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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE

other names/site number Tropical Audubon Society Headquarters, FMSF#DA2883

2. Location

street & number 5530 Sunset Drive N/A not for publication

city or town South Miami vicinity

state FLORIDA code FK countv Miami-Dade code 25 zip code 33143

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alissa Sadzior 5/2/14
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Edson H. Beal 6-13-14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1	2	buildings
1	0	sites
2	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	2	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Wood

roof Wood Shingles

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1932-1964

Significant Dates

1932

Significant Person

Thomas, Arden Hayes "Doc"

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Smith, Robert Fitch

Blder: Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
Name of Property

Miami-Dade Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.95 apprx

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	5	7	1	8	0	6	2	8	4	3	1	2	3
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman, / Sarah K. Cody/Carl Shiver/Historic Preservationist

organization Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation date April 2014

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Rick Cohen, Tropical Audubon Society

street & number 5530 Sunset Drive telephone (305) 667-7337

city or town Miami state Florida zip code 33143

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Arden "Doc" Thomas House is located at 5530 Sunset Drive in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. The building was designed by architect Robert Fitch Smith in 1932. The wood frame Rustic style former residence is a one-story, irregular plan, side-gabled wood frame building. The main facade features a full-width, shed-roofed screened porch. The house rests on a concrete block foundation and has one exterior end masonry chimney on the west elevation. The exterior siding is a combination of horizontal and vertical board-and-batten. The roof is surfaced with wood shingles. The main fenestration features 6/6-light and 4/4-light double-hung wood sash windows flanked by plank wooden shutters. The rear of the house has two wings extending from the main body of the house to create a "U" pattern. The wings embrace a stone flagged patio. A four-stair landing at the back of the house leads to a screened door that opens onto the kitchen. The living room has a fireplace at the west end. Three former bedrooms are grouped at the east and southeast sections of the house, and the kitchen is found at the southwest corner of the building. While historically the property encompassed approximately three acres, today the property is a 1.95-acre corner lot, in the shape of an elongated "L". Much of the property is extensively vegetated with dense pine and hardwood hammock. Doc Thomas' selection of this densely vegetated property, retention of the existing hammock, and complementary design of his home reflect his deep appreciation for the natural landscape of South Miami.

SETTING

The Doc Thomas House fronts on Sunset Drive in unincorporated Miami-Dade County, one block from the boundary of incorporated City of South Miami. The property is situated at the corner of Sunset Drive and SW 56th Avenue. It sits on a lush 1.95 acres in the midst of an urban setting, with commercial and retail properties located directly across Sunset Drive. Across from the SW 56th Avenue side are the backsides of a long, commercial strip with multiple storefronts that face Red Road/SW 57th Avenue. The property extends farther south on the west side than it does on the east side, forming an elongated "L" shape. South Miami is primarily a residential community composed of approximately 11,000 residents, the majority of whom are employed within the city in professional/specialty, administrative support, and executive management positions. The City of South Miami is located in the center of Miami-Dade County, abutting several other municipalities.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

While the Doc Thomas House (Photo 1) historically encompassed approximately 3 acres, today the property is located in a 1.95-acre corner lot, in the shape of an elongated "L". Much of the property is extensively vegetated with dense pine and hardwood hammock. Doc Thomas' selection of this densely vegetated property, retention of the existing hammock, and complementary design of his home reflect his deep appreciation for the natural landscape of South Miami. The house sits at the northwestern edge of the property, fronting on Sunset Drive. A four-foot high chain link fence encloses the property and controls visitor access. A stone walkway leads from the public sidewalk to the front entry (Photo 2). The landscape directly surrounding the house is relatively open

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with freestanding trees in open lawn (Photo 3). Denser vegetation at the foundation of the house, including trees and lower growing shrubs, obscure views of the facade from the public street. Period photographs reveal that this visual and spatial relationship between the site vegetation and the house reflects the historic character.

Just to the east of the house and the open yard are two compacted earth footpaths (Photos 4-5). The Pinewood Trail winds its way through a small pine rockland habitat. The Hammock Trail provides a sense of what the original hardwood hammock habitat looked like. A small, unpaved parking lot is located on the east side of the property, to the south of the footpaths (Photo 6). To the rear of the house is a small non-historic storage shed (Photo 7). Directly behind the house are picnic tables with additional pathways leading farther south to a large chickee structure with thatched roof dating from the historic period that today is used for events and education programs (Photo 8). Doc Thomas originally had at least three, and possibly four, chickees on his property. It was reported that he convinced Miccosukee Chief Tiger Tiger to build the structures for him. He used them to provide shelter for his horses. Only one chickee was remaining when the Tropical Audubon Society gained ownership of the property. This chickee was recently renovated and now serves as an outdoor gathering and educational space. Next to the chickee is a small structure housing bathrooms, a storage unit, and an outdoor sink with a large exterior coral rock fireplace and chimney (Photo 9). The remnants of a historic period coral rock wall still traverse the property about halfway back from the main house, separating the house and picnic areas from the chickee and bathroom structures (Photo 10). The property also features benches and seating areas for visitors to stop and enjoy the natural surroundings.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The 1,775 square-foot home was designed by Robert Fitch Smith at a cost of \$4,500. It reflects native Florida both in materials and in architectural style. The house is a one-story, gable-end frame house with two rear extensions, creating a U-shape plan. A full-width screened porch extends across the entrance facade. A coral rock foundation supports the porch while the foundation under the main house consists of masonry block (Photos 11-12). The house has one exterior end masonry chimney on the west gable. The chimney is unusual in that it contains native limestone and coral, both of which have been cut into rectangular blocks (Photo 13). The chimney is built of stone quarried from Matacumbe Key, and its natural facing is punctuated with shell formations and fossil remains. The tidewater cypress roof shingles were stained during the original construction. Exterior walls and the ceilings, also constructed of tidewater cypress, were stained brown. The home, which sits in its original location, has been carefully cared for and restored over the years in an effort to retain its architectural integrity and design.

The most distinctive feature, for which the house is most known, is its detailed woodwork. Most of the original wood sash windows and doors remain. The cypress roof shingles were recently replaced to closely match the original ones. The front section of the house is clad with vertical board and batten siding, while a horizontal

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
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paneling with a beveled board to drain interior condensation is used on both rear sections (Photos 14-15). Applied wood cornices feature dentils in a zig-zag saw-tooth or diamond pattern.

Floor Plan

The front porch and large, elongated living room make up the major part of the floor plan. Small wings at the rear of the house extend off each end to create the "U" shape; the western extension is the location of the kitchen and eat-in alcove, while the eastern extension contains the bathrooms and the bedrooms. Another bedroom is located directly to the east of the living room but does not sit flush with the main facade, rather it is stepped back about two feet from the back of the front porch.

Main North Facade

The main facade faces north towards Sunset Drive. Four steps lead up to the screened-in porch, which runs the length of the facade. The porch is covered by a shed roof, which extends from the main side-gabled roof. The porch is supported by a coral rock foundation, which runs along the sides of the porch and terminates at the chimney on the west side and the bedroom extension to the east side (Photo 11). You enter the porch through a central screen door that is flanked by two floor-to-ceiling screens (Photo 16). A simple metal and glass light fixture is affixed to the exterior of the porch, to the right (west) of the door (Photo 17). An applied wooden frieze over the front door features a zig-zag pattern. Wooden posts separate this central bay and the large screen window enclosures at each end of the porch. The main entrance into the house is through the porch. A wooden door features applied molding in the same zig-zag pattern found throughout the wooden ornamentation. The door is centrally sited at the rear of the porch and provides the primary entrance into the house (Photo 18).

The exterior of the porch is clad with 12-inch cypress vertical board and batten siding (which changes to horizontal siding with the rest of the house.) The boards feature a tripartite beading, or reeding, a parallel set of small convex moldings for ornamenting a plane or surface (Photo 14). Inside the porch, the woodwork mimics that found both outside and inside the house, with vertical board and batten siding, plank window shutters with applied molding, and exposed wood ceiling beams (Photos 19-21).

West Elevation

The west elevation faces SW 56th Avenue. The defining feature of this facade is the oolitic limestone chimney at the midpoint of the building, where the living room joins the kitchen extension (See Photo 14). The limestone chimney incorporates a small single casement window, set off to the side (Photo 22). An iron clean-out door is centrally located at the base of the chimney (Photo 23). To the north of the chimney, the siding is vertical board-and-batten, with the boards cut in a fish-scale pattern underneath the porch's roof eaves. To the south of the chimney, the portion of the house that contains the dining nook and the kitchen, the siding is horizontal

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board-and-batten (See Photo 14). The kitchen extension has a front-end gable roof, with fish-scaled end boards in the gable eaves (Photos 24-25). Running just under the roof eave along the western side is the applied wooden molding in the zig-zag pattern. The kitchen extension includes 4/4-light as well as 6/6-light double-hung sash wooden windows flanked by plank wooden shutters, with the long edges featuring a zig-zag wooden molding (Photo 26).

South Elevation

The south elevation is the rear of the house, with two wings extending from each end of the house to create the "U" pattern. The inner elevations of the U define 3-sides to a square, stone-surfaced patio area (Photo 27). A stone walkway connects the patio to a stairway at the kitchen (Photo 28). The four-stair landing at the back of the house approaches a screened door leading directly into the kitchen (Photo 29). Facing the patio, a four-stair entrance without a landing leads into the eat-in alcove area (Photo 30). This entrance is covered by a shed roof with spandrel brackets of vertically cut wood elements. An original light fixture remains in place on the exterior wall, to the left (south) of this rear door (Photo 31). The windows on the rear of the house and on the kitchen wing are 6/6-light double-hung sash. The zig-zag applied wooden molding continues under the back eave of the house. The wide wooden board and batten siding continues horizontally around the back of the house (Photo 32). The bedroom extension on the east side of the house forms the eastern edge to the stone patio at the south of the house. The bedroom extension has identical wide, horizontal board and batten siding and zig-zag molding under the eave, matching the rest of the south facade (Photo 33).

East Elevation

The fenestration of the east elevation includes the windows for two of the bedrooms and a window for the bathroom, which is located between the two bedrooms (but not connected through either bedroom.) A large slatted vent is in the gabled eave of the front bedroom, with an applied wooden molding course (in the zig-zag pattern) running just above the windows. The front bedroom and the bathroom are located in a side wing that extends eastward off the main living room. The bedroom has a 6/6-light double-hung sash window, and the bathroom has a smaller 4/4-light window. Again, the windows are framed by plank shutters that have a zig-zag applied wooden molding running along the long edge of the shutters (Photo 34).

Interior

The interior of the Doc Thomas house reflects the same vernacular style and detailed woodwork that defines the exterior. The interior woodwork provides a more refined version of the rustic ornamentation of the exterior through strong vertical and horizontal elements found throughout the house exterior (Photos 35-37).

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
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DESCRIPTION

The living room serves as the primary interior space. It is accessed via a central door leading inside from the screen porch. The character-defining custom woodwork is evident throughout the living room. Exposed wood beams and brackets span the width of the room (Photo 38). Built-in features with simple wood ornamentation, such as a long window seat and a corner bench, add to the functionality of the space. A scalloped window molding frames the elongated window at the rear of the room (Photo 39). Here Doc Thomas and his mother could relax in the window seat that overlooks the back patio. Board and batten vertical paneling of Dade County pine mimics the exterior siding (Photo 40). The living room floor integrates three types of wood, creating a subtle graphic pattern across the living room. White oak, random-width floor planks separated by walnut strips are held down with round mahogany pegs (Photo 41). The coral and limestone chimney stands at the west end of the living room, bringing a visually dominant exterior element into the main living space (Photos 35 and 42).

To the rear of the living room are additional rooms, which form the arms of the U-shaped floor plan. Three bedrooms and the bathroom are located to the rear (east/southeast) of the living room (Photos 43-50). To the southwest of the living room are the eat-in alcove and the kitchen (Photos 51-52). A map that tracked Doc Thomas' world travels hangs in the alcove (Photo 53). The wood floors in the alcove and bedroom are all Dade County pine, as well as the other custom woodwork throughout the house, which utilized similar ornamentation and detailing to that used in the living room (Perdue, 2001.) Together the design, layout, and detailing of the interior spaces and the exterior façades define a rustic character with understated ornamentation, providing a rare-surviving example of South Miami wood-frame vernacular architecture.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The landscape and residence of the Doc Thomas House has been carefully cared for and resources preserved over the years in an effort to retain its historic integrity and naturalistic character. The contributing features of the Doc Thomas House Historic Site include one building, one site, and two structures. The house itself is the central feature of the site, and the feature from which the site derives its primary historic significance. It has been carefully maintained and restored by the Tropical Audubon Society and maintains integrity today. The site itself is also a contributing resource. An appreciation for the natural landscape spurred Doc Thomas to purchase the property initially and later inspired the design of his wood-frame vernacular home. The property encompasses a remnant of the once prolific rockland pine and tropical hardwood hammock. Since the Tropical Audubon Society gained ownership, they carefully managed the site and its vegetation to accurately reflect the native landscape (Photo 54). In addition to the generally dense vegetation, several impressive trees are found throughout the site that likely existed during the historic period (Photos 55-56). The two contributing structures include the renovated chickee and the extant stone wall (See Photos 8, 10, and 54). Together, these four resources provide a strong sense of the historic character of the Doc Thomas House Historic Site.

