



HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 3, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: APPLICATION BY SCOTT P. TIMBERLAKE AND ANNE KRIZMAN REPRESENTED BY THE PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION FOR HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION OF "THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING" LOCATED AT 415 SOUTH PALM CANYON, CASE HSPB #160 (APN 513-213-001) (SY).

FROM: Department of Planning Services

SUMMARY

This request for Class 1 historic designation was submitted by the current owners of the commercial property. Formerly known as "The Merrill Lynch Building", this building was designed by the master architect, Donald Wexler, and completed in 1971.

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.

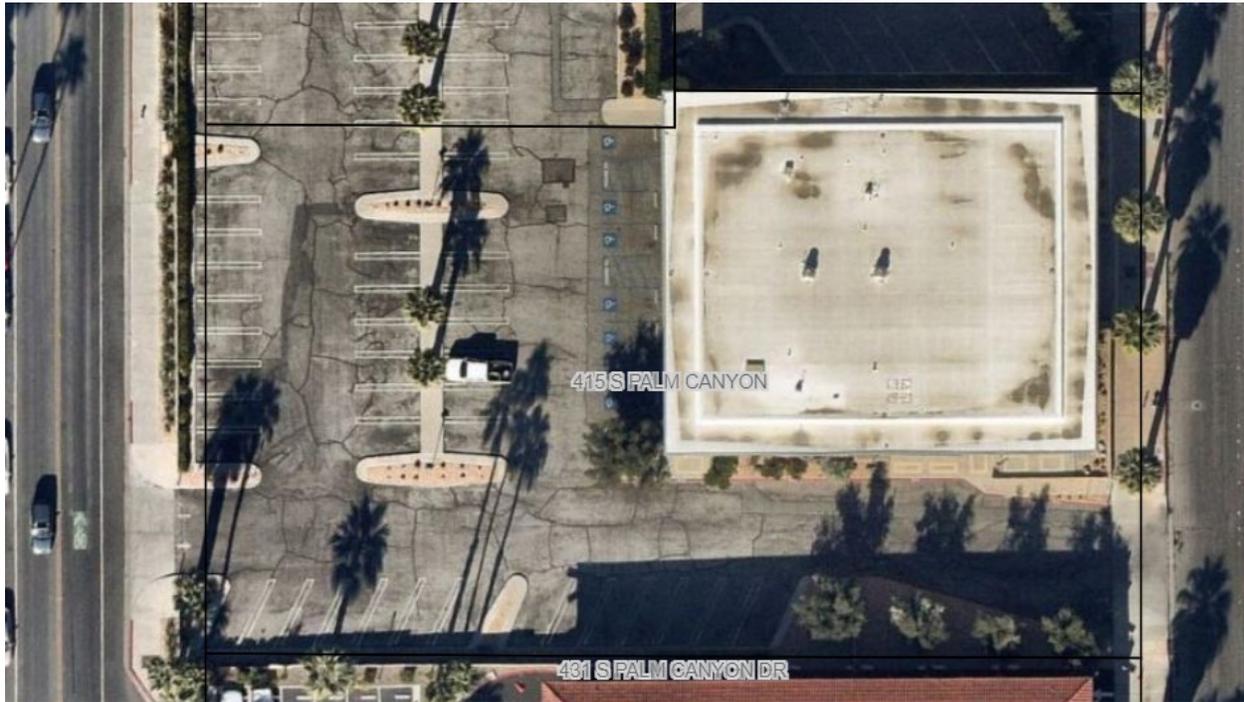
RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open the public hearing and receive public testimony.
2. Close the public hearing and adopt Resolution HSPB #160, "A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE "THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING" LOCATED AT 415 SOUTH PALM CANYON, AS A CLASS 1 (LANDMARK) HISTORIC RESOURCE HSPB #160, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS (APN #513-213-001)."

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

This building was designed for Merrill Lynch, a financial institution, in an area emerging as the Financial District of Palm Springs. The report indicates that the site originally contained a 27-unit apartment hotel from the late 1920s. Utilizing an architectural style to achieve a sense of monumentality, the building continues to display a sense of stability and permanence on South Palm Canyon. The lot is almost one-acre in size with parking concentrated to the south and west sides of the lot. The design is based on Classical principles using modern construction materials like steel. Architect, Donald Wexler collaborated with the design team to restore and rehabilitate the building in 2014 from its original use to its current use as the Eisenhower Health Center.

AERIAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT PARCEL.



EAST ELEVATION FROM SOUTH PALM CANYON, 2024.



<i>Related Relevant City Actions by HSPB, Planning, Fire, Building, etc.</i>	
August, 2024	Site inspection by members of the HSPB and City Staff.

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

Historic Context Statement “Post-World War II (1945-1969)”

Palm Springs enters into a time of growing prosperity and population growth during the post-World War II period. Retail buildings, restaurants and banks started to line the streets of the commercial districts. Financial institutions began to cluster along South Palm Canyon Drive between West Baristo Road and East Camino Parocela. (See page 11 of the report.) Some notable financial buildings in this area include the recently restored Bank of America (City National Bank from 1959), the Architecture Design Center, Edwards Harris Pavilion (Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan, 1960) and the Chase Bank (Coachella Valley Savings and Loan, 1961).

Context: Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)

Theme: Post World War II Commercial Development (1945-1969)

Registration Requirements: To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- Date from the period of significance; and
- Represent important patterns and trends in commercial development from this period; or
- Represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style or property type; or method of construction, or be associated with a significant architect or designer; and
- Display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- Retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

Context: Architectural Styles & Local Practitioners

Theme: Modern Styles of the Post-World War II Era

Sub-theme: New Formalism

Registration Requirements: To be eligible under this theme as an excellent example of its architectural style, a property must:

- Retain most – though not necessarily all – of the character-defining features of the style, and continue to exhibit its historic appearance
- If important for illustrating a particular architectural style or construction technique, must retain most of the physical features that constitute that style or technique.

ANALYSIS:

A historic resources report (“the report”), site visit, and city documents and forms are the basis of this staff report. The existing building retains many character-defining features such as the columns, entry portico, clean lines, and the original site design. The four palm trees in the foreground of the building are trees that were planted in the downtown area along Palm Canyon as part of the Ruth Hardy plan. There is an emphasis on the symmetrical plan and the scale and proportions of the building give it a monolithic presence when viewed from the street. The structure is also elevated from the sidewalk on a podium which adds to this effect.

The building is an exceptional representation of New Formalism¹ and retains a high level of design integrity.

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:

415 South Palm Canyon Drive is a unique example of a commercial property designed in the New Formalist style. The building expresses a level of permanence and longevity, yet the modern materials allow it to fit into its contemporary context. While the interior was significantly rehabilitated to accommodate a new use, the exterior of the building remains relatively in-tact. The following is a detailed analysis of the criterion and integrity findings.

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

¹ City of Palm Springs Historic Context Statement “Architectural Styles and Local Practitioners”.

No meaningful event is associated with this site, thus 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 building was constructed to address the financial needs of a growing community. The report did not reveal any individual of significance being associated with the site; therefore, Criterion ii is not met.

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

In the Post World War II period, the shifting economic climate created new opportunities for designers and architects to move to Palm Springs and explore and implement the latest design trends. In response to the International Style, New Formalism, which may be seen as the abstraction of Classical architecture, developed into a style of architecture that was often used for public and institutional buildings. The scale and symmetry of the buildings evoked a sense of permanence and stability. While there are limited examples of this style of architecture in Palm Springs, the Merrill Lynch Building would be an outstanding example of this form of architecture. Criterion iii is met.

(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 the building was constructed using standard construction methods and materials and 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;

Donald Wexler is a notable and well-respected architect that has influenced the field with his work. He trained under other master architects such as Richard Neutra and William F. Cody but quickly developed his own sense of design using materials like steel in a desert setting. His portfolio of work ranges from residential homes to large civic projects, and he explored a variety of architectural styles throughout his career. In addition, the architectural detailing of the columns and use of scale at the Merrill Lynch Building clearly shows Wexler's design genius, thus 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

The resource is not within a historic district and does not qualify 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 is available 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 Merrill Lynch Building is evaluated based on the following topics of integrity based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

Location.

The location of the structure is in its original place of construction; therefore, the integrity of location is met.

Design.

The two-story, steel-framed building is situated on a podium (platform) elevated from the adjacent sidewalk and has free-standing columns and pilasters supporting the entablature. The columns in the front also create a portico around the main entrance making it a prominent feature. The building uses traditional design concepts yet uses a panelized system to clad the exterior. The concept of New Formalism focuses on scale and a sense of balance and simplifies decorative elements rather than strip them from the building completely. The integrity of the original design has been preserved.

Setting.

The building remains in its original location on South Palm Canyon Drive and the concentration of buildings specifically designed for financial institutions are still in the general vicinity, even if many have been adaptively reused and serve a different function. Staff finds that the overall integrity of setting remains intact.

Materials.

The steel-framed building and the plaster cladded entablature and columns all have a textured finish, painted white. Some exterior walls are arranged with a split-face concrete block and high clerestory windows adorn the façade. The report specifies restoration work occurred in the mid-2000s but the exterior materials, excluding the original front doors, were replaced to match the historic photos of the building. Staff finds the integrity of materials is met.

Workmanship.

The attention to detail, particularly around the columns and pilasters showing the simple decorative aluminum channels and the reveals at the top and bottoms of each vertical element illustrates a design aesthetic that is clean and functional. The white-plaster and exterior wall surfaces appear to be in good condition with no visible damage. Staff finds the integrity of workmanship is intact.

Feeling.

The overall mass, scale and design details of the building's exterior remain unchanged and clearly demonstrates the sense of stability and authority associated with financial institutions of that era. The integrity of feeling is intact.

Association.

The property is associated with the architect Donald Wexler and his interpretation of Classical principles using modern materials and construction methods. The design was well-received by the community and recognized in 1972 with the "Desert Beautiful" award. The integrity of association is met.

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

- Monumental, flat-roofed two-story structure inspired by a more Classical style of architecture that includes freestanding columns in the front of the building, supporting a colonnade, with engaged columns surrounding the structure on the sides and back.
- Squared, white-painted plaster columns with vertical "U"-shaped brushed aluminum decorative channels.
- Wide, white-painted plaster fascia emulating a simplified entablature. The fascia is embellished with vertical "U"-shaped brushed aluminum channels, in line with the same vertical channels in the columns directly below.
- Recessed lighting and anodized bronze can downlights on the ceiling of the colonnade.
- Tan split-faced block walls and podium.
- Concrete paving with tiles arranged in a geometric pattern at the building entrances.
- Solar glass panels and clerestories.

- Four existing California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) from the Ruth Hardy plan down Palm Canyon Drive.
- Concrete-curbed planting beds in the rear parking lot.
- Tan split-faced block walls enclose the property.

Non-contributing elements:

- Bronze anodized aluminum and bronze-tinted solar glass entry doors, which replaced the Ackerman Panelcarve doors and transom.
- Large-scale bronze wall sculpture by artist Abbott Pattison, previously hung on the wall of the Spa Hotel.
- Replacement tiles embedded in the concrete of the podium surface.
- Handrails on the main stairs leading to the front entrance.
- Existing desert landscape design.

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 Merrill Lynch Building meets the definition of a historic resource based on Criterion 3 and 5 of the Palm Springs Historic Preservation Ordinance and meets the necessary integrity findings to support its historic significance; therefore, staff recommends Class 1 Designation as a historic landmark property.

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

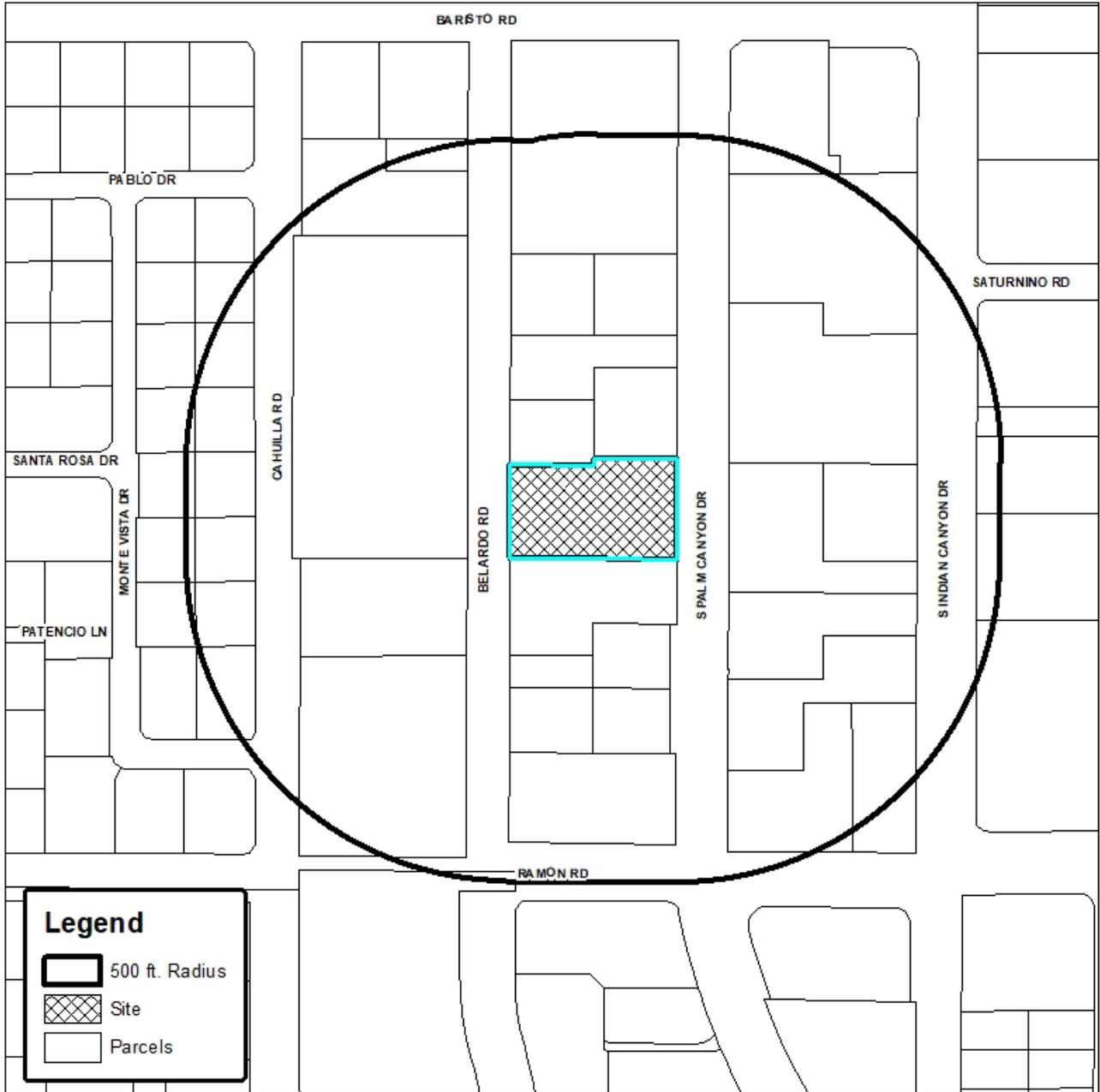
Attachments:

- 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 #160 – The Merrill Lynch Building
415 South Palm Canyon

ATTACHMENT B

RESOLUTION NO. HSPB #160

A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING LOCATED AT 415 SOUTH PALM CANYON, A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE (HSPB #160), APN #513-213-001.

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, The City of Palm Springs filed an application 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 Merrill Lynch Building” located at 415 South Palm Canyon. The application included a historic resources report (“the report”).
- C. WHEREAS, on August 22 and August 29, 2024, 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 3, 2024, a noticed public hearing of the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board (“HSPB”) to consider Case HSPB #160 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:

415 South Palm Canyon Drive is a unique example of a commercial property designed in the New Formalist style. The building expresses a level of permanence and longevity, yet the modern materials allow it to fit into its contemporary context. While the interior was significantly rehabilitated to accommodate a new use, the exterior of the building remains relatively in-tact. The following is a detailed analysis of the criterion and integrity findings.

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

No meaningful event is associated with this site, thus does not qualify under Criterion i.

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Donald Wexler is a notable and well-respected architect that has influenced the field with his work. He trained under other master architects such as Richard Neutra and William F. Cody but quickly developed his own sense of design using materials like steel in a desert setting. His portfolio of work ranges from residential homes to large civic projects, and he explored a variety of architectural styles throughout his career. In addition, the architectural detailing of the columns and use of scale at the Merrill Lynch Building clearly shows Wexler's design genius, thus 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

The resource is not within a historic district and does not qualify 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 is available 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 Merrill Lynch Building is evaluated based on the following topics of integrity based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

Location.

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Workmanship.

The attention to detail, particularly around the columns and pilasters showing the simple decorative aluminum channels and the reveals at the top and bottoms of each vertical element illustrates a design aesthetic that is clean and functional. The white-plaster and exterior wall surfaces appear to be in good condition with no visible damage. The integrity of workmanship is intact.

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The overall mass, scale and design details of the building's exterior remain unchanged and clearly demonstrates the sense of stability and authority associated with financial institutions of that era. The integrity of feeling is intact.

Association.

The property is associated with the architect Donald Wexler and his interpretation of Classical principles using modern materials and construction methods. The design was well-received by the community and recognized in 1972 with the "Desert Beautiful" award. The integrity of association is met.

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:

- Monumental, flat-roofed two-story structure inspired by a more Classical style of architecture that includes freestanding columns in the front of the building, supporting a colonnade, with engaged columns surrounding the structure on the sides and back.
- Squared, white-painted plaster columns with vertical "U"-shaped brushed

aluminum decorative channels.

- Wide, white-painted plaster fascia emulating a simplified entablature. The fascia is embellished with vertical “U”-shaped brushed aluminum channels, in line with the same vertical channels in the columns directly below.
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- Four existing California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) from the Ruth Hardy plan down Palm Canyon Drive.
- Concrete-curbed planting beds in the rear parking lot.
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Non-contributing elements:

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- Large-scale bronze wall sculpture by artist Abbott Pattison, previously hung on the wall of the Spa Hotel.
- Replacement tiles embedded in the concrete of the podium surface.
- Handrails on the main stairs leading to the front entrance.
- Existing desert landscape design.

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 Merrill Lynch Building located at 415 South Palm Canyon, a Class 1 Historic Resource (HSPB #160).

ADOPTED THIS THIRD DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2024.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Christopher Hadwin
Director of Planning Services

ATTACHMENT C

The Merrill Lynch Building, 1971

415 South Palm Canyon, Palm Springs, CA 92264

Nomination Application For
City of Palm Springs
Class 1 Historic Resource



MERRILL LYNCH, PIERCE, FENNER & SMITH INCORPORATED

ARCHITECT: DONALD A. WEXLER ASSOCIATES

Prepared by

Steven Keylon

For the

Palm Springs Preservation

Foundation

FINAL August 27, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Tracy Conrad; Sydney Williams; Barbara Marshall; Gary Wexler; Lauren Bricker, and Robert Alexander,
Donald Wexler Archives, Cal Poly Pomona.

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 June 2021, the PSPF board of directors assigned the task of writing the Merrill Lynch Building Class 1 Historic Resource nomination to Steven Keylon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Merrill Lynch Building is a commercial building at 415 South Palm Canyon Drive, which master architect Donald Wexler designed. The structure is a prime example of one of his elegant modern designs, this time in the “New Formalist” style, which turned contemporary architecture into a temple of financial strength. The Merrill Lynch Building is an essential example of a custom modernist commercial structure. It exhibits numerous character-defining features that place it within the historical context of the Palm Springs Modern period.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource: According 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. For further information, refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” of potentially historic resources.

The Merrill Lynch Building has not previously been evaluated for Class 1 Historic Resource eligibility. A summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

FINDING 1: The site, structure, building, or object exhibits exceptional historic significance and meets the below criteria.

8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraph (iii) - *The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state, or local history.* The Merrill Lynch Building, completed in 1971, exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historical context of Palm Springs’ “Post-World War II Palm Springs” period. The custom-designed commercial structure represents a prime example of significant Post-war architecture for which Palm

Springs is internationally known. The Merrill Lynch Building may be considered an important component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of notable Modern architecture, i.e., a historical movement that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state, or local history. As a bank skillfully designed by Donald Wexler, it rises to the level of work by a master architect with high artistic values. 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 (v) - High Artistic Value - The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced their age or that possesses high artistic value: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. The structure designed by master architect Donald Wexler is eligible under the Modern architecture theme because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the Midcentury Modern style, particularly the New Formalist style. These attributes include a two-story rigidly geometric structure set upon a plinth, with monumental double columns supporting the entablature - in this case, the flat roof. Materials such as brown split-face concrete block, plaster, brushed metal, and solar glass combine the impressive qualities of the New Formalist style. As a custom structure artfully designed by Wexler, this building rises to a master architect's level with high artistic values. Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics representing the Midcentury Modern style, as a master architect's work, and its high artistic values, the Merrill Lynch qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds The Merrill Lynch Building eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraphs (iii and v) of the local ordinance's seven criteria.



