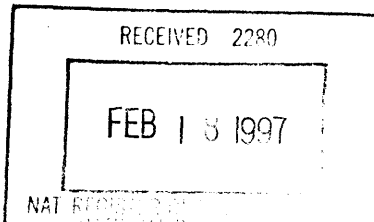


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name BURNS, WILLIAM J. HOUSE

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 47 South Washington Drive

N/A not for publication

city or town Sarasota

N/A vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Sarasota code 115 zip code 34234

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] _____ Date 2/11/97

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain) _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
3/21/97

Burns, William J., House
Name of Property

Sarasota Co., Florida
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco
walls Stucco

roof Ceramic Tile
other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1927

Significant Dates

1927

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

/Arch: Martin, Thomas Reid
Blder: Hines and Humphrey

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

Burns, William J. House
Name of Property

Sarasota Co., Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	4	4	2	4	0	3	0	2	2	5	4	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victoria "Mikki" Hartig/ Sherry Piland, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date February 1997

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number 7 Page 1

The William J. Burns House, 47 South Washington Drive, Sarasota, Florida, is a two-story, Mediterranean Revival style residence with an irregular plan. The 3,500 square foot masonry house rests on a concrete foundation and has exterior walls of stucco. Most of the house is covered with hipped roof segments, surfaced with clay barrel tiles. A few areas of the roof are flat, with built-up roofing material. Scuppers are placed just below the roof line at intervals around the house.

SETTING

The Burns residence is located in the John Ringling Estates subdivision on St. Armands Key. This upscale residential neighborhood contains only seven residences from the 1920s and two dating from the 1930s. The majority of the housing stock on St. Armands Key was built after World War II. The William J. Burns House is situated on less than one acre of land, and is located approximately one block from St. Armands Circle, an upscale retail shopping area laid out in the mid-1920s. The site retains some of its original landscaping which has been supplemented over the years. The Burns House backs onto Sarasota Bay.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The main facade of the Burns House faces southwest, toward South Washington Drive, and is treated in a rather informal fashion. The more formal and more decorative elements are found on the northeast elevation, overlooking Sarasota Bay. The house sits back approximately seventy-five feet from Washington Drive and is approached by a curving drive that leads to a two-story, two-car, garage/apartment (Photo 1). The second story of the southwest elevation of the garage features a recessed balcony, accessed by French doors (Photo 2). A steel casement window with a wrought iron grille is centered below the balcony.

A stucco wall, flanking a wrought iron gate and entry arch, encloses a small courtyard between the garage and the residence (Photo 3). The garage is connected to the house by a passage at the rear of the courtyard. Access to the second floor apartment is by way of an exterior stairway rising from the enclosed courtyard on the northeast garage wall.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 7 Page 2

The principal entrance to the house is located at the south end of the main facade, within another small, walled courtyard (Photo 4). Entrances to the courtyard, on both the southeast and southwest sides, are distinguished by wrought iron entry arches (Photos 4 and 5). A fountain is set in the south corner of the courtyard (Photo 6).

The main entrance to the house consists of a paneled wood door with a small viewing window covered by a wrought iron grille (Photo 7). The door is set within a small projection covered with a tiled hip roof. Just above the door is a rectangular terra cotta panel depicting a pelican in relief. A small oculus, covered by a wrought iron grille, is set in the wall southeast of the door. Below this window is a short, engaged pier, matching that used on the courtyard walls.

A small, one-story wing, set back from the entrance, projects to the southeast. The southwest elevation of this block has a small balcony with a wrought iron railing (Photo 8). This wing is fenestrated with twelve-light, French doors and twelve-light, fixed, rectangular windows. All three elevations of this wing have rectangular, terra cotta panels decorated with floral and animal designs above the doors and windows (Photo 9).

The complex massing of the house is most clearly revealed from the rear (northeast) elevation. On this elevation the larger, central block is set forward and contains a shallow, elevated porch area, approached by a flight of steps (Photo 10). The balusters of the steps and porch are placed between squat stucco piers. Three pairs of French doors with fanlight transoms are slightly recessed and provide access to the living room. The French doors are flanked by engaged columns with Corinthian-type capitals. Centered in the wall space above each door, midway between the fanlight and the parapet, are single, recessed oculi. To the northwest of the projecting block, and also set back slightly, is a two-story block (Photo 11). The first floor of this block contains a French door, flanked by sidelights, set within an Art Nouveau-inspired opening. This door opens on to a small balconet with an iron railing. Above this, the second floor contains a recessed balcony, also with an iron railing. Further to the northwest, and set back yet farther, is another two-story segment. This block has paired, vinyl, sash windows on the first floor. The second floor contains three pairs of eight-

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

light, steel, casement windows. Small, square, decorative, terra cotta panels, depicting various animals, are placed below each of these windows.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Burns House contains over 3,500 square feet of living space. All interior walls in the house are plaster, and the house retains its original crown moldings, oak and tile floors, arched interior doorways, doors and door hardware, and several original ornate light fixtures and wall sconces.

The first floor area includes a small foyer, living room, dining room, study, bedroom and bath, kitchen, and laundry room. The living room is a full two stories in height and has a glazed, tile floor. The most significant feature of the living room is an elaborate, carved, Italian marble fireplace with a tiled hearth (Photo 12). The fireplace was reportedly a gift to Burns from John Ringling. Three sets of paired French doors provide a view of the Bay, admit natural light to the interior, and provide access to the rear porch (Photo 13). The stairway leading to the second floor is located along the northwest wall of the living room. An arched opening under the stairway landing leads into the dining room (Photo 14). The stairway has unusually low risers with glazed, hand made tiles in the stringers. These tiles depict various animals such as a rabbit, turtle, and frog, carrying the exterior use of the animal motif in decorative detail to the interior of the house. The stairway retains its original wrought iron railing and the steps are surfaced with original glazed tile, presently covered by a carpet runner.

In the dining room, Art Nouveau influenced French doors and flanking windows on the northeast wall provide a striking focal point with a water view beyond (Photo 15). The study, with glazed, tile floors, is accessed through an archway from the living room (Photo 16).

A small, rectangular shaped hallway on the second floor accesses the two upstairs bedrooms. The larger bedroom on the northwest end of the rear elevation has paired French doors opening onto a balcony (Photo 17). There are also two baths on the second floor, one of which retains its original fixture. A large dressing area is located off the master bedroom.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

In 1982, a 15 x 30 foot swimming pool (Photo 18) and a large, brick, patio (Photo 10) were added at the rear of the house. A modern boat dock extends from the seawall at the rear of the site, outside the boundary.

ALTERATIONS

The house and garage have received very little alteration. In 1988 the kitchen was modernized and a breakfast room was created by extending the kitchen area into a courtyard space between the garage and house. This extension was constructed of concrete block covered with stucco. The addition is not visible from the street. The eight-light, paired, steel casement window in the northeast wall of the kitchen was replaced at this time with a larger, three-light, paired vinyl casement unit. This window was in a butler's pantry. These revisions to the kitchen area were the work of Sarasota architect Paul Robbin.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number 8 Page 1

The William J. Burns House, 47 South Washington Drive, Sarasota, Florida, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The house, built in 1927, is an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style and of the work of Sarasota architect Thomas Reid Martin. The house was designed to contribute to the grandiose development concepts of the Ringling Estates subdivision on St. Armands Key.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the twentieth century, Sarasota's development was mostly limited to settlement by homesteaders and fishermen. An effort in the 1880s to create a Scottish settlement in the area that today is Sarasota failed. Because the area lacked railroad facilities, there was little growth during the next twenty years. A significant turning point was the completion in 1903 of the United States and West Indies Railroad and Steamship Company line through Sarasota. It later became part of the Seaboard Airline Railroad. Rail service brought numerous manufactured goods and building materials not previously available in Sarasota. Markets for Sarasota's fishing, citrus and agricultural industries were expanded, and commerce began to increase. Tourists and settlers were then attracted to the area and the population began to grow. By 1913, Sarasota had two banks, telephone service, electricity, a brass band, 18-hole golf course, baseball diamond, yacht club, ice plant, theater, two newspapers, and a sanitarium.

During the 1920s, residential subdivisions were platted throughout an expanded Sarasota city limits. Cheap land prices and the promise of quick profits swept the city into a flurry of development, and Sarasota became a modern, resort community. Because of the growth in the area, in 1921, Sarasota County was created out of a portion of southern Manatee County.

