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# THE RAMSEY RESIDENCE THE / LITTLE HAVANA HOUSE

1016 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Court

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## Designation Report



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI  
PRESERVATION OFFICER  
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE  
LITTLE HAVANA HOUSE  
AS A HISTORIC SITE

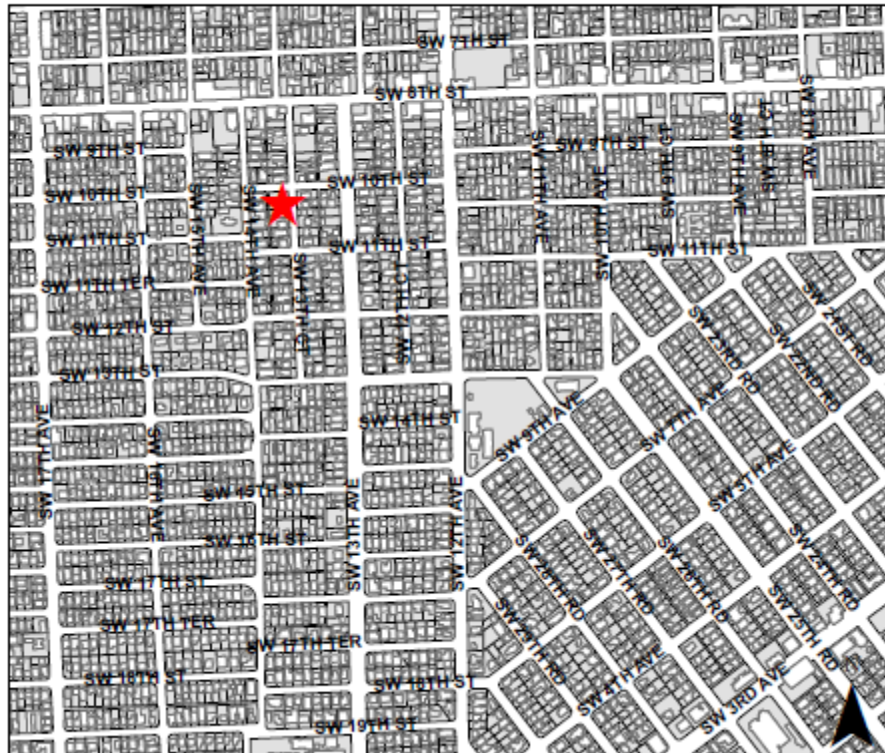
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Edited By: Historic Preservation Officer

Passed and Adopted On: March 03, 2017

Resolution Number: HEPB-R-17-018

# 1016 SW 13 COURT



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## **I- General Information**

Historic Name:

The Ramsey Residence

Current Name:

Little Havana House

Date of Construction:

1918

Location:

1016 SW 13 Ct

Present Owner:

Rene & Elvira Dago

Present Use:

Private Residential

Zoning:

T3-O

Folio No.:

01-411-101-305-30

Boundary (Legal Description):

1ST WESTMORELAND ADD PB 3-33 LOT 2 LOT SIZE 60.000 X 130 OR 19308-1950  
10 2000 1

Setting:

The home is located on SW 13 Ct, between SW 10 St and SW 11 St.

Integrity:

The house has not been subject to major alteration.

## II- Statement of Significance

Architect(s): Unknown

Constructed in 1918. The home at 1016 SW 13 Court was originally built for Archibald H. (A.H.) Ramsey and his wife, Mary C. Burtshan. A.H. Ramsey was the founder and co-owner of A.H. Ramsey & Sons, a company that was instrumental in the development of Miami, along with his sons John David (J.D.) Ramsey and DeWitt (D.W.) Ramsey. A.H. Ramsey & Sons supplied lumber to historically and architecturally significant commercial and residential buildings in Miami.

