

**The President of Palm Beach
Condominium
2505 South Ocean Boulevard**



DESIGNATION REPORT

January 17, 2024

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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I. General Information

Location: 2505 South Ocean Boulevard
Palm Beach, Florida

Date of Construction: 1961-1963

Architect: Norman N. Robson
Robson & Gesbocker Architects

Original Owner: Calig Land Company (Morris Calig Enterprises)

Builder/Contractor: Collins Construction Corporation

Original Name: The President; The President Apartments

Current Name: The President of Palm Beach

Current Owners: Multiple Owners (See Attached List)

Present Use: Residential Condominium Building

Legal Description: Beginning at the point of intersection of the Westerly extension of the North line of Lot 142, Palm Beach Estates, as recorded in Plat Book 8, Page 3, Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida, with the Westerly Right of Way Line of State Road A-1-A, as shown in Road Plat Book 1, Page 91, Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida; Thence run along said Westerly extension of the North line of said lot 142 for a distance of 295.82 feet to a point on the bulkhead line established and approved by the Town of Palm Beach; thence turn an angle of 89° 34'45" measured from the preceding course to the South and run for a distance of 105.55 feet along the

bulkhead line to a point; Thence; turn an angle of $87^{\circ}05'10''$ measured from the preceding course to the East run for a distance of 82.80 feet to a Point of Curve; Thence run along the arc of a curve concave to the West having a radius of 95.00 feet and a central angle of 180° for a distance of 298.45 feet to a Point of Tangent; Thence along a tangent to the aforementioned curve for a distance of 82.42 feet to a point; Thence turn an angle of $92^{\circ}54'50''$ measured from the preceding course to the south and run for a distance of 95.25 feet to a point 10 feet North of and measured at right angles to the Westerly extension of the South line of Lot 143 of said Palm Beach Estates; Thence turn an angle of $90^{\circ}25'15''$ measured from the preceding course to the East and run along a line 10 feet North of and parallel to the Westerly extension of the South Line of Lot 143, Palm Beach Estates, for a distance of 313.47 feet to a point on the Westerly Right-of-Way line, along the arc of a curve concave to the West having a radius of 11,397.97 feet and a central angle of $1^{\circ}41'49''$ for a distance of 337.58 feet to a Point of Tangent; Thence along a tangent to the to the aforementioned curve for a distance of 53.56 feet, to the Point of Beginning, lying, being and situate in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Unit Numbers, Owners and Parcel Control Numbers

201	Leavitt, Christopher C. & Katherine M. TR & Leavitt, Katherine M Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-2010
202	Hayes, Rosemarie Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-2020
203	Leavitt, Christopher C. & Katherine M. TR & Leavitt, Katherine M Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-2030
204	Cohen, Jack S., Maxine A. & Howard B.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2040
205	Morgan, Andrea S.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2050
206	Shacter, Joan	50-43-44-23-01-000-2060
207	Montani, Adriana C.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2070
208	Phares, Joan A.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2080
210	Crowley, Drew & Jane	50-43-44-23-01-000-2100
211	Mulcahy, Daniel J. & Joan B.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2110
212	Stratigos, Theodore & Schiaffino, Lori	50-43-44-23-01-000-2120
214	Darlington, Stephen G. & Mary E.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2140
215	Keen Family Development Trust & Keen, Enrique TR	50-43-44-23-01-000-2150
216	McCracken, Peter M.	50-43-44-23-01-000-2160
217	Rose, Jill Hall	50-43-44-23-01-000-2170
301	Egana, Maria D.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3010
302	White, Dru S. & Alberts, Sandra	50-43-44-23-01-000-3020

303	Sowers, Chris & Jane	50-43-44-23-01-000-3030
304	Bader, Harold B.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3040
305	Aizenberg, Michael & Joanna	50-43-44-23-01-000-3050
306	Dove, James	50-43-44-23-01-000-3060
307	Evans, Robert D. & Kate C.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3070
308	Hoge, Sharon K.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3080
309	Pryshlak, Daria Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-3090
310	Corrado, Andrew F. & Lucy R.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3100
311	Krieger, Mitchell	50-43-44-23-01-000-3110
312	Galipeau, Reynold J. & Geraldine M.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3120
314	Rinehart, Wayne & Odalys	50-43-44-23-01-000-3140
315	Dalton, Calvin R.	50-43-44-23-01-000-3150
316	Colgan, Sigrid & Colgan, Sigrid TR & Sigrid Colgan TR TITL HLDR	50-43-44-23-01-000-3160
317	Muller, Irene C. Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-3170
401	Perlman, Barbara	50-43-44-23-01-000-4010
402	Golde, Lea Marie	50-43-44-23-01-000-4020
403	Negoescu, Alexandre & Cristina	50-43-44-23-01-000-4030
404	Marino, Joseph L., Jr. & Emily M.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4040
405	Tan, Gary and Ashley M.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4050

