

The Dr. Franz Alexander Residence

1011 West Cielo Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

**Nomination Application
for City of Palm Springs
Class 1 Historic Resource**



Prepared by
Steve Vaught
for the
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
June 2020

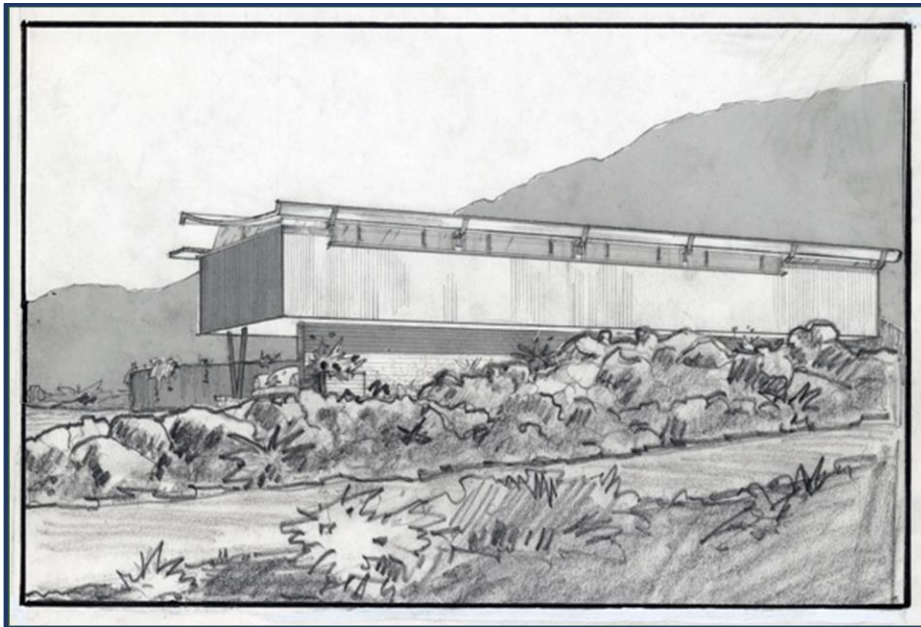
Acknowledgements

The author gratefully wishes to thank the following individuals/organizations for their professional expertise and/or editing assistance:

Barbara and Ron Marshall; Nicholas Pepper; Gary Johns; Tracy Conrad; Julia Larson of the Art, Architecture and Design Museum, University of California Santa Barbara; Steven Keylon; Steven Price; Ketchum Photography; Kip Serafin; Orange Coast Title Company of Southern California; Jackie Linares, Palm Springs Department of Building & Safety; Ron DUBY; and Renee Brown of the Palm Springs Historical Society

A special debt of gratitude is owed to Volker M. Welter of the University of California Santa Barbara for his scholarship on Walter S. White; and to Barbara Lamprecht, architect, whose exceptional work on the Dr. Franz Alexander Residence's National Register application formed the backbone of this nomination.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this nomination to Ilonka Venier Alexander, granddaughter of Dr. Franz and Anita Venier Alexander, who has given so generously of her memories, insights and photographs.



Front cover: Dr. Franz Alexander Residence.
(Courtesy of Ketchum Photography)

Above: Pencil sketch by Walter S. White of the Alexander Residence, which was built largely as shown.

(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum; University of California, Santa Barbara)

THE DR. FRANZ ALEXANDER RESIDENCE

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 September of 2019, the PSPF board of directors assigned the task of writing the Dr. Franz Alexander Residence’s Class 1 Historic Resource nomination to Steve Vaught.

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



**View looking to the north showing the extensive use of glass in the
Dr. Franz Alexander Residence.
(Courtesy of Ketchum Photography)**

Prepared by Steve Vaught on behalf of:
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195
Palm Springs, CA 92264
760-837-7117
info@pspreservationfoundation.org

Executive Summary

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Dr. Franz Alexander Residence (hereinafter referred to as the “Alexander Residence”) is located at 1011 West Cielo Drive in the Little Tuscany neighborhood of Palm Springs. Completed in 1956, the home was designed as a desert retreat for internationally renowned psychoanalyst Dr. Franz Alexander and his wife, artist Anita Venier Alexander. The home’s unique and innovative design was the work of Palm Desert-based modernist Walter S. White. The builder was Rooth & Carr with structural engineering done by Stanley E. Malora of Los Angeles. The Alexander Residence is an important example of a custom modernist home inspired by and adapted to the terrain and environment of Palm Springs. Overall, it exhibits numerous stylistic features that place it within the historic context of the period “Post World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)” as defined in the Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings created by Historic Resources Group. This is a period that has come to be known as the heyday of “Palm Springs Modernism,” when a group of talented architects and designers, many locally based such as White, created “what many consider the largest and finest concentration of mid-20th century Modern architecture in the United States.”

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

The Alexander Residence is listed as being eligible for Class 1 Historic Resource designation by the *Citywide Historic Resource Inventory*. It had previously been evaluated during the 1980s Riverside County Historic Resources Survey, as well as the 2001 and 2004 Palm Springs Historic Resources Surveys. On March 22, 2016, the Alexander Residence was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

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 or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” of potentially historic resources for further information.

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

8.05.070 C.1.a (paragraph ii) - **Persons:** This criterion recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contributions to national, state or local history. In this nomination, the Alexander Residence is associated with Dr. Franz Alexander (1891-1964), Hungarian-American psychoanalyst and physician, considered to be “the father of American psychoanalysis.” Among his many milestones could be counted his pioneering work in psychoanalytic criminology and psychosomatic medicine, as one of the first to link the emotional state with physical ailments. In terms of both fame and influence, Alexander was second only to Freud. The Alexander Residence is associated with Dr. Franz Alexander, a person who had influence in national history. Therefore, the Alexander Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 2.

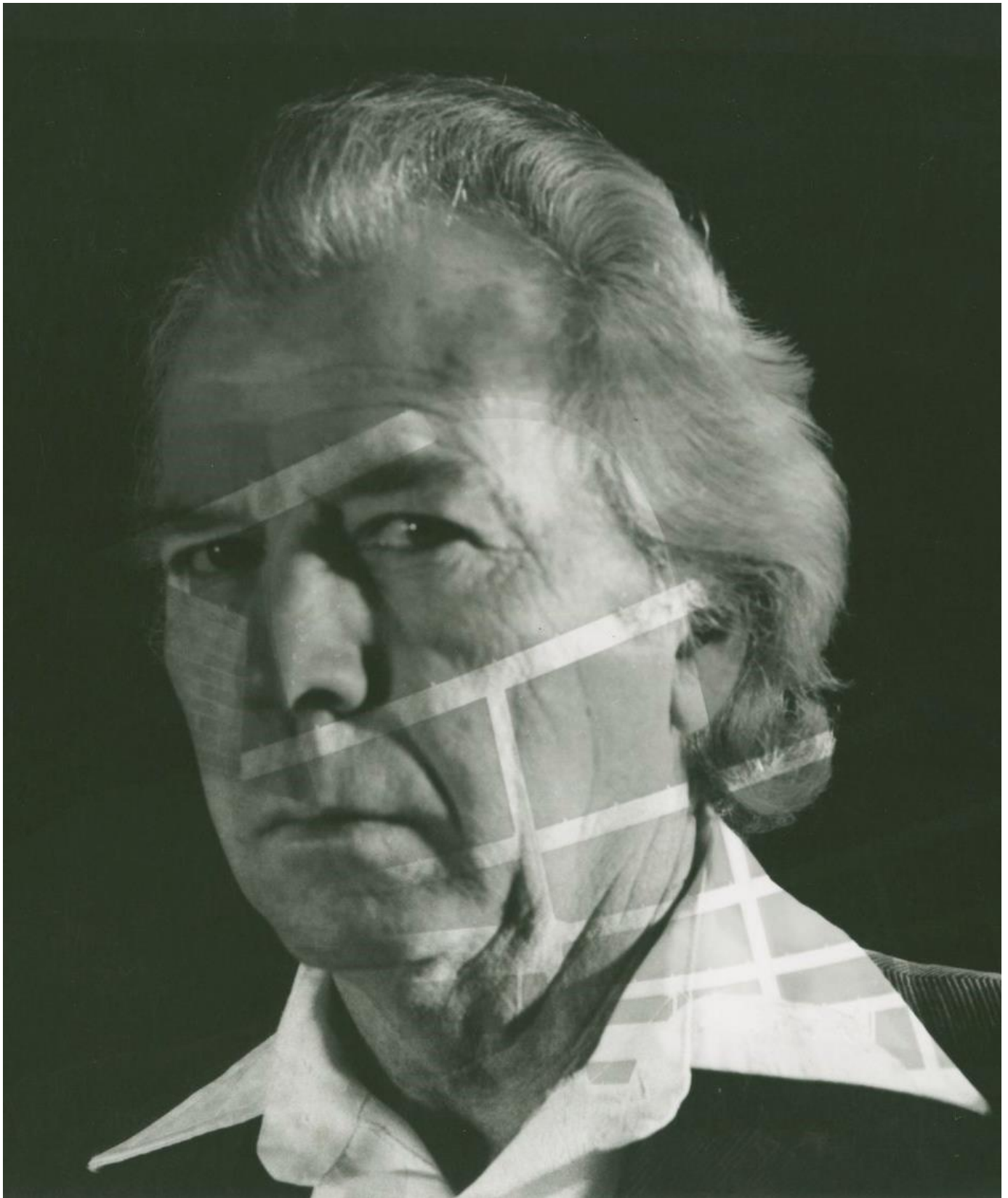
8.05.070 C.1.a (paragraph iii) – **Exemplification of Period:** This criterion recognizes resources that reflect or exemplify a particular period of national, state or local history. The Alexander Residence qualifies under this criterion as a noteworthy example of the type of structure, both in spirit and in style, created during the period after World War II when Palm Springs became renowned for the quality and variety of its modern architecture. The Alexander Residence possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the Modern style as adapted to the climate and topography of Palm Springs. Therefore, the Alexander Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 3.

8.05.070 C.1.a (paragraph iv) - **Construction:** This criterion recognizes resources which embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. The Alexander Residence is eligible under this criterion for the unique and innovative construction methods employed by Walter S. White, particularly the V-bent steel frame “skeleton,” which makes up the structural support system, as well as the unique cambered roof, which appears to lift off from the structure’s southern façade. Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics and method of construction, the Alexander Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 4.

8.05.070 C.1.a (paragraph v) - **Design:** This criterion recognizes resources that are the work of a master builder, designer, artist or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or possessed high artistic value. The Alexander Residence exhibits distinctive features associated with Modern architecture in both the materials used and its design, which is dominated by its dramatic cambered roof, extensive use of glass and natural materials such as redwood and Mexican Driftwood. As a custom residence skillfully designed by Walter S. White, it rises to the level of work by master architects with high artistic values. Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master designer, and for its high artistic values, the Alexander Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.

SUMMARY:

This evaluation finds the Alexander Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 C.1.a paragraphs ii, iii, iv and v of the local ordinance’s seven criteria. Additionally, the Alexander Residence retains a “high degree” of integrity (see Section 7, “Integrity Analysis”).



Walter S. White, Jr. (1917-2002)
The steel framing of the Alexander Residence has been superimposed over his portrait.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara.)



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 Class 1 or Class 2 historic designation for a property or parcel or for historic district applications.

Use the MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION FORM (MAA) if you are seeking approval for alterations to Class 1, Class 2, Class 3 or Class 4 historic sites. (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 resource designation. 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.

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*. Visit: www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation").
2. For proposed historic districts: Refer to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 for *Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts*. Visit: www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05 "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. Once the application is complete, contact the Planning Department and schedule a pre-application conference with the City's Historic Preservation Officer ("HPO").
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 staff in the City Planning Department 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 CHECKLIST FOR CLASS 1 AND 2.
FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT APPLICATIONS, SEE CHECKLIST FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262
Tel 760-323-8245 – FAX 760-322-8360

| |
|---------------------------|
| <i>For Staff Use Only</i> |
| Case Number: _____ |
| In-Take Planner: _____ |
| Date: _____ |

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION PLANNING / ZONING GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

TO THE APPLICANT: Complete all parts of this application. Denote "NA" for lines that are not applicable.

Project Information:

Applicant's Name: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Applicant's Address: 1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195, Palm Springs, CA 92264

Site Address: 1011 West Cielo Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262 APN: 504-201-024

Phone #: 760-837-7117 Email: info@pspreservationfoundation.org

Zone: _____ GP: _____ Section/Township/Range: _____/_____/_____

Description of project:

Completed in 1956, the Dr. Franz Alexander Residence is an outstanding example of a custom-designed Mid-century Modern home built specifically for desert living. It was designed by talented Palm Desert designer Walter S. White for famed psychoanalyst Dr. Franz Alexander and is known for its innovative steel framing and unique cambered roof, which appears to peel back and open the house to the sky.

Note: For Historic District applications: on a separate page provide a list of all sites/parcels within the proposed historic district boundaries with the same information listed above.

Is the project located on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation? Yes/No: _____
(Refer to the Land Status Map under Tribal Resources on the Planning Department home page)

Construction Date: 1956 Estimated Actual (denote source: building permits, newspaper)

Architect: Walter S. White Jr. (Designer)

Original Owner: Dr. Franz Alexander

Common/Historic Name of Property: Dr. Franz Alexander Residence

Other historic associations: _____

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: Mid-century Modern

Refer to the Architectural Styles chapter of Citywide Historic Context Statement, under Historic Resources on the Planning Department Home Page: www.palmspringsca.gov.

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION APPLICATION (CONT.)

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 or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" of potentially historic resources for further information.

Provide a written description of how the site qualifies as a historic resource per the following Findings. Please provide answers on a separate sheet or report.

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

- a. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. 1
- b. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- c. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- d. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- e. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possess high artistic value.
- f. 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.

FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Provide a written description for each element as listed: Design; Materials; Workmanship; Location; Setting; Feeling; and Association. 2

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 2 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 2 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided the site, structure, building, or object exhibits significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed in Finding 1 above. A Class 2 historic resource is not required to meet the findings for integrity as described in Finding 2.

Criteria and Findings for Designation of Historic Districts:

In addition to the criteria listed in Finding 1, to be considered for designation as a Historic District, a defined area must:

- a. Contain contributing resources on a majority of the sites within the proposed district which individually meet the criteria in Finding 1. The defined area may include other structures, buildings, or archaeological sites which contribute generally to the overall distinctive character of the area and are related historically or visually by plan or physical development. *Provide a separate list by address and Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for each site/parcel that meets the criteria outlined in Finding 1.*
- b. Identify non-contributing properties or vacant parcels to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries. *Provide a separate list by address and APN number for each site/parcel within the proposed historic district that is considered non-contributing to the overall historic significance of the historic district.*

1 NOTE: Unlike the National Trust criteria, the City's criterion does not consider "patterns of events". For consideration of "patterns of events", use Criterion "C", reflecting a particular period.

2 NOTE: Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bulletin for "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property".

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING DEPARTMENT APPLICATION
HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION**

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2

APPLICANT'S REQUIRED MATERIAL CHECKLIST

The following items must be submitted before a **Historic Resource Designation** application will be accepted. Please check off each item to assure completeness. Provide twelve (12) hard copies and one (1) PDF copy of the following materials unless otherwise noted:

| | Applicant Only | City Use Only |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Application Information: | | |
| • General Information form (1 copy) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Notarized letter from property owner consenting to Historic Designation (1 copy) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Ownership and Address History ("Chain of Title") (1 copy) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic Resource Report: | | |
| The following items shall be included in a historic resources report describing the site, structure, buildings, or objects eligible and appropriate for designation per PSMC 8.05.070. | | |
| • Photographs of the exterior of the proposed site, structure, buildings or objects. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Aerial photo of the site/resource (from Google Maps or equal). | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Information on the architect, designer, and/or developer. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Date and method of construction. Provide copies of building permits. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • A detailed assessment of the character defining features describing materials, architectural details/style, landscape elements, or other relevant descriptors. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Evaluation of the site relative to the Criteria and Findings for Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Additional Information: | | |
| • Site Plan: 8-12" x 11" or 11" x 17" | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Public Hearing labels per PSZC Section 94.09.00. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Any other documentation or research as may be necessary to determine the qualifications of the site, structure, building, or objects. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

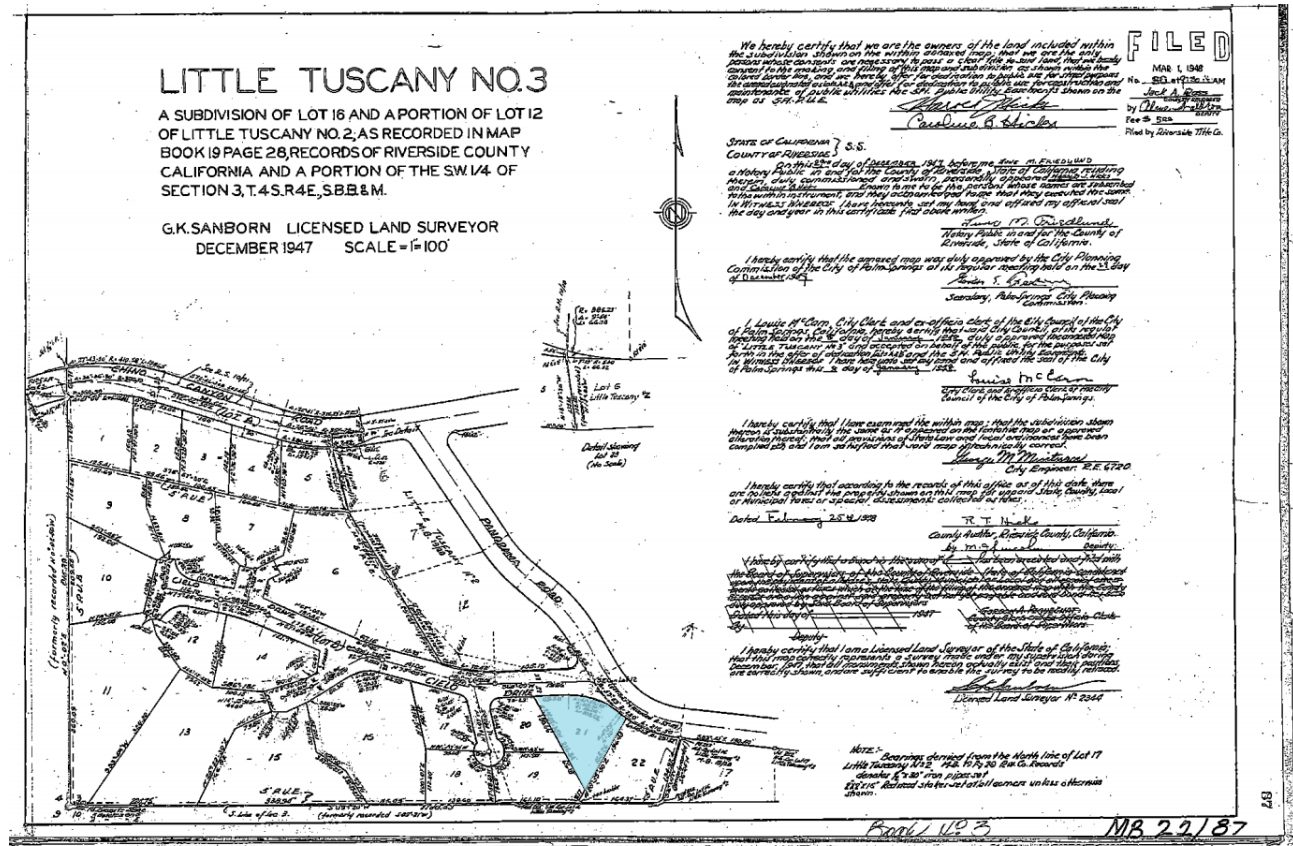
Applicants are encouraged to review the bulletin from the U.S. Department of the Interior titled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation". (National Register Bulletin 15 (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>)).

Statement of Significance

Summary

Completed in 1956, the Alexander Residence is located at 1011 West Cielo Drive in the historic Little Tuscany tract of Palm Springs.

The legal description per the Riverside County Assessor is LOT 21 MB 022/087 LITTLE TUSCANY 3. The "3" is in reference to the different phases of development for the tract. The original Little Tuscany (1) opened in June 1936, with Little Tuscany 2 following in April 1937. Little Tuscany 3 is actually carved out of a portion of Little Tuscany 2, which was made its own tract and opened for subdivision in December 1947.



The tract map for Little Tuscany No. 3, December 1947, as shown in the City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context and Survey Findings. The pie-shaped Alexander lot is shown in blue.

First Owners, Dr. Franz Alexander and Anita Venier Alexander



DEEP WELL INN—Deep Well owners Mr. and Mrs. Yoland D. Markson entertain personalities of international fame at their charming dining room. Left to right, they are Markson, Mrs. Franz Alexander; Dr. Alexander, Viennese psychoanalyst, Mrs. Sam Engel, Mr. Engel, Twentieth-Century-Fox producer; Mrs. Markson and Mrs. Ray Lee of Hollywood.

In this 1956 image from the *Desert Sun*, Dr. Franz and Anita Alexander are seen celebrating New Year's at the Deep Well Guest Ranch with the inn's owners, Mr. and Mrs. Yoland D. Markson.

A towering figure in the world of psychiatry and psychoanalytics, Dr. Franz Alexander (1891-1964) is considered one of the world's most influential authorities on psychosomatic disorder - the correlation between one's emotional state and how it can create particular psychosomatic illnesses. Born in Budapest in 1891, Alexander studied medicine and became a physician. However, he was most intrigued by the newly-developing field of psychiatry and in 1919 he left Hungary for Berlin where he became the first student enrolled at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute.

Alexander's groundbreaking research on the psychoanalytics of criminal behavior drew international attention and in 1930 he was invited to the United States to become the first Visiting Professor of Psychoanalysis, at the University of Chicago. Two years later, he founded the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis, which he headed until 1955 and which became a highly influential training ground for many who would go on to distinguished careers in the profession. In 1955, Alexander left Chicago for the West Coast, having accepted a lucrative offer from Mount Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles to head their newly opened psychiatric division.

In Southern California, Alexander became something of a celebrity among the elite of Hollywood and he was entertained by the likes of Charlie Chaplin and director King Vidor. Some became clients as well including Steve Allen and Danny Kaye. According to his granddaughter Ilonka Venier Alexander, her grandfather claimed to have also had Al Capone and Marilyn Monroe on his psychiatric couch (see full Alexander biography in Appendix VI).

Alexander Residence Construction



Anita Venier Alexander “supervising” construction of the Alexander Residence, 1956.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara)

Although it is Franz Alexander whose name is attached to the house, credit for its construction and design is most likely owed to his wife Anita Venier Alexander (1895-1984). A noted and award-winning artist in her own right, Anita, or “Annie,” as her husband called her, was fiercely independent with a strong creative bent and not afraid to make such major decisions as building a house for the couple on her own.

Anita had already proven this with her entirely unilateral purchase of two cliffside lots above the beach in La Jolla in 1933 during the family’s first California vacation. Anita had purchased the lots after being struck by how much the area reminded her of her native Italy. The family was not consulted or even informed of the transaction until they were ensconced back in Chicago. At that point, Anita announced she was returning to the coast to supervise the home’s construction, which was to be designed by a young architect she had found there named Cliff May. Completed in 1934, the house became a beloved, if not unexpected, family retreat for the next twenty years.

Alexander’s granddaughter Ilonka believes it was again Anita who was solely behind the Palm Springs residence telling architect Barbara Lamprecht in a 2015 interview, “My grandfather would have been far too busy with his work.” Ilonka also notes that it was Anita’s worsening arthritic condition that had caused the couple to make the move in the first place, forgoing the wet climate of La Jolla for the more salubrious dry desert air of Palm Springs. Her husband appears to have trusted his wife’s instincts on all fronts

and happily supported the project. It would, after all, be more hers than his, as he had to spend the weekdays in Los Angeles to be close to Mt. Sinai Hospital.

And it is believed that Anita was the one who selected Walter S. White for the project. How she came to find him is a mystery, but it was a bold, even somewhat daring choice as White was not that widely known and not yet even a licensed architect. Yet, as she had with a young Cliff May two decades earlier, Anita saw something special in White and engaged him for the job.

The Designer – Walter S. White, Jr.

By the time he began work on the Alexander Residence at the end of 1955, Walter S. White, Jr. (1917-2002) was 38 years old and had been working as an architectural designer in the Coachella Valley for around a half-dozen years. Having established an office in the newly developing city of Palm Desert in 1948, White designed some of the community's earliest homes. Quickly, he gained a reputation for his unique and unconventional approach to design and construction. White charted his own course throughout his career and was never afraid to experiment with new concepts and forms. And, although he was greatly inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, he was not content to merely copy him or blindly follow his lead. In this, White held much in common with his client Dr. Alexander who had a similar relationship with Sigmund Freud. And, on occasion, they each faced resistance for their independence from the more traditional thinkers in their respective professions.

Both Alexander and White spent their careers in the pursuit of improving the human condition. For Alexander it was mental. For White it was environmental. He held a lifelong passion for developing ways to create high-quality affordable housing using natural, locally available materials, produced at as low a cost as possible.

Early on, White demonstrated a deep sensitivity to the environment on which his structures were built, not only on how they physically related, but also their suitability to the surrounding climate. The Alexanders shared White's vision and appear to have granted him wide leeway in bringing his innovative ideas for an ideal desert home to fruition (see full White biography in Appendix VII).

Design and Construction

On November 11, 1955, a building permit from the City of Palm Springs was issued for the construction of a single-family residence at 1011 West Cielo Drive. The home was defined as being two-stories with 1,656 square feet of living space on the upper level with a 430 square foot workshop/studio on the lower level. The owner was listed as Franz Alexander with Walter S. White as designer and Rooth & Carr Construction Company (R. Paul Rooth & Tom Carr) as the general contractors. White had worked previously with Rooth & Carr on projects in Palm Desert including one of the Sun Lodges he designed for the Palm Desert Company in 1953. Although Riverside based, the contractors had opened a branch office in Palm Desert during this period. Not included on the permit, but an important figure in the home's construction was Stanley E. Malora

of Los Angeles, who was engaged to serve as structural engineer. White was well versed in engineering, having worked for several prominent firms in Los Angeles during the 1940s, but did not hold an official degree. As such, Malora's expertise was both desired and required.



The newly-completed Alexander Residence, 1956.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara)

White's first task was the placement of the house upon its site, which involved certain challenges, not the least being the composition of the difficult terrain. The Little Tuscany tracts had been created out of land made up almost exclusively of an alluvial fan of rocky debris stretching out from Mount San Jacinto, which loomed above on the west. The lot was large, but irregular in shape, forming roughly an inverted triangle, with the base running parallel with Cielo Drive on the north and the legs tapering southward at angles until they connected.

The sloping topography was covered in its entirety with rocks, which ranged from small pebbles to enormous boulders. While some might consider this a major drawback, the stark, almost lunar-like landscape appealed to both the Alexanders and White. Additional challenges to be addressed were the windiness of the area and, naturally, the desert's extremes of heat and cold. Outweighing all the potential drawbacks, however, was the breathtaking "100-mile view" the site afforded southward across the entire Coachella Valley and mountains beyond. White, known for his emphasis on placing a structure in just the right way to fit its environment, would make the stunning view the focal point of his design.

Interestingly, White already had something of a leg-up when it came to dealing with the issues surrounding Little Tuscany's topography. In 1952, he had been engaged to design a unique desert retreat of similar scope only a few lots down the road at 707 West Panorama Road. While the house, which has been designated the Miles C. Bates House No. 1, would have been a spectacular addition to Desert Modernism, was not ultimately built, the lessons learned in its planning gave White a unique insight into how to approach the design and construction of the Alexander Residence just to the west.

