

PETER MILLER HOTEL

1900 COLLINS AVENUE
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA



KOBI KARP ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN, INC.

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DATE: JULY 15, 2011

PETER MILLER HOTEL & APARTMENTS
MIAMI BEACH

This property consists of four separate structures: the Miller Apartment Building #1, located at the northeast corner of Liberty Avenue and 19th Street; Building #2 immediately to its east, at 229 19th Street; a two-story auxiliary building, originally a garage, behind Building #2; and finally, the Peter Miller Hotel, at the northwest corner of Collins Avenue and 19th Street. The buildings were constructed, in that sequence, between 1934 and 1936, and all were designed by the same architect, Russell T. Pancoast (see Biography following). The buildings were named for their original owner, Peter W. Miller from Ohio, who in the 1930s was living with his wife and two children, a governess and maid, in a house at 1580 Collins Avenue. Miller described himself as a “capitalist” in the 1935 Florida Census.¹

Building #1 (1915 Liberty Avenue) was the first to be issued a building permit, on July 24, 1934. The contractor listed on the Permit Card was the Witter Construction Company. A 2-story stuccoed CBS structure, it contained six apartment units and originally cost \$25,000. It is a rambling, rustic type of Mediterranean Revival style, with multi-level sloping, clay barrel-tile roofs, three wooden balconies on the second floor of the west elevation, wooden shutters, and articulated exterior stairways. Elements of brick, an unusual building material here in the 1930s, are seen in the stairways. Two chimney structures were trimmed with clay tile. The building still maintains a distinctive presence on this block of Liberty Avenue. The apartment interiors also had rustic elements such as exposed wood ceiling beams, wrought-iron light fixtures, and curved archways, as depicted in a c. 1940 advertising brochure.

¹ Ancestryplus.com

Building #2 and its rear garage structure (229-241 19th Street) followed in 1935. While Pancoast was again the architect, the general contractor was the John B. Orr Company. Both are two-story CBS structures and together cost \$30,000. The apartment building originally had two units, with private entrances, on the ground floor; between them a central doorway accessed two two-bedroom apartments upstairs. This building has similarities to Building #1, such as a second-story wooden balcony at its southeast corner, but it is less rustic and has more compact massing. Its decorative coral-rock front door surround and second-story porthole window qualify it as Med-Deco Transitional in style, although the Planning Department database classified the building as Mediterranean Revival in 1987. The building originally had a clay barrel-tile roof that survived to the 1980s, it now has a roof of red asphalt tile. Original wooden shutters have also not survived.

The rear Garage, built together with Building #2, originally had spaces for eight cars on the ground level and seven rooms for “servant accommodations” upstairs. The building was remodeled in 1980 and now consists entirely of apartment units, but it still retains the feeling and association of its original use. The second-story units are accessed from a continuous catwalk, with a wooden balustrade, wooden support posts, and exposed wooden rafters in the overhanging roof. The original clay barrel-tile gable roof is intact. There is an enclosed stairwell at each end of the building, each with a porthole window of unknown date. The ground floor, originally the garage space, now has apartments of new design that are set back in an arcade arrangement.

The Peter Miller Hotel, at 1900 Collins Avenue, was the last element to be constructed, in 1936. Again designed by Russell Pancoast, the contractor here was the O'Neill & Orr Construction Company. Of two stories and originally 62 rooms, it cost \$102,000. Its style is Med-Deco Transitional, with Deco predominating. Its most striking feature is the masterful treatment of its entryway, anchoring it to the corner of Collins Avenue: it consists simply of a

curved wall topped by an overhanging rooflet and lantern, creating the illusion of a tower. The building continues down 19th Street in sawtooth setbacks, the first one rounded to complement the corner element, and the other three squared-off to blend with the neighboring Building #2. The ground level of the first, rounded setback has always been an open porch behind plain columnar supports. The slightly-sloped rooflet that continues down this south elevation might be called a Med-Deco “eyebrow.” Original windows were casements, and the windows in the corner “tower” are separated by decorative columns. Incised “racing stripes” at the first floor and parapet are another Art Deco element.

A photograph in the c.1940 brochure shows the hotel lobby, looking eastward from the reception desk. The double front doors appear to have had a decorative grille. Inside, prominent molding around the walls and ceiling, decorated with floral bas-reliefs, divided the space into three sections. An adjoining room to the north, now occupied by retail space, was originally the hotel coffee shop. On the exterior, stone facing at the first floor level wrapped around the corner, encompassing both the hotel entry and the coffee shop.

These buildings were among the approximately 300 structures in Miami Beach that were occupied by the U.S. Army Air Forces for military use during World War II, serving as barracks, mess halls, and training centers for about 500,000 troops over several years. The Miller Apartment Buildings returned to civilian use in February 1943, and the Peter Miller Hotel on May 30, 1944.

This assemblage of buildings is especially striking in that they illustrate, one by one, the evolution of local architectural style from Mediterranean Revival to Med-Deco Transitional to Art Deco, in the course of only two years and all by the same architect, Russell Pancoast.

