

Preliminary Designation Report

Camp Matecumbe

13841 SW 120 Street
Miami-Dade County, Florida
Built: c. 1956-1967



Prepared by: Alex Dambach
Planning Development Manager
Planning Division
Regulatory and Economic Resources Department
Miami-Dade County

May 17, 2023

CONTENTS

I.	General Information	Page 2
II.	Physical Description / Setting	Page 4
III.	Historic Significance & Context	Page 21
IV.	Proposed Development	Page 30
V.	Property Vulnerability	Page 32
VI.	Florida Master Site File	Page 32
VII.	Criteria for Designation	Page 32
VIII.	Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness	Page 32
IX.	Contributing Features	Page 33
X.	Staff Evaluation & Recommendation	Page 33
XI.	Endnotes	Page 34

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME: **Camp Matecumbe**

LOCATION: 13841 SW 120 Street
Miami, FL 33186
Township: 55
Range: 39
Section: 10

ARCHITECT: Unknown

CONSTRUCTION: c.1956-1967

PROPERTY OWNERS: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 10 55 39 26.787 ACM/L BEG 687.96FTW & 35FTN OF SE COR OF SE1/4 TH N 02 DEG W 357.28FT S 87 DEG W 200FT N 02 DEG W 187.16FT N 51 DEG E 248.94FT N 02 DEG W 838.79FT S 87 DEG W 151.97FT S 55 DEG W 281.68FT N 04 DEG W 14.54FT S 85 DEG W 10FT S 04 DEG E 20.28FT S 55 DEG W 517.17FT S 00 DEG E 117.11FT N89 DEG E 78.39FT S 27 DEG E 202.99FT S 03 DEG E 812.73FT N 86 DEG E 664.30FT TO POB OR 21408-4676 4910-0603 3

TAX FOLIO NUMBER: 30-5910-000-0150

SIGNIFICANCE: **History/Context:** Camp Matecumbe was used as a transit station that housed children of the Operation Pedro Pan program from 1961-1964. Originally a summer camp operated by the Catholic Diocese of Jacksonville, the camp's shelters and buildings were converted for housing for refugee children and later for children from troubled backgrounds. Additional buildings were added during the Pedro Pan program's operation. "From 1960 to 1962, over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children left their homeland in what became the largest recorded unaccompanied child refugee exodus in the Western Hemisphere, later popularly known as 'Operation Pedro Pan.' Fearing children's indoctrination by the newly installed communist government, parents entrusted their children's fate to governmental and religious organizations in the United States".¹ Most refugee children were able to connect immediately with family living in Miami or elsewhere in the United States, but those without immediate connections in this country were sent to live in church-owned properties including Camp Matecumbe and await permanent housing. Initially, the camp housed 60 boys in barrack-style buildings, but numbers of residents fluctuated upward during this period. In the late 1960s up through the 1990s the Catholic Church used the camp for its Boystown program to provide education to children from distressed situations, and additional dormitories were added during that period.

Camp Matecumbe 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.

People: The Camp is connected to the lives of persons significant to the history of Miami-Dade County and Operation Pedro Plan including Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh, for whom the portion of SW 120 Street near the property was renamed, and Bishop Coleman F. Carroll who arranged the conversion of the camp to its use as a Boystown facility. It is also affiliated with the lives of hundreds of children who came to the United States during the Cold War to escape rising communism in Cuba. Camp Matecumbe fulfills Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(b), *be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.*

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. Additional details are included in *Section VIII: Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness.*

Designated resources are eligible to take part in the County's Ad Valorem Tax Exemption program. As a County Park, this would not apply to Camp Matecumbe.



A street sign located at the intersection of SW 120 Street/Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh Street and SW 137 Avenue showing the dedication of the roadway along the south side of the site to Father Bryan O. Walsh of the Catholic Welfare League. He initiated and managed Operation Pedro Pan.

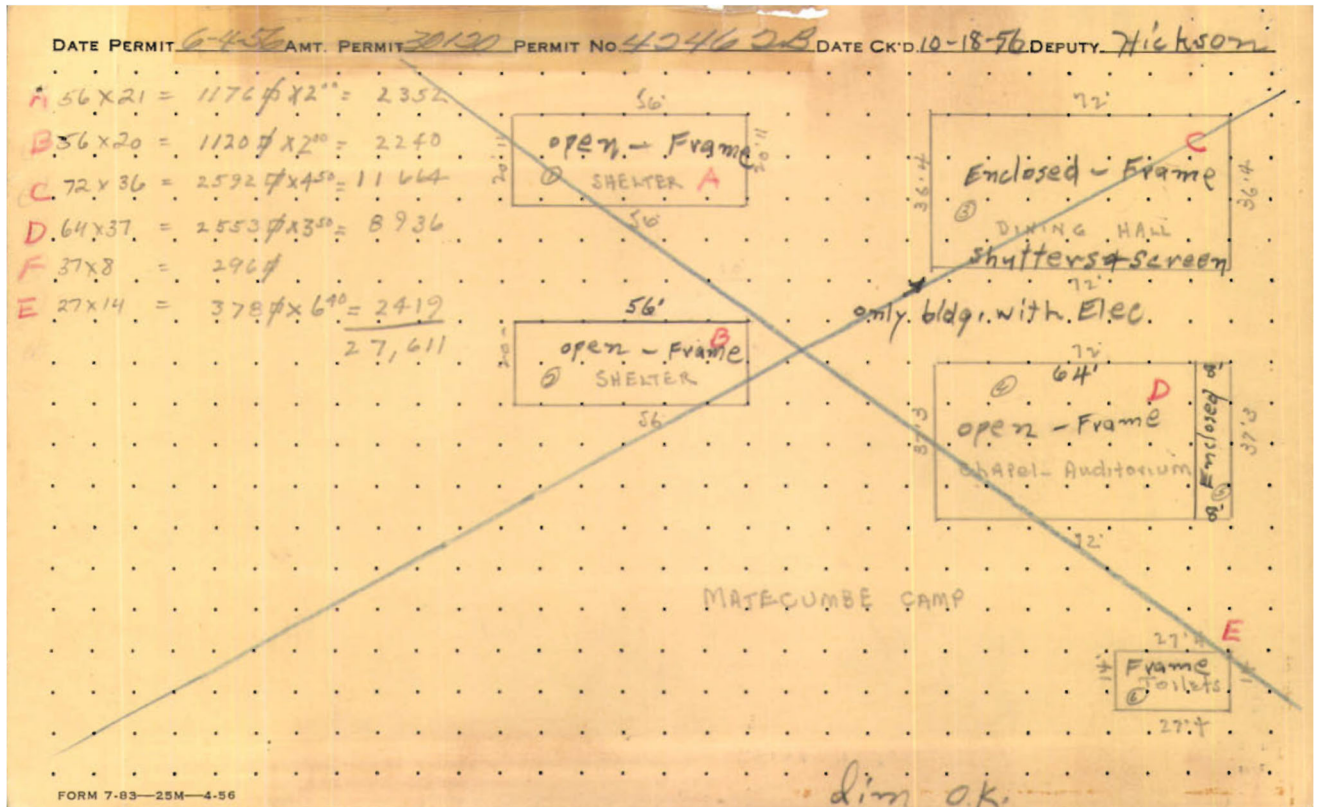


Aerial photograph of Camp Matecumbe from 1978. Note that SW 120 Street/Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh Street appears unpaved, and the camp's entrance was then from SW 137 Street. Also note that the building to the southeast (immediately above the lake), the lake, the swimming pool (with bathhouse), the ball court, and the building extending to the west (left edge of image) were all demolished, apparently in 2008 as part of a plan from that time to update the park according to a Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser "Narrative History Card" dated 1/23/08 and included with the site's "Building Jacket." All elements that have been removed are circled in red.



Current aerial view of site with buildings labeled

The Property & Existing Buildings



Copy of permit documents from 1956 for construction of the Dining Hall, current Chapel (originally an "Open-Frame Shelter"), and Dormitory Number 6 along with the now-removed original 'Chapel-Auditorium' and 'Frame Toilets' buildings

Photos below show the existing buildings on the property. Some were built during the 1950s for a Catholic Church youth camp, but these were modified and made more substantial to become useful for housing and programming eventually for Operation Pedro Pan. Buildings were added in the 1960s including the Gym/Multipurpose Building in 1962, constructed to serve the needs that arose during Operation Pedro Pan, and late-60s buildings added for the Boystown Camp.

1. The Dining Hall, c. 1956, stuccoed in 1965



View from west of south façade.



Canopy/outdoor dining area, kitchen extension, and mid-century dovecote on roof.



