

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH015070 DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 01 1975
DATE ENTERED JUN 11 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Florida Southern College Architectural District
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
McDonald Street + Johnson Ave

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Lakeland

VICINITY OF

STATE
Florida

CODE
12

COUNTY
Polk

CODE
105

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Florida Conference of United Methodist Churches
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Lakeland

VICINITY OF

STATE
Florida

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Polk County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Bartow

STATE
Florida

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Florida Southern College Architectural District is composed of seven architecturally significant buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The campus is the result of a master development plan in which Wright intended to include eighteen buildings. The site originally consisted of an almost unspoiled orange grove along with a small number of brick structures which had already been completed by the college. The seven Wright buildings were constructed from plans between 1937 and 1955.

Wright was, throughout this period preoccupied by his concept of "Organic Architecture." The construction and design of the campus was a tangible expression of Wright's concept that "... buildings would take on, in endless variety, the nature and character of the ground on which they would stand and thus inspired, become component parts" (Wright, The Living City, 112). The completed buildings do appear to harmonize with the natural setting not only in design but also in materials. The use of concrete and steel is the pre-dominating mode in the construction of the buildings; but even more striking are the concrete blocks designed by Wright and produced by students on the campus during construction. The block was a two and one-quarter inch solid rectangle with slots on all sides. These slots contained one-quarter inch steel rods and were bonded together by cement. This technique was known as Wright's "Automatic Building System" which was designed for speed of construction, flexibility, and the use of unskilled labor on the site. The first blocks were made with small pieces of colored glass inserted into spaces which gave a very striking effect. The second type was solid with embossed decoration and without the glass. These construction components were manufactured from local sand and some coquina, a native shell material common to Florida and used in building since the Spanish Period (Schweizer, 2).

The individual buildings on the campus are tied together by covered esplanades. These concrete covered walkways connect all buildings providing protection from the sun and rain of Florida. The concrete roofs, trimmed in weathered copper, are supported by massive concrete columns which cantilever in two directions.

The district basically follows the limits established by Wright's master plan of 1936. It is bounded on the west by Johnson Avenue, on the north by McDonald Street, on the south by Lake Hollingsworth Drive, and on the east by a line running to the east of the Ordway Building and Joseph-Reynolds Hall and to the west of Panhellenic Row.

At the center of the complex is the Annie Pfieffer Chapel (1), the first building to be completed and the focal point of the campus. The

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 01 1975

JUN 11 1975

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

two story concrete structure is dominated by a large rectangular lantern rising from the center. The tall concrete slabs are held together by diagonally placed steel rods supporting the walls and a massive skylight. Plants were to be hung in the lantern and allowed to trail along the iron trellis structure. The two story nave is hexagonal in plan with transepts protruding to the north and south. The seating, composed of wood benches, filled the first floor transepts as well as the galleries at the second level of the transepts and the rear of the nave. Large overhanging balconies are evident on the exterior of the north and south transepts. The external texture of the walls is varied through the use of the specially designed blocks with colored glass and smooth faces on the upper level walls. From 1957 to 1967 the chapel was air conditioned, the original seats were replaced with cushioned chairs, and the cypress and glass doors were replaced with aluminum and glass. The seating in the transepts was removed for exhibit space and the podium was altered.

To the northwest of the Pfieffer Chapel is the E. T. Roux Library (2). This low, split-level building is dominated by the circular reading room measuring ninety feet across. The roof, which spans the entire space, is built-up of three flat, concentric levels which form two clearstories admitting light to the tan and white reading room. On the northeast side of the building is a two-story, rectangular wing which houses offices, book stacks, and a smaller study area. As with all of the Wright buildings, the external walls are composed of the same materials as the Pfieffer Chapel. The interior of the reading room contains three tiers of wood study desks with a librarian's desk in the center of the room. Protruding from the northeast wing into the round space is a mezzanine. The northeast wing is dominated by diamond shaped light shafts. In 1956 a 900 square foot extension was made to the northwest corner of the structure. Between 1968 and 1969 the building's use was changed to an administrative function, the student body having outgrown its capacity, and renamed the Thad Buckner Building.

