

Testimony of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Hearing on H.R. 3120, Stranahan House, Trading Post and Campsite
Historic Preservation Act
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
U.S. House of Representatives,
Honorable Raul Grijalva, Chairman

October 30, 2007

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, distinguished colleagues of the Subcommittee, and fellow panelists:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on H.R. 3120, the Stranahan House, Trading Post and Campsite Historic Preservation Act

The Stranahan House and the Stranahan Trading Post and Camp Site are of national historic significance because it is Broward County's first commerce center where a cultural nexus occurred between white settlers and Native American Indians – specifically the Seminole Tribe of Florida. This singular site is the one place where people and events converged at the right time to create a community, giving birth to the City of Fort Lauderdale. The Trading Post and Camp Site is where Frank and Ivy Stranahan established a significant detente between the two estranged communities which had been destroyed during the wars of the nineteenth century.

This Site is where white settlers, hunters and tourists of that day met and interacted with African Americans and Native Americans. The Site is where people as diverse as Henry Flagler and Admiral Dewy visited along with Seminole Indian families trading their goods and sleeping overnight. The Site was not only where a modern city came to be, but also where a major venue for social and economic interaction between Native Americans, whites and blacks that defined the Florida frontier experience harmoniously existed. Because of this unique interaction, the Site possesses exceptional value of quality illustrating or interpreting the cultural themes of our Nation's heritage.

In 1893, Stranahan built his Trading Post and Camp Site. The Stranahan's Camp became the center of the incipient community; it was the City's first commercial hub with the establishment of the trading post and the overnight facility for the stage passengers, and Stranahan's New River ferry was the essential land transportation link in the area. It attracted new residents to the frontier community. Notably, it was utilized by the local Seminole Indians, whose main camp was located at Pine Island in present Davie. Large groups of Indians frequented the Trading Post and Camp site, bringing pelts, hides and alligator eggs to sell for cash, which they used to purchase necessities like ammunition, cloth or coffee.

In 1899, Frank Stranahan, entrepreneur, proprietor of the trading post, the overnight camp for stage travelers, the New River ferry, postmaster and banker for the little New River pioneer community, met Ivy Cromartie, who had been hired as the first schoolteacher for the area. Stranahan and Ivy married in 1900. The Stranahans are generally considered the first citizens of the "new" community of Fort Lauderdale. Frank with his activities as a trader with the Indians, camp keeper, ferry operator, store owner, banker, city commissioner and early developer and Ivy as the first schoolteacher, her work with the Indians and her involvement with civic activities, both had a profound impact on the history and development of the region. They are also examples of our Nation's pioneers as the Stranahans sparked the social and economic transformation of an important segment of southeast Florida.

In addition to the cultural significance of the Site, the Stranahan Trading Post and Camp Site contains a significant and preserved archaeological record that covers over 2500 years of human history in Fort Lauderdale. It contains materials from several different occupations of the Site in different centuries that indicate several periods of sustained and extended use. The limited archaeological excavations conducted over the last 25 years demonstrate that there are significant and well-preserved archaeological materials present on the Site, despite impacts from construction over time in portions of the property. The Site, because of these materials, is

believed to be the oldest known archaeological site that survives in the City of Fort Lauderdale and among the oldest sites in Broward County.

The Stranahan Camp parcel contains “several areas” of intact archaeological deposits (despite disturbance by later construction and demolition activities), including intact prehistoric deposits along the banks of the New River, in the area formerly beneath the razed grocery store building, and in the former Stranahan Creek channel.¹ These deposits include material that dates from the prehistoric through historic periods (early 1900s).²

Archaeological testing in the archaeological deposits discovered during excavations undertaken in 2006 indicates that the prehistoric materials “are focused on the southern half of the parcel.”³ The archaeologist determined that a preliminary analysis of the features uncovered and the prehistoric artifacts found “suggests activity areas that may indicate hut or habitation locations.”⁴ The existence of such Native American housing (“hut or habitation locations”) would be demonstrative evidence of long-term occupation of the site during the prehistoric period – at least for portions of the year.

The prehistoric material recovered from the Stranahan Camp property is evidence of human habitation of the site from as early as the late Archaic Period (c. 3000 BC through c. 500 BC) into early Glades I (500 BC through AD 500). These earliest eras of occupation are derived, in part, from the discovery at the Stranahan Camp property of Deptford Simple Stamped pottery, a style of one of the oldest decorated ceramic types created in Florida.⁵ Other prehistoric artifacts recovered from the site include stone tools, perforated shark teeth and worked shell implements.⁶

¹ Bob Carr, *Hyde Park (Icon Las Olas) June Interim Report – 2005.90*, dated July 11, 2006.

² Bob Carr, *Hyde Park (Icon Las Olas) Interim Report – 2005.90*, dated March 13, 2006.

³ Carr, *June Interim Report*, July 11, 2006.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bob Carr, *Hyde Park (Icon Las Olas) April Interim Report – 2005.90*, May 4, 2006; Jerald T. Milanich, *Archaeology of Precolonial Florida*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, p. 114: “The temporal range of the Deptford culture has been well-established through radiocarbon dates from both Atlantic and Gulf coast sites. Deptford pottery first appeared by about 500 B.C.”

⁶ Bob Carr, *Hyde Park (Icon Las Olas) May Interim Report – 2005.90*, dated June 6, 2006; Carr, *April Interim Report*, May 4, 2006;

Additionally, human bone was recovered during the archaeological excavation. The bone was part of a human foot that was revealed during examination of soil deposited as a result of the use of a backhoe in the prehistoric area of the property.

The archaeological excavations have also revealed intact deposits of artifacts from the period of the Stranahan's ownership and operation as a camp, trading post and as the as their residence. The creek that once ran through the property – though long-since filled – produced “large quantities of historic refuse dating back to the early 20th century, and possibly some 19th century material” according to the archaeologist's reports.⁷

As the archaeologist has reported in his reports, there are both prehistoric archaeological materials and historic archaeological materials still on and from this site. The archaeologist wrote: “The work to date indicates that two archaeological sites are located on the parcel. Site 8BD3280 is a site characterized by historic refuse dating from c. 1895 to 1910 which is concentrated along and within the creek. Site 8BD259 is a prehistoric habitation/subsistence area located near the New River.”⁸ The archaeologist stated, “We have found missing pieces of early Fort Lauderdale history. These items create a connection to the community and a sense of place.”⁹

In 1982, excavations conducted at the Stranahan House itself – built in 1901 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places – first uncovered the more ancient, prehistoric use of the property and adding considerably “to the historic significance of the tract.”¹⁰ These excavations produced evidence of the occupation of the site and the use of the canal by the ancestors to the Tequesta Indians as early as AD 800-1200, an era known as the Glades II Period.¹¹

⁷ Carr, *Interim Report*, March 13, 2006.

⁸ Carr, *June Interim Report*, July 11, 2006.

⁹ Chen, *Miami Herald*, April 9, 2006.

¹⁰ Robert S. Carr, *Archaeological Excavations at the Stranahan House*, conducted for Stranahan House Inc. by Robert S. Carr, 1982, p. 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Other artifacts were recovered in the fieldwork conducted in 1982 that were items lost either by the Stranahans themselves or by the Seminoles and other pioneers during their years of trade and social interactions in the 1890s and early 1900s. Such items included glassware, glass trade beads used by the Seminoles for jewelry, building materials, a gold pin owned by Frank Stranahan, bullets and other items that were used in building and living at the site or that were lost by hunters and traders visiting the store and camp.¹²

Altogether, the Site has great significance for its research value to understanding Florida's ancient prehistoric past, environmental changes to the land over time and its more recent historic development and use by both the Seminoles and South Florida's early pioneers.

In conclusion, it is my hope that I have given you enough background on this significant Site in not only Florida's history, but also our Nation's, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Stranahan House, Trading Post and Camp Site for inclusion in our National Park System.

¹² Ibid., pp. 21-35.