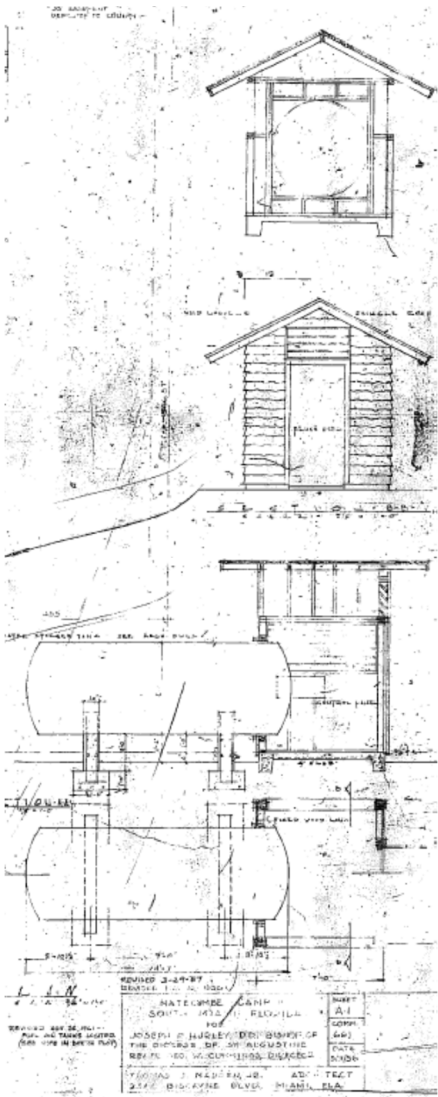
View from the west, including interpretive signage.



Interior of Dining Hall maintenance shed with end of tank through wall.



Dining Hall maintenance shed with tank extension



1956 Permit drawings for shed with protruding tank.



Corner of the building, under the canopy, with wood siding exposed.



View of Dining Hall Building from the north.



View through window into dining area.

2. The Chapel, c. 1956, stuccoed in 1965



View of Chapel and part of Dormitory Number 6 from north.



View of Chapel from south.



Close-up of stained-glass windows.

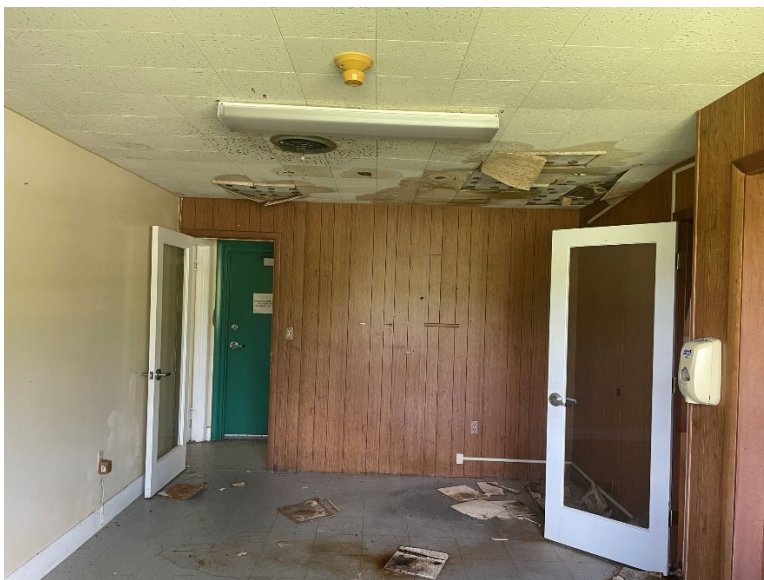
3. Dormitory Number 6, c. 1956, stuccoed in 1965



View of Dormitory Number 6 from south.



View of Dormitory Number 6 from north.



View inside Dormitory Number 6 from window.



Plant growing from inside window frame.

4. Gym/Multipurpose Building, c. 1962



View of Gym/Multipurpose Building from north (photo: <https://rs.locationshub.com/Home/LocationDetail?rsLocationId=029-10000432>).



Close-up view of Gym/Multipurpose Building from east.



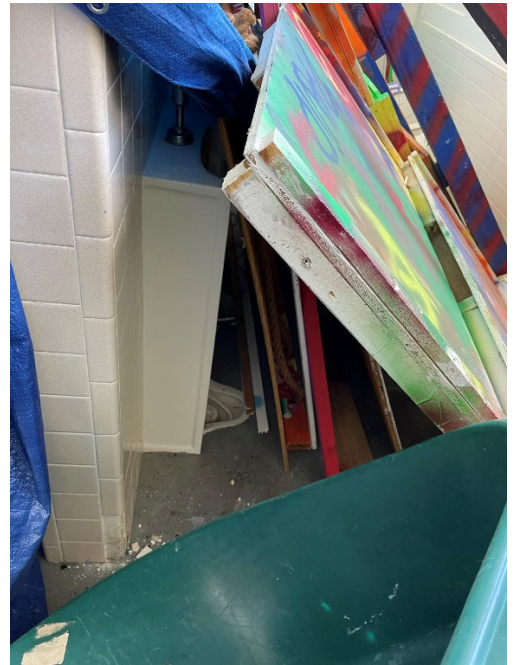
Close-up view of Gym/Multipurpose Building from north.



Indoor view of main gym with arched trusses and tongue and groove roof decking.



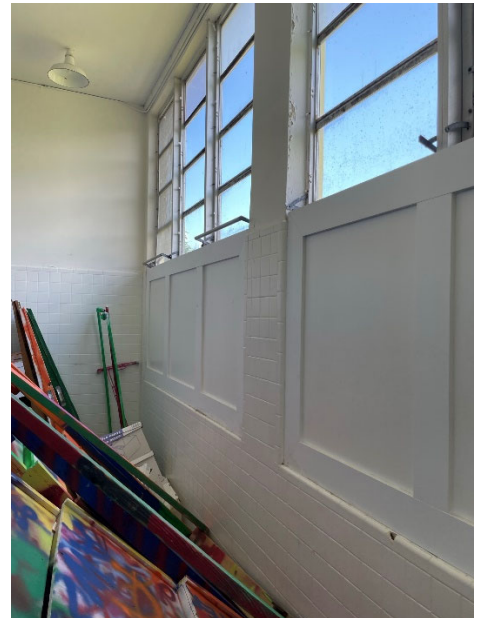
Close-up view of arched trusses, light fixtures, and tongue and groove roof decking.



Close-up view of original bathroom fixtures, under tarp.



Close-up view of arched truss base plates.



Window detail.

BD 38381

~~XXXXX 7-7136~~

September 20, 1962

Rev. Father Bryan G. Walsh, S. T. L.
Executive Director
Catholic Welfare Bureau
393 N. W. First Street
Suite 207
Miami 36, Florida

Dear Father Walsh:

Re: Recreational Building at Camp Matecumbe

This will confirm our oral conversation with your Mr. Sam Morgan, to the effect that the above structure can be occupied on a temporary basis until the final completion of the new sewage disposal system. This approval is on condition that the sanitary facilities in the building will be shut off and not used.

We have received final approval from the Building, Electrical and Mechanical Sections, but have not, of course, received final approval from the Plumbing Section. The Plumbing Section has withheld the final approval because of the lack of connection of the sanitary facilities to the sewage disposal system and because of certain other incomplete work which includes an exchange of a relief valve on the water heater, installation of partitions on the Bradley shower and capping of the flange connections; the latter should be done immediately to prevent the children from throwing rocks into the pipes.

Very truly yours,

METROPOLITAN BARRI COUNTY BUILDING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

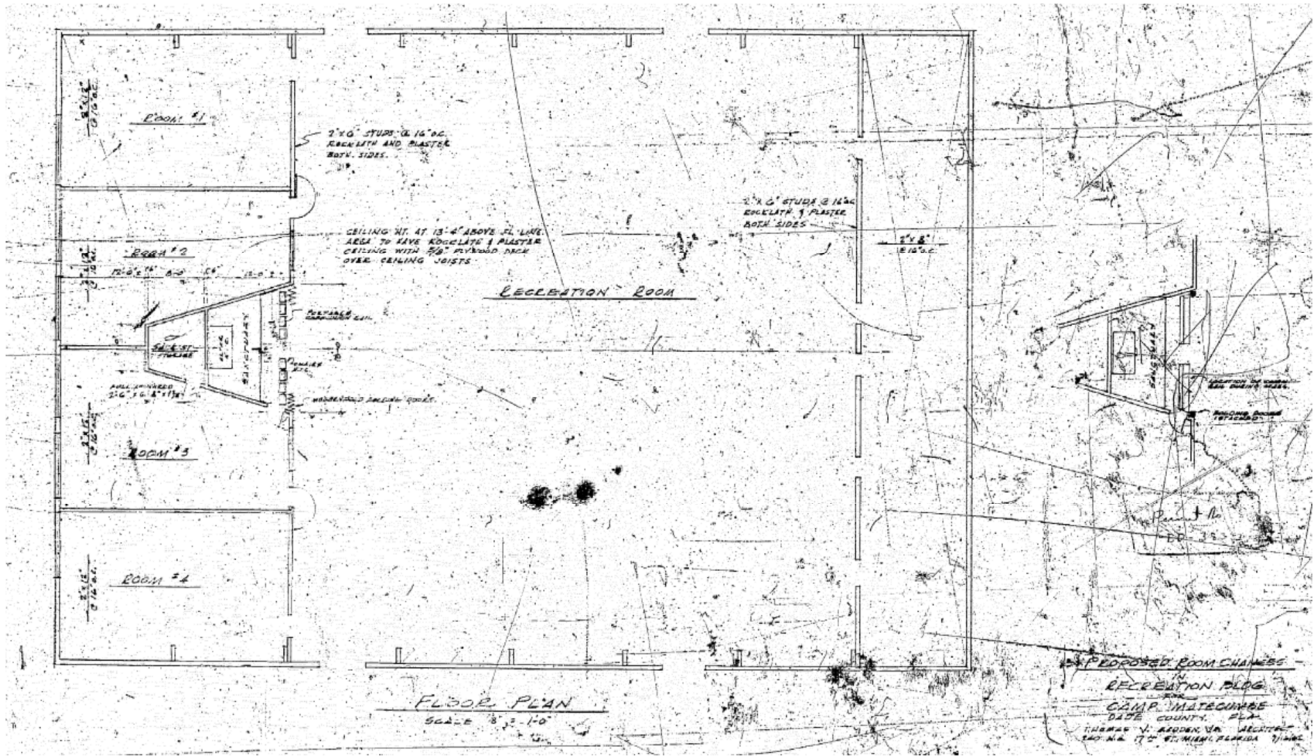
Chester C. Goebriacki
Assistant Director

CCG:ac

ccc

cc: Mike Larway
Charlie Kaufman
Howard Ruck
Cook

1962 letter during construction authorizing temporary occupancy until permanent sewerage system is completed.



