

Florida Department of State
Division of Historical Resources
Bureau of Historic Preservation

Adapted from NPS 10-900
to propose the nomination of
Properties in Florida for listing in
the National Register of Historic
Places

FLORIDA NOMINATION PROPOSAL

Grayed Areas for Use by Staff

1. Name of Property

historic name DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names _____

FMSF Number

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Gilchrist Avenue to the west, 5th Street to the north, Palm Avenue to the east and 3rd Street to the south N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Boca Grande ☐ vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Lee code 07 zip code 33921

3. Owner Awareness Statement

As the owner, or official representative of the owner, of the property identified above, I am aware of this proposal for its nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. I have been advised of the procedures for review of the proposal by the State Historic Preservation Office and the Florida National Register Review Board, and for the formal nomination of the property at the discretion of the State Historic Preservation Officer. I understand that I will be notified of the date and place of the public meeting at which the proposal will be considered by the Florida National Register Review Board, and that I will be given an opportunity to submit written comments and to appear in person in support of or opposition to the nomination of the property.

At this time I _____ support _____ oppose _____ reserve opinion on this proposal.

Signature of property owner or representative

Date

4. Legal Description of Property (according to county property appraiser's office)

Please also provide:

Name of USGS Quadrangle: Port Boca Grande, FL 1958

Township, Section and Range: T 43 S 142 R 20

Tax Parcel #: Various (See Master List)

Attach continuation sheet if necessary

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ buildings
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

31	16	buildings
0	0	sites
4	13	structures
1	0	objects
36	29	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Post Office

HEALTH CARE/Medical Business/Office

COMERCE/TRADE/Business Office

COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant

RELIGION/Religious Facility/Religious Related Residence

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling, Residence

DOMESTIC, Secondary Structure/Garage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

COMMERCE TRADE/ Business/Office Building

COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant

COMMERCE TRADE/Department Store/Grocery Store

RELIGION/Religious Facility/Religious Related Residence

DOMESTIC, Single Dwelling, Residence

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure/Garage

LANDSCAPE/Park

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH and EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS/Craftsman/Masonry & Frame Vernacular

MODERN MOVEMENTS/ Moderne/Art Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete, brick

walls Stucco, weatherboard, vinyl, plywood

roof Asphalt, terra cotta, metal

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuations sheets.)

8. Statement of significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction of represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Maritime History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/Government |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Social History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine | Other: _____ |

Period of Significance

c.1909-1959

Significant Dates

c.1909

Significant Person**Cultural Affiliation****Architect/Builder**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 16.67

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	Zone	Easting	Northing	3	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	Zone	Easting	Northing	4	Zone	Easting	Northing

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mikki Hartig

organization Historical & Architectural Research Services date November 4, 2008

street & number 2337 19th Street telephone 941-536-4476

city or town Sarasota state FL zip code 34234

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets (All information on continuation sheets must be typed.)**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) Do not write upon or attach labels to this map.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

(Do not write upon or attach permanent labels to the photographs.)

Additional items

(check with the area Historic Sites Specialist at [850] 487-2333 for any additional items)

Property Owner

name

street & number telephone

city or town Boca Grande state FL zip code 33921

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

**SECTION 7
SUMMARY**

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District represents the historic core of Boca Grande and is primarily a collection of early and mid 1900 commercial structures located in downtown Boca Grande, Florida. The district is generally centered in the vicinity of Park Avenue and Palm Avenue, the main business thoroughfares on the island. It consists of 47 buildings, one of which is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and one which is pending review for listing. Of the primary resources, 31 are contributing (66%) and 16 are non-contributing (34%). There are also 17 secondary structures such as a detached garage, a cistern, freestanding coolers, storage sheds, and carports of which 4 (23.5%) are historic and contributing and 13 (76.5%) which are non-historic and, thus, non-contributing. Additionally, the former railroad right-of-way and a small surviving section of railroad track that remains as a memorial to former railroad service to the island, that ceased in the 1960s, runs along the east side of the historic train depot. There is one contributing historic object, a 1938 Gulf Oil gas pump. There is a privately owned community park on a vacant lot that is not historic and there are two other vacant lots within the proposed boundaries. The contributing building resources are confined to four architectural styles, Frame Vernacular, Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, and Art Moderne. The majority of the buildings are Frame Vernacular and all are either one or two-stories in height. The most prevalent building material is wood and most of the buildings feature traditional storefront windows and entrances. In addition to regular commercial buildings, the district contains 9 historic residential buildings, the Boca Grande Fire Station, the Gasparilla Inn Employee Dormitory, two churches and two historic parsonages, one of which is associated with a third church. However, that church was completely rebuilt recently and thus non-contributing. The non-contributing buildings are either new construction (post 1959) or historic buildings that have undergone extensive inappropriate alterations.

Setting

Boca Grande is in Lee County on the west coast of Florida on Gasparilla Island, a seven mile long island bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the west and Charlotte Harbor on the east. Two thirds of the island is located in Lee County and one-third is located in Charlotte County. The island is one of a chain of islands that separate gulf from the harbor. The closest major cities are Ft. Myers to the south and Sarasota to the north. Boca Grande has often been referred to as the tarpon fishing capital of the world. The population of the island swells from 600 to over 3,000 depending upon the season.

Initially, Boca Grande's building trends focused on commercial fishing, the phosphate industry and the building of the railroad for the transport of phosphate. In about 1915, the base of the economy began to shift toward tourism and building trends changed to the servicing and housing necessary for the tourism industry.

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Due to the efforts of some of the town's residents in the 1970s, further commercial and residential development on the island, from that time on, became fairly restricted through local legislation. The result of those efforts and that action, along with the historic designation of a large historic district by Lee County in 1990, also initiating design review in the local district, which includes the properties in this proposed NRHP district, has served to preserve and protect many of the town's historic structures.

Narrative Description

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is a collection of commercial and residential buildings constructed between c.1909 and 1953. There are also two historic churches within the boundaries. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were never created for Boca Grande and no city directories ever incorporated information on residents or businesses in Boca Grande and were not available for use in historical research. However, historic photographs and previous in-depth historical research, recently conducted by the preparer for an update of Florida Master Site Files on the buildings within the district, provides historic information and evidence that the character and setting of downtown Boca Grande has been remarkably preserved in large part. (Historic Photos A-I). This is a result, again, by the successful efforts of local residents in the 1970s to limit commercial and future development of the island and by the historic designation of a large portion of Boca Grande as a historic district by ordinance in 1990. That designation was done by local ordinance and incorporated design review of exterior alterations and new construction from that time until the present within those district boundaries. That Lee County Boca Grande Historic District is larger and combines both the subject commercial and residential buildings and a large number of residential buildings, a few public buildings, and a church not included in the proposed district boundaries herein.

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District incorporates much of Park Avenue and Palm Avenue, the two main streets in the downtown commercial core. The boundaries are slightly irregular but encompass parts of E. Railroad Avenue, 4th Street E and W., Gilchrist Avenue and one building on W. 3rd Street.

The district consists of 47 buildings, 31 of which are contributing, and 17 structures such as freestanding coolers, storage sheds, fences, carports, a former garage, and a cistern of which 4 are contributing and 13 are non-contributing. One of the contributing structures is a short remnant of railroad track that is the single remaining track on the island surviving from railroad service that ran from 1909 until the 1960s. The track is adjacent to the historic train depot, but not part of the same tax parcel, the former railroad right-of-way that was donated by Boca Grande resident, Bayard Sharp, to the town in the 1970s as a public bicycle/pedestrian path extending almost the entire length of the island (Photo 11). Additionally, there is one contributing historic object, an unaltered c.1948 Gulf Oil gas pump. Only three

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
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historic buildings in the proposed district boundaries are considered non-contributing. Two are non-contributing due to extensive inappropriate alterations. The remaining non-contributing historic building has lost its second-story and has been extensively altered as well. Only 8 buildings are considered non-contributing due to their date of construction (post 1959).

