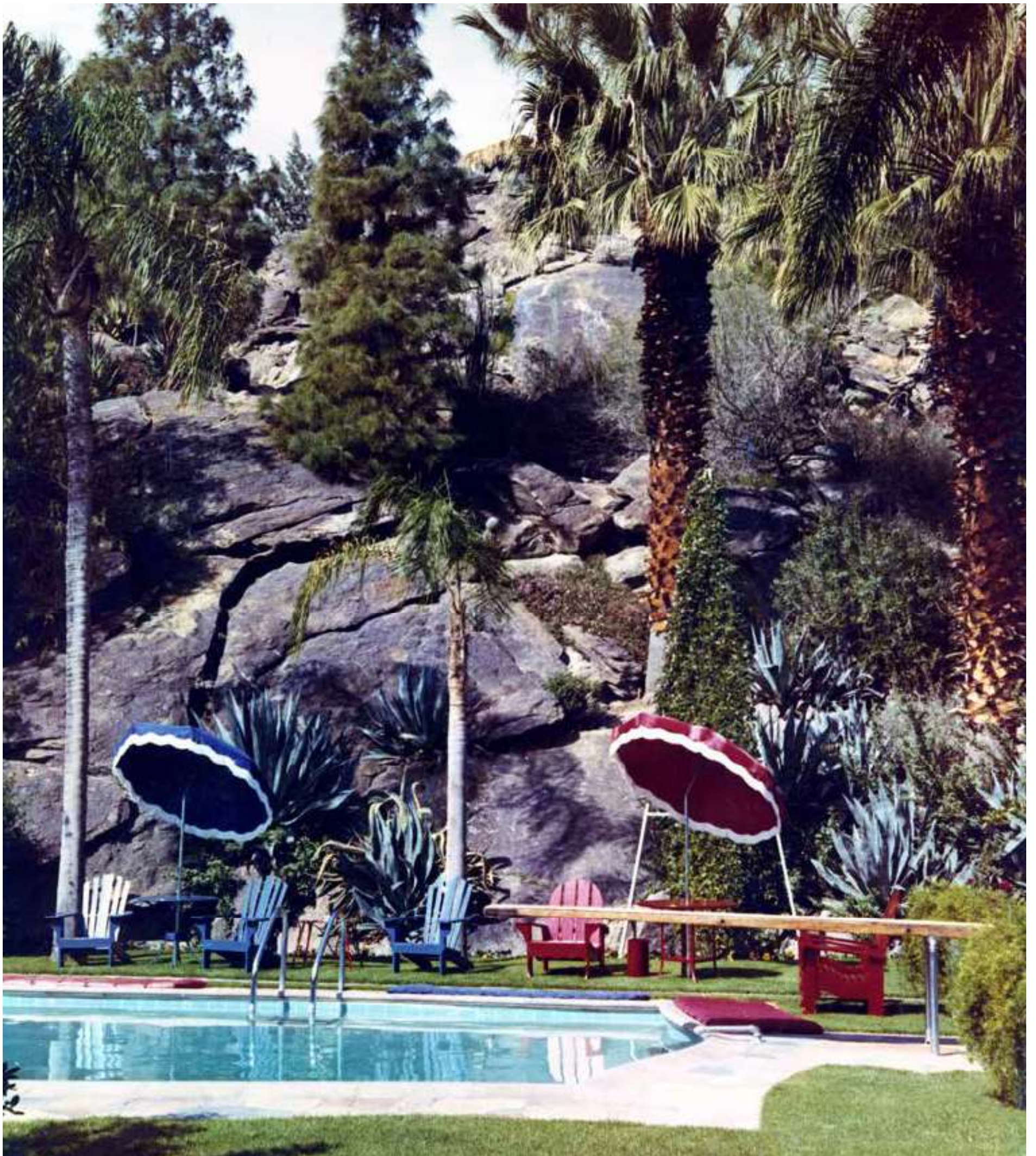


Eden

Journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society

Summer 2017 • Vol. 20, No. 3





Eden

Journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society

Eden Editorial Board

Editor: Virginia Kean

Editorial Board: Phoebe Cutler, Steven Keylon, Ann Scheid, Libby Simon

Consulting Editors: Marlea Graham, Barbara Marinacci

Regional Correspondents:

Bay Area: Phoebe Cutler

San Diego: Vonn Marie May

Graphic Design: designSimple.com

Submissions: Send scholarly papers, articles, and book reviews to the editor: Virginia Kean at vkkean@gmail.com

Memberships/Subscriptions:

Join the CGLHS and receive a subscription to *Eden*.

Individual \$40 • Family \$60

Sustaining \$100 and above

Student \$20

Nonprofit/Library \$50

Visit www.cglhs.org to join or renew your membership. Or mail your check to Julie Arshonsky, P.O. Box 220237, Newhall, CA 91322-0237.

Questions or Address Changes: info@cglhs.org

CGLHS Board of Directors

President: Steven Keylon

Vice President: Libby Simon

Recording Secretary: Nancy Carol Carter

Membership Officer: Brandy Kuhl

Treasurer: Open Position

Directors at large: Antonia Adezio, Thomas Eddy, David Laws, Christine E. O'Hara, Ann Scheid, Jennifer Trotoux

Past President: Kelly Comras

Honorary Life Members

Virginia Gardner

Marlea Graham, Editor emerita

William A. Grant (Founder)

Barbara Marinacci

The California Garden & Landscape History Society (CGLHS) is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization devoted to celebrating the beauty and diversity of California's historic gardens and landscapes; promoting wider knowledge, preservation, and restoration of California's historic gardens and landscapes; organizing study visits to historic gardens and landscapes as well as to relevant archives and libraries; and offering opportunities for a lively interchange among members at meetings, garden visits, and other events. *Eden: Journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society* (ISBN 1524-8062) is published quarterly. Subscription is a benefit of CGLHS membership.

© 2017 California Garden & Landscape History Society

California Garden & Landscape History Society

P.O. Box 220237, Newhall, CA 91322-0237

www.cglhs.org



Contents

The Willows and Its Historic Gardens

Steve Vaught

3

Mar y Cel

The Tea House of Montecito

Keith Park

8

Tahquitz River Estates

Steven Keylon and Steven Price

14

Update on a Palo Alto Garden

Betsy G. Fryberger

20

Front Cover and Right: *The Willows*, one of Palm Springs' first great estates is renowned for its spectacular gardens and remains one of Palm Springs' most important and cherished landmarks. Image by Gail B. Thompson, Gayle's Studio Collection. Courtesy of Tracy Conrad.

Above: Rediscovered path leading from the wisteria arbor to the iris bed in the front of the old Palo Alto garden of the Williams family, c. 1995.

The Willows and Its Historic Gardens

Steve Vaught



In the winter of 1924, longtime denizens of the village of Palm Springs became increasingly uneasy over the growing buzz of activity swirling around the base of the mountain just behind the Desert Inn. The story was that another Hollywood millionaire had come to town to build a pretentious desert hideaway in what was rapidly becoming known as the "Garden of the Sun."

