

# **225 South County Road**



## **DESIGNATION REPORT**

**January 22, 2025**

**Landmark Preservation Commission**

**Palm Beach, Florida**

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Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

## **I. General Information**

Location:	225 South County Road Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1920
Original Address:	172 Seaspray Avenue Palm Beach, Florida
First Lessee:	William Winder "W.W." Laird
First Owner:	Bror J. Carlberg
Current Owner:	Sphinx Properties LLC
Architect/Builder:	City Builders Realty Company
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	RB
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-22-07-000-4670
Current Legal Description:	Poinciana Park 2 <sup>nd</sup> Addition Lots 467 & 469 Less County Road Right of Way

## II. Location Map

### 225 South County Road





### III. Architectural Information

The house at 225 South County Road is an interesting three-story frame Dutch Colonial Revival style dwelling with Craftsman style influence located on the much-traveled southeast corner of South County Road and Seaspray Avenue.<sup>1</sup> The house was built in 1920 by City Builders Realty Company as part of the Poinciana Park subdivision development.<sup>2</sup>



Dutch Colonial Revival houses are not replicates of Dutch houses built during the colonial years, however they often share common architectural elements including multi-light sash windows often in pairs flanked by shutters, prominent dormer windows, gable-end chimneys, and gambrel or jerkinhead roof designs. In the case of 225 South County Road, the steeply pitched roof incorporates jerkinhead forms in the cross gable ends. A jerkinhead roof starts with a basic gable roof structure but instead of rising to a point, the gable ends are truncated with small hips sloping back to create a more flattened appearance. This distinctive feature gives the roof its

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<sup>1</sup> The original address of the house was 172 Seaspray Avenue. It changed to 225 South County Road in 1945-1946

<sup>2</sup> Sea Spray Avenue was platted in 1917 as Poinciana Park Second Addition. Sea Breeze Avenue was platted first, in 1914, as Poinciana Park.

characteristic look and also contributes to the structural benefits of enhancing the roof's ability to withstand various environmental challenges including better protection against strong winds and heavy rain. Craftsman style houses were popular throughout the country from 1905 through the early 1920s and were largely influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement and Oriental wooden architecture. On this dwelling, the Craftsman influence is most evident in the wide overhanging unenclosed eaves with triangular knee braces and decoratively carved rafter tails.



At 225 South County Road, the front north facing facade has an asymmetrical design on the first story and symmetrical designs on the second and third stories. The west portion of the first story features a sun parlor with three pairs of elongated ten-light windows with a front facing gable above the center window pair.<sup>3</sup> This gable is located within the narrow roof that wraps the first story from the east edge of the sun parlor to the main entry on the west facade and features small brackets that add interest to the design. Continuing with the first story, east of the sun parlor is a terrace with a low knee wall, French doors on both the north and west walls and is currently covered by a striped awning. The second story features paired six-over-six sash windows with a single six-over-six sash window in the center. The third story is

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<sup>3</sup> These windows look like eight-light windows with two-light transoms above.



comprised of the steeply pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves punctuated by two gabled roof dormers each with a six-over-six sash window. All of the six-over-six sash windows are flanked by louvered shutters.

One of the most character defining features of this dwelling is the steeply pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves enhanced by both triangular knee braces and decoratively carved rafter tails. Additionally, on the front elevation the steeply pitched roof with the wide overhang between the two dormers creates a pent roof over the second-story center window, a feature that adds to the unique appearance of the dwelling.

The main entry into the dwelling is on the west facade and features a charming arched wood door with divided lights and a gable in the roof above. The west facade also includes French doors leading to a patio, a prominent stucco covered stepped end chimney with brick banding at the top and appealing quarter round windows flanking the chimney on the third story. Both the main entry door and the French doors are covered with awnings and the multi-light sash windows on this west facade are topped with louvered Bahama shutters.



Main Entrance on the West Façade



Carved Rafter Tails and Brackets

The rear south facing portion of the dwelling was originally a garage on the first story with living quarters above. At an unknown date, the garage was altered to living quarters and a single entry door and a six-over-six sash window were added

to the first story with a smaller multi-light sash window centered above. An exterior stair on the east wall of the rear leads to an entry on the rear of the main portion of the dwelling. The east elevation of the dwelling, which is mostly seen from inside the property, has multi-light sash, casement and arched windows as well as a single entry door on the first story.



Over the past 105 years, 225 South County Road has had some alterations including window and door replacements, reroofing, removal of the trellis and modifying the garage into living space. These alterations did not significantly alter the dwelling, and the historic architectural integrity of the house remains intact. This integrity can visibly be seen in how closely the existing house matches the early photograph of the dwelling in the City Builders Realty Company c. 1920 brochure.