---Carolyn Klepser, researcher
July 14, 2011

ARCHITECT BIOGRAPHY

Russell T. Pancoast (1899-1972) was born in Moorestown, New Jersey, but grew up in Miami Beach as the grandson of pioneer John S. Collins and the son of Thomas J. Pancoast, early Miami Beach mayor and founder of the local Chamber of Commerce. Russell Pancoast studied architecture at Cornell, then returned to Miami Beach where he worked from 1925 to about 1955. Here he designed such notable buildings as the Collins Memorial Library (now the east wing of the Bass Museum), the Surf Club, the Miami Beach Woman's Club, and the Mead Building (901 Lincoln Road). His buildings range in style from Mediterranean Revival to Art Deco and Postwar Modern.

Russell Thorn Pancoast
Architect Grandson of Arthur John A. Collins, Pancoast

Fla. Pers. #13

13A

March 30, 1967

Interview with Russell Pancoast



- I: March 30, 1967, interview with Russell Pancoast, the grandson of John Collins, at his architectural office in Coconut Grove on Bayshore Drive. (pause) Well, okay then, I have to check occasionally on my electricity. I have to say for the purposes of the University, Dr. Laplame wants me to say, you know that these will be given to the University and I have a release that will clear it and if you want to they may be put in a, the tapes will be put in a closed file. Now, you were so good to me. I've talked with you twice and I have notes from the interview that I took with you years ago. I don't want to waste your time. You've been so good already.
- P: Well, the time isn't so important. I'd rather do it regular and you get what you need than worry about time. We've got all morning.
- I: I think that I have, and perhaps I don't, but I think that I have the main outlines of the stories about Mr. Collins, well first Mr. Lum, and then Mr. Collins, and then Phil and Oscar and the plantations and that whole business and if you have any sidelights they'll probably come up in that conversation. I would like to start out in the year when your father came first to Miami Beach and I did a little homework last night and I have this book of Mr. Morrisons which your father must have..
- P: It mentions Miami Beach.
- I: Yes. This book has a forward by your father and I gathered that he

2

seemed to approve of and be in favor of this book and it represented the family...

P: It's the best one that I know of beyond other things¹ as far as we know..

I: Uh, huh. Well, according to that, it says that..it says that Thomas Pancoast visited Miami Beach farm in 1911, it doesn't say the month, when Mr. Collins first mentioned the canal. According to this, as I configured, he seems to have gone home and returned with his wife when the family venture, which was Miami BeachImprovement Company, was organized and incorporated in 1912. Can we start then with your father and now you tell me-----it was two or three of you. Not only your father, but one with your uncle.

P: That's right. They had their wives.

I: Well, let's start with the first visit. In fact, let's take us back before the first visit. They were all up there in Merchantville,...

P: Merchantville, not Merchantsville.

I: Mer-chantville.

P: No, Merchantville.

I: Merchatville, no n.

P: Merca tville.

I: Mercatville. And they were living there and they were, well I know that your father was in this business connected with his--your grandfather in this...

P: Yes, in another words, my grandfather financed this business.

I: Uh, huh. And your father...

P: My father ran it under the name of Collins and Pancoast. That's the name of the firm.

Historical Postcard



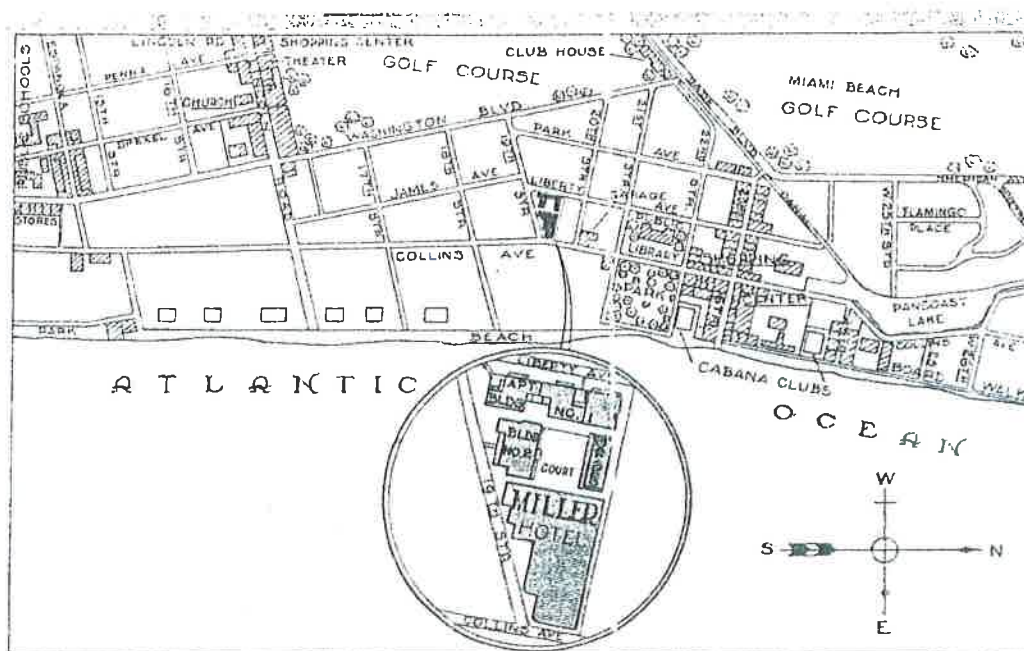
THE PETER MILLER HOTEL featuring Hospitality and Thoughtful Service, is ideally located in the center of the most important section of Miami Beach, at 18th Street and Collins Avenue. It is just one short block from the ocean and in easy walking distance of church, theatres, business houses, Lincoln Road and other shopping districts, night clubs, golf links, and places of sport and amusement.

