

Miller Residence

509 Palmetto Avenue
Melbourne, Florida 32901

Designation Report

September 24, 2012

Revised June 17, 2013



Prepared By:



LITTLEJOHN ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES

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509 Palmetto Avenue

Local Historic Designation Report

I. Location

The property is located at 509 Palmetto Avenue near the intersection of Hickory Street and Palmetto Avenue. The property is located in a block formed by Palmetto Avenue on the north, Strawbridge Avenue (formerly Second Street) on the south, Hickory Street on the west and McQuaid Street on the east. **Figure 1** identifies the specific location of the property within the block.

Figure 1: Location Map

Source: City of Melbourne GIS Data and Littlejohn Engineering Associates, Inc., 2011.

II. General Information

The general information related to the 509 Palmetto Avenue property is as follows:

A. Name of the Property

1. Historic Names

The property is part of the La Bertha Lawn, Lathrop's Resubdivision and was constructed in 1930 according to the Brevard County Property Appraiser. According to census data from April 18, 1930, the house was rented so construction would have most likely started in 1929 or 1928. The structure is a kit home from the Gordon Van Tine Company – model #620/Warwick model (see "Statement of Significance").

2. Current Name

The property is currently known as the Miller Residence.

B. Brevard County Property Appraiser Information

1. Property Address

The property address is 509 Palmetto Avenue, Melbourne, Florida 32901.

2. Present Owner

The present owner of the property is Susan J. Miller.

3. Present Use

The present use of the property is a Single-Family Residence.

4. Zoning District

The property is located in an R-1A zoning district.

5. Site Size

The site is approximately 0.13 acres in size.

