

318 Australian Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

November 17, 2023

**Landmark Preservation Commission
Palm Beach, Florida**

318 Australian Avenue

Table of Contents

I. GENERAL INFORMATION	2
II. LOCATION MAP	3
III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION	4
IV. HISTORICAL INFORMATION	7
V. ARCHITECT'S BIOGRAPHY	9
VI. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	10
VII. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION	10
VIII. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

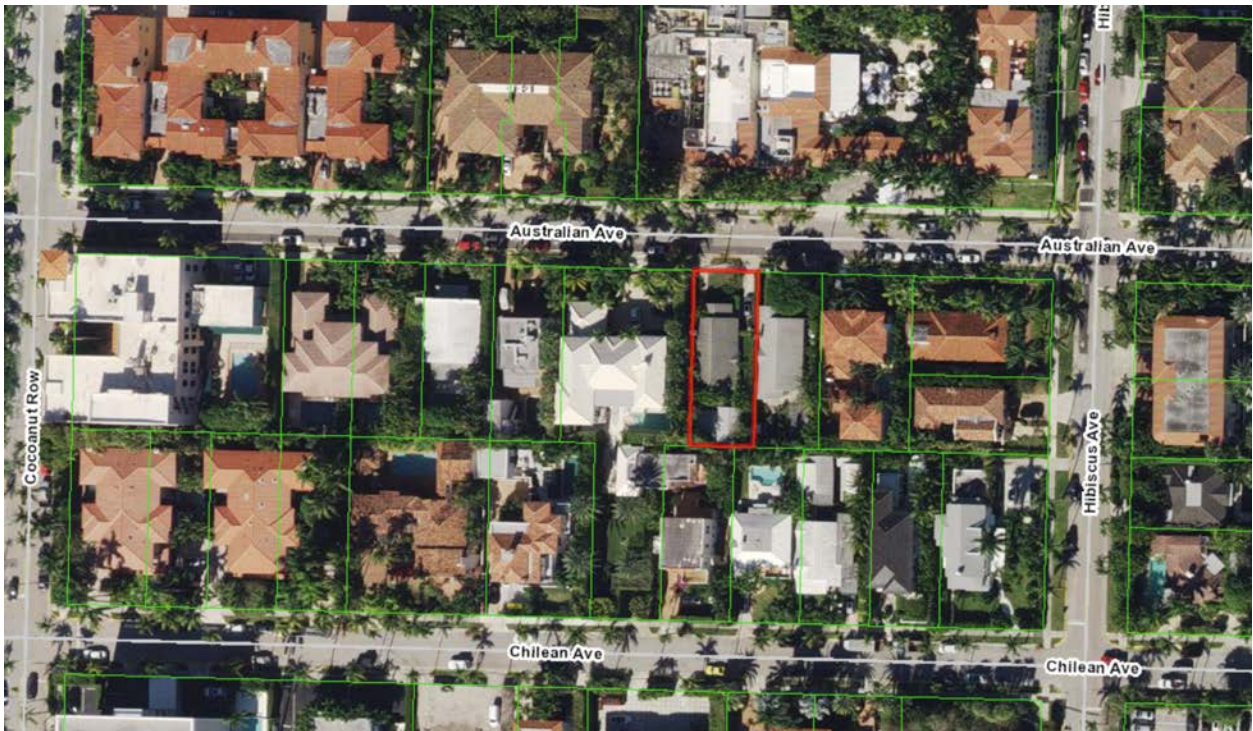
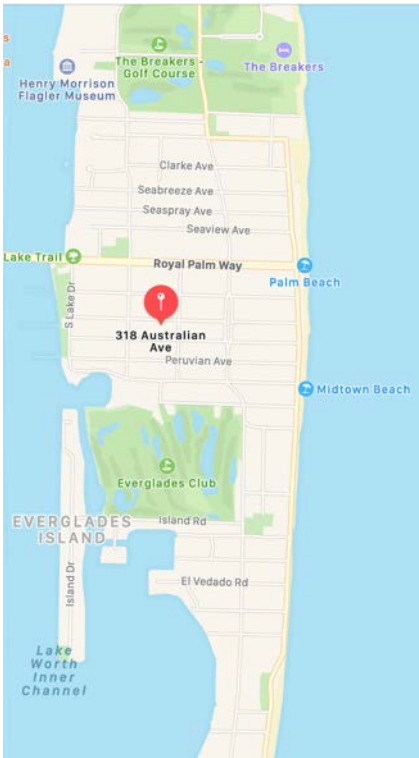
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I. General Information

Location:	318 Australian Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	circa 1918
Historic Name:	Passamaquaddy
Architect:	Not Listed; Likely Contractor Designed and Built
Builder/Contractor:	Unknown
Current Owner:	Combinat, LLC
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	R-C (Medium Density Residential)
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-23-05-006-0181
Current Legal Description:	Royal Park Addition East 7 Feet of Lot 18, Lot 19 & West 14 Feet of Lot 20 Block 6

II. Location Map

318 Australian Avenue



III. Architectural Information

The house located at 318 Australian Avenue is a one-story Bungalow built circa 1918 just prior to Palm Beach's 1920s building boom.¹ The dwelling is located on the south side of Australian Avenue between Hibiscus Avenue and Cocoanut Row in the Royal Park subdivision.



