
Bay Oaks Home for the Aged

337, 405, 411 & 435 NE 34th ST and 448 NE 35th ST

Designation Report



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board

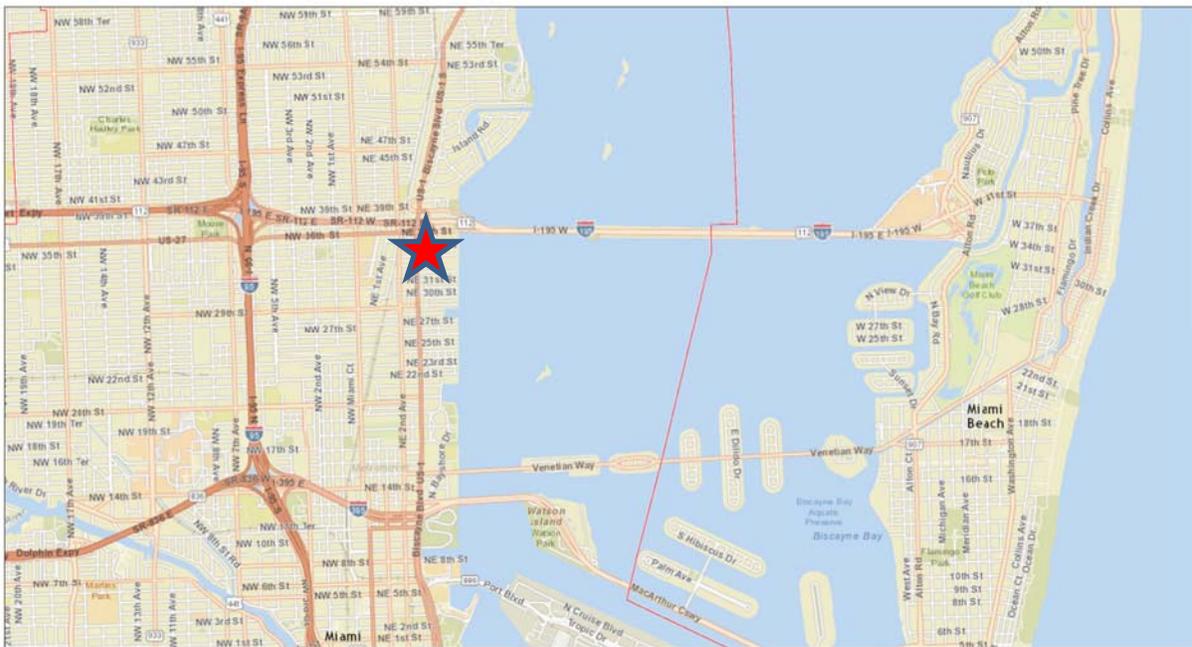


City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER,
MEGAN SCHMITT
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE
BAY OAKS HOME FOR THE AGED
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Written by Marina Novaes
November 2015

Location and site maps



Contents

- I. General Information
- II. Statement Of Significance
- III. Description
- IV. Application of Criteria
- V. Bibliography
- VI. Photographs

I- General Information

Historic Name: Bay Oaks Soroptimist Home for the Aged, Inc.

Current Name: Bay Oaks Home for the Aged, Inc.

Date of Construction: 1933, 1934, 1949, 1956, and 1958.

Location: Edgewater, Miami, FL

Present Owner: Bay Oaks Home for the Aged, Inc.

Present use: Residential / Health Care

Zoning: T6-36A-L

Folio No.: 01-3230-006-0010; 01-3230-006-0030; 01-3230-006-0040; 01-3230-006-0050; 01-3230-006-0060; 01-3230-003-0230.

Boundary (Legal Description): BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24; LOTS 3 THRU 6 BLK 1; LOT SIZE 34150 SQ FT - BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24; LOT 7 BLK 1; LOT SIZE 50.060 X 127; OR 10144-671 0878 4 - BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24; LOT 8 BLK 1; LOT SIZE 50.000 X 127 - BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24; LOT 9 BLK 1; LOT SIZE 50.000 X 127 - BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24; LOT 10 BLK 1; LOT SIZE 50.000 X 127 - SANDRICOURT PB 3-83; LOT 2 LESS ST & LOT 3 LESS ST; BLK 2; LOT SIZE 100.000 X 120

Setting: Bay Oaks Home for the Aged is located in the Edgewater neighborhood, in the middle of the block between Biscayne Bay and Biscayne Blvd on the north side of NE 34th Street. The property consists of five parcels being four on NE 34th ST and one at NE 35th ST.