The house itself was not what concerned them. After all, over the last few years an ever-increasing contingent of wealthy individuals were doing exactly the same thing—turning what had only recently been desolate acreage into handsome winter retreats. Rather, it was the location that brought the worry. From time immemorial, the chosen spot had served as something of an oasis, with a stand of desert willows growing against the almost perpendicular shafts of granite boulders jutting out from the foot of mighty Mount San Jacinto. For

thousands of years, the Agua Calientes passed along this spot on their way to and from nearby Tahquitz Canyon, no doubt pausing beneath the willows for a cooling rest before continuing their journey.

In the 1830s, the site gained even more importance with the construction of a flume, known as the Tahquitz Ditch, which funneled crystal clear snowmelt from high above down to the thirsty village below. Later lined with stone, the Tahquitz Ditch and its bubbling waters added immeasurably to the charm of this peaceful, bucolic haven. To obliterate it all with a boxy, showy mansion just to satisfy the oversized ego of an out-of-town millionaire seemed nothing less than a desecration. But if the locals had known William and Nella Mead, the couple who were building this house, they would have worried no more.

When William Mead passed away unexpectedly in November of 1927, tributes

to his memory appeared in newspapers throughout Southern California. Among the most fitting was one in the *Los Angeles Times* (LAT): "Los Angeles has lost a citizen, who, though more than ordinarily successful in piling up worldly wealth, was more thoroughly interested in the perpetuation and creation of beauty than in the acquisition of money."¹

Time and again, Mead proved that through his words and actions. He had indeed been quite successful in a variety of interests, including business, real estate, and civic affairs, and had even gained prominence in politics, serving for a time in the California State Assembly as well as on the very first Los Angeles Board of Water Commissioners. It was this board that made the momentous decision to approve construction of the Owens Valley Aqueduct, one of the most transformational engineering projects in the history of Southern California.

Mead's greatest passion, however, was the concept of home. As a millionaire several times over, he was able to afford whatever home he desired, yet his thoughts were never far from those struggling to achieve their piece of the American dream. For years, he advocated for affordable housing and when Los Angeles created its first housing commission, Mead was the natural choice to head it. Mead and Nella felt that a beautiful home was one of the keys to happiness, and they lived that philosophy in each of the homes they shared during their decades-long marriage. And the gardens were a critical component.

In 1901, the couple purchased a picturesque four-acre estate in the hills of Hollywood, above Franklin Avenue and Vine Street, and began indulging in their mutual interest in horticulture. The Meads were not only avid gardeners, they were skilled and innovative ones as well, experimenting with and propagating various types of subtropical fruits and ornamental plantings that would become important additions to Southern California. "These two," according to the LAT, "pioneered the growing of plants, collected with all the zeal of collectors, in many lands, and growers and scientists alike plodded up the Vine Street hill to study and learn in that private arborum."² The Vine Street gardens, beautiful as they were, offered just a foretaste of the Meads' horticultural genius.

In 1911, Mead had managed an impressive real estate coup when he successfully negotiated with the wily Colonel Griffith J. Griffith the sale of some 400 acres of prime Griffith land running along the foothill slopes of Los Feliz below Los Angeles' Griffith Park. Mead planned to turn the land into a high-end real estate development called Hillhurst Park. The profit potential for development was high, particularly if Mead flattened out the hilltops into building pads, but Mead would have none of it. The intrinsic natural beauty of the area was to be preserved. To him this was of far greater value than the quick profit he could turn by gouging out the natural topography.

Before allowing even a single lot to be

Above: The enchanting terraces of the Willows offered views of the gardens and the stark desert landscape beyond. Image by Gail B. Thompson, Gayle's Studio Collection. Courtesy of Tracy Conrad.

Opposite: William and Nella Mead pose somewhat precariously at the edge of the historic Tahquitz Ditch as it runs through the Willows gardens. Valentine's Day, 1926. Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection.

