

WYNDHAM GARDENS

1020-1050 WASHINGTON AVENUE
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA



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MIAMI BEACH

On this block, on the west side of Washington Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets, is a cohesive group of five small buildings that offer a microcosm of Miami Beach history and architectural styles. One was a residence, one an apartment house, and three were hotels; they range from one to three stories and were built over a thirty year span in Vernacular, Art Deco, and Post-War Modern styles. All five are classified as “contributing” structures in both the National Register and locally-designated historic districts. All are associated with noteworthy residents or architects. All three hotels were among the hundreds of Miami Beach buildings that served as barracks and training facilities for military trainees during World War II.

These buildings occupy Lots 1 through 6 of Block 36 in the Ocean Beach Addition 3 Subdivision, one of the oldest sections of the City, platted in 1914. In early City Directories and some building records, their addresses are listed on Drexel Avenue, which originally converged with Washington Avenue at 10th Street. The buildings’ individual stories are described here in chronological order:

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Coral Rock House (1030 Washington Ave., Lot 5)

This is a one-story Vernacular style bungalow built of local oolitic limestone, commonly called “coral rock.” No original building records or plans remain on file, but there are several interior and exterior photographs from the 1920s in the Mosaic (Ziff Museum) collection at the Florida State Photographic Archive website. These document the building’s multi-gable roof, originally surfaced in tar paper¹; overhanging eaves with exposed wood beams; sash windows; and a front porch supported by “coral rock” pillars.

According to a State of Florida survey from the late 1970s,² the house was built before 1920 and was owned from 1920-23 by James C. Nichols, manager of the Miami Beach Bathing Casino (later known as the Roman Pools, at 23rd Street). Nichols later became president of the Nichols Motor Company and manager of the Star Motor Company of Florida. In the mid-1920s, this house became the residence of Henri & Rose Levy, who had emigrated from France to Cincinnati, then moved to Florida for their daughter’s health. Levy became a prominent developer of Surfside, North Beach and Normandy Isle; 72nd Street in Miami Beach was recently named for him. His daughter June Neubauer still resides locally.

Behind the house, at the rear of Lot 5 is a two-story apartment house built in 1951, designed in Post-War Modern style by architect Lester Avery. It is classified as a Non-contributing structure in the City’s Historic Properties Database.

¹ R. & V. Beaubien, Discovering South Beach Deco; Domani Press, 2004, pp. 192-3.

² Master Site File, Planning Dept., City of Miami Beach.

Kenmore Hotel (1050 Washington Ave., Lots 1 and 2) was built in 1936, designed by Anton Skislewicz for the Casco Corporation. Original plans are on microfilm #8237 in the Miami Beach Building Department. This is a three-story Art Deco /Streamline building; it originally had 61 hotel rooms, an Otis elevator and a restaurant and cost \$75,000. It has a U-shaped footprint opening to the south, creating a courtyard. A strong, fluted vertical panel over the front door is balanced by horizontal banding and corner windows, and a full-width eyebrow at the first story. The ground floor projects southward with a rounded contour and panels of glass block beneath the windows, with a nautical influence. In the lobby are the original terrazzo floor, stair railing, and neon light coves in the ceiling.

The Kenmore was pictured in the 1937 issue of the journal Florida Architecture,³ and on many vintage postcards. It was one of the Miami Beach military barracks hotels from 1942-43.

Anton Skislewicz (1895-1980)

Born in Yugoslavia, Skislewicz graduated from Columbia University in New York in 1929 and was certified as an architect in 1934. He was active in Miami Beach from 1936 through the early 1940s, introducing a European sensibility to local design, many of his buildings being in Streamline Moderne style. He died in Texas in 1980.

Skislewicz's Miami Beach buildings include:

Kenmore Hotel	1050 Washington Ave.
Stanton Hotel	161 Ocean Drive
Lord Balfour Hotel	350 Ocean Drive
Breakwater Hotel	940 Ocean Drive
Plymouth Hotel	2035 Park Ave.

³ Florida Room, Miami Public Library.

