

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received **DEC 13 1982**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Eastbank - The William C. Comstock House

and/or common Comstock-Harris House

2. Location

street & number 724 Bonita Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Winter Park N/A vicinity of

state Florida code 12 county Orange code 095

3. Classification

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> educational | <input checked="" 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 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 |
| | <u>N/A</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Flora Harris Twactman and John Twactman

street & number 724 Bonita Drive

city, town Winter Park N/A vicinity of state Florida 32789

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Orange County Courthouse

street & number 65 East Central Avenue

city, town Orlando state Florida 32801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Florida Master Site File has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date January 1976; December 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Sites and Properties

city, town Tallahassee state Florida 32301

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 William C. Comstock House, known also as Eastbank, was one of the earliest large residential structures built in Winter Park. As originally constructed in 1878, it was a small cottage (now the service wing). The remainder of the house was completed in 1883. It was a 2¼ story, wood-frame building designed in the shingle phase of the Queen Anne architectural style. The Comstock House was sited on top of a rise above Lake Osceola. It was originally located within a sixty acre tract bounded by Lake Osceola on the west, Palmer Avenue on the north, Phelps Avenue on the east and Bryan Avenue on the south. It is now located on a two-acre parcel within the Comstock Park Subdivision, a subsequent development comprising single-family residences postdating the construction of the Comstock House. Its present boundaries are Bonita Drive on the west, Lasbury Street and Maiden Lane on the south, Lakehurst Drive on the north, and the line of an adjoining property on the east. Since its construction, the Comstock House has remained a single family residential structure. It has lost little of the integrity of its original design.

In the 1880's the Comstock property is described as:

Turning again to the left (from Palmer Avenue) a short crossroad brings us to the elegant homeplace of Mr. Comstock. . . Upon this place, Mr. Comstock has built a large and beautiful house, a large stable and other minor buildings, and the whole place is planted in fruit and ornamental trees, shrubs, flowers and lawns which, with a few years' growth will make one of the finest places in the state.¹

Original outbuildings included two boat houses, barn, caretaker's house, irrigation stand-pipe, laundry and carriage house.²

Of two full two stories with full height attic, the Comstock House is balloon frame construction with heart pine framing and cypress cladding. Sills rest on a vast number of brick piers from which rise a two-part structure: the 1878 cottage, now the service wing of the house, and the main house completed by 1883. The axis of the house is north-south. If there is a principal facade, it is the west elevation with its portecochere and recessive main entrance. To the south of the entrance, the drawing room wing rises in four stages: lattice-filled interstices between brick piers below a large open porch, the cypress clapboarded ground floor, a belt course below the shallow pent of the cut-chingled second floor and above all the broad-roof gable centered by a three-sided, gable-roofed dormer. The gable of the south wing is provided a certain finality by the massive chimney at the exposed gable front. The chimney vents the fireplaces of the drawing room and bedroom above. The first floor of the south wing is extended by a broad screened porch (with square posts) which wraps around the S-E corner tower, continuing to the library bay of the east elevation.

The principal entrance, original save the screen door, is simple and typical of the style of the house. The fine wainscot **panelled door has crown or bulls-eye glass insets** and to the immediate left of the door is a four-panelled wainscot below two windows which light the deep stair hall. The entrance is given visual importance by four pairs of square columns rising from sandstone-capped brick piers to support the roof of the porte-cochere. Above the entrance porch is an 18/18 double-hung wood sash window centered in an independent gable protruding from the face of the second floor above cyra-recta shingle-clad corbels. The gable extends the slope of the transverse gable of the central mass of the house.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The central mass rises in the prescribed four-phase progression: piers, clapboarded first floor, cut-shingle second floor and attic. The first floor exterior is dominated by the five-part dining-room bay window under the second floor pent with 9/1 double-hung sash. Above it is a less bold, broad elliptical bay window--two 9/1 sash connected by a ten-light narrow sash. The shingled gable of the central mass is centered by a Venetian window. Asymmetry at the roofline is provided by the great mass of the dining room chimney which punctures the slope of the south roof face and by the extended sweep of the lower north eaves line. The attic floor level extends forward from the second floor wall plane, visually supported by large cyma-recta shingle-clad corbels. The west elevation is extended north by the juxtaposed gables and roof planes of the 1878 one-and-a-half story cottage, centered with a simple 6/6 double-hung sash below a composition of three asymmetrically-placed simple sash windows--two below and one above the eaves line.

