
NUMBER 1 PALLBEARERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA BUILDING 801 NW 62ND STREET

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
NUMBER 1 PALLBEARERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA BUILDING
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Prepared by Ellen Uguccione for Janus Research,
Consultant

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton, Preservation Officer

Passed and
Adopted on _____

Resolution No. _____

CONTENTS

I. General Information	4
II. Significance	6
III. Description	9
IV. Planning Context	12
V. Bibliography	13

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

None

Current Name:

Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building

Location:

801 NW 62nd Street
Miami, FL

Present Owner:

Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America
4716 NW 16th Avenue
Miami, FL 33142-4127

Present Use:

Charitable Organization

Zoning District:

SD-1 - Martin Luther King Boulevard Commercial District

Tax Folio Number:

01-3114-036-0350

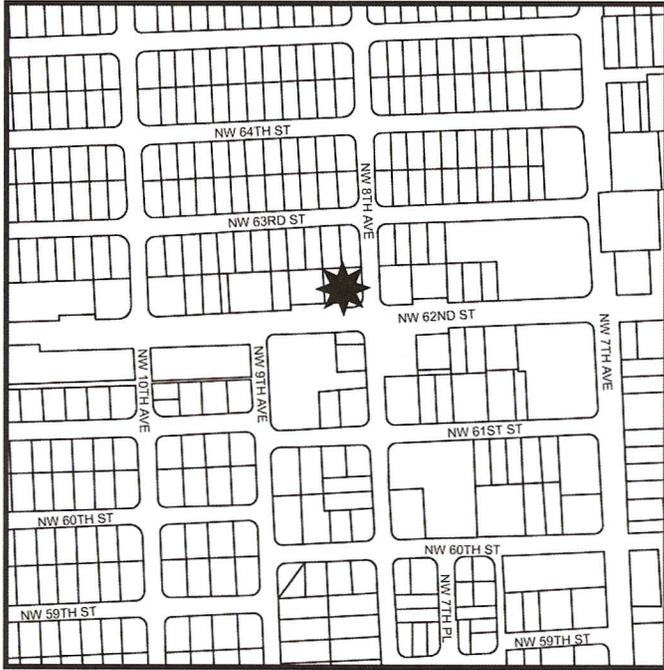
Boundary Description:

Lot 23, less the southerly 15 feet, and all Lot 24 of Block 2 of the plat of SEVENTH AVENUE PARK, as recorded in Plat Book 17 at Page 17, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Classification:

Historic Site

NUMBER 1 PALLBEARERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA BUILDING 801 NW 62ND STREET



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Date:

1947

Architect:

Unknown

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Statement of Significance

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building is significant for its role in the social history of Miami's African-American community and as a distinctively designed Art Moderne building that is unusual in this part of the city.

Northwest Miami has historically been an area that has seen a demographic shift from once all white communities to predominantly African-American neighborhoods. While this area had been sporadically settled as a farming community in the early twentieth century, the greatest round of home building occurred in the 1920s, designed as moderately priced housing for the white middle-class. The area known as Liberty City (an area city planners now call "Model City") was community that witnessed this demographic shift.

The influx of the African-American population to Liberty City began in earnest during the 1940s, following the construction of the Liberty Square Housing Project, which opened in the late 1930s. Liberty City provided relief to the extremely crowded conditions of Overtown, where most of Miami's African-Americans had settled at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The International Association of Pallbearers was created during an era of segregation, and is a dues-paying society. Their mission is to provide financial support for members and assistance to other black families who could not afford medical care or a funeral. At its height, the Pallbearers Association had 18 lodges with hundreds of members across Florida, including six in Miami, and at least one in Hallandale. Although their membership is dwindling, the organization is still in existence.

In an interview with a *Miami Herald* journalist, Wittington Johnson, a retired University of Miami professor and Overtown native, explained that the Pallbearers and similar groups were a precursor to today's insurance companies. They filled the needs of African-Americans, who because of racist practices were refused burial insurance. Membership was through an application process, and was open to anyone who did not have a life-threatening illness when they applied.