Integrity: Bay Oaks Home for the Aged has integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

II- Statement of Significance

The Bay Oaks Soroptimist Home for the Aged is a nonprofit retirement home that was founded in 1947 for the needy elderly by the Soroptimist Club of Miami, a service organization of professional women who volunteer their time to serve the community. Many outstanding women in the community have dedicated time and treasure to sustain this badly needed civic resource. A nonprofit, all-woman board of directors raised funds, managed and have continued to oversee Bay Oaks from founding to the present day. The home's name was changed in 1999 to Bay Oaks Home for the Aged, Inc.¹

No one knows exactly the roots of the Soroptimist Club. It is known that an "Optimist Club" was formed in Buffalo, NY in 1911, a men's service club whose mission was to "Bring Out the Best in Kids"; due to its success, other Optimist Clubs opened throughout the country. In 1921, an entrepreneur named Stuard Morrow was in search for leaders to charter either an Optimist or Rotary Club in the San Francisco Bay area in California when he crossed the Parker-Goddard Secretarial School. Mr. Morrow was surprised to learn that the school was owned by women, Miss Mabel Parker, and Mrs. Adelaide Goddard. Mr. Morrow apologized and was about to leave when Mrs. Goddard remarked "When the men admit women as members of their service clubs, I would be interested". It was the start of the Soroptimist Club of America.²

The preliminary meeting was held on May 31, 1921, in the Rose Room of the Hotel Oakland, six women attended including Mrs. Goddard. The meeting that launch the club happened on June 21, 1921, with ten women in attendance, the minimum required members for the formation of a charter club. At this meeting, the name Soroptimist was chosen, the historical records of the organization show that name was a word coined from the Latin *soror* meaning *sister* and *optima* meaning *best*, which was interpreted as "The Best Of Women." In current usage, Soroptimist is interpreted as "Best For

¹ Kassner, Kathryn Reid and Matkov, Rebecca Roper. "Bay Oaks Home for the Aged" – Preliminary Designation Report. City of Miami. 6/3/2015.

² Soroptimist International of San Diego. "SOROPTIMIST FOUNDING HISTORY" <http://sisandiego.org/founding-history.html> - last accessed 10/21/2015.

Women.” The Official *Soroptimist Founders Day* is October 3, 1921, when the installation ceremony occurred in Oakland, CA.³

The women service club was revolutionary at the time; there was no other organization of women for women. The only obstacle for the organization to become an all women charter service club in the US was Mr. Morrow, who was the only signer of the organization and proclaimed himself originator, founder, and manager of the corporation. Before selling all rights, title and interest for \$5,500 in 1927, Mr. Morrow chartered three additional national clubs in 1922, The San Francisco on March 6, Los Angeles on July 19, and Washington DC on November 27. In England, he organized *the Greater London Club* in 1923 which installation ceremony was attended by the British Royal family.⁴

There are four Federations around the world; SI of the Americas, SI Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd, SI of Europe and SI of South West Pacific. The headquarters office for Soroptimist International is in Cambridge, UK. The organization comprises approximately 95,000 members in more than 125 countries and territories worldwide who contribute time and financial support to community-based and international projects.⁵

The first Soroptimist club in Florida was installed in Miami on November 23, 1943, with Ethel Ernest Murrell as president, Mildred Taylor Rhodes as vice-president, Rosalind Garfunkel as secretary, and Mrs. T. V. Moore as treasurer. The Miami club was the 174th club in the American Federation.⁶

According to Martha Lummus’ Miami News article “Miami Soroptimist Club, First in Florida, Will Install Officers Nov. 23:”

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wikipedia. “Soroptimist International” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soroptimist_International - Last modified on 13 July 2015, at 15:07. Last accessed 10/21/2015.

⁶ Lummus, Martha. “Miami Soroptimist Club, First in Florida, Will Install Officers Nov. 23” Miami News. Nov 18, 1943.

Service is the objective of all Soroptimist clubs. The general service program of the American Federation includes participation in efforts to achieve World Peace by promoting tolerance and understanding among all peoples.