The Bungalow style was a dominant style of smaller houses built throughout the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century. The Bungalow design originated as shelter for British travelers in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.² By the time it reached the United States in the late-nineteenth century, the Bungalow had gained design features from both Japanese architecture and the English Arts and Crafts movement. The American version of the Craftsman-type Bungalow originated in Southern California primarily through the work of the Greene Brothers. Central to the Bungalow's popularity was the idea that simplicity

¹ The 2020 Town of Palm Beach Historic Site Survey lists 1918-1929 as the Palm Beach Boom to Bust years. The Town was growing in 1918, but the main Boom years were the early to mid 1920s. There is no original building permit for 318 Australian Avenue. The first building permit is 1928 for storm damage.

² The term "Bungalow" was inspired by the British Colonial experience in India at the turn of the century. Derived from either the Hindu name "Bania" that was used to describe a house built for the English Civil Service by native Indian labor, or the Indian word "Bangle" which was a small, thatched hut that the English adapted with wide, covered verandas and an open floor plan to facilitate cross ventilation and protection in the hot dusty Indian climate. Despite which derivation the word "Bungalow" comes from, the inspiration of the style is from India.

and artistry could work together and still be an affordable home. The style's popularity spread quickly throughout the United States when plans were published in pattern books and popular magazines as well as prefabricated kit homes.³ Between 1910 and the mid-1920s Bungalows became the most popular style of middle-class architecture in south Florida.

Principal characteristics of the Bungalow style are a simple design with a low sloping gable roof and a quintessential front porch to provide additional living space. The low-pitched gable roof generally has wide unenclosed eave overhangs to shield the house from the sun and exposed rafter tails with their ends sometimes cut to profile for decorative purposes. A triangular knee brace that projects from the front gable is also a common feature of the bungalow. Windows are most often double-hung sash with simple flat wood trim and frequently found in contiguous bands. Many Bungalow porches have a supporting-post construction with short square upper posts resting on massive piers, which often taper as they rise. Other Bungalow characteristics include the use of natural materials, double gable roofs, bargeboards, and exterior chimneys.⁴



³ The current owners found an Honor Bilt Modern Homes Sears Roebuck and Company Catalog #596 in the house. This dwelling is not from a Sears Roebuck and Company prefabricated kit home; however the floor plan and some detailing is close to the Argyle model which may have been an inspiration to the builder of this dwelling.

⁴ A bargeboard, also known as a raked fascia board, is a board fastened to each projecting gable of a roof to give it strength and protection, and to conceal the otherwise exposed end grain of the horizontal timbers or purlins of the roof.

Built of frame construction, 318 Australian Avenue is one-story in height, sided with clapboard and topped with low pitched gable roofs over both the front porch and the main house. Both roofs have broad overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and are covered with asphalt shingles. The front gable on the porch has lattice at the attic vent and wood shingles below. A leading character defining feature of the house are the columns composed of pyramidal elephantine coral stone piers topped with short square upper posts on the east and west corners of the front porch. There is also a small decorative stone feature at the top of the pier. An additional pronounced feature of the dwelling is the tall chimney constructed of rough coral stone matching the stone on the porch piers. This chimney is located on the west exterior wall and features a triangular chimney cap. On the east and west walls there are mostly one-over-one sash replacement windows in an irregular fenestration and the current entry to the dwelling is through a multi-lite wood door on the west side of the front porch. In addition, there are intersecting gables with eave overhangs on both the east and west roof slopes.



Over its 105-year history, there have been additions and alterations to 318 Australian Avenue. In 1976 the screened front porch was enclosed with windows and a door and at an unknown later date the notched ends of the bargeboards were removed.⁵ Other exterior changes to the dwelling include the replacement of wood windows

⁵ Town of Palm Beach microfiche, 318 Australian Avenue. The drawing on this permit shows a notched bargeboard on the porch gable end. It is unclear on this drawing if the bargeboard on the main roof gable is notched.

with aluminum windows, the replacement of doors, rear additions in both 1941 and 1950, and at least four replacements of the roofing material.

