

177 Clarendon Avenue



DESIGNATION REPORT

November 19, 2014

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	177 Clarendon Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1929
First Owner:	Robert Amcotts Wilson
Architect:	Unknown
Builder:	Arnold Construction Company
Current Owner:	Paul M. Pompeo and Lisa B. Bair
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	RA
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50434335030000120
Legal Description:	Vita Serena Lots 12 & 13

II. Location Map



III. Architectural Information

The residence at 177 Clarendon Avenue is a two-story Mediterranean Revival style estate built in 1929 by Arnold Construction Company.¹ It was a “spec” house constructed after the height of the 1920s Florida Land Boom and at the beginning of the Great Depression.² The south facing residence was constructed of frame and hollow clay tile covered with smooth stucco. The house sits on a large corner lot at the intersection of Clarendon Avenue and Lake Park Drive just east of the Clarendon Avenue boat basin.

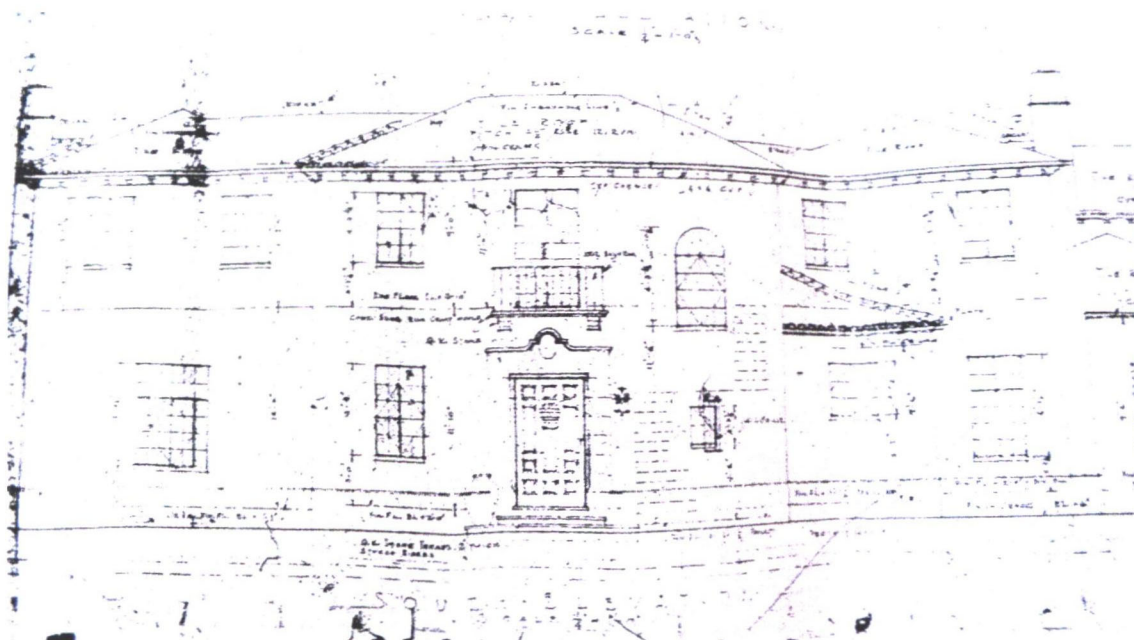
Mediterranean Revival style architecture is an eclectic style incorporating architectural elements derived from the area around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Italy and Spain. The style is found most frequently in states like Florida that have a Spanish Colonial heritage, but its use gained national popularity after the Pan-American Exhibition held in San Diego in 1915. In Palm Beach, the style was first popularized in 1919 by Addison Mizner’s design for the Everglades Club followed by his residential design of the Stotesbury’s estate El Mirasol. Other architects followed on this style and transformed it with variations of their own. The popularity of the style soared in the 1920s and remained a pervasive influence on building design until World War II.



¹ This house has often been attributed to Marion Sims Wyeth. However, the plans are not signed and after searching several archives and speaking with others who have worked on this house, there is no concrete evidence that Marion Sims Wyeth designed it.