The Alexanders had loved their Cliff May Spanish hacienda, but they were definitely looking for a dramatic change in style for their new desert home. Yet, there was much in common between the designs when it came to the use of simple, local materials, an emphasis on indoor-outdoor living, lack of superfluous adornment, and an orientation towards a spectacular view.

For the Alexanders, White created what at first glance appeared to be a simple rectangular "box" placed on steel stilts. This, however, proves to be highly deceptive as, upon closer examination, the design reveals itself to be far more complex and intriguing from virtually every aspect from footings to roof. The illusion of a simple, even humble, structure was doubtless the designer's intention. The home's setting and view was so spectacular it would be inappropriate to try and upstage it with something too visibly distracting. Yet, White did not attempt to hide the house either. Rather, he positioned it in such a way on the downward sloping lot so that it originally appeared to emerge from the higher elevation on the west and "float" above the boulder-strewn lot as it descended eastward. It was a bold statement by White honoring the natural beauty of the topography by touching upon it as lightly as possible.

Some disturbances to the site were unavoidable, but aside from having to dig out space for the swimming pool and its surrounding terrace, as little as possible was done to the natural setting. And even here, White repurposed dislodged boulders into a retaining wall surrounding the pool terrace. Further excavation was required for the footings of the steel framing, but this too, was done only as necessary.

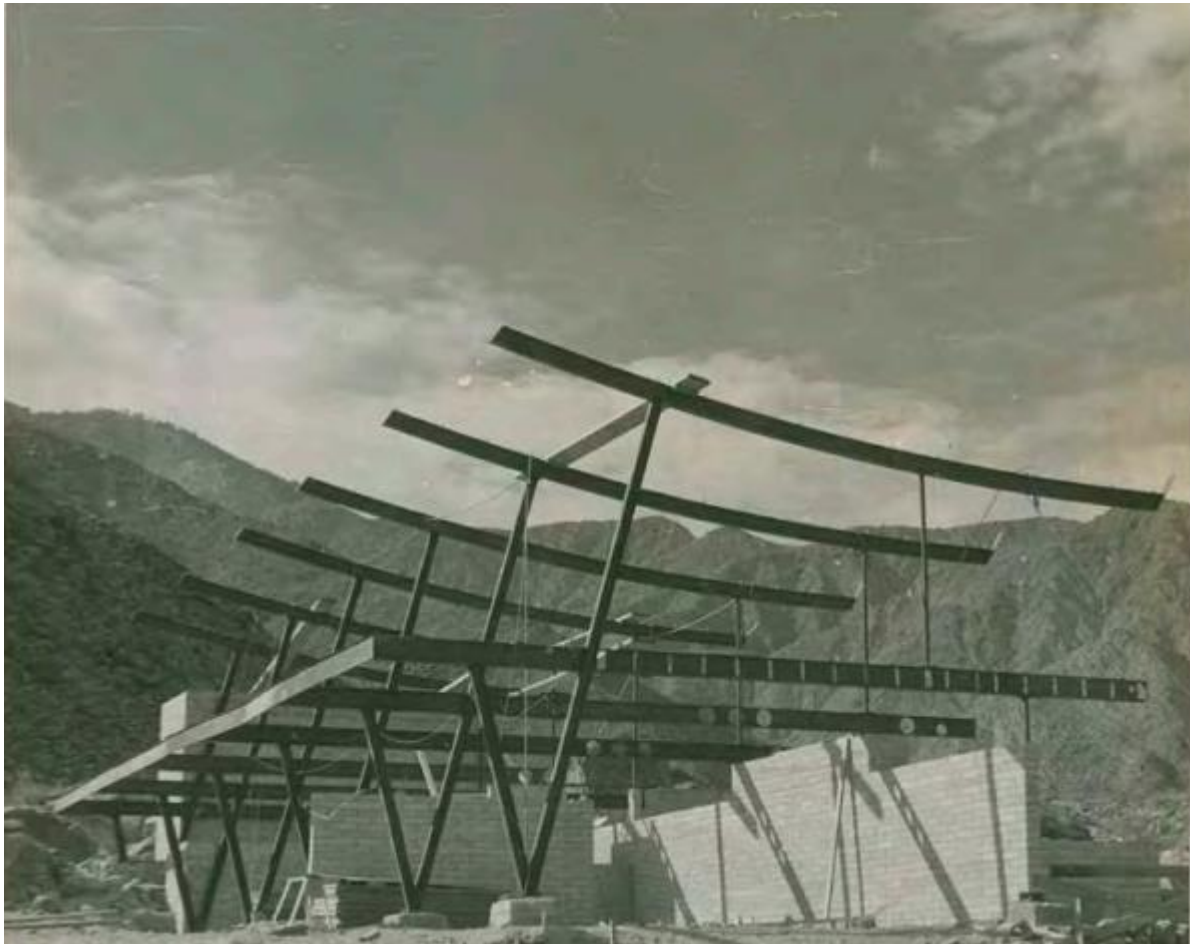
Steel Structural System

The home's steel framing, or skeleton, is one of the most noteworthy aspects of the Alexander Residence. As noted, White designed the house to rise above the desert floor, which he accomplished through a series of six identical steel beams made in the form of "V-bents." These were rolled at the Kaiser Steel mills and fabricated by the Hale Steel Company of Rialto where they were brought to the site and assembled. The total spread of each V-bent is 30 feet or 15 feet per leg. After the concrete footings were poured, each of the six V-bents were placed into the ground 13 feet apart. This created five bays stretching a total length of 60 feet.

The V-bents were each made with one shorter (southern) leg and one longer (northern) leg. The shorter is one story and terminates in about the middle of the balcony which it

partially supports while the longer leg rises through both stories to support the six curved steel beams, which support the roof.

Once the V-bents were in place, a set of six Bethlehem flanged steel beams were welded and bolted to them to serve as support for the upper floor. The beams were incised with holes to allow for the passage of wooden supports and the home's mechanical system. Each of these beams spanned a total of 18 feet, 6 inches. However, extensions were added to them on either side – 8 feet on the terrace side and 5 feet, 6 inches on the northern side – for a total span of 34 feet.



A westward-looking view of the Alexander Residence during the early stages of construction, giving a clear view of the unique V-bent framing. Note the incisions made into the cross beams by which the home's "nervous system" would travel.

(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum; University of California, Santa Barbara)

After the home's completion, White took justifiable pride in the innovative framing system he completed with Stanley Malora, comparing it to that of a human body, its steel-frame "skeleton" intertwined by the respiratory (HVAC) and nervous (electrical)

systems. Part of this unique system is visible on the home's exterior, particularly on the southern and eastern elevations.

In addition to the steel framing, White also added concrete-block shear walls on the western and northern elevations as well as a first floor interior wall that made up the east side of Mrs. Alexander's art studio. Although important structurally, these concrete walls are virtually invisible except on a small portion of the western elevation.

The Roof



A mid-construction view showing how the steel framing, the light shelf and roof connect.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara)

As innovative as the home's framing is, no other aspect of the Alexander Residence is as character-defining as the home's unique cambered roof, which appears to peel back from its southern façade to open the house up to the sky.

White had been fascinated by the possibilities of roof structures from the start of his architectural career and had already experimented with several unique versions. However, few were actually built. The Alexander Residence was one of the first times White had been allowed the opportunity to actually complete a roof that broke the bounds of conventional construction. White's inspiration was not just for aesthetics. He believed the roof was a key to the environmental control of the structure below it with

the shape and position of the roof aiding in temperature control, lighting and airflow. Today, White is best known for his visually arresting roof designs, particularly his Hyperbolic-Paraboloid Roof Structure, which he called the “Hypar Roof.”

For the Alexander Residence, White created a cambered roof by first attaching six curved steel beams to the home’s steel structural frame. These beams were curved so that the angle starts at seven feet on the north (street) side and rises to twelve feet on the south side. With his eye literally on the horizon, White worked with Malora to ensure this cambering would achieve a tangent line with the horizon, “thereby identifying the structure with the terrain,” as noted by the Desert Sun. Although not as dramatic as the cambering on the south side, White also curved the roof on the northern façade, which he connected to the steel beams with a series of black steel straps. Once the roof frame was in place, White covered it with linear 2-inch by 4-inch boards, which were protected by a desert-toned acrylic membrane.

Exterior Design and Sheathing



The newly-completed Alexander Residence, 1956, showing the starkness of its surroundings.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara)

For the elevations most visible from the street, the northern and eastern facades, White clad the upper story in a series of vertical redwood boards, 1-inch by 6-inch in size. Below this, on the northern façade, White sheathed the exterior in locally quarried lava

rock, which is sometimes known as “Mexican Driftwood.” This material was also used as a border around the southern elevation and extensively in the home’s interior. White was later to use this material to good effect during his additions to the home in the mid-1980s. These elevations, other than the narrow band of clerestory windows running beneath the roof, originally presented a largely blank face to the outside world. Today, after the White additions of the 1980s, these elevations are less stark.

The blank street side appearance of the Alexander Residence was an intentional plan by White to orient the house inwards and provide privacy and a sheltering feeling to its occupants. It also served a practical purpose by blunting what was the windy side of the property.

In total contrast to the northern elevation, the southern side was made up almost entirely of glass. Running along the entirety of the façade, White placed a steel-framed balcony/terrace with its railing mimicking the 15-degree angle of the V-bents, which make up its support. A steel-framed Arcadia glass wall with both stationary and operable glass allowed access to the balcony as well as opening the interior to the outdoors.

Above the wall of glass, White placed a steel-bordered light shelf, which was sheathed in the same light-colored acrylic membrane as used on the roof, which cleverly served to bring both light indoors while at the same time deflecting the sun.

Finally, filling in the area between the cambered roof and the main structure, White added clerestory windows, which run in a band along the northern side, but then follow the contours of the cambered roof on the eastern and southern elevations.

Interior

White’s design of the interior spaces reflected simplicity and were efficiently arranged in an open floor plan. The lower level was originally comprised of a two-car carport underneath the cantilevered portion of the house. On the western end was the art studio of Anita Alexander, which had its own entrance, as well as a sliding glass wall making up its southern side. Access to the upper floor was made by way of a steel staircase, which has been attributed as the work of White’s former employer, Albert Frey. The upper level was comprised of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, a study for Dr. Alexander, and a living room, which was anchored by a dramatic island fireplace whose hood was in the shape of an inverted cone. All of the rooms other than the bathrooms had access to the balcony. White wanted to further the openness of the house by having only partial-height interior walls, which allowed air and light to stream in from above. Over the years, the interior has undergone alterations and reconfiguration to meet the needs of subsequent owners.

Landscaping and Grounds

While the raw desert landscape was a feature of the site, certain additions were made, particularly on the home’s south side where a large section was flattened to create the pool area as well as a small grassy yard. The 26-foot circular pool and matching

concrete terrace made for a notable juxtaposition against the rectilinear composition of the house. Circles and hemicycles were a favorite motif of White's and they can be found in a number of his designs. They had been a major part of White's unbuilt Miles C. Bates House No. 1 (1952), which was planned to be built only a few lots down. White had included a circular swimming pool in his Bates house plans. The \$4,000 Alexander pool had been designed and built by Hoams Construction Co. of Rancho Mirage, which provided pools for a number of valley homes during the period.

After the space had been cleared and the pool excavated, White repurposed a number of the boulders into a low perimeter wall along the western edge of the pool terrace, which not only helped to define the space it also served as a windbreak. Additionally, White surrounded the rear of the property with a simple grape-stake fence for privacy and protection.

The landscaping for the site was entrusted to Slim and Pat Moorten, desert landscaping experts, who kept the plants to the barest minimum so as not to muddle the raw beauty of the stark setting. The Moortens added several strategically placed palm trees, *Washingtonia filifera* and *Washingtonia robusta*, as well as cacti, Palos Verdes and other regionally appropriate varieties, all used sparingly. The only major concession to non-native planting was in the grass used to surround the pool area. Based on photographic evidence, it appears the landscaping was supplemented over the course of the Alexanders' ownership to include plantings on at least the eastern and northern sides in addition to those on the south. A 1959 image shows considerably more growth than that from 1956. It is unknown if the Moortens continued to work on the property, however, it seems likely as their names were often found on the guest list for the frequent parties thrown by the sociable Alexanders.

During the mid-1980s when Walter S. White was asked to do additions to the house, he made some changes to the landscaping and hardscape as well including the addition of hedges and other plantings, along with new concrete steps, a ramp, and walls at the eastern part of the lot where a new parking pad was built. He also replaced most of the original grape-stake fencing with new concrete walls and hedges.

Today, the landscaping has been enhanced from its modest beginnings, but certain original features in the form of palm trees remain from the Moortens' design.

The Alexanders' Occupancy 1956-1968

By the time of the home's completion sometime in 1956, Dr. Franz and Anita Alexander were already a familiar part of desert life. As they had in every other place they lived, the couple threw themselves into the local social scene, enhancing their already wide circle of friends. Throughout their time in the desert, the couple's names appeared regularly in the Desert Sun, particularly in Hildy Crawford's society column, which reported on events they either attended or hosted. The Alexanders regularly hosted parties of varying sizes at their new home, with the balcony making a perfect setting for sunset cocktails. The guest lists at these events ranged from local figures of note to high-profile visitors from around the world. A particular favorite was Pauline Phillips and

her husband Morton who were frequent house guests on trips from their home in San Francisco. Professionally, Pauline was known as Abigail Van Buren, the internationally syndicated advice columnist “Dear Abby.”



