

Everglades Club
356 Worth Avenue
Palm Beach
Palm Beach County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-226

HABS,
FLA,
50-PALM,
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

EVERGLADES CLUB

Location: 356 Worth Ave., Palm Beach, Palm Beach Co., Florida.

Present Owner: The Everglades Protective Syndicate

Present Occupant: Some apartments occupied only by members of the Syndicate.

Present Use: Social Club, and some seasonal apartment rentals from December 1 through April 30 of each year.

Significance: The design of the Everglades Club, by architect Addison Mizner in 1919, marked the beginning of an enduring trend in architecture of South Florida for Mizner's so-called Spanish style. The adaptation of this style was a logical inspiration that responded to the climate in the disposition of floor plans, the color of exterior walls, and the height, shape, and color of rooflines meant to reflect and not to compete with the palm trees against the Florida skyline.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1919.
2. Architect: Addison Mizner, of New York City, California-born, world-traveled, had studied art in Spain and sketched historic architecture throughout Europe. His reputation as an architect was considered questionable by some, the work of a genius by others, and provided him with a spectacular and adventurous career. His work as architect for the Everglades Club was in collaboration with his friend Paris Singer, leader of Palm Beach society, world-wide social figure, sewing-machine heir to a fortune in England, and friend of the internationally known dancer, Isadora Duncan.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Paris Singer was the first and only owner during his life in Palm Beach, from 1919 until 1928, when he went into bankruptcy in his Florida operations, and returned to Europe. In 1936 the Everglades Protective Syndicate, Inc., was formed to purchase the buildings and the land, from investors who followed Singer, and who in 1936 threatened to break up the land for profit. In 1946 all the members of the club, then numbering about 800, each became a shareholder in the ownership of the club for \$1000.00 per each. Present ownership is the Syndicate.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Mizner also was his own principal supplier as the war had created an embargo on certain goods, and made European labor impossible to get. Mizner, importing Georgia clay, started his own factory, called Los Manos (the hands), and clay tiles for roofing and flooring were made there for the Everglades Club. The building was therefore built of local materials and by local labor trained by Mizner. Mizner retained overall control of the work of his artisans, although employing foremen, etc.

Mizner's factory produced much ornamental cast-stone--concrete cast in forms and then antiqued and roughened to provide the impression of ancient sculpture recovered from some far-away castle. His fondness for antiqued wood caused him to develop one of the materials most frequently used in the architecture of this period--something called "pecky cypress" had been very useful for such heavy-duty purposes as ocean-front pilings and fence posts. Mizner found that this same material, taken from trees at least 125 years old, when sawn into boards revealed streaks of rotted wood on the interior, which he transformed into decorative architectural materials by cleaning out the rotted wood with a blow torch and wire brushes, and treating the remaining surface of the wood with acids and stains to produce an antique effect. Thus pecky cypress, formerly suitable for only the roughest use, became a highly desirable material for special ceiling treatment and other interior finishing in fine homes.

Addison Mizner's quick appreciation of crafts, his jack-of-all-trades approach to the work of the artisan of which he considered himself one, and his strong sense of theatre served the interests of his clients in Palm Beach, and his flourishing career there. No attempt is made to claim that Mizner alone introduced Spanish Renaissance style into Florida architecture, for the Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine, designed for Flagler by Carrère and Hastings first called upon that style in 1887. Nevertheless, Addison Mizner played a principal role in its proliferation and interpretation.

5. Original plans and construction: The original building consisted of the dining room, kitchen, and servants' quarters, the marble patio area, the apartment of Paris Singer (HABS No. FLA-227), the tower, and the cloister patio areas. Great emphasis was laid on outdoor living which cloister, courtyard and patios made possible.

Mizner is said to have designed the Everglades Club after a Spanish fortress--focussing inward, like a fortress, but unlike a fortress, with its few small windows on its outer face, having larger openings on the outer walls, inviting light and air to stream through the structure. An early phase of construction gave the club the appearance of a mission church with its bell tower, residence tower, and rounded west-end gable. Subsequent additions have surrounded the original structure and given it a rambling effect.

