

DEC 20 1989

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. 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. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 2128-2320 First St., Main St., 1722-2436 Second St., N/A not for publication city, town Fort Myers N/A vicinity state Florida code FL county Lee code FL 071 zip code 33901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [X] private, [ ] public-local, [ ] public-State, [ ] public-Federal. Category of Property: [ ] building(s), [X] district, [ ] site, [ ] structure, [ ] object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 70, Noncontributing 6 buildings, 6 sites, 6 structures, 6 objects, Total 70. Name of related multiple property listing: N/A. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida Dept. of State-Bureau of Historic Preservation. Date: 12/15/89

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency and bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [X] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet. [ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet. [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register. [ ] removed from the National Register. [ ] other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the National Register 1/26/90

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE-businessGOVERNMENT-courthouseCOMMERCE/TRADE-financial institutionDOMESTIC-hotel

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE-businessGOVERNMENT-courthouseCOMMERCE/TRADE-financial institutionDOMESTIC-hotel

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial StyleClassical RevivalModerne

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls CONCRETESTUCCOroof ASPHALTother TERRA COTTACAST IRON

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.





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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page   1  

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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Summary

The Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District is located in the city of Fort Myers in Lee County, Florida. The district is a concentration of commercial and government buildings dating from 1888 to 1939. The district was Determined Eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 under Criteria A and C for its association with the historical development and architectural integrity of Fort Myers.

Present and Original Physical Appearance

The seventy contributing buildings and six non-contributing buildings comprising the historic district are densely configured on a street grid system laid out in 1876 when the Town of Fort Myers was platted. The major streets paralleling the riverfront are Bay Street, First Street, Main Street, and Second Street. Streets running north-south from the river include Monroe Street, Dean Street (which becomes Broadway at Main Street), Hendry Street, Jackson Street, and Lee Street.

Original Setting/Appearance

The Fort Myers commercial district evolved from Fort Harvie, later named Fort Myers, a Seminole Indian War post re-occupied during the Civil War. After its military uses were retired, settlers disassembled the buildings and used the lumber to build modest wood frame houses and commercial structures. These early buildings were laid out in the same pattern as today's buildings, and were gradually replaced with more elaborate structures as the town grew. It is possible that materials from the original fort buildings are contained within existing buildings.

Originally, the commercial center bordered a large waterfront industrial area where wharves and warehouses. Infilling during the twentieth century has created an artificial landscape from dredge and fill operations at the river's edge.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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Present Appearance

The height of buildings within the district is generally two to three stories. Exceptions include the eight story Edison Regency Hotel, the Richards and Robb & Stuckey buildings on Hendry Street which are four and five stories, respectively, and the four story Ford Garage on Main Street. The height-width ratio of facades in the district is generally three to one with the exception of the four and eight story examples.

The physical center of the downtown area remains intact and presents a striking image of a two to three story historic streetscape continuing in a solid pattern for four blocks, from Monroe Street to Lee Street. The impact of this streetscape is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the district.

Another distinguishing feature of the district is the rich textures found on many of the buildings ranging from polychrome terra cotta inlay on the Earnhardt Building, bas relief carved in granite or oolitic limestone on the Lee First National Bank and the Federal building, applied sculptural details on the Lee County Bank building and Lee County Courthouse, or rough brick surfaces found on the Richards building and Robb & Stuckey building. Rough cast stucco finishes are found on Mediterranean Revival styled buildings such as the Dean Hotel and the Patio de Leon. Polychrome designs in low relief decorate these buildings, contrasting with the typically plain wall surfaces associated with the style. These textural features instill a quality of detail and texture in the district that distinguishes it from both its modern surroundings and from the more simple and plain finishes found in many similar Florida downtowns.

The historic buildings of the district tend to cover their lots completely, while modern buildings tend to have open space devoted to parking and landscaping. The Ford Garage building has a small patio area, which enhances the courtyard feeling associated with the Mediterranean Revival styled building. Side alleys and rear alleys have in some cases been further enhanced with brick walks, planters and period lighting. These spaces allow for the viewing of different elevations of many of the historic buildings in the district not otherwise possible.

The commercial buildings of the district are a typical pattern of storefronts with glass display windows, recessed entries, and signage at the transom level as well as at the cornice level.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

Wrought iron balconets appear at upper level windows which add to the complexity of windows and doorways. The block long Bradford building is distinguished in its arcaded facade. This feature provides shade as well as a break in the line of the streetscape of First Street between Hendry and Jackson Streets.

Rooftops of the district are generally flat with built up parapets. Several peaked or gable end rooflines are distinctive in the district. These include the Neo-Classically inspired Gwynne Institute, the hipped tower of the Mediterranean Revival Colquitt Building and the curvilinear parapet of the Ford Garage. The Patio de Leon has an interesting crenellated parapet atop a tower defining one of the entranceways into the courtyard.

The scale of the buildings within the district reflects a relationship to the human form in the sizing of windows, doorways, and bay divisions of facades.

#### Architectural Styles

The architectural styles found in the district include the Commercial Vernacular style, Neo-Classical Revival, and several forms of the Romantic style.

