

300 Clarke Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

March 18, 2020

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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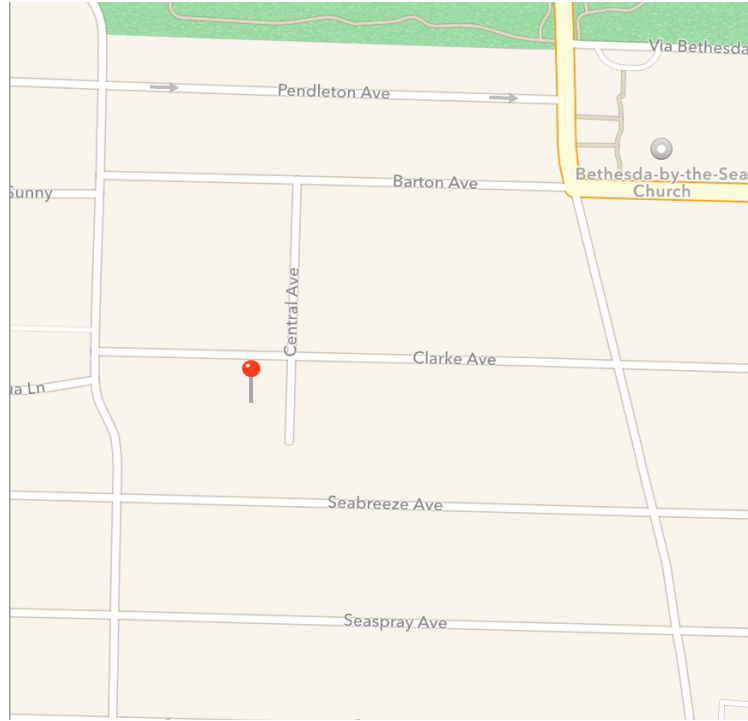
Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	300 Clarke Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1936
First Owner:	Robert Butt and Thelma Von Eye Butt
Architect:	John L. Volk
Builder/Contractor:	Arnold Construction Co.
Present Owner:	Desmond J. Heathwood and Dorothy Ann Heathwood
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	R-B
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-22-04-000-0670
Current Legal Description:	Lots 67 and 68 of Primavera Estates (Middle Section), according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 7, Page 39, of the Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida.

II. Location Map

300 Clarke Avenue



III. Architectural Information

300 Clarke Avenue is located on the south side of Clarke Avenue between Coconut Row and South County Road in the middle section of the Primavera Estates subdivision. The residence and accessory structure were designed by John Volk in the Mediterranean Revival style in 1936 and constructed by Arnold Construction Company for a cost of \$40,000.¹ The residence is a very good representation of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture as it was being constructed in Palm Beach during the late Depression/New Deal Era of the mid-1930s.



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, pilasters and window surrounds. Arched openings, tower features, balconies, asymmetrical massing and windows of varying sizes and shapes are also common features.

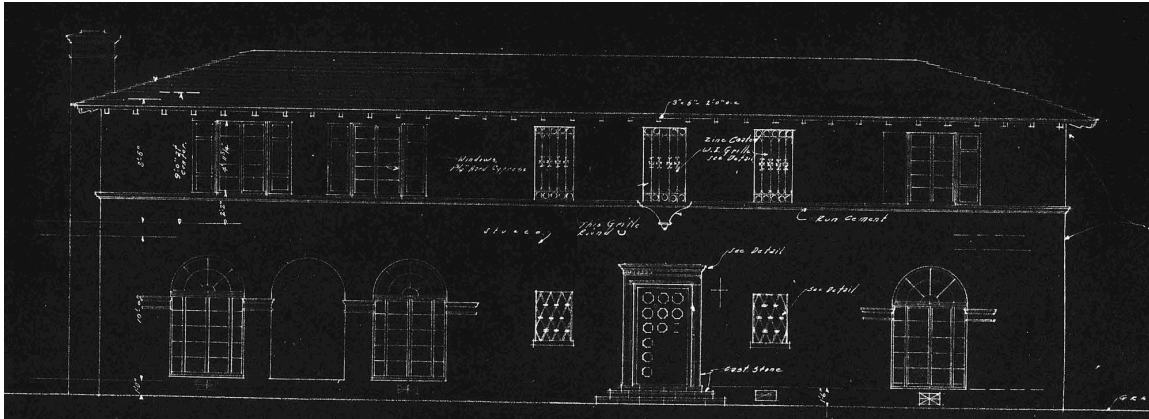
¹ Building Permit #9736, on file at the Town of Palm Beach, was dated June 8, 1936.

