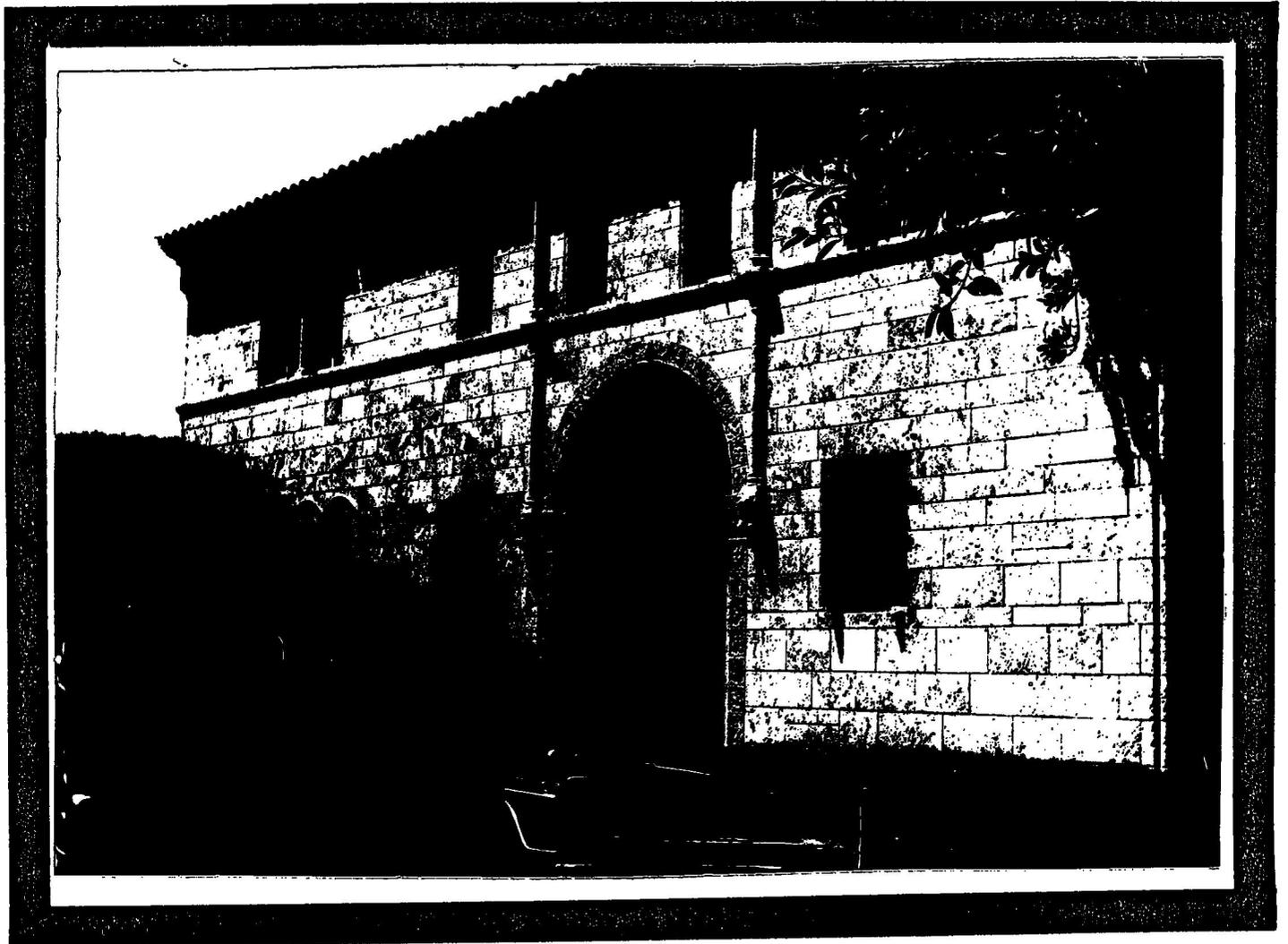


195 VIA DEL MAR



Designation Report

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1990



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Palm Beach, Florida

I. General Information

Location: 195 Via Del Mar or 821 South County Road, Palm Beach

Date of Construction: 1928 (Permit #8728-28, June, 1928)

Architect: Treanor & Fatio

Present Owner: Mr. Howard Gittis

Present Use: Residential - Single Family

Present Zoning: R-A

Legal Description: 35-43-43, W 276.04 FT OF S 300 FT OF
N 941.52 FT OF GOV LT 1 E OF CO RD

Palm Beach County Tax Folio #: 50-43-43-35-00-001-0110

Classification in the "Historic Building Survey of Palm Beach":

This is a Maurice Fatio design, unusual in its complete coral stone facing. The detailing and general composition show Fatio, a well-known Palm Beach architect, at his best. Nothing is rough or improvised looking; everything is carefully worked out in design and execution, with no worry over expense. The little brick lunettes in the corbel table under the cornice add a faint touch of color to an otherwise gray, richly textured front. The carving of the doorway is especially notable in its Italian Romanesque carving. Grade: A."

