

DENNIS APARTMENTS
433-447 North Miami Avenue
Miami
Dade County
Florida

HABS FL-524
FL-524

HABS
FL-524

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DENNIS APARTMENTS

HABS No. FL-524

LOCATION: 433-447 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Dade County, Florida

PRESENT OWNER: United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Washington, D.C.

PRESENT USE: Vacant

SIGNIFICANCE: The Chaille Block and Dennis Apartments is a one of few commercial buildings remaining in Miami from the period before the development boom of the 1920s. Built in the masonry vernacular style, the stuccoed concrete construction and arcade across the facade are architectural adaptations to climate and available building materials characteristic of early Miami architecture. This building is particularly significant in association with the neighboring buildings along North Miami Avenue between NE 4th and 5th Streets. The five buildings, collectively known as the Chaille Block, were built in the masonry vernacular style between 1913 and 1920. Individual examples of pre-1920 masonry vernacular commercial architecture are extant elsewhere in Miami, but the streetscape composed of five such buildings found on this block is a unique, intact remnant of the history of Miami's commercial development.

I. PHYSICAL CONTEXT OF SITE AND ENVIRONS

The Chaille Block is one of five in a row of masonry vernacular buildings occupying Lots 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Block 78 in the northeast quadrant of the City of Miami. The row, collectively known as the Chaille Block, is located on the east side of North Miami Avenue and is bounded north and south by NE 5th and NE 4th streets respectively. (See individual HABS reports for Chaille Commercial Building, Atlantic Furniture Company Building, Frohock Commercial Building, and Dade Aptment Building for additional information on the other structures comprising the Chaille Block.)

The area around the Chaille Block is dominated by parking lots. Four parking areas are located in the lots adjacent to the block, one immediately behind the buildings, one on each of the east and west corners of NE 5th Street and North Miami Avenue, and one facing the block on the west side of North Miami Avenue between NE 4th and 5th streets. The high proportion of parking lots continues in the surrounding blocks, adding a dimension of openness to the environment that feels unnatural in an urban area. The elevated track of the Metro Mover, running down NE 5th Street, has the opposite effect, however, creating a visual boundary between the area north of 5th Street and the area to the south.

The most prominent building in the immediate vicinity of the Chaille Block is the Federal Courthouse occupying the block to the south. The courthouse is composed of two structures joined by an overhead walkway. The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, constructed in 1931-1933, faces NE 1st Avenue. The three-story structure, built in the Spanish-Mediterranean Revival style, is faced with Coquina limestone and is capped with a red, barrel tile roof. Dominating the western half of the block, along North Miami Avenue, is the Brutalist, concrete portion of the courthouse built in the late 1980s. A low, three-story portion, sympathetically massed to the old block, joins the two buildings, but the 12-story tower of the newer courthouse dominates the view from North Miami Avenue.

Also prominent in the surrounding landscape is the New World Campus of the Miami Dade Community College, occupying the blocks between NE 5th and NE 3rd streets on the east side of NE 1st Avenue, to the east of the Chaille Block. The modern, concrete campus is built in a style similar to that of the courthouse addition. The buildings are set back from the edge of the street and the paved plaza in front is landscaped with trees which minimize the impact of the buildings on the surrounding environment.

Despite the presence of large buildings such as these, the neighborhood around the Chaille Block is characterized primarily by one-, two- and, occasionally, three-story commercial structures built during the first-third of the twentieth century. These buildings were constructed in the masonry vernacular style, sparsely ornamented, if at all, with Spanish and Mediterranean Revival features. Many buildings have arcades and those without generally have awnings to shade the sidewalk in front. The continuity of the early streetscapes, seen in the Chaille Block, is typically broken up by later construction, often larger in scale and constructed of different materials than the original. Many of the earlier buildings have been altered, their original appearance masked by the addition of siding and other modern features.

Several blocks to the south of the Chaille Block is Miami's central business district, focused around the intersection of Miami Avenue and Flagler Street. Low one and two story buildings are common here but are more often interspersed by high rise structures from the 1920s and 30s featuring Art Deco, Streamline and Depression Moderne details. Parking lots are also less frequent in the core of the city, resulting in a denser, more urban streetscape.