Anita and Franz Alexander pose for Walter White’s camera during a visit to the construction site.
(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum;
University of California, Santa Barbara)

The celebrated psychoanalyst was a sought-after guest at events, but so was Anita who had quickly gained the respect and admiration of the local art community for her talent. Working from her studio on the ground level of the house, Anita produced oil paintings, but increasingly altered her technique, switching from brushes to palette knives. She also worked in mosaics and sculpted as well. She was so successful in this regard, she was engaged to produce several pieces for the newly-built Spa Hotel in downtown Palm Springs. Anita also took time to take classes and later teach at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts (ISOMATA). During the early 1960s the couple supplemented their Palm Springs home with a winter mountain cabin in Idyllwild, which they would escape to when the desert grew too hot. Anita’s artistic talents were internationally recognized during her time in Palm Springs and she was featured in various exhibitions both in the United States and in Europe. Her husband too was continually called on to lecture and receive honors on both sides of the Atlantic, and the pair spent much time traveling between rests in the desert.

Chain of Ownership

February 28, 1948

Establishment of Conditions, Reservations & Restrictions for Little Tuscany No. 3 tract, Lots 1-22 by Harold J. Hicks & Caroline B. Hicks, owners

January 18, 1951

Grant Deed – Easement to Palm Springs Water Co. granting underground pipeline rights to certain lots in Little Tuscany No. 3 including a portion of Lot 21.

October 6, 1953

Quitclaim Deed from Caroline B. Hicks to Harold J. Hicks quitclaiming all right, title and interest in certain properties including Lot 21, Little Tuscany No. 3 tract.

June 7, 1955

Grant Deed – Harold J. Hicks to Dennis R. Hicks, a minor, and Harold James Hicks Junior, a minor, Lot 21 of Little Tuscany No. 3.

July 29, 1955

Guardian's Deed – Harold J. Hicks, acting on behalf of Harold James Hicks Junior, a minor, grants to Franz Alexander and Anita Alexander, Lot 21 of Little Tuscany No. 3.

February 27, 1968

Kenneth E. Douglas

December 23, 1968

Norman P. Carter & Jean Carter, joint tenants

July 7, 1970

Verne C. Douglas

July 13, 1970

Norman P. Carter & Jean Carter, joint tenants

January 30, 1974

Trident Productions, Inc. (Dale Wasserman, president)

It should be noted that Wasserman (1914-2008) was a well-known playwright and screenwriter, best known for the Tony Award-winning musical production *Man of La Mancha* (1966) and for the stage adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

December 30, 1976

Irving M. Greenberg M.D. & Lois B. Greenberg

July 4, 1998

Paul d'Entremont & William J. Grimm, joint tenants

August 24, 1999

William J. Grimm M.D.

April 23, 2019

Nicholas Pepper (Current owner)

Changes and Additions to the Alexander Residence

In her biography of her grandfather, Ilonka Venier Alexander notes that the Alexanders were not completely satisfied with the finished house and “work had to be redone on walls and infrastructure.” The main complaint was over the interior walls not being completed all the way to the ceiling. Other alterations may have occurred based on a photograph which appeared in the Desert Sun in 1959, which shows the addition of an unsympathetic sliding glass window prominently visible on the eastern façade where the master bedroom was located. Further, it appears the clerestory window above had been filled in. It is not known what else may have been altered but these visible changes have since been undone.

In the mid-1980s, thirty years after his original design, Walter S. White was asked to return to the Alexander Residence to make some additions to the home. White performed a series of sensitive additions to his original design in two phases – 1984 and 1986.

In 1984, White added the present garage at the northwest part of the house. Accessed by a short concrete drive off Cielo Drive, the garage, which contains a laundry, workroom and bathroom, was designed by White to integrate with the original structure. Built of steel and wood, the garage incorporates the same type of materials such as vertical redwood siding and wrapping clerestory windows that mirror those on the main house’s north, east and west façades. Pumice stone is used on the lower half of the walls. White designed the curve of the garage roof to match that of the main house.

Two years after creating a new garage, White returned to remodel the space housing the original carport into a recreation room and bath. White not only enclosed the space, he expanded it outwards, which he defined by a wall of glass placed on a low rugged rock wall made of the same type of lava rock he had used on parts of the façade in 1956. White extended the balcony at the same time, wrapping it around to the halfway point of the east elevation.

White added several interesting features on the east elevation as part of his 1986 additions. The first was the addition of a stone wall made of lava rock that extended southward from the façade and terminated underneath the corner of the balcony extension. The wall provided not only a visually arresting addition to the east front, it served the practical purpose of shielding the glass-walled recreation room for privacy. White was careful to not completely extend the wall to be flush with the balcony in order that both light and air could continue to flow over it. The second addition was an eye-catching web steel joist, which projects northwards from the balcony, and from which White hung a large circular light fixture. This pendant chandelier serves both to illuminate and draw attention to a set of entry steps, which were also added during the 1986 renovations.

The steps were part of the reorientation of the entrance necessitated by the enclosing of the carport. Originally, the entrance was close to the south, but in 1986, it was shifted

to the north. At that time, White added a set of concrete steps followed by flagstone pavers leading to the new entry.

After enclosing the old carport, White created a new parking pad on the lowest portion of the lot on its northeastern edge. The pad is defined by an angled concrete wall, which is incised to give the illusion of being made of individual squares. White masterfully used the wall to jut out at a 90-degree angle to define the pair of parking spots.

White also used the concrete wall to shield a ramp and steps leading up to the south garden.

Later changes to the Alexander Residence, conducted by a subsequent owner, post-1998, are largely restricted to the home's interior. However, a few exterior changes have been made including the removal of a rear exterior staircase, which had not been a part of White's original plans. Also, added was a hot tub on the southern terrace, designed in a compatible style with the existing hardscape.

During the early 1990s, a guest house, which was designed in a manner compatible to the main house, was constructed at the southeastern edge of the lot. It is a non-contributing structure but nonetheless integrates well into the overall scheme.

Permit History

The following is a digest of permits provided by the Palm Springs Department of Building & Safety related to 1011 West Cielo Drive:

November 18, 1955 – Permit #8025 (Main house) – 5 room dwelling with workshop & storage – 2 level column & beam construction. Tract: Little Tuscany Unit 3, Lot 21. Owners: Dr. Franz & Anita Alexander. Architect (Designer): Walter White. Contractor: Rooth & Carr. Cost: \$34,000.

November 21, 1955 – Permit # 7539 (Plumbing) – Owners: Dr. & Mrs. Franz Alexander. Plumber: Hoams Construction Co.

November 21, 1955 – Permit # 6627 (Electrical) – Owners: Dr. & Mrs. Franz Alexander. Electrician: Hoams Construction Co.

November 21, 1955 – Permit # 8031 (Swimming pool) – Owners: Dr. & Mrs. Franz Alexander. Contractor: Hoams Construction Co. Gunite construction. 26' circular. Cost: \$4,000.

December 1, 1955 – Permit # 6658 (Electrical) – Owners: Dr. & Mrs. Franz Alexander. Electrician: Cavanaugh Electric Co.

December 15, 1955 – Permit # 7612 (Plumbing) – Owner: F. Alexander. Plumber: Otto Grelson.

February 1, 1956 – Permit # 7839 (Plumbing) – Owner: Franz Alexander. Plumber: Joe Leonard.

June 6, 1956 – Permit # (Illegible. Poss. 2025) (Cesspool) – Owner: Dr. Franz Alexander. Contractor: Rooth & Carr.

December 1, 1956 – Permit #9227 (Masonry Chimney) Owner: Dr. Franz Alexander. Contractor: Jeff Amino.

January 9, 1964 – Permit # B 6423 (Pool accessory building) – Owner: Franz Alexander. Contractor: Win Miller.

January 28, 1964 – Permit #A 97 (Electrical) Owner: Franz Alexander. Contractor: Bentz.

April 7, 1968 – Permit #B 10994 (Retaining Wall) – Owner: Ken Douglas. Contractor: H.H. Black Masonry. Retaining wall 116' long “6' to 0' on west and front wall.”

December 21, 1979 – Permit # B 2247 (Roofing) – Owner: Mrs. Greenberg. Contractor: Al Miller & Son.

March 8, 1984 – Permit #B 06336 (Garage) – Owner: Greenberg. Architect: Walter White. Contractor: Owner/Builder. New 2-car garage, steel & wood, with storage and laundry room. Concrete & masonry block foundation. Cost: \$35,000.

June 23, 1986 – Permit # B 08913 (Carport conversion) Owner: Lois B. Greenberg. Architect: Walter S. White. Engineer: John P. Clarke. Contractor: Tom Libby Construction Co. Conversion of existing carport into recreation room and bath. New section of sundeck. Steel, masonry & wood construction. Cost: \$30,000.

September 8, 1987 – Permit # B 11172 (Reroofing) – Owner: Greenberg. Contractor: Gary Sanders. Reroofing. Cost: \$2,900.

October 21, 1987 – Permit B 11481 (Garage) – Owner: Irving Greenberg. Architect: Walter S. White. Engineer: John P. Clarke. Replacement of original double garage doors with one single door. Cost: \$5,000.

Character-Defining Features of the Alexander Residence

The Alexander Residence is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Mid-century Modern house. It exhibits numerous character-defining features including:

- Distinctive cambered roof, which appears to peel away and float over the main mass
- An innovative steel skeleton made with V-bents, which is partially visible
- Blending of indoor and outdoor spaces

- Informal open-plan layout
- Extensive use of glass
- Overhanging eaves
- Use of natural materials such as redwood and Mexican Driftwood for exterior sheathing

Contributing Elements

- Residence
- Swimming pool

Non-Contributing Elements

- Guest house
- Hot tub

Local Architectural Context

The Alexander Residence should be viewed within the context of the period Post World War II (1945-1969), a boom period that left Palm Springs with what many consider the largest and finest concentration of mid-20th century Modern architecture in the United States. As noted in the Historic Resource Group's [Palm Springs] *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*, "by 1951 the city's winter population swelled to almost 30,000 from a permanent population of 7,660 – [which] coincided with the peak of Modernism's popularity. The population growth accelerated in the 1950s, bringing a demand for civic necessities such as schools, libraries, museums, a city hall and police headquarters, as well as offices, stores, and housing. Though Palm Springs was a smaller municipality, this economic climate provided many opportunities for locally-based architects, as well as several Los Angeles architects, to explore and develop a wide range of architectural types and ideas, sometimes influenced by sophisticated global design trends. These conditions and the architects' talents lead to the development of an exceptional group of Modern buildings which later came to be identified as 'Palm Springs Modernism' or 'The Palm Springs School.' The desert climate and casual lifestyle all but demanded unconventional design, and clients were more accepting of, even sought out, a more adventurous style in the resort atmosphere of Palm Springs than they would have in their primary residences." Dr. Franz and Anita Alexander were such clients and their engagement of Walter S. White to design a unique desert retreat for themselves resulted in an exceptional addition to the city's unparalleled aggregation of Desert Modernism.

Site Description

Location. The Alexander Residence is located on a prominent corner in the Little Tuscany No. 3 tract, one of the desert's most historic and exclusive residential districts. Because of the home's fortunate positioning, the eastern and northern elevations are visibly accessible, which allows viewers to be able to appreciate many aspects of the

home's exceptional design and landscaping. The Alexander Residence is in an area rich in fine architecture that includes some of the desert's most important works such as the Raymond Loewy House (Albert Frey, 1947); the Edgar Kaufmann Desert House (Richard Neutra, 1947); the Edris House (E. Stewart Williams, 1953); and the Max Palevsky House (Craig Ellwood, 1969). The topography of the triangular-shaped lot is sloping at an angle downwards from west to east. Originally, covered in boulders, as many of these natural features as possible have been retained around the site. Native plantings make up the majority of the landscaping with cacti, palms, succulents, etc. The most mature varieties are part of the original landscaping scheme laid out by Slim and Pat Moorten in the 1950s.

