

Designation Report

American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club

13325 Arch Creek Road
North Miami, Florida
Built: 1926



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Miami-Dade County

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME: American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club

LOCATION: 13325 Arch Creek Road
North Miami, FL 33181
Township: 52S
Range: 42E
Section: 29

ARCHITECT: Unknown

PROPERTY OWNER: American Czechoslovaks Social Club

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 20 52 42 3.5 AC
R E MC DONALDS SUB PB 2-22
S1/2 OF LOT 55 & LOT 56
LOT SIZE 152460 SQ FT

TAX FOLIO NUMBER: 06-2220-014-0420

SIGNIFICANCE: **History/Context:** The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club property is historically significant for its reflection of the original pattern of development in the R. E. McDonald's subdivision along the Arch Creek. It is further significant for its continual use over 7 decades as the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, which was founded during South Florida's heyday of social ethnic clubs and remains one of the few in active use today. The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club fulfills Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(a), *Associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-Dade County, South Florida, the State or the nation.*

IMPACTS: The Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation is required to approve any exterior changes and/or additions, demolition, or new construction to the designated resource.

Most approvals are handled in-house directly by the staff of the Office of Historic Preservation. Major alterations require approval by the County Historic Preservation Board.

Designated resources are eligible to take part in the County's Ad-Valorem Tax Exemption program, and are eligible for any historic preservation grants that may be available at the time.

II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION / SETTING

Located at 13325 Arch Creek Road in North Miami, Florida, the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club is sited on the southeast side of Arch Creek Road. The property extends from the public streetfront to the scenic Little Arch Creek, a branch of the Arch Creek. The railroad extends northeast to southwest and runs parallel to Arch Creek Road, northwest of the property. The property encompasses approximate 3.5 acres with a wood-frame structure dating from 1926 in the southeast corner. The western half of the property is an open grassy field with denser trees and understory vegetation on the eastern half and along the property perimeter. To the south is Lakeside Towers, a residential dormitory owned by Johnson & Wales University. To the north is a dense cluster of multi-family residences. The dormitory was constructed in 1968 and the multi-family residences were constructed primarily in the 1960s. With an original construction date of 1926, the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club is the oldest structure in the immediate vicinity. The Florida East Coast Railway runs alongside Arch Creek Road, directly northwest of the Cultural Club property. Historic Arch Creek Park is also located nearby, north of NE 135 Street.



Contemporary aerial photograph with property boundary outlined in red, circa 2017.



View of the Little Arch Creek from behind the Club, 2015.
(Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)



View of the grassy field to the west of the Club building, 2015.
(Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club building is set back from Arch Creek Road, in the southeast portion of the large property. A winding entry drive lined with dense vegetation leads from the public streetfront to the building. The building itself is a large wood-frame structure measuring 7,656 square feet total. The primary structure is two stories, with a modest, one-story addition on the front of the building. This addition, constructed in 1964, is concrete block with a shed roof.¹ A one-story room extends on the rear of the building. This room is also concrete block with a flat roof, and may have originally served as a Florida room. Architecturally, the building is modest. A covered walkway with a pedestrian-scale gable roof and wooden brackets extends off the eastern side of the main façade, marking the main entrance. Simple wooden, exposed rafters extend under the second floor eaves on the main house. Asphalt shingles cover the main roof. A mix of non-original awning and single-hung windows are seen on the exterior. An oolitic limestone chimney is found on the north elevation and extends above the roofline.



Closer view looking towards the Club from the entry drive, 2006. (Courtesy American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club.)



View looking northeast of the front façade of the Club, 2006. (Courtesy American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club.)

Additional architectural features are found on the interior of the main clubroom. These include a stone fireplace with wooden mantle and wood half-timber features on the walls. Though this room historically incorporated half-timbering, photographs taken during the historic period evidence that the existing half-timber patterns are not original. The one-story room off the rear of the main club room, which likely served as a Florida room originally, has exposed wood beams on the walls and ceilings.