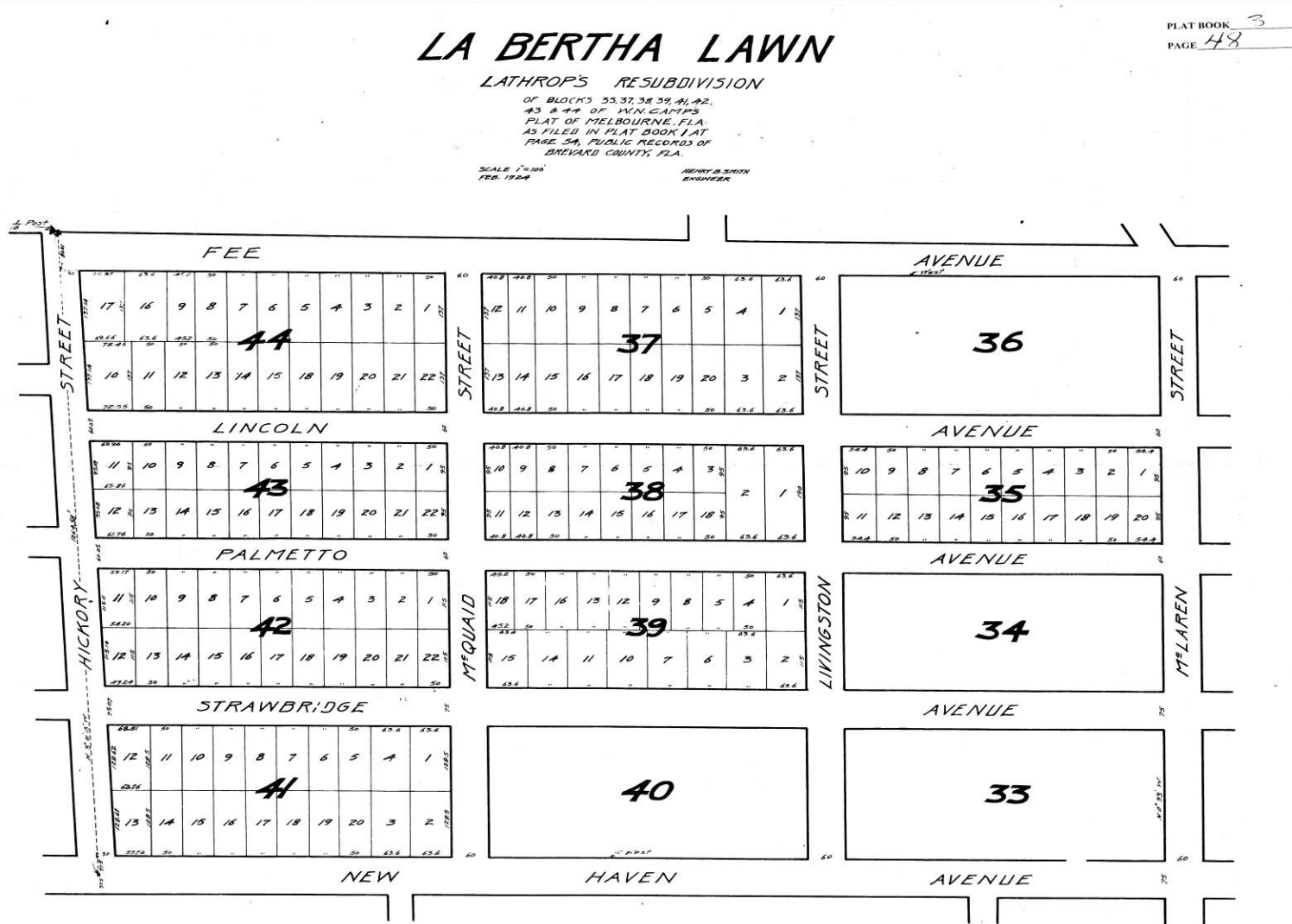
6. Parcel Identification Number

The parcel identification number of the property is 28-37-03-01-00042.0-0009.00.

7. Boundary Description

The legal description according to the public records of Brevard County, Florida is: Lot 9, Block 42, La Bertha Lawn, as recorded in Plat Book 3, Page 48 of the Public Records of Brevard County, Florida.

Figure 2: Plat of La Bertha Lawn, Lathrop's Resubdivision



Source: Public Record of Brevard County, Florida (Plat Book 3, Page 48).

III. Significance

A. Ownership History of the Land

- 1930 - Dr. Strange (Melbourne's dentist)
- 1965 - Janie H. and Joseph N. Greenlee
- 2002 - Susan J. Miller

B. Construction History

1. Construction

Date of Construction: According to the Brevard County Property Appraiser, the structure was built in 1930, which is consistent with the historic map produced by Sanborn Map Company in 1924 (see **Figure 3**). According to census data from April 18, 1930, the house was rented then so construction would have most likely started in 1929 or 1928. This map displays the two houses to the west of the property and the house to the east of the property but the lot is vacant. A review of the historic map produced by Sanborn Map Company in 1944 (see **Figure 4**) draws attention to the subdivision and arrangement of properties along Palmetto Avenue. This map also verifies the structure was constructed between 1924 and 1944. The "D" inside the shapes on the map denotes dwellings, while the dashed lines represent porches. The number of floors is noted in the upper left corner of the dwellings. The structure at 509 Palmetto Avenue and the dwelling to the east were originally built on the same lot. The lot was later subdivided as seen in the 1959 Sanborn Map. The dwelling to the immediate west of 509 Palmetto Avenue no longer exists.