In building the Peter Miller Hotel your comfort was our first consideration. Each room is steam heated for the few cool days we sometimes experience and, due to the well planned exposures, it is comfortable at all times. Our greatest desire is to create and maintain the satisfying sense of Home-like Comfort in an atmosphere of Quiet Refinement. Our guest finds a liberal measure of all these amenities and services he might expect in his own home . . . every convenience . . . beautiful modern surroundings . . . thoughtful courtesies . . . and yet at Considerate Rates.

Have correspondence addressed

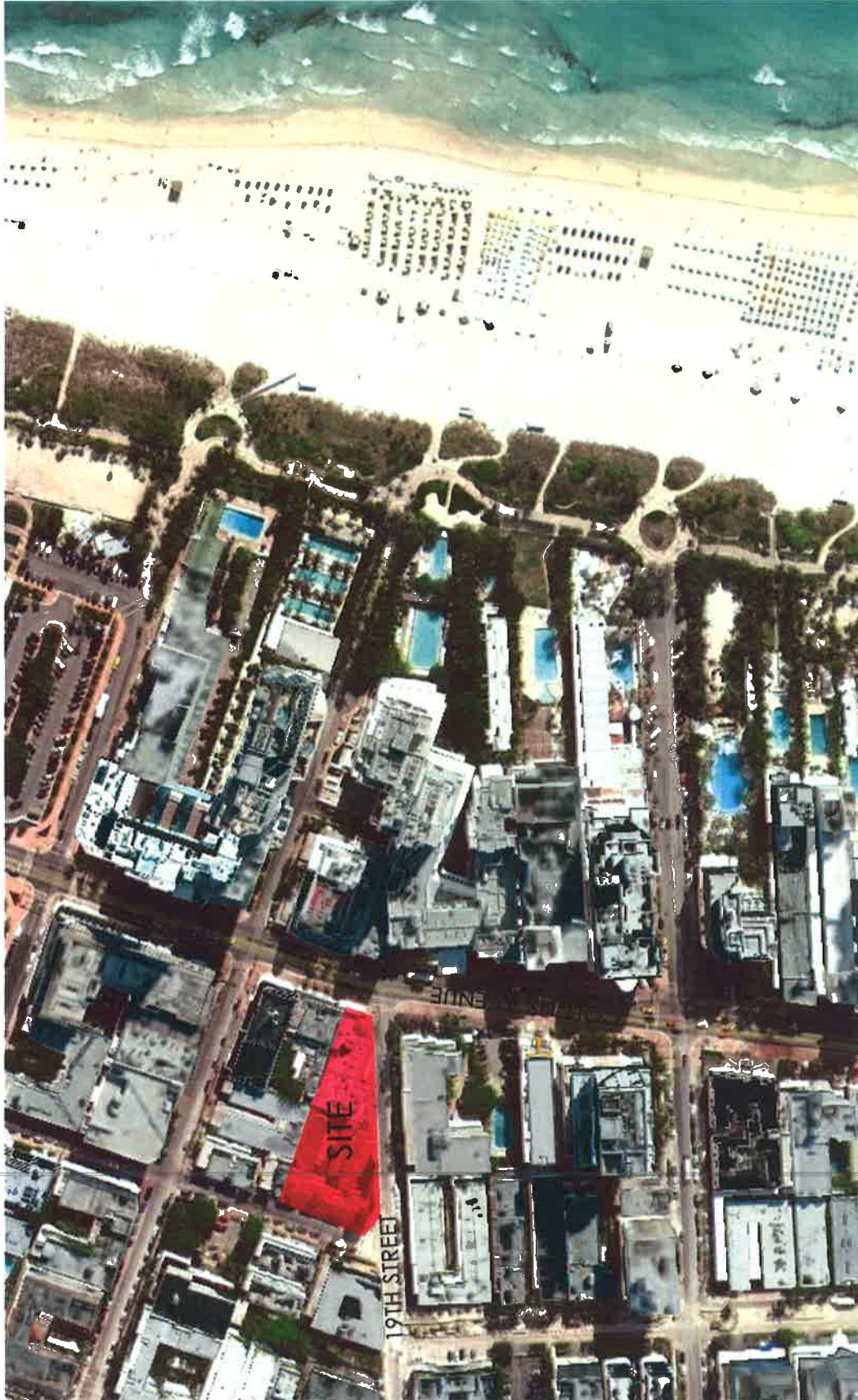
H. P. HOFFMAN, Mgr.

