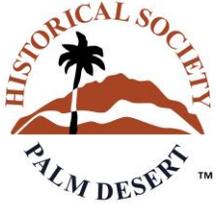


# HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT



## The Hourglass



Fall 2023

Ed. Merilee Colton

The Historical Society of Palm Desert is celebrating the 50-year anniversary of the incorporation of the city in a big way, with several special events. The HSPD is also assisting the city in providing historical materials for the city's celebration on November 18. Last weekend featured a progressive celebration of the city's founding, beginning with a reception at the Firehouse Museum attended by more than 80 partygoers (standing room only), and then dinner and dancing at Casuelas Palm Desert Café. A good time was had by all!



Top center: at the Museum, Gaile Mouser, jackrabbit homeowner and Rochelle McCune, HSPD Archivist.  
Bottom, second from left: Jim Montoya with a Pioneer of Palm Desert award for starting the Palm Desert Youth Sports Association; left, one of the players when a youth; and right, Nerl Porras and Mayor Kelly.  
Other: Firehouse Museum and the Pitchford Family, dining and dancing.

Photos:  
Linda Holden Clode  
and Rob Pitchford

## Firehouse Museum Opens for the Season

The summer closure is over and the Firehouse Museum is open for the season on Friday, October 6. The Museum is open from 10-3 on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays until the end of May. *(R-Historical photo, early 1950's)*



### President's Letter

Fall is here which means re-opening time – our Grand Re-Opening will be Saturday, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> with a reception from 11-1. All are welcome. It also means our Friday Night Lecture Series fires back up. Our first one on October 20<sup>th</sup> will be Bruce Fessier, Entertainment Journalist who worked for the Desert Sun for forty years. His talk will be “Frank Sinatra and the Desert Media.” A Q&A will be held right after, hosted by Patrick Evans from KESQ. It should be a pretty hip evening. We will be hosting it at the Spiritual Center of the Desert across the street from our regular location at the Portola Community Center. 6:00 PM is the start time.

November 17<sup>th</sup>'s lecture will feature Steve Lech, back at the Community Center. He will be talking about his new book, “Crocker’s Folly - The Development of, and Opposition to, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.” This should be a great one. Clear your calendars.

Last Saturday night was the big party celebrating Palm Desert’s 50<sup>th</sup> year since incorporation. It started at the Firehouse Museum and ended up at Casuelas Café for an outstanding dinner. Many longtime residents were honored including Hal and Angie Rover, Brett Romer, Barbara Keedy Eastes and my mom, Vera Pitchford, to name a few. Everybody had a great time and quite a few didn’t want the evening to end. I’d like to thank Chip Schelly and Nerl Porras for really putting this all together. A big high five goes out to Ray Rodriguez and his staff at Casuelas Café for the delicious grub and atmosphere.

Nerl Porras really went above and beyond on this. Getting all these folks together, many who haven’t seen each other in years (decades) was no easy feat. We at the HSPD are lucky to have him on our Board. I am lucky to have him as a friend.

See you at the Firehouse! And let’s talk again, here, in the Winter 2024 newsletter.

**Rob Pitchford**

<b>Opening Day</b>	<b>Friday, October 6 at 10 AM, Firehouse Museum opens for the season</b>
<b>Opening Day Reception</b>	<b>Saturday, October 14 from 11-1 at the Firehouse – all welcome</b>
<b>Mini-Muster</b>	<b>October 3, 5, 10, 12, 17 and 19 at local elementary schools</b>
<b>Friday Night Lecture</b>	<b>October 20, November 17, December 15 from 6-8 PM at the Portola Community Center</b>
<b>Golf Cart Parade</b>	<b>Sunday, October 29 on El Paseo – come see the Fire Truck</b>
<b>Fall Luncheon and Annual Member Meeting</b>	<b>Tuesday, November 14 from 11-2 at Mitch’s on El Paseo – bring a friend</b>

# Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Palm Desert!



