

# CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Background

On May 16, 2002 the City Council of the City of Rancho Mirage enacted Interim Ordinance 802 and directed Staff “to initiate a historic preservation planning process aimed at identifying significant [historical, architectural, or cultural] resources and establishing permanent regulations to protect them.” The interim ordinance provided a temporary process for the issuance of demolition and alteration permits for potential resources pending the performance of a historic resources survey to identify and evaluate such resources.<sup>1</sup> This action was taken in response to the demolition of the Maslon House in March 2002. Designed by Richard Neutra (1892-1970), one of the founders of the modern movement in the United States, the Maslon House was widely acclaimed as one of the crowning achievements of the renowned architect’s later career, and its destruction prompted an outcry that was international in scope.

The City contracted with the team of Leslie Heumann, Teresa Grimes, and Peter Moruzzi, architectural historians, to prepare an intensive level survey of historic resources in Rancho Mirage. This Final Report discusses the methods used, cites the sources consulted, and presents the results of the survey. It includes a Historic Context Statement identifying significant periods, themes, and property types in Rancho Mirage, standardized California Historic Resources Inventory forms for each documented property, and a database that summarizes survey findings in a tabular format.

### 1.2 Goals and Objectives of the Survey

An initial step in the survey process was to formulate goals and objectives, which are presented as follows:

1. Identify and document the City’s historic resources
  - The survey can expedite the environmental review process by identifying which properties are and are not subject to state and federal historic preservation laws.
  - The survey can be used as the basis for seeking formal designation of identified properties under state and federal landmark programs.
2. Safeguard the City’s heritage by encouraging the protection of historic resources
  - The results of the survey can be integrated into private and public land use management and development processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance 802 was extended in November 2002 by Ordinance 816 to allow time to complete the survey.

- The results of the survey can become the basis for drafting a local landmark ordinance and general plan element.
  - The results of the survey can help resolve conflicts between the preservation of historic and architectural resources and alternative land uses.
3. Foster a knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the City's heritage
- The results of the survey can be used in public information material to promote knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the community's heritage.
  - The results of the survey can enhance the local history curriculum taught at the public schools.
  - The results of the survey can be used to promote tourism and strengthen property values.

## 2.0 METHODS USED

The performance of historic resources surveys is governed by the particular characteristics and needs of the subject community and by a set of professional standards and practices. These standards and practices are described primarily in two publications: *National Register Bulletin 24, Guidelines For Local Surveys: A Basis For Preservation Planning* (National Park Service, 1977; revised 1985) and *Instructions For Recording Historical Resources* (State of California Office of Historic Preservation, March 1995). In accordance with these guidelines, the comprehensive, intensive level survey of Rancho Mirage utilized a multi-step methodology consisting of: pre-field research; background research and development of historic context; field survey and photography; property-specific research; evaluation using established criteria; and recordation on inventory forms. Each of these tasks is explained in the following discussion.

### 2.1 Pre-Field Research

Research performed at the outset of the process was intended to locate properties that may have already been documented, to identify sources of information, and to focus subsequent field and survey efforts. The first step was to consult with the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) to determine if there were any properties in Rancho Mirage that had been previously identified as historic resources listed in the California Inventory of Historic Resources database. There were none. The Inventory includes properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, California Registered Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historical Interest, and properties reviewed by OHP as a part of a historic resources survey or an environmental review. Secondly, local libraries were visited, local historians were

contacted, and a collection of published articles about building in Rancho Mirage was begun. The information thus amassed served to identify some of the potential historic resources in the City. Finally, locations of potential resources, including the earliest subdivisions, were plotted on a current map of the City of the City in order to determine which sections of the City would be visited in the course of the field survey.

## **2.2 Background Research and Historic Context**

The Secretary of the Interior has developed a set of Standards for preservation planning, identification, evaluation, and registration of historic resources. These Standards emphasize the importance of historic contexts in order to develop goals and priorities for the performance of a historic resources survey and for the treatment of historic properties following a survey. In addition, the necessity of evaluation of the significance of historic properties within historic contexts is stressed. A historic context statement organizes the development history of a defined geographic area by themes and periods, and identifies the property types and their characteristics that are related to the themes. The historic context for the City of Rancho Mirage is included as Section 3 of this Report. Research for the historic context primarily utilized the collections of the Rancho Mirage and Palm Springs libraries, the private archives of local historians, and extensive interviews with people who participated in, or were knowledgeable about, the development of Rancho Mirage. A complete bibliography of sources consulted for the historic context and the survey as a whole is presented as Section 6 of this Report.

## **2.3 Field Survey and Photography**

A field survey was conducted by car and on foot, as necessary, of all publicly accessible areas of the City and of five gated areas: Tamarisk Country Club, Desert Braemar, Blue Skies Village, Thunderbird Country Club, and Thunderbird Heights. The Consultant Team was unable to see or take notes on the gated Annenberg estate or the walled Sinatra compound; information about these properties was gleaned from published accounts and photographs. All other gated areas in the City were determined during pre-field research to be of relatively recent construction or were not known to possess architecturally significant resources, and therefore were not inspected. Buildings, structures, objects, sites, and historic districts were considered in the survey. Most surveys encompass historic resources that are 45 years of age or older; however, given the fact that much of Rancho Mirage was developed during the middle of the twentieth century, properties that appeared to be less than 45 years of age were identified for further research if they incorporated mid-century architectural characteristics and were relatively intact.

Potential historic and architectural resources were noted and photographed with a digital camera. The Consultant Team was denied permission to take photographs in Thunderbird Country Club and Thunderbird Heights. Those areas were revisited at the invitation of specific property owners, and a limited number of photographs were taken.

Previously published photographs were utilized when available for those properties that were not photographed.

A database of 90 potential historic resources was created and subsequently expanded to 103 when contributors to two potential historic districts were counted individually. The database included street addresses, brief descriptions such as the number of stories, the architectural style and obvious alterations, and a preliminary evaluation.

#### **2.4 Property-Specific Research**

Properties identified as potential historic resources were researched to determine the following information: dates of initial construction and subsequent alterations; original and in some cases subsequent owners, names of other individuals and firms associated with the property such as architects and builders. Initial dates of construction were taken from Metroscan property records provided by the City. It was determined that pre-incorporation (1973) building permits were unavailable at the City and are presumed lost. Post-incorporation permits were utilized primarily to document alterations to properties. Additional research included old city directories, which often provided the earliest known owner or resident associated with a property, notices in local newspapers such as the *Palm Springs Villager* and the *Palm Springs Sun*, histories of the area, and other periodicals such as *Architectural Digest*. The collected articles were correlated to the database of potential historic resources. Other resources included interviews (as noted in Section 2.2, historic photographs and postcards, the William Cody archives at California State University at San Luis Obispo, and, in some cases, the Internet. A complete list of sources is located in the Bibliography.

#### **2.5 Evaluation and Criteria**

Potential historic resources were evaluated under three sets of similar criteria reflecting Federal, State, and local programs and regulations: the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and the City of Rancho Mirage Interim Ordinance 802/816 (Section 2).

National Register of Historic Places. Created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is an authoritative guide used by Federal, State, and local governments, private groups, and citizens to identify the nation's historical resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment. To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a resource must be at least 50 years of age and possess significance in American history and culture, architecture, or archaeology. The Register recognizes properties of local, state, and national significance meeting at least one of four criteria. Potential resources possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. yield, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Certain kinds of properties, including those less than 50 years of age, are not usually considered eligible for listing in the National Register. These properties can be eligible for listing, however, if they meet special requirements, called Criteria Considerations, in addition to satisfying the regular requirements. In the case of properties that are less than 50 years old, which characterizes numerous potential resources in Rancho Mirage, National Register Bulletin 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, states that a property less than 50 years of age may be eligible for the National Register if it is of exceptional importance. The concepts of historic context and relative significance are especially important in the evaluation of properties less than 50 years of age; in Rancho Mirage, the definitive development of the community substantially occurred between the years 1950 and 1973 (see the Historic Context in Section 3 of this Report). National Register Bulletin 15 states: "A property that has achieved significance in the last 50 years can be evaluated only when sufficient historical perspective exists to determine that the property is exceptionally important. The necessary perspective can be provided by scholarly research and evaluation, and must consider both the historic context and the specific property's role in that context. In justifying exceptional importance, it is necessary to identify other properties within the geographical area that reflect the same significance or historic associations and to determine which properties best represent the historic context in question. Several properties in the area could become eligible with the passage of time, but few will qualify now as exceptionally important.

