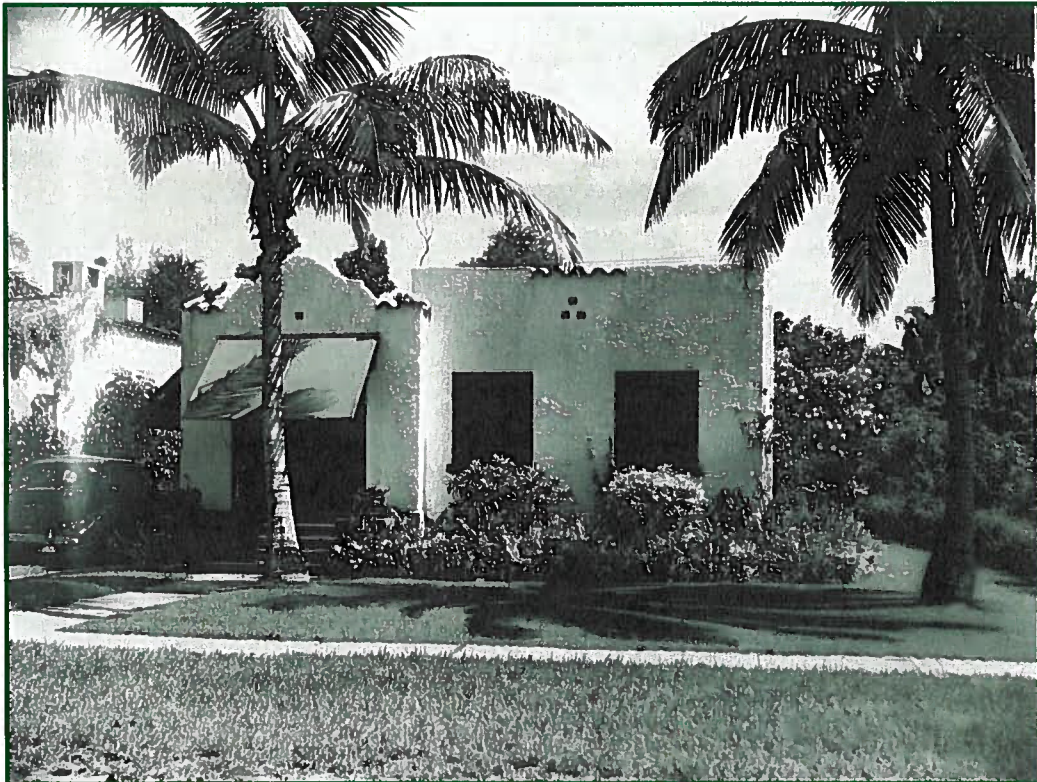


**REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES
HISTORICAL RESOURCES & CULTURAL ARTS DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE DESIGNATION OF
THE PROPERTY AT
808 MAJORCA AVENUE
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**



Historic Photo, c.1940



LHD 2024-001
March 20, 2024

**LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION:
808 MAJORCA AVENUE, CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

Application: Designation review requested by the Board of Architects

Note: all observations were made from the public right-of-way.

Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET
CORAL GABLES
FLORIDA 33134

☎ 305-460-5093
✉ hist@coralgables.com

Folio Number: 03-4108-001-4980

Legal Description: The East 25 Feet of Lot 7 & All Lot 8, Block 30, Coral Gables Section "B," according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 111 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Permit No.: unknown

Construction Date: 1923

Architect: unknown – attributed to H. George Fink

First Occupant: Robert E. Backus & Leola Backus

Present Owner: Majorca PAT, LLC

Building Use, Type, Style: One-story SFR, Mediterranean Revival

Site Characteristics: The property is located on a 75'x 112.5' interior lot on the south side of Majorca Avenue between Pizarro and Cortez Streets.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1923, 808 Majorca Avenue is amongst the earliest homes in the City and stands as a testament to founder George Merrick's vision for Coral Gables. Merrick drew from the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries to create his vision for a fully-conceived and cohesively-designed Mediterranean-inspired city. It is now considered one of the first modern planned communities in the United States.

Merrick and his team felt that Mediterranean architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. During the 1920s, they paid careful attention to ensure that all elements of the City conformed to Mediterranean ideals. In accordance with Garden City precepts, some streets were platted with smaller lots to accommodate various income brackets and modest homes that were built with the same high-quality construction and Mediterranean Revival style features as other structures that shaped the new city.

Designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, the property at 808 Majorca Avenue is an example of a modest home and detached garage built during the founding years of the City. The property at 808 Majorca Avenue maintains sufficient integrity for designation and it significantly contributes to the historic built environment of the City of Coral Gables.

CORAL GABLES REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: Preserving the City's Story

The built environment reflects the beliefs, values, creative expressions, and technical capacity at a place in time in history. Historic Preservation preserves those structures and spaces that tell the story of the community's historic past. The buildings that comprise the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places portray the City's story of progress, change and preservation. They are valuable, non-renewable resources that embody our collective heritage. The retention of these tangible touchstones provides a sense of community, a sense of evolution, a sense of identity, a sense of ownership, and a sense of place for the City of Coral Gables. In other words, these historic resources provide continuity and context; they are the foundation of the City's identity.

Coral Gables is a Certified Local Government (CLG) and as such must maintain a Register of Historic Places and abide by associated preservation standards. A local community works through a certification process --jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs)-- to become recognized as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Once certified the community gains access to benefits of the program and agrees to follow required Federal and State requirements.

The City of Coral Gables was certified in 1986 and was amongst the first cities in Florida to become a CLG. Hence, it is the task of Historic Preservation, and an obligation of Certified Local Governments, to identify and protect those resources that contribute to the story of the City over time. Furthermore, the City must abide by the federal regulations as put forth in The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Buildings.

CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE

Article 8, Section 8-103 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code--*Criteria for designation of historic landmarks or historic districts*--states that to qualify for designation as a local historic landmark individual properties must have significant character, interest, or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic, or architectural heritage of the City, state, or nation.

The single-family residence at 808 Majorca Avenue is eligible as a local historic landmark based on its historical, cultural, and architectural significance. For designation, a property must meet **one (1)** of the criteria outlined in the Code. As discussed below, 808 Majorca Avenue meets the following **three (3)** criteria:

Historical, Cultural significance

- 4. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community*

Architectural significance

- 1. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural style*
- 2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction*

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Coral Gables' developmental history is divided broadly into three major historical periods.

- **Pre-1926 Hurricane:** Initial Planning and Development/Florida Land Boom
- **1927-1944:** 1926 Hurricane/Great Depression Aftermath & New Deal/Wartime Activity
- **1945-1963:** Post World War II & Modern periods (1945-1963).

