



August 13, 2012

Mr. John M. Wohlmuth
City Manager, City of Palm Desert
Palm Desert Civic Center
73-510 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92260

Subj: Proposed Exterior Remodeling of the Desert Magazine Building

Dear Mr. Wohlmuth,

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation's mission extends throughout the Coachella Valley and we are proud to have about 65 Palm Desert residents among our membership.

We have asked Mr. Patrick McGrew, who meets the professional qualifications of 36 CFR Part 61, to prepare a Historic Resources Evaluation Report for the Desert Magazine Building (attached). We understand there is an ill-advised proposal to substantially modify this important historic resource.

As you know, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes California's policy to "take all action necessary to provide the people of this state with clean air and water, enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities, and freedom from excessive noise." (Public Resources Code § 21001.) To ensure all aspects of the environment are protected, CEQA requires agencies that will be approving discretionary projects to analyze a project's potentially significant environmental impacts in a negative declaration or environmental impact report. CEQA specifically finds that adverse impacts to historic resources are significant environmental impacts: "A project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment." (Public Resources Code 21084.1.)

Under CEQA, evaluation of the potential for proposed projects to impact "historical resources" is a two-step process: the first is to determine whether the property is an "historical resource" as defined in Section 15064.5(a)(3) of CEQA; and, if it is an historical resource, the second is to evaluate whether the action or project proposed by the sponsor would cause a "substantial adverse change" to the historical resource.

Even properties which are not formally listed as historic resources but are otherwise determined to be historically significant based on substantial evidence, are considered "historical resources." A report entitled "The History and Tour of Palm Desert's Historic Sites" dated April 27, 2007 describes the Desert Magazine Building as "the single most important historic site in the City of Palm Desert." This document may be found on the City's website and would be considered a list of historic resources under CEQA.

As you will read in the attachment, the Desert Magazine Building, designed by architect Harry Williams in 1948, is perhaps one of Palm Desert's most architecturally and historically important buildings. Allowing the unnecessary and arbitrary modification of this historic resource would be nothing short of a tragedy and should be avoided at all costs.

If you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance, please contact the foundation at (760) 837-7117 or info@pspreservationfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Marshall".

Ron Marshall
President

Attachments:

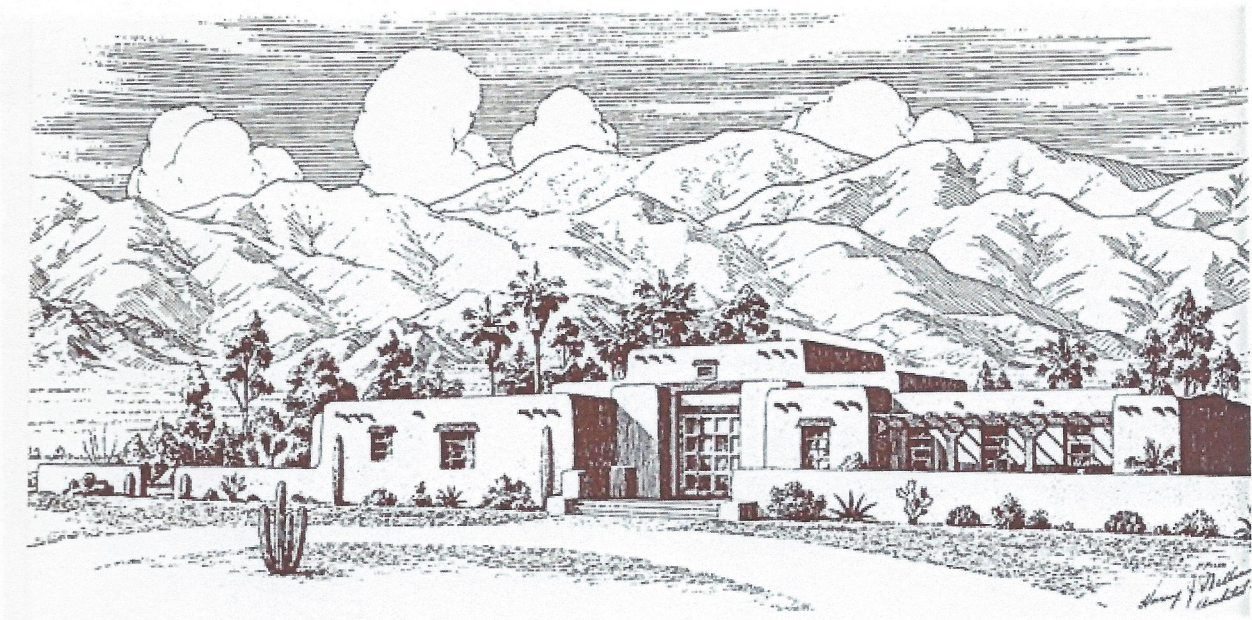
1. Historic Resources Evaluation Report for the Desert Magazine Building (74255 State Highway 111, Palm Desert) including the professional qualifications of preparer Patrick McGrew