California Register of Historical Resources. In 1992, the Governor Wilson signed into law AB 2881, establishing the California Register of Historical Resources. The California Register is an authoritative guide used by State and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify historic resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change. The criteria for listing in the California Register are based upon National Register criteria. Integrity requirements are generally not as stringent as those for the National Register. In addition, properties eligible to the California Register are not required to be fifty years old; instead, it must be demonstrated that a sufficient period of time has elapsed to understand a property's historical importance. A California Register property possesses



significance at the local, state, or national level, under one or more of the following four criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

City of Rancho Mirage. The City of Rancho Mirage, through enactment of Ordinance 802/816, has adopted the following criteria for historical, architectural, cultural, or archaeological value. A significant building or structure:

- A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of Rancho Mirage, the state, or the nation;
- B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant to the history of Rancho Mirage, the state, or the nation;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;
- D. Represents the work of an important creative designer or builder;
- E. Possesses high artistic value; or
- F. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of Rancho Mirage, the state, or the nation; AND
- G. The potential resource has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association.

Evaluation Codes. The California Office of Historic Preservation has developed a two and three digit code to classify historic resources that is based on National Register eligibility. The first digit indicates the general category of evaluation. The second digit is a letter which indicates whether the resource is separately eligible (S), eligible as part of a district (D), or both (B). The third digit is a number, which is coded to describe

some of the circumstances or conditions of the evaluation. The general evaluation categories are as follows:

1. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Determined eligible for listing in the National Register in a formal process involving federal agencies.
3. Appears eligible for listing in the National Register in the judgment of the persons completing or reviewing the [inventory] form.
4. May become eligible for listing in the National Register.
5. Not eligible for National Register, but listed or eligible for listing under an existing or potential future local ordinance.
6. None of the above.

The specific codes that have been utilized in the Rancho Mirage survey are defined as follows:

- 3S. Appears eligible for individual listing in the National Register.
- 4S1. May become eligible for individual listing in the National Register when the property becomes old enough to meet the Register's 50-year requirement.
- 4D1. Contributor to a district that may become eligible for listing in the National Register when the district becomes old enough to meet the Register's 50-year requirement.
- 5S1. Not eligible for the National Register, but would be eligible for designation under a local ordinance, if one were enacted.
- 5D1. Contributor to a district that is not eligible for listing in the National Register, but would be eligible for designation under a local ordinance, if one were enacted.
- 5S3. Not eligible for the National Register or for designation under a local ordinance, but of some local interest.

Properties that are categorized as 3s and 4s are assumed to be eligible for designation under a local ordinance. Under the regulations implementing the California Register, all properties categorized as 5s or higher are also assumed to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register, unless a preponderance of the evidence indicates otherwise.

## 2.6 Recordation on Inventory Forms

The State of California has developed and refined a series of Historic Resources Inventory forms (series DPR 523) to record historic resources in California. The Rancho Mirage survey utilized four of the series: the Primary Record, which presents descriptive information; the Building, Structure and Object Record, which incorporates a statement of significance and corresponding evaluation code; a Continuation Sheet; and a District Record, which both describes and discusses the significance of potential historic districts. The inventory forms were completed according to OHP's *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources*. A Primary Record was prepared for each address in the inventory. Building, Structure and Object Records were prepared for buildings that were evaluated as individual resources. Collective significance of potential historic district contributors was addressed on two District forms.

## 3.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

### 3.1 Introduction

This historic context provides an overview of the history of Rancho Mirage and a framework for determining the significance of properties in the City. A "historic context" may be defined as information about historic trends and properties organized by theme, place, and time. By understanding historic contexts, a property can be seen as a product of its time and as an illustration of aspects of heritage that may be unique, representative, or pivotal.<sup>2</sup> Three primary historic contexts have been identified in the history of Rancho Mirage: the Agricultural and Early Residential Period, extending from 1924 when the first subdivisions were recorded, until 1950, when the first country club organized; the Country Club Era, lasting from 1951 until Rancho Mirage incorporated as a city in 1973; and Cityhood, beginning in 1973 and continuing through the present day.

### 3.2 Prelude: Development of the Coachella Valley

The first residents of the Coachella Valley in the vicinity of what is now the City of Rancho Mirage were the Native Americans who became known as the Agua Caliente band of the Cahuilla Indians. Linguistically part of the Shoshonean family, the Agua Caliente developed camps and villages in several canyons, exploiting ample water supplies, natural palm groves, and the hot springs that provided the group with its name. The Agua Caliente hunted native animals, gathered plants and seeds, and cultivated melons, squash, beans, and corn.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin 16: Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms*. 1991. Page 4.

<sup>3</sup> "The Agua Caliente band of Cahuillas." <http://www.xeri.com/Moapa/cahuilla1.htm>

The name “Agua Caliente” actually dates to the Spanish period of California’s history, when an expedition led by Captain Jose Romero through the San Geronio Pass in search of a route to the Colorado River became the first recorded foray by non-natives into the area. The party stopped at some hot springs, hence the name. It was another twenty years before the next Anglo visit to the area, which took place in 1845. Acting in the name of Pio Pico, the Mexican governor of California, Benjamin “Don Benito” Wilson led a party in search of some “renegade Indians.”<sup>4</sup>

Three years after California became a state, in 1853, the United States Congress dispatched a topographical survey party to California in search of “the most practicable and economical route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the American survey of the region resulted in the valley being divided into a grid of one-mile square sections. To provide an incentive for the construction of a railroad, the federal government deeded every other odd-numbered section to the Southern Pacific Railroad while retaining the even-numbered ones. Eventually, forty-eight sections were given back to the Agua Caliente. The railroad through the Pass was completed in 1876, connecting Los Angeles and Indio, which developed initially as a railroad town and incorporated as a city in 1930. The town of Coachella, too, owed its origins to the railroad stop that was sited there; it incorporated in 1946.<sup>6</sup>

Palm Springs was the closest town to what would become Rancho Mirage to begin its development in the late nineteenth century, and in some respects the trends there would profoundly influence the growth of the younger community. Early residents were attracted to Palm Springs for the perceived health benefits of a warm, dry climate and for the agricultural opportunities afforded by plentiful water and fertile soil. A town was platted in 1887, lots sold, water delivery secured through the construction of ditches, and crops such as alfalfa, grapes, corn, figs, apricots, grapefruit, oranges, and dates raised. By 1915, the Desert Inn and Sanitarium, first opened around 1909, had been converted solely into an inn, setting the pattern for the seasonal resort community that Palm Springs would become as the century passed. By the late 1920s, the area had caught on with the Hollywood crowd, and the desert became a winter playground for movie stars and moguls. Palm Springs incorporated as a city in 1938.

### **3.3 Early Agricultural and Residential Period: 1924-1950**

Before and after the railroad was laid through the Coachella Valley, the area was connected to the outside world by stage routes, one of which ran through the Rancho Mirage area. The Bradshaw Stage, dating to the 1860s, linked California with Arizona. By 1915, the route was characterized by a graded road that became the Bradshaw Highway and later Highway 111. Hugging the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains and

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<sup>4</sup> Bogert, Frank. *Palm Springs First Hundred Years*. 1987. Page 55.

<sup>5</sup> Elmer Wallace Holmes et al. *History of Riverside County California*. 1912. Page 176.

