

**REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE AMENDMENT
TO THE DESIGNATION REPORT FOR
THE MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION
HISTORIC DISTRICT TO INCLUDE
THE RESIDENCE AT
126 OAK AVENUE
AS A CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE
WITHIN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT**



1998 Photograph



The City of Coral Gables

Historic Preservation Department

CITY HALL 405 BILTMORE WAY
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

LHD 89-03

September 1993

Revised: October

Revised: September 1998

to include the residence at

126 Oak Avenue

(LHD 98-09)

AMENDMENT TO THE DESIGNATION REPORT FOR THE MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT

NOTE: The following excerpts are from the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District designation report to introduce an amendment to include the property at 126 Oak Avenue. (Only the sections which justify the inclusion of the property are included.)

AN AREA OF CORAL GABLES ROUGHLY BOUNDED BY OAK AVENUE ON THE NORTH, GRAND AVENUE ON THE SOUTH, BROOKER STREET ON THE EAST, AND U.S. 1 ON THE WEST

Justification of Boundaries:

The area investigated in this report comprises the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision.

Legal Description of Historic District as Enacted by the City Commission:

A portion of "MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision" consisting of Lots 2 through 5 and Lots 16 through 22, Block 1A; Lots 5 through 20, Block 2A; and Lots 1 through 12, Block 3A, Coral Gables, Dade County, Florida.

Number of Properties:

40(36contributing, 4 non-contributing)

Period of Significance:

1926-1941

Architects:

Primarily owner built

Applicant:

Lola B. Walker Homeowners Association

Present Use:

Residential/commercial/religious

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The private residences within the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision, most of which were built during the late 1920's and 1930's, are representative of a vernacular type of architecture not seen elsewhere in Coral Gables.

BACKGROUND: HISTORY OF THE MACFARLANE SUBDIVISION

In 1892, Flora McFarlane purchased 160 acres of land in what is today the City of Coral Gables and Coconut Grove (City of Miami). During the next three decades, McFarlane sold off parts of this 160 acre plot to various owners. In 1925, the Coral Gables Securities Corporation (comprised of George Merrick, Telfair Knight, Charles F. Baldwin and Clifton D. Benson) purchased 19.61 acres of land which had been part of McFarlane's original 160 acre land holding. This 19.61 acre area was then annexed to Coral Gables as the "MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision."

EARLY RESIDENTS

Many of the residents of the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision during the period between 1926-1939 were Bahamians and their decedents who had immigrated to Miami via Key West. They worked in the surrounding areas of Coconut Grove, Miami, and Coral Gables primarily in service-related occupations such as yard work and domestic service. Some of the early residents of the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision also worked in fruit packing houses along South Dixie Highway.

RELATIONSHIP OF DEVELOPMENT IN MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD TO DEVELOPMENT IN CORAL GABLES

The first lots in Coral Gables were sold in 1921 and the first houses built shortly thereafter. By 1926, Coral Gables' population had reached 10,000 and there were over 4,000 buildings in the city. After the September 1926 hurricane, however, building activity in Coral Gables declined dramatically.

The MacFarlane Homestead subdivision was developed after the Coral Gables' development had reached its zenith. The land was purchased in 1925 and the first houses constructed in 1926. St. Mary's Baptist Church, a focal point of the community, was built in the same year. Building permit records indicate that most of the houses within the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision were built between 1926 and 1939. Therefore, the history of this subdivision is not substantially linked to Coral Gables' early history. The MacFarlane Homestead subdivision is more closely linked to nearby Coconut Grove, which had been the home to the black community since the early 1900's. Similarly, many of the early residents of the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision in the 1920's and 1930's had previously lived in Coconut Grove.

PROPERTIES INCLUDED WITHIN THE MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION

A **contributing** building adds to the historic architectural qualities and/or historic associations of the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision because a) it was present during the period of significance, and possesses historic integrity reflecting its character at that time, or is capable of yielding important information about the period, or b) it independently meets the Coral Gables Register criteria.

A **non-conforming** building does not add to the historic architectural qualities and/or historic associations of the MacFarlane subdivision because a) it was not present during the period of significance, b) due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes, it no longer possesses historic integrity reflecting its character at that time or is incapable of yielding important information about the period, or c) does not independently meet the Coral Gables Register criteria.

