

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT

# THE FAIRWAY COTTAGES 1961

Fairway Lane, Shadow Mountain Resort & Club, Palm Desert, CA



Photo: pscondo.com

This 54-unit development, built on the 11th and 18th fairways of the Shadow Mountain Golf Club, was one of the Wexler-Harrison firm's last commissions and was an immediate and resounding success.

The 2 bedroom, 2 bath, 1,715 square foot "cottages" are characteristic of Harrison's style, with his signature design elements of palm trees perforating a low-slung roof, creating a breezy delineation of the front door, and slump-stone fireplaces.

**ARCHITECTS:**  
RICHARD HARRISON, AIA  
WEXLER & HARRISON

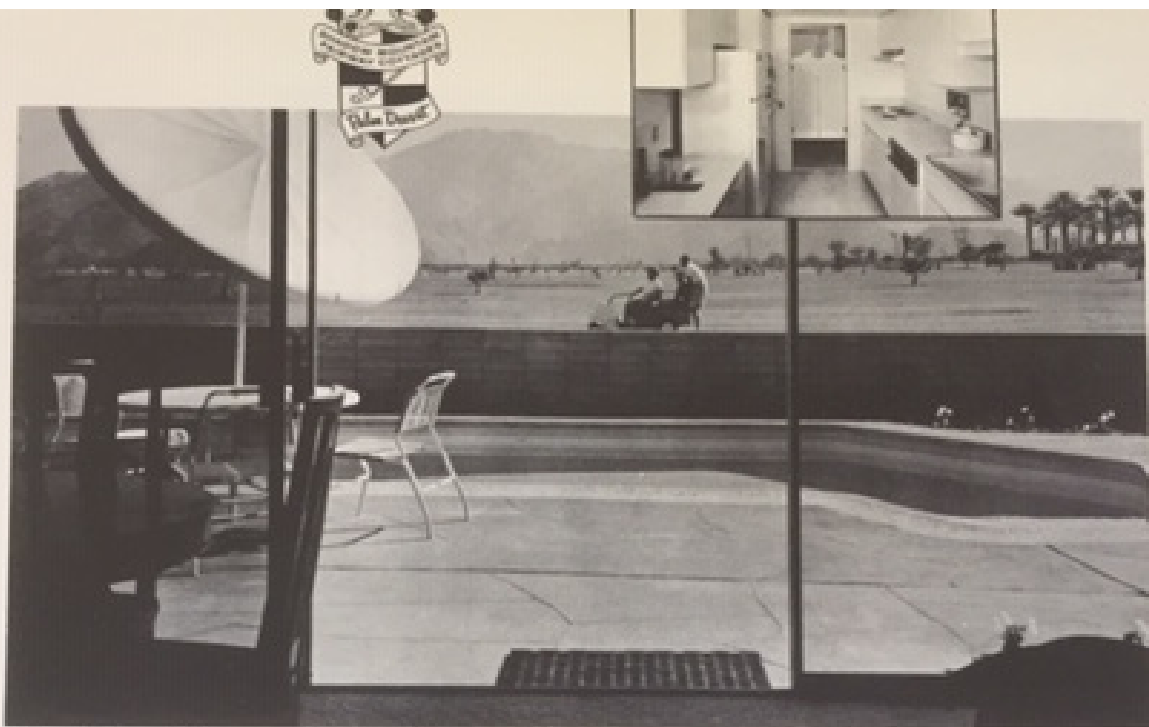
**BUILDER:**  
ADRIAN SCHWILCK



# The Fairway Cottages



Photos: [pscondos.com](http://pscondos.com)



## *Shadow Mountain Fairway Cottages*

*for that feeling of luxurious care-free living*

OWN YOUR OWN GOLD MEDALLION ALL-ELECTRIC HOME



Located in Palm Desert on the beautiful Shadow Mountain Golf Course with breath-taking views in every direction. Your front lawn is the immaculately kept lush green golf course. The balance of the property is beautifully master landscaped and a resident manager will be there to care for your needs and relieve you of many annoying problems in maintaining your home.

All of this adds up to gracious, care-free living in a beautifully designed and appointed home with every comfort and convenience.

