

The Leon and Thea Koerner Residence, 1955

1275 South Calle de Maria
Palm Springs, California, 92264

Nomination Application For
City of Palm Springs
Class 1 Historic Resource



Prepared by **Steven Keylon**

For the **Palm Springs Preservation Foundation**

FINAL October 25, 2022

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Cover illustration: Drawing of the Koerner Residence by E. Stewart Williams, 1962. Courtesy Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections. (Note: The term “Fond” is a word used in Canada to describe an archival collection. According to the Queen’s University archives website: “Fonds (pron. fohn) - archival documents that have been naturally accumulated (made or received) by an individual, company, institution, etc. as a byproduct of business or day-to-day activities.” This word is frequently used in this nomination, as the bulk of archival material came from Leon Koerner’s archives, which are held at the the University of British Columbia archives.)

CLASS 1 HISTORIC RESOURCE NOMINATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.” In April 2021, the PSPF board of directors assigned the task of writing the Koerner Residence Class 1 Historic Resource nomination to Steven Keylon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Koerner Residence is a house and garden at 1275 South Calle de Maria in Palm Springs’ Deepwell Estates neighborhood. The house was designed in 1955 by architect E. Stewart Williams, collaborating with landscape architects Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, and interior designer Arthur Elrod. A masterpiece of environmental design, the house and garden have long been one of the finest estates in the Coachella Valley. The house was recently restored using the original blueprints, reducing the square footage to bring the design back to its original configuration. The landscape was rehabilitated using Eckbo, Royston, & William’s landscape drawings. The Koerner Residence exhibits numerous character-defining features that place it within the historical context of the Palm Springs Modern period. It is the work of master designers at the top of their game. The house has significance for architecture and landscape architecture. A period of significance for the house has been established as 1955-1973, the years the house was owned by Leon Koerner.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource: Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C.1.): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” of potentially historic resources for further information.

As outlined in the analysis beginning on page 20, the Koerner Residence qualifies as a City of Palm Springs Class 1 historic site.

The house and grounds possess exceptional historic significance and meet the following four of seven of the eligibility criteria outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.070(C,1,a): (ii): Association with persons of significance who made a meaningful contribution to Canadian history, (iii): Exemplifying a particular period in local history, (iv): Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, and (v) Presents the

work of a master architect, landscape architect and interior designer, each whose individual genius influenced their age (i.e. peers, profession), and possess high artistic value.

Furthermore, the site possesses a high degree of historic integrity as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.070 (C,1,b) in terms of Design, Materials, Workmanship, Location, Setting, Feeling and Association.

The historic context within which the Koerner Residence was evaluated as outlined in the Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings is The Post-World War II period 1945 – 1969. Its period of significance is associated with the timeframe in which the Koerner's owned the property beginning with their purchase of the parcel in 1955 through Mr. Koerner's passing in 1972.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Phone 760 323 8245

Fax 760 322 8360

Historic Preservation Officer 760 322 8364 x8786

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

WHEN TO USE THIS APPLICATION:

Use this application if you are seeking Class 1 or Class 2 historic designation for a property or parcel or for historic district applications.

Use the MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION FORM (MAA) if you are seeking approval for alterations to Class 1, Class 2, Class 3 or Class 4 historic sites. (Contact the Planning Department if you are unsure of the classification of your property.)

WHO MAY APPLY:

Any individual or organization may apply to the City for consideration of a request for historic resource designation. Applications must be signed and notarized by the owner(s) of record of the site, structure, building or object for which the designation is sought.

PROCEDURE:

1. For proposed historic sites or resources: Refer to Palm Springs Municipal Code ("PSMC") Section 8.05.070 for *Procedures and Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources*. Visit: [www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation"](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation).
2. For proposed historic districts: Refer to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 for *Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts*. Visit: [www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation"](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation).
3. Complete all parts of the application and include related reports, mailing labels and back up information in support of the application. Denote "NA" for any line item that is not applicable.
4. Once the application is complete, contact the Planning Department and schedule a pre-application conference with the City's Historic Preservation Officer ("HPO").
5. Submit the completed application and related materials to the Department of Planning Services. A Planning Department case number will be assigned to the application.
6. Applications for historic site / resource or historic district designation are evaluated by staff in the City Planning Department who will prepare the application for consideration by the City's Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") at a noticed public hearing. Applicants should plan on attending the hearing. City staff will schedule site visits for members of the HSPB to become familiar with the site prior to the public hearing. (Exterior review only, interiors are not subject to HSPB review.)
7. At the public hearing, the HSPB will evaluate the application and make a recommendation for City Council action. The City Council will consider the application and the HSPB's recommendation at a second noticed public hearing. The applicant should again attend that hearing.
8. The final action of the City Council to designate will be recorded on the property title with the County Recorder's office.

FOR HISTORIC SITE / RESOURCE APPLICATIONS, SEE CHECKLIST FOR CLASS 1 AND 2.
FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT APPLICATIONS, SEE CHECKLIST FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services

3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Tel 760-323-8245 – FAX 760-322-8360

For Staff Use Only

Case Number: _____

In-Take Planner: _____

Date: _____

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION PLANNING / ZONING GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

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

Project Information:

Applicant's Name: David and Katherine Wright

Applicant's Address: 1275 S Calle de Maria

Site Address: 1275 S Calle de Maria APN: 508-403-003-9

Phone #: 617-571-4244 Email: birch149@verizon.net

Zone: N/A GP: N/A Section/Township/Range: / X / X

Description of Project:

The Koerner Residence is a house and garden designed by architect E. Stewart Williams, in collaboration with landscape architects Eckbo, Royston, & Williams. It is significant for both architecture and landscape architecture. The house and garden have recently been restored, using the original plans.

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

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

Construction Date: 1955 ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual (denote source, i.e. building permits)

Architect: E. Stewart Williams; Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, landscape architects; Arthur Elrod, interior designer

Original Owner: Leon and Thea Koerner

Common/Historic Name of Property: The Koerner Residence

Other historic associations: _____

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

Architectural Style: Mid-Century Modern

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

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION APPLICATION (CONT.)

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" of potentially historic resources for further information.

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

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

- a. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. ¹
- b. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- c. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- d. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- e. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possess high artistic value.
- f. The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists.

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

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 2 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 2 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided the site, structure, building, or object exhibits significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed in Finding 1 above. A Class 2 historic resource is not required to meet the findings for integrity as described in Finding 2.

Criteria and Findings for Designation of Historic Districts:

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

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

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

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

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

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2

APPLICANT'S REQUIRED MATERIAL CHECKLIST

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

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

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE



Infrared photograph of the Koerner Residence, 1956. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

Summary

The Koerner Residence was designed for Leon and Thea Koerner by a team of master designers which included architect E. Stewart Williams, landscape architects Garrett Eckbo and Francis Dean, and interior designer Arthur Elrod. The contemporary house and garden have long been one of the Coachella Valley's most beautifully designed estates. This was enhanced when the current owners undertook a painstaking, authentic restoration of the house, using the original plans. The square footage that was added later was removed, restoring the original footprint. The garden was given the same attention, and today, the Koerner garden, perhaps the best example of a modernist landscape in the Coachella Valley, has been faithfully restored.

Location

The Koerner Residence is located at 1275 Calle de Maria in Palm Springs' Deepwell Estates neighborhood.

CHAIN OF TITLE

Primary sources show the chain of ownership for the Koerner Residence (Lots 2, 3, 10, and 11 of Deep Well Ranch Estates Unit #10), as shown by Map recorded on file in Book 28 page 69 of Maps, records of Riverside County, California:

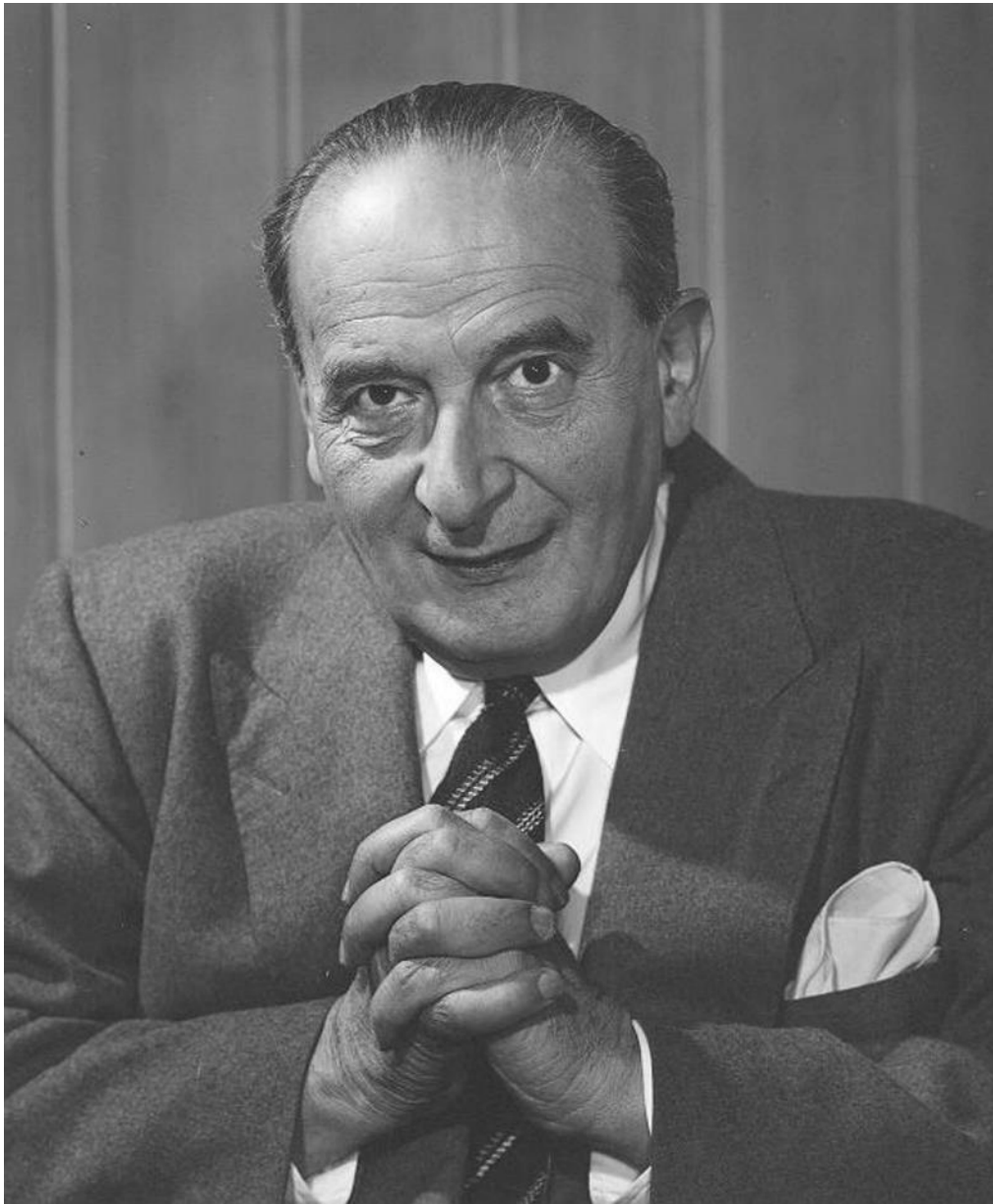
04-15-1955	Harry A. Dart and Gladys M. Dart, husband and wife, to Deep Well Colony Estates, Inc., a California Corporation.
04-15-1955	Deep Well Colony Estates, Inc., a California Corporation, to Leon J. Koerner and Thea Koerner, husband and wife as joint tenants.
11-22-1955	Leon J. Koerner and Thea Koerner, husband and wife, to Miosogno Holdings, Ltd.
09-05-1973	Miosogno Holdings, Ltd., to Estelle Brown Stewart, an unmarried woman.
08-12-1992	Estelle Brown Stewart, a married woman (who acquired title as an unmarried woman), to Estelle Brown Stewart, or her successors, as Trustee of THE ESTELLE BROWN STEWART LIVING TRUST, U/A DATED AUGUST 11, 1992.
05-27-1997	Estelle Brown Stewart, or her successors, as Trustee of the Estelle Brown Stewart Living Trust, U/A dated August 11, 1992, to Henry Lamb, an unmarried man.
08-05-2004	Henry Lamb, an unmarried man, to Henry B. Lamb and Allan R. Lamb, Trustees of the Henry B. Lamb and Allan R. Lamb Trust Dated August 5, 2004. (Quitclaim Deed)
10-07-2005	Henry B. Lamb, an Unmarried Man, to Henry B. Lamb and Allan R. Lamb, Trustees of the Henry B. Lamb and Allan R. Lamb Trust Dated August 5, 2004. (Trust Transfer Deed)
04-05-2018	Allan R. Lamb, Trustee of The Henry B. Lamb and Allan R. Lamb Trust, to Sawtooth Investments, a Massachusetts Limited Liability Partnership. (Affidavit of Death of Allan R. Lamb attached)

NOTE: There is a April 20, 1955 "Subdivision Right of Way" document in the Chain of Title which indicates that the California Water and Telephone Company acknowledge the four parcel assembled lot: "Poles, with related anchors, shall be placed only at the common corner of (a) Lots 1, 2, 11, and 12, and at the common corner of (b) Lots 5, 6, 7, and 8."

No overground right of way or easement is granted between the common corners of Lots (a) and Lots (b) above set forth.

Lots 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12 shall be served underground from the pole at the common corner of Lots (a) and Lots 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 shall be served underground from the pole at the common corner of Lots (be) above set forth."

FIRST OWNERS – LEON AND THEA KOERNER



“On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to commemorate the national historic significance of Leon Joseph Koerner. His commitment to philanthropy, conservation, and safe workplaces made BC a better place to live and work. I encourage all Canadians to learn more about Leon Joseph Koerner and his contributions to Canada’s rich forestry heritage.”

-Joyce Murray. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Member of Parliament for Vancouver Quadra. Spoken at the ceremony to recognize Koerner by the federal government of British Columbia, as a Person of National Historic Significance, May 14, 2018.

EARLY LIFE

Leon Joseph Körner (later changed to Koerner) was born May 24, 1892, to Isidor and Maria Körner in Novy Hrozenkov, in the Czech Republic. The town was 150 miles from Prague in the province of Northern Moravia, which was, at that time, part of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Koerner was the eighth of ten children, four boys, and six girls.

His father Isidor Körner (1848-1925) owned a forestry business, Isidor Körner Forest Industry, Ltd (IKAG).¹ “Isidor Korner was a powerful man, whose cosmopolitan aspirations and inquisitive personality affected the whole family; he influenced the lives of all of his children, especially the careers of his four sons. Like other middle-class patriarchs of Moravia and Bohemia, Isidor enjoyed the good life: good food, good theatre and good companionship. He traveled regularly throughout Europe on business, was always well dressed and rarely seen without a cigar. Walter Koerner described his father as always having an ‘aura of distinction about him.’”²

The Koerner family lived in a large house with a garden and adjacent agricultural property. They had a maid and a cook, and the house was always full of children, friends, visitors, and poor students—who were regularly invited to dinner. Adjacent to the house was a large wholesale and retail lumber yard.³

The Koerners were not profoundly religious; thus, the children were taught to respect Judaism as the religion of their forebearers. “The family atmosphere seems to have been one of rational humanism where knowledge of the Jewish tradition and moral standards were taught and exemplified by Maria Korner.”⁴

According to a lengthy profile in *Maclean’s* magazine in 1956, Koerner:

was reared in a society devoted to high ceremonial and caste, and he circulated in the orbit of Emperor Franz Josef’s court. J. Koerner Lumber Industries Ltd., the family business, was the biggest lumber company in what is now Czechoslovakia. After the fashion of the Rothschilds, the Koerner boys were schooled for the priestcraft of international finance. Leon Koerner graduated from the Export Academie in Vienna, absorbed the progressive theories of the London School of Economics and learned some philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. His education was topped off by a couple of years’ practical experience in the banking and brokerage houses of several European capitals. He was no sooner ready for work than World War 1 broke out. As an artillery officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army he fought on the Russian, Balkan and Italian fronts, was wounded once, and on another occasion, he was buried alive by falling debris from a shell burst. Among the eight decorations he won are two equivalent to the DSO and MC. The division of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 left him a citizen of Czechoslovakia.⁵

¹ *Raincoast Jews*, Lillooet Nördlinger McDonnell, Midtown Press, Vancouver, BC, 2014, 83.

² *Raincoast Jews*, 84.

³ Koerner, Walter. *The Tree May Prefer Calm, But the Wind Will Never Subside*, Vancouver, W.C. Koerner, 1988, 6.

⁴ *Raincoast Jews*, 83.

⁵ “Leon Koerner’s One Man Giveaway Program,” *Maclean’s*, August 4, 1956, 35.

As the most educated of the ten Koerner children, Leon Koerner was considered his mother's favorite. "So it is perhaps not surprising that when Isidor Korner retired in 1920, his four sons took over the business, and Koerner became the de facto head of the firm, although officially his eldest brother Theodore Koerner was the senior partner."⁶

Employing their business acumen and public service to organizations dedicated to the recovery of the forest industry, Koerner and his brothers played a significant role in Czechoslovakia's return to economic prosperity during the mid and late 1930s. They built an empire that at its height employed 15,000 people in its forests, mills, and offices throughout central Europe.⁷

THEA ROSENQUIST

Leon met Thea Rosenquist in post-World War I Vienna, and after a courtship of several years, they married in 1922. Thea was born in Germany in 1896 to Polish and Swedish parents. Before her marriage, she was a thriving and well-known actress on the stage of the *Deutschen Volkstheater* in Vienna. She was also involved in film production and was occasionally photographed modeling women's fashions because of her popularity and beauty. Although she gave up her career when she married, she remained a prominent figure in Vienna's vibrant cultural life and maintained her love of the arts in all their forms throughout her lifetime.⁸

In the *Maclean's* profile, Thea Koerner was said to have "quit the stage in 1922 but never lost her theatrical spirit, was one of the ringleaders of the revel. A full-length portrait of her, painted at the age of twenty-four, shows her to have been a radiantly beautiful woman. In her veins, two volatile racial strains explode. Although she was born in Germany, her parents were of Polish and Swedish descent. She is given, on occasion, to swinging rapidly between tears and laughter."⁹

⁶ *Raincoast Jews*, 84-85.

⁷ Leon and Thea Koerner biography, Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation website. Accessed February 2, 2022 (<https://ltkaward.com/about/leon-and-thea-koerner/>).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Maclean's*, 35.



Actress Thea Rosenquist, at right, starring in the 1919 film “Die Jüdin von Toledo [The Jewess of Toledo].”



Actress Thea Rosenquist, 1916, left; 1919, right. Courtesy Jurgen Reich



The Koerners and friends at the Koerner Residence in Vienna, where they lived from 1922-1938. The house was at Kahlenberger Strasse 141. Thea Koerner, far left, with Leon Koerner in checked jacket at right. Photo courtesy Jurgen Reich.

Between 1920 and 1938, Leon Koerner continued to develop both his reputation and the family firm's reputation, helping mold it into a critical player in the European forest industry. "During the 1930s, the family firm generated a considerable profit margin, thus not only amassing a significant amount of financial wealth for the family but also making considerable contributions to the Czechoslovakian economy by employing upwards of 15,000 workers in mills, factories, and offices throughout Czechoslovakia and Europe. Walter Koerner commented that 'wherever charm, force of personality, and enthusiasm could carry the day, [Leon] Koerner triumphed.'"¹⁰

During the Depression, while his brothers ran the family business, Leon Koerner took on an international task. He was one of the European Timber Exporters' Convention architects, which, from headquarters in

¹⁰ *Raincoast Jews*, 85.

Stockholm, associated the lumber industries of Czechoslovakia, Austria, Rumania. Poland, Yugoslavia, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, and Russia, who were all in a joint fight for survival.

When Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia in 1938, Koerner was in the uniform of a reserve captain and ready for the fight. When the Czechoslovakian government, deserted by Britain and France, was forced to capitulate, he knew nothing was left for his family but flight.

Koerner called himself a Protestant, although he was half-Jewish, half-Slav by blood. As he was later described, “He is not a member of any Vancouver church but in Europe he worshipped at a Lutheran church. Because his grandmothers were Jews — though married to Gentiles — the Nazis rated Koerner and his brothers as Jews and confiscated their property.”¹¹

With the Czech capitulation, and before the Nazis could seize them, the brothers dispersed to collect all outstanding accounts due to J. Koerner Lumber Industries. They also sought to safeguard their foreign investments.

CANADA

By late September 1938, the alarming territorial ambitions of the German Reich and its anti-Semitic policies made it imperative that Koerner and his siblings leave Czechoslovakia without further delay. Leon and Walter Koerner, the last of the brothers to leave the country, made a timely escape by air from Prague to London on September 23, 1938, departing only hours before the airport was closed to all but military traffic. Thea Koerner, a Lutheran, remained in Vienna until December 1938, hoping in vain that the political situation would improve and allow her husband to return to their home. The Koerner brothers had to abandon their business and most of their possessions and leave behind those family members who could not be persuaded they should also go. No monetary compensation was ever received.¹² Three of Koerner’s sisters, twins Irma and Ida, and Kamilla, stayed behind with their husbands. All died at Auschwitz.

Although safe in London, Koerner was despondent over the inevitable fate of his relatives, his country, and the loss of a fortune. In January 1939, he and his wife embarked on an extended trip for much-needed diversion. When German troops occupied Prague on March 15, 1939, Leon and Thea Koerner were in Vancouver, waiting for Mrs. Koerner to recover from a severe case of the mumps before they could leave for California. During that month's delay, Koerner learned something about British Columbia’s coastal forest and lumber industry. He advised his brothers, who were still abroad, that the family should choose this province as a suitable place to begin their new life and business.¹³

TURNING HEMLOCK INTO “ALASKA PINE”

At New Westminster, twelve miles south of Vancouver, Koerner bought a derelict mill, hired forty-five men, and, against all local logic, began to saw hemlock, a wood then regarded by most builders as junk. Because

¹¹ Maclean’s, 35.

¹² Leon and Thea Koerner biography, Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation website. Accessed February 2, 2022 (<https://ltkaward.com/about/leon-and-thea-koerner/>).

¹³ Ibid.

hemlock contained much more moisture than other Canadian woods, it was twice as heavy, cost more to ship, and frustrated workers. Failure to dry the hemlock correctly resulted in severe warping and discoloration during shipping overseas.

Undaunted, Koerner submitted the hemlock to unique processes he had learned in Europe, changed its name to “Alaska Pine,” and successfully sold it worldwide. Soon, he absorbed a neighboring company and, before long, was producing 75 percent of the ammunition and ration boxes used by British Commonwealth forces during World War II. “The business was extremely successful and brought acceptance, respect, and renewed wealth to the Koerners.”¹⁴

When Canadian citizenship was introduced in 1947, Koerner was one of the first four hundred people in the country to receive his certificate. He was invited to attend a formal Vancouver ceremony where prominent men became the first Canadian citizens. His certificate, number 0388, hung on the wall of his office. “That,” he says, “is the most valuable document in my possession.”¹⁵



Leon and Thea Koerner, ca. 1955. Courtesy University of British Columbia Archives

¹⁴ Leon and Thea Koerner biography, Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation website. Accessed February 2, 2022 (<https://ltkaward.com/about/leon-and-thea-koerner/>)

¹⁵ *Maclean's*, 35.



