

The Oakland Park Elementary School is the oldest school building in continuous use in Broward.

School may make history books

Council backs request for designation as a historical place

By DARRELL EILAND
Herald Staff Writer

Broward County's oldest school building in continuous use may soon be included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Midge Turpen, administrator of the Broward County Historical Commission and Oakland Park historian, will submit a proposal to the national organization for the Oakland Park Elementary School, which opened Jan. 6, 1926.

"There were other schools in Broward County before that date," Turpen said, "but none of them is still active."

City Council members last week unanimously approved a resolution supporting the proposal.

The building, at 936 NE 33rd St., began filling other functions for the community almost immediately, Turpen said. Within a few months of its opening, the school's auditorium, roofed with massive, pecky cypress beams, sheltered townspeople from the so-called killer hurricane of 1926.

The school was named for the then-unincorporated community of Oakland Park, Turpen said. The nearest incorporated town was Floranada, a development begun in November 1925, by a group of Palm Beach socialites including the former king of

Oakland Park

Greece, the Earl and Countess of Lauderdale, Horace Dodge, Viscount Molesworth, Mrs. Alexander Biddle of Philadelphia and John S. Pillsbury of the flour family.

The city of Oakland Park was developed (partially on lots that the now-defunct Miami Movie Magazine gave away with each subscription) and incorporated in 1929 when Floranada became bankrupt and its 200 townspeople decided to reorganize the community. The vote on the changeover of cities, Turpen said, took place in the school's auditorium.

"The Oakland Park School will be ready Monday and teachers have been procured to care for at least 200 pupils," The Fort Lauderdale Daily News reported on Jan. 3, 1926. Teaching the first six grades at the school would be Mrs. S.H. Sutton, Mildred L. Brown, Jean O. Mitchell, Sallie Long, Mrs. F.L. Huff and Edna Ward, principal, the newspaper said.

The school still maintains its Spanish-style architecture, with a U-shaped design, central courtyard and adjacent auditorium building,

Turpen said. There have been some changes, she said, such as replacement of the original outhouses.

"From 1926 until the present, the building has served a multiplicity of public functions," Turpen said. "For most of two generations, the population primarily consisted of small farmers unable to support municipal structures and cultural centers, the relatively large, architecturally pleasing and centrally located school building nurtured and matured community life in many phases."

It has been used for political debates, as a polling place, as a site for services for new churches, as a center of picnics and community social events and as a hurricane shelter.

But mainly, Turpen said, the building has fulfilled a vital function as a place for educating the young. From 1940 until 1971, Turpen said, the school was headed by Lucile Waters, a Georgia graduate of Oglethorpe University who administered the 100-student school, doubled as a sixth-grade teacher, taught the children to make ceramics, iron silhouettes, hamster cages, woodworking, dolls and fish.

Waters is now retired and living in Buford, Ga.

Oakland Park Elementary Headed For National Register

By Vikki Alexander

The 60 year-old elementary school in the 900 block of NE 33 Street in Oakland Park, was accepted to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places last Friday.

The school was voted on by Florida's National Register Review Board last week, to suggest that the landmark be admitted to the National Register.

According to Oakland Park Historian and Administrator of the county's National Historical Commission Midge Turpin, Oakland Park Elementary is the oldest school in Broward County still in use.

The school opened its doors on January 4, 1926, with five teachers and six classrooms, and an attendance of 200 students, stated Turpin.

Principal of the school Dick Wohlfarth said that they are attempting to make the school look as historical as possible. The only renovation to the original compound was the replacement of the roof and closed in windows to add air-conditioning.

