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# HALISSEE HALL

1475 N.W. 12 AVENUE

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## Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE  
HALISSEE HAL L  
1475 N.W. 12 AVENUE  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton, 10/15/82  
Historic Preservation Consultant Date

Accepted by Charles Edwin Chase 10/26/82  
Chairman, Heritage Conservation Board Date

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. 9558

Date 01/13/83

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**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Historic Name:

Halissee Hall

Current Name:

Halissee Hall  
Sewell Building

Location:

1475 N.W. 12 Avenue  
Miami, Florida

Present Owner:

University of Miami  
Real Estate Office  
P.O. Box 248106  
Coral Gables, Florida 33124

Present Occupant:

University of Miami School of Medicine  
1600 N.W. 10 Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33136

Present Use:

Offices

Present Zoning District:

R-C

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Boundary Description of HC Zoning Overlay District:

The west 230 feet of the north 180 feet of Tract A of the plat of CARDIAC HOSPITAL SUBDIVISION, as recorded in Plat Book 75 at Page 46, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida

HC Zoning Classification:

Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

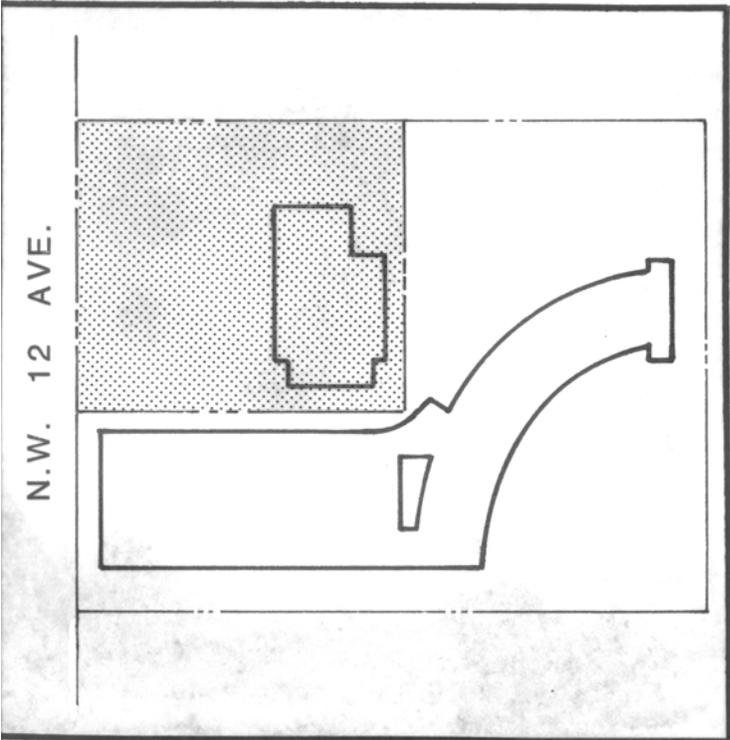
Architectural Significance	- 1
Historical Significance	- 1
Contextural Significance	- 3

# HALISSEE HALL

1475 N.W. 12 AVENUE



  
location



  
site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Statement of Significance:

Halissee Hall is significant for its association with John Sewell, one of Miami's foremost pioneer citizens and the City's third major. The building is also an excellent local example of Neo-Classical style architecture and is particularly noteworthy for the excellence of its design, craftsmanship and detailing.

John Sewell came to Miami in 1896 to supervise the excavation work on Flagler's Royal Palm Hotel. Sewell who also ran a mercantile business with his brother, served as county commissioner between 1901 and 1907 and was elected Miami's third major in 1903. He is also credited with promoting the use of "Miami stone" (oolitic limestone) as a building material and with discovering the use of the stone in its crushed form for roads and pavements. Sewell is well-recognized for his contribution to the growth and progress of early Miami.

Halissee Hall is an excellent example of the adaptation of Neo-Classical style architecture to the South Florida environment, particularly evident in the use of rough-cut oolitic limestone as a building material. The building is architecturally noteworthy for its monumental portico with Corinthian columns, unusual French doors and windows, balustraded deck, and tall paneled chimneys.

### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

Halissee Hall is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

Halissee Hall is the most important structure associated with John Sewell, one of Miami's most influential pioneer citizens.

2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

Halissee Hall is an excellent example of the application of Neo-Classical style architecture to the South Florida environment. The building is particularly noteworthy for its monumental portico with Corinthian columns, balustraded deck, and tall paneled chimneys.

3. Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

Halissee Hall is particularly significant for its use of native, rough-cut, oolitic limestone on a large, elaborate residence. The outstanding craftsmanship of the house is also apparent in the monumental portico, Corinthian columns, balustraded deck, and arched French doors and windows.

### III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

1912-1918

Architect:

Unknown

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Historical Context:

John Sewell was born in 1867 in Elbert County, Georgia, and moved with his parents to Florida when he was 19 years old. Sewell served as foreman and superintendent for the Florida East Coast Railway during the construction of the line from Jacksonville to Miami and later joined the hotel construction department. After helping to construct The Royal Poinciana and The Breakers at Palm Beach, Sewell moved to Miami in 1896 to work on the Royal Palm Hotel . Sewell remained in the employ of the Florida East Coast Railway until 1899, when he left to concentrate his efforts on the mercantile establishment jointly owned with this brother.

After serving in local politics, Sewell began the construction of his house in 1912. Built on the highest point in the city, the house was named " Halissee Hall" from the Seminole word meaning "New Moon."

Sewell died in 1938, and Halissee Hall was sold to the City of Miami. The building is now part of the Jackson Memorial Hospital Complex and serves as administrative offices for the University of Miami Medical School.

#### **IV. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

##### Description of Building:

Halissee Hall is a two-and-one-half story rectangular structure with five bays across the south (front) façade. The building is topped with a truncated hipped roof and is constructed of oolitic limestone quarried on the site. The 18 inch thick exterior walls are faced with random-coursed and roughly cut limestone.

The main feature of the building is a two story portico extending across the entire length of the south façade. The portico features six fluted columns in the Composite order and a flat roof defined by a masonry balustrade. This balustrade is echoed by a similar balustraded deck on the roof.

The main entrance is located in the center bay of the south façade and consists of a double door topped by a fan light with tracery. Above the main entrance on the second story is a pair of French doors which open onto a wrought iron balcony. Two pairs of French doors flank the main entrance on the first story. These doors feature segmental arch transoms with diamond patterned mullions and are topped with smooth-dressed segmented arch lintels.

The majority of windows throughout the building are nine over one double hung sash and are also topped with smooth-dressed arched lintels. The roof is punctuated with three dormer windows on each façade. These dormers contain casement windows and are topped with pedimented gable roofs. The roof is also pierced with tall paneled chimneys on the east, west and north facades.

The building features a tow tier porch on the east façade and a large two-and-one-half story wing on the north façade. Halissee Hall has been relatively unaltered since its completion in 1918.

##### Description of Site:

Halissee Hall was originally located on a 14 acre tract of land on the highest point in Miami. Today, the building is located in the middle of the Jackson Memorial Hospital Complex and is surrounded by modern hospital buildings and parking lots. As a result, the entire context of the building has been drastically altered, particularly by the construction of the National Children's Cardiac Hospital directly in front of the main façade. The west façade of the building now faces N.W. 12 Avenue, and the south (front) façade, with its monumental portico, is practically obscured from view.



Halissee Hall  
1475 N.W. 12 Avenue  
East and South facades  
1982

## V. PLANNING CONTEXT

### Present Trends and Conditions:

Halissee Hall is currently occupied by the University of Miami Medical School, and the building has been preserved and well-maintained, despite redevelopment pressure for hospital expansion during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The National Children's Cardiac Hospital, however, was constructed immediately in front of the main façade of Halissee Hall, thus drastically altering the integrity of the building's setting. This situation points up the need for design review for new construction on the site of a historic structure.

The Civic Center Metrorail Station is presently under construction adjacent to the northwest boundary of Halissee Hall. The Station Area Design and Development Plan calls for the development of a pedestrian bus transfer plaza in what is now the parking lot west of the building.

### Conservation Objectives:

The implementation of the above described plaza should be encouraged, and funding should be sought through UMTA for an intermodal transfer point. Such a plaza would enhance the setting of Halissee Hall. Within the plaza, an interpretive description of the site should be considered to explain the significance of the building. These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the current zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property.

## VI. HC Zoning Elements

### Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include Halissee Hall and that portion of land immediately surrounding the building. This includes the parking lot to the north and east of the building. The National Children's Cardiac Hospital south of Halissee Hall is visually unrelated to the historic site and is not included within the zoning district.

### Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

All four façades of Halissee Hall shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

### Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to the requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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