
HINDU TEMPLE

870 N.W. 11 STREET

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
THE HINDU TEMPLE
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton 10/18/91
For Preservation Officer Date

Passed and
Adopted on _____

Resolution No. _____

Approved by _____
Chairman, Historic and
Environmental Preservation Board

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Hindu Temple

Current Name:

Hindu Temple

Location:

870 N.W. 11th Street
Miami, Florida 33136

Present Owner:

870 N.W. 11th Street Corp.
8510 N.W. 56th Street, Suite 200
Miami, Florida 33166

Present Use:

Vacant

Zoning District:

C-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-3135-027-0920

Boundary Description:

Lots 1 and 2 of Block 11 the plat of SPRING GARDEN, as recorded in Plat Book 5 at Page 38 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

Classification:

Historic Site

HINDU TEMPLE

870 N.W. 11 STREET



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:

1920

Architect:

August Geiger

Statement of Significance:

The Hindu Temple is architecturally significant because it is one of the most unique houses in Miami. Designed in 1920 by August Geiger, a prominent local architect, the building was inspired by the set of a movie filmed on the site, and its design mixes classical and Middle Eastern influences. The Hindu Temple is distinguished by its main facade fronting on the Seybold Canal, with its two domed octagonal towers and finely detailed windows. The building is also significant for its association with two of Miami's pioneer families.

"The Jungle Trail" is said to have been the first movie filmed in Miami. Completed in 1919, the movie was partly shot in the Spring Garden subdivision, where a Hindu village was erected. One of the most elaborate buildings on the set was a temple located on the bank of an artificial lake at the end of the Seybold Canal. Constructed of impermanent materials, the building was destroyed upon completion of filming. The temple, however, had captured the imagination of the citizens of Miami, and John Seybold decided to build a less elaborate version of the building on the same site, which he owned.

John Seybold was a German immigrant who arrived in Miami in 1896. He soon established a bakery and became a prominent Miami merchant. Seybold built the Seybold Building and Arcade on N.E. 1st Street in 1925 and developed two subdivisions, including Spring Garden, in northwest Miami.

Immediately after the house was built, Seybold sold the building to Lillian and Charles O. Richardson. Richardson, an actor, moved to South Florida in 1897 and is said to have exhibited the state's first motion picture. He turned his attention to farming, however, and established a tropical preserve and guava products plant. His fruit grove was located on a tract of land which he named Musa Isle. The Richardson family owned and occupied the Hindu Temple until 1990.

The Hindu Temple was perhaps the most unusual building designed by August Geiger, one of South Florida's most outstanding early architects.

Geiger, who came to Miami in 1905 from New Haven, Connecticut, worked for Carl Fisher on various construction projects in Miami Beach and was appointed architect for the Dade County School Board. Geiger was the tenth registered architect in Florida

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Hindu Temple is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

The Hindu Temple was the home of the Charles O. Richardson family for most of its history. Richardson was an important pioneer fruit grower and processor. The Hindu Temple is also associated with John Seybold, a pioneer merchant and developer, who built the house.

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

With a movie set for its inspiration, the Hindu Temple reflects the historical development of Miami in the 1910s and its residents' fascination with exotic cultures and glamorous new industries.

6. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder.

The Hindu Temple is an excellent and unusual example of the work of August Geiger, one of Miami's prominent early architects.

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.

The Hindu Temple is one of Miami's most unique houses and embodies many design features of Middle Eastern architecture, as adapted to South Florida's environment. Particularly noteworthy are its domed octagonal towers and finely detailed windows.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

The Hindu Temple is a two-story frame and stucco building featuring a combination of classical and Middle Eastern influences. The building is located at the intersection of N.W. 8th Street Road and N.W. 11th Street and is bordered on the south by a lagoon at the end of the Seybold Canal. The building is comprised of a two-story central element with symmetrical one-story wings. The base of the building is flared and is covered with clapboards; stucco covers the remainder.

The street facade faces north and consists of an end gable roof with gable end returns on the central mass of the building. The wings are capped by cross gables. Wide, overhanging eaves provide protection. An enclosed porch with a gable roof and oolitic limestone base extends across the main section of the house and contains the main entrance.

The most elaborate side of the house faces the Seybold Canal. This waterfront facade features twin octagonal towers which rise on both sides of the two-story mass. The towers extend above the main roof and are capped with segmented domes topped with spherical finials. Brick chimneys with corbelled chimneyhoods suggest minarets.

Wood and glass doors feature an elaborate design. Windows have both flat and pointed arched heads and are wood double hung sash with six-over-one lights. The glass pattern of the windows on the south facade repeats the curvilinear line of the domes.

Major additions to the building include security bars and a metal roof over the porch on the south facade.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

The subject structure is a contributing structure. Contributing landscape features on the site include all royal palm trees.



The Hindu Temple
870 N.W. 11th Street
South and east facades from Seybold Canal

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The Hindu Temple was sold in 1990 to a group which intends to rehabilitate the building for use as a professional office. The owner has secured a variance to construct a small addition, and building plans have been approved. A condition of the zoning variance was the filing of an application for historic site designation.

Although permits have been obtained, construction has not yet begun, and the building remains vacant.

Preservation Incentives:

The Hindu Temple occupies a prominent location in the Spring Garden neighborhood and is considered a landmark in the area. Partly because of the building's historic significance, the Zoning Board approved a variance that will permit the functional reuse of the building for professional offices.

As an added incentive, the owner may wish to pursue National Register listing for the building so that he would be eligible to take advantage of the Investment Tax Credit. The City of Miami would be prepared to assist the owner in the nomination process.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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