



**PALM GROVE HISTORIC  
DISTRICT**

**MIAMI, FLORIDA**

**REPORT PREPARED FOR THE  
CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA  
AND THE NATIONAL TRUST  
FOR HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION**

**THOMASON AND ASSOCIATES  
PRESERVATION PLANNERS  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**



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## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the City of Miami a matching grant from the John. S. and James L. Knight Foundation to support efforts by the City of Miami and the Palm Grove Neighborhood Association to seek National Register District Designation for the Palm Grove Historic District. The Nashville, Tennessee preservation planning firm of Thomason and Associates (Consultant) was selected to conduct an architectural survey, research and draft the preliminary designation report, and participate in public hearings. The survey and research was conducted by Principal Phil Thomason and Architectural Historians Kristen Luetkemeier and Andra Kowalczyk.

Thomason and Associates began work on the proposed Palm Grove Historic District project in August of 2007. The Palm Grove Neighborhood Association invited Phil Thomason and City of Miami Historic Preservation Officer Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman to facilitate an initial public meeting to share information about the project and its process on July 31, 2007. Additional participants included community members, representatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and public officials. The survey methodology consisted of walking along the neighborhood streets to write narrative descriptions of the buildings, photograph buildings, and solicit information from owners and residents via conversation and printed questionnaires. Additional sources included published local and neighborhood histories, monographs, historic tax photographs, Sanborn maps, city directories, and the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser. Luetkemeier was the primary author of the report's narrative portion, and Thomason provided editing and additional material. The firm facilitated a second public meeting on October 16, 2007.

As a result of the survey and research effort it is the opinion of the Consultant that the **Palm Grove Neighborhood meets the criteria for listing as a local historic district in the City of Miami.** Under the City's Ordinance, properties may be designated as historic districts if they have significance in the historical, cultural, archaeological, paleontological, aesthetic, or architectural heritage of the city; possess integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past;
2. Are the site of a historic event with significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation;
3. Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community;
4. Portray the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive architectural styles;
5. Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;
6. Are an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder;
7. Contain elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment; or
8. Have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The Palm Grove Neighborhood is worthy of local historic district designation primarily for its portrayal of the growth and development of Miami from the 1920s to the 1950s and embodying dwellings that display popular styles of the period. The neighborhood was platted in the 1920s and by the end of the decade hundreds of dwellings were constructed along its streets. By the mid-1950s the majority of lots had been developed, illustrating the rapid growth and expansion occurring in the city into this period. As a result, the Palm Grove Neighborhood contains a significant collection of residential architecture from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The most dominant styles in the district are Spanish Eclectic and Mission, reflecting the strong influence of the Spanish Colonial and Revival styles in Florida during this period. The district also contains notable examples of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By mid-century, other building styles such as Minimal Traditional and Ranch were constructed. Several dwellings were also built in a local style known as “Miami Modern.”

Included in the proposed Palm Grove Historic District are approximately 521 buildings and 68 empty lots. Buildings that contribute to the character of the historic district are defined as those that have some identifiable architectural style, and retain the majority of form, materials, and detailing they possessed between 1921 and 1957, the district’s period of significance. Non-contributing buildings are those that have minimal or limited architectural character, postdate the period of significance or reflect substantial or multiple alterations to their form, materials, or detailing. Alterations that would make a building non-contributing include removal of original porches, enclosure of original garage bays, removal and replacement of all original doors, windows, and roof materials and the addition of incompatible front or side wings. The surveyors based decisions regarding contributing or non-contributing status on visual observation and comparison between the present states of buildings and the images from tax photographs taken in the 1930s and 1950s.

The district has sufficient numbers of contributing resources to provide a sense of time and place of a residential Miami neighborhood of the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Using the City of Miami’s criteria, the district contains 241 properties considered contributing and 280 considered non-contributing. Many of those classified as non-contributing have little or no stylistic detailing but overall still support the district’s character through their display of materials such as stucco and clay tile roofs as well as their consistency in scale, setback and landscaping.

The district’s period of significance is defined as between the years 1921 to 1957. The earliest plat and development of the neighborhood was recorded in 1921, and construction began in the following years. Many of the lots were developed with one- and two-story stuccoed concrete or frame houses over the next several decades. The period of significance ends in 1957 in accordance with the fifty year rule for eligibility. This date also reflects the final large scale construction in the neighborhood, as most of the remaining vacant lots were developed with Ranch style and Miami Modern houses in the 1950s.

The Palm Grove Neighborhood encompasses all or parts of forty blocks within Miami’s northeast quadrant. The area is bounded to the north by the Little River, to the east by the rear property lines of the buildings fronting Biscayne Boulevard, to the south by 58<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and to the west by the east side of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The Dixie Highway forms the eastern boundary of the neighborhood and was the only through route from the Midwest to the Southeast in 1921.

Today, the Dixie Highway follows the route of Biscayne Boulevard in this section of Miami. The course of the Little River at the northern edge of the proposed Palm Grove Historic District remains the same today as it was in the early 1920s. Below the southern boundary on 58<sup>th</sup> Street NE the residential character of the area is no longer evident and most of this property is composed of vacant lots. The western boundary ends on the east side of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Court. On the west side of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Court are primarily commercial and warehouse buildings constructed from the 1920 to the 1960s. The majority of these buildings were constructed with modest architectural features and have been substantially altered. These alterations include the enclosure of original door and window openings and construction of post-1957 additions. Due to the extent of these alterations the buildings on the west side of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Court no longer retain integrity of their original design and do not meet the criteria for inclusion into the district.

The neighborhood encompasses five historic plat developments of the 1920s. Three of them share boundaries with the proposed district while portions of two plats, Bay Shore and Baywood, continued past present Biscayne Boulevard (formerly the Dixie Highway) to Biscayne Bay. Even Bay Shore's plat maps divide themselves in accordance with the proposed boundaries, however, stipulating that Unit One and Unit Four are west of modern Biscayne Boulevard and Unit Two and Unit Three are east of the road.<sup>1</sup>

The area was initially platted for nearly exclusively residential uses and today, it remains largely residential in character. The majority of the historic buildings are one-story single-family houses, duplexes, or small apartment complexes. Two-story versions of these three property types are also represented. Buildings along NE 4<sup>th</sup> Ct. are located directly adjacent to the railroad, and commercial businesses purchased and developed these lots in order to have rail access. These buildings were built largely with concrete canopies, smooth, unornamented wall surfaces, flat roofs, shallow coping or unelaborated rooflines, and occasional attached and flared concrete signage. Primarily utilitarian in design, these buildings represent modest examples of the International and Art Deco styles of the period. Two historic buildings are used for religious purposes: the building at 6720 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Ct. housed the Northeast Baptist Church in the 1950s and is presently the home of the Mount Zion Evangelical Baptist Church, and the Horeb Seventh Day Adventist Church is housed at 7430 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Ct., the 1950s site of a commercial warehouse. Two schools, Morningside Elementary and the Cushman School, are within the district. The Morningside School at 6620 NE 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. was originally built in the 1920s but has been altered through the addition of a large modern wing in recent decades. The Cushman School at 592 NE 60<sup>th</sup> Street was built in 1926 and designed by architect Russell Pancoast. This property was individually listed as a local landmark by the City of Miami in 1984.

In addition to local historic district designation, the Palm Grove Neighborhood should also be considered for National Register Historic District designation in the future. The neighborhood meets National Register criteria A and C for its role in the growth and development of Miami as well as for its architectural design. Under the registration requirements for National Register districts it is likely that many of the modest dwellings built from 1945 to 1957 with no readily

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<sup>1</sup> Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 5 (1921 – 1922), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 8 (1922), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 9 (1923), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 12 (1924), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 14 (1925), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 15 (1925), Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 16 (1925), and Miami Dade County Clerk, Plat Book 25 (1926).

identifiable style would be considered contributing to the district through their scale and complimentary materials. If a nomination for the Palm Grove Neighborhood does go forward a reassessment of contributing and non-contributing properties should occur to conform to National Register guidelines.



## II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Palm Grove Historic District displays an important aspect of Miami's past, its 1920s development boom. Aristides Millas, an Architectural Historian at the University of Miami, identified three stages in the growth of Miami: the original platting of streets in the approximately two square miles that constituted the incorporated city in 1896, the 1913 northwest and southern expansion covering sixteen square miles, and the 1921 - 1926 real estate boom that expanded the city limits to forty-three squares.<sup>2</sup> The timing, individuals or companies involved, and platted landscapes of the subdivisions included in the Palm Grove Historic District are typical of the development that occurred during this last period of rapid expansion from 1921 to 1926.

Miami incorporated in 1896 and activity during these early years occurred on both sides of the Miami River near its confluence with Biscayne Bay. Building projects included houses, churches, hotels, and stores, all established on property formerly held by only two owners.<sup>3</sup> Dredging of the Everglades, which extended to modern 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, began in 1909 with the opening of the Miami Canal.<sup>4</sup> This massive engineering project directed water into Biscayne Bay via the Miami River and greatly altered local topography, ecology, and development possibilities.<sup>5</sup> One early resident stressed the newness of it all, writing in his recollections that "Miami in its adolescent days was largely a collection of strangers, strangers to the town and to each other. We had all come from someplace else..."<sup>6</sup> The theme of new arrivals is a repetitive one in Miami's development.

At the same time, the independent settlement of Lemon City developed along Biscayne Bay on the site of part of modern-day Palm Grove. Two homesteading families likely began living in the area where modern 61<sup>st</sup> Street NE reaches Biscayne Bay in the 1870s. By the time they obtained legal title to the area in 1890, they had already begun to sell parcels of it. Newcomer to the area E. H. Harrington purchased 11 acres for a subdivision dubbed Lemon City. The name stuck, and began to be used for both the subdivision and the backcountry surrounding it.<sup>7</sup>

As the local population grew and people constructed other subdivisions, they began to build roads and businesses. Dirt and sand roads developed to service Lemon City and connect it to modern Biscayne Boulevard. A sawmill, blacksmith shop, two hotels, a few saloons, a restaurant, stores, and a real estate office existed alongside the eighty or so houses by 1895. Most families had their own docks, and the bay and the shipping it supported were important to the settlement; at least every other day schooners arrived at one of the main docks from Key

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<sup>2</sup> Aristides J. Millas, "Miami," in *Miami's Historic Neighborhoods: A History of Community*, ed. Becky Roper Matkov (San Antonio: Historical Publications Network, 2001), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Millas, "Miami," 18 – 20.

<sup>4</sup> Arva Moore Parks, *Miami: The Magic City*, (Miami: Centennial Press, 1991), 87 and Nicholas N. Patricios, *Building Marvelous Miami*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 54.

<sup>5</sup> Parks, *Magic*, 87 and Patricios, *Building*, 54.

<sup>6</sup> Millas, "Miami," 18.

<sup>7</sup> Thelma Peters, "History," on file at City of Miami Planning Department, a1.

West and other locales to drop people, lumber, goods, and mail and take away agricultural products.<sup>8</sup>

Around the turn of the century, Lemon City began expanding westward. The railroad came through in 1896, and a 1902 rock road along modern 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE connected Lemon City to Miami and its newly developed railroad and steamboat shipping operations. The new transportation networks encouraged development in that part of Lemon City. Workers built a library just east of the railroad tracks on modern 61<sup>st</sup> Street NE. The railroad station was located along the tracks just north of modern 59<sup>th</sup> Street; nearby were a church and school.<sup>9</sup>

Miami's second development state, from 1913 to 1920, was defined by continued growth and luxury. Construction of one estate during this time ultimately employed 1000 people. The Dixie Highway, the first continuous paved route from the Midwest to the Southeast, terminated in Miami in 1915.<sup>10</sup> The infrastructure enabled the influx of the 1920s.

People and buildings poured into Miami during its boom, from 1921 to 1926.<sup>11</sup> The Works Progress Administration's 1939 guide to the state described the period between 1914 and publication by saying, "[i]n less than a quarter century, miles of rainbow-hued dwellings, bizarre estates, ornate hotels, and office buildings have grown from mangrove swamp, jungle, coral rock, and sand dunes."<sup>12</sup> Commercial high-rise development held sway north of the Miami River in the commercial downtown. The estate homes of Millionaire's Row rose south of the river. Businesses thrived in the climate. Boosters cited ritzy homes, water excursions, outdoor sports, bathing, the Everglades, religion, and music as reasons to tour Miami. Building slowed, and then stopped after a devastating 1926 hurricane. Tourism, partially based around the boom time landscape, enabled the city to rebound economically and avoid many affects of the Great Depression.<sup>13</sup> The Works Progress Administration state guide highlighted Miami's downtown buildings and city skyline, the showcase street of Biscayne Boulevard with its royal palms and hotel row, and the Bayfront Park; these continue to be perceived as highly significant boom landscape elements.<sup>14</sup>

The Palm Grove neighborhood owes its existence to five residential developments platted during the early 1920s. Furthest south in the proposed district is Bay Shore. The Bay Shore Investment Company received city and county approval in 1922 to construct Bay Shore; its units one and four were platted in the six blocks between modern 54<sup>th</sup> Street NE, Biscayne Boulevard, 60<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and the railroad tracks. The Delaware-based company's Mid-Atlantic Roots showed;

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<sup>8</sup> Peters, "History," a1 – a2 and Metropolitan Dade County Office of Community and Economic Development Historic Preservation Division, *From Wilderness to Metropolis: The History and Architecture of Dade County, Florida 1825 – 1940* (Franklin Press, Inc., 1982), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Peters, "History," a3 – a7.

