

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received **MAR 11 1987**
date entered **JUL - 2 1987**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Silver Palm Schoolhouse

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 15655 S.W. 232 Street (Silver Palm Drive & Newton Rd.) N/A not for publication

city, town N/A vicinity of Goulds

state Florida code 12 county Dade code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Peter and Kathleen Hoffman

street & number 15655 S.W. 232 Street

city, town Miami vicinity of N/A state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 73 West Flagler Street

city, town Miami state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Dade County Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Division of Historical Resources

city, town Tallahassee state Florida

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Description

The Silver Palm Schoolhouse is a two-story frame vernacular building constructed in 1904 in a rural area of south Dade County, Florida. The ballon frame building is covered by a hip roof and features a two-story porch at its front (south) elevation. The building originally featured a pyramidal-roofed bell tower, Chippendale-styled railings and double hung windows. Alterations to the building include the removal of the above-named features, the replacement of porch supports, foundation enclosures and the addition of a rear entrance stair and porch. The building presently serves as a single family residence.

Location Information

The area surrounding the Silver Palm Schoolhouse retains much of its original rural character. The Silver Palm settlement was initially connected to the Cutler settlement five miles to the east by a simple trail. The trail was replaced in 1904 by a more substantial road of corduroy construction which connected the Silver Palm area to the Florida East Coast Railway three miles to the east. The Silver Palm Schoolhouse was built slightly back from this road on land cleared from the surrounding pines. The location became one of the most important crossroads of the rural community and for years remained the main center of activity for the area.

Original Appearance

As constructed in 1904, the Silver Palm Schoolhouse was a rectangular, two-story building covered by a medium pitch hip roof (photos 1-3). The building was of ballon frame construction covered by horizontal weather boards and raised off the ground on masonry piers. The wood-shingled roof featured a slight overhang with exposed rafter ends. An open bell tower covered by a low pyramidal roof topped the building. A series of horizontal wood slats on the south slope of the roof provided access to the bell tower. Another ladder suspended from the southwest corner of the main roof provided access from the second story of the porch to the roof.

A deep two-story porch covered by a low pitched hip roof extended across the entire front (south) elevation of the building. The porch was supported by six square posts with chamfered corners. A Chippendale-styled railing of simple wood slats originally wrapped around the first and second floors of the porch. An exterior staircase located at the west end of the porch parallel to the building facade provided access to its second story.

The south elevation of the building was four bays wide, the outer bays containing doors, the inner bays windows. Fenestration was double hung wood sash, one over one. The east and west elevations were two bays wide and featured similar fenestration.

In plan the schoolhouse had two first floor rooms and one large second floor room.¹ The first floor rooms were used by the younger children, the second floor by the older students. The second floor room had a stage at its east end and a sheet hung across a wire served as an improvised curtain. Furnishings included wooden desks with hinged tops and unattached seats. There were also several chalkboards and a few charts. Floors and interior walls were of wood. As there was no indoor plumbing, bathroom facilities consisted of two outhouses. A bucket with a dipper was always present in the classrooms to provide drinking water for the students.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1904 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed in 1904, the Silver Palm Schoolhouse is significant as the first of seven rural schools built during the early 1900's in south Dade County. As such, the building contributed significantly to the educational, cultural and social growth of the Silver Palm community. The building is one of two remaining rural schoolhouses in south Dade County and was the largest of the seven original south Dade schools.

After the Florida East Coast Railroad to Miami was completed in 1896, work began on extending the line southward. Teams of engineers were dispatched to conduct exploratory surveys of south Dade County, the Everglades, and the Florida Keys. They found southwest Dade almost completely devoid of habitation. A few families had taken advantage of the homestead lands available in the area and filed claims. However not all areas were open to homesteading. The government considered the glade lands, which were under water during the rainy season, unsuitable for habitation. Only 50 percent of each quarter of a 160 acre plot could be in glade or marsh land.¹ Most of the land in south Dade County, except for the Everglades, was covered by a thick virgin pine forest. Trees were large slash pines, their huge trunks up to six or eight feet in girth. Clearing enough land to build a home and put the required area under cultivation to "prove up" a homestead was a back-breaking task.

