

215 Seaspray Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

December 22, 2021

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

215 Seaspray Avenue

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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

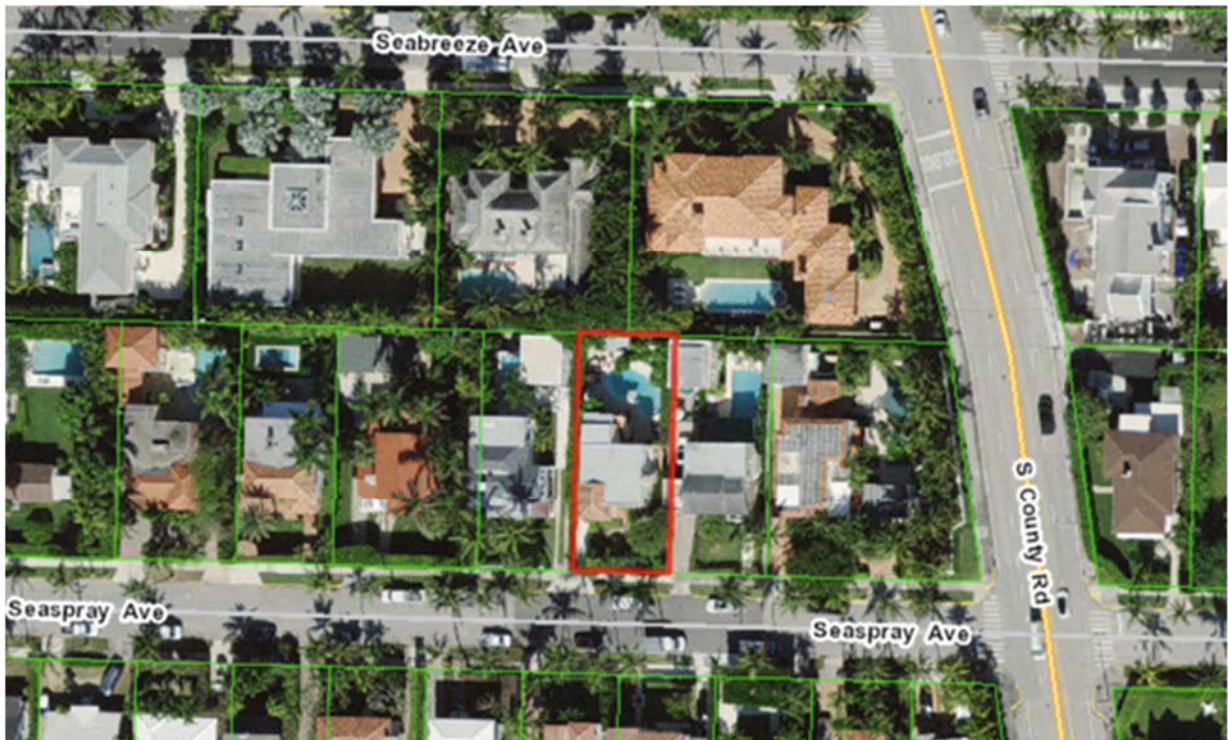
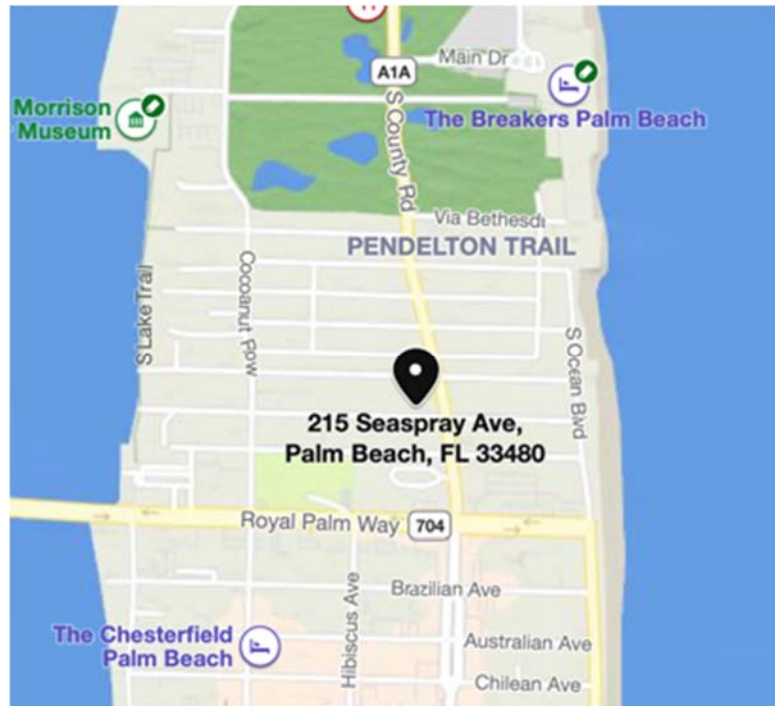
I. General Information