Figure 3: Sanborn Map Company, 1924

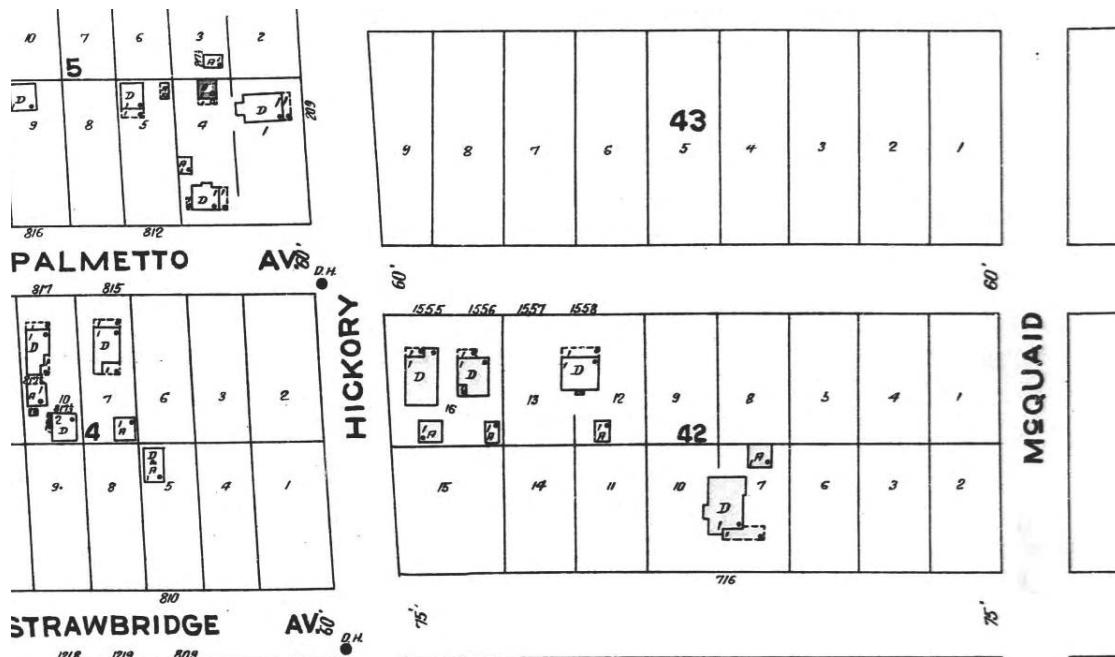


Figure 4: Sanborn Map Company, 1944

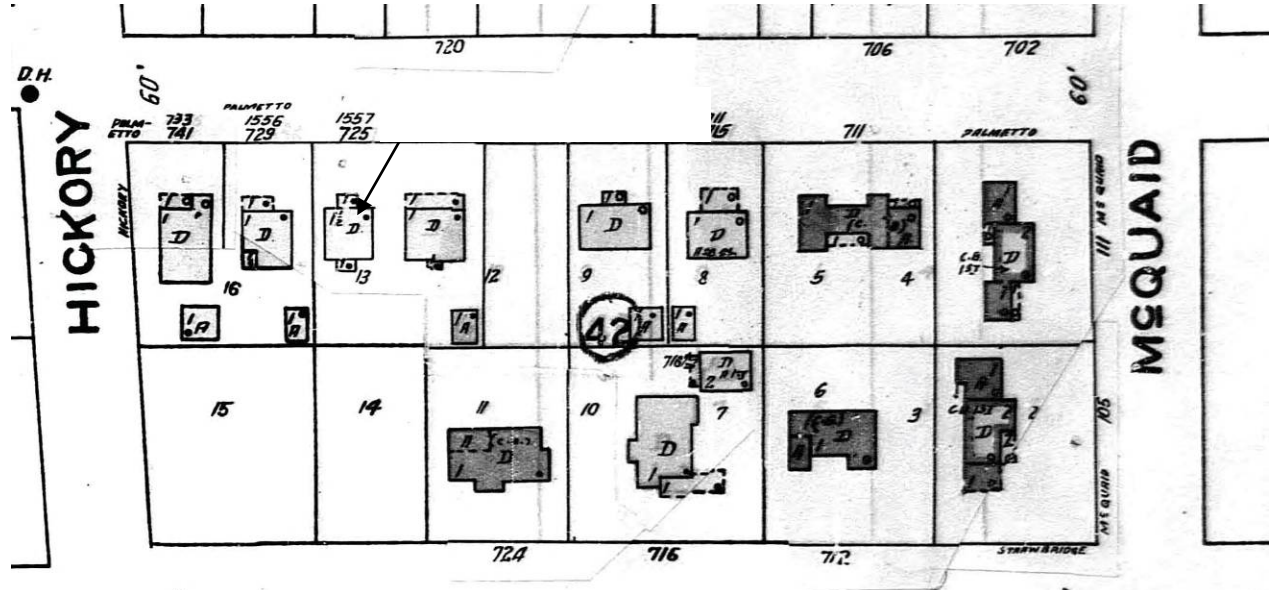
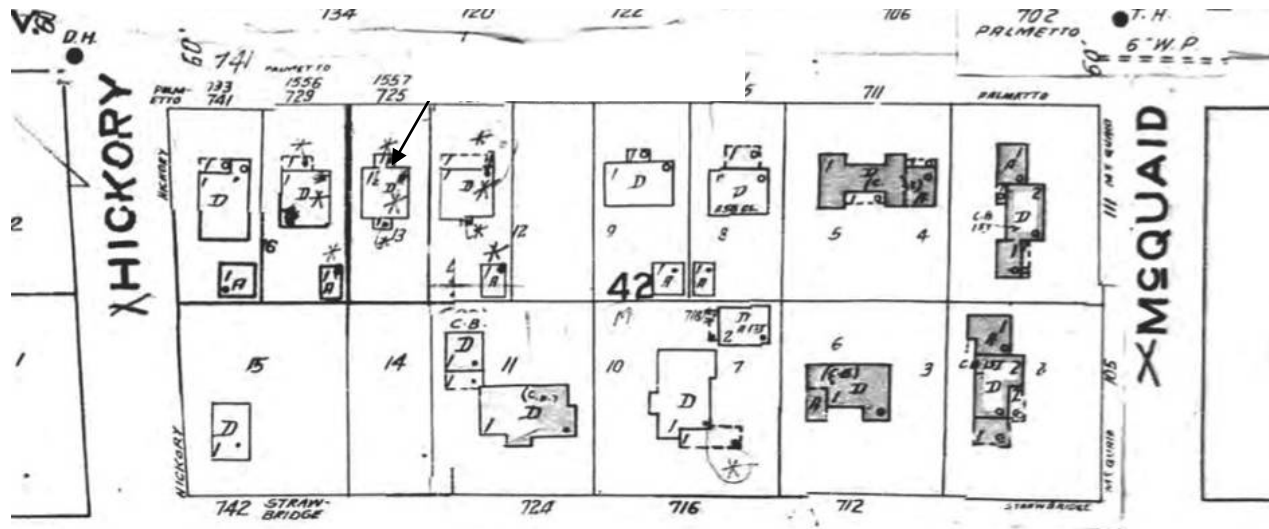


