



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 2, 2021

To: The Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB)

From: Ken Lyon, RA, Associate Planner / Historic Preservation Officer

Subject: **Case HSPB #128 & 129: Historic Resource Report
2275, 2350, 2500, 2501, 2540, 2550 South Araby Drive;
The Araby Rock Houses and El Dumpo Adobe.**

On September 29, 2021 the historic resources report prepared by Architectural Resources Group ("ARG") dated September 28, 2021 for the subject properties was distributed to the HSPB members via e-mail.

These two cases were identified by the HSPB at its meeting of July 9, 2019 as part of your FY 19/20 work plan.

Recommendation: Receive the report and direct staff to arrange site visits (where feasible) and to schedule a public hearing of the HSPB to consider the applications.

Attachments:

Historic Resource Report dated September, 28, 2021. (Transmitted electronically to HSPB members)



Araby Rock Houses and Araby Adobe, Historic Resources Report

2275, 2350, 2500, 2501, 2540, 2550 S. Araby Drive
Palm Springs, CA

Prepared for:

City of Palm Springs
Department of Planning Services

Prepared by:



Architectural
Resources Group

September 28, 2021

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Appendix A. 2016 DPR 523 Forms

1. Introduction

At the request of the City of Palm Springs' Department of Planning Services, Architectural Resources Group (ARG) has prepared this Historic Resources Report for six single-family residences on S. Araby Drive in the Araby Cove neighborhood: 2275, 2350, 2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550. 2275 S. Araby Drive is the Araby Adobe (commonly known as the "El Dumpo Adobe") and the other five are rock houses, four of which (2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550) comprise the historic "Hopi Village" in a canyon separated from the rest of Araby Cove and accessed via a private road. All were constructed between 1926 and 1933.

Completion of this assessment involved a site visit and visual inspection of the buildings on May 17, 2021¹; compilation and review of historic building permits and project documents obtained from the Palm Springs Department of Planning Services; primary and secondary source research conducted through various local and online repositories, including the Palm Springs Historical Society Research Library; development of applicable historic contexts and themes (expanding on those in the City's Historic Context Statement); evaluation of each property's individual eligibility under City of Palm Springs Class 1 historic resource criteria; and evaluation of historic integrity. This report was prepared by Katie E. Horak, Principal and Mary Ringhoff, Associate, both of whom meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* for Architectural History.² ARG intern Luke Leuschner provided research assistance and additional project support.

In summary, ARG finds that the properties at 2275 and 2350 S. Araby Drive meet City of Palm Springs Class 1 eligibility Criteria 3 and 4, and the property at 2540 S. Araby Drive meets Class 1 Criteria 3, 4, and 5. As these properties also retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance, they appear eligible for listing as Class 1 historic resources.

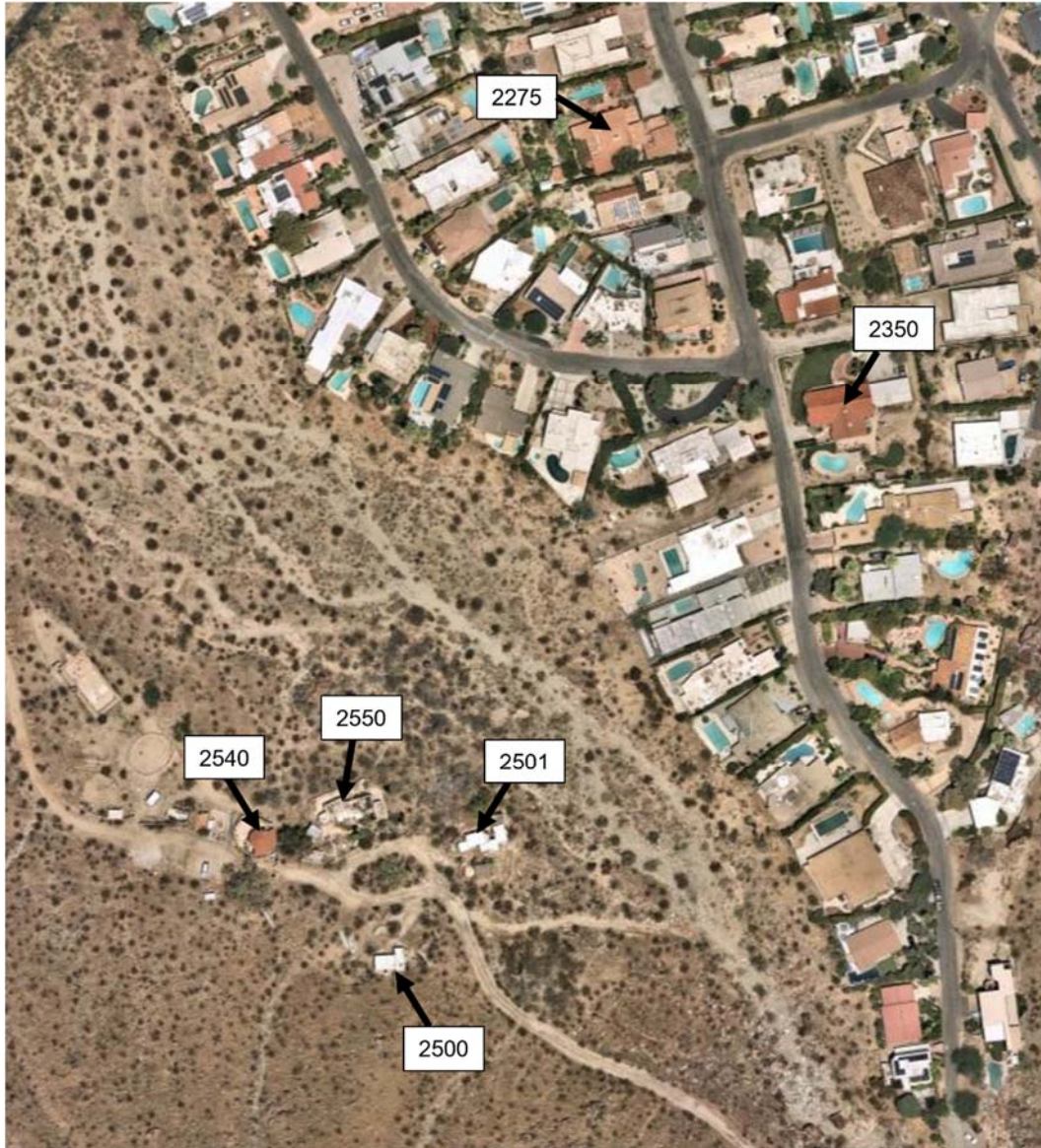
The properties at 2500, 2501, and 2550 S. Araby Drive also appear potentially individually significant under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Criteria 3, 4, and 5. However, due to lack of access and visibility, ARG was unable to determine whether each is individually eligible for listing as a Class 1 historic resource. These three properties therefore appear eligible for listing as Class 2 historic resources.

The following report provides a contextual basis for analysis and a detailed discussion of how these determinations were made.

¹ Four of the properties (2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550 S. Araby Drive, historically "Hopi Village") are located on a private drive and were unable to be closely examined. ARG supplemented the limited visual observation with examination of aerial photographs, historic photographs, and 2016 DPR forms and photos of the property provided by the City.

² Katie E. Horak is a Principal and Architectural Historian in ARG's Los Angeles office, with 18 years of experience in the field. She is a graduate of the Master of Historic Preservation (now Heritage Conservation) program at the University of Southern California. Mary Ringhoff is a Senior Associate in ARG's Los Angeles office, with 12 years of experience in the field. She is also a graduate of USC's Master of Historic Preservation program.

2. Architectural Description



Site map showing locations of subject properties. Base image: City of Palm Springs, 2021.

2.1 Site and Setting

The subject properties, 2275, 2350, 2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550 S. Araby Drive, are located in the Araby Cove residential neighborhood on the southern edge of Palm Springs. Araby Cove, containing only 81 residences, lies south of Palm Canyon Wash (a wide ephemeral drainage running northeast/southwest here) and is situated in the canyon-dissected foothills of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Its titular “cove” is formed by the surrounding slopes and shallow canyons. Araby Cove has only two access points: S. Araby Drive (originally Tamarisk Avenue), which crosses the wash from the north, and Rim Road (originally Mesquite Drive) south of the wash, which contours around the hillside east of the development to

connect with E. Palm Canyon Road. The neighborhood's immediate topography is a relatively flat natural bench within larger west- and north-trending slopes; it encompasses varied terrain to which many properties have adapted with retaining walls and flat spots cut into slopes to allow building. Most of the residences occupy irregularly shaped parcels of moderate size, fronting on the curvilinear streets of S. Araby Drive, E. Smokewood Avenue, Cholla Place, S. Bisnaga Avenue, and Rim Road. S. Araby Drive essentially bisects the development. The streets are paved with asphalt and lack sidewalks or street lights. Residences reflect a range of setbacks, sizes, architectural styles, and eras; while a few properties dating from the 1920s to the 1930s are present, most of the homes were constructed between the 1950s and 2000s. Two of the subject properties (2275 and 2350 S. Araby Drive) are located in this main portion of Araby Cove, which was developed as the Araby Tract in 1926.

The other four subject properties (2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550 S. Araby Drive) are geographically separated from the rest of Araby Cove, situated below the other homes on the east side of a roughly north-trending canyon to the southwest of the 1920s tract. They are accessed via a graded extension of S. Araby Drive, which completes a hairpin turn at the south end of Araby Cove and contours northwest along the side of the canyon to reach the homes. The setting is relatively natural and quite informal here, with graded and flattened cuts/platforms for house sites and individual retaining walls, ancillary buildings/structures, and landscape features. Native and imported vegetation including palm trees, creosote, greasewood, cholla, and mesquite dominates the landscape. The four houses here constitute the entirety of the development in this canyon, and were developed together in the 1930s as "Hopi Village."

2.2 Buildings

2275 S. Araby Drive ("El Dumpo Adobe")

The building at 2275 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with an irregular footprint. It is located in the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, on the west side of S. Araby Drive, and reflects a vernacular adobe idiom. Its original (1926) adobe volume appears to constitute the front and central portion of the current building (comprising the portions which are most visible from the public right-of-way), and has a front-gabled roof covered with red clay tile. Attached to the rear and side of the adobe volume are multiple later (post-1940) additions that all appear to be constructed of slumpstone type concrete masonry units (CMU); some or all of the additions may in fact be wood-framed with slumpstone cladding. These additions have shed roofs with the same red clay tile roofing material as the 1926 volume. Roof features include open eaves with exposed rafters, and an interior stucco chimney with clay tile cap at the interior of the adobe volume. Post-1940 hardscape features include slumpstone entry and perimeter walls attached to the building, a decorative slumpstone arch, a wooden gate with rock piers, and a hedge. Due to these hardscape additions, much of the building is not visible from the street.

The only visible windows, located in the adobe volume, are paired steel multi-light casement windows topped by simple wood lintels. The front (east-most) building volume has multiple sets of single-light wood French doors comprising the majority of its north elevation. The building is fronted by a gravel driveway flanked by rock planters with native vegetation. It leads to a detached modern carport with slumpstone walls topped by wood vertical supports and a tiled shed roof.



2275 S. Araby Dr. overview, view southwest (all visible portions appear to be adobe). ARG, 2021.



2275 S. Araby Dr., view west/northwest showing adobe construction. ARG, 2021.



2275 S. Araby Dr. modern carport, view northwest. ARG, 2021.



2275 S. Araby Dr., view southwest (all visible portions appear to be adobe). ARG, 2021.

2350 S. Araby Drive

The building at 2350 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with a roughly T-shaped footprint. It is located in the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, on the east side of S. Araby Drive. The original building volume, which was rectangular, is oriented with its long axis running roughly east/west (perpendicular to S. Araby Drive). A 1986 garage/storage room addition to the east end lengthened this rectangular footprint, and a 2008 patio enclosure and addition to the south elevation created the existing T-shape. The building reflects a vernacular idiom. The original volume's walls appear to be constructed of mortared native stone, while both additions appear wood-framed; the southern addition has mortared stone cladding and the eastern addition's cladding is not visible from the street. The building is topped by a cross-gabled roof with wood channel board cladding at the gable ends; the roof is shallowly "broken" to create slightly flared eaves, and is covered with red clay tile. The roof features open eaves, exposed purlins and rafter tails, bargeboards, and a vent. Visible window types include tripartite fixed and casement vinyl windows; a single fixed wood window; and paired wood casement windows with divided lights.

The building's primary façade faces north, perpendicular to S. Araby Drive, and contains the primary entry. The entry is fronted by a partial-width, recessed porch with stone pillars, porch walls, and curving cheek walls that flank concrete entry steps. The primary door is not visible from the street. The north and west sides of the building are fronted by a curving rock retaining wall enclosing lawn and native vegetation. A gravel driveway flanked by newer curving rock planters provides access from S. Araby Drive; a newer rock entry wall with wood gate obscures the southern part of the building's west elevation.



2350 S. Araby Dr. overview, view southeast. ARG, 2021.



2350 S. Araby Dr., view southeast. ARG, 2021.



2350 S. Araby Dr., view east. ARG, 2021.



2350 S. Araby Dr., view northeast. ARG, 2021.

2500 S. Araby Drive

The building at 2500 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with an irregular footprint. It is located in the "Hopi Village" area in a canyon separated from the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, along with three other rock houses; visibility from the public right of way is limited. The building reflects a vernacular idiom with some minimal elements of Pueblo Revival architecture. It is sited on a small flattened area and is partially built into a north-trending slope, with its primary façade facing north. It is constructed of mortared native stone and has a flat roof, covered with an unknown material. Roof features include a low flat parapet and several chimney pipes, and log vigas are present. The

primary façade contains two recessed wood doors with historic hardware. The building’s windows, which have simple stone sills and lintels, are boarded up and are of unknown type. Access to the house is provided by a graveled driveway from the graded extension of S. Araby Drive into the canyon, and a segment of low stone retaining wall or planter is present.



2500 S. Araby Dr. overview, view southwest. ARG, 2021.



2500 S. Araby Dr. primary façade, view southwest. ARG, 2021.



2500 S. Araby Dr., primary façade, view south. City of Palm Springs, 2021.

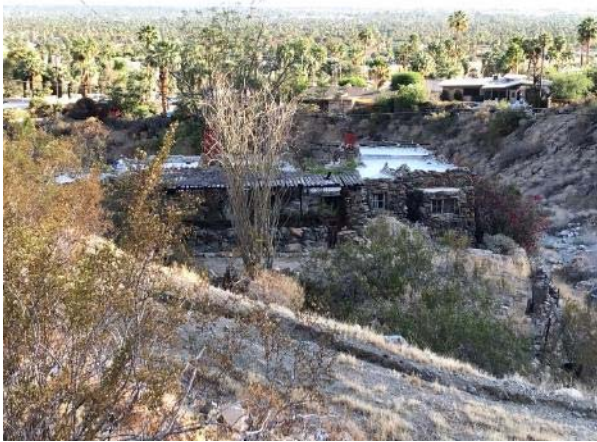


2500 S. Araby Dr., entry detail, view south. City of Palm Springs, 2021.

2501 S. Araby Drive

The building at 2501 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with an irregular footprint. It is located in the “Hopi Village” area in a canyon separated from the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, along with three other rock houses; visibility from the public right of way is limited. The building reflects a vernacular idiom with some minimal elements of Pueblo Revival architecture. It is sited on a flattened area, with its primary façade facing southeast. It is constructed of mortared native stone and has a flat roof covered with membrane roofing of an unknown type. Roof features include a rock parapet with occasional rustic stone crenellation and two exterior stone chimneys. The building has several square bays containing single and paired wood casement windows with divided lights; all windows have

simple stone sills and lintels. A projecting porch at the rear of the building features stone piers and walls, with a ramada-like wood shade structure. A detached garage to the south of the building is accessed by a graveled driveway from the graded extension of S. Araby Drive. Hardscape features include low stone retaining walls.



