

Peruvian Terrace Condominium

401 Peruvian Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

April 16, 2025

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

401 Peruvian Avenue

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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information: Peruvian Terrace Condominium

Location: 401 Peruvian Avenue
Palm Beach, Florida

Date of Construction: 1959 - 1960

First Owner: Robert McAninch, Peruvian Terrace Corporation

Historic Name: Peruvian Terrace Apartments

Architect: John Stetson

Builder/Contractor: Peruvian Terrace Corporation, Calvin Douglas
Superintendent

Engineer: Mack Ritchie

Current Owners: Multiple Owners (See attached)

Present Use: Residential Condominium Apartment Building
R-C Zoning Medium Density Residential

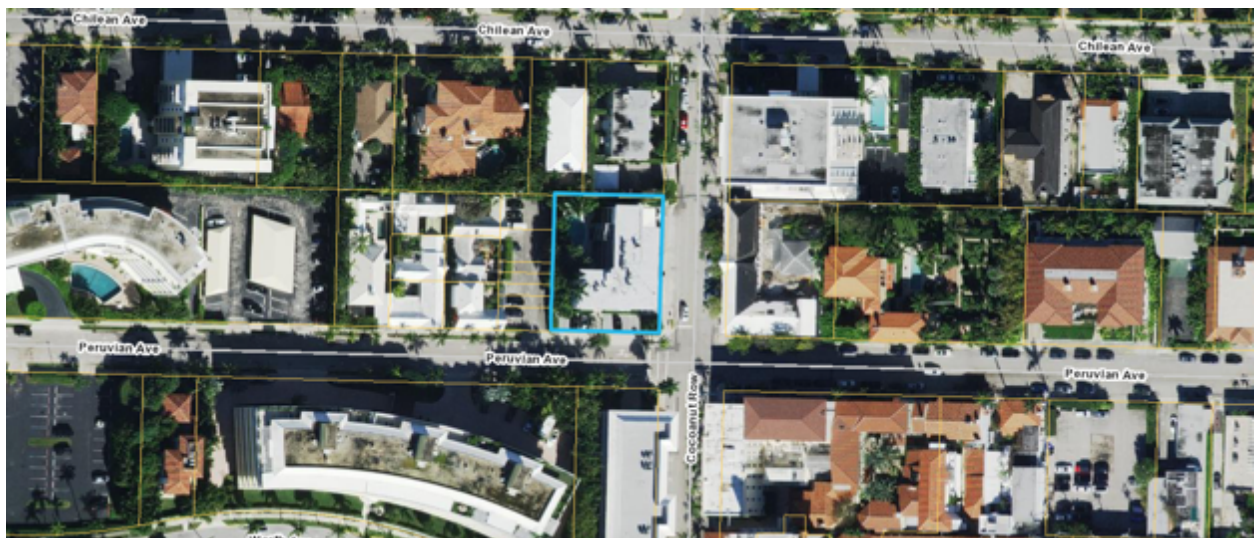
PBC Tax Folio Number: 50-43-43-27-39-000-0000-001 & Multiple Parcels (See attached)

Current Legal Description: Lots 27, 28, 29 and 30, Block 12, Royal Park, Town of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, as Recorded in Plat Book 4, Page 1, in the Office of the Clerk of Court, Palm Beach County

List of Owners & Parcel Control Numbers: Peruvian Terrace Condominium

<u>OWNER</u>	<u>PARCEL CONTROL NUMBER</u>
Peruvian Terrace Condominium	50-43-43-27-39-000-0000
Allen D. Kophelm	50-43-43-27-39-000-1010
Emily Bitting Lockhart Trust & Mellon Bank Trust	50-43-43-27-39-000-1030
Carol G. Sewell	50-43-43-27-39-000-1040
Carol Gunther Sewell	50-43-43-27-39-000-1050
Allen D. Kophelm	50-43-43-27-39-000-2010
Eleanor K. Callahan Trust	50-43-43-27-39-000-2020
Rosemary H. Kalthoff	50-43-43-27-39-000-2030
Giuseppe Papa	50-43-43-27-39-000-2040
Galina Grinkevich	50-43-43-27-39-000-2050
Jeff Morgan	50-43-43-27-39-000-3010
Adrian & Liliana Conway Trust	50-43-43-27-39-000-3020
Karen M. Clancy	50-43-43-27-39-000-3030
Alexander Avedis Sarian & Michael Andrew Gobert Sarian	50-43-43-27-39-000-3040
David B. Lowe	50-43-43-27-39-000-3050
Land Acqui Corporation	50-43-43-27-39-000-4010
Lugo Jorge Rodriguez & Mary Rodriguez	50-43-43-27-39-000-4020
Elisabeth A. Montouri	50-43-43-27-39-000-4030

II. Location Map



III. Architectural Information

The Peruvian Terrace Condominium at 401 Peruvian Avenue is a four-story Mid-Century Modern residential building located on the northwest corner of Peruvian Avenue and Coconut Row in midtown Palm Beach. The structure was designed by prominent Palm Beach architect John Stetson, who was known for his Modern architectural designs, in 1959 during the post-World War II Era in Palm Beach.