Location:	215 Seaspray Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1924
First Owner:	Captain and Mrs. John H. Gibbons ¹
Current Owner:	215 Seaspray Avenue LLC
Architect/Builder:	Ernest Benjamin “E.B.” Walton
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	RB
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-22-07-000-4480
Current Legal Description:	Poinciana Park 2 nd Addition Lots 448 & 450

¹ First owners after developer owner E.B Walton

II. Location Map

215 Seaspray Avenue



III. Architectural Information

215 Seaspray Avenue is a two-story, Mediterranean Revival style dwelling located on the north side of Seaspray Avenue in the heart of the historic Poinciana Park subdivision. The dwelling was constructed by Ernest Benjamin “E.B.” Walton in 1924 during Palm Beach’s boom time era. Entry to the property is through an ornate metal gate from the sidewalk on Seaspray Avenue.



The Mediterranean Revival style of architecture was popular in Palm Beach during the Land Boom of the 1920s and is still considered the signature style of the Island. The Mediterranean Revival style is an eclectic style incorporating architectural elements derived from the area around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Italy and Spain and is based on capturing the feeling of a Mediterranean villa, which became popular in the United States in the 1920s. Warm, tropical places such as Florida sought to embrace a unique aesthetic, something that felt exotic and relaxing, and this appealed to Palm Beach architects, builders, developers, and homeowners alike. In Palm Beach, the style was first propagated by Addison Mizner, but then established through

other leading architects and builders, including master builder E.B. Walton. The style remained a pervasive influence on building design until World War II. Buildings of this style often incorporate ornate cast-stone columns, arched openings, balconies, asymmetrical massing and windows of varying sizes and shapes. In addition, stone or stucco facades, decorative wrought ironwork, and clay barrel tile roofs are typical features of Mediterranean Revival style buildings.

The dwelling at 215 Seaspray Avenue has a number of Mediterranean Revival style elements including the wood frame structure covered with a stucco finish, asymmetrical design, Corinthian columns, arched openings, French doors, a balcony with a metal railing and a roof covered with red clay barrel tiles with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The first story of the front façade features a small entry porch with a Corinthian column supporting an arched opening, a metal lantern, and a wood paneled door all covered by a shed roof covered with red clay barrel tiles. To the east of this main entrance are two sets of multi-light French doors and to the west of the entrance are a pair of arch-topped awning windows. Above the entry on the second story is a small multi-light arched window. To the east of this window are a pair of six-over-six double-hung sash windows topped by a wood lintel and to the west is a set of eight-light doors separated by a Corinthian column and topped by a wood lintel, with the doors leading to a shallow balcony with a simple metal rail and small corbels below. Like most Mediterranean Revival designs, the plan of this dwelling is irregular, and the elevations are asymmetrical.



Over its 97-year history, 215 Seaspray Avenue has had some additions and alterations. Like most houses of this era, air conditioning and a swimming pool were added. There were interior remodeling projects, but the main exterior renovation was the enclosure of the sleeping porch and replacement of some windows and doors.² Although 215 Seaspray Avenue has had alterations, the major character defining features of the house remain and therefore the house retains its historic architectural integrity.