The Emile Watson Administration Building (3) is composed of square and rectangular shapes of concrete block and stucco accented at certain points by double cantilevered columns. The main building is built around a sunken garden and connected to a smaller structure used as a lobby. The interior receives ample natural lighting from numerous skylights and narrow vertical windows. A 1200 square foot addition was made to the northeast and an upstairs area was converted to office space.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 01 1975

DATE ENTERED

JUN 11 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

Immediately adjacent to the Watson Building is the Wall Plaza and Water Dome (4). Originally designed as a single, large pool, the Water Dome has been redesigned and altered to form three separate pools. Due east of the secondary focal point are the Carter, Wallbridge, and Hawkins Seminars (5). These were designed and constructed as three separate, but integrated classroom cubicles. The walls contain few windows with the interior accented by the colored glass inserts in the concrete blocks. In 1958 and 1959 the three buildings were incorporated into one structure and air conditioned. A northwest wing was added in 1964 and 1965, and it was renamed the Rawlerson Building.

One of the most imposing buildings in the Wright complex is the Ordway Building (6). The single story structure is characterized by a shed roof which rises above the flat first story supported by concrete piers and joists. Between the large piers are glass clear-story windows which admit light into the main spaces. At the north end of the building is a circular tower with a flat, conical roof in which the entire second story is enclosed in glass. The original intended use as a dining room was never realized, with the building being utilized instead as an industrial arts and home economics building. A final important asset of this building is the extensive integration of the esplanade into the structure. To the southwest and at the intersection of two major esplanades is the Polk Science Building (7). This three-story structure makes a strong statement of Wright's use of horizontal lines. This horizontal feeling is expressed by the white surrounds of the square windows which form a horizontal band around the first story. The dominating feature of the structure is the white dome of the planetarium.

The final building in the Wright campus is the William H. Danforth Chapel (8). This building was constructed just to the southwest of the Pfieffer Chapel. It is a small concrete and steel structure containing an apse of narrow vertical windows of colored glass. The building is topped by a low gable roof with a sharp sweep at the eaves.

In addition to the Wright buildings the District contains several other structures. Two of these, the President's house (9) and the Joseph-Reynolds Hall (10) were present in 1936 at the inception of the plan. In addition, three structures have been added since Wright's death. These were designed by Nils Schweizer who studied under Wright and helped supervise the early construction of the campus. These buildings include the Humanities and Fine Arts Building (11), the Branscomb Memorial Auditorium (12), and the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 01 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 11 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE three

new Roux Library (13). They were designed to complement and not dominate the buildings already completed by Wright through an attempt to carry on the design themes established by Wright.

The campus contains many features which set it off from the surrounding community. It was observed by Nils Schweizer that "The scale of the buildings is reminiscent of Mr. Wright's own stature in physical height and of the orange grove in which the buildings were originally placed. . . . The esplanades . . . wind through the campus in a very geometric pattern. Each building is a building with a totally different architectural character corresponding to functional needs. . . ." (Schweizer, 3). Horizontality dominates the visual effect of the campus. The roof lines as well as the plan of the individual buildings follows geometrical lines avoiding the rectangular. Even in structures using rectangular components the relationships of those components are geometrical. The entire campus was designed as a unit with individual buildings designed for specific purposes tied together by geometrical esplanades into a single functioning whole.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 01 1975 JUN 11 1975
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE four

Inventory of Frank Lloyd Wright Buildings Located Within the Florida Southern College Historic District

1. Annie Pfieffer Chapel (Building #47); Started 1938, Completed 1941.
2. E.T. Roux Library/Thad Buckner Building (Building #48); Started 1941, Completed 1945.
3. Emile Watson Administration Building (Building #50); Started 1946, Completed 1948.
4. Wall Plaza and Water Dome (#51); Completed 1948.
5. Carter, Wallbridge, and Hawkins Seminars/Rawlerson Building (Building #53); Started 1940, Completed 1943.
6. Ordway Building (Building #40); Completed 1952.
7. Polk Science Building (Building #41); Completed 1952.
8. Danforth Minor Chapel (Building #46); Started 1954, Completed 1955.
9. Esplanades; Completed at various intervals.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

JUN 11 1975

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE five

Descriptions of non-Wright buildings:

President's house- A brick structure of Neo-Georgian style constructed during the 1920s.

Joseph-Reynolds Hall- This brick structure has a "U" shaped plan in a Neo-Classical style common on many college campuses during the 1920s.

Humanities and Fine

Arts Building- Combining curved and rectangular features, this exposed, load bearing concrete building reflects certain Wrightian concepts while being an interesting example of Brutalism.

Branscomb Memorial

Auditorium- While this structure was designed from a preliminary concept of Wright's, it reflects many of Schweizer's own ideas. The building is massive incorporating poured and pre-cast concrete forms.