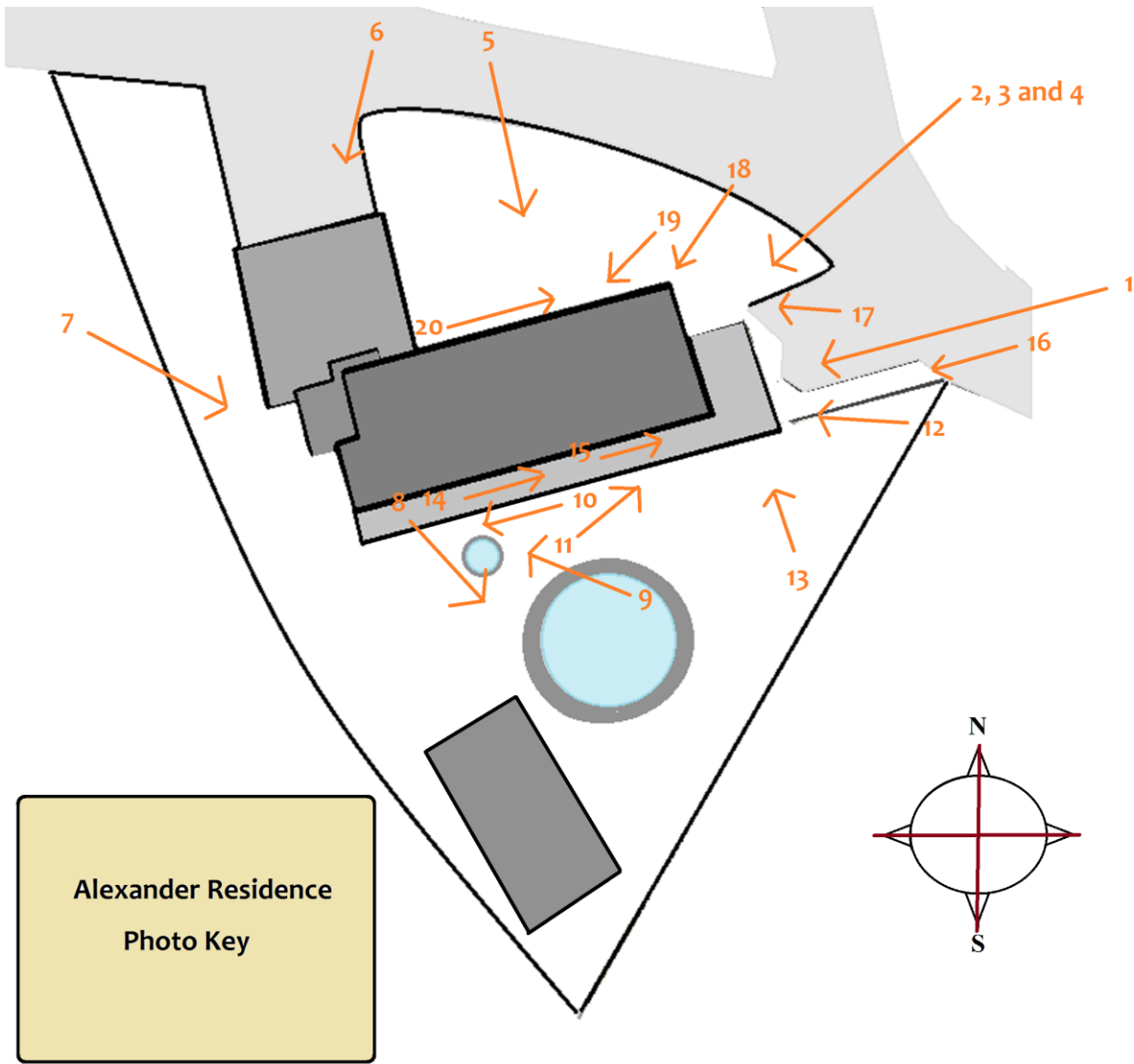




Photo 1: East elevation showing White's 1980s additions including the parking pad and balcony extension.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 2: Juncture of eastern and northern elevations.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 3: East elevation. Detail of unusual pendant chandelier added by White in the mid-1980s.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 4: East elevation. National Register plaque set amidst boulders near entrance walkway.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 5: View of the north elevation showing main house and 1984 garage addition.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 6: View showing garage. Note curved roofline and clerestory windows designed to match the original house.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 7: West elevation showing service area and rear kitchen entrance.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 8: Looking from the balcony over pool and guest house towards the Coachella Valley.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 9: South elevation looking northwest.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 10: South elevation looking west at Mrs. Alexander's former studio. Note the different combinations of stones.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 11: South elevation looking east, showing White's 1986 extension under the balcony.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 12: East elevation showing south elevation and White's 1986 additions.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



**Photo 13: South/east elevation juncture showing balcony extension. Sprite sculpture was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Midway Gardens.
(Author Photo. May 2020)**



**Photo 14: Looking eastwards down balcony. Note the 15-degree tilt of the railing, designed to emulate the structural V-bents.
(Author Photo. May 2020)**



Photo 15: Detail of light shelf and cambered roof above.
(Author Photo. May 2020)

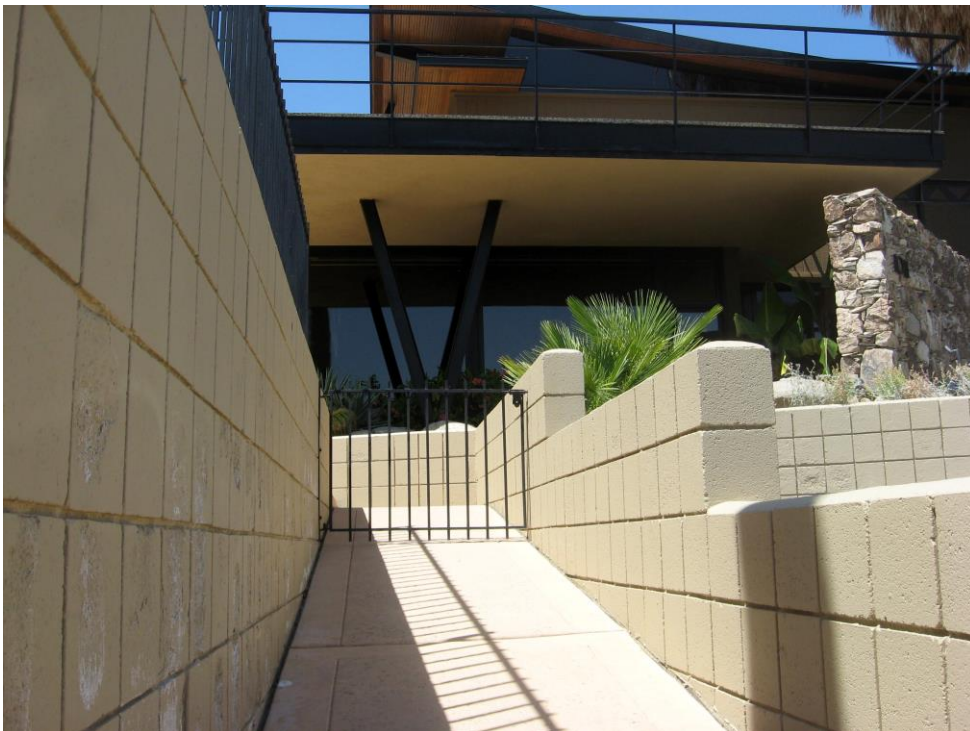


Photo 16: East elevation showing concrete ramp and walls added by White in 1986.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 17: East elevation entrance steps.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 18: North elevation detail of curved roof with steel straps.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 19: View towards entrance, which was added in 1986. Note Mexican Driftwood used as sheathing.
(Author Photo. May 2020)



Photo 20: Looking east from main entrance.
(Author Photo. May 2020)

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 “**Post-World War II Palm Springs**” that the Alexander Residence will be evaluated.

EVALUATION:

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. Dr. Franz Alexander was one of the world's foremost psychoanalysts and is considered the “father of psychosomatic medicine.” In terms of both fame and influence, Alexander was second only to Freud. In the United States, his influence was considered even greater and he has come to be known as the “father of American psychoanalysis.” Dr. Franz Alexander was an influential and well-known figure on a national and international level. Hence, the Alexander Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 2.

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

Criterion 3: *(That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history).* The Alexander Residence, completed in 1956, exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historic context of Post-World War II Palm Springs. The private residence represents a prime and largely intact example of the Mid-century Modern style, for which Palm Springs has gained a worldwide reputation. As such, the Alexander Residence may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important Modern architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4: *(That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or) Type, Period, and Method of Construction:* "Type, period, or method of construction" refers to the way certain properties are related to one another by cultural tradition or function, by dates of construction or style, or by choice or availability of materials and technology. To be eligible under this Criterion, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics" a pattern of features common to a particular class of resources. "Distinctive characteristics" are the physical features or

traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

The Alexander Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that embody the Mid-century Modern Style such as overall horizontality, expression of structure, expansive amounts of glass, use of organic materials, etc. Further, its dramatic cambered roof and innovative steel structural system represented the type of “new thinking” prevalent during the era. As such, the residence is eligible under this criterion because it represents an important example of building practices in Palm Springs during the post-World War II period. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry 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: In the case of the Alexander Residence, the work of Walter S. White can certainly be described as the “work of a master” in view of his history of architectural excellence throughout a career that spanned from the 1930s into the 1980s (see Appendix VII).

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. As an exceptional example of Mid-century Modern architecture, the Alexander Residence certainly articulates the best of what has made Modern architecture so popular throughout the Coachella Valley to a level of excellence and confidence that, in total, could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. For its high artistic values, the residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry 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, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 6.

ARCHEOLOGY

Criterion 7: *(That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory).* The Alexander Residence is not likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory. Hence, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 7.

FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Provide a written description for each element as listed: Design; Materials; Workmanship; Location; Setting; Feeling; and Association.

INTEGRITY

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. ***The Alexander Residence 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. ***The Alexander Residence'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 largely intact. Further, the known major additions and alterations to the residence were done by Walter S. White, its original designer.***

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. ***The setting of the Alexander Residence continues to reflect the architect'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. ***The Alexander Residence's exterior surface materials, which consist primarily of redwood boards, Mexican Driftwood, concrete, steel and glass, both windows and doors, 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 and contributing structures 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 workmanship of the Alexander Residence is evidenced by extensive use of natural materials in both the exterior and interior as well as the steel framing, a portion of which is visible on the home's exterior. Additions and changes to the home's exterior were made by Walter S. White, the original designer, which has ensured a harmonious continuity as the residence has evolved over time. Steel framed windows and doors, redwood boards and Mexican Driftwood sheathing, clerestory windows, cantilevered steel balcony, cambered roof, circular swimming pool, and mature landscape features, all of which were part of the***

original design/construction remain. The residence 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. ***The Alexander Residence is sited on a prominent lot which takes advantage of panoramic views of the surrounding desert and mountain ranges just as it did when completed in 1956. Accordingly, the residence and contributing structures retain their 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. ***The Alexander Residence is an important example of a custom-designed Mid-century Modern private residence in Palm Springs. Accordingly, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: The Alexander Residence 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 the Alexander Residence still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. ***As noted, the Alexander Residence retains a remarkable amount of original details and that which were added later were done almost exclusively by the home's original designer Walter S. White between 1984-1986. In summary, the Alexander Residence possesses a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.***

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Attached is a list of books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application and other documentation that may be relevant.

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Riverside County Assessor’s Office

Appendix I

Owner's Notarized Letter of Support

NICHOLAS PEPPER
1011 West Cielo Drive
Palm Springs, California 92262
323-640-7345
n_pepper@yahoo.com

December 20, 2019


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

Dear Honorable Board,

As the current owner of the Dr. Franz Alexander Residence at 1011 West Cielo Drive, I enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of my property by the city of Palm Springs. I have asked the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to assist me in the preparation of the required nomination paperwork.

If you have any questions, please contact me either by phone at 323-640-7345 or via email at n_pepper@yahoo.com

Sincerely,



Nicholas Pepper

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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 Los Angeles

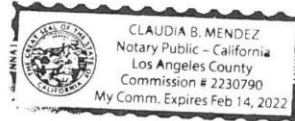
On January 17, 2020 before me, Claudia B. Mendez, notary public
(insert name and title of the officer)

personally appeared Nicholas Pepper
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.

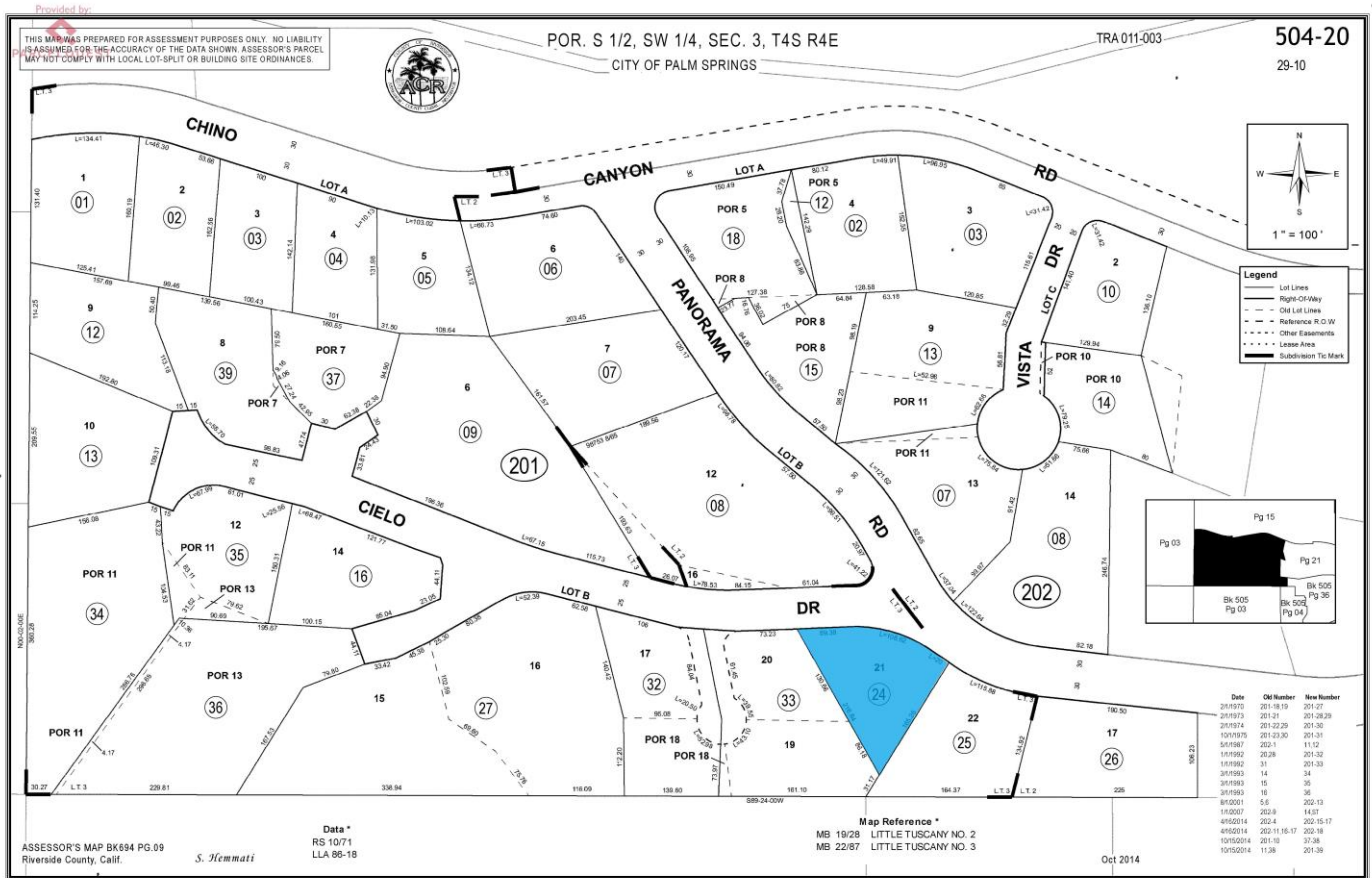
WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature Claudia B. Mendez (Seal)



Appendix II

Assessor's Map



Appendix III

Grant Deed and Legal Description

Branch :O25,User :JECR

Comment:

Station Id :TGQU

RECORDING REQUESTED BY:
Orange Coast Title Company

AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:

Nicholas Steven Pepper
1011 West Cielo Drive
Palm Springs CA 92262

2019-0185715

05/24/2019 01:40 PM Fee: \$ 17.00

Page 1 of 2

Recorded in Official Records
County of Riverside
Peter Aidana
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder



751

Title Order No.: 210.2054030.10
AP#: 504-201-024 -6

GRANT DEED

Escrow No.: 037622-DR
TRA# 011-003

THE UNDERSIGNED GRANTOR(S) DECLARE(S)

DOCUMENTARY TRANSFER TAX is \$2,750.55

computed on full value of property conveyed, or
 computed on full value less value of liens or encumbrances remaining at time of sale.
 Unincorporated area City of Palm Springs **AND**

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged,

William J. Grimm, an Unmarried Man

hereby GRANT(s) to: NICHOLAS PEPPER, A SINGLE MAN


~~Nicholas Steven Pepper~~

the real property in the City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California, described as:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION ATTACHED HERETO AS EXHIBIT "A" AND MADE A PART HEREOF

Also Known as: 1011 West Cielo Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dated April 23, 2019


William J. Grimm

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 5-8-2019 before me,

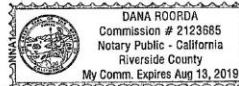
Dana Roorda

appeared William J. Grimm 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  (Seal)



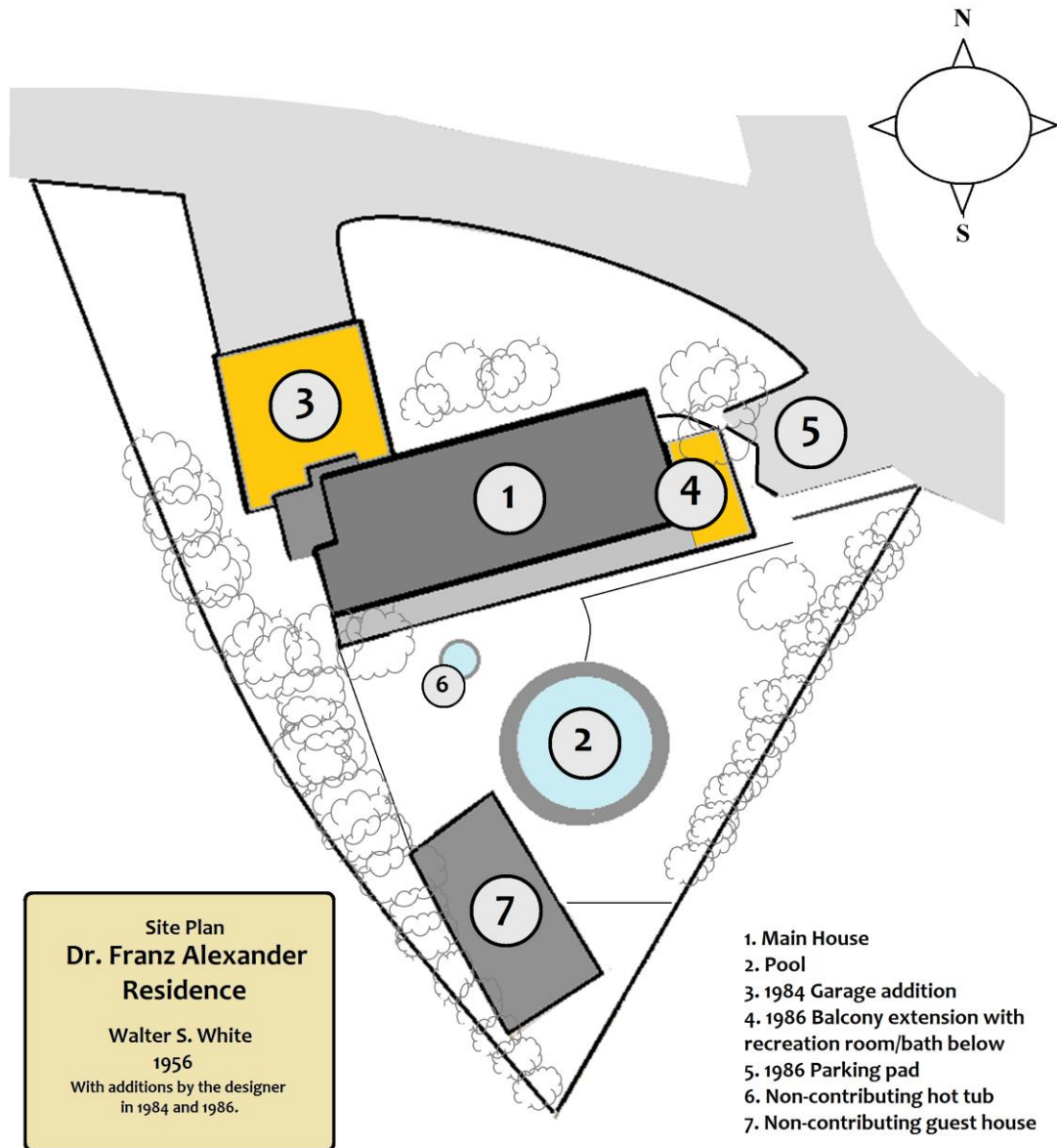
MAIL TAX STATEMENTS TO PARTY SHOWN BELOW; IF NO PARTY SHOWN, MAIL AS SHOWN ABOVE.

Exhibit "A"

Lot 21 of Little Tuscany No. 3, in the City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California, as shown by maps on file in Book 22, Page 87 of Maps in the Office of the County Recorder of Riverside County, California.

Appendix IV

Site Plan



Appendix V

Google Earth Image



Appendix VI

Dr. Franz Alexander



Dr. Franz Alexander (1891-1964)
(Via prabook.com)

On Monday, March 9, 1964, newspapers and media outlets across the globe announced the death of Dr. Franz Alexander who expired the previous day at his desert home in Palm Springs. The news sent shock waves throughout the psychiatric and psychoanalytic community where Alexander had been regarded as a giant. The New York Times memorialized him as the “father of psychosomatic medicine,” while the Los Angeles Times hailed him as “one of the world’s foremost psychoanalysts.” Among his many milestones could be counted his pioneering work in psychoanalytic criminology and psychosomatic medicine, as one of the first to link the emotional state with physical ailments. In terms of both fame and influence, Alexander was second only to Freud. In the United States, his influence was considered even greater and he has come to be known as the “father of American psychoanalysis.”

More than a half century after his death, Alexander’s legacy continues to influence the field of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Some of the ideas he promoted such as short-term therapy and lay analysts, which were hotly debated in his day, are now considered standard practice. Among the many memorials honoring Alexander’s legacy is a plaque placed on the Ludwigkirchstraße, which includes a quote from Freud about Alexander. Roughly translated it reads, “It is good to know that there is someone...in whose head my Abstractions have won life and will continue to grow.”

Budapest

Franz Gabriel Alexander was born on January 22, 1891 in Budapest at a time when the city was still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. He was to be the first boy and the fourth of a total of seven children born to Dr. Bernard (Bernhard) and Regina Alexander beginning with Ilonka in 1881 and ending with Lilla in 1902. The Alexanders were a cultured and well-to-do family. Bernard was a notable and influential figure in the city’s academic and literary scene achieving success as a writer, literary critic and professor of philosophy.

During Alexander’s childhood the family resided in the upscale Erzsebetaros (Elizabeth Ring) district in a grand edifice known as the New York Palace, so named after its builders, the New York Life Insurance Company. Designed by famed Hungarian architect Alajos Hauszmann and completed in 1894, the elegant Baroque structure contained New York Life’s offices on the lower floors while the upper were given over to spacious apartments. The Alexanders occupied a prime corner unit on the top floor with views overlooking the Elizabeth Ring and the city beyond. Alexander’s life was greatly influenced by his days growing up in the New York Palace and he remembered the place and his time there with great fondness for the rest of his life.

The New York Palace was a hub for the city’s intellectual community with a number of professors, like Bernard Alexander, in residence. On the ground floor, the building’s café became the heart of the literary scene and a gathering spot for writers, poets and philosophers. Upstairs, the sociable and well-liked Alexanders entertained regularly. According to Alexander’s granddaughter Ilonka, “Saturday nights with the Alexander family were stimulating and exciting as writers, professors, journalists and artists came to the apartment to discuss the latest ideas.” Sometimes, dinner was taken in Bernard’s

book-lined library, which was always accompanied by lively and far-ranging discussions about the arts, politics and sciences.

Alexander was too young to be included in these discussions but he longed to join in, settling for a place outside the door where he could listen in on the action. From the very beginning, he was seen to be a highly intelligent and inquisitive child, interested in learning all he could and standing in awe of his father whom he reverently called the "Sun King." Alexander loved his mother, but he worshipped his father and struggled throughout his life with a sense of inferiority, believing he was a disappointment. Alexander later made an exploration of these feelings part of his education in the field of psychoanalysis.

As might be expected, Alexander was an excellent student and excelled at his studies, which included philosophy, languages, mathematics, physics and history. Father and son often had detailed discussions and shared ideas and opinions on what Alexander was studying and where he should focus his energies. His father was hoping Alexander would become an archeologist, something which held little interest for him. However, in an effort to please his father he took classes in the subject, but with little success. Ultimately, Alexander choose the field of medicine, but in doing so, he once again felt he had let his father down.

However, it was his father that unintentionally first brought the work of Sigmund Freud to Alexander's attention when he gave him a copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. At the time, both of them felt the book was "crazy" but Alexander never completely forgot it or Freud who was to have such a significant later influence over Alexander's life and career.

During his time in medical school, Alexander had what he considered to be his second brush with psychoanalysis when he participated in a series of experiments, which sought to test how changes in oxygen and blood flow affect behavior. Early on in his studies, Alexander had become interested in how biology affects the mind and body. This mind-body connection became something of an obsession for him which later developed into the psychosomatic theory for which he became so well known.

World War I

Alexander's career and life trajectory were to be forever changed by the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Alexander, who had graduated from medical school just the previous November, was conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army where he was given the rank of lieutenant and assigned to a hospital train. Later promoted to senior physician, Alexander was transferred to the Italian front where he saw direct action, and at one point, suffered a wound to his elbow.

In a scenario that could have been torn from the pages of a romance novel, Alexander found love while war raged literally around him. As the Austro-Hungarian army pushed their way into Italy, Alexander took over a deserted convent to use as a field hospital. There, according to family lore, he discovered the fleeing nuns had left one girl behind,

too ill to travel. Alexander personally nursed her back to health and when she opened her eyes and saw her “savior,” she fell instantly in love.

The girl, Anita Venier, known as “Annie” to Alexander, was the daughter of an old and noble Venetian family. She had been sent to the convent as a child with the intention she become a nun. At the time of their fateful meeting, Anita was preparing to take her final vows and become a “Bride of Christ.”

Blonde, blue-eyed and beautiful, Anita made a stark contrast to the dark, squat appearance of her future husband yet they made a good match. Both were intelligent, cultured and lovers of music and the arts. Anita was a talented artist; her creativity having been encouraged by the nuns at the convent at an early age. She would later become an award-winning and highly regarded artist during her years in Berlin and later in Palm Springs.

Although the couple had gotten married, the circumstances of the war and its immediate aftermath kept them physically apart for several years with Anita remaining in Italy and Alexander returning to Budapest. It would not be until Alexander relocated to Berlin that the pair would be finally reunited.

Back in Budapest, Alexander, like the rest of his fellow Hungarians, grappled with the devastating effects of having been on the losing side of the war and the dissolution of the once grand empire. He took a position at the university’s Department of Psychiatry and Neurology and attempted to restart his civilian career. At the time, psychoanalysis, as championed by Dr. Sigmund Freud in Vienna, was gaining a lot of converts, yet it was quite controversial and not considered medicine by many in the established medical community. Alexander’s revered father was one of those who rejected the movement, a feeling originally shared by his son.

When treating patients, Alexander was not interested in any psychoanalytical interpretations and instead approached treatment from a purely biological standpoint. A psychiatric patient’s personality was not a factor to him. However, one day, a patient who had been in a catatonic state, reemerged into consciousness and wanted to talk about the dreams he had had when catatonic. It was then that Alexander thought of Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*. “This book is crazy and the patient is crazy,” he later wrote. “Maybe this crazy book will help me understand this crazy patient.”

Alexander not only reread the book, he reacquainted himself with all of Freud’s theories, wondering if maybe they could, after all, help his patients. At first, he found much of them tedious or hard to follow, yet over time and after much reviewing it all began to make sense to him. Alexander’s ultimate acceptance of psychoanalysis did not come without a price. It meant not only having to break from academic psychiatry it also meant going against his father who thought of psychoanalysis as a “horror.” But Alexander had not come to his decision lightly, and once he accepted the tenets of Freud’s theories, he began moving forward on what would become his life’s work.

Berlin

In 1919, Alexander left Budapest for the last time, going first to Vienna and then to Berlin where he was finally able to reunite with Anita. Alexander came to the German capital to become involved with an exciting new organization, the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. Founded in 1920 by early influential psychoanalysts Karl Abraham and Max Eitengon, the institute was created as both a training center for analysts and a place where persons in need could get treatment regardless of their financial situation. The institute's operational philosophy was based on the work of Freud, a connection made literal by the structure itself, which was designed by Freud's son, Ernst. Although there was no formal curriculum at the time of Alexander's arrival, he is considered the institute's first graduate.

Alexander had come to Berlin during the time of the Weimar Republic, one of the most critical periods in German history. Demoralized by defeat in World War I and suffering under the weight of crushing reparations payments, the country grappled with hyperinflation, record unemployment and growing political divisions. Yet, in spite of the myriad economic and social problems, Berlin had nonetheless become a place of exceptional creative energy, "stimulating chaos," in Alexander's words – a hub for artists, writers, musicians and intellectuals. It was also fertile ground for advances in the development of psychoanalysis and the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute became the epicenter for research and development of Freud's theories. In addition to Abraham and Eitengon, the institute's staff included such important pioneers in the field as Karen Horney, Felix Boehm, Sandor Rado, Siegfried Bernfeld and Hanns Sachs, among others.