<sup>6</sup> Laflin, Patricia B. *Coachella Valley California: A Pictorial History*. 1998. Pages-43-64.

roughly paralleling the Whitewater River bed, the highway became the spine of the “cove communities,” of which Rancho Mirage was one.<sup>7</sup>

Early interest in the area, as with neighboring Palm Springs, was agricultural, with the DaVall family’s Wonder Palms Date Ranch and the William E. Everett’s Eleven Mile Ranch as two of the two earliest investments. Encouraged by the report of geologist William P. Blake, who had accompanied the 1853 survey party, which extolled the virtues of the desert soil, by the presence of a rich underground aquifer, and by the warm climate, desert farmers saw a market for their produce before crops in other regions had ripened. The area was particularly suited to the cultivation of dates, and with the federal government promoting date farming in the area by offering free date seeds, the distinctive groves began to dot the landscape. In 1912, Everett DaVall, a southern California rancher originally from Pennsylvania, saw an opportunity and purchased a half section from the railroad at \$7.50 an acre.<sup>8</sup> He planted 250 free seeds and eventually developed several of his own varieties, including the popular “honey date” that remains a specialty of the DaVall family growers elsewhere in the Coachella Valley to this day.<sup>9</sup> Agriculture persisted in the Rancho Mirage area through the 1940s, with Johnny and Ruth Warburton, who raised grapes, dates, and onions on eighty acres until their Red Roof Ranch was purchased around 1950 for the proposed Thunderbird Country Club.<sup>10</sup>

In 1924, Los Angeles developers R. P. Davie of Santa Monica and E. E. McIntyre purchased several hundred acres of land in the Magnesia Falls area from the railroad with the intention of subdividing it into ten-acre farms geared towards “gentlemen farmers.” To make the area accessible, Davie laid out a road connecting Magnesia Falls with the Eleven Mile Ranch and the Bradshaw Highway, lined it with palm trees, and named it the “Rio del Sol.” Many of Davie’s Santa Monica friends became the first residents of the “Rancho del Sol Estates,” later known as Clancy Lane. L. M. and Helen Clancy of Los Angeles built the first Rancho del Sol ranch in 1932. In the tradition of the earliest settlers in the Palm Springs area, the Clancy’s built an adobe home on their property and planted grapefruit, dates, and grapes.<sup>11</sup> Water was supplied to the area by wells and delivered via pipes provided by Santa Monica plumbing shop proprietor, E. P. Nittinger, who also purchased property in the development.

Another early investor who had ambitious plans for development of Rancho Mirage as a second home community in the desert was Pasadenan Louis Blankenhorn. Blankenhorn, the developer of the Smoke Tree Ranch, a western style guest ranch and enclave of rustic vacation homes in Palm Springs, purchased property in the Magnesia Falls area in 1934 and began selling lots.<sup>12</sup> In 1937, he, along with sales director Laurence Macomber, offered “modern attractive small homes” of four to six rooms on

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<sup>7</sup> The others are La Quinta, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, and Cathedral City.

<sup>8</sup> Avery, Laura. “Oh, No, It’s Happening Again!” <http://www.smmirror.com/volume3/issue51/>

<sup>9</sup> “Winning Converts to Dates.” <http://www.seasonalchef.com/dates.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Windeler, Robert. *Thunderbird Country Club 50<sup>th</sup>: From Desert to Oasis*. 2002. Page 5.

<sup>11</sup> City of Rancho Mirage. *A Look Back In Time*. 1993, reprinted 1997. Pages 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 6-7.

100 by 100 foot lots in the subdivision. Described as “Early American” in style in a February 27, 1937 advertisement in the *Pasadena Star-News*, the homes were credited to the Pasadena architecture firm of Van Pelt and Lind. The Palm Springs office of this firm was staffed by local designers John Porter Clark and Albert Frey, although Frey was mostly in New York at the time, leading to the conclusion that Clark was the actual designer of the three models on sale at the time. The advertisement and accompanying article boasted that Rancho Mirage offered “one hour more sunshine” than Palm Springs and that it possessed “the finest water system in the valley.” It was also reported that six houses had already been constructed and several lots had been purchased. In a less attractive aspect of the period, the advertisement also noted that the development was “restricted,” an attitude that may have persisted in the area for at least another generation, when membership in the first two country clubs in Rancho Mirage was divided along religious lines.<sup>13</sup>

One of the earliest attractions of the desert was the health benefit of the warm, dry climate for sufferers from respiratory ailments. Sanitariums and other facilities were established throughout the southwest, including the Coachella Valley. Backed by entertainer Will Rogers, a Los Angeles pediatrician, Dr. Earl Tarr, planned to move his school for asthmatic children to Eleven Mile Ranch in Rancho Mirage in 1934. In the wake of Rogers’ untimely death in a plane crash in 1935, several of his Hollywood friends raised the necessary capital.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the handful of year round residents that settled in Rancho Mirage and the seasonal homeowners, visitors were drawn to the area for dude ranch vacations. Horseback riding and other equestrian pursuits were the primary outdoor sport enjoyed by desert inhabitants through the 1940s.<sup>15</sup> Dude ranches were popular throughout the southwest in the 1920s and 1930s, offering city dwellers the chance to not only ride but also try their hand at roping and bronco busting. Guests lived in rustic cabins, taking their meals communally in lodges or on chuck wagon expeditions. Swimming was offered as an alternative to riding.<sup>16</sup> In 1946, Eleven Mile Ranch was converted, with great success, into the White Sun Guest Ranch by New York businessman Jack Dengler.<sup>17</sup> On December 15, 1946 Frank Bogert, with several corporate magnates as backers, opened the Thunderbird Ranch on land in Section 11 that he had purchased for \$34,000 earlier in the year. Thunderbird featured ranch style cabins and a clubhouse designed by Pasadena architect Gordon Kaufmann and arranged around a large pool.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “Model Home Open In Desert Area.” *Pasadena Star-News*, February 27, 1937.

<sup>14</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Bogert, page 245.

<sup>16</sup> Hess, Alan and Danish, Andrew. *Palm Springs Weekend: The Architecture and Design of a Midcentury Oasis*. 2001. Pages 60-63.

<sup>17</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Windeler, page 5.

Rancho Mirage boasted an unusual attraction during this period.<sup>19</sup> In 1946, Henry “Hank” Gogerty, a Los Angeles architect known for Art Deco styled buildings in Hollywood, purchased 320 acres in Rancho Mirage. He graded the land, installed an airstrip, and moved surplus Army barracks from Beaumont onto the site.<sup>20</sup> Over the next few years, Gogerty built the Desert Air Hotel and a polo field next to the runway. Now the site of the Rancho Las Palmas Country Club, the facility was popular with Hollywood celebrities and was even used for filming the Bob Cummings television show in the 1950s.<sup>21</sup>

Hollywood connections in Rancho Mirage dated back almost to the beginnings of the community. Actor Frank Morgan (1890-1949), who would achieve lasting fame for his portrayal of the wizard in the 1939 *Wizard of Oz*, built one of the original Rancho Mirage homes on Sahara Road. Actress Greta Garbo, perhaps in her quest to “be alone,” is also said to have purchased a bungalow on Clancy Lane.<sup>22</sup> The Warburtons at Red Roof Ranch were part of the Hollywood crowd, he as an actor at MGM, she as the widow of producer-director Edward Selwyn.<sup>23</sup> Both the White Sun Guest Ranch and Thunderbird Ranch were popular with Hollywood personalities, and in fact a feature film, *Two Guys From Texas*, was filmed at Thunderbird in 1947.<sup>24</sup>

Although the stock market crash of 1929 and ensuing Depression had had a dampening effect on the growth of Rancho Mirage, there were enough residents in 1934 to form the Rancho Mirage Community Association. A salesman for the Blankenhorn organization, Don Cameron, successfully campaigned for a Rancho Mirage postal stop on the highway. The two tiers of boxes, shaded by a shingled overhang, and adjoining signpost listing resident box holders, became a community meeting place.<sup>25</sup>

Property types associated with the agricultural and early residential period may include single family homes in the Spanish, ranch, and early modern styles; ranch houses and associated date palm groves; stables, dude ranches, and early equestrian trails; early homes associated with celebrities; and surviving improvements from the first subdivisions in the Magnesia Falls and Clancy Lane areas.

### 3.4 Country Club Era: 1951-1973

The destiny of Rancho Mirage was changed forever when Thunderbird Ranch and the adjacent Red Roof Ranch were spotted by golf promoter Johnny Dawson as the

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<sup>19</sup> Apparently, the concept was not unique to Rancho Mirage. A Desert Air Hotel and airstrip utilizing surplus army barracks from Fallon is located in Carson City, Nevada. (<http://www.leg.state.nv.us/68th/minutes/ATX509.txt>)

<sup>20</sup> Holland, David R. “Rancho Las Palmas.”

<http://www.travelgolf.com/departments/resortfeatures/california/rancho-las-palmas.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Holland.

<sup>22</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 5 and 6.

<sup>23</sup> Windeler, page 5.

<sup>24</sup> Bogert, page 181.

<sup>25</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 8-9.

potential site for an 18-hole golf course and country club. With a group of investors that included Texas oilman D. B. McDaniel, Colorado governor Dan Thornton, and Hollywood celebrities Bob Hope, Randolph Scott, Phil Harris, Desi Arnaz, and Ralph Kiner, the property was purchased and the Thunderbird Country Club incorporated in May 1950.<sup>26</sup> The Thunderbird Ranch closed in December of that year, with the construction of the Lawrence Hughes designed golf course having begun in July. In an innovative approach to country club development, lots along the fairways were offered for sale to club members, and entertainers Phil Harris, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, songwriter Hoagy Carmichael, and tire company executive (later ambassador to Belgium) Leonard Firestone were among the first buyers.<sup>27</sup> The club opened in 1951, becoming the first 18-hole golf course in the larger Palm Springs area, with Jimmy Hines as the golf pro. Local architect William Cody was hired to remodel the guest ranch buildings and to construct fourteen “cottages” which were available to members.<sup>28</sup>

The same successful formula was followed a year later, when Tamarisk Country Club opened on the former Harry Taylor ranch, purchased from San Francisco real estate and theater magnate Joseph Blumenfeld in 1952. Incorporated in 1951 by a group of 65 investors, including Hollywood notables Jack Benny, George Burns, Danny Kaye, Sol Lesser, and the Marx Brothers, Tamarisk attracted many members from the Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. It also offered home sites along the fairways as a means of financing club improvements.<sup>29</sup> The club opened in 1952, with a golf course designed by William Bell and renowned golfer Ben Hogan as the golf pro.<sup>30</sup>

With these beginnings, Rancho Mirage became the leader in the development of the Coachella Valley as the “golf capital of the world.” Attracting attention initially because of their well-heeled membership from the corporate and entertainment spheres, Thunderbird and Tamarisk focused the limelight by hosting tournaments such as the Women’s Invitational, the Ryder Cup, and the first Bob Hope Classic. High profile visitors, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower, brought additional publicity. Innovations such as the invention of the golf cart at Thunderbird and the popularization of the alpaca golf cardigan by Thunderbird member Perry Como on his national television show added to the luster of the Rancho Mirage clubs.

The construction of the country clubs and the associated residences coincided with another development that had profound implications for the character of the Rancho Mirage built environment: the evolution of a “Desert Modern” style of architecture. The Desert Modern style was in many ways a domestication and refinement of the avant garde International Style of the 1920s and 1930s, and grew out of local architects’ desire to adapt modern materials, techniques, and floor plans to the unique requirements of desert living. Characteristics include large expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass sheltered by

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<sup>26</sup> Windeler, pages 10-15.

<sup>27</sup> Bogert, pages 246-249.

<sup>28</sup> Windeler, pages 15-17.

<sup>29</sup> Galen, Helene V. *Tamarisk Country Club: The First 50 Years*. 2002. Pages 5, 15, and 17.

<sup>30</sup> Bogert, page 249.



deep overhangs extending from flat roofs and flowing interior floor plans that merged imperceptibly with the outdoors. Oriented to the rear, Desert Modern houses in Rancho Mirage embrace desert, swimming pool, and golf course views and outdoor access while front elevations are often shielded for privacy, with only clerestories and obscured glass panels adjacent to the entries providing light. Desert Modern houses appear light, with roofs floating above the glass walls and clerestories, and ceilings supported by thin steel or wood posts. In addition to glass, exterior materials include stucco, wood, slumpstone, and natural rock.

Several architects contributed to the development of the Desert Modern style, but one, William F. Cody, was the most influential in Rancho Mirage. William F. Cody FAIA (1916-1978) was born in Dayton, Ohio and raised in Los Angeles. While attending architecture school at the University of Southern California in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Cody was also working for architect Cliff May, gaining experience in the adaptation of ranch and hacienda style houses to modern floor plans and construction techniques.<sup>31</sup> Suffering from asthma, and believing that the Palm Springs area offered opportunity and prominent clients, Cody moved to Palm Springs in 1942 and set up practice.<sup>32</sup> One of his first projects, the Del Marcos Hotel of 1946, won an American Institute of Architects “credible mention” award as an example of new resort hotel architecture for its “ingenious plan, which appears complicated but is actually orderly and thoughtful.”<sup>33</sup> Author and critic Alan Hess writes, “Greater thinness and more striking elegance became the single-minded focus of his ongoing design.”<sup>34</sup> Despite a reputation for carousing, Cody was exceptionally focused on the details of his designs and pushing the boundaries of his materials. His well-known and innovative early buildings, along with friendships with influential members of the Thunderbird, Tamarisk, and Eldorado Country Clubs, resulted in commissions to design (or in the case of Thunderbird, remodel) the clubhouses of all three locations.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Cody designed a large number of residences in the country club areas, many along the fairways of the new resort concept of golf course living, a concept that Cody himself helped devise.

Author Adele Cygelman writes, “Joints and door frames seemingly disappeared into walls . . . He merged living rooms into terraces and gardens. Roofs jutted out twelve feet to shield the walls of glass. Pattern and texture came from tile floors, carved wood panels, and concrete-block screens with geometric motifs, all of which were meticulously designed by Cody to match each other precisely at the seams and angles where the planes met.”<sup>36</sup> Like other Coachella Valley architects, Cody designed churches, gas stations, motels, restaurants, offices, a mobile home park, shopping centers, even a carwash. “Yet a distinct character can be seen in all of them,” says Hess. “It is a restless energy that

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<sup>31</sup> Hess, page 92.

<sup>32</sup> Adele Cygelman (*Palm Springs Modern*, 1999, page 102) puts the date of Cody’s move as 1944-1945.

<sup>33</sup> Cygelman, Adele. *Palm Springs Modern*. 1999. Page 102.

<sup>34</sup> Hess, page 92.

<sup>35</sup> The Eldorado clubhouse was designed in association with San Francisco architect Ernest Kump.

<sup>36</sup> Cygelman, page 106.

brings a liveliness to his plans, elevations and details. The radical thinness of Cody roofs or the daring reach of a cantilever are clearly the result of a wrestling match between the architect and the materials and the laws of physics; that energy and striving remains in the building.” Hess concludes, “The fact that Cody could take an established vocabulary and style and reinterpret it so vividly ranks him among the best of mid-century California designers.”<sup>37</sup>

Also a Modernist who used the International Style as a starting point for his desert designs, architect Emerson Stewart Williams came to Palm Springs in 1946 to work with his father, Harry Williams, and brother, Roger Williams, in their architectural office. Harry Williams had come to Palm Springs from Dayton, Ohio in 1934 to design the Palm Springs Plaza. Stewart had studied architecture at Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, taught for a few years at Columbia University, and then worked for designer Raymond Loewy prior to arriving in the desert. He was greatly influenced by the Scandinavian Modernists Alvar Aalto and E.G. Asplund, particularly their use of wood and other natural materials in the creation of a more humanistic Modernism.<sup>38</sup> Williams’ first Palm Springs commission was for the 1947 Frank Sinatra residence, a modern building of glass, natural stone, redwood siding, and an upswept roof that, according to author and critic Alan Hess, “set a tone for postwar glamour as Hollywood stars continued to move to Palm Springs – to large homes, often on country clubs, favoring a sleek but warm Modernism rather than cool minimalism.”<sup>39</sup>

Stewart Williams’ own home in Palm Springs, featured in Adele Cygelman’s 1999 *Palm Springs Modern*, was built in 1956. Says Williams, “The house is essentially a roof over the garden so the desert can flow through. It was designed to be a shelter in a very hard climate.”<sup>40</sup> Williams’ career was long and varied, and included custom homes, offices, banks, civic buildings, Palm Springs’ upper tramway station, and many schools throughout the Coachella Valley and high desert. Of his later work, Williams is most proud of his 1968-1970 design for the Desert Museum, a concrete building lifted above the street, surrounded by a sunken sculpture garden, and sheathed in volcanic cinder. In Rancho Mirage, Williams designed four houses in the Thunderbird Country Club: the Kiner Residence (1951), Bligh Residence (1952), Christie Residence (1955), and Scott Residence (1957). The Roderick W. Kenaston Residence just outside of Thunderbird was built in 1956.

Palm Springs architects Palmer and Krisel also contributed to the modern landscape of Rancho Mirage. Both University of Southern California School of Architecture graduates, partners Dan Palmer and William Krisel designed some of the first tract homes in the Coachella Valley. Starting in 1956, Palmer and Krisel became associated with developers George and Robert Alexander. Their first tract of 39 homes was built in the Twin Palms section of Palm Springs, south of Highway 111. Says author

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<sup>37</sup> Hess, page 94.

<sup>38</sup> Hess, page 79.

<sup>39</sup> Hess, pages 81-82.