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is surrounded by some commercial structures along the perimeter that were excluded from the boundaries as they were constructed post 1959. Some other historic residential structures are nearby but the boundaries were drawn to incorporate as many of the historic downtown commercial buildings as possible and to draw the boundaries as regularly as possible. Additionally, the residential structures within the district are associated with early working class island residents who settled, lived and worked on the island before it became a resort destination for the wealthy that built much larger and elaborate homes further from the downtown core. One historic church, the Boca Grande Methodist Church, is listed as a non-contributing resource because, although it appears almost exactly as it was originally constructed, it was almost totally rebuilt a few years ago and less than 10% of its original historic building materials were retained.

The terrain throughout the district is flat. Streets are two lanes. Diagonal parking is provided in front of most of the commercial buildings and most of the residential buildings have driveways at one side or the other of the residence. Building lots are generally narrow. The commercial buildings are built out to the sidewalk with virtually no setback, whereas, the residential buildings have minimal yet slightly deeper setback from the street. The two churches within the boundaries occupy corner sites and have minimal front and side yard setbacks.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

All of the buildings within the proposed district boundaries are in good to excellent condition and limited to one and two-stories in height. They are in a variety of uses, including retail, office, residential and religious use. Construction materials and scale vary. Those along Park Avenue have a somewhat unified appearance with sidewalks and many have buildings with shared party walls. Virtually all of the commercial buildings in the district tend to encompass the entire lot on which they are sited with service alleys at the rear or separating them from additional structures. A number of storefront entrances are recessed and many structures have awnings or street canopies extending over the sidewalk. The most common roof plan is flat with a raised parapet. Common elements in building height, display windows, knee walls, door openings, and general storefront design can sometimes be seen. (Photos 1-3). A few of the commercial buildings have second floor residential space and occupants. In general, all of the buildings have a regular form and plan, are front-facing, and one to two stories in height. Entrances vary including; multiple storefronts, those that are centrally placed, or those placed at the corner. All of the residential buildings have original front porches although almost all have enclosed in some manner.

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Commercial Vernacular Architectural Styles

The construction of commercial buildings in Florida generally mirrored national trends. Beginning in the mid 19th century, commercial buildings as a distinct property type, developed throughout the United States and in Florida. Certain constraints limited commercial architecture. Most such structures were buildings concentrated in districts or areas where land value was high. Lot size influenced the form and plan of the buildings. To maximize land value, they were placed to cover most of the lot and often side walls of one building formed party walls with the adjacent building(s).

Most Commercial Vernacular buildings share many common characteristics. They were most often rectangular in plan. One narrow elevation, facing the street was the focus of the building and provided the buildings identifying features. Facades were organized into distinct zones and sections commonly referred to as one or two part blocks. One part blocks were one-story and formed by structural framework, such as columns, kick panels, and a cornice topped by a parapet. Large display windows, with transom windows above, were incorporated to display merchandise and to provide light to the interior. The front wall between the transoms or above the display windows provided a place for signage. Other materials such as doors and decorative and stylistic elements were secondary with various patterns of organization. From 1900 to 1940, the form of commercial buildings in Florida changed little although new materials and stylistic influences began to be utilized.

District Styles of Architecture

The various distinct styles of historic and non-historic commercial architecture that can be seen in the proposed district include: Frame Vernacular, Masonry Vernacular, Art Moderne and Mediterranean Revival. The residential structures within the proposed district boundaries are all Frame Vernacular.

Frame Vernacular

Frame Vernacular architecture has been the most prevalent style of architecture in Florida since its settlement until the present. It began as the common wood-frame construction of self-taught builders utilizing local materials. These building traditions were passed down in generations and based on available resources, and responses to the environment. From the end of the Civil War until about 1910, Frame Vernacular architecture in Florida was characterized by the balloon-frame method of construction. Balloon-frame construction reached Florida in about 1870. It featured closely spaced two inch deep boards of varying width joined by nails. Studs in multi-story buildings rose continuously from the floor to the roof. Floors hung on the studs. This method allowed cheaper and more rapid construction by eliminating the need for hand hewing the principal timbers in the walls. Brick piers usually provided the foundation and roofs were generally gable hip or pyramidal. Metal roof surfacing became common.

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Windows were double hung sash but contained larger panes than in the pre-Civil War era, often in a 1/1 pattern.

A final change in Frame Vernacular architecture came about in 1910 with the introduction of platform framing. With this new method, each floor was constructed independently. This framing system was both simpler and more rigid than the balloon framing it replaced. Frame Vernacular architecture of the 1920s and 1930s shared even more common characteristics. Buildings rested on brick or concrete block piers, exterior cladding was usually horizontal wood siding, either ship lap or drop, and roof types were gable or hip, covered with v-crimp or embossed sheet metal or composition or asbestos shingles. Windows remained double hung sash. The size of panes again increased to not only include 1/1 but 2/2 lights. Detailing remained fairly simple such as jigsaw woodwork.

The San Marco Theatre, built in 1928 and located at 321 Park Avenue, is a significant local downtown landmark within the proposed district. It is presently identified as the Old Theatre Mall. The original and main block has a rectangular plan. Exterior walls are covered with both beveled and lap wood siding. A covered portico dominates the primary façade. A 5v crimp metal gable roof covers the structure. It has undergone window replacement and some modifications but continues to relay its historic public use, presence, and character. (Photo 23).

The theater was built for Louise Dupont Crowninshield, Henry Dupont, Robert Sharp, and J.E. Riley in 1928 and was a hub of local entertainment for many years. In 1951, local resident Roger Armory purchased the building after it had undergone major damage in a 1944 hurricane. The theater began to again show movies two nights a week during the winter season and once a week during the summer. It remained open until 1973 and allowed to seriously deteriorate. In 1978, it was purchased by Paul Kruder, George Arehart, and Jan Bloemport. Kruder soon bought out his partners and made extensive repairs to the building.¹ It presently houses shops and a restaurant on the first floor and offices upstairs.

The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande, at 421 4th Street, W., was completed in 1915. The church was organized in 1909 and the church building was constructed by local railroad workers and members of the congregation. It is in excellent condition and remarkably well-preserved both on the exterior and interior. This simple Frame Vernacular church has its original beveled wood siding, intersecting gable roof, a symmetrical plan with an offset main entrance at street level, a hand-built bell tower, and an octagonal apse on the east. A c.1928 addition was added on the north to accommodate two

¹ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 123.

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Sunday school classrooms. (Photo 6). The church bell came from a locomotive and was donated to the church by the Seaboard Airline Railroad. It remains in place and in use today.²

The sanctuary remains virtually unaltered since construction. One interior wall was removed to expand space for churchgoers in the 1920s or 1930s. The church even retains its original church pews and pulpit. The church, along with its c.1933 rectory, and non-contributing 1962 Fellowship Hall have been recently nominated to the NRHP and are presently (11/08) pending review for possible listing.

Masonry Vernacular

Before the Civil War, masonry construction was significantly less common than wood framing. Brick, the most common masonry material in the country was not readily available because of a scarcity of clay in the state and poor transportation via railroad. After the Civil War, brick became more readily available, particularly in the 1880s, when railroads began to open the Florida peninsula. However, it was several years before the rails expanded into the more southern parts of the state and the use of brick never became building material in south Florida. Beginning in the 1920s, hollow clay tile and concrete block became widely used in commercial construction. These new materials were as strong as fired brick, but were lighter and cheaper. In later years, concrete block almost exclusively replaced brick as a structural material in Florida.

Masonry Vernacular structures usually had regular or rectangular plans with continuous or slab concrete or hollow clay tile foundations. Commercial examples were most often one or two-stories in height. Roofs were usually flat with a parapet front wall. Ornamentation was usually simple perhaps with some corbelling or cast concrete detailing.