Roux Library- The Roux Library is composed of poured concrete walls in a rectangular plan surmounted by a built-up roof supported on concrete braces. The structure is a combination of Wrightian ideas and Brutalism.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1937-1955

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank Lloyd Wright

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the campus of Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida is the largest concentration of buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The seven buildings on the campus are significantly different from the famous architect's other work which justifies their careful consideration as major examples of his work. Not only are the individual structures important, but the site plan which Wright developed for the campus reflects the only tangible expression of Wright's planning concepts as idealized by his Broadacre City plan (See Wright, The Living City, for this plan).

In 1935, Florida Southern College was a small, unimportant college. The campus consisted of five brick buildings and was in need of new ones. A local friend of Dr. Ludd Spivey, president of the college, suggested that he consult Frank Lloyd Wright to design a new campus for the college. Being small, the school was very short on money for any large building program, but Spivey did approach Wright and convinced the architect to take the job. Money was raised through the never-ending efforts of Spivey and the campus became a reality (St. Petersburg Times).

By 1936, Wright had visited the school and completed a preliminary plan for the erection of 18 buildings on the 100-acre campus. By 1938, the first building, the Annie Pfieffer Chapel, was under construction. Over the next seventeen years six more buildings and the waterdome would be constructed according to Wright's designs and under his supervision. Student labor was used wherever possible in order to cut costs. The construction of the Danforth Chapel in 1955 concluded the influence which Wright directly asserted on the campus, but his ideas and plan have continued to be considered and used by subsequent architects.

Throughout his career, Wright had designed single buildings, whether houses or commercial structures. During the 1920's he became pre-occupied with the inter-relationship of buildings to each other. His writings during and after this decade expressed the desire to see the problems of the city solved by decentralization through the distribution of urban functions among rural areas and the utilization of modern technological improvements in the building trades in a more effective and efficient way. Wright termed this approach "Organic

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY over ten acres

UTM OK
HL

UTM REFERENCES

406-940 406-940

A	[17]	[419]	[07,0]	[31]	[01]	[10,20]	B	[17]	[419]	[07,0]	[31]	[00]	[5,10]
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING
C	[17]	[419]	[38,0]	[31]	[01]	[05,10]	D	[17]	[419]	[38,0]	[31]	[10]	[10,20]
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

406-620 406-620

The district is bounded on the west by Johnson Avenue, on the north by McDonald Street, on the south by Lake Hollingsworth Drive, and on the east by a line running to the east of the Ordway Building and Joseph-Reynolds Hall and to the west of Panhellenic Row.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE		CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Little, J. Rodney, Historic Preservationist
Werndli, Phillip A., Historic Sites Specialist

ORGANIZATION Div. Archives, History & Records Mgmt. DATE March 25, 1975

STREET & NUMBER Dept. of State, The Capitol TELEPHONE 904-488-7365

CITY OR TOWN Tallahassee STATE Florida

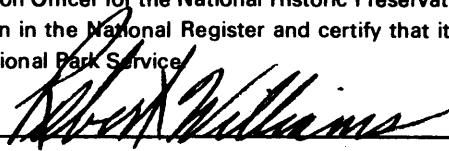
12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:


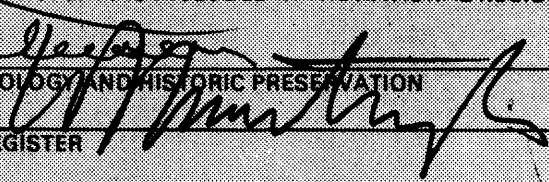
NATIONAL X STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE



TITLE Florida State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 3/27/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE <u>6/11/75</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>JUN 10 1975</u>
ATTEST:	
	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 01 1975

DATE ENTERED JUN 1 1975

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE one

Architecture." Wright designed an idealized city according to the principles of "Organic Architecture" and called it Broadacre City, but the design except for the University campus was never realized.

This University was represented in the design of the Florida Southern Campus. Wright conceived the University campus as "Situated in quiet retreats appropriate to reflection and concentration upon deeper concerns of the creative mind. . . . Any culture center called a school . . . would be set in a natural park in the choicest part of the whole countryside, preferably by some . . . large body of fresh water. The buildings themselves should be well designed and appointed not only as a whole, but so that 'small' may again be divided into small . . . Fireproof buildings fashioned of metals and glass or of other native materials all universally adapted to the uses of young life. . . ." (Wright, The Living City, 185-88). Florida Southern College is a visual expression of these ideals. Wright, never one to underrate his own talents, observed that the campus was "probably the one entirely modern campus among our educational institutions. The overall plan is Floridian in character. . . . The whole is Florida--southern and plastic in feeling, richly planted " (Wright, A Testament, 168). Indeed, the campus does express an architecture uniquely Floridian, adapted to the environment of the area and utilizing native materials including cypress, sand, and coquina shell.