<sup>10</sup> Millas, "Miami," 19 – 21.

<sup>11</sup> Patricios, *Building*, 54.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Writers' Project of the Works Project Administration for the State of Florida, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 208.

<sup>13</sup> Becky Roper Matkov, ed., *Miami's Historic Neighborhoods: A History of Community* (San Antonio: Historical Publications Network, 2001), 213.

<sup>14</sup> Millas, "Miami," 21 – 24.

street names on the original plats include Piedmont, Albemarle, and Potomac, as well as reflect regional influences in the cases of Biscayne and Hibiscus.<sup>15</sup>

Above Bay Shore was North Gate. North Gate's plats show plans for 176 lots located along and between modern 60<sup>th</sup> Street NE (then called Virginia Street), Biscayne Boulevard, (East Dixie Highway), 65<sup>th</sup> Street NE (Kanawha Street), and 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE (Harriman Avenue). The city and county approved the North Gate development plans offered by C. J. Pearson, President of the West Virginia-based C. J. Pearson Company, in 1922.<sup>16</sup>

Morningside was north of North Gate. Its founders, a married couple named L. E. and Carrie E. Edwards, received city and county approval for the development in 1924. The notary public examined Carrie E. Edwards independently to insure that she acted "without any constraint, compulsion, apprehension or fear of or from her said husband." Morningside's plat included 200 lots along and between 66<sup>th</sup> Street NE, modern Biscayne Boulevard (East Dixie Highway), the southern side of 69<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE.<sup>17</sup>

Above Morningside was Baywood, the earliest of the five developments to receive city and county approval. In 1921, Miami and Dade County authorized The Krames and Carlett Company and L. E. and Carrie E. Edwards to begin their plans for 94 lots north of 69<sup>th</sup> Street NE (then called Minerva Drive), Biscayne Boulevard (East Dixie Highway), 71<sup>st</sup> Street NE (Baywood Drive), and 4<sup>th</sup> Court (3<sup>rd</sup> Street). Along the southern edge of modern 71<sup>st</sup> Street NE, the Baywood development continued to the edge of Biscayne Bay.<sup>18</sup>

Federal Way was the furthest north of the five. Bounded by 71<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Biscayne Boulevard (6<sup>th</sup> Avenue), 79<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and the railroad tracks, it constituted the largest development within the proposed Palm Grove Historic District. O. W. and W. C. Ewing, from Dade County and another husband and wife team, received approval for their development in 1926. Federal Way was, thus, also the last of the developments included in the proposed district.<sup>19</sup>

The development of Bay Shore, the southernmost of the historic developments included in the proposed Palm Grove Historic District, is a case study for Miami boom development patterns. James H. Nunnally, who owned a candy company, turned real estate developer early in the decade. He founded the Bay Shore Investment Company in Delaware; it was one of several out-of-state companies eager to take advantage of the frenzied development in south Florida. The company's subdivision in its entirety crossed modern Biscayne Boulevard to plat the area between modern 54<sup>th</sup> Street NE, Biscayne Bay, 60<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and the railroad tracks. In 1922, Nunnally launched the Bay Shore subdivision.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Clerk, Plat 5, Clerk, Plat 15, and Clerk, Plat 16.

<sup>16</sup> Clerk, Plat 8 and Clerk, Plat 9.

<sup>17</sup> Clerk, Plat 12.

<sup>18</sup> Clerk, Plat 5.

<sup>19</sup> Clerk, Plat 14 and Clerk, Plat 25.

<sup>20</sup> Gail Meadows and William E. Hopper Jr., "Morningside and Bay Point," in *Miami's Historic Neighborhoods: A History of Community*, ed. Becky Roper Matkov (San Antonio: Historical Publications Network, 2001), 38.





**Though the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser dates this building to 1936, its outline appears on the 1927 Sanborn map and its lot, on the original plat, is twice the width of surrounding lots. This building, at 5808 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE, appears to have housed the pumping station that developer James Nunnelly used to promote his Bay Shore subdivision.**

Prominent architects with important local credits designed early Bay Shore houses. Robert Law Weed, who designed part of the 1929 Sears building north of downtown Miami; L. Murray Dixon, heavily involved in Miami Beach design work; H. George Fink, who worked with George Merrick in establishing Coral Gables; Kiehnel and Elliott, the Pittsburgh architectural firm which designed Miami's Scottish Rite Temple, Miami Beach's Carlyle Hotel, and Coral Gables' Congregational Church; V. H. Nellenbogen, responsible for the Savoy Plaza and the renovation of Miami Beach's Sterling Building; and Marion Manley, Florida's first female registered architect; all contributed design work to the development.<sup>22</sup>

Quality materials and a unified character were also characteristic of the development. Nunnelly mandated concrete construction. Most houses used three-hole concrete, a higher grade than the two-hole variety typically used in modern construction. All had a stucco, stone, or ornamental cement exterior and tile roofs. Interior walls used Dade County pine with cypress lath covered with two coats of plaster. The average cost per house, \$7000, was "an insurance to every purchaser that he will be as proud of his neighbor's fine home as he is of his own," according to advertisements for the neighborhood.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 38 – 39.



