolished) was the premier nightspot of the Hollywood crowd into the 1960s, and its headliners were frequently interchangeable with its clientele – Louis Armstrong, Desi Arnaz, Pearl Bailey, Milton Berle, Nat “King” Cole, Vic Damone, Sammy Davis, Jr., Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, Gypsy Rose Lee, Peggy Lee, Liberace, Jerry Lewis, Tony Martin, the Mills Brothers, Patti Page, Louie Prima and Keeley Smith, Sophie Tucker, and Mae West.⁴¹⁵

Many of the Hollywood celebrities and executives who vacationed in Palm Springs eventually rented or bought seasonal homes there. So many of them settled in the area south of the Hotel El Mirador that the neighborhood became known as the Movie Colony.⁴¹⁶ Old Las Palmas (Las Palmas Estates) was another popular Hollywood enclave in Palm Springs.⁴¹⁷



L: The Chi Chi nightclub, opened in 1935 on Palm Canyon Drive. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, “In the Swing.” R: Designed in 1927 by architect John Byers, this was the longtime residence of Cary Grant, who purchased it in 1954 (928 Avenida Palmas, HSPB-75). Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

⁴¹⁵ Niemann, 255-258. The Chi Chi closed in 1966 and, after a decade of failed attempts at a revival, the building was demolished in 1977.

⁴¹⁶ The “Movie Colony” was not a tract development, rather a neighborhood name that developed later to describe the high concentration of Hollywood personages residing in the area around the El Mirador Hotel. Although a wider area is sometimes claimed, the boundaries of the Movie Colony as recognized by the City of Palm Springs, the Palm Springs Board of Realtors, and the Movie Colony Neighborhood Association are: Tachevah Road on the north, Alejo Road on the south, Avenida Caballeros on the east, and Indian Canyon Drive on the west (source: The Movie Colony Neighborhood Association, <http://www.themoviecolony.org/history.php>). For purposes of this report, tract names are used to discuss development patterns and “Movie Colony” is used when referring to the broader social history of the area.

⁴¹⁷ The development of these neighborhoods is discussed in the theme Single-Family Residential Development between the Wars (1919-1941). Specific properties associated with the entertainment industry are identified in the survey findings.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (1919-1941): ELIGIBILITY

Property Types: Single-family Residence, Multi-family Residence, Commercial Building, Film Location, Historic District

Starting in the early 20th century, Palm Springs was a get-away for members of the entertainment industry, including movie stars, directors, composers, and other members of the upper echelon of the industry. Members of the entertainment industry became part of the fabric of the city. Properties significant under this theme include residents and commercial establishments with specific associations with the entertainment community. Commercial establishments may be eligible for a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs. There are also identified concentrations of residential properties that are associated with famous residents, including the “Movie Colony” potential historic district. Many residences associated with people in the entertainment industry, in the Movie Colony and other neighborhoods, are not visible from the public right-of-way.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A property or district may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Pattern of Development/Event/Period) ⁴¹⁸	Commercial properties may be eligible under this theme for representing a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs. Film locations may be eligible as the site of an early or iconic motion picture production (Criterion A/1/1). Individual residential properties significant under this theme will be eligible under Criterion B/2/2.

⁴¹⁸ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REASON
B/2/2 (Person)	<p>For its association with an important person(s) in the entertainment industry. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance. Properties associated with living persons are usually not eligible for landmark designation. Sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both the person’s field of endeavor and his or her contribution to that field.</p> <p>Eligibility under Criterion B for listing in the National Register of Historic Places requires that:</p> <p>“Each property associated with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person’s historic contributions. The best representatives usually are properties associated with the person’s adult or productive life. Properties associated with an individual’s formative or later years may also qualify if it can be demonstrated that the person’s activities during this period were historically significant or if no properties from the person’s productive years survives. Length of association is an important factor when assessing several properties with similar associations. A community or State may contain several properties eligible for associations with the same important person, if each represents a different aspect of the person’s productive life.”⁴¹⁹</p> <p>Note that some of these properties may not be visible from the public right-of-way. For survey purposes, these properties have been flagged and assigned a status code indicating that additional evaluation is needed due to lack of visibility.</p>
A/1/6 (District)	<p>A collection of residences associated with members of the entertainment industry that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Residences eligible under this theme will likely contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes; an association with members of the entertainment industry represents one layer of an area’s history.</p>

⁴¹⁹ *National Register Bulletin 15*, Section VI: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.”

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property under this theme eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

The Influence of the Entertainment Industry (1919-1941): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent a known association with an important person or persons in the entertainment industry; because Palm Springs is a resort destination, eligible properties associated with people in the entertainment industry in the city will likely be second homes; for commercial properties, represent a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs; a film location must represent an early or iconic location; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance; and
- retain a majority of the contributors with a known association with members of the entertainment industry; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

