

Theodore & Claire Morse Residence

1197 Abrigo Road
Palm Springs, CA 92262

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



Prepared by
Ron & Barbara Marshall
for the
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Acknowledgements

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Cover photograph: Courtesy Dan Chavkin

Theodore & Claire Morse Residence
CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE 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.”

On December 5, 2014 the PSPF board of directors, in consultation with the owners of the Theodore & Claire Morse Residence, assigned the task of writing the residence’s Class 1 Historic Site nomination to board member Ron Marshall.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE: The Theodore & Claire Morse Residence (hereinafter referred to as the “Morse Residence”) was designed by the architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel and erected by the Alexander Construction Company in 1960. In 1961, the Morses commissioned architect Harold “Hal” Levitt to design a major addition and alteration of the residence. As an important and largely intact example of a modern structure, the private residence exhibits numerous stylistic markers that place it within the historic context of Palm Springs’ modern period.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA: The Morse Residence has not previously been evaluated for Class 1 Historic Site eligibility. However, the residence has been prominently featured in four *Palm Springs Life* magazine articles from September 1970, April 2004, February 2006 and February 2015.

A brief summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 1 - **Events:** This criterion recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends. In this nomination, the applicable “pattern of events” is the gradual rise of Palm Springs’ prominence in midcentury architectural excellence. The Morse Residence is an outstanding example of residential design and the construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert modernism. The nominated private residence is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. *The Morse Residence is associated with this pattern of events, and is associated as well with Criterion 3 for its ability to exemplify a particular period of the national, state or local history. Therefore, the residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 1.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 3, 4 & 5 - **Design/Construction:** The Morse Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the modernist style, including overall horizontality, a combination flat and low-pitched roof, inexpensive mass-produced materials like concrete block, man-made and natural materials suitable to the harsh desert environment (steel, aluminum, glass, concrete stone, etc.) and an architectural design that strives to blur the line between the indoors and outdoors. Additionally, the work of architect Hal Levitt, and to a less significant degree the firm of Palmer & Krisel, must be catalogued as the work of a “Master” architect because of their records of architectural excellence. *Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criteria 3, 4 & 5.*

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds the Morse Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Site under 8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 1, 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance’s seven criteria. Additionally, the Morse Residence retains a moderate degree of architectural integrity.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

**Department of
Planning Services**
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm
Springs, CA 92262
Telephone: 760-323-8245
Fax: 760-322-8360

HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION

The City of Palm Springs allows for the local designation of historic buildings, sites or districts within the City (Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.) This application packet is to be completed in order to request a historic designation. For additional information, please contact the Department of Planning Services at 760-323-8245 or planning@palmsspringsca.gov.

APPLICATION

The completed application and required materials may be submitted to the Department of Planning Services. The submittal will be given a cursory check and will be accepted for filing only if the basic requirements have been met. A case planner will be assigned to the project and will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and all exhibits to ensure that all required information is adequate and accurate. Incomplete applications due to missing or inadequate information will not be accepted for filing. Applicants may be asked to attend scheduled meetings pertaining to their project. These will include the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and the City Council.

HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD (HSPB)

Once the application has been determined to be complete, the HSPB will review the application to determine whether the site meets the minimum qualifications for designation pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. If such determination is made, a public hearing will be scheduled for a future meeting.

A public hearing will be held by the HSPB to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the HSPB will make a recommendation to the City Council. Notice will be provided as indicated below.

CITY COUNCIL

After receiving the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board, a public hearing will be held by the City Council to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the requested Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the City Council will then conditionally approve, deny, or approve the application as submitted. The City Council's decision on the application is final.

NOTIFICATION

Prior to consideration of the application by the HSPB and the City Council, a notice of public hearing for a Historic Site Designation request will be mailed to all property owners within 400 feet of the subject property a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the hearing dates.



Office Use Only

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
Department of Planning Services

HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION

TO THE APPLICANT:

Your cooperation in completing this application and supplying the information requested will expedite City review of your application. Application submitted will not be considered until all submittal requirements are met. Staff may require additional information depending upon the specific project. Please submit this completed application and any subsequent material to the Department of Planning Services.

This form is to be used to nominate individual properties for Class 1 or 2 historic designations, or to nominate the formation of historic districts. Applicants are encouraged to review two bulletins from the US Department of Interior for additional information:

- “How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form” (National Register Bulletin 16A / <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>); and
- “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (National Register Bulletin 15; <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions in the Bulletins.

1. Property Information

Historic name: Theodore & Claire Morse Residence
 Other names: Not applicable
 Address: 1197 Abrigo Road, Palm Springs, CA 92262
 Assessor Parcel Number: 505092007-2
 Owner’s Name: Gary & Joan Gand
 Owner’s Address: 1197 Abrigo Road
 City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92262
 Telephone:
 Fax number: Not applicable
 E-mail address:

2. Classifications

Ownership of Property. Fill as many boxes as apply.

- Private
- Public - Local
- Public - State
- Public - Federal

Category of Property. Fill only one box.

- Building (Note can include site)
- District
- Site (Exclusive of Structures)
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property. TOTAL must include at least One (1) in Contributing Column.

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
<hr/>		
1		Total

If the building or site is part of a larger group of properties, enter the name of the multiple-property group; otherwise enter "N/A".

"N/A"

3. Use or Function

Historic Use or Function: Private residence

Current Use or Function: Private residence

4. Description

Architect: Hal Levitt (original structure designed by Palmer & Krisel)

Construction Date and Source: 1960, modified 1961 (per city permit records)

Architectural Classification: International Style - Desert Regional Variation

Construction Materials:

Foundation:	Concrete slab on grade	Roof:	Composition
Walls:	Frame wood construction covered with stucco, native stone and concrete block	Other:	N/A

Building Description: *Attach a description of the Building/Site/District, including all character defining features, on one or more additional sheets.*

5. Criteria (Fill all boxes that apply for the criteria qualifying the property for listing.)

Events

(1) Fill this box if the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Persons

(2) Fill this box if the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Architecture

(3) Fill this box if the property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, State or local history, or

(4) Fill this box if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or

(5) Fill this box if the property represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or

(6) Fill this box if the property represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

Archeology

(7) Fill this box if the property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Other Criteria Considerations (Check all the boxes that apply.)

- the property is owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- the property has been removed from its original location.
- the property is a birthplace
- the property is a grave or cemetery.
- the property is a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- the property is commemorative
- the property is less than 50 years of age or has achieved significance within the past 50 years

6. Statement of Significance

Summary

The Morse Residence, first owned by Theodore and Claire Morse, was designed by the architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel and erected by the Alexander Construction Company in the Vista Las Palmas No. 2 tract in 1960. In 1961 the Morses commissioned architect Hal Levitt to design a major expansion of the residence completed by Arc Construction Company.

First Owners, Theodore and Claire Morse

Local Records. Theodore Morse (1906-1969) and Claire Morse (given name Burman) (1910-1991) apparently did not participate in the local social scene as evidenced by no mention of them in the social columns of *Palm Springs Villager* magazines during the 1960s. Additionally, they do not appear in *Palm Springs Personages* (the annually-published hardbound local social registry) for the years 1965, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971 and 1972.

