

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ervin's Rest

other names/site number Ervin, Louis Dargan, House/8NA795

2. Location

street & number 5448 Gregg Street n/a not for publication

city or town American Beach n/a vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Nassau code 089 zip code 32035

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gray W. King 3/16/98
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Edson H. Beall _____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4-23-98

Ervin's Rest
Name of Property

Nassau Co., FL
County and State

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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Frame Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Block
walls Asbestos

roof Asphalt
other _____

Narrative Description

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

Ervin's Rest
Name of Property

Nassau Co., FL
County and State

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 road 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.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1938-1948

Significant Dates

1938

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Unknown/Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

Ervin's Rest
Name of Property

Nassau Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	5	7	3	9	0	3	3	8	2	3	9	0
Zone	Easting					Northing									
2															

3															
Zone	Easting					Northing									
4															

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 Ernestine Smith & Carolyn Williams/Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Preservationist Supervisor

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date March 1998

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ernestine Latson Smith

street & number 1470 Evergreen Avenue telephone (904) 356-6441

city or town Jacksonville state FL zip code 32206

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

SUMMARY

Ervin's Rest, the Louis Dargan Ervin House, is a modest, two story, frame vernacular building located at 5448 Gregg Street in American Beach on the east coast of Amelia Island, Nassau County, Florida. The 1938 house is located on its original site and retains the integrity of its historic design, materials, setting, feeling, and workmanship to a high degree. The only significant alteration is the rear addition of an enclosed porch that was made within the first year after the house was constructed.

SETTING

American Beach, a 200 acre coastal community of African Americans constructed during the mid 1930s by the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company of Jacksonville, is located on the southern end of Amelia Island, which is the northernmost barrier island on Florida's east coast. Until fairly recently, American Beach was the only settlement along this part of the coastline. Now, however, American Beach is surrounded by large condominium developments to the north and south, Summer Beach and Amelia Island Plantation, and a golf course to the west.

There are approximately one hundred homes in American Beach, 18 of which are directly on the beach. Ervin's Rest, located on a ridge overlooking the Atlantic Ocean (Photos 1 & 2), was either the first or second house constructed at American Beach, and is the only one of the original beachfront homes that has not been significantly altered. The area immediately around the house has scrub, oceanfront vegetation. Several concrete tables and benches are located on the east (oceanfront) side, between the house and the ocean.

EXTERIOR

Ervin's Rest is a 2 ½ story, wood frame building constructed over a concrete block, 2-car garage (Photo 3). The exterior is covered with original asbestos shingles. Its side gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is pierced by an interior chimney at the north end of the house, and gabled dormers in the center of the east and west elevations. The rafter tails are exposed. The windows are original wooden, 2/2, double

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American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

hung sash. The east (oceanfront) elevation (Photo 4) has an attached porch, and the west (rear) elevation has an enclosed porch above the garage (Photo 3).

The main facade (Photo 4) faces east, toward the Atlantic Ocean. An attached, hip roofed porch stretches across the facade. It is one bay deep and is enclosed with original 2/2, double hung sash windows. The main entrance, approached by three concrete steps flanked with pipe railings, is centrally located. At the second story, a gable dormer with paired windows on axis with the door pierces the roof. The north and south (side) elevations (Photos 3&5) of the main block and the porches have paired windows. The south elevation also has a side entry into the garage area and two small windows (Photo 5). The west (rear) elevation (Photo 3) features an enclosed porch over an open carport that provides access to the garage area under the house. The porch is supported by four concrete blocks columns. The porch above is enclosed. A band of seven windows is at the north end of the elevation and a single window is at the south end. At the second story is a gabled dormer with a small, two-light window.

INTERIOR

The interior of Ervin's Rest is very modest. The floor and interior walls are made of heart of pine. From the front porch (Photos 4&6), the house is entered from a central door that leads to a central hall (Photo 7). To the south is a living room (Photo 8) and two bedrooms (Photo 9); to the north is a dining room (Photo 10) that leads into a kitchen (Photo 11) and a full bath. A straight stairway in the center of the house (Photo 7) leads to the second floor, where there are a half bath and two bedrooms (Photo 12&13), each with two closets.

