

**REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES
HISTORICAL RESOURCES & CULTURAL ARTS DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE DESIGNATION OF
THE PROPERTY AT
1544 SOPERA AVENUE
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**



1933, *Miami News*



LHD 2021-001
April 21, 2021

**LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION:
1544 SOPERA AVENUE, 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: 03-4108-006-1180

Legal Description: Lot 5 of Block 55, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part 4, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at page 57 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Original Permit No. / Date: #1846 / November 21, 1925

Original Architect: Alfred F. Schimek

Original Owner / Builder: Plainfield Realty Investment Company / Sier-Hanson Builders

Present Owner: Eugenio Permuy & Caroline Soret

Building Use, Type, Style: Two-story SFR, Mediterranean Revival

Site Characteristics: The property is located one block north of Bird Road and two blocks west of the Biltmore Golf Course on an interior 50' x 120' lot on the south side of Sopera Avenue between Alhambra Circle and Red Road.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Permitted in 1925, the single-family residence at 1544 Sopera Avenue is known as the "The Permuy House." The home has been owned by the Permuy family for the past forty-five years. Jesus and Marta Permuy played significant roles in the Cuban Resistance. After immigrating to the United States, Jesus continued to champion the cause of democracy and human rights for the Cuban people under the Castro regime for the next several decades. Jesus launched several humanitarian organizations and lobbied the United Nations while living in this home. The Permuys, most notably Marta, also played a pivotal role in supporting Cuban artists including holding artist salons at "The Permuy House." Hence, this home is historically and culturally significant due to its association with the Permuys.

1544 Sopera Avenue is built in the Mediterranean Revival style. It exemplifies the Mediterranean ideals espoused by City founder George Merrick and it is indicative of the type of architecture that was the founding premise of Coral Gables. 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 1544 Sopera Avenue is one of a handful of home built in this initial development phase in Country Club Section Part 4 and stands as a testament to Merrick's vision for Coral Gables. The property at 1544 Sopera Avenue retains a high degree of historic integrity and significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the City of Coral Gables.

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 Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Buildings.

CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE

Article 3, Section 3-1103 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 1544 Sopera Avenue 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, 1544 Sopera Avenue meets the following **four (4)** criteria.

Historical, Cultural significance

1. *Is associated in a significant way with the life or activities of a major historic person important in the past*
4. *Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community*

Architectural significance

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

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

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. Merrick drew from the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 19th and early 20th century to create his vision for a fully-conceived Mediterranean-inspired city which 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 a community with ornate plazas and grand entrances, small parks, scenic areas, and golf courses melded with monumental buildings and tree-shaded picturesque residential streets.

Merrick and his team felt that Mediterranean designs, and specifically Spanish prototypes, best harmonized with south Florida's climate and lifestyle. During the 1920s, careful attention was paid by his development team to ensure that all aspects of the built environment conformed to these ideals and it was a featured selling point in early promotional materials. Advertisements had headlines such as "Will you find the way to your Spanish Garden" and later "Miami's Riviera." The architecture constructed during this initial development period 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 goal was to create architectural splendor in a Spanish suburb with tropical luxuriance.

The single-family residence at 1544 Sopera Avenue was permitted in 1925 during the City's Boom years in the newly re-platted Coral Gables Country Club Section Part 4. It is indicative of the type of architecture that was the founding premise of Coral Gables exemplifying the Mediterranean ideals espoused by founder George Merrick and his plans for this section of the City.

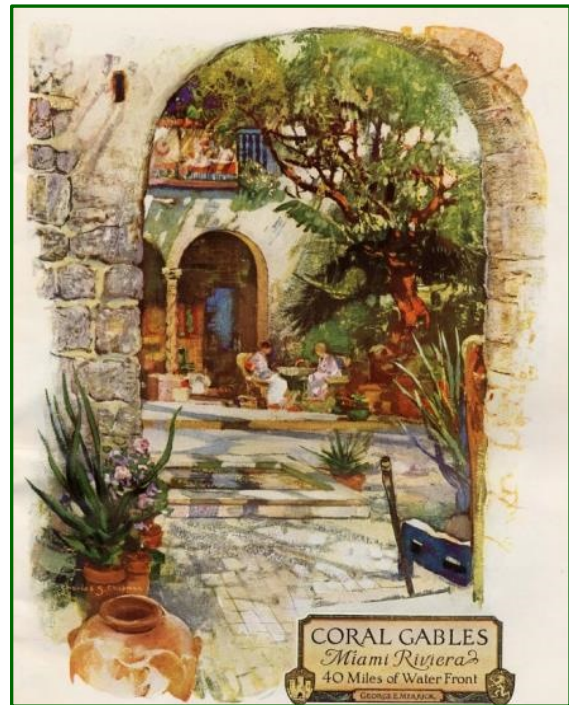


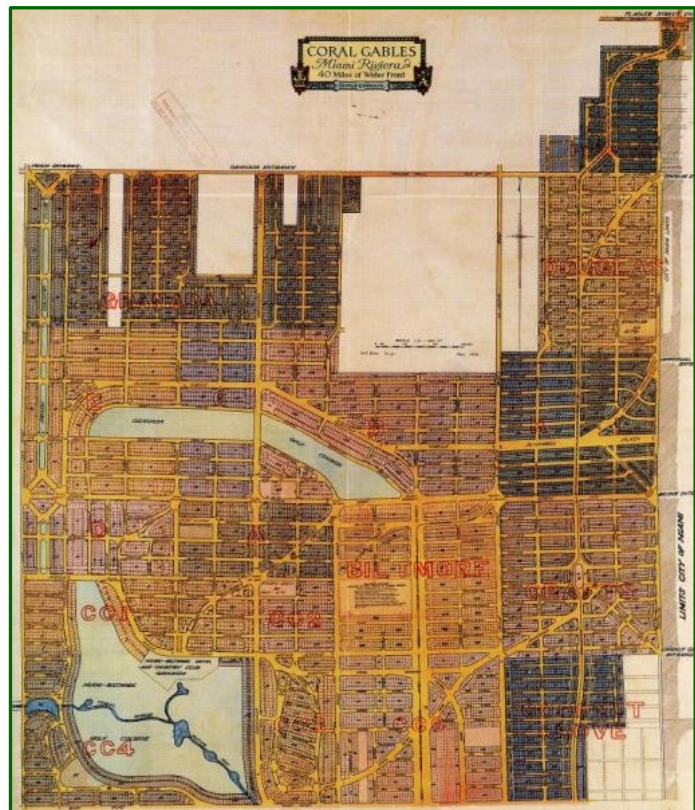
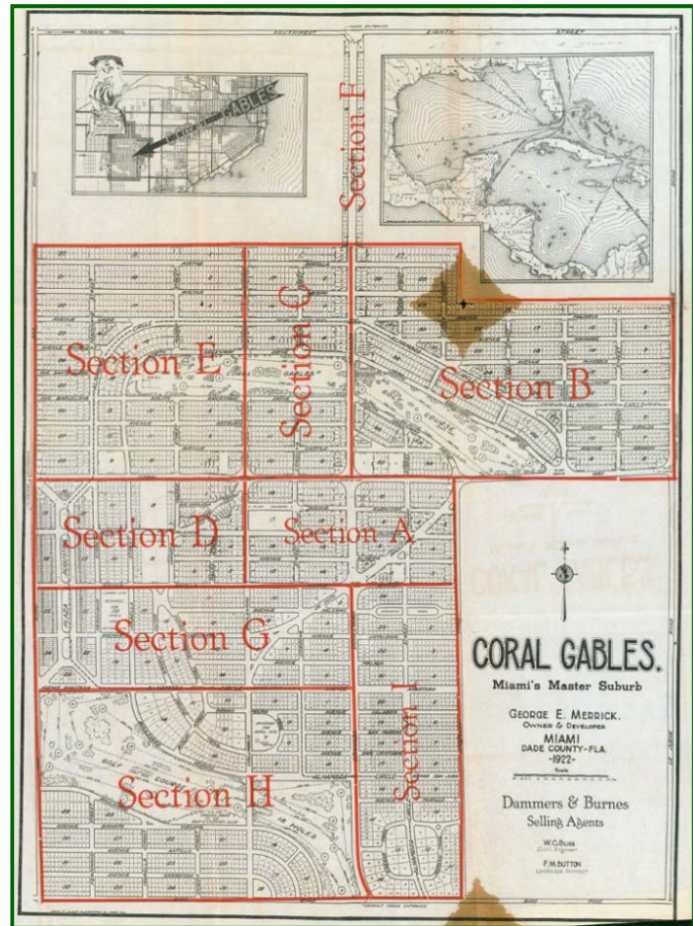
Figure 1: Advertisement in *House Beautiful*, 1925



