

101 North County Road



DESIGNATION REPORT

March 22, 2023

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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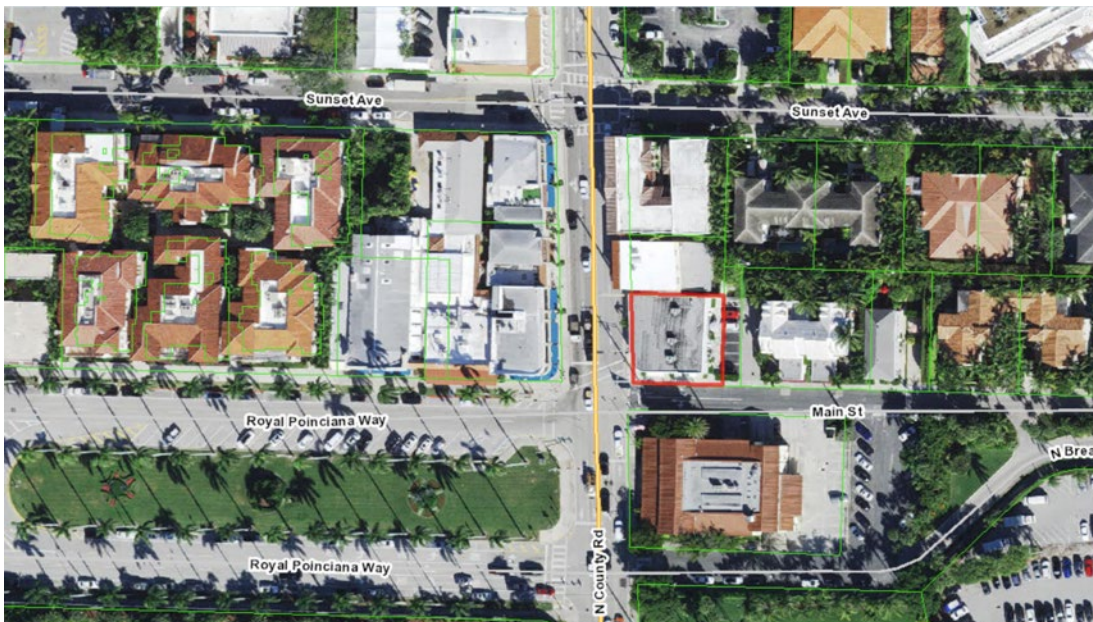
Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	101 North County Road Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1936
First Owner:	Michael Rubekas
Architect:	Gustav Maass
Builder/Contractor:	George Sturhis
Present Owner:	Wade M. Shavell Trust, Cathy W. Shavell, Trustee
Present Use:	Commercial
Present Zoning:	CTS
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-22-31-000-0760
Current Legal Description:	Lots 76, 77 and 78, Floral Park, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 6 of the Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida, less the west 15 feet of said lots conveyed to Palm Beach.

