

# FRANK SINATRA RESIDENCE

1148 East Alejo Road /  
1145 East Via Colusa  
Palm Springs, California  
Nomination Application  
For Palm Springs  
Class 1 Historic Site



*Cover Photo Courtesy James Haefner*

Prepared by  
Patrick McGrew  
For the  
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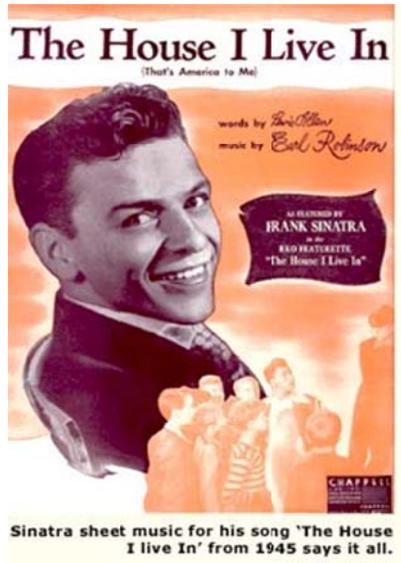
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Frank Sinatra Residence was designed in 1947 by the firm of Williams, Williams & Williams, AIA (E. Stewart Williams, designer). The building's stylistic markers place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' modern period. The house is a prime intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such it may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important mid-century architecture, an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history.

**DESIGNATION CRITERIA:** The Frank Sinatra Residence has not been previously evaluated for Class 1 eligibility but has long been included on the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) Work Program. It was included in the 1987 HSPB Survey and the 2004 Citywide Survey. A summary of the evaluation contained in this report is as follows:

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 1 - **Events:** This criterion recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends, such as the gradual rise of the city's prominence in Mid-century architectural excellence within this context. The home is an early and outstanding example of residential design and construction of buildings within the context of Mid-century desert Modernism. The Frank Sinatra Residence is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. *The Sinatra Residence is associated with this pattern of events, and is associated as well with Criterion 3 for its ability to exemplify a particular period of the national, state or local history. Therefore, the building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site under Criterion 1.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 2 - **Persons:** Frank Sinatra made a meaningful contribution to local history through his career as a nationally important celebrity whose presence in Palms Springs was an important influence in the town's history. His personal involvement in the history of Palm Springs rises to the level sufficient to qualify the building's eligibility for local listing. *The building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site on the local registry under Criterion 2.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs - 3, 4 & 5 **Design / Construction:** The building is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that make up the many qualities of the style, such as flat roofs, expansive amounts of glass, idiosyncratic use of masonry, etc. Additionally, Williams must be considered a Master architect because of his increasingly recognized greatness at his chosen profession. *The building elevates Williams' own brand of modernism to a level of excellence that could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. For its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the building qualifies as a Class 1 site under Criteria 3, 4, and 5.*

**SUMMARY:** The evaluation contained herein finds the building eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site under 8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the building was found to retain a high degree of architectural integrity.

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## 6. Statement of Significance

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### House History

Legend has it that Frank Sinatra walked into E. Stewart Williams' office in late spring of 1947 eating an ice cream cone, snapping his fingers, and saying, "I want to build a house and I want it done by Christmas." With this commission, Williams was about to put his own unique stamp on modern architecture. Sinatra's vision for his Palm Springs home was traditional in style; he requested a two-story Georgian style home built on the large through lot he had purchased on East Alejo Road. Williams is said to have presented him with two designs: the Georgian and a modern design more suited to the desert environment. Fortunately Sinatra chose the latter. "My career would have been over if he had chosen the Georgian design," Williams later commented. Williams utilized natural materials in Sinatra's home; tongue and groove clear Douglas Fir for the soaring sloping ceilings, Arizona flagstone for the chimney stacks, and redwood board and batten siding for the exterior. The home featured a generous use of glass oriented toward the exceptional views of Mount San Jacinto with large sliding glass doors in the living room that reduced the barrier between indoor and outdoor living. There was also a swimming pool sheltered on three sides by the main house, pergola and cabana. State-of-the-art audio/recording equipment was built into a living room cabinet. With crews working around the clock, the home could not be completed by Christmas, but it was ready for a New Years' Eve party. Recently rehabilitated, it remains a quintessential Williams' work. Sinatra owned the house for approximately five years<sup>1</sup>, after which he moved to a large site adjacent to the Tamarisk Country Club, where he occupied a house designed by William F. Cody.

### The Client

"Frank Sinatra (1915-1998) was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, the only child of Martin Sinatra, a boilermaker and sometime boxer from Catania, Sicily, and his wife, Natalie Garavante, who was nicknamed Dolly. The young Francis Albert Sinatra attended high school in Hoboken. He decided to become a singer either after attending a Crosby concert or seeing a Crosby film sometime in 1931 or 1932. His mother encouraged his ambition, allowing him to drop out of high school.<sup>2</sup>

In 1935, after two years of local club dates, he joined three other young men from Hoboken who called themselves the Three Flashes. The quartet renamed itself the Hoboken Four and won first prize on *Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour*. After several months with the group, Sinatra decided to go it alone, and in the late 1930's he had his first important

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<sup>1</sup> The chain of title to the property includes the following owners and dates: Frank Sinatra (1947-1953); Elsinore Machris (1953-1954); Hugh Young (1954-1997); Mark Sanders (1997-2001); A. Sloger (2001-2007); Eric Ellenbogen (2007-2009); Tom & Marianne O'Connell (2009-present).

