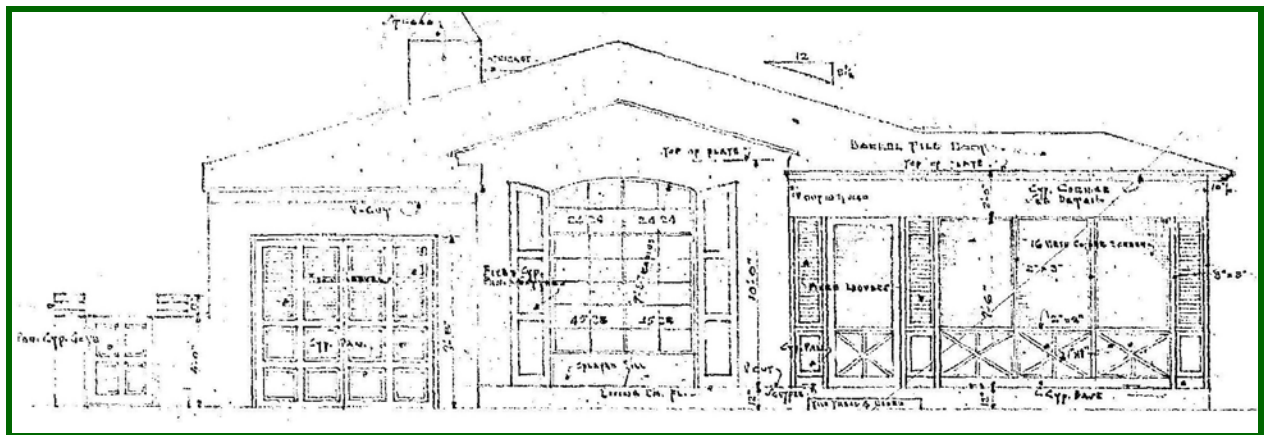


REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES
HISTORICAL RESOURCES & CULTURAL ARTS DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE DESIGNATION OF
THE PROPERTY AT
737 MINORCA AVENUE
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA



Permit #5383, March 1937



LHD 2021-012
February 16, 2021

**LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION:
737 MINORCA AVENUE, CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

Application: resulted from a Historic Significance Determination application from new owners

Note: *All observations regarding this property were from the public right-of-way.*

Historical Resources
Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET
CORAL GABLES
FLORIDA 33134

☎ 305.460.5093
✉ hist@coralgables.com

Folio Numbers: 03-4108-001-4380

Legal Description: Lots 24 & 25, Block 25, 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.

Original Permit No. / Date: 5377 [5383] / March 1937

Original Architect: William Merriam

Original Owner: Captain Christopher Story

Present Owner: Toby Scott Barnhart & Carol Barnhart

Building Use, Type, Style: SFR, One-story, Minimal Traditional

Site Characteristics: The property is on an interior 100' x 112.5' lot on the north side of Minorca Avenue just north of the Granada Golf Course between Cortez Street and Casilla Street.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Permitted in March 1937, the single-family residence at 737 Minorca Avenue was amongst the few homes built during the New Deal Era. This Minimal Traditional style home was thoughtfully-designed by architect William Merriam to qualify for the new Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured loan program that was launched with the Housing Act of 1934.

As construction in Coral Gables tried to regain its footing from the Depression in the 1930s, it shifted away from the elaborate and embellished Mediterranean Revival style of the 1920s towards simpler and more modern designs that reflected the new aesthetic and priorities of society. In doing so, Coral Gables began to follow national housing trends and the City entered a new architectural era. The Minimal Traditional home emerged as a direct response to the economics and aesthetics of the times and was tailored during this time to the meet the specifications of the FHA. Renowned architectural historian Virginia McAlester states that "*The Minimal Traditional house was a well-studied and thoughtful response to the most challenging conditions ever to affect home construction in the United States.*"

The home at 737 Minorca Avenue, with its modified center-hall floorplan adapted to Florida's environment and FHA specification is a thoughtful execution of a home that acknowledges the City's Mediterranean Revival foundation while embracing Modernistic aesthetics. It was one of the first homes in the City to usher in this new style. The property at 737 Minorca Avenue retains its historic integrity and significantly contributes to the historic fabric 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 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 737 Minorca 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, 737 Minorca 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: Section B

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

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

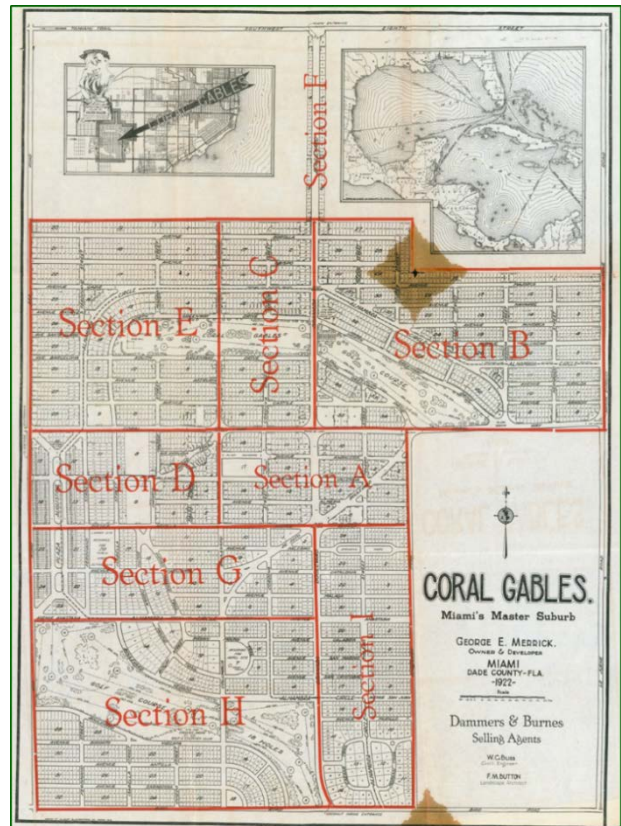
The single-family home at 737 Minorca Avenue was constructed in 1937 during the New Deal era.

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 century to create his vision for a fully-conceived Mediterranean-inspired city which 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 converted 3000 acres of citrus plantation and native hammock into a community with ornate plazas and grand entrances, small parks, scenic areas and golf courses melded with monumental buildings, and tree-shaded picturesque residential streets. During the 1920s, careful attention was paid by his development team to ensure that the buildings and streetscape elements conformed to Mediterranean ideals. Merrick felt that this type of architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. The goal was to create architectural splendor in a Spanish suburb with tropical luxuriance.

Nationally-acclaimed landscape architect Frank Button drew the first comprehensive maps of Coral Gables in 1921-2. They were based on an infrastructure of the inherited grid of fruit trees from the Merrick family's citrus plantation, as well as the native pineland. Laid carefully over the resulting grid of orthogonal streets (north-south) and avenues (east-west) are a series of diagonal and curved roadways.

