



Neighborhood House Tour

Modernism Week • 2017

Welcome to Twin Palms



William Krisel, left, and Dan Palmer in 1957. Their firm designed tract homes in Las Vegas, Arizona and Florida as well as California.

In 1956, developers George and Robert Alexander, working with architect William Krisel completed the Ocotillo Lodge at the southern edge of Palm Springs. The Lodge welcomed home-seekers considering one of their 90 new and distinctive residences. 'Distinctive' because this fledging district (referred to then as "Smoke Tree Valley Estates") introduced to the desert such modernist elements as open carports, clerestory windows, exposed concrete block, breezeways, and butterfly roofs. With little fanfare at the time, the area became both the first mid century modern neighborhood completed by the Alexander Construction Company and the first truly modern housing tract in Palm Springs.

Only two floor plans were available from which prospective Twin Palms homeowners could choose. But a wide variety of available facades, roof-lines, landscaping, color palettes, and home orientations on the property effectively concealed this limitation. The result is that the Alexanders could pass along to buyers the economies of constructing tract housing, and buyers could enjoy a sense of owning a home that was aesthetically unique — at least on the outside.

As a design and marketing strategy, this proved quite sound. Considered for decades to be a second hometown for the wealthy, Palm Springs suddenly came within grasp of a much larger population of home buyers. The 90 original residences sold briskly and led to the development of equally popular tracts elsewhere in the area. In this way, the success of Twin Palms initiated the City's first major housing boom and forever changed its architectural landscape.

Today, exactly 60 years later, Twin Palms enjoys a population mix that reflects the diversity and spirit of Palm Springs. The legacy of William Krisel and the Alexanders is a neighborhood alive with history, rich with character, and fully engaged in its affairs both social and civic.

Photo courtesy the Huntington Library



A 991 La Jolla



991 La Jolla

I had always wanted to live in an architecturally significant house. What struck me first was the “body” of the butterfly. The soaring space provides a more formal area of my home, allowing me to showcase my art and Broyhill Brasilia furniture. My desire was to make changes to the house that provided for my 21st century needs while honoring the architectural heritage and creativity of William Krisel and the Alexander Company. I also updated the landscape to remove the extensive lawns and plant more desert friendly plants that provide color all year round. Striking a balance between the past and the future works best for me.

B 992 La Jolla



992 La Jolla

Welcome to 1957! Originally completed by the Alexander Construction Company, this home is known as the “Gable.” The home renovation team worked closely with the original architect, William Krisel, during the remodel and restoration – consulting his archives (housed at the Getty Museum) to restore the classic period details. We LOVE that the floor plan, a masterpiece of space planning, continues to work beautifully for today’s lifestyle. Historic designation awarded January, 2013 (HSPB85).

C 1095 Twin Palms



1095 Twin Palms

We are proud to own one of the first homes built in collaboration with the Alexander Co. and William Krisel. “The Ponderosa” model, with sloped “A” Frame roof, was the most popular in it’s day. The classic stone front walls are reflected in our bold welcoming landscape using custom “burnished” block and striking rusted steel planters that angle across the property to create a dramatic engaging entrance. Careful attention to detail throughout remodeling respects the mid-century roots and desert locale.

D 1840 Caliente



1840 Caliente

My brother and I remodeled our butterfly family home in Twin Palms last year. We endeavored to keep the 60's vibe while living in the 21st century. We chose exterior house colors that reflected the original vintage palette: turquoise for wood trim and chimney, white for stucco, and orange for the front door. The house is so welcoming and colorful. We hope you love it as much as we do!

Ocotillo Lodge



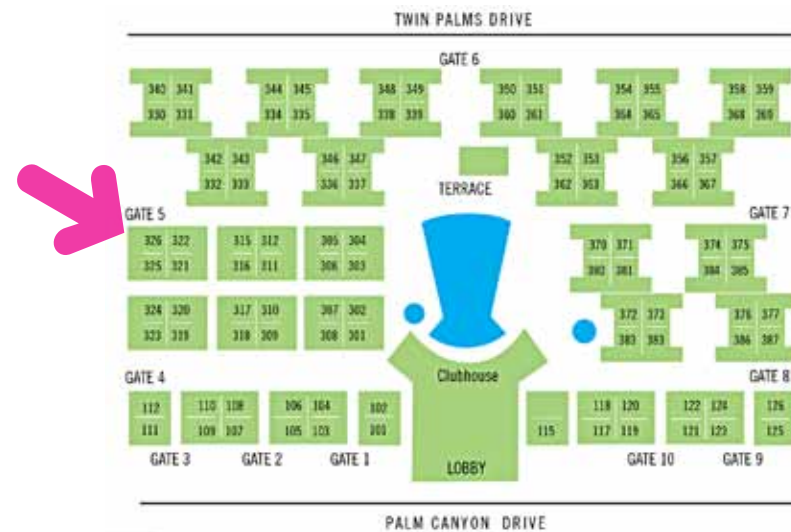
E Ocotillo Lodge #123

We fell in love with the indoor/outdoor feel the floor to ceiling windows create, the views of palm trees and mountains, and the location in Twin Palms (and the pool!) but we had no idea of the architectural significance of this property when we purchased here. We began researching during renovations and soon learned how truly special this complex is. Original kitchen cabinets, concrete floors and the addition of Heath tile, pocket doors, and plywood bathroom cabinets brought the spirit of Krisel's design to life for us.



E Ocotillo Lodge #356

Of the three basic floor plans of Ocotillo Lodge units, this one is referred to as 'The Villa' – approx. 590 square feet. Mr. Krisel's youth, spent in Shanghai, ingrained in him an appreciation for a sophisticated architectural simplicity that is reflected in the design of this space. I live here full time, and I want for nothing. (Except maybe a garage for my poor car!) This was a gut remodel in 2013, based on marketing photos from the era. These units were originally conceived to be leased by the year to companies who could then reward their executives with a glamorous Palm Springs vacation at The Ocotillo Lodge!



G Ocotillo Lodge #326

I had just purchased a unit at the Ocotillo Lodge - initially built as a hotel but now a condominium. After discussions with Mr. Krisel (who was very hospitable and congenial) I was inspired to restore the unit back to the way it originally was in 1957. I worked from original photographs and made only minimal contemporary alterations to satisfy the change in use from a short stay hotel to a long stay condo. Accordion wall, original kitchen cabinets, and period furniture are some of the unique features of this unit.

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and to our Twin Palms Volunteers



Twin Palms rendering from the Palmer and Krisel office circa 1957