# REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES HISTORICAL RESOURCES & CULTURAL ARTS DEPARTMENT TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

ON THE DESIGNATION OF

# THE PROPERTY AT

## 3920 DURANGO STREET

# **CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**



Historic Photo: c.1940



# LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION 3920 DURANGO STREET, CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

**Application:** Designation requested by Owner

Historical Resources & Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET CORAL GABLES FLORIDA 33134

305-460-5093
 hist@coralgables.com

Folio Number: 03-4118-005-1780

Legal Description: Lot 6, Block 46, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part

Three, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 52, of the Public Records of Miami-

Dade County, Florida

Original Permit No.:

unknown

Date of Construction:

1925

Original Architect:

attributed to H. George Fink

Original Builder:

H. W. Nicholes & Sons

Original Owner:

H. W. Nicholes & Lindsey H. Hopkins Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company

Present Owner:

Luciana Maria Patsiga

Building Type:

One- & Two-story SFR

Style:

Mediterranean Revival

Site Characteristics:

The property is located on an interior, approximately 50' x 100' lot on the west side of Durango Street just north of

the intersection of University Drive and Bird Road.

#### SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The single- family residence at 3920 Durango Street, constructed in 1925 during the initial development of Coral Gables, is indicative of the Mediterranean-inspired ideals founder George Merrick envisioned for the City. The design of this Mediterranean Revival style home is attributed to architect H. George Fink, a member of Merrick's original design team. The home was built for the Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company as part of a larger building plan contracted with Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation. The partners, Lindsey H. Hopkins and H. W. Nicholes, were nationally acclaimed for their building campaigns in the Atlanta area. The home at 3920 Durango Street was one of the first fifty homes built as part of this program as a demonstration for the contract and was approved by Merrick. It was built contemporaneous to the development of the Biltmore Hotel and Golf Course in the adjacent and newly re-platted Country Club Sections. Unfortunately, plans for these areas were curtailed due to the 1926 Hurricane followed by the downturn in the economy. 3920 Durango Street is one of a handful of homes built in this initial development phase in Country Club Section Part Three and stands as a testament to Merrick's vision. The property at 3920 Durango Street retains its historic integrity and significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the City of Coral Gables. It portrays the environment in an era of history in Coral Gables characterized by the Mediterranean Revival style, and it embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, and method of construction. Hence, the property at 3920 Durango Street is part of the collection of quality residences that contributes to the story and the City's sense of place over time.

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

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

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

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

#### **CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE**

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

The single-family residence at 3920 Durango Street 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, 3920 Durango Street meets the following **three** (3) criteria:

#### A. Historical, Cultural significance

Criterion 4: Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community

#### B. Architectural significance

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

#### **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

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

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

Constructed in 1925 the single-family residence at 3920 Durango Street occurred during the City's first phase of development and is indicative of the type of architecture that was the founding premise of Coral Gables.

#### **Founding of Coral Gables**

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. Founder George E. Merrick drew from the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 19th and early 20th century to create his vision fully-conceived, cohesively-designed, Mediterranean-inspired city. It is now considered one of the first modern planned communities in the United States. Advised by landscape architect Frank Button, artist Denman Fink, and architects H. George Fink, Walter De Garmo, H.H. Mundy, and Phineas Paist, Merrick converted 3000 acres of citrus plantation and native hammock into ornate plazas, grand entrances, small parks, monumental buildings, and tree-shaded streets.

The use of Mediterranean designs, and specifically Spanish prototypes, was one of the featured selling points in early promotional materials. Merrick and his team felt that this type of architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. The architecture constructed during the

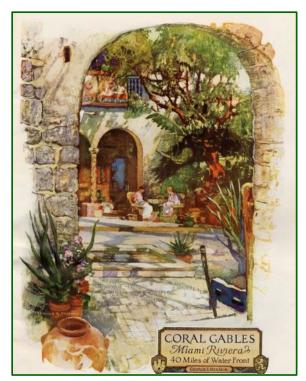


Figure 1: Advertisement, House Beautiful, 1925

community's initial period of development combined elements commonly used in Spanish, Moorish, and Italian architecture, and has come to be known as the Mediterranean Revival style. During the 1920s structures and amenities were built exclusively in accordance with this style.

The home at 3920 Durango Street exemplifies the Mediterranean ideals espoused by Coral Gables' founder George Merrick. As discussed below, the design is attributed to architect H. George Fink. He was a founding member of Merrick's design team, and was a driving force behind the development and evolution of the Mediterranean Revival style in Coral Gables.

Nationally acclaimed landscape architect Frank Button produced the first comprehensive map of Coral Gables in 1921. It was based on an infrastructure of the inherited grid of fruit trees from the Merrick family's citrus plantation. Laid carefully over the resulting grid of orthogonal streets (north-south) and avenues (east-west) are a series of diagonal and curved roadways. George Merrick envisioned a city with Old-World style and purposefully set aside vast amounts of valuable land for plazas, boulevards, scenic spots, parkways, and Realizing that automobile entrances. was becoming increasingly ownership commonplace, Merrick wanted Coral Gables to embrace the motorist without sacrificing the beauty of the community or the comfort of the residents.

Button's 1922 map (Figure 2) lays out a series of wide parkways with center planting medians that were major thoroughfares across the development as well as wide parkways with substantial swales for tree-

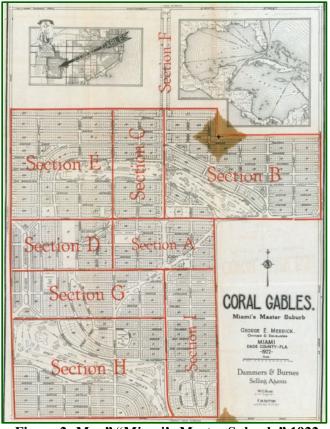


Figure 2: Map" "Miami's Master Suburb," 1922

planting that provided internal access and scenic routes. The grid was opened at strategic locations for grand entrances, plazas, and fountains to provide visual interest for both the pedestrian and the motorist. Broad boulevards curved around planned features that included vast park land, golf courses, monumental public and community buildings, as well as other amenities. 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. Most early construction was concentrated north of, and in the direct vicinity of, the Granada Golf Course.