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

SUMMARY

Ervin's Rest, the beach house of Louis Dargan Ervin, is locally significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **Ethnic Heritage: Black** as one of the first houses built at American Beach, an African American coastal community created by A.L. Lewis, president of the Afro-American Insurance Company (See Lewis Mausoleum NR nomination, 1997). It was established in response to the restrictions placed on African Americans during the era of segregation when Blacks were not allowed the use of most of the beaches in the area. Louis Dargan Ervin was one of the first employees and later an officer of the Afro-American Insurance Company. The period of significance is 1938, when the house was built, until 1948.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

American Beach is one of two of the last remaining African American oceanfront communities in the United States. Other predominately black beaches have been bought out, squeezed out or taxed out. Residents still remain on some beaches, but not on the ocean front. Butler Beach, the Black beach started in St. Augustine in the 1920s after the Florida Land bust, has been reduced to one block with a small park, and no ocean front homes.

American Beach was not the first Black beach of the Jacksonville/Fernandina area. Prior to American Beach there was Manhattan Beach. Manhattan Beach and Butler Beach came about because most of the beaches of the vast coastline of Florida were forbidden by law to African Americans. Until 1884, Blacks had no access to the six public beaches in the Jacksonville area. That year the southern end of Pablo Beach (later Jacksonville Beach) was opened to Blacks one day a week. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Manhattan Beach, near Mayport, became a popular resort for Black people in the region.

Industrialist Henry Flagler is chiefly responsible for the start of Manhattan Beach. Flagler's East Coast Railway sold some beach front property to Black railroad workers in the early 1900s. The land was located near Mayport, which was a Jacksonville fishing community on the southern shore of the St. Johns River. In 1899, Flagler built a line from

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Jacksonville to Pablo Beach, the only land route at that time, and extended it to the northeastern end of Mayport the following year. A few Blacks began buying property in the early 1900s.

Among the well known Black property owners at the beach were the Mack Wilsons of Jacksonville and the William Middletons of Fernandina who operated pavilions that gave Manhattan Beach a little of the flavor of New York City. One of the attractions was Little Coney Island, an amusement park for children with a merry-go-round and swings. Some of the streets were names for prominent national figures like Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. Others were named after prominent local individuals, such as Isaiah D. Hart, the founder of Jacksonville, and Joseph E. Lee, one of Jacksonville's first African American lawyers.

Generally, for more than a quarter of a century Manhattan Beach was Mecca for Black beach day-trip excursions until the Mayport/Manhattan Beach railroad line stopped running in the early 1930s during the Depression. A road had been built from the city of Jacksonville to the beach by then, and people came by car, truck and church bus, but in fewer numbers. Severe erosion also affected the beach, with the Atlantic Ocean swallowing up ocean front lots. A final disaster, a fire in 1938, put an end to Manhattan Beach. After the fire, the Wilsons and others sold the property. Many older African Americans believe the fire was deliberately set to drive Blacks off the beach, which was close to the white beach communities creeping from the northern end of Duval County. Manhattan Beach disappeared altogether during World War II when the federal government appropriated part of the beach to construct the Mayport Naval Base.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

As Manhattan Beach expired, a new enterprise was in the works. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Afro-American Insurance Company frequently sponsored beach outings on Amelia Island in Franklin Town. Due to the popularity of these outings, A.L. Lewis, one of the founders of the Afro and then president, sought oceanfront land for a resort community for the company's employees and their families. Eventually Lewis found available land. By that time, 1935, the Afro boasted of "35 years of success" with a paid-up capital stock of \$200,000. The first streets built in American Beach were named after four of the Afro's seven founders. Less than seven months after the purchase of the first

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

tract of land for American Beach, in 1938, contractor Willis S. Rovers completed work on the community's first oceanfront house. Over the next eleven years the Afro's Pension Bureau purchased the American Beach property in three parcels. By 1946 American Beach was a community of 216 contiguous acres with a half mile of ocean front.

Ervin's Rest, built in 1938, was one of the first, if not the first, house built at American Beach. It was built for Louis Dargan Ervin, one of the officers of the African-American Insurance Company, and the one for whom Ervin Street in American Beach is named. Ervin was the company's first full time agent in 1901. He remained with the company for 63 years, moving up the corporate ladder to become inspector, auditor, superintendent, manager, director, cashier, and finally vice-president. The house remained in his family, and is currently owned by Ernestine Latson Smith, his granddaughter. This is the only one of the original oceanfront homes of American Beach that has not been significantly altered from its original state and continues to reflect the character of the original resort.

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ERVIN'S REST
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

McCarthy, Kevin M. Black Florida. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1995.

Neyland, Leedell W. Twelve Black Floridians. Tallahassee: Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Foundation, 1970.

Phelps, Marsha Dean. An American Beach for African Americans. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997.

