

3199

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DEC 19 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Entrance to Central Miami
other names/site number Coral Gables Wayside Park

2. Location

street & number West of Red Road at SW 34th & SW 35th Streets
city, town N/A
state Florida code FL county Dade code 025 zip code N/A

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local (checked)
Category of Property: structure (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 3, Noncontributing 0, Total 3
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida Department of State
Date: 12/12/88

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register
Signature of the Keeper: Nelson Byrum
Date of Action: 1/19/89

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: park

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Other: Medieval Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Stucco
Stone: limestone
roof _____
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary:

The Coral Gables Wayside Park is a rectangular, landscaped area of approximately one and one half acres defined by Red Road on the east and masonry walls with towers on the north, west and south. It is transected east and west by the Coral Gables Waterway, which forms a small pool in the center of the park, and by S.W. 34th Street and S.W. 35th Street to the north and south of the canal respectively, creating four roughly equal grass covered open spaces, one of which is partially shaded by oak and gum trees. The predominant structural elements are the Medieval Revival stuccoed concrete block walls and flanking towers. Originally constructed during the 1920s Florida Boom to serve as the entrance to the planned community of Central Miami, the Park, wall, and towers retain their essential architectural and structural integrity with only minor alteration.

Setting:

The main entrance to what was intended to be the city of Central Miami is located on the west side of Red Road, at S.W. 34th and S.W. 35th Streets. The Coral Gables Waterway runs east-west between the two streets; a bridge at Red Road passes over the waterway. The waterway is the central landscape feature, and the tower and wall construction are the major structural elements which marked the entrance to the development. The area surrounding the entrance is now a city park, with an open grassy area, surrounded by large shade trees, including pigeon plum, ficus, and live oak trees up to forty-two inches in diameter. The park and entranceway are in sharp contrast to the intensive single family residential development of commonplace design that occurred subsequent to the collapse of the original Central Miami project.

Although the property has changed owners over the years, it has always been a park-like area. Its

See continuation sheet

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configuration, including the Coral Gables Waterway in the center, Red Road on the east, and Southwest 34th and 35th Streets (originally called North and South Waterway Drives), and the surrounding lots, is visible on a 1927 map of Coral Gables. The preservation of the park-like setting was ensured even after the failure of the Central Miami development when George Merrick, then president of the Central Miami Corporation, conveyed the 1.4 acres to Dade County specifically for "park purposes". It has remained in the hands of the Dade County Parks Department and is now known as Coral Gables Wayside Park.

Physical Appearance:

The entranceway for Central Miami was built with all the style and flair that characterized the entrances and plazas of nearby Coral Gables. The entrance consists of a curved wall set back from the west shoulder of Red Road, creating a grassy park area in front. The wall is punctuated by eight medieval looking towers. A pair of thirteen foot square towers flank the Coral Gables Waterway at the center of the composition. Pairs of nine foot towers flank S.W. 34th and 35th Streets, which parallel the north and south banks of the waterway. There the wall curves forward to terminate the composition close to the right-of-way of Red Road with two additional towers, eleven feet on each side, as shown on the site plan attached.

The Mediterranean Revival style was used in neighboring Coral Gables to create an Old World urbanism. The same Old World feeling was created for the entrance to Central Miami using a Medieval Revival style. The walls are set back, thus creating a park in front. The concept is similar to the concave, elliptical spaces flanked by embracing arms, which are typical of Italian Baroque piazzas. Here, it is the Coral Gables Waterway, rather than a church or monument as in a European city, that serves as a focal point. The same theme was used in the Country Club Prado Entrance of Coral Gables. In the Prado Entrance, however, a promenade with fountains and pergolas rather than a canal, provides a central axis.

The architecture itself is inspired by medieval fortifications. Square towers, built of concrete blocks

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faced in rough textured stucco, are mounted on slightly projecting bases of oolitic limestone. Limestone is also used as quoins on corners and on "distressed" areas of the stucco, to give the appearance of surfaces cracked by age, and exposing the "structure" underneath. A feeling of strength is reinforced by the solid walls pierced by tall, narrow second story window slits, secured by vertical iron bars. Doors leading to the interiors have been blocked in or boarded up in all but one of the towers. Originally they were of vertical planks with iron strap hinges.

