

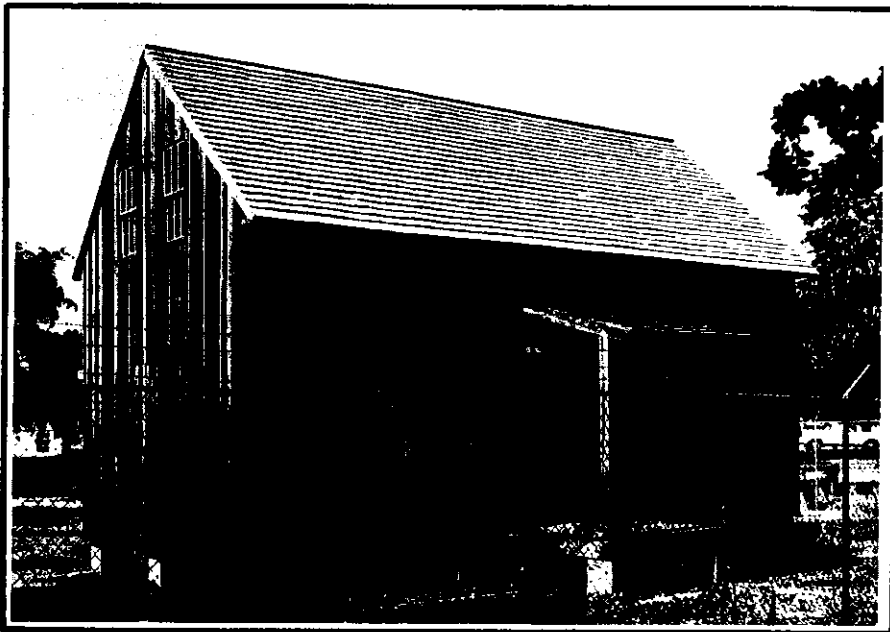
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# WILLIAM WAGNER HOUSE

LUMMUS PARK, 404 N.W. 3 STREET

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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  
WILLIAM WAGNER HOUSE  
LUMMUS PARK, 404 N.W. 3 STREET  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Sarah Caton 6-17-83  
Historic Preservation Date  
Consultant

Accepted by Charles Edwin Chace 6-28-83  
Chairman, Heritage Date  
Conservation Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. 9808

Date FEB 28 1984

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

William Wagner House

Current Name:

William Wagner House

Location:

Approximately 404 N.W. 3 Street  
Miami, Florida 33128

Present Owner:

City of Miami  
3500 Pan American Drive  
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Occupant:

Vacant

Present Use:

Vacant

Present Zoning District:

PR

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-0109-30-2010

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

That portion of "Tract A" of the plat of LUMMUS PARK OF MIAMI, as recorded in Plat Book 81 at Page 23, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida,

lying westerly of the southerly extension of the westerly right-of-way line of North West 4th Avenue. Also described as Block 93N as shown on the plat A.L.KNOWLTON'S MAP OF MIAMI, as recorded in Plat Book B at Page 41, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

HC Zoning Classification:

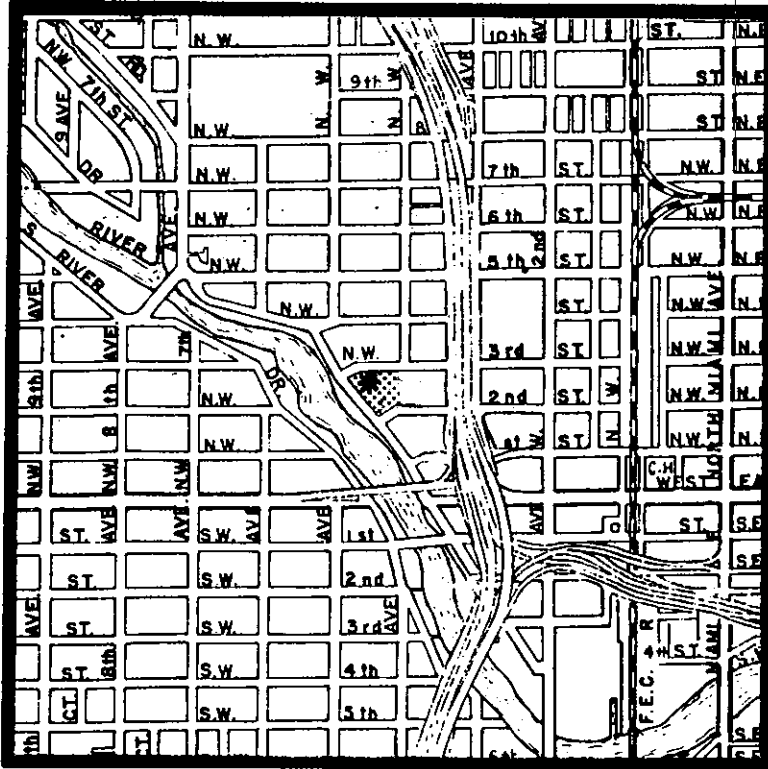
Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

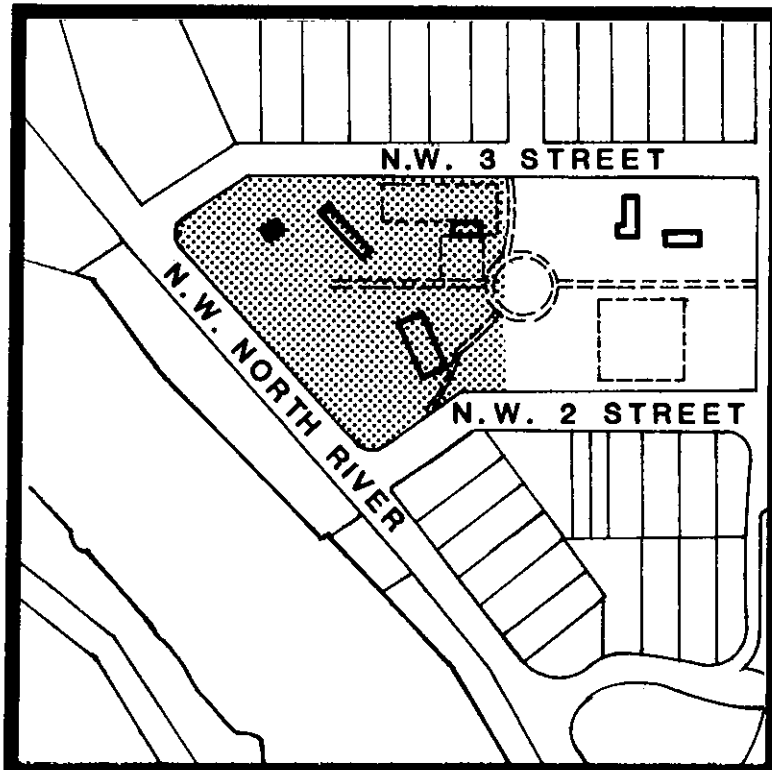
Architectural Significance - 1  
Historical Significance - 1  
Contextural Significance - 1

# WILLIAM WAGNER HOUSE

LUMMUS PARK, 404 N.W. 3 STREET



location



site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Statement of Significance:

The William Wagner House is significant as the oldest known house still standing in Dade County and as a reflection of South Florida's homesteading era during the mid-nineteenth century. The house is also significant for its associations with William Wagner, one of Dade County's early pioneers, and as a unique example of braced frame construction.

William Wagner came to the Miami area in 1855 and constructed this house before 1858. One of the area's first permanent residents, Wagner was a respected figure during Miami's pioneer period and was actively involved in local political and community affairs. One of the Wagner family's most important contributions was the erection of Dade County's first church in 1875.

The William Wagner House reflects the early days of settlement along the Miami River during the mid-nineteenth century and is the only known house which remains from this era. This portion of Miami's history has all but disappeared, and the Wagner House is thus an important reminder of this period.

A rare example of this era's vernacular wood frame architecture, the Wagner House is also unique in its use of braced frame construction. Balloon frame construction, which spread throughout the United States during the 1840's was not available in South Florida until much later. The use of braced (or mortise and tenon) framing this recalls the earlier method of construction.

### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The William Wagner House is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

The William Wagner House was the home of one of Miami's leading pioneer citizens who came to the Miami River area in 1855. Wagner was responsible for erecting the first church in Dade County.

