
Scottish Rite Temple

471 NW 3rd Street

Designation Report



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board

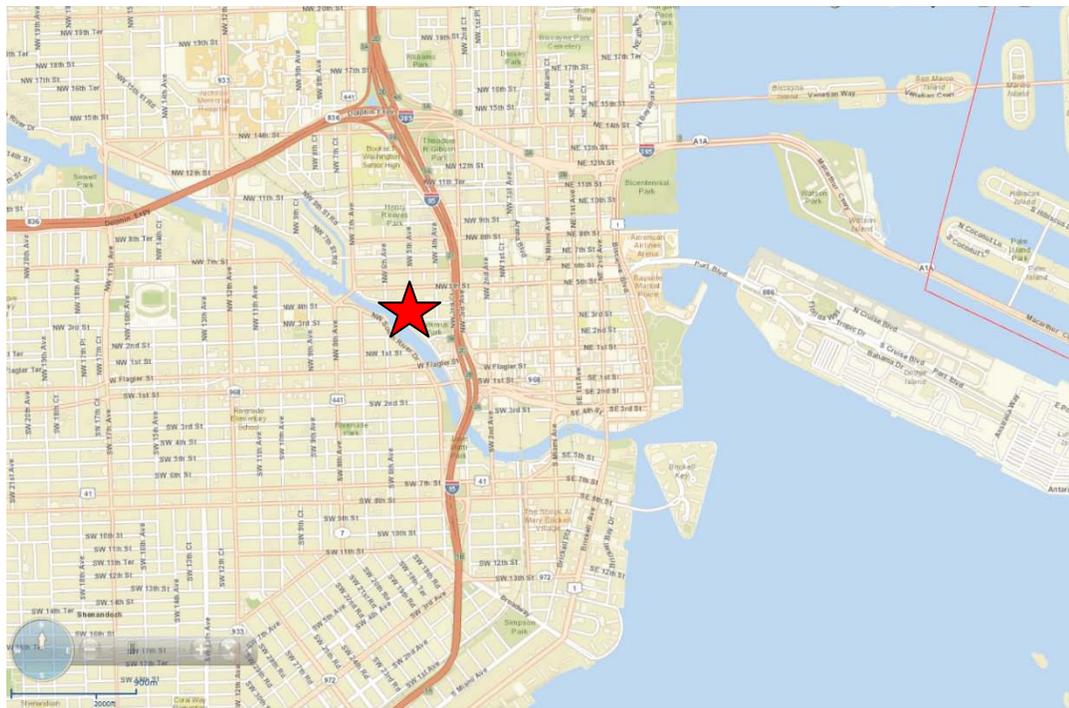


City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE
SCOTTISH RITE TEMPLE
AS A HISTORIC RESOURCE

Written by Marina Novaes
May 2013

Location and site maps



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I- General Information

Historic Name: Scottish Rite Temple

Current Name: Scottish Rite Temple

Date of Construction: 1922-1924

Architect: Kiehnel & Elliott

Builder: John B. Orr

Location: 471 NW 3rd Street (within Lummus Park Historic District)

Present Owner: Miami Scottish Rite Temple ASSN

Present use: Private Club or Hall, Theater

Zoning: T6- 8- L

Folio No.: 01-0109-000-1120

Boundary (Legal Description): MIAMI NORTH PB B-41 ALL LOTS 10 THRU 18 BLK 90
LOT SIZE 61264 SQUARE FEET

Setting: The Scottish Rite Temple sits at the corner of NW 3rd Street and NW North River Drive, across Lummus Park and the Miami River. The building is located within the Lummus Park Historic District and is a contributing property.

Integrity: The Scottish Rite Temple possesses integrity of setting, feeling, design, association, materials, and location.

