

# **750 South County Road**



## **DESIGNATION REPORT**

**December 18, 2024**

**Landmark Preservation Commission**

**Palm Beach, Florida**

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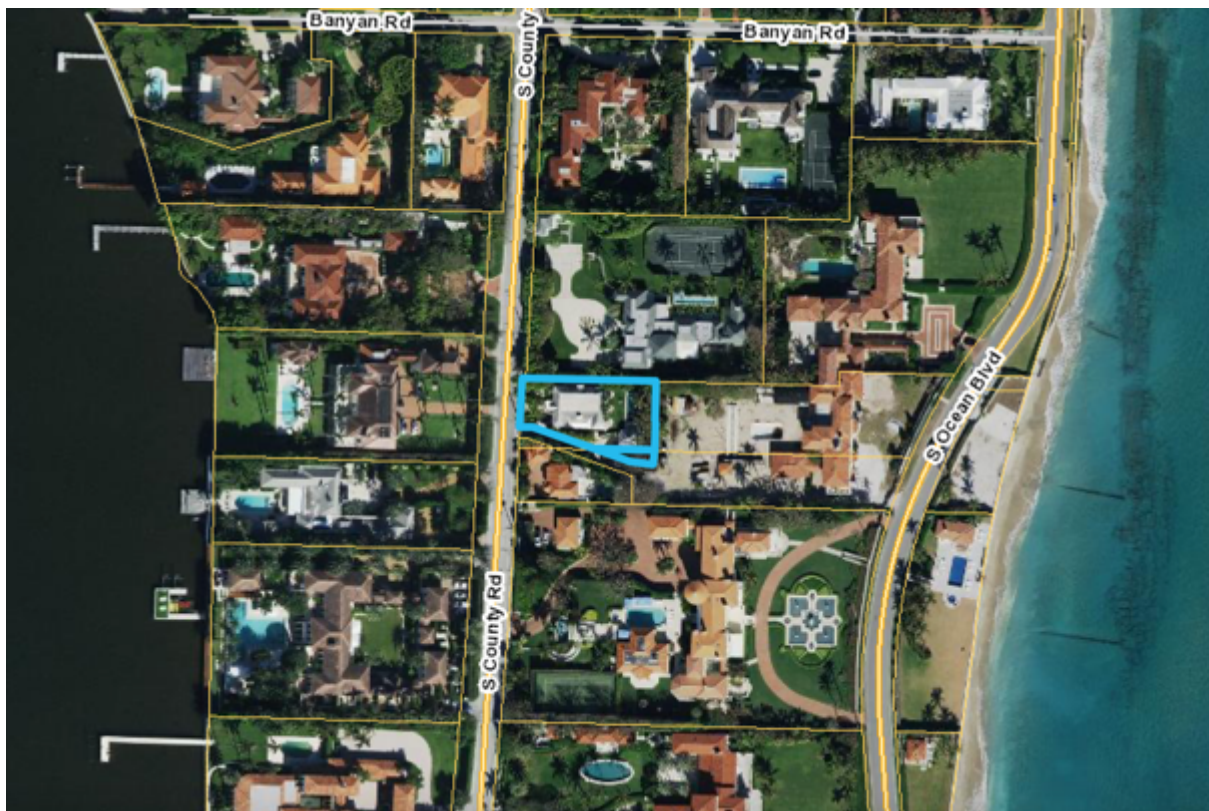
Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

## **I. General Information**

Location:	750 South County Road Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1941
First Owner:	Mr. Louis Levy and Mrs. Irma Levy
Current Owner:	750 S. County LLC
Architect:	Belford Shoumate
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	RA
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-26-00-002-0500
Current Legal Description:	26/35-43-43, PT OF W 163.11 FTOF S 75 FT OF GOV LT 2 E OF CO RD 26-43-43, & PT OF W 163.11 FT OF N75 FT OF GOV LOT 1 E OF CO RD AS IN OR1738 P 918

## II. Location Map

### 750 South County Road





### III. Architectural Information

750 South County Road is a unique Georgian Revival style residence by notable Palm Beach architect Belford Shoumate. Located along one of the Town's most traveled roadways in the Estate Section, the home was designed for Louis and Irma Levy who owned El Solano, the Addison Mizner designed estate at 720 South Ocean Boulevard. El Solano's property ran from South Ocean Boulevard to South County Road, and in 1941 the Levy's commissioned Belford Shoumate to design two guest houses for the west side of the property. The residence now known as 750 South County Road was one of these guesthouses and was built on the northwest corner of the property.



