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Founded 1972

Dade Heritage Trust at 52: Preserving the Past, Embracing the Future

by Dolly McIntyre, Founder

Historic preservation was still in its infancy in 1972 when Dade Heritage Trust was founded. The National Trust for Historic Preservation had been chartered by Congress in 1949 as a grass roots organization to save America's historic places but its influence was not felt in Florida until years later.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 established a national policy regarding the preservation of the nation's historic places and artifacts and its influence slowly began to spread across the states. In the words of the Act, the Federal Government's role would be to "provide leadership" for preservation, "contribute to" and "give maximum encouragement" to preservation, and "foster conditions under which our modern society and our prehistoric and historic resources can exist in productive harmony." Indeed, an underlying motivation in passage of the Act was to transform the Federal Government from an agent of indifference, frequently responsible for needless loss of historic resources, to a facilitator, an agent of thoughtful change, and a responsible steward for future generations.

The first preservation effort in Miami-Dade County was, ironically, carried out by Dr. James Jackson, when he chose to move his 1905 office and surgery building, now Dade Heritage Trust headquarters, to a new location in 1917 rather than have it demolished by the site's new owner. The second effort was the saving of the 1844 slave quarters/ Fort Dallas Barracks by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Miami Woman's Club, who supported the dismantling of the coral rock structure at its downtown site and its reassembly in the City of Miami's Lummus Park in 1925.

1966 saw the birth of a local grassroots movement to save the iconic 1926 Douglas Entrance or the Puerto del Sol, at SW 8th Street and SW 37 Avenue in Coral Gables, from being demolished to make room for a supermarket. A group of design professionals, led by architect James Deen, formed a corporation and purchased the structure to save and restore it and create a design center. Some of the wives of the stockholders then formed an auxiliary organization to help with the restoration. And thus, the historic preservation group, The Villagers was born. When the future of the Douglas Entrance was secure, the group then turned their attention to other historic sites such as the Biltmore Hotel and Vizcaya. They also realized that there was a bigger need than their small group could handle and they considered initiating a statewide organization for historic preservation. However, at that time, the State Historic Preservation Officer advised them that the state was not ready and to get experience with a county-wide organization first. And so, in 1972, Dade Heritage

Trust was founded to be a county-wide, membership-based nonprofit, open to all who had an interest in the mission to save historic resources.

A core group, which included Sallye Jude, Dolly MacIntyre, Sam Boldrick, Margaret Kunz, and others, began meeting in each others' homes and building the organization. The first step was to do a survey to determine just what historic places existed, followed by the creation of legal protection for sites worthy of preservation in the form of a county preservation ordinance.

As the mid-1970s rolled around, the nation was awash in Bicentennial fever, Miami included. To commemorate the occasion, the City of Miami acquired the 1905 Dr. Jackson Office and Surgery and gave DHT a long-term lease agreement to allow the building to serve as the organization's headquarters. With funding from community development block grants, the restoration was undertaken.

The following year, Miami's oldest residence, the 1855 William Wagner Homestead was acquired, to be relocated from its original site north of the Miami River which had become Metro-Dade Transit property. Dade Heritage Trust Members rolled up their sleeves and removed later additions to the wooden vernacular cottage and prepared it for movement to Lummus Park to join the Fort Dallas Barracks where it stands today.

Over the years, DHT originated and implemented annual awards for outstanding preservation projects and individuals in the field, published an annual magazine called *Preservation Today*, developed a program for accepting preservation easements, presented Dade Heritage Days, announced an annual most endangered sites list and art and raised funds for preservation projects across the Miami-Dade County. Numerous conferences were planned and hosted, including a cultural tourism seminar, workshops on restoration, economic benefits of historic preservation, and Miami Modern architecture.

Dade Heritage Trust was instrumental in the recovery of historic sites damaged by Hurricane Andrew as it administered funds dedicated for that purpose. It was involved in the restoration of old Miami High, the Dice House, the Hubbard-Alvarez Bungalow, the Miami City Cemetery and the Cape Florida Lighthouse.

Historic designation was obtained for the Miami Marine Stadium and the Friends of the Marine Stadium established to pursue restoration. The Miami Circle and the Freedom Tower were subjects of intense efforts to preserve them. General obligation bond funds were obtained for preservation projects across the County and a revolving fund was used to preserve special places. The African-American Committee focused on the historic Hampton House and the Cemetery Committee initiated a major restoration project at the Miami City Cemetery.

The year 2016 ushered in a new beginning for Dade Heritage Trust with the hiring of Executive Director, Christine Rupp, who brings creativity, determination and "Energizer Bunny" energy with her. Under her guidance, DHT's headquarters building has been repaired and refreshed and is now an official heritage tourism visitor welcome center with funding from the MiamiDDA and Miami-Dade County. Dade Heritage Trust offers public programming including bike and walking tours and *Historic Places, Green Spaces* a meaningful and impactful K-12 educational program.

The organization has moved into property ownership with the acquisition of three apartment buildings in Little Havana that preserve naturally occurring affordable housing. DHT also owns an historic cottage in the Lummus Park Historic District that will be restored to serve as a community resource.

Through grant and private funding, since 2016, Dade Heritage Trust has performed historic building inventories and surveys in Brickell, Allapattah, Silver Bluff, Shenandoah, Overtown, Westmoreland,

Coconut Grove, Grove Park, Liberty City and is currently working on surveys of the Brownsville neighborhood and the Village of El Portal. In addition, in 2019, DHT commissioned Rosa Lowinger Associates to perform a survey and condition report for the historic Miami City Cemetery. These efforts assist in educating residents, visitors, neighborhood stakeholders and decision makers about the importance of preserving these places that create Miami's sense of place.

The future promises to keep us on our toes as we deal with the ongoing challenges of saving historic places and the memories they engender from the crush of economic pressure for constant growth. Climate change and sea level rise pose yet another challenge, forcing us to rethink how and where we build and how we preserve those special places already built, often at the edge of the sea. Dade Heritage Trust is ready for the challenge.