LEGION PARK

6447 NE 7 AVENUE

Final Designation Report



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board



REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PRESERVATION OFFICER TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD ON THE FINAL DESIGNATION OF 6447 NE 7 AVENUE AS A HISTORIC SITE

Prepared By: <u>Trisha Logan</u>

Historic Preservation Planner

Reviewed By: Megan Cross Schmitt

Historic Preservation Officer

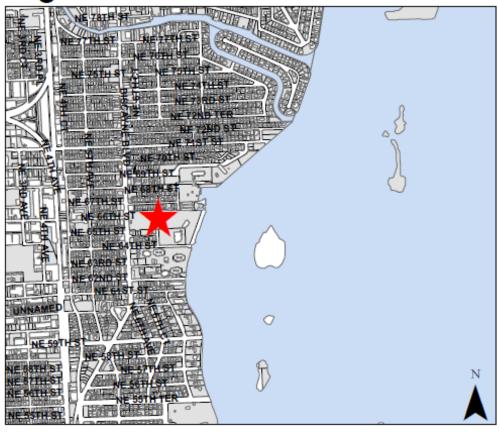
Passed and Adopted On: <u>January 3, 2017</u>

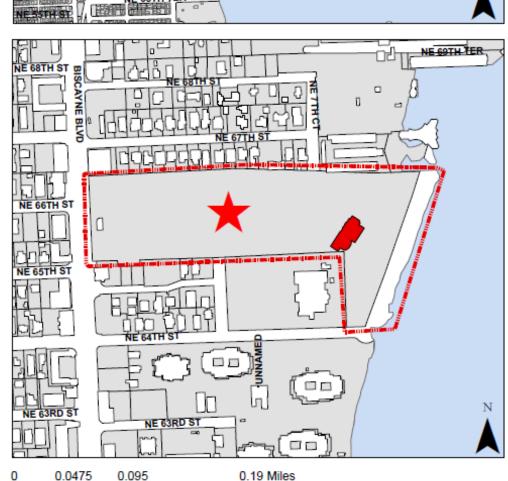
Resolution Number: <u>HEPB-R-17-003</u>

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Legion Park, 6447 NE 7 Avenue





I- General Information

Historic Name:

Legion Park

Date of Construction:

1930

Location:

6447 NE 7 Avenue Miami, Florida 33138

Present Owner:

City of Miami
Department of Asset Management
444 SW 2 Avenue, Suite #325
Miami, Florida 33130-1910

Present use:

Public Park

Zoning:

CS

Folio No.:

01-3218-000-0030

Boundary (Legal Description):

18 53 42 48.1 AC M/L BEG 1064.7FT N & 15FTE OF SW COR GOVT LOT 5 TH E100.64FT S25FT E99.26FT N25FT E876FT S233FT E66FT SWLY84FT M/L E174FT TO BLKHD/L

Setting:

Legion Park is located in the Upper Eastside of the city of Miami between approximately NE 65th Street and NE 66 Street, extending from Biscayne Boulevard to Biscayne Bay. The park contains approximately 48 acres and contains a large number of mature canopy trees, recreational facilities, and the historic structure that acts as a community center.

Integrity:

Legion Park retains a high level of integrity within its original setting, as well as through workmanship and materials in the original park structure.

II- Statement of Significance

Legion Park represents an evolving history that pre-dates the formation of the City of Miami and is one of the few last remaining parcels and structures that hold a significant link to Lemon City. The history of Legion Park also links to the lives of several significant persons who played significant roles within the development of the City of Miami and has served as the home to the American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post #29 for nearly a century.

III- Description

History of Lemon City

Lemon City, now located in today's Upper Eastside, pre-dated the formation of the City of Miami and was one of first settlements of the pioneers who settled in South Florida. Prior to becoming a land of opportunity for newcomers to the area, this land, specifically portions located near Little River, served as home to the Seminole Indians. When the land was surveyed, it was divided into sections with the area where Legion Park is now located first labeled and referred to as "Section Eighteen." For several years, the greater Lemon City area was named Motlo, a name adopted from a Seminole Chief, and later modified to "Motto" by the pioneers which was also the name used by the first Post Office in the area.

