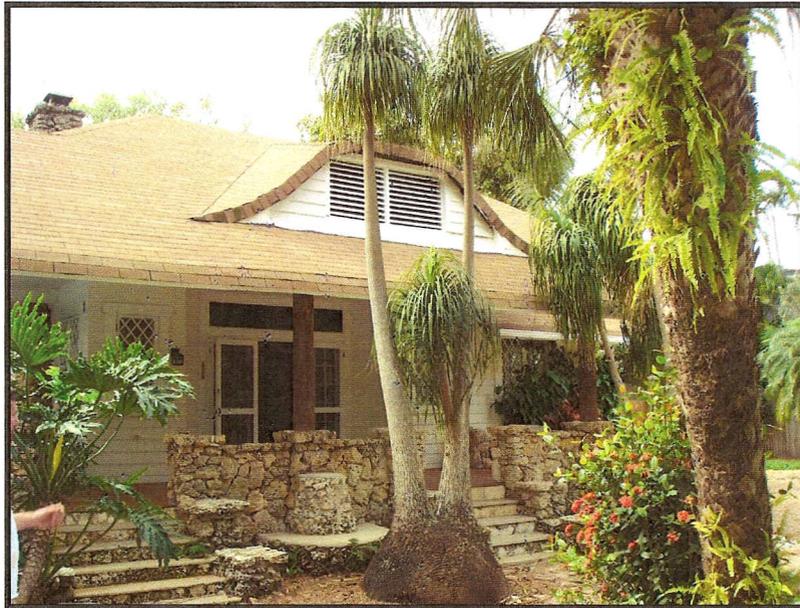


A Report to the
Historic and Environmental Preservation Board
On the Potential Designation of

3848 Little Avenue, Coconut Grove

As a Historic Site



Prepared By: Kathleen S. Kauffman
Preservation Officer
City of Miami

Passed and
Adopted On: April 3, 2007

Resolution: HEPB 2007-24

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I. General Information

Name of Resource:

The Little House in Ye Little Wood

Location:

3848 Little Avenue
Coconut Grove, FL 33133

Present Owner:

Joshua M. Goldberg
3848 Little Avenue
Coconut Grove, FL 33133

Present Use:

Private Residential

Zoning District:

Residential/Single-Family (R1), with an NCD-3 and SD 18 overlay

Tax Folio Number Per Property Appraiser:

01-4129-013-0161

Boundary Description:

Ye Little Wood Amended, Portion of Lots 18 and 19, as recorded in Plat Book 4-158, BEG SE COR OF LOT 19 W123FT NELY 135.4FT SELY NELY 136.86FT S94FT TO POB & PROP INTERTY IN & TO COMMON.

(A review of the actual Sanborn maps shows that this building is located on lot 19 only, lot 18 has a separate building on it and is not part of this consideration.)

Classification:

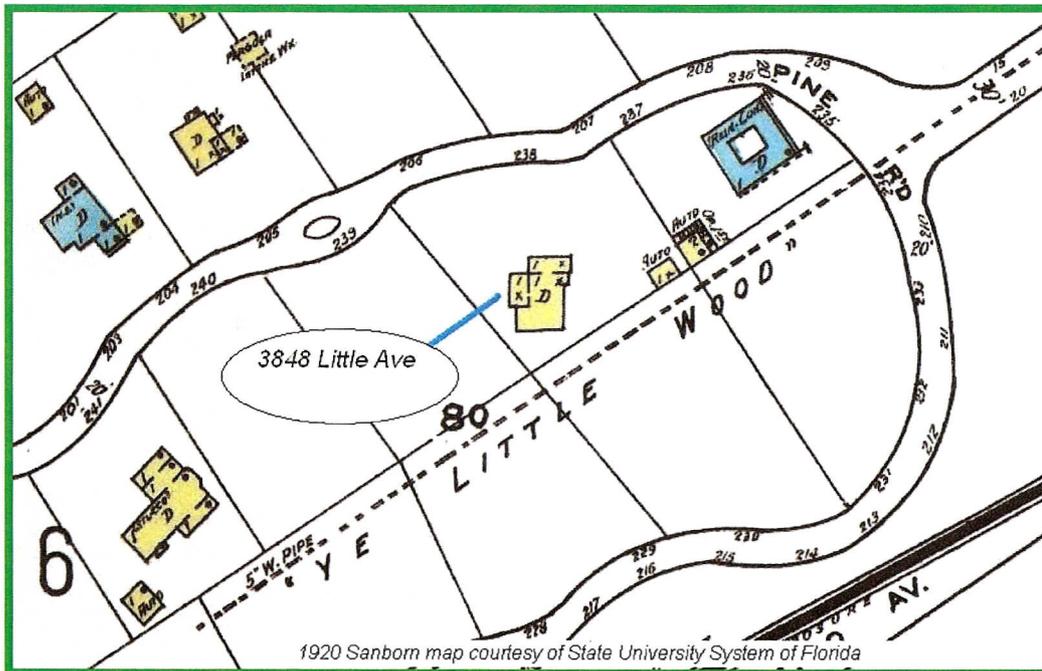
Historic Site

3848 Little Avenue, Coconut Grove, FL



Site Location

Source: Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser, 2007



Site Plan from 1920 Sanborn Map

II. Significance

Date of Construction: 1902

Architect: unknown

Builder: unknown

Statement of Significance:

The residence at 3848 Little Avenue is one of the few remaining wood vernacular structures that possess much of its original fabric and detailing. This "storybook" cottage represents a distinctive type which illustrates skillful craftsmanship and use of form.

The Village of Coconut Grove is one of Miami's oldest communities, with a history that dates back to the 1860s. In 1862, the Federal Government passed the Homestead Act, one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the United States. This Act turned over vast amounts of the public domain to private citizens. A homesteader had only to be the head of a household and at least 21 years of age to claim a 160 acre parcel of land. In return, each homesteader had to live on the land, build a home, make improvements and farm for 5 years before he was given legal possession. The first homestead in Coconut Grove was granted to a man named Edmund Beasley in 1868.

Fifteen years later, on August 13, 1883, the United States of America granted Homestead Certificate #3152 to J. William Ewan of Charleston, SC, for 160 acres which included land in Coconut Grove. J. W. Ewan was known as the "Duke of Dade" for his political influence within the growing county. On March 26, 1901, Mr. Ewan sold 10 of his acres to John Webb Little for \$3,350.00. These ten acres would become the Ye Little Wood subdivision.

John Webb Little's son, William Vogleson Little, was born on December 24, 1879 in Marshall Hall, Maryland. One of five children, William grew up in Pennsylvania and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania.

William eventually moved to South Florida and became very active in the community, starting in the early 1900s. He first served as the secretary of the Miami Real Estate Board from 1912-1913, and then from 1913-1919 he helped handle the properties of the Florida East Coast Railway with Frederick S. Morse. He served as a member of

the Coconut Grove Board of Alderman and was the mayor and municipal judge for the Town of Coconut Grove from March 1920 to March 1921.

As the Director and Vice-President of the Bank of Coconut Grove, he was closely involved with much of the first developments in and around the Coconut Grove community. He served in this capacity from 1920 through at least 1925. The Bank of Coconut Grove was a member of a group of banks with direct ties to the Farmers & Traders Bank of Atlanta, GA. Because of unfortunate business dealings by its principals, almost all of the banks in this chain were forced to close by 1926.

William Little received a survey from R.L. Stewart on April 1, 1915, which recorded Lots 1-20 of the Ye Little Wood, and was subsequently platted. The plat was amended in May of 1919 and shows the road which winds through it as a "Private Road." The First Addition to Ye Little Wood was platted in January 29, 1920 for the William V. Little Corporation. The First Addition added Lots 21-34 and created the lower half of the Ye Little Wood "Loop." This street is also noted as a "Private Drive."

The home at 3848 Little Drive was the home of William V. Little and his wife, Nellete Nelson, whom he had married in 1909. Nellete was a Shakespearean actress who used the stage name of Nellete Reed. She would often dress in costume and recite Shakespeare from the porch of their "Little House in Ye Little Wood" for all who would come by to listen. Her penchant for dramatic performance eventually led to the Coconut Grove Town Council and the Coconut Grove Woman's Club to select Mrs. Little as the queen of the great historical pageant held in 1925 to celebrate Florida's admission to the Union.

Application of Criteria for Designation:

The residence at 3848 Little Avenue has significance in the historic and architectural heritage of Miami, possesses integrity of design¹, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria (as numbered in Section 23-4(a):

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

¹ There may be some issues with the integrity of the main structure, which will be addressed in a later section called Additions/Alterations.

The first resident, William V. Little, had a significant impact on the financial and cultural development of Coconut Grove through his position with the Bank of Coconut Grove and his affiliation with numerous civic associations.