Leon Koerner, ca 1965. Courtesy University of British Columbia Archives

LATER YEARS AND PHILANTHROPY

By the early 1950s, Koerner was ready to slow down and retire, but instead, devoted the rest of his life to giving back. The good fortune Leon and Thea Koerner shared instilled in them profound and lasting gratitude for the opportunity they had been given to start their life over again in a free and democratic country. The couple decided “the best way they could express their deep feelings was by embarking on a program of philanthropy to enrich the province they felt had been so good to them.” Both believed in the benefits of higher education for young people and the importance of the arts to the community as nourishment for the human spirit. Their recognition that these and other enterprises of a social welfare nature needed encouragement in their new land prompted them to establish the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation with an endowment of \$1,000,000 in 1955. It was the third private foundation in the province and the first to be founded by immigrants.¹⁶

¹⁶ Leon and Thea Koerner biography, Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation website. Accessed February 2, 2022 (<https://ltkaward.com/about/leon-and-thea-koerner/>)

The Koerners were present at the first meeting of the Board of Governors on May 6, 1955, to present their cheque. Until the end of his life, Koerner's keen interest in the deliberations of the Foundation was evidenced by his attendance at many meetings. Over the years commitment to their common goal resulted in the formation of deep bonds of camaraderie and personal friendship between the founders and the Governors, greatly enhanced by the generosity of the Koerners. "To show their appreciation to the Governors, Koerner invited them and their spouses to a winter meeting in Palm Springs, California, all expenses paid, on four occasions between 1957 and 1962, and hosted a formal dinner for them every year after the spring, and often the fall, meeting of the Board in Vancouver until 1970."¹⁷

Following the creation of the Foundation, Dr. and Mrs. Koerner continued their philanthropic activities in a manner that not only benefited the University of British Columbia but also permanently established their names in association with it. In 1957 they pledged over half a million dollars to the University of British Columbia's Capital Gifts fundraising campaign to build a Faculty Club on the campus. This building is known today as the Leon and Thea Koerner University Centre. After the death of Mrs. Koerner on July 26, 1959, Dr. Koerner donated his share of her estate to the Foundation on the condition that it be offered with his own contribution to the University of British Columbia for the construction of a graduate student center to be known as Thea Koerner House as a memorial to Mrs. Koerner. The Centre is now known as the Thea Koerner House Graduate Student Centre. When it opened on May 24, 1961, it was, and still is, a unique center among Canadian university campuses, and was chosen by Dr. Koerner as an affirmation of his conviction that the graduate schools of Canada's universities would produce the country's future leaders.¹⁸

Another memorial was established in Mrs. Koerner's name by a group of her friends after her death: the Thea Koerner Memorial Scholarship is still offered each year to a UBC student proceeding to an undergraduate degree in creative writing, fine arts, music, or theatre.¹⁹

The top floor of Thea Koerner House was a penthouse designed for Dr. Koerner into which he moved in May 1961; he resided there from May to early October each year and spent the winter months at his home in Palm Springs, California. In 1966 Dr. Koerner, whose health was not robust, suffered a stroke; thereafter he lived in failing health until his death on September 25, 1972. Under the provisions of his will the Foundation received the residue of his estate which, together with his share of Mrs. Koerner's estate, brought his personal contribution to over one and a half million dollars.²⁰

Leon Koerner received many honors during his lifetime, including an honorary LLD. from the University of British Columbia in 1957 and an honorary PhD from Simon Fraser University in 1967. Posthumously, he was inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame in 1983, and in 1999 he was one of fifty men and women

¹⁷ Leon and Thea Koerner biography, Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation website. Accessed February 2, 2022 (<https://ltkaward.com/about/leon-and-thea-koerner/>)

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

named as British Columbia's business leaders of the century. Many tributes were paid to him in the press after his death in 1972, none more fitting than an editorial in the Vancouver Sun, which read, in part:

Leon Koerner had a consuming sense of debt, and it was not warranted ... He contributed a whole new forest industry of immense value to the Canadian economy... His feeling of obligation persisted ...and ... became a magnificent obsession ... The account he ran with Canada was a private affair, a thing of the heart. By any reckoning — except perhaps Leon Koerner's — he died, this week, a debt-free man.²¹



Architects Roger Williams, left, and E. Stewart Williams at a party at the Koerner Residence, circa 1960. Courtesy Sidney Williams.

THE DESIGN OF THE KOERNER RESIDENCE

SITE PLAN

Collaborating with landscape architects Eckbo, Royston, and Williams, architect E. Stewart Williams sited the house to maximize the garden areas and provide ample space for outdoor living. They did this by arranging all the primary rooms of the house facing west toward the spectacular views and landscaped areas for both passive and active recreation. The home was situated in a north/south configuration along the two parcels (equaling half an acre) facing Calle de Maria. Doing so also meant that the rear garden was a half-acre private

²¹ "Paid in Full," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 September 1972, p. 4

oasis. Compared with the transparency of the rear of the house, the front of the house was relatively opaque, and is where secondary or tertiary spaces were placed. A motor court was accessed from Calle de Maria, leading to an open carport with adjacent storage and closets with louvered doors. From Calle de Maria, an axial central spine, paved in Arizona sandstone flagstones was created. The wide flagstone path began at the street and led to the woodgrain pattern Formica-covered front door. Here, an outdoor pool featured three shallow steel disks graduating in size, which served as a fountain. These were made from tank ends and were a Garrett Eckbo signature. Other similar shallow disks were used around the garden as planters. From the front door, the flagstone spine continued through the house, extended through the rear garden along the rectangular swimming pool, and terminated at a large, curved slat bench and shade structure (another Eckbo feature). The mountains beyond served as a stunning borrowed vista.

The entire arrangement of the site plan, residence, and landscape design was built using a precise eight-foot modular grid.²² A cross-axis was created from the flagstone spine inside the house. Facing south was a large

²² While the use of a grid system to organize architectural space is often considered a “Miesian” device in International Style architecture, in fact, it is an ancient way of defining spaces and organizing axes. Grid formulas in architecture go back to the Greeks and Romans, as well as the Japanese. While Williams was studying architecture at Cornell University, his training in the Beaux-Arts curriculum would have exposed him to the design grid modules of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760–1834), one of the creators of the École des Beaux-Arts. In “Delirious Façade,” authors Wei-Han Vivian Lee and James MacGillivray explain: “From its formalization at the École Polytechnique and the École des Beaux Arts in the 19th Century, architectural composition was understood as a procedural act which entailed of a series of sequential design decisions. The process of design was taught as moving through three forms of representation, the plan, section and elevation more or less in that order. In his *Precis*, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand describes the order of representation as follows: ‘the first [plan] represents the horizontal direction of the building, the second [section] its vertical disposition or its construction and finally the third [elevation] - which could not be anything but the result of the two others - represents the exterior.’ Durand emphasized that the order was an essential logical progression and that to begin with the elevation and proceed to the plan would be tantamount to deducing ‘the cause from the effect, a notion whose absurdity speaks for itself.’”

Describing Durand’s grid process, author Jeroen Goudeau observed: “The overall grid determines the layout of the whole design, starting with the positioning of the walls and columns: but next to the lines of this screen there is a second set of axial lines in the voids of the designs. Here Durand draws as a second layer the axes of symmetry, which bind together the plan as a whole. The overall grid arranges the spaces and forms as a combination of the various architectural elements in two stages — first the disposition of the elements and then the formation of the larger parts. The axes of symmetry then organize the functional parts of the building — the rooms and the successions of the inner spaces; in short, they define the composition of the building.” (“The Matrix Regained: Reflections on the Use of the Grid in the Architectural Theories of Nicolaus Goldmann and Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand.” *Architectural Histories*, January 2015, 7).

In 1938, Williams traveled to Europe to study European Modernism. Though he had been exposed to the International Style and admired Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, he was more interested in the organic modern architecture he found in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. (*An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*. Edited by Sidney Williams, 2014, 26). In 1986, Williams told his son Erik, in an interview for the Palm Springs Historical Society: “I was never a devotee of the International Style per se. I knew about it, and it was a great influence on contemporary architecture in the sense that it broke loose from traditional forms and taught everybody to think from the ground up and to invent your own forms and so forth. But the International Style had a series of rather rigid tenets and rules...absolute geometric forms and...Corbusier saying the house was a machine for living. But I have always felt that architecture should be approached with an open mind.”

Architectural historian Alan Hess, in his chapter on Williams in *Julius Shulman: Palm Springs Modern*, wrote of Stewart’s trip to Europe in 1938: “Taking in the severe Modern icons of Gropius and others, he found himself drawn more to Scandanavian design.

living room and dining room in an “L.” The adjacent kitchen featured folding floor-to-ceiling walnut doors that could be closed for dinner parties. A maid’s room was off the galley kitchen, and next to that, storage spaces in a roofed service yard. Returning to the flagstone entry hall and turning north down the flagstone hallway running on the cross-axis was a hallway lined with closets with walnut doors. Another walnut door led to a guest room and bathroom. The bathroom had walls of obscure glass, with a steel casement obscure glass door leading to the rear garden. On the other side of the flagstone hallway was a floor-to-ceiling fixed pane of glass looking into an indoor/outdoor atrium patio. This unique room was under the house’s roof, but the roof was slatted and open to the sky over this section. Inside was a planting area, flagstone patio, and tiled pool. Three shallow, rectangular steel trays were mounted to the Slumpstone walls, and served as fountains.

A door leading to the Koerners’ separate bedroom suites was at the end of the flagstone hallway. The long (now carpeted) hall continued through the door, with a sliding glass door leading to the atrium patio. Thea Koerner’s bedroom suite (with dressing room, closets, and bathroom) faced the rear garden, with a dynamic angled flagstone patio outside a large, fixed pane of glass and panel of jalousie windows adjacent to steel sliding glass doors. The hallway continued to Leon Koerner’s bedroom, a dressing room, and bathroom. The room had a large floor-to-ceiling fixed panel of glass, jalousie windows, and sliding glass doors leading to the north part of the garden. Another angled flagstone patio was just outside.

ARCHITECTURE

The elegantly low-slung house was wholly modern in design and function. Still, it was rooted to the site with a palette of richly textured materials such as sandblasted wood board-and-batten and Slumpstone resembling old adobe—materials that referenced the “Old West” vocabulary which defined early Palm Springs. Earlier examples of this vernacular architecture include the structures at Smoke Tree Ranch, with their humble materials and board-and-batten construction, as well as 1930s homes designed by Cliff May and Clark and Albert Frey, which are scattered through Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage. The Spanish-Colonial Revival buildings which utilized Adoblar brick, a hard-fired rustic brick meant to resemble adobe, were the influence for Williams choosing Slumpstone brick, a relatively new material developed by General Concrete of Van Nuys, for the Koerner Residence.²³

Europeans like Frey and Neutra found the rigorous clarity of the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier appealing, but the young American found the greatest influence in his life in the softer, often organic forms and warm natural materials of Scandinavians like Aalto and Asplund.” In an interview with Hess, Stewart remarked: “They did things for human habitation, not like Le Corbusier [who designed] according to his own mathematical formulas...I wanted my buildings to have soul, a place where people were part of the human race, not an exercise in geometry.”

²³ Cliff May, the “Father of the California Ranch House,” was also a consultant on the early development of the Deep Well Ranch Estates tract, and set the tone for the early ranch-style homes that were built in Deep Well Ranch Estates. As reported in the *Desert Sun* on January 31, 1952: “Adjoining, as it does, the Deep Well Guest Ranch, oldest guest ranch in the valley, the Deep Well Ranch Estates will carry on the tradition by having ranch-type houses and by using street names which tie in with the activities of ranch life. Mr. Cliff May, the outstanding architect and builder of Ranch houses in America, is on Mr. Grant’s planning and advisory, committee, which ensures the high quality of the new development.” Adoblar brick had been developed by Fritz Ruppel in the 1920s, to be used to restore one of the California Missions. It became a popular building material from the 1920s until after World War II, used for Ranch structures, as well as Spanish-Colonial and Monterey-Colonial buildings. Modernist architects also began using it, admiring the warmth and texture it provided. In the late 1940s, General Concrete Products of Van Nuys developed

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SLUMPSTONE—hollow block or veneer, in all sizes, colors—many different patterns possible.



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An advertisement of products offered by General Concrete Products, Inc., of Van Nuys, includes their recently introduced Slumpstone. Ad from "A New Home at the Old Address," *Remodeling Contractor's Association*, n.d., ca. 1951.

The design of the house is organized on the same modular eight-foot grid. The wing of the house with the public rooms featured a shed roof that angled west from the maid's room at its lowest point, rising and soaring over the living room and outdoor terrace. At the terrace, a section of the roof was left open so that a cluster of three *Washingtonia filifera* palm trees could pierce the roof. On the opposite side of the house, facing Calle de Maria, a shorter span of roof angled east over the storage areas, creating an asymmetrical butterfly roofline.

The bedroom wing had a gabled roofline, which created a most dynamic composition of opposing planes when viewed from the rear terrace. The roof fascia all around angled downward and was sandblasted wood.

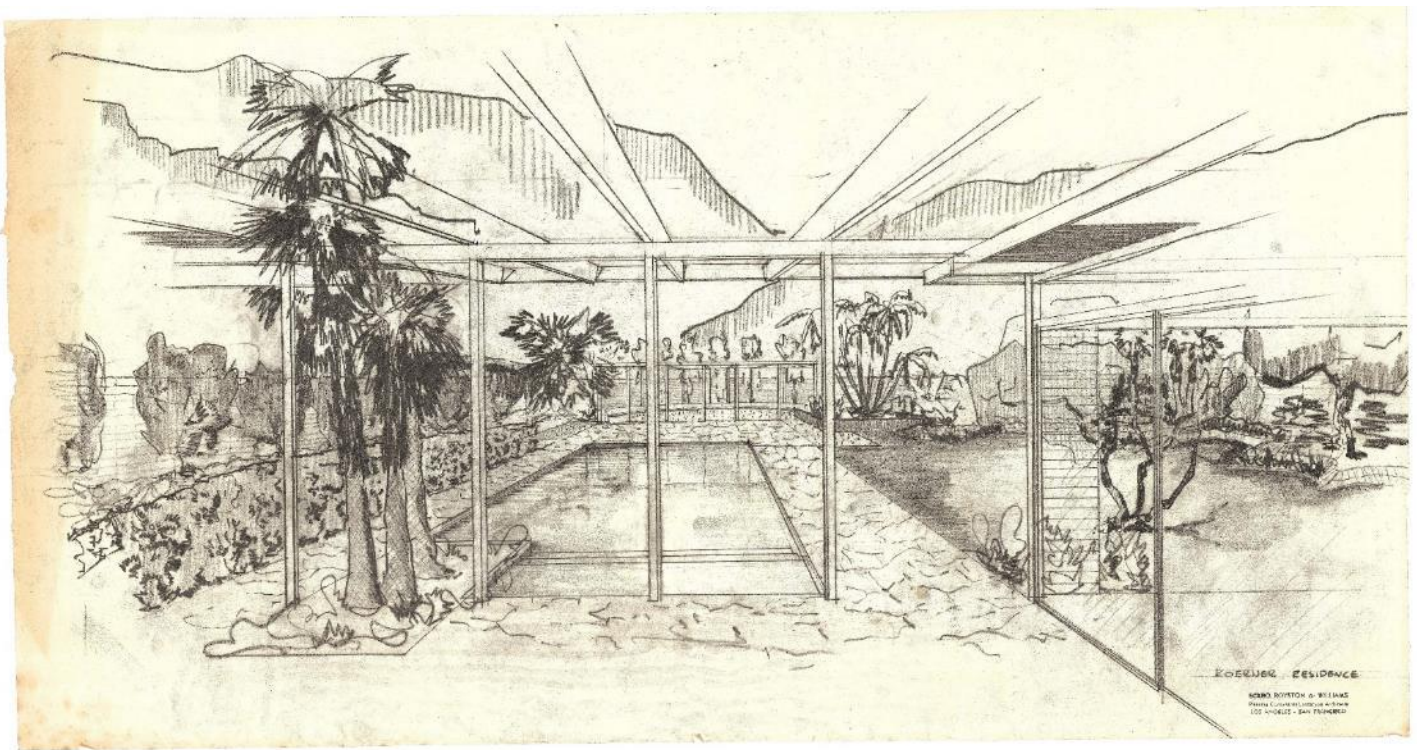
Board-and-batten walls were sandblasted to create an additional interesting texture. Adjacent to the front door, a wall of board-and-batten transitioned between outdoors and indoors, separated only by a floating pane of glass. A brushed brass sconce with pinhole detail, designed by Paavo Tynel for Finland House, New York, was placed on the exterior board-and-batten wall. A matching sconce was positioned on the interior portion of the same wall. A third sconce was on the opposite side of that wall, facing the living room. To further maximize the indoor/outdoor relationship, a long planting bed began outside under the kitchen

Slumpstone, a 6-inch by 6-inch by 16-inch rough-textured concrete brick, designed to "utilize masses and shadows for architectural beauty." ("Concrete Gets Face Lifted," *Los Angeles Mirror*, December 30, 1949, 64.)

windows, ran underneath the glass panel, and continued inside. The same board-and-batten walls were used inside the house on some walls, further maximizing the indoor/outdoor relationship.

Other walls were Slumpstone, extending beyond the boundaries of the house, becoming the walls that enclosed the garden, further blurring the indoor/outdoor relationship.²⁴ This was indeed the plan's genius move, a collaboration between the landscape architects and the architect. The Slumpstone walls surrounding the rear garden were positioned so that a wide buffer between the Koerners' garden and the surrounding development assured privacy. In addition, decreasing the size of the massive acre site created a garden on a much more human scale. On the facade facing Calle de Maria, other than some high clerestory windows, a relatively opaque wall afforded privacy.

The west facade, facing the rear garden and Mount San Jacinto, was almost entirely glazed, using a combination of floor-to-ceiling fixed panes of glass, narrower panels of jalousie windows, and steel-framed casement doors and sliding glass doors.



Landscape architect Francis Dean's rendering of the Koerner garden, seen through the windows of the living room. Courtesy Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

In collaboration with his partner Francis Dean, the landscape by master landscape architect Garrett Eckbo primarily used a plant palette of Mediterranean-climate species known to grow well in the harsh desert

²⁴ The extending of walls beyond the roofline, and into the landscape, had been used in the 1920s by architects like Richard Neutra, Mies van der Rohe, and by Albert Frey in the 1940s in Palm Springs.

climate. These hardy species provided the architecture of the landscape. Succulents and annual flowering color were contained in beds and planters. Landscape architect Francis Dean later recalled that, “the Koerner garden expresses the desire of the clients who had been coming to Palm Springs for many years to escape the cold weather of western Canada. They enjoyed the mountains, the desert, and the unique plant material of the region. The garden, therefore, tended to be a reflection of these elements and located in a fashion to be appreciated from anywhere in the house.”²⁵ A landscape buffer between the garden walls and the property lines was planted in a mix of native species. The landscape for the Koerner Residence was one of the finest examples of modern landscape architecture in the Coachella Valley and is now one of the very few remaining.

The front of the house along Calle de Maria was planted simply, with a pair of *Olea europea* trees (European olive) in a large rectangular panel of turf to the left of the Arizona flagstone pathway. A custom mailbox was installed here. Along the Slumpstone walls of the house, white oleander was planted in a continuous hedge. To the right of the pathway was a square lawn, with a row of juniper planted near the carport. The north side of the grass panel had a hedge of pineapple guava, terminating at another long row of white oleander at the property line along the street. More white oleander was on the north side of the motor court, with a cluster of three *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore) adjacent.

At the pool and fountain near the front door, a cluster of three *Erythea armata* (Mexican blue palm) was planted in the raised bed next to the pool and was underplanted by colorful petunias.

The rear garden had two zones—to the south was a recreation area with a large rectangular swimming pool and shuffleboard court. A long rectangular planting bed between the two was planted with white petunias. Landscape lighting throughout was green-painted mushroom-shaped steel shades attached to steel poles, and was designed by Maurizio Tempestini and Joseph Douglas Weiss, AIA, for Lightolier as part of their Lytescape collection. Some lights had double shades on a single pole. Along the west edge of this area was a long, curved wood slat bench mounted to a curved concrete wall that supported a raised planting bed filled with seven bottle brush plants, underplanted with a mass planting of *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (Lavender Cotton). Overhead was a long curved shade structure, some squares open to the sky, some filled with wood slats for filtered shade. This area was paved in white concrete exposed aggregate. According to landscape architect Francis Dean, “the overhead structure at the far end of the pool was a recall of the extension of the house where the use of Washingtonia Palms projected through the structure and helped to relate the house and garden where other palms were used as mainstays of the garden.”²⁶ A jacaranda tree was planted next to the bench and shade structure. Along the south perimeter, a long raised serpentine planting bed was created using a retaining wall built from undulating stacked native ledge stones, naturally varnished a deep coppery brown. Dean explained, “the rocks were used in this form to reflect some of the dry creek channels in the lower portion of the San Jacinto Mountains.”²⁷ Some of these stones were dramatically cantilevered over the adjacent grass panel, others embedded in the lawn. Large steel disk tank ends were used as planters. The

²⁵ “Koerner Garden – 1955,” typewritten sheet dated January 14, 1991, Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

upper portion of this planting area had a long row of ten citrus trees underplanted with a lively mix of plant materials.

On the north side of the swimming pool was a large lawn, with a mature, multi-trunk olive planted outside the guest room. Adjacent to the slat bench and shade structure, a raised planting bed was constructed using vertical redwood two-inch by two-inch posts set into the earth. In the northwest corner of the garden, a raised circular concrete platform was built, which provided an ideal vantage point from which to view the garden, with the mountains and canyons beyond. As Dean later described it, this platform was designed for, “observing the view to the mountains where the continually changing hues of the mountains becomes an exciting experience just after sunset.”²⁸ Three *Washingtonia filifera* palms encircled this. The west and north perimeters of the lawn were enclosed by undulating earthforms, large dirt mounds, which Dean later said were designed to, “capture the subtleties of the forms in the San Jacinto Mountains. The simple use of African Daisy and White Alyssum over most of the mounds was intended to draw attention to some of the native material used in strategic spots. The unique structure of Ocotillo, the twisted branching quality of Cat Claw Acacia with its red seed pods in the fall and the Palo Verde trees with their yellow green branches, all are very striking in contrast to those plants that have been introduced into the low desert areas.”²⁹

On the other side of the Slumpstone wall, in the buffer between the wall and the property lines, native plants were used. Twenty-four five-gallon *Prosopis glandulosa*, (Honey mesquite) were planted in clusters on two corners of the property, eleven on the southwest corner and ten on the northwest corner. Seven more were planted in a staggered row along the wall behind the shade structure, while seven *Rhus ovata* (Sugarbush) were planted just north of this. Three *Acacia greggi* (Catclaw acacia) and seven more *Rhus ovata* completed the west portion of the perimeter. More *Rhus ovata*, *Salvia apiana* (White sage), and six *Parkinsonia aculeata* (Jerusalem thorn) were planted along the northern edge, while three existing sycamores were retained. Scattered underneath the plantings in the buffer were *Abronia villosa* (Desert sand verbena), which would provide a carpet of lilac-pink flowers during much of the season the Koerners would be enjoying the garden.

INTERIOR DESIGN

Wall-to-wall beige wool looped carpeting was laid throughout the house. French-pleated draperies were made of hand-woven casement cloth and hung from traverse tracks concealed behind wood pelmets. In the bedrooms, the semi-sheer casement cloth was lined.

Elrod had a custom sectional sofa in the living room made with latex foam cushions, covered in hand-woven fabric with a beige plaid textured design. A lounge chair and ottoman were covered in green hand-woven fabric. A custom corner table was designed to accommodate a remote-control chassis, while a cocktail table, end table, and floor lamp completed this simply designed room. Elrod created a custom table in the dining room that could seat eight when the leaves were inserted and a sideboard to match. Six dining chairs with latex cushions were upholstered in a stripe textured green hand-woven fabric. Suspended from the center of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Koerner Garden – 1955,” typewritten sheet dated January 14, 1991, Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

the dining room, the brushed brass adjustable hanging light with counterweight was designed by Paavo Tynell for Finland House, New York.

The guest room was the only room photographed by Julius Shulman. A pair of twin beds, pushed together, are covered in hand-woven stripe textured bedspreads, woven through with metallic Lurex threads. A pair of high-back lounge chairs upholstered in beige hand-woven fabric and magazine table, a swivel stool upholstered in coral, and a Widdicomb desk and chair, with coral textured hand-woven fabric designed by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, completed the room. E. Stewart Williams had designed the built-in walnut cabinetry as part of the architecture.