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.

300 Clarke Avenue is a two-story residence that was constructed of wood frame and concrete block surfaced with stucco. The roofing is comprised of intersecting barrel tile hip roofs with exposed rafter tails. The residence was originally constructed in a L-shaped plan with a two-story, three-car garage apartment building to the rear. The garage is accessed from the alley behind the property. A two-story addition was constructed in 2007-2008 and connects the house to the garage apartment structure. A one-story accessory structure was constructed at the southwest corner of the property in 1940.



The main façade of the elegant residence features an asymmetrical design with the main entrance located slightly off-center. The entrance, which was redesigned in 2007-2008, features a cast stone arched door surround sheltered by a balcony supported by square columns. A pair of French doors on the second floor provides access to the balcony. Flanking the entrance and the balcony above are single sash windows with decorative metal grills. To the east of the entrance are three sets of French doors with arched transoms and stucco surrounds, and to the west of the entrance is another French door with an arched transom and surround. A stringcourse highlights the second floor, which features casement windows with shutters, and a chimney is located on the east facade of the residence.



Main Façade by John Volk, 1936

Early alterations and additions to the exterior include a porch addition to the garage apartment in 1948, an addition to the one-story accessory structure in 1963, and construction of a swimming pool in 1975. In 1989, a renovation to the residence added a loggia on the west façade, a bay window to the east façade (which was later removed), and a third set of French doors with an arched transom was added on the east end of the main façade, where there had been a blind arch. In 2007-2008, the residence was renovated with a design by Bridges, Marsh and Associates. This renovation included a two-story addition on the rear of the residence that connected the main house to the garage apartment and the redesign of the entrance. In addition to these changes, other alterations over the years include replacing windows, re-roofing, and ordinary repairs and maintenance.² The alterations and additions to the exterior of the residence have not had a negative architectural impact on the residence's architectural integrity and the residence continues to reflect Volk's original restrained Mediterranean Revival design.

IV. Historical Information

The residence at 300 Clarke Avenue was built during the late Depression/New Deal Era of the mid-1930s. The 1930s was a period of transition in the Town of Palm Beach. The building boom of the 1920s had ended and the Island was experiencing a period of economic instability, including a building slowdown that lasted until after World War II. The architecture in Palm Beach was also transitioning during the 1930s and less

² Town of Palm Beach Building Permit Records, 1936-2020.

elaborate styles of architecture were being explored. A November 22, 1936 *Palm Beach Post* article described these changing times in Palm Beach, "Majority of homes now being erected are of moderate sized type; showplaces are now things of former years."

300 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.³ 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 1923.⁴

300 Clarke Avenue was designed by John Volk and built in 1936 by Arnold Construction Company for Mr. and Mrs. Robert Butt of New London, Connecticut. Robert Butt started visiting Palm Beach in the early 1900s with his mother. In 1933, he and his wife Thelma Von Eye Butt began to spend the winter season in Palm Beach at a house on the Lake Trail and later at the Brazilian Court Hotel until they built the residence at 300 Clarke Avenue. The Butt's continued to use the house as a seasonal residence until 1948 when they became permanent residents of Palm Beach. Robert Butt was an investment banker and active sportsman and Thelma Butt was a lyricist. They were active members of Bethesda-by-the-Sea, the Bath and Tennis Club, Everglades Club and Seaspray Club and often hosted parties at their Clarke Avenue home. The Butt's reportedly shipped a fireplace that had once belonged to Napoleon to be located in the home's living room.⁵

There have only been five owners of the residence since its construction in 1936. The Butt's owned the property for 35 years and subsequent owners

³ "Clarke Avenue 2002 Annual Walking Tour," Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach 7 February 2002.

⁴ "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.

⁵ *Palm Beach Post*, 26 February 1981, page 21.

included Mr. Anthony Boalt, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ryerson, Mr. and Mrs. Blaine Fogg, and the current owners Mr. and Mrs. Desmond Heathwood. The Heathwoods purchased the residence in 2007 and have been excellent stewards of the property.

V. Architect/Builder Biography

John L. Volk

John Volk has been called the last of the "original" Palm Beach architects. He was one of an elite group of early 1920s architects that included Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, and Marion Sims Wyeth who developed the architectural style of the island that came to be known as the "Palm Beach Style".

Volk was born in Graz, Austria in 1901. He came to the United States with his parents at the age of nine and grew up in New York. He attended Columbia University School of Architecture and L'Ecole des Beaux Arts. Volk opened his office in Palm Beach in 1925.

Volk designed more than 1000 houses, theaters, clubs, shops, and other buildings and lived in Palm Beach from 1925 to his death in 1984. He designed homes for some of the wealthiest and most powerful people in America over his 58-year career in Palm Beach including Colonel Robert McCormack, William Paley, George Vanderbilt, Nicholas DuPont, Henry Ford II, Herbert Pulitzer, Matthew Mellon, George Storer, Horace Dodge II, and John S. Phipps. Included in the designs of John Volk are some of the most prominent commercial and private club buildings in the Palm Beach area including the First National Bank, the Royal Poinciana Plaza and Playhouse, the center section of the Town Hall, the Beach Club, Good Samaritan Hospital, and several shops on Worth Avenue including the Everglades Colonnade. He also extensively modified and rebuilt the Bath and Tennis Club after a major hurricane.

Numerous other buildings are the result of Mr. Volk's labor and it must be noted that no particular style can be exclusively associated with Mr. Volk. Unlike other talented architects who developed or refined specific styles, John Volk understood and perfected many varying architectural styles from Mediterranean Revival to Contemporary Design.

Arnold Construction Company

The Arnold Construction Company, headed by James Y. and W. H. Arnold, was a leading construction company in Palm Beach from the 1920s through the 1970s. The Arnolds arrived in Palm Beach in 1925 during the Florida land and building boom. In addition to building countless houses of varying sizes and styles, they also constructed hospitals, churches, apartment buildings, country clubs and other commercial buildings throughout Florida. In Palm Beach, Arnold Construction Company worked with all of the prominent architects and built a number of the early grand estates and significant mid-town houses.

A few of the grand estates and significant in-town houses built by Arnold Construction Company include The Kennedy Estate on North Ocean Boulevard, E.Z. Nutting House Nuestro Paridiso on South Ocean Boulevard (Julius Jacobs), the Moffett House on South Ocean Boulevard (John Volk), the Charles Manning House on Clarke Avenue (Howard Major), the John Rutherford House on North Lake Trail (Treanor & Fatio), the Ernest Howe Residence on Clarke Avenue (Howard Major), and many others. They also built the esteemed St. Edwards Church and Rectory just north of the Town's original main street on North County Road. The company's files were lost in a fire so there is no complete record of their projects. These projects were noted in newspaper articles in files at the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and in the Palm Beach Post online archives.

