

MORADA LA ESTRELLA

The John C. and Estella Snyder Residence



**271 West Merito Place
Palm Springs, California 92262**

**William Charles Tanner
1932**

**Nomination Application for City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Resource
Prepared by Steve Vaught for the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
Final: September 1, 2025**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Front cover: Morada La Estrella, looking southwest with Inspiration Point and the rugged San Jacintos beyond.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

Above: Morada La Estrella's original wrought iron fireplace screen likely designed by William Charles Tanner and crafted by ironsmith Frankie Paul.
(Courtesy of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation)

MORADA LA ESTRELLA

Class 1 Historic Resource Nomination

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INTRODUCTION

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.”

In June 2023, the PSPF board of directors engaged Steve Vaught to prepare Morada La Estrella’s Class 1 Historic Resource nomination.

The Owner’s Letter of Support is at Appendix I.



Estella C. Snyder getting into the spirit of the Palm Springs lifestyle, 1930s.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

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info@pspreservationfoundation.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE:

Morada La Estrella (roughly translated as either “Dwelling of the” Star or “Home of “Purple”) is one of the most architecturally significant Spanish Colonial Revival style residences within the city of Palm Springs. Located in the historic Merito Vista tract, the home was completed in 1932 for prominent Indiana businessman John Corson Snyder (1866-1941) and his wife, Estella F. Snyder (1871-1958), to serve as a winter retreat for himself and his family. Morada La Estrella is part of a small but exceptional group of finely designed local residences credited to master architectural designer William Charles Tanner (1876-1960). The Los Angeles-based Tanner was active in Palm Springs from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s. During this time, he was responsible for some of its early landmarks, most notably the transformational Desert Inn complex (1922-1926), the hotel credited with helping to elevate Palm Springs into an internationally-renowned resort destination.

The home’s period of significance is 1932 to 1943, which comprises the time of the home’s ownership by the Snyders. This timeframe places it solidly in “Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941),” as defined in the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group. This is a period when wealthy and influential people such as the Snyders were building second homes in the growing and increasingly well-known resort village.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

Morada La Estrella has been previously evaluated for Class 1 historic resource eligibility as part of the *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings* created by Historic Resources Group. A definitive determination on integrity could not be made as the home was not fully visible from the street. However, the survey noted the home may be eligible based on both the significance of its early period of construction (1930s) as well as its Spanish Colonial design by master architectural designer William Charles Tanner.

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource: Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070.C.1.: A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource, provided one or more of the criteria in subsections “a” and “b” are met. Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” of potentially historic resources for further information.

Based on the analysis outlined in this Historic Resources Report beginning on page 60, Morada La Estrella meets two of the seven eligibility criteria for designation as a Class 1 Palm Springs Historic Resource. The relevant criteria are outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.070.C.1.a: (iii) Exemplifies a particular period in local history; and (v) Presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age, or that possesses high artistic value.

Additionally, Morada La Estrella retains a “high degree” of historic integrity as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.070.C.1.b in terms of Design, Materials, Workmanship, Location, Setting, Feeling, and Association (see Section 7, “Integrity Analysis”).



William Charles Tanner (1876-1960)
(Courtesy of Andrea McCarron, Steven Keylon, and Steve Scott)



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262
Phone 760 323 8245

Fax 760 322 8360

Historic Preservation Officer 760 322 8364 x8786

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

WHEN TO USE THIS APPLICATION:

Use this application if you are seeking historic designation for a property, parcel or historic district.

For alterations to Class 1, Class 2, or contributing sites in a Historic District, use the CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS application. (C of A)

For alterations or demolition of Class 3, Class 4 or non-contributing sites in a Historic District use the MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION (MAA).

(Contact the Planning Department if you are unsure of the classification of your property.)

WHO MAY APPLY:

Any individual or organization may apply to the City for consideration of a request for historic designation, however applications must be signed and notarized by the owner(s) of record of the site, structure, building or object for which the designation is sought. For Historic Districts written signatures from at least 51% of the property owners in the proposed district must be included in the application.

PROCEDURE:

1. For proposed historic sites or resources: Refer to Palm Springs Municipal Code ("PSMC") Section 8.05.070 for *Procedures and Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources*. ([www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation) "Historic Preservation").
2. For proposed historic districts: Refer to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 for *Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts*. ([www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation) "Historic Preservation").
3. Complete all parts of the application and include related reports, mailing labels and back up information in support of the application. Denote "NA" for any line item that is "not applicable".
4. Prior to submittal of the application, contact the City's Historic Preservation Officer ("HPO") to review the application for conformance and completeness.
5. Submit the completed application and related materials to the Department of Planning Services. A Planning Department case number will be assigned to the application.
6. Applications for historic site / resource or historic district designation are evaluated by City staff who will prepare the application for consideration by the City's Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") at a noticed public hearing. Applicants should plan on attending the hearing. City staff will schedule site visits for members of the HSPB to become familiar with the site prior to the public hearing. (Exterior review only, interiors are not subject to HSPB review.)
7. At the public hearing, the HSPB will evaluate the application and make a recommendation for City Council action. The City Council will consider the application and the HSPB's recommendation at a second noticed public hearing. The applicant should again attend that hearing.
8. The final action of the City Council to designate will be recorded on the property title with the County Recorder's office.

FOR HISTORIC SITE / RESOURCE APPLICATIONS, SEE PART 1 BELOW.
FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT APPLICATIONS, SEE PART 2 BELOW.

PART 1: REQUIRED MATERIALS FOR HISTORIC SITE / RESOURCE DESIGNATION APPLICATIONS (See PSMC 8.05.070(A.3):

An application for historic site / resource designation must include the following items. After preliminary review of the application by the HPO, provide twelve (12) hard copies and 1 electronic copy on disk or thumb drive of the following materials unless otherwise noted:

		APPLICANT CHECK	CITY STAFF CHECK
1	Original Completed Application (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Owner Consent Letter w/ notarized signature, (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Ownership and address history; ("Chain of title") (1 copy.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	A report that describes how the proposed site(s), structures, buildings or objects are eligible and appropriate for designation under PSMC 8.05.070 for historic resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Photographs of the exterior of the proposed sites, structures, buildings or objects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Aerial photo of the site / resource (from Google Maps or equal).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Information about the architect(s), designer(s), planner(s), and/or developers of the proposed sites, structures, buildings or objects, if known.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Date and method of construction of any structure, building or object upon the proposed site or within the proposed district (provide copies of building permits where possible).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	A detailed assessment of the character-defining features of the site, structure, building or object, (such as materials, architectural details or landscape elements, architectural style, and other relevant descriptors, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Evaluation of the site, structure, building, or object relative to the Criteria and Findings for Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources. (PSMC 8.05.070 (C).1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Identify the source of the information provided in the application, such as building permit numbers, date and issue of publications, organizations or individuals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Site Plan (8-1/2" x 11" or 11" x 17")	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Any other documentation or research as may be deemed necessary by the HPO to determine the qualifications of the site, structure, building or object for historic designation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Public Hearing Labels. The applicant shall submit public hearing mailing labels pursuant to Zoning Code Section 94.09.00.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹Applicants are encouraged to review the City's Technical Assistance Bulletin titled "How to Apply the Palm Springs Eligibility Criteria for Historic Designation" available under "Historic Resources" of the Planning Home page of the City website (www.palmspringsc.gov) and the bulletin from the U.S. Department of the Interior National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (National Register Bulletin 15 (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).



(to be completed by Planning staff:)

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
Department of Planning Services

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

TO THE APPLICANT:

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

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

Applicant's Name: **Robert L. Eicholz and Steven J. Scott, Trustees for the Eicholz Scott Family Trust**
 Owner Lessee Authorized Agent City Other

Applicant's Address: **271 West Merito Place**
Number and Street Name or P.O. Box
Palm Springs **California** **92262**
City State ZIP

Telephone Nos: **323-810-3216 (Robert Eicholz); 310-694-2040 (Steve Scott)** E-Mail address:
beicholz@pacbell.net (Robert Eicholz); ssdibuy@mac.com (Steve Scott)

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

Site Address: **271 West Merito Place, Palm Springs, CA 92262**

APN **505-301-001** Zone: _____ Section: _____ Gen'l Plan Land Use Desig. _____

Is the project is located on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation? **No** (Refer to the Land Status Map under Tribal Resources on the Planning Department home page.) Construction Date: **1932**

Estimated Actual (denote source, i.e. bldg. permits)

Architect: **William Charles Tanner (architectural designer)**

Builder: **William Marte and H.L. Hansen (Marte-Hansen)**

Present Owner: **Robert L. Eicholz and Steven J. Scott, Trustees for the Eicholz Scott Family Trust**

Present Owner Address: **271 West Merito Place, Palm Springs, California 92262**

Original Owner: **John Corson Snyder and Estella Snyder**

Other notable past owners: **Rod Taylor (1930-2015); Gil Garfield (1933-2011); George I. Rosenthal (1931-)**

Other Historic Associations: _____

Common Name of Property: **Morada La Estrella; Snyder Residence**

Historic Name of Property: **Morada La Estrella; Snyder Residence**

Attach to this application any information, photos, drawings, newspaper articles, reports, studies, or other materials to fully describe the characteristics or conditions that support this application for historic designation.

Architectural Style: **Spanish Colonial Revival**

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

Period of Significance: **Palm Springs Between the Wars (1919-1941)**

(See the Citywide Historic Context Statement Document.)

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

PSMC 8.05.070 (C.1): Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 Historic Resources.

A site, structure, building or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met.

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

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

- i. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community.²
- ii. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- iii. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- iv. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction, a period of construction or a method of construction.³
- v. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possesses high artistic value.
- vi. The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists.
- vii. The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.

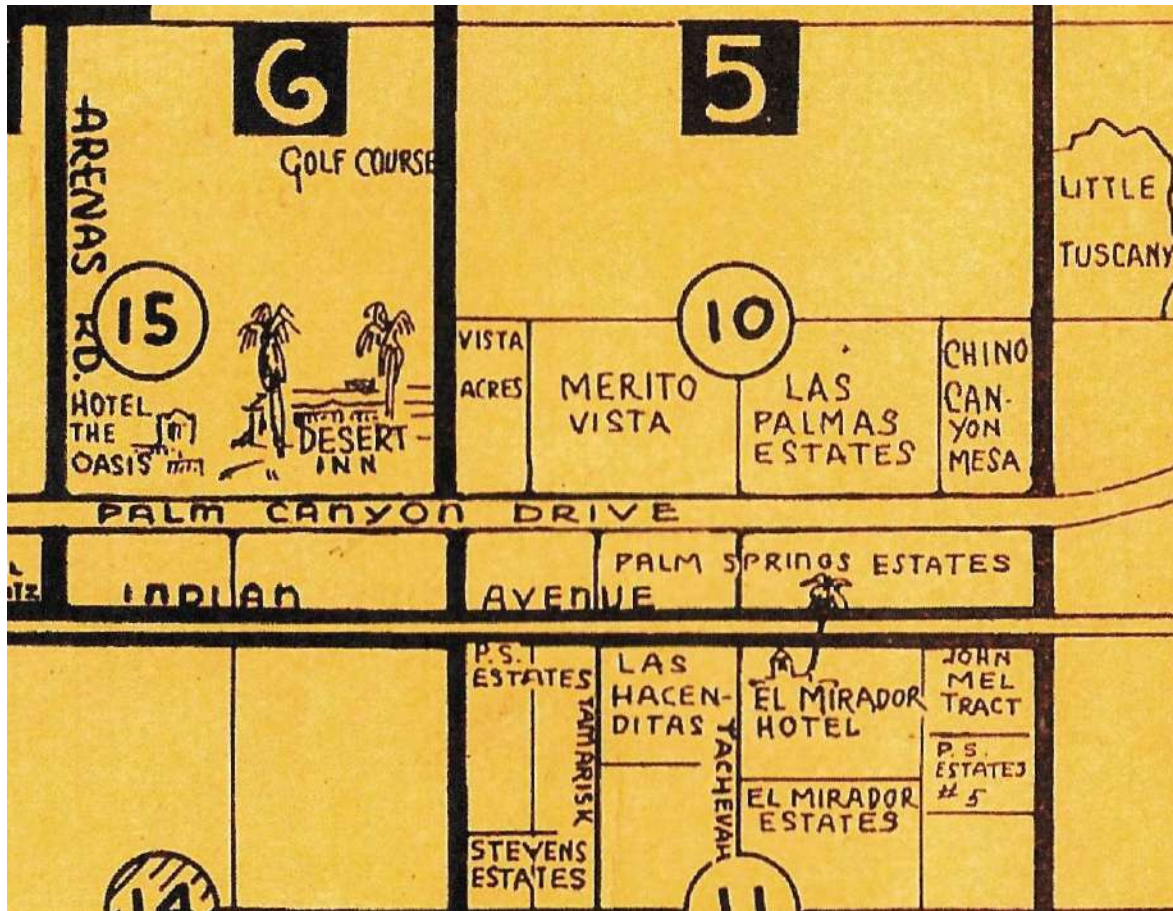
FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains most if not all of the following aspects of Integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards⁴: Design, Materials, Workmanship, Location, Setting, Feeling, Association.

² NOTE: Unlike the National Register criteria, The City's criterion does not consider "patterns of events". For consideration of "patterns of events", use Criterion "iii", reflecting a particular period.

³ Unlike the National Register criteria "type, period of method of construction relates to construction only" For design theme or characteristics use Criterion "iii" (period) or Criterion v (high artistic value).

⁴ Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bulletin for How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property.

The Merito Vista Tract



This 1930s map shows Merito Vista's centralized position in the heart of Palm Springs.

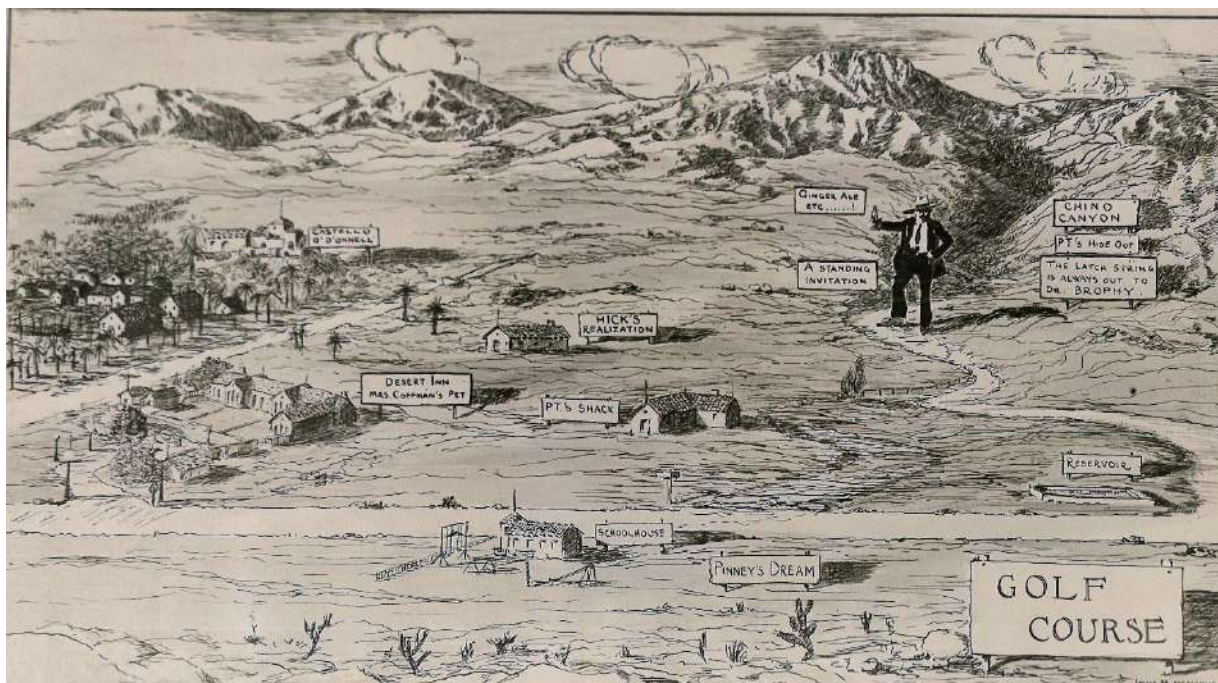
When John and Estella Snyder purchased a homesite in Merito Vista in October 1930, they were purchasing in one of the village's finest residential tracts. It was also one of the most convenient, located just north of the downtown business district and within easy reach of the Desert Inn, Oasis and El Mirador Hotels. If desired, they could walk to the newly-named Palm Canyon Drive (known as Main Street until 1930), which served as the tract's eastern boundary.

First opened for development in 1925, the Merito Vista tract was laid out by pioneering Palm Springs developer Prescott T. ("P.T.") Stevens (1845-1932). A critical figure in the early development of Palm Springs, Stevens was an important influence on the village's residential development, water resources and tourism. He was responsible for a series of important early tracts beginning with Vista Acres (1923); Merito Vista (1925); Las Palmas Estates (1926); and Palm Springs Estates (1927). He was also the driving force behind the El Mirador Hotel (1927), a world-famous hostelry, second in popularity only to the Desert Inn.

Stevens, who had made a fortune as a rancher in Colorado, first came to Palm Springs around 1913 or 1914, staying at Nellie Coffman's modest Desert Inn. He was so taken by the beauty of

the landscape and the healthful climate, he built a cottage near the inn to serve as his family's winter base. He also began buying land and in 1917 he purchased the Ralph Rogers tract, consisting of several hundred acres centered in and around Chino Canyon. By 1920, he had amassed 700 acres just north of the center of the village.

Stevens did not just see the potential in Palm Springs as a perfect winter getaway for himself and his family. He saw it as the perfect getaway for thousands. Stevens had a grand vision of Palm Springs as a major winter resort long before most others could scarcely imagine such a concept. As early as 1916, he floated a plan to build a golf course in the village, a dream that was about a decade ahead of its time. But he would live to see it and several others come to fruition.



**This fanciful map, circa mid-1920s, shows the “domain” of P.T. Stevens including what was to become Merito Vista.
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)**

Stevens knew that success would require water and lots of it. Early on, he began investing in water rights and, after his purchase of Chino Canyon, he began pumping water from it down into the village. In 1926, his water rights were greatly increased by his purchase of the Palm Valley Water Co. And the following year, Stevens founded the Whitewater Mutual Water Co. (later renamed Palm Springs Water Co.) in partnership with J.J. Kocher, Alvah Hicks, Tom O'Donnell and Warren Pinney. Within a few years, however, Stevens sold the company to his friend and off-time business partner, Alvah Hicks (1884-1944).

One of Stevens' greatest contributions to Palm Springs was encouraging Hicks to move into the village from his homestead near Desert Hot Springs in 1916. Like Stevens, Hicks would become one of Palm Springs' most important and influential early pioneers. At Stevens' behest, Hicks became the village's first and much-needed carpenter. Stevens began using him for his various building projects and before long he was sought after by others, literally helping the village to grow.

When Stevens began subdividing his real estate holdings, Hicks was heavily involved. Just how heavily, however, is not entirely clear. While Stevens is shown as the developer on the various tract maps, it is Hicks who was stated as being owner in multiple newspaper accounts. Some sources go as far to state that Stevens bought his land from Hicks. While the specifics of their arrangements vis-a-vis tract ownership is not known, it is evident they worked closely on developing the various Stevens tracts including Merito Vista.

Merito Vista (sometimes incorrectly spelled “Merita”) was the second tract (of 4) developed by Stevens. It abutted directly on the north of his original tract, Vista Acres, which he subdivided in 1923. Merito Vista, which began as a subdivision two years later, was much larger and more ambitious with 125 individual lots which were advertised as “small estate parcels.”

Aside from the natural beauty of its mountain-base setting, Merito Vista was distinguished by the interesting layout of its streets, which were curved in a manner evocative of country lanes rather than standard city blocks. These were given equally romantic names such as Patencio, Hermosa and Mountain View. And, like so many developers, Stevens could not resist naming a street after himself, with Prescott Drive serving as the main entry into the tract.

As he would do in the other Stevens tracts, Alvah Hicks helped establish the look of success in Merito Vista by building several speculative houses around the tract. Each time he would sell a completed home, Hicks would take the proceeds and use them to build another. The quality of his homes, usually done in a simple yet solid Spanish Colonial Revival style, set the tone for future construction and he was regularly sought out by lot buyers wanting a similar home for themselves. Hicks would leave a significant legacy in Merito Vista, credited with some 20 homes completed as either designer/builder or contractor, during the 1920s and 1930s.

Merito Vista, like other early tracts in Palm Springs, was marketed to those wealthy enough to be able to build a permanent “winter” home in the desert. While an advertising campaign was mounted in such publications as the Los Angeles Times, it is likely most lot buyers came from guests of the Desert Inn, El Mirador, Oasis and other local hotels who fell in love with the setting and made the decision to have a permanent piece of it for themselves.

Contemporary news accounts indicate Merito Vista was a success from the start. As the Riverside Daily Press noted on March 4, 1926:

Passing Merita (sic) Vista on entering the village, one cannot help but be impressed by the attractive lay-out and the beauty of the homes which are being erected. This subdivision has been carefully thought out and the ground plotted into lots of more than half an acre, thus insuring no congestion. At least a dozen homes are being contemplated for immediate erection and half the tract has already been sold.

While lot sales were brisk, actual home building lagged behind with only a dozen homes built by 1929. However, two of these were major estates; the exotically themed El Kantara (1926) and the Florentine inspired Hood estate on Hermosa (1929). Both designed by talented Hollywood architects, these estates immediately became, and remain today, important Merito Vista landmarks.

From the beginning, Merito Vista attracted a cosmopolitan blend of prominent figures from a wide variety of professions such as aviation, art, diplomacy, and business, including the “Millionaire Barber of Milwaukee,” A.W. Starke. And of course, Hollywood. One of the first purchasers in Merito Vista was legendary gossip columnist Hedda Hopper. Although she ultimately did not build, many others did such as comedian Robert Woolsey, William Gargan, Claude Binyon, Richard Arlen, Dinah Shore, and Laurence Harvey, among others.

While it attracted figures of national and international renown, Merito Vista also was home to such critical local pioneers such as Carl Lykken, Zaddie Bunker, Alvah Hicks and Harold Hicks. Today, Merito Vista remains one of the most historic and sought after neighborhoods in Palm Springs.



A mid-1930s view taken from Inspiration Point looking north showing Vista Acres and Merito Vista. Morada La Estrella is seen dead center (red arrow). Note the still largely undeveloped sections of the tracts.

(Courtesy Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

The Original Builders and Owners of Morada La Estrella – The Snyders



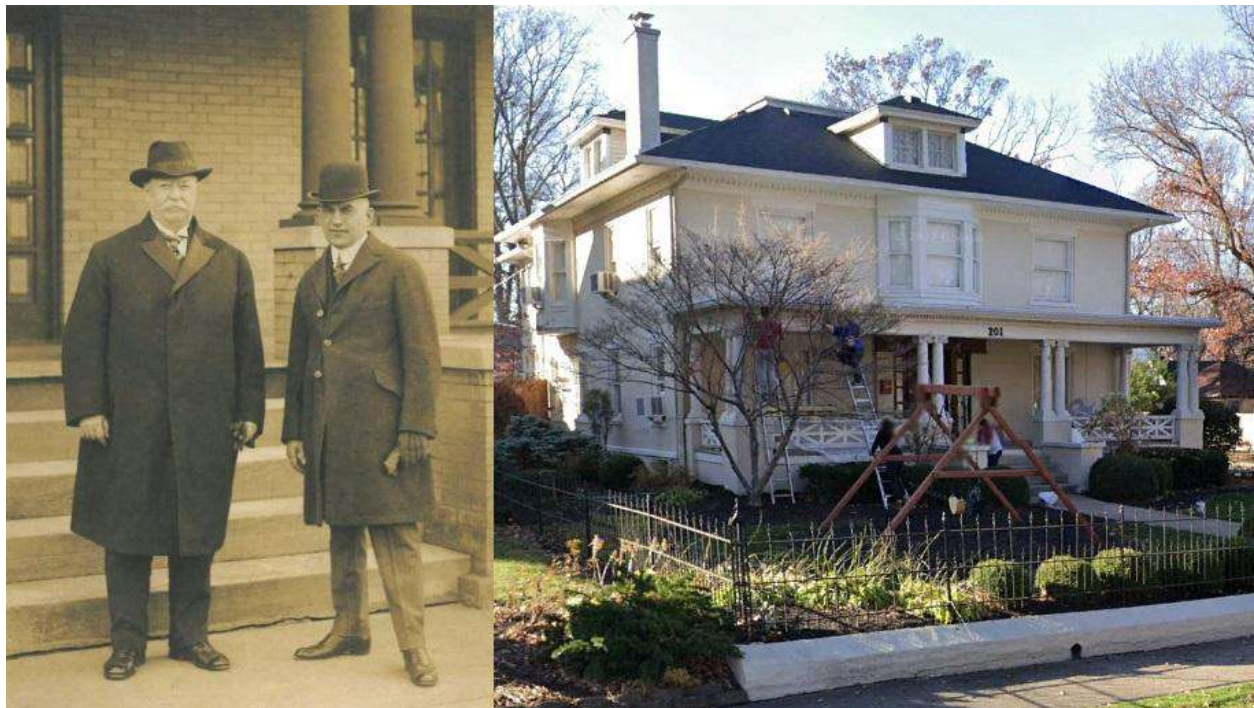
Estella F. and John C. Snyder (right) pose with their daughters Helen and Estella C. (left). 1938.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

When John and Estella Snyder built Morada La Estrella in 1932 they represented the very type of people who would come to define “Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941),” as “a period when wealthy and influential people were building second homes in the growing and increasingly well-known resort village.”

Leading citizens of the midwestern city of Crawfordsville, the “Athens of Indiana,” the Snyders may have first discovered Palm Springs during one of Mr. Snyder’s numerous business trips to the coast during the mid to late 1920s. Snyder’s trips west related to the California lodges of the Tribe of Ben-Hur (hereinafter referred to as “Ben-Hur”). Founded in 1892, Ben-Hur was a national fraternal beneficial (insurance) organization of which Snyder was Chief Scribe. In 1930, the organization was renamed the Ben-Hur Life Association with Snyder going from Chief Scribe to president. The company was a success, managing to not only survive the darkest days of the Great Depression, but to actually grow. As the Monrovia News-Post noted in 1932, Snyder was “considered one of the leading business executives in the fraternal world, and it is due to his financial genius that Ben-Hur Life Association during the depression of 1931 has shown the largest financial gain in its 38-year history.”

Born near Middleton, Ohio in 1866, Snyder moved with his family to Crawfordsville when he was 7. Although he would later move again to different places in his youth, by 1893 he was back in Crawfordsville. He came at the behest of his older brother Frank, one of the founders of Ben-Hur. He wanted Snyder to join him in helping to develop the new organization. Snyder saw it as a great opportunity and enthusiastically signed on. He would remain with Ben-Hur for the rest of his life, rising through the ranks until he was the organization's head. By the mid-1920s, Ben-Hur was a notable success with branches nationwide making Snyder a leading figure in the fraternal insurance association community. In 1927, he was elected to president of the National Fraternal Congress.

The name Ben-Hur was not a random choice. General Lew Wallace, the author of *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (Harper & Brothers. 1880), wrote much of what was to become one of the most popular novels of all time under a beech tree on the grounds of his home in Crawfordsville. General Wallace's estate was located at 200 Wallace Avenue while the Snyder's home was at 201.



The Snyder family's longtime Crawfordsville home, a staid and respectable 1900 Foursquare, could hardly be more different than the romantic Morada La Estrella. Yet it acquired presidential magic when former president William Howard Taft dropped in on the Snyder home in 1918. At the time Snyder was president of the Crawfordsville Chamber of Commerce.
(Left image: Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott. Right image: via Google Earth)

According to a 1987 video interview with daughter Estella C. Snyder, the path for the Snyders settling in Palm Springs was circuitous. Mrs. Snyder had health issues that required a dry climate and low altitude. Like Goldilocks and the porridge, the family tried different fashionable winter resorts across the country, beginning with the east coast of Florida and progressing westward through San Antonio, Texas, then Scottsdale, Arizona. While each of these places had their

charms, not quite fit the family's needs and desires. Finally, in January of 1929 they arrived in Palm Springs and here the fit was "just right." For the first two seasons the Snyder's stayed at the elegant new El Mirador. But for the 1931-1932 season they switched to the Desert Inn. By this time, the Snyders had become so enamored of Palm Springs they decided to make it their permanent winter home, purchasing land in Merito Vista in October 1930.

The Snyders did what a number of other buyers in Merito Vista had done by purchasing more than just the standard-size lot. They also purchased roughly the northern half of the adjacent lot in order to give them a comfortably large plot upon which to build.

1932 – A Fateful Year to Build

One element that sets Morada La Estrella apart is the year of its completion. While this is not usually so significant, in this case it is of notable importance. The mere fact of its completion year being 1932 puts Morada La Estrella in a unique category – one of only a small number of homes built during the deepest and darkest year of the Great Depression.

In 1932, the United States and the entire world was paralyzed by the global economic collapse which had been triggered by the 1929 crash of the American stock market. Prior to the crash, the U.S. unemployment rate stood at 3.2%. In 1932, it had risen to 24.9%, the highest recorded rate in U.S. history, with virtually every corner of the country affected. Between 1931-1932, more than 3,600 banks collapsed with new home construction ground to a virtual halt. Further, in 1932 alone more than 273,000 people lost their homes. By the end of the year, a thousand mortgages a day were being foreclosed upon.

While Palm Springs fared better than most owing to its continued popularity with the wealthy, tourism had dropped considerably and new building starts were at a standstill. These factors brought great distress to the valley's working classes, which were made up mostly of Native Americans and Hispanics. The Snyders were among a lucky minority able to not only keep afloat but remain prosperous enough to build. The construction of Morada La Estrella, which appears to have run from fall of 1931 to spring 1932 would have brought welcome, possibly even life-saving, employment to both skilled and unskilled local workers badly in need of a job.

Morada La Estrella represents a tangible link to the world's most devastating economic crisis, a small glimmer of hope for a community facing its darkest hour.

The Spanish Colonial Revival Style in Palm Springs



The Reginald Pole Adobe (1916) may have been the first Spanish Colonial Revival structure built in Palm Springs.
(Author Photo. May 2012)

The news that the Snyders had decided to have their home designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style would hardly have been a surprise to anyone at the time. Spanish architecture had been nearly ubiquitous throughout Southern California since the early 1920s and Palm Springs was no exception.

As architectural historian David Gebhard writes in his 1964 book on architect George Washington Smith:

In the twentieth-century American architectural scene, there has been only one brief period of time and only one restricted geographic area in which there existed anything approaching a unanimity of architectural form. This was the period from approximately 1920 through the 1930s, when the Spanish Colonial or the Mediterranean Revival was virtually the accepted norm in Southern California.

While there were stirrings among a few far-thinking architects at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego that lit the fuse for the explosion of Spanish-Mediterranean Revival architecture to follow. The fair, which was to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal and San Diego's role as the first port of call for ships traveling westward through the canal, was a major international event, attended by millions over the course of its two-year run.

Out of all the many exhibits, however, it was the architecture that made the strongest impression. The fair organizers had wanted the buildings to serve as physical representations of the spirit of California and its rich colonial past. As such, they originally planned the exhibition's buildings to be done in the Mission Revival style, which had a brief vogue at the turn of the century, but had now lost popularity. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924), the exposition's chief architect proposed something different, something new. He suggested the designs go even farther back from the missions and to their inspirations in Mexico and Spain. The result was a dazzling display of the beauty, artistry and variety of the Spanish style from the simple Spanish Colonial Revival to grand Renaissance and Baroque versions, many with extravagant Churrigueresque decorations. The public was awed by the stunning exhibition buildings. And while Spanish quickly began taking hold across the southern United States from Florida westward, its true home was Southern California.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style resonated for numerous reasons. A few of the most important:

- It was wholly appropriate to the region's climate and topography which was similar to that of Southern Spain and the Mediterranean.
- It was historically evocative, a visual connection to Southern California's romantic past.
- It was highly flexible, able to be adapted to every setting from flat parcels to steep hillsides, from the Mediterranean climate of Santa Barbara to the stark desert of Death Valley.
- It worked successfully with any type of structure from a small casita to a grand commercial or civic building.
- It allowed a wide flexibility in the creation of designs that, while sharing many of the same attributes such as courtyards, tile roofs, and stucco walls, remained wholly unique to their individual treatments.
- It offered countless opportunities for connecting residents to the outdoors through loggias, patios, balconies, and terraces, with garden spaces an integral part of each design.
- While it was historically based, it was thoroughly in tune with modern needs and tastes.

Palm Springs, like most communities in Southern California, had started out with no architectural unity, or any real architecture at all for that matter. At the time of the Panama-California Exhibition in 1915, Palm Springs, with the exception of the McCallum Adobe (1885), consisted almost exclusively of basic wood-frame structures, some with stone foundations, making use of locally available materials. Yet, Palm Springs was destined for change and the first stirring came when artist Reginald Pole built a Spanish adobe house in 1916, located on the grounds of today's Casa Cody.

In 1922, local hotel pioneer Nellie Coffman began the complete rebuild of her Desert Inn, taking it from simple wooden bungalows to high-style Spanish Colonial Revival. Completed in 1926, the Desert Inn was hailed as a masterpiece of Spanish design. It would transform Palm Springs not only into a world-class winter resort but would also set the tone for the village's architectural style. And the man she had chosen to design it was William Charles Tanner.