Economic advancement for women is the objective of the American Federation. Some phases of this program are: sponsorship of youth groups, vocational guidance and research, financial aid to students; interest in legislation and regulations affecting women to prevent discriminatory legislation or treatment; and aid to the mature women through employment adjustment and placement, to enable her to find and keep a place in the employment world.⁷

Ethel Murrell, an attorney, author, and lecturer is best known as one of Florida's leading feminists. Mrs. Murrell drafted the Married Women's Emancipation Bill, which was passed in Florida in 1943 and was elected president of the National Women's Party in 1951. She was also instrumental in forming the Soroptimist Club of Miami and in founding the Soroptimist Home of Miami, a shelter for the indigent, elderly persons.⁸

Ethel Ernest Murrell was born in Laramie, Wyoming in 1904. The only child Ethel, also known as "Sheelah," was very close to her grandfather John Connor, who had a ranch, oil properties, and a hotel (The Connor Hotel) which she inherited and owned until she died in 1985.

Ethel Murrell was "charming but always a little aloof until she felt she could trust a person. Then she was amusing and extremely intelligent but still brittle, not the most relaxing company."⁹ Ethel was sent to school on the east coast, which was a common practice of western wealthy families; she attended the Chevy Chase in Washington D.C. where she met her first husband, Ken Browning. The marriage did not last long. Ethel's second husband was John Murrell, a young Miamian attorney who was starting his

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Eaton, Sarah; Chase, Charles Edwin. "Petit Douy" Historic Designation. City of Miami. 5/31/1983.

⁹ Murrell, Muriel V. "Miami – A Backward Glance" Pineapple Press, Inc. 2003. Pag.56.

practice in the city; he was Senator Malone's partner and Mary Brickell's attorney.¹⁰ The Murrells built the Petit Douy Chateau at the corner of Brickell Avenue and SE15th Road; the couple visited France after their marriage and selected a chateau near Douy, France, as a model for their new house in Miami.¹¹The unique property was designated historic by the City of Miami in 1983.

The Bay Oaks Home for the Aged was organized at the Petit Douy Chateau, in the house's spacious, book-lined library, with its own entrance that was also often used as an office for Sheelah's pro bono law practice.¹²

South Florida with its year-round mild climate is, and always has been, a "retirement destination." Elderly people from all places of the nation and from all economic classes, choose Miami to spend their last years of life, some come with a very tight income. Aid to the Aged became the Soroptimists' goal and for a few years the Club members did what they could to help the needy men and women on special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Fourth of July. But that wasn't enough.¹³

The Soroptimist Club of Miami decided to create a home for the indigent aged where they would have meals, companionship, and a room for their own. The Bay Oak Home for the Aged was established on March 21, 1947, right after, a house was bought, and the first group of residents moved in, they were selected through the cooperation of the District and County Welfare Board. There were 25 of them.¹⁴

As the organization grew, adjacent properties were acquired and in 1954, prominent architect Robert Fitch Smith was hired to design a modern two-story facility.

Robert Fitch Smith was born on July 1st, 1894 in Fremont, Ohio. He had a long background in education before entering the profession of architecture in Miami in 1931. Robert Fitch Smith graduated from Western Michigan University in Industrial Arts. He took his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Miami in 1930 and followed that

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Eaton, Sarah; Chase, Charles Edwin. "Petit Douy" Historic Designation. City of Miami. 5/31/1983.

¹² Murrell, Muriel V. "Miami – A Backward Glance" Pineapple Press, Inc. 2003. Pag.57.

¹³ Gee, Connie. "Keep Aged Safe, Busy, Loved." Miami News. February 23, 1959.

¹⁴ Ibid.

with Bachelor of Architecture in 1931. Later he took courses in architectural design at Columbia University and at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. He taught architecture at the University of Miami for three years. He was a fellow of the AIA in 1960, and served as Chairman of the Regional Planning Board of Dade County, Executive Director of the Coordinating and Planning Committee of Dade County, among other roles.¹⁵

Smith designed the impressive “Java Head,” owned for many years by Sallye and Jim Jude, and the elegant Montgomery Garden Estate. He designed numerous houses in a “tropical colonial” style, including the home now owned by Arva Moore Parks on Miami Avenue.¹⁶

Smith also designed the Biscayne Plaza Shopping Center, Miami’s first suburban strip shopping center; the University Baptist Church of Coral Gables; Shenandoah and Westminster Presbyterian Churches; North Hialeah Methodist Church; The Museum and Garden House at the Fairchild Tropical Garden; and the National Register-listed “Thomas Arden “Doc” House” in South Miami.