**Builders anticipated that concrete construction would change building methods. What was more surprising was its deep impact on building aesthetics. Stuccoed concrete exteriors, such as the one on the 1925 Mission-style house at 5969 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE, are still prevalent in the proposed Palm Grove Historic District. These houses eloquently reference their 1920s and 1930s origins.**

The greatest expansion of the Bay Shore neighborhood occurred between 1936 and 1941. Deed restrictions reminiscent of those used Bay Shore’s initial development insured architectural continuity in these new sections.<sup>24</sup>

Just as late nineteenth-century Miami residents “had all come from someplace else,” new arrivals came again in the early 1920s. This time, many settled in the proposed Palm Grove Historic District. During the first fifteen years of residential development in Palm Grove, about three-quarters of Miami’s overall population were new arrivals, mostly from northern and Midwestern farms and industrial centers. According to the WPA guide, “[t]he World War created a renaissance in south Florida, and the Miami area in particular, with a new affluent class fostering a demand for extravagant dwelling in harmony with climate and background.”<sup>25</sup>

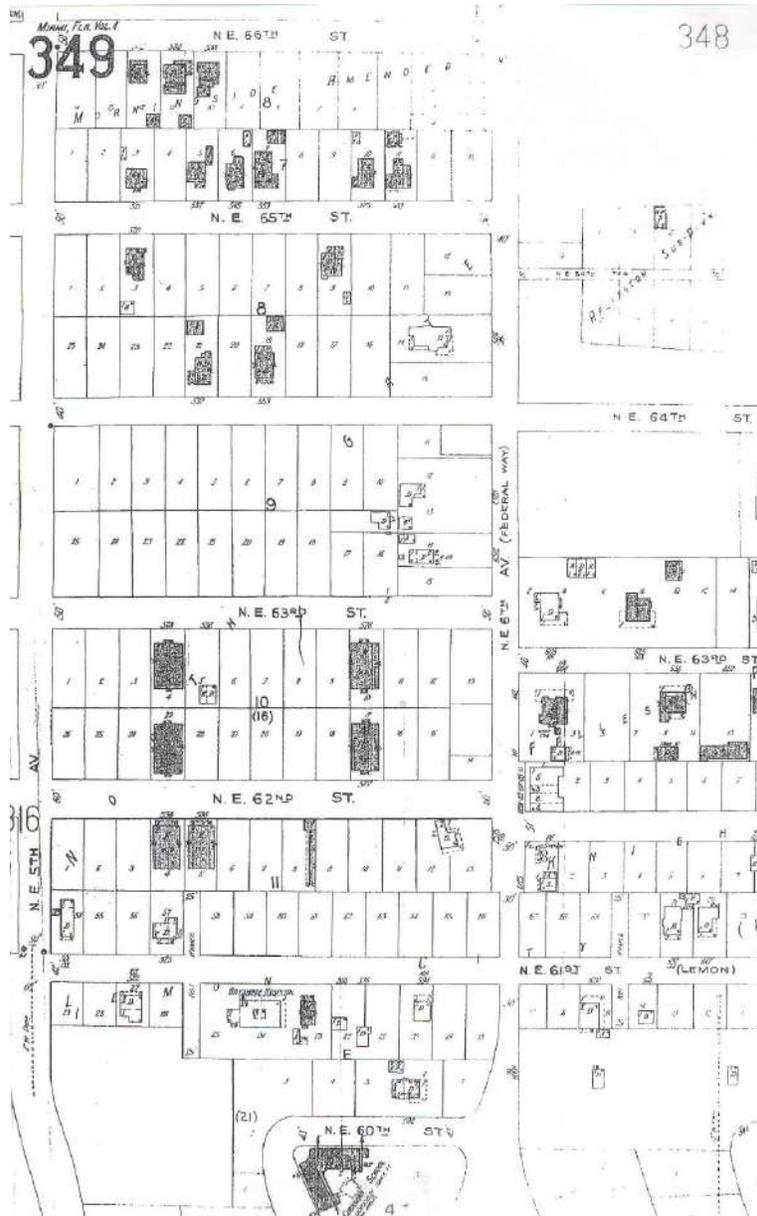
Members of this class settled in Palm Grove in the 1920s, and similar people continued to settle there through 1957. City directories from the period provide information about the ethnic, professional, and marital background of Palm Grove residents during its period of significance. Surnames of 1931 residents demonstrate predominately Anglo ancestry with a healthy minority of residents with German names. George T. and Adeline V. Mann, Charles J. and Edith Joiner, Frederick J. and Esther Marshall, William F. and Betty Frantz, and Joseph and Helen Muller are examples. Residents held a variety of occupations. Tradesmen were well represented in 1931 Palm Grove. At 5946 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE, carpenter Jesse J. Rogers lived with his wife, Anna. Down the street at 7801 was auto mechanic William M. Mettair and wife Mary. Executives, also, made their homes in Palm Grove. The president of Ideal Dry Cleaning, Ralph D. Hutchinson, and his wife June lived at 5900 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. At 553 75<sup>th</sup> Street NE lived Winifred C. Ewing and her husband Orville W., president of Morrow, Becker, and Ewing, Incorporated. Some worked in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 18 – 25.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Writers’, *Guide*, 211.

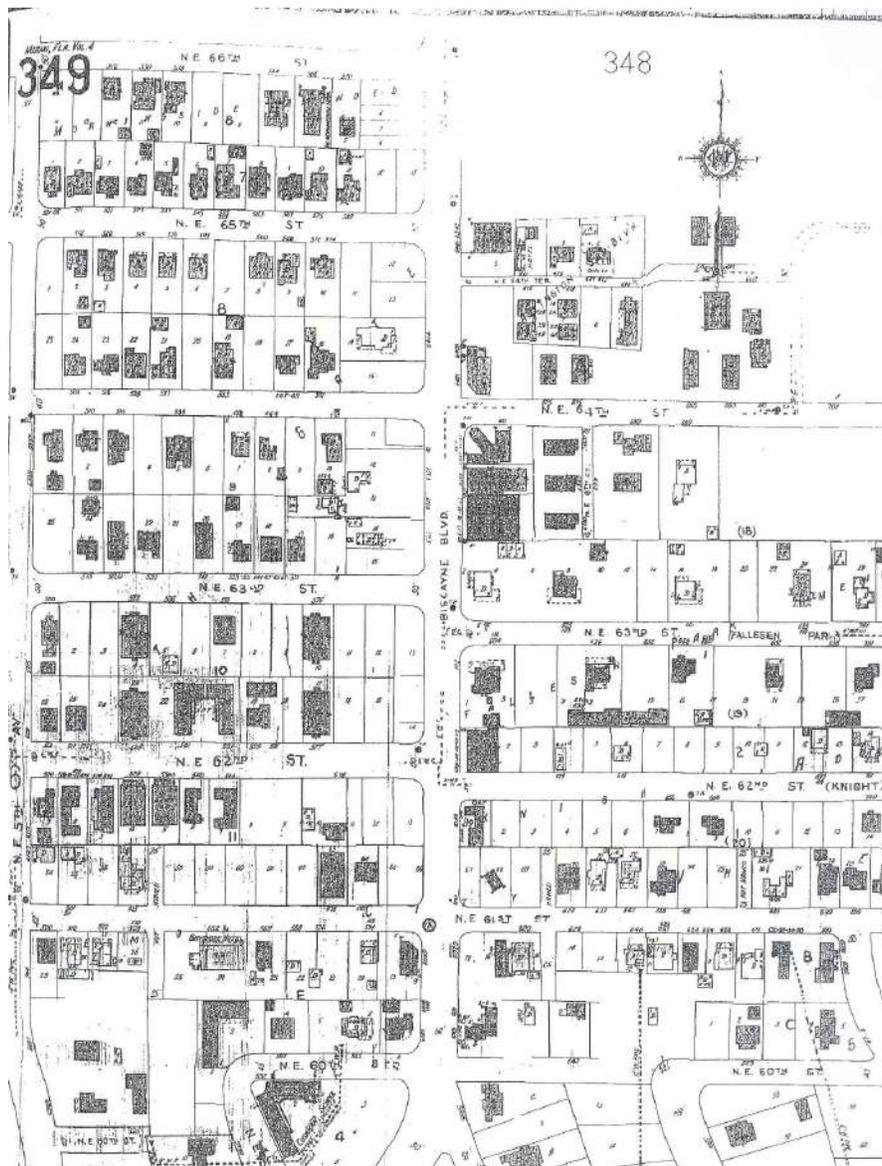
real estate, the profession that so marked the preceding decade. Dorothy O. Scott lived at 598 56<sup>th</sup> Street NE with her husband Paul R., the president of Biscayne Boulevard Company and New Miami Shores Corporation and treasurer of M. R. Harrison Construction Company. Service workers, such as Frederick J. Marshall, a clerk at A & P Tea Company, made their homes in Palm Grove. Asbury Griffith, an auditor who lived with his wife Margaret at 536 77<sup>th</sup> Street NE, represented the professional class in Palm Grove. With some exceptions of single men or women, most residents were married and typically the husband in these partnerships supported the couple financially. Few women in the neighborhood were listed as having occupations.<sup>26</sup>



