

Production of the artist's drawing of the Coconut Grove theater, to be on Highway and Charles street. The building is expected to be completed by today. The Irving J. Thomas Company is financing the project.



Bryan Memorial Church, Miami, Fla.

# KIEHNEL & ELLIOTT

COCONUT GROVE SURVEY



## CITY ARCHITECT RECIPIENT OF SIGNAL HONORS

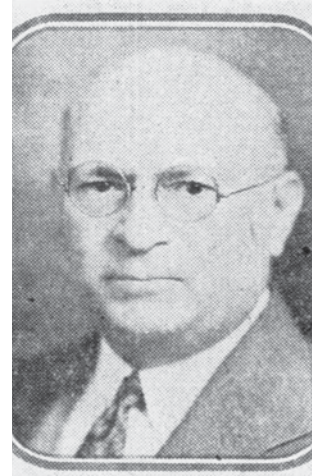
Richard Kiehnel Awarded Fellowship In American Institute

Word has just been received from Charles T. Ingham, secretary of The American Institute of Architects, Washington, that the institute's jury of fellows has advanced Richard Kiehnel of the firm of Kiehnel & Elliott of Miami, to a fellowship in the institute.

This type of membership is a recognition of an "outstanding achievement in the practice of the profession of architecture," and is bestowed only after a careful investigation and consideration of the nominee's record.

In Kiehnel's case the honor is an acknowledgement of his contribution to the introduction of the Spanish Colonial style of architecture in South Florida and of his long years of service in assisting the advancement of the profession of architecture.

Kiehnel & Elliott  
**RICHARD KIEHNEL**  
Seybold Building



RICHARD KIEHNEL  
Architect



### A Few Choice Lots on "Millionaires' Row" Cocoanut Grove

This sub-division, known as Plymouth Court, lies between two of the most beautiful estates in all South Florida—those of Commodore James and Mr. W. J. Matheson, and is right on that part of the main Cocoanut Grove road known as "Millionaire's Row."

The Union Congregational Church had to purchase this entire property in order to secure the site it wished for its new building, and to insure quick sale are offering these lots as low as \$450, with a liberal discount for cash.

These prices are much lower than could possibly be offered under usual conditions prevailing with the ordinary sub-division.

Improved roads, tennis court, etc., guaranteed, and all lots covered by adequate restrictions.

**IRVING J. THOMAS**  
Bayview Road, Cocoanut Grove      Call or write

**COCONUT GROVE**  
FLORIDA

A PLEASANT PLACE IN WHICH  
TO LIVE

FOR HOUSES, BUILDING SITES  
OR GROVES, SEE

**THE SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY**  
ESTABLISHED 1910

H. DeB. JUSTISON      F. J. DICK, Associate.      A. W. FRANTZ.



# KIEHNEL & ELLIOT

## COCONUT GROVE SURVEY

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MIAMI, FLORIDA

Report prepared by Iris Guzman Kolaya, Writer and Researcher  
Commissioned by Dade Heritage Trust | July 2020

*Special Thanks: Georgette Balance & Joanna Lombard*



A. Cherokee Lodge (1917)  
3734 Main Highway; 3683 Hibiscus Street

B. El Jardín (1918-20)  
3747 Main Highway

C. Mead Residence (1921)  
3700 Hibiscus Street

D. La Brisa (1922)  
3551 Main Highway

E. La Solana (1922)  
3670 Hibiscus Street

F. Frantz Residence (1922)  
3529 St. Gaudens Road

G. Justison Residence (1922)  
3575 St. Gaudens Road

H. Sunshine Building (1923)  
3406 Main Highway

I. Thomas Residence (1925)  
3892 Douglas Road/ 3725 Leafy Way

J. Coconut Grove Playhouse (1927)  
3500 Main Highway

K. Bryan Memorial Church (1928)  
3713 Main Highway

L. Second Church of Christ, Scientist (1941)  
3840 Main Highway

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# I. OVERVIEW

**Name:** Kiehnel Corridor

**Period of Significance:** 1910s – 1940s

**Location/Setting:** The Kiehnel Corridor includes thirteen (13) non-contiguous properties within a one-mile radius along Main Highway in the City of Miami’s Coconut Grove neighborhood.

**Tax Folio No.** [Source: Miami-Dade Property Appraiser]

- a. Cherokee Lodge, Main Home (01-4121-060-0030); Carriage House (01-4121-060-0050)
- b. El Jardin (01-4128-004-0050)
- c. Mead Residence (01-4121-0130-0130)
- d. La Brisa (01-4121-000-0130)
- e. La Solana (01-4121-013-1201)
- f. Justison Residence (01-4128-008-0050)
- g. Frantz Residence (01-4128-008-0080)
- h. Sunshine Building (01-4121-044-0010)
- i. Thomas Residence (01-4129-009-0020)
- j. Coconut Grove Playhouse (01-4121-045-0140)
- k. Bryan Memorial Church (01-428-004-0040)
- l. Second Church of Christ, Scientist (01-4128-004-0070)

**Integrity:** All of the structures in the report were designed by the firm of Kiehnel and Elliot under the direction of the firm’s senior partner, Richard Kiehnel, between 1917 and 1941. While a number of structures have been altered over the years, they retain their historic, cultural, and/or historical values.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

Richard Kiehnel (1870 – 1944) is among a distinguished group of highly skilled architects who helped shape Greater Miami in the early twentieth century. He arrived in South Florida on the eve of the 1920s real estate boom and, over the course of nearly three decades, left an indelible mark on the burgeoning community. Kiehnel was a respected architect and senior partner at the Pittsburgh firm of Kiehnel & Elliott when he accepted his first commission in South Florida in the spring of 1917. Trained at the prestigious *École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, Kiehnel brought a wealth of experience and creativity to the nascent region in search of an identity. Working with skilled artisans and masons, the German-born architect designed and constructed ornate structures in harmony with the area's semitropical environment. Kiehnel & Elliott became known for elaborately detailed projects that as the *Miami Herald* described in 1925, "combine and resolve ideas of beauty and utility into artistic perfection."<sup>1</sup> From 1917 until his death in 1944, Kiehnel designed grand public buildings, elegant private residences, and avant-garde commercial spaces throughout South and Central Florida, most notably in Miami, Coral Gables, Miami Beach, Miami Shores, Winter Park, and St. Petersburg. A number of local structures designed by Kiehnel & Elliott are listed on the United States National Register of Historic Places.<sup>2</sup>

Architectural historians have credited Kiehnel & Elliott's masterpiece El Jardin, built in 1918, as Miami's first "full-fledged Mediterranean Revival" structure.<sup>3</sup> Located on the shores of Biscayne Bay in the City of Miami's historic Coconut Grove neighborhood, El Jardin established Kiehnel's reputation in South Florida, and helped fuel the Mediterranean trend that would define area architecture during the boom years and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Noted Florida architect Russell T. Pancoast (1898-1972) oversaw Kiehnel & Elliott's Miami Beach office in the mid-1920s, and later credited Kiehnel's foundational role in the implementation of the new style, explaining that Kiehnel "came early to Miami, recognized the Mediterranean trend, accepted it eagerly and gave it impetus. Without question he was the source of major influence on the Miami development of this trend."<sup>5</sup>

Architectural historian Rexford Newcomb's *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*, first published in 1928, highlighted

1 Frank B. Shutts, ed., "Kiehnel & Elliott, Florida, The East Coast: Its Builders, Industries, and Resources." *Miami Herald*, 1925, 246.

2 Kiehnel & Elliott structures listed on the NRHP include: El Jardin (1918), Coral Gables Congregational Church (1923), Coral Gables Elementary School (1925), Miami Senior High School (1927), as well as the two districts, Morningside Historic District and the Miami Shores Thematic Group, which contain a number of residences designed by the firm.

3 Ivan Rodriguez and Margot Ammidown, *From Wilderness to Metropolis: The History and Architecture of Dade County, Florida 1825-1940* (Miami: Metropolitan Dade County, 1982): 89-90.

4 The terms "Mediterranean" and "Mediterranean Revival" are used interchangeably in this report to describe the architectural style that became popular in the United States, particularly Southern California and Florida, beginning in the 1920s. The eclectic style draws from a number of sources, including Spanish Colonial (based on Spanish settlers in North American), Spanish and Italian Renaissance and Beaux-Arts styles.

5 Russell T. Pancoast, "Miami Architecture So Far," *A Guide to the Architecture of Miami* (American Institute of Architects, Florida South Chapter, 1963), 12.

designs by a number of the country's pre-eminent practitioners of the increasingly popular style. The survey featured six Kiehnel & Elliott designs, including three within Coconut Grove's proposed Kiehnel district: El Jardin (1918), La Brisa (1921), and La Solana (1922).<sup>6</sup>

While widely remembered for his work in the Mediterranean style, Kiehnel is also credited with designing Miami's first Art Deco building, the Scottish Rite Temple (1922), located within the Lummus Park Historic District.<sup>7</sup> He later designed several iconic Art Deco buildings in Miami Beach, including the surviving Nunnally Building (1933) on Lincoln Road and Carlyle Hotel (1941) on Ocean Drive.

In 1939, near the end of his prolific career, Kiehnel became the first architect in Miami to earn a Fellowship in The American Institute of Architecture. According to the nomination form, submitted by the Institute's South Florida chapter, Kiehnel's body of work produced "notable effect on the architecture of this district [South Florida], and through this on the rest of the United States – principally noticed in interiors."<sup>8</sup> The national organization specifically recognized Kiehnel's "splendid contribution" to the architecture of the United States and for his adaptation of the Mediterranean and Spanish types of architecture to the needs of southern Florida.<sup>9</sup>

The community of Coconut Grove in Miami is home to a number of significant structures designed by Kiehnel & Elliott located within a one-mile radius along and near Main Highway. The 13 structures in the proposed Kiehnel District are primarily in Kiehnel's signature Mediterranean-style, but also include examples of Tudor-Revival, Byzantine, and Neo-Classical architecture. Four of the properties – El Jardin, Bryan Memorial Church, the Frantz residence, and Coconut Grove Theater – are individually designated in the Miami Register of Historic Places and El Jardin is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district also includes Kiehnel's first South Florida commission, Cherokee Lodge (1917), and one of the firm's last large-scale designs, the addition which became the main assembly building of the Second Church of Christ Scientist (1940). *A Monograph of the Florida Work of Kiehnel & Elliott*, published in 1938, features three of the architect's Coconut Grove properties: El Jardin, La Brisa, and La Solana. Grouped together, the structures in the proposed Kiehnel district represent the extraordinary skill, range, and influence of a renowned architect.

6 Additionally, the book includes Kiehnel's designs for the E.B. Douglas Residence, Miami (demolished), Lance Residence, Miami Beach (demolished) and Hotel Rolyat, St Petersburg, Florida (currently part of Stetson University College of Law). Rexford Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States* (New York: Acanthus Press, 1999)

7 Marina Novaes, "Scottish Rite Temple – Designation Report" City of Miami (2013): 7, <http://www.historicpreservationmiami.com/pdfs/ScottishRitereport.pdf>.

8 Nomination For Fellowship By Chapter, The American Institute of Architects, October 16, 1937, <http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/KiehnelRichard.pdf>

9 "Kiehnel Gets Added Honors As Architect," *Miami Daily News*, October 1, 1939.

### III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

#### DEVELOPMENT OF COCONUT GROVE (1880s – 1920s)

From its prominent perch along Biscayne Bay, roughly five miles south of the Miami River, Coconut Grove can lay claim to a storied and distinguished past. Toward the end of the 19th century an adventurous group of settlers developed a small village on the elevated oolitic limestone ridge overlooking the bay's crystal-blue waters. Their efforts resulted in the community of Coconut Grove, with its winding roads, lush foliage, and eclectic architecture. Although its independence was short-lived – Coconut Grove was annexed by the City of Miami nearly a century ago – the historic waterfront community maintains a distinct vibe. Early settlers were intrepid souls who, for the most part, were not looking to make a 'quick buck' in real estate speculation, but instead believed that they were amidst an unusual and subtle landscape and climate that, combined with the hardship of distance from civilization, offered them refuge.

For millennia the fishing, hunting and in some locations, agricultural grounds of Native Americans – first the Tequesta tribe, and more recently the Seminoles – the area was frequented by wreckers in search of sunken treasure throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. It wasn't until the late 19th century, following the end of the American Civil War and the extension of the Homestead Act to Florida that a steady stream of intrepid settlers began to claim the hammock and pinelands for their own. Beginning in the 1880s, a band of industrious, largely well-educated, and determined pioneers – including Commodore Ralph M. Munroe, Charles and Isabella Peacock, Kirk and Mary Barr Munroe (no relation to Ralph), Flora MacFarlane, Ebenezer W. Stirrup, among others – created the enduring community of Coconut Grove. They built the area's first hotel (the Bay View House), and established a school, library, women's club, and yacht club. At the same time, Bahamian settlers developed a thriving black community, known as Kebo, along Evangelist Street (present-day Charles Avenue). Until the arrival of Henry Flagler's railroad into Miami in the spring of 1896 – and the explosive growth that followed – Coconut Grove, then spelled "Cocoanut Grove," was considered the most influential settlement in the Biscayne Bay area, which at the time included Miami, Lemon City, and Cutler.<sup>1</sup>

#### EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

As Flagler's East Coast Railroad continued its march south from Miami to Key West – laying 128 miles of track to reach the southernmost point – residents of Coconut Grove successfully thwarted attempts to route tracks directly through their verdant community. However, they could do little to halt the wheels of progress. The region's improved transportation in the early 20th century would



Sailboat on Biscayne Bay; 1928. Before the railroad made its way to Miami in 1896, pioneers were connected to each other and the outside world via the water. (University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Finlay B. Matheson Papers)

forever alter what Commodore Munroe termed "the simple and genuine life."<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on those quieter years when sailboats cruising the pristine water of Biscayne Bay were the Grove's primary link to the outside world, the *Miami Herald* noted: "[F]or 30 years or more the peace that brooded over the village was undisturbed and in their comfortable villas they watched while sails drift across the bay and forgot that the turbulent world that lay beyond their gates."<sup>3</sup> The railroad bought an influx of people and development across Greater Miami, and profoundly changed the area's environment. Early settlers cleared much of pine rockland that surrounded Coconut Grove, and transformed acres of saw palmetto, silver palms and tropical hardwoods into citrus groves, some of which became George Merrick's Coral Gables. In 1896, a road was built through the Brickell Hammock linking Coconut Grove to Miami.<sup>4</sup> Known as County Road, the route included present-day Brickell Avenue and South Bayshore Drive. With the new and improved transportation, the once isolated settlement on the bay became more widely known and began attracting a *Who's Who* of notable residents.

<sup>2</sup> Arva Moore Parks, *The Forgotten Frontier: Florida Through the Lens of Ralph Middleton Munroe* (Miami: Banyan Books, 1977), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> "Standards of Beauty Seen in Miami Homes." *Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas N. Patricios, *Building Marvelous Miami* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994): 26.

<sup>1</sup> Arva Moore Parks, *Miami: The Magic City* (Miami: Community Media, 2008), 68.



Coconut Grove pioneers gathered on the steps of the Peacock Inn, 1894-95.  
(University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Ralph M. Munroe Family Papers)

## NEW ARRIVALS | MILLIONAIRES' ROW

Beginning in the early twentieth century, leading American industrialists, entrepreneurs, scientists, artists, and writers – lured by the tropical climate and available land – began building winter estates on bayfront properties, including a stretch of waterfront land in Coconut Grove situated atop the ridge. Aside from protection from flooding, the high ground afforded residents uninterrupted views of Biscayne Bay. Coconut Grove's seasonal residents at that time included some of the country's wealthiest men and women: William Deering of the Deering Harvester Company (later the International Harvester Company), William J. Matheson, founder of the National Aniline and Chemical Company, railroad industrialist Arthur Curtiss James and Jessie Moore, whose home would later become the Moorings subdivision. They developed the bayfront land immediately south of Coconut Grove's central business district, which would become known as Millionaire's Row. The land was originally platted in 1894 by J. William Ewan as a series of large, rectangular tracts extending out from the

bay (with the narrower portion along the bay) – those divisions are largely still visible today. Dubbed the “Duke of Dade,” Ewan divided the waterfront parcels, which he called “Ewanton Heights,” on land first homesteaded by New England mariner Edmund Beasley, and later purchased by John Frow.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1920s the southern stretch of County Road (present-day Main Highway) was home to a number of prominent winter residents, who typically traveled to South Florida in December and stayed until April or May. However, the era of the grand winter estates on the bay did not last long; by the mid-20th century developers divided many of

<sup>5</sup> New England mariner Edmund “Ned” Beasley made the area's first recorded homestead in 1868. Beasley's land covered much of present-day Coconut Grove, extending along the shore from 27th Avenue south of the Moorings. J. William Ewan purchased much of the original Beasley land from early pioneer John Frow (in 1877 Edmund Beasley widow's Ann Beasley had sold the land to Frow for \$100) from which Ewan created the Ewanton Heights subdivision. Patricios, *Building Marvelous Miami*, 25





Portrait of Commodore Ralph Middleton Monroe (1851-1933); 1915. (Richard Hoit. Photographer, Miami-Dade Public Library)

the Dade County clerk.<sup>7</sup> Coconut Grove experienced its own growth spurt, albeit not quite at the frenetic pace of its northern neighbor. Not surprisingly wealthier individuals gravitated toward the choice waterfront lots and built winter estates with spectacular views of Biscayne Bay, while communities of relatively modest homes for northern investors developed immediately west of Main Highway in the southern portion of Coconut Grove. Those communities included the homes of northern academics, many of whom were persuaded to move to the area by forester John C. Gifford, an amateur architect who had been designing and building homes in Coconut Grove since 1903. Seasonal residents and investors also included successful businessmen and merchants fleeing the increasingly polluted industrial northern hubs of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh during the bitter winter months. In 1923, the *Miami Herald* reported that the: "Subdivisions of Coconut Grove has been so rapid and complex that a kaleidoscope map would be necessary to indicate all that has happened to the place."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Helen Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.*, 3rd ed. (Gainesville: University of Press of Florida, 2000), 134.  
<sup>8</sup> "Grove Subdivisions Developed Rapidly from Early Times," *Miami Herald*, March 3, 1923.

the larger tracts of land into smaller parcels.<sup>6</sup> Even so, several larger tracts and/or early estates along Main Highway remain intact to this day, including four of the properties in the proposed Kiehnel district: **La Brisa, 3551 Main Highway; Bryan Memorial Church, 3713 Main Highway; Cherokee Lodge, 3724 Main Highway, and El Jardin, 3747 Main Highway.**

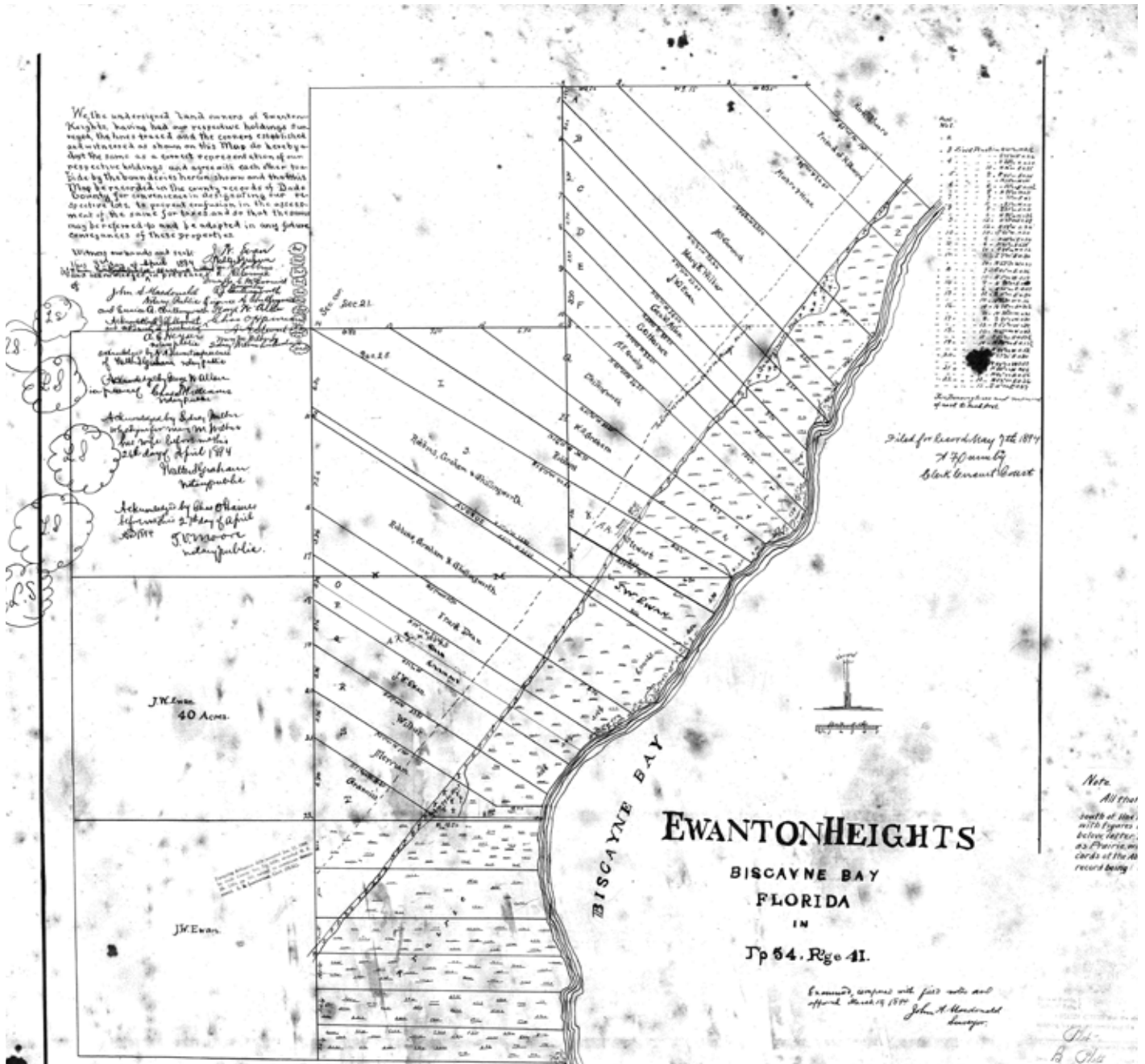
### 1920s REAL ESTATE BOOM | SUBDIVISIONS OF COCONUT GROVE

Amid the frenzied real estate market of the 1920s much of the land in Coconut Grove – like large swaths of Greater Miami – was carved up and platted into new subdivisions. Greater Miami's growth during the boom years, which began in 1921 and peaked in the summer of 1925, was staggering by any measure. In 1925 alone developers platted 971 new subdivisions, and filed 174,530 deeds with

<sup>6</sup> The first properties subdivided along Millionaire Row occurred as early as 1925, at the height of the real estate boom. The 21-acre estate of Sam Brown purchased by Irving J. Thomas in 1925 was among the first properties subdivided. Thomas created the community of Royal Gardens (with present-day Royal Road down the center); it was followed by the multi-home "Moorings" community, which was developed from combined the estates of Jessie S. Moore and Frank Leonard Church. "Millionaires' Row Succumbs to Developers," *Miami Daily News*, August 16, 1925.



View looking west from Peacock Inn (current site of Peacock Park) looking out toward Biscayne Bay, c.1890s. (University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Ralph M. Munroe Family Papers)



Map of the Ewanton Heights subdivision along Biscayne Bay in south Coconut Grove, platted by J.W. Ewan in 1894. (Miami-Dade Property Records)

## BAYVIEW ROAD AT COCOANUT GROVE

The coolest and most attractive home sites in Cocoonut Grove fine rock road, palm trees, electric lights, free deliveries, deeds convey right of way to bay and use of yacht basin. These large lots make charming home sites and offer all the opportunities of this wonderful climate and location. Bayview road is in the heart of the delightful Cocoonut Grove section, near the Sunshine Inn. The Craig open air school has its winter quarters here.

The Trackless cars stop here daily. For particulars see owners.

**THE SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY**  
COCOANUT GROVE.

Early advertisement for Sunshine Fruit Company.  
(Miami Metropolis, June 16, 1914)

## COCOANUT GROVE PARK

Cocoonut Grove Park, located between the highway and Douglas Road, was one of Coconut Grove's first planned subdivisions west. It was platted in 1910 by Walter DeGarmo, Miami's first registered architect (and son of Charles DeGarmo, a nationally known educator, former president of Swarthmore College and early resident of Coconut Grove), and two of his business partners.<sup>9</sup> Initially a neighborhood of modest bungalows for owners of nearby citrus groves, Cocoonut Grove Park became home to a number of prominent residents and architecturally significant structures, including the Kiehnell-designed La Solana, 3670 Hibiscus Street and the Mead Residence, 3700 Hibiscus Street.

## SUNSHINE FRUIT COMPANY

Around the same time DeGarmo and his associates established Coconut Grove Park, a group of entrepreneurs led by Harold deBussy Justison (1880-1934) formed the Sunshine Fruit Company.<sup>10</sup> The company was initially focused on managing grapefruit and avocado groves for absentee owners, but eventually expanded into residential and commercial real-estate development. "We were here and posted, so people turned to us about real estate," Justison was quoted as saying

<sup>9</sup> In 1910 Walter C. DeGarmo (1876-1951) formed the Coconut Grove Development Company with Franklin C. Bush and John C. Gramling. The company's first and seemingly only project was the development of "Coconut Grove Park," a subdivision of 211 plots with public plaza at the center. "Notice Of Intention to Apply For Letters Patent," *Miami Metropolis*, June 9, 1910.

<sup>10</sup> Justison together with Fin L. Pierce, Helen W. Lester, Irving J. Thomas and Ed. Schweitzer formed the Sunshine Fruit Company in 1910. At the start of World War I, Justison enlisted in the Navy and hired Albert W. Frantz to help manage the company after he was deployed. When Justison returned from service two years later, Frantz and Justison bought out the other partners and became co-owners of the business.

LEFT: Advertisement for "Cocoonut Grove Park" was developed by architect Walter DeGarmo and two business partners, on the west side of Main Highway.  
(Miami Metropolis, December 17, 1910)

# I AM GOING TO LIVE AT COCOANUT GROVE PARK!

This is What More and More People  
are Saying Every Day.

Here is your first opportunity to own a Bungalow Site in Cocoonut Grove on Bay Biscayne where you may have all the conveniences of the City and at the same time the delights of the country

AT COCOANUT GROVE YOU HAVE SELECTED SCHOOLS, YACHT CLUB, PUBLIC LIBRARY, WOMAN'S CLUB, CHURCHES, STORES, DAILY DELIVERIES OF GROCERIES, MEATS, ICE AND TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

COCOANUT GROVE PARK IS IDEALLY LOCATED ON THE RIDGE OVERLOOKING THE BAY AND LIES BETWEEN THE HIGHWAY TO MIAMI AND PALM BEACH AND STATION ROAD LEADING TO THE DEPOT.

Beautiful Avenues of Cocoonuts and Australian Pines have already been planted and the paving of streets is well under way.

IN THE CENTER OF THE PARK THERE IS A SPACIOUS PLAZA WHICH IS TO BE DEVELOPED INTO A TROPICAL GARDEN FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF PARK RESIDENTS.

COCOANUT GROVE PARK LIES SURROUNDED BY BEAUTIFUL ESTATES, SOME OF THEM OWNED BY WEALTHY RESIDENTS AND ALL BY A CLASS OF PEOPLE MOST DESIRABLE AS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.

## Do You Enjoy Swimming, Boating or Fishing?

AT COCOANUT GROVE PARK YOU MAY OWN YOUR OWN BOAT AND KNOW TO THE FULLEST THE DELIGHTS OF OUR AMERICAN MEDITERRANEAN. A DOCK IS TO BE BUILT AT THE END OF THE ROAD LEADING TO THE BAY SO YOU CAN HAVE ACCESS TO THE WATER AT ALL TIMES.

Here at Cocoonut Grove Park you can live the ideal life, surrounded by groves of Golden Fruit, in the midst of a delightful, cultured community.

Here you can have your own garden and tropical trees and live the life of a country gentleman, away from the hurly burly of the city.

ONLY A LIMITED AMOUNT OF THIS CHOICE PROPERTY IS STILL TO BE HAD AS A CONSIDERABLE PORTION HAS ALREADY BEEN SECURED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE DISCRIMINATING AND WHO APPRECIATE THIS EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY. THEY COMPRISE LAWYERS, PHYSICIANS, MANUFACTURERS, BANKERS, BROKERS, UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, ARCHITECTS, RETIRED BUSINESS MEN, ETC. (NAMES AND ADDRESSES ON FILE AT OUR OFFICE)

## Trolley service is assured in the near future.

THIS IS YOUR FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE A HOME SITE AT BEAUTIFUL COCOANUT GROVE PARK. ANYONE CAN OWN ONE OR MORE OF THESE FINE BUNGALOW SITES.

The early investors in this property have realized an astonishing increase in value, better than a Savings Bank.

Prices low and terms remarkably easy, as long as two years to complete the investment if you like.

For further particulars and  
A FREE TRIP TO THE PROPERTY  
Call or address

**Cocoonut Grove  
Development Company**

225 12th St.

Miami, Fla.



Canal on the estate of W.J. Matheson, c.1920s. (University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Finlay B. Matheson Papers)

in a 1923 article on the company's rapidly expanding portfolio.<sup>11</sup> Sunshine Fruit Co.'s first subdivision, Bayview Road, opened in 1912, followed by Sunshine Villas in 1915, Ozone Avenue (present-day St. Gaudens Road) in 1920, and Douglas Circle in 1921; each of the subdivisions were located in the southern section of Coconut Grove.<sup>12</sup> The company also opened the Sunshine Inn, a small hotel to accommodate prospective investors, as well as a series of cottages. In 1923, Sunshine Fruits began developing commercial properties in Coconut Grove's business district along Main Highway and Grand Avenue.

Justison, and his business partner Albert W. Franz, as well as a former officer of the company turned real estate investor, Irving J. Thomas, worked closely with Kiehnel on a number of projects throughout the 1920s, including each of their personal residences.<sup>13</sup> Two of the proposed properties in the Kiehnel district are located in the Sunshine Fruit Co.'s Bayview Subdivision: **the Frantz Residence, 3529 St. Gaudens Road, and the Justison Residence, 3529 St. Gaudens Road.** A third home, originally designed by Kiehnel for Thomas and his wife, Sadee, lies immediately west of the Sunshine Development: **Thomas Residence, 3856 Douglas Road.** Two Kiehnel-designed buildings

remain in the commercial district – **the Sunshine Building, 3400 Main Highway, and the Coconut Grove Playhouse, 3500 Main Highway,** linked to Sunshine Fruit Co. and Thomas, respectively.

### INFLUENCE OF THE BRIGHT PLAN

As Miami's population continued to grow in the early part of the century, the city began expanding its borders through the annexation of neighboring communities. In 1919 the fiercely independent village of Coconut Grove voted to incorporate as a town (a move residents hoped would give them greater control over future development). Thomas was elected mayor of the new Town of Coconut Grove. Among the town council's first orders of business was to assess existing needs and plan for growth.

In November 1919, the council hired John Irwin Bright (1869-1940), a prominent Philadelphia architect, to create a comprehensive urban plan for the community. "The Bright Plan," as it became known, proposed the creation of a grand plaza at center of Coconut Grove, designed entirely in the Mediterranean style, surrounded by a luxury hotel, civic center, and theater, as well as the widening of Main

<sup>11</sup> "Well Established Real Estate Firm Had a Novel Origin," *Miami Daily News-Metropolis*, March 3, 1923.

<sup>12</sup> Arva Moore Parks, "The Thomas/Stamps House," Arva Parks & Company, July 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas began purchasing property in Silver Bluff as early as 1914, and by 1916 had left Sunshine Fruit Company to establish his own real estate development business.



View looking south on County Road at the intersection of Poinciana Avenue, c.1920. (Photograph by Claude C. Matlack, HistoryMiami)

Highway.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it proposed relocating the Kebo community (along and near Charles Avenue) west of Dixie Highway, and developing a golf course in its place.

The Bright Plan followed the ideas of the City Beautiful movement, an urban planning philosophy popular in the United States toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which involved the beautification of cities through grand public spaces and monuments.<sup>15</sup> While the large-scale plan was never implemented in Coconut Grove, it would nonetheless influence the area's development in the years that followed.<sup>16</sup> One of the plan's biggest proponents was Sunshine Fruit President Harold deBussy Justison, who also served as Coconut Grove's fourth and final mayor. He believed any future growth should conform to Bright's vision.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, Justison and Irving Thomas independently developed properties in Coconut Grove in line with the Bright Plan – and in nearly every instance commissioned Kiehnel as the architect. Projects completed at this time include the Sunshine Building (Justison), Coconut Grove Theater (Irving), and Commodore Plaza (Irving). Additional projects completed in the Mediterranean style and influenced by the Bright Plan during this period include the Moor-

14 Arva Moore Parks and Bo Bennett, *Images of America: Coconut Grove* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010) 59-60.

15 The City Beautiful movement was an urban-planning movement that flourished in the United States between 1890 and 1920s. Its influence is evident in cities such as Washington DC, Cleveland and Chicago. Naomi Blumberg, "City Beautiful Movement," Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/City-Beautiful-movement>.

16 "More About the Bright Plan," *The Miami Metropolis*, April 1, 1921.

17 "Ask City To Go By Bright Plan With City Cash," *The Miami Metropolis*, May 20, 1921.

ings, Coconut Grove Bank, and Anthony's Arcade. It is worth noting a number of commercial structures in Coconut Grove designed by Kiehnel for Thomas and Justison during the 1920s were demolished in later years, including several buildings on Main Highway and Commodore Plaza. Additionally, Kiehnel drew up plans for several projects for the developers, which were never built, including a large hotel on the current site of the Mutiny Hotel on Bayshore Drive.<sup>18</sup>

## BEYOND THE BOOM YEARS

Coconut Grove's municipal independence only lasted six years. On September 2, 1925, five years after incorporation, the town (along with Allapattah, Buena Vista, Lemon City, and Silver Bluff) was annexed by the City of Miami even though a majority of residents opposed the move. And yet, despite joining Miami, Coconut Grove managed over the past century to retain its distinct character and independent spirit.

With a few exceptions, little development occurred in Coconut Grove throughout the 1930s and 1940s as post-1926 hurricane real estate bust folded into the Great Depression, and the onset of World War II. Kiehnel designed his final large-scale commission in Coconut Grove, **Second Church of Christ, Scientist, 3840 Main Highway**, in 1941.

18 "Coconut Grove to Get A New \$200, 000 Hotel," *Miami Herald*, April 13, 1923.

**A Few Choice Lots  
on "Millionaires' Row"  
Cocoanut Grove**

This sub-division, known as Plymouth Court, lies between two of the most beautiful estates in all South Florida—those of Commodore James and Mr. W. J. Matheson, and is right on that part of the main Cocoanut Grove road known as "Millionaire's Row."

The Union Congregational Church had to purchase this entire property in order to secure the site it wished for its new building, and to insure quick sale are offering these lots as **low as \$450**, with a liberal discount for cash.

These prices are much lower than could possibly be offered under usual conditions prevailing with the ordinary sub-division.

Improved roads, tennis court, etc., guaranteed, and all lots covered by adequate restrictions.