Morada La Estrella's Architectural Designer – William Charles Tanner



Nellie Coffman's Desert Inn, the hotel that put Palm Springs on the map was also William Charles Tanner's masterwork. There are numerous similarities between its design and that of Morada La Estrella.
(Courtesy Mott-Merge Collection. California State Library)

The choice of who would design the Snyder's new winter home appears to have been almost predestined. Having spent their first two winters at the luxurious new El Mirador Hotel, the Snyders ultimately gravitated to the Desert Inn. While both hostelries were excellent examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, there was something that set the Desert Inn apart from its friendly rival. That "something" was its proprietress, Nellie Coffman. Known affectionately as "Mother" Coffman, Nellie had built the Desert Inn up from a few tent cottages in 1909 into a world-class resort patronized by millionaires and movie stars. And in doing so, she elevated the modest little village of Palm Springs into a destination of international renown.

With her motto of "be content but never satisfied," Nellie had that rare talent of making her guests feel at home, always anticipating their wants and needs and ever watchful for ways to improve the inn. Nellie could also see the future. She believed that Palm Springs was destined for greatness long before most anyone else. And by the early 1920s, that belief was beginning to come true. She saw the time had come to transform her modest little hotel into a first-class

destination on par with the great winter resorts from Florida to Southern California. To accomplish this lofty goal, Nellie turned not to one of the great architects practicing in Los Angeles and Pasadena, but rather Nellie picked William Charles Tanner (1876-1960), a comparatively obscure figure who was not even a licensed architect. But Nellie knew what she was doing. And so did Tanner. An accomplished artist as well as architectural designer, Tanner had designed a series of beautiful Spanish homes in Hollywood and Riverside, which showed a keen understanding of the nuances of the style and its variants from hacienda to Andalusian.

Over the summers of 1922-1926, the modest old wooden cottages gave way and, in their place, rose a masterpiece of Spanish design. Not one single structure but a series of bungalows, or "lodges," artfully arranged around the 35 acres of existing gardens. Whitewashed concrete walls gleamed in the desert sun, offset by rough-hewn wooden balconies and ruddy red tile roofs. Arches, patios, babbling fountains, colorful Spanish tiles, the new Desert Inn was a wonderland of Old-World romance yet thoroughly up-to-date in a way guaranteed to please even the most discriminating tastes.



Tanner artfully spread the Desert Inn across 35 acres of gardens set against the rugged backdrop of Mt. San Jacinto.
(Courtesy Mott-Merge Collection. California State Library)

The relaunched Desert Inn proved to be everything Nellie, and Palm Springs, could have hoped for. It was a runaway success, filled during its heyday with guests from around the globe, and playing host to presidents, royalty, movie stars, industrialists, and regular folks as well. The hotel had been the draw, but many were entranced by the setting and decided to make Palm Springs their permanent winter homes. As *Pictorial California* magazine perfectly summed it up in 1928: "A Woman Starts an Inn and Creates a Town."

By the time of the Snyder's arrival in 1931, the Desert Inn was well into its golden age and at the peak of its charms. Tanner, too, had prospered. Having been hailed for his masterful design of the Desert Inn, he was engaged to design several elegant homes in Palm Springs, most notably Ojo del Desierto, the grand Monterey Spanish estate Tanner designed for Tom O'Donnell in 1925 and Invernada, the Andalusian hacienda Tanner had recently completed for millionaire George Heigho.

Perhaps without even yet knowing Tanner's name, the Snyders were beguiled by the artistry of his design of the Desert Inn, and during their extended stay they were able to get a true sense of what they wanted in a home both in physical appearance and lifestyle. And, inevitably, they sought out the man who had created it to reproduce in their own home.

In attempting to find William Charles Tanner, the Snyders had to look no further than Nellie Coffman. Nellie and Estella Snyder had become good friends over the course of her stay at the inn and there is little doubt that she arranged for a meeting between Tanner and the Snyders.



Nellie Coffman in period costume (left) is seen with a beaming Estella F. Snyder (right) in a screenshot from an early 1930s home movie by the Snyders.

It is highly likely that it was Nellie who introduced William Charles Tanner to the Snyders.

(Courtesy Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

Steve Scott, the current steward of Morada La Estrella who has conducted extensive investigation and research into Tanner and the home's history, was able to locate through the Snyder family rare home movies from the early 1930s. One showed the Snyders touring Invernada with Tanner himself circa 1931. It was likely he was showing them an example of his most recent work and giving them ideas for their own plans (See William Charles Tanner biography in Appendix VI).



**Tanner himself with his wife Lottie Mae circa 1931 at his recently-completed Invernada estate as seen in a screenshot from a home movie by the Snyders. It is believed he was showing the Snyders an example of his latest work for inspiration.
(Courtesy Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)**



**Another screenshot showing Tanner and Lottie Mae with the dog of Invernada's owner, George Heigho.
(Courtesy Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)**

**Morada La Estrella's Contractor – William Lee Marte and Associate,
H.L. Hansen of Marte-Hansen**



The contractor for the Morada La Estrella project, William Lee Marte (1887-1978) was one of the area's busiest and best-known builders throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Ohio-born Marte was a pioneer Palm Springs resident, having been in the desert with his wife Henrietta and their children since the 1920s. Marte established a general contracting business in the original Palm Springs Theatre building, working with his longtime associate H.L. Hansen. He would later handle the rebuild of the theater as well as at least two others for Earl Strebe in Lake Arrowhead and Newport Beach.

Over the course of his long career, which spanned more than 60 years, Marte, along with his longtime associate Hans Lauritz (H.L.) Hansen (1883-1969), built dozens of structures throughout Palm Springs and beyond from residences to apartments, hotels, theaters, stores, governmental buildings, and offices. His clients included such important local figures as Carl Lykken, Harold Hicks, H.J. Carpenter, and Rufus J. Chapman, as well as nationally known personages as actor William Powell, and Ambassador Charles Crane. In 1917, Marte built the summer cottage at Moss Point in Laguna Beach for presidential confidante Colonel Henry House, an area landmark gaining fame as a "Western White House," during the time it was occupied by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. The house still stands at 139 Moss Street.

In addition to Tanner, Marte worked with other major Palm Springs architects of the day, including Charles O. Matcham, Brewster & Benedict, John Porter Clark, and Albert Frey.

During his time in Palm Springs, Marte lived with his family at the Spanish-styled home at 814 North Indian Canyon Drive, a home later occupied by architect Charles O. Matcham. In 1941, he sold the house and relocated to Bloomington where he would remain until his death at 91 on May 29, 1978.

The Design and Construction of Morada La Estrella



The Snyders were so proud of their new desert home they documented its construction in a series of remarkable images. This view looking north shows the rustic stone fireplace and north exterior wall beyond.

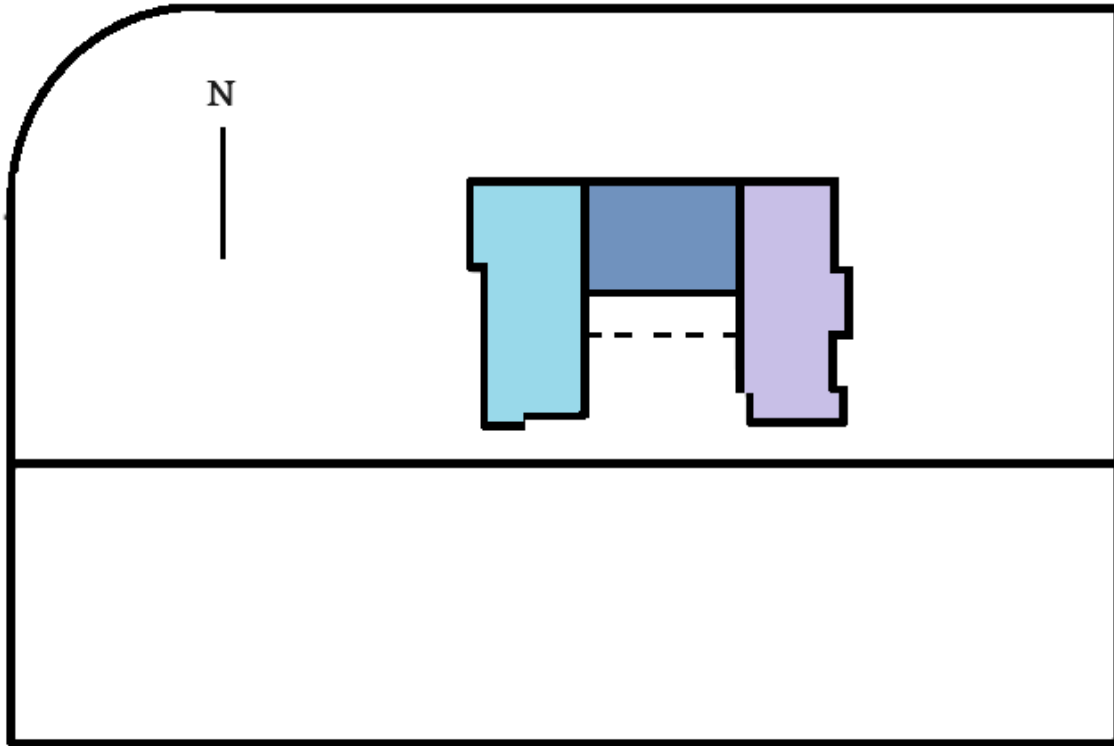
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)




In a 1925 article in *California Southland*, Roland E. Coate, one of the great masters of Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California, posed the question, “Isn’t it possible to recapture some of the romance of the early days of California?” He believed it could be done by creating homes that would “capture some of the romance of the early days without sacrificing modern demands of comfort.” This type of home, which he called the Early California house, was perfectly suited to Southern California both climactically and through heritage. “It lends itself to many sites,” he wrote. “It is new and yet it is old...It combines the formal with the informal, it is quaint but dignified.” It was a description that perfectly fit the future design of Morada La Estrella.

Like Roland E. Coate, William Charles Tanner was thoroughly steeped in the history of the Spanish/Mexican period in Southern California and the unique architecture that it produced. In 1915, while he was resident artist at the Mission Inn, Tanner had been so moved by the Panama-Pacific Exhibition, he began organizing tours for both Mission Inn guests and interested locals to see the exhibition and its dazzling Spanish architecture.

By the time of his design of Morada La Estrella, Tanner had successfully produced a number of Spanish designs from Hollywood to Palm Springs with his masterwork, the Desert Inn, achieving international acclaim.

The underlying sublimity of Morada La Estrella is in the simplicity of Tanner's design. It followed the same forms and principles that made the early Southern California adobes so charming and so livable while producing a house thoroughly up to date for modern living.



-  Central core (living room)
-  Service wing (Kitchen, garage, staff/guest quarters)
-  Family bedrooms

As the above schematic shows, Tanner's straightforward design had clear distinction between functions. The U-shaped massing allowed for the central (living room) mass to unite the two wings adjoining it on either side. It also created a patio space in the center, which was intended to serve as an extension of the living room directly connecting occupants to the outdoors. In designing the wings, Tanner carefully avoided making them symmetrical, giving each its own character. It is of interest to note how carefully Tanner positioned the house on its site, placing it off the center slightly to the northeast, which allowed a maximum amount of garden space on the south and southwest.

Architecturally, Tanner drew heavily from the adobe haciendas of the Spanish and Mexican period. Although he captured the look and feel of those storied dwellings from “the Days of the Dons,” Morada La Estrella was not a direct copy of any known structure. Rather, he incorporated elements from a variety of early designs to give the home its own unique look yet evoke the feeling of the historic past.

Tanner did this with all his period designs and to great success at the Desert Inn. While it is not officially known, it seems clear the Snyders asked Tanner to recreate the same look and feel of the Desert Inn for their own home. Indeed, Morada La Estrella bears striking stylistic similarities to the Desert Inn.



(Courtesy of Steve Scott)

The similarities in design of the Desert Inn and Morada La Estrella could not be more obvious than in this side-by-side comparison between the deluxe suite of the Desert Inn (310L) and the living room at Morada La Estrella. It is likely the Snyders stayed in this suite during their sojourn and were so taken by it they asked Tanner to recreate it for their own home. Note, the wrought-iron gates, which were designed by Tanner and forged by local artisan Frankie Paul.

Tanner had a good working relationship with Estella F. Snyder, endeavoring to incorporate her needs and desires into his plans. Tanner worked well with strong accomplished women throughout his career, most famously with Nellie Coffman and later with pioneering female Hollywood director Dorothy Arzner.



Part of a Desert Inn bungalow with Tanner's Ojo del Desierto presiding from above. Note the overall similarities with Morada La Estrella including the rustic chimney cap and the quartet of windows, a motif he also applied on Morada La Estrella's east façade. Lintels and the wooden porch columns/corbels are also shared attributes.
(Courtesy Mott/Merge Collection. California State Library)

As was an integral part of Spanish Colonial Revival, Tanner's design focused on horizontality with the house hugging low to the ground. The simulated adobe brickwork, which was actually slump stone concrete, gave the feeling of the home rising directly up from the earth itself.

Tanner's greatest success in achieving horizontality without a squashed feeling was in his masterful handling of the roof planes. Tanner used the U-shape of the design to create multiple intersecting roofs, which also defined the spaces beneath. The main mass of the house, which contained the living room and covered patio was given the highest pitch. Side gabled on its east-west ends, the roof was gracefully swept outward by Tanner on the north to form a cover for the entry and on the south to shelter the patio.

Over the east-west sections lower pitched rooflines extending out from the center were used to define the east-west sections of wings. Tanner did not attempt to integrate the roofs of the perpendicular portions of the wings. Rather, he gave them their own separate identity as if the house had been added onto at a later date, one of the common features of the early adobes.



Tanner's use of varying roof pitches added visual interest to the low-slung massing of the house. Note, Inspiration Point on the mountain above.

(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

Overall, Tanner's design of Morada La Estrella was exceedingly simple in its plan - a slab over grade concrete block U with a low-pitched tile roof. Yet he was able to take a basic form and enhance it into something wholly unique through various elements. This started with the concrete block walls scored to resemble the rustic look of adobe bricks. The rooflines, as already noted, brought visual interest through the variegated roof pitches and the use of multi-hued Gladding, McBean Co. tile.



**A recent (2023) image of the southern façade of Morada La Estrella (looking northeast) shows how Tanner varied roof heights to achieve a more interesting visual effect. Note, the sawtooth board cladding, a Tanner favorite, filling the gable ends.
(Author photo. July 2023)**

Another way Tanner enhanced the design of Morada La Estrella is through the manner in which he employed doors and windows. The main goal was to provide views and access to the outdoors, which Tanner accomplished through a series of French doors and windows of varying sizes. Tanner ensured occupants could move between indoors and out with great ease by placing doors both in the central section and out from each wing. The living room had three pairs of French doors (including the original front door) offering direct access to the front garden and covered patio. This not only provided freedom of movement it also ensured a maximum amount of air flow to keep the house cool. Service doors were given their own treatment with heavy vertical boards studded with nails with ornamental iron strap hinges and latches.



A 1930s view of a portion of Morada La Estrella's north (front) façade showing the main entrance flanked by what appear to be French doors on either side. These, however, were actually windows designed to match the look of the front door. Although not easy to see, there are brick lintels over the entry door and windows.

(Courtesy of Steve Scott and Mary Kummings)

Windows, mostly casement of several sizes, were placed throughout. Like the doors, windows were usually framed by louvered shutters and capped by lintels. Tanner's attention to detail is evident by how he chose to mix brick and wood lintels to help avoid monotony. On the wooden lintels, a band of delicate carvings was added to soften the plainness. This effect was not only charming; it harkened back to the original adobes where similar simple handmade detailing helped bring a little artistry to the otherwise unadorned structures.

The most elaborate of the windows Tanner added to Morada La Estrella was a boxed window, which is found in the master bedroom facing south. This is capped by a copper hood and trimmed with turned columns.

It should be noted that today, six of the home's windows are "caged" in steel grilles. While these are a traditional feature on Spanish homes and are compatible to Morada La Estrella's design, they are not original, having been added at a later unknown date.

