

# **686 Island Drive**



## **DESIGNATION REPORT**

**March 18, 2020**

**Landmark Preservation Commission**

**Palm Beach, Florida**

# DESIGNATION REPORT

## 686 Island Drive

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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

**I. General Information**

Location: 686 Island Drive  
Palm Beach, Florida

Date of Construction: 1955

First Owner: Dr. & Mrs. Alfred F. Henderson

Architect: Henry Knowles Harding

Builder/Contractor: C.G. Warner Construction Company

Present Owner: Robert F. Greenhill

Present Use: Residential

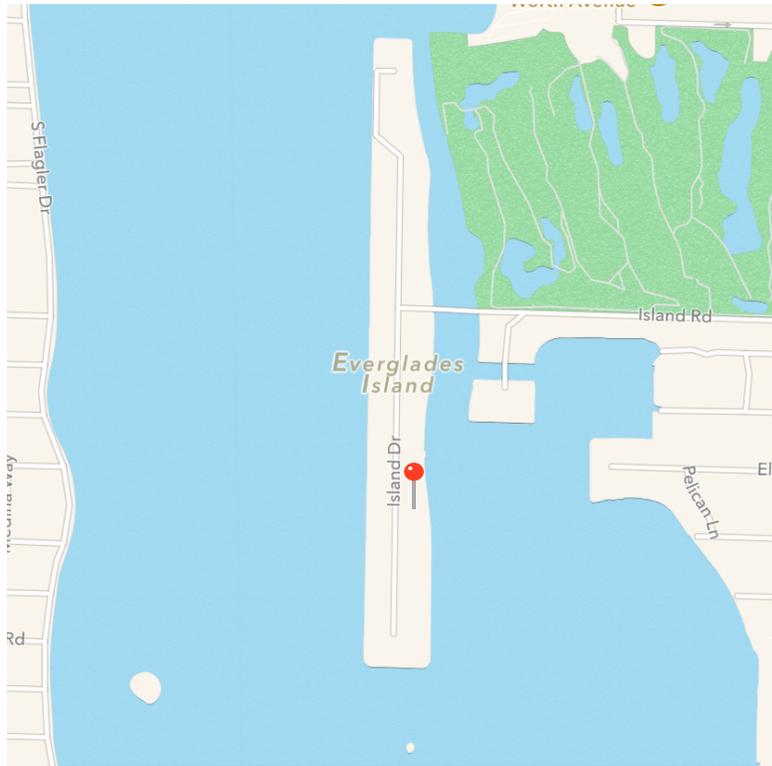
Present Zoning: RB

Palm Beach County  
Tax Folio Number: 50-43-43-27-02-000-0740

Current Legal Description: Plat No. 2 Everglades Island Lot 74 & North 35  
Feet of Lot 76

## II. Location Map

### 686 Island Drive



### III. Architectural Information

The design of 686 Island Drive is representative of the Neo-Classical Revival style in its classical details and symmetrically balanced form in the main block with a lower two-story wing set back on the north side. The main façade's full-height Corinthian columns are the most prominent feature of architect Henry Harding's 1955 design. Harding also brings in a French Colonial element with the ornate iron balcony rail on the second story.



The 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression conclusively ended the great expectations of the Florida Land Boom. Palm Beach had established itself as a leading American resort and its development continued but without some of the magnificent excesses of the earlier era.<sup>1</sup> The desire for changes in architectural design reflected the shifting economic times, resulting in buildings with cleaner lines and greater symmetry. Neo-Classical Revival, British Colonial, Monterey, and Regency style houses were introduced and often used instead of the Mediterranean style designs so popular in the 1920s. By the 1950s, many new styles had become popular in Palm Beach and Harding's design for 686 Island Drive reflects this change in the architectural development of the Island.

