
RESIDENCE at 8238 NE 9th Avenue

And adjoining lot at 8220 NE 9th Avenue

Designation Report



Front Elevation

(photo by property owner, c. 2000)

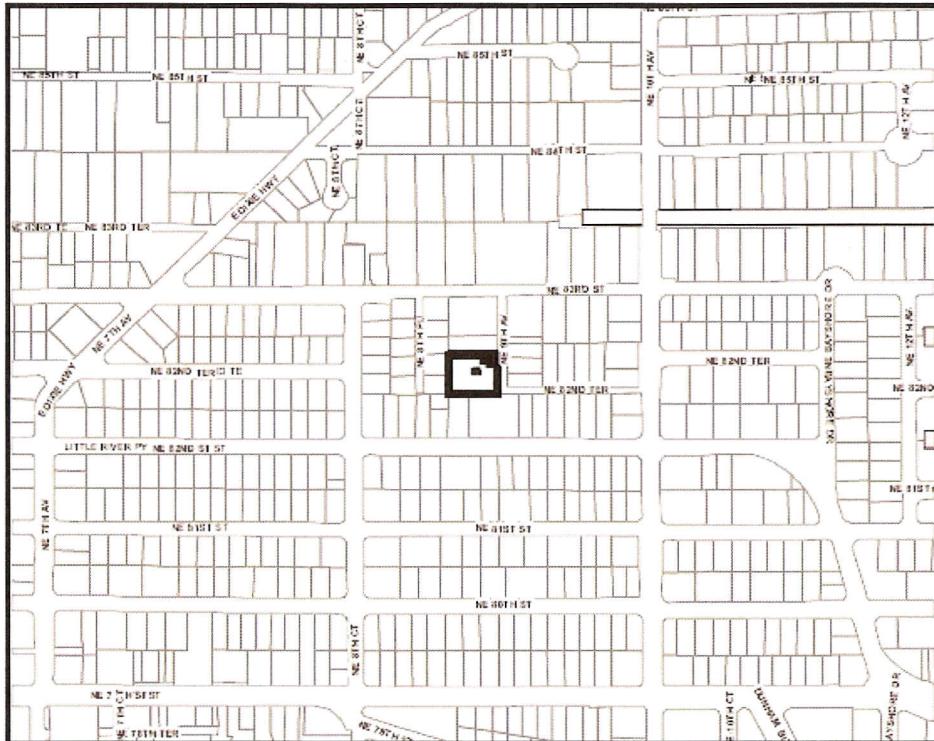
December 1, 2009

Historic and Environmental Preservation Board



City of Miami

8238 NE 9 AV & 8220 NE 9 AV



Site Plan

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|----|
| I. | GENERAL INFORMATION | 4 |
| II. | PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE | 5 |
| III. | DESCRIPTION | 8 |
| IV. | APPLICATION OF CRITERIA | 8 |
| V. | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 9 |
| VI. | PHOTOGRAPHS | 10 |

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

8238 NE 9th Avenue

Current Name:

8238 NE 9th Avenue, 8220 NE 9th Avenue

Date of Construction:

ca. 1925

Location:

8238 NE 9th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33138

Present Owner:

Mauricio Raponi & Alejandra Daneri
8238 NE 9th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33138

Present Use:

Residence

Zoning

R-1 Single Family Residence

Folio No.

01-3207-001-0030

Boundary (Legal) Description

Lots D and E, Griffing's Second Amended Plat of Biscayne Heights Subdivision Lot 19, as recorded in Plat Book 3 at page 189 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Setting

The residence and the adjacent lot to the south are located at the northwest corner of NE 82nd Terrace and NE 9th Avenue, in an area historically known as the Little River neighborhood. The residence occupies a half-acre lot with three ancillary structures: a wishing well, a shade porch, and a structure the owner refers to as a hand-made greenhouse. The garage and wishing well appear to have been built concurrently with the house. The shade porch and greenhouse appear to have been built later.