The entry for the couple in the 1961 Palm Springs telephone directory reads as follows: "Morse Theo (Claire) h1197 Abrigo rd". The entry in the 1962 Palm Springs telephone directory is identical but adds the phone number "FA 4-4836".

Other Records. Theodore Morse is identified in the August 24, 1955 edition of the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper as an "apparel manufacturer" and in a January 20, 1967 U.S. Court of Claims document as the "part owner and executive in the business of manufacturing women's lingerie."

Theodore's wife Claire was a more colorful figure. During her lifetime she married well three times. Her first marriage in 1933 was to Chicagoan Nathan Borin who was reported to be a "wealthy art products dealer." The marriage ran into trouble after about a year and then dragged on in divorce court for more than a decade. The nasty divorce battle garnered national newspaper coverage. The media, which referred to Claire as a "Chicago beauty contest winner," breathlessly reported the salacious details of the divorce. Each accused the other of adultery though neither charge was found to have merit. As part of the divorce battle Nathan filed an "alienation of affections" suit against famous Hollywood producer E. M. Asher. Claire was remarried to Chicago banker Harry G. Buchman but was soon widowed upon his death in 1951. Unfortunately, Claire had to return to court again in a lawsuit over the disposition of her second husband's estate. In the legal action, the Buchman family opposed any payment from the estate to Claire on the grounds that she gave up all rights to inheritance under a settlement made in contemplation of a divorce from Harry. Claire then married Theodore Morse. Theodore and Claire found themselves in court in 1959, 1967 and 1974 over income tax matters.

Battling Borins Due For Fight to Finish



Claire Morse (then Claire Borin) and her first husband Nathan Borin were nicknamed the “Battling Borins” in the press due to their contentious divorce (from the November 11, 1937 edition of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*)

Today, the Claire and Theodore Morse Foundation (a philanthropic foundation with over \$3M in reported assets) bears their names. The foundation is a California corporation created on September 26, 1995 (File Number C1949977) currently located at 9200 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 525, Los Angeles, California. The philanthropic foundation was contacted on two occasions by letter and certified letter, and multiple times by phone. Despite these numerous inquiries, the representatives of the foundation were unable to provide any substantive information on the Morses.

In addition to the property in Palm Springs an unsubstantiated source indicates that the Morses may have also owned a unit in Sierra Towers in West Hollywood.

Additional research on the Morses was deemed of limited value as Criterion 2 of the local code (which recognizes properties “associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history”) is not asserted in this nomination.

Additional Owners

Primary records show the chain of ownership for 1197 Abrigo Road as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Owner(s)</u>
October 20, 1960	Theodore & Claire Morse ¹
December [illegible], 1975	David E. Wallace
May 18, 1987	Maurice & Shirley Engleman
October 11, 1999	Mark B. Levine & John C. Williams
June 6, 2002	John C. Williams ²
September 7, 2004	Jim Richardson & Mark Anton
July 7, 2006	Edward F. Limato ³
March 9, 2011	John G. Sacchi & Stephen J. Simoni
October 23, 2013	Gary & Joan Gand

Notes:

¹ The Joint Tenancy Grant Deed was signed by Robert Alexander as Authorized Agent for Las Palmas Estates, a Co-Partnership.

² Sold by Trustee due to Williams' death on July 30, 2004.

³ Sold by Trustee due to Limato's death on July 3, 2010. The most prominent owner in the chain of ownership is "Edward F. Limato" who is most probably Edward Frank "Ed" Limato (1936-2010), a famous American talent agent and a senior vice president at the William Morris Agency. However, because of the other more substantive criteria for designation and Limato's relatively late and brief ownership of the property, Criterion 2 of the local code (which recognizes properties "associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history") is not asserted in this nomination.

The Architect

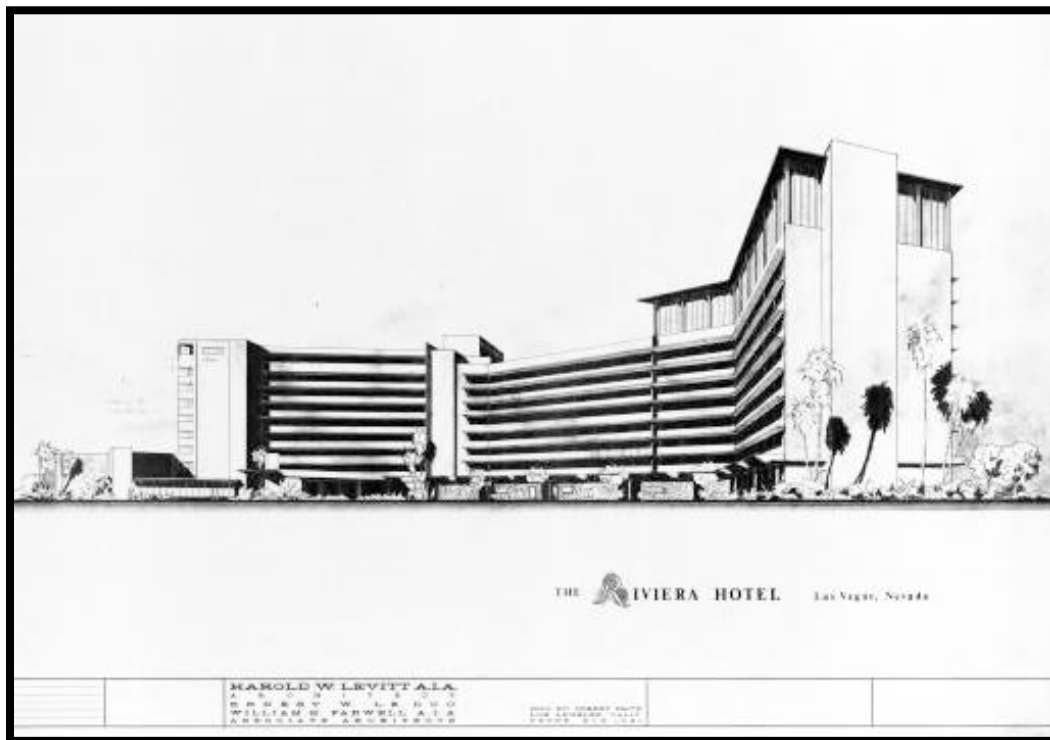
Architect Harold ("Hal") Levitt (1921-2003) was a well-known California architect who gained fame largely as a result of his Hollywood commissions. The most succinct summary of Levitt's career can be found in his obituary which appeared in the April 29, 2003 edition of the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper:

Harold Levitt...[was] a veteran architect who designed homes for the rich and famous, including Walter Mirisch, Steven Spielberg and Lew Wasserman....Levitt, who retired to Reno...[in 2001]...died of natural causes...at his vacation home in Las Vegas....The Wassermans' modern glass-walled mansion may be among the best known of Levitt's creations because of its use over many years as a venue for fund-raising events for politicians and organizations such as the Los Angeles Music Center's Center Theatre Group....But over Levitt's half-century career, the architect also created homes for such show-business personalities as Olivia Newton John, Ross Hunter, Quincy Jones, Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Debbie Reynolds, Lionel Ritchie, Kenny Rogers and Hal Wallis.