Hotel Taft (1044 Washington Ave., Lot 3) was designed by architect Henry Hohauser in 1936 in a richly ornamented Art Deco style. This two-story building originally had 30 rooms and cost \$35,000. Original plans were found on microfilm #8037 in the Miami Beach Building Department, and an archival postcard image and early photograph document the original design as well. The Taft's most striking feature is its ornate bas-relief stucco trim on windows, doorway, central vertical panel, and parapet. There is also horizontal banding, and an eyebrow supported by brackets over the door. The double door itself had a decorative design as well that is no longer present.

Original owner was the Essex Corporation. The Taft served as a barracks for military trainees, 1942-43.

Henry Hohauser (1889-1963)

Born in New York City and educated at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y., Hohauser came to Miami in 1932. He was a practicing architect in Miami Beach for over 20 years and was one of the most prolific. His firm designed over 300 buildings in the Miami area and he is "generally credited with being the originator of modernism in Miami Beach."⁴ His fine execution of the Art Deco style in so many beloved buildings has contributed enormously to the success of the Miami Beach Architectural District and to its listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Just a few of Hohauser's buildings in Miami Beach's historic districts are:

Park Central Hotel	640 Ocean Drive
Colony Hotel	736 Ocean Drive
Edison Hotel	960 Ocean Drive
Cardozo Hotel	1300 Ocean Drive
Collins Park Hotel	2000 Park Ave.
Essex House	1001 Collins Ave.

⁴ H. Kleinberg; Miami Beach: A History, Centennial Press, Miami, 1996, p. 129.

Davis Hotel (1020 Washington Ave., Lot 6)

The Davis was built in 1941 as a two-story hotel with 31 rooms, originally costing \$36,500. It was designed in Art Deco style by prominent Miami Beach architect Henry Hohauser (see previous Biography) for owner David Shapiro. Original plans were found on microfilm #15589 in the Miami Beach Building Department. The Davis is also documented in archival postcards and early photographs. Outstanding architectural features are the green keystone surrounding its front entrance, and a projecting “prow” of glass block, lighted from within, on the front façade. The front parapet is stepped up, with a central flagpole, and two decorative bas-relief circles. Eyebrows wrap around the corners on both stories. The first-floor front windows are shown on the plans as awning type. These were replaced by jalousies in 1960, according to the Permit Card. Other windows were originally casements.

The Davis was one of the City’s last Pre-War buildings. Shortly after its completion, from April 1942 to August 1943 the Davis served as a military barracks for World War II recruits. It was later known for many years as the Park Washington Hotel.

Bel-Aire Apartments (1036 Washington Ave., Lot 4)

In the 1920s a small wood frame bungalow occupied this site; it is seen in photographs of its neighbors, the Coral Rock House and the Hotel Taft. In July 1952, the bungalow was moved “out of city,” and the present building replaced it in 1953.

This is a two-story Post-War Modern apartment house, designed by Gerard Pitt, of the single-bar Garden style with catwalk on the south side. The catwalk, overall asymmetry, tapered fin sign, and jalousie windows are typical features of local Post-War, or “MiMo” (Miami Modern) architecture. No original plans (#41246) nor any early photographs of this building have been found. A 1990 photo in the Historic Properties Database shows vertical jalousies on the front façade, screening the catwalk from the street. By 2000 they were replaced by decorative perforated masonry, or “breezeblock,” another typical MiMo feature.

Gerard Pitt (1885-1971)

Pitt was born in New Rochelle, New York, and graduated from Columbia University in 1907. In his early career he worked in New York City with Carrere & Hastings, among others, and in Detroit. He moved to Miami in 1930 and was in partnership with George L. Pfeiffer, 1940-41. Pitt served as supervising architect for the southeast district of the Florida Hotel Commission from 1935 to 1957.⁵ In Miami Beach, he designed dozens of mostly small-scale apartment buildings in Art Deco and Miami Modern styles from 1940 to the late 1960s, when he was in his 80s. These include:

Lincoln Arms	1800 James Ave.
Mermaid Apts.	1831 James Ave.
Tropical Gardens	1600 Collins Ave.
Clifton Hotel	1343 Collins Ave.
Synagogue	1545 Jefferson Avenue
“	935 Euclid Avenue.