<sup>2</sup> This biography of Frank Sinatra is excerpted from Stephen Holden's May 16, 1998 obituary in the *New York Times* entitled "Frank Sinatra Dies at 82; Matchless Stylist of Pop."

nightclub engagement, at the Rustic Cabin, a roadhouse in Alpine, N.J. Local radio exposure brought him to the attention of Harry James, the trumpet player who had recently left Benny Goodman to form his own band. James signed Sinatra for \$75 a week, and the singer made his first concert appearance with the James band in June 1939 and his first recording the next month.

Early that year, he married his longtime sweetheart, Nancy Barbato. They had three children: Nancy, who was born in 1940; Franklin Wayne (later shortened to Frank Jr.), born in 1944, and Christina (Tina), born in 1948.

For millions, his ascent from humble Italian-American roots was a symbol of ethnic achievement. And more than most entertainers, he used his influence to support political candidates. His change of allegiance from pro-Roosevelt Democrat in the 1940's to pro-Reagan Republican in the 1980's paralleled a seismic shift in American politics. By the end of his career, Sinatra's annual income was estimated in the tens of millions of dollars, from concerts, record albums, real estate ventures and holdings in several companies, including a missile-parts concern, a private airline, Reprise Records (which he founded), Artanis (Sinatra spelled backward) Productions and Sinatra Enterprises.

Widely held to be the greatest singer in American pop history and one of the most successful entertainers of the 20th Century, Sinatra was also the first modern pop superstar. He defined that role in the early 1940's when his first solo appearances provoked the kind of mass pandemonium that later greeted Elvis Presley and the Beatles. During a show business career that spanned more than 50 years and comprised recordings, film and television as well as countless performances in nightclubs, concert halls and sports arenas, Sinatra stood as a singular mirror of the American psyche.

After the voice lost its velvety youthfulness, Sinatra's interpretations grew more personal and idiosyncratic, so that each performance became a direct expression of his personality and his mood of the moment. In expressing anger, petulance and bravado -- attitudes that had largely been excluded from the acceptable vocabulary of pop feeling -- Sinatra paved the way for the unfettered vocal aggression of rock singers. The changes in Sinatra's vocal timbre coincided with a precipitous career descent in the late 1940's and early 50's. But in 1953, Sinatra made one of the most spectacular career comebacks in show business history, re-emerging as a coarser-voiced, jazzier interpreter of popular standards who put a more aggressive personal stamp on his songs.

From 1943 to 1945, he was the lead singer on *Your Hit Parade* and at the same time began recording for Columbia. Because of a musicians' strike, the accompaniment on his first several recording sessions for the label was a vocal chorus called the Bobby Tucker Singers, instead of an orchestra. In June 1943, however, Columbia re-released a recording he had made in September 1939 with Harry James. The recording, "All or Nothing at All," which had sold 8,000 copies in its first release, sold over a million.

Sinatra's popularity remained at a peak through 1946, when he had 15 hit singles. Then it began a gradual slide that steepened after 1948 and hit bottom in 1952. As early as November 1947, an appearance at the Capitol Theater in New York drew disappointing attendance. Only 4 Sinatra singles made the Top 10 in 1947, and the number dropped to one in 1948.

Although he had shown himself to have an engaging screen presence, his film career had not made him a top box-office star. From 1946 to 1949, he appeared in five MGM musicals - *Till the Clouds Roll By* (1946) (in which he sang "Ol' Man River" in a white suit); *It Happened in Brooklyn* (1947); *The Kissing Bandit* (1948); *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949); and *On the Town* (1949) - and one R.K.O. film, *The Miracle of the Bells* (1948), in which he was miscast as a priest. After two more unsuccessful pictures, *Double Dynamite* (1951) and *Meet Danny Wilson* (1952), his movie career all but evaporated.

Part of the public disenchantment came after the columnist Robert Ruark denounced him in 1947 for having socialized with the deported gangster Lucky Luciano in Cuba. The suggestion that the singer consorted with criminals made him a target of the conservative press, which resented his pro-Roosevelt political stance. For the rest of Sinatra's career, stories of his relations with the underworld dogged him, and he reacted angrily to the charges.

While his career was in decline in the late 1940's, his marriage to Nancy Barbato also unraveled. In 1949 he had begun an affair with the movie star Ava Gardner. The relationship became public the next year, and on November 7, 1951, one week after his divorce was final, he married her in Philadelphia. Passionate but stormy, the marriage lasted just less than two years. MGM announced their separation in October 1953, and they were divorced in 1957. (She died in 1990.) Those personal upheavals, including a suicide attempt, coincided with increasing tension between Sinatra and Columbia Records after Mitch Miller took the company's creative reins in 1950.

Sinatra's phenomenal resurgence began in 1953 with the release of *From Here to Eternity*, Fred Zinnemann's film version of James Jones' best-selling novel about American G.I.'s in Hawaii on the eve of World War II. His portrayal of Maggio, the combative Italian-American soldier who is beaten to death in a stockade, won him rave reviews, an Oscar and renewed public sympathy.