2501 S. Araby Dr. overview, view north. ARG, 2021.



2501 S. Araby Dr., view northeast. ARG, 2021.

2540 S. Araby Drive³

The building at 2540 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with an irregular footprint. It is located in the “Hopi Village” area in a canyon separated from the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, along with three other rock houses; visibility from the public right of way is limited. The building reflects a vernacular idiom with some minimal elements of Pueblo Revival architecture. It is sited on a flattened area fronted by a concrete patio with mortared native stone retaining/entry walls. Like these walls and other hardscape features on the property, the house is constructed of mortared native stone. It is primarily circular in shape, with a conical roof covered in red clay tile at the main round volume and a shed-roofed wing (also roofed with red clay tile) curving around the east/southeast portions of the round volume. The round volume features log vigas. Roof features include clay tile coping, a weathervane, and an exterior stone chimney. All visible windows are topped by log lintels, and are made of steel. They include tripartite (fixed picture window flanked by multi-light casements), single and paired multi-light casements, and a round multi-light window with an operable (hopper type) upper sash.

The primary entry, located in the west-facing round volume, is a wood door with decorative slats and historic metal hardware. It is set in a simple wood frame and is fronted by shallow stone steps from the front patio. A secondary door in the curving wing contains a paneled wood door with historic metal hardware and a log lintel; it is fronted by stone steps from the patio.

The property includes ancillary buildings and structures, including a stone building missing its roof; an empty concrete swimming pool; stone planters; and stone retaining and perimeter walls. These features

³ 2540 S. Araby Drive is located behind a private gate and was not accessed by authors of this report. The architectural description was developed based on photographs of the building available on www.airbnb.com, which are also included below. The Airbnb listing can be accessed here: <<https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/30498813>>

appear in the 1940 aerial photograph of the property and are all presumed to be original. Access to the graded extension of S. Araby Drive is provided by a graveled driveway with a mortared stone gate structure that is also presumed to be an original feature.



2540 S. Araby Dr. overview, view northeast (Airbnb.com, 2021).



2540 S. Araby Dr., view east/northeast. (Airbnb.com, 2021).



2540 S. Araby Dr., primary entry, view northeast. (Airbnb.com, 2021).



2540 S. Araby Dr., patio and ancillary building, view west. (Airbnb.com, 2021).

2550 S. Araby Drive

The building at 2550 S. Araby Drive is a one-story, single-family residence with an irregular footprint. It is located in the “Hopi Village” area in a canyon separated from the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract, along with three other rock houses; visibility from the public right of way is limited. The building reflects a vernacular idiom with some minimal elements of Pueblo Revival architecture. It appears to be partially built into a south-trending slope, though it primarily sits on an elevated flattened area with mortared native stone retaining walls. The building is constructed of mortared native stone and has a flat roof covered with membrane roofing of an unknown type. Roof features include a flat rock parapet and two exterior stone chimneys. The building’s windows appear to be single and paired steel casement windows with divided lights, all with simple stone sills and lintels. Several attached wood ramadas provide shade. The primary (south-facing) façade is fronted by multiple sets of stone steps and landings/patios, and a set of steps leads from ground level to the flat roof; door types are unknown. The

property includes two ancillary buildings of mortared native stone and wood board-and-batten, with shed roofs. Other hardscape features include stone retaining walls, planters, and steps.



2550 S. Araby Dr., view northeast. ARG, 2021.



2550 S. Araby Dr., view north. ARG, 2021.



2550 S. Araby Dr., view northwest. ARG, 2021.



2550 S. Araby Dr., northwest. ARG, 2021.

3. Alterations and Chronology of Development

Upon review of historical building permits, newspaper sources, photographs, and city directories, ARG created the following chronology of development for the Araby Rock Houses. All notations of residents come from Palm Springs City Directories unless otherwise noted; occupancy history is addressed in detail in *Sections 4.2 and 4.3*, below. The current addresses of the four “Hopi Village” properties, including street name, appear not to have been formalized until ca. 1946; census and city directory references to this area prior to this time simply noted them “Araby Tract,” sometimes with the addition of “end of Tamarisk Ave.” (the former name of Araby Drive).⁴ The 1940 census, in fact, did not note addresses or street names for any of the homes in the Araby Tract, whether located in “Hopi Village” or the main neighborhood. This chronology provides a summary of each property’s development and known occupants as well as a summary of all documented alterations. Uncertainties about addresses mean most owner/occupant information prior to the late 1940s-early 1950s is tentative.

As reflected in the construction dates below, all six of the buildings date to the period 1926-1933, falling within the “Palm Springs Between the Wars (1919-1941)” context in the citywide HCS. Periods of significance for the individual properties are discussed in more detail in *Sections 6.2 and 6.3*, below.

2275 S. Araby Drive (1926)

- 1926: Adobe house constructed.⁵ The original owner is unknown.
- 1926-1940: Semi-attached adobe guest cottage added to southeast corner; this may have been built in 1926, at the same time as the main house, but without building permits or earlier maps/photos that cannot be confirmed.⁶
- 1958: Addition (594 square feet) to living room: frame and stucco, with composition roof. This is presumed to be either the central-south volume of the building or the westmost portion of the building (both of which are now tile-roofed). “No changes to be made to adobe structure.”⁷ Owner: Everett Dunlap.
- 1960-1975: Sliding glass doors added to north elevation of guest cottage.⁸
- 1975: Carport (200 square feet) added to south side of building: masonry piers and wood/metal frame with tile roof.⁹ Chain link fence added to rear yard.¹⁰ Owner: Cecil Bennett.

⁴ City of Palm Springs city directories, 1939, 1946, 1947, 1956; 1930 and 1940 census data.

⁵ City of Palm Springs, *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings* (prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Palm Springs, 2016). Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1926 as construction date “per research” (the construction date “per County/City” is 1950, which likely reflects later additions/alterations).

⁶ The guest cottage is present on a 1940 aerial photograph of the area.

⁷ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 1359, 12/16/58.

⁸ There is no documentation of this alteration; date derived from visual observation and known period of popularity for this door type.

⁹ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B-8229, 2/26/75.

¹⁰ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 8-9035, 7/22/75.

- 1980: Building re-roofed (underlayment replaced under existing tile).¹¹ Owner: Cecil Bennett.
- 1981: Solar system added.¹² Owner: Cecil Bennett.
- 1982: New 2-bay carport constructed: “adobe block,” steel, and wood construction, with tile roof.¹³ Owner: Cecil Bennett.
- 1988-89: Electrical and HVAC upgrades.¹⁴ Owner: Frank Jones.
- Permit for retaining wall (5’4” high, 100 feet long) on north portion of property.¹⁵ Owner: Frank Jones.
- Permit for retaining wall (6 feet high, 80 feet long).¹⁶ Owner: Greg Hough.
- Detached open trellis patio cover (8x16 feet) constructed.¹⁷ Owner: Frank Jones.
- 2011: Building re-roofed (underlayment replaced under existing tile).¹⁸ Owner: Frank Jones.
- General HVAC renovations to guest house and main house, with no structural demolition proposed. Owner: Frank Jones. Architect: Duane Valencia
- 2011-2014: Sliding glass doors at guest cottage replaced with multiple sets of single- light French doors.¹⁹
- 2014: Bathroom remodel, work restricted to interior.²⁰ Owner Franklin Jones.

Observed alterations not documented in the permit record include an addition to the building’s rear (west) elevation; and addition of entry walls with gate and retaining walls.

¹¹ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 3883, 9/23/80.

¹² City of Palm Springs Dept. of Community Development Solar Energy System Application, 5/13/81; City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B6344, 9/25/81.

¹³ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B0755, 12/13/82.

¹⁴ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B15046, 3/15/89.

¹⁵ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B14172, 11/14/88.

¹⁶ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B15766, 6/26/89.

¹⁷ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B14650, 1/23/89.

¹⁸ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. C30429, 10/11/11.

¹⁹ Google Streetview, 2011 and 2014.

²⁰ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2013-1336, 5/13/13 (expired), renewed in City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2014-950, 3/31/14.



Comparison of 2275 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

2350 S. Araby Drive (1926)

- 1926: Rock house constructed.²¹ Owner unknown.
- 1930-1935: Seasonal residents for all or part of this time may have been Lawrence M. and Anna M. Giannini of San Francisco, who may have been the original owners.²²
- Post-1940: Screened patio added to south elevation.²³
- 1956: Swimming pool added. Owner: Ramon Somavia.²⁴
- 1960: Existing wardrobe converted to bathroom, existing bathroom remodeled (work appears to have been restricted to interior).²⁵
- 1986: Wood-framed carport and storage room (1,288 square feet) added at east elevation.²⁶ Owner Morley Marsten. Builder: W.A. Foster, Inc. Architect: Albert Frey.
- 1988: Detached, 8-foot diameter (aboveground) spa pool constructed; existing pool equipment relocated from in-ground to above ground and new equipment added.²⁷
- 2008: Screened patio on south elevation enclosed into living area (235 square feet); new adjacent addition of breakfast nook, kitchen, dining room, pantry, screen wall, and

²¹ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*. Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1926 as construction date “per County/City.”

²² Based on the residence’s common name as the Giannini-Somavilla Residence, the Gianninis’ 1930 enumeration in the Araby Tract area of Palm Springs, and post-1934 references to them residing seasonally at the Desert Inn.

²³ Comparison of 1940 and 2021 aerial photographs; City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. C20741, 1/9/08 for enclosure of screened patio and construction of new addition at south elevation.

²⁴ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 8842, 8/7/56.

²⁵ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B2443, 8/2/60.

²⁶ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B09354, 9/22/86.

²⁷ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B13885, 10/10/88.

retaining wall (678 square feet).²⁸ Owner Rob Kittleson. Architect Eric Kleiner, San Diego.

2016-2021: Original windows replaced with vinyl at west (street-facing) elevation.²⁹

Observed alterations not documented in the permit record include hardscape alterations including removal of some original rock planters, reconfiguration of rock retaining wall, and addition of new rock planters, gate, and entry wall; and addition of awnings.



Comparison of 2350 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

2500 S. Araby Drive (1930)

1930: A dwelling is built on the hillside above the 1st section (at 2550 S Araby, 1929).³⁰ Lee Miller is the designer and builder. The construction consists of a small dwelling and patio (perhaps a guest house). The original owner is unknown, though Miller is likely to have retained ownership.

1935-1950: Helen Cooke Miller, divorced from R. Lee Miller, occupies the house. By 1946, she had married John H. Warner, and both lived there ca. 1946-1950.³¹ Helen Warner's parents, Charles P. and Gertrude Cooke, appear to have been seasonal residents as well.³²

Observed alterations not documented in the permit record include boarding up of all visible windows and probable replacement of roof material.

²⁸ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. C20741, 1/9/08

²⁹ The 2016 survey noted wood windows; the current west windows are vinyl.

³⁰ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*. Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1930 as construction date "per County/City."

³¹ Palm Springs city directories 1939, 1946, 1954, 1955; 1940 census data.

³² City directories and census as above; "Charles P. Cooke," *Los Angeles Times* 9/8/54.



Comparison of 2500 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

2501 S. Araby Drive (1930 ca.)

1930 ca.: A dwelling is built on the hillside to the east of the initial construction (at 2550 S Araby, 1929).³³ R. Lee Miller is the designer and builder. The property consists of a dwelling surrounded by a patio and a detached garage. The original owner is unknown.

1984: Owner is David Levy, who resides at 2550 S. Araby Drive.³⁴

Observed alterations not documented in the permit record include probably replacement of roof material.

³³ While no primary source material or documentation of this property outside of data from the Riverside County Assessor and the City of Palm Springs could be found, numerous *Desert Sun* articles make reference to Miller constructing multiple rock houses in the 1929-1930 period.

³⁴ City of Palm Springs Notice of Public Nuisance (plumbing and electrical issues), File #8408-28.02, 8/30/84.



Comparison of 2501 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

2540 S. Araby Drive (1933)

- 1933: R. Lee Miller designs and builds this rock house with distinctive round volume. Owner: Perle Wheeler Martin.³⁵ The property consists of a circular dwelling (678 sq ft.) surrounded by a patio, a detached garage, a large swimming pool (34' by 68'), and an additional barbeque/patio area. It appears a separate gated road is added to the western side of the property.³⁶
- 1933-c.1956: Perle Wheeler Martin is owner and resident of the property.³⁷
- 2013: Building re-roofed (underlayment replaced under existing tile), copper flashing and gutters installed.³⁸ Owner: Julie Rupp.
- 2014: Septic tank replacement for Julie Rupp.³⁹

³⁵ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*. Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1933 as construction date "per County/City." It is unclear if Miller was commissioned by Martin to construct on land purchased from him, or if Martin purchased this section from Miller after rock dwellings had been built, but Martin appears to have been the earliest owner; *The Desert Sun*, "Legal Notice No. 183," 11 December 1956.

³⁶ Aerials from UC Santa Barbara's collection show a separate dirt road entrance by 1940. Whether this was constructed immediately or in the years between 1933 and 1940 is unknown.

³⁷ *Palm Springs City Directory, 1933-1956*, accessed via Palm Springs Historical Society

³⁸ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2013-1583, 6/4/13.

³⁹ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2014-819, 3/18/14.



Comparison of 2540 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

2550 S. Araby Drive (1929)

- 1929: R. Lee Miller designs and builds this house as the first building in his “Hopi Village” on S. Araby Drive.⁴⁰ He may have also been the original/early occupant, though extensive research could not confirm this. Miller’s ex-wife Helen Cooke Miller occupied 2500 S. Araby Drive starting around 1935, suggesting they may have shared that home rather than 2550 prior to their divorce.
- 1936-1939: R. Lee Miller’s residence is listed at the “Araby tract.”⁴¹
- 2019: Sewer line work for David Levy.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1929 as construction date “per County/City”; *The Desert Sun*, “Remember When,” 7 October 1959; “Remember When,” 9 December 1959; “Down Memory Lane,” 13 December 1949.

⁴¹ *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, accessed via Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁴² City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2019-941, 3/7/19.



Comparison of 2550 S. Araby Drive footprint in 1940 (left) and 2021 (right).

4. Historic Contexts

4.1 Early Residential Development of Palm Springs

Originally inhabited by the people of the Cahuilla tribe, later known as the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Palm Springs was settled by European Americans starting with John Guthrie McCallum in the 1880s. While McCallum brought his family there for health reasons and envisioned a community that would draw other health-seekers, others focused first on its agricultural potential. The new inhabitants took advantage of the region's warm weather to grow produce which ripened sooner and could reach Los Angeles markets earlier in the season. However, the town's agricultural aspirations were short lived. A flood in 1894, followed by years of drought, devastated the local farming industry. By the early 1900s, Palm Springs' agricultural ambitions were overshadowed by its emergence as a resort destination, a quality that would come to define the desert city.⁴³ New arrivals like Nellie Coffman shared McCallum's enthusiasm for the warm, dry climate, though they focused on developing Palm Springs as an exclusive winter resort for a well-heeled clientele rather than just a health destination for people seeking relief from physical ailments.

Palm Springs' residential development began in earnest in the 1920s, and tourism played a major role in its development from the start. Hotels, including the Desert Inn (1909), the Oasis Hotel (1925), and the El Mirador Hotel (1928), accommodated wealthy vacationers who came for the warm desert climate and positive health effects.⁴⁴ Taken by the leisurely atmosphere of the desert oasis, hotel patrons often considered buying a residence, or renting one for an entire winter season. Most of Palm Springs' early residents (often referred to as "colonists") were prominent industrialists and Hollywood moguls who bought second homes in the town. The town residents' exclusive parties and various social occasions were often covered and popularized in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers throughout the 1920s.⁴⁵ By the time Palm Springs incorporated in 1938, it had become famous worldwide as a "winter playground for Hollywood stars, European royalty and business tycoons, all who came to enjoy the endless sunshine and serenity of the desert."⁴⁶

Prior to World War II, most residential development was concentrated in the vicinity of the existing village and its vacation accommodations; it was arrayed around the village center as subdivided in 1887-1888, and featured several early residential subdivisions, though these were soon eclipsed by those of the early 1920s. The community's earliest 20th century residential subdivisions include Las Hacienditas (1923), Vista Acres (1923), Tahquitz Park (1923), Palm Canyon Mesa (1924), Araby Tract (1925), and Merito Vista (1925). Though subdivided and improved in the 1920s, most tracts were left largely

⁴³ Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend: The Architecture of a Midcentury Oasis* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 22-24.

