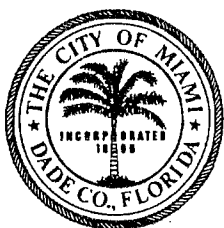
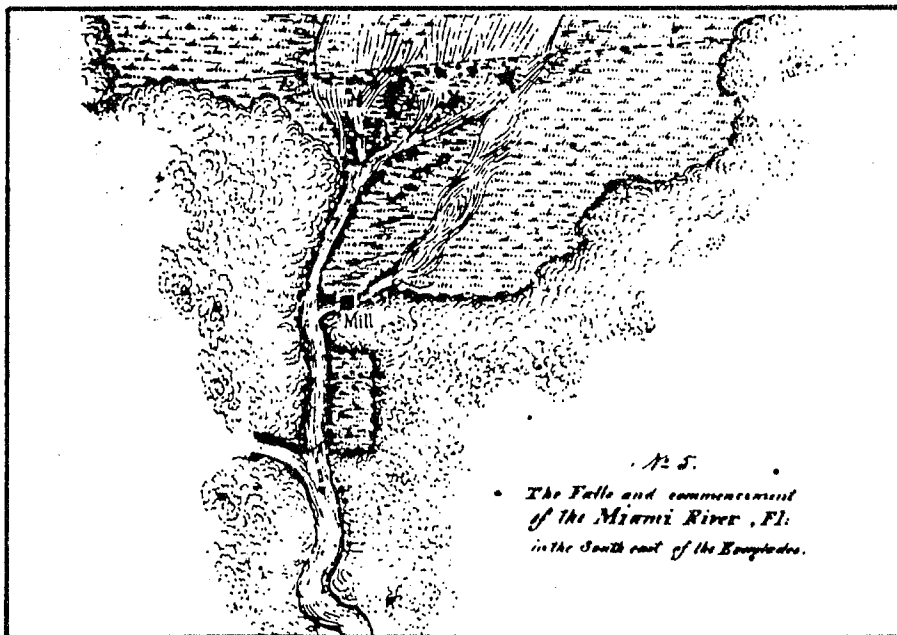

MIAMI RIVER RAPIDS ARCHEOLOGICAL ZONE

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
THE MIAMI RIVER RAPIDS ARCHEOLOGICAL ZONE
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Robert Carr 8-17-89
Dade County Archeologist Date

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton 8-18-89
Historic Preservation Date
Planner

Accepted by _____ Date
Chairman, Heritage
Conservation Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. _____

Date _____

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Miami River Rapids

Current Name:

Miami River Rapids Archeological Zone

Location:

Approximately 2810-2916 N.W. South River Drive and that section of the North Fork of the Miami River located along the southeasterly property line of 1851 Delaware Parkway

Present Owner:

Multiple owners - complete list is available in the Planning Department.

Present Use:

Commercial, Park

Present Zoning District:

CG-2/7

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Numbers:

01-3133-036-0060
01-3133-036-0070
01-3133-036-0090
01-3133-036-0100
01-3133-047-0100 (portion)
01-3133-006-0930 (portion)

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

Lots 5, 6, and 7 of the plat of TWIN RIVER ISLAND, as recorded in Plat Book 40 at Page 34 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida; and that portion of the original course of the North Fork of the Miami River, more particularly described as follows: the northeasterly 30 feet of Tract "E" of the plat of DELAWARE PARK SECTION 1, as recorded in Plat Book 40 at Page 17 of the Public Records of Dade County, and the northeasterly 30 feet of the southeasterly 110 feet of Tract "A" of the plat of DADE REAGENTS, as recorded in Plat Book 70 at Page 56 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