Figure 5: Sanborn Map Company, 1959



2. Additions and Alterations

Additions and alterations included the addition of a mudroom at the rear of the house and the enclosure of the front and rear porches. The front porch was added to the original stoop. The outline of the original stoop is visible by cracks from differential settlement of the concrete slab. The dates of additions and alterations are unknown.

3. Construction Materials

The building is a 1.5 story framed vernacular style home with front and rear porches. The roof is a Jerkin head roof with pressed metal shingles. Triple Jerkin head dormers are located on the front façade and a single Jerkin head dormer is centered in the rear roof. The Jerkin head roof or clipped gable is similar to a side-gable roof but the gable ends are clipped back towards the center of the roof. The exterior is stucco over a wood structure with a brick chimney along the west side of the building. The porch is made of block and stucco construction; the mud room is constructed of wood lap-siding. Both the porch and mud room have a pressed metal shingle roof consistent with the main roof. All of the windows are single-hung with the exception of the mudroom which has the original double-hung windows.

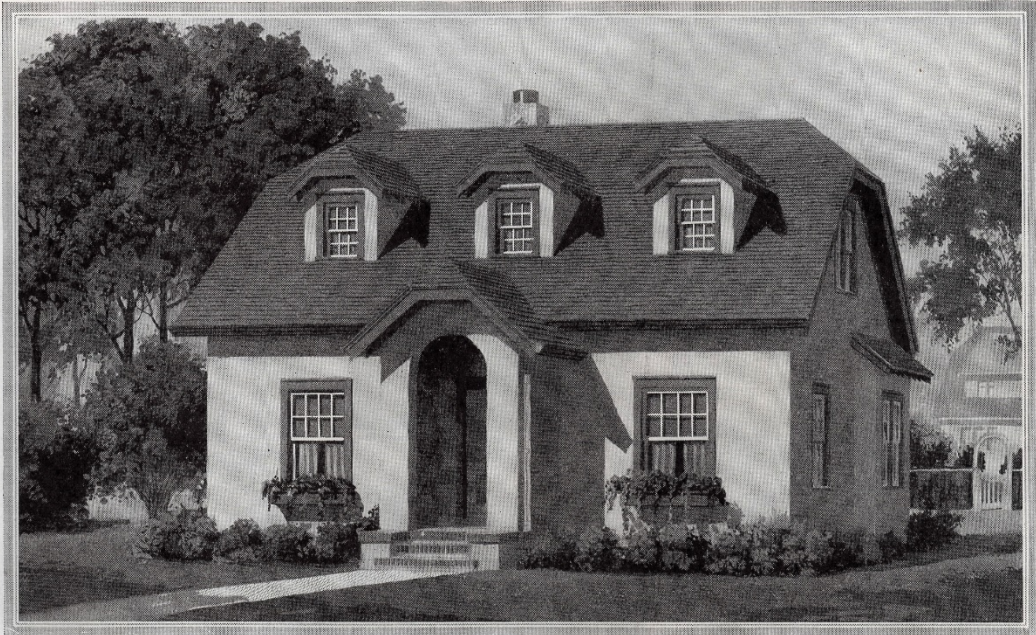
C. Statement of Significance

The building is a kit home/mail-order home that was manufactured by the Gordon Van Tine Company. This company which was based in Davenport, Iowa, was incorporated in 1907. According to Mail Order Homes of Montgomery Ward by Thornton and Wolicki, Gordon Van Tine's "first catalogs were devoted wholly to building materials, and in 1912, the company introduced a catalog of house plans. Many building material companies fought with the pre-cut housing industry, but Gordon Van Tine took a different tact and introduced their own line of pre-cut homes in 1916." They claimed that their pre-cut homes, branded as Ready-Cut homes would save the builder thirty to forty percent of construction time as compared to traditional construction schedules. Unfortunately, no records have survived to indicate how many homes were manufactured or where they were built during the company's forty-year history. Experts estimate that about 50,000 kit homes were sold by the Gordon Van Tine Company. Given the close proximity of La Bertha Lawn to the Melbourne train depot a pre-cut/kit home could have been an efficient, cost-effective means of construction for this neighborhood. The dwellings immediately east and west of 509 Palmetto are also Ready-Cut homes from the Gordon Van Tine Company. The lot on the corner of Hickory and Palmetto also features a mail-order garage from the same company. It is very possible that the structure that once stood to the west of 509 Palmetto was also a Gordon Vine Tine Ready-Cut home. It was built within the timeframe and on the same lot as the home on the corner. Having a row of kit homes from the same manufacturer is very rare in Melbourne.