⁴⁴ *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* (City of Palm Springs: Department of Planning Services, 2016), 58; Moya Henderson and the Palm Springs Historical Society, *Palm Springs* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 8.

⁴⁵ Historic Resources Group, 58-59.

⁴⁶ *Draft Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, March 2003), 3-5.

undeveloped until the post-World War II period.⁴⁷ The few houses that were built typically reflected either one of the Period Revival styles popular at the time (particularly Spanish Colonial Revival), or a vernacular idiom in keeping with the continued “rustic resort” image of Palm Springs. Simple wood-framed and board- or stucco-clad cottages were common, while adobe or native stone houses appeared in smaller numbers. while adobe or native stone houses appeared in smaller numbers.

4.2 Development of the Araby Tract

The Araby Tract, now known as Araby Cove and sometimes “Little Araby,” was a subdivision developed by H.W. Otis and Son in the mid-1920s on the outskirts of then-unincorporated Palm Springs.⁴⁸ Hilemon W. Otis first took option on the land in November of 1924, then drilled a 565-foot well to supply the necessary water for a subdivision. After the “quality and quantity” of water was known, Otis exercised his option on the land in spring of 1925. Throughout 1925, more improvements were made: water was piped to each homesite, electricity was installed, and streets were graded (but not paved).⁴⁹ Otis also constructed the first home in the tract in 1925, a Craftsman residence at 2290 Mesquite Drive (now 2290 Bisnaga); Otis and his wife Dora W. Otis lived at this property, which may have also included the tract sales office either in the main house or the rear ancillary residence.⁵⁰ The Otis home was designed by local designer-builder R. Lee Miller, who would go on to design the rustic rock houses of “Hopi Village” in the canyon adjacent to the Araby Tract. By early 1926, improvements on the subdivision were complete, and the opening announcement appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* in late February.⁵¹ The first lot buyer purchased three 60’ by 140’ lots for \$1000 each, and homes began construction that year.

Reflecting the Araby Tract’s orientation toward would-be seasonal residents, Otis advertised it heavily in the *Los Angeles Times* and produced an informational brochure they could order for more information. The illustrated brochure, titled “Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs, Cal.” drew on the tropes favored by Palm Springs boosters at that time, most obviously the characterization of the area as “Our Araby” – a warm winter oasis like those of the romanticized ancient Middle East. The “Our Araby” phrase was apparently coined by British writer and photographer J. Smeaton Chase in his 1920 book *Our Araby: Palm Springs and the Garden of the Sun*.⁵² Otis’ Araby brochure asserted Herodotus himself “would find our own ‘ARABY’ infinitely more beautiful and alluring than any section he had yet traversed,” and went on to explain:

⁴⁷ Historic Resources Group, 58-59.

⁴⁸ *The Los Angeles Times*, “Desert Tract is Opened for Home Building,” 21 February 1926.

⁴⁹ Letter from H. W. Otis describing the Araby tract, 1938, McManus/McCallum Papers (Object #B15-2-f1-d001). Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁵⁰ “H.W. Otis Very Ill in Glendale,” *Desert Sun* 10/27/39; 1939 city directory; Dora Otis enumeration in 1940 census; architect information is from the citywide HCS, which identified the home as potentially eligible. It identifies the address as 2200 Mesquite Drive, which may have been an older address later change to 2290 (there is no 2200 on either Bisnaga or Rim Rd, which intersects near the Otis house. The house retains native stone retaining walls and steps/walkway that are very similar to Miller’s known work in “Hopi Village” and elsewhere. Regarding the tract office: Otis’ property once included a rear ancillary residence (visible on the 1940 aerial but no longer extant) which may have served that original purpose.

⁵¹ “Desert Tract Is Opened for Home Building.”

⁵² *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, 41.

He would find flora and fauna of infinite variety and kind; his vision would not be greeted by immeasurable spaces of barren waste, but instead he would behold a relatively narrow strip of undulating land, skirted by high-towering mountains that cast their shadows and lend variegated and ever-changing tints to masterpieces which no artist of brush or pen, however gifted, could hope to fittingly depict.

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.⁵³

Follow the Trail to
Araby
 at PALM SPRINGS, CAL.

Since the Beginning
 of Time
 ... Men Have Come into the
 Desert for Inspiration -
 Reflection - Tranquility.

Desert Homesites
 Located 3 miles from Palm Springs on a mesa, just east of the mouth of Palm Canyon, facing toward the desert. Improvements include a modern electric system, plumbing, and every amenity for a winter home. A good heated and cooled garage, the government's sandable, restorative, pure water. Prices range from \$1000 to \$2500.

Come Soon or Write!

H.W. OTIS & SON
 Araby
 PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.
 Owners and Subdividers

Los Angeles Representative
The BLAIR-MATTHEWS CO.
 REALTORS
 1106-1108 Van Ness Bldg.
 7th, Van Ness Bldg.
 Los Angeles, Cal.

ARABY, at Palm Springs, is exactly 110 miles from Los Angeles, via well-paved highways . . . a 3 or 4 hour drive via Route 66 and the Jack Rabbit Trail, or via Redlands and the new State Highway. Thence through Desert and Sierrita to Palm Springs, where our office is located directly across from the Postoffice. For information or our beautifully illustrated booklet, mail the coupon.

Mail this Coupon for Full Details

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____
 Zip _____

Times, Feb. 21

Araby Tract display ad, Los Angeles Times 2 February 1926.

⁵³ Araby Tract Brochure, 1926.

Ultimately, Otis purchased 163 acres under his real estate and brokerage company “H.W. Otis & Son,” of which approximately 40 acres were improved and subdivided.⁵⁴ The 138 lots/homesites were priced between \$500 to \$1500, with lots sizes ranging from 50’-100’ long by 70’-200’ deep. Construction was set at a minimum of \$2500 and policed by architectural restriction. As the original sales brochure details, “It is not necessary or expected that lot buyers build expensive homes, but it is required that they be attractive and desirable.” Lot buyers were, however, expected to be of the “most desirable nature” – insinuating racial restrictions synonymous with 1920s subdivisions.⁵⁵

A few homes were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s, including an adobe building later known as “El Dumpo” at 2275 S. Araby Drive and a rock building at 2350 S. Araby Drive (Araby was originally platted as Tamarisk Drive and the name appears to have changed in the late 1940s). But development was nowhere near what Otis had hoped, possibly due to the financial setbacks of the 1929 stock market crash and ensuing Great Depression. In the mid-1930s, Otis advertised Araby lots for sale at \$250-\$400, much reduced from original prices.⁵⁶ In 1939, he widened Mesquite Drive along the eastern edge of the subdivision, resulting in “a big improvement to the beautiful Araby Tract.”⁵⁷ A 1940 aerial photograph of the tract shows only 13 homes had been built by that time, four of which were located in a separate area to the southwest known as “Hopi Village.” The tract eventually saw full buildout in the post-World War II period, when Palm Springs saw enormous growth, and today its built environment is characterized by a wide range of construction dates, house types, and architectural styles. Sometime in the late 1940s, most of the tract’s original street names were changed, perhaps reflecting the resurgence of development here. Tamarisk Avenue became S. Araby Drive, Bisnaga Avenue retained its name at its south end became part of Rim Road to the north, and Mesquite Drive became Rim Road.

2275 S. Araby Drive

The single-family residence at 2275 S. Araby Drive was constructed in 1926.⁵⁸ One of the first houses in the Araby Tract, the house was one of a handful of Palm Springs residences built of adobe. Its original owner, builder, and designer (if it had one), are unknown. The earliest occupant on record is Fannie Beach, who resided there from at least 1946 to the early 1950s; from at least 1935 to 1944, she resided next door at 2305 Tamarisk (later Araby Drive), first with her husband A.W. Beach, then with her son Walter E. Beach.⁵⁹ Beach may have owned and occupied both properties – a 1935 *Desert Sun* account notes that they owned at least six other lots in addition to her home at 2305 - but no primary source

⁵⁴ Letter from H.W. Otis, 1938.

⁵⁵ “Our Occidental Araby” brochure, Brochures (Palm Springs promotional) collection (Object #73-097). Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁵⁶ Display ads, *The Desert Sun* 8 March 1935, 29 March 1935, 24 May 1935.

⁵⁷ “H.W. Otis Widens Road to His Tract,” *The Desert Sun* 13 January 1939.

⁵⁸ City of Palm Springs, *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings* (prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Palm Springs, 2016). Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1926 as construction date “per research” (the construction date “per County/City” is 1950, which likely reflects later additions/alterations).

⁵⁹ Palm Springs city directories, 1935, 1939, 1944, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1950, 1951; “News of Araby,” *The Desert Sun* 12 April 1935; “Be It Ever So Humble, There’s No Place Like ‘El Dumpo,’” *The Desert Sun* 27 March 1987 cites Greg Hough stating Fannie Beeche was the original owner, but research was unable to confirm.

information could be found for any owner or occupant prior to 1946.⁶⁰ Either at the time of the main house's construction or sometime between 1926 and 1940, a semi-attached adobe guest cottage matching the original in materials and appearance was constructed off the southeast corner of the house.⁶¹

From at least 1954 to around 1958, the property was owned by Bessie Goldberg, owner of the Mountain View Court multi-family residential complex. She may not have actually lived at the property; if she did, she shared it with several different renters (who presumably occupied the guest cottage): B.E. Neal in 1954, and Eva Moss in 1956. In 1959, the city directory listed Sam and Edith Goldberg as owners, but building permit records suggest the property had recently passed to Everett Dunlap, a telephone company employee.⁶² Dunlap had a 594 square foot addition to the living room built with no changes to the original adobe structure – the exact location of this addition is unknown, but is presumed to be either the central-south volume of the house, or its westmost portion.⁶³ The building permit noted the addition would be wood-framed, stucco-clad, and sheathed with composition roofing material. All of the building's visible roofs are now covered with red clay tile. Sometime in the 1960s or 1970s, sliding glass doors were added to the north elevation of the guest cottage, necessitating enlargement of existing openings or creation of new ones.⁶⁴ The property may have gained its nickname "El Dumpo" during Dunlap's period of ownership.⁶⁵

Cecil L. Bennett gained ownership of the property around 1972.⁶⁶ Born in Monument, New Mexico in 1907, she owned Bennett's Indian Shop, a curio and jewelry store in downtown Palm Springs.⁶⁷ Bennett occupied 2275 S. Araby Drive until 1986. She added an attached carport to the south side of the building (a driveway appears to have run down the south edge of the parcel at that time) and a chain link fence to the rear yard in 1975, replaced the roof underlayment in 1980, added a solar system in 1981, and constructed a new detached, two-bay carport fronting the house on S. Araby Drive in 1982 (presumably replacing the 1975 carport).⁶⁸

In 1986, Bennett sold the property to Greg and Katherine Hough, an insurance specialist and curator of the Palm Springs Art Museum, respectively, who appear to have only owned it for a short time – by 1988, the owner was Frank Jones, publisher of *Palm Springs Life* magazine and current owner.⁶⁹ Since 1986, Jones has made electrical and HVAC upgrades to both the main house and the guest cottage,

⁶⁰ "News of Araby."

⁶¹ The guest cottage is present on a 1940 aerial photograph of the area.

⁶² "Be It Ever So Humble;" City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 1359, 12/16/58; "At Blood Bank" photo caption, *The Desert Sun*, 28 December 1953.

⁶³ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 1359, 12/16/58; addition location options based on comparison of 1940 and 2021 aerial photographs.

⁶⁴ There is no documentation of this alteration; date derived from visual observation and known period of popularity for this door type. The sliding glass doors are visible in a 2011 Google streetview image.

⁶⁵ "Be It Ever So Humble."

⁶⁶ "Be It Ever So Humble;" City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B-8229, 2/26/75.

⁶⁷ "Cecil Lavina Bennett, Owned Gift Shop," *The Desert Sun* 3 July 1990; birth and death records on ancestry.com.

⁶⁸ City of Palm Springs Building Permit Nos. B-8229, 2/26/75; No. 8-9035, 7/22/75; No. 3883, 9/23/80; No. B6344, 9/25/81; No. B0755, 12/13/82; City of Palm Springs Dept. of Community Development Solar Energy System Application, 5/13/81.

⁶⁹ "Be It Ever So Humble;" City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B14172, 11/14/88.

added a retaining wall, built a detached open trellis patio cover, replaced the roof underlayment, remodeled a bathroom, and replaced the guest cottage's sliding glass doors with wood French doors.⁷⁰

2350 S. Araby Drive

The single-family residence at 2350 S. Araby Drive was constructed in 1926.⁷¹ One of the first houses in the Araby Tract, the house was one of a handful of Palm Springs residences built of native stone. Its original owner, builder, and designer (if it had one), are unknown. The building is sometimes attributed to R. Lee Miller due to its rockwork, but this could not be confirmed with primary source research, and the current owner denies it is a Miller design.⁷² The earliest occupants on record are Lawrence M. (L.M.) and Anna M. Giannini, who may have been the original owners. L.M. Giannini was a prominent San Francisco banker, and the couple spent winters in Palm Springs from at least the 1930s until his death in 1952. As they are enumerated in the Araby area in the 1930 census and the common name of this residence as the Giannini-Somavilla house, it is entirely possible that the Gianninis were the original occupants. Their occupation appears to have been short-lived, as *Desert Sun* articles indicate they usually stayed at the Desert Inn during their seasonal residences between 1935 and 1952, with no mention of Araby.

The next owner appears to have been Sarah L. Stock, a widow who lived there (likely seasonally) from 1935 until her death in 1938.⁷³ Her estate continued to own the property until sometime between 1944 and 1948, at which point George F. Miller became the primary resident (as a renter from 1948 to 1952, as owner from 1952 to 1956). At some point after 1940, a screened patio was added to the house's south elevation, creating a T-shaped footprint.⁷⁴ Ramon Somavia (Jose Ramon Somavia Jr.) and his wife Juanita Somavia purchased the property in 1956. Both members of old California families, they owned a large cattle ranch in San Benito County and maintained their primary residence there. City directories and census records indicate they were living at least part-time in Palm Springs as early as 1939. In February 1953, they were living at 1348 Verbena Drive in the Araby Tract.⁷⁵ During their occupancy of 2350 S. Araby Drive, the Somavias added a swimming pool, converted an existing closet to a bathroom, and remodeled another bathroom.⁷⁶

By 1975, ownership had passed to J. Morley Marston, originally from Palo Alto. In 1986, Marston added a large (1,288 square foot) wood-framed storage room and carport to the east end of the house; it was

70 City of Palm Springs Building Permit Nos. B14172, 11/14/88; No. B14650, 1/23/89; No. B15046, 3/15/89; No. C30429, 10/11/11; No. 2013-1336, 5/13/13 (expired), renewed in No. 2014-950, 3/31/14; Google Streetview, 2011 and 2014.

70 City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2013-1336, 5/13/13 (expired), renewed in City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2014-950, 3/31/14.

⁷¹ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1926 as construction date "per County/City."

⁷² Email communication from City of Palm Springs, 10 June 2021.

⁷³ "News of Araby" (1935), which notes one of Stock's winter visitors bought ten lots in the Araby Tract; Long Beach city directories; "Services for Hugh E. Stock Set for Today," *Long Beach Sun* 2 February 1935; death records at ancestry.com and findagrave.com.

⁷⁴ Comparison of 1940 and 2021 aerial photographs; City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. C20741, 1/9/08 for enclosure of screened patio and construction of new addition at south elevation.

⁷⁵ "Villagers Here, There, and Abroad," *The Desert Sun* 9 February 1953.