The only community south of Miami and Coconut Grove before the arrival of the railroad was the small town of Cutler, located in the vicinity of present-day Southwest 167th Street and Biscayne Bay. Established in the late nineteenth century, Cutler was the gateway to the Perrine Land Grant and to homesteads in the south and west. At its peak, the population of Cutler was perhaps 100 people, and it boasted a post office, school, church, and sawmill.

Silver Palm was the first settlement south of Cutler to be established at the turn of the century. The settlement was named for the beautiful little palm with its silver-backed frond that grew profusely in the pine woods. Early settlers were attracted to this region because of its rich soil and because they believed the railroad was going to be extended to Key West via Cape Sable. Had that been the case, Silver Palm would have become a commercial center. Instead, the railroad was routed to the east, near present-day Princeton and through Florida City. As a result, the Silver Palm area remained a relatively sparsely populated rural and agricultural community of small, individual frame houses, barns, and a country store. All of these buildings are reminiscent of the character of much of Dade County before the real estate boom of the 1920's.

By 1898 John Brinzell had become the first settler in south Dade County and built the first house south of Cutler. He homesteaded south of Silver Palm Drive (Southwest 232nd Street), and west of Newton Road (Southwest 157th Avenue). His house, built of logs and clapboard with a palm thatched roof, had a door but no windows. Brinzell's

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than 1

Quadrangle name Goulds

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	5	5	5	7	2	0	2	8	2	5	8	9	5
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D

Zone		Easting						Northing						

E

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H

Zone		Easting						Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot marked SCHOOL 183.7 feet by 183.7 feet, Griffing Silver Palm Subdivision. This area includes all historic resources associated with the Silver Palm Schoolhouse.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily Dieterich, Michael Zimny

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation

date February, 1987

street & number Department of State

telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee

state Florida

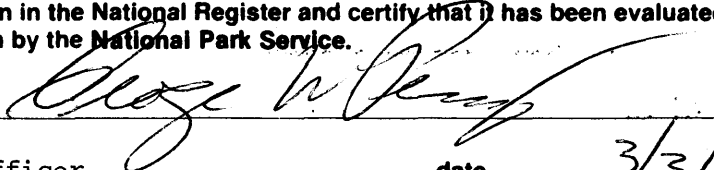
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



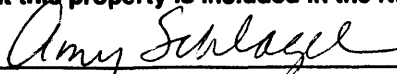
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

3/3/87

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register



date 7/2/87

Keeper of the National Register

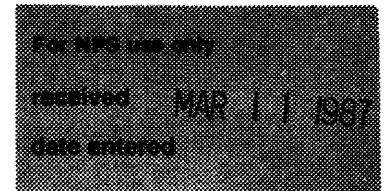
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

Page 1

Alterations and Present Appearance

The Silver Palm Schoolhouse has undergone numerous alterations through its history, although its basic exterior appearance remains intact (photos 6-10). Exterior alterations include the removal of its bell tower and porch staircase and railings, replacement of porch supports, foundation enclosure, door and window modifications and the addition of a rear entrance stair and porch. Removal of the bell tower and the porch stair and railings appears to have been made early in the history of the building, probably before the early 1920's. Most of the other alterations were made during the late 1970's and early 1980's when the property underwent substantial renovations. All fenestration except for the center first floor windows, south elevation, were replaced with aluminum awning type windows. The east door on the same elevation was replaced by a smaller jalousie window opening and a new door was cut immediately to the east of the east center window. The porch posts were replaced by similar steel posts faced with wood. The wood steps leading to the porch and the porch deck itself were reconstructed in cement. A one-story porch with a low pitched shed roof supported by square posts on a concrete floor was added to the rear elevation, as was a concrete second floor stair.

Substantial interior alterations were made during the 1930's when the interior was divided into five apartments and additional bathrooms installed. The interior has since been completely renovated with new bathrooms and kitchen, and wood panelling on most walls. Few traces of the original interior remain except for wood floors and a narrow wood staircase of simple construction. The second story porch retains its original character, with wood floors and exposed wood rafters.

Alterations to the site include a circular driveway in front of the building and a swimming pool at the rear of the property. There are also two small non-contributing sheds of undetermined age to the rear of the building. The backyard of the property is enclosed by a chainlink fence and is landscaped with several tropical shrubs and trees.

Resources Inventory

Contributing resources: 1 building

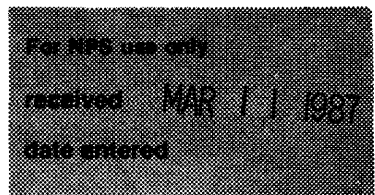
Non-contributing resources: 1 structure (swimming pool)

NOTES

¹Interview, McClure by Dieterich, Miami, Florida, March, 1986.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 2

Item number 8

Page 1

business was acting as broker to locate settlers on claims for a fee of \$10.00. A great number of claims had been registered in Miami but no one else except Brinzell lived on them at the end of the nineteenth century.²

In 1900 Charles Gossman, Will Anderson, and Charles W. Hill arrived to improve their claims. Gossman, an experienced carpenter, homesteaded north of Coconut Palm Drive (Southwest 248th Street) and west of Farmlife Road (Southwest 162nd Avenue). He grew tomatoes on his land which he transported to Cutler where they were loaded on sailboats to be sold at northern markets. Will Anderson came to Dade County from Indiana as a young man of twenty and was among the first of the families to settle in the Silver Palm area. He chose his 160 acres between Coconut Palm Drive and Silver Palm Drive, west of Newton Road. C. W. Hill owned land on Farmlife Road, north of Silver Palm Drive, where he too eventually farmed tomatoes. Gossman and Anderson were financed for a year by Hill in return for improving his claim, as well as their own, while he worked in his pineapple field at Cutler.

The intersection of Silver Palm Drive and Newton Road was the hub of the Silver Palm community that developed into the social and commercial center of the area. By 1902 there were enough families with children to warrant building a school. The school was located on the northwest corner of the crossroads, just west of Newton Road, on the north side of Silver Palm Drive. Onie Hill Craig, daughter of pioneer Charles W. Hill, reports in her autobiography that,

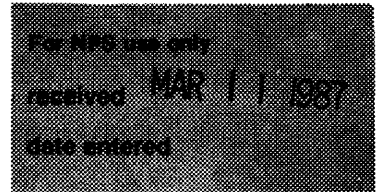
"soon after we moved to Silver Palm, the homesteaders in the area got together and built a one-room log school. All grades were taught in the one room...We sat on benches, without desks, and wrote on slates that we held in our laps."³

Mary Dickinson, employed by the Federal Writers Program, indicates that the log cabin school was approximately 20' x 12', with a palmetto thatched roof.⁴ Another description of the interior comes from Flora Caldwell, a south Dade schoolteacher for forty years, who remembers that split logs were used for the benches which had no back supports.⁵ Henry Proctor was the first teacher, provided by the Board of Public Instruction of Dade County. The Charles Gossman family boarded Mr. Proctor at their house, and the Gossman's youngest daughter, Mildred, was recruited at an early age as the tenth pupil necessary to warrant sending a teacher from Miami to Silver Palm. Eva Fletcher, an early Silver Palm resident, reported that the little schoolhouse was also used for church services as there was no church at the time.⁶ No documentation exists as to exactly what happened to the schoolhouse, but most accounts agree that it was destroyed by fire in 1903.

A new schoolhouse was built in 1904 on the northeast corner of the Silver Palm Drive and Newton Road. This was also the southwest corner of the Sixteenth Section of Township 56 South, Range 39 East. When Congress created a territorial government for Florida on March 20, 1822, "the sixteenth section of land, near the center in every township, was reserved for the use of public schools."⁷ The Board of Education of the State of Florida had previously sold Section 16, containing 640.55 acres, to John M. Caldwell and Frank Adams in 1897. In 1902 Caldwell and Adams sold one square acre in the southwest corner of Section 16 to the Board of Public Instruction

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 3 Item number 8 Page 2

of Dade County.⁸ This is the acre on which the school was built. The school board furnished the lumber, and local residents organized by pioneer Charles Gossman constructed the large two-story frame building. One of two Dade County school board ledgers in existence, which begins with entries in 1894, lists Charles A. Gossman as "supervisor" of the school, appointed as of January 1, 1905. Charles R. Ross is listed as the teacher, earning \$40.00 a month salary.⁹ According to Florence McClure, Will Anderson's niece and a graduate of the Silver Palm School, the lower floor consisted of two classrooms for the younger students. The upstairs floor was a large, open room with a platform or "stage" at the east end and was used as a classroom by the older students and as a social hall on other occasions. McClure remembers the many plays, programs, and spelling bees held weekly in the second floor gathering hall.¹⁰ Several denominations, principally Methodist and Baptist, shared the schoolhouse on Sundays.

Although the Florida East Coast railroad by-passed Silver Palm, the area grew quickly as new residents moved in to homestead land. The Silver Palm Schoolhouse functioned as a school from 1904 until June, 1916. The building also hosted many community gatherings, town meetings, and social events such as picnics and fish fries. During this time other agricultural communities developed in nearby areas and, as it was too far for children to walk the three to five miles to the Silver Palm School, each community established its own small school. By 1916 a total of seven neighborhood schools, including Silver Palm, were operating. The others included Redland (1906), Eureka (1907), Princeton (1908), Modello (1909), Goulds (1911) and Murray Hill (1914).

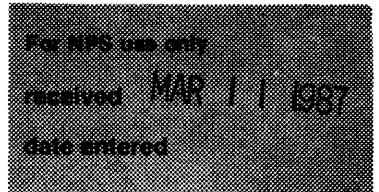
The Silver Palm School was the largest of the seven schools and always had the largest enrollment. Geographically, it was located in the middle of a circle formed by the six other schools. All seven schools merged in 1916 to form the Redland Farmlife Consolidated School, which was built on ten acres donated by Will Anderson, on Coconut Palm Drive and Farmlife Road. At the time, the school claimed to be the largest consolidated school in the country.¹¹

The Silver Palm Schoolhouse is one of only two remaining neighborhood schools from the south Dade area in the early 1900's, the other five have been destroyed. The Redland School, a more modest structure, is still standing, just a few feet from its original location, in the Dade County Redland Fruit and Spice Park. The Silver Palm Schoolhouse is the older of the two and the more elaborate in terms of architecture. Along with Anderson's Corner, a general merchandise store established in 1911 on the southwest corner of the crossroads, and a blacksmith shop to the west, the schoolhouse formed the nucleus of the Silver Palm community. The school played an important role in the development of Silver Palm and is an integral part of the area's history.

In 1919 the school board sold the property to Dr. W. W. Cunyngham (sic) after he retired to Florida from Tennessee. He and his wife raised their five sons in the old schoolhouse. Mrs. Cunyngham was active in the Silver Palm Methodist Church and one of the sons, W. C. Cunyngham, became a well-known plumber. Beginning in the 1930's, the schoolhouse interior was divided into five apartments and was operated part-time as a boarding house. The property remained in the family for over fifty years. In June, 1976, Mary and Elizabeth Cunningham, widows of two of the Cunningham sons, sold the property to Peter Hoffmann and his wife, Kathleen B. Hoffmann. During the 1970's the Hoffmanns remodeled the first floor to accommodate a nursery school

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 4

Item number 8

Page 3

and day care center, which was in operation for several years. The Hoffmanns have lived in the house since they bought it and are the current property owners. On March 19, 1986, the Metro Dade County Historic Preservation Board designated the Silver Palm Schoolhouse as a local historic site.

NOTES

¹Jean C. Taylor, "Silver Palm," Unpublished manuscript, 1980, n.p.

²Ibid.

³Onie Craig, Lady, (Miami: E. A. Seeman Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 19.

⁴Mary Dickinson, "Redland Farmlife School, Homestead, Florida," Federal Writers Program, P. K. Younge Library, Gainesville, Florida, Field Copy, p. 1.