After *From Here to Eternity*, Sinatra's movie career boomed, with roles many and varied. He played the perennial gambler Nathan Detroit in the film adaptation of the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls* (1955), a heroin addict in *The Man with the Golden Arm* the same year and an Army investigator tracking a would-be assassin in the political thriller *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962).

Assessing his film career, the critic David Thomson said Sinatra had a "pervasive influence on American acting: he glamorized the fatalistic outsider; he made his own anger intriguing, and in the late 50's especially he was one of our darkest male icons. "Sinatra is a noir sound," he said, "like saxophones, foghorns, gunfire and the quiet weeping of women in the background."

Sinatra's last concert was on Feb. 25, 1995, at the Palm Desert Marriott Ballroom in Palm Desert, California. Assessing his own abilities in 1963, Sinatra sounded a note that was quintessentially characteristic: forlorn and tough. "Being an 18-karat manic-depressive, and having lived a life of violent emotional contradictions, I have an over acute capacity for sadness as well as elation," he said. "Whatever else has been said about me personally is unimportant. When I sing, I believe, I'm honest."

Frank Sinatra, the singer and actor whose extraordinary voice elevated popular song into an art, died on May 15, 1998 in Los Angeles. He was 82. The cause was a heart attack, said his publicity agent, Susan Reynolds. She said he would be given a private funeral.

## The Architecture / Building Description

Centered on a through lot that faces East Alejo Road on the south and East Via Colusa on the north, the layout of the 3,617 sq. ft. Sinatra Residence is a variation on pinwheel form, typically found in the works of both Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra. An excellent example of architect E. Stewart Williams' philosophy, the site plan exemplifies the concept that the site generates the form. Williams often said: "buildings must be compatible with the land where they sit, compatible with the colors of materials and shape and form of the site."

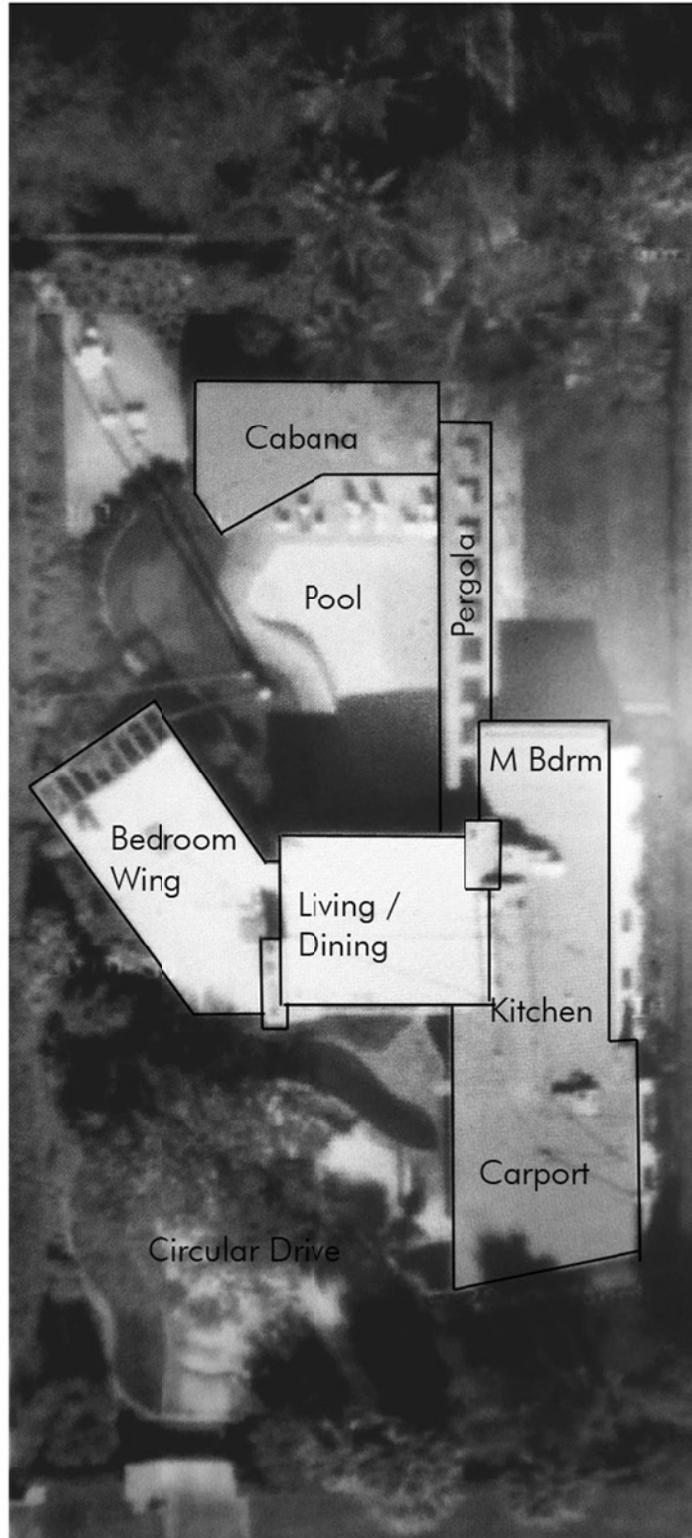
From the Alejo Road entrance, a circular motor court provides access to both the carport and the original entrance. A sidewalk leads to the original front door from which a small Foyer gave onto the open plan Living/Dining space; to the right is the Kitchen and beyond that, to the north, the Master Suite. On the west side of the Living / Dining space is the guest room wing, set at a 45-degree angle to the main body of the house; it contains two bedrooms, one originally occupied by Nancy, the other by Frank, Jr. Sinatra's second daughter Christina wasn't born until 1948.