Copy to:

City of Palm Desert, Cultural Resources Preservation Committee
Historical Society of Palm Desert
The Desert Sun

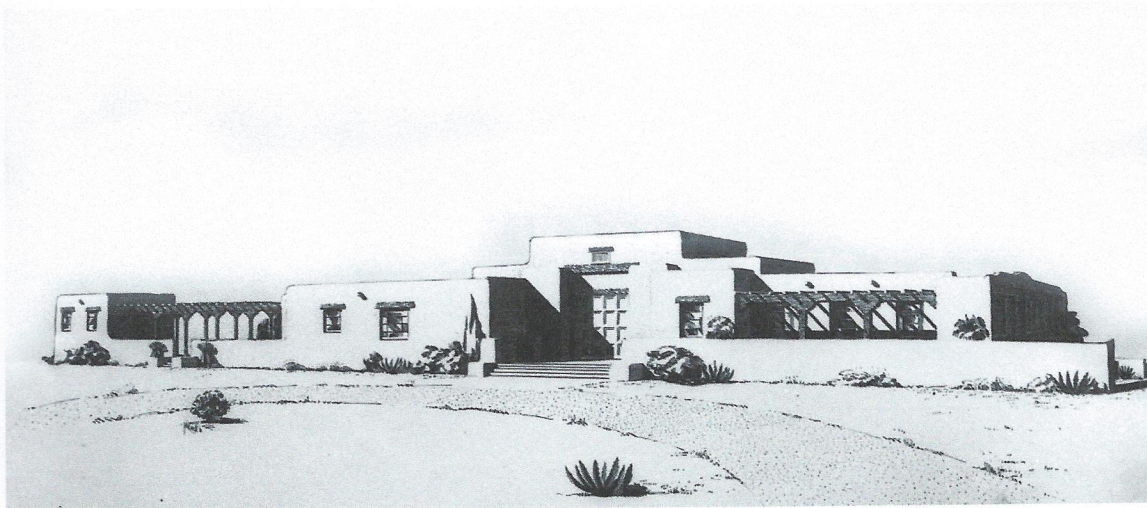
HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION REPORT

Desert Magazine Building 74255 State Highway 111 Palm Desert, California



Prepared for:
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

By Patrick McGrew
McGREW / ARCHITECTURE
674 South Grenfall Road
Palm Springs, California 92264
August 2012



Desert Magazine Building (1948, Williams, Williams & Williams, AIA)
74-225 Highway 111
Palm Desert

Introduction: The Desert Magazine Building was the first commercial building to be built on the first developed block of Palm Desert. Built for Randall Henderson, the 17,000 square-foot building housed the *Desert Magazine* and numerous other publications, along with an art gallery, gift shop and gem shop. It was also the home of the Smoketree School of Desert Art. According to Ann Japenga, the Desert Magazine building housed the Smoketree School of desert art at its greatest flowering. Although the gallery is long gone, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. It is an important and highly visible shrine to artists such as Jimmy Swinnerton, Olaf Wieghorst, Brownell McGrew, Bill Bender and many others. The Desert Magazine building was the home of the city's first printing company, bank, art gallery and post office. Later it was the location of a Bank of America branch which was Palm Desert's first bank, and later still it was the location of a restaurant. Today it anchors an office complex.