Floorplan with building permits from 1962

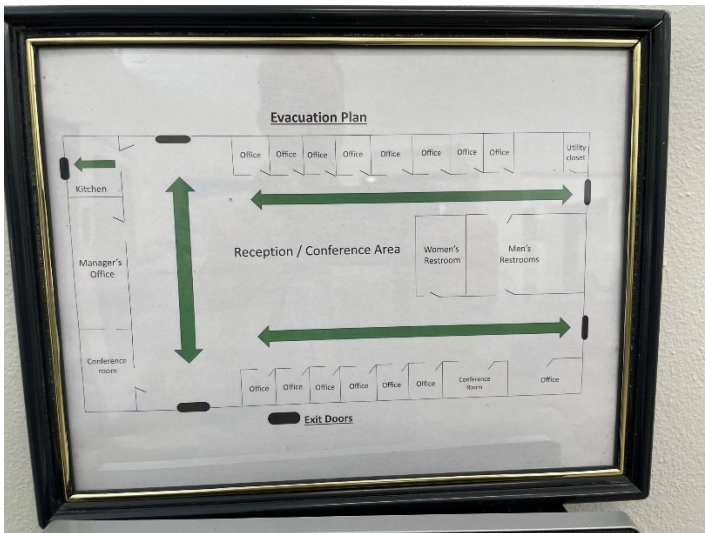
5. Boystown Dormitories, c. 1967-1968 (twin buildings)



View of a Boystown Dormitory from south.



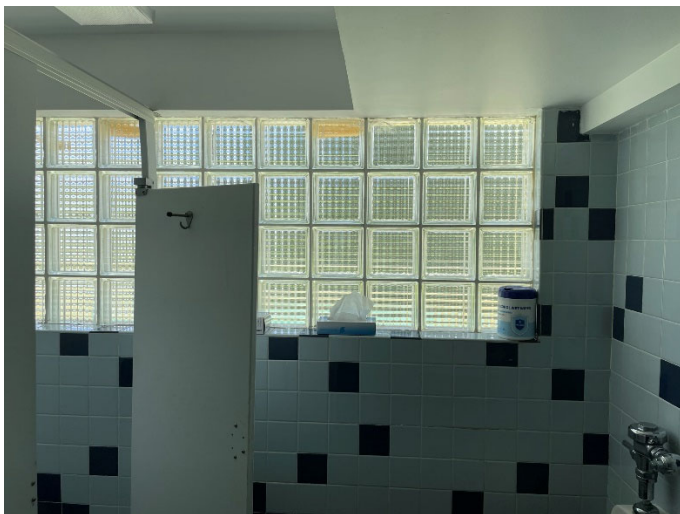
Close-up view of Boystown Dormitory dentil molding.



Current (as an office) Floorplan of Boystown Dormitory showing sleeping room configuration.



Indoor view of Boystown Dormitory with trusswork for former courtyard area.



Bathroom tile and glass block window

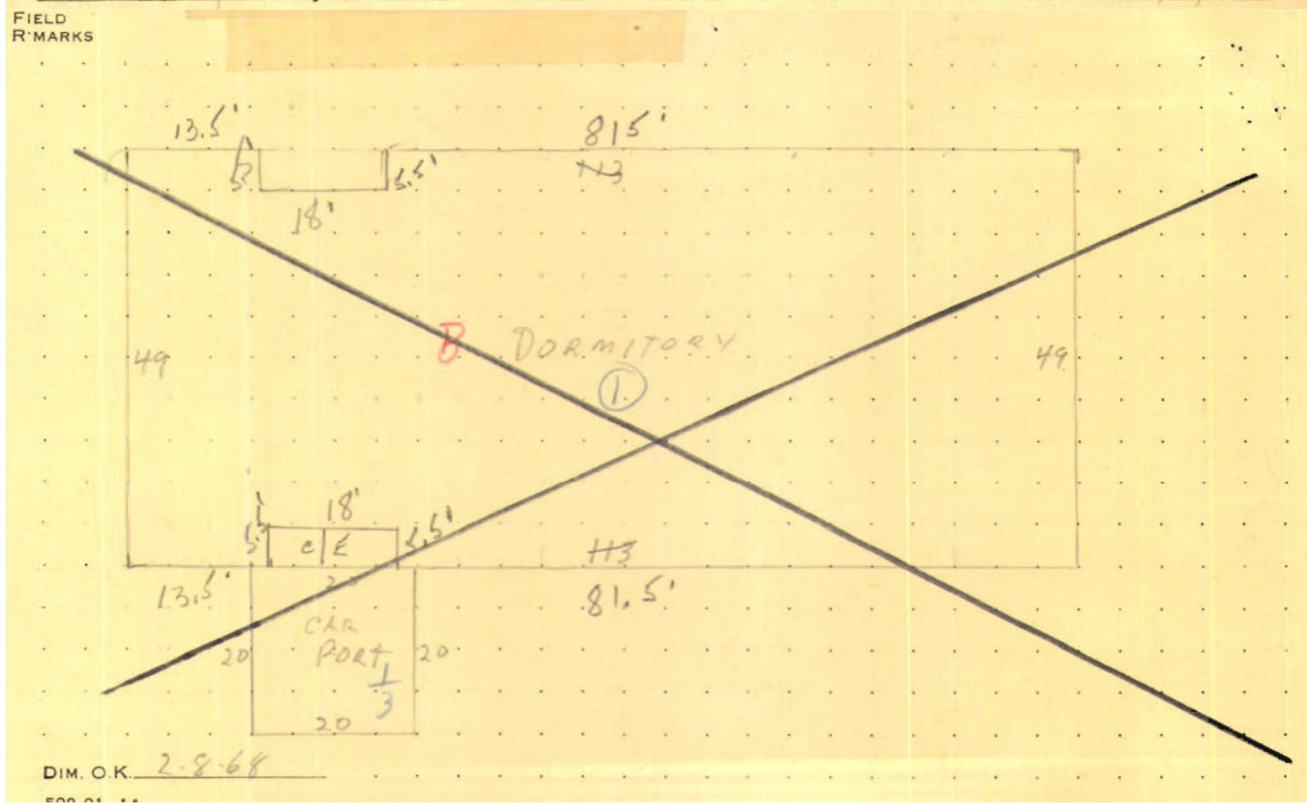
DATE PERMIT 2-5-68 AMT. PERMIT 5170 PERMIT NO. 92676 DATE CK'D 2-8-68 DEPUTY HEFLY

FOLIO 30-5910-00-015 NAME _____

LEGAL DESC'PT. SE 1/4 of 10-55 1/2 Sec 14-455' 8 1/2 x 240' ADDRESS OF PROP. Boystown

SCHOOL DIST. _____ PB _____ MAIL ADDRESS 11400 - SW 137 Ave

BUILDINGS	A	B	C	OPERATORS		YR.	LAND	IMPR.	TOTAL	REMARKS
				FOLIO	PLATES					
								X		
										100% - 68
TYPE BLDG.	<u>B. Dormitory</u>									
MATERIAL	<u>CBS</u>		<u>50</u>							
STORIES	<u>1</u>		<u>X 122</u>							
FOUND.	<u>FTD</u>									
FLOORS	<u>2nd flr</u>									
BED ROOMS	<u>20</u>									
BATHS	<u>10</u>									
ROOF	<u>Coal Tar</u>									
SASH	<u>1 1/2" x 4 1/2"</u>									
PLUMBING	<u>GOOD</u>									
ELECTRIC	<u>GOOD</u>									
A/C-HEAT	<u>CENTRAL TON</u>									
PROJ./CUST.	<u>CUST</u>		<u>Blackboard</u>							
MISC'L	<u>PL/ELF</u>									

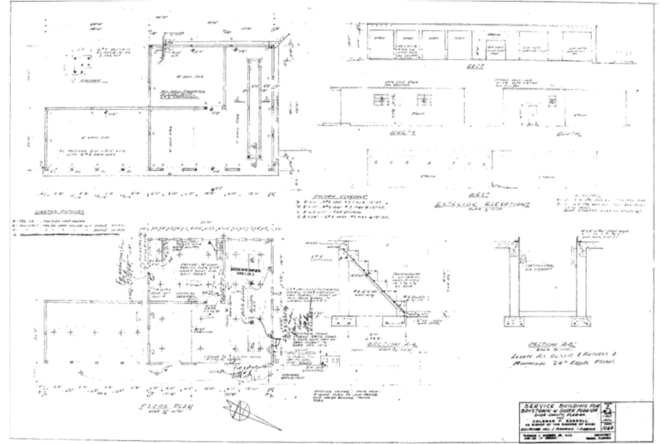


Inspection documents from 1968 completion of one of the Boystown Dormitories

6. Maintenance Building, c. 1965



View of Maintenance Building from west (photo: <https://rs.locationshub.com/Home/LocationDetail?rsLocationId=029-10000432>).



1965 Building Permit drawings for the Maintenance Building

7. Boystown Memorial, c. 1969



View of Boystown Memorial from east.



Boystown Memorial Shrine Marker



View of Boystown Memorial statue.

III. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE & CONTEXT

The primary period of significance is when the property was used for Operation Pedro Pan as a Transit Camp from 1961 through 1964. This program is significant to the history of the Miami Metropolitan Area and the Cuban Diaspora in the United States. During that time, the camp had additional buildings that have been demolished and had a swimming pool, pond, and ball courts that do not now remain. The property was subsequently used for the Boystown Program in the late 1960s continuing into the late 1990s, when additional buildings and a memorial were added. This is also a period of significance, where children's lives were impacted through that program's education and enrichment efforts.

Operation Pedro Pan

Cuba gained its independence from Spain and from United States occupation in 1902, after the Spanish-American War, but its subsequent history included the challenges of government corruption, dictatorship rule, uprisings, undue foreign influence, and periods of general political instability. Fulgencio Batista was a key figure in the country's 20th Century history, having been politically influential in the 1930s and having held a term as elected president from 1940 to 1944. He ran for president again in 1952 and was defeated, but he staged a bloodless coup and took control of the country that year. His regime lasted until the end of 1958 when he fled the country because of a revolution led by Fidel Castro.²

In 1959 Fidel Castro took the title of "premier." Within two years of his assuming power, the general population was becoming aware that he was moving Cuba in the direction of becoming a socialist dictatorship.

Castro had come to power with the support of most Cuban city dwellers on the basis of his promises to restore the 1940 constitution, create an honest administration, reinstate full civil and political liberties, and undertake moderate reforms. But once established as Cuba's leader he began to pursue more radical policies: Cuba's private commerce and industry were nationalized; sweeping land reforms were instituted; and American businesses and agricultural estates were expropriated.³

During his early years he also limited press activity and took over public and parochial schools. Many middle-class and working-class parents became concerned, as schools under Castro started to indoctrinate children with socialist ideologies. Military drills accompanied classes.⁴ Furthermore, rumors began to spread that the Cuban Government had plans to remove children from their parents for training and indoctrination at rural camps. This did occur in some cases.⁵

Cubans remembered the Spanish Civil War and the 5,000 children who were sent to the Soviet Union for indoctrination—and feared the same thing would happen in their country. Parents reasonably feared losing the "patria potestad," the parents' right and duty to raise their children, a reality that eventually came to pass in Castro's Cuba."⁶

Starting in 1960, some parents began sending their children to live with friends or relatives in the United States, especially in Miami. Many assumed that the Castro regime would be short-lived, and the children would be able to return home once another new government was in place. Some of those relatives in Miami struggled to care for their charges, and in a now-famous case, relatives of a child named Pedro Martinez asked the Catholic Church for assistance supporting him. This led to Father Bryan O. Walsh, director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau in Miami, to start arranging foster care for the influx of Cuban children that suddenly started arriving that year. He feared that in Cuba children of Castro's political enemies would be harassed and many would experience Communist

indoctrination.⁷ Children and parents in Cuba at the time began to experience anti-Catholic harassment, see farms get taken from their owners, and witness other signs of the start of communism.⁸



Father Walsh with boys from Operation Pedro Pan.⁹

From 1960 through 1964, Father Walsh helped over 14,000 Cuban children who had been sent to the United States by their parents. He coordinated with airlines, school leaders in Cuba, and the US Government to operate a network providing immigration approval, transportation, education, foster care, family reunification, and temporary housing for these children and their parents.¹⁰

The name of the program, Operation Pedro Pan, came from the press. There had been a voluntary news blackout about the program when it began, generally to keep Castro unaware that the Catholic Church and US Government were coordinating the removal of large numbers of children from the country. The Cleveland Plain Dealer broke the blackout in 1962 with a news story, and the Miami Herald also published an account about the refugee children soon after. Its reporter, Gene Miller, first used the term “Peter Pan” in his story title.¹¹

'Peter Pan' Means Real Life to Some Kids

By GENE MILLER
Special Staff Writer

Raggedy Ann doll. The boy
across the aisle in the airplane
plans to sleepably at the 11
card tied to his shirtbutton.

They're in the sky — Operation
Peter Pan.
Maybe it should be Operation
Pedro Pan.

Castro's Red Cuba. Their par-
ents are 1,000 miles away. For
16 months—the 14th hole—
case of Miami quietly helped
release 7,778 children — all
fleeing Cuba without their

parents. Nearly 8,000 have
flown north.
The Communist are certain
to call it child-smuggling.

A third boy, a good-looking
kid with curly hair and big
flappy ears, was also 10 years
old.
He was a veteran of the
group. He'd been in Miami since
early February — in one of
"Dade's" transit camps.

At a stopover in Atlanta, an
airline clerk noticed her plight
and bought her first pair
of garters, fancy black ones
with red roses. She was de-
lighted.

There were two older chil-
dren, a boy, 17, and his sister,
13. Only last Monday they
slipped into this country.
At Atlanta, they transferred
to a flight to Newark, N.J.,
where they were to meet an
aunt and uncle.



New Life in a New Land Awaits Sweet Sleep
... and she'll protect her 'baby' always



The Coldness Fades Away
... under Evansville's warmth

At 9:05 a.m. Thursday, five
Cuban children walked up the
steel ramp to a plane at Mi-
ami International Airport.

At 6:42 p.m. Tuesday, after
delays because of hazy
weather, they departed here
at Evansville, an industrial
town of Westland at a big
bend in the Ohio River.

"Snow" asked an excited
13-year-old boy, as he walked
into a bitter 23-degree rain.

Will call the boy Jose One;
his brother, 10 years old, Jose
Two. The Jones furiously chewed
bubble gum, a commodity
rare indeed in Cuba these
days.

They hadn't seen the inside
of a schoolhouse since Castro
closed the schools last year.

That was one reason their
parents called them aside one
day last month and quietly
told them they'd have to
leave.

Another reason was that
they were hungry. And another
was that they were afraid
the Communists might send
them to Russia.

"I cried just a little," Jose
One confessed. "Mother cried
much."

Neither boy were an over-
coat. They didn't own any. As
in the fashion of children flee-
ing from Cuba they wore
shirts, lots of shirts. Jose One
wore four.

The record this month for
120 children: Delta Airlines has
flown north in nine shirts. That
boy also wore three pair of
pants. Jose Two clutched his
most valuable worldly posses-
sion: sack of marbles — 203
marbles.

Police Station Thief Was Boy

SMITHFIELD, R.I.—(AP)—
Police said a 15-year-old boy
has admitted sneaking into the
police station, stealing a mon-
ey bag containing \$653, and
spending all of it on a "good
time," including purchase of a
second-hand car and a pistol.
The money, receipts from the
Route 44 drive-in theater, had
been left with police for safe
keeping Dec. 10.

Socialite's Will Is Overthrown

A Miami Beach socialite's
will that left \$30,000 to her
young attorney-escort was over-
thrown by District Court of
Stafford's law partner, Richard
C. Carter Jr., as executor, the
appellate judge said there was
preponderant evidence of undue
influence and mental inca-
pacity.
The will, dated Jan. 31, 1961,
was filed the day after she died,
March 21, 1961.

Police Trucks Are 'Arrested'

Miami Beach Police Lt. Cal
Schuler, his fatigue work-out
dripping wet, described waves
that broke up to his waist on
Collins Ave.
Two police pickup trucks
stalled on the road, he said,
with surf up to their axles
and waves breaking on their
windshields.
"They didn't even stall dur-
ing Hurricane Donna."

Besides four thin dresses,
the older one wore her first
pair of nylon, and she shyly
seemed to mind that they kept
slipping.
At a stopover in Atlanta, an
airline clerk noticed her plight
and bought her first pair
of garters, fancy black ones
with red roses. She was de-
lighted.
Through an interpreter, the
girls told about a cousin still
in jail. He was captured in the
Bay of Pigs invasion almost a
year ago.
The 10-year-old clung to her
little Raggedy Ann doll named
Lola. Lola took the trip calm-
ly.
The girls know only two
words in English. The words
are: "Thank you."