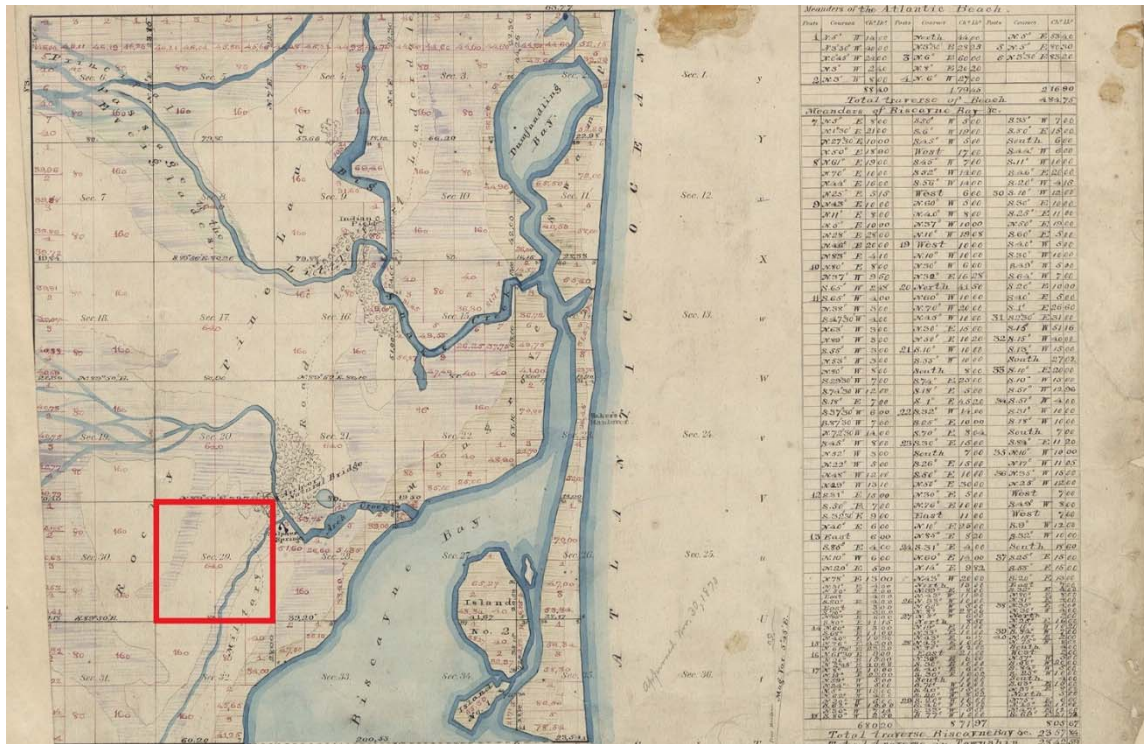
View of the interior dining area. The large, original windows of the Florida room are visible in the rear of the room. The photograph is undated. (Courtesy American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club.)



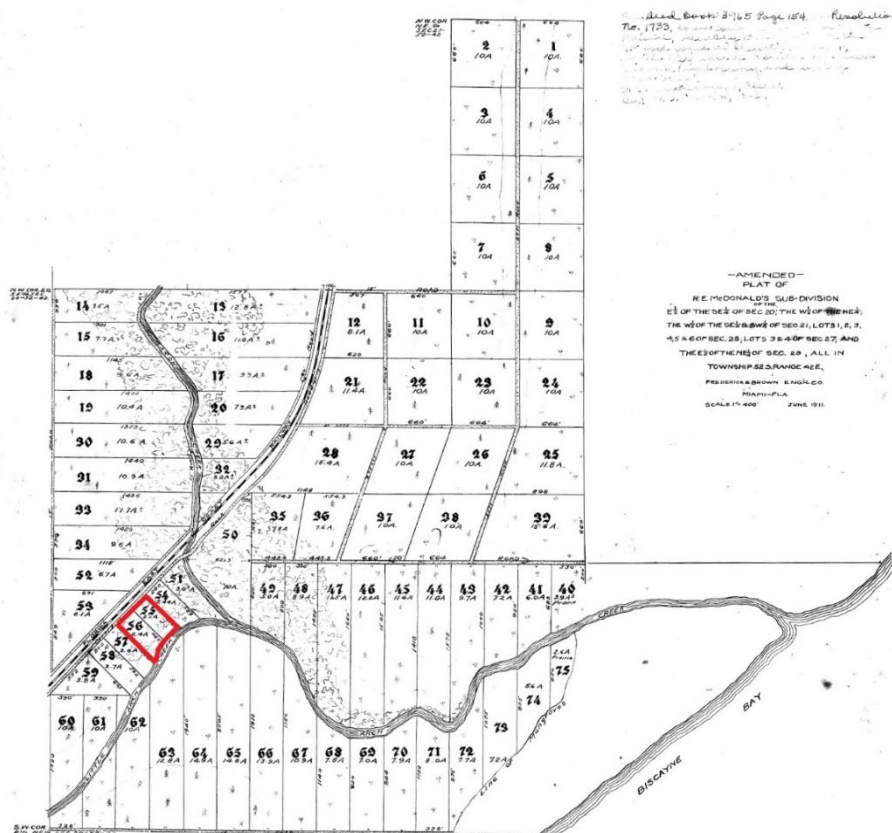
Contemporary view of the interior dining area, 2015. Half-timber features still characterize the interior walls, though it is in a different configuration than what is seen in the historic period photograph. The former Florida room is visible at left. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

III. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE & CONTEXT

The property located at 13325 Arch Creek Road is historically significant for its reflection of the original pattern of development in the 1920s along the Arch Creek and the Florida East Coast Railway. The property is located in the R. E. McDonald's subdivision, which was platted in 1911. This subdivision laid out large properties that aligned with existing landscape features, such as the Arch Creek and the Florida East Coast Railway. The property to which the American Czech-Slovak Club would eventually move encompasses two lots – 55 and 56 – and stretches between the Little Arch Creek and the railway. These existing features were important to the subdivision and subsequent development of the area. The nearby military trail and the railway particularly attracted Czechoslovak immigrants from Chicago to South Florida.²

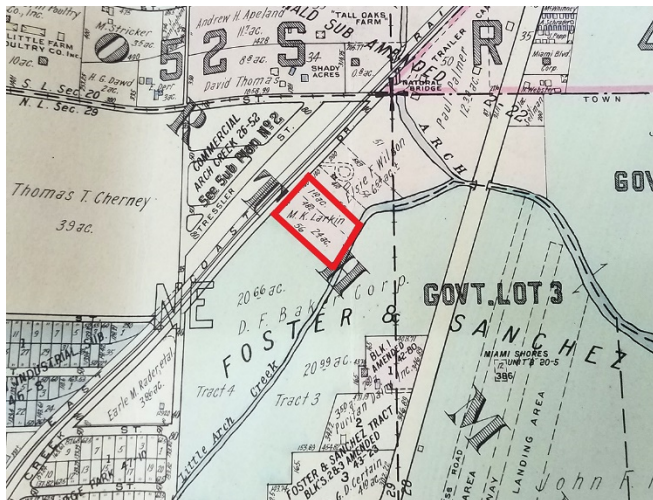


1870 survey showing the natural conditions in the area where the R. E. McDonald's subdivision would be developed. Section 29 is outlined in red. The survey shows the native pineland in the area and the waterways, including the Arch Creek. The natural bridge in across Arch Creek is also identified, as well as the historic military trail. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

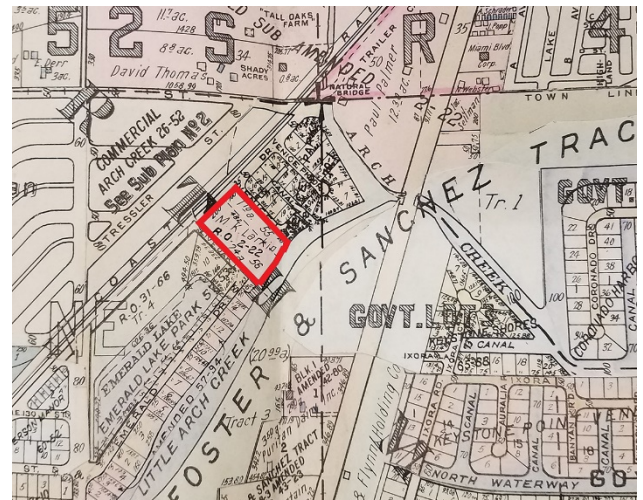


June 1911 plat of R. E. McDonald's subdivision, with the historic site boundary outlined in red. (Courtesy Miami-Dade County, annotated by the Office of Historic Preservation.)