Robert Fitch Smith designed the Bay Oaks’ new building that opened in 1958 with bedrooms individually furnished and private baths. In 1959, the Soroptimists dedicated the new addition to the main building for use as a dining room,¹⁷ which was named after Mrs. T. V. Moore, who was a member of the Miami Soroptimist Club and one of the most ardent supporters of Bay Oaks Home for the Aged.¹⁸

Mrs. Moore was praised as a “Miami civic leader from the time she came here in 1901.” Not only had she been a founder and past president of the Soroptimist Club, she had also served as a founder of the YWCA, the Traveler’s Aid, Miami Woman’s Club, Flagler Memorial Library, Dorsay Library for Negroes, The American Red Cross, American

¹⁵ Janus Research. “*Bal Harbour Village Historic Structures Survey.*” June 2011

¹⁶ Kassner, Kathryn Reid and Matkov, Rebecca Roper. “Bay Oaks Home for the Aged” – Preliminary Designation Report. City of Miami. 6/3/2015.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Gee, Connie. “Keep Aged Safe, Busy, Loved.” Miami News. February 23, 1959.

Cancer Society, Day Nursery, the Crime Commission of Greater Miami and the Chain of Missions.”¹⁹

The east wing was named in honor of Edna Stevens. Minutes of the Bay Oaks Board of directors noted that on Feb. 3, 1959, “all the occupants of Bay Oaks were moved into the new east wing and on Feb. 4th and 5th the old building was razed.”²⁰

Many well-known citizens called Bay Oaks Home for the Aged home. Among others, Gloria Maguire Calhoun who was an environmentalist, society decorator, and raw foods advocate; she won The Miami Herald’s endorsement in the six-way 1973 mayoral race. Praising her positions on open government and inner-city improvement, the newspaper called her “Mrs. Clean” – she lost narrowly to front-runner Maurice Ferre, a longtime family friend.²¹

Ex-Tuskegee Airman, Jefferson Thomas Friday also lived at Bay Oaks Home. He was a skilled musician who spoke French and Danish. Friday joined the Airmen, all-black 332nd Fighter Group in 1942 until 1941 segregation laws forbade blacks to fly; the black squadron was created by sustained NAACP pressure.²²

Bay Oaks Home for the Aged, Inc. is significant as a tribute to the effectiveness of women in tackling a community problem and providing a service continuously for over fifty years, for its connection to a prominent architect whose projects are respected throughout Miami, and as a landmark filled with history and meaning for decades of people who have spent their last years being cared for there.²³

¹⁹ Kassner, Kathryn Reid and Matkov, Rebecca Roper. “Bay Oaks Home for the Aged” – Preliminary Designation Report. City of Miami. 6/3/2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Brecher, Elinor J. “Mayoral candidate, eco-activist” The Miami Herald. 2008.

²² Brecher, Elinor J. “Ex-Tuskegee Airman lived in S. Florida” The Miami Herald. date unknown.

²³ Kassner, Kathryn Reid and Matkov, Rebecca Roper. “Bay Oaks Home for the Aged” – Preliminary Designation Report. City of Miami. 6/3/2015.

III- Description

The Bay Oaks Home for the Aged property consists of five buildings and one vacant lot.

The building at 435 NE 34th Street is composed of two one-story Masonry Vernacular homes and the “U” shape addition added in 1958. The connected buildings have thirty-five rooms and twenty-one bathrooms, and the “Edna Stevens” and “Mrs. Moore” wings.

The 1956 two-story house with barrel tile roof at 448 NE 35th Street, behind the main building of Bay Oaks, serves as a meeting room for social events. Its carriage house has been restored as a guest house for out-of-town relatives visiting residents. The simple one-story stucco home at 411 NE 34th Street, just to the west of the main building, serves as space for art classes and group sessions. The attractive one-story house with Spanish roof tile and floors on the front and back porches at 405 NE 34th Street are the residence of the facilities manager. The house at 337 NE 34 Street provides additional space as needed. All these houses have front porches, making them open and inviting in appearance.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid.

IV- Application of Criteria for Designation

The Bay Oaks Home for the Aged has significance as it relates to the historic heritage of Miami and possesses integrity of setting, materials, feeling, design, and location. The property is eligible for designation as a historic site under the criterion (3) as numbered in Sec. 23-4 (a), of Chapter 23 of the City Code.