5. It embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The residence at 3848 Little Avenue is an excellent local example of a wood frame vernacular structure and retains much of the original features and materials, including the eyebrow dormer, wide wrap-around porch and clapboard siding. The high quality of craftsmanship is found in the use of oolitic limestone for the porch foundation and chimneys, the Dade County pine flooring and palm trunk porch supports.

III. Description

Setting:

The residence at 3848 Little Avenue is located on the south side of Little Avenue and is situated diagonally on the lot facing northeast. The back of the residence closely approaches the rear property line. Currently, there is a tall wooden stockade type fence around the property which totally obscures the view to the residence.

There is a pool immediately east of the property, and in the southeast corner of the property is a guest cottage, with architectural features similar to that of the main property. A review of the December 1920 Sanborn maps indicates that the main dwelling was situated as it is currently, with the rear of the property backed up to the southwest corner, facing northeast. The map also shows a smaller version of the detached garage which sits in the southeastern-most corner of the lot.

Exterior Description:

North (Main) Façade

This one story wood frame residence rests on an elevated foundation and features an off-center French door entrance with double screen doors. The roof of the wide veranda is supported by palm trunk columns, and runs the length of the main (north) façade and turns the corner at the east side of the house. The veranda is approached by two sets of steps, each with four risers. Between the two sets of

steps is a semi-circular bench made of limestone. The porch walls which define the veranda were also built with oolitic limestone. Limestone caps are evenly spaced across the top of the porch walls; some of which serve as the base for the columns made of tree trunks. The floor of the veranda has been replaced with bamboo wood planks, and the ceiling is thin beadboarding. Multiple wooden brackets support the eaves.

A diamond pane single casement window flanks each side of the entrance, with another diamond pane folding casement at the west end of the elevation.

Above the entrance is a wood overdoor, with the following phrase carved into it:

*“Ye Little House where friends may come, Ye tangled world to flee,
Ye Little nook where peace will bide, and hospitality.”*

The words are barely legible due to the wood taking on a very dark patina, indicating this panel is probably original to the structure. At the threshold there is a section of brick inlaid into the porch floor, with pine tree glazed tile accents.

The northern portion of the main dwelling and the porch are covered by a hipped gable (or jerkinhead) roof, covered with asphalt shingle. The prominent roof feature is the eyebrow dormer that has ventilation slats instead of a window.

East Façade

The northern portion of this side includes two bays of tall folding casement windows, again with diamond pattern panes. Between these windows is a random coursed coral rock chimney that extends beyond the roofline. From this side you can see that there is a double clipped gable roof, one that covers the east portion of the veranda and the other that covers the front half of the main dwelling.

Just south of the second bay of casement windows, the building jogs to the east again and then extends before extending all the way to the rear of the property. This second portion of the building is covered with a hip roof, and can be entered separately through a set of French doors with sidelights. A wide three step approach to the French doors uses the oolitic limestone material as well. This back portion of the home is covered by a hip roof.

South (rear) Façade

The house backs right up to the rear property line, and heavy landscaping and an adjoining property owner's fence did not provide easy access to view the rear façade.

There is another oolitic limestone chimney, flanked on either side by tall single casement diamond pane windows. This may be an original rear room as this chimney is partially visible in a historic tax card photo on file at the City of Miami.

West Façade

On this side of the building, the veranda does not extend around the corner from the front façade. Beyond the main roof, another clipped gable extension covers two bays of diamond paned folding casements. The second casement window is in a boxed bay which extends outward from the façade, and is covered with a simple shed roof (the shed roof is also underneath the clipped gable roof). Then the façade extends westward again and accommodates a single French door with steps leading up to it.

Towards the rear of the building, there is one diamond paned fixed window installed in a horizontal position, and the glass in the lights do not have the "wavy" effect found in historic windows, suggesting this window may have been produced to replicate the originals.

Style:

In the first few decades of the 1900s, Florida saw a building boom, particularly in the small single family house, along with the detached garage or carriage house. Magazines of the time, such as "The Ladies Home Journal," popularized certain styles by publishing designs and complete plans. Often, these styles were variations of period styles, including Tudor, chalet, and bungalow.

This building is best described as an English cottage, a subsection of the more formal Tudor style, as interpreted for the tropics with its use of indigenous materials such as limestone and Dade County pine. Typical of the period, the building also features such picturesque architectural details including diamond lights in the windows, an eyebrow dormer and prominent chimney.