Additional subdivisions were platted, though the area maintained its rural character through the first half of the 20th century. By 1960, the surrounding properties has been re-subdivided to accommodate denser, multi-family development. However, the property at 13325 Arch Creek Road remained unchanged. The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club purchased the property in 1949 and immediately began using it to achieve their mission to "further the Czech and Slovak cultures, customs, traditions, and foods in South Florida."³



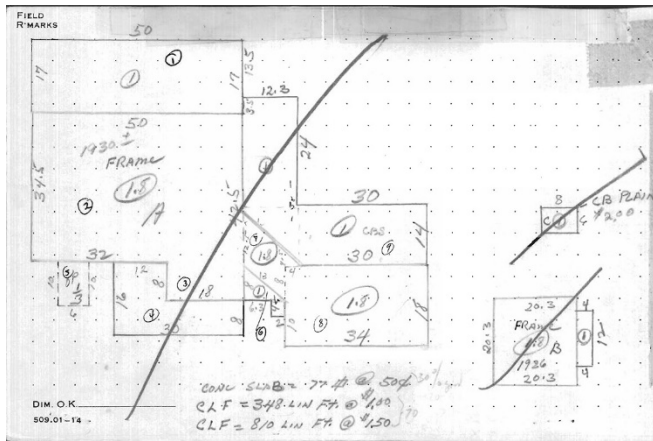
G.M. Hopkins Co Plat Book, showing the historic site outlined in red, in context with the neighboring properties and the Little Arch Creek and railway, 1948. The properties immediately northeast remain large and open at this time. (Photo courtesy G.M. Hopkins Co., *Volume Two Plat Book of Miami, Florida and Suburbs*, 1948, annotated by the Office of Historic Preservation.)



G.M. Hopkins Co Plat Book, showing the historic site outlined in red, in context with the development that happened in the 1950s. The properties immediately to the northeast have been densely developed, 1960. (Photo courtesy G.M. Hopkins Co., *Volume Two Plat Book of Miami, Florida and Suburbs*, revised 1960, annotated by the Office of Historic Preservation.)

Before they purchased the property and officially founded the Club, early Czechoslovak immigrants gathered at local parks and beaches until 20 members formed a club at the Slavic Inn in Miami Springs. This local tavern became too small to accommodate the growing membership, so they purchased the current property on Arch Creek Road.⁴ At the time of their incorporation, and purchase of the property, the Club had grown to 77 members, all of which were Czechoslovak immigrants.⁵

When the Club moved into the property, they maintained the existing structures. This included a main single-family home and a small building with garage and apartment to the west. The wood-frame, two-story structures were constructed in 1926.⁶ At the time of purchase in 1949, the grounds were characterized by "thick, wild growth and a narrow road [that] led into the property."⁷ The members themselves carried out improvements to the property and buildings to accommodate their needs.⁸ The smaller garage and apartment building remained on site through the 1990s, but was later demolished.⁹ The main residence remains today. An extension of the asphalt driveway that once ran from the main residence to the secondary structure is also extant. A small concrete-block, one-story building once stood to the north of the garage/apartment building, though that has also been demolished.¹⁰



Sketch Plan of the three structures that were on site from circa 1926 through the 1990s. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Sketch Plan of the three structures overlaid on an existing aerial, indicating where the garage and apartment building was located in relation to the main building, as well as the small support structure. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)

In addition to the historic context of the physical property, the site is also significant for its continual use as the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club for nearly 70 years. The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club was founded during an era when ethnic and cultural-based social clubs proliferated throughout South Florida. This was a result of the strong immigrant population that was drawn to the region; these types of clubs emerged as a way for immigrant communities to socialize and carry on their cultural traditions. While during the mid-20th century, these clubs were popular and widespread, the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club is one of the few that remains active today.¹¹

IV. ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION & ALTERATIONS

When the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club purchased the property at 13325 Arch Creek Road in 1949, the property had three existing structures, one of which remains today. The structures included the extant 1926 wood-frame residential structure. The main structure is two stories, with a one-story concrete block addition on the front façade, and a one-story concrete block Florida room on the rear façade.

Photos dating from the historic period show that the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club started modifying the building to meet their programmatic needs soon after acquiring the property in 1949. A covered entry was built leading into the main Club room. One of the primary goals of the Club's mission was to further their cultural traditions, in part by providing traditional food. In order to fulfill this aspect of the mission, the Club established a kitchen and bar at the property. The one-story concrete block addition on the front façade was constructed for this purpose.



AMERICAN CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIAL CLUB HOUSE - 13325 EAST DIXIE HIGHWAY, MIAMI, FLORIDA

View across the entry drive towards the front façade of the main building, prior to the Club renovating it to accommodate their needs. The photograph is undated, though is sometime prior to 1955. This is likely the building as it appeared when the Club purchased the property in 1949. (Courtesy American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club.)