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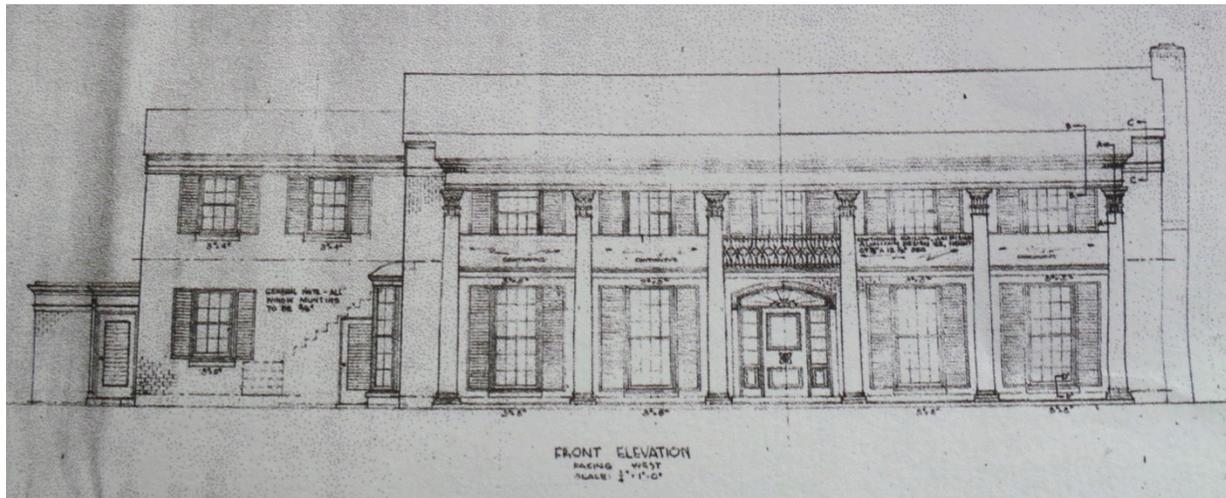
<sup>1</sup> Polly Anne Earl, Palm Beach Architecture: An Architectural Legacy, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, p. 18.

Neo-Classical was a dominant style for domestic architecture throughout the United States during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Identifying features include facades dominated by full-height porches with roofs supported by classical columns, typically with Ionic or Corinthian capitals, and the façade having symmetrically balanced windows and a center door. Windows are rectangular with multi-light double-hung sashes and cornices often have a boxed eave with a moderate overhang frequently with dentils beneath. French Colonial houses are often characterized by tall verandas with full-length porches with ornate wrought iron balcony rails accessed through French doors.



This exceptional frame dwelling with a brick veneer at 686 Island Drive has side gable roofs covered with flat tiles. The full-height porch with five stately Corinthian columns supports a shed roof extending from the main roof. Above the columns is an entablature containing dentil molding. A second-story balcony embellished with an ornate wrought iron railing and carved brackets below is located within the porch. The main façade of the residence is divided into five bays with large 9-over-9 double hung sash windows on the first floor and 8-over-8 double-hung sash windows and multi-light French doors on the second floor. Full-height Colonial shutters frame the windows. A wood-paneled entry door is located in the center of the main dwelling's first story and has classic sidelights and an arched transom above. The south façade features a chimney flanked by 9-over-9 and 8-over-8 double-hung sash windows. A two-story wing, located on the north side of the house, is set back significantly from the front plane of the residence and

features 6-over-6 double hung sash windows flanked by shutters and covered with a side gable roof. A large circular driveway is located just west of the dwelling.



Since it's construction in 1955, there have been additions and alterations to 686 Island Drive. The main addition to the dwelling occurred in 1993-1994 when two, two-story additions were constructed on the rear of the house behind the north wing. These additions cannot be seen from the street view. Some of the alterations include the roof replacement in 2004, Colonial shutter replacement in 2008, and the replacement of most of the dwellings windows and doors with impact windows and doors to closely match the existing in 2017. All of the alterations were in keeping with the historic character of the dwelling and therefore 686 Island Drive retains its historic architectural significance.

#### IV. Historical Information

Everglades Island began as one of the tiny natural islands scattered throughout Lake Worth.<sup>2</sup> First known as Lone Cabbage Island, it was home to the boatyard of Captain Lincoln Holmes in the early 1900's.<sup>3</sup> In 1937, Bessemer Properties, Inc. a company owned by the Phipps family of Pittsburgh, formed a subsidiary to be known as the Island Road Development Company and obtained a right-of-way

