

State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code _____

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 3 Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) *Kenaston Residence*

P1. Other Identifier:

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad

*c. Address *39-767 Desert Sun Drive*

*e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number Block: Lot:

*a. County *Riverside*

Date:

City *Rancho Mirage*

Zip *92270*

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

Architect E. Stewart Williams designed this large, one-story Desert Modern residence in 1957. Located on .56 acres, the house is 4,816 square feet, with four bedrooms and 3.5 bathrooms. The north-facing, flat-roofed house has deep overhangs and is arranged in a "U" configuration. Exteriors are sheathed in medium-smooth stucco, corrugated aluminum, and natural rock. Windows are aluminum-framed, ceiling-to-floor, and either fixed and sliding. Immediately west of the main entrance, a broad wall projects diagonally from beneath the overhang six feet into desert landscaping. A concrete path leads at right angles to the front door. East of the entrance, a rectangular natural rock wall plane continues above the roofline. An open floor plan with generous, flowing spaces characterizes the interior. Exterior materials such as corrugated aluminum and natural rock are used on some interior walls. Visible from most of the interior rooms and hallways, the rectangular swimming pool is located in the center of the "U." Remarkably, the rock veneer forming the exterior wall of the living room continues below the pool surface to several feet below the water level. This is the same rock used on the north elevation. A steel latticework trellis shades the poolside patio. Extensive desert landscaping of river rock, cacti, and palms surrounds the house. The residence was fully restored in 2001 and is in excellent original condition.

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) *HP2. Single-family Property*

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a. Photo



P5b. Description of Photo: (view and date)

*North and east elevations
August 2002*

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: historic

1957/ Source: Metroscan

*P7. Owner and Address:

*Mark B. and Kristine B. Davis
39767 Desert Sun Drive
Rancho Mirage, CA 92270*

*P8. Recorded by:

*P. Moruzzi, T. Grimes, L. Heumann
Leslie Heumann and Associates
600 N. Sierra Bonita Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90036*

*P9. Date Recorded:

September 23, 2002

*P10. Survey Type:

Intensive Survey .

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none")

None.

*Attachments: None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list)

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 2 of 3

*NRHP Status Code 3S

*Resource Name or #: *Kenaston Residence*

- B1. Historic Name: *Kenaston Residence*
B2. Common Name: *Same*
B3. Original Use: *Single-family Property*
B4. Present Use: *Single-family Property*

*B5. Architectural Style: *Desert Modern*

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations): *Constructed in 1957.*
Note: Only a few building permits exist prior to incorporation of the City of Rancho Mirage in 1973.
December 11, 1970. Detached garage.
April 19, 1983. Reroof.
September 29, 1990. Addition garage plus remodel. Value: \$47,000.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features:

None.

B9a. Architect: *E. Stewart Williams*

b. Builder: *Unknown*

*B10. Significance: Theme *Country Club Era*

Area *Rancho Mirage*

Period of Significance: *1951 - 1973* Property Type: *Single-family Residence* Applicable Criteria: *C*

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

The Kenaston House is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of Desert Modern residential design as interpreted by local architect, Stewart Williams. According to the architect's building list, the original client for this 1957 residence, located just outside of Thunderbird Country Club, was Roderick W. Kenaston. Emerson Stewart Williams came to Palm Springs in 1946 to work with his father Harry and brother Roger in their architectural office. Stewart had studied architecture at Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, taught for a few years at Columbia University, and then worked for designer Raymond Loewy prior to arriving in the desert. Stewart Williams was greatly influenced by the Scandinavian Modernists Alvar Aalto and E. G. Asplund, particularly their use of wood and other natural materials in the creation of a 'warmer' Modernism. Williams' first Palm Springs commission was for the 1947 Frank Sinatra residence, a modern building of glass, natural stone, redwood siding, and an upswept roof that, according to author and critic Alan Hess, "set a tone for

(See Continuation Sheet 3 of 3.)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) _____

*B12. References:

City of Rancho Mirage Building Permits
Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, Palm Springs Weekend, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 2001.
Adele Cygelman, Palm Springs Modern, New York, Rizzoli
International Publications, 1999. pp. 94-99.
Stewart Williams Building List.

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: *Peter Moruzzi, Teresa Grimes, Leslie Heumann*

(This space reserved for official comments.)

Sketch Map

*Date of Evaluation: *September 23, 2002*

***B10. Significance (continued):**

postwar glamour as Hollywood stars continued to move to Palm Springs – to large homes, often on country clubs, favoring a sleek but warm Modernism rather than cool minimalism.”

Stewart Williams’ own home in Palm Springs, featured in Adele Cygelman’s 1999 Palm Springs Modern, was built in 1956. Says Williams, “The house is essentially a roof over the garden so the desert can flow through. It was designed to be a shelter in a very hard climate.” Williams’ career was long and varied including custom homes, offices, banks, civic buildings, Palm Springs’ upper tramway station, and many schools throughout the Coachella Valley and high desert. Of his later work, Williams is most proud of his 1968—1970 design for the Desert Museum, a concrete building lifted above the street, surrounded by a sunken sculpture garden, and sheathed in volcanic cinder. In Rancho Mirage, Williams designed four houses in the Thunderbird Country Club: the Kiner Residence (1951, altered beyond recognition), Bligh Residence (1952, altered beyond recognition), Christie Residence (1955, demolished), and Scott Residence (1957).

The Kenaston Residence typifies the Desert Modern style that Williams helped develop and with which he, along with William Cody, became most closely associated. The Desert Modern architectural style incorporates large expanses of floor to ceiling glass sheltered by deep overhangs extending from flat roofs in creating a powerful interaction between the indoors and outdoors. In addition to glass, exterior materials include stucco, wood, slumpstone, and natural rock. Street elevations are often shielded for privacy with only clerestories providing light, although in this case what now constitutes the north (street) elevation originally faced open desert. Only later was Mashie Drive extended past the north elevation. Rear elevations embrace desert views and outdoor access. The Desert Modern style grew out of local architects’ desire to adapt Modern materials, techniques, and floor plans to the unique requirements of desert living.

The Kenaston Residence is the last remaining house that Stewart Williams designed in Rancho Mirage that retains its integrity of design and materials. The house has been carefully restored to a level close to its original condition in consultation with architect Williams himself. Possessing exceptional significance for its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of Desert Modernism from the hand of a master, the property appears eligible for separate listing in the National Register of Historic Places (a “3S” National Register Status Code). In addition, the property would be eligible for designation under an existing or proposed local ordinance.

P5b. Description/Date of Photo: *View of north and west elevations, August 2002.*