Main (South) Façade

401 Peruvian Avenue is a notable example of Mid-Century Modern architecture in Palm Beach. Mid-Century Modern architecture designed during the Post-World War II Era was a by-product of post-war optimism and the nation's dedication to building a new future. During this time architects and designers were adapting various modernist movements to create new designs, often using modern materials and building techniques, that were defined by clean lines, simple shapes, angular planes, and refined simplicity. Mid-Century Modern was a further development of Frank Lloyd Wright's principles of organic architecture combined with many elements reflected in the International and Bauhaus movements. The Mid-Century Modern style generally features geometric forms, asymmetrical compositions, flat roofs, facades surfaced with smooth stucco, large amounts of glass, concrete eyebrows, ornamental masonry elements, angular details, and minimal ornamentation.



South Façade

Sited on the northwest corner of Peruvian Avenue and Cocoanut Row, 401 Peruvian Avenue has an L-shaped plan with a courtyard and pool located within the interior of the L. The building is surfaced with smooth stucco and has a flat roof with a deep overhang. The south façade, facing Peruvian Avenue, is composed of five bays with the entrance located in the center bay. The entrance bay is emphasized by a two-story vertical element composed of multiple cast stone panels in a stack bond pattern. A set of stairs lead to the entrance which features a cast stone surround providing access to the open-air entrance lobby. Trapezoidal shaped balconies flank the entrance bay on the second and third floors and another is located on the fourth floor centered above the entrance. These angled balconies are an interesting architectural feature of the building and feature stucco finished half walls with a simple metal railing in the center. While a building permit to replace the balcony railings was not located, it is likely that the existing railings are replacements that may have been done for safety reasons.¹ Another distinctive feature of the building's Mid-Century Modern design is the use of concrete eyebrows that run above the windows and meet vertical breeze block panels. The eyebrows and breeze block panels provide shade to the units while delivering sleek, geometric, minimalistic ornamentation to the building.

¹ John Stetson's design for the railing had a triangular design and was the same height as the solid portion of the balconies.



Entrance



Breezeblock Panels & Eyebrows

Along Coconut Row, the building's east façade continues many of the design features of the south façade including trapezoidal balconies, concrete eyebrows and breezeblock panels, and cast stone panels in a stack bond pattern. The building's fenestration consists of awning windows, which were the original window type, one-over-one sash windows, sliding glass doors and single-light doors.