SALE of BARS!

Miami's most complete bar and accessory center!

79.50

Bar Stools
from \$35

Beautifully
crafted
of solid
wood.
Any
appoint-
ment. Size 48" x
18" x 30" or
36" high.

Open Fri. &
Sat. 10-9
Free Parking

the Ritz Plastic Bar

Val. 119.50

CARIBBEAN INTERIORS—6665 Biscayne Blvd.—PL 8-2577

Miami News Article from March 9, 1962, where the term 'Pedro Pan' was introduced.¹²

In December of 1960, James Baker, Headmaster of the Ruston Academy in Havana had met Father Walsh to get help relocating students who were children of people active in the Anti-Castro underground. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba broke in early 1961, but the US State Department initiated a visa waiver program for Cuban children at that time, and it allowed the Father Walsh's Catholic Welfare Bureau to notify parents in Cuba of the waiver and to allow children to travel by commercial flight to Miami. The Bureau also made arrangements with airlines, particularly Pan American, to get seats for these children on flights.¹³ Parents in Cuba learned of the program through secret networks of schools, including that of James Baker; clergy; and other informal channels. In the United States, as the number of arriving children increased, the program took over several Catholic Church-owned facilities in greater Miami consisting of group homes and transit camps including a complex of apartment buildings in Florida City, known as the "Florida City Camp;" two youth camps, Camp Kendall and Camp Matecumbe; and residential children's group homes in various neighborhoods. The program also arranged foster housing for children around Miami but also throughout the United States. It operated additional transit camps in other states, as well.¹⁴ The program used facilities in over 100 cities in 38 states. "Seventy percent of Pedro Panes were boys over the age of 12, so special group homes staffed by Cuban houseparents for adolescent boys were opened in several cities, including Wilmington, Delaware; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Lincoln, Nebraska; and the Florida cities of Jacksonville, Orlando and Miami."¹⁵

Camp Matecumbe was used as a transit camp to provide temporary housing for older boys while the Bureau sought foster homes or relatives to provide more long-term housing.

Located on a wooded 165-acre tract at SW 137 Avenue 120 Street in Southwest Dade, it was formerly a summer youth camp, owned and operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Miami. It was occupied by 17 and 18-year-old Pedro Pan boys in July 1961, when Camp Kendall became overcrowded. Initially, the

camp only had 60 boys housed in a sizeable barracks-style building furnished with bunk beds. But as the number of Pedro Pans arriving in the U.S. continued to increase, the Florida Department of Public Welfare approved the use of army tents. The camp became a facility for teenage boys at large. Subsequently, a building project began, and with time the use of tents was gradually phased out.

For approximately two years, the School Department of the Diocese of Miami, jointly with De La Salle Brothers, operated an onsite high school, Matecumbe High School. Camp Matecumbe was closed in October 1964, when Roman Catholic Bishop Coleman F. Carroll of the Diocese of Miami ordered all shelters and transit stations for teenage boys, including long-term placement facilities St. Raphael's Hall and Jesuit Boys Home, be consolidated at Camp Opa-Locka. Like Camp Kendall, Camp Matecumbe was an Operation Pedro Pan transit station. In November 2003, Camp Matecumbe was purchased from the Archdiocese of Miami by Dade County's Parks and Recreation Department, using Pedro Pan alumni's grants and funds, and turned into a public park.¹⁶

Operation Pedro Pan's evacuations from Cuba ended abruptly in October 1962, when the Cuban missile crisis put a halt to commercial air service between Havana and the United States.¹⁷ Most children in Operation Pedro Pan remained separated from their parents until the Camarioca Boatlift in 1965, when Castro sought to reduce opposition in the country by allowing Cubans with relatives in the United States to emigrate by boat.¹⁸ This allowed many parents to leave Cuba and rejoin their children.

While the program was operated by a branch of the Catholic Church, and most of the children were Catholic, there were several hundred children of other religions, mostly Jewish and Protestant.¹⁹ The children from Operation Pedro Pan grew into adulthood, and many became successful professionals. A non-profit group, Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., created by them continues to operate today and provides benevolent assistance to children in need.²⁰

Operation Pedro Pan has also touched the lives of parents who sent their children away. Latin Grammy nominee Angela Alvarez is the subject of a new documentary about her experience as a young mother in the 1960s who sent her four children away through the program.²¹ Some of her songs are about that experience. As a 95-year-old, she was nominated for the Latin Grammy's Best New Artist category in 2022.

Boystown

After Camp Matecumbe was no longer needed for Operation Pedro Pan, the facility continued its role in providing a place for children in need. The Catholic Welfare Bureau converted the camp into a facility for the Boystown program, which had started in 1917 in Omaha, Nebraska by Father Edward J. Flanigan, and had been made famous in a 1938 movie starring Spencer Tracy.²² The Miami location was part of a nationwide program expansion.

From the mid-1960s onward, Boystown operated as a facility for children who experienced abuse or abandonment. It was "not an orphanage, nor a place for delinquent boys—although some have been in trouble with authorities." It used training and mentoring programs to help its children address their challenges. The facilities grew under Boystown, and two new dormitories were added to Camp Matecumbe in 1967-1968. The program continues to operate in South Florida, in West Palm Beach and in Pompano Beach. Boystown ceased operations at Camp Matecumbe in the late 1990s/early 2000s. The Catholic Church sold the property after.



Fr. James Henry In Chapel



Boys Work Crews Spread Sand On Grounds



Friendly, Informal Atmosphere At Meal Times

Miami News Photo by Bill Tyler

Boystown — Kids Find Somebody Cares

All the world has heard of Boys Town, founded by a priest whose motto was: "There is no such thing as a bad boy." That was in Nebraska, 49 years ago. The priest was Fr. Edward Joseph Flanagan, whose faith brought new life and hope to tens of thousands of boys. Fr. Flanagan died in 1948. His work goes on, not only in Nebraska. The Miami News visited Boystown in South Dade.

"I'll tell you about how I came here," said the boy, his dark eyes staring at the interviewers and then glancing out the window at the tall pines around Boystown, South Florida.

"I was born in Coral Gables. I was the first of three children. My father was a milkman, my mother was a bookkeeper. He worked . . . she worked . . . and I never saw much of them.

"They had a neighbor woman take care of us kids. She liked my brother and sister, but not me. I used to take off from school sometimes, you know, skip classes and go fishing behind Robert King High Park near the railroad tracks.

"Well . . . my mother and father got divorced. Both of them remarried and I went to live with my father and step-mother. She didn't like us from the beginning. I ran away four times.

"Once, I got as far as five miles out on the Trail before the highway patrol brought me home. After the fourth time I was sent to Youth Hall for a month. It was terrible, a real bad place . . .

"Then a priest from St. Dominic's came to see me. Then, the Catholic Welfare Bureau people brought me out here to see if I'd like it . . .

"I've been here six months. I'd like to stay. There's lots of friendship, you know. They treat you like a human being."

THAT 14-YEAR-old boy's story, multiplied by 30, presents a big part of the picture at Boystown, which was chartered two years ago under the inspiration and direction of Bishop Coleman F. Carroll of the Miami Catholic Diocese.



There Are No Gates, Locks, Fences Here

One boy's mother is dead and his father is a drunk. Another boy's mother is in a mental institution and his father is senile.

Another boy's mother simply abandoned him. To this day, he keeps some of his mother's clothing hanging in his closet at Boystown. He doesn't want to part with it.

"At first, when they're abandoned, they feel bitter against their parents," said Fr. James Henry, the 31-year-old priest who was the first Catholic chaplain assigned to the state penal institution at Okeechobee before he took over as director of Boystown.

"They feel no one loves them. But later, after a long process of getting the bitterness out, through counseling and dai-

ly living, the attitude changes."

Boystown is not an orphanage, nor a place for delinquent boys — although some have been in trouble with the authorities.

Right now there are 20 Catholic boys, nine Protestants and one Jewish boy. They came to Boystown from all classes.

Located on 153 acres at SW 137th Avenue and 114th Street, Boystown was built on the site of Camp Matecumbe, a former summer camp for children. The site had also been used to shelter Cuban refugees of all ages in Army tents while they awaited resettlement.

The 30 boys, aged 12 to 17, soon will be joined by 30 more as two new dormitories are opened within the next six months. But there is a waiting list of 180, referred by welfare agencies, social workers, probation officers and the courts.

It is the only place in the South patterned after the Boys Town, Neb., of the famous Father Flanagan, who was portrayed in motion pictures by Pat O'Brien. One boy entering Boys Town was portrayed by Mickey Rooney. His counterpart as a grinning, freckle-faced, devilish youngster can be found today at Boystown of South Florida.

"The kids get to you," said Fr. Henry, who earned degrees in education and psychology and was ordained in 1960 in his native Dubuque, Iowa.

"They become part of you, because you have to be both father and mother to them. You've got to be on their side on the one hand and still back up the counselors when they hand out extra work or camping (policing up the area, Army style) for discipline. There is no physical punishment here."