**IRVING J. THOMAS**  
Bayview Road, Cocoanut Grove Call or write

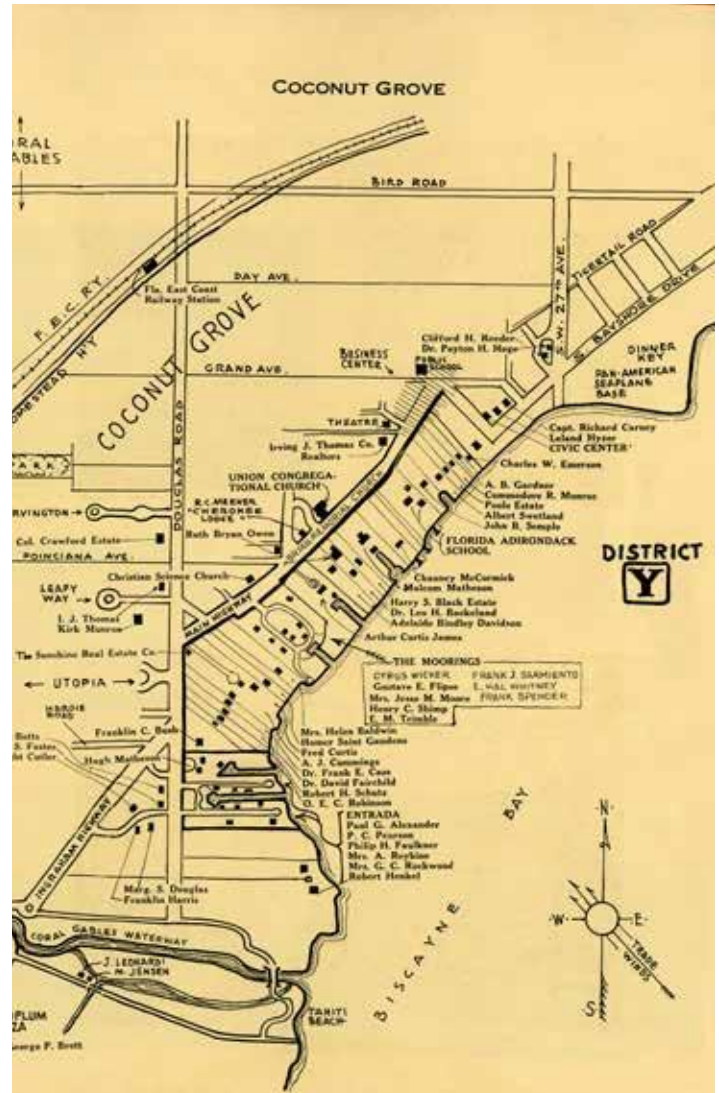
From his home on Bayview Road, Irving J. Thomas began selling real estate in Coconut Grove and Silver Bluff. He was among the first to market the southern stretch of Main Highway as "Millionaire's Row." (*Miami Metropolis*, January 17, 1916)



ABOVE: Aerial view of waterfront estates along Main Highway. El Jardin is at the center (indicated with an X), with Four Way Lodge on the left and Marymount on the right. Bryan Memorial Church is under construction immediately west of Marymount, c.1925-28. (Carrollton School Archives)

The post-war era ushered in a fresh crop Miami architects, a number of whom lived in Coconut Grove. The transition from a Beaux-Arts education to the rising Bauhaus methods that were sweeping American architecture programs swept through the profession as well, and many of Miami's prominent architects followed suit. Grove resident Marion Manley, a close friend of Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the DeGarmo family moved to an increasingly modernist vocabulary, as did H. George Fink and Russell Pancoast. Younger architects Alfred Browning Parker (who installed a black box theater inside Kiehnel's Coconut Grove Playhouse) and Robert Bradford Browne found inspiration in Frank Lloyd Wright, while George Reed, Robert Law Weed, and Rufus Nims looked toward the International Style. Coconut Grove became a destination for the many variations of a "tropical modern" style, ensuring the community's rich legacy of innovative design in an ever-evolving landscape. Current development continues as cranes crowd the sky from Main Highway to Grand Avenue and down Bayshore Drive, which not long ago was little more than a wagon path through the dense hardwood hammock. With its character disappearing in many locations, efforts to maintain a link to its past, and where possible, to preserve its history also continue. Today, the City of Miami's zoning regulations for Coconut Grove mandate that no two adjacent buildings duplicate one another, a strategy that seeks to carry forward the legacy of the lively eclecticism of its people and architecture.

BELOW : Map of waterfront estates in Coconut Grove, published by Frank Stearns in his 1932 book *Along Greater Miami's Sun-Sea-Ara*. Most of the estates have been demolished and subdivided in subsequent decades.



## IV. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE | MEDITERRANEAN

**“THE ARCHITECTS WHO ARE BUILDING FLORIDA HOUSES ARE MAKING THE MOST OF WHAT IS REALLY A REMARKABLE ARCHITECTURAL OPPORTUNITY. THEY HAVE DONE WELL TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM TOO STRICT AN ADHERENCE TO PRECEDENT, AND TO LOOK NOT ONLY TO SPAIN AND ITALY, BUT TO OTHER NEARBY COUNTRIES FOR BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC INSPIRATION THAT ENABLES THEM TO CREATE A STYLE WHICH MIGHT BECOME KNOWN AS MEDITERRANEAN.”**

– Matlack Price, “Latin Architecture in the Playgrounds of the South,” *Arts & Decoration*, January 1925

Beginning with the area's pioneer homes of the 19th century, development in Coconut Grove reflected an appreciation and connection with the tropical environment. The earliest homes were typically rustic bungalows and cottages constructed from salvaged lumber, or wood-frame homes in the vernacular style. Amateur architects designed two of the area's most notable early homes – End of the Trail, the bungalow of forester John C. Gifford, and the Barnacle, the home of Commodore Ralph Munroe. Both homes were designed to draw on the local breezes, open to views and offer sanctuary from the brilliant sunlight through a close integration with native hardwood hammock.<sup>1</sup> The Barnacle, preserved today as The Barnacle Historic State Park expresses Munroe's goal of “living in harmony with nature.”<sup>2</sup> As the *Miami Herald* noted in 1925, nature took center stage: “The early residents built simple homes on sites that an emperor might have coveted – set in a wealth of tropic growth and looking out on shimmering stretches of sea. That was before the era of concrete and masonry and the invasion of Spanish architecture.”<sup>3</sup>

As South Florida began expanding rapidly in the opening years of the twentieth century, wealthy and, in many cases, exceedingly well-traveled residents began building more expansive and structurally advanced masonry structures in Coconut Grove. In 1904, W.J. Matheson built Four Way Lodge (later home to Arthur Curtiss James) on the high ground overlooking the Biscayne Bay. It was one of the first residences in the area to use poured-in-place concrete as well as incorporate elements of the Mission style architecture, which drew inspiration from the Spanish missions in California. Spanish influences had begun appearing in Florida architecture as early as the 1880s with Henry Flager's Ponce de Leon Hotel in St Augustine, designed by the prestigious New York firm of Carrère and Hastings. The trend toward “revivalist architecture,” including Spanish Colonial and English Tudor styles, became increasingly popular across the country following the 1893 Chicago's World Fair, which was themed the Columbian Exposition, highlighting “historical interpretations of European styles.”<sup>4</sup> Walter DeGarmo, Miami's first registered architect and a Coconut Grove resident, was among the first in the region to widely embrace the charm and romance of Spanish-inspired architecture, with plans that-

1 Margot Ammidown, “Walter DeGarmo: Fantasies in Concrete,” *Update: Historical Association of South Florida*, (February 1984) Volume 11, Number 1.

2 Hap Hatton. *Tropical Splendor: An Architectural History of Florida* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987)

3 “Standards of Beauty Seen In Miami Homes,” *Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925.

4 “Beaux Arts,” *Architectural Styles of America and European*; <https://architecturestyles.org/beaux-arts/>



Barnacle, home of Commodore Ralph Munroe, was built in 1891 and is currently preserved as a Florida State Park.  
(University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Ralph M. Munroe Family Papers)

included arcades, loggias, courtyards and interior patios.<sup>5</sup> In 1915, another prominent early Miami architect, August Geiger, designed Miami City Hospital (“the Alamo”) – one of the earliest examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which became popular in Miami in the first part of the century.<sup>6</sup>

The style we recognize today as “Mediterranean” was largely influenced by Spanish design, particular Spanish-Colonial Architecture, but also combined the art and architecture of various European and North African countries. As architect and writer Marc Appleton notes in his introduction to Newcomb’s *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*, wealthy American clients increasingly set their sights across the Atlantic for a vision. He noted that:

*It seems the real force behind Mediterranean revival was unencumbered by any allegiance to local history or weather and depended instead on romantic fantasies of the early twentieth-century newcomers, who looked for their models not so much to the surviving examples of local Spanish Colonial architecture but to their original European precedents.*<sup>7</sup>

The Mediterranean style appears to have been introduced in Southern California and quickly found its way to South Florida. In 1916, James Deering of the International Harvester fortune, constructed Villa Vizcaya, a lavish winter estate immediately north of Coconut Grove on 180 acres of bay front land that had once belonging to the Brickell family, early settlers of Miami. Architect F. Burrall Hoffman, artistic director Paul Chalfin, and landscape architect Diego Suarez designed

5 Arva Moore Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2015)  
6 August Geiger’s Homestead Public School (1914) is an example of the Mission style that became popular for middle class subdivisions in the earlier part of the 20th century. Spanish Colonial Revival can be seen in Geiger’s design of Miami City Hospital (1915), present day Jackson Memorial Hospital.  
7 Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*; VIII

the villa and gardens. According to architect Russell Pancoast, Vizcaya had an enormous influence on the development of the Mediterranean style who felt that although “the architectural inspiration for Vizcaya was derived from Italy, it introduced and suggested to many, the rich, relatively untapped sources of design inspiration available in all Mediterranean countries.”<sup>8</sup>

Following Vizcaya, which opened on Christmas Day 1916, the first Mediterranean homes in the area appeared in Coconut Grove, beginning with El Jardin, which its architect, Richard Kiehnel designated “the pro-genitor of the Modern Mediterranean Style Home.”<sup>9</sup> El Jardin launched Kiehnel’s career in South Florida and inspired a new – albeit seemingly old – architectural identity for the region.<sup>10</sup> Pancoast wrote that the:

*Mediterranean trend – and Kiehnel’s technique for its local adaptation – swept with incredible swiftness throughout the State, In Miami there were probably more men hammering out wrought iron gates, grilles, light fixture and railings than anywhere else in the world . . . by 1920 the Mediterranean idea was thoroughly entrenched, with most architects accepting the trend without question.”*<sup>11</sup>

As architecture journalist and former *Miami Herald* architecture critic Beth Dunlop explained, the Mediterranean style was wholly

8 Pancoast, “Miami Architecture So Far,” 12.  
9 Richard Kiehnel, “El Jardin: Pro-genitor of the Modern Mediterranean Style Home,” *Tropical Home and Garden* (Volume 1, Number 4, August, 1928), 4.  
10 Ibid.  
11 Pancoast, “Miami Architecture So Far,” 13.



Four Way Lodge, home of Arthur Curtiss and Harriet James; February 1925.  
(Florida Memory, W.A Fishbaugh Collection)



manufactured, "...an invented style not an imported one. She felt it could be considered "a pastiche, as it draws upon elements of Italian, Spanish, French, Moorish and Arabian," and identifies its purpose as an effort "to conjure up images of the old-world in a tropical new world."<sup>12</sup> Florida and Southern California, both former Spanish possessions, with climates of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, seemed natural fits for the style. Reflecting in 1928 on the popularity of the style, Kiehnel felt that South Florida was "best adapted to such a type of architecture" because of its climate. He believed that any architect working in this style needed to live in the environment to truly "comprehend the part that color effects play in building designs" and design structures "that will harmonize with the tropical foliage and the changing hues of sea and landscape."<sup>13</sup>

While there are multiple interpretations of what can be considered Mediterranean architecture, in their book, *From Wilderness to Metropolis, The History of Dade County (1825-1940)*, Margot Ammidown and Ivan Rodriguez, then Historian and Director of what was then MetroDade Historic Preservation Division respectively, attempted to itemize the chief aspects of the style's interpretation in South Florida. They identified a series of decorative motifs "generously used, usually concentrated around doorways, windows, balconies and cornices," expressed through materials that ranged from stucco walls to

<sup>12</sup> Beth Dunlop, "Inventing Antiquity: The Art and Craft of Mediterranean Revival Architecture," *Florida Theme Issue: The Journal of the Decorative and Propaganda Arts 1875-1945*, 23 (1998): 198.  
<sup>13</sup> Richard Kiehnel, "Spanish Type of Homes Blends Into South Florida Landscape," *Miami Daily News*, September 16, 1928.



Postcard aerial view of Vizcaya from south, c.1935. (Postcard Collection, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archive)



Postcard of rear façade of El Jardin. (Kolaya)



The original St. Stephen's Episcopal Church building on Main Highway, 1919. (St. Stephens Episcopal Church Archive)

"red tile roofs, wrought iron grilles and railings, wood brackets and balconies, applied oolithic limestone and terra cotta ornaments and glazed ceramic tiles"<sup>14</sup>

Looking skyward, Ammidown and Rodriguez noted the significance of ornamental parapets, "straight or decorative, twisted columns, pediments and other classically derived details," and a particular emphasis on the use of "elaborate stucco Churrigueresque decoration of Spanish Baroque derivation." They believe that the more vernacular renditions of porches and stoops give way to "patios, courtyards, balconies and loggias" and they find arches to be "one the most widely used features, coming in a variety of shapes with semi-circular, segmental, flat, pointed and Moorish elaborations, among the most popular." They also found

<sup>14</sup> Rodriguez and Ammidown, *From Wilderness to Metropolis, Architectural Styles*.

He Is One of America's Greatest Experts on Stucco and Ornamental Plaster Work



Photograph by Bill Orlin of The Herald staff

To say that John B. Orr is a plasterer by profession, will convey very little to most people. True, in the field throughout the United States, but they are equally plasterers and masonry work. John B. Orr has made plastering a fine art, and today he is considered one of the greatest experts in his line in this country. He has not only figured extensively on stucco and ornamental plaster work, but has written numerous books which have been accepted as authority on this subject.

Miami for his work on the Flamingo apartment, which beautiful, well-known, he designed and built. He has been engaged for the sculpturing and decorative work on many of the most important private homes in this vicinity, including those of James Dreyfus, the late John H. Hoadley and John B. Hoadley. Practically every important building in the city shows the handiwork of this great plasterer, including the Central Bank and the new First National bank building. Branches of the John B. Orr company have been established in Palm

Beach and Atlanta, and in the latter city Mr. Orr is now engaged on the new Hotel St. James. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and came to Miami 12 years ago. He was so impressed with the place that he used for his own residence, all of whom, with their families, now reside in this city. He is a member of the American Concrete Institute, serves on the committee on concrete surfaces. He is likewise a member of the Miami Shriners Temple, is a member of the Elgin Lodge, Scottish Rite, N. C. C. H., and Knights Templar.

ABOVE: Profile of John B. Orr (Miami Herald, May 4, 1922)

RIGHT: Advertisement for John B. Orr (Miami Metropolis, October 25, 1919)

An advertisement for John B. Orr. At the top, his name 'JOHN B. ORR' is written in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the services 'Plain and Decorative Plastering Structural, Tile and Brick Work' are listed in smaller bold text. Underneath, 'Modeling and carving in all materials. All kinds of cement work.' is written in a regular font. Then, 'Orrolith Stone and Stucco The New Exterior Finish' is highlighted in a light grey box. Below that, 'Office, Show Rooms and Work Shop' is written. At the bottom, the address '314 Eleventh Street' and 'Phone 448' are listed in bold.

common use of casement windows, which can effective in ushering breezes through a structure and they note the efforts made to “achieve an aged, weathered effect” on the structure and its ornament.<sup>15</sup>

This last element, “the weathered effect,” is of particular note in Kiehnel’s Mediterranean projects. Kiehnel worked closely with contractor John B. Orr (1886-1935), a contractor and supplier of architectural elements for Vizcaya. Born and educated in Scotland, Orr came to Miami in 1911 and established a successful career as a plasterer, molder, and mason contractor.<sup>16</sup> Together with Kiehnel, Orr developed a technique in the mix and applications of textured stucco that gave new buildings the appearance of gentle aging. The collaboration between Kiehnel and Orr was profoundly successful. In Coconut Grove the two built El Jardin, the Mead Residence, and La Brisa. Orr and Kiehnel also worked together on the Scottish Rite Temple along the Miami River, as well as residences in Spring Garden, downtown Miami, and Miami Beach.

Mediterranean architecture flourished in South Florida’s boom years. As Hap Hatton noted in his book *Tropical Splendor*, the style

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Miami Home Designers and Builders,” *Miami Herald*, April 24, 1924.

“psychologically and economically suited the time and place.<sup>17</sup> While its opulence, Hatton wrote, “complemented the 1920s prosperity and sense of well-being,” the style was not widely embraced following the collapse of the real estate market and the start of the Great Depression.<sup>18</sup> Fortunately a number of historic structures in the style, designed by Richard Kiehnel, and a distinguished group of Florida-based architects including August C. Geiger, Walter DeGarmo, Martin Hampton, Phineas Paist, H. George Fink, and others, remain and some have been assiduously conserved. Unlike many of the buildings constructed quickly and cheaply during the boom years (a number of which were quickly destroyed in the Hurricane of 1926 and subsequent storms), these architects focused on endurance in the structure and quality of materials as well as the design elements. Their lasting creations highlight a remarkable period full of optimism and fantasy – a time when Miami was viewed by those who hoped to link their own prosperity to its future, as a seemingly a blank slate full of possibilities.

<sup>17</sup> Hatton, *Tropical Splendor*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



A classic example of Mediterranean architecture, Kiehnel & Elliot designed this Miami residence for businessman E.B Douglas and his family. The home was featured in Rexford Newcomb's 1928 book, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*.

## V. BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE | RICHARD KIEHNEL



Image of Richard Kiehnel (*Miami Herald*, May 24, 1931)

Few architects in early Miami rivaled Richard Kiehnel's experience and education. In 1917, when he first arrived in South Florida, at the age of 47, Kiehnel was an established and well-respected senior partner at the Pittsburgh architectural firm of Kiehnel & Elliot. The firm was known in the first part of the century for their progressive work, particularly in the emerging Prairie School manner later championed by renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1957).<sup>1</sup> Kiehnel scholar Martin Aurand notes, "apart from Scheibler [Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr. (1872-1958)], Kiehnel & Elliot was the only Pittsburgh architectural firm of the era to complete a substantial body of work in a manner influenced by international progressive movements."<sup>2</sup>

Kiehnel & Elliot was among a select few Pittsburgh firms to move away from the revival styles that dominated early twentieth century

<sup>1</sup> Martin Aurand, "Prairie School Architecture in Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh History*, Spring 1995, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Aurand, *The Progressive Architecture of Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994)

architecture, in as Aurand writes, a "quest of contemporary architectural expression."<sup>3</sup> It is not difficult to see the parallels between Kiehnel's innovative work in Pittsburgh and his later work in South Florida. In both places the architect drew on his European heritage and education, as well artistic training, to develop distinct regional expressions apart from prevailing trends. Albert Tannler, a former director of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, researched the enormous impact of the firm on the architecture of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Pittsburgh and observed that, to our amazement, "Richard Kiehnel doffed the Wrightian porkpie hat, put on a Panama hat, and did it again in Florida."<sup>4</sup>

Richard Kiehnel was born in West Prussia, Germany (now Poland) on November 1, 1870. He attended grammar and secondary schools in the region.<sup>5</sup> As a young adult Kiehnel traveled throughout Europe,

<sup>3</sup> Aurand, "Prairie School Architecture in Pittsburgh,"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Albert Tannler "Richard Kiehnel: Architect of International Modernism and Tropical Splendor," *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Focus*, April 29, 2001, 6.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; Roll #: 637; Volume #: Roll 637 - 01 Oct 1903-31; <https://www.ancestry.com>



The Kiehnel-designed Central Turnverein (1911), currently known as the Gardner Steel Conference Center at the University of Pittsburgh, was added to the NRHP in 1983.



Façade of Seybold Building along N.E. 1st Street in downtown Miami, 1926 (Photograph by William A. Fishbaugh, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

including trips to Spain, France, and England, as well as North Africa, Turkey, and Egypt. At the age of 21 he graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Breslau in Germany (known since 1945 as the University of Wrocław in Poland); followed by one year of study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin. In September 1892, Kiehnel boarded an ocean liner in Rotterdam and headed to America. He moved to the Midwest and began working as a draftsman. He initially worked at several architectural firms in Chicago, most notably Egan & Prinderville, which specialized in church design, before briefly going into private practice.<sup>6</sup>

In 1893, at the age of 28, Kiehnel married 26-year-old Elizabeth Wieland (1866-1902), a native of Hanover, Germany.<sup>7</sup> She died nine years later; the couple did not have any children together.<sup>8</sup> In 1915, Kiehnel married Jessie Mayer (1885-1968), in Pittsburgh, and the two

<sup>6</sup> Kiehnel worked as a designer for D.H Burham & Company, Chicago from 1893 to 1897; Henry Schlaks, Chicago, 1897-1898; and was in private practice in Chicago, 1898-1901. AIA Nomination for Fellowship, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Kiehnel and Elizabeth Wieland married on August 3, 1893 at the Holy Trinity Evangelical Church in Chicago, Illinois. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Elk Grove, Illinois; Congregational Records; Roll: 3 of 3 books; <https://www.ancestry.com>

<sup>8</sup> Cook County's Deaths Index list her names as "Elisabeth" Kiehnel, but marriage, census and Chicago city directories list her name as "Elizabeth" Kiehnel. Researcher did not uncover cause of death. Cook County, Illinois, Deaths Index, 1878-1922 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; <https://www.ancestry.com>

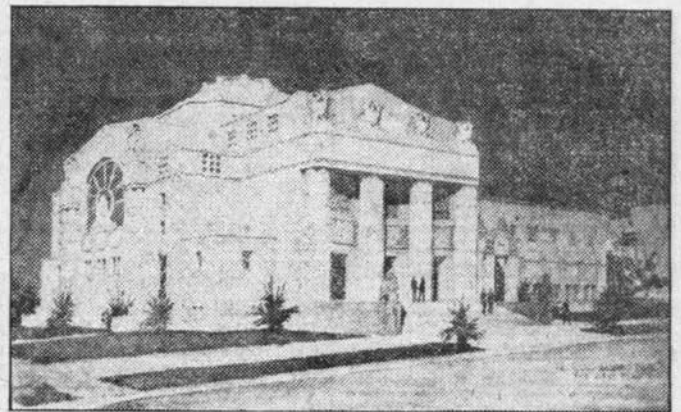
remained together until his death in 1944.<sup>9</sup> They also did not have any children together.

Kiehnel became a naturalized American citizen in 1898 and, while passport records indicate he made subsequent trips to Europe and the Caribbean (including several trips to Havana, Cuba), he would spend the rest of his life living in the United States.<sup>10</sup> In 1900 he returned to Europe for one year to study at the *École nationale supérieure des*

<sup>9</sup> Marriage Licenses. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 6, 1915. Jessie S. Mayer was born in 1882 in Pennsylvania to Alfred and Mary Mayer. She died on January 17, 1968 at the age of 82. 1900 United States Federal Census; <https://www.ancestry.com>

<sup>10</sup> National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; Roll #: 536; Volume #: Roll 536 - 01 Dec 1899-31 Dec 1899; <https://www.ancestry.com>

### Masonic Cathedral to Be Erected on River



Miami Scottish Rite bodies are preparing to build this home on a beautiful site at N. River drive and N. W. Third street. It will cost \$200,000.



ABOVE: Scottish Rite Temple at the corner of NW 3rd Avenue and NW River Drive (*Miami Herald*, January 19, 1922)

BELOW: Coral Gables Elementary School, 105 Minorca Avenue, 1926. (Photograph by William A. Fishbaugh, Florida State Archives, Florida Memory)



Richard Kiehnel on site during construction of Coral Gables Congregational Church (1923), 3010 DeSoto Boulevard, c.1923.  
(Office of Historical Preservation, City of Coral Gables)



View of the church's southwest elevation, 1926. (Photograph by William A. Fishbaugh, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

*Beaux-Arts in Paris.* The Beaux Arts movement, embraced by students of the school, “emphasized classical (Greek and Roman) forms and features, elaborate detailing, massive plans and heavy masonry.”<sup>11</sup> The style dominated the architecture of America’s Gilded Age in the late 19th and early 20th century, and would influence Kiehnel’s richly ornamented Mediterranean creations. As his 1939 application for fellowship in the American Institute of Architecture notes, “while Mr. Kiehnel’s original training was in the free styles, such as Romanesque, Gothic and Early Renaissance, this training was very valuable in the design of his early buildings in semi-tropical South Florida, particularly in Miami.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1902, after returning from Paris and following the death of his first wife, Kiehnel moved to Cleveland and worked in the offices of J. Milton Dyer and later Frederick J. Osterling, which is likely where he met John B. Elliot, who at the time was also working in Osterling’s

office.<sup>13</sup> In 1906, Kiehnel partnered with Elliot and established the firm of Kiehnel & Elliot in Pittsburgh. From the start Kiehnel served as the firm’s principal architect. Reflecting on the influence of the junior partner, Tannler writes: “I have no doubt that Elliot’s contribution to his firm was substantial, but his role appears to have been supportive.” Elliot was born and raised near Pittsburgh, in the small town of Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup> He began working as a carpenter after high school before becoming a draftsman; an experience that Tannler notes “suggested a career rooted in practical experience rather than formal education.”<sup>15</sup>

Kiehnel & Elliot became a leading architectural firm in Pittsburgh. Buildings of note designed by the firm during Kiehnel’s time in

11 “Architectural Styles of America and Europe: Beaux Arts,” <https://architecturestyles.org/beaux-arts/>

12 AIA Nomination For Fellowship, 3.

13 “John B. Elliot, Architect, Dies Suddenly at 79,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, Nov. 6, 1947.

14 John Blair Elliot was born on May 29, 1868 to James Elliot, a carpenter, and his wife Anna Elliot. He married Minnie Ackley Elliot (1867-1959). They did not have any children. Elliot died of a heart attack on Nov. 5, 1947 at the age of 80. Year: 1870; Census Place: Elizabeth, Allegheny, Pennsylvania; Roll: M593\_1292; Page: 46B; Family History Library Film: 552791; Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania (State). Death certificates, 1906-1967; <https://www.ancestry.com>

15 Tannler, “Richard Kiehnel,” 6.



Hotel Rolyat, now the Stetson University College of Law, in Gulfport, Florida. Built in 1925 by developer Jack Taylor, the Hotel Rolyat (Taylor spelled backwards) was among Kiehnel's largest project, c.1925. (State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

Pittsburgh: the Lemington Engine House No. 38 (1908), Brushton School (1909), City of Pittsburgh Hospital at Marshalsea (c. 1909), Pitcairn Bank (c. 1910), Central Turnverein (1911), George H. Stengel residence (1913), Pittsburgh Tuberculosis Hospital (1913), and the Greenfield School (1916).<sup>16</sup>

While living in Pittsburgh, and indeed throughout his life, Kiehnel was active in professional and civic organizations. As president of the Pittsburgh's Architectural Club, Kiehnel organized a large exhibition of architectural drawings in 1907.<sup>17</sup> The month-long exhibit was considered a major achievement for Pittsburgh since it brought together designs by leading European and American architects and artists, helping boost the prestige of the city and its designers.<sup>18</sup> The event was also the first to exhibit Frank Lloyd Wright's work in Pittsburgh, as well as the projects of other members of the progressive set. Additionally, Kiehnel was a member of the Pittsburgh chapter of the American Institute of Architects since 1906 and a member of the national body from 1913. He would later become a charter member of the South Florida chapter and its president in 1930-1931. From 1935 to 1942, Kiehnel served as editor of *Florida Architecture and Allied Arts*.

During his time in the Iron City (1906 to 1917), Kiehnel was part of a group of "public-spirited citizens committed to improving living conditions."<sup>19</sup> As a member of the Pittsburgh Civic Commission, he worked with noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted,

whose firm, Olmsted and Vaux collaborated on the site design for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 with Daniel Burnham, a champion of the City Beautiful movement, and others, on a plan to redesign a number of Pittsburgh's bridges over the Allegheny River.<sup>20</sup> Kiehnel's later community work in Miami, including the design of Bayfront Park, are reminiscent of his civic-minded activities in Pittsburgh.

In 1917, Kiehnel & Elliot completed an expansion of Atherstone, the Gothic Revival mansion of Pittsburgh industrialist John Bindley. That same year Bindley purchased property in Coconut Grove, and hired Kiehnel to develop two homes in South Florida. The architect likely did not foresee that accepting Bindley's commission would change the course of his life and later career.

Kiehnel landed in Miami in 1918, and opened a branch office of the firm downtown at the Central Arcade. Within a few years, he made the move to Miami permanently.<sup>21</sup> There is no evidence his business partner, John B. Elliot, ever visited South Florida, and Elliot's in the design of the Miami projects is unclear, however, Kiehnel and Elliot would remain partners for the next ten years. Their partnership was dissolved in 1928, though Kiehnel continued to maintain the practice under the name Kiehnel & Elliot for the remainder of his career.<sup>22</sup>

Nearly from the moment he arrived in Miami in 1918, Kiehnel's services were in high demand, initially in Coconut Grove and eventually

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted. Pittsburgh main thoroughfares and the downtown district: improvements necessary to meet the city's present and future needs: a report. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Civic Commission, 1911.

<sup>21</sup> 1921 Polk's *City Directories* listed Richard Kiehnel and his wife Jessie living in the Gautier Apartments in Miami. The 1923 directory lists his office at the 224 Central Arcade.

<sup>22</sup> Elliot formed a partnership with employee William B. Chalfant. The Pittsburgh firm became known as Kiehnel, Elliott & Chalfant, though it only lasted for several years.



Miami Beach residence designed by Kiehnel & Elliot during the boom years of the 1920s for attorney Lucian C. Lance. (Newcomb, Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United, 1928)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

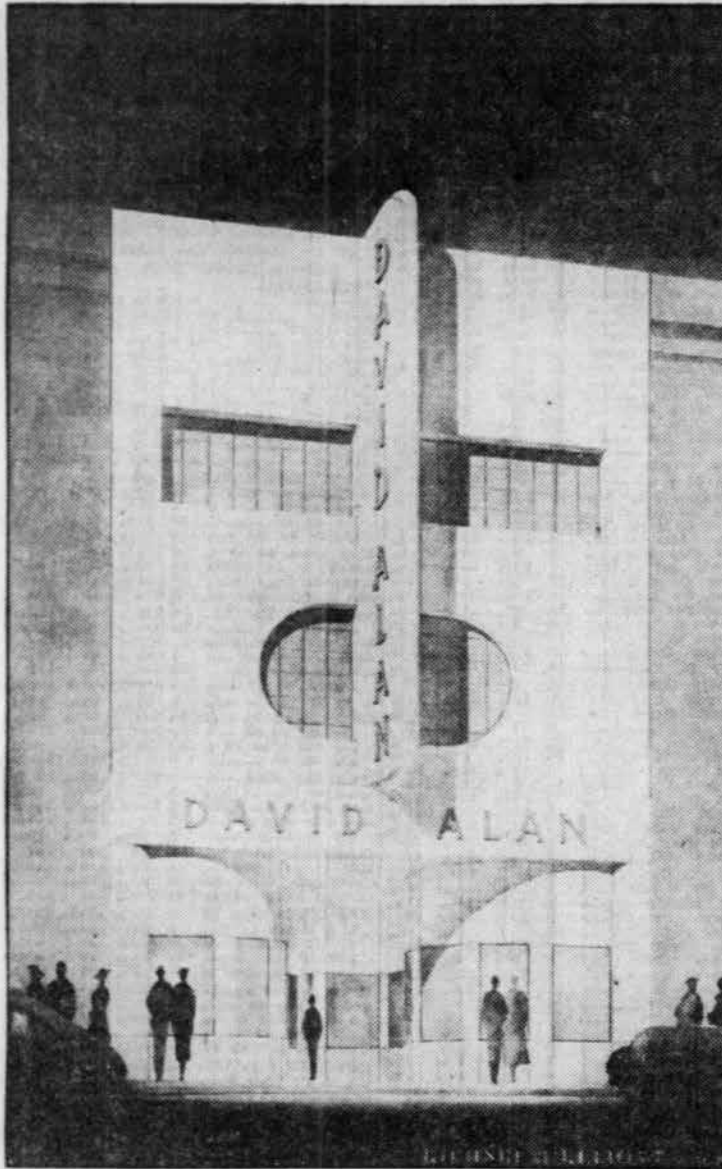
<sup>17</sup> Kiehnel joined the Pittsburgh Architectural Club in 1904, and served two terms as its president. He was later honored as a life member. Kiehnel was also a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, as well as the national organization.

<sup>18</sup> "Pittsburgh to have Largest Architecture Exhibit Ever Held in This Country," *Pittsburgh Press*, Nov. 10, 1907.

<sup>19</sup> George Swetman, "Pittsburgh's Other Renaissance," *Pittsburgh Press*, Sept. 1, 1957



**NEW DAVID ALAN STORE TO BE BUILT**



A three-story building, to be occupied in October, will replace the former structure at 124 E. Flagler st., to be occupied by David Alan's men clothing store, which now operates at 121 E. Flagler st. Kiehnel & Elliot, architects, drew the plans and Normandy Construction Co. is general contractor. The building will be air-conditioned, and special lighting effects will be a feature. There will be 2,600 square feet of space on each floor. The organization also operates a resort men's shop in Miami Beach.

Rendering of a Kiehnel-designed department store on Flagler Street in downtown Miami. (*Miami Daily News*, August 16, 1936)

across Greater Miami and northward to Central Florida. While Coral Gables, Miami Shores, and Palm Beach are widely known for their Mediterranean style residences and impressive public buildings, Coconut Grove can lay claim to the earliest examples of the style as a result of Kiehnel's innovative designs.

His first homes in the style - El Jardin, Mead Residence, La Brisa and La Solana - soon led to similar commissions, on both a large and smaller scale. "They used to say when we were new to Miami that we wouldn't work for local people and that we took no clients outside the multi-millionaire class," Kiehnel was quoted as saying in a 1926 *Miami Daily News* article, "but that did not worry us for we were too busy to think about it, and gradually the matter righted itself without any attention from us."<sup>23</sup>

Kiehnel had reason to be proud. At the time of the article, two months shy of the devastating Miami Hurricane of 1926, Kiehnel could barely keep up with demand. His downtown Miami office in the Seybold Building, which he designed, employed 16 draftsmen to handle the workload, as well as two superintendents and two stenographers. Less than a decade after arriving in Miami, he had established himself as one of the area's premier architects. He was known not only for his richly detailed structures, but for practicality in designing spaces that suited modern customs and the subtropical climate - the marriage, as one writer noted, of "beauty with utility."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "Store Building Adapted from Venetian," *Miami Daily News*, July, 1, 1926.  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



Aerial view looking north over South Biscayne Boulevard and Bayfront Park, which Kiehnel helped design in the early 1920s. (State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

# CITY ARCHITECT RECIPIENT OF SIGNAL HONORS

## Richard Kiehnel Awarded Fellowship In American Institute

Word has just been received from Charles T. Ingham, secretary of The American Institute of Architects, Washington, that the institute's jury of fellows has advanced Richard Kiehnel of the firm of Kiehnel & Elliott of Miami, to a fellowship in the institute.