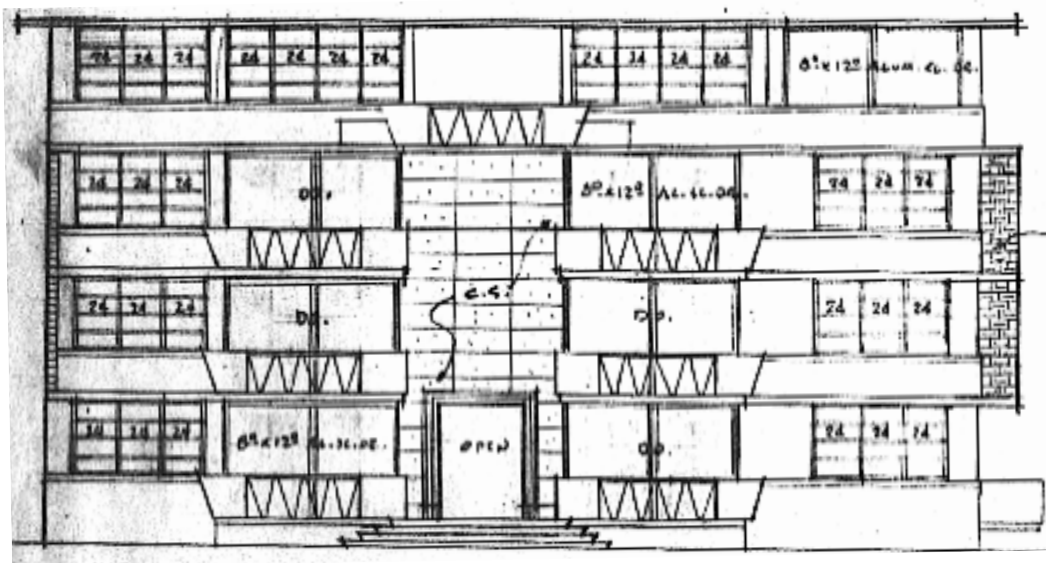


Southeast Corner

The building's interior courtyard features a swimming pool and provides access to the residential units by way of exterior walkways, stairs and an elevator. The entrance doors of the units are single light doors with opaque glass.



401 Peruvian Avenue exhibits many character defining features of the Mid-Century Modern style such as smooth stucco facades, a flat roof, geometric forms, ribbons of windows, and projecting concrete eyebrows, breezeblock panels and angled balconies. The exterior of the building has undergone minor alterations over the years. These changes include the 1966 enclosure of an open terrace at the southeast corner of the fourth floor that was designed by John Stetson, replacement of some of the awning windows with sash windows, the lessening of the depth of some of the exterior terraces on the south and east facades where the balconies are located, and the change in the metal railing design.



South Elevation, John Stetson, 1959

IV. Historical Information

401 Peruvian Avenue is a mid-twentieth century condominium building constructed in Palm Beach's Royal Park subdivision. Royal Park was one of the earliest settled and established areas of Palm Beach and has an interesting development history and association with the town's important pioneers, architects and developers. Royal Park was originally part of Hiram F. Hammon's homesteaded property, which in 1873 was the first homesteaded property in what became the Town of Palm Beach.² For the next 20 years, the area along Lake Worth's eastern shore was home to a small community of South Florida pioneers who homesteaded land or bought government property that was mostly jungles and swamps and turned it into a remote tropical settlement that started to attract tourists and others who wanted to make it their winter residence. This small community began to change in the 1890s when Standard Oil business magnate Henry Flagler became instrumental in transforming the island into a preeminent winter resort by extending his Florida East Coast Railway southward and opening the Royal Poinciana Hotel in 1894 and the Breakers Hotel in 1896.

In the early 1900's prior to World War I most of the tourists and seasonal residents resided in the hotels though several early businessmen saw the need to create residential developments to house the growing number of people who wanted something other than to spend the season at a hotel. As winter residents arrived in increasing number each year, early pioneers Elisha "Cap" Dimick and his nephew Harvey Geer began buying up property from Lake Worth to the Atlantic Ocean between what is today Royal Palm Way and Worth Avenue.³ Dimick and Geer began developing the area in 1908 and joined with business partners George Jonas and Otto Kubin to form the Palm Beach Improvement Company. The development of the approximately 150 acre Royal Park subdivision was a tremendous undertaking having to clear and dredge much of the land. After the dredging, it was decided that the area was to be developed in its entirety at one time in order to be the first substantial real estate development in Palm Beach outside of the Flagler hotel properties.⁴ To provide much needed automobile access to the Island and to help

² After proceeds from the sales of these 169.2 acres had amounted to well over a million dollars, the United States Department of the Interior found it to be the most valuable claim ever filed and they sent a representative to interview Mr. Hammon.

³ Elisha N. Dimick settled in the area that became Palm Beach in 1876 and was one of the most influential people in the history of the Town. In addition to establishing the first hotel, serving in the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate, and co-founding the area's first bank, Dimick was instrumental in developing Royal Park and founding the Town of Palm Beach.

⁴ A sea wall was built, areas of the land were filled in and graded, the streets and sidewalks were constructed and lighting, water mains, electricity and telephone lines were installed,

ensure success of the development a bridge was constructed between West Palm Beach and the Island at Royal Palm Way in 1911, the same year the Town of Palm Beach was incorporated and Dimick was elected mayor. The first houses in the new development were mostly single-family frame dwellings built by individual owners and small developers.