II. Location Map

101 North County Road



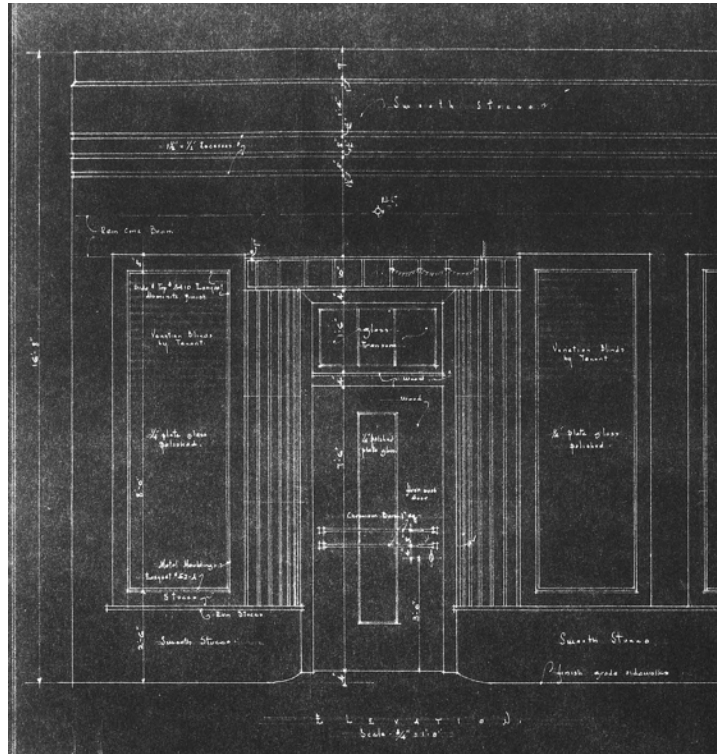
III. Architectural Information



101 North County Road is a one-story commercial building located on a prominent corner at the eastern edge of Palm Beach's historic main street. Situated at the intersection of North County Road and Royal Poinciana Way and designed by well-known Palm Beach architect Gustav Maass in 1936, 101 North County Road is a very good example of the Art Moderne style of architecture.

The Art Moderne style flourished between 1930 and 1945 and was highlighted at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. Influenced by the technology that followed WWI and following the "less is more" standard of design, it drew from the streamlined aerodynamic shapes of planes and cars. Also referred to as Streamline Moderne, the Art Moderne style, with its simple geometric forms and simplicity in decorative details was becoming popular as the more decorative Art Deco style was falling out of favor. Art Moderne architecture features flat roofs, asymmetric shapes, smooth surface finishes, curvilinear features, and horizontal elements.

101 North County Road is a one-story commercial building with a rectangular form surfaced with stucco and a flat roof with a parapet. Designed in the Art Moderne style, the building features a curved corner which is a defining characteristic of the style, following the flow of automobile movement around the corner. The curved corner along with the recessed horizontal banding at the roofline of the building are character defining features of the style and reflect the aerodynamic shapes that were the inspiration of Art Moderne architecture and design. The curved and fluted window and door surrounds are additional architectural details of the Art Moderne style that add to the architectural character of the building.



Detail Drawing of Entrance Bay on South County Road
Gustav Maass, 1936



Originally designed to house four businesses with three entrances facing South County Road and one facing the corner, the building over the years has undergone alterations to meet the changing needs of the businesses it housed. Exterior alterations consisted of the installation of awnings, signage and lighting, and window and door changes. In addition to new window and doors being installed in existing openings, the east façade, which was originally utilitarian in nature, was

altered in 2004 to provide improved access into the building from the parking spaces to the east by creating two entrances with fluted decorative details similar to the other openings of the building. In 2019, two additional window openings with fluted decorative details were added to the east end of the south façade. Changes to storefronts are common in commercial buildings to accommodate the needs and uses of businesses. The alterations to 101 North County Road accomplished this while retaining the historic and architectural integrity of Gustav Maass' original design.



South Facade



Corner



East Facade

IV. Historical Information

The Art Moderne commercial building at 101 North County Road is located at the eastern end of the town's historic main street commercial corridor within the Floral Park Subdivision. Floral Park was platted in 1912 and developed by brothers John R. and Edward R. Bradley. The area was initially developed in relationship to Henry Flagler's 1895 FEC railroad bridge, which linked the mainland of West Palm Beach to Palm Beach. During the early twentieth century, Floral Park included dwellings, stores, hotels, restaurants, offices, and municipal buildings. Due to the fighting in Europe during World War I, domestic tourism increased. Flagler's railroad and grand hotels attracted wealthy tourists to the island and the area along Main Street became the hub of civic and commercial activity.

From the late 1920s through the mid 1930s, the land boom began to decline steeply, the stock market crashed, and the Great Depression ensued. Some of Palm Beach's wealthiest were unaffected by these events, but many were forced to suspend taking winter holidays, which hurt the hotels and town merchants. Although Main Street served as the central shopping, dining, and commercial area of town in Palm Beach's early years, it wasn't until the late 1930s that many of the notable resources that now comprise the area came together to transform the area into a "gateway" to Palm Beach. In 1938, the Flagler Memorial Bridge was completed, providing automobile traffic to and from the mainland to the area.¹ The landscaped medians were also designed and constructed at this time and the name was changed from Main Street to Royal Poinciana Way.² The bridge, medians, and the Palm Beach Main Post Office, which opened in 1937, just north of 101 North County Road, were all developed as part of the country's New Deal policies and projects.