6. Alterations and additions: The bar and part of the Orange Garden areas were originally part of the lake. When this was filled in, in the 1930s, the bar was added (mural on wall dated 1937 attributed to Robert Bushness) sometime before 1937. The Orange Garden was originally an area with a few planted orange trees. When it was recently enclosed and paved, the orange trees were retained by putting the trees in movable planters and allowing the ceiling to open.

The Worth Avenue entrance area was added to about 1928. This includes the offices and possibly some service additions.

Since 1928 the uppermost room (tower room) has been enclosed.

In the Paris Singer Apartment, the interior of the living room is still intact, with no change except for the addition of temporary partitions, and the loss of the curtain around the wall at the ceiling.

Bathroom lights were different in 1928. The one-time canopy is not there now at the ceiling, and the cabinet on the east wall has been changed. Fine ornamental tile was emphasized here.

The spiral staircase (second level) leading to the apartment had a large column on its lower balustrade that it not there now.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

Paris Singer and Addison Mizner, builder, architect, and collaborators, were also the two principal, now historic personages involved with the construction of the Everglades Club.

Paris Singer was one of the sons of the Isaac Merritt Singer, of sewing-machine fame. He thus had funds necessary for his many adventures. Because of World War I, Singer had returned to New York from Europe. He came back in the company of the American dancer, Isadora Duncan. In 1918 they had come to Palm Beach together with the original idea of starting a winter school of dancing there for Isadora. When Duncan and Singer broke up, the dancer returned to Europe. Singer, who always used architecture and building as a comfort after all or any serious misfortune, was immediately caught up in Mizner's verbal and artistic daydreams and visions, and arranged a collaboration to restore Mizner's health and his own spirits.

Singer had, in the past, given a hospital for France, and one for England. He seized upon this opportunity to build a convalescent hospital for American officers who had become World War I casualties. This was also to reflect Singer's gratitude to a country in which he had made much of his fortune. By the time the club was finished the Armistice had brought an end to the casualties, and the structure was given the name of the Everglades Club, and turned from a very serious purpose to one of great festivity, seriously taken. After the completion of the structure, Paris Singer took charge of it, and ran the club, by personal invitation only, for many years. No one held any kind of membership. People came solely as guests, and stayed for as long as they were welcome. Paris Singer gradually dropped the control, and with the hurricane of 1928, and the Florida land boom's collapse, Singer's American enterprise went bankrupt, and he returned to Europe.

Addison Mizner, described in the WPA Guide as "artist-architect, prize-fighter and miner," was born in Benecia, California in 1872. He was the descendant of Lawrence Mizner, founder of Elizabeth, New Jersey, son of a soldier in the Mexican war who eventually became minister to the Central American States, with residence in Guatemala. His mother was described as a distant relative to Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The combination of adventure and talent produced a son who was a vagabond adventurer, only partially educated in formal academic channels, but an avid observer and explorer, who was eventually to produce, from his original drawings and sketches (Mizner felt that buildings should be made from his drawings first, and the blue-prints made afterwards), architecture of drama and beauty, verging on the theatrical.

Addison Mizner attended the Instituto Nacional in Guatemala, and became particularly interested in sixteenth-century Spanish Colonial architecture and art objects. As he grew he traveled more, and bought and sold many antiques and art objects. His travels took him to Honolulu, where he is reported to have received the Star of Kalakau and the title of an "extinct Polynesian nobleman" and called "Sir Addison" by the deposed Queen Liliuokalani "as a reward for restoring the portraits of her ancestors." [Johnston, p. 11] He went on to Australia, where he hand-colored slides for a traveling lecturer, and then returned to Europe. It is at this point that he is sometimes described as having entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. According to Orr-Cahal, Mizner did not enter the École but instead studied for some time at the University of Salamanca in history and art. [Since he did not prepare for a diploma, he is not listed in the files of the university.] He also created his own course of study by a program of sketching and collecting photographs. From trunksfull of these in later years he created the designs for houses in Palm Beach.