<sup>2</sup> It also has been called a "spoil" island created when Lake Worth was dredged to be part of the Intracoastal Waterway extending from New Jersey to Florida.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Marconi and Debi Murray with the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. Images of America: Palm Beach. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

through the south side of the Everglades Club golf course. The company then created a bulkhead around the island, filled it in to create house lots and built the little bridge. They changed the island's name to Everglades Island and designated the east-west road along the golf course Island Road and the north-south road over the bridge Island Drive.<sup>4</sup> There was also a road leading to privately-owned Tarpon Island originally named Clement Way that was renamed Tarpon Way. The lots along Island Road overlooked the golf course to the north and the bay to the south while the lots along Island Drive were platted as waterfront facing either west looking across Lake Worth to a residential area of West Palm Beach or east looking across a placid bay toward Palm Beach, all being attractive vistas.<sup>5</sup> As an enticement to come and look at the lots, Bessemer Properties, Inc. commissioned John L. Volk to design an impressive entrance gateway at the intersection of Island Road and South County Road. The classical Everglades Island Gates flank both the north and south sides of Island Road and feature L-shaped walls, columns topped with circular orbs and end columns with eagles mounted on top. The words "Everglades Islands" are carved into the taller columns, and the shorter columns adjacent to Island Road are carved with "Island Road."<sup>6</sup>

The work to create Everglades Island was completed in two stages, beginning with the development of Island Road, Tarpon Way and the south one thousand feet of the island over the little bridge.<sup>7</sup> Only a few houses were built at the onset of World War II before all of the area's construction halted.<sup>8</sup> At the time, lots were selling for \$125 per foot. After the war, in 1946, the south end of the island was completed. Two years later the north end was cleared, filled, and secured with a seawall. Utilities were installed, Island Drive was paved with turnabouts at either end and landscaped with melaleuca and coconut palm trees. By 1951, there were a total of 66 lots. At this time Bessemer Properties sold bay front lots for \$165 per front foot while Intracoastal Waterway lots were \$190 per front foot. All purchasers were subject to Bessemer Properties approval and property was not available for speculative building. Houses were to cost no less than \$20,000, contain no less than thirty-thousand cubic feet and no garages were allowed that had an opening facing the street.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Garden Club of Palm Beach. Brochure for House and Garden Day, Sunday, March 4, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> The bay is part of Lake Worth; Everglades Island is surrounded on three sides by Lake Worth.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Day, Research Atlantica. "Everglades Island Gates Landmark Designation Report." December 15, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Augustus Mayhew. Lost in Wonderland: Reflections on Palm Beach. Palm Beach Editorial Services, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> The first houses built were on Island Road in 1939, 330 Island Road, and in 1940 at 350 Island Road - check. The first development on Island Drive was to the south of the little bridge with the first house at 670 Island Drive completed in early 1940 for the John Cushman's of North Carolina

<sup>9</sup> Augustus Mayhew. Lost in Wonderland: Reflections on Palm Beach. Palm Beach Editorial Services, 2012.

The house at 686 Island Drive was designed by Henry Harding and built for Dr. and Mrs. Alfred F. Henderson in 1955 for \$71,000. From the time it was built, the house has been recognized for its architectural charm and elegant presence. When Bessemer Properties platted and planned Everglades Island during the mid-1930s, its appeal and aesthetic were intended as an understated alternative to the “mansionization” of Palm Beach in a relaxed setting in tune with the surrounding elements and environment, yet only minutes from Worth Avenue.<sup>10</sup> The allure of waterfront properties was great and the Henderson’s were one of the early residents to enjoy waterfront island living for nearly twenty years before selling the house to George W. Benisch in 1974. The Benisch family lived there for nearly fifteen years selling the house in 1988. After 1988 the house had several owners before being purchased in 1999 by author James Patterson and his wife Susan. The current owner, Robert F. Greenhill purchased the dwelling from the Pattersons in 2010 and has been a wonderful steward of 686 Island Drive.

## **V. Architect’s Biography**

### **Henry Knowles Harding**

Harding came to Palm Beach County in 1935 and apprenticed briefly in the offices of Wyeth, King and Johnson and of Howard Major, both firms having excellent reputations and accomplishments in Palm Beach. After majoring in architecture at Princeton and obtaining a degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture, Harding went on to further advanced degrees at the Fountain Bleu in Paris (1930) and New York University (1935). Preparation for this thorough college training was done at two prestigious schools, St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire (1917-1920) and St. Georges School in Newport, Rhode Island (1924). He was familiar with the Palm Beach area before as his parents had a winter house on South Ocean Boulevard that was designed by renowned Palm Beach architect Marion Sims Wyeth.

