

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 16 1981  
DATE ENTERED AUG 20 1981

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Venetian Pool  
AND/OR COMMON  
Venetian Casino

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
2701 De Soto Boulevard  
CITY, TOWN  
Coral Gables  
STATE  
Florida

VICINITY OF  
14

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
14

COUNTY  
Dade

CODE  
025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: recreatio

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
City of Coral Gables  
STREET & NUMBER  
405 Biltmore Way  
CITY, TOWN  
Coral Gables  
VICINITY OF  
Florida  
STATE  
Florida

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Dade County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN  
Miami  
STATE  
Florida

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN  
STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Venetian Casino and Pool is composed of a large, irregularly shaped pool; two observation towers, a gatehouse, and loggias. A garden patio with a wall fountain and natural coral rock diving and waterfall formations is surrounded by lush landscaping. The entire complex covers approximately two acres and is situated in a residential area of Coral Gables.

The main entrance to the pool is between twin pillars of coral rock and stucco construction. Each pillar has a Venetian-style lamp attached and iron gates that open into the pool area.

The walkway into the pool is of coral rock slab--to the left of the entrance is an iron fence closing off the pool and to the right is a small gatehouse. This small building also of coral rock and stucco has a red barrel tile roof. Through an archway to the left of the gatehouse and to the south is the first observation tower. The exterior of this tower is of exposed brick, concrete, coral rock with a stucco finish. To the right is a stairway leading up to an arched entrance which was originally the observation level but now functions as offices. To the left and several steps down is the current entrance into the buildings. The building is rectangular in shape and has several small windows on the lower level and a series of three windows at the upper portion just under the roof on each side of the building. Originally, this window area was not enclosed and served as an observation deck until windows were installed prior to 1950. The roof is covered with red barrel tiles and topped with a finial and weathervane. The roof has exposed wood rafters. This building presently houses the ticket office, gift shops and snack bar in three rooms on the ground floor. A small circular room off of the central snack bar area was once an aquarium room. The circular, stone aquarium is in the center of the room and has polychrome tiles set into it. Today, this room functions as part of the gift shop. The bannisters, stairs leading to the original observation level above and the exposed wood ceiling beams in this building are made of pecky cypress. Venetian-style lamps hang in each room of this building.

The main loggia is directly off of the first observation tower to the south running east and west. The pillars of the loggia are made of coral rock and stucco and the roof is of red barrel tiles. In the southwest corner of the roof is a small decorative cupola. The exposed wood beams in the loggia are painted with simple designs. A large, decorative Venetian-style lamp hangs in the central part of the loggia. On the north side of the loggia is a wooden pergola that encloses an area that leads into the shallow children's pool. On the south side is an open garden patio. A polychrome tiled wall fountain is the east side. The floor of the patio is terrazzo--the floors of the loggia and towers are of Cuban tiles. On the east and west sides of the loggia are wings that house the men's and women's locker rooms--they are made of the same materials as the loggia and observation tower. On the east side of the women's locker room is a wood pergola used for a picnic area.

At the southeast end of the loggia is the second observation tower. This building is rectangular in shape and made of concrete, coral rock, brick and stucco. The fenestration is similar to the first tower--around all four sides in the upper part of the building are two sets of windows that were once open-air observation areas. This tower is different from the West tower in several features: Midway up the northwest side of the building is a small balcony. This balcony has decorative stone and an iron rail. An arched entrance with steps is below the balcony on the ground level and leads into the shallow children's pool. Also, on three sides of the building--the north, northwest and south sides are a pair of stone, decorative vigas protruding from the upper half of the building.

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Recreation
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1924

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Architect-Paist, Phineas E. (both of  
Builder-Merrill, Del E. (Coral Gables)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Venetian Casino and Pool is an irregularly shaped, multi-use recreational area composed of a large pool and building facilities that include two observation towers, roofed loggias and a garden patio.

Venetian Pool is unique in that it began as a rock quarry where coral rock was obtained for construction in the early years of Coral Gables.<sup>1</sup> This quarry site was originally on the outskirts of early construction, but as Coral Gables grew this massive rock pit became an eyesore to residents of this growing city.<sup>2</sup> In 1924, Denman Fink, Art Supervisor and Phineas Paist, Supervising Architect transformed this gaping hole into a beautiful swimming pool which resembled a natural lagoon in a Venetian setting. Their design included bridges, towers, a casino and lush landscaping.<sup>3</sup>

Venetian Pool is particularly significant in that it represents one part of George Merrick's plan for creating and developing a Spanish-Mediterranean styled city. Arcaded loggias, patios, fountains, Old Spanish barrel tile roofs combined with native coral rock and tinted stucco created in Coral Gables a complete expression of the skillfully mingled Mediterranean styles which make the city so architecturally unique. The layout of the city, the naming of the streets and avenues as well as construction of buildings reflect this Mediterranean influence. Merrick insisted on a continuity in this one style of architecture for construction in Coral Gables.<sup>4</sup>

The beginning of Coral Gables date back to the years between 1911 and 1921 when George Merrick acquired much of the land in and around the original 160-acre family citrus plantation. In 1921, with 1,600 acres and \$500,000 in cash, an efficient sales organization, a personal knowledge of marketing land, and, most important, a developed city plan, Merrick was ready to begin selling. The streets and plazas were laid out in 1921 and in November of 1921, the first lot sales began. Merrick brought together the talents of expert architects, city planners, artists and engineers who designed the earliest notable Coral Gables landmarks.<sup>5</sup>

George Merrick was born in Springdale, Pennsylvania on June 3, 1886, the son of Congregationist minister Solomon Greasley Merrick and artist mother, Althea Fink Merrick. George came to South Florida in 1898 with his father where they purchased the Gregory homestead of 160 acres. With the rest of the family they built a prosperous fruit and vegetable plantation. George managed the entire plantation by himself after his father's death in 1911.<sup>6</sup> Merrick went into the real estate business in 1914 and accumulated land for his dream city of Coral Gables.<sup>7</sup>

George Merrick's plans were realized with the assistance of several talented men, among them: Denman Fink, Phineas Paist, H. George Fink, Frank M. Button, Walter de Garmo and W.C. Bliss.<sup>8</sup>

Denman Fink, an uncle of George Merrick, acted as the Art Director of Coral Gables and later was a professor of Painting at the University of Miami. His works have been displayed at the National Academy, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Boston Public Library. He was also a contributing artist for Harper's, Scribner's, Century and the

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**  
**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 ac

QUADRANGLE NAME USGS South Miami

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 min.

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 571281010 2184761010

B               

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Coral Gables Section A, Sevilla Park, Also Lot 2 and portion of Lot 1, Block 6. Begin at NE corner, S 125', W 50', N 30', northwesterly 65.7' to S line of DeSoto Boulevard, northeasterly 69.56' thence E 29.49' to POB also Lot 3 less: Begin at NW (Continued)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management

STREET & NUMBER

The Capitol

CITY OR TOWN

Tallahassee

DATE

June 26, 1981

TELEPHONE

(904) 487-2333

STATE

Florida

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

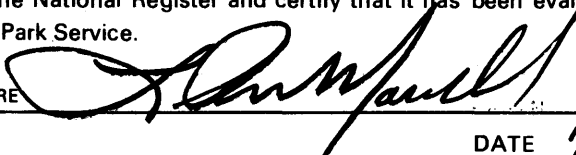
NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE

L. Ross Morrell, State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

7/2/81

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

William H. Brabham

DATE

8-20-81

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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The roof on this building also has red barrel tiles and the eaves project with wood rafters.

The interior of this building is similar to the first tower in that it has bannisters, stairs and exposed wooden beams made of pecky cypress. Simple designs are painted at the end of these wooden beams. This building's interior contains only one main room which acts as a walkway out to the swimming area.

From the north side of the second tower a walkway leads to the main pool area and to a small bridge of brick, coral rock and stucco. This bridge leads out to a stone island in the middle of the pool which now separates the shallow children's pool from the deeper swimming pool. Originally, three palm trees were planted in the middle of this island but they are no longer there. The bridge originally had no rail. There are Venetian-style lamps on lampposts in the pool at the beginning of the bridge. Other lampposts are clustered at various points in the pool.

To the east of the pool is a walled-in sand beach that extends out to Sevilla Avenue, and Toledo Street.

The swimming pool extends from the northeast and northwest of the two observation towers. It has varying depths and is finished on the east side with the customary cement but natural coral rock is left exposed on the northwest side and is used to create a small waterfall, caves and a diving platform.

Lush landscaping surrounds the pool on all sides, especially in the area where the natural coral rock is left exposed.

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Hearst magazines.<sup>9</sup> Fink was an authority on Spanish art and architecture--his designs include Venetian Pool and the various Entrances and Plazas to Coral Gables, as well as many wall murals in buildings of the area.<sup>10</sup>

Phineas E. Paist was the supervising architect and coordinator of color for Coral Gables. Paist worked as associate architect on the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia and the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. He was the architect for many residences in Coral Gables, but is most known for his designs of important public buildings in the city: Douglas Entrance, designed in association with Walter de Garmo, Coral Gables City Hall, the Christian Science Church, the WPA-financed Coral Gables Police and Fire Station.<sup>11</sup>

H. George Fink was a cousin of Denman Fink and a leading architect during the same period. He designed the first home for George E. Merrick, among other residences.<sup>12</sup>

Frank M. Button was the first landscape architect for Coral Gables. Button is credited with being a major contributor to laying out the original plans for the city. Button is also credited with landscaping the grounds of Lincoln Park, Chicago; the Lowden Place at Oregon, Ill. and the estate of Charles Deering in Miami. Button's contributions can be seen today at the various entrances and plazas as well as along the major streets and avenues of Coral Gables.<sup>13</sup>

Walter de Garmo was the first registered architect in the State of Florida and one of many architects hired to design for Coral Gables.<sup>14</sup> His contribution is more evident than others, as he collaborated on several public buildings with Phineas Paist.<sup>15</sup> Most prominent of these is the Douglas Entrance.

W.C. Bliss was the first civil engineer in Coral Gables and is credited with laying out the early plans for Coral Gables.<sup>16</sup>

Venetian Pool's use has not been limited to recreational activities only but has been drained on occasion and used for opera concerts and other social events.<sup>17</sup>

Venetian Pool is of a Spanish-Mediterranean design which complements much of the other Spanish influenced architecture of the city. Coral rock and tinted stucco construction combined with red barrel tile roofs on the observation towers and arcaded loggias most visibly express this Mediterranean flavor. There is not a great deal of ornamentation on the buildings and the Mediterranean style is seen primarily in the coral rock construction, massed fenestration, tiled roofs and smaller details of iron grillework fencing, Cuban tile floors, Venetian-style lamps and lampposts and a small balcony off of one of the towers.<sup>18</sup>

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Wilkins, Woodrow W., The City of Coral Gables, Florida, An Historic New Town, National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey, Summer 1971, p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Clarke, Mary Helm, Consider Coral Gables, Parker Art Printers, Coral Gables, Florida, 1948, p.13.

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<sup>3</sup> Coral Gables Junior Women's Club, draft copy of history of Venetian Pool, City of Coral Gables Historic Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Moore, Mary T., "Coral Gables History," Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, 1950, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>9</sup> The Story of Coral Gables, promotional pamphlet, Coral Gables, Florida, p.7.

<sup>10</sup> Wilkins, W.W., Coral Gables: 1920's New Town, Historic Preservation Vol. 30, No. 1, January-March 1978, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>14</sup> Wilkins, W.W., The City of Coral Gables, Florida, An Historic New Town, HABS Survey, 1971, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Wilkins, W.W., Coral Gables: 1920's New Town, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> Wilkins, W.W., The City of Coral Gables, Florida, An Historic New Town, HABS Survey, p.4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Historical Association of Southern Florida, Update, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1974, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> City of Coral Gables, Historic Landmark Inventory, Venetian Pool.

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- Coral Gables Junior Women's Club, draft copy of history of Venetian Pool, City of Coral Gables Historic Archives.
- Historical Association of Southern Florida, Update, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1974.
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- Robie, Virginia, "A Spanish City in Florida," International Studio, May 1925.
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- Venetian Casino, promotional literature, 1924.
- Wilkins, Woodrow W., The City of Coral Gables, Florida, An Historic New Town, National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey, Summer 1971.
- Wilkins, Woodrow W., Coral Gables: 1920's New Town, Historic Preservation, Vol. 30, No. 1, January-March 1978.



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corner Lot 3 thence southward 26.12' along W line thereof, thence eastward parallel to N line a distance of 25', thence NE to NE corner, thence westward to POB.