750 South County Road is an interesting example of the Georgian Revival style as interpreted by Belford Shoumate during the early 1940s. Georgian Revival is a sub-type of the Colonial Revival style of architecture. The Georgian Revival style has the classic symmetrical colonial shape and is one of the long-lived architectural styles in the United States. It dominated the English colonies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was popular throughout the country from 1880 to 1955. Based on Georgian and Adam prototypes from the northeastern states, variations on the style were popular throughout the Caribbean and were adapted in revival form in South Florida during the 1930s through the 1950s. Stylistic features include symmetry in building mass and fenestration, accentuated front entries often with large stairs, pediments over the main entrance, and often bay windows and decorative shutters.

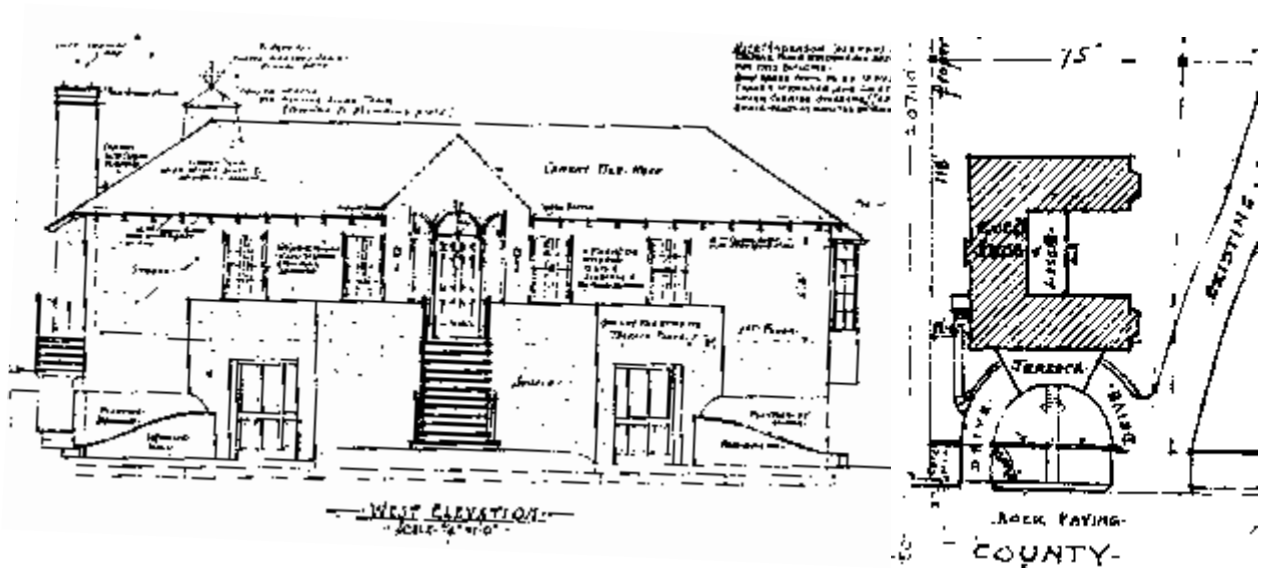
750 South County Road is primarily a one-story structure with a partial lower level on the west side of the building that allows the residence to read as two-stories from South County Road. Constructed of concrete block and surfaced with stucco, the home features concrete tile hipped roofs with exposed rafter tails and a centrally located front facing gable roof highlighting the entrance.



Belford Shoumate's interesting design for 750 South County Road is highlighted by the home's arrival procession. Shoumate designed the home to be accessed by a centrally located welcoming staircase with a metal railing that leads to a second-floor entrance terrace. The entrance terrace leads to a paneled wood front door with a decorative fanlight and arched door surround with a keystone. An arched pedimented portico supported by Doric columns shelters the entrance.

The staircase extends over a porte cochere that features a curved wall on the west façade that follows the curve of the circular driveway at the front of the home and angled walls on the north and south sides. The porte cochere was originally designed as a garage with overhead garage doors in the openings.





