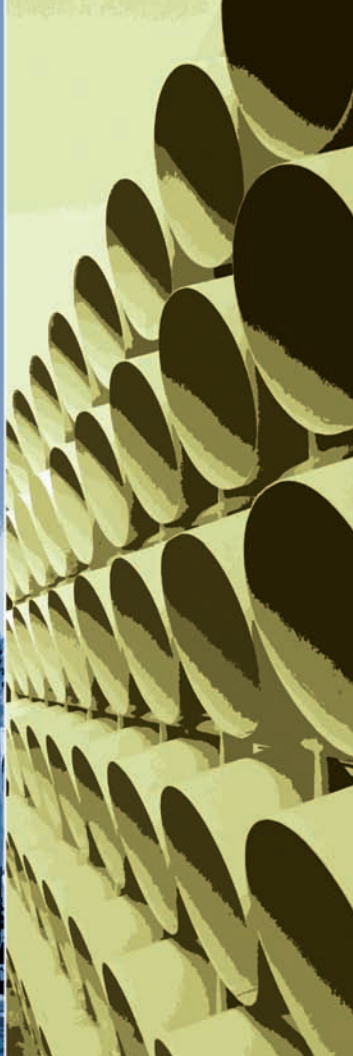


Class 1

*A Guide to the
Designated Class 1
Historic Sites
of Palm Springs*

**Palm Springs
Preservation Foundation**



Class 1

A Guide to the Designated Class 1 Historic Sites of Palm Springs

PALM SPRINGS



PRESERVATION
FOUNDATION

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Introduction

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation labors on a daily basis to ensure that the city's internationally renowned architectural resources remain intact and protected. While previous Palm Springs city councils have generally supported preservation goals in principle, local developers have been allowed to proceed with unwise and overly speculative development. This ill-advised development has frequently resulted in the demolition or alteration of historic properties. Additionally, over the years many of the city's historic properties have been "demolished through neglect" by financially-strapped owners.

Nevertheless, there is reason to be optimistic. While many know Palm Springs because of its rich history as a playground to the stars, increasingly the city's architectural riches are becoming discovered by a broader audience. In 2006, the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed Palm Springs on its prestigious list of cultural tourism destinations for architecture. Simultaneously, we see yet another re-discovery of the modern era by a new generation of cultural tourists (the city's 2008 Modernism Week saw a 35% increase in attendance over the previous year).

In March 2008, the PSPF and other concerned non-profit organizations met with tribal representatives to discuss the future of the Spa Hotel complex. In June 2008, the PSPF pro-actively requested

that the Palm Springs City Manager consider creating a full-time Preservation Officer position. PSPF is involved in a host of other local preservation issues involving the Town and Country Center, the Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan and city historic districts. The PSPF has also funded city historical markers and provided grants to local organizations in recognition and support of their preservation and education efforts.

As architectural tourism becomes an increasingly important component of the city's economy, the necessity of preserving our "built environment" becomes critical. To preserve this legacy a variety of audiences must be educated about Palm Springs' unique heritage. That audience includes tourists, full and part-time residents, real estate agents, developers and city leaders. We hope that this guide to the city's Class I Historic sites helps achieve that educational goal.



Ron Marshall, President
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Tramway Gas Station (Palm Springs Visitors Center)

2901 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Albert Frey & Robson Chambers, 1963



Originally featuring a simple curbside fountain and lights on the underside of its roof, the Tramway Gas Station was a brilliant landmark that celebrated the popularity of auto culture and welcomed visitors to Palm Springs.

In 1963, noted realtor and land-owner Culver Nichols commissioned architects Frey and Chambers to design a much-needed service station at the entrance to Palm Springs. Originally built as the “Enco” Tramway Gas Station, the building that today houses the Palm Springs Visitors Center stands as an excellent example of California’s mid-century roadside architecture. With its stunning mountain backdrop, the roof, a steel-cantilevered hyperbolic paraboloid, soars to a dramatic point, marking the official entry to the city.

Born and raised in Switzerland, Albert Frey (1903-1998) moved to Paris in 1928 to study under and work with Le Corbusier. He later partnered with A. Lawrence Kocher in New York, where they designed the Aluminaire House. Frey made the journey to Palm Springs in 1934 to oversee construction of the Kocher-Samson building (located at 760 N. Palm Canyon Drive) and in 1939 permanently relocated here, where he would live and work until his death.

Robson C. Chambers (1919-1999) became a partner in the firm of Clark and Frey in 1952. Born in Los Angeles and raised in Banning, Chambers received his B.A. from USC in 1941. After Clark left the firm in 1956, Chambers remained in partnership with Frey for ten more years.

Tramway Valley Station

1 Tramway Road / Clark, Frey & Chambers, 1963

Designed over a fourteen year period from 1949-1963 by architects John Porter Clark, Albert Frey and Robson Chambers, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway valley station was designed to embrace its surroundings. The structure is literally built as a bridge that allows mountain run-off and snow-melt to pass underneath without affecting the building or visitors. The ceilings are made of perforated corrugated aluminum, the same material Frey used in his second home.

John Porter Clark (1905-1991) was the first resident architect in Palm Springs. Born in Los Angeles and educated at Cornell University, Clark arrived in Palm Springs in 1932 and proved to be ahead of his time with the sophisticated 1939 modern design of his own home in the International Style. Clark and Frey's partnership of nearly twenty years truly set the tone for architectural practice in the desert.



The caption of this vintage postcard lauded the “well designed Valley Station” as “the world’s largest passenger carrying aerial tramway.”

El Mirador Hotel Tower & Garage

1150 N. Indian Canyon Drive & 1090 N. Palm Canyon Drive



The reconstructed El Mirador Tower remains a colorful reminder of the site's glamorous history.

Originally built by cattle rancher Prescott T. Stevens in 1928, this tower was the centerpiece of the famed El Mirador Hotel. After a failed start, the hotel rebounded in 1932. For many years it was the place to stay in Palm Springs and certainly one of the most fashionable resorts of its kind. At the start of World War II, the site was purchased and converted by the federal government into Torney General Hospital to treat wounded soldiers. After the war, a portion of the site remained a community hospital, but the hotel re-opened its doors with a

new design and additions by modernist architect Paul R. Williams to much fanfare and another round of celebrity guests. Sadly, in 1973 El Mirador Hotel shut its doors forever and the first Desert Hospital, designed by Albert Frey, was built on the site. However, the original tower building stood until destroyed by fire in 1989. By 1991, the tower was reconstructed in its entirety thanks to the original plans.