II- Statement of Significance

Freemasonry is the oldest fraternal organization in the world, its roots dating back to the Middle Ages. The medieval mason was not a monk but a highly skilled lay craftsman who combined the roles of architect, builder, craftsman, designer and engineer. Using only a set of compasses, a set square and a staff or rope marked off in halves, thirds and fifths, the mason was able to construct some of the most amazing structures ever built: Gothic cathedrals. Their overwhelming size combined with their appearance of lightness and fragility has led people to believe that medieval masons had magical powers but it was actually just a profound understanding of proportion and geometry.¹

As medieval stonemasons' skills were in high demand, guild members gave rise to three classes of stonemasons: apprentices, journeymen (fellow-craft), and master masons. Apprentices were indentured to their masters as the price for their training, journeymen (fellow-craft) had a higher level of skill and could go on journeys to assist their masters, and master masons were considered freemen who could go anywhere and work for any patron they wished – Freemasons.²

To be able to recognize each other, their skill level, and professional legitimacy, a series of secret codes were created among masons according to their training level. The guilds became so powerful at the time that evolved into something larger than a mere trade union; it evolved into "brotherhood." No matter where they were from, at stonemason's lodges throughout Europe, masons were brothers and considered themselves equals.

By the eighteenth century, Europe had undergone profound transformations especially ideological. Reason and science began to replace mysticism and religious skeptical doctrines. "The Enlightenment" movement provoked a harsh reaction of the Church that persecuted scientists and liberal thinkers fiercely.

Having a secure place to meet became a matter of life or death to the Enlightenment adherent and, as stonemasons also believed in science, rational thinking, and mathematics, stonemason's lodges turned to be a perfect place for "secret" meetings. The knowledge exchanged at the stonemason's lodges yielded the birth of Freemasonry. The first Freemason Lodge of gentlemen and not workers was established in England in 1717, since then it has been an unbroken history.³

Freemasonry came to the U.S. early in the eighteenth century under the authority of the Grand Lodge of England. After the Revolution and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Grand Lodges, which are independent from one another, were established in different states and today there is one for each state in the Union and the District of Columbia.⁴

Among the country's early Masonic leaders were George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John Hancock. Another influential Mason, Chief Justice John Marshall, served as Chief of the Supreme Court for more than 34 years and shaped the court into its present form.⁵ Fourteen U.S. presidents were freemasons: George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James Polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Howard Taft, Warren Hardin, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Gerald Ford. The list of famous influential freemasons is extremely long, just to cite a few: Clark Gable, Charles Lindberg, Walter P. Chrysler, Ty Cobb, Mozart, J. Edgar Hoover, Henry Ford, etc.

There are two major paths in Freemasonry, the York Rite and the Scottish Rite. Both groups are Masonic organizations dedicated to the benefit of the society through the improvement of the individual. By

¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/architecture_medmason_01.shtml

² <http://wendlandmasonry.com/stone-masonry>

³ <http://www.aasrcleveland.org/aasr/history.htm>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

morality lessons and peer association, they promote behaviors which civilize the man and strengthen the society through the Blue Lodge lessons which teach a man to be a better husband, father, son, neighbor, churchgoer, and citizen. Scottish Rite Masonry is the champion of individual freedoms and citizenship rights as well as responsibilities. York Rite Masonry in its concluding Degrees or Orders is the champion of Christianity. A man must pledge to defend Christianity to become a Knight Templar Freemason in the York Rite. Good men of other religions (Jews, Moslems, Hindus, etc.) believing in Deity may become Scottish Rite Masons. The Scottish Rite Mason is urged to take an active leadership role in the promotion and protection of individual rights: government by democracy, free speech and press, equitable treatment before the law, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.⁶

Blue Lodge refers to the first three degrees of learning: apprentice, fellow-craft, and master mason, which are common to both paths, Scottish Rite and York Rite. After completing this first three degrees, a freemason should keep climbing the ladder of degrees (lessons) up to thirty three degrees in the Scottish Rite path and nine degrees in the York Rite path. Each degree has its ceremonial ritual which is kept secret, therefore, the reputation of being a "secret society."

