

HISTORIC RESOURCES REPORT



1818 Michigan Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33139


Report prepared by:

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

The present report and attached documents comprise a survey of the property located at 1818 Michigan Avenue in Miami Beach, Florida. The project site is located in the Palm View Historic District. The subject building is surrounded by the contributing 1810 and 1800 Michigan Avenue houses, both two-stories high, as well as by the vacant land at 1039 18th Street. This report has been prepared in anticipation of the proposed reconstruction of the 1818 Michigan Avenue house, a contributing building. The attached study provides an overview of the existing structure based on photo surveys, historical documents and newspaper articles. The report includes, among other references, the City of Miami Beach Building Cards documenting the permit history of the property. The proposed modification is designed to reconstruct historical resources which are in current state of dilapidation, seasonal flooding and abandonment, in a manner consistent with the site's proposed development rights. The property, as well as the adjacent 1810 Michigan Avenue house have been subjected to numerous non-permitted modifications carried over the span of years. A demolition permit has been recently issued by the city.

HISTORY:

The history of the site is closely related to Collins canal. The canal celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012. Its history began when John Stiles Collins moved from New Jersey to South Florida. Collins founded the development Miami Beach Improvement Company in 1922. Construction of the canal required cutting westward through mangrove swampland. Towards Biscayne Bay. The canal is referred to as the oldest example of public development on the city. Even though Collins gave up farming on Miami Beach, he built the canal at age 75 so he could move his avocados north for shipping ¹.

Fish such as the White Grunt, Pinfish, Blue Grunt and Barracuda have been observed at the canal⁷. The canal and its neighboring Palm View Historic District has been subjected to increasingly high tides, this was even a concern as far back as 1926, as reported in a Miami Herald 10/24 article. "At no time within a long period of years has the water on the east loop of the canal been higher than a point of six inches below the top of the bulkhead. (...) it was unusually high at other points along its course."³ A 2019 article in RE: Miami Beach addresses the resident's views on historic protections and imminent ocean level rise and cites Palm View resident Rita Starr stating that the area "floods more often and deeper than before." The article further states: "She pointed to the elevated seawall on the north side of Dade Boulevard with no openings to allow rising canal waters to run out onto the roadway. Instead, she said, there is 'flooding only on the south side' and into her property."⁴



A 1939 photo shows position of the high water mark on the wall of 1818 Michigan Ave, along the Collins Canal. Also shown are the height of the high water mark in 2011 and its expected height in 2030 and 2060.

Record Tides Raise Collins Canal Waters

**Old Residents Fail to Recall
When Week's Level
Exceeded**

Collins canal was higher on Thursday and Friday following the storm than at any time during the last several years, the older residents averred. At no time within a long period of years has the water on the east loop of the canal been higher than a point six inches below the top of the bulkhead.

On Friday the water was lapping over the bulkheading at the Meridian ave. bridge, while it was unusually high at other points along its course.

The sea has been running high since Wednesday's storm and backs the water up into the canals and into Lake Pancoast. There is no danger of a large overflow, however, as the canal banks are sloped along the entire course.

The Collins canal increasingly made its place in the imagination of residents as evocative of Venice, and images found show gondolas navigating it. The canal saw public navigation events take place. Images from a 1925 Miami Herald article describe "a scene worthy of the artist's brush (...) when a dozen fast racing cruisers and smaller craft were moored in the blue water" when vessels were moved temporarily from the bay dues to stormy weather.² A Miami News 1921 article described that for \$2.50 a visitor could ride gondolas⁶

**NEW GONDOLA FLEET IS
GIVEN WARM WELCOME
BY WINTER VISITORS**

Charming Craft Make Picturesque
Scene Gliding Up and Down
the Bay, and Through the
Collins Canal

Eventually, celebrated artist Henry Hubbell found the canal ideal for the house that they would eventually call “casa Rosita”, his home, to be located at 1818 Michigan Ave.