The single-family home at 808 Majorca Avenue was constructed in 1923 during the initial development of Coral Gables. It was amongst the earliest homes built and it exemplifies the Mediterranean ideals espoused by Coral Gables' founder, George Merrick.

Coral Gables was originally conceived as a suburb of Miami and attracted investors from across the nation during the South Florida real estate boom of the 1920s. Merrick drew from the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries to create his vision for a fully-conceived and cohesively-designed Mediterranean-inspired city. The goal was to create architectural splendor in a suburb with tropical luxuriance. It is now considered one of the first modern planned communities in the United States.

Advised by landscape architect Frank Button, artist Denman Fink, and architects H. George Fink, Walter De Garmo, H.H. Mundy, and Phineas Paist, Merrick transformed 3,000 acres of citrus plantation and native hammock. Merrick's team felt that Mediterranean-inspired architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle and it was a featured selling point in early promotional materials. The architecture constructed during the community's first period of development combined elements commonly used in Spanish, Moorish, and Italian architecture, and has come to be known as the Mediterranean Revival style. During the 1920s structures and amenities were built almost exclusively in this style. The construction of the single-family residence at 808 Majorca Avenue occurred in 1923 during the City's Boom years and is indicative of the type of architecture that was the founding premise of Coral Gables. It is designed in the Mediterranean Revival style and is an example Merrick's vision for the City.

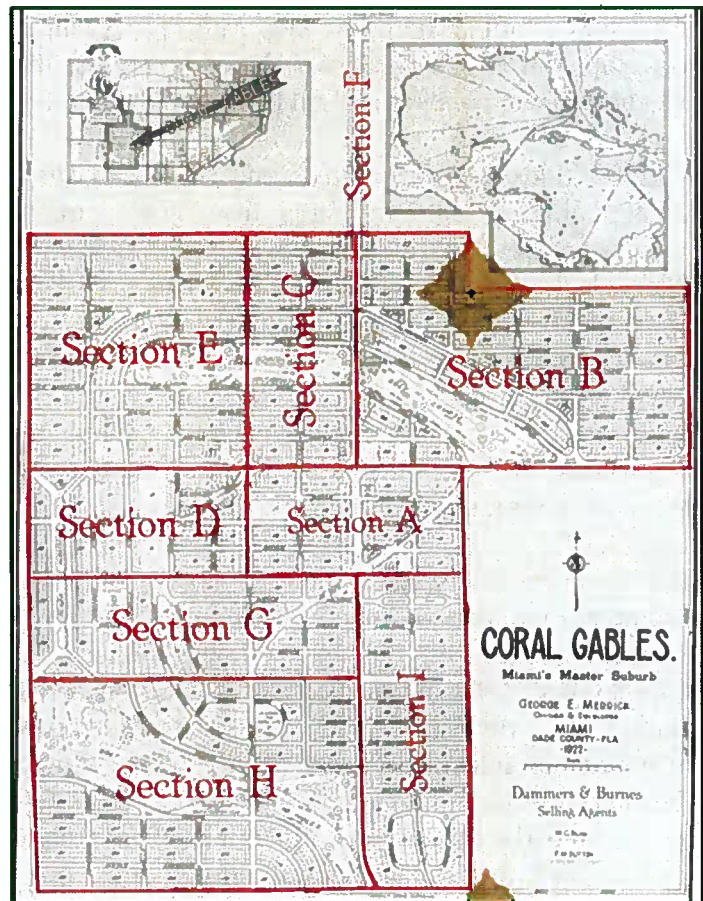


Figure 1: Advertisement in *House Beautiful*, 1925

Nationally-acclaimed landscape architect Frank Button drew the first comprehensive map of Coral Gables in 1921. It was based on the grid of fruit trees of Merrick family's citrus plantation, as well as the native pineland. Merrick's design team carefully planned the city to maximize the potential intrinsic to its tropical environment. They laid out broad sweeping boulevards with grand vistas and tree-lined streets, plazas with fountains that invited visitors to linger, and Mediterranean-inspired homes that conveyed a quality of centuries-old permanence with generous street setbacks for front yards that celebrated the 'tropical vegetation in a delightful profusion.' The planned community also employed restrictive zoning to control development and aesthetics. The city plan embraced the City Beautiful ideals of copious amounts of public green space and monumental

public buildings. It also wholeheartedly incorporated the Garden City precepts of comprehensive planning. There were defined areas for different uses (i.e., residential, commercial, trades), a wealth of public facilities, and housing for different income levels that didn't sacrifice quality. Homes built for modest incomes were constructed alongside grand palazzos and a section of the City was devoted to multi-family housing.

Merrick realized that automobile ownership was becoming increasingly commonplace for members of the affluent and middle classes and, as such, wanted Coral Gables to embrace the motorist without sacrificing the beauty of the community or the comfort of the residents. Thus, he implemented an intentional hierarchy of roadways. In Button's 1922 map, one can clearly see the series of wide parkways with center planting medians that were major thoroughfares across the development, as well as wide parkways with substantial swales for tree-planting that supplied internal access and scenic routes. (Figure 2) Merrick's 'Great Development Program' also included majestic place-making features. The grid opened at strategic locations to include grand entrances, plazas, and fountains giving focus to major arteries and vistas, and providing visual interest for both the pedestrian and the motorist. Broad boulevards curved around planned features that included vast park land, golf courses, monumental public and community buildings, and other amenities.



**Figure 2: Coral Gables Map:
"Miami's Master Suburb," 1922**

With Merrick's acceptance of Button's plan in July 1921 the building of Coral Gables' infrastructure began in earnest. Miles of roads were laid with sidewalks, green space, and trees, along with the establishment of acres of parks. The levelling of the Granada Golf course commenced and waterways were channeled through the oolitic limestone beds. The boundaries ran from just north of Sorolla Avenue south to Bird Road, west to Red Road, and east to Anderson Road, with a small section abutting Le Jeune Road north of Coral Way. The northern section of Granada Boulevard was only a strip of land from the street north of Sorolla Avenue (then called Coral Valley Road) to the Tamiami Trail where the first entrance was to be constructed.

The map also indicated the location of the first seventy-five acres which was to be put up for sale. Labelled as Section "A," it was the area just south of Merrick's home on Coral Way. It contained both large and small lots which encouraged buyers from different income brackets. On November 23, 1921, three days before the subdivision lots opened for public sale at a heavily advertised auction, Button's plan was made public in a two-page spread in the Miami Times. Records indicate

that an upwards of five thousand people attended the auction. Six days later the auction closed with three hundred lots sold for more than a half-million dollars. Buoyed by the sales in December 1921 Merrick pledged \$10,000 of the sales towards a library and, a few days later, pledged another \$100,000 and land to create a University of Miami in Coral Gables.