Integrity

The residence, garage structure, and wishing well have retained a significant amount of their original materials and detail. The exterior portion of the fireplace had been repaired sometime after 2000 when it was struck by lighting. The repair was minor and

only some of the original stones have been replaced with coral rock to match the original. There is also a small addition in the rear of the house completed sometime around 1950, but it is not visible from the public right-of-way.

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Date of Construction: c. 1925
Architect(s) and/or builder(s): Unknown

Summary Statement of Significance

This coral rock house located in the southwestern portion of the Biscayne Heights subdivision (within the larger community of the Little River) is given a date of construction of 1925 by the Miami-Dade County Property appraiser. However, judging by its character and the agricultural land use that existed in the early 20th century, it is more than likely built earlier.

Because the house occupies only a small portion of the two lots that comprise the property, it seems very small, but the detail of the exterior belies its humble size. This residence is constructed entirely of random-coursed coral rock and is one story in height. The end bay on the front (which serves as the foyer,) is filled with light coming from the segmental arch that contains a three panel wooden window. The definition of space is aided by a cast concrete stringcourse that runs above the windows, and below the coping of the roof. The flat roof is hidden behind a parapet where the stones are sometimes laid to extend beyond the parapet, and at the ends the rock becomes a pedestal holding a stone sphere.

While there is no jurisdiction over the interiors of the home, the fact that the original wood flooring, frescoed murals, many of the light fixtures and the scalloped entry arches still exist is testament to the care taken by its owners. The richness of the wood used in the entry arches and the fine detailing of the fireplace also suggests that the original owners made a substantial investment in this home.

The Little River Community

Generally the state grew from north to south following along the course of major railway systems (ACL/FEC), on the east and west coasts. By the 1890s, the rich agricultural lands in the south Florida region allowed pioneers to grow cash crops that formed the basis of that early economy. As the FEC railroad moved southward, a series of communities developed including Arch Creek, Biscayne, Little River, Lemon City, and Buena Vista. Customarily, these communities had their own post offices and a railroad depot where truckloads of produce were delivered for shipment.

The Little River, although never incorporated as a city or town, community predates the City of Miami (incorporated in 1896) and by some accounts was homesteaded as early as 1848. Some of the early homesteaders were men like Ephraim Sturtevant, Julia Tuttle's father, who settled in the area from the 1860s until moving back to Ohio in 1881.

Most of the structures from this era are gone, yet there are some reminders of the pioneer days such as the canal between 83rd & 84th Streets, originally dug by the Potter brothers, Richard B. and George Wells Potter. In 1874 theirs was the fourth homestead in the bay front area north of the Little River. The Potters cleared seven acres of pine land and planted sugarcane, bananas, pineapples, coconuts, oranges, limes, lemons, and vegetables.

The turn of the century changed the character of the Little River community. During the construction of the Florida East Coast Railroad, arriving in Miami in 1896, three stations served the northern communities: Biscayne station, Little River station (NE 79th Street), and the Lemon City station (NE 61st Street). By 1898, the Little River community had its first post office and its own depot (around NE 99th Street). Originally tied to the Lemon City community, it is around this time that Little River and Lemon City evolved as distinct communities. Several families settled on the coastal limestone ridge on land that originally was homesteaded by the Potter and the Barnott families.

The Little River community at the turn of the century was populated by groves and farms. There were two large nurseries in the area: the Soar Brothers Nursery and the Griffing Brothers Nursery, both supplying fruit trees to Miami and its neighboring communities. The Soar brothers bought several acres in the area in 1897. Arthur Mertlow Griffing moved to the Little River area in 1901 to establish a branch of the Griffing Brothers nursery. The original nursery was located in Macclenny, near Jacksonville, and was one of the largest nurseries in the state of Florida.