Coral Gables' initial development was predominantly around the Merrick family's Coral Gables Plantation in Section A. Lots in Sections A, B, and C were offered for sale in 1921-2. (Figure 1) The majority of initial construction was concentrated north of, and in the direct vicinity of, the Granada Golf Course. 737 Minorca Avenue is located in Section B which was well-developed in the early 1920s. (Figure 5)

**Figure 1: 1922 Map:
"Coral Gables: Miami's Master Suburb"**



Construction in the City boomed until the devastating combination of the 1926 Hurricane and the Great Depression. In the aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street Crash, the economy in Florida declined steeply. Between 1929 and 1933, 148 state and national banks in Florida collapsed. By 1933, approximately one out of four Floridians was receiving some type of public assistance. In the mid-1930s, relief measures expanded under the New Deal administration and people adjusted to a new way of life. Priorities and aesthetic changed, and this was reflected in all aspects of life including the types of homes that were built.

In Coral Gables the dire downturn in the economy, coming so closely on the heels of the devastating Hurricane of 1926, had a drastic impact on construction as illustrated in Figure 2. Recovery was slow. In Coral Gables few single-family homes were built during the Depression Era of the 1930s. With the implementation of New Deal and other incentives, the building industry finally experienced a small resurgence in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, it abruptly ground to a halt during the War years as materials, expertise, and manpower were diverted to the war effort. (Figures 3)

In Coral Gables, when construction of single-family homes began again in the mid-1930s there was a distinct departure from the ornamented and picturesque Mediterranean Revival style that had dominated the City’s landscape since its inception. Aesthetics and priorities had changed and homes in Coral Gables began to lean towards national trends with a simpler palette. Historic structure surveys of sections of Coral Gables (i.e., North Gables Section, Flagler Section), conducted by Janus Research, indicates that in the 1930s single-family homes transitioned away from Mediterranean Revival and embraced Minimal Traditional, Modernistic, masonry vernacular and ranch styles.

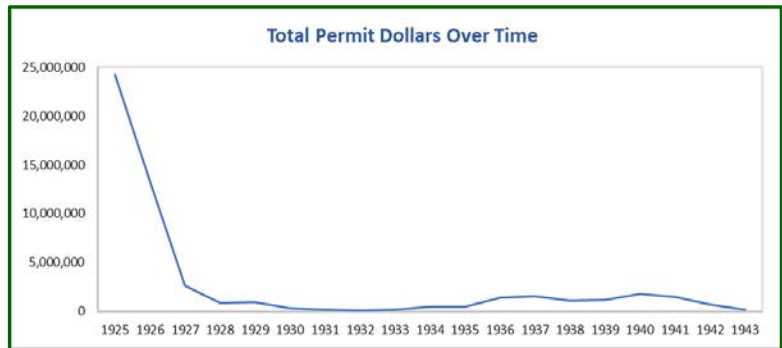
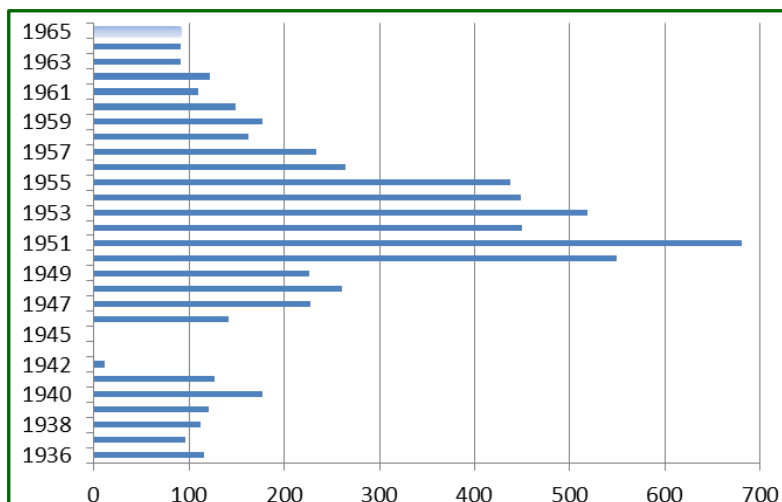
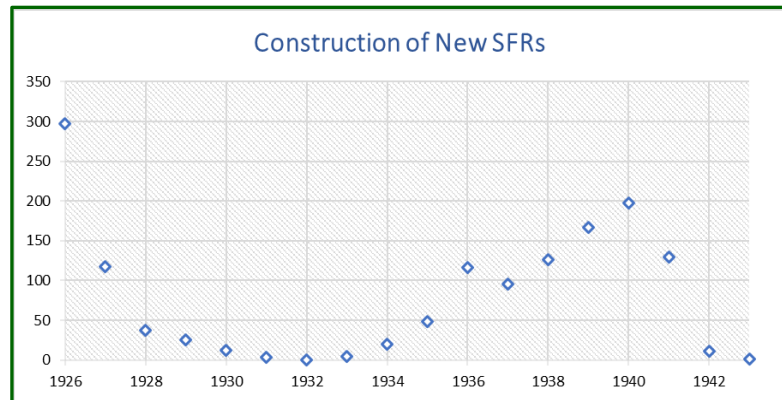


Figure 2: Coral Gables Total Building Permit Dollars, 1925-1943



Figures 3: Number of New SFR Building Permits: 1926-1943 [top]; 1936-1965 [bottom]

Note: no data for 1945;

1926 building curtailed by a major hurricane in September

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. (Figures 3) During this time single-family homes in Coral Gables followed national trends both in numbers and in style. By the late 1950s Coral Gables Section B, to the north, east and west of 737 Minorca Avenue was built out with new residences. These areas retain this context of single-family homes to present day. The multi-family and commercial area to the south was primarily built out between the 1950s and 1970s. (Figures 4)



Figures 4: Aerial Photographs – 1948 [top]; 1957 [bottom]
Location of 737 Minorca Avenue indicated by red arrow
Courtesy of University of Florida, George A. Smathers Libraries

Minimal Traditional (1935-1950) and Federal Housing Administration Program (1934-)

The Minimal Traditional style was a popular national house style that emerged during the New Deal era. Homes of this style were small (2-3 bedrooms) and meant to be affordable for working and middle-class families. It remained a prevalent style until the early 1950s, when it was supplanted by the Ranch style. The popularity of the Minimal Traditional style was due to its ability adjust to societal needs. It had three distinct phases. Its inception and rise during the New Deal era were in part due to its capacity to meet the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan requirements. During this period, it incorporated features from contemporaneous styles. During World War II it became a simpler home built quickly to accommodate wartime production and training. After the war it was common in large developments and was built to fulfill the wartime GI Bill promise that every returning serviceman would be able to purchase a home.

The home at 737 Minorca Avenue was built in 1937 in the Minimal Traditional style and was designed specifically to meet FHA loan insurance requirements. Virginia McAlester, a leading architectural historian, in the following quote provides insight to the link between the rise of the Minimal Traditional style and the New Deal FHA-insured loan program.

The Minimal Traditional house was “the little house that could.” It was the small house that could be built with FHA-insured loans in the midst of the Great Depression between 1935 and 1940...The Minimal Traditional was a well-studied and thoughtful response to the most challenging conditions ever to affect home construction in the United States. In the early 1930s, the Great Depression virtually shut down the home-building industry.... Banks were going under, mortgages were past due, and there were no funds for new construction. The urgent first step was the creation of new method for insuring long-term, low-interest mortgages. This was accomplished in 1934 through the creation of the FHA, whose goal was to produce small homes the average working American could afford. The FHA not only provided insurance that covered the mortgage loan a bank made, it also prepared publications that showed how to most effectively design a small house.

Architects, desperate for work after 1930, had enthusiastically turned their attention to the design of the small house. Large portions of professional journals were devoted to this subject beginning in the mid-1930s. It was of paramount importance to design the most efficient floor plans, kitchens, and baths since every extra square foot added to the cost. A high home cost both limited the market and made it harder to qualify for the all-important FHA loan insurance. At that time, the FHA, along with its associated Fannie Mae, limited the maximum sales price of homes they would insure so that the average home size and cost remained within the reach of a broad market.

A Field Guide to American Houses, p.588-9

In the 1930s, Minimal Traditional single-family homes appeared throughout the country as architectural journals and magazines promoted it and as it easily adapted to qualify for FHA-insured loans. Its simplicity was a response to the economic hardships of the Depression and the burgeoning modern aesthetic of subtle ornamentation and streamlined homes. Typically, Minimal Traditional homes were one-story with low or moderate roof pitches, prominent exterior chimneys, integral garages, and well-considered floor plans. These homes were well-built, often using modern materials (i.e., plywood, modern cement mixtures) and methods (i.e., solar). This style also focused on practicality and included the emerging trend of attached garages. Minimal Traditional homes combined a restrained variety of features from earlier ornate house styles with

the contemporary Modernistic aesthetic. In general, common influences on Minimal Traditional style homes across the nation were Colonial Revival, Arts and Crafts, and Tudor styles. However, the Minimal Traditional style was flexible and could embrace various features and hence, led to area-specific, and sometimes architect-specific, variations.

In Coral Gables, by the mid-1930s there was a distinct departure from the ornamented and picturesque Mediterranean Revival style that had dominated the City's landscape since its inception. Minimal Traditional houses in Coral Gables most often reflected this precursor style as well as the dominant regional style of Art Deco. Specifically, Minimal Traditional style homes in Coral Gables tended to reflect Mediterranean Revival style influences with features such as barrel tile roofs, grouped vents, arched openings and prominent chimneys. The Art Deco influences often included eyebrows, corner windows, floral motif elements, and wide eaves. The overall Modernistic aesthetic included smooth stucco, an overall horizontal emphasis, fenestration without sills or lintels, curving and geometric forms, and simplified roof types.

737 Minorca Avenue

Coral Gables Section B was amongst the first lots to go on sale in late 1921 and was fairly well-developed prior to the 1926 Hurricane. (Figures 4 & 5) In July 1936, as construction began to rebound and FHA-insured loans were becoming available, Christopher Story purchased Lots 22 to 25 in Coral Gables Section B.

Figure 5: Map of Pre-1935 Single-Family Residences
Blue boxes: built homes
Red arrow: 731 & 737 Minorca Ave



Captain Christopher Story, Jr. was the vice-president and marine division general manager for the New York-based Cities Service Oil Company. (see Owners section below for bio) He was amongst the executives who travelled to the Miami area with Henry L. Doherty--president of Cities Service Oil Company and new owner of the Maimi-Biltmore Hotel--in the early 1930s to establish the company's interests in Florida. Story reportedly became enamored with the area and in late 1934 purchased 1218 Coral Way as a winter residence. In subsequent years he built several investment homes in Coral Gables. At this time, Story was a national figure for the Oxford Group. This international Christian movement preached that the root of all problems was fear and selfishness and it urged each individual to find their own way to bring hope to others. Building homes eligible for FHA-insured loans to enable families to move forward after the Depression was reportedly one way Story demonstrated his conviction.

As seen in Figures 6, Story built the homes at 731 and 737 in 1937. He hired architect William Merriam who designed the homes, as specified by Story, so that they would be eligible for FHA-insured loans. The homes had the same floor plan but were 'styled' differently. [Note: the original permits were issued for 725 & 731 Minorca Ave. By construction the addresses had changed to 731 & 737 respectively]

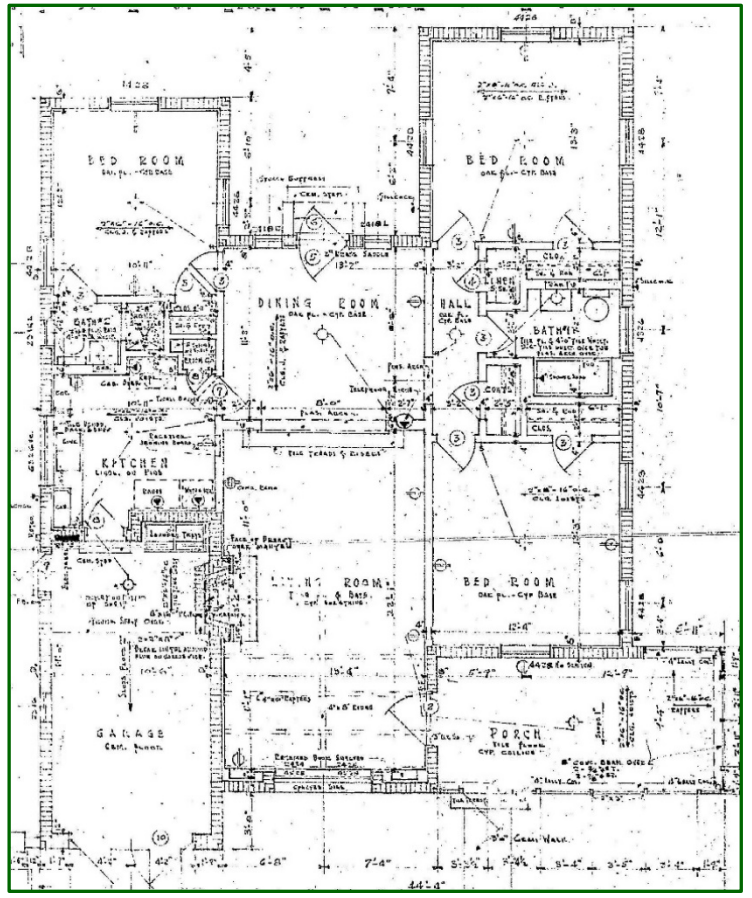
**TWO BUNGALOWS
BEING ERECTED**

*Property Transaction Handled
By Coral Gables Realtor*

Two attractive bungalows are being built by Capt. Christopher Story of New York and Coral Gables, at 731 and 737 Minorca avenue, Coral Gables, one being of Spanish design and the other one of Bermuda type architecture. Both buildings were designed by William H. Merriam, architect, and are being constructed by R. L. Winters, general contractor.

They each contain three bedrooms with two tile baths, tile kitchen, tile floors in living room and loggia, full tile roofs, general electric automatic hot water heating system, completely landscaped, and are on lots 100 x 112½ feet.

These houses are built in accordance with the F. H. A. specifications and will be eligible for loans insured by the Federal Housing Administration.