⁵Flora Caldwell, "History of Redland Area Schools," Unpublished notes on file at Redland Junior High School, Miami, Florida, n.p.

⁶Eva Fletcher, "History of the Early Silver Palm Methodist Church," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, n.p.

⁷Eugene Provenzo and Austerie Provenzo, "Education on the Forgotten Frontier," Dade County Public Schools, 1985, p. 20.

⁸Abstract of Title Number 628, 551, Florida Title Company, Miami, Florida, p. 2.

⁹Dade County, Florida, School Exhibit Book, 1894, n.p.

¹⁰Interview: McClure by Dieterich, Miami, Florida, March, 1986.

¹¹Jean Taylor, "The Redland Farmlife School," Update Magazine, December, 1978, p. 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAR 11 1987

date entered

Continuation sheet 5

Item number 9

Page 1

PUBLISHED

Brown, Harlen. "Once Silver Palm School, Old Building Weathers Time," South Dade News Leader, February 4, 1975, n.p.

Craig, Onie and Nixon Smiley. Lady. Miami: E. A. Seeman Publishing, Inc., 1976.

Dewar, Heather. "Rural and Still Holding, Just Barely," The Miami Herald, January 7, 1980, p. 3b.

Hanlin, Elizabeth. "The Early Days of Redland," Homestead Leader, May 1, 1958, n.p.

Metropolitan Dade County, Historic Preservation Division. From Wilderness to Metropolis - The History and Architecture of Dade County, Florida, 1825-1940. Miami: Franklin Press, Inc., 1982.

Stein, Dorothy. "The Redland: A Rural Retreat," The Miami Herald, July 5, 1979, p. 13.

Taylor, Jean C. Villages of South Dade County. St. Petersburg, Florida: Byron Kennedy and Company, In Press.

_____. "The Redland Farmlife School," Update Magazine, Volume 6, Number 1, December, 1978.

_____. "Scarifying South Dade," Update Magazine, Volume 5, Number 1, October, 1977.

Thompson, Walter. "The First Pioneer Looks Back," Homestead Leader, April 3, 1958, n.p.

UNPUBLISHED

Caldwell, Flora. "History of Redland Area Schools," Unpublished notes on file at Redland Junior High School, Miami, Florida, n.d.

Connelly, Flora Hill. "Early Days in the Homestead Country," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, n.d.

Dickinson, Mary E. "Redland Farmlife School, Homestead, Florida," Federal Writers Program (ca. 1937-1940), P. K. Younge Library, Gainesville, Florida, Field Copy, p.1.

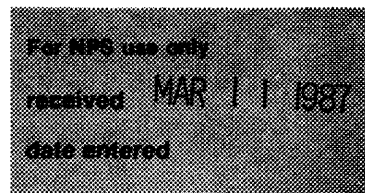
Fletcher, Eva. "History of the Early Silver Palm Methodist Church," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, n.d.

Provenzo, Eugene and Austerie Provenzo, "Education on the Forgotten Frontier," Dade County Public Schools, 1985.

Taylor, Jean C. "Charles Gossman Family," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, June, 1980.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 6

Item number 9

Page 2

_____. "C. W. Hill Family," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, June, 1980.

_____. "Redland," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, June, 1980.

_____. "Silver Palm," Unpublished manuscript on file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, June, 1980.

INTERVIEWS

Anderson, Will Jr. by Emily Dieterich. Telephone interview, December, 1985.

Hoffmann, Peter and Kathleen by Emily Dieterich. Interview, Miami, Florida, December, 1985, and April, 1986.

McClure, Florence by Emily Dieterich. Interview, Miami, Florida, March and April, 1986.

McMillan, Joann by Emily Dieterich. Interview, Miami, Florida, December, 1985.

Taylor, Jean by Emily Dieterich. Interview, Miami, Florida, May, 1986.

Vihlen, Edward and Sadie by Emily Dieterich. Interview, Miami, Florida, December, 1985.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Dade County, Florida. Recorder's Office Deed Abstracts, Miami, Florida.

Dade County, Florida. School Exhibit Book. On file at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami, Florida, 1894.