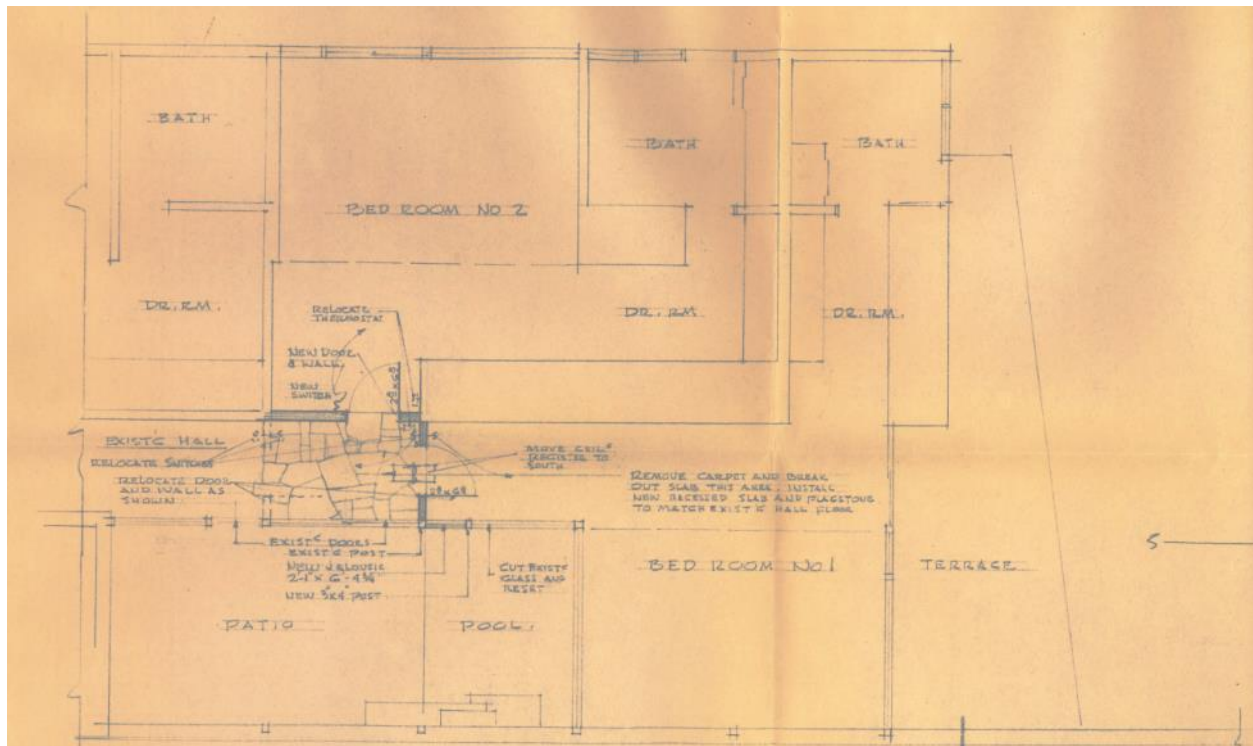
In Thea Koerner's bedroom, a full-sized bed was covered with a bedspread in green hand-woven fabric. A desk chair, day bed, and swivel stool also had green upholstery. The walls were covered in grass cloth wallpaper. Leon Koerner had similar furniture in his bedroom, upholstered in brown hand-woven fabrics. Both bedrooms had built-in walnut cabinetry in the dressing areas. Over each of the Koerners nightstands, a pair of Lightolier adjustable wall lamps with counterweight and plug-in cord was installed. These featured a brass stem and straw shades, and were designed by Gerald Thurston.

The patio furniture was manufactured by Brown Jordan. For the pool area, the chaise lounges and small glass-topped tables were constructed of painted aluminum tube laced with plastic straps, which were from Brown Jordan's Leisure and Lido collections. Patio dining furniture was from the "Morning Glory" collection of cast iron and steel, and was painted black with coral vinyl cushions.

Before the Koerners moved in, Elrod brought in all the accessories to complete the home's interior.³⁰

³⁰ Arthur Elrod's specifications sheets and correspondence with the Koerners. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

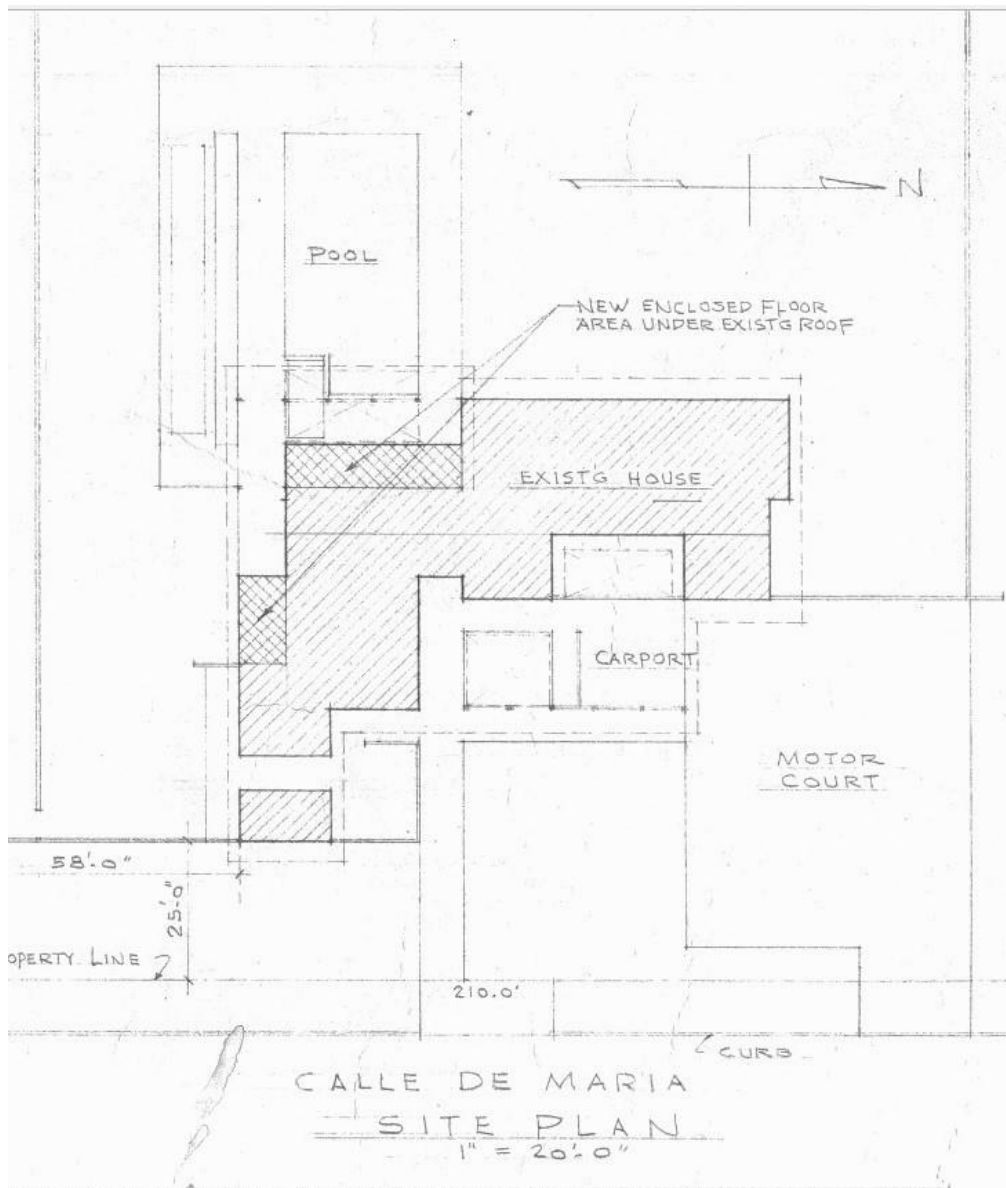
CHANGES OVER TIME



E. Stewart Williams's drawing for the interior modifications, 1961.

After his wife Thea died in 1959, Koerner asked E. Stewart Williams to reconfigure the entry into their bedroom suites, to better accommodate guests. Previously, the flagstone hallway, which led from the entrance to the bedrooms, terminated at a door which led to both Koerner bedroom suites. The middle bedroom was turned into another guest room, which required that the door to the bedrooms be pushed further down the hallway. The existing door was pushed back eight feet, forming an entrance to the primary bedroom north of the wing. A new entry was created to enter the middle bedroom, the flagstone hallway extended, and the existing carpet removed. All walnut veneered doors and wall panels were either retrofitted and refinished or created new to match the original. In the new guest room, jalousie windows were installed. This work was completed in October 1961 at the cost of \$1,700. Arthur Coffey was the contractor.³¹

³¹ E. Stewart Williams plans, and correspondence between Williams and Koerner, October 1961. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections. The contractor/builder for the Koerner Residence is not known. The building permit on file with the city has a signature that is illegible but looks like "Parm." According to Sidney Williams (email to author October 1, 2022), Williams often used Coffey as contractor. In Steve Vaught's Class 1 report for the Sutter House, next door to the Koerner, he notes about Coffey: "One of Palm Springs' premiere contractor/builders, Arthur J. Coffey (1918-1965), was responsible for a number of homes and commercial structures throughout his long time in the desert. The Kentucky-born Coffey had fallen in love with Palm Springs during his time recuperating at Torney General Hospital after an injury during World War II. Mustered out of the Army Air Corps in 1946, Coffey stayed in the village and became part of the vanguard of builders launching the post-war building boom. Coffey often built homes of his own design but also worked as a contractor for local architects as well. A few of the projects he was associated with include the Lyons Residence (Clark & Frey, 1948), Lily Pons house (Poper & Lockett, 1955), parish hall for St. Paul's in the Desert (Clark & Frey, 1950), and the Ernest Alschuler home (Lapham & Iwata, 1960). Coffey



Architect Roger Williams's 1973 drawing showing the areas where the house would be expanded underneath the existing roof.

In 1973, architect Roger Williams, E. Stewart Williams's brother, was called back by the second owner of the house, Brownie Stewart, a wealthy socialite who loved to entertain on a grand scale. Williams enlarged the living and dining areas of the home to facilitate that while honoring the original design and materials. Landscape designer Matthew Sumich removed Eckbo's sculptured earth mounds, making the lawn a vast, open area with more flat space for large-scale parties.

collaborated with Williams on a number of occasions and was not just a professional colleague but also a family friend. One his biggest Williams-related projects was building the Coachella Valley Savings and Loan (1961)."

In 1996, when Adele Cygelman was researching her book *Palm Springs Modern*, she and photographer David Glomb began looking for homes that were in original condition and preferably still being lived in by their original owners. Cygelman recalls:

Stewart Williams gave us a list of about six houses he had designed, and we started contacting the homeowners. We had photographed Stewart and Mari's own house, and we knew we wanted to include the Edris House, which was his favorite. Of the Koerner house, he said, 'It has nice details, but it's been remodeled.'

Brownie Stewart had purchased the Koerner house directly from them, fully furnished. She was a no-nonsense, matter-of-fact blonde who led us into the living room. She had been living in the house for about twenty-five or thirty years, and it showed. There was wall-to-wall carpeting (brown shag, if I recall correctly), heavy drapes over the windows, and every surface and shelf was filled with objects and bric-a-brac. But she still had the Robsjohn-Gibbings for Widdicomb furniture that Arthur Elrod had provided in the '50s, and, as she said, 'I know what I have.'

David and I knew that we couldn't photograph the house and do it any justice without removing most of the knickknacks and trying to de-clutter it. So we just thanked her and left. But we probably should have taken snapshots.³²

Photographer David Glomb remembered, "trying to look through all the rubble into the bones of the place and what it had to offer without all the distraction. But I guess I was distracted because I remember it being attractive, but I couldn't tell you why, it was a feeling. I guess in hindsight it should've been documented just as it was."³³

RESTORATION

After the home was purchased in 2018, the new owners restored the house, removing the 1973 additions done for Brownie Stewart, using the original drawings. Overseen by Henry Blackham and Maureen Erbe, with M Design Group Architects, the interiors were mostly dismantled and safely stored, while all infrastructure was replaced. After the later additions were removed, materials and finishes were matched to repair the damage from demolition. The original color palette was carefully matched. The walls are a slightly different shade of off-white than the ceilings, eaves, and fascia. Off-white stain is used on woodwork instead of paint, which enhances the sandblasted wood grain, providing textural interest in varying light. The steel-framed sliding glass and casement doors and Slumpstone walls are painted.³⁴

Except for historic trees, the landscape was removed and restored using Eckbo, Royston, & Williams's landscape plans from 1955. Landscape architect JC Miller, who had worked with Robert Royston for years, oversaw the garden's restoration.

³² Email from Adele Cygelman, February 2, 2022.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Email from Henry Blackham, July 11, 2022.

RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY HENRY BLACKHAM



A dining room addition was removed, as was a small, screened porch. The former maid's room and storage areas were repurposed into guest rooms.



The interiors were carefully removed and safely stored while all the infrastructure work took place.



Where later additions were removed, new sandblasted board-and-batten, matching the original, was replicated.



Walnut paneling throughout was restored.



Landscape architect Garrett Eckbo's signature sculptural earth mounds were replicated, and the rear garden planted using Mediterranean-climate species specified by Eckbo and Dean, or with more drought-tolerant species that provided the same look and feel. Landscape architect JC Miller created the replicated landscape.



Paint was carefully scraped down to the first layer, and the paint palette matched. Walls have a slightly different off-white stain than ceilings, eaves, and fascia.

Character-Defining Features of the Koerner Residence (from the period of significance, 1955-1973)

Contributing Elements that are extant or restored:

The Koerner Residence is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Midcentury Modern house and garden. It exhibits numerous character-defining features including:

- Contemporary interpretation of Ranch-style residence.
- Sandblasted board-and-batten vertical wood detail.
- Open carport.
- Slumpstone walls used for structure and to enclose the rear garden.
- Panels of turf at front of house and rear garden.
- Sculpted earth mounds in rear garden (lost feature that has been restored).
- Native stone retaining walls in rear garden.
- Native planting in landscaped buffer on three sides of the house.
- Arizona flagstone pathway serving as spine along east–west axis (this was restored like for like to replace damaged existing flagstone).
- Rectangular swimming pool (replastered but original footprint, with spa added to interior of footprint).
- Curved poured concrete retaining wall with slatted bench attached; Overhead shade structure. (lost feature that has been restored).
- Flagstone, white concrete exposed aggregate paving (lost feature that has been restored).
- Mature multi-trunk olive trees, two in front, one in rear lawn.
- Steel-framed sliding glass doors and casement doors.
- Cluster of three *Washingtonia filifera* palm trees piercing roof at rear of house. (These three replace three original palms that had badly damaged trunks. The species were replaced like for like).
- Blue palms at entry pool.
- Indoor/outdoor atrium adjacent to primary bedroom.
- Shallow steel tank ends used for planters and fountains.
- Formica-covered front door.
- Off-white stains and paint.

Contributing elements that no longer exist:

- Shuffleboard court
- Jalousie windows

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

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

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

EVALUATION:

CRITERION 1 – Significant Events - The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community: The Koerner Residence is not affiliated with significant events and does not qualify under Criterion 1.

CRITERION 2 – Significant Persons - The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history: The Koerner Residence, completed in 1955, was the winter home of Leon and Thea Koerner. Leon Joseph Koerner (May 24, 1892 – September 26, 1972) was a Czechoslovakian-born industrialist and philanthropist in British Columbia. When he retired in 1955, he and his wife created a foundation, the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, which contributed to education, the creative arts, and social programs, particularly in British Columbia. Because of his philanthropy, Koerner was recognized by the government of British Columbia as a Person of National Historic Significance in 2018. **The Koerner Residence is affiliated with significant persons and qualifies under Criterion 2.**

CRITERION 3 - The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history: The Koerner Residence, completed in 1955, exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' "Post-World War II Palm Springs" period. The custom-designed residence represents a prime example of significant Postwar architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally known. The home was designed by a top-notch team of designers, working in collaboration, for wealthy owners with refined taste and receptive to the design team's ideas. This confluence of talent produced one of the masterpieces of environmental design in the Coachella Valley. E. Stewart Williams designed a custom contemporary interpretation of a classic California Ranch House, by using materials associated with the Ranch Style, as well as the long, low, horizontality. However, the form and detailing are wholly modern in design. While modern in spirit and function, Williams used materials that rooted it to the site, honoring the roots of early Palm Springs. The modernist landscape, designed by Garrett Eckbo and Francis Dean, represents the best of modernist American landscape design. Eckbo was one of the main protagonists who defined the twentieth-century modernist landscape, and his influence had international reach. The landscape for the Koerner Residence exemplified Eckbo at the height of his influence, and since its restoration, is one of the best extant examples of an Eckbo landscape in the country. The undulating earthen mounds; the native stonework rooting it to the site

and the mountains beyond; the wide palette of drought-tolerant Mediterranean species; the slat bench with overhead shade structure; the steel tank ends used as planters and fountains: these features define an Eckbo garden, and as one of the few places left one can experience this in person, make it important. The Koerner Residence may be viewed as an essential component of the historical trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of notable Modern architecture and landscape architecture, i.e., a historical movement that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state, or local history. **The Koerner Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 3.**

CRITERION 4 - The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction: The Koerner Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture and landscape architecture because it possesses numerous distinct features and methods of construction that exemplify the Midcentury Modern style. This home designed by master architect E. Stewart Williams exemplifies the construction type used for high-end custom residential structures in the Coachella Valley during the Midcentury period. Using an 8x8 foot grid, the post-and-beam construction was typical of other housing being produced in the Coachella Valley at the same time. The materials and detailing, however, while deceptively simple, are of a quality not seen in mass-produced tract housing of the same time. For example, one of the home's signature features was board-and-batten wood siding. But here, the board-and-batten is wood of the highest quality, sandblasted and scrubbed with a wire brush to emphasize the grain. And instead of being a full board with a smaller vertical batten used to seal the gap, here it is a distinctly decorative treatment, nearly equal width board and batten, used to provide a lively textured surface. Then, instead of paint, the wood is stained with a light neutral buff tone, further emphasizing the dramatic wood grain. The board-and-batten detail is used both indoors and out, and walls merge seamlessly through large panes of glass. More warmth and texture was achieved by the use of a relatively new product, Slumpstone, which had been developed by General Concrete of Van Nuys in the late 1940s. "Slumpstone Structure - hollow concrete block, irregular texture on both sides, for adobe or stone appearance at about half-cost."³⁵ Williams used the Slumpstone ingeniously, constructing walls of the residence in the adobe-like material, which extended beyond the roofline to become the walls that enclosed the rear garden of the house. Glazing is elegantly installed using frameless panes of glass which appear to disappear into the ceiling and surrounding walls or supporting posts. The superb garden, designed by internationally known and significant landscape architecture firm Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, is equally evocative and a prime example of a modernist masterwork of landscape architecture. Custom features like giant steel tank ends, used as fountains and planters, and undulating earthen forms, show the high caliber of the type of construction utilized at the Koerner Residence. Both the house and garden have significance for their distinctive characteristics, both of which have been beautifully restored. **The Koerner Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 4.**

Criterion 5: The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age; or that possesses high artistic value.

³⁵ Advertisement for General Concrete Products, *Arts & Architecture*, June 1954, 42.

High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. Master architect E. Stewart Williams is one of the Coachella Valley's most admired and designers, who influenced the other architects and building designers working at the time. Because of his own influence and admiration for the more organic modern architecture of Scandinavian designers, his designs gave his structures a human quality, with warm materials and colors that worked with the desert setting. Williams's designs inspired other designers to think beyond the rigidity of the International Style and the post-and-beam construction method so prevalent in the Coachella Valley at the time. Because of this, as well as his reputation as one of the most important and influential figures in Palm Springs architecture from the 1940s-1990, Stewart was named a Fellow of the AIA. In addition, the landscape was created by one of the most influential and important landscape architects of the twentieth-century, a pioneer in modern landscape architecture, Garrett Eckbo, with his partner Francis H. Dean. The work of Eckbo, Royston, & Williams was internationally known and respected. Garrett Eckbo was one of modern landscape architecture's earliest and most influential designers. His work in the field and books on landscape architecture influenced the entire profession of landscape architecture around the world. The landscape of the Koerner Residence features many Eckbo signatures—curved slat bench with overhead shade structure; earthen landforms; shallow steel disks used as fountains and planters; complex plant palette of primarily Mediterranean species—features that influenced his peers around the world, through his writing. **Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics representing the Midcentury Modern style, as a master architect's work and its high artistic values, the Koerner Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criterion 5.**

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

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

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

Integrity Analysis (using US Secretary of Interior Standards)

INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical

features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Koerner Residence has been meticulously restored, using the original plans from 1955. Later additions have been recently removed, restoring the original footprint. The modernist landscape, designed by the iconic firm Eckbo, Royston, & Williams has many of the firm's signature elements, and is also recently restored.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a period 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 types of materials and technologies. ***The Koerner Residence's materials successfully represent the best of Midcentury Modern design, with high-quality but simple Slumpstone brick, stone, steel, sandblasted board-and-batten, and glass. The materials in the landscape, such as Arizona sandstone, high-quality and labor-intensive white concrete exposed aggregate, innovative shallow steel tank ends, and native boulders, all contributed to this masterpiece of architecture and landscape architecture. These original materials survived largely intact before restoration. The recent restoration sought to restore those intact materials, and to accurately replicate others that had been lost over time, using identical materials called out in the original drawings.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices

and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***The Koerner Residence displays Williams's meticulous attention to detail in methods of workmanship.³⁶ While we don't have a record of the individual craftsmen who worked on the Koerner Residence, the proof of this is in their results: the quality of their workmanship ensured the details, like the sandblasted wood, stained with transparent washes, added to the overall success of the home. The house was completely custom in every detail, which required craftspeople able to deliver exacting products with the highest level of quality. In collaboration with Earl Neel of Neel's Nursery, the superb landscape design by Eckbo, Royston, & Williams used high-end custom materials and innovations in modern landscape architecture to create a spectacular work of modernist landscape design. In the recent restoration, many of those important details that had been lost over time were authentically and accurately replicated, by studying the original design drawings, as well as extant details at the house.***

LOCATION

Location is the place where a historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often important to understand 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 Koerner Residence remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect. Though there were still vacant lots dotting the Deepwell Estates tract by the time the home was completed in 1955, most were under construction, and the concept of a high-end residential tract of custom residences, as planned, was soon realized. Thus, the setting remains intact.***

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 Koerner Residence was built in the newly subdivided Deep Well Colony Estates (now Deepwell Estates) neighborhood. Developed after the land surrounding the famous Deep Well Guest Colony was sold, a new subdivision of first-class contemporary homes was built. The Koerner Residence sits on four contiguous parcels, which total an acre. The setting of the Koerner Residence continues to reflect E. Stewart Williams's***

³⁶ As described in E. Stewart Williams' biography in this document, 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." In researching the Koerner Residence, no contractor could be determined. The 1955 building permit has a sloppy signature that looks like "Pam," which doesn't match known builders working in the desert at that time. Contractor Bill Foster was hired to do small additions in 1956.

and Eckbo, Royston, & Williams's original designed relationship of site, structure, and garden. Though several open parcels had yet to be developed at the time the Koerner Residence was completed, those lots were soon built out and the Deepwell Estates setting as it exists today has the same character.

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. 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 nineteenth century. ***The Koerner Residence's design was carefully considered by the master design team working to create a first-class home for the Koerners to enjoy during their winter stays. The Koerner Residence, especially after its recent restoration, has a scale and presence which still blends well into this unique neighborhood. As one of two large home sites equaling an acre (the Barrett Residence being the other), the Koerner Residence's designed feeling as an elegant modernist home set into a unique and important masterpiece of modernist landscape design, remains intact. Accordingly, the Koerner Residence retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the eighteenth 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 the eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***Architectural signatures such as the long, low, flat-roofed home with sandblasted board-and-batten and Slumpstone walls, walls of glass, and elegant detailing, allow one to recognize the structure as the work of E. Stewart Williams. The landscape by Eckbo, Royston, & Williams exhibits many of the firm's character-defining features (as outlined elsewhere in this document), for which they became internationally known and respected. It is one of the few significant landscapes left of this great firm in the Coachella Valley, and in its restored state, a very rare example of the finest in modern landscape architecture in the country.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: This integrity analysis confirms that the site, structures, and landscape of the Koerner Residence still possess seven aspects of integrity. ***The Koerner Residence's home and garden are the best of the best. The site represents a successful restoration that respects and honors the essential design features of the past, while bringing the systems and infrastructure up to current standards. Later additions were removed, restoring the original footprint from 1955. In summary, the Koerner Residence still possesses an exceptionally high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.***

APPENDICES

I. Owner's Letter of Support

August 11, 2021

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

Dear Honorable Preservation Board,

As the current owner of the Koerner Residence, designed and built by architect E. Stewart Williams, at 1275 S Calle De Maria, Palm Springs, I am thrilled to support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of my property by the City of Palm Springs. I engaged the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, primarily Vice President Steve Keylon, to advise and assist me with the preparation of all required nomination paperwork and am grateful for all their work on my behalf.