Belford Shoumate, 1941  
Shoumate Archives, Provided by the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach

Shoumate designed the residence in a U-shape form with an enclosed loggia and courtyard facing south. The home features two chimneys with pointed arch chimney caps. The original chimney is centrally located on the north façade and an additional chimney was later constructed on the south façade in the courtyard.

Since its construction in 1941, there have been alterations and additions to the home. During a renovation in 2000-2001, earlier alterations that had negatively affected the architectural design were reversed by reintroducing appropriate features and materials based on Shoumate's original design for the residence, such as flat cement roof tiles and multi-light sash windows. During this renovation a portico was constructed to shelter the entrance. The portico was designed to be slightly smaller than the original front-facing central gable that Shoumate designed to highlight the main entrance, which allowed the main façade's original roof design to be preserved. Additional alterations included window and door changes, the construction of three small hip roofs supported by columns on the rear (east) façade, an addition that enlarged the loggia to create a larger living room with an awning structure over the courtyard, and alterations to two bay windows on the south façade.<sup>1</sup>



Historic Photograph, circa early 1980s  
Provided by the Preservation Foundation of  
Palm Beach

Showing architecturally inappropriate  
barrel tile roofing and awning windows



Photograph, circa 2015  
from Realtor.com website

Showing original gable roof at entrance  
behind entrance portico, architecturally  
appropriate flat tiles, and multi-light sash  
windows

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<sup>1</sup> Two bay windows had been located on the southern ends of the wings that run north and south, the eastern bay was removed and the windows in the western bay were removed but the form and metal roof remain.



A 2019-2020 renovation included installing hurricane impact resistant windows and doors, removal of the shutters on the west and east facades, alterations to the porte cochere that widened the openings and shortened the length of the covered area, construction of a site wall with a pedestrian gate at the front property line where a site wall had been in the past, and construction of an accessory structure on the southeast corner of the property.<sup>2</sup>



Southern Entrance to the Porte Cochere



Accessory Structure

The alterations and additions to the residence over the years retained many of the important features of Shoumate's original design and returned elements that had previously been removed. These changes modernized the home to meet the needs of later owners, thus allowing the continued usefulness of the historic structure.

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<sup>2</sup> The accessory structure is surfaced with stucco and has hipped roofs with flat tiles and exposed rafter tails. A one car garage is located on the lower level and a pool cabana is located above with access to the rear yard and a swimming pool to the north.

#### IV. Historical Information

The property located at 750 South County Road was originally part of the Addison Mizner designed Mediterranean Revival style estate El Solano, which spanned from the ocean to South County Road. El Solano, located at 720 South Ocean Boulevard, was designed by Mizner in 1919 and was purchased by Harold S. Vanderbilt shortly after its construction. Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kay, who owned the property just to the north of El Solano, at 710 South Ocean Boulevard, purchased the property from Harold Vanderbilt when he built a new estate, Eastover, in Manalapan.<sup>3</sup> The Kay's owned the property from 1930 until 1934 when they sold the estate to Mr. and Mrs. Louis Levy of Dobbs Ferry, New York.<sup>4</sup> Louis S. Levy and Irma B. Levy had been wintering in Palm Beach for several years before purchasing El Solano for their winter residence.

With the onset of World War II in 1939 and continuing through the mid-1940s, new construction slowed and then came to a halt as building materials and much of the labor force was dedicated to fighting the war. For two winter seasons, September 1942 through May 1944, the Breakers became the U.S. Army's Ream General Hospital. A November 23, 1943, Palm Beach Post-Times newspaper article describes how the War caused an unprecedented rise in demand for rental properties in Palm Beach,

“As the result of the biggest real estate flurry since boom days, dozens of Palm Beach houses are under new ownership this season. With new building out for the duration of the war, rental property is so much in demand desirable leases have been at a premium. Many of those accustomed to going to the Breakers Hotel or abroad have decided to take houses. Consequently, throughout the year and especially this past summer, sales have skyrocketed and about one hundred transfers have been reported. Smaller houses requiring a minimum of servants have been most in demand, though a few of the larger well-known houses have also changed hands this year.”

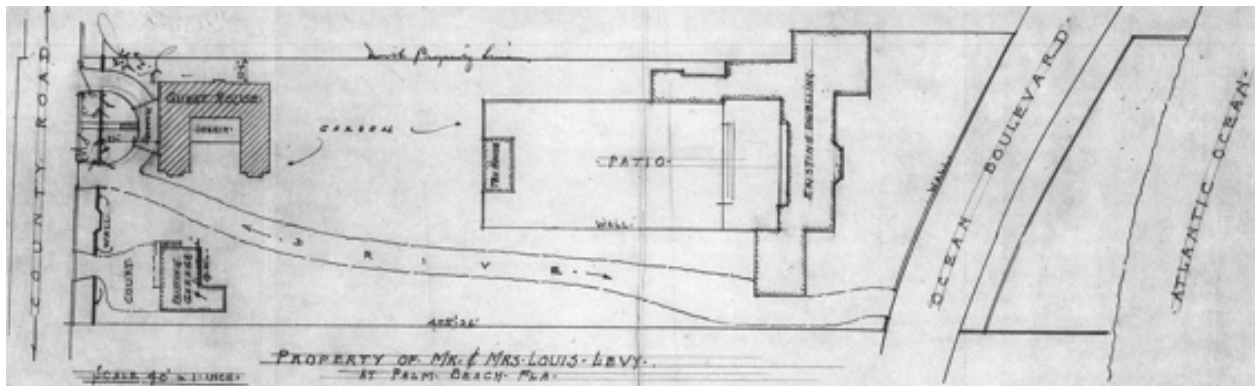
In 1941, just before the United States entered World War II, Irma Levy decided to create two additional residences to be used as guest houses at the western end of the property with a driveway running from South County Road to South Ocean Boulevard between the two new homes. She hired Belford Shoumate to design a

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<sup>3</sup> Newspaper articles stated that there were issues between Mrs. Kay and Harold Vanderbilt while he owned the property, and it is believed she wanted to make sure the next owner would be a better neighbor.

<sup>4</sup> Palm Beach Post, “New Yorkers Purchase Palm Beach Residence.” 14 March 1934.

new residence at the northwest corner of the property, which would later be known as 750 South County Road, and to transform the existing garage and servants building at the southwest corner into a residence which became 755 South County Road. After the houses were constructed, the Levy's would rent the residences, sometimes including El Solano, for the winter season. If El Solano was rented, the Levy's would reside in one of the other homes on the property.<sup>5</sup>



Belford Shoumate, 1941

Showing El Solano at 720 South Ocean Boulevard, the new residence at 750 South County Road, and the original garage and servants building that would become 755 South County Road

Following World War II, Palm Beach flourished and grew exponentially. In 1947, the Town evaluated making zoning changes and two re-zonings were approved that led to dramatic growth in the Town. While these zoning changes were being considered, Irma Levy requested that her property, and other similar properties, receive a special classification that would allow them to be used as residential clubs. In her request Mrs. Levy wrote that “large estates are not in key with the times, that the trend is away from large places held for one family alone, that the use as a residential club would be in keeping with efforts to meet the housing shortage, that such use would preserve the ocean front tract.”<sup>6</sup> During one meeting, Mrs. Levy stated that the property would be used as a “residence club for refined and cultured persons in groups of not more than 25 to 30, who might prefer this to hotels”. There were several objections and the request for residential clubs was not granted.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, by the end of 1950, the property was divided into three parcels and sold as 720 South Ocean Boulevard, 750 South County Road, and 755 South County Road.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Murphy Stillings LLC research on 755 S. County Road.

<sup>6</sup> Palm Beach Post, “Rezoning is Asked by Resort Resident”, January 28, 1947, page 5.

<sup>7</sup> Palm Beach Post, “Rezoning Favored in Two Resort Areas, Status Quo for Others”, January 30, 1947, page 10.

<sup>8</sup> El Solano, 720 South Ocean Boulevard, which had been purchased by John Lennon and Yoko Ono shortly before his death, was designated a Town of Palm Beach landmark in 1980.



