

246 Atlantic Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

February 16, 2022

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

246 Atlantic Avenue

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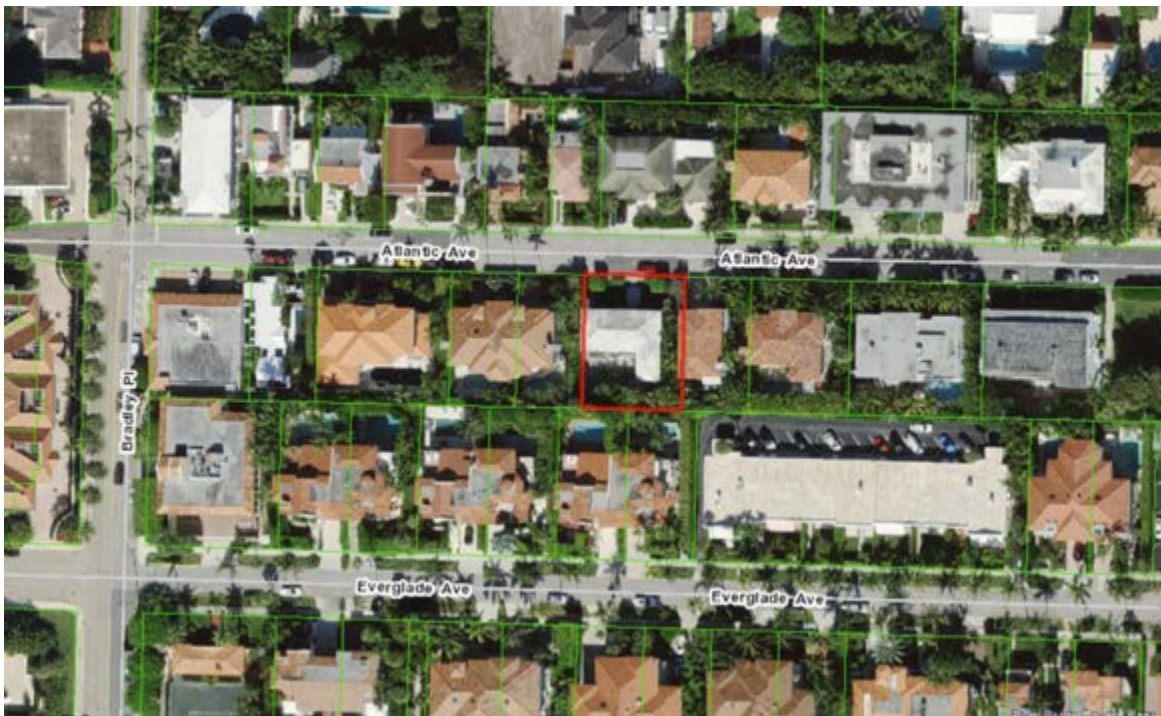
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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	246 Atlantic Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1951
Architect:	Arthur LeBaron Weeks
Original Owner:	Leon and Pearl Gruner
Historic Name:	Leonardo
Builder/Contractor:	Clough-Foreman
Current Owner:	Teddys Land Joint Venture LLC
Present Use:	Multi-Family Residential
Present Zoning:	R-C
Legal Description:	Lots 18-20, Orange Grove Park, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 5, Page 97, of the Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida.

II. Location Map



III. Architectural Information

The multi-family residential building located at 246 Atlantic Avenue, known as the Leonardo, was designed in the Moderne architectural style by prolific architect Arthur LeBaron Weeks in 1951. The two-story apartment building is located on the south side of Atlantic Avenue east of Bradley Place. 246 Atlantic Avenue is a very good example of a Moderne style apartment building built in Palm Beach during the post-World War II building boom.



From the 1940s through the 1970s, Modernism was an important architectural trend in Palm Beach. The Modernism movement consisted of several architectural styles including the Moderne style that began to flourish in the 1930s when it was highlighted at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. It was influenced by the technology that arose after WWI and followed the "less is more" standard of design. It was influenced by the advancements in the industrial designs of ships, planes, trains and automobiles. The 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. Moderne architecture features cubic forms with smooth surface finishes, curvilinear features, horizontal elements, wrap around windows, and glass block accents.