In the 1930s, Arnold Construction Company formed Palm Beach Modern Homes as their chief development company. The company hired the best architects in Palm Beach to design a series of "spec" houses on Pendleton Avenue and Pendleton Lane. Nearly half of the original structures were designed by John L. Volk, but Maurice Fatio, Howard Major, Gustav Maass, Marion Syms Wyeth, Howard Chilton and Belford Shumate all had part in designing houses on the street. The Arnold Construction Company built and financed other speculation houses throughout Palm Beach such as 215 El Bravo Way and continued to build houses and commercial buildings in Florida and surrounding states into the 1970s when the company became a division of McCloskey and Company.

VI. Statement of Significance

The residence at 300 Clarke Avenue is a very good example of a Mediterranean Revival style residence constructed during the late Depression/New Deal Era in Palm Beach. The restrained design by the prominent architect John Volk is also representative of the architectural, cultural and social changes occurring in Palm Beach during the mid 1930s.

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.”

300 Clarke Avenue reflects the broad cultural, economic and social history of the Town of Palm Beach. Built in 1936, during the late Depression/New Deal Era for Robert and Thelma Butt, the residence is a very good example of the changing times in the Town. The end of the Boom Time Era in Palm Beach had signaled a change in development and construction of residences with many owners seeking mid-size residences with restrained designs. While designing the house in the Mediterranean Revival style popularized during the Boom Times of the 1920s, John Volk kept the design for 300 Clarke understated and in keeping with the architectural preferences of the 1930s.

(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 300 Clarke Avenue, designed and constructed in 1936, 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, arches, columns, decorative metal work, and stucco façades. Despite changes over time, 300 Clarke Avenue has retained its architectural integrity.

(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.”

300 Clarke Avenue is a very good representation of the design work of the architect John L. Volk. John Volk has always been recognized as one of the most important architects to practice in the Town of Palm Beach. Unlike other talented architects who developed or refined specific styles, John Volk understood and perfected many varying architectural styles from Mediterranean Revival to contemporary designs.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

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

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

McAlester, Virginia Savage. A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2015.

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IX. Florida Master Site File Form



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # PB04144

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) Dorothy Heathwood, House Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
 Other Names _____ >> Villa Felice
 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>300</u>		<u>Clarke</u>	<u>Avenue</u>	

Cross Streets (nearest/ between) Central Ave & Coconut Row
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Town of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES
 County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #(s) 50-43-43-22-04-000-0670
 Subdivision Name Prima Vera Estates Block _____ Lot 67,68
 Ownership Private Individual
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____
 Route to (especially if no street address) On the south side of Clarke Avenue opposite the T intersection with Central Ave.

MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name _____ Publication Date _____ >> PAIM BEACH;1946
 Township: _____ Range: _____ Section: _____ 1/4 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) _____ >> Masonry - General
 Other Structural System(s) _____
 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) _____
 Roof Material(s) _____ >> Spanish tile
 Other Roof Material(s) _____
 Roof Secondary Structure(s) (dormers etc) _____ >> _____
 Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) shed
 Number of Chimneys 1
 Chimney Material Brick
 Other Chimney Material(s) stucco on exterior
 Chimney Location(s) east exterior wall

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB04144

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions casement, French doors, 1/1 DHS, fixed

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) On the north facade with cast stone surround

Porches: #open 1 #closed #incised Location(s) raised entry - n

Porch Roof Type(s) awning

Exterior Ornament cast stone, double belt course, exposed rafters, wrought iron

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 1936

Architect (last name first): Volk, John L.

Builder (last name first): Arnold Construction Co.

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;1936;

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? YES

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 house, built in 1936 was designed by well known architect, John L. Volk. It is worthy of local designation.

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB04144

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>8110</u> Form Type Code: <u>NCRM</u> Form Quality Ranking: <u>NEW</u> Form Status Code: <u>SCAT</u>	SHPO's Evaluation of Resource Date: _____
Supplement Information Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT</u> Supplement File Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT FILE</u>	FMSF Staffer: _____ Computer Entry Date: <u>7/25/2004</u>
Form Comments: _____ _____ _____	

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"