Figure 3:
Aerial Photo
Coral Gables
looking West,
c.1924
Red Arrow:
808 Majorca
Avenue

On December 27, 1921, Section “B” went on sale. This section included lots on the impressive Greenway Drives that circled the proposed golf course, as well as Alhambra Circle which was a wide boulevard with a ‘parked’ center median. Section B also included smaller 50’ lots that could be bought separately or bundled together offering affordable and higher-end options.

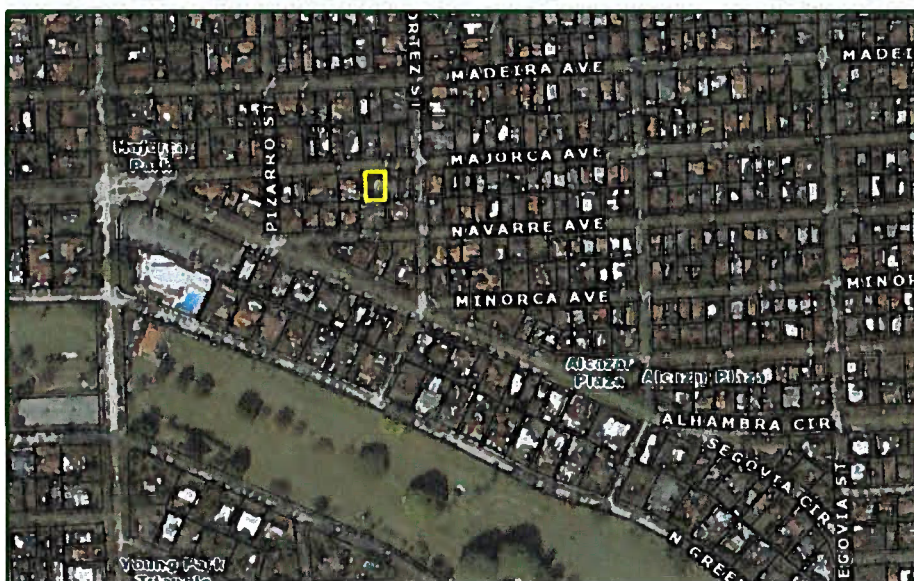
As sales progressed in Section D-E Merrick had his architects design finely-detailed Mediterranean Revival style homes on fifty- and sixty-five-foot-wide lots. He strove to demonstrate that, though smaller, moderately-priced homes in Coral Gables would have the same quality of construction and aesthetic as the larger homes. Many of these smaller homes would later be classified as Coral Gables Cottages.

The home at 808 Majorca Avenue was built in Section B on a fifty-foot-wide lot --the property expanded to seventy-five-foot wide in 1954 with the acquisition of half of Lot 7. As seen in Figure 3, 808 Majorca Avenue was one of the first homes built on the street. It was a one-story, moderately-priced home that followed Merrick’s vision. The original permit drawings for the home have not been located to date. [Note: early tax cards for the property cite the original permit as #60. However, #60 is the permit for Coral Gables power plant.] Early records show that Robert and Leona Backus were the first owners of the home and that they moved into the home in November 1923. (Figure 4) Six months later Leona was hired as one of the first teachers at Coral Gables Elementary. She remained at the school for thirty-six years. The Backuses owned the home for fifteen years. (See Owners below)

Mrs. Robert E. Backus has moved
into her new home on Avenue
Majorca.

Figure 4: Backus Moved in 808 Majorca Ave
Miami News, November 19, 1923

Building permit records indicate that there was significant construction on Majorca Avenue in the mid-1920s. In general, construction in the City of Coral Gables boomed until the combination of the devastating Hurricane of 1926 and Great Depression curtailed new development and ended Merrick's grand plans. During the Depression Era of the 1930s few single-family homes were built. With the implementation of the New Deal and other incentives, the building industry finally experienced a small resurgence in the late 1930s and early 1940s, only to abruptly grind to a halt during the War years. The Post-War prosperity that followed these lean years created an optimism which reigned through the 1950s and 1960s and resulted in an unprecedented building boom. During this time the building of single-family homes in the City of Coral Gables followed national trends both in numbers and in style. As illustrated in Figures 5, Majorca Avenue and Section B saw marked construction of additional contemporary styled single-family homes in the 1940s. Building records indicate the area was built out by the late 1950s. Section B developed as a single-family neighborhood and remains so to date. Hence, the home at 808 Majorca Avenue retains its historic context and is an example of the Mediterranean ideals espoused by Coral Gables' founder, George Merrick, during the initial developmental period of the City.



Figures 5:
808 Majorca Street
Siting & Context
Aerial Photos

Top:
Aerial Photo: 1948
[red arrow]
Courtesy Aerial
Photography: University
of Florida

Bottom:
Current: 2023
[yellow box]
Courtesy Miami-Dade
Property Appraiser

SIGNIFICANCE ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION



**Figures 6: 808 Majorca Avenue, Front (North) Façade
c.1940 [top]; 2009 [center] *Courtesy Google Earth*; Current, 2024 [bottom]**

Executive Summary

Built in 1923, 808 Majorca Avenue was amongst the earliest homes built in Coral Gables. Designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, this home exemplifies the founding design premise of Coral Gables. City founder George Merrick and his team felt that Mediterranean-inspired architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. During the 1920s, careful attention was paid to ensure that buildings and streetscape elements conformed to Mediterranean ideals. In accordance with Garden City precepts that guided Merrick's development of Coral Gables, some streets were platted with smaller lots to accommodate various income brackets and modest homes that were built with the same high-quality construction and Mediterranean Revival style features as other structures that shaped the new city in the early 1920s. The single-family home and its detached garage at 808 Majorca Street stand as a testament to Merrick's vision.

The home at 808 Majorca Avenue honors their vision for adapting residential design to the rigors of South Florida's climate while keeping the integrity of the Mediterranean Revival style. It features thick cement masonry block walls which keep the home cool, light-colored stuccoed exterior walls which reflect the sun's heat, and varied windows that supplied much needed ventilation and light in this tropical environment. Its construction over a crawl space supplied added ventilation and separation from the high-water table.

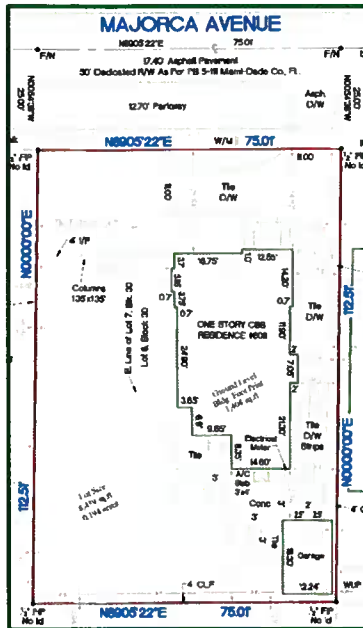
As described below, the home and auxiliary garage building exhibit numerous character-defining features of the Mediterranean Revival style. These include but are not limited to: rectilinear massing and floor plan, flat roofs with a variety of decorative parapets (Mission, inflexed (splayed)) and barrel tile accents, textured stucco, projecting front bay (originally the front porch), projecting gable-roofed bay clad in barrel tile, shouldered chimney with a distinctive geometric masonry cap, decoratively-grouped square vents, smooth-faced masonry base, as well as recessed casement windows with projecting sills.