The north elevation comprises the early portion of the house. It contains a picturesque amalgam of 6/6 pantry window at the the N-W corner, and the broad and simple kitchen porch. The eaves line of the porch is broken by the gable of a latticed projection. From there the eye is led to the downward sweep of the cottage's rear roof then up the incline of a connecting shed roof to the monumental north gable of the main house with its centered double window which lights the attic.

Parallel to the axis of the main house and joined by a small porch is the former summer kitchen, one-and-a-half stories, now with vehicle storage below and quarters above. Its exterior finish is identical to that of the house, with a double garage door on the north and a single door on the east.

The east elevation comprises the massive two-story bay of the library and bedroom above. The rear entrance with first floor porch extends the length of the house behind the drawing room and around the S-E tower across the south elevation. The library bay has an extended center plane with short corners, is clapboard at first floor level, cut-shingle above, all below a shingled gable centered with a three-part attic window. A massive chimney thrusts from the north slope of the roof to vent the library and bedroom fireplaces. Unique features of the bay composition are the paired corner-mounted windows with 9/1 double-hung sash. The two-story composition is visually unified by a running transom of bevel-cut leaded quarrelled panes extending the bay's entire width. The deep library is given more light by an 18-pane single-sash which joins the paired corner windows above the wainscot. There is a duplicate on the north side of the bay.

The rear entrance is below a massive three-unit stained-glass window. The window extends from stair landing to eaves line above a panelled and glassed entrance door with side lights. Immediately south of the window, second floor, is a nine-panel single sash above the shingle wainscot. The south elevation is dominated by a two-story circular tower mounted at the S-E corner of the main

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house. At the first floor level, the tower base is within the broad eaved porch. The porch is supported by simple posts between which are screening and low level inset panels.

The south elevation of the main house comprises the four-part rise from ground to gable point: piers, clapboarded first floor, cut-shingled second floor, extended shingled gable with supporting corbels. Drawing room and bedroom windows are 9/1 double-hung sash in plain enframingent, the brick chimney pierces the gable point, and two 8/1 sashes light the attic. Between the sashes is a rectangular full patera or sunburst, with fluted rays emanating from a bold elliptical boss.

The S-E circular tower extends the spaces of the dining room and bedroom above. Each space is lighted by three curved 9/1 sash, all under a half-spherical roof or dome which seats within the east slope of the principal gable of the main house.

All window glass in the main house is plate glass. The house was lighted between 1883 and 1911 by carbide gas from a generator on the premises. A majority of the gas lighting fixtures are in situ. The tin roof was put on in 1938-39 following a roof fire which damaged the original wood shingle roof.

Planned around a broad and deep stair hall, the first floor comprises a large drawing room across the south wing, a large dining room north of the entrance, a long N-S side hall, the library, a bathroom, two pantries, a store room and a large kitchen with fireplace. The second floor has five bedrooms and four bathrooms.

All principal interior spaces have panelled wainscoting, worked mantel pieces and crown mouldings. Throughout the house there are finely laid floors of heart pine. All joinery and turned work are of the best order. Facings of fireplaces in the drawing and dining rooms are encaustic tile; that of the library is thin-mortared hardpressed brick. Certain rooms retain the original wallpapers, one with sectioned hand-painted borders of Florida birds and fruits.