Due to the popularity of the El Mirador Hotel and its elite car-savvy clientele, the garage was built in 1929, one year after the hotel's opening. The two-story portion of the Spanish Revival building housed the chauffeurs while service and fueling transpired street-side on North Palm Canyon Drive.



El Mirador Garage was at the corner of Tachevah and N. Palm Canyon Drive.

El Paseo Building

800 N. Palm Canyon Drive

A two story Spanish Eclectic compound featuring an interior courtyard, this 1926-1927 building exemplifies much of Palm Springs' early architecture. Much of the original building remains and a sympathetic renovation was undertaken in 2008.



Looking northeast, the front facade of this building no longer has a covered walkway.

Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society

Pacific Building

766-768 N. Palm Canyon Drive



Looking southeast, the view of the Pacific building at N. Palm Canyon Drive and Tamarisk Road remains virtually the same as in this 1950s photo.

This Mission Revival style building was built in 1936 by Charles Chamberlin. The original owner, Los Angeles pediatrician Dr. Rothman, sold it to former Palm Springs Mayor Florian G. Boyd. The upstairs level remains as apartments while the courtyard and street-facing space have housed numerous office and retail oriented business over the years. The adjacent Casa Palmeras apartments to the east remain virtually unchanged.

Photo courtesy Western Resort Publications

Frances Stevens School & Park

538-550 N. Palm Canyon Drive

Frances Stevens was the wife of Prescott T. Stevens, builder of the El Mirador Hotel. They built their home in the 900 block of N. Palm Canyon Drive, now known as the Blondon House at Church of St. Paul. Prescott donated the land and funds for constructing a school to be named the Palm Springs Desert School but by its completion Frances had passed away. The school was dedicated to her as a tribute to her passion for education and the first classrooms were built in 1927. Earle Strebe, manager of the Plaza Theatre, began his theater career by showing films at the school. The city purchased the site in 1974.



The school as it appeared in 1932. The site is currently a cultural arts center and home to the Palm Canyon Theatre.

General Telephone Building

365 N. Palm Canyon Drive



During World War II the telephone building was equipped with air raid sirens.

Built in 1934 by the California Water & Telephone Company as an office and switching center, this Spanish Eclectic building is made of poured-in-place concrete and features a long upper balcony. Subsequent renovations gutted the interior and added an exterior side patio/bar used by numerous restaurants over the years.

Street Marker

Northwest corner N. Palm Canyon Drive and Chino Drive



This stone street marker stands as a testament to the building skills of early Palm Springs settlers.

Photo by Barbara Marshall

In 1930 Main Street became Palm Canyon Boulevard, and following the city's incorporation in 1938, stone street markers were created. Built of native stone and cement, this is the last remaining marker of its kind in the city.

Welwood Murray Cemetery

Chino Drive and Vine Avenue

As the first cemetery for non-Indian settlers in Palm Springs, this is the final resting place for many Palm Springs pioneers. Deeded to the Palm Springs cemetery district by Welwood Murray's heirs, it is named in his honor. Erksine Murray, son of Elizabeth and George Murray, was the first buried here in 1894.



The cemetery as it appears against the backdrop of O'Donnell Golf Course.

Photo by Clara Nelson

Our Lady of Solitude Church

151 W. Alejo Road / Albert Martin, 1930

Planning for this church began in 1926 under Father Phillip LaVies from Saint Boniface School in nearby Banning. Albert C. Martin, Sr. (1897-1960), architect of Los Angeles City Hall, was retained to design the church on a site purchased from Southern Pacific Railroad. The Spanish Mission Revival structure was completed in 1930 by local builder Alvah Hicks. The Rectory to the east was added in 1964 and a Parish Center to the south was built in 1974. President John F. Kennedy attended services at Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church during his frequent visits to Palm Springs.



This early photo, looking southwest from Alejo Road, shows the church in its original state before the addition of the rectory.

Drs. Smith & Peppers Office

483 N. Palm Canyon Drive



One of the oldest homes on Palm Canyon Drive, this house remains in its original location.

When built in the 1920s, this small Spanish Eclectic home was the northernmost residence in the city. As Palm Springs prospered, a higher demand for community services along “Main Street” prompted original owner Dr. John F. Smith to convert the home into his medical offices in the early 1930s. Dr. Peppers occupied the site from 1940-1958 and the structure has since housed various businesses.

American Legion, Owen Coffman Post #519

400 N. Belardo Road / John Porter Clark & Albert Frey, 1948

Built by R. S. Pinkard in 1948 with donated materials and labor, this project was originally known as the War Memorial Building. Under first commander Earl Coffman, a World War One veteran, the American Legion Post held early meetings in the Fiesta Room at the Desert Inn. Upon learning that his son, Lieutenant Owen B. Coffman, was the first Palm Springs native killed in action in World War II, a resolution was drafted to rename the post in Owen's honor.

A site was obtained in 1945 from Pearl McManus for just \$9.90 and Nellie Coffman donated the land to the north for a parking lot. Original architectural details featured pale green plaster exterior walls, corrugated pressed glass windows and wooden parquet flooring often used for dances. An arched wood ceiling with contrasting diamond cross beams is no longer visible, but still exists above a dropped acoustic ceiling installed by Riverside County when it leased the building in 1957 to house various county offices.

Popular radio shows broadcast from the building's radio booth and stage included those of Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, Charlie Farrell and Al Jolson with such guest stars as Doris Day and Groucho Marx. The launch of local radio station KCMJ coincided with Frank Sinatra's national radio show during a special fundraiser where former mayor Frank Bogert served as master of ceremonies.



TOP: The building as it appeared shortly after its dedication in January 1948.

BOTTOM: The interior as it looked on opening day. Note the elaborate wooden diamond-shaped crossbeams above the streamers.

Cork 'n Bottle

342 N. Palm Canyon Drive

Somewhat shrouded in mystery, this last remaining example of commercial Art Deco architecture in downtown Palm Springs is listed at this address as early as 1937 in local phone books, but was most likely built earlier. While the architect and builder are unknown, records indicate the building was first owned by local civic leader Clarence Simpson, who ran it as Simpson's Radio and Frigidaire until his death in 1944. The building then housed Ted Reed's Radio Shop until the business moved across the street in 1950. At that time,



Built in the Art Deco style, this building is among the last of its kind in Palm Springs.

the Cork 'n Bottle business, originally established in 1946, moved from its first location at 392 N. Palm Canyon Drive to the present location and has remained there since, making it one of the oldest businesses in Palm Springs.

Palm Springs Fire Station #1

277 N. Indian Canyon Drive / Albert Frey & Robson Chambers, 1957



Palm Springs Fire Station #1 still appears much as it did when built in 1957.

