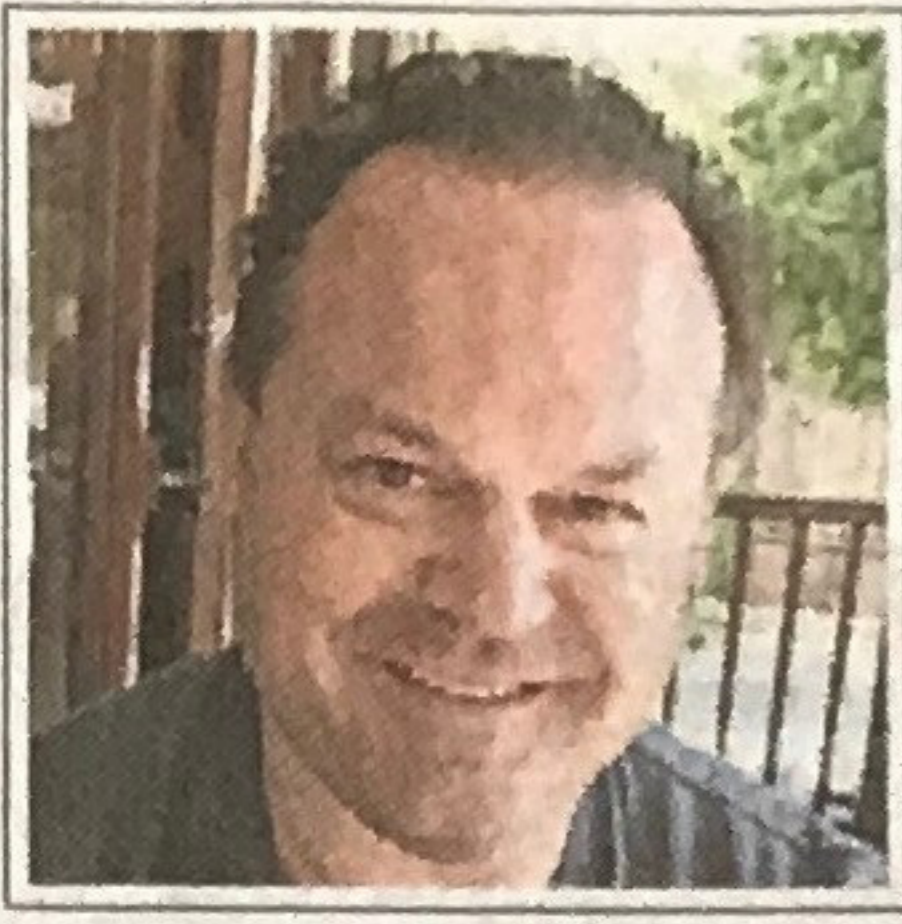


Name new park for Nellie Coffman



Erik Rosenow

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation has applauded the city's public outreach regarding the program for the proposed downtown park.

In December 2012, and in July 2015, The Desert Sun published articles about the historical elements removed in the years leading up to the demolition of the Fashion Plaza (i.e., the Nellie Coffman star and the County of Riverside plaque commemorating the Desert Inn). As reported in those articles, the city manager and Wessman Development principals assured the public that those elements would be reincorporated into the downtown redevelopment scheme.

We ask that those promises be kept.

The city has historically named its parks after its illustrious female pioneers (e.g., Ruth Hardy Park and Frances Stevens Park), and it seems fitting to continue that tradition. Accordingly, we strongly suggest that the new park be named after Nellie Coffman, owner of the Desert Inn and one of the city's most notable philanthropists.

Coffman can be argued to have been the undisputed matriarch of Palm Springs for over 40 years. Arriving in 1909, she quickly opened the Desert Inn as a sanatorium for those suffering from respiratory ailments. However, within a few years, the focus of the Desert Inn had changed, attracting a more upscale crowd, notably the Hollywood elite.

By the 1920s, thanks to "Mother Coffman," Palm Springs had become a major destination for the wealthy. She was the true originator of Palm Springs tourism.

The Desert Inn was notable for its charming bungalows and beautiful landscaping. The Tahquitz Ditch, an



Nellie Coffman COURTESY PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

irrigation channel started by the native Cahuilla Indians, ran through the property. Guests could traverse the soothing running water over several rustic bridges.

In 1939, Coffman was named honorary president of the Palm Springs Woman's Club in the year of its genesis. In appreciation for all she had done for Palm Springs, doves turned out in 1947 to celebrate Nellie Coffman Day.

Following her death in 1950, the Desert Inn changed hands, and eventually was razed and replaced with the Desert Fashion Plaza. Recently, that too was razed to make way for the current downtown redevelopment.

The city park, designed by Rios Clemente Hale Studios, will stand in the center. Additionally, we understand that the gates of the Desert Inn are still extant and hopefully could be a historical element that would connect the proposed park to its historical precedent.

We trust that the city will take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to connect visitors and residents alike to the storied history of the Desert Inn, which played a pivotal role in making Palm Springs a world-renowned resort destination.

To honor the universally loved and true Palm Springs pioneer, we ask the city to name the park in honor of Nellie Coffman.

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