

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

- MEMORANDUM -

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

DATE: MAY 25, 2017

FROM: 

DONA M. SPAIN
HISTORICAL RESOURCES AND
CULTURAL ARTS DIRECTOR

SUBJECT:
COCO PLUM WOMAN'S CLUB HISTORIC
MARKER

Attached please find the proposed text and location for a State Historic Marker for the Coco Plum Woman's Club, 1375 Sunset Road. The marker will be paid for by the Woman's Club.

GFWC COCO PLUM WOMAN'S CLUB

Pioneer women from distant urban areas were lonely and isolated in the pines and palmettos of South Florida. On February 14, 1912, six of these ladies met at Mrs. Eleanor Jordan's home and founded the Coco Plum Thimble Club. "Mother" Jordan became the first president. Within a year membership grew so rapidly that a clubhouse was needed. Mrs. Mary Dorn, the second president, found five acres owned by FEC Railway for \$150. The club had only \$100 from events and 50 cent annual dues. She wrote to Mr. Ingraham at FEC, offering the \$100 and suggested that a public building on the site would be an asset for Larkins. He agreed, replying, "The land will be yours." With no money left for construction, the club issued scrip in \$5 denominations, redeemable when the club had the funds. Thus a simple frame clubhouse with wide porches was built on the Larkins Wagon Trail. In 1916 the club was incorporated as the Woman's Club of Larkins. In 1926 George Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation was expanding and paid \$100,000 for four of the five acres. Under the presidency of Mrs. Carrie Ravlin, the present Mediterranean Revival clubhouse, designed by Howard & Early, was built by the Knight Construction Company for \$75,000.

SIDE TWO

For more than 100 years the club has served as a community center and has been affiliated with other woman's clubs, FFWC and GFWC. In 1926 the club's name was changed to Coco Plum Woman's Club. Begun for social purposes only, the club quickly adopted literary, scientific, and philanthropic goals. In 1915, a lone book, *Pollyanna*, was the start of a free library that continued for 56 years. The summer of 1948 the club's "Book Wagon" became the first traveling library operating in the State of Florida. Beginning in 1945 the club housed a kindergarten, lasting for 26 years. In the fifties Coco Plum was recognized three years in a row as one of the 250 Honor Role Clubs in the nation for its community service. The "Round the Clock" Civil Defense Program, on September 16, 1957, brought county, state, and national recognition. The clubhouse was registered as a National Historic Place in 2006. On February 14, 2012, the Mayor presented to the club a Key to the City of Coral Gables and the Proclamation acknowledging a century of its service. A time capsule, replacing the 1926 one opened during the Centennial, holds both past and current memorabilia, depicting the club and the women who brought it to life.

The Board of Directors and Members of GFWC Coco Plum Woman's Club





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