⁷⁶ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 8842, 8/7/56; No. B2443, 8/2/60.

designed by master architect Albert Frey and built by W.A. Foster, Inc.⁷⁷ In 1988, he added a small aboveground spa pool and relocated pool equipment accordingly.⁷⁸ Scott Holden was noted as owner of the property in 1991, but little else is known about him or his occupancy.⁷⁹ Rob Kittleson has been the owner since at least 2008, when he had the south elevation's screened patio enclosed into a 235 square foot living area and added an adjacent 678 square foot addition.⁸⁰ The architect for this work was Eric Kleiner of San Diego. Other alterations, including vinyl window replacements at the west (street-facing) elevation, hardscape alterations, awning additions, and new entry wall and gate, are presumed to date to the post-2008 occupation as well.

4.3 “Hopi Village”

In 1929, local designer/builder R. Lee Miller purchased 20 acres of land immediately southwest of the established Araby Tract with a vision of creating a “Hopi Village” residential compound of small, rustic rock dwellings.⁸¹ With the closest developments being the barely-built Araby Tract and the rustic resort of Smoke Tree Ranch, the setting of Miller's new development was suitably natural and unspoiled. By December 1929, Miller had completed one of the houses, probably what is now 2550 S. Araby Drive.⁸² Miller lived in his development-in-progress, most likely in either 2550 or 2500 S. Araby Drive, while constructing over the next four years. It is unknown whether he envisioned a larger development, or even how he funded the work – portions of the land were owned by Perle Wheeler Martin, for whom Miller built the distinctive round rock house at 2540 S. Araby Drive. Martin may have financed all or part of “Hopi Village,” and she appears to have owned more than one of the houses there.

The dwellings closely resembled those Miller had built in Palm Springs' Andreas Canyon Club a few years earlier: small, vernacular rock dwellings occupying a series of small terraces in the surrounding slopes, with vaguely Pueblo Revival influences and details including vigas and hand-crafted iron hardware.⁸³ Featuring irregular massing, flat roofs, natural materials, and rustic details, the homes took the bucolic ideals of the nascent Palm Springs Village to a new extreme. By the late 1930s, the 20-acre development was threaded with rock walls, patios, multiple dwellings, and a sizable pool and wind screen -- all made accessible via a steep extension of Tamarisk Avenue (S. Araby Drive) down into the canyon. It quickly became known as a unique vernacular enclave speculated to have been populated by hobbits or the little people who played munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz*. Judging by the numerous occupant names associated with the houses, they were mostly occupied by seasonal residents, most of whom rented rather than owned. Today, three of the four houses are in disrepair, while the Martin residence at 2540 has been restored.

⁷⁷ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B09354, 9/22/86.

⁷⁸ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B13885, 10/10/88.

⁷⁹ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 21663 (building inspection), 10/4/91.

⁸⁰ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. C20741, 1/9/08

⁸¹ “Remember When,” *The Desert Sun* 7 October 1959.

⁸² “Memory Lane,” *The Desert Sun* 9 December 1959 (reprint of news from 9 December 1929).

⁸³ See *Section 4.5* for more information on Pueblo Revival architecture.

The ownership and occupancy histories that follow are based on secondary and primary sources, though gaps exist in the historical record and the chronologies are therefore incomplete.⁸⁴ Secondary sources note a number of post-1960s owner-occupants of the rock houses without specifying which house each occupied, including Christina Lillian, Burt Procter, Constance Walsh, and Rudy de Rooy.⁸⁵

2500 S. Araby Drive

The single-family residence at 2500 S. Araby Drive was constructed in 1930.⁸⁶ Like the rest of the “Hopi Village” houses, it was designed and built by R. Lee Miller, who also lived in the complex. Miller himself may have occupied this residence at one time, along with 2550 S. Araby Drive, which is more commonly thought to be his home. The earliest occupant on record is Helen Cooke Miller, R. Lee’s ex-wife, who lived there at least as early as 1935 and may have occupied it with Miller prior to their divorce (which happened sometime between 1937 and 1940).⁸⁷ Cooke Miller was a trained artist and active within the Palm Springs community. In 1936, she illustrated the cover and various maps within Don Admiral’s “Palm Springs Desert Area and Vicinity.”⁸⁸

As with the other “Hopi Village” houses, no addresses are noted in this area until the 1940s; the 1939 city directory noted Helen Cooke Miller’s address as “Araby Tract, end of Tamarisk Ave.” By 1946, Cooke Miller had married John H. Warner and taken his surname, and city directories note both living at 2500 S. Araby Drive until ca. 1950. City directories note Helen Warner’s parents, Charles P. and Gertrude Cooke, as residents of 2500 S. Araby Drive in the 1940s and owners in the early 1950s; they appear to have been seasonal residents at most (Cooke was a prominent civil engineer for the City of Los Angeles) and rented out the property.⁸⁹ In 1952, Frederick H. and Marjorie Swedenhjelm were occupants. Frederick was a groundsman for the California Electric Power Company.⁹⁰ In 1954, R.W. Hellis occupied the house.

Very little information could be found on occupants after the Cookes, and it is largely unknown which were renters versus owners. Carl Wertz was the owner from at least 1956 through 1959. Other occupants between 1955 and 1985 included Carl Bennett, Georgia Terry, Stanley Kassovic, and Dianne

⁸⁴ Unless noted otherwise, occupant information came from Palm Springs city directories at the Palm Springs Historical Society and through the Accessing the Past Digital History Collaborative (accessingthepast.org).

⁸⁵ Ann Japenga, “The Disappearing World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses,” April 11, 2019, accessed July 2021, <https://www.linktv.org/shows/artbound/the-disappearing-world-of-r-lee-miller-and-the-araby-rock-houses>; Ann Japenga, “The Hidden World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses,” California Desert Art, February 1, 2015, accessed July 2021, [The Hidden World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses - California Desert Art by Ann Japenga](#).

⁸⁶ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1930 as construction date “per County/City.”

⁸⁷ The 1940 census, which enumerated Helen Cooke Miller as divorced, notes that she had lived in the same house in 1935; an untitled article in *The Desert Sun* 26 November 1937 notes that Cooke Miller’s parents were visiting Mr. and Mrs. Lee Miller in Araby.

⁸⁸ *The Desert Sun*, “New Desert Book Makes a Big Hit,” 23 October 1936.

⁸⁹ City directories and census as above; “Charles P. Cooke,” *Los Angeles Times* 9/8/54.

⁹⁰ City directory, 1952.

Stadelman.⁹¹ Kassovic and Stadelman, both architects, owned and occupied the home between at least 1979 and 1985.⁹²

The property currently appears to be in disrepair, with windows boarded up, and is presumed to be vacant. Due to the lack of permit history, historic photos, and access to the property, the physical integrity of 2500 S. Araby Drive is currently unknown.

2501 S. Araby Drive

The single-family residence at 2501 S. Araby Drive was constructed ca. 1930.⁹³ Like the rest of the “Hopi Village” houses, it was designed and built by R. Lee Miller, who also lived in the complex. The earliest owner on record is Charles P. Cooke, father of Miller’s ex-wife Helen Cooke Miller, who owned it from at least 1952 until 1954 (he died in that year). As with Cooke’s other property in “Hopi Village,” 2500 S. Araby Drive, he appears to have rented this property out and was a seasonal resident at most. Renters included Priscilla Chaffey in 1952, and R.A. Gillet in 1954. By 1956, Virginia M. Moore had gained ownership of the property; she lived here until her death in 1978.⁹⁴ Moore was originally from Benton, Illinois and moved to Palm Springs after her first visit there in 1954; profitable stock speculation enabled her to buy her Araby home, which she decorated with rocks she found hiking in the desert.⁹⁵ Moore worked for the E.F. Hutton Company. In 1984, the owner was architect David Levy (residing at 2550 S. Araby Drive at the time).⁹⁶

The property currently appears to be in disrepair, and it is unknown whether it is occupied. Due to the lack of permit history, historic photos, and access to the property, the physical integrity of 2501 S. Araby Drive is currently unknown.

2540 S. Araby Drive

The single-family residence at 2540 S. Araby Drive was constructed in 1933.⁹⁷ Like the rest of the “Hopi Village” houses, it was designed and built by R. Lee Miller, who also lived in the complex. The original owner was Perle Wheeler Martin, who lived there until about 1956.⁹⁸ It is unclear if Martin commissioned Miller to construct on land she already owned, or if she purchased this property from Miller after the dwelling had been built. Martin appears to have owned multiple properties in the Araby Tract, although it is unknown whether they were in “Hopi Village” or the main neighborhood – a 1936

⁹¹ “Three Narrowly Escape As Auto Rolls Off Road,” *The Desert Sun* 3 March 1955; city directories; “Notice of Trustee’s Sale,” *The Desert Sun* 10 January 1985.

⁹² “Clancy Lane Progresses,” *The Desert Sun* 25 May 1979.

⁹³ While no primary source material or documentation of this property outside of data from the Riverside County Assessor and the City of Palm Springs could be found, numerous *Desert Sun* articles make reference to Miller constructing multiple rock houses in the 1929-1930 period.

⁹⁴ “The Hidden World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses;” “Odd Device Tests Stroller,” *The Desert Sun* 7 March 1959; “Moore,” *The Desert Sun* 8 February 1978.

⁹⁵ “Odd Device Tests Stroller,” *The Desert Sun* 7 March 1959.

⁹⁶ City of Palm Springs Notice of Public Nuisance (plumbing and electrical issues), File #8408-28.02, 8/30/84.

⁹⁷ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1933 as construction date “per County/City.”

⁹⁸ *Palm Springs City Directory, 1933-1956*, accessed via Palm Springs Historical Society.

advertisement in the *Desert Sun* simply noted “Two Beautiful Homes in Araby district for rent or sale. Fine View.”⁹⁹ Martin owned property elsewhere, including a cabin in the Lake O’ The Woods resort in Oregon (possibly her summer home), but had been a seasonal resident of Palm Springs since at least 1931, when she first came and stayed at Deep Well Guest Ranch.¹⁰⁰ Born in South Dakota in 1888, Pearl Gertrude Wheeler married John Henry Martin, a miller in Klamath Falls, Oregon in 1916; they divorced in 1925.¹⁰¹ As a seasonal resident, Pearl Wheeler Martin was active in Palm Springs social events but little else is known about her. Her “Hopi Village” house was known as “Casa Contenta,” though that nickname has been linked to 2550 S. Araby Drive and there are some uncertainties as to ownership and property names (see 2550 S. Araby Drive discussion below).

City directories indicate H.D. Phillips was the owner in 1959, and Jo Roth was a resident in 1962. The property was listed for rental multiple times throughout the 1960s, and was listed for sale in 1968 and 1972, though the sellers and buyers are unknown.¹⁰² The parcel offered for sale was 23 acres in size. By 1996, ownership had passed to John Simonello.¹⁰³ Since at least 2013, the owner has been corporate event planner Julie Kay Rupp; it is unknown whether Rupp ever occupied the building, but she replaced the roof underlayment, installed gutters, replaced the septic tank, and sensitively restored the house for use as a vacation rental.¹⁰⁴

The building at 2540 S. Araby Drive appears to retain a high level of physical integrity with no major observable alterations to its exterior; due to lack of access to the property, this is a tentative conclusion. The property’s ancillary buildings are in disrepair, with one missing its roof.

2550 S. Araby Dr.

The single-family residence at 2550 S. Araby Drive was constructed in 1929.¹⁰⁵ This was the first of the “Hopi Village” houses completed by designer and builder R. Lee Miller, who also lived in the complex, probably at this address. As noted above, he may have also occupied 2500 S. Araby Drive with Helen Cooke Miller prior to their divorce, at which point she (and later her husband John Warner) retained occupancy. Secondary sources have attributed occupancy of both 2540 and 2550 S. Araby Drive to Miller and to Perle Wheeler Martin, though city directories indicate Martin definitely occupied 2540.¹⁰⁶ They

⁹⁹ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, 31 January 1936.

¹⁰⁰ Classified ad, *The Klamath News*, 8 September 1938; “To Lake,” *The Evening Herald* (Klamath Falls) 9 September 1941; Untitled, *The Desert Sun*, 23 November 1956.

¹⁰¹ Oregon marriage and divorce records on ancestry.com.

¹⁰² “Beat Inflation, Buy Land,” *The Desert Sun*, 19 April 1968; “Palm Springs Ranch,” *The Desert Sun* 11 March 1972.

¹⁰³ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. B31530, 11/12/96, for reinstallation of electric meter.

¹⁰⁴ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2013-1583, 6/4/13; No. 2014-819, 3/18/14; “Rock House at Happy Canyon Ranch Monthly Rental,” accessed July 2021,

https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/30498813?guests=1&adults=1&s=67&unique_share_id=1bdecae0-b8cf-4986-934c-2cd74b935bb4.

¹⁰⁵ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, Preliminary Survey Findings, October 2015, notes 1929 as construction date “per County/City”; *The Desert Sun*, “Remember When,” 7 October 1959; “Remember When,” 9 December 1959; “Down Memory Lane,” 13 December 1949.

¹⁰⁶ *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings*, 68; Ann Japenga, “The Disappearing World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses,” April 11, 2019, accessed July 2021, <https://www.linktv.org/shows/artbound/the-disappearing-world-of-r-lee-miller-and-the-araby-rock-houses>.

also note that 2550 was known as “Casa Contenta,” though that may have been the nickname of 2540 instead. One source states that Martin’s initials are stamped in the concrete patio of Casa Contenta – field examination of 2540 and 2550 may resolve the question, though as discussed above, Martin may have owned more than one of the “Hopi Village” houses.¹⁰⁷ Miller is noted as residing in the “Araby Tract” at least from 1936 through 1939, and is not enumerated in either the 1930 or 1940 Palm Springs censuses.¹⁰⁸

Charles and Meta Royer appear to have been owners from about 1946 to 1956 time period and until at least 1956. Charles Royer was a realtor who in 1946 opened a Palm Springs branch of Vista Realty, which had multiple offices in the San Diego area.¹⁰⁹ Multiple occupants were listed in city directories during this time, suggesting either shared occupancy or (more likely) seasonal tenant turnover. The Royers were also listed at a Vista, CA address in a 1948 San Diego city directory and are likely to have been seasonal Palm Springs residents at most. Other residents between 1946 and 1953 include Mildred Stricklen and John and Elsa Chambers, about whom little information could be found. John Chambers was co-owner of the Palm Springs Appliance Company in the 1940s, and Elsa Chambers was a secretary who worked at Bank of America and the Weingarten-Hough Insurance Company.¹¹⁰

By 1953, Toni King had become a resident of the property, and she and/or family members appear to have retained occupancy for decades; Frances Elizabeth King and Lois Ruff King resided there between at least 1956 and 1963, Frances King was listed as the property owner in 1959, and Toni King lived there seasonally for about 30 years.¹¹¹ She was a popular hairstylist who owned and operated beauty salons in Palm Springs, Palm Desert, and La Jolla from the late 1940s through the early 1970s (spending summers in either La Jolla or Los Angeles, working at another salon).¹¹²

David Levy has been the owner since at least 1987. He also owned 2500 S. Araby Drive but resided at 2550. In 2019, sewer line work was conducted.¹¹³

The property currently appears to be in disrepair, and it is unknown whether it is occupied. Due to the lack of permit history, historic photos, and access to the property, the physical integrity of 2550 S. Araby Drive is currently unknown.

4.4 Architecture

Rock Houses

Stylistically adjacent to the Arts and Crafts movement as well as eclectic residential Folk building traditions, rock houses feature extensive stone cladding as their defining attribute. As the Arts and Crafts movement emphasized natural materials, several of its related architectural styles incorporated

¹⁰⁷“The Disappearing World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses.”

¹⁰⁸ *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, accessed via Palm Springs Historical Society.

¹⁰⁹ Display advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, 15 October 1946.

¹¹⁰ “Hotpoint Dealer for Village Appointed,” *The Desert Sun* 16 November 1945; “Don Miller Joins Weingarten-Hough Insurance Co. Staff,” *The Desert Sun* 17 October 1947.

