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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name The Desert Inn

other names/site number Wilson's Corner / 8 Os 99

2. Location

street & number 5570 South Kenansville Road N/A not for publication

city or town Yeehaw Junction N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Osceola code 97 zip code 34972

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 9/20/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Maq M. Noz

1/3/94

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Roadhouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco

walls Stucco

roof Composition

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Social History

Period of Significance

c. 1925 - 1943

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown/E.P. Wilson

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

The Desert Inn
Name of Property

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Osceola, Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.15 acres approx.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	7
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5	0	9	3	6	0
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3	0	6	3	7	9	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3

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Zone Easting Northing

4

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--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lucille Rights/W.N. Thurston, Historic Preservation Supervisor

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date _____

street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250
Street

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Desert Inn, Osceola County

SUMMARY

The Desert Inn is a 2-story, wood frame, commercial building resting on a concrete and cypress timber foundation. The exterior is stuccoed, except for the overhanging second story front which is clad in asbestos shingle. The flat, built-up roof is parapeted. Three non-contributing buildings -- two wood frame utility sheds and a masonry motel unit -- are located immediately behind the main building.

SETTING

In 1925, southeastern Osceola County was open cattle range and forest land, traversed by two dirt track roads that converged some three miles west of a branch line of the Florida East Coast Railway (map 1). The railroad maintained housing for several section workers near the isolated freight depot known as "Yeehaw." A small sawmill and a turpentine still supported the nearby village of Lokosee, but the nearest large towns were Kenansville, ten miles to the north, and Fort Drum, fifteen miles to the south. State Road 30 (now SR 60) connected Vero Beach, thirty miles to the east, with Lake Wales, fifty miles to the west. The Canoe Creek Road ran north and south between Kissimmee and Lake Okeechobee.

Both the north-south and east-west roads were improved and paved by the early 1940s, and the crossroads had become known as Yeehaw Junction. The railroad line was abandoned in 1947, and most of the station towns along its route disappeared. The north-south road through Yeehaw Junction was soon rebuilt as a major 2-lane highway, U.S. 441. In 1964, a segment of the Florida Turnpike connecting Orlando with Fort Pierce was completed, passing just east of the Junction.

Today, Yeehaw Junction is the site of several motels and service stations and a small community of homes along State Road 60. But the surrounding area remains primarily cattle range and scattered wood lands essentially unchanged except for the fencing of the rangelands. There are no major communities within a radius of twenty-five to forty miles.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Desert Inn, Osceola County

DESCRIPTION

The Desert Inn is a 2-story, wood frame, vernacular commercial building located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 441 and State Road 60 in rural southeastern Osceola County, Florida (photo 1). No firm documentation of its original construction or early evolution is currently available. However, oral tradition and County property records indicate that it was built before 1930, and may incorporate all or part of an earlier, c.1924 building.

The main (east) facade is dominated by the overhanging second story, which is supported by four boxed columns with solid triangular brackets (photo 2). This overhang originally formed a canopy that sheltered the main entrance and provided a protected area for servicing automobiles from gas pumps located between the supporting columns. The central entrance is flanked by display windows asymmetrically placed. The first floor exterior, including the columns, is stuccoed. The second floor overhang is clad in asbestos shingle with wood trim. Double jalousie windows flank an advertising sign that takes up the center third of the second floor facade.

The south elevation (photo 3) exhibits five asymmetrical bays separated by boxed pilasters and irregular fenestration. Three doors at the first floor lead to the barroom, a stairway to the second floor, and a storeroom giving access to the kitchen (see floor plan). A 1-story extension of the exterior wall encloses an open utility area leading to a walk-in cooler, and a shed roofed storage and laundry room addition complete this elevation.

The north elevation is distinguished by a projecting ell at the rear and a deck and fire escape stair from the second floor (photo 4). A side entrance provides access to the first floor restaurant. Double, sliding pane windows are predominant in the irregular fenestration.

The rear (west) elevation is nondescript, exhibiting the vertical exterior wood paneling of the storage/laundry addition against the stuccoed finish of the main building.