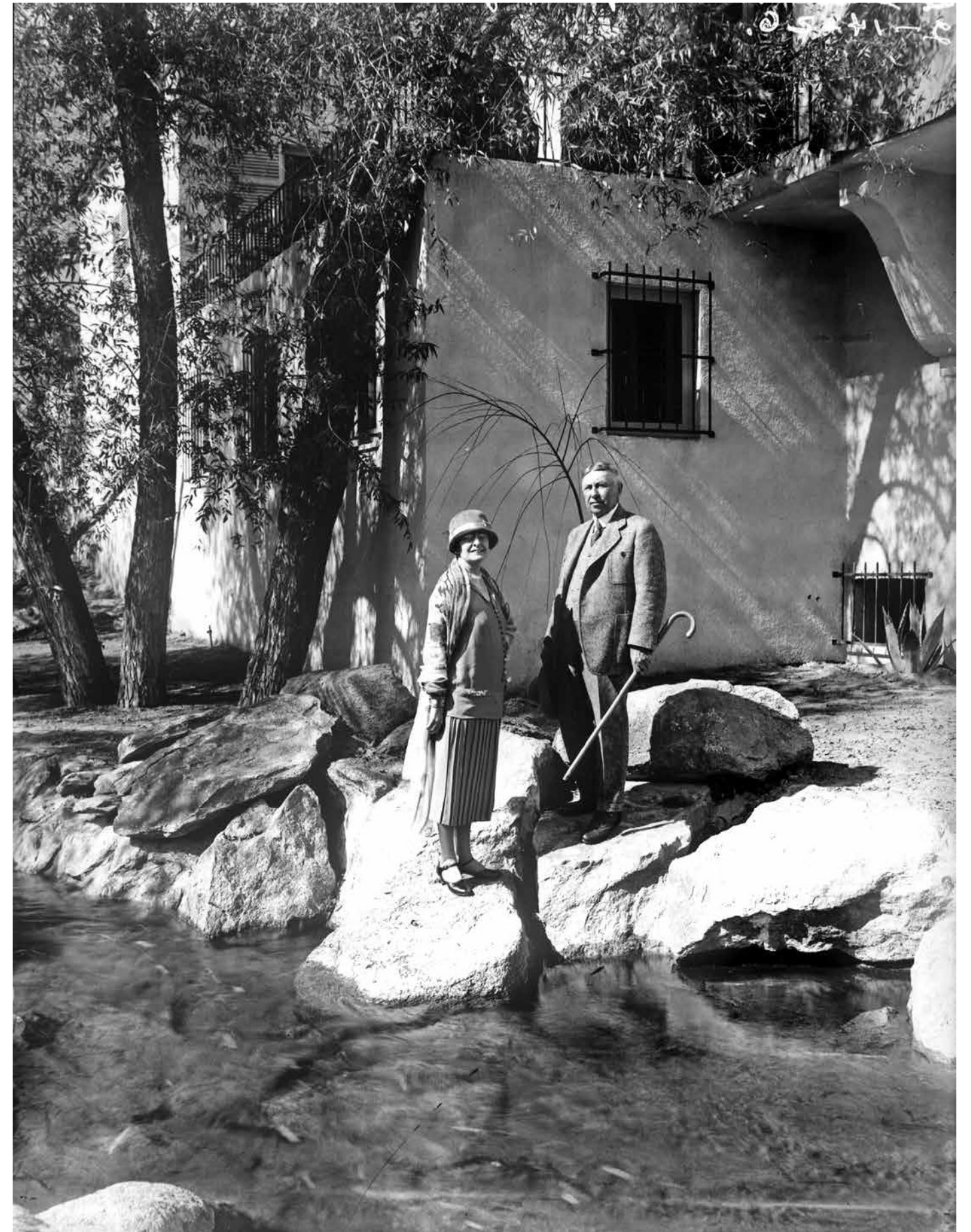


sold, Mead expended large sums in carefully laying out the streets to gracefully follow the contours of the land. Burying utility lines in underground tunnels added enormous expense, but not wanting to mar the district with unsightly telephone poles, Mead considered it worth the cost. Finally, Mead scattered millions of wildflower seeds across the empty lots, which with the coming of the first spring rains turned the entire hillside into a glowing carpet of California poppies. Visible for miles, the profusion of poppies was such a delight to Angelenos that the LAT rapturously declared, "Never has a city seen a more gorgeous sight."³

And it was in this new development that the Meads built their showplace estate in 1912, which they named "Dreamwold." Designed by the prominent Los Angeles firm of Hudson & Munsell, Dreamwold was sited on a high promontory above Vermont

Canyon. Its gleaming white walls and green tiled roof made an impressive contrast to the brown hues of the mountain rising behind it. As spectacular as the house was, the real treasure of the estate lay in its nine acres of hillside gardens, which were filled with an astonishing variety of trees, shrubs, and flowers. The many rare and unusual plantings ranged from bananas to coffee, pineapple, apricots, peaches and oranges, as well as spices such as black pepper and cinnamon. The Meads loved the site's wild, natural terrain and worked their garden into the natural topography. "Deep in the mass of tropical plants," wrote the LAT, "a miniature grand canyon thrills the observer with its beauty and unexpectedness."⁴

So when the Meads turned their attention to their new desert home, which they appropriately called "The Willows," they lavished the same care and attention that had made their previous homes Hollywood



showplaces. They began by engaging the talented William J. Dodd of Dodd & Richards. Dodd was well suited for the project, having done exemplary work in a series of hillside villas he designed throughout Hollywood's exclusive Laughlin Park neighborhood.

As expected, Dodd was instructed to intrude into the natural topography as lightly as possible. The architect performed an impressive balancing act, designing a stately Italian-inspired villa that draped itself over the hillside terrain rather than gouging it out. Today, this accomplishment is nowhere better evidenced than by the large boulder rising majestically from the floor of one of the villa's bathrooms. Outside, the landscaped grounds took their cues from the existing features of the Tahquitz Ditch, an old stacked-stone wall running along the front of the property and, of course, the desert willows.

Whether a professional landscape architect was brought in or the Meads and/or Dodd handled the design themselves is unknown. Mead had previously worked with Wilbur Cook at Hillhurst Park and Dodd with Frank Lloyd Wright Jr., who, by coincidence, earlier in the year had been staying only a few hundred yards away in the Reginald Pole adobe during the construction of the Oasis Hotel. Whoever was responsible, their work was exceptional, beginning with a wide curving stone staircase that rose from street level and passed by bridge over the Tahquitz Ditch until it connected to the villa's terrace entrance. The stonework, which was made from exquisite rose stone, was smoothed down to provide a flat paving surface. Several smaller pathways emanated from the main staircase with one following the Tahquitz Ditch and another meandering over the lower grounds to a flat grassy area and the estate's orange grove.

Undoubtedly, the most delightful feature was the serpentine staircase and pathway



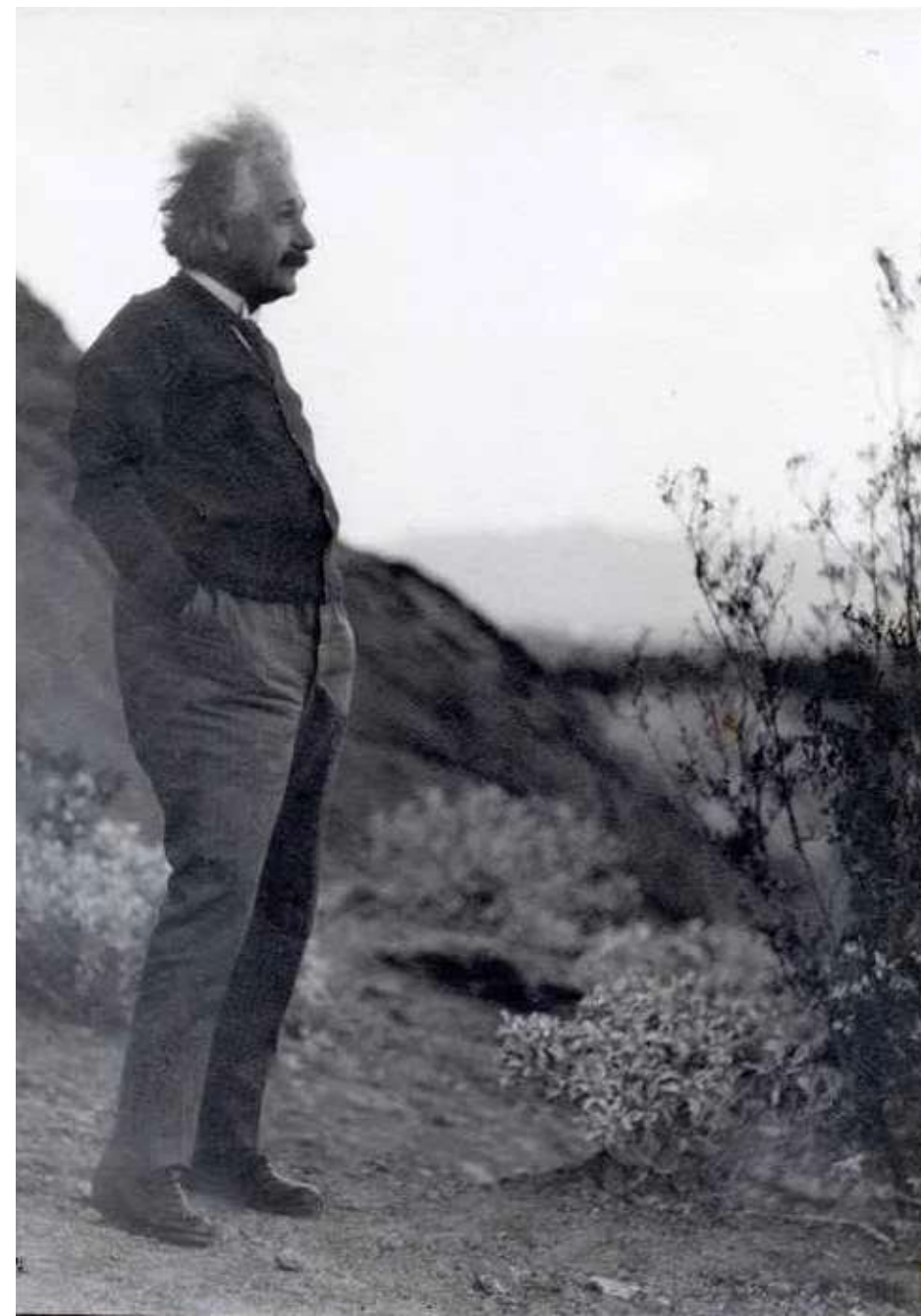
Top: The newly completed Willows, in 1925, with the young palm trees that today tower over the estate. Author's collection.