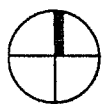
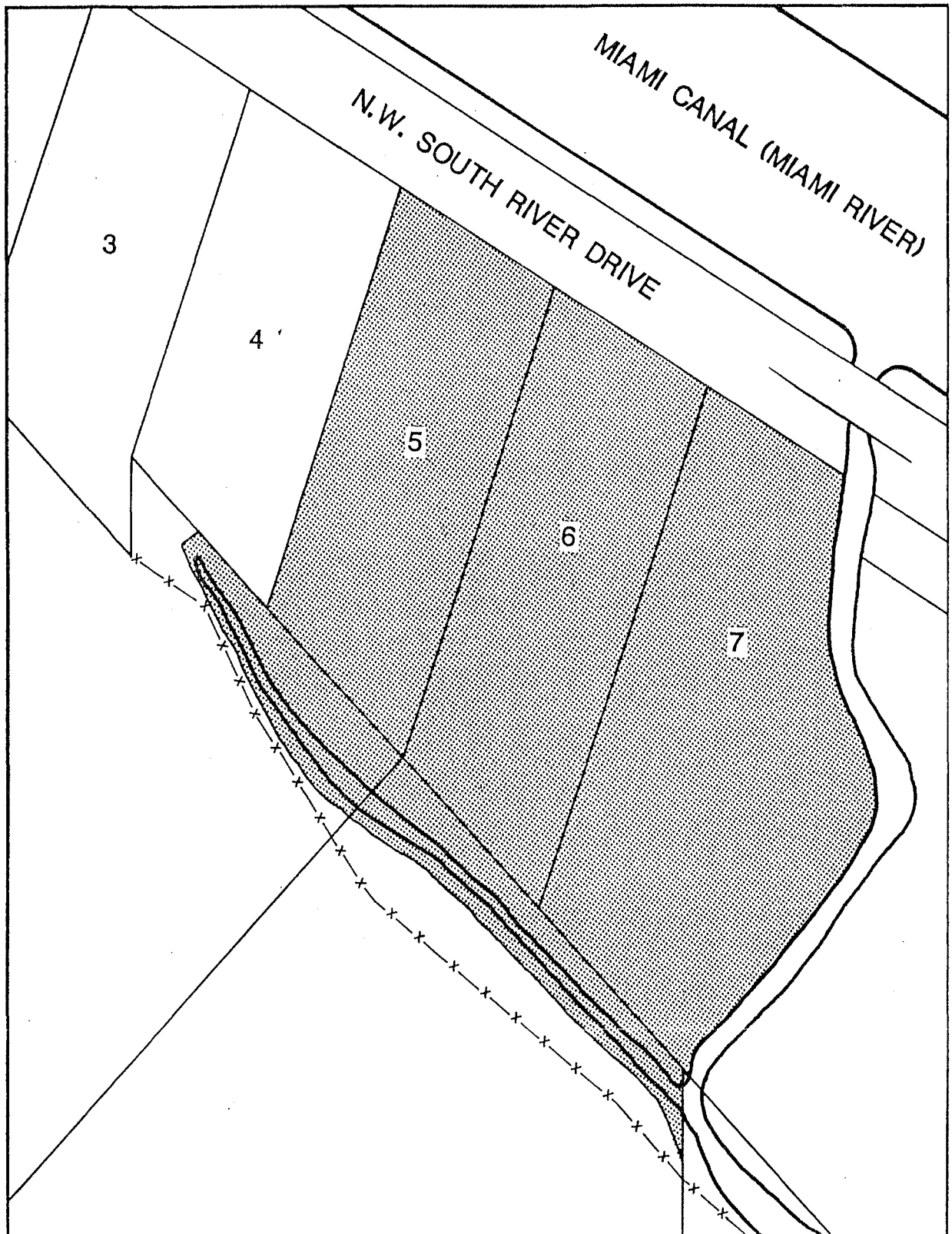
HC Zoning Classification:

Archeological Zone

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

Archeological Significance -	1
Historical Significance -	1
Preservation Quality -	3

MIAMI RIVER RAPIDS ARCHEOLOGICAL ZONE



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance:

The Miami River Rapids Archeological Zone is significant because it encompasses at least two archeological components of prehistoric and historic activity. These two components are designated as site 8DA1655 in the Florida State Master Site File. The prehistoric component is a Tequesta camp or village located on the river bank. On top of this prehistoric component are the remains of the nineteenth century Ferguson Mill and homestead.

The site incorporates archaeological data that could provide significant insights into early nineteenth century pioneer life in Miami. The artifacts and information still buried at this site could also provide valuable clues to the commercial manufacture of coontie starch, the principal industry of Dade County in the 1850's. Coontie starch, which was similar to arrowroot, was processed from the root of the indigenous coontie plant. The Ferguson site may be the only surviving coontie mill site on the Miami River.

George Washington Ferguson and Thomas Jefferson Ferguson located their mill on a small area of the North Fork of the river and used the rapids to drive the mill. The mill employed 25 people and reportedly earned \$24,000 in one year. It was the largest commercial site in Dade County prior to the Civil War. "Ferguson's Florida Arrow Root" was sold throughout the United States, until the mill was abandoned because of hostilities caused by the Third Seminole War.