**This page of the 1927 Sanborn map outlines some of the earliest Palm Grove houses; those shown are in the North Gate development.**

<sup>26</sup> Miami City Directory, 1931.

The 1941 City Directory indicates similar patterns for the following decade. Anglo names such as Dean Clark, at 445 55<sup>th</sup> Street NE, Robert E. and Nan Cook at 469 58<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and Theodore Potts at 450 59<sup>th</sup> Street are in the majority. Professions continued to be mixed, but employment of one marriage partner, typically the husband, or of single residents was the norm. Occasionally both marriage partners listed a job. A barber lived at 560 61<sup>st</sup> Street NE, the president of the Civic Bar Association at 577 62<sup>nd</sup> Street NE, a salesman at 425 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, and an engineer at 578 64<sup>th</sup> Street NE. Hilda Scruggs, a teacher at Ojus Elementary School living at 537 66<sup>th</sup> Street NE, represented the minority groups of single professionals and single women in the neighborhood. The presence of a few widows or widowers without listed employment suggests that retired people were also Palm Grove residents.<sup>27</sup>



This page, from the 1949 update to the Sanborn map, shows the intervening development in the same portion of North Gate as the number of residents and houses in the Palm Grove area grew.

<sup>27</sup> Miami City Directory, 1941.

The directory published in 1957 is a source for the last year of Palm Grove's period of significance. Discernable by this time was an increase among professional or executive residents. Palm Grove seems to have grown in wealth over the decades. Residents in this year can be categorized in similar categories to those observed in earlier directories as predominately Anglo or Saxon in ancestry, largely employed, and predominately married. An observable minority of single residents is still apparent. Marvin Maher was a single music teacher living at 5808 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE. Maurice and Melba R. Goldman, living at 5920 4<sup>th</sup> Court, did not list jobs and may have been retired. Lee V. Sexton was a dentist who lived with his wife Margaret at 5955 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE. Further north at 580 71<sup>st</sup> Street NE were Alvah G. and Mae W. Bondie; Alvah owned Marion's Fruit Shippers. Louise P. Freeze, resident at 493 72<sup>nd</sup> Street NE, was an underwriter with Langston and Company. James H. Chance, an architect for Steward and Skinner, lived with his wife Vera at 444 74<sup>th</sup> Street NE.<sup>28</sup>

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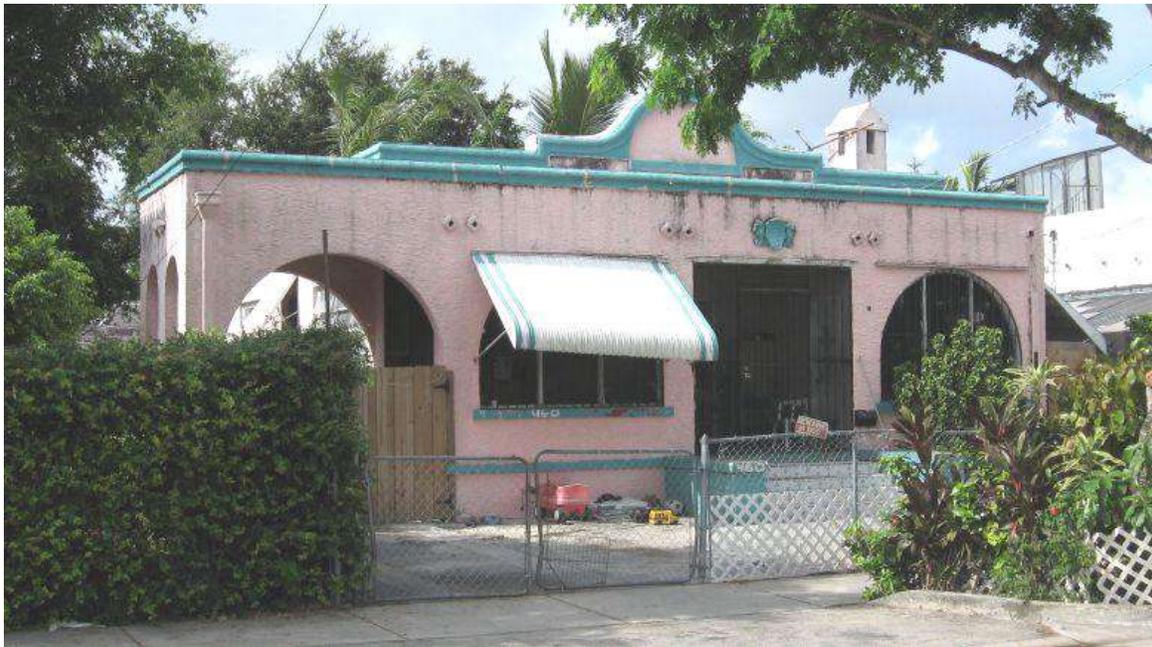
<sup>28</sup> Miami City Directory, 1957.