[Levitt]...also designed such commercial projects as the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas and the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts & Sciences in Los Angeles....Born Harold Warren Levitt in San Francisco on July 26, 1921, Levitt...earned a bachelor's degree in graphic arts at Stanford University and an architecture degree at the University of Southern California. He based his firm, Levitt, LeDuc & Farwell, in Beverly Hills....Levitt is survived by his wife of 58 years, Jane Spalding Levitt; a son, Lansford, of Reno; [and] a brother, William C. Putney of Monarch Beach....

Hal Levitt started his practice in the early 1950s after working for the famous residential designer Roland Coate and later Burton Schutt.

According to architectural historian Steven Price (author of the soon to be published book *Trousdale Over the Top*), in recent years aficionados of modernist design have brought Hal Levitt back into the limelight. Celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston, MaryKate & Ashley Olsen, Ellen De Generes & Portia DeRossi, and Darren Starr have each famously acquired and updated “Levitts” (later selling them for soaring prices). While many of Levitt’s commissions have been razed or significantly altered, the best of his intact residences are centered in Beverly Hills, specifically in the Trousdale Estates enclave.



Levitt’s Riviera Hotel Project in Las Vegas, Nevada

According to Levitt+Moss Architects (which was established in 2001 by Kyle Moss, AIA upon the closure of Harold W. Levitt and Associates, where Kyle worked alongside Levitt), “Mr. Levitt’s work reflects the best modern design philosophies of mid-century Los Angeles. The intermixing and re-interpenetration of the indoors and outdoors was used extensively in his projects. Large glass surfaces, interior courtyards, and surprising entry sequences exist throughout his residential work and blur the boundary between the interior and exterior.”

Levitt “Archives”

The authors are deeply indebted to architectural historian Steven Price who generously shared various professional papers from architect Hal Levitt’s estate. In a January 17,

2015 email to the authors, Price provides the following information about the disposition of Levitt's professional papers:

When Harold Levitt began to plan his retirement, closing his practice to move to Reno, Nevada (to be closer to son Lans), he attempted to contact each current owner of the properties he'd designed, to see if they wanted the plans he still had on file. In about 70% of the cases, the offer was accepted, and plans, blueprints and drawings shipped out. In approximately 20% of the cases, they were apparently discarded (a "T" notation in the workbooks signifies "Tossed" to the archive directors, but could have meant something far more elegant). Roughly 10% still remain in the Archive's possession--the foundation of the collection that the Directors of the Harold W. Levitt Professional Archive are endeavoring to add to, with the help of owners and historians, to the point where a critical mass [is] acquired.

At that time, the core collection will be transferred to the Architecture & Design Collection at the University of California, Santa Barbara Art Museum, where famed architect, scholar, writer and professor David Gebhard started one of the world's premier architectural resource depositories in 1963.

The Builders

Little is known about Arc Construction Company aside from the fact that they do not appear in local Palm Springs phone books of the era. It is probable that they were outside (e.g., possibly Los Angeles or San Diego) builders brought in to construct the Levitt addition to, and alteration of, the original Alexander-constructed Morse Residence. Interestingly, a surprising number of California companies have used (or still use) the name Arc Construction. Further research on this topic was deemed of marginal importance to this nomination.

Local Architectural and Historical Context

The Morse Residence should be viewed as part of Palm Springs' modernist tract-house building boom which started in earnest with the arrival of George and Robert Alexander in 1955 and effectively ended with their tragic deaths in an airplane accident on November 14, 1965. In *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, author and architect Jim Harlan asserts:

Key to the Alexanders' success was their ability to rely on good architects like Palmer & Krisel and Donald Wexler, whose designs were highlights of many Alexander developments in Palm Springs. As developers the Alexanders wanted a product that sold, and they knew that open, airy plans and clean, Modern lines would sell well with their customers. They were also just as interested in the ability of Bill Krisel and Don Wexler to apply intrinsically Modern concepts such as prefabrication, modularization, and mass production to the task of lowering costs and speeding production. The pragmatism of Modern production did not conflict with the idealism of good design in saving money and increasing profits.

Site Description

Location. The Morse Residence is located on a prominent corner lot in the Vista Las Palmas No. 2 tract. The residence is bounded by Via Vadera to the north, Abrigo Road to the east and two residential parcels to the south and west. The topography of the lot

is relatively flat. A full legal description of the property is provided at Appendix II (i.e., “Lot 1, Vista Las Palmas No. 2, as per map recorded in Book 39 page 72 of Maps, records of Riverside County, California”).



Aerial view of the Morse Residence (oriented north) showing surrounding private residences. (Google Maps)

The Architecture

The Morse Residence is a single-family, two-bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom, 3,711 square foot structure (per assessor) with a combination low-pitch and flat roof. The entry sequence is straightforward beginning with a concrete pathway which terminates in a step-up polished terrazzo concrete pad. The entry door is a subset of a larger element of random-design wood board and batten (this material is used extensively in the interior of the house). Opening the entry door leads to a dramatic interior terrazzo hallway which is 8’8” wide and an impressive 43 feet long on the south side.

The residence’s street-side façade consists of a painted stone wall punctuated (starting from the south) with two 7-foot wide by 8-foot tall garage door openings then the entryway door. Continuing northward, the stone facade is “enhanced” with a grid of concrete screen block which is intended to create visual interest (and some functionality by shading and concealing the front windows). The striking screen block wall successfully breaks the monotony of the long stone facade. The screen block element is composed of 156 individual units of 12”x12”x4” concrete screen block and is 12 units high by 13 units wide. This wall of screen block is anchored and framed vertically with two stone piers which are 14” wide and 28” deep and extend upwards to the roofline. When installed in 1961, this screen block design was commonly referred to as the

“Empress” pattern. A detailed history of this particular screen block pattern and the “Venetian” screen block pattern is contained in Appendix VIII of this nomination.



The Morse Residence’s street-side (east) façade



Southward view of spa (a 1976 addition), pool area and view through sliding glass doors to south patio area. This photograph shows the transparency and seamless indoor-outdoor effect achieved by the Levitt design. (Photograph courtesy Dan Chavkin)

("Venetian" block was used in the construction of the utility room attached to the southeast portion of the residence). For additional commentary about the painted stonework found throughout the interior and exterior of the Morse Residence see "Section 7. Integrity Analysis."