As part of his education at the institute, Alexander underwent his own psychoanalysis, which was conducted by Hanns Sachs. Unlike the stereotypical image of analysis, Alexander was not analyzed "on the couch," but rather, he and Sachs would often take long walks together discussing Alexander's issues, notably his feelings of inferiority and the perceived belief he was a disappointment to his father.

The sessions with Sachs were fruitful for Alexander in several ways. From a personal standpoint, he felt they successfully addressed the issues over his father and, after having an oedipal dream at about three months into his analysis, Alexander was declared cured and the analysis ended. From a procedural standpoint, Alexander became a lifelong proponent of shorter-term analysis as well as the acceptance of lay analysts, such as Sachs, to be able to successfully conduct psychoanalysis. Sachs had been a lawyer by training before becoming an intimate of Freud's inner circle.

After graduation in 1921, Alexander became a fully-accredited psychoanalyst, opening his own practice in Berlin. He quickly began to gain recognition as a leading figure in the field and in 1923 he won the first Freud Prize for his paper, *The Castration Complex in the Formation of Character*. He remained closely tied to the institute, working as assistant to the director as well as the institute's first training analyst. He also conducted lectures on a regular basis.

It was a series of these lectures that became the basis of Alexander's first book, *Psychoanalyse der Gesamtpersönlichkeit* in 1927. Published in English in 1930 as *Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality*, the work was widely and well received within the psychoanalytic community and earned praise from Freud himself.

Alexander had a close relationship with Freud and often visited him in Vienna. They also regularly corresponded on numerous aspects of the psychoanalytic theory. Alexander was a great admirer of Freud and originally focused solely on putting his theories into practical usage. However, over time Alexander began to find areas where he disagreed with Freud and, although he would remain a strong supporter of the "Master's" work, he was not afraid to chart his own course when he felt his ideas were more appropriate.

Alexander's years in Berlin saw him rise from obscurity into a leading figure in the international psychoanalytic community. As busy as he was, he managed to nonetheless maintain an active social life with he and Anita entertaining regularly among their wide circle of friends. The couple had their first daughter, Sylvia in 1921, followed by Francesca, nicknamed "Kiki," in 1926. With her husband's growing financial success, Anita was able to return to her love of art and painting and in 1927 she won a national competition for her painting "Convent Room." The honor brought recognition for Anita's talents and helped launch her on a successful career of her own as an artist parallel to that of her husband's.

America – First Experience

Alexander had long been intrigued by the psychoanalytics of criminal behavior, which he studied extensively during his time in Berlin. It was his work in this vein that brought him considerable attention in the United States. In 1930, Alexander was approached by pioneering criminologist and psychiatrist Dr. William Healy to come to America to discuss his findings at the International Congress of Mental Hygiene, which was to be attended by more than 4,000 people from around the globe. Alexander enthusiastically accepted and his visit had far-reaching consequences, bringing him in direct contact with other influential members of the psychoanalytic community, and an invitation to relocate permanently to America.

The invitation came from Robert Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago. He originally offered Alexander a position as professor of psychiatry, but Alexander rejected the offer believing it should be as professor of psychoanalysis. Hutchins agreed and Alexander was made the world's very first visiting professor of psychoanalysis, taking his position at the university's medical school in 1930.

Both Alexander and his wife enthusiastically embraced the idea of life in the United States. Alexander felt Americans were more tolerant of new ideas and it would be a great opportunity to further spread the concept of psychoanalysis, which was just starting to gain ground in the country. Of course, his timing was providential. Although Alexander claimed to have been too busy to have paid much attention to politics during his Berlin years, it seems hard to imagine he could not have noticed the steady and

terrifying rise of Hitler and Nazism and what it portended for those not falling into their warped conceptions of a “Master” Aryan race.

Alexander had much to fear from the rise of National Socialism for he was harboring a secret. For decades, at least as far back as Bernhard, the Alexanders had been practicing Catholics, but they were in fact Jewish. This secret was so tightly held within the family that it was not uncovered until the 2000s during genealogical research conducted by Alexander’s granddaughter Ilonka Venier Alexander. Like a number of upwardly-mobile Jews in Budapest in the late 19th century, Bernhard may have hidden his background to avoid discrimination, gain promotions, and attain social recognition within the largely Catholic Austro-Hungarian empire. Alexander was aware of his Jewish heritage but never practiced or even publicly admitted to it even after coming to America. Like his father, he may have felt it could hold him back both professionally and personally, a belief not unreasonable considering the racial attitudes of the time.

Even without experiencing any racial discrimination, Alexander found he faced an uphill battle upon arrival in Chicago when it came to gaining acceptance for psychoanalysis. The medical school staff was suspicious and unwelcoming to him and his philosophy, believing psychoanalysis was not real medicine. This became immediately apparent during his first disastrous lecture at the university in which Alexander discussed the case of a woman suffering with constipation. He related that he advised the woman’s husband to bring her roses, which cured her of the problem. Most of the medical professionals in the audience, according to Ilonka Alexander, were outraged “and quickly turned on him.”

The unpleasant reception Alexander encountered in Chicago should perhaps not have been such a surprise considering he had encountered similar opposition by the traditional medical community to psychoanalysis in Europe. However, he had thought Americans were more open to new ideas than they turned out to be, at least those in the Chicago medical community.

Return to America and Chicago

Alexander gave up on Chicago and the United States and returned to Europe, presumably for good. But his reputation as one of the world’s foremost psychoanalysts and particularly his work in criminal behavior brought him back to the States in less than a year of what he thought was his final departure. Alexander had been contacted by the Judge Baker Foundation in Boston (today’s Judge Baker Children’s Center) to collaborate with Dr. William Healy on a study of juvenile delinquency. Alexander readily accepted and he and his family once again crossed the Atlantic for a second, and this time much more satisfying, experience in the United States.

The results of Alexander and Healy’s groundbreaking study were published in book form under the title *Roots of Crime: Psychoanalytic Studies*, which was well and widely received upon its publication in 1936. Alexander, who was a prolific writer had also managed to complete a second book while in Boston, this one entitled *Medical Concepts of Psychology*. The book’s subject matter tied in with one of Alexander’s

dearly held professional objectives, which was to integrate psychoanalysis and medicine.

By the time of the books' publications, Alexander and his family were already reestablished in Chicago. Their return to the scene of such a bleak moment in an otherwise illustrious career may have seemed ironic, but Alexander was able to return in complete triumph thanks to an offer he received from Alexander K. Stern, a major Chicago banker and philanthropist. Stern wanted Alexander to establish an institute for psychoanalytic research, training and education that would be modeled along the same lines as the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. In addition to Stern, the institute would eventually receive funding from the Rockefeller Foundation helping it to succeed as the second-oldest institute of its kind in the United States.

Alexander saw the Institute's functions as being twofold – with an educational component to provide training for analysts as well as a polyclinic. In regards to the polyclinic he wanted to ensure that acceptance of those seeking treatment be based on need and without any regard for financial circumstance. There was to also later be a third – research – which became one of the Institute's most important functions.

While these were in line with the form of the Berlin Institute, Alexander broke new ground in the establishment of the Chicago board of directors, which would include lay members from other parts of the community and not just those in the psychiatric and medical professions. Although common today, it was a novel and somewhat controversial idea at the time, but it proved wise and helped give the new institute credence within established society.

Opened as the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis in late 1932, the Institute was an immediate success and would become, under Alexander's quarter-century of leadership, one of the most important and influential centers for research and training of psychoanalysts in the nation, attracting students from around the globe.

In some ways, the Institute was the realization of Freud's dream of spreading psychoanalysis to the United States where he felt it could be of great benefit. However, he also feared that his theories might be "diluted" in the hands of others.

Freud had a great deal of respect for Alexander and had even asked him to come and work with him in Vienna rather than go back to Chicago. Although Alexander was greatly flattered and honored, he rejected the offer. As his granddaughter Ilonka Venier Alexander wrote, "[Alexander] did not think his life's work was to preserve Freud's work or his ideas about how to teach and practice psychoanalysis solely. He had ideas of his own and America was the place to take them."

One major area where Alexander differed with traditional Freudian practice was in the duration of analysis. The common method was for a patient to undergo a long period of intense therapy, 4-5 days a week for some 300 sessions, where root problems would be discovered through a detailed exploration of the patient's childhood and past. Alexander, who had personally experienced a successful short-term analysis during his

training in Berlin, became a strong advocate for short analysis based on a specific problem presented by the patient. This generated considerable opposition by traditional Freudians, but Alexander and others continued to promote the benefits of short-term therapy and today it has become the norm in modern psychotherapy.

Throughout the 1930s, Alexander continued to build the Institute while working tirelessly to promote understanding and acceptance of the tenets of psychoanalytics in both the traditional medical establishment as well with the lay public. Alexander was a prolific writer and lecturer and made good copy for newspaper and magazine profiles. He quickly became the most famous psychoanalyst in America and his services were sought out by many including, according to family lore, Al Capone himself.

Professional success also brought financial rewards and he and his family were able to live well even during the darkest days of the Great Depression with a series of luxury apartments along Chicago's famed Gold Coast. Alexander loved America and applied for citizenship at the earliest opportunity, which was granted in 1938. His wife, Anita, however, faced a different set of circumstances. After the outbreak of war in 1941, she was classified, because of her Italian birth, as an "enemy alien." Alexander quickly used his connections with high-ranking officials at the State Department to push through her citizenship papers.

At the Institute, Alexander continued his research into psychosomatic disorders, which had been a passion from his earliest days in Berlin. Alexander was a leading proponent of the theory "that specific personality traits and specific conflicts may create particular psychosomatic illnesses." Research into this became a major part of the Institute's work and in 1950 the results of their important findings were published as *Psychosomatic Medicine: Its Principles and Applications*.

During this same period, Alexander became a strong advocate of the Corrective Emotional Experience, which he wrote about, along with Dr. Thomas Morton French and others in *Psychoanalytic Therapy: Principles and Application* (1946). The idea was that a preconceived false belief could be "corrected" by the patient experiencing first-hand a positive version of that belief, which causes them to reevaluate their original belief. Alexander was not the first nor only psychoanalyst to promote this theory, but because of his fame and extensive writing on the subject, his name has been the one most associated with it.

The corrective emotional experience was widely discussed and debated throughout the psychoanalytic community with many embracing its concepts. Yet there were others who categorically rejected it and it remains somewhat controversial even to the present day. Some of the most vocal dissenters came from within the ranks of Alexander's own Chicago Institute. During the 1940s and into the 1950s, he faced rebellion on several fronts including his advocacy of short-term therapy and the acceptance of lay analysts.

Ultimately, the internal divisions over his ideas became a major factor in his decision to retire and leave Chicago for California in 1955. After his departure, his opponents gained control of the Institute and reversed its direction back to the more traditional

methods. For several decades, Alexander's reputation faded, but in more recent years, the ideas he promoted such as short-term therapy and lay analysts have not only become accepted, they are the standard of practice.

California

Leaving his beloved Chicago behind was a bittersweet experience for Alexander yet he looked forward to new adventures out on the west coast. Fortunately, the transition was made far easier by the family's love of California, which had been their summer home from as far back as the 1930s. It had been on their first trip together to the state in the summer of 1933, that Anita, without consulting or even informing her husband, had purchased two blufftop lots in the seaside community of La Jolla. Anita, who had been taken by how much the area reminded her of her native Italy, revealed her purchase after the family had returned to Chicago. As a fait accompli, she also announced she had already hired an architect and was returning to the coast to supervise construction. Her husband may have been aghast but he did not appear displeased and he warmly embraced the family's surprise seaside escape.

Anita had not only picked a spectacular setting for a summer home she also picked an exceptional architect to design it. Cliff May had not yet gained fame as the "Father of the Modern Ranch," yet Anita immediately recognized his talent and commissioned him to design a Spanish hacienda inspired house, built around a courtyard and oriented to take in the beautiful Pacific views. Completed in Spring 1934, the house, at 5758 Dolphin Place, became the setting for many happy memories for Alexander and his family for the next twenty years. It not only provided a place of relaxation for Alexander, it helped Anita further her artistic pursuits as a member of La Jolla's burgeoning art colony.

When Alexander decided to permanently leave Chicago in 1955, he went first to Stanford University in Palo Alto before accepting a lucrative position with Mt. Sinai (today's Cedars-Sinai) Hospital in Los Angeles, where he was named as chief of their newly-created psychiatric department. It was the first hospital with a psychiatric unit west of Chicago. Alexander took up his duties in November of 1956 at what was officially known as the Psychiatric and Psychosomatic Research Institute of Mt. Sinai Hospital and Clinic. As the institute's name indicated, an important component of its function was research. Alexander took a personal interest in a study, funded by the Ford Foundation, into how the relationship between the therapist and patient affects the results of psychoanalytic treatments.

Although his duties at Mt. Sinai took up a considerable amount of his time, Alexander managed to open his own successful private practice. The arrival in Southern California of America's foremost psychoanalyst and a personal friend of Freud generated a great deal of interest particularly from Hollywood. Alexander became a welcome guest at swank parties where he mingled with the likes of Charles Chaplin and director King Vidor. As a result, a number of high-profile members of the entertainment industry such as Danny Kaye and Steve Allen became Alexander clients.

Alexander was also much sought-out as a lecturer, not only locally but nationally and internationally as well. At the same time, he continued writing, turning out articles, papers and books. One of his most notable was a semi-autobiographical work entitled *The Western Mind in Transition: An Eyewitness Story* (1960).

Palm Springs

While the Alexanders already had a long time Southern California base, Anita had begun to develop an arthritic condition which was exacerbated by the damp sea air. A decision was made to look for a warmer, drier climate and Palm Springs seemed the natural choice. The Alexanders had come to the desert at least as early as 1954, staying at the Tennis Club, which may have been a scouting expedition for a homesite. In November 1955, a full year before Alexander took up his position at Mt. Sinai, a building permit was taken out on a new home to be built in the prestigious Little Tuscany neighborhood of Palm Springs.