The neighborhood was designated as a Historic District in 1999 for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of its historical period, architecture, design style and construction methods. The area is recognized for its association with events that have significantly contributed to the history of Miami Beach. The Palm view historic district stands as a testament to the rapid development of Miami Beach, particularly during the city’s initial major land development period from 1915 to 1926. Moreover, the area holds significance in its connection to two of the city’s earliest pioneers: John Collins, credited with the construction of the oldest structure within the vicinity, and Carl Fisher, renowned as the “father of Miami” for his extensive development of land across Miami Beach. The architectural styles prevalent in the neighborhood mirror those of the 1920s, encompassing ten distinct styles ranging from Mediterranean Revival to Med/Deco Transitional, Streamline Moderne, and eventually Post WWII Modern and Garden Apartment Styles. In essence, the neighborhood possesses high artistic value and historical significance, warranting its designation as a Historic District and the need for its preservation.

1818 Michigan Avenue

This contributing building, under legal description PALM VIEW SUB PB 6-29 stands at the intersection of Michigan avenue and the historically significant Collins Canal.

The firm of Schultze and Weaver was organized in New York City in 1921 by architect Leonard Schultze and engineer Major Spencer Fullerton Weaver. The firm was the finest in New York in its period, known for providing extravagantly detailed drawings and renderings. Leonard Schultze was born in Chicago in 1877, studied architecture under E. L. Masqueray, attended the Metropolitan Museum School and became chief draftsman for the firm Warren and Wetmore. Major S. (Spencer) Fullerton Weaver was born in Philadelphia in 1880 and received a degree in engineering in 1902. Weaver became well connected in New York and secured most of the commissions for the firm. Lloyd Morgan joined the firm as chief draftsman in 1926 and became a partner in 1928. In 1940, after Mr. Weaver's death the firm was reorganized and the Associates, Messrs. Morgan, Meroni and Sunderland became partners of Leonard Schultze and Ann M. Maisch a member of the firm, under the firm name Leonard Schultze and Associates, Architects.

The Palm View Historic Designation Report states “The buildings located within the proposed Palm View Historic District possess artistic value in building form, special materials (such as natural and colored keystone), detail, ornamentation, interior design, and site features. One building of exceptional historical significance is located at 1818 Michigan Avenue. Constructed in 1925 and designed by Schultze and Weaver, it was inhabited from 1930 until 1940 by portrait painter Henry Salem Hubbell. This structure was widely publicized in its time in tinted postcards and atmospheric photographs depicting its Venetian-style canal front, complete with gondolas”

The house was a two-story reinforced concrete and hollow tile building with a large living room, dining room, kitchen and butler’s pantry. Additionally, Henry would have his studio on the first floor, as well as a large rear patio with views from the whole house overlooking the



canal with steps that lead down to a boat landing. The house was well maintained and went up for sale starting in along with 1810 Michigan and 1800 Michigan. The house was listed as a “12-unit apt. house, almost new” by Hill Real Estate. The house was bought by a New York family, Maxwell Lehrman and Joseph Ronai around 1941

PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE HOUSE

Despite extensive research extending to local agencies and libraries, available imagery of the existing structure is limited to a few photographs of the exterior, and artistic renderings. Drawings are limited to the largely deteriorated microfilm depicting elevations of the model apartment Villa Biscayne. This home is believed to have been an inspiration for the original home, and was drawn by its architect, Schultze and Weaver, who labeled the Villa Biscayne project as Job No 122. No drawings of the interior nor of the interior exist for the house.

The proposed reconstruction is not bound by setbacks imposed by current development regulations. This variance is necessary to reconstruct the property in the highest possible fidelity. However, unlike the current construction, the property lines are respected. The proposed reconstruction strongly proposes all elements of the historic design which make this property one of the most unique in Miami beach. Its venetian-inspired public elements and open courtyard have been retained and considerably enhanced including the iconic three punch hole arched openings and its Mediterranean and Venetian inspired profiles, reveals and scrolls. A comparison of the drawings of the proposed home and available imagery of the existing structures demonstrate the care under which the facades and courtyard spaces have been designed.

Although the experience of the gondola navigating on the canal was a unique part of the history of the property which cannot be replicated today, our reconstruction clearly expresses the original intent of Hubbel’s canal-friendly Venetian frontages, -which are a vital part of the pedestrian and vehicular experience northwest of the property- while observing the current seawall and design flood elevation regulations.