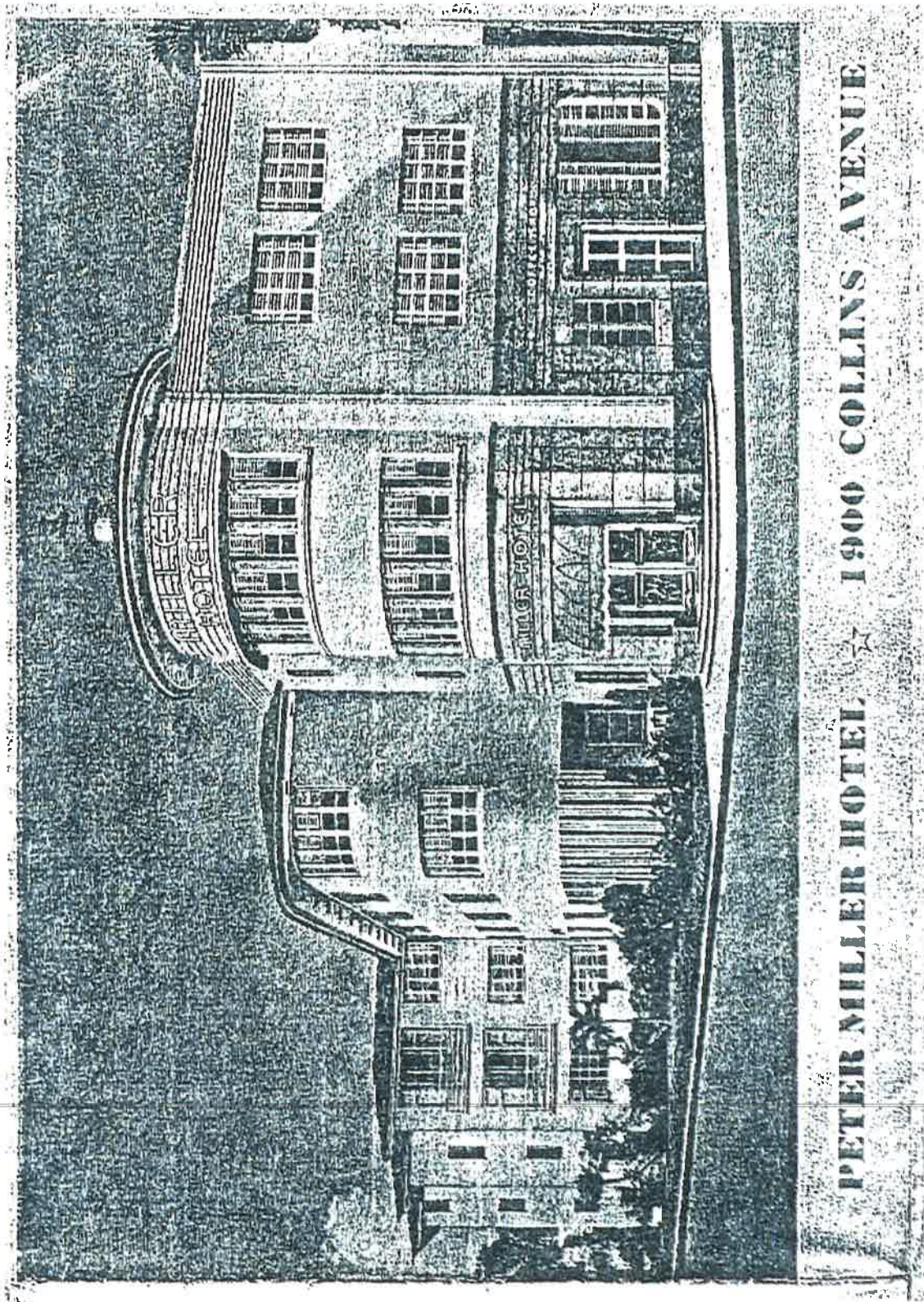
PETER MILLER HOTEL & APARTMENT
 MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA



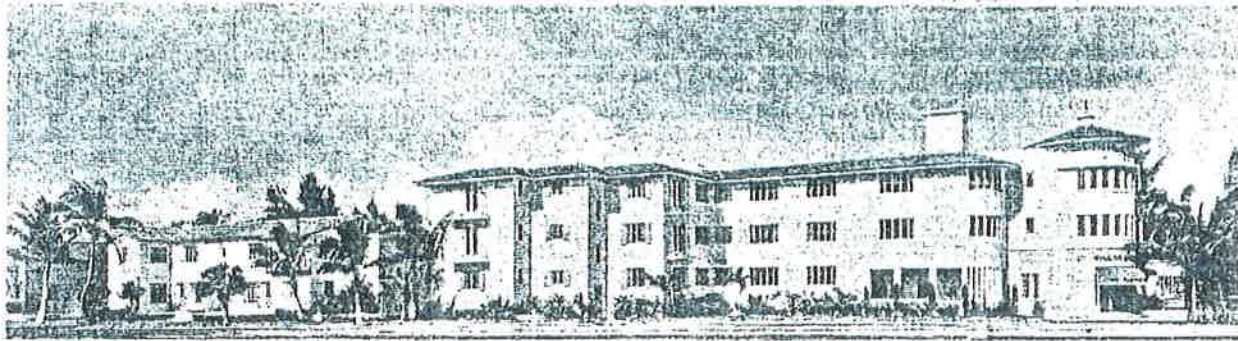
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A. No. 1