(to be completed by Planning staff:)

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
Department of Planning Services

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

TO THE APPLICANT:

Complete all parts of this application. Denote "NA" for lines that are not applicable.
Submit the completed application with attachments to the Department of Planning Services at
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262 Phone: 760-323-8245 Fax: 760-322-8380

This application is for a proposed: (Check one) Historic Site / Resource Historic District:

Applicant's Name: REALTY TRUST 650 E Tahquitz Canyon Way, Ste 2, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Please Print

Owner Lessee Authorized Agent City Other

Applicant's Address: REALTY TRUST 650 E Tahquitz Canyon Way, Ste 2, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Number and Street Name or P.O. Box

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone Nos: 760-505-3936

Residence

Cell

Work

E-Mail address: melodeehpc@gmail.com

Note: For Historic District applications: On a separate page, provide a list all sites / parcels within the proposed historic district boundaries with the following information provided for each parcel / APN.

Site Address: 415 SOUTH PALM CANYON, PALM SPRINGS, CA 92264

APN 513213001 Zone: _____ Section: _____ Gen'l Plan Land Use Desig. _____

Is the project is located on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation? NO
(Refer to the Land Status Map under Tribal Resources on the Planning Department home page.)

Construction Date: 1971 Estimated Actual (denote source, i.e. bldg. permits)

Architect: DONALD WEXLER Builder: COBLE AND WESSMAN CONSTRUCTION

Present Owner: SCOTT P. TIMBERLAKE AND ANNE KRIZMAN

Present Owner Address: 650 E Tahquitz Canyon Way, Ste 2, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Original Owner: MERRILL LYNCH

Other notable past owners: NONE

Other Historic Associations: NONE

Common Name of Property: MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING

Historic Name of Property: MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING

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: NEW FORMALISM
(Refer to the Architectural Styles chapter of the Citywide Historic Context Statement, under Historic Resources on the Planning Home page (www.palmspringsca.gov).

Period of Significance: 1971
(See the Citywide Historic Context Statement Document.)

Please list any informational reference sources used to complete this application:

PSMC 8.05.070 (C.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 or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met.

Provide a written description of how the site qualifies as historic resource under one or more of the following criterion:

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

- i. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community.¹
- ii. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- iii. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- iv. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction, a period of construction or a method of construction.²
- 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.
- 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.
- vii. The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

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

² Unlike the National Register criteria "type, period of method of construction relates to construction only" For design theme or characteristics use Criterion "iii" (period) or Criterion v (high artistic value).

FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains most if not all of the following aspects of Integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards³: Design, Materials, Workmanship, Location, Setting, Feeling, Association.

PSMC 8.05.070 (C,2) Criteria for the Designation of Class 2 Historic Resources.

A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 2 historic resource, or a Contributing Resource to a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council provided the site, structure, building or object exhibits exceptional historic 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 (above).

PSMC 8.05.090 (C) 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.
(Identify list by address and APN number each site / parcel that meets the criteria outlined in Finding 1 above and document how each meets the criteria.)
- b. Identify non-contributing properties or vacant parcels to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries.
(Identify list by address and APN number each site / parcel within the proposed historic district that is considered non-contributing to the overall historic significance of the historic district.)

Please attach any additional information related to the application as necessary.

Questions: Contact the Palm Springs Planning Department at 760 323 8245.

³ Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bulletin for How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property.

Statement of Significance

Summary

The Merrill Lynch Building, 1971, was designed by master architect Donald Wexler.

Location

The Merrill Lynch Building is located at 415 South Palm Canyon Drive.

BACKGROUND/HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Architect

Born in South Dakota, architect Donald Allen Wexler (1926-2015) grew up in Minneapolis. After graduation from high school, he served in the Navy during World War II, and upon discharge after the war, on the GI Bill, Wexler was educated at the University of Minnesota, getting his Bachelor of Architecture in 1950.

In Lauren Weiss Bricker's essay on Donald Wexler in *Shade and Steel: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, she observes, "Wexler was a member of the first generation of American architects trained along modern lines. So thoroughly engrained in modernism were the Minnesota graduates that in 1943, Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and later head of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, observed that graduates of Minnesota's program coming to study at Harvard were among 'the best we have.'"¹

Upon graduation, Wexler moved to Los Angeles, where he worked as a draftsman for architect Richard Neutra, whose influence can be seen in Wexler's work. Though Neutra rarely interacted with the younger members of his staff, this experience profoundly shaped the young architect. According to architectural critic Esther McCoy,

Neutra was the perfect teacher. In watching him work, we learned in a few weeks what would have taken years if we had been left to fumble our way to it. This is the only quick way to learn and, I believe, the only effective way to teach.²

In Patrick McGrew's 2011 PSPF book *Donald Wexler: Architect*, he writes that Wexler never experienced the "sometimes demanding reputation for which Neutra was known" and that Wexler "continues to hold his first mentor in high esteem." Quoting Donald Wexler, "I admire him as I do Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and the other truly great contributors to our built environment. Neutra would complement our good work, and it was there that I learned what a genius is."³

Wexler worked in Neutra's office for nine months, primarily on a public housing project, Elysian Park Heights, created by Neutra and his partner Robert Alexander in collaboration with landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. In his apprenticeship with Richard Neutra, Wexler observed the general skills needed to run a private practice, which would serve him well in just a few years.

With the idea that he might spend six months in Palm Springs, Wexler began working as a designer in the office of architect William F. Cody in September 1952. There, he met architect Richard A. Harrison, who was working there as a draftsman. Harrison had graduated with a degree in architecture from USC in 1951 and began working for Cody that July.

In February 1953, having completed the apprentice requirements, Wexler & Harrison formed a partnership and opened their own office with their pooled resources—\$250.⁴ Over the years, Wexler & Harrison would design homes, residential subdivisions, schools, banks, and offices. In 1961, by mutual agreement, the partnership was amicably dissolved.

As a sole proprietorship, Donald A. Wexler, AIA, would go on to be known for pioneering the use of steel in residential design. Wexler's designs for public buildings, including the dramatic Palm Springs Airport, served as soaring and practical models for other municipalities to emulate. His Steel Development House Number 2 and Palm Springs Airport are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Both Richard Harrison and Donald Wexler are the recipients of stars on the Palm Springs Walk of Stars in recognition of their architectural achievements. These stars are only one of many honors and awards received for their extraordinary work within the architectural profession.

Donald Wexler was inducted as a Fellow of the AIA in 2004. He died on June 25, 2015.

THE PALM SPRINGS FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Following World War II, Palm Springs experienced a building boom, coinciding with modernism's rising popularity. This unique convergence of events shaped the city's distinct commercial district, including financial institutions, upscale retail establishments, and civic landmarks that celebrated the city's prosperity and growth. Architects of prominence were entrusted with designing a range of buildings, from small office and retail structures to large department stores, many of which have since been recognized as Class 1 Historic Resources or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This collection represents Palm Springs' version of Wall Street.

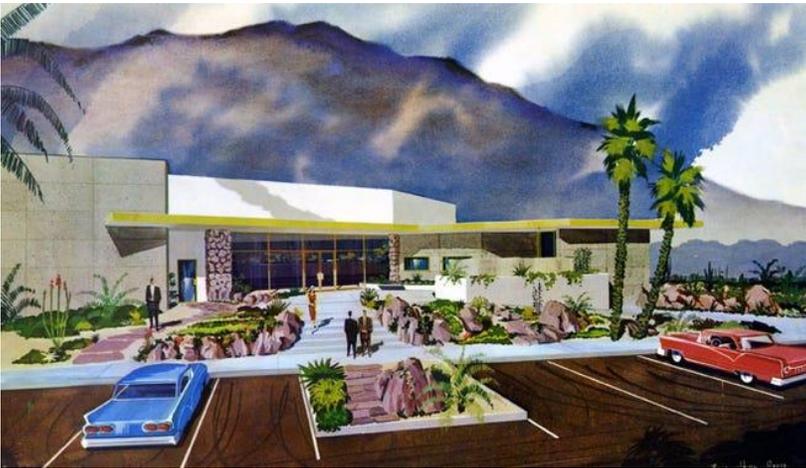
Dotting South Palm Canyon Drive between Baristo and Camino Parocela, a handful of elegant midcentury buildings stand as enduring finance icons. In their heyday, these structures represented the height of financial majesty, inspiring hope and prosperity during the post-war era.



Coachella Valley Savings & Loan No. 1, 1956. E. Stewart Williams.



City National Bank, 1959. Rudi Baumfeld of Victor Gruen Associates.



Security First National Bank, 1959. Joseph B. Wong.



Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan, 1960. E. Stewart Williams.



Coachella Valley Savings & Loan No. 2, 1961. E. Stewart Williams.



E. F. Hutton, 1965. Architect unknown.



Merrill Lynch, 1971. Donald Wexler.

Palm Springs' post-war civic architecture along South Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives is a testament to the city's embrace of modernism, the prosperity of finance, and the enduring inspiration of good design. These iconic buildings, with their distinctive architectural features, continue to captivate visitors and further enrich the architectural legacy of the desert oasis.



Graphic courtesy Susan Secoy-Jensen

MAP LEGEND:

 retail - department store

 financial institution

1. *Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan, E. Stewart Williams, 1961*

Now the Architecture and Design Center, Palm Springs Art Museum

Class 1 Historic Site, National Register of Historic Places

2. *J. W. Robinson's Department Store, Pereira & Luckman, 1958*

Now various retail establishments

Class 1 Historic Site

3. *Coachella Valley Savings & Loan #1, E. Stewart Williams, 1956*

National Register of Historic Places

4. *Merrill Lynch Building, Donald Wexler, 1971*

Now Eisenhower medical offices

5. *Coachella Valley Savings & Loan #2, E. Stewart Williams, 1961*

Now Chase Bank

Class 1 Historic Site, National Register of Historic Places

6. *Saks Fifth Avenue, Wurdeman & Becket, 1958*

Now vacant

7. *Alan Ladd Hardware, Kaptur & Lapham, 1968*

Now professional office building

8. *E. F. Hutton, architect unknown, 1965.*

Now heavily remodeled, its current use is retail and design services

9. *City National Bank, Rudi Baumfeld, Victor Gruen Associates, 1959*

Now Bank of America

Class 1 Historic Site

10. *Security First National Bank, Joseph B. Wong, 1959*

Now Union Bank

Class 1 Historic Site



THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING

Though one of Merrill Lynch's founders, Charles E. Merrill of New York, often frequented the El Mirador Hotel in the 1930s, the firm had never had a presence in the desert.⁵

In 1969, Merrill Lynch announced that "to meet the growing needs of a growing community," it would open a temporary branch until the new permanent Merrill Lynch Building could be built. Samuel L. Grodin was named the manager at the temporary offices at 167 North Indian Canyon.⁶ They found a site at 415 South Palm Canyon Drive and signed a twenty-five-year lease from Stanley A. Rosin, the property owner. It would have two floors, each nearly 7,000 square feet, with "the most modern investment facilities for twenty-five account executives, with additional space on the second floor to be available for selected tenants."⁷ It would become one of several impressive architect-designed financial and retail structures in an area known as the Palm Springs Financial District.