IV. Historical Information

The house at 215 Seaspray Avenue is located in the mid-town, historic Poinciana Park subdivision. Poinciana Park was platted and largely developed by Oscar A. Jose and his City Builders Realty Company. Jose created Poinciana Park by purchasing tracts of land south of the Breakers and the Royal Poinciana Hotel from Lake Worth to the Atlantic Ocean. This area became the “Sea” streets with Sea Breeze platted in 1914 followed by Sea Spray in 1917 and the north side of Sea View in 1923.³ A brochure designed and distributed by City Builders Realty Company titled “Poinciana Park, The Preferred Location,” goes into great detail about the many advantages of wintering in Palm Beach and the benefits of owning a house in centrally located Poinciana Park, close to all of the town’s amenities but removed from the “rush and bustle of the hotel center.”⁴ Oscar Jose was one of the early developers to recognize the potential in Palm Beach for building something other than a grand estate or spending the season at a hotel. Poinciana Park was an attempt to make Palm Beach more family oriented and the Palm Beach lifestyle more accessible to the “upper-middle class.”⁵

City Builders built houses for sale and rent in Poinciana Park, and they also sold lots to outside owners and developers. 215 Seaspray Avenue was purchased from City Builders and developed by master builder E.B. Walton. In 1919 Ernest Benjamin Walton began a long and distinguished career of designing and building in the Palm Beach area. His construction firm, E.B.

² There is currently a proposal to renovate 215 Seaspray Avenue and a number of the windows will be replaced to more closely match the original.

³ Sea Breeze, Sea Spray and Sea View were the original spellings of the Poinciana Park Avenues.

⁴ “Poinciana Park, The Preferred Location,” Brochure distributed by City Builders Realty. No Date. Located in the Poinciana Park file at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. Ownership or seasonal rental of a house in Poinciana Park included a membership in the Sea Spray Beach Club. Located on the ocean side of South Ocean Boulevard and Seaspray Avenue, the fashionable club provided members with an Olympic-sized pool, tennis courts, a solarium, and popular dining facilities.

⁵ “Preservationist’s Home Gets Landmarks’ OK,” Palm Beach Daily News, 22 January 1998.

Walton Inc., was a prominent construction company responsible for building numerous residential and commercial buildings within the Town of Palm Beach, the City of West Palm Beach, as well as, throughout the southeast United States. E.B. Walton designed many of the residences in addition to constructing them. During the 1920's his designs were primarily in the popular Mediterranean Revival style. E.B. Walton Inc. was also responsible for constructing designs by prominent architects such as Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, John Volk, and Marion Sims Wyeth, as well as successfully developing numerous streets in the north end of Palm Beach.

215 Seaspray Avenue was built for the first owners Captain John H. Gibbons and his wife Maud. Captain Gibbons had a highly distinguished career in the Navy both on the sea and the shore, receiving many commendations and serving both as an instructor and then as the superintendent of the United States Naval Academy. For many years Captain and Mrs. Gibbons made Palm Beach their winter home, arriving from homes they maintained in Washington D.C. and Avon, Connecticut. They were prominently identified with the social and cultural life in Palm Beach, and after living at 215 Seaspray Avenue for 15 years, they moved to 200 El Brillo Way, another Mediterranean Revival style dwelling.⁶ The current owner, 215 Seaspray Avenue, LLC purchased the house from Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Greenleaf in 2021 and is planning to renovate the 97-year-old dwelling that will update and preserve the house, ensuring its longevity as a contributing historic dwelling in the Poinciana Park neighborhood.

V. Builder's Biography

Ernest Benjamin (E.B.) Walton, Sr.

Ernest Benjamin Walton was born in Genoa, Nebraska in 1881. The Walton's, whose American origins date to the mid 1650s, had a family home "Mosswood" in Harford County, Maryland. When Walton's father, William, was appointed an Agent to the Indian Bureau by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1869, he and his wife moved to Nebraska. In 1893 the Walton family returned to Maryland where Ernest and his five siblings continued their education. Walton's youth in Nebraska and summer vacations on family farms in Maine left him with a lifelong love of the outdoors.