406	Marino, Joseph L., Jr. & Emily M.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4060
407	Trevor, Nancy C.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4070
408	Wynn, Patricia H. Trust & Wynn, Patricia H. TR	50-43-44-23-01-000-4080
409	Calden, Sue E.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4090
410	Wynn, Patricia H. Trust & Wynn, Patricia H. TR	50-43-44-23-01-000-4100
411	Wilson, Martin C. & Jane C.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4110
412	Salvia, Joseph A. Tr & Salvia, Mary Tr & Salvia Family investment Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-4120
414	Mandell, Danielle J. & Gabrielle S.	50-43-44-23-01-000-4140
415	Lofrese, Daniel L., Jr	50-43-44-23-01-000-4150
416	Lief, Ingrid	50-43-44-23-01-000-4160
417	Kris Fuchs Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-4170
501	Reiman, Michael S.	50-43-44-23-01-000-5010
502	Rinaldo, Donna	50-43-44-23-01-000-5020
503	Ochs, Helmut	50-43-44-23-01-000-5030
504	Charney, Stephanie & Arsene, Vladimir	50-43-44-23-01-000-5040
505	Lee, Hyunjung	50-43-44-23-01-000-5050
506	Arsene, Vladimir & Charney, Stephanie	50-43-44-23-01-000-5060
507	Nitchmann, Louis P. & Christine	50-43-44-23-01-000-5070

508	Foreman, Phillip & Denise	50-43-44-23-01-000-5080
509	Pielak, Odette	50-43-44-23-01-000-5090
510	Ritenour, David & Abreu, Miriam	50-43-44-23-01-000-5110
512	Bloom, Donald S. Family Trust & Bloom Donald S. Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-5120
514	Sowards, Buckley D.	50-43-44-23-01-000-5140
515	Hanna, Timothy K.	50-43-44-23-01-000-5150
516	Starr, Elva D. R. & Starr, Elva Diane Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-5160
517	Schwartz, Barberina	50-43-44-23-01-000-5170
601	Judar, Charlotte	50-43-44-23-01-000-6010
602	Baumler, Manfred	50-43-44-23-01-000-6020
603	Reidy, Dennis & Reidy Dennis Tr	50-43-44-23-01-000-6030
604	Chu, Quyue	50-43-44-23-01-000-6040
605	Margolies, Matthew & Eileen	50-43-44-23-01-000-6050
606	O'Connor, Francis X. & Donna	50-43-44-23-01-000-6060
607	Dalton, Allen	50-43-44-23-01-000-6070
608	Wunsch, Charles M. & Hojnacki, Linda H., Wunsch, Charles M. TR & Hojnacki, Linda H. TR & Charles Wunsch ET ALTR TITL HLDRS	50-43-44-23-01-000-6080
609	Marino, Carole L.	50-43-44-23-01-000-6090
610	Garito, Stephen A.	50-43-44-23-01-000-6100

611	Winters, Nestor A. & Barbara	50-43-44-23-01-000-6110
612	Schaefer, Elise TR & Schaefer, Elise Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-6120
614	Fischer, Clifford R.	50-43-44-23-01-000-6140
615	Gottesman, Peter & Irene D.	50-43-44-23-01-000-6150
616	Sandground, Evelyn H. Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-6160
617	Tepper, Sheryl	50-43-44-23-01-000-6170
701	Kesman, Steven E.	50-43-44-23-01-000-7010
702	Axelrod, Terry & Shapiro, Heather	50-43-44-23-01-000-7020
703	Charney, Aaron & Hanani, Benjamin	50-43-44-23-01-000-7030
704	Axelrod, Terry & Shapiro, Heather	50-43-44-23-01-000-7040
705	Sibson, Bruce W. & Demry W.	50-43-44-23-01-000-7050
707	Kelly, Stan A. & Kelly, Stan A. TR & Stan A. Kelly TR TITL HLDR	50-43-44-23-01-000-7070
708	Hoening, Gerald	50-43-44-23-01-000-7080
709	Kelly, Stan A. & Kelly, Stan A. TR & Stan A. Kelly TR TITL HLDR	50-43-44-23-01-000-7090
710	Chautin, Alex & Jessica	50-43-44-23-01-000-7100
711	Einiker, Thomas P. & Gail	50-43-44-23-01-000-7110
712	Charney, Aaron, & Hanani, Benjamin	50-43-44-23-01-000-7120
714	Lei Thomas D TR & Lei & Lu Family	50-43-44-23-01-000-7140
715	Hanley, Stephen & Patricia	50-43-44-23-01-000-7150