² The Building Permit # 15229 is dated August 1, 1929. The Stock Market crash, known as Black Tuesday, occurred on October 29, 1929, and was the official start of the Great Depression in the United States.

177 Clarendon Avenue was designed in a U-shape with attached wings on either side extending to the north. Unlike many of the earlier Mediterranean Revival style estates in Palm Beach, this house is free from excessive ornament and the decoration is primarily achieved through the use of stone window and door surrounds, ornamental iron doors and carved brackets under the eaves. The entrance façade is located along the south side of the symmetrical center block and contains a quarried keystone door surround with a cast-stone shell and decorative iron doors. Above the entry is a second-story balcony with simple French doors and a matching rail. All four windows on the facade of this section are rectangular awning windows divided into six lights, with those on the first story being narrower and protected with metal grilles. However, it is interesting to note that the original plans show an asymmetrical design for this façade with the east portion featuring a small window on the first floor and a large arched window on the second floor. It is not known whether the house was built with these features and later altered or if it was built in its current design.



The roof of the residence is a collection of intersecting low-pitched hip roofs covered in red-clay barrel tiles. The slight overhanging eaves have carved wooden brackets below. All of the facades, including those within the courtyard, have varied window fenestration, with the majority of the windows being divided light rectangular awning windows. Both the east and west wings have exterior chimneys

with stone caps and there is an original 2-bay garage with a wood cornice and carved brackets on the east wing.³



An important feature of Mediterranean Revival style estates is their blending of indoor and outdoor spaces. 177 Clarendon Avenue has a central courtyard, with a patio, fountains, pool and cabana house extending to the north. This courtyard was originally accessed from the open loggia just beyond the grand entrance foyer as well as from several first floor rooms and the breezeway connecting the main house to the guest rooms. The access is more limited with changes that have occurred over time. Portions of the original first floor interior areas feature large rooms with original Spanish tile floors, pecky cypress ceilings and ornate stone fireplaces.



³ The south two bays of the garage are original. The third bay was added later.

Throughout the history of the 177 Clarendon Avenue there have been many additions and alterations to the property. In 1968, all of the original windows were replaced. The building permit states that the size of the openings were not altered but the windows were replaced with mostly divided light awning windows rather than double hung or casement windows.⁴ In 1982, the first floor loggia was expanded to the north and enclosed and a large balcony terrace was added to the second story above this loggia. The following year, eight windows were replaced on the house and a guest bedroom and bath were added to the pool cabana.⁵ In 1987, a second story bedroom, bathroom and terraces were added to the northeast wing of the house. A coffered ceiling was also added to the dining room ceiling to give it more interest. In 2006, a door replaced a window on the east side of the east wing creating a side entry to the dwelling and a window was added above. At unknown dates a second story and stair tower were added to the northwest wing of the original one-story guest area, the breezeway linking this space to the main house was enclosed, a hall linking the main house to the staff quarters on the second floor was added and a third garage bay was attached on the north end of the original garage. Much of the open-air access between the main house and the courtyard was closed off when the breezeway and loggia were enclosed, and the original transparent view of the courtyard and gardens from the entry foyer was diminished. Stone surrounds were added to the windows in the courtyard elevations, and possibly to other areas of the house. Sometime in the past 15 years, coral stone with a patterned stringcourse was applied over the stucco to the front façade significantly altering its historic appearance. In addition, the circular driveway serving the front entry was removed and now there is no clear pedestrian access to the historic front entry.



⁴ Palm Beach Building permit #65068 states "Replace all existing windows – all openings exist; no change in size."

⁵ Drawings done by Ames Bennett & Associates dated April 1983 show this addition.