246 Atlantic Avenue was constructed of concrete block surfaced with smooth stucco with low pitched hipped roofs covered with flat concrete tiles and wide overhanging eaves. The massing of the two-story building is L-shaped with the main mass running east-west and a wing that extends to the south on the

eastern end of the building. The building was constructed as four apartments, two one-bedroom units and two two-bedroom units.



Main Facade

The main façade of the building is symmetrical and organized into five bays with the main entrance located in the center bay. The entrance is a focal point of the structure and consists of a two-story slump brick door surround that steps in at the second floor. A concrete header and eyebrow shelter the entrance which consists of a multi-light French door flanked by glass block sidelights and light fixtures. Above the eyebrow is a building marker with the name “Leonardo” and a six-over-six sash window.

The windows on the main façade are organized and include pairs of awning windows that wrap around the corners of the building and sets of awning windows that consist of a wide window flanked by narrow windows. The horizontality of the building is further emphasized by the slump brick window sills and bands that run the length of the building between the windows at the sills and headers. The rear and side façades continue the use of paired awning windows at the corners as well as single awning windows. A small one-story storage room with a shed roof is located at the southwest corner of the building.

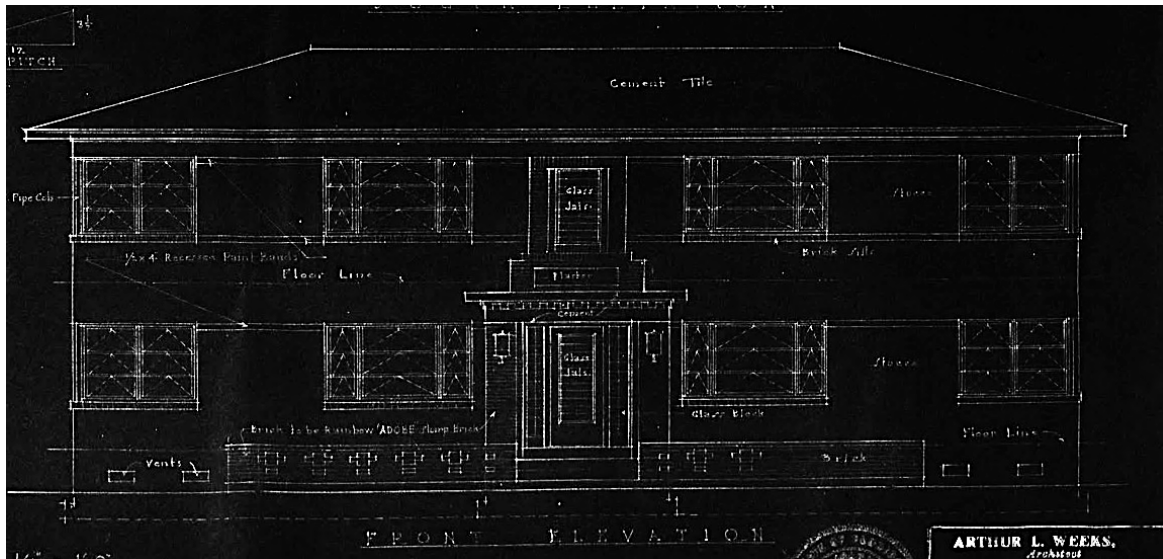
The building features many elements of the Moderne style including its cubic forms, horizontal design, and the use of corner windows, glass blocks and eyebrows.



Entrance



Example of Corner Windows



Main Façade by Arthur LeBaron Weeks, 1951

Over the last 70 years there have been minimal alterations to the exterior of the structure. Alterations to the exterior of the building include the replacement of a jalousie door and jalousie window in the entrance bay with the existing multi-light French door and sash window, re-roofing, and ordinary repair and maintenance of the structure. The building retains the architectural integrity of the original design.

IV. Historical Information

The Leonardo apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue in mid-town Palm Beach is located east of Bradley Place and a few blocks north of Royal Poinciana Way in the Orange Grove Park subdivision. The Orange Grove Park subdivision was one of the Town's early subdivisions. Platted by Amanda J. Ryman in January of 1915, it included the lots along Atlantic Avenue between County Road and the Lake Worth lagoon.