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III. Architectural Information

Casa Della Porta is a noteworthy residence of fine proportion and scale. It is a thoroughly livable adaptation of a Romanesque design with the ground floor plan well disposed around the central patio. All exterior walls, except in the service wing, are finished in coursed ashlar quarry key (coral rock) in weathered grays and buffs. The main block of the house projecting to the south is asymmetrical, two stories, and articulated vertically by two slender 3/4 engaged columns at the corners. These extend up to a moulded string course which is a continuation of the second floor window sills. The column capitals are small scaled acanthus leaves and the string course is decorated with a small running chain pattern. Similar columns are superimposed at the corners above the string course.

Above the asymmetrical, recessed, arched entrance is a cluster of three engaged columns. Each projecting entablature over the carved capitals is surmounted by a stone seated lion. Below these grouped columns and the string course is a single engaged half column which begins at the springline of the arch. These are supported by brackets carved in the Grottesque. At the top of the wall is a small scaled corbelled arcade, above which is a series of closely spaced modillions and a carved stone cornice moulding. This infilling of the corbelled arcade is treated with red brick set in a variety of patterns, i.e., basketweave, common running band, etc. Green louvered vents are also spaced within the arcade. The articulation of the south wall continues around the east wall to where it meets the tower wall with a one quarter column without capital at the intersection.

The walls of the three story tower are framed with rectangular pilasters projecting five inches from the wall. These pilasters rise flush with a high stone base that is sloped at the main wall to form a drip moulding. A carved string course surrounds the tower at the third floor window sills. Below the string course is a series of nine round arches which are projected flush with the plane of the corner pilasters. The wall terminates with a horizontal moulding. A string course carved in a vine pattern occurs under the second story window sills. The east wall also incorporates a stone balcony supported by stone brackets. The service wing walls are smooth cream colored

stucco with a wood cornice.

The main living area of the house is wood frame on brick piers, with the exception of the garden pool room which has a concrete basement. At the front entrance on the south side of the house, there is a quarry key stoop with three risers. All other outdoor living spaces are disposed around a central patio. In the southeast corner is a relatively low tile-roofed porch. Most of this porch is recessed between the walls of the house. The north side of the patio is enclosed by a broad arcade loggia, up three risers from the patio grade, and flanked by small rooms. The floor of the loggia is decorative tile. The highlight of this loggia is the ceiling which is complex and highly decorated. The patio itself is paved with broken cast stone pavers with a fountain in the center, set on a low base.

Windows in the south and east walls of the living room are identical consisting of a group of three pointed arched opening. The lower part contains bronze framed sashes which slide into pockets in the exterior wall. The windows have fixed arch transoms. In the east wall of the stair foyer, bronze casements contain leaded lights in a vertical hexagonal pattern. On the south and west walls of the dining room, there are paired sliding bronze windows under glazed arched transoms. The north wall of the house is a glazed loggia consisting of three sets of three arched openings with casement windows set midway in the 18 inch thick wall.

The plan of the house is complex. The entry on the southeast corner leads to a spacious foyer which connects with a well proportioned stair hall. This, in turn, leads to the living room wing and the garden pool room. West of the main foyer is a wide glazed loggia providing entrance to the dining room and a large powder room. West of the dining room is the pantry and kitchen. North of the dining room is a roofed terraced and grille room adjacent to it on the west. All bedrooms are on the second floor.

Although the exterior walls have weathered well, there is visible failure in the exposed wood and hardware.

IV. Historical Information

Casa Della Porta is steeped in local history. Architect Maurice Fatio built the house for William J. McAneeny, owner of the Hudson Motor Car Company. McAneeny was reportedly so happy with the house that he gifted Fatio with a custom built Hudson car. Later owners have included Eugene Howerdd and General Robertson. The Marshall plan was drafted partly at Casa Della Porta while General Robertson was its owner.

V. Statement of Significance and Criteria for Designation

Statement of Significance

"The McAneeny-Howerdd House is important as an example of the highest point that quality eclectic architecture ever reached in Florida...Before the economic collapse of 1929, no cost was spared in the construction of Palm Beach homes. The McAneeny-Howerdd House is of this period. The design of the floor plan incorporates all the luxuries of a modern house and it is very sensitive to the Palm Beach climate. Because of the excellence of the materials used and the exquisite detail of the house, it is important that an effort be made to preserve the building for future generations."

State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Archives, History and Records Management.

