

MEMORANDUM

TO: Historic Preservation Board
FROM: Merrilyn C. Rathbun, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society
SUBJECT: Agenda for
DATE:

2.

Case	8 H 13	FMSF #	
Applicant	<i>David Berlin</i>		
Owner	Cormona Apartments Inc.		
Address	323 & 333 N Birch Road		
General Location	Approximately 140 feet northwest of the N. Birch Road and Granada Street intersection		
Legal Description	CORMONA APTS CO-OP UNITS 1 THROUGH 7		
Existing Use	Multi-family residential		
Proposed Use	Multi-family residential		
Applicable ULDR Sections	47-24.11.B.6.		
Request(s)	1. Historic Designation		

Property Background:

Miami architect Russell Thorn Pancoast first opened an office in Fort Lauderdale in 1938. In 1939, the City of Fort Lauderdale hired Pancoast as the lead architect for its first public housing project, Dixie Court; he worked with Dixie Court associate architects Courtney Stewart, Jr. and Robert Little. Pancoast had come to Miami as a fourteen year old; He was the grandson of Miami Beach founder John Collins. He attended the Cornell University College of Architecture, graduating in 1922. Pancoast opened his Miami office in 1927. The Miami firm, Pancoast, Ferendino, Grafton and Skeets later evolved into the well known firm of Spillis, Candela and Partners.

Once his Las Olas Boulevard office was established, Pancoast and his associates took on many private and commercial projects in the city. Notable among his projects was the Coral Sands Hotel (later The Westminster Manor), built in 1941 as the first project in Fort Lauderdale for developer James S. Hunt. Mr. Hunt later went on to develop Coral Ridge and the Galt Ocean Mile. Pancoast designed the 1953 master plan for the city of Plantation, Florida. Among Pancoast's Miami projects are the Art Deco Bass Museum of Art (formerly the Miami Beach Public Library) The Surf Club of Miami Beach, the Mercury Hotel on South Beach,

Pancoast designed the Cormona Apartments for Cornelius/Moninger in 1941. The Cormona Apartments are located in Lauder-del-Mar, just south of Birch Estates. The two apartment buildings are 2 stories and have rectangular footprints with irregularities. The buildings are oriented west to east on the lot, with Birch Road to the east and the Intracoastal Waterway to the west. Both buildings have glassed in porches, on both floors, on the west elevations. The roofs are barrel tiled, hipped with gable ends on the east and west elevations and have overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. The original metal work of the hand rails of the exterior stairs and second floor balconies has been preserved. There are original small metal canopies over some of the apartment entries. In his design for the buildings Pancoast used elements from different styles; he anticipated the later Mid-century Modern style in his use of many corner windows. New impact resistant windows replaced the originals a few years ago.

Description of Proposal:

The applicants are asking for local designation of the Cormona Apartments.

Criteria for Historic Designation

ULDR Section 47-24.11.B.6.	Consultant Response
<i>d. Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation.</i>	CONSULTANT RESPONSE The Cormona Apartments is the work of a significant South Florida architect, Russell Thorn Pancoast

Summary Conclusion:

Russell Pancoast was primarily known as a Miami based architect. By the late 1930s, Pancoast, along with a number of other architects, was beginning to take an interest in Fort Lauderdale and its improving economy. Although there were a few large projects, such as the Lauderdale Beach, the Riverside and Governor's Club Hotels and Dixie Court, most projects were relatively small scale. The Cormona Apartments, which were intended as upscale seasonal rentals for winter visitors, is typical of the sort work available. Cormona Courts is representative of Pancoast's work in Fort Lauderdale at this time. The buildings also show distinctive design elements characteristic of Pancoast's work, such as the decorative metal work of balconies and stair rails. The Cormona is worthy of designation as the work of a master architect.

Historic Preservation Board Action:

For each request, the board may:

1. Approve the application as presented; or
2. Approve the application with modification; or
3. Deny the application.