Siegel, "American Beach," The Tampa Tribune, February 27, 1993.

Stewart, Ralph B., Sr., "History of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company." in Afro-American Life Insurance Company Golden Anniversary, 1901-1951. Jacksonville: Afro-American Life Insurance Company, 1951.

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 1 Lot 9 or 235/663
American Beach sub #1PB 2/22

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the parcel of land that is historically associated with Ervin's Rest, the Louis Dargan Ervin House.

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, Nassau Co., FL

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1 1) Ervin's Rest (Louis Dargan Ervin House), 5448 Gregg Street
 2) American Beach, Nassau County, Florida
 3) Photographer Unknown
 4) 1997
 5) Mrs. Ernestine Smith, Jacksonville, Florida
 6) View of beach, looking south from front yard
 7) 1 of 13

Note: Items 1-5 for the remaining photographs are the same as above.

- 2 6) View of beach, looking north from front yard
 7) 2 of 13
- 3 6) Rear elevation, from Gregg Street, camera facing SE
 7) 3 of 13
- 4 6) Main (oceanfront) elevation, camera facing NW
 7) 4 of 13
- 5 6) South elevation, camera facing NE
 7) 5 of 13
- 6 6) Enclosed front porch, camera facing S
 7) 6 of 13
- 7 6) Hallway, showing stairs leading to basement garage and underside of stairs
 leading to the second story, camera facing E
 7) 7 of 13
- 8 6) Living Room, camera facing SE
 7) 8 of 13
- 9 6) First floor bedrooms, camera facing W