Exterior trim is sparse and simple (photos 6-8). The entire building is painted white with green trim, the historic color scheme reflecting its long association as a Sinclair gasoline service station.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Desert Inn, Osceola County

The interior reflects the evolution of the building. Flooring is cypress on the first floor (photo 9) and heart pine or plywood on the second. Ceilings and walls are unsheathed (photos 10-12) with the exception of the dining room and the front apartment on the second floor. A U-shaped bar dominates the dining room (photos 13 & 14), and a paneled partition separates the dining room from the package store.

Three non-contributing ancillary buildings are located at the rear of the main building. A wood frame, gable roofed storage building sheathed in asbestos shingles, originally a rest room facility, is hidden on the south side by a paneled screen (photo 15). Immediately behind it is a larger, wood frame, board and batten building housing a diesel generator (still in place) and a workshop (photo 15). A ten unit, stuccoed, cement block motel building resting on a concrete slab stretches along the rear of the property (photo 16). These buildings were either substantially altered or newly constructed to replace earlier buildings in the 1950s.

ALTERATIONS

Exterior alterations to the main building include replacement of the original double hung second floor windows on the main facade, addition of an exterior fire escape stair and second floor landing on the north elevation, and addition of the small shed extension at the rear. Interior alterations include installation of a second rest room and laundry facilities on the first floor, and partitioning of the originally open second floor to provide a small apartment and several rental room on the second floor. Despite these alterations, completed in 1946-47, the Desert Inn retains its essential integrity of design, materials and workmanship and continues to exhibit the appearance and character that reflect its historic associations. At the present time, however, the building functions only as a restaurant, and the second floor is not currently in commercial use.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Desert Inn, Osceola County

SUMMARY

The Desert Inn is significant under Criterion A for its association with the commercial and social history of rural Osceola County in the early to mid-twentieth century. It served as a trading post for cattle drovers and lumbermen, a service station for tourists, and an entertainment and recreation center for transients and local patrons alike.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The vast area of what is now Osceola and Okeechobee counties in Florida was unexplored and virtually unknown prior to the military operations of the Second Seminole War of 1835 - 1842, and it was too remote to attract settlement in the early post war years despite the inducements of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. But its burgeoning stock of wild cattle did attract the attention of cow hunters, who by the 1850s were driving herds from the region to markets in northern Florida and to Charlotte Harbor for shipment to Cuba. Frontier communities began to develop at the former military posts at Fort Drum and Fort Bassinger, and later, during the Civil War, on Lake Marion (see locator map). The Cuban market was shut off during the Civil War by the Union blockade, but south Florida cattle, driven from 300 to 500 miles to slaughterpens in Georgia, were an important source of beef for the Confederate armies.

The cattle industry continued to flourish in the post-Civil War years. Kissimmee became the major market when the Florida Southern Railroad reached the town in 1882. Then, as a result of the Disston Land Purchase of 1881 by which industrialist Hamilton Disston amassed huge areas of public lands in Florida, settlement and development of farmlands in the Kissimmee River valley and around Lake Kissimmee and Lake Okeechobee boomed. Here, as elsewhere throughout the state, farmers fenced their croplands to protect them from cattle, hogs, and other livestock roaming the open range or being driven to market. But the prairies and pinelands of southern Osceola and northern Okeechobee counties remained the domain of the cattle hunters and cowmen.

In 1911, the Florida East Coast Railway began construction of a branch line from New Smyrna Beach to Lake Okeechobee, tapping the timber and naval stores resources of the region. Holopaw,

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Desert Inn, Osceola County

Kenansville, and Lokosee were born and grew as sawmill and turpentine towns, and Fort Drum, an established cow country trading center, prospered from its rail connection, while depots at other locations, including Yeehaw, served only as way stations or water stops. In the meantime, an effort to promote agricultural development by the construction of the South Florida and Gulf Railroad from Kenansville to the Ft. Bassinger area was a total failure, and this line was taken up shortly after its completion.

By the 1920s, increasing motor vehicle traffic had led to a series of improvements to the major north-south wagon roads and the relocation of the east-west road from Vero Beach to Lake Wales. The two roads then crossed at a point approximately three miles west of the isolated railroad depot at Yeehaw. Improvement of these roads continued with a series of grading and ditching projects in the following decade, but paving and bridge building was not complete until 1942. Logging and naval stores activity in the area declined sharply during the Depression, but revived somewhat during World War II, and the cattle industry, benefiting from the gradual improvement of herds through selective breeding and imported stock, prospered with the wartime demand for beef. Thus, the region remained an open range cattle frontier until the mid-point of the twentieth century.

But in 1949, the State Legislature passed the so-call "No Fence Law," by which stockmen could be held liable for damage caused by their free ranging herds to the unfenced property of others. The effect was to force the cattlemen to fence their herds, putting an end to the open range and to traditional overland cattle drives. This, more than any other single event, marks the end of the Florida frontier and the opening of the state to the explosive economic and cultural development that continues today.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Desert Inn is historically associated with both the heritage of the cattle frontier and the early development of transportation in Osceola County. No written documentation of its construction is available, although County property records confirm that it was on the site in 1930. Oral tradition indicates that it was built by E. P. "Dad" Wilson in the mid 1920s.

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Section number 8 Page 3 Desert Inn, Osceola County

Little is known of Wilson's background, but he acquired several hundred acres of land near the junction through which cattle drives passed with some regularity. Nathan "Teet" Holmes, who ran large herds in the area from his homestead a few miles south of Yeehaw, recalled "Dad's Pen" as one of the temporary holding pens that he and a number of other cattlemen used routinely on cattle drives from the Ft. Drum area to the Kissimmee market.

It is possible that Wilson first occupied a small cabin and engaged in trading with the more or less constant flow of transient cowmen and lumbermen working in the area. But the road improvement projects of the 1920s, in both response to and encouragement of increasing vehicular traffic, offered a dual opportunity to provide a broader range of goods and services to the local clientele and a convenient rest and service stop for tourists and travelers. Wilson responded with the construction of the two story commercial building that still serves its basic original functions.

Cowmen working the palmetto prairie, whether gathering and branding or on an overland drive, travelled light, with only such provisions and equipment as they could conveniently carry on horseback. For them, the Desert Inn provided a sort of oasis. Its dining room offered a welcome and varied alternative to their own camp cooking, and its bar and second story dancehall a popular place to "frolic." These attractions were equally enjoyed by loggers cutting timber or crossties in the surrounding pinelands and nearby cypress stands. As this local clientele included blacks and Native Americans from the Seminole and Miccosukee reservations, a separate dining room was available at the rear of the building.

The loss of patronage due to the decline of logging activity in the 1930s was offset by increased traffic on the steadily improved roads. As the only service facility within fifteen to thirty miles, the Desert Inn dispensed Sinclair gasoline and displayed that company's colors of white with green trim that it still carries. At some time early in the life of the Inn, Wilson installed an electric generating system, running water, and a septic system, and by the late 1930s he had added a set of overnight cabins behind the Inn.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Desert Inn, Osceola County

The Desert Inn continued to cater to its dual clientele throughout the World War II years. Although surrounded by military training facilities at Ft. Pierce, Kissimmee, Avon Park, and Okeechobee, the Kissimmee Valley rangelands experienced little change other than the continual improvement and extension of its roads. Its beef and timber industries continued unabated to meet the wartime demand. But the pace of change accelerated in the immediate post-war years. The Florida East Coast Railway abandoned its branch line through Osceola County in 1947. The much improved State Road 29 became a part of U.S. 441, a major north-south route to Miami. The east-west road was upgraded and redesignated SR 60. The operation of the Desert Inn was increasingly oriented toward the burgeoning growth in motor vehicle traffic. But the cattle range remained open, and the cattle drives continued (photos 17 and 18).

In 1946, Alfred and Julie Cheverette purchased the Desert Inn and, in addition to normal maintenance and repairs, carried out the only substantial alterations that have been made to the building. (See Section 7.)

Thus, the evolution of the Desert Inn coincides with the transition of the Florida cattle industry from a traditionally transient, open range occupation to modern ranching operations, and with the early development of the state's modern, transient tourist industry based on automotive transportation. It reflects, in other words, the final stage of Florida's long frontier history and the short twentieth century prelude to the Space Age.