Staff visually assessed the property from the public-right-of-way, and examined permit documents, building records, and historic photographs. Staff has determined that the property at 808 Majorca Avenue possesses sufficient integrity for designation. The home is a Mediterranean Revival style home built during the City's initial development period in the 1920s. As per, Article 8, Section 8-103 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code--*Criteria for designation of historic landmarks or historic districts*: "Districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects of national, state and local importance are of historic significance if they possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, or association." Hence, it is deemed that this property significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the Coral Gables and is part of the collection of quality residences that contributes to the City's sense of place over time.

A REAL BUY!
\$4,950, Furnished
2-BEDROOM bungalow with sleeping porch. in good condition; has fireplace, solar system, garage, large screened-in front porch; storm shutters; stationary tubs. Only \$750 cash needed. balance arranged with easy terms.
Open Today
808 MAJORCA AVE.

Figure 7: *Miami Herald*, June 6, 1940

Extant Exterior Description & Alteration Discussion



**Figures 8:
808 Majorca Avenue:
Property Overview**

Site Plan, 2023 [left]
Courtesy AFA Company, Inc.

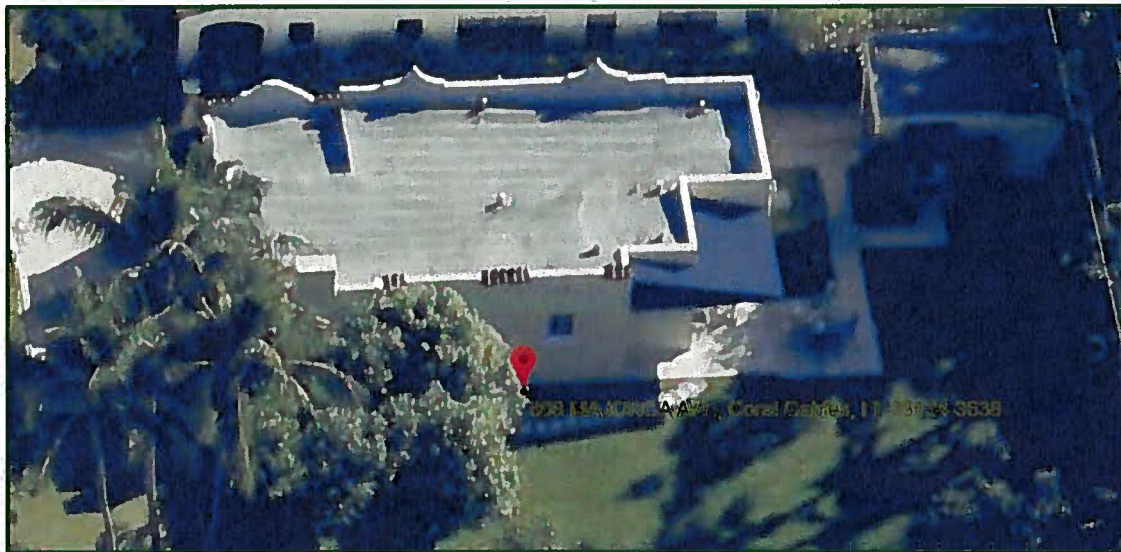
**Current Aerial Photo, 2023
[right]** *Courtesy of Miami-Dade
Property Appraiser*

Streetview, 2023 [below]
Courtesy Realtor.com



The approximately 8,476 SF property at 808 Majorca Avenue sits on an interior lot on the north side of the street. On the property is a one-story, single-family residence and at the southeast corner of the lot is a one-story accessory garage building. The structures are built on the 50' wide Lot 12 and the adjacent half of Lot 13 (25' wide), acquired in 1954, is a side yard. (Figures 8)

The one-story single-family residence is built of masonry over a crawl space and is clad with textured stucco. The home retains its original rectilinear massing; it has had no additions. The home is under a flat-roof and a series of parapet types adorn the home. The fenestration of the home varies in size and configuration. Windows are recessed and casement in type with protruding sills. Square vents are decoratively arranged as a single or in a triangle above the windows on all facades. Wrapping around the home is a smooth-faced stucco base. (Figures 8-12)

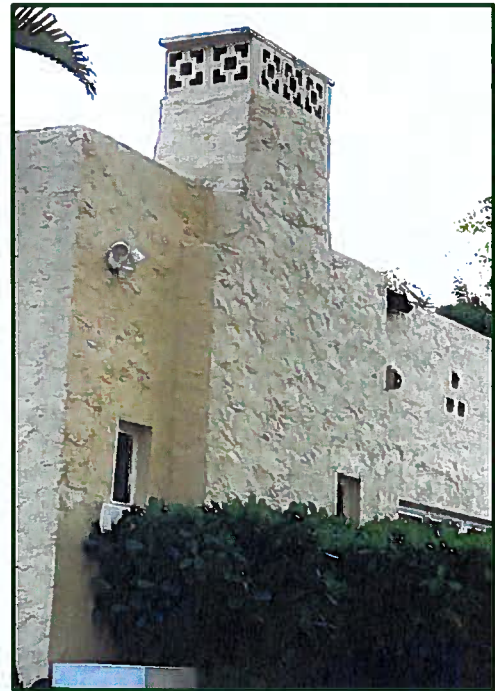


Figures 9: 808 Majorca Avenue
Front (North) & Side (West) Facades, 2022 [top] *Courtesy Realtor.com*
Aerial View Looking East [center] *Courtesy of Miami-Dade Property Appraiser*
Rear Façade, 2022 [bottom] *Courtesy Realtor.com*