Wright's participation in the design of the campus was one of his first projects to be undertaken after a long period of relative inactivity between about 1912 and the mid 1930's. The campus plan and individual designs of the buildings are an important representative of Wright's polygonal mode in which he avoids the rectangular in favor of sharp and tapering geometrical shapes and forms. In a minor sense, his circular mode is represented in the Water Dome and the original Roux Library. Both of these modes are very characteristic of Wright's later development and his movement away from the rectangular Prairie Style and the Usonian.

It should be noted that the district does not fall under the fifty year rule. In spite of this, it is believed that the campus is of such major importance architecturally, that its inclusion on the National Register is of the utmost necessity. Wright was one of America's most important and influential architects and this campus provides a very rare statement about the architect and his work.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 01 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 11 1975

Florida Southern College Architectural District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE

one

"The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright at Florida Southern College."
Florida Southern College News Bureau, n.d. pp. 1-4.

Archives. E.T. Roux Library, Florida Southern College, Lakeland,
Florida.

"Frank Lloyd Wright," Architectural Forum (September, 1952):
120-31.

Readdick, David L. to J. Rodney Little, July 22, 1974. (Personal
Correspondence) In Florida Southern College File, Historic
Preservation Section, Division of Archives, History and Records
Management, Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida.

St. Petersburg Times, February 10, 1974.

Schweizer, Nils M. "Prologue/Florida Southern College/On Historic
Preservation." July 25, 1974. (Personal Correspondence) In
Florida Southern College File, Historic Preservation Section,
Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Department
of State, Tallahassee, Florida.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. A Testament. New York: Horizon Press, 1957.
pp. 167, 234-35.

_____. The Living City. New York: Bramhall House, 1958.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AT FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE

The largest concentration of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in the world is in Lakeland--on the campus of Florida Southern College.

On a hillside overlooking Lake Hollingsworth, the buildings stand as a symbol of the foremost non-conformist of the 20th century, reflecting the creative genius of perhaps the greatest architect of all time.

Frank Lloyd Wright was closely associated with Florida Southern for almost a quarter of a century prior to his death on April 9, 1959. He first visited the campus in 1936 before accepting the commission of designing the buildings on the West Campus.

From this master artist came the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel, the Isabel Walbridge, Cora Carter and Charles W. Hawkins Seminars, the E. T. Roux Library, the J. Edgar Wall Waterdome, the Emile E. Watson Administration Building, the Lucius Pond Ordway Arts Building, the William H. Danforth Chapel and the Polk County Science Building.

Wright had completed preliminary plans for an auditorium-music building before he covered his earthly drawing board for the last time.

A trip to Europe by the late Dr. Ludd M. Spivey, president of Florida Southern for 32 years before his retirement in 1957, was the spark that was to set off the building of the Wright structures in Lakeland.

Seeing a beautiful war memorial abroad fired the imagination of the educator and he returned to the United States with the dream of constructing a million dollar campus on the orange grove acres. Next was the reading of the autobiography of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Dr. Spivey flew to Taliesin East at Spring Green, the Wisconsin home of the architectural giant. Wright received him cordially and listened intently while the Methodist minister unfolded his dream:

"I have no money with which to build this modern American campus, but if you'll design the buildings, I'll work night and day to raise the means."

Wright agreed to visit Lakeland. At that time he was 67 years of age, as youthful as spring and as colorful as an autumn day in the mountains. His was the jaunty step, the flowing cape, beret or pork-pie hat, and the ever-present walking stick. He walked slowly about the college campus, from time to time letting the Florida sand trickle through his delicate fingers. The West Campus then was a little desolate...some aging orange and grapefruit trees and a footpath here and there.

But the eyes of Wright envisioned creative jewels rising "out of the ground, into the light and into the sun." He saw pools and rippling streams, flowering bougainvillea, azaleas and pink oleander, stately pines and palms, and an endless procession of eager young minds.

The architect laid out a master plan for Florida Southern College calling for 18 building units. The basic materials: steel for strength, sand because it was Florida, and glass to bring God's outdoors into man's indoors. The cornerstone of the first building, the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel, was laid in 1938. (Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on May 24th, 1938, at 10:00 a.m.)

Unfolding of Dr. Spivey's dream and the architect's genius came slowly and painfully. The impact of World War II was everywhere. And, as always at the Methodist college, funds were in short supply. But the unusual superstructure, or steeple of the chapel, designed to sift sunlight at various planes into the interior, rose upwards and the edifice was dedicated March 9, 1941. Next the three seminar units were complete. They are now used as offices.