--Carolyn Klepser, researcher
Sept. 14, 2012

⁵ Membership application, American Institute of Architects, Coral Gables, Fla.

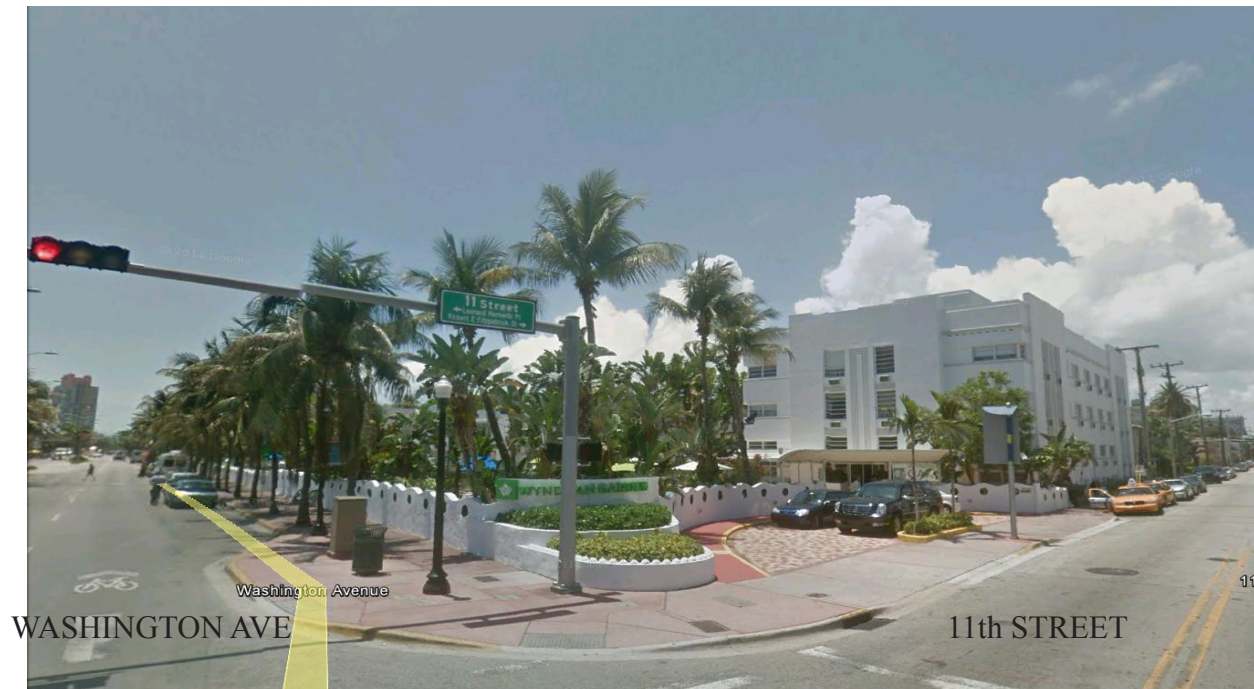