About 1893 Mizner returned to San Francisco where for a short time that year he worked in the architectural office of the young Willis J. Polk, accepting eventually a partnership in lieu of greater wages. He did not intend to stay long for he had been asked by his old friend Jose Maria Reina Barrios (president dictator of Guatemala and nephew of Justo Rufino Barrios, president of Guatemala, 1835-1885) to build a new palace in Guatemala City. The assassination of Jose Maria changed Mizner's plans. He then joined his younger brother, Wilson Mizner, in the Klondike gold field in 1897. Addison Mizner built a large log-cabin trading post there, as well as working on his own claim.

By 1904 Addison Mizner had returned to New York where he became known to New York society (beyond the entrée given him by his mother) through Mrs. Stuyvesant-Fish and Mrs. Herman Oelrichs, through whom he also met Stanford White. White is reported to have given Mizner some commissions thought too small for the firm of McKim, Mead & White to take on. Once more Wilson Mizner joined his career to Addison's, and for the Hotel Rand, on West 49th Street, managed by Wilson, Addison designed a notable bar in 1907. [Johnston, p. 112] As background for his growing career Addison also remodeled the Old Cow Bay Manor House at Port Washington, Long Island, and entertained there lavishly.

Overtaken by ill health (ulcers, and a bad leg from a childhood fracture) Mizner went to Florida in early 1918, where he met Paris Singer. From their combined visions they planned their convalescent hospital on Lake Worth, which was to become the Everglades Club after the armistice of World War I.

Commissions for houses came fast after Mizner's Everglades Club, and included the Stotesbury estate, "El Mirasol," followed by villas for the Vanderbilts, the Wanamakers, the Biddles, and John S. Phipps, plus dozens of other social leaders, or would-be social leaders. It was in this period that Mizner built the Rasmussen-Donahue house (HABS No. FLA-229). In 1925 Johnston reports that Mizner was working on one hundred jobs at one time. Johnston describes Mizner's building technique also as having "been compared to the medieval architect who collected their guilds of artists and artisans about them and relied heavily on the word-of-mouth and trial-and error technique."

As a result of these methods, Mizner had arrived in Florida without a license to practice. In fact, he had really been practicing without a license in New York State, but to prove his qualifications his lawyer had been able to obtain a "License of Exemption," meaning that he had already accomplished work in so satisfactory a manner before licenses were required by the state that he merited exemption from the current examination. Many years later, in 1930, only three years before his death, Addison Mizner wished to be able to practice in California, and that state would not accept his New York "License by Exemption." Unable to avoid appearing before the Florida State Board of Architecture to be examined for a proper license, Mizner came prepared with such a wealth of research and background material—stacks of his own sketches and paintings, and blueprints by his associates, and such an unparalleled verbal demonstration of his qualifications, that he was given a license on the basis that he had passed what the board chose to call a "Senior Examination," whereby he had demonstrated his ability to please both his clients and his community.

But already Mizner's fortune had turned against him. He was bankrupt, and forced to live largely on the generosity of his friends. With the boom and the hurricane behind him, he retired in Palm Beach, ill, and his only work preparing his family history. Called The Many Mizners, only the first volume appeared before his death in February 1933. It was left to others to complete the tales of the seven Mizner brothers.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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2. Secondary and published sources:

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: When Addison Mizner designed the structure that was to become the Everglades Club he is credited with having begun a trend in the architecture of South Florida, in the so-called Spanish style, based on the fact that the climate of South Florida reminded him of Spain. Though later alterations and additions to the club have not always been as sensitively executed as Mizner's original, the general character has been maintained. It remains a local landmark on Worth Avenue.
2. Condition of fabric: Having been continuously occupied, the fabric is generally in good repair.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Not recorded. The asymmetrical massing and the irregular plan of the structure expresses chiefly a three-story building, with a tower which offers an elevated fourth floor. Only the first story is described here. [For second and third-floor rooms see Paris Singer Apartment, HABS No. FLA-227.]