One of the premiere 1920s residential subdivisions was John Ringling Estates on St. Armands Key, an island just west of downtown Sarasota. John Ringling, the circus magnate, first came to Sarasota in 1912, and saw the future of Sarasota as a metropolitan resort that could attract many people of wealth. In 1922, with assistance of Sarasota developer Owen Burns (not related to William J. Burns), Ringling began to purchase property on the islands just west of downtown Sarasota. Ringling formed and

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 2

incorporated John Ringling Estates, Inc., with himself as president and treasurer, and his wife Mable, as vice-president. Burns held a 25% share in the company. Ringling and Burns continued their buying efforts until they held all the islands between the Sarasota mainland and the Gulf, except for Siesta Key. Siesta Key had already for the most part been secured by an earlier developer. The cost of the acquisition of the land paled in comparison to the amount of development costs necessary before the subdivision would be marketable for homes, hotels, or shops.

In late 1923, work began on the Ringling Estates subdivision. The subdivision was a fraction of the much larger Ringling Isles development plan. Dredges were used to build up the mangrove islands and form solid land. The Ringling Isles office was set up in Owen Burns' real estate office, in downtown Sarasota.

St. Armands Key was the most important part of Ringling's development plan. Planning, engineering and landscape design were an important feature. Ringling commissioned John J. Watson, of Toledo, Ohio, to oversee the work. Workmen laid miles of water and sewer mains, paved roads and streets, built parkways, and poured concrete sidewalks. The development was landscaped with royal palms, flowering shrubs, poinsettias, hibiscus and oleander trees mixed with ixoria and flame vine. Citrus trees were planted for additional color. Italian statuary purchased by Ringling in Italy was made part of the scheme. In addition to John Ringling Estates, the Ringling Isles plan included a shopping area in a circular design, St. Armands Circle, and a beach casino.

In order to market the subdivision, Ringling had to provide access to St. Armands Key by a means other than boat. At a cost of about a million dollars, he bridged Sarasota Bay to Bird Key, and built a bridge from Bird Key to St. Armands Key. The causeway and bridge were the first to link Sarasota to the offshore islands. On January 1, 1927, exactly one year after the bridge and Ringling Isles were opened, Ringling bestowed the Ringling Causeway to the city of Sarasota as a gift.

Ringling Estates was heavily promoted and advertised throughout the state and brought many people to Sarasota for the first time. However, by 1926, when the real estate boom collapsed, only a few houses had been built in Ringling Estates. In 1926, Owen Burns took legal action against Ringling for transferring funds from their financially sound real estate project to

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 3

Ringling's ailing Ritz Carlton Hotel project on Longboat Key (which was never completed). This marked the end of their business alliance. Ringling would continue to be plagued by financial difficulties, innumerable lawsuits, and the loss of most of his extensive land holdings until his death in 1936.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

No doubt, it was with John Ringling's persuasion that William J. Burns selected the Ringling Estates on St. Armands Key as the location for a new residence. Burns, considered one of the world's greatest detectives, was the founder of the William Burns International Detective Agency and a former chief executive of the United States Department of Justice.

Burns was an acquaintance of Samuel Gumpertz, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus manager, and was persuaded by him to visit Sarasota. Burns first visited the city in March of 1926. Although Burns originally planned to build a winter home on the east coast of Florida, he changed his mind after this visit and immediately began to look over potential Sarasota home sites. He later publicly thanked Ringling for introducing him to "beautiful" Sarasota.

In March, 1927, John Ringling Estates, Inc. deeded two lots to Burns's wife, Annie Ressler Burns. Although written confirmation has not been located, reportedly the lots were given to Burns in exchange for Burns's agreeing to build his home on the property. Having a well-known, international personality such as Burns make Ringling Estates his home would have been excellent publicity for the development. An editorial in the local paper declared that Sarasota could receive no finer compliment than to have Burns and his family choose the city as their place of permanent residence.

William John Burns was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1861. The family moved to Ohio when Burns was 12 years old. After high school, Burns attended a business college and then reluctantly joined his father in the tailoring business. When his father was appointed to the Columbus, Ohio, Police Commissioner in 1878, young Burns decided to become a detective. He worked with a St. Louis, Missouri, detective agency for four years before joining the United States Secret Service in 1889, where he had a highly successful career.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 4

In 1906, Burns left governmental service. Striking out on his own, he obtained evidence against dishonest officials in San Francisco, ultimately trapping an entire board of supervisors in the act of committing bribery. In 1909, he organized the William J. Burns National Detective Agency with its first office in Chicago, although he maintained the corporate headquarters and his primary residence in New York City. He eventually established over thirty branch offices across the country and abroad.