One of the most notable architectural features of the residence is the projecting stone "V" wall on the west side (rear) of the house. This dramatic architectural feature, which is both interesting and aesthetically pleasing, is entirely functional as the structure serves to house two of the three sets of huge aluminum-framed sliding glass "pocket" door systems. These two sliding glass door systems open adjacent to the large southwest patio (consisting of two framed glass doors each 10-feet high by 9'4" long) and the south edge of the pool (consisting of two framed glass doors each 7-foot by 7'10" long). The third pocket door system is adjacent to the east side of the pool and tucks into the stone wall to the north (it also consists of two framed glass doors each 7-foot by 7'10" long). When opened, either singly or in combination, these huge glass doors create a stunningly airy and floating effect which is both unexpected and delightful. This resulting seamless indoor-outdoor transition is one which many modernist architects attempted but few achieved. This particular aspect of the Levitt design is nothing short of masterful.

Levitt adds much drama by "sinking" the living room. This sunken portion includes the bar area (further sunken) adjacent to the pool. Hence the surface of the adjacent pool is effectively at "mid-body" (i.e., about 3-feet high). This unexpected feature (which seems vaguely dangerous---as if the wall might crack at any moment and flood the house with pool water!) is yet another masterfully-executed Levitt feature that reveals both the architect's competence and confidence.

While the combination linear and sinuous shape of the pool might be called "high-design" perhaps the most striking feature of the pool is the round concrete plinth *in* the pool upon which rests a functional stone-clad roof support column.

Surrounding the property are walls made of "Shadowal" (trade name) concrete block.

In summary, the Morse Residence exhibits many features which place it solidly within the modernist canon: overall horizontality, a combination flat and low-pitched roof, inexpensive mass-produced materials like concrete block (e.g., Empress and Venetian pattern concrete screen block, Shadowal concrete block and 8"x8" concrete block), man-made and natural materials suitable to the harsh desert environment (steel, aluminum, glass, concrete and stone), deep eaves to moderate solar radiation and an architectural design that strives to blur the line between the indoors and outdoors.

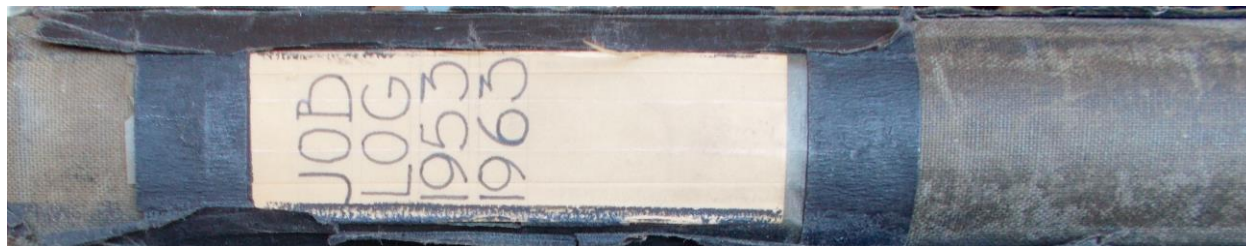
The Levitt Connection

The greatest research challenge of this nomination was unearthing a linkage between architect Hal Levitt and the Morse Residence. As discussed later in this nomination, *Palm Springs Life (PSL)* magazine made numerous references to Levitt in articles which featured the house. However, the *PSL* articles were treated as sometimes unreliable secondary sources.

Fortunately, architectural historian Steven Price was discovered to be in possession of architect Levitt's professional "Job Logs." These primary sources proved to be invaluable and the relevant portions are excerpted. In summary, the job logs reveal that Levitt's project number "6108" (the job numbers are prefixed with the two-digit year) corresponds with city of Palm Springs Building Permit #B3769 (issued on September 26, 1961) which authorized a major 2,500 square foot addition to the house.

Levitt job logs indicate that the architect was involved with two projects at 1197 Abrigo Road in 1965. A "Lanai Remodel" (job number 6508) and a "Maid and carport addition" (job number 6532).

Finally, Levitt job logs show that an "Alteration to fireplace" (job number 8017) and another "addition" (job number 8020) was made to 1197 Abrigo Road in 1980 by which time David E. Wallace owned the house. There is no further information available regarding the extent of this job and the project does not correspond to any extant city permits.



**Levitt's Job Log for years 1953 through 1963
(Courtesy Steven Price)**



**Cover of Levitt's 1953-1963 Job Log
(Courtesy Steven Price)**

MORSE

6108

ALTERATIONS & ADDITION TO THE RESIDENCE
OF MR. & MRS. THEODORE MORSE
1197 ABRIGO ROAD
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

92262

Tubc 55

PLANS ISSUED			RETURNED			
ISSUE DATE	ISSUED TO	SHEETS OR SET	DATE	PLAN	SPEC.	REMARKS
6- -61	OFFICE					
6-19-61	OWNER-SET #1	SET #1				
		#2				
		#3				
		#4				
		#5				
REVISED SETS						
6-20-61	OFFICE	SET #1				
6-20-61	OWNER	SET #2				
6-20-61	COLWELL & MANTOLLO	SET #3				
6-20-61	" "	SET #4				
6-20-61	" "	SET #5				
6-20-61	" "	SET #6				
7-6-61	" "	2 SETS				