2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: The beige-colored stucco walls are flush with the sidewalk on Worth Avenue, with typically few openings. Decorative details and trim are of cast stone. The port cochère on the east, and the orange garden on the southwest are major additions.
4. Structural system, framing: Three structural systems have been used—structural clay tile, frame, and brick. Modern additions are of concrete block.
5. Porches, portios or courtyards, loggias: Typically Spanish are the exterior and semi-enclosed spaces, which are features in the arrangement.
 - a. North Loggia: This loggia is the central circulation for the club, as well as the apartments above. This deep loggia is divided into five bays, similar to the South Loggia opposite, except that the arched openings are true arches. The stuccoed wall above the arches is articulated by engaged pilasters rising directly above the capitals supporting the arches, with cast molded archivolts. Above the pilasters is a rectangular lintel, and the wrought-iron balcony extending across the Paris Singer apartment on the second floor.

On the north wall of this North Loggia is a modified Tudor arched doorway leading past the existing executive offices to the doorway on Worth Avenue. At the east end the loggia connects to the Cloister passage and the porte cochère. At the west end of the loggia an arched opening leads to the ballroom. The floor of the North Loggia consists of large fields of glazed tile set in concrete pavers.

The monumental stairway begins on the west wall to reach the Paris Singer apartment. Broad cast-concrete treads and 20 risers create a straight flight which leads to a mezzanine balcony. The three lowest treads are elliptical with a cast concrete column resting on the third tread. This column has a foliated capital. The balustrade is enclosed with cast concrete panels.

At the mezzanine level, a spiral concrete stair with filigreed wrought-iron balustrade continues to the upper floor. At the mezzanine level is the richly carved doorway to the Paris Singer apartment. Three large wrought-iron lanterns are suspended from the ceiling of the North Loggia.

- b. The Cloister: The easternmost open court is surrounded by an arcade known as The Cloister. Cast concrete pavers in the floor are set in an asflar pattern. In the open court or patio

cast heraldic pavers are set in uncoursed concrete walks. A free-standing arcade of five bays defined by pairs of transverse columns enclosed the court or patio on the south. Iron filigreed grilles are located between the columns. The arcade returns along the east side of the courtyard for two bays where it meets the structural wall of the building.

The north cloister provides the main circulation between the porte cochère and the original part of the club. It is divided into five bays by cast-concrete columns in relatively widely spaced pairs within the deep reveal of the arches. Except at the center bay, which is wider and higher, the columns rest on a low wide wall with a concrete coping. Capitals are cast in a foliated design. The opposite wall of this cloister has doorways to the men's and ladies' lounges.

- c. Marble Patio: This is the major exterior space which, according to photographs in Florida Architecture of Addison Mizner was formerly called the "Court of Oranges Tea Garden" or simply "The Patio." (A third patio which was built on lake fill west of the ballroom at a later date is presently called the "Orange Court" or "The Patio.") A significant change in the patio from the early photographs shows in the floor. The present green terrazzo paving is at a slightly higher level than the original random pavers in the patio, which were five risers below the floor of the loggia on the north.

The west wall of the Marble Patio contains four pairs of French doors leading to the interior and the Grand Ballroom. The doors are reached by broad cast-concrete steps, three risers high, located at this wall. The doors have ten lights each and the fan has five lights.

On the south wall of the Marble Patio is an elaborate loggia open on both sides. The central bay of the five-bay arcade is wider and higher than the end bays. The cartouche-shaped arches are supported by paired transverse arches resting on the patio pavement. The wall above the arches terminates with a molded cornice surmounted by a wrought-iron railing, except at the central arch. Here there is a small square tower with a hipped tile roof. The southernmost arcade of the loggia is now glazed, set between the transverse columns.

The Marble Patio is enclosed on the east by another arcaded loggia. The simple arches spring from rectangular piers with simple capitals. Above is the terrace of the Paris Singer Apartment. (See HABS No. FLA-227.)

The enclosure of the Marble Patio on the north is formed by the North Loggia.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: No plans are available to illustrate accurately the intricate layout of this irregular plan. However, the interior has been described in the Historic Sites Inventory by the Division of Archives, History, and Records Management of the Florida Department of State as follows:

The interior is [arranged] around the three open cloistered courtyards: the cloister garden, central court, and orange court. Flanking them are the main spaces: 1) the ballroom with its decorative cross joists with painted designs contrasting the naturally finished pecky-cypress rafters; 2) the dining room with its imported European walnut paneling (now painted) and its gabled cathedral ceiling have carved joists and exposed rafters. Above the paneling are frescoes by Achile Angeli. Massive iron chandeliers and hard wood flooring are other dining room features. 3) The foyer has extensive Spanish-Mooresque tile work on walls and floor and a cast-stone spiral staircase.