Photo from City Builders Realty Co. Brochure  
Courtesy of the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach



Current View  
Looking Southeast



## IV. Historical Information

The house at 225 South County Road is located in the Poinciana Park Subdivision that was platted and largely developed by Oscar A. Jose and his City Builders Realty Company. In 1914, Jose and his family began to spend their annual winter vacations in Palm Beach, first leasing a Lake Trail house from pioneer Frederick Robert.<sup>4</sup> Jose, a successful Indianapolis developer who previously vacationed in Daytona Beach as early as 1912, created Poinciana Park by purchasing tracts of land south of the Breakers and the Royal Poinciana Hotel from Lake Worth to the Atlantic Ocean. This area became the “Sea” streets with Sea Breeze platted in 1914 followed by Sea Spray in 1917 and the north side of Sea View in 1923.<sup>5</sup> The land for the Poinciana Park second addition where 225 South County Road is located was purchased from James and Charles Stillman.<sup>6</sup> A brochure designed and distributed by City Builders Realty Company titled “Poinciana Park, The Preferred Location,” goes into great detail about the many advantages of wintering in Palm Beach and the benefits of owning or leasing a house in centrally located Poinciana Park, close to all of the town’s amenities but removed from the “rush and bustle of the hotel center.”<sup>7</sup> Houses in a variety of styles and sizes could be either purchased or leased for the season and many were fully furnished and staffed. City Builders Realty Company took out numerous advertisements in newspapers expounding the benefits of living in Poinciana Park.

Oscar Jose was one of the early developers to recognize the potential in Palm Beach for building something other than a grand estate or spending the season at a hotel. Poinciana Park was an attempt to make Palm Beach more family oriented and the Palm Beach lifestyle more accessible to the “upper-middle class.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to building, selling and leasing properties, City Builders Realty Company sold many lots in Poinciana Park to individual buyers as well as other developers. However, lot

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<sup>4</sup> Frederick Robert became Secretary of City Builders Realty Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> Sea Breeze, Sea Spray and Sea View were the original spellings of the Poinciana Park Avenues. A January 28, 1917 City Builders Realty Company advertisement in the Palm Beach Post stated, “We have platted a new addition to Poinciana Park and we are advertising for a name for the new street. \$10.00 for an acceptable name.” The street was named Sea Spray Avenue.

<sup>6</sup> James Stillman was an American businessman who invested in land, banking and railroads in New York, Texas and Mexico and was president and later chairman of the National City Bank. At the time of his death in 1918 he was one of the wealthiest people in the United States. His son, Charles Stillman, took over his land in Palm Beach after his death.

<sup>7</sup> “Poinciana Park, The Preferred Location,” Brochure distributed by City Builders Realty. No Date. Located in the Poinciana Park file at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

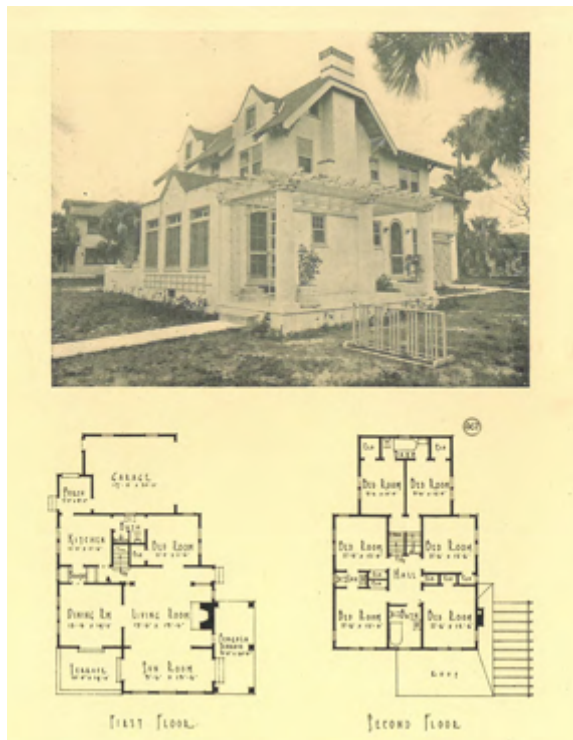
<sup>8</sup> “Preservationist’s Home Gets Landmarks’ OK,” Palm Beach Daily News, 22 January 1998.

sales came with stipulations regarding the quality of houses to be built so that no “cheap” house could be built in Poinciana Park.<sup>9</sup>

As early as 1919, City Builder’s had difficulty keeping up with the housing demand. Houses were selling quickly and there were not enough rental properties to keep up with all of the seasonal requests. Despite this demand, City Builders did not construct cookie-cutter houses. Each house was unique and of high quality. An August 4, 1919, Palm Beach Post article stated,

“With six houses underway now, the City Builders Realty Company will at once start seven more houses in Poinciana Park. Each of the houses will vary in style of construction in order to avoid monotony. Some of the houses are for clients who have bought lots; others will be available for sale or rental.”

