

KOCHER-SAMSON BUILDING  
766 North Palm Canyon Drive  
Palm Springs, California 92264  
Nomination Application for  
Class 1 Historic Site

# KOCHER – SAMSON BUILDING



Figure 1 View from the North, Image by Stephen Willard

Prepared by Patrick McGrew  
For the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation  
February 2008; Revised January 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the process of researching a building, certain phrases and/or points of view begin to surface. Sometimes exact quotes appear in many sources, usually uncredited. The research conducted on the Kocher-Samson Building was no exception: the oft-told story of the building and Albert Frey's concurrent move to Palm Springs was repeated many times in various magazines, books and Internet sites that contain information about the building. And so, it was a fortunate occurrence that, having saved the best until last, I finally read architect, author, scholar Joseph Rosa's<sup>1</sup> authoritative and comprehensive *Albert Frey, Architect*. Here finally was the complete story of both Frey and the Kocher-Samson building, based upon extensive personal interviews that Rosa conducted with Frey in 1986-1987. It has been a distinct pleasure to prepare an historic site nomination for this important building because the research was remarkably complete, seemingly waiting to be rediscovered. The building should be designated a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, with public credit to Joseph Rosa.

- Patrick McGrew  
Palm Springs, 2012

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<sup>1</sup>**Joseph Rosa** Joseph Rosa is currently the Director of the University of Michigan Museum of Art. He is the former John H. Bryan Curatorial Chair of Architecture and Design at the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as the author of 13 books; his writings have appeared in *Praxis, Architectural Design, Assemblage, Casabella, The History of Photography Journal, Oculus, Architektur & Bauforum*, and *Progressive Architecture*. Rosa has curated over 30 exhibitions and was formerly the Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), the Curator of Architecture at the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, PA, the Chief Curator at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, and the Director of the Columbia Architecture Galleries. Rosa has been a Visiting Scholar at The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, a recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. He has also taught at Columbia University, California College of the Arts, Catholic University, the University of California Berkeley, and SCI-ARC in Los Angeles. Rosa received a B.Arch. in Architecture from the Pratt Institute, a M.S. in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, and was a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art and Archaeology. He has worked in the architectural firms of Gwathmey Siegel and Associates, Peter Eisenman, and Agrest & Gandelsonas.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The architectural historian David Gebhard<sup>2</sup> has called the Kocher-Samson Building “probably the most pure and at the same time workable example of the International style in Southern California.” Others have said that the Kocher-Samson office building may be Palm Springs’ most important building today, though to some it hardly seems worth a second look, except the countless students and scholars who make regular pilgrimages to Palm Springs to visit this building. More important American architectural scholars have written about this building than possibly any other in early Palm Springs history; a partial list is included in the Bibliography.

### DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

Previous evaluations: The Kocher-Samson building was previously evaluated and found to be eligible for National Register listing at the local level in the *Citywide Historic Resources Survey of 2004*. The authors of that survey did not have the time, money, or for that matter, the responsibility to examine all of the information available on this important early modernist building. The review and analysis contained in this report, of the additional information available, finds that the building is eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Class I Historic Site under five of the local ordinance’s seven criteria, as well as being eligible for listing on both the California and National Registries under three of their four criteria.<sup>3</sup> The site has not been evaluated for archeological significance.

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 1 - **Events**: The Kocher-Samson Building is an important example of mid-century commercial development in Palm Springs. The building represents the overall commercial development of the downtown from the 1930s onward and contributes to the scale and character of the city’s main commercial street. As such, it is associated with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community, thereby qualifying it as eligible for listing on the local, California and National Registries. As Palm Springs’ first International Style building, the Kocher-Samson Building begins a chronology of a pattern of events that continues today as variations of the International Style continue to be built along Palm Canyon Drive. Today, Palm Canyon Drive is known internationally for its collection of buildings inspired by the International Style, including the Oasis Commercial Building, the Santa Fe Federal Building, the two Coachella Valley Savings and Loan buildings, and the City National Bank Building, to name the most prominent, but the Kocher-Samson was the first. The Kocher-Samson Building is eligible for listing on the Palm Springs Historic Site Registry, as well as the California and National Registries under this criterion.

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 2 - **Persons**: Jacob John Kocher was the first licensed pharmacist and one of the earliest physicians in Palm Springs. He was a key player in the emerging village’s commercial and civic life, and was also President of the Palm Springs Board of Trade - roughly the equivalent of Mayor - in the days before Palm Springs’ incorporation in 1938. Research about Kocher indicates that the building is Register eligible under this paragraph for its association with Jacob John Kocher, a person of significance in Palm Springs history.