Fire Station #1 is similar to Palm Springs City Hall in that it features many of Frey's trademark elements such as colored concrete block and corrugated aluminum. The fire station is an excellent example of a post-war modern civic building. The structure is remarkably intact and happily serving its original function. Two interesting details of the building are the pink-tinted mortar and the station's flagpole, which cleverly pierces the roof overhang.

Lykken's Department Store

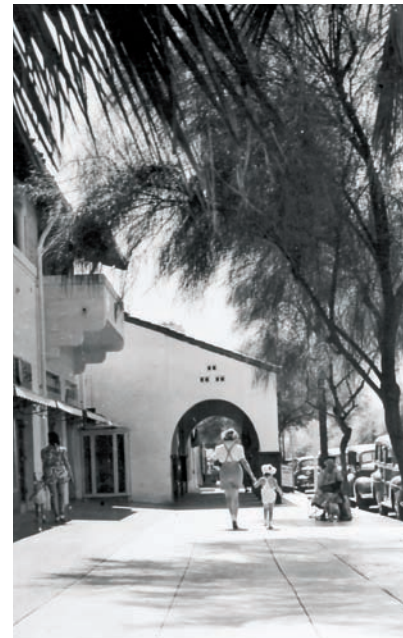
180 N. Palm Canyon Drive

Pioneer Carl Gustav Lykken and business partner J. H. Bartlett built the first Palm Springs department store in 1914. Lykken later added a hardware store on the north side. The original Gladding McBean clay roof tile remains and the building currently appears much as it did after a 1930s renovation that added the signature overhang and arches when pedestrian sidewalks were added by the city. A place of many firsts, Lykken's had the town's first public phone and a branch of the United States Post Office.



Lykken's as it appeared after the arched facade was added in the 1930s.

Undoubtedly one of Palm Springs' most loyal and beloved citizens, Lykken served the city for nearly six decades in various organizations. He also served as Chamber of Commerce president and was the postmaster for many years. Lykken and his wife Edith lived in a two-story home just south of the store until 1925. Their only daughter, Jane Lykken Hoff, still lives in Palm Springs and is very active with the Palm Springs Historical Society.



Lykken's as seen walking south on Palm Canyon Drive. To the left is the Carnell Building, by Harry J. Williams.

Town & Country Center (pending designation)

146-176 N. Palm Canyon Drive / A. Quincy Jones and Paul R. Williams, 1948



The Town & Country Center was a bustling mixed-use development in the heart of town.

One of the architects was Paul R. Williams (1894-1980), the first African-American member of the American Institute of Architects. Williams received countless accolades for his body of work that included many of Los Angeles' most famous public buildings and hundreds of private homes for the rich and famous. His collaborator, architect A. Quincy Jones (1913-1979), is most famous for his modernist architectural style which brought "the outdoors inside." In design partnership with Frederick Emmons, Jones was to realize his ideas in the design of tract housing for builder Joseph Eichler. Jones was a professor and later Dean of Architecture at USC. The collaboration between Jones and Williams, their first of three in Palm Springs, produced the steel-framed building of

stucco, redwood and cement walls. A stunning cantilevered staircase sweeps up to the second floor and defines the interior court created by the surrounding buildings. Divided by patterned garden planters, the cement flatwork falls off into shallow, angular stairs.

"Redeveloped with a Flair" reads the title of a 1950 *Architectural Record* article about the remodel of a restaurant called Top of the Ramp, the offices of *The Desert Sun*, the Palm Springs Corporation (then owners of the property), three shops and four small apartments.

Palm Springs Art Museum

101 Museum Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1976

Photo by David Glomb, courtesy Palm Springs Art Museum



Architect E. Stewart Williams designed the museum facade to blend into the foothills.

When the Palm Springs Desert Museum purchased a large portion of the former Desert Inn site in the early 1970s, architect E. Stewart Williams (1909-2005) was commissioned to conceptualize a new museum. Williams immersed himself in the project, traveling the country to visit various museums, and interviewing their staff and directors to gain a better sense of building the ideal facility. A thirty-five foot building height limit at the time did not hamper Williams' creativity; he simply placed the outdoor sculpture gardens and theater below grade. As a result, a magnificent entry stairway echoes the ascent of the 10,000-

foot high Mt. San Jacinto immediately behind the site. Constructed primarily of concrete, the building is sheathed with a layer of volcanic cinders in shades hand-selected to match the mountain. The exposed concrete walls are finished with a vertical fluting pattern inspired by sand dunes, creating rhythmic sun shadows throughout the day. This natural and organic approach to building was a trademark of Williams' work. Having the clever foresight that building codes and height restrictions would evolve, Williams came out of retirement in 1996 at age 86 to design a seamless addition.

Just north of the Palm Springs Art Museum, at the intersection of West Alejo and North Belardo Roads is the city's Chamber of Commerce. Constructed in 1957 by local builders, the

structure has expansive walls of glass and beautiful pink and orange stone-work. There are many historically and architecturally significant buildings in Palm Springs waiting to be designated as Class 1 sites by the Palm Springs city council. A short list of "Other Significant Sites" can be found on page 35.



Photo by Barbara Marshall

O'Donnell House

Private Road / Charles Tanner, 1925

Designed to complement the Desert Inn, this private home was built for Thomas O'Donnell by Palm Springs pioneer Nellie Coffman and designed by architect Charles Tanner. With its wrought iron gates proclaiming "Ojo del Desierto," Eye of the Desert, the house was the highest in the valley when built in 1925. Currently in excellent condition, the Mediterranean Revival structure features a red clay tile gable roof and a sweeping second-



The O'Donnell House is perched on the hill above the museum.

Photo by William Kopelk

The Willows

412 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way / Dow & Richards, 1924

The winter home of New Yorker Samuel Untermyer, the first attorney to earn six figures for a single case, "The Willows" was built in 1924 by architects Dow

and Richards. Long neglected, the home was rescued by entrepreneurs who

undertook a thorough restoration before opening the once private estate as a luxury hotel in 1996. The formal dining area opens onto a small patio featuring a magnificent waterfall that runs down the rocky hillside. Appearing much like an Italian villa, the structure rises out of its mountainside site and boasts only the finest materials such as mahogany, sandstone, hand-made tiles, frescoed ceilings, custom wrought iron and native stone floors. A distinctive array of personalities visited and stayed here as guests of Untermyer and include such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Marion Davies, Clark Gable and Shirley Temple, who played on the grounds.



The Willows rests at the base of Mt. San Jacinto.

Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society

Roberson House (Le Vallauris)

385 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way / Charles Tanner, 1924

Designed by Charles Tanner, architect of the Desert Inn and the O'Donnell House, this home was built in 1924 by George Roberson, son of Nellie Coffman. Originally surrounded by a native stone wall, the Spanish Revival structure was one of three homes that made up a compound of early Palm Springs families; the Coffmans, Robersons and Valeurs. Because of its proximity to the Desert Inn, the house served as an ideal

place for private parties with hotel guests such as Lena Horne, Buddy Rogers, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, William and Mousie Powell, Louis Armstrong, Mae West and countless others.

When General George Patton

visited Palm Springs during World War II, he befriended George Roberson and they smoked cigars on the patio. In January 1974, the owners of Los Angeles' Le Saint Germain turned the home into the upscale French restaurant Le Vallauris, which remains to this day. Great care has been taken to keep the home's original layout.



A wreath adorns the front door of the Roberson House.



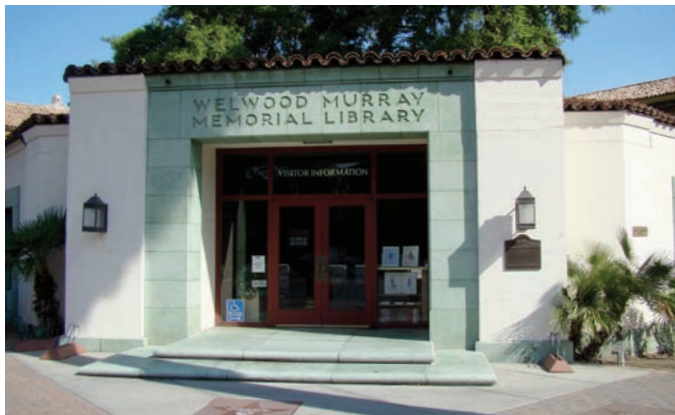
The courtyard, as it appeared in 1926, today serves as patio dining for Le Vallauris restaurant.

Welwood Murray Memorial Library

100 S. Palm Canyon Drive

John Porter Clark, 1940 / addition, Harry J. Williams, 1950s

Completed the last week of 1940, the Welwood Murray Memorial Library was deeded to the city by Murray's son, Dr. George Murray. Terms of Dr. Murray's 1938 gift deed to the city require that the property, on a prime downtown corner, always contain a library. A 1950s rear addition was designed by Harry J. Williams. Welwood Murray was best known as the first justice of the peace in the San Geronio Pass area.



The Welwood Murray Memorial Library as it appears today.

Tie Down on Easmor Circle

Easmor Circle (just east of Farrell, off Livmor)



A round slab of concrete with embedded anchors was used in World War II for tying down aircraft.

During World War II, the Palm Springs Army Air Field was used as a deployment center for aircraft being ferried to the east coast and abroad. The Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command launched a project, as a safety measure, to install dozens of tie downs or "hardstands." About sixty feet in diameter, each tie down was a round slab of concrete in which brass rope anchors were embedded.

Photos by Barbara Marshall

Spa Bath House and Hotel (included though on tribal land)

100 N. Indian Canyon Drive

William F. Cody and Wexler & Harrison, 1959-1962

Erected on the natural springs that gave the city its name, the Spa Bathhouse (1959) and Hotel (1962) are structures of both civic and tribal importance. The significant financial investment in the Spa Hotel complex (the first concrete-and-steel modern hotel erected in the valley) motivated tribal leaders of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and developers Samuel Banowit and William Leeb, to seek authority from the U.S. government to grant extended leases on tribal land. The ensuing era of extended leases made the tribe one of the wealthiest in the nation. Unfortunately, many of the striking aspects of the Spa Hotel have been removed, altered or over-landscaped. The concrete-domed colonnade, or arcade, was nationally recognized for its brilliant use of pre-cast concrete forms. The beautiful *porte-cochere*, or covered entryway, on North Calle Encilia, is today covered by an awning. The Greek water nymph statue (since relocated) was designed by Los Angeles sculptor Bernard Zimmerman and appeared prominently in the marketing of the Spa complex. The work of artists John Mason and Dale Clark can also found inside and outside the Spa complex. Artwork was a typical William Cody (1916-1978) detail intended to soften the severity of the architecture.



The December 1960 issue of *Concrete* magazine lauded the use of pre-cast concrete forms for the Spa's striking colonnade.

EL MOLINO

A-G

SUNNY VIEW

SIMMS

- 1 **Tramway Gas Station** / 2901 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 2 **Tramway Valley Station** / 1 Tramway Road
- 3 **El Mirador Hotel Tower** / 1150 N. Indian Canyon Drive
- 4 **El Mirador Garage** / 1090 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 5 **El Paseo Building** / 800 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 6 **Pacific Building** / 766-768 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 7 **Frances Stevens School** / 538 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 8 **Street Marker** / NW corner N. Palm Canyon Drive & Chino Drive
- 9 **Welwood Murray Cemetery** / Chino Drive & Vine Avenue
- 10 **Our Lady of Solitude Church** / 151 W. Alejo Road
- 11 **Drs. Smith & Peppers Office** / 483 N. Palm Canyon Dr.
- 12 **American Legion Post #519** / 400 N. Belardo Road

- 13 **General Telephone Building** / 365 N. Palm Canyon Dr.
- 14 **Cork 'n Bottle** / 342 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 15 **Palm Springs Fire Station #1** / 277 N. Indian Canyon Drive
- 16 **Town & Country Center** / 146-176 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 17 **Lykken's Department Store** / 180 N. Palm Canyon Drive
- 18 **Spa Bath House & Hotel** / 100 N. Indian Canyon Drive
- 19 **Palm Springs Art Museum** / 101 Museum Drive
- 20 **O'Donnell House** / Private Road (above museum)
- 21 **The Willows** / 412 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way
- 22 **Roberson House** / 385 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way
- 23 **Oasis Commercial Building** / 101-121 S. Palm Canyon Dr.
- 24 **Oasis Hotel Tower** / 121 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

AVE. MIRALESTE

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INDIAN CANYON DRIVE

Map of Designated
Class 1
Historic
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& Palm Springs City Hall