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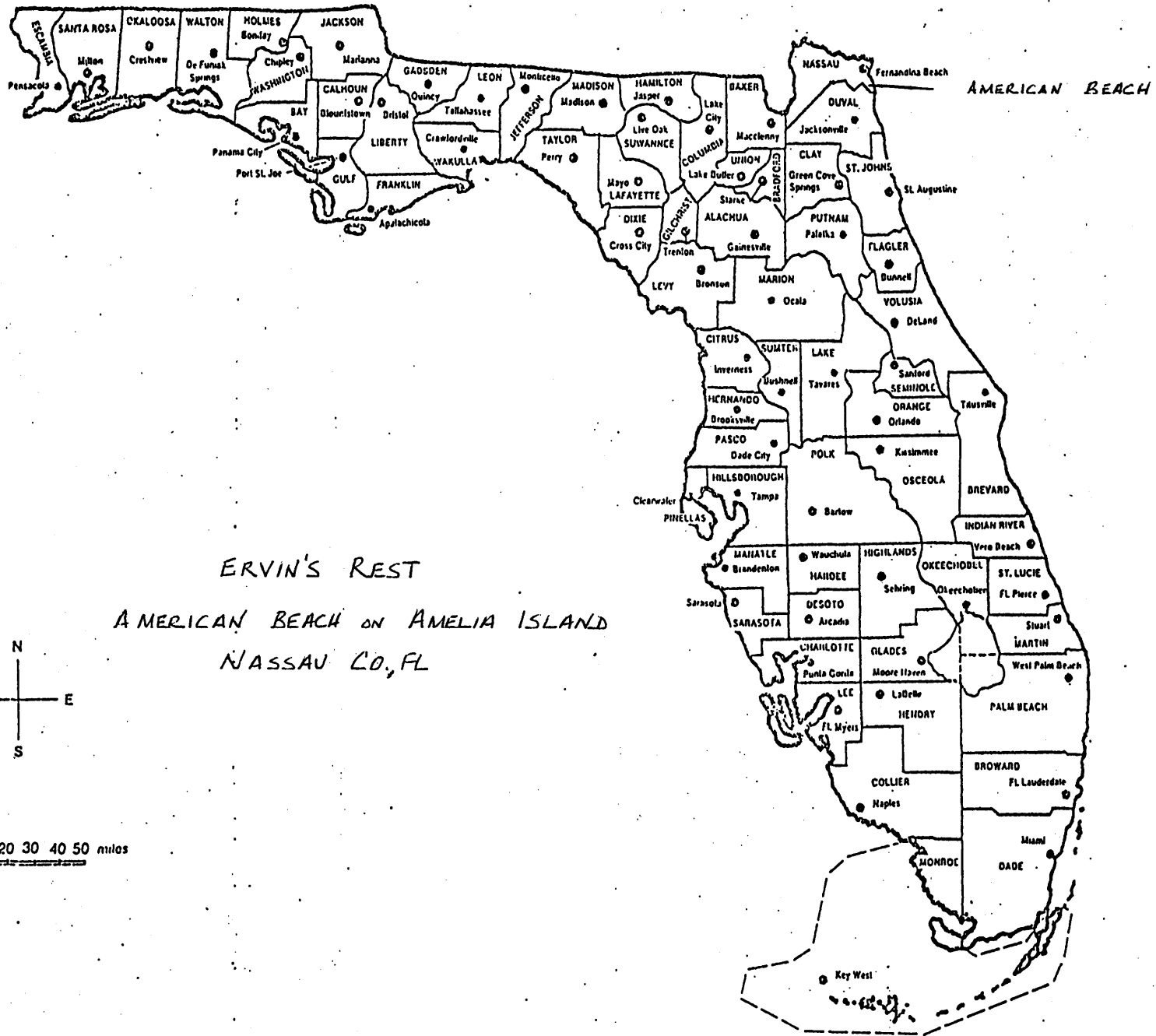
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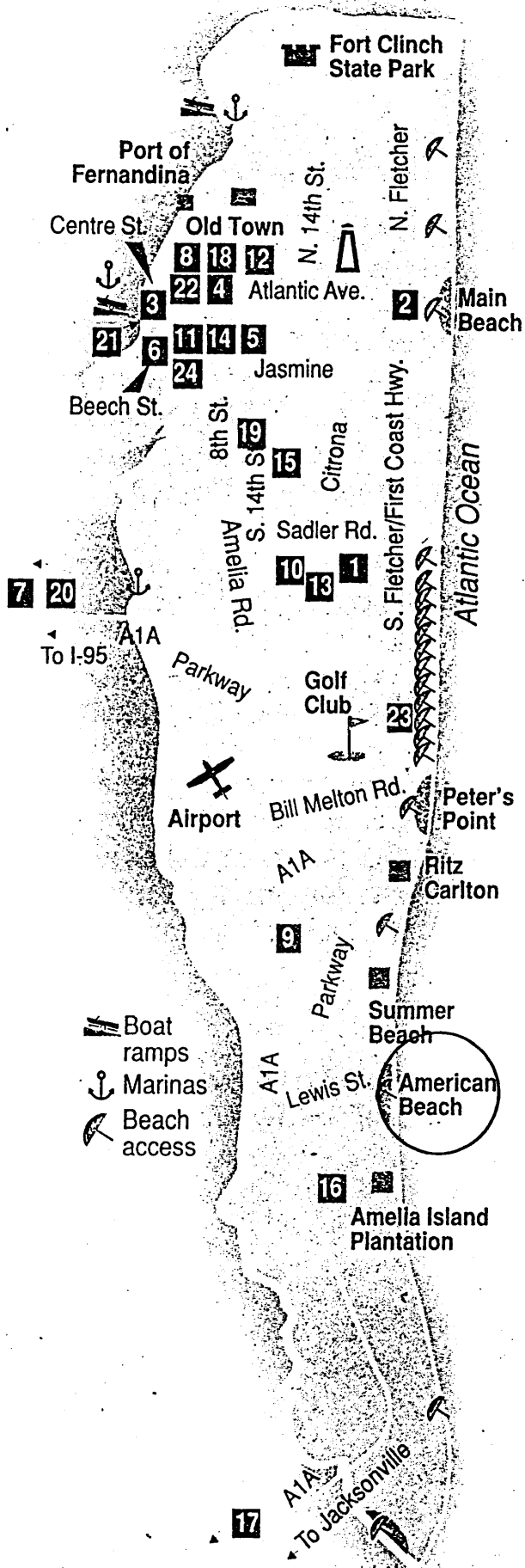
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- 7) 9 of 13
- 10 6) Dining Room, camera facing E
7) 10 of 13
- 11 6) Kitchen, camera facing W
7) 11 of 13
- 12 6) South upstairs bedroom, camera facing SE
7) 12 of 13
- 13 6) North upstairs bedroom, camera facing NW
7) 13 of 13