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs - 3, 4 & 5 **Design / Construction**: Because the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of Palm Springs commercial modernist architecture, and because it is the work of two master architects, and because it possesses high artistic values, it qualifies as eligible for listing on the Palm Springs, California and National Registries.

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<sup>2</sup>**Dr. David Gebhard** (1928-1996.) Dr. Gebhard was born and raised in Minnesota; he received his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in 1958. He served, for six years, as director of the Roswell Museum and Art Center in New Mexico, before moving to UC Santa Barbara in 1961. As an historian and professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, he was well known for his reference guides to the architecture of California, Los Angeles and San Francisco. He was also the author of numerous volumes on the architects and architecture of California, and was the founder and curator of the renowned architectural drawing collection at UCSB, where the Albert Frey Archive is housed. Gebhard was a leading architectural historian, particularly known for his books on the architecture and architects of California. He was a long-time faculty member at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and was dedicated to the preservation of Santa Barbara architecture. As a teacher he inspired many students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition to his long teaching career, he served as director of the University Art Museum for twenty years, building a small gallery into a significant accredited university museum. In this position, he initiated the Architectural Drawings Collection, now one of the leading West Coast repositories for architectural materials. With Robert Winter he co-authored guides to architecture in northern and southern California. Gebhard was also active in service to his community, serving for many years on the Santa Barbara County Architectural Board of Review. He was active in the Society of Architectural Historians, and served a term as its president in the 1980s.

<sup>3</sup> The National Register Criteria served as a model for the criteria established by both the California Register of Historic Resources and Palm Springs Municipal Code Section 8.05.020 which utilizes six sub-paragraphs (8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 1-6 as the criteria used for local designation. National Register Criterion A, *Events* finds its counterpart in the California and Palm Springs Registries as Criterion 1 and paragraph 1 respectively; similarly, the National Register Criterion B, *Persons* finds its counterpart in the California and Palm Springs Registries as Criterion 2 and paragraph 2 respectively. National Register Criterion C, *Design / Construction* is paralleled in the California Register as Criterion 3, whereas, in Palm Springs it becomes paragraphs 3, 4, 5 & 6.



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262  
Telephone: 760-323-8245 ~ Fax: 760-322-8360

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Public Works & Engineering ~ 760-323-8253

Fire Department ~ 760-323-8187

Building & Safety ~ 760-323-8242

Building Inspections ~ 760-323-8243

Code Enforcement ~ 760-778-8434

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## HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION

The City of Palm Springs allows for the local designation of historic buildings, sites or districts within the City (Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.) This application packet is to be completed in order to request a historic designation. For additional information, please contact the Department of Planning Services at 760-323-8245 or [planning@palmsspringsca.gov](mailto:planning@palmsspringsca.gov).

### **APPLICATION**

The completed application and required materials may be submitted to the Department of Planning Services. The submittal will be given a cursory check and will be accepted for filing only if the basic requirements have been met.

A case planner will be assigned to the project and will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and all exhibits to ensure that all required information is adequate and accurate. Incomplete applications due to missing or inadequate information will not be accepted for filing.

Applicants may be asked to attend scheduled meetings pertaining to their project. These will include the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and the City Council.

### **HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD (HSPB)**

Once the application has been determined to be complete, the HSPB will review the application to determine whether the site meets the minimum qualifications for designation pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. If such determination is made, a public hearing will be scheduled for a future meeting.

A public hearing will be held by the HSPB to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the HSPB will make a recommendation to the City Council. Notice will be provided as indicated below.

### **CITY COUNCIL**

After receiving the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board, a public hearing will be held by the City Council to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the requested Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the City Council will then conditionally approve, deny, or approve the application as submitted. The City Council's decision on the application is final.

### **NOTIFICATION**

Prior to consideration of the application by the HSPB and the City Council, a notice of public hearing for a Historic Site Designation request will be mailed to all property owners within 400 feet of the subject property a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the hearing dates.



**Office Use Only**

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

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**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS  
Department of Planning Services**

**HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION**

**TO THE APPLICANT:**

Your cooperation in completing this application and supplying the information requested will expedite City review of your application. Application submitted will not be considered until all submittal requirements are met. Staff may require additional information depending upon the specific project. Please submit this completed application and any subsequent material to the Department of Planning Services.

This form is to be used to nominate individual properties for Class 1 or 2 historic designation, or to nominate the formation of historic districts. Applicants are encouraged to review two bulletins from the US Department of Interior for additional information:

- “How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form” (National Register Bulletin 16A / <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>); and
- “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (National Register Bulletin 15; <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions in the Bulletins.