In 1918, Paris Singer, son of Isaac Singer who founded the Singer Sewing Machine Company, began buying property in Royal Park for what was to be the Touchstone Convalescent Center with villas and a clubhouse for shell-shocked soldiers returning from World War I.⁵ Together with his architect Addison Mizner, Singer developed the Mediterranean Revival-style villas and clubhouse at the western end of Worth Avenue for the convalescent center, but with no soldiers accepting the terms of the offer to convalesce in Palm Beach, Singer instead used the property to establish the Everglades Club in early 1919 followed closely by shops and apartments along Worth Avenue, forever changing the architectural and social landscapes of Palm Beach.⁶

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 along Royal Park's South County Road at the end of 1925, the area became the town's new governmental center and surrounding businesses and neighborhoods thrived.⁷

Palm Beach did experience effects of the late 1920s land and housing bust and the Great Depression, however, during the post-Depression/New Deal Era of the 1930s and 1940s, the Town saw significant development of residential neighborhoods while also continuing to host many wealthy people both as residents and tourists. With the conclusion of World War II, Palm Beach flourished and grew exponentially.⁸ An era of prosperity that had emerged in the 1920s became considerably larger and more mobile, with the population nearly doubling in the 1950s. In addition to the increase in the population and boost in tourism, the lifting of wartime restrictions and an increasing supply of materials helped to accelerate

⁵ During World War I, Paris Singer built several hospitals in Europe for the war-wounded as well as donating the use of his estate Oldway in Paignton to be used as a military hospital.

⁶ The Everglades Club opened with twenty-five charter members and was a rousing success. The Mediterranean Revival-style building not only changed the architecture essence of the resort but moved the social scene away from Flagler's hotels in the northern part of town, south into an exclusive private realm centered on Mizner's new Everglades Club complex and its companion streetscape Worth Avenue.

⁷ At the time, South County Road was named Palm Beach Avenue.

⁸ During the course of the War the Army stationed tens of thousands of troops in Palm Beach County, including a large Air Corps base at Morrison Field and a smaller base, Camp Higgins, on the very north end of Palm Beach that was established to guard the Palm Beach Inlet.

Palm Beach's post-World War II economy with new construction throughout the town.⁹

In Palm Beach, a controversial zoning law in 1947 led to dramatic growth in much of the Royal Park subdivision. Prior to 1947, Royal Park had mostly exclusive residence zone A classification. However, zoning expert George Simons, Jr. was commissioned to survey the town zoning and make recommendations to update its 1929 zoning ordinance. His report stated that Royal Park had too much spot zoning and recommended changing the mostly Class A zoning to Class C zoning. His recommendations were approved and the new law changed much of the land to Class C classification permitting larger hotels and apartments. Despite the controversy, this rezoning created a building boom that endured for decades, as houses and small hotels were replaced by apartments and co-ops, and later by condominiums.¹⁰ It was this rezoning law that paved the way for the Peruvian Terrace Apartments to be constructed.

In addition to this rezoning, in the late 1950's Florida received an additional post-war boost when the Interstate Highway System was launched in 1956 and one year later when the Sunshine State Parkway opened, bringing many additional residents and tourists to Florida.¹¹ Faster trains, air travel and modern conveniences such as air conditioning accelerated the boom even more and the demand for housing rose dramatically. In addition to being another building boom, Palm Beach architectural styles following WWII were also changing, with a shift away from the period styles of the 1920s and 1930s to new modernist styles. Peruvian Terrace's architect John Stetson was well versed in modern styles, and he designed many of Palm Beach's Mid-Century Modern buildings including a number of examples in the Royal Park subdivision.¹²

In November of 1959, local developer Robert McAninch as owner of Peruvian Terrace Corporation, took out a building permit to construct a four story, eighteen unit, 16,200 square foot apartment house at 401 Peruvian Avenue for the

⁹ Augustus Mayhew. Palm Beach: A Greater Grandeur. East Side Press, 2016.

¹⁰ Ibid. According to newspaper articles at the time, there were many heated arguments between residents who wanted to keep Palm Beach a community of homes and others who wanted to expand the hotel and apartment business. Many residences and smaller buildings were demolished and replaced with apartments and hotels.

¹¹ President Eisenhower created the Interstate Highway System by signing the Federal Aid Highway Act into law in 1956. The Sunshine State Parkway is now the Florida Turnpike.

¹² A few of John Stetson's modernistic designs in the Royal Park subdivision include his office and residence at 249 Peruvian Avenue, Earl Hollis's building at 217 Peruvian Avenue, the Armour Building at 201 Worth Avenue, and the Riviera Apartments at 455 Worth Avenue,

approximate cost of \$175,500.¹³ Prominent modernist Palm Beach architect John Stetson was commissioned to design the building along with Mack Ritchie as the engineer and Calvin Douglass as foreman for Peruvian Terrace Corporation as the owner-builder. The building was originally a cooperative with Peruvian Terrace Corporation as the owner with buyers purchasing shares in the property and renting their individual units. This was a common form of ownership for multi-family residential buildings prior to Florida passing the condominium law in 1963.¹⁴

Peruvian Terrace Apartments ideal location on the corner of Cocoanut Row and Peruvian Avenue just one block north of Worth Avenue and close to both the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Worth in the heart of Royal Park was a great selling point for the property. The Realtor for the property James R. Branch promoted the “beautiful Peruvian Terrace cooperative apartments with a swimming pool, terraces and air conditioning as ‘The New Way of Life.’” By the time the building was completed in April 1960, most of the apartments were occupied with well-to-do clientele.