As had been the case with the La Jolla house, it was Anita who took charge. Her granddaughter Ilonka believes it was she who chose Walter S. White as architect as Alexander would have been way too busy to concern himself with such things. Further, as Alexander would be spending much of each week in Los Angeles, it made sense that the new desert house would accommodate Anita and her needs since she would be using it far more often than her husband.

The new home's modernistic design was a dramatic shift from the historically evocative hacienda Cliff May had created for the Alexanders in the 1930s and it seemed to fit well into the public image of the type of home in which one of the world's foremost psychoanalysts might live.

In reality, Alexander was only able to come out on weekends, having to remain in Los Angeles to be near Mt. Sinai. Alexander rented an apartment in the Wilshire corridor of West Los Angeles. However, he found he dreaded coming home every night to an empty apartment. Around the same time, his daughter Sylvia was going through a divorce. He proposed what he saw as a solution for them both. If she and her daughter Ilonka would move in with him, he would find them a nice place to live and pay all of the bills. Ilonka, who was entering high school at the time, was thrilled by the arrangement and enjoyed bonding with her grandfather. Sylvia, however, was not as happy. Fiercely independent, she bristled at her father's efforts to control her, particularly his ongoing attempts to fix her up with men he considered more appropriate. After a few years, the arrangement ended and Alexander took an apartment by himself at Chateau Marmont.

Alexander had tailored his work schedule to be a four-day week, heading to Palm Springs at the first opportunity. As they had been in Berlin, Chicago and La Jolla, the Alexanders were welcomed into local society with a wide range of friends in a variety of professions. The couple entertained frequently, with the expansive terrace overlooking the valley providing a perfect setting for sunset cocktails.

As she had done in Chicago and La Jolla, Anita had forged her own course, continuing to build on her reputation as an artist. She had changed from traditional oil painting to using a palette knife as well as working in mosaic tiles. Anita's work was so well received, she was commissioned to do several pieces for the newly-built Spa Hotel in downtown Palm Springs. Her work was showcased not just in the desert but with exhibitions in New York and Europe as well.

Death

By the start of 1964, Alexander was contemplating yet another transition in his long and brilliant career. At 73, he had decided to resign from his post at Mt. Sinai and devote his attention full time to working at the University of Southern California (USC) where had been serving as a clinical professor of psychiatry. After leaving Mt. Sinai, Alexander planned on embarking upon an extensive research project for the school. However, at the beginning of March he became ill with a respiratory infection and had to be confined to his bed in Palm Springs. He did not improve and on Sunday, March 8th, he suffered a massive heart attack en route to Desert Hospital.

Appendix VII

Walter S. White, Jr.



Walter S. White, Jr. as a young designer.

(Walter S. White papers, Architecture and Design Collection; Art, Architecture and Design Museum; University of California, Santa Barbara)

(The following biography, written by Barbara Lamprecht, M. Arch., Ph.D., is excerpted from the 2015 application nominating the Alexander Residence for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.)

As scholarship expands, the work of exceptional yet previously unknown mid-century architects is emerging. This is the case with architect, industrial designer, and inventor Walter S. White. Reflecting on his career, he described the variety of buildings he designed: “300 residences, 40 recreation homes, ski lodges, commercial buildings, churches, luxurious club houses and guestrooms, and condominiums. Of the 300 residences designed I have built approximately 15% of them myself.” While White was surrounded by other renowned Modern architects practicing in the Coachella Valley, and even employed by some renowned architects including Rudolf (R.M.) Schindler (1887-1953), Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903-1990), and Albert Frey (1903-1998), White proved to be independent thinker, unwilling to rely on others’ solutions to realize his own interpretation of Modernism.

This independence was honed from life-long investigations into innovative passive solar window mechanisms and prefabricated materials. He experimented with hyperbolic roof shapes designed to reduce costs and materials requirements while gaining unforgettable silhouettes. White earned three U.S. patents for these explorations, and his stamp can be seen on scores of buildings in the Coachella Valley and in Colorado. Few, however, integrate so many of his ideas and his self-imposed challenges as well as the Alexander Residence. In the *National Geographic* article that highlighted the project he stated, “Conventional architecture is just static and self-conscious and doesn’t fit the freedom of the desert ... We are abandoning the tyranny of rigidly parallel walls and 90-degree angles. We strive for a form that seems to spring from the ground, like a native plant.” In addition to his work in experimental forms and reconceptions of materials, his other area of research addressed passive solar energy and energy conservation.

Born in 1917, White grew up in San Bernardino. He seems to have been an iconoclast from the start. Instead of pursuing a formal education, at age 20 he began working for seminal architects and did not receive his architect’s license until 1987, when he was 70 years old. White was employed for six months by one of Neutra’s most important protégés, Harwell Hamilton Harris, in 1937. While White’s tenure with Harris was short, there were several important projects on the office boards or recently completed. During that time, Harris himself was exploring several avenues of thinking in various projects, demonstrated in the Greta Granstedt House, Los Angeles, 1938. This dwelling had a broad, standing seam metal roof that Harris devised himself from off-the-shelf components, indicating an inquisitive, hands-on approach that White shared. The floor plan and section of the John Entenza House, Santa Monica, 1937, integrated circles of various sizes with rectilinear forms, as did White in many of his houses, including the Alexander Residence.

Harris’s Helene Kershner House, Los Angeles, 1935, featured vertical redwood siding and broad roofs, another point of comparison with the subject property. Soon after, White joined Schindler’s office on Kings Road, Los Angeles for eight months, 1937-1938. The legendary architect is known for his “Space Architecture” and for his uncommon exploitation of materials. During this period his work ranged from large-boned International Style dwellings to the rustic Bennati Cabin, Lake Arrowhead, 1937.

Common to all projects, however, were several qualities: a fearlessness in designing with angles, as was Frank Lloyd Wright, Schindler’s earlier employer; an alert engagement with the landscape and nature; and a desire to consider each new project as a unique opportunity for exploration. These are qualities found in White’s work as well. According to White’s obituary, White was one of the few individuals ever to be invited by Frank Lloyd Wright to intern gratis at Taliesin West, Wright’s Arizona-based school and practice. Wright almost invariably required payment from his group of handpicked apprentices, including well-known architect John Lautner (1911-1994). While this cannot be corroborated, much of the rest of the obituary has been researched and documented as accurate. If true, it is an exception to Wright’s typical practice and indicates a high level of regard for White’s skills and potential.

In the Los Angeles area, White went on to work for other firms, such as that of architect Lee Kline (1914-2007), known for his comfortable Modern houses. Later White helped to plan and detail prefabricated war housing with a skin-stressed plywood panel system between 1939 and 1942; he recounted later that over 8,000 of these units were constructed in the U.S. In 1947, White moved from Los Angeles to Palm Springs where he worked for Clark & Frey Architects for approximately 18 months between 1947 and 1948, and quite possibly in their new office on Palm Canyon Drive which they designed. The well-established firm had recently completed the Loewy House in Little Tuscany and Frey was beginning his seminal design for the Tramway Gas Station. Completed in 1949, the station's exuberant angled roofline defines an unforgettable entrance to the City.

As with Harris and Schindler, Frey was constantly testing materials and methods for his experimental structures. These more avant garde designs ran side-by-side with the firm's work for a more conventional audience. This was a clientele who preferred the relaxed Ranch-style houses that the firm designed throughout the 1950s in Smoke Tree Ranch, an upscale community in southern Palm Springs that included such celebrities as Walt Disney. While employed by Clark & Frey, White worked on the James Lyons House in Smoke Tree Ranch, 1948, working directly with Frey. Thus, White's renowned architectural mentors were all Modernists who each interpreted its philosophy differently. Collectively, White was exposed to daring cantilevered roofs; a sensitivity to site; using materials in innovative ways; considering angles as readily appropriate for design as straight lines; adapting to clients on a spectrum from conventional to radical; and to hands-on building. White was distinguished, however, by his specialized knowledge of industrial and tool design and engineering, based on his wartime employment from 1942 to 1946 with Douglas Air Co. His archives, for example, contain research on greenhouses, oxidation rates of stainless steel, fluid dynamics, and cooling tower construction.

White's astute knowledge of steel's properties and his interest in passive solar design led to three patents, including the "Wall or Roof Structure," 1959. This generic name belies an extraordinary use of wood considered as a precious resource. Here, long, slender wooden circular dowels, alternating with small, hourglass shapes of wood that fill in the gaps between the dowels like pieces in a puzzle, create a flexible lattice with the ability to be supported by beams of any shape. The second patent, "The "Hyperbolic Paraboloid Roof Structure and Method of Constructing Frame Thereof" was issued in 1966. The "hypar" roof, as White called it, is best described as shaped like a Pringles® potato chip.

The "Solar Heat Exchanger Window Wall" patent, issued in 1975, is a passive window-and-solar collection system. The window unit, comprising three panes of glass, pivots from the top and bottom of a frame. During the summer, one face of the unit deflected heat, reflecting the sun's rays. During the winter, the user pivoted the window, reversing orientations. Heat collected on the inside of the window was returned back into interior space with a special duct that was embedded in the ceiling and connected just above the window. The device was used for a very few experimental projects, including the

Stafford Residence II, Escondido, 1988, which also has a curved roof and overlooks an expansive view. Owner Newt Stafford, 91, recalls the mid-century desert community around Palm Springs as an “exciting time” for architecture. “Everyone was innovating.” He described his long-term friend White, who also designed Stafford’s first home, as a “very gentle man, an artist,” and reported that his solar units made an “incredible difference” along the 60 feet of south-facing windows. While as initially designed the windows were difficult to control in strong winds, remedial stops secured the inevitable spinning motion. While the prototype was not developed further, it remains a credible approach and demonstrates White’s ability to analyze *a priori*.

In the late 1940s, White obtained his contractor’s license and began designing homes in the Coachella Valley that reveal a diversity of approaches. For example, the long, low, Johnson-Hebert Residence, Palm Desert, 1958, is a very fine example of canonical Modernism. Its orthogonal geometry of hardscape, landscape, and pools interlock house and setting into a controlled but expansive spatial experience. Tens of smaller, more modest homes in La Quinta, Indio, and Palm Desert are more traditional in appearance, integrating Ranch-style elements with trademark White features.

Such signature strategies include mitered glass windows with a steel column corner support set back from the glass corner; tapered ridge beams; broad roofs; concrete block walls; a minimal palette of materials; strong contrasts of solid and void; interior spaces that exploited day and artificial lighting; an integration of indoors and out; and a street façade relatively closed to public view with glass sliding walls at the rear; this last [was] a typical strategy by many Modern architects.

In the late 1960s, White moved to Colorado. There, as vice-president and consulting architect for Environ Masters, Inc., he developed cabin vacation homes designed to minimize disruption to a natural setting and maximize resistance to wind and snow loads. Instead of a conventional poured foundation, he designed a lighter-weight system with a steel substructure and caissons. Reflecting his now mature tenets, the design’s use of glass, wood, and steel underscore White’s consistent investigation into a material’s potential and into how it could be used as efficiently as possible in concert with the other materials.

While many of White’s houses are good or exemplary expressions of Modern design, they do not prepare one for a handful of extraordinary works of residential design extant in the Coachella Valley. These larger experimental buildings reveal one of his essential tenets: the roof as the primary design feature. “The roof does not define the living area,” he wrote in *Arts & Architecture*, precisely outlining the technical components of the hypar roof and his exploitation of steel placed in tension, when “it is at its efficient best.” Walls were free to be inserted at will. Relieved of the traditional requisite of load-bearing, their new role was to define spatial relationships both interior and exterior. While recalling the strong prow of Frey’s Tramway Gas Station, the roof of the extant Max Willcockson Residence, Indio, 1959, is far more complex because it is a hypar roof with two prows. However, set in a dense thicket of trees on a hillock far back from the street and protected by chain link fences, it is all but invisible to the public.

The extant Miles C. Bates Residence, Palm Desert, 1953, is possibly one of the most remarkable modern houses in California. It is not hyperbole to suggest its design offers an interpretation of organic architecture different to but no less brilliant than that of Frank Lloyd Wright. That dwelling's roof is an example of White's 1959 patent, described above. Following a wave-like curve of the supporting beams, the roof actually soars off the building altogether, tapering down to the ground at both ends of the building. Here the roof beams are secured to massive steel supports. The impression is one of a refined version of a large dinosaur, such as a brontosaurus or a stegosaurus, in its sequential diminution of intricate wood framing. By contrast, the floor plan below this dynamic roof is fairly orthodox in a fluid, rectilinear layout whose projecting volumes frame outdoor spaces and, like the Alexander Residence, a circular pool, although here very small.

White also conceived of the Alexander Residence as organic as a body. A 1959 article in the *Desert Sun* featuring the dwelling as the "Home of the Week" notes "Walter White felt that the structure is analogous to the human anatomy in the way that the steel frame supports and contains the exterior and interior structural components." White compared the holes burned through the web of the floor support beams for plumbing and electrical conduit to human respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems. Like the Bates Residence, while a much simpler process, the two-by-four ceiling is also a little more flexible, a valuable attribute during earthquakes. While unusual, the Alexander ceiling is not unique. For example, the 1955 Long Beach office of Killingsworth, Brady, and Smith features the same use of two-by-fours on end.

Apart from the late 1980s Stafford Residence II, other White-designed houses with comparably exceptional roof designs were never realized or have been demolished. The substantially renovated Smith House, 1986, has a curved roof. However, it is not located in California but in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In addition, the Smith House's thicker members and detailing reflect not only Colorado's winter demands but also the impact of national changes to building codes that disallowed strategies associated with mid-century architecture's qualities of lightness and slenderness. These facts elevate the importance of the mid-century Alexander Residence, which is in excellent condition, possesses integrity, and is easily visible to the public.