The property at 318 Australian Avenue also includes a one-story, frame detached building in the rear. This building, also designed in the Bungalow style, has a low-pitched cross gable roof with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. Like the main dwelling, this rear building has clapboard siding, replacement aluminum one-over-one sash windows and a multi-lite entry door. Decorative features of this rear building are the bargeboards with flared and notched ends on both the front and rear gables.⁶



Accessory Structure



Bargeboard Detail on Accessory Structure

IV. Historical Information

318 Australian Avenue is an early Town of Palm Beach Bungalow constructed circa 1918 in the Royal Park subdivision. The development of Royal Park was a tremendous undertaking planned by early Palm Beach pioneer Mr. Harvey Geer. As winter residents arrived in increasing numbers each year, Mr. Geer saw the need for desirable home sites in the resort and in 1908 the Palm Beach Improvement Company was organized with members Harvey Geer, George W. Jonas, Cap E. N. Dimick, and Otto Kublin.⁷ This subdivision, which in 1908 was mostly jungle, sand, and muck, included 160 acres of land from approximate present-day Royal Palm Way south to Worth Avenue, and from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Worth. Over a half million yards of fill were pumped by hydraulic dredge, employing two hundred men for three years to complete the work and start the first real estate development in Palm Beach outside of the Flagler Hotel properties. After the dredging, it was

⁶ It is likely that the front porch and main house bargeboards had flared and notched ends like the rear building and the dwelling next door at 314 Australian Avenue.

⁷ Cap Elisha N. Dimick became the first mayor of Palm Beach and Harvey Geer served on the Palm Beach Town Council for many years including serving as president.

decided that the area was to be developed in its entirety at one time. A sea wall was built, areas of the land were filled in and graded, and the streets and sidewalks were constructed. Lighting, water mains, electricity and telephone lines were installed, and a bridge was constructed to connect Royal Park to West Palm Beach at Royal Palm Way in 1911. The first houses in the new development were mostly single-family frame dwellings built by individual owners and small developers. When 318 Australian Avenue was constructed circa 1918, it was the beginning of significant growth in Palm Beach. The end of World War I began a remarkable decade of growth and prosperity throughout the country and the boom years quickly followed in Palm Beach.⁸

318 Australian Avenue was constructed as one of three Bungalows along the south side of Australian Avenue between Hibiscus Avenue and Cocoanut Row, later with the addresses of 310, 314 and 318 Australian Avenue. The three dwellings were similar in size and style and were most likely designed and constructed by the same builder.⁹ The 1919 Sanborn Insurance Company map shows the three houses on one property with the middle dwelling named Kirkland. This house was initially owned by Sarah E. Kirk of Devil's Lake, Wisconsin.¹⁰

Early Palm Beach directories list a "cottage" on the south side of Australian Avenue west of Hibiscus Avenue as Passamaquoddy, and in 1925 the address 318 Australian Avenue is listed as Passamaquoddy and owned by Mrs. Rosalie Stewart Magee.¹¹ Mrs. Rosalie Magee of Boston, Massachusetts, was a successful realtor and owner of a number of Palm Beach County properties. She personally knew Harry Kelsey, founder of Kelsey City, and specialized in selling real estate in Kelsey City.¹² In Palm Beach Mrs. Magee was actively involved with the Palm Beach County Real Estate Board, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Spanish War Veterans, the Animal Rescue League, the League of Women Voters and various musical circles. For a few years in the early 1930s, Mrs. Magee lived in California and worked for Harry

⁸ Railroad and road construction had significantly increased, and Florida became much more accessible to northerners wishing to spend the winter months in the state.

⁹ In 1918, H. C. and Rita Bartholomew are listed as living in one of the three dwellings on the south side of Australian Avenue between Hibiscus Avenue and Cocoanut Row. H.C. Bartholomew was an early Palm Beach builder and developer and may have designed and built these three dwellings.

¹⁰ A December 2, 1919, Palm Beach Post article noted that Mrs. S.E. Kirk arrived by train to spend the season in her home, Kirkland Cottage, on Australian Avenue in Royal Park.

¹¹ Prior to 1925 Passamaquoddy had several different tenants including F.K. Glidden (1920), Stanley J. Wakeley (1922), William H. Miller (1923). Passamaquoddy are a Native American tribe with their homeland located on the Maine and Canada border. It is not known if there is an association with the Passamaquoddy tribe and the early owners of 318 Australian Avenue.

¹² Kelsey City was renamed Lake Park in the late 1930s. Both Harry Kelsey and Rosalie Magee were from Boston so they may have known each other prior to moving to Florida.

Culver, founder and owner of Culver City, California. Mrs. Magee continued to own Passamaquoddy until her death in 1936.¹³ During Mrs. Magee's eleven years of ownership, the area around her property changed significantly. Like much of Palm Beach, Royal Park was booming in the 1920s with both residential and commercial construction. After completion of the new Palm Beach Town Hall and Fire Station at the end of 1925, the area became the town's new governmental center and surrounding businesses thrived. In 1926, the Brazilian Court hotel opened across the street from 318 Australian Avenue and the Vineta hotel opened at the west end of the block, bringing many visitors and a commercial element to the immediate neighborhood. And just three blocks to the south, Worth Avenue was developing with world class shopping and dining and the sought after Everglades Club.