In 1862, the Homestead Act was passed by the federal government, allowing industrious and adventurous settlers to lay a stake in the developing land of South Florida. A number of years after the initiation of the Homestead Act, John Sanders, a Bahamian born settler who was raised in the upper keys, began squatting on the land within Section Eighteen in 1876. He later homesteaded 148 acres in 1883, within the section where he was squatting and what later became Lemon City. Saunders initially paid \$13.75 of the land and later in 1889 an additional \$3.72 for newspaper notices that were required prior to final proof. "Saunders' homestead papers, about thirty pages, on file in the National Archives, reveal a good deal about Saunders, his possessions, his occupations, and his neighbors. During the thirteen years he resided on his land before "final proof" he worked as a sailor, a laborer in a starch mill, and a farmer." In October of 1889, Saunders began selling the land. One of the first investors within the area was Eugene Harrington who purchased the upper portion of Section Eighteen and subdividing it into smaller lots, with a street in the center that would become Lemon Avenue.

By 1889 the name Lemon City appeared for the first time in a public record listing the sale of land between two parties – Eugene Harrington and Charles S.B. Moffat. It is not entirely clear how the area became known as Lemon City, however "some old lemon trees on the Saunders property may have suggested the name."

¹ Peters, Thelma. *Lemon City – Pioneering on Biscayne Bay 1850-1925*. Banyan Books, Inc. Miami Florida. 1976. Page 22.

² Ibid. Page 22.

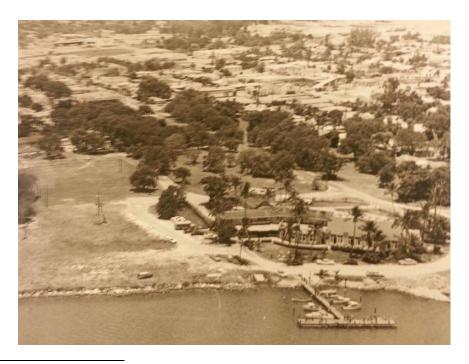
³ Peters, Thelma. *Lemon City – Pioneering on Biscayne Bay 1850-1925*. Banyan Books, Inc. Miami Florida. 1976. Page 23.

Previous Owners

Just to the north of Saunders property, William Temple Pent claimed "a quarter mile of Bayfront" with "thirty-five acres, mostly high pine" in 1885. Wanting more for his children in the way of education, Pent and his neighbor to the north, William Mettair, started the first school in Lemon City. The school was located in a two-room cabin that was donated by Mettair and classes were taught by Alice Brickell.

Pent planted a vegetable garden and a citrus grove on the property, he also ran a starch mill which was also presumably located on his Bayfront land. Pent subdivided his land, selling off small portions at a time, with one sold to the Brown family who moved from Washington, D.C. in 1897. On the land that the Brown's purchased they built a "two-story residence, 22 by 59 feet, with roomy piazzas on their piece of Bayfront property." The Brown's also used the land to grow fruit and vegetables.

Even though the land was previously subdivided, in 1911 several sections were rejoined by the William B. Ogden who moved from Baltimore, Maryland. Ogden retained the two-story residential structure that the Brown family had built, but made significant alterations that included large additions. The additions formed the house in the shape of a "T" and the house was then nicknamed the "Tee House."



⁴ Peters, Thelma. *Lemon City – Pioneering on Biscayne Bay 1850-1925*. Banyan Books, Inc. Miami Florida. 1976. Page 27.

⁵ Ibid. Page 238.

⁶ Tee House Plantation Aerial Photo after conversion into American Legion Post #29. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/30488176006/in/photostream/

Alterations to the structure are rumored to have been designed by George Pfieffer, a prominent architect of the time who built his own residence just to the south of the Tee House. Pfieffer's own home, along with the altered Tee House, and several other residences within Lemon City utilized native rock on the exterior facade. The installation of the exterior "was done by two Virginians, father and son, William D. Savage and William Rosser Savage, who were artisians in working with native rock." As noted on 1925 Sanborn maps, the year in which Lemon City was annexed into the City of Miami, the land in which Ogden's property was located was identified as the Tee House Plantation and where today's Legion Park is located.

When Ogden relocated to Lemon City, "he was wealthy, educated, middle-aged, divorced from his wife, alienated from his children, and an alcoholic." Ogden was a member of a prominent social Chicago family, with the same name, and was son to Mahlon D. Ogden who was an attorney and real estate investor, who served a term as an Alderman in the City of Chicago. With an entrepreneurial spirit, Ogden operated several businesses throughout his life in Lemon City and in Miami. He expanded the citrus grove on his property in Lemon City that had been initiated by the Brown family, he opened the Ye Wee Tappie Tavern on West Flagler Street, which later closed due to prohibition, and built at least one hotel in downtown Miami.

