



HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 5, 2023

PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: AN APPLICATION BY ERIC ELLENBOGEN, JOHN ENGELMAN AND THOMAS ENGELMAN REPRESENTED BY PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF "THE BLANKENHORN/GILMORE RESIDENCE" LOCATED AT 1850 SMOKE TREE LANE, CASE HSPB #148. (APN #510-104-002, 510-104-006, 510-105-002) (SY).

FROM: Department of Planning Services

SUMMARY

An application for historic designation of the "Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence" was submitted by the current owners: Eric Ellenbogen, John Engelman and Thomas Engleman. This property is identified as one of the first private homes built in the Smoke Tree Ranch gated community. The period of significance spans from 1935 to 1990 when the home was owned by the Blankenhorn family and the Gilmore family. Architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. designed the home for Louis McLaughlin Blankenhorn in 1935 and Albert Frey worked on the house for the Gilmore family from 1947-1990, a duration of 43 years.

If designated as a historic resource, the property would be subject to the regulations outlined in Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.

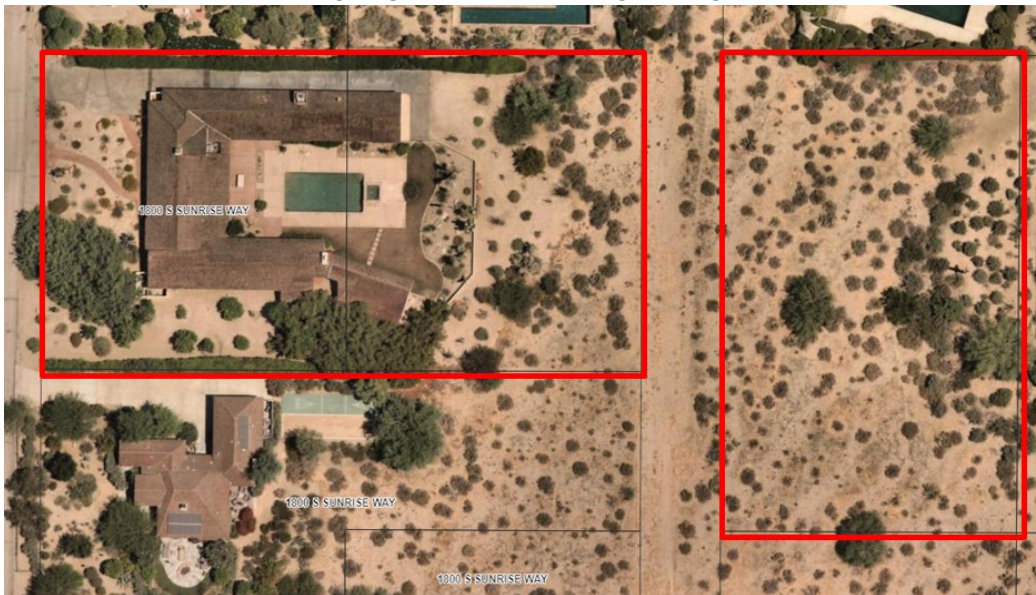
RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open the public hearing and receive public testimony.
2. Close the public hearing and adopt Resolution HSPB #148, "A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE "THE BLANKENHORN/GILMORE RESIDENCE" LOCATED AT 1850 SMOKE TREE LANE, AS A CLASS 1 (LANDMARK) HISTORIC RESOURCE HSPB #148, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS (APN #510-104-002, 510-104-006, 510-105-002)."

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence is a single-family home on two separate parcels in the Smoke Tree Ranch development. The 375-acre property was a subdivision created in the 1930s and marketed as a “dude ranch” resort. Unlike other similar resorts, Smoke Tree Ranch emphasized the rustic atmosphere of a desert as an exclusive experience. The aesthetic of the subdivision is closely managed down to the dirt roads and rock markers and internally, they have a separate addressing convention that uses the rocks as an identifier. This property is also known as RL2, Ranch House Road. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence is considered an early example of a single-family home built in this development which became the precedent for residential design.

BELOW IS AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE.



BELOW IS A VIEW OF THE WEST (FRONT) ELEVATION.



<i>Related Relevant City Actions by HSPB, Planning, Fire, Building, etc.</i>	
August, 2023	Site inspection by members of the HSPB and City Staff.

<i>Ownership Status</i>	
June, 2021	Purchased by the current owner.

ANALYSIS:

A historic resources report (“the report”) and a site visit by staff and members of the HSPB are the basis of this staff report.

The rambling one-story ranch home was carefully integrated into the natural desert landscape. According to the report, the approximate completion date for the home is 1930 by architect Garrett Van Pelt Jr. Subsequent additions expanded behind the front façade and remained subservient to the original massing of the home. The building forms and exterior materials for the additions were derived from the existing home and designed by architect Albert Frey, who worked for the original architect Garrett Van Pelt Jr. in his youth.

Historic Preservation activities in Palm Springs are regulated under Municipal Code Section 8.05 (“*Historic Preservation*”). The purpose of the Historic Preservation Ordinance is:

“...to stabilize and improve buildings, structures or areas which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological or ecological value, to foster civic beauty, to strengthen the local economy and to promote the use of historic resources for the education and welfare of the citizens.”

Conditions that apply to Class 1 historic sites or resources:

1. It shall meet the definition of a historic site as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.020.
2. An archival file shall be maintained on the property by the City.
3. It may be qualified as ‘historic’ at the federal, state, and/or county level.
4. A marker explaining the historic nature of the site may be installed in a location viewable from the public way.
5. Compliance with all rules and regulations for Historic Resources and Historic Districts under Chapter 8.05 of the Municipal Code.
6. If designated, the findings in support of designation shall be stated in a resolution of the City Council that shall be recorded with the County Recorders’ office within 90 days of the effective date of the Council’s resolution.

Evaluation of the Application. Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.070 (C,1,a), the HSPB shall evaluate the application and make findings in conformance with the following criteria:

Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 Historic Resources. A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource, provided both of the following findings (“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:

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence is a unique example of a rustic ranch-style home with a rambling floor plan that tell the history of residential development in the Smoke Tree Ranch community. The home demonstrates exceptional historic significance because of its association with the history of “dude ranch” resorts in Palm Springs and its association with respected master architects Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., and Albert Frey.

(Criterion i) The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community;

No information was provided indicating any significant event was directly associated with this site. The site does not qualify under Criterion i.

(Criterion ii) The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history;

The report describes the two main owners associated with the property: Louis “L. Mac” McLaughlin Blankenhorn and Donald S. Gilmore. Blankenhorn, one of the original developers of Smoke Tree Ranch and the city of Rancho Mirage, hired architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. to design the home which he owned from 1929 to 1935. The house was then sold to Donald S. Gilmore in 1935 and stayed in the family’s possession until 1990. It was during this time Donald Gilmore became the president and general manager of the leading pharmaceutical company in the United States, Upjohn. Architect Albert Frey designed any additions or remodels made to the home during the years of 1947 to 1990.

Blankenhorn made meaningful contributions to the desert communities and specifically played a critical role in setting the development standards for Smoke Tree Ranch, and Gilmore was a nationally recognized business leader that made important advancements in the pharmaceutical world during the time he owned and stayed at the home, thus, staff finds Criterion ii is met.

(Criterion iii) The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history;

Smoke Tree Ranch was a subdivision developed during the time of the Great Depression. The home was designed as a ranch-style home with strong rustic elements such as low-pitched roofs, board-and-batten siding, wood or steel encased windows, and asymmetrical plans and elevations. The rambling floor plan is also considered a characteristic of a ranch style home. As one of the earliest examples of a residential

structure in the subdivision, the scale, form and exterior building palette utilized at this home set the tone for the rest of the development. Additions to the home were made during the post World War II period but the overall aesthetic of the ranch was embraced. The additions continued the use of simple forms and paid close attention to scale and proportions. The building is an example of how a ranch style home was intended to expand and adapt to the needs of the owner. The home exemplifies a specific time period of development in Palm Springs is a historically significant community, thus, the site qualifies as a historic resource under Criterion iii.

(Criterion iv) The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;

Unlike the National Register criterion concerning construction, the Palm Springs evaluation of construction addresses the type (of construction), the period (of construction) and the method (of construction). It appears that standard wood frame construction methods were used to construct the building and the additions. The construction methods are conventional; therefore, contrary to the report, staff finds the project does not qualify for this criterion.

(Criterion v) The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possesses high artistic value;

The original home was designed by master architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. who was based in Pasadena and Santa Barbara. He was recognized and praised by his colleagues for his understanding of residential design. (The report goes into more detail about his contributions to the field of architecture and design.)

The additions to the home were completed by the renowned architect Albert Frey who is recognized for his contributions to the mid-century modern movement. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence embodies the design talent of both architects and demonstrates their understanding of mass/scale, form, and site planning. The report also reveals the unique relationship of employee and employer between the two architects. Frey had an advantage in understanding the design intent surrounding the original home since he worked for the original architect prior to designing the new additions. Both architects influenced the field with their designs, therefore, Criterion v is met.

(Criterion vi) The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists; or

No information has been provided that the resource qualifies under Criterion vi.

(Criterion vii) The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

No information has been provided on any pre-historic significance of the site.

Analysis of Integrity. (PSMC 8.05.070 (C,1,b). The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards: integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, or association.

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is evaluated in terms of its historic integrity as follows:

Location.

The resource remains in its original location of construction, therefore, retains its integrity of location.

Design.

The mass/scale, form and building materials of the home are consistent with the original design intent. The irregular footprint of the home evolved from an L-shaped floor plan to a U-shaped floor plan, however, the idea of a rambling/asymmetric design remains consistent. While there are certain elements on the newer additions that reflect contemporary building solutions to address the owner's needs, the architect demonstrates an understanding of the original design and emulates the rustic style of the original design and does not compete with the main facades of the home, therefore, the design integrity remains intact.

Setting.

Located within the Smoke Tree Ranch development, the desert setting around the home has been maintained and remain relatively unchanged. The open and rural setting not only preserves views, but it also highlights the site placement of the home, thus the integrity of setting is intact.

Materials.

The use and rhythm created by the board-and-batten siding, steel casement window details and openings, and wood roof shingles are key components of the exterior façade that remain consistent throughout the home; therefore, the integrity of materials is intact.

Workmanship.

Conventional construction methods were utilized and the aesthetic for the home emphasizes simplicity rather than craft. The exterior of the home is well maintained, and the original workmanship is evident.

Feeling.

The home is in a preserved rural setting and the design of the building represents the

time period in which it was originally constructed. The rustic, ranch-style home remains integrated with the desert landscape, thus the original feeling of the site remains intact.

Association.

The design and condition of the property is an excellent example of a rambling ranch style home associated with the “dude ranch” aesthetic of Smoke Tree Ranch is maintained through the use of simple forms, building materials and its integration into the desert context. The home’s association with the two architects, Pelt and Frey, are visible in the overall form and fenestration of the home; therefore, the home’s association to the time periods it represents, and the architects remain intact.

DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

In considering a recommendation for historic resource designation it is important to distinguish those physical elements that are original or from the period of significance that contribute to the resource’s historic significance from alterations, additions or features that were added at a later time that may be sympathetic to the original character, but which may create a false sense of historicity. Distinguishing original character-defining features from non-original elements aids the HSPB when it is tasked with evaluating future alterations to the historic resource.

On page 25, the report identifies the physical character-defining historic features of this site as follows:

- One-story ranch home with an emphasis on horizontality
- Low pitched wood shake roof
- Board-and-batten wood siding
- Deep roof eaves with extended roof rafters
- Covered front porch, patios and arcades
- Shed roof building mass against the low pitch gable roof
- Masonry chimney along the roof ridge of the low-pitched gable roof visible on the west facade
- Irregular/rambling floor plan
- Steel-framed windows

Non-contributing elements:

- Large swimming pool and spa in the central courtyard of the home
- Hardscaped walkways, patios and driveways
- Rooftop mounted mechanical equipment and screening
- Parcel across the street is owned by the current owners but does not contain any part of the historic resource

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposed historic resource designation is not subject to the California Environmental

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

NOTIFICATION

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

CONCLUSION:

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence meets the definition of a historic resource based on Criterion 2, 3 and 5 of the Palm Springs Historic Preservation Ordinance; therefore, staff recommends Class 1 designation. The property possesses historic integrity to qualify as a Class 1 (“Landmark”) site.

PREPARED BY:	Sarah Yoon, Associate Planner/Historic Preservation Officer
REVIEWED BY:	David Newell, AICP, Assistant Director of Planning

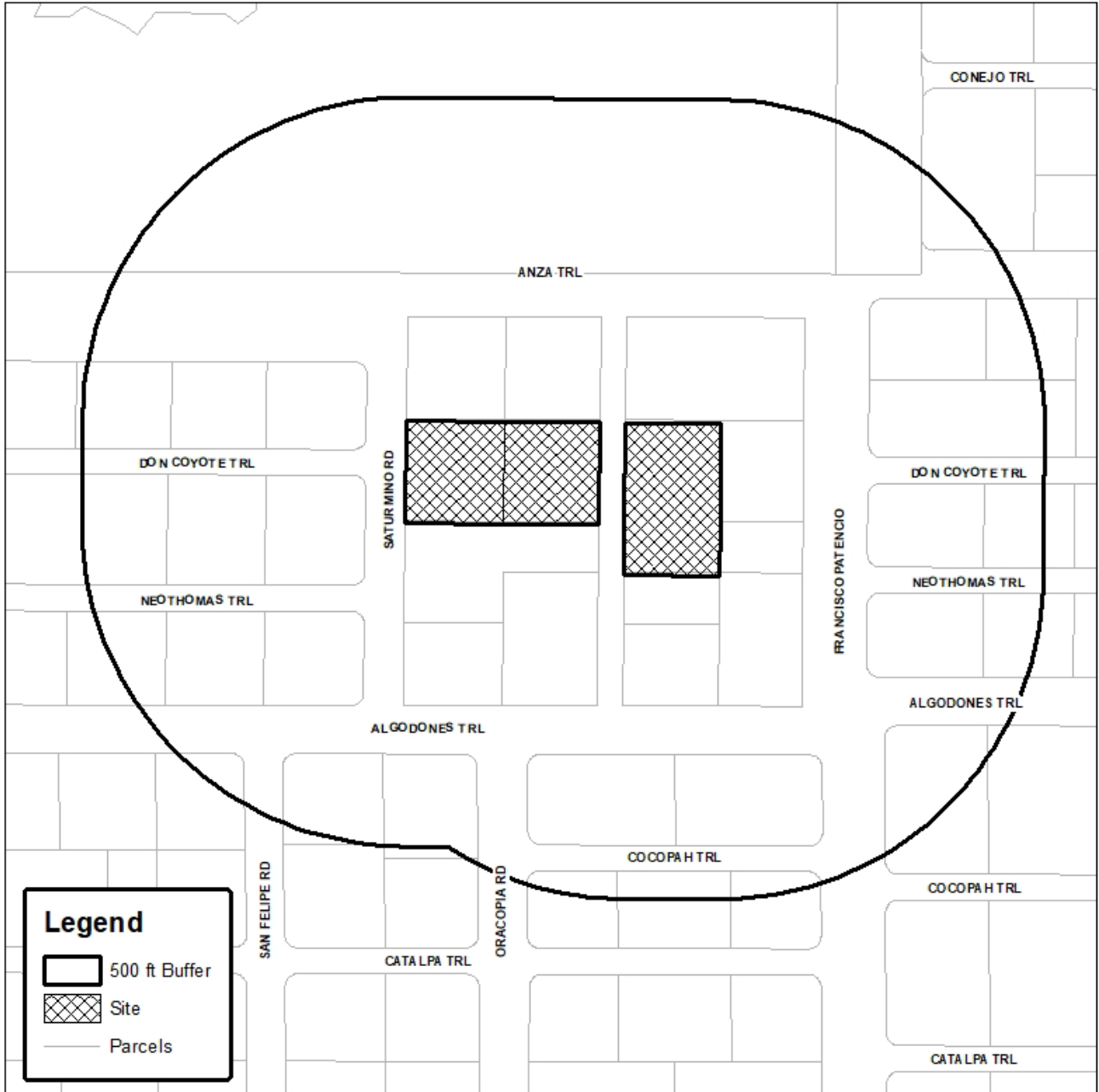
Attachments:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Draft Resolution
- C. Application, related background materials, photos.

ATTACHMENT A



Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
HSPB #148 – The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence
1850 Smoke Tree Lane

ATTACHMENT B

RESOLUTION NO. HSPB #148

A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE "THE BLANKENHORN/GILMORE RESIDENCE" LOCATED AT 1850 SMOKE TREE LANE, A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE, (HSPB #148), APN #510-104-002, 510-104-006, 510-105-002.

THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD ("HSPB") FINDS AND DETERMINES AS FOLLOWS:

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

B. WHEREAS, on November, 2022, Eric Ellenbogen, John Engelman and Thomas Engelman filed an application with the City pursuant to Article III, Section 8.05.070 (*Procedure and Criteria for Designation of Historic Resources*) of the Palm Springs Municipal Code requesting historic resources designation for the "Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence" located at 1850 Smoke Tree Lane. The application included a historic resources report ("the report").

C. WHEREAS, on August 15th and August 29th, 2023, members of the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) conducted site inspections of the proposed historic resource, accompanied by City staff; and

D. WHEREAS, on September 5, 2023, a noticed public hearing of the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") to consider Case HSPB #148 was held in accordance with applicable law; and

E. WHEREAS, The HSPB carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence presented in connection with the hearing on the project, including, but not limited to, the staff report and all written and oral testimony presented.

THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS RESOLVES:

SECTION 1: FINDINGS – PART "1", CRITERIA FOR HISTORIC RESOURCES.

Evaluation of the Application. Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.070 (C,1,a), the HSPB shall evaluate the application and make findings in conformance with the following criteria:

1. *Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 Historic Resources. A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource, provided both of the following findings (“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:*

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence is a unique example of a rustic ranch-style home with a rambling floor plan that tell the history of residential development in the Smoke Tree Ranch community. The home demonstrates exceptional historic significance because of its association with the history of “dude ranch” resorts in Palm Springs and its association with respected master architects Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., and Albert Frey.

(Criterion i) The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community;

No information was provided indicating any significant event was directly associated with this site. The site does not qualify under Criterion i.

(Criterion ii) The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history;

The report describes the two main owners associated with the property: Louis “L. Mac” McLaughlin Blankenhorn and Donald S. Gilmore. Blankenhorn, one of the original developers of Smoke Tree Ranch and the city of Rancho Mirage, hired architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. to design the home which he owned from 1929 to 1935. The house was then sold to Donald S. Gilmore in 1935 and stayed in the family’s possession until 1990. It was during this time Donald Gilmore became the president and general manager of the leading pharmaceutical company in the United States, Upjohn. Architect Albert Frey designed any additions or remodels made to the home during the years of 1947 to 1990.

Blankenhorn made meaningful contributions to the desert communities and specifically played a critical role in setting the development standards for Smoke Tree Ranch, and Gilmore was a nationally recognized business leader that made important advancements in the pharmaceutical world during the time he owned and stayed at the home, thus, staff finds Criterion ii is met.

(Criterion iii) The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history;

Smoke Tree Ranch was a subdivision developed during the time of the Great Depression. The home was designed as a ranch-style home with strong rustic elements such as low-pitched roofs, board-and-batten siding, wood or steel encased windows, and asymmetrical plans and elevations. The rambling floor plan is also considered a characteristic of a ranch style home. As one of the earliest examples of a residential structure in the subdivision, the scale, form and exterior building palette utilized at this home set the tone for the rest of the development. Additions to the home were made

during the post World War II period but the overall aesthetic of the ranch was embraced. The additions continued the use of simple forms and paid close attention to scale and proportions. The building is an example of how a ranch style home was intended to expand and adapt to the needs of the owner. The home exemplifies a specific time period of development in Palm Springs is a historically significant community, thus, the site qualifies as a historic resource under Criterion iii.

(Criterion iv) The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;

Unlike the National Register criterion concerning construction, the Palm Springs evaluation of construction addresses the type (of construction), the period (of construction) and the method (of construction). It appears that standard wood frame construction methods were used to construct the building and the additions. The construction methods are conventional; therefore, contrary to the report, staff finds the project does not qualify for this criterion.

(Criterion v) The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possesses high artistic value;

The original home was designed by master architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. who was based in Pasadena and Santa Barbara. He was recognized and praised by his colleagues for his understanding of residential design. (The report goes into more detail about his contributions to the field of architecture and design.)

The additions to the home were completed by the renowned architect Albert Frey who is recognized for his contributions to the mid-century modern movement. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence embodies the design talent of both architects and demonstrates their understanding of mass/scale, form, and site planning. The report also reveals the unique relationship of employee and employer between the two architects. Frey had an advantage in understanding the design intent surrounding the original home since he worked for the original architect prior to designing the new additions. Both architects influenced the field with their designs, therefore, Criterion v is met.

(Criterion vi) The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists; or

No information has been provided that the resource qualifies under Criterion vi.

(Criterion vii) The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

No information has been provided on any pre-historic significance of the site.

SECTION 2: PART “B” ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY.

Analysis of Integrity. (PSMC 8.05.070 (C,1,b). The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards: integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, or association.

“The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence” is evaluated in terms of its historic integrity as follows:

Location.

The resource remains in its original location of construction, therefore, retains its integrity of location.

Design.

The mass/scale, form and building materials of the home are consistent with the original design intent. The irregular footprint of the home evolved from an L-shaped floor plan to a U-shaped floor plan, however, the idea of a rambling/asymmetric design remains consistent. While there are certain elements on the newer additions that reflect contemporary building solutions to address the owner’s needs, the architect demonstrates an understanding of the original design and emulates the rustic style of the original design and does not compete with the main facades of the home, therefore, the design integrity remains intact.

Setting.

Located within the Smoke Tree Ranch development, the desert setting around the home has been maintained and remain relatively unchanged. The open and rural setting not only preserves views, but it also highlights the site placement of the home, thus the integrity of setting is intact.

Materials.

The use and rhythm created by the board-and-batten siding, steel casement window details and openings, and wood roof shingles are key components of the exterior façade that remain consistent throughout the home; therefore, the integrity of materials is intact.

Workmanship.

Conventional construction methods were utilized and the aesthetic for the home emphasizes simplicity rather than craft. The exterior of the home is well maintained, and the original workmanship is evident.

Feeling.

The home is in a preserved rural setting and the design of the building represents the time period in which it was originally constructed. The rustic, ranch-style home remains integrated with the desert landscape, thus the original feeling of the site remains intact.

Association.

The design and condition of the property is an excellent example of a rambling ranch style

home associated with the “dude ranch” aesthetic of Smoke Tree Ranch is maintained through the use of simple forms, building materials and its integration into the desert context. The home’s association with the two architects, Pelt and Frey, are visible in the overall form and fenestration of the home; therefore, the home’s association to the time periods it represents, and the architects remain intact.

SECTION 3: DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

In considering a recommendation for historic resource designation it is important to distinguish those physical elements that are original or from the period of significance that contribute to the resource’s historic significance from alterations, additions or features that were added at a later time that may be sympathetic to the original character, but which may create a false sense of historicity. Distinguishing original character-defining features from non-original elements aids the HSPB when it is tasked with evaluating future alterations to the historic resource.

Character-defining features of the resource are as follows:

- One-story ranch home with an emphasis on horizontality
- Low pitched wood shake roof
- Board-and-batten wood siding
- Deep roof eaves with extended roof rafters
- Covered front porch, patios and arcades
- Shed roof building mass against the low pitch gable roof
- Masonry chimney along the roof ridge of the low-pitched gable roof visible on the west facade
- Irregular/rambling floor plan
- Steel-framed windows

Non-contributing elements:

- Large swimming pool and spa in the central courtyard of the home
- Hardscaped walkways, patios and driveways
- Rooftop mounted mechanical equipment and screening
- Parcel across the street is owned by the current owners but does not contain any part of the historic resource

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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

SECTION 5: CONDITIONS THAT APPLY TO CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITES.

According to Section 8.05 of the Municipal Code, the following shall apply to a Class 1 Historic Resource:

1. It shall meet the definition of a Class 1 historic site as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.020.
2. An archival file on the property shall be maintained by the City.
3. It may be qualified as ‘historic’ at the federal, state, and/or county level.
4. The structure/site may not be modified nor objects removed without following the procedures outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.110 “Demolition or Alteration of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources – Certificate of Appropriateness”.
5. A marker explaining the historic nature of the site may be installed at the site in a location viewable from the public way.
6. Compliance with all rules and regulations for Historic Sites and Historic Districts under Chapter 8.05 of the Municipal Code shall be required.
7. The site shall not be further subdivided.
8. The City Clerk shall submit the Council Resolution to the County recorder for recordation within 90 days of the effective date of the Council’s resolution.

Based upon the foregoing, the Historic Site Preservation Board recommends that the City Council designate “The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence” located at 1850 Smoke Tree Lane, a Class 1 Historic Resource (HSPB #148).

ADOPTED THIS FIFTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2023.

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Christopher Hadwin
Director of Planning Services

ATTACHMENT C

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence

Smoke Tree Ranch
1850 Smoke Tree Lane
Palm Springs, CA 92264

**Nomination Application
for City of Palm Springs
Class 1 Historic Resource**



Prepared by
Steve Vaught
for the
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
July 2022, Revised November 2022

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully wishes to thank
the following individuals/organizations for
their professional expertise and/or editing assistance:

Eric Ellenbogen; Barbara and Ron Marshall; Gary Johns; Tracy Conrad; Ron DUBY; Thomas Morbitzer; Maria Franco; Frank Lopez of the Architecture and Design Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum; Nancy Hadley of the American Institute of Architects; Orange Coast Title Co.; Christina Rice of the Los Angeles Public Library; Renee Brown of the Palm Springs Historical Society.



Front cover: Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence, as photographed by Maynard Parker.
(© Huntington Library)

**Above: Still frame from a 1941 home movie by Martha Gilmore (Parfet)
via the documentary *Smoke Tree Ranch: A Way of Life*.**
(Courtesy Tracy Conrad)

THE BLANKENHORN/GILMORE RESIDENCE

Class 1 Historic Resource Nomination

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Introduction

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.”

In November 2021, the homeowner, Eric Ellenbogen engaged Steve Vaught to prepare the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence’s Class 1 Historic Resource nomination. The Board of Directors of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation subsequently voted to sponsor the nomination.

The Owner’s Letter of Support is at Appendix I.



**View looking towards west (front) façade.
Note the shed roof, deep porch and original fireplace chimney.
(Author photo. April 2022)**

Prepared by Steve Vaught on behalf of:
The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195
Palm Springs, CA 92264
760-837-7117
info@pspreservationfoundation.org

Executive Summary

SIGNIFICANCE:

The property that is the subject of this historic resources report, the Louis McLaughlin Blankenhorn/Donald S. Gilmore Residence (hereinafter referred to as the “Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence”) is a single-family residence in Smoke Tree Ranch (hereinafter referred to as “STR.”), a private gated community located south of East Palm Canyon Drive and east of South La Verne Way. The very first private home built in the colony, its rustic, Ranch-style design has served as a model for the nearly 100 homes that have followed. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence has the unique cachet of having been the work of two master architects, with its original design by Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., FAIA, a major figure in Southern California architecture during the period, and Albert Frey, FAIA, one of Palm Springs’ iconic architectural masters, who sensitively added on to the house over a period of decades.

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence’s significance further extends to its association with its original builder, Louis McLaughlin “L. Mac” Blankenhorn, principal developer of not only Smoke Tree Ranch, but the future city of Rancho Mirage as well, and to Donald S. Gilmore (1895-1979), a transformational figure in the pharmaceutical industry, whose family occupied the home from 1935-2021.

The home’s period of significance is lengthy (1930-1990), which covers its original period of design as well as the extensive later work by Albert Frey from 1947-1990. Therefore, it may be argued that the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence bridges two distinct periods as defined in the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group: “Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)” and “Post World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969).”

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence has not been previously evaluated for Class 1 historic resource eligibility.

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource: Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C.1): A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource, provided one or more of the criteria in subsections “a” and “b” are met:

FINDING 1: The site, structure, building or object exhibits exceptional historic significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed below:

8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraph (ii) - *The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state, or local history:* In this nomination, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is associated with Louis “L. Mac” McLaughlin Blankenhorn (1884-1943), principal developer of not only Smoke Tree Ranch, but the future city of Rancho Mirage as well, and to Donald S. Gilmore (1895-1979), an internationally known businessman who guided the Upjohn Co. of Kalamazoo, MI (hereinafter referred to as “Upjohn”), from a small family concern into a pharmaceutical empire. Under Gilmore’s leadership, Upjohn became the leading pharmaceutical company in the nation, responsible for numerous live-saving innovations such a method for mass producing cortisone and penicillin.

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is associated with Louis McLaughlin Blankenhorn and Donald S. Gilmore, persons who had influence in local and national history. Therefore, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 2.

8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraph (iii) - **The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state, or local history:** The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence exhibits a number of stylistic markers which identify it as being of Ranch architecture. This style, which was popular both in the Pre War and Post War periods, may well have been first introduced to Palm Springs by Garrett Van Pelt's design of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence and other original STR structures. They are among the earliest, if not *the* earliest Palm Springs examples of the Ranch style, putting them at the vanguard of what would become one of the village's most popular traditional building types of the 1930s through the 1950s. The home's style, original build date and subsequent additions allow it to bridge two distinct historic periods as defined in the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group: "Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)" and "Post World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969). The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence may be viewed as an important component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of notable architecture, i.e., a historical trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state, or local history. The structure qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 3.

8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraph (iv) - **The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction:** The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction reflective of the period in which it was built. Although board-and batten construction had been used in earlier decades including on some of Palm Springs' pioneer buildings, it had largely been superseded by other methods. The use of board-and-batten construction on the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence represented a renewed interest in this form, which was to become commonplace on homes of similar style over the ensuing years. The board-and-batten construction used on the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence exhibits the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction popularly employed during the time of the home's period of significance. As such, it qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 4.

8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraph (v) - **High Artistic Value - 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:** The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence has the unique distinction of being the work of two separate master architects, each of whom contributed meaningfully to the artistry of its design. Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. produced the original plan, which was intended to evoke the pioneer western ranch houses of the previous century. These structures were born of pure necessity, not artistry, and were constructed out of the simplest materials available in the simplest forms practicable. Aside from modern interior features such as plumbing and lighting, Van Pelt stayed true to concept for the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence, using the same type of materials and basic architectural styling as its pioneer inspirations. The result showed how even something ostensibly as utilitarian as a pioneer ranch house could be made beautiful in the hands of as a talented practitioner as Van Pelt. Although his contributions to the house began nearly two decades later, Albert Frey

had a deep and unique understanding of Van Pelt's vision and carefully tailored his designs for various additions to retain the spirit of Van Pelt's intentions. Even though the house was to grow considerably over the decades, Frey skillfully managed to keep the proportions and the feeling of Van Pelt's original design intact. Therefore, for the well-proportioned simplicity of its design as the combined work of master architects Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. and Albert Frey, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.

8.06.070 (C,1,b) – Integrity: 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.

SUMMARY:

Based on the analysis outlined in this Historic Resources Report, the site qualifies as a Class 1 (Landmark) historic site eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 C.1.a.(ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence retains a "high degree" of integrity (see Section 7, "Integrity Analysis").



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Phone 760 323 8245

Fax 760 322 8360

Historic Preservation Officer 760 322 8364 x8786

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

WHEN TO USE THIS APPLICATION:

Use this application if you are seeking Class 1 or Class 2 historic designation for a property or parcel or for historic district applications.

Use the MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION FORM (MAA) if you are seeking approval for alterations to Class 1, Class 2, Class 3 or Class 4 historic sites. (Contact the Planning Department if you are unsure of the classification of your property.)

WHO MAY APPLY:

Any individual or organization may apply to the City for consideration of a request for historic resource designation. Applications must be signed and notarized by the owner(s) of record of the site, structure, building or object for which the designation is sought.

PROCEDURE:

1. For proposed historic sites or resources: Refer to Palm Springs Municipal Code ("PSMC") Section 8.05.070 for *Procedures and Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources*. Visit: www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation".
2. For proposed historic districts: Refer to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 for *Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts*. Visit: www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation".
3. Complete all parts of the application and include related reports, mailing labels and back up information in support of the application. Denote "NA" for any line item that is not applicable.
4. Once the application is complete, contact the Planning Department and schedule a pre-application conference with the City's Historic Preservation Officer ("HPO").
5. Submit the completed application and related materials to the Department of Planning Services. A Planning Department case number will be assigned to the application.
6. Applications for historic site / resource or historic district designation are evaluated by staff in the City Planning Department who will prepare the application for consideration by the City's Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") at a noticed public hearing. Applicants should plan on attending the hearing. City staff will schedule site visits for members of the HSPB to become familiar with the site prior to the public hearing. (Exterior review only, interiors are not subject to HSPB review.)
7. At the public hearing, the HSPB will evaluate the application and make a recommendation for City Council action. The City Council will consider the application and the HSPB's recommendation at a second noticed public hearing. The applicant should again attend that hearing.
8. The final action of the City Council to designate will be recorded on the property title with the County Recorder's office.

FOR HISTORIC SITE / RESOURCE APPLICATIONS, SEE CHECKLIST FOR CLASS 1 AND 2.
FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT APPLICATIONS, SEE CHECKLIST FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262
Tel 760-323-8245 – FAX 760-322-8360

For Staff Use Only
Case Number: _____
In-Take Planner: _____
Date: _____

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION PLANNING / ZONING GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

TO THE APPLICANT: Complete all parts of this application. Denote "NA" for lines that are not applicable.

Project Information:

Applicant's Name: Eric Ellenbogen, John Engelman & Thomas Engelman

Applicant's Address: 1850 Smoke Tree Lane, Palm Springs, CA 92264

Site Address: 1850 Smoke Tree Lane, Palm Springs, CA 92264 APN: 510-104-002; 510-104-006;
510-105-002

Phone 307-200-9443 (Ellenbogen) Email: ee.boomerang@gmail.com

Zone: _____ GP: _____ Section/Township/Range: _____/_____/_____

Description of Project:

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is Smoke Tree Ranch's first and most historic residence. It was built for the ranch's original developer, Louis MacLaughlin Blankenhorn and later became the long-time winter retreat of the head of Upjohn pharmaceutical, Donald S. Gilmore. The home was designed by master architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. and continued to evolve under the masterful hand of Albert Frey.

Note: For Historic District applications: on a separate page provide a list of all sites/parcels within the proposed historic district boundaries with the same information listed above.

Is the project located on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation? Yes/No: _____ No
(Refer to the Land Status Map under Tribal Resources on the Planning Department home page)

Construction Date: 1930 Estimated Actual (denote source, i.e. building permits)

Architect: Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. with extensive additions/alterations by Albert Frey

Original Owner: Louis MacLaughlin Blankenhorn, Jr.

Common/Historic Name of Property: Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence

Other historic associations: Donald S. Gilmore

Attach to this application any information, photos, drawings, newspaper articles, reports, studies, or other materials to fully describe the characteristics or conditions that support this application for historic designation.

Architectural Style: R a n c h

Refer to the Architectural Styles chapter of Citywide Historic Context Statement, under Historic Resources on the Planning Department Home Page: www.palmspringsca.gov.

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION APPLICATION (CONT.)

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" of potentially historic resources for further information.

Provide a written description of how the site qualifies as a historic resource per the following Findings. Please provide answers on a separate sheet or report.

FINDING 1: The site, structure, building or object exhibits exceptional historic significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed below:

- a. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. 1
- b. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- c. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- d. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- e. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possess high artistic value.
- f. The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists.

FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Provide a written description for each element as listed: Design; Materials; Workmanship; Location; Setting; Feeling; and Association. 2

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 2 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 2 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided the site, structure, building, or object exhibits significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed in Finding 1 above. A Class 2 historic resource is not required to meet the findings for integrity as described in Finding 2.

Criteria and Findings for Designation of Historic Districts:

In addition to the criteria listed in Finding 1, to be considered for designation as a Historic District, a defined area must:

- a. Contain contributing resources on a majority of the sites within the proposed district which individually meet the criteria in Finding 1. The defined area may include other structures, buildings, or archaeological sites which contribute generally to the overall distinctive character of the area and are related historically or visually by plan or physical development. *Provide a separate list by address and Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for each site/parcel that meets the criteria outlined in Finding 1.*
- b. Identify non-contributing properties or vacant parcels to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries. *Provide a separate list by address and APN number for each site/parcel within the proposed historic district that is considered non-contributing to the overall historic significance of the historic district.*

1 NOTE: Unlike the National Trust criteria, the City's criterion does not consider "patterns of events". For consideration of "patterns of events", use Criterion "C", reflecting a particular period.

2 NOTE: Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bulletin for "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property".

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING DEPARTMENT APPLICATION
HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION**

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2

APPLICANT'S REQUIRED MATERIAL CHECKLIST

The following items must be submitted before a **Historic Resource Designation** application will be accepted. Please check off each item to assure completeness. Provide twelve (12) hard copies and one (1) PDF copy of the following materials unless otherwise noted:

	Applicant Only	City Use Only
Application Information:		
• General Information form (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Notarized letter from property owner consenting to Historic Designation (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Ownership and Address History ("Chain of Title") (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic Resource Report:		
The following items shall be included in a historic resources report describing the site, structure, buildings, or objects eligible and appropriate for designation per PSMC 8.05.070.		
• Photographs of the exterior of the proposed site, structure, buildings or objects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Aerial photo of the site/resource (from Google Maps or equal).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Information on the architect, designer, and/or developer.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Date and method of construction. Provide copies of building permits.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A detailed assessment of the character defining features describing materials, architectural details/style, landscape elements, or other relevant descriptors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Evaluation of the site relative to the Criteria and Findings for Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional Information:		
• Site Plan: 8-12" x 11" or 11" x 17"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Public Hearing labels per PSZC Section 94.09.00.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Any other documentation or research as may be necessary to determine the qualifications of the site, structure, building, or objects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Applicants are encouraged to review the bulletin from the U.S. Department of the Interior titled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation". (National Register Bulletin 15 (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>)).

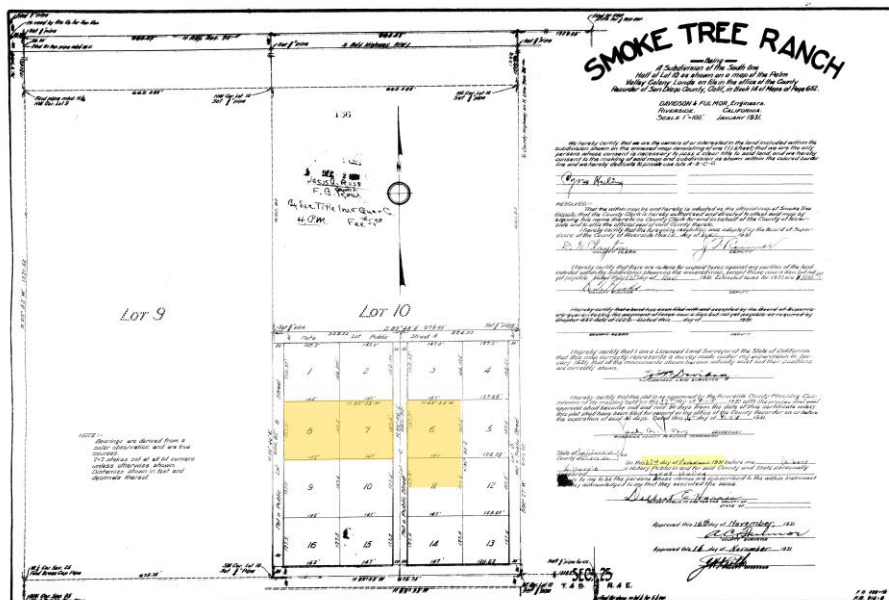
Statement of Significance

Summary

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is located within the historic Smoke Tree Ranch development. As is the case with all Smoke Tree Ranch homes, it bears the official address of 1850 Smoke Tree Lane, although internally it is located at RL2, Ranch House Road (alternately known as Saturmino Road).

The property consists of 2 separate parcels. Parcel 1 consists of Lot 6 and the northern half of Lot 11. Parcel 2, which is where the residence is located, consists of Lots 7 and 8. The legal description per the Riverside County Assessor is LOT 8 MB 018/029 SMOKE TREE RANCH 1. The "1" is in reference to the different sections of the ranch, which was laid out and developed in four distinct parcels. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was built in Smoke Tree Ranch No. 1., which had been officially opened for subdivision in 1931.

The generally accepted construction date is 1929, however, based on related documentation, the actual date would more likely appear to be 1930. It should be noted that the Riverside County Assessor states the build date as 1947, which is incorrect and is presumably based on Albert Frey's major addition of that year. The estimated build date of 1930 is based on newspaper references to construction activities at STR as well as references to Blankenhorn staying in the colony. While the tract map for STR was not officially filed until January 1931, there is clear documentary evidence, including photographic, that construction was underway throughout the latter part of 1930, with the colony's official grand opening taking place on January 2, 1931. By this time, the initial colony structures, including the school house, were fully operational. How the colony came to be prior to the official tract map filing is presently unclear, but county rules regarding such filings may have been different in that early period of development.



The tract map for Smoke Tree Ranch No. 1, January 1931. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore property is shown in yellow.

L. Mac Blankenhorn and the Founding of Smoke Tree Ranch



**L. Mac Blankenhorn (1884-1943), principal developer of Smoke Tree Ranch
and co-founder of Rancho Mirage.**
Courtesy Pasadena Historical Museum

Today, Smoke Tree Ranch, a picturesque private retreat of Ranch-styled residences, is considered not only one of the finest and most exclusive enclaves in Palm Springs, its reputation extends nationally and even internationally as well. For decades, Smoke Tree Ranch has been home to some of the most recognized names in business, finance, society, and motion pictures, each of whom have been drawn to the rustic, low key atmosphere of this desert hideaway. Names like Disney, Weyerhaeuser, Upjohn, Helms, Trousdale, Janss, Hoover, Haldeman, among many others, have all found Smoke Tree Ranch to be a place of peace and relaxation. Even President Dwight D. Eisenhower enjoyed the ranch's hospitality during his 1954 trip to the desert.

Smoke Tree Ranch came into existence right on the cusp of Palm Springs' transformation from a minor regional resort into its ultimate destiny as one of the world's foremost leisure destinations. And it did not merely benefit from this transformation, it was a major contributor. Prior to the ranch's opening, wealthy winter visitors had only

two options: They could stay at a hotel during the season or could build a home for themselves. While the latter may have offered privacy and freedom, it also came with expenses, maintenance, staff and caretaking issues. Smoke Tree Ranch offered both options, providing guest accommodations as well as the ability to build private homes. But here, home owners would have the unique advantage of hotel amenities as well as full community features such as a restaurant/club house, tennis, swimming, horse stables and the trails on which to ride them, even a private school. All of this was the result of farsighted thinking on the part of the ranch's original developers, led by Pasadena businessman, L. Mac Blankenhorn (see Blankenhorn biography in Appendix IV).

A member of one of Pasadena's pioneering families, Blankenhorn, known as "L. Mac" or simply "Mac," was a leading figure in real estate and development for more than 30 years. While Mac focused principally on Pasadena, he kept an eye out for opportunities wherever they might turn up. One was in the oil fields near Bakersfield, another was in Palm Springs.

L. M. Blankenhorn, realty broker,
is spending considerable time these
days at Palm Springs.

The Pasadena Post took note of Mac's activities out in the desert.

April 8, 1930.

(Via newspapers.com)

According to author and historian Tracy Conrad, an authority on the history of Smoke Tree Ranch, Mac and his wife Kathryn were frequent visitors to Palm Springs, staying weekends at Nellie Coffman's Desert Inn. It was on one of those sojourns that Mac may have discovered the 450-acre parcel about 2 miles from Palm Springs. The property had been known locally as the Smoke Tree Forest owing to the profusion of the eponymous trees dotting the landscape. There was also an old ruin on the grounds, a sole surviving relic of "Palmdale," a failed attempt to develop the property from the 1880s.

Mac was entranced by the site's natural beauty, its spectacular mountain backdrop, all within close proximity to the heart of Palm Springs. And he was further intrigued to learn that the Palm Springs-Indio Road, running in front of the property (today's South Palm Canyon Drive) was soon to be paved.

Mac dreamed of a beautiful and private residential development where the natural feeling was retained, a place where a select group of residents and guests could relax and get a true sense of rustic, Old West-style living.

Learning that the site's elderly absentee owner, Judge Cyrus Huling of Columbus, Ohio, would consider selling, Mac assembled a group of investors that included Charles F. Doyle, former owner of the nearby Deepwell Ranch, Robert Furst, Nicholas Harrison, George L. Alexander, Dudley Coye, L.J. Kingsley, and John Chaffey. Another investor, architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., proved to be of great importance to the venture, serving as the ranch's master architect (see Van Pelt biography in Appendix V).

Originally known as Smoke Tree Tavern, the tract was to be laid out in one to five-acre plots as homesites to a "selected group of professional and business men." Plans were immediately put underway for the construction of a tract office/community building, which would ultimately include a dining room and kitchen, stables, a set of small guest cottages, and even a one-room school. All of these structures, and more, were to be designed by Van Pelt.

In selecting the venture's architect, Mac had the good fortune of being able to pick from a group that included some of the finest architects ever to practice in Southern California. Mac not only knew them by reputation, he knew many personally, even serving as an usher at Wallace Neff's 1923 wedding. In the end, he chose Van Pelt. They had worked together before, from as early as 1918 when Mac's brother David had engaged Marston Van Pelt to design a house on East California in Pasadena. Later, they designed a set of four bungalows for Blankenhorn & Hunt.

At Smoke Tree Ranch, the talented Van Pelt was able to put into physical form, the rustic, Old West feeling envisioned by Mac in a way that has proven timeless rather than dated. Nowhere was this more readily visible than in the very first private home built in Smoke Tree Ranch, the home of L. Mac Blankenhorn.

Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence and Ranch House Revival

As the very first of its kind built at the Smoke Tree Ranch, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence's architectural design was intended to literally set the tone for what would follow, serving as a de facto model for subsequent construction. In its rustic yet solid form, the house expressed the developers' intentions both spiritually and physically in a way no words or drawings could do.

The developers' goal was to capture the romance of the Old West, even if it were the Hollywood version rather than the often less-than-romantic reality of the pioneering days. No aspect of the development would demonstrate this image more potently than the colony's architecture and great care was taken to ensure structures that promoted the desired effect.

Therefore, the choice of Ranch-styling was obvious and it was made the official and mandated style for all structures built within the colony from the beginning to the present. On the surface, these restrictions may have seemed short-sighted, dooming the colony to acres of monotonous repetition, but in the hands of talented architects such as Garrett Van Pelt, Albert Frey and others to follow, limitations were seen not as drawbacks, but

rather as exciting challenges to find ways to produce something wholly unique while remaining in harmony with the others.

The Ranch-style, which would later go on to considerable popularity in the post-World War II era, did offer a variety of options and, as Cliff May, the undisputed master of the California Ranch House was later to write:

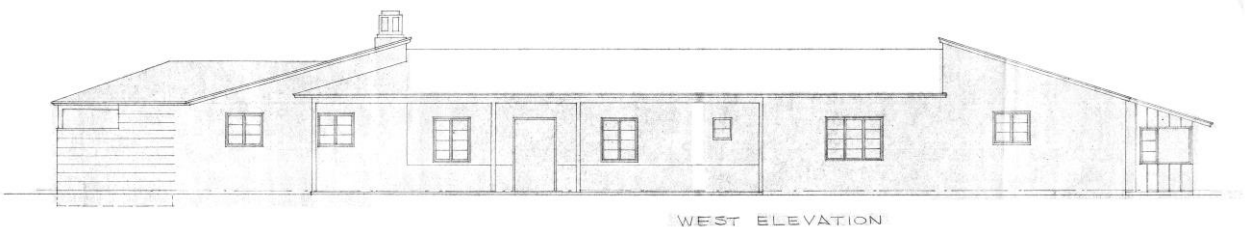
The form called a ranch house has many roots. They go deep into the Western soil. Some feed directly on the Spanish period. Some draw upon the pioneer years. But the ranch-house growth has never been limited to its roots. It has never known a set style. It was shaped by needs for a special way of living – informal, yet gracious.

While May wrote this 15 years after the completion of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence, his description of the style offering a lifestyle both informal, yet gracious, is wholly apt in the design of the home itself and of Smoke Tree Ranch in general.

The Architecture

The home was sited on a multi-acre parcel a short distance to the west from the ranch's club house. Located on what was originally known as Saturmino Road (Today's Ranch House Road), the main portion of the house faced and ran parallel to the road. However, great care was given, as was to be the case with future Smoke Tree Ranch homes, that the house be set back away from the road, allowing generous space between house and streetside. The home was initially sited almost squarely on Lot 8. Over time, as the home would grow, it would ultimately extend into the adjoining Lot 7 as well.

In its original form as designed by Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was created in the form of an L, with a central core running on an east-west axis, and a wing running perpendicularly north to south outwards from the eastern end of the central mass. The home's interior spaces were divided into two distinct zones. The central portion was devoted to the main family living and bedroom areas, while the southern wing was given over to 2 ensuite guest (or staff) bedrooms and a garage.



Prior to embarking on any additions, Albert Frey made a careful study of the home in its original form. This drawing of the front (west elevation) shows Van Pelt's clean lined simplicity. Façade remains much the same today.

(Courtesy Albert Frey Collection. Palm Springs Art Museum)

Van Pelt geared the design to blend indoor-outdoor living, beginning with a wide and welcoming front porch intended to serve as an informal outdoor living room. On the interior side, the architect added a set of doors off the living room to access the outdoors as well as picture windows in the dining room and master bedroom.

Architecturally, Van Pelt had the choice of either sheathing the residence in stucco (to simulate adobe) for a more Spanish look, or in board and batten to match more of an American pioneer feel. He chose the latter, although there was some stucco used in certain places. The windows were simple, wood-framed casement types, which were enhanced in some places by wooden shutters.

The split shake covered roof was low pitched for the most part, but special interest was provided by sloping shed sections which bookended the eastern and western ends. Shed roofs, a common feature of early western homes, became a signature element of the houses at Smoke Tree Ranch, later becoming a common choice of John Porter Clark and Albert Frey during the 1930s. A picturesque whitewashed brick fireplace chimney completed the design.

In its original form, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was extremely simple and modest, not the typical residence of a millionaire, but this was exactly what Mac Blankenhorn and the millionaires to follow loved, a feeling of “roughing it” in the wild west.

While records from the intervening years are not available, it does not appear the residence underwent any notable alterations or additions from the time of its initial construction to Albert Frey’s first major addition in 1947.

Blankenhorn Ownership

While the actual date of its construction cannot be verified with complete certainty, it appears the house was ready by the time of Smoke Tree Ranch’s official opening on January 2, 1931. What might have been a joyous occasion for Mac, was doubtless tempered by the loss of his beloved wife Kathryn, who had died unexpectedly in September 1930, leaving him a widower with two young daughters. According to Tracy Conrad, Mac had planned the home as a retreat for himself and Kathryn, regularly escaping the busy world of Pasadena into the quiet desert with a few close friends.

As it was, Mac used the home frequently and hosted numerous gatherings, one of which was to open a new chapter in his life. According to the recollections of her granddaughter, Ruth Anderson Wheeler was a young Pasadena society matron who had recently (1932) lost her husband. Perhaps drawn by mutual loss, she and Mac began seeing each other at various events in Pasadena and at Smoke Tree Ranch. Ruth’s granddaughter recalled a memorable dinner party hosted by Mac at Smoke Tree Ranch. The date was March 10, 1933. The guests, all Republicans, were grumbling over the actions of newly-elected president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, particularly his order of a national bank closure. But their focus quickly changed when it was announced

over the radio that a major earthquake had struck in Long Beach. As most everyone at the party had business interests in Long Beach, the dinner broke up and everyone headed back to Pasadena to find more information.

The bond between Ruth and Mac, however, continued to grow and the pair were married in June 1935. By this time, Mac had become involved in a new business venture, a new residential development 10 miles to the south of Smoke Tree Ranch, a place Ruth had named “Rancho Mirage.” As a result, Blankenhorn sold his interests in Smoke Tree Ranch and his home as well. Its buyer was Donald S. Gilmore.

Gilmore Ownership

Donald S. Gilmore had yet to rise to preeminence in the American pharmaceutical industry when he first started coming to Smoke Tree Ranch in 1933, but he was climbing rapidly (see full bio in Appendix IV). According to Gilmore’s daughter, Martha Gilmore Parfet, it had been Gilmore’s mother Carrie who first spotted the ranch while on a tour of Palm Springs. She thought it would be a perfect getaway spot for the Gilmores and convinced them to go and see it. They did and wholeheartedly agreed.

For the first two years, they rented a cottage, but in 1935 they jumped at the chance to purchase when the Blankenhorn residence came up for sale. They loved the house, which was to remain their winter home for the remainder of their long lives and continuing in Gilmore family hands all the way up until 2021.

Martha Gilmore Parfet, who became the family historian, left a vivid picture of her first trip to Smoke Tree Ranch in her book *Keep the Quality Up* (2014) as well as how much their home at the ranch meant to them all, writing “Smoke Tree Ranch found a permanent place in the hearts of the entire family.” Adding further:

Smoke Tree Ranch became a perfect respite for my mother and dad. They spent more and more time at the ranch during the winter, and enjoyed the many friendships they formed with other colonists. Mom and dad generously shared their cottage, which in time grew into more of a comfortable home, with plenty of room for family visits.

The Gilmores found much-needed respite from their busy schedules back in Michigan and the freedom to pursue hobbies and interests they had little time for at home. Donald found he greatly enjoyed silversmithing, even studying under an expert artisan in Los Angeles. Gilmore’s hobby was reflected in the 1947 addition to the home, which included a well-equipped workshop adjacent to the garage. On the other side of the house, Genevieve pursued her own hobbies of painting, photography and sculpting in a purpose-built studio at the end of the southern wing. Later, when Donald became fascinated by antique cars, the garage was expanded and remodeled to provide a proper setting to both work on and showcase his latest treasures.

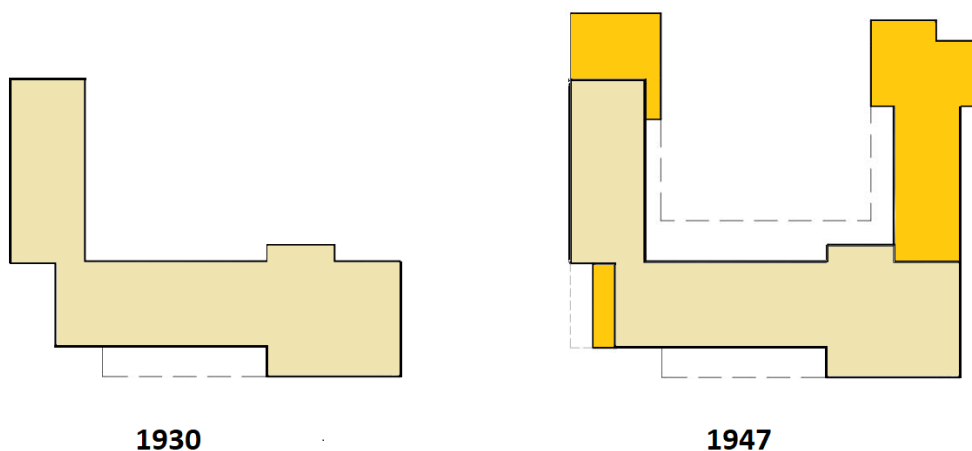


Donald S. Gilmore stands proudly in front of his new desert retreat. 1935.
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

Additions During the Gilmore Years

The Gilmore hobbies were one of the main impetuses to adding on to their beloved winter cottage. The other was an ever-increasing influx of family and friends. Ranch houses, by their very spirit, were expected to “ramble” as needs and finances allowed. Between the years 1947-1992, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence did just that through a series of additions and alterations which more than doubled the home’s original size. Yet, the overall integrity was not compromised owing to the fact that all the changes were made by the hand of one architect, Albert Frey. While the original design had been the work of Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., no other architect proved to have a better understanding of Van Pelt’s Smoke Tree Ranch work both in spirit and execution than Frey, and he was able to sensitively add on to the residence while still maintaining Van Pelt’s vision.

1947 Additions



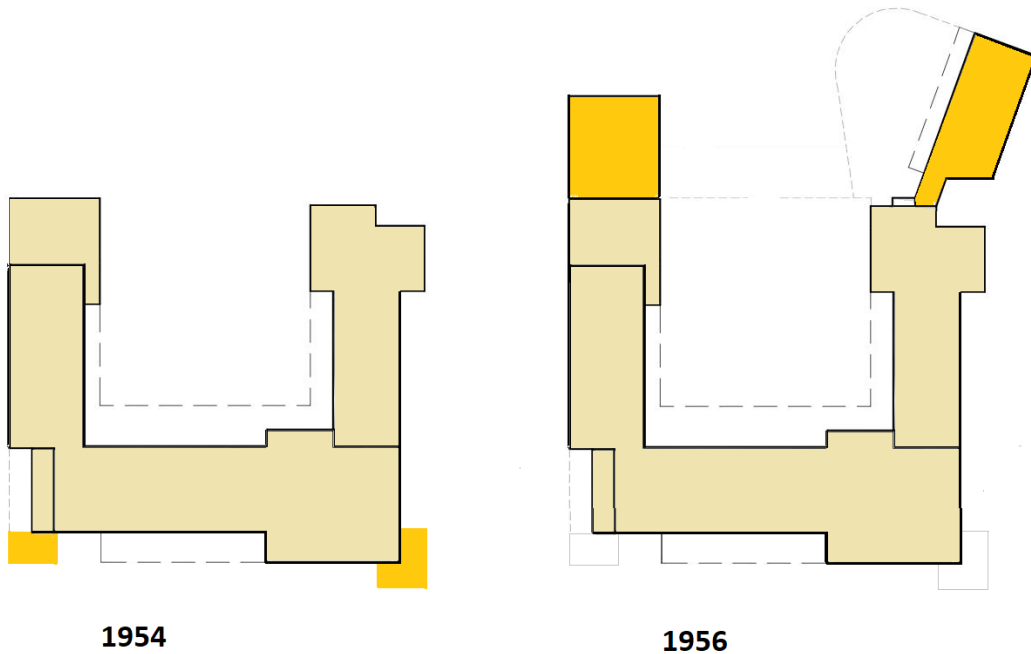
This schematic, based on a study by Ammor Architecture, LLP, shows the original layout and Albert Frey's 1947 additions. Note Frey's inclusion of a wraparound porch on the inner court.

Frey's first known work on the residence was also the most significant in terms of overall structure. Frey transformed the home from its initial L-shape into a U-form through the addition of a new wing which ran on an east-west axis on the southern side of the structure. This wing encompassed a new master suite for the Gilmores, which included a sitting-bedroom with fireplace, an adjoining office-bedroom, as well as two dressing room/bathrooms. Additionally, Frey extended the existing northern wing through the creation of a new multi-vehicle garage and altering the former garage space into a workshop and storage. The new wing also created an inner courtyard, enclosed on three sides, which was both a traditional and useful addition in and of itself.

Utilizing the same board-and-batten sheathing and window types as found on the original Van Pelt design, Frey skillfully and seamlessly harmonized the new with the old, creating a near symmetry between the new southern wing and its northern original. Yet, Frey wisely resisted making a mirror copy of the northern wing as this would have run contrary to traditional ranch house/hacienda design, which featured a more rambling, asymmetrical effect.

Frey further sought to unify the new wing to the original through the addition of a covered walkway/patio, running the length of the interior-facing facades. This was not only aesthetically pleasing; it also served a very useful function in shielding the home's interior from the direct summer sun. As each of the major rooms opened out onto the walkway, it allowed for a greater freedom of movement between spaces, which also harkened back to traditional hacienda design. The addition of the covered walkway necessitated extending the original roofline outwards, which was sheathed in shakes to match the existing roof.

In what was a Frey trademark, the architect kept the rafters exposed to the sky in the section directly outside the living room. Not only did this provide more light to the interior, it offered an ever-changing play of light and shadows as the sun moved across the sky. Frey had been fascinated by the relation of light and shadow ever since his early days with Le Corbusier. He used this same motif on certain other designs at least back to his days with Van Pelt & Lind and would use it again in various forms for the remainder of his career.



1954 Addition/Alterations

Albert Frey’s next known work on the Gilmore Residence was a relatively minor addition principally consisting of two new “cooler yards,” fenced sections intended to disguise the home’s air conditioning systems. One of these was positioned at the northwest corner of the home, while the other was at the southwest. Discretion was the byword for the work and Frey carefully ensured the additions would blend into the home’s existing design by matching the board-and-batten design featured throughout the exterior. The fencing was composed of a combination of 2”x4”-4”x4” posts and boards built to a height of 5’6.”

The work did not involve any changes to the existing dwelling other than the removal of a small closet window on the southwest façade as well as new soffits on the northwestern cooler yard, which was built adjacent to the existing drying yard.

1956 Addition

Frey's 1956 addition to the residence was more extensive than the 1954 work. This addition principally consisted of a new art studio space for Mrs. Gilmore, which was constructed on the end of the southern wing and opening from the Gilmore's master bedroom suite.

The studio consisted of a main room, 16'x21', with an adjoining bathroom and various built-ins such as a wardrobe and counter space. This created a flexible space that could serve multiple functions as desired including as a bedroom suite.

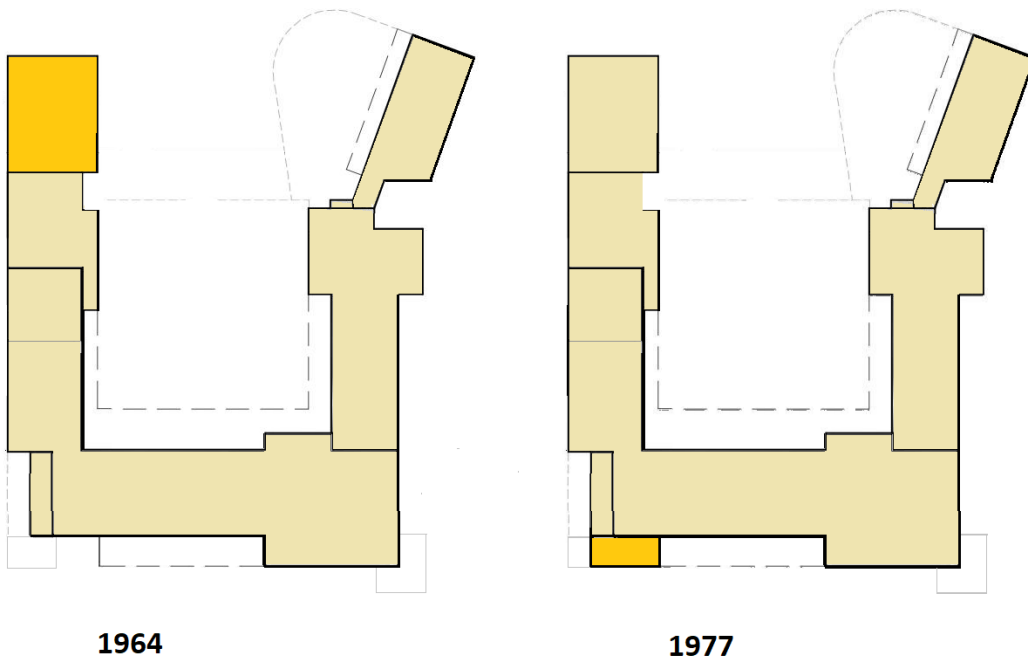
Frey gave the addition a steeply sloped shed roof intended to match the look of the existing residence and he also added a covered porch running the length of the addition on the east. While these visually and spiritually connected the addition to the main house, he gave the space a wholly distinct feel through how he positioned it, boldly angling it away from the main structure so it directly faced the eastern sunrise. Frey ensured the studio would get the maximum amount of light by making the entire eastern façade glass. Frey used a wall of glass with sliding panels to allow access to the porch. The architect completed the wall of glass effect by filling the space above the porch with a bank of clerestory windows.

The 1956 addition work also included a revision to the garage located at the end of the northern wing. On the southern façade of the garage, Frey added a distinct group of three full-length louvered panels intended to shade the existing windows. The 1956 plans also showed a reorientation of the garage entrance. Originally, vehicles entering the garage would do so at the eastern end, which necessitated a U-turn from the driveway. Frey created a new entrance on the northern side, which allowed vehicles to enter by merely turning to the right. The former opening on the east was redesigned to give a more residential feel with windows, a set of double glass doors, and a peaked roof with vertical boards designed to match other parts of the home. It is unclear if this portion of the work was done as, by 1964, the main entrance to the garage remained on the east end.

During this time, Frey's attention also focused on the property's hardscape and landscape features, working with two of Palm Springs' foremost landscape designers, Earl Neel of Neel's Nursery and Slim Moorten. Among the additions made were a new blacktop driveway running along the northern side of the house, a new brick pathway running from the driveway to connect to the existing brick entry walk, a brick and cement walkway to and from the garage and connecting with a new terrace built in front of the art studio. Desert planting at the new terrace were provided by Earl Neel, while a new garden was created by Slim Moorten to fill in the area on the western side of the art studio where it connected to the original house. Finally, Frey also added new lighting in certain places as well as providing new glass for the home's entrance sign.

1964 Addition

Frey's 1964 work saw a return to the garage, which coincided with Donald Gilmore's new passion for classic cars. Frey extended the length of the garage and returned the entrance/exit orientation back to the east end. On the northern part of the garage space, Frey added steel framed sliding glass doors. He also made some minor additions to the hardscaping on the property, most notably creating a new brick walkway leading from the street to the front porch, which was also given a new brick floor.



1965 Alterations

This work was restricted mostly to an interior remodel in the north wing, principally converting one of the 2 dressing rooms into a sitting room. One new window was added on the west wall.

1967 Guest House

While not an addition to the residence itself, it should be noted that the Gilmores engaged Albert Frey to build an entirely separate, full-sized residence to be used as a guest house for the property. This house is located on Rock 6 (Algodones Trail).

1977 Addition

This was restricted mostly to a kitchen addition on the western façade, which extended the space outwards in line with the edge of the front porch. One original window was relocated while a second, new window, of a style to match the home's other windows, was added. Additionally, the work involved extending the roof outwards to conform with the addition.

1978 Addition

A jacuzzi was added for the Gilmores' use by Albert Frey. It was located just beyond the studio patio. This was removed when the swimming pool was installed in 1992.

1980 Addition

This was largely restricted to an interior alteration of the former shop space into a chauffeur's apartment with bedroom, sitting room and bath.

1981 Alterations

This work was a minor addition of cabinets to the south wing hall in addition to some minor maintenance work.

1982 Alterations

Further minor interior alterations to the south wing apartment and a garage window. It also included an addition of a second brick walkway from driveway to porch.

1984 Alterations

Minor interior alterations in the north wing.

1989 Alterations

Restricted to repaving the driveway and replacing redwood headers.

1990 Addition

This was a relatively minor addition involving exterior fencing near the studio as well as work on the roof and glazing the previously outdoor walkway on the western façade of the northern wing. This was the first work done on the house by Frey since the death of Mrs. Gilmore, being done for Carol Gilmore Boudeman, and would prove to be his final alteration to the house over a 43-year period.