The Temptations Restaurant, at 350 Park Avenue, is a World War II era Masonry Vernacular building. Construction began in 1939 but was interrupted by war shortages and it was completed in about 1946. It is two-stories in height and has a simple rectangular plan. Construction is stucco over concrete block resting on a poured concrete slab. Wood entrance doors, wood framed display windows and transom windows appear on the primary façade at street level. (Photo 27). The first floor storefronts have accommodated the Temptations Restaurant and Package Store since the building was completed. The interior of the restaurant displays original Art Deco period decorative elements such as floor and wall tile and light fixtures. The second floor has historically been in use as residential space and presently remains in such use.

² Beatty, Pastor (Dr.) Gary, "The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande, Florida, 1909-2009," 2009, and Cost, Pansy, lifetime island resident, congregation member, and town librarian for 50 years, in an interview with Pastor Beatty.

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The Van Fleet Building, located at 340 Park Avenue, abuts The Temptations Restaurant on the south. Although it was completed in c.1945 by the same builder, it is extremely similar in design and materials and, without careful examination could be construed as part of The Temptations Restaurant building. (Photo 26). The first floor is in office and retail use and residential space in on the second floor.

Mediterranean Revival

Spanish and other Mediterranean-influenced styles of architecture were most commonly constructed in California, Arizona, Texas and Florida reflecting a tradition of Spanish colonial architecture. Principally, Mediterranean derived styles were Italian Renaissance, Mission, and Spanish Colonial Revival which were popularized at the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition at San Diego.

Identifying features of Mediterranean influenced architecture include clay tile roofs, stucco exterior walls, straight or arched windows, arcades, ceramic tile decoration and ornate low-relief carvings highlighting arches, columns window surrounds, cornices and often parapets. Plans were usually irregular, Foundations we most often continuous. Primary exterior wall finishes were stucco.

The single historic example of the Mediterranean Revival Style within the proposed district is the NRHP listed **Charlotte & Northern Railroad/Seaboard Railroad Depot**. It is located at 433 4th Street, W. (Photo 10). Three non-historic buildings within the proposed district display characteristics of the Mediterranean Revival Style, 320, 360, and 420 Railroad Avenue East. (Photos 40, 42 & 47, respectively)

Art Moderne

The Art Moderne style broke from the past more flamboyant and decorative styles of earlier years. The style began to become popular after 1930, when industrial designs began to exhibit streamlined shapes. The concept of rounded corners to make automobiles and airplanes more aerodynamic was applied to many things such as kitchen appliances, jewelry, and many other products where function was less important than form.

Art Moderne structures in Florida were located in coastal communities where tourism remained popular during the Depression. The style was usually applied to commercial and apartment buildings. They had flat roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, glass blocks, horizontal grooves, cantilevered overhangs, and rounded corners to emphasize a streamline effect. Plans were irregular, foundations were continuous concrete, and primarily exteriors were stucco. Ornamentation displayed included asymmetrical facades, rounded corners, lines in walls.

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There are two Art Moderne Style buildings within the proposed district, both being modest examples of the style.

Fugates, located at 428 54th Street W., is a simple 1939 Depression era Art Moderne masonry structure that is minimally altered on the exterior although a one-story addition with several storefronts was added on the west in c.1947.³ The structure is constructed of stucco over concrete block on a continuous concrete foundation. Curvilinear stucco banding adds a stylistic detail to the exterior walls. A flat roof with a curvilinear parapet covers the largest of the three building blocks that comprise the structure. (Photo 9).

Fugate's has been a commercial fixture for many years on the island. The store was built for Jerome Fugate, Sr. in 1936. Fugate and his son, Jerome, Jr. operated the store for over 40 years. From its beginning, the store was a general store that included a pharmacy for local residents and guests. On the south, there was an open roofed cocktail lounge until after World War II, when Geraldine Futch, Jerome Fugate Jr.'s wife, had a roof constructed over the open patio to enclose the space to accommodate a dress shop she opened The Patio Shop. Although under different ownership, the shop remains in existence today. The c.1947 additions on the west provided space for a beauty and barber shop, and the Boca Grande Clinic, a physician's office. In 1963, the storefront space that had previously been occupied by the clinic was converted into residential space for the Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Fugates, Jr. and their children. The Fugate family continued to own the building and operate Fugate's until 1982 when it was sold outside of the family.⁴ The store continues in operation today and still bears the Fugate name.

Cabbage Court, located at 333 Park Avenue, is two-story stucco over concrete block apartment building with minimal stylistic details including stepped masonry exterior stair walls. It was completed by local prominent builders, Van Fleet, Griffin and Kuhl in 1953. (Photo 24).

³ Fugate, Suzanne, granddaughter of original owner and daughter of owners until 1982, telephone interview with Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, FL, on October 18, 2007.

⁴ Ibid.

⁹ Boca Grande, Images of America, Hoeckel, Marilyn, and VanItallie, Theodore, Boca Grande Historical Society and Barrier Island Parks Society, Arcadia Publishing, 2000, p. 7.

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Non-contributing Structures

Three structures within the district are older than 50 years of age but have been substantially modified with major adverse effect to their original architectural integrity. They are 441-447 4th Street, E. (Photo 4) and 421 Park Avenue (Photo 34). The Boca Grande Mercantile at 390 Park Avenue was original constructed as a two-story building but a fire destroyed the second floor several years ago and the building has also been substantially compromised by changes to the street level storefronts and the application of stucco over the original red brick. (Photo 32). There are also 9 one and two-story modern buildings, constructed between 1962 and the 2004 within the proposed district boundaries.

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SECTION 8

SUMMARY

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is directly linked to the historic development and settlement of Gasparilla Island. Albert Gilchrist, a prominent Florida citizen, promoter and former governor of the State of Florida, was responsible for first platting the town. Baron Collier who played a prominent role in the development of many areas within the state, and for whom Collier County is named, also played a major role in the development and history of the island. Collectively, the structures are excellent examples of historic commercial buildings and early island residential buildings constructed during the first half of the 20th century, when the island was focused on the shipping of phosphate and commercial fishing, and subsequently the period the state and the island were first being developed as tourist destinations.

Historic Context of Boca Grande

The earliest settlers to Gasparilla Island, on which Boca Grande is located, were Calusa Indians. During the later 1800s, fishermen and their families migrated to the area for the seafood bounty of Charlotte Harbor. By 1879, a successful fish ranch with permanent structures and 30 employees was in operation on the island. With no means of preserving their catch for shipping, fish were salted. In the later part of the century, an ice factory in Punta Gorda and ice stations houses, built along Charlotte Harbor, greatly improved the ability to send fish to northeastern markets.⁹

The island became a significant economic factor in the development of southwest Florida. The United States government reserved the two northern miles of Cayo Costa, a nearby island, and the two southern miles of Gasparilla Island from general land sales on November 17, 1882.

The history of the island and Boca Grande is strongly linked to the phosphate industry. In the 1880s, phosphate rock was discovered on the banks of the Peace River, north of Arcadia, Florida. Phosphate was barged down the Peace River to Port Boca Grande and loaded onto schooners. In 1890, a lighthouse was constructed at the southern tip of Gasparilla Island as a military installation and to help guide schooners, fishing boats, and freighters in transport. Eventually, quarantine docks and a customs office were built to inspect the boats. For over fifty years, Boca Grande, with one of the deepest natural ports on the coast of Florida, played a major role in the shipping of phosphate.¹⁰

¹⁰ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 139, excerpted from an undated and unpublished history entitled "Peace River Valley, The Puritan's Utopia".