Figure 2: Aerial Photo, current
Note: 1544 Sopera Avenue outlined in yellow
Courtesy of Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser

Nationally-acclaimed landscape architect Frank Button drew the first comprehensive maps of Coral Gables in 1921-2. It was based on an infrastructure of the inherited grid of fruit trees from the Merrick family's citrus plantation, as well as the native pineland. 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 entrances. Merrick realized that automobile ownership was becoming increasingly commonplace and, as such, wanted Coral Gables to embrace the motorist without sacrificing the beauty of the community or the comfort of the residents. Thus, he implemented an intentional hierarchy of roadways.

Button's 1922 map 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-planting that provided internal access and scenic routes. (Figure 3) The grid was opened at strategic locations to include grand entrances, plazas, and fountains to give focus to major arteries and vistas and provide visual interest for both the pedestrian and the motorist. Broad boulevards were curved around planned features that included vast park land, golf courses, monumental public and community buildings, as well as other amenities.



Figures 3: Coral Gables Maps:
“Miami’s Master Suburb,” 1922 [top];
“Miami Riviera: 40 Miles of Water Front”
Northern Section, 1925 [bottom]

Coral Gables' initial development was predominantly around the Merrick family's Coral Gables Plantation with lots in Sections A, B, and C offered for sale in 1921-2. Merrick's homestead was in Section A. The majority of early construction was concentrated north of, and in the direct vicinity of, the Granada Golf Course. Smaller pockets of early construction occurred in other areas.

In the mid-1920s plans for a premier hotel in Section H were announced. The associated golf course was expanded to an 18-hole championship course designed by legendary golf course architect Donald Ross and renamed the Miami-Biltmore Golf Course. Sections G, H, and I, which were primarily undeveloped, were reworked to accommodate the large \$10 million Biltmore Hotel complex. These three sections were divided into six sections and renamed Country Club Sections Parts 1 through 6 as well as a portion of the Biltmore Section. The Biltmore Section was labelled as the "Heart of Coral Gables" and is where City Hall was later built. Button took this opportunity to add additional scenic boulevards which included Anastasia Avenue, Ocean Beach Drive (later renamed University Drive), and Segovia Street. He 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 such as DeSoto Boulevard. 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: Aerial Photo, Coral Gables, c.1925

The golf courses were prominent features of Merrick's development that were integrally incorporated in his plan. The Biltmore Hotel was the crown jewel in Merrick's campaign to attract tourists and to provide social amenities for residents. Unlike the Granada Golf Course, which was bounded by streets, lots were platted abutting the Miami-Biltmore Golf Course in Country Club Section Part Four. (Figures 3 & 5)

The home at 1544 Sopera Avenue was permitted in 1925--the same year the golf course construction was launched. The course opened January 2, 1926. It is likely that this area along the golf course would have seen rapid development had the hurricane not hit later that year. 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.



Figure 5: Miami-Biltmore Hotel and Golf Course, looking south, c.1926

Note: Bird Road cutting across the golf course in the upper portion of the photo.

1544 Sopera Avenue (located north of Bird Road) is just off camera on the right side of the photo

As Merrick's vision for his Mediterranean-inspired city continued to grow his team recruited leading investors, architects, and builders from across the country. In Fall 1925 Plainfield Realty & Investment Company. The company, represented by Harvey R. Rothberg (formerly of Plainfield, New Jersey and a contemporaneous resident of Coral Gables) comprised of investors from New Jersey and Miami, purchased approximately a dozen lots throughout Coral Gables. They hired architect Alfred F. Schimek, who had recently moved to Miami from Chicago, as well as the construction firm Sier-Hanson Builders. (See Architect section below) Building permits were filed in November and December 1925 with 1544 Sopera Avenue being the second permit filed on November 21st. Evidently this endeavor was a trial investment with a much larger Phase II planned once these initial homes began to sell. Unfortunately, the 1926 Hurricane curtailed these plans.

As noted above, construction in the City boomed until the combination of the devastating Hurricane of 1926 and the Great Depression. In Coral Gables the dire downturn in the economy, coming so closely on the heels of the hurricane, had a drastic impact on new construction. In Coral Gables few single-family homes were built during the Depression Era of the 1930s. With the implementation of New Deal and other incentives, the building industry finally experienced a small resurgence in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, it abruptly ground 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 the unprecedented building boom. (Figures 6) During this time single-family homes in Coral Gables followed national trends both in numbers and in style. By the late 1950s Coral Gables Country Club Part 4 was built out with new residences. These areas retain this context of single-family homes to present day. (Figure 2)

It should be noted that when construction of single-family homes began again 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. Historic structure surveys of sections of Coral Gables (i.e., North Gables Section, Flagler Section) conducted by Janus Research, indicates that in the mid-1930s single-family homes transitioned away from Mediterranean Revival style and embraced Minimal Traditional, Modernistic, Masonry Vernacular and Ranch styles. As illustrated in Figures 6, the home at 1544 Sopera Avenue was one of a handful of single-family residences built during the 1920s in accordance with Merrick's vision for Country Club Section Part 4 – specifically the area west of the Biltmore Golf Course. It remains as one of the few extant Mediterranean Revival style homes in this area.