View looking southwest across the front façade of the Club building, December 1964. By this time, the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club had made several modifications to the building, including the covered entryway and the concrete block kitchen addition, both seen here. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Contemporary view across the front façade of the Club building, 2018. While the building has been modified from its original, 1926 design, today it remains as it did in the mid-20th century. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)



View of the northeast corner of the main residence. The stone chimney remains today. This photo also reveals that the Club constructed the covered entry by December 1955. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Contemporary view of the same corner of the building, 2018. The original chimney and historic period covered entry remain, though obscured by vegetation. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

At the southern end of the main building was a two-story section that also saw modifications to accommodate the Club's use. At some point after 1955, a stairway was constructed on the front façade to provide access to a caretaker's apartment. Other modifications included replacing the single-hung windows with awning windows and introduction of a secondary door on the end façade.

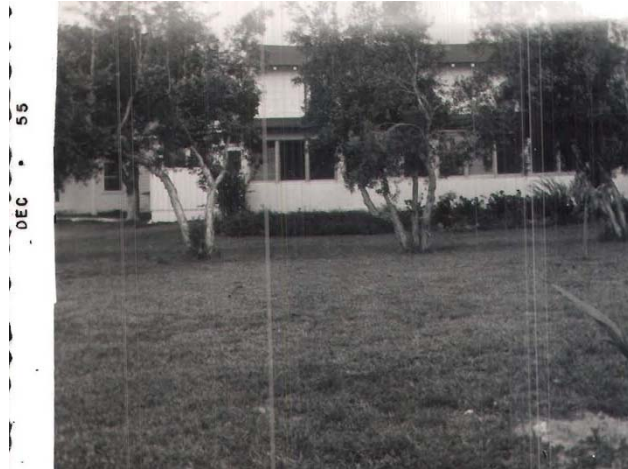


View of the southern portion of the main building, December 1955. Note the wood siding, single-hung windows, and exposed rafters. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



View of the southern portion of the main building, circa 1974. Note the addition of the exterior stairs and a secondary entry door on the end, and the awning windows. The wood siding and wooden exposed rafters remain. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)

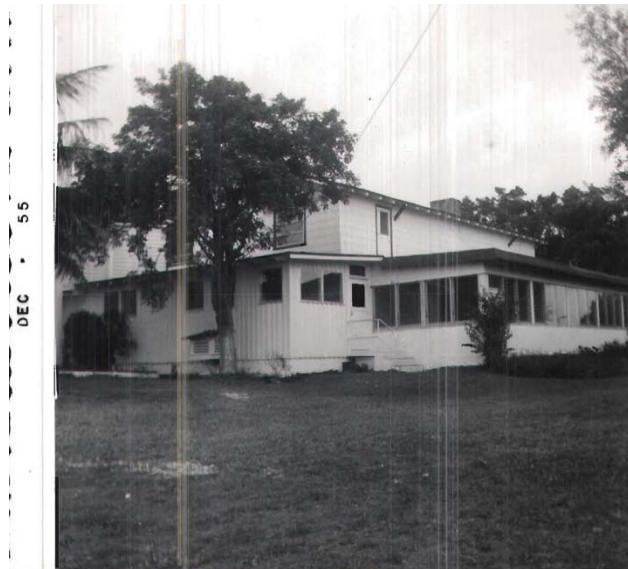
The original expansive windows of the rear Florida room were also replaced with smaller casement windows.



View looking northwest towards the Florida room on the rear of the main building, December 1955. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Contemporary view looking northwest towards the former Florida room on the rear of the main building, 2015. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)



View looking north towards the Florida room on the rear of the main building, December 1955. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Contemporary view looking north towards the former Florida room on the rear of the main building, 2015. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

The Club has recently undertaken a number of renovations to the main building. This has included a new roof and installation of a new air conditioning system. The Club also plans to install a new interior lighting system. These recent renovations have not detracted from the historic character or integrity of the property.

When the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club purchased the property in 1949, a second two-story wood-frame structure stood just to the southwest of the main residential structure. This structure was also constructed in 1926 and served as a garage with apartment above. By the late 1990s, the building had fallen into disrepair and was not used by the Club. As a result, it was demolished.¹² A third structure, with an unknown date of construction, was a small one-story concrete block structure to the south of the garage/apartment. This structure likely served some type of support function, perhaps for storage. This structure was also demolished, likely around the same time as the garage/apartment structure.



View of the secondary structure, which stood to the southwest of the main residence, December 1955. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



Undated view of the secondary structure with the southwest façade of the main residence visible beyond. (Courtesy Office of the Property Appraiser.)



