

Villagers' Home Tour on Dec. 7 to showcase Shenandoah area



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Kelley Schild

TO MIAMI'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Participants will see a different side of Miami as they visit six uniquely different homes from the 1920s and '30s. The private residences will be showcased during The Villagers' Annual Home Tour in the culturally significant historic Shenandoah neighborhood on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"We hope our tour will focus attention on this often-unseen Miami treasure," said Kelley Schild, Villagers president.

The vibrant community, located in the heart of Miami, was planned in the 1920s and features an unusual blend of architectural styles. House types in the neighborhood include Craftsman, Art Deco Moderne, Mission, Coral Rock, Mediterranean Revival, and Sears' kit Colonial houses. Unusual in South Florida, kit homes were purchased from companies like Sears and Montgomery Ward, delivered, and assembled onsite.

"We selected Shenandoah for this year's tour because the neighborhood's history is in danger of being erased by the demolition of original homes," Schild explained.

Shenandoah has the largest concentration of buildings from the 1920s and '30s in Miami, not in the National Register of Historic Places or designated locally.

"Right in our midst, we have a culturally significant neighborhood that has survived more than 100 years and is facing an imminent risk," Schild said. "The pride of the Shenandoah homeowners for their neighborhood is evident. Their love for their homes and enthusiasm to share the history is what historic preservation is all about. As one homeowner aptly explained 'I am just a caretaker of our home, until the next generation.'"

A study by the Dade Heritage Trust reported the population has always been as diverse as the architecture, with the many climate-adapted home styles reminding residents "where they grew up, from old Cuba to the mid-west. It makes people happy."

Greek influence will be evident when guests visit the stunning St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral that will serve as the site for The Villagers' popular Holiday Boutique. This seventh historic location will be open until 4 p.m.

featuring gift items, plants, Villager Angels, baked goods, handmade items, and vintage jewelry. A pop-up café will be on-site.

Participants may drive between the venues or take advantage of The Villagers courtesy hop-on/hop-off buses that will travel between the venues throughout the tour.

"The buses are just one of the new features we are offering this year," Schild said. "We are especially pleased to also have limited tickets for an additional one-hour walking tour by Dr. Paul S. George, HistoryMiami Museum's resident historian."

Many prominent early residents called Shenandoah home, including Miami's first mayor, John Reilly, whose home is still standing, now repurposed as a Russian Orthodox Church. The area was very popular with Jewish residents and is remembered as Miami's "premier Jewish neighborhood" from 1925 through the early 1960s. In the 1960s as Cuban residents began arriving in Miami, they moved with their families into the neighborhood.

Marion Manley, Florida's first female architect designed several homes in the area, including that of her brother Lester Manley who was the developer of the community.

This is the 39th year of the popular tour offered by The Villagers, Miami's oldest preservation organization. Members will be on hand to explain each private home's distinctive history and features.

Registrants will receive tour directions with their ticket purchase. Proceeds support the preservation and protection of historic sites in Miami-Dade County. Since 1966, The Villagers have awarded 266 grants to more than 85 organizations and 200-plus university scholarships to advance historic preservation.

Early bird tickets purchased through Nov. 17 are \$65. Full details and tickets are available from members of The Villagers, or by visiting the website at Villagers' Historic Home Tour at www.eventbrite.com/e/villagers-historic-home-tour-to-showcase-a-different-side-of-miami-tickets-1024910052557.

For information about the full scope of The Villagers' 58-year preservation legacy, visit www.thevillagersinc.org.