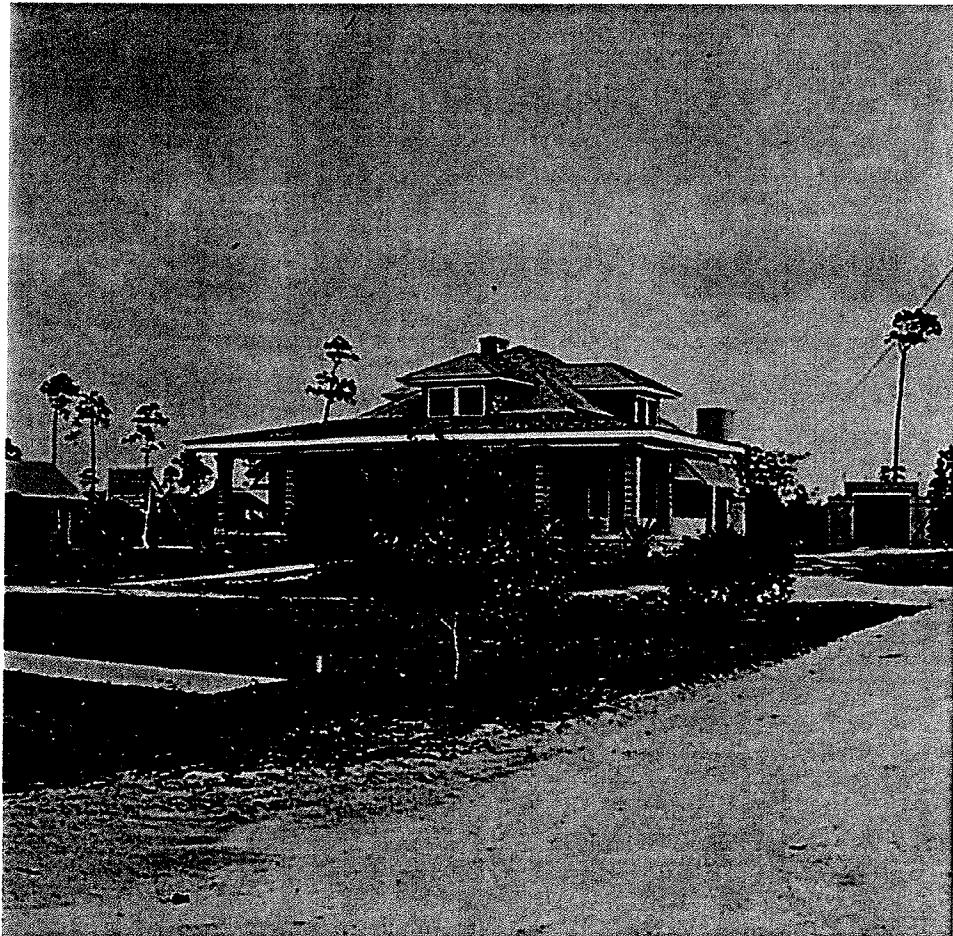
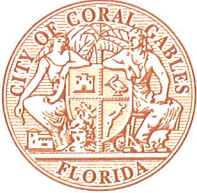


**REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE DESIGNATION OF  
THE PROPERTY AT  
1044 CORAL WAY**



**1920s Photograph**



## The City of Coral Gables

LHD 2003-18 (REVISITED)

APRIL 15, 2004

MAY 20, 2010

### *Historical Resources Department*

#### **DESIGNATION REPORT PROPERTY AT 1044 CORAL WAY CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

Date of Construction: ca. 1910

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Hall Construction Co.

Legal Description: Lot 1 and the West 32 feet of Lot 2, Block 11, Coral Gables Section "A," according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 102, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

Original Owner: Worth St. Clair

Present Owner: Waldo Toyos and Jemima Cubas Toyos

Original Permit No.: 55

Present Use: Residence

Listed on the Coral Gables: April 15, 2004  
Register of Historic Places

Site Characteristics: The property is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Coral Way and Cordova Street. The main elevation of the residence faced north onto Coral Way.

#### **SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

1044 Coral Way is among the first residences to be constructed on Coral Way. Constructed prior to 1924, the home was built for Worth St. Clair and his wife Emma Merrick, sister to Reverend Solomon G. Merrick (George Merrick's father). It remained a family home until 1955-1956, when Worth St. Clair's second wife Lillian Merrick Hampton St. Clair, Solomon Merrick's cousin, died.

The main residence was an excellent example of Florida Vernacular architecture, based on the Bungalow architectural typology.

### **BACKGROUND**

The following is a brief timeline of events that eventually resulted in the demolition of the historic structure.

The property was designated by the Historic Preservation Board as a Local Historic Landmark on April 15, 2004 (Resolution number HPB22-LHD2003-18). A Certificate of Appropriateness application was received for the construction of an addition, the rehabilitation of the historic residence, and the installation of at-grade improvements in July of 2004. A variance was requested at that time to exceed the maximum allowable floor area. Case file COA (SP) 2004-17 was reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board and on January 20, 2005 a motion to approve the design and the requested variances failed; however, the Board passed a motion to waive the one-year limitation related to the determination of the variances as specified in Section 24-10 of the "Zoning Code". The Owners did not resubmit plans to the Board.

At the beginning of May 2006, the home at 1044 Coral Way collapsed and was cited as an unsafe structure by City of Coral Gables Code Enforcement. The Historical Resources Department signed a permit for an emergency chain link fence for the perimeter of the property. A letter was then issued by the Building Official on May 10, 2006 deeming the structure unsafe. A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness [case file COA (SP) 2006-13]] for demolition was reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board on August 17, 2006. A motion was passed to approve the application with staff's recommendations pending receipt of more information: additional supporting architectural drawings, photographs, structural report and forensic report so that the Board can be more certain that what the Board are going to get with the new structure is what the Board is looking for and to be brought back next month at next meeting. On October 19, 2006, the matter was continued and presented to the Historic Preservation Board. The Board passed a motion to allow the demolition of the property with the understanding that as much as possible be salvaged from the ruins, saved and secured to be used in the future home and allowed the demolition with the understanding that the original historic building would be re-created unless the Board agrees to a lesser solution when they see the specific plans with additions.

In December 2006, a special meeting of the Historic Preservation Board was held to revisit the application regarding the demolition of 1044 Coral Way. The meeting was held to determine whether the conditions imposed at the August 2006 meeting had been satisfied. After discussion about reviewing future plans and designs, the Board accepted that the requirements set forth in the August Board motion were met. In February 2007, the demolition of the structure was complete.

On June 21, 2007, the Historic Preservation Board considered Case File COA (SP) 2007-13, a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new residence and the installation of at-grade improvements. At their regular meeting, the Board approved the design of the new residence with conditions and noted that the requested revisions could be brought to the Historical Resources Department staff for administrative approval. On August 2, 2007, staff issued a letter granting administrative approval of the requested revisions.

At the same June, 2007 meeting the Historic Board also denied a request from the owner to remove the local historic landmark designation of the property.

On December 20, 2007, the Historic Preservation Board revisited Case File COA (SP) 2007-13 when it was discovered that a variance from the Coral Gables Zoning Code was needed to implement the previously approved design. The Board granted a variance to allow the proposed residence to exceed the maximum allowable square foot floor area. The Board also granted an extension for the expiration of the approved variance to be three years, rather than the usual two-year expiration date for variances.

The current request before the Board is to determine whether the property meets the criteria for designation as a Local Historic Landmark in its current state, without the original structures.

#### **CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE**

*A. Historical, cultural significance:*

- 1. Is associated in a significant way with the life or activities of a major historic person important in the past;*

Constructed prior to 1924, the home was built for Worth St. Clair (sic. Claire) (b. about 1878, d. 1952) and his wife Emma Merrick (b. about 1870, d. 1925). Emma Merrick was the sister of Reverend Solomon Greasley Merrick and aunt to Coral Gables' founder George Merrick. Worth and Emma St. Clair arrived from Baltimore, Maryland in 1910.

Worth St. Clair assisted the Reverend Solomon Merrick with the fruit farming on the plantation until 1916. It was that year his association with George E. Merrick's real estate ventures officially began. Integrated into the development team, Worth St. Clair was in charge of the construction of *Riverside Farms, North Miami Estates, South Bay Estates, and Twelfth Street Manors*.

Besides his involvement with George Merrick's developments, he took over "The Coral Gables Garage" in 1924. Identified at the time as the first modern business building in the City, the garage operated on the southeast corner of Alhambra Circle and Salzedo Street. By 1926, the property had grown to be an entire block long and was the local facility for Hudson Brougham and Essex cars.

In 1925, Emma Merrick died and the following year, Worth St. Clair married Lillian Merrick Hampton, a first cousin of Reverend Solomon Merrick, in Washington, DC. They travelled back to Coral Gables and again took up residence at 1044 Coral Way.

The property remained in the Merrick/St. Clair family until 1955-1956, when Lillian Merrick Hampton St. Clair, Worth St. Clair's second wife, died.



### **ADDITIONS / ALTERATIONS**

At the time of designation in 2004, it was noted that the residence had undergone minor alterations. By the end of the 1940s, the screened porch on the east was extended towards the front and was eventually enclosed. Additionally, several windows and doors throughout the structure had been replaced.

In 2006, the primary structure on the property collapsed and was ultimately removed, along with the freestanding garage structure. No permanent structure remains on the site.

### **ARCHITECT**

The architect of the original residence at 1044 Coral Way is unknown.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The City of Coral Gables has no processes in place for the removal of the local historic designation status. There are no criteria for the de-designation of a locally historic property.

In looking for an example from the National Park Service, arbiters of the National Register of Historic Places, one finds within Title 36 Section 65.9 entitled "Withdrawal of National Historic Landmark Designation." This section provides a set of conditions for the de-designation of a National Historic Landmark. It states, in part:

- (a) National Historic Landmarks will be considered for withdrawal of designation only at the request of the owner or upon the initiative of the Secretary.
- (b) Four justifications exist for the withdrawal of National Historic Landmark designation:
  - (1) The property has ceased to meet the criteria for designation because the qualities which caused it to be originally designated have been lost or destroyed, or such qualities were lost subsequent to nomination, but before designation;
  - (2) Additional information shows conclusively that the property does not possess sufficient significance to meet the National Historic Landmark criteria;
  - (3) Professional error in the designation; and
  - (4) Prejudicial procedural error in the designation process.

It is important to note, however, that the City of Coral Gables standards do differ from those of the National Park Service. The most notable example of the differences is that the City has the authority to designate without owner consent while the Park Service does not.

As stated above, the City has no criteria for the withdrawal of local historic designation from a property. In absence of criteria, if one applies the National Register standards to this property, only criteria (B)(1) would be appropriate because the structures at 1044 Coral Way were lost.

However, the Staff Report for the local historic designation of the property, written in 2004, does not base the designation solely on the architectural significance of the structures on the

property, but applies the criterion for historical significance (at the time of designation this criterion was called “historical, cultural significance”). The full staff recommendation to designate the property in that report reads as follows:

“The residence at 1044 Coral Way has retained its integrity as an example of the Florida Masonry Vernacular architecture that was derived from the Bungalow building typology. Because of its direct association with the Merrick Family, as one of the earliest homes in the City of Coral Gables, and its architectural adaptation to the South Florida climate, the staff finds the property at 1044 Coral Way eligible for listing in the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places.”

Although the architecture and typology of the house are noted and obviously important, reference is also made to the importance of the original property owners’ direct association to the Merrick family. The first Mrs. St. Clair was the sister of Solomon Merrick and the second Mrs. St. Clair was Solomon’s cousin. In addition, Worth St. Clair was an integral part of the history of Coral Gables. He helped Solomon Merrick farm the original plantation and then helped George Merrick in the real estate development of Coral Gables. Staff found the entire property eligible for designation, not just the structures.

The applicant requests removal of the Local Historic Landmark Designation from the property. Staff finds that although the house is no longer standing, the property is still significant as the site of the Worth St. Clair home and the site still has strong and lasting ties to the history of Coral Gables.

In addition, allowing the de-designation of the property would set a dangerous and irreversible precedent in the City. It would also undermine the strength of our preservation program and the Coral Gables Zoning Code. The ability to de-designate a property as a historic landmark would, in a worst case scenario, essentially allow owners who did not consent to designation to diminish the architectural integrity of their property and then seek to remove the historic designation.

It is Staff’s opinion that while the property has lost its architectural integrity and significance, the historic integrity of the property remains because of its association with the Merrick family and therefore continues to meet the minimum criteria for listing on the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places.

Staff finds the following:

In spite of substantial alterations that have occurred over time, the property located at 1044 Coral Way (legally described as Lot 1 and the West 32 feet of Lot 2, Block 11, Coral Gables Section “A,” PB 5-102) remains significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on its: historical and cultural associations.

LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)

April 15, 2004

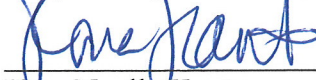
May 20, 2010

Page 6

**Therefore, Staff recommends the following:**

A motion to **DENY** the request for the removal of the Local Historic Designation of the property at 1044 Coral Way (legally described as Lot 1 and the West 32 feet of Lot 2, Block 11, Coral Gables Section "A," PB 5-102).

Respectfully submitted,



---

Kara Noelle Kautz

Historic Preservation Officer

LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)

April 15, 2004

May 20, 2010

Page 7

### Bibliography

1940s Archival Photographs, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department.

Building Microfilm Records for 1044 Coral Way, Building and Zoning Department, Microfilm Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

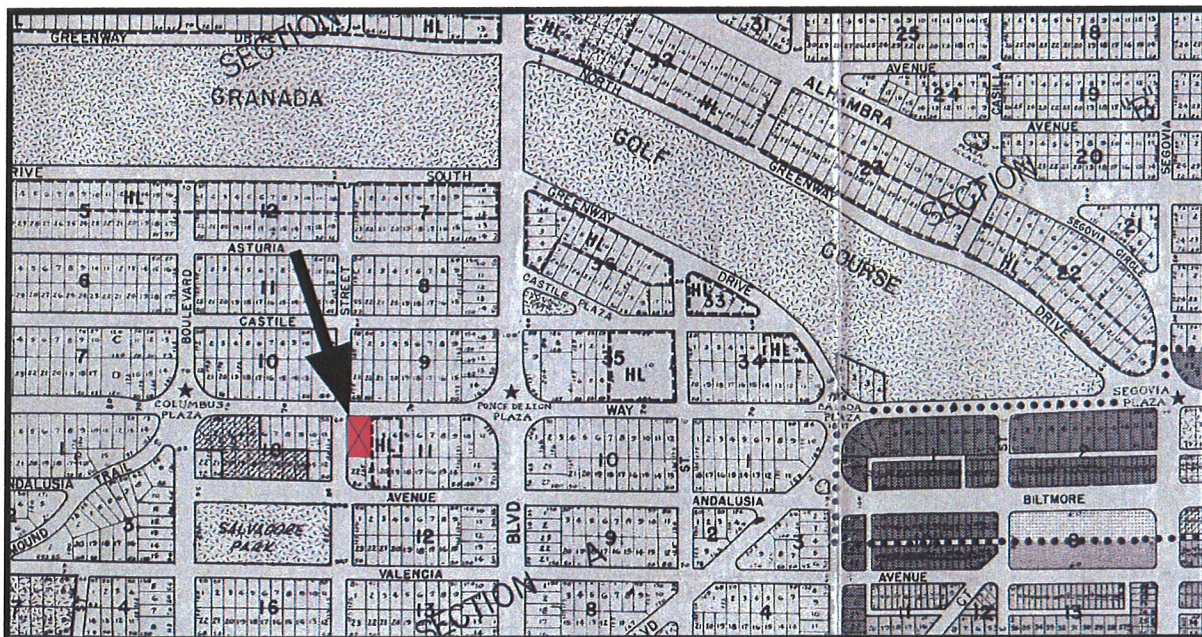
Coral Gables Use & Area Map, City of Coral Gables, June 1997, Plate No. 2.

*Miami Rivera*, 1924, 1926 and 1955

Real Estate Map, private collection of Aristedes Millas

Written Correspondence with "Skipper" Hill

Genealogy database, <http://www.ancestry.com/trees>: Lists compiled by Kelly Robinson and Jill Bennett



Location Map

## **REVIEW GUIDE**

Definition: The Review Guide lists some of the more prominent features, which contribute to the overall character of a structure and/or district. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as photographic documentation fully illustrates the present physical character of the property.

Use: The Review Guide may be used to address the impact of new construction, additions/modifications/alterations and/or renovations which may become the subject of some future Certificate of Appropriateness consideration....and

The Review Guide by describing EXISTING physical characteristics may be used to determine whether or not elements which create the character of the structure and/or district is present and/or whether or not later additions or alterations have so changed that character so as to cause the property (ies) to become ineligible for listing.

---

Residence Address: 1044 Coral Way

Date of Construction: ca. 1910

Construction Material: Original structure was masonry covered with stucco, barrel tile



Photograph 1940s



LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 9

### Photographs, Year 2010





Photographs, Year 2004





LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 11





LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 12





LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 13





LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 14





LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 15

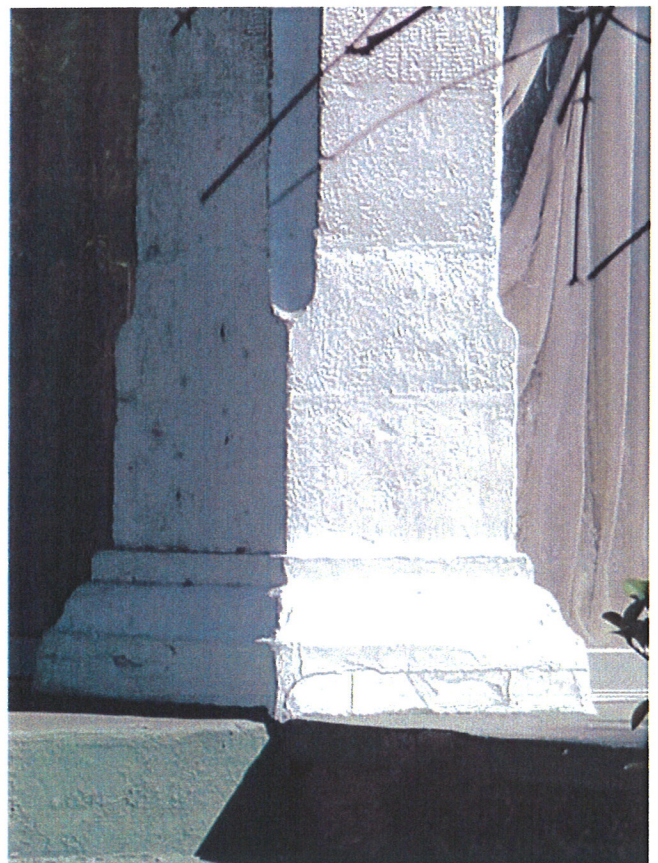




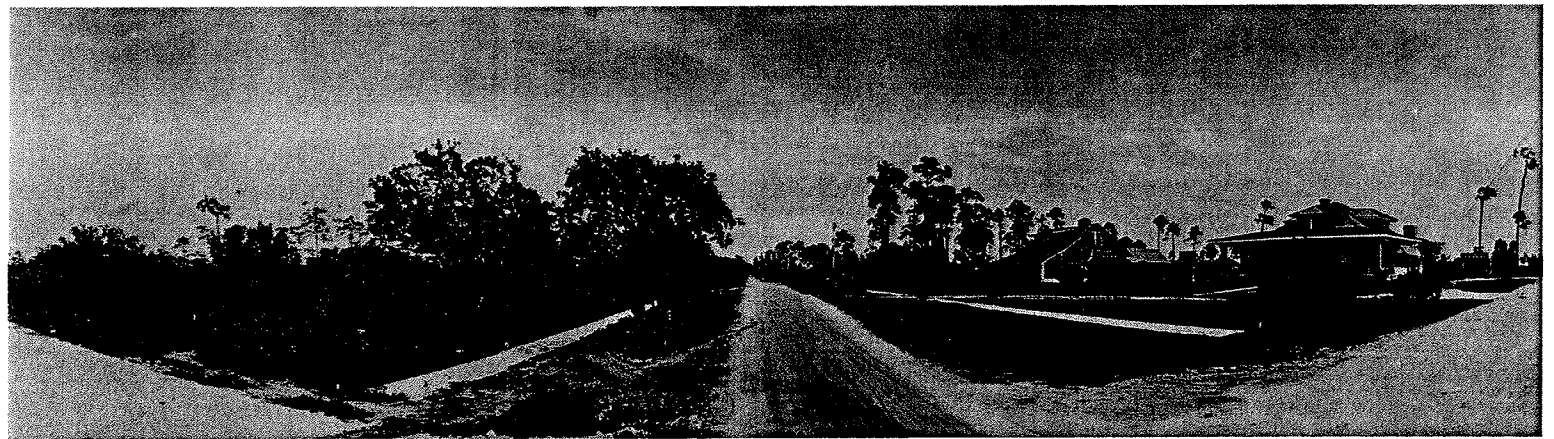
LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 16







LHD 2003-18 (Revisited)  
April 15, 2004  
May 20, 2010  
Page 18



Early panoramic view of Coral Way