El Encanto Apartment Hotel, 1929. 415 S. Palm Canyon. Marshall P. Wilkinson, architect.

Before the impressive new building could be built, the site, containing a Monterey-Colonial Revival style hotel, “El Encanto,” had to be cleared. As reported in the *Desert Sun*,

An auction today signals the demise of the famed El Encanto Apartment Hotel, 415 S. Palm Canyon Dr., to make room for construction of an office building. El Encanto was built in the late 1920s by Mrs. Ruth F. Sherman, Mrs. Myra Howell and Mrs. Mary Wilshire of Wilshire Boulevard fame. It was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Rosin and Victor Rosin in 1943. Spacious landscaped grounds and Spanish-style structures emphasized the name of the 27-unit apartment hotel. The two-story structure, containing 7,000 sq. ft. on each floor, will house investment facilities for 25 account executives with additional office space on the second floor available for selected tenants. Completion of the building is expected to take eight months, with removal of existing structures set to begin in about two weeks. The architectural firm of Donald A. Wexler Associates is designing the facilities. Announcement of the local real estate venture was made today by Stanley A. Rosin, owner of the property, and Samuel I. Grodin, senior vice president of the firm. The auction will conclude this evening. The site encompasses about 1.4 acres and construction of the office building provides for parking space for 70 cars.⁸

The new Merrill Lynch Building would be built in the Palm Springs Financial District, a collection of financial institutions designed by Palm Springs's premier architects. The new Merrill Lynch Building won a "Desert Beautiful" award in 1972.⁹

The building was built by Coble & Wessman Construction.¹⁰ The Wexler designed Merrill Lynch Building opened in 1971.

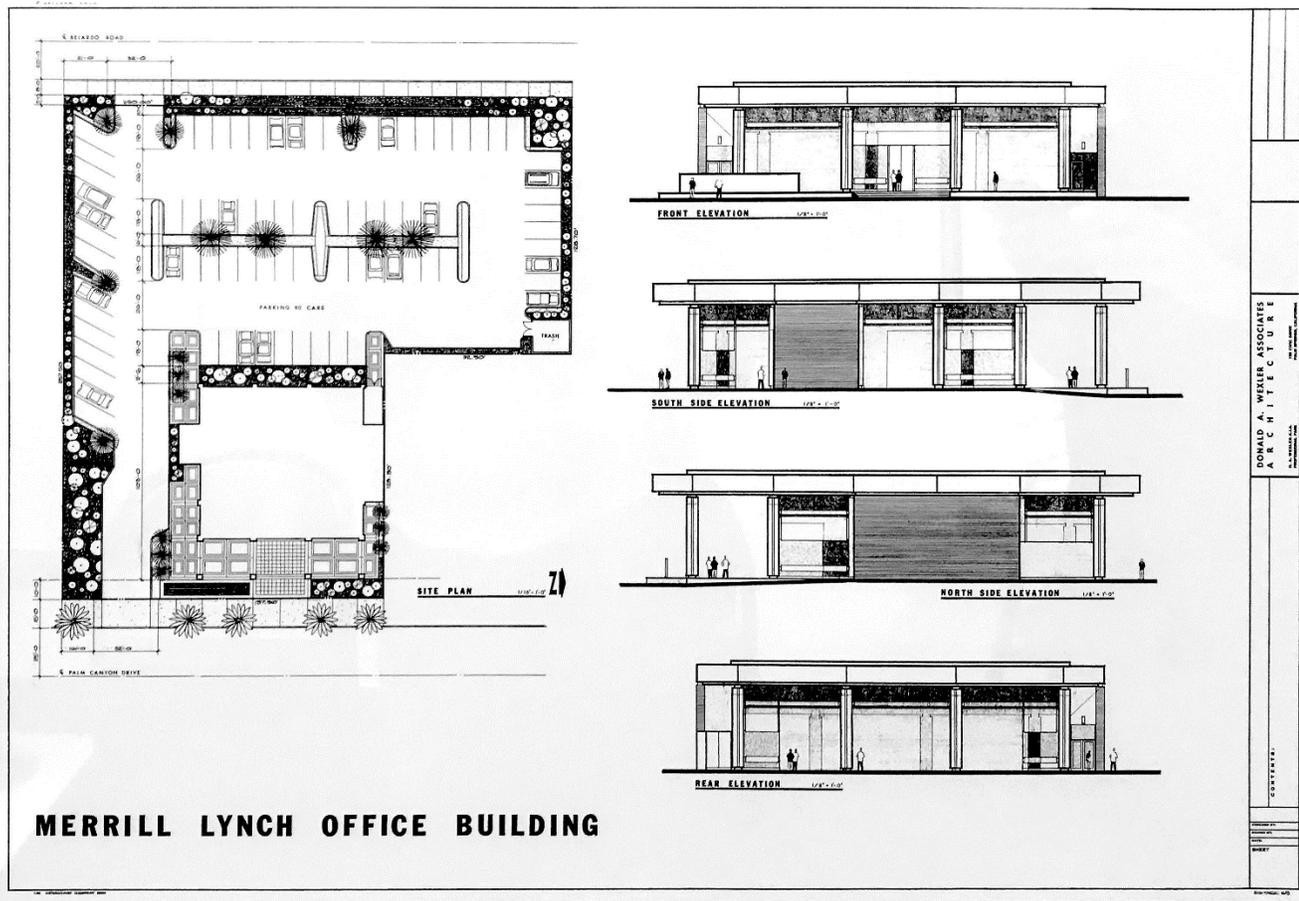
In 1985, Wexler designed a second Coachella Valley location of Merrill Lynch at Wexler's Hope Square Professional Centre in Palm Desert.¹¹

ARCHITECTURE OF THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING

In designing Merrill Lynch's first proprietary building, master architect Donald Wexler's task was to create a large (over 13,000 square feet) structure akin to a "temple," which would signify permanence. With its dignified scale and majestic aura, the result was a commanding presence in the Palm Springs Financial District. The first floor of the two-story building would be used for trading, with offices occupying the second floor.

New Formalist architecture, blending modernism and classicism, aimed to evoke a sense of gravity and formality, making it particularly suitable for financial institutions, projecting an air of stability and authority. Wexler's modernist interpretation of a Greek temple demonstrates a rigid use of symmetry and imposing columns but with contemporary materials ideal for the harsh climate of the desert.

As he would with most projects, Wexler worked with engineer Jack Zender, who had his office in the famed Bradbury Building in downtown Los Angeles.¹²



MERRILL LYNCH OFFICE BUILDING

THE SITE PLAN

The flag-shaped lot runs from South Palm Canyon through to South Belardo Road. The structure is situated on the northeast portion of the lot facing Palm Canyon. To the left of the building, a driveway runs along one side, leading to a large parking lot at the rear, facing Belardo. The parking lot featured raised concrete curbs with long ovoid dividers, landscaped with trees and shrubbery.

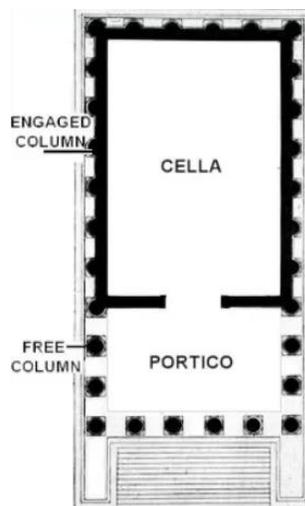


This photograph taken during construction shows the steel-framed building's structure. Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.

THE BUILDING

The Merrill Lynch Building is a large square, with relatively small bump-out entrances on the north and south sides, catering to those entering from the parking lot. Designed as a two-story steel-framed modernist temple, Wexler used Vitruvian principles to develop the program for the building.

Wexler designed the building in the style of a *Pseudoperipteral* temple. In classical architecture, a *Pseudoperipteral* temple design features freestanding columns (in the front only) and pilasters, or engaged columns (embedded), around the sides and back, giving the appearance of a *Peripteral* colonnade, which has freestanding columns all the way around.¹³





A perfect example of a Pseudoperipteral temple is the Maison Carrée temple in Nimes, France, shown above. The photo shows clearly how though this temple has freestanding columns in front, most of the columns along the side are partially embedded in the wall or "engaged" with the wall.



Wexler's Merrill Lynch Building was inspired by the Pseudoperipteral temples of classical Greek and Roman architecture. The primary structure has rows of embedded columns, or pilasters, encircling the building, with a portico of freestanding columns in front. Note the tan split-face block "podium" along Palm Canyon Drive.

PODIUM

The building is raised slightly from Palm Canyon by a podium (platform) built using a split-face concrete block. This deep tan block provided a rough texture, which was also harmonious with the view of Mt. San Jacinto in the background. The same block is used for most exterior walls. Three concrete steps lead to a slightly wider landing. Then three more concrete steps lead to the covered portico at the entrance of the building. Paving here was poured concrete, with large square tan tiles embedded in the concrete in a square geometric pattern.



The tan glazed tiles embedded in the concrete in this early photo can be seen. These are extant today. Photograph courtesy the Palm Springs Historical Society.



One of the building's pilasters shows off-white-painted plaster, "U"-shaped brushed aluminum vertical embedded channel, and the smaller, recessed, dark-painted block on which each pilaster and column sits. Another dark-painted block is at the top, between the column or pilaster and the heavy entablature/fascia.

COLUMNS AND PILASTERS

The Merrill Lynch Building is organized around a series of columns and pilasters (embedded columns) that encircle the building. The primary facade facing Palm Canyon features four columns (a colonnade) supporting an open portico in front of the building. Each squared column was covered in a relatively smooth, white-painted plaster and embedded by a vertical “U”-shaped brushed aluminum channel on all four sides. A series of squared, white-painted smooth plaster pilasters surround the structure, emphasizing the verticality while introducing an attractive metallic sheen to the materials palette.

Each column and pilaster terminate, top and bottom, on a smaller, squared block, painted dark so the columns and pilasters appear to float startingly free of what they support. These columns and pilasters define the boundary of the structure, which are not uniformly spaced: the north and south sides have five columns, while the east and west facades have four more widely spaced columns.



This circa 1980 photograph shows the Jerry and Evelyn Ackerman Panelcarve doors, which originally served as the entrance to the Merrill Lynch Building, but were removed at some unknown date. Glen Wexler photograph, from “Steel and Shade,” by Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams.

WALLS:

Walls are built between each pilaster. Most are tan split-face concrete blocks laid three-quarters of the way up the wall, topped by a horizontal frieze of off-white plaster and a fixed bronze-tinted solar glass clerestory above that. On the primary facade facing Palm Canyon Drive, this arrangement bookends a central panel of bronze-tinted solar glass set in bronze anodized aluminum frames with double-door entry.

The original front doors were a pair of heavily carved wood doors and transom from Jerome (“Jerry,” 1920-2019) and Evelyn (1924-2012) Ackerman’s “Panelcarve” collection. According to Gary Wexler, Jerry

Ackerman visited Donald Wexler one day at Wexler's office at 10 Professional Park and showed him their distinctive line of architectural Panelcarve doors and paneling. So, Wexler, intrigued, used them at the Merrill Lynch project.¹⁴

A horizontal plaster handrail is placed in front of the bronze solar glass on either side of the entry doors. Above the entry doors is a much larger horizontal band of off-white plaster.

On the south elevation, the tan concrete block with a horizontal band of plaster and clerestory walls continues, apart from a bumped-out entry with bronze aluminum and tinted glass doors. This has a floor-to-ceiling tan split-face concrete block wall, now graced by a large bronze wall sculpture.

The rear elevation, facing the parking lot to the west, has a similar arrangement of tan split-face block with white plaster horizontal bands and tinted glass.

ENTABLATURE:

The columns and pilasters surrounding the structure hold up a wide entablature, in this case, a flat roof with a tall, precast concrete fascia painted off-white. Embellishing the entablature is a series of "U"-shaped brushed aluminum channels embedded in and in line with the similar channels in the columns and pilasters.

On the ceiling underneath, recessed lighting on the perimeter is mixed with Wexler's signature aluminum can downlights, this time in a dark anodized bronze color, harmonizing with the window glazing.

LANDSCAPE:

Landscape architect David Hamilton possibly designed the landscape for the Merrill Lynch Building, though no records were found in researching this document to verify that. Hamilton was Wexler's favorite landscape architect, and they worked together on many projects in the Coachella Valley. The landscape at Merrill Lynch has a similar Mediterranean climate plant palette and strong architectonic style as other projects Wexler and Hamilton collaborated on, notably the Palm Springs Airport.

The building was designed so that the four columns in front, supporting the open-air portico, would fall in rhythm (though not in line) with the four existing California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) that had been planted as part of Ruth Hardy's plan to plant an allée of fan palms down Palm Canyon Drive.

At the front of the structure, facing Palm Canyon Drive, a long line of juniper was planted in a bed at the top of the tan split-faced brick podium, enhancing this critical architectural feature with an architectural planting of a single species, which would be pruned into a long, low, uniform mass. Underneath the portico, on either side of the front doors, three large pots sat atop the podium, planted asymmetrically. On the right, three tall tree-like shrubs were planted, while on the left, three short shrubs were planted to not grow over the Merrill Lynch signage affixed to the block wall.

At the rear of the building, the parking lot's distinctive concrete-curbed planting beds were planted with two pair of California fan palms at the center of the parking lot. Two more single California fan palms were placed at the western corners of the parking lot, facing the two Belardo exits.

At the front of the building, four mature specimen olive trees were planted adjacent to the driveway as one accessed the parking lot. Another olive tree was planted adjacent to the southwest corner of the building.



The completed Merrill Lynch Building circa 1980. Glen Wexler photograph, from “Steel and Shade,” by Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT: NEW FORMALISM

Stylistically, the Merrill Lynch Building falls under the category of New Formalism.

New Formalist architecture emerged from the twentieth-century modern movement as a reaction to both Brutalism’s use of concrete and the International Style’s use of glass and steel. Architects such as Edward Durrell Stone, Philip Johnson, Minoru Yamasaki, and Welton Becket were known for their mastery of the New Formalist style, which celebrated symmetry, Vitruvian proportions, and classical forms, often with rich materials. New Formalist structures featured minimalist geometries and massing, sometimes with more decorative elements than other modern offshoots. New Formalism was generally reserved for civic, institutional, or cultural buildings for their classic proportionality and form, monumental stature, and often luxurious materials.

Common features of the New Formalism style include:

- Use of traditionally rich materials such as travertine, marble, and granite or man-made materials that mimic their luxurious qualities;
- Buildings are usually set on a podium;
- Designed to achieve modern monumentality;
- Embraces classical precedents, such as arches, colonnades, classical columns, and entablatures;
- Smooth wall surfaces;
- Delicacy of details;
- Formal landscape; use of pools, fountains, and a sculpture within a central plaza.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES OF THE MERRILL LYNCH BUILDING

Contributing Elements

The Merrill Lynch Building is an exceptional example of a custom-designed modernist commercial structure designed in the New Formalist style. Very few exterior changes have occurred since it was completed in 1971. It exhibits numerous extant character-defining features, including:

- Monumental, flat-roofed two-story structure inspired by the classical style of the Pseudoperipteral temple. This style featured freestanding columns in the front of the building, supporting a colonnade, with engaged columns surrounding the structure on the sides and back.
- Squared white-painted plaster columns (the steel posts are hidden inside), with vertical “U”-shaped brushed aluminum decorative channels. The columns have dark, much smaller blocks, top and bottom, giving the columns a startling effect of not supporting the roof.
- Wide, white-painted plaster fascia emulating a classical but simplified and contemporary entablature. The fascia is embellished with vertical “U”-shaped brushed aluminum channels, in line with the same vertical channels in the columns directly below.
- Recessed lighting and anodized bronze can downlights on the ceiling of the colonnade.
- Tan split-faced block walls and podium.
- Concrete paving embedded with tan tile arranged in a geometric pattern at building entrances.
- Solar glass panels and clerestories.
- Four mature olive trees specimens at the entrance to the parking lot, and a single mature olive at the southwest corner of the building.
- Mature California fan palms in the parking lot.
- Concrete-curbed planting beds in the rear parking lot.
- Tan split-face block walls enclose the property.

Non-Contributing Elements

- Bronze anodized aluminum and bronze-tinted solar glass entry doors, which replace the Ackerman Panelcarve doors and transom.

- Large-scale bronze wall sculpture by artist Abbott Pattison, which previously hung on the wall of the Spa Hotel. Though it is an important work of art that must be preserved, it is not original to the period of significance of 1971.
- Desert landscaping which replaced the original palette of hardy, drought-tolerant Mediterranean climate shrubs and groundcovers.

Changes Over Time

From the 1971 completion of the Merrill Lynch Building until the 2014 conversion to an Eisenhower facility, the only changes that took place (other than routine reroofing and the replacement of the entry doors) happened inside the building, with various reconfiguration projects to suit the needs of the tenants.



In this photograph taken at a round table discussion in early 2014, the rehabilitation architect, Joost Bende, AIA (standing), looks at Donald Wexler's 1970 drawings of his Merrill Lynch Building. Looking on from left are Mary Wexler, Wexler's daughter-in-law, Dr. Lauren Weiss Bricker, and Sidney Williams. Courtesy Desert Sun.

2014: RESTORATION/CONVERSION

Seeking to meet the growing needs of its patients and expand its reach into Palm Springs, Eisenhower Health embarked on a search for a location that would bring its specialized medical services closer to the Palm Springs community. Patients often found it inconvenient to travel to the main hospital in Rancho Mirage, mainly when their doctors were based in Palm Springs. Additionally, the demand for clinic services in Palm Springs increased.

According to Martin Massiello, who was executive vice president and chief operating officer at the time (he is now president and CEO), "When we started looking for a building, there were a couple of things that we had in our heads about creating a space for a multi-specialty clinic. One was that we wanted to be in a space that

was really a kind of iconic Palm Springs space. Because our campaign is all about the fact that we're here in your neighborhood. So we wanted a building that was familiar to people."¹⁵

Donald Wexler's classic former Merrill Lynch Building, then vacant, emerged as the ideal choice to fulfill Eisenhower Health's vision. The organization engaged in extensive negotiations, seeking Wexler's input and showing great respect for his iconic work, "one of my favorites," he told *Palm Springs Life* in 2015.¹⁶ Once the building was secured, the Eisenhower team engaged architect Joost Bende, AIA, president of Pacific 33 Architects, based in San Diego. Collaborating with Wexler, the building would be wholly re-envisioned in this adaptive reuse. According to Bende, "It's an architectural masterpiece. We're recognizing the great historic stock of the architectural diamonds we have out there and it's important to preserve them."¹⁷ Massiello agreed, explaining, "You'd never know that the inside of this was ticker-tapes and a financial institution. But we kept the integrity of the building, and totally re-purposed it. And it can be done. That's the whole controversy in Palm Springs. Buyers buy these buildings, and then decide, 'Oh, my god, I have to tear this whole thing down. I can't re-purpose it. But you can.'"¹⁸

The planned rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Merrill Lynch Building garnered much positive attention and press, with articles in *Palm Springs Life* and the *Desert Sun*. After the interior of the building had been gutted and before work began, the public was invited for one last chance to see the stripped interior at a Modernism Week event in February of 2014, a lecture "discussing the influence of Wexler's work and why the building is one of his most admired designs."¹⁹ According to Sidney Williams, "the building had been completely gutted, but they carved out a space with black plastic sheeting, to create a sort of room, where Lauren Bricker and I did our presentation. Don was so humble, but so pleased with what was happening to the building. Marty and his partner were really keen that this was a Wexler building, and Don was really pleased about that."²⁰

The restoration and conversion of the Merrill Lynch Building into Eisenhower Health's Palm Springs clinic went beyond aesthetics. Joost Bende and his team at the architectural firm Pacific 33 in San Diego deeply understood how design could impact health, believing that their intentional approach to design aligned with evidence-based design, which recognizes the profound impact of the environment of designed spaces on patient outcomes and overall well-being.²¹

"We're trying to sort of bring it back to the way it was," said Eisenhower Medical Center's chief operating officer, Marty Massiello. "This space, because it's clean and modern, I think, lends itself well to the healing environment."²²

After a significant \$4.5 million restoration project, the transformation was complete. The once-vacant building now serves as Eisenhower Health's Palm Springs clinic, offering the community a comprehensive range of specialty services.



Architect Donald Wexler, left, and artist Jerry Ackerman, right, in front of a pair of Ackerman Panelcarve doors, which were intended to replace a missing pair which had originally served as the entrance to the Merrill Lynch Building. Photo courtesy Gary and Mary Wexler.



This large bronze wall sculpture by artist Abbott Pattison once hung on the Spa Hotel, 1963, designed by architect William Cody.



Photo from Desert Sun, April 22, 1963. See below for caption information.

The photograph above right ran in the *Desert Sun* on April 22, 1963. At the time it was printed, the caption read:

DEDICATION of an original work of art symbolizing the role the American Indian played in the development of Palm Springs, Calif., has marked the opening, Sunday, April 21, 1963, of the Palm Springs Spa Hotel. The 14-foot bronze bas-relief of Indian totemic figures was executed for the hotel by noted sculptor Abbott Pattison, whose works are on view in such collections as the Phoenix Art Museum, La Jolla Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, D.C., Notre Dame University and other places. It adorns an exterior wall of the new hotel and mineral springs facility on the site of the original mineral springs which gave the community its name. Shown at the dedication are Pattison (left), Mrs. Aileen Miguel, chairman of the Agua Caliente Indian Council, and Samuel Banowitz, president of National Properties, Inc., hotel owners.²³

Accompanying the photograph, the *Desert Sun* published this article about artist Abbott Pattison and his large bronze wall sculpture, which had been recently installed on the newly completed Spa Hotel.

Symbolic Art of Pattison Will Grace New Spa Hotel

Creation of an original work of art symbolizing the role the American Indian played in the development of Palm Springs by one of the world's leading sculptors, may well make Palm Springs Spa Hotel, "the healthiest hotel in the world," one of the most beautiful as well. The art piece is a 14-foot bronze bas-relief of Indian totemic figures by Abbott Pattison, a Chicago sculptor who has achieved international fame for his artistry. It adorns an exterior wall of the new \$2,500,000 hotel, located in the heart of the desert resort playground on the site of the original mineral springs which gave the community its name. "The design of my sculpture," says Pattison, "is a fairly abstract one of two human figures, suggesting a certain amount of Indian lore. There are also several suggested animal figures in it." Pattison said he has not yet decided on a name for the piece. "Much time and thought must be given to selecting just the proper name for such a creation," he admitted. Pattison was commissioned to create the art work by Samuel W. Banowitz, president of National Properties, Inc., developers of the Palm Springs Spa Hotel and Mineral Springs. National Properties is a real estate development firm with offices in New York, Chicago and Beverly Hills. After preliminary sketches and designs were completed, Pattison spent six months in building the one-ton figure. He then shipped the molds to Florence, Italy, where it was cast in bronze. Why Italy? "Most of the world's leading sculptors use Italian foundries to cast major pieces," he answered. "They have old, established, experienced facilities and workmen there. In fact, Florence has one of the few foundries in the world where a project of this magnitude can be done." Pattison, who resides in Chicago with his wife and four children, is recognized as one of the leading sculptors of our day. His creations are on view in the Phoenix Art Museum, the courtyard of the La Jolla Museum, the lobby of the LaSalle-Jackson Building in Chicago, the California Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, DC. His works are in collections at Notre Dame University, Brandeis University, and the University of Georgia.²⁴

Other Sources Consulted

- Historic Resources Group. *City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*. Pasadena, 2015 (Final Draft, December 2018).
- Architectural Resources Group. *City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco, 2004.
- Historic Site Preservation Board. *Inventory of Historic Structures*. Palm Springs, 2001.
- www.newspapers.com (*Desert Sun* and *Los Angeles Times*).

- City of Palm Springs (Planning and Building Departments).
- Ancestry.com.
- Palm Springs Historical Society.
- Riverside County Assessor's Office.

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*. These include the following:

- Native American Settlement to 1969
- Early Development (1884-1918)
- Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)
- Palm Springs During World War II (1939-1945)
- Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)

EVALUATION:

CRITERION 1 – Significant Events - The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community: The Merrill Lynch Building is not affiliated with significant events and **does not qualify under Criterion 1.**

CRITERION 2 – Significant Persons - The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state, or local history: The Merrill Lynch Building is not affiliated with significant persons and **does not qualify under Criterion 2.**

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

CRITERION 3 - The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history: The Merrill Lynch Building, completed in 1971, exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historic context of the "Post-World War II Palm Springs" period. The custom-designed commercial structure represents a prime example of significant Post-war architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally known. As designed by master architect Donald Wexler, the structure is an excellent example of the Midcentury Modern style for which he had become highly respected and sought-after. Here, Wexler uses the New Formalist style to convey a financial institution's strength and stability. Examples of New Formalist architecture are rare in Palm Springs, and the Merrill Lynch Building is an outstanding example. The Merrill Lynch Building is an early example of the Modern style of commercial architecture that defines the Palm Springs School. As such, the building may be viewed as an essential component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important Modern 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.**

CRITERION 4 - The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction: The Merrill Lynch Building, built with a steel frame and with basic materials such as split-face block, plaster, aluminum, and glass, does not have anything so unique to elevate it to embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Therefore, the Merrill Lynch Building does not qualify for listing as a **Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 4.**

Criterion 5: (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).

Master architect Donald Wexler was widely admired and respected by his peers, and his body of work, including his early partner Richard Harrison, is impressive. His architectural oeuvre has received scholarly attention with the publication of a book documenting his life, artistry, and career. Wexler was also the focus of an exhibition at the Palm Springs Art Museum.

High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. The structure designed by Wexler is eligible under the modern architecture theme because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the New Formalist style. These attributes include a two-story flat-roofed building inspired in form by the Pseudoperipteral Temple of Classical architecture. Raised on a podium, the wide plaster fascia emulates an entablature supported by squared and embedded columns. The walls are contemporary tan split-face block, the color and texture rooting the building to its site. As a custom structure artfully designed by Wexler, this building rises to a master architect's level with high artistic values. Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics representing the Midcentury Modern style and its high artistic values, **the structure 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 structure **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 Merrill Lynch Building is not expected to deliver information essential to the national, state or local history or prehistory. Hence, the structure **does not qualify under Criterion 7.**

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds The Merrill Lynch Building eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 (C.1.a.) paragraphs (iii and v) of the local ordinance's seven criteria.

INTEGRITY

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 understanding a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (convey their significance) or do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To maintain historic integrity, a property will always possess several aspects, and usually most. Retaining 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.

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create a property's form, plan, space, structure, and style. 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. The design includes elements such as space organization, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historical functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; the arrangement of spaces; the pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Merrill Lynch Building's essential elements of form, plan, space, structure, configuration, and style have remained almost entirely intact. Similarly, the structural system; and the type, amount, and style of detailing have survived with a considerable portion intact. Donald Wexler's Late Formalist architecture is a masterful contemporary interpretation of classical architecture. The restoration has only strengthened the integrity of the design.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements combined or deposited during a period and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveal the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of materials and technologies. ***The Merrill Lynch Building's materials successfully represent the best of Midcentury Modern design, with high-quality but simple split-face block, aluminum, solar glass, and plaster. All of Wexler's original materials choices, except for the Ackerman Panelcarve front doors, remain intact and have been restored.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a 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 construction methods, plain finishes, or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is essential 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 Merrill Lynch Building used relatively common building materials and artistry to create an uncommonly exceptional building. The Merrill Lynch Building does not qualify for the aspect of workmanship.***

LOCATION

Location is the place where a historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often essential to understand why it was created, or something happened. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historical events and persons. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historical associations is destroyed if the property is moved. ***The Merrill Lynch Building remains in its original location, as part of the Palm Springs Financial and Commercial District, and therefore qualifies under this aspect.***

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 primary physical conditions under which a property was built and its intended functions. In addition, how a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The Merrill Lynch Building was designed to conform to the existing character of Palm Springs' commercial district, with its concentrated group of financial structures. Beginning in the 1950s, and continuing into the 1970s, some of the finest architects created a collection of Palm Springs' most distinctive commercial buildings. That setting and context remain intact, and the Merrill Lynch Building is a significant contributor.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of a particular period's aesthetic or historical sense. 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 to the feeling of agricultural life in the nineteenth century. ***The Merrill Lynch Building is situated on a prominent block in the downtown commercial district of Palm Springs. The custom-designed contemporary commercial building conveys the feeling of the Midcentury Modern period for which Palm Springs is internationally known and is a rare and fine example of the New Formalist style. The Merrill Lynch Building has an imposing scale, and its presence still blends well into this unique neighborhood. Accordingly, the Merrill Lynch Building retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historical 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 eighteenth century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is insufficient to support a property's eligibility for the National Register. ***The Merrill Lynch Building is not associated with important historic events or persons, and therefore does not qualify under association.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: This integrity analysis confirms that the site and structures of the Merrill Lynch Building still possess five aspects of integrity. Donald Wexler's masterful interpretation of the New Formalist style resulted in an imposing contemporary temple, conveying a sense of stability and strength appropriate for a financial institution. Wexler's design has remained almost entirely unchanged since it was completed in 1971, its integrity strengthened by a thoughtful restoration and adaptive reuse, with the input of Donald Wexler himself. He was delighted with the outcome. The Merrill Lynch Building is an essential contributor to the historic Palm Springs Financial District and is worthy of designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.

APPENDICES

I Owner's Letter of Support

May 18, 2021

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

Dear Honorable Board,

As the current joint owners of the Eisenhower Health Center building (historic name, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Building) located at 415 South Palm Canyon Drive, we enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Resource designation of my property by the City of Palm Springs. I have asked the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to assist us in the preparation of the required nomination paperwork.

If you have any questions, please contact us at scottptimberlake@icloud.com.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

1C08704A36174A0...

Scott P. Timberlake, Trustee
The Scott Paul Timberlake Revocable Living Trust dated July 16, 1998

DocuSigned by:

1C08704A36174A0...
Anne Krizman

II Assessor's Map and Aerial

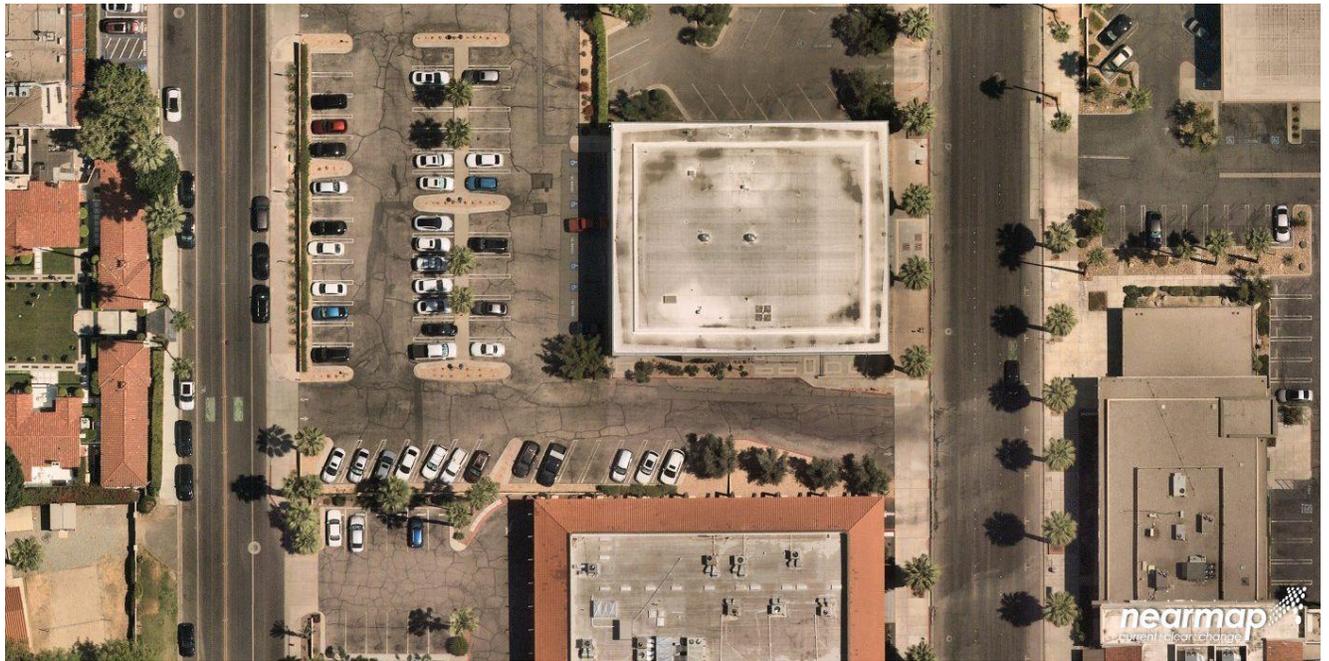
Riverside County, CA - Community: Property Search
Property ID Number (PIN/APN): 513213001