### III. ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The proposed district constitutes an impressive collection of popular early-twentieth styles of architecture such as Mission, Craftsman, Spanish Eclectic, Art Deco, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch. The high proportion of Spanish Eclectic and Art Deco buildings demonstrates the local preferences of Palm Grove buildings and residents.

#### Mission (1890 – 1920)

Californians interested in interpreting their state's past developed the Mission style of architecture late in the nineteenth century. Defining features of the style include tiled roofs, overhanging eaves, parapets or dormers, smooth stuccoed walls, and porches with arched roof elements.<sup>29</sup> Florida, with its Hispanic heritage, adopted the Mission style also. The style is simple, inexpensive, and seemingly timeless, making Mission houses popular choices in the new, middle-income Miami subdivisions of the 1920s like those comprising Palm Grove.<sup>30</sup>



In 1937, workers finished the house at 460 70<sup>th</sup> Street NE. The curvilinear roof form, porch and porte-cochere arches, and smooth stucco exterior are all elements of the Mission style.

#### Craftsman (1905 – 1930)

The Craftsman aesthetic developed from a mid-nineteenth-century English movement emphasizing quality materials, handcrafted work, and the dignity of human labor.<sup>31</sup> Its visual aspects included low, often gabled roofs; exposed rafters or tails; brackets; and porches with posts which often extended to the ground. The Bungalow form was popular with Craftsman-style builders and owners. Bungalows in the United States were often composed of one story,

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<sup>29</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984; reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 408 – 410.

<sup>30</sup> Metropolitan Dade County, *From Wilderness to Metropolis*, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

though some Miami examples had a smaller upper story. They typically included large windows, multiple and deep porches, and wide eaves, features which made Bungalows a fine match for south Florida's climate.<sup>32</sup> The Craftsman style, often paired with the Bungalow form, was popular across the United States early in the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> Though it is not a dominant style in Palm Grove, scattered examples exist.



**The Bungalow at 421 70<sup>th</sup> Street NE, constructed in 1929, incorporates many Craftsman elements, including its low gabled roof, exposed rafter tails, over-hanging eaves, and tapered wooden-upper and brick-lower porch posts that extend to the ground.**

### Spanish Eclectic (1915 – 1940)

The term Spanish Eclectic refers to buildings that draw from aspects of historical Spanish architecture of any time and location. Houses in this style often have low, tiled roofs, stuccoed walls, asymmetrical facades, arched openings, chimney roofs, arcaded walkways, and towers.<sup>34</sup> As with the Mission style, Florida's Hispanic climate and heritage seemed to lend themselves to the popularity of the often more Baroque Spanish Eclectic style.<sup>35</sup> Like the earlier Florida mansions of Addison Mizner, Palm Grove's simpler Spanish Eclectic buildings reflected the glamour that contemporary society ascribed to the Mediterranean region.<sup>36</sup> The style peaked nationally during the construction of Palm Grove, and it is widely represented throughout the district.

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<sup>32</sup> Metropolitan Dade County, *Wilderness to Metropolis*, 70 – 73.

<sup>33</sup> McAlester, *Homes*, 452 – 454.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 416 – 418.

<sup>35</sup> Metropolitan Dade County, *Wilderness to Metropolis*, 87.

<sup>36</sup> Hap Hatton, *Tropical Splendor: An Architectural History of Florida* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 80.



The low tiled roof, stuccoed walls, and asymmetrical façade of this dwelling at 440 71<sup>st</sup> Street NE Street are all aspects of its Spanish Eclectic style. Builders completed it in 1948.

#### Art Deco (1910 – 1940)

Art Deco refers to a variety of aesthetic currents popular between 1910 and 1940. Though names exist for specific typologies within the style, this report follows the practice of many monographs of referring to this group of Modernist architecture universally as Art Deco.<sup>37</sup> Art Deco, so broadly defined, incorporates a variety of aesthetic currents. The book *Rediscovering Art Deco USA* offers five recurring traits by which to define the style. These include organizing elements in groups of three, employing streamlined bands to decorate facades, using smooth metal and machined surfaces, interplaying light and dark, and partnering art and engineering.<sup>38</sup>

As with the Spanish Eclectic style, the timing of Miami's real estate boom insured that Art Deco influenced the construction in Palm Grove. Though Art Deco and Spanish Eclectic coexisted in Palm Grove, they represented differing responses to the 1920s and 1930s. Writer Leicester Hemingway contrasted them, saying of the building on nearby Miami Beach

During the Depression, people needed to let go...They became wild on Miami Beach...They didn't watch their nickels...[Architects] were determined not to use any older styles like the Spanish...They wanted something modern, so they smoothed out all the Spanish things. They smoothed everything until you got the feeling that life was smooth. The buildings made you feel all clean and new and excited and happy to be there.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Barbara Capitman, Michael D. Kinerk, and Dennis W. Wilhelm, *Rediscovering Art Deco U.S.A.* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1994), 1 and Adrian Tinniswood, *The Art Deco House* (New York: Watson-Guption Publication, 2002), 8 – 9.

<sup>38</sup> Capitman et al., *Rediscovering*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

In contrast with the more conservative colonial references of the Spanish Eclectic style, Art Deco designers and residents saw their buildings as a response to uniquely modern conditions.<sup>40</sup>



**The building at 572 67<sup>th</sup> Street NE, constructed in 1936, demonstrates many of the five traits mentioned above in its three façade bays and three-part groupings of etched line segments, banded façade and secondary elevations, smooth concrete surfaces finished with stucco, and combination of concrete construction with decorative elements such as brackets and etched trim.**

The Art Deco style emerged early in the twentieth century in Western Europe, where competing strains existed.<sup>41</sup> In Germany, practitioners preferred austerity. French practitioners relied on decorative elements. Architectural Historian Adrian Tinniswood, speaking about its French incarnation, called its beginnings conservative, because it continued to rely on some traditional materials and elements of the Beaux Arts style. It was also deeply informed by the craze for exoticism that existed during this era of European colonialism.<sup>42</sup> The conflicting approaches did not trouble American architects, who ultimately took freely from both traditions and merged them as they liked.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Hatton, *Tropical*, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Hatton, *Tropical*, 92 and Tinniswood, *House*, 10 – 15.

<sup>42</sup> Tinniswood, *House*, 10 – 15.

<sup>43</sup> Capitman, *Rediscovering*, 2.