WASHINGTON AVENUE LOOKING SOUTH



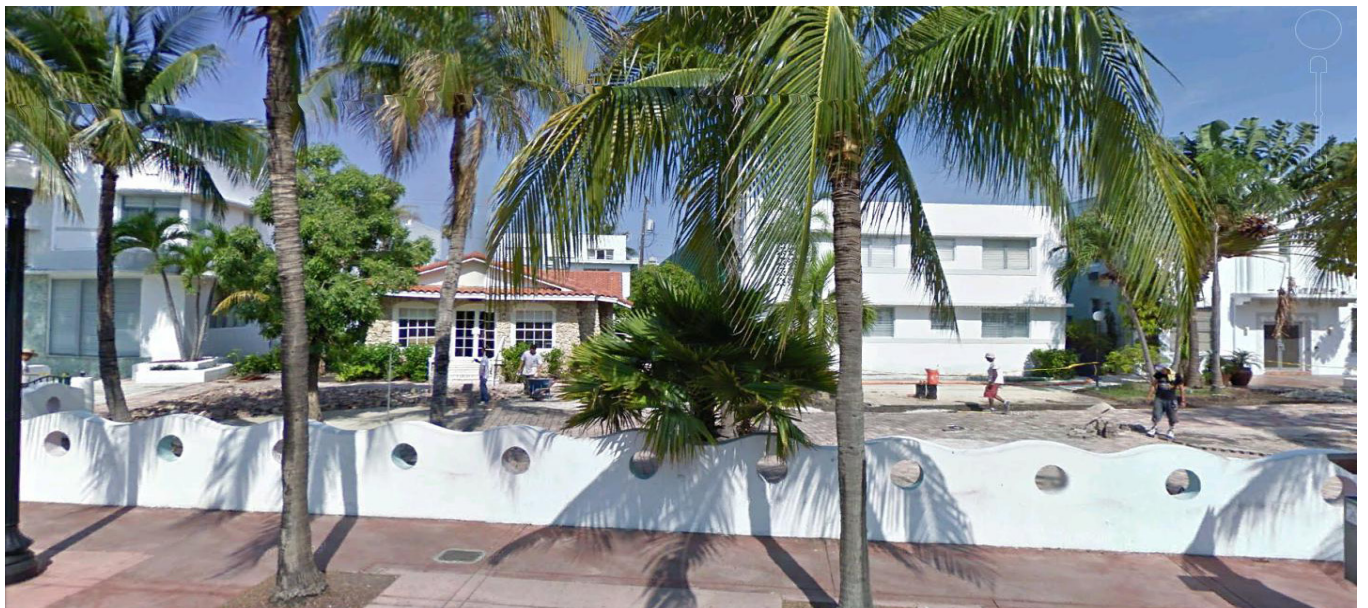
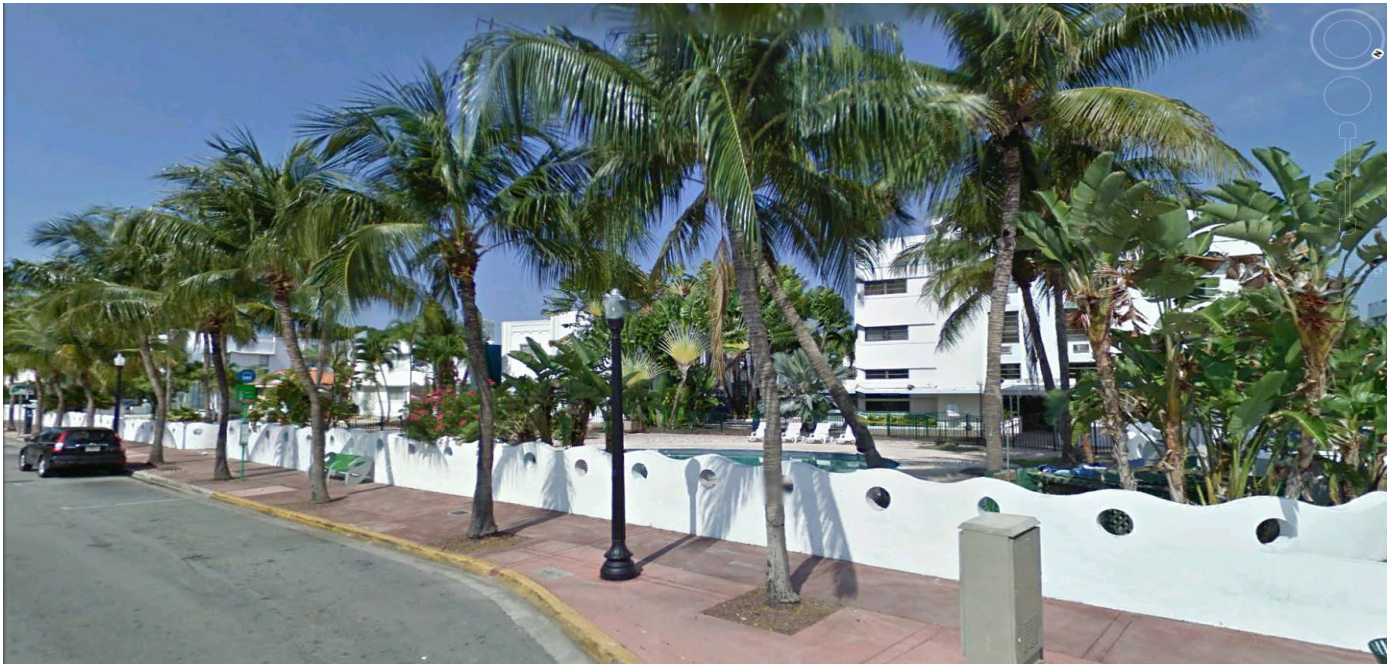
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