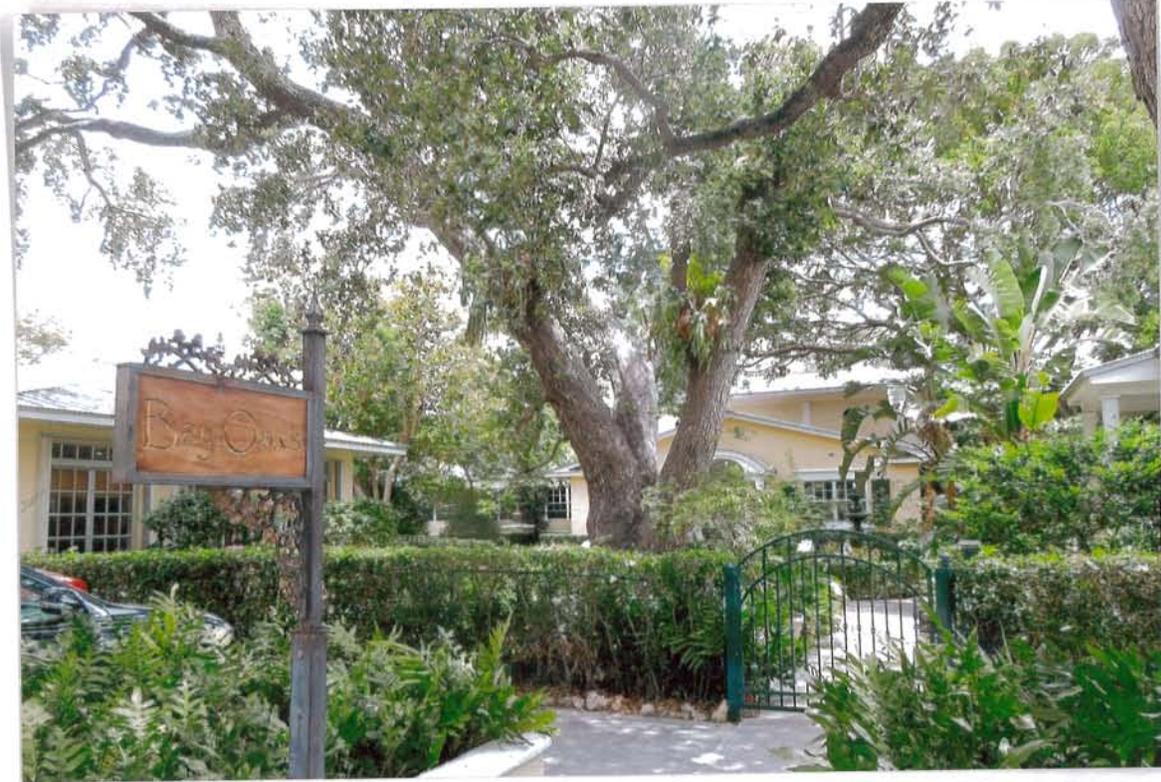
(3) exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community;

Bay Oaks as a project – and its continuous success for over 60 years – demonstrates the successful leadership of the Soroptomist Club, an all women's organization, in tackling a pressing social need for a pleasant, well-run home for the elderly who had no other resources.

V- Bibliography

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- Brecher, Elinor J. "*Ex-Tuskegee Airman, lived in S. Florida*" The Miami Herald. date unknown.
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- Soroptimist International of San Diego. "SOROPTIMIST FOUNDING HISTORY" <http://sisandiego.org/founding-history.html> - last accessed 10/21/2015
- Wikipedia. "Soroptimist International" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soroptimist_International - Last modified on 13 July 2015, at 15:07. Last accessed 10/21/2015.

435 NE 34th Street
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOTS 3 THRU 6 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 34150 SQ FT