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**1. Property Information**

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Historic name: Kocher- Samson Insurance Company Building

Other names: N/A

Address: 766 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, California 92262,

Assessor parcel number: 505286002

Owner's name: Michael Kilroy

Owner's Address: The Kilroy Companies, LLC; 800 South Pacific Coast Highway, Suite 225

City: Redondo Beach State: California Zip: 90227

Telephone: unknown

E-mail address: m1@kilroy.com

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## 2. Classifications

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Ownership of Property. Check as many boxes as apply.

- Private
- Public - Local
- Public - State
- Public - Federal

Category of Property. Check only one box.

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property. TOTAL must include at least One (1) in Contributing Column.

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ Buildings
_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ Sites
_____	_____ Structures
_____	_____ Objects
_____	<b>2</b> _____ <b>TOTAL</b>

If the building or site is part of a larger group of properties, enter the name of the multiple-property group; otherwise enter "N/A".

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## 3. Use or Function

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Historic Use or Function: Mixed use: Residential above Commercial

Current Use or Function: Residential above Commercial

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## 4. Description

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Architect: Kocher & Frey

Construction Date and Source: 1934; Architectural Drawings

Architectural Stylistic Classification: International Style

Construction Materials:

Foundation: Reinforced Concrete

Roof: Composition and Tar & Gravel

Walls: Wood Frame with Cement Plaster

Other: Metal wall & ceiling panels

Building Description: *The following is a description of the Building including all character defining features.*

Building Description: The Kocher-Samson Building is located on a long, narrow lot on the east side of North Palm Canyon Drive, the main thoroughfare of Palm Springs. It is included, without reference in the Las Palmas Business Historic District. Frey realized that the parcels on both sides of the building would be built upon eventually, so he designed solid walls at the property lines, and opened the offices onto a series of interlocking interior courtyards. The first floor plan is a large rectangle broken into smaller rectangles and squares based on a 3'x3' grid. It contains individual offices, garden and terrace spaces wrapped by a high perimeter wall. A covered passageway acts as a central circulation spine, giving order to the assembly of alternating squares and voids that was something of a Frey motif during the early years of his career. At the second floor, the apartment is rotated ninety-degrees to provide a rooftop deck as an outdoor terrace for the apartment and a cantilevered overhang to shelter the office entrance below. The apartment is a pure rectangle featuring free-standing or wall mounted built-ins to define the kitchen, bathroom, and closets. This level is articulated by covering the secondary walls with plywood veneer and the perimeter walls with white cement plaster.

Construction of the Kocher-Samson Building utilized the latest building technology available. The first floor was a poured concrete post-and-beam system with concrete block in-fill for the walls. At the second floor, the perimeter walls were of lightweight pressed steel frames made in sections at a factory in Pennsylvania, trucked to California and joined together on the site. Four inch metal decking was used for the second floor and the roofs. The metal was exposed as the ceiling of the first floor and linear light fixtures were placed between the recesses in the ribbing. The building is a flat-roofed rectangular volume approximately 33 feet wide by about 65 feet deep, and about twenty feet high, containing approximately 1200 square feet on two levels. The building's design features an upper level in the form of a large white volume, visually floating above a glassy base that could be seen to recall Le Corbusier's early modernist masterpiece the Villa Savoye - an early and classic exemplar of the International Style. Le Corbusier was the architect who first made the world aware that a new style was being born and Frey worked on the detailing of that pivotal structure. Both buildings appear to hover above the ground plane and both feature strip windows, a flat roof and a glassy lower level that stands free of the structural system. To Frey's credit, the building made a bold aesthetic statement in its day, but the plan of the Kocher-Samson Building was determined by functional rather than aesthetic considerations. Other than the massing, important character-defining features of the building include the steel-rod lateral bracing, strip glazing, pipe columns and handrails, a metal circular stair, and the innovative roof deck system and prefabricated wall panels.

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**5. Criteria (Check all boxes that apply for the criteria qualifying the property for listing.)**

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**Events**

- (1) Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**Persons**

- (2) Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**Architecture**

- (3) That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, State or local history, or
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or
- (5) Represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or
- (6) Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

## Archeology

(7) Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Check all the boxes that apply.)

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious
- purposes. removed from its original location.
- a birthplace or a
- grave. a cemetery.
- a reconstructed building, object, or
- structure. a commemorative property.
- less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

## 6. Statement of Significance

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Figure 1 Original model of the Kocher-Samson Building.

A compliance evaluation is included in Section 5.

### **Building Background: Statement of Significance**

The Kocher-Samson building was designed for Dr. Jacob John Kocher by his brother Lawrence in partnership with Albert Frey. Dr. Kocher was an early physician in Palm Springs, California. After other medical professionals located to the desert, Kocher retired from medicine and required a new building designed to house his real estate development and insurance office; the building also included a studio apartment on the upper level, and a free-standing carport with a metal roof (see Figure 1, above). So important was this new building, even in its own time that photographs of it were shown at New York's Museum of Modern Art exhibition "Modern Architecture in California" in October, 1935. The exhibition featured the works of architects Kocher & Frey, Richard Neutra, R. M. Schindler, and William Wilson Wurster, thereby placing the building and its architects in the forefront of American modernism. The Kocher-Samson Building was cited as being "typical of the restrained ingenuity of the eastern experimentalism which in contrast with that of California seems economical and chaste." Kocher and Frey were the only architects in the exhibition not based solely in California, and theirs was one of the first architectural offices to build on both coasts. The Kocher-Samson building was also included in James and Katherine Morrow Ford's book, *The Modern House in America* which showcased the best examples of the Americanized International Style Residential Architecture built before 1940. Important architects included in this book other than those already mentioned included Pietro Belluschi, Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Le Corbusier, William Lescaze, Raphael Soriano, Edward Durell Stone, and many others.

At the end of October 1934, Frey left for Palm Springs to detail and supervise the construction of the building. This was not his first trip across America; he had driven from New York to California in the summer of 1932, but at the time had not gone as far south as Palm Springs. He then stayed in Los Angeles where he met with and visited the works of important Los Angeles architects Neutra, Schindler, J. R. Davidson, and Kem Weber. The Kocher-Samson building was the project last that Kocher and Frey would do together. The dissolution of their partnership was amicable; there was no work in New York for Frey, and he had grown fond of the desert landscape and mountains. For Frey, Palm Springs had become the new frontier where he could be an architectural pioneer on a barren landscape. The Kocher-Samson Insurance Company building was the first International Style building to be built in

Palm Springs, and with that act presaged a future when the city would become known internationally for its modern architecture.

**Building Style:** The International Style became the basis of later Modern architecture throughout the world, a style that ironically has now become traditional. Henry-Russell Hitchcock<sup>1</sup>, who literally “wrote the book” on the International Style has said: “The lines that led to the International Style are clearer now to everyone than they could have been in the in the 30s, and the principles are few and broad...there is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than mass. Secondly, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, together with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of the International Style.” It has been said that only writers and critics are interested in stylistic terminology; fittingly, Frey found little use for the doctrinaire constraints of the International Style, and in time developed a warmer regional aesthetic. However, his works often display the stylistic markers that place the work squarely in the late International Style tradition, of which the Kocher-Samson Building is an excellent and rare example.

**Previous Evaluations:** The Kocher-Samson Building has been previously listed as an historic site, first on the 1987 Historic Site Preservation Board List and subsequently in the 2004 Citywide Architectural Survey found that the building appears to meet the level of significance necessary for individual National Register and California Register eligibility<sup>1</sup> at the local level under Criteria A / 1(Events) and C / 3 (Construction / Design.) **Local Eligibility Evaluation:** Based upon the information contained in the background research developed for this report, the building also appears for listing in the Palm Springs, California and National Registries under additional criteria as follows:

**Significant Event** (Complete if Criterion 1 is marked above): The Kocher-Samson Building is an important example of mid-century commercial development in Palm Springs. The building represents the overall commercial development of the downtown from the 1930s to today, and contributes to the scale and character of the city’s main commercial street. As such, it is associated with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community, thereby qualifying it as eligible for listing under **events** on the Palm Springs, California and National Registries.



Figure 2 J. J. Kocher

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion 2 is marked above): Dr. Jacob John Kocher (c.1884-1938) was a California-born, Stanford-educated physician who began his medical practice in Palm Springs in 1917. In a small adobe building directly across the street from The Desert Inn, he established a pharmacy called the “Mortar and Pestle. The “desert doctor,” as he became known, served a clientele that included most of the local citizenry, both Native American and Anglo. His reputation as a doctor spread throughout the valley and he was called upon to perform surgery, deliver babies, and otherwise attend to the well-being of the citizenry. During World War I he headed both the local Rations and Price Control Boards, and when the Palm Springs Board of Trade was formed in 1918, Dr. Kocher became its first president, a position that translated as roughly equivalent to Mayor after the city was incorporated in 1938. Near the end of his career, a “Stork Party” celebration was held for Dr. Kocher and many of the babies he delivered were in attendance, including the first Anglo infant born in Palm Springs, Ted McKinney, his sister Barbara McKinney, Beatrice Willard, and Elizabeth and Owen Coffman. After Dr. Henry Reid came to town Kocher retired from his medical practice to concentrate on his real estate

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<sup>1</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903-1987) was the leading American architectural historian of his generation. A long-time professor at Smith College and New York University, he is best known for writings that helped to define Modern architecture. In the early 1930s, at the request of Alfred Barr, Hitchcock collaborated with Philip Johnson (and Lewis Mumford) on “Modern Architecture: International Exhibition” at the Museum of Modern Art (1932), the exhibition that presented the new “International Style” architecture of Europe to an American audience. Hitchcock and Johnson’s co-authored book *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* was published simultaneously with the New York Museum of Modern Art exhibit. Over the course of Hitchcock’s career, he produced more than a dozen books on architecture. His *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1958) is an exhaustive study of more than 150 years of architecture and was widely used as a textbook in architectural history courses from the 1960s to the 1980s. It is still a useful reference today. Hitchcock focused primarily on the formal aspects of design and he regarded the individual architect as the chief determinant in architectural history.

<sup>2</sup> An unresolved internal contradiction in the Citywide Survey Form also assigns the building a National Register Status Code of 5S3. The initial number indicates the general status; “5” is defined as Ineligible for the National Register but still of local interest. “5S3” is defined as “Not eligible for separate listing or designation under an existing local ordinance but is eligible for special consideration in local planning.” No response has been forthcoming to queries made to ARG regarding this discrepancy.

investments. Kocher had wisely invested in the land that would become downtown Palm Springs.

Along with Pearl McManus, Kocher became one of the earliest civic leaders to promote new architecture. Kocher's career change required a new building from which to tend to his property investments in Palm Springs. In 1934, he turned to his architect brother in New York to design a small office building with a studio apartment above on the north end of town. Kocher's brother, A. Lawrence Kocher was then in partnership with Swiss-born architect Albert Frey, and also served as the editor of *Architectural Record*, the leading American architectural publication of its day. Both architects were devoted to modernism, and Dr. Kocher embraced the radically Modern structure the firm designed for him. Dr. Kocher can be seen as a person of significance in Palm Springs history and is intimately associated with the building, thereby qualifying the building as eligible for listing under persons on the Palm Springs, California and National Registries.

Significant **Architecture** (Complete for each of Criteria 3, 4, 5 and / or 6 marked above): 3) That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or (4) that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or (5) that presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value; or (6) that represents a significant and distinguishable entity (such as an Historic District) whose components may lack individual distinction.<sup>3,1</sup>

The Kocher-Samson building possesses the distinctive characteristics of Palm Springs commercial buildings of the modern era. It also represents a construction method of prefabricated steel panels and metal decking, as well as iconic stylistic features including free-standing columns, nearly transparent first floors and other signature details of International Style architecture, as previously described. These stylistic markers commonly occur in the important modern buildings of the period that line Palm Canyon Drive, but the Kocher-Samson was the first building to be built in this style in Palm Springs. The building contains enough of those characteristics to be considered to exemplify its particular period in local history. The characteristic described are expressed in specific terms embodied in the form, proportion, structure, plan, style, and materials and may be seen to represent a type, period and method of construction

Both A. Lawrence Kocher and Albert Frey are master architects who are generally recognized for greatness in their field. Their work was significant, even if their practices were small. "Kocher and his partners produced only a handful of projects, but these projects epitomize the straightforward, innovative, simple, mechanical logic of the International Style in America."<sup>2</sup> Their building may also be said to possess high artistic values as expressed in design, planning, and engineering. 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. The Kocher-Samson Building successfully embodies the aesthetic ideals of International Style architecture.

Because the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of Palm Springs commercial modern architecture, and because it is the work of two master architects, and because it possesses high artistic values, it qualifies as eligible for listing on the Palm Springs, California and National Registries.

Significant Archeologically (Complete if Criterion 7 is marked above)

The site is the location of the first International Style building in Palm Springs. It was not, however, noted as a Native-American site of significance. No archeological data is available for the site, so based upon the information currently available, it would not qualify as an historic resource under this criterion.

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<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 6 refers to buildings that might not qualify individually, but might be a contributor to a potential historic district; this section is not applicable to the subject property.

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## 7. Integrity Analysis

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Attach an analysis of the Building / Site / District's integrity based on the criteria in this section.

In addition to being determined eligible under at least one of the Applicable Criteria listed above, the building / site / district must also retain its architectural integrity. Integrity is based on significance: Why, where, and when a property was built is important. Only after significance is fully established can a determination be made with regard to the issue of integrity.

There are seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity: **Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling and Association**. 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.