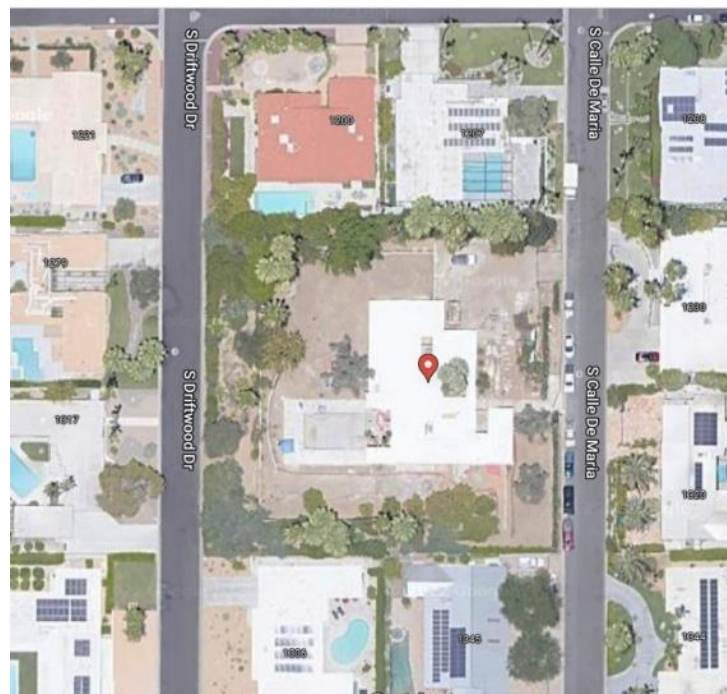
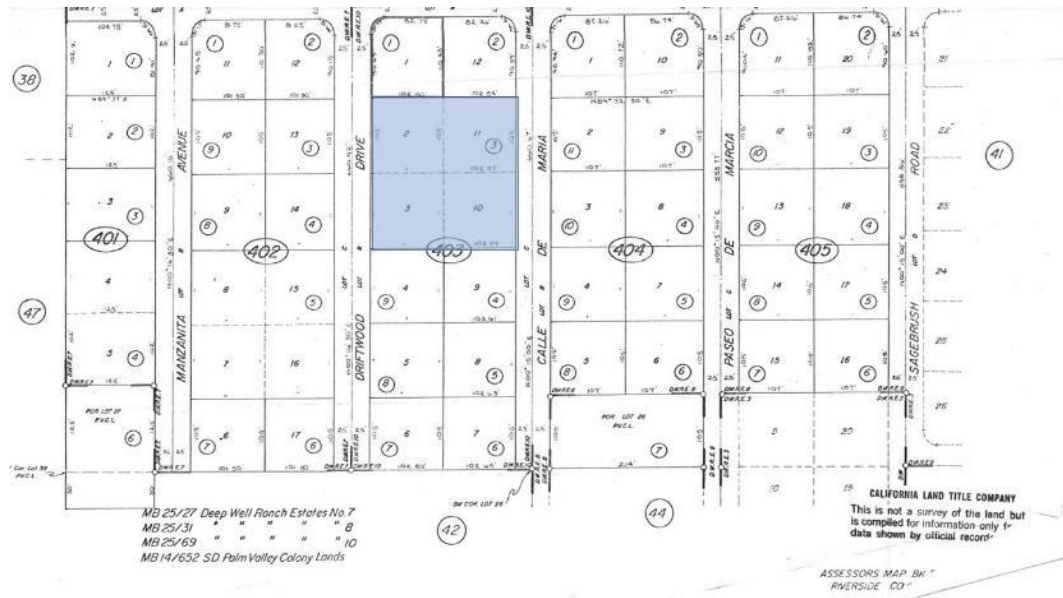
Please contact me with any questions or concerns at +1.617.571.4244.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DWright', is written over the printed name.

David Wright

II. Assessor's Map and Aerial



Property Address	1275 S CALLE DE MARIA, PALM SPRINGS, CA 92264
APN	508-403-003

III. Building Permits

Date	Owner	Permit Type	Description of Work
06-20-55	Mr. and Mrs. Leon J. Koerner	Building	7 room dwelling, 8" concrete block. Frame and board-and-batten. Tropicool roof. Double carport. Lot size 210x205. 3250 sq. ft. house; 400 sf carport; 764 sf porches.
06-22-55	Koerner	Electrical	Temporary service.
Month/day illegible, 1955	Koerner	Electrical	223 outlets; 121 fixtures; 4 heaters; 3 ranges.
07-01-55	Leon Koerner	Electrical	1 outlet; 1 fixture; 1 ½ to 2 hp. Motor. Paddock Construction Co. (pool)
07-01-55	Leon Koerner	Plumbing	1 cesspool; 1 floor drain; 1 gas piping; 1 sewer piping; 1 water heater; 1 water piping. Paddock Construction Co. (pool)
07-01-55	L.J. Koerner	Plumbing	1 bathtub; 2 gas outlet; 1 gas furnace; 4 lavatories; 2 sinks; 4 toilets; 1 water heater; 1 water piping.
07-15-55	Leon Koerner	Building	Swimming pool, 24x40 ft. Paddock Pools.
Month/day illegible, 1955	Mr. Koerner	Plumbing	2 cesspools; 1 sewer piping.
11-23-55	Leon J. Koerner	Plumbing	126 sprinklers.
12-11-56	Mr. & Mrs. Leon J. Koerner	Building	Addition of storage rooms and bathroom. Frame, stucco and masonry, compo roof. 390 sf. Bill Foster, general contractor.
01-02-57	Leon J. Koerner	Electrical	8 outlets; 1 light fixture.
05-08-58	Koerner	Building	Masonry wall.
09-05-61	L.J. Koerner	Plumbing	1 cesspool; 1 sewer piping.
06-04-64	Koerner	Sewer	Partial hookup – 1 cesspool.
01-13-69	L.J. Koerner	Mechanical	Repair, alter, or add to heating appliance, refrig. unit, etc.
10-15-73	Mrs. E. Brown Stewart	Building	Extend living room 8x32' installing steel beam to carry existing ceiling & roof. Extend dining room 8x16' under existing roof. 416 sf.
12-28-73	Stewart	Electrical	2 outlets.
09-20-78	B. Stewart	Electrical	3 outlets; 1 light fixture; 1 all fixed appliance – 110 volt.
09-20-78	Brownie Stewart	Building	Install 6' x 7 ½' fiberglass spa-pool.

01-06-89	Mrs. Bear	Building	Remove existing roof and reroof with 4-ply built up roof per U.B.C. 32.
03-28-11	Henry Lamb	Building	Replace existing patio cover with new freestanding alum. patio structure in back yard (lattice). "Duralam products."
08-08-18	Mrs. Wright	Building	Tear off roof to substrate and install new built up asphalt roof.
08-28-18	Sawtooth Investments, LLC	Building	Remodel pool, re-plumb, re-locate equipment and add new spa.
11-19-18	Sawtooth Investments, LLC	Building	Remodel guest suite, new elec, plumb & HVAC, convert storage area to extension of guest suite.
01-09-19	Allan Lamb (incorrectly named as owner)	Building	30 PV Panel Array – 9.9 kW Solar System.

IV. The Development of the Koerner Residence

On their seasonal visits to Palm Springs (where they stayed at the Biltmore), the Koerners had become friends with Arnold and Muriel Rumwell.³⁷ Rumwell was an attorney in Palo Alto, and when the couple visited Palm Springs, they would stay at the Ingleside Inn. In 1953, the Rumwells bought a house at 250 Lilliana Drive, and he opened an office in Palm Springs at the newly built Williams, Williams, and Williams-designed Oasis Commercial Building. Their reason for moving to Palm Springs was explained by Arnold Rumwell, "because to us it is the greatest place in the world."³⁸ The Rumwell's enthusiasm was contagious, and Koerner would later credit Arnold Rumwell with advising him to build his own house so that Leon and Thea could spend more extended periods in the desert they had grown to love.³⁹

Once they considered it, things happened quite rapidly. They met with Bill Boggess, the realtor representing Deep Well Colony Estates. Boggess showed them four contiguous parcels in the newly subdivided Unit No. 10. He was enthusiastic about the new development. He told them about the new house he was having built on a plot kitty-corner from theirs across Calle de Maria, designed by Wexler and Harrison. Along Driftwood, a block over from the parcels the Koerners were looking at, a substantial home—also on a four-lot acre

³⁷ The *Desert Sun* reported on the Koerners' month-long stays in 1954 and again in 1955. It isn't known if they visited earlier than that.

³⁸ "Arnold Rumwell Opens New Office in Village," *Desert Sun*, June 18, 1953, 3a.

³⁹ Typewritten speech by Leon Koerner from his 1955 housewarming party. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

parcel—was being built for George and Martha Barrett. His intensity must have also been infectious because the Koerners agreed on the spot to buy the four lots within two hours of meeting Boggess.⁴⁰

Almost immediately, even before signing purchase contracts, they contacted architect E. Stewart Williams, who met with them at the site and got to work on preliminary plans. Knowing that the most exemplary projects are achieved by close collaboration between client, architect, landscape architect, and interior designer, Williams recommended that the Koerners contact the firm of Eckbo, Royston, and Williams, landscape architects from Los Angeles with whom he had worked before. He also told them about interior designer Arthur Elrod, who had recently returned to Palm Springs from San Francisco, opening a showroom at 886 North Palm Canyon. Elrod had recently completed the interior design for Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz's new Paul R. Williams-designed home at Thunderbird Country Club.

In a letter dated February 26, 1955, Elrod explained to Koerner, "Mr. Stewart Williams, the architect, has told me of your interesting plans for a new Palm Springs residence. I would be most pleased to have the opportunity to talk with you, that possibly I could assist you with the color coordination and furnishing of the new residence. As you undoubtedly know, if the interior designer can work with the architect and his client from the inception of the planning, a more satisfactory way of living can usually be attained. By this I mean that if we may plan furniture arrangement now, we may place the electric facilities in their proper place to avoid the necessity of extra cordage on your floor. Also, inasmuch as floor covering materials are made on standard size looms, unless you select a hand-woven fabric, by adjusting room sizes by possibly an inch or two, we would be able to aid you in having a seamless area, rather than having to supply you with a necessary, but unattractive, seam in an awkward place."⁴¹

Koerner reached out to Garrett Eckbo and his partner Francis Dean.⁴² Though both landscape architects worked collaboratively from their Los Angeles office, Dean was the point person on the ground for the firm's Palm Springs projects because Dean lived in El Monte, which was closer to Palm Springs than Eckbo's home in the Hollywood Hills. Dean traveled to Palm Springs and met the Koerners and E. Stewart Williams at the site in March. They discussed the Koerners' objectives for the garden, and Dean then conferred with Stewart, who gave Dean a set of preliminary drawings of a site plan to take back to Los Angeles.

On March 21, 1955, Dean wrote to the Koerners, including a fee schedule for the proposed design of their garden. He said that once approved, the firm would get to work on plans. "This plan will name and locate all physical features not covered by the architects. It will be a very serious effort to prepare a garden which will satisfy your needs and desires so that you can completely enjoy your annual visits to Palm Springs. Be assured that we will work very closely with Mr. Stewart Williams and Mr. Earl Neel of Neel's Nursery to produce for

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Letter from Arthur Elrod, to Leon Koerner, February 26, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁴² In 1955, only Garrett Eckbo and Francis Dean are called out in the letterhead as the landscape architects in the Los Angeles office, working out of 8942 Wonderland Park Avenue in Los Angeles.

you the very best of our combined efforts.”⁴³ Koerner must have sent an approval because two days later, the first set of plans for the garden was complete.⁴⁴

On Thursday, March 24, Dean and his wife Myrtle returned to Palm Springs to bring the preliminary plans for the Koerners to review. E. Stewart Williams and his wife Mari invited the Deans to dinner afterward. In a letter to Williams, Dean thanked him for their “very enjoyable evening,” and then apologized, saying, “I’m afraid we weren’t our scintillating best after spending an enjoyable but tough day with the Koerners. I believe that you were going to send some elevations of the Koerner house for our information. These would be very helpful. I have not sat down to review the cost on the garden, but I think it would be wise to indicate to the Koerners that the cost of the garden would probably be within the \$10,000 to \$15,000 bracket. I believe I left the impression with them that this was only an estimated cost based on the preliminary plan and that adjustments would certainly be forthcoming. I believe I am clear now on the charges as the plans proceed; namely, that we are to bill you directly for our fee and supervision charges on the construction and planting operations. As per our letter to Mr. and Mrs. Koerner we are requesting a \$100 retainer and \$250 for preliminary studies which we are billing separately.”⁴⁵

After getting the preliminary floor plans and discussing the project with Williams, Elrod got to work to pull together the interior design quickly. On March 23, 1955, Elrod sent eleven pages of detailed inventory sheets documenting the proposed interior furnishings and hand-woven draperies and fabrics, which he addressed to Leon Koerner at the Biltmore. In the cover letter, Elrod wrote, “We will work closely with Mr. Stewart Williams, your architect, that all our mutual plannings may be carried out to your satisfaction. Dependent on construction progress, we expect to have your residence completed, ready for you, shortly prior to the first day of October. We will plan to install the home furnishings shortly after your return to the desert. Please know that we are pleased to have the opportunity to assist you in the decoration of your new residence, and candor compels me to state that when completed, you will have one of the outstanding homes in the area. We will continue in our efforts to work on your home that it may be done in the utmost of good taste, and that it will suit your convenience and comfort.”⁴⁶ The estimated total to furnish the house was \$35,587.30.

On March 31, Stewart sent Dean the requested elevations. In response to a proposed fee schedule, Stewart opined, “I also believe that you should make up a complete estimate, based on the prices Neel gave you, plus your estimate of the garden structures, paving, rock work, etc. and send me two copies, one of which I can send Mr. Koerner. In this way, we will have everything set up in black and white and not have to depend on our memory of discussions taking place early in the work.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁴⁴ Preliminary drawing of first iteration of the garden is dated March 23, 1955. Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

⁴⁵ Letter from Francis Dean to E. Stewart Williams, March 29, 1955. Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

⁴⁶ Typewritten “Estimates for the Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Leon J. Koerner. Palm Springs, California.” Typewritten cover letter and eleven-page inventory of contents of furnishings for Koerner residence, bound in black fiberboard covers. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁴⁷ Letter from Stewart to Dean, March 31, 1955. Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

It wasn't until April 15, 1955, that Harry and Gladys Dart deeded four parcels, Lots Two, Three, Ten, and Eleven, of Deep Well Ranch Estates Unit No. 10 to their company Deep Well Colony Estates, Inc. The company sold the four parcels to Leon and Thea Koerner that same day.⁴⁸ On April 20, an easement allowing the acre parcel to be free from utility wires was executed, indicating that the design team had the foresight to ensure the view of the mountains from the Koerners' house and garden was free from unsightly wires.

On April 26, 1955, Eckbo and Dean completed the planting plan for the second version of the design. On this iteration, a raised planting bed comprised of vertical two-by-two redwood posts on the north side of the garden was omitted, and replaced by a boldly biomorphic series of sculpted earthen mounds, which would be planted with a large *Schinus mole* (California pepper) and a dynamic mix of flowering color, sculptural succulents, and spiky Ocotillo. Eckbo had used similar earthen mounds at an earlier Palm Springs residence, in a more restrained manner. Here, they would be an exuberant punctuation mark to enliven the rear garden.

In late April and early May 1955, Elrod went to New York on a business trip. While there, he made a separate trip to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to visit the Widdicomb furniture factory to check in on the large order, with its several custom pieces, to ensure "that there will be no error—no delay."⁴⁹

Final architectural drawings dated June 1, 1955, show all the landscape architect's features incorporated. Construction began by the end of June, with Elrod noting, "I stopped by your property this morning to find it 'alive' with workmen who are really getting started on the building of your new residence here."⁵⁰

On June 7, Elrod wrote to Koerner to inform him that many of the hand-woven fabrics were off the looms and would soon be on their way to the various furniture manufacturers. He also promised to take some photographs of the progress of the house, noting, "they have made some good progress in the planting. I had a pleasant and successful trip to New York, but am glad to be back in Palm Springs, where I can keep a careful eye on your fine house."⁵¹ Once the fabrics had been delivered to Elrod, Williams approved them and shipped them to the manufacturers.⁵²

On June 29, 1955, Bill Boggess wrote to Leon Koerner: "Hello neighbor (and Thea). Great and wonderful things are going on in our neighborhood and the workmen are busy as beavers on the handsome Koerner establishment. The George Barrett house (across the street) is completed and couldn't be more beautiful."⁵³ All of us are fortunate to be situated amongst the finest properties in our area. My own house is an absolute

⁴⁸ In November 1955, the Koerners granted the deed to their corporation Miosogno Holdings, Ltd. "Miosogno" was the nickname Thea gave the house. It translates to "My Dream."

⁴⁹ Letter from Barbara Wills of the Elrod office to Leon Koerner, April 30, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵⁰ Letter from Elrod to Koerner, June 27, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵¹ Letter from Elrod to Koerner, June 7, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵² Letter from Elrod to Koerner, June 24, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵³ The George and Martha Barrett residence was at 1323 Driftwood. Like the Koerner residence, it was sited on four contiguous parcels, equaling an acre. Designed and built by Joe Pawling, it later became the home of actor William Holden.

knockout and I couldn't be happier with it or in it." Boggess's new Asian-inspired contemporary home was across Calle de Maria at 1366, designed by Wexler and Harrison, with interiors by Arthur Elrod and landscape by "Cactus Slim" Moorten. The builder was Joe Pawling.⁵⁴ Boggess continued, "After seeing what is going on with the planting, etc., and how your new home is situated on your four lots it has occurred to me that you really ought to have (for proper protection) the two corners on the north of your property." Priced at \$6,500 each, the two parcels were immediately north of the Koerners' four parcels. Koerner declined, and on October 11, 1955, the parcels were sold to William H. Wright & Wiltrud Greta Wright.⁵⁵ They sold a few years later, and in 1960, E. Stewart Williams designed the Sutter Residence for the northeast parcel. Arthur Elrod did the interiors.

Eckbo and Dean completed the final planting plan on July 7, and the plans were forwarded to the Koerners. Dean wrote to Koerner shortly afterward, explaining some of the modifications:

I'm sure by now you've received the latest planting plan and the general design plan showing the structural items in the garden. I hope the sketch of the garden has clarified some of the points about the general appearance of the garden. I talked with Earl Neel this morning about the cost of the installation and it appears that, everything considered, it will be less than quoted to you by Mr. Stewart Williams.

I would like to make a few comments about the final plan insofar as our thinking on the total lay-out is concerned. As you will recognize, much of the basic material which we discussed when you were in Palm Springs has remained, and I think to good advantage. We are still having a little problem locating some of the specimen material, but I am sure this will be solved shortly. We have introduced quite a bit of annual and perennial [sic] color in the mound areas to the north of the garden which will be something of a maintenance factor but which, I believe, will enhance the beauty of the garden generally. I believe you will recall the wood retaining boxes on the north side of the garden which we have since eliminated in favor of a mounding arrangement of the soil so it will have a more pleasing setting in relation to the 6' garden wall and the mountains beyond as well as the adjacent landscape. In addition to the introduction of carefully planned color in the garden, we have also brought in some rather large native boulders to blend into the general mound areas. The main point of emphasis here, we feel, should be to provide a usable and pleasing garden for you and a good relationship between the garden and the mountains beyond.

We have a few points to determine on the indoor planting when we get to those areas because the ultimate placement of the planting material should be done when all the component parts of the pool are in place. When you return to Palm Springs we will then have to determine whether we should introduce any ornamental material outside the garden wall. It is my personal feeling that it could all be left to a desert area since the garden seems self-sufficient without the introduction of this extra material.

⁵⁴ "Oriental Mood on the Desert," *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine*, January 1, 1956.

⁵⁵ Vaught, Steven. Sutter Residence Class 1 Historic Resource nomination, PSPF, 2020, 24.

As you may have heard from Mr. Williams, the Olive trees, the Oleanders, the citrus and the Sycamores are in place at present and we are proceeding as rapidly as the house construction will allow us.⁵⁶

By August, the house was coming along so well that Elrod took color stereo slides of the progress and sent them to Koerner.⁵⁷ Elrod updated Koerner on the progress of the furnishings, stressing that he was keeping on top of things so “you and Mrs. Koerner move into your new home at the end of October” that all would be livable. He pointed out that nothing had been done to equip the kitchen, and knowing that the Koerners wanted to move into a “really completed home,” he offered to shop for “toasters, waffle irons, pots, pans, and sets of dishes and glasses—that would be most appropriate for your decor.” He also asked them what soaps they preferred.⁵⁸ Koerner responded that Thea would like to do that shopping when she arrived in Palm Springs, but would undoubtedly ask for Elrod’s assistance if necessary. The Koerners were planning to move into the Biltmore when they came, expecting the house wouldn’t entirely be livable by the end of October.⁵⁹

By October 15, most furniture had arrived and was at Elrod’s storage facility. Elrod updated Koerner about the details, assuring him that things would be ready to be installed shortly after the Koerners arrived, and sent more photographs of the progress. Koerner responded a bit concerned, saying “everything still seems very unfinished but we know that the last finishing work shows very best progress, especially when more cleanliness is around the place.” He let Elrod know they would be arriving in Palm Springs on Halloween, and checking in to the Biltmore. He stated that they hoped “to move as quickly as possible into our new home and it will be your job and Mr. Williams’s responsibility to get us in without further delay. We hope that your assumption that all the pieces of furniture etc. will have arrived in Palm Springs before us is correct and that there will be no disappointment in that respect. We are sure that you are doing your best to achieve this goal.”⁶⁰

On November 11, the house was ready, and Elrod ordered bouquets from the Palm Springs Florist to enhance the beautiful interiors for the first time the Koerners would see the house completed.

Before the Koerners moved in, Elrod brought in all the accessories to complete the home’s interior.⁶¹

On Wednesday, December 14, 1955, at 6 p.m., the Koerners hosted a housewarming party. The couple invited many artists, artisans, craftsmen, and tradespeople who had worked on the creation their new home. Leon Koerner addressed the guests:

⁵⁶ Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵⁷ Letter from Elrod to Koerner, August 22, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵⁸ Letter from Elrod to Koerner, August 26, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁵⁹ Letter from Koerner to Elrod, September 2, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁶⁰ Letter from Koerner to Elrod, October 18, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁶¹ Arthur Elrod’s specifications sheets and correspondence with the Koerners. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

May I, in the name of my better half and myself, welcome you all to our new abode and thank you for the pleasure of having you with us.

This year we are especially privileged to celebrate already the third Thanksgiving Day.

The first one we celebrated in Vancouver in October, when we thanked our Lord for all the blessings he bestowed on us in our adopted country, our beloved Canada.

The second we spent here last month amid the loveable people of this grand country, thanking Him for the goodness of their wonderful neighbourliness.

Today is the third and our particular Thanksgiving Day. Thanksgiving to Him for the blessing of having moved into this new home, thanksgiving to all those who have been responsible for the creation, construction, and completion of house and garden.

Our thanks go to Arnold Rumwell, whose advice led us to our decision to build on our own grounds.

Thanks to Bill Boggess who, in less than two hours of acquaintance, sold us this lot on which we stand.

Thanks to Francis Dean, who transformed the flat desert ground into a most enjoyable garden perfectly fitting into the surrounding landscape.

Thanks to Earl Neel who, together with Francis Dean chose and planted exquisite trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Last, but certainly not least, our thanks go to Stewart Williams, the composer and maestro of the symphony which Thea proudly named "Miosogno."

We hope to enjoy it every day while we are here, and God willing, through many years to come.

Stew and his associates have put the hearts and brains, their skills and greatest abilities into this creation, and voilà, the outcome of their excellent team work.

Amongst the other distinguished members of their orchestra I mention his brother Roger, Mssrs. Hoffman, Nelson, Frank Evans, and our most able, ambitious, enthusiastic interior decorator, Arthur Elrod.

To all of them and to many others not present here go our hearty thanks.