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

While many original resources have been protected and enhanced over time, newer features have been added to meet Doc Thomas' vision of using his property for environmental education. Two non-contributing buildings are located within the boundaries of the historic site. A storage shed is located to the rear of the house (See Photo 7). A building that houses bathrooms, an outdoor sink, and additional storage stands alongside the restored chickee (See Photo 9 and Photos 56-58). The two footpaths are also non-historic features. Though these features did not exist during the historic period, their overall simple design and placement within the landscape do not detract from the broader historic character that remains evident today.

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Doc Thomas House is a significant at the local level under Criteria A and B mainly for its association with the life of Arden Hayes "Doc" Thomas an early South Miami pioneer and businessman who significantly contributed to the growth of the community. The main house on the property also meets Criterion C for its distinct architecture, possessing high artistic value as a rare example of Rustic style wood frame construction that dates from South Miami's early years. The house is the work of master architect Robert Fitch Smith. The site itself is significant under Criterion A in the area of Conservation as it provides the region with a representative remnant of the rockland pine and tropical hardwood hammock that defined the pre-settlement natural landscape. It was this dense, natural vegetation that drew Doc Thomas to the property, and what inspired the design of his vernacular style residence. The period of significance dates from 1932, when the house was constructed to 1965.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historically, the City of South Miami was known as the Town of Larkins. The boundaries of the City of South Miami extend to the north as far as Bird Road (in some areas) or Miller Drive (in other areas), North Kendall Drive (SW 88th Street) to the south, Red Road (SW 57th Avenue) to the east, and to the west, Ludlam and Palmetto Roads. The settlement of this portion of south Miami-Dade County began in the late 1800s with a handful of homesteaders. Situated just south of Coconut Grove between what was known as the Big (Cutler) and Little (Coconut Grove) Hunting Grounds, the pioneers were connected to other budding communities by a wagon trail (Metro-Dade OCED, 5).

By the 1890s, these clusters of homesteads began to take on the characteristics of a small town. Wilson A. Larkins came to Miami-Dade County in 1897 and settled on the land that is now the Cocoplum Circle. He bought a small herd of cattle and operated a dairy. He also owned and operated a small general store. In 1898, he established the Larkins Post Office.

It was the arrival of the Florida East Coast Railway (F.E.C.) that would have a profound effect on the area. Henry M. Flagler was an American industrialist who built his wealth by founding Standard Oil. He is credited with the development of much of the east coast of Florida, mostly due to his hotel development and the expansion of the F.E.C. Railroad. The railroad was extended south to Miami and Biscayne Bay in 1896. When Flagler subsequently extended his railroad line farther south to Homestead, Larkins opened a branch store near the tracks, which became known as Larkins Station. The opening of this station was the beginning of the Town of Larkins. Larkins Station became a regular stop on the F.E.C. line, which had an immediate impact on the fledgling community. Wilson Larkins moved the post office to the train stop (Metro-Dade OCED, 6).

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
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SIGNIFICANCE

In 1926, the town's name was changed to South Miami and it was officially incorporated. By this time, the new town already had several prominent commercial buildings. The Dorn brothers, who had come to the area in 1911, erected the Riviera Theatre in 1925 (which later became the Holsum Bakery building at 5750 South Dixie Highway). The Dorn-Martin Drugstore was located at 5900 Sunset Drive, and at 5904 South Dixie Highway was the City of South Miami Post Office. In October 1924, the Larkin Country Club Subdivision was further subdivided, creating the High Pines Subdivision located south of Dixie Highway and east of Red Road. It was here in the High Pines Subdivision that Doc Thomas would find a property to build his home.

CRITERION B: ARDEN HAYES "DOC" THOMAS

Arden Hayes "Doc" Thomas (1887-1975) became a key businessman and socialite in the fledgling town of South Miami. He was known as "Doc" Thomas, because he was essentially the town's doctor, having opened the local pharmacy in 1926. His father had been a pharmacist in Fortville, Indiana. Thomas would follow his father's career path, earning a pharmacy degree from Indiana University.