**Both vertical and horizontal forms are evident on the Art Deco style dwelling at 482 59<sup>th</sup> Street built in 1935.**

Early Art Deco architects emphasized verticality and made heavy use of projecting elements. They deemed this look particularly appropriate for large buildings. The aesthetic informed an architectural interest, increasing over the first decades of the twentieth century, in multi-occupancy buildings and urban planning.<sup>44</sup>



**Vertical emphasis is particularly apparent in the projecting central bay at 482 59<sup>th</sup> Street. Architects favored apartment buildings and other large edifices for vertical and diagonal Art Deco elements.**

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<sup>44</sup> McAlester, *Houses*, 465 and Tinniswood, *House*, 81.

Art Deco practitioners by the 1920s nearly entirely embraced the materials and visual vocabulary advanced by architect reformers, which by then included materials such as steel, reinforced concrete, and glass; plain white surfaces; rectangular volumes; and flat roofs.<sup>45</sup> Visual references to the speedy, aerodynamic nature of automobiles, ships, and planes reflected people's fascination with the new machinery for transportation.<sup>46</sup>

This more streamlined variety of Art Deco, gaining popularity in the 1930s and often called Art Moderne, had particular resonance as a domestic style. Freestanding houses, so emphasized during the turn of the twentieth century when Craftsman ideals held strong sway, remained of deep concern in the century's first decades. The anti-modern ideals that informed the Craftsman aesthetic, however, seemed irrelevant to many by the 1920s and 1930s. Technology-based production methods and design vocabulary seemed to be more appropriate choices for post-World War One domestic architecture.<sup>47</sup>



**The round window, rounded-edge canopy, horizontal etched courses, and window that turns a corner all contribute to the streamlining of this 1937 duplex at 537 and 539 70<sup>th</sup> Street NE.**

Miami Modern, sometimes abbreviated as MiMo, emerged as a later, localized version of the worldwide interest in Art Deco. This style blended traditional Modernist elements with fanciful, locally thematic touches. Architectural Historian Adrian Tinniswood described the style, which he called Miami Deco, as “a seaside architecture that used stylized palms, birds, and other motifs drawn from the locality and blended them with the fastest, loudest, brashest form of streamlined Moderne.”<sup>48</sup> Local history editor Becky Matkov wrote that the style peaked in the 1950s with the Miami Beach work of Morris Lapidus.<sup>49</sup> Tinniswood agreed that Miami Beach was a center

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<sup>45</sup> Tinniswood, *House*, 10 – 15.

<sup>46</sup> Hatton, *Tropical*, 93.

<sup>47</sup> Tinniswood, *House*, 6 – 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

<sup>49</sup> Matkov, *Neighborhoods*, 13 – 14.

for the style, and cited Henry Hohaus, L. Murray Dixon, and Albert Anis as notable practitioners.<sup>50</sup>



Elements from the Miami Modern approach made their way into Palm Grove. This duplex from 1948 at 550 and 552 67<sup>th</sup> Street NE includes a terra cotta panel depicting palm trees.



Terra cotta medallions with sea-related motifs, such as this one depicting a ship on the 1939 house at 525 72<sup>nd</sup> Street NE, were popular ways for architects and residents to reference Palm Grove's tropical setting.

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<sup>50</sup> Tinniswood, *House*, 94 – 95.

### Minimal Traditional (circa 1935 – 1950)

Minimal Traditional houses continued to use the forms of earlier eclectic buildings, but eliminated much of the detailing and decorative materials of their predecessors. Buildings in this style typically incorporate low roof pitches, close eaves, single stories, and economic materials.<sup>51</sup> In Palm Grove, Minimal Traditional houses often share forms with their Spanish Eclectic neighbors, but avoid decorative details and incorporate more affordable materials like asphalt shingles.



The low roof pitch, close eaves, single story, single story, unadorned appearance, asphalt shingles, and stucco facing of this 1937 house at 5900 4<sup>th</sup> Court NE all mark it as an example of the Minimal Traditional style.

### Ranch (circa 1935 – 1957)

Ranch-style buildings incorporate influences from southwestern Spanish Colonial architecture and early-twentieth-century Craftsman and Prairie modernism. It is common for Ranch houses to occupy more ground space than styles used before the rise of personal automobile ownership.<sup>52</sup> Typical Palm Grove Ranch houses features include low-pitched roofs, overhanging eaves, asymmetrical fronts, and private outdoor spaces.

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<sup>51</sup> McAlester, *Houses*, 478.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 479 – 481.



**The Ranch style was a popular choice for multiple occupancy buildings, such as this 1956 duplex at 521 and 523 66<sup>th</sup> Street NE. Its horizontal emphasis, low hipped roof, overhanging eaves, asymmetrical elevations, and side-facing porch are all Ranch features.**

#### IV. TRENDS AND CONDITIONS, 1957 - 2007

Architectural developments in Palm Grove since 1957 have largely followed historic precedents. The concentration of pre-1957 properties in the proposed Palm Grove Historic District demonstrates that the historic landscape of the area remained largely intact through the late 1950s and into the present. This historic landscape heavily influenced new construction. With few exceptions, residences constructed after 1957 reflect styles and influences, such as Art Deco, Spanish Eclectic, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch, common to older houses. The sizes and proportions of newer residences, typically one- and sometimes two-stories and compact, also demonstrate historic influences.

The theme of “strangers to the town and to each other” voiced in reflections of late 1800s Miami repeated itself a third time in the years just after 1957, when upper northeast Miami briefly became a tri-ethnic community. White and black residents spoke, variously, English, Haitian Creole, French, and/or Spanish. Native white residents grew older, but otherwise retained much in common with the area’s 1950s population. Events in Haiti and Cuba are important to defining the other two demographic categories of residents.

Late in 1957, Haitians elected medical doctor Francois Duvalier to the presidency. Duvalier’s work establishing clinics across the country to treat people afflicted with yaws, an endemic disease in Haiti with symptoms similar to those of leprosy, endeared him to Haitians. His humanitarian contributions combined with his appeals to black pride and Haitian folk culture to make him a popular candidate in the 1957 election. Yet “Papa Doc,” as people nicknamed Duvalier, quickly resorted to oppressive measures to maintain political power. He became, for most Haitians, a terrifying figure.<sup>53</sup>

The political violence prompted emigration. Many political enemies with the means to leave boarded planes for adopted countries.<sup>54</sup> Some came to Miami. One history of Little Haiti, classified within as the area between Biscayne Boulevard, Highway 195, Highway 95, and 80<sup>th</sup> Street NE and including the Palm Grove study area, describes the 1950s formation of a small Haitian community there.<sup>55</sup>

Francois Duvalier remained in power until his death in 1971, after which his eighteen-year-old son Jean-Claude Duvalier took over. Though seemingly innocuous, historian Philippe Girard wrote that the so-called “Bebe Doc” established a devastating economic structure based on “foreign aid, exiles remittances, and whatever cash foreign tourists left in Haiti.” Much of the income involved quickly cycled back to Duvalier and his cronies. The new president also retained his father’s infrastructure of violence, leaving Haitians desperate for alternatives.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Philippe Girard, *Paradise Lost: Haiti’s Tumultuous Journey from Pearl of the Caribbean to Third World Hotspot* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 93 – 100.