Buildings of the same vintage as the Chaille Block (1910s) are scattered about, but nowhere is the streetscape of this era intact as it is in the Chaille Block. Ironically, the Chaille Block is best appreciated when viewed from the Metro Mover as it passes North Miami Avenue. The almost frontier-like quality of the block's design and construction is in striking contrast to the surrounding vacant (parking) lots as well as in comparison to the commercial rows of a similar vintage now interspersed with later construction.

II. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The first recorded land grant in the area which is now Dade County was made in 1808 by the government of Spain, then proprietors of Florida, to John Egan for 100 acres of land on the Miami River (Blackman 1921:11). Four other grants were awarded by Spain to settlers in the area, but the climate, isolation of South Florida, and difficult relations with local Indian groups proved too inhibitive, and none of these early residents was able to establish a permanent settlement (Metropolitan Dade County Office of Community and Economic Development [hereinafter cited as OCED] 1982:4).

The territory was awarded to the United States in 1821 under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. Richard Fitzpatrick, one of the first successful landowners in South Florida, was instrumental in the establishment of Dade County, voting with the Florida Legislative Council in 1836 to create Dade County from the existing Monroe County and to name the new jurisdiction for Major Francis Langhorn Dade, who had recently been killed in a Seminole Indian attack. During the 1830s Fitzpatrick, who had purchased John Egan's tract of land, sought to develop South Florida in the tradition of the Southern plantation system. To this end, he wished to attract other southern aristocrats to the area. However, the start of the Second Seminole War and the ensuing Indian attacks on American settlements preempted the fulfillment of his vision (OCED 1982:4).

The Second Seminole War lasted from 1835 to 1842. During this time, the American military attempted to secure the area for civilians. Construction of Fort Dallas commenced in 1838 on the north bank of the Miami River (OCED 1982:5).

After hostilities had declined sufficiently for civilian settlers to return to the area, Fitzpatrick sold the remains of his plantation to his nephew, William English. English platted the "Town of Miami" and sold a few lots, but the venture was, on the whole, unsuccessful. English left South Florida in 1849, heading for the Gold Rush in California, where he was accidentally shot and killed (OCED 1982:5,6).

At this time a small pioneer community began to develop in the vicinity of Miami. The county seat of Dade County had been moved from Indian Key to Miami in 1844, making it the political focus of the area. The majority of residents at this time were involved in the manufacture of starch from the root of the coontie plant. The product was popular in Key West but had limited accessibility to the larger markets in the north (OCED 1982:6).

When the Third Seminole War erupted in the 1850s Fort Dallas was reopened. The protection offered by the fort and the prospect of employment at the starch mills brought settlers from outlying areas to the mouth of the Miami River. When Fort Dallas closed in 1858, at the end of the war, the settlers finally began to establish peaceful relations with the neighboring Indians (OCED 1982:6). However, growth remained slow through the 1860s and the Civil War.

In 1870, two influential families with visions of a great city settled in Miami. Mrs. Julia Tuttle purchased the title to the 640 acres of land owned by the Biscayne Bay Company north of the mouth of the Miami River, and William Brickell settled his family on a

large parcel on the opposite shore (Blackman 1921:18; OCED 1982:7). Both Mrs. Tuttle and the Brickells harbored great dreams of what the City of Miami could be. However, they had very little luck enticing others to join them.

It was Henry Flagler who provided the necessary impetus for the town to grow. After retiring from a partnership in the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, Flagler established himself as a railroad tycoon. Flagler purchased several railroads in northern Florida, consolidating and renaming them the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) (OCED 1982:23). The arrival of the railroad alone stimulated the growth of many previously small, if not nonexistent, communities by facilitating transportation of goods and communication with more developed states to the north. Flagler also planned the development of a chain of resort hotels along the Florida coast that would stimulate a tourist trade on which he would capitalize. His first hotel was the Ponce De Leon Hotel in Saint Augustine followed shortly by the Alcazar Hotel (Sessa 1950:9). By 1894, Henry Flagler had extended the FEC from St. Augustine as far south as Palm Beach, a town of his own creation (Sessa 1950:8-9).