Figures 6: Aerial Photos:

1948 [top]

1958 [bottom]

**Note: 1544 Sopera Avenue circled
in red**

*Courtesy of Aerial Photography: Florida
Collection, University of Florida*

SIGNIFICANCE ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION



**Figures 7: 1544
Sopera Avenue**

Historic Photos:

1933 [top]

c.1940s [center]

**Current Photo
[bottom]**



Permitted in 1925, the single-family residence at 1544 Sopera Avenue is known as the “The Permuy House.” The home has been owned by the Permuy family for the past forty-five years. Jesus and Marta Permuy played significant roles in the Cuban Resistance. After immigrating to the United States, Jesus continued to champion the cause of democracy and human rights for the Cuban people under the Castro regime for the next several decades. Jesus launched several humanitarian organizations and lobbied the United Nations while living in this home. The Permuys, most notably Marta, also played a pivotal role in supporting Cuban artists including holding artist salons at “The Permuy House.” (See Owner section below for additional details) Hence, this home is historically and culturally significant due to its association with the Permuys.

Situated one block north of Bird Road and two blocks west of the Biltmore Golf Course, the single-family residence at 1544 Sopera Avenue sits on an interior lot in Coral Gables Country Club Section Part 4. The home was constructed during the initial development of Coral Gables and is indicative of the Mediterranean-inspired architecture Merrick envisioned for the City. 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. Unfortunately, plans for these areas were curtailed due to the 1926 Hurricane followed by the downturn in the economy. The home at 1544 Sopera Avenue is one of a handful of home built in this initial development phase in Country Club Section Part 4 and stands as a testament to Merrick’s vision for Coral Gables. (See Historic Context above) Hence, the property exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

1544 Sopera Avenue is a one- and two-story, four-bedroom house with a detached auxiliary structure (Attachment A: Permit 1846, 1925) It is built in the Mediterranean Revival style and is indicative of the type of architecture that was the founding premise of Coral Gables exemplifying the Mediterranean ideals espoused by City founder George Merrick. The home at 1544 Sopera Avenue honors Merrick’s vision for adapting residential design to the rigors of South Florida’s climate while maintaining the integrity of its style with thick cement masonry block walls which keep the home cool, the light-colored stuccoed exterior walls which reflect the sun’s heat, and varied windows that provide much needed ventilation and light in this tropical environment.

As described below in more detail, the home exhibits character-defining features of the Mediterranean Revival style. These include: projecting and recessed planes; rectilinear massing and floor plan; a projecting entry bay with an arched front door, moulded masonry keystone arch door surround and a cast ornamental medallion; a front porch bay with tiled floors, arched openings and cast masonry balustrades; a combination of roof types including a series of low-pitched gabled roofs covered in two-piece barrel tile; textured stucco, a prominent and distinctive chimney, grouped round vents, as well as recessed casement windows of various shapes and sizes with projecting sills. Hence, the home portrays the environment in an era of history in Coral Gables characterized by the Mediterranean Revival style, and it embodies those distinguishing characteristics of its architectural style, period, and method of construction.

Historic photos (Figures 7) indicate that few changes have occurred to the character-defining features of the home in the subsequent decades and this residence retains a high degree of historic integrity. Thus, the property at 1544 Sopera Avenue significantly contributes to the historic fabric of the City of Coral Gables and is part of the collection of quality residences that contributes to the story and the City’s sense of place over time.

Extant Exterior Description**Figure 8: Front (North) Elevation, 2020**

The single-family residence at 1544 Sopera Avenue sits on an interior 50' x 120' lot on the south side of the street. The one- and two-story home is approximately 2,712 SF in size. There is also a small one-story auxiliary structure located at the southeast corner of the property. (Figure 9) The house sits above a crawl space and is built of cement block units covered with textured stucco. It is rectangular in plan with a one-story flat roofed portion with a protruding gable-roof entry bay facing the street and two-story L-shaped portion to the rear comprised of flat- and front-facing, gabled-roofed sections. The low-pitched, front-facing gabled roofs are clad in two-piece barrel tile and have decorative apex end caps. A broad, tapered, curved-top chimney stack rises between the eastern one-story and two-story flat roof sections. The street-facing parapet of the two-story flat roofed section behind the chimney has a faux mansard also clad in two-piece barrel tile. Fenestration openings are simple and recessed with protruding sills. Most windows appear to be hurricane-impact casements with the same muntin pattern as the original wood casements.

**Figure 9: Aerial View
1544 Sopera Avenue**

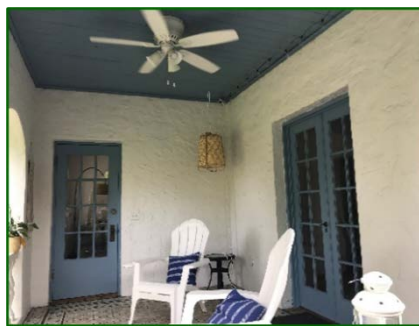
*Courtesy of Miami-Dade
County Property Appraiser*

The home is approached by a brick paver walkway. It leads to a two-step front stoop of the centrally-located, slightly projecting entry bay. (Figures 7-9) The rounded front door is recessed in a semi-circular arched opening with a flat-faced masonry keystone arch surround. Centered above the keystone is a cast ornamental medallion.

To the west of the projecting front entry bay is a front porch under a flat roof with a parapet. The front porch has three large semi-circular arched openings – two along the front north façade a larger one on the west side. The original hip-height masonry balustrades with molded balusters enclose each opening. The porch also retains its original wood ceiling. The floor is patterned tile floor. There is single door on its eastern wall and a pair of French doors on its southern wall which appear to be original. (Figures 8 & 11)



Figure 10: Front Entry, 2021



**Figures 11: Front Porch, 2021
Looking east [left & center]
Western arch [right]**



The rear (south) façade of the home is two-story with an unarticulated parapet. At the southwest corner is the rear door accessed by three brick steps in the same manner as the front stoop. Access panels as well as grouped round vent holes for the ground level crawl space are clearly visible and are representative of these features as found on the other facades.



Figure 12: Rear (South) Façade, 2021



Along the east side façade is a low one-story, projecting one-room bay with a side-gable roof. This was originally a porte cochere. It was enclosed in 1946 (see Alteration section below; Figures 7, 13 & 16) and now has a pair of double casement windows on each facade. At the northeast corner it retains the porte cochere's original angular and tapered wing wall. (Figures 8 & 13)

**Figures 13: East Façade and Enclosed Porte
Cochere, 2021**

**South and east façade of enclosed porte cochere
[top]**

North façade and wing wall [bottom left]

View of home looking southwest [bottom right]





Figures 14: West Façade, 2020
Looking south [left]; Looking north [right]
Note: grouped round vents in parapet

At the southeast corner of the property is an auxiliary structure that was originally a garage. The garage door was removed at an unknown date and the front (north) façade now comprises of a singular door. A slight differentiation in the stucco is discernable indicating the original vehicular opening.