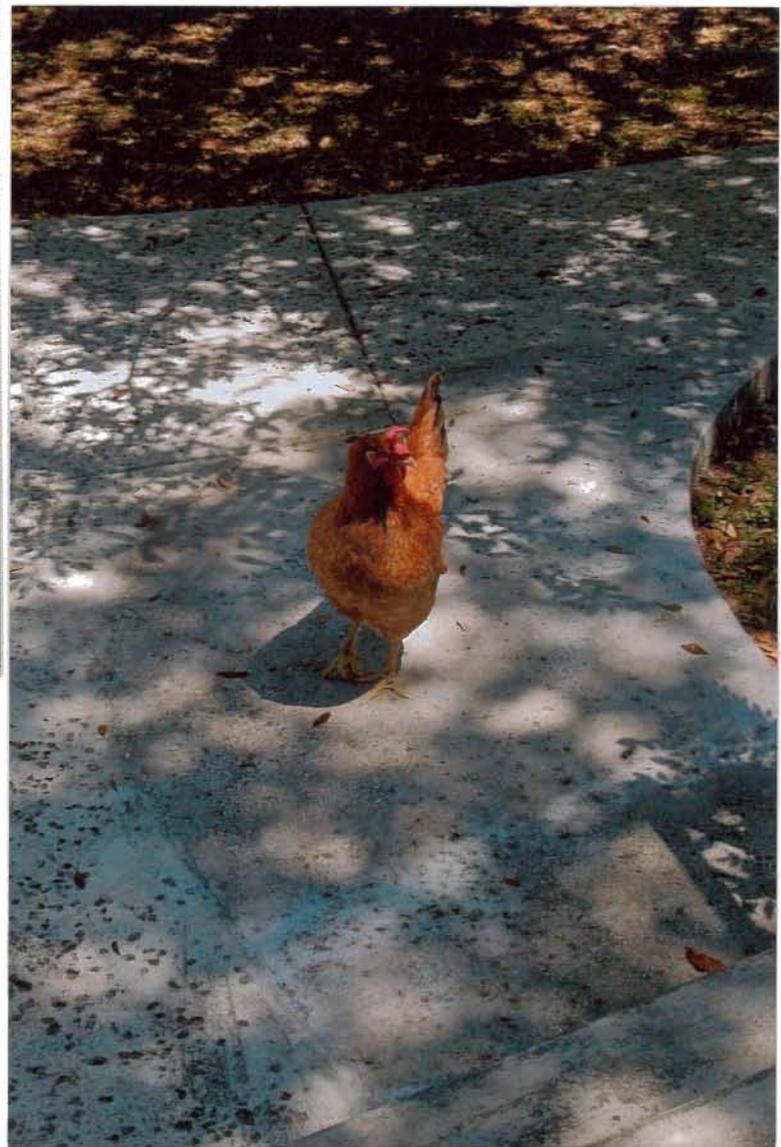
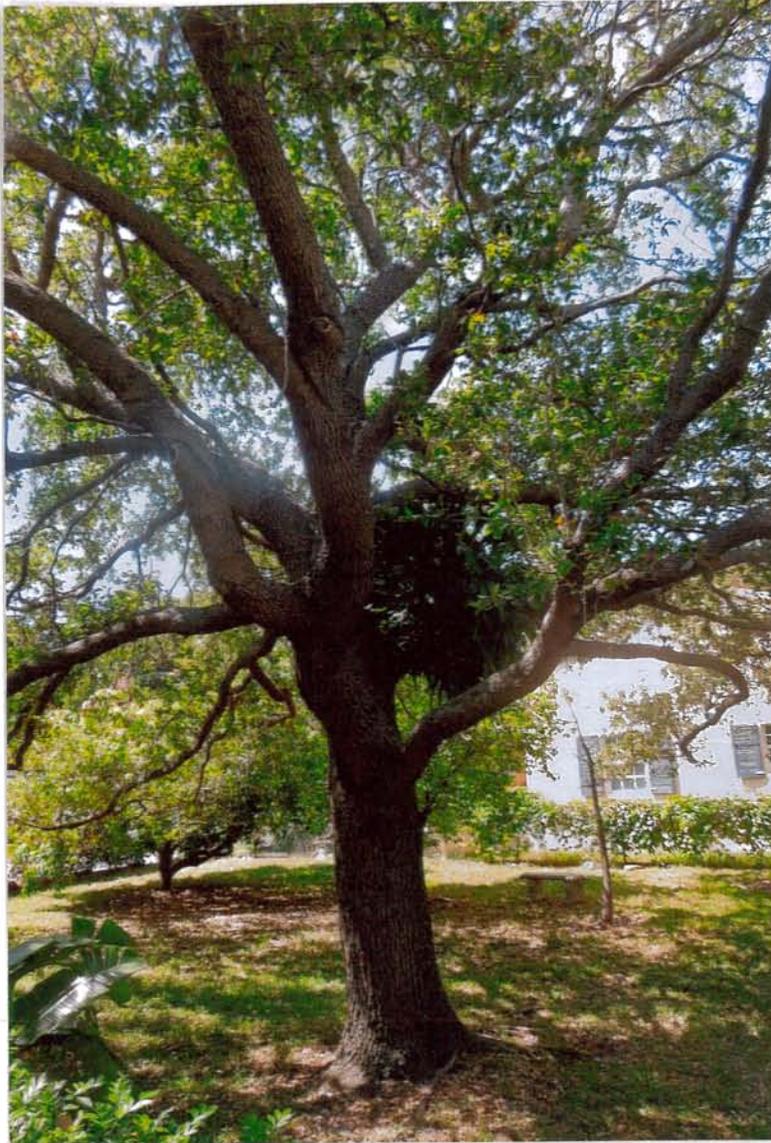
435 NE 34th Street
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOTS 3 THRU 6 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 34150 SQ FT