716	Hanke, John V.	50-43-44-23-01-000-7160
717	RJ Fendrick Irrevocable Trust & JC Sacknowitz Irrevocable Trust	50-43-44-23-01-000-7170

II. Location Map



III. Architectural Information

The President of Palm Beach is a distinctive condominium located in the south end of Palm Beach at 2505 South Ocean Boulevard. The Mid-Century Modern building was designed by architect Norman Robson in 1961 and constructed by the Collins Construction Corporation between 1961 and 1963. Located just south of the Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course on the west side of South Ocean Boulevard, Robson's design for The President takes advantage of its waterfront location with a semi-circular plan which provides each residential unit with an uninterrupted view of the waters of Lake Worth.



East Façade

Modern architectural styles were popular following World War II as they were a by-product of post-war optimism. Architects and designers were moving away from period architectural styles and were adapting various modernist movements to create new designs, including what would become known as the Mid-Century Modern style. Mid-Century Modern architecture used modern materials and building techniques and was defined by clean lines, simple shapes, and refined simplicity. A further development of Frank Lloyd Wright's principles of organic architecture combined with elements reflected in the International and Bauhaus movements, Mid-Century Modern architecture generally features geometric forms, facades surfaced with smooth stucco, large amounts of glass, cantilevers running the length of the building, decorative grilles, ornamental masonry elements, angular details, and minimal ornamentation.



Main Entrance, Looking Northwest

The President of Palm Beach is a stylish seven-story U-shaped residential structure currently containing 94 units. The building was constructed of steel and concrete finished with smooth stucco and has a flat roof with a decorative parapet. Norman Robson's Mid-Century Modern design for the structure is characterized by its curvilinear massing blended with a play of vertical and horizontal elements.

The focal point of The President's design is the centrally located, vertical, pre-cast concrete geometric panel with stone aggregate. The panel shares the same elongated honeycomb-like pattern as the building's railings with the addition of stone aggregate within the hexagonal shapes which adds an organic element to the building's design. The panel rises from the building's porte cochere which features a wavy, compressed arch, cantilevered canopy that is supported by rectangular posts. The main entrance to the building is located via the porte cochere and provides

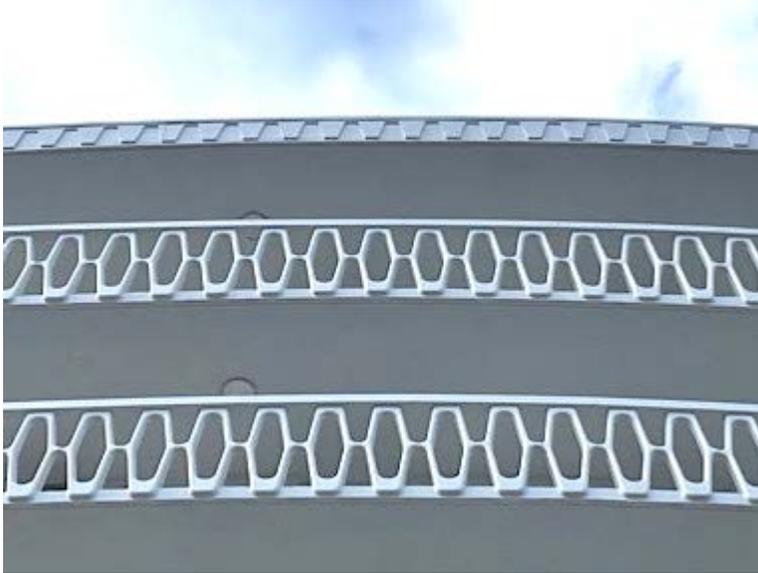
access to the building's lobby through a pair of metal and glass doors flanked by fixed glass panels.



Main Entrance

The central section of the building's ground floor features the lobby with a central elevator and additional community spaces such as a lounge, kitchen, and gym. On each side of the center section are covered parking areas for the residents and the western ends contain elevators, storage areas and restrooms.

