

The History of Palm Springs

Excerpts from the book "PALM SPRINGS *First Hundred Years*"
by Former Palm Springs Mayor Frank M. Bogert

According to anthropologists, Native Americans have lived beside the sparkling waters of Palm Springs' tree-lined canyons and around its bubbling hot springs for over a thousand years. They survived by using a multitude of desert plants for food, clothing, and medicine. With bows and arrows and sticks, the Indians hunted deer, bighorn sheep, rabbits, and other small animals. Recent discoveries indicate that their irrigation ditches may date back to pre-Columbian time.

After the arrival of the Spaniards, the Indians grew corn, squash, beans, and melons. They later cultivated orchards and began raising cattle and horses.

The Agua Caliente Indians of Palm Springs are one of ten or more independent clans of the Cahuilla tribe from the Shoshonean division (Tatic) of the Uto-Aztecan language family. Their traditional communities were located in the Palm, Andreas, Murray, Tahquitz, and Chino canyons.



By the turn of the century, Agua Caliente (as Palm Springs was called in the 1800s) became a focus of Cahuilla activity. Because of their close association with white people, many Indians fell victim to the great small pox epidemic of 1862. By 1884, around 70 Indians were living in the Palm Springs area; in 1925, only 50 remained. Today the tribe numbers 240 members.

The Americanization of the Indians began after the Mormons settled in San Bernardino around 1852. Soon, their invasion extended as far south as San Timoteo Canyon, with several settlers moving into the San Gorgonio Pass region. By 1862, the Bradshaw Trail from Redlands to Arizona became an important stage stop and a one-day trip from Banning.

As Palm Springs grew, it soon became apparent that the village needed zoning restrictions and other types of controls. In November, 1936, a committee to study incorporation was formed, with Frank Bennett as temporary chairman. On the 30-man committee were Earl Coffman, Fred Markham, Warren Pinney, Alvah Hicks, Ralph Bellamy, Phil Boyd, Culver Nichols, and Jack Williams. A 1939 census numbered 5,336 year-round residents with a seasonal jump to over 8,000 people.

The Hollywood film colony and tourists from all parts of the country discovered the desert playground. Palm Springs was in its heyday.

Among the wealth of outdoor activities were nine stables, Tom O'Donnell's golf course, and several tennis courts including Charlie Farrell's prestigious Racquet Club. The city boasted more swimming pools than any other place in the country. Bicycle rentals were available



at every hotel and a bowling alley opened in the center of town.

Everyone went to Cathedral City to gamble at Al Wertheimer's Dunes Club, Earl Sausser's 139 Club, or Frank Portnoy's Cove Club.

On December 7, 1941, people crowded around the Mashie Course at The Desert Inn for the Annual Dog Show heard John Miller announce that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. After the declaration of war, a few people left town in a panic; those who stayed prospered.



When peace was declared, tourists returned in even greater numbers; the village was back to normal. Other cities in the county also were prospering. Desert Hot Springs added a new spa, Cathedral City built new houses and a fire station, Ronald Button and John Culver started a new subdivision in Rancho Mirage, and Cliff Henderson's project across from the small community of Palm Village was the valley's biggest event.

Edgar Bergen, who had a ranch east of Thunderbird, talked Cliff and his brother Randall into developing the 1,600 acres used by General Patton's tank repair facility during the war. Cliff formed Palm Desert Corporation, with Bergen and Leonard Firestone listed among the directors. Fire Cliff Lodge and the Shadow Mountain Club, several office buildings, and a few homes were built. Thirty years later this area would become the city of Palm Desert.

Celebrities began to build houses in the area. Lily Ports and Jolie Gabor and her beautiful daughters built their homes on the same hill. Kirk Douglas moved into the Las Palmas area and Frank Sinatra built a large house on Alejo. Bob Hope, a longtime resident, was appointed Honorary Mayor.

Palm Springs' appellation as "Golf Capital of the World" considered the Thunderbird and Tamarisk country clubs as part of the city. Even Floyd Odlum's course in Indio was included in the count. Many of the day's tournaments were played on those courses.

Polo, popular before the war, was revived, and several indoor tournaments were played at the field club. Tennis tournaments at the Racquet Club and Tennis Club brought the city worldwide acclaim.



Though Herbert Hoover had come to The Desert Inn in 1936 to visit his friend, George Lorimer and Franklin D. Roosevelt had stayed at La Quinta before the war, nothing equaled the furor of Dwight D. Eisenhower's arrival in February, 1954. Over 2,000 people were on hand to greet Ike and his wife Mamie.

Harry Truman also spent considerable time in the village during this period, staying at the home of Phil Regan at Tamarisk.

By December 9, 1962, when John F. Kennedy came to town on the first of several trips, villagers considered themselves experienced presidential hosts. Again, thousands of people turned out to catch a

glimpse of this very popular president.

On February 20, 1964, Palm Springs was the scene of a major international event. President Lyndon Johnson had chosen the city for a meeting with Mexico's President Adolfo Lopez Mateos to resolve a long-standing dispute over a piece of land in Texas called the Chamizal.

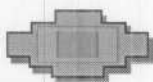


President Gerald Ford had visited Palm Springs during his term as Vice President. When his term of office as president expired in 1976, he returned to build a home next to Ambassador Leonard Firestone's house at Thunderbird. The Fords have been very active in all valley events, appearing at groundbreaking, hotel openings, and charitable balls. The president has played in all major golf tournaments. Mrs. Ford brings considerable recognition to the valley through her alcoholic and drug center in Rancho Mirage.

The people who made Palm Springs world-famous, such as Einstein, Samuel Untermyer, Mayor Jimmy Walker, and Jimmy Swinnerton, would hardly be noticed today in the valley. On any given day during the winter season, over 100 nationally known figures can be seen around the desert.



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The Cahuilla Maiden

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Home

Welcome

Centuries ago, ancestors of the Agua Caliente Cahuilla Indians settled in the Palm Springs area.

They developed complex communities in the Palm, Murray, Andreas, Tahquitz, and Chino Canyons. With abundant water supply, plant and animal life, the Cahuilla Indians thrived. They grew crops of melons, squash, beans, and corn, gathered plants and seeds for food, medicines and basket weaving and hunted animals.

Today, remains of Cahuilla society like rock art, housepits and foundations, irrigation ditches, dams, reservoirs, trails, and food preparation areas still exist in the canyons.

The Agua Caliente Indians were industrious and creative with a reputation for independence, integrity, and peace. They believed this productive land of their ancestors would always be theirs.

However, in 1876 the U.S. Federal Government deeded in trust to the Agua Caliente people 52,000 acres to be used as their homeland. At the same time, they gave the Southern California Railroad ten miles of odd sections of land to induce them to build the railroad. Of the reservations's 52,000 acres, some 6,700 lie within the Palm Springs city limits. The remaining sections fan across the desert and mountains in a checker-board pattern.



UM NAW

Great Spirit of the land, the earth, the water, the air

-- everything He watches, always He helps the people, their lives, their living, their food, their homes.

Over all the world He knows what we are doing, night and day.

Always He remembers His people.

UM NAW
God of the Indians,
To Him we pray.



The Spirit Lives!

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