1992 Addition

In 1992, a private swimming pool and spa was added to the home for the first time in its long history. The work was the first known addition made by someone other than Albert Frey, being done by the team of Kurt & Audrey Dalskov, landscape contractors and designers. In addition to the pool, the Dalskovs redesigned much of the hardscape and landscape features within the central interior court where the pool was positioned. All of this involved removing the former jacuzzi as well as the studio's concrete patio.

Ownership History

Two attempts at locating the chain of title for the residence made by Orange Coast Title revealed only a few documents. However, based on other documentation, the ownership history is largely known to have been:

1929-1935

Louis McLaughlin Blankenhorn

1935-1979

Donald S. & Genevieve Gilmore

1979-1990

Genevieve Gilmore

1990

Carol Gilmore Boudeman

1991-2021

Tom & Martha Boudeman Vandermolen

2021-Present

Eric Ellenbogen, Thomas Engelman, John Engelman

Documentation that was located by the Title Co. shows the following:

1960

By Deed of Transfer dated February 25, 1960, Smoke Tree, Inc. grants to Donald S. Gilmore and Genevieve Gilmore all right, title and interest (with certain restrictions) to all of Lot 6 and the northern half of Lot 11, Smoke Tree Ranch.

1976

Grant Deed dated February 24, 1976 whereby Donald S. Gilmore and Genevieve Gilmore grant to First Kalamazoo Co., all of their right, title and interest in certain real property including the Smoke Tree Ranch property.

1996

Grant Deed dated May 20, 1996 whereby First Kalamazoo Co. grants to Martha B. Vander Molen, as trustee of the Martha B. Vander Molen Living Trust, all of its right, title and interest in the Smoke Tree Ranch property.

2021

Grant Deed dated March 26, 2021 whereby Martha B. Vander Molen, as trustee of the Martha B. Vander Molen Living Trust, grants all of her right, title and interest in the Smoke Tree Ranch property to John Engelman, a married man, an undivided 60%; to Thomas Engelman, a married man, an undivided 33 1/3%, and to Eric Ellenbogen, a married man, 6 2/3% interest.

Character Defining Features of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is an exceptional example of Ranch House architecture, a style which began to appear in Palm Springs during the 1930s and which would reach its peak of popularity in the 1950s-1960s. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence exhibits classic Ranch House elements including:

- An emphasis on horizontality
- Blending of indoor and outdoor spaces
- Informal, asymmetrical layout
- Board and batten exterior wall treatments
- Overhanging eaves
- Covered patios and arcades
- Steel casement windows

Contributing Elements

- Main residence

Non-Contributing Elements

- 1992 Swimming pool and spa
- Walkways/patios/driveway

Local Architectural Context

Because of its unique architectural pedigree, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence may be viewed under two separate contexts as defined by the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group. The first is within the context of the period between World Wars I and II, when Palm Springs was becoming established as a fashionable winter resort for wealthy and/or famous people. According to the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*, "In the 1930s important figures in finance and business continued to flock to the desert in the winter, helping to cement the village's reputation as one of the nation's top winter

resort destinations.” Louis Mac Blankenhorn and Donald S. Gilmore were among those figures. Architecturally, the Spanish and Mediterranean Revival styles were the village’s dominant architectural expression during this period. However, the Ranch-style began to gain in popularity.

The Ranch-style emerged from the 1930s designs of Southern California architects and designers such as Cliff May who merged modernist ideas with traditional elements of the working ranches of the American West and in particular, the rustic adobe houses of California’s Spanish and Mexican-era ranchos. In 1930s Palm Springs the Ranch house took on the simpler, more rustic style of traditional southwestern adobe, hacienda, and wood vernacular types that was believed to be better suited to the desert climate and casual lifestyle. These tended to be informal one-story houses finished in plaster, brick, or board and batten siding, with irregular or rambling plans, low-pitched tile or wood shake roofs, wide verandas, wood or steel windows, and minimal ornamentation.

And contextually the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence may also be considered as part of “Post World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)” owing to its long-time association with Albert Frey who did extensive additions to the home from 1947 to 1990, and the continuing evolution and refinement of the Ranch-style in postwar Palm Springs.

The Ranch-style house proved popular both before and after the war, combining as it did modernist ideas of open interior space with traditional imagery of working ranches and Spanish ranchos.

Site Description

Location. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is located on a prominent multi-acre lot in the Smoke Tree Ranch colony, one of the desert’s most historic and exclusive residential districts. The home was the very first private residence in the colony and its fortuitous positioning was intended to showcase the charm of its Ranch-style architecture as envisioned by the colony’s first master architect, Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., FAIA. The home’s charm was enhanced further through the work of master architect Albert Frey. The topography of the lot is level. The site is largely left to natural landscaping on its front portion with some added cacti, succulents, etc. With the exception of the interior court where the pool is located, which has a grass lawn, the rear portion of the acreage is left largely in its natural state.

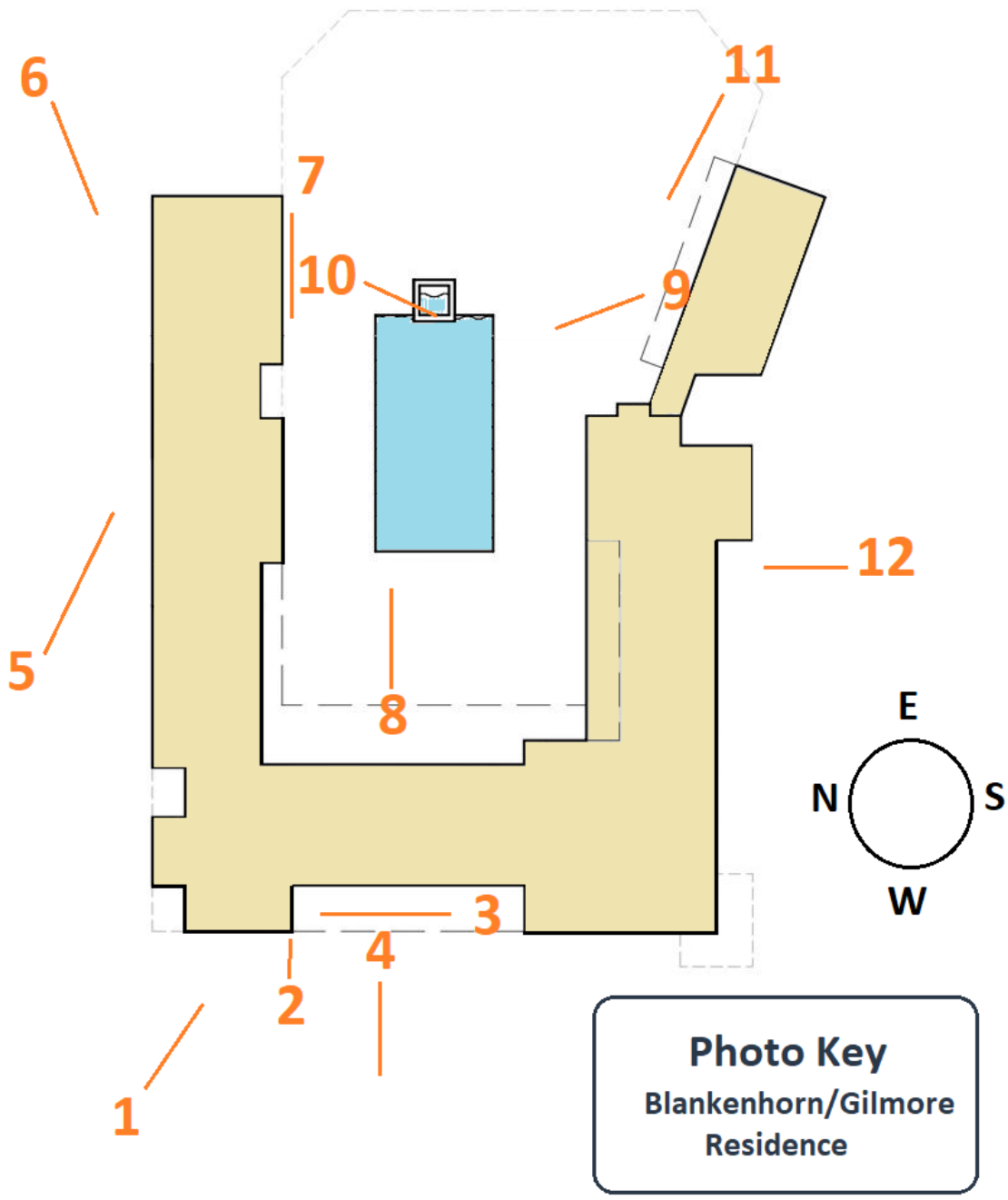




Photo 1. General view as seen from street looking east towards western façade.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 2. Closer view showing front porch, desert landscaping, brick walks. Note, 1977 kitchen extension on left.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 3. Looking north along porch. Note board-and-batten sheathing.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 4. Looking west from entry.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 5. View on southeast looking up north wing towards garage.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 6. Garage view looking westwards. Note, glass display doors.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 7. Looking westwards along north wing. Pool is on the left.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 8. Looking east from patio across pool.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 9. Looking across pool from studio towards north wing.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



Photo 10. Looking across pool to southern wing. Note glass doors where outdoor patio was enclosed by Albert Frey
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)



**Photo 11. View of 1956 studio addition looking west.
Note shed roof designed to match original 1930 design.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)**



**Photo 12. View of south wing facing north.
(Thomas Morbitzer Photo. April 2021)**

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into several distinct periods, as defined by the Historic Resources Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*. It is within the context of the period "Palm Springs between the Wars" that the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence will be evaluated. The following context statement is edited from Historic Resource Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings: Palm Springs Between the Wars (1919-1941)*: This context explores the transformation of Palm Springs from a modest spa town into a luxury winter resort in the years between the First and Second World Wars. By 1918 Nellie Coffman and her sons (George Roberson and Earl Coffman) understood the town's potential as an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do. They set about transforming their sanatorium into the luxurious Desert Inn, one of the most renowned hostelrys in the country.

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

In the 1930s important figures in finance and business continued to flock to the desert in the winter, helping to cement the village's reputation as one of the nation's top winter resort destinations.

One of their favorite neighborhoods was the Smoke Tree Ranch. Smoke Tree Ranch is a 375-acre resort and housing development that was one of the few subdivisions developed in Palm Springs during the Great Depression. Originally developed as a dude ranch resort, Smoke Tree Ranch was started in 1930 by L. Mac Blankenhorn and named after the characteristic trees that dot the landscape. Early advertisements for the guest ranch emphasized an exclusivity that continues to this day. "Designed for those wishing to escape from the turmoil of weekend resorts...introductions or satisfactory references are required." In 1936, Fred and Maziebelle Markham (operating as the Mardo Corporation) bought Smoke Tree Ranch. With the help of local educator and real estate investor Raymond Cree, Markham subdivided the ranch into parcels for single-family residences.

Under the Markhams, the guest ranch did not advertise or seek publicity. The Smoke Tree way of life (for guest ranch patrons as well as homeowners who are historically known as "Colonists") was simple without the need to impress, as "most who have come here have been every place, seen everything and done most things." Smoke Tree Ranch purposefully maintained a rustic atmosphere. Homes were required to be one

story and sit apart on large lots with no large lawns or non-native shade trees. They were to be built in a traditional Ranch style with a pitched shingle roof. Streets were intentionally left as dirt roads groomed by a sprinkler wagon and scraper. There were no street signs, and instead roads were indicated with rock markers.

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

EVALUATION:

Criterion 1: Significant Events. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community: The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is not affiliated with significant events and does not qualify under Criterion 1.

Criterion 2: Significant Persons. Criterion 2 recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to the national, state or local history: The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was built by Louis Mac Blankenhorn (1884-1943), a prominent Pasadena businessman who was the leading figure in the creation of one of Palm Springs’ most notable residential tracts, Smoke Tree Ranch. Blankenhorn was the driving force behind the venture, with day-to-day involvement with its creation and management from the time it was first planned in 1929 until selling his interests in 1935. It was Blankenhorn who personally designed the street grid for the colony and it was he who brought in Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. as the colony architect. Further, Blankenhorn established the colony’s unique guest ranch/residential tract business model, which proved to make the colony a great success. Blankenhorn’s influence is easily recognized today as all of the features he planned in the beginning remain in place at Smoke Tree Ranch. In 1935, Blankenhorn, along with partner Louis Macomber, established a second residential development, Ranch Mirage. As with Smoke Tree, Blankenhorn personally supervised the area’s early development, laying out the street grid, naming the streets, and building the first homes. It was his wife Ruth who named the development and the street names they conjured are still evident today. For these noteworthy achievements, Louis Blankenhorn stands as an influential figure in the history of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley.

Additionally, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence holds significance for its longtime association with Donald S. Gilmore (1895-1979) and the Upjohn/Gilmore family, which lasted from 1935 until 1991. Gilmore was a businessman and philanthropist who led the Upjohn Company of Kalamazoo, Michigan from the 1930s until his retirement in 1961. Under his leadership, Upjohn became a household name as the leading pharmaceutical company in the nation. Gilmore invested heavily in research and his team produced numerous critically important and influential innovations most notably a method for large scale production of cortisone, penicillin, and, during World War II, the Sulfa Sterile

Packet, credited as saving literally millions of lives. Upjohn's best-known drugs include Halcion, Xanax, Motrin and Rogaine. One of the country's most prominent business leaders of his day, Donald S. Gilmore was an influential and well-known figure on a national and international level. The residence is affiliated with significant persons and qualifies under Criterion 2.

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

Criterion 3: The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history: Estimated to have been completed in 1930, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence exhibits many stylistic markers which identify it as being of the Ranch-style. This style was to gain popularity throughout the 1930s before becoming even more popular in the Post War building boom, not just in Palm Springs, but elsewhere in California and nationwide as well. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence and the other original structures built at Smoke Tree Ranch designed by Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., may have been the very first, or at least among the earliest, examples of the Ranch-style to be produced in Palm Springs. As such, the residence and the associated Smoke Tree Ranch structures served as the vanguard of the future popularity of Ranch architecture that was to follow soon after. Beginning in 1947 and continuing over the next several decades, the residence was added on to by master architect Albert Frey who sensitively produced additions that retained the original look and feel of the house as designed by Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. As such, it may be argued that the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence bridges two distinct periods as defined in the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group: "Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)" and "Post World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)." The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence may be viewed as an important component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of notable Ranch architecture, i.e., a historical movement that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state, or local history. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4: The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction: The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction reflective of the period in which it was built. Although board-and batten construction had been used in earlier decades including on some of Palm Springs' pioneer buildings, it had largely been superseded by other methods. The use of board-and-batten construction on the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence represented a renewed interest in this form, which was to become commonplace on homes of similar style over the ensuing years. The board-and-batten construction used on the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence exhibits the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction popularly employed during the time of the home's period of significance. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 4.

Criterion 5: (That (a): represents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or (b): that possesses high artistic

value):

5a: Work of a Master: In the case of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence, the dual work of Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., FAIA, and Albert Frey, FAIA, two of Southern California's most important and influential architects of their day, can certainly be described as the work of masters in view of their combined histories of architectural excellence. (See appendices V and VI.)

5b: Properties possessing high artistic values: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was intended to showcase the type of Ranch-style architecture that would be mandated for all future construction. The desire was to create a feeling of relaxed informality through simple, rustic design, and providing a sense of "roughing it," in the "Wild West" to those accustomed to far grander residences.

The home's original architect, Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., wanted to show the ways such simple styling could also be aesthetically pleasing. The home's artistry derives from how he was able to produce a design that was both authentic to its pioneer roots and yet subtly elegant. The emphasis on horizontality was furthered by the board-and-batten sheathing and low-pitched shake roof. A near symmetry was created by the mirrored shed roofs bracketing each end of the main (west) façade, however, Van Pelt was careful to avoid an exact match as this would have gone against the rusticity of the Ranch-style. Aside from the shed roofs, enhanced the charm of the design with a picturesque whitewashed fireplace and the deeply inset covered porch, which invited one inward and away from the hot desert sun.

Van Pelt's mastery of the ranch-style was further evidenced in his understanding that ranch houses were intended to grow as needs and means allowed and he arranged the layout of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence to anticipate later expansion. This is one of the main reasons why the home, in spite of later expanding to double its original size, does not feel out of proportion. And it was here that the second master architect, Albert Frey, achieved the difficult balancing act of increasing the mass without altering the home's original feel of casual openness. Frey's artistry is most evident in how he chose to address the addition of an artist's studio for Mrs. Gilmore in 1956. An extension of the southern wing, Frey matched features of Van Pelt's original design in the use of a covered porch, board-and-batten sheathing, and shed shake roof. Yet, Frey showed his mastery with how he sited the new addition. Rather than following straight with the existing wing, Frey boldly angled it, achieving both the practical effect of maximizing the morning light in the studio as well as aesthetically, breaking up the U of the mass, giving visual interest and charm and avoiding a mirrored look of matching masses between the southern and northern wings.

The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was intended not only as a comfortable and attractive home for its occupants, it was intended to act as an informal prototype for what an idea ranch-style home could and should look like. The home certainly articulates the best of what made Ranch House architecture so popular to a level of

excellence that, in total, could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics representing the Ranch-style, as the work of two master architects and its high artistic values, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.