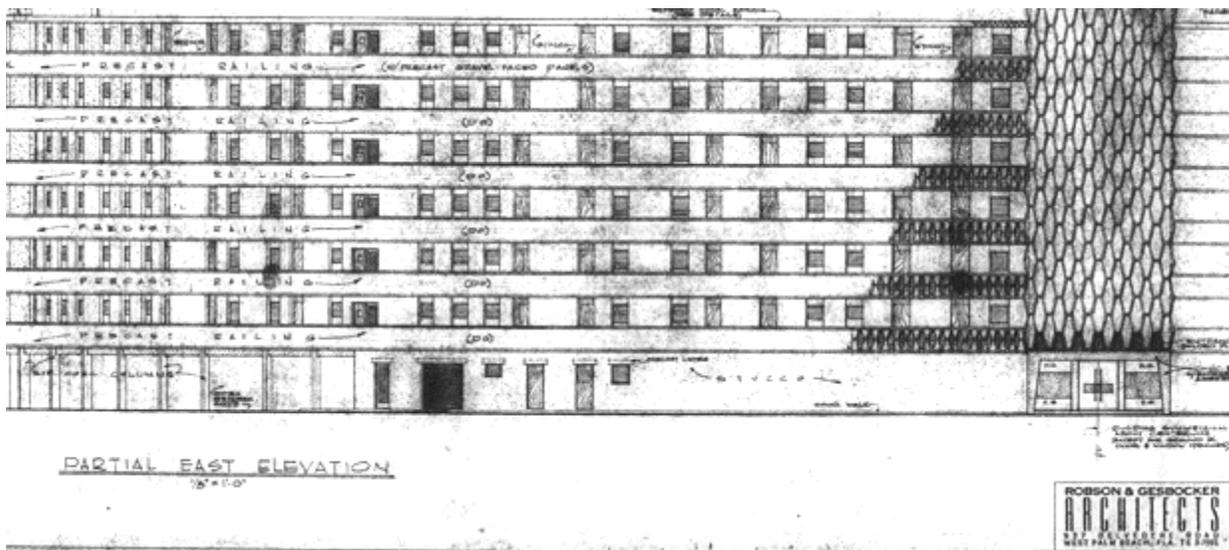
The residential units are located on the six upper floors and are accessed by cantilevered balconies that run the length of the building along the outer eastern radius of the structure's curved form. These balconies with the elegant pre-cast concrete geometric railings are a significant architectural feature of the design and form curving sheltered galleries that are crowned at the roof line by a decorative parapet. The units are laid out with the entrance foyers and kitchens along the outer curve of the building allowing the living areas and bedrooms to enjoy views of the Intracoastal Waterway.



Parapet & Balcony Railing Details



Curved Balcony Walkways



Original Design for Partial East Elevation
Robson & Gesbocker Architects, 1961

The western façade of the building looks out to Lake Worth and features private balconies for each residential unit. The balconies ring the internal curve of the structure and continue the use of the structure’s character-defining geometric balcony railing design. The balconies are accessed from the units through sliding glass doors with hurricane protection provided by accordion shutters which close behind the railings.



View of West Facade from the Dock

The President’s semi-circular design is sited to create an internal courtyard containing a free-form shaped swimming pool and a garden with curvilinear walkways. The design and placement of the structure on the property provides a sense of privacy for the community’s residents. The water line at the western end of the property is highlighted by a bulkhead railing, with the same geometric design as the balcony railings, and a boat marina.

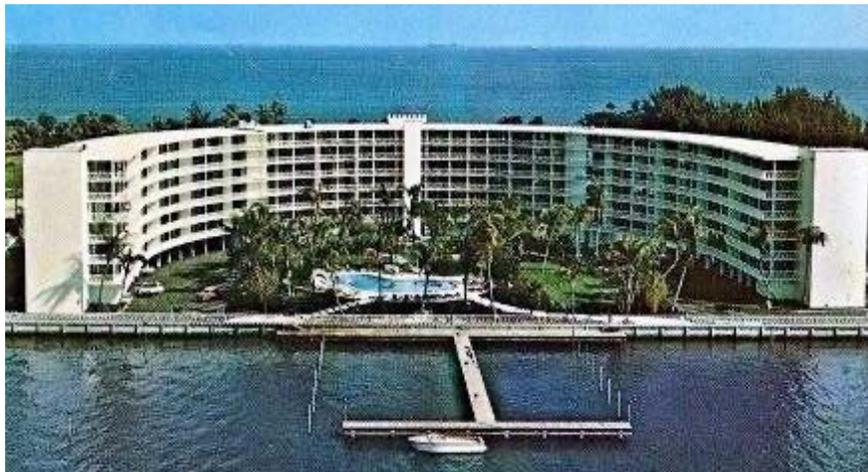


Aerial Views
Courtesy of the President of Palm Beach



Main Façade
Courtesy of The President of Palm Beach

The Board and residents of the President of Palm Beach appreciate Robson's elegant Mid-Century Modern design for their building and have been excellent stewards of the property. Renovations have been undertaken to preserve the property's significant architectural features, protect the structure, and update community amenities for current and future residents. Over the years there have been alterations primarily to the interior of the units and to windows and doors but the overall design of the exterior of the structure has been maintained and the property's historic and architectural integrity has been preserved.¹