The folks who planned Boystown didn't plan to keep it like a rustic summer camp, but like a genuine home. The dormitories are air-conditioned and heated and the beds are comfortable and the chow — as well as the chores — is designed to put muscle on growing boys.

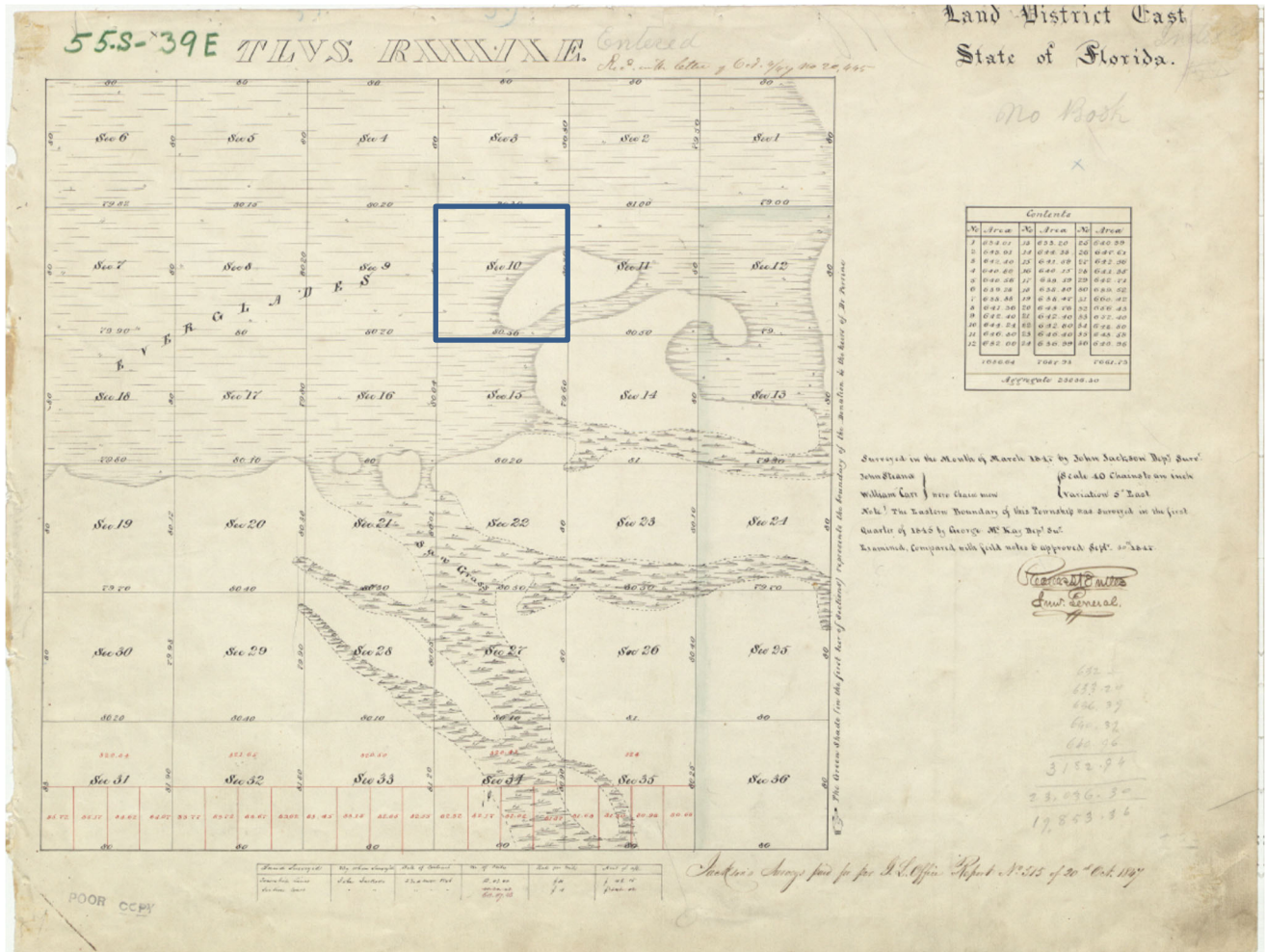
All the entrance doors bear signs: "Please Wipe Feet Before Entering."

And the gates, said Fr. Henry, are always open. Despite the kind of pressure that squeezes most homes: The budget. (TONORROW: Faith, fun and money at Boystown.)

Miami News Article from August 8, 1966, describing Boystown at the Camp Matecumbe site. 23

History of the Camp Matecumbe

Historically, the land where Camp Matecumbe sits today is the land of the Tequesta and Seminole people. After forced removal of the Indigenous Peoples, the land was in part portioned off by the United States government to various homesteaders through a series of land grants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. No land grant information is available for the particular area. This specific site is unplatted.



1847 Survey Map of Township 55, Range 39, Section 10 by Raymond A. Butler

Camp Matecumbe was named after the only Indigenous Peoples in South Florida evangelized by Spanish missionaries.²⁴ This property was originally developed as a summer camp for the Catholic Church, Diocese of St. Augustine,²⁵ and the first buildings were constructed circa 1956, according to building permits. From 1961 through 1964, the site was used by the Diocese of Miami Catholic Welfare Bureau's Cuban Children's Program, and the property became a home, with recreation and education facilities, for children in Operation Pedro Pan, a program for relocating children out of Cuba during the rise of the Castro regime. Building permits were issued for renovations and modifications in 1961 for the use of the site's buildings as "quarters-Refugee Camp." Operation Pedro Pan used several sites around Miami-Dade County for housing, educating, and administering the needs of the children. Other facilities were in Florida City and at another camp in Kendall, now Kendall Indian Hammocks Park, and at various houses around the County. Camp Matecumbe was used as a 'Transitional Camp' where children who were not immediately met by relatives upon arrival in the United States were placed until they could be provided with foster housing or housed with relatives somewhere in the United States.

By 1964 housing needs for the Pedro Pan program had diminished, and this camp was converted into a Boystown facility, also operated by the Catholic Church, as a home and camp for children with various needs. Additional dormitories (cottages) for that program were added in 1967-1968.²⁶ Boystown relocated from the site in 2003, and the majority of the property was then conveyed to the County, but the easternmost portion of the site was separated and platted in 2004 for a residential and commercial development.

This site was rural until the 1970s, and all access was from SW 137 Avenue/Lindgren Road, as SW 120 Street was not yet improved. When the camp began use for Operation Pedro Pan, the existing c. 1956 cabins and shelters were used, but because of growing capacity needs, additional buildings were added in 1962, including the large central Gym/Multipurpose Building. This building was used for sleeping areas, classrooms, and as a gymnasium.

The original buildings were built in the 1950s. Initially there were four buildings plus a toilet structure built in c.1956, a large chapel/hall, two dormitories, and a dining hall. The buildings were wood frame and were first built as open-sided shelters. These buildings were enclosed with wood siding c.1958. A small maintenance shed with a protruding liquid storage tank was also part of the c.1956 construction, and all of these buildings were covered in stucco over c.1965. The original large chapel and the toilet structure were demolished, and one of the dormitories was converted into the new chapel. The site also had a swimming pool that has since been removed.

The site has a few buildings that were added in the 1960s. These include the previously mentioned Gym/Multipurpose Building constructed c.1962 and a long residential building that did not survive. There are additional existing buildings on the site built during the Boystown period including a garage/maintenance building constructed c.1965 and two large buildings at the rear of the property that are now used as offices. They were built c.1967-1968 and were used as dormitories. The site also has a memorial from the Boystown Period, with the earliest plaques dating to 1969. A lake was dug during the 1960s for stormwater management, but that has since been removed.²⁷

The surviving buildings relevant to the Pedro Pan period are the Gym/Multipurpose Building, the Dining Hall, Dormitory 6, and the Chapel. All of these buildings retain period elements including visible structural components and hardware. The Chapel and the Recreation buildings are in good condition, but the others have signs of severe decay.

The surviving buildings relevant to the Boystown period are the c.1967-1968 Boystown dormitories and the c.1969 Boystown memorial. These buildings are also notable and retain period features such as dentil moldings, post-and-beam structural elements, and original bathrooms.

In looking at the overall site beyond its buildings, the layout, spatial organization, circulation patterns, and vegetation patterns appear to be relatively unchanged, even with the swimming pool and pond having been removed. They continue to convey a sense of the historic character of Camp Matecumbe and contribute to the integrity and sense of place.

Since acquiring the site, Miami-Dade County Department of Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces has undertaken projects to interpret the historic significance of Camp Matecumbe. They installed a series of interpretive markers that inform visitors to the park of its history. In 2016, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners adopted resolution No. R-188-16, dedicating Camp Matecumbe as the County's official exhibition site for Operation Pedro Pan, which included identifying funds for a permanent exhibit on site and for the development and preservation of the park.