In the mid-1920s plans for a premier hotel in Section H were announced. The golf course originally slated for this area was expanded to an 18-hole championship course. It was designed by legendary golf course designer Donald Ross and renamed the Miami-Biltmore Golf Course. It was designed as a championship golf course and has retained its elite status over the years. Sections G, H, and I, which were primarily undeveloped, were reworked to accommodate the large \$10 million Biltmore Hotel complex. These three sections were subdivided into six sections and renamed Country Club Sections Parts One through Six and a portion given to the Biltmore Section. The Biltmore Section was labelled as the "Heart of Coral Gables" and is where City Hall was later built. Button rerouted streets, including Alhambra Circle which eventually curved around the east side of the Miami-Biltmore golf course (portion of which was originally called Ferdinand Drive) and continued south. He also fine-tuned existing streets. Most notably, the S-shaped DeSoto Boulevard became a clearly defined scenic thoroughfare between the Granada and the Miami-Biltmore golf courses whose halfway point was celebrated by a traffic circle plaza with a magnificent pedestal-type fountain. (Figures 3 & 4)



Figure 4: Coral Gables 1925 Aerial Photo, c.1925 [left]

Figure 5: Coral Gables 1925

Map Detail:
"Miami Riviera," 1925
[below]

Golf courses were prominent features of Merrick's plan, and the Biltmore Hotel complex was the crown jewel in Merrick's campaign to attract tourists and to provide social amenities for residents. The home at 3920 Durango Street is in Country Club Section Part Three which is adjacent to the southeast portion of the golf course. (Figure 4) As mentioned above it was one of the sections purposefully replatted Merrick as prime real estate around the Biltmore complex. The home was permitted in 1925--the same year the golf course construction was launched. The course opened January 2, 1926. Rapid growth in the area was anticipated.

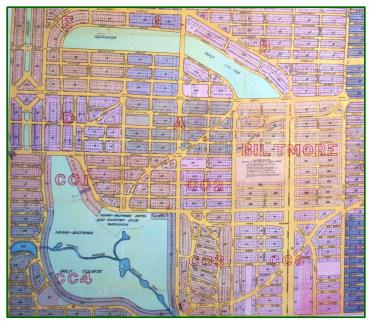




Figure 5:
Miami-Biltmore Hotel
& Golf Course,
looking southeast
c.1926

Red Circle: 3920 Durango Street

Note:

Bird Road cuts across the golf course in the upper portion of the photo.

#### **Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company**



Figure 6: Lindsey H.

Hopkins

Courtesy Atlantic

Constitution

As Merrick's vision for his Mediterranean-inspired city continued to grow, his team began recruiting leading investors, architects, and builders from across the country that could demonstrate experience building in accordance with his vision. By the mid-1920's Merrick attracted the nationally acclaimed investor, Lindsey H. Hopkins. Hopkins was a director of Coca-Cola Company, the Federal Reserve Bank at Atlanta, and the Reynolds Metal Company. He was intensely interested in aviation, automobiles and road development, and real estate (See section below) - all passions shared by Merrick. Hopkins, with partner H. W. Nicholes - a prominent builder and president of Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company, was responsible for most homes in Druid Hills, a planned exclusive suburb of Atlanta. Druid Hills was initially planned by the premier landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in 1893, sold to Asa Candler, president of Coca-Cola in 1908, and developed in large part by Hopkins and Nicholes between 1910-1936. Druid Hills is now listed on the National Register for Historic Places. This was one of several of their high-profile and successful endeavors.

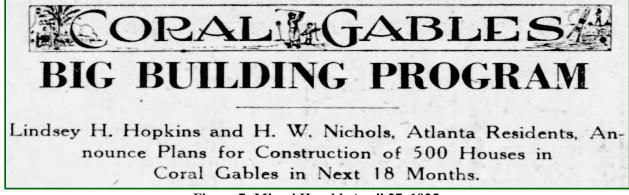


Figure 7: Miami Herald, April 27, 1925

With this experience Hopkins and Nicholes approached Merrick in early 1925 with a large building program. It was to include the construction of 500 single-family homes. In April 1925, with the purchase of the first fifty lots and the submission of some architectural drawings, a contract was issued, and the plan announced. (Figure 7) The lots were in undeveloped sections. Thirty of the homes were concentrated in the Coconut Grove Section, just south of the planned San Sebastian Apartment Hotel which broke ground in August. The other twenty were scattered over Country Club Sections Parts 3, 4, and 5 which wraps around the southern portions of the Miami-Biltmore Golf Course. The City was in dire need of housing for working-class families and these homes were intended to help fill that need. They were designed by architects H. George Fink or Frank Wyatt Woods, and they were built by Nicholes' construction company with oversight by Merrick's Coral Gables Cooperation. The newspaper article states that within the contract there would be some new exploration of styles that are harmonious with the Mediterranean Revival fabric. Fink explored the Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial styles in some of his homes. Of these first fifty

homes, twelve were in Country Club Section Part Three. The home at 3920 Durango Street was amongst them and was one in which Fink leaned into Spanish Colonial precedents.