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TAHQUITZ CANYON WAY

- 25 Welwood Murray Library / 100 S. Palm Canyon Drive
- 26 Plaza Theater / 128 S. Palm Canyon Drive
- 27 La Plaza / 160 S. Palm Canyon Drive
- 28 McCallum Adobe / 221 S. Palm Canyon Drive
- 29 Miss Cornelia's "Little House" / 221 S. Palm Cyn. Dr.
- 30 Casa Cody Inn / 175 S. Cahuilla Road
- 31 Community Church / 283 S. Cahuilla Road
- 32 Ingleside Inn / 200 W. Ramon Road
- 33 Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan / 300 S. Palm Cyn. Dr.
- 34 Coachella Valley Savings & Loan / 499 S. Palm Cyn. Dr.
- 35 City National Bank / 588 S. Palm Canyon Drive
- 36 Tie Down on Easmor Circle / (E. of Farrell, N. off Livmor)
- 37 Palm Springs City Hall / 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way

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Q**Steel Development Houses**

300 & 330 E. El Molino Road;
3100, 3125, 3133, 3165 Sunny View Drive;
290 Simms Road

Miller House / 2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive**Carey-Pirozzi House** / 651 W. Via Escuela**Hamrick House** / 875 Chino Canyon Road**Edris House** / 1030 W. Cielo Drive**Loewy House** / 600 W. Panorama Road**Kaufmann House** / 470 W. Vista Chino**Invernada** / 657 Via Miraleste**Frey House II** / 686 Palisades Drive**Neel House** / 272 Camino Buena Vista**Ship of the Desert** / 1995 Camino Monte

S. PALM CANYON DRIVE

MESA DRIVE

CAMINO BUENA VISTA

CAMINO CARMELITA

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BELARDO ROAD

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RAMON ROAD

MUSEUM DRIVE

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CAHUILLA ROAD

We ask that you
respect the privacy of
private homeowners.

Oasis Commercial Building (pending designation)

101-121 S. Palm Canyon Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1952

Built and designed in 1952 at a cost of \$1.3 million, this building quickly became a city landmark and favorite meeting and shopping destination. An early application of “mixed use,” the building

featured retail spaces surrounding a cool, inviting central garden on the street level with office spaces on the second floor that commanded expansive views through flush casement windows.

The east-facing downstairs retail spaces are sheltered from the intense sun by a cantilevered upper floor and large windows on both floors flood interior spaces with light. A solid balustrade of corrugated aluminum created privacy and shielded the upper floor from street noise. An inspired combination of stone, aluminum-framed windows and glass create a striking retail space seen in the shop at the building’s southeast corner. The north retail space was originally a Milton F. Kreis drug store with interiors designed by Los Angeles architect Paul R. Williams. The architectural firm of Williams, Williams and Williams (which included E. Stewart, his father Harry and his brother Roger) practiced out of the building. The architect’s attention to detail and use of new technologies of the era can be seen in innovative door hardware, aluminum-framed glass doors floating in walls of glass and in the sculpted staircase at the rear of the building’s northwest corner.



The Oasis Building combined lower level shopping with second story offices.

Oasis Hotel Tower

121 S. Palm Canyon Drive / Lloyd Wright, 1923-1925

Lloyd Wright (1890-1978), son of Frank Lloyd Wright, designed this early Art Deco/Moderne hotel for clients Pearl and Austin McManus from 1923-25. Built around early Palm Springs settler John McCallum's



Once covered in vines, the top of the tower was reportedly a favorite spot of Loretta Young who stayed at the Oasis when she visited Palm Springs.

original adobe house, the hotel was constructed using an innovative slip-form method of construction whereby concrete was poured into forms to create sturdy 12-inch walls. When dry, those same forms were “slipped” up to create another level and so on. This resulted in an original and organic modern



Lloyd Wright is believed to be the first to use the slip-form method of concrete construction, creating the graceful lines of the Oasis Hotel.

design that became the first truly important building in Palm Springs. Wright paved the way for a strong organic influence in local architecture until the 1970s. Called “one of the great neglected buildings of California architecture,” the Oasis Hotel and tower have been subject to unfortunate defacement and neglect over the years.

Plaza Theatre

128 S. Palm Canyon Drive

As the most remarkable building of the million-dollar Plaza project, the Plaza Theatre embodies the finest features of modern Spanish Revival architecture and construction. Among its most notable achievements was the first ever installation of



Palm Springs High School students line up at the Plaza Theatre box office in 1952 to see "Detective Story" starring Kirk Douglas.

Western Electric's Mirrophonic Sound, then the most innovative and perfected system of its kind. Opening night on December 12, 1936 featured the world premiere of "Camille" starring

Greta Garbo, who theater manager Earle C. Strebe noted "wore slacks and a little dark hat." Initially quite successful, the theater suffered in later years from the downtown's economic hardships and an unfortunate separation of the space into two screening areas. In 1990, under the direction of then mayor Sonny Bono, the city undertook an extensive \$770,000 restoration of the Plaza Theatre expressly for its use in the first annual Palm Springs International Film Festival. Since 1992 it has been home to the Fabulous Palm Springs Follies, an important component of the revival of downtown.



Costumed clowns welcome visitors to "The Greatest Show on Earth."

Photos courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society

La Plaza

160 S. Palm Canyon Drive / Harry J. Williams, 1935

Julia Carnell of the National Cash Register Corp. in Dayton, Ohio had wintered in Palm Springs and believed a commercial development would be a good investment. With the help of local realtor Robert Ransom, she purchased three and a half acres from Miss Cornelia White. Harry J. Williams, who had designed the offices of NCR, was her natural choice when selecting an architect. In 1934, Carnell brought Williams to the desert to design an office building and then a large shopping center, his most significant commission in eight years following the collapse of his former firm, Schenk & Williams.



La Plaza was designed by architect Harry J. Williams in 1935.



This post card from the 1940s shows off La Plaza as a busy shopping center with convenient parking.

Among the first mixed-use centers in California, La Plaza was indeed the first outdoor-oriented shopping center in the country. When ground first broke in 1935, some residents considered the site to be on the edge of town and they surmised that no one would go there to shop or watch a movie! Original tenants included the local post office, an upstairs nightclub and the trendy Desmond's apparel shop. Unique features included cottages, shuffleboard courts, and even a store-front "doggie-bar," a small built-in basin for thirsty pets.

Miss Cornelia White's "Little House"

221 S. Palm Canyon Drive (on the Village Green)

Built partially out of railroad ties from the defunct Palmdale Railway, this building was originally erected in 1893 by Welwood Murray on the site of his Palm Springs Hotel before the property was sold in 1914 to the White sisters, Miss Cornelia and Dr. Florilla. The "Little



The Cornelia White "Little House" at its present location on the Village Green, next to the McCallum Adobe which houses the Palm Springs Historical Society.



Miss Cornelia's "Little House" being moved two blocks in 1979 to its present location on the Village Green.