- *Location*: The Kocher-Samson Building remains on its original site and therefore retains integrity of location.
- *Design*: The character-defining elements of the original design Kocher-Samson building have survived intact. Some superficial changes have occurred, such as replacing the smooth white stucco on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor facade with textured stucco, or wrapping the pipe column with stucco. Still, the property retains integrity of design.
- *Setting*: Many have written about the changes in the setting of the Kocher-Samson building, but to the architects' credit, they anticipated future development adjacent to the property, and resolved this eventuality by erecting windowless walls along the north and south property lines, thus creating a building that looks inward. An important aspect of the setting was the large planter along the Palm Canyon property line, which is neglected, but restorable. The property retains integrity of its setting.
- *Materials*: The original materials palette has survived intact, including the prefabricated steel panels, metal decking, free-standing columns, most of the first floor glazing and other signature details of International Style. The property retains integrity of its materials.
- *Workmanship*: Unlike historic buildings of an earlier era, the design of the Kocher-Samson Building relied on catalog parts and easily assembled prefabricated elements that do not bear the imprint of fine craftsmanship. Nonetheless, the examples of workmanship that characterize the building have survived intact, and the property retains integrity of workmanship..
- *Feeling*: This is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular time. Although the significance of the building's place in architectural history may not be immediately apparent, its "floating" second floor is sufficient to place it within the International Style, and thus, its feeling survives and the property retains integrity of feeling.
- *Association*: A property retains its association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an informed observer. Like *feeling*, *association* requires the presence of physical characteristics that convey the property's historic character. In this case, the building's stylistic characteristics are sufficiently intact to convey the building's early modernist roots, and the property therefore retains integrity of association.

Alterations to the Kocher-Samsom building over time have blunted the dazzling effect that the building must have had upon visitors arriving on North Palm Canyon Drive in the 1930s after the building was completed. Later alterations caused its perfect pattern of alternating open-air and roofed squares to meld into one roofed space. Its graceful lines were subtly altered by a clunky textured stucco parapet that replaced the slender pipe railings on the roof terrace, and blunted the pristine quality of

the projecting second level. Although the interior courts have been roofed over and converted into enclosed rooms it is still possible to fully understand the character of the original design. Although these unsympathetic accretions have been applied to the building, it still possesses sufficient integrity to convey its significance. And while the building has undergone these alterations, virtually all of its character-defining features survive, insuring that with the guidance of the Historic Site Preservation Board and the sensitive stewardship of its owner, these less-than-sensitive changes can be reversed. The building retains all seven aspects of integrity.

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## 8. Bibliography

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The following is a list of all books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application. Also included are the previous surveys that cite the subject property and any other documentation on file.

### Books

- Architectural Resources Group, *Citywide Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco: 2004.
- Bogert, Frank M., *Palm Springs, First Hundred Years..* Palm Springs Public Library. Palm Springs: 2003.
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## 9. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: .229 Acre

Property Boundary Description: Attach a description of the boundaries of the property, or District Boundary Description: Attach an explanation for the selection of the district boundaries.

## 10. Prepared By

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Name/title: Patrick McGrew

Organization: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Address: 674 South Grenfall Road, Palm Springs, California 92264

Telephone: (760) 416-7819; Cell: (760) 567-2978

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

## 11. Required Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed application form. **Do not mount any exhibits on a board.**

1. **Attachment Sheets.** Include all supplemental information based on application form (above).
2. **Maps:** For Historic Districts, include a sketch map identifying the proposed districts boundaries.
3. **Photographs:** Eight (8) sets of color photographs showing each elevation of the property

and its surroundings.

4. **Non-owner's Notarized Signature:** If the applicant is not the owner, a notarized affidavit shall be provided (see following page).
5. **Site Plan:** One 1/8" to 1/4" scale drawing of the site, and eight reduction copies (8 ½ x 11 inches) The site plan shall show all of the following: Property boundaries, north arrow and scale, all existing buildings, structures, mechanical equipment, landscape materials, fences, walls, sidewalks, driveways, parking areas showing location of parking spaces, and signs. **Indicate the square footage and use of each building and the date(s) of construction.**
6. **Public Hearing Labels:** Three (3) sets of typed self-adhesive labels of all property owners, lessees, and sub-lessees of record. **The labels shall include the Assessor's parcel number, owner's name and mailing address of each property with 400 feet from the exterior limits of the subject property.** Additionally, all Assessor Parcel Maps clearly indicating the 400-foot radius and a certified letter from a title company licensed to conduct business in Riverside County, California shall be submitted.

Note: If any property on this list is owned by the United States Government in trust for the Agua Caliente Indian Tribe or individual allottee, copies of notices with postage paid envelopes will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to notify the individual Indian land owners of the public hearings.

**NON-OWNER  
AFFIDAVIT**

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
(COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE) ss

I (We), \_\_\_\_\_ being duly sworn,  
depose and say that I (we) am (are) the person(s) herein named and that the foregoing  
statements and answers herein contained and the information herein submitted are in all  
respect true and correct to the best of my (our) knowledge and belief.