Julia Tuttle realized that the railroad would be the key to development of Miami as a major city. Flagler, however, showed no interest in her offers of gifts of land until the "Great Freeze" of 1894-1895 destroyed the citrus crop of northern Florida but left the groves around Miami unscathed (Sessa 1950:8-9). As the popular legend relates, an agent of Mr. Flagler, James Ingraham, in Miami at the time of the freeze, arranged with Mrs. Tuttle to bring back to Flagler a bouquet of citrus blossoms and foliage as proof of the hospitable, productive climate of Miami (Blackman 1921:19; OCED 1982:21; Sessa 1950:9). Swayed, the story continues, Flagler hurried to Miami to finalize an agreement with Mrs. Tuttle, and a city was born.

By the time the first train arrived in April, construction on Flagler's new hotel, the Royal Palm, was well under way on 100 acres at the mouth of the Miami River (Montague 1979:6). According to his agreement with Mrs. Tuttle, Flagler agreed to lay out a town, at his own expense, in exchange for the remainder of Mrs. Tuttle's tract of land less her ten acre homestead. Surveyor A.L. Knowlton of the Fort Dallas Land Company (an organization directed by Flagler, Mrs. Tuttle and the Brickells) platted the new town (OCED 1982:22). Streets were numbered from the northern town line south, while avenues, designated letters of the alphabet, started one block from the present Biscayne Boulevard and moved west (Montague 1979:6). The business district focused on Avenue D, now Miami Avenue.

As E.V. Blackman wrote in his history of Miami in 1921, "[Miami had] the distinction of never having been a village or town, but was born a full fledged city" (Blackman 1921:19). When the new city was incorporated in July, 1896, only a year and a half after the great freeze, many of the merchants and civic leaders were former Flagler employees who had first arrived in Miami with the FEC. A newspaper, The Miami Metropolis, had been founded (by Flagler) in May, and downtown, Avenue D was a bustling commercial center lined with a variety of stores to serve the new population, the majority of whom were Flagler's employees (Kleinberg 1985:38).

From two families in 1894, the town grew to an official population of 1,681 in 1900. By 1910 5,471 people resided in Miami, and in 1920 the census counted 29,571 residents, a population increase of over 400 percent, not including an additional estimated 50,000 to 100,000 seasonal visitors (Sessa 1950:11). From the outset Miami was a resort community, relying on tourist dollars until it could establish itself as a trade hub for imports from Central and South America and the Caribbean. The rapid growth of the city and the accompanying influx of dollars resulted in the creation of a modern, up-to-date community. In 1921, Blackman praised the "progressive citizenship" served by "the most complete and modern school system and the best buildings of any county in the United States," as well as the numerous banks, the quality of the merchandise available in the city stores, the high quality of public utility service, and the streetcar line that connected Miami with Miami Beach via the Causeway (Blackman 1921:23-24).

As early as 1913, it was clear that the physical plan of Miami was being stretched to its limit. Small communities outside of the Miami city limits were in danger of being absorbed into the city (as many later were), and new streets and avenues were being developed without regard to the existing street system, which due to its numbering starting from the northern city boundary, was not equipped to handle growth (Montague 1979:7). By 1921 the situation had deteriorated to the point that the postal authorities threatened to stop delivering mail (Parks 1987:106).

A young councilman named Josiah Chaille developed a plan for renumbering the streets ("the Chaille Plan") which was adopted in 1921 and remains in use today. Borrowing the system of Washington, D.C., Chaille divided the city into quadrants NE, NW, SE, and SW (Kleinberg 1985:107). The new grid, centered on the intersection of Flagler Street and Miami Avenue (formerly 12th Street and Avenue D), the commercial focus of downtown, did not alter the City's original plat, but simply renumbered the streets in a manner

allowing for continued growth (Montague 1979:8). North-south corridors were called avenues while east-west thoroughfares were designated streets. Short streets east and west were called courts or places, while those north and south were designated terraces and lanes (Kleinberg 1985:107).

Not all local merchants were eager for the renumbering of streets to occur. One opponent of the plan argued that the cost to Miami businesses for new letterheads would be outrageous and that it would negate existing advertising listing the old addresses. A period of confusion did follow the adoption of the Chaille Plan. Many advertisers listed old addresses, while others used the new. Some businesses used combinations of the two, for instance, the old street number with the new street designation. However, in spite of initial problems, the plan has proven effective. As of 1979 the numbering extended from SW 432nd Street to NE/NW 215th Street (the Broward County line) and westward to 237th Avenue (Montague 1979:8-9).