The 200 block of Atlantic Avenue consists of a mix of single-family and multi-family residential buildings that were constructed between circa 1917 and the 2000s. Leon and Pearl Gruner commissioned Arthur L. Weeks to design the four-unit apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue in 1951, during the post-World War II building boom in Palm Beach.

During the years that followed World War II, Palm Beach flourished and grew exponentially. During the war there was very little construction because nonessential construction had been halted. However, after the war ended Florida saw significant economic and demographic growth as the country began to recover and move to a peacetime economy. Thousands of soldiers who came to Florida during the war decided to return to live afterwards, and as in previous years, retirees were moving to Florida for the climate and northerners were spending the winter season in Palm Beach. The post-World War II era was the start of another building boom in Palm Beach.

As Palm Beach flourished after the war, the development occurring in Town was changing in both density and style. A controversial zoning law passed by the Town in 1947 led to dramatic growth in much of mid-town Palm Beach by allowing hotels, apartments and cooperatives in areas that had been zoned for single family residences. Due to this zoning change many cottages and villas were replaced with low-rise multi-family residential buildings. The architectural styles of structures being constructed was also changing. During this time, modern architectural styles were becoming popular for both residential and commercial architecture throughout the United States, and Palm Beach was no exception. Many of the architects practicing in Palm Beach during the post-World War II era were exploring the use of modern designs in their commissions.

Leon and Pearl Gruner commissioned Arthur LeBaron Weeks to design the four-unit apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue in 1951. Arthur Weeks

was born in Canada in 1881 and practiced architecture in Boston, Ottawa, and Detroit before moving to South Florida in 1946 at the age of 65. His firm of Weeks and Keefer in Ottawa was best-known for the Rosenthal Building which was a six-story office building built in 1910 that was one of the first to use a reinforced concrete structural frame and complete exterior cladding of architectural terra cotta.¹ When Weeks moved to Florida his architectural practice was based in Lake Worth and was successful designing commercial and residential commissions throughout Palm Beach County. While practicing, during what many would consider their retirement years, Arthur Weeks designed many commercial and residential structures throughout the County most of which were in the modern styles of architecture that were popular at the time. Weeks died in 1962 at the age of 81.

The Gruner's were longtime residents of West Palm Beach arriving from Key West in 1914. Leon Gruner had been a retail merchant and while he passed away at the end of 1952, the Leonardo apartment building remained in the Gruner family until 1985. The current owner of the property, Teddys Land Joint Venture LLC, purchased the apartment building in 2012 and has been a good steward of the property.

V. Architect Biography

Arthur LeBaron Weeks

Arthur LeBaron Weeks was born in New Brunswick, Canada in 1881 and lived there for his early years and primary education. He later moved to Boston, Massachusetts where he trained in several architectural offices including the firm of Shepley, Ruttan and Coolidge. Shepley, Ruttan and Coolidge were the successors to Henry Hobson Richardson's architectural firm. Richardson was the creator of the architectural style that became known as Richardson Romanesque. While working in that office Weeks met fellow architect Ernest M. Machado and in April 1907, they formed a partnership and started the architectural firm of Machado and Weeks in Ottawa, Canada. Unfortunately, the partnership was short lived due to Machado's unexpected death months later.

Following Machado's death, Weeks teamed up with Alan Keefer to form the firm of Weeks and Keefer from 1908 - 1910. They won major commissions

¹ Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950, Weeks, Arthur LeBaron.

for both commercial and governmental projects in Ottawa. One of the best-known works of the firm was the Rosenthal Building, built in 1910, which was a six-story office building that was one of the first to use a reinforced concrete structural frame and complete exterior cladding of architectural terra cotta.

Following his partnership with Keefer, Weeks continued to practice in Ottawa on his own, from 1911-1913, designing commercial and institutional buildings as well as residences. In 1914, he and Cecil Burgess started the firm of Weeks and Burgess. In 1916, Weeks moved to Detroit, Michigan and by 1921 he was a staff architect for the Detroit Board of Education. He continued to practice architecture in the Detroit area until he moved to Lake Worth in 1946 at the age of 65.²

Based on reciprocity with Michigan architectural license Weeks was granted a Florida architectural license, Florida certificate number AR0001505, in June 1946. Based in Lake Worth, Weeks' architectural practice was successful designing commercial and residential commissions throughout Palm Beach County. Weeks also published a catalog of homes designed for the Florida climate. In it he reminds potential homeowners that designs from up north do not take into account Florida's sunshine, breezes and occasional hurricanes.