The designs of the towers vary. The most marked difference between them is in the way the structures are topped. The two central towers flanking the waterway have slightly projecting parapets with boldly projecting round turrets on all four corners. These turrets originally had conical caps, which have been smoothed out in profile to a more rounded shape. The parapet is pierced by three vertical slits that repeat the theme of the second story windows. The rest of the towers have parapets that project farther out from the main wall plane. These projections are supported on arched corbelling detail that tapers down to heart-shaped springing for the arches. The romantic spirit of the design takes full expression in these parapets, which are pierced by three hearts on each side.

The wall that spans the distance between the towers has concave shallow arches punctuated by square piers with pyramid caps. The rhythm of the piers and arches is mindful of the crenellated tops of medieval battlement walls, but the effect is greatly softened by the elongated curve of the arches.

Alterations:

The entranceway has undergone very few alterations, other than the removal of doors from the towers, and conical roofs from smaller turrets. The towers appear to be in good condition. There is substantial spalling in some areas of the wall that spans the distance between the towers. Much of the wall is defaced by graffiti. The original vegetation in the park has matured and there are now large shade trees.

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Contributing Resources:

The contributing resources include: the pool, the walls and towers, and the open green space.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

Significant Person

Edward E. Dammers

Period of Significance

1925-1936

Significant Dates

1925

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary:

The Coral Gables Wayside Park is significant under Criterion A as a reflection of the 1920s development in the Miami-Coral Gables area, under Criterion B as the only remaining tangible evidence of Edward E. Dammers' promotional career, and under Criterion C as an example of a medieval variation of the typical Florida boomtime Mediterranean Revival architectural theme.

CRITERION A

Context:

FLORIDA LAND BOOM

The onset of the First World War in Europe forced wealthy Americans to curtail their overseas travel and look to domestic lands for travel and vacation destinations. Florida tourist trade prospered as many of those who would have traveled to Europe headed to Florida for summer vacations and winter residences.

After the War, reports of large profits in real estate brought thousands of speculators to Florida. Huge tracts of land were bought and sold overnight at enormous profits. Adding to the furor for new land was the staggering undertaking of draining the Everglades to produce marketable lands for cities, towns, cattle ranches, citrus groves, and agricultural farmland.

The state was soon inundated with speculators, winter residents and retirement communities. Between 1920 and 1925, the population of Florida increased four times faster

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.4 acres

UTM References

A

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5	7	1	7	3	0
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2	8	4	16	4	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 51, Block 1, Lot 46, Block 2, Lot 36, Block 5 and Lot 13, Block 13, Amended Plat of Central Miami Part One recorded in Plat Book 10 at Page 75 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida, and those portions of SW 34th and SW 35th Streets lying contiguous with the aforesaid lots.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the towers and walls of the entranceway and the surrounding area which has been historically associated with it.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily Dieterich/Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist
 organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date December 9, 1988
 street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333
 city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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than any other state in the nation. As real estate demands increased, so did demands upon the state. Lumber was a precious commodity, particularly in South Florida; because Florida had very few manufacturing centers in the 1920s, the majority of all building materials had to be imported from other parts of the nation or other nations. Railroad, land and water transportation networks were unable to keep up with the enormous demands on the systems. By 1926, the City of Miami was so pressed to control the flow of ships in their bay, they limited ships' cargoes to agricultural materials and food supplies.

Added to these transportation problems were economic and financial difficulties caused by bad press. The practice of buying on margin, causing financial problems across the nation, was rampant in Florida. Reports of overspeculation in Florida land were reported in the press in graphic detail. The Florida Land Boom was having serious financial problems. In 1926, the sinking of a cargo ship in the Biscayne Bay forced the closing of the port to all water traffic. The resulting blow to Miami's economy heralded the beginning of the end of the Florida Land Boom in South Florida. Compounding the strain caused by the closing of the port was the overextension of the railroad lines. Railroads, already taxed by the excessive demands of a boom economy, were forced to issue their own shipping embargoes, creating more hardship on industries already overextended.