<sup>54</sup> Girard, *Paradise*, 103.

<sup>55</sup> Dennie M. Ross, “A Sense of Place: Little Haiti,” in *The Dade County Environmental History*, eds. Sandra Ross, Dennis M. Ross, and Joseph E. Podger, 157 – 159, 1985), 157 – 158.

<sup>56</sup> Girard, *Paradise*, 98 – 102.

Two types of emigration resulted from the continued repression and desperate economic situation. The first was through the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in accordance with United States law. The second bypassed the INS. In both, Haitians sought an alternative to the poverty at home.<sup>57</sup> The INS reported processing nearly 13,000 new Haitian entrants in 1980; many settled in Miami.<sup>58</sup> “Boat people” also began setting out for Florida in the early 1970s. Visas and plane fare were not options for these would-be immigrants without money. The INS estimates that more than 100,000 people arrived this way between 1972 and 1981; about 85% settled in Miami.<sup>59</sup> As immigrants have always done, new Haitian arrivals often chose to live in community with others who shared their language, religion, and other aspects of culture. In Miami, Haitian settlement continued to concentrate on the upper northeastern part of town into the 1990s.<sup>60</sup>

Events in Cuba were, in some ways, similar to the situation in Haiti; in both cases new leadership and political repression sparked a mass outmigration. Dictatorial Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista faced increasing resistance to his regime throughout the 1950s. Among the opposition groups was the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement led by Fidel Castro. On January 1, 1959, Batista fled Cuba and Castro’s movement for the Dominican Republic and the shelter of fellow rightist dictator Rafael Trujillo.<sup>61</sup>

Although Fidel Castro spoke of a return to constitutionalism and democracy, his government quickly adopted imprisonment and executions to stifle dissent. The Cuban response to these events, immediate and continual immigration, deeply impacted Miami and its neighborhoods.<sup>62</sup> Florida International University writing professor Les Standiford wrote, “some 150,000 refugees fled to South Florida between 1959 and 1962, many of them members of the middle and upper classes. These Cubans brought with them money, political savvy, moral outrage and a vision uncharacteristic of the ‘typical’ immigrant community. The influx was to transform the region instantaneously, creating not just a significant Hispanic populace, but a bicultural force that has only grown steadily since.”<sup>63</sup> Twice daily on weekdays between 1965 and 1970, “freedom flights” brought 182,375 more new arrivals to Miami. By 1970, likely more than 300,000 Cuban people representing 22 percent of the population lived in Dade County.<sup>64</sup>

In 2007, Hispanic, Haitian, and Anglo names predominate on the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser’s list of Palm Grove property owners. A minority of east and south Asian listings

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>58</sup> Ross, “Place,” 158.

<sup>59</sup> Glenn R. Smucker, “Haiti: The Society and Its Environment,” in *A Country Study: Haiti* (District of Columbia: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1989), accessed in September 2007 at [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ht0027\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ht0027)).

<sup>60</sup> Ross, “Place,” 158.

<sup>61</sup> United States Department of State, *Background Note: Cuba* (2005), accessed in September 2007 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> David Rieff, *Going to Miami: Exiles, Tourists, and Refugees in the New America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1987).

<sup>63</sup> Les Standiford, text in *Miami: City of Dreams*, Alan S. Maltz (Key West: Light Flight Publications, 1997), 100.

<sup>64</sup> Patricios, *Building*, 57.

appear, as well.<sup>65</sup> Spanish, Creole, and English languages all have healthy representation in the neighborhood streets and homes. Residents continue to be a mix of old and new arrivals; surveyors from Thomason and Associates spoke with some people who had owned their Palm Grove homes for several decades and others with less than ten years of ownership. The heightened desirability of urban living that began in the early 1990s has caused the residential composition of Palm Grove to reflect both past patterns of settlement and architecture and its historic dynamic of constant change.

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<sup>65</sup> Miami Dade County Property Assessor, records accessed in September 2007 at <http://gisims2.miamidade.gov/myhome/propmap.asp>.

## V. SUMMARY

In 2007, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the City of Miami a matching grant from the John. S. and James L. Knight Foundation to support efforts by the City of Miami and the Palm Grove Neighborhood Association to seek National Register District Designation for the Palm Grove Historic District. The Nashville, Tennessee preservation planning firm of Thomason and Associates (Consultant) was selected to conduct an architectural survey, research and draft the preliminary designation report, and participate in public hearings.

As a result of the survey and research effort it is the opinion of the Consultant that the **Palm Grove Neighborhood meets the criteria for listing as a local historic district in the City of Miami.** The Palm Grove Neighborhood is worthy of local historic district designation primarily for its portrayal of the growth and development of Miami from the 1920s to the 1950s and embodying dwellings that display popular styles of the period. The neighborhood was platted in the 1920s and by the end of the decade hundreds of dwellings were constructed along its streets. By the mid-1950s the majority of lots had been developed, illustrating the rapid growth and expansion occurring in the city into this period. As a result, the Palm Grove Neighborhood contains a significant collection of residential architecture from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The most dominant styles in the district are Spanish Eclectic and Mission, reflecting the strong influence of the Spanish Colonial and Revival styles in Florida during this period. The district also contains notable examples of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By mid-century, other building styles such as Minimal Traditional and Ranch were constructed. Several dwellings were also built in a local style known as “Miami Modern.”

Within the district are 241 properties considered contributing and 280 considered non-contributing. Many of those classified as non-contributing have little or no stylistic detailing but overall still support the district’s character through their display of materials such as stucco and clay tile roofs as well as their consistency in scale, setback and landscaping. The district has sufficient numbers of contributing resources to provide a strong sense of time and place of a residential Miami neighborhood of the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to local historic district designation, the Palm Grove Neighborhood should also be considered for National Register Historic District designation in the future. The neighborhood meets National Register criteria A and C for its role in the growth and development of Miami as well as for its architectural design. Under the registration requirements for National Register districts it is likely that a number of the modest dwellings built from 1945 to 1957 with no readily identifiable style would be considered contributing to the district through their scale and complimentary materials. If a nomination for the Palm Grove Neighborhood does go forward a reassessment of contributing and non-contributing properties should occur to conform to National Register guidelines.

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