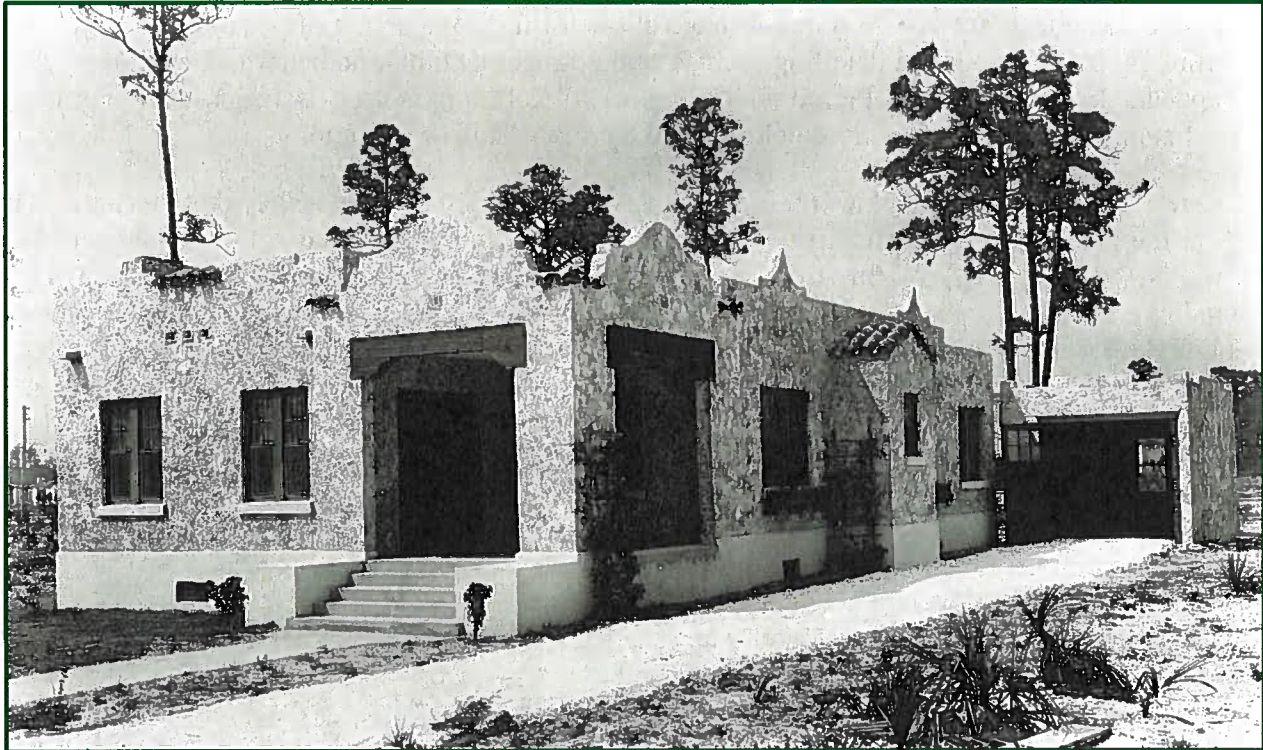
Figures 10: 808 Majorca Avenue
Front (North) & Side (East) Facades, 2022 [top] *Courtesy Realtor.com*
Aerial View Looking West [center] *Courtesy of Miami-Dade Property Appraiser*
Side (East) Façade Looking North, 2022 [bottom] *Courtesy Realtor.com*

The parapets and chimney are notable and distinct Mediterranean Revival style features of the home. At the northeast corner of the home was originally a screened entry porch. As discussed below, it is now enclosed for living space. (Figures 6, 10 & 11) The curvilinear Spanish Mission-shaped parapets demark the porch and bring attention to the home's main entry. The coping of the flat parapets flanking the Mission parapet are clad in two-piece barrel tile. Centered below each parapet is a single square vent. (Figures 11) On the east side façade two additional distinct parapets adorn the home. These are Moorish-inspired inflexed curtain (aka splayed) type parapets. Centered below each of them are a triangular arrangement of square vents. (Figures 10) On the west façade, near the northwest corner, a rectangular, shouldered chimney straddles and rises above the simple parapet. The chimney cap has masonry geometric screens in keeping with the Moorish-inspired parapets on the east façade. (Figures 11)



Figures 11: Notable Features, 2024
Chimney with Geometric Cap [top]
Front Entry Porch Parapet Ensemble [bottom]

The original permit for this home has not been identified or located to date. Newspaper reports indicate that the home was built and occupied by November 1923. However, a few blocks away is a contemporaneous home that offers comparative primary documentation. As seen below in Figures 12, 533 Alcazar Avenue, with only a few changes to details, appears to be the mirror image of 808 Majorca Avenue. 533 Alcazar Avenue was also built in 1923; the photo in Figures 12 shows it nearing completion on March 21, 1923. In late 1922 the Dexter-Geare Construction Company commissioned architect H. George Fink to design ten homes for them in Coral Gables and have been identified as Permit #430-439. 533 Alcazar Avenue was Permit #436 and is provided as Attachment A in this report. The Miami Herald reported in December 1922 that all ten of these homes were sold prior to their completion and that another ten were being commissioned. The second set of commissioned homes have not been identified to date. Given the almost identical but mirror image of the home and the time of its initial occupancy in November 1923, it is highly likely that 808 Majorca Avenue was amongst this second cadre and was also designed by Fink.



**Figures 12: Mirror Image 1923 Homes
533 Alcazar Avenue, March 21, 1923 [top]
808 Majorca Avenue, 2023 [bottom]**

Historic documents for 808 Majorca Avenue allow for the comparison of portions of home with Permit #436 and, except for detailing such as vent arrangement, muntin pattern, and chimney cap, it appears they align. Hence, Permit #436 (Figures 14 & 15 top) is used as a comparative primary document for this home. It is used below to aid the discussion of alterations.

Exterior alterations of the home at 808 Majorca Avenue are almost exclusively on fenestration. In 1972 the property was purchased by Tropic Properties, 'upgraded,' and sold a year later. (see Owners section below) At this time the original wood casements were replaced with awning windows and the screened porches (front, rear, sleeping) were enclosed in various manners. (Figures 15, center) In 2019 casement windows were reintroduced into the home and some original porch openings were further reduced at this time. (Figures 15, bottom)

In 1972 the front porch was enclosed for living space by inserting a door and sidelight ensemble in the street-facing opening. The size and the decorative masonry lintel were retained. On the east façade the porch opening was reduced in height to accommodate awning windows. The masonry lintel was retained, and a sill was added. In the 2019 campaign these openings were retained. However, although it is not indicated on the permit both lintels were removed. A Google Earth image from 2018 (Figure 13) show that they were extant prior to the 2019 work.



Figure 13:
Extant Original Front Porch Lintels, 2018
Courtesy Google Earth

As illustrated in Figure 14, the rear stepped bays were originally a sleeping porch and a back porch. In 1972 all three large openings of the sleeping porch were altered when the space was enclosed for living space. The openings on the west and east side façades were blocked up. The rear (south) façade opening was reduced in width for a double window. In 2019 this opening was further reduced to a single small window. In 1972 the window adjacent to back porch door on the west façade was blocked up. In 2019 this opening was blocked up when the back door was moved to the rear (south) façade. The expansion of an original screened opening on the rear façade accommodated this new back door location.