I cannot conclude without thanking also our dear friend Fred Ingram for the care he and his organization have taken in looking after the financial coordination without any discord in the concert of efforts.

Again to you all, from the bottom of our hearts, many many thanks.

May I express Thea's and my wish for many years of friendship and good neighbourly relations in the friendly spirit of tonight's gathering.

Thank you, thank you all, and many cheers for only happy days.⁶²

On December 14, 1955, Leon Koerner wrote a letter of appreciation to E. Stewart Williams:

My Dear Stew:

You have, by your artistic design and most thorough supervision of its construction, created for Thea and myself a lovely winter abode, which Thea rightly calls Miosogno (My Dream).

We both thank you from the bottom of our hearts for what you have done for us.

Your achievement would not be what it is without the perfect team work of your associates and the craftsmanship of your contractors and their skilled crews.

In addition to being the owners and beneficiaries of your creation, we hope for many years to come, we have by meeting you and Mari, enjoyed the rare privilege at our age of acquiring new loveable friends, whose affection we cherish.⁶³

Koerner wrote a similar note to Elrod on December 14, "Mrs. Koerner and I want to thank you for what you have done to furnish and beautify our new desert abode. We both feel that with your sense for beauty of design and color and your full attention to our wishes you have contributed very much to make it attractive and comfortable, at the same time."⁶⁴

To Dean, Koerner wrote, "Mrs. Koerner and I feel that you have, through your most cooperative efforts, together with Mr. Stewart Williams and Earl Neel, in a wonderful way contributed to the beauty of our desert abode by the creation of a most tastefully designed garden. To show our great appreciation we want to express to you our hearty thanks and our congratulations for a most distinguished achievement"⁶⁵

On April 24 and 25, 1956, E. Stewart Williams had famed photographer Julius Shulman photograph the house, focusing primarily on the landscape architecture. Williams sent Koerner copies of the pictures, writing, "enclosed are several photographs which Julius Shulman, our photographer from Los Angeles, took of your garden the day after you left. With your permission, he wants to send them to *House & Garden*, one of the leading home magazines in the United States, to see if they would be interested in devoting a section of one of their winter issues to your home. If interested, they would commission him to take full coverage of the interior of the house sometime in the fall, after you return to Palm Springs. I have cautioned him of your desire to avoid publicity, either by mentioning your name or your address, other than to say it is a home in Palm Springs, California." Koerner responded, thanking Williams for the photographs, but expressing his "regret that they are not showing the colours. As I told you personally, we have no objection to reproduction of these photographs in addition to some of the house in the magazine '*House and Garden*,' as we can visualize

⁶² Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Letter from Koerner to Elrod, December 14, 1955. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁶⁵ Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

that it will be of some value for your firm and a tribute to your artistic achievement. It is understood that our name, as owner of the property, will not appear in any publication.”⁶⁶

Before the Koerners arrived for the 1956-57 season, Williams wrote to Koerner to tell him, “incidentally, your garden looks just marvelous. I have never seen things grow like your plants and trees did this summer. Neel must have fed everything several times with fertilizer to get that kind of result.”⁶⁷

After the house was completed, the Koerners and the Williams families remained close, and their friendship grew. The Koerners regularly entertained the couple on their trips north, and in the Leon Koerner archives, is extensive correspondence back and forth for the rest of Koerner’s life. Eventually, the families merged when in 1969, E. Stewart Williams’ son Erik married Leon Koerner’s great-niece Sidney Koerner.

⁶⁶ Letters between E. Stewart Williams and Leon Koerner, May 21 and May 25, 1956. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

⁶⁷ Letter from E. Stewart Williams to Leon Koerner, October 24, 1956. Leon Koerner fonds, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

V. Biographies



E. Stewart Williams

(The following biography, written by Andy Sotta, is excerpted from the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation's 2005 tribute journal – *E. Stewart Williams: A Tribute to His Work and Life*.)

Emerson Stewart Williams was born in Dayton, Ohio on November 15, 1909, to Harry and Una Williams. At the time, his father was a 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 that 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's 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 fifty years in practice), steering him at times away from a career in architecture and toward 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 admired 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 had vines growing in the house. There was a feeling of simplicity and warmth that made me feel this was the way I would like to work." He found what he was looking for later in the trip, in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

Though he admired the International Style and Bauhaus design he saw in Germany, it was the modernist design he saw in the Scandinavian countries that truly inspired Williams and would influence his later work. In contrast to the rigorous clarity he saw in Germany, seeing the softer, organic forms and warm materials of Alvar Aalto and Erik Gunnar Asplund would alter the course of his thinking on architecture. As he later recalled to Alan Hess, "They did things for human habitation, not like Le Corbusier [who designed] according to his own mathematical formulas...I wanted my buildings to have soul, a place where people were part of the human race, not an exercise in geometry."⁶⁸

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

⁶⁸ Julius Shulman: *Palm Springs Modern*, by Alan Hess.

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 Loewy 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 US 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 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's first significant commission in almost eight 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 architects and projects built or under construction in Palm Springs during E. Stewart Williams's 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 Loewy Residence; and the Del Marcos Hotel by desert newcomer William F. Cody. Williams commented about his own early expertise in a 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's 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." These philosophies guided Williams throughout his entire career.

During the 1950s, Williams's work consisted of both commercial and residential commissions, however, most of his notable residential work was done during this period. These include the Kiner, Bligh, Edris, and Sutter houses, and, in 1955, a home for his growing family. Notable commercial projects of this period included the original Desert Hospital, the first Palm Springs Desert Museum, the interior of the Florsheim shoe store on Palm Canyon Drive, the Oasis Hotel and Oasis Office Building, where he housed his offices, and the first Coachella Valley Savings & Loan bank building in 1956. Heeding the advice of his father, Williams pursued commercial work which comprised the majority of his projects from the midfifties through his retirement in 1990. In addition to the aforementioned projects, Williams's work included: the Palm Springs High School gym, 1947; Palm Springs baseball stadium, 1949; the original Desert Hospital, 1950; Palm Springs City Hall (with Clark & Frey), 1955; Palm Springs High School auditorium, 1956; both the Palm Springs High School library and the College of the Desert gymnasium and pool, 1958.

From the late fifties until the early seventies, Williams practiced with his brother Roger, later joining forces with fellow desert architect, neighbor and friend, John Porter Clark, in 1972. The outstanding and impressive body of work from this period in Williams's career includes: Santa Fe Federal Savings building on Palm Canyon Drive; a second bank building for Coachella Valley Savings and Loan, was completed in 1961 at the corner of Ramon Road and Palm Canyon Drive; the design of the Aerial Tramway mountain station; Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa and the new Palm Springs Desert Museum.

Although an avowed modernist heavily influenced by the International Style, Stewart Williams always charted his own course. Through his interpretation, he eschewed its rigid tenets 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 invited the outdoors inside. Williams labored with each design to make the building appear to grow out of its site. The beauty of the materials used in his buildings always predominated. When asked about the essence of his style, Williams said over and over again, "Let the natural beauty of the materials be the thing you see."



*Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, landscape architects.
From left, Garrett Eckbo, Francis Dean, Edward Williams, and Robert Royston.*

Garrett Eckbo

(From The Cultural Landscape Foundation's "Pioneers of Landscape Design" website. Essay by Dorothée Imbert).

Although born in Cooperstown, New York, to Theodora Munn and Axel Eckbo on November 28, 1910, Garrett Eckbo identified with California.

In 1912, following his parents' divorce, he moved with his mother to Alameda, east of San Francisco, where he grew up with very limited social opportunities. Prospects improved in 1929 with a six-month visit to a wealthy and enterprising paternal uncle in Oslo, Norway, spurring young Eckbo's ambition to pursue higher education. After a year at Marin Junior College, Eckbo entered the Division of Landscape Design and Floriculture at the University of California at Berkeley, in the fall of 1932. He later credited Professor H. Leland Vaughan, a former student of Thomas D. Church at Ohio State University, as being influential in his professional

development. Vaughan and the Great Depression years impressed Berkeley landscape students with the need for pragmatic and reductive design, even though their projects rarely strayed from adaptations of historical styles, as witnessed in Eckbo's 1934 design entitled, *Estate in the Manner of Louis XIV*. Upon graduating in June 1935, Eckbo moved south. Employed by Armstrong Nurseries in Ontario, California, for a year, he produced approximately one hundred garden plans and acquired a wide knowledge of Southern California plants.

A scholarship to Harvard University's Graduate School of Design allowed him to move beyond the service industry. In the fall of 1936, Eckbo drove east to enroll in the Department of Landscape Architecture. Soon disillusioned with the school's traditional curriculum, Eckbo questioned the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted and the program's reliance on Henry V. Hubbard and Theodora Kimball's *Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, a textbook which he condemned as formulaic and overly aesthetic. While the landscape department conformed to a Beaux Arts tradition and the formal/informal dialectic, the architecture department at Harvard was undergoing a complete transformation under the leadership of Walter Gropius, who had joined the faculty in 1937. Eckbo began to define his own modernist theory by establishing connections among landscape design, architecture, and art. He collaborated with architecture students on projects such as a recreation center and park in underprivileged South Boston. He announced his beliefs that "what is good for the rich is good for the poor," and that design required a multidisciplinary approach. He further explored the relationships between private gardens and public space, and urban and suburban design, in both his master's thesis project, *Contempoville* — a superblock with a central common — and "Small Gardens in the City." The publication of the latter in the architectural periodical *Pencil Points* in September 1937 brought him notoriety at home and abroad.

Eckbo quickly understood the necessity of advancing his ideas in writing. He joined forces with fellow students and modernism champions Dan Kiley and James Rose to produce the three-part seminal text "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment," "Landscape Design in the Rural Environment," and "Landscape Design in the Primeval Environment" which appeared in *Architectural Record* in May and August 1939 and February 1940, respectively. These articles argued for collaborative, cohesive design, and planning, from city garden to natural preserve, stressing the interdependency of such environments.

On September 19, 1937, he married Arline Williams, the sister of his future business partner. Having received a master's in landscape architecture degree in 1938, Eckbo took a series of project-based jobs, each lasting six weeks. He worked on the Federal Building for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition at the office of Kastner and Berla in Washington, DC. While in Washington, Eckbo designed prototypical open spaces for housing projects at the request of Frederick Gutheim of the United States Housing Authority. In addition, he conceived several unbuilt landscape schemes for Norman Bel Geddes' General Motors pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.

Having returned to California, Eckbo worked for the San Francisco office of the New Deal's Farm Security Administration from 1939 to 1942, where he designed environments for migrant-worker camps across the valleys of California, Washington, and Texas. Collaborating with architects Vernon DeMars and Burton Cairns and landscape architect Francis Violic, Eckbo would further his spatial explorations and provide shelter at the human scale within the expansive agricultural landscape. At Tulare and Ceres, in the San Joaquin Valley, his

grand and richly varied planting schemes offered shade, wind protection, and a sense of place for a transient population. With the same group of designers, Eckbo founded Telesis, an organization that focused on the impact of development in the Bay Area. From 1942 to 1945, he participated in the World War II effort by contributing landscape designs for defense housing in the San Francisco region.

In the postwar era, Eckbo founded a firm with Robert Royston and Edward Williams. Eckbo Royston and Williams soon expanded their scope of work from residential gardens to suburban parks (the 1949 Standard Oil Rod and Gun Club in Richmond and 1957 Mitchell Park in Palo Alto) and planned communities (Ladera on the San Francisco Peninsula). From 1946, Eckbo headed the firm in the Los Angeles area with the assistance of Francis Dean. The early years were marked by a multitude of garden designs for the wealthy and the more modest, and by collaborations with modernist architects on several developments. His unbuilt 1946 to 1949 design for Community Homes in Reseda remains exemplary in its sophisticated use of vegetation as a tool for structuring neighborhoods. Other designs included the semi-urban Park Planned Homes from 1946 to 1947; Mar Vista Housing in 1948; both with Gregory Ain; and the dramatically canyon-sited Crestwood Hills in 1948 and Wonderland Park in 1950.

In 1950, Eckbo coalesced his ideas in *Landscape for Living*, defining the modern discipline of landscape architecture for his professional peers and a broader readership. A quintessential twentieth-century text in a field that has shied away from theory, *Landscape for Living* stands apart with Christopher Tunnard's *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938, 1948) and Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* (1969) as remarkable attempts to define the field in relation to planning and the environment. Eckbo illustrated its theory, defined as "a generalization of social experience," with his own projects and those of the firm. He reiterated the call for an organized and planned landscape, from garden to nature, a designed landscape that would stress the relations between human and land without apologizing for the human presence.

Eckbo continued to balance design and writing in his mature years. He taught in the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California from 1948 to 1956. His widely publicized 1956 to 1959 Forecast Garden, commissioned by the Aluminum Company of America, tested aluminum as a spatial and decorative force in landscape design. The year 1956 also saw the publication of *The Art of Home Landscaping*, a garden and site planning manual aimed at a popular audience. Eckbo's innovative design for the pedestrian blocks of the Fulton Street Mall in Fresno, developed with Victor Gruen in the early 1960s, proposed an urban alternative to shopping centers. In 1962, Eckbo began a twenty-year design and planning process for the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque. He published *Urban Landscape Design* in 1964 and *The Landscape We See* in 1969.

His firm continued to evolve as well. In 1958, Eckbo Royston and Williams divided into Royston Hanamoto and Mayes, and Eckbo Dean and Williams. In 1964, Donald Austin became a partner and the firm was recast as Eckbo, Dean, Austin and Williams, later known as EDAW. Ultimately, the laboratory for progressive landscape design with a focus on the relationship between individual and community grew into a multinational planning corporation. Eckbo returned to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1963 to head the Department of Landscape Architecture at Berkeley until 1969. He received the Medal of Honor from the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1975; he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1978, and left EDAW a year later.

In an attempt to start anew, Eckbo formed Eckbo Kay Associates with Kenneth Kay in 1979 with whom he collaborated until 1983. During the final years of practice, Garrett Eckbo and Associates addressed the scales of planning and garden design, having come full circle. His involvement in writing and debating the state and future of landscape architecture never abated. Eckbo still believed in landscape design as an agent of societal change, publishing *People in the Landscape* two years before his death on May 14, 2000, in Oakland, California.

Francis H. Dean

Born in Concord, California, Dean spent much of his childhood on a family farm. During World War II he served as a pilot in the US Army Air Corps, once crash-landing his plane on an Italian farmstead after engaging the enemy. He studied landscape architecture under H. Leland Vaughan and Robert Royston at the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1948 (he would earn his master's degree in landscape architecture in 1981). Upon receiving his undergraduate degree, Dean was invited to join the firm Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, becoming a partner in 1953. After changes in partnership and with the addition of Don Austin, the firm was renamed Eckbo, Dean, Austin and Williams in 1964, with Dean eventually directing the offices in Irvine, California. The firm's official moniker became EDAW in 1974.

During his tenure with the firm, Dean worked on a wide range of projects, from residential gardens to university campuses and regional plans. In 1955 he was the landscape architect for San Fernando Gardens, a public housing project comprising 450 garden apartments in the Pacoima neighborhood of Los Angeles. By the 1960s Dean and his firm were at the forefront of sustainable planning, working on groundbreaking large-scale projects, such as the California Urban Metropolitan Open Space Plan for the State of California. Dean took the leading role on the Santa Ana River /Santiago Creek Greenbelt Study, completed in 1971. In 1976 he began teaching part-time at the Department of Landscape Architecture at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona), moving to full-time status two years later. He was named a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1978 and a Distinguished Professor in the Cal Poly Pomona Department of Landscape Architecture in 1990. In 1995 Dean received the Richard J. Neutra Award for Professional Excellence from the Cal Poly Pomona Department of Architecture. He died at the age of eighty in his home on Vashon Island, near Seattle. His professional papers are repositied at the special collections archives of the College of Environmental Design at Cal Poly Pomona. (From the Cultural Landscape Foundation's "Pioneers of Landscape Design" website).

ECKBO IN PALM SPRINGS

Eckbo, Royston, & Williams created several landscapes in the Coachella Valley. In Eckbo's finding aid, besides the Koerner Residence, the following projects are listed. It is unknown whether all were built:

- Tom May Residence, 1947. William F. Cody architect.
- Town & Country Center, 1948. Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones, architects. (Built using a modified design; extant).
- Preston Higgins Residence, 1950. E. Stewart Williams architect. (built, demolished).

- Colonia #1 & #2, 1955. Houses adjacent to Thunderbird Country Club. (There are ads for this project in *Desert Sun*, not sure if the Eckbo plans were installed).
- Thunderbird North Golf Club, 1955.
- C. E. Needham Residence, 1955-1956.
- Palm Springs City Hall, 1956. (Built, landscape altered).
- Desert Holiday House, 1956. Palmer & Krisel, architects (project was renamed Ocotillo Lodge).
- Sidney Charney Residence, 1956-58. Wexler & Harrison, architects. Tamarisk Country Club. (Built, extant).
- A. J. Coffey Residence, 1960. (unknown if built. Coffey was remodeling a house at 1630 S Calle Marcus in Deepwell Estates in 1960).
- Birdie Lyman Residence, 1960.
- Desert Highland Park, 1968. (built).
- Russell Garner Residence, William F. Cody, architect. (Palm Desert, built, current condition unknown).
- G. E. Karlen Residence, E. Stewart Williams, architect. (Unknown).
- Kaufmann House restoration, 1996. Collaborator: Marmol & Radziner (restoration architects).



The Russell Gardner Residence, 1948. In Desert Palm Estates in Palm Desert. William F. Cody, architect; Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, landscape architects.

THE PRESTON HIGGINS RESIDENCE

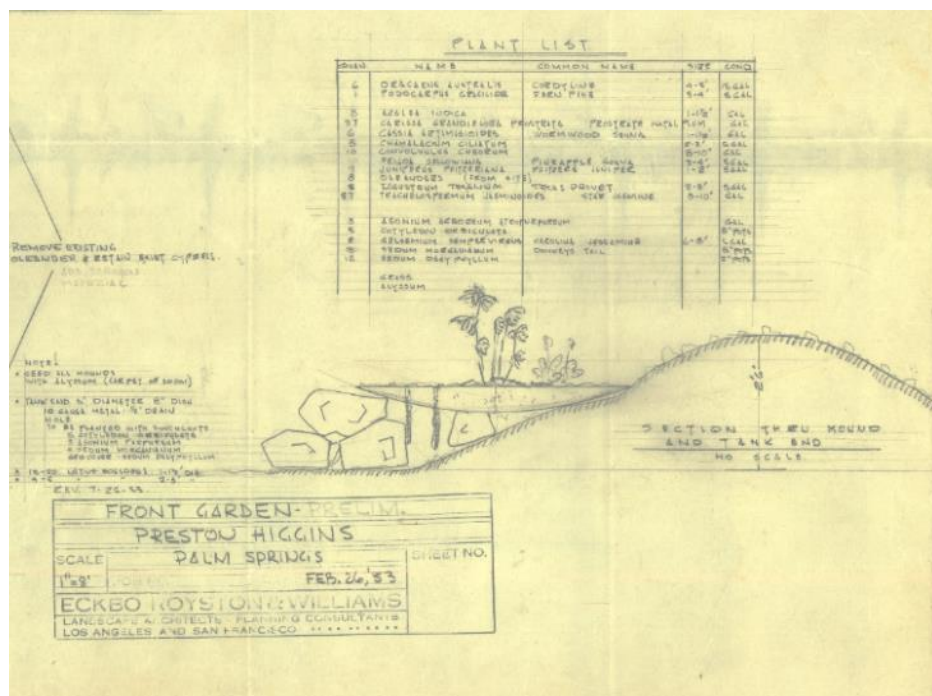
At the Preston Higgins residence, designed in 1950 by architect E. Stewart Williams, Eckbo used sculptural mounds of earth, covered primarily in white alyssum, as a device to add interest and break up the large panels of turf. They also were meant to relate to the San Jacinto Mountains, which were always looming over the landscapes. Other Eckbo signatures used in both the Koerner and Higgins gardens were the shallow steel tank ends used as planters and circular concrete pads. The initial landscape was designed in 1950. In 1953, Eckbo returned to create a design for the front of the house.



Eckbo's sculpted earthen mounds at the Higgins Garden. William Aplin photograph, courtesy Eckbo archives, UC Berkeley.



William Aplin photograph of the Higgins Garden, courtesy Eckbo archives at UC Berkeley. Though concrete signatures are widely conceived as a William Krisel signature in Palm Springs today, Krisel's professor of landscape architecture at USC was Garrett Eckbo, and it is Eckbo's influence that resulted in Krisel's similar design feature.



Landscape architect Garrett Eckbo's drawing for the earth mounds and tank ends at the Higgins Garden. Courtesy Eckbo archives at UC Berkeley.



At Palm Springs City Hall, 1957, Eckbo used sculpted earth mounds to enclose an area in front of the structure devoted to desert plants. The mounds were planted with verbena. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



At Palm Springs City Hall, the median between the street and parking lot featured native desert plants, with earth mounds. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

Notes on Koerner Garden and the Role of Garrett Eckbo as Designer

By JC Miller

Garrett Eckbo's career, perhaps more accurately his life's work, was multifaceted. While he is widely known for his success as a landscape architect, he was also an educator, writer, and theorist. His prominence in the field of postwar landscape architecture is such that current discussions often describe him as "the father of modern landscape architecture."⁶⁹ A survey of his legacy, both the built and published work, indicates that he considered his writings as important as his designs. In both *Landscape for Living* (1950) and the subsequent *The Art of Home Landscaping* (1956) he provides his audience with a thoughtful, thorough, and detailed guide to the principles of landscape design. Beyond "how-to" instructions, however, Eckbo's writing is, in his own words, a "why-to" of landscape architecture. This is immensely helpful for the retrospective analysis of his built work.

In 1955, when Eckbo Royston and Williams (ERW) was engaged to design a garden for the soon-to-be-built seasonal home of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Koerner in Palm Springs, Eckbo's design practice was thriving. ERW's Los Angeles office opened in 1948. It was in a studio building adjacent to Eckbo's Wonderland Park home in the Hollywood Hills. The office was busy with residential commissions and an increasing number of larger and more complex commercial and institutional projects.⁷⁰ Working with Eckbo in the Wonderland Park studio was Francis Dean, who had joined ERW in 1948 after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley's Landscape Architecture program, where he had studied under Eckbo's ERW partner Robert Royston. Dean became a partner in ERW in 1953.⁷¹ Given Eckbo's divided schedule during this period—he was concurrently teaching in the School of Architecture at USC —Dean likely functioned as the managing principal in the Los Angeles studio.

The issue of authorship often arises when individuals work as partners in the same office. The ERW office was a collaborative environment and without doubt, Eckbo and Dean worked together on the Koerner project. During this period, Eckbo and Royston often traveled to meet each other, meeting mid-state, to stay informed on current projects in the north and south offices.⁷² Francis Dean certainly had a prominent role in the Southern California office and the Koerners' garden project in 1955, but Eckbo's primary role in the project's design is obvious. Eckbo's writing in *Landscape for Living*, the book that preceded the work, and *The Art of Home Landscaping* that followed it support this assertion. A review of Eckbo's design drawings, construction detailing, and the built features of the 1950-53 Higgins garden in Palm Springs reinforce the point.

The large shade structure that encloses the west end of the swimming pool in the Koerner garden directly reflects ideas put forth by Eckbo in his published work and confirms his role in the garden's design. At some point in the past, prior homeowners removed this critical garden feature. Rebuilding it was a high priority of

⁶⁹ Los Angeles Conservancy Website: <https://www.laconservancy.org/architects/Garrett-eckbo>

⁷⁰ Timeline of Eckbo, Royston, & Williams office – *Modern Public Gardens*, 25

⁷¹ Cultural Landscape Foundation – Pioneers: <https://www.tclf.org/francis-h-dean>

⁷² Op.cit – citation 2

the recently completed garden restoration project. It was rebuilt from period photographs because the original construction details for the shade structure were not available for reference.

In *Art of Home Landscaping*, Eckbo describes in detail his ideas about the general nature of enclosure and the specifics of wood construction as well as the view from the house to the garden. His explanation of these concepts could be a specific description of the Koerner structure. Images supporting the text show arbors and pergolas very similar in appearance to the Koerner structure. The images illustrate Eckbo's ideas on structural geometry, the control of garden views, and the directional function of built elements in the garden.

