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Vizcaya



Vizcaya

Miami

Built in 1916 by Architect F. Burrell Hoffman; Restoration Wolfberg Alvarez & Partners, 1978-1989; Restorations R.J. Heisenbottle Architects, 2002-2011; Skylight replacement, MC Harry & Associates, 2012.

Initiated by James Deering, industrial magnate of International Harvester farm machinery. The site grew from 130 to 180 acres, including a working farm, and required over one thousand workers to build, making it the most important construction project of its time. Deering was encouraged and supported by Paul Chalfin, a classically trained painter whose duties extended to escorting Deering through Europe on a grand tour. Villa Vizcaya comprises a central courtyard around which loggias connect four corner towers, lending the structure its fortified appearance. The influence of the Italian Renaissance in both the home and gardens was pervasive, although native materials were used throughout. The house addressed the surrounding landscape differently on each of its four sides.

Miami's hammock and the formal gardens were located to the south. The house was intended to appear as an Italian estate that had stood for 400 years and had been occupied and renovated by several generations of a family. It has 34 decorated rooms with 15th through 19th century antique furnishings and art objects. The house appears to be only two stories high but between the main public rooms and the bedrooms, there is an intervening level with 12 rooms for servants and service. The expansive gardens combine elements of Renaissance Italian and French designs. Following restorations by Wolfberg Alvarez & Partners, 1978-1989; R.J. Heisenbottle Architects on the restoration of the Garage and Blacksmith Shop, the East & West Gate Lodge buildings and the Main House Café & Museum Shop in 2011; and the Skylight replacement by MC Harry & Associates, 2012, today the site covers 50 acres in the heart of Miami and Biscayne Bay.