Postcard of the West Façade of The President of Palm Beach, date unknown
Courtesy of The President of Palm Beach

¹ The residential units originally featured jalousie windows on the east façade which have been replaced over the years with one-over-one sash windows. Accordion shutters have been installed in each unit to provide hurricane protection to the west façade. These shutters have been located to the interior side of the balcony railings allowing for the balcony design to be visible even when the shutters are closed.

IV. Historical Information

The history of Palm Beach started long ago with native peoples inhabiting the area around 5,000 BCE. However, it was not until the late nineteenth century that Standard Oil tycoon Henry Flagler became instrumental in transforming the island of jungles and swamps into a preeminent winter resort by extending his Florida East Coast Railway southward to the area and opening the Royal Poinciana Hotel in 1894 and the Breakers Hotel in 1896.² Prior to World War I most of the seasonal residents resided in the hotels but following the war there was a 1920s land and housing boom where grand estates were built by some of the richest people in America and upper middle class neighborhoods, attractive commercial corridors and luxury hotels were built to accommodate the arrival of new residents and tourists.

Palm Beach did experience effects of the late 1920s land and housing bust and the following Great Depression, however, following World War II Palm Beach flourished and grew exponentially. Part of this substantial growth was the result of a zoning law passed by Town Council in 1947 which raised the housing density in midtown as well as in the stretch of land starting at Sloan's Curve and running south to Palm Beach's southern border, which included the land where The President of Palm Beach was constructed.³ In addition, prior to the devastating hurricane of 1947, State Road A1A (South Ocean Boulevard) was located along the ocean. However, the hurricane washed out the road so from Manalapan's Vanderbilt Curve to Palm Beach's Sloan's Curve, A1A was relocated west of the ocean, resulting in a windfall for South End developers.⁴ By relocating the road and adding lakefront landfills, the storm's aftermath resulted in nearly twice the number of large buildable lots, including the sizeable property where The President of Palm Beach was constructed.

The Ambassador Hotel was the first major building constructed in Palm Beach south of Sloan's Curve following the Town's rezoning law. The property at 2730 South Ocean Boulevard was designed by architect Eugene Lawrence and developed in 1947 by Charles Bernstein, a Palm Beach winter resident and Cleveland developer. The hotel was a success and became a popular destination for tourists and new

² Flagler extended the East Coast Railroad to the area in 1894. The Breakers was originally called the Wayside Inn and then the Palm Beach Inn. It was renamed The Breakers after a 1901 expansion because guests requested rooms "over the breakers."

³ It was a controversial zoning law that created a building boom that endured for decades.

⁴ Sloan's Curve starts at 1960 South Ocean Boulevard. It was named for the estate of Alfred P. Sloan, the head of General Motors from 1923-1956, that was previously located at that location. Vanderbilt Curve is located at approximately 1550 South Ocean Boulevard in Manalapan.

residents following the War⁵. Despite the hotel's success, there was little development in the South End during the 1950s except for a few smaller projects and the Bessemer Properties initial development of Ibis Isle.⁶

Beginning in 1960, more developers became attracted to the stretch of Palm Beach south of Sloan's Curve as it was mostly undeveloped ocean and lakefront land. By 1961, Morris Calig and his two sons, Harold and Sam, recognized the opportunity to build an apartment building along Lake Worth just south of the new Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Club.⁷ The Calig Land Company hired West Palm Beach architect Norman N. Robson to design the building, which he did with a distinguished modern design, and then developed the property as a residential hotel/apartment that they named The President.⁸ The first permit for the property No. 35661 was dated March 27, 1961, and specified that it would be a multi-family apartment building with 97 units located on lots 142 and 143 in the Palm Beach Estates subdivision. The cost was estimated to be \$1,500,000.⁹ The building was constructed by Collins Construction Corporation under direction of architect Norman Robson, who built an intricate model of the building which he used to explain and promote the project. The building was completed ahead of schedule with the certificate of occupancy dated January 17, 1963.