*Note: Although the correct spelling of Flora McFarlane does not include an "a", records from the 1920's consistently use the spelling MacFarlane to describe the subdivision, and is therefore used in this report.

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

<u>Address</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Property Type</u>
Brooker Street		
4608	1933	residence, "shotgun" type
4610	1933	residence, "shotgun" type
4612	1933	residence, "shotgun" type
4614	1933	residence, "shotgun" type
Florida Avenue		
112	c. 1935 *	residence, two-story vernacular
114	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
117	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
118	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
121	1935	residence, bungalow type
122	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
125	1937	residence, bungalow type
126	1933	residence, bungalow type
129	1926	residence, bungalow type
130	1937	residence, bungalow type
134	1926	residence, bungalow type
141	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
145	1931	residence, bungalow type
Frow Avenue		
109/111	c. 1935 *	duplex, "shotgun" type
113	1941	residence, "shotgun" type
115	1941	residence, "shotgun" type
117/119	c. 1935 *	duplex, "shotgun" type
118	1926	residence, bungalow type
125	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
126	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
128	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
129	1928	residence, bungalow type
136	1958	church(replaced church built in 1926)
141	1929	
145	1938	residence, bungalow type
		residence, bungalow type

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125	1937	residence, bungalow type
126	1933	residence, bungalow type
129	1926	residence, bungalow type
130	1937	residence, bungalow type
134	1926	residence, bungalow type
141	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
145	1931	residence, bungalow type
Grand Avenue		
105	1939	residence, bungalow type
107	1939	residence, bungalow type
109	1939	residence, bungalow type
111	1939	residence, bungalow type
113	c. 1935 *	residence, bungalow type
119	1926	commercial
119A	1926	two-story vernacular residence
Oak Avenue		
126	c. 1929 *	residence, bungalow type

*The written record which verifies construction dates has not been located. The date given is conjectured based on the type of construction, style, and context within the neighborhood.

ARCHITECTURAL TYPES

The houses within the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision were, in most cases, built by their owners without the assistance of an architect. They are considered a "vernacular" architectural type, meaning that they do not reflect the influence of any particular architectural style but rather reflect the local building trend. The residential architecture consistently sees the repetition of two types, a one-story frame or concrete block bungalow; and a one-story "shotgun" house.

Bungalow Style

The bungalow type features a steeply-pitched front gabled roof with exposed rafters, a full-width front porch with a gabled or hipped roof, and sash windows. In some of the bungalows in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision, the porches have been enclosed for some more living space, and sash windows have been replaced with awning or jalousie windows.

Building permit record indicate that many of the bungalows in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision were constructed in the 1930's, and some in the late 1920's.

"Shotgun" Style

The other common building type seen in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision, the "shotgun" house, is characterized by its steeply-pitched front gable roof and full-width front porch, which is also frequently gable roofed. The plan of the house is narrow and rectangular, and only one room wide. Some of the "shotgun" houses in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision however, are a variation of the type and are shotguns joined together to form a duplex.

The origin of this residential type has been traced to the West Indies and Africa, and it is a common property type in Haiti and the Bahama Islands. In the southeastern United States the shotgun was popular from c.1880-1930, and many were built by black freedmen who migrated to southern urban centers following the Civil War. The origin of the term "shotgun" is not clear, although it most likely refers to the long, narrow shape of the house. Popularly, reference is made to the fact that one could stand at the door, fire a shotgun, and the bullet would pass through to the rear with no obstructions.

Building permits indicate that many of the shotgun houses in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision were constructed in the 1930's and 1940's.

Construction Materials

Both the bungalow and shotgun houses in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision share common construction characteristics not seen in other structures in Coral Gables, such as concrete pier foundations, and asbestos shingle or metal roofs. Alterations seen in these housing types include enclosed porches, awning windows, and occasionally, additions which utilize a building material different from that of the original structure (e.g., concrete block addition to a wood frame building.)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The structures in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision consist mainly of residences, with one church and some commercial structures. Many of these buildings are in a deteriorated state. Many houses built between 1926-1939 have been razed, leaving vacant lots scattered throughout the subdivision. New housing was constructed in 1993 in the northern part of the subdivision at the intersection of Oak Avenue, U.S.1, and Jefferson Street.

