

Coral Gables news

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Afternoon of refined French snacking in a Mediterranean Revival landmark

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The afternoon was picture perfect and El Jardin was at its finest.

The Carrollton School staff recently welcomed the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables to a “private peek” inside El Jardin, a historical gem built by Kiehnel & Elliott — prolific architects during the 1920s.

Several HPACG members own Kiehnel & Elliott homes, including two families that attended the event: Beau Genovese and Tom Cabelka, and Carol and Randall Berg. Others in attendance included Coral Gables historian Arva Parks McCabe; preservationist and founder of Dade Heritage Trust Dolly MacIntyre; City of Coral Gables Historical Resources Department Officer Kara Kautz and family; artists Carlos Barbon, Alice Goldhagen, Penny Thurer; antiquarians Ernest Coscia and Tom Reardon; Maria Alicia and Ajit Asrani; Carol and Jerry Cope, and Carrollton Headmistress Sr. Suzanne Cooke.

Nearly 60 guests enjoyed discovering and basking in the beauty of the grounds — from the stately main house to the ornate pool grotto and beyond.

The El Jardin living room was elegantly set for “le goûter” refined French snacking in keeping with a tradition celebrated at Carrollton, one of 23 network schools under the Society of the Sacred Heart established in France by St. Madeleine Sophie Barat in 1800. Le goûter, pronounced “luh goo tay”, happens around 4 p.m. and is part of the French culture as much as afternoon tea is in England.

The afternoon also celebrated the ongoing restoration work at El Jardin. Joanna



UM Professor and Carrollton trustee Joanna Lombard (left) is pictured with HPACG president Karelia Martinez Carbonell.

Lombard, UM Professor of Architecture, and a returning Carrollton trustee, gave a standing-room-only presentation that took the audience on a narrative — meticulously weaving historical context and historical significance of the El Jardin property and its continued and subsequent role in Miami. She also discussed the Herculean task of balancing the needs of a historical property with the needs of an active educational institution.

A limited number of books, *Great Houses of Florida* co-authored by Joanna and Beth Dunlop, former architectural writer for the *Miami Herald*, were available for sale with proceeds benefitting the El Jardin Fund at Carrollton. The book features a section on the El Jardin property.

In one article, Lombard observed, “...next to Vizcaya, El Jardin is South Florida’s greatest architectural treasure.” Dunlop added, “It is a mandate. Stewardship brings with it larger responsibilities...not just to the present, but to the past and future. El Jardin poses the

opportunity.”

Built in 1918 along a ridge of oolitic limestone, El Jardin expresses the broad training of its architect, Richard Kiehnel of Kiehnel and Elliott. Kiehnel, in a September 1928 article for *Tropical Home and Garden*, referred to the house as a “progenitor of the Modern Mediterranean style home.” Kiehnel became the architect for many landmark buildings, including the Coral Gables Congregational Church, Miami Senior High School, and the Coral Gables Elementary School. The landmark house is considered the first real Mediterranean Revival building still remaining in South Florida and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Founded in 1991, HPACG is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to promote the understanding and importance of historic resources and their preservation. Visit HPACG at www.historiccoralgables.org.