In 2017 the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolutions R-159-17 and R-398-17 by the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners. The Resolutions directed the Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation to survey and identify resources related to Brigade 2506 and the Cold War and to make "recommendations for appropriate recognition of such sites, including possible historical recognition." The Office of Historic Preservation retained a historic preservation architect to complete the Thematic Research Study for Cold War Resources in Miami-Dade County, which recommended that Camp Matecumbe be designated as a Miami-Dade County Historic Site.²⁸



Dining Hall c. 1956, photographed in 1962 showing wood siding, trees in vicinity, and children from Operation Pedro Pan.²⁹



Gym/multipurpose building c. 1962 photographed in 1962 showing window pattern that continues today and showing a ceremony including Pedro Pan Children.³⁰



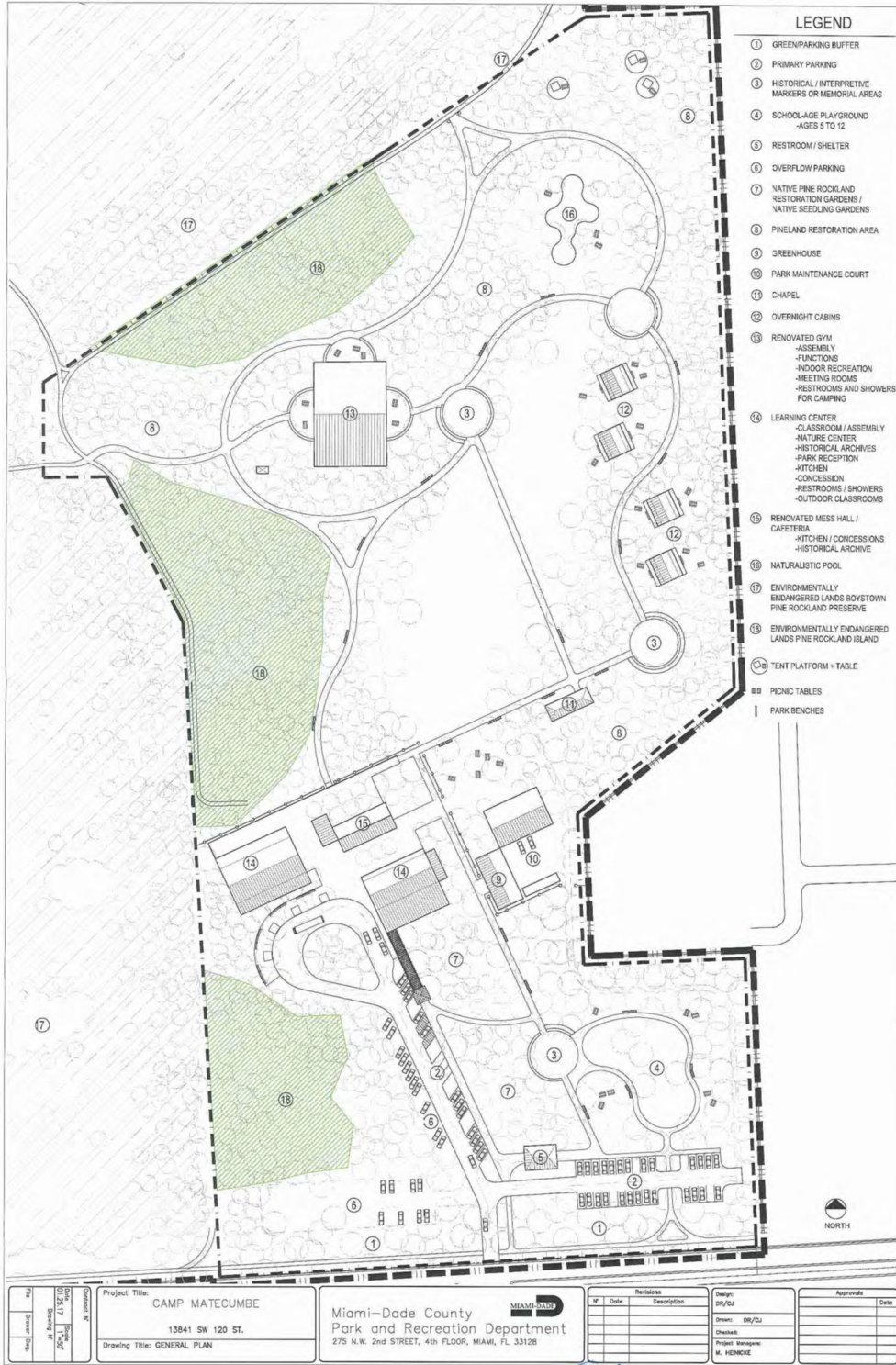
Gym/multipurpose building c. 1962 photograph date unknown showing a group of Pedro Pan teenagers in front of building with a temporary structure in the foreground³¹

IV. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Sec. 16A-10(4) regarding the designation process requires that, to the extent applicable, designation reports shall address the following:

- any projected, proposed, or existing public improvements and developmental or renewal plans;
- any private plans for development or redevelopment of the property or area under consideration, including any new architecture or features proposed for the same location;
- any applicable neighborhood or community revitalization goals, plans, or objectives, including any existing policies in the local government's comprehensive plan or other planning initiatives pertaining to, among other things, economic development, transportation, and housing;
- any impacts on the availability of affordable or workforce housing in the community due to historic designation or proposed redevelopment of the property or area under consideration; and
- the possible adaptive use of the property after designation, based on applicable local government zoning regulations and other building code requirements.

Camp Matecumbe was purchased by Miami-Dade County for parkland in 2004. It is now used as a park and recreation space with passive and programmed activities. In 2018, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution R-14-18 approving a General Plan for future redevelopment of the park site. The General Plan depicts existing and additional approved amenities and buildings for future development at Camp Matecumbe. The General Plan was developed in a manner that celebrates the historic heritage of Operation Pedro Pan and also in a manner that respects the context of the adjacent Boystown Pineland Preserve, while also supporting the community's educational, recreational, and ecological needs. The plan depicts approved park elements, including parking improvements; renovations of the chapel, gym/multipurpose building, and dining building; interpretative and educational signage; playgrounds; restrooms; concessions; a new swimming pool; environmental preservation; and other features. The layout, placement, and configuration of elements, placement, size, and circulation is to be developed. Regarding the gym/multipurpose building, the plan renovates and reorganizes the office and restroom/shower spaces for increased spatial efficiency. The project also replaces the existing windows with new impact resistant windows and replaces the existing roof with a new standing seam metal roof to be consistent with the existing buildings on the campus. The Chapel has this roof already. The site plan includes the removal of the Dormitory Number 6, the maintenance building, and the Boystown Dormitories. Prior to removal, the buildings will be recorded through photographic documentation, measured drawings, and preparation of a Florida Master Site File form.



General plan from 2018 Miami-Dade County Resolution R-14-18 depicting the approved elements for the future development of the site.

V. PROPERTY VULNERABILITY

As Miami-Dade County works to address the impending challenges of increased flooding, sea level rise, and more frequent severe weather events, it becomes increasingly important to assess the vulnerability of historic and cultural resources to these threats. Utilizing the matrix developed in association with the County's Historic Site Vulnerability Assessment, historic properties can be evaluated for their level of vulnerability. Factors related to a property's flood zone, elevation, storm surge, sea level rise, king tides, and proximity to water are a sampling of the environmental factors that are included in determining a site's vulnerability. Property use is also included.

Utilizing information in the County's Flooding Vulnerability GIS-based mapping system, 13841 SW 120 Street is in both the X flood zone, an area of minimal flood hazard risk, and in the AH flood zone, an area with moderate to high flooding risk with shallow flooding with average depths of between one and three feet. The site has a parcel mean elevation of 7.88 feet. All buildings except the Boystown Dormitories are in the X flood zone with minimal flood hazard risk. The property does not show vulnerability to storm surge inundation or king tide flooding, nor does it have predicted vulnerability to sea level rise. As such, the locations of the buildings from the period of significance are not highly vulnerable. Standard mitigation options for protecting the property from storm events are recommended.

VI. FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE

At the time of designation, no Florida Master Site Form exists for this property, and a new form will need to be submitted to the Florida Division of Historical Resources.

VII. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The Camp Matecumbe is significant under the following criteria, as set forth in Section 16A-10 of the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Ordinance:

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.

Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(b), Be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

VIII. STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATE 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) and as detailed in *Resilient Rehab: A Guide for Historic Buildings in Miami-Dade County*. However, ordinary maintenance and minor repairs/alterations will not be subject to review.

The Office of Historic Preservation recognizes that the County's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces (PROS) has plans to continue improving Camp Matecumbe, as indicated in the adopted County Resolution R-14-18, to further meet their programmatic needs, which includes ongoing interpretation of the site's historic significance. It is the intent of this designation to recognize the significance of Camp Matecumbe in relation to Miami-Dade County's cultural, social, and political history while also balancing the current use of the site as a public park. The designation does not prohibit PROS from carrying out improvements to the site. It is understood

that PROS shall file an administrative COA application for the planned window and roof replacement at the gym/multipurpose building and for the demolition of Dormitory Number 6, the maintenance building, and the Boystown Dormitories. A demolition of those structures will be conditioned upon PROS undertaking documentation prior to demolition, as more fully described in Section IV. Proposed Development.

Construction of new park features will also require a COA. It is important to state that the historic significance of Camp Matecumbe is inherently tied to the site itself. The overall site provided the setting for the significant historic association with Pedro Pan. Further, the residents' daily engagement with the site, the various elements throughout the landscape, and the natural environment is related to the overall significance of the site. While various individual features have been altered or lost over time, such as the swimming pool, overall, the site continues to convey the historic sense of place. Ongoing use of the site as a public park and introduction of various park features is compatible with the historic character and designation of the site. While new construction and renovation will require a COA, the designation will not prohibit PROS from carrying out improvements at the park in the future.

IX. CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

In spite of changes to individual buildings, overall Camp Matecumbe retains a high degree of historic integrity. The overall site is significant and defines the historic character of Camp Matecumbe. The park circulation features spatial layout, and Boystown memorial are contributing features. All exterior elevations of the buildings are contributing features, including the roofs. The interior of the Gym/Multipurpose also contributes to the historic character and integrity of the site, specifically the wooden arched trusses and tongue and groove wood ceiling. Any proposed alterations to the features that contribute to the significance and integrity of Camp Matecumbe require submittal of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Aside from the interior of the Gym/Multipurpose building, the interior spaces of Camp Matecumbe have not been evaluated for purposes of this designation. As such, alterations to these interior spaces would not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

X. STAFF EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION

Staff has performed site visits to document Camp Matecumbe and researched the historic construction of the buildings including building permits and property appraiser records. Staff has determined that Camp Matecumbe, located at 12381 SW 120 Street, meets the objective criteria for designation. This evaluation is based on the historic context and integrity of the site. Camp Matecumbe is a site where children experiencing distress went through a significant experience in shaping their lives. Operation Pedro Pan was a major element in the formation of modern Metropolitan Miami, and the children's experience at this location is an important chapter in the history of the Cold War for the United States. Camp Matecumbe remains today as an important site associated with the cultural, social, and political history of Miami-Dade County, particularly our Cuban community. It provides a significant touchpoint for a notable era and event in Cuban history and the impact that the political environment in Cuba had on the cultural and social development of the Miami-Dade County community and also has significance for its history in the late-1960s when children from distressed households went through the Boystown program there. It is also significant for its association with Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh, for whom the portion of SW 120 Street near the property was renamed, and Bishop Coleman F. Carroll. Based on its historic context, and the application of objective criteria for designation, Staff recommends that procedures be initiated to consider Camp Matecumbe for designation as a Miami-Dade County Historic Site.

XI. ENDNOTES

- ¹ Barry University, Operation Pedro Pan / Cuban Children's Program: Historical Overview, <https://equides.barry.edu/c.php?g=754119&p=5403148>, accessed October 5, 2022
- ² History.com Editors, August 19, 2021, "Cuban Revolution," <https://www.history.com/topics/latin-america/cuban-revolution>, accessed October 6, 2022
- ³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, "Fidel Castro: Political Leader of Cuba," <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fidel-Castro>, accessed October 10, 2022
- ⁴ Gonenon10, November 30, 2010, The History of Operation Pedro Pan online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpakURg3ij8>, accessed October 5, 2022
- ⁵ Gonenon10, November 30, 2010, The History of Operation Pedro Pan online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpakURg3ij8>, accessed October 5, 2022
- ⁶ Scaperlanda, Maria Ruiz, May 22, 2020, Franciscan Media, "No Greater Love: Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/no-greater-love-operation-pedro-pan>, Accessed October 2, 2022
- ⁷ Blackmore, Erin, September 14, 2020, "The Secret Cold War Program that Airlifted Cuban Kids to the US—Without Their Parents," <https://www.history.com/news/cold-war-refugee-operation-peter-pan-cuba-eisenhower>, accessed October 7, 2022
- ⁸ Bell, Maya, December 10, 1995, Orlando Sentinel, "Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1995-12-10-9512081267-story.html>, accessed 10/13/22
- ⁹ Gonenon10, November 30, 2010, The History of Operation Pedro Pan online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpakURg3ij8>, accessed October 5, 2022
- ¹⁰ Bell, Maya, December 10, 1995, Orlando Sentinel, "Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1995-12-10-9512081267-story.html>, accessed 10/13/22
- ¹¹ Bell, Maya, December 10, 1995, Orlando Sentinel, "Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1995-12-10-9512081267-story.html>, accessed 10/13/22
- ¹² Miller, Gene, Miami Herald, "Peter Pan means Real Life for Some Kids," chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://assets.website-files.com/6007cfcbaf10177efef718a2/600a0f6c2c7fcb84884a8d1c_Article-Gene-Miller-Herald_0.pdf, accessed October 13, 2022
- ¹³ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, "Operation Pedro Pan: A Leap for the Sake of Freedom Instructional Resources Created by the Division of Social Sciences and Life Skills in cooperation with Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc. Historic Committee and Miami-Dade County Public Schools," chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://briefings.dadeschools.net/files/67343_Operation_Pedro_Pan_Instructional_Resource_Packet-Final_Version.pdf, accessed October 6, 2022
- ¹⁴ Gonenon10, November 30, 2010, The History of Operation Pedro Pan online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpakURg3ij8>, accessed October 5, 2022
- ¹⁵ Scaperlanda, Maria Ruiz, May 22, 2020, Franciscan Media, "No Greater Love: Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/no-greater-love-operation-pedro-pan>, Accessed October 2, 2022
- ¹⁶ Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, "Camp Matecumbe," <https://www.pedropan.org/locations/camp-matecumbe>, accessed September 15, 2022
- ¹⁷ Scaperlanda, Maria Ruiz, May 22, 2020, Franciscan Media, "No Greater Love: Operation Pedro Pan," <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/no-greater-love-operation-pedro-pan>, Accessed October 2, 2022

¹⁸ The University of Miami Libraries: Cuban Heritage Collection, “Exodus from Cuba,” <https://scholar.library.miami.edu/digital/exhibits/show/freedom/exodus>, accessed October 1, 2022

¹⁹ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, “Operation Pedro Pan: A Leap for the Sake of Freedom Instructional Resources Created by the Division of Social Sciences and Life Skills in cooperation with Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc. Historic Committee and Miami-Dade County Public Schools,” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://briefings.dadeschools.net/files/67343_Operation_Pedro_Pan_Instructional_Resource_Packet_Final_Version.pdf, accessed October 6, 2022

²⁰ Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, “About Us,” <https://www.pedropan.org/about-us>, accessed September 15, 2022

²¹ Busch, Anita, September 13, 2018, Deadline.com, “‘Miss Angela’, Feature Docu About 90-Year-Old Cuban-American Songwriter, Sets Andy Garcia To Narrate – Update,” <https://deadline.com/2018/09/buena-vista-social-club-musicians-join-documentary-90-year-old-cuban-american-songwriter-angela-alvarez-1202405776/>

²² Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, “Our History,” <https://www.boystown.org/about/our-history/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed September 15, 2022

²³ “Boystown—Kids Find Somebody Cares,” The Miami News, August 8, 1966, https://www.newspapers.com/image/301963023/?clipping_id=21517869&fcfToken=eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiIsInR5cCI6IkpXVCJ9.eyJmcmVILXZpZXctaWQiOiJwMTk2MzAyMywiaWF0IjoxNjY1NzA0MTMyLCJleHAiOiJlE2NjU3OTA1MzJ9.XpZlwiRfM_kQwEYV3s4Ymy3OJgp mDnil8oW1jCbNxB0, downloaded October 13, 2022.

²⁴ Yager, Richard, September 24, 2014, “\$15 Million Needed to Turn Camp Matecumbe into Park,” Miami Community News, <https://communitynewspapers.com/pinecrest-tribune/15-million-needed-turn-camp-matecumbe-park/>, accessed October 1, 2022 ,

²⁵ Walsh, Monsignor Bryan O., April 21, 1999, “Brief History of Camp Matecumbe/Boystown of South Florida,” <https://dloc.com/AA00053009/00001/pdf>, accessed October 3, 2022

²⁶ Walsh, Monsignor Bryan O., April 21, 1999, “Brief History of Camp Matecumbe/Boystown of South Florida,” <https://dloc.com/AA00053009/00001/pdf>, accessed October 3, 2022

²⁷ Walsh, Monsignor Bryan O., April 21, 1999, “Brief History of Camp Matecumbe/Boystown of South Florida,” <https://dloc.com/AA00053009/00001/pdf>, accessed October 3, 2022

²⁸ Avdakov, Steven and Debbie Griffin, Heritage Architectural Associates, August 5, 2019, “Thematic Research Study of Cold War Resources for Miami-Dade County,” Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation.

²⁹ Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, “Camp Matecumbe,” <https://www.pedropan.org/locations/camp-matecumbe>, accessed September 15, 2022

³⁰ Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, “Camp Matecumbe,” <https://www.pedropan.org/locations/camp-matecumbe>, accessed September 15, 2022

³¹ Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2021, “Camp Matecumbe,” <https://www.pedropan.org/locations/camp-matecumbe>, accessed September 15, 2022