General Information

Property ID Number (PIN/APN)	513213001
Owner	More Information

Property Address	415 S PALM CANYON DR
Property Type	Office - General
Tax Rate Area (TRA)	011-008 PALM SPRINGS
Approximate Lot Size	40,075 SqFt / 0.920 acres
Legal Description	LOT 5 BLK 18 MB 009/432 SD MAP OF PALM SPRINGS AND LOTS 7, 8 & 9 MB 012/100 H & W TR FOR TOTAL DESCRIPTION SEE ASSESSORS MAPS



Property Address	415 S PALM CANYON DR PALM SPRINGS, CA 92264
APN	513213001

III Building Permits

Building Permits

Date	Owner	Permit Type	Description of Work
01-06-70	El Encanto	n/a	Remove gunite concrete swimming pool structure and fill cavity with earth fill (approx. 100 cu. Yds.) Remove all existing buildings from site by means of demolition or hauling or by moving under specified permit as required. (Note on permit says site cleared 03-10-70)
04-24-70	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith	Building	Plan check commercial office building
05-05-70	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith	Building	Foundation Permit Only
05-08-70	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith	Building	Construct 2 story commercial office building. Masonry, frame and steel constr. Compo. Roof.
05-27-70	Merrill Lynch Bldg	Electrical	1 temporary service.
06-16-70	Merrill Lynch	Plumbing	7 lavatories, 8 toilets, 7 sinks, 2 drinking fountains, 1 water piping, 1 water heater, 5 gas outlets, 7 rainwater drains.
08-10-81	Merrill Lynch Bldg.	Building	Reroof.
11-10-81	Merrill Lynch	Building	Install new water heater
01-19-84	Merrill Lynch	Building	Remodeling existing space; removing some of the existing partitions and adding new partitions, including mechanical, electrical, wallcovering, carpeting, etc., as required.
02-02-84	Merrill Lynch	Building	Interior remodel of office suite. Permit to include electrical, plumbing, and mechanical work. Signage requires planning dept. approval and a separate permit.
05-03-85	Merrill Lynch	Building	Re roof per city specs.
07-20-94	Howard Rosin	Building	Tenant improvement and remodel of restrooms. 54 existing fixtures being removed. 41 new fixture units being installed. No connection fee due.

02-03-97	Pacific Commercial	Building	Remove existing roof and reroof with class B hot mop built up roof. 1 layer 28# fiberglass base, hot mop 2 layers 11# fiberglass and one 72# fiberglass cap sheet.
01-16-14	Realty Trust	Building	Non structural demo to prepare for remodel. Sewer fixture unit count required prior to removal of any plumbing fixtures.
08-18-14	Realty Trust	Building	Remodel of existing office building for Eisenhower medical offices. Removing 46 fixtures units. New total will be 87 fixture units. Charged for difference of: 41 fixture units.
09-22-14	Realty Trust	Building	Clean and prepare existing roof and reroof with singly ply roof system.
04-07-15	Eisenhower Medical	Building	Relocate trash enclosure gates and infill existing opening.

IV Historic Images



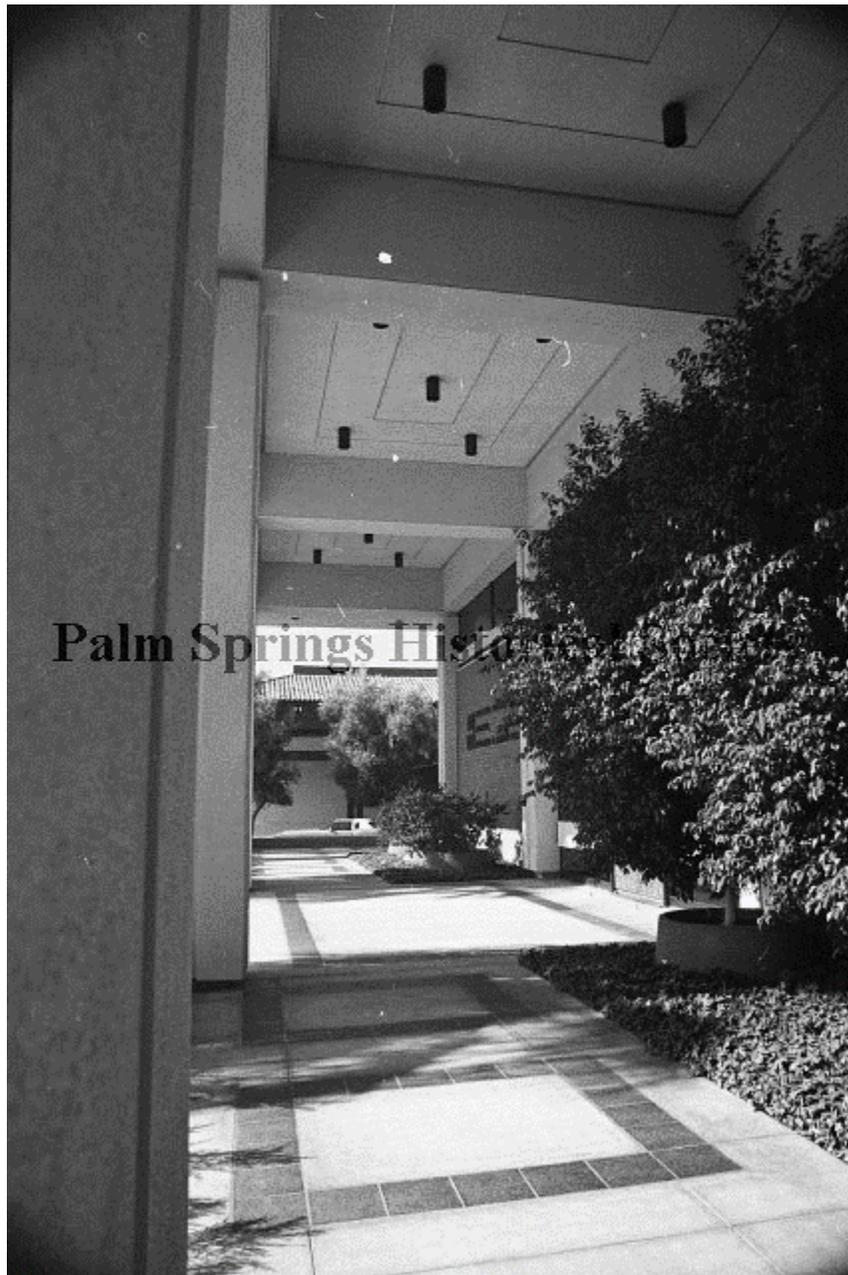
The Merrill Lynch Building shortly after completion. Photograph from the book “Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler.”



Merrill Lynch Building, circa 1980. Photo courtesy Cal Poly Pomona College of Environmental Design Archives.

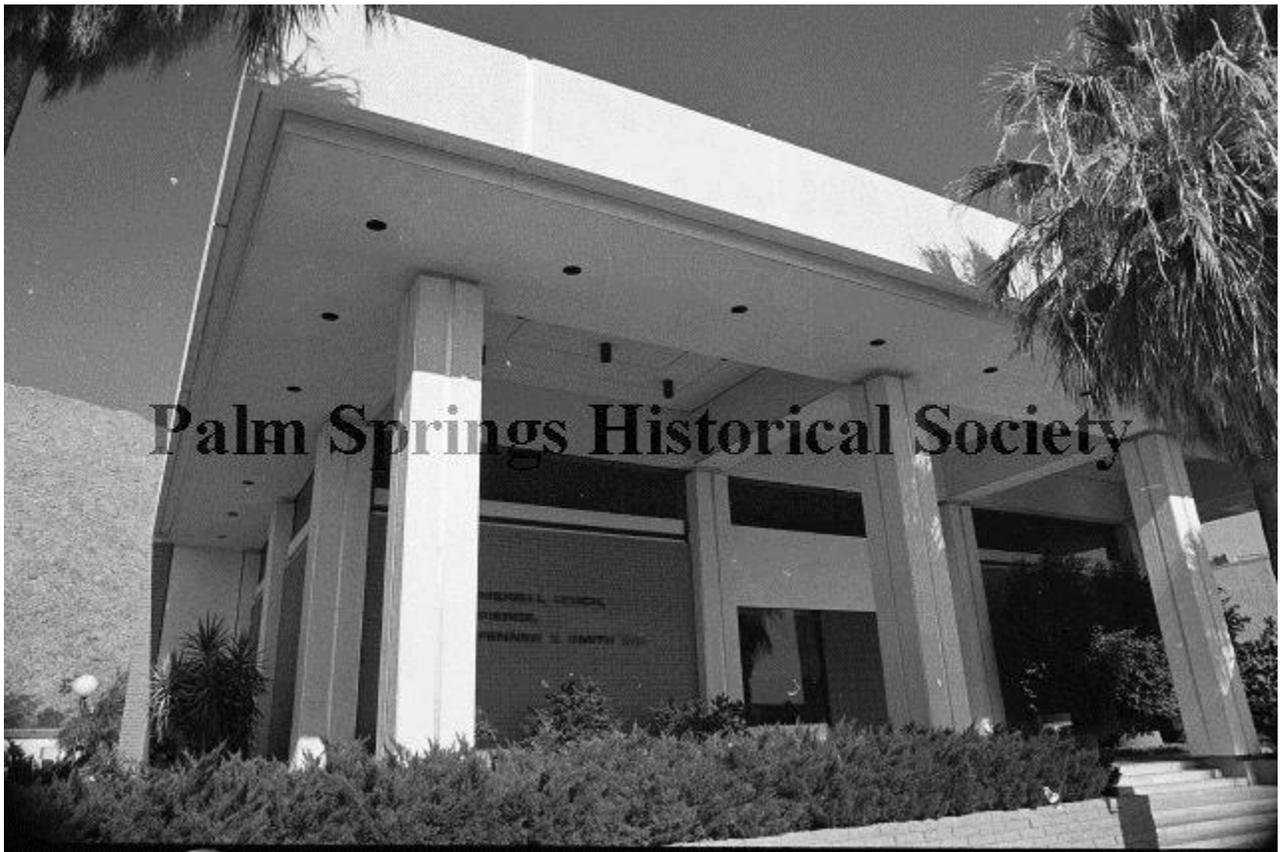


Merrill Lynch Building, circa 1980. Photo courtesy Cal Poly Pomona College of Environmental Design Archives.