Extending northward from the juncture of the Living and Master Bedroom Suite is a Pergola that leads to the Cabana / Pool House that contains changing rooms and showers. Today, the main entry to the house is from the Via Colusa side, through gates that open onto the Pergola walkway and lead to the main house.

The swimming pool is located along the western side of the Pergola, and along with the Cabana and the main house provides shelter and privacy for the pool. According to architect Williams, confirmed by several sources, the pool shape is not that of a piano, but rather was generated as an interlocking form with the landscape that focuses the eye on the spectacular view of the mountains. The name "Twin Palms" derives from the signature palm trees that originally signaled the house's location; these trees survive today. This "Twin Palms" should not be confused with the Alexander Company "Twin Palms" development designed by Palmer & Krisel.

The house is flat-roofed, except for the Living / Dining Room and the Master Suite, both of which have shed roofs that slope up to the north. The north side of the living area features floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors. The living room has low clerestory windows on the south side, and transom windows above the tall sliding glass doors on the north side. The lower roof aligns with the top of the glass, and forms the base for the clerestories and transoms. Three large Arizona flagstone-veneered rectangular masses (two are chimney stacks) mark the functional divisions from the exterior. Built of conventional frame construction, the exterior was originally redwood board and batten siding. In 1998 rehabilitation, the original siding was replaced with painted cement plaster. See Integrity section for more information regarding changes to the building's exterior.

**VIA COLUSA**



**ALEJO ROAD**

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

To qualify as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, a property must be significant; that is, it must represent a significant part of the history, architecture, or archeology, of an area, and it must have the characteristics that make it a good representative of properties associated with that aspect of the past. The significance of an historic property can be properly understood when it is evaluated within its historic context. Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history is made clear. In order to decide whether a property is significant within its historic context, it must be determined which facet of history the property represents; the significance of that facet of history; whether the subject property has relevance in illustrating the historic context; how the property illustrates that history; and an analysis of the physical features the property possesses to determine if it conveys the aspect or history with which it is associated. If the subject property represents an important aspect of the area's history (under any of the seven criteria recognized by the Municipal Code) and possesses the requisite quality of integrity, it then qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site.

## BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into three more or less distinct periods that include Prehistory, the Settlement Period, and the Modern Period. It is within the context of these last two periods that the buildings of Palm Springs can be evaluated.

**Pre-History Period** For centuries Palm Springs was the home of the Agua Caliente Indians. As the site of natural hot springs and a dry and sunny desert climate, the area drew its first non-Indian visitors in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of Palm Springs' Pre-History Period the only remaining objects are likely to be archeological in nature as no buildings or physical structures from that period survive.

**Settlement Period (1880-1925)** The period began with the 1880 land purchase from the Native American Pedro Chino to the first white land owners W. E. Van Slyke and M. Byrne. That land was subsequently purchased by Judge John Guthrie McCallum who established a ranch and built his home in Palm Springs in 1887. Through the efforts of McCallum and others, an infrastructure was built that supported the development of a small village. Many settlers followed, and by the 1920s, the local climate, mineral springs and beauty combined to foster the development of the town as a health resort.

**Modern Period (1925 - 1960s)** The period might be considered to have begun with the construction of the area's first "modern" structure, Rudolph Schindler's Paul and Betty Popenoe Cabin in 1922. With this building, the area's then predominant architectural style based on Mexican and Spanish Colonial motifs already well-established in Southern California began to change. Incorporation of the town of Palm Springs followed in 1938. During the post-WWII era, Palm Springs prospered through reliance on tourism that fueled the economy. Hollywood celebrities discovered the desert oasis and patronized its hotels, inns, nightclubs and restaurants; celebrity-seeking tourists soon followed, transforming Palm Springs from a sleepy village into an increasingly cosmopolitan environment that saw the

construction of schools, hospitals an airport and other important public works projects. The commercial core along Palm Canyon Drive (originally Main Street) flourished. In the 1950s the downtown core was expanded by the construction of the cross-axis of Tahquitz-McCallum Way that extended from the center of the original settlement to the airport, spurring new development along the way. Early private residential development also expanded into new sub-divisions composed of mid-century modern second homes in the flat lands surrounding the town's original core.

Today, Palm Springs is increasingly known for its early Hollywood associations as well as for its mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century architectural "Golden Age." Important buildings from the Modern Period reflect regionally oriented contemporary architecture inspired by the International Style that are now popularly called "mid-century modern."

The construction of modern homes by celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Dinah Shore, Bob Hope and others became fairly commonplace; those homes with their intimate connection to celebrities are valued over those merely purchased by celebrities. Nonetheless, a small cottage industry of "homes of the stars" contributes to the city's allure and lore, despite its occasionally specious nature.