Criteria for Designation

Section 16-38 (a) of the Town of Palm Beach Landmarks Preservation Ordinance #2-84 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 which relate to this property and justification for designation.

(a) Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, county, or town."

Large Mediterranean Revival houses have come to symbolize the

cultural, economic, and social history of Palm Beach, Florida. These houses were designed by Palm Beach's most influential architects, including Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, Marion Sims Wyeth, Howard Major, and John Volk.

Built primarily in the second decade of the twentieth century for America's wealthiest families, the fanciful Mediterranean Revival designs reflected this prosperous economic period in American history. Following the stock market collapse of 1929 and the severe Depression which followed, these same houses were reinterpreted as symbols of the gross excesses indulged in by the American elite which foreshadowed the Depression. Mediterranean Revival houses like 195 Via Del Mar formed the foundation of Palm Beach's cultural, economic, and social history, serving today as cornerstones in Palm Beach.

(c) "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."

An amalgamation of Spanish and Italian influences often set off by accents of Renaissance, Baroque or even Gothic details, the Mediterranean Revival style began simultaneously in Florida and California around 1908. Mediterranean Revival structures were built in Palm Beach during the first decade of the twentieth century, but it was Addison Mizner who so popularized the style for both residential and commercial structures that it is sometimes called the Mizner style.

Almost anything goes in Mediterranean Revival design, from Romanesque to Venetian, Byzantine to Moorish. Walls are usually covered with coquina or quarry keystone. Mediterranean Revival structures are almost always topped with a clay barrel tile roof.

The most popular style of architecture in Palm Beach, the Mediterranean Revival, can be found in a number of variations. The windows usually have some interesting details like round or pointed arches, wrought iron grilles, cast stone columns and decorations, and pecky cypress sills. A variety of balconies, towers, porches, and courtyards are also found.

Casa Della Porta is both an excellent example of the Romanesque style in Palm Beach as well as an excellent example of the use of quarry keystone. The house is further notable for its fine planning, complex massing, and its excellent integration with its site.

(d) "Is representative of notable works of one or more master builders, designers or architects whose individual ability has been recognized to have influenced their age."

PLEASE SEE THE MAURICE FATIO BIOGRAPHY, AS ATTACHED.

Maurice Fatio Biography

Maurice Fatio was one of the Palm Beach's top architects in the 20's, 30's, and early 40's. Treanor & Fatio was one of the largest architectural firms in Palm Beach and Fatio's distinctive designs can be seen throughout the island.

Fatio was born in 1897 in Geneva, Switzerland. He studied architecture under Karl Moser at the Zurich Polytechnical. After graduation in 1920, Fatio came to America and apprenticed with Harrie T. Lindeberg, a prominent New York architect of Norman and English style country houses.

In 1921, Fatio formed a partnership with William A. Treanor, another architect in Lindeberg's firm. They quickly achieved a great deal of success, constructing numerous houses, primarily Colonial, on Long Island as well as buildings in Manhattan, including Beekman Tower on the East River.

Fatio's association with Florida can be traced to his time with Lindeberg, when he received the commission for eight small houses in New Smyrna, Florida. In October, 1923, Treanor and Fatio were asked to be the architects for the Olympia Beach development, now Jupiter Island. The following year Fatio opened an office in Palm Beach.

Fatio's many commissions for houses and commercial buildings in Palm Beach were based on his reputation in New York as well as his charm, good looks, and European manner. During his career in Florida, Fatio designed in many diverse styles. Mediterranean Revival, more specifically, Italianate houses incorporating tower blocks, were designed for William McAneeny (195 Via Del Mar), the Coopers (801 South County Road), Mortimer Schiff (920 South Ocean Boulevard), and Daniel McCarthy (550 South Ocean Boulevard). More horizontal, symmetrical and formal Florentine houses were designed for Otto Kahn (690 North County Road) and Joseph Widener (1500 South Ocean Boulevard). In the mid-30's, Fatio began designing in the Georgian and British Colonial styles. Large commissions for Albert Worswick (1860 South Ocean Boulevard, E.F. Hutton (1768 South Ocean Boulevard), and Wolcott Blair (1960 South Ocean Boulevard) with their simple materials and uncluttered lines reflected the sober economic

climate and set the pace for the smaller Colonial and Regency commissions that followed them.

During this time, Fatio also worked in the modern style, producing such modern masterpieces as "The Reef" built for Mrs. Barclay Douglas (Jo Hartford). Other modern houses were designed for Messmore Kendall, aviation pioneer Grover Loening, and Prince and Princess Zalstem-Zalesky (Evangeline Johnson Merrill).

World War II brought a halt to construction in Palm Beach. Although Fatio was already beginning to suffer from cancer, in June, 1943, he entered the Office of Strategic Services. He died of cancer later that same year, on December 2, 1943.

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