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# SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY INN

3940 MAIN HIGHWAY

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## Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF  
SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY INN  
3940 MAIN HIGHWAY  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton 12-6-84 Date  
Historic Preservation  
Consultant

Accepted by John Ward Chris 12-19-84 Date  
Chairman, Heritage  
Conservation Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Sunshine Fruits Company Inn

Current Name:

Sunshine Fruits Company Inn

Location:

3940 Main Highway  
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Owner:

Frank A. & M. Kenwyn Rubino  
4850 Kendall Drive  
Miami, Florida 33156

Present Occupant:

Vacant

Present Use:

Vacant

Present Zoning District:

RS-1/1

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-4128-10-0060

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

Lot 6 of the plat of THE TRIANGLE, as recorded in Plat Book 11 at Page 36, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

HC Zoning Classification:

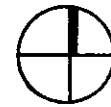
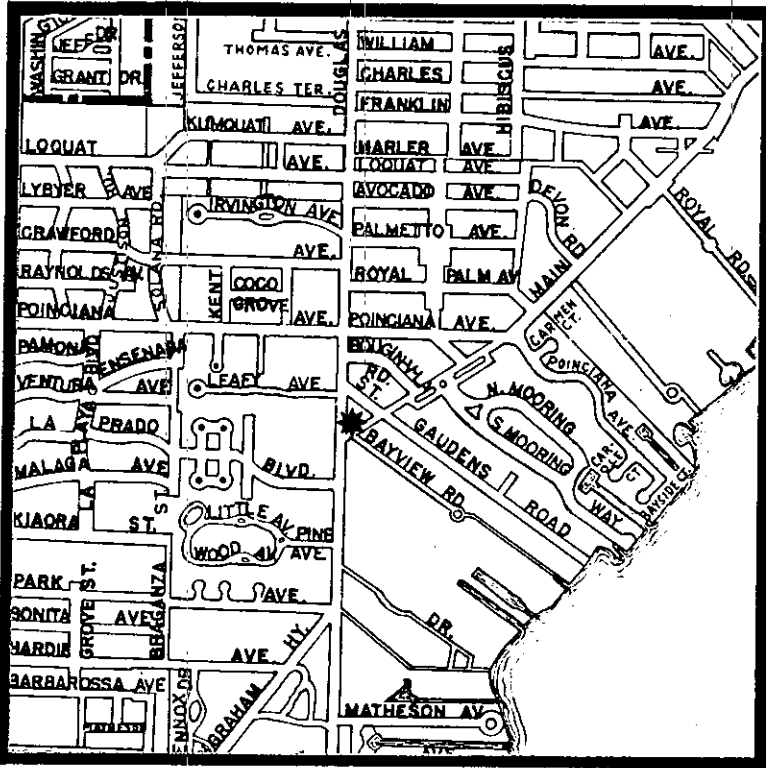
Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

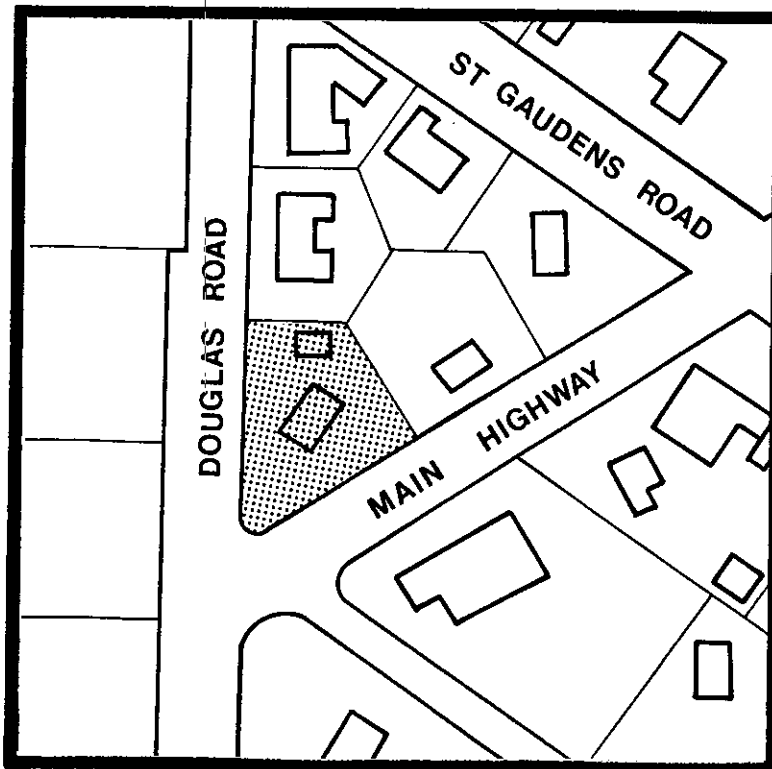
Architectural Significance -	1
Historical Significance -	2
Contextural Significance -	1

# SUNSHINE FRUITS COMPANY INN

3940 MAIN HIGHWAY



location



site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Statement of Significance:

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn is significant in the history of architecture and community development in Miami. The building is an excellent example of mission style architecture, a popular style in boom-time Miami. The simplicity of the building's design and detailing is particularly characteristic of the style, as are the curved parapets which are repeated on several facades. Of particular interest are the battered walls.