The Miami River Rapids was one of the most prominent natural features of South Florida and was a tourist attraction from the 1890's until 1909, when the rapids ceased after the Miami River was diverted into the adjacent Miami River Canal.

The Everglades reclamation project began in 1881 to drain the lands for agriculture and expansion. Work did not begin on the Miami River, however, until 1908. Both the North and South Fork were dynamited and dredged, and by 1909 the North Fork began to disappear as a new canal was created immediately to the north of the river and toward Lake Okeechobee. Although the man-made Miami Canal is commonly known today as the Miami River, the remains of the original Miami River continue to exist within the proposed archeological zone..

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

10. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The Miami River Rapids Archeological Zone incorporates the original rapids of the North Fork of the Miami River and is likely to provide significant insights into prehistoric activity of the fifteenth century, as well as pioneer and commercial manufacturing activity of the mid nineteenth century.

III. ARCHEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Date of Site:

Tequesta Camp - ca. 1400 - 1500 A.D.
Ferguson Mill - ca. 1845 - 1852

Site Description:

The Ferguson Mill site is located on the north bank of the North Fork of the Miami River adjacent to the historic rapids, a natural rocky shelf of Miami oolite that presented a dramatic feature that separated the Atlantic Coastal Ridge from the Everglades. To the surprise of most Miamians, the North Fork still exists, although it is stagnant and filled with sediment and trash because its flow has been terminated by the placement of fill across its course on the property adjacent and west of the proposed archeological zone. It is worth noting that the North Fork has a lush community of native pond apples growing in the river, possible the only location in the City of Miami still supporting this species in its natural habitat.

The north bank of the river presently has varied land use. The centerpiece property is the City of Miami River Rapids Park, and the adjacent lots have numerous small scale CBS structures that have been used for light industry, offices, residences, and in one case, as a welding shop. The soil along the river bank has been artificially elevated with up to two to three feet of fill spread across the area, possibly representing the original sediments dredged in 1909 from the nearby Miami River Canal.

This fill has acted to seal the original sediments below, thus preserving thousands of artifacts and features associated with the Ferguson Mill and earlier Indian camp.

Archeological Data:

In 1980 the general vicinity of the Ferguson Mill was located by the Dade County Historic Preservation Division using historic maps and documents. A one meter square was excavated on the river bank adjacent to the Frenchy's Welding Shop property. The pit revealed a number of prehistoric and nineteenth century artifacts including pottery sherds, glazed ceramics, stoneware, flint flakes, and animal bones.

On June 24, 1982, six trenches were dug with the aid of a back hoe on the LaRoca property (now city or stated owned) at the north end of the proposed zone. Those trenches were excavated through fill to bedrock. In trench #2, a well-preserved Dade County pine log was found as well as historic pearlware (ca. 1850), Indian pottery, and a copper mirror. All artifacts currently repose at the Historical Museum of South Florida.

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The Miami River Rapids Archeological Zone is located near the northwestern City limits in an area that is primarily commercial in nature. A portion of the site is an undeveloped City park, while adjacent parcels have been proposed for a land swap by the Florida Department of Natural Resources. The status of this action is unclear.

The original Miami River Rapids are covered by heavy underbrush and trees and are marred by debris and fill.

Conservation Objectives:

The designation of the Miami River Rapids Archeological Zone will assure that adequate archeological investigations will be conducted prior to any additional clearing or development of the property. It will also help raise community awareness about the historic importance of the Miami River Rapids and the Ferguson Mill. The location of the Miami River Rapids Park within the zone offers the opportunity of interpreting the site with signs and outdoor exhibits. The owner of the original Miami River Rapids should be encouraged to work with local conservation groups in cleaning up and restoring this portion of the river.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by applying the HC-1 zoning overlay district to the proposed archeological zone.

V. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district are based on historic maps and documents and archeological testing and include the original Miami River Rapids located along the original course of the North Fork of the river, as well as the sites of both a Tequesta Indian camp and the Ferguson Mill.

Activities Subject to Review:

Any excavation, filling, digging, removal of trees, or any other ground disturbing activity that may alter or reveal an interred archeological site shall be subject to review.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carr, Robert

1981 Dade County Historic Survey: The Archeological Survey.
Metro-Dade Historic Preservation Division.

1982 Florida Master Site form. 8DA1655