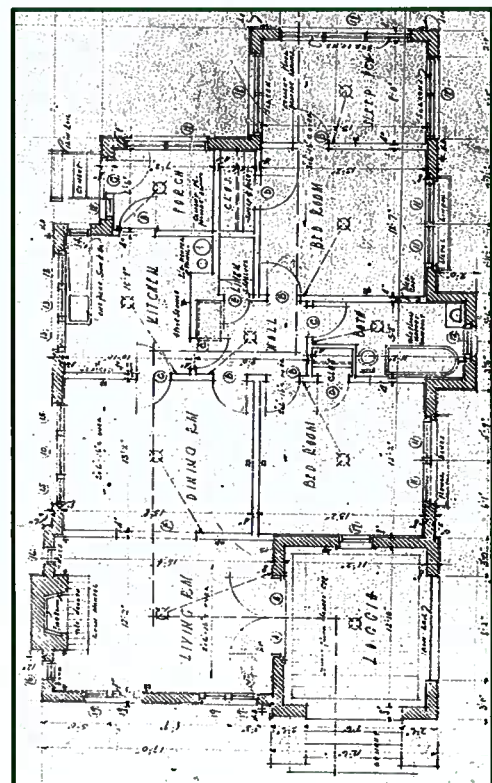
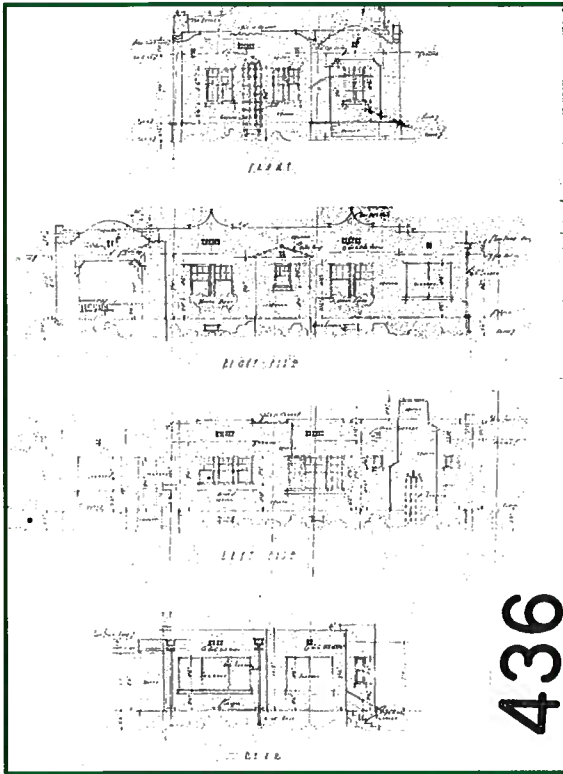


Figure 14: Floor Plan, 1923
Permit #436, 533 Alcazar Avenue
provided as probable mirror image floor plan

The remaining window openings of the home appear to retain their original size and their protruding sills.

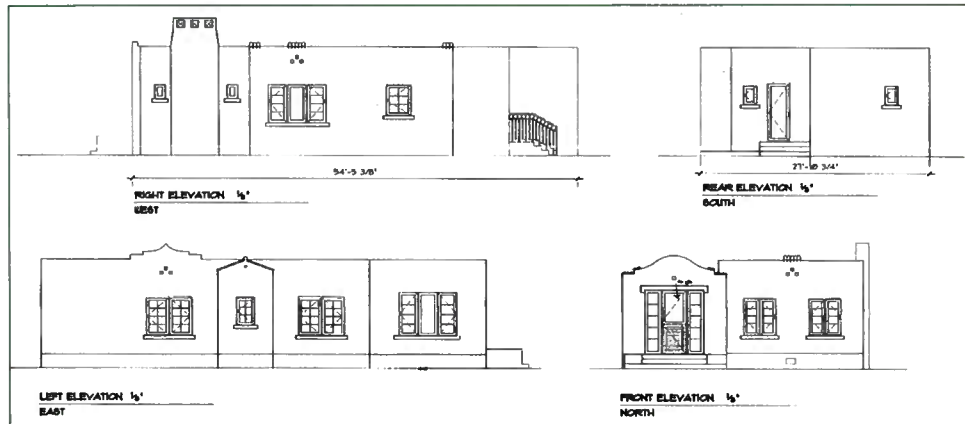


Figures 15:
Elevation Drawings: Windows

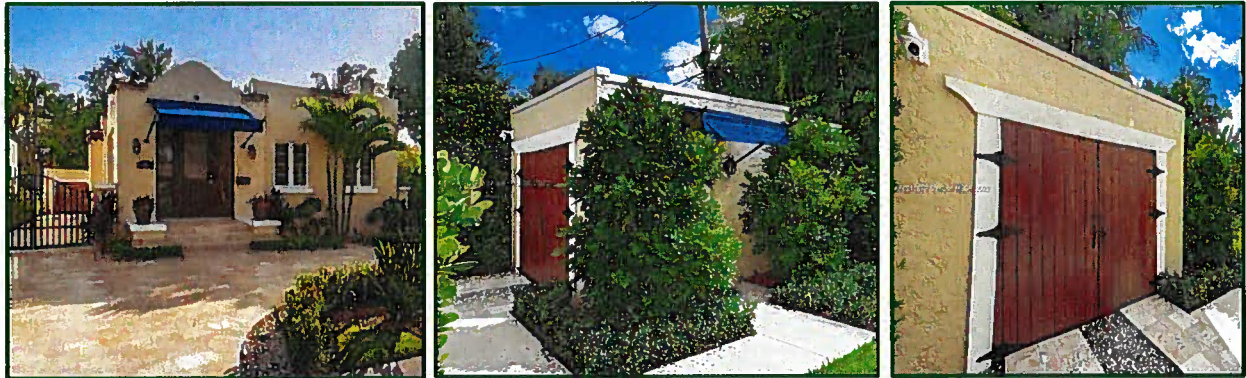
1923:
Permit #533 for 533 Alcazar Ave
Mirror Image of 808 Majorca Ave
provided to show window size & placement
 [top]

1972:
Permit #22619-A
 [center]

2019:
Permit BL-19-01-3853
 [bottom]



At the southeast corner of the property is the original detached garage. It is one-story under a flat roof with simple parapets. The textured stucco matches the home. The detached garages are important features of the early homes in the City.



Figures 16: Detached Original Garage, 2022 Courtesy Realtor.com

Owners

The first occupants of the home were Robert Backus and Leola Backus. They moved to Miami in 1923 and lived in this home for the next fifteen years. Robert was a construction engineer for the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Miami. Leola was an elementary school teacher. She was one of the first teachers at Coral Gables Elementary School. The school opened in October 1923 with one teacher and thirty-nine students. In May 1924 three additional teachers were hired one of which was Leona. By 1925 the school enrollment exceeded 1,000 students. Leona remained at Coral Gables Elementary for the next thirty-six years teaching primarily second grade.

After Robert and Leona Backus sold the property in 1938, the home had several other long-term owners. Notably, Clifford and Mary Bliss resided for ten years (1940-50) and Eda de Groot Riley for seventeen years (1950-1967). Dan and Nettie May were the longest-term owners holding the property for forty-five years (1973-2018). The current owners, Majorca PAT, LLC, purchased the home in February 2023.

Chronological List of Owners:

1923-1938	Robert E. Backus & Leola Backus
1938-1940	Mary Fuqua
1940-1950	Clifford N. Bliss (1868-1948) & Mary I. Bliss
1950-1967	Eda de Groot Riley
1967-1972	Alex Hirsch & Ruth Hirsch
1972-1973	Mary Denger (Tropic Properties)
1973-2018	Dan P. May & Nettie E. May
2018-2023	Eugenio J. Lage & Onelia G. Lage
2023-Present	Majorca PAT, LLC

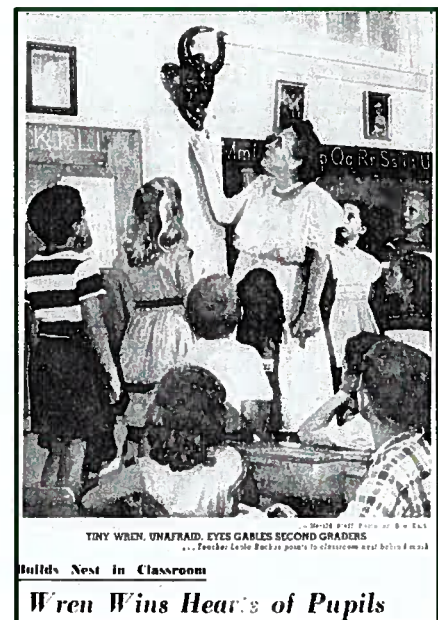


Figure 17: Leona Backus with Students watching a nesting wren and her three eggs
Miami Herald, May 29, 1954

Attributed Architect: H. George Fink



Figure 18: H. George Fink, Portrait, c.1920s

As discussed above, the home at 808 Majorca Avenue is attributed to architect H. George Fink. He was a key member of founder George Merrick's original design team and was instrumental in creating the fabric of 1920s Mediterranean Revival architecture which characterizes Coral Gables. He designed numerous Mediterranean Revival residential and commercial structures in Coral Gables in the early 1920s. His residential designs ranged from small cottages to more elaborate residences for the City's leaders including George Merrick and Edward E. "Doc" Dammers. Over 100 of his buildings are designated as Local Historic Landmarks within the City of Coral Gables (either individually or as part of a historic district).

Fink's architectural practice was so busy during the early 1920s, that by the end of 1923 he outgrew his office and built a new one at 2506 Ponce de Leon Boulevard that served as a showcase for the Mediterranean Revival style. He was regularly featured in newspaper articles discussing the progress of development in Coral Gables, and

in advertisements for the community during the 1920s. In 1924, Fink travelled to Spain to study the architecture and was honored by King Alfonso XIII of Spain for his "interesting, outstanding, and extremely artistic interpretation and reproduction of the Spanish Arts in America." During his visit to Spain, Fink was also made a "Don," the Spanish equivalent of English knighthood.

H. George Fink's architectural career spanned over four decades in Coral Gables. Fink's family moved to the Miami area from Springdale, Pennsylvania in 1904. He was a 1907 graduate of Miami High School. He then studied architecture at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia while supplementing his education with special classes at the University of Pennsylvania. From 1915 to 1921 Fink designed numerous buildings for Miami Beach developer Carl Fisher and Associates. In 1921 he began working with George Merrick. That same year, Fink became a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA); the youngest member at the time of his appointment.

The devastating hurricane in 1926 abruptly halted much of the construction in Coral Gables. In 1928, Fink left the City accepting a position as the Designing Architect for the J. C. Penney Company of New York. He remained with them until 1932 when he became a Supervising Architect for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He was assigned to the State of Maine and remained with the WPA until 1937.

Fink returned to Coral Gables in 1937 and resumed his private architectural practice. During World War II, he was Architectural Designer for Robert & Company, of Atlanta, assisting with the Richmond Naval Air Station, the Glynn County Base, in Brunswick, Georgia, and the Chamblee Naval Base in Chamblee, Georgia. In 1943, Fink became Architect in Charge, Architectural Division, Bell Bomber Plant, Marietta, Georgia, where the famous B-29s were built and assembled. Fink returned to Coral Gables in 1945 and continued to design there until the middle of the 1960s. He served on the Coral Gables Board of Architects from 1945 through 1956, acting as its chairman for seven years within this period. Fink also served as the Secretary of the Florida South Chapter of the AIA from 1952-1955.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of historic designation within the City of Coral Gables is defined in Article 3, Section 8-101 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code as,

“to promote the educational, cultural, and economic welfare of the public by preserving and protecting historic structures or sites, portions of structures, groups of structures, manmade or natural landscape elements, works of art, or integrated combinations thereof, which serve as visible reminders of the history and cultural heritage of the City, region, state or nation.”

It is the intent of the Coral Gables Zoning Code to recognize all buildings which possess “significant character, interest or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic, or architectural heritage of the City, state or nation” qualify for designation as a local historic landmark (Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 8, Section 8-103). To that end, the eligibility for designation as a local historic landmark is defined by the Coral Gables Zoning Code as meeting **one (1)** (or more) of the criteria stipulated in Article 8, Section 8-103.

Constructed in 1923, the property at 808 Majorca Avenue (legally described as the East 25 Feet Lot 7 & All Lot 8, Block 30, Coral Gables Section “B,” according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 111 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.) is significant to the City of Coral Gables’ history based on the following **three (3)** criteria found in the Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 8, Section 8-103:

Historical, Cultural significance

3. *Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic or social trends of the community*

Architectural significance

1. *Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural style;*
2. *Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;*

Staff finds the following:

The property located at **808 Majorca Avenue** is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

HISTORICAL, CULTURAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Therefore Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the Local Historic Designation of the property at **808 Majorca Avenue** (legally described as the East 25 Feet Lot 7 & All Lot 8, Block 30, Coral Gables Section “B”) based on its historical, cultural and architectural significance.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna Pernas, Historic Preservation Officer

Selected References

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- Aerial Photography: Florida Collection. University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries.
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- Building Permits Record Books, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department.
- McAlester, Virginia, A Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.
- Merrick, George, *Coral Gables Homes, Miami Florida*, c.1925.
Coral Gables Miami Riviera: Heart of the American Tropics, c.1925
Coral Gables Miami's Master Suburb, 1923.
- Miami-Dade County Property Appraisers Department Records
- Miami-Dade County Clerk, County Property Records
- Newspapers.com
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- "Coral Gables School Will Present Old-Fashioned Dances and Athletics" May 6, 1925, p.38.
- "New Residences Opened" November 19, 1923, p.9.
- Miami News
- "Backus, Robert E." obituary, June 28, 1950, p.34.
- "Backus Moved In" November 19, 1923, p.4.
- "Same Staff at Most of the Schools" May 10, 1924, p.10.
- Parks, Arva Moore, George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables, University Press of Florida, 2015.
- Polk, R. L. R. L. Polk and Company's Miami City Directory. Jacksonville, Florida: R. L. Polk and Co., various editions.
- Real Estate Records for 808 Majorca Avenue, Coral Gables Historical Resources Department.
- United States Census Records, various years.