**Commercial Vernacular.** The Commercial vernacular style is a simple form of architecture found in business blocks. A square mass with a flat roof with a parapet typifies this style. Occasionally a front facing gable is found. The Earnhardt Building features a nearly two hundred foot long facade that is elaborately decorated. The Earnhardt Building and the Kress Building are both constructed of buff brick and feature elaborate entablatures with the company names. Spiral scrolls between green borders near the cornice are particularly noteworthy on the Earnhardt Building. See photos 11 and 12.

**Neo-Classical Revival Style.** The Neo-Classical Revival style is found on public buildings or financial institutions. The Lee County Courthouse, the Federal Building, the First National Bank and the Lee County Bank are excellent examples of this disciplined form of public architecture. Based on the classical Roman or Greek orders, the style features an entablature with columns flanked with pilasters. Details are sparse and facades are symmetrically composed with large single light windows. See photos 2, 5 and 10.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

Mediterranean Revival. This eclectic style is represented in Fort Myers' commercial architecture in the Tonnelier Arcade and the Collier Arcade as well as several independent structures including the Colquitt Building and the Edison Regency. Spanish barrel clay tile roofs or roof coping, rough textured stucco exteriors with terra cotta decorative motifs, and highly stylized entrance door and window surrounds characterize the style. Curvilinear parapets with crenellated corners are present on several buildings in the district. See photos 14 and 18.

Moderne. There are several examples of the Moderne style of architecture as well as Art Deco. The Elks Club is a typical Moderne structure with a projecting, curvilinear frontispiece with fluted vertical members. The Edison Theater is an excellent example of the Art Deco in Fort Myers. This post-depression style of architecture is inspired by the machine age and features streamlined details, applied ornamentation and pastel colors. The Edison Theater, recently rehabilitated for an office use, retains its original exterior features. These include a set-back facade emphasizing dimension and verticality. A large central element extends above the roof line, which is fluted. The marquee extends above this element exaggerating the vertical emphasis. See photo 22.

#### Alterations

Many of the contributing buildings in the district have been altered in some way. While most alterations are reversible, such as the hanging of awnings or false facades, some have been irreversibly altered such as re-surfacing with new stucco, or moved doorways or entryways. The buildings are in good condition, having been in constant use over the years. Two of the older hotels, the Dean Hotel and the Edison Regency, are currently under rehabilitation. The Bradford Hotel has already undergone extensive rehabilitation, as have several smaller buildings such as the Richards Building, the Robb and Stuckey building, and the Edison Theater. Several major buildings in the district are remarkably unaltered. The Earnhardt Building, with its terra cotta details and buff brick facade, is in an excellent state of preservation. The First National Bank building, with its granite, Classical facade, has been very sensitively restored inside, with the exterior well-preserved.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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Non-Contributing Buildings

There are six buildings within the district that are considered non-contributing. The new municipal parking garage located on the block between Main and Second, on Jackson, is a multi-level concrete structure that is surrounded on all sides by historic buildings. It would not be feasible to re-draw the boundaries around this building due to the location of important contributing buildings on all sides of it. Other non-contributing buildings are not obtrusive in character, but were constructed some time after the period of significance of 1939.

Archaeological Sites

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the boundaries of the historic district. An Indian site, now destroyed, was located at the landfall of the Edison Bridge, but this is not within the district.

The Fort Myers Commercial Historic District is a highly urbanized area. Yet, it is located on the site of the original Seminole Indian War fort, Fort Harvie, later re-named Fort Myer. The actual fort was located in the vicinity of the Federal building on First Street. It is highly likely that archaeological remains exist underneath any fill that may have been added or underneath buildings. It is not likely that these resources will be either disturbed in the future or that the opportunity to excavate will occur.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