As with celebrity connections, architectural tourism is an important theme in the city's contemporary history. Local architectural practitioners whose names permeate the town's collective consciousness include John Porter Clark, Albert Frey, E. Stewart Williams, William F. Cody and Donald Wexler, who were among the first generation of licensed architects to discover the opportunities for creating modern architecture in Palm Springs in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. It is against these contexts that the Frank Sinatra Residence will be evaluated.

## EVALUATION:

### **Criterion 1:** Significant Event (Completed because Criterion 1 is marked above)

To qualify for listing under this criterion, a property must be associated with one or more events important in the defined historic context. *Criterion 1 recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends, such as the gradual rise of the city's prominence in architectural excellence in Mid-Century Modern architecture that is an important pattern of events within this associated context. The home is an early and outstanding example of residential design and construction of buildings within the context of Mid-century desert Modernism. The Frank Sinatra Residence is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. Therefore, the building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site under Criterion 1.*

### **Criterion 2:** Significant Person (Completed because Criterion 2 is marked above)

This Criterion applies to properties associated with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented. Persons "significant in our past" refers to individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, State, or national historic context. The criterion is generally restricted to those properties that

illustrate a person's important achievements. In order to determine whether a property is significant for its associative values under this Criterion, the importance of the individual must be established along with the length and nature of his/her association with the subject property and any other properties associated with the individual.

In the evaluation of historic properties, one of the most consistent dilemmas is how to establish the importance of "persons." Preservation scholar Harold Kahlman developed an easily understood methodological hierarchy wherein the association with the life or activities of a person who has made a significant contribution is quantified as follows: A person of primary importance, intimately connected with the property receives the highest rating. An example would be a home actually built or commissioned and occupied by a celebrity. The home would ultimately reflect the personality as well as the programmatic requirements of that person as interpreted by the architect. The Sinatra Residence is an example of a person of primary importance, intimately connected with the property.

By comparison, the programmatic requirements of a person of primary importance, loosely connected to a property, or a person of secondary importance intimately connected with a property would not have benefited from the significant person's input. This is analogous to the "Washington Slept Here" school of preservation. The connection with the property is incidental (if not anecdotal) and is not reflected in the building's design. In Palm Springs, there are innumerable examples of historic properties acquired by celebrities who had no input into their origins. Nonetheless, these properties are marketed at premium prices as the home of a famous person.

Frank Sinatra made a meaningful contribution to local history through his career as a nationally important entertainer whose presence in Palms Springs was an important influence in the town's history. His continuing involvement in Palm Springs' cultural and philanthropic life continued even after he moved to Ranch Mirage. His personal involvement in the history of Palm Springs rises to the level sufficient to qualify the building's eligibility for local listing. The building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site 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 Frank Sinatra Residence was designed in 1947 by the firm of Williams, Williams & Williams, AIA, with E. Stewart Williams as the partner in charge of design. The building's stylistic markers place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs modern period. One of Palm Springs better-known residences, the house is a prime, largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such it may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs image as a center of important mid-century architecture, an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site 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 building is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that make up the many qualities of the style, such as overall horizontality, flat roofs, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive, machine produced materials, masonry, etc. The structure is eligible as a specimen of its type or period of construction because it is an important example (within its context) of building practices in Palm Springs at mid-century. The building qualifies as a Class 1 Site 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: Works of a Master:** A master is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill. The property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his work, or a particular idea or theme in his craft. A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect. For example, not every building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is eligible under this portion of Criterion 5, although it might meet other Criteria.

E. Stewart Williams remains important because he was included among the earliest practitioners of Modernism in the desert. A short biographical study of Williams' work may be found in the attachments to this nomination. In short, Williams must be considered a Master architect because of his increasingly recognized greatness at his chosen profession. Further, the Sinatra Residence is a signature representation of his career at its beginning. It was Williams first completed structure, illustrating his sense of proportion, massing and refinement in an emerging modern vernacular. Williams was an architect of consummate skill and this project in particular exemplifies all of the markers of his emerging modernism.

**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. A property is eligible for its high artistic values if it so fully articulates a particular concept of design that it expresses an aesthetic ideal. As mentioned above, as an example of Williams' early modern style, the building articulates Williams' own brand of modernism to a level of excellence that could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. As the work of a

Master, and for its high artistic values, The building qualifies as a Class 1 site 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. Since no claim has been brought forward regarding an historic district in this tract, The building does not qualify as a Class 1 Site under Criterion 6.

## ARCHEOLOGY

**Criterion 7:** (That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.) The building does not qualify for listing on the local registry under Criterion 7.

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## 7. Integrity Analysis

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Background: The following analysis is based upon an interview by Matt Bamberg, in the *Desert Post Weekly* entitled "He Did It His Way: Restoring Frank Sinatra's Palm Springs Hideaway."

During a 1997 house-hunting trip, Marc Sanders purchased the Sinatra residence. Sanders represented a group of investors who purchase and rehabilitate architecturally significant properties. Located in an older neighborhood once populated by movie stars of the '40s and '50s, the home was one of many in the neighborhood that had fallen into disrepair. When built, the house was located on the outskirts of town.