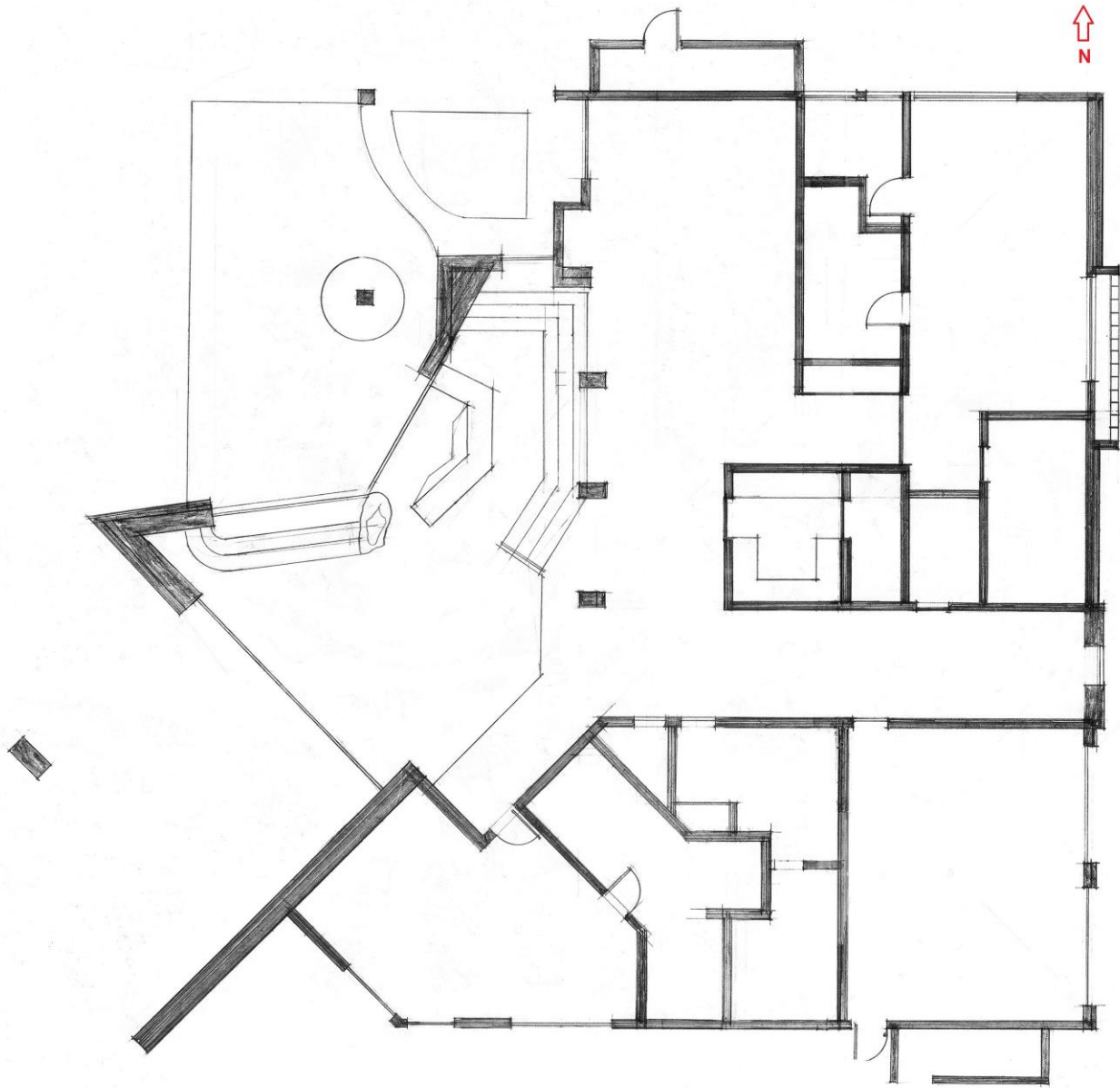
SCHEDULE OF SHEETS			
NUMBER	DATED	TITLE OR DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
1	6-12-61	PLOT PLAN; FOUND PLAN; FOUND DETAILS;	
2	6-12-61	FLOOR PLAN; FOUND DTL. SCHEDULES	
3	6-12-61	EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS	
4	6-12-61	SECTIONS & ROOF PLAN; ROOF FRAMING PLAN; FASCIA DTL. STRUCT. DTL.	
5	6-12-61	INTERIOR ELEVATIONS	
6	6-12-61	INTERIOR ELEVATIONS; MISC DTL'S; DR. & WINDOW DTL.	
7	11-7-61	CHANGE IN EAST ELEV CARPORT	
A-1		ALTERNATE TO INSTR. BEDROOM & BATH	
B	11-15-61	MASTER BDRM & WARDROBE	
AREA		ADDITION - 2261.25 SQ. FT.	
		ALTERATION - 460.0 SQ. FT. 460.0	
10	1/23/62	MASSAGE TABLE DTL'S	
11	12/29/61	BAR DTL'S	
14	3/13/62	HIFI CABINET	
12	2/26/62	REV TO A/C. CLOSET	
13	3/19/62	WOOD GRILLS	
	2/11/62	KITCHEN PLAN & ELEV. (OVER)	

This entry shows the disposition of plans for Job 6108 to various parties (including the owner and architect). Note the reference to a 2261.25 square foot "Addition" and a 460.0 square foot "Alteration" which corresponds roughly to the city building permit #B3769 which authorized a 2500 square foot addition. Most importantly, this document ties Levitt directly to the Morses and the 1197 Abrigo address in Palm Springs.
(Courtesy Steven Price)

CURRENT JOBS				1961
JOB NO.	TB.	CLIENT	TYPE	
✓ 6101	27	SAMUELS	Restaurant (Jerry Lewis)	
6102		HORRELL, DOROTHY	Residence - Hillsborough	
✓ 6103	33	WILSON	Residence #1	
✓ 6104	18	EISENBERG	Residence Remodel	
6105	FIG#2	FARMERS-DALLAS	Office Building	
✓ 6106	28 A	MARTIN, DEAN	TV Room & Alteration	
✓ 6107	18	CROWE	Residence Remodel	
6108	55	MORSE, THEODORE	Residence Addition-Palm Springs	
✓ 6109	29	JONES, ALLAN	Residence	
✓ 6110	29	HALL	Residence	
6111	FIG#3	FARMERS-REDWOOD CITY	Office Building	
6112	NONE	HORRELL, DOROTHY	Residence - Hillsborough	
✓ 6113	30	BURG	Residence	
6114	9	SKOURAS	Residence Addition-Maid's Rm.	
6115	75	HOLT, James	Residence	
✓ 6116	49 A	RIVIERA HOTEL	Las Vegas - Low Rise Bldg @ Pool	
6117	FIG#3	FARMERS-TULSA	Office Building	
6118	FIG#3	FARMERS-HUNTINGTON BEACH PARK	Office Building	
✓ 6119	55	MORSE, THEODORE	Apartment Remodel-Comstock	
✓ 6120	33	KAROFF	Bar Alteration	
6121	NONE	JONES, ALLAN	Residence Remodel - Trousdale	
✓ 6122	33	WILSON	Residence #2 (Redraw)	
6123	34	WASSERMAN	Residence Addition & Projection Rm	
6124	FIG#3	FARMERS-SEATTLE	Office Building	

A page from Levitt's professional archives which includes a summary of his commissions for the year 1961. In addition to the Morse's job 6108, note the many other high-profile clients. (Courtesy Steven Price)

It is important to note that Levitt's architectural drawings for the Morse Residence have not been located (Levitt's notation in his job logs indicates they were in "TB" (probably meaning "tube") 55. Accordingly, much of the information about the 1961 Levitt addition and alteration (and for that matter the 1965 and 1980 Levitt additions and alterations) must be extrapolated from (1) what is known about the original standard Palmer & Krisel floor plan, (2) clues from the limited number of vintage photographs (either on file at the Palm Springs Historical Society or as shown in *PSL* magazine articles over the years) and, (3) various city building permits (the city records, while extensive, appear to be incomplete). This makes an authoritative analysis of the Morse Residence challenging at best but every effort has been made in this nomination to remain fact-based not conjectural. To that end, architect Jim Harlan provided his professional expertise to capture the floor plan of the house as it exists today, using on-site measurements. It is hoped that this effort will be a boon to any future research on the home.



Morse Residence floor plan created by architect Jim Harlan which attempts to capture the rather complex and angular floor plan of the house as it exists today (2015). Harlan made numerous on-site measurements. Because there are no extant floor plans of the 1961 Levitt addition and alteration it is hoped that this documentation will prove useful to any future research on the home.

Permit History

The permit history for the Morse Residence at 1197 Abrigo Road documents the two seminal events in the history of the residence, i.e., the 1960 construction of the house by the Alexander Construction Company and the major Levitt addition and alteration to the house completed in 1961 by Arc Construction.