Figures 15: Auxiliary Structure
Interior, 2020 [left] *Courtesy of Realtor.com*
North and west facades, 2021

Additions / Alterations

From a comparison of historic photographs and the original architectural plans with the extant home as well as an examination of building permits and records it is determined that the property at 1544 Sopera Avenue has retained a high degree of historic integrity for over nine decades. There have been no additions or substantial changes to the form or style of the home. Alterations of note include the enclosing of the porte cochere and the installation of hurricane-impact windows and doors. (Figures 7)

Permit #7343 enclosing the porte cochere was issued in July 1946 to architect Alfred Browning Parker. (Appendix B)

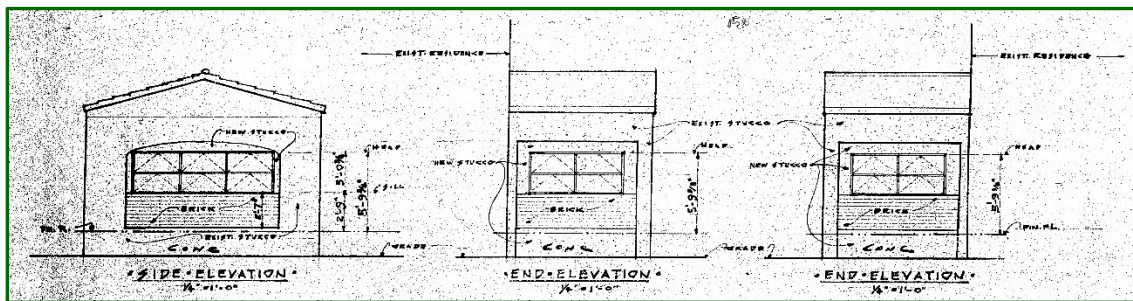


Figure 16: Permit 7343, Enclosing Porte Cochere

While the property originally comprised of two lots from 1925 to 1976. The house and detached garage were contained solely on Lot 5. Lot 6 was vacant and used as a garden with fruit-bearing trees. The enclosure of the porte cochere rendered the original garage inaccessible via Lot 5. (Figures 7, 9 & 17) There is no indication in records or aerial photos that Lot 6 was ever used to access the garage. A survey, dated June 1946, was recorded one month prior to the issuing of Permit #7343 and the garage is clearly labelled. A tax card dated 1957 refers to the garage structure as a utility building; a use which it retains to present day. In 1975 the vacant lot (Lot 6) was determined to be buildable lot. There was no mention that the sale of this lot would render the garage inaccessible. Hence, this condition is legally non-conforming.



Figures 17: Aerial Photographs: 1951 [left]; 1957 [right]

Courtesy of Aerial Photography: Florida Collection, University of Florida

The original plans (see Attachment A) indicate that there was a sleeping porch at the southeast corner on second story and that the back door led to a small screened back porch. There were alterations to the original plans prior to construction. Hence, it is not clear if these porches were constructed and enclosed later -- and if enclosed retained the same fenestration configurations. Changes in the extant stucco do not yield any clues.

Two exterior doors were replaced in 1993 and in 2001 the front door was also replaced. The current windows retain the muntin configuration of the original; the date of their installation is unknown. There are very few building permits on file associated with this property. Most are roofing permits for various maintenance and recladding. The most recent roofing permit was issued 2018 for Ludowicci Mission cap-n-pan roof tile.

Ownership History

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

The single-family home at 1544 Sopera Avenue has remained predominantly owner-occupied in the over nine decades since its construction. The home at 1544 Sopera Avenue was built for a Plainfield Realty & Investment Company. The company was comprised of investors from Miami and New Jersey who purchased lots in an initial effort to aid George Merrick in developing Coral Gables. 1544 Sopera Avenue was the second of twelve homes permitted in late 1925 as part of this initial endeavor. The second larger phase of this effort never transpired due to the combination of the 1926 Hurricane and the economic downturn. It is not clear when the home was first occupied but city directories record Charles & Lydia Perkins as owners by 1931. The home had several short-term owners including Colonel Joseph R. Cooke (1893-1977) and surgeon, Dr. Joseph Lomax. Colonel Cooke was aide of General George Patton and the president of Pennsylvania Corporation of Coca-Cola. In 1951 J. Stuart Clifford and his wife Helen Clifford purchased the property. After twenty-five years and the death of Mr. Clifford, Helen separately sold the vacant Lot 6 to Hector & Guadalupe Ortiz and Lot 5, containing the structures to Jesus and Marta Permuy. In 1991 Jesus transferred ownership to Marta and their seven children following their divorce. The house is now owned by their son Eugenio Permuy. (See List of Owners below)

Jesus (1935-) and Marta Permuy (1938-2017) were both born in Havana, Cuba. In the 1950s, when the Cuban Revolution began, Jesus was studying at the University of Havana School of Architecture and Planning. Jesús joined the Movement for Revolutionary Recovery (MRR) and played a leading role in the opposition to Fidel Castro and the Communist forces. Initially a leader of the MRR's student arm, he oversaw members and activities associated with the University of Havana. He then joined the MRR's Security Division where he quickly became Secretary of Security, was elevated to Civic Coordinator, and eventually became the MMR's National Coordinator.

Marta, likewise, became involved in anti-Castro activities. She met Jesus in his role of Secretary of Security and became invaluable to the cause. Operating under an alias, she assisted in his missions by relaying messages, hiding contacts and supplies, organizing secret meetings and coordinated between different cells of the resistance, among other essential high-risk activities.

Following the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion, they fled to Venezuela under diplomatic protection until permanently relocating to the United States in 1962. Jesus and Marta were married, and Jesus completed his architecture and urban planning studies at Catholic University.

Jesus continued to champion the cause of democracy and human rights for the Cuban people under the Castro regime for the next several decades. By the 1970s he had become a leading international figure in this fight. For the next four decades Jesus was a tireless advocate and lobbyist for international human rights both in Cuba and throughout Latin America. From 1976 to 2006, he led or represented numerous organizations working as Consultative Status in the United Nations. In 1974 Permuy founded the Center for Human Rights of Miami and served as its president for over thirty years. The center advocated for human rights internationally and helped connect families in Cuba with relatives in the States. He also served as the Vice President of both the Human Rights Commission of Christian Democratic International and the Christian Democratic Organization of America's Caribbean Region. Additionally, he was the president of the Christian Democratic Party of Cuba, as well as president, and later chairman, of the Cuban Municipalities in Exile. He was also president of Unidad Cubana, an influential federation of over thirty Cuban organizations,

The Miami Herald's profile of the Cuban Christian Democrat Movement stated that Permuy spearheaded an international diplomatic strategy to call out the Castro regime's human rights abuses and work with other Christian-Democratic governments to withhold international support until governmental changes occurred. At its peak in the 1980s, the group had chapters in several large cities with significant Cuban populations such as New York City and Los Angeles. In 1984, the Center for Human Rights of Miami successfully lobbied to have Cuba's representative removed from the United Nations Human Rights Council. After decades of petitioning, with the end of the Cold War, in 1992 the United Nation Human Rights Council shifted their hands-off policy to embrace diplomatic efforts such as those proposed by Permuy. In 1992, as President of the Christian Democratic Party, Permuy testified for the Cuban Democracy Act before the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, which included sanctions directed at the Castro government and aid to the Cuban people, was passed later that year. In 1993 Permuy aided in establishing an independent and uncensored news agency in Cuba. Permuy testified again to the United States Congress on the human rights situation in Cuba in 1998.