2224 BAY STREET		1925	COMMERCIAL
2210 BAY STREET	2210-2214	1900	COMMERCIAL
1408 BAYVIEW COURT		1925	COMMERCIAL
1411 BAYVIEW COURT	1411-1415	1925	COMMERCIAL
1414 BAYVIEW COURT	1414-1420	1924	COMMERCIAL
1722 BROADWAY ST	GARNER-GONZALEZ	1913	FRAME VERNACULAR
1515 BROADWAY ST	BELLMAN	1924	MED REV
1404 DEAN STREET	FRANKLIN	1900	FRAME VERNAUCALR
1410 DEAN STREET	FRANKLIN-1412	1936	COMMERCIAL
1414 DEAN STREET	1414-1416	1924	COMMERCIAL
1418 DEAN STREET	1418-1420	1924	COMMERCIAL
2254 EDWARDS DRIVE	HALL OF 50 STATE	1927	MED REV
2118 FIRST STREET	COLLIER ARCADE	1909	COMMERCIAL
2132 FIRST STREET	KRESS BUILDING	1929	COMMERCIAL
2145 FIRST STREET	2145-2149	c.1927	COMMERCIAL
2200 FIRST STREET	ST. VINCENTS	1937	MED REV
2207 FIRST STREET	DEAN HOTEL	1927	MED REV
2208 FIRST STREET	BARBER SHOP	1925	MED REV
2215 FIRST STREET		c.1925	COMMERCIAL
2216 FIRST STREET	PATIO DE LEON	1913	MED REV
2224 FIRST STREET	CHARLES HOTEL	c.1925	MED REV
2225 FIRST STREET		c.1925	MED REV
2229 FIRST STREET	SALON	c.1925	COMMERCIAL
2231 FIRST STREET	HEITMAN	c.1911	COMMERCIAL
2236 FIRST STREET	STONE BLOCK	c.1915	COMMERCIAL
2247 FIRST STREET	BRADFORD BLOCK	1905	COMMERCIAL
2248 FIRST STREET	FIRST NATIONAL	1914	NEO-CLASSICAL
2250 FIRST STREET	EARNHARDT BLDG	1914	COMMERCIAL
2270 FIRST STREET		1901	COMMERCIAL
2282 FIRST STREET	LANGFORD HOTEL	1914	COMMERCIAL
2288 FIRST STREET	BANK OF FT.MYERS	1914	COMMERCIAL
2301 FIRST STREET	FEDERAL BUILDING	1933	NEO-CLASSICAL
2320 FIRST STREET	EDISON REGENCY	1915	MED REV
1375 HENDRY STREET	ELKS CLUB	1937	MODERNE
1508 HENDRY STREET	PATIO DE LEON	1913	MED REV*
1534 HENDRY STREET	HOTEL	c.1915	COMMERCIAL
1517 HENDRY STREET	1517-1523	1914	COMMERCIAL
1527 HENDRY STREET		c.1915	COMMERCIAL
1529 HENDRY STREET	1529-1531	1929	COMMERCIAL
1533 HENDRY STREET	EDISON THEATER	1939	ART DECO
1603 HENDRY STREET		c.1938	MODERNE
1605 HENDRY STREET		c.1930	COMMERCIAL
1611 HENDRY STREET	ARCADE	1924	MED REV

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

1617 HENDRY STREET	RICHARDS	1923	COMMERCIAL
1625 HENDRY STREET	ROBB & STUCKY	1924	COMMERCIAL
1631 HENDRY STREET		c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1635 HENDRY STREET		c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1701 HENDRY STREET		c.1935	MODERNE
1713 HENDRY STREET		c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1717 HENDRY STREET	1717-1723	c.1928	COMMERCIAL
1532 JACKSON STREET	E.J. LE VAY	c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1619 JACKSON STREET	PAVESE-HENDRY	1914	FRAME VERNACULAR
1631 JACKSON STREET		c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1645 JACKSON STREET	ASHE LOCKSMITH	c.1926	COMMERCIAL
1735 JACKSON STREET	BAPTIST RECTORY	1933	COMMERCIAL
1711 LEE STREET	GARDNER-KELLY	1888	FRAME VERNACULAR
1736 LEE STREET	BUNGALOW	c.1930	BUNGALOW
1745 LEE STREET	SEMINOLE ICE	1923	COMMERCIAL
2040 MAIN STREET	FORD REPAIR	1925	MED REV
2070 MAIN STREET	FORD GARAGE	1925	MED REV
2120 MAIN STREET	LEE COUNTY CH.	1915	NEO-CLASSICAL
2127 MAIN STREET	COLQUITT BLDG	1926	MED REV
2201 MAIN STREET		1914	MED REV
2211 MAIN STREET	LIDO	c.1926	COMMERCIAL
2229 MAIN STREET	LEE CNTY BANK	1914	NEO-CLASSICAL
2253 SECOND STREET	GWYNNE INSTITUTE	1911	MED REV
2322 SECOND STREET	BUNGALOW	c.1930	BUNGALOW
2414 SECOND STREET		c.1930	NEO-CLASSICAL
2436 SECOND STREET	PRESBYTARIAN CH	c.1926	NEO-CLASSICAL
2436B SECOND STREET	PRESBYTARIAN CH	c.1926	NEO-CLASSICAL

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

2200 MAIN STREET		
2281 MAIN STREET		
2286 MAIN STREET	PARKING GARAGE	1988
1524 JACKSON ST		
1601 JACKSON ST		
2201 SECOND ST	FIRST FEDERAL	c.1985

TOTAL CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES	70
TOTAL NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES	6
TOTAL RESOURCES	76

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

**SUMMARY**

The Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District is significant under Criterion A at the local level in the areas of settlement, social history, commerce and government from 1888 to 1939. The district is also significant under Criterion C at the local level as an excellent collection of commercial structures in Fort Myers, Florida. The district was Determined Eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as a result of a Florida Department of Transportation study.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT****ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MILITARY POSTS OF FORT HARVIE AND FORT MYERS**

In November, 1841, Captain H. McKavit established a new post on the Caloosahatchee River named Fort Harvie. During the following months, Fort Harvie became the base of all governmental Seminole War operations south of the Caloosahatchee River. Barracks, warehouses, and a small hospital were constructed. In March, 1842, as the war drew to a close, Fort Harvie was abandoned.

Tensions and violent confrontations between white settlers and Seminole Indians continued. On February 20, 1850, troops constructed barracks, officers quarters, warehouses and stables at the abandoned Fort Harvie site and renamed it Fort Myers.

During the first half of the 1850s, efforts and energies were directed towards replacing the initial pioneer structures of the fort with more substantial ones. By 1856, the post consisted of some fifty-seven buildings. There was a large supply depot and numerous barracks and a two and one-half story hospital. The facility contained shell streets, a parade ground, and vegetable gardens.

