

Local Historic Designation Report

2716 Cordova Street, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

"The Little House That Could"



1940s Photograph, Courtesy of Public Records

Folio Number: 03-4118-001-1510

Legal Description: Lot 12 and the East Half of Lot 13, Block 15, Coral Gables Section A, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, Page 102 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

Boundaries: Verdant 11,250 sq. ft. Rectangular Lot at Cordova Street/Sevilla Avenue

Original Permit Number: 5650 (as 1101 Sevilla Avenue)

Date of Construction: 1938

Original Architect: William Shanklin, Jr.

Original Builder: George E. Batcheller

Building Type: One-Story, Single-Family Residence

Architectural Style: Minimal Traditional

Site Characteristics: The property is located on the northwest corner at the intersection of Cordova Street and Sevilla Avenue in the City of Coral Gables, one block from the historic De Soto Fountain and Venetian Pool in the iconic Biltmore neighborhood.

Application: Result of a Significance Determination

Summary Statement of Significance

The single-family residence at 2716 Cordova Street was designed by architect William Shanklin and constructed by builder George Batcheller in the Minimal Traditional style. Permitted and built in 1938, it is amongst the very few homes constructed in the City in response to the ethos of the lean Great Depression/New Deal era.

As construction in the Gables began to slowly uptick once again after the devastating Great Miami Hurricane of 1926, Stock Market Crash of 1929, Great Depression and resultant collapse of the Great Florida Land Boom of the 1920s, the 1930s brought about a significant shift away from the elaborate and ornate Mediterranean style of architecture that predominated during the prior decade in favor of sleeker, simpler architectural treatment to match the times. In doing so, Coral Gables began to follow national housing trends that responded to the economics and culture of a new architectural era, resulting in the construction of Minimal Traditional homes. Acclaimed architectural historian Virginia McAlester affirms, "*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.*" Thoughtfully acknowledging the City's quaint "Old Spanish" and Mediterranean foundation while embracing Modernistic tones and "beauty in simplicity," the residence at 2716 Cordova was one of the first homes in the City to explore this style and, in doing so, ushered in the spirit and sensibilities of a new era in the history of Coral Gables. It retains its historic integrity and serves as a visible reminder of the history, cultural heritage and architecture of the City.

To qualify for designation as a local historic landmark, The Coral Gables Zoning Code states that 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. Furthermore, a property must meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined in the Code to be historically designated. 2716 Cordova meets three (3) of the criteria: *historical, cultural significance* (CRITERION 4: exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic or social trends of the community), and *architectural significance* (CRITERION 1: portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles, and CRITERION 2: embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period or method of construction). The Code clearly states that if the property meets the criteria, then the Historic Preservation Board shall designate the property as a local historic landmark.

Therefore, be it resolved, that 2716 Cordova should be designated as a local historic landmark based on its historical, cultural and architectural significance to the historic fabric and built environment of the City of Coral Gables. As part of the unique collection of resources that captures the City's spirit of the era in which it was constructed, this residence portrays the City's history and sense of place over time and is a valuable, non-renewable historic and environmental resource that should be preserved.

*"They paved paradise, put up a parking lot. They took all the trees, put 'em
in a tree museum. And they charged the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em!
Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone?"*

Joni Mitchell, Singer/Songwriter

REVIEW GUIDE:

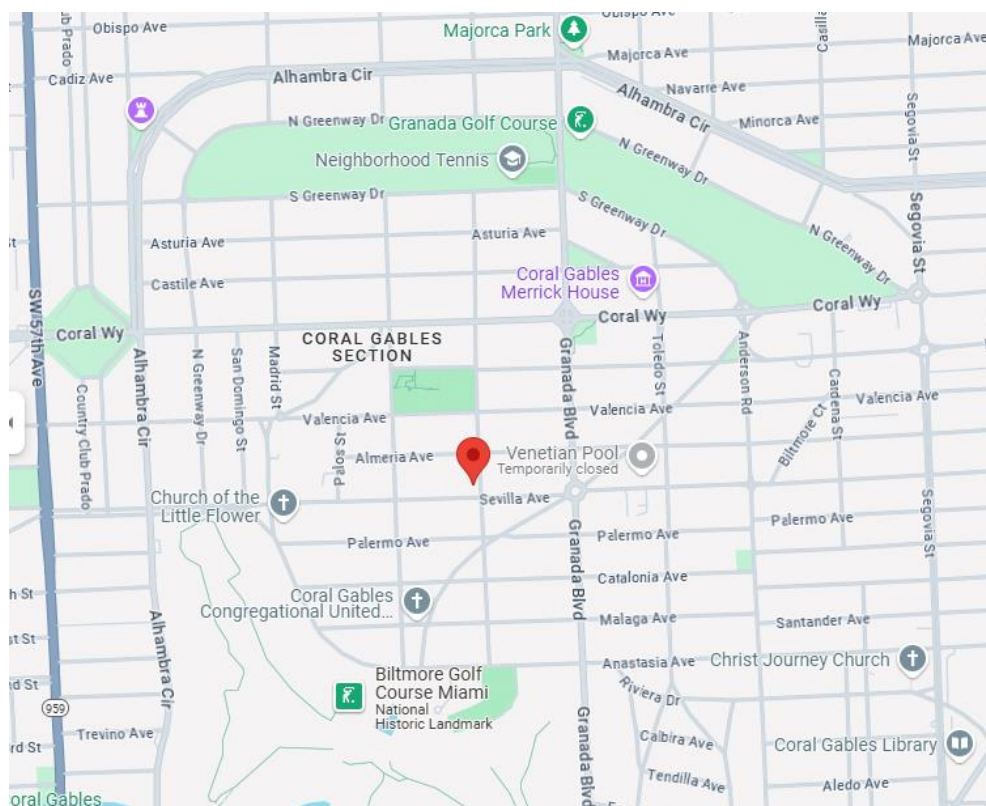
Introduction

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 conserves those structures and spaces that tell the story of the community's historic past. The local landmarks 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, identity, evolution, ownership and place. In other words, these historic resources provide continuity and context and, thus, form 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. The City of Coral Gables participated in the 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). In doing so, 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 one of the first cities in Florida to become a CLG. As a CLG, the City is required 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.

Location Map, Photography



Map with pin at the location of the subject property in the heart of Coral Gables, Courtesy of Google Earth



Photograph at time of listing in 2024, Courtesy of Zillow



Current photograph, Courtesy of Vicki Cerda Photography



Old Spanish and Modernistic features closeup, Courtesy of Vicki Cerda Photography

Historical Significance Analysis

The history of Coral Gables is well documented in numerous other historic designation reports and books and will not be belabored here. A brief summary follows.

The story of developers selling off the Sunshine State is as old as the first railroad tracks laid across the peninsula. But, in creating Coral Gables, founder George Merrick was on a quest to distinguish himself from the legions of other developers who sought only profit. After the devastating loss of one of the Merrick children around the turn of the century, the Merricks left the cold North for the grove on the outskirts of Coconut Grove "where the sun always shone" that they had purchased, sight unseen. That grove became one of the most successful in Florida and forms the original land on which Coral Gables grew (just a few blocks from 2716 Cordova).

Helping to create the land boom of the 1920's, Merrick transformed his family's citrus grove on the outskirts of Miami into one of the finest planned communities in America. With a stellar team of architects and planners, he built homes for the growing middle class using local stone and stucco while investing in public infrastructure such as parks, greenways, schools, trolley lines and waterways. He pledged land for a library and the University of Miami. Hailed in the national press as a visionary, Merrick was "green" before "green" and a New Urbanist before the movement even had a name! As Coral Gables prospered, so did Merrick. Unlike other developers, Merrick reinvested his *entire* fortune into making Coral Gables a better place by using his funds for education, affordable housing and other progressive causes. The Great Depression hit him hard, and he went from being one of the wealthiest men in America during the 1920's to dying with an estate worth less than \$400. Never bitter, Coral Gables was his prize. Today, we are the beneficiaries. Every house and every building... his "poems" cast in stucco and stone... every tree, every green space is a monument to his vision.

Advised by landscape architect Frank Button, artist-designer Denman Fink and architects George Fink, Walter DeGarmo, H. H. Mundy and Phineas Paist, Merrick converted his 3,000 acres of plantation land and native hammock and pine forests into a Garden City and City Beautiful with ornate plazas, grand entrances, small parks, scenic areas, golf courses, monumental buildings, mansions and homes, with beautiful tropical vistas and tree-lined streets as the backdrop.

Mr. Merrick and his team felt that Mediterranean style architecture harmonized best with the conditions in South Florida. A novel idea for the East Coast, most other areas outside of California focused on English inspired Arts and Crafts, Colonial Revival and Tudor styling. It does "make sense," though, given how Florida, like California, was originally colonized by the Spanish. Careful attention was paid to all aspects of building in the Gables... from zoning districts, to height, to style, to stucco texture, to paint color. Spanish, Moorish and Italian motifs and Floridian flair were combined into what is now referred to as the Mediterranean style, and buildings were built almost exclusively in this style until the 1930s.

Nationally acclaimed landscape architect Frank Button drew comprehensive maps of Coral Gables, starting in 1921. The natural systems (inherited grid of fruit trees, dense forests, land formations and where water flowed) were considered when mapping and building. The motorist's experience was also considered as automobile ownership and usage was greatly increasing. Mr. Button's original plan set the tone for a beautiful pedestrian experience, with picturesque streets and vast plantings, with orthogonal streets (running from north to south) crosscut by winding avenues (east to west), imparting the ambience of a village in old Spain, a strong departure from the stern grid that was used in downtown Miami.

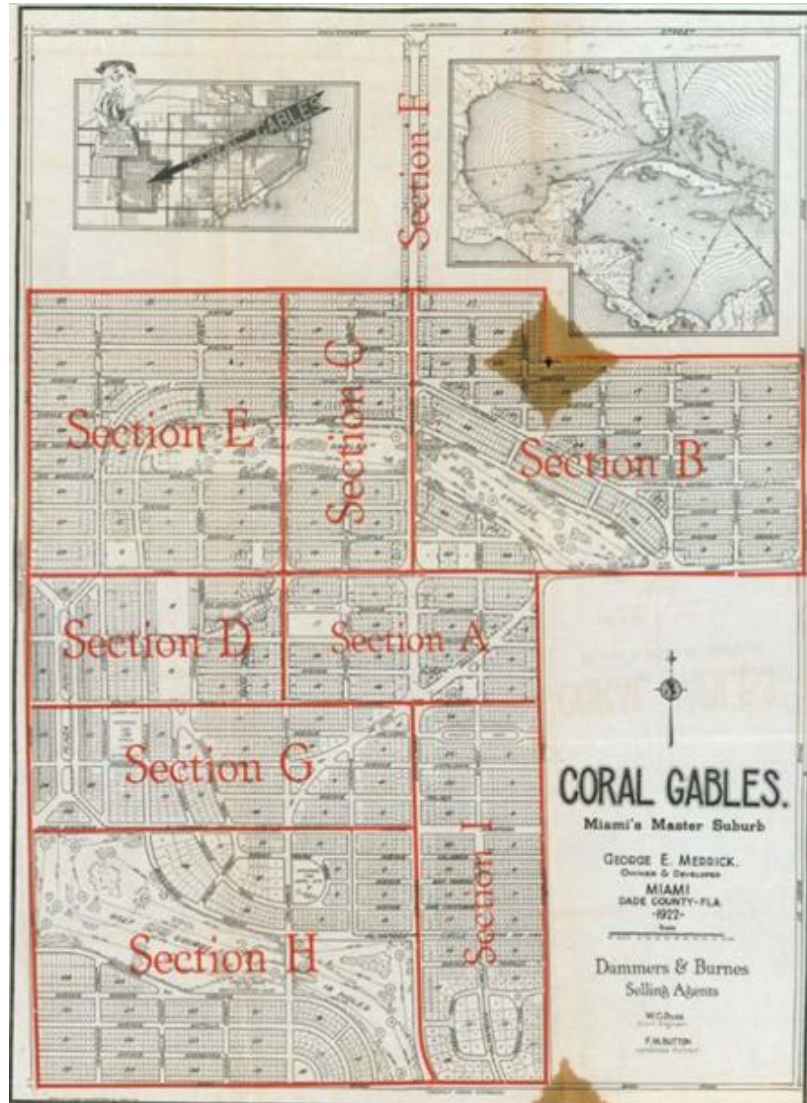
Initial development primarily occurred around Mr. Merrick's original land holdings in Sections A, B and C (2716 Cordova is located in Section A). This is an important point as 2716 Cordova exists in harmony with some of the oldest homes in the Gables while still reflecting the architecture and culture of its own era of construction. The ability to compare and contrast

structures from different eras of the City's history is crucial to maintaining the ability to tell the whole story of Coral Gables and how the City has progressed over time.

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

- Coral Gables' Initial Planning and Development/Florida Land Boom (1920-1926),
- Aftermath of 1926 Hurricane/Great Depression & New Deal/Wartime Activity (1927-1944),
- Post World War II and Modern Periods (1945-1963).

Located in Section A, the single-family residence at 2716 Cordova was built during the second major period in the City. Designed in the Minimal Traditional style, the home is indicative of the type of homes being built in this era. Because so little construction occurred during this period in comparison to the Florida Land Boom and Post-War Boom years a relatively small number of homes constitute the built tapestry of this era.



1922 map of Coral Gables indicating the various sections, Courtesy of Public Records

In the wake of the devastating composite of the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926, Stock Market Crash of 1929, Great Depression and collapse of the Great Florida Land Boom of the 1920s, many of Merrick's plans and aspirations were never realized. These combined factors resulted in a dire downturn in the economy of the area, and construction plummeted. Few single-family homes were built during the Depression Era. However, the implementation of the New Deal and

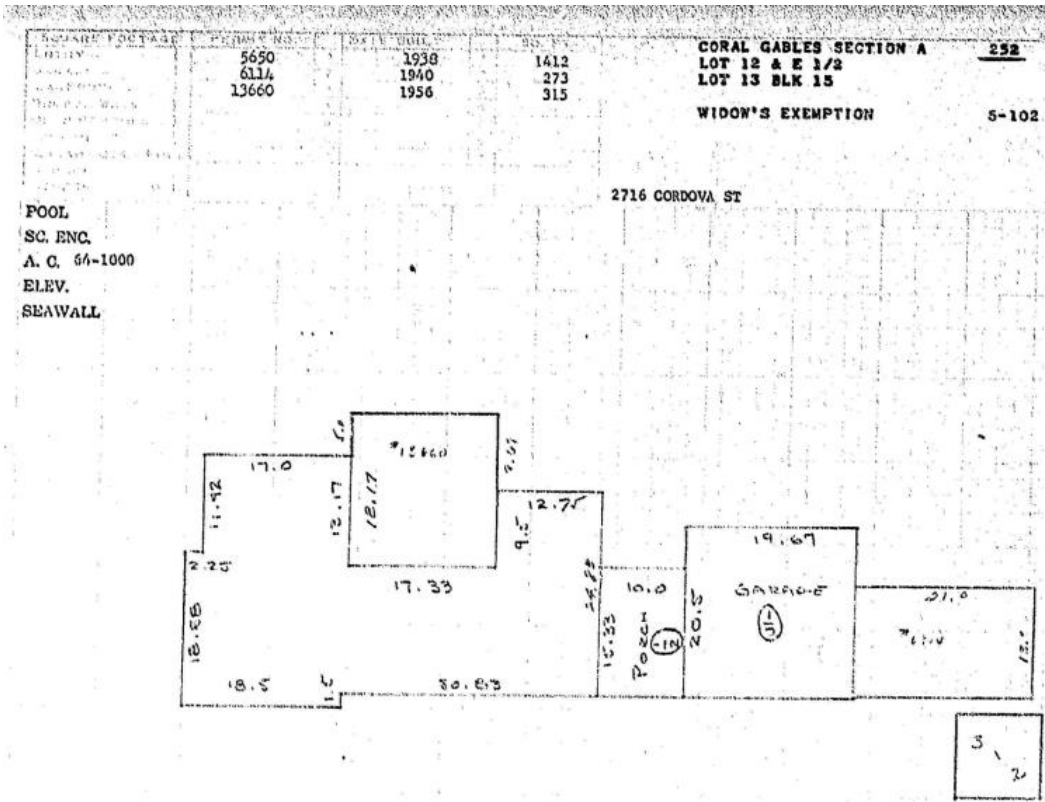
other incentives brought an uptick in building that resulted in a small resurgence of primarily modest homebuilding in the late 1930s and early 1940s, only to once again be curtailed by America's entry into World War II in late 1941, which brought residential construction to a halt once again. By 1942, materials, expertise and manpower were almost entirely diverted to the war effort. These combined factors (an economic time when few homes were built to begin with, then a brief increase due to New Deal initiatives and a stabilizing economy, only to be derailed by a global war) plus the reality that not all homes built during this period persist today results in a small number of surviving homes from this era. In summary, 2716 Cordova is one of these few homes that was designed and built during this era that remains extant today.

Postwar prosperity following the triumph in war in 1945 resulted in extreme optimism in almost everything, including a booming economy and an unprecedented building boom that reigned through the 1950s and 60s. By the 1960s, most of Section A and the Biltmore neighborhood was built out. The extant residence at 2716 Cordova remains as one of the few mementos of its era in an area of Coral Gables that is now almost entirely built out. It stands as a visual reminder of the few residences built in the City during the meager Great Depression years and is a living testament to the perseverance of its architect William Shanklin and builder George Batcheller in the city they were dedicated to revitalizing. Hence, the property exemplifies the historical, cultural, political and economic trends of the community.

REPORT OF BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED
WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1938

PERMIT NO.	DATE ISSUED	STORIES	CLASSIFICATION	MATERIAL	OWNER	BUILDER	COST	LOT	BLK	SECTION	STREET AND NO.	ARCHITECT
5646	6/1	2	RES & GAR.	C.B.	R. F. WEBB	R. F. WEBB	21,000.00	26			3603 GRANADA BLVD	WM. SHANKLIN
								27	45	CC#3	109	ELI EDWARDS
5647	6/7	1	RES.	C.B.	MRS. OLA HUMM	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	3,000.00	22		11CG.1	CAMILLO AVE.	WM. MERRIAM
5648	6/7	1	RES & GAR.	C.B.	PEARSON CONST. CO.	PEARSON CONST. CO.	5,000.00	19	18	E	1304 AVE SOROLLA	MERRIAM
5649	6/7	1	ADD. ROOM (1)	C.B.	JNO. A. GAUTIER	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	400.00	13	1	K	325 MADEIRA AVE.	---
5650	6/7	1	RES. & GAR.	C.B.	C. C. PATTERSON	BATCHELLOR CONST. CO.	7,000.00	12	15	A	1101 SEVILLA AVE.	SHANKLIN
5651	6/8	1	RES & GAR.	C.B.	L. H. SOLIE	A. McDONALD	6,200.00	18	19	A	825 SEVILLA AVE.	CARL BLOHM
5652	6/8	1	GEN. REP.	C.B.	MRS. JANE CLARK	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	100.00	26	57	GRA.	1206 MADRID ST.	---
5653	6/8	1	PAINTING	C.B.	C. P. JOHNSON	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	75.00	11	27	B.	909 SOROLLA AVE.	---
5654	6/9	1	RES. & GAR.	C.B.	GEO. F. BLAMEY	BYRON D. KIRBY	7,500.00	31	72	GRAN.	1106 FERDIAND ST	SHANKLIN HOWARD
5655	6/9	3	ADD & REP.	C.B.	ST. THERESA SCHOOL	SOUTHEASTERN CONST.	8,553.00	10	6	D	215 INDIAN MOUND TR	KNIGHT
5656	6/9	1	GEN. REP.	C.B.	W. H. POTEET	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	50.00	13	28	DOUG.	423 SALAMANCA AVE.	ROBT. E SMTH
5657	6/15	1	RES. & GAR.	C.B.	MR & MRS. H. PILKINGTON	BABCOCK & LAMONT	6,000.00	18	6	B	1412 GIRALDA AVE.	WM. MERRIAM
5658	6/16	1	RES & GAR.	C.B.	J. G. C. VOGUES	PEARSON CONST. CO.	7,000.00	6	18	E	137 SOROLLA AVE.	MERRIAM
5659	5/16	1	FRAME HOUSE	FRAME	H. F. WELLS	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	750.00	10	3A	MCFAR-	139 FROW AVE.	---
5660	6/16	1	FRAME HOUSE	FRAME	H. F. WELLS	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	750.00	10	3A	MCFAR-	139 FROW AVE.	---
5661	6/17	1	RES. & GAR.	C.B.	GEO. F. BLAMEY	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	5,000.00	14	5	GRA.	815 ORTEGA AVE.	SHANKLIN
5662	6/18	1	FRAME HOUSE	FRAME	GERTRUDE PERRY	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	1,000.00	12	1A	MCFAR-	145 GRAND AVE.	---
5663	6/18	1	PAINTING	C.B.	MRS. JENNIE BRIGGS	OWNER (DAY LABOR)	200.00	43	7	K	235 MAJORDA AVE.	---

1938 Permit Page, Courtesy of Public Records



Tax Card, Courtesy of Public Records

Ownership History

The residence was originally built in 1938 as a joint venture by the Batcheller Construction Company and architect William Shanklin. A Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Patterson of Pittsburgh, PA. purchased the bungalow that same year. Mr. Patterson was president of the Pittsburgh Gravel Company. As stated by historian Joan Mickelson, Ph.D., realtors use the term *bungalow* to describe quaint, little homes. And 2716 Cordova certainly was the “little house that could,” having sold almost immediately in one of the darkest economic times in American history! The property has sold several times over the years. A Mr. David Beaty (1947-2022), who had it for a long tenure, purchased the property in 1988 and held it until his estate sold it this year (2024). He led a saga of a life—from his birth in Brazil, to growing up in wild and wonderful Coconut Grove, setting state swimming records, attending Columbia University, moving to the remote Grecian island of Patmos for a while, working for *Time* magazine, meeting famous authors all over the world, and then returning home to purchase this home in the Gables and work at Books & Books. He made remarkably few changes/alterations. Mr. Beaty’s estate sold the property to Gables Development Group Cordova LLC in 2024. The public listing stated:

“3 Bed/2 Bath home in prime Coral Gables location! Property is on a spacious 11,250 Sq Ft Lot within minutes of Venetian Pool, Biltmore Hotel and Miracle Mile. House needs updating but has good bones & ample room to expand and add a pool. Living Room features an Art Deco fireplace, a vaulted 10 ft.+ wood ceiling & is subdivided by columns providing space for separate seating or informal dining. There is a library off the Living Room with built in bookshelves and another large room that can serve as a formal Dining Room. 2 Bedrooms and a bath complete the main living quarters. A separate room & bath on the other side of the garage has its own entrance & may be used as a home office or additional bedroom for guests. House is offered ‘As is.’”

As such, 2716 Cordova was not marketed as a “tear down.”



LUXURIANT CORAL GABLES FOLIAGE enhances the design of this bungalow at Sevilla avenue and Cordova street, purchased recently by Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Patterson of Pittsburgh, Pa., from George Batcheller, builder, through Paul A. Mickler, realtor. Patterson is president of the Pittsburgh Gravel Company. Featuring the plan of the home is a "blow-away" screened porch opening in back and front. William Shanklin was architect. Price was \$8,000.

Clipping announcing the sale of the property almost immediately after construction in 1938, Courtesy of NewsBank

Architectural Significance Analysis

Construction boomed in the Gables during the 1920s until the combined devastation of the 1926 hurricane and 1929 Wall Street crash. In 1925 alone, \$25 million were spent on construction in the Gables. In 1930, this value was almost zero. Between 1929 and 1933, 148 state and national banks in Florida failed, and, by 1933, approximately one in four Floridians was receiving some type of government assistance. Relief measures expanded under the New Deal administration, and people adapted to this new way of meager living. Priorities and aesthetics changed, and this was reflected in all aspects of life, including architecture; the ornate and ostentatious Mediterranean architectural flair no longer matched the times. In terms of single-family home construction, about 300 were constructed in 1926 alone, and this was not even the height of the boom, which was in 1925. In the early 1930s, 50 homes or less per year were constructed until 1936. Between 50 and 100 homes were constructed per year from 1936 to 1942 when construction came to a halt once again on account of the War. Compare this to the height of the postwar boom, where almost 700 homes were built in 1951 alone.

These 1930s homes were primarily constructed in what became to leading style of the era, the Minimal Traditional. Mr. Merrick and his original design team were mostly gone, and Coral Gables began to follow national building trends in both numbers and style as aesthetics changed to a simpler palette.

Minimal Traditional Style (1935-1950)

and

Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Program (initiated in 1934):

The Minimal Traditional style emerges during the New Deal era as a popular national architectural style for houses. Homes of this style were small (generally 2 or 3 bedrooms) and were intended to be affordable for working-class families. This style prevailed until the 1950s, when it was supplanted by the Ranch style that dominated the postwar boom. The style reached its level of popularity on account of its ability to adjust to societal needs. Initially, it rose to dominance during the New Deal era to meet Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan requirements. During this period, it incorporated features from contemporaneous styles. The few houses built during World War II were simple and constructed quickly simply to accommodate wartime needs. After the war, it was common in large developments to provide the housing that the GI Bill promised (so that “every returning serviceman would be able to purchase a home”). In 1935, Coral Gables hosted one of the first five national FHA workshops.

In *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Mrs. McAlester observes:

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.

Like “the manna in the desert” (*the miraculous food—physical and spiritual—that God sent to give the Israelites life as they wandered the desert for 40 years following the Exodus*), the Minimal Traditional house gave life to homebuilding during the New Deal era. Simply put, the Minimal Traditional home style became “the little style that could”—and it did! It restarted homebuilding across the nation.

Thus, by the 1930s, Minimal Traditional single-family homes began to pop up across the nation as architectural journals and magazines promoted them. The simplicity in design was a direct response to the economic hardships of the era and the notion of Modern tones flourished since ornamentation was more costly. Typically, Minimal Traditional homes were one story in height

with low to moderate pitched roofs, prominent chimneys, integral garages and efficient floor plans. These homes were well built and sturdy but not heavily ornamented. Practicality was the focus, as illustrated in the trend of integral/attached garages (garages in the 1920s were generally set back from the front façade or a detached structure at the rear of the property). The garage of 2716 Cordova is a prime example of simplicity and practicality in design in its versatility (it counted as the necessary garage component to construct a residence in the Gables but was also touted for its ability to be used as a covered porch area).

Minimal Traditional homes combined a restrained variety of features from earlier ornate house styles with added contemporary tones. Nationally, Minimal Traditional homes were influenced mostly by Colonial Revival, Arts and Crafts and the Tudor styles, but, due to its simplistic nature, the style was flexible and accommodated area-specific variations and considerations. Whereas a Minimal Traditional home in Shaker Heights or Forest Hills would have been more likely to reference Colonial Revival or Tudor styling, the Minimal Traditional homes of Coral Gables reflected their precursor styles, especially the “Old Spanish” and Mediterranean, as well as the Modernistic styles of Art Deco and Art Moderne which were gaining favor in South Florida at the time. Hence, 2716 Cordova illustrates this in its retention of a tile roof, grouped vents, arched openings and a prominent chimney from the Old Spanish motif while introducing Modernistic tones with smoother stucco, a horizontal emphasis, lack of sills or lintels, curved and geometric forms, attached garage and a simplified movement and massing.

Character-Defining Features of 2716 Cordova, designed in the Minimal Traditional style

- ✓ One-story over crawlspace
- ✓ Overall simple form with geometric segmentations
- ✓ Very lightly textured stucco
- ✓ Gently cascading horizontal emphasis
- ✓ Low-pitched, broad roof lines with minimal to no eaves
- ✓ Tile roof covering the connected roof segments with slightly cascading heights/levels
- ✓ Recessed windows without sills or lintels imparting the Modernistic impression of the fenestration being “carved out”
- ✓ Mixed window sizes and configurations featuring casement window stands indicative of previous influences contrasting with Modernistic geometric windows
- ✓ Segmental arched/squared openings with built-in planters/ ledges
- ✓ Vertical vintage brick feathering above arched front door emulating Moorish insets
- ✓ Cascading vintage brick steps
- ✓ Curved Modernistic built-in planter connected to front steps
- ✓ Dominant but squat interior chimney with geometric emphasis
- ✓ Modestly projecting stepped extension bay on the main façade
- ✓ Exposed rafter tails accentuating one level of the slightly stepped roof
- ✓ Matching Modernistic sets of flush vents under left bay and built-in planter
- ✓ Old Spanish style tubular vents grouped under an eave
- ✓ Shallow segmental arched square opening of the attached “blow-away porch”/integral garage opening
- ✓ Coral rock wall with gentle step-down aspects emulating the cascading main façade

Architect: William Shanklin, Jr. (1903-1946)

William Shanklin practiced architecture in Greater Miami for over two decades and significantly contributed to the built environment of Coral Gables in an era when little construction occurred. Born at Cuevas, Mississippi and raised primarily in Puerto Rico, where his father was a civil engineer for the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company, he earned his degree in architecture from

Cornell University in 1923. Mr. Shanklin came to the Miami area in 1925 and initially worked for the firms of John Bullen and Walter DeGarmo (DeGarmo being a fellow Cornell alumnus and a member of founder George Merrick's original design team). In 1935, Mr. Shanklin opened his own architectural firm in Coral Gables. Along with George Fink, William Merriam, Paist & Steward and a few others, Mr. Shanklin joined the cadre of Coral Gables architects exploring the new styles that the New Deal generated in the 1930s. He designed quaint residential and commercial projects across the Greater Miami area, but the core of his work was in Coral Gables, where he and the cadre noted above were devoted to revitalizing the Gables with an aesthetic that honored the past but embraced the spirit and changing conditions of the time. Between 1935 and his untimely illness and death in 1946 (sadly, his wife also died a short time later), Mr. Shanklin filed nearly 200 building permits, an astonishing amount given the overall minimal amount of construction occurring during those dark days of the Great Depression (and the near halt on residential construction once America entered World War II). Fourteen (14) of Mr. Shanklin's works in Coral Gables are historically designated. Particularly notable are his works, which would include 2716 Cordova, that explored a "Modern Spanish" motif in the Minimal Traditional style in the 1930s. This residence portrays the built environment characterized by the Minimal Traditional design philosophy of the era. In contrast to the "Old Spanish" motif in the Mediterranean style of the 1920s, his increasingly modern treatment in homebuilding introduced new concepts (less ornamentation, beauty in simplicity, streamlined movements and rhythm, more visible/integral garages, etc.) while still harmonizing with the spirit of the progenitor "Old Spanish" motif already established in the built environment of the City. Rather than building extremely modern structures that would have clashed with the architecture from the City's heyday, his works bring a fresh look while also succeeding in harmonizing with the past. Mr. Shanklin's work was featured in *House Beautiful* magazine in 1939, bringing national attention to his treatment of domestic architecture in the Gables during the Great Depression and New Deal. His designs were also prominently featured in Miami area newspapers during his tenure as a leading Coral Gables architect. These silent structures are the living testament to his legacy in Coral Gables.



MRS. EDWARD B. QUINAN, (left), Mrs. Ralph Chapman, (center) and Mrs. William Shanklin (right) are in charge of arrangements for the tea hour.

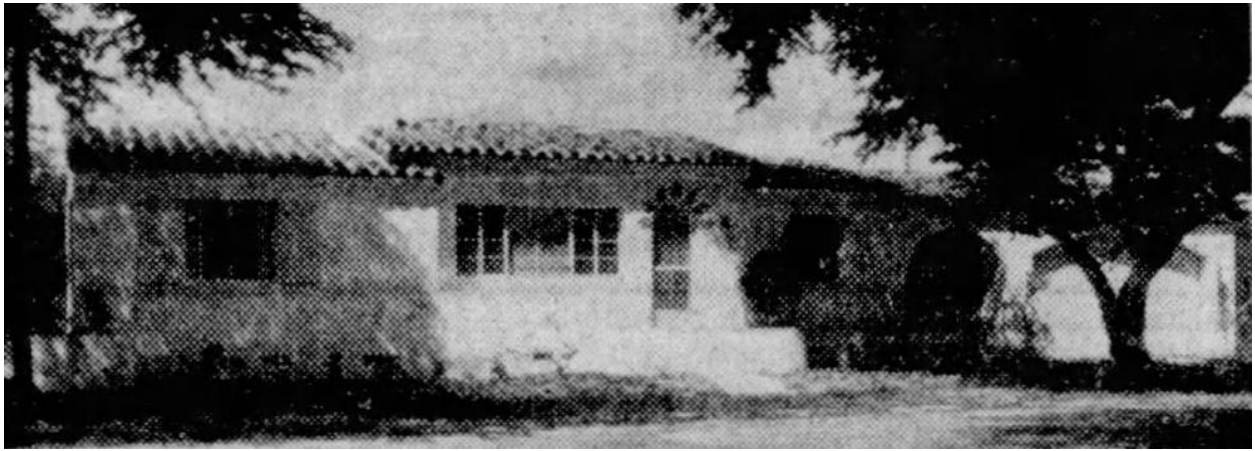
Clipping of Mrs. Shanklin at a tea in 1941, Image Courtesy of NewsBank

Builder: *George E. Batcheller (1888-1959)*

George Batcheller was the founder and proprietor of a well-known Coral Gables-based construction company that was largely responsible for the development of the Italian Village

and, later, custom residences surrounding the Country Club and The Biltmore. Founder George Merrick recruited Mr. Batcheller to the Gables from Forest Hills Gardens, New York, one of the garden cities that Mr. Merrick had studied in planning his own garden city at Coral Gables. After Mr. Merrick enticed Forest Hills financier Joseph Kresse to underwrite forty (40) homes in the Gables, both Kresse and Batcheller scoped out the area while vacationing in the Miami area. After Batcheller and his bride spent their honeymoon nearby in 1925, they were hooked. Batcheller agreed to handle all of the construction and in some cases the design of these 40 homes. Ultimately, Kresse and Batcheller transformed what was a virgin pine forest into today's Italian Village. The endeavor was a complete success. By 1927, 38 of the 40 homes had sold and at least twenty (20) additional residences were commissioned. Even though the Great Hurricane of 1926 had ravaged the area, Kresse and Batcheller continued to enjoy success at a time when other builders' and architects' businesses was plummeting. In 1928, Mr. Batcheller reinvested in Coral Gables on his own, with the purchase of fifty (50) lots on the north side of Bird Road throughout the Country Club sections. Initially, some homes were built and sold, and some lots were resold as vacant land, but in the wake of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 only a fraction of the lots were ultimately built out. By 1930, the Great Depression was raging, and construction reached its lowest point in years. Development was extremely sparse until the economy and home building campaigns began to rebound in the mid-1930s when Batcheller and Shanklin began to collaborate on constructing homes for this new era. Together, Batcheller and Shanklin made significant and noteworthy contributions to the historic fabric and built environment of Coral Gables. Both based in Coral Gables, this dynamic duo was highly motivated to facilitate a building renaissance in the City, and, in doing so, were instrumental in launching new chapters in the architectural history of Coral Gables. The residence at 2716 Cordova Street is a prime example of their combined efforts in building a distinctive home on a corner in the prevailing Minimal Traditional style, thus embodying those distinguishing characteristics of the style and period. Mr. Batcheller certainly left a mark on Coral Gables and is recognized as one of the few builders that enjoyed the bliss of the boom years, but also the toil of the Depression years, never abandoning the City Beautiful, to once again enjoy success during the brief uptick prior to the War.

Alterations/Additions



Photograph of the home at the time of completion in 1938, Courtesy of NewsBank



Photograph from the 1940s, Courtesy of Public Records



Current photograph of the property, Courtesy of Vicki Cerda Photography

Comparison of historic photographs and building records to the extant residence indicates that the property has retained a high degree of historic integrity over nearly a century. Although the original plans have not been located to date, building records indicate that few alterations have occurred, and none irreversibly impact the character-defining features.

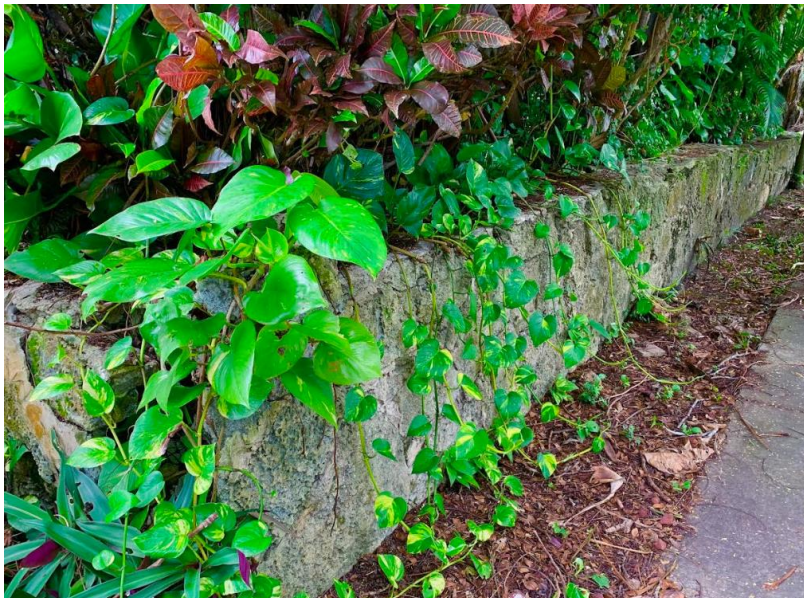
On June 30, 1938, architect William Shanklin filed building permit #5650 for this concrete block and stucco residence and garage/carport. The address was originally 1101 Sevilla Street and was changed to 2716 Cordova Street by 1939 once the owners placed the mailbox facing Cordova. At this time, a coral rock wall was also approved and built around the property. This coral rock wall is the only addition that would be considered historically significant.

Other improvements include small additions that were made at the back and side of the property, which do not detract from the street presence/vista and would not be considered necessary to retain. (These types of additions would generally have been permitted even if the property were already historic at the time they were undertaken as they were sympathetic to the original design, and they could be removed at a later date, if desired.)

Other modifications to the property are likewise insignificant and unsubstantial: removable screen door has been replaced, removable wooden shutters have been removed, some windows have been replaced (but openings on the main façades have not been significantly altered), installation of air conditioning systems, conversion of concrete tire strips to a paved driveway, replacement of the tile roof with one that mimics the original and a new drainfield. Removable hurricane panel rails and shutters were also added (allowed by law and could not be prevented, even if designated). All of these interventions are reversible and common place with historic houses in the Gables.



Original front door and windows persist, Courtesy of Zillow



Photographs of the coral rock perimeter wall, Courtesy of Vicki Cerda Photography

Criteria Analysis

The Code states that, “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. In order to qualify for designation as a local historic landmark or local historic landmark district, 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. For a multiple property nomination, eligibility will be based on the establishment of historic contexts, of themes which describe the historical relationship of the properties. The eligibility of any potential local historic landmark or local historic landmark district shall be based on meeting one (1) or more of the following criteria:” *[annotations in italics]*

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 *[no]*;
2. Is the site of an historic event with significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation *[no]*;
3. Is associated in a significant way with a major historic event whether cultural, economic, military, social, or political *[no]*;
4. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community *[YES]*; or
5. Is associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution, which has contributed, substantially to the life of the City *[no]*.

B. Architectural significance:

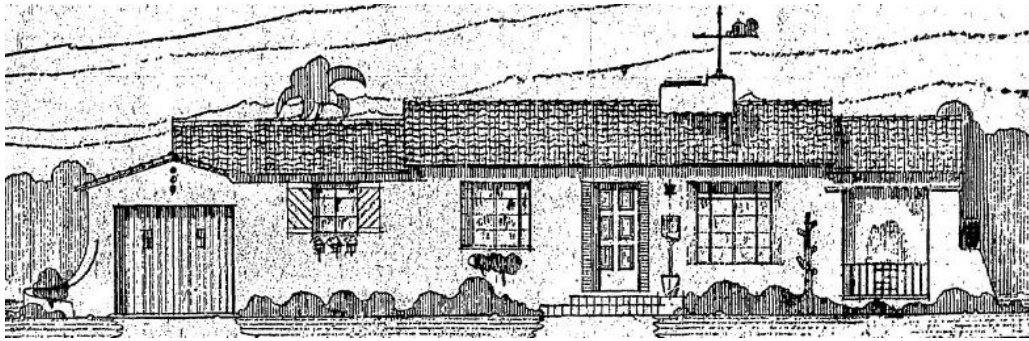
1. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles *[YES]*;
2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction *[YES]*;
3. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder *[no]*; or
4. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment *[no]*.

C. Aesthetic significance:

1. By being a part or related to a subdivision, park, environmental feature, or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on an historical, cultural, or architectural motif *[no]*; or
2. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, is an easily identifiable visual feature of a neighborhood, village, or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood, village, or the City. In case of a park or landscape feature, is integral to the plan of such neighborhood or the City *[no]*.

D. Archaeological significance: Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistoric history or history *[no]*.

Comparative Analysis



Clippings of William Shanklin designs from the 1930s (the last being 2716 Cordova), Courtesy of NewsBank



Photographs of just a few Minimal Traditional houses already designated in Coral Gables, Courtesy of Public Records



Photograph showing the Minimal Traditional design of the subject property at 2716 Cordova, Courtesy of HPACG

Optional Designation of Interiors

The interior of 2716 Cordova is not recommended for historic designation like it would be if the residence were located in Palm Beach or Rancho Santa Fe, for example. *(N.B. as per Section 8-104 of the Code, the interior spaces of this residence are not “customarily open to the public,” and, therefore, do not qualify for historic designation and may be totally altered in the future.)*

Incentives

Historic Preservation is recognized as a valuable tool in protecting a community’s heritage and sense of place by revitalizing neighborhoods, stabilizing and enhancing property values and improving quality of life.

The Historical Resources Department routinely meets with homeowners to review potential ad valorem tax exemption, as well as grants and other incentives such as potential variances that may be available.

Historic preservation benefits everyone. Rypkema’s landmark *Enhancing Paradise* study proved that historic preservation has made a positive fiscal impact on Miami-Dade County and its residents:

“Whether a rich or modest neighborhood, for the last fifteen years, homeowners in historic districts have been rewarded for their choice of where to live. In years of rapid property appreciation, local historic districts outperformed the rest of the market. When the real estate crash hit the nation, owners in historic districts saw a value decline less than in other neighborhoods. An important result of this was foreclosures in historic districts at half the rate of other areas. When the recovery finally came, it was owners in local historic districts that saw their equity return more rapidly... The wonderful historic resources of Miami-Dade County aren’t just for tourists. The entire community benefits from the character, quality, and vibrancy of historic neighborhoods.”

As noted in *Preserving Our Past: A Guide to Historic Preservation in Coral Gables*, The City of Coral Gables created its first historic preservation ordinance in 1973 in response to the community’s growing concern for safeguarding its irreplaceable historic resources. The ordinance was revised and expanded in 1984 and officially made part of the City Code. Since then, additional incentives have been added such as ad valorem tax exemption, the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and the Coral Gables Cottages program. Historic preservation offers a certain prestige that improves the marketability and interest in single-family homes as well, increasing the value and possibly helping to secure financing that otherwise would not be possible. Pride in ownership often results, improving the “look factor” of neighborhoods and creating statistically lower crime rates, higher public investment and cleaner streets and parcels. This all adds up to an increased quality of life in historic areas. Additionally, the Historic Preservation Board and its staff can provide technical advice and approve variances when appropriate. Given the global climate crisis and the fact that every building possesses significant “global” value, the stakes have never been higher.

“We are ready... to do all we can to help save places that matter, places

*that are part of our community and sense of place and belonging ...
We must speak up for those silent structures that we treasure. We do
this by attending government meetings, writing letters and emails to
legislators at the local, state and national level and making phone calls.
We do this by keeping our eyes and ears open to possible threats to
historic structures and speaking up as necessary. We do this by
helping research and document buildings to aid the professional
preservation staffs. We do this by caring enough to take action.”*
Dolly MacIntyre, Founder of Dade Heritage Trust

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the designation of historic landmarks in Coral Gables is "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. Furthermore, it is the purpose of this Article to strengthen the economy of the City by stabilizing and improving property values in historic areas and to encourage new buildings and developments that will be harmonious with the existing historic attributes of the City including buildings, entrances and fountains. In addition, the provisions of this article will assist the City and property owners to be eligible for federal tax incentives, federal and state grant funds and other potential property tax abatement programs for the purpose of furthering historic preservation activities" (Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 8, Section 8-101).

"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. In order to qualify for designation as a local historic landmark or local historic landmark district, 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" (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 Code as meeting one (1) or more of the criteria. As noted in the report, this property meets three (3) criteria.

In 1921, founder George Merrick said "Coral Gables is not a thing of the moment, of the year or even of the passing period, but a wonderful monument to the achievement of worth-while perseverance in the creation of Beauty and the bringing true of dreams that will as solidly endure and as beautifully and bountifully age as does the everlasting coral upon which this master development is founded." In Coral Gables An American Garden City, it is concluded that Coral Gables is "a city whose walls should transmit history and bear witness to the roughness of life. It rests with the patina to evoke the passage of time, the tragedies and souvenirs which in turn become engraved in the stone and stucco." 2716 Cordova Street is part of this history, part of this culture, part of this architectural heritage—the tapestry of Coral Gables.

And, like The Little Engine That Could, this Minimal Traditional house is the "little house that could." It hadn't been "over the mountain" and wasn't sure what it was capable of, but in its simplicity and compassion for its era it was successful and has stood the test of time, just like the Little Engine.

Summary Recommendation Statement:

Approval of local historic landmark designation of the residence located at 2716 Cordova Street in Coral Gables based its historical, cultural and architectural significance.

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