Harding opened his first office in South Florida in 1936 and continued to design houses in the area for over forty years while he gained a deserved reputation for updating the traditional to make refined homes. This attracted socially prominent clients who contributed to the ambience of Palm Beach. He was elected a member emeritus to the American Institute of Architects based in Washington, D.C. for supporting the goals, work, and projects of the AIA.

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<sup>10</sup> Augustus Mayhew. Lost in Wonderland: Reflections on Palm Beach. Palm Beach Editorial Services, 2012.

While residing in Palm Beach, Harding worked with other well-known architects and developers. The mid-1930s through the 1950s was an exciting time for construction in Palm Beach as developers were chopping down jungle, filling in swamps and opening up streets. One of the most prominent developers was builder Robert Gottfried with whom Harding did several projects. One of Harding's classmates was Belford Shoumate and the two were said to have traded clients with each other. Shoumate called him, "an excellent designer and a really nice guy." Harding was a contemporary of other estate designers in Palm Beach such as John Volk and Maurice Fatio.

Harding's unsung works were for his villages of houses for people of more modest fortunes. These houses had a distinctive title called "Maisonettes." They were Bermuda style with white tile hipped roofs, colonial type six-over-six double-hung sash windows and coach lamps beside the doorways. There were at least six of these villages in Palm Beach County with such names as Maisonettes North and Maisonettes South, Las Casitas, Village of Golf, Vina del Mar, and Sun and Sea Village. The usual pattern was to design three or four different houses called A, B, C, etc. and offer a choice to the buyer before construction. They were mostly designed in the Bermuda style and dated from the mid 1960s to 1980 so were built toward the end of his career.

Harding was born in Dedham, Massachusetts in 1904, and passed away in 1984 at the age of 79. He was buried in The Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Henry was first married in 1931 to Louise Coburn and had four daughters. His second marriage in 1953 to Lynn Saul produced a son, Henry Harding, Jr. During his school days he became a member of the Ivy Club, and later a member of The Manalapan Yacht Club, The Ocean Club of Ocean Ridge, Lake Toxaway Country Club in North Carolina and The American Institutes of Architects. In World War II, he was a naval lieutenant commander (1941-1944). He loved the sea and became an avid yachtsman with power and sail.

Though Henry K. Harding may not have achieved the fame of some of his contemporaries, his effect on the Palm Beach community was not less than the others. There are still many expertly designed Classical Revival and Bermuda style houses attributable to Harding and there will be people who appreciate good design who will preserve and restore his structures.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This biography of Henry Knowles Harding was provided by The Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

## **VI. Statement of Significance**

The residence at 686 Island Drive is a very good example of the Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture with French Colonial influence as interpreted by Henry Harding during the mid 1950s. This Neo-Classical residence was a departure from the estates of the Boom years of the 1920s and reflects the changing times and styles of the Post World War II era when architects were often producing unique but compatible designs in a combination of styles. The dwelling is also significant as representative of the post World War II development of Everglades Island as a unique waterfront community.

## **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.”**

686 Island Drive reflects the broad cultural, economic and social history of the Town of Palm Beach. Though first initiated in 1937, the creation of Everglades Island was mostly completed after World War II and into the 1950s when bulkheads, fill and utilities for the dwellings were completed for the mostly manmade island. The allure of waterfront lots on a tranquil island just minutes from mid-town Palm Beach made Everglades Island a desirable location to build a dwelling and enjoy island life. 686 Island Drive is an outstanding representative of this unique post war Palm Beach development.

**(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 design of 686 Island Drive by Henry K. Harding in 1955 is an excellent example of the Neo-Classical Revival style in its classical details and symmetrically balanced form. Though the Neo-Classical Revival style was popular throughout the country in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, it was underrepresented in Palm Beach during this

period. With its full-height Corinthian columns, large multi-light double hung windows, Colonial Shutters and dentil entablature, the house embodies important features of the Neo-Classical Revival style. The French Colonial style balcony rail also adds to the beauty of the house.

**(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.”**

686 Island Drive is a very good representation of the design work of the architect Henry K. Harding. Harding’s style was described as “restrained formality – simple, direct symmetrical facades with an emphasis on balance, proportion and ornamental detail,” all things displayed in this house. Harding was an exceptional Palm Beach architect whose work has left an important legacy on the island.

## VIII. Selected Bibliography

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Earl, Polly Anne. Palm Beach: An Architectural Legacy. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2002.

Johnston, Shirley. Palm Beach Houses. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. 1991.