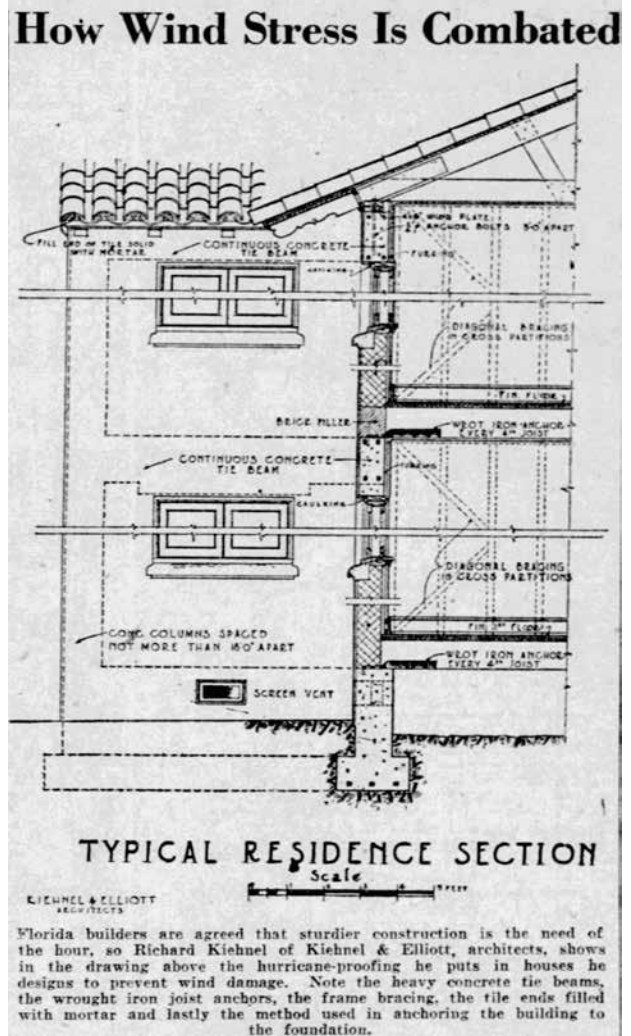
This type of membership is a recognition of an "outstanding achievement in the practice of the profession of architecture," and is bestowed only after a careful investigation and consideration of the nominee's record.

In Kiehnel's case the honor is an acknowledgement of his contribution to the introduction of the Spanish Colonial style of architecture in South Florida and of his long years of service in assisting the advancement of the profession of architecture.

The firm of Kiehnel & Elliott was formed in Pittsburgh in 1906, with Kiehnel as the designer. The first commission for Florida work was received in 1917. In the beginning, a small branch office only was established, but in 1922 a permanent office was opened, with Kiehnel in charge.

During the period of Florida's rapid growth branch offices were maintained in Miami Beach and St. Petersburg.

In 1926 certain changes in the partnership agreement were made, and in 1930 Kiehnel, personally took over the entire Florida interests of the firm. In 1934 George H. Spohn, who had for many years been connected with the Miami office, and Henry P. Whitworth became associated



ABOVE: Following the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926, Kiehnel wrote a series of articles on how to build hurricane-proof structures, and advocated for stronger building codes. (*Miami Daily News*, October 7, 1928)

LEFT: In 1939 the American Institute of Architects recognized Kiehnel for his lasting contributions to the field (*Miami Daily News*, September 3, 1939)

Following his commissions in Coconut Grove (detailed later in this report), Kiehnel worked on a series of homes in Spring Garden, as well as North Miami, and several commercial buildings in downtown Miami. In 1924, Coral Gables developer, George Merrick, hired Kiehnel as one of his principal architects, in addition to Walter DeGarmo, H. George Fink, and Martin Hampton, to build a series of grand residences exclusively in the Mediterranean style. In addition to the homes in Coral Gables' Country Club Section, Merrick hired Kiehnel & Elliot to design two landmark buildings within his planned community: Coral Gables Elementary School (1922) and Coral Gables Congregational Church (1923), both listed today on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1925, the Shoreland Company hired Kiehnel to design a series of homes in the same style for the company's newly platted community of Miami Shores, advertised as "American's Mediterranean."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The Miami Shores Thematic Group is a historic district on the National Register of Historic places consisting of 25 Mediterranean-style homes built between 1925-27 most are designed by Kiehnel & Elliot. National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Sept. 30, 1988.

## Richard Kiehnel Dies in Florida

Richard Kiehnel, 74, designer of St. Paul's Catholic Cathedral here, died yesterday at his home in Miami, Fla., according to an Associated Press dispatch.

Mr. Kiehnel left Pittsburgh in 1917 and is credited with introducing Mediterranean type architecture into Florida. In 1941 he was awarded a gold medal by Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla., for his work in designing the campus.

(Pittsburgh Post Gazette, November, 4, 1944)

In the early 1920s, with the real estate boom in full swing, Kiehnel opened additional Florida offices in Miami Beach for which he engaged Russell Pancoast, and in St. Petersburg. He bypassed Palm Beach where his contemporary Addison Mizner had firm hold, and began work in central Florida. Among Kiehnel's largest projects was the Rolyat Hotel (1925), which currently houses Stetson University's College of Law, in Pinellas County. The luxurious Mediterranean resort hotel was designed to resemble a medieval Spanish walled settlement. Kiehnel also designed a number of structures at Rollins College in Winter Park, including the Anne Russell Theater (1931), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Throughout much of the 1920s Kiehnel designed almost exclusively in the popular Mediterranean style, which had proven adaptable to both large public buildings, including Miami Senior High School (1925), as well as smaller residences, such as his own home at 5942 Biscayne Boulevard (since demolished). In Miami Beach, developer Carl Fisher hired Kiehnel to design cottages for the Nautilus Hotel, which was located on the site of the present-day Mount Sinai Hospital. He also worked with contractor John Orr on a number of large residences on Star Island.

As the boom gave way to a real estate crash and the subsequent Great Depression, Kiehnel's extensive studies, travel and library contributed to his capacity to adapt his work to the era's changing design sensibilities. He increasingly designed structures in the emerging Art Deco and Moderne styles, which he had first introduced to Miami with the imposing Scottish Rite Temple (1923) and developed more fully in the Nunnally Building (1935), the Barclay Hotel (1935), the Carlyle Hotel (1939), and the Shorecrest (1940).

Throughout his career Kiehnel remained active in civic and professional affairs. Shortly after arriving in Miami he focused on the design of the city's public spaces. In 1923, Kiehnel served as chairman of the City of Miami's Bay Front Park Committee, ground that had been added to the city's edge through the dredging of a shipping channel in Biscayne Bay. Kiehnel also served as a director of the Miami Builder Exchange with the purpose of "stabilizing conditions in the industry," and was a member of the City of Miami's Zoning Board. Following the hurricane of 1926, Kiehnel wrote several articles in local Miami papers recommending hurricane resistant building methods and underground utilities. A number of his suggestions related to building construction were subsequently incorporated in South Florida building codes, although his advocacy of buried powerlines was not.

Richard Kiehnel passed away in Miami on November 3, 1944 at the age of 71. *The Miami Daily News* described him as:

*One of the most gifted architects of his time, monuments to his genius are the many prominent Miami buildings he designed . . . The signal honor of fellowship in the American Institute of Architects came to him for his initiative in adapting and developing the Mediterranean and Spanish types of architecture to South Florida. Other architects were quick to follow his leadership in design, this he might truly be called the father of Miami's distinctive architecture.<sup>26</sup>*

A small number of the Kiehnel's architectural drawings were donated to HistoryMiami Museum. Sadly, however, the vast majority of his sketches and drawings were either lost or destroyed. Despite his impact on the early architecture of South Florida, surprisingly little has been written about Kiehnel. As a result, too few residents are aware of the architectural gems he created within their own neighborhoods.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

## V. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTIES

- A. CHEROKEE LODGE (1917), 3734 MAIN HIGHWAY;  
3683 HIBISCUS STREET (ORIGINAL CARRIAGE HOUSE)**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-060-0030; 01-4121-060-0050  
AVONSHIRE  
LOT SIZE: 35,946 SQ. FT.
- B. EL JARDIN (1918-20), 3747 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4128-004-0050  
EWANTON HEIGHTS  
LOT SIZE: 398,615 SQ. FT.
- C. MEAD RESIDENCE (1921), 3700 HIBISCUS STREET**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-0130-0130  
AVONSHIRE  
LOT SIZE: 21,000 SQ. FT.
- D. LA BRISA (1921), 3551 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-000-0130  
MUNROES PLAT DB D-253  
LOT SIZE: 300,860 SQ. FT.
- E. LA SOLANA (1922), 3670 HIBISCUS STREET**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-013-1201  
COCONUT GROVE PARK 2ND AMD. PLAT.  
LOT SIZE: 19,463 SQ. FT.
- F. JUSTISON RESIDENCE (1922), 3575 ST. GAUDENS ROAD**  
FOLIO: 01-4128-008-0050  
JUSTISON & FRANZ SUB  
LOT SIZE: 21,240 SQ. FT.
- G. FRANTZ RESIDENCE (1922), 3529 ST. GAUDENS ROAD**  
FOLIO: 01-4128-008-0080  
JUSTISON & FRANTZ SUB (LOT 8)  
LOT SIZE: 18,800 SQ. FT.
- H. SUNSHINE BUILDING (1923), 3406 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-044-0010  
BURDINES & SHEPARDS RESUB.  
LOT SIZE: 6,678 SQ. FT.
- I. THOMAS RESIDENCE (1925), 3892 DOUGLAS ROAD (37TH AVENUE)/3725  
LEAFY WAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4129-009-0020  
LEAFY WAY  
LOT SIZE: 125,592 SQ. FT.
- J. BRYAN MEMORIAL CHURCH (1925-28), 3713 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-428-004-0040  
EWANTON HEIGHTS  
LOT SIZE: 46,412 SQ. FT.
- K. COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE (1927), 3500 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4121-045-0140  
MUNROES PLAT DB D-253  
LOT SIZE: 100,294 SQ. FT.
- L. SECOND CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST (1941), 3840 MAIN HIGHWAY**  
FOLIO: 01-4128-004-0070  
EWANTON HEIGHTS  
LOT SIZE: 32,040 SQ. FT.

# CHEROKEE LODGE (1917)

3734 MAIN HIGHWAY [MAIN HOUSE]; 3683 HIBISCUS STREET [CARRIAGE HOUSE]

**Boundary Description:** Lot 3 and 5, Avonshire, recording in Plat Book 80, at Page 73, of the Public Record of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

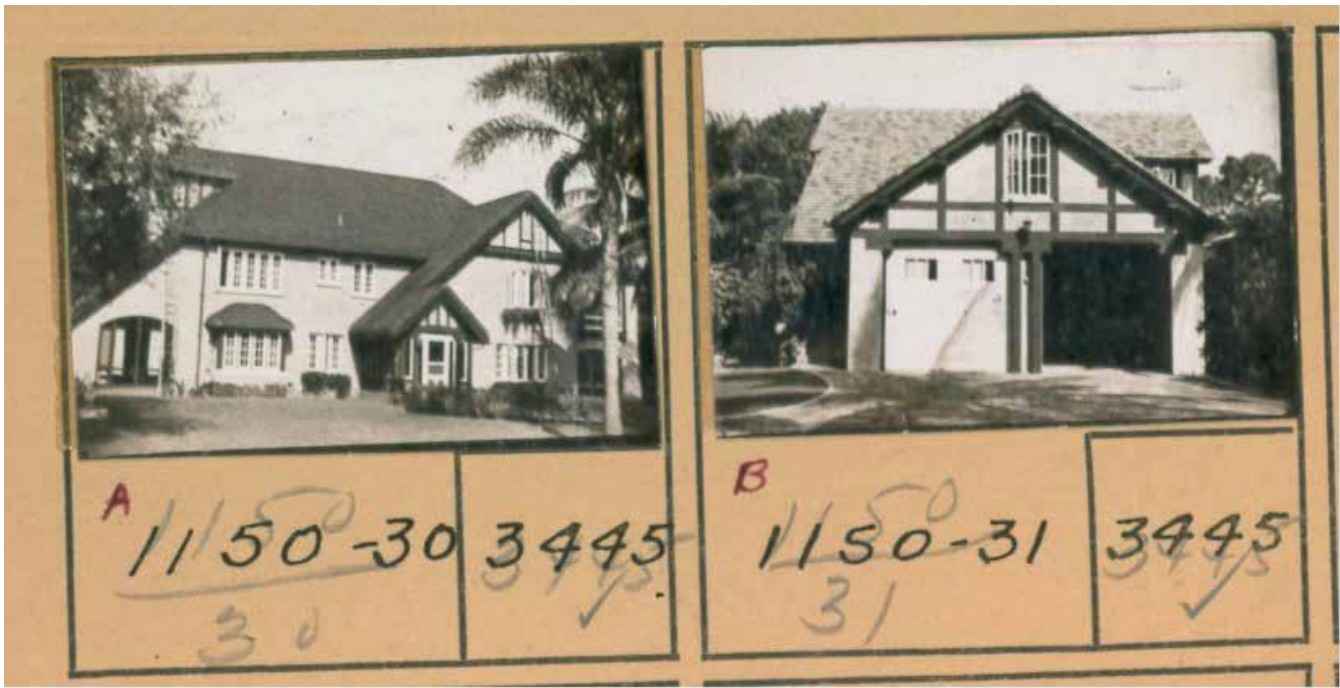
**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** Unknown

**Original Owner:** Mary Bindley McMillin

**Present Owner:** Cesar and Cheryl Guerrero [Main House]; Roland Castro [Carriage House]

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



Cherokee Lodge and Carriage House (City of Miami, Florida Historic Preservation Office Tax Card Photographs)



Postcard of Cherokee Lodge, c.1930s. (Kolaya)

Tucked behind a high oolitic-limestone wall and nearly hidden by the canopy of trees along Main Highway lies an old English cottage, seemingly out of place amid Coconut Grove's tropical setting. The home, known as Cherokee Lodge, is significant only as one of the oldest homes in the area, and because it was architect Richard Kiehnel's first commission in South Florida. He designed the Tudor-Revival home in 1917 for Pittsburgh industrialist John Bindley.

### MARY BINDLEY MCMILLIN

Cherokee Lodge was a gift from Bindley to his sister Mary Bindley McMillin (1840-1924) and his niece, Mary's daughter, Elmina McMillin (1870-1942). He was especially close to his sister Mary throughout his life. Decades earlier, following the death of her husband, steamboat captain John Smith McMillin (1813-1893), Mary, and her two youngest children moved into her widowed brother's Pittsburgh home to help care for his young children and manage the household.<sup>1</sup> The two became lifelong companions and frequently traveled together both in the United States and abroad.

1 Mary Bindley McMillin married Captain John Smith McMillin in 1867 a year after the death of his first wife, Phoebe Ann Fry. The couple had six children: Zabina McMillin (1868-1877), Elmina McMillin (1870-1942), Emily McMillin (1871-1890), Edwin Josiah McMillin (1874-1944), John Bindley McMillin (1873-1876), and Albion Steele McMillin (1878-1957). 1880 United States Federal Census; <https://www.ancestry.com>

### LAND ACQUISITION

Bindley, president of Pittsburgh Steel Co., first visited South Florida with his family in December 1916, and leased Carl Fisher's home on Miami's Coconut Grove Road (present-day Brickell Avenue) for the winter season.<sup>2</sup> He immediately set his sights five miles down the road to the small but thriving village of Coconut Grove. In February and March of 1917, Bindley purchased 13.1 acres of undeveloped land along Main Highway (properties D and E of Ewanton Heights subdivision) in the name of his only daughter Adelaide Marie Bindley (1883-1959).<sup>3</sup> A larger piece of land, 9.1 acres, was located on the east side of the road, between Four Way Lodge, the estate of Arthur Curtis James, and the Anchorage, the estate of Lawrence D. Huntington, while the remaining four acres were situated west of the road, abutting the recently platted Coconut Grove Park subdivision. In spring of that year Bindley commissioned Kiehnel to design two homes on his newly acquired property – the first, Cherokee Lodge, would be located on the smaller parcel to the west of the road, and the second, El Jardin, on the expanse of waterfront land to the east (described in the next section). That same year Kiehnel & Elliot completed a \$200,000 expansion of Bindley's Pittsburgh residence, Atherstone (1890), a Gothic-Revival home in that city's Shadyside neighborhood.<sup>4</sup>

### TUDOR-REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE

Construction of Cherokee Lodge began in 1917 and was finished by the following year. Kiehnel designed the home in the Tudor-Revival style, which was popular in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and drew inspiration from England's Tudor period (1500-1559).<sup>5</sup> The Bindley family originally hailed from Warwickshire County in the English Midlands, which may have inspired their decision to build a picturesque cottage reminiscent of the English countryside.

The estate was named for the Cherokee roses that once grew on the extensive property, which, in addition to a more formal garden in the front, included a grove of fruit trees planted on the south lawn. The main house was set back from the road and enclosed by a low oolitic

2 "Demand for Houses Far in Excess of Supply," *Miami Daily Metropolis*, November 18, 1916  
 3 According to property records, ownership of the 4-acre northern plot (labeled "D") was transferred from L.T. Allen to John Bindley's daughter Adelaide Marie Bindley on February 28, 1917, and the 6-acre southern plot (labeled "E") was transferred from Carrie Stafford Wyrick to Adelaide on March 2, 1917.  
 4 Atherstone was located at 5300 Fifth Avenue. The home was demolished in 1938, having been vacant since the death of John Bindley's son Edward Bindley in 1929. "Builder of \$200,000 Home to Demolish It," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 21, 1938.  
 5 "Architectural Styles of America and Europe: Tudor Revival," <https://architecturestyles.org/tudor-revival/>



LEFT: Front façade of home, looking west from Main Highway, April 1933. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, Miami-Dade Public Library)



MIDDLE: Southwest view of home and property, April 1933. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, Miami-Dade Public Library)



RIGHT: South elevation of Cherokee Lodge, with a glimpse of the carriage house behind the main house, April 1933. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, Miami-Dade Public Library)

limestone wall. A large decorative wooden entrance was located at the southern end of the property. With the exception of the relocation of the entrance further north and added height to the wall, the exterior of Cherokee Lodge remains largely unchanged with the passage of time. The home featured a unique green roof, which gave the appearance of being thatched, now rendered in crafted cedar shingles in the English cottage tradition. Its asymmetrical design, steep gabled roof, casement windows grouped in rows of three and five, and front façade adorned with decorative wood half-timbering, as well as a small dormer, are all classic characteristics of Tudor-Revival design. A pool and cabana were added to the property later near the area where there were once fruit groves, immediately southwest of the home.

Kiehnel designed Cherokee Lodge to have the look and feel of an elegant country cottage set in medieval English, but with 20th-century amenities. He reportedly made a number of adjustments to accommodate American preferences and customs. A 1925 *Miami Herald* article quotes Kiehnel's view that a true English house would not appeal to American women. With formal dining rooms of the English manor were positioned at great distances from the kitchen, Kiehnel felt that adjustments were needed in the planning of the rooms to be

more amenable to the American lifestyle, while the exterior expression in its form and ornament could retain English Country charm.<sup>6</sup>

## SOCIAL LIFE

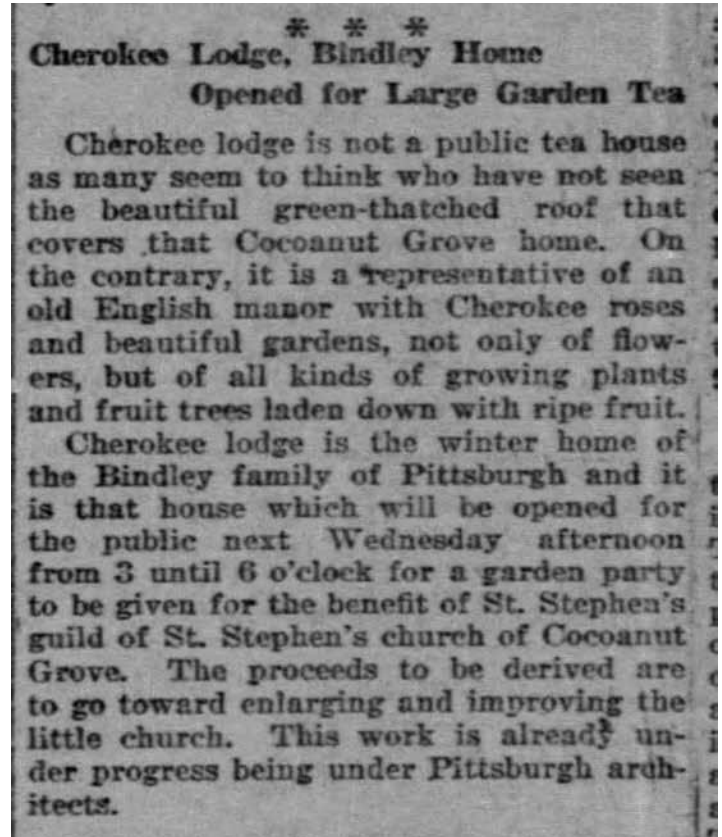
In February 1919, Mary McMillin hosted a large tea party at her newly finished winter home, which Miami's society papers covered extensively. Previewing the event, the *Miami Metropolis* reported:

Cherokee Lodge is not a public tea house as many seem to think who have not seen the beautiful green-thatched roof that covers that Cocoanut Grove home. On the contrary, it is representative of an old English manor with Cherokee roses and beautiful gardens, not only flowers, but of all kinds of growing plants and fruit trees laden down with ripe fruit.<sup>7</sup>

The occasion for the gathering was St Stephen's Garden Party, the nearby Episcopal church where the family was closely involved and McMillin was a member. More than 1,000 guests, including neighbors

<sup>6</sup> "Standards of Beauty Seen in Miami Homes," *The Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925.

<sup>7</sup> "Cherokee Lodge, Bingley Home Opened for Large Garden Tea," *Miami Metropolis*, February 15, 1919



Article announcing the St. Stephen's Garden Party at Cherokee Lodge, the home's first large social function. (*Miami Metropolis*, February, 15, 1919)

and fellow congregants W.J. Matheson, Commodore Ralph Munroe, and Admiral Albert Ross, as well as Richard Kiehnel attended the lawn party, which featured Turkish dancing, fortunetellers, and an orchestra. The St. Stephen's tea was by then an annual tradition in Coconut Grove – each year one of the larger bayfront estates hosted a fundraiser benefitting the Church Guild. Kiehnel, who had studied fine arts in Berlin, painted a series of original posters to be sold at the event”<sup>8</sup>

The garden party at Cherokee Lodge reportedly raised nearly \$4,000 toward the renovation of the St Stephen's chapel.<sup>9</sup> Kiehnel designed a larger sanctuary and adjoining cloister for the church, completed by the spring of 1919 (it was demolished in 2009). The historic church served as the initial thread connecting Kiehnel's earliest clients in Coconut Grove. Beginning with the Bindley and McMillin families, whose commission first brought him to South Florida, the architect's subsequent clients in Coconut Grove, including the Mead and Semple families, were active members of the church.

Mary McMillin and her daughter Elmina stayed at Cherokee Lodge during the winter from 1918 to 1921. In December 1921, after her

<sup>8</sup> "Cherokee Lodge, Bindley Home Opened for Large Garden Tea," *Miami Metropolis*, February 15, 1919.

<sup>9</sup> "St Stephen's Church Coconut Grove Has Been Enlarged." *Miami Metropolis*, March 8, 1919

brother John Bindley passed away at El Jardin, Mary and her daughter Elmina began wintering across the street at his former estate, occasionally hosting luncheons and bridge parties at Cherokee Lodge. In 1922, Mary leased the home for the winter season to Howard Heinz, Jr. of the H.J. Heinz Company. Howard's father, industrialist Henry J. Heinz, had been a close friend of John Bindley and had previously visited the family in Miami.




**The Very Much Admired  
CHEROKEE LODGE  
in Coconut Grove**

**Is now offered for sale to include  
the handsome and elegant furnishings,  
at a much lower price than  
ever before.**

**For special appointment to inspect  
SEE**

**The Sunshine Fruits Co.  
Coconut Grove.**

**CHEROKEE LODGE  
COCONUT GROVE**



*This most beautiful and conveniently located  
home, completely furnished; now available for a Pur-  
chaser at a Price and Terms that assures all that could  
be desired, together with possession.*

*Particulars and arrangements for inspection by  
appointment through your Realtor, or*

**A. J. RICHEY**  
Leamington Hotel Lobby

**RICHEY - BARNHART  
REALTORS**

MIAMI, FLORIDA                      PITTSBURG, PENN.

**COOL AND RAMBL-  
ING.** this Spanish  
styled home of Mrs.  
Martha Reybire at  
3611 Stewart ave.,  
Coconut Grove, is  
shaded by palms. A  
patio between the  
main house and the  
guest house at the  
right is given seclu-  
sion by a wall.

**ANOTHER POINT**  
on  
the itinerary of sight-  
seers is Cherokee  
Lodge at 3734 Main  
highway, Coconut  
Grove, the residence  
of Richard C. Meek-  
er. The green shingle  
roof and rough rock  
wall covered with  
flame vine are in  
keeping with the Eng-  
lish country home  
effect.



TOP LEFT: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, April 4, 1924)

TOP RIGHT: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, February 13, 1925)

BELOW: A news article highlighting the most picturesque locations in Coconut Grove. Note the original wooden entrance gate mirrors the design of the home. (*Miami Herald*, April 26, 1942)

80-73

# AVONSHIRE

A REPLAT OF A PORTION OF LOTE  
EWANTON HEIGHTS (B-52) <sup>MSD</sup>  
FOSTER-SANCHEZ ADDITION  
LYING IN THE SW<sup>1</sup>4 OF SECTION 21  
TOWNSHIP 54<sup>S</sup> RANGE 4F  
CITY OF MIAMI - DADE COUNTY - FLORIDA

HAROLD A. SCHULER, JR. & ASSOC., INC.  
LAND SURVEYORS & SUBDIVISION PLANNERS  
KENDALL, FLORIDA

March 1966

Scale: 1" = 20'

LOCATION SHEET  
SHEET 1 OF 2

SHEETS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

HIBISCUS ST.

MAIN HIGHWAY

PLYMOUTH COURT

1 2 3 4 5

SURVEYOR'S NOTE:  
\* per - indicates Permanent Reference Monument.  
Distances shown are based on an assumed elevation.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, James L. Anderson and Eunice P. Anderson, his wife, have caused to be made the attached plat entitled "AVONSHIRE" the same being a replat of Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4, THE FOSTER AND SANCHEZ ADDITION TO COCONUT GROVE ESTATE recorded in Plat Book 5 at Page 27 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida, and that portion of Lot 6, EWANTON HEIGHTS as recorded in Plat Book 5 at Page 27 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida, that has heretofore been the County Record, to wit, that the Street and Highway as shown on the attached plat together with all existing land (Culture Plants, Trees and "Machinery Thereon") are hereby dedicated to the perpetual use of the public for proper purposes, reserving for themselves, their heirs, their assigns or assigns the reservation or reservations thereof whenever discontinued by law.

That the official zoning regulations now in effect or on the same may be from time to time changed or amended applicable to the area in which this subdivision is located shall be observed. That the easements 6 feet wide of the rear-sides of certain lots as shown by dashed lines on the attached plat is hereby reserved for the installation and maintenance of public utilities. No individual well will be permitted on any lot within this subdivision except for irrigation, swimming pools or air conditioners. The use of septic tanks will not be permitted in this subdivision after sewer lines from an approved central sewerage system are available. All deeds of conveyance shall contain the foregoing statement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 15th day of March, 1966.

Witnessed by: James L. Anderson and Eunice P. Anderson  
James L. Anderson Eunice P. Anderson, his wife

STATE OF FLORIDA I,郝德克 亨里, Before me this day personally appeared James L. Anderson and Eunice P. Anderson, his wife, to me well known to be the persons described in and who executed the foregoing instrument and who acknowledged that they executed the same freely and voluntarily for the uses and purposes therein expressed. My commission expires February 26, 1968.

Notary Public, State of Florida.

This plat was recommended for adoption by the City Planning and Zoning Board of Miami, Florida, this 27th day of MARCH 1966 by authority of Resolution No. 3722.

Approved: W. J. [Signature] Attest: J. J. [Signature] Signed: [Signature]  
Director Dept. of Public Works City Clerk City Manager

This plat was approved by the Dade County, Florida, Planning Dept. this 15th day of APRIL 1966 by Reginald P. Walker Director

This plat was approved by the Dade County, Florida, Zoning and Building Department this 15th day of APRIL 1966 by R. S. [Signature] Director

This plat was approved and the foregoing dedication was accepted and approved by Resolution No. 3722 passed and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners of Dade County, Florida, this 22nd day of APRIL 1966.

Approved: [Signature] Attest: [Signature] By [Signature]  
Director, Dade County Public Works Dept. Clerk of the Circuit Court Vice-Chairman

Filed for record this 29th day of April 1966 at 11:00 AM in Book 81 of Plat Book 23 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida, this plat complies with the requirements of the laws of the State of Florida, and Metropolitan Dade County, Florida.

E. A. Leatherman  
Clerk of the Circuit Court E. A. Leatherman

I HEREBY CERTIFY: that the attached plat entitled "AVONSHIRE" is a true and correct representation of the land as surveyed and platted under my direction, also that the Permanent Reference Monuments were in place on the 15th day of March 1966 in accordance with Section 7, Chapter 1878 (1978) Laws of the State of Florida.

Harold A. Schuler, Jr. Registered Land Surveyor No. 2601  
State of Florida

Avonshire subdivision, platted in March 1966 divided the original Cherokee Lodge estate into five separate properties. (Miami-Dade Property Records)

### LATER RESIDENTS

Following Mary's death in April 1924, her daughter Elmina McMillin sold Cherokee Lodge to William H. Avery of Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>10</sup> In 1927 at the onset of the Great Depression, the Averys moved out of the home following a foreclosure suit.<sup>11</sup>

Polk's *Miami City Directory* indicates that Richard Carsons Meeker (1869-1953) and his wife Helen Painter Meeker moved into the

<sup>10</sup> "At Cherokee Lodge," *Miami Herald*, May 22, 1925.  
<sup>11</sup> "Courthouse Notes," *Miami Herald*, April 20, 1927.

Cherokee Lodge in 1932. Meeker was born in Canada but at the time lived with his wife and son in Baltimore. Their son, William Painter Meeker (1902-1983) was a student at the Florida Lake-Placid School in Coconut Grove, founded by John M. Hopkins in 1905 and now the Northwood School in Lake Placid.

In 1953, following the death of Richard Meeker, his second wife, Marguerite Meeker, sold the home to Dr. James L. Anderson, a psychiatrist, and his wife Eunice. The Andersons re-platted the four-acre property into five separate lots in March 1966, and created the



The current owners of Cherokee Lodge's former carriage house, located at 3683 Hibiscus Street, extensively renovated the property, 2020. (Kolaya)

Northwest view of carriage house looking south on Hibiscus Street. (Kolaya)

Avonshire subdivision. The main home of Cherokee Lodge became lot 3, and the carriage house became lot 2 of the new subdivision.

In 1966, the Andersons unsuccessfully petitioned the City of Miami Commission for a zoning variance so that the couple could establish a 55-student private school on the property although on the east side of Main Highway, El Jardin had recently been converted into Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart. One commissioner expressed her concern that "economic pressures will soon end the single-family estates and homes that border Biscayne Bay, and will lead to a concrete wall of high-rise apartments." In the wake of the school debate, commissioners called for new zoning classifications in Coconut Grove to "preserve the unique charm and beauty" of the area.<sup>12</sup>

Two years later, in 1968, the Andersons sold Cherokee Lodge to Dr. Joel Gilbert, a radiologist at Coral Gables Hospital, and his wife, Charlene Gilbert, a former president of the Villagers. In 1979, while Dr. Gilbert and his 8-year old daughter were sleeping, a fire broke out in the home's second story – reportedly caused by a faulty light fixture in the closet of the master bedroom.<sup>13</sup> There were no injuries, but the fire caused extensive damage on the second and third floors. The Gilberts sold the home in 1983. The next owner, Eva Ruiz Khawly, held the deed, individually and later through a trust with her husband, James F. Khawly, until Feb. 1991 when current owners Cesar and Cheryl Guerrero purchased the property. The couple briefly operated a bed and breakfast at the home in the early 2000s.

## CARRIAGE HOUSE

Cherokee Lodge's original carriage and guesthouse, which was separated from the property in the late 1960s by the Andersons, was used primarily as a rental property. Its current owner, Roland C. Castro, purchased the property in 1991. Castro and his wife Deborah Scarpa have since expanded the structure while preserving and restoring a number of original details. In 2008, the Dade Heritage Trust recognized their efforts with its annual Award Winning Restoration.



<sup>12</sup> *New Grove Zoning Study Is Ordered.* *Miami Daily News*, February 7, 1966.

<sup>13</sup> Joanne Hooker, "Fire Damages Historic Grove Home," *Miami News*, February 27, 1979

## EL JARDIN (1918-20)

### 3747 MAIN HIGHWAY

**Boundary Description:** A portion of Lots D and E of the Ewanton Heights subdivision according to the plat recorded in Plat Book B at Page 52 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

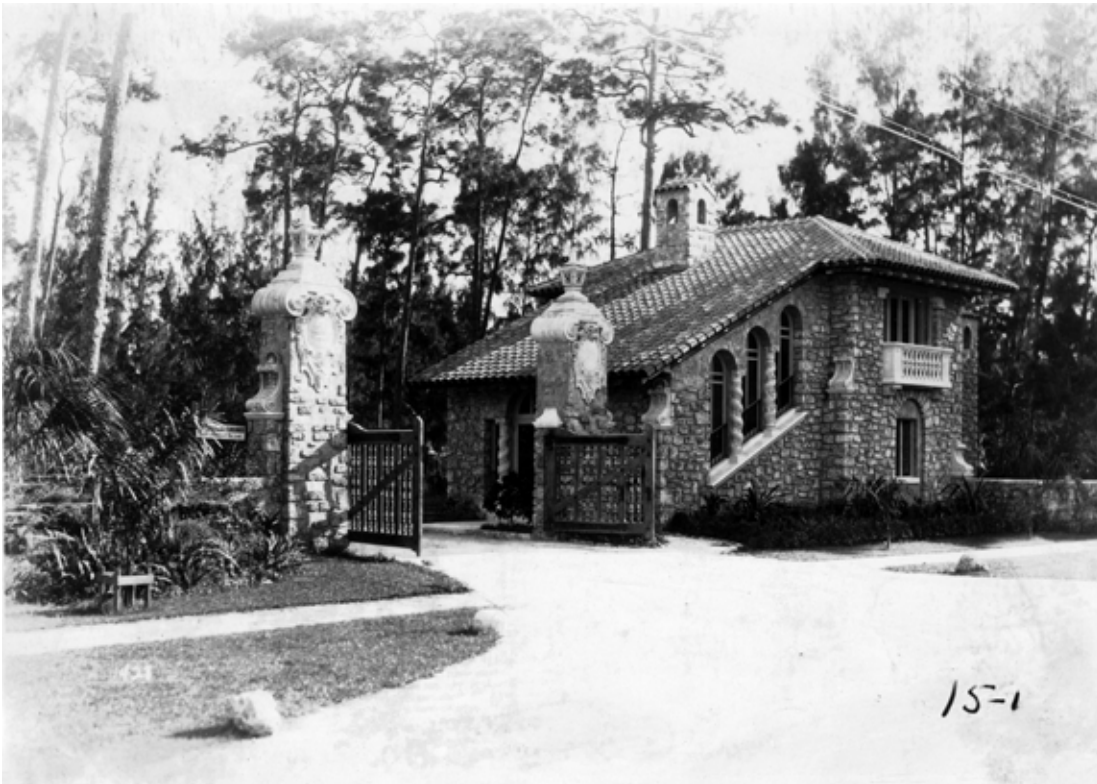
**Original Owner:** Adelaide Bindley Davidson

**Present Owner:** Society of the Sacred Heart

**Present Use:** Educational



El Jardin Postcard, c.1940s (Kolaya)



El Jardin's Gatehouse along Main Highway, c.1920s (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)

El Jardin, Spanish for “the garden,” is the home that launched Kiehnel’s Florida career and is often credited with inspiring the region’s Mediterranean trend. Situated on roughly nine acres along Main Highway in Coconut Grove (the eastern portions of lots D & E of the Ewanton Heights subdivision), the estate is perched atop a ridge of oolitic limestone with its gardens and eastern lawn gradually sloping down to Biscayne Bay. El Jardin has been called “the first real Mediterranean Revival building in South Florida, the first to use a picturesque montage of architectural elements, drawn from a range of sources – Spanish, Moorish, Tuscan, Venetian.”<sup>1</sup> For more than a century, the estate’s original beauty has been preserved and maintained, offering a priceless glimpse of the skill and creativity of its renowned architect.