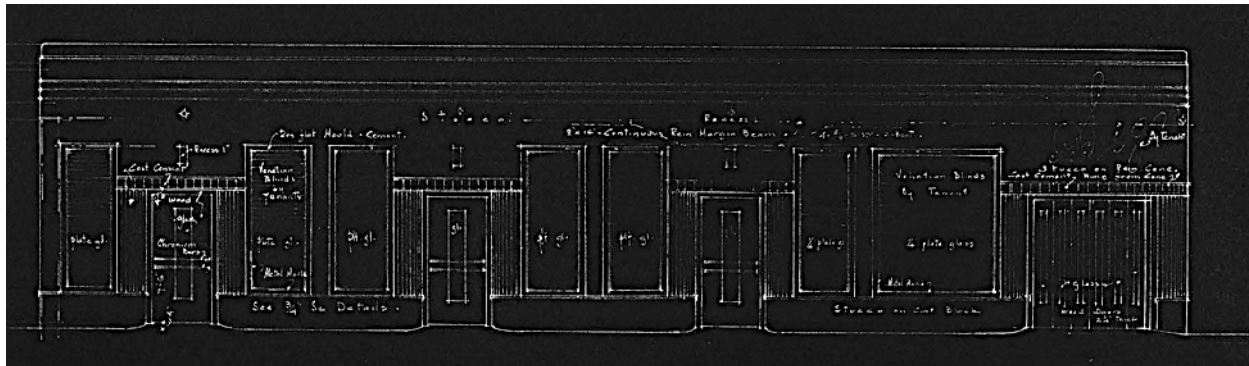
In 1936, while the Town's main post office was under construction, architect Gustav Maass was commissioned by developer Michael Rubekas to design a commercial building directly north of the new post office.³ Maass designed the building in the Art Moderne style with a curved corner at the intersection of Royal Poinciana Way and North County Road. The building opened in 1936 with the

¹ Prior to construction of the Flagler Memorial Bridge, the only bridge providing automobile traffic to Palm Beach was the Royal Park Bridge built in 1911.

² "What's in a Name" Palm Beach Post-Times, May 27, 1938. "The most attractive suggestion in Palm Beach has been the one that the double street be called Royal Poinciana Way in tribute to the old hotel and to the grounds where this tree is prevalent, and as a balance to the other bridge street, Royal Palm Way."

³ The property previously had a one-story Mission Revival style structure that housed Wagoner's Pharmacy from 1929 to 1936 when the building was demolished.

Post Office Soda Bar and Grill operating in the corner space of 101 North County Road until 1942.



North County Road Elevation
Gustav Maass, 1936

Traffic increased significantly with the opening of the Flagler Memorial Bridge and in 1941 County Road was widened to accommodate the additional traffic flowing from Royal Poinciana Way.⁴ That same year, John Volk was hired to redesign the buildings on the west side of the 100 block of North County Road, across the street from 101 North County Road, to accommodate the increased width of the road. The buildings were redesigned to feature Art Moderne elements including curved corners, echoing the design of 101 North County Road across the street.



101 North County Road, designed by Gustav Maass in 1936, is the first building on the right.
John Volk's 1941 redesign of the west side of the street is on the left.

Historic Photo from [Images of America: Palm Beach](#)

⁴ Palm Beach Avenue was also changed to County Road, which had been its name prior to 1921. For many years there had been discussion about widening County Road. As early as 1918, J.T. Havens had offered to give the Town a strip of land on Main Street and County Road for the purpose of widening the street, but it was not accepted.