The Miami Chapter of the International Association of Pallbearers met in a Masonic lodge house in Overtown until they were displaced by the construction of Interstate 95 in the early 1960s. They moved to the building at 801 NW 62nd Street in Liberty City, where they still meet. Today, there are fewer numbers of members in the Association, and many of them are elderly. Still, when a dues paying member dies, the group sends a \$300 donation to the survivors.

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building also possesses architectural significance as a late example of Art Moderne style architecture that is unusual in this part of the city. The Art Moderne style, an offshoot of the Art Deco style, uses its geometry for effect. The building is particularly noteworthy for its curved lines and corner doorway that is set into the curve. Even though some of the windows have been changed, or apertures boarded, this building continues to maintain integrity and convey its unique character.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building at 801 NW 62nd Street represents a unique resource in this predominantly African-American neighborhood. The Pallbearers Association created a program that supported the African-American community during a time when exclusionary racist policies excluded them from obtaining burial insurance. In a larger sense, the Pallbearers Association, which often met within churches, was a source of genuine compassion and a rallying force for the citizens of the community.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building is a distinctively designed Art Moderne building that is unusual in this part of the city. Even though some of the windows have been changed, or apertures boarded, this building continues to maintain integrity and convey its unique character.

III. DESCRIPTION

The Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building faces south onto NW 62nd Street and is located at the northwest corner of NW 62nd Street and NW 8th Avenue. The tax card indicates that the building was designed for both commercial and residential uses. The commercial aspect of the building was limited to the first floor, while the second story provided living quarters that could be accessed by an exterior staircase on the north side of the building. The one story section is particularly interesting as its semicircular shape puts the entrance at a diagonal with the street.

The building, constructed in 1947, is a late example of the Art Moderne style of architecture. The Art Moderne style, an offshoot of the Art Deco style, uses its geometry for effect. In this example the lines of the one story, flat-roofed building block are curved. The doorway becomes the principal focal point of the building, as it is set into the center of this curved elevation; is partially recessed, and is flanked by vertical score lines simulating the appearance of pilasters. An eyebrow roof projects above the door and side bays, further emphasizing the building's sense of movement. Fenestration consists of a rectangular plate glass window (now boarded) on the westernmost side, and a circular window on the easternmost side (now blocked).

The second story section of the building occupies approximately two-thirds of the building's whole. This section is rectangular and terminates in a flat roof. Eyebrow ledges extend out above the windows of this section. Although the windows have been replaced with aluminum awning windows, and other apertures are blocked entirely, the building continues to maintain its integrity, and is an unusual design and mixed-use type for this area of the city.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

Contributing structures within the site include the Number 1 Pallbearers Association of America Building itself. There are no contributing landscape features.



South elevation on NW 8th Avenue
View Looking West
Janus Research, December 2004



Corner Entrance
South and east elevations
View looking northwest
Janus Research, December 2004



East elevation on NW 8th Avenue
View looking west
Janus Research, December 2004



West Elevation
View looking northwest
Janus Research, December 2004

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The building at 820 NW 62nd Street is a particularly well designed building that occupies a prominent corner in Liberty City. With the revitalization effort that has been proposed along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, this building is a particularly distinctive historic building that can become a defining landmark in the neighborhood.

Preservation Incentives:

The current zoning allows for a commercial use of the property. If the building were rehabilitated and improvements made that would increase its assessed value, the owner would be eligible for an ad valorem tax incentive through Miami-Dade County. Further, if designated by the Miami Historic and Environmental Review Board, the building will be protected for the future and continue to occupy an important corner in the neighborhood.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dunn, Marvin. *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida) 1997.

George, Paul S. and Thomas K. Peterson. "Liberty Square: 1933-1987, The Origins and Evolution of a Public Housing Project. *Tequesta, The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida*, Volume 48, 1988.

Robinson, Andrea. "Lights Dimming on Black Self-Help Group" *The Miami Herald*, 22 April 2004. p. 1A

R.L. Polk's City Directories, 1953, 1956, 1957, 1962, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1974.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Fifth Printing (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press) 1999.