The Third Seminole War took place from 1856 to 1858. Reinforcements were sent to Fort Myers and Colonel Harvey Brown was assigned as the new commander of Fort Myers. In 1857, President James Buchanan ordered a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Indians would receive monetary compensation as an incentive for relocating to the Western Great Plains. The last 125 Seminoles transported west embarked from Fort Myers. Following this event, the post was again abandoned until 1863 when it again was occupied by Union troops.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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## HOMESTEADING AND SETTLEMENT

After the Civil War, the military force was dismantled and settlers began to filter in to the Caloosahatchee River region. The opening of the Florida Railroad from Jacksonville to Cedar Key and steamer connections to the area made settlement easier. Promotion of the area by such landowners as Henry Disston, who owned millions of acres in Lee and Hendry Counties, encouraged settlement in the area.

In 1866, Captain Manuel A. Gonzalez and his family, John A. Weatherford, his brother-in-law, and Joseph D. Vivas arrived in Fort Myers from Key West and established homesteads. The following year, two more settlers, John Powell and William S. Clay, arrived. Powell is credited with establishing the first orange grove in the county with seeds found on trees at the fort. Clay established a homestead on Twelve Mile Creek. Charles W. Hendry also settled at Fort Myers, becoming one of the most prominent cattleman in the county. In 1873, he relocated his family from his cattle operation near the Big Cypress. Other relatives that also came to the town included the Blounts and the Wilsons.

The old fort provided materials and buildings for these settlers which facilitated their establishing homes. Several of the fort buildings were renovated or rebuilt. Other settlers came to Fort Myers to salvage lumber, windows and flooring from the abandoned military structures as building materials were so scarce.

Most settlers arrived with the intention of undertaking farming and shipping their products north or to markets such as Key West and Cuba. The homesteaders raised truck crops at first, including cabbage, eggplant, and squash. Others experimented with coconuts, pineapples, sugar cane, and of course, cattle. Fort Myers served as the central place for the transshipment of locally raised produce, with its wharves and commercial establishments.

## TOURISM

Sportsfishermen discovered Lee County's plentiful supply of kingfish, bass, trout, mackerel, and tarpon. Gradually, an industry grew around these recreational anglers. In 1894, Harvie Heitman, later one of the most energetic developers of Fort Myers, opened a small general store which carried, among other

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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items, a large stock of marine supplies wanted by the sportsmen. Two years later, Heitman ran a hack line to Naples, allowing tourists staying at the Naples Hotel to visit Fort Myers.

## TRANSPORTATION

Water-based transportation was the most important influence on the history and development of the county. The first regularly scheduled steamboats on the Caloosahatchee River were operated by Captain J. Fred Menge. He purchased two workboats in 1888, the Gopher and Nemie. These boats formed the core of what became the Menge Brothers Steamboat line. It operated along the river until World War I, when their operations were replaced by expanding roads and rail lines.

Overland routes to the community were primitive. Determined pioneers arrived along well-used cattle trails carrying possessions on two-wheeled ox carts. It was not until this century that Fort Myers was connected to the north by rail. In spite of pleas to bring his railroad to Fort Myers, Henry Plant refused, only extending his line as far south as Punta Gorda. It was not until Plant's death in 1902 and the sale of the South Florida Railroad to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad, that a rail line to Fort Myers was established. On February 20, 1904, the line opened to Fort Myers and was extended south to Naples in 1924.

The most important development in road building was the construction of the Tamiami Trail. This trail was first conceived in 1915 and bonds were approved in Lee County for construction of its portion of the road from Fort Myers to Naples and Marco. The beginning of World War I halted construction and engineering problems traversing the Everglades became a major obstacle. The connection between Fort Myers and Punta Gorda was completed in 1924 and a bridge across the Caloosahatchee River was completed the same year.

## COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1910-1914, Fort Myers experienced another building boom, as did other parts of south Florida. A decade earlier, Napoleon B. Broward became governor of Florida with a goal of draining the Everglades. A comprehensive drainage law was passed which created a Board of Drainage Commissioners empowered to construct a system of canals to drain and reclaim swamp and overflowed

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

lands. This prospect of drainage sponsored a boom in land sales and Fort Myers became the gateway city to the Everglades. Hopeful purchasers streamed into Fort Myers. Wood buildings in downtown Fort Myers disappeared, giving way to new masonry brick buildings of elaborate designs and details. By 1914, the boom ended as people who bought land in the Everglades became disenchanted by the mosquitoes and realities of draining submerged lands.

## 1920S FLORIDA LAND BOOM PERIOD

During 1917-1918, Fort Myers, like all other cities throughout the nation, subordinated all things to the task of winning World War I. The 1920s brought the "boom" to Florida and Fort Myers shared in this phenomenon. Most of the Mediterranean Revival buildings seen throughout Fort Myers were built during this period. This style which combines other prominent architectural styles is the hallmark of the 1920's in Florida. Many excellent examples are found in the downtown commercial structures.

In addition to business buildings and schools, hundreds of houses, churches, apartment houses, filling stations, garages and many other kinds of structures were erected. During the 1920s, optimism about the future was high. In 1925, voters approved bond issues totalling \$3,500,000 breaking the previous record of \$445,000 approved in 1923. Fort Myers' first skyscraper was an eight-story addition to the Franklin Arms Hotel (an outgrowth of the old Hill House) in February, 1924.