¹¹¹ “The Disappearing World of R. Lee Miller and the Araby Rock Houses.”

¹¹² Display advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, 28 January 1949; multiple *Desert Sun* ads and articles through the 1950s.

¹¹³ City of Palm Springs Building Permit No. 2019-941, 3/7/19.

natural stone (both unmodified arroyo stone and cut stone) as a common feature. Rock houses are clad entirely in stone, typically whatever native stone is available – in Palm Springs, semi-angular igneous cobbles are the stone of choice, whereas rounded arroyo cobbles dominate in areas like Los Angeles and Pasadena (adjacent to the Arroyo Seco). In many cases, native stone is the structural material, not just the cladding. Buildings clad in a mix of stone types or entirely in cut stone are less common but still representative examples of this idiom. These buildings often took a long time to construct and reflected eclectic design influences as well as the idiosyncrasies of the builder; many feature distinctive vernacular/folk art elements.

Palm Springs in the 1920s and 1930s was a hotbed of romanticized rustic architectural styles meant to reinforce the community’s image of an informal, bucolic resort destination where city dwellers could get away from it all. Local practitioners, including R. Lee Miller and others enamored of traditional indigenous architecture often utilized native and natural materials in their production of new revival styles. Adobe and faux adobe (including cement stucco and similar materials) were most prevalent, but native stone was also commonly used – and locally abundant, reducing material costs. Miller used native cobbles and boulders almost exclusively in his houses at “Hopi Village” and the Andreas Canyon Club, whose dwellings were noted to be “built as the Indians build” (presumably a reference to the cliff dwellings of Ancestral Puebloan cultures, as well as the later, larger pueblos constructed by their descendants).¹¹⁴ The use of unmodified or crudely cut local stone as a material for both structure and cladding was a shortcut to the ideals of escapism and rustic authenticity, and blurred the line between architecture and art inspired by the local desert landscape.

Common character-defining features of rock houses include:

- Elevations clad fully with natural and/or cut stone
- One or two stories in height
- Hipped, gabled, or flat roofs with overhanging eaves or parapets
- Small, recessed window openings
- Handmade decorative elements and integral folk art

Adobe and Adobe Revival Architecture

Adobe construction is an old and vernacular building method creating buildings of thick walls composed of large sun-dried bricks, usually made from clay mud, straw, and other organic material, which are covered with earth plaster to protect the unfired bricks. The building style demonstrates a continuation of indigenous construction traditions that were passed down from generations of craftsmen. Early adobe buildings were typically small (one story in height), with flat roofs, wood vigas, covered porches, and timber lintels at window and door openings. Adobe construction is dependent on climate-specific resources, and is appropriate for the American Southwest, staying cool in the summer and warm in the winter. In California’s Spanish Colonial Era, adobe was commonly used in the construction of mission buildings and rancho residences. The practice continued through the late 19th century, as homesteaders,

¹¹⁴ “The Lancer,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1931.

ranchers, and farmers used locally available materials to build small adobe homes. Palm Springs' McCallum Adobe (1884, HSPB-5) is an excellent example of this continued use of adobe construction.

As mass-produced, kiln-fired brick became nationally available and cheap enough to ship in the late 19th-early 20th century, the use of adobe declined. But starting as early as the 1890s, the adobe construction technique became a matter of philosophical preference – its traditional methods and materials were embraced with renewed interest by material enthusiasts and practitioners fond of historicist idioms, who adapted them to create the Adobe Revival style. Magazine editor and early preservationist Charles Lummis and architect Sumner Hunt published articles celebrating the material and its western heritage. In Southern California, the resurgence of adobe as a contemporary building material in the 1920s and 1930s was advocated by architects such as John Byers and Clarence Cullimore, Sr.¹¹⁵

In Palm Springs, adobe constructions often featured Anglicized interpretations of the form, though Spanish Colonial Revival and Monterey Revival styles remain the most popular stylistic iterations. Residences often feature elements of the earlier adobe era including simple rectangular plans, thick adobe walls, gable roofs clad in wood shake or clay tile, wood lintels at window and door openings, wood double hung or casement windows, and corredores (covered porches) with simple wood posts along one or more sides.¹¹⁶ Adobe construction is rare in Palm Springs, with a handful of known surviving examples including the McCallum Adobe, the Reginald Pole Adobe on the grounds of the Casa Cody Inn (1916, HSPB-59), the R. Lee Miller-designed Casablanca Adobe (1936, HSPB-68), the Fuller residence and studio on Smoke Tree Ranch (1940-41) in addition to the “El Dumpo” adobe at 2275 S. Araby Drive.¹¹⁷ One source suggests the city may contain as many as two dozen adobe structures, some of which may be obscured by later cladding and roof material replacement.¹¹⁸

Common character-defining features include:

- Thick masonry walls of adobe brick
- One or two stories in height
- Rectangular or L-shaped plan with simply arranged interior spaces
- Simple, unadorned exteriors (often with cement plaster veneer)
- Few, small window and door openings with wood lintels
- Double hung, wood sash windows
- Corredores along one or more sides
- Use of the features of Spanish Colonial Revival, Monterey Revival, or Pueblo Revival styles

Pueblo Revival Architecture

¹¹⁵ *City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*, 79.

¹¹⁶ *City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*, 302.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68, 79, 302.

¹¹⁸ “Be It Ever So Humble.”



Taos Pueblo, NM: an example of the indigenous building type that inspired the Pueblo Revival style and designers like R. Lee Miller. Photo by Luca Galuzzi (Wikimedia Commons).

Pueblo Revival architecture emerged in California at the turn of the 20th century, one of several revival styles inspired by indigenous building traditions during this time. The style drew from flat-roofed iterations of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and the multi-family pueblo dwellings of southwestern Native American groups, like the Hopi, Tewa, and Zuni. These buildings were traditionally built of adobe brick or of large stones cemented with adobe (and typically plastered over with an adobe mud finish to create smooth exteriors), and were fundamental inspirations to the Adobe Revival movement as described above. Intact examples of Pueblo Revival buildings are significant for their representation of these influences. They are also significant, in Palm Springs, for their rarity.

Pueblo Revival buildings are characterized by their flat roofs with parapets, projecting wooden roof beams (vigas) that extend through walls, and stucco wall surfaces. As with many Period Revival styles, the architectural idiom reached its height in popularity during the 1920s and '30s in Southern California. With its indigenous roots, desert-adapted materials, and simple articulation, Pueblo Revival architecture fit nicely into the rustic ideal of early 20th Palm Springs, with the preeminent example being the Del Tahquitz Hotel (1928, demolished 1960). However, orthodox examples of the style are comparatively rare in Palm Springs, and it is far more common to see selected elements of Pueblo Revival architecture incorporated in a mix of Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival styles. One local example of Pueblo Revival architecture is the McCabe Residence at 1850 W. Crestview Drive (1930).¹¹⁹

Common character-defining features of the Pueblo Revival style include:

- One or two stories in height
- Flat roofs with parapets extending flush with exterior wall surfaces
- Cubic massing

¹¹⁹ City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings, 310.

- Irregular stuccoed wall surfaces, often earth colored
- Rows of rough-hewn vigas (roof beams) projecting below the parapet
- Rough-hewn window lintels and porch supports
- Casement windows
- Lack of ornamentation

4.5 Designer/Builder R. Lee Miller

Robert Lee Miller, who referred to himself as Lee Miller or R. Lee Miller, was born in Texas in 1897. Though he never received any formal education, Miller made a name for himself as an artist, designer, and builder of unique structures in Palm Springs, and was often referred to as an architect. Miller arrived in Palm Springs sometime in the early 1920s and soon commenced development work on two of his best-known projects, the Andreas Canyon Club and his “Hopi Village.”

The Andreas Canyon Club is likely one of Miller’s first projects in the desert, possibly as early as 1924 during the construction of the clubhouse. Founded in 1921 by a group of Los Angeles lawyers and businessmen, the secretive Andreas Canyon Club consists of a scattering of rock dwellings in the mountains surrounding Indian Canyon.¹²⁰ The homes are small, constructed of native stone, and seem to disappear into the hillside. Many early articles note Lee Miller as builder of the Andreas Canyon Club building itself, but it is certain that the small rock structures – very similar to his later “Hopi Village” above Araby – were designed by Miller as well. As an article featuring the Andreas Canyon Club notes,

*The houses of the Andreas Canyon are the best note of architecture on the desert. They are built as the Indians build. A quarter of a mile away you would swear that not a house was built there, so well do they blend into the hills. They stand on little separated headlands looking down upon a silver arroyo that curls around the forests of age-old palms.*¹²¹

It was through the Andreas Canyon Club project that Miller came into contact with his second wife, Helen Cooke. Helen was the daughter of Charles P. Cooke, a field engineer for the City of Los Angeles and part of the initial Andreas Canyon Club syndicate, who served as their secretary.¹²² As noted above, Cooke Miller was an artist and occupied 2500 S. Araby Drive after divorcing Miller. R. Lee Miller had been previously married to Dorothy Starr Nilon in 1932, the daughter of the wealthy industrialist George W. Starr, who operated the Empire Gold Mine in Grass Valley, NV. Although his marriage announcement to Nilon details them returning to Palm Springs “to make their home,” it was the first and last mention of the couple, who were divorced after only a few years.¹²³

In 1929, Miller acquired land near the 1925 Araby Tract and commenced work on the small residential complex he called a “Hopi Village;” he also lived in the complex until at least 1939. The grouping of four

¹²⁰ “The Secret Rock Houses (and Beauty) of Andreas Canyon,” *The Desert Sun*, 10 September 2016.

¹²¹ “The Lancer,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1931.

¹²² “Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Cooke,” *The Desert Sun*, 26 November 1937; “Andreas Club Plans for Home in Canyon,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 7 November 1924.

¹²³ “Dorothy Nilon of Grass Valley Weds Architect,” *The Sacramento Bee* 7 May 1932.

homes built of locally available stone combined complex massing and abundant hand-crafted details with diminutive size and an emphasis on serenity and privacy. In “Hopi Village,” Miller hoped to emulate the indigenous building traditions of Puebloan tribes, as interpreted through a 1920s-30s Palm Springs lens.

Throughout his career, Miller was referred to with a multitude of titles: “architect,” “designer,” “artist,” “engineer,” “adobe specialist,” “craftsman,” or “builder.” Though broad, this breadth of titles is accurate for Miller’s career in the desert. Miller worked on land surveying projects, graded roads, designed and constructed homes, was a craftsman for Palm Springs builders like Alvah Hicks and Don Cameron, and in many instances, played a combination of all these roles. In general, Miller worked in three spheres of construction: design/construction, surveying/grading, and subcontracting/artistry. Miller was well known in 1920s and 30s Palm Springs, when the town was still considered a “village” to the few year-round residents. A 1940 *Desert Sun* article notes his local notoriety in announcing the “biggest news of the week” as Miller purchasing a new Stetson hat. As is detailed, “To every villager of six- or eight-years residence... Lee Miller’s famous old hat has been a civic attribute.”¹²⁴

The Andreas Canyon Club and “Hopi Village” rock houses exemplify Miller’s use of native stone in construction, but through the 1930s, Miller was busy designing and constructing Spanish Colonial Revival and Pueblo Revival homes for individual clients. One such project was the 1930 Frederick A. Rose “Las Rosas” residence (478 Camino Sur), a sizable Spanish Revival estate in the Las Palmas neighborhood. Las Rosas, referred to as “one of the famous hospitality centers of Palm Springs,” was composed of the highest detail.¹²⁵ In 1935, *Palm Springs News* featured the desert home, writing,

So many lovely things that endear themselves to one immediately are seen about the home that they must of necessity simply be mentioned. Iron-barred windows, wide porches, restful colored square tile for the flooring, colorful furniture, incidental decorative ollas, filled with cacti, rustic eucalyptus poles, covered with fan plans to make lovely ramadas, and many other attractions.

*The home’s interior centers around the typical large living room. Recessed thick walls, comfortable unpretentious furniture, gay colorful Mexican and Central American decorations, hats, fans, and pottery add to one’s feeling of Mexican California. A large fireplace is most attractive. Indian baskets and other adornments complete the picture.*¹²⁶

Miller’s large Spanish Colonial Revival/Pueblo Revival homes were often of thick-walled adobe construction, the inside lined with stained woodwork, imposing beams, and centered around a fireplace. Although this description could describe most homes in these styles, Miller’s work is immediately recognizable. The level of detail – hand carved/burned beams, walls that appear constructed by hand, the integration of native materials, and even a sense of whimsy – differentiates Miller’s work from other homes, even when most homes were of similar style in 1930s Palm Springs.

¹²⁴ “Views and News,” *The Desert Sun*, 3 October 1940.

¹²⁵ “Lovely Home – Typical Here,” *Palm Springs News*, 5 April 1935; “Frederick Rose Residence Sold to Chicago Woman,” 3 *The Desert Sun*, 1 March 1944.

¹²⁶ “Lovely Home – Typical Here.”

Miller would often find a way to weave native stone into his projects, even if the primary mode of construction was adobe. In his 1935 Spanish Revival/Pueblo Revival estate for British actor Reginald Owen (1757 S Palm Canyon Dr), a line of native stone wraps around the base of the house and windowsills.¹²⁷ In the house he designed and constructed for Calvin Goodloe (579 South Indian Trail, 1936), a similar rock trim is applied to the house, but leads into an outdoor fireplace, also constructed out of rock.¹²⁸ In various instances where Miller was acting as a subcontractor, he would be responsible for the construction of rock walls, whether for privacy or hillside retention purposes. While most of his residential projects were of adobe construction, the L. Verda Jordan residence (address not known, 1930) is another Miller project built to “blend into the rocky hillside” despite it being a “massive structure.”¹²⁹ His constant use of rock speaks to his affinity for native desert materials – a tendency which he took to an extreme at “Hopi Village” and the Andreas Canyon Club.

Miller’s skill and attention to detail made him a popular subcontractor. Multiple histories recount Miller often working under the pioneering Palm Springs builder Alvah Hicks, who was responsible for many prominent projects like the Ingleside Inn and Ojo del Desierto (O’Donnell House, 412 W. Tahquitz Way).¹³⁰ Don Cameron, another realtor/builder, worked extensively with Miller in the construction of many early ranch homes in the Rancho Mirage area. In a 1947 account of adobe homes in Rancho Mirage, Cameron notes how “there must be about fifteen or more, some of which I had a hand constructing along with Lee Miller.”¹³¹ The extent of Miller’s subcontracting work is largely unknown, but his architectural footprint is not relegated to the homes he designed and constructed alone. If anything, the extent of subcontracting work is larger than individual works like the Las Rosas estate or “Hopi Village.”

Miller’s work in surveying and grading is perhaps his least recognized. In 1930, Miller purchased a tractor and land grader to work on local subdivisions.¹³² The high demand for this sort of machinery, which very few desert builders and companies owned outright, is likely a contributor to Miller’s advancement in the local industry. By 1931, Miller was grading the runways of Palm Springs’ airfields and carving out hiking/riding trails for the Chamber of Commerce.¹³³ In 1936, the industrialist John Robertson purchased 330 acres from Fred Payne Clatworthy, a famed *National Geographic* photographer, and hired Miller to “build the roads and plat the property.” While the project never happened, the *Desert Sun* does note that Miller held an option on the hillside land, suggesting that he had prospects for another development like his Araby rock houses.¹³⁴ In another instance of Miller’s land surveying experience, a 1937 article recounts how Miller surveyed routes for a proposed tramway in the 1920s. Of the three routes which Miller proposed, it is noted that he considered “the route from the head of Chino Canyon

¹²⁷ [Reginald Owen announcement], *The Desert Sun*, 19 April 1935; “Desert Sun Beams,” *The Desert Sun*, 30 July 1937.

¹²⁸ “Palatial Homes to Be Built Here Early This Summer,” *The Desert Sun*, 10 July 1936; “Desert Sun Beams,” *The Desert Sun*, 11 December 1936.

¹²⁹ “Remember When,” *The Desert Sun*, 17 June 1960; “Memory Lane,” *The Desert Sun*, 11 August 1950.