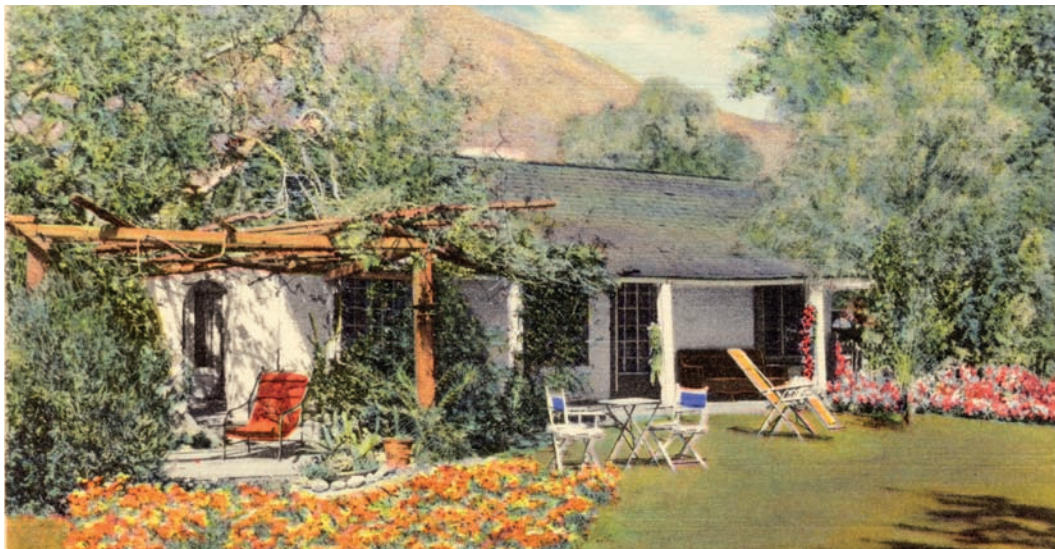
House" was moved across the street to what is now the southeast corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Indian Canyon Drive when Cornelia deeded it and the land for the first Palm Springs Desert Museum. When the Museum sold that site, the house was moved again in 1979 to its present location. Though the river rock chimney was significantly damaged by the 1986 earthquake, it has since been rebuilt.

McCallum Adobe

221 S. Palm Canyon Drive (on the Village Green)

The oldest existing structure in Palm Springs, the McCallum Adobe was the original family home of Judge John Guthrie McCallum, the first permanent non-Indian settler. Built in 1884 under the guidance of Will Pablo, a Cahuilla Indian from the Morongo Reservation, the walls were made of adobe brick in the “ancient manner,” from a mixture of earth and water tamped down in forms then left in the sun to dry. When McCallum’s daughter Pearl sold the Oasis Hotel that she had built around the homestead, she did so with the stipulation that the adobe be moved to the Village Green. Local architect William Cody was hired in 1953 to dismantle and move the house brick by brick to its present site. As a staunch believer in Palm Springs and its future success,

Pearl McManus once wisely noted: “(Palm Springs) will be a big city and a great community. Of that I’m sure. I only hope it won’t be spoiled by unregulated development.”



The McCallum Adobe, the oldest building in Palm Springs, was once part of the Oasis Hotel, as seen in this early post card photo. It now houses the Palm Springs Historical Society on the Village Green.

Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan (Wessman Office Building) (pending designation)

300 S. Palm Canyon Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1960

The simplicity and purity of form makes this building a favorite among visitors and the city's architecture cognoscenti alike. Despite the use of "cold" modern materials such as steel, glass and concrete,

the human-scale of the building makes it warm and welcoming. The architect used a five-foot dimensional module to scale all other aspects of the building. The building's columns and walls are disengaged

from each other, allowing the wall plane to flow uninterrupted by the structural columns. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the building is the linear, cantilevered concrete base which allows the floor slab to "float" when viewed from the north and west sides. Other notable features of the building include free-standing steel columns which gracefully narrow at the top and bottom and sliding aluminum *brise-soleil* or sunscreens. The bank's drive-up teller window was a new innovation at a time when "motor banking" was still a novelty. The city is currently reviewing a developer's proposal to abut a slab of concrete next to the building to create outdoor seating for a proposed restaurant. If approved by the city, it would compromise the building's most notable feature, the floating effect created by the cantilevered base.



A cantilevered concrete base makes the building appear to "float."

Casa Cody Inn

175 S. Cahuilla Road

The Casa Cody complex is an eclectic collection of four parcels, eight buildings and numerous historic elements. The modestly scaled early California ranch buildings were constructed from the 1900s through the 1950s and are surrounded by mature trees, extensive citrus and bougainvilleas, open lawns, pool areas and

perimeter stone and masonry walls. Highlights of the property include a 1930s ranch style L-shaped wing designed by architect Myron Hunt and built by Vassar-educated Harriet Cody, then the widow of architect Harold William Cody, who was related to Buffalo Bill Cody. During the Second World War this building housed several



The Adobe House embodies the distinctive characteristics of the adobe method of construction, using sun-dried clay masonry units laid up in thick walls by hand in an unreinforced manner.

of General Patton's officers training for the North African Campaign. Other highlights are a 1910s Adobe House, once the playground of opera star Lawrence Tibbit and Charlie Chaplin, the 1930s Winter House, and a small cottage relocated from the 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Village which served as one of the first hotel rooms. There are also portions of a native stone wall and irrigation ditch commissioned by Judge John McCallum, Palm Springs' first non-Indian settler, whose vision to make Palm Springs an agricultural hub was ruined by a dreadful ten-year drought during the 1890s.

Community Church of Palm Springs

283 S. Cahuilla Road / Charles Tanner, 1935

The original Community Church of Palm Springs, located at the southeast corner of Andreas Road and North Palm Canyon Drive, was a quaint white frame structure built by Thomas Critchlow and



The Community Church is the only surviving example of Gothic Revival in Palm Springs.

“set in an expansive green lawn sprinkled with palms and chinaberry trees.” By the early 1930s a growing congregation created the need for a large building, prompting the church board to sell the property in order to raise

funds for a larger site and to build a new church. Nellie Coffman was appointed building committee head and found a buyer, Julia Carnell, to whom the property was sold for \$40,000 in 1935 with the stipulation that the old church be moved. With the proceeds, three lots were purchased from Austin and Pearl McManus, and a beautiful new church, designed by Charles Tanner in a Gothic-Revival style, was completed and furnished by March 1936. An addition was designed by architect Harry J. Williams and built in 1950. On February 21, 1954, President and Mrs. Eisenhower worshipped in the church during a week-long visit to Palm Springs that brought more world recognition to Palm Springs than it had ever received. The building is now owned by a local developer.



President Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower and wife Mamie greeting Pastor Charles Blackstone.

Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society

Ingleside Inn

200 W. Ramon Road / Alvah Hicks (builder) 1922

Local developer and builder Alvah Hicks built this as a private residence for the Humphrey and Ethel Birge family in 1922. Humphrey, the son of George K. Birge who was president of Pierce-Arrow Motorcars from 1908-1916 before selling his interest in the company, was better known as president of MH Birge and Sons Wallpapers, famous for its twelve-color process of wallpaper production.

In 1934, the Birge's sold the property to local civic leader Ruth Hardy, who turned it into an inn for popular and affluent guests such as Howard Hughes, J. C. Penny, Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. By the late 1960s, the inn fell into neglect and was



View from lobby entrance toward Belardo Road.



Alvah Hicks at work on construction of the Birge Estate in 1922.

finally rescued in 1974 by Brooklyn entrepreneur Mel Haber, who bought it on a whim. The restaurant once known as Orville's was re-christened Melvyn's, and with little experience in the hospitality industry, Haber successfully revived the inn, attracting such clientele as Betty and President Gerald Ford, Liberace, Mary Martin and Jack Lemmon.

Coachella Valley Savings & Loan #2 (Washington Mutual)

499 S. Palm Canyon Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1961

The giant parabolas of negative space created by the tapering pre-cast concrete columns helped win E. Stewart Williams an award from the nation's premier concrete association. Fountains and moat-like

pools on the street elevation coupled with the cantilevered floor slab recreate far more dramatically the “floating” effect the architect so subtly achieved in the nearby Sante Fe Federal Savings &

Loan building. The building's wide, gently rising stairs evoke a temple-like elegance despite the later unfortunate installation of additional hand railings. The tall vertical panels of anodized aluminum sheathing, which have done well in the harsh desert climate, contrast nicely with the bright white concrete. Williams integrated into the site a clever bi-level horseshoe shaped parking garage (the city's Historic Site Preservation Board sensibly included the parking garage in the historic designation of the structure). An ATM machine was recently added to the southeast corner of the bank distracting from the clarity of the original design and inside, the bank's owners saw fit to remove the spectacular curving staircase. Stewart's masterpiece appeared on the cover of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation's 2005 tribute journal to the architect.



The Portland Cement Association recognized architect Williams for his deft use of pre-cast concrete.

City National Bank (Bank of America)

588 S. Palm Canyon Drive / Victor Gruen Associates, 1959

In 1959, the City National Bank of Beverly Hills commissioned the Beverly Hills office of Victor Gruen Associates to design a branch bank for the Palm Springs financial district. Designed by Viennese-born architect Rudi L. Baumfeld (partner-in-charge) with James B. Lim (associate-in-charge) the bank's structure was first described as "adobe-like." However, the sculptural quality of the round-cornered triangular bank is more akin to Le Corbusier's famous modernist chapel in Ronchamp, France (1955). Sited on an odd triangular piece of land, the bank's entrance is oriented to the north to avoid the intense desert sun. Also the building is slightly raised on a terrazzo platform which enhances the view from the interior. Other notable building features include a rolling brim-like roof, a massive curling wall of "Byzantine blue" glass tile, and an east-facing concrete *brise-soleil* by sculptor Malcolm Leland. While portions of the original terrazzo remain, gone is the

outdoor 16-foot diameter chalice-shaped fountain and gone as well are the aluminum sun screens shielding the west-facing glass wall. Little remains of the bank's custom interior finishes which were prominently featured in the July 1960 issue of the influential *Interiors* magazine.



The City National Bank building sits on a triangular piece of land at the intersections of South Palm Canyon and South Indian Canyon Drives, providing views from both sides.

Palm Springs City Hall

3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way

Designed “cooperatively and serially” from 1952-1957 by the architectural firms of Clark, Frey and Chambers and Williams, Williams and Williams, Palm Springs City Hall was largely the vision of Albert Frey. Inspired by a pivotal 1955 trip around the world in which his understanding of form and function was renewed, Frey returned to complete the final scheme for his most important public design. Featuring pinkish-brown colored concrete blocks, the Council Chamber sits higher than the rest of the facility. Its entrance features



The entrance to the Council Chamber proclaims “The People Are The City.”

a poured concrete disc supported by four pillars and appropriately announces “The People Are The City.” At the main entrance, a circular cutout in the metal overhang of the same diameter as the disc creates a certain symmetry

that unifies the design. Originally a flagpole pierced this opening, but has since been replaced by a trio of palm trees. Supporting the metal overhang along the front façade is a series of five *brise-soleil* (French for “sun-break”) each made from fifty-four shallow sheet-metal cylinders, a Frey signature, that simultaneously allow views and provide shade for the mayor and city staff offices.

The addition of two later wings in 1982, now know as the Communications and Planning/Building centers, was designed by brothers Roger and E. Stewart Williams and John Porter Clark.



Entrance to City Hall much as it currently appears.

Private Class 1 Homes

We ask that you respect the privacy of the homeowners in viewing these properties.

Steel Development Houses / 300 & 330 E. Molino Road

3100, 3125, 3133, 3165 N. Sunny View Drive / 290 E. Simms Road



Planned as a 38-home subdivision funded by U.S. Steel, only seven "Wexler" Steel Houses were built before the rising cost of steel halted the project. Designed by Donald Wexler in partnership with Ric Harrison, the homes were built between 1961-62 by the Alexander Construction Company.

Miller House/2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive /Richard Neutra / 1937



Architect Richard Neutra (1892-1970) designed his first Palm Springs commission in 1936-37 for Grace Lewis Miller as a winter home and studio for the purpose of teaching the "Mensendienck" System of Functional Exercise. The home was recently restored after years of neglect.

Carey-Pirozzi House / 651 W. Via Escuela / Albert Frey / 1956



In 1956 Albert Frey was commissioned by Laura Carey to design a small house on a rocky site, and to minimize costs, he designed the structure on slanted steel tubes above the terrain. In 1983, the second owners hired Frey to modify and enlarge the house.

Hamrick House / 875 Chino Canyon Road / Clark & Frey / 1942



Fannie and John Hamrick commissioned John Porter Clark and Albert Frey in 1942 to build this Spanish Revival home overlooking the valley. After many years in the Hamrick family, the home was sold and restored in 2006 and a pool added.