### Little Havana

When the City of Miami was incorporated in 1896, the area now known as Little Havana was a dirt path within a wilderness populated by pines and palmettos. In 1913, members of the pioneer Brickell Family developed one of Miami's first subdivisions, encompassing the area between S.W. Seventh and Eighth Avenues.<sup>1</sup>

Originally a lower-middle-class Southern and a thriving Jewish neighborhood in the 1930s, the name "Little Havana" emerged in the 1960s as the concentration of Cubans in the area grew sharply. Little Havana is the name affixed to a sprawling neighborhood lying immediately west of Downtown Miami. It stretches west from the Miami River for several miles. This sobriquet was applied to the Shenandoah and Riverside neighborhoods in the 1960s, following the beginnings of a vast influx of Cuban refugees there. Little Havana is famous as the cultural and political capital of Cuban Americans, and the neighborhood is a center of the Cuban exile community.<sup>2</sup>

Westmoreland 1st Addition was platted October 31, 1912. Westmoreland Company president was A.A. Boggs and Clifton D. Benson, Secretary. The subdivided lands are described as North 993 feet of Lot 2 of Section 11, Township 54 South – Range 41 East. An auction sale of lots was advertised in the Miami Herald March 26, 1916 for Monday, April 3 and Tuesday, April 4, 1916. Westmoreland fronts on Twentieth Street and Lawrence Drive and was

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Liebman, "Calle Ocho District Designation Report," 1993, 5

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 5

advertised as “very close to the car line.” Lots sold were 60’-65’ frontage and 130’ deep. The current boundary is S.W. 14th Avenue on the west, S.W. 11th Street on the south, S.W. 12th Avenue on the east, and the south side of S.W. 8th Street on the north.<sup>3</sup>

#### A.H. Ramsey & Sons

A.H. Ramsey & Sons, Inc. is the oldest millwork company in Miami. In 1911 Biscayne Novelty Works was founded and established by A.H. Ramsey. It would later be re-named A.H. Ramsey & Sons when his two sons D.W. and J.D. took over leadership roles. A.H. Ramsey first opened the wood mill at the intersection of South Miami Avenue and Third Street. Two years later a fire devastated that section of the city and the Biscayne Novelty Works was moved to 1151 NW First Ave<sup>4</sup>. It was not merely a planning mill but a general wood working establishment with a large number of machines for preparing and finishing lumber products. Besides general mill-work the plant manufactured railings, stairs, frames, sashes, doors, show cases and store fixtures. Biscayne Novelty Work was the first company to bring carloads of glass and sheetrock into Miami and the first to have attached screen wire to screen doors without using tacks and to have motor-driven machinery in any millwork plant in Miami<sup>5</sup>.

A.H. Ramsey & Sons furnished millwork for some of the most architecturally and historically significant residential and commercial buildings in Miami. Most notably that of Henry Flagler’s Royal Palm Hotel, built in 1897. A.H. Ramsey’s company provided the lumber for the Royal Palm Hotel. Henry Flagler built the East Coast Railroad which connected Miami to the North; and with the building of the Royal Palm Hotel, began the tourist industry so important to Miami’s economic development. The Royal Palm was torn down in 1930 due to damage from the 1926 hurricane.

Other significant buildings for which A.H. Ramsey & Sons provided the lumber and interior wood fittings are:

*The Residence of B.F. Tobin home at Buena Vista*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>4</sup> Harry Gardner Cutler, History of Florida: Past & Present, Historical and Biographical, Volume 2 (Chicago & New York: The Lewis Publishing Company), 140

<sup>5</sup> “Millwork Business Here 25 Years Old,” *The Miami Herald*, December 1, 1935, 4

B.F. Tobin's winter residence was built in 1919 by W.C. Garmo<sup>6</sup>. The building no longer exists and has never been historically designated. [Figure 1]

*The Residence of John Bindley (El Jardin/Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart)*

John Bindley's winter residence was built in 1917 by Kiehnel and Elliott. It is located at 3747 Main Highway. Also known as El Jardin it is now the Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart. The building is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and locally designated as a historic site by the City of Miami in 1983. [Figure 2]

*The Residence of John B. Semple at Coconut Grove (La Brisa/Ransom Everglades School)*

John B. Semple's winter residence was built at 3551 Main Highway by Kiehnel & Elliott in the early 1920s. The residence was bought by Ransom Everglades School in 1916. Ransom Everglades was locally designated as an historic site by the City of Miami in 2000. [Figure 3]

*The Residence of H.E. Talbot at the Beach*

H.E. Talbot's winter residence was built between 1915 and 1920 and located on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> street and West Avenue in Miami Beach<sup>7</sup>. The house no longer exists and was never historically designated. [Figure 4]