CEQA AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires all public agencies to review the environmental impacts of proposed projects that are assessed as having historic significance.¹ Even properties which are not formally listed as historic resources but are otherwise determined to be historically significant, based on substantial evidence, would also be considered "historical resources." A report entitled "The History

¹ The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Sections 21000-21178) is the foundation of environmental policy and law in the state of California. It encourages the protection of all aspects of the environment (including historic resources - Section 21084.1) by requiring agencies to prepare informational documents on the environmental effects of a proposed action before carrying out any discretionary activities. Under CEQA, evaluation of the potential for proposed projects to impact "historical resources" is a two-step process: the first is to determine whether the property is an "historical resource" as defined in Section 15064.5(a)(3) of CEQA; and, if it is an "historical resource," the second is to evaluate whether the action or project proposed by the sponsor would cause a "substantial adverse change" to the "historical resource."

and Tour of Palm Desert's Historic Sites" dated April 27, 2007 describes the Desert Magazine Building as "the single most important historic site in the City of Palm Desert." This document may be found on the City's website and would be considered a list of historic resources under CEQA.

ASSESSMENT OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE for DESERT MAGAZINE BUILDING at 74-225 HIGHWAY 111

The following is a professional assessment of the property's historic significance, and is not intended to represent a formal determination of eligibility. Such a determination would be made by the staffs of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and local registers, and has not been performed at this time.

Based upon this assessment, the Desert Magazine Building appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 (Events), 2 (Persons) and Criterion 3 (Architecture), and thus would likely be considered a historic resource for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Criterion 1: *Events*

The Desert Magazine Building is significant under this criterion as the first building to be constructed in what would become the town of Palm Desert.

Criterion 2: *Persons*

The Desert Magazine Building is significant under this criterion for its association with the founders of Palm Desert, Cliff and Randall Henderson, both notable persons in the history of Palm Desert. According to information from the Palm Desert Historical Society, they were the founding fathers of Palm Desert. "Clifford Henderson was a visionary who started monumental projects and brought them to fruition. Just as he built the Pasadena Winter Garden, the Pan-Pacific Auditorium and organized the National Air Races - he conceived an idea for a post-war community in the desert...and Palm Desert was born. Randall Henderson loved the written word and he was the editor of the popular "Desert Magazine." An expert on desert and mountain environment, he caused many people to lose their 'barren, desolate' mind-set about deserts. He was looking for a place to relocate his publishing plant from El Centro and Palm Desert became that place.

Criterion 3: *Architecture*

The Desert Magazine Building is significant under this criterion as an early and largely intact example of the Pueblo Revival Style. The style was chosen as a programmatic of Randall Henderson. In the December 1947 Desert Magazine (excerpt attached) he stated: "Pueblo design is one of the desert's most important contributions to the cultural life of the Southwest." The style is the only surviving style indigenous to North America and not based upon European models. Pueblo Revival style architecture seeks to imitate the appearance of traditional adobe construction, though more modern materials such as brick or concrete are often substituted. If adobe is not used, rounded corners, irregular parapets, and thick, battered walls are used to simulate it. Walls are usually stucco and painted in earth tones. Roofs are always flat. A common feature is the use of projecting wooden roof beams (vigas), which originally were extensions of roof beams.

The Desert Magazine Building also appears to be significant as one of two Palm Desert buildings designed by master architect Harry Williams; a brief biography of Williams is attached. Significant in his own right, Harry William's work has been somewhat overshadowed by that of his son E. Stewart Williams, one of the region's most successful modernists. The building is not widely known to be one of Williams' masterworks, but as one of the firm's early commissions, it is a design which well represents the firm's contributions to the field of Desert Modernism in the mid-twentieth century. Many early modernists such as Irving Gill and Albert Frey cite the American Pueblos with their stripped-down sensibility as having inspired their own work. The Valley's oldest Pueblo style building, Cabot's Old Indian Pueblo Museum, is only a few years older than the Desert Magazine Building; it was recently listed on the National Register.

Criterion 4: No assessment of the property was made in relation to archeological resources.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in local, state, or national historical registers, a property must possess significance and have historic integrity. The process of determining historic integrity is similar for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR), and under local regulations. The same seven variables or aspects that define integrity—location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association—are used to evaluate a resource's eligibility for listing.

According to National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, these seven characteristics are defined as follows:

The Desert Magazine Building has undergone only minor alterations since its original construction, and thus retains a high degree of integrity. It has never been moved from its location on Highway 111, and thus retains its integrity of location. As the first building in a developing town, its setting has been altered appreciably, but later development has attempted to respect the historic structure.