Name: (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_ Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

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/hr/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 this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
\_\_\_\_\_, 2012

\_\_\_\_\_

Notary Public in the State of \_\_\_\_\_

with principal office in the County of \_\_\_\_\_

Place Notary Seal Above

PALM SPRINGS HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD  
Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

Appendix I: Biography of the firm of Kocher & Frey

Alfred Lawrence Kocher (1885 - 1969) was born in San Jose, California and graduated from Stanford University in 1909, after which he pursued a graduate degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1910-1912. He was an instructor in Architectural History and Design at Pennsylvania State University where he received an MA degree in 1916; he was promoted to full professor, and ultimately head of the Architecture Department there until his resignation in 1926. From 1926-1928 he taught at the University of Virginia before becoming managing editor of the *Architectural Record*, a position he held from 1928-1938, during which time he included news of the latest developments in design in Europe and the United States. From 1940 to 1943 Kocher taught at Black Mountain College, an experimental school that was internationally known for its modernist advancements in American art and education. The college faculty and students were leaders of the day and included architect and scholar Kocher; composer John Cage; Bauhaus artists Josef Albers, Willem DeKooning and Franz Kline. From 1944 to 1954 he worked as an architectural recorder on conservation and restoration projects at Williamsburg, where he died in 1969.

Albert Frey (1903 - 1998) was born in Zurich, Switzerland. Frey received his architectural education from the Institute of Technology in Winterthur, Switzerland, from which he graduated in 1924. The training he received there was vocational instruction rather than the architectural design instruction of the sort taught by the French *École des Beaux-Arts*. It should be noted that Frey's future employer William Lescaze also received his architectural education in Zurich. Following his graduation, Frey was drawn to the work of his countryman, Swiss architect Le Corbusier, who has been called "the most important architect of the Twentieth Century." In 1928 Frey secured an intern position in Le Corbusier's small Paris office, which after a few months became a paid position. Although Frey was with Le Corbusier for only ten months, his tenure coincided with the creation of the seminal modernist residential masterpiece the Villa Savoye of 1929, with which he was involved. In 1930 Frey moved to New York where he worked for William Lescaze<sup>4</sup> (1931-33), and began a small practice with early modernist A. Lawrence Kocher, while maintaining a correspondence with Le Corbusier for many years. While most architects of the Twentieth century admit to being influenced by Le Corbusier, very few can claim a connection as direct as that enjoyed by Frey.

In 1930 in New York, Frey and Kocher established their two-person office that produced the famous "Aluminaire House," one of the key modernist buildings of the Twentieth century, and one of the few examples of American modernism to be included in Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson's<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Designed by William Lescaze, the 1932 Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (PSFS) building is today generally considered the first International Modernist skyscraper, and the first International Style building of wide significance in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> Phillip Cortelyou Johnson (1906–2005) was an influential American architect. With his thick, round-framed glasses, Johnson was the most recognizable figure in American Architecture. In addition to his many large projects, Johnson produced dozens of such small works over his long career; some of which were built. In 1930, he founded the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA. Then in 1928 Johnson met the Bauhaus architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who was at the time designing the German Pavilion for the Barcelona exhibition of 1929. The meeting was a revelation for Johnson and formed the basis for a lifelong relationship of both collaboration and competition. Johnson returned from Germany as a proselytizer for the new architecture. Touring Europe more comprehensively with his friends Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Henry-Russell Hitchcock to examine firsthand recent trends in architecture, the three assembled their discoveries as the landmark show "The International Style: Architecture Since 1922" at the Museum of Modern Art, in 1932.

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Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

seminal tract 1932 on modernism, *The International Style*. The show was profoundly influential and is seen as the introduction of modern architecture and architects Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe to the American public. As critic Peter Blake has stated, the importance of this show in shaping American architecture in the century "cannot be overstated." With this single project, the place of Kocher and Frey in architectural history was assured. One historian has said that, given this early success, the surprise was that Frey did not become more important than he did. The brief collaboration of Kocher and Frey lasted until 1935. Of the few projects completed by the partners, the Kocher-Samson Insurance Services Building brought Frey to Palm Springs for the first time. Subsequently, it became his home and the setting for his career, an event that changed the course of Palm Springs history. One of a handful of important Palm Springs architects, Frey worked and practiced into his nineties, and many of his works are icons of the City of Palm Springs.

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Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

Appendix II: Photographic Documentation:



Figure 3 This historic photo illustrates the building's original appearance and underscores how easily the front façade could be restored.

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Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet



Figure 4 View from courtyard looking toward Palm Canyon.

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Figure 5 Original appearance of the apartment interior.