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn also reflects the evolution of architectural tastes in Miami between the first decade of the twentieth century and the boom. Built in 1909, this house originally was a wood frame structure covered with shingles. Changing tastes and the rapid adoption of building styles based on earlier Spanish architecture prompted the Inn's new owners to extensively remodel this house in 1924. The remodeling adopted the then-popular mission style.

The building's early age and subsequent development also reflects the growth of Coconut Grove during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Originally built as a residence, the house was acquired in 1915 by the Sunshine Fruits Company Inn, a company instrumental in the early development of Coconut Grove. Founded in 1910 to manage fruit groves in the area for absentee owners, the Sunshine Fruits Company quickly expanded to include real estate development. The company opened this building as a great inn for prospective clients. The house was owned by Sunshine Fruits until 1924.

### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

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

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn reflects the early development of Coconut Grove during the first decade of the twentieth century. It is also significant for its association with the Sunshine Fruits Company, an important organization in Coconut Grove's early history.

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

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn is an excellent example of Mission style architecture, a style popular in boom-time Miami.

### III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

1909

Architect:

Unknown

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Historical Context:

George & Margaret Dock of Ann Arbor, Michigan, owned the tract of land on which this building was constructed in 1909. In 1915, the Docks sold the property to the Sunshine Fruits Company, a company instrumental in the early twentieth century development of Coconut Grove. Founded in 1910 by H. de B. Justison, the Sunshine Fruits Company originally managed fruit groves in the area for absentee owners. The company expanded to include real estate development, and it opened this building as a guest inn for prospective clients. The company's operation soon became a popular and early tourist attraction. In addition to attracting many early residents to Coconut Grove, the Sunshine Fruits Company subdivided some of the oldest sections of Coconut Grove. By this time they were also managing over 800 acres of grove land.

The company constructed an office building in downtown Coconut Grove around 1920. A division of the Sunshine Fruits Company, Sunshine Real Estate, is still operating in Coconut Grove.

In 1924, the Inn was sold to Arthur B. & Olive W. Commons. Commons was president of Commons, Magee & Commons Inc., a real estate firm, and his wife was a noted artist and ceramicist. Here, Mrs. Commons developed Platinum Palm Ware, whereby platinum was fused onto her china in original palm, moss, sky, and sea motifs: Platinum Palm Ware received a medal at the New York World's Fair.

The house was occupied by Mrs. Commons until her death in 1963. After years as a rental property, the house was restored by its present owners in 1983.



