
MARY BRICKELL PARK

501 BRICKELL AVENUE

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
MARY BRICKELL PARK
AS AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AND HISTORIC SITE

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Passed and
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Resolution No. HEPB-R-2013-008

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Brickell Park

Current Name:

Brickell Park Archaeological Site and Historic Site / Mary Brickell Park

Location:

501 Brickell Avenue
Miami, Florida 33131

Present Owner:

City of Miami Parks and Recreation
444 SW 2nd Avenue, 8th Floor
Miami, Florida 33130-1910

Present Use:

Public Park

Zoning District:

CS- Civic Space Zone

Tax Folio Number:

01-0210-000-1040

Legal Description:

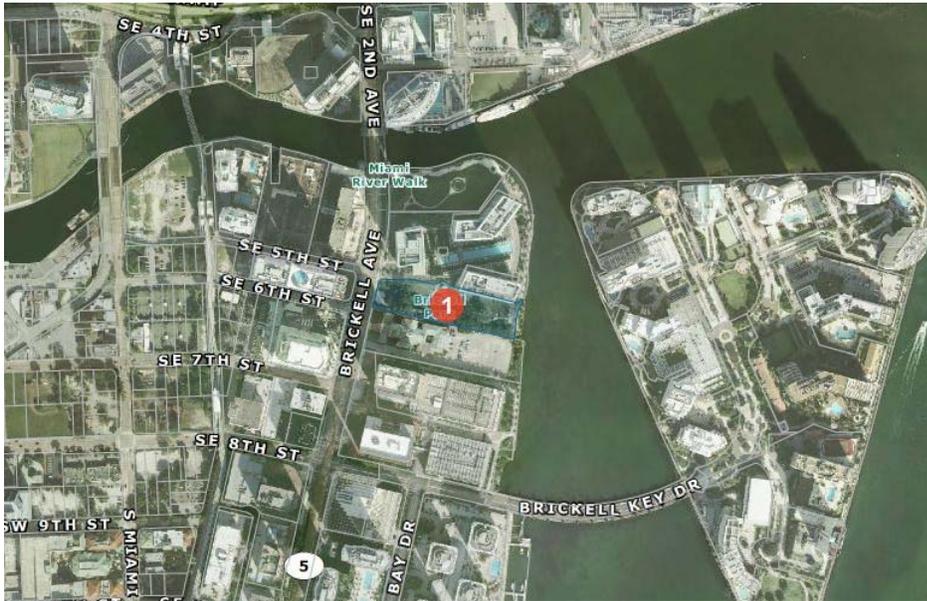
BRICKELL POINT PB 8-93 BEG X OF N/L OF SE 5TH ST & ELY/L OF BRICKELL AVE TH S 76
DEG E 233.52FT NELY AD 116.46FT S 76 DEG E 321.10FT S 05 DEG W

Classification:

Archaeological Site and Historic Site

BRICKELL PARK

501 BRICKELL AVENUE



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Period of Significance

Tequesta Village and Cemetery: 500 BC – AD 750 (Glades I and Glades II Periods)
Brickell Mausoleum: 1924

Architect

Brickell Mausoleum: Thurmond Monument Company

Builder/Contractor

Unknown

Statement of Significance

Brickell Park is significant on a local level because of its association with both the Tequesta Indians and the pioneer Brickell family. It is also one of Miami's earliest parks, having been deeded to the City by the Brickell family in 1924.

Brickell Park encompasses a pre-Columbian cemetery and village that dates from between ca. 500 BC and AD 750. This site is recorded as a part of 8DA12, also known as the Brickell Point site and Miami Midden 2, of which the Miami Circle is part. The site represents part of the principal village and political center of the Tequesta who occupied an area that extended from the Florida Keys north to the current Broward/Palm Beach county line. The midden is characterized by the presence of food remains (animal bone, shell), pottery, and other artifacts.

Brickell Park is significant due to the presence of human remains associated with the Tequesta Indians. It is also significant because it meets Criterion D of the National Register of Historic Places. It represents a Native American cultural site and contains archaeological material that has yielded and has the potential to yield important information regarding Tequesta culture and lifeways.