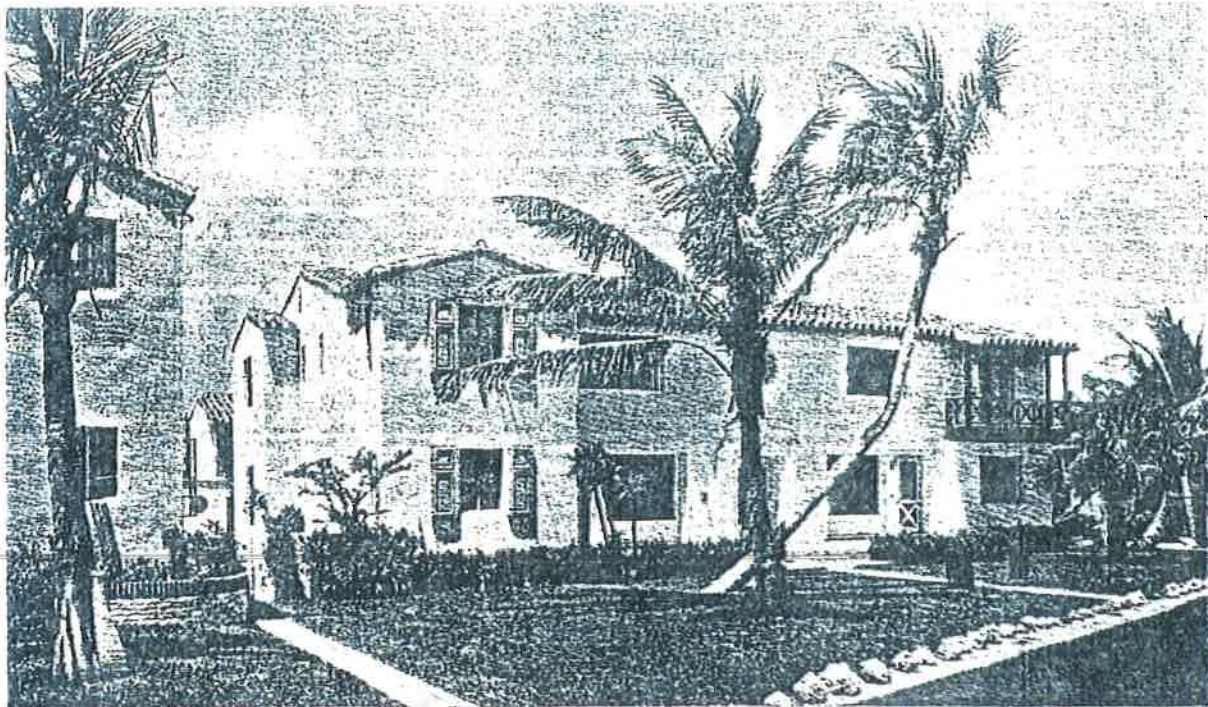
Apt. No. 2

Peter Miller Hotel

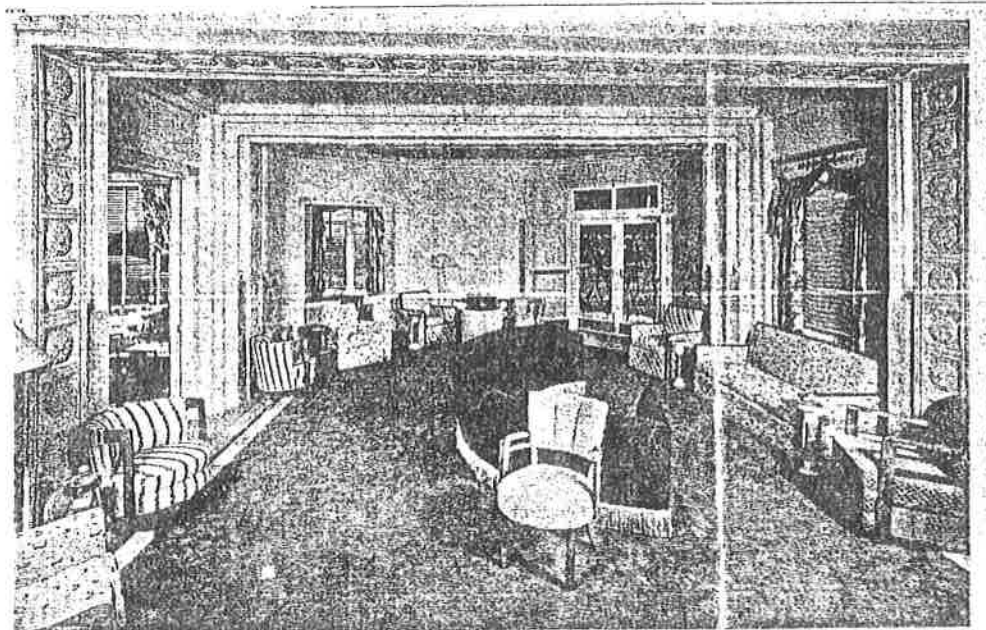
Above group picture shows the southern exposure and the relationship between the Apartment Buildings Nos. 1 and 2, and the Peter Miller Hotel.

THE MILLER APARTMENTS, are just adjoining. They are truly Spacious, Refined and Fully Equipped, and comprise one or two bedrooms, with one or two baths, large living room, full sized dining room, and a perfect kitchen. They are planned for Comfort and Beauty and are furnished in keeping with the well planned home.