Until the turn of the century, Miami's streets were typically lined with two-story vernacular frame buildings with little or no ornamental trim, hastily erected by entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on the continually growing demand for goods, services and lodging (Anonymous n.d.). The first edition of the Miami Metropolis, on May 15, 1896, described the variety of merchants already established. Among the businesses were a pool room and cold drink stand, a jeweler and watch repair, a saloon, a shoe store, a drugstore, a tailor, a grocery and a clothing store (Kleinberg 1985:39). Fires were common, but none were as devastating as the fire that spread through the commercial district on Christmas morning 1896 (Blackman 1921:23; OCED 1982:29). Although the fire leveled most of downtown, the community was not discouraged. The business district was rebuilt, and Miami's retail center thrived.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the first architects began arriving in Miami. Many early designed hotels and residences were larger and more ornate than previous buildings and featured elements of the Victorian and Queen Anne architectural styles popular in the established communities of the states to the north (OCED 1982:31). The architects also introduced the use masonry construction to the streetscape of Miami. Concrete block covered with stucco was a popular construction technique due to the local abundance of sand and other necessary building materials (Chase 1987:5). Architectural styles were adapted to the hot, humid climate of subtropical Miami. An open, ground floor arcade covering the sidewalk was a practical feature to protect shoppers from the sun and rain (OCED 1982:30).

Victorian architecture, and the Queen Anne in particular, was characterized by free-flowing floor plans highlighted by asymmetrical facades, full-width or wrap-around porches, flowing rooflines, as well as random towers, dormers, and bay windows. When stiff, Neo-Classical designs dominated national styles in the 1910-1930s, Spanish, Mission and Mediterranean motifs were more common in Miami. Characterized by tile roofs, arched or curved parapets, sparse ornamentation and stuccoed walls, these styles were more playful and flamboyant than the restrained Neo-Classical architecture and seemed to better suit the free-spirited atmosphere of Miami (OCED 1982:85). Many civic buildings, as well as some residential and commercial buildings, were faced with oolitic limestone, Key Largo limestone (also known as keystone) and coquina, local coastal limestone varieties, often quarried on or near building sites. Many buildings, if not sheathed with the stone, would be highlighted with details of carved keystone or coquina. These types of limestone are composed of whole or broken shells and quartz sand grains and are characterized by the fossilized remains of coral and other sea life (Bishop and Dee 1961:8-9; Anderson 1988:17). The stone was often dyed pink or green for added highlight. However, it was the stuccoed concrete interpretations of these revival styles that dominated the streets of Miami.

At the time the 1914 edition of the Sanborn Map Company's Insurance Map of Miami was published, the central business district was expanding north to NE 4th and 5th streets (then known as 7th and 8th streets). One block of three stores (425-427 North Miami Avenue) had already been constructed by William Chaille on North Miami Avenue, and the surrounding lots on the block were filled with frame commercial and residential structures. The block to the south of 8th Street was lined with three arcaded buildings of concrete block construction divided into six storefronts. The businesses they housed were representative of the needs and services demanded by the rapidly growing community. Tenants included a music store, a grocery, a drug store, a sewing machine store, and a tinsmith. The Central Grammar School, a concrete block structure built on land donated to the City by Henry Flagler in 1897, was standing on the site presently occupied by the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (Freeman 1987:3).

Little had changed by 1925, although more infill had occurred. The Chaille Block was completed and the George Furniture Company was identified as the tenant of 419 North Miami Avenue. Both sides of Miami Avenue were lined with masonry buildings housing commercial and residential tenants. The lots behind the Chaille Block were still dominated by frame dwellings, although a few more hotels and

apartment buildings had been constructed. The Central Grammar School remained standing, and two frame structures had been built in the yard, perhaps to house classes for a growing school population (Hopkins 1925).

The most dramatic change between the 1925 map and the map from 1936 was the replacement of the Central Grammar School with the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. North Miami Avenue between 4th and 5th streets was lined with stores and apartments. The next block south, however, was now dominated by "hotels" and the Capitol Theatre. Frame dwellings dominated the northern side streets between North Miami Avenue and NE 1st Avenue while the more southern (3rd Street and south) were typically commercial properties and hotels (Hopkins 1936). Through 1947 very few changes were visible in the physical make up or character of the streets surrounding the Chaille Block (Sanborn 1921/40; Hopkins 1947).

III. THE CHAILLE BLOCK AND DENNIS APARTMENTS: GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND SITE HISTORY

The "Chaille Block" is composed of five buildings fronting on the east side of North Miami Avenue between NE 4th and 5th streets, all built between 1913 and 1920. The row takes its name from the northernmost of the buildings. Although varying in height and decorative details, all five were constructed in the masonry vernacular style that characterized Miami architecture before the 1920s development boom and the introduction of the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne architectural styles. Typical of the earlier period of construction are arcades and awnings to shelter sidewalk pedestrians from the hot southern sun, and stuccoed concrete block construction. The City of Miami Heritage Conservation Board declared this row of buildings "the only intact commercial streetscape in downtown Miami dating from the second decade of the twentieth century." The Board also emphasized the significance of the buildings as indicators of the commercial growth of downtown Miami during this period and as representatives of an era of mixed-use (residential and commercial) development (Eaton n.d.:4).

When viewed from the front the varying heights of the buildings form a rhythmic pattern. The tallest of the five, a three-story building, is located at the south end of the row. Two, two-story buildings are located at the north end and in the center. One story, buildings act as hyphens between the taller buildings, creating a continuous streetscape. The end buildings are arcaded

while the center three have awnings enabling a pedestrian to walk the full block between 4th and 5th streets in the shade. The northern two buildings (the Chaille Block, containing the Dennis Apartments, 433-447 North Miami, and the Chaille Commercial Building, 425-429 North Miami), were constructed by William Chaille between 1912 and 1914. The southern three buildings (Dade Apartments 403-405 North Miami, Frohock Commercial Building, 411-415 North Miami, and the Atlantic Furniture Company Building, 419 North Miami) were built by John Frohock between 1918 and 1920, and it is probable that they were designed simultaneously by one architect who adapted the rhythms and motifs of the earlier Chaille Block, creating the continuity of the streetscape.

William Chaille, father of Josiah Chaille, was born in Tennessee in 1850 and arrived in the growing city of Miami with his family in 1900. Chaille established the Racket Store, a dime store or department store, which he ran until 1912 (Blackman 1921:214). Upon selling his store to his son, Josiah, the elder Chaille entered into real estate. In 1921, Chaille was recognized as "a broker of high-grade properties and investments and ... a man whose judgement as to land values is second to none in the community" (Blackman 1921:219).

A deed of sale records the sale of Lot 9 to W.H. Chaille from Eliza P. Chaille, wife of William's son Floyd Chaille, in June 1912 (Dade County Deeds 93:288). There is no record of when William acquired Lot 10, however, it was probably the acquisition of Lot 9 that gave him the depth he needed behind his lot fronting Avenue D to construct the two structures (the Chaille Block and Chaille Commercial Building) between 1912 and 1914. With this property Chaille proved himself to be a speculative developer, purchasing land, erecting buildings and, soon after, selling the properties to other real estate speculators.

John Frohock arrived in Miami shortly after the railroad in 1896 (McAbee 1954). From the start, he was active in local law enforcement. He was elected city marshal in 1899 and sheriff of Dade County the following year, an office he held until 1908. Frohock next focused his efforts on fruit and vegetable growing. His groves of grapefruit and avocados were among the largest in the Miami area (Blackman 1921:247).

At the same time, Frohock began investing in real estate. Among the first properties he purchased was a parcel "across from the courthouse" which had only a horse stable in place at the time (McAbee 1954). Frohock purchased these lots (11 and 12 of Block 78) in 1906, from Luther F. and Laura C. Townsend for five dollars (Dade County Deeds 34:263). No further information is known about

the Townsends; however, given their Brookline, Massachusetts address, it is likely that they were early real estate speculators in the developing City of Miami.

Frohock constructed three commercial buildings on Lots 11 and 12 fronting Avenue D. Blackman reports, "In January, 1918, he built the Dade Apartments on Miami Avenue. This is a modern business block of concrete construction" (Blackman 1921:247). Unlike many of his peers, Frohock did not sell the Avenue D properties for a quick return. Rather, he retained ownership from 1906 until his death in 1963 at which time they were valued at \$120,000 (Dade County Probate Records 272:735). The parcel was inherited by Frohock's son, John Moran Frohock, who, upon his death in 1990, willed the property to his daughter, Jacquelyn F. Biggane (Dade County Probate Records 90-1192).

Prior to the construction of the two-story, mixed-use, masonry Chaille Block by William H. Chaille in 1914, two buildings had occupied the parcel. On the corner of Avenue D and 7th Street (North Miami Avenue and 5th Street NE) was a one story frame structure with a rear wing and a 1 1/2 story frame dwelling attached on the north (Sanborn Map Co. 1914). This was the home and store of Stephano Pero, proprietor of a confectionery, first listed in the Miami City Directory of 1913. The second structure, to the south on Avenue D, had a principal mass 1 1/2 stories in height of frame construction with a one-story concrete block room, fronting on Avenue D, occupying the northwest portion of the main block (Sanborn Map Co. 1914). Constructed before 1913, this building served first as William Chaille's real estate office, with Claude Nicholson's barber shop sharing the premises in 1914 (Polk 1913, 1914).

Chaille sold his namesake building in 1916, shortly after it had been built (Dade County Deeds 147:234). It was sold three more times before S. Bobo Dean, President of the S. Bobo Dean Corporation and editor of the Miami Metropolis newspaper acquired the lot in 1924 (Dade County Deeds 401:185). Dean did not hold on to the property long and it was transferred among investors seven more times by the mid-1940s.

The first city directory available after the construction of the Chaille Block dates from 1916. In that first year all five retail units on the ground floor were occupied. The tenants included a dry goods store, a grocery, a confectioner, a dry cleaners, and a Chinese laundry. The tenants changed very little in the first few years. By 1919, M.C. Hodes Dry Goods had opened a millinery in the same block and the cleaners and chinese laundry had moved out (Polk 1919). M.C. Hodes was one of the most enduring tenants. After

changing his line of merchandise from dry goods to men's furnishing in 1925, he remained in business until 1928 (Polk 1925, 1928). Other merchants continued to sell men's furnishings from Hodes' corner store until 1933 when the Greek & Italian Importing company took up the lease (Polk 1933).

Theo Pero continued to operate the ice cream parlor and confectionery started by Stephano Pero (possibly his father) at 705 Avenue D/439 North Miami Avenue until 1922. The confectionery continued under the management of Albert G. Griffin until 1925. It operated as a soda fountain until the store was vacated in 1929 (Polk 1922, 1925, 1929). The space remained vacant until 1935. Through the end of the 1930s it housed various merchants including a furniture company, a wholesale paper distributor and a men's clothing store (Polk 1935, 1940, 1942).

Other retail tenants came and went with a fair amount of frequency. Few stayed more than two or three years. Typical businesses included various clothing stores, shoe stores, a decorating store, and a restaurant. Between 1929 and 1935, the years of the Great Depression, up to three of the five commercial spaces were vacant at any given time.

The first listing of residents for the Dennis Apartments is given in the City Directory of 1921. The tenants represented a variety of retirees, merchants, and workers in service oriented fields, including mechanics, a dentist, a clothes cleaner, a salesman and a photographer (Polk 1921). Few tenants appear to have stayed long, and during the years 1928 and 1929 the majority of the apartments were listed as vacant (Polk 1928, 1929). It should be noted that these Depression years correspond to the vacancies in the store fronts below. After 1930, widows and retirees dominated the resident population of the Dennis Apartments.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHAILLE BLOCK AND DENNIS APARTMENTS

Occupying the north 100 feet of Lots 9 and 10, Block 78, the Chaille Block is a two-story stuccoed building of concrete block construction resting on a poured concrete foundation, approximately 100 feet long by 80 feet deep. The first-story of the building is divided into five retail spaces, and the upper story contains 10 residential apartments. The front and side walls are parapeted. A large triangular pediment containing a circular name plaque, inscribed with "Chaille Block 1914," flanked by two raised, elongated acute triangles, is centered in the facade. This motif

is mimicked by a bulls-eye flanked by two acute triangles in the parapet of the north wall. Paired dentils are widely spaced below the front and side projecting cornice. A two-story porch, the upper level sheltered by an aluminum awning, covers the full width of the facade. The second-story apartments extend out over the sidewalk forming the roof for the covered walk as it wraps around the north side of the building.

A gabled monitor, running east-west, rises from the central three-fifths of the flat, tar roof. Seven square concrete block chimneys with flat caps are arranged around the perimeter of the roof, five spaced evenly across the rear wall and one centered in each side wall.

The street level facade is divided into five bays of storefronts. The divisions are not equal, ranging in size from 14 to 25 feet in width. At various times during the history of the building, two bays were leased by a single business, for example the narrow corner bay and its larger neighbor. Building permits indicate that the recessed entrances of all five bays were altered in 1951 with the addition of cement over tile floors, new plate glass display cases, and doors with ridged aluminum on the exterior surfaces (City of Miami Permit No. B4931, 29 August 1951). The original tile flooring is still visible in some spots.

Three small windows and a door are located in the ground level of the north wall. One of the windows contains an air conditioning unit. The other three openings, as well as the openings of the rear elevation have all been filled in with concrete blocks. Only the second story windows of the north elevation retain 1/1 double hung sash.

The ground floor interiors have been significantly altered as well. From existing evidence, it appears that all were built with plaster walls, pressed tin ceilings, and tongue-in-groove floors. The most recent renovations have included addition of linoleum flooring and carpeting, panelling, and pressboard and drywall walls and ceilings. All of the bays have modern fluorescent lighting and renovated bathrooms with the exception of the central bay, the lavatory of which has vertical board wainscoting, a four paneled wood door, and the original porcelain sink.

In contrast to the irregular divisions of the first story, the second story, containing ten apartments and a large central foyer, is symmetrically arranged around three east-west running hallways and one north-south hallway. From an exterior, wooden staircase and porch (which have recently been removed) on the rear wall of the building one entered a large entrance foyer. A large fireplace

on the rear wall featured a plain concrete mantel and is framed by white tiles. Bricks on the interior of the fireplace are stamped with the word "Stevens." Double doors with transoms fill the two entrances on either side of the fireplace. Windows in the side walls of the monitor provided natural light to the room. The walls and ceilings of the foyer, hallways, and apartments are plaster, and the wide board floors have been covered with linoleum. Although no light fixtures remain in the foyer, there are push button light switches here and in several of the apartments.

Screened transoms are found above all of the apartment doors and the exits to the front and, former, rear porch. The wooden five-panel doors have metal knobs and hardware, and, as do the windows, have plain, unmolded wooden surrounds. Most of the apartments have at least one screened, double-hung window, of the same size and style as the exterior windows, that opens onto an interior hall. Moldings with simple turnings protect the corners at hallway intersections, and a wide, plain chair rail at mid-height runs the length of the hallway walls. Baseboards with a beaded molding are found in the hallways and inside the apartments. Skylights illuminate the kitchens of the six interior apartments, and stove thimbles were found in the six apartments touching the rear and side walls corresponding to the placement of the chimneys visible from the exterior. Many of the bathrooms appear relatively unaltered, featuring vertical board wainscoting, porcelain claw foot bath tubs and corner sinks.

V. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Anderson, Robert
1988 Guide to Florida Rocks, Minerals and Fossils. Erwin Lampert, Miami.
- Anonymous
n.d. "Avenue D 18 year ago, Miami, Fla." Postcard located in the files of the Historical Association of Southern Florida Research Center, Miami. No Date - circa 1900.
- [1922-
1924] 403-419 N. Miami. Photograph located in Chaille Block File, Historic Conservation Office, Miami.
- Bishop, Ernest W., and Lawrence L. Dee, Jr.
1961 Rocks and Minerals of Florida: A Guide to Identification, Occurrence, Production and Use. Florida Geological Survey. Special Publication No. 8. State of Florida, State Board of Conservation, Division of Geology, Tallahassee, Florida.