Figures 6: 731 & 737 Minorca Avenue

Miami Herald, March 16, 1937
[top left]

Floor Plan, Permit #5383
[top right]

737 Minorca Avenue, rendering
Miami News, July 18, 1937
[center]

731 Minorca Avenue,
historic photo, c.1940
[bottom]

The ads for 737 Minorca Avenue use varying descriptors from Bermudian to California and Mexican to Tropical bungalow. It is likely the intention was to call attention to the ‘tropical features’ such as the floor plan (modified center-hall and one-room wide bedroom wings) which facilitates ventilation (Figures 6, top right), the screened porch, the pair of large shutters on the front façade, and the white tile roof. (Note: while the rendering in Figure 6 shows a flat tile roof the tile installed was white barrel tile. (Figures 8 [center]) It is important to note that the typical center-hall floor plan was modified to meet FHA specifications resulting in the most efficient use of space; hence, the ‘hall’ became the living room and dining room.

737 MINORCA AVE.
NEW BERMUDIAN type C.B.S. 3-bed-room. 2 colored tile bath home. Living room with tile floor; also tiled floor loggia with delightful S. E. exposure; tiled kitchen; white tile roof; 1-car garage equipped with laundry tubs. Lot 100-ft. frontage, attractively landscaped.
THE UNUSUAL well arranged floor plan of this home assures you of excellent cross ventilation. Venetian blinds throughout and many more refinements and conveniences found only in the construction of modern homes.

**Figures 7: ‘Well-arranged’ Floor Plan
Sale ad, *Miami Herald*, April 14, 1938
[top]**

**Looking North through the modified
Center-hall containing living room and
dining room, 2020 [bottom]**

Courtesy of Realtor.com



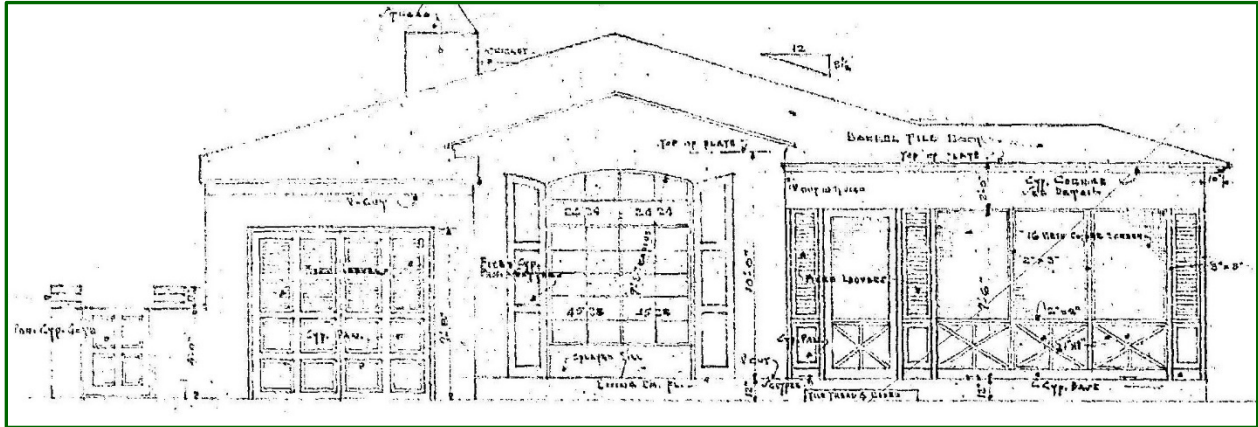
Despite Story’s intention to facilitate home ownership by having the home designed to meet FHA specifications, it did not immediately sell. The home was rented for several years with rent-to-own options. (See Ownership & Occupant section below) In 1939 Story added a ‘maid’s room’ to the west of the garage (Permit #5812; Figure 8 [center]). It is not clear if the home remained FHA eligible with this addition. Story continued to rent the home and sold it after World War II.

A February 1939 Miami News article may shed some light on Story’s difficulties. At a public meeting convened by the Miami FHA director, an FHA national deputy, and the president of the Coral Gables Realty board with the Coral Gables mayor and city manager, there was a discussion about enabling properties to utilize FHA-insured loans. Mayor McGarry stated that he:

was optimistic over the ability of the city to iron out any ambiguities which may exist over the zoning ordinance, and now that the financial affairs of the city, long a bugaboo, have been largely straightened out, we can go forward, and the city will co-operate in tying in our affairs with those of the real estate interests and requirements of the federal housing administration.

The difficulties were not specified but assurances were given that there be “a more satisfactory situation concerning current FHA commitments on properties in Coral Gables” and that the City would identify sections of the City where smaller homes would be easily saleable in the future. The ‘current FHA commitments’ may have included Story’s properties at 737 and 731 Minorca Avenue and hence, may have aided in bringing attention to and clearing the City’s logistical FHA logjam. Ironically, in 1935 Coral Gables had hosted one of the first five national FHA workshops.

SIGNIFICANCE ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION



Figures 8: 737 Minorca Avenue
Permit #5383, 1937 [top]; Historic Photo, c.1940 [center]
Current Photo, 2020: [bottom] Courtesy of Realtor.com
Note: Rendering shows flat tile roof; original installed roof was barrel tile

Permitted in December 1937, the single-family residence at 737 Minorca Avenue was built during the New Deal Era. It was one of only several hundred homes were built in Coral Gables during the 1930s. As construction in the City tried to regain its footing in the 1930s, it shifted away from the elaborate and embellished Mediterranean Revival style of the 1920s towards simpler and more modern designs that reflected the new aesthetic and priorities of society. In doing so, Coral Gables began to follow national housing trends and a new architectural era was ushered into the City.

Designed for Captain Christopher Story by architect William Merriam, along with its neighbor at 731 Minorca Avenue, it was built as a moderately-priced home in accordance with specifications that would allow it to qualify for Federal Housing Administration-insured loans as instituted by the Housing Act of 1934. Captain Story was a wealthy and devotedly religious man who reportedly strove to give people hope. Building these homes was one endeavor he undertook towards that end. Since investment properties did not qualify for FHA loans, and since there was a price cap for the loans, these homes were not necessarily profitable for him but rather were intended to provide affordable homes for families after the lean Depression years.

The Minimal Traditional style emerged in direct response to the Housing Act of 1934 and incorporated the new Modernistic aesthetic. The single-family residence at 737 Minorca Avenue is a thoughtful execution of a home that embraced the new Minimal Traditional style. It is an early example of the style. It was initially built as a three-bedroom house with an integral garage—versus the detached garage of the Mediterranean Revival style. In 1939 a maid's room was built to the west of the garage and in 1957 a detached garage was added west of the home.

The home has numerous hallmark features of the early Minimal Traditional style. It is one-story with an overall horizontal and geometric emphasis and low roof pitches. The home is clad in smooth stucco and the fenestration is deeply recessed without sills or lintels which gives the Modernistic impression of the openings being carved out. The original openings visible from the street are dominant, and visually balance each other--from the square of the original garage (now enclosed with windows) to the full-height segmental arch window, and to the rectangular screened porch. In the Modernistic aesthetic, the semi-circular arches of the Mediterranean Revival style have been replaced with a segmental arch and the ornate spindles and columns of the porch openings replaced with simple features that impart a geometric impression. Likewise, the large Spanish chimneys along the facade has been replaced with a prominent interior chimney--also with a geometric emphasis. While the roof is clad in barrel tile of the Mediterranean Revival style, the roof along the front façade is low and broad with the hipped roof seemingly encapsulating the gable roof and extends to accommodate the bays. This is a distinct departure from the use of separate roofs of varying types and heights common in the Mediterranean Revival style. Additional embellishment is minimal and is comprised of the Mediterranean Revival element of grouped round vents in the gable eaves and crawl space openings. On the front porch louver shutter panels conceal round lally columns.