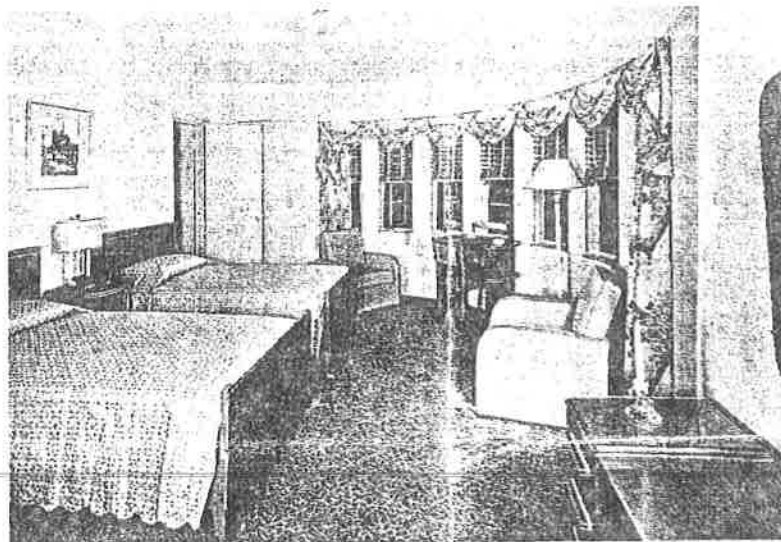
For those desiring servant accommodations we offer comfortable quarters in a separate building on the premises, above Guest Garages.



MILLER APARTMENTS--Building No. 2--Facing South on 10th Street



Lobby with Glimpse of Adjoining Dining Room at Left



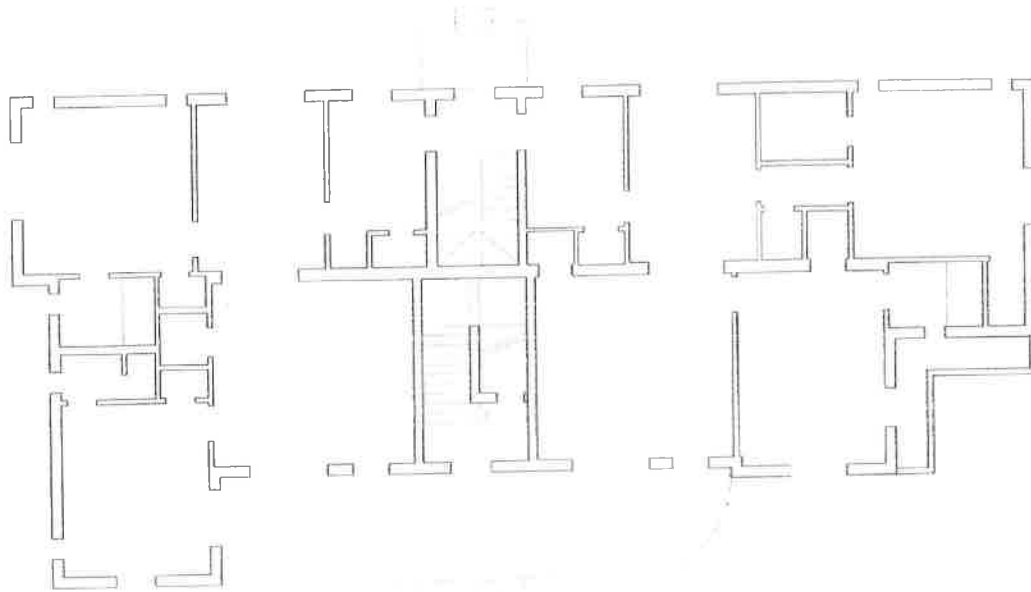
RESTFUL
 CALM prevails
 throughout the
 new and ac-
 cordingly appoint-
 ed room.

The idea of
 attractiveness
 with comfort
 is treated
 throughout.



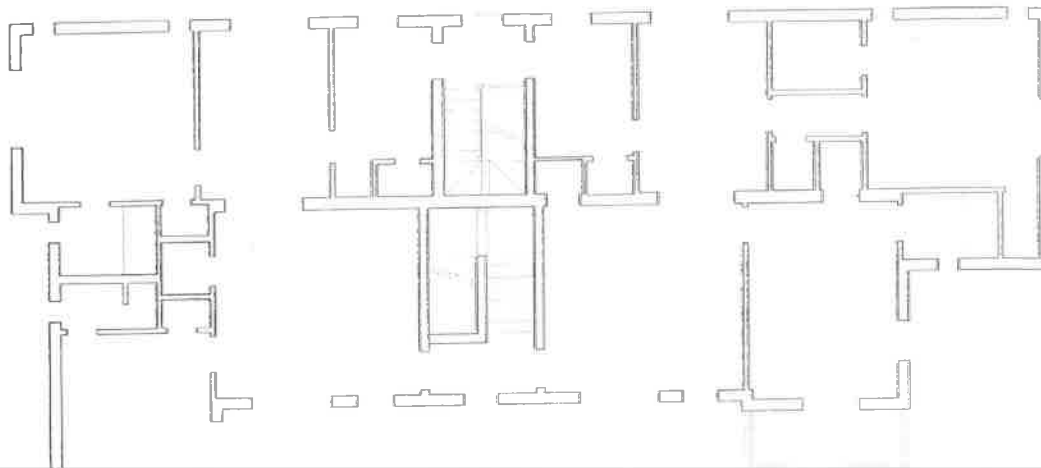


MILLER APARTMENTS—Building No. 1—Facing South and West on Liberty Avenue.

