

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT

THE FIRESTONE ESTATE 1950

73153 Fiddleneck Lane, Palm Desert, CA



Photo: Estate.com

Built for the tire magnate, diplomat and philanthropist Leonard Firestone and designed by William Pereira in 1948-1950, this home is one of the finest Mid-Century Modern homes in the desert.

Sited in South Palm Desert on 1.3 acres the main home is approximately 5,000 square feet and the guest house is approximately 2,000 square feet comprising of a total of 7 bedrooms and 7 1/2 baths. The estate has a hotel-size pool, tennis courts, and as befitting a a tire magnate's home, 3 garages, 2 carports and additional parking for 15 cars.

ARCHITECT:
WILLIAM PEREIRA

ORIGINAL OWNER:
LEONARD & PEGGY
FIRESTONE

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Photo: Estate.com



Photo: Fuegorock, CC BY-SA 4.0

Leonard Firestone

Leonard Kimball Firestone was born in 1907 in Akron, Ohio. The son of rubber magnate, Harvey S. Firestone, he was educated at Princeton University and after graduating from college, was employed by the family company.

In 1939, he became a director at Firestone. He was named president of Firestone Aviation Products Co. in 1941 and President of Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. in 1943.

A staunch Republican, Firestone was a delegate to the Republican National Convention from California in 1944, 1948 and 1952. Firestone was chairman of the Nelson Rockefeller 1964 presidential campaign.

He retired as president of Firestone's California operations in 1970. In retirement, Firestone developed vineyards, planting 250 acres of vines, and in partnership with his son, founded the first commercial winery in Santa Barbara County.

He was appointed U.S. ambassador to Belgium by President Richard Nixon in 1974, and was reappointed by President Gerald Ford, serving until 1976.

Leonard Firestone died in Pebble Beach, California in 1977, aged 89.



Photo: Herald Examiner Collection, LA Public Library

The following is excerpted from "The man from the desert who played with presidents",
Melissa Riche, November 17, 2016 The Desert Sun:

Firestone visited the desert regularly beginning in the early 1930s. His first home, on Fiddleneck Lane was designed by renowned LA architect, William Pereira and completed in 1950.

Firestone then bought four lots overlooking the thirteenth fairway in the Thunderbird Country Club. Firestone decided to build a new desert home on two of his lots, saving the adjacent land for a future neighbor. Again, he chose William Pereira as architect.



Firestone in the desert

As head of California fundraising for Eisenhower's campaigns, Firestone joined the golfing party on the famous presidential visit to Thunderbird Country Club in 1954. Eisenhower made many return trips to Thunderbird, becoming an honorary member in 1961, by which time Firestone was president of the Palm Springs Golf Classic. The tournament eventually became the Bob Hope Desert Classic and proceeds went towards the founding of the Eisenhower Medical Center, for which Firestone became chairman.

Gerald Ford visited Belgium for a NATO meeting and stayed with the Firestones at the embassy. Although they'd met before, the visit sealed the friendship. After Ford became President, the Firestones were regular visitors to the White House. In 1977, following his defeat to Jimmy Carter, Firestone built Ford his retirement dream home next door at Thunderbird. The friendship between the Firestones and the Fords resulted in the Betty Ford Clinic.

When Firestone died in 1996 at the age of 89, Ford said of his friend, "He was a truly great man and an outstanding citizen."

Pereira was born in Chicago and graduated in architecture from the University of Illinois. He helped draft the master plan for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. With his brother, Hal Pereira, he designed the Esquire Theater at 58 East Oak Street, considered one of Chicago's best examples of Art Deco.

Later in the 1930s he moved to Los Angeles. After working as a solo architect, Pereira was hired by the Motion Picture Relief Fund and designed the first buildings for the Motion Picture County House in Woodland Hills.

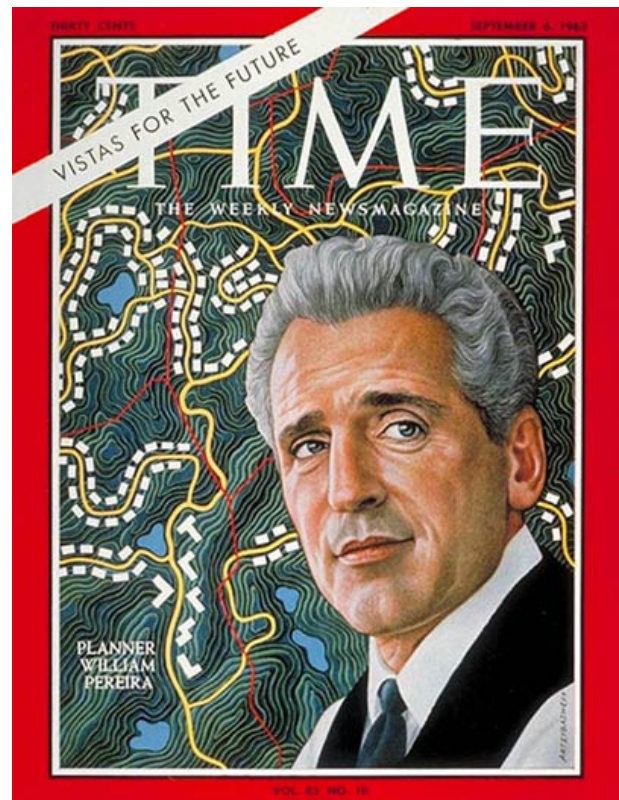
Pereira also had a brief stint as a Hollywood art director. He won, with others, an Oscar in 1942 for special effects on a Cecil B. DeMille film *Reap the Wild Wind*.

William L. Periera

In 1949, he became a professor of architecture at the University of Southern California. He then formed a partnership with architect and classmate Charles Luckman, designing some of Los Angeles's most well-known buildings. After parting with Luckman, he formed the third and final company, William L. Pereira & Associates, completing over 250 projects.

Among his most recognized buildings are San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid (1972), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1965), and the Geisel Library at UCSD (1970).

Pereira was one of the few architects to appear on the cover of Time magazine.



Time Magazine, September 6, 1963



Photo: Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives

The House



Photo: Michael Locke



Photo: Michael Locke

The House



Photo: Linda Holden Clode



Photo: Michael Locke

The House



Photo: Michael Locke



Photos: Michael Locke



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