Criterion 6: (That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction). This Criterion was created to address the resources contained within a potential historic district and as such it does not apply to this nomination. Hence, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 6.

Criterion 7: (That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory.) The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is not likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory. Hence, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 7.

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 C.1. a., paragraphs ii, iii, iv, and v of the local ordinance's seven criteria.

INTEGRITY ANALYSIS

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

LOCATION

Location is the place where an historic property was constructed or the place where an historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often important to understanding why the property was created or why something happened. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historic events and persons. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved. ***The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect.***

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence reflects a unique design history that spanned 60 years between the home's initial construction in 1930 and the last credited addition/alteration by Albert Frey. With one exception, the 1964 glassed-walled garage at the end of the northern wing, the home reflects the same rustic Ranch-style architecture, design elements such as board-and-batten sheathing, shake-type roofing, casement windows, etc., first introduced by master architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. While the home has been greatly enlarged, it was done so in a manner that matched the original design in materials as well as scale and proportion. Frey had been both mentored by and employed by Van Pelt and he possessed a unique understanding of Van Pelt's intentions in the home's design and he honored those intentions throughout his multiple later additions/alterations. As such, the home's essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have remained largely intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing have survived largely intact. The only modern addition, the 1964 garage, was added by Frey during the home's second period of significance to showcase Donald Gilmore's growing rare car collection. Walled entirely in floor-to-ceiling glass, both in fixed and sliding forms, the addition was integrated into the overall design through its roofline, which copies the same low-pitched shake style as the rest of the house.***

SETTING

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was built at a prominent spot in the newly-developing Smoke Tree Ranch colony. Like all future Smoke Tree Ranch homes, it was set back away from the road to foster a more rural rather than suburban atmosphere and to bring it more in harmony with its natural surroundings and expansive vistas. Located a short distance from the main ranch facilities, the home was intended to be visible and serve as a***

showcase for the Ranch-style of architecture mandated as the sole type allowed within the colony. The surrounding landscape and hardscape features were mandated to be minimal and of native plantings only, an edict that remains the same today (Grass is allowed in the rear only). While there have been additions/expansions on rear wings, the setting of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence continues to reflect the architects' original design relationship of site and structure.

MATERIALS

Materials are 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 choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. ***The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence's exterior surface materials, which consist primarily of redwood clapboard board-and-batten sheathing, shake roof, wooden and steel casement windows, picture windows, sliding glass doors, wooden shutters, brick fireplace chimney, have remained essentially intact and continue to express the physical elements as designed during the building's period of significance; the pattern and configuration that today forms the residence survives intact.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***The fine workmanship of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is evidenced by how well various materials have been integrated into the whole structure even though the house was added onto multiple times over several decades. This is most notable in how skillfully the wooden sheathing has been applied across the multiple facades in both horizontal and vertical manners. The same may be said of the rooflines, eaves and shakes, all presenting a unified whole rather than a patchwork of placement and quality. The Blankenhorn/Gilmore residence continues to express a high degree of contemporary period workmanship.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***When it was completed, circa 1930, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence was intended to provide a rustically casual lifestyle allowing its occupants to have a sense of life in the pioneering western days and connect meaningfully with the natural environment which surrounded it. More than 90 years later, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence continues to reflect that exact same aesthetic, with later additions following the same style and philosophy of the original. Accordingly, the residence retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence is not only an important example of a custom-designed traditional Ranch-style private residence in Palm Springs, its design helped establish the very look of the colony architecturally and aesthetically. Each of the nearly 100 homes to have been built in Smoke Tree Ranch over the ensuing years have had this home as their base inspiration/model, with Albert Frey involved in various ways with no less than 30 of those homes. As such, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence could be characterized as the quintessential Smoke Tree Ranch residence and, accordingly, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: The Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence appears to be in excellent condition partially due to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. This integrity analysis confirms that the building and site of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. ***As noted, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence retains a remarkable amount of original details from both the Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. design from 1930 and later work by Albert Frey. In summary, the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence still possesses a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.***

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Via e-mail 4/13/2022

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Riverside County Assessor's Office

Appendix I

Owners' Notarized Letters of Support

ERIC ELLENBOGEN
611 North Phillips Road
Palm Springs, CA 92262
(917) 400-6262
eric.ellenbogen@mac.com

April 14, 2022

City of Palm Springs
Historic Site Preservation Board
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

RE: Class 1 Historic Site Nomination—Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence, Smoke Tree Ranch

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As an owner of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence located at Smoke Tree Ranch, I enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of my residence by the City of Palm Springs.

I am also the owner of the James Logan Abernathy Residence, which received a Class 1 designation now almost a decade ago. Accordingly, I am very familiar with the review and designation process and the essential importance of preserving and protecting the heritage of such properties.

I have again enlisted the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to assist me in the preparation of the required documentation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any further questions that PSPF is unable to answer, please contact me at the email address above.

Respectfully,



Eric Ellenbogen



MARIA M FRANCO BARRERO
NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF NEW YORK
No. 01FR6365253
Qualified in Queens County
My Commission Expires 10-02-2025

John Engelman
Tom Engelman
Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence
Smoke Tree Ranch
1850 Smoke Tree Lane
Palm Springs, CA 92264

July 12, 2022

City of Palm Springs
Historic Site Preservation Board
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Re: Class 1 Historic Site Nomination

Dear Honorable Board:

As co-owners with Eric Ellenbogen of the Blankenhorn/Gilmore Residence located at Smoke Tree Ranch, we enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of our property by the city of Palm Springs. In view of the historical significance of the property, the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation has generously offered to assist us in this submission.

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

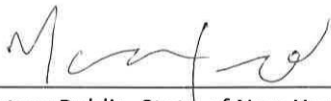

Tom Engelman


John Engelman

ACKNOWLEDGMENT CERTIFICATE

State of New York)
)ss.:
County of QUEENS)

On the 12 day of JULY in the year 2022 before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said State, personally appeared, THOMAS ENGELMAN, personally known to me or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual(s) whose name(s) is (are) subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument, the individual(s), or the person upon behalf of which the individual(s) acted, executed the instrument.



Notary Public, State of New York

MARIA M FRANCO BARRERO
NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF NEW YORK
No. 01FR6365253
Qualified in Queens County
My Commission Expires 10-02-2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENT CERTIFICATE

State of New York)
)ss.:
County of QUEENS)

On the 12 day of JULY in the year 2022 before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said State, personally appeared, _____
JOHN ENGELMAN,
personally known to me or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual(s) whose name(s) is (are) subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument, the individual(s), or the person upon behalf of which the individual(s) acted, executed the instrument.



Notary Public, State of New York

MARIA M FRANCO BARRERO
NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF NEW YORK
No. 01FR6365253
Qualified in Queens County
My Commission Expires 10-02-2025

Appendix II

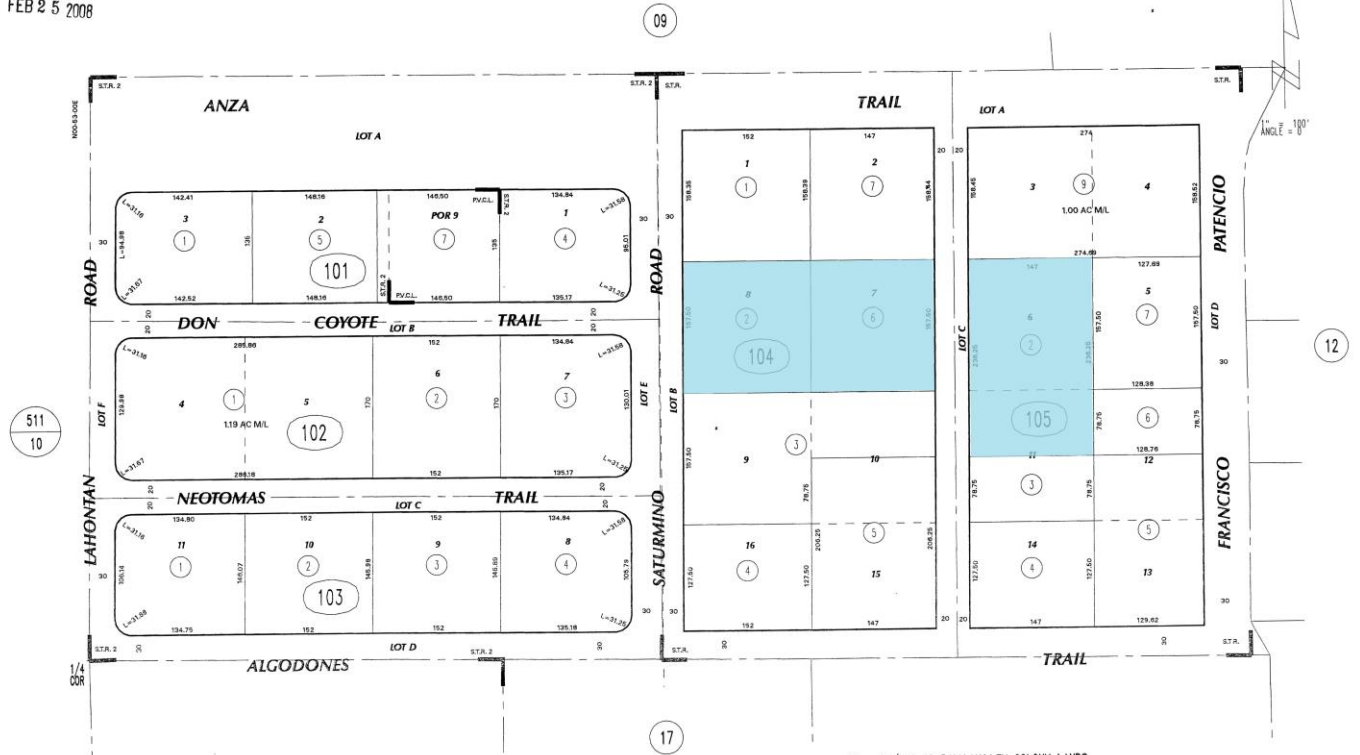
Assessor's Map

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY. NO LIABILITY IS ASSUMED FOR THE ACCURACY OF THE DATA SHOWN. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL MAY NOT COMPLY WITH LOCAL LOT-SPLIT OR BUILDING SITE ORDINANCES.
 FEB 25 2008

POR. NW 25 T.4S., R.4E
 CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

T.R.A. 011-022

310-10
 29-69



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17

ASSESSOR'S MAP BK510 PG.10
 Riverside County, Calif.

MB 14/652 SD PALM VALLEY COLONY LANDS
 MB 18/29-98 SMOKE TREE RANCH
 MB 18/97-98 SMOKE TREE RANCH NO. 2

Feb 2008

DATE	OLD NUMBER	NEW NUMBER
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07/08	101-2	1-4
07/08	3,4	101-7

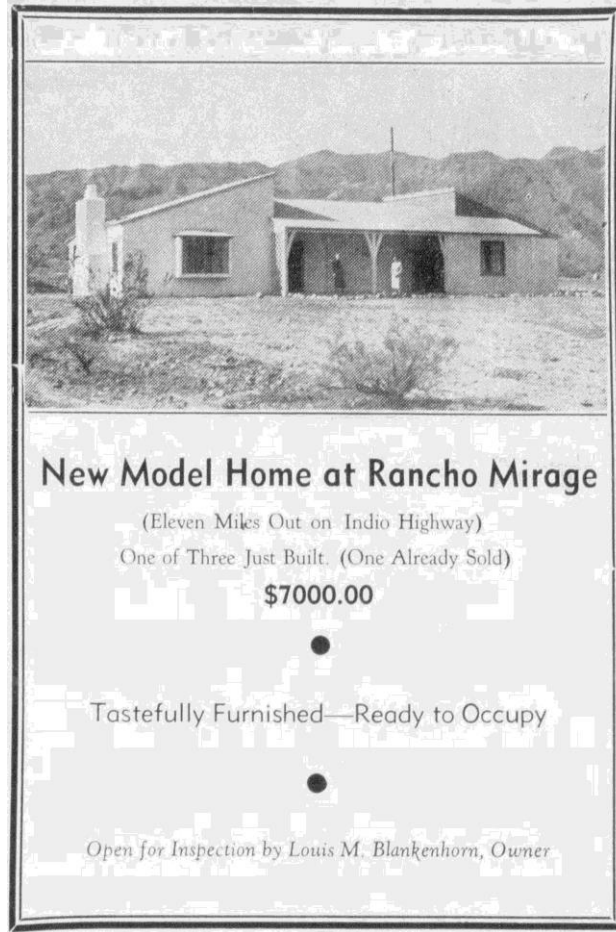
Appendix III

Google Earth Image



Appendix IV

Louis MacLaughlin Blankenhorn, Jr. Biography



Louis MacLaughlin Blankenhorn, Jr. (1884-1943) holds the unique distinction of being a driving force behind two important Coachella Valley communities – Smoke Tree Ranch and Rancho Mirage – a legacy of significant achievement. Yet, ironically, his name is little known today in the desert he loved and helped to develop.

Known throughout his life as “L. Mac” or just “Mac” to his friends, family and associates, Mac was a pioneer from the moment of his birth in Pasadena, California on November 3, 1884. While today, Pasadena is one of Southern California’s best known and most important cities, it had not yet even formed into an official municipality at the time of Blankenhorn’s arrival, making him one of Pasadena’s true pioneers. According to his widow, Ruth, Mac had been the very first child baptized at Pasadena’s All Saints Episcopal Church.

Mac's parents, Louis Blankenhorn, Sr. (1848-1922) and Lillian Stevens Blankenhorn (1858-1936) had come to the Southland in 1882 from their former home in Poughkeepsie, New York. An ambitious man of drive and talent, the elder Blankenhorn sensed great opportunities in the west and his belief proved prescient.

Blankenhorn's arrival came just ahead of the great "Boom of the Eighties," a period when real estate prices throughout the Southland rose at a frenzied pace, making millionaires virtually overnight. Yet, the same millions vanished just as quickly for those either not savvy or lucky enough to know when to buy and when to sell. Louis Blankenhorn was one who emerged from the boom/bust a wealthy man, forming the basis of the family fortune that would continue to grow over the next decades.

By 1886, when Pasadena officially incorporated as a city, the Blankenhorns were already well established among its leading citizens, both socially and in business. The family's longtime residence, a Queen Anne Victorian treasure at 346 Markham Place, stands today as a Pasadena Historic landmark. It also holds a place in the hearts of movie buffs as the location for the 1968 Lucille Ball, Henry Fonda film *Yours, Mine & Ours*.

While growing up in the house, Mac Blankenhorn attended Pasadena public schools before moving on the Throop Institute, today's CalTech. Mac followed his father into business and investments, involved in real estate and bonds from as early as 1910. By 1913, he had joined the realty firm of his older brother David, at Blankenhorn, Hunter & Dulin. Mac would remain with the firm for at least a decade before branching out on his own in the mid-1920s.

When the U.S. entered the First World War, Mac joined the U.S. Navy as an apprentice seaman. By war's end, he had distinguished himself enough to have been promoted up to lieutenant junior grade. Although he returned to civilian service, Mac remained attached to the Navy, joining the reserves and later becoming a member of the U.S. Coast Guard.

After returning to civilian life, Mac continued to build a reputation as a top broker and developer. He kept active in business, civic and social affairs, serving on the board of directors of the Pasadena Realty Board, the Oak Knoll branch of the Los Angeles First National Trust & Savings Bank, as well as president of the Oak Knoll-San Marino Improvement Association. Mac and his family had relocated to the exclusive Oak Knoll section in 1915, residing in a Myron Hunt-designed mansion at 1234 Hillcrest Road. Mac was very active socially, an avid tennis player and a member of the Valley Hunt Club. He also joined other notable young men as a member of the Bachelor's Club, but was forced to resign in 1921 after he violated the club's number one rule – he got married. His bride, the former Kathryn Elizabeth Simmons, was the daughter of a prominent Chicago family and a popular winter resident. Ultimately, the couple would have two daughters.

The latter part of the 1920s proved to be an exceedingly busy and productive time for Mac. While he focused principally on Pasadena, he kept an eye out for opportunities wherever they might turn up. As it turned out, he found one in Palm Springs. Mac had been coming out to the desert for years and, according to the recollections of his widow Ruth, loved hiking in the canyons and enjoying the healthy desert air, making the Desert Inn his base of operations.

It was on one of those sojourns that Mac first spotted the area known as the Smoke Tree Forest, a 450-acre parcel about 2 miles from Palm Springs. Mac immediately saw the potential for an unusual private residential development where the natural feeling was retained, a place where a select group of residents and guests could relax and get a true sense of rustic, Old West-style living.

Finding the property could be purchased, Mac formed the Smoke Tree Forest Company, Ltd., which was made up of a group of experienced investors from Pasadena. Before handing over the \$500,000 purchase price, however, the savvy Mac had ensured there would be adequate water, having bankrolled a well on the property, which was assessed to produce a flow capable of supporting a population of 5,000.