Countless people came from far and near to see the beginning of Wright's works. Standing alone, the chapel looked somewhat like a medieval fortress. Focal point of the entire Wright complex, it was unlike any chapel ever seen. Across what is now the quadrangle were the low seminars, resembling frontier military outposts. Few were the visitors who didn't look curiously and then shake their heads in negation. A few years later the chapel was chosen by American architects as one of the country's most beautiful buildings.

Miss Oween Sumner, an alumna of Florida Southern, broke the ground for the circular library in 1942. Steel and manpower shortages slowed construction to a crawl. Students--both men and women--helped in the actual labor. And like the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel, this was a library unlike any ever seen. Dedication was in 1945. The library now serves as an office building. The present Roux Library, much larger than the original library was built in 1966.

With the building of the first units, Florida and the entire South were introduced to something new in construction. Namely, a man named Wright and designs of an architectural poet. The concrete blocks used at Florida Southern (made on the campus) were especially designed by Wright. They are tied together by steel rods with all of the mortar poured "internally."

"They will be standing a thousand years into the future," the architect once commented.

In the first units, the great dissenter from the drab and dreary introduced small, colored glass squares which form a part of the block wall itself. In the daytime the sunshine brings colored light streaming into the buildings. When the buildings are lighted from within at night, the opposite artistic effect is achieved.

And now, too, there came to a college campus for the first time another innovation--called an esplanade. Sturdily, classically designed stoas... the Greek for "portico," walled at the back and with a front colonade to afford a sheltered promenade, supported the roof of steel and concrete to connect the chapel and library.

Students could walk from the one building to the other, shaded from a hot sun or shielded from a downpour of rain. That is the practical aspect. However, the artistry of Frank Lloyd Wright had envisioned a great complex of building units and the key was to be the esplanade--several miles of covered walkways connecting each of the buildings to form the single whole.

With the completion of the library, hundreds of hands joined in the building of the next two units...the Emile E. Watson Administration Building and the decorative J. Edgar Wall Waterdome. Dedication of these additions was in 1948.

What seemed like Florida Southern's "folly" of only a few years ago was starting to make sense, even to some of the most skeptical. The little Methodist school of the 1920's was becoming known across the world. National publications began to carry pictures and articles about the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in the Florida orange grove.

Visitors now streamed across the campus by the thousands. Internationally, the name of Florida Southern College may have been unknown in Prague or Rome or Athens, but there were many in such cities who knew about the college campus Wright was designing in Lakeland.

Next came the esplanade connecting the library and the administration building, and the gleam once seen in the eyes of Wright as the sand trickled through his fingers in 1936 was being revealed to all. A significant contribution to a true American culture was being made by the college that had struggled for many decades merely to sustain the educational breath of life.

Down went the foundations of the Ordway Arts Building--the most striking and ambitious of the Wright units to this time. In 1936, President Spivey thought in terms of a building program with a total cost of a million dollars. The Ordway Building alone was to cost almost this much! There were sweat and tears and prayer in its construction. Dedication was in 1953.

The esplanade was extended from the seminars to the Ordway Building and then to the Chapel. The quadrangle was finally formed. The pattern was clear beyond any doubt and Florida Southern was becoming ever more famous as an architectural showplace.

Danforth Chapel, a miniature jewel box of a building, went up in the broad shadow of the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel even as the foundations went down for the Polk County Science Building. The latter was the greatest undertaking of all--magnificent in every detail, costing at least \$1,250,000, more than 400 feet in length with a planetarium crowning the southern end. It was built in four sections, three completed during the last years of Dr. Spivey's administration and the final work under the administration of Dr. Charles T. Thrift, Jr., who succeeded Dr. Spivey in 1957.

Wright made various visits to Lakeland during the 20 years his work was underway at Florida Southern. Thousands of Lakelanders turned out to

see him...a few summoned courage enough to engage him in conversation. Most held him in awe. It was said that he was the only man ever feared by Dr. Spivey.

Only of medium stature, his appearance was commanding, his air haughty. One thought of the imperious as the architect strode over the campus. There were those who believed him willful, arbitrary, capricious, an iconoclast, an anarchist, and idealist, a humanist.

No matter the yardstick, there was no doubting his love of truth and beauty...just as intense as his scorn for commonplace suburbia and the marble and coldness of the nation's capitol.

Visiting in Lakeland in 1949, he observed in a talk in his Annie Pfeiffer Chapel:

"Florida Southern College may never be more than just a freshwater college among the big institutions of the country, but its architecture will cause it to become a beacon of light."