The house has undergone little change since completion in 1883. The porte-cochere roof gable has been reduced; the open balcony over the entrance enclosed to provide an additional bathroom; porch screening and enframingent have been periodically replaced and kitchen cabinets and bathroom fixtures have been replaced as originals became unserviceable. Originally painted gray or beige, brown and green, the Comstock-Harris house has been painted white since Mr. Comstock's death in 1924.

¹ Claire Leavitt MacDowell. Lochmede (Winter Park: Winter Park Herald, 1955). Vol. I., p. 5.

² Bruce Sherwood, Interview with John and Flora Harris Twactman, Eastbank, Winter Park, Florida, June 1982.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input 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 +1878, +1883

Builder/Architect R. R. Thayer (Builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The William C. Comstock House is significant for three reasons. First, it is a fine example of the Queen Anne architectural style. Second, it is associated with William C. Comstock, a prominent Chicago businessman and Florida real estate developer. Finally, it represents an important theme in state history--Florida as a winter and health resort for northern visitors.

The Comstock House was known also as Eastbank, one of the earliest large homes built in Winter Park. It originally was constructed as a small cottage (now the service wing) in 1878. The main house was completed in 1883.¹

By Central Florida standards, the design and finish of the house is elegant and perhaps elaborate. Its dozen and a half gables and dormers above, intricate, cut-shingle patterns, smooth undulating weatherboarding, many bays and carefully crafted joinery both exterior and interior, enriched with quality stained glass and carving, subtly and boldly define its Queen Anne architectural style. The subtleties of its design indicate the work of a competent architect; the quality of construction and finish demonstrate the work of a gifted builder. The record indicates no architect, only that:

. . . Mr. R. R. Thayer is busy erecting a neat and substantial two-story house thereon (William Comstock's property), lumber is also on the ground for building a barn.²

The house is a testimonial to Mr. Thayer's abilities.

The Comstock House is deceptive--it appears much smaller than it is. The shingle phase of the Queen Anne style, of which it is prototypical, hugs the ground. It is a large house dwarfed by the mature plant material around. Surviving pictures of the 1890's show it to have been richly furnished, well maintained, but never pretentious. Its lack of pretention appears to reflect the awareness of quality of its builders. Regardless of its low key visual quality, it is a building of great elegance, craftsmanship and potential for comfortable living.

William C. Comstock, the original owner, was a member of the Chicago Board of Trade, a successful entrepreneur, and an advocate of wintering in Florida. Born October 20, 1847, in Williamstown, Oswego County, New York, Comstock was the son of Charles and Julia Sprague Comstock and the grandson of one of the Rhode Island pioneers who settled the Ontario Lake Plain in the 18th century.³ The family distinguished itself in business, education and law. Charles Comstock moved to Syracuse, New York in the 1850's where he was a grain merchant and salt manufacturer. The family moved to Evanston, Illinois in 1861.

Charles Comstock was a successful grain broker⁴ and President of the Travellers Insurance Company of Chicago. He and his wife wintered in Winter Park from the early 1880's until their deaths.⁵ William C. Comstock received the bachelor of arts degree in 1867 from Northwestern University where he was Phi Beta Kappa. Upon graduation, he entered his father's business and in 1868 married Ellen K. Douglas, daughter of the Honorable Samuel Douglas of Evanston, Illinois. He was successful as a grain broker between 1868 and 1893, a member of the Chicago Board of Trade from 1875 to 1924, a trustee of Rollins College, Winter Park, and a generous benefactor of that institution.⁶

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 2 acres

Quadrangle name ORLANDO EAST

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

H

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|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Weaver, Paul L. (Historic Sites Specialist)

organization Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management date 11/19/82

street & number The Capitol telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida 32301

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/3/82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 1/13/83

Keeper of the National Register 

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Typical of so many others during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, William C. Comstock came to Florida because of his health. He arrived in Winter Park in 1877, having suffered a recent illness. In 1878, with his health restored, he returned to his business, an advocate of the Florida climate.⁷