The home at 509 Palmetto is a Gordon Van Tine model #620, and was first offered for sale in 1924. In the 1926 catalog it was noted as "An unusually Handsome Colonial Cottage". It was one of the more rare models from Gordon Van Tine. Later in the 1920's Gordon Van Tine started naming their models and #620 became the Warwick model. The description was updated to read "An Appealing English Cottage". The exterior elevations and interior floor plans of 509 Palmetto are an exact match to those shown for the Warwick in the 1928 catalog. Additional evidence of the home's origin is found in the lumber itself. One of the exterior doorframes has lumber that has been stamped "HOUSE-NO-620".

Figure 6: Gordon Van Tine Company, Warwick (Model #620), 1928 Catalog

Gordon Van Tine Homes



The Warwick—Six Rooms and Bath
For New Low Prices on This Home—See Inside Back Cover

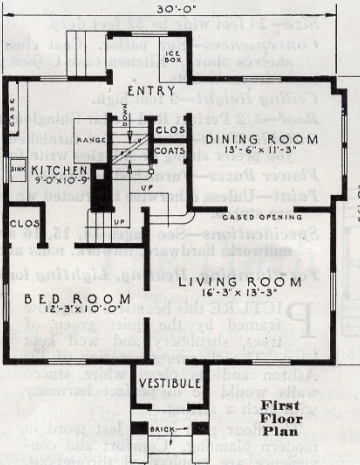
An Appealing English Cottage

WE wish to call your attention to one outstanding feature of The Warwick—the stairway arrangement. From the living room two steps lead up thru the plastered arch to the landing where the coat closet is placed. From this landing another step leads to a second landing from which the stairs run directly to the second floor. From the second landing a short flight of stairs descend to the kitchen. This arrangement offers all the conveniences of a separate rear stairway without the usual loss of space that a rear stairway would mean.

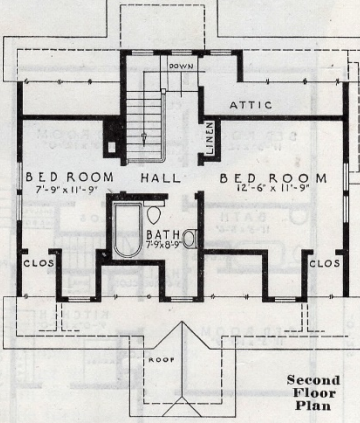
Note: The ceiling height in the bedrooms is standard excepting at the extreme front and rear where the ceilings are 6½ feet high at the lowest point.

Study the floor plan carefully and write for our portfolio which gives full information about this popular home.

First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Size—30 feet wide by 26 feet deep.

Conveniences—Coat closet. Rear entry closet. Kitchen case D (see page 16). First floor bedroom. Separate stairway from kitchen joining main stairs. Linen closet. Three bedroom closets. Small attic on second floor.

Ceiling Height—First floor 9 feet. Second floor (see note above).

Roof—5 2 Perfect Red Cedar Shingles, 100% Edge Grain.

Outside Walls—Stucco. Not furnished. See "Stucco Exterior" page 15. If you prefer siding or shingles, write for prices.