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Figure 6 View of Inner Courtyard looking Northeast.

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Figure 7 In this 2008 photograph, insensitive alterations conceal the largely intact primary facade of the building. A sensitive removal of the inappropriate alterations and restoration of the building's original character-defining spatial concepts could restore the building's original appearance and reconfirm its importance as Palm Springs first International Style building.

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Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

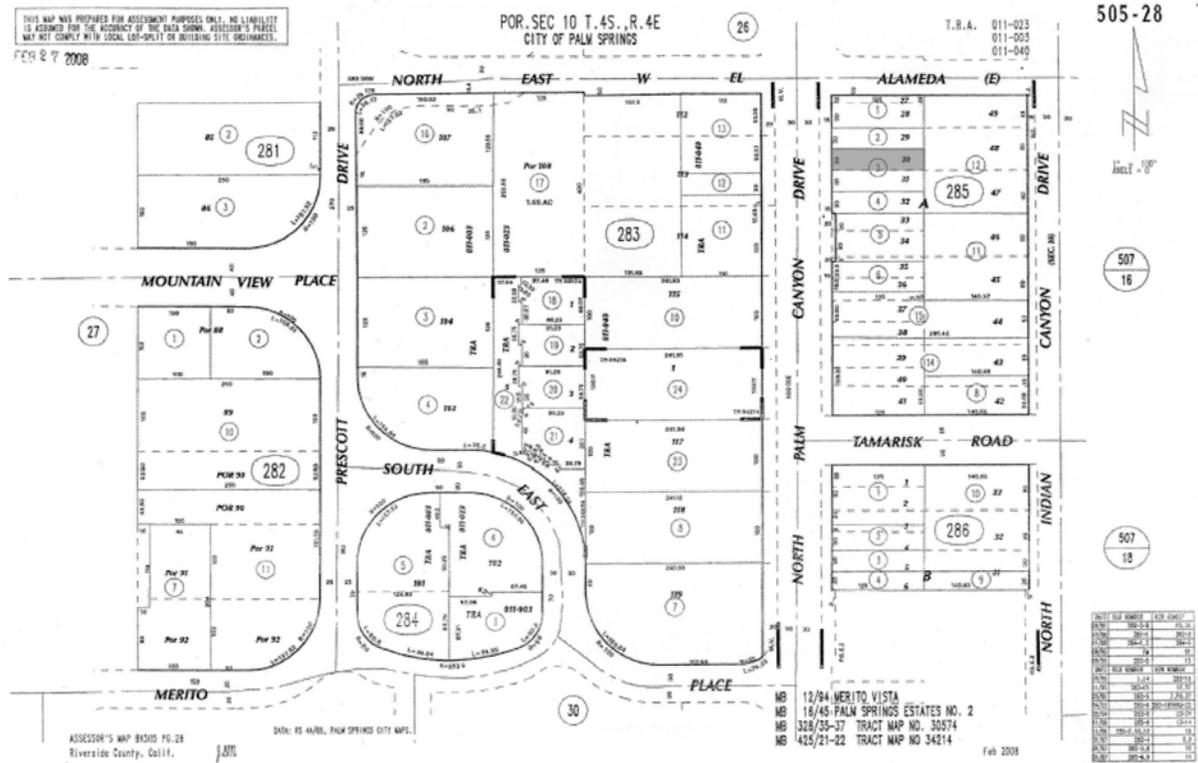
Appendix II: Site Map



Figure 8 Floor Plans: Upper (top) and Lower (bottom).

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 Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

Appendix III: Assessor's Map



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Historic Site Nomination Continuation Sheet

Appendix IV: 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 known for the depth and breadth of accumulated architectural / historical knowledge. He places a high value on the objectivity and completeness of his written works. He has several years' experience in research, writing, practicing and teaching architecture with an academic and historical agencies and institutions. He has made a substantial contribution through research and publication of a body of scholarly knowledge in the field of California architectural history. His experience has included the preparation of numerous historic research reports, National Register nominations, and San Francisco and Palm Springs 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 his public service as the long- time President of San Francisco's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, which extended over an eighteen year span 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 Fame, 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 and is currently working on a book about Palm Springs' Architectural History. Palm Springs Class One Historic Site Nominations completed by McGrew include the Oasis Commercial Building, the Sidney Noles Residence, the Hugh Stephens Residence, the Frank Sinatra Residence, the Town & Country Center and the Royal Hawaiian Estates Historic District. McGrew was also the author of National Register nominations for the Thomas O'Donnell Residence and the Cabot's Old Indian Pueblo Museum and in 2009 completed *Donald Wexler, Architect* for the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. In 2011 McGrew was named Preservationist of the Year by the Palm Springs Modern Committee.