Two devastating hurricanes in 1926 and 1928 added further problems to the already financially strained state. A mid-September 1926 hurricane swept across the state destroying houses, businesses and in some cases, entire communities. A second hurricane in September 1928 killed 1800 people and left the same number injured. Damage estimates were in the hundreds of thousands. Unable to recover, many communities went bankrupt, and the Florida Land Boom came to an end.

CORAL GABLES

George Merrick, son of the Reverend Solomon Greasley Merrick, a Congregationalist minister, came to Florida in 1898 to an area today known as Coconut Grove. He and his father were successful farmers and shippers of fruits and vegetables, and eventually became the largest shippers of

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grapefruit in the Southeast. These endeavors led to financial security, and in 1906, the Merricks built the family home, "Coral Gables".

In 1921, George Merrick began his development of the then 3,000 acre tract he also called "Coral Gables". He brought together the talents of architects, landscape architects, engineers, city planners and fine artists to create the model city he envisioned. The city plan was developed by Denman Fink, the landscape artist was Frank Button of Chicago, and the principal architect was Phineas Paist. Between 1920 and 1923, Merrick invested over fifty million dollars in construction of permanent improvements. Over three million dollars was spent to advertise Merrick's "Riviera of the Tropics". Coral Gables was phenomenally successful and eclipsed other developments of its kind. Although struck by the land boom collapse, Coral Gables rebounded and remains one of Florida's most distinctive planned communities.

Historic Significance:

The Central Miami Subdivision, a project of land promoter, Edward E. "Doc" Dammers, was surveyed and platted in December 1924. It was to be built according to the same high standards as the neighboring Coral Gables, with such features as a grand entrance, deed restrictions, and pink sidewalks.

Full-page advertisements in the Miami Herald indicate Part One of Central Miami, which included 525 lots, sold out "in practically eight hours after it was placed on the market." In January 1925, Dammers announced that the 330 lots comprising Part Two would be ready about February 5th, and he predicted a complete sell-out in "three hours time." Dammers promised to spend \$3.00 on "development work" for every \$1.00 he acquired from sales of lots in Central Miami.

The years 1924 and 1925 were prosperous for many boomtime developers. Coral Gables was incorporated in early 1925 with Dammers as its first mayor. The entranceway to Central Miami was constructed sometime in 1925, using the waterway as its centerpiece. An advertisement in the January 1926 Tropic magazine shows the two central towers flanking the waterway. The entranceway was most likely

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designed by Phineas Paist or Denman Fink, the resident architects of Coral Gables at the time. The exact date of construction of the waterway is not known.

Prosperity, however, did not last -- the real estate boom collapsed in 1926. Dammers continued to advertise Central Miami, but his grand plans of creating a large community never materialized. Although his pet development had a spectacular entranceway, not much more than the stone towers and wall were ever built. A few homes dating from the late 1920s or early 1930s are present in the area, but they are of a very modest architectural style. By June 1927, Central Miami was part of the City of Coral Gables, as indicated on a contemporary map where it is referred to as "Coral Gables Western Section".

According to records from the State Division of Corporations, the E.E. Dammers Realty Corporation changed its name to the Central Miami Corporation in January 1929. Central Miami remained part of the City of Coral Gables until 1934 when a lawsuit involving taxes and services placed it within the boundaries of unincorporated Dade County. In 1936, the entrance park property was still owned by Central Miami Corporation which listed George Merrick as president, and Eunice P. Merrick as secretary. The property, approximately 1.4 acres, was conveyed to Dade County specifically for "park purposes".