Flower Boxes—Furnished as shown.

Paint—Unless otherwise instructed, we will furnish willow green paint for trim. Walls are stucco.

Specifications—See pages 14, 15, 16 and 17 for full description of lumber, millwork, hardware, tinwork, nails and paint furnished.

For Plumbing, Heating, Lighting for this house see last pages of Book.

Send for The Warwick Portfolio



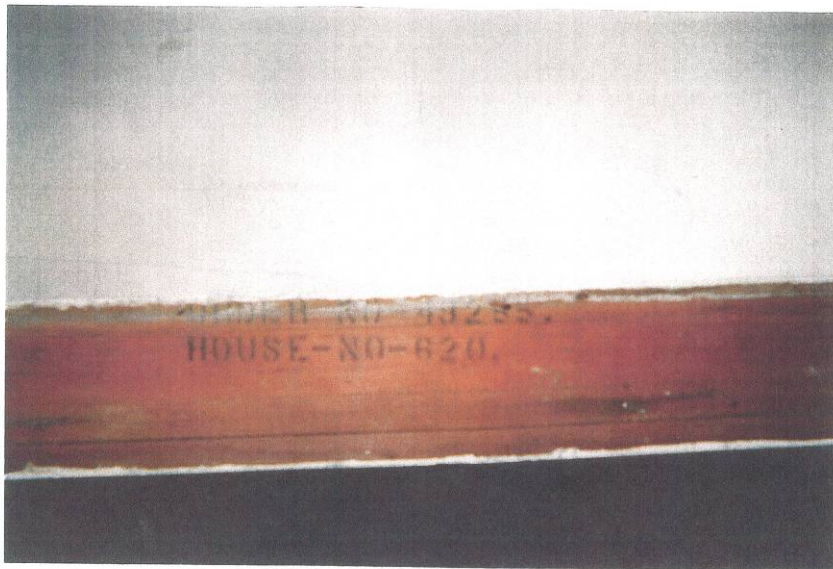
COMPLETELY describes and illustrates this home. Exterior views from all four sides, large size floor plans. Furniture cut-outs, convenience features, material lists, etc.

Sent to you Free

24

Source: "Oklahoma Houses by Mail" by Rachel Shoemaker, June 2013

Figure 7: Numbered Lumber



Source: Susan J. Miller, September 2012

IV. Contextual History¹

The 509 Palmetto Avenue building was built in 1930 in the town that was known as Melbourne. Melbourne is located on a natural harbor on the Indian River Lagoon, which was originally named “Crane Creek.” William H. Gleason was the first person who made an attempt to settle in this area and purchased a large tract of land along the Indian River in 1869. In the 1880s, the first official subdivisions were recorded in the Village of Eau Gallie and the Town of Melbourne. In 1884, William Gleason filed the Eau Gallie Village Plat, and in 1886 William Camp filed the first plat of Melbourne.²

The Town of Melbourne was incorporated on December 22, 1888, adopting a corporate seal that included a pineapple plant, a crane and a palmetto tree³. The town was named for its first postmaster, Cornthwaite John Hector, an Englishman who was said to have come from Melbourne, Australia⁴.

As in many other Florida cities, the growth of Melbourne and neighboring Eau Gallie would not begin in earnest until the arrival of the railroad. Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway arrived in Eau Gallie in 1893 and just months later was extended to Melbourne. Flagler’s tracks would continue their march down the east coast, arriving in Miami in 1896, and to Key West in 1912. The railroad brought tourists, settlers and an inestimable boost to the region’s economy, as produce and timber could now be shipped to out-of-state markets.

Melbourne developed steadily during the 1880s and first half of the 1890s. The coming of the Florida East Coast railway brought a period of significant development within Melbourne. The financial profit in the citrus grove industry attracted a number of settlers to Melbourne. During the 1890s, a large number of residential buildings were built along Riverview Drive and Melbourne Avenue. To service the community’s needs, Melbourne’s commercial area started growing north of Crane Creek along Front Street. Some of the businesses included merchandise stores, a meat market, a newspaper, lumber yards, hotels, a telegraph office and a post office. The local economy, however, suffered serious devastating freezes during the winter of 1894-1895, which killed citrus groves and other crops in the area.