However, by mid-1925, there were indications in Florida of the end of the boom era. On August 15, 1925, the Florida East Coast Railroad announced an embargo on shipments except for fuel, petroleum, livestock, and perishable materials. The embargo was prompted by the use of freight cars as warehouses in reponse to the serious shortage of storage facilities.

A massive hurricane struck the east coast of Florida in 1926. On September 16, 1928, a second hurricane struck Palm Beach and moved inland. As a result of economic problems exacerbated by these tropical storms, Florida's economy sagged in 1926. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Florida was already deep in the throes of its own recession.

In reponse to the steadily worsening economy, the new Roosevelt Administration implemented numerous new programs known as the New

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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CRITERION A

The structures located in the proposed historic district date from 1888 to 1939. The structures described below are representative of the district which is significant on a local level in the areas of settlement, social history, commerce and government.

The Garner and Gonzalez Houses, located at 1722 Broadway, have been rehabilitated and have housed the Verandah Restaurant since 1973. Originally, they were private residences built by pioneer contractor, Manuel Gonzalez. The houses are two and one-half story wood frame with metal roofs. The J. Franklin Garner house was built in 1902 and is located at the corner of Second and Broadway, facing Second Street. The Gonzalez family home was built on Broadway in 1912. It is speculated that the buildings could contain lumber salvaged from the old fort, as this was the practice of Gonzalez, the builder.

The Collier Arcade at 2118 First Street (Photo 17) was constructed in 1925 by developer George R. Sims of Ann Arbor, Michigan, who had earned a fortune in the advertising business in New York City. Sims was responsible for the opening of Broadway Street between First and Main. With realtors L.C. Curtwright and Henry Colquitt, he acquired the key properties in that era and, in 1924, was granted permission by the city commissioners to open a new thoroughfare.

The first building erected on Broadway Street was the Arcade. It served as the post office and large spaces were leased to the government at low lease hold rates in order to attract people to the building. The L-shaped building was later named the Collier Arcade when it was acquired by Barron G. Collier.

The Kress Building, located at 2132-2138 First Street, opened in 1927. (Photo 17) The building is one of the showcases of downtown Fort Myers and is an excellent example of commercial architecture in Boom Time Florida. The building was constructed by L.C. Curtwright, Frank C. Alderman and John M. Dean at a cost of \$136,000.

The Dean Hotel, located at 2207-09 First Street, was originally named the Morgan Hotel and built by John Morgan Dean of Providence, Rhode Island, developer of Dean Park, a small elite residential subdivision in Fort Myers. In 1923, Dean purchased



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

Deal. Several important projects were completed in Fort Myers during the New Deal Era. A new concrete bridge named the Edison Bridge replaced the a wooden bridge constructed in 1924. The construction of a new post office was completed on October 30, 1933. A new water plant with a capacity of two million gallons was completed in 1937. Other projects that were aided by the WPA included the Lee County airport (Page Field), for which three concrete runways were completed in 1940, Lee Memorial Hospital, which was completed as a WPA project in 1943, and the waterfront park and yacht basin which was begun in 1937 as a WPA project and completed in 1939.

## HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Myer grew rapidly between 1882 and 1886. Many newcomers homesteaded or bought land along the Caloosahatchee River, starting farms and setting out small groves. Coconut, pineapple, orange, and sugar cane crops were planted. It was among this growth and optimism that Fort Myers incorporated in August, 1885.

Two years later, Lee County was carved from Monroe County. Finding Key West, the county seat, unresponsive to their needs, and they chose to manage their own fate. During this period, small hotels began to appear in Fort Myers, the first being the Keystone at the foot of Park Street. By 1885, Fort Myers had its first newspaper and Thomas Alva Edison had visited the town where he would build his winter home two years later.

The era of prosperity and progress continued in Fort Myers. After the United States occupation of Cuba, Cuban demand for cattle soared and Lee County's cattlemen prospered. As a result, a building boom ensued. Two cattlemen from the West, John T. Murhpy and Daniel Augustus Greene Floweree constructed elaborate homes on the Caloosahatchee River in 1898, inspiring others to build and develop, also. In 1900, Gilmer McCrary Heitman requested and received a telephone franchise from the County Commission. By 1900, the population of Fort Myers had increased by sixty-four percent during the previous ten years.

During the late nineteenth century and very early twentieth century shipping had provided the only connection between Fort Myers and the outside world. After Henry B. Plant's death in 1899, the Plant railroad system was purchased by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The new owner was favorably impressed with the idea of extending the railroad service to Fort Myers. The

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

first excursion out of Fort Myers was run to Punta Gorda on April 7, 1904.

It was 1898 before a modern, first class tourist hotel was built in Fort Myers. The hotel was built by Hugh O'Neill. O'Neill's efforts to attract guests to his hotel gave Fort Myers its first large scale promotional advertisements in northern papers. Soon the name of the hotel was changed from the Fort Myers Hotel to the Royal Palm Hotel after palms brought in from Cuba that same year. They became the principal feature of the hotel gardens.

In the 1890s, in addition to the Royal Palm Hotel, Fort Myers had three small hotels; the Hendry House, the Hill House, and the Fort Myers Inn. The Hendry House was the home of Captain F.A. Hendry, which his sons converted into a hotel. The Hill House, was established in 1884 by Mrs. Mary F. Hill. Originally it had been a small boarding house, but later she added enough rooms to make it a leading hostelry in Fort Myers. The hotel was located on the present site of the Franklin Arms (Edison Regency) on First Street. The Fort Myers Inn was enlarged it and renamed the Riverview Hotel.

Once regular train service was established in 1904, Fort Myers became more easily accessible and a building boom followed. The Bradford Hotel, on the northeast corner of First Street and Hendry Street, was built by Harvie E. Heitman. It originally had forty-one rooms and was kept open throughout the year and was patronized by tourists and businessmen. It was said that only the Hill House rivalled it in popularity and the Royal Palm in elegance.

Fort Myers joined the real estate boom around 1924 when, in January, the Morgan Hotel was opened by developer John Morgan Dean. In February, Fort Myers first skyscraper, an eight story addition to the Franklin Arms, was completed. Also in 1924, Albertus A. Gardner completed the four story commercial building now known as the Richards Building on Hendry Street.

Outside money began to pour into Fort Myers. In 1925, George R. Sims, who had earned his wealth in advertising in New York City, built the Arcade on Broadway Street. Henry Colquitt, a progressive real estate developer from Detroit, built the Colquitt Block. Other buildings included the Robb and Stuckey Furniture Company's building, erected in 1925 on Hendry Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

the S.W. Sanchez homestead on First Street and began construction of the hotel. He laid out a new street to run through the property, enabling the hotel to face both streets. The city commission voted to name the newly constructed street, Dean Street.

The original Morgan Hotel opened in January, 1924, and contained twenty-two rooms. That summer, the hotel was renovated and opened for the new season in October with an enlarged lobby, a telephone booth, new carpets and furnishings. During 1925, seventy more rooms were added and the "new" Morgan Hotel was opened at the end of November.

Tonnellier Court, today known as Patio de Leon, (Photo 14, 15) extends from First street to Main street and is constructed in the Mediterranean Revival style. The development was built in 1913-15 by Peter Tonnellier, a retired businessman and barber from Brenton Harbor, Michigan. From 1913 to 1923 he bought 52 separate parcels of real estate in Fort Myers and Lee County, becoming the county's second largest property owner.

The Bradford Hotel, (Photos 2, 12) located at the corner of First Street and Hendry Street, was opened on November 12, 1905. The block long building was built by Harvie E. Heitman and was financed by Tootsie McGregor, widow of Ambrose McGregor. Ambrose McGregor had befriended Heitman in the late 1890s. The hotel was named the Bradford after McGregor's deceased son. The Bradford originally had forty-one rooms. In 1914 it was announced that the hotel had expanded to include the ground level.

The Arcade Theater, (Photo 12) a two-story building located between Bay and First Streets, was built in 1915 by the Heitman brothers, Harvie and Gilmer. It is part of the Bradford Block and offers passage from Bay to First Street. The Arcade housed several shops and a theater which contained a large stage that was used for shows and vaudeville acts.

The Bradford Block and Arcade are intact. The Bradford has been converted to condominium apartments and the Arcade continues to house a variety of shops. The theater is not operating as such but plans are underway to reopen it as a repertoire theater.

The First National Bank Building, at 2248 First Street, was completed on August 17, 1914. (Photo 2, 10) The Neo-Classically styled bank was built on the site of the Phoenix Hall. The bank

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 9

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

was chartered in January, 1908, and established at the Stone Block on the southwest corner of First and Hendry. The bank was founded at the urging of Walter G. Langford, in response to the recent establishment of the Bank of Fort Myers, an institution that had excluded Langford from its board of directors. For years the First National Bank of Fort Myers and the bank of Fort Myers were bitter rival organizations. When the Bank of Fort Myers moved to a new location at First and Jackson Streets, the officials at the First National Bank decided to build the existing structure at First and Hendry Streets.

After the banking moratorium of March, 1933, the bank was unable to reopen and was placed in the hands of a conservator. Finally on June 13, 1934, a new bank was organized, the First National Bank in Fort Myers and depositors of the old bank received fifty percent of their claims.

The Earnhardt Building at 2250 First Street (Photo 2, 3, 11) was completed on February 10, 1915. It was built by Harvie Heitman who tore down the old livery stable and other old frame buildings on the south side of First Street. The 193 feet long and two stories high building is an excellent example of the commercial style or architecture. For over fifty years McCrory's store has occupied the building and the company currently owns the structure.

The Bank of Fort Myers located at 2288 First Street (Photo 3), was built in 1911. The bank was founded in 1906 as an outgrowth of the Fort Myers branch of the Citizens Bank and Trust Co. of Tampa. Harvie E. Heitman as one of the directors of this bank, took the lead in financing the construction of this building. Although a new facade has been added to the street level, the remaining floors have not been significantly altered.

The Federal Building, at 2301 First Street, was dedicated on December 9, 1933 as the Fort Myers Post Office. (Photo 21) The building is unique in Fort Myers for its rare use of Florida Keys limestone. Coral formations and a variety of sea shells can be seen embedded in the building's walls. During the 1960s, a new post office was built on Monroe Street and the building now houses Federal offices.

The Edison Regency House, located at 2320 First Street, (Photo 13) started in 1889 as the Hill House operated by Mary F. Hill. A small boarding house, it was gradually expanded to become one of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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the leading hostelrys in Fort Myers. In 1918, the building was purchased by W.P. Franklin and renamed the Franklin Arms. In 1924, an eight story addition containing 84 rooms and costing \$300,000 was added. The three story brick and masonry portion of the building shows Mediterranean Revival influences in the barrel tile roof trim and in the columns at the front. During the 1970s, the old Franklin Arms was partially renovated and renamed the Edison Regency House.

The Richards Building, located on 1615 Hendry Street, was built by Albertus A. Gardner in 1924 to serve primarily as a home for the Royal Palm Lodge No. 12, Knights of the Pythies. The structure, which cost \$150,000 to build, represents a good example of commercial Italianate styled architecture.

The Robb and Stuckey Furniture Company at 1625 Hendry Street, erected its four story building in 1925 at the cost of \$50,000. The building is an excellent example of commercial Neo-Classical Revival. The building was constructed by architect and engineer, Leo H. Pleins.

The Gardner House and the Ice Plant located at 1711 and 1745 Lee Street, respectively, are important structures in the proposed district. Both are associated with one of Fort Myers' earliest and most enterprising settlers: the Gardners. In 1883, William P. Gardner, his son, Albertus Gardner, and his daughter, Miranda M. Gardner, came to Fort Myers from Cleveland, Ohio.

William P. Gardner was a horticulturist and a leading citizen of early Fort Myers. When he built his home on Lee Street, his property included the entire block. He established the first nursery in Fort Myers, which specialized in plants imported from New Orleans and Cuba. In 1888, he and his family founded the Seminole Canning Company, processing guavas into jellies and preserves.

On October 9, 1897, a five-year franchise to supply electricity to Fort Myers was awarded by the town council to the Seminole Canning Company, then headed by Albertus P. Gardner. In the beginning when electric power was limited to evenings, the major consumer of electricity was the Royal Palm Hotel. Eventually, the number and types of customers increased. In January, 1909, the company announced they would provide customers with electricity during the day time, also.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 11

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

Ice manufacturing equipment was installed by the company in the spring of 1901 as it was a natural accompaniment to the power station. In February, 1913, Gardner sold the Seminole Ice and Power Company to Engineering and Securities of New York. The company was renamed Southern Utilities. In 1925, Florida Power and Light purchased the company; in 1940 it leased the ice plant to the City Ice and Fuel Company but has continued to maintain the electric transmission facilities to this day. The present structures, the Gardner House and the Ice Plant, are unaltered and in good condition. (Photos 6, 7 and 8)

The Ford Garage, now the Lee County Courthouse Annex at 2070 Main Street, (Photo 19, 20) was built in 1925 by Sykes and Hill, Ford automobile dealers, at a cost of \$60,000. The floors were constructed to hold the weight of automobiles stored on the upper floors and an elevator designed to carry automobiles was included. On the exterior, large rounded parapets and equally large arched windows give the Mediterranean Revival flavor to the four-story structure.

The Old Lee County Courthouse, located at 2120 Main Street, is a two story buff brick building built in 1915 in the Neo-Classical Revival style with a 1926 addition in the same style. The building was designed by architect Francis J. Kennard and is significant architecturally for its integrity and details. The Old Lee County Courthouse was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

The Colquitt Building, at 2127 Main Street, (Photo 18) was completed in 1925 by Henry Colquitt, a real estate developer from Detroit, Michigan. The building was later sold to W.H. Reynolds Sr. and was used as a real estate office. This Mediterranean Revival building has been modernized but still retains the stucco work, barrel tile and the second story bell tower, a prominent feature on this corner.

The Lee County Bank building located at 2229 Main Street, the northwest corner of Main and Hendry Streets, was built by James A. Hendry in 1911 to house a general store. For many years the building also housed the Fort Myers Post Office. (Photo 5) The red brick exterior was stuccoed in 1927 when the Lee County Bank moved into the building. On July 18, 1932, the Lee County Bank and Trust Co. closed its doors, unable to meet the depositors demands. After the banking moratoriums of March, 1933, the bank was reorganized as the Lee County Bank.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 12

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

The Andrew D. Gwynne Institute, (Photo 4) located at 2253 Second Street, was opened for classes on October 20, 1911. It was built to replace the two-room wooden structure erected in 1887 after Lee County was created. Colonel Gwynne, a wealthy cotton magnate, and wholesale grocer of Memphis, Tennessee, had expressed an interest in helping to build a new school for the community. After his death on July 20, 1909, his widow and son announced that in memory of Andrew D. Gwynne they would match any sum raised by the community of Fort Myers to build a school.

Fort Myers raised \$8000, which was matched by the Gwynnes. A special bond issue raised an additional \$10,000 and the school board provided \$45,000. The architect was W.A. Edwards of Atlanta, well-known as the architect of state institutions at Gainesville, Tallahassee, and St. Augustine. Indeed, the Mission style, red-brick building is very handsome and can be compared to the collegiate architecture of those cities.