At the time, the houses were called “cottages” and residents were considered part of the “cottage colony.” As noted previously, Jose’s progressive marketing methods featured the house at 225 South County Road in the City Builder Realty Company’s Poinciana Park brochure that was used in mass-market mailings. The house was one of 13 “cottages” highlighted in the brochure with a photograph and the following description of the property:



*“Located in the Ocean Block we strongly recommend this house as a winter residence. Here we offer another popular plan with many distinctive features. There are seven bedrooms, including a downstairs bedroom for servants, each provided with spacious closets, two complete baths with tubs, another bath with shower, and an additional lavatory. Further study of these floor plans will reveal a liberal living room with fireplace, and sun parlor which opens on a terrace. Being located on a corner, easy access is obtained to the two car garage attached to rear of house. It was our desire when planning this cottage to build something peculiarly adapted to the seashore and in which there would be included every requisite for comfort. As is the case with several other of the houses pictured on this page, the grounds have been beautified with flowers and shrubbery since the photos were taken. You will find it difficult to obtain a more desirable house for lease.”*

<sup>9</sup> Advertisement in Palm Beach Post .

One of the more notable things about City Builders Realty Company was their full service approach to marketing Poinciana Park. As the brochure indicated, the company would sell or rent a house furnished, unfurnished, staffed, unstaffed, custom built, etc. Included in each sale or lease were complete maintenance packages, transportation from the railway, and financing for “the successful” family, if desired. The company was aiming to build a community, not just a housing development, and therefore the brochure placed great emphasis on local schools and recreation, including the “private bathing beach” which was the legendary Sea Spray Beach Club.<sup>10</sup> Ownership or seasonal rental of a house in Poinciana Park included a membership in the Sea Spray Beach Club which was located on the ocean side of South Ocean Boulevard and Seaspray Avenue.

From 1920 to 1935, the house at 225 South County Road was leased as a seasonal rental “cottage.” In 1920, William Winder “W.W.” Laird and his wife Mary Alleta Belin DuPont Laird were the first people to lease the house for the season. W. W. Laird, originally from Maryland, moved to Wilmington, Delaware where his wife’s DuPont family was located. He became one of the city’s largest financial brokers and director of several banks and other businesses including the DuPont’s family company.<sup>11</sup> Following the Laird’s seasonal leasing of the dwelling, from the mid-1920s until 1935, the house was leased to various seasonal residents including Arthur and Ethel Roche, Frederick and Madeline Blackburn, Mrs. Frederick D. Kay, Dr. C.W. and Anna Cameron, and Carroll D. Keeler.

In 1935, Bror J. Carlberg purchased the house as the first owner following City Builders Realty Company. Carlberg was a Palm Beach resident and developer who was an important figure in the early development of West Palm Beach and in particular the development of the Mango Promenade area. Born in Salina, Kansas, Carlberg moved to Palm Beach in 1911 and established the Carlberg Realty Company, one of the first development corporations in West Palm Beach. He later joined with M.E. Gruber to form the Gruber-Carlberg Company that was instrumental in the development of West Palm Beach’s Flamingo Park and Sunshine Park subdivisions. In Palm Beach he developed early property in the Royal Park subdivision and starting in the mid-1930s he developed a number of properties in

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<sup>10</sup> “Poinciana Park, The Preferred Location” brochure, ca. 1920. the fashionable club provided members with an Olympic-sized saltwater pool and popular dining facilities. Beginning in 1929, Jose recognized that many residents of Poinciana Park were becoming year round residents, so they opened the Sea Spray Beach Club as the “Summer Bath Club” for their members who stayed in town during the summer months.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Alleta Belin DuPont Laird was the great granddaughter of Eleuthere Irenee DuPont, founder of the E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Company, a chemical company more commonly known as the DuPont Company. The DuPont family have been one of the most prominent American families since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with generations of influential businessmen, politicians and philanthropists.



the far north end. In 1945, Blaine Webb purchased 225 South County Road and owned it for 25 years. Webb was born in Springfield, Ohio in 1893 and after serving in World War I he came to Palm Beach and was a real estate broker with Webb Brothers Real Estate for more than 50 years. Long active in civic affairs, he served for a number of years on the Palm Beach Town Council, the executive committee of the American Red Cross, the board of Good Samaritan Hospital, president of the Palm Beach Community Chest, and a vestryman for the Church of Bethesda-By-The-Sea.<sup>12</sup> In 1970, John Haynsworth purchased the dwelling from Blaine Webb. Haynsworth was a nationally known photographer “of the rich and famous” who had a studio on South County Road. His work was featured in many prominent publications in the United States and Europe and his photograph of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton was used on the cover of LOOK magazine in 1972 while living at this residence. The house was purchased in 1980 by William and Georgia “Gigi” Tylander, who owned the dwelling for forty-four years before it was purchased in March 2024 by the current owners, Sphinx Properties, LLC.