The building's major character-defining features—such as its form, massing, pergolas and entrance are intact. Even with the few observable minor alterations that have taken place, the building continues to convey its original design intent, architectural style, and original finishes, and therefore has integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building retains integrity of association with its original use and retains its integrity of feeling as an early Pueblo style structure.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

A proposed project involving an historical resource will be evaluated to determine if it qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 31 (CEQA Guidelines Section 15331), if the project requires the preparation of a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration, or requires the completion of an Environmental Impact Report. Normally, a project will qualify for a categorical exemption if the change or alternation is minor and if the implementation of the alteration will meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures (the Standards). The Standards provide guidance for working with historic properties and are used by Federal agencies and many local government bodies to evaluate proposed rehabilitative work on historic properties. The Standards offer four sets of standards to guide the treatment of historic properties: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. Obviously, a proposed demolition of an historic resource does not meet the Standards.

Typically one set of standards is chosen for a project based on the project scope. In the case of the Desert Magazine Building, the Standards for Rehabilitation are the most applicable:

- 1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.*
- 2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
- 3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.*
- 4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*
- 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*
- 6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*
- 7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.*
- 8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

Any proposed project for altering the Desert Magazine Building should strive to meet the Standards for Rehabilitation, with special attention paid to Standards 2, 5, and 9. As currently designed, the proposed project at the Desert Magazine Building which requires the demolition of the building's façade does not comply with the Standards for Rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The Desert Magazine Building was constructed for Desert Magazine in 1948 by architect Harry Williams. Based upon the data contained in this preliminary assessment, the building appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 (Events) - the founding of Palm Desert; Criterion 2 (Persons) - having been built and occupied by the founding family of Palm Desert; and Criterion 3 (Architecture) as a significant example of Pueblo Revival Architecture and as the work of the prominent Palm Springs, California architectural firm of Williams, Williams, & Williams, AIA. As such, the Desert Magazine Building would likely be considered a historic resource for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As designed, the proposed project at the Desert Magazine Building which requires the removal of the principal facade of the building does not comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and would result in a substantial and unmitigated negative environmental impact.

Biography of Harry Williams (1909-1966)

Harry Williams and Harry I. Schenck were partners in the firm of Schenck and Williams, an architectural firm in Dayton, Ohio. Both were 1903 Cornell University graduates and members of the American Institute of Architects. In Dayton they produced a number of historically significant buildings, including: the Schwind Building (1914); Wright Brothers Residence/"Hawthorne Hill" (1914); the Engineers Club of Dayton (1916); the Mutual Home Savings (1931) and the NCR Building (1938). After the dissolution of the firm and Williams' relocation to Palm Springs, he is credited with the Carnell Building (1934); La Plaza Shopping Center (1936); and the Desert Magazine Building (1948).

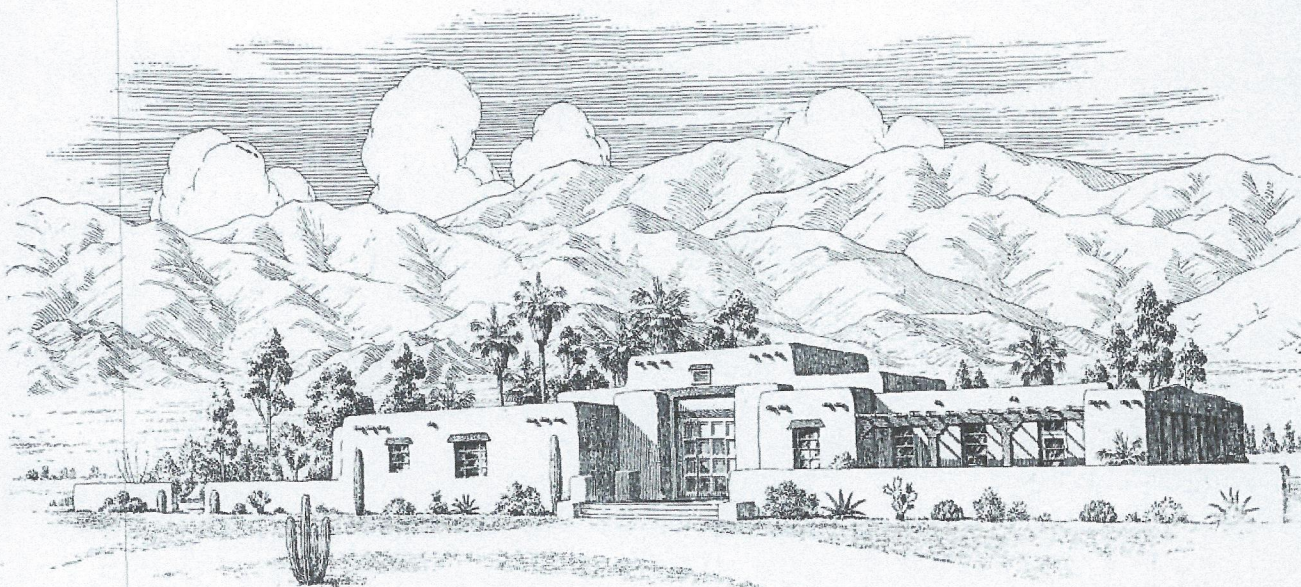
By 1933, the Great Depression had swept across America, bringing with it major change. The Williams family's affluent lifestyle was not spared. Architectural commissions evaporated. Schenk and Williams' once thriving firm was reduced to just two partners scrounging for whatever work they could find. Their client, Julia Carnell, the wife of a vice-president of the National Cash Register Company, commissioned a commercial building in Palm Springs. Soon thereafter Williams was commissioned by Carnell to design The Plaza Shopping Center, now Palm Springs Class 1 Site No. 22, on Palm Canyon Drive, completed in 1936. It was a mixed-use project combining retail/office and residential components - a novel concept at the time. It was Williams's first significant commission in almost 8 years after suffering the collapse of Schenk and Williams. In 1942, Harry Williams moved to Palm Springs and semi-retirement in a climate that would help alleviate his wife's debilitating arthritis. Williams' two sons Roger and Stewart joined him in Palm Springs and the firm that became Williams, Williams and Williams, Architects AIA, in 1946.