The President's horseshoe-shaped structure was originally developed as a residential hotel/apartment available on an annual basis with four types of units – studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and two-bedroom deluxe apartments, both furnished and unfurnished, with full hotel services for the “select winter residents for whom the Palm Beach area has particular attraction.”¹⁰ Fill was brought in from Lake Worth

⁵ According to a January 1950 article in *Palm Beach Life*, “The exquisitely beautiful hotel rises like a Taj Mahal on the golden strands of Lake Worth and the blue Atlantic. Today it has become the mecca for a discriminating clientele.”

⁶ In the early 1950s, the Phipps family owned Bessemer Properties began filling in Penner Island which was located in Lake Worth just west of Palm Beach. In 1952 they built a bridge to connect Penner Island to the mainland and in 1953 they platted a subdivision and renamed the island Ibis Isle. The Phipps family owned much land in the south end of Palm Beach, including the property they donated that became Phipps Ocean Park.

⁷ The Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course was developed in 1960-1961 by Mike Phipps' Bessemer Properties that owned the land. The course is located between the ocean and the lake south of Phipps Ocean Park. At the time it was built, the land was estimated to be worth \$12,000,000 and the course had the most ocean front holes than any other links in the nation – five.

⁸ The building was named The President but it was also referred to as The President Apartments before it became a condominium.

⁹ There is a note on the permit that states that the permit was originally applied for on March 27, 1961, but the date of the permit after court action was June 20, 1961. After the owners applied for a building permit on March 27, 1961, the Town of Palm Beach amended an ordinance that affected the proposed height of the building. The court decided in favor of The President and the building permit was approved June 20, 1961.

¹⁰ The Calig Land Company was a subsidiary of Calig Steel Drum Company of Pittsburgh. The first manager of The President was Leon B. Sternberger, formerly of Pittsburgh. There are no unit numbers ending in “13”, a number commonly associated with bad luck in Western culture. Fear of the number 13 is called triskaidekaphobia.

to create a “front yard” where the large free-form, saltwater pool and marina were built. Other features of the property included lush landscaping and designed paths that connected The President to its private beach and cabana across South Ocean Boulevard. In addition, public facilities on the ground level included covered parking and storage space, a coffee shop, a beauty salon, a lobby, and a lounge available to tenants for entertaining.¹¹



Photograph of Nelson Robson (on left) and the First Manager Leon Sternberger (on right) Showing a Model of The President with Construction Underway Behind, 1962
Courtesy of The President of Palm Beach

When The President opened in 1963, it was heralded for its luxury and architecture, with one article even likening it to the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami. The article stated, “It’s hard to make a big splash along the manicured shores of Palm Beach, where millionaires’ mansions are as plentiful as coconuts on the palms. But a new luxury apartment in the southern part of town, which cuts a sweeping, alabaster swath across the sand, even has this blasé resort blinking. Located in a resort

¹¹ The cabana was designed by Norman Robson in 1962. The coffee shop was later transformed into restaurant Le Monegasque that was popular for many years. There is currently no restaurant in the building and the space was changed to the Club Room, Gym, and Kitchen.

community the Kennedy family has helped publicize, the new apartment building is appropriately named, The President. A building of monumental proportions, this seven-story, semicircular structure is probably the most eye-catching piece of Southern Florida architecture since the Fontainebleau Hotel.”¹²

Norman Robson, an architect who believed “modernism represented progress in artistic design,” took great pride in the project and it became one of his most celebrated designs. Though esthetic appeal was certainly an influencing factor in his design, the semicircular shape primarily was designed to take visual advantage of the exceptional site with the building constructed to occupy half of the circumference of a 700-foot-diameter circle. Robson oriented the structure so the outside radius faced east toward the ocean and the inside radius faced west toward Lake Worth which then formed a sheltered courtyard overlooked by each of the glass-walled apartments with unique water views.¹³

The President was one of the first buildings constructed south of Sloan’s curve and aerial photographs taken shortly after its completion show the building surrounded by large tracts of open space. However, between 1963 and 1970 there was a fervor of building in Palm Beach’s south end where nineteen condominiums were constructed between Sloan’s Curve and the Town of South Palm Beach.¹⁴ And as it became evident by 1969 that more people coming to Palm Beach were looking to own rather than to rent, the Perini Corporation, who had recently purchased The President, converted it from a residential hotel/apartment building to a condominium.¹⁵

The fervor of condominium development, however, did not please everyone in Palm Beach as the Palm Beach establishment saw the town as an enclave for the few while developers saw Palm Beach as a metropolis for the many. With a change in its members, the 1970 Town Council tightened building codes and zoning restrictions to reduce the town’s population density.¹⁶ By March 1970, the town had curbed high rises, setting a five-story limit on apartments and a three-story limit on commercial

¹² *PPG Products*. Volume 71, Number 3, Fall 1963.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ In 1963, the State of Florida passed the Condominium Act, which allowed for the construction of condominiums and the conversion of apartment buildings to condominiums. Nine of these condominiums were built on Ibis Isle in the late 1960s. They are low-rise condominiums developed as the French Villas each with a French name.