In 2017 Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen gave a Statement of Congressional Record on the floor of the House of Representatives paying tribute to Jesus Permuy's life and career and calling him "a shining example to us all." In 2018, Ros-Lehtinen presented him with a Flag of the United States that had flown over the United States Capitol in recognition of his community contributions. At that ceremony Permuy was also presented with the Key to the City of Coral Gables by Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli. In October 2019 Miami-Dade County honored Permuy by co-designating a portion of Miami Avenue in Downtown Miami bordering Brickell Avenue and U.S. Route 1 as "Jesús A. Permuy Street." The dedication ceremony was held in Miami City Hall on February 18, 2020. The date was purposefully chosen to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Permuy's involvement in a pro-democracy protest of the Soviet Union Premier's visit to Cuba in support of the Castro regime. Former Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado recounted Permuy's early struggles in his human rights activism on behalf of the Cuban people. He thanked Permuy for his perseverance, for his international human rights campaign strategy, and for his extensive work with the United Nations and elsewhere to successfully raise visibility for the human rights abuses in Cuba and other dictatorships. He concluded by stating:

Jesús Permuy started writing history about 50 years ago,... little by little, the human rights cause of Cuba became something of importance to the world. So, when we write the real Cuban history, we owe several pages to Jesús.



Figures 18: Jesús A. Permuy

Presentation of Capital Flag, 2018 [left] *Courtesy of Miami Community News*

Jesús A. Permuy Street dedication, 2020 [right]

Courtesy of: <https://creativepinellas.org/magazine-items/the-permuys-a-legacy-in-art/>

In addition to his humanitarian work, Jesus and Marta also made it their personal mission to champion the works of Cuban artists. With Marta as the General Manager, they launched one of the first commercial Cuban art galleries in the United States. The Permuy Gallery had humble beginnings as a converted apartment space on LeJeune Road in Coral Gables. Lasting from approximately 1972-1977, the Permuys transformed the apartment into a dynamic nexus of culture that was celebrated by the Cuban exile community. As one visitor in April of 1973 inscribed into on the gallery's iconic gilded guestbook: (translated and paraphrased from Spanish) "To Marta - In your corner of

exile, art gains stature, emotion, and rhythm... You have made the apartment a small version of Cuba." The gallery's diverse array of artists included well-established artists, some exiled and some still in Cuba, as well as unknown newcomers that would become leading forces in forging the modern Miami art market during its rise to international prominence in the 1980s and '90s. In Lynette Bosch's 2004 book "Cuban-American Art in Miami: Exile, Identity and the Neo-Baroque"



Figure 19: Marta & Jesús Permuy, Permuy Gallery, 1974

Courtesy of: <https://creativepinellas.org/magazine-items/the-permuys-a-legacy-in-art/>

she cites the Permuy Gallery as an important locale for the arts in the history of South Florida and stated:

That early art world could not have happened without them.

The Permuy Gallery was more than just a gallery space. It was community center for Cubans. The Permuy's held Friday salons which would start in the afternoon with a wine and cheese art exhibition and moved into wide-ranging discussions that lasted into the early morning. After the gallery closed in 1977, in their new home at 1544 Sopera Avenue, Marta continued to represent artists privately and the Permuys continued to host regular Friday night salons and private exhibits attended by Cuban artists, collectors, writers, politicians, and business leaders. Marta leveraged these salons to aid struggling Cuban artists and on occasion even offered rooms in her home as studio space. Hence, 1544 Sopera Avenue played role in aiding the Cuban community on various levels. It was home to Jesus until Marta during his first international humanitarian efforts on behalf of Cubans under the Castro regime as well as to Marta as she aided in launching and sustaining Cuban artists. The home is a touchstone to aid us in remembering and honoring their efforts.

List of Owners: 1544 Sopera Avenue

1925	Plainfield Realty & Investment Company
1926-29	<i>No listing in Polk's Directories</i>
1931-34	Charles H. Perkins (eye specialist) & Lydia Perkins
1934-1937	George McCall (Clerk of Criminal Court, Dade County) & Lurline McCall
1937-39	<i>Owner undetermined</i>
	<i>Tenants:</i>
	1937 Walter & Virginia Shumate –Dade Mattress Co -- Polk
	1938 Ben Rosenthal
1940-1944	Edward P. Magill (filling station owner) & Virginia Magill,
1944	Frances D. Gordon
1945	Col. Joseph R. Cooke & Ellen Cooke
	Colonel Joseph R. Cooke (1893-1977) was an aide of General George Patton and the President Pennsylvania Corporation of Coca-Cola
1945-1951	Dr. Joseph Lomax (surgeon)
1951-1976	J. Stuart Clifford & Helen Clifford
1976-Present Permuy Family	
1976-2018	Jesus Permuy & Marta Permuy
1991-2017	Marta Permuy & children
	Eugenio Permuy, Pedro Permuy, Francisco Permuy, Maria Elena Permuy, Alejandro Permuy, Ana Mari Permuy-Mas, Ignacio Permuy
2018	Estate of Marta T. Permuy: children
2018	Eugenio Permuy
2018-Present	Eugenio Permuy & Caroline Soret

Architect

Alfred F. Schimek started his architectural career in Chicago. He designed for the firm of Foltz & Brand before opening his own firm in 1920. In the summer of 1925, he moved his practice to the Miami area and by the fall he, amongst other commissions, had become the architect for Plainfield Realty & Investment Company. Plainfield comprised of investors from New Jersey and Miami.



Figure 20: Miami Herald, July 27, 1925

During fall 1925 the Plainfield group purchased approximately a dozen lots in Coral Gables. They hired Schimek to design the homes and Sier-Hansen Builders to construct them. Below is a partial list of those properties in the order they were permitted:

November 1925:

- 2028 Alhambra Circle (contributing resource in Alhambra Historic District)
- **1544 Sopera Avenue**
- 1207-11 Country Club Prado
- 1224 San Miguel Avenue

December 1925

- 916 Venetia Avenue
- 831 Pizzaro Street
- 833 Algeria Avenue
- 1231 Lisbon Street
- 1209 Cordova Street

Also, in December Schimek filed a permit for the home at 540 Majorca Avenue also built by Sier-Hansen for Mutual Home Builders. Schimek's final project in Coral Gables appears to be the redesign of the apartment building at 107 Mendoza Avenue after it was destroyed in the 1926 hurricane. The builder was again Sier-Hansen.

In 1926 Schimek formed his own firm with associate Claude Dunkle with an office in Miami. Their work seemed to be heavily concentrated on Miami Beach with several projects in Illinois. A notable project, which was a joint effort with architect William Arthur Bennett, was the four-story hotel at the corner of Washington Avenue, 20th Street, and Sheridan Avenue. During the late 1920s Schimek became heavily involved in the Greater Miami Civic Theater creating elaborate set designs and serving on its Board of Directors. By the late 1930's Schimek main practice returned to Illinois but he continued to design some projects in the greater Miami area. In 1937 Schimek was named the architect for Broadview, a \$2,600,000 a planned community in the Chicago area. It comprised of 333 medium-priced Colonial, French and English styled homes. Schimek stated that he would employ knowledge gained from planned communities he experienced in Florida where each home has its individual identity, but the community had its own distinct sense of place. In 1957 Schimek was elected the Secretary of the Illinois Society of Architects; a position held for several years.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of historic designation within the City of Coral Gables is defined in Article 3, Section 3-1101 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 3, Section 3-1103). To that end, the eligibility for designation as a local historic landmark is defined by the Coral Gables Zoning Code as meeting **one (1)** (or more) of the criteria stipulated in Article 3, Section 3-1103.