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

The William Wagner House is the oldest known house still standing in Dade County and represents Miami's homesteading era.

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

The William Wagner House is the only known house remaining from Dade County's homestead era and is a unique example of braced frame construction.

### III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

c. 1855-1858

Architect:

None

Builder/Contractor:

The William Wagner House was probably built by William Wagner, with the assistance of other local pioneers.

Historical Context:

William Wagner, the son of German immigrants, was born approximately 1825 and may have grown up in Pennsylvania. Wagner joined the Army in 1846 and fought in the Mexican War under General Winfield Scott, until he was wounded in the battle of Cerro Gordo. Sent to Charleston, South Carolina, to recuperate, he met and married Eveline DeBau (or Aimar), a French Creole, in 1849. When Wagner's former military unit was sent to reopen Fort Dallas at the Miami River in 1855, Wagner decided to move to South Florida.

Wagner opened a sutler's store at Fort Dallas and built a coontie mill and house on land that later became his homestead. His entire family joined him in 1858. Wagner formally filed for a homestead in 1869, claiming a 40 acre tract along Wagner Creek.

The Wagner family was well respected and was one of the first families to make friends with the Seminole Indians. Wagner also established the county's first church in 1875.

Wagner died in 1901 on his homestead, after living for a brief time in South Dade. He is buried in the City of Miami Cemetery. Wagner's property was inherited by his daughter, Rose Wagner Richards, and was sold in 1906 to the A. J. Bendle Company, a firm that was developing Highland Park. In 1909, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Cassell purchased a lot in Highland Park. The Bendle Company gave the Wagner House to the Cassells with the stipulation that they move it onto their own lot. The house was thus moved approximately 50 feet to the south.

The house was threatened by development in the late-1970's and was moved to Lummus Park in 1979.



#### IV. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### Description of Building:

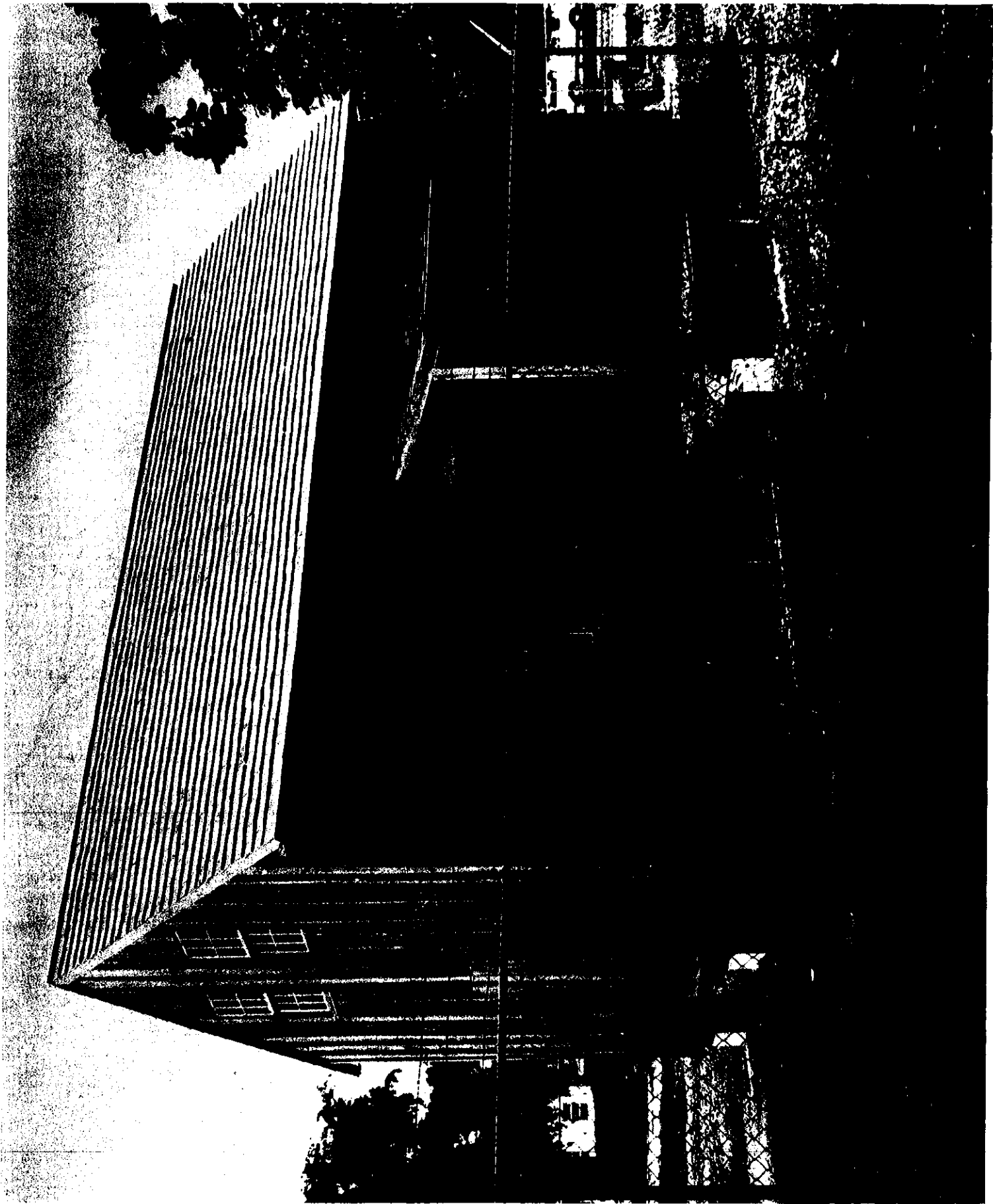
The William Wagner House is a one-and-one-half story rectangular structure with a symmetrical facade. Finished with board and batten siding, the building is topped with a gable roof covered with wooden shingles. The building is of braced frame construction, with the members mortised and tenoned, and the framing is hand-hewn from heart of pine.

The Wagner House features plain batten doors and wooden, single hung windows with six-over-six lights. A small, one bay porch with a shed roof is located on the north facade.

The building was originally located on Wagner Creek and was moved approximately 50 feet to the south in 1909. The house may also have been moved again in 1925. After 1909, major additions were made to all four facades of the house, but these were removed before the house was relocated to its present site in 1979. The Wagner House has been partially restored, although much of the house has been reconstructed, due to the deterioration of the original fabric.

##### Description of Site:

The William Wagner House is located in the western half of Lummus Park overlooking the Miami River. Also located on the site is the William English Slave Quarters/Fort Dallas (see separate designation report), a one story recreation building, and shuffleboard courts. The Wagner House is presently enclosed by a chain line fence and has yet to be landscaped.



William Wagner House  
Lummus Park, 404 N.W. 3 Street  
East & North facades  
1983

## V. PLANNING CONTEXT

### Present Trends and Conditions:

In 1978, the William Wagner House was located at 1145 N.W. 8 Avenue in the Highland Park Subdivision. Although the original house was almost hidden behind several later additions, many early residents of the City were aware of its history. The house was threatened, however, by Metro-rail construction. Although moving a historic structure from its original site is considered a last resort for preservation, no other alternative existed in this situation.

In 1979, the owner donated the house to Dade Heritage Trust. Utilizing Community Development Block Grant funds, the house was moved to Lummus Park and restoration began. Lummus Park was selected because it is only a short distance from the original site and is also close to the Miami River. In addition, the park contains another structure of the same era, the William English Slave Quarters, which is commonly known as Fort Dallas.

Restoration and partial reconstruction began in 1979 but has not been completed due to a lack of funds. The house is presently secured behind a chain link fence, awaiting completion.

### Conservation Objectives:

Private funds should be secured as soon as possible to complete the restoration and reconstruction of the William Wagner House. The House should soon be opened to the public on a regular basis. A comprehensive interpretation of the Wagner House, together with the William English Slave Quarters/Fort Dallas, should be provided, explaining the story of mid-nineteenth century Miami.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the current 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 western half of Lummus Park. The eastern portion contains newer park structures and is historically unrelated to the historic building.

### Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

All four facades of the William Wagner House shall be considered major exterior surfaces 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

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Ammidown, Margot. "The Wagner Family: Pioneer Life on the Miami River." Tequesta. XLII (1982): 5-37.

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