Bottom: The press and the public couldn't get enough of the sight of New York's glamorous, high-living mayor "Gentleman Jimmy" Walker (right) "roughing it" in the wild west on a trip to the Willows in 1931. Tracy Conrad/Gayle's Studio Collection.

Opposite: No one attracted more attention at the Willows than Albert Einstein, who was so charmed by the desert retreat he visited three times between 1931-1933. He is seen here watching the sunrise from the estate's upper garden, 1931. Courtesy of the Palm Springs Historical Society. All Rights Reserved.

carved directly into the hillside. It wound its way upwards above the house to a series of beautiful vista spots, one of which featured a palm-covered bench, later to be dubbed "Einstein's bench," for its most famous visitor. The original planting scheme around the Willows included several dozen young palm trees, agaves, cacti and other desert plants. However, in the lower garden, nonnative varieties, such as roses, were introduced as well. Upon its completion in the fall of 1925, the Willows, once so feared by the locals, was hailed as an instant Palm Springs landmark, fitting beautifully into its landscape rather than overwhelming it.

Sadly, the Meads were to enjoy their beautiful winter retreat for only a few seasons before William's death at age 65 in 1927. Yet their efforts would not be undone. The new owner of the estate, New York attorney Samuel Untermyer, was an even more accomplished gardener than the Meads. His 171-acre "Greystone" estate in Yonkers was considered one of the finest in the country, with a two-a-half-acre complex of greenhouses and hothouses said to be the largest in America.⁵ Untermyer was delighted by the Meads' work on the Willows, making relatively few changes other than adding a series of orchid trees, the lawyer's favorite flower.



Untermyer began bringing his many famous friends to stay at the Willows, including Lord Beaverbrook; *New York Times* publisher Alfred S. Ochs; John Jakob Raskob, builder of the Empire State Building; film star Billie Burke; and New York's playboy mayor, Jimmie Walker, among many others. His most famous guest was Dr. Albert Einstein who came to stay at the Willows on three separate occasions between 1931-1933. Einstein was fascinated by the desert landscape and enjoyed spending most of his time outdoors in the gardens. A daily ritual was a trip up the stone steps of the upper garden where he engaged in a private sunbath in the nude.

Einstein had the hillside all to himself on these occasions, with one dramatic exception. Eleanor "Cissy" Patterson, famed editor of the *Washington Herald*, sneaked up the steps in the hopes of getting an Einstein "exclusive." She did, but not the one she had expected.

After Untermyer's death in 1940, the Willows remained in the family, becoming the winter retreat of his son, Alvin. As his father had done before him, Alvin lovingly maintained both the Willows and the gardens. His one major change was the addition of a large swimming pool on the lower grounds near the orange orchard. In

1952, landscape designer Chryse Coleman gave a glimpse of the Willows gardens, writing in the *LAT*: "Purple and yellow violas and varicolored lantana cling to the stone. Peeping around boulders are beds of primulas. Tuberous begonias thrive under the personal care of [Alvin] Untermyer himself."⁶ By the time of Alvin's death in 1963, the character of Palm Springs and the surrounding area was changing somewhat dramatically, with new, modern buildings replacing the old. The Willows fell into the hands of a bank with plans to demolish the estate and incorporate the land into part of a new hotel/shopping complex. Although those plans ultimately fell through, the Willows did suffer a loss to its grounds when the swimming pool and orchard section were sold off to become a parking lot of the new Desert Art Museum. For the next 20 years, the once-magnificent house and grounds continued to deteriorate from neglect until by the 1990s it was practically a ruin.

Miraculously, the house found a pair of owners who both understood and appreciated the Willows unique history. They undertook a major restoration not only to bring back the house itself but its spectacular grounds as well, even building a new swimming pool to match the original. Reborn as the Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn in 1996, the estate today remains one of Palm Springs' most treasured historic sites. Its gardens today are still much the way they were envisioned by those "lovers of beauty," William and Nella Mead, nearly a century ago.

Endnotes

1. "He Loved Beauty," *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1927, J2
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. "Magnificent Home Sold," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1923, 11.
5. The City of Yonkers, assisted by Marco Polo Stufano of Wave Hill fame, has been renovating to great effect the walled garden, the six color gardens, the temple, rock garden, and woodland trails that formed the core of Samuel Untermyer's Hudson River estate.
6. Chryse Coleman, "Blossoms in the Sand," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1952, F40.

Steve Vaught is an author/historian who specializes in Southern California architectural and social history. He has written five books as well as articles in publications such as Architectural Digest and Los Angeles magazine. He is currently collaborating with architect Marc Appleton and author/realtor Bret Parsons on the second volume of their series on the Master Architects of Southern California 1920-1940. He is also completing a book on the historic architecture of Hollywood.

Tahquitz River Estates

Steven Keylon and Steven Price

When Elizabeth Gordon, the influential editor of *House Beautiful* and an arbiter of taste for the American homemaker, visited the new Tahquitz River Estates subdivision in Palm Springs, she found a community with exciting innovations in site planning, architecture, and landscape design. Profoundly impressed, she announced to her devoted readers in 1948: "Attention! Armchair dreamers, land planners, home builders, homeowners, architects, real estate subdividers! Here's an idea that may well change the course of your life and thinking. Study it well."¹

The largest and most ambitious standardized tract housing development ever attempted to that point in Palm Springs, Tahquitz River Estates was the product of a dynamic partnership, driven by a feisty Palm Springs pioneer with discerning tastes and an industrious developer, both of whom had the good sense to hire two talented designers to collaborate on creating the new community. Sited within the breathtaking natural beauty of this world-renowned resort, potential homeowners at Tahquitz River Estates were ensured that the new housing development would "capture the elegance of its exotic surroundings, your home an architectural salute to 'Outdoor Living' and a compliment to your exquisite taste."²

Pearl McCallum McManus and the Tahquitz River

The land on which Tahquitz River Estates was built was owned by Palm Springs pioneer Pearl McCallum McManus, the daughter of John Guthrie McCallum (1826-1897), the first white man to settle in what would become Palm Springs. McCallum, a prominent San Francisco attorney, had also served as a state senator, casting one of the first electoral votes in California for Abraham Lincoln. In 1885, after his eldest son developed tuberculosis, McCallum moved his family—wife Emily, three sons, and two daughters—to the desert, hoping the dry climate and hot mineral

waters of Agua Caliente would cure his son. Initially buying 320 acres, McCallum built an adobe house and opened a small store, befriending and employing the native Cahuilla Indians.