### FAIRWAY COTTAGE HOMES FEATURE:

- 1715 sq. ft. of living space
- Two bedrooms, den and 2 baths
- Luxurious dressing room
- Carpets and drapes
- Landscaped and maintained
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- 12' by 22' enclosed carport and storage
- All electric Westinghouse kitchen
- Heating and refrigeration for year-round comfort, 5 ton Westinghouse heat pump
- Underground utilities

You are invited to visit our furnished model decorated by Vinette Curtis, A.I.D., of Nicholson's of Palm Springs

PRICED FROM \$33,850 to \$39,500  
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## SHADOW MOUNTAIN FAIRWAY COTTAGES

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## Richard Harrison (1924-1999), AIA

Richard Arnett Harrison, AIA was born in Los Angeles. Harrison studied aeronautical engineering in the Navy and went on to study architecture at the University of Southern California. Harrison worked for William F. Cody from July 1951 to February 1953, where he worked with his soon-to-be partner Donald Wexler. Wexler and Harrison went on to build custom homes and several tract home developments in Palm Springs. The Fairway Cottages were designed by Harrison in the final year of their partnership which dissolved amicably by 1961, as Harrison preferred to concentrate on residential projects and Wexler was interested in civic projects.



Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison, Source: US Modernist

# Fairway Cottages' History

Excerpted from The Desert Sun, Jan 24, 2021

Sometimes architectural history is planned, and sometimes it just happens. One such story is a twisty tale of an unlikely alliance featuring three desert characters who, without aiming to, nonetheless created architectural history in south Palm Desert. The three characters were businessmen and developers Adrian Schwilck, Cliff Henderson and architect Richard A. Harrison.

Henderson, the founder of Palm Desert, before moving to the desert, lived in Pacific Palisades, along the pleasant coastline of Los Angeles County. The leafy town of large lots and custom-built homes was inspiration for his plans for Palm Desert, surrounding its signature centerpiece, the Shadow Mountain Club, allowing only the building of prestigious, one-of-a-kind homes on sprawling parcels owned by the gentry of the club's membership. But a decade after launching that vision, Henderson had bought 50 acres next to the club where he expected to build a lush 18-hole golf course dotted on its borders by cottages.

By 1958, Cliff Henderson had completed the golf course. However, the cottages, or "apartment units", as they were then called, proved controversial with the Shadow Mountain neighbors. These were the people who had kicked in on his risky wager to build a showcase of a new desert town. Henderson faced the wrath of area homeowners, one calling the project "proposed barracks."

Richard Harrison and Adrian Schwilck would provide Henderson's solution.

Schwilck, a young developer, owned lots in Silver Spur Ranch which he cashed out in order to buy Henderson's "apartment unit" dream - land, plans and name, letting Henderson off the hook. In turn, Henderson guided Schwilck through the minefield of rezoning and approvals with one of his edicts being that Schwilck had to hire an architect of appropriate talent and prestige to ensure a development worthy of its neighbors - Richard Harrison.

Richard Harrison and Donald Wexler, met while working for William Cody's firm and found they were compatible in ambition, talent as well as in circumstance. Leaving Cody's firm, together they established their own practice in 1952.

# Fairway Cottages' History, Cont'd.

During this time, they designed many projects in Palm Springs including El Rancho Vista residential tract, commercial buildings and the so-called Steel Houses built by Robert and George Alexander, when Harrison encountered Clifford Henderson and Adrian Schwilck.

The Shadow Mountain Fairway Cottages, one of the Wexler-Harrison firm's last commissions, was an immediate and resounding success. The cottages are characteristic of what can now be seen as Harrison's unique style, with his signature design element of palm trees perforating a low-slung roof, creating a breezy delineation of the front door.

Further, Harrison incorporated shade with generous overhangs, he specified slump stone on walls interrupted by inset columns of breeze block, luxurious Italian glass-tiled showers, and regularly included a high horizontal window in the master bedroom allowing homeowners to sleep under the gentle cool of the desert evenings.

Harrison's spectacular designs created such success for Schwilck, he was able to buy back Silver Spur Ranch. He hired Harrison to adapt the multi-unit designs of the Shadow Mountain Cottages into duplexes and houses for Silver Spur, filling in every undeveloped lot and building an entire street of Harrison-designed homes on Feather Trail.

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