Scottish Rite Masonry was first established in Miami on December 4, 1916 – Mithra Lodge of Perfection. From 1916 to 1919, Mithra Lodge of Perfection was the only Scottish Rite body operating in Miami. Meetings were held in the Masonic Hall on what was then Thirteenth Street, and later the meeting place was moved to the second floor of the Seybold Building (downtown). On October 22, 1919, the three higher bodies of the Scottish Rite were created and charter under the names of Acacia Chapter Knights, Rose Croix, and Utopia Council Knights Kadosh.⁷

From the time of their inception, the Four Coordinate bodies of Miami Consistory grew rapidly achieving the mark of 2,200 members. Due to the Great Depression and the collapse of Miami's real estate boom, this number declined to about 700. Thereafter, in the years of recovery the Bodies experienced a steady growth reaching 5,500 members at one point. Today the membership is about 2,000.⁸

Upon deciding to build a proper temple in Miami, the Scottish Rite Bodies purchased a 75 by 240 foot lot fronting the river in Fort Dallas Park from Harry Tuttle; the land was later swapped with the City of Miami for the site at Third Street and N.W. North River Drive, where the present building was erected. On July 21, 1922, the Scottish Rite Masonic Center contracted builder John B. Orr who accepted the commission without earning any profit for himself. Kiehnel and Elliott was the prominent architectural firm that designed the building.

According to the American Institute of Architects, AIA Florida Top 100 Buildings: "Well before the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs in Paris that gave Art Deco its contemporary name, Scottish Rite Masonry laid the cornerstone for its building in October 1922. Employing abstracted and stylized decorative elements from Egyptian and European history, and a simplified form of Neoclassicism, Kiehnel and Elliott's design was an early harbinger of Modernism in Miami. The two-headed eagles on the entablature above the façade's four Doric columns are symbols of the Scottish Rite, and the number is that of this lodge. The pyramidal roof, based loosely on the mausoleum of Halicarnassus, was a popular motif for civic temples, and was also used to crown the Dade County Courthouse."⁹

Kiehnel and Elliot architectural firm was established in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1906. Richard Kiehnel, who was the firm's designer, was born in Germany and studied at the University of Breslau in Germany and the L'Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris. Kiehnel and Elliott first came to Miami in 1917 and in 1922 they opened an office in Miami.¹⁰

⁶ <http://srjarchives.tripod.com/1997-09/Duncan.htm>

⁷ <http://www.srmiami.org/History.htm>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ <http://www.aiaflatop100.org/building.cfm?idsBuilding=59>

¹⁰ http://www.tutorgigpedia.com/ed/Kienhel_and_Elliott

Many architects moved to Florida to take advantage of the land and building boom in the post-World War I period. Among the first was Richard Kiehnel, he designed El Jardin, a Bayfront Coconut Grove house with Churrigueresque, or Colonial Baroque, which details are particularly found in its elaborate cast-stone door and window surrounds and in its frieze. After completing El Jardin, Kiehnel opened the Miami office which became a significant force in Florida architecture. For many years, he edited *Florida Architecture and Allied Arts*, the yearbook of the South Florida chapter of the AIA.¹¹

Many of Kiehnel's designs are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), just to list a few in Miami-Dade County: El Jardin, Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Coral Gables Congregational Church, Coral Gables Elementary School, Miami Senior High School, Coconut Grove Playhouse, among others.

The Scottish Rite Temple was the precursor of Art Deco in Miami. Ahead of their time, the architects' avant-garde modernist project was to become the first Art Deco building in Miami. The building is a rare example of Egyptian influence architecture in Miami. Egyptian features were a global trend at the time after the archaeological discovery of the Tutankhamun's intact tomb in 1922 which sparked a sudden flourish of Egyptomania worldwide.¹² Art Deco is considered to be an eclectic form of elegant and stylish modernism, which has been influenced by a wide range of sources. Among them were the arts of Africa, Ancient Egypt, and Aztec Mexico. Art Deco also drew on mathematics, such as geometry; also on so-called streamline technology, modern aviation, electric lighting, the radio, ocean liners and the skyscraper for inspiration.¹³

The Scottish Rite Temple was built to the requirements of the Scottish Rite association; however, it has held different functions throughout the years. Especially during the Depression years, the temple was leased to other companies to help support and maintain it. The "Federal Theater" leased the property to show silent movies for a period of time, then "The Miami Playhouse Group" used the temple for live plays, and it was leased out for church events on weekends, from regular services to wedding ceremonies. Today, the property is underused and in need of repairs to be able to accommodate other functions besides the regular Masonic ceremonies.