The English cottage is typically asymmetrical and features sloping roofs which give the building a feeling of being built very low to the ground. Other characteristics

include prominent chimneys made of brick or stone, small dormer windows peeking out of rooflines and casement windows with leaded glass. Another distinctive subtype of some Tudor houses is the false thatched roof. This is where a composition roofing material is rolled around the eaves to suggest a thick layering of thatch, in an attempt to mimic with modern materials the picturesque roofs in rural England (McAlester, p. 356). These are all architectural elements that are exhibited in the residence at 3848 Little Avenue.

Additional Structures:

At the far southeast corner of the property is the guest cottage. According to the 1920 Sanborn map, a much smaller carriage house existed at this location. The 1924 Sanborn map (with corrections labeled as late as 1987) shows an enlarged structure labeled as a residence.

The building is clad in clapboard siding, with an asphalt shingle cross-hipped roof. The back portion of the structure has had a set of French doors installed to create an additional entrance. Fixed diamond paned windows that run vertically and horizontally are found throughout the structure. Because of the obvious enlargement to the original structure and the addition of new doors, the historical integrity of the detached garage has been compromised and would not be a contributing structure.

A covered detached carport was built by the current owner at the northwest corner of the property right at the entrance to the driveway. This carport and the swimming pool (located between the primary residence and the guest cottage) are not contributing elements to the site.

Alterations/Additions:

There are several architectural indications which suggest the southern portion of the eastern facade is a later addition to the original structure. The first indication being the way the two roofs intersect. The northerly portion of the house uses a clipped gable roof, the southern portion a hip roof. The clipped gable roof ends abruptly into the side of the hip roof. The clapboard siding that is used to cover the rear portion of the structure has less of a rough hewn look to it, indicating a wood product milled at a later date. The French doors with sidelights are a modern alteration, as are the coral rock steps, which when built did not use the coral in such a random or various sized way as was done in with the chimney or veranda.

Although some additions may eventually gain historical integrity in their own right, initial inspection of the exterior materials do not seem to indicate historic fabric, with the exception of the rear limestone chimney.

Foundation settling is occurring throughout the house, as evidenced by the uneven flooring and the breaking apart of the limestone rock veranda wall on a regular basis. This has made it necessary to continually replace the limestone rock and floorboards on the veranda.

IV. Planning Context

The planning context for the property located at 3848 Little Avenue presents two very unique and difficult issues as it relates to the designation of the property. The first is the issue of accessibility, the second is the issue of consideration for designation exclusive of neighboring historic structures.

Accessibility:

The Amended Plat of Ye Little Wood, dated May 1919, shows that the road (which is now Little Avenue) was already designated as a private road. When the first addition to Ye Little Wood was platted in August 1919, the road which is now Wood Avenue is marked as a private drive. This was before Coconut Grove was annexed by the City of Miami in September of 1925, which is why there are no papers on file with the Public Works Department deeding over the right of way responsibilities to the homeowners; it has always been a private roadway.

The Subdivision is entered from Douglas Road, and leads to Pine Avenue. An unmanned security gate, only operable by a coded keypad, prevents access to the properties. The City of Miami provides garbage pickup and essential services such as police and fire, but according to the Policies and Procedures of the Ye Little Wood Association the security gate must be kept closed at all times. Additionally, the Policies and Procedures include the following rules concerning the guard gate:

- The security gate will not be opened for real estate open houses.
- Gate cards may not be given to subcontractors, workers and service or delivery vehicle drivers.
- Arrangements must be made in advance with the Road Chairman for gate openings for any large truck or delivery vehicle.

Additionally, the parks within the subdivision are not public parks and are maintained by the Ye Little Wood Association, not by the City of Miami.

It would be difficult to defend any designation as serving the public purpose if the public does not even have access to the roadways which lead to this property.

Context of Neighborhood

The other challenging issue that faces this designation is the fact that the neighborhood as a whole seems to possess the integrity and criteria for a district, making it difficult to defend a decision to single out any one property.

