

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“A fascinating tour of the historic neighborhoods along McGregor Boulevard, blending local history and documenting Fort Myers’s architectural legacy with lavish photographs.”

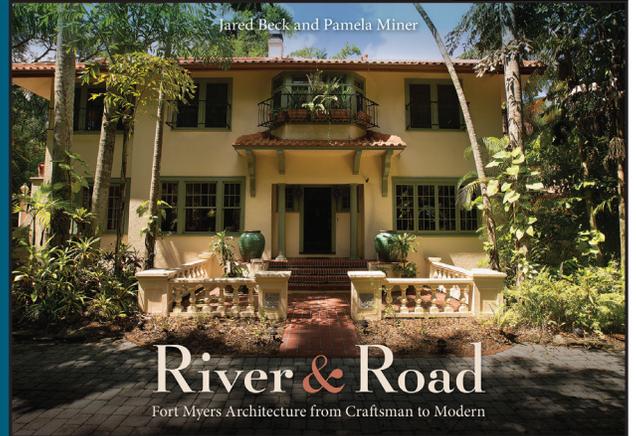
—Gerri Reaves, author of *Legendary Locals of Fort Myers*

“With its striking photographs and engaging stories of past and contemporary characters, this book captures the architectural and historical significance of houses in Fort Myers.”

—Linda Stevenson, principal architect, Stevenson Architects, Inc.

“Offers a unique historical precedent by using architecture as snapshots of time during Fort Myers’s growth and development to show how it has become the dynamic and successful city it is today.”

—Guy W. Peterson, FAIA



RIVER AND ROAD

Fort Myers Architecture from Craftsman to Modern
JARED BECK AND PAMELA MINER

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Jared Beck, AIC P, is an urban designer and community planner. Stemming from a bachelor of landscape architecture degree, the breadth of his professional skills ranges from large-scale planning to detailed architecture and design. With more than fifteen years in both private and public roles, his focus is now on reinvestment programs and projects that recognize and work within the unique built environment that exists in our communities.

Pamela Miner is a historian, educator, and museum professional. With a master's degree in history/historic preservation, she has been active in the field for more than thirty years. During Pamela's eighteen years in Missouri, her work included countywide reconnaissance surveys with the Missouri Historic Preservation Office. Pamela served as board member, vice president, and president of Missouri Preservation.



In Southwest Florida, Pamela has served as board member and president of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation. She was a key member of the restoration team at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates, where she was curator of collections and interpretation. Pamela was also adjunct professor of history at Florida Southwestern State College and has held various positions within the Collier County Museum system.

Jared Beck and Pamela Miner

are available for interviews and appearances



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Q&A

with

JARED BECK AND PAMELA MINER

authors of
River and Road

Why did you decide to tell the cultural heritage of Fort Myers through homes and architecture?

JB: To give insight into the vision and dedication of those who built South Florida, its communities, and its homes, which are endlessly fascinating. Fort Myers has a rich heritage of residents, tales, and roles in the development of South Florida that have never been so uniquely displayed.

PM: These are tangible elements which directly reflect cultural heritage.

Did you learn anything surprising about Fort Myers history while doing research for this book?

JB: The national appeal that Fort Myers had with early 19th century business magnates is largely unknown within the region.

PM: It solidified the experiences of the 1920s boom and bust period. Fort Myers is as good an example as any across the country.

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JB: The interconnected bonds between those who built the community and their spirit of togetherness and vision of the future town is much deeper than generally understood.

PM: Yes, the connections of the people, both past and present, who live in the river and road area were surprising, as was how the owners truly love their homes and neighborhoods. They would be hard-pressed to live anywhere else in the Fort Myers area.

You share with readers never before published views of Fort Myers homes, the owners' lives, and the stories they have to share. What was it like being granted access to these historic sights?

PM: It was genuinely an honor and a privilege. The experience of being led through the homes and outdoor spaces was awe-inspiring. Seeing individual details, furnishings, personal treasures, and everything else come together to create homes for family and friends was an amazing journey.

JB: It was an inspiring peak into the treasure chest of Southwest Florida history.

Jared, you're an urban planner and community planner, while Pam, you're a historian, educator, and museum professional. How did your different backgrounds contribute to the development of this book?

PM: As a historian with a master's degree in historic preservation, I have studied architecture, material culture, and what they tell us about lifeways. My passion is to research ways to interpret homes and educate others about them and the "stuff" within them.