Above the Club are private apartments which are noted for their extensive use of quarry tile, leaded stained-glass windows in cusped arches and bathrooms of Spanish-Mooresque tile.

From Tarbell's Florida Architecture of Addison Mizner, his own words provide some insight: "I didn't dare tell them that it was not really a Spanish thing I was doing, . . . what I really did was to turn the Spanish inside out like a glove, making all the openings face a patio or courtyard."

2. The descriptions of individual rooms that follow omit their placement generally:
 - a. The Men's Lounge: Here floors are cast-concrete pavers and walls are painted plaster. The ceiling is pecky cypress in the lounge and plaster in the toilet room.
 - b. Ladies Lounge: Here the floors are of hardwood, walls are papered, and the ceiling is painted.
 - c. The Ballroom: This room is presently used as a lounge. Floors are of wood. Walls are treated with an ashlar pattern up to the head of the transoms of the French doors on the east and west walls set in arched openings. The walls above are rough-textured plaster, rubbed earth-tone colors. Large-scaled brackets between the arches support the exposed pecky cypress beams and decking.

In the Ballroom an orchestra alcove with painted wood ceiling is located under a balcony. The balcony is supported by painted wood brackets. The balcony balustrade contains turned wood balusters and wood panels. The fireplace on the south wall has a tile hearth with a simple cast molding around the opening.

- d. The Dining Room: The dining-room floor is of wood. The west north, and east walls are paneled up to the height of the soffit of the balcony which also opens to the adjacent ballroom. Above this paneling are frescoed walls. The north wall, for its entire length, has a painted canvas mural depicting the Spanish Armada. The high ceiling is of exposed pecky-cypress decking supported by wood joists, purlins, and heavy timber trusses. Six arched openings on the south wall lead to the Orange Garden.
- e. The Orange Garden: This large room was created on fill at the southwest of the club. The floor is brick parquet set in a concrete border. Arched openings overlook Lake Worth on the west. The retractable roof over the room is framed by pipe columns and metal joists. There is a stage on the south wall.
- f. The Bali Room: This room opening on the Orange Garden is west of the dining room. The floor is of modern rubber tile. The walls are frescoed predominantly in purples and pinks thought to represent the people of Indonesia at daily tasks. It is signed by Robert Bushnell, 1937, and was restored in 1957. The three arched openings on the west, south, and east walls are set in groined vaults in the flat plastered ceiling. On the east wall are wood doors containing turned wood spools. The fans above enclose wood rejas in a gilt rope design.
- g. The Green Room: The room is south of the ballroom. The floor is carpeted. Walls are painted plaster. Two large pecky-cypress beams divide the ceiling into three bays. The ceiling is stained green with applied ivory molding forming a diagonal design in the center of each bay. French doors and tall wood casements contain eight lights. The fireplace has a simple molded trim at the opening, with a mirror above. The hearth is tile.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Everglades Club faces north, on the west end of Worth Avenue which runs east-west between the ocean and Lake Worth. The club lies at the upper corner of the Everglades Golf Links, between Golf Road and Lake Worth, while the links extend at its wider part from South County Road on the east, to Lake Worth on the west.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Florida project to survey the historic architecture of Palm Beach and to emphasize written historical and architectural data was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and the Florida Board of Archives, History and Records Management in the summer of 1971. Under the direction of James C. Massey, then Chief of HABS, the project was carried out in the Historic American Buildings Survey field office in the Flagler Museum, Whitehall Way, Palm Beach, with Professor Woodrow W. Wilkins, AIA (University of Miami) Project Supervisor; Richard C. Crisson, Architect (University of Florida); Richard High, Student Architect (Georgia Institute of Technology); and Bryan Bowman, Student Historian (University of Florida). Under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS from March 1972, additional documentation was prepared, and archival photographs for the project were taken in April 1972 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in 1980 in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.

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EVERGLADES CLUB
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HABS No. FL-226

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