⁶ Later owners of 215 Seaspray Avenue included Mr. & Mrs. George Huntoon, Mr. & Mrs. E. W. Poor, Mrs. Eleanor Shaw, Ms. Dina Fisher, Mr. & Mrs. Roman Smucer, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Di Fillipo, Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Sheinman and Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Greenleaf.

In his senior year at college Walton convinced his father to invest in 260 acres of land on Lake George, New York. Upon completing his studies at Lehigh University in 1901 with a degree in Civil Engineering Walton returned to Lake George to begin surveying the area and planning on future development which became Glenburnie Inn. Walton and his father eventually constructed a cottage colony and hotel. Winters were spent in New York City with various building firms. Each spring Walton returned to Glenburnie.

Walton and his wife, Julia, made their first trip to Florida in 1916-17. A side trip to Fort Lauderdale from Sanibel convinced Walton of the possibilities of Florida's east coast. Eventually Walton decided upon the Palm Beach area as a source of winter work. World War I and a First Lieutenant's commission postponed the family's move until after the war.

By the 1920s Walton began his long and successful career in South Florida with the construction of some small houses in the El Cid area of West Palm Beach and the construction of four apartment buildings in West Palm Beach and Palm Beach. Demand for Walton's company continued from the Boom Times into the Depression Era. The company successfully developed numerous streets throughout the northern section of Palm Beach, which included North Shore Addition, Monterey Road, Colonial Lane, and Sanford Avenue. Walton also constructed large estates designed by Palm Beach's prominent architects.

In the 1940s Walton again served in the United States Army. During World War II he served as Assistant Post Engineer. His classified work included sketches of old military buildings north of Cape Canaveral. These sketches were included in the start of the Cape Canaveral Space Center.

Walton's success was not limited to residential construction. His company built numerous Mount Vernon and Howard Johnson Motor Lodges throughout the southeastern United States. Local commercial buildings include the West Palm Beach Women's Club, Palm Beach Town Hall Additions (1960s), Seminole Building, U.S. Trust Office Building, and the Heart of Palm Beach Hotel.

In the 1950s Walton's two sons, Ben and Bill, joined him in the family business. It is interesting to note that the project which gave Walton the most satisfaction was his construction of the Cluett Memorial Garden at the Bethesda-by-the-Sea Church in Palm Beach.

VI. Statement of Significance:

215 Seaspray Avenue is important as a classic Mediterranean Revival style dwelling built in the desirable Poinciana Park subdivision during Palm Beach's land and housing boom. The original owners, Captain and Mrs. John H. Gibbons were prominent Palm Beach winter residents, and the designer/builder E. B. Walton was a highly respected master builder.

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."

The house located at 215 Seaspray Avenue reflects the broad cultural, social, and economic history of the Town of Palm Beach. Seaspray Avenue is part of the Poinciana Park subdivision that was one of the Island's first successful large residential developments. While prior to 1919, Palm Beach's reputation had mostly rested on the fashionable hotels, the success of Poinciana Park and early houses like 215 Seaspray Avenue helped to establish another dimension to the development of Palm Beach. The first owners, Captain and Mrs. John H. Gibbons, were prominent social and cultural members of Palm Beach society, with Captain Gibbons being both a decorated Naval Officer and former Superintendent of the United States Naval Academy. The house is also important because it helps maintain the historic fabric of Seaspray Avenue, the Sea Streets, and the development of the Palm Beach.

(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."

215 Seaspray Avenue has a number of notable Mediterranean Revival style elements including the wood frame structure covered with a stucco finish, Corinthian columns, arched openings, French doors, a balcony with a metal railing and a roof covered with red clay barrel tiles with overhanging eaves and

exposed rafter tails. Important to most Mediterranean Revival designs, the plan of this dwelling is irregular, and the elevations are asymmetrical, creating a unique design though one that fits in size, scale, and design with neighboring Poinciana Park dwellings.

(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.”