Originally known as Smoke Tree Tavern, the tract was to be laid out in one to five-acre plots as homesites to a “selected group of professional and business men.” Plans were immediately put underway by noted Pasadena architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. for the construction of a tract office/community building, stables, a set of small guest cottages and a private residence, the latter serving as an unofficial model for homes to follow. It was to be the home of L. Mac Blankenhorn and his family.

But while he was in the midst of preparing the new development, Mac was visited by tragedy. His beloved wife Kathryn died after a short illness in September 1930, leaving him a widower with two young daughters. Mac had envisioned the new home he was building to be a retreat for himself and his wife, but now he would be moving in alone.

Smoke Tree Ranch officially opened on January 2, 1931. Over the next years, Mac helped oversee the nascent district’s development from dream into reality, even laying out the ranch’s street grid himself. Over the next few years, he traveled regularly back and forth between Pasadena and Palm Springs, overseeing operations and planning for future expansions. In 1935, he decided to sell his interests in the ranch to seek new opportunities elsewhere. By the time of his departure, the ranch had gone from raw desert into a going concern with community structures completed as well as more than a half-dozen homes completed or underway.

With the money he made from the sale of his Smoke Tree Ranch interests, Mac invested in a new development. He and a partner, Laurence Macomber, purchased a tract of raw desert land approximately 11.5 miles south of Palm Springs with plans to create a new community. As he had in his previous venture, Mac laid out the streets and then began building a tract office and a few model homes. The question over what to name the new development was answered by his new wife, the former Ruth Anderson Wheeler, whom he had married on June 1, 1935. She later recalled that she, Mac and Macomber were

sitting on the tract house steps trying to think of a name when she came up with “Rancho Mirage.”

The Blankenhorns built a house for themselves on Sahara Road and later a second on Anza during the development’s first years. A few others followed, including *Wizard of Oz* star Frank Morgan, but the Depression, the remoteness of the setting and then the coming of World War II caused Rancho Mirage to grow very slowly.

When war came, Mac and Ruth left the desert for the time being, dividing their time between Pasadena and Ruth’s hometown of Tacoma, WA. Mac, who had remained active with the Navy Reserve, became a member of the U.S. Coast Guard as well as helping to organize the Civil Defense efforts in the region. He also began teaching classes in astronomy at CalTech for naval recruits.

Mac Blankenhorn maintained a very busy schedule of work and travel up to the time he began being sidelined by blinding headaches. The diagnosis was dire, a brain tumor. An operation was attempted but it was not successful and Mac died on April 6, 1943 at the age of 59.

Mac Blankenhorn had lived long enough to see Smoke Tree Ranch begin to grow into the famous and fashionable development it was to become, but not Rancho Mirage, which did not start booming until after the Second World War. Had he lived, he would no doubt have been stunned at its success as one of the great golf capitals of the world and home to U.S. presidents. Today (2022), a resort city of nearly 20,000, Rancho Mirage stands as a testament to the foresight of its founder who looked at raw desert and saw a city.

(S. Vaught 6/2022)

Appendix V

Donald S. Gilmore Biography



Donald S. Gilmore and Genevieve Upjohn Gilmore
(Via Mlive.com)

Had it not been for the unexpected death of his brother-in-law Harold Upjohn in 1928, Donald S. Gilmore may have had a long and successful career in the department store business. But fate intervened and Gilmore's father-in-law (and step-father) the venerable Dr. W.E. Upjohn (1853-1932) urged Gilmore to come over and work instead for his business – the Upjohn Company of Kalamazoo, MI. At the time, Upjohn was a moderately successful enterprise producing pills and other pharmaceuticals to be distributed to various locations. It had been W.E. and his siblings who had founded the enterprise back in 1886 as the Upjohn Pill & Granule Co.

A young country doctor in Hasting, Michigan, Upjohn was deeply dissatisfied at how medicines were made and distributed and sought to make changes to standardize doses and ease ingestion through better pills. After numerous attempts, Upjohn and his siblings, all doctors too, found a way to create a Friable pill, one that dissolves easily and could be broken up by a thumb. The invention was a huge success and the company began to grow. They continued to score with welcome innovations, most notably the first pleasant-tasting laxative in 1906. By 1914, the company had opened its

own research and development lab where the first heart therapy tablets were created, later they began producing early antibiotics.

Throughout all this, the company continued a slow, steady growth under Dr. Upjohn and his only son Harold. Upjohn was greatly proud that it was a family-built and family-run business, making Harold's death doubly devastating. Having been impressed by his son-in-law's business acumen, Dr. Upjohn offered him a place with the company. In 1929, Gilmore switched his trajectory from one family business to another. The Gilmore Bros. Department Store may long be forgotten, but the Upjohn Company, even though it too has merged away, is known as a giant. Much of the credit for this success may be given to Gilmore, who led the company from a modest affair into an international behemoth.

Donald Sherwood Gilmore was born in 1895 in Kalamazoo, MI. His family owned and ran a successful department store chain known as Gilmore Bros. founded by his father and an uncle in 1881. It was expected that once he came of age, he too would become a part of the family business. To prepare him for his future in business, he was sent to the prestigious Lawrenceville School in New Jersey before moving on to Yale University.



A young Donald S. Gilmore at the dawn of his brilliant career.
(Via Mlive.com)

In 1916, Gilmore got married and the choice of a bride no doubt raised a few eyebrows. It was his stepsister Genevieve Upjohn (1894-1990) who had won his heart. She had become his stepsister after his widowed mother, Carrie Gilmore had married the widower, Dr. W.E. Upjohn in 1913. The union proved an enduring one with the couple later having three children together – Carol Gilmore Boudeman (1917-1991); Jane Gilmore Maloney (1919-1996); and Martha Gilmore Parfet (1925-2017), who would become the family historian.

With marriage, Gilmore may have felt he needed to pursue a career over education and he left Yale, joining Gilmore Bros. full time. After a short apprenticeship, he was named to the firm's board of directors, and then to vice president, where he helped to make Gilmore Bros. one of the largest department store chains in southwestern Michigan. His dynamic work ethic and innovations not only impressed the Gilmore management, it did not go unnoticed by his father-in-law/step-father who urged him to join Upjohn.

Gilmore had certain hesitations in making the move, not just that he was leaving an established business where he was on track to become president, but also because he had absolutely no knowledge of either medicine or pharmaceuticals. Finally, however, after some serious discussions, he agreed to make the switch.

Gilmore started on the Upjohn board of directors in 1929. The elderly Dr. Upjohn, who was in increasingly weak health, saw his son-in-law/step-son as rightful heir to the family business. Gilmore moved quickly in his new duties. He had to. Many businesses were going under as the devastation of the Great Depression took hold. While other companies cut back, Gilmore expanded, enlarging Upjohn branches from 3 to 11. He also devoted a great deal of resources into research and development, increasing the department from a small number to more than 1,000.

Gilmore's innovations paid off, and the company not only survived the Depression, it exploded in size and influence, becoming a pharmaceutical giant. The company had a great influence on medicine during World War II, ramping up production of penicillin and the creation of the sulfa sterile wound-dressing packet, which has been credited as saving literally millions of lives during the war.

By war's end, Gilmore had been named president and general manager, and over the next two decades continued building success after success. A tangible example of how much Upjohn grew under Gilmore's leadership is in its sales totals. In 1936, when he was named vice president, sales were \$11.7 million. In 1961, the year of Gilmore's retirement as chairman of the board, they were \$166 million.

As busy as he was, Gilmore somehow found time for relaxation and travel. For years, he did silversmithing, and even made sure that Albert Frey designed a proper work space for his hobby. Palm Springs and Smoke Tree Ranch proved to be a great source of relaxation not only for Gilmore but his entire family. The Gilmores made many close friendships through their stays at Smoke Tree Ranch. One of the closest was with Hollywood studio chief Walt Disney.

Their relationship extended to business when Disney asked Gilmore to invest in his new theme park, which was to be called Disneyland. As a result, the Upjohn Company sponsored the creation of a turn of the century pharmacy on the park's Main Street. To honor his friend's generosity, Disney had the window painted above the pharmacy with the names "D.S. Gilmore M.D." and "E.G. Upjohn M.D." Although the pharmacy has long since disappeared, the names on the window are still visible just as they have been since 1954.

In 1963, Genevieve bought her husband a classic car – a 1920 Pierce-Arrow. On the surface, it may have seemed an odd gift as her husband had not previously shown any special interest in antique cars. But Genevieve was onto something. At first, sticking the car under an old tarp at the rear of his Smoke Tree Ranch home, Gilmore slowly began tinkering with it. The car needed a great deal of work. By the time he had finished restoring it, he was hooked and began buying other antique cars. A hobby became an obsession, and by 1966, he had acquired an impressive collection of 45 vintage vehicles.



Donald & Genevieve proudly tooling around in his 1910 Stanley Steamer. Gilmore loved driving his classic cars not only in Michigan but at Smoke Tree Ranch as well.
(Via Hemmings.com)

That year, he and Genevieve began the non-profit Gilmore Car Museum after purchasing 90 acres in Hickory Corners, MI. Gilmore had three antique barns moved and reassembled onto the property to serve as showrooms. He also added 2 miles of paved roads running around the property. Today (2022), the collection has grown to more than 300 and is considered one of the finest antique car museums in the country. Perhaps a love of automobiles ran through Genevieve and Gilmore's blood. Father (his step-father and father-in-law) had bought the very first automobile in Kalamazoo, MI, a Locomobile in 1899. This exact car is now on display at the Gilmore Car Museum.

The Gilmore Car Museum is only one of many examples of the Gilmores' philanthropy which extended to numerous charities through the family foundations. One noteworthy effort was their donation of the new building for the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, built in 1961 and designed by the famed Chicago firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. That same year, the firm that designed Upjohn's new corporate headquarters (demolished in 2007), which had been hailed as a Midcentury modern masterpiece.

Although he officially retired as chairman of the board in 1961, Donald S. Gilmore remained on as vice chairman. In 1969, he left that post, but remained on the board of directors. Gilmore continued with the Upjohn board for 50 years, resigning only months before his death at age 84 on December 21, 1979. His beloved wife Genevieve would outlive her husband by another decade, passing away in 1990 at age 95.



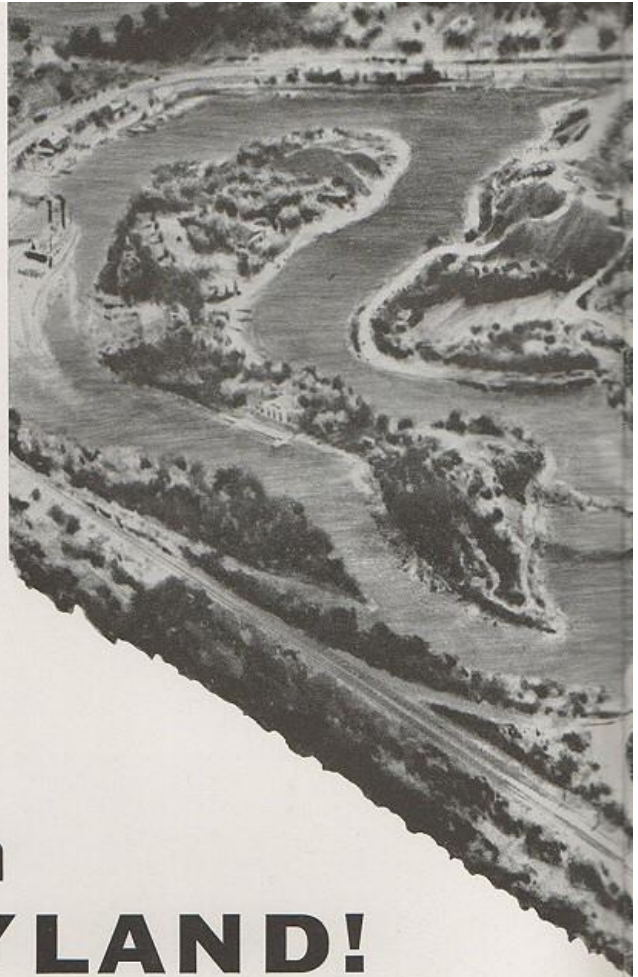
**Upjohn's Midcentury masterpiece, Building 88, Kalamazoo, MI. Demolished in 2007. Photo by Ezra Stoller © Esto.
(Via som.com)**

But, it's fantastic . . . Upjohn in Disneyland? Why should a pharmaceutical house want to create a turn-of-the-century-type drug store in Walt Disney's fabulous fairyland? The answer: it *is* fantastic . . . fantastically good advertising! Upjohn is venturing into an advertising medium never before tried by the Company. Our part of this spectacular show will be a Victorian design apothecary shop on Disneyland's nineteenth century Main Street. Signs on the building will introduce all incoming visitors to the Upjohn Pharmacy.

Disneyland, an honest-to-goodness fairyland built on World's Fair scale, will draw at least five million visitors each year, eighty per cent of them adults . . . And, *Upjohn is going along for the promotional ride!*

This latest Disney brain-child has been in the offing for some time. Sixteen years ago Disney began mentally planning this huge project which will become a reality in July when its first visitors enter through the Victorian railroad station.

This is Disney's masterpiece. His life is a success story and Disneyland may well be the biggest chapter in it. With the single exception of "Fantasia," all his major projects have been profit-



ADventure in DISNEYLAND!

able. A man of amazing foresight and experience, Disney studied numerous variables before initiating the Disneyland venture. He had the Stanford Research Institute conduct a complete study on the economic risks of this gigantic project. From these studies of transportation, rainfall, tourist data, and population centers, the ideal location—a 160-acre plot about twenty miles from Los Angeles—was selected. Disney believes—and his record indicates he's usually right—that this venture will be a huge success.

The fabulous Mr. Disney, Director of Advertising Jack Gauntlett, and Chairman and Managing Director Donald Gilmore are pleased with original sketch of the Upjohn Pharmacy—and probable success of Disneyland. Cover picture is artist's painting of the shop.



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COVER PICTURE is artist's conception of Upjohn Pharmacy in Disneyland. Original sketch is shown in picture to the right.

EDITORIAL STAFF

MARY ELEANOR STODDARD, Editor • BARBARA S. HAMLAW • ALICE SCHARFF

(Via upjohn.net)

Appendix VI

Garrett Van Pelt, Jr.



1.3 Garrett Van Pelt on the far left, c. 1930

A rare image of Garrett Van Pelt as seen in the book *Sylvanus Marston: Pasadena's Quintessential Architect* by Kathleen Tuttle.

Garrett Van Pelt, Jr., FAIA, was a major figure in Southern California architecture for more than a half century. Principally based in Pasadena and later Santa Barbara, Van Pelt was responsible for the designs of a wide variety of notable structures from residences to schools, churches, clubs and public buildings. During the most productive periods of his career he was associated in major partnerships, the first, with Sylvanus Marston (1916-1923); Marston, Van Pelt & (Edgar W.) Maybury (1923-1926), and finally with George Lind (1935-1941). Together and individually, Van Pelt has left behind an impressive legacy of design with his talent recognized by his own fellow architects. As one such colleague, Henry L. Eggers, was to state:

The work of Mr. Van Pelt has been, for a great many years, outstanding in Southern California...His work was largely in residential design and invariably exhibited those qualities which do not grow old. His houses are still some of the best in Southern California.

Although his work in Palm Springs may not be as well-known as elsewhere in Southern California, Van Pelt has left a solid legacy, both in structures, mostly at Smoke Tree Ranch, but also in people. It was Van Pelt who engaged two talented young architectural designers, John Porter Clark and Albert Frey, to serve as the Palm Springs representatives of Van Pelt & Lind. It was during this time (1935-1937), the pair began to build a reputation for architectural excellence that ultimately elevated them to the top tier of the desert's most talented and influential architects. As Frey was later to write:

I had the privilege to work for [Van Pelt] from 1935-1937 and came to admire his design ability and integrity, and his serious study of architectural forms. He has always recognized the importance of relating buildings to their surroundings, and thus his works have attained a timeless quality.

It appears that Van Pelt allowed his two young associates, neither of whom were licensed at the time, to use the prominent Van Pelt & Lind name while producing designs from their own ideas. And it was during this fruitful period that Frey was able to complete 8 projects including the much-admired Brandenstein Study, Guthrie House, San Jacinto Hotel (all 1935); Halberg House, La Siesta Court, and Kellogg Studio (1936), among others. The time Clark and Frey spent working for Van Pelt was a critical moment in both careers allowing them to explore architectural solutions to the challenges of desert living.

It was also Van Pelt who provided entrée into Smoke Tree Ranch. Clark and Frey began designing homes there as early as 1936 under the Van Pelt & Lind name, with Frey later becoming the unofficial "in house" architect for Smoke Tree Ranch, much as Van Pelt had been in the colony's first few years.

Garrett Beekman Van Pelt, Jr. was born on August 8, 1879 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin into a prominent family whose lineage included the famous Van Pelt and Beekman families of New York. Little is known of Van Pelt's childhood, but it appears his father, who ran a local dry goods store, "disappeared early" leaving young Van Pelt in the care of his mother, Sarah. Known affectionately as "Vinnie," she and her son formed a tight bond, particularly after the death of a baby daughter left him as her sole surviving child. They would remain close, even living together for much of the remainder of Vinnie's life.