The Griffing Brothers n nursery comprised nine acres of land above the Little River to the west (records state that it was near the Little River Depot) and an additional twenty acres with roughly 50,000 trees to the east. The nursery contained citrus trees, grapefruits, limes, lemons, and oranges. Griffing also experimented with rose culture and Australian Pines.

The Griffing home was located on NE 10th Avenue and 84th Street. In 1910, Arthur M. Griffing subdivided the acreage near his home as Biscayne Heights. The property located at 8238 NE 9th Avenue is located in the southwest corner of the Biscayne Heights subdivision. Mr. Griffing is better known for his later sub-development: the present-day Village of Biscayne Park.

The Remnants of the Groves

Although the original occupant of this house remains unknown, family, the Theobald family owned it from 1936 until 2004, when the estate was purchased by the present owners. The present owner of the residence claims that the Theobald family bought the home from the original architect who built the house and resided in the structure. While little remains of the pioneer lives, what is clear is that the homesteaders planted significant acreage before its transformation into home sites. The coral rock home at 8238 NE 9th Street is nestled on a small, quiet street, but has the appearance of a palatial estate because of its acreage. The amount of land associated with it and the series of mature trees that are planted in a row leads to the conclusion that at one time this was an orchard.

What is equally significant is the amazing degree of original materials, windows, hardware, and the retention of the auxiliary buildings that have truly personalized this property over time. The survival of the coral rock house at 8238 NE 9th Avenue is an anomaly, a survivor despite the burgeoning pressures of development, increases in taxes and insurance.

III. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Description

The building is an example of vernacular construction.¹ It is a single-story structure constructed from coral rock which may have been quarried on-site. The residence faces NE 9th Avenue and is comprised of three bays. The central bay, which projects outward from the main façade, is an enclosed entry porch that is slightly smaller in height than the remaining portion of the structure. The porch's roof is flat and decorated with tile coping. The entrance of the building is deemphasized; its door is placed on the side of the porch (south). The prominent feature of the central protruding bay, or entrance porch, is a segmental arched tripartite window with two six-light single casements flanking a central fixed single pane window.

Other original character-defining features are present such as the wooden spindle used in the door. The single-hung, four-over-one windows are also evidence of the building's age, and many remain intact. The garage structure retains its original elements including its original wooden garage door and an original weathervane. The wishing well is also constructed of coral rock. The remarkable degree of integrity of this home is of great significance.

IV. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The residence at 8238 NE 9th Avenue has significance insofar as it relates to the historic and architectural heritage of Miami and possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The property is eligible for designation under the following criteria (as numbered in Section 23-4(a), of Chapter 23 of the City Code).

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community;
5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;
7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment

¹ Vernacular is used to describe a building tradition, rather than as a description of style.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Miami Herald. "Home a Sign of Miami's Roots." January 3, 2002.

Biscayne Park website – www.biscyaneparklf.gov/index, September 14, 2009.

Florida Lawyers Support Services, Inc., Book 22025, Page 1059.

Owner Interview

Plat Maps

ILLUSTRATIONS

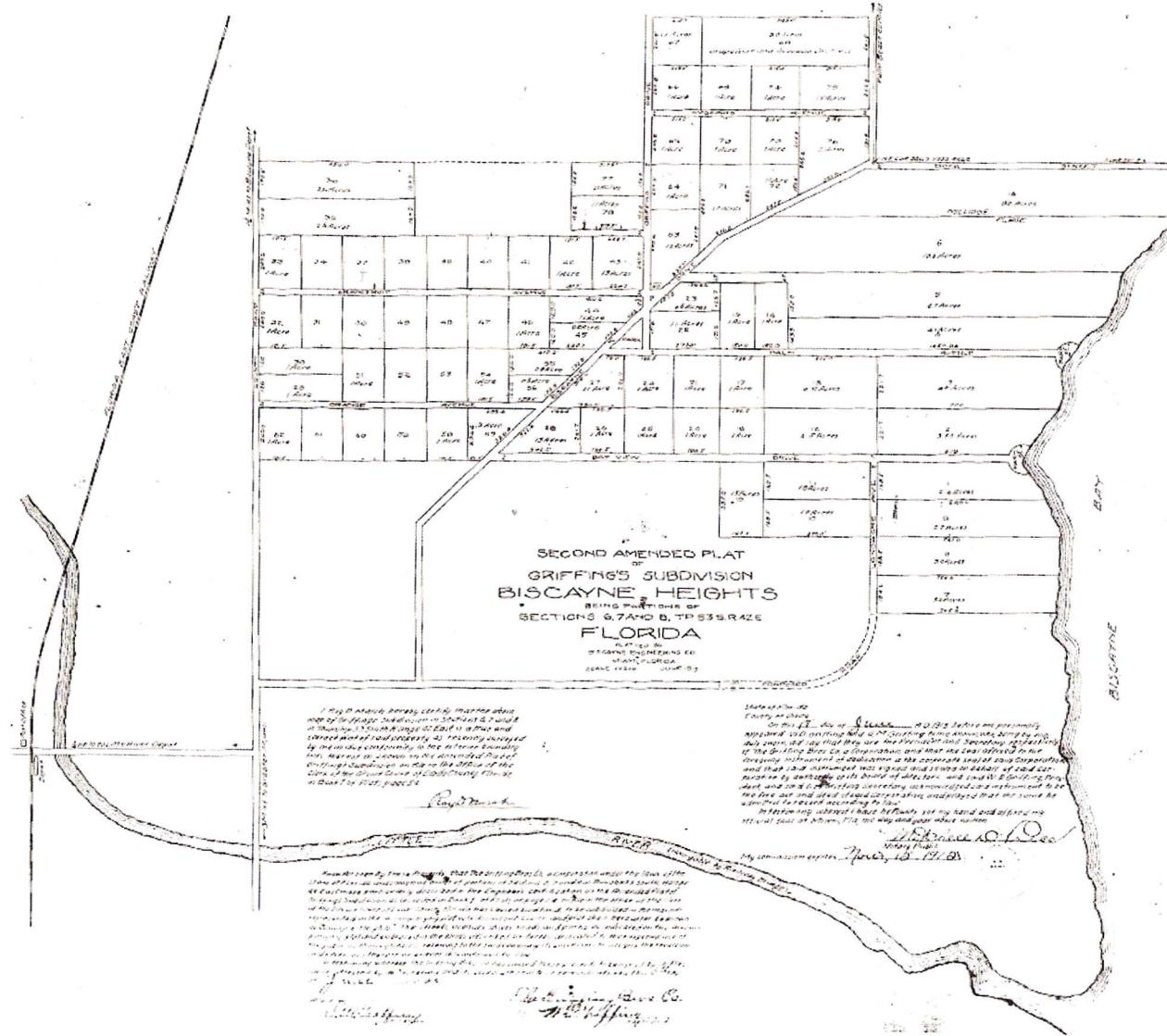


Fig. 1: Plat map of Griffings Biscayne Heights subdivision



Fig. 2: Entrance porch (detail), August 2009



Fig. 2: Entrance door, August 2009



Fig. 3: detail of original window, August 2009



Fig. 4: South elevation and garage structure, August 2009



Fig. 5: wishing well, August 2009

FOR THE BEST

Orange, Grapefruit

AND OTHER NURSERY

 TREES 

CALL ON

THE GRIFFING BROS.,

POMONA NURSERIES,

Jacksonville, Macclenny, Komoko and Miami, Florida

Local Office S W. Cor. 12th Street and Avenue C., MIAMI, FLA.

REYNOLDS & LASSETER

DEALERS IN

GROCERIES,

GRAIN,

HAY,

FEED, ETC.

ULLENDORFF BLOCK, 1004, Avenue D.

210

Illustration: advertisement for Griffing Brothers Nursery in 1904 City of Miami Directory