

124 Clarke Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

March 13, 2019

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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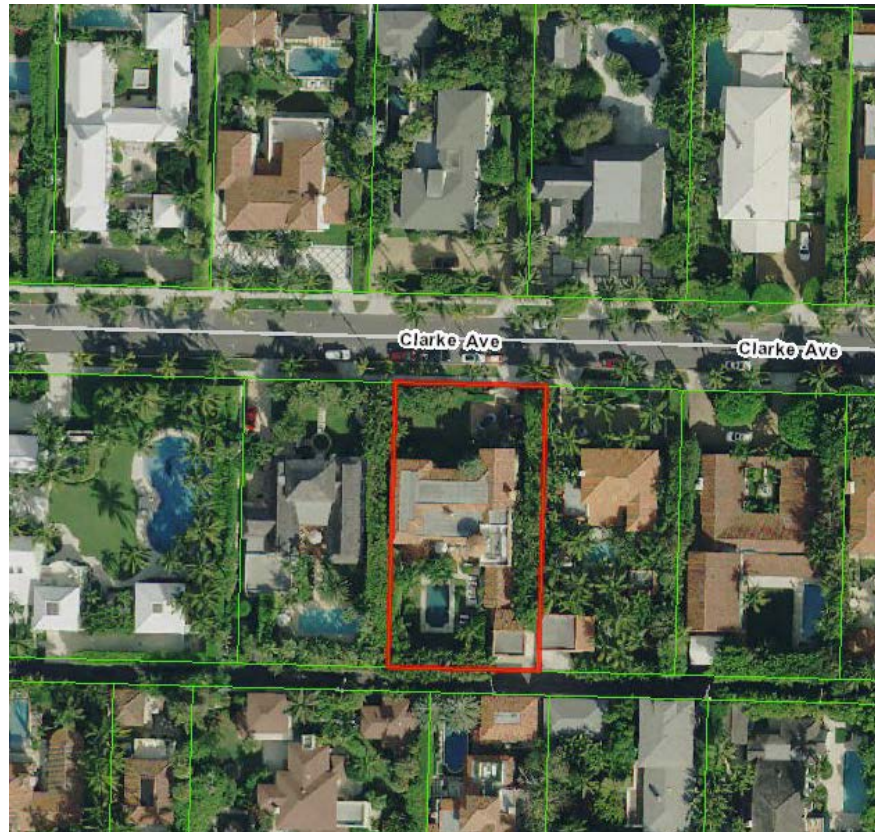
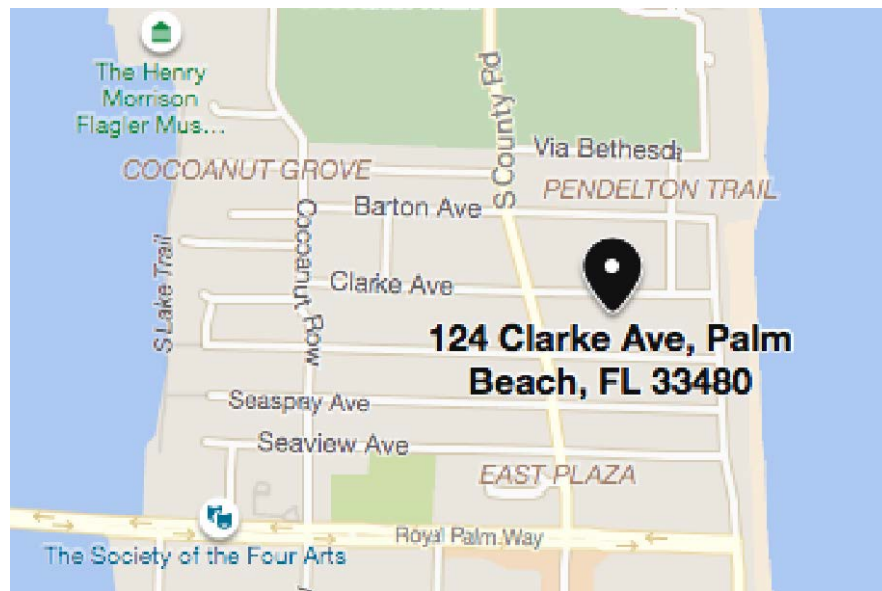
Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	124 Clarke Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1925
First Owner:	Niles S. Babbitt
Architect:	Unknown
Builder/Contractor:	Charles S. Rice
Present Owner:	Gerald and Emily Lemole
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	R-B
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-22-05-000-0130
Current Legal Description:	Lot 13, Primavera Estates (Ocean Section), according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 82, of the Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida.