Presently the property is known as Coral Gables Wayside Park, and is maintained by the Dade County Parks Department. It is of particular significance today as evidence of the early success of Dammers' development and its subsequent collapse. The property was designated a local historic site by the Dade County Historic Preservation Board in October 1987.

CRITERION B

Context:

Coral Gables Wayside Park is the most tangible evidence that remains of the work of one of Miami's most colorful and successful real estate developers and promoters. According to journalist Theodore Weigall, no description of Florida's land boom would be complete without mention of Edward "Doc"

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Dammers: "one of the most characteristic figures which the boom produced and certainly one of the most popular."

Dammers was born in Massachusetts in 1867. Before entering the real estate business, he pursued a variety of occupations: treasurer of the Forepaugh circus; director of the West Indian Exposition for the British government in Jamaica; and president of his own optical company, from whence he gained the nickname "Doc", and, according to Weigall, "amassed a large fortune." He later went to California where he became a land auctioneer and expert land appraiser.

Dammers began visiting South Florida about 1910. He lived in West Palm Beach for several years and "was at once unbelievably successful in selling lots of what were at the time regarded as utterly useless wastelands." J.N. Lummus, a prominent Miami land developer, gave Dammers his first job in Miami selling land for John Collins and Carl Fisher who were developing an area called Miami Beach. Dammers gathered a crowd of 3,000 people for the first auction of beach property held in February 1913. Interrupting his colorful harangue periodically to give away prizes of dishes, ash trays and china, Dammers drew large crowds and sold lots worth \$66,000 in just four days. Not only did he sell thousands of lots at public auctions, he invested his own money in the project and is credited with helping to make the public aware of the possibilities for the growth of Miami Beach.

Dammers subsequently conducted land auctions at other boomtime developments in the Miami area, including Riverside Heights, Ritmer's Subdivision and Twelfth Street Manors in the City of Miami. At one time he acted as a purchasing agent for four large development companies in Miami and also re-established his reputation as a land appraiser. Dammers was known as a master auctioneer throughout the state of Florida and "was the type of salesman who could make a good living selling ice cream to the Eskimos."

George E. Merrick was about to launch the development of his dream city, Coral Gables, southwest of Miami. He hired Dammers to run the first land sale for Coral Gables in November 1921. Dammers became Merrick's head salesman, and was later named general sales manager of the Coral

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Gables Development Corporation. At the peak of the Coral Gables promotion, Doc operated a sales force of 3,000 men. His salesmen loaded prospective buyers on buses and transported them from downtown Miami to what became much more than a simple real estate sale. Many photographs of early Coral Gables show Dammers standing in a wagon in the middle of a pine field or citrus grove selling home sites to an eager crowd. He continued his successful tactic of giving away sets of dishes, clocks, and other prizes to entice prospective buyers out to see what Merrick was up to in the "back country". By 1923, the sale of land in Coral Gables was in the hands of the Dammers and Harry A. Burnes Real Estate firm. Dammers was a valuable asset to Merrick and is credited with a good part of the 1924 sales record of \$13,705,897.59. Merrick built a house for Dammers in Coral Gables in 1924. The coral rock residence was designed by Merrick's cousin, well-known architect H. George Fink, and was often photographed and used in promotional material. The home still stands at 1141 Coral Way, and was designated as a local historic site by the Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board in 1978.

Coral Gables became one of the most successful real estate developments of the Florida land boom. When it was incorporated in 1925, Edward E. Dammers was elected mayor, a position he held until 1927.

Historic Significance:

In October 1924, Dammers announced his plans to start a development of his own. He would form a new million dollar firm, the Edward E. Dammers Realty Corporation, with an office at 17 East Flagler Street, and a "sales force of 100 widely experienced real estate men." Before long, he began to promote his new development, Central Miami, which was located just to the west of Coral Gables, and which he insisted would soon become the center of rapidly expanding Miami. Dammers proceeded with his project, only to be thwarted by the land boom collapse and the 1926 hurricane. He continued to advertise Central Miami in early 1927, claiming that "little damage was done by the hurricane to Coral Gables and Central Miami," but nothing besides the entranceway and few sidewalks resulted from his efforts.