As noted in the previous section, Richard Kiehnel arrived in South Florida in 1917 at the request of Pittsburgh client John Bindley (1846-1921), president of Pittsburgh Steel. It is not surprising that Bindley, a wealthy and worldly entrepreneur, with a love of art and architecture, would embrace a style that echoed his European travels. He was a patron of the Academy of Arts and American Art Society in Pittsburgh and New York and was known among his peers as “a man of esthetic tastes” and keenly “interested in the cultivation of the beautiful.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, South Florida’s natural environment stood in sharp contrast to the pollution and congestion of his native Pittsburgh. Like many prominent individuals of his generation, Bindley was attracted to the still relatively remote and undeveloped nature of South Florida. When architectural historian Marc Appleton wrote

about the Mediterranean-style taking root in Southern California, he could have easily been writing about Bindley and his South Florida peers when he observed that:

*New settlers were not pioneers in the traditional American sense but relatively sophisticated tourists who decided to stay on in this paradise. They would make new lives by adopting a new lifestyle in a place that, while civilized and safe, was still foreign and exotic enough to invite the*



Lattice pavilion along northern property line, c. 1920s. (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)

<sup>1</sup> Beth Dunlop, *Miami: Trends and Traditions* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1996), 40.

<sup>2</sup> “John Bindley Dies in Florida,” *Pittsburgh Press*, December 16, 1921.



ABOVE LEFT: Front façade of main villa, c.1920s, (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)



ABOVE RIGHT: View through entrance doors to the courtyard beyond, c. 1920s. (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)

*indulgence of their dreams.... to help them with this endeavor, they hired equally sophisticated architects who were knowledgeable about European architecture or educated in the Beaux Arts tradition.”<sup>3</sup>*

Bindley, who had been widowed decades earlier, purchased the home as a gift for his only daughter, Adelaide. She suffered from respiratory issues, which likely contributed to Bindley’s decision to select South Florida as their winter residence. Additionally, his niece Edna Allen Rickmers (1863-1956) resided in a grand bayfront home at 609 Brickell Avenue and reportedly had tried for years to convince her uncle to visit.

### CREATION OF EL JARDIN

Kiehnel seems to have been intricately involved in all aspects of construction and design, from the rafters to the furnishings, while Bindley decorated the home with art and antiques collected from his travels. Working together with contractor and builder John B. Orr, Kiehnel created what he called the “progenitor of the modern Mediterranean Style Home.”<sup>4</sup> Kiehnel noted at the time El Jardin was built, beginning in 1918, “the beautiful residences adorning Miami Beach and

the numbers of Mediterranean homes now found in Coral Gables” were “scarcely thought of.”<sup>5</sup>

The home was organized around a central court with the galleries of the first and second floors opening to a centrally placed Venetian fountain and ornamental pool. A large living room on the east face of the first floor links the dining room on the north with the billiard room/library on the south, each of which is fronted by a loggia. This entire suite of public rooms shares an upper terrace, overlooking the nearly Olympian sized pool to view the boathouse inlet and bay beyond. The elaborately decorated home integrates a number of architectural elements from various countries and cultures, with an emphasis on 16th century Spanish architecture in the grand entrance door, and most notably the living room fireplace. A number of decorative elements, including the antique stone and wrought iron lightening fixtures in the four corners of the patio, were imported from Europe -- many are still at El Jardin today.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

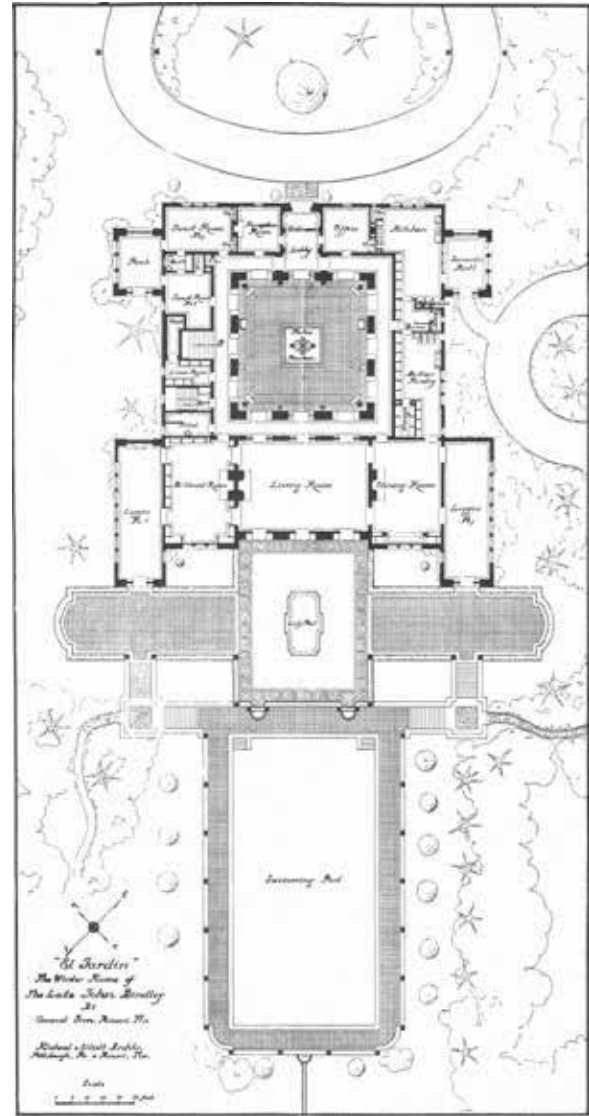
<sup>6</sup> Among the original decorations and furnishings preserved at El Jardin are the a 15th century fireplace brought from Ferrara, Italy; a Florentine marble table from Egypt, and a 12-foot long wooden table from an old Spanish monastery in Southern California. Haden Company of New York, known for its high-end reproductions of antique furniture, created a number of other pieces at the home. Kiehnel reportedly designed a number of woodwork pieces, lights and ornamental grills, which were then created in Hayden Co.’s Rochester workshop. “Magnificent Bindley Home Near Miami Is Really A Masterpiece,” *Miami Metropolis*, December 13, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture*, IX.

<sup>4</sup> Kiehnel, “El Jardin,” 4.



Eastern terraces, c.1920s. (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)



Orr's skilled handiwork is evident at nearly turn with intricate cast-stone detailing around the main entrance, corridors, fireplaces, and ceiling. "Variety seems to be the idea of the owner in all the carvings and special designs for woodwork, stone work, lights and ornamental grills," reported a front-page article in the *Miami Metropolis*, which labeled the home a "masterpiece" that "embodies the highest type of architecture."<sup>7</sup> Among the most distinct features of El Jardin is the Moorish Loggia, which according to architectural historian Jose Lozano is where Kiehnel's "high level of maturity and understanding of the diverse stylistic components which made up the Mediterranean style" are combined while "at the same time orchestrating all of them in a coherent architectural symphony that had never been played before."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the main villa at the center of the 9.1 acre property, Kiehnel designed a rustic gatehouse along Main Highway, a large propagation house or gazebo full of tropical plants and song birds on the northern edge of the property, a two-story, four car carriage house with servants quarters on the second floor, and a boathouse positioned aside the inlet carved into the property along waterfront.<sup>9</sup> The low stonewall surrounding the estate allowed passers-by a view of the flower gardens and a sunken garden in front of the propagation house.<sup>10</sup> It has long been a favorite location in Coconut Grove.



ABOVE: First floor plan. (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United*, 1928)

BELOW: El Jardin's living room, c.1920s. (Photograph by Richard B. Hoit, Carrollton School Archive)

7 Ibid.  
 8 Jose Lozano, "The Last Eclectics: Walter DeGarmo and Richard Kiehnel in South Florida," *South Eastern College Art Conference Review*, no. 5 (1990): 363-71.  
 9 While the gatehouse, main villa, and carriage house have been preserved. The gazebo was torn down in 1969, and the boathouse was likely lost following the Hurricane of 1926.  
 10 Most of the gazebo, which was by then in a state of disrepair, was demolished in 1969 when Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart constructed additional classrooms.

**El Jardin**  
Overlooking Bay and Ocean  
COCONUT GROVE



A view of the living room which is a reproduction of an old Spanish hall. The floor being of tile carrying an ornamental border and the arrangement of the furniture in this vast room is unusually home-like and the pictures and rugs add rich color notes.



Viewed from the Bay one sees this palatial home rising above its planted pool where it is reflected in the mirror-like water.

This palatial home with furnishings placed in the center of a ten-acre, beautifully landscaped garden, having 270 feet frontage on Dixie Highway and depth of 1,000 feet to Bay, which affords a view of both ocean and bay and enjoys full riparian rights, is now offered for sale at a price which will attract.

For full particulars and appointment to inspect see your realtor or  
A. J. RICHEY, Lexington Hotel.

**RICHEY - BARNHART**  
REALTORS

MIAMI, FLORIDA      TELEPHONE 5105      3812 Fourth Ave.      PITTSBURGH, PA.

### BINDLEY FAMILY

While El Jardin was under construction, Bindley also purchased 120 acres of farmland along Red Road, near the intersection of Coral Way, to provide fruits, vegetables and dairy products to his new home. Kiehnel reportedly designed the structures on the Bindley farm in the "Spanish style," including a small residence, poultry house, and dairy barn. Several years later the structures were demolished to create the Schenley Park subdivision planned to be sold amid the 1920s real estate boom.

Bindley and his daughter Adelaide spent their first winter at El Jardin in January 1920. They hosted several events during their time at the home, including small gatherings for tea and bridge as well as boating excursion on their yacht, the Surpass, which was moored behind the home. On February 7, 1921 the Bindleys hosted the annual St Stephen's Garden Party, which marked the first time the estate was open to the public. That event attracted the attention of local papers, as well as society pages in Pittsburgh and New York. More than 2,000 people reportedly attended the party.

That same month Bindley announced his daughter Adelaide's engagement to Anglican minister, Reverend George Davidson. The couple married in June 1921 and following an extended honeymoon in Europe, moved to Los Angeles.<sup>11</sup> In the fall the 75-year old Bindley became ill and traveled to El Jardin in the hope that the climate would be restorative. He passed away at the home on December 16, 1921. Reverend Benjamin W. Soper of St. Stephen's presided over the memorial service on the lawn of the estate with Adelaide and her brother Edward at his side.

### RICHEY FAMILY

In 1925 Adelaide Bindley Davidson sold the home to real estate investor Alfred J. Richey and his wife Dorothy for nearly \$1,000,000. The Richeys and their four children, Gertrude, Robert, William, and Jayne, spent approximately five years at the home – the only family to live at the residence year-round. As part of the purchase of El Jardin, Richey also acquired the Bindley farm along Red Road and began developing the neighborhood of Schenley Park.

During the Richey's time at El Jardin, amid the exuberance and joie de vivre of the Jazz Age, Miami's social pages were full of festivities and events hosted by the family on the property. El Jardin was the scene of everything from large pool parties to musical events and theatrical performances. Following the collapse of Miami's real estate market in the late 1920s, however, the Richeys could no longer meet their mortgage payments and they were evicted from the property in early 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Reverend George Davidson was rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in Los Angeles.



ABOVE: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, February 22, 1925)

BELOW: Dorothy Richey and her children pose in the living room, c.1925. (Carrollton School Archive)





News article announcing the start of Carrollton School, initially named Convent of the Sacred Heart, at El Jardin. (*Miami Herald*, February 1962; Carrollton School Archives)

### EL JARDIN NURSERY

El Jardin remained vacant for several years, with the exception of the nursery in the large gazebo on the property that was managed by the estate's longtime superintendent, Michael Fascell (1887-1954), an Italian-born landscaper and uncle of future Congressman Dante B. Fascell. As depicted in local advertisements from the time, Fascell began operating a nursery at the property in late 1928 until 1933, he grew and sold orchids and other tropical plants out of the gazebo, which was open to the public.

### CITIES SERVICE (CITGO)

In 1933, Adelaide Bindley, who had reclaimed ownership of the home from the Richeys through foreclosure, sold El Jardin and all its furnishings for \$45,000, a small fraction of what her father spent little more than a decade earlier, to the Florami Holding Company, a subsidiary of Cities Service Company (rebranded as CITGO in 1965). The company's founder and president, Col. Henry Latham Doherty (1870-1939), was one of the country's wealthiest men, having built a public utilities empire. There is no evidence Doherty ever lived at El Jardin, but before his death in 1939, he passed the estate to his Cities Services successor, William "Pete" Alton Jones (1891-1962). Jones, like Doherty, was a pioneer in the development of the natural gas and petroleum industries. Together with his wife, Nettie Marvin Jones (1891-1991), and their two daughters, Elizabeth and Patricia, Jones wintered at the estate until the early 1940s. A decade later, after Jones and his wife moved to a new home on La Gorce Island in Miami Beach, City Services began using El Jardin as a retreat for top executives. For nearly two decades employees and their families traveled to Miami and enjoyed the property for two week sojourns.

### CARROLLTON SCHOOL OF THE SACRED HEART

In September 1961, the Society of the Sacred Heart approached Cities Services to discuss purchasing the bayfront property. Miami Bishop Coleman F. Carroll had invited the women of the Society to explore opening a school in Miami and early in 1961, amid Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution forced the Society to close two schools on the island providing further motivation for a new school in South Florida. Jones agreed to sell the estate for a sum of \$300,000, and through its Miami attorney's the Society successfully petitioned the City of Miami for permission to operate a school at El Jardin. The Villa's many served as classrooms by day and a home for the nuns at night; the original Moorish loggia became a chapel. Named Carrollton, in honor of the Bishop, classes officially began on the property in January 1962. Other than an early yard sale to raise funds for the fledging school, the Society has retained all the remaining original furnishings and is deeply committed to preserving the El Jardin for future generations.



Renovations of El Jardin's living room are part of the ongoing preservation efforts undertaken by the school. (Carrollton School Archive)



Front façade, 2005 (Photograph by Steven Brooks)

# MEAD RESIDENCE (1921)

## 3700 HIBISCUS STREET

**Boundary Description:** Lots 9, 10, and 11 in Block B of the Second Amended Plat of Coconut Grove Park according to the plat recorded in Plat Book 1 at Page 62 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** Maurice A. Mead

**Present Owner:** Elliot H. Scherker and Karen M. Gottlieb

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



Front façade visible from Hibiscus Street. (Kolaya)

**M. A. MEAD & CO.,**  
**Watches at Wholesale,**  
**No. 104 State-st., Chicago.**

The ONLY EXCLUSIVE WATCH DEALERS west of New York City.  
 Watches and Watch Cases exclusively.

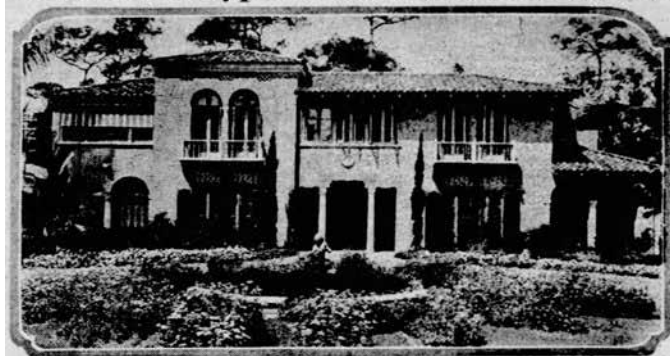
**MEADE TO BUILD \$50,000 HOME AT COCONUT GROVE**

A contract has been awarded to John B. Orr for the erection and completion of the winter home of M. A. Meade, Esq., at Coconut Grove. The house is of an attractive Italian design, built of terra cotta tiles and finished in stucco and cut stone, with a Spanish tile roof.

It is a building that will take its place among the many handsome homes in the district and will cost approximately \$50,000. The architects of the building are Kiehnel and Elliott, of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Miami. This is the firm of architects that designed the handsome home of John Binley, also of Coconut Grove.

The interior features will be of special design, though they are not as yet fully decided upon.

**This Home Is Typical of New Architecture Here**



—Photo by Fowler  
 This artistic residence at Hibiscus and Palm aves., Coconut Grove, is the Florida home of M. A. Meade of Chicago. Kiehnel & Elliott were the designing and supervising architects and John B. Orr the general contractor. Similar homes can be constructed by Miami builders for \$40,000.

ABOVE: M.A. Mead & Co. Advertisement (*Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1889)

MIDDLE: News article shortly before the start of construction. Note Mead's name is misspelled. (*Miami Herald*, May 28, 1921)

BELOW: The Mead residence featured in a local news article on the Mediterranean style (*Miami Daily News*, September 16, 1928)

The Mead Residence, currently dubbed "Casa Mamey," sits on the corner of Hibiscus and Palmetto, one block west of Main Highway in Coconut Grove. Built in 1921, the home is a classic example of Mediterranean architecture. It is among the first moderately sized, relative to larger estates such as El Jardin, homes constructed in that style that would soon become ubiquitous, and the iconic images of life in Coral Gables, Miami Beach, and Miami Shores.

**MAURICE AND PAULINE MEAD**

The home was originally built for Chicago businessman Maurice Alexander Mead (1854-1934), president of M.A. Mead & Co, a wholesale watch company.<sup>1</sup> A father of three, Mead lived with his second wife, Pauline B. Mead (1865-1950), in Evanston, Illinois.<sup>2</sup> The couple first visited Miami in December 1915. Like many wealthy tourists of that era, the Meads stayed at the fashionable Halycon Hall Hotel, which once stood at the corner of NE 2nd Avenue and Flagler Street, and later at the Royal Palm Hotel, Henry Flagler's approximation of the epitome of luxury in early Miami. They returned to South Florida the following winter season but bypassed the hotels of Miami in favor of a bungalow in Coconut Grove, and perhaps finding this lifestyle more to their taste, returned to the quiet community each winter thereafter.<sup>3</sup> The Meads became active members of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and joined the area's close-knit society.

**CONSTRUCTION OF "BEN VENUTO"**

In March 1921, several years after his first visit, Mead paid \$5,000 for three adjacent lots on Hibiscus Road in the recently platted subdivision of Coconut Grove Park.<sup>4</sup> Construction began several months later, with the *Miami Herald* reporting that "Maurice A. Mead has been coming to Coconut Grove for the past seven years and had finally decided that it far surpasses any other place in his knowledge for a winter residence and he will spend probably half his time here."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to selecting Richard Kiehnel as architect, Mead hired contractor John B. Orr to oversee construction of the home, which reportedly would "take its place among the many handsome homes in the district" at a cost of \$50,000.<sup>6</sup> Orr, known for his detailed masonry

1 The company advertised as the "only exclusive watch dealers west of New York City," Advertisement for M.A. Mead & Co., *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 1, 1889.  
 2 Maurice Mead was born in Union City, NJ. In 1877 he married Lillian Horton Evans (1854-1887), they had three children together: Maurice Evan Mead, who died as an infant, Lillian Evans Mead (1879) and Richard Armstrong Mead (1882-1963). In 1888, a year after the death of his first wife, Maurice Mead married Pauline B Mead (1865-1950). They had one child together, Marion Lorraine Mead (1890-1978), and were married for nearly five decades.  
 3 "South Cocoonut Grove Has Interesting News," *Miami Metropolis*, January 14, 1916.  
 4 Richard Ashby sold lots 9,10, 11 in Block B of Coconut Grove Park. Real Estate Transfers, *Miami Metropolis*, March 3, 1921.  
 5 "Mead Will Build A Handsome Home," *Miami Herald*, March 21, 1921.  
 6 "Meade to Build \$50,000 Home at Coconut Grove," *Miami Herald*, May 28, 1921.

# Spanish Type of Homes Blends Into South Florida Landscape

Color Effects Are in Harmony With Nature Says Richard Kiehnel

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** About 14 years ago, construction was started on the first modern, Spanish style home to be built in Florida. It was the home of James Deering at Coconut Grove, designed by New York architects, with Phineas E. Paist, Miami architect, in charge of construction. Richard Kiehnel, Miami architect, was quick to see the advantages of such a style of architecture for Florida, and used it on buildings in Coconut Grove. Other architects followed in the use of this style of houses in South Florida. In the following article, Mr. Kiehnel tells why this type of architecture is peculiarly fitted to Florida.]

By **RICHARD KIEHNEL**  
(Kiehnel & Elliott, Architects, Miami)  
Styles and periods of Europe have been influential in the evolution of certain types of architectural design in America, but on account of the vast area of this country and the great variation in climatic and social conditions, it is natural that different styles must predominate in certain sections of the country.

Florida and Southern California, originally both Spanish possessions and with climatic conditions so similar to those found in Mediterranean countries, naturally feel the influence of Spanish architecture.

Because of social and other conditions, the southeast coast of Florida, in particular, was easily influenced, and is now evolving a type of architecture based on the Spanish style, so appropriate to the locality and its semi-tropical climate. It makes possible a home permitting the fullest enjoyment of Florida's many hours of sunshine.

About 14 years ago, the first homes of this style were built in the Coconut Grove section and this type has rapidly spread over a large section of south Florida. It appeared in Palm Beach about 10 years ago. The Palm Beach and Miami districts, however, remain today more representative of this type of building than other sections of the state, but the movement

has spread even to the northern part of the state, particularly as regards interiors.

And speaking of cooperation this applies also to the landscape gardener. It is necessary that he work in unity of purpose with the plasterers, the painters and decorators, to produce harmonious effects. It is up to the workman to follow the instructions of the architect in combining the colors of the many materials used, such as quarry key rock, specially developed artificial stones or beautiful stuccos.

Tinting must harmonize with all these materials. Colors used in woodwork and tiles, wrought iron and roof covering all must blend to produce a harmonious whole.

South Florida, however, is the locality really best adapted to such a type of architecture because of its semi-tropical climate. It is, of course, necessary to adapt the building to living conditions so necessary in the modern American home. This problem has been solved to a large extent by leading architects in this district.

Previous to the adoption of the Spanish type here, little color has been used in home construction, but the progressive architects who have studied the effects of the sunlight, bright foliage, and contrasts in water colors in ocean and bay have copied nature in color effects with happy results.

To comprehend such a style of architecture in its ornamental aspects one must live in surroundings of this type. It is for this reason that the ablest architects require to live in the semi-tropics long enough to comprehend the part that color effects play in building designs. Their problem is to design a home that will harmonize with tropical foliage and the changing hues of sea and landscape.

In a measure, the exterior becomes more important than the interior design, but once the correct relation of house to site is obtained, although certain limitations may be put on the plan, the main problem has been solved.

So the tendency toward Spanish architecture which has developed in this part of Florida has been natural. It only needed a few leaders to guide the profession in the right direction.

It should be said that while the architect takes the lead in building operations, he needs the support of honest, sincere and willing contractors and craftsmen in all the various branches to make his efforts successful.

Announcement that plans to offer a full technical course, including various forms of craftsmanship, are under consideration was made by Colonel Williams. It is probable, however, that such a course will not be offered this term.

Enrollment at the academy is already under way, with a number of students making early application for admission.

The new home, completed in November 1921, was initially named "Ben Venuto" welcome in Italian.<sup>8</sup> The structure is a scaled-down version of nearby El Jardin, and features a number of elements that became hallmarks of Mediterranean homes, including arched windows with ornamental balconies, decorative stucco work, particularly around the entrance, a painted stucco exterior, which currently is a bright coral hue, and a barrel tile roof. Additionally, the Kiehnel used a hollow clay tile construction tile for the walls, typical for northern homes of this size and era. The two-story home originally had five bedrooms, four bathrooms, and a separate two-story carriage house with a 3-room apartment above the garage. It was wired for electricity by the same firm, E.A. Robinson Electrical, which worked on El Jardin and would later complete the Semple home.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Personal Mention, Miami Herald, November 13, 1921.

<sup>9</sup> "E.A. Robinson Oldest Electrical Store," Miami Herald, January 27, 1922.



The Mead residence is located in the "Coconut Grove Park" subdivision immediately west of Main Highway in south Coconut Grove. (Miami-Dade Property Records)

News article written by Richard Kiehnel regarding Mediterranean architecture (Miami Daily News, September 16, 1928)

and woodworking elements, had first collaborated with Kiehnel on the construction of El Jardin, and later regularly listed both homes, as well as the La Brisa, the nearby John and Eleanor Semple residence, in company advertisements. Kiehnel described his colleague as a "superior contractor...as shown in the erection of the Bindley, Mead and Semple residences in Coconut Grove" and noted that Orr was "more of a professional man and a master as it was known in the olden times in Europe."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Advertisement, Miami Metropolis, January 27, 1922.



**COCONUT GROVE** property located at 3700 Hibiscus st. has been sold by Fred and Lola Tushbant to Mrs. Lenora W. Parker. Deed stamps indicated the sale price was \$33,000. The transaction was handled by Mildred B. Callahan, Real-

tor. The house of hollow tile construction is located on a lot 150 by 140 feet and contains five bedrooms and four baths. There is in addition a two-car garage with three room apartment and tile bath.



**COCONUT GROVE**

A glorious home in a gorgeous tropical setting. Approximately a half acre of Royal Palms, Coconut, and Meliuzum trees. Bamboo, Hibiscus, and Bougainvillea, and a myriad fruit trees. Tiled throughout on first floor. Artistic French fireplace in living room. Five bedrooms, three baths, and ample closet space on the second floor. Two-car garage of concrete and stucco, with a lovely three-room apartment above.

OPEN FOR INSPECTION TODAY 2 TO 5 P. M.

**3700 HIBISCUS AVE.**

LOCATION DIRECTIONS

Just Off Male Highway At Bryan Memorial Church

**PRICE \$35,000**

TO REPRODUCE TODAY: \$45,000

BROKERS CO-OPERATE

**IRVING J. THOMAS CO. REALTORS**

2326 Male Highway Coconut Grove Phone 4-6471

LEFT: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Daily News*, January 31, 1954)

RIGHT: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Daily News*, January 22, 1950)

**PETTICOAT LANE**

Pauline Mead, an avid gardener, planted ornamental flowers in front of the home throughout the 1920s and 30s. Together with her good friend and neighbor on the opposite corner, Katherine Soden Bigler at La Solana (3670 Hibiscus), the corner of Hibiscus and Palmetto was known for its beauty and a popular spot for tourists on day trips from Miami. In 1931 the City of Miami briefly changed the name of Palmetto Avenue, from Hibiscus Avenue to Douglas Road, to “Petticoat Lane” at the request of Bigler. She credited the name to Coconut Grove pioneer Helen Lester who reportedly said the pink phlox and blue larkspur were so pretty along the road that “she always picks up her skirts and walks gently.”<sup>10</sup> The name was changed back to Palmetto Avenue the following year after others residents complained to city commissioners they resented the new name and would “flush to the implications of it.”<sup>11</sup>

**LATER RESIDENTS**

Maurice Mead died in 1934 at the age of 79. His wife, Pauline, continued to winter at the home until the late 1940s, when the house was placed for sale. A real estate advertisement from November 1947 lists the home for \$35,000.<sup>12</sup> Buyers, Fred and Lola Tushbant owned a sporting goods store in Detroit and in 1954, sold the home to the widowed Lenora William Parker for \$33,000 Parker’s husband, Orion Creet Parker, a prominent builder and contractor in Tallahassee, was responsible for the construction of the original Governor’s Mansion in 1906. Following Lenora Parker’s death in 1961, Miami-Dade property records indicate the home changed hands numerous times; past

owners and/or residents include: Coman and Audrey L. Bayer, Richard and Adrienne Southerland, Stuart E. and Mary Wilson, Herbert and Magdalene Johnson, William Higginson, Kathryn Anne Lewis, Guillermo and Ellen Heredia and, finally, its current owners, Elliot Scherker and wife Karen M. Gottlieb, who purchased the estate in August 2003 for \$1,482,500. Scherker is a prominent appellate attorney with the Greenberg Traurig law firm in Miami.

From the exterior it does not appear the Mead Residence has been altered significantly since its initial construction. City of Miami building permits indicate a pond in the rear of the property was converted into a swimming pool and spa in 1996. A fence was also added around the perimeter of the lot.



Front façade visible from Hibiscus Street. (Kolaya)

10 “Women Discuss Trial to Keep Ocean Road,” *Miami Herald*, Feb. 13, 1925.

11 “Petticoat Lane Goes Way of Old Namesake,” *Miami Herald*, January 15, 1932.

12 Real Estate Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, Nov. 2, 1947.

# LA BRISA (1921)

## 3551 MAIN HIGHWAY

**Boundary Description:** Lot 12 of the plat of a subdivision of Government Lot 1 according to the plat recorded in Deed Book D, page 253; and lots 1, 2, 13, and 14 of Robert's Subdivision according to the plat recorded in Plat Book A, page 21 of the public records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. [note: not a full description]

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** John and Eleanor Semple

**Present Owner:** Ransom Everglades School Inc.

**Present Use:** Educational



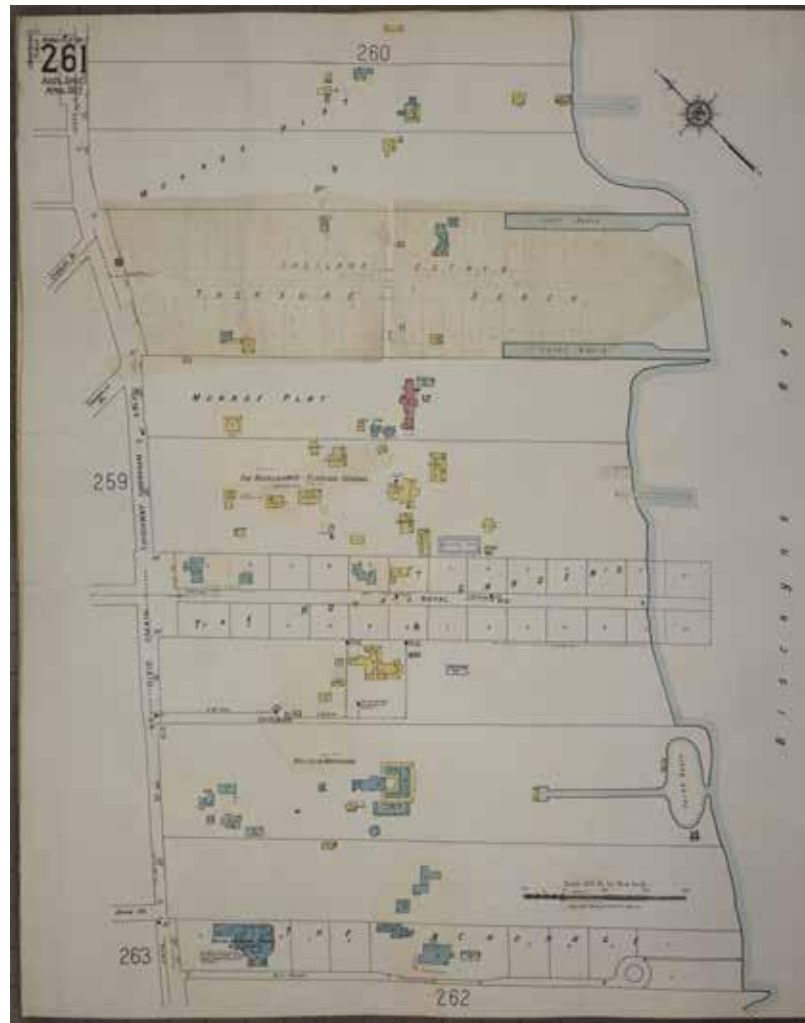
LEFT: Front façade (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United*, 1928)



RIGHT: Rear elevation (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United*, 1928)

Few properties in Miami rival the famed La Brisa, the breeze in Spanish. The 6.9 acre estate, renowned for its beauty in its era as well as for its historical and architectural significance in the present day.

The property featured a large freshwater spring, aptly dubbed “Big Spring,” which once bubbled up from Biscayne Bay. The spring, located at the head of a 536-foot inlet bordering the northern edge of the property, attracted Native Americans and the area’s earliest settlers to the site, and reportedly supplied fresh water to American troops during the Spanish-American War.<sup>1</sup> Two decades later, architect Richard Kiehnel designed one of his most well-known Mediterranean residences atop the ancient oolitic limestone ridge running south through the property, 23 feet above sea level. The estate, completed in 1921, was featured in the monograph of Kiehnel & Elliot’s Florida work and the architect’s nomination for AIA fellowship, as well as numerous architectural publications over the years. In recent years the property was one of the most expensive single-family residences sold in Miami. While the villa has undergone a number of renovations and expansions, including significant work at the time of this report’s publication, it nonetheless retains many of the features associated with its historic beauty.



Lot 12 of Munroe's Plat depicts the Semple estate. April 1927 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Miami, Dade County, Florida; Library of Congress)

## PROPERTY HISTORY

While the land attracted Native Americans and wreckers cruising the coast, the first settler on the site of today’s 3551 Main Highway is believed to be John Dubose, the first keeper of the Cape Florida lighthouse.<sup>2</sup> According to Miami historian Arva Moore Parks, Dubose and his family likely cleared the land and constructed the first house on the property around 1826. Ten years later Debose abandoned the area, and his post, after Seminole Indians attacked the lighthouse.

The two decades of conflict that followed between the Seminoles and the US Government became known as the Second (1836-1842) and Third Seminole Wars (1855-1857). Not long after Debose’s departure, Peter Johnson operated a coontie mill on the property. Johnson and an assistant, Edward Farrell, were working at the mill in 1856, when they were ambushed and killed. Once hostilities with the Seminoles ceased, Edmund Beasley settled in the area with his wife, Anna.

Based on Parks’s research, the Beasley residence was likely located on the land between 3551 Main Highway and the current Barnacle property. On November 14, 1868, Beasley filed the area’s first homestead application for 160 acres of land, which included present day 3551 Main Highway, as well of much of today’s Coconut

<sup>1</sup> John T. Farris, “Miami, the Magic City,” *Miami Metropolis*, July 1, 1920.  
<sup>2</sup> Arva Moore Parks, “From Scrububs to La Brisa,” January 5, 2017.

Grove (from 27th Avenue to the area just south of the Moorings). In 1877, pioneer John Frow purchased the entire Beasley homestead from Beasley’s widow, Anna, at a cost of \$100. Frow was the son of Simeon Frow, an early keeper of the Cape Florida lighthouse and among the first non-native settlers of Coconut Grove. John Frow in turn sold portions of the land to his sisters, including the 6.9 acres of present-day La Brisa. He sold that piece to his sister, Catherine (“Kitty”) and her husband, George L. Roberts. The Roberts platted the land and lived on the property for several years before selling it in 1886 to Kirk and Mary Barr Munroe.