<sup>40</sup> Cygelman, page 94.

and critic Alan Hess, “Krisel used post-and-beam construction methods as he oversaw the Palm Springs projects. Butterfly roofs, natural stone walls, patterned concrete block, clerestory windows, carports – these designs showed that Modern could be a successful commodity in the housing market.”<sup>41</sup> Because of air-conditioning, a standard feature of each tract, “Alexander homes helped to usher in the era of year-round desert living,” says Hess. Although the floor plans were essentially identical, the 1,600 square foot houses were available in a range of rooflines and facades, which gave each neighborhood a varied street appearance. Other desert projects included the residential subdivisions of Vista Las Palmas, Racquet Club Estates, Kings Point at Canyon Country Club, and Sandpiper in Palm Desert. In Rancho Mirage, for developers Maus and Holstein, Palmer and Krisel used their Twin Palms floor plan, slightly enlarged, and three roof configurations in the construction of sixteen houses on adjacent cul-de-sacs. Hess concludes, the Palmer and Krisel tracts “display the hopefulness and easy lifestyle of Modernism in the 1950s as it spread to a general audience.”<sup>42</sup>

Howard Lapham, a registered designer, arrived in the Coachella Valley from Stamford, Connecticut in 1954 at age 40. Initially intending to become a builder in his new desert home, Lapham soon was designing residences for wealthy and influential members of the Thunderbird Country Club along the Club’s fairways and up the slopes of what became known as Thunderbird Heights. A number of Lapham’s buildings appeared in *Architectural Digest*, including the Hyatt von Dehn Residence (1960, Thunderbird Heights), the Kiewit Residence (1960, Thunderbird Country Club), the Clarke Swanson Residence (1961, Thunderbird Country Club), the Morrow Residence (1961, Silver Spur Ranch, Palm Desert), and the 1961 remodel of the Thunderbird Country Club clubhouse. He remodeled the famous Chi Chi nightclub in 1959, giving it an ultra-modern new façade. Lapham also designed Lord Fletcher’s English Pub in 1966 on what became known as ‘restaurant row’ on Highway 111 in Rancho Mirage. One of Lapham’s largest residential projects was the Mayan-themed Cook House, known as Ichpa Mayapan, built atop Thunderbird Heights in 1970. Lapham also drew the initial plans for the Eisenhower Medical Center, although Edward D. Stone obtained the commission. Lapham officially retired in the 1980s, although he continues to maintain an office in Palm Springs.<sup>43</sup>

Because of their affluence, several of the Rancho Mirage property owners were able to commission architects of regional, national, and even international prominence to design their vacation homes. In many cases, the architects had designed residential, industrial, or commercial projects for their clients in their home cities. The architects included Welton Becket (McCulloch Residence, 1955), A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons (Sunnylands, 1963), Richard Neutra (Maslon Residence, 1963), William Pereira (Firestone Residence, 1958), and Paul Williams (Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Residence

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<sup>41</sup> Hess, page 69.

<sup>42</sup> Hess, page 73.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Howard Lapham, October 4, 2002.

(1954). In many cases, these commissions were rare examples of an architect's work in the desert or in a residential mode.

By sheer size alone, Sunnylands, the over 200-acre estate of Ambassador and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg stands out. Located at the corner of Wonder Palms Road and Rio del Sol, now renamed Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope Drives, the compound includes a 32,000 square foot main house, guest quarters, a system of twelve manmade lakes, a nine-green, eighteen-tee golf course, and extensive landscaping. Architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons designed a vast home reflecting Japanese and Mayan influences that is dominated by a monitor roof. Famed interior designers Billy Haines and Ted Graber were retained to furnish the home.<sup>44</sup> Walter Annenberg (1908-2002) came to national prominence as the publisher of newspapers and magazines, including *TV Guide*, which he founded in 1953. An avid art collector, generous philanthropist, and important player in the Republican Party, Annenberg was appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James by President Nixon. Leonore Annenberg served President and Mrs. Reagan as White House chief of protocol. While maintaining their primary residence in Pennsylvania, the Annenbergs have hosted United States presidents and British royalty as well as other luminaries at their Rancho Mirage home.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to constructing buildings of outstanding architectural merit, Rancho Mirage's high profile residents from the entertainment and corporate worlds contributed in many other ways to the growth of the community. Bing Crosby, one of the first members of Thunderbird Country Club, developed an upscale mobile home park that he called Blue Skies Village after the Irving Berlin song of the same name. William Cody was retained to design some of the permanent buildings of the development, and 140 palm trees were installed to provide the proper desert ambiance. Strict design controls were enforced on the golf cart-sized streets named after Crosby's celebrity friends and fellow investors. Like all other matters related to the doings of the Hollywood elite, the opening of Blue Skies in 1953 and subsequent social functions that occurred there were avidly reported by the press.<sup>46</sup>

In 1961, Bob Hope purchased 300 acres from Hank Gogerty and in 1966 donated 80 acres for the development of a medical center to serve the desert area. Named after the former president who had enjoyed vacationing in Rancho Mirage, the Eisenhower Medical Center was constructed with substantial support from the community. Dedicated in 1971, the initial building was designed by internationally renowned architect Edward Durrell Stone. Subsequent additions reflected the generous endowments of many residents and included the Probst, Kiewit, and Wright Professional Buildings, the Annenberg Center, the Betty Ford Center, the Hal B. Wallis Research Facility, the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, and the Dolores Hope Outpatient Center, among others.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Cygelman, pages 180-186.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Annenberg obituary ([www.cnn.com/2002/US/Northeast/10/01/obit.annenberg.ap/](http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/Northeast/10/01/obit.annenberg.ap/))

<sup>46</sup> Hess, pages 146-157.

<sup>47</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, pages 19-20.

Several property types are associated with the Country Club Era in Rancho Mirage. Most are single family homes in the Modern and Desert Modern styles, either built in conjunction with the development of the country clubs or on properties purchased elsewhere in the community. Other property types include improvements associated with the country clubs themselves, higher density housing such as apartments, condominiums, or hotels, and a development type peculiar to Rancho Mirage: clusters of single family residences grouped around cooperatively owned landscape and recreational amenities such as swimming pools. One category of property type, improvements associated with celebrities, spans most building types and runs the gamut from the country clubs to the Blue Skies Village mobile home park.

### **3.5 Cityhood: 1973 to Present**

In the late 1960s, Rancho Mirage had a year-round population of approximately 500 and a seasonal residency of at least 1,500.<sup>48</sup> It had experienced two decades of steady growth, with the erection of country clubs and golf courses, homes, commercial improvements along Highway 111, an elementary school, infrastructure improvements, a first class post office, and a hospital under construction. When the neighboring communities of Cathedral City and Palm Desert began to show interest in expanding their spheres of influence to encompass the new medical center, a movement to incorporate Rancho Mirage as a city was initiated. An election was held in which 85 percent of the voters favored incorporation, and on August 3, 1973, Rancho Mirage became the sixteenth city in Riverside County.<sup>49</sup>

The mid-1970s witnessed a building boom, with 5,000 dwelling units reported in progress in 1974.<sup>50</sup> Several municipal improvements were undertaken, including the construction of Fire Station #1 on Highway 111 in 1976, the opening of Whitewater Park in 1981, and the creation of the Bighorn Sheep Preserve in the hills. The development of country clubs, initiated with Thunderbird and Tamarisk, continued unabated, with the groundbreaking for the Sunrise and Rancho Las Palmas clubs. Commercial growth accelerated along Highway 111, with the construction of the distinctive Organic Modern styled Chart House, designed by Kendrick Kellogg, in 1978 as the most notable architectural milestone. By 1979, the population of Rancho Mirage had reached 7,379.<sup>51</sup>

Cementing a tradition that had seen every U.S. president beginning with Harry Truman visiting the desert, President and Mrs. Gerald Ford decided to retire to Rancho Mirage where they had enjoyed Easter vacations for several years. Leonard Firestone offered them a property adjoining his at Thunderbird, and in 1978 the Fords moved into their newly constructed home. Since their arrival, the Fords have continued the tradition

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<sup>48</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, page 19.

<sup>49</sup> City of Rancho Mirage, page 21.

<sup>50</sup> "History." <http://www.ci.rancho-mirage.ca.us/residents/history.html>

<sup>51</sup> "History."

of contributing to the community, with the well-known Betty Ford Center for alcohol and drug dependency, established in 1982, very much in the public eye.<sup>52</sup>

Property types associated with the Cityhood period of Rancho Mirage may include municipal improvements as well as private residential and commercial improvements. Because resources constructed during this period are substantially less than forty-five to fifty years old, the usually accepted threshold for historic resources, and are not examples of the mid-century modern style that characterized Rancho Mirage during the Country Club era, evaluation of their historic significance in most cases will await further passage of time.