During a ten-month, \$400,000.00 rehabilitation, Sanders largely maintained the property's architectural integrity; the structure of the home was not changed during the remodeling process. The original single-glazed windows and sliding glass doors were replaced with double-glazed windows and doors in bronze anodized aluminum frames. Recognizing the futility of maintaining wood siding in the desert, all of the deteriorated wood siding was replaced with cement plaster, painted sandy beige; the wood roof trims were painted a dark brown. Sanders made a few changes to the basic layout. Although the house did not have a traditional front porch, it did have a covered entranceway. That area was enclosed to become the current Breakfast area. Sanders met with Stewart Williams and discussed the change to the entry and the replacement of the wood siding with cement plaster. Williams said to have agreed, and indicated that if he were doing it over he would have used cement plaster because of the difficulty in maintaining wood in a desert climate. Opting perhaps for a "better" address, Sanders chose to relocate the entrance to the house to the Via Colusa side of the property. Original fences were replaced by the painted stack-bond block walls and entrance gates on both street frontages that exist today. A similar block wall replaced the louvered sidewall of the carport.

Inside the house, concrete floors were warmed with a layer of polymer-based mix that was spread over the existing surface and stained caramel. "I wanted to keep the surface hard like it was outside for the inside/outside living ...," says Sanders. Sanders restored the sinks, light fixtures and tile in the bathrooms to their original state by having them professionally cleaned. The existing dual hot and cold faucets, one on each side of the simple square lavatories were retained. There was no need to replace the plumbing because the house was built with copper water lines throughout and was in acceptable condition. Original to the property was a state-of-the-art music system / recording studio that was contained in a Living Room closet.

## INTEGRITY

This 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 building 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. ***Although the building has seen some minor alterations, the***

*essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived intact. Similarly the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; the type, amount, and style of detailing has survived as well. Although the materials and colors of the exterior surface materials have been changed from redwood siding to cement plaster, this is a fairly common occurrence in a desert climate, and is a relatively insignificant and reversible change.*

## 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 Sinatra Residence continues to reflect the architects' 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. *As mentioned above, the exterior surface materials have been changed from redwood siding to cement plaster, but this change does not constitute a significant loss of the physical elements that expressed the design during the building's period of significance; the particular pattern and configuration that today forms the historic property survives.*

## 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. *With the Sinatra Residence, the workmanship is comprised of sophisticated configurations and integral ornamental detailing reflected in stone, glass, steel, and, with the pergola, even the exposed structural*

*system itself. The property 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. *Although the culture's concept of glamour may have changed, the Sinatra Residence was the very essence of Palm Springs glamour when built. The 1940s were a sophisticated, open and optimistic time, a feeling still expressed by the design of this building. The Sinatra Residence retains the 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. *As stated under Criterion 1: the Sinatra Residence is an important example of mid-century residential development in Palm Springs. The building represents the overall residential development from the 1940s to the 1960s, and contributes to the scale and character of the city's mid-century residential neighborhoods. As such, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community; the building retains integrity of association.*

*Integrity Summary: The recently rehabilitated building appears to be in excellent condition. The Integrity analysis confirms that the building still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. And while the building has undergone numerous minor alterations since it was built, virtually all of its character-defining features survive. The building retains a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify it for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site.*

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## 8. Bibliography

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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.

### Books

Architectural Resources Group, *Citywide Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco: 2004.

Bamberg, Matt, *Desert Post Weekly*, "He Did It His Way: Restoring Frank Sinatra's Palm Springs Hideaway."

Cygelman, Adele, *Palm Springs Modern*. Rizzoli International Publications, New York: 1999.

Hess, Alan, and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend: the Architecture and Design of a Midcentury Oasis*. Chronicle Books, San Francisco: 2001.

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National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.,

Niemen, Greg, *Palm Springs Legends: Creation of a Desert Oasis*. Sunbelt Publications: San Diego: 2006.

Sotta, Andy, et. al., *E. Stewart Williams: A Tribute to His Work and Life*. Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, Palm Springs: 2005.

Williamson, Roxanne Kuter, *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame*. University of Texas Press, Austin: 1991.

### Magazines

*Palm Springs Life*, January 2000, p 79 "Building a Reputation." Stewart Williams as told to Hal Meltzer.

### Sources Consulted:

Palm Springs Assessor's Office

Palm Springs Historical Society

Palm Springs Public Library

Palm Springs Planning Department, HSPB Files

San Francisco Public Library Historic Photographs Collection

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## 9. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 35,719 sq. ft. or 0.82 acres

Property Boundary Description: The boundary includes all of APN 507274003.

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## 10. Prepared By

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Name/title: Patrick McGrew

Organization: McGrew / Architecture

Street address: 674 South Grenfall Road

City: Palm Springs

State: CA

Zip: 92264

Telephone: 760 416 7819

e-mail address: [patrickmcgrew2@gmail.com](mailto:patrickmcgrew2@gmail.com)

## Appendix III: E. STEWART WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHY

### Williams, Williams & Williams, AIA / E. Stewart Williams, Partner in Charge of Design

Emerson Stewart Williams was born in Dayton, Ohio on November 15, 1909 to Harry and Una Williams. At the time, his father was partner in an extremely successful architecture firm, Schenk and Williams. At its peak, the firm employed 120 people with a focus on large commercial buildings for corporate clients such as Delco, Frigidaire and National Cash Register Corporation. The occasional house project included one designed for the Wright brothers of flying fame.