## CRITERION C

The seventy contributing buildings of the district embody the distinctive characteristics of a variety of types and styles of architecture. These resources are significant on a local level for their formality, materials and overall character of the district. The commercial architecture in southwest Florida is relatively modest in comparison to the many examples of high style or formal buildings found in the Fort Myers district. The First National Bank Building, the Federal Building and the Earnhardt Building are formal and classical in character, which is distinctive from the more typical commercial vernacular. The materials used on the buildings of the district also provide a significant distinction for the area. Polychrome terra cotta, oolitic limestone, and richly detailed masonry features add to the architectural character of the district.

The number and density of the contributing buildings of the district is also a point of architectural significance. The feeling of being in a historical area is evident on most street corners, with historic streetscapes extending along each block. This creates a comfortable scale as well as architectural variety, often a desirable feature of "Main Street" towns. Indeed, the First Street streetscape presents an excellent "Main Street" pattern, with historic buildings lining each side of the street for several blocks. The integrity of the resources within

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   13  

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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the district is such that where alterations have been made, it would be possible in most cases to remove these and restore original commercial store fronts and cornice lines.

The present day downtown Fort Myers area has undergone numerous eras; the Seminole Wars, the Civil War, The Cuban Insurrection, the Spanish-American War, the pre-World War I boom, World War I, the 1920's Florida real estate boom and bust, the Great Depression, and the New Deal. Today, downtown Fort Myers, through its buildings and sites, has retained its historic identity and integrity. By doing so, it has provided Fort Myers with a sense of place and continuity.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 1

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 2

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 3

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United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   4  

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 10 **Page** UTM REFERENCES Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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UTM REFERENCES

A.	17	413310	2947270
B.	17	413220	2946810
C.	17	413580	2946800
D.	17	414000	2947040
E.	17	413690	2947520

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Section number** 10 **Page** Justification Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

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**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the district are irregular and reflect the concentrated development of the district from 1886 to 1939. The boundaries are defined by the presence of extant historic resources and their visual relationship. The natural boundary of the Caloosahatchee River to the north defines the historical limits to the built environment. The eastern boundary roughly bordered by Jackson and Lee Streets abuts modern development and the historical residential district, that will be the subject of a future nomination. The south boundary, roughly Second Street, follows the southern extremity of the contributing structures. The western boundary of Broadway, Monroe and Heitman Streets is defined by the presence of historic resources and includes the Lee County Courthouse complex, already listed on the National Register, and the Ford Garage, an important commercial structure. Buildings outside of the boundaries represent a later period of development, from the 1940s to the 1980s.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Photos \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Aerial of Fort Myers Downtown
2. Fort Myers, Florida
3. Unknown
4. pre-1920
5. Fort Myers Historical Museum
6. Facing east, looking down First Street
7. #1 of 23

1. First Street, Fort Myers Downtown
2. Fort Myers, Florida
3. Unknown
4. ca. 1940
5. Fort Myers Historical Museum
6. Facing east, looking down First Street from Hendry Street
7. #2 of 23

1. First Street, Fort Myers Downtown
2. Fort Myers, Florida
3. Unknown
4. ca. 1940
5. Fort Myers Historical Museum
6. Facing west, looking down First Street from Jackson Street
7. #3 of 23

1. Gwynne Institute, Second Street
2. Fort Myers, Florida
3. Gladys Cook
4. 1989
5. Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc.
6. North Facade, facing south
7. #4 of 23

Items 2-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

1. Lee County Bank, Hendry Street
6. South Facade
7. #5 of 23

1. Gardner House, Second Street
6. North Facade
7. #6 of 23

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 2

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

---

1. Ice Plant, Jackson Street
6. West Facade
7. #7 of 23
  
1. Curbing, Second Street
6. Looking east, Second Street at Jackson Street
7. #8 of 23
  
1. 2149 First Street
6. South Facade
7. #9 of 23
  
1. First National Bank, First and Hendry Streets
6. West Facade
7. #10 of 23
  
1. Earnhardt Building, First Street
6. North Elevation
7. #11 of 23
  
1. Bradford Hotel, First Street
6. South Elevation
7. #12 of 23
  
1. Edison Regency, First Street
6. North Elevation
7. #13 of 23
  
1. Patio de Leon, First Street
6. North Elevation
7. #14 of 23
  
1. Patio de Leon, interior courtyard
6. East elevation
7. #15 of 23
  
1. Patio de Leon, First and Hendry
6. North Elevation
7. #16 of 23
  
1. Collier Arcade, Kress Building
6. North Elevation
7. #17 of 23



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number      Photos      Page   3  

Fort Myers Downtown Commercial District

---

1. Colquitt Building, Collier Arcade, Kress in background
6. South Elevation
7. #18 of 23
  
1. Ford Garage 2077 Main Street
6. Northwest Elevation
7. #19 of 23
  
1. Ford Garage Repair shop
6. Northwest Elevation
7. #20 of 23
  
1. Federal Building, First Street
6. South Elevation
7. #21 of 23
  
1. Edison Theater, Hendry Street
6. West Elevation
7. #22 of 23
  
1. Streetscape, east edge of district, First Street
6. Looking east, out of district
7. #23 of 23