The following year, here to receive an honorary degree during Founders' Week, he said:

"This type of architecture can't mean much to you until you have had a good look at yourself. This architecture represents the laws of harmony and rhythm. It's organic architecture and we have seen little of it so far. It's like a little green shoot growing in a concrete pavement."

On other visits to the college, he said:

"College buildings today are hangovers from an architecture that for 500 years tended to make people feel inferior..."

"The function of architecture, and it's going to be the function of education, is the stress of the beautiful..."

Wright made his last visit to Lakeland and to "his" college in March 1957. At that time, he said:

"Where is American culture? It appears to me that the one blind spot in our nation, educationally, is architecture.

"I am sure that every student here has within him--or her--the stem of a truly American culture. Florida Southern College will be praised in history as notable because it has taken the first step...shown the way...to a culture of our own."

On the hillside where the sand of Florida once trickled through the fingers of the master builder...when the buildings and esplanades are lighted...when the complex stands white in the light of a soft moon...one needs but to walk in this fairyland of artistry...greatness is indeed here.

WHAT OTHERS SAY:

No Longer Obscure

Soon after the work in Racine a college president came to Wright's door. Dr. Ludd M. Spivey, of obscure Florida Southern College, introduced himself by saying, "Mr. Wright, I have no money--but if you'll do me some plans, I'll give you money when I get some."

Perhaps Dr. Spivey did not know that Wright had once said, "If I had unlimited wealth, I would use it in buying up and closing colleges and universities."

But Wright decided to design an entirely new center of learning for Dr. Spivey. The educator raised money in satisfactory amounts--Wright's fee at last count was more than \$100,000. Needless to say, Florida Southern is no longer obscure.

--Saturday Evening Post series,
February 4, 1961, on "Frank
Lloyd Wright: Defiant Genius."

Campus Is Wright Monument

You either like Frank Lloyd Wright's work or you don't. There doesn't seem to be much middle ground about the late Wisconsin-born architect, whose works still have thousands arguing pro and con.

But if you are one of those who hasn't made up his mind about the controversial and opinionated Wright, you have a chance to get a sampling of his works on the campus of Florida Southern College...For here, on a campus which was made famous by the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, is the greatest concentration in the world of his architectural offerings.

On a beautiful hillside overlooking a perfect gem of a lake, the buildings stand as a sort of monument to the man who thought most architectural concepts were rubbish--and was not the least bashful about saying so.

--Excerpts from Chicago Tribune,
March 5, 1961

Organic Campus Group

The entire scheme is given an outdoor garden character fit for Florida by the continuous esplanades which connect all the buildings. All walls and structural members are reinforced cast-concrete. Color of the buildings inside, as out, is a warm tan--lighter on the plain surfaces. Roofing edges down over the eaves are in verdigris bands of copper detailed to drip, so that no gutters are needed. Accoustics are especially fine. The buildings do not crowd each other, but each has its own stretch of esplanade and intervening trees. Concrete wall-perforations are filled with cut-glass jewels. When building is completed, the U.S. will have at least one example of the cultural value of organic buildings well suited to time, purpose, and place.

--Architectural Forum, January 1948

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

Florida Southern, a fully accredited, four-year liberal arts college, is co-educational and maintains a capacity enrollment of approximately 1,600 students. It was founded in 1885 by The Methodist Church, and occupied three other campuses before settling permanently in Lakeland in 1922. It is affiliated with the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 01 1975

DATE ENTERED

JUN 11 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

NAME

HISTORIC Florida Southern College Architectural District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Lakeland VICINITY OF COUNTY Polk STATE Florida