Also rebuilt as a part of the restoration project was exposed aggregate paving beneath the shade structure. No archival reference material was available for the material specification, so a close examination of period photos guided the restoration work. Historic photos revealed a variety of sizes in the decorative aggregate, an Eckbo technique.⁷³ In *The Art of Home Landscaping* he states that a wide variety of decorative aggregates might be used and that the "proportions must be determined by experiment."⁷⁴ Demolition brought to light pieces of the original patio. Those fragments provided physical reference to match the aggregate and concrete color (white) of the original patios in the restoration.

When planning for the garden restoration project began in 2019, the geometric planting areas adjacent to the house and flagstone patios and the sculptural earth mounds along the north edge and at the northwest corner of the garden were no longer existent. Recreating and replanting these areas was a high priority for the garden restoration project. The visual tension between Eckbo's signature angled geometries and the flowing and organic forms of the planted mounds was a significant part of the original garden. This subtle relationship of geometry and form was also a strong indicator of Eckbo's primary role in the authorship of the design.

In *Garrett Eckbo Modern Landscape for Living* (1997), Marc Treib and Dorothee Imbert explore in detail Eckbo's art-inspired compositional strategies. "In gardens that can be counted in the high hundreds, if not thousands, Eckbo investigated and reinvestigated the play among space, activity, geometry, climate, and vegetation."⁷⁵

A comparison of the Koerner plan with Eckbo's drawings for the Higgins garden 1950-53, an earlier project also in Palm Springs, follows Treib and Imbert's thesis of investigation and reinvestigation. The Higgins plan details mounds very similar in size, form, and arrangement to those found in the later Koerner garden. The similarity between the two projects continues beyond the earthwork, to planting design. In both projects, we see Eckbo placing Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) as vertical accents on the crest of mounds. Further similarities are found in tree planting on the mounds. In the Higgins garden, he specified the relocation of an existing Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) to the top of a newly created planted mound. For the Koerner garden he called for California pepper (*Schinus molle*), a tree of similar character and form, to be placed in the same way.

⁷³ Recorded conversation between JC Miller and Robert Royston in 2006 in which Royston describes Eckbo's fondness for "pebbly concrete" and his preference to be on site when concrete was poured to hand cast the aggregate when possible. Royston further elaborated that Eckbo used a range of aggregates that varied in color and size.

⁷⁴ Eckbo, Garrett. *The Art of Home Landscaping*, 100.

⁷⁵ Eckbo, Garrett. *Modern Landscape for Living*, Berkeley Design Books/William Stout Publisher, 59-67.

A comparison of the planting plans and plant lists prepared for both the Higgins and Koerner gardens reveals further similarities and significant duplication, not only in the various species called for but in the way in which plants were to be used. For example, both plans include a low, dark, and directional line of Pfitzer's juniper (*Juniperus pfitzeriana*) in the front garden. This indicates a consistency in design intent and suggests that, at minimum, Eckbo's earlier plan for Higgins was a template for the later Koerner plan.

The planting plan developed for the Koerner garden restoration relied heavily on the original plan. Fortunately, the 2019 garden still included many of the trees planted originally. Specifically, the Mission olives (*Olea europea*), Blue palms (*Brahea clara*, previously known as *Erythea armata*), and fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta* and *Washingtonia filifera*). Due to poor condition, the original Desert fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) on the southeast corner of the pool were replaced with specimen plants in kind. Important structure-defining plants from the original plant list were restored to the garden wherever possible, including the Ocotillo and California pepper tree mentioned previously.

The sculptural mounds in the first iteration of the Koerner garden were planted heavily with several varieties of showy annuals, including Sweet Alyssum (*Lobelia maritima*) which was also the cover plant used in the Higgins garden. Historic photos of the garden made by Julius Shulman demonstrate the dramatic effect of this mass color planting strategy. This approach to planting reflected the part-time seasonal occupancy of postwar homes in Palm Springs. While lush and colorful in winter and spring, the planted mounds would have been bare through summer and fall. Planting for the restored garden strives to replicate the effect of the initial large-scale color planting with a variety of flowering perennials that persist year-round.

Both the Koerner and earlier Higgins gardens include industrial boiler tank ends as large shallow planters. This was a favorite device used by Eckbo and his partners. A casual survey of both *Landscape for Living* and *The Art of Home Landscaping* shows that many early ERW gardens included tank ends as planters and fountains, so it is not surprising to find them in the Palm Springs gardens. The plan for the Higgins garden includes a whimsical sketch of a tank end planter partially set into a planted mound and supported on stones. This is also how the tank end planters were arranged for the Koerners. The sketch is in Eckbo's hand and includes a list of succulent plants. While no instructions are given, it is assumed that the proposed succulent planting was to be refreshed seasonally since the species called for would not have persisted through high summer temperatures in the desert.

Similarities of the plant lists proposed for the tank end planters are nearly identical, reinforcing the kinship of the Higgins and Koerner gardens. Both are a mix of *Aeonium*, *Cotyledon*, and *Sedum* varieties supplemented with Blue Fescue grass (*Festuca ovina*). It is worth noting that in 1954 the January and June issues of *Sunset* magazine included articles on tank end planters and succulents.⁷⁶ Both articles include essentially the same plant list and are illustrated with photos of ERW work in Northern California. It is possible that Robert Royston, Eckbo's partner in Mill Valley, originally developed the list and it was in general use for both offices.

Landscape architect JC Miller worked for more than a decade in the Royston office and, as a principal, assisted Royston in the design and execution of his final projects. He is coauthor of "Robert Royston," a volume in the Library

⁷⁶ *Sunset*, January 1954 – These are "tank" gardens and June 1954 – "Gardening with Succulents."

of *American Landscape History's* "Masters of Modern Landscape Design" series, and coauthor, with Reuben Rainey, of the book *"Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park."* Miller was the historic landscape architect in charge of restoring the Koerner Garden.

Arthur Elrod



Born in 1924, the South Carolina native studied textiles at Clemson Agricultural College (now Clemson University), then interior design at Chouinard Art Institute, in Los Angeles. He arrived in Palm Springs in 1947 and worked as junior staff decorator in the home furnishings department of the newly opened Bullock's department store. His early career was fueled by the postwar building boom and by a growing awareness in the desert community of modernism, sparked by the work of Schindler, Frey, Neutra, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Despite abundant commissions and favorable publicity, Elrod decamped to San Francisco in 1952 for a two-year stint at prominent home design and carpet store W. & J. Sloane. During that time, General Electric engaged him to design an exhibition for the San Francisco Museum of Art to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the invention of Edison's incandescent bulb. Elrod installed a "penthouse apartment" with a terrace in the museum's galleries that garnered him considerable attention and also marked a turn in his style. Almost all the furnishings were contemporary pieces, by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. And, signaling an early innovative impulse, the lighting was subtly integrated into the design — fixtures hidden in valances, a downlight color constellation that changed hues, concealed dimmer-controlled spots, and more — rather than

added as an afterthought by deploying lamps and chandeliers. “It was the first use of recessed downlights in conjunction with fluorescents,” Cygelman writes.

At W. & J. Sloane, Elrod met Hal Broderick — who would be his life partner until the 1960s and his business partner until the designer’s death, in 1974 — and Barbara Wills, an assistant manager in the store’s modern furniture department. The three established Arthur Elrod Ltd. and relocated back to Palm Springs in 1954. The firm was instantly successful, and over the years took on more and more designers to meet demand, including, in 1964, William Raiser, a “design heavyweight” who, says Cygelman, shifted the design direction in subtle yet profound ways.

Raiser had worked for thirty years for Raymond Loewy, whom he assisted in designing the interiors of Air Force One for the Kennedys. He had a portfolio thick with commercial and hospitality projects and custom designs. He ushered Elrod’s firm into contract work, assumed control of its custom rug and carpet designs and refined its signature look into something more polished and layered.

Elrod literally created the Midcentury Palm Springs interiors aesthetic we take for granted today. His was the first firm to bring national lines like Baker and Widdicomb to the desert. “He poured surfboard resin over fabrics to create countertops,” says Cygelman. “Who else was doing that?” Elrod also pioneered the use of indoor-outdoor fabrics, covered a fireplace wall with green vinyl and made Naugahyde chic. He floated credenzas on wall panels and under-lit sofas and beds with recessed kickbacks so that they appeared to levitate. “We are living now,” Elrod told *Architectural Digest* in 1972. “Homes should reflect the materials and craftsmanship of today rather than the past.”

The firm had a fearless approach to color as well. “Color is not easy to do,” Los Angeles designer Brad Dunning told Cygelman. “Other decorators of the period were doing similar work, but no one did it better than Elrod — bold colors that were so ballsy, but he pulled it off. . . . He could do those patterns and bright colors on a par with the best color field painters . . . but he was doing it in 3-D.”

Elrod commissioned rising talents to create custom work for projects. He also embraced technology, designing speakers into consoles and embedding stereo and lighting controls into furniture. In a time when we can adjust our world from our armchairs on iPads, it’s easy to forget how revolutionary his tech-savvy was back then. “It’s taken forty years to catch up to that,” notes Cygelman.

Former *Architectural Digest* editor Paige Rense Noland, who splashed many Elrod interiors across the publication’s pages in her early days there, observes that he persuaded clients “to look at their second or third house on a par with their primary residence. He made clients want to spend money on their weekend home.” Unlike most decorators of the day, Elrod often designed clients’ Palm Springs homes before being asked to redo their primary residences in cities across the country, from Honolulu to Chicago to New York.

Cygelman calls his style “smooth and sexy.” No surprise, then, that Elrod’s own home, designed by architect Lautner, landed a role in the James Bond film *Diamonds Are Forever* as Willard Whyte’s desert abode, where the tycoon sat under house arrest, guarded by martial arts vixens Bambi and Thumper.

Elrod and the Desert Modern architects with whom he collaborated transformed Palm Springs into a design mecca. “Entertaining in the desert is much more formal now,” Elrod told the *Desert Sun* in 1962. “We are becoming more urbane and cosmopolitan with every passing season. And the decor of our homes reflects these trends.”

So, what happened — why did he all but disappear? “Definitely, being regional hurt him,” says Cygelman. “Even though lots of projects were published in AD, at first it was a very regional magazine, and I don’t think anyone was paying attention to what was happening in Palm Springs at the time.” Elrod and Raiser also died young (49 and 58, respectively), when their car was broadsided by a drunken teen’s pickup truck. “He didn’t really get national coverage until the nineteen seventies,” Cygelman explains, “and he died just as AD was becoming a national magazine, right when he was getting huge commissions with budgets in seven figures.”

The firm’s partners kept Arthur Elrod Ltd. going long enough to finish the projects Elrod and Raiser had begun. But without its two leading visionaries, the “Elrod look” morphed into something else, and commissions dwindled until Broderick finally closed the company in 1996 and retired to Sonoma.

(Essay adapted from 1stdibs.com. (<https://www.1stdibs.com/introspective-magazine/arthur-elrod/>, accessed July 10, 2022).

VI. The Development of Deepwell Estates

When the Koerner Residence was completed in late 1955, it was a masterpiece of environmental design, created by designers at the top of their game—architect E. Stewart Williams; Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, landscape architects; and interior designer Arthur Elrod.

In the spring of 1955, while spending the season at the nearby Biltmore, the couple bought four contiguous parcels, equaling an acre, in the newly developing Deepwell Estates subdivision. They hired architect E. Stewart Williams and landscape architects Eckbo, Royston, & Williams to collaborate on the house and garden’s design. They designed a house that maximized the indoor/outdoor relationship, blurring boundaries between home and garden. The land upon which the house was built had a rich history.



The entrance to Deep Well Guest Ranch was at 1020 Indio Road (Highway 111). Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.

DEEP WELL COLONY ESTATES

The Koerner Residence was built in a new 231-parcel subdivision which is now commonly known as Deepwell Estates (this subdivision has been described variously through the years as Deep Well Ranch Estates, Deepwell Ranch Estates, Deep Well Estates, and Deep Well Colony Estates). The district, as defined in the City of Palm Springs Historic Resource Survey, has boundaries of Mesquite Avenue to the north, East Palm Canyon (Highway 111) to the south, the west side of Manzanita Avenue to the west (Palomino and Cactus Roads branch out further west from this), and the east side of Sagebrush Road to the east. Though considered part of Deepwell Estates today, Sun View Estates was developed a few years earlier, in 1946. Its boundaries are the west side of South Calle Rolph to the west and Sunrise Way to the east.

Originally part of the Agua Caliente Tribe's Section 23, the land upon which Deepwell Estates sits was for years mostly open land from Deep Well Guest Ranch to Section 24. Frank and Melba Berry Bennett ran the Deep Well Guest Ranch for many years. After the Bennetts sold the Guest Ranch, Melba Bennett wrote a history of the site for the *Palm Springs Villager*.⁷⁷ In it, she gave an overview of the town's early history, including Judge McCallum's early efforts to grow orchards, which failed after torrential rains in 1893, followed by a ten-year drought. After that:

New men ventured into Palm Springs. Among these men was the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, George Hamilton Fitch, who in 1895 bought some of the fields near the old Indian village southeast of the new McCallum town site. Fitch sent John Gilmore, a correspondent, to manage the

⁷⁷ Bennett, Melba Berry. "Story of Deep Well," *Palm Springs Villager*, February 1952, 38-39.

ranch but Gilmore was soon replaced by an Englishman, Bert Coons. A small orchard of apricots was set out, and a shed was built where the fruit was to be sorted and packed.

However, as the drought lowered the water level, trouble with the Indians developed. They had a legal right to the first forty inches of water from the Whitewater Ditch and now demanded that the government give them full rights to the water from the canyon streams. They too had orchards. So in 1897 or 1898, the Indians were awarded exclusive rights to the water from the canyons. With the ditch down to a slow trickle, this reduced the whites to hauling water from long distances.

In the meantime, the Fitch property had been sold to a man by the name of Walker from Santa Ana. Fitch's apricot trees had burned out during the drought, but the olive and pepper trees were still standing. Walker planted more apricot trees about 1912. He watered the trees with water provided by the water company which was then controlled by Mr. Bunker, Senior. In 1916 an enterprising young man by the name of McKinney, and his wife Rose, moved to the desert, took the little money they had and leased Walker's land, and made their first payment on the eighty acres to the west of Walker's property. They set out more apricot trees and a good-sized patch of alfalfa.

McKinney also decided the armed forces could use a large supply of castor oil, and so he planted about twenty acres of castor bean trees. However, about this time, the Palm Valley Water Company changed hands, and PT Stevens took over the control. The ditch had been supplemented with a supply of water from Chino Canyon, but Stevens was interested in the development of the north end of town, and the McKinneys and others in the south end of town pleaded in vain for water. The McKinneys never cut their first alfalfa and lost what money they had put in the ranch. The alfalfa and apricots died from lack of water, but not the castor beans. Neither thirty-five hot summers, neglect, nor uprooting and burning have obliterated them. They are still making their fight for survival.

Mr. Henry Pearson, eminent scientist, and authority on rubber, purchased the property in 1926. He drilled a well and was amazed to find water so close to the surface. Though he hit water at 100 feet, his curiosity forced him to keep going and he didn't stop drilling until 630 feet. From this well, the deepest in the Coachella Valley, the property which had been originally cultivated by the Indians then set out as an orchard by Fitch, and then by McKinney, and had twice been defeated by the shortage of water, came to be known as the Deep Well Ranch.

Pearson and his daughter, Esther, employed the services of Alvah Hicks and Hans Hansen to build them a board-and-batten ranch house. It consisted of a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and a tiny library. A small, one-room guest house was built at the rear, on the patio. Water was heated by the solar system. The pipes, covered with glass, were still on the roof of the little ranch house when the Bennetts moved into it in 1931.

But the ranch proved too isolated for the Pearsons and in 1928, they moved to the village and sold the ranch to an easterner by the name of Charles Doyle, who converted the old apricot shed and the ranch house into guest quarters and called the place the Deep Well Guest Ranch. He had

accommodations for twenty-two guests, but from the early ledgers, it is apparent that there were always plenty of rooms to spare.

Doyle was operating on a shoestring, and in 1929 he had a chance to sell, and took it. Major and Mrs. Everett, and Mrs. Everett's brother, Carrol Smith of San Francisco, were the purchasers. Calling in young Paul Williams, [the African American] architect, they drew plans for charming hacienda type buildings around pleasant patios. The new buildings were completed early in 1930 and the ranch opened for guests. Unfortunately, the Major did not live to see his ambition for the finest guest ranch in California realized. He died that same year, and his widow, with the assistance of her brother-in-law, Fred Warner, planned to carry on until a buyer could be found. But the depression made things too difficult, and Mr. Warner persuaded Frank and Melba Bennett of Beverly Hills to operate the ranch in the winter of 1930 and spring of 1931. Frank had been general manager and vice president of the Town House in Los Angeles.

The Bennetts and the Philip Boyds of Palm Springs were both interested in the purchase of the property. During the summer of 1931 it had reverted to its former owner, Henry Pearson, and that fall the Boyds and the Bennetts combined their interests and bought the property together. Frank and Melba assumed the operation for the next eighteen years, and made the ranch their home, while Phil and Dorothy continued to live in the village and later Phil became the first mayor of Palm Springs.



After dinner, guest would gather in the Long Room. 1930s photograph courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.



The swimming pool at Deep Well Guest Ranch. 1930s photograph courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.

Deep Well Guest Ranch was located at 1020 Indio Road (Highway 111), not far from the famed Smoke Tree Ranch. Western-themed “dude ranches” were described by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1928 as “a resort where life on a ranch is offered without the frequent makeshifts for ordinary comforts...the main feature of entertainment is a stable of good horses where the able may ride to their heart’s content...”⁷⁸ Palm Springs was especially well-suited to have these upscale dude ranches, places where wealthy industrialists, industry titans, and celebrities could wear western clothing and play cowboy for the season. According to historian Renee Brown, “Deep Well Guest Ranch attracted people who wanted to experience the desert in all its glory as well as stay in comfortable accommodations and enjoy western hospitality. Deep Well Guest Ranch became the spot where the famous, near-famous and ordinary people came together to experience a western adventure. Melba and Frank Bennett created engaging activities that made Deep Well Guest Ranch attractive to those who loved horseback riding, swimming and sunbathing. Great food, comfortable accommodations and western music were all part of the western heritage that could be experienced firsthand.”⁷⁹ At Deep Well Guest Ranch, low-slung hacienda-style buildings, designed by master architect Paul R. Williams, enclosed charming courtyards with adjacent Long Room for socializing, a dining room, and a swimming pool. Melba Bennett’s history of Deep Well Guest Ranch, printed in the February 1952 issue of the *Palm Springs Villager*, continues:

In 1949, with subdivisions crowding the ranch, the Bennetts found it increasingly difficult to maintain the old, informal, simple atmosphere that everyone had loved. So, when Yoland Markson, of Boston, fell in love with the place and offered to lease the ranch and twenty surrounding acres, the Boyds and Bennetts decided that it was the best thing to do. Mr. Markson said he would make the ranch the beauty spot of Palm Springs, and that he has done.

⁷⁸ “Arizona Resorts Popular,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1928, A1.

⁷⁹ Brown, Renee. “Deep Well Guest Ranch provided true western experience,” *Desert Sun*, April 11, 2015.

This year the balance of the acreage is to be subdivided. Locally popular Bill Grant, former chairman of the Desert Circus, Palm Springs Horsemen's Association, and active in many other civic enterprises, is the purchaser and developer. He is a well-known builder, having pioneered the development of such local areas as Rancho Royale, and Sun View Estates, and is connected with the building and development of famous Thunderbird Ranch and Country Club.

It is fitting that such a man should set the standard of quality for the new Deep Well Ranch Estates and carry on its high tradition. Many of the residential sites have already been acquired by prominent winter residents who are aware of the many advantages of locating their Palm Springs home in this area. The fact that Bill Grant has placed on his architectural committee men of such prominence as Cliff May (considered American's foremost designer of California ranch-type homes), and Phil Boyd, destines this to become Palm Springs' finest residential colony.



1940s postcards, courtesy the author.

Grant, the owner of Desert Properties Company, bought thirty acres in the southwest portion of what is now known as Deepwell Estates.⁸⁰ Grant purchased the land from the Bennetts and Boyd, the property described as “lying between the Deep Well buildings and Highway 111.”⁸¹ Concurrently, Harry A. Dart and his wife Gladys bought twenty acres for development. On January 31, 1952, the *Desert Sun* reported

Bill Grant, local builder who is the purchaser and developer of this beautiful new residential area. Mr. Grant, former Chairman of the Desert Circus, member of the Palm Spring Horsemen’s Association and the Desert Riders. and builder of many of Palm Springs’ better homes in such residential areas as Rancho Royale, Sun View Estates, and Thunderbird Golf Club, rides up from his home at Thunderbird every day on his horse, “Caudillo,” to oversee his newest project. With all the utilities installed, activity at Deep Well Ranch Estates now centers around the construction of new homes, of which five are already in the process of being built. The Deep Well Ranch properties, situated two and a half miles south of the center of the village, has, because of its 200-foot higher elevation, a beautiful view of the mountains in all directions —San Geronio at the north, San Jacinto in the west. Palm Canyon to the south, and the Little San Bernardino Range across the valley to the east—which affords a front-row seat to every beautiful sunset and every change of shadow on the hills. Adjoining, as it does, the Deep Well Guest Ranch, the oldest guest ranch in the valley, the Deep Well Ranch Estates will carry on the tradition by having ranch-type houses and using street names that tie in with the activities of ranch life. Mr. Cliff May, the outstanding architect and builder of Ranch houses in America, is on Mr. Grant’s planning and advisory committee, which ensures the high-quality of the new development. The property can be reached by turning off Highway 111 through the Deep Well Ranch gates. Here a new road leads directly to the Estates property. Mr. Grant is kept busy operating a one-man guide tour for the many visitors who drive in to watch the conversion of the old ranch property into a modern subdivision.

⁸⁰ William Travers Grant (1902-1982) and his wife Bernice (1903-1994) began appearing in articles in the *Desert Sun* after World War II. It was said that they had a cattle ranch in Medford, Oregon. Bill Grant was the chairman of the 1948 Desert Circus. They were one of the first to build a home near Thunderbird Ranch, which soon became Thunderbird Country Club.

⁸¹ “New Deep Well Estates Humming,” *Desert Sun*, February 21, 1952, 12.

Congratulations To 'Tamarisk!'



ON PALOMINO ROAD — FIRST OF A NUMBER OF COMPLETED HOMES

Your Place in the Sun!

THIS HOUSE, now completed, was designed to fulfill all requirements for gracious desert living. Its position relative to desert view and sun offer the best possible advantages. It has adequate circulating warm air heating and cooling systems.

The large living room provides a mountain view on two sides, one facing the rear patio through sliding glass windows. There is a fireplace of unique design. Every woman will find delight in the unusual ranch-style kitchen and dining room with new type range, built-in oven, dishwasher and inset electric spit barbecue. A large bedroom with bath off the kitchen could be converted into children's or servant's quarters. On the opposite side of the house are two bedrooms (with tile baths) with such conveniences as roomy wardrobes, built-in chests, dressing table, etc.

The fenced-in patio in landscaped surroundings offers a grand view of Mt. San Jacinto . . . on the other side majestic San Geronimo. Other homes have variations in size, plan and design, but all are constructed with expert knowledge of desert living requirements. Designed and built by Desert Properties Co., general building contractors.

HERE IN DEEP WELL RANCH ESTATES, in the sheltered south side of Palm Springs—not too far out—but far enough to offer a restful, quiet feeling of privacy is a beautiful landscaped and scenic place for gracious desert living.

It is just off State Highway 111 (in the business section this is Palm Springs' famous Palm Canyon Drive) two to four minutes to "anywhere" in the village, and just a few minutes to your favorite golf club. All utilities are installed, the streets are wide, paved and easy to find. Here is one of the outstanding scenic residential areas in the desert . . . An ideal place for the most discriminating . . . for a home in the sun!

**Deep Well Ranch
Estates**

BILL GRANT — DEVELOPER
Phone PALM SPRINGS 5363
P. O. BOX 688 PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.

An advertisement for Bill Grant's Deep Well Ranch Estates subdivision featured ranch-style homes that harmonized with the architecture of the Deep Well Guest Ranch.