II. Location Map

124 Clarke Avenue



III. Architectural Information

124 Clarke Avenue is located on the south side of Clarke Avenue between South Ocean Avenue and South County Road in the ocean section of the Primavera Estates subdivision. The residence and accessory structures were constructed in the Mediterranean Revival style in 1925 during the height of the Palm Beach Land and Housing Boom.¹ The residence has an eclectic array of Gothic, Venetian and Spanish details.



Main (North) Facade

124 Clarke Avenue is a very good example of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture that was popular in Palm Beach during the Land Boom of the 1920s. The Mediterranean Revival style is an eclectic style incorporating architectural elements derived from the area around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Italy and Spain. The style is found most frequently in states that have a Spanish Colonial heritage, but its use gained national popularity after the Pan-American Exhibition held in San Diego in 1915. In Palm Beach, the style was first popularized in 1919 by Addison Mizner's design for the Everglades Club. The popularity of the style soared in the 1920s for both commercial and residential buildings. The style remained a pervasive influence on building design until World War II. Buildings of this style are often decorated with ornate cast-stone columns,

¹ Building Permit #43625, on file at the Town of Palm Beach, was dated April 11, 1925, with an approximate cost of \$35,000.

pilasters and window surrounds. Arched openings, tower features, balconies, asymmetrical massing and windows of varying sizes and shapes are also common features. In addition, stone or stucco facades, decorative wrought ironwork, tile floors, pecky cypress ceilings and clay barrel tile roofs are typical features of Mediterranean Revival style buildings.

124 Clarke Avenue is a two-story residence constructed of wood frame and hollow clay tile and is surfaced with rough stucco. The roofing is comprised of barrel tile hip and gable roofs with exposed rafters, as well as, flat roofs with parapets and barrel tile accents. The residence was constructed in a H-shaped plan with a two-story garage apartment building at the southeast corner of the property. A one-story addition connects the house to the accessory structure. The property is surrounded by a site wall and a pair of rectangular columns with a decorative metal gate provides access to the property.

The eastern wing of the residence has a front facing gable roof and contains the focal point of the main façade, a gothic arched recessed entryway with a large cast stone door surround. A rectangular cartouche with a tile background and a religious statue tops the surround. A pair of wood and glass doors with decorative metal work and an arched transom above provide access into the residence. Two casement windows with Venetian arched cast stone window surrounds are located above the entry feature.



Eastern Wing with Entrance



Entrance

The central bay of the residence, which is recessed from the eastern and western wings, connects to the eastern wing with an angled wall. This portion of the residence contains a double height living room with 22-foot ceilings. A high fixed glass window with a decorative Venetian arched window surround is the focal point of this bay.



Eastern Wing and Central Bay

The western wing of the residence does not extend forward as much as the eastern bay. Unique features of this wing include the second floor's curvilinear shaped window with a cast stone surround and the decorative tracery located at the northwest corner of the second floor.



Curvilinear Window on the North Façade
of the Western Wing



Decorative Tracery at Northwest Corner

The residence has varied window fenestration including multi-light casement and sash windows, fixed windows, and arched multi-light French doors. At some point after 2005, embellishments were added to some of the windows on the main façade, including the two Venetian style window surrounds above the entrance and the rectangular surround at the center window on the second floor of the western wing.²



Main (North) Façade

The highlight on the rear of the residence is a three-story round tower with a barrel tile hip roof. The tower has rectangular windows on the first and second floors and arches on the third floor. A rear loggia with multi-light arched French doors looks out on the rear yard and pool. A one-story addition that was constructed in 2000 connects the house to the accessory structure. This addition has three sets of arched French doors facing the pool area.³

² Building permit information for the window surrounds could not be located. The work may have been done in 2007-2008 when windows were replaced. A photograph from a real estate advertisement from 2005 does not show these window surrounds.

³ Description of the rear of the residence is based on building permit records and online photographs.