My museum experience, especially with historic sites, helps me to share the value of historic homes. A home does not need to have been lived in by someone famous to tell a significant story. Fort Myers is lucky to have the Edison and Ford Estates as anchors to an area filled with historic homes. Once visitors leave the Estates, I hope they take the time to explore the surrounding neighborhoods.

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JB: My background in design and development lets me easily interpret various building styles and the functional design intent based on the era. As urban design today is based on centuries-old principles while incorporating elements developed over the decades, I understand how development periods link to previous national trends in those periods.

Did you find yourself attracted to any specific architectural style or house while writing your book?

PM: I previously owned a 1930s Craftsman Bungalow, and I still have a soft heart for that style. But, the Mid-Century Modern has grown on me. Jeff Mudgett's new creation is a gorgeous home.

JB: I believe that regardless of the style, homes are meant to be adapted to our own personalities and liking. The homes in *River and Road* reflect both an architectural period and the taste infused by the owners. I generally like all of them, but if I had to pick, the Van Tyne and the Shadow Lane houses are my favorites.

What do you hope that readers will take away from your book?

PM: I hope they'll see that Fort Myers has many stories to share that most people mistakenly believe are only textbook lessons. Life happens around us, influencing our everyday experiences. Take the time to have a Sunday walk or drive around Fort Myers and beyond to see. Be inspired to live in historic neighborhoods and to save older homes.

JB: I hope people will have a greater appreciation for the dedication those before us made to develop our community with far less convenience than we have today.

How did you manage such amazing photographs?

PM: Photographer Andrew West's eye and talent made the homes come alive more than only words could have ever done.

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River & Road



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Villa Palmera

2642 McGregor Boulevard

CLASSIFIED AS A MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL home, this Spanish-Italian-Moorish hybrid has a traditional central hall floor plan with flanking rooms. Exterior finish materials create a unique appearance not expected of the basic rectangular house form. This was one of many desirable premade (or kit) homes produced by nationally known Gordon Van Tine, a popular catalogue home manufacturer throughout the early twentieth century based in Davenport, Iowa. This selection was commonly referred to as the 535, 560, or Roberts model. Gordon Van Tine homes still exist throughout America today.

Included in the Graham-Shriver Subdivision, this property was envisioned from the beginning as a grand riverfront estate. The original lot, one hundred feet in width, extended lengthwise some six hundred feet from McGregor Boulevard to the Caloosahatchee River. With these attributes, and within minutes walking distance of Thomas Edison's winter estate Seminole Lodge and Henry Ford's neighboring winter estate, The Mangoes, this property joined the ranks of the other grand homes being constructed at the time, and furthered the recognition of McGregor Boulevard as the most prominent development corridor in the city.



The 535, or Roberts model, was easily modified to fit the homeowner's taste. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.

The basic shape of this kit home allowed regional and local influences to vary the exterior finishes, creating a variety of appearances. Regarded as grand for the time, the model included options for a first-floor sunporch, a second-floor sleeping porch, or both. These additions could be placed on one or both sides of the building. The overall size, stately design, and ability for expansion made this an appealing home for the successful family. In 1923 it could be purchased, including all materials and fixtures, for \$2,862.

Assembled circa 1924, this Roberts model features a hipped-barrel tile roof and paired symmetrical six-over-one and eight-over-one double-hung windows, which even now contain the original wavy glass. The elaborate front entry, identical to the catalogue advertisement, is topped by a bow window with five casement openings. The original owner, Charles Shriver, lived in the guesthouse and supervised during the construction phase. The Shrivens chose a side bay sunporch, with French doors leading to a terrace, as well as a second-floor sleeping porch. The home also includes a basement, extremely rare in South Florida, particularly within such close proximity to the Caloosahatchee River.

The house design smartly took full advantage of the

Home No. 535. Material Furnished Either Ready Cut or Not Ready Cut

Fine Sleeping Porch and Sun Porch in This Home

For Prices on This Home, See First Page.
Read Pages 14 to 16 for Full Description of Materials.

SPECIAL ADDED FEATURES—FURNISHED AT NO EXTRA COST
Double Floor Furnished for both floors. Clear Edge Grain Yellow Pine flooring both floors. Solid bronze cylinder front door lock set. Flower boxes as shown on plan. Mantel, dome damper, ash trap and ash pit door for fireplace.

THIS beautiful home is certain to continue a favorite with the discriminating home-builder. It will prove, wherever built, one of the community's most substantial units. Should your need suggest, and your desire permit the construction of this exceptional home, then select this plan with all the comfortable assurance that goes with it.