By all accounts, Stewart was an extremely bright and charming young man with a great sense of humor who enjoyed athletics, his studies, socializing and the arts - traits which stayed with him throughout his life. Knowing since age 5 that he desired to follow in his father's footsteps to become an architect, Stewart entered Cornell University in 1928 and graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1932. He then attended the University of Pennsylvania where he earned his Master's Degree in architecture in 1933 and was awarded the prestigious Theophilus Parsons Chandler Fellowship.

By this time, the Great Depression had swept across America, bringing with it major change. The Williams family's affluent lifestyle was not spared. Architectural commissions evaporated. Schenk and Williams' once thriving firm was reduced to just two partners scrounging for whatever work they could find. Undoubtedly this reversal of fortune had a profound effect on the young Stewart Williams (he resisted expanding his firm throughout 50 years in practice), steering him at times away from a career in architecture and towards a career in art and design. Fortunately Williams found a position at Bard College (then part of Columbia University) teaching art and design from 1934-1938. While there, he supplemented his teaching salary by selling his etchings and paintings. Upon entering one of his artworks in the American Watercolor Society Exhibition in New York, he was awarded the Zabriskie prize, the top purchase award.

In 1938, Williams departed on a long-delayed grand tour of Europe to study architecture and art. His travels took him to Stuttgart, Germany where he was profoundly influenced by the Werkbund (a modernist workingman's housing complex designed by a collaborative of some of Europe's greatest modernist architects). Williams recalled in a 2000 interview for *Palm Springs Life Magazine*: "I once went to a Seidling in Germany done by Gropius, Mendelsohn, Behrens, Mies van der Rohe and others where there were tract houses nearby. The little inexpensive houses were full of people while the elegant structures done by those world-famous architects were empty. So I asked one of the guards why these houses were empty and he said people didn't like living in boxes. This was early in the modern movement and people had not changed their thinking about being closer to the earth. The use of materials like beautiful wood, native stone and glass, to a certain extent, were mixed with colorful interiors. They loved fabrics that were patterned and they loved flowers and have vines

growing on the house. There was a feeling of simplicity and one that made me feel this was the way I would like to work.”

While visiting the south of Sweden, Williams met the love of his life, Mari Schlytern, a young and beautiful art student at Stockholm’s Kunsthalle. After six months touring Europe, Williams returned home with hopes of making Mari his bride as well as with a profound appreciation of the Swedish design philosophy, significantly their use of natural materials. In 1940, after a brief stint working in his father’s architectural firm Williams took a job with famed industrial designer Raymond Lowey of New York, where Stewart and Mari eventually married in Woodstock.

By 1942 Williams felt he would inevitably be drafted into World War II service. Wanting to determine which branch he would serve in, he enlisted in the Navy and was assigned to the Mare Island Naval Yard in San Francisco. While there, he supervised the design and construction of the dry docks serving the U.S. Navy fleet.

Meanwhile, Harry Williams had decided to move to Palm Springs for semi-retirement and to a climate that would help alleviate the symptoms of his wife’s debilitating arthritis. After designing a home and a commercial building in Palm Springs for Julia Carnell, Harry was commissioned by Carnell to design The Plaza<sup>3</sup> Shopping Center, now Class 1 Site No. 22, on Palm Canyon Drive in 1936. It was a mixed-use project combining retail/office and residential components - a novel concept at the time. It was the senior Williams first significant commission in almost 8 years after suffering the collapse of Schenk and Williams.

With World War II over, in 1946 Stewart decided to join his father and brother Roger in establishing an architectural practice in Palm Springs. From 1946 to 1956, the three Williams’s worked in partnership. During this time Harry taught his sons about specifications, building codes, zoning, and the ups and downs of working with clients. He also taught them how to run an architectural practice; there was little money to be made in a residential practice, so Harry encouraged his sons to pursue commercial work for banks, office buildings and schools. While Stewart continued designing an occasional house during his career (usually with spectacular results), the bulk of his work was in the commercial arena. He acted as lead designer, Roger as engineer and Harry as facilitator. The years 1946 to 1948 were busy for Williams. Besides the Sinatra Residence, he would design The Colony, Temple Isaiah, the Bissonte Lodge and a modern addition to the 1924 Pepper Tree Inn. All but the Sinatra Residence have either been altered beyond recognition or demolished.

Southern California proved an especially fertile ground for modernist architecture due to a climate which encouraged indoor/outdoor living. Palm Springs, a playground for wealthy movie stars and industrialists, not only provided perfect climate and scenic beauty as the backdrop for modern designs, but also the financial resources to take those designs from drafting table to reality. This is evident when one looks at the concentration of modern

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<sup>3</sup> Later “La Plaza”

architects and projects built or under construction in Palm Springs during E. Stewart Williams first year in practice, 1946 to 1947. In that year alone, significant modernist projects included the Edward Kaufmann Residence by Richard Neutra; the Clark & Frey-designed Raymond Lowey Residence; and the Del Marcos Hotel by desert newcomer William F. Cody. Williams commented about his own early expertise in 1997 *Palm Springs Life* interview; “I didn’t know anything about architecture really when I came out here in 1946. I had only sort of bits of experience, I didn’t know about zoning, about building codes, didn’t know anything about construction. I didn’t know how to mix concrete. I detailed a lot of things in my dad’s office but I didn’t know how to build.”