The construction of these first fifty homes of Merrick's agreement with Hopkins and Nicholes was an exhibition of their design intent, their ability to mobilize resources for their large-scale plan, and the quality of their construction. Evidently, Merrick approved. In July the Coral Gables Corporation announced the contract for the second fifty. Permits for these homes were filed over the next several months. Nationwide issues with transporting building supplies led to a slowdown of construction in early 1926 and Hopkins and Nicholes paused their contract. The hurricane in September ended the continuation of the planned building campaign. It took several years but eventually they completed the one hundred homes as contracted. After the hurricane, Nicholes moved his company back to Atlanta. Hopkins, however, remained in the area and continued to invest in Coral Gables and the Miami area, especially on Miami Beach. In 1925 Hopkins had financed the final construction permits for the San Sebastian Apartment Hotel and in 1928 he purchased it from the Coral Gables Corporation, living in the penthouse apartment until his passing in 1937. His estate eventually sold the San Sebastian to the University of Miami in 1939.

#### 3920 Durango Street

The permit for 3920 Durango Street was approved in early June along with seven other Hopkins-Nicholes homes in the Country Club Section Part Three (Permits #1198, #1200-1206). However, while the drawings of the homes for the other six permits match what was built, the plans associated with Permit #1204 do not. The most likely explanation relates to the permitting process at the time. Coral Gables was incorporated in April 1925 and began officially permitting plans in August. Prior to this Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation approved plans and tracked them by legal addresses. In August, the City began assigning permit numbers and they asked that all architects and builders who had constructed buildings within the City bring in the approved plans. The City then retroactively assigned permits numbers as the plans were brought in (not by construction date). Since Nicholes was submitting over seventy plans at this time it is possible that the plans for the home at 3920 Durango Street were switched with another Nicholes home. Research is ongoing to determine if this was the case.

Even without the original plans, it is clear the home was built in late 1925-- contemporaneous to the other six Nicholes' homes. In early January 1926 newspapers report the first owners of 3920 Durango Street, Daniel and Susan Redfearn, had moved in. Newspapers also confirm that the home was built under the Hopkins-Nicholes contract as it records the title transfer from the Builders Finance & Mortgage Company to the Redfearns a few months later. (Figures 8)

Figures 8: 3920 Durango Street

First Owners, the Redfearns, move in *Miami Herard*, January 6, 1926 [top]

Title Transfer

Miami Herald, April 1, 1926

[bottom]

Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Redfearn of Albany, Ga., have moved into their new home at 3920 Durango street.

Builders Finance and Mortgage Company to S. Redfearn and husband, lot 6, block 46, Country Club section 3, Coral Gables, \$20,000.

The first fifty homes of the Hopkins-Nicholes contract were designed either by H. George Fink or by Frank Wyatt Woods. While both architects were designing Mediterranean Revival style homes, they had distinct interpretations of the style with Fink leaning more towards Spanish and Moorish precedents and Woods towards the Italian. Thus, it is often clear who designed the home. In the case of 3920 Durango Street the features and massing are in keeping with Fink's designs. Furthermore, it is very similar to another home he designed for the Hopkins-Nicholes contract that was built in the Coconut Grove Section at 318 Alesio Avenue. The Alesio home has the same massing and layout as well as similar features to 3920 Durango Street. Hence, the home at 3920 Durango Street is attributed to architect H. George Fink. The permit for 318 Alesio Avenue (#1121) is provided at the end of this report as Attachment A and it is utilized as a template to discuss the home at 3920 Durango Street.

#### **Context: Country Club Section Part Three**

The new Country Club Section—Parts 3 and 4, offers really remarkable opportunities for investment in the section where the greatest of all Coral Gables development will take place within the next year. The finest sports center in this country is to be developed around the nucleus of the Miami-Biltmore Hotel at Coral Gables. The Bowman project alone means an outlay of \$10,000,000—practically all in the area adjoining the new section opened up this week.

Figure 9: Opening of Country Club Section Parts 3 & 4, Miami News, December 4, 1924

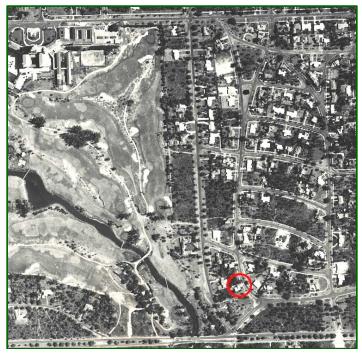
In anticipation of interest in the residential area ringing the Miami-Biltmore Golf Course, Nicholes and Hopkins planned to contribute heavily to the development of Country Club Sections Parts Three, Four, and Five. As mentioned above, there were several circumstances that prevented the full implementation of Hopkins-Nicholes contract. As a result, the area around the golf course remained sparsely populated through the 1940s. (Figures 10) It is likely that this area along the golf course would have seen rapid development if a major hurricane had not hit South Florida in September 1926 – less than a year after it was opened. The Miami-Biltmore Golf Course designed as a championship golf course retained its elite status over the years hosting the Coral Gables Open Invitational (also known as the Miami-Biltmore Open) golf tournament on the PGA Tour from 1931 to 1937 and again from 1959 to 1962.

In general, construction in the City of Coral Gables boomed until the combination of the devastating Hurricane of 1926 and Great Depression curtailed new development and ended Merrick's grand plans for completing his Mediterranean-inspired city. During the Depression Era of the 1930s, few single-family homes were constructed. With the implementation of New Deal and other incentives, the building industry finally experienced a small resurgence in the late 1930s and early 1940s; only to abruptly grind to a halt during the War years of 1942-1945 as materials, expertise, and manpower were diverted to the war effort. The Post-War prosperity that followed these lean years created an optimism which reigned through the 1950s and 1960s and resulted in an unprecedented building boom. During this time the building of single-family homes in the City of Coral Gables followed national trends both in numbers and in style. As is evident in the aerial photos in Figures 10 & 11, the area in the immediate vicinity of the home at 3920 Durango Street was built out during this boom and homes near the Biltmore Golf Course continue to be prime real estate in the City. To date, Country Club Section Part Three and the adjacent neighborhoods retain their single-family residence context. (Figures 11)