On November 18, 1963, just a few months after the passage of Florida Statute 711 Condominium Law, Peruvian Terrace Inc. did a Declaration of Condominium and became the Peruvian Terrace Condominium Apartments, Inc.¹⁵ Unlike a co-op apartment where unit owners share one mortgage and the building receives only one tax statement, a condominium apartment is owned, mortgaged and taxed individually. Despite passage of the Florida Condominium Act in 1963, the Town of Palm Beach refused to recognize condominiums stating that the Town’s zoning did not permit them, and that the Florida condominium law was unconstitutional. Although Peruvian Terrace had become a condominium in 1963, the Town continued to tax the Peruvian Terrace as a cooperative with one blanket tax bill, so

¹³ Town of Palm Beach Building Permit #70359. The construction classification was Type II Fire Restrictive. There were five one-bedroom/one bathroom apartments on floors one, two and three, and three larger apartments on the fourth floor penthouse. A previous Town of Palm Beach Permit # 64059 was taken out on October 10, 1959, by Robert V. McAninch, owner of Peruvian Terrace Apartment Corporation. The permit was to “Install Piling and Grade Beams Under a Proposed Apartment House.” The size of the project was 16,200 square feet and the approximate cost was \$20,000. Architect John Stetson and engineer Mark Ritchie were both listed on the permit under their respected titles. Developer Robert V. McAninch moved with his family from the San Francisco Bay area to Tequesta in 1957. His brother Lt. Col. John McAninch was with the Palm Beach Air Force Base and was also building a house in Tequesta in 1957.

¹⁴ In 1963, the Florida Legislature passed the Condominium Act, establishing the condominium form of ownership, thus allowing for development of condominiums throughout the state. The state subsequently experienced a rapid growth in development, and over the next ten years, condominiums became very popular. The Town’s attorney at the time confessed that the Palm Beach Town Council was fearful lest somebody go broke and be unable to pay his taxes and leave the tax collector with a second hand “cabin in the sky “on his hands in the form of a sixth floor condominium apartment.

¹⁵ Peruvian Terrace Condominium is likely the first registered condominium in the Town of Palm Beach.

in 1965, Peruvian Terrace Inc. and Robert McAninch as petitioners challenged the Town in Circuit Court to recognize condominiums and tax the individual units.¹⁶ In January 1967, Peruvian Terrace Inc. won the lawsuit which required Palm Beach to stop taxing registered condominiums on the entire structure and instead tax individual units. Since this time, the Peruvian Terrace Condominium has continued to be a successful and sought after mid-size residential building in a prime Palm Beach location with a number of long-time owners who enjoy their lovely terraces and many inhouse and nearby amenities.

V. Architect Biography

John F. Stetson

John F. Stetson, a Florida native, was one of Palm Beach's most prominent Modern architects. Born in St. Lucie County on June 26, 1915, he graduated from Ft. Pierce High School and the University of Florida School of Architecture and Allied Arts. Stetson came to Palm Beach in 1936 when he joined the architectural firm of Lester Geisler, who had been Addison Mizner's "right hand man". Following two years with Geisler, Stetson began working with another prominent Palm Beach architect Howard Major. At the start of the Second World War, John Stetson joined the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and was responsible for converting many hotels and condominiums in Miami into barracks and facilities for soldiers. He was later assigned to Trinidad and South America for the last year and a half of the war.

Following the war, in July 1947, Stetson passed the Florida State Board of Architecture exam and opened an office in Palm Beach. John Stetson's architectural firm, with his individualist approach and desire to mentor young architects, became a source of much of Palm Beach's modern architecture. Licensed in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio in addition to Florida, Stetson was a member of the American Institute of Architects and in 1955 served as president of the Palm Beach chapter. In 1963, John Stetson was awarded the highest architectural award when he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. This was only the second fellowship granted to a Palm Beach architect with the first being awarded to Marion Sims Wyeth in 1954.¹⁷

John Stetson was very civically and socially active in Palm Beach and the State of Florida. He served under three governors as an official of the Governor's Hurricane

¹⁶ The Apartments and owner Robert V. McAninch filed a writ of mandamus action in Circuit Court protesting a move by the Town of Palm Beach to assess and tax the building on the entire structure.