## **4.0 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

### **4.1 Overview**

The survey ultimately identified 105 properties (103 addressed properties and two historic districts) that constitute the City's inventory of architectural and historical resources as of 2002-2003. These 105 properties consist of two potential historic districts with 23 contributors and 81 individual resources. A number of the district contributors could also be considered as individual resources. The survey yielded fourteen individual properties that appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register (3S). Several of these are less than 50 years old and therefore appeared to meet the requirement for exceptional significance necessary for such eligibility. Another three individual properties may become eligible for National Register listing when they become 50 years of age (4S1). In addition, the Tamarisk Fairway on 10th, a potential historic district containing eight contributing properties (including one property previously counted as individually eligible for the National Register), added seven properties to the inventory (4D1). Forty-one properties were identified as potential local landmarks that do not appear to be eligible for the National Register (5S1). It should be noted that all 3S and 4S1 properties are also assumed eligible for local designation. A second potential historic district, the Tamarisk Ranchos, contains an additional fifteen contributing properties (5D1). Finally, twenty-three properties were documented that do not appear eligible for designation, mostly because of compromised integrity, but which are worthy of some recognition for the historic or architectural associations (5S3). A full listing of all inventoried properties is located in the Appendix of this Report.

Several generalizations about the documented resources can be made. Most are single-family residences. The majority of the buildings date from the two decades between 1951 and 1970, and exhibit various interpretations of Modern architectural design, especially the "Desert Modern" associated with the mid-century in the Coachella Valley. The greatest number of resources reflects the growth of the community associated with the development of the early country clubs, Thunderbird and Tamarisk.

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<sup>52</sup> Windeler, page 107.

The following discussion groups the surveyed properties by themes; several properties were associated with more than one theme.

**4.2 Resources Associated with the Agricultural and Early Residential Period**

A little more than one dozen properties, mostly located on Clancy Lane, Sahara Road, and San Gorgonio Road, remain from the earliest subdivisions in Rancho Mirage. The oldest documented residence, Casa Chiquita, was constructed in 1934 and is still associated with the 10-acre date farm that characterized its early years. Two other homes were models constructed for developer Louis Blankenhorn by the Palm Springs office of the Pasadena architectural firm of Van Pelt and Lind. Most of these properties are one-story single-family residences, with vernacular styling reflecting Spanish Revival, ranch style, or early Modern influences.

**Table 1  
Resources Associated with the Agricultural and Early Residential Period**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>
Clancy Residence	72-010 Clancy Lane	1938
Nittinger Residence	72-116 Clancy Lane	1934
Rancho Manana Stables	72-551 Clancy Lane	Circa 1950
Residence	40-233 Club View Drive	1950
Casa Chiquita	72-116 Follansbee Road	1934
Knox Residence	71-274 Mirage Road	Circa 1940
Garvey Residence	71-365 Sahara Road	1949
(Model) Residence	71-431 Sahara Road	Circa 1937
Goode Residence	71-533 Sahara Road	1950
Residence	71-552 Sahara Road	Circa 1940
Residence	71-781 Sahara Road	1938
(Model) Residence	71-785 Sahara Road	1937
Frank Morgan House	71-845 Sahara Road	1939
Grafton Residence	71-284 San Gorgonio Road	Circa 1948
Whittle Residence	71-312 San Gorgonio Road	1949
Residence	71-459 San Gorgonio Road)	Circa 1940

**4.3 Resources Designed by Architect William F. Cody**

One of the major discoveries of the survey was the innovation and skill of architect William F. Cody, his contributions to the “Desert Modern” style, and his important role in shaping the built environment of Rancho Mirage. Over two dozen properties that were designed by Cody were documented; additional examples have either been demolished or substantially altered. Six of the surveyed properties appeared to meet the National Register’s requirement for exceptional significance due to their elegant and intact designs that embodied Cody’s design philosophy.

**Table 2  
Resources Associated with Architect William Cody**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>
Jorgensen Residence	40-253 Club View Drive	1955
Hoagy Carmichael Residence	40-267 Club View Drive	Circa 1954
Residence	71-076 Country Club Drive	1958
Skutt Residence	71-049 Early Times Road	1957
Gillin Residence	70-924 Fairway Drive	1958
Hanson Residence	71-087 Fairway Drive	1967
Blue Skies Village	70-260 Highway 111	1953
Thunderbird Country Club Cottages	70-612 Highway 111	Circa 1952
Charney Residence	37-127 Marx Road	Circa 1962
Mirage Cove Drive Apartments	70-200 Mirage Cove Drive	Circa 1963
Hines Residence	39-905 Morningsprings Drive	Circa 1957
Jaffe Residence	37-200 Palm View Drive	1963
Residence	37-500 Palm View Drive	Circa 1973
Tamarisk Fairway on 10 <sup>th</sup> Historic District	37631 through 37659 Palm View Drive	1969-1970
Susan Marx Residence	37-631 Palm View Drive	1970
Glass Residence	37-635 Palm View Drive	1970
Metz Residence	37-639 Palm View Drive)	1970
Jacob Residence	37-643 Palm View Drive	1970
Foster Residence	37-647 Palm View Drive	1970
Brachsman Residence	37-651 Palm View Drive	1970
Morris Residence	37-655 Palm View Drive	1969
Ross Residence	37-659 Palm View Drive	1970
Dyer Residence	40-105 Sand Dune Road	1953
Stein Residence	71-111 Tamarisk Lane	1970
Holub Residence	37-845 Thompson Drive	1957

#### **4.4 Resources Designed by Other Local Architects and/or Builders**

Several of the architects and builders who were active in the Coachella Valley during the 1950s and 1960s designed residences in Rancho Mirage. As a group, these designers helped to define the mid-century Modern style of architecture that characterizes the desert communities. Architects and builders whose work is represented in Rancho Mirage include Howard Lapham, Robert Marx, Palmer and Krisel, Val Powelson, Wexler and Harrison, and Stewart Williams.



**Table 3**  
**Resources Associated with Other Local Architects and/or Builders**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Architect/Builder</b>
Residence	71-048 Country Club Drive	1960	Wexler and Harrison
Miller Residence	71-024 Cypress Drive	1958	Howard Lapham
DaVall Estates	37-800 DaVall Drive	1961	Val Powelson/Robert Marx
Kenaston Residence	39-767 Desert Sun Drive	1957	Stewart Williams
Borwick-Emrich Residence	37-361 Marx Road	1962	Robert Marx
DeLue Residence	37-115 Palm View Drive	1961	Robert Marx
Gummo Marx Residence	37-130 Palm View Drive	1957	Val Powelson
Anderson Residence	36-421 Sandsal Circle	1958	Palmer and Krisel
Peake Residence	36-421 Sandsu Circle	1958	Palmer and Krisel
Nestor Residence	36-468 Sandsu Circle	1958	Palmer and Krisel
Maranz Residence	70-551 Tamarisk Lane	1960	Val Powelson/Robert Marx

#### **4.5 Resources Designed by Architects of Regional, National, or International Repute**

A half dozen properties in Rancho Mirage showcase the talents of several mostly Los Angeles based architects who enjoyed widespread renown for their designs. Their Rancho Mirage efforts ranged from the original Eisenhower Medical Center building by Edward Durrell Stone, known throughout the world for his New Formalist approach to United States foreign embassies, to a house by Pasadena architects Buff and Hensman, who abandoned their usual wood and glass vocabulary for a more appropriate desert idiom. Residential designs by Welton Becket and William Pereira are extremely limited regardless of location; these architects are known mostly for their large scale commercial and institutional projects. Other architects whose work is represented include Paul Williams, who had made a reputation as an architect for the Hollywood elite, and Jones and Emmons, who were equally skilled at both residential and institutional commissions.

**Table 4**  
**Resources Associated with Well-Known Architects**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Architect</b>
Eisenhower Medical Center	39000 Bob Hope Drive	1971	Edward Durrell Stone
Ball-Arnaz Residence	40-241 Club View Drive	1954	Paul Williams
McCulloch Residence	71-308 Cypress Drive	1955	Welton Becket
Hayden Residence	70-927 Fairway Drive	1968	Buff and Hensman
Sunnylands (Annenberg Estate)	71-800 Frank Sinatra Drive	1963	Jones and Emmons
Firestone Residence	40-555 Sand Dune Road	1958	William Pereira)

#### 4.6 Other Representative Examples of Modernism

Located along the streets and fairways of Rancho Mirage and its country clubs, numerous examples of Modern design from the 1950s and 1960s add to the mid-century architectural character of the community. For the most part, these are homes whose plans

**Table 5**  
**Other Representative Examples of Modernism**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>
Tower Residence	72-026 Clancy Lane	1951
Cruttenden Residence	71-125 Country Club Drive	1952
Dolton Residence	71-317 Country Club Drive	1961
Residence	71-388 Country Club Drive	1958
Feicht Residence	70-731 Fairway Drive	Circa 1960
Hillard Residence	70-53 Fairway Drive	Circa 1955
Singer Residence	70-754 Fairway Drive	1952
Elman Residence	70-770 Frank Sinatra Drive	1955
Rancho Super Car Wash	71-490 Highway 111	Circa 1960
Residence	70-417 Los Pueblos Way	1958
Residence	70-435 Los Pueblos Way	1958
Residence	70-451 Los Pueblos Way	1958
Residence	70-465 Los Pueblos Way	1958
Hurd Residence	37-380 Marx Road	1967
Organ Residence	71-391 Mirage Road	1952
Residence	36-903 Palm View Drive	1958
Halper Residence	36-927 Palm View Drive	1958
Rosenbaum Residence	37-084 Palm View Drive	Circa 1970
DeLue Residence	37-115 Palm View Drive	1961
McMillan Residence	37-174 Palm View Drive	1961
Silver Residence	37-350 Palm View Drive	1969
Weisbard Residence	37-505 Palm View Drive	1961
Jones Residence	37-647 Peacock Circle	1958
Tugend Residence	36-904 Pinto Palm Way	1958
Groucho Marx Residence	36-928 Pinto Palm Way	1958
Hart Residence	36-966 Pinto Palm Way	1958
Dennis Residence I	70-81 Placerville Road	1958
Johnson Residence	40-281 Sand Dune Road	1963
Simon Residence	70-151 Sonora Road	1971
Robbin Residence	70-400 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Weingarten/Marmorston Residence	70-418 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Residence	70-36 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Goldstone Residence	70-450 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Residence	70-466 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Minow Residence	70-470 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Goldstein Residence, 70	70-889 Tamarisk Lane	Circa 1970
Dillman Residence	40-780 Thunderbird Road	1967
Dennis Residence II	40-915 Tonopah Road	1970
Boscacci Residence	71-995 Vista Del Rio	1958

are oriented away from the street to embrace desert and golf course views. They are recognizable by their use of clean-lined design, generous expanses of glass on private elevations balanced by minimal glazing on public facades, distinctive flat or peaked rooflines, and open, flowing floor plans. Due to lack of documentation, the survey did not uncover the designers of most of these buildings, although it is likely that several were the products of in-house designers of local construction companies.

#### 4.7 Resources Associated with Celebrities

The cachet of Hollywood celebrities who built second homes in the desert helped to put Rancho Mirage, as well the neighboring communities, on the map. As long as the public was fascinated by the activities of the Hollywood crowd, publicity for Rancho Mirage, and the star-studded country clubs of Thunderbird and Tamarisk, was assured. A handful of celebrity homes have survived relatively intact; others have been substantially remodeled or replaced and were therefore not recorded in the inventory. Local celebrities have also been generous with their resources, donating money, time, and other assets to community causes, most notably, the construction of the Eisenhower Medical Center. Celebrity in Rancho Mirage has not been the sole province of the Hollywood set; executives of many of the nation’s top companies have also enjoyed second homes in Rancho Mirage. In addition, Rancho Mirage has also been associated with well-known golf personages and, especially during the Cityhood period of its history, with politicians, especially those well placed in the Republican Party.

**Table 6  
Resources Associated with Celebrities**

Eisenhower Medical Center	39000 Bob Hope Drive	1971
Bing Crosby Residence	70-375 Calico Road	1952
Ball-Arnaz Residence	40-241 Club View Drive	1954
Hoagy Carmichael Residence	40-267 Club View Drive	Circa 1954
Frank Sinatra Compound	70-588 Frank Sinatra Drive	1957-1998
Sunnylands (Annenberg Estate)	71-800 Frank Sinatra Drive	1963
Blue Skies Village	70-260 Highway 111	1953
(Jimmy) Hines Residence	39-905 Morningsprings Drive	Circa 1957
Gummo Marx Residence	37-130 Palm View Drive	1957
Groucho Marx Residence	36-928 Pinto Palm Way	1958
Frank Morgan House	71-845 Sahara Road	1939
Firestone Residence	40-555 Sand Dune Road	1958

#### 4.8 Architecturally Notable Cooperatives and Multi-Family Housing

Although the majority of the resources documented in the survey are self-contained single-family properties, a significant minority represents either higher density

**Table 7  
Cooperatives and Multi-Family Housing**

Name	Contributor	Address	Date
Cluster between Early Times Road and Country Club Drive	Residence	71-048 Country Club Drive	1960
	Residence	71-076 Country Club Drive	1958
	Skutt Residence	71-049 Early Times Road	1957
	Hines Residence	39-905 Morningsprings Road	Circa 1957
Tamarisk West		37-586 to 37-627 DaVall Drive	Circa 1968
DaVall Estates		37-800 DaVall Drive	1961
Desert Braemar Apartments		69-860 Highway 111	1957
Thunderbird Country Club Cottages		70-612 Highway 111	Circa 1952
Tamarisk Ranchos Historic District	Residence	70-417 Los Pueblos Way	1958
	Residence	70-435 Los Pueblos Way	1958
	Residence	70-451 Los Pueblos Way	1958
	Residence	70-465 Los Pueblos Way	1958
	Residence	36-903 Palm View Drive	1958
	Halper Residence	36-927 Palm View Drive	1958
	Tugend Residence	36-904 Pinto Palm Way	1958
	Groucho Marx Residence	36-928 Pinto Palm Way	1958
	Hart Residence	36-966 Pinto Palm Way	1958
	Robbin Residence	70-400 Tamarisk Lane	1958
	Weingarten/Marmorston Residence	70-418 Tamarisk Lane	1958
	Residence	70-436 Tamarisk Lane	1958
	Goldstone Residence	70-450 Tamarisk Lane	1958
	Residence	70-466 Tamarisk Lane	1958
Minow Residence	70-470 Tamarisk Lane	1958	
Mirage Cove Drive Apartments		70-200 Mirage Cove Drive	Circa 1963
Tamarisk Fairway on 10 <sup>th</sup> Historic District	Susan Marx Residence	37-631 Palm View Drive	1970
	Glass Residence	37-635 Palm View Drive	1970
	Metz Residence	37-639 Palm View Drive	1970
	Jacob Residence	37-643 Palm View Drive	1970
	Foster Residence	37-647 Palm View Drive	1970
	Brachsman Residence	37-651 Palm View Drive	1970
	Morris Residence	37-655 Palm View Drive	1969
	Ross Residence	37-659 Palm View Drive	1970
Casbah Apartment Hotel		42-457 Rancho Las Palmas Drive	1957
Tierra Del Sol	Boscacci Residence	71-995 Vista Del Sol	1958

housing, such as apartments or condominiums, or a development type peculiar to Rancho Mirage, cooperative clusters of single-family homes. There were approximately five such clusters built in Rancho Mirage, each consisting of privately owned homes, usually similar in style, that were grouped around communal grounds, swimming pools, and sometimes, driveways and carports. Inherent in the cooperative plan is the belief that a country club/resort atmosphere naturally encourages socializing in common areas before retreating to private dwellings. Two of these complexes have survived substantially intact and are documented as potential historic districts: the Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup> cluster and the Tamarisk Rancho cluster. Fragments, in the form of individually intact homes, remain from the cluster between Early Times Road and Country Club Drive and the Tierra Del Sol development.

#### **4.9 Other Resources**

A handful of properties documented by the survey are each the only example of their property type and are all located on Highway 111. They include two buildings built during the Cityhood period: the first municipal building constructed by the City (Fire Station #1, 70-801 Highway 111, built in 1975) and the Chart House Restaurant, a remarkable display of the evolution of Organic Modern design (69-934 Highway 111, built in 1978). Blue Skies Village (70-260 Highway 111, built in 1953), an upscale mobile home park developed by Bing Crosby and friends, is a widely published and innovative example of this property type, which is also significant for its Hollywood pedigree and for its William Cody designed permanent buildings. The Rancho Super Car Wash is of some interest for its clean modern design; however, its quirky neon sign featuring an illuminated pink elephant is even more noteworthy (71-490 Highway 111, built circa 1960).

### **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Although the historic resources survey documented a rich collection of architectural and historical resources within the City of Rancho Mirage, these properties represent a small percentage of the total number of improvements in the City. It is abundantly clear that the majority of the resources reflect the achievements of mid-century Modern architecture and therefore are, at this point in time, less than fifty years old. Thus, it would be in the best interests of preservation of the City's special character to craft a preservation policy that waives the fifty-year old requirement that suits other, older, cities. Moreover, as development pressures continue to threaten many resources, the historic character of the City may erode further. It has been demonstrated throughout California and the nation that architectural and historical resources can add immensely to the quality of life and to the economic health of a community. Therefore, the following recommendations, intended to encourage the preservation and appreciation of the City's heritage, are made:

- Enact a preservation ordinance that provides for the designation and protection of historic resources.
- Adopt a Preservation Element as part of the City's General Plan in order to formulate a cohesive preservation policy and coordinate preservation goals and procedures with other City activities.
- Create a historic preservation incentives program, such as enabling the use of Mills Act contracts to lower property taxes on designated resources.
- Develop an education program to familiarize residents and visitors with the City's architectural and historical heritage.
- Regularly update the survey, so that properties are re-evaluated as they become older, new information is uncovered, or certain property types become more rare.

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**APPENDIX A:  
INVENTORIED PROPERTIES LISTED BY  
EVALUATION CATEGORIES**

**Appears Eligible for Individual Listing in the National Register (3S):**

Jorgensen Residence, 40-253 Club View Drive (1955)  
McCulloch Residence, 71-308 Cypress Drive (1955)  
Kenaston Residence, 39-767 Desert Sun Drive (1957)  
Gillin Residence, 70-924 Fairway Drive (1958)  
Casa Chiquita, 72-116 Follansbee Road (1934)  
Sunnylands (Annenberg Estate), 71-800 Frank Sinatra Drive (1963)  
Chart House, 69-934 Highway 111 (1978)  
Blue Skies Village, 70-260 Highway 111 (1953)  
Charney Residence, 37-127 Marx Road (Circa 1962)  
Jaffe Residence, 37-200 Palm View Drive (1963)  
Morris Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-655 Palm View Drive (1969)  
(Model) Residence, 71-785 Sahara Road (1937)  
Firestone Residence, 40-555 Sand Dune Road (1958)  
Maranz Residence, 70-551 Tamarisk Lane (1960)

**May Become Eligible for Individual Listing in the National Register (4S1):**

Eisenhower Medical Center, 39000 Bob Hope Drive (1971)  
DaVall Estates, 37-800 DaVall Drive (1961)  
Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup> Historic District, 37-631 through 37-659 Palm View Drive  
(1969-1970)  
Nestor Residence, 36-468 Sandsu Circle (1958)

**Contributor to a District That May Become Eligible for Listing in the National Register (4D1):**

Susan Marx Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-631 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Glass Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-635 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Metz Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-639 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Jacob Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-643 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Foster Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-647 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Brachsman Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-651 Palm View Drive (1970)  
Ross Residence (Tamarisk Fairway on 10<sup>th</sup>), 37-659 Palm View Drive (1970)

**Appears Eligible for Local Designation (5S1):**

Bing Crosby Residence, 70-375 Calico Road (1952)  
Clancy Residence, 72-010 Clancy Lane (1938)

Nittinger Residence, 72-116 Clancy Lane (1934)  
Rancho Manana Stables, 72-551 Clancy Lane (Circa 1950)  
Residence, 40-233 Club View Drive (1950)  
Residence, 71-076 Country Club Drive (1958)  
Cruttenden Residence, 71-125 Country Club Drive (1952)  
Dolton Residence, 71-317 Country Club Drive (1961)  
Residence, 71-388 Country Club Drive (1958)  
Miller Residence, 71-024 Cypress Drive (1958)  
Tamarisk West, 37-586 to 37-627 DaVall Drive (Circa 1968)  
Skutt Residence, 71-049 Early Times Road (1957)  
Hayden Residence, 70-927 Fairway Drive (1968)  
Hanson Residence, 71-087 Fairway Drive (1967)  
Frank Sinatra Compound, 70-588 Frank Sinatra Drive (1957-1998)  
Desert Braemar Apartments, 69-860 Highway 111 (1957)  
Thunderbird Country Club Cottages, 70-612 Highway 111 (Circa 1952)  
Fire Station #1, 70-801 Highway 111 (1975)  
Sign, Rancho Super Car Wash, 71-490 Highway 111 (Circa 1960)  
Tamarisk Ranchos Historic District (Los Pueblos Way, Palm View Drive, Pinto Palm Way, Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Knox Residence, 71-274 Mirage Road (Circa 1940)  
Mirage Cove Drive Apartments, 70-200 Mirage Cove Drive (Circa 1963)  
Hines Residence, 39-905 Morningsprings Drive (Circa 1957)  
Rosenbaum Residence, 37-084 Palm View Drive (Circa 1970)  
Gummo Marx Residence, 37-130 Palm View Drive (1957)  
Silver Residence, 37-350 Palm View Drive (1969)  
Residence, 37-500 Palm View Drive (Circa 1973)  
Jones Residence, 37-647 Peacock Circle (1958)  
Casbah Apartment Hotel, 42-457 Rancho Las Palmas Drive (1957)  
(Model) Residence, 71-431 Sahara Road (Circa 1937)  
Residence, 71-552 Sahara Road (Circa 1940)  
Residence, 71-781 Sahara Road (1938)  
Frank Morgan House, 71-845 Sahara Road (1939)  
Dyer Residence, 40-105 Sand Dune Road (1953)  
Johnson Residence, 40-281 Sand Dune Road (1963)  
Anderson Residence, 36-421 Sandsal Circle (1958, Palmer and Krisel)  
Peake Residence, 36-421 Sandsu Circle (1958, Palmer and Krisel)  
Grafton Residence, 71-284 San Gorgonio Road (Circa 1948)  
Residence, 71-459 San Gorgonio Road (Circa 1940)  
Dillman Residence, 40-780 Thunderbird Road (1967)  
Dennis Residence II, 40-915 Tonopah Road (1970)  
Boscacci Residence, 71-995 Vista Del Rio (1958)

**Contributor to a Historic District That Appears Eligible for Local Designation (5D1):**

Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-417 Los Pueblos Way (1958)  
Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-435 Los Pueblos Way (1958)  
Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-451 Los Pueblos Way (1958)  
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Robbin Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-400 Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Weingarten/Marmorston Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-418 Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-436 Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Goldstone Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-450 Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-466 Tamarisk Lane (1958)  
Minow Residence (Tamarisk Ranchos), 70-470 Tamarisk Lane (1958)

**Not Eligible for Designation But of Local Interest (5S3):**

Tower Residence, 72-026 Clancy Lane (1951)  
Ball-Arnaz Residence, 40-241 Club View Drive (1954)  
Hoagy Carmichael Residence, 40-267 Club View Drive (Circa 1954)  
Residence, 71-048 Country Club Drive (1960)  
Feicht Residence, 70-731 Fairway Drive (Circa 1960)  
Hillard Residence, 70-753 Fairway Drive (Circa 1955)  
Singer Residence, 70-754 Fairway Drive (1952)  
Elman Residence, 70-770 Frank Sinatra Drive (1955)  
Rancho Super Car Wash, 71-490 Highway 111 (Circa 1960)  
Borwick-Emrich Residence, 37-361 Marx Road (1962)  
Hurd Residence, 37-380 Marx Road (1967)  
Organ Residence, 71-391 Mirage Road (1952)  
DeLue Residence, 37-115 Palm View Drive (1961)  
McMillan Residence, 37-174 Palm View Drive (1961)  
Weisbard Residence, 37-505 Palm View Drive (1961)  
Dennis Residence I, 70-381 Placerville Road (1958)  
Garvey Residence, 71-365 Sahara Road (1949)  
Goode Residence, 71-533 Sahara Road (1950)  
Whittle Residence, 71-312 San Gorgonio Road (1949)  
Simon Residence, 70-151 Sonora Road (1971)  
Goldstein Residence, 70-889 Tamarisk Lane (Circa 1970)  
Stein Residence, 71-111 Tamarisk Lane (1970)  
Holub Residence, 37-845 Thompson Drive (1957)

**APPENDIX B:  
SURVEY DATABASE**

**APPENDIX C:  
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORMS**



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