The neighborhood retains the original street design, large park and lot layout as platted in 1919. There have been some large homes built on lots that are out of character with the neighborhood, but there are several homes remaining from the 1930s, 1920s and earlier. Searches of the Miami Dade County Property Appraiser records indicate the following dates of construction for the homes in Ye Little Wood:

3777 Pine Avenue – 1921	3800 Wood Avenue – 1944
3802 Little Avenue - 1916	3810 Wood Avenue - 1940
3803 Little Avenue – 1930	3811 Wood Avenue - 1921
3848 Little Avenue – 1902	3820 Wood Avenue - 1937
3814 Little Avenue – 2006	3839 Wood Avenue - 2003
3853 Little Avenue – 1936	3840 Wood Avenue - 1935
3860 Little Avenue – 1977	3845 Wood Avenue - 1923
3877 Little Avenue – 1935	3860 Wood Avenue - 1938
3891 Little Avenue – 1920	3883-87 Wood Avenue - 1940
3900 Little Avenue – 1989	3900 Wood Avenue - 1938
3910 Little Avenue – 1989	3920 Wood Avenue - 1962
3944 Little Avenue – 1938	3950 Wood Avenue - 2004
3948 Little Avenue – 1920	3960 Wood Avenue - 1994
3975 Little Avenue – 1921	3963 Wood Avenue - 1926
3976 Little Avenue – 1922	3981 Wood Avenue - 1942
	3980 Wood Avenue – 1961

Total Structures: 31

Structures built previous to the 1920s: 2 (6%)
Structures built in the 1920s: 8 (26%)
Structures built in the 1930s: 8 (26%)
Structures built in the 1940s: 4 (13%)

Structures built after 1949: 9 (29%)

(Note: There are three lots on Douglas which were part of the original plat but are not within the gated community and are not listed here.)

Since 70% of the properties within Ye Little Wood were built previous to 1950, and since the roadway and lot delineation has remained virtually unchanged since 1919, there is strong evidence that if a designation is to be considered, there is more justification to consider the subdivision as a district, and not to single out any one property.

Because this residence is not accessible to the public; and because this residence is contextually and historically linked to several other properties within the subdivision, the Historic Preservation Officer recommends Denial of the designation of the property as an individual Historic Site.

Report Prepared by: Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman
Preservation Officer
City of Miami
February 2007

Editor's Note: On April 3, 2007, the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board considered this application. Through the public hearing, testimony was given by the neighborhood which applied to the issue of access. It was noted that the automatic gates are open two days of the week for trash pick up, and that the pedestrian gate is always unlocked. As the property clearly met the requirements for significance, the Board unanimously approved a motion to designate the property as historic.

In addition, the Board requested that another Preliminary Report be prepared to consider the subdivision of Ye Little Wood as an entire district.

V. Glossary of Terms

Clapboard: The most traditional siding in many parts of America, consisting of overlapping boards laid horizontally. Each board is either tapered or grooved, for a perfect fit and to keep moisture out.

Eyebrow Dormer: A low dormer having a roof that is an upwardly curving continuation of the main roof plane.

Folding Casement Window: A pair of casements with channeled or grooved meeting stiles, hung in a frame with no central fixed mullion.

Hip Roof: A roof having sloping ends and sides meeting at an inclined projecting angle.

Jerkinhead Roof: A roof having a hipped end truncating a gable. Also called a clipped gable.

Overdoor: An ornamental painting, carving, or section of woodwork directly above a doorway.

Veranda: A large, open porch, usually roofed and partly enclosed, as by a railing, often extending across the front and sides of a house.