The Brickell Mausoleum is significant because of its association with one of the most important pioneer families in the history of Miami. The Mausoleum is the only surviving structure that is directly connected to the Brickell family and is situated on land they once owned. At one time the Brickell Mausoleum held the remains of William Brickell, his wife Mary Brickell, and their daughter Edith Brickell. Prior to the 1950s the human remains within the Mausoleum and at least one grave associated with the Brickell family occurred on the parcel. All of these historic burials were relocated to Woodlawn Cemetery.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features

The Brickell Mausoleum is the only contributing structure on the site. Contributing landscape features include the remaining hammock trees, such as gumbo limbo, oak, and ficus.

Criteria for Designation

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

The Brickell Mausoleum is significant as the only surviving structure associated with the Brickell family. The Brickells were among Miami's most important pioneer citizens and were influential in the early settlement of Miami. Brickell Park was part of the Brickell holdings from December 1870 until August 19, 1924, when Maude, Belle and Alice Brickell deeded the park to the City Of Miami.

8. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Brickell Park incorporates the remains of a Tequesta village and cemetery, as well as a historic archaeological component related to the Brickell family. The archaeological remains contain data that could provide significant insight into the daily life of the Tequesta as well as the Brickell family.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

Setting

Brickell Park is located in Section 38 of Township 54 South, Range 42 East in Miami-Dade County. It is a narrow parcel bounded on the west by Brickell Avenue, on the north by the Icon-Brickell parcel, on the east by Biscayne Bay, and on the south by the First Presbyterian Church. The park comprises 2.29 acres, with a length of 700 feet east-west and a width that varies from 140 to 170 feet north-south.

Description

Prior to development, the subject parcel was part of the Brickell Hammock, a mixed forest of tropical trees and oaks that once extended from the mouth of the Miami River southward to Coconut Grove, a distance of about 4 miles. Today, only a few remnant hammock trees, such as gumbo limbo, still remain in the park. The parcel's proximity to the confluence of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay made it an ideal location for pre-contact and historic activity. Natural soils are very shallow on the site, most of which are characterized by loamy organic sediments that are typical of hammocks. These sediments vary from 5 to 10 cm deep to as deep as 50 cm within solution holes, and are situated on top of oolitic limestone bedrock that is occasionally exposed on the surface strata. In much of the park prehistoric cultural material is associated with a dark organic sediment. In some areas, particularly in the park's eastern third, natural soils are capped by crushed rock fill. The bedrock is Miami oolitic limestone, a substrate that characterizes the Atlantic Coastal Ridge, a natural formation extending north and south along the southeastern coast of Florida. Elevations range from up to 14+ feet near Brickell Avenue to as low as 2 feet near the bay shore. The eastern slope of the ridge is a prominent feature within the park.

Prehistory

The Tequesta were the prehistoric indigenous people of southeastern Florida. Their principal town was at the mouth of the Miami River. Their territory reached north to Boca Raton Inlet, south to Key West, and west into the Everglades. They were well adapted to living in the South Florida environment that was largely wetlands prior to modern drainage. Transportation was by dugout canoe, and daily trips between the Everglades and Biscayne Bay using the Miami River, the Little River, and the Oleta River were common. Other sites were situated along Biscayne Bay including the area within and adjacent to 1814 Brickell Avenue.

Tequesta subsistence was based on hunting, gathering, and extensive fishing strategies that were adapted to a mosaic of wetland and aquatic environments graduating from the fresh water sloughs of the Everglades to coastal estuaries,

coral reefs, and deep sea. Lacking native sources of hard stone, the Tequesta fashioned tools from shell, bone, limestone, and wood. They crafted pottery bowls from local clays. They also carved ornaments and ritual objects of high artistic value from shell and bone.

The Tequesta and their ancestors thrived in south Florida from as early as 5000 years ago until the 18th century. After European contact in the 16th century their population began to decline, depleted first by exotic diseases and later by slave raids. In 1763, with only 300 survivors, the last of the Tequesta fled to Cuba.