**REPORT ON THE INCLUSION OF 126 OAK AVENUE
AS A CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE
WITHIN THE PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Legal Description: Lot 18, Block 3A, MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision

Date of Construction: c. 1929

Architect: Unknown

Addition: 1947, 371 sq. ft. CBS addition to the rear of the original structure.

Architect for addition: Walter De Garmo, Architect

Owners History: According to the R.L. Polk City Directories for Miami/Coral Gables dated 1925 - 1946, the first residents at 126 Oak Ave. were George F. Bethel, a laborer, Emma L. Bethel, and Corinne Bethel(1930-1935). Subsequently the home was occupied by Earlie G. Bentley, a barber, and Henry F. Bentley, a student(1936); and Howard DeMerritt, a general store owner/laborer , Hilda DeMerritt and their family(1937 to present).

The DeMerritt's purchased the property from Montgomery, Inc. on May 10, 1943. No information regarding the Montgomery, Inc. has been found.

Both the Bethel and DeMerritt families settled in South Florida during the 1800's. Both families can trace their ancestry to the Bahamas/Nassau. Information regarding the Bentley family has not been found.

Present Owner: Ms. Hilda Dorsey-Demeritte and Ms. Grace McCraney

Present Use: Residential

Zoning Classification: R-1-2

Site Characteristics: The residence is located in the middle of the block with the primary elevation facing north onto Oak Avenue.

Justification to Extend Boundary

The original boundary was drawn at the rear property line of those structures which front onto Frow Avenue. Immediately behind them are structures which face onto Oak Avenue. Because the majority of these properties were non-contributing (i.e. Not built during the period of significance,) they were excluded from the boundaries of the historic district.

In August 1998, the owners of the property at 126 Oak Avenue brought their property to the Department's attention, and requested that an appraisal be made to determine whether it could be included in the district.

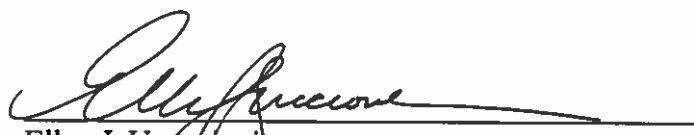
Because the property is within the period of significance, is a bungalow type, and reflects those elements of design and construction that are part of the significance of the entire historic district, the residence is deemed eligible for inclusion. Further, because the boundaries are still contiguous with the inclusion of this property, the district still retains its distinctive geographic character.

The staff therefore recommends APPROVAL of including the residence within the boundaries of the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District. The new legal description which would result is as follows:

A portion of "MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision" consisting of Lots 2 through 5 and Lots 16 through 22 , Block 1A; Lots 5 through 20, Block 2A; and Lots 1 through 12, and Lot 18, Block 3A, Coral Gables, Dade County, Florida.

Number of properties: 41(37contributing, 4 non-contributing)

Respectfully submitted,



Ellen J. Ugacchioni
Historic Preservation Director

Selected Bibliography

Abstract of Title, 1892-1953, including the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision. Security Abstract Company, Miami, Florida.

Bonawit, Oby J. Miami Florida Early Families and Records. Miami, Florida: Oby J. Bonawit, 1980.

Interviews with Agnes Demeritte, Learline Edyth, Mrs. Hopkins, C.D. Johnson, Hazel McCloud and Richard Smith, residents of the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision, week of May 9, 1989, conducted by Michelle Sebree and Ellen J. Uguccioni, Historic Preservation Department, City of Coral Gables.

Interview with Kenneth McCraney, grandson of Howard and Hilda DeMerritt, resident of the 126 Oak Avenue, MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision, week of September 14, 1989, conducted by Simone Chin, Historic Preservation Department, City of Coral Gables.