Permitted in 1925, the property at 1544 Sopera Avenue (legally described as Lot 5 of Block 55, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part 4, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at page 57 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida) is significant to the City of Coral Gables’ history based on the following **four (4)** criteria found in the Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 3, Section 3-1103:

Historical, Cultural significance

- 1. Is associated in a significant way with the life or activities of a major historic person important in the past*
- 4. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community*

Architectural significance

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

Staff finds the following:

The property located at **1544 Sopera Avenue** is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

HISTORICAL, CULTURAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Therefore Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the Local Historic Designation of the property at **1544 Sopera Avenue** (legally described as Lot 5 of Block 55, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part 4), based on its historical, cultural, and architectural significance.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams

Historic Preservation Officer

Bibliography

1940s Archival Photographs, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department.

Aerial Photography: Florida Collection. 2004-2011, University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries. Accessed online at: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/aerials>

Bosch, Lynette, Cuban-American Art in Miami: Exile, Identity and the Neo-Baroque. Ashgate Publishing, 2004.

Building Microfilm Records for 1544 Sopera Avenue, Building and Zoning Department, Microfilm Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

Building Permits Record Books, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department.

Creative Pinellas, website. "The Permuys — A Legacy in Art," March 11, 2020.

Janus Research. 2004 Historic Resources Survey of Coral Gables Report, 2004.

Legacy.com. "Marta Cazañas Permuy," obituary

McAlester, Virginia, A Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.

Merrick, George, *Coral Gables Homes, Miami Florida*, c.1925.

Accessed online at:

<https://archive.org/stream/coralgableshomes00merr#page/1/mode/2up>

Merrick, George, *Coral Gables Miami Riviera: Heart of the American Tropics*, c.1925

Merrick, George, *Coral Gables Miami's Master Suburb*, 1923.

Miami-Dade County Property Appraisers Property Information Search website

Accessed online at: <http://gisims2.miamidade.gov/myhome/propmap.asp>

Miami-Dade County Clerk, Country Record's Records Search website

Accessed online at: <http://www.miami-dadeclerk.com/public-records/default.asp>

Miami's Community Newspaper "Ros-Lehtinen, other community leaders salute Jesús Permuy," October 1, 2018.

Newspapers.com

"Architect-Engineer, Alfred F. Schimek," ad, Miami Herald, July 27, 1925, p.17.

"Col. Joseph R. Cooke, former aide to Patton," obituary, Tampa Bay Times, August 15, 1977, p.46.

"Constructing 333 Homes in Broadview," May 7, 1937, p.5.

"Golden Wedding Anniversary for Lomaxes," Miami Herald, March 2, 1951, p.3.

"John C. Lindop Plans Homes in Broadview," May 2, 1937, p.66.

“New Coral Gables Home: 1544 Sopera Avenue,” The Miami News, February 5, 1933, p.43.

“Permits Issued,” [831 Pizzaro Street], Miami Herald, December 7, 1925, p.3.

“Permits Issued,” [1231 Lisbon Street], Miami Tribune, December 10, 1925, p.9.

“Permits Issued,” [2028 Alhambra Circle], Miami Herald, November 12, 1925, p.48.

“Soldier Captures 5 Nazi Soldiers,” Miami Herald, March 18, 1945, p.12.

Parks, Arva Moore, George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables, University Press of Florida, 2015.

Parks, Arva Moore. *George Merrick's Coral Gables "Where Your 'Castles in Spain' Are Made Real!"* Ponce Circle Development LLC with Centennial Press, Miami, Florida, 2006.

Polk, R. L. R. L. Polk and Company's Dual City Directory. Minneapolis, Minnesota: R. L. Polk and Co., various editions.

Polk, R. L. R. L. Polk and Company's Miami City Directory. Jacksonville, Florida: R. L. Polk and Co., various editions.

Real Estate Records for 1544 Sopera Avenue, Historical Resources Department, Coral Gables, Florida.

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:	1544 Sopera Avenue
Lot Description:	interior lot
Date of Construction:	1925-6
Use:	single-family residence
Style:	Mediterranean Revival
Construction Material:	concrete block covered with smooth stucco
Stories:	one- and two-story SFR; one-story auxiliary building

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Property: 1544 Sopera Avenue