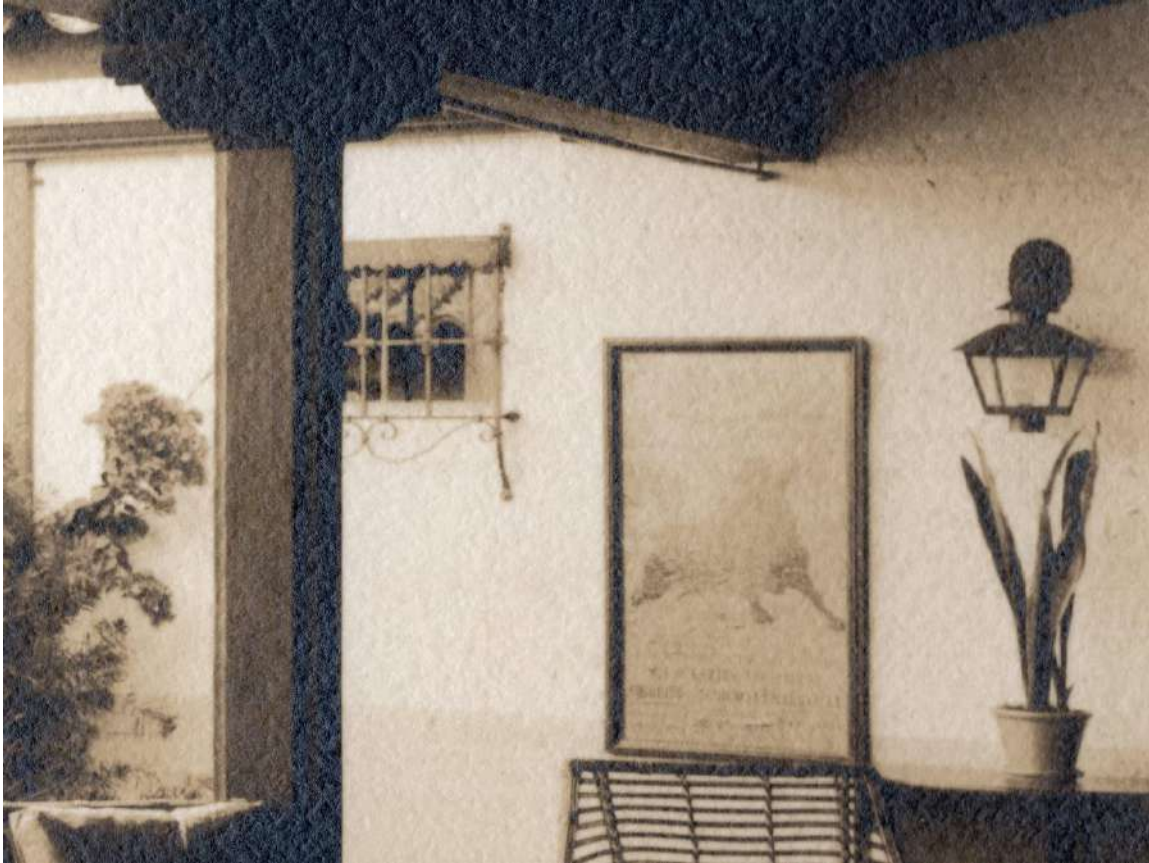


The boxed window of the master bedroom remains virtually unchanged today.
(Left image: Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott. Right image: Author photo. July 2023)



The steel window grilles, designed in traditional Spanish style, are not original features but are period appropriate.
(Author photo. July 2023)

Ironically, the one original window grille appears to have been lost a number of years ago. It was located in the patio on the west inner wall and covered a small window that provided light for the hallway inside. The home's current owners, Steve Scott and Bob Eicholz, excavated the original bricked-up window and installed a period 1920s amber rondel window - a motif Tanner used extensively in other residential projects like the O'Donnell Golf House.



A glimpse of the now-lost decorative grille once found on the west patio wall. Note the bullfighting poster giving a further touch of Spanish flavor.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

The exterior fireplace was, and remains, one of Morada La Estrella's most notable decorative elements. William Charles Tanner was known for creating unique and eye-catching fireplace designs and his work at Morada La Estrella is no exception. The unusual triangular-shaped opening surrounded by rustic stonework and topped by a stairstep brick chimney is a visual delight and a one-of-a-kind feature. At some point, the stairstep chimney was covered up, but it has recently been restored by the current owners to its original look.



A rare view of the exterior fireplace while under construction. Current homeowner Steve Scott believes its unique triangular shape offers a clue to Tanner's future involvement in another major project nearby – Inspiration Point. While it cannot be conclusive without further documentation, it is a compelling theory that would fit with Tanner's timeline and his work for Tom O'Donnell.

(Upper photo: Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott. Lower image: Author photo. November 2018)





The completed fireplace provided a dramatic focal point for the entire structure.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)



While there have been some modifications to the patio, the fireplace retains its preeminent position as the unifying focal point of the home.
(Author photo. July 2023)

Across Mediterranean villages from Spain to Italy, rusticated chimney stacks/caps have been prized for their uniqueness and charm since Medieval times. While performing a useful function, many have risen to the level of art. William Charles Tanner and other architects and designers of the 1920s-1930s, often used artistic chimney stacks/caps, which were inspired by European precedents. Elaborate chimney stacks became a hallmark of Tanner designs with each given its own feel and personality.



The chimney at Morada La Estrella would be right at home in Spain and Italy.
(Author photo. July 2023)



A typical pair of vintage Italian chimneys.
(via outofbounds.com)

One factor that has made Spanish Colonial Revival architecture so enduringly popular is its versatility. The style is so simple at its core that it does not usually clash if a different style is introduced, be it furniture or an architectural element. Throughout the Golden Age of Spanish architecture in Southern California, the master architects all enjoyed intermingling bits from other styles, sometimes in small ways, other times more significantly. Perhaps the most notable example is the Monterey Spanish style, which is a successful combination of both Spanish Colonial and American Colonial.

William Charles Tanner was not afraid to bring in something different if he felt it would enhance a design, which he did at Morada La Estrella. While the majority of the home featured a solidly and typically Spanish Colonial exterior, Tanner threw a curveball in the form of a set of delicate lacy wrought iron lattice columns in a Cherokee Rose pattern, which he used to frame the home's entry. Introducing such an ostensibly incongruous feature reminiscent more of New Orleans than Seville was a bold and risky decision. Tanner, however, knew what he was doing and the columns added an unexpected grace, much like a fine lace tablecloth draped over a rough-hewn Spanish table. It was perhaps the most noteworthy example of William Charles Tanner, the artist, at Morada La Estrella.

And he was not alone. Master architects such as Wallace Neff, Paul R. Williams, Gordon B. Kaufmann, Roland E. Coate, and others all did likewise, using lacy wrought-ironwork on entry columns, balconies, and elsewhere, to achieve the same kind of visual surprise that Tanner achieved at Morada La Estrella.

Unfortunately, this entry is one of the lost elements at Morada La Estrella. (See Changes and Modifications to Morada La Estrella, page 41)



Tanner designed all the wrought-iron work at Morada La Estrella himself, which was then fashioned by talented local craftsman, Frankie Paul.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)



One of the unquestioned masters of Southern California Spanish architecture, Gordon B. Kaufmann, used wrought-iron in a similar fashion as Tanner, regularly including designs otherwise principally Spanish, Norman, Georgian, and English. This is an example from his 1938 Eugene Hill-Smith Residence in Holmby Hills, Los Angeles.
(Via The Architectural Digest, Volume X, No. 3. 1940)



**A 1930s view of the living room of Morada La Estrella facing to the southeast.
Note the mix of styles in the furnishings.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)**

The interior spaces at Morada La Estrella were as well thought out as the exterior. While filled with charm, the home was by no means grand. It was actually a rather modest house, particularly considering the prominence of the Snyders, but it was all they desired. Plus, building a grandiose house in the depths of the Depression was considered crass (although a number were indeed built across the country).

By the time Morada La Estrella was built, the Snyders were empty nesters with their children all grown and with families of their own. As such, the house had only two principal bedrooms, each with ensuite baths, contained in its own wing off the east side of the living room. In the service wing, there were an additional two bedrooms which were likely used by staff although they could also serve for additional guests.

As noted earlier in this nomination, Tanner designed a straightforward floorplan with clear definition of spaces. Both of the wings were arranged in such a way to have equal access to the main living room, the covered patio, and the gardens beyond. With multiple entrances in each wing, privacy could be ensured as desired in spite of the limited proportions.

The living room and its adjoining patio, artfully arranged by Tanner to be the heart of the home's "public" activities, was warm and inviting and perfectly suited for entertaining with a double height ceiling and heavy wooden beams making the space feel larger. Its layout harkened back to the early classic Spanish homes of California in that it was an early incarnation of 'open concept' design featuring both the living room and dining room in one large open space. With French doors on both the north and south side, the living room literally connected to the outdoors. Tanner also subtly but effectively linked the exterior design to the interior, with the same distinct sawtooth boards gracing the upper parts of the east-west walls to match those on the exterior gables. He also used the same style of wooden corbel on the ceiling beams that he used at the exterior on the patio columns. The walls on three sides were sheathed in the same simulated adobe brick as the exterior, but on the fourth, the south wall, Tanner sheathed it entirely in vertical boards, lightly stained to show off the texture of the grain. With the ceiling above stained in the same fashion, it gave the illusion the ceiling was continuing down the wall. The ceiling beams and cabinet work may well have been the work of the talented Robert Lee Miller, who was known to have fashioned similar ceilings in other houses in the area during the same period.

Another visual cue to the exterior, almost so subtle as to be missed, are the simple carvings along the lower edges of the heavy trestle beams. These match those found on the lintels above the doors and windows outside.



The living room in its current form. There have been changes but the original feeling remains.
(Courtesy of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation)

The centerpiece of the living room, the fireplace, was much more restrained than that directly behind it on the patio, being a simple rectangle framed in brick and wood. However, Tanner gave it an exquisite touch in the form of its wrought-iron screen, which has the home's name, Morada La Estrella, punched through at the bottom in Tanner's signature self-designed font. Above, are three stylistic stars, which may reference the home's name. While there are several ways to interpret it, Morada La Estrella can be translated as "home of the star" or "Purple Star." Purple was used frequently throughout the home's original design, being Estella's favorite color. No matter what the interpretation may be, the effect of the home's name backlit by an inviting fire, is a visual treat. It is also a near-miracle the screen has remained in situ for 91 years, and is one of the home's treasures.



Morada La Estrella's fireplace in the 1930s and today.
(Top image: Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott.
Lower image: Courtesy of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation)

The overall design and construction of Morada La Estrella reflects the very finest in architectural design, quality of materials, and not the least, in those who built it. While we do not know the names of all those involved other than Tanner, ironsmith Frankie Paul, and the contractors William Marte and H.L. Hansen, it is clear the home was created by a talented group, ranging from construction workers to skilled craftspeople. While the Great Depression had a horrible effect on the building industry and those who worked in it, it did offer the opportunity for those who could afford to build to get the very best both in materials and in craftspeople at a bargain price.

Karen E. Hudson, granddaughter of legendary architect Paul R. Williams, wrote of this effect when Williams was doing a mansion in the Hancock Park district of Los Angeles at the same time Morada La Estrella was under construction. Hudson wrote:

Since the residence was built when many skilled craftspeople were unemployed, the artisans who carved the staircase and paneled the library often only received one day's wages for two day's work.

It was a difficult situation across the country in 1931-1932 and may well have been the case at Morada La Estrella. But its construction doubtless helped some to survive.



Skilled woodworkers preparing corbels for the living room beams on site ca. 1931.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)



BEAUTIFUL DESERT HOME

THE BEAUTIFUL EARLY CALIFORNIA TYPE home of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Snyder, of Palm Springs and Crawfordsville, Indiana—located in Merita Vista, and seen here, is outstanding from the standpoint of architectural beauty. The exterior of the home, too, is inspiringly lovely. Planned by Mrs. Snyder, whose architect was Charles W. Tanner, and builder, William Marte, the home is—as its name—a “superior dwelling.” The home’s Spanish name, “Morada la Estrella,” translated means “Superior Dwelling of Estrella” (Mrs. Snyder’s first name). “Morada” also means purple—the outstanding color used externally in the tile roof, and in the interior in the wall’s coloring and rugs.

HOME OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN C. SNYDER IS INSPIRING ABODE

(Ed. Note—This is the first of a series of illustrated articles on the beautiful homes of Palm Springs, whose builders sought beauty and distinction in their homes—an inspiration to all others — and featuring the homes built by local builders, who have attempted to use local supplies and materials.)

One of the most charming of the numerous lovely homes of Palm Springs is the home of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Snyder. Located on Merita Place in Merita Vista, it is of early-California type, definitely Spanish in motif, and bears the influence of the Dons of Spanish California.

High white walls, made from desert brick, protect and surround the home. Lawns inside the walls are surrounded by flowers and shrubs, native of the desert, and plants and trees that lend themselves to the local setting.

The home’s exterior is bone white in color, of desert brick construction (locally made tile) surmounted by a rare and lovely shaded purple tile roof. Recessed, deep windows in the walls, protected by heavy Spanish grill bars, give the idea of sturdiness, and an “attached to the soil” feeling to the home.

Most beautiful is the delicate Spanish grill work surrounding the porch entrance. Its design is the Cherokee Rose—made into a pattern by Charles W. Tanner, the architect — and wrought by Frankie Paul, artistic craftsman.

The interior of the home has the desert’s pur-

ple as a base or main color idea. It reflects the exterior — the desert, the mountains and their colorings — and brings this feeling within the walls into the rooms. A large purple rug establishes one within the large living room. The stained walls reflect the color in the gray purple stained shade of the board walls, that give the idea of the partitions of colonial California homes.

Amethyst, old red, and gold are the relieving color combinations for furnishings used in drapes and furniture. Small

white Moroccan rugs at either end of the room provide highlights to the interior.

The color ideas for one of the two large bedrooms are eggplant (purple), old red and old green (taken from an old Japanese print); for the other (on the north) sunny yellows and browns.

Even the kitchen is beautiful. The walls of V-ship-lapped board, carrying the color of the purple of the concord grape, are seen above the eye level. The lower part of the walls are covered with French oil-cloth, shaded a parchment color and decorated with brightly painted fruit designs.

The large patio in the rear of the home completes an ideal home. An out-of-door covered porch allows one to live indoors as well as “out.” Lawns, blooming yucca, riotously

growing flowers—all blend in a symphony of planned colors, reflecting the same lovely, hazy purple shades of the desert’s mountains.

(Palm Springs News, April 4-11, 1935)

Changes and Additions to Morada La Estrella

Like all houses of its age, Morada La Estrella has been subject to the inevitability of modifications as new owners pass through its portals bringing with them ideas as to how to make the home their own. Over the course of its nearly 100-year history, the house has been altered in certain ways including a significant addition. However, these alterations/additions have largely been done in a way that does not diminish the home's original integrity.

Entry Alteration –

As noted earlier in this nomination, Morada La Estrella's front entry was originally a covered but open space featuring a set of wrought-iron columns decorated with vines and Cherokee Rose flowers. However, at some point (the date is unknown) the entry was modified. While the original tile roof extension was retained, the front door was drawn forward and the space fully walled to create an indoor space. As such, the wrought-iron columns were replaced by thick solid walls made of the same type of concrete block as the original portion of the house. It is clear that there was a sincere effort to not alter the original character of the house in how the addition was done. It takes the same dimensions as the original, uses the same type of brick and bears a lintel designed to match others on the house. The front door replacement remained as a French door albeit a sturdier version.

While it cannot be verified with absolute certainty owing to the lack of details, this may well have been the "porch addition" referenced in a 1945 building permit taken out by owner Natt McDougall and executed by H.L. Hansen who, along with William Marte, was contractor for the home's original construction. The sensitivity and seamlessness of the addition makes this a credible possibility.



{Left image: Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott. Right image: Courtesy of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation}

Patio Alterations –



A 1930s view of the patio in its original configuration. Outdoor fireplace is just out of frame on the right. A pair of French doors was later added to the wall on the center right.
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

Like the front entry, the central patio has also undergone some alterations at unknown date(s). The most significant has been the enclosure of the original covered but open-air portion, which includes the home's famous stone fireplace. The work included taking the original French doors and bringing them forward to the new wall space, which was filled in between by large nearly floor-to-ceiling windows. Between the windows and the French doors, the new wall is almost entirely glazed.

While it cannot be confirmed through existing documentation if this was done at the same time, the patio roof was extended outwards in order for there to still be an open-air covered space.

Additionally, and again, it cannot be confirmed as to the date, a set of French doors was added on the west wall of the patio, opening into one of the two bedrooms at the end of the west wing. This set of doors is an identical match of the existing French doors and mirrors the already extant set of French doors opening off the opposite side of the patio from the master bedroom. The

current homeowners believe that this set is the original front door, moved here when it was replaced, which would be a likely scenario.



**These images, taken during the time of the previous owner, show the enclosed wall and outdoor patio extension.
(Courtesy of Steve Scott)**



**A current view of the now-enclosed space looking west. The arched doorway had originally been squared and contained one of the pair of French doors relocated to the new patio wall.
(Courtesy of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation)**

The Rod Taylor Additions/Alterations –



This stylized “T” on a lintel in the front bedroom, is a reminder of the days when Morada La Estrella was owned by film star Rod Taylor.

(Author photo. July 2023)

When William Charles Tanner named the Snyder residence Morada La Estrella or “Home of the Star” in 1932, it became a prophecy of the day when it truly would become the home of a star. That star was Rod Taylor who purchased the home with his wife Carol in 1984.