- Building Permit #B2262 issued on June 9, 1960 to the Alexander Construction Company for a (per permit) 1,500 square foot house and 440 square foot carport (described as “5-room frame and stucco dwelling with carport and comp[osition] roof”). Robert Alexander was listed as the owner.
- Building Permit #B2437 issued on August 1, 1960 for a “16x32 swimming pool.”
- Building Permit #B2895 issued on November 16, 1960 to “remodel/change swimming pool.”
- Building Permit #B2900 issued November 16, 1960 to “change partition arrangement in house under construction.”
- Building Permit #B2966 issued on December 7, 1960 to “construct masonry wall.”
- Building Permit #B2970 issued on December 9, 1960 for “8’ high, 80’ long [masonry wall] along property line.”
- Building Permit #B3769 issued on September 26, 1961 for a 2,500 square foot addition. Work to be performed is described as “add guest [room], steam room, bath and lanai to existing dwelling, remodel bath and comp[osition] roof.” The contractor was Arc Construction Company, the property owner was listed as Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Morse. The permit is annotated “lanai setback as approved by council resolution September 25, 1961.”
- Building Permit #B10452 issued on August 23, 1976 for a “6x4x6 therapy pool adjacent to existing pool.” (Note: This “therapy pool” (spa) was installed in an existing terrazzo patio at the northeast edge of the pool.)
- Building Permit #(illegible) issued on December 13, 1976 to “remodel bathroom.”
- Building Permit #B24068 issued on January 4, 1993 for “pool.”
- Building Permit C10468 issued October 11, 2004 to: “Demo[lish] front garden wall. Repair drywall & plaster as needed throughout house. Remove flatwork at back patio area. Replace door, replace decorative t[ongue] & g[roove] & block, add 2 lav[atories], replace shower, replace 1 w[ater] c[loset], lights & outlets.”
- Building Permit #C[illegible] issued February 3, 2005 to: “Remodel existing exercise room and bathroom. Frame in fire door from garage to dwelling and relocate to different location. Remove sliders at foyer. Replace rotted beam at garage with same. Add

stone veneer to match remainder of house. Close in FAU closet at bathroom and add louvered door opening into garage.”

- Building Permit #2012-1181 issued May 10, 2012 to “Replace (2) gas package units and (1) down flow complete system. All on roof, same size and location.”

The Morse Residence in the Media

The Morse Residence has received an unusual amount of attention over the years starting in September 1970 when it appeared in a *PSL* magazine article simply entitled “Luxury.” The 1970 *PSL* article made mention of “architect Hal Leavitt (sic), A.I.A.” and described the residence as “a truly unique European contemporary villa.” *PSL* magazine consistently misspelled Levitt’s name in later articles in 2004 and 2006. The 1970 *PSL* article does provide many useful photographic clues about the house and shows that both the garage door (a single bay in 1970, today a two-bay garage) and the front entry way, were modified over the years. Additionally, the article shows that the most striking features of the Levitt addition, namely the sunken seating area, the terrazzo bar, southwest patio area and sliding glass pocket doors have all remained remarkably intact. Interestingly, photographs accompanying the 1970 *PSL* article show that the stonework has been painted for at least 45 years.

The April 2005 *PSL* article, appropriately entitled “Inside-Out,” tells the unverifiable “legend” of the residence, i.e., that the “lady of the house” was unhappy with the “Alexander design” (meaning the Palmer & Krisel design) and “fired the famous developers” (the Alexanders). Permit records, coupled with the well-documented efficiency and rapidity of the Alexander’s building methods, seem to dispute this legend. The house (assessed by architect and author Jim Harlan to be a standard Alexander Construction Company-built, Palmer & Krisel-designed “B2” plan in the Vista Las Palmas tract) was most likely simply purchased when near completion and only minor customization is indicated from the permit records (specifically Building Permit #B2900 issued November 16, 1960 to “change partition arrangement in house under construction”). Almost a year later, construction of the Levitt addition commenced (see Building Permit #B3769 issued on September 26, 1961). The 2004 *PSL* article does do a fine job describing the most important aspect of the house:

The swim-in home first appeared in the pages of *Palm Springs Life* in 1970. Touted as a contemporary villa designed for convertible indoor-outdoor living, the home promoted a design feature that now comes standard in most high-end desert homes: pocket doors--- glass walls that actually disappear, creating a seamless transition between indoors and out. That interplay with the natural environment put this design ahead of its time in 1960.

The February 2006 issue of *PSL* returned to the residence with an article entitled “Midcentury Redux” which touts the then owners as having “brought the home back to its midcentury glory.”

Most recently, the February 2015 issue of *PSL* features the Morse Residence in an article entitled “In Perfect Harmony.”

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into three more or less distinct periods that include Prehistory, the Settlement Period, and the Modern Period. It is within the context of the last period that this building will be evaluated.

Modern Period (1925-1960s): This period can be considered to have begun with the construction of the area's first "modern" structure, Rudolph Schindler's Paul and Betty Popenoe Cabin in 1922. With this building the area's predominant architectural style, which was based on well-established Mexican and Spanish Colonial motifs, began to change. Incorporation of the town of Palm Springs followed in 1938. During the post-WWII era, Palm Springs' economy prospered through tourism. Hollywood celebrities discovered the desert oasis and patronized its hotels, inns, nightclubs and restaurants; celebrity-seeking tourists soon followed, transforming Palm Springs from a sleepy village into an increasingly cosmopolitan environment that saw the construction of schools, hospitals, an airport and other important public works projects. The commercial core along Palm Canyon Drive (originally Main Street) flourished. In the 1950s the downtown core was expanded by the construction of the cross-axis of Tahquitz-McCallum Way that extended from the center of the original settlement to the airport, spurring new development along the way. Early private residential development also expanded into new sub-divisions composed of midcentury modern second homes in the flat lands surrounding the town's original core. Palm Springs' Hollywood associations certainly imparted an air of sophistication to the city. By 1964, the city had built a reputation for cutting edge architecture with architectural practitioners like John Porter Clark, Albert Frey, E. Stewart Williams, William F. Cody and Donald Wexler.

EVALUATION:

Criterion 1: Significant Event. To qualify for listing under this criterion, a property must be associated with one or more events important in the defined historic context. *Criterion 1 recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends, such as the gradual rise of the city's prominence in architectural excellence in midcentury modern architecture that is an important pattern of events within this associated context. The Morse Residence is an outstanding example of residential design and construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert Modernism. *The Morse Residence is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 1.**

Criterion 2: Significant Persons. Criterion 2 recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history. The Morse Residence is not associated with individuals of national importance. *Hence, the residence does not qualify for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 2.*

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

Criterion 3: *(That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history).* The Morse Residence was designed by the architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel and erected by the Alexander Construction Company in 1960. In 1961, the Morses commissioned architect Hal Levitt to design a major modification and expansion of the residence. The stylistic markers of the residence place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. The private residence represents a prime and largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such the residence may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. *The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 3.*

Criterion 4: *(That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or) Type, Period, and Method of Construction:* "Type, period, or method of construction" refers to the way certain properties are related to one another by cultural tradition or function, by dates of construction or style, or by choice or availability of materials and technology. To be eligible under this Criterion, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics" a pattern of features common to a particular class of resources. "Distinctive characteristics" are the physical features or traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

The Morse Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that make up the many qualities of the style, such as overall horizontality, a combination flat and low-pitched roof, inexpensive mass-produced materials like concrete block, man-made and natural materials suitable to the harsh desert environment (steel, aluminum, glass, stone, etc.) and an architectural design that strives to blur the line between the indoors and outdoors. As such, the residence is eligible under this criterion because it represents an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at midcentury. *The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 4.*

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

5a: Work of a Master: A master is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill. The property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his work, or a particular idea or theme in his craft. A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect. For example, not every building

designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is eligible under this portion of Criterion 5, although it might meet other Criteria.