Historic Preservation Evaluation Qualifications

Professional Qualifications Standards: The Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61 defines the minimum education and experience required to perform historic preservation identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities. The minimum professional qualifications in architecture are a professional degree in architecture plus at least two years full-time experience in architecture; or a State license to practice architecture.

Patrick McGrew received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Oklahoma in 1965. He has been actively engaged in the architectural profession, specializing in historic preservation, since then. McGrew has been a licensed architect in the State of California since 1970, as well as a holder of the NCARB (national licensing) certificate. He possesses an in-depth knowledge of all procedures and standards utilized in the identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment of historic properties as evidenced by his lengthy career known for the depth and breadth of accumulated architectural/historical knowledge. He places a high value on the objectivity and completeness of his written works. He has twenty-five years' experience in research, writing, practicing and teaching architecture with academic and historical agencies and institutions. He has made a substantial contribution through research and publication of a body of scholarly knowledge in the field of California architectural history. His experience has included the preparation of numerous historic research reports, National Register nominations, and San Francisco and Palm Springs Landmark nominations, as well as the preparation of plans and specifications for architectural preservation projects.

Patrick McGrew's knowledge and reputation in the field of historic preservation provided the basis his public service as the long-time President of San Francisco's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. His impressive list of publications on California's historic architecture is a testament to his proficiency as a leading expert in California architectural history. He is a member of the Society of Architectural Historians, and has received many awards for his work during a distinguished career. In 1995, his book *The Historic Houses of Presidio Terrace*, received an award of honor from the California Heritage Council. Former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown declared November 30, 2003 as 'Patrick McGrew Day' in San Francisco, and a Commendation from the United States Senate was presented in recognition of McGrew's 'distinguished career and outstanding contributions to the City of San Francisco.' Patrick McGrew now lives and works in Palm Springs, California. McGrew serves on the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board, is the Chairman of the Architecture and Design Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum and also serves on the Board of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. McGrew is also a contributing writer on Coachella Valley Architecture for the Artbound Project of Public Television Station KCET in Los Angeles.



Norton Allen drew this sketch of the new Desert Magazine publishing plant from plans prepared by Architect Harry J. Williams. Santa Rosa mountains are in the background.

For Desert a New Home!

AFTER more than two years of preliminary planning, construction was started in November on a building to house the main offices and printing plant of the Desert Magazine at the townsite of Palm Desert in the Coachella valley of California.

With approximately 17,000 square feet of floor space, the new structure will provide for the editorial and business offices of the magazine, book shop, both letterpress and offset printing facilities, bindery, photographic department, and a 30x60 foot lobby-museum of regional exhibits.