Rear façade as shown in Real Estate Advertisement in the Palm Beach Post, 2007

Alterations and additions to the exterior of the residence include the construction of the swimming pool in 1968, enclosure of a second floor sundeck at the center of the eastern wing with an addition in 1995, construction of the front site wall and driveway gate in 1997, construction of a one-story addition that connects the rear of the residence's eastern wing to the accessory structure and a four-foot extension of the rear loggia and an addition above the loggia in 2000, replacement of windows and doors, addition of some window surrounds, re-roofing, and ordinary repairs and maintenance.⁴



Main Façade - Image from a Real Estate Advertisement in the Palm Beach Post, 2005

⁴ Town of Palm Beach Building Permit Records, 1925-2019.

IV. Historical Information

The residence at 124 Clarke Avenue was built during the Florida Land Boom. The early 1920s was a period of tremendous growth in the Town of Palm Beach. The Island had become the winter resort of America's most influential families and the building boom was radically changing the face of the small community. By 1920, Ocean Boulevard was completed and motorists from the north were driving down to enjoy the popular winter resort town. As Addison Mizner and other prominent Palm Beach architects were designing large estates along the ocean and lake in the Mediterranean Revival style, demand for hotels, apartments and residences grew. Many of these homes were taking their design cues from the larger estates and were being built in the Mediterranean Revival style as well, increasing the style's popularity.

124 Clarke Avenue was constructed in Primavera Estates, a subdivision developed by Louis Clarke. Louis Clarke was the son of Charles J. Clarke, an early Palm Beach pioneer. The origins of Clarke Avenue and the Primavera Estates subdivision go back to 1880, when E. N. "Cap" Dimick, Palm Beach's first mayor, built his home on Lake Trail at the west end of what is now Clarke Avenue. The home was named "Cocoanut Grove" and became the first hotel in the area, Cocoanut Grove House. In 1891, Charles Clarke purchased the Cocoanut Grove along with sixty acres of property that ran from the ocean to the lake.⁵ A fire destroyed the Cocoanut Grove House in 1893, after which Charles Clarke built his home on the site, which he named "Primavera". Louis Clark developed the Primavera Estates subdivision in 1917 and many of the lots in the subdivision were sold from 1918 through 1923.⁶

Historically named "Casa Del Padre", 124 Clarke Avenue was built in 1925 by Charles S. Rice for Niles S. Babbitt and his wife Anne, from Philadelphia. Babbitt was the owner of a dress manufacturing and importing company and was an avid sportsman. He was a founder of the Philadelphia Athletic Club and an active member of the Sailfish Club.⁷ The Babbitt's began spending the winter season in Palm Beach, prior to 1920, staying at

⁵ "Clarke Avenue 2002 Annual Walking Tour," Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach 7 February 2002.

⁶ "All Quiet on Clarke Avenue Beach," Palm Beach Daily News 25 September 1985.

"Primavera Estates," Palm Beach Post 22 December 1918.

"Primavera, Palm Beach Auction Lot Sale," Palm Beach Daily News 18 February 1923.

⁷ Obituary, The Evening Bulletin, Philadelphia. 8 June 1968.

The Royal Poinciana Hotel. Niles Babbitt was known as a very religious person and donated a large stained glass window to St. Edward's Catholic Church.

In 1924, Babbitt contracted Charles S. Rice to construct a residence, known as Villa Banyan, at 217 Clarke Avenue.⁸ Shortly after the construction of Villa Banyan, Babbitt had Charles Rice construct another residence for him down the street at 124 Clarke Avenue.⁹ Shortly after Villa Banyan was built Babbitt sold the property. Niles Babbitt spent most winter seasons at Casa Del Padre, 124 Clarke Avenue, until his death in 1968.

There have only been five owners of the residence since its construction in 1925. Niles Babbitt owned the property for 43 years and the second owners, Louis O. and Birgett Hilton, owned the property for 27 years. Following the Hilton's, the house was owned by Raphael and Fortune Beriro, Dean and Pamela Lovett, and is currently owned by the Gerald and Emily Lemole who purchased it in 2007 and have been excellent stewards of the property.

V. Architect/Builder Biography

There is no architect listed on the original building permit for 124 Clarke Avenue and therefore, like many Palm Beach buildings constructed in the early twentieth century, the residence was likely designed and built by the contractor Charles S. Rice.

