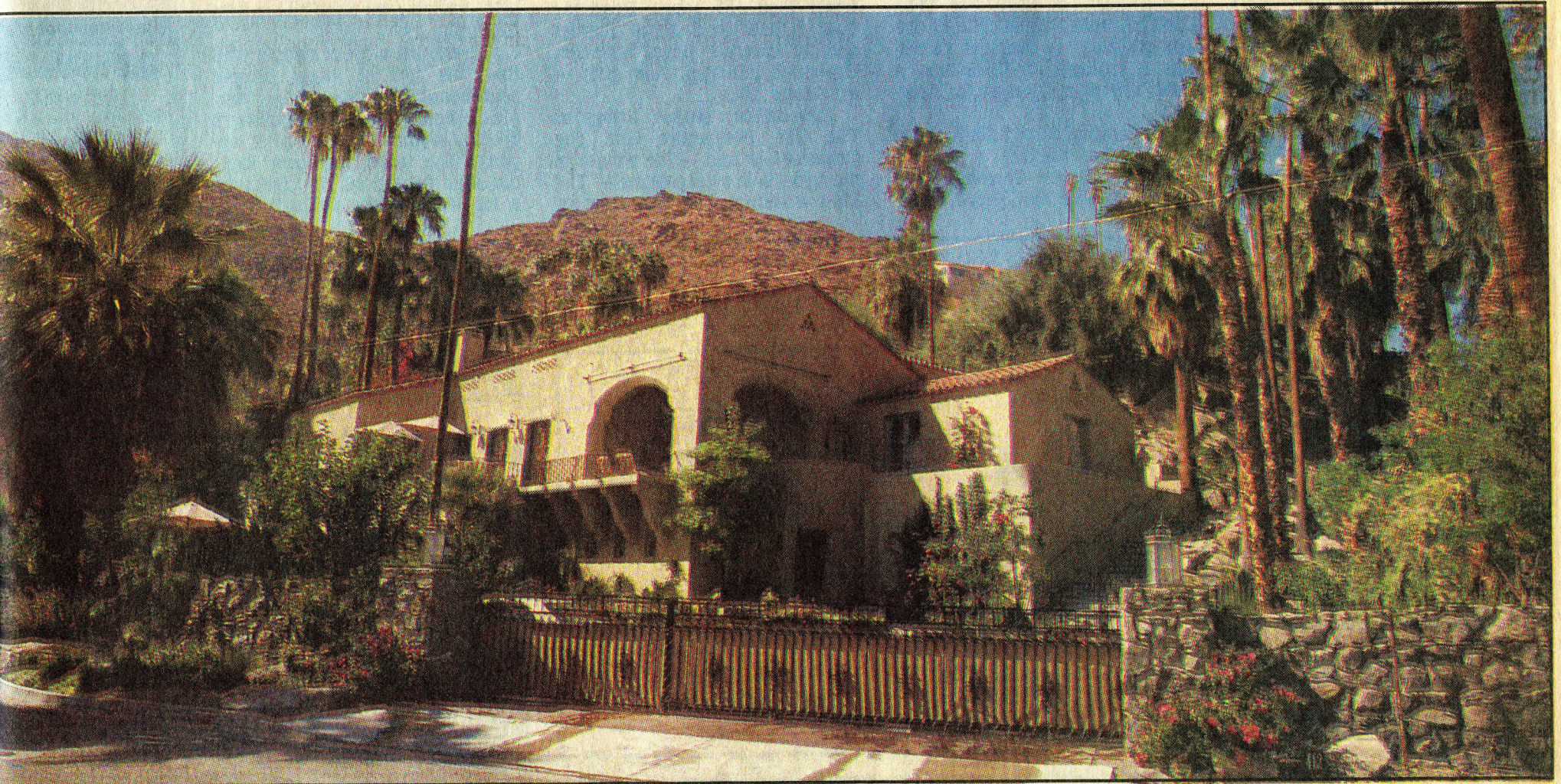


THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

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Living / Classified

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Steve Medd / The Press-Enterprise

THE WILLOWS

The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, a bed and breakfast, was recently opened by a pair of emergency-room physicians who rescued the historical house from certain demise.

Samuel Untermeyer, a wealthy New York attorney who once earned the unheard of sum of \$1 million for a single case, built this Italian-style villa in 1927 as a healthier place to winter.

To help him pass the time, Untermeyer invited as his guests many leading figures of his day, including Albert Einstein and his wife, Elsa, and publisher William Randolph Hearst and his mistress, the actress Marion Davies.

In the house's heyday, musical programs were performed in the mahogany-beamed living room, and guests brunched on the terrace overlooking the Coachella Valley.

After Untermeyer's death in 1943, the house suffered a slow decline until it was little more than a hulking shell. Two years ago, Dr. Tracy Conrad, Dr. Paul Murat and Tracy's brother, Andrew Conrad, took it on as a project.

More than \$1 million and thousands of work-hours later, the house has been revived.

Down on his hands and knees, Murat scraped layers of wax and varnish from the rock floor of the dining room.

Together, Tracy Conrad and Murat stripped ugly paint off ornate moldings, window frames and ceiling beams, restoring fine wood to original luster.

They replanted the rock garden that snakes up the hill behind the house. And they sanded red-oak floors, revarnishing them to a heel-clicking sheen.

Of the nine guest rooms, Conrad's favorite is the Garden Room, in which Einstein frequently stayed. A photo of the scientist and his wife posing on the rock garden's stone path hangs near the entry. The room has art deco inlaid mahogany furniture, French doors that open onto a private garden overlooking a 50-foot waterfall, a bathroom with a claw-footed slipper tub, travertine stone floor and a pewter chandelier.

Once an art history major, Conrad revels in the old-timey feel of the house, the way it evokes an era when men wore hats, and smart-talking women had seams in their silk stockings.

The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, 412 W. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, Calif. 92262; (619) 320-0771; Rates: Range \$250-\$550 per room in season. Two-day minimum stay on weekends and holidays. Reduced summer rates. Includes full breakfast, afternoon wine tasting with hors d'oeuvres and music.

THE INGLESIDE INN

"There would be some juicy stories if these rooms could talk," said Mel Haber, owner of the 30-room Ingleside Inn.

You enter the inn through wrought-iron gates onto a curved driveway that fronts a vine-shaded veranda. On this morning, a

*Please see **FAMOUS, D-3***

The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, an Italian-style villa built in 1927, was visited by such luminaries as Albert Einstein and his wife, Elsa, below, photographed in the mid-1930s.



Palm Springs Historical Society

STAR ★ STUDDED Getaways

Legends and apocryphal stories abound, but here are four nearby lodges where celebrities actually once lounged.

Something about star power lights up a place. 'Fess up. Who among us wouldn't be enchanted to stroll the same palm-studded sidewalks Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall once walked? Who wouldn't be a little cozier in front of a glowing fireplace once shared by Clark Gable and Carole Lombard? Who wouldn't stand taller at a bar John Wayne once bellied up to?

So you're a few bucks ahead, and you'd like to make a getaway to some romantic inn where the stars have stayed.

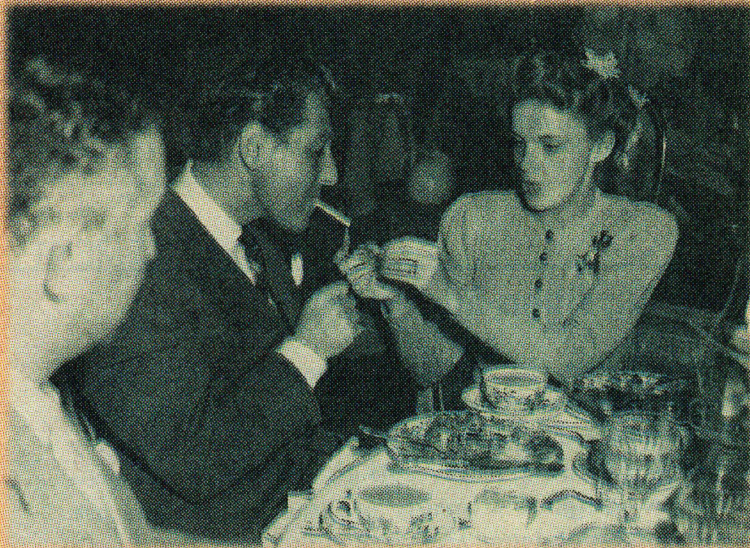
Yes? Well, you can and you can't.

For sure, there are many places in and near Riverside County where celebrities did and do hang out. Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Goldie Hawn, Jack Lemmon, Madonna, Greta Garbo, Tom Hanks and John Travolta are among the legion of luminaries who have signed guest registers in the area.

But as happens with celebrities, apocryphal stories can outrun the truth.

Say for instance, that you want to sleep in the room where Clark Gable honeymooned with Carole Lombard in 1939.

Palm Springs lore has it that Gable and Lombard honeymooned



Avery Edwin Field Collection / Mission Inn Museum

Showbiz legend Judy Garland, right, and band leader David Rose dine at the Riverside Mission Inn circa 1941.

in the library of Samuel Untermyer's house, now a bed-and-breakfast called The Willows. Other legends place the honeymooners at The Ingleside Inn, also in Palm Springs, and the Gold Mountain Manor in Big Bear.

Call around to other establishments, and who knows, you may find they honeymooned there, too.

But according to Sally McManus, director/curator of the Palms Springs Historical Society, the only place Gable and Lombard honeymooned for sure was at film director Edmund Goulding's home in Palm Springs.

Weeding fact from fiction is often difficult, McManus says. She recalls some folks who charged \$6 a head for tourists to see their home, where Will Rogers supposedly once lived. Documents show, however, Bill (no relation) Rogers had paid the mortgage. Not the same thing at all.