At the conclusion of World War II, tourism quickly rebounded and many businesses in the Floral Park area thrived. Although the “winter season” was still the busiest time in Palm Beach, by the mid-1940s, tourists and residents began staying longer and many of the stores and restaurants in the area remained open throughout the year. Following the Post Office Soda Bar and Grill, 101 North County Road was the home of the Casablanca Restaurant and the Casablanca Liquor Store from 1943 to 1959 and then Samoa Polynesian Restaurant and Lounge from 1960 to 1964. Later tenants included Croft Antiques (1966-1971), Herzfeld and Stern brokerage firm (1972-1982), the Church Mouse (1975-1988), and Casablanca Café Americain (1992-2002). In 2003, the building was purchased by realtor Wade Shavell who converted the restaurant to a real estate office. 101 North County Road is currently the home of Serena and Lily, a home furnishings retailer, who opened their Palm Beach location in 2019.

V. Architects Biography

Gustav A. Maass, Jr.

Gustav Adam Maass, Jr. was born in New Orleans in 1893, the third of eight children of German immigrants. His father was a mechanical engineer. Maass grew up in New Orleans and Birmingham, Alabama. He received a degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1917 and worked during World War I in the U.S. Civil Service at League Island Navy Yard in Philadelphia. After the war Maass returned to Birmingham, where he designed a variety of structures, including a Masonic Temple, power plants, schools, churches, and houses. Later Maass worked for the firm of Warren, Knight and Davis designing public and commercial buildings. There he met and married Helen Hensley.

In 1921, Maass came to West Palm Beach and became associated with the firm of Harvey and Clarke. Harvey and Clarke were the architects for the Seaboard Railway and as one of their associates Maass designed the Seaboard Railway Stations in Delray Beach, Deerfield Beach, and the Homestead. Maass designed many buildings in Delray Beach in the 1920s and his Art Deco style was reflected in commercial buildings along Atlantic Avenue.

Perhaps Maass is best known for his association with John L. Volk. The two formed a partnership that lasted from 1927 to 1935 and was headquartered in Phipps Plaza. During this time the two famous architects designed homes for Jacob H. Marx, J.H. Behrens, Charles M. Hayes, and Charles Hall among others.

Following his partnership with John L. Volk, in 1935 Maass started his own successful firm in Palm Beach. Over the course of his career, Maass designed projects in Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Boca Raton, and West Palm Beach. Maass died on April 22, 1964.

VI. Statement of Significance

101 North County Road is significant as a very good example of the Art Moderne style of architecture as designed by prominent Palm Beach architect Gustav Maass. Constructed to provide additional commercial space due to increased demand during a notable period of civic improvements along the Town's historic main street corridor, the well-known building reflects the Town's history and architecture during the late 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."

The Art Moderne commercial building at 101 North County Road was developed at the eastern end of Palm Beach's historic main street during a time of significant development in this important part of Town. The construction of the Flagler Memorial Bridge, landscaped medians, and the Palm Beach Main Post Office during the late 1930s all contributed to the area being transformed into a gateway to Palm Beach. 101 North County Road's location at the northeast corner of Royal Poinciana Way and North County Road, two of the Town's main thoroughfares, contributed to it being one of the most well-known buildings from the time it was constructed until today. In addition, the building's architecture influenced the design of the buildings on the west side of North County Road. 101 North County Road has remained a notable building providing valuable commercial space for numerous shops, restaurants, and offices since 1936.

(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.”

101 North County Road is a very good example of Art Moderne style architecture as designed by prominent Palm Beach architect Gustav Maass. The 1936 building embodies distinctive Art Moderne characteristics including a smooth stucco exterior, flat roof, curvilinear features, and horizontal elements. The building’s curved corner and recessed horizontal banding at the roofline are character defining features of the style that reflect the aerodynamic shapes that were the inspiration of Art Moderne architecture. The curved and fluted window and door surrounds are additional details that add to the Art Moderne character of the building.

(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.”

Gustav Maass was a prominent architect who lived and worked in Palm Beach for over forty years. In the 1920s, Maass was best known for his Mediterranean Revival style designs. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Maass adapted to the changing tastes and lifestyles of his clients and designed residential and commercial buildings in many architectural styles. 101 North County Road is a very good representation of Maass’ interpretation of the Art Moderne style of architecture.

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