Charles S. Rice was a prominent contractor and builder in the Palm Beach area from the 1920s to 1940s. Originally from Nova Scotia, Rice came to South Florida by way of Massachusetts in 1920. He was responsible for the construction of many residences in Palm Beach, West Palm Beach and other municipalities in the area. In addition to 124 Clarke Avenue and 217 Clarke Avenue, Charles Rice also constructed 10 South Lake Trail, 114 Seaspray Avenue, 124 Brazilian Avenue, 148 South County Road, and 212 Clarke Avenue. Charles Rice passed away in 1948.

⁸ 217 Clarke Avenue was designated a Town of Palm Beach Landmark in 1982. Building Permit #27224 on file at the Town of Palm Beach. 21 May 1924.

⁹ The Florida Master Site File Form incorrectly lists the builder of 124 Clarke Avenue as J.S. Willson. The 1925 building permit for the construction of the residence and newspaper articles from 1925 state the builder was Charles S. Rice.

VI. Statement of Significance

The residence at 124 Clarke Avenue with its Gothic, Venetian and Spanish details is a very good example of a Mediterranean Revival style residence constructed at the height of the 1920's Land Boom in Palm Beach. Built in 1925 for Niles Babbitt, the residence is representative of the homes being constructed during a time of significant growth in Palm Beach and more specifically the Primavera Estates subdivision.

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 the 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.”

124 Clarke Avenue, built for successful businessman Niles Babbitt, represents the broad cultural and economic spectrum of building activity that was taking place in Palm Beach during the Florida Boom Time Era of the 1920s. Clarke Avenue is part of the Primavera Estates subdivision, a successful subdivision created during the 1920s Land Boom. While Palm Beach's reputation rested upon the individual grand estates and fashionable hotels, residences such as 124 Clarke Avenue are symbolic of the rise of cohesive neighborhoods of single family homes in Palm Beach during the 1920s.

(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 located at 124 Clarke Avenue, designed and constructed in 1925, is a very good example of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture popularized in Palm Beach during the Land Boom of the 1920s and still recognized as the “Palm

Beach Style.” The residence embodies distinctive Mediterranean Revival characteristics including asymmetrical massing, tile covered roofs, distinctive entrances, tower features, arches, columns, and stucco façades. The combination of Gothic, Venetian and Spanish design elements exhibited in the residence is characteristic of the eclectic nature of the Mediterranean Revival style.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

Curl, Donald W. Mizner's Florida: American Resort Architecture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.

_____. Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History. Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1987.

The Historical Society of Palm Beach County. Clarke and Babbitt files.

Marconi, Richard A. and Murray, Debi. Images of America: Palm Beach. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984.

The Palm Beach Daily News and Palm Beach Post. Archived Articles

Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. 124 Clarke Avenue file.

Sanborn Insurance Map of Palm Beach. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1919 and 1926. City of West Palm Beach Public Library, Florida Room.

Town of Palm Beach. Building Permits, 1925– 2019.

West Palm Beach City Directories. Asheville, NC: Florida-Piedmont Directory Company, 1918-1989.

IX. Florida Master Site File Form



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # PB06415
 Recorder # Jane S. Day
 Field Date 9/20/2010
 Form Date 10/18/2010
 Form No 201009
 Form No = Field Date (YYYYMM)

First Site Form Recorded for this Site? NO

GENERAL INFORMATION

Site Name (address if none) Gerald M. Lemole, House Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
 Other Names _____ >> Casa Bendita
 Survey or Project Name Palm Beach Historic Sites Survey, Phase V Survey# _____
 National Register Category Building(s)

LOCATION & IDENTIFICATION

Address

Street No.	Direction	Street Name	Street Type	Direction Suffix
<u>124</u>		<u>Clarke</u>	<u>Avenue</u>	

Cross Streets (nearest/between) So Ocean Blvd & So. County Rd
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Town of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES
 County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #(s) 50-43-43-22-05-000-0130
 Subdivision Name Prima Vera Estates Block _____ Lot 13
 Ownership Private Individual
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____
 Route to (especially if no street address) On the south side of Clarke Ave. between South Ocean Blvd and South County Rd.

MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name _____ Publication Date _____ >> PALM BEACH;1946
 Township: _____ Range: _____ Section: _____ 14 section: _____ >> 43S ;43E ;22;UNSP
 Irregular Section Name: _____
 Landgrant _____
 UTM: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____
 Plat or Other Map (map's name, location) _____

DESCRIPTION

Style Mediterranean Revival Other Style _____
 Exterior Plan Irregular Other Exterior Plan _____
 Number of Stories 2
 Structural System(s) _____ >> Wood frame
 Other Structural System(s) hollow clay tile
 Foundation Type(s) _____ >> Continuous
 Other Foundation Types _____
 Foundation Material(s) _____ >> Concrete Block
 Other Foundation Material(s) _____
 Exterior Fabric(s) _____ >> Stucco
 Other Exterior Fabric(s) _____
 Roof Type(s) _____ >> Hip
 Other Roof Type(s) gable
 Roof Material(s) _____ >> Spanish tile
 Other Roof Material(s) _____
 Roof Secondary Structure(s) (dormers etc) _____ >> _____
 Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) _____
 Number of Chimneys 1
 Chimney Material Brick
 Other Chimney Material(s) stucco on exterior
 Chimney Location(s) east slope

Page 1 of 3

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB06415

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions casement, fixed

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) On the north facade with a cast stone surround and Gothic arched top

Porches: #open 2 #closed #incised Location(s) entry - n, 2nd floor loggia - NW

Porch Roof Type(s)

Exterior Ornament cast stone, exposed rafters, belt course, medallions, tile

Interior Plan Unknown

Other Interior Plan

Condition Excellent

Structure Surroundings

Commercial: NONE of this category Residential: ALL this category

Institutional: NONE of this category Undeveloped: NONE of this category

Ancillary Features (Number / type of outbuildings, major landscape features)

Archaeological Remains (describe): none observed

If archaeological remains are present, was an Archaeological Site Form completed?

Narrative Description (optional)

HISTORY

Construction year 1924

Architect (last name first): unknown

Builder (last name first): Willson, J.S.

Changes in Locations or Conditions

Type of Change	Year of Change	Date Change Noted	Description of Changes
>>			

Structure Use History

Use Year Use Started Year Use Ended >> Private residence; 1924;

Other Structure Uses

Ownership History (especially original owner, dates, profession, etc.)

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methods >> Examine local property records

Other research methods

SURVEYOR'S EVALUATION OF SITE

Potentially Eligible for a Local Register? INSUFF. INFO Name of Local Register if Eligible Town of Palm Beach Landmark

Individually Eligible for National Register? INSUFF. INFO

Potential Contributor to NR District? INSUFF. INFO

Area(s) of historical significance >> Community planning & development

Other Historical Associations

Explanation of Evaluation (required) This Mediterranean Revival style residence built in 1924 has an eclectic array of details in the Gothic, Venetian and Spanish Baroque type. It is worthy of further study.

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB06415

DOCUMENTATION (Photos, Plans, etc.)

Photographic Negatives or Other Collections Not Filed with FMSF, including Field Notes, Plans, other Important Documents.

Document type: _____	Maintaining Organization: _____
File or Accession #: _____	Descriptive Information: _____
>> _____	

RECORDER INFORMATION

Recorder Name (Last, First) Day, Jane S.
 Recorder Address / Phone 728 Granada Drive, Boca Raton, Fl. 33432 561-362-4473
 Recorder Affiliation Research Atlantica Other Affiliation Town of Palm Beach
 Is a Text-Only Supplement File Attached (Surveyor Only)? _____

***** MASTER SITE FILE USE ONLY *****

Cultural Resource Type: <u>SS</u> Electronic Form Used: <u>SL10</u> Form Type Code: <u>NCRM</u> Form Quality Ranking: <u>NEW</u> Form Status Code: <u>SCAT</u> Supplement Information Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT</u> Supplement File Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT FILE</u> Form Comments: _____ _____ _____	SHPO's Evaluation of Resource _____ Date _____ FMSF Staffer: _____ Computer Entry Date: <u>7/23/2004</u>
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REQUIRED PAPER ATTACHMENTS

- (1) USGS 7.5" MAP WITH STRUCTURE PINPOINTED IN RED
- (2) LARGE SCALE STREET OR PLAT MAP
- (3) PHOTO OF MAIN FACADE, B&W, AT LEAST 3"X5"