3 MAP REFERENCE

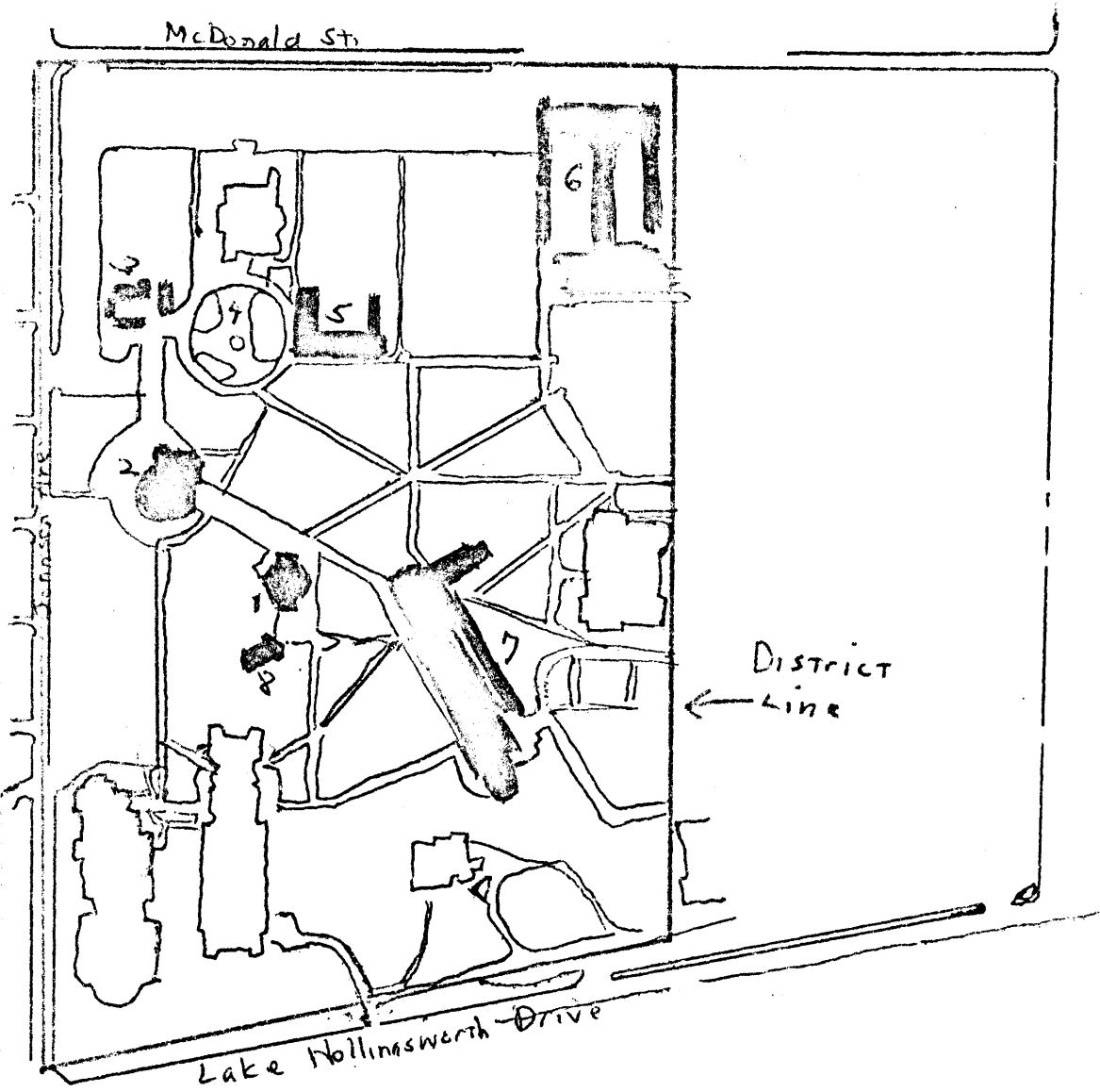
SOURCE Phillip A. Werndli, Div. Archives, History, and Records Mgmt.

SCALE None DATE March 25, 1975

REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



Florida Southern College
Historic District

Solid Structures are
Frank Lloyd Wright Buildings

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 01 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 11 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

NAME

HISTORIC Florida Southern College Architectural District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Lakeland _____ VICINITY OF _____ COUNTY polk STATE Florida
Lakeland