On July 14 the Historical Society held the traditional Midsummer Madness potluck at the Portola Community Center with a timely theme – a Happy Birthday celebration of the City’s 50<sup>th</sup> year since incorporation. Sydney T., the young winner of the Mayor’s award, read her essay “Living in Palm Desert 50 years Ago” (see photo). Old friends and new had a chance to visit and reminisce about Palm Desert then and now. Special thanks to Board members David Toltzmann and Erika Sharp for putting it all together.

*The 1998 Winter/Spring edition of The Hourglass newsletter included an article about the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation:*

## **PAST IS PROLOGUE – PALM DESERT’S 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Congratulations and thanks to the 1998 Community Calendar committee for producing a beautifully illustrated 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary calendar. Colorful monthly photographs show developments of recent years and natural beauties of the desert. They remind us how the good life in this city is being achieved and needs met for all age groups. Clever design, using strip photos and smaller frames, fill out the theme of progress. Sepia tone historical photos from the archives of our Society give a glimpse of the quarter century preceding cityhood. They are identified on the dark margin at the bottom of each page.

The years following WWII were indeed seminal years in this part of the Coachella Valley. But for the remarkable Henderson brothers, we might be using Palm Village as our return address instead of Palm Desert. To learn more of this fascinating story, visit the Historical Society at the old fire station. Hours are Mon/Tues/Thurs, 10 AM to 3PM.

### **HSPD MISSION STATEMENT**

**TO COLLECT, PRESERVE AND RECORD THE  
HISTORY OF OUR CITY AND COMMUNITIES, AND  
TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE SOCIETY’S ARCHIVES  
AND ARTIFACTS THROUGH EXHIBITS,  
PUBLICATIONS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**

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## ***“Know Your Board”***

### **Linda Holden Clode**



In 1975 my parents purchased a condo in Palm Desert. Later, I bought here as well, and so have been coming to the desert for almost 50 years. During that time, I have acquired an appreciation for the modernist architecture of Palm Desert.

I have always had a passion for architecture. My parents built a new home when I was young, and house plans and magazines were all over the house. I was fascinated. In the eighth grade, I chose Drafting as an elective, but no luck. It seems girls were not permitted to take Industrial Arts. Resigned, I took another path, and had an interesting and varied career in education.

After retirement I earned a Certificate in Interior Design. At last, I could draft!

Also after retirement I volunteered, included chairing several committees at the Palm Springs Art Museum, both in Palm Springs and Palm Desert. I am on the Board of the HSPD and Chair of the HSPD Architecture and Design Committee. These opportunities have allowed me to build my knowledge and to fully value all that the desert offers. More and more I appreciate the treasures here and admire the people who are doing so much to preserve them.

I also became involved in PS Modernism Week. Between 2015 and 2018 I narrated the Double Decker Bus Tours in Palm Desert created by architectural historians Jim West and Karen Prinzmetal. I also assisted with their walking tour during October Modernism Weekend, 2017.

In February 2022 and 2023, in partnership with Modernism Week, I and a small team managed the Shadow Mountain Walking tours sponsored by the HSPD. We had generous support from the Shadow Mountain Resort and the Shadow Mountain community, as well as the Palm Desert City Council. Both tours sold out quickly. A few copies of the ‘Encore’ booklet of the properties on the second tour are still available at the Firehouse. We hope to plan other walking tours in years to come.

I am so very fortunate to have had these experiences, and to have been a resident of this wonderful city for all these years. I plan to continue to focus on Architectural Education whenever the occasion arises.

*Ed. Note: this is the seventh in a series of biographies about the Board members of the HSPD.*

## **Archivist’s Corner**



With the new season come new opportunities to participate in this wonderful adventure – discovering, documenting and preserving the history of Palm Desert and surrounding communities. Come help us in our mission!