Architecturally, the building will follow a modified pattern of the Southwest's Indian-Pueblo design. This pattern had its origin in the cliff dwellings of the Southwest and has gone through successive modifications by Spaniards, Mexicans and Anglo-Americans during the 408 years since Coronado's con-

quest. Pueblo design is one of the desert's most important contributions to the cultural life of the Southwest. Harry J. Williams of Palm Springs is architect for the project.

The building is being erected on a 20-acre site along Highway 111, mid-way between Indio and Palm Springs—12 miles from each of these communities. The site, near the junction of 111 with Pines-to-Palms highway, is in the newly developed Palm Desert community adjacent to Coachella valley's date gardens, in a 2000-acre cove at the base of the Santa Rosa mountains. A new postoffice was opened at Palm Desert last July, and 1620 acres of the cove are now in process of subdivision by the Palm Desert corporation.

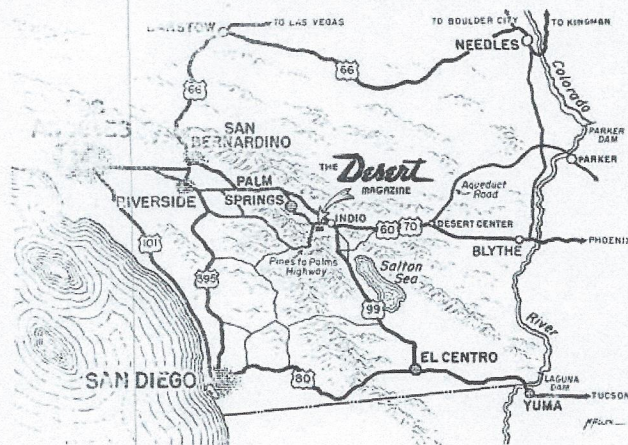
The construction contract, let to the R. P. Shea company of Indio, includes the erection of a lodge for the housing of part of Desert's editorial, business and mechanical staff. Additional housing is to be provided later, the plan being to establish homes and recreational facilities on the 20-acre site for the entire organization.

Adjoining the Desert Magazine tract is another 20 acres reserved by the publisher for a community to be devoted exclusively to the arts and handicrafts. The plans provide for studios and craft shops—and housing for the artists and craftsmen. This project is not to be launched until members of the staff move to the new location in 1948.

The Palm Desert plant of the magazine is to be equipped entirely with new printing machinery. The present printing plant in El Centro does a large volume of commercial printing in addition to its work on the magazine, and will be continued in operation at the Imperial county seat where it is now located. Desert's new plant also will be equipped for a general printing business, with publication work as a specialty.

Need for larger quarters for Desert was recognized by the publishers five years ago. The circulation had climbed steadily since the publication was launched in 1937, and lack of space and adequate presses made it necessary to make up the type

Located at Palm Desert, the new publishing plant will be directly accessible from all main highway of the Southwest.



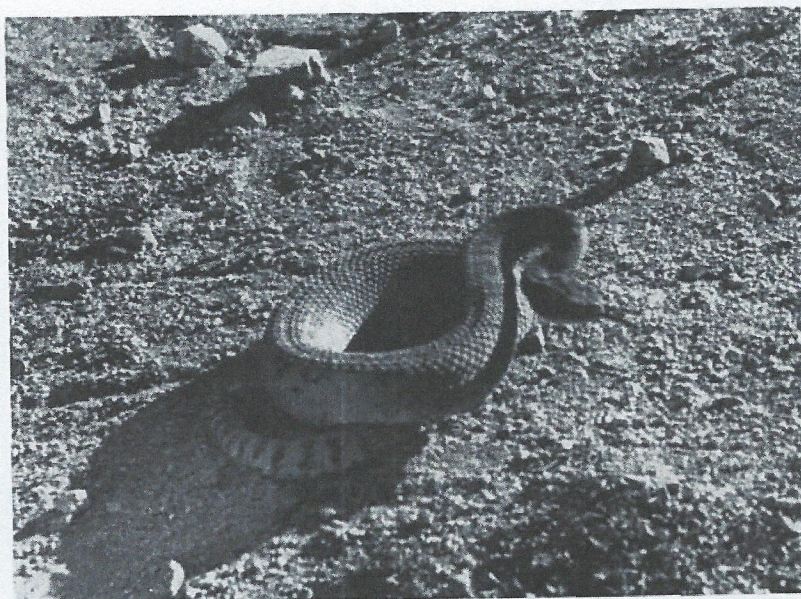
pages in El Centro and take them to Los Angeles for press and bindery work.