History

William Brickell was born in Stuebenville, Ohio, in 1825 and moved to Miami in 1871. In 1870, he paid \$3000 for a large parcel of land, formerly awarded as a land grant when Florida was a Spanish colony. The Hagan (or Egan) Grant extended from the south shore of the Miami River to Coconut Grove. On the river Brickell built his home and a trading post, which eventually became a post office. He became prosperous trading with the Seminole Indians, and his land became the center of Miami's community activity. William Brickell and Julia Tuttle were responsible for luring Henry M. Flagler president of the Florida East Coast railway, to Miami. The arrival of the railroad established a vital link with northern Florida and the rest of the Eastern Seaboard. Mary Brickell, William's wife, handled the family real estate holdings, and their daughter Alice served as postmistress.

The Brickell Park parcel is located directly south of the location of the Brickell house. Aside from the mausoleum there is no archaeological or historical evidence that any structures were located in the park parcel, apart from a chicken coop shown on a 1921-1924 Sanborn map. It is recorded that the Brickells had a cemetery in the "center of the tract" (of their land). Several members of the Brickell family, including Mary Brickell, were buried on the property.

After Mary Brickell's death, her daughter, Maude, moved the family burials from the garden of the home to a mausoleum that was built in an easement on the north boundary of the park. The mausoleum was reached by a private drive aligned with Southeast 5th Street (Figure 2). On August 19, 1924 Maude, Belle, and Alice Brickell deeded the five acres of land surrounding the mausoleum to the City of Miami for park use with the intent that the city would "bear all the expense of improving and beautifying said Brickell Park and burial ground." In 1948, however, Maude E. Brickell complained that the nights were too noisy at the mausoleum location and moved the remains of the family members to Woodlawn Cemetery.

Archaeology

Several archaeological studies have been conducted at Brickell Park. John Goggin originally recorded the Brickell Point site as Miami Midden #2 (8DA12) in his inventory of south Florida sites. He noted that the old Brickell home had been built on "...a low black dirt midden with some shell," referring to an area that is currently the Icon-Brickell property. In 1958 and 1959, Dan Laxson, an avocational

archaeologist, conducted excavations within the same property. Laxson's excavations uncovered extensive black dirt midden deposits that he assigned site number 8DA98. In 1961 Bob Carr and Mark Greene excavated a single trench about 2 meters long at a location now occupied by Icon-Brickell and made collections beneath the Brickell house. During this testing, Carr and Greene observed a stratum of white sand associated with a large number of human teeth and artifacts suggesting that a burial mound once might have been located at the site of the house. Carr also collected a large quantity of glass beads and other artifacts associated with the Brickell Trading Post and the Brickell family.

A field assessment conducted under the Dade County Historic Survey, completed in 1980, indicates that prehistoric occupation of the area extended along Biscayne Bay for at least 1000 feet south of the Miami River. Field visits by Carr indicated that the deepest midden deposits were located at Brickell Point.

Salvage excavations were conducted in 1981 by the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Division prior to construction of a Holiday Inn (later the Sheraton Hotel) located immediately north of Brickell Park. The project uncovered well-preserved black dirt midden deposits averaging 50 cm in depth. Six radiocarbon dates were obtained from the lower midden deposits, indicating that the site was occupied during the Glades I and Glades II Periods (AD 200 – 750). Carr also collected a large quantity of artifacts associated with the Brickell Trading Post.

In 1998, the Miami Circle was discovered at Brickell Point during monitoring of the demolition of the Brickell Apartments, located 1000 feet north of Brickell Park and the mausoleum. The Circle consists of holes and basins carved or cut into the Miami oolitic limestone that forms the local bedrock. The Circle represents the footprint of a pre-Columbian structure. Black earth midden deposits occur stratigraphically over and within the cut holes that make up the Circle. Artifacts found during excavations are typical of the Glades Area, but a number of exotic items, such as basaltic celts and galena, have also been recovered. Since 1998, additional research elsewhere on the Circle parcel has revealed intact black earth midden and similar collections of holes cut through the limestone bedrock. The discovery of this significant site led to its public acquisition by the State of Florida and Miami-Dade County.