750 South County Road was sold to Ralph Stevens who started occupying the residence in 1943. In 1950, Henry Bogatin Sr. of Lawrence, New York, purchased the residence from Stevens and lived there for almost twenty years. Henry Bogatin, a well-known builder and real estate broker in Palm Beach County, was a charter member and president of the Home Builders and Contractors Association of Palm Beach County, president of the Florida Home Builders Association, and elected a life director of the National Association of Home Builders. Bogatin was also credited with starting a construction course at the University of Florida in the early 1960s and helping to found Florida Atlantic University. 750 South County Road was sold to Palm Beach lawyer Frederick Hope Jr. in 1969. Hope served in World War II and was a special agent for the FBI from 1951 to 1957 where he received the Outstanding Service Award. Following Hope's death in 1994, his wife Marie Hope Davis owned the property until 1999. Subsequent owners included Clive Stuart Findlay, Gary Lumsden, and 750 South County Road Realty Trust. The current owners, 750 S. County LLC, purchased the property in 2021.

## **V. Architects Biography**

### **Belford Shoumate**

Belford Shoumate was born in Aberdeen, Ohio in 1903, and was raised in Mobile, Alabama. After receiving a degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1929, Shoumate worked for four years with architect Joseph Urban in New York City. In 1936, he moved to Miami and worked with architect Carlos B. Schoeppl for a year before coming to Palm Beach.

In 1937, Shoumate married Beatrice Owen, moved to Palm Beach to start his own architectural practice, and received his architectural license. While designed prior to starting his own firm, Shoumate's first Palm Beach commission was the 1937 Art Moderne style "Boat House" on North Lake Way, which was rumored to have won the award for "House of the Future" at the 1939 World's Fair.

In 1940, Shoumate designed a British Colonial style residence with a studio for his architectural firm in Phipps Plaza (known as Architect's Row) where he lived and worked until his death in 1991. From the late 1930s, Belford Shoumate has left his architectural imprint, in either design or restoration, on more than 1,500 buildings of many styles in South Florida. While he designed in many styles, including variations of the Colonial Revival style, he is best known for his Modern designs, especially those in the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles.

Belford Shoumate was listed in *Who's Who in America* and was active in the National Committee for the Preservation of Historical Buildings, representing the local chapter of the A.I.A. Shoumate is quoted as saying, "Our American Heritage is being challenged in many ways. It's time to wake up and realize we have a wonderful history for such a young country and we should preserve its form of government as well as its representative buildings for prosperity!"

## **VI. Statement of Significance**

The residence at 750 South County Road is significant as a unique example of the Georgian Revival style of architecture as interpreted by prominent Palm Beach architect Belford Shoumate. It is also a very good representation of the architectural, cultural, and economic changes occurring during the post-Depression/New Deal Era and the post-World War II Era in Palm Beach.

## **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 that 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."**

750 South County Road reflects the broad cultural, economic, and social history of the Town of Palm Beach during the late Depression/New Deal Era as well as the Post WWII Era. The residence was designed in 1941, during the late Depression/New Deal Era, for Louis and Irma Levy as a guest house just as the United States was entering World War II. As seasonal accommodations were limited due to the war, the Levy's used the residence as a seasonal rental to address the demand for lodging while hotel rooms were occupied for the war effort. Following the war's end, during a time of extreme growth in Palm Beach, owners of large estates saw their properties as anachronisms, too large to air-condition, too expensive to maintain, and too hard to staff. El Solano and its two guest houses along South County Road were spared from the wrecking ball that befell many of the Town's other grand estates due to the Levy's dividing the parcel into three smaller properties. The residence at 750 South County Road is a very good example of the changing times in the Town of Palm Beach during the 1940s.

- (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 residence at 750 South County Road is a very interesting example of Belford Shoumate’s interpretation of the Georgian Revival style for Palm Beach during the early 1940s. The front façade of the house is symmetrical in form and fenestration with an attention-grabbing entrance procession featuring a second-floor entrance terrace that is accessed by a welcoming staircase over a unique curved porte cochere. The residence’s steeply pitched, flat tile, hipped roofs with exposed rafter tails and front facing gable at the entrance, front door crowned with a decorative fanlight and sheltered by an arched portico, chimneys with pointed arch chimney caps, and use of multi-light sash windows are additional character-defining features of this distinctive Georgian Revival design.

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

Belford Shoumate, one of Palm Beach’s most influential and noteworthy architects, designed hundreds of architectural projects during his fifty-four-year career. Shoumate is one of the Town’s famous architects credited with promoting additional architectural styles in Palm Beach, such as variations on the Colonial Revival style and more modern styles such as Art Deco and Art Moderne. 750 South County Road’s Georgian Revival design is a very good example of Belford Shoumate’s notable work.



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