Immediately after his return from service in World War II, Randall Henderson of the publishing staff began looking for a larger site where magazine presses could be installed. Since magazine publishing is largely a mail order business, it was decided to establish the new plant out on the desert beyond the limits of any municipality where there would be ample room for expansion, and where housing could be provided for members of the organization.

The 2000-acre cove at the base of Santa Rosa mountains, then entirely vacant, appeared to offer the ideal solution. Not only would plenty of space be available, but the location would give Desert's staff more direct access to Highways 60, 66, 70, 80 and 99, which are the main east-west thoroughfares of southwestern desert travel. The site also would be more accessible for the thousands of visitors from all over the United States who come to the magazine offices annually—readers, hobbyists, artists, writers, photographers, and the traveling public.

Following the selection of the site, a group of developers headed by Cliff Henderson, brother of Desert's editor, sensing that the establishment of Desert Magazine with its affiliated enterprises in the Santa Rosa mountain cove would invite widespread interest on the part of cultural groups, purchased 1620 acres of the adjacent desert and made plans for a model town. Water mains were laid, streets surfaced, and the new postoffice of Palm Desert was established. Scores of new homes and business buildings are now under construction there. While the new town is still in its pioneering stage, the original townsite designed by Landscape Architect Tommy Tomson of Pacific Palisades, providing wide streets, ample parking areas, church, civic center and school sites, insures an attractive community setting for Desert's new home. The beauty of the setting is further enhanced by the high type of business and residential improvements and the colorful landscaping in progress for several years under the management of Christopher Hendra and his associates at the Palm Village community across the road from Desert's project, and by the scenic drive along Highway 111 through the date gardens and vineyards and grapefruit groves between Indio and Palm Desert.

Over-shadowing this modern desert community the rugged 8000-foot peaks of the Santa Rosa range serve as friendly although not easily accessible guardians whose natural beauty has been little disturbed since those pre-historic days when they watched over the home of the ancient Cahuilla.



TRUE OR FALSE

Probably no denizen of the desert is the victim of more false propaganda than the rattlesnake. Much of the common hearsay pertaining to the rattler is pure fiction. Here are 20 questions designed to separate the facts from the popular myths. The answers given—whether you believe them or not—are backed by scientific opinion. Ten correct answers is an average score, 11 to 14 is a good score, 15 to 18 is superior, and if you do better than that you may go to the head of the class. Answers are on page 35.

- 1—A rattlesnake's age may be judged by the number of buttons in its tail—one for each year. True..... False.....
- 2—Hospitals and laboratories will buy rattlesnake venom for medical purposes. True..... False.....
- 3—A rattlesnake sheds its skin once a year. True..... False.....
- 4—The fangs of a rattler are on the end of its tongue. True..... False.....
- 5—In summertime desert rattlers may be seen sunning themselves on the rocks under the midday sun. True..... False.....
- 6—A rattlesnake has a backbone. True..... False.....
- 7—Certain non-venomous species of bullsnake will coil and strike in the same manner, as a rattler. True..... False.....
- 8—A rattler may always be identified by the diamond-shaped pattern of its skin. True..... False.....
- 9—Potassium permanganate is the best treatment for rattlesnake bite. True..... False.....
- 10—A rattlesnake will not cross a horse-hair rope on the ground. True..... False.....
- 11—A rattler can coil and strike only when its body is resting on the ground or other plane surface. True..... False.....
- 12—Rattlers have been known to suck milk from the udder of a cow. True..... False.....
- 13—The roadrunner bird has been known to kill rattlesnakes. True..... False.....
- 14—Rattlers and other snakes sometimes swallow their young to protect them. True..... False.....
- 15—All venomous snakes in North America have fangs. True..... False.....
- 16—The first rule, if bitten by a rattler, is to run for help. True..... False.....
- 17—In case of snake bite it is important to apply a tourniquet between the bite and the heart. True..... False.....
- 18—A second important step is to sterilize and make an incision at the wound. True..... False.....
- 19—Most effective treatment is to extract the poison by suction. True..... False.....
- 20—All venomous snakes have diamond-shaped heads. True..... False.....