Grant began developing the thirty acres adjacent to the Deep Well Guest Ranch. The Old West vernacular served as the design theme—streets were named Palomino, Pinto, Buckskin, Roan, and Bayshore, and the homes built were ranch-style.⁸²

Los Angeles-based developer/contractor Robert C. Higgins bought several of the first lots in the tract. The *Desert Sun* reported in February that Higgins was having a ranch-style home built at 11 Palomino Road. "Higgins, a general contractor from Los Angeles, came here originally three years ago to restyle the Chi-Chi Restaurant. Returning to Los Angeles he got the 'come back' signal from Chino and returned to build Place in the Sun and the Red Barn [apartment hotels.] Another neat piece of construction work in which Higgins shared, is his new daughter, Claudia, born ten days ago at the Palm Springs Community Hospital. But Chino had the final word and now the Higgins are here to stay and expect to move into their new Deep Well Ranch

⁸² Pinto and Palomino Roads still exist. When the first parcels of the tract were surveyed in January 1951, they honored the Old West vernacular by naming streets after horse breeds. The first parcel surveyed is known as Deep Well Ranch Estates No. 4, and had the Buckskin, Roan, and Bayhorse Road names. It was in the northeast corner, with Mesquite to the north and Ocotillo to the south. Today, those streets are named Sagebrush, Paseo de Marcia, and Calle Maria. The street names were changed by the Darts when they began using street names inspired by desert plant names or continuing existing street names from tracts north of Deepwell Estates. The section developed by Grant were Deep Well Ranch Estates Unit No. 1, which consisted of twenty-two parcels along Palomino and Pinto Roads, with five along Deep Well Road.

Estates home by the 10th of March.”⁸³ Higgins sold that house and built another at 15 Palomino, which he then sold in 1953 to Fred and Lloyd Blethan, who had aircraft factories.⁸⁴ That was the last home Grant built on his initial thirty-acre tract before moving on to a Montana project. The Grants would soon move to Las Vegas.



Bill Grant, left, showing Mr. and Mrs. Jules Howard their new Deep Well Ranch Estates Home, 1952.

The same day the *Desert Sun* reported that Bill Grant would be developing Deep Well Ranch Estates, the newspaper also said that realtor Bill Boggess, formerly with the Ransom Realty Corporation, had opened his own office in the Plaza. Boggess would handle the subdivision of a new separate Deepwell Ranch subdivision, which he had just sold to Harry A. Dart of Detroit. It was reported that the roughly twenty-acre tract, to be known as Deep Well Colony Estates, would be a “casual, irregular subdivision with roads laid out with the informal feeling which is part of the charm of the desert for a great many wealthy winter colonists.”⁸⁵ “Utilities and streets with curbs and gutters will be installed soon, and the construction of outstanding desert houses will begin. Rigid architectural control, as well as square footage requirements exceeding anything in that vicinity, will prevail.”⁸⁶ While Bill Grant’s portion of Deep Well Ranch Estates emphasized Old West-themed ranch-style homes, the Dart’s Deep Well Colony Estates would showcase many of the desert’s finest modern architects of the 1950s, including Richard Harrison, Donald Wexler, E. Stewart Williams, and Hugh Kaptur. Boggess himself purchased a parcel at 1366 South Calle de Maria, and built a house designed by Wexler & Harrison, with interiors by Arthur Elrod, and landscape by “Cactus Slim” Moorten.

Harry Aloysius Dart (1905-1976) and Gladys M. Dart (1892-1974) owned Dart Investment Company in Detroit. Gladys was thirteen years older than Harry, and she was also the wealthy daughter of Aaron Mendelson, one of the founders of Fisher Auto Body in Detroit. Born Gladys Marie Mendelson, she married

⁸³ “What’s Old in Palm Springs,” *Desert Sun*, February 21, 1952, 9.

⁸⁴ “Blethans Buy Bill Grant Home at Deep Well,” *Desert Sun*, September 3, 1953, 1b.

⁸⁵ “Boggess Opens Own Real Estate Office in Plaza,” *Desert Sun*, January 31, 1952, 9.

⁸⁶ “Harry Dart Soon to Open Fine New Residential Tract,” *Desert Sun*, February 14, 1952, 3.

Bernard Kuhn in 1914, and the couple had seven children. Bernard Kuhn died on August 9, 1932, leaving a life insurance policy of \$300,000 to his widow, with the stipulation that should she remarry, the funds would pass to her children.

When she married Harry in 1933, Harry was described as a “former gasoline station proprietor,” It was also revealed that upon her marriage to Harry, she would forfeit the \$300,000 inheritance. In the mid-1930s, the Darts bought what is now commonly known as the Gene Autry estate at 328 Mountain View Place in Old Las Palmas. They would spend winters at the home through World War II.⁸⁷



*Harry and Gladys Dart's Palm Springs home at 328 Mountain View Place, now known as the former estate of Gene Autry.
Photograph courtesy the Palm Springs Historical Society.*

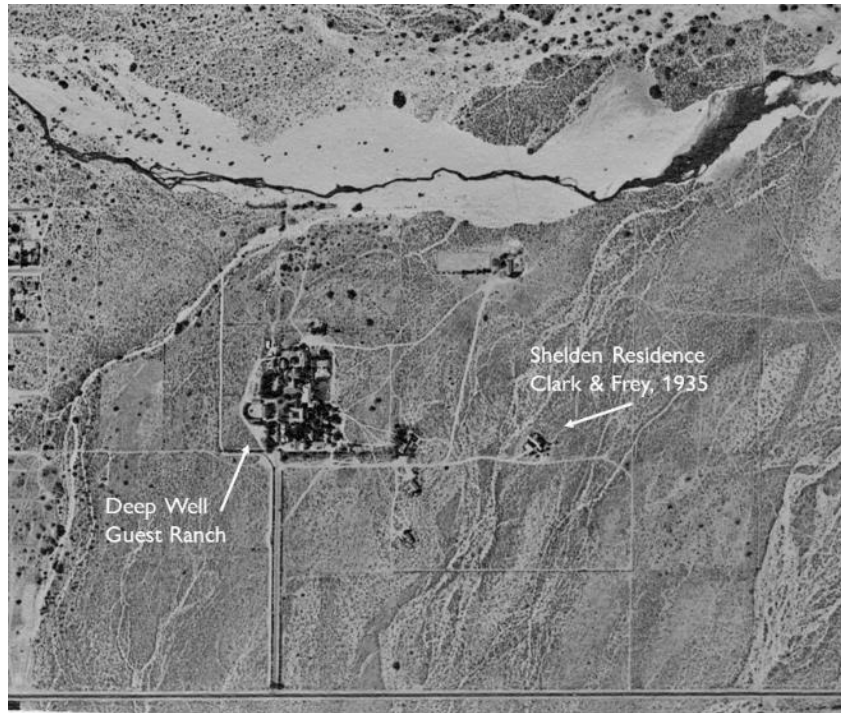
By 1950, the Darts moved into a new house at 1635 South Calle Marcus in Sun View Estates, and soon formed Dart Builders, Inc, and were building spec houses in the Sun View Estates development along South Calle Marcus and South Calle Rolph. When the land for Deepwell Estates became available, they jumped at the chance and bought the first twenty-acre parcel. In March 1952, they added another thirty acres when they purchased the home of Alger and Frances Shelden (now 1400 S Calle de Maria). The Shelden Residence was designed in 1935 by Van Pelt & Lind (John Porter Clark and Albert Frey), with landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. The Sheldens had been Deep Well Guest Ranch guests, before building their private residence on the thirty-acre parcel adjacent and accessed via the same road.⁸⁸ By 1953, newspaper ads were touting “booming values” at “Harry A. Dart’s 62 acre Deep Well Colony Estates.” Presumably, the Darts bought Grant’s remaining twelve undeveloped acres in 1953, when Grant moved on to a project in Montana. The

⁸⁷ Gladys’ daughter Barbara married Charles “Barney” Hinkle in 1937. Hinkle was the manager of the Desmond’s department store at the Plaza. In 1946, Robert Ransom, a prominent Palm Springs realtor with an office at the Plaza, announced that he was partnering with Hinkle, and the firm would then be called Ransom and Hinkle, Realtors. Hinkle later left Ransom and Hinkle to partner in the development of Thunderbird Country Club. One of the realtors at Ransom and Hinkle was Bill Boggess, who sold the Darts the Deep Well acreage, before opening his own office in the Plaza. Boggess handled the sale of parcels for the Darts for Deepwell.

⁸⁸ “Dart Enlarges Deep Well Tract to Fifty Acres,” *Desert Sun*, March 6, 1952, 7.

⁸⁹ The first section of what would become Deepwell Estates was surveyed in January 1951 for the Darts. Called “Deep Well Ranch Estates No. 4., it consisted of the northeast corner, adjacent to Sun View Estates. In July 1951, Grant’s twenty-two parcels on Palomino, Pinto, and Deep Well Roads were subdivided. This is the only subdivision map under Grant’s name, so he must have sold off the rest of his thirty acres to the Darts relatively early on. Thirty parcels along Sagebrush, Paseo de Marcia, and Calle de Maria were enclosed by Mesquite to the north, and Ocotillo to the south. In September 1951, the Darts subdivided No. 2, which consisted of twenty-nine parcels along Calle de Maria, Driftwood, and Manzanita, enclosed by Deep Well Road to the south. That same month No. 3 was subdivided, thirty-one parcels along the east side of Calle de Maria, Paseo de Marcia, and Sagebrush. Deep Well Road enclosed the south portion. In November 1951, twenty-nine parcels were subdivided in No. 5 along the west side of Calle de Maria, Driftwood, and Manzanita, with Mesquite to the north and Ocotillo to the south. That same month twenty-five more parcels (No. 8) along Sagebrush, Paseo de Marcia, and the east side of Calle de Maria were subdivided for the Darts. Section No. 6 was subdivided in January 1952 for the Darts, and consisted of seventeen parcels at the northwest corner, along Mesquite and Cactus. No. 7 was subdivided for the Darts and the Bennetts, and featured eighteen parcels on Driftwood and Manzanita, with Ocotillo to the north. No. 9 information is missing. Unit No. 10, the final part of the subdivision to be laid out, is where the Koerner Residence is. Twelve parcels along the west side of Calle de Maria and the east side of Driftwood were surveyed on January 24, 1955.

An ad from the “Desert Sun” showcased the Dart’s Deep Well Colony Estates.



In this 1939 aerial photograph, Deep Well Guest Ranch is the largest development, just left of center. The Alger Shelden Residence, 1935 can be seen nearby. The Tahquitz Wash at the top hasn't been improved. Highway 111 can be seen at the bottom of photo. Sunrise Way hasn't been created; Section 14 is open desert.



In this 1953 aerial, Deep Well Guest Ranch is now surrounded by the newly subdivided Deepwell Estates neighborhood. At top, Tahquitz River Estates (Siple & Stephanian, architects; Edward Huntsman-Trout, landscape architect; Paul Trousdale, developer. 1948) has been created, and the Tahquitz Wash improved.

VII. Subsequent Owners of the Koerner Residence

Estelle Brown Stewart (1973-1997)

Estelle Jackson was born in Marlow, Oklahoma on June 16, 1912, to Wiley Judson Jackson and his wife Mona Lee. Wiley Jackson was a laborer on a farm. Estelle was the oldest child, having two brothers and two sisters. Little is known about her early years, but at some point, she married a man with the last name Brown. From then on, her nickname was “Brownie.” By the 1930s, she had moved to Hollywood and was reportedly working as a model. There, presumably in 1938, she met “Billy” Wilkerson, the colorful editor of the *Hollywood Reporter*.

William R. “Billy” Wilkerson was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on September 29, 1890. He began to study medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but Wilkerson quit school to support himself and his mother when his father died, leaving extensive gambling debts. He would later become a compulsive gambler himself. After toying with careers in medicine and the church, Wilkerson took a job as a film producer in 1912 at Lubin Manufacturing Company in New York City. Later, he expanded his work in the movie industry, becoming district manager at Universal Pictures under Carl Laemmle.

After moving from New York to Los Angeles in 1930, he founded *The Hollywood Reporter*, Hollywood's first daily entertainment trade newspaper. Not content with a successful newspaper, he became interested in a series of restaurants and nightclubs. First, he opened Vendome, a lunchtime restaurant in Hollywood near the *Hollywood Reporter* offices. In 1934, after Prohibition ended, he launched his first venture on the Sunset Strip, the Café Trocadero—named for the Trocadero Plaza near the Eiffel Tower in Paris—at 8610 Sunset Boulevard, in Sunset Plaza. The “Troc” soon became the top A-list place to be seen in the city and one of the most famous nightclubs in the world.



Newlyweds Brownie and Billy Wilkerson leave for their honeymoon, 1939.

According to Wilkerson's son, after Brownie and Wilkerson met, "as usual my father launched a whirlwind courtship."⁹⁰ "Weeks of candlelit dinners followed by extravagant gifts found his victims falling helplessly under his spell. 'He could turn on the charm like nobody you've ever seen. He would move straight in for the kill like a Bengal tiger. It was truly fantastic to watch.'"⁹¹ The budding romance between Wilkerson and Brownie was first announced by gossip columnist Louella Parsons, who reported to the country in February 1939 that "Billy Wilkerson gave the reporters extra work when it was learned he and Estelle Brown had flown to Las Vegas. It wasn't an elopement, however."⁹² In the summer of 1939, the couple toured Europe, returning in July on the French luxury liner the *Normandie*.⁹³ They eloped to Las Vegas and were married on December 11, 1939, by Justice of the Peace George Marshall.⁹⁴ She became the fourth of what would be six wives.⁹⁵ The witnesses were film star Lana Turner, who had been famously "discovered" by Wilkerson, and entertainment attorney Greg Bautzer.

While Brownie was married to Wilkerson, he became involved in the Arrowhead Springs Hotel and opened what would become the world-famous *Ciro's* nightclub on the Sunset Strip. His friends included Howard Hughes as well as many involved in organized crime. He had a custom-built bulletproof Cadillac town car built for him and Brownie to travel to his various haunts.

During her years married to Wilkerson, Brownie began coming to Palm Springs. In 1941, the *Desert Sun* reported, "Billy and Brownie Wilkerson, owners of *Ciro's*, partook of the famous Dunes' steaks several different evenings this last week."⁹⁶

According to Wilkerson's son, "soon after Billy and Brownie tied the knot, he reverted to his unromantic, withdrawn, moody persona. And Brownie certainly hadn't bargained for his combustible temper and demonic rages." Shortly before Brownie's death, he interviewed her in 2003, and as she recalled, "He was a very abrasive, impatient man."⁹⁷ Hedda Hopper reported in June 1942 that singer Rudy Vallee had been seen out

⁹⁰ Wilkerson, W. R.. *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson*. United States: Chicago Review Press, 2018, 166.

⁹¹ Ibid, 165.

⁹² Louella Parsons gossip column, *San Francisco Examiner*, February 28, 1939.

⁹³ Normandie passenger records, Ancestry.com. Her address is listed as 2346 Mandeville Canyon.

⁹⁴ "Movie Paper Editor Weds in Las Vegas," United Press press release, printed in the *San Bernardino County Sun*, December 12, 1939.

⁹⁵ Wilkerson was married six times. His wives were:

- Helen Durkin - probably around 1913 or 1914 - probably New York or Fort Lee, New Jersey - Durkin died in the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918.
- Edith Gwynn Goldenhorn - June 22, 1927 - Los Angeles, CA - August 7, 1935 - Cd. Juárez, Mexico
- Rita Ann Seward - September 30, 1935 - Las Vegas - May 9, 1938 - Los Angeles, CA
- Estelle Jackson Brown - December 12, 1939 - Las Vegas, NV - August 13, 1942 - Reno, NV
- Vivian DuBois - May 9, 1946 - Las Vegas, NV - March 14, 1950 - Los Angeles, CA
- Beatrice Ruby Noble - February 23, 1951 - Phoenix, AZ - His death

⁹⁶ *Desert Sun*, November 21, 1941

⁹⁷ Wilkerson, 166.

with “a new girl, Brownie Wilkerson, with a tan matching her name.”⁹⁸ According to Wilkerson’s son, “by July 1942 Brownie had had enough of her husband’s jealousy, temper tantrums, and acidic criticism. She fled to Reno to sit out the necessary six weeks to establish residence in order to obtain a quick Nevada divorce.”⁹⁹ Louella Parsons reported on July 2, “News that Brownie Wilkerson is in Reno seeking a divorce from Billie is a surprise and shock to us (as it will be to their many friends).”¹⁰⁰

Newspapers reported from Reno on August 13, 1942, that Brownie Wilkerson had filed for divorce “on the ground of extreme mental cruelty.”¹⁰¹ Property rights were settled out of court, and Brownie was granted her former name of Estelle Brown.¹⁰²

There may have been another reason for the divorce because less than a month later, it was reported that the former Mrs. Wilkinson had run off to Las Vegas again, this time to marry Minneapolis lumber heir James E. Stewart, age twenty-four. Stewart was a junior at Pomona College in Claremont and was living in Pasadena. When his parents heard of the impending marriage, father George Stewart flew to Beverly Hills to try to stop it. His wife said, “The news certainly is shocking to me. The news dispatch from Las Vegas has told much more than I knew before. Mr. Stewart went out there to try to stop it, but apparently failed.”¹⁰³

James Elliott Stewart (1922-2006) was the son of George Miller Stewart and Laura Elliott Stewart. George Stewart founded the Stewart Lumber Company in 1919. After serving in the Army in World War II, James and Brownie Stewart settled in Minneapolis, living at the Calhoun Beach Club until their house at 3434 Zenith Avenue South was completed. *Variety* reported in June of 1946 that “Brownie Stewart joined International Pictures as fashion editor and mag consultant.”¹⁰⁴ The couple had two children, Susan in 1947 and George in 1949. By the late 1950s, the family split its time between Minneapolis and Palm Springs.

The couple became very well-known for their large-scale but informal entertaining and were “considered the best team of gourmet cooks in Minneapolis.” Brownie was reported admitting that *Gourmet* magazine was her cooking bible, but said, “I change everything about to suit myself.”¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ “Hedda Hopper’s Hollywood,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1942.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 182.

¹⁰⁰ *San Francisco Examiner*, July 2, 1942.

¹⁰¹ “Film Newspaper Editor Divorced,” *San Pedro News-Pilot*, August 13, 1942.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

¹⁰³ “Minneapolis Youth Scorns Dad’s Plea; Weds Ex-Model,” *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, September 12, 1942.

¹⁰⁴ “Hollywood,” June 1946. Little is known of that association, other than that the Stewarts were good friends of author Betty Bard MacDonald, author of “The Egg and I,” which was being filmed by Universal-International at this same time.

¹⁰⁵ “Virginia Stouffer” column, *Minneapolis Star*, November 1, 1956.



Brownie and James Stewart in a 1951 Minneapolis Star photo.



STEP INTO THE KITCHEN in the modern home of Mr. and Mrs. James Stewart, 3434 Zenith avenue S. You'll find the host and hostess preparing an unusual but easy-to-get supper. If there are guests, they will be looking on. "Brownie" and Jim work in perfect harmony, dividing the cooking responsibilities. Jim is the meat cooker, usually broiling everything from thick lamb chops to "pigs in blankets,"

which are oysters wrapped in bacon, over his special indoor grill. He also makes the coffee. Brownie has the right touch with salad mixing in a huge oval wooden bowl. She favors casserole dishes, believes most vegetables are cooked too long, and turns out delectable desserts. Both will tell you, "Nothing is more fun than cooking food—not even the eating of it."

MINNEAPOLIS STAR PHOTO BY ARTHUR MAGNAN

On March 23, 1967, Brownie and James divorced, and she moved to Palm Springs that same year.¹⁰⁶ Nelda Linsk, who had befriended Brownie while she was still married to James, recalls that “we had the best relationship. She was like an older sister to me. She loved horses, was an excellent horsewoman, and kept horses at the Smoke Tree Stables. We were always at the Racquet Club together. We had so much fun. We traveled the world together with our husbands. One summer, we rented the Ferragamos’ villa at Capri. Another we spent in Rome, doing all the things the Romans do.”¹⁰⁷

In 1973, she bought the Koerner Residence from Leon Koerner. Because she entertained on a larger scale than the Koerners had, she asked architects Williams, Clark & Williams to enlarge the living and dining rooms as seamlessly as possible. Designed by H. Roger Williams, both additions were under the original roofline, taking over existing covered patio spaces. The finishes matched the original materials.

While living there, she would later marry Ralph Bear, an insurance executive, in 1981. The Bears were founders of the McCallum Theater and the Bob Hope Cultural Center, in the President’s Circle at the College of the Desert and the Palm Springs Art Museum, and on the board of Vale Padrinos, a “support group for Hispanics” in the Coachella Valley. In 1987, the Humane Society of the Desert honored the Bears as “among the ‘10 best’ for their social, philanthropic, and civic work in the community.” He died in 1989.¹⁰⁸ Brownie married local travel agent Scott Fransen in 1990. In 1997, she sold the Koerner Residence to Henry Lamb. She died in La Jolla in 2003.

Third Owners: Henry and Allan Lamb (1997-2018):

HENRY B LAMB (02/28/1937 - 07/14/2016) – From Lamb’s obituary:

“Henry Basil Lamb, a descendant of an early Portland Oregon family died in Palm Springs California. He was 79 years old. He attended Reed College Oregon and received a Master’s degree from the University of Michigan; School of Public Health in the organization and financing of Health Care Services. Henry served in the US Army for three years in the European theater of operations and for many years he worked and traveled extensively throughout Europe, Algeria, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia.

He served as an expert consultant on HMO’s to the Assistant Secretary of Health in the Carter and Reagan Administrations in Washington DC He joined the Kaiser Permanente program in the late 1960s and served as the founding Administrator of the Kaiser Permanente Dental Care Program. He later served as the Administrator of the Kaiser Center for Health Research.

He served as the founding Administrator of the Scan Health Plan in Long Beach California, he also worked with the Hawaii State Human Services Dept. evaluating a major program to reduce Hawaii’s uninsured population to below 5 percent in the 1990s.

¹⁰⁶ “Northwood Names Brownie Bear as One of Ten Distinguished,” *Desert Sun*, October 30, 1984.

¹⁰⁷ Telephone interview with Nelda Linsk, December 14, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ “Memorial Planned for Desert Philanthropist,” *Desert Sun*, September 7, 1989.

He later became a consultant to HCF, a large Health Care Insurance Corporation in Australia, and worked with the Royal Commission in Saudi Arabia in the delivery of Health Care Services. He is survived by his husband Allan Robert Lamb.”

Allan Lamb sold the Koerner Residence in 2018 to the current owners, Katherine and David Wright, who undertook a masterful restoration of the house and garden.

VIII. Leon and Thea Koerner House, Palm Springs, 1955

By Sidney Koerner Williams



Citrus blossoms perfumed the evening air while umbrella lights pooled light on the white petunias filling a long flowerbed adjacent to the shuffleboard court. The house itself with its floor-to-ceiling panes of glass looked out to the garden and to the steep escarpment of Mount San Jacinto. As a twelve-year-old visiting my great-uncle Leon's house for the first time with my parents, John and Eileen Koerner, and my sister Diane, these are indelible memories. On this balmy March evening, we played shuffleboard after a rich and wonderful dinner prepared by Leon's cook.

Coming for vacation from still wintery Vancouver, it was easy to understand why Leon and his wife Thea chose to build a house in Palm Springs. After several seasons of staying at the Biltmore Hotel, they decided they needed their own house in which to enjoy the winter months. The dry climate was also a healthy choice for Leon's emphysema.

Leon and Thea selected architect E. Stewart Williams to design their desert house. After purchasing four lots in Deepwell, discussions began with Stewart about the program, their preferences, the selection of Arthur Elrod to design the interior furnishings, and Eckbo, Royston, and Williams the landscape. Before returning to

Vancouver in the spring, Leon deposited a large sum in a local bank from which Stewart could draw for construction expenses. The two men corresponded frequently while construction was underway.

When Leon and Thea returned to the desert, Stewart met them at the airport to drive them to their newly completed house. As they approached the front door, as Stewart recounted to us, he was anxious that his clients approve of the finished home that they had yet to see. Leon and Thea toured the house from room to room not making any comments while Stewart became ever more nervous. When they completed the tour, Leon pronounced the house perfect in all respects.

Embracing modern architecture marked an enormous departure from the Koerners' Vancouver house, a traditional two-story gracious home in the Shaughnessy neighborhood. The Palm Springs house was the antithesis of that, yet it contained certain features that suited the somewhat more formal European habits of the clients. The plot plan indicates that Stewart sited the house with a generous setback from Calle de Maria and the longitudinal axis of the house running north–south facing the mountain view to the west. Entirely on one level, the original floor plan shows a living room separated from the dining area by a fireplace wall and the kitchen open only by a pass-through counter. (In 1973 the dining room and living room were extended and a sunroom added.) The bedroom wing features a large guest room with ensuite bath and dressing room. A door in the hallway accesses the master suite, which contains two bedrooms, each with bath and dressing rooms. The larger of the two bedrooms looks out to the garden while the second bedroom has an enclosed patio on one side and a private outdoor patio on the north side.

The interior enclosed patio in the core of the house includes a water feature and planting. Water plays a central role in the landscape design by Francis Dean of the Eckbo firm. At the entry to the house, a pool contains three raised shallow saucers where water cascades, contributing to the ambiance of a desert oasis. Another shallow pool beside the sandstone walkway links the exterior to the interior. In recent years the stone cladding of the concrete island and the bottom of the shallow pond have been replaced with newer materials.¹⁰⁹

The exterior landscape reinforces the oasis feel and also frames the mountain view. In a letter dated July 13, 1955, Dean wrote to Leon stating, “In addition to the introduction of carefully planned color in the garden, we have also brought in some rather large native boulders to blend into the general mound areas. The main point of emphasis here, we feel, should be to provide a usable and pleasing garden for you and a good relationship between the garden and the mountains beyond.”¹¹⁰

The living room opens onto a sheltered patio with an extended post-and-beam shed roof overhang. Palm trees emerge from some openings in the shade cover offering filtered sunlight. At the west end of the pool,

¹⁰⁹ Peter Moruzzi, National Register of Historic Places, multiple property listing for E. Stewart Williams, 2016.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Francis Dean to Leon Koerner, July 13, 1955, Francis Dean Collection, ENV Archives-Special Collections, Cal Poly Pomona.

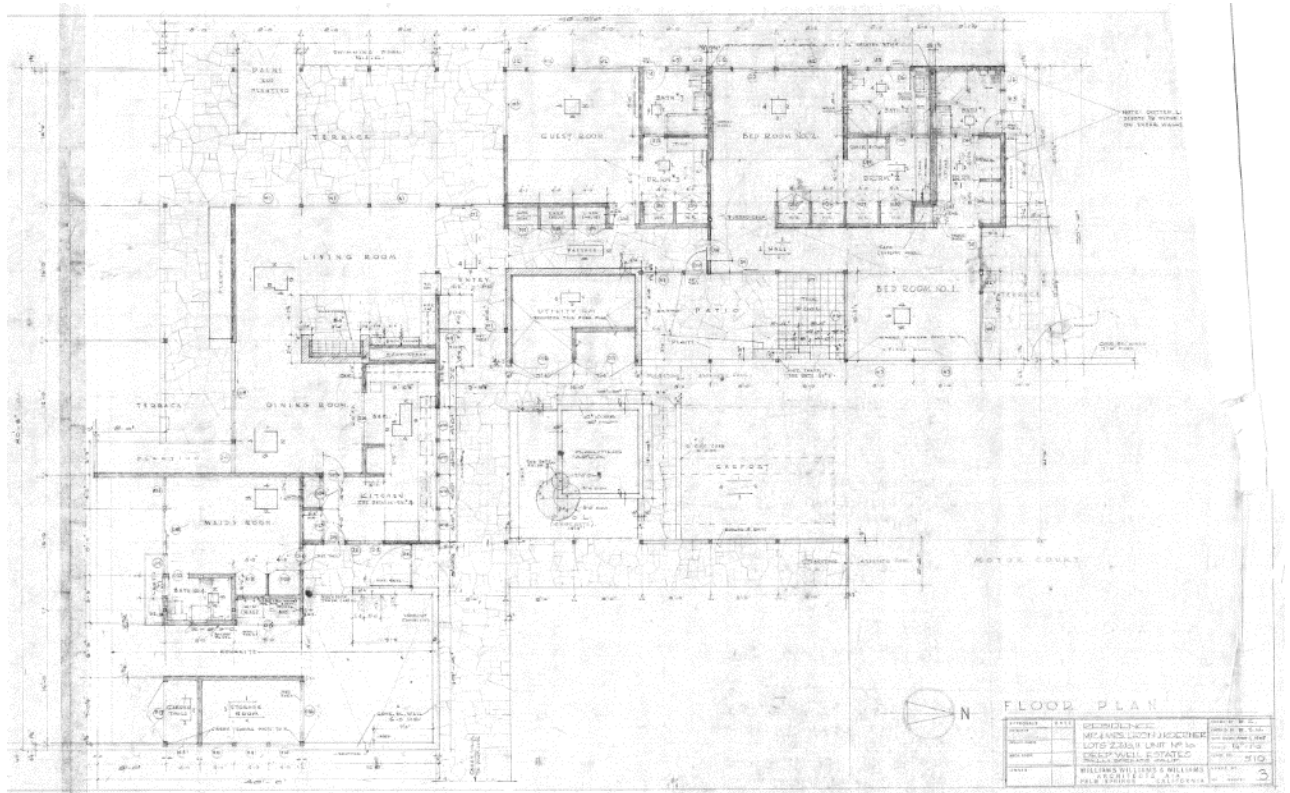
there is a curving wood shelter with built-in seating, a fireplace, and barbeque for entertaining.¹¹¹

Slumpstone cladding, wood post-and-beam construction with translucent clerestory windows, board-and-batten siding, and a shed roof form the exterior in warm, desert finishes. The materials that Stewart selected are in keeping with his design aesthetic, combining a modern plan with materials that related to the desert environment in both texture and color. Like the Edris House, designed in 1954, Stewart sought to integrate the house into the landscape.

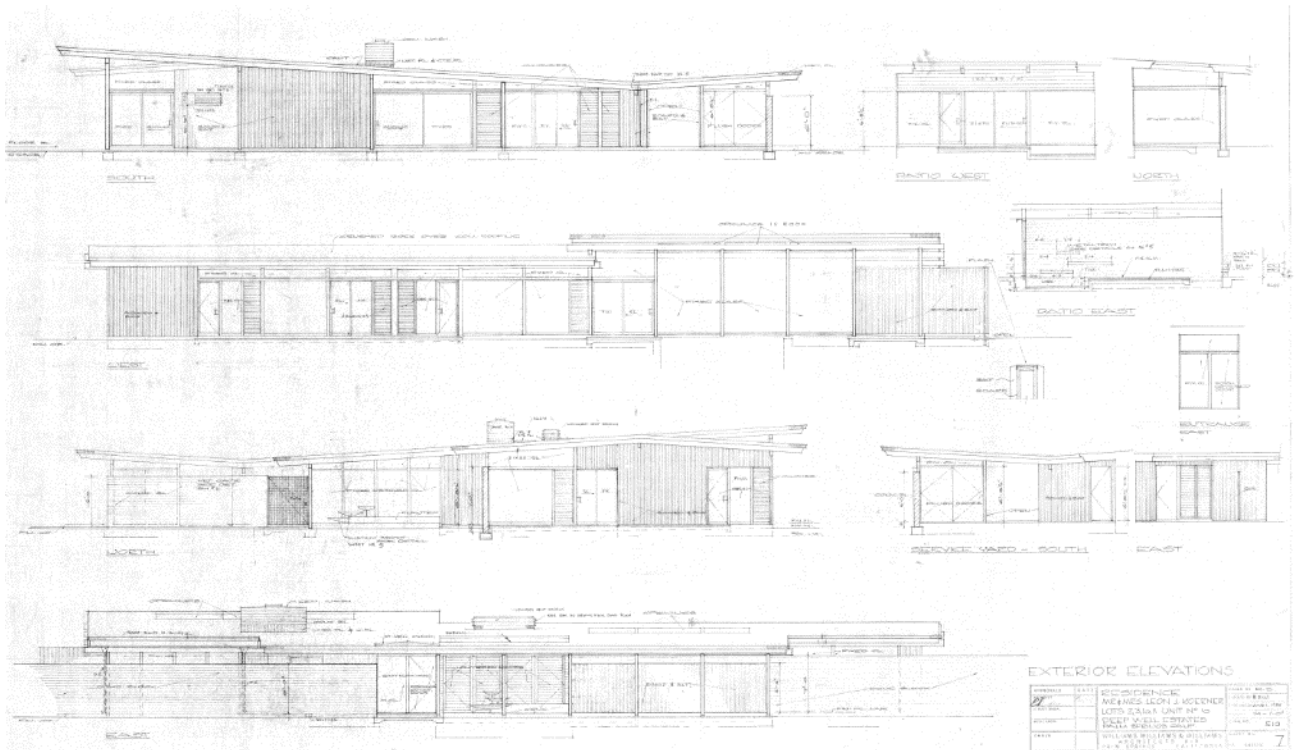
Sadly, Thea only enjoyed the winter house for four years as she passed away in 1959. Leon, however, continued to spend the winter months in Palm Springs until his death in 1972. Together they established the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation to foster the cultural and creative arts, higher education, and the public welfare, in British Columbia. They were eager to give back to the country that had given them refuge from World War II and allowed them to continue their successful lumber business. Their home in Palm Springs brought the Williams and the Koerner families together. Leon attended my wedding to Erik Williams, eldest son of Stewart, in May 1969. A passion for modern architecture continues to run through our families.

¹¹¹ “At Home with E. Stewart Williams: Modern Domestic Architecture in the Genteel Tradition”, Volker M. Welter, PhD, *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*, edited by Sidney Williams, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2014.

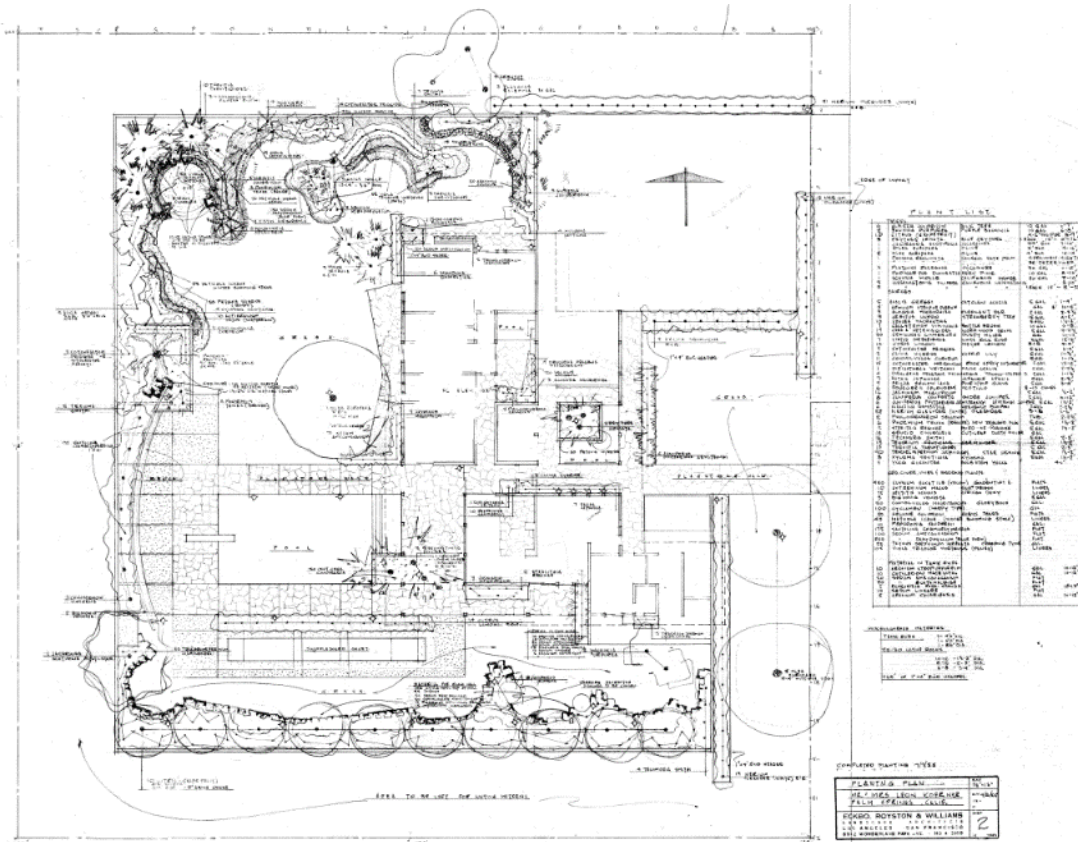
IX. Blueprints



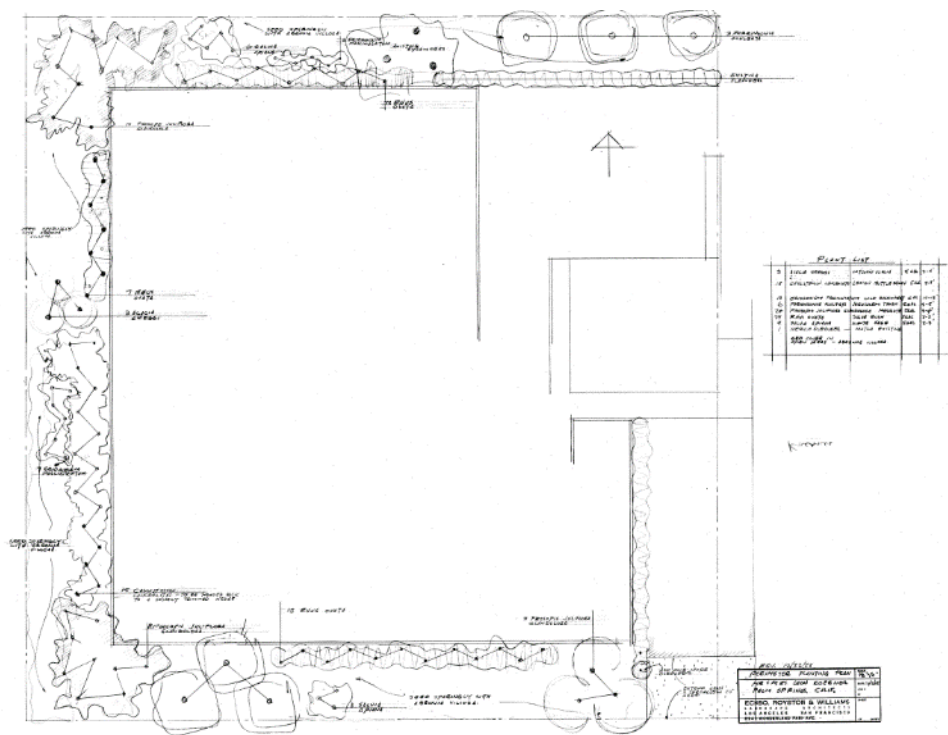
E. Stewart Williams, Floor Plan Sheet.



E. Stewart Williams, Elevations Sheet.



Eckbo, Royston, & Williams, Landscape Sheet 1.



X. Historic Images



Primary façade of the Koerner Residence, 1956. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



At the front door, a pool with waterfall created from three graduating steel tank ends. The obscure glass has been replaced by transparent glass. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



The view from the guest room to the garden. Arthur Elrod used hand-woven fabrics throughout. Desk and chair designed by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings for Widdicomb. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



An indoor/outdoor atrium was adjacent to the Koerners' bedroom suites. Shallow steel trays spill water into a tiled pool. These important features remain and are now restored. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



From the rear terrace of the house, views of the Eckbo, Royston, & Williams-designed landscape, with the mountains beyond. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



The swimming pool and shuffleboard court. The house designed by Wexler & Harrison for Bill Bogges can be seen across the street. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



Slatted wood bench with overhead shade structure. This detail is a Garrett Eckbo signature from the period. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



The paving at the shade structure was white concrete exposed aggregate. Redwood planting box, with contoured earthforms in the background. All of the features seen here were meticulously restored. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



These undulating mounds were a Garrett Eckbo signature for work in Palm Springs, meant to link the garden to the mountains beyond. Besides the Koerner garden, Eckbo, Royston, & Williams used this feature at the Higgins Residence in Palm Springs (1950, E. Stewart Williams, architect) and Palm Springs City Hall. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



Between the shuffleboard court and the swimming pool, a long rectangular bed was planted with white petunias. The shuffleboard has been removed, but the rest remain intact and restored. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



On the south side of the garden, retaining walls were created using varnished native stone slabs. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



Tank ends filled with succulents and flowers near the stone retaining walls. Citrus was planted on the upper level. All of these features remained extant, and were recently restored. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



The undulating forms of the stone retaining wall mirrored the similar biomorphic shapes of the earthforms on the opposite side of the garden. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



The long slatted wood bench and shade structure. During the recent restoration, this bench and shade structure were completely rebuilt and replicated, using the original drawings as a guide, as well as remnants of the original. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



Canvas fabric cushions were attached with special hardware to the poured concrete wall back of the bench. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



A cluster of three California fan palms were planted under the openings of the shed roof, growing through the roof. Julius Shulman photograph, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

XI. Contemporary Images – Photos by Author, June 2022



The motor court.



Sandblasted board-and-batten is combined with Slumpstone.



A wide flagstone path serves as the central east/west spine for the site.



The south portion of the primary façade.



The entry.



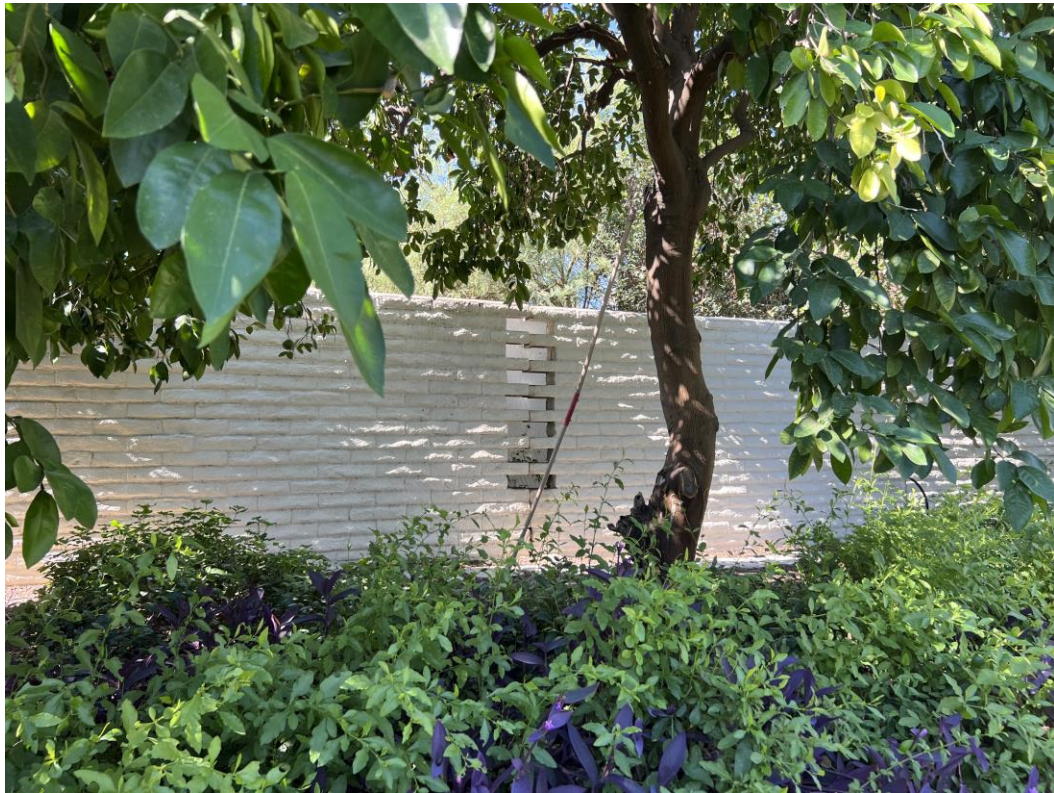
Brushed brass wall sconces designed by Paavo Tynel are used both inside and out.



The wood has been sandblasted to emphasize the grain, providing a textural interest.



The southeast portion of the rear garden.



The Slumpstone walls enclosing the rear garden have expansion joints with a decorative detail obtained by omitting one brick. Frosted glass panels are placed behind the openings.



Another Paavo Tynel sconce, and board-and-batten vertical wood detail. Eckbo and Dean created a simple trellis using pipe and wire, trained with jasmine.



A cluster of three California fan palms pierce the roof at the rear terrace.



Where the soaring shed roof over the public rooms of the house meets with the gabled roof of the bedroom wing.



View from the rear terrace facing west.



Views from the southwest corner of the garden.



The retaining wall on the south of the property is built using long native stone ledges, naturally varnished a deep coppery brown. Some stones cantilever out, others are embedded in the lawn.



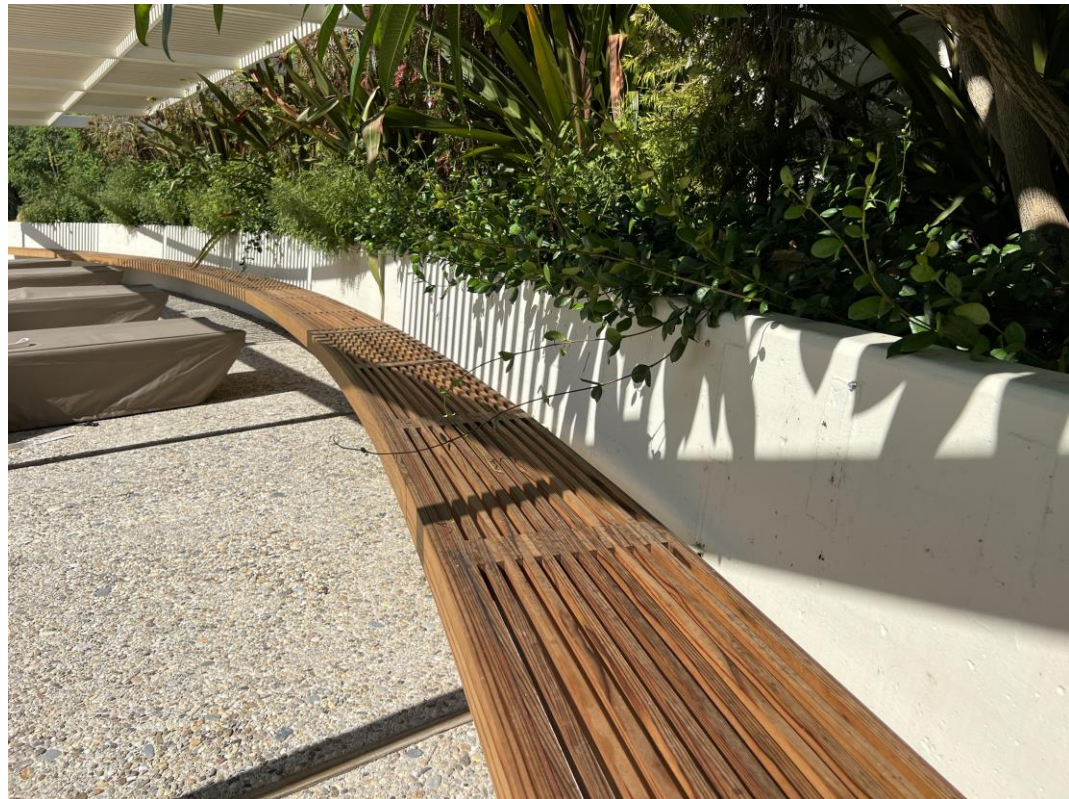
The rear terrace.



Views of the rear terrace and pool.



Pool, curved slatted bench, and shade structure.



Bench and structure details.



Eckbo and Dean specified white concrete exposed aggregate at the bench and shade structure. This was carefully replicated when the garden was recently restored.



White concrete exposed aggregate contrasts with Arizona sandstone flagstones and a smooth panel of turf.



A mature multi-trunk olive tree anchors the large lawn.



The rear lawn and earthen mounds.



At the northwest corner of the garden, a circular concrete patio was created, offering a sweeping vantage point for the gardens and mountains beyond.



Views of the garden from the northeast corner, outside Leon Koerner's bedroom.



Bowtie-shaped patio adjacent to the house.

XII. Landscape Photos by Henry Blackham