Edris House / 1030 W. Cielo Drive / E. Stewart Williams / 1953



E. Stewart Williams was commissioned by friends Marjorie and William Edris in 1953 to design a winter retirement house that became a permanent residence. One of Williams' favorite projects, the house appears to grow out of its site, integrating nature into the architecture.

Invernada / 657 Via Miraleste / 1930

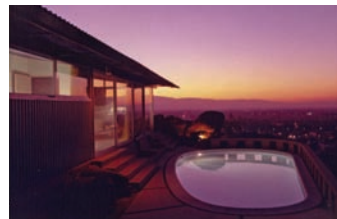
Invernada (Spanish for "winter season") is a fine Spanish Revival home featuring an exquisitely tiled fountain centered in an expansive garden. The home's west-facing porch provided shade to wealthy business magnate George Heigho who wintered in Palm Springs. Reflecting a golden era of large vacation estate building, the house features exposed rafter beams, ornamental iron, and oak paneling.

Loewy House / 600 W. Panorama Road / Albert Frey & Raymond Loewy / 1946

An equal collaboration between architect and owner, Frey called industrial designer Loewy a "wonderfully inventive" client. The house features a trapezoidal wooden trellis and a free-form pool.

Kaufmann House / 470 W. Vista Chino / Richard Neutra / 1946

Considered among the greatest modern houses in the world, this residence was commissioned by department store magnate Edgar J. Kaufmann and immortalized in a photo by Julius Shulman.

Frey House II / 686 Palisades Drive (private road) / Albert Frey / 1963

Built around a massive granite rock and perched on a natural mountain-side outcropping 220 feet above the city, this aluminum, steel and glass house blends into its environment. Upon his death in 1998, Frey willed his second house to the Palm Springs Art Museum.

Neel House / 272 Camino Buena Vista / 1924

This Spanish Colonial Revival house built in 1924 was the home of Earl Neel, former Palm Springs city councilman and owner of Neel's Nursery who planted a mile of palm trees along Palm Canyon Drive in the late 1940s.

Ship of the Desert / 1995 Camino Monte / Wilson and Webster / 1936

Named for the curvilinear forms inspired by its Streamline Moderne design, this house is a rare, classic example of the style. In the late 1990s, after suffering from neglect and a fire, new owners carefully restored the house, the only one of its kind in Palm Springs.

Other Significant Sites

1. **Kocher-Samson Building** 760 N. Palm Canyon Dr. / Albert Frey & A. Lawrence Kocher, 1934
2. **Carnell Building** 184-196 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Harry Williams, 1935
3. **San Jacinto Hotel** (Movie Colony Hotel) / 726 N. Indian Canyon Way / Albert Frey, 1935
4. **Nichols Building/Dr. Purcell's Office** 700 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Albert Frey, 1945/47
5. **Clark & Frey Office Building** 879 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Clark & Frey, 1947
6. **Town & Desert** (The Hideaway) 370 W. Arenas Road / Herbert Burns, 1947
7. **Nichols Store Building** (Trina Turk Boutique) 891-899 N. Palm Canyon Dr. / Clark & Frey, 1953
8. **Robinson's Department Store** (The Alley) 333 S. Palm Canyon Drive / Pereira & Luckman, 1953
9. **Del Marcos Hotel** 225 W. Baristo Road / William Cody, 1947



Del Marcos Hotel



Palm Springs International Airport

- 10 **Palm Springs International Airport West Facade** (and Fountain)
3400 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way / Donald Wexler, 1966; Fountain / Julia de la Peña, 1968
11. **First Church of Christ** 605 S. Riverside Dr. / Frey & Chambers, 1956
12. **Premiere Apartment Building** (Former Orchid Tree Inn) 261 S. Belardo Road / Albert Frey, 1957
13. **Lapham Building** 666 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Howard & Lawrence Lapham, 1961
14. **L'Horizon Garden Hotel** (Horizon Hotel) 1050 E. Palm Canyon Drive / William Cody, 1952
15. **Dollard Building** 687 N. Palm Canyon Drive / Frey & Chambers, 1947
16. **Royal Hawaiian Estates** 1994 S. Palm Canyon Drive / Wexler & Harrison, 1961
17. **Chamber of Commerce** 190 E. Amado Road / Built by local tradesmen, 1957
18. **St. Theresa Catholic Church** 2800 E. Ramon Road / William Cody, 1968
19. **Harold Hicks Real Estate Building** (Pacifi Union)
1345 N. Palm Canyon Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1956
20. **Coachella Valley Savings and Loan #1** (Prudential Real Estate)
383 S. Palm Canyon Drive / E. Stewart Williams, 1956



Why Join the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation?

It's About Education! The challenge of educating a host of audiences about Palm Springs' unique architectural and historic heritage falls to non-profit organizations like the PSPF. We take this mission seriously; all audiences are important whether it is educating a weekend visitor, a resident or a local elected official.

It's Green! The goals and objectives of preservationists and those concerned about the environment have never been more in harmony. Because every new building represents a new impact on the environment (no matter how much green technology is employed in its design and construction), it is now generally recognized that the greenest building is the building that has already been built. In a recent speech concerning sustainability,

Despite being designated a Class 1 historic site, some years ago church officials felt it necessary to cement new saltillo tiles along the lower facade of the historic Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church (1930) (see page 8). The lesson learned is that even "protected" historic sites must be watched closely.

Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said "it makes no sense for us to recycle newsprint, bottles and aluminum cans when we're throwing away entire buildings."

We Need Your Help! Your contributions help keep PSPF financially viable and help pay for a host of operating expenses. We make every effort to be good stewards of the organization's finances and "target" our expenditures to receive tangible results. Our PSPF board members are volunteers who dedicate untold hours of their time to achieve the goals of the organization. But while we appreciate your financial support your time can be even more valuable. If you have technical expertise, or just passion for "the cause" we ask for your help. Our PSPF monthly board meetings are open to members and your views are welcomed.

For additional information and to join the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation contact us at:

www.pspreservationfoundation.org

The Palm Springs
Preservation
Foundation
thanks the
many talented
volunteers who
made this guide
possible.

The 1948 Palm Springs
Biltmore Resort (main
building designed by
Fred MonHoff and
rooms designed by
Henry Gogerty) was
demolished in 2003.

Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society





The Historic Site Nomination Process

Any person may nominate a site for historic designation. Further information and applications can be obtained through city staff at the Palm Springs planning department. Once the nomination application is complete, the Historic Site Preservation Board will review the subject property, conduct public hearings and make a recommendation to City Council for their final approval.

For assistance, please contact the Department of Planning Services, City of Palm Springs, 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262, phone (760)323-8245 or email planning@palmsprings-ca.gov

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