## **V. Architect/Builders Biography**

### **City Builders Realty Company**

One of the earliest companies to successfully construct and promote real estate development in the Town of Palm Beach was the Indianapolis based City Builders Realty Company headed by Oscar A. Jose. In 1914, City Builders Realty Company became part of a growing number of successful midwestern firms who opened offices in South Florida prior to the 1920s Boom Time Era. Indiana contemporaries of Jose included City of Hollywood developer Joseph Young and Miami Beach developer Carl Fisher. These astute businessmen were instrumental in promoting South Florida as a desirable place to reside.

Beginning in 1914, City Builders Realty Company purchased tracts of land from Palm Beach pioneers including William Lanehart, Elisha Dimick, Frederick Robert, Henry Maddock, H.F. Hammon, E.M. Brelsford and Harvey Geer.<sup>13</sup> These combined parcels, renamed Poinciana Park by Jose, extended from Lake Worth to the Atlantic Ocean south of the Royal Poinciana Hotel and the Breakers Hotel. The streets were named Sea Breeze Avenue, Sea Spray Avenue and Sea View Avenue,

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<sup>12</sup> He was a former governor of the Everglades Club, a member of the Bath & Tennis Club, Gulfstream Club, the Metropolitan Club of NY and a charter member of the local chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and a member of the American Legion at WPB. According to his obituary, on his death in 1973, Blaine Webb was one of the four remaining original living members of the Everglades Club.

<sup>13</sup> Information found in the Poinciana Park file at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. The paper lists land title searches of properties in Poinciana Park.

and included 820 lots, though most properties encompassed several of the twenty-five foot wide lots. The company provided water, electric and sewer connections, sidewalks and lush landscaping. Prior to 1920 the houses were marketed as complete packages for families, fully furnished for a seasonal residence, however, by the mid-1920s they were being marketed for both seasonal and permanent residence. Additional amenities included the private Sea Spray Beach Club, nearby public and private schools, dockage for private yachts and attractive term financing for those who desired to finance their house. Commercial buildings were prohibited from the Poinciana Park Subdivision.

City Builders Realty Company designed and constructed a number of the houses in Poinciana Park. The company also marketed lots to other Palm Beach builders and architects who maintained the size, scale and quality of residences as originally established within the subdivision. Designed to impress an upscale market of both the permanent homebuyers and those interested in leasing seasonal Palm Beach residences, City Builders Realty Company made a lasting impression on Palm Beach architecture and lifestyle.

## **VI. Statement of Significance**

225 South County Road is a unique Dutch Colonial Revival style dwelling with Craftsman influence built in 1920 at the start of the land and housing boom in Palm Beach. It is important as one of the houses featured in the City Builders Realty Company brochure promoting their Poinciana Park subdivision and today closely resembles the original design. In addition, a number of the lessees and owners were prominent Palm Beach residents and business owners.

## **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.”**

The house located at 225 South County Road reflects the broad cultural, social and economic history of the Town of Palm Beach. The dwelling is located in the Poinciana Park subdivision that was one of the Island’s first

successful large residential developments. City Builders Realty Company promoted it as a “home site park with broad avenues prevailing in beautiful homes where many of the country’s best-known people spend their time filled with contentment.” While prior to 1919, Palm Beach’s reputation had mostly rested on the fashionable hotels, the success of Poinciana Park helped establish another residential dimension to the development of Palm Beach. The house is also important because it is a well-known house on a much-traveled prominent corner in mid-town Palm Beach and its size, scale and design helps maintain the historic fabric of the Sea Streets and the early architectural development of the town.

**(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 house at 225 South County is an interesting example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style of architecture featuring a number of distinguishing characteristics of the style including gable dormers in the steeply pitched roof, multi-light sash windows with several in pairs, a prominent gable-end chimney, and the jerkinhead roof design. This unique roofing style provides both aesthetic charm and practical benefits. In Indianapolis, where City Builders Realty Company was founded, jerkinhead roofs are found on many 19<sup>th</sup> century revival style houses, including Stick Style, Bungalows and Dutch Colonial Revival style dwellings. This house also features wide unenclosed overhanging eaves with triangular knee braces and distinctive carved rafter tails that indicate influence from the Craftsman style that was popular throughout the country when this residence was constructed.



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