POSTCARD SHOWING THE CANAL EXPERIENCE OF THE ORIGINAL PROPERTY



3D VIEW OF PROPOSED HOME

Joining the Northwest (canal) and east facades, two iconic 2-level structures are part of the reconstruction effort. The first is a tower element that forms an integral part of the long canal-facing facade, crowned by a gabled Spanish barrel tile roof. The second structure in this northeast corner is a 2-story structure enclosing the courtyard. The latter requires the addition of a minimally invasive garage door, placed to avoid impacting the main focus of the east facade.

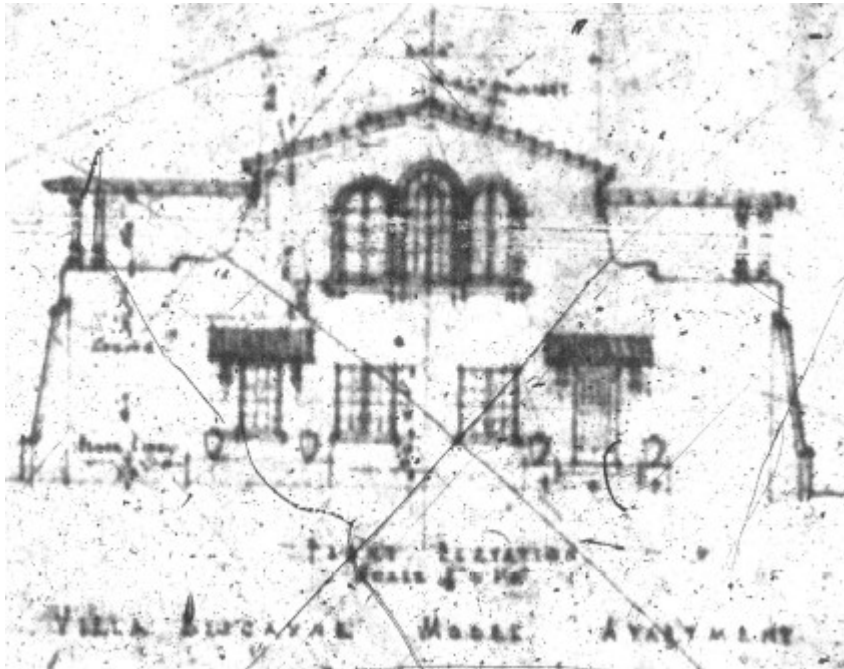


HISTORIC IMAGE SHOWING THE TOWER STRUCTURE (UPPER LEFT CORNER)



3D VIEW OF PROPOSED ELEMENTS

The east portion of the proposed facade, vital in expression of the original design, faithfully respects the Mediterranean basis, its lines delineating private and public boundaries, including the symbolic and expressive scrolls on the upper left and right wings. The existing structure had one of these symbolic scrolls removed among the illegal work done on the property over the years. The proposed design reinstates these important elements based on observing existing microfilm and promotional drawings of the home. The house's upper open deck respects the original design while offering a unique experience of openness and 2-way engagement of views from the Canal and of Dade Boulevard.



EAST ELEVATION VIEW OF HISTORIC HOME



EAST ELEVATION VIEW OF PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION HOME

PHOTO SURVEY:



EXISTING CONDITION – SOUTH ELEVATION



EXISTING CONDITION - EAST ELEVATION



EXISTING CONDITION – NORTH ELEVATION



EXISTING CONDITION – WEST ELEVATION

BUILDING CARD:

ALTERATIONS & ADDITIONS

Building Permits: # 18455 - - Painting, outside - Magnus Olsen, painter \$ 300.....June 5, 1944
 # 44767 Giffen Industries, Inc: Re-Roofing: \$ 253: June 1, 1954
 50301 by owner "For Sale" sign as per ordinance #1024 \$ xx May 2, 1956
 51829 Giffen Industries, Inc: Re Roofing \$ 470: Oct. 18, 1956
 #53453 Owner: Laying floor in garage to use for storage of furniture-\$200-6/3/57
 #53907 Owner: Repairing patio & porch - \$200.00 - July 15, 1957
 #77839 Owner, Angelillis: Minor repairs and painting - \$100 - 2/21/67
 #83296 - Antonio Painter - Paint exterior only must comply with ord. 1060 \$535.00 11/13/69
 #85042 - Owner - Paint and small repairs \$900.00 9/18/70
 #08433-Owner-Minor repairs ext. and interior no structural-\$700-1-8-76
 #08591-Owner-Replace existing windows with new units-\$500-2-11-76
 #11767-Owner-Replace deteriorated exterior stairs with same sized installation in same location-\$400-7-22-77
 #89426-Owner-Addition of storage room-\$600-10-4-77
 #14955-Owner-Re-roof 20 sqs-\$1200-5-7-79
 Plumbing Permits: # 14293- O. Schweitzer -2 showers - take out 2 sinks-, Oct.14-1940
 ""# 14372-- O. Schweitzer -- 1 lavatory-- Oct. 19-1940
 #55121-S & A Plumbing- 1 bath tub, 2 rough 8 set lavatory, 5 shower, 7 sink, slop; 2 rough, 8 set water closet, repipe-8-8-77
 #57420-Felix Fera- 1 bath tub, 2 lavatory, 1 sink, residence, 2 water closet relocate-7-9-79
 Electrical Permits: # 15865- Lyon Electric- 5 switch - 5 light outlets - 9 receptacles - 6 fixtures -
 1 center of distribution - Oct.14-1940
 #30948 Frost Television: 1 Television antennae: March 14, 1950
 #72930-Pan Am Electric- 12 switch outlets; 8 light outlets; 23 receptacles; 1 service 600 amps-2-23-76
 #74249-Pan Am Electric- 12 switch outlets, 15 light outlets, 38 receptacles, 4 a/c window-8-3-77

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Project: 1818 Michigan Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33139
14-April-2024

Henry Hubbell Joseph Ronai -owner 3234-04-014

Owner Owners Finance & Building Corporation Mailing Address Permit No. 1632 Date Dec. 4-1925

Lot 3 Block 10 Subdivision PALM VIEW Address 1818 Michigan avenue

General Contractor J. B. Orr 5152 Address RD See letter 1/26/55 (Zoning appeal)

Architect Schultze & Weaver Address

Front 50'-0 Depth 50'-0 Height 20'-0 Stories 2 Use STUDIO & MODEL APARTMENT

Type of construction Frame-Metal Cost \$ 20,000.00 Foundation Concrete Roof Comp-

Plumbing Contractor Alexander Orr, Jr. Address Date Feb. 23-19

Plumbing Fixtures 12 Rough approved by Date

Gas Stoves Date

Gas Heaters Date

Alex. Orr- Final approved by Date

Sewer connection 1 Septic tank 1 Make O'Neal Date

Electrical Contractor E. A. Robinson Address Date Dec. 28-1925

Switch Range 1 Motors Fans Temporary service

OUTLETS Light 50 HEATERS Water 1

Receptacles Space Centers of Distribution

Electrical Contractor A. E. Robinson Address Date Feb. 25-1926

No. fixtures set 28 Final approved by Date

Date of service Lowry -# 1021- 40 Outlets - Nov. 26-1929

Alterations or repairs # 3128- ADDITION - 2 garages; 1 Atelier; patio & covered Terrace- Date July 19-1929--
cost- \$ 9,500.00