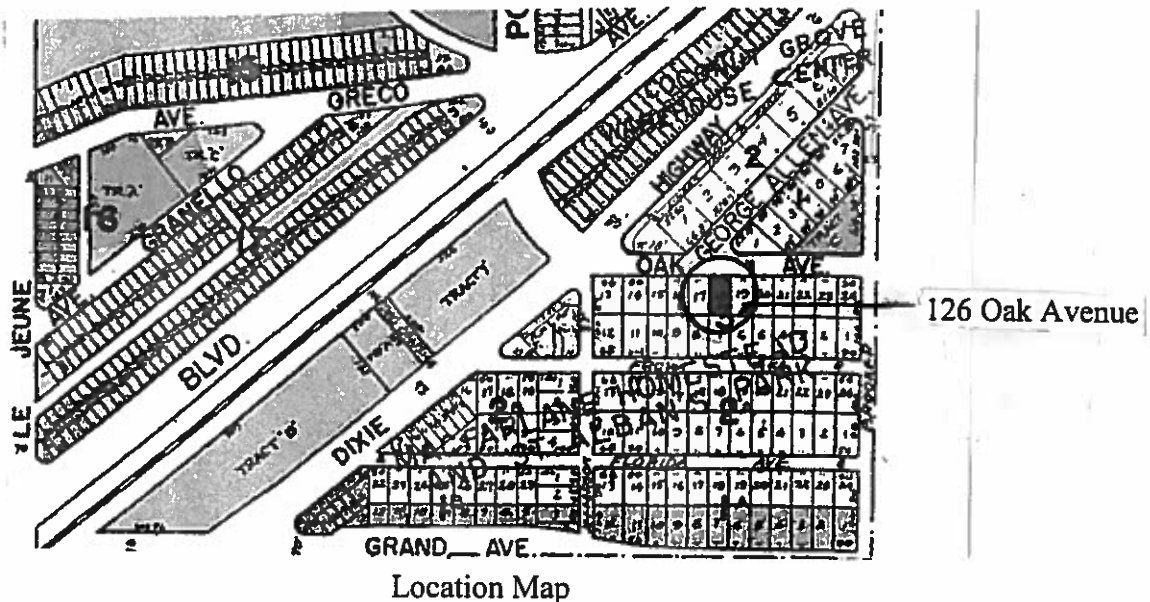
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Merrick, George M. Coral Gables Today (promotional booklet), November 15, 1926.

Mohl, Raymond a. "Black Immigrants: Bahamians in Early Twentieth Century Miami" Florida Historical Quarterly LXV, Number 3 (January, 1987): 271-297.

Cooper, Leona Baker. Report on MacFarlane Subdivision/Golden Gate Subdivision; interviews with residents, November, 1988.

R.L. Polk City Directories, Miami/Coral Gables 1925 - 1946.



REVIEW GUIDE

Note: The following which describes the architectural detail of the residence at 126 Oak Avenue is to familiarize the reader with the property and its relationship to the similar types included within the "MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District."

Definition: The Review Guide lists some of the more prominent features which contribute to the overall character of a structure and/or district. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as photographic documentation full illustrates the present physical character of the property.

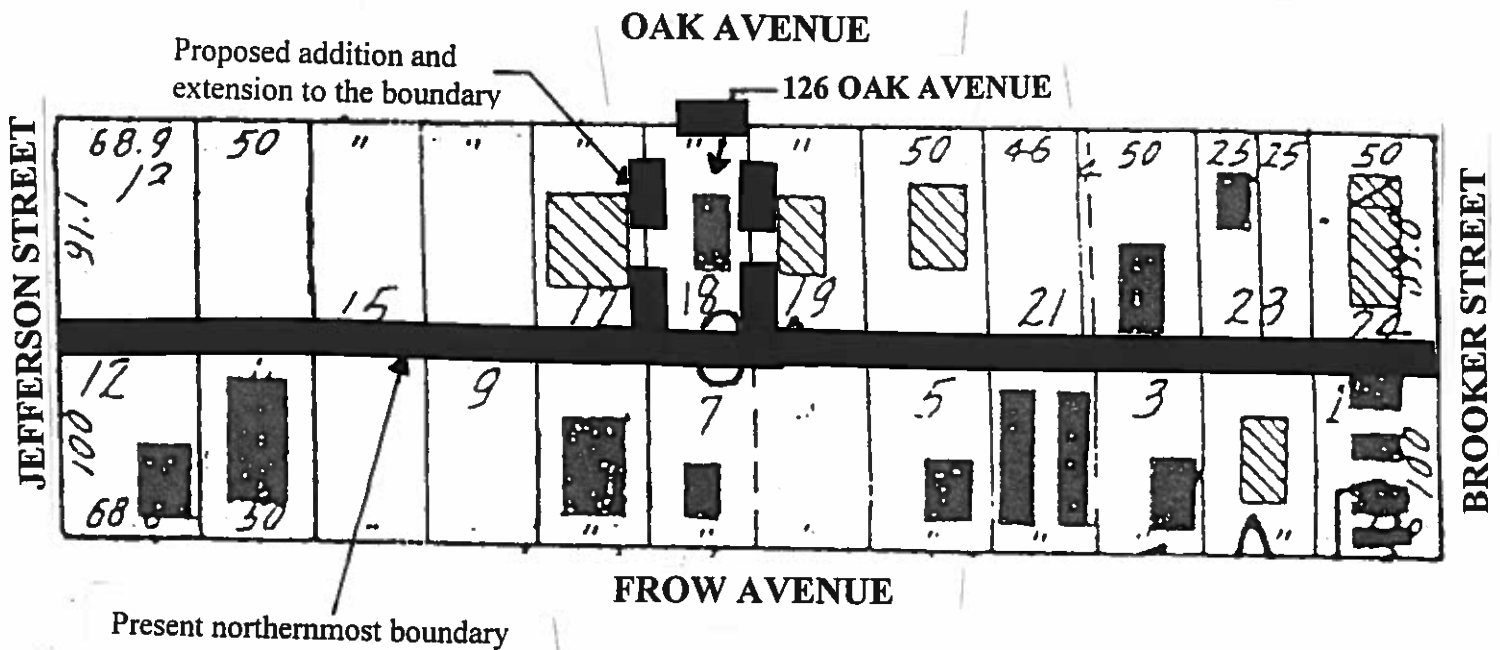
Use: The Review Guide may be used to address the impact of new construction, additions/modifications/alterations and/or renovations which may become the subject of some future Certificate of Appropriateness consideration....and