During their five years of ownership, the Taylors embarked upon the biggest modifications to date of Morada La Estrella. While substantial, the modifications did not diminish the home’s original integrity with the swimming pool and tennis court exterior features and the garage/recreation room a separate structure only superficially attached to the main house. Other than the “T” in the front bedroom, Taylor’s work (if any) in the interior is not known. However, Taylor was known as a talented woodworker who had designed and built much of the cabinetry in his Beverly Hills home. It is likely he crafted some elements of his Palm Springs getaway as well.



(Left) Carol and Rod Taylor enjoying a game of cards in the home's enclosed patio. The artwork behind the couple was all done by Taylor. (Right) The same spot today, with artwork by the home's current owner, Steve Scott. (Courtesy of Diane Tomasik and Steve Scott)

Swimming Pool Addition 1984 -

While today, a backyard swimming pool is a nearly ubiquitous feature of a Palm Springs home, it was not a common amenity until after World War II. It was not until 1984 when a swimming pool and spa were added to Morada La Estrella by Rod and Carol Taylor. The 16' x 36' gunite pool was built by Blue Cascade Pools at a cost of \$15,000.



**The 1984 Rod Taylor pool showing its relationship to the house.
(Author photo. July 2023)**



Two views of the 1984 Rod Taylor pool and spa as seen from the patio.

(Both: Courtesy of Steve Scott)



Tennis Court Addition 1984 -



Contemporaneous with the swimming pool was the addition of a championship sized tennis court placed on former lawn space on the home's western side. The court was designed and built by Pacific Tennis Courts at a cost of \$15,432.

Garage Addition 1985 -

In 1985, the Taylors changed the garage arrangements at Morada La Estrella. As originally built, the one-car garage was an integral part of the house, sharing the same roof and fitting within the original U-shaped massing of the structure. The garage, which was accessed off North Cahuilla Road, was on the home's west side.

The Taylors decided they needed a larger garage and, as a result, they built a new garage with storage/recreation space and partial bath, on former garden space on the home's east side. Only superficially attached to the main house by way of a connecting roof, the new addition is separated by a breezeway. This prevented the original windows on the home's east side from being blocked.

The 22' x 40' garage was designed by Glen W. Bouton (1914-1989), who practiced for more than 40 years as an architect in his native Nebraska before relocating to Palm Springs. The contractor was Robert Boyer. The cost was \$18,000.

Bouton took great care to ensure the new garage would be as seamless as possible, even using the original garage doors from their former location, matching the roofline both in pitch but also in the multicolored tilework, duplicating the rustic carved lintels above the garage doors, even scoring the stucco walls on the front to simulate the brickwork of the rest of the house. However, on the eastern side and rear (south) façade, which encompasses the recreation room/bath, this effort dropped off with little or no attempt to match the original house. Windows are of a different style and even the roof over the recreation room portion is flat composition with no tile.



The 1985 garage and recreation room are connected to the original house not only by a single roof but also architecturally with elements matching the rest of the home. It is, however, a separate structure, divided from the main house by a covered breezeway.

(Author photo. July 2023)



**The 1932 house and 1985 garage were carefully unified by the architect to form a near seamless transition. The breezeway separating the structures is found behind the rustic wooden gate.
(Author photo. July 2023)**



**A view through the breezeway looking north. Original house is on the left.
(Author photo. July 2023)**



**The stylistic difference between the east and south side of the garage with its north side is somewhat surprising considering the effort made to unify the front with the main house.
(Author photos. July 2023)**



Conversion of the Original Garage –

The new garage and recreation room on the home’s east side replaced the original garage, which was located on the west. Unlike the new garage, which was freestanding, the original garage was integrated into the house itself.



This schematic shows the location of the original 1932 garage and 1985 replacement. The old driveway off Cahuilla has been subsumed beneath the tennis court. The original gateposts remain, hidden behind lush foliage.

The space where the former garage was located was successfully redesigned into a new guest room and bath without altering any of the exterior or interior walls. The former garage door space was changed into French doors with a small patio created under the existing roof overhang.



The former 1932 garage.
(Author photos. July 2023)





The converted garage at the time of the last owner's occupancy. Note the sawtooth cornice.
(Both photos: Courtesy of Steve Scott)



Gilbert Garfield 1996 Alterations -

Based on a set of floor plans located by current owner Steve Scott, the homes 7th owner, Gil Garfield, did an extensive remodel in 1996. This included:

- The west garage-to-guest suite conversion, garage subdivision and reconfiguration, kitchen remodel, guest bathroom remodel, new mechanical/AC room in breezeway and other changes in 1996. His architect was Anderzej W. Weber (AIA) of Indio, CA
- Extensive landscape remodel including removal of the front curved driveway along with Jacuzzi and pergola additions, new pool and spa equipment area, numerous tree & shrub plantings and removals, and exterior landscape lighting. The landscape designer was Ronald Gregory Associates of Palm Desert, CA

These changes did not affect any of the home's historic integrity.

Landscaping and Hardscaping



(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)

While the garden spaces surrounding Morada La Estrella provide a beautiful parklike setting, they have undergone numerous changes through the years. Initially, the front (north) and back (south) yards were originally planted with grass while the east and west side yards remained more natural.

Over time, different trees, shrubs and ornamental plants were introduced as well as grass. Today, there are a number of mature trees surrounding Morada La Estrella which may date back to its earliest years. The hardscape, however, is mostly lost with the exception of the wall that surrounds the entire property. It is made from the same slump stone concrete blocks used for the home's construction. Vintage photos provided by the Snyder family show that the walls originally extended into the lot in at least two places creating separate garden spaces. These walls, however, were removed at an unknown date and the lot fully opened.



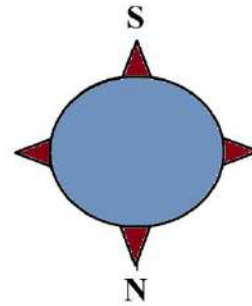
**These images show how the spaces surrounding Morada La Estrella were originally divided by concrete walls of a style matching the house.
(Both images Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)**



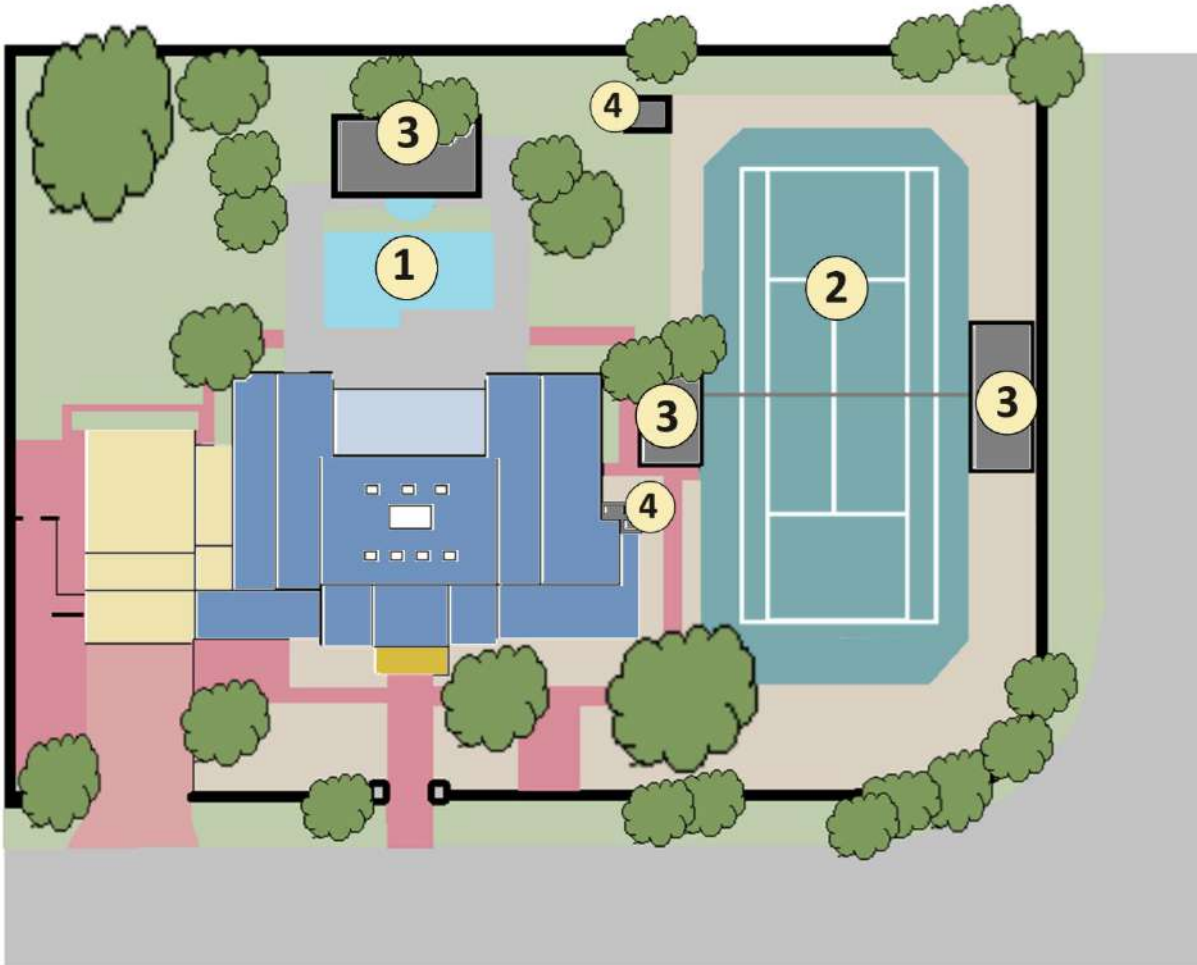
Site Plan
Morada La Estrella

The John & Estella Snyder Residence

William Charles Tanner
Architectural Designer



1932



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | 1932 - Original Structure | 1. 1984 Swimming Pool/Spa (Non-contributing) |
|  | 1985 - Garage/Recreation Room Addition (Non-contributing) | 2. 1984 Tennis Court (Non-contributing) |
|  | Unknown date - Entry Alteration (Non-contributing) | 3. Covered patio/gazebo (Non-contributing) |
|  | Ancillary Non-contributing Structures | 4. Equipment (Non-contributing) |

Character Defining Features of Morada La Estrella

Morada La Estrella is an exceptional example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Its character defining features include:

- An emphasis on horizontality including low pitched roof
- Multiple gabled roof lines
- Vintage barrel roof tiles
- Blending of indoor and outdoor spaces
- Asymmetrical U-shaped layout
- Concrete block exterior wall treatments intended to imitate adobe brick
- Overhanging eaves
- Covered patio

Contributing Elements

- The original 1932 residence
- Vintage Gladding, McBean roof tiles
- Wood rafter tails and wooden eave brackets
- Original portion of the covered patio with rustic stone fireplace
- Wood and brick lintels
- Multi-light and single-light casement windows
- Wooden French doors excepting that which fronts the 1985 garage conversion
- Original wood-plank doors
- Original wrought-iron door hardware and shutter dogs
- Wooden shutters
- Sawtooth board siding under roof gables
- Copper hooded box window at master bedroom
- Concrete block perimeter wall

Non-Contributing Elements

- 1984 swimming pool and spa
- Swimming pool/spa covered terrace
- 1984 tennis court and surrounding fencing
- Composition roofed patio extension
- Tennis court pavilion
- 1985 garage and recreation room
- Equipment enclosures
- Steel cages on various windows
- Glass panels on patio extension
- Non-original light fixtures
- Non-original front door
- Skylights on roof (8)
- Hardscape
- Landscape including statuary and art pieces

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into several distinct periods, as defined by the Historic Resources Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*. These include the following:

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

It is within the context of the period "Palm Springs Between the Wars" that Morada La Estrella will be evaluated. The following context statement is extracted from Historic Resource Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings: Palm Springs Between the Wars (1919-1941)*:

This context explores the transformation of Palm Springs from a modest spa town into a luxury winter resort in the years between the First and Second World Wars. By 1918 Nellie Coffman and her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, understood the town's potential, not as a health spa for asthmatics and consumptives, but as an exclusive winter resort for the well-to-do, and set about transforming their sanatorium into the luxurious Desert Inn, one of the most renowned hostleries in the country. Their success inspired the development of two equally spectacular hotels in the 1920s and cemented the town's growing reputation as one of the country's premier luxury winter resorts. The Oasis Hotel, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (known as Lloyd Wright) opened in 1925 by Pearl McCallum McManus; and the grand Hotel El Mirador, designed by Walker and Eisen in a sumptuous Spanish Colonial Revival style and opened in 1927.

Automobile tourism played an early and important part of the success and growth of Palm Springs as a destination. In 1914, highway bonds were passed in Riverside County for extensive road improvements and construction of new routes. As part of these efforts, the highway connecting Los Angeles and Palm Springs was completed in October 1916. Pavement of the highway through to Indio was completed in 1924, allowing travelers to drive all the way from Los Angeles to Palm Springs in less than four hours, all on paved roads.

The first residential subdivisions were recorded in the early 1920s on tracts largely concentrated on land immediately surrounding the existing village and the resorts. Several tracts were subdivided by Prescott T. Stevens, along with other prominent early Palm Springs settlers including Pearl McManus, Raymond Cree, and Harriet Cody.

In the 1920s, business tycoons, industrialists, and other wealthy businessmen, along with the Hollywood elite discovered the desert and began to transform Palm Springs into an international resort. While the movie stars primarily stayed at the resort hotels when visiting Palm Springs, other wealthy residents and seasonal visitors started building architect-designed estates and drawing increased attention to the growing resort town.

The 1930s saw Palm Springs blossom, as more and more celebrities made it their winter weekend getaway, and more development sprang up to house and entertain them. By the start of World War II, Palm Springs had so long been thought of as a movie star's playground that some of the

neighborhoods were described as "Beverly Hills in the desert." One section was so filled with film notables, the neighborhood was ultimately dubbed the "Movie Colony."

In the 1930s important figures in finance and business continued to flock to the desert in the winter, helping to cement the village's reputation as one of the nation's top winter resort destinations.

Architecturally, the Spanish and Mediterranean-Revival styles were the town's dominant architectural expression during this period. In addition, there are examples of simplified Ranch houses featuring rustic details and board-and-batten exterior walls. Beginning in the 1930s, prominent modernist architects began making significant contributions to the architectural landscape in Palm Springs.

EVALUATION:

Criterion 1: Significant Events. *The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community: Morada La Estrella is not affiliated with significant events and does not qualify as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 1.*

Criterion 2: Significant Persons. *Criterion 2 recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to the national, state or local history:* Morada La Estrella was built by prominent Indiana businessman John Corson Snyder (1866-1941) and his wife, Estella F. Snyder (1871-1958) to serve as a winter retreat for themselves and their family. While the Snyders were both prominent figures within their community and professional associations, they do not rise to a level that meets the criteria of persons who had influence in local and national history. One later owner, film star Rod Taylor (1930-2015) would have possibly qualified owing to his level of importance in motion pictures. However, Taylor's ownership of Morada La Estrella came late in his career after his popularity had waned. **Therefore, Morada La Estrella does not qualify for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 2.**

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

Criterion 3: *The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history:* Completed in 1932, Morada La Estrella exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historic context of the "Palm Springs Between the Wars (1919-1941)" period. The custom-designed and built structure represents a fine example of significant Spanish Colonial Revival architecture for which Palm Springs first became known. Morada La Estrella is part of the group of structures, the majority done by Tanner himself, which established Spanish Colonial Revival as Palm Springs' dominant architectural style. And it was during this period, 1920s-1930s, that Palm Springs rose to prominence as a world class resort. Spanish Colonial Revival would remain Palm Springs' principal architectural style all the way up to the end of World War II when Desert Modernism began its ascent. As such, Morada La Estrella is viewed as an essential component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a world-class resort, i.e., a historical movement that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. **Therefore, Morada La Estrella qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 3.**

Criterion 4: The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction: Morada La Estrella was built using simple materials and conventional construction methods. As such, the residence is not noteworthy for its type or construction method and does not qualify for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 4. **Morada La Estrella does not qualify for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 4.**

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

5a: Work of a Master: Morada La Estrella was the work of William Charles Tanner (1876-1960), an architectural designer responsible for popularizing the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Palm Springs. Tanner's design work, especially on the Desert Inn (1922-1926) changed the very look of Palm Springs, transforming it from an undistinguished jumble of frame structures into a stylish Spanish style resort. In addition to Morada La Estrella, Tanner's residential work includes a number of fine homes across the region. His most famous are the Dorothy Arzner/Marion Morgan house in Los Angeles (1930) and Ojo del Desierto (1926), the Tom O'Donnell estate in Palm Springs. Additionally, the home's builders, William Marte and H.L. Hansen, were among the busiest contractors practicing in Palm Springs during the 1930s. They were known for their very high-quality construction for high-profile people during this period. **Therefore, Morada La Estrella can certainly be described as the work of masters in view of Tanner's history of architectural excellence and Marte-Hansen's record of quality construction.**

5b: Properties possessing high artistic values: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. Morada La Estrella was a showcase of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture that represented the very ideals of what has made the style so enduringly popular such as its emphasis on indoor-outdoor living and a relaxed, casual atmosphere.