Arden Thomas moved to Miami in the mid-1920s and immediately set about to start up his own business. Thomas knew that Henry Flagler had just extended his railroad line down to Homestead and that there was a small railroad station in a community that had just become the town of South Miami. He opened his pharmacy in 1926 on the ground floor of a small apartment building located on Sunset Drive and thought about naming it the Riviera Pharmacy (Smith, FL Living Magazine). However, he named his pharmacy the O.K. Pharmacy after his father's pharmacy in Indiana

Not long after he opened shop, the great hurricane of September 1926 swept through Miami, putting an end to many of the businesses in South Miami, including the shoe shop that had opened next to the O.K. Pharmacy. Arden took over the shoe shop's retail space and opened the O.K. Feed Store to complement his pharmacy. When South Dixie Highway was paved on its way towards Homestead, Doc Thomas moved his stores to U.S. 1 to take advantage of the traffic.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

"Doc" Thomas befriended a young architect named Robert Fitch Smith, who became the first Dean of Architecture for the University of Miami (Perdue, 2001). In 1931, he convinced Smith to design a home for him to complement the existing pine and hardwood hammock environment found on the property on which "Doc" Thomas had purchased to build his family home.. The house was built in 1932, and was said to be Robert Fitch Smith's first residential project. In 1962, Doc Thomas proclaimed that the house contained the architect's "favorite living room, being 16 feet wide and 32 feet long, with walls made out of 12-inch cypress boards" (Smith, Florida Living, 1962.) Doc lived in the house with his mother; following her death, he continued living in the house until his death in 1975. On December 24, 1974, Doc Thomas donated the house and property to

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

the Tropical Audubon Society under the condition that he could continue living there until his death. He donated the house and property with the provision that both the house and the natural beauty of his property preserved and be used for environmental education (Dade County, 1069).

CRITERION C: ROBERT FITCH SMITH

Robert Fitch Smith was born in Fremont, Ohio on July 1, 1894. He was educated at the University of Michigan, the Carnegie Institute of Technology, the Western State College-Michigan, Columbia University, and at the University of Miami (AIA 1946, 1.) He continued as an instructor of architectural design at the University of Miami from 1928 through 1931. He later became the first University of Miami sDean of Architecture. He established his own practice in 1931, shortly after which he would design the little house in South Miami for Doc Thomas. According to Thomas, his was the residence designed by Smith (Smith, 1962).

Over the next three decades, Smith became a prominent and prolific architect, designing over 600 residences and more than 200 civic, commercial, and industrial buildings in the South Florida region and in the Caribbean (Forbes, 9E). He was publicly active and just as involved in civic duties as he was in building his private practice. Fitch was a charter member of the City of Miami Planning Board and in 1935, the governor of Florida appointed him to the Dade County Planning Council. He served on the council until 1939 with George Merrick (founder of the City of Coral Gables) as Chairman. In 1938, he was appointed to the Dade County zoning board and co-authored the Dade County Zoning Plan (Forbes, 9E). During WWII, he provided survey and design work for the military, designing military hospitals in Brazil and Mexico and military airports in Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil (AIA 1946, 1).

By the time our nation was in a post-war building frenzy, Fitch was already a nationally recognized architect, winning awards from the National American Institute of Architects (AIA) for his Key Biscayne Cabana Colony design. He obtained an additional architectural license for the State of North Carolina and served as the Vice-Chair for the AIA's Committee on Urban Planning for the Southern region. In 1952, he became the President of the Florida AIA South chapter. Fitch designed many projects in Miami and other cities in Florida and elsewhere in the United States. He died at the age of 69 in June 1964.

Overview of the Rustic Style

The Rustic style is more about materials and details than house type. The houses may be simple structures with just a single bedroom or multiple bunkrooms. They may have a full bathroom, but often the earliest homes had no indoor plumbing at all. They ranged in construction from single-story log cabins to two-story houses. Bungalows and Arts & Crafts houses in particular, were well-adapted to the style The Rustic style wood-frame house built for Doc Thomas was recognized within a few years of its completion. The meticulous detailing and understated color palette of the Thomas House provided an artistic example of a local vernacular residence

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

perfectly situated within its serene tropical hammock. The design of the Doc Thomas House was featured on the cover of both The Lumberman's Journal in June 1932 and House & Garden Building Bulletin in 1936. Both these publications displayed the Doc Thomas House as a showcase of unique and highly artistic application of wood ornamentation. Based in part on the early 20th century simplicity movement, the rustic style was soon synonymous with "artistic" homes that eschewed the stern formality of the Victorian period. The rustic style was also an expression of nostalgia for the simpler life of the Colonists who'd founded the United States with little more than a musket and an ax. The American wilderness deeply resonated in the collective psyche; capturing a personal part of it was clearly a reaction to the unknowns of the early industrial age.