Palm Springs Historic

This early view shows the colonnade. Note the square glazed tile embedded in the concrete floor; the squared columns; the bronze-tinted anodized aluminum downlights. Photograph courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.



In this early photograph, the long line of juniper planted at the top of the podium creates a long, green, architectural landscape feature. Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.

V Contemporary Images



The east elevation of the Merrill Lynch Building faces Palm Canyon Drive. Photograph by the author, June 2022.



Concrete steps lead up the podium from Palm Canyon Drive to the colonnade. Note the original downlights, a Wexler signature. Photograph by the author, June 2022.



The ceiling of the colonnade has recessed lighting at the perimeter, with five bronze aluminum downlights between each column. Incised lines add decorative detail. Photograph by the author, June 2022.



Squared columns with brushed aluminum “U”-channel trim, with matching trim on the fascia. The original juniper has been replaced with a spiky row of yucca plants. Photograph by author June 2022.



The south façade, showing the tan split-face brick podium, the same brick on the walls, the embedded columns that encircle the structure, the columns supporting the colonnade. Note Abbott Pattison wall sculpture. Photograph by the author June 2022.



Tan split-face brick, off-white-painted plaster, brushed aluminum, and bronze-tinted solar glass were the materials chosen by Wexler for the Merrill Lynch Building. Photograph by the author June 2022.



Bronze wall sculpture by artist Abbott Pattison once adorned the Spa Hotel. This is not an original feature and was added in the 2014 restoration. Photograph by the author June 2022.



This portion of the building bumps out to the south of the main structure and has entry doors on the east and west sides. Note the tan glazed tiles embedded in the concrete. Photograph by the author June 2022.



One of the squared embedded columns, created with off-white-painted plaster, embedded with a brushed aluminum “U”-channel. Note the dark-painted smaller blocks, which are at the top and bottom of the columns, giving the illusion of weightlessness. Photograph by the author June 2022.



The rear (west) façade with embedded columns supporting entablature (fascia), with walls of tan block, off-white-painted plaster band with bronze-tinted solar glass clerestories. Photograph by the author, June 2022.



The west façade showing the parking lot with its two pair of California fan palms (original), and tan split-face block wall which encloses the site. Photograph courtesy Google Maps.



The rear parking lot, with the original distinctive concrete curbs and planting beds. Photographs courtesy Google Maps.

VI Biography of Abbott Pattison



Artist Abbott Pattison, 1960s. Photograph courtesy the University of Chicago.

Abbott Pattison, a renowned American artist, achieved international acclaim for his extraordinary talent as a sculptor. His preferred mediums included cast bronze, welded brass, and carved marble. Pattison's artistic journey began in his hometown of Chicago, where he gained recognition through representation by the Fairweather-Hardin Gallery. However, his reputation soon extended nationally, with multiple one-man exhibits in prominent galleries in New York City and, later, representation in Los Angeles and London.

Born on May 15, 1916, Abbott Pattison was the second of seven children born to William and Bonnie Pattison. His father was a well-known real estate developer in the city. At the age of ten, Abbott began attending art classes at The Art Institute of Chicago while studying at the Francis Parker School. He chose to pursue a degree in art at Yale University due to the institution's distinguished art program. At Yale, Pattison received thorough training in classical drawing, fresco painting, and the Sieneese egg tempera style. Eventually, he found his true calling in sculpture.

In 1937, Abbott graduated with a Liberal Arts Degree and continued his education by enrolling in the Master's program at Yale, completing it in 1939 with a Degree in Fine Arts. His exceptional talent earned him first prize among the fifty-two graduates from the art/architecture department, along with a traveling fellowship. He chose to embark on a six-month journey to Northern China and Japan, where he carved Twelve Stations of the Cross for a monastery in China and faced an incident of mistaken identity as a spy in Japan.

With the outbreak of World War II, Pattison returned to the United States and served as a captain in the United States Navy. He commanded various vessels, receiving accolades for his bravery and leadership. After the war, he resumed his artistic pursuits, and by 1946, he was a well-known figure in the art community, having received several awards and accolades for his work. He also joined the faculty of The Art Institute of Chicago as a sculpture instructor.

Abbott Pattison firmly believed that sculptors, irrespective of time and place, share a brotherhood of form and image makers. He drew inspiration from classical Greek and Etruscan forms, infusing elements of these traditions into his abstract bronzes, welded braided figures, and marble carvings. However, he was not limited to sculpture alone, often exhibiting his paintings, watercolors, and terra cotta sculptures alongside his bronze works.

Pattison's artistic journey was one of constant learning and growth. He acknowledged the complexity of being an artist in the modern era, where exposure to various art forms from different cultures challenged artists to incorporate diverse perspectives into their work. His experiences allowed him to embrace an eclectic approach to his art, drawing from the rich history of art forms from across the world.

In 1953, Pattison's work brought him to The University of Georgia as a visiting sculptor, and he returned the following year as a sculptor in residence. During his time there, he created the striking marble sculpture titled "Mother and Child" and a twelve-foot high abstract horse made of welded plate steel known as "The Iron Horse."

Despite his international success, Abbott Pattison remained a humble and dedicated artist. His summers were spent in his home and studio on the coast of Maine, occasionally teaching at The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Winters were dedicated to work in Florence, Italy, where his bronze works were cast, and the rest of the year, he worked in his Chicago studio, occasionally teaching at The Art Institute of Chicago.

Pattison's artistic legacy lives on through more than thirty of his sculptures displayed throughout Chicago and in collections of universities, corporations, and museums worldwide. His art can be found in prestigious institutions such as the Whitney Museum in New York City, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Corcoran Museum in Washington, DC, and many others, including embassies overseas and Buckingham Palace in London.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, 13.
- ² *Vienna to Los Angeles: Two Journeys*, Esther McCoy, Arts + Architecture Press, 1979, 11.
- ³ *Donald Wexler: Architect*, Patrick McGrew, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 18-21.
- ⁴ Richard A. Harrison application for membership, AIA.
- ⁵ SOCIAL EVENTS AT EL MIRADOR, *Desert Sun*, January 31, 1936.
- ⁶ Merrill Lynch advertisement, *Los Angeles Evening Citizen News*, February 5, 1969.
- ⁷ "Merrill Lynch to Build Own Office Building," *Los Angeles Evening Citizen News*, November 17, 1969.
- ⁸ Sale Signals Demise Of El Encanto Hotel, *Desert Sun*, November 6, 1969.
- ⁹ Desert Beautiful Gives Awards, *Desert Sun*, May 12, 1972.
- ¹⁰ Congratulatory ad from Coble & Wessman Construction, *Desert Sun*, December 18, 1970.
- ¹¹ Merrill Lynch to open second desert office RM location to house 14 brokers, *Desert Sun*, March 2, 1985.
- ¹² Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, July 29, 2023.
- ¹³ PERIPHERAL VERSUS PSEUDOPERIPHERAL: When looking at a temple, if every column is freestanding and not touching any wall, then it is said that the temple is Peripteral. However, if even just a few of the columns are not freestanding and are making contact with a wall, then the temple is said to be Pseudoperipteral, as in the Merrill Lynch Building.
- ¹⁴ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, July 29, 2023. More on Jerry and Evelyn Ackerman, from the Ackerman Modern website: "Evelyn designed and Jerry produced their first group of carved wood bas-relief wall panels in 1959. These included St. George and the Dragon and Adam and Eve. Hand carving was time consuming, and the Ackermans recognized the need to increase production while maintaining a handcrafted feel. Turning to the furniture industry, they found Maurey Spinak, a master woodcarver who had a small business employing multiple spindle-carving machines. Each piece was roughed out by machine and finished by hand carvers, providing a very close match to the hand-carved original. Evelyn created a series of carved wood designs for architectural applications that became the basis for Panelcarve in the early 1960's. The designs were executed as modular panels with tongue-and-groove detail so they could be assembled easily for diverse architectural and interior design applications. The panels were used extensively in hotels, restaurants, office buildings, schools, and homes. The Ucello series designed by Evelyn was used on the doors and transom of the landmark Alan Ladd building in Palm Springs in 1971. When Panelcarve later became Forms+Surfaces, the Ackermans continued designing for the company and became its distributor. In 1971 Evelyn designed a series of Animal Woodblocks that were carved in thick redwood. The 20 different designs, marketed by both ERA and Panelcarve, worked individually and grouped. The woodblocks were included in the "California Design XI" exhibition and the book California Design. The Ackermans later introduced a series of plaques with a blank lower portion for house numbers, plant holders, and the like, as well as carved wood gourmet accessories such as knife holders and spice racks. All were popular gift items for specialty stores, department stores, and catalogs." (<https://www.ackermanmodern.com/studio/wood-carvings/> - accessed August 6, 2023).
- ¹⁵ "Older Buildings Can Be Adapted For Second Life," *Desert Sun*, May 23, 2015.
- ¹⁶ "A Healthy Restoration," *Palm Springs Life*, accessed July 29, 2023 (<https://www.palmspringslife.com/a-healthy-restoration/>)
- ¹⁷ "Merrill Lynch building conceived by Donald Wexler to undergo restoration," *Desert Sun*, February 10, 2014. (accessed online: <https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/entertainment/events/modernism/2014/02/10/merrill-lynch-building-conceived-by-donald-wexler-to-undergo-restoration/5355883/>).
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Telephone interview with Sidney Williams, August 3, 2023.
- ²¹ "A Healthy Restoration," *Palm Springs Life*, accessed July 29, 2023 (<https://www.palmspringslife.com/a-healthy-restoration/>)
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ *Desert Sun*, Volume 36, Number 232, 3 May 1963.
- ²⁴ Ibid.