REVIEW GUIDE

Definition:

The Review Guide comprises of some of the extant and character-defining features, which contribute to the overall significance of the structure and/or district.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties embody two important goals: 1) the preservation of historic materials and, 2) the preservation of a building's distinguishing character.

Every historic building is unique, with its own identity and its own distinctive character. Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining features are the visual and physical features that give a building its identity and distinctive character. They may include the overall building shape, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, features, and aspects of its site and environment.

Use:

The Review Guide may be used to address the impact that additions, modifications, alterations and/or renovations may have on the historic structure and site.

The Review guide may also inform appropriate new construction in an historic district, neighborhood, or streetscape.

Property Address:	808 Majorca Avenue
Lot Description:	interior lot
Date of Construction:	1923
Use:	single-family residence
Style:	Mediterranean Revival
Construction Material:	concrete block covered with textured stucco
Stories:	one-story SFR; one-story detached garage
Roof Types and Materials:	gable, flat; barrel tile

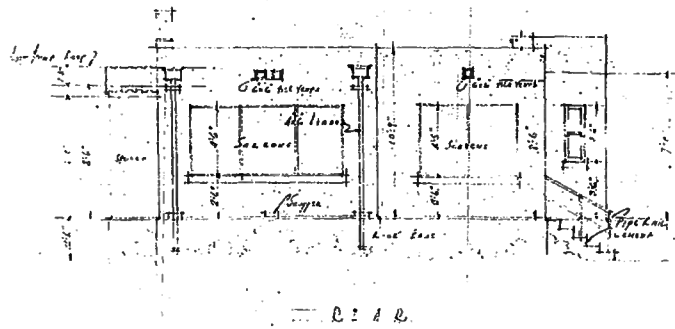
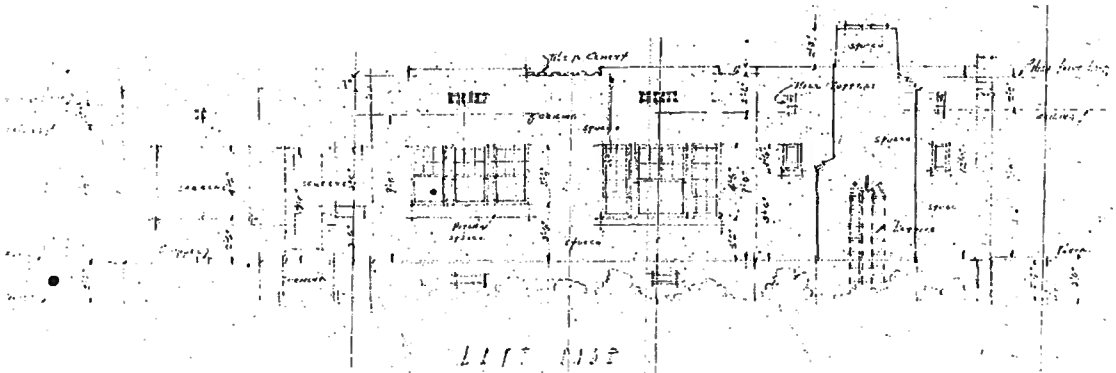
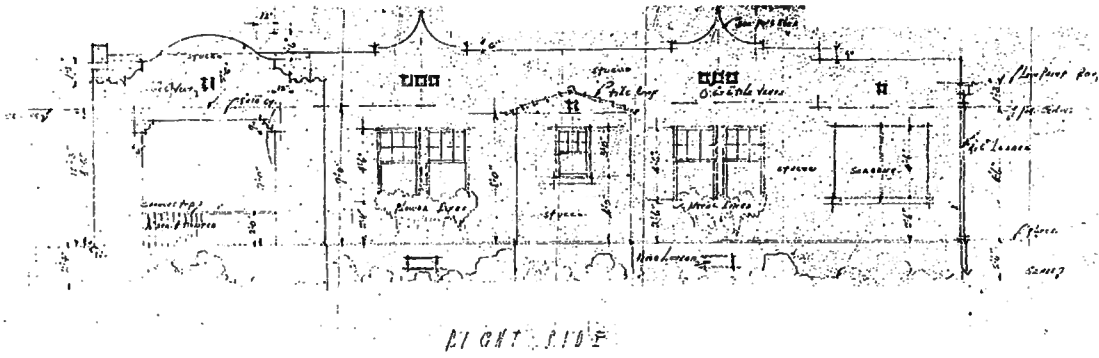
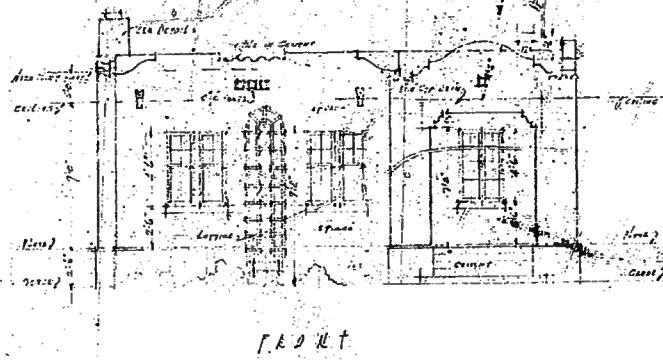
NOTE: The Review Guide is to be referenced in conjunction with the information and photographic documentation contained elsewhere within this Report. Character-defining features may include, but are not limited to, the listing found on the following page.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Property: 808 Majorca Avenue
Style: Mediterranean Revival



- ✓ thick cement masonry block walls
- ✓ light-colored, textured stuccoed exterior walls
- ✓ projecting and recessed planes
- ✓ rectilinear massing and floor plan
- ✓ flat roofs with a variety of decorative parapets (Mission, inflexed (splayed))
- ✓ barrel tile accents
- ✓ projecting gable-roofed bay clad in barrel tile
- ✓ shouldered chimney with a distinctive geometric masonry cap
- ✓ decoratively-grouped square vents
- ✓ smooth-faced masonry base
- ✓ recessed casement windows with projecting sills



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