¹⁵ The Palm Beach Post, advertisement, 5 December 1969. The Perini Corporation was founded in 1894 in Ashland, Massachusetts by a stonemason named Buonfiglio Perini. Under the direction of Buonfiglio’s grandson, Lou Perini, the company moved into the real-estate business, developing 4,500 acres in Palm Beach County. Architect Norman Robson was part of the Perini team for part of this Palm Beach County development. In 1970, the units were priced from \$16,000 to \$43,000. It is likely at this time that the name was changed to The President of Palm Beach.

¹⁶ Augustus Mayhew, “High-Rise Palm Beach: Changes in Altitude.” Palm Beach Daily News, January 20, 2019.

usage.¹⁷ Despite the new building codes and zoning restrictions, demand for condominium development in the south end of Town continued to boom with twenty-one more condominiums constructed between Sloan’s Curve and the Town of South Palm Beach in the 1970s and fourteen more in the 1980s. In just three decades more than fifty condominiums were constructed along this three-and-one-half mile ocean to lake narrow strip, ever changing the south end Palm Beach landscape.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that among these fifty plus condominiums, The President of Palm Beach was often cited as standing out among its peers. In a Palm Beach Post article titled “Travel on the Scenic Route: AIA from Palm Beach to Boca Raton,” it states, “Most condos on this drive are tall and dramatically boring, with faux posh names, but we are partial to two between Sloan’s Curve and Lake Worth: The ‘60s mod-looking President of Palm Beach and the cool white Regency of Palm Beach.”¹⁹

During its sixty-one-year history, The President of Palm Beach has remained a sought after building for selective clientele. Many have chosen The President for its striking modern architecture and its skillful siting that ensured every unit had an open view of the water through expansive glass doors and balconies.²⁰ Its location in the heart of Palm Beach’s south end is suburb with a private dock and extensive views of Lake Worth on the west, the Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course adjacent to the north and deeded beach access across the boulevard to the east. In addition, the sustained commitment from the owners to preserve the architectural design makes The President of Palm Beach a building that will continue to stand the test of time and be recognized as one of the most important modern designs in the Town of Palm Beach.

¹⁷ Ibid. In response to the decades of high-rise residential and commercial development, the Town’s 1969 and 1970 council elections proved revolutionary. In 1969, George Matthews won a council seat opposing nine-time Councilman John Cushman and the following year, Robert Grace and “Deedy” Matrix were elected. Their incumbent opponents had appeared lax in protecting the town against over development. Matthews, Grace and Matrix kept their pledge to scale Palm Beach back to sea level.

¹⁸ Murphy Stillings, LLC. The Reef Condominium Landmark Designation Report, November 2019.

¹⁹ “Travel On The Scenic Route: AIA from Palm Beach to Boca Raton.” Palm Beach Post 16 June 2016. The Regency of Palm Beach is located at 2760 S. Ocean Boulevard. It was designed by Eugene Lawrence and was originally named Ambassador Lakes South.

²⁰ Correspondence with Steve Darlington, resident of The President of Palm Beach, 2023. The main features of the building that attract new residents and add to the quality of life of the existing residents include the mid-century modern aesthetic of the building, balconies that run the length of the building, open exterior walkways, attractive landscaped garden and pool, skillful lighting of the building, a dock for residents’ boats, the Presidents Club and gym, deeded beach access, a twenty-four-hour doorman and personalized service where in the mailroom the doorman hands residents their mail instead of a wall of mailboxes.