Morada La Estrella certainly articulates the best of what made Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture so popular to a level of excellence that, in total, could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. **Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics representing the Spanish Colonial Revival style, as the work of a master architectural designer and its high artistic values, Morada La Estrella qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.**

Criterion 6: (That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction). This Criterion was created to address the resources contained within a potential historic district and as such it does not apply to this nomination. **Hence, Morada La Estrella does not qualify as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 6.**

Criterion 7: (That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory.) Morada La Estrella is not likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory. **Hence, Morada La Estrella does not qualify as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 7.**

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds Morada La Estrella eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 C.1. a., paragraphs iii, and v of the local ordinance's seven criteria.

INTEGRITY ANALYSIS

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

LOCATION

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

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***Morada La Estrella's essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived largely intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing have survived almost entirely intact. A 1985 garage and recreation room, which was designed to match the home's original style, is a separate structure, only superficially attached to the original house by a shared tile roof. An undated alteration to the front entry, enclosed what had been a covered porch. However, the changes retained the original footprint with cement block construction identical to the original house and other original details either retained or faithfully copied. One further change, the enclosure of the formerly open-air covered patio, combined two original pairs of French doors with floor-to-ceiling length glazing. As such, the home still reflects the same Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture, design elements such as simulated adobe walls, barrel tile roofing, casement windows, French doors, etc., first introduced by master architectural designer William Charles Tanner in 1932.***

SETTING

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***Morada La Estrella was built on a prominent spot in the high-end Merito Vista tract, one of the oldest residential tracts in Palm Springs in 1932. The low-slung house was, and continues to be, surrounded by a high concrete block wall scored to resemble adobe bricks just the same way as the walls of the house itself. The original lot has never been subdivided and the house retains the same space as when built. And it enjoys the same views it did when first built, with no taller structures blocking it off. The setting of the Morada La Estrella continues to reflect the architectural designer's original design relationship of site and structure.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. ***Morada La Estrella's exterior surface materials, which consist primarily of slump stone concrete block scored to mimic adobe, multi-hued barrel tile roof, rough-hewn lintels, wood rafter tails and eave brackets, wooden shutters, wooden French doors and windows, have remained essentially intact and continue to express the physical elements as designed during the building's period of significance; the pattern and configuration that today forms the residence survives intact.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***The fine workmanship of Morada La Estrella is evidenced in different ways such as how the slump stone concrete blocks were produced to give the effect of ancient adobe; the delicate, simple carvings along the wooden lintels; the graceful curves of the wrought-iron shutter dogs, and the artistry of the patio fireplace, a bravura performance by the architectural designer in two types of rustic stone, plaster, brick, and tile. Thanks to the rare opportunity to compare images of the home when it was first constructed and how it appears today, it is clear Morada La Estrella continues to express a high degree of contemporary period workmanship.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***When it was completed in 1932, Morada La Estrella was intended to provide a comfortable desert home that allowed its occupants to not only connect meaningfully with the natural environment which surrounded it, but also to visually transport them through its historically evocative architecture, to the days of Southern California's romantic Spanish/Mexican past. More than 90 years later, Morada La Estrella continues to reflect that exact same aesthetic. Accordingly, the residence retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***Morada La Estrella is an important example of a custom-designed 1930s Spanish Colonial Revival style house. It, along with a number of other structures built during the same period (mid-1920s to mid-1930s) set the architectural tone for Palm Springs, helping to transform its look from a disjointed mix of frame structures into a stylish Spanish resort. As its integrity has remained intact, Morada La Estrella offers a powerful visual callback of that period when Palm Springs was a haven for historic Spanish Colonial Revival architecture well before it was diluted by newer styles. Accordingly, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: Morada La Estrella appears to be in excellent condition partially due to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. This integrity analysis confirms that the building and site of Morada La Estrella still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. ***As noted, Morada La Estrella retains a remarkable amount of original detail. In summary, Morada La Estrella still possesses a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.***

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Riverside County Assessor's Office

APPENDIX I

Owner's Notarized Letter of Support

October 11, 2023

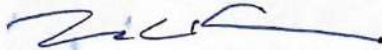
City of Palm Springs
Historic Site Preservation Board
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dear Honorable Board,

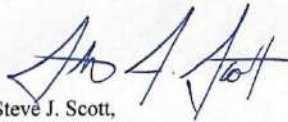
As trustees of the Eicholz Scott Family Trust, owners of the residence located at 271 West Merito Place in Palm Springs, California, we enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Resource designation of our property by the city of Palm Springs. We have asked the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to assist us in the preparation of the required nomination paperwork.

If you have any questions, please contact us at beicholz@pacbell.net & ssdi@mac.com

Sincerely,



Robert L. Eicholz,
Trustee



Steve J. Scott,
Trustee

* October 11th 2023
See A Handled To Notary
By J. R. Hernandez



CALIFORNIA JURAT

GOVERNMENT CODE § 8202



A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of the individual who signed the document to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

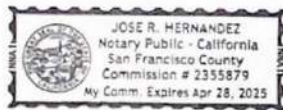
State of California

County of San Francisco

Subscribed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me on
this 11th day of October, 2023, by
Date Month Year

(1) Robert L. Eicholz

(and (2) Steve J. Scott),
Name(s) of Signer(s)



Place Notary Seal and/or Stamp Above

proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) who appeared before me.

Signature [Handwritten Signature]
Signature of Notary Public

OPTIONAL

Completing this information can deter alteration of the document or fraudulent reattachment of this form to an unintended document.

Description of Attached Document

Title or Type of Document: _____

Document Date: _____ Number of Pages: _____

Signer(s) Other Than Named Above: _____



APPENDIX III

Chain of Title

The subject of the following documentary transfers is the real property in the City of Palm Springs (from 1938 forward), County of Riverside, State of California, described as Lot 94 and the north 59.5 feet of Lot 95 of the Merito Vista Tract, as per map recorded in Book 12, Page 94 of Maps, in the office of the Riverside County Recorder, otherwise known as 271 West Merito Place.

10-30-1930	Bank of America of California to Estella F. Snyder , a married woman.
2-14-1943	Estella F. Snyder , a widow, to Natt Mc Dougall Company .
12-17-1943	Natt Mc Dougall Company to Natt Mc Dougall .
11-28-1945	Natt Mc Dougall and Christena Kennedy Mc Dougall , husband and wife, to Lee Frank , a married man.
9-27-1948	Merwyn Evans Frank and Walter Frank , Executors of the Estate of Lee Frank, Deceased, to Merwyn Evans Frank and Walter Frank , trustees under the Last Will and Testament of Lee Frank, Deceased.
9-30-1948	Merwyn Evans Frank and Walter Frank , trustees under the Last Will and Testament of Lee Frank, Deceased, to Merwyn Evans Frank , a widow.
5-9-1983	Estate of Merwyn E. Frank to Richard E. Evans, Sr.
5-2-1984	Richard E. Evans Sr. to Rod Taylor and Carol Y. Taylor , husband and wife, as joint tenants.
8-30-1989	Rod Taylor and Carol Y. Taylor , husband and wife, as joint tenants, to George I. Rosenthal , Trustee of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983.
12-16-1992	George I. Rosenthal , Trustee of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983 to Bernard L. Warner and Southpac Trust International, Inc. , Co-Trustees of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983.
12-16-1992	Bernard L. Warner and Southpac Trust International, Inc. as co-trustees of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983 to George I. Rosenthal , trustee of the Ruth Rosenthal Trust, a 77.4% undivided interest, and to Bernard L. Warner and Southpac Trust International, Inc. , as co-trustees of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983, a 22.6% undivided interest, with all as tenants in common.
3-19-1996	George I. Rosenthal , trustee of the Ruth Rosenthal Trust, and Bernard L. Warner, Southpac Trust International, Inc. , as co-trustees of the George I. Rosenthal Trust of May 16, 1983, to Gilbert Garfield , a single man.
4-3-1996	Gilbert Garfield , a single man, to Gilbert I. Garfield , as trustee of the Garfield Family Trust Agreement dated December 20, 1993.
5-16-2011	Steven J. Weissman as Successor Trustee of the Garfield Family Trust Agreement dated December 20, 1993, to William Katzin , trustee of Gemini Trust (Mike and Megan Abbott).
2-13-2020	William Katzin , trustee of the Gemini Trust, to Robert L. Eicholz and Steven Scott of the Eicholz Scott Family Trust.

APPENDIX IV

Building Permits

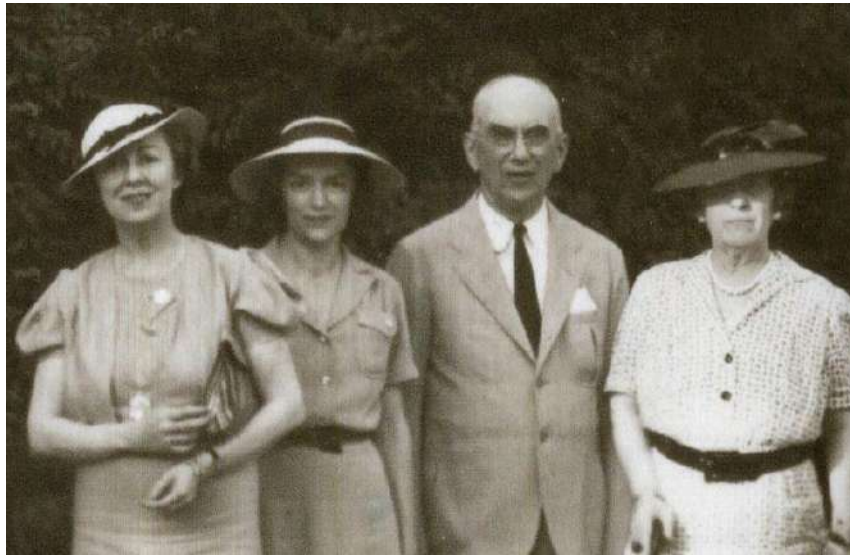
The following is a summary of building permits provided by the Palm Springs Department of Building and Safety in response to a public records request in June 2023. However, a subsequent search of the Desert Sun newspaper database revealed three more permit references. These are the first three noted below:

1943 Unspecified Remodeling \$100	Owner: Natt McDougall	
1944 Unspecified repairs \$30	Owner: Natt McDougall	
6-5-1944 Addition \$200	Owner: Natt McDougall	
7-2-1945 Porch addition	Owner: Natt McDougall	Contractor: H.L. Hansen
8-17-1961 Air conditioning	Owner: Mrs. Lee Frank	Contractor: Utility Heat and Cooling
6-25-1962 Sewer inspection	Owner: Mrs. Lee Frank	Contractor: Palm Springs Sewer Service
10-23-1968 Sprinkler system	Owner: Mrs. Lee Frank	Contractor: Leo Wilkes Plumbing
5-4-1972 Awning	Owner: Mrs. Lee Frank	Contractor: Admiral Awning
4-30-1976 Air conditioning	Owner: Lee Frank	Contractor: Lake Air Conditioning
6-25-1984 Swimming pool	Owner: Rod Taylor	Contractor: Blue Cascade Pools
6-28-1984 Tennis court	Owner: Rod Taylor	Contractor: Pacific Tennis Courts
6-21-1985 Garage	Owner: Rod Taylor	Architect: Glen Bouton Contractor: Robert Boyer

APPENDIX V

Owner Biographies

1932-1943 – First Owners – John Corson Snyder and Estella F. Snyder



The Snyder family, 1938. From left to right: Daughters Helen and Estella C., John and Estella F.
(Courtesy of Mry Kummings and Steve Scott)

John Corson Snyder (1866-1941) and his wife Estella F. Courtwright Snyder (1871-1958) were leading citizens in the Midwestern town of Crawfordsville, Indiana with John being the president of the Ben-Hur Life Association, a nationwide insurance carrier. The Snyders wintered in Palm Springs for several seasons prior to making the decision to purchase a lot and build a winter base for themselves, their family and friends. Between 1932 and John's death in 1941, the Snyders divided their time between Crawfordsville and Palm Springs.

Born on a farm near Middleton, Ohio in 1866, Snyder moved with his family to Crawfordsville when he was seven. At 15, the family moved to another farm in southwestern Missouri where he briefly taught school after his high school education. At 21, he moved to Kansas City to attend business college. He tried several ventures such as real estate and zinc mining before returning to Crawfordsville and embarking upon his lifelong career with The Tribe of Ben-Hur (later Ben-Hur Life Association), which his brother Frank had helped establish in 1893. Snyder would steadily rise in the organization until in 1923 he became its head, a position he would hold for the remainder of his life. While Ben-Hur took up the majority of his time, he managed to serve concurrently as president of the Elston Bank and Trust Co. of Crawfordsville from 1923-1941.

Snyder was also extremely active in civic affairs, heavily involved in the American Red Cross, YWCA and Liberty Bond drives during World War I. He also became a leading figure in the

Chamber of Commerce on a local, statewide and national scale, serving not only as president of the Crawfordsville Chamber but also the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce between 1919-1920. Snyder was such a well-known and highly regarded figure, he was put in nomination by the Democratic Party of Montgomery County for the United States Senate. Although it was only a "Favorite Son" nomination, it nonetheless showed the esteem by which he was held in his hometown county.

Snyder married Estella F. Courtwright in May 1889, a relationship that would produce three daughters: Helen (b. 1892), Marion (b. 1903) and Estella C. (b. 1905). The couple's marriage was a happy and enduring one lasting the duration of their lives. Estella, like her husband, was socially and civically minded. On occasion, she would open up their homes in Crawfordsville and Palm Springs, to host charity events. Both were active at St. Johns Episcopal Church in Crawfordsville and St. Paul's in Palm Springs.

John Snyder died at age 75 in 1941. His death was noted not only in his home places of Crawfordsville and Palm Springs, but nationwide as well, even earning an obituary in the New York Times. Estella outlived her husband by nearly 20 years, dying in Crawfordsville at age 87 in 1958.

1943-1945 – Second Owners – Natt McDougall



Natt McDougall and his granddaughter Joanne Herron Hanson on the patio at Morada La Estrella.
(Courtesy of Natt McDougall, Jr.)

At the time of his purchase of Morada La Estrella, Nathan "Natt" McDougall (1879-1954), was the president of a major construction company in Portland, Oregon. Still in business today, the Natt McDougall Company is a civil engineering and general contracting firm operating principally in the states of Oregon and Washington. The company has remained in family hands since its founding 1932 and its current president in 2023 is Natt Anthony McDougall, Jr.

McDougall and his wife Christena's time at Morada La Estrella was brief, but they continued coming to Palm Springs, often staying at the Desert Inn. Their son, Natt, Jr., and his wife Ann, would later become prominent residents of Palm Desert.

1945-1983 – Third Owners – Lee Frank and Merwyn Evans Frank



To date, the Frank family represents the longest stewardship of Morada La Estrella. Lee Frank (1880-1947) was a successful financier from Chicago, long associated with the National Bond and Investment Company. In 1941, he was elected Chairman of the Board of the firm, a position he would hold until the company was liquidated a few years later. Even while he was still a vice president of the firm, Frank was included on the annual list of the nation's highest paid executives.

Frank and his wife, Merwyn Evans Frank (1897-1982), lived at the prestigious Aquitania Apartments at 5000 North Marine Drive, overlooking Lake Michigan. According to Mrs. Frank, the couple discovered the pleasures of Palm Springs in 1935 and began making it a regular winter destination. In 1945, they purchased Morada La Estrella from Natt and Christena McDougall as their permanent winter home.



IN THE STARLITE ROOM at the Chi Chi and having a splendid time enjoying the food and entertainment are, left to right: Mrs. Travis Rogers, Miss Dorothy Gray, exponent of foremost styles for women in the desert; Mrs. Alexander Marcuse, Mrs. Lee Frank and Miss Rose Mints, Villager.

Lee Frank (second from right) enjoying a night out at the Chi Chi with friends, 1951.
(Via the Desert Sun 3-9-1951)

Even after Lee Frank's death at 67 in 1947, Morada La Estrella remained an unofficial headquarters for winter residents from Chicago. Merwyn Frank was very active socially and civically with her name appearing regularly in Hildy Crawford's "Around Town" column in the Desert Sun. Merwyn was famous for the many parties she threw at Morada La Estrella including her annual New Year's Eve buffet and card party and her Tuesday night card and cocktails parties. One of her most memorable events was the 1958 Lincoln's Birthday soiree she hosted at Morada La Estrella for the Chicago contingent. The elegant event, catered by master Palm Springs caterer Santos de Jesus, featured a red and white theme. "Red and white flowers flanked on either side by tapered candles made an attractive centerpiece for the dinner table covered in an imported white dinner cloth," reported the Desert Sun.