¹¹ Florida Humanities Council- Forum / Fall 2003. Florida Architecture Section pag. 32

¹² http://www.academia.edu/1551501/Egyptian_Revival_in_Art_Deco

¹³ <http://st-james.hubpages.com/hub/Art-Deco-The-American-Architecture-Influence>

III- Description

The principal elevation of the building is characterized by four stylized Doric columns dividing the main façade into three bays. The columns extend to a height of two stories and are capped by a stylized entablature bearing the name of the building as an inscription: "Scottish Rite." There are four stylized sculptural eagles which surmount the entablature atop the placement of each column axis below. Behind the eagles is visible a gable end roof. The building's configuration presents a "T" shape plan with a projecting lower wing to the northeast. The principal elevation of the wing is characterized by a colonnade delineated by similar stylized Doric columns and an articulated masonry entablature. The principal roof of the building is a ziggurat-shape mass that is capped by a stylized cupola. The walls of the building are clad in smooth stucco.¹⁴

The building is accessible by way of a set of masonry steps leading from the sidewalk level. The steps span the width of the main façade and emphasize the Grecian overtones in the styling. The greater part of the fenestration has been replaced by awning-type windows set in aluminum frames. A masonry dentil course wraps around the perimeter of the building at the height of the entablature.¹⁵

The auditorium is undoubtedly the most outstanding interior space. With a seating capacity of 1200 persons the auditorium is composed, in addition to the main floor, of two major balconies and two small balconies. Under the ziggurat roof is a dome from which is suspended a magnificent chandelier; the four columns that support the dome have large light panels featuring the emblems of the Order.¹⁶

The stage is large enough to accommodate extensive theatrical productions and is equipped with all necessary equipment including a complete electrical switchboard to control all of the lighting effects. The building was badly damaged by Hurricane Andrew in 1992, therefore completely restored at a cost of \$2.7 million. The most impressive restoration work was the fifty hand-painted backdrops decorating the stage for historic tableaux used in the Rite's symbolic degree ceremonies. During the restoration an orchestra pit was discovered under the floor of the auditorium; 1200 new seats and a new sound system were also installed. A Skinner pipe organ adds up to the list of features.¹⁷

¹⁴ Eaton, Sarah. Lummus Park Historic District – Designation Report. City of Miami. 1988.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ <http://www.srmiami.org/History.htm>

¹⁷ Ibid

IV- Application of Criteria for Designation

The Scottish Rite Temple has significance as it relates to the historic heritage of Miami and possesses integrity of setting, feeling, design, association, material, and location. The property is eligible for designation as a historic site under the criteria (5) and (6) as numbered in Sec. 23-4 (a), of Chapter 23 of the City Code.

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

The Scottish Rite Temple was the precursor of Art Deco in Miami. Ahead of their time, the architects' avant-garde modernist project was to become the first Art Deco building in Miami. The building is a rare example of Egyptian influence architecture in Miami. Egyptian features were a global trend at the time, after the archaeological discovery of the Tutankhamun's intact tomb in 1922 which sparked a sudden flourish of Egyptomania worldwide. Art Deco is considered to be an eclectic form of elegant and stylish modernism, which has been influenced by a wide range of sources. Among them were the arts of Africa, Ancient Egypt, and Aztec Mexico. Art Deco also drew on mathematics, such as geometry; also on so-called streamline technology, modern aviation, electric lighting, the radio, ocean liners and the skyscraper for inspiration.

(6) Are an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder.

Kiehnel and Elliot architectural firm was established in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1906. Richard Kiehnel, who was the firm's designer, was born in Germany and studied at the University of Breslau in Germany and the L'Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris. Kiehnel and Elliott first came to Miami in 1917 and in 1922 they opened an office in Miami. Richard Kiehnel designed El Jardin, a Bayfront Coconut Grove house with Churrigueresque, or Colonial Baroque detailing, particularly found in its elaborate cast-stone door and window surrounds and in its frieze. After completing El Jardin, Kiehnel opened the Miami office which became a significant force in Florida architecture. For many years, he edited *Florida Architecture and Allied Arts*, the yearbook of the South Florida chapter of the AIA.

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VI- Photographs