A unique connection to the current Legion Park and its current use as a public park and recreational facility is that Ogden started a baseball team in Lemon City called the "Tea House Plantation baseball team." ¹¹ Ogden sponsored the team and ordered uniforms "costing over \$200" ¹² with the intention of the team playing other organized baseball teams throughout Florida.

In 1920, Ogden moved to an apartment within the Security Hotel and passed away on October 13, 1921 "from an attack of acute indigestion." It is stated in his obituary that he was planning to leave Miami and travel the world for the next several months. After his death, a dispute over his will erupted in the courts between Ogden's children and third wife, who he had only recently married. Ogden's will was signed and dated only the day before Ogden died, leaving ninety-five percent of his estate to his new wife. ¹⁴

Charles Edward "Ed" Ballard first acquired the Tee House Plantation from Ogden in August of 1920 who, "paid \$101,000 on the purchase price and concluded the deal with \$149,000 in

⁷ Ibid. Page 256.

⁸ Map of Greater Miami Florida and Suburbs. G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia, PA. 1925

⁹ Peters, Thelma. *Lemon City – Pioneering on Biscayne Bay 1850-1925*. Banyan Books, Inc. Miami Florida. 1976. Page 240

¹⁰ MAHLON D. OGDEN.: Death of an Old and Well-Known Citizen. Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Feb 14, 1880; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune pg. 6

¹¹ "The "Tea House" Team in Game." Miami Herald. July 3, 1912.

¹² "Lemon City to Have A Cracker-Jack Team." Miami Herald. July 9, 1911.

¹³ "William B. Ogden Passes Away Here". *Miami Herald*. October 14, 1921.

¹⁴ "Ogden Will, Filed for Probate, Made Day Before Death." Miami Herald. November 21, 1921.

case."¹⁵ Ed Ballard was born in French Lick Springs, Indiana where he worked his way through the ranks at the West Baden Springs Hotel, eventually acting as the manager of the casino portion of the hotel and later owning and operating his own casino. In addition to his interest in gambling, Ballard also had an affinity for circuses, of which he purchased several throughout his life, and even housed one of them, the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, at the West Baden Hotel in the winter while they were not traveling. In 1923, the West Baden Hotel was sold to Ballard and it was proclaimed that he was then "one of the richest men in the state."¹⁶

By 1921, Ballard was running an illegal casino in the Tee House Plantation, and at one time charged a fine of \$2000 for the alleged activities.¹⁷ At this time, Lemon City was cited as being "the first settled place south of Palm Beach"¹⁸ within a Miami Herald article. The same article stated that, "within the general limits of the town there are probably 3,000 persons. Business establishments are numerous. There are four garages, seven groceries, a barber shop, a construction company's plant, two plumber shops, a dancing pavilion, a post office, an inn, a bakery, a paint shop, etc."¹⁹

Ballard, although primarily a winter resident, was a well-known fixture and connected to other prominent south Florida residents such as Carl Fisher, who also hailed from Indiana and was the developer behind the formation of Miami Beach. A newspaper article announced an unusual present from Ballard to Fisher, a gift of a two-year old baby elephant named Carl, who lived on Broad Ripple Farm (located at present day 41st Street on Miami Beach).²⁰ The gifts did not stop there, as Ballard sent a second elephant, named Rosie, two years later to keep Carl (the elephant) company.²¹ On November 7, 1936, Ed Ballard was shot and killed in Hot Springs, Arkansas by Robert Alexander, a former business partner of Ballard, who also killed himself that very night.

Following the death of Ed Ballard, the American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29 used the Tee House Plantation as their new headquarters. The property was acquired by the State of Florida prior to the death of Ed Ballard and then sold to the American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29 for one dollar.²² At the time of the sale, there was an agreement that the Post would restore the Tee House and take care of the 45 acres of land. There was also a stipulation that if Legion Park were to no longer own the property, it would then revert back to the state.

¹⁵ "Tee Tree Plantation Sold." Miami Herald. October 2, 1921.

¹⁶ "The Life of Charles Edward Ballard." <u>http://frenchlickresort.blogspot.com/2016/06/the-life-of-charles-edward-ballard.html</u>, Tuesday, June 28, 2016.

¹⁷ "Ed Ballard Fined \$2,000 by Norfleet." Miami Herald. April 13, 1921.

¹⁸ "Lemon City Distinctive as a Suburb." Miami Herald. December 19, 1921.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Baby Elephant Comes to Beach." Miami Herald. February 7, 1921.

²¹ "Flamingo Course Can Boast Only Cat Caddy in the World." *Miami Herald*. October 14, 1923.

²² Flanders, Robert A. "American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post #29, 85 Years of Miami History." *Biscayne Boulevard Times*. November, 2004.

The first home of Post No. 29 was located at the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and NE 8 Street. In 1934, Post No. 29 moved into their second outpost within the former Tee House which served as their primary office location with meeting spaces for the members and a social hall that hosted regular Sunday dinners.²³



American Legion Post #29 was named for Private Harvey W. Seeds, a member of Company M, 124th Infantry, of the Florida National Guard serving under Captain Junius T. Wiggington. Seeds was a Miami native, son of Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Seeds, and was reported as Missing in Action in a Miami Herald article dated September 20, 1918, which stated he had been missing since July 18 of the same year.²⁴ He was the first Dade County man to be killed in action and it was the idea of Captain Junius T. Wiggington, a charter member, to name the post after Seeds.²⁵ Photo below of Harvey W. Seeds.²⁶



²³ Ad. *Miami Herald*. November 23, 1935.

²⁴ "Harvey W. Seeds Among Missing." *Miami Herald*. September 20, 1918.

²⁵ Feiblman, Herbert U. "History of Harvy W. Seeds Post No. 29 American Legion." Miami, Florida. 1960.

²⁶ Ibid. No page number.

In July of 1965, the American Legion Post #29 formed a Property Advisory Committee to discuss the possibility of selling a portion of the land that the post occupied to the City of Miami for use as a public park.

The committee polled the membership for their opinion of the proposed sale in anticipation of a vote that occurred on February 18, 1966. As of the date February 1, 1966 as stated in *The Miami Legionnaire*, *Official Publication Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29*, the monthly newsletter of the post, the committee had "...received about 600 replies. Over 560 of these replies were in favor of the sale to the City." The proceeds of the sale would aid in constructing a new post on the land that the group would retain. In the following monthly newsletter dated March 1, 1966, the Commander reported that the sale was approved with "less than 10% of all the Post members opposed..." and the post members opposed..." The proceeds of the sale was approved with "less than 10% of all the Post members opposed..."

In August of 1966, the City of Miami purchased 37 acres of the property for \$862,000 to make way for a new public park that would be named Legion Park.²⁹ At this time, the City of Miami received funds from the Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which allotted "\$1.1 million to purchase and develop more than 45 acres of "open spaces" land"³⁰. This allowed for the development of several parks throughout the city including Sewell Park, Legion Park, and Wainwright Park. The American Legion Harvey Seeds Post #29 occupied the site until 1967 when they moved into their newly built structure, located immediately to the south of the Tee House.

Architectural and Physical Description

Legion Park is located in the Upper Eastside of the city of Miami between approximately NE 65th Street and NE 66 Street, extending from Biscayne Boulevard to Biscayne Bay. The park contains approximately 48 acres and contains a large number of mature canopy trees, recreational facilities, and the historic structure that acts as a community center.

The community center is an altered version of the original Tee House, leaving only a portion of what is believed to be from the original structure. The portion that remains from the original Tee House is a two-structure that has a coral rock façade which contains the main entrance, a canopy supported by coral rock columns and capped with a hipped roof covered in asphalt shingles. The main two-story structure contains louver shutters, a hipped roof with asphalt shingles, and on the rear side is a semi-circular room that is supported by coral rock columns that are placed at regular intervals. Leading off the main two-story structure is a one-story building that acts as an event space and meeting room is coated in a smooth stucco finish, also containing coral rock columns and a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. Aluminum glass entry doors and sidelights are installed on the west façade facing into the parking lot.

²⁷ Cox, William E. "Property Sale to the City of Miami." *The Miami Legionnaire, Official Publication Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29.* February 1, 1966. Page 1.

²⁸ Cox, William E. "Property Sale to the City of Miami." *The Miami Legionnaire, Official Publication Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29.* March 1, 1966. Page 1.

²⁹ Flanders, Robert A. "American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post #29, 85 Years of Miami History." *Biscayne Boulevard Times*. November, 2004.

³⁰ "U.S. Gives Miami a Jump on Future." Miami Herald. April 20, 1967.

In 1972, the Parks Department at the City of Miami made alterations to the structure that they had purchased from the American Legion to convert the space into a community and recreation center.

IV- Criteria for Designation

The property may be eligible for designation under the following criteria as numbered in Section 23-4(a) contained in Chapter 23 of the City Code:

- (1) Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past; The history of Legion Park links to the lives of several significant persons who played significant roles within the development of the City of Miami. Those significant persons include S.K. Brown, William B. Ogden, and Ed Ballard whose contributions and histories are described in the preceding text.
- (2) Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community; Legion Park represents an evolving history that pre-dates the formation of the City of Miami and is one of the few last remaining parcels and structures that hold a significant link to Lemon City. It has also served as the home to the American Legion Harvey W. Seeds Post #29 for nearly a century.

V- PLANNING CONTEXT

Legion Park is a public park space that serves the Upper Eastside community. The Preservation Office will have purview over any work done to the main structure that functions as a community center, any work that affects the canopy trees or specimen trees, any ground disturbing work that affects the high probability archeological conservation area, and any proposed new construction on the site. The Preservation Office will not maintain purview over the playground equipment or recreational elements, unless they are substantially modified.

VI- BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Map of Greater Miami Florida and Suburbs. G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia, PA. 1925

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VII- Photographs

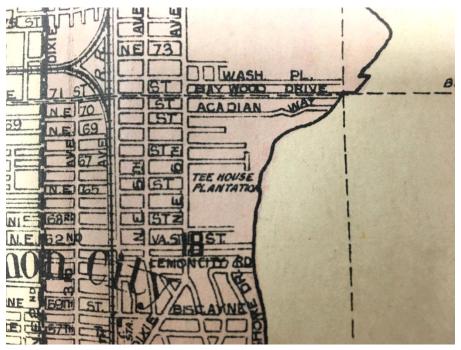


Figure 1: Map of Greater Miami Florida and Suburbs. G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia, PA. 1925

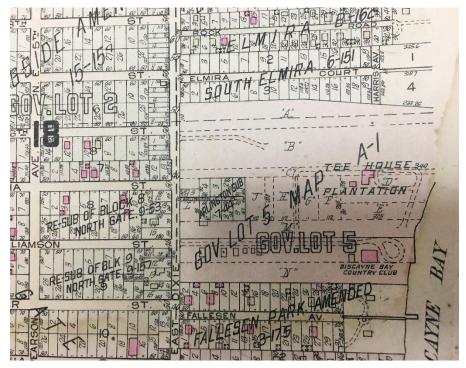


Figure 2: Map of Greater Miami Florida and Suburbs. G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia, PA. 1925

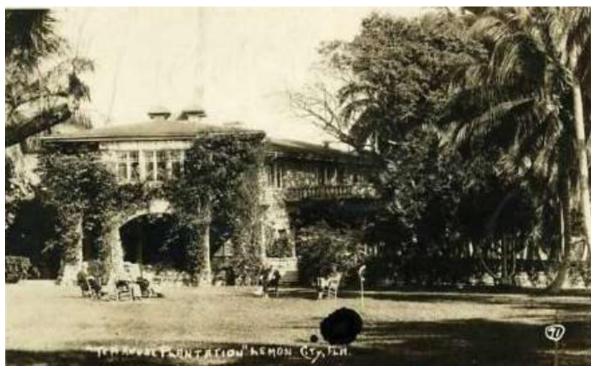


Figure 3: Tee House Plantation, Lemon City, Florida. History Miami Archives



Figure 4: Tee House Plantation. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/30436364464/

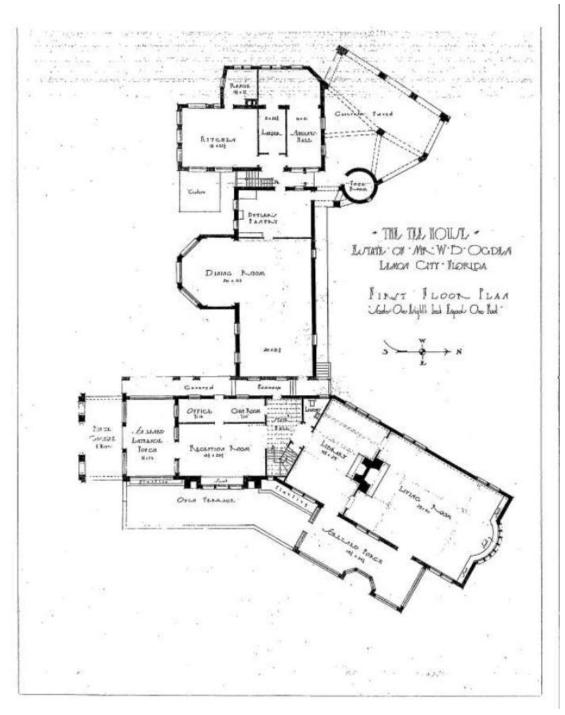


Figure 5: Tee House Plantation, Lemon City, Florida. History Miami Archives

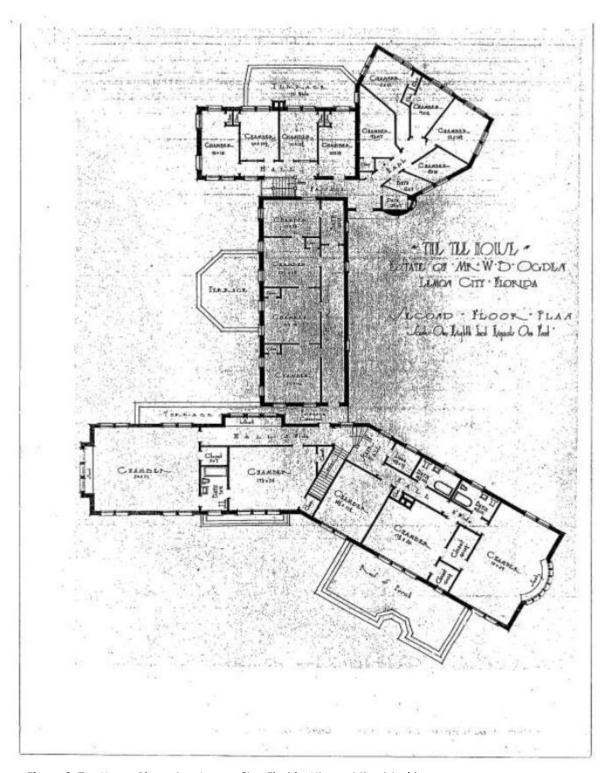


Figure 6: Tee House Plantation, Lemon City, Florida. History Miami Archives

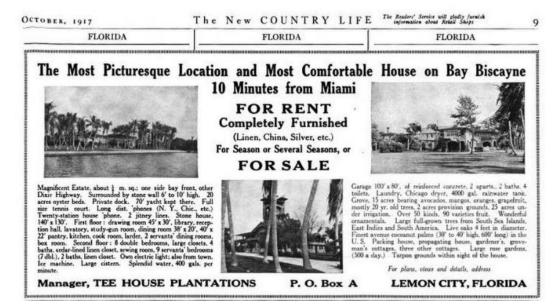


Figure 7: The New Country Life: A Magazine for the Home-maker in the Country. Doubleday, Paige, and Company. Garden City and New York. October 1917, Page 9



Figure 8: Tee House Plantation. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/



Figure 9: Tee House Plantation. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/

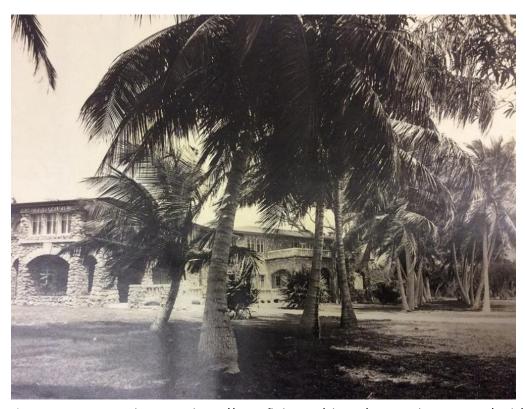


Figure 10: Tee House Plantation. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/

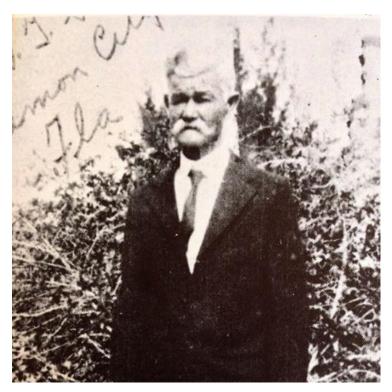


Figure 11: http://www.imgrum.net/user/lemon_city/1810797890/1028652163085971330_18



Figure 12: American Legion Post. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/



Figure 13: American Legion Post. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/



Figure 14: Bar in the American Legion Post. https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanlegionpost29/with/30436403264/

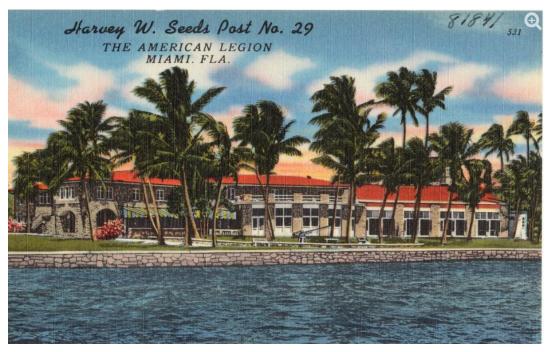


Figure 15: Color postcard for Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29, The American Legion, Miami, Florida. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:6108vg16g

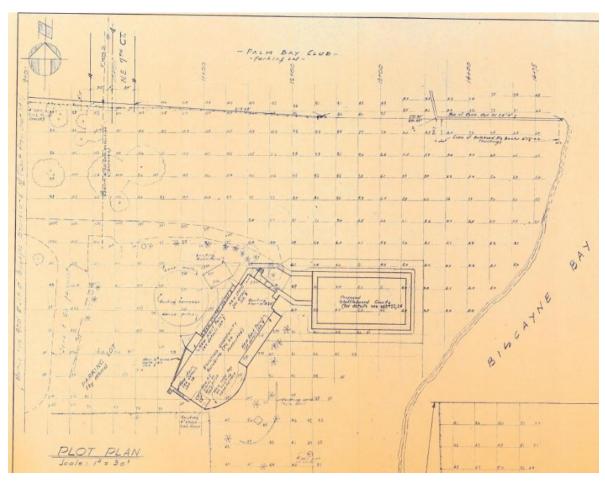


Figure 16: Plot Plan, Legion Memorial Park, Community Building Alterations, 1972. Plans courtesy of City of Miami, Office of Capital Improvement and Transportation

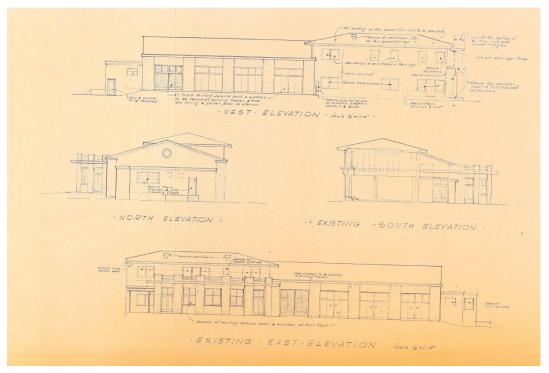
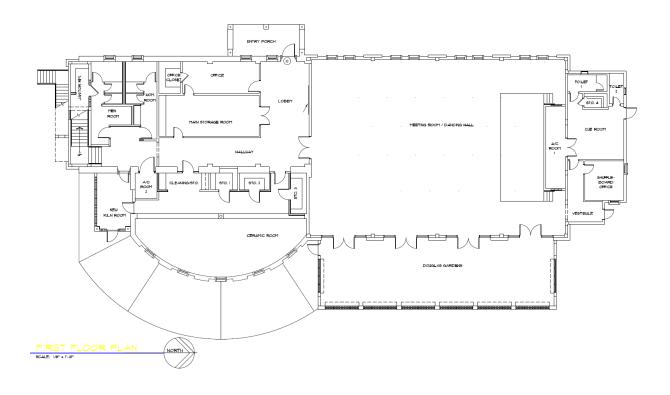


Figure 17: Existing Exterior Elevations, Legion Memorial Park, Community Building Alterations, 1972. Plans courtesy of City of Miami, Office of Capital Improvement and Transportation



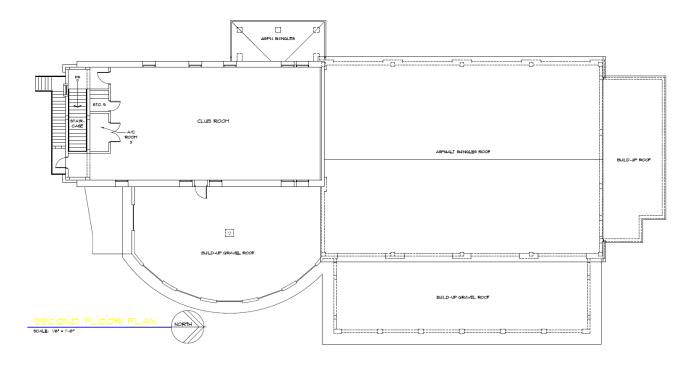


Figure 18: Current First and Second Floor Plans of the Legion Park Community Center Plans courtesy of City of Miami, Office of Capital Improvement and Transportation



V J DAY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION HARVEY W. SEEDS POST NO. 29

AUGUST 14th

VOL. 500 NO. 1

MIAMI, FLORIDA

AUGUST 1, 1966



OUR NEW POST HOME

ABOVE IS AN ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE NEW POST HOME WE ARE PLANNING TO BUILD ON A SITE 500 FT. BY 317 FT. AT N.E. 64TH STREET AND N.E. 7TH AVENUE. THIS IS THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF OUR PRESENT PROPERTY, AN AREA OF 3.6 ACRES. ALL ARCHITECTURAL AND OTHER DRAWINGS AND SPECIFICATIONS ARE COMPLETED. THESE ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION BY ANY MEMBER IN THE ADJUTANT'S OFFICE. FIVE CONTRACTORS ARE SUBMITTING BIDS WHICH WILL BE OPENED IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS. SOON THEREAFTER A START CAN BE MADE ON CONSTRUCTION.

THE PICTURE ABOVE SHOWS THE WEST FRONT OF THE BUILDING, WHICH WILL BE THE MAIN ENTRANCE. A PARKING LOT FOR 300 CARS WILL BE LAID OUT IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING. THIS WILL BE LIGHTED AT NIGHT BY FIXTURES ON THREE 20 FT. POLES. ALSO DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING WILL BE A FLAGPOLE, AND PROVISION FOR COMMEMORATIVE TABLETS.

AN IMPRESSIVE PORTICO WILL LEAD TO AN EXPANSIVE LOBBY. ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LOBBY UPON ENTERING WILL BE THE AUXILIARY MEETING ROOM. ON THE LEFT WILL BE A CONFERENCE ROOM, THE ADJUTANT'S OFFICE, AND A RECORDS ROOM. DIRECTLY AHEAD WILL BE THE BAR WHICH WILL HAVE A LOW HEIGHT SO THAT VIEWS OF BISCAYNE BAY CAN BE ENJOYED BY PATRONS. OPENING OFF THE BAR WILL BE A TERRACE ALSO AFFORDING VIEWS OF THE BAY. THE RECREATION ROOM WILL BE ON THE RIGHT WITH POOL TABLES, MAGAZINES, TELEVISION, AND OTHER THINGS FOR THE MEMBERS' RELAXATION. ALSO INCLUDED IN THE BAR IS A SMALL SNACK STAND. ON THE LEFT OF THE BAR IS THE DINING ROOM AND KITCHEN, AND WEST OF THEM THE MAIN MEETING ROOM.

MAINTENANCE OFFICE AND STOREROOMS WILL BE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING. AN ELEVATOR WILL GIVE ACCESS TO THE SECOND STORY, TOGETHER WITH TWO STAIRCASES AT NORTH AND SOUTH SIDES OF THE BUILDING. ADEQUATE STORAGE SPACE IS PROVIDED IN SEVERAL LOCATIONS. ON THE SECOND FLOOR IS ANOTHER SPACIOUS LOBBY WHICH WILL FEATURE AN OVER-LOOK INTO THE FIRST FLOOR LOBBY. ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING IS ANOTHER RECREATION ROOM. AND ON THE SOUTH SIDE IS THE TROPHY ROOM. IN THE MIDDLE WILL BE A SMALL GYMNASIUM WITH LOCKERS AND SHOWERS. DIRECTLY EAST OF THIS WILL BE A COVERED SPACE, WITH EASY CHAIRS, OPEN TO THE BAY. THIS COULD EASILY BECOME THE MOST POPULAR PLACE IN THE POST. THE BUILDING WILL BE COMPLETELY AIR CONDITIONED AND WILL BE HEATED IN COOL WEATHER.

OUTSIDE IT IS CONTEMPLATED IT WILL BE LANDSCAPED TO EMPHASIZE OUR SUBTROPICAL LOCATION. ADEQUATE COMFORT FACILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED ON BOTH THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS. WE EXPECT THIS NEW POST HOME TO BE A SHOW PLACE OF THE SOUTHERN LEGION. MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO SAFEGUARD SURPLUS MONIES IN A TRUST FUND FOR FUTURE UPKEEP.

Figure 19: "Our New Post Home." *The Miami Legionnaire, Official Publication Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29.* August 1, 1966. Page 1.



Figure 20: Current photos of the Tee Plantation House. December, 2016.