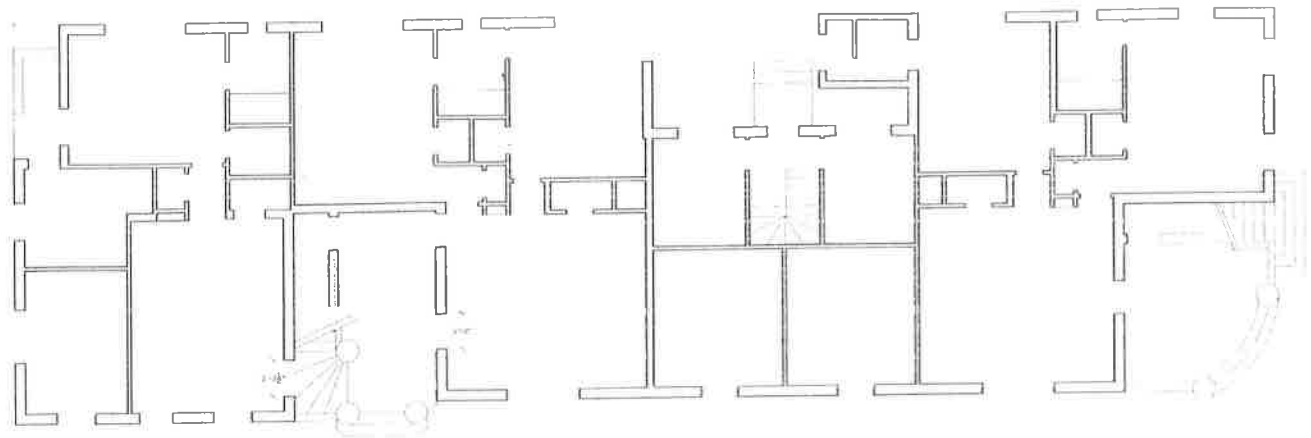


Beach Holding

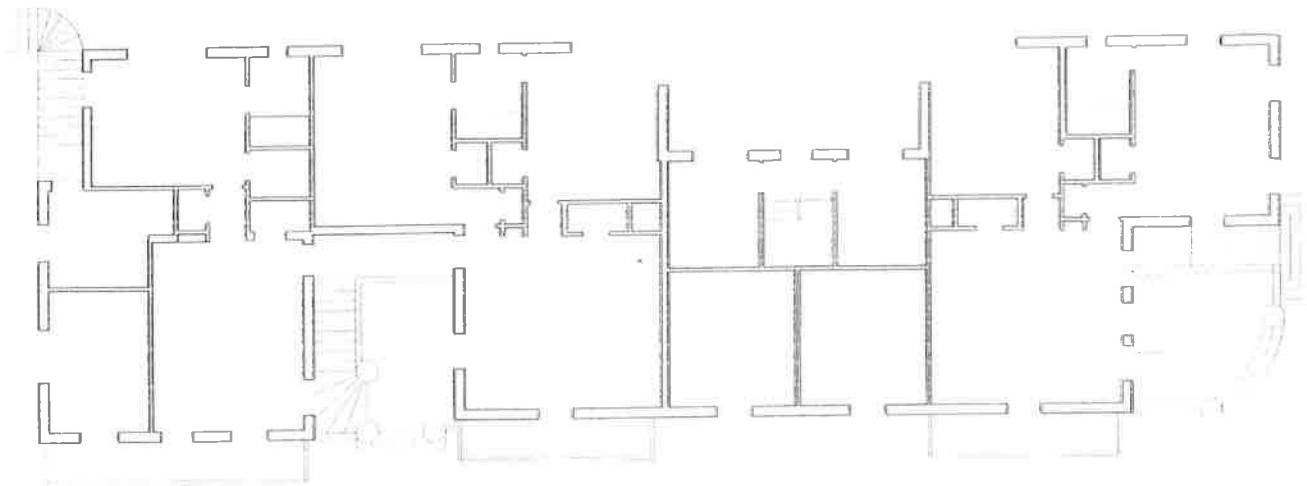
First Floor Plan, Existing. 220 19 ST.



Beach Holding . Second Floor Plan, Existing . 220 19 ST.