V. Architect Biography

Norman Nugent Robson

Norman N. Robson was born January 12, 1925, in Coshocton, Ohio, the son of Phedora and Harry Dean Robson. He grew up in Cleveland and attended Marietta College and Case School of Applied Science before entering the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1942. After Officer Candidate School, he was sent to Louisiana State University to study engineering, and he then served as a First Lieutenant in Luzon, Philippines, and in Japan after the Japanese surrender. Upon discharge, he studied architecture at Western Reserve University and became involved in theatrical design working for Dramaturgy, Inc. When he received a Theatrical Artists Union membership card, he took a job in New York as a scenic artist with NBC television. Robson became interested in sports car racing in Watkins Glen, NY and met Briggs Cunningham, race car designer and builder, who offered him a job in his West Palm Beach plant. When Robson arrived in Florida after completing his New York obligations, Cunningham had decided to move his operations to California. Robson decided to stay in West Palm Beach, and in order to make some acquaintances, he offered to design and build a few sets for the Norton Gallery Players. There he met a teacher, Margaret Doty, and they decided to get married as soon as he could get a job with an architectural firm. They were married eight weeks after they met, and he worked in turn for three prominent architectural firms, Obst and Obst, John Volk and Edmond Pachner, before opening his own office.²¹ His creative talents served many interesting clients including the Perini's Western Expansion in West Palm Beach and some of the first high-rise ocean front condominiums in Palm Beach County including The President of Palm Beach. For over thirty years, he designed numerous residential, commercial, and public buildings throughout the County, including the West Palm Beach Public Library in 1961.²²

During his life, his passion was collecting and restoring classic British sports cars. At one time, he owned and restored both a high chassis and a low chassis "Invicta" known as one of the all-time great cars. After he retired, Robson took up watercolor painting and studied with Barbara Carr of Pratt Institute on trips to China, Brazil, Italy, and Ireland and at the Lighthouse Gallery in Tequesta with Claire Dorst, Millard Caswell, and Karin Bastidas. He received numerous awards in juried

²¹ He also worked for a number of years with John B. Gesbocker as Robson & Gesbocker Architects.

²² Additional Norman Robson buildings listed in the 1970 AIA Directory include the Holiday Inn Motel and Restaurant, Palm Beach 1959; Chrysler Dealership, West Palm Beach, 1967; and St. Clair's School and Church, North Palm Beach, 1969.

exhibitions and his family and friends continue to display his paintings. His other interests were music, particularly opera, tennis, and the study of the Shakespeare Authorship Question with The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. For many years, Robson was a member of the West Palm Beach Rotary Club and at various times he served on the boards of the South Florida Science Museum, Goodwill Industries, the Lighthouse for the Blind, and the YMCA.

VI. Statement of Significance

For more than three decades (ca. 1945-1975), Modernism prevailed as Palm Beach's post-World War II paradigm of style, found among South End and Midtown's co-ops and condominiums, as well as commercial buildings along Worth Avenue, County Road and Royal Palm Way.²³ The President of Palm Beach condominium is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern architectural style and the modern architecture movement in Palm Beach as designed by noted architect Norman N. Robson during a time of significant growth in the south end of the Town.

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, county or town.”

The President of Palm Beach condominium reflects the broad cultural, economic, and social history of the nation, state, and town. Built in 1961-1963 in the Mid-Century Modern style, The President reflects the time when Modernism reigned as one of the most popular Post World War W II styles for multi-family and commercial architecture throughout the country and in Palm Beach. The President also reflects the beginning of significant growth in Palm Beach's south end following relaxed zoning restrictions, State Road AIA shifting west, and an influx of new residents and tourists attracted to Palm Beach. Although there are more than fifty condominium buildings in Palm Beach south of Sloan's Curve, The President stands out among its peers for its striking architecture that provides unique water views for each unit, as

²³ Augustus Mayhew, “Unforgettable Palm Beach: Modernist Buildings Among Town's Most Endangered Cultural Resources.” Palm Beach Daily News, 6 March 2011.

well as for its personalized service, notable amenities, and the owners' commitment to preserving the buildings architectural design, which in turn attracts a selective clientele. In addition, The President was one of the earlier modern buildings in Palm Beach's south end and the accolades for its style likely influenced later designs throughout Town.

(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 President of Palm Beach condominium is an excellent representation of Mid-Century Modern architecture and embodies distinguishing characteristics of the style. The President's Mid-Century Modern design is characterized by its curvilinear massing intermingled with vertical and horizontal design features which contribute to the building's unique design. The semi-circular plan provides each unit with exceptional views and a relationship to the surrounding environment while the central vertical geometric panel, the sweeping geometric balcony railings, and the cantilevered wavy compressed arch porte cochere represent distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style.

(4) “Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual ability has been recognized or has influenced his age.”

Norman N. Robson was an accomplished architect who believed “modernism represented progress in artistic design” and used this concept in The President of Palm Beach. Robson worked for prominent Palm Beach architectural firms prior to establishing his own practice. His Mid-Century Modern design for The President became one of his most celebrated projects and helped shape the aesthetic of the south end of Palm Beach.

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