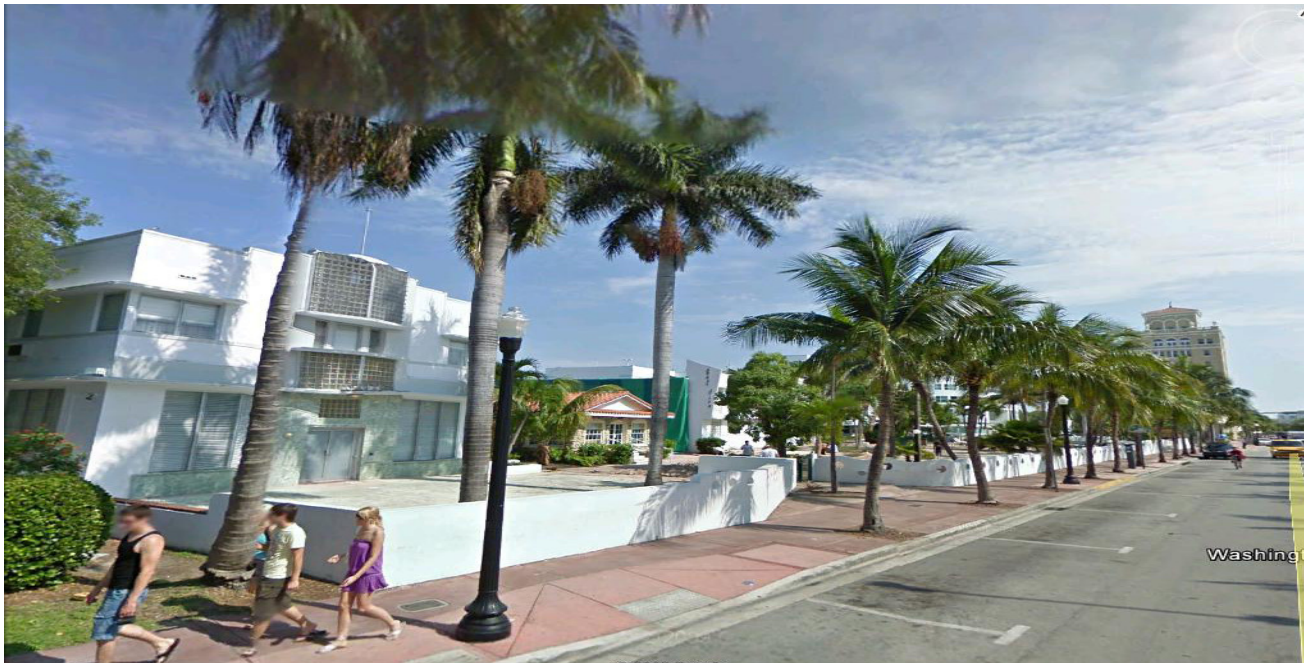


2002



Views along Washington Ave





View along 11th Street



Views of courtyard and pool





THE CORAL ROCK HOUSE