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The central section of Gasparilla Island was eventually available for homesteading. The homestead lands conveyed from the federal government to various individuals eventually were all acquired by either John Wall, a Tampa attorney, or by Albert Gilchrist, a Punta Gorda politician (who became governor of Florida in 1909).¹¹ Gilchrist served as a United State Deputy Surveyor, beginning in 1897. He worked hard as early as 1888 to see that the islands around Charlotte Harbor, including Boca Grande, were surveyed or that prior surveys that were inadequate or poorly conducted were revised. He pushed the state government to do so as there were some settlers on various south Florida coastal islands who desired to purchase their homestead. Once the land became available for homesteaders, he acquired the claims of several who had not yet gotten patents from the U.S. Government. In all, he purchased 818 acres on Gasparilla Island at a cost of \$8,500. His holdings extended two and one-half miles northward on the island from what is today's First Street.¹²

On January 29, 1897, Gilchrist was able to file a plat, on land on Gasparilla that he had acquired. "The Town of Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island", was laid out on the widest part of the island. It displayed six blocks along the Gulf front in the south central portion of Gasparilla Island which was what he envisioned as the most suited part for residential development.¹³ Three blocks aligned the Gulf of Mexico and three blocks were set back from the gulf. The six blocks were separated by a street, identified as Gilchrist Avenue. The cross streets were First, Second, Third and Fourth Streets.¹⁴ Although the plat was filed, Boca Grande continued to consist of only the lighthouse and a "cluster of camps and a few rickety dwellings for fisherfolk."¹⁵ For nearly a decade, streets were not laid out and no lots were sold.

A school on the island had been established in a small wood frame building on the island in 1892. It was built by local residents. Over the next fifteen years after the school was first opened, it would close from time to time because of a lack of enrollment.¹⁶

In about 1900, the American Agricultural Chemical Company (AAC), owned by Peter Bradley, had come to dominate the phosphate industry of Central Florida. Bradley has been called the founding father of Boca Grande.¹⁷ He maintained his office in Boston but liked to be personally involved in certain

¹¹ History of Boca Grande", Breeze Newspapers, 2006, p. 9.

¹² Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, pg. 164, and an undated and unpublished history, by Robert Lee Thompson, May 2004, pg. 41.

¹³ Plat Book 1, Page 7, Hoeckel and VanItallie Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

¹⁴ Boca Grande, Images of America, p. 51.

¹⁵ Boca Grande, Images of America, p.8 and "excerpted from *Peace River Valley, The Puritan's Utopia*," an undated and unpublished history, by Robert Lee Thompson, pg. 41.

¹⁶ "History of Boca Grande". a supplement in the Breeze Newspaper, June, 2006, pg. 16.,

¹⁷ Arnold, Anthony, with commentary by Charles Dana Gibson, *A Brief History of Boca Grande*, (unpublished manuscript reprinted in its entirety in *Boca Grande, A Series of Historical Essays* by Charles Dana Gibson, 1982)

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business details and took an active role in the construction and expansion of the town and hotel in its first years.¹⁸

AAC determined that a railroad would be more efficient in transporting phosphate to the port rather than barges. Rail transportation would also provide a means to transport the catch of local fishermen from Gasparilla Island and other nearby ports. Bradley and his senior associates decided to form a railroad company, the Alafia, Manatee and Gulf Coast Railway, and extend the 6-mile Hull-Liverpool railroad 40 miles south to Boca Grande Pass and to continue on to Arcadia, Florida. The AAC determined that the proposed terminus of the railroad should be located about a quarter mile north of the lighthouse on the harbor side of Gasparilla Island. Construction of the rail line began in 1905 and was completed in 1907. The railroad company underwent a name change in July of that year, becoming The Charlotte Harbor and Northern (CH&N) Railroad.¹⁹ Trains began to arrive in early 1908.²⁰ Boca Grande soon acquired a growing market for goods transported by train. At first, a small wood frame depot was built on the corner of Park and Fourth Street but, in 1910, a much grander brick Mediterranean Revival structure (extant) was completed that provided for the CH&N railroad offices on the second floor.²¹ A few years later, the depot was enlarged to include a telegraph office and office space for CH&N's phosphate operations. Over time, the Customs Office, a medical clinic, and an athletic club would also occupy second floor space.

When the railroad was very near completion and trains would soon be arriving, Bradley and his senior associate, James Gifford, of the company's law firm, reviewed the 1897 plat of Boca Grande that Albert Gilchrist had filed. Perhaps inspired by what other railroad owners had done in regards to resort development in Florida, such as Henry Flagler on the east coast and Henry Plant, on the west, Bradley decided to develop the island as a "high class" winter resort.²² Gifford formed the Boca Grande Land Company as an entity of AAC.²⁴ The company was chartered by the State of Florida on April 29, 1907 to

¹⁸ VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 4.

¹⁹ VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 7, and Arnold, Anthony unpublished history of American Agricultural Company history, undated, p. 121, copy on file at Gasparilla Inn and with Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida.

²⁰ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 58, excerpted from an undated and unpublished history entitled "Peace River Valley, The Puritan's Utopia."

²¹ Ibid., pgs 7-8

²² VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 8.

²⁴ <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/HistoricPreservation/HistoricDistricts/BocaGrande.htm>

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buy, sell and develop real estate.²⁵ Gilchrist and John Wall of Tampa became partners in the company and their first meeting together was held in the office of John Wall in Tampa. Wall was elected Secretary and Treasurer, Gilchrist was elected President. In exchange for building the railroad, the American Agricultural Chemical Company (AAC) had been given a land grant of property on Boca Grande. Bradley purchased Gilchrist's and his partner John Wall's local land holdings for \$100,000 and the officers of the Boca Grande Land Company were authorized to file a new plat which was filed on January 9, 1908.²⁶ Gilchrist and Wall appeared to have maintained at least some continued financial interest as they remained officers of corporation. The real estate venture was financed with funding from AAC, furnished through the Peace River Phosphate Mining Company, and was operated by employees of the CH & N. Railroad. The land development company began to promote the development of the island. To assure that the island would be upscale, the lots on Gulf Boulevard and Gilchrist Avenue were restricted to the building of residences only at a minimum cost of \$4,000 and \$3,500, respectively.

In 1908, the island population had grown sufficiently that a need for a new school was evident. Residents petitioned the School Board for a new school and, in the interim, built a temporary one. In 1909, a special taxing district was established to raise money for the construction of a permanent building. In 1909, the Boca Grande Land Company donated land on Gilchrist Avenue where a two-story wood frame schoolhouse (non-extant) was built containing four classrooms.²⁷ That school would serve the island until 1929.²⁸

Charlotte Harbor had become widely known for its excellent tarpon fishing and, in 1909, the officers of the Boca Grande Land Company made a decision to build a hotel on the island, which would eventually become the Gasparilla Inn.. At first the hotel was small and intended only for the use of visiting directors and officers. In 1912 the hotel was enlarged. It was first known as Hotel Boca Grande but soon was renamed the Gasparilla Inn. Once the hotel was enlarged for use of paying guests, the railroad company built half a dozen homes on Second Street. One or two homes were built by railroad employees L.M. Fouts, the manager of the railroad on the island, built a large home. Some land on the island was sold for the construction of a few homes by wealthy buyers.²⁹ The list of early prominent property home owners included J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas Lamont, the Dupont family and other well-known names such as Crowninshield, Saltonstall, Payne, Cabot, Frothingham, Drexel, Biddle, and

²⁵ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 10.

²⁶ Plat Book 1, Page 37, Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

²⁷ "History of Boca Grande", a supplement in the Breeze Newspaper, June, 2006, pg. 17.

²⁸ Ibid.

a supplement in the Breeze Newspaper, June, 2006, pg. 17..

²⁹ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 12.

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Eastman. Some individuals began to construct a few commercial buildings in the center of the town to service the wealthy winter residents, railroad employees, and hotel guests and employees.

In 1915, the Gasparilla Inn was almost doubled in size. The tremendous enlargement and increase in visitors spurred the further establishment of the historic commercial center of Boca Grande. The Boca Grande Land Company hired Carl Rust, of the renowned Olmsted Brothers firm of Boston, to landscape the Inn and the central section of the island which was the commercial center. Gilchrist Avenue was lined with coconut palms and hibiscus as was Palm Avenue south of the Inn. Fifth Street was lined with casuarinas (Australian Pines). The block between Gilchrist Avenue and Park Avenue on Second Street was lined with banyan trees and today is known as Banyan Street. The company employed A.H. Twombly, a sanitary engineer, to lay out and install sewers and a large septic tank to serve the new hotel and the platted area of the town.

In 1916, Mr. Loomis, the Second Vice President and Manager of the Boca Grand Land Company, built 16 fishermen's houses at the north end of the island at the Peacon Cove Settlement.³⁰ A dairy farm was established on the south end of the island that same year. The train brought in other fresh goods.³¹ There were several ice houses by that time on the island where fisherman could store their catch until they could be shipped out by insulated rail cars.³² Boats also delivered groceries and general merchandise to the island from Punta Gorda.³³

In 1924, the land boom in Florida was at its height and the AAC was determined to capitalize on it and make greater efforts to sell property to the wealthy for winter homes. Despite great and high pressure sales efforts, land sales during this time were unsuccessful.

In 1925, Colonel L.J. Campbell, son of the President of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, was at Boca Grande recuperating from a loss of a leg and being gassed in World War I. He was well-acquainted with owners and prospective owners of valuable beachfront property including many from the east coast that were seeking a more serene or quaint atmosphere. He saw an opportunity and entered into an agreement to sell property for the ACC on a commission basis. An auction of the company's land holdings as well as the Gasparilla Inn was scheduled for January 29 and 30, 1925 at the

³⁰ Arnold, A.B., engineer for AAC Co. for 46 years, taken from a booklet he wrote on the history of the AAC, excerpt taken from a copy in possession of Historical and Architectural Research Services, pg. 126 and see Commentary footnote 7, attached thereto by Charles D. Gibson..

³¹ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 52.

³² Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, pg. 184.

³³ Ibid., pg. 62

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Tampa Bay Hotel. Land sales were made, many for cash, for a total land auctions sales amount of \$270,000 and, as a result, virtually all of the undeveloped beachfront 1 1/4 miles long was had been sold. During the remainder of the season, several more sales were made of interior lots.³⁴ About the same time, Mr. Warfield, President of the Seaboard Airline Railroad, was undertaking expansion plans in Florida by building a line to Palm Beach and Miami, extending below Ft. Myers on the west coast. Peter Bradley began negotiations with Warfield in regards to the CH & N Railroad. Eventually, a lease was negotiated which could later be converted to a sale. The effective date of the lease was December 31, 1925. Thus, the AAC Co. was no longer in the railroad business having profited a little over one million dollars.³⁵

The commercial center of the island finally began to grow with many new businesses starting up in the 1920s. By then, Gasparilla Island had become an extremely popular destination for wealthy and elite American visitors who came to enjoy its world class tarpon fishing and easy restful lifestyle.³⁶

In these early years, there were two grocery stores, a general mercantile, and a drug store. The town had a telephone office, several dress shops, a flower shop, several rooming houses, a movie theater, an ice storage house, a fish market, a car dealership, and a gas station. A variety of new residents came to the island to make it their home, some to start new businesses, and others to work for the railroad.³⁷ By 1929, the town had a community center but the post office, established in 1910, was the center of downtown activity.³⁸

After an unsuccessful attempt to auction off the Gasparilla Inn in 1925, the ACC sold the Inn to Barron G. Collier of New York City in March of 1930. Collier built a new golf course east of the Gasparilla Inn for its guests and opened a local bank. He purchased the telephone, lighting, and fire protection systems from the Boca Grande Corporation. The ACC had built and owned the powerhouse providing electricity for the island in 1909. The powerhouse remained in use, and most likely under Collier financial interest, until 1952 when FPL took it over and began to provide electric service to the island.³⁹

Few land sales took place during the Depression and during World War II. Repeated attempts were made to sell the remaining lots and acreage in one package with special efforts to sell to island beachfront owners. Finally, in December, 1945, all of the Boca Grand Land Co.'s remaining land

³⁴ Arnold, A.B., engineer for AAC Co. for 46 years, taken from a booklet he wrote on the history of the AAC, excerpt taken from a copy in possession of Historical and Architectural Research Services, pg. 130,

³⁵ Lee County Designation Report, Boca Grande Historic District, 1990.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 74

³⁷ *Boca Grande, Images of America*, p. 52.

³⁸ *Boca Grande Lives of an Island*, pgs. 65 & 116, and Lee County Designation Report, Boca Grande Historic District, 1990.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pgs. 111-112.

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holdings were sold to H. L. Schwartz, a wealthy oil distributor of New York City. Those holdings included land on the island situated in Charlotte County and also a large portion of the undeveloped land in Lee County.⁴⁰ Schwartz formed the Sunset Realty Co., New York Real Estate firm. Thus, the AAC no longer owned any part of Gasparilla Island.⁴¹ To this day, Sunset Realty continues to have land holdings on the island.⁴²

Barron Collier died in 1939 and the Collier Corporation retained ownership of the Gasparilla Inn until 1963 when a group of investors purchased Collier's holdings. One year later, Bayard Sharp, who had visited in lived on the island for many years and a party of that group, bought out the others and took it over. Bayard Sharp, along with others on the island, began a long campaign and worked hard to preserve the old way of life on the island. Nearly all of the property owners and several of the island's long-term guests put great effort into a fight against excessive development⁴³ and were successful in limiting the amount and size of future development. Because of limited development that has taken place and the designation of a local historic district to protect the historic core of the island, Boca Grande retains its unique unspoiled natural feeling. A large number of wealthy winter residents and hotel guests intersperse with fishermen and together they have formed a year-round community.

Albert Gilchrist, Early Officer of Boca Grande Land Co. and Former Governor of Florida (1858-1926)

Albert W. Gilchrist was born on January 15, 1858 in Greenwood, South Carolina. He was the son of General William E. and Rhoda Elizabeth (Waller) Gilchrist. His father was a prosperous cotton farmer near Quincy, Florida. Albert attended the Carolina Military Institute in Charlotte, North Carolina from 1876 to 1878. He then attended the United States Military Academy at West Point but failed to graduate. He became a civil engineer and real estate dealer before finally settling in Punta Gorda, Florida where he served as surveyor for the Florida Southern Railroad and he owned orange groves. He worked as surveyor for the State of Florida in 1897 and his survey and real estate ventures paved the way for settlers in the entire Charlotte Harbor area. Gilchrist was a brigadier general of the Florida militia until 1898, when he volunteered for service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War during which he attained the rank of Captain before being discharged in 1899.

⁴⁰ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 185.

⁴¹ Arnold, A.B., engineer for AAC Co. for 46 years, taken from a booklet he wrote on the history of the AAC, excerpt taken from a copy in possession of Historical and Architectural Research Services, pg. 130-131.

⁴² Lee County Property Appraiser's records.

⁴³ Island Reporter, February 17, 1978.

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In 1893, Gilchrist was elected to the Florida House of Representatives where he served as Speaker of the House. He served as a representative until 1905. Gilchrist was elected the twentieth governor of the State of Florida in 1908 and took the oath of office on January 5, 1909. His primary focus as governor was public health and he was responsible for building the first state building in Tallahassee after the Capital. He was a tremendous promoter of the state.⁴⁴ Gilchrist left office on January 7, 1913. He spent a number of years living in Punta Gorda in his later life. He never married and he died on May 15, 1926 in New York City.⁴⁵

Carl Rust Parker, Landscape Architect

Carl Rust Parker of Portland, Maine was a member of the Olmsted Brothers firm⁴⁶. The premier landscape architectural firm in the United States for many years and is responsible for the early landscaping plan for the downtown area of Boca Grande and for the grounds of the Gasparilla Inn. The Olmsted firm is best known as the designer of New York's Central Park and the Vanderbilt estate, Biltmore. Parker designed a number of landscape projects in Maine including the grounds of the governor's mansion, Blaine House (1920). He is also known to have laid out the grounds of the University of Maine, Elmhurst (NR) 1913, also known as the Hyde Mansion, a 23 acre estate in Bath, Maine. Another of his landscape plans was executed at the Ralph S. Norton House, in Falmouth, Maine.

Peter Bradley (1859-1933)

Peter Butler Bradley, of New York was born in 1850.⁴⁷ Bradley was a director and member of the executive committee of the American Agricultural Chemical Co. whose trade name was Agrico. The company was America's leading fertilizer conglomerate. Bradley was one of the fertilizer capitalists of the period and his time. He served as the company's chief executive from 1906-1921. He quickly began buying up all the mines and claims along the Peace River in west central Florida. He first purchased the Peace River Phosphate Co. in the early 1890's and then quickly bought out GW Scott and his Desoto Phosphate Co. at Zolfo and Comer & Hull's operations at Arcadia and Hull, Florida. Consolidating all into his Peace River Phosphate Co. he then began pushing the railroad south to Liverpool, where the ore could be loaded and hauled to waiting ships in the deep water off Boca Grande. Operations continued this way for years until the drying plant at Hull burned around 1900 and a new dryer was erected at Liverpool. By this time, Bradley had acquired a large acreage of phosphate land in central Polk County and a new

⁴⁴ Peebles, Vernon, taken from a copy of Gilchrist Papers in his possession, in a telephone interview with Mikki Hartig on October 18, 2006, and Lee County Designation Report, Boca Grande Historic District, 1990.

⁴⁵ Wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_W._Gilchrist, <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/museum/collections/governors/about.cfm?id=27> and Florida State University, Albert Waller Gilchrist Papers Collection Guide.

⁴⁶ Olmsted Papers, Library of Congress

⁴⁷ "Peter Bradley," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (James T. White & Co., 1936), vol. 25, pg. 282.

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operation was begun at Pierce, Florida. Bradley was responsible for initiating and being the driving force for his company's development of Gasparilla Island and had an important influence on the early settlement of the island as a resort community. He is often called the father of Boca Grande.

Baron Collier, (1873-1939)

Baron Collier was born in Memphis, Tennessee on March 23, 1873. He quit school at 16. He first became successful at the early of age 20. By 26, he had amassed his first million by selling advertising card franchises to the trolley, train and subway lines. With his base in New York City, Collier's Consolidated Street Railway Advertising Company led the market in mass transit advertising with affiliates in over 70 American Cities, Canada, and Cuba. Collier married Juliet Gordon Carnes, a Memphis girl, in 1907. The couple had three sons who later carried on their father's empire.

In 1911, Barron Collier visited Useppa Island off the Fort Myers coast. He was immediately captivated by the region. Over the next decade Collier accumulated over a million acres of land in southwest Florida, making him the largest landowner in the state. His holdings accumulated to 1.3 million acres and stretched from the Ten Thousand Islands coastal area northward to Useppa Island and inland from what is now Naples into the Everglades and Big Cypress areas. He owned 90% of Marco Island.

Collier envisioned a vacation, agricultural and environmental paradise on Florida's last frontier. He invested millions of dollars to transform and develop his untouched tracts of wilderness. He was involved in the earliest efforts to drain the Everglades and was a driving force in the completion of the Tamiami Trail. When road construction on the western side of the Trail faced financial difficulties, Collier agreed to finish the highway on the condition that a new county be named in his honor. The Florida State Legislature obliged, creating Collier County on May 8, 1923, with Everglades (later Everglades City) as the County seat. Collier planned and developed that town as well as made it his home base for his road building company. A bridge in Charlotte County and a high school in Naples also bear his name. Collier was also involved in purchasing and established luxury hotels, resorts and exclusive fishing clubs throughout southwest Florida.⁴⁸

Barron Collier died on March 13, 1939, at the age of 66. At that time, he remained Florida's largest land owner. In 1947, land that Collier had set aside for a nature preserve was turned over to the state for management as a state park. Collier-Seminole State Park opened in 1947. The Baron Collier Company remains in existence today.

⁴⁸ Gail Clement, Florida International University, South Florida National History, 1884-1934, Everglades Biographies, Baron Griffin Collier, "History of Boca Grande". a supplement in the Breeze Newspaper, June, 2006, pg. 16., et,

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Francis and Louisa Dupont Crowninshield

Francis B. Crowninshield was a descendent of a wealthy New England shipping family. He and his wife, Louisa Dupont Crowninshield, one of the islands most influential and loved residents built a cottage on Gulf Boulevard at First Street. Mrs. Crowninshield was a direct descendent of E.I. Dupont, the patriarch of the Dupont family of Delaware and the founder of the Dupont Company who first made their fortune in the munitions business during World War I. Louisa Crowninshield made a great impact on the quality of life on the island and was instrumental in establishing and partially funding the Community House, the Boca Grande Clinic, and the Boca Grande School. In the 1920s, she made the push for a new school for the island and exchanged four acres of her own holdings on the island for a new school to be built on for the two lots where the old school stood.⁴⁹ She worked hard to raise money to build the school. The school no longer operates but the school building has survived and is now the town's Community Center. In the 1930s, she was considered the social leader of the "beachfront" Both Crowninshields were endeared by island residents for their philanthropy and dedication to the betterment of the island and its residents from their arrival in 1916 until their deaths in the 1950s.⁵⁰ Mrs. Crowninshield's brother, Harry F. DuPont, also bought land and built a cottage in the same block on Boca Grande.

Bayard Sharp (1913-2002)

Bayard Sharp was a philanthropist, politician, Republican, political activist and sportsman. Sharp was born in 1913 and first visited the island in 1924. His mother was Isabella Dupont and his father was H. Rodney Sharp, Jr. Louise Crowninshield was his cousin. His parents had discovered the island a few years earlier and built a home on the island in the mid 1920s. Bayard Sharp continued to visit the island as he grew up. He graduated from the University of Virginia. Sharp served as a Wilmington, Delaware Council President. He was lieutenant commander in the Navy during World War II. He served as an advisor to presidents, congressmen and governors. Sharp established the foundation that endowed the Historic Houses of Odessa. A building bears his name at the University of Delaware. He donated 113 acres and a mile of beachfront property that became a State Park in that state. He maintained his own home in Boca Grande. He was said to be as comfortable in the company of fishermen as he was with presidents. Sharp was loyal to Boca Grande locals and nurtured many local businesses. He loved both politics and horse racing and had a national influence in both his passions. George Bush, Sr. was one of his close friends. Bush visited Sharp every year in Boca Grande for a number of years. Sharp was an accomplished thoroughbred horse breeder and owner. His horses won major stakes in Delaware. He was also the chairman of *Blood Horse, Inc.* magazine and a member and steward of the Jockey Club and a

⁴⁹ "History of Boca Grande", a supplement in the *Breeze Newspaper*, June, 2006, pg. 17.

⁵⁰ *Boca Grande, Lives of an Island*, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pgs. 28-38.

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trustee emeritus of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association. In essence for many years, Sharpe was the essence of Boca Grande. It was to his credit that the island was stabilized and protected⁵¹ From intensive development over the last fifty years. During the 1970s and 1980s, along with approximately 300 others, became a leader in the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association (GICIA). It is in large part that is island had not been excessively developed and maintains its respite and charm. Upon Sharp's death at age 89 in August of 2002, former president George Bush expressed his condolences and was quoted as saying "I can't think of a finer gentleman, and he will be sorely missed..."⁵²

Conclusion

Over the years, a good representation of the social registry and financial tycoons and politicians of the day at one time or other have visited the island or owned homes there. The downtown core and the nearby Gasparilla Inn have historically been the centers of life on the island and provided an uncrowded leisurely destination and pace for visitors and residents and a mecca for fishermen and yachtsman in a secluded location. Boca Grande continues to invoke the wealthy at play before the Depression years. The downtown commercial center has provided for the needs of the entire community including those engaged in the phosphate industry, building the railroad and commercial fishing. It has also and continues to serve the American elite who enjoy yachting, fishing tennis, golf, and the Gulf of Mexico in a relaxed informal atmosphere and setting. Island residents have continuously attempted to retain both anonymity and isolation from the tourist and social scenes with great success making it one of Florida's little-known yet significant historic locales protected from the perils of the results of intense development that most other early Florida communities have endured, largely through the successful efforts of Bayard Shape and other property owners during the 1970s.

Criterion Considerations and Conclusion

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architecture. The structures within the district embody distinctive characteristics of various types of historic architecture and their period of construction. The buildings are surviving examples of early Florida structures that were constructed to serve the needs of island residents and visitors. The district continues to relay its historic function as well as integrity in its location, design and setting, period of construction, materials, workmanship, historic association and feeling. It retains a relatively high degree of integrity. Although some of the contributing buildings have undergone some

⁵¹ Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 41.

⁵² The News Journal, August 15, 2002, 1978.

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form of alteration, those alterations primarily consist of replacement display window framing, entrance doors and some windows, these alterations are generally reversible. Overall, the Downtown Boca Grande Historic District retains integrity and continues to relay its historic character to a high degree.

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Gilchrist Papers, in possession of Vernon Peeples, Punta Gorda, Florida.

Beatty, Pastor (Dr.) Gary, "The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande, Florida, 1909-2008," 2008, and Cost, Pansy, lifetime island resident, congregation member, and town librarian for 50 years, in an interview with Pastor Beatty used in preparation of church history.

Interviews

Peeples, Vernon, Charlotte County historian and owner of Gilchrist Papers., Telephone interview on October 18, 2006 with Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, FL.

Fugate, Suzanne, Sarasota, FL, granddaughter of original owner of Fugates and daughter of co-owners up until 1982. Telephone interview with Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, FL, on October 18, 2007.

Historic Photos

Boca Grande Historical Society

Miscellaneous

Boca Grande Promotional Brochure, c.1926, Gasparilla Inn Archives. Boca Grande, FL

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

SECTION 10

Verbal Boundary Description

The proposed boundaries are as follows:

The boundaries encompass two full city blocks and portions of four other blocks. Properties within the district align; Park Avenue from 3rd Street W to 5th Street E, W, East Railroad Avenue from 3rd Street W to 5 Street E, and a few properties within the proposed boundaries align 4th Street W and Gilchrist Avenue.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries incorporate the largest concentration of historic resources associated with and contiguous to the historic commercial center of Boca Grande and the largest proportion of contributing resources.

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

PHOTO LOG

Photo Inventory

1. Park Avenue, looking S
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 3. Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, 1325 Coconut Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34238
 4. July 23, 2007
 5. Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, 1325 Coconut Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34234
 6. Park Avenue, Looking South
 7. 1 of 49
- Items 2-5 are the same for the remaining non-historic photographs

1. Park Avenue Street View, Looking North
6. Park Avenue, looking N
7. 2 of 49

1. Park Avenue Street View, Looking South
6. Park Avenue, Looking South
7. 3 of 49

1. Old Boca Grande Post Office, 444 & 446 4th Street E.
6. Primary façade, Looking Southeast
7. 4 of 49

1. Anchor Inn, 450 4th Street, E.
6. West elevation and partial Primary Façade, Looking Northeast
7. 5 of 49

1. Boca Grande Baptist Church, 421 4th Street, W.
6. North & West elevations, Looking Northeast
7. 6 of 49

1. Boca Grande Baptist Church Pastorium, 421 4th Street, W.
6. Primary façade, Looking North
7. 7 of 49

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

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1. Boca Grande Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 421 4th Street
 6. West elevation, Looking East
 7. 8 of 49

 1. Fugate's, 428 4th Street W.,
 6. East & North elevations, Looking Southwest
 7. 9 of 49

 1. Charlotte & Northern Railroad/Seaboard Railroad Depot, 443 4th Street, W.
 6. West & South elevations, Looking Northeast
 7. 10 of 49

 1. Alafia Manatee & Gulf Railway, Charlotte & Northern Railroad & Seaboard Railroad and railway remnants, 443 4th Street, W.
 5. Looking Northeast
 7. 11 of 49

 6. St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 390 Gilchrist Avenue
 5. Primary elevation, Looking East
 7. 12 of 49

 1. Jesse & Margaret Downing House, 310 Palm Avenue
 6. Primary elevation, Looking East
 7. 13 of 49

 1. Austin Bass House, 311 Palm Avenue,
 6. Primary façade, Looking West
 7. 14 of 49

 1. John & Honor Downing House, 330 Palm Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking E
 7. 15 of 49

 1. Lonnie Futch & Louise Futch Thompson House, 340 Palm Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 16 of 49

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

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- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Gaines/Spear House, 341 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking Northwest |
| 7. | 17 of 48 |
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| 1. | Mary Frances Whidden Thompson House, 342 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 18 of 49 |
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| 1. | Gasparilla Inn Employee Dormitory, 351 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 19 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Richard & Jane Kuhl House, 370 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 20 of 49 |
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| 1. | Corum Lanier House, 380 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 21 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Howell House/Palmetto Inn, 381 Palm Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 22 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | San Marco Theater, 321 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade and partial South elevation, Looking Northwest |
| 7. | 23 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Cabbage Court, 333 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 24 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | 333 Park Avenue, Retail/Office Building |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 25 of 49 |

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Section 10 Page 5

Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

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- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Van Fleet Building, 340 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 26 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Temptation Restaurant, 350 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 27 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Boca Grande Fish Market, 360 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 28 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Kuhl's Store, 370 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking East |
| 7. | 29 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Jeanne Alzamora House & Art Gallery |
| 6. | 371 Park Avenue, Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 30 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Wilhelm House, 375 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 31 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | Boca Grande Mercantile, 390 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade and West elevation, Looking Southeast |
| 7. | 32 of 49 |
| | |
| 6. | 411 Park Avenue, |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 33 of 49 |
| | |
| 1. | 421 Park Avenue |
| 6. | Primary façade, Looking West |
| 7. | 34 of 49 |

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

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1. Rachel's Dress & Hat Shop, 431 Park Avenue
 6. Primary façade and N elevation, Looking Southwest
 7. 35 of 49

 1. Whidden's Grocery & Gulf Gas Station, 441 Park Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking West
 7. 36 of 49

 1. Whidden House, 441 Park Avenue
 6. Primary elevation, Looking West
 7. 37 of 49

 1. 471-477 Park Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking West
 7. 38 of 49

 1. Apartment Building, 471 Park Avenue
 6. Primary façade and North elevation, Looking Southwest
 7. 39 of 49

 1. 320 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 40 of 49

 1. Griffin Builders, 330 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 41 of 49

 1. Boca Grande Fire Station, 350 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 42 of 49

 1. Hotel Quick, 370 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 43 of 49

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CONTINUATION SHEETSection 10 Page 7Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

-
1. Gaines Chevrolet Dealership, 380 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 44 of 49

 1. 384 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 45 of 49

 1. Sprint Building, 390 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade and North elevation, Looking Southeast
 7. 46 of 49

 1. The Galleria/Agles Building, 420 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade and South elevation, Looking Northeast
 7. 47 of 49

 6. Boca Grande Land Company Office/Sunset Realty Office, 430 E. Railroad Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking East
 7. 48 of 49

 1. Boca Grande United Methodist Church Parsonage, 300 Gilchrist Avenue
 6. Primary façade, Looking North
 7. 49 of 49

 1. Boca Grande United Methodist Church, 300 Gilchrist Avenue
 3. Unknown
 5. Boca Grande United Methodist Church, <http://thelighthouseumc.com>
 6. Primary façade, Looking North
 7. 50 of 50

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Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

HISTORIC PHOTO LOG

1. 4th Street E.
2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
3. Unknown
4. c.1915
5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
6. 4th Street E. Street View, Looking East
7. A

1. Aerial View of Boca Grande
2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
3. Unknown
4. 1920
5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
6. Postcard aerial view of Boca Grande, Looking North
7. B

1. Boca Grande Mercantile, 390 Park Avenue
2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
3. Unknown
4. c. 1912
5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
6. North and East Elevations, Looking Southwest
7. C

1. 4th Street
2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
3. Unknown
4. 1926
5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
6. Street view of 4th Street, Boca Grande, FL, Looking East
7. D

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CONTINUATION SHEETSection 10 Page 9Downtown Boca Grande Historic District
Lee County, FL

-
1. Howell House/Palmetto Inn
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 3. Unknown
 4. c.1914
 5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
 6. Primary Façade and East Elevation, Looking Southwest
 7. E
-
1. Fugate's 428 4th Street, W.
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 4. c. 1937
 5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
 6. North and East elevations, Looking Southwest
 7. F
-
1. Temptation Restaurant & Van Fleet Building, 340 & 350 Park Avenue
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 3. Unknown
 4. c. 1950
 5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
 6. Primary Elevations, Looking Southeast
 7. G
-
1. Anchor Inn, 450 4th Street, E.
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 4. c. 1928
 5. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
 6. South Elevation, Looking North
 7. H
-
1. San Marco Theater, 321 Park Avenue
 2. Boca Grande, Lee County, FL
 3. Unknown
 4. c. 1974
 5. Primary façade, Looking Northwest
 6. Boca Grande Historical Society, Boca Grande, FL 33921
 7. I

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

	Address / Historic Name	Present Use	Style	Built	FMSF #
4th Street East					
450	Anchor Inn	Residential, Vacation Accommodations	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL00873
4th Street West					
421	Baptist Church	Religious Facility	Frame Vernacular	1915	8LL00947
421	Baptist Church Pastorium	Residential, Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1933	8LL00946
428	Fugate's	Retail & Office	Art Modern	1936	8LL01816
433	Charlotte & Northern/Seaboard Railway Depot	Retail, Office & Commercial	Mediterranean Revival	1909	8LL00909
East Railroad Avenue					
330	Griffin Builders	Office	Frame Vernacular	1926	8LL00845
330	Outbuilding	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1926	8LL00845
370	Hotel Quick	Residential., Multi-family condominium	Frame Vernacular	1917	8LL02477
380	Gaines Chevrolet Dealership	Retail (Barnichol)	Masonry Vernacular	1935	8LL00843
384	Bakery	Boca Grande Baking Company, Retail & Residential, Multi-family	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL02478
430	Boca Grande Land Company/Sunset Realty	Seale Family Realty, Inc., Office	Frame Vernacular	1926	8LL00840
	Railroad R/W Alafia, Manatee & Gulf Railway/CNN Railway/Seaboard Railroad track remnant & Bicycle/Pedestrian Path	Memorial for former railroad operation on the island	N/A	1906	
Gilchrist Avenue					
300	Boca Grande United Methodist Church	Parsonage	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL00938
390	St. Andrew's Episcopal Church	Religious Facility	Frame Vernacular	1915	8LL00851
Palm Avenue					
310	Jesse & Margaret Downing House	Residential, Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL00880
311	Austin Bass House	Residential, Single Family & Office	Frame Vernacular	1940	8LL00879
330	John & Honor Downing House	Residential, Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1946	8LL00878
340	Lonnie Futch & Louise Futch Thompson House	Residential, Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1946	8LL00877
341	Gaines/Spear House	Residential, Single family	Frame Vernacular	1927	8LL01712
342	Mary Frances Whidden Thompson House	Residential Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1910	8LL00952
342	Cistern (Mary Frances Whidden Thompson House)	N/A	N/A	1910	8LL00952
370	Richard and Jane Kuhl House	Residential Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1915	8LL00876
380	Corum Lanier House	Residential Single Family	Frame Vernacular	1930	8LL00874
381	Howell House / Palmetto Inn	Residential, Multi-family	Frame Vernacular	1909	8LL00875
Park Avenue					
321	San Marco Theatre	Retail, Commercial, Office	Frame Vernacular	1928	8LL00903
333	Cabbage Court	Residential, Multi-family, Apartments	Art Modern	1953	8LL01815
340	Van Fleet Building	Retail, Office & Residential	Masonry Vernacular	1945	8LL00904
350	Temptation Restaurant	Commercial, Temptation Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	1939	8LL02476
360	Boca Grande Fish Market	White Pelican Shop, Retail	Masonry Vernacular	1941	8LL00905
370	Kuhl's Store	Smart Studio, Retail	Masonry Vernacular	1928	8LL01704
375	Wilhelm House	Boca Grande Outfitters, Inc., Retail & Offices	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL00907
375	Garage/outbuilding	Commercial	Frame Vernacular	1925	8LL00907
431	Rachel's Dress & Hat Shop	Gasparilla Outfitters, Retail & Office	Frame Vernacular	1917	8LL00911
441	Whidden's Grocery & Gulf Gas Station/Hudson's Grocery	Hudson's Grocery, Retail	Masonry Vernacular	1948	8LL00912
441	Gas Pump	N/A	N/A	1948	
471/477	471-477 Park Avenue	Pink Pony, Retail, Office & Residential	Frame Vernacular	1915	8LL00904

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

	Address / Historic Name	Present Use	Style	Built	FMSF #
4th Street East					
444 /446	Old Boca Grande Post Office	Retail & Office	Masonry Vernacular	c.1926	8LL02475
4th Street West					
421	Fellowship Hall	Congregation Meeting & Fellowship Hall	Masonry Vernacular	1962	8LL00947
East Railroad Avenue					
320	Frame Outbuilding	Storage	Masonry Vernacular	c.2004	N/A
360	Boca Grande Fire Station	Fire & Rescue Station	Mediterranean Revival	2004	N/A
384	Bakery	Boca Grande Baking Company, attached outbuilding			
390	Sprint	Telecommunication equipment building	Masonry Vernacular	1983	N/A
420	East Railroad Ave	A Perfect Day In Paradise , Retail & Offices	Mediterranean Revival	1992	N/A
430	East Railroad Ave	Carport	Metal Vernacular	c.1995	8LL00840
Gilchrist Avenue					
300	Boca Grande United Methodist Church	Church Building			
Palm Avenue					
310	Metal shed	Storage	Metal Vernacular	c.1995	N/A
311	Metal shed	Storage	Metal Vernacular	c.1986	8LL00879
311	Wood gazebo	Leisure	Frame Vernacular	2004	8LL00879
330	Wood shed	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1998	N/A
341	Wood shed	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1985	N/A
342	Metal shed	Storage	Metal Vernacular	c.1980	N/A
351	Gasparilla Inn Employee Dorm	Residential/Multi-family/hotel employee housing	Masonry Vernacular	1978	N/A
380	Wood shed	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1982	N/A
Park Avenue					
321	Frame shed	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1982	N/A
321	Cooler	Food Storage	Metal Vernacular	c.1982	N/A
333	Frame Bldg	Retail, Commercial & Office	Frame Vernacular	c.1999	N/A
371	The Jeanne Alzamora House/Art Gallery	Residential, Single Family	Masonry Vernacular	1979	N/A
390	Boca Grande Mercantile	Office	Masonry Vernacular	1910	8LL00908
411	Park Ave	Office.	Commercial Modern	2003	N/A
421	Park Ave	Retail, Office & Residential, Single Family	Masonry Vernacular	1946	8LL00910
441	Whidden House	Residential, Duplex	Masonry Vernacular	1948	8LL00912
441	Cooler	Food Storage	Metal Vernacular	c.1975	8LL00912
441	Frame Shed	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c.1975	8LL00912
471-477	Apartment building				