*The Moore Furniture Company*

The Moore Furniture Company was built in 1922. It is located at 4000-4040 NE 2 Ave and is an Historically Designated Site by the City of Miami. [Figure 5]

*The Central Arcade (Seybold Building)*

The Central Arcade was built in 1915 at 36 NE 1 St. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. It is not locally designated as a historic site. [Figure 6]

During the architectural boom of the 1920s A.H. Ramsey & Sons' plant was enlarged to take up almost a full city block and, at its height in the 1920s, employed 200 men. In 1931 the company entered the business of boat building and his sons, J.D. and D.W., assumed leadership roles<sup>8</sup>. J.D. became

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<sup>6</sup> "Successful Building in Stucco," *The American Architect* 116 part 2(1919): 516, accessed February 17, 2017 [https://books.google.com/books?id=ywVaAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=snippet&q=516&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=ywVaAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=snippet&q=516&f=false)

<sup>7</sup> Abraham D. Lavender, *Miami Beach in 1920, The Making of a Winter Resort* (Charleston SC, Arcadia Publishing), 115

<sup>8</sup> "Lumber Firm Growth Keeps Pace with City," *The Miami Herald*, October 29, 1931, 7



the Vice President, and D.W. became the Secretary and Treasurer of the company.<sup>9</sup> The boats produced by A.H. Ramsey & Sons were a type of speedboats known as 'The Prigg' designed by Paul Prigg<sup>10</sup>. The speedboats were well received and praised for "their symmetry and efficiency, as well as for their seaworthiness, and speed."<sup>11</sup> The magazine, *Yachting*, even noted that in the Miami Beach Yacht Club Regatta competition in 1931 that the Prigg boats made by A.H. Ramsey were the "most interesting of the whole regatta....they ran in excellent form, were exceptionally dry and showed a speed and running qualities which were very remarkable."<sup>12</sup>

By 1936 the A.H. Ramsey & Sons were celebrating twenty-five (25) years of service to South Florida and the success of a newly added wholesale department. The wholesale division, added in 1935, had a nationally advertised line of products<sup>13</sup> and allowed for the distribution of "millions of dollars' worth of building materials in its trading territory, from Vero Beach to Key West and the British West Indies."<sup>14</sup>

A.H. Ramsey and Sons, Inc. merged with Florida Trim & Door of Miami, Inc. in 1978<sup>15</sup>. The company is no longer in business.

#### The Ramsey Family in South Florida

Mr. A.H. Ramsey first moved to Florida in June, 1896 making him one of the first settlers in what is now Miami. He married Miss Mary C. Burtshan, a native of Georgia, but raised in Florida. Their children were: David, DeWitt, Susie, Letetia, Esther, Leah, Carrie, and the twins Dorcas and Doris<sup>16</sup>. The land the house is built on was part of 147 acres of public land owned by William B. Brickell, Jr. William Brickell bought the land in mind to develop the City of Miami. The Brickell family was instrumental in the early planning and development of Miami from a small homestead into a prospering city. William Brickell, Jr.'s

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 7

<sup>10</sup> "Miami Beach Breaks All Records," *Yachting*, May, 1931, accessed February 19, 2017, [http://www.lesliefield.com/races/1931\\_miami\\_beach\\_yacht\\_club\\_regatta.htm](http://www.lesliefield.com/races/1931_miami_beach_yacht_club_regatta.htm)

<sup>11</sup> "Lumber Firm Growth Keeps Pace with City" 7

<sup>12</sup> "Miami Beach Breaks All Records."

<sup>13</sup> "Millwork Business Here 25 Years Old," 4

<sup>14</sup> "Structure Aid to Builders: A.H. Ramsey & Sons to Open New Display building Monday," *The Miami Herald*, December 10, 1939, 2

<sup>15</sup> FICompanyDB. "Florida Trim & Door of Miami, Inc." Accessed February 17, 2017, <http://flcompanydb.com/company/141582/florida-trim-door-of-miami-inc.html>

<sup>16</sup> Cutler, History of Florida, 141

father was William Brickell and a co-founder with Julia Tuttle of the City of Miami.

The Ramsey family were active members in their community. Mr. Ramsey was a member of the Miami Chamber of Commerce and his business was part of a local baseball league for businesses called the Diamondball League. Their rival teams included the Courthouse, Florida Power & Light, the City of Miami and the Owja Club<sup>17</sup>. He also was a member of the Miami Kiwanis Club and active in the local Y.M.C.A chapter.<sup>18</sup>

A.H. Ramsey along with John Burtshaw built Cocoplum, the first schoolhouse in South Miami on land donated by Adam Richards, at what is now Sunset Drive and Erwin Road<sup>19</sup>. John Burtshaw, was father-in-law to Wilson A. Larkin. W.A. Larkin was the first Postmaster in South Miami. In his honor what is now the City of South Miami was originally called Larkin.

Susie Ramsey, Mr. & Mrs. Ramsey's daughter, married Robert Shelley in 1916. He was an influential citizen who contributed to the creation of an incorporation committee to encourage and manage the growth of what is now South Miami. Robert Shelley built a grocery store at 5837 Sunset Drive in 1926, now historically designated as the Shelley Building<sup>20</sup>. Robert also invented and patented a device that brought the last bottles of beer from the bottom of a cooler to the top, making them easier to reach. The Shelley Manufacturing Company used his patent to make all kinds of machines used mainly in cafeterias<sup>21</sup>.

J.D. Ramsey left his father's company in 1933 to cofound the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Miami, also known as AmeriFirst federal<sup>22</sup>. He remained director of AmeriFirst until 1973 when he retired and served in an advisory level. J.D.'s contributions to Miami extend past his professional life. He

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<sup>17</sup> "Diamondball League to Start Tomorrow," *The Miami Herald*, June 15, 1930, 10

<sup>18</sup> "A.H. Ramsey Dies in North," *The Miami Herald*, July 27, 1940, 1

<sup>19</sup> "South Miami Where Everyone Knew Your Name." April 24, 2015, <https://communitynewspapers.com/south-miami-home/where-everyone-knew-your-name/>

<sup>20</sup> Ellen J. Uguccioni, "The Shelley Building 5837 Sunset Drive South Miami, Florida: Designation Report," May 2005, accessed February 18, 2017,

[http://southmiami.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=&clip\\_id=401&meta\\_id=31863](http://southmiami.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=&clip_id=401&meta_id=31863), 7

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 7

<sup>22</sup> "John D. Ramsey, First Federal Co-founder" *The Miami Herald*, August 28, 1982, 8

was a member of the Advisory Board for the Salvation Army and along with his brother, D.W., were deacons in the First Presbyterian Church.

Mary Ramsey was a member of the Woman's Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church as well as the Westmoreland Auxiliary of the Red Cross. Mary played host for the Westmoreland Auxiliary and the Woman's Aid Society at the Ramsey Residence on multiple occasions. There they participated in charitable acts such as making comforters for donation to the Children's Home in Jacksonville<sup>23</sup>.

A.H Ramsey passed away in July 1940, shortly after his fiftieth wedding anniversary. His wife remained in the family home until her passing in June 1973. In total, the Ramsey family owned the property for fifty-five (55) years. It was sold to Nikolas Tsalikis in 1977. The Dago family purchased the property in 2000 and has lived there ever since.

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<sup>23</sup> "Mrs. Ramsey to Entertain Westmoreland Auxillary," *The Miami Herald*, January 9, 1919, 4

### **III – Description**

#### Architectural Description

Colonial Revival in style, adapted to the South Florida climate. The design of the Little Havana House has an asymmetrical front façade, with a Florida room set off to the north. The house retains both the original floor plan and exterior details. Walls are stack plank style of carpentry, composed by the stacking of horizontal wood planks. The roof is hipped with asphalt shingles. All of the wood windows and doors appear to be original. On the north-side of the building is a brick chimney that rises above the roof line.

The front entrance is offset towards the south end of the front façade containing a Florida room. The roof of the Florida Room is a roof-porch that extends from the second floor. In the rear of the house is back-porch with a slanted roof. There are 46 windows; single-hung 6/6 with muntins. Each window has louvered shutters.

## IV - Application of Criteria for Designation

The Little Havana house at 1016 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Ct possesses quality and character through its architectural design, historical associations and development of Miami. The property is eligible for designation under the following criteria as numbered in Section 23-4(a) contained in Chapter 23 of the City Code:

- (1) *Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past;*

This house is located on property sold to A.H. Ramsey, a pioneer land owner. The land the house was built on was owned by William B. Brickell, Jr. The Brickell family was instrumental in the early planning and development of Miami from a small homestead into a prospering city. William Brickell, Jr's father was William Brickell and a co-founder with Julia Tuttle of the City of Miami.