215 Seaspray Avenue is a very good example of the work of master builder E. B. Walton. Walton came to Palm Beach in 1917 and established E. B. Walton, Inc. to design and construct buildings in Palm Beach. He was an important early designer and builder in the Poinciana Park subdivision. In addition to many commissioned and speculative dwellings throughout Palm Beach, Walton developed Sanford Avenue, the East Shore Addition, and the North Shore Addition, growing his company along the way.⁷

⁷ East Shore Addition includes Southland Road, Plantation Road and Crest Road. North Shore Addition includes Seagate Road, Dolphin Road and Reef Road.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

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McAlester, Virginia Savage. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2015. Revised and expanded from the original edition written by Virginia and Lee McAlester.

Palm Beach County Official Records Books, Poinciana Park Second Addition 1917 – 1950.

The Palm Beach Daily News. Archived Articles Online

The Palm Beach Post. Archived Articles Online

The Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. Files on Poinciana Park; 215 Seaspray Avenue file

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

Town of Palm Beach. Building Permits, 1924 – 2021.

West Palm Beach City Directories. Asheville, NC: Florida-Piedmont Directory Company, 1924 -1986. These city directories included Town of Palm Beach directories and information on Palm Beach residents.

IX. Florida Master Site File Form

Page 1

☐ Original
☒ Update



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE Version 5.0 3/19

Shaded Fields represent the minimum acceptable level of documentation.
Consult the Guide to Historical Structure Forms for detailed instructions.

Clear Form Values

Site# **PB06748**
Field Date **12-9-2019**
Form Date **9-16-2020**
Recorder # **MAS**

Site Name(s) (address if none) **215 Seaspray AVE** Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
Survey Project Name **Palm Beach Historical Site Survey** Survey # (DHR only) _____
National Register Category (please check one) ☒ building ☐ structure ☐ district ☐ site ☐ object
Ownership: ☐ private-profit ☐ private-nonprofit ☒ private-individual ☐ private-nonspecific ☐ city ☐ county ☐ state ☐ federal ☐ Native American ☐ foreign ☐ unknown

LOCATION & MAPPING

Clear Location Values

Address: **215** **Seaspray** **Avenue**
Cross Streets (nearest / between) _____
USGS 7.5 Map Name **PALM BEACH** USGS Date **1986** Plat or Other Map _____
City / Town (within 3 miles) **Palm Beach** In City Limits? ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ unknown County **Palm Beach**
Township **43S** Range **43E** Section **22** 1/4 section: ☐ NW ☐ SW ☐ SE ☐ NE Irregular-name: _____
Tax Parcel # **50434322070004480** Landgrant _____
Subdivision Name **POINCIANA PARK 2ND ADD I** Block **000** Lot **4480**
UTM Coordinates: Zone ☐ 16 ☐ 17 Easting ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Northing ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Other Coordinates: X: _____ Y: _____ Coordinate System & Datum _____
Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____

HISTORY

Clear History Values

Construction Year: **1924** ☐ approximately ☐ year listed or earlier ☐ year listed or later
Original Use **Private Residence (House/Cottage/Ca** From (year): **1924** To (year): **2020**
Current Use **Private Residence (House/Cottage/Ca** From (year): **1924** To (year): **2020**
Other Use _____ From (year): _____ To (year): _____
Moves: ☐ yes ☒ no ☐ unknown Date: _____ Original address _____
Alterations: ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ unknown Date: _____ Nature **some windows**
Additions: ☐ yes ☐ no ☒ unknown Date: _____ Nature _____
Architect (last name first): _____ Builder (last name first): _____
Ownership History (especially original owner, dates, profession, etc.)
ANDREW SHREINMAN REVOCABLE LIVING TRUST

Is the Resource Affected by a Local Preservation Ordinance? ☐ yes ☒ no ☐ unknown Describe _____

DESCRIPTION

Clear Description Values

Style **Mediterranean Revival** Exterior Plan **Irregular** Number of Stories **2**
Exterior Fabric(s) **1. Stucco** 2. _____ 3. _____
Roof Type(s) **1. Hip** 2. **Flat** 3. _____
Roof Material(s) **1. Barrel tile** 2. **Built-up** 3. _____
Roof secondary strucs. (domers etc.) 1. _____ 2. _____
Windows (types, materials, etc.)
wood paired divided (maybe doors) w pilaster & balcony, grouped divided single sash, divided metal w arched heads & opaque glass, Bermuda shutters
Distinguishing Architectural Features (exterior or interior ornaments)
hip roof w overhang, exposed rafters, rear flat roof w parapet
Ancillary Features / Outbuildings (record outbuildings, major landscape features; use continuation sheet if needed.)
paved drive, hedge, vegetation, piers w fruit, metal gate