Upon its completion in 1883, the Comstock House and surrounding property became a showplace of Winter Park. Although Mr. and Mrs. Comstock had no children, their large home accommodated Mrs. Comstock's nieces and nephews, James Douglas Flood, Robert Douglas Flood and Elinor Douglas Flood, who collectively inherited Eastbank and who later built homes nearby. William C. Comstock was vestryman of St. Marks Episcopal Church in Evanston, Illinois and senior warden of All Saints Church in Winter Park. He was also President of the Winter Park Improvement Association and a shareholder in the Winter Park Land Company. Mrs. Ellen Comstock was benefactress of the Winter Park Library Association, serving as its president from 1897-1902.⁸ The Comstocks had the means and the taste to build a substantial and carefully designed residence. Mrs. Comstock died in Chicago, June 7, 1902. Mr. Comstock continued to occupy Eastbank until his death, December 29, 1924 in Chicago.⁹

Following Comstock's death in 1924, a Mr. Lasbury bought the sixty-acre property and subdivided it. In 1928 he sold the house and two acres of land to John Harris of Winter Park. Mr. Harris' father, Captain John Harris, an Ocoee, Florida pioneer, moved his family to Winter Park in 1899 to provide better access to schools for his children.¹⁰

Aside from the architectural distinction of the Comstock House and William C. Comstock's entrepreneurial significance, ownership of the property is typical of time and place. Built by an early investor and winter resident, the Comstock House has been occupied and well maintained for more than fifty years by three generations of the Harris family, natives of the area.

¹ Winter Park Herald, June 18, 1925.

² Loring Chase Scrapbook, 1882, Mills Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, Vol. I, p. 49.

³ Comstock Files, Archives, Mills Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida; Biographical Sketch, James Douglas Flood, 56 East Walton Place, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1963.

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Loring Chase Scrapbook, February 23, 1882, Vol. I, p. 50.

⁶ Comstock Files, Archives, Mills Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida. Elinor Douglas Flood, Chronology of the Life of William C. Comstock, 1963, pp. 1-3.

⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

⁸ Loring Chase Scrapbook, April, 1883, Vol I, p. 65; Chapman and Chase, Map of Winter Park, Florida, Winter Park, Florida 1883; Chicago Herald Tribune, September 29, 1924 (obituary); Comstock Files, Archives, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida; Claire Leavitt MacDowell, Chronological History of Winter Park, Florida (Winter Park: The Winter Park Herald, 1950), pp. 52, 115, 121, 152, 225.

⁹ Chicago Herald Tribune, September 29, 1924, October 1, 1924.

¹⁰ Personal Interview, John and Flora Harris Twachtman, Eastbank, Winter Park, Florida, June, 1982.

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BOOKS

MacDowell, Claire Leavitt. Chronological History of Winter Park, Florida.
Winter Park: The Winter Park Herald, 1950.

MacDowell, Claire Leavitt. Lochmede. Winter Park: The Winter Park Herald,
1955. Vol. I.

ARTICLES AND PERIODICALS

Chicago Herald Tribune.

Winter Park Herald.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Loring Chase Scrapbook. Mills Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida.
Vol. I, 1881-1888; Vol. II-III, 1889-1906.

Comstock Files, Archives, Mills Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida.

MAPS

Chapman & Chase, Map of Winter Park, Florida. Winter Park, 1883. (Mills Library,
Rollins College, Florida Collection).

INTERVIEWS

Sherwood, Bruce T. Personal Interview with John and Flora Harris Twachtman,
Eastbank, Winter Park, Florida, June, 1982.

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Bounded north by Lakeview Avenue; East by land of Laurance Allan which comprised Lot 17, Section E of Comstock Park Subdivision and lands of Russell Mannys which comprise Lot 21, Section E of Comstock Park Subdivision; South by Lasbury Avenue West by Bonita Drive, the parcel contains two (2) acres more or less, comprising Lot 19, Lots 18 and 21, Comstock Park Subdivision in the City of Winter Park, Orange County, Florida and recorded in Deed Book K-87, pages 44-46.