Figures 10: Aerial Photographs
1931 [top] Courtesy Florida International University Archives
1938 [bottom] Note: 3920 Durango Street circled in red
Courtesy of University of Florida Archives



#### Figures 11: Aerial Photographs

Note: 3920 Durango Street circled in red

1948 [top]

1957 [bottom]

Courtesy George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida

Current, 2023 [right]

Courtesy Miami-Dade Property Appraiser





It should be noted that when construction of single-family homes resumed in Coral Gables there was a distinct departure from the ornamented and picturesque Mediterranean Revival style that had dominated the City's landscape since its inception and the City began to embrace contemporary modern styles. The home at 3920 Durango Street was one of a handful of single-family residences built during the 1920s in accordance with Merrick's vision for the Country Club Sections Part Three, Four, and Five. It remains as one of the few extant Mediterranean Revival style homes in this area.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION**









Figures 12: 3920 Durango Street Over Time
Front (East) Façade:
c. 1940 [top]
1968 & 1977 [center]
Courtesy Miami-Dade Property Appraiser

2024 [bottom]

#### **Executive Summary**

Situated one block east of the Biltmore Golf Course, the single- family residence at 3920 Durango Street sits on an interior lot in Coral Gables Country Club Section Part Three. The home and its detached auxiliary garage structure was constructed during the initial development of Coral Gables and is indicative of the Mediterranean-inspired ideals founder George Merrick envisioned for the City. Its design is attributed to architect H. George Fink, a member of Merrick's original design team, for the Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company as part of a larger building plan in coordination with Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation. It was one of the first fifty homes built as part of this program as a demonstration for the contract and was approved by Merrick. The home was built contemporaneous to the development of the Biltmore Hotel and Golf Course in the adjacent and newly re-platted Country Club Sections. The home at 3920 Durango Street is one of a dozen homes built in this initial development phase in Country Club Section Part 3 and stands as a testament to Merrick's Mediterranean vision for Coral Gables. Hence, the property exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

Merrick and his team felt that Mediterranean architecture harmonized best with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. 3920 Durango Street is a one- and two-story residence with a detached garage built in the Mediterranean Revival style. The home honors Merrick's vision for adapting residential design to the rigors of South Florida's climate while maintaining the integrity of its style. It is built over a crawl space with thick cement masonry block walls which keep the home cool and above the high water table. The light-colored stuccoed exterior walls reflect the sun's heat, and the varied windows provide much needed ventilation and light in this tropical

environment. The home leans on Spanish Colonial precedents. In particular, the front entry is emphasized with a classical quoin surround and swooped hood ensemble. It is in tandem with the prominent bell tower-inspired chimney, while the remainder of the structure is simple in ornamentation. Other Spanish Colonial features of the home include the pitched roofs with minimal overhang clad in two-piece barrel tile, wing walls, a vertical plank front door, textured stucco, and recessed windows (originally casements) with protruding sills, as well as a porte cochere with crenelated parapets, barrel tile copings, and masonry lintels over its openings.



Figure 13: Bell Tower-Inspired Chimney, 2024

Assessment of the property, building documents, and historic photographs indicates that over the past century there were few changes to the home's historic character-defining features. As per, Article 8, Section 8-103 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code--Criteria for designation of historic landmarks: "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." Staff has determined that this property possesses sufficient integrity for designation, and it is part of the collection of quality residences planned during the land boom period. Thus, the property at 3920 Durango Street significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the Coral Gables and is part of the collection of quality residences that contributes to the City's sense of place over time.

#### **Extant Exterior Description and Alteration Discussion**



Figure 14: 3920 Durango Street, Front (East) Façade, 2022 Courtesy Google Streetview



Figures 15: Property Overview
Property Survey, 2022 [left] Courtesy J. Bonfill & Assoc. Inc.
Aerial, 2022 [right] Courtesy Miami-Dade Property Appraiser

*Note:* In July 2023 there was a fire on the second story of the home. It was declared not fit for habitation and has been vacant since. The current owner purchased the property in September 2023 with the intention of restoring and adding to the house.

The property at 3920 Durango Street is on the west side of the street on an interior irregularly shaped lot--roughly 50' x 110.' A 1,794 SF, four-bedroom, single-family residence spans the width of the lot. The residence is comprised of one- and two-story sections. A one-story garage auxiliary building sits at the northwest corner of the property. A large semi-circular paver driveway curves in front of the home. (Figures 14 & 15)

The single-family residence, built over a crawl space, is constructed with masonry block units and clad with textured stucco. At the northeast corner the home rises to two stories under a hipped roof. The roof pitch is shallow with minimal overhang and, until recently, was clad in two-piece barrel tile. Apart from the front shed-roofed Florida room, the remainder of the living space is one-story under a flat roof whose parapets have simple copings. The original windows throughout the home were casements in a divided-lite configuration with high-profile muntins and protruding sills. Permits for the change in window type have not been located to date. In reviewing historic photos, it is discerned that by 1977 the Florida room was enclosed with awning windows and the current single-hung windows were installed throughout the home between 1980 and 2006.

The asymmetrical front façade has at its core the two-story portion of the home. Extending from it to the south is the one-story Florida room and to its north is a porte cochre. (Figures 14, 16, & 20) At the front corners of the porte cochre and the Florida room, simple footed wing walls flare out.

The front entry is near the northeast corner of the home adjacent to the porte cochere. The front door appears to be original to the home. It is a vertical plank door with a diamond cutout window. Embellishing the entry is a masonry quoin surround. Above the entry is a masonry swooped hood. The hood and surround have a smooth texture which contrasts with the textured stucco of the home. As seen in Figures 12, the original front entry steps cascaded in a simple manner from the door. The current enlarged steps and railings were recently added in 2005 when the curved driveway was installed. The masonry lintels of the porte cochere openings are also smooth in texture and provide a visual link to the home. Additionally, the parapets of the porte cochere are crenelated with two-piece barrel tile in the valleys.