411 NE 34th Street
30 53 42
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOY 7 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 50.060 X 127
OR 10144-671 0878 4



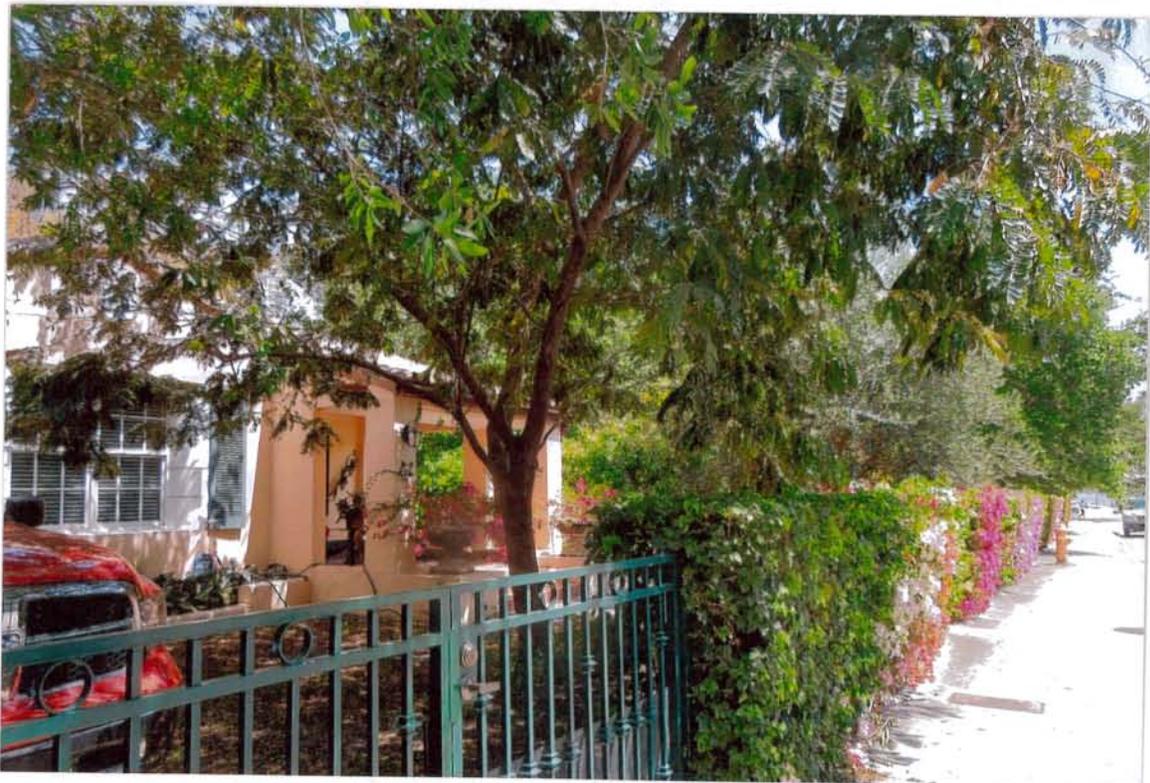
409 NE 34th Street
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOT 8 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 50.000 X 127



405 NE 34th Street
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOT 9 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 50,000 X 127



337 NE 34th Street
BEVERLY SUB PB 3-24
LOT 10 BLK 1
LOT SIZE 50.000 X 127



448 NE 35th Street
SANDRICOURT PB 3-83
LOT 2 LESS ST 7 LOT 3 LESS ST
BLK 2
LOT SIZE 100.000 X 120

