



George H. Bail

George Hamlin Bail was born on August 6, 1921, in Cleveland, Ohio. His family moved to Fort Myers in the early 1930s, and George graduated from Fort Myers High School in 1939. Not ready to settle down, George jumped a freighter to see the world after graduating from high school. When he returned, he spent six months in his father's architectural office learning to draft. It was then he knew his father's profession would become his own.

He headed to Princeton University, where he earned an A.B. degree in 1943. During the summers, he worked back in Fort Myers as a laborer for M.M. Cornwell, a general contractor, and as an assistant for his father's firm of Bail, Horton and Associates on survey parties and as an architectural and engineering draftsman. Then WWII intervened, and he served in the U.S. Army Field Artillery from 1943 to 1946.

After the war he returned to Princeton to earn a M.F.A. degree in Architecture, studying under Jean Labatut, and graduating in 1948. At Princeton, he met a number of the most influential architects of the era, including Wright, Gropius, Saarinen, Neutra, and Mies van der Rohe, who visited or lectured at the school during his tenure as a graduate student.

Returning to Fort Myers, George worked with his father, Frank W. Bail, for 16 years. Fort Myers wasn't really growing at that time, so he found himself working on projects all over the state, including the master plan and a high rise dormitory for Florida State University, large projects for the military, the Army Corps of Engineers and even a NASA tracking station. He became a partner in Bail, Horton & Associates in 1955. In 1966 he joined W.R. Frizzell Architects, and rose to become president of the firm after Frizzell's death. He retired, as president, in 1987.

George's father had bought land with a small lagoon on the Caloosahatchee, which he named "Cajuput Cove", and, in the mid-1950s, George designed houses there for his father, himself and his sister, his wife's parents and her aunt. He created a unique compound of homes that took advantage of the river location, the natural breezes, and the spectacular views – as the picture, taken at sunset, shows.



George has served as president of the Southwest Florida Chapter of the AIA and on the National AIA Committee on Regional Development and Natural Resources. He has also served as a director of the Lee County Alliance of the Arts and as a director of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce and member of its Area Development Committee.

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George married Meryon S. Mitchell on May 7, 1949. Meryon was born on April 20, 1918 in Akron, Ohio. She attended Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. Meryon taught ballet and modern dance for 25 years in the dance studio in her and George's Cajuput Cove house. George and Meryon have three daughters – Milne Cato, Laura Wilson, and Muriel Redifer, and five grandchildren. Milne and Laura followed their mother into a career of dance and



Meryon (Mitchell) Bail

teaching, while Muriel practices architecture in Sarasota. Muriel's daughter is becoming a fourth-generation architect via Virginia Tech while one of Laura's sons already has his BA in Architecture.

George's parents were Frank Wooster Bail, born July 3, 1881, in Wellsville, Ohio, and Florence, born April 24, 1891, also in Wellsville. Frank attended high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and graduated with a B.A in architecture, with a minor in fine arts, from Columbia University in 1917. While at Columbia, on weekends, he did watercolor renderings of homes for local realtors. He served in WWI, and was severely injured, losing the use of his right hand. He learned to draw again with his left hand.

After two years in Army hospitals, Frank worked as an architect, getting business from local Cleveland businessmen who wished to support veterans. In 1920, he was City Architect in Cleveland, and served on the city's Master Plan Commission from 1924 to 1928. He formed the F.W. Bail Co., Architects & Engineers in Cleveland, as a corporation, and his investor-directors were instrumental in providing leads and generating business. Frank's designs while in Cleveland included the Loraine County TB Hospital, 1922, The Fifth Church of Christian Science at 11625 Lake Avenue, 1926, The Juvenile Courts Group, 1924, the Lake Shore Hotel, 1925, and the Ohio State Office Building, Columbus, Ohio, 1929.

However, work in Cleveland dried up during the Depression, and in 1933 he left for Fort Myers, Florida to "go fishing". He also wrote a book, "A Man in Arms", which was published in 1935. But he was too good an architect to remain idle for long, and in 1937 he opened an office in Fort Myers, at Hendry and First, with his brother Ralph. By 1940, new military construction was needed throughout the state, and Freeman Horton, an engineer from Bradenton, partnered with the Bails to form Bail, Horton and Associates, Architects and Engineers. The firm opened an additional office at 306 West Adams Street in Jacksonville, and during the war years designed numerous training camps, airfields and naval installations from Homestead to Pensacola.

Frank died on April 27, 1964, in Fort Myers; Florence died on December 29, 1984, in Wilson, North Carolina, where she had moved to live with her daughter, Florence Jane Falk.

Meryon's parents were George Evans Mitchell, born 1888 in Aurora, Indiana, and Blanche Eynon, born 1890 in Delaware. George studied architecture at Carnegie Mellon University. Blanche was a jeweler and a horsewoman. They married in 1917, and in 1920 were living in Akron, Ohio, and George was working as an architect. By 1930, they had moved to Cleveland Heights, Ohio. George had formed the firm of Warner & Mitchell, Architects, and the firm designed the art deco Cleveland Criminal Courts Building in 1931. During the war years, George was employed by J. Gordon Turnbull Inc., 1301 Citizens Building, Cleveland, as Consulting Architect. They moved to Fort Myers in 1956, and purchased a lot in Frank Bail's Cajuput Cove development. George Mitchell died, aged 103, on March 11, 1992, in Fort Myers.

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George Bail was the architect of record on churches, hospitals, nursing homes, college buildings, condominiums, private residences, commercial and industrial buildings, car dealerships, offices, jails, and motels. His principal works include:

While with Bail, Horton and Associates:

Cajuput Cove Residences, mid-1950s

Master Plan, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 1954

Jet Engine Overhaul Plant, Brookley AFB, 1955
 Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Drive-In Church, Bradenton, 1956
 Transformer Repair Plant, Westinghouse Electric Corp., Baldwin, 1958
 Satellite Tracking Station, NASA, Fort Myers, 1959
 Manufacturing Plant and Office Building, Electronic Communications Inc., St. Petersburg, 1960
 Missile Tracking Station, USAF, Marco Island & Cudjoe Key, 1960
 Special Assembly Building, Cape Kennedy, 1961
 Villas Sheraton, Fort Myers, 1962

While with W.R. Frizzell Architects, Inc.:

St. Joseph Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Port Charlotte, 1966
 Buddy Braun Chevrolet Cadillac Agency, Fort Myers, 1968
 Desoto County Jail, Arcadia, 1970
 Creciente Condominium, Fort Myers Beach, 1972-74
 Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Collier County, 1976
 Lee Memorial Hospital Additions, Fort Myers, 1976 & 1980
 Johnson Paints Store, Fort Myers, 1978
 Gulfside Place Condominium, Sanibel, 1978-79
 Edison Mall, Fort Myers, 1978-80 (additions and remodeling)
 Medical Office Building, Lee Memorial Hospital, 1986

The following are some of George's most notable works:



**Frank & Florence Bail Residence,
1950**

This large two-story ivory brick home features a living room cantilevered over the river for views up, down and across. Every room had through ventilation and a view of the river or the adjoining lagoon.

Additions and remodeling by later owners substantially have changed the original character of the home, giving it a Spanish flavor.



George & Meryon Bail Residence, 1954 (demolished)

This is a unique U-shaped house – one wing each for living, cooking and sleeping. Strategically located around a courtyard, the orientation captured the view and the breeze. Each wing was only one room deep to maintain continuous airflow.

The living unit was a multipurpose living space located on the edge of the river. It served foremost as living room and a dance studio, but over

the years filled numerous other functions – a temporary sanctuary for Sunday services of a start-up church, a banquet hall, an intimate concert hall, and a balloon volleyball court.



Master Plan, FSU, Tallahassee, 1954

The master plan converted the existing women's teachers college (in the foreground) to a coeducational State university.

New academic buildings joined the existing ones along the right side – high-rise dormitories on the far right, the Doak Campbell Stadium on the

far left, and athletic buildings in the center. Jean Labatut, director of design at the Princeton School of Architecture, served as consultant on this project. The present university has been expanded far beyond the limits shown in this model.



Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church, Bradenton, 1956

This was a drive-in church designed to accommodate worshippers parked in their cars, while simultaneously seating several hundred people indoors.

The pulpit faced directly out toward the parked cars, while the indoor

congregation faced the pulpit at an angle from the sides. Sunday school classrooms were on the first level.



Villas Sheraton, Fort Myers, 1962 (since remodeled)

This project was planned so that the tropically landscaped courtyard and pool would attract passing motorists.

The motel has three large meeting rooms which can be combined into one space. The kitchen is equipped to serve banquets as well as the dining room and lounge, which overlook the courtyard.



Medical Office Building, Lee Memorial Hospital, Fort Myers, 1986

The 1986 building, shown in the picture at left, contains administrative departments and two floors of doctors' offices.

Earlier work from 1976 to 1980 at Lee Memorial, shown at right, included the addition of the 6th, 7th, and 8th floors to the main hospital, emergency department additions, and a completely revamped kitchen.



St. Joseph Nursing & Rehab Center, Port Charlotte, 1966

Run by the Felician Sisters, this 102-bed nursing facility was designed to be open and cheerful from the patient's point of view, with several sunny rooms and porches where they could congregate.

The dining room is large enough to accommodate all of the patients in wheelchairs. It has legless tables hung from the ceiling, which can be raised to the ceiling to provide an unobstructed space for meetings and entertainment.



Buddy Braun Chevrolet Cadillac Agency, Fort Myers, 1968

The main showroom is elevated, and has glass on all sides, eliminating reflections, so that the cars displayed within can be seen day and night.



Creciente Condominium, Fort Myers Beach, 1972-74

This development consists of three 9-story apartment buildings rising over a parking garage which covers most of the property.

Where not under the buildings or in the pool area, the roof of the garage is planted with grass and palm trees.



Johnson Paints Store, Fort Myers, 1978

Here, a full-height reflective glass wall and pool, combined with brightly colored stuccoed walls, create an eye-catching design appropriate for a manufacturer and seller of paints.



**Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park,
Collier County, 1976**

The park's entrance building, bathhouses, picnic pavilion, observation tower, and walkways are designed to disturb as little of the natural flora as possible.

The bathhouses (shown in the picture), though elevated above flood levels, are completely accessible, thoroughly ventilated, and use skylights for sanitation. The beach is one of the finest in Florida.



**Gulfside Place Condominium, Sanibel,
1978-79**

This is a 3-story, 82-unit, luxury beachfront condominium.

Use of city water for lawns is not permitted on Sanibel, so rainwater is collected from the roofs and stored in a large cistern under the tennis courts

for watering the lawns and the extensive landscaping. A porous concrete, through which rainwater will pass, was used for all exterior parking areas.

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Photos of Meryon Bail and the Cajuput Cove houses courtesy of George Bail

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