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By 1927, Dammers was suffering ill health. He continued to maintain a winter home in Coral Gables, though his primary residence was in Cochrasset, Massachusetts. In November 1929, while at his house in Coral Gables, he suffered a stroke. He returned to Cochrasset as an invalid in early March, and died March 24, 1930.

CRITERION C

Context:

New styles and techniques in architecture were seen throughout Florida during the 1920s Land Boom Period as planned communities and developments sought to create exotic paradises. Florida, and in particular South Florida, was advertised nationally as a "Tropical Paradise". Planned communities flourished and counties saw their populations explode. Utopian communities borrowed from exotic locales to create thematic cities such as Opa-Locka. Gateways, faithful to a theme, or sometimes just fanciful creations, often marked the entrances to these new developments.

Dade County, in particular, experienced phenomenal growth during this 1920s boom period. Miami suburbs, such as Miami Shores Village developed by Hugh Anderson's Shoreland Company in 1924; the James Bright and Glenn Curtiss developments of Miami Springs and Opa-Locka, begun in 1924 and 1925 respectively; Carl Fisher's burgeoning Miami Beach community; and George Merrick's Coral Gables, all enticed buyers with their promise of something unique.

Moorish, Spanish, Northern Italian, Pueblo Indian, California Mission, Middle Eastern, Chinese, French, and English style elements were used with sometimes surprising results in the new developments. George Merrick chose Mediterranean Revival, with its Spanish elements, as the predominant style for his Coral Gables development. Some of the most distinctive architectural features of his City Beautiful are the four grand entrances: the Douglas entrance known as La Puerta del Sol, Granada Gate, the Commercial entrance, and the Country Club Prado entrance. These gates, in keeping with an Old World theme, emulated old Spanish city walls. Glenn Curtiss' fanciful Opa-Locka is an "Arabian Nights" planned community with medieval Moorish Revival architecture. It was originally conceived

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as a medieval English village. The architect, Bernhardt E. Muller, called it his "Robin Hood" style, and had had success with it.

Historic Significance:

The architectural style of the entranceway to Central Miami, built in 1925, is Medieval Revival with elements of citadel towers: crenelated and pierced parapets, narrow window slits, and turrets. Dammers' overall inspiration for Central Miami was Coral Gables, and the resemblance of the layout of his entranceway to the Prado entrance to Coral Gables is quite strong. He, too, used oolitic limestone and cracked stucco to create the illusion of age.

Dammers' stylistic plans for Central Miami are not known. The houses in the Central Miami area were built after Dammers' involvement in the project was over, and no stylistic description of what he envisioned has been found. It is possible that the medieval theme of his entranceway reflected the intended style for Central Miami.

Fewer than a dozen grand entrances to the planned communities of the Florida Land Boom are known to remain. Most of them were in the popular Mediterranean Revival style or had no particular style at all. The entrance to Central Miami is unique in its use of Medieval Revival architecture. With its fanciful architecture, it is a fitting reminder of its colorful creator, Edward E. Dammers, who played a significant role in the South Florida Land Boom.

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Correspondence:

LaRoue, Sam to Emily Dieterich. Personal communication and correspondence, September 1987 and January 12, 1988.

Washington, Marty to Emily Dieterich. Personal communication and correspondence.