¹³⁰ Patrick McGrew, *Desert Spanish: The Early Architecture of Palm Springs* (Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2012).

¹³¹ “What Goes on in Palm Valley,” *The Desert Sun*, 1 August 1947.

¹³² “Down Memory Lane,” *The Desert Sun*, 13 October 1950.

¹³³ “Memory Lane,” *The Desert Sun*, 25 October 1961; “Memory Lane,” *The Desert Sun*, 21 November 1961.

¹³⁴ “Buys 330 Acres Hillside Land Above Village,” *The Desert Sun*, 25 September 1936.

to be the most feasible.”¹³⁵ In 1963, some 40 years after Miller’s initial survey, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway was realized, and in fact constructed from the head of Chino Canyon.

In 1937, Miller was commissioned by British actor George Brent to construct a ranch in the Rancho Mirage area.¹³⁶ However, it appears the project was Miller’s last in the Palm Springs area, and unbuilt. In the late 1930s, Miller relocated part-time to the high desert, particularly Morongo Valley. The last phonebook listing of Miller in Araby was 1939, and a 1940 article names him as a “artist-engineer of the Morongo Valley and village.”¹³⁷ When he had arrived in Palm Springs in the 1920s, the phonebook barely consisted of more than a pamphlet. But by the 1930s, the quiet “village” was already attaching itself to the glamour of Hollywood. Palatial estate homes appeared – some of which had been worked on by Miller – in addition to the development of boulevards and resorts. Perhaps Palm Springs lost its appeal for Miller, pushing him towards more untouched expanses of the desert, and closer to places that reminded him of the pre-Hollywood Palm Springs.

By then, Miller’s name was absent from building permit figures and construction announcements. In 1940, he and a friend purchased the Desert Inn’s original 1912 Pierce Arrow for “roadless desert trips in the vicinity of Morongo Valley.”¹³⁸ In the same year, he was one of two “venturesome village outdoors men” to discover a fragmented portion of Palm Canyon fallen from an earthquake.¹³⁹ Shortly thereafter, and sometime in the early 1940s, Miller left Palm Springs for good, moving full-time to Eagle Mountain just outside Desert Center and Joshua Tree National Park.¹⁴⁰ It is unknown whether he remained active in the construction and design business, moved onto another career, or retired.

When Miller vacationed in Palm Springs for the late spring and early summer of 1948, he partook in the Desert Circus parade and even contributed to the construction of a Rancho Mirage residence.¹⁴¹ However, the very last mention of Miller in any newspaper or publication was not a positive one. When he married his third wife, India W.S. Miller (the grandniece of railroad magnate Collis Potter Huntington and widow of an industrialist) in 1951, her daughter sued to annul the marriage on grounds of her mother’s alcoholism. Despite the bad press, the article remembers Lee Miller as a “pioneer village builder” who “built many of the early homes here.”¹⁴²

¹³⁵ “Proposed Cableway Arouses Interest,” *Palm Springs Limelight* 12 June 1937.

¹³⁶ “Much Interest Shown in Desert Acreage for Winter Homes,” *The Desert Sun*, 29 October 1937; [George Brent announcement], *Palm Springs Limelight*, 17 April 1937.

¹³⁷ “Discovers Sliding Mountain,” *The Desert Sun*, 27 September 1940.

¹³⁸ *The Desert Sun*, “Ancient Village Car Being Overhauled for Use Again,” 8 March 1940.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 27 September 1940.

¹⁴⁰ *The Desert Sun*, “What Goes on in Palm Valley,” 22 June 1948.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*; *The Desert Sun*, “Doing the Village,” 16 March 1948.

¹⁴² *The Desert Sun*, “Daughter Suing Wife of Pioneer Village Builder,” 6 July 1951.

5. Regulations and Criteria for Evaluation

5.1 City of Palm Springs Historic Resources and Historic Districts

The City of Palm Springs administers a local designation program in which individual properties and concentrations of properties can be designated as historic resources and historic districts. The designation of significant properties is governed by Title 8, Chapter 8.05 (Historic Preservation) of the Palm Springs Municipal Code (as amended in 2019 and 2020 ordinances) – referred to hereafter as “the Ordinance.”

The Ordinance establishes and authorizes a seven-member Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) to issue decisions regarding applications to alter or demolish designated or potentially eligible resources and for new construction in historic districts; make recommendations to City Council regarding designation of historic resources; advise the City Council and/or Planning Commission in all matters concerning historic preservation; and educate and inform the community on historic preservation matters.¹⁴³ To facilitate this process, the Ordinance establishes requirements that a property or properties must meet in order to qualify for designation as a historic resource or historic district.¹⁴⁴

The City of Palm Springs classifies individual historic resources and potential historic resources into four different categories, as defined in Article I of the Ordinance (General Provisions)¹⁴⁵:

Landmark/Class 1 historic resource. Any site, structure, building or object not located on Tribal Trust or Allotted Trust Land designated by resolution of the City Council as having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic significance that contributes to an understanding and awareness of the community’s history. A Class 1 historic resource may include a structure, building or object on the site, or may include all or a portion of the site itself. Class 1 historic resources are eligible for the execution of a Mills Act historic property preservation agreement, as determined by the City Council.

Historic Merit/Class 2 historic resource. A site, structure, building or object not located on Tribal Trust or Allotted Trust Land that does not qualify for Class 1 historic resource designation under this chapter, but is otherwise deserving of official recognition as having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic significance and is designated as a Class 2 historic resource by resolution of the City Council. A Class 2 historic resource may lack some aspects of historic integrity, or may include a site where the structure, building or object of historic significance has been lost, damaged or removed. Class 2 sites on which the historic resource still exists are eligible for the execution of a Mills Act historic property preservation agreement, as determined by the City Council.

¹⁴³ City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.030.

¹⁴⁴ The City of Palm Springs is also a designated Certified Local Government (CLG), which is a preservation partnership between the National Park Service (NPS), the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and local communities with a goal to create local commitments to historic preservation.

¹⁴⁵ City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.020.

Potentially Eligible/Class 3 building. Any building which is not a Class 1 or Class 2 historic resource, but is identified in a City historic resources survey as eligible for designation as a historic resource. A building may be a Class 3 building regardless of the construction date or the improvements thereon. Class 3 sites are not eligible for the execution of a Mills Act historic property preservation agreement.

Class 4 building. Any building which is not a Class 1 or Class 2 historic resource or a Class 3 building, and on which the building or improvements thereon were constructed before January 1, 1978, or whose age cannot be determined. The City Council shall review this date and update it as it deems appropriate through amendment to this chapter.

The Ordinance also defines a historic district:

Historic district. Any delineated geographic area of the city of Palm Springs excluding Tribal Trust or Allotted Trust Land, containing a number of buildings, structures, natural features or sites having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic significance and designated by the City Council as a historic district under the provisions of this chapter.

Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resource Eligibility Criteria

Article III of the Ordinance (Procedures for Designation of Historic Resources and Historic Districts) defines the following criteria for designating Historic Resources (Class 1 and Class 2 historic resources) in the City¹⁴⁶:

1. Class 1 Historic Resources. A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource, provided one or more of the following criteria in subsections “a” and “b” are met:
 - a. The site, structure, building or object exhibits exceptional historic significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed below:
 - i. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or
 - ii. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or
 - iii. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history; or
 - iv. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or
 - v. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age, or that possesses high artistic value; or
 - vi. The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluated applications

¹⁴⁶ City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.070.

- for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists; or
- vii. The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

- b. The site, structure, building or object shall be evaluated for integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association according to the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service's National Register Bulletin titled: "How to apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" as revised from time to time.

2. Class 2 Historic Resources. A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 2 historic resource, provided the site, structure, building or object exhibits significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed above. A Class 2 historic resource shall not be required to meet the findings for integrity as described above.

As noted above, In order for a property to qualify as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Resource, it must not only be significant under one or more of the above evaluative criteria but also retain integrity, which the National Park Service defines as "the ability of a property to convey its significance."¹⁴⁷ Class 2 historic resources do not need to retain integrity.

The National Register has identified seven aspects of integrity as follows; to convey historic integrity, a property will possess several, if not most, of these aspects.¹⁴⁸ :

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

¹⁴⁷ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1990), 44.

¹⁴⁸ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin #15*, 44.

Class 3 and Class 4 Buildings

As noted above, the City of Palm Springs defines Class 3 buildings as those previously identified as eligible in a historic resources survey, and Class 4 buildings as those that are not Class 1 or Class 2 historic resources or a Class 3 building, but were constructed before January 1, 1978 or whose age cannot be determined. The Ordinance does not provide separate eligibility criteria for Class 3 and Class 4 buildings, but notes any Class 3 or 4 building may be designated as a Class 1 or Class 2 historic resource if they meet the Class 1 or Class 2 eligibility criteria as listed above.¹⁴⁹

Historic District Eligibility Criteria

Article III of the Ordinance (Procedures for Designation of Historic Resources and Historic Districts) defines the following criteria for designating Historic Districts in the City¹⁵⁰:

Historic Districts. A district may be designated provided the following findings are met:

1. The proposed district and the contributing resources located therein exhibit exceptional historic significance and meet one or more of the criteria listed below:
 - a. Is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or
 - b. Is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or
 - c. Reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history; or
 - d. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or
 - e. Presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age, or that possesses high artistic value; or
 - f. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluated applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists; or
 - g. Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.
2. The contributing resources within the proposed district shall be evaluated for integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association according to the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service's National Register Bulletin titled: "How to apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" as revised from time to time.
3. The proposed district:
 - a. Contains contributing resources on a majority of the sites within the proposed district which individually meet the above criteria, as well as other structures, buildings, or

¹⁴⁹ City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.080.

¹⁵⁰ City of Palm Springs Municipal Code, 8.05.090. The Ordinance also contains specific historic district designation requirements pertaining to owner notification/consent. As these are pertinent to actual designation but not to evaluation of historical significance and physical integrity as appropriate to the scope of an HRR, these requirements are not addressed herein.

archaeological sites which contribute generally to the overall distinctive character of the area and are related historically or visually by plan or physical development;

- b. Includes non-contributing properties or vacant parcels only to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries.

6. Evaluation of Significance

6.1 Previous Surveys and Designations

The Palm Springs citywide historic context statement and historic resources survey¹⁵¹ identified 2275, 2350, 2540, and 2550 S. Araby Drive as potentially individually eligible for listing, with designation program unspecified. They are therefore Class 3 buildings per the City of Palm Springs Ordinance. These same four properties are also listed in the California Office of Historic Preservation's Built Environment Resource Directory as eligible for listing, with the following evaluation information:

- 2275 S. Araby Drive: 5S2 (Individually eligible for local listing or designation)
- 2350 S. Araby Drive: 3S (Appears eligible for National Register individually through survey evaluation)
- 2540 S. Araby Drive: 3S (Appears eligible for National Register individually through survey evaluation)
- 2550 S. Araby Drive: 3S (Appears eligible for National Register individually through survey evaluation)

The properties at 2500 and 2501 S. Araby Drive appear not to have been previously evaluated for significance, and have not been assigned a Class 1, 2, or 3 category. As both were constructed prior to January 1, 1978, they are by definition Class 4 buildings.

6.2 City of Palm Springs Class 1/Class 2 Historic Resource

Each of the six subject properties is evaluated against City of Palm Springs Class 1 eligibility criteria, including an assessment of integrity, as follows:

2275 S. Araby Drive

This property appears eligible for local designation under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Criteria 3 and 4, exhibits exceptional historic significance, and retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Its period of significance is 1926, corresponding with its construction date. Evaluation under each of the City's seven eligibility criteria and an integrity assessment follow.

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

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive is not associated with a singular event that has made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. Research did not indicate that any significant events occurred at the subject property, nor did it reveal that the property's construction occurred as a result of any one event; rather, the residence reflects early residential development patterns. Therefore, ARG

¹⁵¹ City of Palm Springs, *Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings* (prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Palm Springs, 2016).

does not find the subject property eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 1.

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

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive does not appear to be associated with persons who have made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history. Research was unable to confirm the original owner. The earliest owner of record, Fannie Beach, does not appear to rise to the level of significant persons within the context of national, state, or local history. Subsequent owners included several prominent local individuals, including Cecil Bennett, Katherine and Greg Hough, and Frank Jones. Though these residents added to the social and institutional fabric of the city, the available evidence does not indicate they made meaningful contributions to national state, or local history at the requisite level to be considered a historically significant personage. The property does not appear eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 2.

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

2275 S. Araby Drive was one of the first houses constructed in H.W. Otis' 1925 Araby Tract, which itself was one of the earliest residential subdivisions in Palm Springs. The 1920s-1930s were a crucial period in the development of Palm Springs, reflecting investment in the community by new part-time and full-time residents attracted by its climate and new recreational attractions. The city's growth during this time was a precursor to the larger boom of the postwar period, and established characteristics of Palm Springs residential areas that remain to this day. Otis envisioned his new subdivision as a winter community for seasonal residents, and heavily marketed it as the epitome of the warm oasis of "Our Araby." Most of the Araby Tract was not developed until after World War II, making the house at 2275 S. Araby Drive one of the few residences constructed immediately after the tract's 1925 establishment. The house's age and vernacular idiom make it a relatively rare example of the kind of unpretentious winter home H.W. Otis envisioned for the Araby Tract. As the property is associated with historic patterns of single-family residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s, as well as with an important developer, it appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 3.

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

2275 S. Araby Drive is an excellent example of Adobe Revival residential architecture, a style popular (though examples were never very numerous) in Palm Springs during its early development as a recreational destination in the 1920s and 1930s. Both the main house and the guest cottage are recognizable as adobe structures and retain the majority of their original design, materials, and workmanship. Both buildings have experienced some alterations, including side and rear additions to the main building; creation or enlargement of openings in the guest cottage for sliding glass doors later replaced by wood French doors; and addition of slumpstone entry walls, gate, and detached carport.

However, the original design is still clearly legible. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an Adobe Revival residence from the 1920s, a property type which is quite rare – only a handful of known examples survive. As a result, 2275 S. Araby Drive appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 4.

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

Extensive research has not provided information about the architect/designer or builder of 2275 S. Araby Drive. While the subject property embodies the distinctive characteristics of vernacular Adobe Revival design and construction as discussed above under Criterion 4, it does not appear to represent the work of a master builder, designer artist, or architect, and does not possess high artistic value. As a result, the property does not appear eligible under City of Palm Springs Criterion 5.

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

As 2275 S. Araby Drive is not a district or part of a district, it does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Therefore, it is not eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 6.

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

As an archaeological assessment was not conducted as part of this study, 2275 S. Araby Drive is left unevaluated under Criterion 7.

Integrity Assessment

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance, as detailed in the following evaluation under each of the seven aspects of integrity.

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

The subject property remains at its original location and retains this element of integrity.

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

The adobe house and guest cottage at 2275 S. Araby Drive have experienced some alterations, including side and rear additions to the main house, addition of sliding glass doors (later wood French doors) to the guest cottage, and addition of slumpstone entry walls, gate, and detached carport. Despite these alterations, the form, plan, space, structure, and style of the property is still clearly legible, largely because the additions do not impact the primary façade and are restricted to the side and rear of the building. The slumpstone hardscape components are easily reversible. The property is easily

recognizable as an irregularly shaped adobe structure from the 1920s, with its original layout and design intact. As a result, it retains integrity of design.

Setting: *The physical environment of a historic property.*

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive was among the first few homes constructed in the Araby Tract in the mid-1920s, and the 1925 tract itself was slow to develop – about a dozen homes had been built by 1940, with full buildout not occurring until the post-World War II period. As a result, the property’s setting has changed dramatically. The layout of the tract, including its streets and lots, remains essentially the same as it did when it was first subdivided. The subject property was built in the existing tract (rather than having been present prior to the time of subdivision), and conforms to the historic and present lot sizes, orientations, street frontage, and setbacks seen across the rest of the tract. Despite these consistencies, infill of the surrounding blocks with properties mostly dating from the 1960s through the 2000s means the subject property has lost integrity of setting.

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

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive was built primarily of adobe brick, the raw components of which are locally available. The majority of its material structure and cladding has remained the same since its construction, and the addition of new slumpstone elements has not extensively obscured the original materials. As a result, the property retains this element of integrity.

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

The original workmanship of 2275 S. Araby Drive is evident through its intact exterior features, including adobe walls and steel multi-light casement windows. It retains this element of integrity.

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

The property clearly expresses the aesthetic and historic sense of residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s and 1930s, a time during which the community’s earliest subdivisions were established. It was also a time during which Palm Springs valued and promoted its image as a rustic, healthful escape from city life, and vernacular homes such as those in the Araby Tract and its related “Hopi Village” embodied the ideals of the Village. The subject property retains integrity of feeling.

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

The property at 2275 S. Araby Drive has been in use as a single-family residence since its construction, linking it with 1920s-1930s residential development in Palm Springs. As the property largely retains its original appearance and is clearly recognizable as a 1920s-1930s vernacular residence, its integrity of association remains intact.

2350 S. Araby Drive

This property appears eligible for local designation under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Criteria 3 and 4, exhibits exception historic significance, and retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Its period of significance is 1926, corresponding with its construction date. Evaluation under each of the City's seven eligibility criteria and an integrity assessment follow.

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

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive is not associated with a singular event that has made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. Research did not indicate that any significant events occurred at the subject property, nor did it reveal that the property's construction occurred as a result of any one event; rather, the residence reflects early residential development patterns. Therefore, ARG does not find the subject property eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 1.

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

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive does not appear to be associated with persons who have made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history. The most likely original owner, L.M. Giannini, was an important San Francisco banker; however, he and his wife Anna only resided seasonally at this address for a few years, and after 1935 stayed elsewhere on their trips to Palm Springs. As a result, neither L.M. nor Anna Giannini appears to have had a long or strong relationship with this house, and it is not the property most strongly associated with them. The same goes for subsequent owners Ramon and Juanita Somavia, owners of a large ranch in San Benito County and seasonal residents of the property – though they were prominent and influential, their association with this property was short-lived. Evidence does not indicate that any other owners or occupants made meaningful contributions to national state, or local history at the requisite level to be considered historically significant personages. The property does not appear eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 2.

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

2350 S. Araby Drive was one of the first houses constructed in H.W. Otis' 1925 Araby Tract, which itself was one of the earliest residential subdivisions in Palm Springs. The 1920s-1930s were a crucial period in the development of Palm Springs, reflecting investment in the community by new part-time and full-time residents attracted by its climate and new recreational attractions. The city's growth during this time was a precursor to the larger boom of the postwar period, and established characteristics of Palm Springs residential areas that remain to this day. Otis envisioned his new subdivision as a winter community for seasonal residents, and heavily marketed it as the epitome of the warm oasis of "Our Araby." Most of the Araby Tract was not developed until after World War II, making the house at 2350 S. Araby Drive one of the few residences constructed immediately after the tract's 1925 establishment. The house's age and vernacular idiom make it a relatively rare example of the kind of unpretentious

winter home H.W. Otis envisioned for the Araby Tract. As the property is associated with historic patterns of single-family residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s, as well as with an important developer, it appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 3.

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

2350 S. Araby Drive is an excellent example of a vernacular rock house, a style popular (though examples were never very numerous) in Palm Springs during its early development as a recreational destination in the 1920s and 1930s. The house retains the majority of its original design, materials, and workmanship despite having experienced alterations including a rear addition/patio enclosure, a side addition, some window replacements, addition of awnings, and hardscape alterations. The original design is still clearly legible, and the primary (south) façade, which is oriented perpendicular to S. Araby Drive, appears unaltered. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a vernacular rock house from the 1920s, a property type which is quite rare – only a handful of known examples survive. As a result, 2350 S. Araby Drive appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 4.

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

Extensive research has not provided information about the architect/designer or builder of 2350 S. Araby Drive. Due to its rock construction, it has been attributed to R. Lee Miller, but this could not be confirmed through primary source research, and its current owner denies Miller’s involvement. While the subject property embodies the distinctive characteristics of vernacular rock house design and construction as discussed above under Criterion 4, it does not appear to represent the work of a master builder, designer artist, or architect, and does not possess high artistic value. As a result, the property does not appear eligible under City of Palm Springs Criterion 5.

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

As 2350 S. Araby Drive is not a district or part of a district, it does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Therefore, it is not eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 6.

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

As an archaeological assessment was not conducted as part of this study, 2350 S. Araby Drive is left unevaluated under Criterion 7.

Integrity Assessment

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance, as detailed in the following evaluation under each of the seven aspects of integrity.

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

The subject property remains at its original location and retains this element of integrity.

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

Alterations to the rock house at 2350 S. Araby Drive include a side (east elevation) addition of a carport and storage room, a rear (south elevation) addition along with enclosure of an adjacent covered porch, some window replacements, and hardscape modifications. The additions lengthened the footprint of the once-rectangular house and then created a T-shaped footprint – both substantial modifications. However, because they are restricted to the side and rear of the building, the original form, plan, space, structure, and style of the property are still clearly legible. The primary (north-facing) façade appears unaltered. The property remains easily recognizable as a rock house from the 1920s, with its original layout and design intact. As a result, it retains integrity of design.

Setting: *The physical environment of a historic property.*

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive was among the first few homes constructed in the Araby Tract in the mid-1920s, and the 1925 tract itself was slow to develop – about a dozen homes had been built by 1940, with full buildout not occurring until the post-World War II period. As a result, the property's setting has changed dramatically. The layout of the tract, including its streets and lots, remains essentially the same as it did when it was first subdivided. The subject property was built in the existing tract (rather than having been present prior to the time of subdivision), and conforms to the historic and present lot sizes, orientations, street frontage, and setbacks seen across the rest of the tract. Despite these consistencies, infill of the surrounding blocks with properties mostly dating from the 1960s through the 2000s means the subject property has lost integrity of setting.

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

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive was built of locally available stone. It has lost some original materials, including wood windows, and its 2008 south (rear) addition has modern stone cladding. But the addition has not extensively obscured the original materials, and overall the property retains the vast majority of its original materials. As a result, the property retains this element of integrity.

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

The original workmanship of 2350 S. Araby Drive is evident through its intact exterior features, including native stone walls, wood casement and picture windows, and fine rockwork. It retains this element of integrity.

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

The property clearly expresses the aesthetic and historic sense of residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s and 1930s, a time during which the community's earliest subdivisions were established. It was also a time during which Palm Springs valued and promoted its image as a rustic, healthful escape from city life, and vernacular homes such as those in the Araby Tract and its related "Hopi Village" embodied the ideals of the Village. The subject property retains integrity of feeling.

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

The property at 2350 S. Araby Drive has been in use as a single-family residence since its construction, linking it with 1920s-1930s residential development in Palm Springs. As the property largely retains its original appearance and is clearly recognizable as a 1920s-1930s vernacular residence, its integrity of association remains intact.

2540 S. Araby Drive

This property appears eligible for local designation under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Criteria 3, 4, and 5, exhibits exceptional historic significance, and retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Its period of significance is 1933, corresponding with its construction date. Evaluation under each of the City's seven eligibility criteria and an integrity assessment follow.

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

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive is not associated with a singular event that has made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. Research did not indicate that any significant events occurred at the subject property, nor did it reveal that the property's construction occurred as a result of any one event; rather, the residence reflects early residential development patterns. Therefore, ARG does not find the subject property eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 1.

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

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive does not appear to be associated with persons who have made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history. The original owner, Perle Wheeler Martin, was a seasonal resident of the house for over two decades, and participated in Palm Springs society when in town. She maintained a primary residence in Oregon. Martin's involvement with R. Lee Miller's development of "Hopi Village" is unclear – research to date has not uncovered evidence that she was involved in the planning, design, or financing of the unusual project, merely that she was a longtime resident. While Martin added to the social and institutional fabric of the city, the available evidence does not indicate she made meaningful contributions to national state, or local history at the requisite level to be considered a historically significant personage. The same is true of the property's subsequent owners. The property does not appear eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 2.

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

Completed in 1933, 2540 S. Araby Drive was the last of the four rustic rock houses constructed as part of R. Lee Miller's "Hopi Village" adjacent to the main neighborhood of the Araby Tract. It, along with its three architecturally cohesive neighboring buildings, lay outside of the tract as subdivided by H.W. Otis in 1925 and is an atypical embodiment of single-family residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s. Residential development during this time was shifting from *ad hoc* construction as seen in earlier years, toward larger, carefully planned subdivisions. The 1920s-1930s were a crucial period in the development of Palm Springs, reflecting investment in the community by new part-time and full-time residents attracted by its climate and new recreational attractions. The city's growth during this time was a precursor to the larger boom of the postwar period, and established characteristics of Palm Springs residential areas that remain to this day.

One key characteristic embodied by 2540 S. Araby Drive is the rustic ideal – in Palm Springs' pursuit of seasonal residents, the community and its boosters and developers marketed small, modest homes in bucolic settings meant to help residents escape from the pressures of city life. They also emphasized the aesthetic appeal and artistic integrity of living in homes designed to adapt to the warm desert climate, evoking indigenous building traditions and appealing to an artistic subset of residents who proved crucial shapers of the Village's character and built environment. The house's age, vernacular idiom, natural setting, and expression of cultural and aesthetic ideals of the time make it an excellent, if atypical, embodiment of historic patterns of single-family residential development in Palm Springs during the 1930s. It is also associated with important developer R. Lee Miller, who was not in the business of residential subdivisions, but rather of unique and romantic designs for a variety of clients (like the Andreas Canyon Club. As a result, 2540 S. Araby Drive appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 3.

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

2540 S. Araby Drive is an excellent example of a vernacular rock house, a style popular (though examples were never very numerous) in Palm Springs during its early development as a recreational destination in the 1920s and 1930s. The house retains the majority of its original design, materials, and workmanship and does not appear to have experienced any major alterations. The property embodies

the distinctive characteristics of a vernacular rock house from the 1930s, a property type which is quite rare – only a handful of known examples survive. With its distinctive round volume, integral patio terrace, round and picture windows, and conical roof, it is also a particularly charismatic example of the type and style. As a result, 2540 S. Araby Drive appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 4.

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

2540 S. Araby Drive was designed and built by artist/designer/builder R. Lee Miller, whose rustic residential designs were hailed as unique and artistic embodiments of the Palm Springs spirit during the 1920s and 1930. His trademark was elaborate rockwork employing the locally available stone, of which this property is an excellent example – built almost entirely of rough-cut and unmodified local stone, the house embodies the materials, techniques, and artistic flair for which Miller was known. Its integration into the natural landscape is also a Miller signature, seen in his Andreas Canyon Club houses as well as those here in “Hopi Village.” As the most intact of Miller’s four “Hopi Village” houses, 2540 S. Araby Drive clearly conveys the vision of the designer and evokes the ideals of early Palm Springs. The property appears eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 5.

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

As 2540 S. Araby Drive is a single property and not a district, it does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Therefore, it is not individually eligible as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criterion 6.

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

As an archaeological assessment was not conducted as part of this study, 2540 S. Araby Drive is left unevaluated under Criterion 7.

Integrity Assessment

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance, as detailed in the following evaluation under each of the seven aspects of integrity.

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

The subject property remains at its original location and retains this element of integrity.

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

Constructed in 1933, 2540 S. Araby Drive does not appear to have experienced any major alterations – its original round volume with curving shed-roofed wing remains intact, along with the integral patio. The property remains easily recognizable as a rock house from the 1920s, with its original layout and design intact. As a result, it retains integrity of design.

Setting: *The physical environment of a historic property.*

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive is one of the four “Hopi Village” buildings (2500, 2501, 2540, and 2550 S. Araby Drive) constructed in the natural setting of a canyon which had few improvements during the historic period. They remain the only residences in this part of the canyon, and the natural setting (including native vegetation and unmodified sloping topography) is essentially the same as when they were built. Residential development has covered the formerly-empty higher ground east and west of the canyon, meaning the larger viewshed and setting have changed. As the immediate physical environment of these properties retains its original characteristics, all four, including 2540 S. Araby Drive, retain integrity of setting.

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

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive was built of locally available stone, with details including wood casement windows and rustic wood doors. The majority of its material structure and cladding has remained the same since its construction, and as a result, the property retains this element of integrity.

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

The original workmanship of 2540 S. Araby Drive is evident through its intact exterior features, including native stone walls, wood casement windows, rustic wood doors, fine rockwork, details like log lintels and vigas, and hardscape features including integral terraces, patios, steps, and retaining walls. It retains this element of integrity.

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

The property clearly expresses the aesthetic and historic sense of residential development in Palm Springs during the 1920s and 1930s, a time during which the community’s earliest subdivisions were established. It was also a time during which Palm Springs valued and promoted its image as a rustic, healthful escape from city life, and vernacular homes such as those in the Araby Tract and its related

“Hopi Village” embodied the ideals of the Village. The four geographically discrete, architecturally cohesive “Hopi Village” houses are particularly strong with regard to feeling, expressing the very specific aesthetic sense of local artist/builder R. Lee Miller and other practitioners enamored of indigenous styles, particularly those of the Puebloan tribes. As a result, 2540 S. Araby Drive retains this element of integrity.

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

The property at 2540 S. Araby Drive has been in use as a single-family residence since its construction, linking it with 1920s-1930s residential development in Palm Springs; while some of the “Hopi Village” houses have been vacant for periods of time, research did not indicate any of them had been adapted for a different use. As the property largely retains its original appearance and is clearly recognizable as a 1920s-1930s vernacular residence, its integrity of association remains intact.

2500, 2501, 2550 S. Araby Drive

Each of the “Hopi Village” properties of 2500, 2501, and 2550 S. Araby Drive appears significant and potentially individually eligible for local designation as a Class 1 historic resource; each exhibits exceptional historical significance and meets City of Palm Springs Class 1 Eligibility Criteria 3, 4, and 5, using the same analysis as 2540 S. Araby Drive, above. Their periods of significance correspond with their construction dates: 1930 for 2500, 1930 ca. for 2501, and 1929 for 2550.

However, due to a lack of access and visibility, ARG was unable to ascertain the integrity and condition of these three properties, and therefore determine whether they retain sufficient integrity to convey their historical significance on an individual level, and therefore whether they are eligible for classification as Class 1 historic resources.

As 2500, 2501, and 2550 S. Araby Drive meet Class 1 eligibility criteria but their integrity is indeterminate, each is, at a minimum, eligible for listing as a Class 2 historic resource. Closer inspection of these properties in the future may find them sufficiently intact to be eligible for Class 1 listing.

6.3 Summary of Eligibility

In summary, the six subject properties appear individually eligible for listing as either City of Palm Springs Class 1 and/or Class 2 historic resources, as follows:

- **2275 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3 and 4, with a 1926 period of significance.
- **2350 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3 and 4, with a 1926 period of significance.
- **2540 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 1 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3, 4, and 5, with a 1933 period of significance.
- **2500 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 2 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3, 4, and 5, with a 1930 period of significance.
- **2501 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 2 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3, 4, and 5, with a ca. 1930 period of significance.
- **2550 S. Araby Drive** appears eligible for listing as a Class 2 historic resource under City of Palm Springs Criteria 3, 4, and 5, with a 1929 period of significance.

7. Conclusion

Documentary and archival research, site analysis, the development of historic contexts, and evaluations against local eligibility criteria indicate that the properties at 2275 and 2350 S. Araby Drive meet City of Palm Springs Class 1 eligibility Criteria 3 and 4, and the property at 2540 S. Araby Drive meets Class 1 Criteria 3, 4, and 5. As these properties also retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance, they appear eligible for listing as Class 1 historic resources.