DHR USE ONLY

OFFICIAL EVALUATION

DHR USE ONLY

NR List Date	SHPO - Appears to meet criteria for NR listing: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient info	Date _____	Init. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Owner Objection	KEEPER - Determined eligible: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Date _____	
	NR Criteria for Evaluation: <input type="checkbox"/> a <input type="checkbox"/> b <input type="checkbox"/> c <input type="checkbox"/> d (see National Register Bulletin 15, p. 2)		

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Site #8 PB06748

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Clear Description Values

Chimney: No. 0 Chimney Material(s): 1. _____ 2. _____
 Structural System(s): 1. Wood frame 2. _____ 3. _____
 Foundation Type(s): 1. Continuous 2. _____
 Foundation Material(s): 1. Concrete, Generic 2. _____

Note: you may use the last box in each field to type in an answer that does not appear in the list provided

Main Entrance (stylistic details)

8 panel

Porch Descriptions (types, locations, roof types, etc.)

hip porch adj to projecting mass, arched opening, columns, masonry landingCondition (overall resource condition): ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ deteriorated ☐ ruinous

Narrative Description of Resource

This 1924 Mediterranean Revival style building is in good condition.

Archaeological Remains

☐ Check if Archaeological Form Completed

RESEARCH METHODS (select all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FMSF record search (sites/surveys) | <input type="checkbox"/> library research | <input type="checkbox"/> building permits | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn maps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FL State Archives/photo collection | <input type="checkbox"/> city directory | <input type="checkbox"/> occupant/owner interview | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> plat maps |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> property appraiser / tax records | <input type="checkbox"/> newspaper files | <input type="checkbox"/> neighbor interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Lands Survey (DEP) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural resource survey (CRAS) | <input type="checkbox"/> historic photos | <input type="checkbox"/> interior inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> HABS/HAER record search |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other methods (describe) <u>Town Staff</u> | | | |

Bibliographic References (give FMSF manuscript # if relevant, use continuation sheet if needed)

OPINION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

Clear Significance Values

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing individually?

☐ yes ☒ no ☐ insufficient information

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing as part of a district?

☒ yes ☐ no ☐ insufficient information

Explanation of Evaluation (required, whether significant or not, use separate sheet if needed)

This structure does not appear to meet criteria for individual listing, but it does meet district criteria based on its architectural features and association within the Town of Palm Beach.

Area(s) of Historical Significance (see National Register Bulletin 15, p. 8 for categories: e.g. "architecture", "ethnic heritage", "community planning & development", etc.)

1. Community planning & development 3. _____ 5. _____
 2. _____ 4. _____ 6. _____

DOCUMENTATION

Clear Documentation Values

Accessible Documentation Not Filed with the Site File - including field notes, analysis notes, photos, plans and other important documents

- 1) Document type _____ Maintaining organization _____
 Document description _____ File or accession #s _____
- 2) Document type _____ Maintaining organization _____
 Document description _____ File or accession #s _____

RECORDER INFORMATION

Recorder Name Patricia Davenport-Jacobs Affiliation Environmental Services, Inc.
 Recorder Contact Information 7220 Financial Way, Suite 100, Jacksonville, FL 32256/9044702200/pdavenport@
 (address / phone / fax / e-mail)

Required Attachments

① USGS 7.5' MAP WITH STRUCTURE LOCATION CLEARLY INDICATED

② LARGE SCALE STREET, PLAT OR PARCEL MAP (available from most property appraiser web sites)

③ PHOTO OF MAIN FACADE, DIGITAL IMAGE FILE

When submitting an image, it must be included in digital AND hard copy format (plain paper grayscale acceptable).
 Digital image must be at least 1600 x 1200 pixels, 24-bit color, jpeg or tiff.