IV. Historical Information

177 Clarendon Avenue was built in 1929 as a “spec” house by Arnold Construction Company for an estimated cost of \$40,000.⁶ Arnold Construction Company, headed by James Y. and W.H. Arnold, was a leading construction company in Palm Beach from the 1920s through the 1970s. The Arnolds arrived in Palm Beach in 1925 during the Florida land and building boom. In addition to building countless houses of varying sizes and styles, they also constructed hospitals, churches, apartment buildings, country clubs and other commercial buildings throughout Florida. In Palm Beach, Arnold Construction Company worked with all of the prominent architects and built a number of the early grand estates and significant mid-town houses. They also worked as a development company and built numerous houses like 177 Clarendon Avenue as investments properties. By 1929, the Florida Land and Housing Boom was over and it was the beginning of the Great Depression. Fortunately for builders in Palm Beach, not the entire Winter colony was severely affected by the land bust or the Great Depression.⁷ There were more than \$3 million in building permits issued in Palm Beach in 1930 and the Town had one of its busiest seasons. Buyers unscathed by the Depression were able to purchase houses like 177 Clarendon Avenue in the sought-after Estate Section of Palm Beach.

The first owners of 177 Clarendon Avenue were Captain & Mrs. Robert Amcotts Wilson who purchased the house in 1932. The Wilsons were London residents who spent the winter season in Palm Beach. Newspaper articles from the 1930s often mention them dining and attending parties with members of Palm Beach’s “International Set” and “Café Society.”⁸ In 1933, they hosted the wedding of William Randolph Hearst, Jr. to Miss Lorelle McCarver at their 177 Clarendon Avenue home. The wedding was described in the newspaper as “an event of major importance in the colony” with the reception held in the “villa’s patio.”

In 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Noel Seeburg purchased the house and that same year they added a large pool and cabana house at the north end of the patio. M. Noel Seeburg was the son of Justice P. Seeburg who started the J.P. Seeburg Piano Company in Chicago in 1907. The Seeburg Company became one of the first manufacturers of a multi-select jukebox with the introduction of the “Audiophone”

⁶ Town of Palm Beach Building Permit #396, March 16, 1925.

⁷ Augustus Mayhew, “Unforgettable Palm Beach: Island Endured Great Depression Largely Unscathed.” Palm Beach Daily News. February 21, 2011.

⁸ In the International Set the Wilson’s were associated with The Duke of Windsor, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, Sir Philip Sassoon, Mrs. Louis Jaques Balson (the former Duchess of Marlborough) and Captain Allie Macintosh.

in 1928. In 1939, in addition to purchasing 177 Clarendon Avenue, Noel became president of the Seeburg Company.⁹ He was a successful president and in 1949 Seeburg Company changed the face of Jukebox history when it engineered a mechanism that could play both sides of 50 records, a true 100 select jukebox. In Palm Beach, the Seeburgs were active in the Island's social scene and were often noted for their philanthropy to local charities.¹⁰

In 1963, the Seeburgs sold 177 Clarendon Avenue to Donald H. Parsons of Birmingham, Michigan. During his eight-year ownership of the house, he was listed as a lawyer, real estate developer and banker. Donald Parsons was also an avid hockey fan and in the late 1960s he became managing partner of the Pittsburgh Penguins NHL hockey team.

Herman and Ruth Holtzburg purchased 177 Clarendon Avenue in 1971. The Holtzburg's were best known for their Worth Avenue shop "Tops'n Bottoms," which was a staple on Worth Avenue from 1948 through the 1980s. In 1982, Leslie Claydon-White, an antique dealer, purchased the house. During his twenty-year ownership of the house he did a number of additions and alterations to the property. Sterling Morton Hamill, the great-grandson of Joy Morton, founder of the Morton Salt Company, purchased the house in 2003. The current owners, Paul M. Pompeo and Lisa B. Bair, purchased 177 Clarendon Avenue in 2013.

V. Architect's Biography

Although there have been suggestions that the house at 177 Clarendon Avenue was designed by Marion Sims Wyeth, no primary source information could be located to substantiate this claim.

Arnold Construction Company

Arnold Construction Company, headed by James Y. and W.H. Arnold, was a leading construction company in Palm Beach from the 1920s through the 1970s. The Arnolds arrived in Palm Beach in 1925 during the Florida land and building boom. In addition to building countless houses of varying sizes and styles, they also constructed hospitals, churches, apartment buildings, country clubs and other

⁹ Newspaper articles described him as a very sharp businessman who reorganized the company in the early 1940's to compete more effectively with Wurlitzer and Rock-Ola.

¹⁰ Palm Beach Daily News articles 1939-1963.

commercial buildings throughout Florida.¹¹ In Palm Beach, Arnold Construction Company worked with all of the prominent architects and built a number of the early grand estates and significant mid-town houses.

A few of the grand estates and significant in-town houses built by Arnold Construction Company include The Kennedy Estate on North Ocean Boulevard, E.Z. Nutting House Nuestro Paridiso on South Ocean Boulevard (Julius Jacobs), The Moffett House on South Ocean Boulevard (John Volk), the Charles Manning House on Clarke Avenue, The John Rutherford House on North Lake Trail (Treanor & Fatio), the Ernest Howe Residence on Clarke Avenue (Howard Major), and many others. The company's files were lost in a fire so there is no complete record of their projects. These projects were noted in newspaper articles in files at the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and in the Palm Beach Post online archives.

In the 1930's, Arnold Construction Company formed Palm Beach Modern Homes as their chief development company. The company hired the best architects in Palm Beach to design a series of "spec" houses on Pendleton Avenue and Pendleton Lane. Nearly half of the original structures were designed by John L. Volk, but Maurice Fatio, Howard Major, Gustav Maass, Marion Syms Wyeth, Howard Chilton and Belford Shumate all had part in designing houses on the street. The Arnold Construction Company continued to build houses and commercial buildings throughout Florida and surrounding states into the 1970s when the company became a division of McCloskey and Company.

VI. Statement of Significance:

177 Clarendon Avenue is a Mediterranean Revival style house built in 1929 by Arnold Construction Company on a sizeable lot in the Estate Section of Palm Beach. During its 85-year history, many prominent people have owned the house and resided there during important times in their careers. Unfortunately, the house has been significantly altered over the years and has lost a good deal of its architectural integrity. Many of the alterations were done in the recent past and if removed and restored, the house could redeem much of its architectural integrity.¹²

¹¹ In 1929, while working on 177 Clarendon, they were awarded the contract to build Seminole Golf Club. Marion Sims Wyeth was the architect and the clubhouse design was to be a Spanish U-shaped building covered with stucco with ornamental concrete trim surrounding a large patio and pool.

¹² Removing the coral stone on the façade would be recommended. Also, restoring loggias and openings in the courtyard on the first and second story would be recommended so that effective indoor and outdoor circulation could be reestablished.

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 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.”

177 Clarendon Avenue was built in 1929 at the end of the Florida Land and Housing Boom and at the start of the Great Depression. New construction had slowed in Palm Beach after the Florida Land Bust in late 1926 and the devastating 1928 hurricane, however, reputable builders like Arnold Construction Company, who had profited substantially during the Land Boom were able to stay profitable during the Land Bust and Great Depression by doing additions, renovations and new construction for Palm Beach clients and potential owners who were not significantly effected by the economic setbacks of the times. 177 Clarendon Avenue therefore reflects the broad economic and social history of the Town of Palm Beach fulfilling criterion (1).

VIII. Selected Bibliography

Clarendon Avenue Walking Tour Brochure. Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

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

Hoffstot, Barbara D. Landmark Architecture of Palm Beach. Revised Edition. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Ober Park Associates, Inc., 1980.

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

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.

Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. 177 Clarendon Avenue File.

Sanborn Insurance Map of Palm Beach. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1926 (updated 1952). City of West Palm Beach Public Library, Florida Room.

Town of Palm Beach. Building Permits, 1929 – 2012.

West Palm Beach City Directories. Asheville, NC: Florida-Piedmont Directory Company, 1918-1984.