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Doc Thomas House Historic Site extends the full width of the block along Sunset Drive from SW 56th Avenue to SW 55th Avenue. The property is in the shape of an elongated "L," with the arm extending south, encompassing the western half of the block. The property line extends nearly the full length of the block along SW 56th Street, from Sunset Drive towards SW 74th Street. The property boundary ends 100 feet north of SW 74th Street. Here a single family house stands between the historic site and the public street.

The legal boundary description for the Doc Thomas House is as follows: Amended Plat of High Pines Subdivision (Plat Book 10, Page 18), Lots 3, 4, 5, and 25 of Block 8 and TR 8-A of Plat Book 31, Page 57 and W ½ of TR 8-B less S100FT of PB 31-57.

The specific boundaries of the house and grounds are shown on a map of the site and floor plans drawn in AutoCAD accompanying this National Register Nomination Proposal.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes the full 1.95 acres retained by the Tropical Audubon Society. It encompasses all remaining historic resources associated with the Doc Thomas House developed during the period of significance. This includes the residence and the surrounding landscape, including the remnant stand of rockland pine and tropical hardwood hammock.

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

1. Doc Thomas House
2. 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami-Dade County, Florida
3. Sarah K. Cody
4. February 2014
5. Miami-Dade Office of Historic Preservation, 111 NW 1st Street, 12th Floor, Miami, FL 33128
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South from Sunset Drive
7. Photo 1 of 58

Items 1 through 5 are the same for the following photos 2 – 34.

3. Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman
 4. February 2013
 6. Main (North) Facade, Detail of Screen Door, Looking South
 7. Photo 2 of 58
-
6. View Across Front Lawn, Looking East
 7. Photo 3 of 58
-
6. Wooden Sign Directing Visitors to the Two Footpaths, Looking North
 7. Photo 4 of 58
-
6. View of Birdhouse along One of the Footpaths. Looking North
 7. Photo 5 of 58
-
6. View of Gravel Parking Area, Looking West
 7. Photo 6 of 58
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6. View of the Non-historic Storage Shed and Information Kiosk, Looking Southwest
 7. Photo 7 of 58
-
6. View of Restored Chickee, Looking West
 7. Photo 8 of 58
-
6. View of the Coral Rock Fireplace and Chimney at the End of the Non-historic Structure that Houses Bathrooms and an Outdoor Sink, Looking East
 7. Photo 9 of 58

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SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

6. Detail of the Historic Coral Rock Wall that Crosses Property from East-West at the Approximate Mid-Point, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 10 of 58

6. Arden Thomas House, View of Coral Rock Foundation Under Screen Porch, Looking South
7. Photo 11 of 58

6. Detail of Masonry Block Foundation that Supports the Main Structure, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 12 of 58

6. Detail of Native Limestone and Coral Rock Chimney with Slit Window, Looking East
7. Photo 13 of 58

6. View of west elevation of house, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 14 of 58

6. Detail of Horizontal Board-and-Batten Siding with Beveled Vertical Boards, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 15 of 58

6. Main (North) Facade, Screen Porch with Brick Steps, Looking South
7. Photo 16 of 58

6. Detail of Light Fixture on Screen Porch, Main (North) Facade, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 17 of 58

6. Detail of Front Door with Zig-Zag Wood Molding, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 18 of 58

6. Detail of 6/6-Light Double-Hung Sash Window and Plank Shutter on Front Porch, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 19 of 58

6. View Inside Screen Porch, Looking Southwest
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6. Detail of Exposed Beams in Screen Porch, Looking East
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Section number Photos Page 3 THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. Detail of Slit Window Set into Chimney, Looking Southeast
- 7. Photo 22 of 58

- 6. Detail of Chimney Clean-out Door in Chimney, Looking East
- 7. Photo 23 of 58

- 6. Detail of side-gable roof at the Kitchen Wing, Looking South
- 7. Photo 24 of 58

- 6. Detail of Gable End at Rear (South) of Kitchen Wing, Looking North
- 7. Photo 25 of 58

- 6. View of West Elevation of Kitchen Wing, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 26 of 58

- 6. View of the Rear (South) Elevation of Arden Thomas House, Looking North
- 7. Photo 27 of 58

- 6. View of Paved Walkway at the South Entrance to the Kitchen, Looking East
- 7. Photo 28 of 58