Merwyn Frank was also heavily involved with such organizations as the Palm Springs Art Museum, the Women's Auxiliary of the Desert Hospital, and the Heart Fund. A longtime member of the Palm Springs Garden Club, Merwyn regularly opened up Morada La Estrella for meetings, which usually included a speaker. As the Desert Sun noted on the February 1957 gathering:

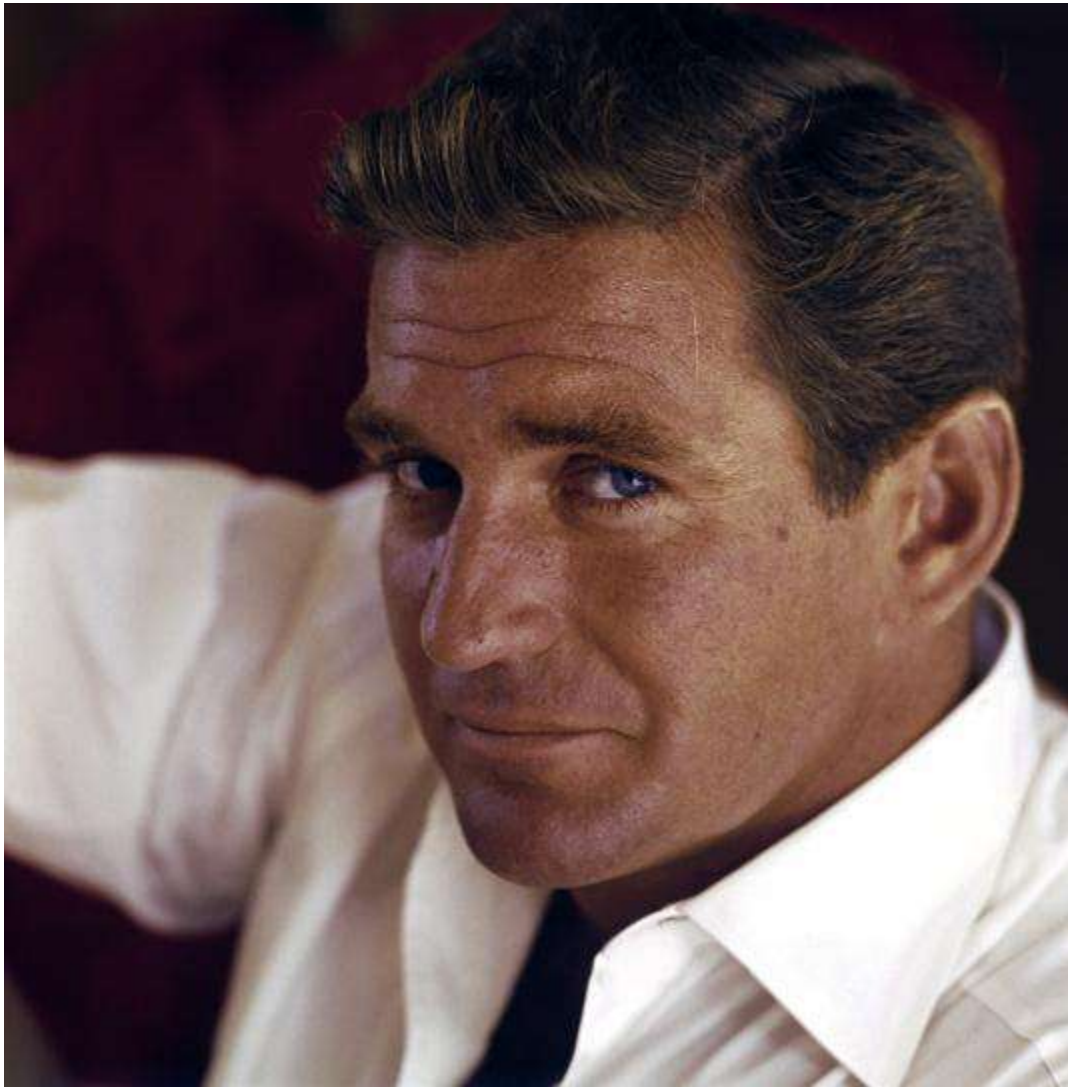
Members of the Palm Springs Garden Club gathered on Saturday at the Merito Place home of Mrs. Merwyn Frank for dessert and the February meeting...Members, according to custom, wore flowers grown in their own gardens, and answered roll call by giving the name of the flower worn. A wide variety of dozens of flowers was represented.

Although her social activities gradually decreased as she grew older, Merwyn Frank continued enjoying Morada La Estrella, hosting friends and family, until her death at 85 in 1982.

1983-1984 – Fourth Owner – Richard E. Evans, Sr.

Richard E. Evans, Sr. inherited Morada La Estrella from Merywn Evans Frank. His relationship to her is unclear but he appears to be a relative based on the shared Evans name. He also appears to have not planned on keeping the property, selling it within a year after the inheritance.

1984-1989 – Fifth Owners – Rod Taylor and Carol Yates Taylor



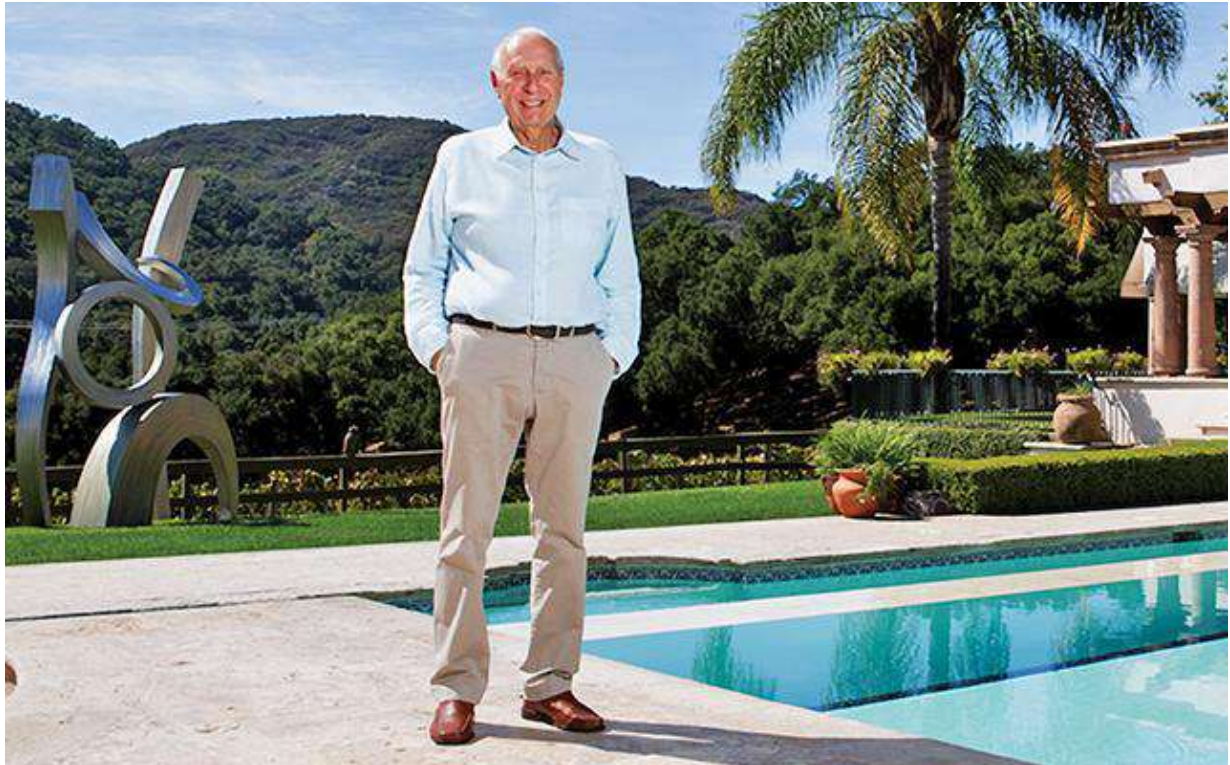
Rod Taylor at the height of his fame in the 1960s.
(via IMDB. © 1978 Gene Trindl/mptvimages.com)

Morada La Estrella was picked up by famous Hollywood film star Rod Taylor (1930-2015) and his wife, former actress and artist Carol Kikumura (Yates). Best known for *The Time Machine* (1960) and Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963), Taylor was one of the biggest stars of the 1960s. He had an extensive career that would last from the 1950s through 2009 with his last role being that of Sir Winston Churchill in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Bastards* (2009).

The following is a brief biographical sketch of Taylor taken from his page at Turner Classic Movies (TCM.com)

With a career spanning six decades, Australian actor Rod Taylor had many opportunities to prove his abilities as a performer in film, TV, theater and radio. Born in the suburban town of Lidcombe in New South Wales, Australia, Taylor had early exposure to the creative arts from his mother, a writer of more than a hundred children's stories, and his father, a construction contractor who also worked as a commercial artist. Taylor picked up his father's knack for visual design, working at Mark Foy's department store painting window displays as he studied graphic arts at East Sydney Technical and Fine Arts College. Undeniably, however, Taylor also loved acting. In his spare time he would take drama classes and participate in small-scale theatrical productions like "Julius Caesar" at the Independent Theatre in 1950 and "The Vigil" at John Alden Co. in 1951. Taylor got married around this time to a woman named Peggy Williams, though he would later remark that they were far too young at the time to create a healthy marriage. He wavered between his two crafts until he had a formative experience watching a performance of "Richard III" by none other than Sir Laurence Olivier and his touring Old Vic theatre troupe. Taylor was so inspired by the production that he made up his mind to pursue acting full time. He would continue to act on stage, but Taylor found still more success acting in radio dramas, which soon became his full time occupation. He starred in such popular radio shows as "The Dambusters," "Tarzan," "Blue Hills," "Such Men are Dangerous," "No Lullaby for Lise," and many more, before he won the Rola award for his performance on "O'Sullivan's Bay" in 1954. Recently divorced from Williams, Taylor parlayed his win into a trip to Hollywood, where he set to work breaking into the mainstream film industry. He found many outlets early on, appearing on shows like "Studio 57" (DuMont, 1954-58) and in films like "World Without End" (1956) and "The Catered Affair" (1956) before his big break came in 1960, with a starring role in George Pal's adaptation of "The Time Machine" (1960). The film's success skyrocketed Taylor's fame to a new level, and he would appear in several more prominent movies from that period, including "The Birds" (1963). The iconic Hitchcock thriller would come on the heels of Taylor's second marriage to Mary Hilem, with whom he would give birth to a daughter, Felicia, in 1964. While this marriage would also end in divorce, in 1969, Taylor's career remained successful, with roles in landmark films and TV shows like "Zabriskie Point" (1970), and the series "Bearcats!" (CBS, 1971). He would be married again in 1980 to Carol Kikumura, a woman Taylor had dated back in the early '60s before she relocated to Las Vegas. After rekindling their relationship, he and Kikumura's union would last for the rest of his life. Meanwhile, Taylor found ongoing success throughout the '80s on the shows "Masquerade" (ABC, 1983-84) and "Falcon Crest" (CBS, 1981-89). The '90s found Taylor acting in movies like "Open Season" (1995) and on shows like "Walker, Texas Ranger" (CBS, 1993-2001) and "Murder, She Wrote" (CBS, 1984-1995). His last appearance on screen was as the great Winston Churchill in the explosively popular Quentin Tarantino film "Inglorious Basterds" (2009). Taylor died in Los Angeles on January 7, 2015. He was 84 years old.

1989-1996 – Sixth Owner – George I. Rosenthal



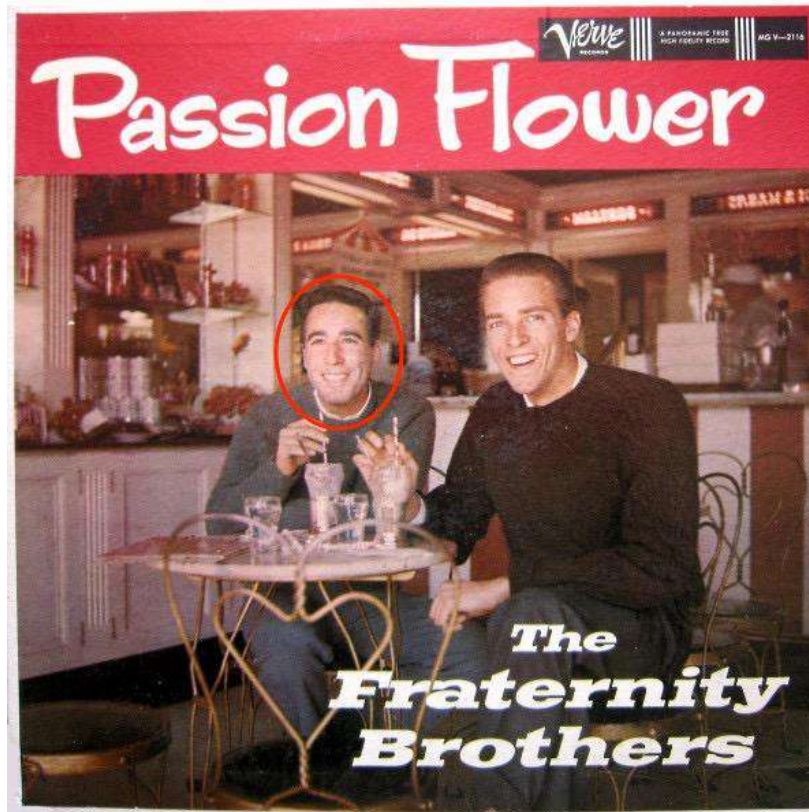
In response to a phone question by Morada La Estrella's current owner Steve Scott, well-known Southern California entrepreneur George Rosenthal (1931-) never spent a single night there during the entirety of his 7-year ownership of the house. "Although we did own the home on Merito," he told Scott, "we never spent one night in it, nor did we do any improvements whatsoever. We basically bought it to use the tennis court because the other home we owned in the neighborhood didn't have one"

Rosenthal is the founder of Raleigh Enterprises, which he started in 1955 as a general contracting and development company. The firm became involved in real estate, selling homes in Orange County before moving on to commercial projects. A major break came in 1963 when Raleigh partnered with Playboy Enterprises to develop the Playboy Building and Playboy Club on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood. That same year they began their first hotel venture with the Sunset Marquis. Other hotels in the Raleigh portfolio have included the Westwood Marquis; the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas; Hotel Jerome in Aspen, Colorado and the Ritz-Carlton in Georgetown, Washington D.C.

In 1974, Raleigh branched out in the record-keeping business with the creation of File Keepers, and in 1979, Raleigh purchased the historic Producer's Studio on Melrose Avenue in Hollywood. Rosenthal resurrected and expanded the fading studio and rebranded it as Raleigh Studios.

Today, Rosenthal may best be known for the 235-acre Malibu winery, Rosenthal – The Malibu Estate.

1996-2011 – Seventh Owner – Gilbert Garfield



Gil Garfield (left) and Perry Botkin, Jr. (Right) had several popular hits while performing as “The Fraternity Brothers.”

Gilbert “Gil” Garfield (1933-2011) was a successful singer, songwriter and music producer who lived at Morada La Estrella with his longtime partner, publicist Mike Hiles. The Los Angeles-born Garfield began his musical career singing in local L.A. nightclubs before partnering with Sue Allen and Bert Convy to form “The Cheers.” In 1955, the group had a Top-10 chart topper with Leiber & Stoller’s “Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots.” This was followed by another Leiber & Stoller tune – “Bazoom! I Need Your Lovin’,” which also made the Billboard charts.

After the group disbanded, Garfield formed a new association, teaming with his childhood friend Perry Botkin, Jr. to create “The Fraternity Brothers,” which had several hits including “Wonderful Summer.” Later, he would later team up with Johnny Cole to form “Gil and Johnny.”

As his music career began to decline, Garfield was quick to seek out other opportunities. Even while still writing songs, he took on a second career as a contractor, working with his father’s real estate development firm Desser-Garfield Developments. And he joined with his sister Suzanne to create a children’s apparel line marketed under the name “Ivan Joy.” They were also creators of the “Pan-T-Boot,” shoes with panty hose built in. This was not a success.

In his later years, the multi-talented Garfield became an accomplished artist and art collector and was known for his generous philanthropy to numerous worthy causes.

2011-2020 – Eighth Owners – Mike and Megan Abbott



Mike and Megan Abbott entertaining members of the Palm Springs Historical Society at Morada La Estrella.
(Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

The Abbotts purchased Morada La Estrella under the name of the Gemini Trust and it was to be their winter home “during the rainy Vancouver winters.” The Abbotts were much beloved Vancouverites who would transfer their charm and love of life to Palm Springs where they made many friends. Mike Abbott (1938-2019) was, according to his obituary in the Vancouver Sun, someone who “always marched to the tune of his own drummer.” He was involved with many business ventures in his life but is perhaps best remembered for being the founder of Buy&Sell in Vancouver in 1971, said to be the first free classified ad newspaper in the world. It was a phenomenal success and led to the format being copied around the world. He also founded Vancouver’s popular Havana restaurant, among other ventures.