A.H. Ramsey and his family were influential in the community. His family owned the property for fifty-seven years. He was the owner of Biscayne Novelty Works. His company provided the lumber for the construction for some of the most significant companies of the time; the Moore Furniture Company and the Central Arcade. He worked for Henry Flagler providing the lumber for Henry Flagler's Royal Palm Hotel. In the private sector Biscayne Novelty works provided the lumber for the homes of some of Miami's most influential community members; Mr. H.E. Talbot on Miami Beach, Mr. B.F. Tobin in Buena Vista, and the homes of Mr. John Bindley and Jon B. Semple.

- (3) *Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community;*

The early development of Miami from a small town to a city was shaped by the work of A.H. Ramsey's lumber business. A.H. Ramsey's company, active in Miami for sixty-four (64) years, provided the lumber for the construction and development of Miami. The business provided wood-furnishings and lumber to commercial and private buildings many of them historically and architecturally significant to Miami ,such as the Royal Palm Hotel, the Moore Furniture Company, the Seybold building, El Jardin, and La Brisa. The Ramsey Family occupied the home at 1016 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Ct for fifty-seven years, and in that time became integral to

their community; becoming deacons in the local church, active leaders in charity organizations and members of the Miami Chamber of Commerce.

*(5) Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;*

The architecture of the Little Havana house is that of Colonial Revival and is a good example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture in Miami. It utilizes techniques and construction methods to adapt to the hot tropical climate of South Florida. Unique adaptations are oriented towards the goal of cooling the house with the use of breezes. There are a multitude of large windows throughout the exterior of the structure and a roof-porch on the façade of the home as well as a full-width porch in the rear. Details such as the brick chimney, the decorative entry porch, 6/6 divided light windows, shutters, and shallow roof cornice with dentils all contribute to the house's architectural significance. The house was kept well preserved by its owners and has not suffered any alterations.

## **V - Planning Context**

The home is located on SW 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a street that is not heavily landscaped. Few other houses have large canopy trees in the front of the property. It is situated in the middle of the lot, between of SW 11<sup>th</sup> Street and SW 12<sup>th</sup> Street, with access to the driveway from SW 13<sup>th</sup> Court.

Most homes along the street are visible from the right-of-way. These properties have few canopy trees and utilize transparent fences and gates. The Little Havana House is the only property hidden from view behind a heavily landscaped front yard. The structure is set on a lot that contains a number of canopy trees that obstructs its view from the right-of-way, and is surrounded by a high, iron gate with concrete piers.

### Contributing Structures and Landscape Features

There is one contributing structure on the site, the two story residence described in the preceding text, of which all facades shall be subject to review.

Any future development at the site should also take into consideration the lush tree canopy created by the existing landscape features, both along the right-of-way and on the property. These landscape features are subject to requirements set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

## VI – Bibliography

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## VII – Photographs



Figure 1: B.F. Tobin Residence.

Abraham D. Lavender, Miami Beach in 1920, *The Making of a Winter Resort* (Charleston SC, Arcadia Publishing), p.115



Figure 2: John Bindley Residence.

Sarah E Eaton, "El Jardin 3747 Main Highway: Designation Report," December 12, 2014, 11



Figure 3: John B. Semple Residence  
 Lance Dixon, "Ransom Everglades School buys one of South Florida's most expensive properties," *The Miami Herald*, June 21, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017



Figure 4: H.E. Talbot Residence  
 Fishbaugh, W. A. (William Arthur), 1873-1950. View of the Talbot family home in Miami Beach, Florida. 1922. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/165626>, accessed 22 February 2017.





Figure 5: Moore Furniture Company

Kisa Hooks, "Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Company: Designation Report," July 2004, 14



Figure 6: Seybold building

Fishbaugh, W. A. (William Arthur), 1873-1950. Seybold building - Miami, Florida. 1926. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/41141>>, accessed 22 February 2017.

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*The Miami Herald, December 3, 1931, p. 11*

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*The Miami Herald, May 5, 1931, p. 13*