A common thread running through Williams designs is that the site generated the form. Williams is often quoted as saying, “buildings must be compatible with the land where they sit, compatible with the colors of materials and shape and form of the site. I don’t design something that looks as if some alien spaceship set down onto the landscape.” Unlike some of his contemporaries, he also lauded the craftsmen who built his projects. “They are responsible [for the work] as much I am. That’s the way architecture is. It’s a team effort... We dream them up and design them but it’s a collaborative effort.” This philosophy guided Williams throughout his entire career.

During the 1950s, Williams work consisted of both commercial and residential commissions. However, most of his notable residential projects were completed during this period, including the Kiner; the Edris (Class 1 Site No. 46) and the Sutter residence, and in 1955 a home for his growing family. Notable commercial projects of this period include the original Desert Hospital; the first Palm Springs Desert Museum; the Oasis Commercial Building - the upper level of which is Class 1 Site No. 55 - where the firm’s offices were housed; and the first of two banks he designed for the Coachella Valley Savings and Loan in 1956.

Heeding the advice of his father, Williams pursued commercial work which comprised the majority of his projects from the mid-50s through his retirement in 1990. In addition to the previously mentioned projects, Williams completed the Palm Springs High School Gym (1947); the Palm Springs Polo Fields (1947); the original Desert Hospital (1950); Palm Springs City Hall with Clark & Frey (1955) - Class 1 Site No. 33; Palm Springs High School Auditorium (1956); and Library (1958) and the College of the Desert Gymnasium and Pool (1958.)

### **1957-1972 Williams and Williams / 1972-1990 Williams, Clark and Williams**

From the late 50s until the early 70s, Williams practiced with his brother Roger, later joining forces with fellow desert architect, neighbor and friend, John Porter Clark. The outstanding and impressive body of work from this period includes; Santa Fe Federal Savings Building - Class 1 Site No. 54 on Palm Canyon Drive for which the firm received a special citation for the design from the Inland California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The second bank building for Coachella Valley Savings and Loan - Class 1 Site No 53, was completed in 1961 at the corner of Ramon Road and Palm Canyon Drive; it won the Portland

Cement Association award for creative use of concrete. Other projects included the Aerial Tramway Mountain Station; Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa, and the new Palm Springs Art Museum - Class 1 Site No. 35.

Although Williams was an avowed modernist heavily influenced by the International Style, he always charted his own course. Through his interpretation, he eschewed the rigid tenets of the style and approached architecture with an open mind. Williams had great respect for Mies van der Rohe's work and appreciated the graceful lines of his houses and the way in which he merged the outdoors with the interior. Williams labored with each design to integrate the building into the site. The beauty of the materials used in his buildings always predominated. When asked about the essence of his style, Williams said, "Let the natural beauty of the materials be the thing you see."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The preceding biographical data on Stewart Williams is based upon *E. Stewart Williams: A Tribute to his life and Work*, published by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation.

## Appendix VI: Historic Consultant Qualifications

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

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

Patrick McGrew's knowledge and reputation in the field of historic preservation provided the basis for his public service as the long-time President of San Francisco's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, which extended over an eighteen year period beginning in 1978 when he was first appointed by then-Mayor George Moscone; he served the next ten years under Mayor Dianne Feinstein. Although he served less than a year under Mayor Art Agnos, it was Agnos who declared November 17, 1991 "Landmarks of San Francisco Day" to honor the publication of McGrew's first book, *Landmarks of San Francisco* (Harry Abrams, New York, 1991). Reappointed in 1992 by Mayor Frank Jordan, McGrew served four more years on San Francisco's Landmarks Board. McGrew's second book, *Landmarks of Los Angeles* was published by Abrams in 1994. His acknowledgment by government and/or regulatory agencies, combined with Mr. McGrew's impressive list of publications on California's historic architecture, is a testament to his proficiency as a leading expert in California architectural history. He is a member of the Society of Architectural Historians, and has received many awards for his work during a distinguished career. In 1995, his book *The Historic Houses of Presidio Terrace*, received an award of honor from the California Heritage Council.

Upon the occasion of Mr. McGrew's induction into the City Club of San Francisco's Wall of Honor, Mayor Willie Brown declared November 30, 2003 as "Patrick McGrew Day" in San Francisco, and a Commendation from the United States Senate was presented in recognition of McGrew's 'distinguished career and outstanding contributions to the City of San Francisco.' Patrick McGrew moved to Palm Springs, California in 2005. Recently McGrew has presented lectures on architects William F. Cody and Hugh Kaptur for the Palm Springs Art Museums' Architecture and Design Council. In January 2010, he completed a monograph entitled *Donald Wexler, Architect*. Previous Class 1 Nominations prepared by McGrew include the Kocher-Samson Building; the Oasis Commercial Building; The (Town & Country) Center; the Sidney Noles / Kirvin Satterwhite Residence; the Marius and Rachael de Brabant Residence; the Royal Hawaiian Estates Historic District; and the Dr. Hugh Stephens Residence.

### Memberships and Affiliations:

Board Member, Lecturer Historian & Archivist: Architecture & Design Council, Palm Springs Art Museum  
Board Member: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation  
Architectural Advisory Committee of the Palm Springs Planning Commission  
Palm Springs Historical Society  
Society of Architectural Historians, Southern California Chapter  
California Preservation Foundation  
National Trust for Historic Preservation