Burns was doted on by the press, for he was a man of strong opinions with no hesitation about expressing them. He was extroverted, flamboyant, photographed well, and provided interesting stories. He, in turn, used the press to enhance his image. He authored several publications, including ten articles about his work in McClures in 1910-1911. These articles enlarged the detective's legend and lauded him as the "nation's leading and most publicized crime fighter." Burns also wrote fiction, based on experiences from his professional career. In late 1931, Burns also took part in the production of a series of six motion pictures in California that depicted a number of his greatest mystery cases.

In 1921, Burns stepped down as president of his agency when he was named Director of the newly created Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, the forerunner of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He served as its director from its founding until 1924. J. Edgar Hoover was one of his employees, succeeding him when Burns resigned to return to his detective agency.

When Burns visited Sarasota in 1926, he was sixty-five years old and beginning to retire gradually from active investigative work. However, his agency's business was booming, and he remained involved by advising other detectives in the field and analyzing their reports. He turned over daily operation of the agency to his sons.

Upon moving to Sarasota, Burns became active in Sarasota civic affairs. He was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, and the Anti-Mosquito League. He was a charter member of the Whitfield Estates Country Club, and an active member of Sunnyland Council of Boy Scouts, something he considered a great honor.

Burns became an ardent promoter of his new city giving a great

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 5

deal of time to boosting his newly adopted home to his many friends all over the country. In his role as a local promoter, he was in great demand as a speaker by Sarasotans and his national radio fans when he broadcast his speeches from Sarasota. Burns attended conventions to speak on Sarasota and addressed numerous civic and luncheon clubs, bringing the name of Sarasota before important business gatherings. In 1927, Burns addressed the 500 delegates at the American Title Association annual convention in Detroit, speaking on Florida in general and Sarasota in particular. He closed with an invitation to all of them to visit the city. In October 1927, Burns was invited to participate in a conference sponsored by the Florida State Chamber of Commerce for hotel men, chamber of commerce executives, railroad and steamship representatives and developers who were interested in bringing visitors to the state.

In his private life in Sarasota, Burns enjoyed the frequent visits of his children and grandchildren. Various family members spent entire seasons at the Burns's home, with the grandchildren often attending school at Sarasota's Out of Door School on Siesta Key. According to family descendants, Burns and John Ringling remained friends for the rest of Burns's life and were both poker enthusiasts, sometimes playing at the Burns home. Mr. and Mrs. Burns were active in St. Martha's Catholic Church. Mrs. Burns helped form the St. Martha's Guild, hosting the organizational meeting in her home in February of 1931.

William J. Burns died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Sarasota, on April 14, 1932. Upon his passing, the New York Times referred to him as a detective who was equal to the fictional figures of Sherlock Holmes and Arsene Lupin. Hundreds of Sarasotans paid their last respects at his memorial mass, during which all businesses in Sarasota were closed.

The Burns Detective Agency remained in the hands of his son and widow for several years before it was sold and became part of a large corporation. Mrs. Burns continued to live in the house on St. Armands Key. About 1945, Kathleen Ressler, an unmarried niece, came to live with Mrs. Burns. Although she deeded the house to her children in 1954, Mrs. Burns lived in the house until her death in 1958. Kathleen Ressler continued to live in the Burns home until 1962. The family then deeded the house to Saint Martha's Catholic Church. From 1962 to 1967 or 1968, the home was occupied by the pastor of St. Martha's, Father Esslinger. In 1968, the house

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 6

passed back into private ownership when the Catholic Diocese sold the property to Bernard and Edna Levkoff.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The unparalleled growth and development of Florida in the 1920s, helped foster a new architectural identity for the state. The Mediterranean Revival style, which first gained prominence in California during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became the most popular style in residential architecture in Florida and in Sarasota during the 1920s. The style contains elements derived from the area around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Italy and Spain. Its exuberant detailing complimented the 1920s sense of excitement, prosperity, and well-being.

