
RANSOM SCHOOL

3575 MAIN HIGHWAY

Designation Report



City of Miami

**REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
RANSOM SCHOOL
AS A HISTORIC SITE**

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton, Preservation Officer
Designation Date May 31, 1983
Amended Date October 17, 2000
Resolution No. HEPB - 2000-65

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Ransom School
The Pagoda
Pine Knot Camp
Adirondack-Florida School

Current Name:

Ransom-Everglades School

Location:

3575 Main Highway
Miami, Florida

Present Owner:

Ransom School, Inc.
3575 Main Highway
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Use:

Educational

Zoning District:

R-1, SD-18

Tax Folio Number:

01-4121-045-0180

Boundary Description:

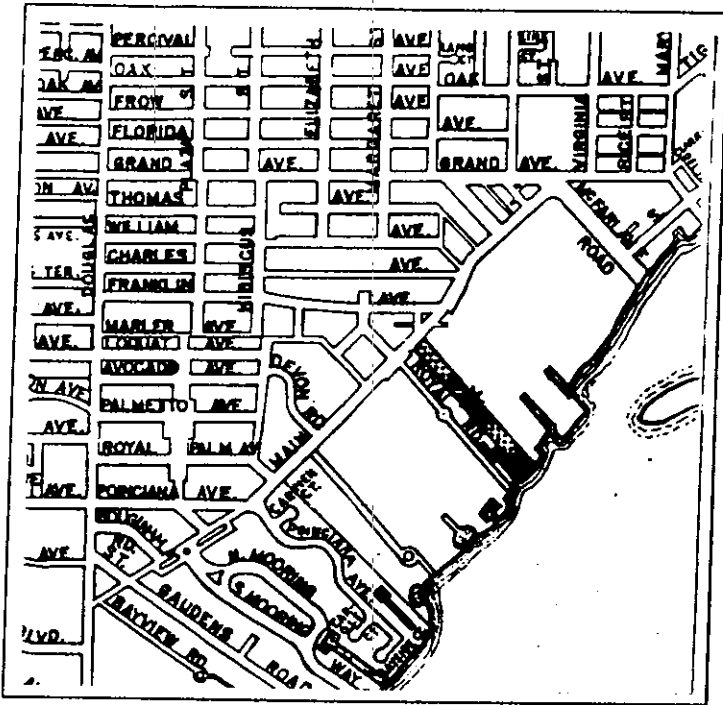
Lot 13 lying southeast of Main Highway, less the triangular portion northwest of County Road, and submerged lands lying southeast to the bulkhead line, of the plat of MUNROE'S PLAT, as recorded in Plat Book D at Page 253, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

Classification:

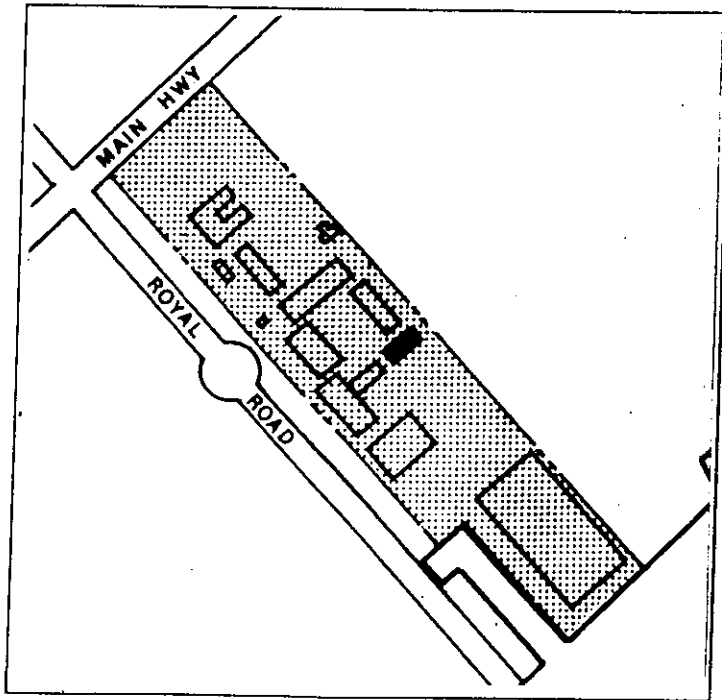
Historic Site

RANSOM SCHOOL

3575 MAIN HIGHWAY



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:

1902, 1909

Architect:

The architect for The Pagoda was the firm of Green and Wicks of Buffalo, New York.

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Statement of Significance:

Ransom School is significant for its role in the history of education in Miami-Dade County. In addition, The Pagoda, the most significant building on the property, is an excellent example of vernacular style architecture and is particularly noteworthy for its adaptability to the South Florida environment.

The Pagoda and the Paul Ransom Cottage are the only two remaining buildings on the campus associated with the early history of Pine Knot Camp and the Adirondack-Florida School. Established by Paul Ransom in 1895, the Adirondack-Florida School was the nation's first two-campus migratory boarding school, with half of the school year spent in Florida and half in New York State. The school offered a curriculum that encouraged mental, moral, and physical development, as well as individuality and interdependence among members of the school community and coexistence and respect for the natural environment.

Paul C. Ransom was born in 1863 in Earlville, New York. After graduating from Williams College, he studied law at Harvard and Columbia. Because of a serious illness, Ransom was instructed to spend winters in a warm climate. He arrived in Coconut Grove in 1893 and purchased a seven-and-one-half acre tract of land on Biscayne Bay.

Ransom established a winter tutoring camp for several boys at his Pine Knot Camp in 1896 and broadened his educational philosophy to include a migratory prep school. The Adirondack-Florida School opened in the Fall of 1903 at Meenagha Lodge in the Adirondacks with seven students and four masters. Ransom believed that the ideal outdoor conditions of his school, together with a family-like atmosphere and small classes, would prepare students well for college and life.

Ransom died in 1907, but his wife Alice Carter Ransom continued the operation of the school. After World War II, the Adirondack campus was sold, the Coconut Grove campus became a year round boarding and day school, and the facility was renamed Ransom

School. In 1974, the school merged with Everglades School, a private girls' school in Coconut Grove, and became the Ransom-Everglades School.

The Pagoda, built in 1902, is an excellent example of vernacular style architecture at the turn-of-the-century. Built of native materials, it is also an outstanding example of structural design erected to suit local climatic and environmental conditions. Its many windows, the high ceiling in the main room, and the building's position on the ridge overlooking Biscayne Bay keep The Pagoda cool, even in the warmest weather. The Paul Ransom Cottage, built c. 1090, is a good example of vernacular domestic architecture in Miami at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Ransom School 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.

Ransom School is a reflection of Coconut Grove's pioneer era and is significant for its role in the early educational history of the community.

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

The Pagoda is an excellent example of the type of vernacular style architecture constructed in Miami-Dade County at the turn-of-the-century.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The Pagoda is particularly noteworthy for the excellence of its design, which is remarkably adapted to the South Florida environment. The building's many windows, high ceilings, and location were tailored to meet the requirements of South Florida and afford maximum comfort to its inhabitants.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

The Pagoda is a two story rectangular structure constructed vaguely in the shape of a Chinese pagoda. This wood frame building, sitting high above the ground on oolitic limestone piers, is covered with vertical board and batten siding. The building features a double-hipped roof, with a smaller hipped roof on the second story resting on the truncated hipped roof of the first story. Composition shingles replace the original wood shingles.

Facing the bay on the north and southeast corners are two verandas. Soon after 1902, one was converted to a sleeping porch. Entrances to The Pagoda are located on the southeast and northwest facades, and both feature wood panel doors with plain surrounds.

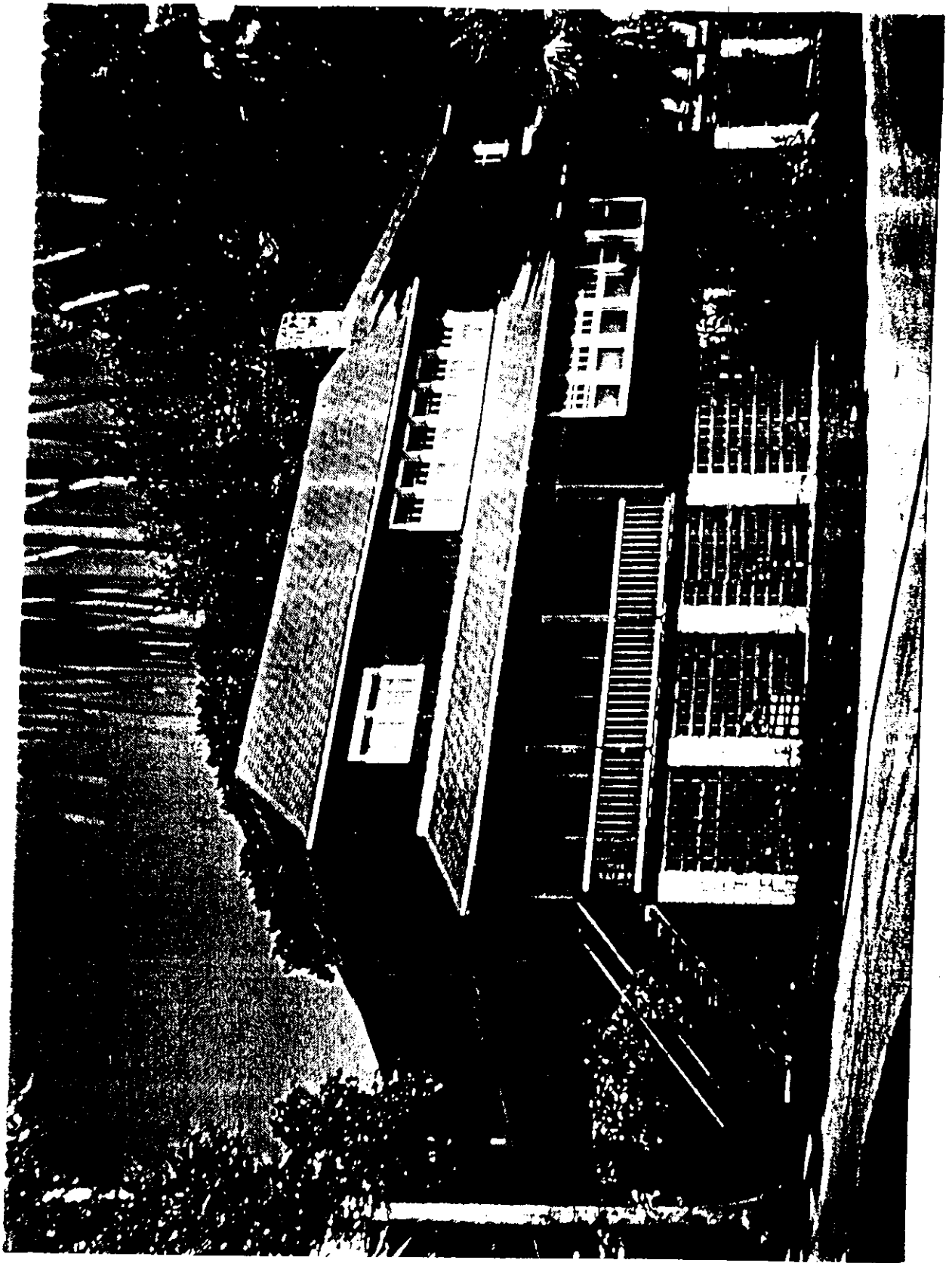
Most of the numerous windows in the building are wooden double hung sash with six-over-six lights. Wooden casement windows are also common. During the 1940's, some damaged windows were replaced with glass jalousies.

The Pagoda has survived in a relatively unaltered condition and was restored in 1976.

The Paul Ransom Cottage is a small, one story rectangular building topped with a gable roof and covered with vertical board and batten siding.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

The Pagoda and the Paul Ransom Cottage are a contributing structures. Contributing landscape features include all specimen trees on the property.



Ransom School
3575 Main Highway
Southeast facade
1982

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The continued preservation of The Pagoda is assured due to the commitment of Ransom-Everglades School. The school recognized the historic value of the structure in the mid-1970's and undertook a major restoration project. The Pagoda now houses an interpretive exhibit that details the history of the Adirondack-Florida School.

The existence of the Paul Ransom Cottage was brought to public attention by a group of alumni, who urged that it be preserved. The cottage was moved to its present location during the construction of new facilities for the campus, and plans are underway to completely rehabilitate the structure.

Preservation Incentives:

The historic site designation covers the entire Ransom-Everglades School property to help guide future development of the site. The Pagoda and the Paul Ransom Cottage are presently surrounded by modern classroom buildings.

The preservation of the historic buildings should remain a preservation priority. The development of preservation incentives for properties such as these, however, is one that is very difficult to address. Existing tax incentives for rehabilitation are not applicable.