If you are interested in volunteering at the Historical Society of Palm Desert, either in the Archives or the Museum, please contact us at [hspd.firehouse@gmail.com](mailto:hspd.firehouse@gmail.com) and leave a message. There are Docent opportunities at the Firehouse Museum for the 2023-2024 season. We have eight 2 and ½ hour shifts to fill each week between Friday and Monday. Training is available. Welcome visitors to the Museum, or help out in the Archives with cataloguing, scanning and annotating. Learn about Palm Desert’s amazing history!

***Rochelle McCune, HSPD Archivist***

## HSPD Architecture and Design Committee Report



This month the Architecture and Design Committee (A&D) has a wonderful announcement: we are going to participate in Modernism Week 2024! The theme is **“Stretch Your Legs from Kings Point to Sands and Shadows: Living Large in Small Spaces”** a HSPD/Modernism Week Walking Tour, February 23/24, 2024.

The A&D Committee had planned to take a year off from our Walking Tours, but was persuaded to offer a new tour in another interesting area of South Palm Desert. We will once again partner with Modernism Week. This is newly confirmed, so when you are looking on the Modernism Week Website when it drops November 1st, you won't find us, but we will be added shortly. Watch for it!

The route will take us on the east side of Shadow Mountain in an area we are referring to as Painters' Path. Plein Air artists used to bring their easels and palettes here to capture the flora and fauna and the hills beyond. The tour is meant to highlight the smaller homes and the condominiums in the area that were an alternative to the larger custom homes that were also built at that time. We will begin at Hugh Kaptur's Kings Point (his only condo development in Palm Desert), tour portions of Hedgehog, Beavertail, and Pitahaya, take a peek at the east side of William Krisel's Sandpiper and then come back up Shadow Mountain and over to Harold Bissner's Sands and Shadows on Highway 74. We will conclude at Kings Point with a reception.

The Painters' Path area is very interesting as the planning department, back in the day, did not want one or two builders to have dominance (i.e. Metro Homes) and so there are many single-builder homes in the area. Among the homes we will view will be ones by Walter White, Patten and Wild and John P. Moyer. Other surprises are in store.

We are excited about this new tour and look forward to your joining us in February.

***Linda Holden Clode, Chair, A&D***



*Kings Point condo*

*Photo by Linda Holden Clode*

## IN MEMORIAM

# Ginny Folkers



Ginny Folkers passed away on July 10, 2023. Ginny was a longtime Historical Society member and volunteer, along with her husband, Dick. Ginny reported, wrote and edited *The Hourglass* newsletter for a decade, beginning in 2000, and continued to supply articles for many years after. You can read these early newsletters at <https://archive.org>, search on Historical Society of Palm Desert, then select Text.

Ginny was also the archivist for the Historical Society, before everyone had a personal computer and long before Google. Ginny not only organized and protected the letters and other memorabilia that had been gifted to the Society from the early pioneers and the founders of Palm Desert, she also clipped newspaper articles daily, and developed a filing system that was available to researchers. Several books have been written based on the information in those files, including a recent New York Times best-seller, “Fly Girls: How Five Daring Women Defied All Odds and Made Aviation History,” about women pilots in the 1920s and 1930s. Ginny’s files were indispensable to architectural historians as well, and provided the background information needed by Professor Volker M. Welter of UC Santa Barbara, who spent a summer in the HSPD archives researching the Palm Desert architect Walter S. White for his book, “Walter S. White: Inventions in Mid-Century Architecture.”

Ginny wrote a book of her own about one of the founders of Palm Desert, “The Life and Times of Clifford W. Henderson,” published in 2018. Contact the Historical Society for information on how to obtain a copy. Proceeds from the sales go to benefit the Society, one of many generous donations the Folkers have made to the HSPD over the years.

In 2018 Ginny retired from her volunteer work at the Historical Society and turned over all her files to the current HSPD Archivist, Rochelle McCune. Ginny left behind an indispensable body of work and will be sorely missed by all who value the history of Palm Desert.

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