

October 21, 2020

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Board,

In reference to agenda item: 20-1756 Historical Significance Determination of 649 Palmarito Court

UNDER THE CITY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE, the property may be considered significant if it can be associated with *persons or events which have made an impact on our community*, or if the property is deemed to possess architectural distinction.

I wish to express my support in granting historical significance of 649 Palmarito Court. As presented in the research article below, its original owners made an impact in our community with passion and patriotism and their choice of architectural style reflected their lifestyle. Their home stands today as one of the earliest Colonial Revival homes built in Coral Gables designed by William Shanklin, an architect whose other residences have garnered historical status in Coral Gables.

Please preserve our heritage.

Thank you.

Dr. Karelia Martinez Carbonell
532 Altara Avenue, Coral Gables

From the HPACG EBLAST dated October 20 2020

SAVE "TARA"

The Architecture of 649 Palmarito Court

The home is a fine example of the Colonial Revival style in Coral Gables. Also known as Neoclassical, or "Southern Colonial," one is drawn to love and appreciate the historical, cultural, and architectural value of 649 Palmarito Court, and its style—the most patriotic of styles.

BEHIND THE STONE COLUMNS, A SOFT SIDE

A stately Coral Gables of "Georgian" inspiration evokes Southern charm as original owners selected a home to reflect their Colonial heritage

649 Palmarito Court is referred to in a 1988 Miami Herald real estate ad as a "stately Georgian home with giant oaks." And it is fitting to refer to the home as a "Georgian" since its original owners selected their new home to reflect their Georgian and Colonial heritage. Let's name it "Tara."

Mr. and Mrs. George C. Simpson, originally from Georgia, brought their Southern charm and hospitality with them to Coral Gables. In late 1930s, they selected for their new residence a Colonial Revival

designed by the well-known architect William Shanklin, a southerner from Mississippi, who in 1935 had designed a Colonial Revival style house on 1125 Alhambra Circle.

The couple dedicated their lives to civic altruism throughout the 30s, 40s, and 50s. They were pillars [just like the firm upright columns in their stately home] of Coral Gables society. They were, as the saying goes, the “fabric of society.” Their home, always a place of welcome, was host to numerous events and social affairs for state dignitaries and members of local club chapters. The Colonial architecture of their home served as an emblem of their patriotic passion.

Mrs. George C. Simpson [Minnie Wolcott Simpson] was a direct descendant of "Oliver Wolcott" one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence. Her mother was Charles H. Wolcott from Atlanta.

Mrs. Simpson “lived’ the Colonial traditions through her leadership in the D.A.R. [Daughters of American Revolution] Everglades Chapter [Coral Gables] rising to Regent in 1940. She was a leader in D.A.R. local and state affairs including chairing many committees such as St. Distaff Day [an old tradition of sewing for charity inherited from Colonial times], the DAR Museum, and Conservation and Thrift.

Celebrating American heritage was Mrs. Simpson’s life-long commitment. This was reflected in her other volunteer work for the D.F.P.A. [Daughters of Founders and Patriots]. For the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, Simpson, representing the Everglades Chapter of DAR, dedicated a tree to his memory at Old Fort Dallas.

Aside from her commitment to American history, she was also involved with local clubs. She was active in the Coral Gables Garden Club, serving as president from 1938-1940; Coral Gables Women’s Club; Ladies of the Civitan Club; elected officer at University Baptist Church; and a supporter of the Opera Guild of Greater Miami. She died in 1987 at 89 years.

Minnie Simpson was not the only civic leader in the family.

Mr. George C. Simpson, an attorney who practiced law in Miami since 1923, was with the firm Hudson & Cason for eight years. He later formed his own practice. He was originally from Talbotton, Georgia where he was elected mayor at the young age of 27.

During his lifetime, he served as past president of the Miami Civitan Club; Vice President of the Riviera Country Club; He was selected as a Governor’s Colonel under Governor Fuller Warren; and nominated as Commander of the Harvey Seeds Post, American Legion. He died in 1970 at 76 years old

Save "Tara" and avoid it being gone with the wind.

[Recognition goes to Jorge Zaldivar board member of the Miami Pioneers & Natives of Dade for the research used in this article.]