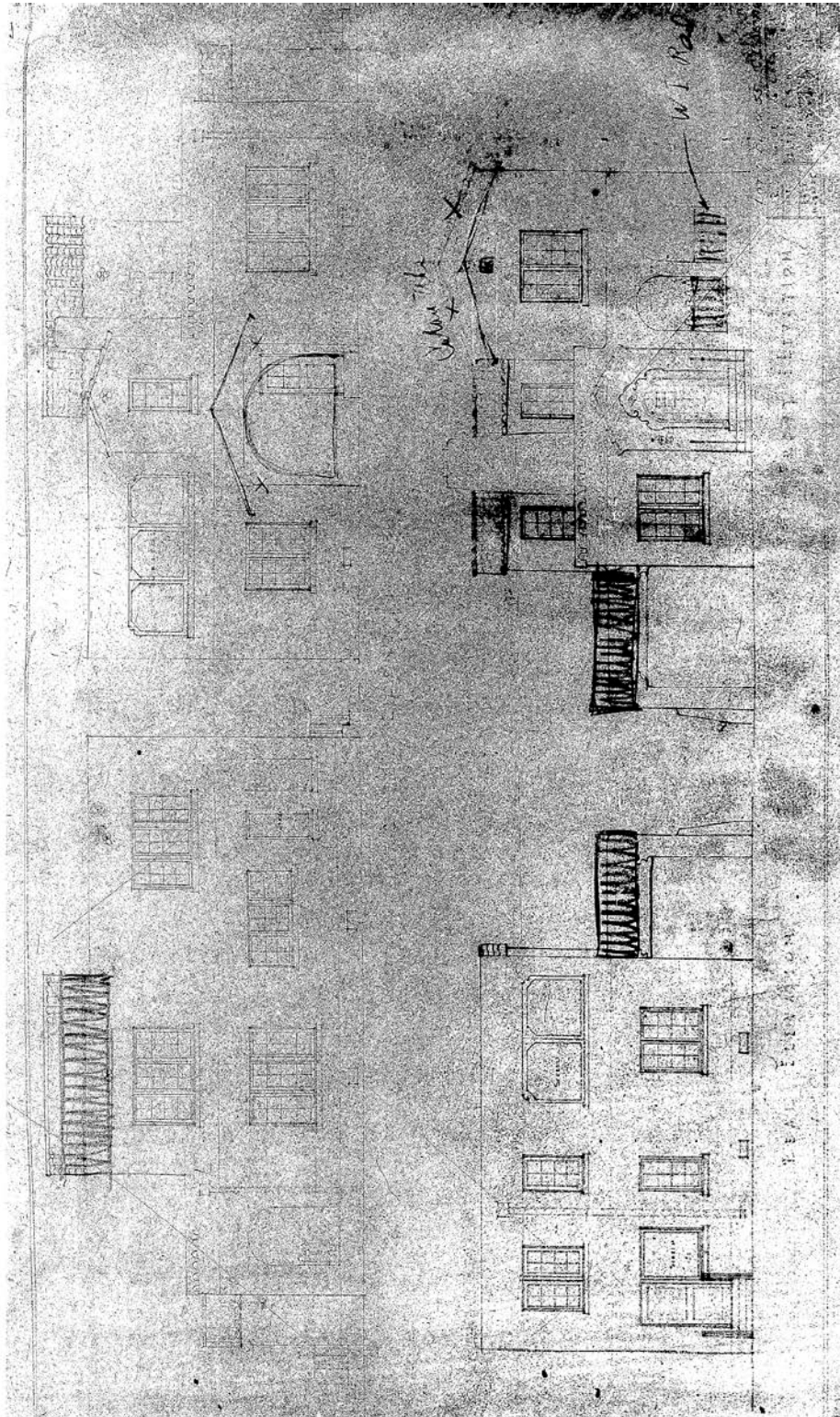
Style: Mediterranean Revival



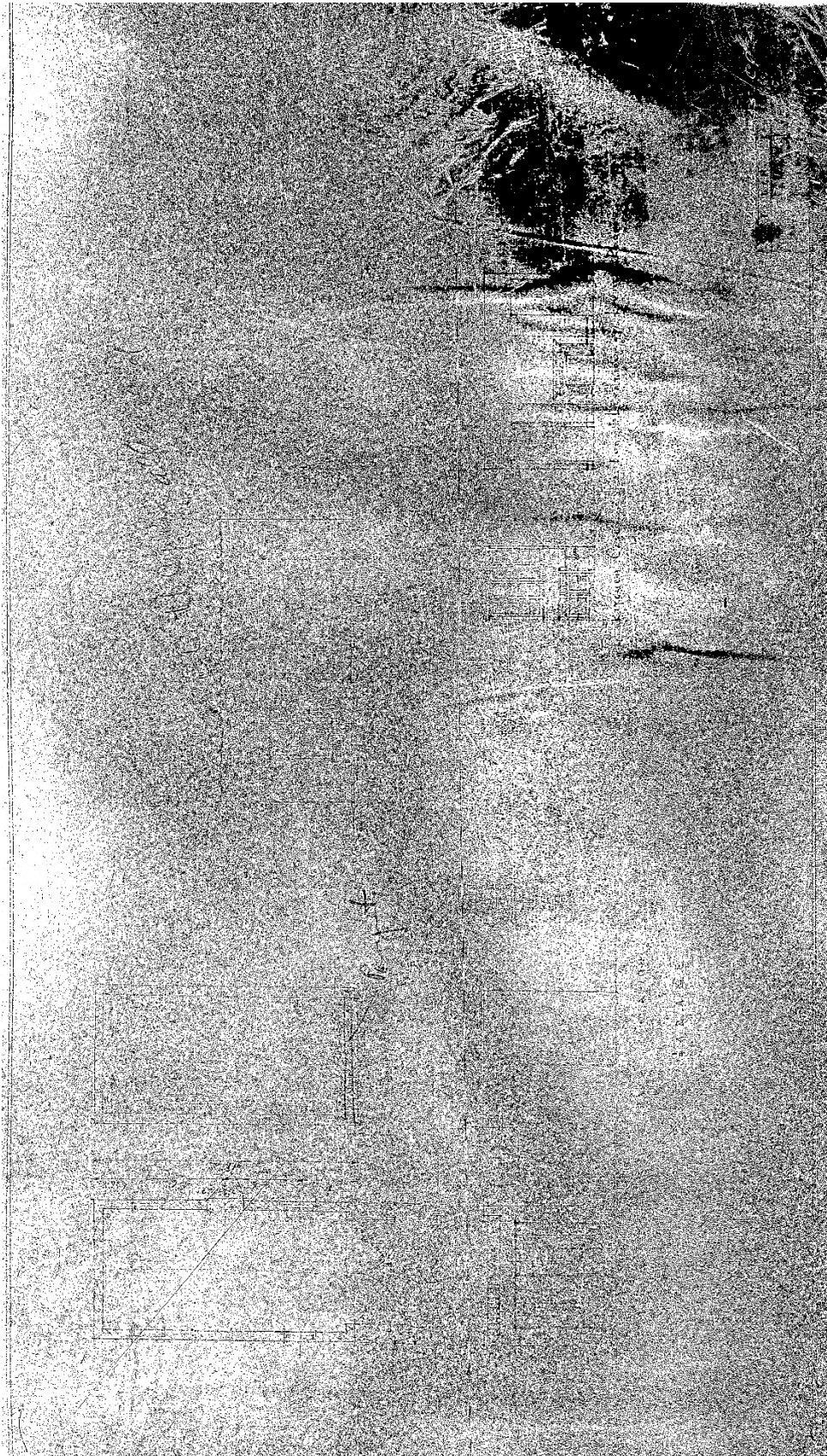
- ✓ projecting and recessed planes
- ✓ rectilinear massing and floor plan
- ✓ a projecting entry bay with an arched front door, moulded masonry keystone arch door surround and a cast ornamental medallion
- ✓ front porch bay with tiled floors, arched openings and cast masonry balustrades
- ✓ combination of roof types including: flat roofs with unarticulated parapets; flat roof with faux mansard also clad in two-piece barrel tile (behind chimney); and a series of low-pitched gabled roofs covered in two-piece barrel tile with decorative apex end caps
- ✓ original textured stucco
- ✓ prominent and distinctive broad, tapered, curved-top chimney stack
- ✓ grouped round vents
- ✓ recessed casement windows, retaining the original muntin pattern, of various shapes and sizes with projecting sills



