

At home



Early in the 20th century, important people visited the desert and then wanted to build their own piece of paradise. The resulting iconic residences represented the most desirable styles of the era.

the same style on the hill above. Published in *House Beautiful* magazine in 1928, the home was called *Ojo Del Desierto*, and offered vistas of the empty desert that stretched for miles below.

OTHERS FOLLOWED SUIT

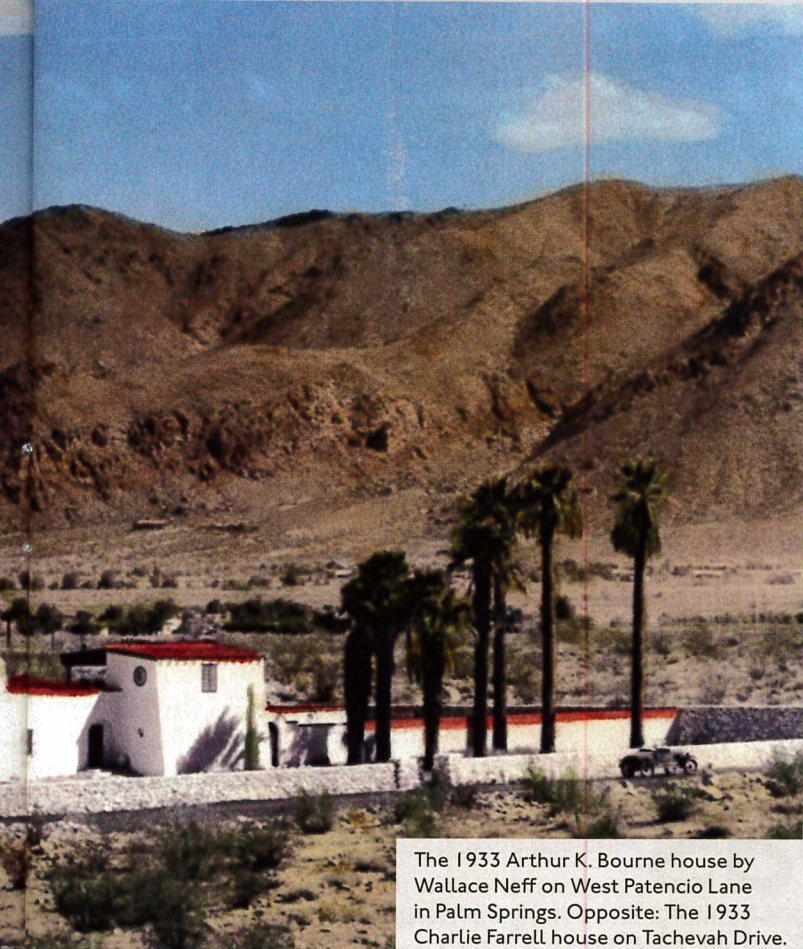
William Mead, a Los Angeles banker and two-time state legislator, commissioned a house by Los Angeles architects Dodd and Richards to be set at the terminus of Tahquitz Canyon. Mead's good friend Roland Bishop, one of the largest manufacturers of crackers and cookies in the 1920s, built a similar house next door.

King Camp Gillette of safety-razor fame, who likewise frequented the Desert Inn, bought acreage in the foothills south of Palm Springs in what is now called the Mesa. By 1926 he had already commissioned renowned California architect Wallace Neff to build an estate in the early California Spanish style in Los Angeles County's Santa Monica Mountains. Neff subsequently designed Gillette's Palm Springs house with guesthouse, in the same style, but it was later subdivided and remodeled out of recognition.

In the 1930s, Fred and Mazie Belle Markham also would enjoy sojourns at the Desert Inn. They subsequently decided to buy and expand Smoke Tree Ranch, using the firm of Marsten and Van Pelt from Pasadena. Frank and Melba Bennett similarly developed Deep Well Ranch, while residing in a rare,



A respite at the Desert Inn was frequently the starting point. Many who first enjoyed innkeeper Nellie Coffman's hospitality thereafter built their own homes. The most significant guest was Thomas O'Donnell. In 1925, he would loan Coffman \$350,000 to rebuild and expand her establishment in the popular Spanish Mediterranean style in exchange for her building him a house in



The 1933 Arthur K. Bourne house by Wallace Neff on West Patencio Lane in Palm Springs. Opposite: The 1933 Charlie Farrell house on Tachevah Drive.

PHOTOS/COURTESY OF THE PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

two-story Monterey adobe in Las Palmas.

George A. Newhall, a wealthy San Francisco landowner, built a Spanish home adjacent to Ruth Hardy Park that was a tour de force in tile. The midnight blue bathroom is still talked about today. The house was featured in California Arts and Architecture magazine in 1931. Subsequently owned by Mr. and Mrs. S.L. De Graff of Tonawanda, New York, it survives today un-subdivided.

John Burnham, reputedly the son of Daniel Burnham, the architect of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, built a house and artist colony near pioneer Pearl McManus' pink palace. It was situated against the mountain around the corner from the end of Tahquitz Canyon Way. Beautifully renovated, the spectacular compound survives today and will soon be seen in the pages of this magazine.

By the 1940s, there were so many showplace homes that the Palm Springs Villager, the forerunner to Palm Springs Life, featured a monthly article with pictures of private residences aptly titled "It's Lovely Here!" Each month locals would be treated to a peek inside one of the desert's fabulous estates. Even decades later, such pictorials remain a pleasure.

—TRACY CONRAD

►► DETAILS

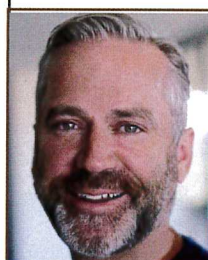
Tracy Conrad is a board member of the Palm Springs Historical Society and also of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. She has served on the Historic Site Preservation Board and the Planning Commission of the city of Palm Springs.

FLOORING INNOVATIONS
CARPET • CERAMIC • HARDWOOD • LAMINATE • VINYL

BEAUTIFUL FLOORS begin here.



FLAGSHIP SHOWROOM in Cathedral City:
67-615 East Palm Canyon Dr | Cathedral City | 92231 | 760-321-8600



LA QUINTA SHOWROOM:
79-700 Highway 111 | La Quinta | 92253
| 760-342-2222 |

Bill Nicholson / President

Free in-home estimates visit:
flooring-innovations.com