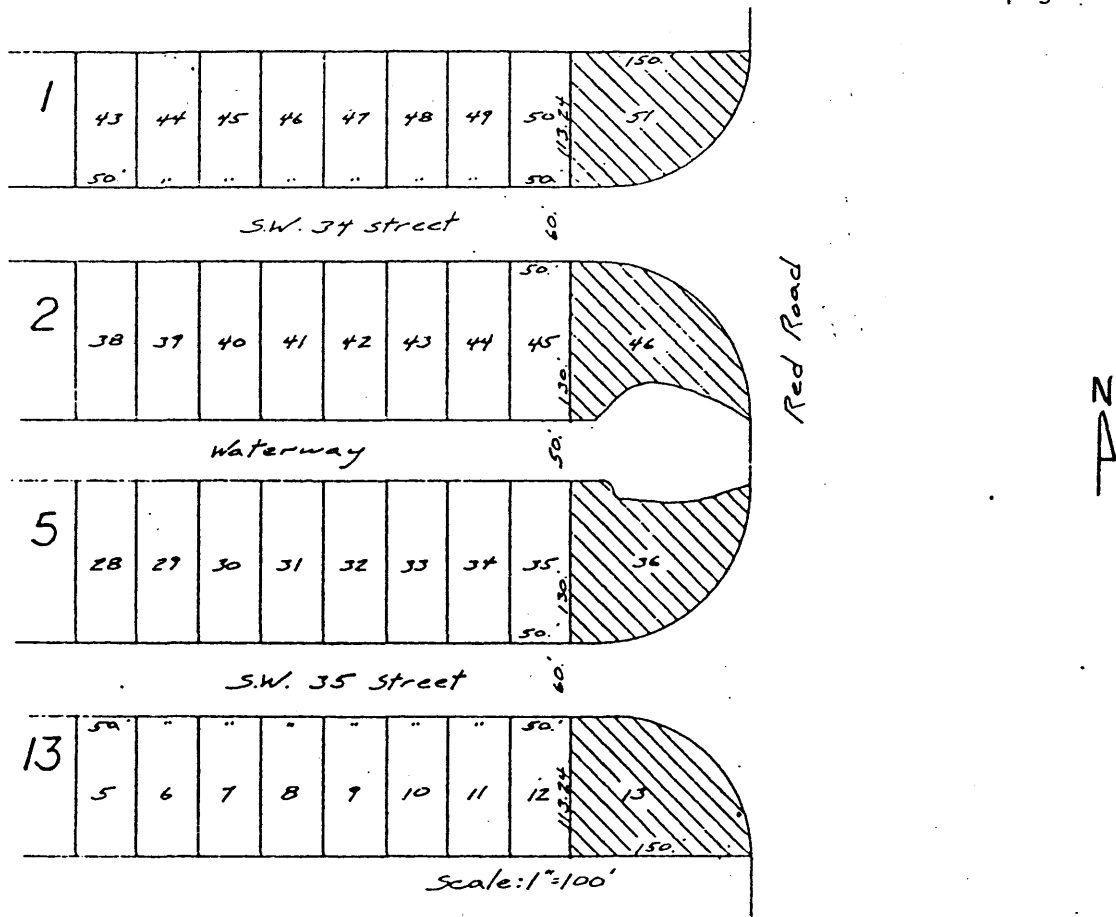
Interviews:

LaRoue, Sam. Telephone interview by Emily Dieterich, September, 1987.

Uguccione, Ellen. Interview by Emily Dieterich, September, 1987.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS:

Dade County, Florida. Records Library. Deed Abstracts, Warranty Deed, Book 4757, page 170.



Sketch of Survey

Lot 51, Block 1, Lot 46, Block 2, Lot 36, Block 5 and Lot 13, Block 13.
 Amended Plat of Central Miami Part One recorded in Plat Book 10
 at Page 75 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida and those portions
 of S.W. 34 street and S.W. 35 street lying contiguous with the aforesaid lots.