- 6. View of the Four-Stair Landing of the Kitchen Wing, Looking East
- 7. Photo 29 of 58

- 6. View of the Four-Stair Entry to the Dining Nook, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 30 of 58

- 6. Detail of Original Light Fixture Outside Dining Nook Door, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 31 of 58

- 6. Detail of Board-and-Batten Siding on the South Elevation, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 32 of 58

- 6. View of the South Bedroom Wing, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 33 of 58

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. View the East Elevation of the Bedroom Wing, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 34 of 58

- 3. Tropical Audubon Society
- 4. May 2013
- 6. Living Room Interior, Looking West toward Fireplace
- 7. Photo 35 of 58

- 3. Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman
- 4. February 2013
- 6. Detail Showing Interior Vertical Wall Paneling, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 36 of 58

- 6. Detail of the Woodwork on the Living Room Window Seat, Looking Southeast
- 7. Photo 37 of 58

- 6. View of Exposed Wooden Beams and Brackets in Living Room, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 38 of 58

- 4. May 2013
- 6. Living Room Interior, Looking West toward Fireplace
- 7. Photo 39 of 58

- 6. Living Room, Looking Southwest toward Window Seat
- 7. Photo 40 of 58

- 6. Detail of Random-Width White Oak Flooring in living room, Looking West
- 7. Photo 41 of 58

- 6. Detail of the Tiled Hearth of the Coral Rock Fireplace, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 42 of 58

- 3. Tropical Audubon Society
- 4. December 2013
- 6. Hallway Leading to the Three Bedrooms and Bath, Looking West
- 7. Photo 43 of 58

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THOMAS, ARDEN "DOC", HOUSE
SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

3. Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman

4. May 2013

6. Light Fixture in Hall between the Bedrooms and Bath, Looking Southeast

7. Photo 44 of 58

3. Sarah K. Cody

4. December 2013

6. View of the North Former Bedroom, now Tropical Audubon Society Library, Looking Northeast

7. Photo 45 of 58

3. Tropical Audubon Society

4. December 2013

6. Rear (Southwest) Former Bedroom, now Office Space for the Tropical Audubon Society. Looking Northeast

7. Photo 46 of 58

Items 1 through 5 are the same for photos 46 – 48.

6. Rear (Southwest) Former Bedroom, now Office Space for the Tropical Audubon Society. Looking Southwest

7. Photo 47 of 58

6. View of Third Former Bedroom, now Office Space for the Tropical Audubon Society, Looking Northeast

7. Photo 48 of 58

3. Kathleen Slesnick Kauffman

4. May 2013

6. Detail of the Vertical Woodwork of Doors found throughout the house, Looking West

7. Photo 49 of 58

6. View of the Bathroom in East Wing, Looking East

7. Photo 50 of 58

6. View of the Dining Nook, Looking Southwest

7. Photo 51 of 58

6. View of Kitchen Looking South from Dining Nook

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SOUTH MIAMI, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. Map that Documented Travels of Doc Thomas, Looking at South Wall of Dining Nook
- 7. Photo 53 of 58

