ADDISON MIZNER LEAVES HIS MARK

TOPIC: Addison Mizner and Palm Beach Architecture

AIM: Students will become familiar with and be able to recognize design elements of the Mediterranean-Revival style houses and other buildings inspired by Addison Mizner. They will use these concepts to make a pictorial town of their own creation.

RELATED SUBJECT AREAS: Art and Social Studies

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS:

Social Studies: SS.A.1.2.1 SS.A.1.2.2 Visual Arts: VA.B.1.2.1 VA.C.1.2.1
SS.A.6.2.3 SS.B.1.2.2 VA.C.1.2.2 VA.D.1.2.2
VA.E. 1.2.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

One of the features of Boca Raton and South Florida, which is clearly recognized, is its unique style of architecture. Addison Mizner is one man whose vision left that unique mark. He lived in Central America and Spain so he was greatly influenced by the Mediterranean style. He came to Palm Beach County during the South Florida land boom and in 1918 he began to build elegant homes for wealthy families. His buildings could be identified by the handmade red barrel tiles he used for roofs and the rough textured stucco walls. He made extensive use of wrought iron decorative grills and lightening fixtures. The windows and door frames were made of cast stone. There were arches and columns and even towers. Much of the materials used in his buildings were made in his factories in West Palm Beach. The furniture for the homes was either imported from the Mediterranean or built in Mizner’s workshop. Mizner’s business created a hub of employment opportunities in construction, design, and other related services.

Mizner was appointed the town planner for the developing Boca Raton in 1925. His dream was to build a resort city of residential areas, main streets, shops, a park, a plaza, a railway station, a hotel, a bridge, and a canal. Unfortunately, the South Florida land boom came to an end and he was able to complete his plans. There are several examples not only in Boca Raton, but throughout Palm Beach County that act as reminders of the old Mizner era, such as the Women’s Club of Boyton Beach and the Gulf Stream Club on A1A in Gulf Stream. And this popular style is still often incorporated in new buildings throughout Boca Raton and other cities throughout South Florida.

MOTIVATION: Display several pictures of buildings by Addison Mizner.

MATERIALS: Mizner building photographs, photos of other houses or students’ own houses, drawing instruments, and butcher block paper.
PROCEDURE:
Students examine the pictures of Mizner buildings and create a chart of common characteristics (such as arches, columns, open breezeways, towers, wrought iron, tile, etc.). They may bring in photos of their own homes to compare to Mizner style of buildings in a Venn diagram. The class will then compile a list of the types of buildings they would need (i.e. houses, shops, schools, etc.) to develop a small town. Small groups of students will plan various buildings, making sure each has some elements with Mizner’s influence. Then each group will add their buildings to a large mural on butcher block paper.

PHOTOS:

*Cloister Inn Yacht Landing* - after noting the architectural style points, ask students why Mizner would want to build on Lake Boca Raton and make his hotel accessible by water? (Answer: One of the many reasons is the Florida waterways were still a main transportation system during the 1920s.)

*Cloister Inn Breezeway* - after noting the architectural style points of interests, ask the students why would open walkways and open porches that are used as extended rooms be of interest to people who visit and/or live in Florida. (Answer: One of the reasons was to help keep cool with the Florida breezes due to no air conditioning in this time period.)

EXTENSIONS:

✓ Prepare a “guided” tour of your class town for parents, including historically correct information.

✓ Tour a Boca Raton historic site that demonstrates the Mediterranean-Revival architectural style such as Town Hall or the F.E.C. Railway station.

✓ Visit the Old Floresta Historic District neighborhood.

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Written by: Claire Greene and Sue Baillie (Poinciana Elementary School), Boca Raton Historical Society volunteers.
Revised by: Laurie-Lynn Jones, Museum Educator Consultant & Florida State Certified in Elementary Education.

Awarded: Outstanding Educational Program Award from the Florida Historical Confederation for lesson plans on local history created for area teachers.
Gulf Stream Golf Club
Gulf Stream, Florida
Residence of Wilson Mizner
Palm Beach, Florida