

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT

THE TOM F. BROWN HOUSES 1951 & 1960

73543 Juniper Street and
73526 Ironwood Street, Palm Desert, CA



House #2 Photo: Redfin.com

Walter White designed three homes in Palm Desert for Tom Brown (two - #1 and #3 - are on our tour route):

1. 73543 Juniper Street (1951);
2. 73219 Juniper Street (1954), and
3. 73526 Ironwood Street (1959)

House #1, built in 1951, contains 4 bedrooms and 4.5 bathrooms in 3,680 square feet. At the corner of Burroweed and Juniper, the house is angled on the corner lot, typical of many Walter White designs.

House #3, built in 1960, sits on a .54 acre property. This 5,591 square foot house with 3 bedrooms, and 3 bathrooms, as well as a large detached casita, is also angled on a large corner lot.

ARCHITECT:
WALTER S. WHITE

DESIGNER HOUSE #1:
BARKER BROS, LA

DESIGNER HOUSE #3:
GEORGE ERB, A.I. D.

BUILDER HOUSE #3:
MHOON & MHOON,
PALM DESERT

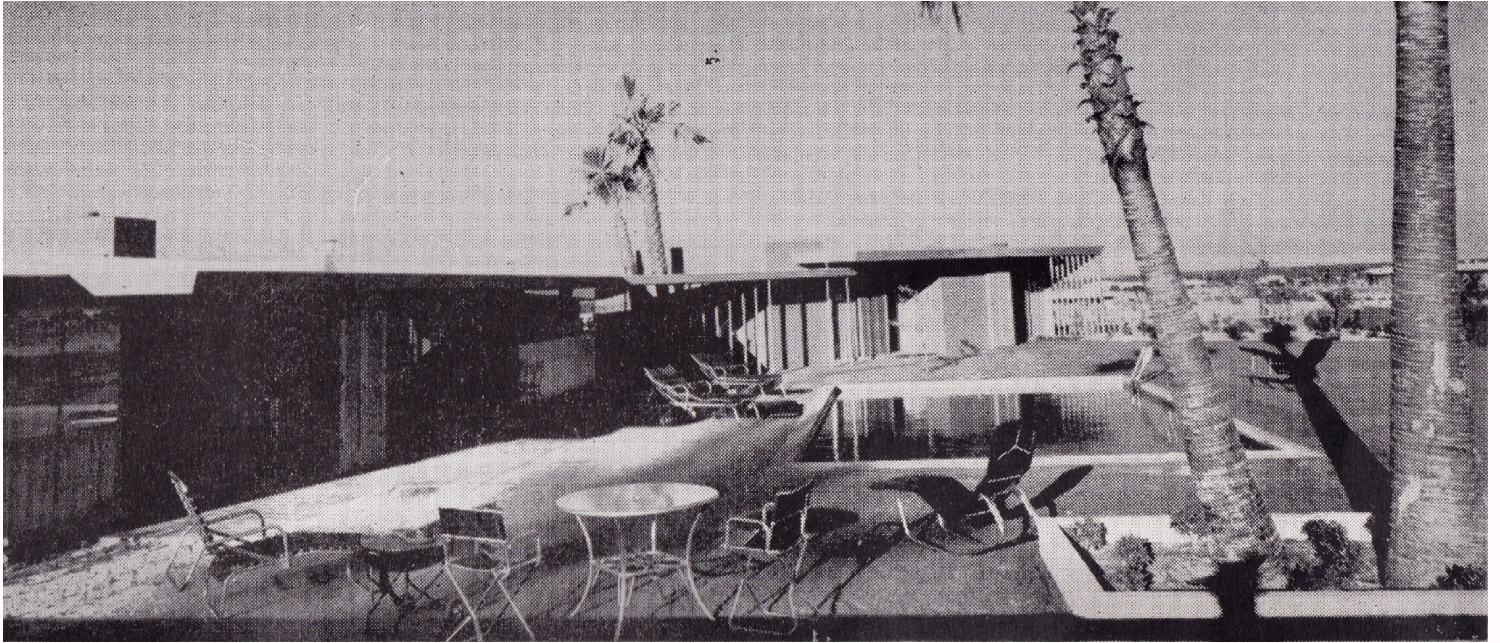
ORIGINAL OWNERS:
MR & MRS THOMAS
(TOM) F. BROWN



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House #1



Photos: Desert Sun, 1952 and 1953



LARGEST TRANSACTION — The Tom Brown home at Palm Desert has been purchased by Henry F. Asmussen of Los An-

Bar Association President

geles, chairman of the board of West Publishing Company of St. Paul and New York, legal publishers. Edith Eddy Ward represented both buyer and seller in the largest real estate transaction in Palm Desert this season.

House #1



Photos: zillow.com

House #3



White designed several homes for Thomas Brown. In addition to the three in Palm Desert, he also designed a home Arcadia, California (1960), as well as a prefabricated cabin in Estes Park, Colorado (1965).