VI. Bibliography

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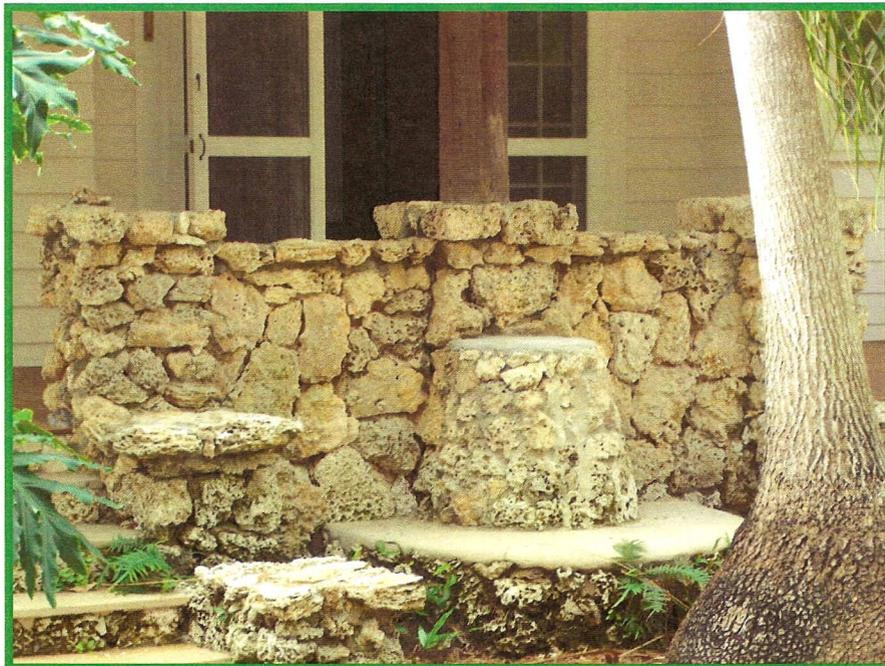
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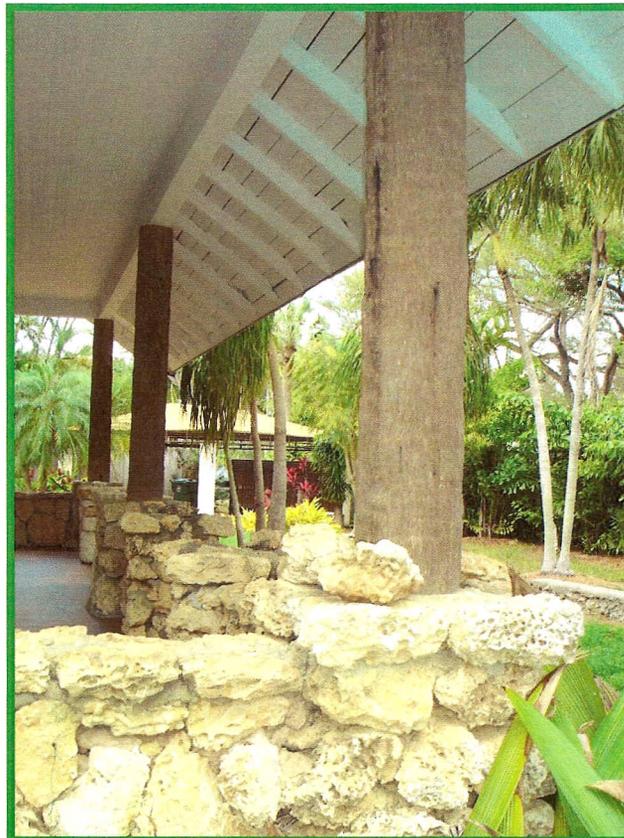
The Main (north) façade of
3848 Little Avenue



Detail of limestone bench between
the two sets of front steps



The veranda with coral rock
(limestone) porch walls



Detail of palm trunk porch
supports



Detail of the brickwork in front of
the main entrance



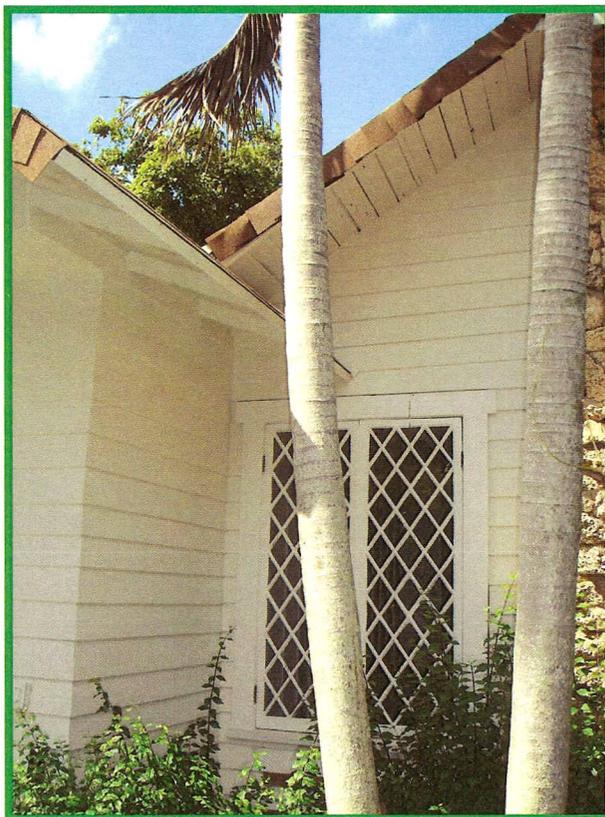
Wooden overhead carved with a
welcoming phrase and pine trees



East elevation



Detail of connection between northern
portion of house and southern portion



Detail on East elevation where northern portion joins with southern portion



West elevation



North elevation of guest cottage



West elevation of guest cottage