The properties at 2500, 2501, and 2550 S. Araby Drive appear potentially individually significant under City of Palm Springs Class 1 Criteria 3, 4, and 5. However, due to lack of access and visibility, ARG was unable to determine whether each is individually eligible for listing as a Class 1 historic resource. These three properties are, therefore, eligible for listing as Class 2 historic resources.

8. Bibliography

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Architectural
Resources Group

Appendix A. 2016 DPR 523 Forms

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database Yes HRI Code 2003 Status Code
 HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION National Register 6Z California Register 6Z Local 6Z

Period of Significance **Criterion**
Context
Theme
Sub-theme

Period of Significance **Criterion**
Context
Theme
Sub-theme

Period of Significance **Criterion**
Context
Theme
Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property was re-evaluated during the 2015 survey as part of an update to the City of Palm Springs' list of potential historic resources (Citywide Historic Resource Database). This property has been altered and therefore does not appear eligible for designation.

Notes/Additional Information

The first residential subdivisions were recorded in the early 1920s on tracts largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts. 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. In addition to the resort-related development for the entertainers and the neighborhoods where the wealthy industrialists started constructing their winter homes, the city has a collection of early residential neighborhoods that developed to accommodate the growing permanent settlement. This property is located in the Araby tract. In 1925, H.W. Otis and Son, owners/sub-dividers began marketing and selling "Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs." The 138-parcel tract of irregularly-shaped lots were intended for the development of a community that was "artistic and charming."

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database

Yes

HRI Code

2003 Status Code

7R

HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION

National Register

California Register

Local 7R

Period of Significance

1926

Criterion

A/1/3

Context

Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)

Theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)

Sub-theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1929)

Period of Significance

1926

Criterion

C/3/4

Context

Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme

19th Century Methods of Construction & Architectural Styles

Sub-theme

Adobe Construction

Period of Significance

Criterion

Context

Theme

Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property was re-evaluated during the 2015 survey as part of an update to the City of Palm Springs' list of potential historic resources (Citywide Historic Resource Database). It was constructed in 1926, making it one of the earliest residences in the Araby Tract. Although there appears to be a large addition, the original building is still evident. If it can be confirmed that the property is adobe construction, then due to rarity of the type, it would be eligible for historic designation.

Notes/Additional Information

The first residential subdivisions were recorded in the early 1920s on tracts largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts. 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. In addition to the resort-related development for the entertainers and the neighborhoods where the wealthy industrialists started constructing their winter homes, the city has a collection of early residential neighborhoods that developed to accommodate the growing permanent settlement. This property is located in the Araby tract. In 1925, H.W. Otis and Son, owners/sub-dividers began marketing and selling "Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs." The 138-parcel tract of irregularly-shaped lots were intended for the development of a community that was "artistic and charming." The house may represent a rare local example of adobe construction. Adobe construction demonstrates a continuation of indigenous building traditions that were passed down from generation to generation of craftsmen. Adobe construction used locally available resources, and was appropriate for the climate in the Southwest, staying cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Assessor Parcel Number

Additional APNs

2016 Status Code

5S3

510241037

Address 2350

Direction S

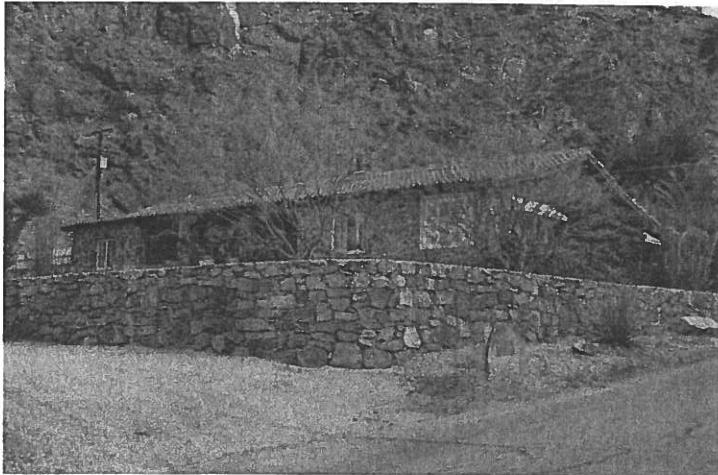
Prefix

Street Araby

Suffix Dr

Location

2016 FIELD PHOTO



CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

Date from Tax Assessor 1926

Date from Research

Date Source

Architect Miller, Lee

Architect Source City Historic Resources Database

Builder

Original Owner Giannini-Somavilla

Other Owner(s)

Marston, Marley

Historic Name Giannini-Somavilla

Common Name

Marston Residence

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Original Use Single-family residence

Stories 1

Current Use Single-family residence

Tract/Neighborhood Araby Tract

Resource Attribute HP2. Single family property

Located in a District?

District

Architectural Style Ranch

Additional Style

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

One-story, L-shaped plan

Low, horizontal massing with wide façade

Low-pitched gable roof with open overhanging eaves and clay barrel tiles

Divided light wood sash windows (picture and casement)

Wide, covered front porch with stone columns

Stone walls and retaining wall; horizontal wood siding at gables; interior stone chimney; stone steps, piers, and parapet

GENERAL ALTERATIONS

No major alterations

CUSTOM ALTERATIONS

2016 Status Code

5S3

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database

Yes

HRI Code

2003 Status Code

HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION

National Register

California Register

Local 5S3

Period of Significance

1926

Criterion

A/1/3

Context

Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)

Theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)

Sub-theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1929)

Period of Significance

1926

Criterion

C/3/5

Context

Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme

Sub-theme

Period of Significance

Criterion

Context

Theme

Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property was re-evaluated during the 2015 survey as part of an update to the City of Palm Springs' list of potential historic resources (Citywide Historic Resource Database). It is significant as an example of pre-World War II residential development, reflecting an important period of growth and transition in the city; and as the work of master builder Lee Miller.

Notes/Additional Information

The first residential subdivisions were recorded in the early 1920s on tracts largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts. 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. In addition to the resort-related development for the entertainers and the neighborhoods where the wealthy industrialists started constructing their winter homes, the city has a collection of early residential neighborhoods that developed to accommodate the growing permanent settlement. This property is located in the Araby tract. In 1925, H.W. Otis and Son, owners/sub-dividers began marketing and selling "Our Occidental Araby at Palm Springs." The 138-parcel tract of irregularly-shaped lots were intended for the development of a community that was "artistic and charming." There are stone features on many residences in the neighborhood, including stone walls scattered throughout. This was the first house to be built in Araby Hills. It has been attributed to prominent local building Robert Lee Miller. Miller was born in Hill, Texas in 1887. After serving in World War I, Miller was trained in civil engineering, but ultimately decided to become a carpenter. In 1931, Miller moved to Palm Springs, where he worked as a subcontractor, most often working for Alvah Hicks. Miller was a skilled woodworker, and designed many of the elaborated exposed wood detailed trusses in the city's early mansions. With no formal training, Miller studied the Spanish style through observing existing adobes and pattern books.

Assessor Parcel Number

Additional APNs

2016 Status Code

6L

510270006

Address 2500

Direction S

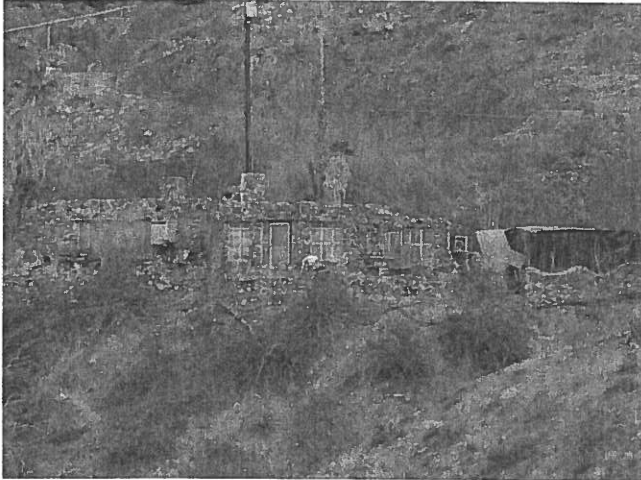
Prefix

Street Araby

Suffix Dr

Location

2016 FIELD PHOTO



CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

Date from Tax Assessor 1930

Date from Research

Date Source

Architect Miller, Lee

Architect Source

Builder Miller, Lee

Original Owner

Other Owner(s)

Historic Name

Common Name

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Original Use Single-family residence

Stories 1

Current Use Single-family residence

Tract/Neighborhood Araby Cove

Resource Attribute HP2. Single family property

Located in a District?

District

Architectural Style Residential Vernacular

Additional Style

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Stone walls

GENERAL ALTERATIONS

CUSTOM ALTERATIONS

Remnant of original stone house

2016 Status Code

6L

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database

HRI Code

2003 Status Code

HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION

National Register

California Register

Local 6L

Period of Significance

1930

Criterion

A/1/3

Context

Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)

Theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)

Sub-theme

Depression-era Single-family Residential Development (1930-1941)

Period of Significance

1930

Criterion

C/3/4,5

Context

Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme

Method of Construction

Sub-theme

Period of Significance

Criterion

Context

Theme

Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property is a remnant of the compound of rock houses built by Lee Miller. It is significant as an example of early residential development, and as a rare example of stone construction by master builder Lee Miller, reflecting the tradition of using local/found construction materials. There may not be sufficient historic fabric remaining for historic designation of the property; however, these remnant features warrant special consideration in the local planning process.

Notes/Additional Information

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 known as "Hopi Village" in the 1920s. The distinctive, round stone R. Lee Miller Residence (c. 1925) and stone "Casa Contenta, Perle Wheeler Martin" Residence (c. 1933) were among them. Wheeler resided in the "Araby rock house" well into the late 1930s. 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. Robert Lee Miller was born in Hill, Texas in 1887. After serving in World War I, Miller was trained in civil engineering, but ultimately decided to become a carpenter. In 1931, Miller moved to Palm Springs, where he worked as a subcontractor, most often working for Alvah Hicks. Miller was a skilled woodworker, and designed many of the elaborated exposed wood detailed trusses in the city's early mansions. With no formal training, Miller studied the Spanish style through observing existing adobes and pattern books.

Assessor Parcel Number

510270022

Additional APNs

2016 Status Code

5S3

Address 2540

Direction S

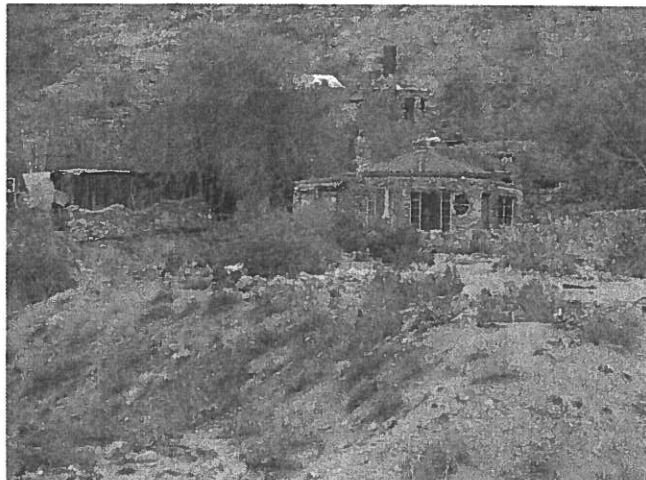
Prefix

Street Araby

Suffix Dr

Location 2500 S Araby, 2540 S Araby, 2550 S Araby

2016 FIELD PHOTO



CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

Date from Tax Assessor 1933

Date from Research c.1925-1933

Date Source

Architect Miller, Lee

Architect Source

Builder Miller, Lee

Original Owner Miller, Lee

Other Owner(s)

Arthur, Michael; Nahodil, Robert L.

Historic Name Round House; Lee Miller House

Common Name

Round House

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Original Use Single-family residence

Stories 1

Current Use Single-family residence

Tract/Neighborhood Araby Cove

Resource Attribute HP2. Single family property

Located in a District?

District

Architectural Style Residential Vernacular

Additional Style

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Polygonal plan; stone walls; hipped roof with clay barrel tiles; exterior stone chimney; divided light steel sash windows (casement and fixed picture); circular accent window; wood plank door

GENERAL ALTERATIONS

CUSTOM ALTERATIONS

Not fully visible from the public right-of-way; no major alterations visible

2016 Status Code

5S3

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database

Yes

HRI Code

2003 Status Code

HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION

National Register

California Register

Local

5S3

Period of Significance

1925-1933

Criterion

A/1/3

Context

Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)

Theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)

Sub-theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1929)

Period of Significance

1925-1933

Criterion

C/3/4, 5

Context

Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme

Method of Construction

Sub-theme

Period of Significance

Criterion

Context

Theme

Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property was re-evaluated during the 2015 survey as part of an update to the City of Palm Springs' list of potential historic resources (Citywide Historic Resource Database). This evaluation is for the "Round House." It is significant as an example of pre-World War II residential development, and as a rare example of stone construction by master builder Lee Miller, reflecting the tradition of using local/found construction materials.

Notes/Additional Information

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 known as "Hopi Village" in the 1920s. The distinctive, round stone R. Lee Miller Residence (c. 1925) and stone "Casa Contenta, Perle Wheeler Martin" Residence (c. 1933) were among them. Wheeler resided in the "Araby rock house" well into the late 1930s. 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. Robert Lee Miller was born in Hill, Texas in 1887. After serving in World War I, Miller was trained in civil engineering, but ultimately decided to become a carpenter. In 1931, Miller moved to Palm Springs, where he worked as a subcontractor, most often working for Alvah Hicks. Miller was a skilled woodworker, and designed many of the elaborated exposed wood detailed trusses in the city's early mansions. With no formal training, Miller studied the Spanish style through observing existing adobes and pattern books.

Assessor Parcel Number

Additional APNs

2016 Status Code

5S3

510270004

Address 2550

Direction S

Prefix

Street Araby

Suffix Dr

Location

2016 FIELD PHOTO



CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

Date from Tax Assessor 1929

Date from Research

Date Source

Architect Miller, Lee

Architect Source Steve Vaught

Builder Miller, Lee

Original Owner

Other Owner(s)

Levy, David Merritt

Historic Name Rock House

Common Name

Rock House

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Original Use Single-family residence

Stories 1

Current Use Single-family residence

Tract/Neighborhood Araby Cove

Resource Attribute HP2. Single family property

Located in a District? District

Architectural Style Residential Vernacular

Additional Style

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Rock walls; flat roofs; steel casement windows

GENERAL ALTERATIONS

CUSTOM ALTERATIONS

Remnants of early rock houses

2016 Status Code

5S3

PREVIOUS SURVEY EVALUATION

City Historic Resources Database

Yes

HRI Code

2003 Status Code

HSPB No.

2016 EVALUATION

National Register

California Register

Local 5S3

Period of Significance

1929

Criterion

A/1/3

Context

Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)

Theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1941)

Sub-theme

Single-family Residential Development (1919-1929)

Period of Significance

1929

Criterion

C/3/4, 5

Context

Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme

Method of Construction

Sub-theme

Period of Significance

Criterion

Context

Theme

Sub-theme

Statement of Significance

This property was re-evaluated during the 2015 survey as part of an update to the City of Palm Springs' list of potential historic resources (Citywide Historic Resource Database). It is significant as an example of pre-World War II residential development, and as a rare example of stone construction by master builder Lee Miller, reflecting the tradition of using local/found construction materials.

Notes/Additional Information

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 known as "Hopi Village" in the 1920s. The distinctive, round stone R. Lee Miller Residence (c. 1925) and stone "Casa Contenta, Perle Wheeler Martin" Residence (c. 1933) were among them. Wheeler resided in the "Araby rock house" well into the late 1930s. Robert Lee Miller was born in Hill, Texas in 1887. After serving in World War I, Miller was trained in civil engineering, but ultimately decided to become a carpenter. In 1931, Miller moved to Palm Springs, where he worked as a subcontractor, most often working for Alvah Hicks. Miller was a skilled woodworker, and designed many of the elaborated exposed wood detailed trusses in the city's early mansions. With no formal training, Miller studied the Spanish styles through observing existing adobes and pattern books.