

Flipse / O'Donnell House

A remarkable example of Mediterranean Revival style architecture with some Mission style influences built in 1917 is alive and well right here in Palmetto Bay. The house embodies an important transitional point in the architectural history of the County representing one of the earliest examples of Mediterranean Revival although more modest than most other homes built at the time. The Flipse/O'Donnell House appears to derive more influence from the Mission style, with its parapet, flat roof and tile coping, than many later Mediterranean structures.

The home was built by Louis Flipse, an agricultural teacher from Milwaukee, Wisconsin who came to Homestead in 1909 in search of a climate that provided a longer growing season. Once in Homestead, Mr. Flipse became close friends with Mr. William J. Krome, surveyor and chief engineer for the Florida East Coast Railroad. Mr. Krome was interested in tropical horticulture, especially the cultivation of mangos and avocados. Mr. Flipse and Mr. Krome purchased acreage in Rockdale for the purpose of experimenting and propagating these tropical fruits. The land that they purchased to establish their groves was originally a portion of the land grant from the United States Government to Dr. Henry Perrine.

Once Mr. Flipse and Mr. Krome planted mango and avocado groves, they cut a dirt road through the property which is today Coral Reef Drive. Mr. Krome's property was on the north side of the road in an area now known as the Mangowood today. Mr. Flipse's property was on the south side of Coral Reef Drive, SW 152nd Street, in what is today the Southwood area. The coral rock walls dividing the property were built by a stone mason, Mr. Heavenridge, in 1919 of which portions of the walls remain along Coral Reef Drive.

In 1917, Mr. Flipse commissioned Miami architect Henry La Pointe to design a home for his family. The gardens, pond and cascading waterfall that once surrounded the property were designed by his close friend and partner in a papaya plantation venture, Dr. David Fairchild. The O'Donnell's purchased the residence and avocado groves in 1950. The home has been featured on the TV show, "This Old House."