Between 1896 and 1920, the area recovered from the devastating effects of the freezes. The replanting of orange groves along with the development of other industries, such as commercial fishing, lumbering and ranching helped the local economy recover. The Union Cypress Lumber Company at Hopkins was the most important industrial complex constructed near Melbourne; George Hopkins, south of Crane Creek, established it in 1912. The Union Cypress Mill not only propelled Melbourne into the Industrial Revolution but it also provided Melbourne’s first electricity, out-patient hospital and moving picture house.

In 1919, a devastating fire destroyed the commercial district along First Street in downtown Melbourne. On August 31st of the same year, another fire partially destroyed the Union Cypress Sawmill in Hopkins, leaving hundreds of workers out of jobs. The fires, along with the

¹ Barile, Diane. “The Elizabeth Eaton Residence Designation Report”, October 2007

² Olausen, Stephen. Page 9

³ www.melbourneflorida.org/info/history

⁴ Other sources say that Hector was actually from New Zealand

national economic depression during World War I, ended a prosperous period of development.

The end of World War I, however, brought a wave of new settlers to Florida, and by the 1920s, the State was poised for the phenomenon dubbed as the “Florida Real Estate Boom.” In a 1925 book, “The Truth about Florida,” author Charles Donald Fox explains that the Boom in Florida eclipsed all other mass migrations, including the California Gold Rush in 1849.

“There is reflected in the great migration to Florida the natural result of the knowledge, that here, within thirty-six to forty hours’ train travel of sixty million of our population. Lies a land of upwards of thirty million acres. Two-thirds of this immense area is capable of agricultural development, and because Nature has cast her favoring smile upon it above practically all other sections of our country, it is capable of producing scores of varieties to satisfy the demands and needs of half the population of the United States.”⁵

By 1923, Melbourne had made significant strides toward civic improvement, including the construction of paved roads, concrete sidewalks, electric street lamps and improved water and sewer systems. A new commercial area was developed along Melbourne and New Haven Avenues to replace the old commercial area along First Street that was destroyed by the 1919 fire. The tremendous increase in tourism and record breaking citrus crops attracted many people to the Melbourne area. Due to the increase in the population along with the increasing demands for expansion, the Town of Melbourne and Eau Gallie reincorporated as cities in 1923 and 1925, respectively.

Between 1921 and 1926, Melbourne experienced tremendous development in the commercial and residential areas. Mediterranean and Florida Vernacular were the dominant building styles. Several new subdivisions were platted in areas north and west of Melbourne’s commercial district based on the tenets of the National City Beautiful Movement. Indian River Bluff and Country Club Colony were some of the subdivisions that were designed by incorporating curvilinear streets and irregular building lots to produce “more interesting building sites”⁶.

After World War II, Melbourne experienced dramatic growth with the development of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) facilities in Cape Canaveral. In 1969, the City of Eau Gallie merged with the City of Melbourne and formed the largest city in Brevard County.

⁵ Fox, Charles Donald. The Truth about Florida, pages 10-11

⁶ Olausen, Stephen, page 19

V. Architectural Significance

A. Property Features

The predominant architectural and site features of the property include:

- A 1.5-story main house
- A Jerkin head roof with pressed metal surfacing
- Triple Jerkin head dormers
- Front and rear porches
- Double-hung sash windows operated by pulleys and weights
- A brick chimney on the west elevation

B. Building Placement/Orientation

The primary building is setback approximately 45 feet from the public street and roughly centered in the rectangular lot. The main entrance and the primary façade of the building are oriented toward Palmetto Avenue.

C. Building Form and Architecture

The architectural style of the structure is Framed Vernacular. According to the Florida Master Site File (ID #BR01318):

Frame Vernacular, the prevalent style of residential architecture in Florida, refers to the common wood frame construction technique employed by lay or self-taught builders. Before the Civil War, residents relied upon local materials and their own methods and designs to construct buildings. The Industrial Revolution permitted standardization of building materials and parts and exerted a pervasive influence over vernacular house designs. Popular magazines helped to make architectural trends universal throughout the country. The railroad provided cheap and efficient transportation for manufactured building materials. Ultimately, individual builders had access to a myriad of finished architectural products from which to create their own designs.

Frame Vernacular houses are typically one or two stories in height, with wood balloon frame structural systems and brick pier foundations. Plans are usually rectangular, though L-shaped plans were often used to maximize cross-ventilation. Gable or hip roofs usually have steep pitches, which accommodate attic space. Horizontal drop siding and weatherboard are the most common exterior wall surface materials. Wood shingles were often used to cover the roofs, but they have nearly always been replaced by composition shingles. Porches, most commonly simple entrance or end porches are common features of the style. Fenestration is regular, but not always symmetrical. Windows are generally double-hung sash with multi-pane glazing and doors contain recessed wood panels. Exterior decoration is sparse and limited to ornamental woodwork.