The Abbotts found particular solace in their “small Spanish house in Palm Springs,” which, according to his obituary, “brought out [Mike’s] truly happy and tanned side.”

2020-Present – Ninth Owners – Steve Scott and Robert Eicholz



Bob Eicholz & Steve Scott are married and have been together since 1979. They've resided in Houston, the Hollywood Hills, Catalina Island and currently in both Palm Springs and San Francisco with their two whippets – Ward & Taylor.

When Bob and Steve purchased the home at 271 West Merito Place, neither they nor the previous owners they had any knowledge of its history. They only knew that they loved the home's beauty and historic charms. Steve was so intrigued by the house that it set him on an obsessive quest to uncover and celebrate the surprising life of the architect, Mr. William Charles Tanner, a true renaissance man. Over time he was able locate family members of the home's original owners, the Snyders, who provided photographs, home movies & priceless memories. He even discovered that the home had been given a name by Tanner – Morada La Estrella. He has subsequently given many lectures about Mr. Tanner, each revealing some new discovery, and has furthered the scholarship on William Charles Tanner and his contributions to Palm Springs architecture.

Bob Eicholz has served as Chief Technology Officer for Technicolor's Production Services companies and Senior Vice President at Deluxe Entertainment Services Group. He has led the strategic technology direction for Production Services worldwide, and across Deluxe business units globally. Mr. Eicholz is known as one of the pioneers in transitioning the film industry from the analog photochemical world to the digital age. He holds an MBA with Honors in Finance / Technology from UCLA's Andersen School of Management. Mr. Eicholz is also an avid instrument-rated pilot and aircraft owner, with a passion for applying technology to aviation training through immersive experiences.

Steve Scott has lived and worked in both Hollywood and Palm Springs and has served Senior Colorist and V.P. of Theatrical Imaging for Technicolor as well as major Hollywood studios.

He began his career in the entertainment industry singing & dancing with the likes of Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire & Bob Hope. He went on to perform in San Francisco's long-running 'Beach Blanket Babylon' for its initial 2 years and has had the showbiz bug ever since.

He studied painting & architectural rendering, eventually taking up illustration full time. He later entered the Visual Effects field in an effort to combine his love of movies & painting.

His movie credits include Apollo 13, Titanic, The Lion King, Children of Men, Tree of Life and Hairspray as well as Academy-Award-winning films such as Roma, Gravity, Birdman, The Help, The Revenant & Star Wars. He's worked on 20 Marvel pictures including The Avengers Endgame, Iron Man & the Guardians of the Galaxy franchises. His TV work includes The Mandalorian, Angels in America, Star Trek TNG, The X-Files, The Simpsons, and That 70s Show.

Steve served as Governor of the Special Visual Effects Peer Group for the Television Academy and is a member of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He won an Emmy for his visual effects work and 9 HPA Awards for his feature film work.

Both Steve and Bob are dedicated to preserving Morada La Estrella and are active supporters of the efforts to dedicate it as a Class 1 Historic Resource.

APPENDIX VI

William Charles Tanner (1876-1960):



**(William Charles Tanner with his wife Lottie Mae and daughter Margaret "Peggy" Tanner Dowell at their La Hacienda apartment, 257 South Palm Canyon Drive, in 1938)
(Courtesy of Andrea McCarron and Steven Keylon)**

William Charles Tanner: Artist, Architect, Visionary

Biography by Steven J. Scott

A true Renaissance man, William Charles Tanner devoted the better part of his long life to the pursuit of beauty in all its forms. Renowned for his portraits of prominent citizens, sweeping historical murals, magazine illustrations, and clever “Puzzle Pictures” syndicated in newspapers across the country, the Canadian-born Tanner was a familiar figure in the American art world from the dawn of the 20th century through the outbreak of World War II. Yet his most enduring legacy may not rest on canvas, but rather in concrete, stucco, and tile.

Tanner was also an accomplished journalist, contributing art criticism and opinion pieces to *The Desert Sun* in Palm Springs. As a young man, he famously wrote to many of the great literary figures of his day, inviting them to send birthday messages to Leo Tolstoy in celebration of the Russian author’s seventy-ninth birthday. Tanner personally delivered the tributes from the likes of William J. Bryan, Clarence S. Darrow, William Lloyd Garrison and others to Count Tolstoy in Russia in 1907 – an extraordinary gesture that garnered national press coverage.

For over a decade, Tanner served as curator of the Spanish Gallery at the Mission Inn in Riverside, California, where he delivered numerous lectures on art and architecture to enthusiastic patrons. To Tanner, there was no boundary between the two disciplines. During his most prolific years—from the 1910s through the 1930s—he moved seamlessly between easel and drafting board, producing a remarkable portfolio of architectural designs across Palm Springs and Southern California. He approached every building with a painter’s sensibility, elevating his structures beyond functionality into the realm of “architecture as art.”

How Tanner became so adept at architecture remains something of a mystery. What is known is that he spent five years as a draftsman for a prominent architectural firm while attending the Art Institute of Chicago. Though the firm’s name has been lost to history, the quality of Tanner’s training is unmistakable in the confidence and sophistication of his later work.

Tanner’s earliest known architectural commission in Palm Springs was also among his finest: the Spanish Colonial-style Desert Inn complex (1922–1926), hailed nationwide for its elegance and artistry. This masterwork was followed by a series of distinguished desert homes, including *Ojo del Desierto* for oil magnate Thomas O’Donnell, *Invernada* for financier George Heigho, and *Morada La Estrella*, the Las Palmas residence of Indiana businessman John C. Snyder. At the same time, he was designing a collection of equally refined homes in the Los Feliz hills of Los Angeles.

While Spanish Colonial Revival was his primary idiom, Tanner was never confined to a single style. For pioneering film director Dorothy Arzner, he designed a striking Hollywood residence in 1930 that fused Greek and Art Deco elements. In 1935, he completed the First Community Church of Palm Springs in an imaginative “Gothic Deco” style—now recognized as a transitional work that bridged early desert architecture with the mid-century modernism that would soon define the region.

Despite the breadth and brilliance of his contributions, Tanner has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. Much remains to be uncovered about this visionary artist and designer. But even without a complete record, the enduring beauty he left behind speaks volumes—and ensures that his legacy will continue to inspire.

Partial List of Architectural Designs by William Charles Tanner

Civic and Public Works

- **1916** – Concrete bridge plan over the Santa Ana River, Santa Ana, CA
- **1916** – Pergola structure connecting downtown Riverside to the train station along both sides of 7th Street
- **1917 / 1927?** – Mission Inn float design for the National Orange Show & Tournament of Roses parade
- **1928** – Concept sketches for Old Rubidoux Bridge over the Santa Ana River, 4700 Scout Ln, Riverside, CA
- **1934–1935 (Speculative)** – Inspiration Point, Palm Springs
- **1935** – First Community Church of Palm Springs, 284 S Cahuilla Rd (Gothic-Deco style)
- **1936** – Palm Springs Field Club, later used by the California Angels for spring training

Commercial & Institutional

- **1920–1921** – Southern Sierras Power Co. expansion, Eighth Street (now University Ave), Riverside, CA
- **1922** – Riverside Community Hospital, 14th & Magnolia Ave – Construction supervised by Tanner on behalf of architect Myron Hunt
- **1922** – Balboa Yacht House (now Balboa Yacht Club), Newport Beach
- **1933** – O'Donnell Golf Shop and restroom facilities, Palm Springs
- **1933** – Briargate Lodge (Health Haven), home and resort of Dr. George Starr White, 344 W Indian School Ln, Banning, CA

Resorts & Recreational

- **1922–1927** – Desert Inn Reconstruction, Palm Springs
- **1926** – Idyllwild Golf Club / Dining Hall (Extant – Tudor / Adirondack style). 26855 Saunders Meadow Rd, Idyllwild, CA
- **1934** – *Dragon Room* cocktail lounge at the Desert Inn, Palm Springs (Mayan motif)
- **1936 (Speculative)** – Casa Cody Hotel: Winter's House Bungalow, possibly designed in conjunction with Myron Hunt

Residential (Riverside & Surroundings)

- **1921** – Residence, 6150 Hawarden Dr., Riverside, CA (First known residence designed by W. C. Tanner. Extant)
- **1921** – Donald Fullerton Residence, 3637 Mt. Rubidoux Dr., Riverside, CA
- **1922** – Residence (referred to as 'Mansion') at St. Lawrence Ave. & Old Elsinore Rd., Victoria District, Riverside
- **1922** – Residence at 169 Elmwood Court, Riverside, CA
- **1922** – Irving Residence, 6150 Hawarden Dr., Riverside

Residential (Palm Springs)

- **1922** – Mrs. Carrie Humphrey Birge Estate (widow of George K. Birge), Palm Springs, CA
- **1925** – *Ojo del Desierto* ("Eye of the Desert"), 447 W Alejo Rd – for oilman Thomas O'Donnell & Dr. Winifred Jenny
- **1925** – Carriage House / Chauffeur's Apartment for Ojo del Desierto
- **1926–1936** – O'Donnell Golf Course and properties, Palm Springs
- **1926** – O'Donnell Caretaker's Residence / Gate House / Committee of Twenty-Five. 21 W Alejo Rd
- **1930** – *Invernada*, 657 N Via Miraleste – residence of George Heigho
- **1932** – *Morada La Estrella*, 271 W Merito Pl – for John C. & Estrella Snyder (built by Alvah Hicks and likely Robert Lee Miller)
- **1934** – Charles Farrell Guest House, 796 N Via Miraleste
- **1936** – Thomas O'Donnell Golf House, 301 N Belardo Rd, Palm Springs (original entrance at 447 W Alejo Rd)
- **1936** – Dr. Winifred O'Donnell's physiotherapy office (part of O'Donnell Golf Course complex)

Residential (Los Angeles – Los Feliz)

- **1923** – Milton H. Berry Residence, 2308 Nottingham Ave. (with Wyckoff)
- **1924** – John & Evelyn Saint Residence, 2441 Glendower Ave. (with Wyckoff)
- **1924** – George Roberson Residence (later Le Vallauris Restaurant), 385 W Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs
- **1924** – William H. Peck Residence, 2580 Nottingham Ave.
- **1925** – Jordan Residence, 2243 E. Live Oak Dr.
- **1926** – William N. Elwell Residence, 2324 Nottingham Ave.
- **1926** – *Corona di Collini*, 2208 W Live Oak Dr. – 13,000 sf residence later owned by Jane Withers and Geena Davis
- **1926** – Residence at 2414 Chislehurst Dr., Spanish Colonial Revival
- **1930** – *Arzner-Morgan Villa*, 2249 Mountain Oak Dr. – designed for film director Dorothy Arzner

Other Projects

- **1919–1922** – Worker cottages for Rush Creek Hydroelectric System, June Lake, Mono County, CA
- **1927** – Rose Parade float design for the Mission Inn

APPENDIX VII

Historical Images

This selection of rare 1930s images of Morada La Estrella are all courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott.



Construction photos ca. late 1931. Top view looking northeast.
Bottom shows east façade. Note, quartet of windows.







APPENDIX VIII

Current Imagery/Details



**Looking north from front entrance.
(Author Photo. July 2023)**



**View southwest showing non original but period appropriate light fixture and window box.
(Author Photo. July 2023)**



View looking north westward from garden
(Author Photo. July 2023)



Detail of studded service door. Note carvings on lintel.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



**Tennis court pavilion, a non-contributing structure.
(Author Photo. July 2023)**



**Detail of west perimeter wall showing original gate post of original 1932 driveway.
(Author Photo. July 2023)**



View facing east showing an eave brace and French doors to master bedroom.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



View west showing variegated roofs with sawtooth board cladding.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



Wrought-iron shutter dog.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



View to the north west.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



View north to 1985 recreation room.
(Author Photo. July 2023)



View of south towards former garage through mature landscaping.
(Author Photo. July 2023)

APPENDIX IX

Grant Deed

271 Closing

DOC # 2020-0114301
03/11/2020 05:00 PM Fees: \$30.00
Page 1 of 3
Recorded in Official Records
County of Riverside
Peter Alcana
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS INFORMATION
RECORDING REQUESTED BY:

FIRST AMERICAN TITLE

AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:
AND MAIL TAX STATEMENTS TO:

Robert L. Elcholz and Steven J. Scott, Trustees
271 W Merito Place
Palm Springs CA 92262

**This document was electronically submitted
to the County of Riverside for recording**
Receipted by: MARIA VICTORIA #411

Space above this line for recorder's use only

GRANT DEED

Title of Document

TRA: 011-003

DTT: \$3,157.00

Exemption reason declared pursuant to Government Code 27388.1

- This document is a transfer that is subject to the imposition of documentary transfer tax.
- This is a document recorded in connection with a transfer that is subject to the imposition of documentary transfer tax.
Document reference: RECORDED CONCURRENT
- This document is a transfer of real property that is a residential dwelling to an owner-occupier.
- This is a document recorded in connection with a transfer of real property that is a residential dwelling to an owner-occupier.
Document reference: _____

THIS PAGE ADDED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SPACE FOR RECORDING INFORMATION
(\$3.00 Additional Recording Fee Applies)

First American Title Company

RECORDING REQUESTED BY:
The Escrow Connection

AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:

Robert L. Eicholz and Steven J. Scott,
Trustees of The Eicholz Scott Family Trust
271 W. Merito Place
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Order No. 0625-6147358
Escrow No. 43363-KK
Parcel No. 505-301-001

Tat 11003

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

GRANT DEED

THE UNDERSIGNED GRANTOR(S) DECLARE(S) THAT DOCUMENTARY TRANSFER TAX IS \$3,157.00

- computed on full value of property conveyed, or
- computed on full value less liens or encumbrances remaining at the time of sale.
- unincorporated area: City of Palm Springs, and

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged,
William Katzin, Trustee of Gemini Trust dated February 15, 2010

Hereby grants to Robert L. Eicholz and Steven Scott, Trustees of The Eicholz Scott Family Trust
dated 1/07/2012
the following described real property in the County of Riverside, State of California:

LOT 94 AND THE NORTHERLY 50 1/4 FEET OF LOT 95 OF MERITO VISTA, AS SHOWN BY MAP ON FILE IN BOOK
12 PASGE 94 OF MAPS, RECORDS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.

Date February 13, 2020

William Katzin, Trustee of Gemini Trust dated
February 15, 2010


By: William Katzin, Trustee

A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of the individual who signed the document to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

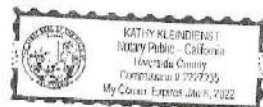
STATE OF CALIFORNIA }
COUNTY OF Riverside } S.S.

On March 9, 2020, before me, Kathy Kleindienst, notary public,
Personally appeared William Katzin, who
proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and
acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s)
on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature Kathy Kleindienst (Seal)



Mail Tax Statement to: SAME AS ABOVE or Address Noted Below

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS INFORMATION
RECORDING REQUESTED BY:

FIRST AMERICAN TITLE

AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:
AND MAIL TAX STATEMENTS TO:

Robert L. Elghyzy and Steven J Scott, Trustees
271 W Merito Place
Palm Springs CA 92262

Space above this line for recorder's use only

GRANT DEED

Title of Document

TRA: 011-903

DTT: \$3,167.00

Exemption reason declared pursuant to Government Code 27388.1

- This document is a transfer that is subject to the imposition of documentary transfer tax.
- This is a document recorded in connection with a transfer that is subject to the imposition of documentary transfer tax.
Document reference: RECORDED CONCURRENT
- This document is a transfer of real property that is a residential dwelling to an owner-occupier.
- This is a document recorded in connection with a transfer of real property that is a residential dwelling to an owner-occupier.
Document reference: _____

THIS PAGE ADDED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SPACE FOR RECORDING INFORMATION
(\$3.00 Additional Recording Fee Applies)

ACR 238 (Rev. 01/22/18)

Available in Alternative Formats

GOVERNMENT CODE 27361.7

I CERTIFY UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY THAT THIS MATERIAL IS A TRUE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL MATERIAL CONTAINED IN THE DOCUMENT:

ATTACHED FOR CLARITY:

A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of the individual who signed the document to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

State of CALIFORNIA
County of RIVERSIDE

On MARCH 9, 2020 before me, KATHY KLEINDIENST , Notary Public personally appeared WILLIAM KATZIN, who proved to me the basis of satisfactory evidence) to be the person (s) whose name (s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her their authorized capacity (ies), and that by his/her/their signature (s) on the instrument the person (s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person (s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

(seal)

Signature _____

ePN AS AGENT:

DATE: 3 / 11 / 20

CMO
Signature MONIQUE ORTEGA
Executed: RIVERSIDE, CA



**An unknown photographer unsuccessfully, but delightfully, attempting to keep out of frame while photographing the master bath at Morada La Estrella. 1930s (See page 97 for original).
(Courtesy of Mary Kummings and Steve Scott)**