Historic photos indicate that few changes have occurred to the character-defining features of the home in the subsequent decades and this residence retains its historic integrity. The 1930s was a transitional architectural period in Coral Gables. Due to economics and other influences, there were few houses built during this time. This 1937 home is an early example of a style that emerged in direct response to the housing needs across the nation. Thus, the property at 737 Minorca Avenue significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the City of Coral Gables and is part of the collection of quality residences that contributes to the story and the City's sense of place over time.

Extant Exterior Description



**Figures 9: 737 Minorca Avenue,
2020**
Front (South) Façade [left]
Aerial View [right]
Courtesy of Realtor.com

The single-family residence at 737 Minorca Avenue sits on the north side of the street on an interior 100' x 112.5' lot. It is a one-story home of approximately 2,038 SF. The 1957 detached, one-car garage sits less than 10' to the west of the home. The house sits above a crawl space and is built of cement block units which are covered in smooth stucco. The main body of the home is under a low-pitched pyramidal hipped roof with smaller low-pitched hipped and gable bays which dovetail into the main roof. The roof is clad in two-piece barrel tile. A smooth stucco chimney stack rises through the western front-sloping ridge. The squat Modernistic chimney reads as a horizontal rectangular stack with a large triangular cap. All fenestration openings are simple, very deeply recessed in the Modernistic fashion, without sills or lintels, giving the impression of the openings being cut out and emphasizing their geometric nature. The windows are single-hung with muntins.

The front (south) façade is distinctly horizontal; aided by the low-pitched roofs. The façade was originally asymmetrical (Figure 8, top) but with the addition of the maid's room at the western end with its own hipped roof that matches the roof over the porch at the eastern end, the façade's form now reads as symmetrical. (Figures 9) At the center of the front façade is a full-height, large segmental arched opening framed above by a shallow, low-pitched gable roof. This window anchors the south end of the modified center-hall discussed above. The deep recess of this opening is visible in Figures 9.

West of this gabled bay is the large square opening that originally housed the garage door. This bay protrudes forward from the remainder of the façade – originally giving more prominence to the integral garage which was a new emerging trend when constructed. The opening is now enclosed by two large single-hung windows and several courses of brick below. This space is under the main pyramidal hipped roof. At the western end of the façade is the window of the 1939 maid's room addition.

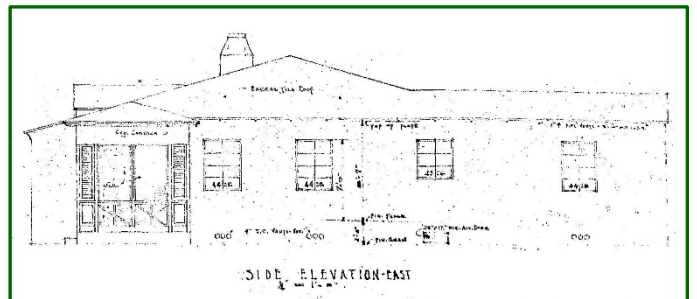
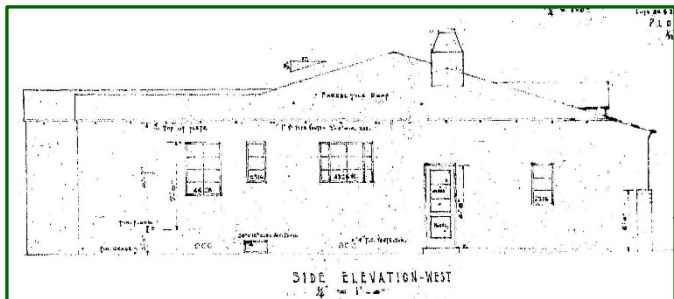
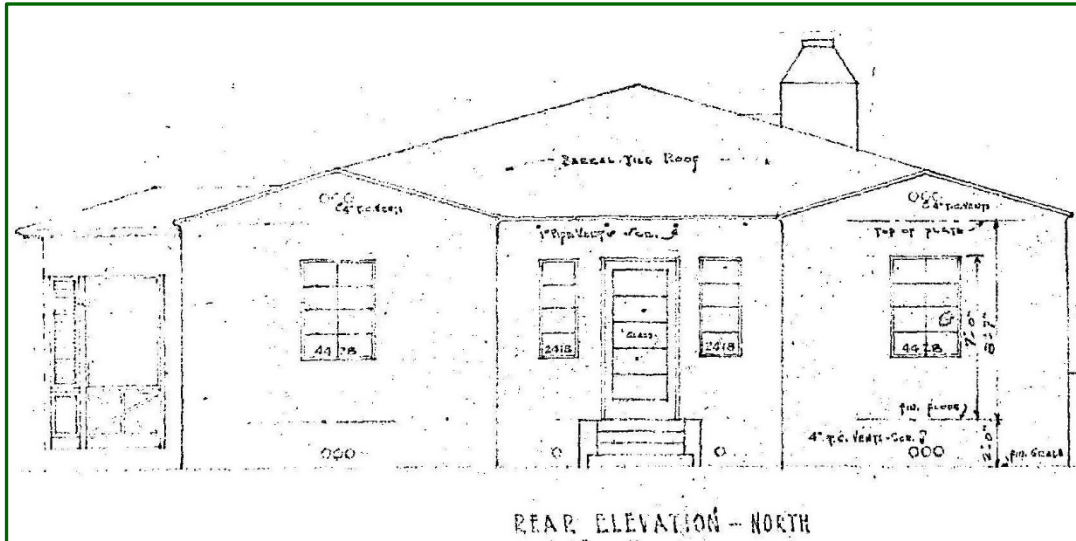


Figure 10: Front Porch, from front door looking east, 2020
Courtesy of Realtor.com

A screened porch, at the eastern end of the front façade, is under its own hipped roof. As seen in the aerial photo in Figures 9 it projects beyond the main body of the home which facilitates better ventilation. The porch façade is flush with the adjacent gable bay, but the porch roof has much wider eaves and hence it imparts the impression that it projects forward. (Figures 8, bottom) The wide eaves provide additional shade for the porch. The front door is accessed from within the screened porch on its west façade. The tile of the step leading up to the porch is the same tile as the porch floor; the tile is original. (Figure 10) The porch is fully screened with no walls to block breezes. The screens are framed and supported simple wooden elements. A cross-braced element that wraps around the porch simulates a railing or balustrade. As illustrated in Figure 10, the porch is supported by round lally columns. They are concealed from street view by louvered panels. The porch is an intact hallmark historic feature of the home.