There is small need, if any, to impress upon you the beauty, the convenience, and excellence of this home. The exterior could not be more imposing or pleasing—it is indeed a beautiful home, inside and out.

The impressive features of the exterior are the fine proportions obtained—the broad eaves, the big stucco pillars, the heavy brackets supporting the quaint hood over the entrance; the attractive front door and side lights, the two quadruple casement sash on either side, with the two lower boxes set below them, are welcome additions that serve to intensify the fine harmony that prevails throughout.

Notice particularly the fine balance obtained in proportioning the windows of the second floor. Hold in mind, as you study this plan, the living comforts afforded by the sun porch and sleeping porch.

The living room and dining room are spacious and perfect in light and ventilation—opening from the sun porch are our beautiful French doors. You will always appreciate the fireplace with its cheer and warmth. The kitchen is a model, equipped with our kitchen case, style "D" and so handily arranged it will always be appreciated as a perfect room in a perfect home.

Through the service hall the basement is easily reached. Here there is space for the ice box and a convenient closet. Notice how easily we have arranged the approach to the second floor stairway—either from the front or rear halls.

Four bed rooms, a bath, a sewing room, with the sleeping porch provide an ideal arrangement upstairs. Besides a closet for each bed room, we have furnished our linen closet, as shown on the colored insert. Entrance to the sleeping porch is made from either chamber.

See price for sectional sash for sun porch, see back of first page.
PAINT—Unless otherwise instructed, we will furnish paint for this home same as shown in picture. We do not furnish stain for roof shingles.

Second Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

For Plumbing, Heating, Lighting for This Home, See Back of Book

Advertisement for a Gordon Van Tyne kit home. Original Gordon Van Tine sales brochure.



Elaborate fixtures adorn the central staircase on the second floor landing. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.

environment. Deep eaves provide partial protection from the sun while allowing in natural light. The window placement accommodates the cross-circulation of air, and the orientation toward the gardens, instead of the road, utilizes the expansive outdoors as additional living space.

Modifications and additions over the decades include a single-story family room and office, a multid denominational chapel with three 1902 stained glass windows, and a courtyard area that includes a pool with a waterfall, made of Florida limestone. Decorative elements placed throughout the interior reflect the whimsy and carpentry skills of various owners.

Equally impressive are the elaborate grounds. A tropical, almost jungle-like setting has evolved over the decades since the lot was cleared in the 1920s. Although the riverfront portion was sold off from the home parcel in 1944, it has maintained a commanding presence. Today, barely visible from the adjacent, heavily travelled McGregor Boulevard, the home sits nestled within a haven of mature trees, palms laden with epiphytes, festive bromeliads, tropical foliage, and bamboo. The yard provides a refuge for birds, mammals, and reptiles—especially since it is typically ten degrees cooler under the canopy,



The gracious living room provides ample space for entertaining. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.



ABOVE: Wood elements such as the beams and wide baseboards reflect the Spanish influence. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.

RIGHT: A bright space for an afternoon read. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.



according to longtime owner Marnie Paulus. Meandering walkways pass statues, massive carved wooden gates, water features, sitting areas, and terraces made even more romantic when illuminated by strings of tiny lights. Despite its origins as a mail order catalogue home, this property creates a secluded magical retreat.

Unlike many early estates in the city's history that remained with the original families for generations, this property has been bought and sold many times over the decades. With transactions occurring on average every four years for the first forty years of its existence, the ownership history adds to both the property's uniqueness and its intrigue.

The sales history includes a sense of loss and mystery, including a sale by the Shrivvers at the height of the Florida land boom in 1925. Presumably a result of the real estate crash shortly thereafter, the home was sold back to the Shrivvers in 1928. Sales records indicate that Eva Shriver, now widowed, assumed all debt on the property and continued to own it until selling it for a second time in 1936 to her neighbor, William McGuire. The year 1938 subsequently brought more curiosity as the property was again sold on February 21 to Carrie Seay, McGuire's niece, who promptly resold the home to her uncle one day later.



Stained glass windows dating from 1902 adorn the on-site chapel. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.



Heavily carved legs anchor the kitchen island. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.

We can only speculate why this transaction occurred; perhaps it reflected a change of heart or creative financing.

Harold and Mildred Crant owned the home from 1950 until 1965. A significant tie to regional history lies with

the Crants and their four children. Locals and longtime visitors alike know the iconic Shell Factory. Originally built in Bonita Springs, the building, designed in the shape of an orange, was the must-stop destination to purchase



The Asian-influenced door leads to the tropical oasis. Photograph courtesy of Andrew West.