

How early PS holidays were celebrated

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In 1938, the brand-new city of Palm Springs was small, but that didn't stop the new city from celebrating the holidays in spectacular fashion.

The festivities began with a big tennis tournament held at The Desert Inn, where Nellie Coffman cordially invited her hotel guests and the Palm Springs locals to attend the matches of the popular young sport.

Tennis professionals came from all over the world to compete, many of them top international players of the time. They were matched with the local hotel & tennis club stars and battled it out for a full week.

The final doubles match was played the Sunday after Thanksgiving when Les Stoeften, Racquet Club pro, and film star Charlie Farrell went head-to-head against El Mirador tennis pro, Gene Mako and Paul Lucas, husband of Charlie Farrell's frequent co-star, Janet Gaynor.

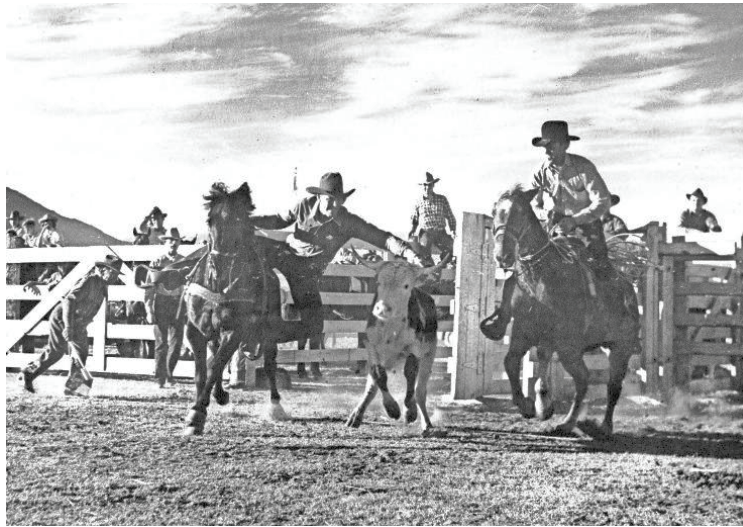
Stoeften and Farrell won the match and a large party was held at the Racquet Club to celebrate their victory.

On Thanksgiving Day, horse races were held at the Field Club, located on the northeast corner of Sunrise Way and Ramon Road where Sunrise Park, the Leisure Center and the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs sit today.

The Desert Sun reported that the grandstands were full of tourists and villagers, noting slyly how the tourists were generally clad in slacks, shorts, sweaters & skirts while the villagers went to the races in Western wear that included fringed-leather riding skirts, suede dress shirts, high-heeled Western boots and sombreros.

In early December, young Palm Springs next held the nationally ranked All-Breed Dog Show on the Mashie Golf Course at The Desert Inn.

Hosted by the Palm Springs Kennel Club, the dog show proved a popular at-



Christmas Eve Rodeo 1938 PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



All Breed Dog Show on the Mashie Golf Course at The Desert Inn c.1938



Thanksgiving Day horse races at the Field Club 1938

traction, with large crowds – including many distinguished dog lovers – watching as thousands of thoroughbreds paraded before the judges.

Trophies and ribbon-winners were everywhere when Desert Inn guests returned from the judging rings to their rooms. Blue ribbons were awarded that year to participants from Beverly Hills, Santa Ana, Hope Ranch, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.

That social hub of town, The Desert

Inn, next provided its annual Christmas tradition, a play put on by the employees. For 1938, Catherine Snyder wrote and directed the play about a little girl named Nell who was meanly-treated by an enterprising scoundrel.

The audience – a collection of hotel guests, local residents and family members – roared with laughter, hissing at the villain and applauding little Elmer's rescue of the heroine and doing right by his little Nell and her illegitimate off-

spring in the end. Mrs. Coffman's presence was the highlight of the event as she presided over the feast that followed, enjoyed by guests and employees alike.

Gaining momentum in its celebration, baby Palm Springs next sponsored a Christmas Eve Rodeo at the Field Club, accompanied by dozens of cocktail parties, dinner parties and musical performances around the small town at hotels like the Del Tahquitz, El Mirador, the Oasis and, of course, The Desert Inn.

Bands of carolers also wandered up and down Palm Canyon Drive wishing everyone a Merry Christmas – continuing an old and beautiful custom during the warm afternoons that year, according to an article in Palm Springs Life.

Christmas Day finally arrived with hotels and restaurants throughout the city celebrating, the majority having planned incredibly creative holiday menus.

Owners knew from experience that hearty food helped to maximize the special joy and serenity that near-freezing nights and pleasantly-warm daytime sunshine brought to the season.

Gardeners at many hotels had foreseen the need for adding a little holiday spirit to the landscape by planting scarlet poinsettias on their properties, visually reinforcing the "Christmas-in-the-Desert" feeling.

New Year's Eve in Palm Springs, like Christmas, was celebrated with a significant tradition: At the stroke of midnight, local cowboys drew their sixshooters and fired into the clear, star-filled sky.

This Western "calling card" was done in anticipation of the season's final upcoming hootenanny – the Mid-Winter Rodeo.

At last, this two-day show of Western horsemanship, which brought the country's champion bronc-riders and bulldoggers to Palm Springs, was now only a few days away!