While practicing in Palm Beach County, during what many would consider their retirement years, Arthur Weeks designed many commercial and residential structures throughout the County most of which were in the modern styles of architecture that were popular at the time. Weeks died in 1962 at the age of 81.

VI. Statement of Significance

The Leonardo apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue is distinctive for its Moderne style of architecture designed by prolific architect Arthur LeBaron Weeks. The building is also significant as a representation of the changing character in Palm Beach during the post-World War II building boom.

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

² Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950, Weeks, Arthur LeBaron.

that at least one criterion must be met to justify the designation. Listed below are 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 Leonardo apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue reflects the changing architectural character of the Town of Palm Beach during the post-World War II era. As the war ended and another building boom began the Town saw an increase in apartment and cooperative buildings in mid-town Palm Beach. In addition, the building is a good example of the modern architectural trend that became popular during the post-World War II period in 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.”

The Leonardo apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue is a very good example of the Moderne style of architecture as interpreted by Arthur Weeks in 1951. The design embodies distinguishing characteristics of the architectural style including cubic forms, horizontal design elements, and the use of corner windows, glass blocks and eyebrows.

(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.”

The Leonardo apartment building at 246 Atlantic Avenue is a good representation of design work of Arthur LeBaron Weeks. Weeks was a prolific architect in Ottawa, Canada, Detroit, Michigan and Palm Beach County, Florida from 1908 to the late 1950s. While practicing in Palm Beach County, during what many would consider their retirement years, Arthur Weeks designed many commercial and residential structures throughout the County most of which were in the modern styles of architecture that were popular at the time.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

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IX. Florida Master Site File Form



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # PB15240
 Recorder # Jane S. Day
 Field Date 12/1/2010
 Form Date 3/1/2011
 Form No 201012
 Form No = Field Date (YYYYMM)

First Site Form Recorded for this Site? YES

GENERAL INFORMATION

Site Name (address if none) 246 Atlantic Avenue LLC, House Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
 Other Names _____ >> The Leonardo
 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>246</u>		<u>Atlantic</u>	<u>Avenue</u>	

Cross Streets (nearest/ between) N. Lake Way & N. County Road.
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Town Of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES
 County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #(s) 50-43-43-15-03-000-0180
 Subdivision Name Orange Grove Park IN Block _____ Lot 18-20
 Ownership Private-Corporate-for Profit
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____
 Route to (especially if no street address) On the south side of Atlantic Ave. between N. Lake Way and N. County Rd.

MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name _____ Publication Date _____ >> PAIM BEACH;1986
 Township: _____ Range: _____ Section: _____ 1/4 section: _____ >> 43S ;43E ;15;UNSP
 Irregular Section Name: _____
 Landgrant _____
 UTM: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____
 Plat or Other Map (map's name, location) _____

DESCRIPTION

Style Moderne 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) brick
 Roof Type(s) _____ >> Hip
 Other Roof Type(s) _____
 Roof Material(s) _____ >> Flat tile
 Other Roof Material(s) _____
 Roof Secondary Structure(s) (dormers etc) _____ >> _____
 Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) _____
 Number of Chimneys _____
 Chimney Material _____
 Other Chimney Material(s) _____
 Chimney Location(s) _____

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB15240

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions aluminum awning, fixed, 6/6 DHS

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) centered on the north facade with a brick surround and eyebrow above

Porches: #open 1 #closed 3 #incised Location(s) entry - n

Porch Roof Type(s) flat eyebrow above entrance

Exterior Ornament brick, belt course

Interior Plan Unknown

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 1951

Architect (last name first): Weeks, Arthur

Builder (last name first): Clough

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

>>

Apartment; 1951;

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

>>

Architecture

Other Historical Associations

Explanation of Evaluation (required) This small apartment building is worthy of further study.