Both the architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel and architect Hal Levitt qualify individually as “master architects” (with the firm of Palmer & Krisel having been identified as such in previous city designations).

5b: Properties possessing high artistic values: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. As an example of the maturing modernist movement, the Morse Residence certainly articulates the best of residential “lifestyle” modernism to a level of excellence and confidence that, in total, they could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. As the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 5.

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

ARCHEOLOGY

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

7. Integrity Analysis (using U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards)

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 an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity. ***Although the 1960 Morse Residence was originally designed as a Palmer & Krisel tract house, the 1961 Hal Levitt-designed addition-alteration (which is now more than 50 years old) profoundly altered the home. Therefore the seven integrity aspects are applied to the residence as constituted after the 1961 Levitt addition-alteration.***

LOCATION

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

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Morse Residence's essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived largely intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing (as designed into the 1961 addition-alteration), have survived largely intact.***

SETTING

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The setting of the Morse Residence continues to reflect the architect's original design relationship of site and structure.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. ***As mentioned previously, while some of the Morse Residence's exterior surface materials have been painted, this change does not constitute a significant loss of the physical elements that expressed the design during the building's period of***

significance; the particular pattern and configuration that today forms the building site survives intact.

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***The workmanship of the Morse Residence is comprised of integral ornamental detailing reflected in native stone, concrete block, glass and steel. The property continues to express a high degree of contemporary period workmanship.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***When constructed, the Morse Residence was part of a well-planned modernist tract development and sited to take advantage of panoramic, mountain views to the west. Accordingly, the Morse Residence retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it *is* the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***The Morse Residence is an important example of a modernist private residence in Palm Springs. Accordingly, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: The Morse Residence appears to be in excellent condition partially due to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert

environment. This integrity analysis confirms that the building and site of the Morse Residence still possess all seven aspects of integrity. ***As previously asserted, while the Morse Residence has had one significant addition-alteration, this sympathetic and well-done addition-alteration is now more than 50 years old, was designed by a master architect, and has become an important and integral part of the history of the residence. Overall, most of the early and important character-defining features of the residence survive with some exceptions. For example, in January 2015 the current front door (which is most likely more sympathetic to the original design) replaced a less sympathetic replacement from a circa 2000 renovation. After 1970 the single-bay garage was replaced with a double-bay garage and in 1976 a spa was placed in the existing terrazzo pad adjacent to the pool. Finally, vintage photographs indicate that an internal re-jiggering of some interior spaces may have occurred over the years but did not substantially impact the external envelope of the residence. Therefore, the residence and site both retain a moderately high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify it for designation as a Class 1 historic site. (Note: The last paragraph of “The Levitt Connection” on page 18 of this nomination is also relevant to this Integrity Analysis).***

8. Bibliography

Attached is a list of books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application and other documentation that may be relevant.

Books

Architectural Resources Group. *City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco, 2004

Harlan, James R. *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*. Palm Springs. Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011.

National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Magazines and Other Documentary Sources

John Aaroe Group (real estate brokerage firm) website

Levitt + Moss Architects company website

Los Angeles Times newspaper, April 29, 2003 edition, article entitled “Harold Levitt, 81; Architect Created Homes for Stars of Show Business.”

Palm Springs Life, Annual Desert Progress Issue, September 1970, “Luxury”

Palm Springs Life, April 2004, “Inside Out”

Palm Springs Life, February 2006, "Midcentury Redux"

Palm Springs Life, February 2015, "In Perfect Harmony"

Other Sources Consulted

- City of Palm Springs (Planning and Building Departments)
- Palm Springs Historical Society
- Palm Springs Public Library
- Riverside County Assessor's Office
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University Libraries
- Hal Levitt archival material in the possession of Steven Price

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately .27 acres (or 11,761 sq. ft.)
Property Boundary Description: See Appendix II

10. Prepared By

Name/title: Ronald W. & Barbara A. Marshall
Organization: Submitted on behalf of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
Street address: 1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195
City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92264
Telephone: (760) 837-711
e-mail address: info@pspreservationfoundation.org

11. Required Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed application form. **Do not mount any exhibits on a board.**

1. **Attachment Sheets.** Include all supplemental information based on application form above).
2. **Maps:** For Historic Districts, include a sketch map identifying the proposed districts boundaries.
3. **Photographs:** Eight (8) sets of color photographs showing each elevation of the property and its surroundings.

4. **Non-owner's Notarized Signature:** If the applicant is not the owner, a notarized affidavit shall be provided (see following page).

5. **Site Plan:** One 1/8" to 1/4" scale drawing of the site, and eight reduction copies (8 ½ x 11 inches) The site plan shall show all of the following: Property boundaries, north arrow and scale, all existing buildings, structures, mechanical equipment, landscape materials, fences, walls, sidewalks, driveways, parking areas showing location of parking spaces, and signs. **Indicate the square footage and use of each building and the date(s) of construction.**

6. **Public Hearing Labels:** Three (3) sets of typed self-adhesive labels of all property owners, lessees, and sub-lessees of record. **The labels shall include the Assessor's parcel number, owner's name and mailing address of each property with 400 feet from the exterior limits of the subject property.** Additionally, all Assessor Parcel Maps clearly indicating the 400-foot radius and a certified letter from a title company licensed to conduct business in Riverside County, California shall be submitted.

Note: If any property on this list is owned by the United States Government in trust for the Agua Caliente Indian Tribe or individual allottee, copies of notices with postage paid envelopes will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to notify the individual Indian land owners of the public hearings.

Appendix I: Letter of Owner Support

January 15, 2015

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

Dear Honorable Board,

As the current owners of the Theodore Morse Residence at 1197 Abrigo Road (built by the Alexander Construction Company and modified by architect Hal Levitt in 1961), we enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of our property by the city of Palm Springs. We have asked the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (specifically board members Ron & Barbara Marshall) to assist us in the preparation of the required nomination paperwork.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us at _____ or by email at _____

Sincerely,




Joan Gand



Gary Gand

Appendix II: 1960 Grant Deed (includes Legal Description)



#4376851 **Joint Tenancy Grant Deed** I.R.S. §10.45
(Individual)

LAS PALMAS ESTATES, a Co-Partnership
(GRANTOR - GRANTORS)

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged.

Do..... Hereby Grant To **THEODORE MORSE and CLAIRE MORSE, husband and wife as** ..
..... **Joint Tenants**

the real property in the


County of..... **Riverside** .. State of C.iforma, described as follows:

LOT 1, VISTA LAS PALMAS No. 2, as per map recorded in Book 39 page 72 of Maps, records of Riverside County, California.

Subject to:

1. Second-half General and Special Taxes for the fiscal year 1960-1961.
2. Conditions, restrictions, reservations, covenants, easements, rights and rights of way, now of record, if any.
3. First Trust Deed of record.
4. Second Trust Deed to record.

Dated..... **October 20, 1960**.....

LAS PALMAS ESTATES
By: 
Robert Alexander, Authorized Agent

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

On, February 20, 1961, before us, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said county and state personally appeared Robert Alexander, known to me to be the authorized agent of the partnership that executed the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for and on behalf of said partnership and that said partnership executed the same. WITNESS my hand and official seal.

(Seal)

Wilma Lovel
Notary Public in and for said County and State

WHEN RECORDED, PLEASE MAIL THIS INSTRUMENT TO
Pearson, Scott and Company
553 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Calif.
ORDER No. _____ ESCROW No. **2-1650**

SPACE BELOW FOR RECORDER'S USE ONLY

14807

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
FEB 21 1961
AT 9:00 O'CLOCK A.M.
BY ROBERT OF COMPANY
AMERICAN TITLE COMPANY
Recorder of Deeds, Riverside County, Calif.

No 14807
FEB 21 1961

L-9 (3-5) 4-25-58 (8 pt.)
(Rev. 12-47)

As corroborated by later documentation, the Legal Description on the October 20, 1960 Joint Tenancy Grant Deed reads: "Lot 1, Vista Las Palmas No. 2, as per map recorded in Book 39 page 72 of Maps, records of Riverside County, California."

Appendix IV: William Krisel, AIA Biography

(The following is excerpted from *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*)

William Krisel received a degree in architecture from the University of Southern California (USC) in June of 1949. During his time at USC, Krisel apprenticed at the offices of Paul Laszlo and later at Victor Gruen and Associates. In September of 1949, Krisel partnered with architect Daniel Saxon Palmer to form Palmer & Krisel (Palmer had left Victor Gruen and Associates in 1947).

Palmer & Krisel was quickly recognized as a firm that paid careful attention to the requirements of builders. Specifically, they were very successful in solving the problem of producing good design while still meeting tight project budgets. In the mid-1950s, Palmer & Krisel started to receive substantial professional recognition for their work. This recognition ranged from awards bestowed by the local Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects to recognition from the influential National Association of Homebuilders. The firm was also listed as one of the “top 100 firms in the nation” by the seminal *Progressive Architecture* magazine.

The Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel produced a large and diverse body of work including residential housing tracts, office high-rises and shopping centers. In all, 40,000 housing units were produced by the firm. In 1964, the Palmer-Krisel partnership dissolved. Daniel Palmer died on December 22, 2007 in Santa Monica, California.

Appendix V: Additional Photographic Documentation

(Note: The more mundane photographs of the Morse Residence, for example the pool equipment structure and the external laundry room, are included in a supplemental compact disk.)



Front door with random board and batten design and period “brutalist” light fixture. This door treatment replaced a circa 2000 renovation which featured a rather unsympathetic glass-framed front door. Also shown are a terrazzo planter, terrazzo flatwork, painted stonework, garage opening (left) and supporting pier (right) for screen block wall.



Double-bay garage doors which replaced a single bay garage door after 1970



Concrete screen block wall covering windows on east façade. The “Empress” screen block pattern is discussed in detail in Appendix VIII.



Terrazzo sidewalk and planters



Wall of concrete block “Shadowal” on north edge of property. The concrete block wall surrounds much of the Morse Residence.



Pool, spa (in foreground), stone-clad support columns and projecting “V” wall (in background)



View over the pool into the sunken living room showing the seamless indoor-outdoor effect designed into the architecture. The top of the bar can also be seen.



Southwest patio area showing projecting "V" wall, stone-clad support column, deep eave and portions of the southwest sliding glass pocket doors



View from the patio, through the south sliding glass pocket doors and sunken living room to the pool and beyond. Also seen are the deep eaves which provide passive solar control and the effect of “transparency” when the large glass pocket doors are stowed.

Appendix VI: Photographs of Selected Architectural Details



Random board and batten



Painted stonework (historical photographs indicate stonework was painted prior to 1970)



Concrete block (trade name "Shadowal")

Appendix VII: Additional Historical Photographs



**Vintage photo of Morse Residence interior circa 1970 (note painted stonework)
(Photo by Paul Pospesil courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)**



**Vintage photo of Morse Residence interior circa 1970
(Photo by Paul Pospesil courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)**

Appendix VIII: Empress and Venetian Pattern Concrete Screen Block



The “Empress” pattern block appeared in an October 1958 Stearns Manufacturing advertisement in *Concrete Products* magazine as design “1680.” The “Empress” marketing name was used as early as 1959 by General Concrete Products. The “Empress” pattern block is still widely available today and is undoubtedly the most popular screen block pattern ever produced. Architect Edward Durell Stone patented this block design in 1959 and used it in his commissions overseas and throughout the United States. Some of the early blocks produced under Stone’s supervision included white marble chips in the concrete. The geometric diamond-circle pattern appears in both eastern and western cultures. As testament to the popularity of the “Empress” pattern, there are many subtle variations of the block design, possibly motivated by a desire to circumvent architect Stone’s patent. Today, the “Empress” pattern is called “Cordova” by both Orco Block and Sepulveda Building Materials, “Mar-Veil I” by Adams Products, “No. 377” by A-1 Block, “No. 430” by Perez Brothers and “#377” by Tileco. Vintage names for the “Empress” pattern include “Filigree” by Buehner Block, “Trojan” by Pennsylvania Western, “Venetian” by Fleming Manufacturing, “430,” “No. 377” and “No. 7753” by Columbia Machine, “No. 30” by Schuster’s, “#122” by Park Architectural Block and design “1216” by Demaco.



The “Venetian” (Type A) pattern block appeared in a General Concrete Products advertisement in the January 1959 issue of *Concrete Masonry Age* magazine. The “Venetian” (Type A) pattern is relatively common, though whether it seems Italian is debatable. A solid-backed version of the pattern appeared in a Universal Atlas Cement advertisement in the February 1962 issue of *Architectural Forum*. Today, the “Venetian” (Type A) pattern is offered as the “Monterray” design by Bend Industries, Jewell Concrete and Superlite Block. Vintage names for the “Venetian” (Type A) pattern include “Style 327” by Besser, “No. 412” by Columbia Machine and design “1212” by Demaco. A squashed 4x12x16 version of the “Venetian” (Type A) pattern has also been sighted.

(The foregoing was excerpted from an unpublished manuscript, *The Power of Pattern: Concrete Screen Block in Midcentury Architecture*, by Ron & Barbara Marshall)