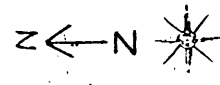
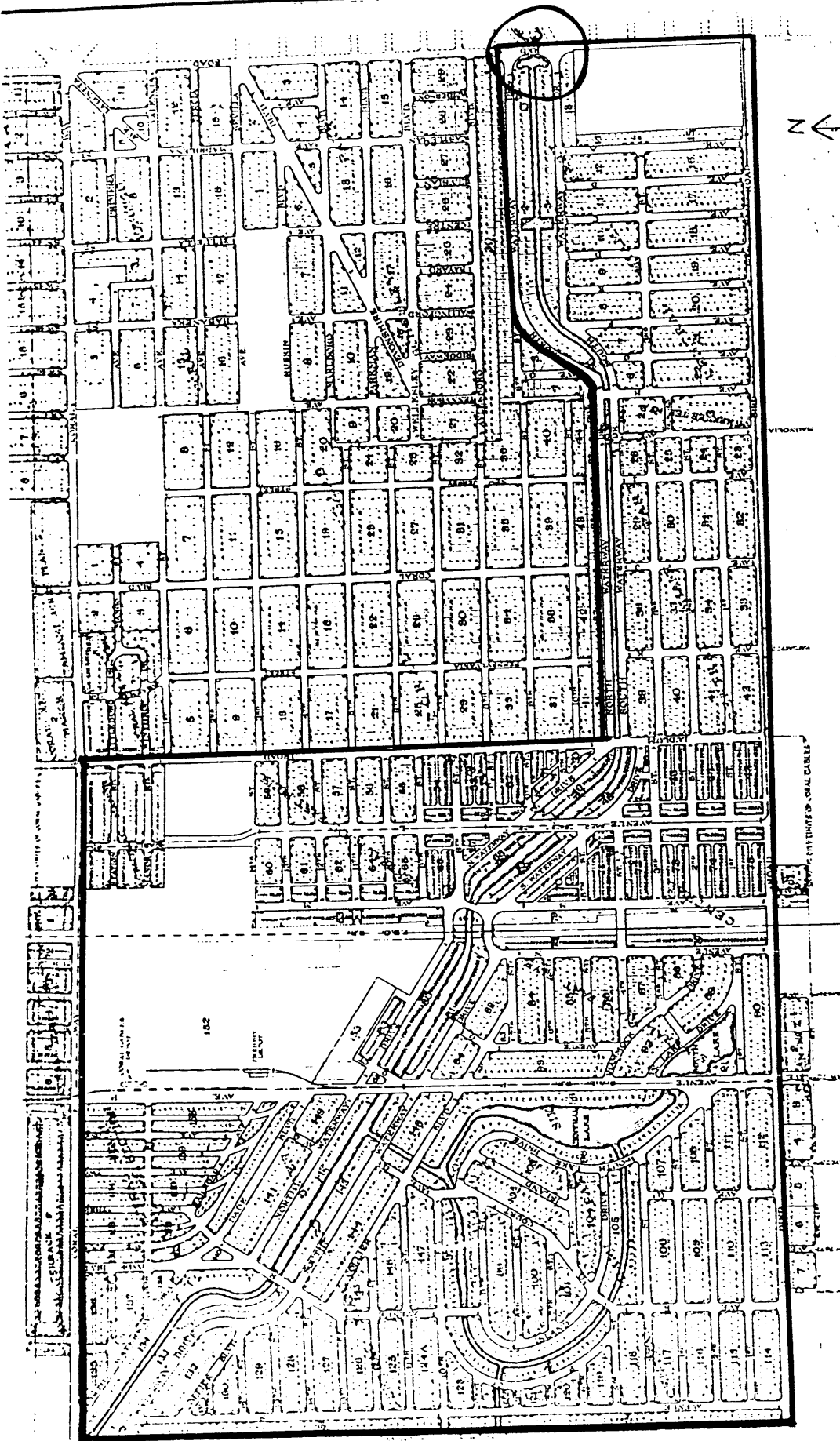
Order #764 F.B. #26-40 September 14, 1987

For: Historic Preservation Division of Dade County, Florida

I Hereby Certify: That the survey represented hereon meets technical
 standards set forth by the Florida State Board of Land Surveyors
 and is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

T.L. Riggs
 T.L. Riggs
 Registered Land Surveyor No. 2349
 State of Florida

T. L. RIGGS
 PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR
 P. O. BOX 330403
 MIAMI, FL 33233-0403
 TEL. (305) 448-9032



MAP OF
CORAL GABLES
 WESTERN SECTION

JUNE 1927

SCALE

June 1927

E. FRIDMAN, City Engineer