The rear of the home has two one-room wide gable-roofed bays flanking a wooden deck. The bays extend asymmetrically; the west approximately 9' and the east corner bay approximately 13'. (Figures 9, top right & 11 & 12) A triptych line of round vents is in each gable end. Round vents also appear in the crawl spaces. Windows of varying sizes occur on these elevations. Where visible comparison with original drawings indicate they remain the same sizes in their original locations. (Figures 11)

The 1957 detached, one-story garage to the west of the home aligns with the plane of the home's front façade. The garage has a hipped roof with wide eaves differentiating it from the main home. It is clad in barrel tile. A door on the east side of the garage opens onto a concrete patio and aligns with the side door on the west façade of the home (Figures 11 & 12)



**Figures 11: Rear and Side Facades & Garage
Current Photos (2020) & Permit #5383 Drawings**

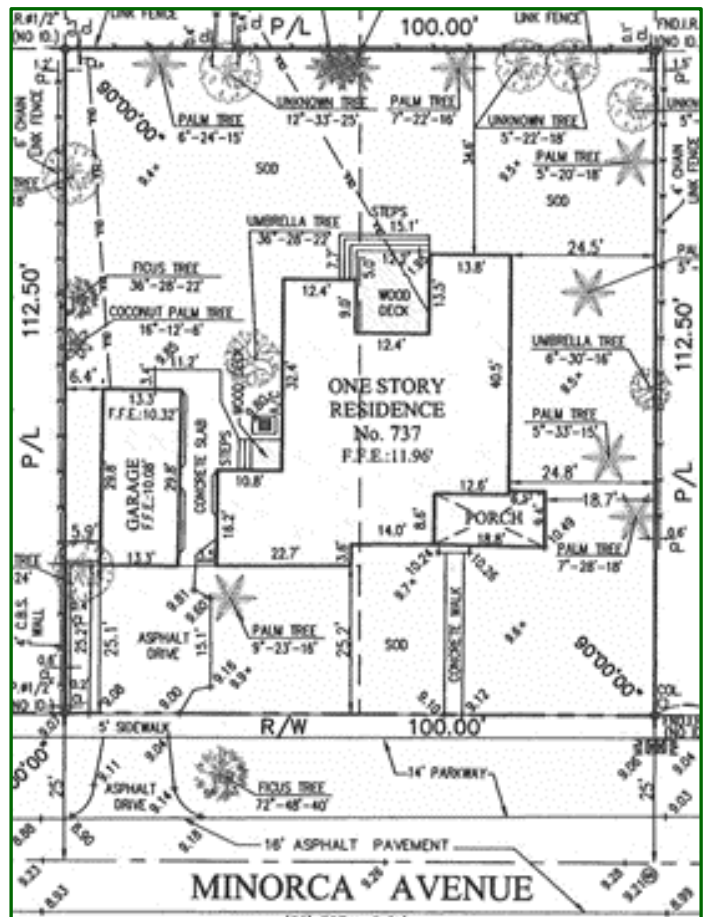
Rear Elevation [top]
**Northwest Corner with rear façade of garage in
foreground & West Side Elevation
[center left]**
**Northwest Corner & East Side Elevation
[center right]**
1957 Detached Garage [bottom]
Photos courtesy of Realtor.com

Additions / Alterations

From a comparison of historic photographs and the architectural plans with the extant home, as well as an examination of building permits and records it is determined that the property at 737 Minorca Avenue has retained its historic integrity for over eight decades. The following discusses notable alterations or work undertaken on the property.

Record books document the original permit for the home was filed in March 1937 (Permit #5377) by architect, William Merriam for Captain Christopher Story. This permit has not been located to date. As discussed above, Story also contemporaneously built the adjacent home at 731 Minorca Avenue. Both homes had the same floor plans but with different exterior styling. (Figures 6) Permit #5383 for 731 Minorca Avenue has been located and it appears that Merriam used the drawings from Permit #5377 and just added a rendering of the façade for the second house. The rendering in Figures 6 published on March 16, 1937 in the *Miami Herald* is probably the rendering that accompanied Permit #5377 for 737 Minorca Avenue. As noted previously, while this rendering shows a flat tile roof, the tile installed was two-piece barrel tile as seen in the c.1940 historic photo in Figures 8 and roof jog in front of the gable section was not constructed.

In January 1939 Captain Story added a maid's room west of the original garage (Permit #5812). The addition is denoted in blue in Figures 12. The c.1940 photo in Figures 8 shows it just after completion. In 1957 a detached garage was built immediately west of the home by architect Tyrus Tripp (Permit #14914) (Figures 11 & 12) These permits have not been located to date.



Figures 12: 737 Minorca Avenue
c.1960 Tax Card [left]
blue: 1939 Maid's Room Addition
orange: Original Garage
Property Survey, 2021 [right]
Courtesy of Form Tech Land Surveying, Inc.

The original integral garage, denoted in orange in Figures 12, was enclosed for living space. It is worth noting that the original garage door as seen in Figures 8 was designed such that at first glance the upper half looks like a bank of windows rather than a garage door. This is another change from the *Miami Herald* rendering. A permit to enclose the garage has not been located but it most likely occurred in tandem with the construction of the detached garage in 1957. The original garage door was removed. Several rows of brick brought the opening up to the level of the adjacent arched opening and the floor level of the screened porch. The remainder of the opening was infilled with large windows. The use of brick to infill the bottom of the original opening serves to distinguish it as an alteration and the original garage opening is easily discernable when viewing this façade. A view of the interior of the original garage space in Figures 13 shows that the floor remains at its original ground level. Also note the original steps clad in the same tile as the porch floor and steps as well as the some of the interior flooring. (Figures 7 & 10)



Figures 13: Garage Enclosure, 2020
Note: brick below infill windows; discernable original opening; floor level, step tile
Courtesy of Realtor.com

The original windows were replaced at an unknown date. The original shutters flanking the arched opening and the maid's room have been removed. The Street File for this property notes permission to remove charred wood members in 1968. It does not note substantial fire damage. In 1969 the two-piece barrel tile roof was replaced in-kind. As demonstrated in Figures 8 the roof was originally painted white. It is not currently white and there are no notes in the building files of it being painted since this 1969 installation. Permits indicate that air conditioning was first introduced into the house in 1962. There are very few permits on file for this property but there appear to be no other significant changes to the exterior of the home.

Ownership History

Note: Records regarding ownership prior to 1950 have not been located. The ownership history for this time period is based on numerous sources including R. L. Polk City Directories (available from 1926-65), building permits, realtor notes, records on file within the Coral Gables Historical Resources Department and the Miami-Dade County Clerk.

As discussed above, Captain Christopher Story (1892-1960) built the home at 737 Minorca Avenue in 1937. Originally from New Jersey he retired from Cities Services Oil Company in New York after thirty-eight years of service. He was a vice-president and general manager of the marine division in charge of the company's tanker fleet and ship building program. In the early 1930s



Figure 14:
Christopher Story
Tampa Bay Times,
February 25, 1939

Story travelled to Miami area to aid in establishing the company's oil interests in Florida. During this time he often accompanied Henry L. Doherty, the president of Cities Service Oil Company and new owner of the Maimi-Biltmore Hotel. Story reportedly fell in love with the area. He purchased a winter home in Coral Gables in 1934 and split time between New York and Coral Gables for next several decades. In addition to the homes at 737 and 731 Minorca Avenue, Story financed the building of several other homes in Coral Gables. William Merriam was the architect for most of these endeavors.

In World War I Story served as a Navy Lieutenant under Admiral Norman Scott, who oversaw tankers and collier operations. For his service under Scott, Story received a commendation from the Naval Overseas Transportation Service. His naval experience led to employment with Standard Oil Company in New Jersey and then Cities Service Oil Company. During World War II, he represented the latter with the War Shipping Administration. He was a member of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, the American Bureau of Shipping, and the American Petroleum Institute. As mentioned above, contemporaneous to building 737 Minorca Avenue,

Story was a national figure in the Oxford Movement. He travelled and spoke both nationally and internationally about their beliefs. Newspapers indicate that he often shared the stage with another prominent Coral Gables citizen, John McEntee Bowman, the original financier of the Biltmore Hotel complex.

Captain Christopher Story owned the property at 737 Minorca Avenue from 1936 to 1946. He constructed the single-family home in 1937 with the intention of selling it to a family who could take advantage of the FHA-insured loans. This intention was never realized. Story never lived in the home and rented it as listed below. His tenants included John Addison Lambeth, the manager of the Miami Biltmore Hotel who rented the home when the hotel was converted to a military hospital until he made other arrangements. Given Story's association with both Bowman and Doherty, this connection is not surprising. Another tenant was Florence Wharrie who lived in the home with her husband James for eleven years until her passing in 1956. Wharrie had served as a Democratic National Committeewoman in Michigan from 1932 to 1940 and remained very active in politics while residing in the Minorca home. Several years later when the home went into foreclosure in her son Joseph St. Ana purchased the home and lived there for five years. St. Ana was the owner who added the detached garage. Other long-term owners include John and Julia Bojus who held the home for thirty-three years, from 1961 to 1994 and the Artista-Salado family who owned the property from 1998 to 2020. See below list of known tenants and owners.

List of Owners and Occupants

1936 Land only -- J. W. Anderson

1936-1946 Christopher Story

1938	Ilse Ballin
1939	Dr. Louis Manley
1941	W. F. Adam
1942	E. S. Gaylor
1943	John Addison Lambeth, manager Miami Biltmore Hotel

	Blanche Lambeth
1943-1945	Colonel Louis C. Wilson Louise Wilson
1945-1956	James F. Wharrie Florence Wharrie, Democratic National Committeewoman (1932-40)
1952-1956	G. H. Stone Patricia Gillen Lange Leone Gillen (mother of Patricia)
1956	<i>foreclosure</i>
1956-1961	Joseph St. Ana (son of Wharrie), attorney, U.S. Supreme Court bar Elizabeth McGhee St. Ana
1961	Isidore Schachter Clara Schachter
1961-1994	John Bojus Julia Bojus
1994-1998	Christopher H. Renard Angeline Sardou Renard
1998-2016	Leopoldo R. Arista-Salado (1923-2005) Maria Arista-Salado
2016-2020	Maria Arista-Volsky
2020-Present	Toby Scott Barnhart Carol Barnhart

Architect: William Hobert Merriam (1897-1992)

William H. Merriam was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He attended the Ohio Mechanics Institute from 1915-17 earning a Certificate in Architecture. In 1918 he served in the Army and a year later he entered the Georgia School of Technology from which he earned a degree in Architecture in 1922. During this time, he worked as a draftsman for the prominent architect W. H. Sears in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Upon his graduation, Merriam went to work as a draftsman for Sears' mentor, the nationally-acclaimed architect, Reuben H. Hunt. Both architects have numerous buildings listed on the National Register for Historic Places.

In 1924, William Merriam moved to Coral Gables to accept a draftsman position with H. George Fink. In 1931 Merriam became a registered architect. He practiced briefly in New York when work in Coral Gables was scarce. In 1935 he returned to Coral Gables where he opened an office and practiced for the next several decades. In 1946 he was admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He retired in 1970 at the age of 73 and was granted AIA emeritus status. Merriam served on the Coral Gables Board of Architects for several years in the 1950s during H. George Fink's chairmanship. Merriam was the Secretary-Treasurer for the Florida AIA Chapter from 1951-52 and its vice-president from 1952-3. In 1954 he chaired the Florida Building Code Committee.

Merriam worked consistently and prolifically in Coral Gables and the region in both the residential and commercial realm for over three decades. In 1939 the Coral Gables Association of Architects gave Merriam an award of merit for the design of the home for F. A. Larson at 1043 Alhambra Circle. His work in designing the Coral Gables High School with August Geiger, Vann & Lyell in 1950 and the curved commercial building across from City Hall also received local acclaim.

Merriam has numerous homes listed on the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places--many of which are contributing structures in the Alcazar Historic District and the Alhambra Circle Historic District. These include: 1008, 1043, 1317, 1414, 2039 and 2523 Alhambra Circle; 520 & 628 Alcazar Street; 1132 & 1260 S Greenway; 611 N Greenway; 2601 DeSoto Boulevard; 842 Palermo Avenue; 2505 Granada Boulevard; 3621 Monserrate Street, and 229 Cadima Avenue. Merriam is also responsible for the first addition to the Coral Gables Women's Club in 1948. This building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.



**Figure 15: Architect William Merriam
Vice President, American Institute of Architects, Florida
South Chapter
*Miami News, January 18, 1953***

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of historic designation within the City of Coral Gables is defined in Article 8, 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 1937, the property at 737 Minorca Avenue (legally described as Lots 24 & 25, Block 25 in Coral Gables Section B, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded 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

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*

Staff finds the following:

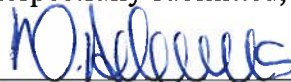
The property located at **737 Minorca Avenue** is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

HISTORICAL, CULTURAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Therefore Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the Local Historic Designation of the property at **737 Minorca Avenue** (legally described as Lots 24 & 25, Block 25 in Coral Gables Section B), based on its historical, cultural, and architectural significance.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams

Historic Preservation Officer

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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. Hallmark and character-defining features are the *visual and physical features that give a building its identity and distinctive character*.

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:	737 Minorca Avenue
Lot Description:	interior lot
Date of Construction:	1937
Use:	single-family residence
Style:	Minimal Traditional
Construction Material:	concrete block covered with smooth stucco
Stories:	one-story

