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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Aristides J. Millas, Ellen J. Uguccioni. *Coral Gables Miami Riviera: An Architectural Guide*. Miami: Dade Heritage Trust, 2003. 104 pp. \$15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-9620565-1-2.

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Merrick's Grand Design

For anyone interested in the founding and building of the community planned by George Merrick in Coral Gables, Florida, this is an invaluable guide to use for a journey through this beautiful area. The text's organization by the two authors allows the architectural enthusiast to explore the community with six self-guided tours as well as providing a comprehensive historical background on the development of the district. Millas and Uguccioni both employ their expertise on this topic in such a way as to make this an accessible guide to various structures for the average reader. Millas is a professor at the University of Miami School of Architecture who teaches classes on South Florida's architecture; Uguccioni leads Coral Gables's Historic Preservation District. Both of the authors have contributed other texts to the historiography available on the architecture of Miami, and with this particular guidebook they have made their scholarly findings available to a much wider audience.

The impetus for the construction of Coral Gables in 1921 relied on the vision of the real estate developer George Merrick. The concept which Merrick relied on was the premise that a city should be holistic in its goals to include all factions of the community's development and, as the authors point out, Coral Gables "is unique in America in the completeness of its original concept and plan as a suburban community" (p. 21). Thus, Merrick accomplished his initial dictate to create this unique atmosphere in the sub-tropical region of southern Florida. The authors convincingly portray Merrick's success with the use of different sources. They drew upon various primary sources, which included promotional publications from

the era, as well as articles from professional architectural sources which touted the richness of Coral Gables's contribution to the discipline of architecture.

In addition to the authors' concise descriptions on the realization of Merrick's grand design, the text uses numerous photographs to guide the reader through the city of Coral Gables. Unfortunately, the clarity of these prints makes it difficult to pick out particular details of the Mediterranean Revival style which Merrick promoted for his dream development. A greater understanding of what Mediterranean Revival architecture looks like would be gained from reading more in-depth texts on the topic. The use of Mediterranean motifs in South Florida's architecture was not new in the early twentieth century, as its use had been espoused by the architectural vision of Addison Mizner in Palm Beach, but Merrick's vision provided that all facets of the built environment would employ this aesthetic. This factor allowed Millas and Uguccioni to divide their guidebook into sections which deal with specific geographical areas in the city such as the business district. This makes it a digestible guidebook because it allows the person who wishes to explore Coral Gables to use their time to experience the functional type of architecture which most interests them.

Overall, *Coral Gables Miami Riviera* fits into the goals of the preservationists of the late 1980s who began to draw attention to the value of South Florida's architectural heritage. It helps to widen the scope of architectural buffs who have been repeatedly pointed towards South Beach in Miami as being the site to look at for good ar-

chitecture in the region. The continuation of this impetus provided this opportunity for Millas and Uguccioni to showcase the city of Coral Gables. The more inclusive this type of scholarship becomes, as far as the audience it targets, the more it will help to promote the production of diverse guidebooks for the visitors and inhabitants of South Florida.

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