Counties and County Seats



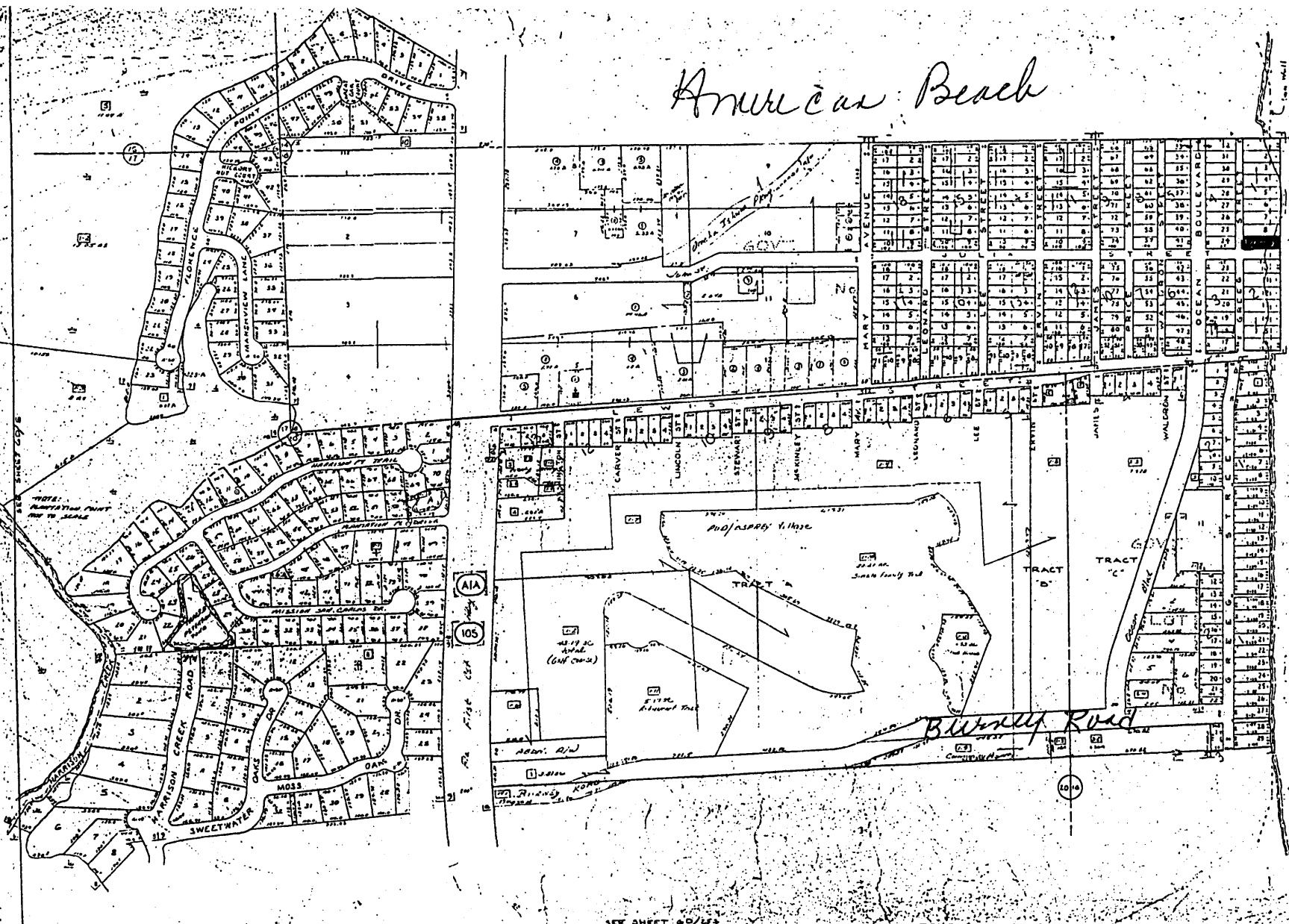


LOCATOR MAP

**ERVIN'S REST
American Beach
Nassau Co., FL**

American Beach

5448 Gregg Street
F. SMITH



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2.	AMERICAN BEACH - UNIT 1 - SECTION 3	4	17
3.	AMERICAN BEACH - UNIT 2 - SECTION 3	4	17
4.	SUMNER TRACT - SUBDIVISION 3	DB 39	281
5.	AMERICAN BEACH - UNIT 3 - SECTION 3	5	17

NO.	NAME	PB.
7.	FLORENCE POINT	5
8.	HARRISON CREEK SUBDIVISION	5
9.	SWEETWATER DAKES	5
10.	FRANKLIN TRACT	5
11.	ACORN SUBDIVISION	5

SEW SHEET 60/153

RESORT COUNTY

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SECTION 4

SECTION 5

SECTION 6

SECTION 7

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ERVIN'S REST
American Beach, FL

5448 Gregg Street