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

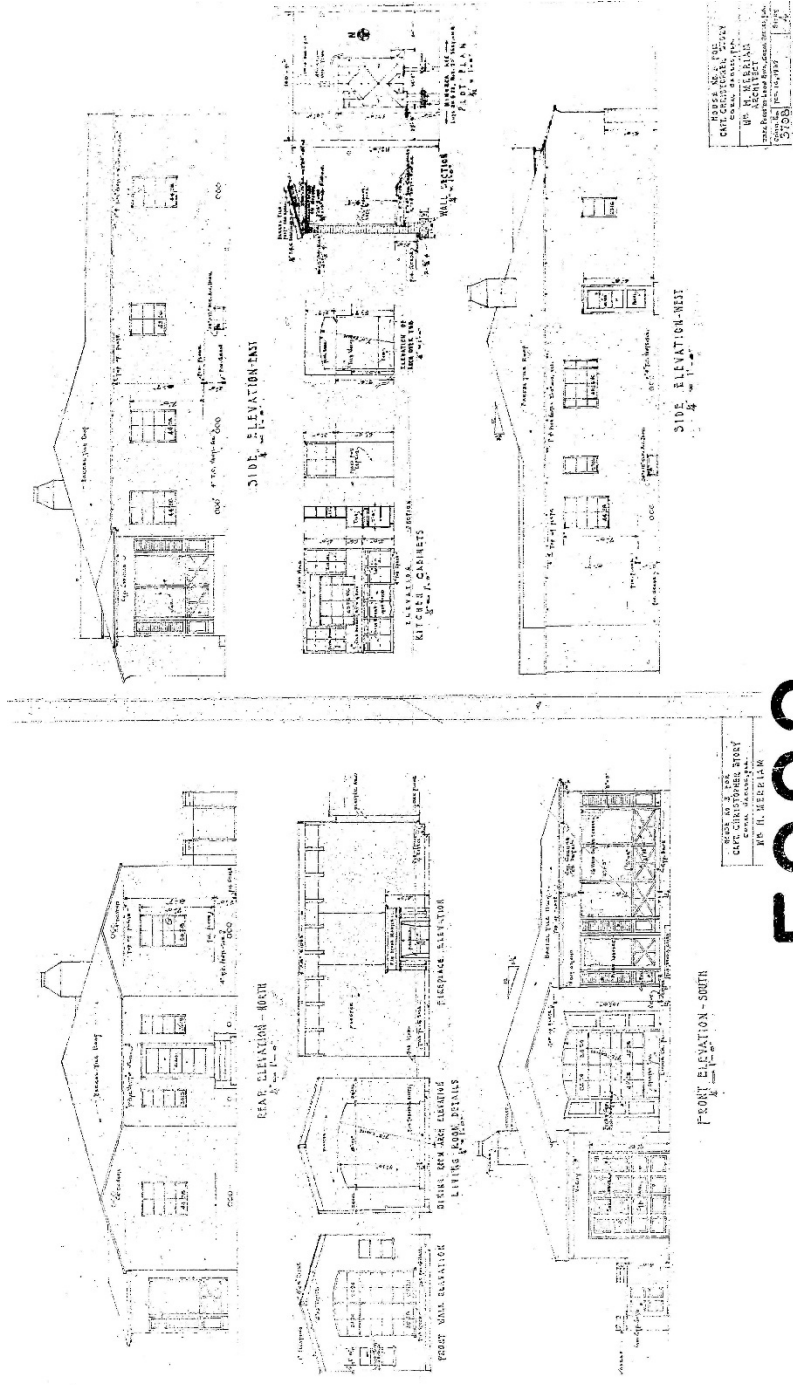
Property: 737 Minorca Avenue
Style: Minimal Traditional



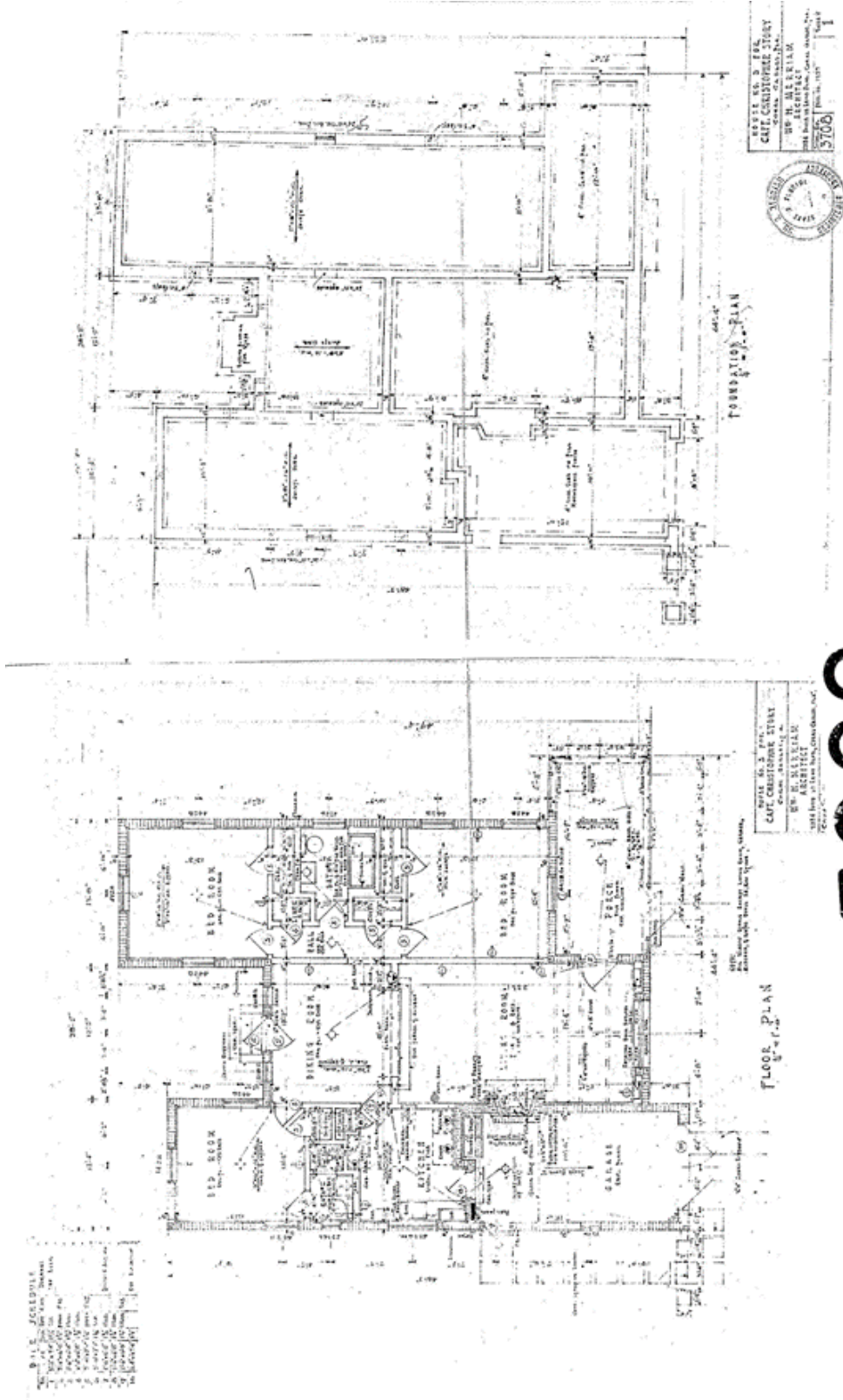
- ✓ one-story with an overall horizontal emphasis
- ✓ overall simple form with a focus on geometric forms
- ✓ smooth stucco accenting the home's geometric emphasis
- ✓ fenestration openings of various geometric shapes deeply recessed with no sills or lintels giving the Modernistic impression of being carved out
- ✓ front façade openings are large, dominant, and visually balance each other
 - square of the original garage (now enclosed with windows)
 - full-height segmental arch window
 - rectangular screened porch.
- ✓ Modernistic segmental arch
- ✓ interior geometric chimney stack with a Modernistic geometric emphasis
- ✓ low-pitched connected roofs; hipped and gables
- ✓ roofs clad in two-piece barrel tile
- ✓ original attached garage opening
- ✓ grouped round vents in the gable eaves and crawl space openings
- ✓ wide eaves over southeast facing screened porch
- ✓ louver shutter panels concealing lally columns that allow for continuous wrap-around screening with simple framing forming geometric elements



ATTACHMENT A: Permit #5383, 1937
Architect: William Merriam



5383



5383