The Review Guide by describing EXISTING physical characteristics may be used to determine whether or not elements which create the character of the structure and/or district is present and/or whether or not later additions or alterations have so changed that character so as to cause the property(ies) to become ineligible for listing.

Residence Address: 126 Oak Avenue


Date of Construction: c. 1929

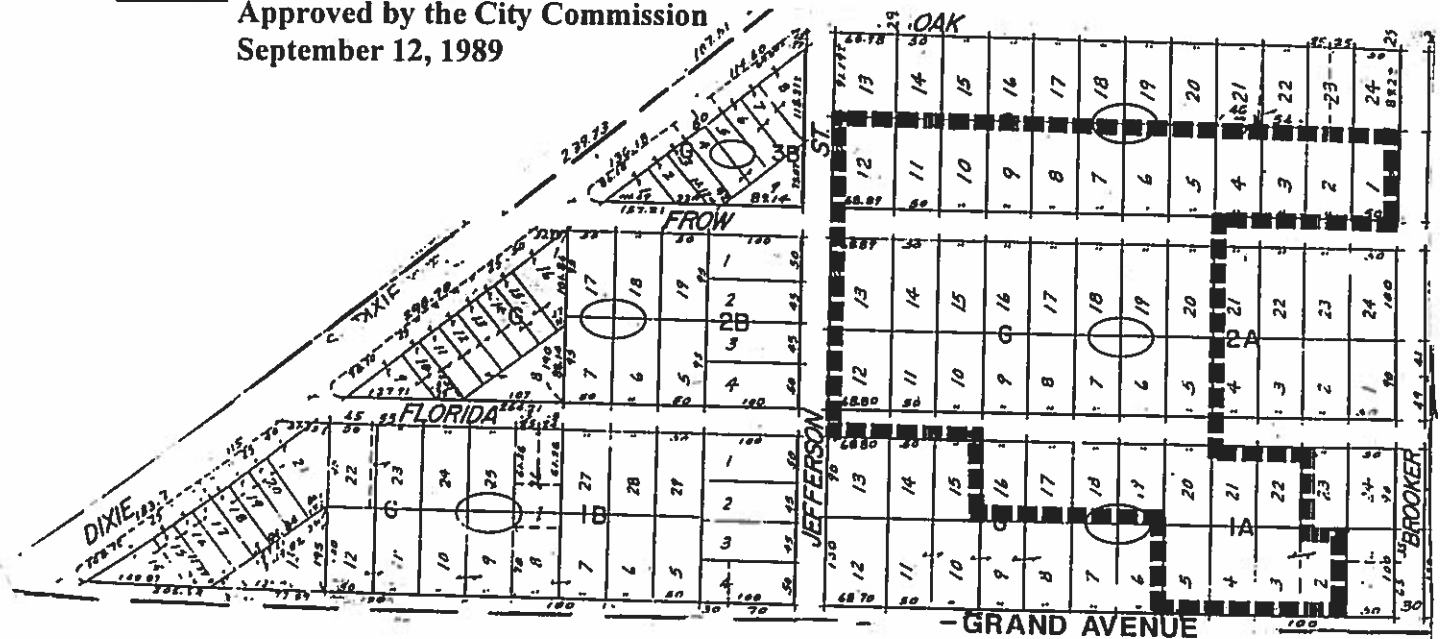
Construction Materials: Wood framing, concrete block