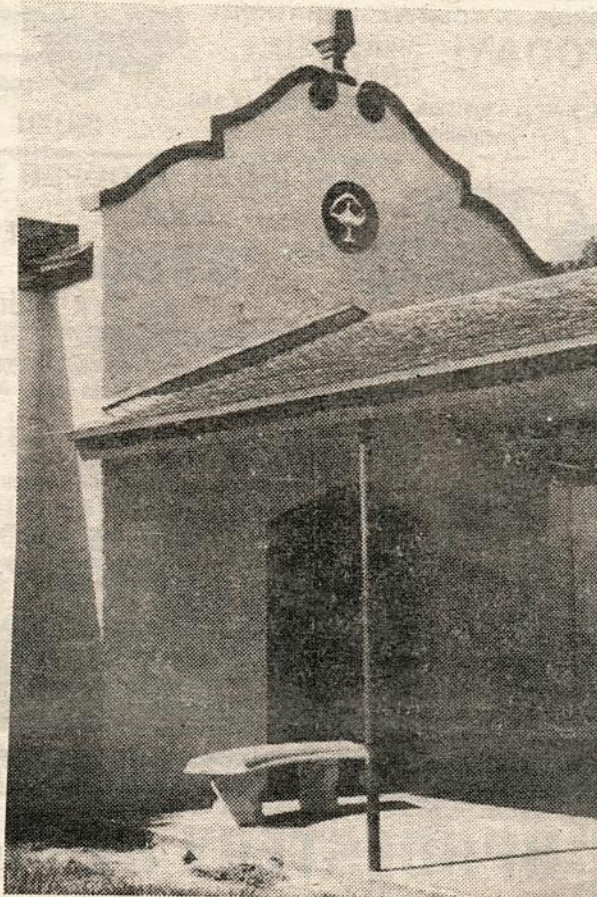
He stated that they would like to take one classroom and restore it with what it might have looked like in 1926, with old time desks,

ceiling fans, and ink wells.

The school--which is Spanish-style architecture--has wrought iron gates, an auditorium that has ceiling beams made of pecky cypress wood, along with the original wooden

floors and seats that were installed 60 years ago.

According to Turpin the proposal will go to Washington for the paperwork before being placed on the register.



OAKLAND PARK ELEMENTARY School auditorium was built 60 years ago as a community theater and later transferred to Oakland Park School for use by elementary students.

Schools targeted for history

Register approval may come this year

By VICKI McCASH
and GARY ENOS
Staff Writers

The 60-year-old Oakland Park Elementary School and 69-year-old Davie Elementary School likely will be added to the National Register of Historic Places by the end of this year.

Florida's National Register Review Board voted on Friday to recommend the old schools for inclusion in the National Register.

A state recommendation all but guarantees that the National Parks Service will approve the sites for the National Register, which contains names of 47,000 historic landmarks across the country, said Patrick Andrus, a historian for the National Register in Washington, D.C.

The National Parks Service acts within 45 days of receiving a formal application from the state, Andrus said.

Oakland Park Elementary, at 936 NE 33rd St., was built in 1927 and is the oldest school in Broward County still used for classes.

Walking into the courtyard of the school is like walking into a bit of Florida's past. The Spanish-style stucco buildings and wide verandas recall many of the first homes and buildings built here.

Midge Turpen, the Oakland Park city historian and administrator of the Broward Historical Commission, has been trying to get the school placed on the register for several years.

The most outstanding feature of Oakland Park Elementary is the vaulted auditorium at the open end of a U-shaped stucco classroom building. A circular building stands in the middle of the courtyard, once an open gazebo over four bowl-shaped porcelain drinking fountains mounted on a concrete basin.

Walled in since the 1960s, the circular building now serves as a storage area and teacher planning room. Turpen said she hopes to raise money to restore the gazebo to its original form.

The auditorium is unchanged. Its pecky cypress beamed ceilings with faintly painted baroque decorations, wood floor, decorative concrete urns and scrolls above doors and windows, and its hinged, wood-seated theater chairs create the feeling of times gone by.

OP school is touted for historical status

By SALLIE JAMES
Staff Writer

OAKLAND PARK — National recognition is being sought for a 60-year-old elementary school that a local historian wants to have placed on the National Register of Historic Places succeeds.

Oakland Park Elementary, 936 NE 33rd St., may be eligible for the honor because it is oldest school in Broward County still being used as a school, said Midge Turpen, administrator of the county's Historical Commission and the Oakland Park city historian.

The school's vaulted auditorium, which has the original wooden floors and pecky cypress ceiling beams, and the concrete-block classrooms have remained intact since the school was built, Turpen said.