ATTACHMENT A: Permit #1846, 1925, Alfred F. Schimek, architect



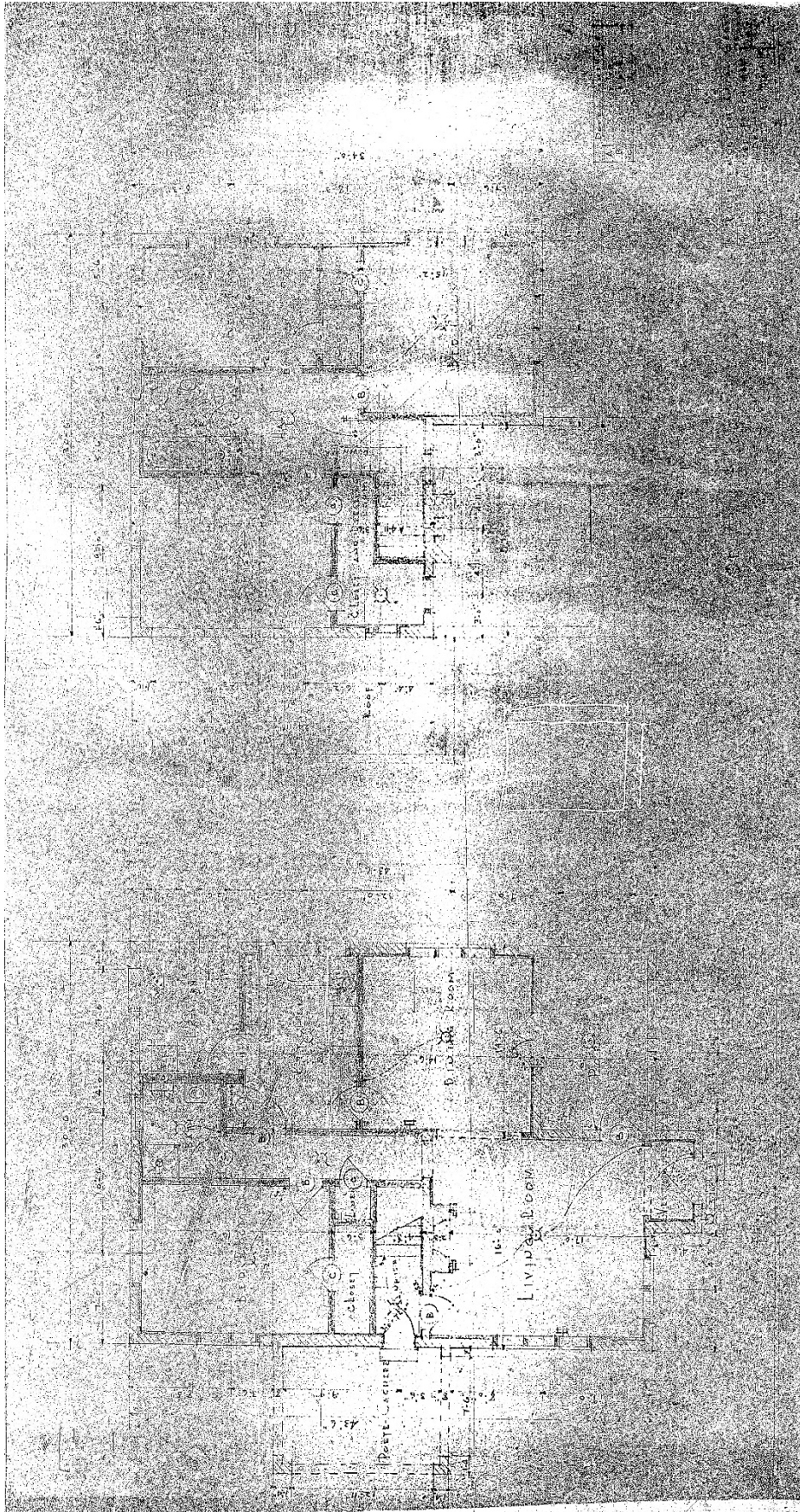
1846



1846

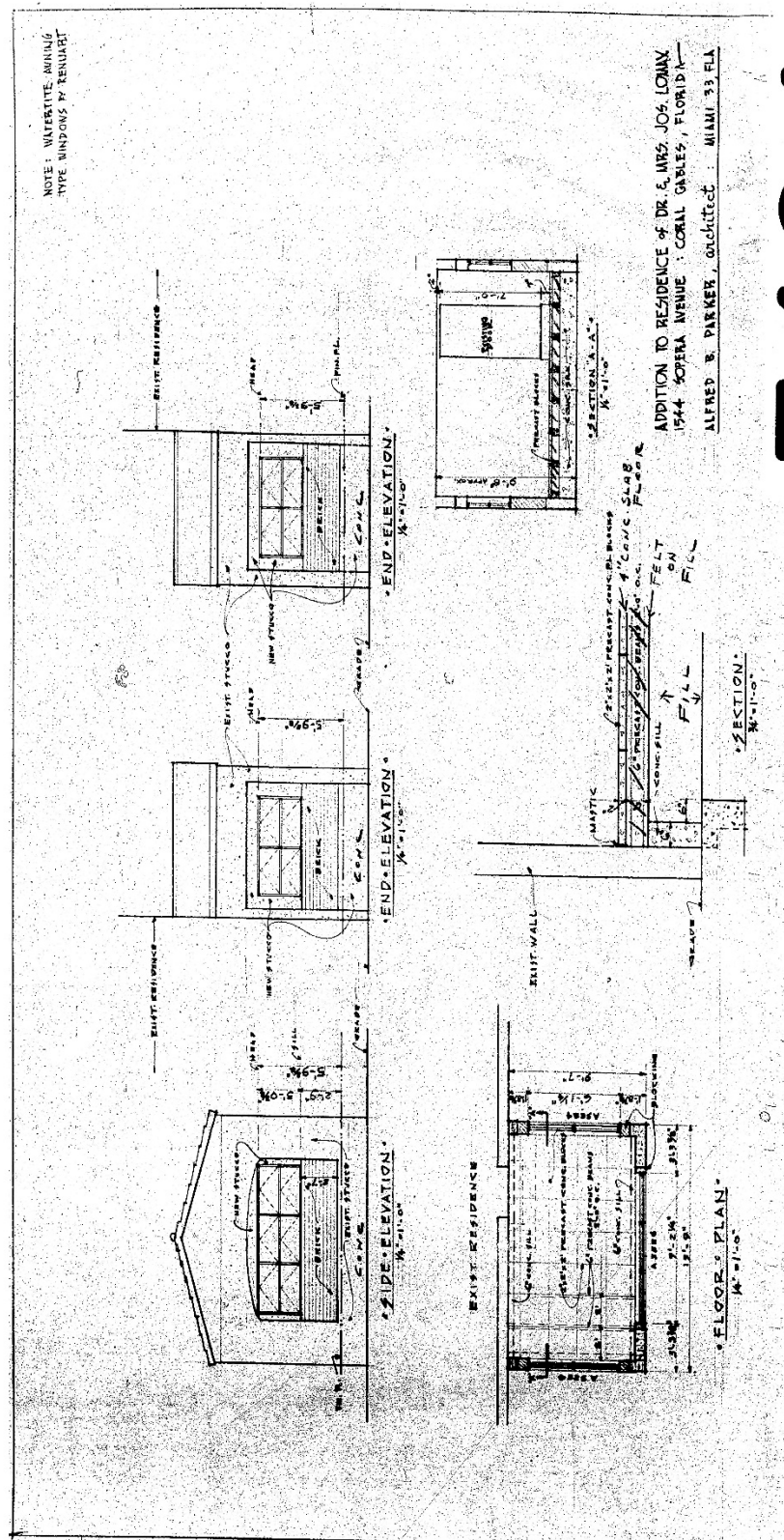


1846



1846

ATTACHMENT B: Permit #7434, 1946, Alfred Browning Parker, architect



7434