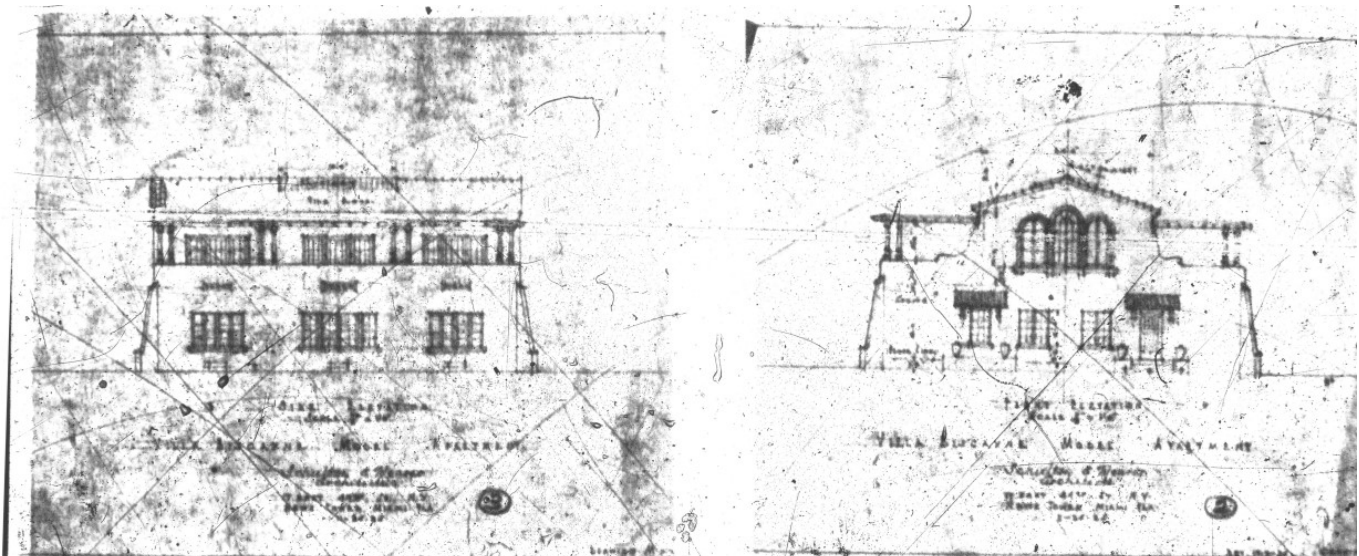
Electrical # 15419- Jones Electric- 2 switch outlets- 8 light outlets- August 12-1940

Plumbing permit - Replace lavatory and sink - Herman March- August 22-1940

BUILDING PERMIT # 14821- Remodeling 2nd floor: owner builds- \$ 1,600.- Oct. 14-1940

Over

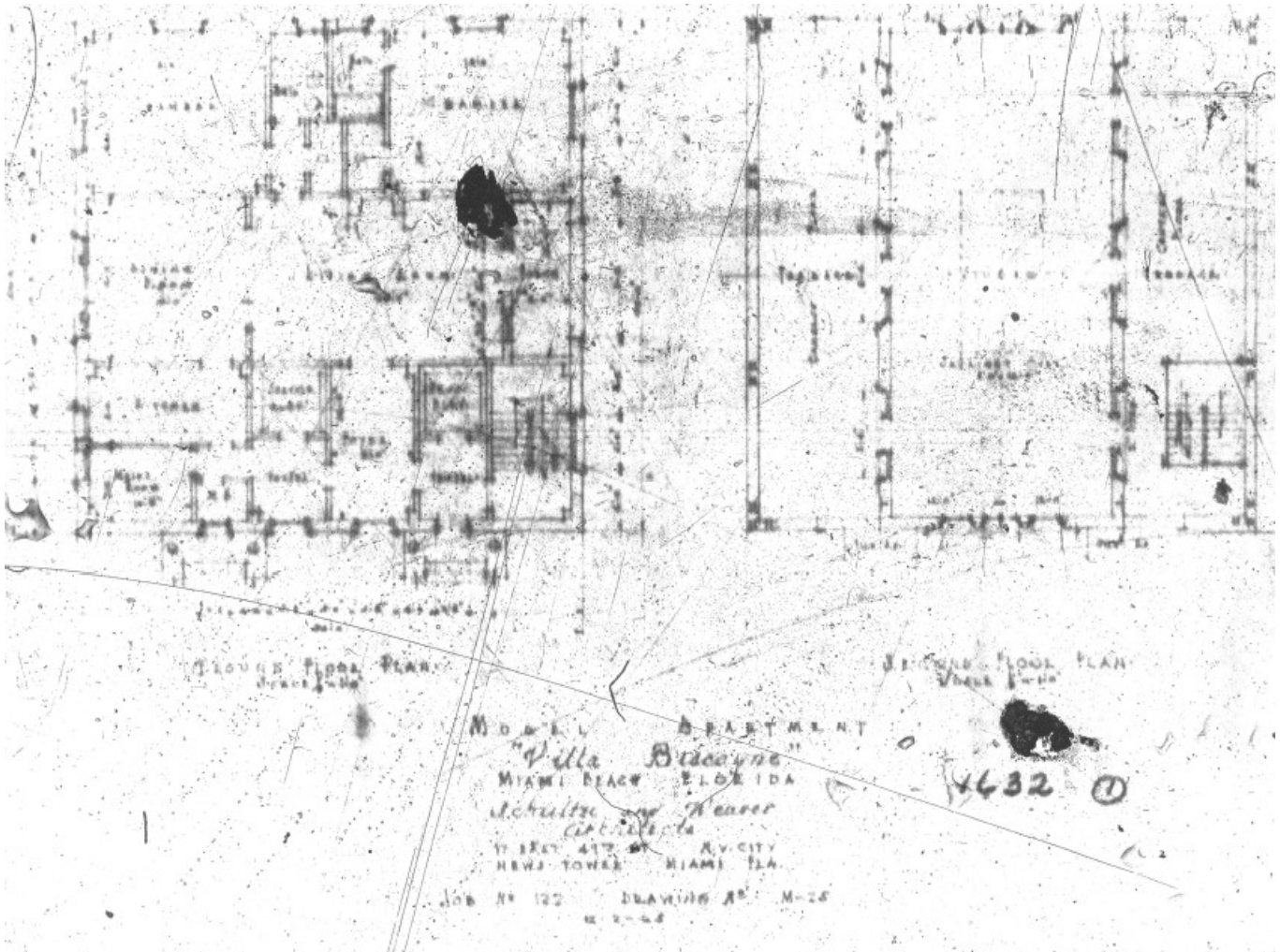
ORIGINAL DRAWINGS:



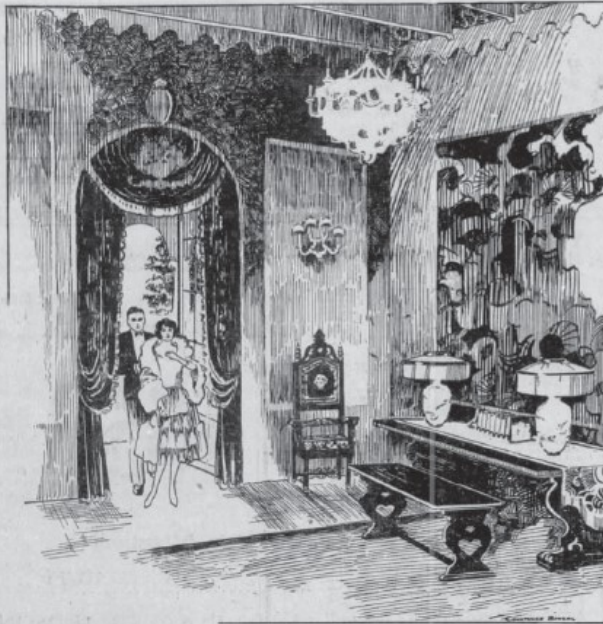
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14-April-2024



ELEVATIONS OF THE MODEL APARTMENT VILLA BISCAINE BELIEVED TO HAVE INSPIRED THE ORIGINAL HOUSE



An Exclusive
Residential Club
in a setting of
Matchless Beauty

Villa Biscayne Miami Beach

Every factor entering into a luxurious, exclusive residential building has been provided in Villa Biscayne. There is no point upon which approval may be withheld.

It is situated on the most desirable site on Miami Beach, the capital of South Florida's recreational and residential life. The six-acre point in Biscayne Bay occupied by Villa Biscayne was set aside by Carl G. Fisher for a structure of monumental beauty.

Every apartment embodies the highest degree of comfort and luxury modern construction and equipment can impart—electric refrigeration and ranges; vacuum cleaning outlets; open fireplaces; cork insulated floors; accessibility to eighteen high-speed elevators; free sweep of the ocean breezes and matchless views of ocean, bay and beach protected forever against encroachment.

Men who have helped make Miami and builders who have been identified with the best in co-operatively owned construction in New York, are the men who have made Villa Biscayne.

Service

Villa Biscayne's all-inclusive service provides complete escape from the servant problem.

Step to your telephone and maid, butler and chauffeur service is at your call, on an hourly charge basis. At your order, breakfast, luncheon or dinner will be prepared by Villa Biscayne's expert staff, either in your own apartment, or in the villa's kitchen, and served in your home.