In 1937, Russell H. and Mildred Hull purchased the property at 318 Australian Avenue. After returning from WWI duty in the Marine Corps, Russell Hull and his brother Lytle entered the cattle business in Florida.¹⁴ However, with the 1920s land and building boom, Russell and his two brothers George and Lytle became engaged in real estate in Palm Beach and Mildred Hull became an interior designer with many notable Palm Beach clients. The Hulls lived at 318 Australian Avenue for 30 years until Russell Hull passed away and the property was purchased by Theodore M. Wennergren in 1967. Theo Wennergren worked at the renowned Findlay Galleries which opened a Palm Beach location in 1961 on Worth Avenue just a short distance from his house on Australian Avenue. Theo Wennergren owned 318 Australian Avenue for 17 years until it was sold to Shannon G. Sadler Hull in 1984 returning the property to the Hull family. Shannon G. Sadler Hull worked for the Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin Counties for 28 years, retiring in 2008 as president and CEO. She lived at 318 Australian Avenue for 39 years until the property was purchased by the current owner Combinat, LLC in 2023.¹⁵

V. Architects Biography

There is no Building Permit for 318 Australian Avenue and therefore, like many of the more modest Palm Beach houses built prior to 1920, it was most likely designed and constructed by a local builder.¹⁶

¹³ Mrs. Rosalie Stewart Magee passed away in Palm Beach in 1936 at the age of 45. During the early 1930s she leased the house at 318 Australian Avenue to various seasonal tenants.

¹⁴ Russell Hull spent his childhood in Tuxedo Park, NY and graduated from Yale University. He spent a year in Alaska during the Gold Rush, later worked on the Panama Canal and then went into the cattle business in Texas before serving in WWI and moving to Florida after the war.

¹⁵ The owner is currently proposing a rehabilitation of the property.

¹⁶ The 1918 City Directory lists H.C. Bartholomew living at or near this address (there are no specific addresses listed in the 1918 City Directory). H. C. Bartholomew was an early Palm Beach builder and developer who may have been

VI. Statement of Significance

The house at 318 Australian Avenue was constructed in circa 1918 in the Royal Park subdivision, the first real estate development in Palm Beach outside of the Flagler Hotel property. The dwelling is a good example of the Bungalow style of architecture that was popular in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century. Because of the widespread popularity of this style, this house not only embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, but also reflects a broad national trend. In addition, Bungalows are important to the historic architectural composition of Palm Beach, but they have been one of the Town's fastest disappearing styles and deserve local protection.

VII. Criteria For Designation

Section 54-161 of the Town of Palm Beach Landmarks Preservation Ordinance outlines the criteria for designation of a landmark or landmark site and suggests that at least one criterion must be met to justify the designation. Listed below are criteria which relate to this property and justification for designation:

(1) "Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, country or town."

The dwelling at 318 Australian Avenue reflects the broad cultural, economic and social history of the nation and town. Coming out of the Craftsman movement of the early twentieth century, the Bungalow style of architecture enjoyed widespread popularity throughout the United States. Variations of the style were built in Palm Beach during the early years of the Island's history and this house is a good example of both the local and national trends. 318 Australian Avenue was built in the Royal Park development which was the result of an immense undertaking by the Palm Beach Improvement Company to provide home sites for the growing number of northerners wishing to make Palm Beach their winter home. 318 Australian Avenue is also representative of the early development of Palm Beach. Being constructed circa 1918, the property represents the beginning of the Town's major period of real estate growth which culminated with the early to mid 1920s boom time era. In addition, Mrs. Rosalie Stewart Magee, an early owner of the property, was very involved in the real estate industry as were the Hull family who followed her as the property owners.

responsible for the design and construction of 318 Australian Avenue, as well as 310 and 314 Australian Avenue. However, without an original building permit this is just speculative.

(3) “Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or is a specimen inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, method of construction or use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.”

The house at 318 Australian Avenue is a very good example of the Bungalow style of architecture and features distinguishing characteristics of the style that make it valuable for study. These characteristics include one-story frame construction with clapboard siding and simple decoration, low-pitched gable roofs with wide eave overhangs and exposed rafter tails, a front porch with columns of pyramidal elephantine coral stone piers topped with short square upper posts, and a tall chimney constructed of rough coral stone matching the stone on the porch piers. In addition, this circa 105-year-old frame structure has stood the test of time and is one of the older extant buildings in Palm Beach, which makes it additionally valuable for study.

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