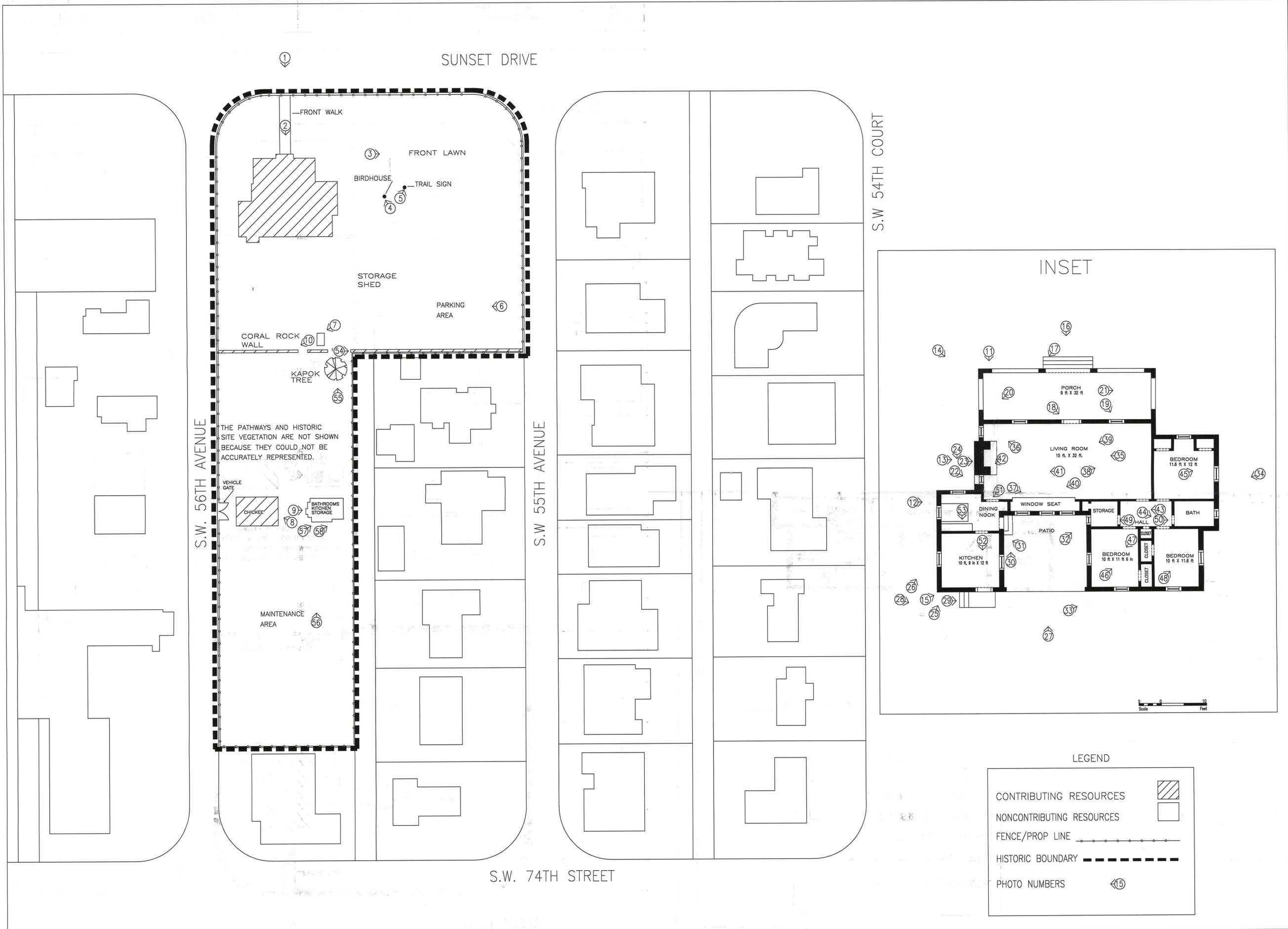
- 6. Commemorative Plaque on end of Coral Rock Wall Installed by the Tropical Audubon Society Noting the Society's Efforts to Restore the Tropical Hardwood Hammock and Pine Rockland, Looking East
- 7. Photo 54 of 58

- 6. View of an Original Kapok Tree, Looking North
- 7. Photo 55 of 58

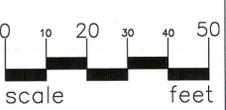
- 6. View from the Parking Area toward the Non-Historic Bathroom S, Looking North
- 7. Photo 56 of 58

- 6. View of Storage Area and Outdoor Kitchen in the Non-Historic Structure, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 57 of 58

- 6. View of the Visitor Bathrooms, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 58 of 58



ARDEN "DOC" THOMAS HOUSE
 5530 SUNSET DRIVE
 SOUTH MIAMI (MIAMI-DADE COUNTY), FLORIDA



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DRAWN BY: W. Carl Shiver
 DRAWING DATE: APRIL-MAY 2014
 THE ARDEN "DOC" THOMAS SITE & FLOOR PLANS WERE DRAWN USING A VARIETY OF VISUAL RESOURCES INCLUDING SURVEY MAPS, COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER GIS MAPS, AERIAL AND HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS AND ON-SITE VIEWS. THE PLANS HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO APPROXIMATE SCALE BUT VARIATIONS WERE ALLOWED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CLARITY. THE MAP WAS PREPARED USING THE AUTOCAD COMPUTER DRAWING PROGRAM.

MAP REVIEWED BY: CARL SHIVER
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DRAWING NUMBER	SHEET NO. 1 OF 1
N/A	
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HISTORIC BOUNDARY

PHOTO NUMBERS

SITE & FLOOR PLANS



TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
STEINBERG
NATURE CENTER

5530





Pinewood Trail
←

Hammock Trail
→





Parking





















TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Fold the Flock!























LADIES