Beech Holding . First Floor Plan. Existing . 1901, 1907, 1915. Liberty. AV

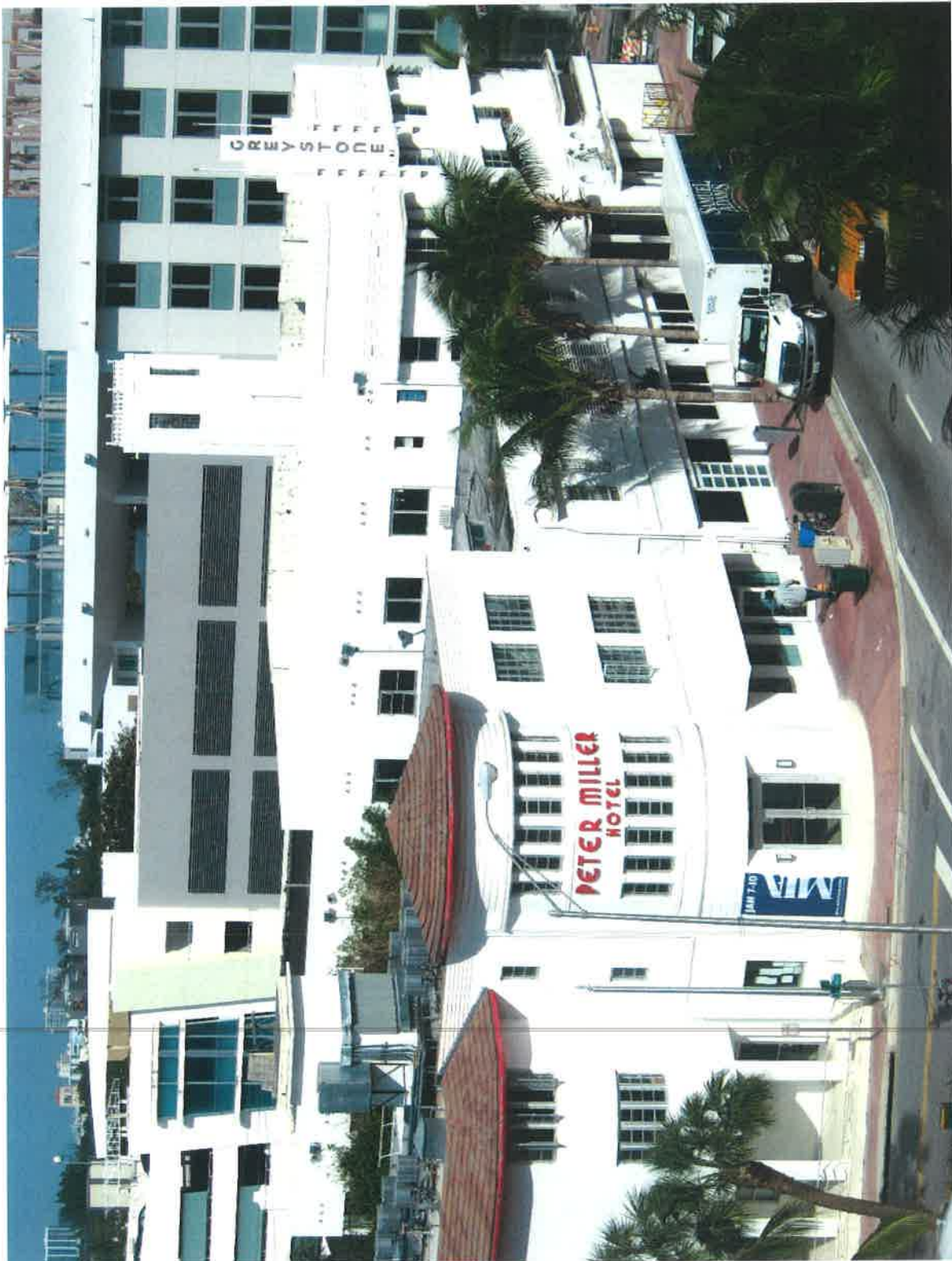


Beech Holding . Second Floor Plan. Existing . 1901, 1907, 1915. Liberty. AV

Peter Miller Hotel 1999



Peter Miller Hotel 2011





Peter Miller Hotel
Building Card

General Contractor George Fleming Construction Co. 3232-03430
MOVING HOUSE FROM 19th STREET TO 18th STREET AND ADDITION OF 1 ROOM.
SPECIAL PERMISSION OF CITY COUNCIL JULY 25, 1939

Front 50 Depth 40 Height 17 Stories 17 Use residence

Type of construction frame Cost \$3,000.00 Foundation reinf. conc. Roof

Plumbing Contractor Fixit System Permit #7520 Address Date

No. fixtures 4 Rough approved by Date

Plumbing Contractor Address Date

No. fixtures set Final approved by Date

Sewer connection Septic tank 1 Make Date

Electrical Contractor Standard Electric Company Address permit # 4547 Date Nov. 2-1934

No. outlets 20 Heaters 1 Stoves Motors 1 Fans Temporary service

Rough approved by Receptacles 12; Meters 2 Date

Electrical Contractor Standard Electric Co permit 4919 Address Date Jan. 17-1935

No. fixtures set 5 Final approved by Date

Date of service

Alterations or repairs #12165- Addition of bath room- owner, Weesel, supt. \$ 215.00 Date Jan. 17-1939

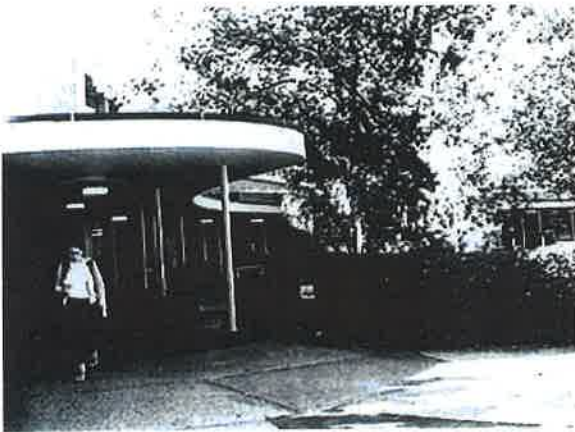
PLUMBING PERMIT #435190 - relay drain tile for septic tank - 4/8/1941

BUILDING PERMIT # 43521 Roofing: Palmer Roofing Co: \$375: Dec 8, 1953

Other works by Russell T. Pancoast



Miami Beach Library and Arts Center
(Now Bass Museum of Arts)



The Hub at The University of Florida



The Hub at The University of Florida



Lauderdale Apartments



Surf Club



Plantation Community Center
(Dedicated on City's 10th Anniversary)



Miami Beach Women's Club



The Johnson House