Figure 8: Main (North) Façade

Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

The north side of the structure faces the street and has the primary entrance at the center of the structure. This façade highlights the triple Jerkin head dormers along the front with the Jerkin head roof. The enclosure of the front porch is an apparent modification from the street. The porch also has a Jerkin head roof.

Figure 9: Close Up of Jerkin Head Dormers (Main Façade)



Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

Figure 10: Corner Entrance



Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

Figure 11: South Façade (Rear Façade)

Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

The south façade is the rear of the structure and highlights the Jerkin head dormer and the three upper windows. The enclosure of the rear porch on the left and addition of the mudroom on the right is also visible.

Figure 12: Jerkin Head Dormer and Windows (Rear Façade)

Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

Figure 13: West Side of the Building



Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

An original brick fireplace is located on the west side of the structure. The fenestration consists of double-hung sash windows.

D. Interior

The interior of the structure has been preserved and restored with many of the original details. The flooring in the structure is original oak on the main floor with original heart pine in the kitchen, downstairs hallway, the stairs and all rooms on the second floor. The heart pine flooring in the kitchen is currently covered with vinyl parquet flooring, but could be removed in the future. The main room features a poured concrete mantel with a masonry surround and hearth. The front door and French doors in the dining room are original to the structure. The original interior doors throughout the house feature the original hardware. The original doorbell, the upstairs tub and lighting fixtures are being stored for restoration in the future. The original plaster wall surfacing was replaced with modern drywall when the electrical wiring was replaced.

Figure 14: Interior Details



Source: Littlejohn Engineering Associates, September 2012

VI. Eligibility Criteria

Article XI of the Melbourne City Code, “Preservation of Historic Resources and Districts, Archaeological Sites and Zones,” contains the criteria for designating historical properties on the Melbourne Register of Historical Places. The following is an excerpt from Section 10-229:

“...the historic preservation board shall recommend for designation as historic resources [those resources] that are significant in Melbourne’s history, architecture, archeology, and culture and possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or association...”

A. Integrity Issue

Before determining the significance of a property nominated for designation, the property must be reviewed for “integrity”, that is, the property must maintain its original character despite any alterations that may have occurred over time.

In the case of the 509 Palmetto Avenue property, it is clear that additions and alterations have been made over the course of time. The following are considerations that can be objectively evaluated:

- Has the general form (plan shape) been maintained?
- Have the alterations/additions been made during a period of significance, whereby those alterations have been a part of the evolving history of the house?
- Do the window openings maintain their original dimensions, even though the window type may be different from the original configuration?
- Are the original roof slopes maintained?
- Are the original construction materials still evident?
- Is the original character of the resource, dating from its initial construction period, still apparent even though additions and alterations may have occurred?
- Do the major alterations/additions affect a major elevation?

The minor alteration to the exterior was the addition of the mudroom at the rear of the main house and the enclosure of the front and rear porches. There were some alterations done inside the main structure, which have not had an effect on the exterior of the house.

Despite the alterations, the structure still maintains its Frame Vernacular style characteristics, including its construction materials, basic roof-form and plan, window apertures and verticality. “It is significant for its association with the development of Melbourne's residential area during the Florida Period of Expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”

Therefore, the 509 Palmetto Avenue property meets the “test” for the retention of sufficient integrity.

Figure 15: Historic Photo

Source: Florida Master Site File #BR01318, 1991

B. Designation Criteria

The 509 Palmetto Avenue property is significant in Melbourne's history and architecture; possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship; and meets the following criteria contained in Section 10-229 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

Recognizes the quality of design and construction, and embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architecture type, period, style and method of construction.

C. Recommendation

LEA/Staff proposes that the City of Melbourne's Historic Preservation Board recommend to the City Council the listing of the 509 Palmetto Avenue property in the Melbourne Register of Historic Places.

VII. Planning Context

The historic designation is a tool for a community to retain its physical integrity. Many of the historic structures that have made a significant contribution to the history of the community have been destroyed.

The designation of the 509 Palmetto Avenue property will provide protection in the future from its subsequent owners from inaccurate or unsympathetic alterations and unnecessary demolition to assure the preservation of the character and uniqueness of the property. The designation may also serve as an “object lesson” to others who may consider the designation of their historic properties.

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