3 MAP REFERENCE

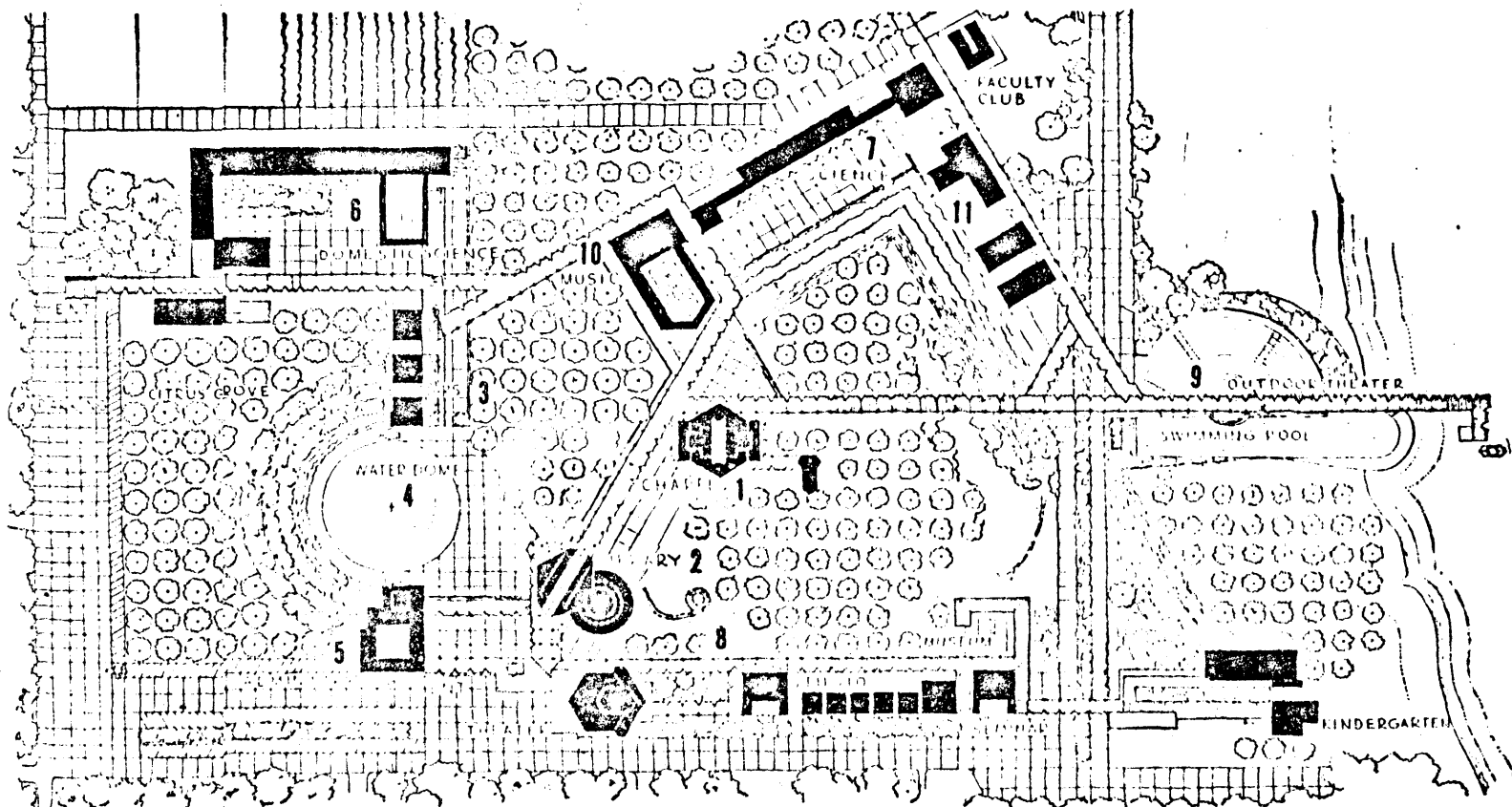
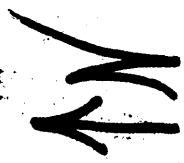
SOURCE Architectural Forum, Sept. 1952 by Frank Lloyd Wright

SCALE None DATE 1937

REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED JUN 11 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

NAME

HISTORIC Florida Southern College Architectural District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Lakeland

___ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Polk

STATE

Florida

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE Phillip A. Werndli, Div. Archives, History, and Records Mgmt.

SCALE None

DATE May 22, 1975

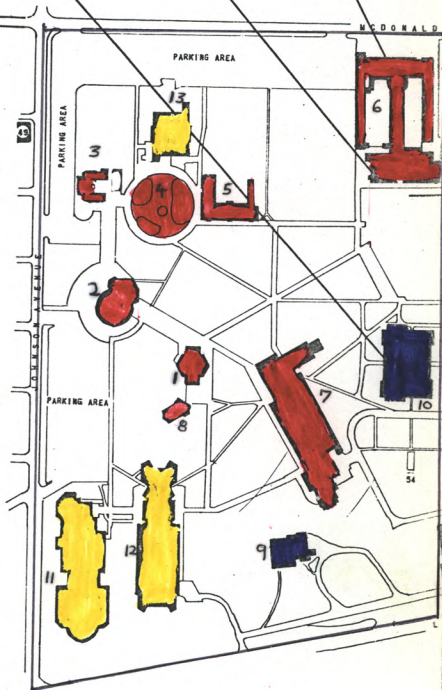
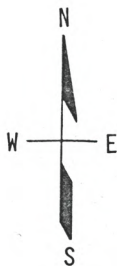
REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES

S. Fla. Ave.

McDonald St.



Florida Southern College Architectural District

- Pre-Wright Buildings
- Wright Buildings
- Schweizer Buildings