Marconi, Richard A. and Debi Murray with the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. Images of America: Palm Beach. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

Mayhew, Augustus. Lost in Wonderland: Reflections on Palm Beach. Palm Beach Editorial Services, 2012.

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.

Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, 686 Island Drive file.

The Garden Club of Palm Beach. Brochure for House and Garden Day, Sunday, March 4, 2007.

The Palm Beach Daily News. Archived articles online and articles from the files of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

The Palm Beach Post. Archived articles online and articles from the files of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

Town of Palm Beach. Building Permits, 1955 – present.

West Palm Beach City Directories. Asheville, NC: Florida-Piedmont Directory Company, 1955-1989.

# IX. Florida Master Site File Form



## HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # FB15079  
 Recorder # Jane S. Day  
 Field Date 7/15/2010  
 Form Date 1/17/2011  
 Form No 201007  
 Form No = Field Date (YYYYMM)

First Site Form Recorded for this Site? YES

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Site Name (address if none) Robert Greenhill, House Multiple Listing (DHR only) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Names \_\_\_\_\_ >> \_\_\_\_\_  
 Survey or Project Name Palm Beach Historic Sites Survey, Phase V Survey# \_\_\_\_\_  
 National Register Category Building(s)

### LOCATION & IDENTIFICATION

| Street No. | Direction | Street Name   | Street Type  | Direction Suffix |
|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| <u>686</u> |           | <u>Island</u> | <u>Drive</u> |                  |

Cross Streets (nearest/ between) South County Road  
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Town Of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES  
 County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #(s) 50-43-43-27-03-000-0740  
 Subdivision Name Everglades Island Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ownership Private Individual  
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Route to (especially if no street address) In the center portion of Everglades Island. Houses faces west, water to the east.

### MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name \_\_\_\_\_ Publication Date \_\_\_\_\_ >> PALM BEACH;1986  
 Township: \_\_\_\_\_ Range: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 section: \_\_\_\_\_ >> 43S ;43E ;27,UNSP  
 Irregular Section Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landgrant \_\_\_\_\_  
 UTM: Zone \_\_\_\_\_ Easting \_\_\_\_\_ Northing \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plat or Other Map (map's name, location) \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIPTION

Style Monterey Other Style \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exterior Plan Irregular Other Exterior Plan \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Stories 2  
 Structural System(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> Concrete block  
 Other Structural System(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foundation Type(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> slab  
 Other Foundation Types \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foundation Material(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> Concrete Block  
 Other Foundation Material(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exterior Fabric(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> Stucco  
 Other Exterior Fabric(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Roof Type(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> Cross-gabled  
 Other Roof Type(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Roof Material(s) \_\_\_\_\_ >> Concrete tile  
 Other Roof Material(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Roof Secondary Structure(s) (dormers etc) \_\_\_\_\_ >> \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Chimneys 1  
 Chimney Material Concrete  
 Other Chimney Material(s) stucco on exterior  
 Chimney Location(s) south facade

# HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB15079

## DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions 2/2 DHS, casement

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) on the western facade under flat roof with columns and transom

Porch: #open 2 #closed      #incised      Location(s) entry - w, pool patio - e

Porch Roof Type(s) under flat roof

Exterior Ornament shutters, columns

Interior Plan Irregular

Other Interior Plan     

Condition Good

### 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 1955

Architect (last name first): Harding, Henry K.

Builder (last name first): C. G. Warner Const. Co.

### Changes in Locations or Conditions

| Type of Change   | Year of Change | Date Change Noted | Description of Changes |
|--|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| >> <u>Altered-not to standards;1988;;2nd story add</u> |                |                   |                        |

### Structure Use History

Use      Year Use Started      Year Use Ended      >> Private residence;1955;

Other Structure Uses     

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

## RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methods      >> Examine local tax records

Other research methods tax records, windshield

## 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? NO

Potential Contributor to NR District? NO

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

Other Historical Associations     

Explanation of Evaluation (required) This house is in scale with the neighborhood.

# HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB15079

## 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 Dr., 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>88</u>                   | SHPO's Evaluation of Resource<br>Date _____ |
| Electronic Form Used: <u>8110</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> | FMSF Staffer: _____                         |
| Supplement File Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT FILE</u>   | Computer Entry Date: <u>11/14/2004</u>      |
| Form Comments: _____<br>_____<br>_____              |   |

### 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"