"The original school is still as it was. Nothing has been done to it except adding a new roof," Turpen said. "There are other outbuildings — a new office, a library and a kindergarten classroom, but they are not attached to the original building in any way."

Records of the Historical Commission say the school, which had only six classrooms, two bathrooms and an auditorium, opened on Jan. 3, 1926, with about 200 students. Today, the school has 467 students.

The school's Spanish-style architecture, wrought-iron gates and enclosed courtyard have not changed

since the Depression.

The only changes occurred when the tile roof was replaced with a shingled roof and several windows and an outdoor gazebo were closed in, Turpen said.

The school already is listed on the state's master site file of historic places, which is an honorary designation. As with the National Register of Historic Places, such a designation does not guarantee preservation.

Turpen said that she planned to send a six-page application and 62 pictures to the state Division of Archives and to the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C., next week.

"It will be the only school in South Florida that will be on the national list, if it's picked," Turpen said. "The whole thing is unusual — there's not another one around like it."

School principal Dick Wohlfarth said plans have been approved to replace the school's shingled roof with barrel tile to restore more of the structure's historic flavor.

In the future, he said, he would like to see one of the school's original classrooms restored to what it looked like when the school was opened.

"We will take one of the classrooms, rip up the carpeting, remove the lowered ceilings and put in the old teacher's desk, old school desks and paddle fans," Wohlfarth said.

The auditorium was used for the first Town Hall meetings for Oakland Park and its predecessor, the city of Floranada, incorporated from 1925 to 1929.

The original Oakland Park classroom building is virtually the same today as it was in 1926. The same wooden doors open into each room from the courtyard. One major alteration was done in the mid-1970s, however, when 24 large sash windows and 12 small arch windows were filled in for energy efficiency.

The original school is surrounded by office, classroom and cafeteria buildings constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. None of the newer structures is connected to the auditorium and classroom building.

Historical status sought for school

By SALLIE JAMES
Staff Writer

OAKLAND PARK — A 60-year-old elementary school may earn national recognition if a local historian's pitch to have it placed on the National Register of Historic Places succeeds.

Oakland Park Elementary, 936 NE 33rd St., may be eligible for the honor because it is oldest school in Broward County still being used as a school, said Midge Turpen, administrator of the county's Historical Commission and the Oakland Park city historian.

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Oakland Park pledges money for street

OAKLAND PARK — City Council members have agreed to pledge \$95,000 toward improvements, including turn lanes, curbs and sidewalks, at Northeast 16th Avenue and Oakland Park Boulevard.

The city will enter into a joint project agreement with the state Department of Transportation to make the improvements.

Council members also agreed to

endorse the Broward County Historical Commission's recommendation that Oakland Park Elementary School, 936 NE 33rd St., be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The school, built in 1925 and opened in January 1926, is the oldest public school in Broward County that is still in use.

— KELLY LEON

Oakland Park Elementary Oldest School In South Florida

By Vikki Alexander

A local historian is striving to put Oakland Park Elementary School on the National Register of Historic Places for being the oldest school in existence in South Florida.

According to Midge Turpen, administrator of the county's National Historical Commission and Oakland Park city historian, Oakland Park Elementary was built over 60 years ago and first opened its doors on January 4, 1926, with five teachers and six classrooms, and an attendance of 200 students.

Turpen is working on getting the school placed on the

National Register of Historic Places in Washington D.C. She sent pictures to Tallahassee that were taken by OP Police from a cherry picker. She suspects it will take about six months before it gets on the National Register.

Oakland Park Principal Dick Wohlfarth stated that they are attempting to make the school look as historical as possible. The only renovation to the original compound was the replacement of the roof and closed-in windows to add air-conditioning.

He stated they they would like to take one classroom and restore it with what it might have looked like in

1926, such as old time desks, ceiling fans, and ink wells. "The kids would get a charge out of it", said Wohlfarth.

The school--which is of Spanish-style architecture--has wrought iron gates, and an auditorium that has ceiling beams made of pecky cypress wood, along with the original wooden floors and seats that were installed 60 years ago.

The school, currently listed on the state's master site file of historic places, will not be guaranteed preservation if put on the National Register of Historic Places, but it is unlikely it would be destroyed, according to Turpen.