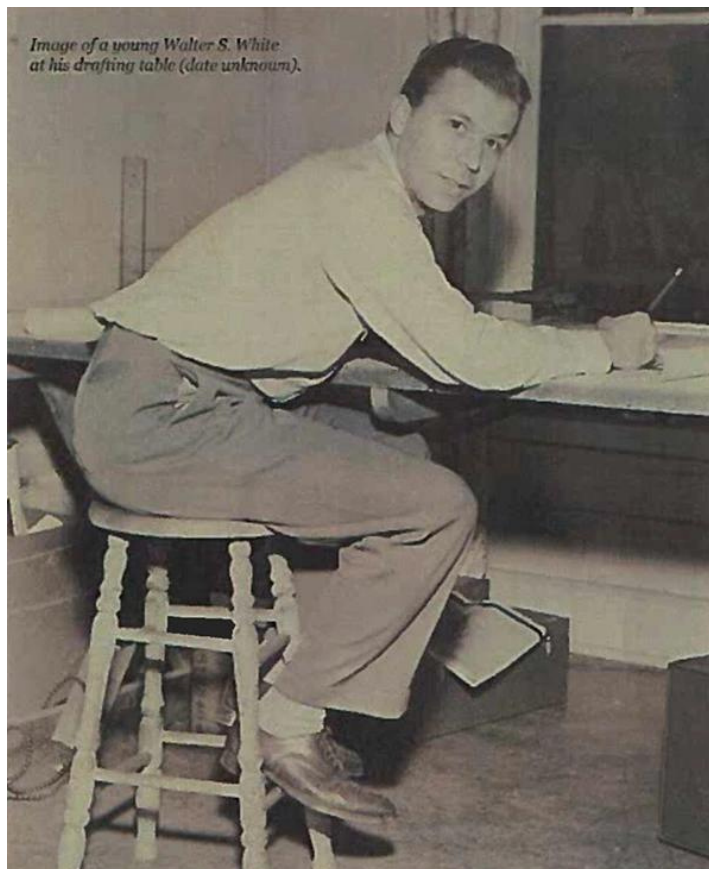
The Palm Desert House #3 on Ironwood Street, was showcased in Architectural Digest's Spring 1962 edition with photographs by Maynard L. Parker.



Photos: Maynard L Parker, Architectural Digest

Walter S. White was born in San Bernardino in 1917. Between 1933 and 1936 he attended San Bernardino High School. White learned how to build from his father, who owned a construction business in San Bernardino, California; honed his technical skills in a Southern California airplane factory during World War II; and worked in the offices of noted architects Rudolf M. Schindler, Harwell Hamilton Harris, and Albert Frey. By the mid-1940s White was a designer, builder, and developer to the growing number of desert dwellers in California's Coachella Valley. With nearly 50 homes in Palm Desert alone attributed to White, he quickly became the "go to" designer for homes in the Shadow Mountain neighborhood.

Walter S. White



After moving to Colorado Springs in 1960, White designed many of the private residences in the exclusive Kissing Camels Estates. In the 1970s he established a reputation for designs that relied on passive solar energy.

White's career is notable for three major areas of focus: inexpensive, even DIY architecture; innovation in construction and materials; and concern for nature and sustainability.

In the early years of his practice, right after World War II, White focused on designing minimal and small, inexpensive houses. These include his affordable wooden cabins for returning G.I.s, small concrete-block houses in the desert, and prefab steel and wood cabins for mountain sites.

White had an abiding interest in the construction of buildings and was fearless in his experimentation. He held patents for innovative construction methods, including one for hyperbolic-paraboloid roofs. White's concern for the local landscape and the earth's environment led him to design buildings that took advantage of their natural settings while also caring for nature and sitting lightly on the land. Especially in the 1970s, the efficiency of his buildings and their effect on man's energy consumption became a focus of his practice.

Walter S. White died in 2002, at the age of 85.

Source: Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara

Thomas (Tom) F. Brown



Thomas F. (Tom) Brown was a San Francisco lawyer. During the 1950's, he was the No. 1 ranked tennis player in California (Mill Valley Record May 20, 1954) and played out of the Mill Valley Tennis Club. In this June 14, 1956, photo (above) he is shaking hands with his brother, Noel - to whom he lost - apparently, a rarity! In fact, a Madera Tribune article of July 3, 1959, notes Tom was invited to join the US Davis Cup squad, but unfortunately due to work commitments was not able to do so.

In November, 1952, Tom was elected as Vice-President of the Palm Desert Community Association. His wife was active in the Palm Desert Players Association as well as the local chapter of the American Red Cross. They attended the Palm Desert Community Church and belonged to the Shadow Mountain Club. Many articles of the day, highlight Tom and his wife who were often guests at events with the Hendersons' and other 'movers and shakers' of Palm Desert's early days.

Other Owners

House #1 was built by Tom Brown in 1951 and sold to Mr and Mrs Henry S Asmussen of Los Angeles in 1952. Mr Asmussen was the Chairman of the Board of West Publishing Company of St Paul and New York, legal publishers. The Desert Sun (1962) reported the sale as the largest in the desert in that season.

In 1956 Harry B. Clow, President of Rand McNally purchased House #1. The Desert Sun (December 1956) reported that:

"One of Palm Desert's most outstanding homes, formerly owned by Mrs. Alyce Asmussen. was purchased last week by Mr. and Mrs. Harry B. Clow of Chicago through the Edith Eddy Ward Real Estate Office. Mrs. Ward represented both seller and buyer Located in the Shadow Mountain Estates, the distinctive desert home featured in brochures and magazines as representative of the finest in desert living, was designed by Walter White, Jr., with interior decoration by Barker Brothers of Los Angeles. Mr. Clow is president of Rand McNally Publishing Company in Chicago and Mrs. Clow is related to the noted Cudihy family. The Palm Desert home will be used as their winter residence."

Historical Society of Palm Desert
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