#### IV. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### Description of Building:

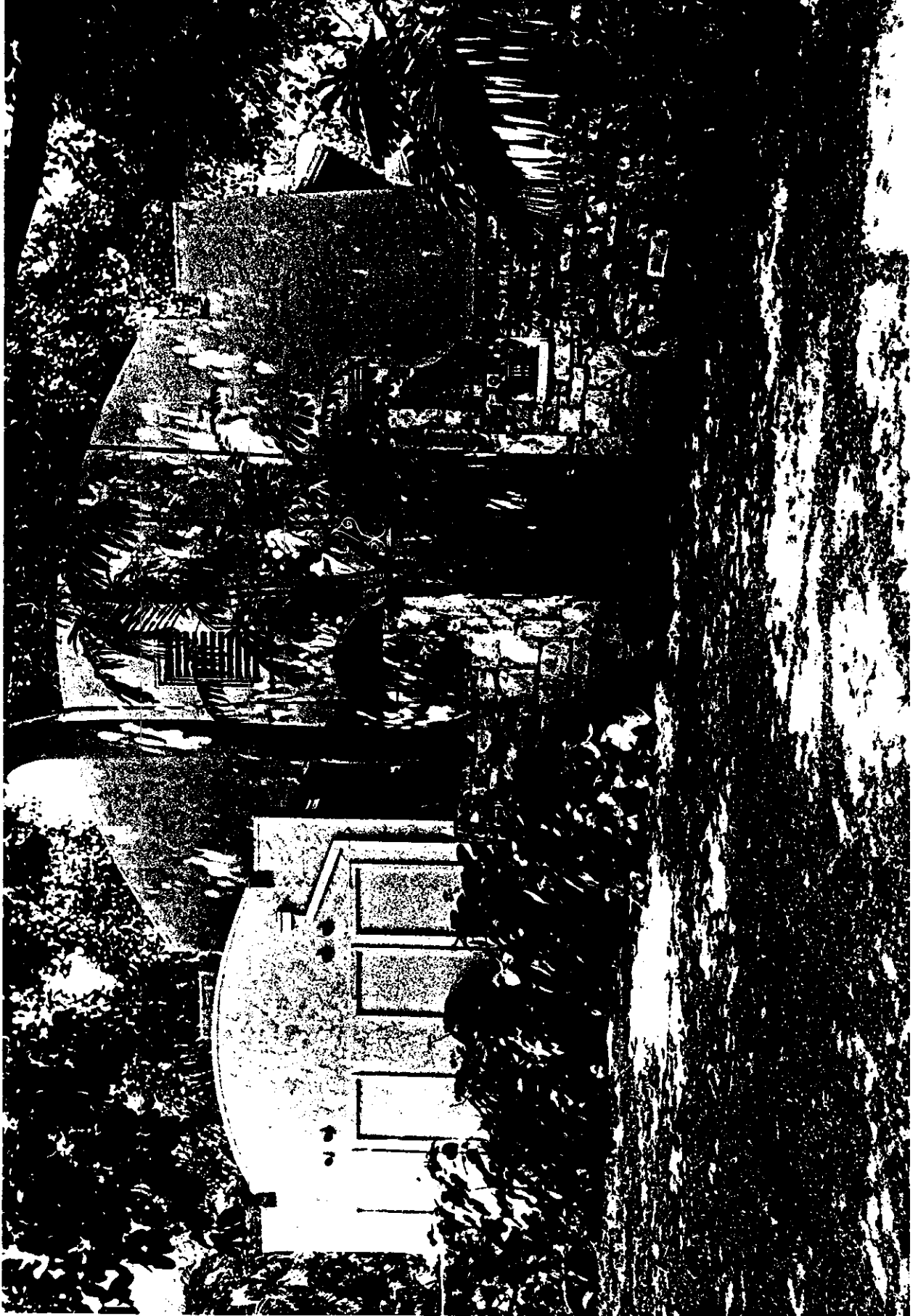
The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn is a one story rectangular structure of wood frame construction. Originally covered with shingles, the house was finished with a textured stucco surface in the mid 1920's. The house now features battered walls with curved parapets on the front and side facades. Behind the parapets is a gable roof with exposed rafter ends. The roof is covered with asbestos shingles.

Two enclosed wings or porches, one on the southeast facade and one on the southwest facade, feature parapet walls identical to those on the main house. The main entrance is located on the southeast facade and contains a round arched wooden door. Windows throughout the house are primarily wooden double hung sash with one-over-one and nine-over-one lights. A rectangular louvered window is located above the main entrance. Several windows have been blocked off, although the window surrounds still remain.

Exterior ornamentation is minimal and is restricted to ornamental plaques, scuppers, exposed rafter ends, and the parapet wall itself.

##### Description of Site:

The Sunshine Fruits Company Inn is located on a corner lot at the intersection of Main Highway and Douglas Road. The site is heavily wooded and contains what is said to be the second largest banyon tree in the area. A two-car garage built c.1924, is also located on the property. Much of the lot is enclosed by a low stone wall, with an ornamental iron gate at the entrance.



Sunshine Fruits Company Inn  
3940 Main Highway  
Southeast (front) facade  
1984

V. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

Although partially hidden from view by heavy landscaping, the Sunshine Fruits Company Inn occupies an important site in Coconut Grove at the intersection of Main Highway and Douglas Road. The house has recently been restored by its present owners and is now vacant. The property is for sale. The present owners have requested designation because they wish to insure the preservation of the house by future owners.

Conservation Objectives:

Although historic site designation cannot prevent the ultimate demolition of the property, designation is the only mechanism currently available to encourage such a goal. The existing residential use of the property should be continued.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the existing zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property.

VI. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include the entire tract of land under a single ownership.

Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

The southeast, southwest, and northwest facades of the house and the west and south facades of the garage shall be considered major exterior surface subject to review.

Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dade County, Florida. Community and Economic Development, Historic Preservation Division. Dade County Historic Survey, Site Inventory File for 3940 Main Highway , Miami, Florida.

Miami, Florida. Fire, Rescue and Inspection Services Department. Building and Zoning Division. Real Property Record, 3940 Main Highway.

Rubino, M. Kenwyn. "Proposal for Designation: Sunshine Fruits Company Inn." 1984.