View looking along the entry drive from the entry on Arch Creek Road, 2018. The scenic character of the property has been retained since its original development in 1926. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

In spite of the loss of the two ancillary structures and the alterations to the main building, overall the site continues to evoke the same character as when the Club purchased the property in 1949. The winding entry drive continues to lead members and visitors through the property and towards the club building. Large trees and understory plantings frame views of the building as visitors approach. The dense vegetation concentrated to the south and east portions of the property and the open grassy area to the west reflect the character not just of this property, but of the broader area when it was platted and subsequently developed in the first half of the 20th century.



Panoramic view looking towards the Club and property from along the entry drive, 2018. (Courtesy Office of Historic Preservation.)

At the time of designation, no known plans are currently under consideration for public or private improvements, development, or redevelopment of the site. The designation of the site does not conflict with any existing government policies or goals, nor does it preclude the possibility of adaptive use of the property after designation.

V. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club is significant under the following criterion, as set forth in Section 16A-10 of the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Ordinance:

- (a) Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(a)**, Is associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-Dade County, south Florida, the State or the nation.

It should be noted that while the remaining structure dates from 1926, the site is not considered eligible under Criterion C, as the building has been considerably modified from its original appearance. Rather than being significant for its architectural qualities, the overall site is significant for its continued reflection of the original pattern of development in the area, and for its association with the social history of the American Czech-Slovak community in South Florida.

VI. STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness will follow the general guidelines as recommended for historic sites, as detailed in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* as developed in 1992 and codified as 36CFR Part 68 in the July 12, 1995, *Federal Register* (Vol. 60, No. 133). However, ordinary maintenance and minor repairs/alterations will not be subject to review.

VII. CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

The overall site of the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club maintains its historic integrity, in spite of changes that have been applied to the building after its original construction in 1926. All exterior façades of the building are contributing resources. Beyond the built structure, the site itself maintains its integrity and continues to reflect the original development that occurred along the Arch Creek in the early 20th century. The open field and areas of dense vegetation are integral to the historic character and setting of the site and shall be considered contributing features. Any proposed alterations to features that contribute to the significance and integrity of the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club require submittal of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The interior spaces of the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club are non-contributing resources. As such, alterations to these interior spaces do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

VIII. STAFF EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION

Staff has performed a site visit to document the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, as well as research into the historic context of the property. Staff has determined that the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, located at 13325 Arch Creek Road, meets the objective criteria for designation. This evaluation is based on the historic context of the property, as it reflects the pattern of original development that occurred along the Arch Creek and is among the only remaining such properties in the area. Further, its use as the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club beginning in 1949 is significant. In this context, the site represents an era in Miami-Dade history when ethnic and cultural-based social clubs were important elements in the settlement and quality of life for the people who traveled and immigrated to South Florida. While in the mid-20th century, these types of clubs were popular and

widespread, today, the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club is one of the few that remains active. Thus, it is significant to the social and cultural history of Miami-Dade County. Based on its historic context, and the application of objective criteria for designation, Staff recommends that the American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club be designated as a Miami-Dade County Historic Site.

IX. ENDNOTES

¹ Building Jacket, 13325 Arch Creek Road, Metropolitan Dade County Tax Assessment Department.

² Ivana J. Robinson, "Our History: Arch Creek American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club," Biscayne Boulevard Times, July 2006.

³ "About our Club," American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://acsc.org/>.

⁴ Ivana J. Robinson, "Our History: Arch Creek American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club," Biscayne Boulevard Times, July 2006.

⁵ Ivana J. Robinson, "Our History: Arch Creek American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club," Biscayne Boulevard Times, July 2006.

⁶ "Property Search Application," Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.miamidade.gov/propertysearch/#/>.

⁷ "History of our Club," 10th Anniversary History, 1959, accessed August 8, 2016, http://acsc.org/Papers/ACSCC1959_030309.pdf.

⁸ "History of our Club," 10th Anniversary History, 1959, accessed August 8, 2016, http://acsc.org/Papers/ACSCC1959_030309.pdf.

⁹ Building Jacket, 13325 Arch Creek Road, Metropolitan Dade County Tax Assessment Department; Dr. Robert J. Petrik, American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, interview with author, April 3, 2018.

¹⁰ Building Jacket, 13325 Arch Creek Road, Metropolitan Dade County Tax Assessment Department.

¹¹ Dr. Paul George, interview with author, March 23, 2017.

¹² Dr. Robert J. Petrik, American Czech-Slovak Cultural Club, interview with author, April 3, 2018.