Pearl, the youngest of McCallum's five children, shared a special bond with her father. "They both loved the desert and would take long rides together through the canyons, learning about the wildlife and vegetation. As the years grew into decades, the bond between father and daughter increased, and McCallum's vision took root in Pearl's heart."³ McCallum continued purchasing land over the next decade, and by the time he died in 1897, he owned nearly 6,000 acres of land in Palm Springs. After her mother's death in 1914, Pearl took over management of the vast landholdings.

Now married to Austin G. McManus of Pasadena, Pearl felt it was her duty to fulfill her father's vision of Palm Springs as the premier city in the Colorado Desert. She began subdividing the land, demanding that only buildings of the highest quality be built, adding conditions to deeds stating they could be reversed if she did not like what was being constructed.⁴ Her high standards assured that her Oasis Hotel would be built by architect and landscape architect Lloyd Wright, with celebrated architects Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones designing additions to her famed Tennis Club.

"Auntie Pearl" became a dominating force who for decades controlled much of the evolution of her beloved village of Palm Springs. She felt strongly that for her father's vision to become a reality, haphazard and uncontrolled building could not be allowed. After Frank Lloyd Wright visited Palm Springs in 1938 and dismissed what he saw as "erratic, unplanned subdivisions" peppered with "architectural monstrosities," McManus was in complete agreement that some "architectural control was essential."⁵

After World War II, with a building boom sweeping California, she decided to develop land she owned along the Tahquitz Wash. While she had often dreamed of improving the area, her plans always fell through, as the wash was prone to frequent flooding, making building problematic.⁶ Finally, on September 22, 1947, the front page of the *Desert Sun* pictured Pearl and Austin

Right: Each home at Tahquitz River Estates came fully landscaped by Edward Huntsman-Trout. Here, a broad brick-paved lanai overlooks the spacious private garden. Beyond, a sunshade with red and yellow strips of canvas harmonizes with a redwood fence with a similar woven pattern on top. Photo by Maynard L. Parker. Courtesy Huntington Library.



McManus in the front seat of one of the several earthmovers that would stabilize the wash by lining it with concrete, making building possible.

The “A” Team

To achieve a first-class community worthy of her name, McManus sought out the best, assembling an all-star team consisting of developer Paul Whitney Trousdale, architect Allen Siple, and landscape architect Edward Huntsman-Trout.

Trousdale (1915-1990) was a builder and developer whose activity was based mainly in California and Hawaii. Born in Wisconsin, raised in Tennessee and New York City, by 1932 Trousdale had arrived in Los Angeles and after a year at the University of Southern California, had embarked on a career in sales. Focusing initially on selling a variety of things, such as advertising and chewing gum, Trousdale finally decided to sell real estate, reasoning that if he was going to sell anything, it might as well carry a big commission.

By the end of his long career, Trousdale would calculate that he had constructed over 25,000 homes, along with the nation’s first regional shopping center (with three major anchor tenants) as part of his Baldwin Hills project in Los Angeles. He would advocate for the incorporation of features to benefit the community (parks, pools, recreation center, retail components) in virtually all of his developments. He was best known for his Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills, built from 1954 to 1973 on 410 acres comprising the former Doheny Ranch (aka the “backyard” of Doheny-Greystone Mansion). He merged his company in 1974 with Lear-Sigler Incorporated, a NYSE-listed company that funded Trousdale’s first venture into “manufactured” housing (the concept today is called “prefab”) at Pearl Ridge, above Pearl Harbor, and retired from its board in 1980.

Architect Allen G. Siple, FAIA (1900-1973), graduated from the architecture program at the University of Southern California in 1923 and received his license in 1929. Focusing primarily on residential architecture, Siple’s work was described as “a forthright expression of our indigenous California tradition in terms of contemporary life.” Siple favored natural

Right: *House Beautiful* editor Elizabeth Gordon wrote an eight-page featured for the December, 1948 issue. Illustration shows Huntsman-Trout’s innovations in site planning to maximize usable outdoor space and create variety.

materials, and always paid careful attention to detail, both in construction and planning. Architect A. Quincy Jones admired Siple’s “intimate relation of indoor spaces to garden, use of filtered light, concern for the distant as well as close-up view.”⁸ Siple had a prescient understanding that the most successful projects are done in collaboration with a landscape architect, and his preferred partner was Edward Huntsman-Trout. The feeling was mutual, as Huntsman-Trout wrote of Siple: “... there is the true architect. Whose architecture is inevitably of his own flesh and blood: who knows at first hand the vocabulary of his craft, the essence and the aptitudes of the basic materials—brick and wood and stone—and of the humanity for which it is created.”⁹

Landscape architect Edward Huntsman-Trout, FASLA (1889-1974), was born in Canada and attended the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in science. He took courses in botany and geology as well as a few elective courses in architecture in the years before Berkeley’s landscape architecture program was established.¹⁰ In 1913 he attended Harvard, and according to Jere Stuart French, “was the first Californian to receive professional training in landscape architecture.”¹¹ He worked briefly for Fletcher Steele in Boston and A.D. Taylor of Cleveland before returning to California to work at the Beverly Hills Nursery. Huntsman-Trout opened his own office in 1923, and like Siple his focus was primarily on large residential estates. He became a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1920 and a Fellow in 1933.

Siple and Huntsman-Trout would collaborate on a wide variety of projects, including the Webb School in Claremont, Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills, and the Siple Residence in Mandeville Canyon. They even worked together on the camouflage that protected the Douglas Aircraft Company from enemy aircraft during World War II.

Creation of a Community

In 1946, Trousdale was the client, engaging Siple and Huntsman-Trout to design a home for his family at the exclusive Smoke Tree Ranch in Palm Springs. Like much of Siple’s work, the large house was contemporary in function and feeling but adhered to Smoke Tree Ranch’s rustic ranch house vernacular. Custom interiors by Greta Magnussen Grossman followed suit, with stylish ranch-inspired modern furniture and cowhide doors on some cabinets. Huntsman-Trout’s landscape, following Smoke Tree Ranch landscape standards,

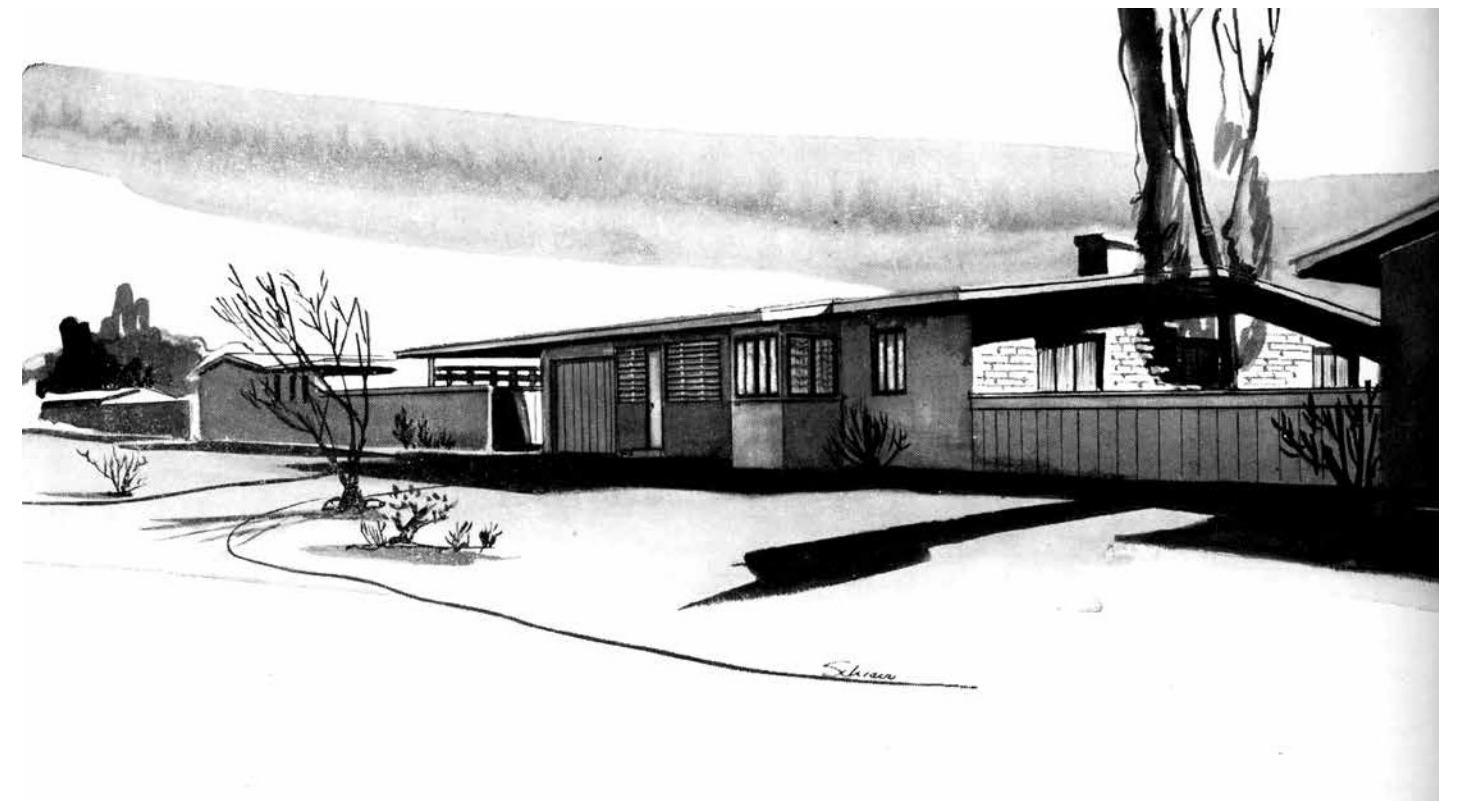
left the natural desert around the house. Only a small, concealed panel of turf was adjacent to the house, enclosed by a low pony wall and dotted with a mature olive and soaring palms. Another Smoke Tree Ranch rule prohibited private swimming pools, as “Colonists” were expected to use the large community pool near the ranch house. Soon after the house was built, however, Trousdale surreptitiously installed a pool, which the ranch’s governing board demanded be filled in. Trousdale’s charismatic charm prevailed, and the pool remains to this day.

For the Tahquitz River Estates subdivision, the team set out to create a singular community, where the emphasis was on maximizing the usable outdoor living space. This was important, as each home would come fully landscaped. “Paul Trousdale recognized what is the matter with today’s small home communities,” declared Gordon. “He has created a new kind of neighborhood where every homeowner gets 100% use of his own land.”¹²

The community of 230 two- and three-bedroom single-family homes was planned to be self-contained, and would have apartments, a large park, a community center with a pool, and a retail shopping district.¹³ Siple, working with architect Stephen Stephanian, developed 8 master floor plans, with 18 different elevations, in a contemporary ranch-inspired style. The houses, advertised as earthquake proof, were set on reinforced-concrete foundations and built using painted brick, stucco, and board and batten. The combination living-dining rooms featured exposed beam ceilings, wood-burning fireplaces, and “Walls of Glass,” and could be outfitted with central air-conditioning.

As interesting as the houses would be, the real story lay in the innovations of Huntsman-Trout’s site plan, which would ensure each lot (10,000 square feet) had optimum privacy. In the December 1948 issue of *House Beautiful*, Gordon described the program of “privacy landscaping”:

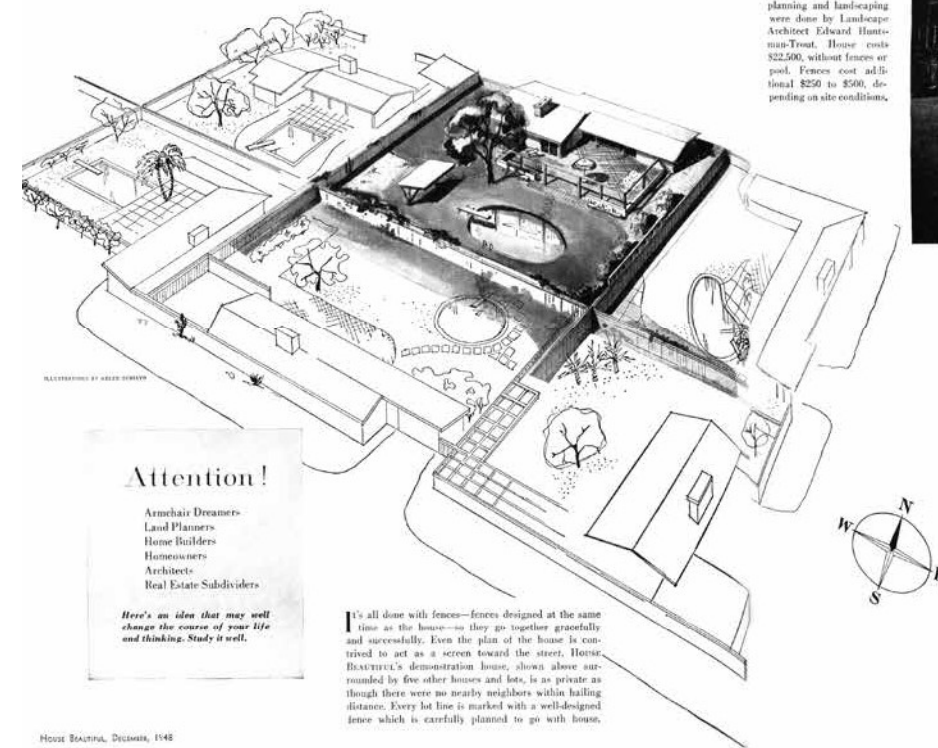
Privacy used to be the prerogative of only the rich. It came high, for you had to surround yourself with empty acreage in order to screen out the prying eyes of the “nosy nellys.” But these days even the rich can’t afford much acreage. Yet privacy is the keystone to good living. Without it you can’t do any of the desirable, up-to-date things with your house—like having big windows, or outdoor living rooms, or entertaining terraces. You can’t “bring in the outdoors” through window walls if you also bring in street traffic or the



How to have a Private Estate on 105' by 103'

By Elizabeth Gordon, Editor

This winter go to see the new pace-setting home community in Palm Springs, California, that shows how anyone can have the amenities of a big estate on as little as 1,000 square feet of land. And study our model house, selling for \$22,500.



Fences—all kinds of them—are part of “privacy landscaping.” At right is rear of terrace of House Beautiful’s home. High board fence blocks neighbors’ view of terrace. Site planning and landscaping were done by Landscape Architect Edward Huntsman-Trout. House costs \$22,500, without fence or pool. Fence cost additional \$250 to \$500, depending on site conditions.

Attention!

Armchair Dreamers—Land Planners—Home Builders—Homeowners—Architects—Real Estate Subdividers

Here’s an idea that may well change the course of your life and thinking. Study it well.

It’s all done with fences—fences designed at the same time as the house—so they go together gracefully and successfully. Even the plan of the house is contrived to act as a screen toward the street. House Beautiful’s demonstration house, shown above surrounded by five other houses and lots, is as private as though there were no nearby neighbors within hailing distance. Every lot line is marked with a well-designed fence which is carefully planned to go with house.



Privacy used to be the prerogative of only the rich. It came high, for you had to surround yourself with empty acreage in order to screen out the prying eyes of the “nosy nellys.” But these days even the rich can’t afford much acreage. (Land costs are inflated as much as 150%.) So lot sizes are shrinking for people at all income levels. Yet privacy is still the keystone to good living. Without it you can’t do any of the desirable, up-to-date things with your house—like having big windows, or outdoor living rooms, or entertaining terraces. You can’t “bring in the outdoors” through window walls if you also bring in street traffic or the back-lot trash pile of your neighbors. Yes, privacy is the cornerstone on which twentieth-century good living must be built.

But only a handful of community builders and land-planners have recognized this fact. They still treat your lot as though its main function, after serving to hold up your foundation, were to endow the whole neighborhood with a park-like look. While the residential park is a fine ideal, it is a luxury the small homeowner can ill afford. For houses are also shrinking in size—making it crucial for the owner to get every scrap of utility and good living out of both house and land. If his lot can be made private, for his exclusive use, he can get more use out of it.

(Text continued on page 172. More pictures on next six pages.)



back-lot trash pile of your neighbors. Yes, privacy is the cornerstone on which twentieth-century good living must be built. But only a handful of community builders and land-planners have recognized this fact. They still treat your lot as though its main function, after serving to hold up your foundation, were to endow the whole neighborhood with a park-like look. While the residential park is a fine ideal, it is a luxury the small homeowner can ill afford. For houses are also shrinking in size—making it crucial for the owner to get every scrap of utility and good living out of both house *and* land. If his lot can be made more private, for his exclusive use, he can get more use out of it.¹⁴

Huntsman-Trout achieved this desired privacy while maximizing the usable outdoor living space by minimizing front yards and giving houses on east-west sites 10-foot setbacks and north-south sites, 15-foot setbacks. Houses on corner plots came right up to the setback lines on both frontages. Side and rear yards throughout had 5-foot minimum setbacks.¹⁵ Furthermore, houses were not placed the same way on each lot, as “each plot has five variables (house, garage, motor court, fences and garden), thereby permitting many rearrangements, avoiding that regimented look which curses nearly

all developments.”¹⁶ The comparatively small front yards were decomposed granite, planted as a unit with species native to the Sonoran Desert. Informally placed trees (Huntsman-Trout’s drawings indicate “scattered”) included palo verde, desert willow, cottonwood, ironwood, smoke tree, desert acacia, and ocotillo. These were underplanted with groups of yellow-flowering brittlebrush (*Encelia farinosa*) and a variety of native wildflowers, pink sand verbena predominating.

Working with Siple, Huntsman-Trout developed a wide variety of fencing options, designed at the same time as the houses and using similar materials. Huntsman-Trout’s drawings carefully made note of which materials would be left in their natural state and where they would be painted—most often to match the fascia trim on the house. Another innovation was the creation of a “breezeway porch” between the detached garage and house. The porch had a louvered wall facing the street and was open to the private backyard. This permitted the house structure to stretch to almost the full lot width and created privacy for the garden.

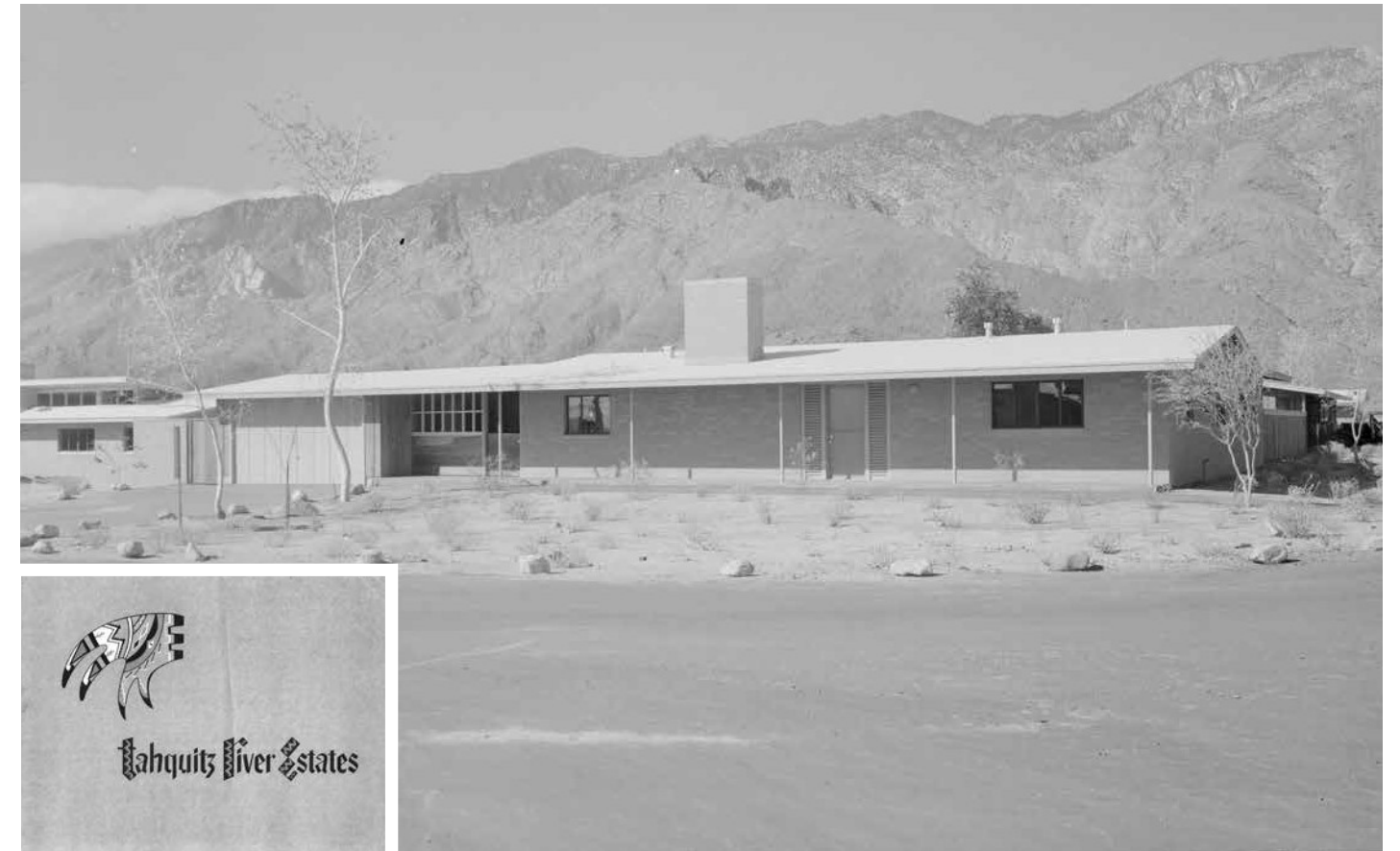
The private backyards featured large panels of turf, often inset with an optional Paddock swimming pool designed by

Huntsman-Trout in a variety of shapes and sizes, from freeform biomorphic shapes to geometric ovals, squares and rectangles. Drought-tolerant trees, such as California pepper, jacaranda, olive or Chinese elm, provided shade. Other trees included eucalyptus, crepe myrtle, Arizona cypress, almond, and a wide variety of citrus.

House Beautiful created a \$22,500 Demonstration House at 1157 South Riverside Drive, fully landscaped and stylishly furnished by Barker Brothers with modern “Precedent” furniture designed by Edward Wormley for Drexel. The Trousdale Company created another fully furnished and landscaped model house next door.

House sales were initially brisk. The *Desert Sun* reported that the “community is destined to become somewhat of a movie colony, judging from the large number of stage, screen, and radio personalities who are buying there. Swimming pools, and homes designed for ‘outdoor living’ added to the sun-kissed climate of Palm Springs makes living in the Estates a thing of natural desire.”¹⁷

By the end of 1949 Trousdale had completed 72 of the 230 homes originally planned. In October 1949, he was advertising improved



lots for sale for \$990.¹⁸ In April of 1950, the *Desert Sun* reported that Carl Bohne, who had been developing lots in Tahquitz River Estates, had applied for a rezoning to residential use of the four lots set aside for public parks, arguing that “Paul Trousdale was now completely out of the picture as far as any further development of these lots.”¹⁹

The remainder of the lots were developed in piecemeal fashion, and in the years since, many of the original Trousdale homes have been heavily altered, with the breezeway porches becoming indoor space. Other than large trees and hardscape features, very little of Huntsman-Trout’s landscape plantings are extant.

Endnotes

1. “How to Have a Private Estate on 105’ by 103’,” Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, December, 1948, 154.
2. Tahquitz River Estates advertising brochure, 1948.
3. “The McCallum Centennial – Palm Springs’ Founding Family,” *Palm Springs Life*, April, 1984.
4. “Pearl McCallum McManus Helped Shape Palm Springs,” Renee Brown, *Desert Sun*, April 29, 2016.
5. *The McCallum Saga, the Story of the Founding of Palm Springs*, Katherine Ainsworth, the Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, California, 1973, 205.
6. *Ibid.*, 211.
7. A. Quincy Jones, American Institute of Architects Fellowship Nomination Form, 1966. AIA Member Files, Washington, DC.
8. *Ibid.*

9. “Image of an Architect,” Edward Huntsman-Trout, Southern California Chapter, AIA Bulletin. Summer, 1962, 18.

10. “The Gardens of Edward Huntsman-Trout,” Susan Jane Gross, master’s thesis, 1976. California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 7.

11. “Edward Huntsman-Trout: Innovation and Practicality,” *The California Garden*, Jere Stuart French, Landscape Architecture Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1993, 118.

12. “How to Have a Private Estate on 105’ by 103’,” Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, December, 1948, 156.

13. “The Publisher’s Corner, by Oliver B. Jaynes,” *Desert Sun*, December 26, 1947, 1. Huntsman-Trout’s site plan shows space set aside for a park on the north side of the Tahquitz wash, placed symmetrically on Hermosa, but detailed plans in Huntsman-Trout’s papers for a park at Tahquitz River Estates. Aerial photos from 1952 show the area proposed for a park as undeveloped open land, but houses exist there today.

14. Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, December, 1948, 155.

15. Preliminary site plan studies, dated . Edward Huntsman-Trout Papers, Collection 1186, Box 8, Folder 1, Young Research Library, UCLA.

16. Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, December, 1948, 173.

17. Trousdale Homes Add Growth Here,” *Desert Sun*, December 14, 1948, 6.

18. Advertisement, *Desert Sun*, October 18, 1949, 8.

19. “Bohne Request Again Denied,” *Desert Sun*, April 14, 1950, 10.

CGLHS President and landscape historian Steven Keylon serves on the Stewardship Council of the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and is on the boards of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation and Docomomo/US: SoCal.

Steven Price is an author, producer, speaker, historian, and preservation consultant based in Palm Springs. The author of Trousdale Estates: Midcentury to Modern in Beverly Hills (Regan Arts, 2016), Price is now a recognized authority on the subject, with sold-out speaking engagements on Trousdale Estates, developer Paul Trousdale, and Mid-Century Beverly Hills. He serves on the Board of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation.

Opposite: Edward Huntsman-Trout designed a number of shade structures, this one named “The Sun Trap.” Angled vertical posts in oiled redwood supported a gridded canopy painted white outside, with red paint inside the grid. Lounge chairs in a “beach” of white sand look out to an oval pool, set into a panel of turf, with white oleander against the back fence, a mature olive planted near the house. Photo by Maynard L. Parker. Courtesy Huntington Library.

Above: Architect Allen Siple’s ranch-inspired modern homes were enhanced with landscape architect Edward Huntsman-Trout’s landscaping. In lieu of traditional grass front yards, Huntsman-Trout unified homes with decomposed granite, scattering native trees and shrubbery. Photo by Maynard L. Parker. Courtesy Huntington Library.

Inset: From the brochure for the Tahquitz River Estates.