IX. Florida Master Site File Form



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # FE06007
Recorder # Jana S. Day
Field Date 9/27/2010
Form Date 9/22/2010
Form No 201009
Form # - Field Date (YYYYMM)

First Site Form Recorded for this Site? ED

GENERAL INFORMATION

Site Name (address & name) Stirling M. Merrill Multiple Listing (MLR only) _____
Other Names _____ >> _____
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
177 _____ Clarendon Avenue _____

Cross Streets (nearest between) South Ocean Blvd.
City/Town (within 3 miles) Town of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES
County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #s 90-43-43-39-03-000-0120
Subdivision Name Vita Ocean In Block _____ Lot 12, 13
Ownership Private Individual
Name of Public Tract (e.g. park) _____
Route to (especially if no street address) At the northwest terminus of Clarendon Ave. west of South Ocean Blvd.

MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name _____ Publication Date _____ >> DAVIS BEACH, 1990
Township _____ Range _____ Section _____ 1/4 section _____ >> Sec 14, T29N, R25E, S10W, Palm Beach Co., FL
Irregular Section Name: _____
Landmark _____
UTM: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____
Plot or Other Map (map's name, location) _____

DESCRIPTION

Style Mediterranean Revival Other Style _____
Exterior Plan Irregular Other Exterior Plan _____
Number of Stories 2
Structural System(s) _____ >> Concrete block
Other Structural System(s) _____
Foundation Type(s) _____ >> Continuous
Other Foundation Types _____
Foundation Material(s) _____ >> Reinforced Concrete Footing
Other Foundation Material(s) _____
Exterior Fabric(s) _____ >> Stucco
Other Exterior Fabric(s) _____
Roof Type(s) _____ >> Gip
Other Roof Type(s) _____
Roof Material(s) _____ >> Barrel tile
Other Roof Material(s) _____
Roof Secondary Structure(s) (domes, etc) _____ >> _____
Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) _____
Number of Chimneys 2
Chimney Material Brick
Other Chimney Material(s) stucco
Chimney Location(s) east and west exterior

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

SPSC6007

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions aluminum casing, French

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) flat front with curved stone surround

Porches: Open Closed Enclosed 1 Location(s) front entrance

Porch Roof Type(s)

Exterior Ornament Wrought iron, exposed rafters, glazed tile, cast stone

Interior Plan Irregular

Other Interior Plan

Condition Good

Structure Surroundings

Comment: NONE of this category Resident: MOSTLY this category

Institution: NONE of this category Undeveloped: NONE of this category

Auxiliary 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 1929

Architect (last name first): unknown

Builder (last name first): Arnold Construction Company

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 >> Private residence, 1929;

Other Structure Uses

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

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methods >> Imaging local property records

Other research methods windshield, tan records

SURVEYOR'S EVALUATION OF SITE

Potentially Eligible for a Local Register? YES

Name of Local Register if Eligible

Eligibility Eligible for National Register? INSUFF. INFO

Potential Contributor to NR District? NO

Area(s) of historical significance

>> Architecture

Other Historical Associations

Explanation of Evaluation (required) This is a well-proportioned Mediterranean revival residence constructed by a prominent builder at the end of the Roan Flaco. It warrants further study.

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

85206407

DOCUMENTATION (Photos, Plans, etc.)

Photographic Negatives or Other Collections Not Filed with FHSF, including Field Notes, Plans, other Important Documents.

Document type: _____	Maintaining Organization: _____
File or Accession #: _____	Descriptive information: _____
>> _____	

RECORDER INFORMATION

Recorder Name (Last, First) Doy, James S.
 Recorder Address / Phone 1014 NW 6th Dr. Boca Raton, FL 33431-407-2936
 Recorder Affiliation Boca Raton Atlantico Other Affiliation Town of Palm Beach
 Is a Text-Only Supplement File Attached (Surveyor Only)? _____

***** MASTER SITE FILE USE ONLY *****

Cultural Resource Type: Electronic Form Used: Form Type Code: Form Quality Ranking: Form Status Code: Supplement Information Status: Supplement File Status: Form Comments: _____ _____ _____	SHPO's Evaluation of Resource Date: _____ FHSF Staffer: Computer Entry Date:
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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"