

SHENANDOAH

Eighth-graders give local history lesson

■ Kids gave tours of the 1942 building that houses their middle school as they learned about local architectural history.

BY SAM STANTON

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Shenandoah Middle School invited the public for a history lesson from eighth-graders last month. After learning about the architectural roots of Miami in general and their school in particular, they gave visitors a PowerPoint presentation and tour of the school.

The students studied the Work Projects Administration, WPA-era architecture and Miami Mid-Century Modern, MiMo architecture as part of their Museums Magnet program.

But to learn about the WPA, the students didn't have to go far. Shenandoah Middle School, 1950 SW 19th St., was built in 1942 in Spanish Colonial Revival style with the help of WPA construction workers.

Over the decades, there have been several additions to the original building, like the auditorium, added in the 1950s. There have also been structural improvements, like fixing the roof after Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, but as students pointed out in their presentation, the building could use a little work.

The 20-year-old coral paint on the façade looks weathered.

"We need to return it to its old glory," Shenandoah students said in unison to close their presentation.

Fred Darwick, who graduated from Shenandoah in 1949, came to reminisce about what the school was like when it was almost new, was a proponent of painting the school its original blue and cream.



PHOTOS DANIEL BOCK/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

WINDOW TO THE PAST: Shenandoah Middle School seventh-graders — from left, Aleyah Alford, 13, Michelle Rodriguez, 14, and Angel Castro, 12 — check out a photograph of the first field day at the school during an architectural tour of the building on March 25. Built in 1942 by the Work Projects Administration, the school is a sample of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal efforts to end the Great Depression.

WPA grew out of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and lasted from 1935 until World War II, when MiMo became the dominating local architectural style. The administration provided jobs — mostly for men, coming out of the Great Depression — while constructing and preserving buildings of public and cultural value.

In addition to Shenandoah, other WPA projects in the area include Coral Way Elementary, the Coral Gables Woman's Club and the Coral Gables Museum, which used to be the city's police and fire station.

John Stack, a Florida International University professor and co-editor of *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1932-1940*, said the WPA was an attempt to get America moving forward again by providing

communities with the wherewithal to do it.

"WPA was playing to the region with their own twist," said Stack. "They saw Miami as a tourist region, so they played to that."

Other WPA projects range from North Miami's Greynolds Park, to Matheson Hammock, to projects as big as the Orange Bowl.

"Our ... administration really wanted to capture the regional diversity of the United States," said Stack. "There was a clear agenda of trying to help communities and regions develop, which has stuck with those regions since that time for both good and bad in the sense of tourism."

Museum Magnets lead teacher Maria Jimenez said Shenandoah Middle was awarded the grant for the magnet program six years ago, and they've been using museums and the humani-

ties in all aspects of their education program ever since.

"For the last two years,



SHARING MEMORIES: Fred Darwick, an alumnus from 1949, shows off his class yearbook to history teacher Terri Herrera during the tour of Shenandoah Middle School.

we've found partners like Coral Gables and Teri D'Amico," a local interior designer, said Jimenez. "We have a really unique program, different from other magnet schools."

The first floor of one of the newer additions to the school is dedicated to student artwork. Here, the eighth-graders' MiMo pho-

tography is on display.

Daniel Regalado, 14, photographed a pastel yellow Bay Harbor Islands home.

"I found it cool how they did the angles and stuff," said Daniel.

And he said that although he's learned about MiMo features, and sometimes recognizes them, he might need a little more work before he's able to detect the buildings on his own.

To learn about MiMo, the kids took a field trip to Bay Harbor Islands, where D'Amico showed them The Mediterranean, The Dexter Building and some Bay Harbor homes and taught them about cut-outs, cheese holes, asymmetry and angles typical of the post-World War II style.

Maggie Rivers, 13, could recite all of these details and more after the trip.

"MiMo introduced new materials like aluminum they couldn't use before the war," Maggie explained. She also remembered why designers chose certain colors.

"They usually keep it clean white so it can be relaxing," said Maggie. "It was supposed to give a hope for a better future, a getaway."



LOOK OF THE TIMES: The façade of Shenandoah Middle School features pediments, pilasters and arched windows, all characteristic of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture.