

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED  
APR 12 1990

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Initial Period of Development, 1911-1918

Boomtime Development, 1919-1928

**C. Geographical Data**

City Limits of Lake Wales

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

3/22/90

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

Amy Federman

5/10/90

---

**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

---

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   1   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing**SUMMARY**

The Lake Wales Multiple Property Group fulfills Criteria A, B, and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The properties included are significant for their association with persons and events which are locally significant in the areas of commerce, transportation, religion, government, and exploration and settlement. The properties have additional significance as good examples of statewide and national trends in architecture during the 1910s and 1920s. All of the buildings included under this cover were constructed within one of two periods of development of Lake Wales: the Initial Period of Development, 1911-1918; and Boomtime Development, 1919-1928. The properties built within these historical periods include the most significant historic resources within Lake Wales.

**HISTORIC CONTEXTS:****I. Initial Period of Development, 1911-1918**

Lake Wales developed relatively late in the recorded history of Florida. Lying in the central highlands region of the state, the area around Lake Wales experienced little development prior to the turn of the twentieth century. There is no recorded archaeological evidence to suggest that the area was widely inhabited by prehistoric or historic Indian tribes. The lack of river access to the region from either coast also prevented exploration and settlement of the area during the Spanish and British colonial periods. The Second Seminole War (1835-1842) sparked the first concerted development of the southern interior of the state. Forts and military roads were constructed to provide communication in the various theaters of operation. Polk County was established in 1861 out of parts of Hillsborough and Brevard Counties. In 1867 Bartow, fifteen miles to the west of the present Lake Wales, was made the county seat.

The area where Lake Wales is located was first surveyed by Colonel J.W. Childs for the U.S. government in 1879. Childs named a large lake in Section 1 of Township 30 South, Range 26 East for S.I. Wailes, an attorney and State Agent for Florida in Washington who had accompanied him during the survey.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number   E   Page   2   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, however, only sporadic settlement, spurred mostly by the cattle and expanding citrus industries, occurred along the Highlands Ridge. Other than Bartow, the area around Lake Wailes remained largely a wilderness until the Sessom Investment Company took an interest in exploiting its abundant pine forests.

The men who arrived in the Lake Wailes area to establish a lumber and naval stores business during the early 1900s saw the possibilities. Among the first to recognize the developmental potential of the area was G.V. Tillman, who first visited the Highlands Ridge in 1902. Tillman, a native of Belleville, Georgia, had previous experience with the production of naval stores in Georgia and North Florida. In 1906, Tillman and three other men - C.L. Johnson, B.F. Bullard, and B.K. Bullard - formed the Sessoms Investment Company to deal in real estate and promote the naval stores industry in the area. The company purchased 180,000 acres of land in the region. In 1911, the same group, joined by E.C. Stuart, formed the Lake Wales Land Company and purchased 5,000 acres of land near Lake Wailes from the Sessoms Investment Company. (It is not known why the change in the spelling of "Wailes" came about.)

Following a nationwide trend toward enlightened town planning, the company employed a professional civil engineer, A.C. Nydegger of Winter Haven, to survey and plat its acreage. Nydegger's plan called for the establishment of a central business area west of the tracks of the newly arrived Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and residential lots around the scenic lakes. Taking into account the natural features of the land, Nydegger introduced diagonal and curvilinear drives that produced scenic vistas for choice residential building sites. Nydegger also surveyed and platted the town of Sebring, some thirty miles south of the Lake Wales location.

The event that proved crucial to the early development of Lake Wales was the extension of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad from Haines City to Lake Wales in June 1911. The railroad ended the relative isolation of the community, which previously could be reached only by sand trails. It provided access to the community for prospective settlers and an avenue to northern markets for the products of the naval stores and citrus industries. In addition, the arrival of the railroad

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   3   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

bolstered the confidence of the members of the Lake Wales Company, who subsequently proceeded to build a community infrastructure.

Land sales were enthusiastically promoted. The first and most prominent of Lake Wales' promoters was J. Walker Pope, a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, who from his Winter Haven office began selling real estate as an agent for the Lake Wales Land Company in 1911. His promotional tracts emphasized the natural beauty of the area.

Besides a turpentine still, the town's structures in its first year included an ice plant, a general store, a small railroad depot, and a hotel, which provided accommodations for arriving settlers and construction workers. Plans were being drafted by year's end for a waterworks. The concession for the water system and an electric plant was assumed by E.C. Stuart.

A fire department was organized in 1914, the same year the town got its first telephone exchange. A school, churches, bank, post office, drug store, commercial buildings, and many residences, numbering more than eighty structures in all, were either completed or under construction in 1915. A second railroad, the Seaboard Air Line, began construction of a line through the city. The first train from the second line, which ran east from Tampa, entered the town on April 5, 1915. The initial runs of a local newspaper were printed in Bartow and expressed by train to Lake Wales. On March 16, 1916 the first issue of a locally printed paper, the **Lake Wales Highlander**, began circulating. It claimed that Lake Wales had a population of 300, which is evidence of the rapid growth the community experienced in its early years.

E.C. Stuart, G.V. Tillman, C.L. Johnson, and B.K. Bullard, all of whom were involved in both the Sessoms Investment Company and the Lake Wales Land Company, were the principal directors of Lake Wales' development in that incipient period of growth. The first bank in the village was established by T.J. Parker in the small general store he owned and managed. In 1915, as the village began to assume larger proportions, Stuart and an associate, T.J. Wetmore, obtained a state charter for a second bank. Tillman, Johnson, and Bullard joined them as directors of the new institution, which within six months

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   4   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

purchased Parker's banking interests. In addition to serving as president of the bank, Stuart owned the power and ice plants; Johnson played a significant role in the organization and management of local fruit growing associations; Bullard operated a large general department store, established an insurance agency, served in the state legislature, and remained actively engaged in the naval stores industry; and Tillman managed the affairs of the land company itself. All built handsome residences in the city they had founded. (The C.L. Johnson House was listed in the National Register in 1989.)

In addition to its beauty, Lake Wales offered soils and a climate particularly well suited for citrus production. Citrus, long a vital economic base for the older communities in Polk County, soon supplanted naval stores as Lake Wales' most valuable industry. The first organization of local growers in the Lake Wales area was the Waverly Growers Cooperative, founded in 1914. A second, the Lake Wales Citrus Growers Association, was formed by a number of locally prominent independent producers in 1918. They joined an increasing number of similar organizations, as the Lake Wales area became part of a regional citrus boom. By the end of the decade, Polk County was the largest citrus producing county in the state, and the prospect of obtaining cheap land for the cultivation of citrus became a major draw in attracting settlers to the relatively undeveloped Highlands Ridge area.

The commercial and residential buildings constructed by the early residents of Lake Wales exude a sense of permanence and solidity that was not common to the communities of Florida which developed during the nineteenth century. The buildings of Lake Wales reflect the founders' confidence in the village's future. The Florida towns that developed in the earlier century grew organically, for the most part. That is, they began as outposts in the wilderness, small settlements that were usually placed along the coast or a natural artery of transportation. Their first residences and commercial buildings were wood frame. Brick did not come into widespread use until late in the century, after disastrous fires had leveled great parts of the earlier towns. Lake Wales did not have to endure that experience. The presence of the railroad, which could be used to import building materials, the by then common use of brick, and the easy availability of cut lumber

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   5   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

and twentieth century building materials allowed the early settlers of Lake Wales to erect substantial buildings from the start.

Lake Wales remained an unincorporated village until May 28, 1917, when it was incorporated as a town. A mayor and five councilmen were elected in June; B.K. Bullard served as president of the Town Council, and C.L. Johnson was the first tax assessor. Among the early acts of the council was an ordinance defining the town's fire limits, which provided for regulation of the use of building materials and ultimately led to the replacement of all wood frame buildings with brick and steel structures in the commercial sector.

On the eve of America's entry into World War I, Lake Wales was poised to begin its physical transformation from a fledgling rural community to a modern small town. The war, however, halted immediate progress in construction as the people of Lake Wales, like the rest of the country, turned their energies to the war effort. When development did resume after the war's end, it was spectacular.

## II. Boomtime Development (1919-1928):

Expansion in Lake Wales, especially in the commercial area, followed rapidly on the heels of Armistice Day. Within the following two years, eight substantial brick commercial block buildings were added to the downtown area where only three had existed before. The principal area of commercial development was concentrated along Railroad Avenue (now Scenic Highway), between Orange Avenue on the north and Central Avenue on the south. Some commercial development had begun to spread westward along Park Avenue. A large garage was constructed on Railroad Avenue, between Stuart and Central Avenues. It served as a showroom and repair shop for automobiles, which by that time had already become a ubiquitous feature of American life. A motion picture theater, another innovation of twentieth century American society, was located west of the garage. The post office stood on the north side of Stuart Avenue. Other commercial buildings included a drug store, grocery and mercantile stores, a shoe shop, feed store, and warehouse.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   6   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

By 1920, Lake Wales had experienced growth that in an earlier decade might have seemed phenomenal, rising from wilderness to a small urban community in the short span of seven years. It is doubtful, however, that even in their wildest dreams the founders and promoters of Lake Wales and other Florida communities would have envisioned the experience of the next five years.

During the 1920s, real estate speculation became the prime force behind what became known as the Great Florida Land Boom. Entranced by a flood of promotional literature expounding upon the beauty of Florida, freed by the increased mobility which the automobile afforded, and inspired by the prospect of making an easy fortune through land speculation, visitors from all over the country descended upon the state in unprecedented numbers.

It is difficult to exaggerate the speculative proportions of the 1920s Boom in Florida real estate. Miami and Palm Beach are generally regarded as the areas of most intense activity, but few communities in the central and southern parts of the state failed to get caught up in the feverish rush for property. Twenty thousand people were thought to be arriving daily in the state in December 1924. That fall, the Florida Legislature issued an open invitation to wealthy investors with approval of a constitutional amendment prohibiting either an income or inheritance tax. The resulting influx of capital further accelerated an already well developed surge of land purchasing.

Lake Wales shared in the experience, to the extent that the city might be regarded as a product of the Boom. From a base of 795 in 1920, the population jumped in five years to an official count of 2,747, an increase of 245 percent, which one contemporary writer said was the greatest gain made during that period by any Florida city or town. The Chamber of Commerce estimated the population that year in fact reached 4,000. The number of telephones in use rose from 117 to 1032 in that same period; power connections from 205 to 1,200; and water connections from 191 to 842. Together such figures provide a reliable index to the enormous building activity that occurred. The town did not begin to compile building permits until 1922, when 49 permits for business, garages, and homes were issued.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   E   Page   7   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

In 1925 and 1926, 248 and 283 such permits were granted. The valuation of such activity rose from \$64,389 in 1922 to \$1,278,800 in 1926.

The fire insurance maps produced for Lake Wales in 1924 indicate that growth was widely dispersed. Commercial infill westward along Park Avenue continued. As revealed by the building statistics, the growth was mainly in residential structures. The lots around Crystal Lake were about seventy-five percent filled by 1924. The blocks bounded by Bullard and Polk Avenues, the pond, and railroad were occupied to approximately the same extent. The northwest quadrant of the town, particularly 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Streets between Washington and North Avenues, was included in the 1924 map, which indicates heavy lot coverage in that area. Many of those buildings, however, may have been present before 1920.

Between 1924 and 1928 growth was characterized by additional infill of the already developed areas around the lakes. Major subdivisions were added in the southeast sector of the town, south of Lake Wailes and along Hesperides Highway. The lumber mill complex operated by the W.C. Sherman Company in the northwest corner of the town was greatly expanded. Within the commercial area, the Rhodesbilt Arcade, the most distinctive building in the downtown area, was completed in two stages between 1924 and 1926. The Dixie Walesbilt Hotel, a ten-story structure, towered over the town from its location between Park and Stuart Avenues on 1st Street. The 120-room hotel, which was completed in 1926, reflected the town's optimism about the tourist industry.

The area around Lake Wales also prospered, as evidenced by the development of the neighboring communities of Mountain Lake, Highland Park, Ridge Manor, and Babson Park. The continuing development in 1927 of Mountain Lake, construction of Lake Wales' new City Hall and high school, the latter designed by noted Tampa architect M. Leo Elliott, and the continuing prosperity of the citrus industry may have insulated Lake Wales to some extent against the more dramatic effects of the Boom's collapse.

The speculative bubble began to deflate in August 1925 when the overloaded Florida railroads announced an embargo on

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   E   Page   8   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

freight shipment to South Florida. Rail lines and ports in the Miami and West Palm Beach area had become clogged with incoming building materials. Bankers and businessmen throughout the nation had begun to complain about transfers of money to Florida. Newspapers suggested fraud in land sales. Florida's governor and a score of representatives from the state's press held a "Truth About Florida" meeting in New York in an effort to counter disparaging publicity. In spite of their efforts, Florida's image remained little changed. Property values that in some locations had soared to exaggerated levels during the Boom's peak fell precipitously, bringing over-extended speculators down with them. Conditions worsened in 1926 and construction activity in most parts of the state shut down in 1927. The Great Depression descended upon Florida, three years in advance of the rest of the country.

**Depression and Aftermath**

The population of Lake Wales had grown to 5,000 by 1928, but the Depression brought an end to the town's expansion. Although there was some infrastructural residential growth in the late 1930s, as the economy began to recover and Federal Housing Administration programs permitted easier access to credit for prospective home owners, Lake Wales, like most Florida cities, did not regain its developmental momentum until the end of World War II. The physical development of Florida cities, which came to a standstill during World War II, resumed with renewed vigor in the late 1940s as the state entered another period of halcyon growth.

Lake Wales was spared the devastating effects of change wrought by the expansion of Florida's highway systems during the 1950s and 1960s. The two major highways, north-south U.S. 27, and east-west S.R. 60, which cross one another within the city, skirt both its downtown business district and the residential areas that contain the city's highest concentration of historic buildings. The interstate system and accompanying strip development bypassed the city. As a result, Lake Wales possesses much of its historical infrastructure. Buildings that complemented one another in style, materials, color, and location generally remain. The scale of the city has been preserved over time, in spite of the rapid growth of Central Florida.

---

**F. Associated Property Types**

---

I. Name of Property Type PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

II. Description

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

III. Significance

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

IV. Registration Requirements

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

---

See continuation sheet for additional property types

---

**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

---

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

---

**H. Major Bibliographical References**

---

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: N/A

---

**I. Form Prepared By**

---

name/title Stephen Olausen/Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist  
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date March 22, 1990  
street & number R. A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333  
city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.1 Page 1 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

I. Name of Property Type: Commercial Buildings 1915-1928

II. Description:

The extant historic commercial buildings in Lake Wales embody Masonry Vernacular designs commonly found in the United States during the early twentieth century, and fall into the sub-type categories of either one-, two- or three-part blocks, or arcaded blocks. The two-part block was the most common commercial design used in small cities and towns in the United States between 1850 and 1950. Generally used only for two- to four-story buildings, it is characterized by a horizontal division into two distinct zones. The two zones are defined by the use of the interior space of the building. The lower zone is usually reserved for retail space and often contains large plate glass display windows, while the upper part contains space for offices or apartments. The exterior design of the building is usually homogeneous, but in some cases different building materials and exterior fabrics are used to visually divide the two zones. Decorative elements in vernacular commercial designs incorporated into the main facade. Shop windows were flanked by pilasters which provided an inviting frame for displaying retail merchandise. Horizontal or kick panels, beginning at ground level and rising several feet, framed the bases of the display windows. Constructed of a variety of materials, most commonly wood, the panels were resistant to breakage and weather damage.

The business entry was frequently recessed to avoid visual competition with the display area. A common storefront configuration was a central entrance with two obliquely placed windows flanking the doorway, and a band of transom lights placed above it. Metal or wood canopies or canvas awnings were most extensively used over commercial storefronts. When signs were placed on them, they served as an advertising medium. They also provided shelter for shoppers and extended the display area of the building.

The one-part block is a one story, free standing building that was a popular commercial design in small cities and towns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was adapted from the lower part of the more common two-part commercial block during the Victorian period. The one-part

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F.1 Page 2 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

block is a simple rectangular building, often with an ornate facade. It is most often utilized for retail or office space.

The three-part block is like a two-part block except that it has three distinct zones: a base; a central zone of one to three stories, called the shaft; and a cap. The first three-part blocks were developed in the 1850s and became very popular from the 1890s through the 1920s.

The arcaded block type of commercial building is also a variant of the two-part commercial building. It is based on a style derived from loggias, great arcaded porches, built in Italian cities during the Renaissance. Designed primarily for banks and large retail stores, most buildings of this type date from the first three decades of the twentieth century. Generally two or three stories high, the building type is characterized by a series of tall, evenly spaced, round-arched openings extending across a wide facade with no separate bracketing elements at the ends.

The Mediterranean Revival Style generally refers to a style derived from a combination of architectural elements borrowed from countries and cultures surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, primarily Spain and Italy. This practice became popular in the late 1910s as part of the increased national interest in historical styles and architecture. Interest in such styles was especially fostered by the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915. The style, so suitable for Florida's Mediterranean-like climate and Spanish history, became extremely popular in Florida and is closely associated with the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s.

General design characteristics include features taken from the Mission, Spanish Colonial Revival, and the Italian Renaissance styles: Moorish columns; low pitched, clay tiled, gabled, hipped, or flat parapeted roofs; stucco exteriors with terra cotta decorative features; and multi-level plans. Loggias and arcades are common features with plans in a U or L-shape, enclosing a courtyard. The walls may be decorated with cartouches, tile, and terra cotta insets. Highly decorated door and window surrounds are common.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.1 Page 3 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**III. Significance:**

The historic commercial buildings of Lake Wales are significant for their association with the development of the downtown commercial area of the city during the first two periods of its historical development. They have further significance as good examples of nationwide trends in vernacular commercial architecture.

In Lake Wales the blending of a variety of commercial architecture gives the downtown a distinct character. As the first brick structures replaced the original wood frame buildings in the commercial area beginning in 1915, a conscious effort was made by the merchants to create functional and pleasing architectural designs. The pioneering businessmen of Lake Wales contracted builders familiar with the latest trends in small town vernacular commercial architecture. Although relatively small in scale, the commercial buildings constructed during this initial period of development reflect a confidence by their builders in the future of Lake Wales.

During the land boom period of the 1920s the commercial buildings became more exuberant, reflecting a general increase in wealth. Professional architects were increasingly employed over lay builders to design buildings in popular Mediterranean influenced styles. Rapid expansion during the boom era removed most of the vestiges of the city's frontier appearance. More than in any other area of the city, the solid concentration of buildings provides the commercial center with a decided boomtime flavor.

Historic commercial buildings in Lake Wales are tangible evidence of how the city's commercial area evolved. There is an obvious difference in design, materials, and quality of buildings erected during the historical periods, and those added later. The historic buildings represent the hopes and dreams of early merchants, who foresaw the establishment of Lake Wales as a thriving community and a viable place to do business.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.1 Page 4 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**IV. Registration Requirements:**

To be eligible for inclusion under the Lake Wales Multiple Property Cover, all commercial buildings must have been constructed during the initial period of Lake Wales' development (1911-1918) or the boom era (1919-1928). They must exhibit designs and materials consistent with those detailed in the description statement above and be located within the Downtown Redevelopment Area, bounded by Crystal Avenue on the north, Scenic Highway on the east, Tillman Avenue on the South, and Wetmore Street on the west. In addition, individual buildings considered architecturally significant must maintain the integrity of their original design to a degree that will meet established National Register criteria.

The results of the historical and architectural survey performed in Lake Wales in 1988-89 show that the boundaries of the Downtown Redevelopment Area encompass the vast majority of buildings with historic commercial functions. Although there has been a good deal of subsequent development in the area, the concentration of buildings suggests the formation of a historic commercial district there. Buildings moved into the area, unless they possess unusually significant historic associations, should be considered as non-contributing. Historic commercial buildings outside of the redevelopment area are isolated and have little to do with the overall development of Lake Wales' commercial center, and are excluded from eligibility under this cover.

Buildings considered as contributing to the character of the historic downtown area of Lake Wales should be representative of contemporary design trends during the period in which they were constructed. The original materials and architectural details must remain intact to a large degree. A building will be considered ineligible for listing if a significant portion of its original materials and architectural details have been permanently masked or removed. In the Lake Wales commercial area alterations have been performed on the majority of buildings. Predictably, the majority of changes have been made to the storefronts. These changes have mostly been confined to the replacement of the original plate-glass windows and wooden surrounds, and should not by themselves be cause for listing the building as non-contributing. If,



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** F.1 **Page** 5 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

however, the storefront has been completely and irreversibly enclosed, or significant alterations or additions have been made to the upper story facade, the building should be excluded.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F.2 Page 1 Lake Wales Multiple Property ListingI. Name of Property Type: Residential Buildings 1911-1928

## II. Description:

The historic residential buildings of Lake Wales are eclectic in style and reflect the nature of the periods in which they were constructed. They range in scale from modest wood frame shotgun houses to grandiose high-style examples. They are scattered throughout the city with surrounding lots infilled with modern buildings. The most intense historic residential development occurred between the tracks of the old Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and Lakeshore Boulevard. Contiguous with the commercial sector, this area contains many of the oldest homes in the city.

Residential buildings in Lake Wales are generally one or two stories in height, with a balloon frame structural system constructed of pine. They are generally set back on their lots, which are usually planted with trees and shrubs. They have a regular plan, most often rectangular, and are mounted on masonry piers, most often made of bricks. Horizontal weatherboard, drop siding, and stucco were the most widely used exterior wall surface materials. Wood shingles and sheet metal were often used as a roof surfacing material, but they have nearly always been replaced by composition shingles in a variety of shapes and colors. Porches are also a common feature and include one-and two-story end porches or verandas. Decoration is sparse. It is generally limited to ornamental woodwork, including a variety of patterned shingles, turned porch columns and balustrade, and ornamental eave and porch brackets.

According to data compiled during the 1988-89 survey of historic properties in Lake Wales, most residences are simple Frame Vernacular and Bungalow designs built between 1913 and 1930. During the 1920s Mediterranean influenced styles became prevalent. Other styles present in much lesser numbers include Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Neoclassical, Log House, and Italian Renaissance. The residential properties considered worthy of nomination under this cover were designed in the Colonial Revival Style.

The Colonial Revival Style was the dominant style for American residential architecture during the first half of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F.2 Page 2 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

twentieth century. In Florida, however, the popularity of the style during the era was eclipsed by the Bungalow and Mediterranean Revival styles. Based on Georgian, Adam, Post-medieval English, and Dutch Colonial precedents, the Colonial Revival was among the first of the eclectic styles to gain widespread acceptance. It was introduced at the centennial celebration at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, which sparked a general interest in colonial era craftsmanship. Many of the buildings designed for the Exposition were based on historically significant colonial designs. Publicity on the Exposition occurred simultaneously with efforts made by several national organizations to preserve Old South Church in Boston and Mount Vernon. About the same time a series of articles focusing on eighteenth century American architecture appeared in the American Architect, Harpers, and the New York Sketch Book of Architecture. The publicity the Colonial Revival style received helped to make it popular throughout the country. It dominated high-style residential design during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, and continues to be applied in varying forms to the present.

### III. Significance:

The historic residential buildings of Lake Wales are representative of stylistic trends consistent with those of small communities throughout Florida during the 1910s and 1920s. There are a number of residences that may qualify for registration because they embody distinctive characteristics of a style or represent the work of a well-known architect. In addition to buildings significant as individual examples of high-style architecture, there are several areas in the city where districts, whose components represent the eclectic nature of residential architecture during the periods of significance, may be formed.

Besides buildings eligible solely for their architectural significance, a number of residences are associated with persons and events important to the history of Lake Wales. Examples of this type of property are the houses constructed by town founders, B.K. Bullard, G.V. Tillman, and C.L. Johnson, in 1915 and 1916.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.2 Page 3 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**IV. Registration Requirements:**

For residential buildings to be eligible for nomination under this cover they must have been built between 1911 and 1928 and meet at least one of the following criteria:

1) Individual buildings that are exceptional examples of a style or type of architecture or represent the work of a prominent architect. Buildings nominated under this area of significance must retain their original appearance to a high degree. A building that has been altered by significant additions, the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which they were constructed, the removal of significant architectural details, or that have been moved from their original location are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

2) Individual buildings with historic associations to persons or events significant on the local, state, or national level. Integrity requirements for buildings with important historic associations should be less stringent than for those nominated for their architectural significance alone. Buildings, however, that have been radically altered to the point where they exhibit little of their original design are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

3) Groups of buildings of a similar design or that together embody the eclectic nature of residential architecture during the periods of significance. Districts nominated under this criterion should possess a concentration of relatively well preserved resources. Contributing buildings must meet the basic criteria for integrity outlined in the National Register guidelines.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F.3 Page 1 Lake Wales Multiple Property ListingI. Name of Property Type: Public, Transportation, and  
Religious Buildings, 1919-1928

## II. Description:

Buildings included in this property type share characteristics typical of the exuberant nature of the Florida Land Boom years of the 1920s. Although they make up a very small percentage of the total historic building stock of Lake Wales, they are among the city's most distinctive buildings. All are architecturally significant, exhibiting characteristics of high-style building trends during the Florida Boom era. They are scattered throughout the city on large property lots with parking areas. All feature masonry construction of either brick, reinforced concrete, or hollow tile. The roofs of these buildings are mostly hipped with composition shingle surfacing. Other architectural features include stucco or brick exterior wall fabrics, central entranceways with sidelights and transoms, multi-pane or stained glass double-hung sash windows, and poured concrete foundations. Compared to other buildings in Lake Wales, these properties exhibit a high degree of architectural ornamentation. The architectural styles represented in this property type include the Neoclassical, Mission, and Mediterranean Revival Styles.

The Neoclassical Style was popularized by the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Buildings erected by each state at the Exposition were to have a classical theme. Wide publicity for the event and attendance by people from all over the country assured a popularity of the style which lasted for nearly fifty years.

Neoclassicalism recalled the simple architectural features and techniques of the Greeks and Romans. Its most distinguishing characteristics include: use of the Ionic or Corinthian order for colossal pilasters and engaged columns, flat or low pitched roofs behind parapets, horizontality, symmetry, and balance. Doorways often have elaborate decorative surrounds based on Greek Revival, Adam, or Georgian precedents. Cornices often have dentils or modillions, and sometimes have a wide frieze band. Windows are usually double hung sash with various light configurations.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F.3 Page 2 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

The Mission Style was developed in California in the 1890s to emulate the Franciscan missions of the Spanish Colonial Period. This style incorporates stuccoed walls, tiled roofs, round arches, Spanish details, and open, spreading plans. Buildings are simple in form with little sculptural ornamentation. Curvilinear parapets, its most distinctive feature, are pronounced.

The Mediterranean Revival Style generally refers to a style derived from a combination of architectural elements borrowed from countries and cultures surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, primarily Spain and Italy. This practice became popular in the late 1910s as part of the increased national interest in historical styles of architecture. Interest in such styles was especially fostered by the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915. The style, so suitable for Florida's Mediterranean-like climate and Spanish history, became extremely popular in Florida and is closely associated with the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s.

General design characteristics include Moorish columns; low pitched, clay tiled, gabled, hipped, or flat parapeted roofs; stucco exteriors with terra cotta decorative features; and multi-level plans. Loggias and arcades are common features with plans in a U or L-shape, enclosing a courtyard. The walls may be decorated with cartouches, tile, and terra cotta insets. Highly decorated door and window surrounds are common.

### III. Significance:

Buildings that fall into this category in Lake Wales are significant as excellent examples of architectural types within the context of the Florida Boom era. Most were designed by architects of local, or even, statewide significance in the Mediterranean Revival style. Although the Mediterranean Revival found its most extensive application in Southeast Florida, its prevalence throughout the state is a benchmark of the extent a particular community was affected by the boom. In Lake Wales, the fact that several of its most important public, transportation, and religious buildings were designed in the style, indicates the extent to which Lake Wales developed during that period.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F.3 Page 3 Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

Some of the buildings in this category have additional significance for their association with events important in the history of Lake Wales. The primary transportation buildings are train stations. Railroads were crucial to the early development of Lake Wales. They provided access to the community before the construction of good roads was undertaken in the 1920s. The arrival of the first track in 1911 marks the beginning of the initial period of development in Lake Wales.

The public buildings of Lake Wales are also significant for their association with important events. The most notable of this type of building is the Lake Wales City Hall. It is associated with the establishment of a viable local governing body. Built in 1928, it is the only city hall Lake Wales has ever had, and still houses the police and fire departments.

#### IV. Registration Requirements:

To be eligible for listing under this property type all buildings must have been built during the Boomtime era of development, 1919-1928. They must have achieved their initial historical significance while functioning as a building type in this category. This includes buildings that have subsequently been converted to other uses. Additionally, buildings must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1) Buildings that are nominated primarily for their architectural significance must retain their original appearance to a high degree. A building that has been altered by significant additions, the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which they were constructed, the removal of significant architectural details, or that have been moved from their original location are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

2) Individual buildings with historic associations to persons or events significant on the local, state, or national level. Integrity requirements for buildings with important historic associations should be less stringent than for those nominated for their architectural significance alone. Buildings, however, that have been radically altered to the point where they exhibit little of their original design are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   G   Page   1   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

A historical and architectural survey of the historic properties of Lake Wales was undertaken in two stages in 1988 and 1989. A comprehensive survey is a systematic, detailed examination of historic properties within a defined geographic area. The Lake Wales survey was undertaken to determine the exact nature, extent, and character of historic properties. Using the definition of the National Park Service, historic properties are buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts significant in national, state, or local history or pre-history.

The methodology used when conducting historic property surveys consists of a series of progressive steps. In the case of Lake Wales, the initial level consisted of research in existing historical literature to determine the periods, activities, and personalities significant to the development of the city, and to identify previously recorded historic buildings, other standing structures, and historic period archaeological sites. During this phase, it was determined that all buildings constructed before 1940 would be considered for listing on the final inventory of sites surveyed. The intermediate level included a field survey to locate or confirm the location of extant properties, evaluation of the preliminary research and field survey, recording site data, and compilation of a basic inventory. The third level consisted of an analysis of properties by theme and period of significance, evaluation of the significance and concentration of the historic buildings, and recommendations for National Register nominations and locally recognized landmarks.

The format for survey data was the same as that used for recording standing structures in the Florida Master Site File, the state's inventory of historic resources. Forms were set up on a D-Base III data processing program. The forms were updated as additional information was generated, and then were printed-out in hard copy. Analysis of the data, particularly the results of the field survey, was facilitated by the D-Base program. Information about historic properties was recorded on a computer disk filing system, and an inventory of those evaluated as being significant to the history of Lake Wales was provided in a final report.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   G   Page   2   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

In accordance with the survey criteria, 586 buildings were recorded during the course of the project. The survey team field inspected each building, photographed it and recorded its location on a base map or United States Geological Survey map. The team noted its condition, integrity, and any threats to it. After the completion of field work, the team recorded the aforementioned information along with the legal description of each property and its address.

The development of a historical context for evaluating properties in Lake Wales constituted a major portion of the survey. The consultant's team of historians conducted a preliminary literature search, focusing on the chronological development of the city and emphasizing important events, individuals, and significant themes associated with the development. They conducted research at the Polk County Courthouse in Bartow; the St. Augustine Historical Society Library in St. Augustine; the Depot Museum in Lake Wales; the State Library of Florida and the library of the Bureau of Historic Preservation, both in Tallahassee; and the Library of Florida History at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The research information formed the basis for the preliminary and final historical reports and the historical information included on the Florida Master Site File forms.

Based on the visual reconnaissance, information gleaned from cartographic sources, newspapers, other primary source materials, and discussions with informants, the survey team established a range date of construction for all standing structures, and determined an exact year for some. They included the date of construction on the Master Site File form in the appropriate place, entering either the range date or the exact date. In most cases it proved impossible to establish a firm date of construction. As a consequence, the survey team entered an approximate date with a c. for circa before it.

After the architectural and historical research was completed, a map showing concentrations of historic buildings was prepared to aid in identifying areas where historic districts might be created. Using computer generated data, a detailed analysis of building types, materials, and alterations was made to determine the integrity of the resources. The

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number   G   Page   3   Lake Wales Multiple Listing

---

results of this analysis, along with all information gathered in the other stages of the survey, were incorporated into a final report, the individual Master Site File forms, and the National Register nominations.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   H   Page   1   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

- Ahl, Janyce B. **Crown Jewel of the Highlands - Lake Wales, Florida.** Lake Wales, 1983.
- Barbour, Ralph H. **Let's Go to Florida.** New York, 1926.
- Bok, Edward. **Two Persons - An Incident and an Epilogue.** New York, n.d.
- Bowe, Richard J. **Pictorial History of Florida.** Tallahassee, 1965.
- "Come Up to the Florida Hills," **Sunshine.** February, 1925.
- Cutler, Henry G. **History of Florida, Past and Present.** New York, 1922.
- Florida Editor's Association. **The Book of Florida.** n.p., 1925.
- Federal Writer's Project. **Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State.** New York, 1939.
- Frisbie, Louise. **Yesterday's Polk County.** Miami, 1976.
- Gelboon, Mara, "Old Storefronts, 1870-1920," **Old House Journal** (March, 1978).
- Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival of Southern California (1895-1930)," **Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians** (1967).
- Hamlin, F. Talbott. **The American Spirit in Architecture.** New Haven, 1926.
- Heatherington, M.F. **History of Polk County, Florida.** Chuluota, Florida, 1971 (reprint edition).
- Kaucher, Dorothy. **They Built A City.** Lake Wales, 1970.
- Koford, Jack. **The Florida Story.** Garden City, New York, n.d.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   H   Page   2   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

- Longstreth, Richard. **The Buildings of Main Street, A Guide to American Commercial Architecture.** Washington, 1987.
- Maddex, Diane, ed. **Built in the U.S.A., American Buildings from Airports to Zoos.** Washington, D.C., 1985.
- Mahon, John. **History of the Second Seminole War.** Gainesville, FL, 1973.
- McNeely, Ed. **A Century in the Sun: The History of Polk County.** Polk County Centennial Committee, n.d.
- Milanich, Jerald T. and Charles H. Fairbanks. **Florida Archaeology.** New York, 1980.
- Nolan, David. **Fifty Feet in Paradise: The Booming of Florida.** New York, 1984.
- "Polk County," **Sunshine** (February, 1925).
- Polk, R.L. and Co. **Florida Gazetteer.** Jacksonville, 1925.
- Reps, John W. **The Making of Urban America.** Princeton, 1965.
- Roberts, Kenneth L. **Florida.** Tampa, 1926.
- Tebeau, Charlton. **History of Florida.** Miami, 1981.
- "The Florida Guide and Program," **Statistical Magazine of Florida,** 1926.
- Wiley, Gordon R. **Archaeology of the Florida Gulf Coast.** Washington, D.C., 1949.
- Warren, Bob, and Fred Clark, Jr. **SCL in Florida - A Pictorial History.** Freedom Township, N.J., 1985.
- Winter, Nevin O. **Florida: The Land of Enchantment.** Boston, 1918.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   H   Page   3   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

**City and County Records:**

City Council Minutes, 1917-1930

Polk County Deed Records

**Unpublished Manuscripts:**

Austin, Robert J., "A Cultural Resources Assessment Survey of the Proposed North Clear Springs Mining Area, Polk County, Florida," Unpublished Report. November, 1983. Copy at the Florida Division of Historical Resources.

Federal Writer's Program. "Polk County," 1936. Copy in P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, FL.

**Newspapers:**

Courier-Informant (Bartow, FL)

The Lake Wales Highlander

**Promotional Tracts:**

American Foundation, Inc. Mountain Lake Sanctuary. 1961.

"Historical Highlights of Polk County," n.p., n.d.

Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce. Lake Wales. Lake Wales, 1941.

Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce. Crown Jewel of the Scenic Highlands. Lake Wales, 1922.

Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce. Lake Wales on the Ridge. Lake Wales, 1923.

Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce. Statistical, Industrial, and Commercial Survey of Lake Wales, Polk County, Fl. Lake Wales, 1927.

Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Singing Tower. Tampa, FL, 1930.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   H   Page   4   Lake Wales Multiple Property Listing

---

National Land Company. "The Prospect, the Famous Istopoga  
Prairie," 1913.

Polk Co. **The Scenic Highlands of Florida.** Sebring, FL.

**Miscellaneous Sources:**

Adams, William R., et al, "Historic Sites and Buildings Survey  
of St. Augustine, Florida," (St. Augustine, 1980), 159-  
160.

"Diary of Rose Wetmore, 1911-1921," Unpublished manuscript  
diary in the collection of the Lake Wales Historical  
Museum.

Diocese of St. Augustine. "Oral History of the Parishes. The  
Holy Spirit Parish." Copy in P.K. Yonge Library of  
Florida History, Gainesville, FL.

**Florida, An Advancing State.** 1907, 1917, 1927.

Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board,  
Biographical File, "M. Leo Elliot".

**The Traveler's Guide to Florida.** 1922.