



**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2023, 8:30 a.m.**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134**

Historical Resources &  
 Cultural Arts

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MEMBERS	A 22	M 22	J 22	J 22	A 22	S 22	O 22	N 22	D 22	J 23	F 23	M 23	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	#	P	N	N	P	P	P	P	N	E	P	#	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	P	P	O	O	E	P	E	E	O	P	#	P	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	P	P	M	M	P	E	P	P	M	E	P	P	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	P	A	E	E	E	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Mary Beth Burke	P	P	E T	E T	P	E	P	P	E T	E	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	E	I	I	E	P	E	E	I	P	P	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	P	P	N	N	P	P	P	P	N	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

**LEGEND:** A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; \* = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member.  
 - = No Meeting; # = Late meeting arrival.

**STAFF:** Warren Adams, Historic Preservation Officer; Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer; Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator.

**RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES:** Nancy Kay Lyons, Administrative Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:36 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record.

Chair Meagher showed the board a picture of a tea set that is being loaned for the tea.

**OPENING STATEMENT:**

On a hot, humid August day in 1737, the ship *Samuel*, with its human cargo “packed like herring” sailed up the Delaware River on the last leg of its seven-week transatlantic voyage from Rotterdam. Among the more than two hundred weary Germans aboard was Johann Nickel Fink [Finck], the first of Althea Fink Merrick’s ancestors to come to America. In the years to come, the Fink family would leave its mark on the American frontier and on Althea’s son George Merrick. Their pioneer experiences built their confidence, honed their faith, fostered their creativity, and taught them forbearance laced with unabashed optimism. More than 150 years later, in the wilds of South Florida, this proud family’s strong frontier values would serve Althea Fink Merrick well as she and her children added a new chapter to the Fink family saga.

At more than six feet four inches tall, reed thin with piercing blue-gray eyes, H.G.G. had a commanding presence. When he was as young boy, George Merrick wrote that his beloved grandfather, prematurely gray with a long, flowing Old Testament beard, seemed like the personification of Moses and God when “his shouting Methodist voice would soar up and away into the rafters.”

His grandmother Medie was pretty and as petite as H.G.G. was tall. But, as George Merrick recalled, she was easily his grandfather’s match. Strong, independent, tart-tongued, and outspoken, she reminded George of the girl on a can of Old Dutch Cleanser.

Ana Lam joined the meeting at 8:41 am.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Ms. Burke and seconded by Ms. Seipp to approve the minutes of February 13, 2023, with corrections.

The motion was unanimously approved.

## HOUSE REPORT:

1. **Coral Gables Merrick House Report for February 2023:** Ms. Bondurant read the Coral Gables Merrick House Report for February 2023 (see attached).
2. **Vanity Set:** Has been purchased and is on the dresser in Helen's room.
3. **Donations to the house:**
  - a) **Thank you letters:** Ms. Cason was provided with a copy of the letter that was sent out.
  - b) **Pat Blanco's Donations:** Have been placed in the house and photos will appear in the next *Merrick Matters* newsletter.
4. **Bulb for Floor Lamp:** There is a lamp in Richard's room that needs a light bulb. Public Works will replace.

## OLD BUSINESS:

1. **"100 Voices":**
  - a) A thank you note was received from Brett Gillis along with a check for ticket sales from HPACG members who attended. He donated 10 Pfaltzgraff Secret Rose French flutes for use at the house.
  - b) Dolly McIntyre has been contacted to be a speaker but has not responded.
  - c) May 7<sup>th</sup> is the new date so as not to coincide with Mother's Day. Speaker Monk Terry has been notified of the new date and is available.
2. **Garden Tea:**
  - a) Three quotes were received from R Catering, Catering by Lovables and Sarah Sharpe Catering, the lowest being R. Catering.
  - b) Thanks to Mayor Don Slesnick, Biltmore Hotel Chef Tom Russo will be donating 100 7-inch plates as well as 60 white teacups and saucers.
  - c) **Speakers:**
    - i) Japanese Speaker: Mary Beth Burke was unable to confirm a speaker but is still working on it.
    - ii) A representative from the British Consulate is confirmed to talk about the history of tea and how it was integrated into the culture across Western Europe.
    - iii) Chef Thomas Russo: Mayor Slesnick had suggested asking Chef Russo from the Biltmore Hotel to speak about how tea is served at hotels. He has also been to Japan. Chair Meagher will follow.
3. **Displays:** The following tea sets will be on display: Mate Cups from Paraguay, Russian Samovar, German Tea Set, Chinese Tea Set, and a Japanese Tea Set. For the Transferware display, Chair Meagher has picked up the Souvenir Plates from Linda Zahler. Her collection is pink and white, and she has a green and white pitcher. Ms. Burke has a blue St. Augustine. Brett Gillis has loaned numerous items for displays that Chair Meagher and Ms. Burke will be going through on Wednesday. All interior displays will be set up the day before.
4. **Centerpieces:** All board members are responsible for a centerpiece for a table using the teapots distributed at the last meeting.
5. **Music:** Ms. Lam has not heard back from the Music Club student. Ms. Reese will contact the violinists to see if they are available. Chair Meagher will contact the South Florida Youth Symphony.
6. **Tickets:** Ticket price is set at \$65. Eventbrite is active and 5 tickets have been sold. Anyone that does not want to buy tickets on Eventbrite can write a check to the City of Coral Gables and put Merrick House Tea in the memo line. Checks are to be given to Chair Meagher. Docents working the event will not have to buy a ticket. Attendance is anticipated/planned for 104 guests.
7. **Flyers:** Board members were provided with flyers for distribution. Chair Meagher has additional flyers.
8. **Quilters:** The quilters from last year will be back this year.
9. **Vintage Vendor:** Only one vintage vendor (Maria) will be attending this year.
10. **Helen Muir's Son:** Helen Muir's son, Toby, has some of Althea's items given to his mother by Eunice Peacock. Chair Meagher will meet with him this weekend as he is loaning these items for the tea.
11. **Timeline:**
  - a) **Set-Up of Tables and Chairs:** Public Service will put out tables and chairs.
  - b) **Board Arrival & Event Start Time:** Board needs to arrive at 11:30 am. The event begins at 2pm.
  - c) **Violinist:** The violinist will play from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm.
  - d) **Tea Service Start Time:** Tea service starts at 3pm.
12. **Instructions:**
  - a) **Place Setting Diagram:** A sample diagram of the place setting will be provided. Each member is responsible for setting and clearing 2 tables.
  - b) **Number of Tables:** There will be 14 tables of 8 to accommodate 112 people.

- c) **Registration:** Table will be near the parking lot, Ms. Seipp & Ms. Ehrenhaft will be there. Attendees will be given ribbons. Chair Meagher will provide.
- d) **Signs:** Private event signs will be set up to discourage walk ins.
- e) **Reserving Tables:** A board table can be reserved or if someone has enough people to fill a table and they want to sit together, it can be reserved.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

- 1. **Woodwork in Merrick House:** Ms. Kautz will contact the conservator for an update.
- 2. **Vines:** Deena Bell- Llewelyn and the landscape crew have started removing the vines from the trees.
- 3. **Perimeter Wall:** Completed.
- 4. **Roof Leak over Secondary Fireplace:** A purchase order is being prepared.

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:48 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Kara Kautz  
Acting Historic Preservation Officer