## KIRK AND MARY BARR MUNROE | “SCRUBUBS”

While on their honeymoon, the Munroes cruised down the Indian River from St. Augustine into Lake Worth, in today’s Palm Beach County. The adventurous couple originally intended to settle in Lake Worth. However, the following year they visited Coconut Grove and immediately decided to relocate there, in a lush property along Biscayne Bay. In 1887 they moved their new home, which they named





Aerial view looking west from Biscayne Bay over of Munroe estate (center), Ransom Everglades is visible on the left, and Camp Biscayne on the left. Note the tower on the Munroe property, which the author used as his study.c.1910s (University of Miami Libraries, Special Collections, Finlay B. Matheson Papers)

“Scrububs,” on the former Roberts property immediately south of Ralph Munroe’s property. Amid the dense hammock and palmettos, the land resembled a tropical jungle. *The Miami Herald* decades later described the property as “one of the show places of this vicinity,” noting that “thousands of tourists and all of Miami have on innumerable occasion delighted in the wealth of tropical shrubbery and flowers, and the native trees growing there.”<sup>3</sup>

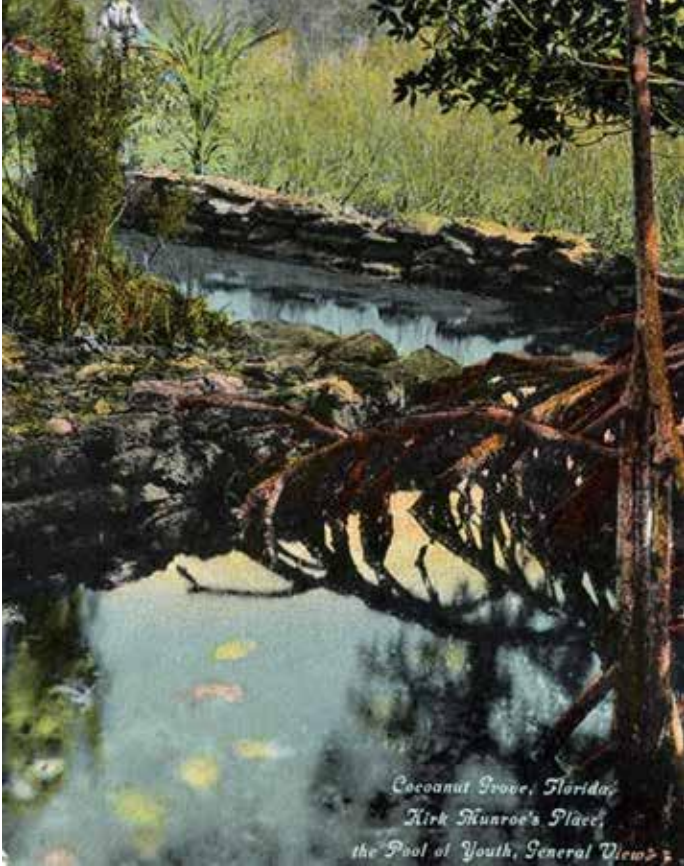
The Munroes became central figures in the development of this fledgling community. Kirk, a successful author of children’s fiction, celebrated the area’s natural environment as well as adventures with Native Americans and pioneers in his stories. Mary Barr, the daughter of author Amelia Barr, immersed herself in civic and environmental activities. Both husband and wife, who never had children of their

own, played a pivotal road in establishing and fostering several Coconut Grove institutions, including the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club, the Coconut Grove Library, the Housekeeper’s Club, and were reputed to be among the area’s first and staunchest environmental advocates.

As Coconut Grove expanded, so did the Munroe home, which became a gathering spot for young and old alike. Kirk Munroe, among the most famous children’s authors of his day, wrote his books from his study at the top of a windmill tower at the rear of the property, which he named “Tower of London.”<sup>4</sup> In 1898 Kirk Munroe reportedly sold the water from the spring on his property to the United States government for the sailors anchored in Key West fighting in the Spanish-American War.

3 “Million Dollars in Aggregate of Day,” *Miami Herald*, April 21, 1920.

4 Helen Muir, “Once Upon A Time,” *The Miami News*, May 16, 1964.



Postcard of Kirk and Mary Barr Munroe's property, c.1910s.

## JOHN AND ELEANOR SEMPLE

In April 1920, with Mary in poor health, the Munroes sold the Scrububs, their home of 35 years, to John Bonner and Eleanor Semple at a cost of \$100,000. The Munroes in turn moved to a smaller residence further south on Leafy Way, which they purchased from early Grove resident De Forest Christiance for \$35,000.<sup>5</sup>

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, John B. Semple (1869-1947) attended Pennsylvania Military Academy and graduated from Lehigh University in 1882 with a bachelor's degree. He worked as chemist for several years before forming the Sterling Varnish Company with two partners. In February 1898, John Semple married Eleanor Shinn Semple (1869-1942), also a Pennsylvania native. The couple had two children: John Bonner Semple (1899-1976) and Eleanor Patterson Semple (1903-1939). The family lived in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

In 1897, Semple filed a patent for the "Semple Shell Torch," a tracer that allowed for the "rapid and accurate firing [of] projectiles at night."<sup>6</sup> In 1905, he received the John Scott Legacy Premium and Medal from the Franklin Institute for the innovation. Semple sold his interest in the Sterling Varnish Company and established the John B. Semple Company to manufacture the tracer and several other related inventions. During World War I Allied forces used Semple's tracer extensively to check the accuracy of artillery fire.<sup>7</sup> Following the 1918 armistice, he closed his company and retired from business activities. In

<sup>5</sup> "De Forest Christiance Home Bought by Munroe," *The Miami Metropolis*, April 21, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes from Committee on Science and the Arts, June 7, 1905, *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, Volume 160, 77.

<sup>7</sup> "J.B. Semple, Devised Tracer of Shell Fire," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1947.

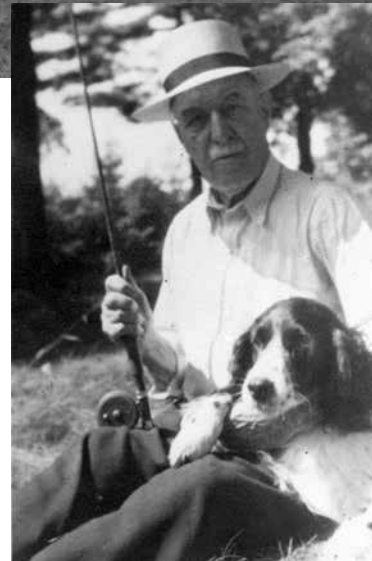
later years, Semple became a trustee of the Carnegie Institute and an amateur ornithologist. He sponsored numerous bird expeditions across North America.<sup>8</sup>

## CONSTRUCTION OF LA BRISA

The Semple family's first reported visit to South Florida was in March 1920.<sup>9</sup> They stayed at the Royal Palm Hotel. One month later the Semples purchased the Munroe property in Coconut Grove. Although La Brisa, named for the breeze coming off Biscayne Bay, became one of Kiehnel's best-known residential projects, the architect received the

<sup>8</sup> "Obituaries: J.B Semple, Carnegie Trustee," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, November 14, 1947.

<sup>9</sup> Jefferson Bell, "People And Events," *Miami Herald*, March 18, 1920.



ABOVE: Munroe's home, named Scrububs, c.1895 (Source unknown)

BELOW: Portrait of John B. Semple (1869-1947) in Coconut Grove. (Source unknown)

commission only after the original architect died suddenly while visiting the property. In December 1920, shortly after purchasing the land from the Munroes, the Semples hired Pittsburgh architect Frederick A. Russell to design their winter residence.<sup>10</sup> Russell reportedly completed plans for the home and was visiting the site in February 1921 when he collapsed and never regained consciousness.<sup>11</sup> Following Russell's death, the Semples hired Kiehnel. Earlier that month the family attended the opening of the neighboring El Jardin estate, where Kiehnel was also a guest.<sup>12</sup>

By early summer of that year a "large force of workmen" was on the property installing an extensive irrigation system and extending the main drive to the bay.<sup>13</sup> While waiting for their home to be finished, the Semples stayed at the original Munroe home, which seems to have been situated further west on the property; that home was torn down once the new one was finished.

Completed by January 1922, La Brisa was considered "one of the most picturesque and elaborate estates in the grove."<sup>14</sup> Kiehnel worked with contractor John Orr to create a richly detailed Mediterranean style home, including elaborate interior woodworking, still visible today, and intricate exterior stuccowork, which was

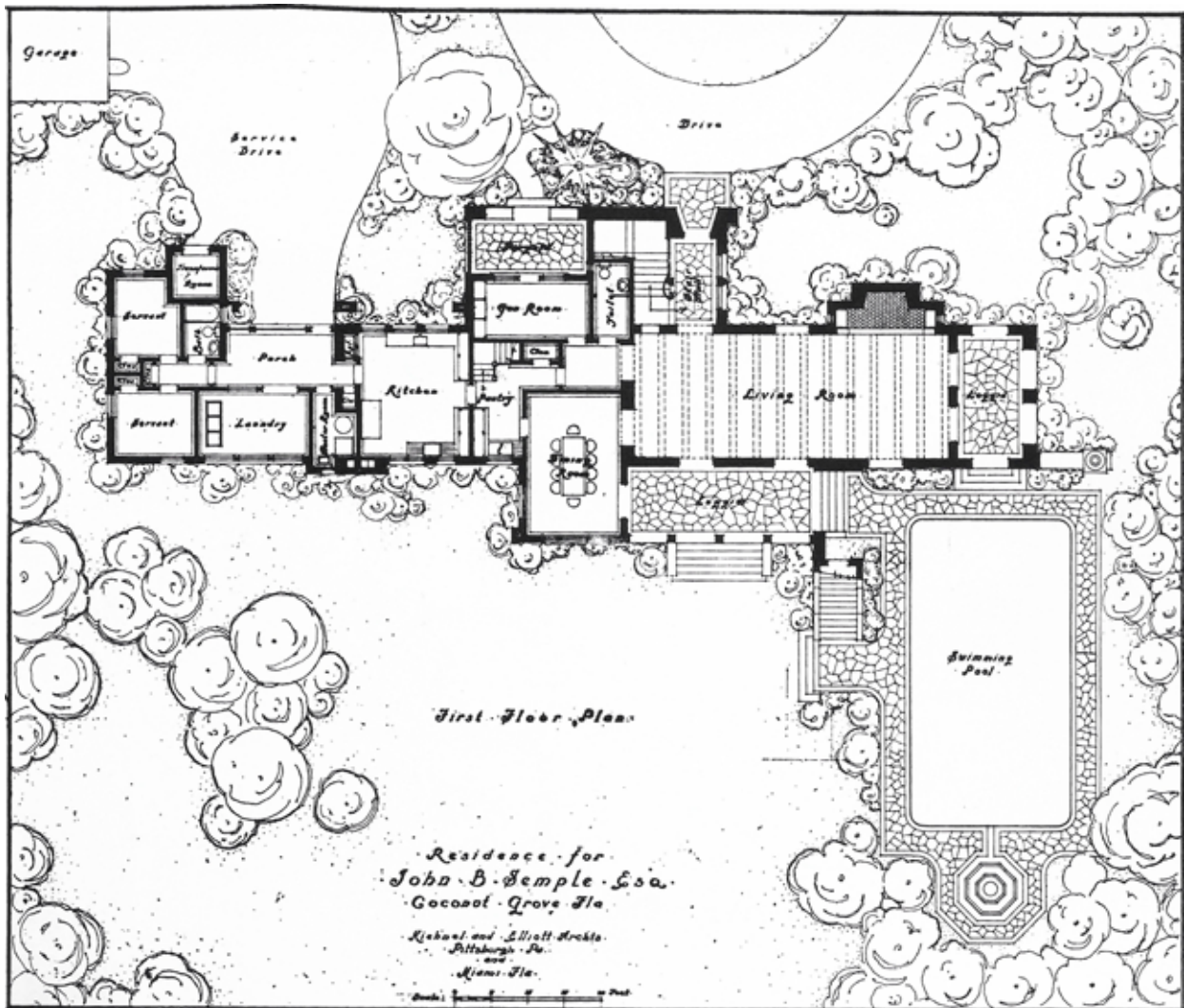
<sup>10</sup> Coconut Grove, *Miami Herald*, December 22, 1922.

<sup>11</sup> "Architect Suddenly Dies," *Miami Herald*, February 26, 1921.

<sup>12</sup> Violet Stephens, "El Jardin Throngs With Hundreds of Visitors Monday," *Miami Metropolis*, February 8, 1921.

<sup>13</sup> "Old Munroe Place Being Converted in Modern Home," *Miami Metropolis*, May 13, 1921.

<sup>14</sup> "Coconut Grove Keeping Pace With Miami in New Building," *Miami Metropolis*, Jan. 13, 1922.



First floor plan. (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United*, 1928)

**LA BRISA, SETTING FOR ST. STEPHEN'S ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY**



La Brisa, the home of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Semple, at Coconut Grove, was the setting for the annual Garden Party of St. Stephen's Guild yesterday. The home is set in a tropical garden overlooking Biscayne Bay. The architecture is Spanish. Native stone has been used with good effect and the architect, Richard Kiehnel, has handled color admirably in it. A large swimming pool reflects the blue of the sky and the banks of flowers that grow close to its rim.—Photograph by Eric Collin of The Herald Staff.



Photograph: Klara Farkas

Julia Allen Field, a former superintendent of Crandon Park Zoo, is now one of its biggest critics. She is pictured here in her work room at the Field estate in Coconut Grove

**Garden Party**  
 BENEFIT  
**ST. STEPHEN'S GUILD**  
 WILL BE HELD AT  
**"LA BRISA"**  
*The winter home of Mrs. John B. Semple.*  
**Coconut Grove**  
**Wednesday, Jan. 17th**  
 3:00 to 6:00  
**Admission \$1.00—Including Dancing**  
 Tickets for Sale at

Miami Chamber of Commerce	Gralynn Apartments
Royal Palm Hotel	Whaler's Jewelry Store
McAllister Hotel	Philipp's Music Co.
Haleyon Hotel	McDonald Furniture Company
B. P. O. Elks	C. & L. Cafeteria
Ask Mr. Foster	Lubin's Restaurant
Quail Roost Inn	Y. W. C. A.
Rogers Pharmacy	Red Bird Market

*The grounds' seven acres include mangroves, lawns, wooded patches and a Spanish Revival house built in the 1920s by architect Richard Kiehnel.*

**Estate in Grove put up for sale**

**By PEGGY ROGERS**  
*Herald Staff Writer*

A stately Coconut Grove estate, former home of a noted author and site of a prewar Spanish Revival mansion, is up for sale and tentatively slated for subdivision into a dozen lots.

It is not yet clear whether the house at 3551 Main Highway, will be restored or demolished. A proposal submitted to the city earlier this year had the 1920s-era house being razed to make way for new homes.

A new, but still tentative, proposal submitted to the city would have it restored and occupied as part of the development.

Author Kirk Munroe, a Miami resident of the early 1900s who penned popular books for boys, once owned the private estate. Now occupied by Julia Field, widow of noted anthropologist Henry Field, the property fronts Main Highway across from the Taurus restaurant and backs up to Biscayne Bay.

The grounds' seven acres include mangroves, lawns, wooded patches and a Spanish Revival house built in the 1920s by Richard Kiehnel, the



**RESTORE OR RAZE?** A proposal earlier this year had the 1920s-era house being razed to make way for new homes. A new, but still tentative, plan would have it restored and occupied.

architect who designed the Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart and Miami High School.

"The house is really a remarkable home," said Joe Gelabert-Nava, acting dean of the University of Miami's architecture school. "It's a gorgeous, lovely house. It's in prime condition."

Gelabert-Nava, a member of Miami's Heritage Conservation Board, said he was shocked to see plans, submitted to the board in February, calling for the house's demolition.

"I almost resigned from the Heritage Conservation Board the day that thing came out. The proposal was to tear it down," Gelabert-Nava said.

The house has not been designated a historic site, and the heritage board has no authority to rule on its proposed demolition. But the board recommended that the February plans be withdrawn and the owner "consider the retention of the existing historic house."

"I'd like to see it remain as it is," agreed David Swerdlow, whose home adjoins the estate and also occupies a large old property from the Grove's early years.

The Coconut Grove Civic Club objected to the original proposal, which was filed by the property's present owner to prepare the property for development once it is sold.

The estate's ownership is unclear.

Wade Field has long occupied it, Coconut Grove Bank is listed in property records as trustee for an unspecified owner. A bank executive referred all questions about the property to Field. She declined to be interviewed.

Architect Robert Wade, hired to seek city approval for the land's subdivision, has withdrawn the original plans.

New plans indicate the house would be preserved on one of 12 lots. That proposal is to go to the April 17 Heritage Conservation Board meeting but remains tentative, Wade said.

"We may have to withdraw that application and follow with another route," depending on who wants to buy the estate and what they plan to do with it, Wade said.

**NEIGHBORS**

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 South Miami, Fla. 33143  
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 Retail: 663-2300  
 Fax: 663-2300  
 Susan Burnside  
 Editor  
 Eric Fidler  
 Assistant Editor  
 Paul Lopez  
 Advertising Manager

ABOVE: One of the first social functions held at the Semple's new home was the annual St. Stephen's Garden Party. (*Miami Herald*, January 18, 1923)

ABOVE: Garden Party Announcement, (*Miami Herald*, January 17, 1923)

BELOW: Image of Julia Allen Field (Photograph by Klara Farkas, *Miami Herald*, May 30, 1976)

BELOW: News article on the sale of La Brisa (*Miami Herald*, April 12, 1990)



Real estate images of the property prior to recent renovations. (<https://www.estately.com/listings/info/3551-main-hwy--1>)

originally a shade of soft orange with touches of pink and blue.<sup>15</sup> A 1929 article in the *Miami Herald* described the villa as an “interesting adaptation of Spanish farm house with tiled roof and a satisfying treatment of line and color that fits into its setting.”<sup>16</sup> Three loggias on the first floor and a large second story loggia allowed the Semples and their guests to enjoy the breezes from the bay amid the lush foliage surrounding their home. Kiehnel designed La Brisa so that all of the main living spaces, including the kitchen, large dining, tea room, laundry and servant quarters were housed on the first floor, while the five bedrooms and three bathrooms were upstairs.

Behind the home, Kiehnel designed a distinctive open stone staircase and swimming pool, which led down to the natural spring, within a clear pool. As they do today, mangroves covered the property beyond the spring until the water’s edge. On the patio the Semples placed a

large terra cotta bench, which according a 1923 *Miami Metropolis* article, was a “copy of the Ludovici throne brought from Rome.”<sup>17</sup>

As the *Miami Metropolis* reported, the home’s landscaping induced the sense of a tropical oasis with gardens, clusters of flowers, and plants toward the front of the property, which transitioned to “a natural state” along the waterfront, with thick mangroves partially shielding the spring. From the home’s entrance gate along Main Highway, a winding drive bordered by citrus trees led to the villa suggesting “the further beauties that await the visitor at the front of the house.”<sup>18</sup> Its planting added to the home’s overall romantic and charming expression and was a key element in the home’s design, as reported when the home was opened to the public in 1922. The January *Miami Metropolis* attributed the design to “Spanish and Moorish lines” and described La Brisa as:

<sup>15</sup> The home’s color was described “café au lait predominately over streaks of blue and rose stucco.”  
<sup>16</sup> “Beautiful La Brisa Chosen For St. Stephen’s Garden Party,” *Miami Metropolis*, January 8, 1923.  
<sup>17</sup> “Standards of Beauty Seen in Miami Homes,” *Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925.

<sup>17</sup> “Ornamental Planting for Homes,” *Miami Metropolis*, January 13, 1923.  
<sup>18</sup> “Beautiful La Brisa Chosen For St. Stephen’s Garden Party,” *Miami Metropolis*, January 8, 1923



a vision of beauty set amid picturesque surroundings that are a combination of the work of a landscape artist and the unsurpassed loveliness proved by Dame Nature. Large oak trees, bedecked with Spanish moss and clinging air plants, tower over the undergrowth of the ferns and flowers that outline the estate. Tall date palms, Royal Palms, sapodillas, avocados, mangos, and banana trees border the spacious lawn.<sup>19</sup>



Kiehnel worked with landscape artist James Donn, owner of Exotic Gardens, a nursery in Allapattah, to select a wide range of tropical plants in bright colors, including Florida natives - orange lantana blooms, yellow and blue allamanda, and orchid flower vines. So impressive was the home's landscape, Coconut Grove police once set up a sting operation to catch a pair of thieves stealing expensive bougainvillea from the property at night.



On February 24, 1922, the Semples hosted a large, informal tea party at La Brisa, the first of many social events at the home. Approximately 200 guests enjoyed tea sandwiches, bonbons, and punch on the home's expansive porch. According to local social pages the tea party was "one of the smartest affairs of the season."<sup>20</sup> The following season the Semples hosted the annual St Stephen's Garden Party to benefit the Church Guild. Hundreds of "charmingly gowned women and girls" followed the path around the pool to the veranda, where the Hotel Urmey orchestra "played the most tantalizing music that tempted many into the drawing room where dancing was enjoyed."<sup>21</sup>

During their winter stays at La Brisa the Semples entertained regularly. They also hosted frequent guests, which likely helped fuel their decision in 1931 to hire Kiehnel & Elliot to design a guesthouse on the estate. Built of oolitic limestone and wood, the one-story building cost \$2,000.



## FIELD FAMILY

Eleanor Semple passed away in 1942, followed by her husband five years later. In 1949, their son John Bonner Semple, Jr. sold the home to socialite Minna Field Burnaby, a relative of wealthy Chicago merchant Marshall Field and the widow of British aristocrat Algernon E. Burnaby. Burnaby lived at La Brisa for three years before passing away at the age of 70. She left the home to her son, Henry Field (1902-1984). Field, a world-renowned anthropologist and explorer, moved to Coconut Grove in 1952, and the following year married Julia Rand Allen, a former lion tamer and director of the Crandon Park Zoo.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Mrs. John B. Semple's Tea Honors Her Guests, Dr. Odell and Miss Rossiter," *Miami Herald*, February, 25, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> St Stephen's' Garden Party at La Brisa is Lovely Affair," *Miami Metropolis*, January 18, 1923.

<sup>22</sup> Howard Burns, "Scientist Henry Field was optimistic about man," *Miami Daily News*, January 6, 1986.

ABOVE: Real estate images of the property prior to recent renovations. (<https://www.estately.com/listings/info/3551-main-hwy--1>)



View of property facing east from Biscayne Bay. A boardwalk cuts through mangroves to the water's edge. (Kolaya)

Field grew up in England and studied at Eton and Oxford, where he earned a PhD in 1937. He spent his life traveling the world through his archeological expeditions. Among his explorations, from 1925-50 Field conducted an extensive survey of the Arabian desert, and excavated the Mesopotamian city of Kish to discover evidence that it was destroyed by a deluge, providing what some said was proof of a flood described in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> The author of 50 scholarly works, Field was considered one of the "world's foremost anthropologists working in the Near East."<sup>24</sup>

"When a man devotes his life to following the path of civilization, where does he end up," asked one newspaper columnist of Field's decision to settle in Coconut Grove. It was, the writer commented, a remarkable endorsement coming from the well-traveled scientist as "when a man had been around as much as much as Henry Field he should know where on earth is the most pleasant place to live."<sup>25</sup> Field lived at La Brisa with his wife Julia for more than 30 years, and passed away at the home in 1986 at the age 83.

23 "Henry Field, 83, world-renowned, Chicago born anthropologist..." *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1986.

24 "Anthropologist Henry Field, 83; found mankind's oldest wheel," *Boston Globe*, January 6, 1986.

25 Fred Miller, "At The End of the Track...Florida," *Panama City News Herald*, July 25, 1954.

## JAMES AND SHEILA GRAY

In 1993, Burdines' president James E. Gray (1939-2019) and his wife, Sheila, purchased the house for \$2.35 million from Coconut Grove Bank.<sup>26</sup> The bank reportedly took over the property in lieu of foreclosure from Julia Field. The home and grounds were in a state of disrepair following Hurricane Andrew, a category 5 hurricane that made landfall in the Miami area in August 1992. Much of the once lush foliage surrounding the home was stripped, and the house itself had deteriorated. The Grays renovated the estate with new landscaping, the addition of a brick patio and flagstone tile, and updated interior spaces. With their renovation and the work of a subsequent owner, the home expanded from Kiehnel's original plan of 8,000 sq. feet to 13,800 sq. feet. While the Grays lived at the home, archaeologists discovered a number of artifacts, including 19-century copper buttons, a child's toy, and a gold-plated pen, in a sinkhole that had opened during renovations.<sup>27</sup>

Miami-Dade County property records indicate that the Grays sold La Brisa in 1997 to Ryan Investment LTD at a cost of \$4.7 million; in 2008 the property was purchased by La Brisa LLC for \$11.5 million.

## RANSOM EVERGLADES

In October 2014 La Brisa was listed for sale at a record \$65 million, at the time the most expensive single-family residence on the market in Miami.<sup>28</sup> Two years later Ransom Everglades purchased the estate for \$34.6 million, which although significantly lower than the original asking price was until that point the highest price paid for a property in Coconut Grove.<sup>29</sup> In a press release after the acquisition, Ransom Everglades head of school Penny Townsend announced that the purchase allowed the school to "continue our long tradition of respecting, protecting and learning from the treasures of Old Florida and Miami's precious coastal ecosystems."<sup>30</sup> In January 2018, the City of Miami approved the school's master plan for the site, which includes the new construction of a science and technology center and alterations of the interior spaces of the villa to house the admissions office. As of summer 2020, this project is currently underway.

26 The bank took over the property in lieu of foreclosure from Julia Field, who several years earlier had put the home on the market for \$6 million. The Grays had sold their previous waterfront home, north of Vizcaya, to Madonna. Beatrice E. Garcia, "Mansion a nice encore after sale to Madonna," *Chicago Tribune*, April 18, 1993.

27 Heather Dewar, "Grove Archaeological Dig Yields Pieces of the Past," *Miami Herald*, April 5, 1994.

28 Megan Willett, "House of the Day: A Spectacular 9-Bedroom Estate is Now Miami's Priciest Home at \$65 Million," *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/65-million-mansion-la-brisa-in-miami-2014-10>

29 Josh Baumgard, "La Brisa Closes at \$34.6 M, Sets record in Coconut Grove," <https://miami.curbed.com/2016/6/21/11997474/la-brisa-coconut-grove-record-ransom>

30 Gina Faridniya, "Miami's 'La Brisa' Mansion Sets a Record for Coconut Grove," <https://www.mansionglobal.com/articles/miami-s-la-brisa-mansion-sells-for-34-6-million-sets-a-record-for-coconut-grove-31345>

# LA SOLANA (1922)

## 3670 HIBISCUS STREET

**Boundary Description:** Lots 9, 10, and 11 in Block P of the Second Amended Plat of Coconut Grove Park according to the plat recorded in Plat Book 1 at Page 62 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** Katherine Soden Bigler

**Present Owner:** Stephen P. Hook and Weng C. Yeo

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



Front façade. (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United*, 1928)



Even amidst the dense foliage of Coconut Grove, it is hard to miss the striking architecture of La Solana, the sunny side, or a place facing the sun in Spanish. The Mediterranean home with a distinctive Moorish influence, an ornate entrance, and burnt orange exterior stands out in the quiet neighborhood. La Solana was built for Bernadette Katherine Soden Bigler (1867-1958), a trailblazer in her own right, who in the early part of the 20th century was a leading voice in the women's suffrage movement.

### KATHERINE SODEN BIGLER

Soden, who went by her middle name, Katherine, was born in 1867 – the seventh of nine children born to Irish immigrants living in Louisville, Kentucky. At the age of 24 she married George A. Soden, a successful wholesale jeweler in Chicago. From an early age she immersed herself in the plight of suffragists in Illinois. In 1919 she was one of only three Illinois women selected to attend the Republican National Convention, participate in drafting the party's platform and bring the issue to the national forefront.<sup>1</sup> According to the National American Women Suffrage

<sup>1</sup> Jason Musgrave and Josh Bill, *Biographical Sketch of Katherine Soden Bigler Included in Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragist, 1890-1920* (Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL); <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009860079>



Profile of Katherine Soden Bigler (*Pittsburgh Press*, February 4, 1914)



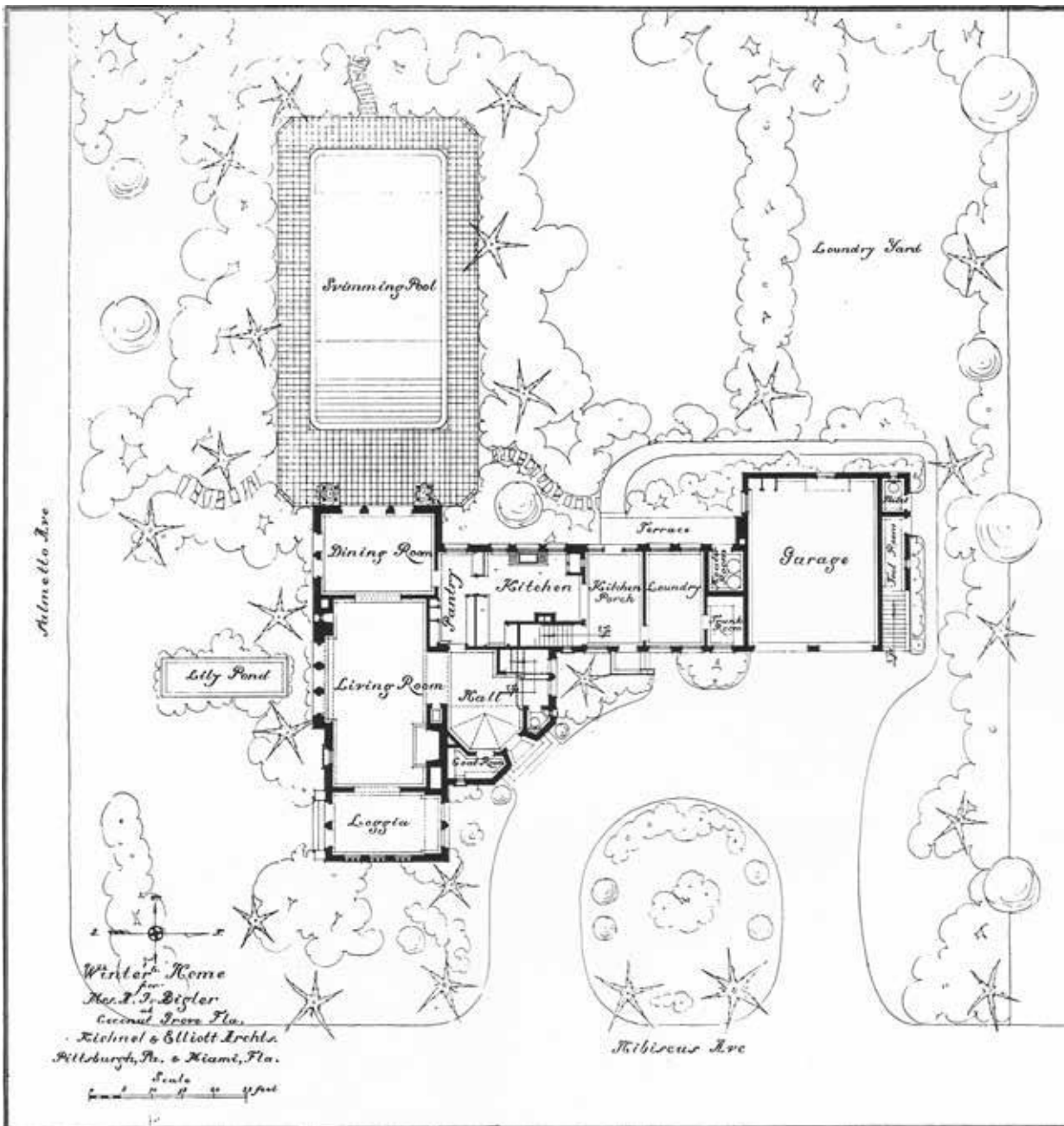
RESIDENCE OF MR. AND MRS. A. J. BIGLER  
COCONUT GROVE, MIAMI, FLORIDA

Photo of the home's south elevation, published in Randolph Sexton's 1927 book *Spanish Influences on American Architecture and Decoration*.

Association (NAWSA) Bigler's "pioneering steps were crucial" during this period and together with "her Illinois suffrage sisters helped ensure the nineteenth amendment to the United States Constitution was passed." Illinois was among the first to ratify the women's suffrage nationwide.

In 1918, following the death of her husband, Bigler managed his jewelry business and remained active in Republican Party politics. The following year Bigler visited South Florida for the first time. She later recalled that her initial intention was to purchase a winter home in Miami Beach or perhaps Nassau, but close friends persuaded her to visit Coconut Grove.<sup>2</sup> As it happens, those friends – Maurice and Pauline Mead – had recently purchased property in the subdivision of Coconut Grove Park in south Coconut Grove. Bigler quickly followed suit and, in 1922, bought a parcel of undeveloped land directly across the street from the Meads' home on Hibiscus and Palmetto. Like the Meads, she hired Kiehnel as the architect for her new winter residence.

<sup>2</sup> "Even Newcomers Recognize Charm of Life in the Grove," *Miami Herald*, January 16, 1944.



First floor plan. (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*, 1928)

## CONSTRUCTION OF LA SOLANA

By the spring of 1922, Kiehnel's services were in high demand across Miami. His Scottish Rite Temple, considered Miami's first Art Deco structure, was underway near the Miami River, while in Coconut Grove he had recently completed La Brisa and was working on a number of new projects, including design of the Franz and Justison homes, which were completed the following year.<sup>3</sup> The *Miami Herald* reported that the new Soden residence, together with Kiehnel's other projects, would "take their place in the front rank of the architectural successes of the neighborhood."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Grove Interests," *Miami Metropolis*, June 16, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> "Many Beautiful Homes in Progress of Construction at Coconut Grove," *Miami Herald*, August 7, 1922.

La Solana was completed later that year at an estimated cost of \$60,000. Like its contemporaries Kiehnel used hollow clay tile and stucco construction. A striking Moorish-style entrance led into a richly decorated stone hallway, a grand salon for entertaining, adjacent dining room and, in the back, a lush garden and large pool.<sup>5</sup> So distinctive was the home's intricately designed arched entrance that Bigler used images of the doorway with its octagonal openings as place cards for one of her first social functions.<sup>6</sup> The interior featured an ornamental beamed ceiling, wrought iron balustrades and antique wrought iron lamps, which Kiehnel said dated to a period 100 years following that of the Moors in Spain.<sup>7</sup> Specially appointed rooms on the second

<sup>5</sup> "Standards of Beauty Seen in Miami Homes," *Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925.

<sup>6</sup> "Beautiful Moorish Doorway to Mrs. G.A. Soden's Home," *Miami Daily News-Metropolis*, January 30, 1924.

<sup>7</sup> "Seclusion Instead of a Front Porch Is the Fundamental Factor With European Styles of Houses Says Grove Architect," *Miami Metropolis*, September 8, 1922.

# SODEN HOME IS OPENED FOR TEA FOR 200 GUESTS

La Solana Seen Tuesday  
Afternoon—Miss E. G.  
Cumming Honored

Opening of Mrs. G. A. Soden's residence. La Solana, was an important social event in Coconut Grove Tuesday afternoon. The Soden house has been one of the show places of the Grove ever since construction progressed far enough to make its beauty apparent.

A tea for 200 guests was given for the occasion and also in honor of Mrs. Soden's house guest, Miss E. G. Cumming, a life long friend, who is now vice-president of the jewelry house which bears the name of G. A. Soden.

Moorish details are carried out in the house which was designed by Kiehnel & Elliott, architects. The tiny arches in the porch windows, if a porch can have windows, are but one of the many distinctive features. The general plan of the house from garages to swimming pool is beautiful in its exterior effect and yet insures abundant privacy for the people in the home.

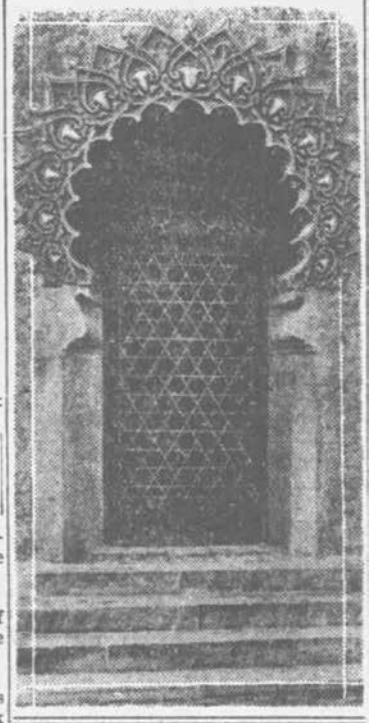
The interior, with its wonderful beamed ceilings, its wrought iron balustrades, its ancient type of lamps, its ornamentally colored window grilles, its countless unique and fascinating pieces of furniture, its unusual and gay drapes and other features, would interest or charm all interested in home building. The green room and the rose room, upstairs, are each decorated with rare contrasts in drapes and upholstery, in rugs and woodwork.

Mrs. Soden was assisted at the tea

## BEAUTIFUL MOORISH DOORWAY TO MRS. G. A. SODEN'S HOME

For place cards at a dinner to those who assisted her in the first social event in her new home at Coconut Grove, Mrs. G. A. Soden used pictures of the door to that home. It is of Moorish design with a part circle of ornamental development over the top and with a beautiful woodwork door with small octagonal openings instead of a screen door.

At the banquet at the Royal Palm grill, following the tea for 200 guests at the house, the table decorations were an intricate floral reproduction of the door design. It is said that the Flagler street florists used 30 different kinds of flowers to get the right colors.



### Grove Interests

E. W. Clark of Portland, Me., arrived last week at Matsuba for the season.

Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Robertson of Montreal, arrived today at Sunshine Inn.

Mrs. Charles Crofts, Ariel Crofts and Charles, jr., have all been sick

floor, "the green room and rose room," were each decorated with "rare contrasts in drapes and upholstery, in rugs and woodwork." The home had four bedrooms and three bathrooms upstairs, and a separate two-bedroom apartment.

Kiehnel again worked with his La Brisa colleague, landscaper James Donn, of Allapattah, to design and install the gardens, which included large coconut and date palm placed on either side of the home, as well as aquatic plants for a lily pond on the south side of the property.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after her arrival in South Florida, and six years after the death of her first husband, Katherine Soden married Albert J. Bigler, a Chicago businessman. Mr. Bigler, a native of Switzerland, was a member of the Christian Science Church, and following their marriage the couple became active members of Second Church of Christ, Scientist, established decades earlier by neighboring estate owner Jessie Moore of the Moorings in Coconut Grove. Moore had engaged Walter DeGarmo to design the first church in 1914, and with the Biglers' financial backing, the congregation turned to Kiehnel in 1941 to design a larger structure to accommodate their growing enrollment.

The Biglers entertained extensively at La Solana for several decades. They also became founding members of the Bath Club in Miami Beach, and regularly hosted events at the club. In addition to their good friends and neighbors the Meads, the Biglers also socialized with the Kiehnels and others within the tight-knit community of Coconut Grove.<sup>8</sup> "Beautifying Grounds and Building Homes," *Miami Metropolis*, July 7, 1922.

ABOVE LEFT: News article on the home's first social event, a tea party for 200 guests. (*Miami Daily Metropolis*, January 30, 1924)

ABOVE RIGHT: Image of home's distinctive entrance. (*Miami Daily Metropolis*, January 30, 1924)



Postcard of "Petticoat Lane," facing northeast from Palmetto Avenue, c.1930s. La Solana in the background, (State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

Grove. According to one newspaper account, the Biglers hosted the Meads, Kiehnel, and another Grove couple at La Solana for Thanksgiving dinner in November of 1925.<sup>9</sup>

Katherine Bigler had a well-known love of gardening, as is evident from her lushly landscaped home and her involvement with what is now Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. She served as a founding member and director of the organization.<sup>10</sup> The Biglers also contributed funds to build the Rare Plant House at Fairchild. Over the years, La Solana also became known for its own garden. The Meads and Biglers' friendship was said to have been "sealed in flowers," a reference to the plantings along their respective properties. Their flowers on either side of Palmetto Street resulted in the City briefly renaming their block Petticoat Lane. The 1920s era *Miami Herald* society columnist Jefferson Bell often wrote about the popular spot exclaiming that:

At La Solana, the Bigler home the petunia beds are joyful sight. They are in full flower and the air is scented at evening with their delicate perfume. Petticoat Lane, between the Bigler and Mead place, is walled in with rows of larkspurs and phlox and is very lovely. It is a fascinating little road, spilling over with romance.<sup>11</sup>

Albert Bigler died in 1956 at the age of 91, followed by Katherine Bigler two years later. In 1964 La Solana was listed for sale at a price of \$60,000, interestingly the same price it was valued when it was built in 1922.<sup>12</sup>

9 Jefferson Bell, "Told in Miami Homes," *Miami Herald*, November 26, 1925.  
 10 "Mrs. Bigler is Dead," *Miami Herald*, July 1, 1958.  
 11 Jefferson Bell, "Told in *Miami Herald*," *Miami Herald* April 27, 1926.  
 12 Real Estate Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, April 19, 1964.



ABOVE: The flower-filled walk down Palmetto Avenue, between the Mead and Bigler residences, briefly known as Petticoat Lane in the 1930s (*Miami Daily News*, July 19, 1931)

BELOW: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, April 19, 1964)



TOP LEFT: Front façade, c.2016 (<https://www.realtor.com/>)

BOTTOM LEFT: South elevation, c.2016 (<https://www.realtor.com/>)

TOP RIGHT: Living Room, c.2016 (<https://www.realtor.com/>)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Front of home looking south, c.2016 (<https://www.realtor.com/>)



LEFT: Construction on the property, July 2020. (Kolaya)

RIGHT: South façade under construction, July 2020. (Kolaya)

## LILLY FAMILY

Following the Biglers, another remarkable family occupied the home for several decades and added to Coconut Grove's eclectic community. In 1965 the Lilly family, headed by Dr. John C. Lilly (1915-2001), a neurophysiologist and writer, moved into La Solana. Speaking of Lilly's work with human consciousness and dolphin communication, Andrew Revkin in Lilly's obituary in the *New York Times* said that Lilly displayed "the showmanship of P.T. Barnum and the infectious zeal of Jacques Yves-Cousteau."<sup>13</sup> The unorthodox researcher invented an isolation tank and pioneered research on dolphin intelligence and communication. In later years, Lilly experimented with LSD and other mind-altering drugs.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1950s and early 60s, Lilly lived with his wife Elisabeth and their children at a home at 3908 Main Highway and later at La Solana. The family also spent time in St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, where

Lilly led a research facility. During this time, he also operated the John C. Lilly Research Institute for interspecies communication between humans and dolphins at the former Coconut Grove Bank building.<sup>15</sup> The Institute housed several dolphins in specially designed tanks, and Lilly is said to have once kept and cared for a dolphin in La Solana's large swimming pool.

Lilly separated from his wife Elisabeth Berj Lilly in 1967, and moved to California. Elisabeth remained at La Solana and lived there for more than three decades, passing away in September 1998.<sup>16</sup> Her daughter Leslie Berj Lilly sold the home in 2017 for \$2,570,000 to New Yorkers Stephen P. Hook and Weng C. Yeo. The home is currently undergoing construction. Much of the interior has been gutted, windows removed, and the walls stripped of plaster and stucco, exposing the original hollow clay tile construction.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew C. Revkin, "John C. Lilly Dies at 86; Led Study of Communication With Dolphins," *New York Times*, October 7, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> "J.Lilly, studied dolphin intelligence," *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, October 8, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Walter DeGarmo originally designed the building at 3430 Main Highway in 1923 for the Bank of Coconut Grove.

<sup>16</sup> Social Security Administration; Washington D.C., USA; Social Security Death Index; <https://www.ancestry.com>

# FRANTZ RESIDENCE (1922)

## 3529 ST. GAUDENS ROAD

**Boundary Description:** Lot 8 of Justison & Frantz subdivision, recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 20 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** Albert W. Frantz

**Present Owner:** Daren Joseph Primoli

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



Front façade (Kolaya)



FRANTZ, ALBERT WILLIAM

Photo of Albert W. Frantz (East Coast: Its Builders, Resources, Industries, Town and City Development, *Miami Herald*, 1924)

Spared from the wrecking ball in 2014 by neighbors determined to preserve the historic property, the Frantz home is a classic Mediterranean residence in near pristine condition with many of its original architectural elements and decorative details intact.<sup>1</sup> In 2014 the St. Gaudens Road Neighborhood Association successfully petitioned the City of Miami for historic designation of the home historic following a demolition request by the property's new owner, who intended to tear down the home, subdivide the lot and build two new homes on the site. The neighborhood's efforts saved a remarkable home that exemplifies Kiehnel's design and the work of master craftsman John B. Orr.

#### ALBERT W. FRANTZ

In 1922 Albert William Franz (1879 -1954), who together with Harold deBussy Justison oversaw the Sunshine Fruits Company, decided to build a home on Lot 8 of the company's newly platted Justison and Frantz Subdivision on St. Gaudens Road, then known as Ozone Avenue. The two business partners both built homes on the road, a few doors apart, and hired Kiehnel, by then well known in the area, to design their respective residences.

Frantz had moved to Miami five years earlier and initially lived in a cottage on Bayview Road. Born in Kenosha, Wisconsin to a large family,

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary Designation Report, 3529 Saint Gaudens Road, Miami, FL. 33122

Frantz married Bella lone Blackman (1878-1964), also of Kenosha, in 1902.<sup>2</sup> Two years later Bella gave birth to the couple's first and only child, lone Belle Frantz.<sup>3</sup> After working for 25 years as a cashier at First National Bank in Kenosha, Frantz moved to Miami with his family in 1917 to oversee the Sunshine Fruit Company.<sup>4</sup> He had been an investor in the company, but it wasn't until Harold deBussy Justison enlisted in the US Navy during World War I that Frantz took an active role in its management.<sup>5</sup> When Justison returned two years later, the men bought out their remaining partners and together managed the company for more than a decade. Justison, the founder of the company, served as its President; Frantz served as Vice-President and Treasurer.<sup>6</sup>

By 1922, the Sunshine Fruits Company had expanded their initial business of managing groves for absentee owners into a hugely successful real estate development business. Beginning with Bayview Road and later the subdivisions of Entrada and Sunshine Villas, among others, the company grew exponentially during the boom years of the 1920s. They also built Sunshine Inn and its cottages to accommodate prospective buyers.<sup>7</sup>

St. Gaudens Road was initially part of the Bayview Road development, which the company purchased from John C. Gifford in 1912.

- <sup>2</sup> Franz was one of six children born to Captain Charles Frantz (1840-1930), born in Prussia, and Angeline Frantz (1849-1913), a native of Wisconsin. 1880 United States Federal Census; <https://www.ancestry.com>
- <sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society; Madison, Wisconsin; Census Year: 1905; <https://www.ancestry.com>
- <sup>4</sup> "A.W Frantz Resigns From First National, Kenosha, Wis.," *The Financier*, Vol. 109; 1255 May 12, 1917.
- <sup>5</sup> Florida, the East Coast: Its Builders, Resources, Industries, Town and City Developments, 154.
- <sup>6</sup> Well Established Real Estate Firm had A Novel Origin," *Miami Daily Metropolis*, March 3, 1923.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.



Postcard of St. Gaudens Road, c.1920s. (Gleason Waite Romer, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)





City of Miami, Florida Historic Preservation Office Tax Card

The company platted the Frantz & Justison subdivision in 1920 and began selling lots. Originally named Ozone Avenue, the road was renamed St. Gaudens in honor of the family of the noted sculptor August Saint-Gaudens. His widow, Augusta and their son Homer lived on an estate at the end of the road on Biscayne Bay that was a destination for Fairchild family outings from their home, The Kampong.<sup>8</sup>

### CONSTRUCTION OF FRANTZ HOME

Construction of the Frantz home began in July 1922.<sup>9</sup> Frantz hired contractor John B. Orr, who by then had partnered with Kiehnel on several Coconut Grove residences and was well regarded for his highly detailed masonry and woodwork. Much of Orr's handiwork is still evident at the Frantz residence, including poly-chromed balustrades, original hardwood floors, and a wood-burning fireplace. As noted in the home's preliminary designation historic report "the quality of construction is evidence[d] by how little has changed on the property through the years." The residence is set back from the road on an 18,800 square foot property. At the time it was built the L-shaped, two-story home was notable for its "unique porch effect, and a tower on the southwest corner."<sup>10</sup> As the *Miami Herald* reported in a 1922 article, the layout was different from previous Mediterranean residences designed by Kiehnel:

*The dining room and kitchen, which are placed on the west side of the house, are one story high and over them is a flat roof. Through the center of the building runs the patio, which is the main entrance. The east side of the dwelling is two stories height. It has a hip roof, which is to be covered*

<sup>8</sup> Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens, the widow of Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907), and their child Homer Saint-Gaudens, wintered in a large home at the end of the street from 1916 to 1926. Before her death in July 1926, Ozone Avenue had been renamed in the family's honor.

<sup>9</sup> "Doings of People in Coconut Grove," *Miami Herald*, July 3, 1922.

<sup>10</sup> "Many Beautiful Homes in Process of Construction at Coconut Grove," *Miami Herald*, Aug. 7, 1922.

*with variegated tile. On the second floor is one large sleeping porch, bath and several closets, and at the front a porch 16 by 16 overlooking the bay.*<sup>11</sup>

According to Miami-Dade property records, the home has three bedrooms and two bathrooms, and consists of 3,596 square feet.

One of the first social functions held at the home in March 1923 was a birthday party for the Frantz family's 18-year daughter, Ione Bella Frantz. Guests included Mabel and Doris DeGarmo, the daughters of architect Walter DeGarmo, Patty and Wirth Munroe, the children of Commodore Ralph Munroe, and Kitty Owen, the daughter of future US Congresswomen Ruth Bryan Owen, and granddaughter of William

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## Coconut Grove Opportunities

**HOME SITES, HOMES, BAYFRONT ESTATES, GRAPEFRUIT GROVES, ETC.**

There is a decided activity in Coconut Grove properties and the many attractions of this beautiful home place are bringing many new buyers.

The new activities and developments are making new values and one must be posted in order to appreciate the new opportunities.

Our business was established here in 1910 and through our efforts along three lines we have been a decided factor in the upbuilding of the town. They are as follows:

**THE SUNSHINE INN AND COTTAGES,  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRAPEFRUIT GROVES,  
THE MAKING AND SELLING OF HOME SITES AND HOMES**

We are handling some two hundred acres of grapefruit groves at profit to owners. The Sunshine Inn and Cottages makes possible the comfort of some splendid people and has brought many of our best citizens here as home owners.

Through our services some splendid homes now adorn what was a few years ago wild and uncleared land. We have handled some \$300,000 worth of Coconut Grove property during the past twelve months.

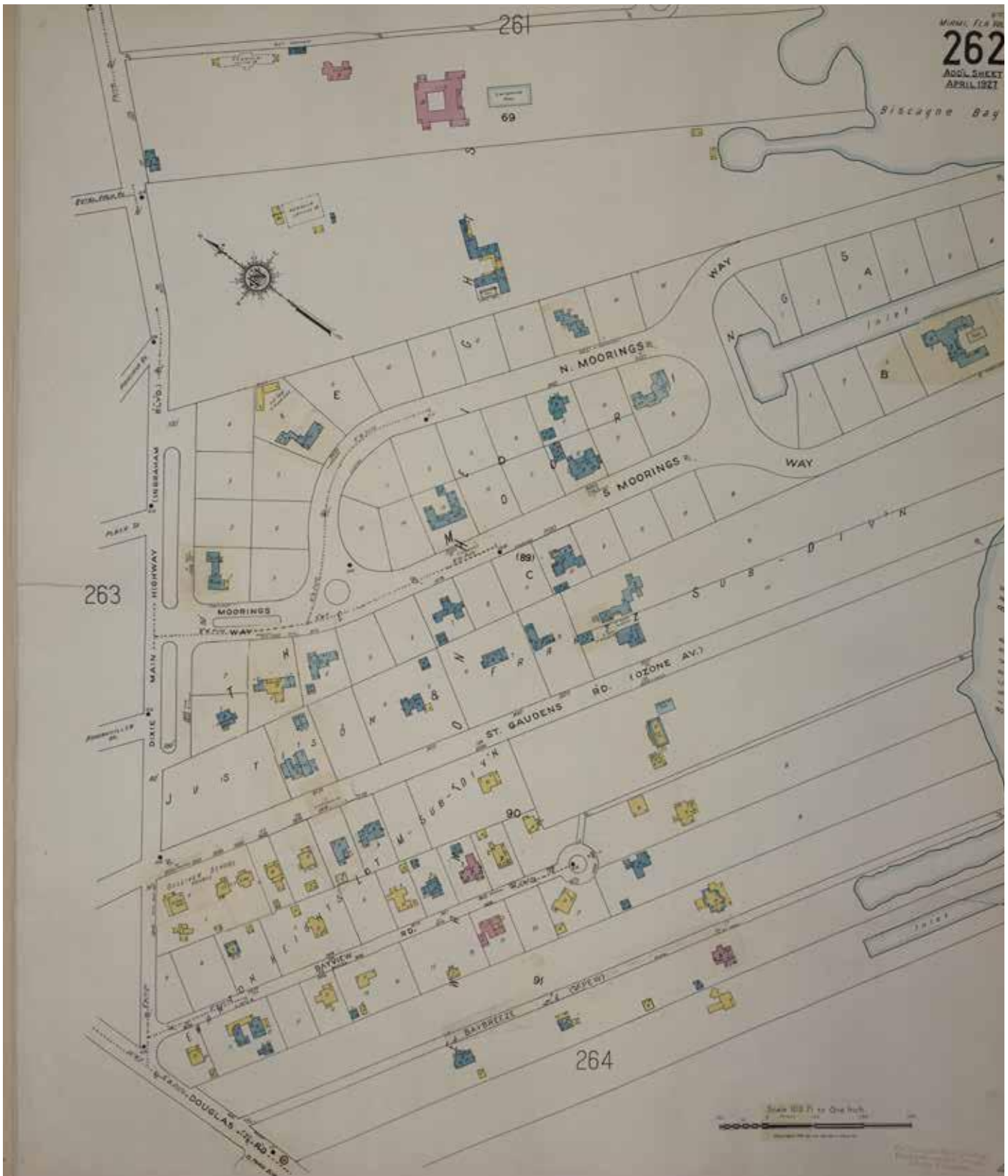
We have a definite service to offer you and it will pay you to call and talk with us regarding the present opportunities here.

## The Sunshine Fruits Company

**COCONUT GROVE, FLA.**

H. deB. Justison      J. A. Williams      A. W. Frantz

Sunshine Fruits Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, January 18, 1920)



The Frantz residence is depicted in lot 8 along St. Gaudens Road in the Justison & Frantz subdivision, April 1927. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Miami, Dade County, Florida; Library of Congress)



Front façade along St. Gauden's Road, July 2020. (Kolaya)

Frantz's original home on Bayview Road.<sup>14</sup> She helped organize a number of the Guild's events over the years, including a large garden party at Cherokee Lodge in 1919 where she was "gowned in white georgette heavily beaded" with a hat of "white georgette and silk braided...and finished with an ostrich plume."<sup>15</sup> Frantz was also active in the Housekeepers Club of Coconut Grove.

With the real estate market slide after the 1926 Hurricane, the start of the Great Depression, and the death of Harold deBussy Justison in 1933, it does not appear the Sunshine Company stayed active long after the boom years of the 1920s. The Frantz lived in the home on St Gaudens Road until 1943, and then moved away from South Florida. Frantz died ten years later in August 1954 at his home in Iowa.

### LATER RESIDENTS

Following the Frantzs, Capt. Clarence Hall Smith (1909-1960) and his wife, Felicia Trombetta Smith, purchased the home, which remained in their family for nearly seven decades. The couple married in 1940 and had four children, Marcia, Felicia, Gregory, and Eugenia Smith. Capt. Smith, a longtime pilot for Pam American Airways and a WWII veteran, began his career flying seaplanes from Dinner Key and later flew the first trans-Atlantic flights of Pan-Am's famed Clippers out of New York.<sup>16</sup> In 1960, Capt. Smith tragically drowned while swimming during a layover in Beirut, Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> Felicia Smith and their four children remained at the house. Following Felicia Smith's death in 1978, her children inherited the home, which later passed to her grandson, Mark Gregory Hilderbrand, the son of Smith's eldest daughter, Marcia Smith Hilderbrand.

According to Miami-Dade property records, Mark Hilderbrand sold the home in 2014 to FCS Property Management for \$1,575,000. In 2016, HUS LLC bought it for \$1,552,000 and sold it in 2020 to its current owners, Jonathan M. Cohen and his wife, Holly Cohen, for \$2.2 million. According to a real estate listing for the property, the City of Miami has approved plans by preservationist architect Herbert Brito to expand the home to 6 bedrooms and 6 ½ baths.<sup>18</sup>

Jennings Bryan.<sup>12</sup> Aside from an occasional tea for St Stephen's or a community meeting, the Frantzs did not host many events at their home, at least not large gatherings covered by local society columns.

In addition to his role with the Sunshine Fruits Company, A.W Frantz also served as secretary and treasurer of the Proctor Hardware Company of Coconut Grove.<sup>13</sup> Bella Frantz was active in the St Stephen's Church Guild, which held their first meeting in 1918 at the

<sup>12</sup> "Miss lone Frantz Honored by Party," *Miami Metropolis*, March 16, 1923.  
<sup>13</sup> Florida, the East Coast," *Miami Herald*, 154.

<sup>14</sup> "Guild Meets with Mrs. A.W. Frantz," *Miami Herald*, August 19, 1918.  
<sup>15</sup> "Society Gay and Money Coined At Garden Tea At Bindley Home," *Miami Metropolis*, February 20, 1919.  
<sup>16</sup> "Texas Rites Planned for Pilot Smith," *Miami Today*, July 24, 1960  
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>18</sup> Real estate listing; <https://www.trulia.com/p/fl/miami/3529-saint-gaudens-rd-mi-ami-fl-33133--1001735315>

# JUSTISON RESIDENCE (1922)

**3575 St. Gaudens Road**

**Boundary Description:** The east 20 feet of Lot 4 and all of Lot 5, Justison & Frantz subdivision, recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 20 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

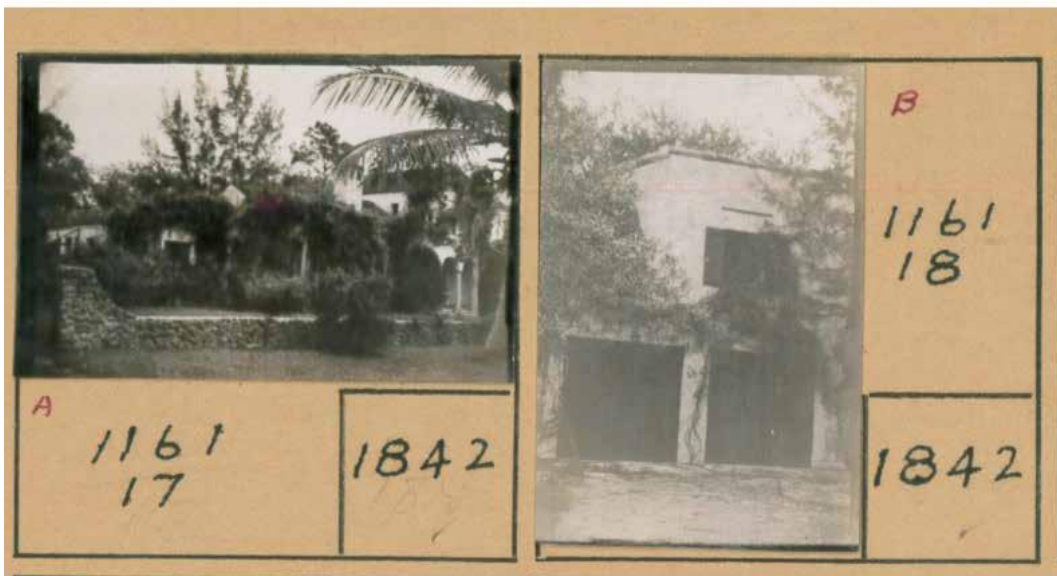
**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** Harold deBussy Justison

**Present Owner:** Daren Joseph Primoli

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



City of Miami, Florida Historic Preservation Office Tax Card



Front façade (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*)

In the early twentieth century, South Florida was still considered a sleepy, backwater region full of “rattlesnakes and jungles,” as Harold deBussy Justison (1880-1934) would later recall.<sup>1</sup> He was working for the H. Black Company, one of Cleveland’s largest garment manufacturing businesses (a distributor of the Woolex Works brand), when he heard a colleague, Helen Lester, singing the praises of the waterfront community along the shores of Biscayne Bay. Lester was a longtime winter resident of Coconut Grove.<sup>2</sup>

Justison thought her characterization of Coconut Grove’s beauty and financial opportunities seemed too good to be true, but, intrigued, he paid a visit in 1910. He was joined on the trip by EE. Wooley and F.L. Pierce, also of Cleveland. They met John Gifford, a former forestry faculty member at Cornell who had teamed up with Charles DeGarmo to develop homesites in Coconut Grove, and were immediately convinced of the area’s potential. Justison and Pierce bought several acres of land and together the men formed the Sunshine Fruits Company with Lester, Irving J. Thomas, and Edward Schweitzer. After managing fruit groves for absentee owners, they joined in the growing movement toward real estate development

1 “Well Established Real Estate Firm had A Novel Origin,” *Miami Daily Metropolis*, March 3, 1923.  
 2 Helen W. Lester (1858-1935) was an early real estate developer in Coconut Grove, and one of the original investors in Sunshine Fruits Company. Lester, DeBussy and Thomas were all associated with the H. Black Company in Cleveland, Ohio. She lived for many years at her home, 3939 Leafy Way. She passed away at her home in 1935 at the age of 77.

## HAROLD DEBUSSY JUSTISON

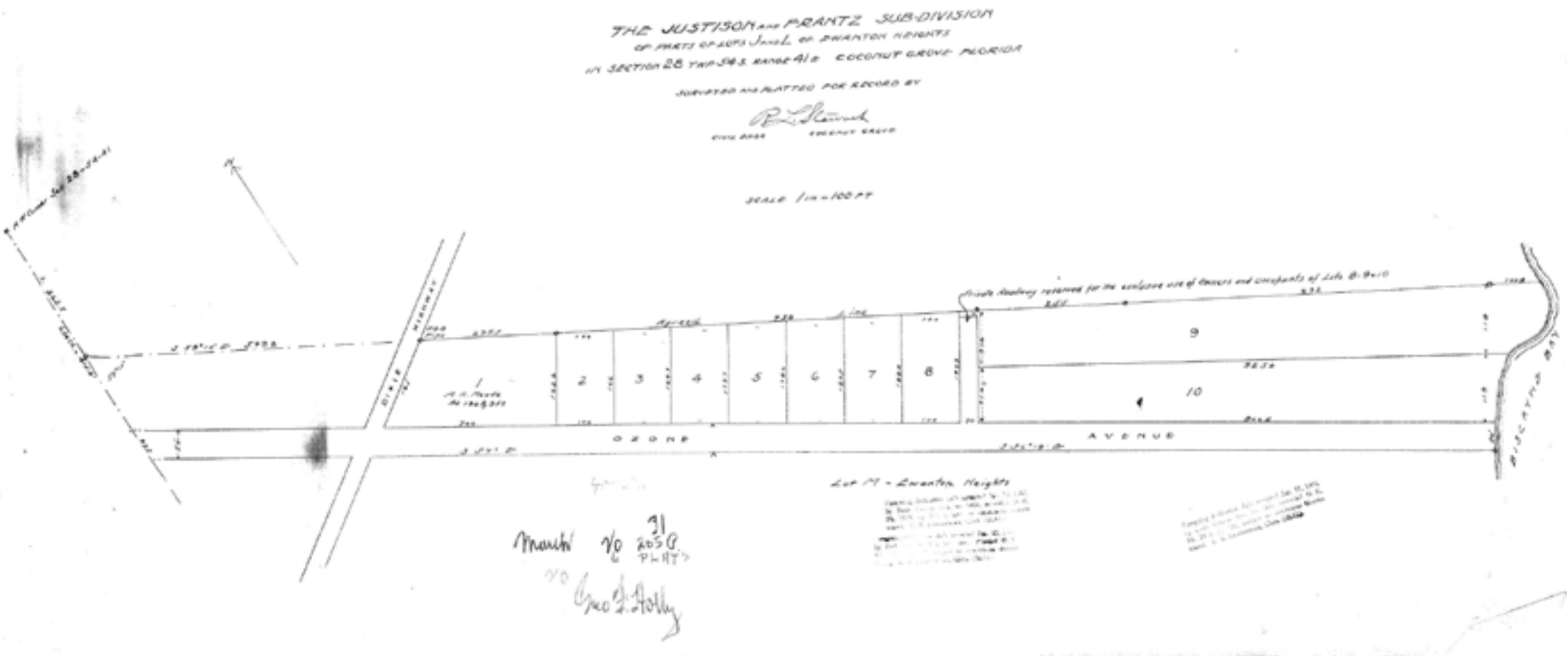
Born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut, Justison graduated from the New York Nautical College and, after a brief stint at sea, went to work in Cleveland.<sup>3</sup> He married Lillian Prichard (1872-1970) of Youngstown, Ohio in 1905.<sup>4</sup> They divorced in the early 1920s, and in 1926 Justison married Harriet Luzetta Smith (1882-1968).<sup>5</sup> He never had any children with either spouse. Justison moved to Coconut Grove in on Christmas Day 1911, and stayed for the rest of his life, leaving briefly to serve in World War I.

In addition to his roles as President of Sunshine Fruits Co., Polk’s 1917 directory of businesses shows Justison was involved in a number of fruit growing enterprises, including Elliott’s Key Lime Company and Tropical Trades Co. He also was a director of Miami Bank & Trust and the Coconut Grove Exchange Bank.<sup>6</sup> Described as a “real live wire” the ambitious Justison served as the fourth and final mayor of Coconut Grove (prior to its annexation as part of the City of Miami), and was active in a number of civic organizations, including his role as Commander of the Lindley DeGarmo Post of the American Legion and an organizer of Miami’s Boys and Girl Scouts.<sup>7</sup>

3 Harry Gardner Cutler, *History of Florida: Past and Present, Historical and Biographical, Volume 1* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1924): 150  
 4 “Western New York Weddings,” *Buffalo Evening News*, September 15, 1905.  
 5 Marriage Licenses, *Tampa Bay Times*, June 30, 1926.  
 6 “Brief Illness Fatal to Pioneer Resident,” *Miami Herald*, October 3, 1934.  
 7 “Sunshine Fruits CO. Aided Growth of Coconut Grove,” *Miami Tribune*, July 27, 1924.

Photo of Harold deBussy Justison (East Coast: Its Builders, Resources, Industries, Town and City Development, *Miami Herald*, 1924)





Justison and Frantz subdivision (Miami-Dade Property Records)

### CONSTRUCTION OF JUSTISON RESIDENCE

In 1922, near the height of the Sunshine Fruits Company's success, Justison hired Kiehnel & Elliot to build his personal residence on Lot 5 of the newly platted Justison and Frantz subdivision. The relatively small home by Kiehnel's standards was considered "one of Coconut Grove's most unusual residences."<sup>8</sup> It stood out from Kiehnel's previous designs for the inclusion of a "bird cage" on the home's first and second floor, which the architect said was the "prime essential of the moderate-sized tropical house."<sup>9</sup> According to Kiehnel, a birdcage was an upstairs porch on the windward side of the house to be used as a living room or sleeping porch, and another porch on the downstairs for additional living and entertaining space. The porches were attached to the house only by one small corner to permit as much air as possible to flow through the space. Similarly, Kiehnel's design encouraged "open air passage with doorways, arches and windows as far as possible opposite each other."<sup>10</sup> Given the warm temperatures in South Florida for much of the year, and in the days before central air conditioning, Kiehnel's design to maximize airflow ensured comfort for year-round residents

Justison hired Edwin A. George as the contractor to build the three bedrooms and two bath home in the main house, and a separate guest-house and garage, which included an additional bedroom and bathroom. At the same time the Justison home was being built, Kiehnel was working with John B. Orr a few doors down on the Frantz residence. Shortly after both homes were completed, Kiehnel reportedly designed another home directly adjacent to the Justison residence for real estate investor Maurice Cotton.



News article announcing Frantz and Justison's home. (Miami Metropolis, April 21, 1922)

<sup>8</sup> August 7, 1922, *Miami Herald*

<sup>9</sup> "Seclusion Instead of a Front Porch Is The Fundamental Factor With European Houses Says Grove Architect," *Miami Metropolis*, September 8, 1922.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



Exterior of home along St. Gaudens Road, July 2020. (Kolaya)

## LATER RESIDENTS

Justison lived in the home for little more than a decade. In 1934, he died at the age of 54 following a brief illness.<sup>11</sup> He was buried in New Haven, Connecticut. Following his death, Justison's wife sold the home to Paul D. Barns, a Dade County circuit judge, who lived at the home with his wife and son until 1946, when Barns was elected to the Florida Supreme Court and moved to Tallahassee.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Rolla B. Hill and his wife, Claire Hill purchased the home from Barns. In 1949 the Hill family, which included two daughters and a son, constructed an addition to the property at a cost of \$2,000.<sup>13</sup> Dr. Hill passed away in 1963, at the age of 71.

Since the 1970s, the Justison residence has changed hands numerous times. In 1977 the property sold for \$122,500; several years later, in 1985, it went on the market for \$498,000; in 1999 Charles and Maria Bourland purchased the home for \$547,000 from Randall A. and Lana B. Whitman; and in 2001 it was purchased by Joel Simon and Toni Meltzer for \$780,000. Joel Meltzer passed away in 2006; his wife Toni currently lives in the home.

<sup>11</sup> "Harold DeBussy Justison," *Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 3, 1934.

<sup>12</sup> The Honorable Joseph A. Boyd Jr. and Randall Reeder, *A History of the Florida Supreme Court*, 35 U. Miami L. Rev. 1019 (1981); <http://repository.law.miami.edu/umlr/vol35/iss5/7>

<sup>13</sup> Building Permits, *Miami Daily News*, November 8, 1949.

# SUNSHINE BUILDING (1923)

## 3406 Main Highway

**Boundary Description:** Lot 1, Block 1, Burdines & Shepard Resubdivision, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 5, Page 70, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Builder:** John B. Orr

**Original Owner:** Sunshine Fruit Company

**Present Owner:** 3406 Main Highway LLC

**Present Use:** Commercial



Photo of the Sunshine Building, c.1920s (East Coast: Its Builders, Resources, Industries, Town and City Development, *Miami Herald*, 1924)





Map of downtown Coconut Grove, April 1927 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Miami, Dade County, Florida; Library of Congress)

For nearly two decades, beginning in the early 1910s, the Sunshine Fruit Company developed properties in Coconut Grove and the surrounding area. As discussed in previous sections, what began in 1911 as primarily an agricultural business to manage citrus groves for absentee owners, quickly evolved into a successful real estate development business. The company's first project – the construction of the Sunshine Inn and nearby cottages – attracted prospective land buyers to the area where they could enjoy the “climate and natural beauty” in a comfortable setting.

Other successful ventures followed in quick succession: Bay View Road, Ozone Avenue (present-day St. Gaudens Road), Entrada subdivision, and Douglas Circle. In 1922, Sunshine Fruits – with Justison and Frantz at the helm – next set its sights immediately north, to the central “business district” of Coconut Grove. At the time, the downtown area was home to a dozen or so small local businesses, including the longtime Sanders & Peacock grocery store (at the site of present-day CocoWalk), A.L. Hardie's Garage, Trymore Tea Room, and the Bank of Coconut Grove.

In 1922 the Sunshine Fruits Company purchased three adjacent lots along Main Highway near the intersection of Grand Avenue and MacFarlane Road on a central piece of land known to locals as “Trymore Point.” According to newspaper reports at the time, Sunshine Fruits hoped to “establish a new standard for business houses of the town.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Modern Structure for Sunshine Co.,” *Miami Metropolis*, June 22, 1923.

Trymore Point was a triangular parcel with frontage on both streets.<sup>2</sup> The land was originally platted by pioneer Charles Peacock and later by Roddy B. Burdine and Ben Shepard.

## CONSTRUCTION

The company hired Kiehnel to design a “modern” one-story building in what would become the heart of downtown Coconut Grove. The new Sunshine Building cost an estimated \$25,000, and would replace an older building on the site, which at the time was leased by R.P. McAdams.<sup>3</sup> Construction began in June 1923, and was supervised by local contractor Edwin H. George, who had worked with Kiehnel on past residential projects, including Justison's home.<sup>4</sup>

Using reinforced concrete as the structure, the Sunshine Building featured stucco applied in “old Spanish style, tinted in Mediterranean


<sup>2</sup> “Business Block Is Being Planned,” *Miami Metropolis*, May 12, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> “Tenants Moving Into Sunshine Building,” *Miami Herald*, Oct. 2, 1923.

<sup>4</sup> “Modern Structure for Sunshine Co.,” *Miami Metropolis*, June 22, 1923.

Irving J. Thomas Advertisement (*Miami Metropolis*, January 21, 1926)

**Sunshine Building**  
(Flatiron Corner)  
**COCONUT GROVE**



**THIS STRATEGIC CORNER**

Dixie Highway at Grand Avenue, in the very heart of this rapidly growing business section, commanding the full trend of traffic.

Eleven prospering stores—all rented—contained in this fine new building. Plans ready for additional two stories.

We are in a position to offer, for a short time only, this unusual piece of income-bearing property at an astoundingly low figure, with terms that warrant your attention.

**YOU MEN OF VISION**  
WHO KNOW VALUATION! SEE US TODAY!  
EXCLUSIVE SALE

**IRVING J. THOMAS CO.**  
**REALTORS**

*Specializing in Coconut Grove Properties for 14 Years*

**MODERN STRUCTURE  
FOR SUNSHINE CO.**

**Constructed of Reinforced Concrete With Cut Stone Pilasters, Will Be 117 by 46 ft.**

Work has begun on the one-story Sunshine building being erected by the Sunshine Fruit Co. A drug store will be located in one of the rooms and a barber shop and poolroom in others. Besides these there will be one large showroom and two offices.

Richard Kiehnel is the architect and E. H. George the builder, both are from Miami. The building will be pushed to completion because the lessees desire to occupy it as soon as possible.

The building will be 117x46 feet, of reinforced concrete, with cut stone pilasters, the foundations of which will be strong enough to allow the addition of another story.

Old Spanish style stucco will be used for the exterior. There will be marguis all the way around the building. A triangular room on the corner will have an arched entrance.

The Sunshine building, occupying a prominent location in the center of the business section, is expected to establish a new standard for the business houses of the town, according to the owners.

New article announcing start of construction. (*Miami Metropolis*, June 22, 1923)

pastel shades, giving it an antique effect.”<sup>5</sup> The gentle aging technique was a hallmark of Kiehnel’s Mediterranean style. The Sunshine Building featured ten ornamental rock columns along the exterior, and a prominent marquis, which wrapped around both the east façade fronting Main Highway and north façade fronting Grand Avenue.

The triangular-shaped building, measured 117 x 46 feet with the primary façade along Main Highway and space for six businesses, most notably the Coconut Grove Drug Co., located in the large corner unit. As an article in the *Miami Herald* noted, the building’s “ornate construction” made a statement from the start as:

5 “Work Starts Monday on Sunshine Building,” *Miami Herald*. June 22, 1923.

**NEW SUNSHINE  
BUILDING OPENS**

Over 500 Attend Celebration  
Which Included Street  
Dancing

The formal opening of the new Sunshine building, which was held Saturday evening and celebrated by a street carnival and dance, was voted a success by all attending, their number being more than 500.

A large portion of the street and sidewalk was roped off and the road waxed and dancing was enjoyed to music supplied by Kyle’s orchestra. Cigars, candies, soft drinks, and other refreshments were served.

The entertainment committee was headed by W. Heath Proctor and Hugo Hubsch and also included J. A. Tabor, J. C. Yelverton, J. Hines Cowart, and C. R. Yelverton.

Official opening of the building was celebrated along Main Highway. (*Miami Metropolis*, December 5, 1923)

*The focal point of the front of the building will be the arched entrance to the Coconut Grove Drug store, which will occupy the main room. At this point the marquis will be cut away to allow the extension of the stone arch over the doorway to a greater height, and providing more ample concentration of the ornamentation.*<sup>6</sup>

The interior floor was terrazzo and the building featured modern electrical and plumbing. Although it remained a single story building, its foundation was reportedly strong enough to support another story for future development. Before construction was completed, the Sunshine Fruits Company proudly announced that all of the spaces were rented, which according to Justison served as “significant evidence of the commercial growth of Coconut Grove.”<sup>7</sup> In addition to the Coconut Grove Drug Co., operated by Hugh Hubsch, original tenants of the Sunshine Building included Proctor Hardware Co., owned by W. Heath Proctor; the office of J.H Cowart, a real estate broker; a barbershop, pool hall, and newsstand run by C.R. Yelverton; and a Western Union Telegraph office managed by J.A Tabor.<sup>8</sup>

More than 500 people reportedly gathered outside the building on December 4, 1924 to celebrate the building’s grand opening. Portions of Grand Avenue and Main Highway were blocked off for a large street carnival, which featured a local orchestra – all to commemorate the grand opening of the Grove’s first modern commercial building.<sup>9</sup>

The Sunshine Building was directly across the street from the property of Grove pioneer Phillip W. Condry.<sup>10</sup> In a series of purchases over several years, the Sunshine Fruit Company purchased portions of the former Condry property, directly across from the Coconut Grove

6 Ibid.

7 “All New Stores Rented,” *Miami Herald*, July 6, 1923.

8 “To Move Into Stores In Sunshine Building,” *Miami Metropolis*, September 28, 1923.

9 “New Sunshine Building Opens,” *Miami Metropolis*, December 5, 1923.

10 Massachusetts native Phillip W. Condry (1863-1939) and his wife Louisa “Lulu” B. Condry moved to Coconut Grove in 1900. They purchased property and built a home southwest of the Peacock family along today’s Main Highway.

**New Western Union Office**

New Sunshine Building. Phone 33.

All business will have my personal attention. Messages accepted over telephone. J. A. Tabor, Manager.

SERVICE WITH A CONSCIENCE  
**TABOR'S TRANSFER**  
 PHONE 33 COCONUT GROVE, FLA.

Imported and Domestic Cigars

**C & G CIGAR STORE**

CANDIES, CIGARETTES and all the  
 LEADING MAGAZINES  
 POCKET BILLIARDS AND POOL

3416 MAIN HIGHWAY COCONUT GROVE  
 "JIMMIE" YELVERTON, Prop.  
 14 Years in Miami in This Line of Business

**FRESH GREEN GRASS**  
**Beautiful Flowers and Shrubbery**

Can be yours if you will investigate our line of Garden Hose and Lawn Sprinklers.

Hose Guaranteed One Year.  
 7 Different Varieties of Sprinklers.

**THE PROCTOR CO.**

Sunshine Bldg. Phone 84-J Coconut Grove



Upper Right: W. B. Justice Residence,  
 Lower Left: A. W. Evans Residence,  
 Lower: The Sunshine Building.

**A Representative Group of  
 Coconut Grove Properties**

These buildings illustrate the standards we are setting in construction work at Coconut Grove.

Nothing is too good for people who appreciate the best in homes and commercial buildings, and our constant aim is to make the best still better.

*Visitors are always welcome at our office.*

**THE SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY**  
 Established 1910  
 COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA

Western Union Advertisement (*Miami Metropolis*, November 7, 1923)

C&G Cigar Store Advertisement (*Miami Herald*, April 15, 1929)

The Proctor Co. Advertisement (*Miami Metropolis*, March 19, 1924)

Sunshine Fruits Company Advertisement (*Miami Metropolis*, January 1, 1924)

Bank, and sold off those parcels to create new businesses in the area. The company also added additional retail and storage space, including three stores along Grand Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

Nearly 100 years later, the Sunshine Building remains mostly intact at 3406 Main Highway. The marquis that once wrapped around the building is gone, as well as much of the ornamentation, however elements of the building's original Mediterranean façade appear largely the way they did in 1923.

Presently the corner space is owned by a Maryland-based development company, and occupied by several businesses. Starbucks at 3406 Main Highway is located on the original site of Coconut Grove Drug Co. El Taquito at 3410 Main Highway is in the original site of the Western Union office; Robin in the Grove at 3412-14 Main Highway is in the original barber shop, and the recently-closed Tavern in the Grove at 3416 Main Highway was the original site of a newsstand and pool hall.

<sup>11</sup> "Three New Stores," *Miami Metropolis*, Oct. 17, 1923.



View of Main Highway facing north. The Sunshine Building is on the right. c.1940s (HistoryMiami)



Main Highway facing northeast with the former Coconut Grove Bank Building in the center, painted yellow, and the Sunshine Building on the right; c. 1980s. (State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)



View of Sunshine Building from Main Highway, July 2020. (Kolaya)

**EVOLUTION OF BUSINESSES**

The Sunshine Building has housed many different businesses over the years. A partial history of these businesses, based on City of Miami property and tax records, phone directories and newspaper advertisements, includes the following:

3400 Main Highway: Coconut Grove Pharmacy (Hugh Hubsch); Liles Pharmacy (various owners from 1920s through the 1970s: Charles Lilies, V.A. Granger and L.S Rentz); Coconut Grove Bank, branch office; Starbucks

3410 Main Highway: El Taquito

3412-14 Main Highway: Barber Shop; Cleaners; Jewelry Shop,

3416 Main Highway: Newsstand and Pool hall (C.R. Yelverton), Bill's Place (1931); Village Spot (1943), Beer Hamlet (1973) \*Interestingly records indicate this establishment has operated as a bar continuously since the 1930s until the closure of the Tavern in January 2020

# THOMAS RESIDENCE (1925)

**3892 Douglas Road (37th Avenue)/3725 Leafy Way  
(originally 3856 Douglas Road)**

**Boundary Description:** Boundary description: Lots 3, 4, 5 and East 105 feet of Lot 6, Leafy Way, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 9 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Builder:** Albert V. Peacock

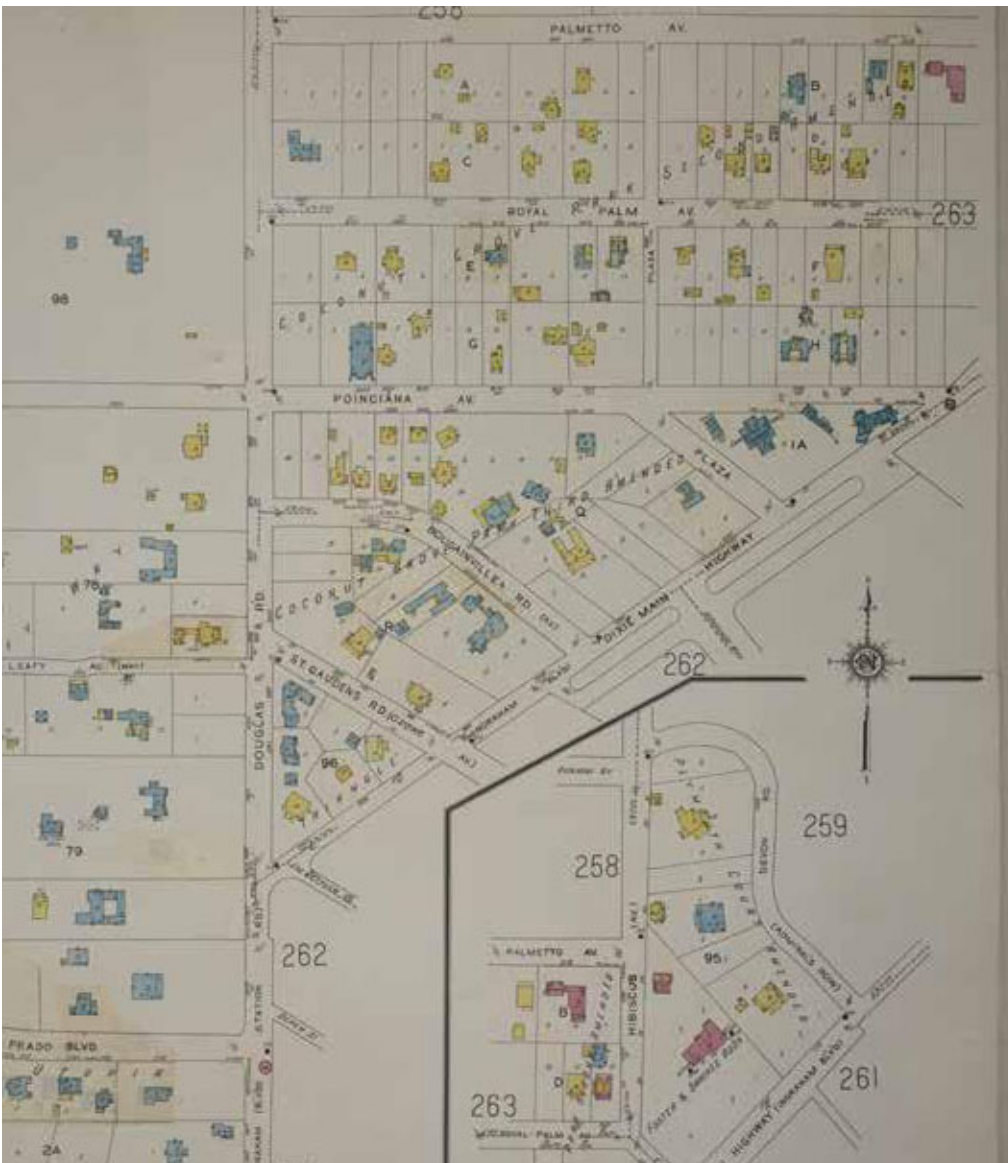
**Original Owner:** Irving J. Thomas

**Present Owner:** Greenleaf Investments (Roe Stamps)

**Present Use:** Single Family Residential



Front façade (Newcomb, *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*)



Map of southern Coconut Grove, with view of Leafy Way, April 1927 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Miami, Dade County, Florida; Library of Congress)

Irving J. Thomas (1877– 1962) arrived in Coconut Grove nearly a decade before the frenzied real estate boom of the 1920s. By the time the notorious “binder boys” and other fortune seekers descended on the area, Thomas had established a thriving real estate business from his office tucked into the canopy along Main Highway. He initially moved to Coconut Grove with his wife and young son in 1913 to manage citrus groves owned by the Sunshine Fruits Company, a company he helped establish a few years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Within two years, however, Thomas left the company to focus on real estate and it seems that he never looked back. Thomas spent more than five decades selling and developing properties almost

<sup>1</sup> Other officers of the company were Fin L. Pierce, H. de.B. Justison, and Helen W. Lester. Legal Advertisements: Notice of Incorporation, *Miami Herald*, March 4, 1911.

exclusively in Coconut Grove and Silver Bluff. He became one of the community’s leading figures, serving as a Justice of the Peace and as Coconut Grove’s first mayor.<sup>2</sup>

In 1921 Miami historian Ethan V. Blackman compiled profiles of leading citizens, and wrote of Thomas that:

*The progress and development of any community depends to a rarely appreciated extent upon the enterprise and initiative of a comparatively few of its individual citizens. Numbered among the active business men and civic leaders of Coconut Grove is Irving J. Thomas, prominent real*

<sup>2</sup> In March 1919, after a close contest with his former business partner, Harold deBussy Justison, Thomas was elected mayor of the newly incorporated town (Thomas won by just two votes). He served a one-year term.

## Irving Thomas Looks For the Best Season Miami Has Ever Had

"We are expecting the biggest season yet," declared Irving J. Thomas, one of Cocoanut Grove's liveliest boosters, this morning. Mr. Thomas is enthusiastic over the prospects for the coming season for Cocoanut Grove, believing that many new tourists and winter visitors will come this winter in addition to those who have spent the previous winters here.

Mr. Thomas was a member of the officers' training camp at Ft. McPherson and although he completed his course and was recommended for a commission, the surgeons at the camp believed that there was a physical defect that should bar him from the service and he was discharged. Later army surgeons at Washington examined Mr. Thomas and found that there was no reason why he should be debarred from the service. However this came too late to do Mr. Thomas any good and he returned home disappointed.

Mr. Thomas, like all loyal Americans, is ready and anxious to "do his bit" believing that everyone should stand by the government and help win the war.

(From The Miami Metropolis, March 19, 1919)

## Cocoanut Grove is Now Incorporated; Thomas Mayor

Cocoanut Grove is a regular town now. It became so last night, when a majority of 43 residents present at a meeting called for that purpose voted to incorporate.

In the process of becoming a town, the community knocked the "a" out of Cocoa. This was not done without considerable discussion, however, the convincing argument in its favor coming from Dr. David Fairchild, a botanical

authority, who stated that "cocoanut" is the proper way to spell the word from which the original name was derived.

Contrary to expectation in some quarters, there was little apparent opposition to the incorporation of the town, due, apparently, to the skill with which the boundaries were laid out to eliminate the principal objections of the fight of two years ago, when a similar attempt was made to incorporate.

In the election that followed the vote to incorporate, Irving J. Thomas, a real estate man, was elected mayor in a close contest with H. deB. Justison, receiving two votes more than his opponent. Frederick Roas was unanimously elected clerk. Roy Swanson, A.G. Hardee and Charles De Garmo were elected aldermen for one-year terms. Dale Payne was the successful candidate for marshal.

The limits of the town were adopted as advertised in the notice to incorporate. The northern boundary will take in the naval air station, the southern boundary will run to about one-quarter of a mile below the Hugh Matheson property, the western boundary will take in the railway station, the packing plants and the fertilizer factory and the bay will form the eastern boundary. This will leave a strip between Cocoanut Grove and the city limits of Miami, forming a "No Man's Land," as someone expressed it.

The town will become a full-fledged incorporated place as soon as the record of incorporation is filed with the state.

Attorney F.M. Hudson and A.E. Heyser conducted the meeting from a place on the platform.



Irving J. Thomas was Cocoanut Grove's first mayor. He came here in 1913 from Cleveland, was a real estate broker and grower of citrus fruits, as well as director of the Bank of Cocoanut Grove.

ABOVE: Irving operated a successful real estate company in Cocoanut Grove for more than five decades. (Miami Daily Metropolis, November 21, 1917)

BELOW Reprint of a March 19, 1919 article announcing Thomas' election as Cocoanut Grove's first mayor. (Miami Daily News, May 28, 1988)

*estate dealer and broker and banker, who substantial enterprise and constructive ability has been a forceful element in the growth and development of that popular community.*<sup>3</sup>

Thomas was born in Buffalo, New York on March 28, 1877.<sup>4</sup> He worked briefly as a teacher, and later a cashier with Standard Oil Co. in Buffalo,

<sup>3</sup> Ethan V. Blackman; *Miami and Dade County, Florida: Its Settlement, Progress and Achievement* (Washington, DC: Victor Rainbolt, 1921)

<sup>4</sup> Thomas was born in Buffalo, New York on March 28, 1877 to Henry and Katherine Thomas. His father was a successful shoe manufacturer and merchant..

before moving to Cleveland, Ohio, where he took a job as a sales and advertising manager for the H. Black Co., manufacturers of Woolex.

In 1901, at the age of 27, Thomas married Sadee Agnes Craik, also from Buffalo. The couple's only child, Irving Craik Thomas, Jr., was born in 1908. Years later, after the family moved to Coconut Grove, Irving Jr. was killed in a car accident. The 11-year-old was playing in the front yard of the Thomas home on Bayview Road in when the child reportedly ran into the street to retrieve ball and was accidentally hit by a fuel truck.<sup>5</sup>

In 1911 Thomas joined with Harold deBussy Justison and Helen Lester, former colleagues of H. Black Co. to establish Sunshine Fruits. Two years later Thomas moved with his family to Coconut Grove. According to R.L Polk & Co.'s *City of Miami Directory*, the family lived in a bungalow on Ozone Avenue beginning in 1913. Several years later they moved to a home on Bayview Road.

Thomas left the area briefly at that start of World War I to attend officer's training at Fort McPherson, Georgia but returned home after being disqualified for health reasons. By 1916 Thomas was no longer associated with Sunshine Fruits and was selling realty from an office on Bayview Road. He also owned several acres of fruit groves and exported oranges, avocados, pears, and other fruits. His business, later named the Irving J. Thomas Co., moved to a building at the corner of Charles Avenue and Main Highway (3536 Main Highway). Thomas hired Kiehnel & Elliot to design an addition to the building (since demolished), which housed the real estate company until the 1960s.

<sup>5</sup> Irving Thomas, Jr. Killed By Truck In Coconut Grove," *Miami Metropolis*, March 16, 1920.

View of home looking west from Douglas Road, c.1920s. (Source Unknown)





ABOVE: Living Room, 1975 (*The Villagers' Book of Outstanding Homes of Miami*, Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1975)

BELOW: Dining Room, 1975 (*The Villagers' Book of Outstanding Homes of Miami*, Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1975)

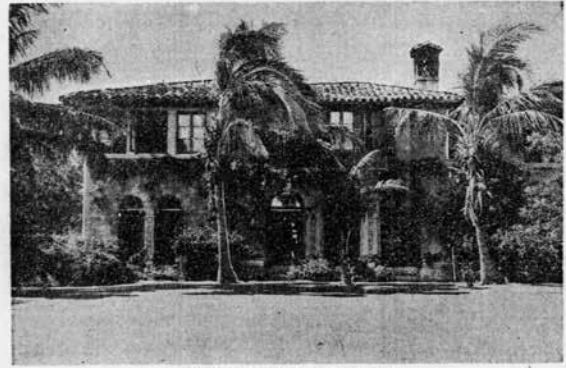
## CONSTRUCTION OF HOME

In 1919 Thomas purchased the property in South Coconut Grove on the corner of Douglas Road and Leafy Way, where he built one of the "show places of Coconut Grove." Thomas bought the land, of which 100 feet fronted Douglas Road and extended west 660 feet, from Burnet Kaltenbach of Kenosha, Wisconsin, which also was the hometown of A.J. Frantz.<sup>6</sup> Polk's *City of Miami Directory* in 1921 listed Mr. and Mrs. Thomas' residence on Douglas Road, also referred to at the time as Station Road

Newspaper reports of the time indicate that Kiehnel didn't build a new home on the site until 1925. It seems likely that Irving and Sadee Thomas lived in an existing structure on the property, perhaps the

<sup>6</sup> "Real Estate Transfers," *Miami Metropolis*, May 11, 1916.

Open For Inspection Today, 2 to 5



3856 Douglas Road, Coconut Grove  
Just North of Intersection With Main (Ingraham) Highway

### Beautiful Home in Coconut Grove Miami's Most Exclusive Residential Section

This is an unusually attractive and well-built home. Four very large bedrooms, 3 tile baths, tile roof and floors. Servant's room and bath. HEATED THROUGHOUT WITH HOT WATER RADIATORS. Also a separate guest, or servant's house and a 2-car garage.

The grounds consist of nearly two acres with a most interesting collection of tropical and sub-tropical trees and shrubbery—specimens that cannot be equaled anywhere else on the mainland.

There are many coconut, royal and other palms. Various varieties of citrus fruits—early and late oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes, tangerines, etc., etc. Avocados every month of the year. Half dozen varieties of the finest mangoes, also akees, figs, beautiful roses, etc., etc. Splendid neighborhood.

This property is in perfect condition and can be bought at a most attractive price—far below the cost of reproduction.

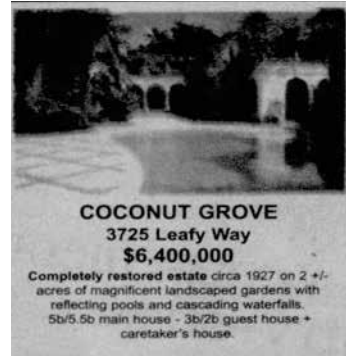
IRVING J. THOMAS CO., Realtors  
Specializing in Coconut Grove—Silver Bluff Properties Since 1913

### DOUGLAS ROAD ESTATE IS SOLD

New Yorker Purchases Property  
For \$40,000

Purchase for \$40,000 of the small estate at 3856 Douglas road, Coconut Grove, by Harry M. Dent of Buffalo, N. Y., president of the General Plastics Company, from Irving J. Thomas was reported Saturday.

The property, improved with a two-story, four-bedroom residence and small guest house, covers two acres planted with a wide variety of tropical fruit trees and shrubbery.



COCONUT GROVE  
3725 Leafy Way  
\$6,400,000

Completely restored estate circa 1927 on 2 +/- acres of magnificent landscaped gardens with reflecting pools and cascading waterfalls. 5b/5.5b main house - 3b/2b guest house + caretaker's house.

ABOVE: Real Estate Advertisement (*Miami Daily News*, March 15, 1936)

BELOW After two years on the market, Thomas sold the home in 1938. (*Miami Herald*, May 29, 1938)

home of, Anna E. Steere, a previous owner who resided there in 1914.<sup>7</sup> Thomas erected a water tower and windmill at the rear of the property during the summer of 1921 to water the groves.

Contractor Alfred V. Peacock built the two-story home of concrete block and stucco. Completed in December 1925, the Thomas residence was described as "the most perfect gem of architecture in the state."<sup>8</sup> The home, with Moorish details and lush foliage, cost an estimated \$50,000 at the time it was constructed.

Designed as a classic Mediterranean home, similar in size to the nearby Mead and Frantz homes, the Thomas residence originally included four bedrooms and three bathrooms. It also had a separate guest-

<sup>7</sup> Polk's *City of Miami Directory* for 1914 lists Anna E. Steere's home on Station Road (also known as Douglas Avenue).

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Gabriel, *The Villagers' Book of Outstanding Homes of Miami* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press), 1975





Image of reflecting pool created by Roe and Penny Stamps, published in *Tropical Garden, Magazine of Fairchild Tropical Garden*, Spring 2010.

house and a two-car garage. According to a 1975 profile of the house, original details preserved at residence included a red clay Spanish-tile roof with tiles dating from the 1800s, Cuban tile floor, a 15-ft high living room with 12 walnut beams hand painted by a Dutch artist, an ornate stone and plaster mantel, and a “unique’ dining room with three curved corners.<sup>9</sup> The house was said to be so climate responsive, that fifty years later it did not have air conditioning.

In addition to the detailed Mediterranean style architecture and elaborate landscaping, the lavish home reportedly featured its own radio receiving room, which was “equipped to meet the approval of the most discriminating fan.”<sup>10</sup> United States commercial radio broadcasting was still in its infancy at the time, and radio sets were considered a novelty – to say nothing of a specially appointed receiving room.

The home featured 12 French doors topped with arched windows, letting in the natural light and providing residents uninterrupted views of the surrounding gardens. Thomas was known for his love of gardening and landscape, and planted a wide variety of tropical plants and on his two-acre property. A 1936 real estate listing for the home noted that the property consisted of “a most interesting collection of tropical and sub-tropical trees and shrubbery – specimens that cannot be equaled anywhere else on the mainland.”<sup>11</sup> Thomas planted a range of citrus fruits, including oranges, grapefruit, and lemons, as well as several varieties of palm trees. Fortunately, subsequent owners have maintained and expanded Thomas’ original garden, resulting in its present state as a tropical oasis.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Spacious Radio Receiving Room In Thomas Home.” *Miami Daily News*, September 13, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Real Estate Advertisement, *Miami Daily News*, March 15, 1936.

## LATER RESIDENTS

In 1940 Thomas sold the estate for \$40,000 to Harry Mason Dent (1888-1967), president of General Plastics Company, and his wife, Lucy Dent of Buffalo, N.Y.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, a decade earlier Thomas listed the value of his home on as \$70,000.<sup>13</sup>

The Thomas family moved to a home on Old Cutler Road, where they lived for the rest of their lives. Sadee passed away in 1944. Irving lived on Old Cutler Road and maintained a real estate office on the same location on Main Highway until his death in 1962.

It appears the Dents lived in the home for less than two years. They sold the estate in 1942 to Ruth Gillett, widow of Darwin Lathrop Gillett, who named the home Dar-Dale, presumably after her two children Darwin and Dale. The Gilletts lived in the home until 1947, when Ruth married Alvan Markle, Jr., and moved to New York.

The next long-term residents of the home were Eugene and Margaret “Peggy” Hancock and their three children. Eugene “Gene” Hancock (1924-2001) was a well-known Miami businessman who ran a successful outdoor advertising company. The couple had two sons, Andrew and Charles Hancock, as well as a daughter, Margaret Hancock Hutchinson. The family was known for its philanthropy and community involvement, particularly at St. Stephen’s Episcopal School. Peggy passed away in 1998, and her husband in 2001. In the mid-1990s, the Hancocks sold the home to Italian investor Marco Possati and his wife, Juliet. They hired designer Robert Couturier to restore the

<sup>12</sup> “Douglas Road Estate is Sold,” *Miami Herald*, May 29, 1938.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census, File April 7, 1930; <https://www.ancestry.com>

original interiors. The couple also hired landscape architect Harry Nelson to create a series of gardens with various reflecting pools and a large cascading waterfall.<sup>14</sup>

Although the current address of the home is 3892 Douglas Road, as well as 3725 Leafy Way, the original address of the Thomas home was 3856 Douglas Road. Another home, built in 1927, sat on the corner of Douglas and Leafy Road, immediately south of the Thomas residence. According to Miami-Dade property records, the Possatis purchased the adjacent home in 1995 and combined the properties. The original home at 3892 Douglas was torn down in the early 2000s.<sup>15</sup> Once the properties merged, the Thomas estate expanded from its original 2-acres to nearly 3-acres.<sup>16</sup>

Penny and Roe Stamps paid \$6,050,000 for the property in 2001. Roe, a retired private investor, and Penny, a former interior designer, immediately began renovating the property. They hired Vermont architect Andrew Garthwaite to design a garden pavilion, which incorporated one wall of the adjacent 1927 home, which they subsequently tore down, and engaged landscape architect Raymond Jungles to create an informal tropical garden alongside a formal Italian garden.<sup>17</sup> Their collaboration resulted in one of “South Florida’s most intriguing outdoor spaces,” according to landscape writer Georgia Tasker, who profiled the Stamps’ “exotic and jungle-like garden” for the Spring 2010 edition of Fairchild’s *The Tropical Garden* magazine.<sup>18</sup> When asked by Tasker what drew her to the property, Penny, who passed away in 2018, said it was the quality of the main residence as well as the tropical garden. “It’s a very peaceful place and right in the middle of a city,” she said. “It is a personal and private garden, contemplative and peaceful, it feeds the soul.”

Given the property’s importance to its original owner, it seems fitting that the home remains intimately connected with nature nearly a century later. While Thomas no doubt appreciated Kiehnel’s skill as an architect, as well as the intricate details of his home, his true love was the land. In the early 1920s, amid the booming real estate market, the developer was most interested in cultivating his fruit groves, which he said were “the real joy of life.”<sup>19</sup>



ABOVE AND MIDDLE: Images of garden created by Roe and Penny Stamps, published in *The Tropical Garden*, Magazine of Fairchild Tropical Garden, Spring 2010.

BELOW: Aerial photograph outlining the Roe’s nearly 3-acre property. (Source unknown)

14 Real Estate Advertisement, 3725 Leafy Way, \$7,500,000, *Miami Herald*, Oct. 1. 2000.  
 15 The original home at 3892 Douglas Road (since demolished) was built in 1927 by real estate investor Edward M Lawrence and his wife Effie. They named the home “Arborie.” In the early 1930s the couple sold the home to William Emmett Highbee, a Chicago insurance executive. He lived there for a decade. Highbee passed away in March 1940 and left the home to his only daughter, Jane H. Hoppe. Hoppe stayed at the home following the death of her husband, Ellsworth Hoppe several months later, in June 1940. Later residents include Mr. and Mrs. James Williams, and Marion V. Williams. And Edward Williams the home was abandoned following Hurricane Andrew; the property was combined with the adjacent Thomas estate and subsequently torn down, except for one wall, which was incorporated into a garden pavilion.  
 16 According to Miami-Dade property records the lot size is 125,592 square feet, which is equivalent to 2.88 acres.  
 17 Georgia Tasker, “Tropical Paradise,” *The Tropical Garden*, Spring 2010, 27  
 18 *Ibid.*, 26  
 19 “Real Estate Dealer Has a Fine Office But Prefers Groves,” *Miami Herald*, May 5, 1922.

# COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE (1927)

**3500 Main Highway**

**Boundary Description:** A portion of Lot 10 of the play of Monroe's Plat as recorded in Deed Book D at Page 253 of Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** Albert V. Peacock

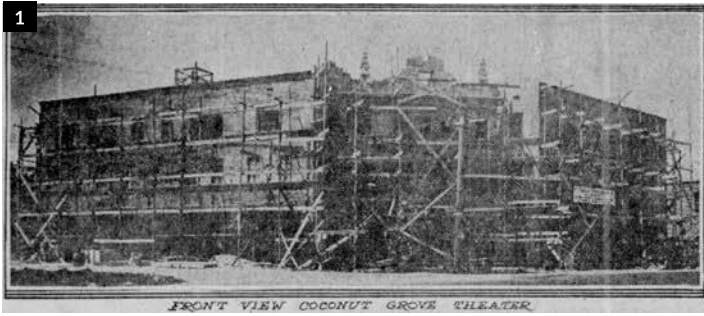
**Original Owner:** Irving J. Thomas and Fin Pierce

**Present Owner:** State of Florida

**Present Use:** Commercial



Rendering of the new Coconut Grove Theater. (*Miami Herald*, January 15, 1926)



2 Pretty New Movie House at Coconut Grove



The new Coconut Grove theater will be opened Saturday night at 8 o'clock by Paramount Enterprises, Inc. The building was constructed by the Thomas-Pierce Holding Co., of Coconut Grove and will be the 11th theater operated by Paramount Enterprises in Greater Miami. Doors of the theater will be opened at 7 p. m. for inspection.

**4**

## Coconut Grove Soon Will Have Costly Theater

Modern Building With Seating  
Capacity of 1,000 Planned  
By Irving J. Thomas

A \$200,000 theater building will be built in Coconut Grove by Irving J. Thomas, real estate operator, and associates, according to Kiehnel & Elliott architects, who are completing plans. The theater will have a seating capacity of approximately 1,000 and will be flanked on both sides by shops and offices. The auditorium will be one story in height while the front portion of the building will be two stories, containing a commodious lounge, rest rooms and providing for the foyer.

The site for the structure is on the west side of main highway, in the center of the suburb.

The Peacock Construction Co., a subsidiary of Peacock & Rice Lumber Co., has the contract. The site is now being cleared and construction will be started as soon as the floor plan is completed by the architects.

**5**



**3**

## Coconut Grove

INGRAM HWY AT CHARLES ST.

Charming MARION DAVIES will whirl you via the wings of the famous mill into a land of roars, romance and adventure!

**MARION DAVIES**  
in **THE RED MILL**

A Picture Gallery's Finest service  
Opening Sunday  
**EVELYN BRENT**  
in  
"Love's Greatest Mistake"  
A Paramount Picture

COCONUT GROVE THEATER  
SPECIALTY ORCHESTRA  
HAZEL READ, Organist  
Continues 2 P. M.—11 P. M.  
Prices: Matinee, 25c-50c  
Evenings, 50c and 75c

**6**

## Grove Theater Building Is Sold

George S. Engle, a local resident with Texas oil interests, has purchased the Coconut Grove Theater building for a price in excess of \$150,000.

The building contains five apartments, ten offices and a group of stores on the ground floor.

Transaction was negotiated by Mrs. Martha Magruder and Irving J. Thomas, Coconut Grove Realtors.

1. Coconut Grove Theater under construction. (*Miami Herald*, September 5, 1926)
2. The theater opened on New Year's Day 1927. (*Miami Daily News*, January 1927)
3. (*Miami Daily News*, February 10, 1927)
4. (*Miami Daily News*, January 3, 1926)
5. Opening Day Announcement (*Miami Daily News*, January 1, 1927)
6. (*Miami Daily News*, March 6, 1955)
7. South and southeast façades, 1950s (State Archives of Florida. Florida Memory)

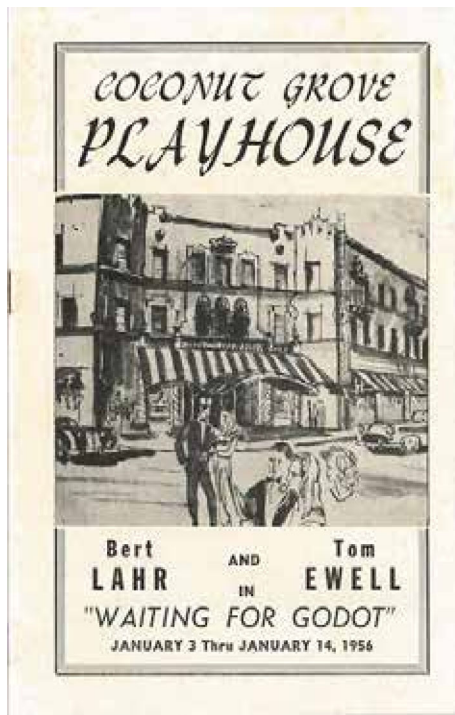
In the fall of 1926, construction of the Coconut Grove Theater, also known then as "The Shrine of Music and Pictured Arts," was moving forward at fast clip. A *Miami Herald* article from September 1st of that year noted that the theater's owner, the Thomas-Pierce Holding Company, was rushing to complete the structure in time for its formal opening scheduled for early November.<sup>1</sup> Mother Nature had other plans. Twenty-six days later, a powerful hurricane hit Miami. The 1926 storm caused extensive damage across South Florida. The theater, supported by scaffolding, sustained significant damage after its rear wall collapsed.<sup>2</sup> Repairs began immediately with a new opening date set for January 1927. Still, the theater emerged phoenix-like to weather many more storms, political and otherwise, since it first opened more than nine decades ago.

From its prominent location on the corner of Main Highway and Charles Avenue, the theater's debut was an important milestone for Coconut Grove. No longer would residents need to travel to Miami, they would have a luxurious picture house in their own community. Real estate investor Irving J. Thomas had purchased the property from Commodore Ralph Munroe as part of Thomas's vision to develop a thriving downtown in Coconut Grove.

Thomas-Pierce Holdings, a development company owned by Thomas and business partner Fin Pierce, hired Kiehnel and Elliot to design an Mediterranean-style theater, which, in addition to the 1,500 seat auditorium, included retail space on the ground floor, office space on the second floor and apartments on the third floor.<sup>3</sup> They hired

1 "Construction Rushed," *Miami Herald*, September 1, 1926  
2 "Citizens Hard At Work," *Miami Herald*, October 17, 1926

3 The auditorium was reportedly 75 feet wide by 140 feet deep, with a ceiling height of 38 feet. The ground floor had space for seven stores, while the second story accommodated 10 offices, with apartments on the third floor. "New Coconut Grove Theater To Open With Feature Tonight," *Miami Herald*, January 1, 1927



Playbill from "Waiting for Godot," January 1956 (<https://thenewtropic.com/future-coconut-grove-playhouse/>)

Alfred V. Peacock, who had recently completed Thomas's personal residence, as the contractor.

Kiehnel designed the theater at an angle to provide a highly detailed entrance façade and portal at the corners of Main Highway and Charles Avenue. The original entrance, later modified in the 1950s, extended the entire height of the building and featured cast stone ornament. A series of four helical columns, a hallmark of several Kiehnel projects, as well as other classic Mediterranean embellishments above the windows are still present, as are the four three-story balconies, two on the building's west side, and two on the south, with wrought-iron details. A freestanding wood ticket booth once stood in front alongside a stone fountain.

Before the Coconut Grove Theater was completed, it was turned over to Paramount Enterprises, Inc. and became their eleventh theater, and "the finest motion picture theater in the south" when it opened on New Year's Day 1927, with a showing of D.W. Griffith's *Sorrows of Satan*.<sup>4</sup> Notable elements included a Wurlitzer organ, an orchestra pit for up to 20 musicians, and a "modern cooling and ventilating system" by which air entered the through several large ceiling grilles.<sup>5</sup>

The ornate exterior was matched by a luxurious interior, which the *Miami Herald* described in detail for an article on the theater's opening day. From the lobby guests passed a row of arches, flanked on either side by stairs leading to "well-appointed, richly carpeted" lounge

<sup>4</sup> "New Theater Opens on New Year's Day," *Miami Herald*, December 21, 1926

<sup>5</sup> "'New Coconut Grove Theater To Open With Feature Tonight,'" *Miami Herald*, January 1, 1927

areas on the second floor.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the arches, guests could catch a glimpse of the main attraction, the large auditorium. The *Miami Herald* described the experience:

*On looking into the auditorium the feeling that one has is that he is gazing into a great room, which opens onto a patio at either side. For along the sidewalls are a series of double arches on twisted columns opening through fine wrought iron gates into a loggia or promenade. Through these gates one has a vista of fountains playing, a background of rich masonry grilles in an old Spanish wall, with the subdued lights reflecting through the arches. The walls of the auditorium are of texture plaster with antique color. An ornamental cornice with rich color treatment runs along the walls and supports a dark blue covered ceiling, in which are set highly ornamented colored grilles. Large, well-designed chandelier of wrought iron are suspended from the ceiling and add to the antique effect. The stage itself is set off by an elaborate proscenium treatment characterized by a huge receding moulded and ornamented arch. On either side are the organ grilles, two in the arch itself and one in each side treatment flanking the arch – a treatment marked by a balcony and decorated arches opening containing the wood spindle organ grille."*<sup>7</sup>

Less than two years later, the theater shut its doors in October 1928. Despite its luxurious amenities and first run shows, it debuted at a particularly difficult time. After the 1926 Hurricane Miami's real estate market plummeted, and just as it was emerging from the literal and figurative blows, the country entered the Great Depression. The theater reopened in September 1930 under new management, which reportedly spent \$25,000 in renovations, but continued to

<sup>6</sup> "Theater Structure is a Artistic Triumph," *Miami Herald*, January 1, 1927

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Set pieces from final showing of *Sonia Flew* inside the vacant theater, c. 2006 (<https://www.abandonedfl.com/coconut-grove-playhouse/>)





Exterior of theater, July 2020. (Kolaya)

struggle. During WWII, the theater served as a school for naval aviators and subsequently closed.<sup>8</sup>

In 1955 oil tycoon George Engle purchased the aging building from the Claughton family, owners of Claughton Island, also known as Brickell Key, for \$200,000.<sup>9</sup> Engle, who had recently built the Engle Building, the first new building in Coconut Grove in several decades, which still stands on the corner of Main Highway and McFarlane Road, envisioned a “first rate theater where Broadway plays could hold tryouts, established performers could give concerts, and new playwrights could showcase their efforts.”<sup>10</sup> Engle hired noted architect and Coconut Grove resident Alfred Browning Parker to reconfigure the interior as a performing arts venue, and the theater was resurrected again as the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Engle spent an estimated \$700,000 on the renovations.

On January 3, 1956, the theater opened with the U.S. premiere of Samuel Beckett’s new play *Waiting for Godot*. While celebrities in attendance included playwright Tennessee Williams and actors Joseph Cotton and Joan Fontaine, the initial local audience reaction was not positive, perhaps because the play had been advertised as a comedy. Just two weeks later Tallulah Bankhead played Blanche DuBois in Williams’s revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. While the Playhouse had begun to acquire a national reputation in the theater arts com-

munity, Muriel Murrell recalls in her book *Miami, A Backward Glance*, that in spite of its promising start, the Playhouse “seemed unable to maintain the lofty standard on which its owner had set his sights.”<sup>11</sup> Engle closed the theater in 1960.

From the late 1960s until 1980 the deed to the historic theater changed hands numerous times. In 1966 producer Zev Buffman purchased the building. Several years later Eddie Bracken and his business partners bought it, but unable to turn a profit, sold it in 1971 to Arthur Cantor and Robert Fishko. In 1977 the building was renamed the Players State Theater by its new owners, the Players Repertory Theater.<sup>12</sup> Three years later, the State of Florida purchased the Playhouse’s \$1.5 million mortgage. It would continue to run until 2006, when it shut its doors. While the University of Miami Richter Library Special Collections Division and Actors’ Playhouse in Coral Gables formed a team to rescue and preserve items from the storied history of the Playhouse and its productions, including costumes, original set designs, and playbills from productions with stars from George C. Scott to Denzel Washington, Ethel Merman to Liza Minnelli, and closing show, *Sonia Flew with Luci Arnez*, the once grand building currently sits empty and neglected amid an ongoing legal battle.<sup>13</sup>

8 Janus Ugucioni and Sarah E. Eaton, Coconut Grove Playhouse Historic Designation Report, City of Miami.

9 Muriel V. Murrell, *Miami, A Backward Glance* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press).

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ugucioni, “Coconut Grove Playhouse Historic Designation Report,” City of Miami.

13 Bill Hirschman, “Irreplaceable Playbills, Costumes And Ephemera Rescued From Coconut Grove, Florida Theatre on Stage, January 29, 2013, <http://www.floridatheateronstage.com/features/irreplaceable-playbills-costumes-and-ephemera-rescued-from-coconut-grove/>

# BRYAN MEMORIAL CHURCH (1928)

**3713 Main Highway**

**Boundary Description:** A portion of Lot 10 of the play of Monroe's Plat as recorded in Deed Book D at Page 253 of Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** Goddard & Sydow

**Original Owner:** Coconut Grove Methodist Episcopal Church

**Present Owner:** Chabad of South-Dade

**Present Use:** Religious



South elevation of Bryan Memorial as seen from the gardens of El Jardin, c.1930s (Kolaya)



Exterior of Bryan Memorial Church, July 26, 1951. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

Along Main Highway, nestled between the former Matheson and El Jardin estates, lies an imposing, octagonal structure originally known as Bryan Memorial Church, home of the present day Bet Ovadia Chabad of South Dade. Distinctive for nearly a century for its dimension and its neo-Byzantine architecture, it is considered one of the finest examples of religious architecture in Greater Miami.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Designed by Kiehnel & Elliot, the structure was named in honor of William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), once among the most famous men in America. Bryan lived briefly in Coconut Grove and helped to establish the church on land directly west of his waterfront estate. Known as the "Great Commoner" for his belief in the wisdom of the common man, Bryan was a popular statesman, debater and orator in the late 19th and early 20th century.<sup>1</sup> He ran unsuccessfully for president three times in 1896, 1900 and 1908, and later served as US Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson.<sup>2</sup>

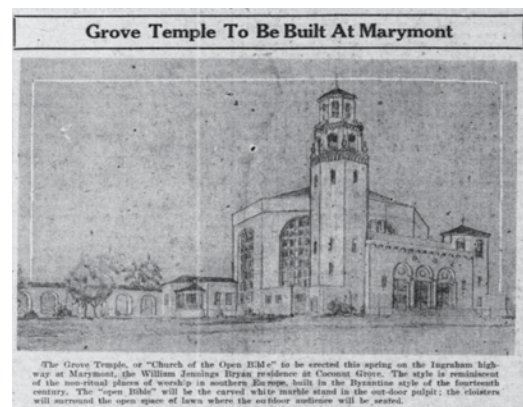
He is probably best remembered for his role in the Scopes Monkey Trial in July 1925. Bryan won the trial but the days of grueling testimony as he argued in favor of creationism against high school teacher John Scopes, who was charged with teaching human evolution in a public school, and the oppressive heat inside the courtroom took a toll. Bryan died of a heart attack in Dayton, Tennessee on July 26, 1926, five days after the trial concluded.

1 William Jennings Bryan was born in March 19, 1860 in Salem, Illinois. He practiced law in Jacksonville, IL, before moving to Nebraska; in 1890 he successfully ran for Congress. "William Jennings Bryan, American Politician," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Jennings-Bryan>

2 Ibid.

As a result of Bryan's sudden death, the first service held at the community church he had envisioned was his own memorial service. At 5 pm on August 2, 1925, Coconut Grove residents gathered outside the church, which was still under construction and covered in scaffolding, to pay their final respects to their famous neighbor. Rev. Foster W. Taylor delivered a sermon from the pulpit that Bryan had planned to use for his outdoor Bible classes. The church's entrance was draped with a black cloth, and flowers lined the front.<sup>3</sup> Several days after Bryan's memorial service, church leaders requested and received permission from Bryan's widow Mary Baird Bryan to change the name of the Grove Temple, also called "Church of the Open Bible," to the Bryan Memorial Church in his honor.

3 "Bryan's Friends Here Make Plans For Rite Of Memorial Sunday," *Miami Herald*, July 28, 1925.

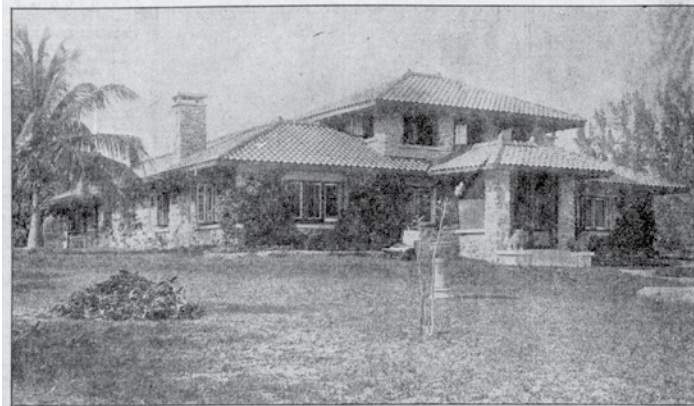


The church was originally known as the Grove Temple. (*Miami Metropolis*, February 15, 1925)





the property to the Sunshine Fruits Company for that purpose.<sup>5</sup> He apparently changed his mind and sold the estate to Bryan, who renamed it “Marymont” in honor of his wife. The five-acre property, directly east of Plymouth Congregational Church, extended from Main Highway to Biscayne Bay. The couple made several small renovations to the original Huntington residence, including a circular drive at the entrance “so tourists could see the home and bay” without disrupting the family.<sup>6</sup>



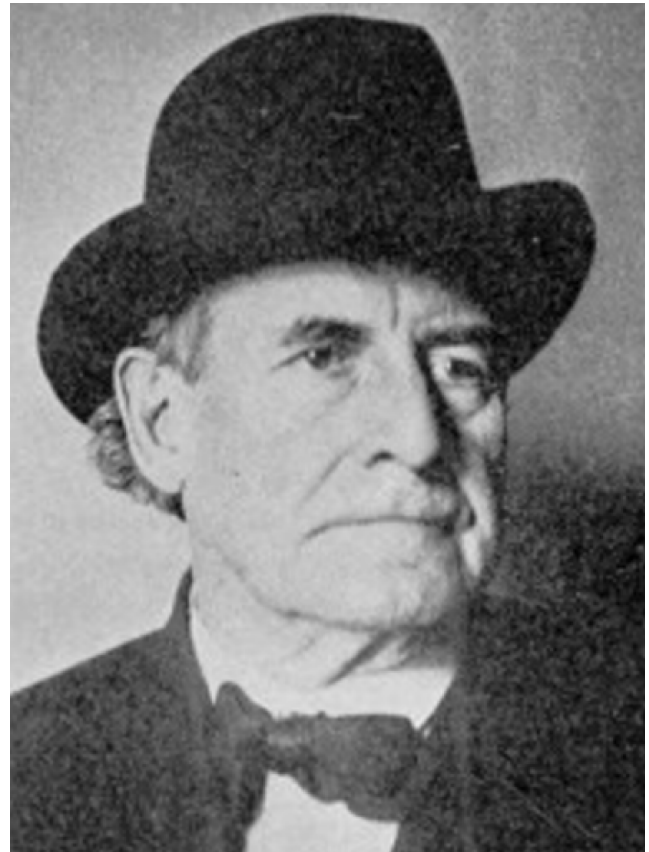
Shortly after purchasing the property, Bryan sold a portion of his land along Main Highway to Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, as it was then known.<sup>7</sup> Bryan was eager to have a community church nearby where he could offer Bible classes and the occasional sermon from a specially designed outdoor pulpit. Even though Bryan and his

<sup>5</sup> “New York Lady to Build Home,” *Miami Herald*, June 6, 1921.

<sup>6</sup> “Tourist to See New Bryan Home at Coconut Grove,” *Miami Daily News-Metropolis*, July 30, 1924.

<sup>7</sup> Bryan sold a tract of his property: 300 feet deep and 125 feet wide, fronting along Main Highway, for a cost of \$18,000. “Part of Bryan’s New Estate To be Used for Community Church and Sunday Classes,” *Miami Daily News and Metropolis*, August 25, 1924.

Portrait of Bryan, c.1920s. (East Coast: Its Builders, Resources, Industries, Town and City Development, *Miami Herald*, 1924)



“Marymont” is the home of William Jennings Bryan in Coconut Grove. It is a simple type of Spanish farm house with tiled patio and fountain. The location is a charming one.

ABOVE: Bryan preached to large crowds gathered in Bayfront Park, c.1920s. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, Miami-Dade Public Library)

BELOW: Bryan’s Coconut Grove home, Marymont (*Miami Herald*, March 1, 1925)

## MARYMONT

William Jennings and Mary had moved to Miami more than a decade earlier. Mary suffered from arthritis and the couple hoped the weather would be good for her health. In 1913 the Bryans built “Villa Serena,” along Brickell Avenue’s Millionaire’s Row. The grand bay front home, designed by noted architect, August Geiger is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In Miami, Bryan began hosting “Sunday Schools” in Royal Palm Park, present-day Bayfront Park, which each week attracted large crowds of tourists.

Bryan also helped Coral Gables founder George Merrick sell lots in his newly-planned subdivision by extolling the virtues of Florida in daily sermons at the emptied Venetian Pool. In 1924, Bryan purchased the Anchorage, the former estate of L.D Huntington, Jr., near the home of his daughter Ruth Bryan Owen and son-in-law Reginald Owen.<sup>4</sup> Huntington had initially planned on subdividing the estate, and sold

<sup>4</sup> L.D Huntington purchased the land; lot “C” of Ewanton Heights subdivision, in March 1916 from Robert S. Howard and wife Claridge Howard. “Real Estate Transfers,” *Miami Herald*, March 18, 1916.



—Daily News Photo by Kolsbun  
 Workmen Saturday began removing the last exterior forms from the Bryan Memorial church, Coconut Grove. The church, which was to have been named the Grove Temple, is located on the grounds of the late William Jennings Bryan, just west of Marymont, the Bryan estate on Biscayne bay.



ABOVE: Church under construction (*Miami Daily Metropolis*, August 29, 1935)

BELOW: Bryan's Memorial service (State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory)

wife were Presbyterian, not Methodists, Bryan said that they were committed to establishing a community church to serve all of those in need, explaining that they wanted "to be identified with all that goes on in the church and to contribute to advancing the welfare of all in the community."<sup>8</sup> Bryan was elected to the Board of Trustees and served on the Building Committee. Church leaders hired Richard Kiehnel as the architect, and at Bryan's direction, Kiehnel designed ground level entrances to accommodate Mary Bryan who was by then confined to a wheelchair.<sup>9</sup>

8 "Part of Bryan's New Estate To be Used for Community Church and Sunday Classes," *Miami Daily News and Metropolis*, August 25, 1924.

9 Margot Ammidown, Sarah E. Eaton, Bryan Memorial Methodist Church, Designation Report, City of Miami, October 21, 1997.

## COCONUT GROVE METHODIST CHURCH

The original Coconut Grove Methodist Episcopal Church was organized on February 14, 1915, in the Housekeepers Club of Coconut Grove with 25 charter members.<sup>10</sup> The congregation, which later changed its name to Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, erected its first building on Mary Street and Grand Avenue in 1918. As membership increased in the early 1920s, the Grace Methodist leaders began plans to expand, originally intending to purchase land from Commodore Munroe. They decided instead to buy the parcel on Bryan's property at a cost of \$18,000 in August 1924.

The purchase provided the Grace Methodist with the necessary space for a large structure with the capacity to fulfill Bryan's vision of an inclusive community church.<sup>11</sup> Construction began in the spring of 1925, and was scheduled to finish by October of that year. Bryan's sudden death in July 1925, the Miami Hurricane of 1926 and the subsequent crash of Florida's real estate market stalled fundraising and delayed construction. After four years of work, the church was completed and in the spring of 1928, Bryan Memorial Church was formally dedicated and declared "free of debt."<sup>12</sup> The building reportedly cost \$168,000, which included \$12,000 in damage repairs from the 1926 storm. American businessman J.C. Penney gave the principal address at the church's dedication service on Easter Sunday 1928.

## NEO-BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

Kiehnel's striking design for the church was said to be "reminiscent of the non-ritual places of worship in southern Europe, built in Byzantine style of the 14th century." Kiehnel brought experience in ecclesiastical architecture in his early position with Egan and Prindeville of Chicago, a firm that specialized in ecclesiastical architecture, and is best known for its Gothic-Revival design of St. Paul's Cathedral (1906) in Pittsburgh. The dome, a feature of Byzantine architecture that Kiehnel planned for Bryan Memorial, was completed successfully, but an accompanying tower shown in original sketches for the church was not built.

In October 1997, the City of Miami City Commission approved the designation of Bryan Memorial Methodist Church as a historic site. The designation report describes the structure's architectural elements in detail beginning with the primary building which:

*is an octagonal block topped with a smaller octagonal rotunda. Both octagons feature pyramidal hipped roofs.. The building, which is finished with smooth stucco, is embellished with a corbel table on the lower*

10 Ibid.

11 "Part of Bryan's New Estate To be Used for Community Church and Sunday Classes," *Miami Daily News and Metropolis*, August 25, 1924.

12 "Easter Sunday Set For Bryan Temple Rites," *Miami Daily News and Metropolis*, April 3, 1928.



Exterior view from Main Highway, c.1938. (Photograph by Gleason Waite Romer, Miami-Dade Public Library)

octagon and a cornice with dentils on the upper octagon. A bronze cupola with a cross tops the rotunda. The exterior of the church is characterized by two, two-story projecting gable roofed wings. The one on the northwest facade contains an exterior, second-story loggia with five slender arched bays demarcated by Byzantine columns. Below the loggia is an outdoor pulpit. It is this loggia, rather than the main entrance, that is the principal facade facing Main Highway, making the orientation of the structure somewhat unusual. The main entrance is located on the southwest facade in the second major gable-roofed wing and has been modified by the addition of a newer gable-roofed doorway. A small one story polygonal office, added later, extends from the west wall of the entrance to the sanctuary. The fenestration of the main octagonal block is characterized by tall, tripartite arched openings, separated by engaged Byzantine columns. The central arch is flanked by shorter, more slender arched openings, and all contain multiple windows glazed with an opaque marble-like material. A circular stained glass window is found within the central arch on the northeast facade.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Margot Ammidown and Sarah E. Eaton, Bryan Memorial Methodist Church, Designation Report, City of Miami, October 21, 1997.

## BET OVADIA CHABAD OF SOUTH DADE

After years of declining membership and mounting debt, Bryan Memorial United Methodist Church merged with Coconut Grove's United Methodist congregation, Christ Allapattah Church, in 1995.<sup>14</sup> The following year the church relocated to the Christ Allapattah location at 2850 SW 27th Ave. In October 1998 Bet Ovadia Chabad of South Dade purchased the historic property for \$1.7 million. In addition to a synagogue, the organization runs a Montessori school on the property.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Tomb, "Fellowship beyond walls, denominations," *Miami Herald*, July 16, 1995.

# SECOND CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST (1941)

**3840 Main Highway**

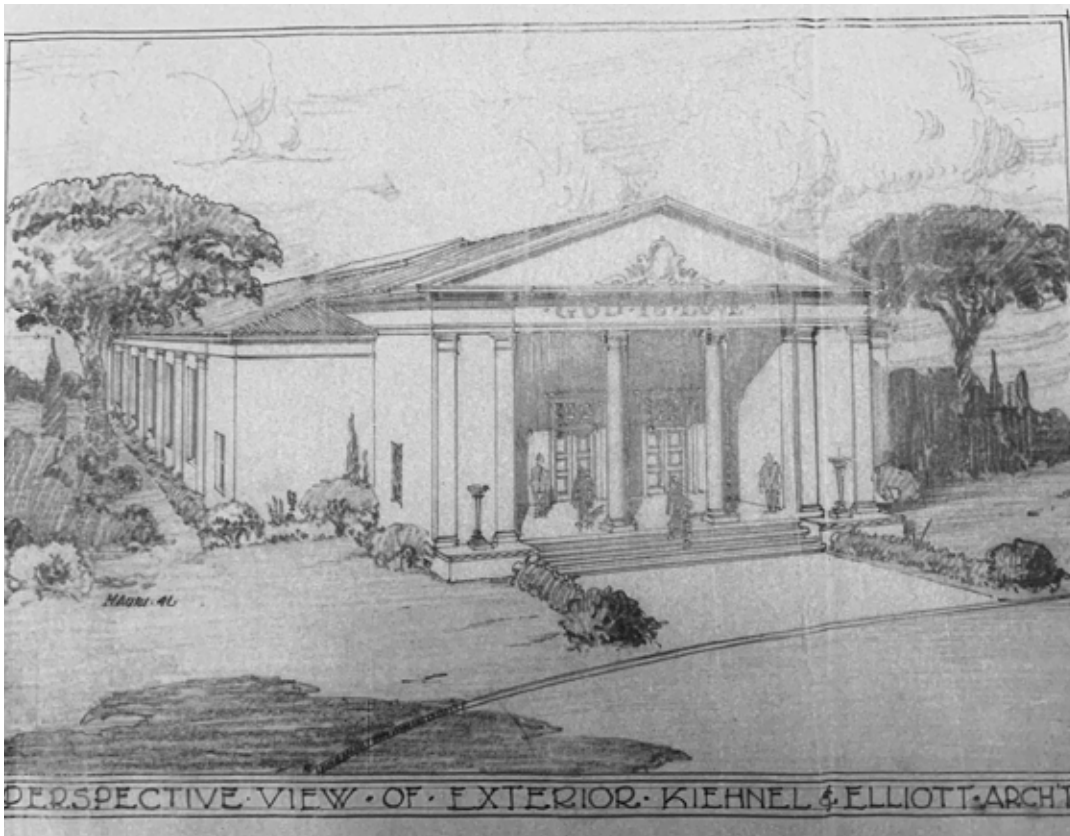
**Boundary Description:** A portion of Lot H of the plat of Ewan-ton Heights, as recorded in Plat Book B at page 52 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Architect:** Kiehnel & Elliot

**Builder:** Witters Construction Co.

**Original Owner:** Second Christian Science, Church

**Present Use:** Religious



Kiehnel's original design sketches for Second Church of Christ, Scientist are preserved at HistoryMiami.



City of Miami, Florida Historic Preservation Office Tax Card

More than two decades after Cherokee Lodge in 1917, his first commission in South Florida, Kiehnel returned to Coconut Grove to design the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, just a stone's throw from where he began. Much had changed in the intervening years. Miami had experienced the frenzied years of the early 1920s, a horrific and deadly hurricane, as well as the devastating crash that followed and the lean years of the Great Depression. Kiehnel was no longer associated with John Elliot, but continued to practice under the name Kiehnel & Elliot. From his early success advancing the Mediterranean style, Kiehnel adapted to the times designing residential and commercial projects in the emerging Art Deco style. In the post-War era, Mediterranean had largely fallen out of favor, which mattered little in the case of the Second Church of Christ, Scientist given the Church's long time association with Neoclassical Revival architecture, beginning with "The Mother Church" in Boston and evident in Miami's First Church of Christ, Scientist by August Geiger on 1836 Biscayne Boulevard in Miami.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), Christian Scientists emerged in the late 19th century - one of the few religions founded both in the United States, and by a women. It is based on the belief that "prayer has the power to heal and transform anyone."<sup>2</sup> The central textbook of Christian Science, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, published in 1875, lays out the basic tenants of Eddy's beliefs. The religion, which reached its peak at turn of the century, is known for its belief in spiritual healing. Adherents have traditionally shunned medical science, preferring instead to rely on prayer and homeopathic remedies, although the church has modified its stance in recent years.

<sup>1</sup> The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, also referred to as "The Mother Church" was built in 1894 in the Romanesque style; a massive addition in 1906 was designed in the Neoclassical Revival style, which "became a symbol of the Church of Christ, Scientist," with future temples erected in that style. Marina Novaes and Dr. William Hopper, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Designation Report, City of Miami, September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianscience.com/what-is-christian-science>

Christ Science initially took hold in Coconut Grove as a result of pioneer Jesse S. Moore, who had reportedly been an "invalid" but during a stay in Boston was healed through the church. Moore and her husband Stephen Moore, an inventor of wood carving machinery, first arrived in Coconut Grove in 1897 and purchased land in the Ewanton Heights subdivision.<sup>3</sup>

A handful of early worshipers, including pioneer Isabella Peacock, began meeting at Moore's bayfront home, the Moorings, which gave name to the present-day Moorings, to study Eddy's teachings. They group soon formed the "Christian Science Society of Coconut Grove" and began meeting on Sunday afternoons at the Housekeeper's

<sup>3</sup> "Death Takes Mrs. Moore, City Pioneer, *Miami Herald*, April 19, 1944.



The first church was designed by Walter DeGarmo in 1913.

**1** **Second Church of Christ, Scientist**  
Coconut Grove, Florida

Announces a  
**FREE LECTURE**  
On  
**Christian Science**  
By  
**PAUL A. HARSCH, C. S. B.**  
of Toledo, Ohio

Member of the Board of Lectureship of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts.

At the Edifice  
Main Highway—Coconut Grove, Fla.  
**TUESDAY EVENING, FEB. 6th**  
at 8:15 P. M.

This lecture will be amplified, so that those wishing to sit in their cars may do so, as ample parking space is available.

**2**



A \$30,000 Colonial addition is being built by the Second Church of Christ Scientist at Main highway, Plaza street and Poinciana avenue, Coconut Grove. The existing building will be used for a Sunday school. The addition comprises a large auditorium, 89 by 48 feet with balcony. The main entrance will be from Main highway by means of a curved driveway through a portico or entrance loggia into the foyer. Doors will lead from the foyer into the main auditorium, teachers' rooms, literature and retiring rooms and church offices. The foyer will have a vaulted plastered ceiling and the auditorium will be treated with ornamental pilasters and run plaster cornices. The ceiling will be covered with acoustic tile and all main floor surfaces will be of asphalt tile. Modern recessed lighting fixtures, electric organ and a ventilating system, also will be installed. Kiehnel & Elliot are the architects and Winters Construction Company, the contractors.

**3** *Church Of The Week*



Second Church Of Christ, Scientist

**Grove Is Graced  
By Second Church**

One of the most attractive churches in the Coconut Grove area is the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, 3850 Main Hwy., whose gleaming white walls and tall columns enclose a seating area for about 800 persons.

The church was built in 1941, with the first services held in it on Nov. 27, 1941, Thanksgiving Day.

The church was dedicated on Thanksgiving Day 1948 — five years later, when the church was fully paid for, a custom adhered to by Christian Scientists.

It had its beginning in 1896 when residents of Coconut Grove became interested in the teachings of Christian Science.

Jack Cummins, TV sports commentator, is the first reader and Mrs. Alma Hughes the second reader.

Services are at 11 a.m. Sundays, with Sunday school at the same hour. A testimony meeting is held at 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

The church maintains a reading room at 3436 Main Hwy., which is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

**4** **Death Takes  
Mrs. Moore,  
City Pioneer**

Mrs. Jessie Smith Moore of 3463 S. Moorings way, Coconut Grove, who came here from Boston in 1897 when there were only a few homes in the Miami area, died at her home late Sunday after a brief illness.

With her husband, the late Stephen Moore, an inventor of wood-carving machinery, Mrs. Moore came South before the turn of the century, making the trip by boat before train service was established. The Moores made their home in Coconut Grove and at one time owned all of the property known as Moorings way.

Well known for her philanthropic work, Mrs. Moore was a member of the Housekeepers club, Audubon society, Fairchild Garden society and First Church of Christ Scientist of Miami.

Survivors include several nieces and nephews of Boston.

Funeral services will be held at 7 tonight in Philbrick Funeral home chapel and the body sent to Boston for burial.

1. Church announcement (*Miami Daily News*, February 4, 1934)
2. Announcement on opening of the church (*Miami Herald*, September 14, 1941)
3. (*Miami Daily News*, November 10, 1962)
4. Founding member Jessie Moore passed away shortly after Kiehnel built the new church.

Club of Coconut Grove.<sup>4</sup> Several years later a dozen or so members gathered at the Congregational Church, and held their meetings there from 1902 to 1913.

In 1913, Moore donated roughly an acre of her property in South Coconut Grove on the west side of Main Highway between Plaza Street and Poinciana Avenue to build a church. The group hired Walter DeGarmo to design a simple and relatively small church, which is still

4 "Healing Story Started Local Science Study," *Miami Metropolis*, March 3, 1923

located behind the much larger 1940 structure.<sup>5</sup> The building reportedly cost \$5,000, with room for 125 people. In December 1913, the congregation placed a bronze box with a Bible, Eddy's writings and other Christian Science writings, and a copy of the *Miami Metropolis*. The structure was dedicated in 1919 once it was declared free of debt.

The Christian Science Society of Coconut Grove officially became a church in 1926 and added two wings to the building, and another addition in 1935. Since by this time a Christian Science church had been established in downtown Miami, the Coconut Grove society took the name Second Church of Christ, Scientist.<sup>6</sup>

5 DeGarmo's wife was an active member of the Church. Joseph Faus, "Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Miami," *Miami Sunday News Magazine*, October 15, 1950, 12.

6 "Debt-Free Ceremony is Planned," *Miami Herald*, November 26, 1946.



In 1940 the congregation hired Kiehnel and Elliot to design a new auditorium and auxiliary rooms for prayer and study, as well a grand main façade. The new auditorium, which measured 68 by 58 feet, was built to accommodate nearly 500 people on its main floor and overlooking balcony. From the main entrance, along Main Highway, visitors enter an imposing portico into the church foyer. From there, the Miami Herald described the anticipated entry sequence through which:

*Doors will lead from the foyer into the main auditorium, ushers' room, literature and retiring rooms and church offices. The foyer will have a vaulted plastered ceiling and the auditoriums will be treated with ornamental pilasters and run plaster cornices. The ceiling will be covered with acoustic tile and all the main floor surfaces will be of asphalt tile. Modern recessed lighting fixtures, electric organ and a ventilating system will also be installed.<sup>7</sup>*

Kiehnel designed a series of large horizontal windows along the length of main auditorium. The new addition cost totaled \$30,000. The original church was converted to a Sunday school. The congregation dedicated the new structure at sunrise on November 13, 1941. Jessie Moore, who had first brought Christian Science to the area four decades earlier, as well as Katherine Soden Bigler, who lived nearby at the Kiehnel-designed La Solana, laid the cornerstone of the new church. Construction finished just as the United States was entering World War II, and the space was used to pack and ship materials to troops overseas.

Over the years the Second Church of Christ, Scientist has been used for both religious purposes as well as a community gathering space. In addition to the church building, the Christian Science Reading Room has been a fixture at 3456 Main Highway for decades. The Second Church of Christ, Scientist has lost its original lanterns, which were part of Kiehnel's architectural vocabulary in several projects. Otherwise, both the DeGarmo and Kiehnel buildings remain relatively intact and contribute to the Kiehnel's Coconut Grove opus.

<sup>7</sup> Miami Herald, September 14, 1941.



Front façade. (source unknown)

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