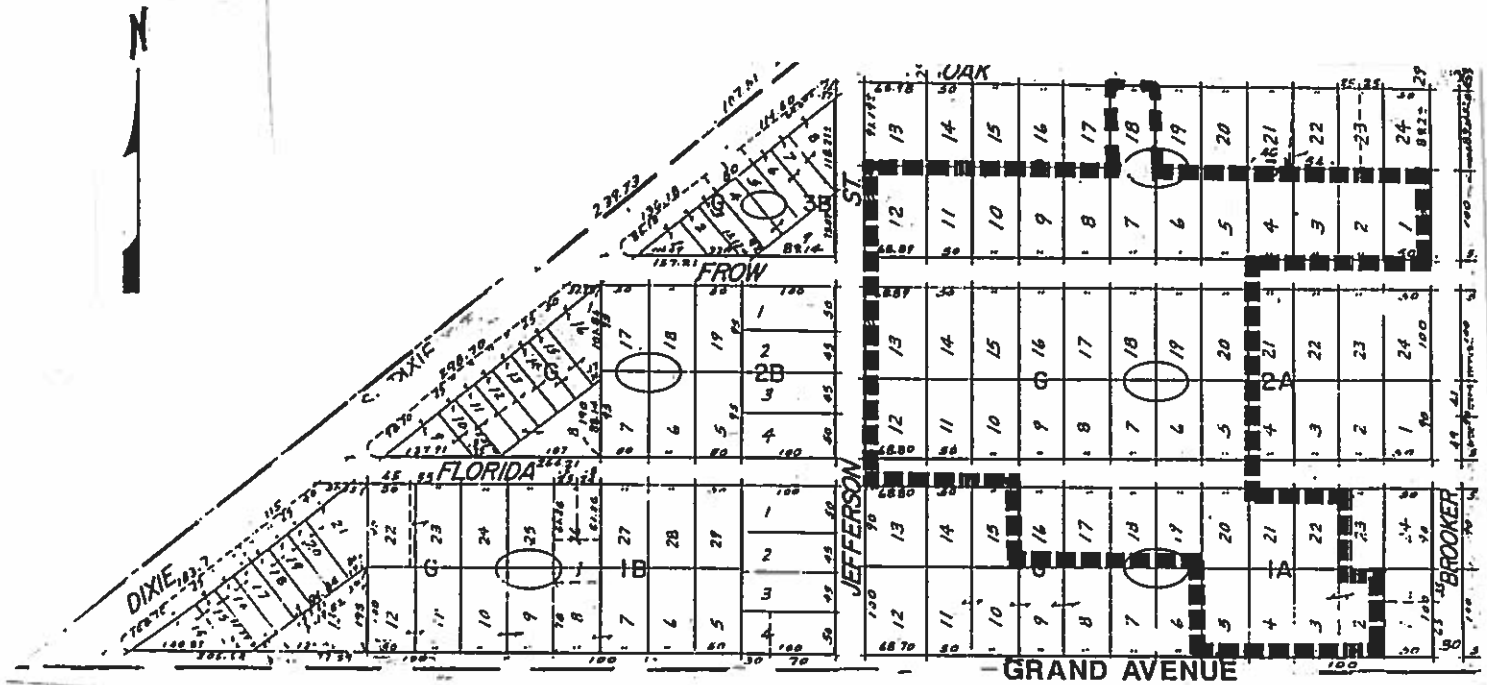
MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION

LEGEND

-  Historic District Boundaries
Approved by the City Commission
September 12, 1989



Existing Historic Boundaries



Proposed Historic Boundary



Gabled Roof
Asphalt Shingle Tile
Attic Vent



Wooden Outriggers
Horizontal Weatherboard Siding
Concrete Pier Foundation



East Elevation



West Elevation, Addition,(far right)

MC FARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION

