

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Sinatra, Frank, House

Other names/site number: Twin Palms

Name of related multiple property listing:
The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1145 East Via Colusa Road

City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> <u>does not meet</u> the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL:steel, WOOD: Plywood, STONE: Sandstone, STUCCO, GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Frank Sinatra House was E. Stewart Williams' first residential commission in Palm Springs. The single-family desert vacation house was commissioned by Sinatra in the summer of 1946. Williams' design for a modern ranch style house won out over the Georgian Revival mansion that Sinatra had initially requested. The 4,500 square foot dwelling is of wood frame construction with a flat and shed roof, open floor plan, large expanses of glazing including sliding glass doors, and a stucco exterior finish that replaced the original redwood siding. Original window frames, glazing, entry doors, and sliding glass doors have been replaced. In addition, concrete decking instead of flagstone now surrounds the large swimming pool. Despite these alterations, the overall building exhibits sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance.

Narrative Description

Designed early in E. Stewart Williams' Palm Springs career, the Frank Sinatra House exhibits many elements that would appear in the architect's residential commissions over the next 40 years: flat or shed roofs, deep overhangs, large expanses of fixed glazing, sliding glass doors, and, most importantly, the integration of natural materials into his modern designs.

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Inspired by modern ranch style houses of the early postwar period, the Frank Sinatra House is laid out at a casual angle somewhat like a pinwheel instead of a typical grid. The large house contains four bedrooms and seven bathrooms, and is capped by both a shed and flat roof. Exterior elevations originally sheathed in redwood siding were refinished in stucco in the 1990s due to extensive deterioration of the wood from many years of neglect in the harsh desert environment. In order “to make the house feel as if it were part of the desert landscape,” said Williams, “instead of walls I put in glass.”¹ Given its remote location at the time near the town’s airfield, this was a feasible goal. A pair of backyard Mexican Fan Palms that have since grown to remarkable height are the Twin Palms for which the property was originally named.

With Sinatra’s fondness for entertaining in mind, the house was designed with a large, open plan living room and dining area with sliding glass doors adjacent to the swimming pool. The bedroom wings are on opposite sides of the living room with the master bedroom’s floor-to-ceiling windows facing Mt. San Jacinto. The two prominent chimneys are of Arizona flagstone, floors are terrazzo, and ceilings are finished in natural wood. Approaching the house from the north, a concrete walkway is shaded by a flat canopy supported by steel posts. What makes this canopy unique are its square cutouts that, when the sun is directly above, give the effect of piano keys for the adjacent grand piano-shaped swimming pool. A freestanding cabana with its angled flat roof and deep overhangs is located on the north side of the swimming pool.

Another distinctive feature is the original hi-fidelity recording equipment in the living room. Apparently, Sinatra made musical recordings with the equipment using a special disc-engraving device.

The dwelling’s south elevation is the original approach to the house via a circular driveway. A small carport is to the east while the entrance is in the elbow of the L-shaped portion of the house. The living room’s large flagstone chimney is the dominant visual element of this façade.

Building permits documenting alterations to the property were not located by the city except for ones related to the remodeling of the kitchen in 2009. In the early 2000s, the primary approach to the property was changed from the south driveway off of busy Alejo Road to the dramatic poolside walkway with its perforated canopy on the north side of the parcel through East Via Colusa Road. This did not result in any physical modification to the dwelling. As noted, the original board-and-batten siding was removed due to deterioration in the 1990s and a stucco finish applied to exterior surfaces. A comparison with historic photographs reveals that the original flagstone decking around the swimming pool has been replaced with concrete, and the dwelling’s windows, entry doors, sliding glass doors and their respective frames have been replaced with contemporary materials.

Despite these changes, the overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is such that the Frank Sinatra House is able to convey its architectural significance. The property retains the essential physical features associated with the residential work of E. Stewart Williams. These

¹ Howard Johns, “His Kind of Town,” *Palm Springs Life*, February 1999, 65.

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features include a flat and shed roof, deep overhangs, large expanses of glazing with sliding glass doors for indoor-outdoor flow, and an open floor plan. In addition, the design incorporates Arizona flagstone for several prominent chimneys and natural wood for ceilings. This melding of the natural environment with modern design precepts is key to Williams' architectural philosophy. The residence retains integrity of association as it continues to be known and promoted as the Frank Sinatra House and used as a single-family residence. The dwelling is at its original location and the setting has been retained. Because of these factors, integrity of feeling also remains high.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1947

Significant Dates

1947

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Williams, E. Stewart

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Frank Sinatra House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century residential architecture as interpreted by E. Stewart Williams. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for residential buildings in association with the historic context “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1947.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Frank Sinatra House was E. Stewart Williams’ first residential commission after relocating to Palm Springs after World War II. It exhibits the distinctive characteristics of dwellings Williams designed from 1947 through the 1960s. Specifically, a flat and shed roof, deep overhangs, large expanses of glazing with sliding glass doors for indoor-outdoor flow, and an open floor plan. In addition, and consistent with Williams’ architectural philosophy, natural materials are integrated into the design with flagstone used for prominent chimneys, wood finishes for ceilings, and redwood siding for exterior surfaces (since removed).

The Frank Sinatra House is significant within the oeuvre of E. Stewart Williams and fits within the historic context presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The Sinatra House is a key early example of the residential property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of E. Stewart Williams, FAIA. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of residential buildings associated with the master architect.

The subject property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.830809 Longitude: -116.533655

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property is located at 1145 East Via Colusa Road, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California between North Hermosa Drive and North Arquilla Road. The property fronts a portion (132 feet) of East Alejo Road. Its legal description is LOT 18 AM 001/049 ASSESSORS MAP 47. APN 507-274-003

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Frank Sinatra House.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian
organization: _____
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com
telephone: (213) 706-0151
date: February 2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Frank Sinatra House
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: CA
Photographer: Peter Moruzzi
Date Photographed: January 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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- 1 of 13 Primary street entrance, south elevation, camera facing north
- 2 of 13 South and west elevations, camera facing northeast
- 3 of 13 South elevation, camera facing northeast
- 4 of 13 Rear pedestrian entrance, north elevation, looking southwest
- 5 of 13 Pedestrian entrance walkway, north elevation, camera facing south
- 6 of 13 North elevation, camera facing southwest
- 7 of 13 North elevation, camera facing southwest
- 8 of 13 North and west elevations, camera facing southeast
- 9 of 13 Pool cabana, south elevation, looking northeast
- 10 of 13 Detail, flagstone chimney roof eaves junction, primary elevation, looking northwest
- 11 of 13 Living room, looking southeast
- 12 of 13 Living room with original Hi-Fi equipment, looking southwest
- 13 of 13 Bedroom, looking northwest

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- Figure 2 South elevation, looking north
- Figure 3 North elevation, looking south
- Figure 4 North and west elevations, looking east
- Figure 5 Living room, looking southwest
- Figure 6 Bedroom, looking northwest

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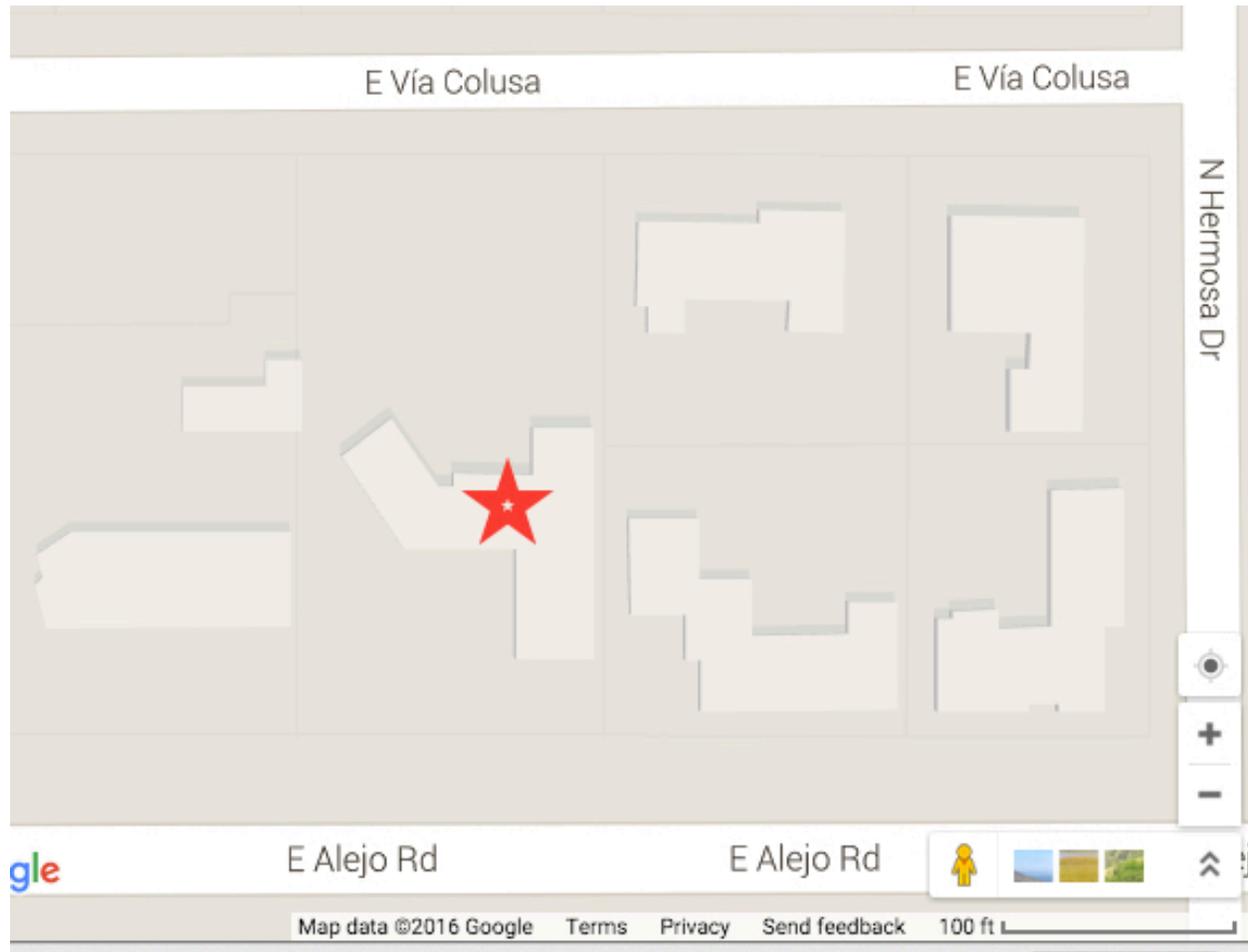
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Location Map

1145 East Via Colusa Road

Latitude: 33.830771

Longitude: -116.533660



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Sketch Map/Photo Key



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Figure 1. North and west elevations, looking southeast, 1949



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Figure 2. South elevation, looking north, 1949



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Figure 3. North elevation, looking south, 1949



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Figure 4. North and west elevations, looking east, 1949



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Figure 5. Living room, looking southwest, 1949



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Figure 6. Bedroom, looking northwest, 1949



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