The Mediterranean Revival style has been categorized into various sub-types, such as the Spanish Colonial or Mission Revival. It is found most frequently in states which have a Spanish Colonial heritage. In Florida, Mediterranean Revival style architecture was popularized by Henry Flagler in St. Augustine and Addison Mizner in Palm Beach. A wide array of buildings were constructed in the 1920s with stylistic features of Spanish, Colonial Byzantine, Moorish, Mission, and Italianate architecture. Some general characteristics include, a preference for barrel clay tile roofs, stucco walls, porches, patios, balconies, arched entrances and windows, complex roof lines, and ceramic tile decorations. Other identifying features include arcaded wings; multilight casement and double hung sash windows, often deeply set in the walls or arched openings; use of wrought iron; and balconets.

For Florida, the Mediterranean Revival style proved a perfect marketing device for resort communities such as Sarasota, conveying the exotic beauty of the area, while also drawing upon a remote link to the Spanish Colonial heritage.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Although Thomas Reid Martin, a prominent Sarasota architect, was hired in March 1926, to design the residence, a building site was not acquired until March 15, 1927. Eighteen contractors bid on the contract to build the Burns House. In April, 1927, Burns

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**Section number 8 Page 7

awarded the project to the Hines and Humphrey contracting firm. In 1926, John Humphrey was practicing as an architect in Sarasota. The 1927-1928 Sarasota City Directory lists Hines as a draftsman with prominent local builder, Leadley Ogden. L.M. Chase, an engineer for John Ringling Estates was to oversee the construction. While the house was being built, Mr. and Mrs. Burns made frequent trips between New York City and Sarasota to keep abreast of the construction. In June 1927, Mrs. Burns brought her niece Helen Bergin, a New York City interior designer, to Sarasota so they could oversee the final work and interior decoration. Mr. and Mrs Burns took up occupancy by late November, 1927.

Thomas Reed Martin, the architect of the Burns House, was a native of Wisconsin. Martin studied architecture and construction while working in Chicago as a draftsman and woodworking company manager. In 1911, he was retained by wealthy Chicagoan, Mrs. Potter Palmer, to remodel her newly-acquired winter estate on Sarasota Bay. Martin subsequently moved to Sarasota permanently in 1920. During the next three decades he designed more than five hundred homes in the Sarasota area, many in the Mediterranean Revival style. Among his designs in Sarasota are the 1925 Mediterranean Revival style home for L.D. Reagin (NR 1984); Burns Court, a complex of fifteen Mediterranean Revival style bungalows built between 1924-1925 (NR 1984); and the Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club, a modernistic design done in collaboration with Clarence Martin, built in 1937 (NR 1995). He also designed the Hacienda Hotel in New Port Richey, a 1927 Mediterranean Revival style building (NR 1996).

The design of the Burns House is typical of the Mediterranean Revival style architecture Martin favored during the 1920s. This house incorporates many Mediterranean Revival stylistic elements, notably the ornamental detail, the rough stucco exterior, the balconies, the use of wrought iron, and the barrel tile roofing material. The design intentions, to set a standard and to showcase the kind of elegant residences that would be typical of Ringling Estates, were realized with Martin's masterful design.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number 9 Page 1

“Burns Funeral Monday.” New York Times, 16 April 1932, p. 15.

Grismer, Karl H. The Story of Sarasota. Tampa: Florida Growers Press, 1946.

Hatten, Hap. Tropical Splendor. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

“The History of William J. Burns.” Nation 126 (23 November 1927): 561.

Hunt, William R. Front-Page Detective, William J. Burns and The Detective Profession: 1880-1930. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990.

Hynd, Alan. In Pursuit, The Cases of William J. Burns. Camden, New Jersey: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968.

Maher, James T. The Twilight of Splendor, Chronicles of the Age of American Palaces. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975.

Plowden, Gene. Those Amazing Ringlings and Their Circus. New York: Bonanza Books, 1967.

The Story of St. Martha's Catholic Parish, Sarasota, Florida, 1912-1977. Sarasota: St. Martha's Catholic Parish History Committee, 1977.

Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources

Plat Map Files, Plat Map of Ringling Estates, 1925.

Interviews (by Mikki Hartig)

Borough, Randal, William Burns's grandson, Charlotte, North Carolina, 6 March 1996.

Dickson, Jean Martin, granddaughter of Thomas Reed Martin, Bradenton, Florida, 15 September 1995.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number 9 Page 2

Goldsboro, Joan Borough, William Burns's granddaughter, Ossining, New York, 7 March 1996.

Hughes, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H., current owners, Sarasota, Florida, 27 February and 12 March 1996.

O'Connor, Ann Buroughs, William Burns's granddaughter, Naples, Florida., 6 March 1996.

Wunderlich, Maureen, former owner, Sarasota, Florida, 15 March 1996.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 9 & 10, Block 15, St. Armands Div., Sarasota,
Florida.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically
associated with the William J. Burns House.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number Photo Page 1

1. William J. Burns House, 47 S. Washington Drive
2. Sarasota, Sarasota County, Florida
3. Mikki Hartig
4. February, 1996
5. Historical and Architectural Research Services, 3708 Flores Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34239
6. Main (southwest) facade, view looking north
7. Photo 1 of 18

Item numbers 1-5 are identical for the remaining photographs.

6. Southwest elevation of garage, view looking northeast
7. Photo 2 of 18

6. Courtyard between garage and residence, view looking northwest
7. Photo 3 of 18

6. Entrance courtyard, view looking northeast
7. Photo 4 of 18

6. Entrance courtyard, view looking north
7. Photo 5 of 18

6. Entrance courtyard fountain, view looking south
7. Photo 6 of 18

6. Primary entrance, main (southwest) facade; view looking north
7. Photo 7 of 18

6. Detail, main (southwest) facade; view looking northeast
7. Photo 8 of 18

6. Rear (northeast) elevation, view looking west
7. Photo 9 of 18

6. Rear (northeast) elevation, view looking southwest
7. Photo 10 of 18

6. Rear (northeast) elevation, view looking south
7. Photo 11 of 18

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**BURNS, WILLIAM J., HOUSE
SARASOTA CO., FL.**

Section number Photo Page 2

- 6. Interior detail, living room; view looking south
- 7. Photo 12 of 18

- 6. Interior detail, living room view looking north
- 7. Photo 13 of 18

- 6. Interior detail, looking from living room toward dining room; view looking northwest
- 7. Photo 14 of 18

- 6. Interior detail, dining room; view looking northeast
- 7. Photo 15 of 18

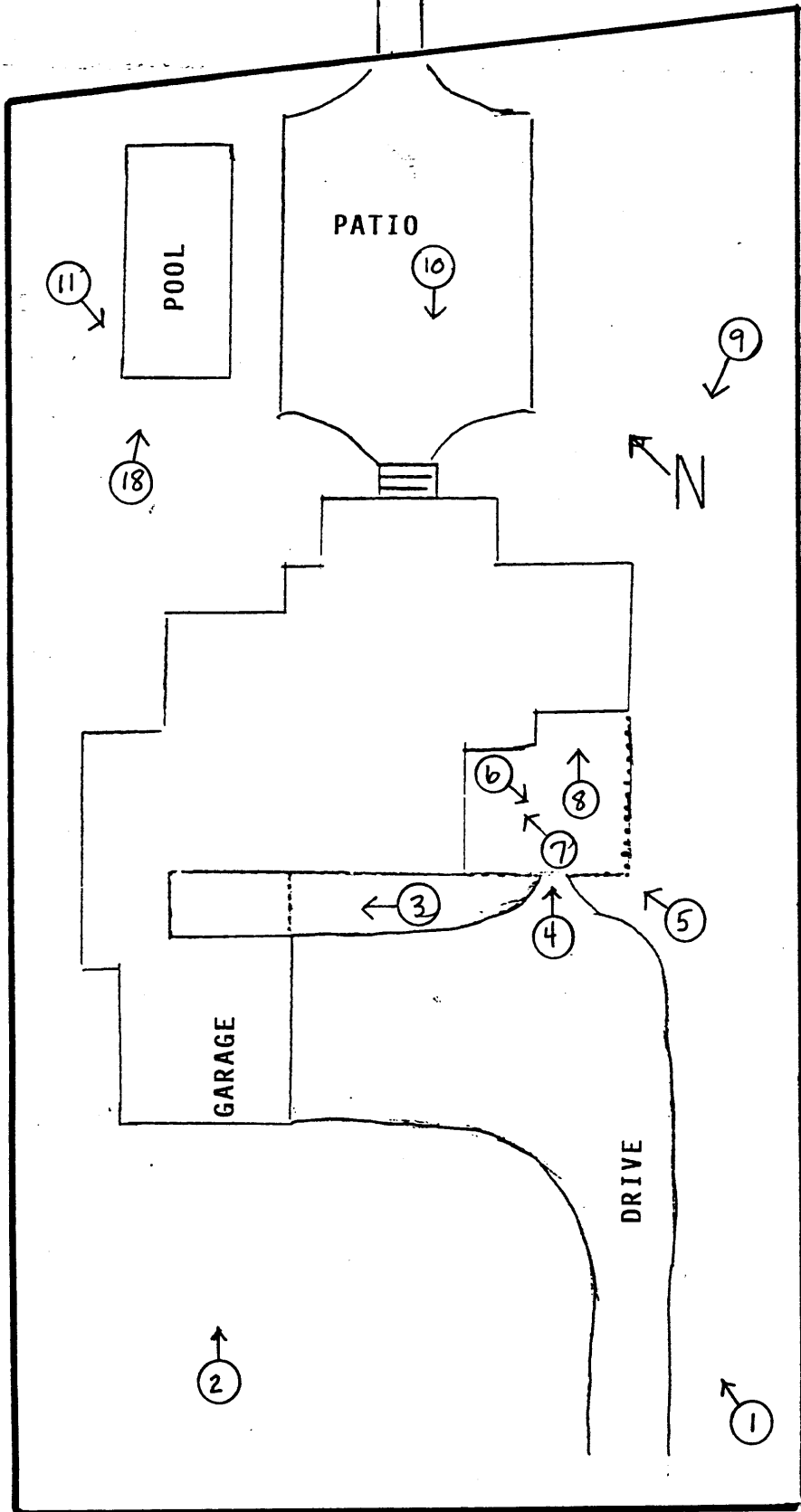
- 6. Interior detail, looking from living room into study; view looking southeast
- 7. Photo 16 of 18

- 6. Interior detail, second floor bedroom; view looking northwest
- 7. Photo 17 of 18

- 6. Pool and patio, overlooking Sarasota Bay; view looking northeast
- 7. Photo 18 of 18

SARASTOA BAY


DOCK




WILLIAM J. BURNS HOUSE

Sarasota County, Florida

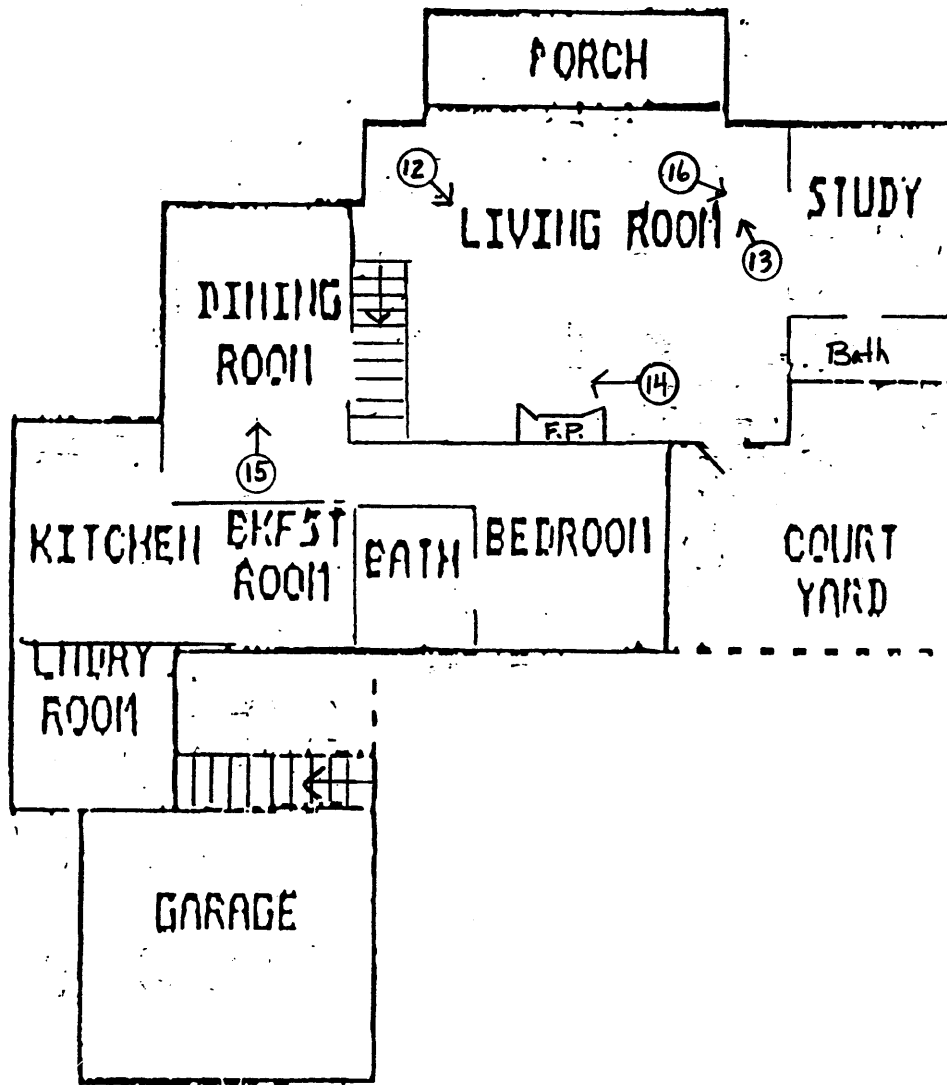
SITE PLAN

Photo Direction 

Approx. Scale: 0.5"=10.5'

Boundary 

SOUTH WASHINGTON BOULEVARD



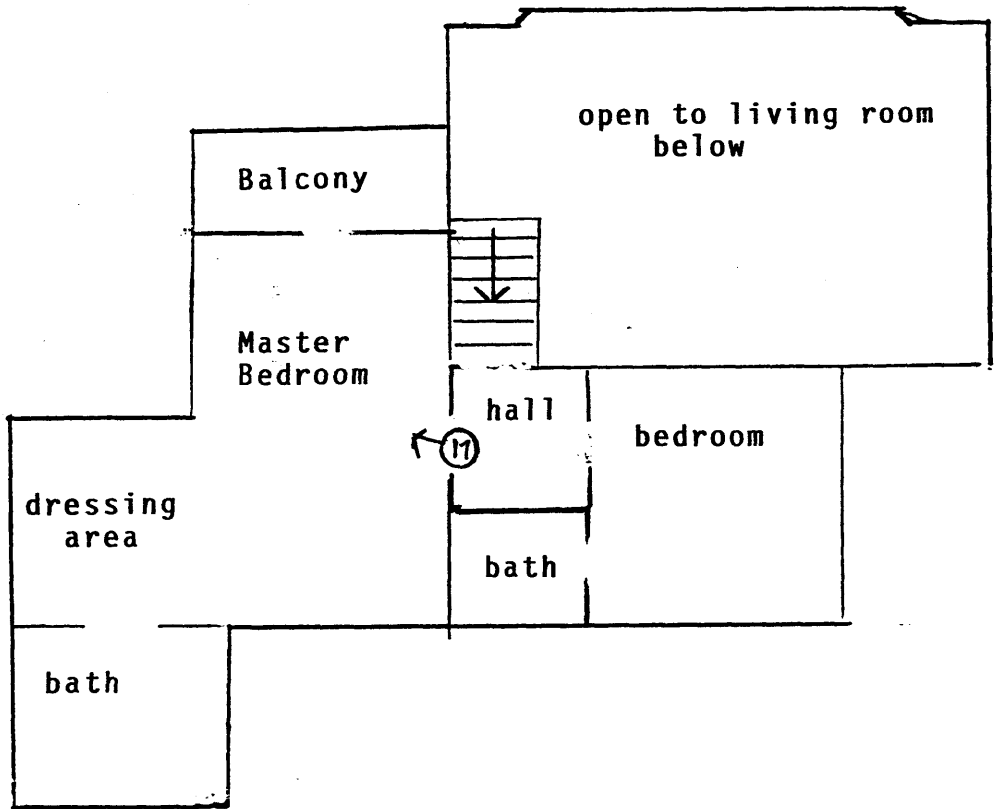
WILLIAM J. BURNS HOUSE

SARASOTA CO., FLORIDA

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Approx. Scale: 0.5' = 7'

Photo Direction ○ →



WILLIAM J. BURNS HOUSE
Sarasota County, Florida
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
Approx. Scale: 0.5"=7'