- Blackman, E.V.
1921 Miami and Dade County, Florida: Its Settlement, Progress and Achievement. Victor Rainbolt, Washington, D.C.
- Chase, Charles Edwin
1987 Resourceful Rehab: A Guide for Historic Buildings in Dade County. Metropolitan Dade County Office of Community Development, Historic Preservation Division, Miami, Florida
- City of Miami
[1938] Real Property Record, Folio 3-42-2046 (Lots 11-12, Block 78). City Assessor, Miami.
- Dade County, Florida
1910-1990 Deeds and Probate Records. On file at Dade County Courthouse, Miami, Florida.
- Eaton, Sarah E.
n.d. Report of the City of Miami Planning Department to the Heritage Conservation Board on the Potential Designation of Chaille Block, 401-447 N. Miami Avenue, as a Heritage Conservation Zoning District. Prepared for the Miami Heritage Conservation Board by the City of Miami Planning Department, Miami.
- Freeman, Susan Hale
1987 Monument to Three Artists. In Update, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 3-5. Published by Historical Association of Southern Florida, Miami.
- Hoffmeister, John Edward
1974 Land from the Sea: The Geologic Story of South Florida. University of Miami Press, Coral Gables, Florida.
- Hopkins, G.M.
1947 Platbook of Miami and Suburbs. Vol. 1, Plate 2. G.M. Hopkins & Co., Philadelphia.
- 1936 Platbook of Greater Miami, Florida and Suburbs. Vol. 1, Plates 1 & 2. G.M. Hopkins & Co., Philadelphia.
- 1925 Platbook of Greater Miami, Florida and Suburbs. Plate 1. G.M. Hopkins & Co., Philadelphia.
- Kleinberg, Howard
1985 Miami: The Way We Were. Miami Daily News, Inc., Miami.

McAbee, Doris

1954 Last of 370 Original Miamians Was Dade's First Sheriff.
The Miami Herald. August 22, 1954.

Metropolitan Dade County Office of Community and Economic
Development (OCED)

1982 From Wilderness to Metropolis: The History and
Architecture of Dade County, Florida 1825-1940.
Metropolitan Dade County Office of Community and
Economic Development, Historic Preservation Division,
Miami.

Montague, Peggy Newman

1979 The Chaille Plan. In Update. Vol. 6, No. 2. Historical
Association of Southern Florida, Miami.

Parks, Arva Moore

1987 John Sewell: A New Pictorial Edition of John Sewell's
Own Story, edited by Ellen Sue Blakey. Arva Moore Parks
& Co., Miami.

Parrish, Allan R.

1908 Official Directory of the City of Miami. Allan R.
Parrish Publisher, Miami.

Peters, Thelma

1984 Miami 1909 with Excerpts from Fannie Clemons' Diary.
Banyan Books, Inc., Miami.

Polk, R.L. & Co.

1913 Miami City Directory 1913. Vol. II. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

1914 Miami City Directory 1914. Vol. III. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

1916 Miami City Directory 1916. Vol. V. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

1917 Miami City Directory 1917. Vol. VI. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

1918 Miami City Directory 1918. Vol. VII. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

1919 Miami City Directory 1919. Vol. VIII. R.L. Polk & Co.
Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

- 1920 Miami City Directory 1920. Vol. IX. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1921 Miami City Directory 1921. Vol. X. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1922 Miami City Directory 1922. Vol. XI. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1923 Miami City Directory 1923. Vol. XII. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1924 Miami City Directory 1924. Vol. XIII. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1925 Miami City Directory 1925. Vol. XIV. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1926 Miami City Directory 1926. Vol. XV. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1928 Miami City Directory 1928. Vol. XVII. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1929 Miami City Directory 1929. Vol. XVIII. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1930 Miami City Directory 1930. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1933 Miami City Directory 1933. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1935 Miami City Directory 1935. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1937 Miami City Directory 1937. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1940 Polk's Greater Miami (Dade County, Fla.) City Directory 1940. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.
- 1942 Polk's Greater Miami (Dade County, Fla.) City Directory 1942. R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Jacksonville, Florida.

- Rundell, Richard
n.d. Law Enforcement Tough In 1900. The Miami Herald.
- Sanborn Map Company
1921 Insurance Maps of Miami, Florida. Vol. 1, Plate 16.
Revised 1940. Sanborn Map Company, New York.
- 1914 Insurance Map of Miami, Dade County, Florida. Sanborn
Map Company, New York.
- Sessa, Frank Bowman
1950 Real Estate Expansion and Boom in Miami and Its Environs
During the 1920's. Ph.D. dissertation, University of
Pittsburgh.
- Sharley, Jean
1964 City Forgot Its Hero - But He Recalls It All. The Miami
Herald. August 4, 1964.

VI. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Chaille Block and Dennis Apartments were recorded in March, 1991 by Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice (Federal Bureau of Prisons), the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The recording team included Martha H. Bowers, project coordinator, Elizabeth Rosin, Architectural Historian, Ingrid Wuebber, Historian, Rob Tucher, Photographer, and John R. Bowie, A.I.A., Consulting Historical Architect.