Another hallmark feature of the home is the chimney rising through the porte cochere along the north façade of the home. In a nod to Spanish colonial architecture, it is reminiscent of the belfry. As seen in Figures 12, there was originally a finial cap feature that also had a smooth texture. It was damaged in a windstorm in 1996 and not replaced. Other features of note are the smooth textured projecting window sills around the home. On the front façade, until recently, there was a metal window box holder below the center second story window. (Figures 12) In keeping with the influences. Spanish Colonial ornamentation of the remainder of the home is simpler with the entry as the primary focus.







Figures 16:
Front Façade, July 2023 [top]
Front Entry, May 2023 [center]
Courtesy Realtor.com
Northeast Corner, June 2024 [bottom]

Along the north side of the home running behind the porte cochere to the garage auxiliary building is a wood deck and trellis. A pair of French doors lead out onto it from the dining room. (Figures 17) At the rear of the home the original back porch area and bay is retained. (Figures 18)







Figures 17: Side (North) Façade & Garage Auxiliary Structure, 2024 North Façade & Deck with Trellis, 2023 Courtesy Realtor.com





Figures 18: Rear (West) Façade, 2024
Northern Portion with Original Back Porch Bay [left]; Southern Portion [right]

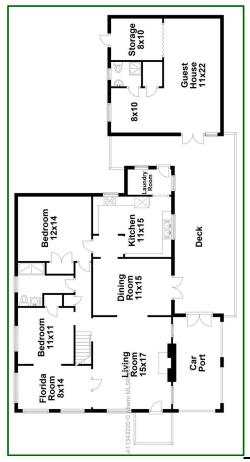
Courtesy Realtor.com

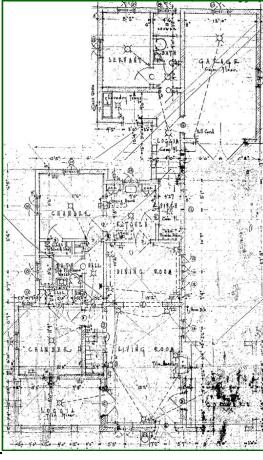
At the northwest corner of the property is the garage auxiliary building. As early as 1930 newspaper ads and city directories document that there were servant's quarters attached to the garage. By 1944 the space was being rented out and remained a rental unit for decades. At an unknown date the garage door opening was enclosed, and it is now listed as a guest house. (Figure 20) Some of the alterations to the front (west) façade of the structure are obvious from the stucco pattern. (Figure 19) As mentioned above, while the correct original plans for this home have yet to be located, the home and garage building are strikingly similar in massing, plan, and features to another home Fink designed for Hopkins and Nicholes at 318 Alesio Avenue. (Permit #1121:

Attachment A) The original floor plan from 318 Alesio Avenue is shown below with the current plan from this home. The layout and siting of the auxiliary building and its loggia connection from the servant's quarters to the home is likely similar to the original plan for this home.

Figure 19: Garage Auxiliary Building, Southeast Corner, 2023 Courtesy Realtor.com







Figures 20:
First Story
Floor Plans

3920
Durango
Street
2023
Courtesy
Realtor.com
[left]

318 Alesio
Avenue
Permit #1121
1925
[right]



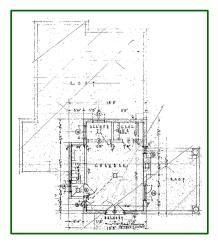
Figure 21: Front (East) Façade, 2023

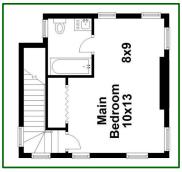
Certain aspects of the current front façade suggest that it may have been altered early in its history. Note that the window sill of the southern window on the second story is slightly lower than its counterparts. Also note that the shed roof over the Florida room is truncated halfway over the second window. (Figure 12 & 21) Fink designed hundreds of homes in Coral Gables in the 1920s and the overall impression of this current façade is not characteristic of his designs.

A closer examination reveals a distinct line and change in stucco at the southeast corner of the second story. (Figure 22) A comparison of this home to the very similar home designed by Fink at 318 Alesio Avenue may yield the answer. In the Alesio home, both the front and back corner of the second story above the Florida room / porch are notched resulting in a protruding stairhall bay. Currently in this home only the rear corner is notched. (Figures 23) The location of the stucco changes, however, suggests that the front corner was also originally notched back.



Figure 22: Front Façade, Southeast Corner, 2023





#### Figures 23:

Second Story Floor Plans Note: Notched Corners at Stairhall

> 318 Viscaya Avenue Permit #1121, 1925 [left]

3920 Durango Street, 2023

Courtesy Realtor.com

[right]

The earliest historic photo of this home found to date is from the early 1940s. (Figure 12 & 24) The alteration – if it occurred – predates this photo. Note that the stucco line and change are present in this early photo. A permit was filed on September 21, 1936, for 'general repairs" to the home. There is no permit on file for this work. However, it fits the timeframe for the alteration. The original plans for the home at 3920 Durango Street have not been located to date and no other documentation regarding this alteration has come to light yet. However, it is Staffs' opinion that this alteration occurred and that the restoration of the second story as result of the recent fire may provide an opportunity to verify and document it.



Figure 24: Front Façade, Southeast Corner Historic Photo, c.1940s *Note*: stucco line & change





Figures 25: Front Façade: Similar Homes Designed by H. George Fink in 1925 318 Alesio Avenue, 2022 [top]; 3920 Durango Street, 2023 [bottom]

#### **Ownership History**

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

In January 1926 Daniel and Susan Redfearn moved into the home at 3920 Durango Street. (Figures 8) They owned the home for a decade. Daniel H. Redfearn (1884-1963) was born in Thomas County, Georgia. He attended the University of Georgia where he was awarded a literary degree in 1909 and a law degree in 1910. According to University of Georgia legend, when Redfearn arrived on campus in the early 1900s, he vowed that he would not walk under the University's wrought iron "Arch" (a University landmark and part of the University's official logo) until he had a diploma in hand. Redfearn kept his vow. When a University professor learned of his promise and announced it to his classes, a tradition began at the University of Georgia among the freshman classes that still holds to this day. Redfearn even stipulated in his will that \$1,000 be allocated toward the maintenance of "The Arch." Redfearn went on to do post-graduate work at Columbia University and the University of Michigan and practiced law in Albany, Georgia from 1910 to 1925. On November 20, 1913, he married Susan Ellis Fort (1970-1883) who was a prize-winning poet. In 1925, he moved his law practice from Albany, Georgia to Coral Gables, Florida. After selling this home they later lived at 1260 South Greenway Drive. Redfearn is the author of a number of law books on wills and estates that are still being

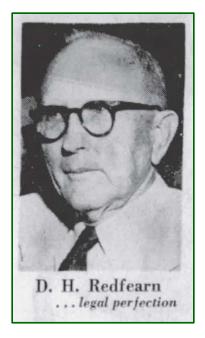


Figure 26: Daniel H. Redfearn *Miami Herald* January 5, 1964

published today. He was also President of the Dade County Bar Association and the President of the Florida State Bar Association. He also served for 21 years as a trustee and legal counsel for the University of Miami. Upon his death in 1963 he bequeathed land and funds for scholarships and for the preservation of university structures.

From 1945 to 1960 the home was owned by Frederick B. Boggs (1891-1956) with his wife Isabelle (-1960). The hailed from Lima, Ohio. Frederick was the owner of a chain of beatuy colleges throughout Ohio. He was also a member of the board of directors of both the All American and Ohio Beauty Associations.

The long-term owners of the home were Dabney ("Bud") Park, Jr. and his wife Betty. They purchased the home in 1976. Dabney started the external degree program at FIU in the 1970s. He later went on to found the Performance Executive Search company whose work was recognized by the City. In 2002 Mayor Donald Slesnick awarded them Seal of the City. (Figure 27) See below for a full listing of Owners of the home at 3929 Durango Street



SEAL OF APPROVAL: Coral Gables Mayor Donald Slesnick, center, recently presented the Seal of the City to Performance Executive Search Inc.'s Dabney (Bud) Park, the founding senior partner, and partner Morgan Park, right.

The workshop costs \$75. For more information, call offices, and other nonprofit organizations.

Performance Executive Search was presented with the Seal to the City by Coral Gables Mayor Donald Slesnick at a recent reception hosted by the firm. The company researches, analyzes, screens and evaluates candidates for positions at businesses, higher education insti-

Performance Executive is located at 2121 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 422, Coral Gables. For more information, call 305-445-2842.

Construction at Hamptons South, a residential tower being built along the Intracoastal Waterway in Aventura,

has reached the seventh floor. The 28-story, 220-unit tower's exclusive listing broker, The International Sales Group, announces that year-to-date sales for the residences, which are priced from \$600,000 to \$3 million and range from 3,150 to 3,950 square feet, are running 35 percent ahead of last year.

The Hamptons South sales pavilion is at 20223 E. Country Club Dr., Aventura. For more

#### Figure 27:

Dabney Park, Jr. Accepting Seal of the City from **Mayor Slesnick** 

> Miami Herald, **September 12, 2002**

#### **Owner & Occupants:**

1925	H. W. Nicholes & Lindsey H. Hopkins
	Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company
1926-1936	Daniel H. Redfearn, lawyer & Susan F. Redfearn
1932	Ruby Warrick
1933	Samuel Graydon & Anna W. Graydon & Mrs. R. F. Streett (Anna's sister)
1936-1939	Capt. Wilbur Bradley
1940-1945	William H. Derbyshire, Jr.
1941	Blanche Munford Sinclair
1942	Mrs. M. Eickleberry
1945-1960	Frederick B. Boggs & Isabelle M. Boggs
1960-1970	Michael J. Altosino & Laska Altosino
1970-1973	Ben V. Hess III & Dana L. Hess
1973-1976	William A. Friedlander & Priscilla Friedlander
1976-2023	Dabney G. Park, Jr. & Betty K. Park

2023- Present Luciana Maria Patsiga

#### **Architect: H. George Fink**

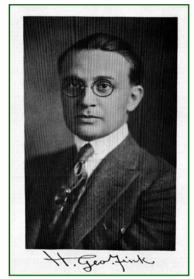


Figure 28: H. George Fink, Portrait, 1920s

As discussed above, the design of 3920 Durango Street is attributed to architect H. George Fink. He was a cousin of City founder George Merrick and was responsible for much of the early design and planning of Coral Gables. Over 100 of his buildings are designated as Local Historic Landmarks within the City of Coral Gables (individually or in a historic district).

Architect H. George Fink, a key member of Merrick's original design team, was instrumental in creating the fabric of 1920s Mediterranean Revival architecture which characterizes Coral Gables. He designed numerous Mediterranean Revival residential and commercial structures in the City in the early 1920s. His residential designs ranged from cottages to elaborate residences for the City's leaders including George Merrick and Edward E. "Doc" Dammers. Fink's architectural practice was so busy during the early 1920s, that by the end of 1923 he outgrew his office and built an office at 2506 Ponce de Leon Boulevard that served as a showcase for the Mediterranean Revival style. He was regularly featured in

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

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

The devastating hurricane in 1926 abruptly halted much of the construction in Coral Gables. In 1928, Fink left the City accepting a position as the Designing Architect for the J. C. Penney Company of New York. He remained with them until 1932 when he became a Supervising Architect for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He was assigned to the State of Maine and remained with the WPA until 1937. Fink returned to Coral Gables in 1937 and resumed his private architectural practice. During World War II, he was Architectural Designer for Robert & Company, of Atlanta, assisting with the Richmond Naval Air Station, the Glynn County Base in Brunswick, Georgia, and the Chamblee Naval Base in Chamblee, Georgia. In 1943, Fink became Architect in Charge, Architectural Division, Bell Bomber Plant, Marietta, Georgia, where the famous B-29s were built and assembled. Fink returned to Coral Gables in 1945 and continued to design there until the middle of the 1960s. He served on the Coral Gables Board of Architects from 1945 through 1956, acting as its chairman for seven years within this period. Fink also served as the Secretary of the Florida South Chapter of the AIA from 1952-1955.

#### **Investor & Builder**

# **Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company** H. W. Nicholes & Sons



Figure 29: Lindsey H. Hopkins and H. W. Nicholes *Miami Herald*, July 19, 1925

In early 1925 Lindsey H. Hopkins, an Atlanta financier, partnered with H. W. Nicholes, the president of Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company, and approached George Merrick with a large building program in Coral Gables. In April they announced their contract with Merrick whose goal was to build 500 single-family homes. (Figures 7 & 29) The first phase, already launched by April, included constructing 50 homes in sections of Coral Gables that were primarily undeveloped but ready for construction. These were the Coconut Grove Section and the Country Club Section Parts Three, Four, and Five. H. W. Nicholes & Sons would build the homes. The first fifty homes would be evaluated by Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation for quality and style before the purchase of additional lots. Designed by architect H. George Fink, a member of Merrick's design team, the single-family at 3920 Durango Street was amongst this cadre.

Lindsey H. Hopkins (1879-1937) (Figures 6 & 29) was a prominent capitalist, philanthropist, and noted Atlanta banker. He was the director and major stockholder of the Coca-Cola Company, the director of Federal Reserve Bank at Atlanta and the Reynolds Metal Company. Hopkins was intensely interested in aviation, automobiles, and road development, as well as real estate. He was very active in the Good Roads Movement and made a fortune selling Overland automobiles. Hopkins owned the first private plane in Atlanta, invested heavily in early commercial aviation, and was a

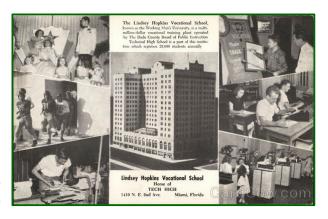
passenger on the second trip of the Zeppelin Hindenburg between Germany and the United States in 1936. He was a voting trustee in the Sperry Corporation which dealt with airplane and navigation control devices. He was a life-long director of North American Aviation, of which Eastern Airlines was a subsidiary.

In the 1910s Hopkins and H. W. Nicholes were responsible for most homes in Druid Hills, a planned and exclusive suburb of Atlanta. Druid Hills was initially planned by the premier landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in 1893, sold to Asa Candler, president of Coca-Cola in 1908, and developed in large part by Hopkins and Nicholes between 1910-1936. Druid Hills is now listed on the National Register for Historic Places. This was one of their several high-profile and successful endeavors.

In Miami, separate from his joint endeavors with H. W. Nicholes, he headed a separate real estate firm, Lindsey Hopkins Properties. His real estate holdings in the Miami area were extensive. At his death it was said he was perhaps the largest individual owner of Metropolitan Miami real estate. Most notably, he was largest stockholder in the Carl G. Fisher hotel chain, owned the Shoreland

Arcade, the largest arcade in the south, and the San Sebastian Apartments. In 1936 Hopkins purchased the Roosevelt Hotel which had remained unfinished since it incurred damage in the 1926 Hurricane. After his passing the completed building was sold to the Miami Dade Public Schools who turned it into a vocational school which was named in his honor.

Figure 30: Postcard, Lindsey Hopkins Vocational School, undated



**Herbert W. Nicholes** (1871-1959) was the founder and president of H.W. Nicholes & Sons (1910-1971). The firm was based in Atlanta, Georgia and included his sons Martin, Roy, and David. During the mid-1920s H. W. Nicholes & Sons had an office in Coral Gables at Ponce De Leon Boulevard at Palermo Avenue. H. W. Nicholes' career spanned over fifty years. His firm H. W. Nicholes & Sons closed in the 1970s when his oldest son retired.

Nicholes was a prominent suburban builder in the Atlanta area. He is responsible for, or contributed heavily to, several early twentieth century suburbs in the Atlanta area. Most of these are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and include Druid Hills, Peachtree Battle, Collier Heights, Avondale Estates, Roswell, and Cameron Court. He also has several individual building listings on the National Register for Historic Places. Most notable is 61 16th Street Apartment Building. Constructed in 1924, it is a three-story, masonry building built to look like a large Colonial Revival home.

H. W. Nicholes dominated the construction scene in Coral Gables from 1925 to 1926. As cited above he built 100 homes under his firm Builders' Finance & Mortgage Company with investor Lindsey Hopkins. To facilitate the construction, they erected a concrete plant in the Industrial Section of Coral Gables. (Figures 31 left) Nicholes also had dozens of independent commissions for which his firm H. W. Nicholes & Sons served as the builder and in some cases also the designer. One notable commission was for Robert M. Davidson, Coral Gables city manager, on Castile Avenue. For this home Nicholes used hollow coral stone building blocks made from a process Nicholes invented. (Figures 31 right)

# BUILDING PROGRAM IS BEING HELPED Builders Finance and Mortgage Company Erects Concrete Block Plant to Facilitate Its Program. To facilitate its building program now in progress in Coral Gables, the Builders Finance and Mortgage Company is erecting a concrete block plant in the industrial section. The plant is to be located on the LeJeune road, two blocks north of the tracks of the Florida East Coast Railroad Company.

### NEW MATERIAL USED IN HOUSE

Hollow Building Blocks of Coral Stone Selected by Gables Executive

Hollow building blocks, made of coral stone, will be used in the construction of the new residence for Robert M. Davidson, city manager of Coral Gables, on Castile av. Frank Wyatt Woods, architect for the residence, said that this new material shows great promise of becoming enormously popular for building in this section. It is made by a special process invented by the head of the Nicholes Construction Co., which will build the Davidson residence.

Figures 31: H. W. Nicholes Coral Gables Construction Contributions

Miami Herald, August 2, 1925 [left]

Miami News, July 17, 1925 [right]

#### 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 Coral Gables Zoning Code states that for designation as a local historic landmark the property must meet **one** (1) (or more) of the criteria stipulated in Article 8, Section 8-103.

Designed in 1925 in the Mediterranean Revival style the property at 3920 Durango Street (legally described as Lot 6, Block 46, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part Three, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 52, 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:

#### A. Historical, Cultural significance

Criterion 4: Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community

#### **B.** Architectural significance

Criterion 1: Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural style

Criterion 2: Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction

#### **Staff finds the following:**

The property at 3920 Durango Street is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

#### HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### Therefore, Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the Local Historic Designation of the property at **3920 Durango Street** (legally described as Lot 6, Block 46, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part Three, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 52, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida) based on its historical, cultural, and architectural significance.

Respectfully submitted,

Historic Preservation Officer

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National Register of Historic Places, Cameron Court, Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia, National Register # 82004662.

#### Newspapers.com

**Atlanta Constitution** 

"Lindsey Hopkins, Capitalist, Dies of Heart Attack Here," August 18, 1937, p.1, 5. Miami Herald

- "15 Permits Are Issued: work will begin next week on a block of houses in Coral Gables," June 5, 1925, p.33.
- "50 Mansions To Be Built: noted Atlanta builder of fine homes and a member of the Federal Reserve Bank are associated in large construction project for Coral Gables Miami Riviera," April 13, 1925, p.6.
- "Attorney of Georgia to Practice in Miami: D. H. Redfearn, Who Compiled Work on Wills and Estates to Locate Here," March 9, 1925, p.2.
- "Big Building Program: Lindsey H. Hopkins and H. W. Nichols, Atlanta Residents, announce plans for construction of 500 homes in Coral Gables in next 18 months," April 27, 1925, p.25.
- "Big Building Program: Construction Company of Atlanta Unloading Materials to Begin Coral Gables Building," May 16, 1925, p.9.

- "Building Program is Being Helped: Builders Finance and Mortgage Company erects concrete block plant to facilitate its program," August 2, 1925, p.11.
- "Daniel Redfearn, UM Trustee, Dies," December 23, 1963, p.1.
- "Eight Homes Are Sold," May 10, 1926, p.16.
- "Helps Struggle of College Youth," January 5, 1964, p.44.
- "Hopkins Confers Here," July 15, 1925, p.11.
- "Hopkins' Properties Many In This Area," December 1, 1935, p.148.
- "Permits Half Million," June 28, 1925, p.4.
- "Permits Total \$75,000," June 18, 1925, p.33.
- "Permits Total \$363,000," June 27, 1925, p.8.
- "Special Building Block: unusual construction will be used in Davidson residence," July 17, 1925, p.2.
- "Will Finance 500 Houses Here," July 19, 1925, p.1.

#### Miami News

- "8 Coral Gables Homes Are Sold," May 10, 1926, p.17.
- "Frederick B. Boggs," obit. January 20, 1956. P.28.
- "Gables Has New Building Rush," June 24, 1925, p.21.
- "Gables Permits Exceed \$75,000," June 18, 1925, p.19.
- "Lawyer Plans Miami Office," March 8, 1925, p.6.
- "H. George Fink Designs Many Fine Buildings" Sunday, January 4, 1925.
- "New Material Used in House: hollow building blocks of coral stone selected by Gables executive," July 17, 1925, p.12.
- "Redfearn, Susan F.," obit. November 9, 1970, p.30.
- "Widely Known Miami Realtor Dies in Atlanta: Lindsey Hopkins stricken on visit to his former home," August 18, 1937, p.11.

#### Miami Tribune

- "500 New Homes Will be Built In Coral Gables: Atlantans back project to represent investment of \$1,600,000," July 20, 1925, p.11.
- "Forty New Homes For Coral Gables," May 16, 1925, p.15.
- "Coral Gables Building," May 29, 1925, p.5.
- "Gables City Manager To Erect Residence," July 15, 1925, p.21.
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- Polk, R. L. <u>R. L. Polk and Company's Miami City Directory</u>. Jacksonville, Florida: R. L. Polk and Co., various editions.
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United States Census Records, various years.

#### **REVIEW GUIDE**

#### Definition:

The Review Guide comprises of some of the extant and character-defining features, which contribute to the overall significance of the structure and/or district. 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: 3920 Durango Street

Lot Description: interior lot

Date of Construction: 1925

Use: single-family residence

Style: Mediterranean Revival

Construction Material: concrete block covered with textured stucco

Stories: one- & two-story

Roof Types: hipped, shed, & flat

pitched roofs clad in two-piece barrel tile

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

#### **CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES**

**Style: Mediterranean Revival** 





- ✓ asymmetrical massing
- ✓ front entry classical quoin surround and swooped hood ensemble
- ✓ prominent bell tower-inspired chimney
- ✓ low- pitched roofs with minimal overhang clad in two-piece barrel tile
- ✓ wing walls
- ✓ vertical plank front door
- ✓ textured stucco
- ✓ recessed windows (originally casements) with protruding sills
- ✓ a porte cochere with crenelated parapets, barrel tile copings, and masonry lintels over its openings

Appendix A: 318 Alesio Avenue, Permit #1121, April 1925 Architect: H. George Fink