After graduation from high school in Milwaukee, Van Pelt decided to pursue architecture as a career, entering the famed Chicago School of Architecture. However, he remained for only a year before dropping out and there is no record indicating he ever attained a degree. Van Pelt later hinted that it was illness that caused him to drop out of school. Not to be deterred, Van Pelt began working at the prominent Milwaukee firm of Perry & Clas. According to a relative, Van Pelt "loved drawing" and was excellent at it. His talent earned him a place as a draftsman at the firm. He later switched over to Brust & Philipp, the biggest architectural firm in Wisconsin at the time.

Van Pelt was to enhance his hands-on office education with extensive travel throughout Europe and South America where he studied classical architecture up close. This first-

hand study helped him to understand classical design in a way books could not and it greatly aided his later work as an architect, particularly in period revival design.

Van Pelt made his way to Southern California while traveling with his mother to Pasadena for the winter, starting at least as early as 1910. It was there that he first connected with architect Sylvanus Marston (1883-1946) who hired him as draftsman. By 1914, he had done so well, he was elevated into a full partnership by Marston. The successful pairing of two such talented young architects created what was to become one of the most important firms in the history of Pasadena's architectural development.

Marston & Van Pelt (and subsequently Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury) turned out an impressive array of designs during its existence that ranged from churches, to schools, banks, country clubs, apartments, stores, hotels, mortuaries, mausoleums, libraries, warehouses, and laundries, as well as numerous important residences throughout the Southland.

Some of the most significant works Van Pelt was involved with during his time with Marston included the main mausoleums for the Hollywood Memorial Park Cemetery (1917 and 1929), the Turner & Stevens Mortuary (1922), Hill Avenue Branch of the Pasadena Public Library (1924), the Pasadena Athletic Club (1925), Westminster Presbyterian Church (1927), major structures for the Huntington and Vista Del Arroyo hotels, among others. Perhaps the most visually arresting landmark principally designed by Van Pelt during his time with Marston was the Grace Nicholson Treasure House of Oriental Art (now Pacific Asia Museum) (1924). Nicholson, a well-known art dealer, commissioned the firm to build a combination residence and art gallery on Los Robles Avenue in downtown Pasadena that would reflect her love of Asian art and antiquities. Marston and Van Pelt responded with an authentic Chinese palace modeled after ancient architecture found in the Forbidden City.

Both Marston and Van Pelt were masters of period revival styles, and as the Grace Nicholson Treasure House demonstrates, they were not restricted to just one type as a number of others were, but able to produce a wide range of whatever the client may have desired. In fact, Marston and Van Pelt are credited with one of the first Spanish Colonial Revival homes to be built in Pasadena – the Arthur L. Garford Residence (1916). They also produced what has been described as the “first truly Tudor Revival House in Pasadena,” the Samuel Hinds Residence at 880 La Loma Road (1915). They also worked with ease in American Colonial, Italianate, French Revival, Neoclassical, English country and variations on the Arts & Crafts movement. It had been Marston who had created the very first bungalow court with the St. Francis Court in Pasadena in 1908.

The works of Marston & Van Pelt were highly praised and well published in the various architectural publications of the day including a dozen times in *The Architectural Digest*. Van Pelt would later publish a book of his own, *Old Architecture of Southern Mexico*, based on his extensive travels in the region.

In 1927, Van Pelt ended his long association with Sylvanus Marston and struck out on his own in independent practice. This proved to be an extremely active period with a number of notable commissions, not the least being a home for himself and his mother at 1212 South El Molino, which he had started while still with Marston. The Gothic-inspired home drew much praise and was well published, including a full layout in *The Architectural Digest*. It was not the only one, however, two other Van Pelt designs – the Leroy D. Kellogg Residence in Pasadena and the D.W. Norris home in San Marino, were also featured in the magazine. And it was during this time Van Pelt became involved in Palm Springs and Smoke Tree Ranch. He had not only had known both L. Mac Blankenhorn and his uncle David Blankenhorn for years, he had designed homes for them including a group of speculative homes for the Blankenhorn-Hunt realty firm.

In 1935, Van Pelt partnered with George J. Lind (1891-1963) to create the firm of Van Pelt & Lind, a highly successful arrangement. Among the many designs produced by the firm were the Robert D. Bassett Residence in Pasadena (1935) and the John Rodgers Residence in the Los Feliz section of Hollywood (1936). But their best-known work was in the Santa Anita Oaks development in Arcadia where they designed numerous homes including the original Demonstration model. The firm also branched out to Palm Springs, opening an office in the desert, however, with the exception of the M.J. Harrison Residence in today's Movie Colony, it appears most all the work done under their name was actually produced by their talented young associates John Porter Clark and Albert Frey.

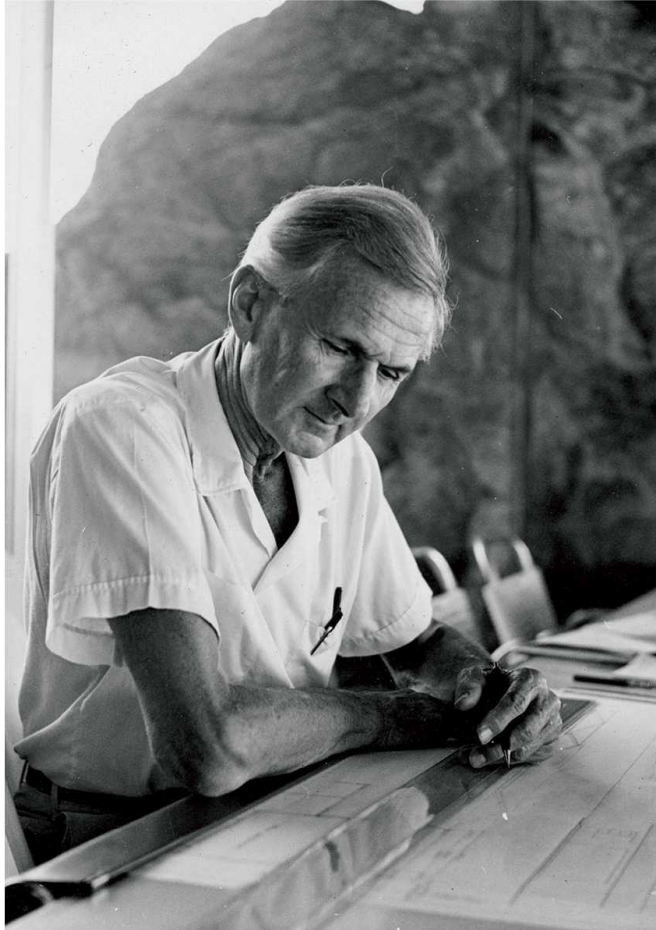
Van Pelt & Lind closed after the start of World War II, which began a period of semi-retirement for Van Pelt, who had been in the field for more than three decades. After the death of his beloved mother in 1944, Van Pelt left Pasadena and returned to Mexico, where he had spent much time over the years, buying a home in San Miguel de Allende. Ultimately, he returned to California, building a home for himself in Montecito and taking commissions from time to time. His last major commission before full retirement was a residence for an heir to the Armour meat packing family.

Although having been a member of the AIA since 1916 and decades of distinguished design work, Van Pelt had never been honored by elevation to "Fellow" by the organization. This oversight was belatedly corrected through the efforts of a group of his fellow architects including Wallace Neff, H. Roy Kelley, Thornton Abell, Albert Frey and John Porter Clark, and in 1964, he became Garrett Van Pelt, Jr. FAIA. Van Pelt died, October 31, 1972, at the age of 93.

Bio by S. Vaught 6/2022

Appendix VII

Albert Frey



(psmuseum.org)

(The following obituary, written by architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper on November 17, 1998)

Albert Frey, Modernist Architect, Dies

Design: His series of landmark buildings helped define Palm Springs as a hotbed of experimental work. He was 95.

Albert Frey, the Swiss-born architect who became one of the leading California Modernists of his generation and recently enjoyed a revival of sorts with the sudden popularity of mid-century Modernist work, died Saturday night at his home in Palm Springs. He was 95.

During the 1940s, '50s and '60s, Frey designed a series of Modernist landmarks that eventually came to define Palm Springs as a hotbed of architectural experimentation. Among them were a house for industrial designer Raymond Loewy, the Palm Springs City Hall and the Tramway gas station. The houses, in particular, were remarkable for their sleek, almost surrealistically futuristic forms and their experimental use of materials.

But Frey, generally underappreciated at the height of his career, only recently achieved international recognition, when modern design became fashionable again. In recent years, images of Frey and his houses became fixtures in fashion and design magazines. Last year, several of his buildings were designated city landmarks in Palm Springs after his design for a gas station was temporarily threatened with demolition.

Frey was born in Zurich, Switzerland, on Oct. 18, 1903. He was 25 when he began working in the Paris office of Le Corbusier, who would soon emerge as one of the great architects of the century. Le Corbusier was then at work on the seminal works of his early career. Frey spent 10 months working for Le Corbusier as one of only two paid design assistants, yet he contributed to two Modernist landmarks: the design for the Centrosoyuz building in Moscow, which was never built, and the Villa Savoye (1929-31) in Poissy, France, which, along with Frank Lloyd Wright's 1936 Fallingwater, ranks among the most famous 20th century buildings in the world.

"That was one of the things that separates him from others of his generation, his association with Le Corbusier," said Joseph Rosa, the author of a 1990 monograph of Frey's work. "He was the first disciple of Le Corbusier to build in the United States."

Frey moved to the United States in late 1930. It was a time when America was seen as the home of all that was modern, from jazz to skyscrapers to industrial and technological invention. Frey joined with A. Lawrence Kocher, a central figure on the New York cultural scene, and began what was to become an extraordinarily inventive and long-lived career. Together, the two designed the Aluminaire House, an experimental prototype for a modern house that incorporated an ingenious use of industrial materials and Corbusien notions about mass production and the open plan. (In 1987, the house was moved to the New York Institute of Technology's Islip, New York, campus from its original site in Huntington, N.Y., where it is now under renovation.)* Later, Frey worked briefly on Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durrell Stone's design for New York's Museum of Modern Art and was largely responsible for the building's auditorium.

But Frey never felt completely at ease in the congested, bustling metropolis, and in 1936 he moved to Palm Springs, the city with which he would be most identified. There, he produced a body of work that melded the Modernist obsession with the machine and mass production techniques with a deep sensitivity to natural surroundings.

In his design for Raymond Loewy, completed in 1947, Frey created an L-shaped house overlooking a rough desert landscape, with an amoeba-shaped swimming pool that flowed into the living room. Later projects were perhaps more Expressionist, even

flamboyant, among them the North Shore Yacht Club in Salton Sea (1958-59), whose stylized facade includes protruding, porthole-like windows.

Among Frey's greatest creations was a house that he designed for himself at a mountainside site overlooking Palm Springs, completed in 1964. The house is tiny--1,200 square feet--yet it encapsulates all of Frey's ideas about nature and the man-made, about the poetic beauty of living a life intimately connected to the human scale.

The house was designed as a narrow glass box and is set lengthwise along the side of the mountain. Frey used the tough industrial materials that marked much of his work--steel frame, glass walls, corrugated metal roof. But the refined, Cartesian-inspired order of the house is intentionally distorted by the rugged mountain landscape. Inside, the house's floor is divided into two levels to reflect the mountain's steep slope, and a boulder seemingly crashes through the living room, cunningly separating living space from the lone bedroom. It is that tension--between the order of man and the order of nature--that came to define Frey's best work.

The house established Frey's reputation as a leading figure of the Modernist avant-garde. Yet its immediate ambitions were more humble. This was still the postwar building boom, the architectural photographer Julius Shulman noted. "Young married couples could afford to build small houses," Shulman said, "And this little house had a million ideas. He had designed space for everything, the compact kitchen, the bathroom was oriented towards the morning light--everything he did was meticulously oriented towards design. It was the efficiency of the Swiss mind."

In many ways, the image of Frey became entwined with the image of that house. High above the city, Frey, a vegetarian and nature lover who said that the clean mountain landscape reminded him of his native Switzerland, would regularly do his yoga exercises or wander outside to feed quail, squirrels and lizards.

"He was gentle," Shulman said. "He did not want to produce big, glamorous images of his work like [his contemporary Richard] Neutra, for example. He was a quiet, nonaggressive person. That's maybe why people didn't know his work until later years."

By the mid-'80s, Frey was semiretired, although he continued to consult on local architectural projects, including some design work for the Smoke Tree Ranch...a ranch-style residential community in Palm Springs. Nearly a decade passed before Palm Springs was rediscovered. Suddenly, it was touted as the West Coast's answer to Miami's Art Deco tradition. Worshipful students and curious reporters began to make the pilgrimage to Frey's mountainside house for interviews. His house was repeatedly used for fashion shoots. Frey is survived by a sister, Emma, and his longtime companion, Jean Farrar.

*Since the publication of this obituary, the Aluminaire House has been relocated to Palm Springs.

Appendix VIII

Maynard Parker Images

As part of their major 1947 Albert Frey addition, the Gilmores engaged the noted furniture and interior design firm of Barker Brothers to decorate their expanded residence. Famed architectural photographer Maynard Parker was brought in to photograph the finished results.

(All images (c) Henry E. Huntington Library)





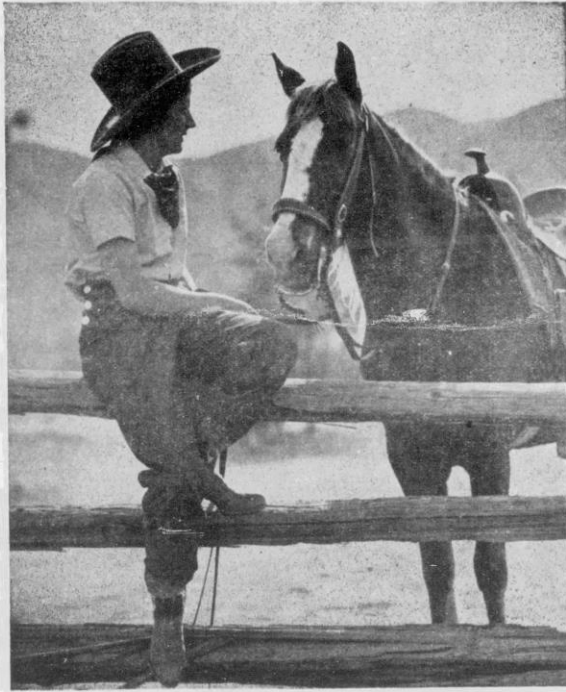


MONROE PARKER
1920 - 1980









Accustomed as it is to the annual visits of old guests and residents, Smoke Tree Ranch, nevertheless, felt an unusual happiness last week at the news that the Donald Gilmores would again spend their winter vacation at their home on the ranch. A busy executive of the Upjohn Chemical Corporation in Kalamazoo, Michi-

gan, Mr. Gilmore has for the past three years abandoned summer vacations for winters in the sunshine of the California Desert. Owners of the first private home in California's most famous guest ranch, the Gilmores are the pioneers in the exclusive colony. Each year this charming family has become more a part of the ranch. That

Smoke Tree Ranch has also become a part of their lives may modestly be assumed from their recent letter to the Resident Director, Charles Francis Doyle.

"It always seems to us like going home to get back to Smoke Tree. No doubt it is the excellent care taken of us by your organization when we are there.

It was such a satisfaction last winter to find our house completely ready for occupation down to the last detail, a delicious breakfast waiting at the ranch house dining room and even the fires lighted in our fireplace when we arrived from the depot. It completely removed that feeling of strangeness to new environment which one usually experiences when traveling. It is little wonder that we refer to it as "our ranch at Palm Springs." Our friends cannot believe there is a place away out on the desert where such care is taken of our winter home while we are absent, so little responsibility when we are there, and so much time for fun.

"My mother, Mrs. Upjohn, has been loaning the cottage to Pasadena friends this fall, and they all give glowing reports of the many improvements you are making.

"We are, however, most happy to hear that for all the additions to the comforts and recreations, none of the simplicity of the ranch has been sacrificed and that you are maintaining the ranch

atmosphere. During the last three years since we have been coming to the ranch and have been watching your growth we have often marveled at the way you have been able to retain this simple life. You have somehow kept a gracious hospitality and courteousness by your ranch employees without obsequiousness or the forms of hotel atmosphere and that is the great attraction to us who want ranch life.

"The children are inquiring whether the new heated swimming pool will be ready when we arrive. We shall, of course, want them to carry on their school work at your ranch schools during our vacation, and ask your head wrangler to save the same horses for all of us."

TRADITIONS

Happy indeed are the creators of any original idea at words of approval, but particularly pleased were the owners of Smoke Tree Ranch to receive approbation for those characteristics which have become a tradition.

A NEW IDEA

Under a Warm Sun . . .

LARGE LOTS ALL UTILITIES

FREE OWNERSHIP OR 40-YEAR LEASES WITH OPTION TO BUY DURING FIRST THREE YEARS

Highly Restricted to Desirable Families

SMOKE TREE RANCH, Inc.,

F. S. Markham Charles F. Doyle
Pres., Altadena Vice-Pres., Ranch Office