A call or wire to the superintendent before your arrival, and your home is ready for you. If you desire, dinner will be waiting in your own home on your return from an active day of recreation.

Whether you bring your own servants, or not, you will find a service whose completeness and convenience will delight you.

Mr. Harry M. Webb of Atlantic City purchased a \$39,000 home in Villa Biscayne for his own use and two additional apartments for investment.

ASK YOUR BROKER OR CALL

CO-OWNERS FINANCE AND BUILDING CORPORATION

FISHER BUILDING
MIAMI BEACH
TELEPHONE 2556

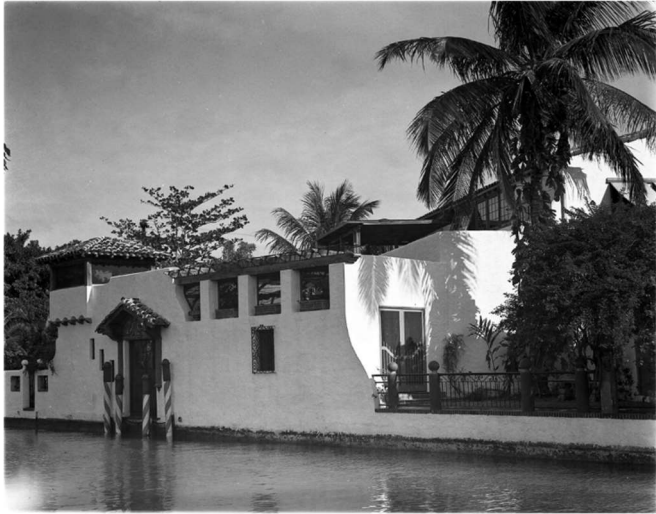
909-15
EXCHANGE BLDG.
MIAMI



East View Villa Biscayne
From Where Signal Can Be Given
to Private Yacht

PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE VILLA BISCAINE DEVELOPMENT, ITS MODEL HOUSE BELIEVED TO HAVE INSPIRED THE ORIGINAL 1818 MICHIGAN HOUSE

HISTORIC IMAGES:



VIEWS FROM THE CANAL



HUBBEL'S PORTRAIT OF HIS WIFE



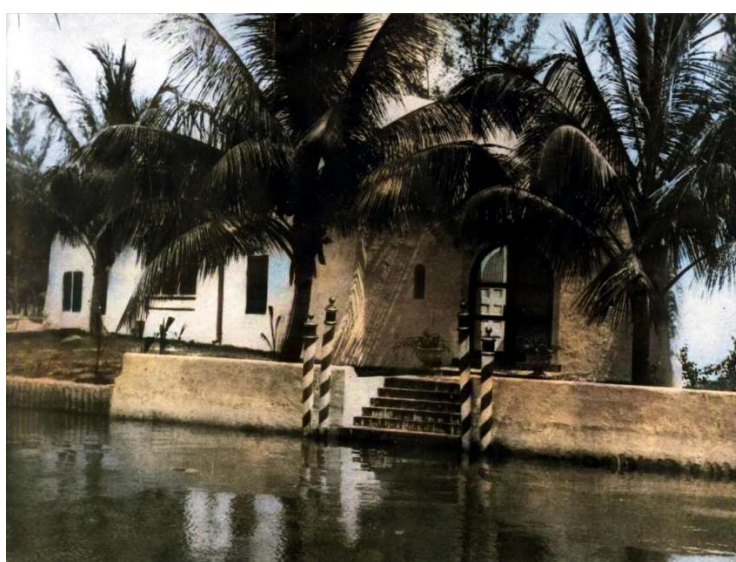
ARTISTIC RENDITION OF THE HOUSE



ARTISTEL VIEW PORTRAYING THE
RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOUSE WITH THE CANAL



EARLY PHOTOGRAPH



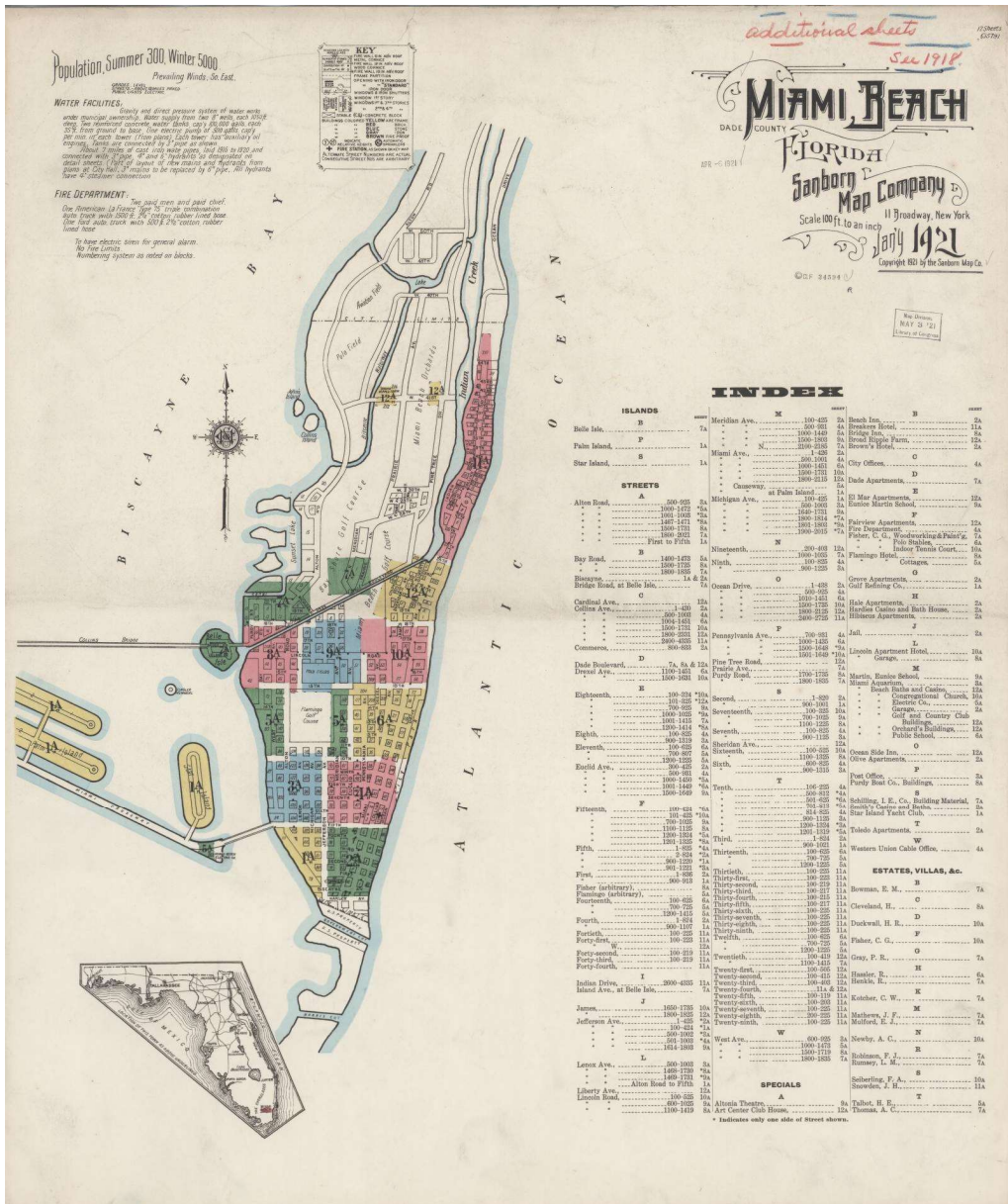
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14-April-2024



VIEWS OF THE COURTYARD AND THE CANAL



1921 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP FROM MIAMI BEACH, DADE COUNTY FLORIDA.

END OF REPORT

1. The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida) Oct 28, 2012
2. The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida) Oct 30, 1921
3. The Miami News (Miami, Florida) Oct 24, 1926
4. RE: Miami Beach <https://www.remiamibeach.com/>
5. Miami Beach Studio Home of Henry Salem Hubbell <https://tinyurl.com/yc6nfp6r>
6. The Miami News (Miami, Florida) Jan 11, 1921
7. <https://naturalatlas.com/canals/collins-979450>