¹⁷ "Architect Achieves Fellowship" *Palm Beach Post*, March 24, 1963.

Advisory Committee and as a panelist for the American Arbitration Committee. In Palm Beach, Stetson was a close follower of Town business and policies. He was active in social and civic organizations such as the Islanders Club, Fraternal Order of Police Association, Kiwanis Club of Palm Beach, Old Guard Society, the Sailfish Club, The Beach Club, Sons of the American Revolution, and the Royal Poinciana Chapel.

John Stetson retired after 49 years in the architectural profession and closed his office in 1985. He designed hundreds of private residences and commercial buildings in Palm Beach, as well as in the surrounding area, including the master plan for Old Port Cove in North Palm Beach, Temple Israel in West Palm Beach, the Federal Office Building in West Palm Beach, the Palm Beach Country Club, the Armour Building, the Dorset House, the original buildings of Florida Atlantic University, and Palm Beach Fairground buildings. He was also instrumental in the relocation of the Royal Poinciana Chapel to its current location. In addition to his commissions in Palm Beach County, Stetson also designed residences in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Montana, and Spain and was a patentee for plumbing connections for rotating buildings.

On November 22, 1986, John Stetson passed away. Following his death, architect Eugene Lawrence said “John was a strong individualist. Through the years, he made a strong contribution to his profession. He always was very involved and never minced words – he spoke his mind. John was one of the architects of an era in Palm Beach.”¹⁸ The Palm Beach chapter of the American Institute of Architects created the John Stetson Award to recognize outstanding service to the chapter with the first award being presented in 1989.

VI. Statement of Significance

The Peruvian Terrace Condominium is distinctive for its interesting Mid-Century Modern architecture designed by distinguished Palm Beach architect John Stetson. The building is also significant as a representation of the changing building character of Palm Beach’s early Royal Park subdivision where many single-family houses were replaced by larger apartment buildings due to increased Post WWII demand and changes in the town’s zoning ordinance as well as a changes in building styles with modernist designs becoming the paradigm for most multi-family residential buildings in Palm Beach during this period.

¹⁸ Romoser, Chris “Architect John Stetson Dies”. *Palm Beach Daily News*, November 24, 1986.

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 Peruvian Terrace Condominium reflects the broad cultural, economic and social history of the Town of Palm Beach. The property is located in Palm Beach’s historic Royal Park subdivision that was developed as one of the first residential and commercial areas of town outside of Flagler’s hotel properties by some of Palm Beach’s early influential pioneers. The building was constructed in 1959-1960, a time after an impactful rezoning in Royal Park that allowed for larger apartment buildings and a time when Palm Beach was thriving in a post WWII population boom with a housing demand looking to accommodate increasing residents looking for in-town modern accommodations. The Peruvian Terrace Condominium’s role in legally challenging the Town of Palm Beach to recognize and properly tax condominiums was pivotal to the legal standing of condominiums in Palm Beach. Peruvian Terrace’s modernist design along with its prime location in close proximity to premier shopping, dining, hotels, beaches and the Town’s government center made it an ideal property to meet those needs and one that continues to attract discerning property owners.

(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.”

401 Peruvian Avenue is a notable example of a Mid-Century Modern mid-rise residential structure as designed by prominent Palm Beach architect John Stetson. The building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style, which was a by-product of the post-World War II optimism and the nation’s dedication to building a new future. During the post-war era architects and designers were breaking away from the past and designing buildings defined by clean lines, simple shapes, and minimal ornamentation. Mid-Century Modern features of the Peruvian Terrace Condominium include its geometric forms, smooth stucco façade, flat roof, ribbons of windows, projecting eyebrows, breezeblock panels and angled balconies.

- (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.”**

401 Peruvian Avenue is a very good representation of the notable work of architect John Stetson. Stetson was a prominent Palm Beach architect and resident for 50 years. He began his architectural career in 1936 working for architects Lester Geisler and Howard Major before serving in the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers during World War II. After the war, Stetson returned to Palm Beach and established his own architectural firm in 1947. He was the second Palm Beach architect to be named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the highest architectural award, in 1963. John Stetson was an outspoken proponent of Modern architecture and over the course of his career he designed several hundred commercial and residential buildings most of which were in Modern architectural styles.

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