In 2001 the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy conducted an archaeological assessment of Brickell Park as part of the due diligence process for the potential development of the parcel. Midden depth was mapped using a series of test holes dug across the park. The assessment resulted in the identification of a significant prehistoric Tequesta cemetery containing graves associated with the 8DA12 village site. Previous investigations of other parts of the site, specifically at the Miami Circle, revealed only a few fragments of human bones and teeth, reinforcing the conclusion that the site's cemetery was located south of the Miami Circle in what is now Brickell Park. It is likely that the Tequesta cemetery dates from 500 BC to AD 750 based on the overall site chronology. No historic graves were encountered, although rumors persist that at least one Brickell family member or other historic graves may still be located within the park. A single

historic trash pit that dates from circa 1900 that may be associated with the Brickell family was documented.

In 2005 the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy conducted salvage excavations after the demolition of the Holiday Inn and prior to the construction of the Icon-Brickell building. The excavations extended southward up to 25 feet into the park because a driveway and easement that separated the Holiday Inn and the park was included in the development. Those excavations resulted in the recovery of human remains representing 13 individuals, and thousands of artifacts, animal bones, and shells. Cut post holes also were found indicating that wood and thatch houses were built near the shore.

Brickell Mausoleum

The last Brickell home was demolished in 1961, leaving the Brickell Mausoleum as the only surviving structure associated with the Brickell family and their once vast real estate holdings. The erection of a mausoleum on one's property was a rarity in Miami. As such, the Brickell Mausoleum is indicative of the family's ties with their homestead and greater downtown Miami.

The Brickell Mausoleum (Figure 3) was built of granite following the classic form of a Greek temple with four ionic columns. The mausoleum was set in a right-of-way cul-de-sac. The Brickell name appears prominently in relief on the front of the mausoleum—the sole surviving representation of the Brickell homestead. Constructed in 1924, the mausoleum was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in October 1988.

In 1961 when the Brickell house was demolished, the mausoleum was in excellent condition, with its stained-glass windows, bronze art-nouveau door, and two urns flanking the entry stair in place and intact. In the late 1970s the stained glass windows were smashed by vandals. The valuable bronze doors were taken by the City of Miami Parks Department for safekeeping, and the two urns also were removed.

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Trends and Conditions:

When Maude, Belle, and Alice Brickell deeded Brickell Park to the City of Miami, the park deed included a clause that if ever the site were to be used for non-park purposes, the land would revert to the Brickell heirs. However, in 1987, the Commission of the City of Miami adopted resolutions to nullify this clause. The Brickell family countered with a lawsuit against the city to enforce its rights in 1988 (Case Number 88-0230 in the U.S. District Court). A four-part settlement agreement was achieved in 1989 that the site would revert to the Brickells and it would be developed, but that they would, in turn, obtain the property upon which the Miami Circle lies and it would become a park. This was prior to any knowledge of the existence of the Miami Circle. The Brickell family never turned the park over to the city, so the city filed a motion in 1994 to enforce the agreement.

In 1999, the City of Miami voted to put Brickell Park up for sale, with the proceeds divided equally between the City and the Brickell family. However, the discovery of human remains associated with the prehistoric Tequesta halted plans for development of the park and likely will ensure the park remains undeveloped.

A stone historical marker was recently placed in the park under the City's Historic Preservation program.

Conservation Objectives:

The designation of Brickell Park as an archaeological site and historic site will ensure that development of the property will not occur, and that any improvements to and maintenance of the park involving ground-disturbing activities will be subject to review and archaeological documentation. It also will facilitate community awareness about the historic importance of the Brickell Mausoleum and the pre-Columbian Tequesta site, including the cemetery, that are part of archaeological site 8DA12.

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Figure 2. 1925 Hopkins Map showing Brickell Park



Figure 3. Mausoleum façade looking southwest, 2002



Figure 4. Mausoleum looking north during park improvements, 2008.



Figure 5. Mary Brickell Park looking west during park improvements, 2008.