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Desert Inn, Osceola County

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

Akerman, Joe A. Florida Cowman: A History of Florida Cattle Raising. Kissimmee, Fl.: Florida Cattleman's Association, 1976.

Cody, Aldus M., and Cody, Robert S. Osceola County, the First 100 Years. Kissimmee, Fl.: Osceola County Historical Society, 1987.

Hetherington, Alma. The River of the Long Water. Chuluota, Fl.: Mickler House Publishers, 1980.

Van Landingham, Kyle, and Hetherington, Alma. History of Okeechobee County. Ft. Pierce, Fl.: 1978.

Additional information was obtained through personal interviews conducted in April through August, 1992 by Lucille Rights with sixteen current and former long-term residents of the area.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Desert Inn, Osceola County

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated Desert Inn property are as shown by the heavy black line on the accompanying map labeled Map 2 Plot Plan.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries encompass that portion of the property that has historically been associated with the operation of the Desert Inn.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

PHOTOGRAPHS 1

Section number _____ Page _____

Desert Inn, Osceola County

1. Desert Inn, Yeehaw Junction
2. Osceola County, Florida
3. Lucille Rights
4. September, 1992
5. Photographer's files, Stuart, Florida
6. Overall view, camera facing north
7. 1 of 18

Unless otherwise indicated, items 1 through 5 are the same for all photographs.

6. Main (southeast) facade, camera facing northwest
7. 2 of 18

6. Southwest elevation, camera facing northeast
7. 3 of 18

6. Northeast elevation, camera facing southwest
7. 4 of 18

6. Rear elevation, camera facing east
7. 5 of 18

6. Detail of exterior trim, southwest side, camera facing north
7. 6 of 18

6. Detail of southwest side entrance, camera facing northeast
7. 7 of 18

6. Detail of siding and trim, second floor, main facade, camera facing northwest
7. 8 of 18

6. Detail of original dining room floor and entrance to added bathroom, camera facing north
7. 9 of 18

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Continuation Sheet**

PHOTOGRAPHS 2
Section number _____ Page _____

Desert Inn, Osceola County

- 6. Detail of dining room ceiling, camera facing southwest
- 7. 10 of 18

- 6. Detail of unfinished original interior partition
- 7. 11 of 18

- 6. Detail of dining room ceiling
- 7. 12 of 18

- 6. Service counter and bar, camera facing north
- 7. 13 of 18

- 6. Dining room, camera facing north
- 7. 14 of 18

- 6. Non-contributing generator house and utility shed, camera facing northeast
- 7. 15 of 18

- 6. Non-contributing motel unit, camera facing north
- 7. 16 of 18

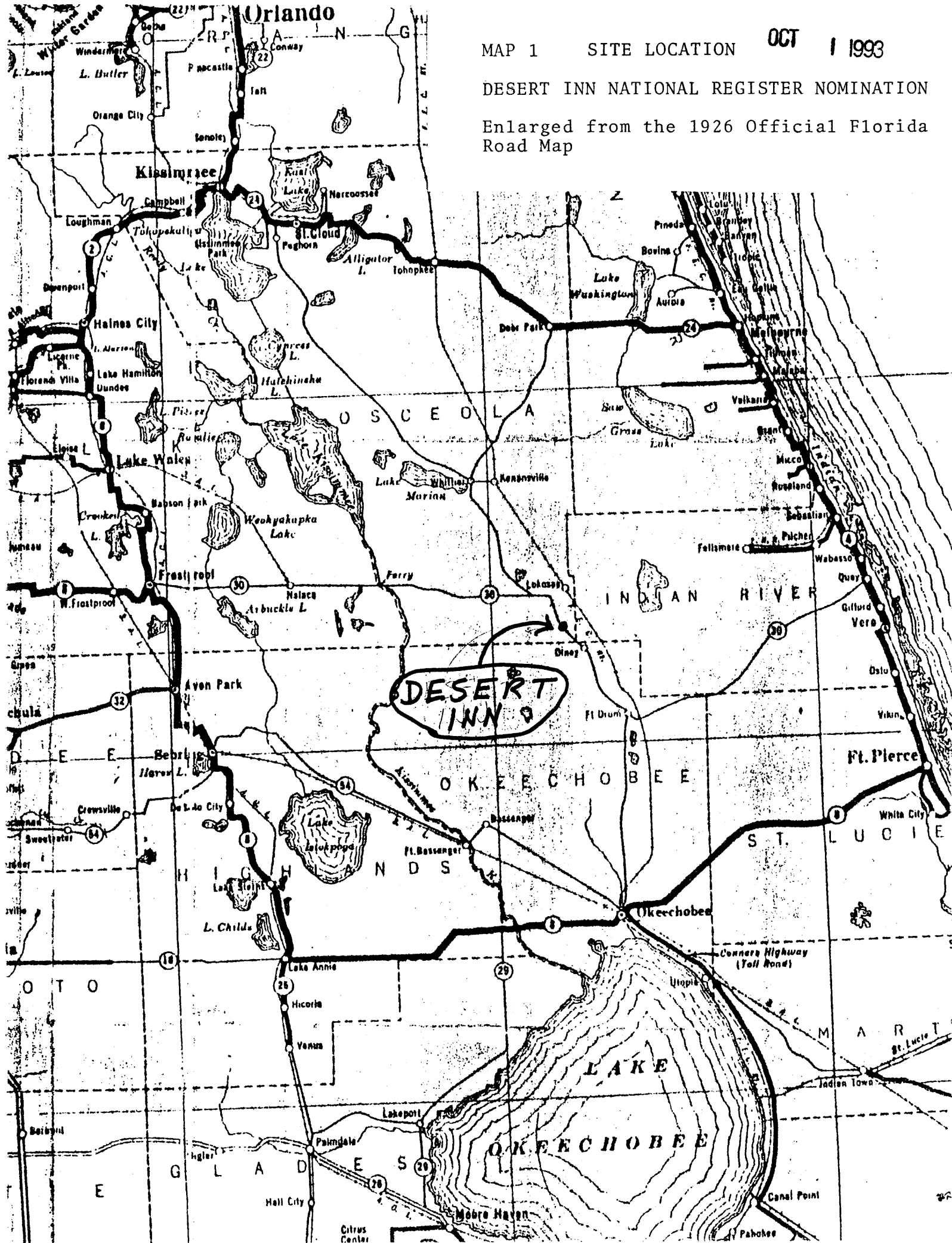
- 3. Unknown, copy by Lucille Rights
- 4. c. 1950
- 6. Cattle drive across Desert Inn property, camera facing northwest
- 7. 17 of 18

- 3. Unknown, copy by Lucille Rights
- 4. c. 1950
- 6. Cattle drive across Desert Inn property, camera facing northwest
- 7. 18 of 18

MAP 1 SITE LOCATION OCT 1 1993

DESERT INN NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

Enlarged from the 1926 Official Florida Road Map

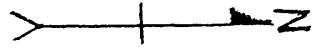


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Section 10
Section 11

Section 15
Section 14

T.325 - R34E



MAP 2 PLOT PLAN

DESERT INN NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

⊙→ Photo Key - photo number and direction of camera view

Section 11
Section 14

R/W Line
STATE ROAD 60

Scale 1" = 100'



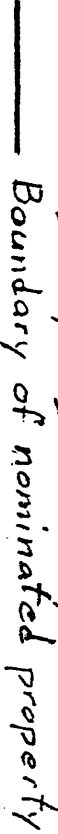
Contributing Resource



Non-contributing Resource



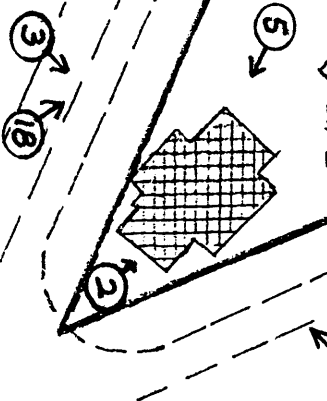
Highway Right of Way



Boundary of nominated property

Motel Units

Generator House
Utility shed



SITE MAP - DESERT INN

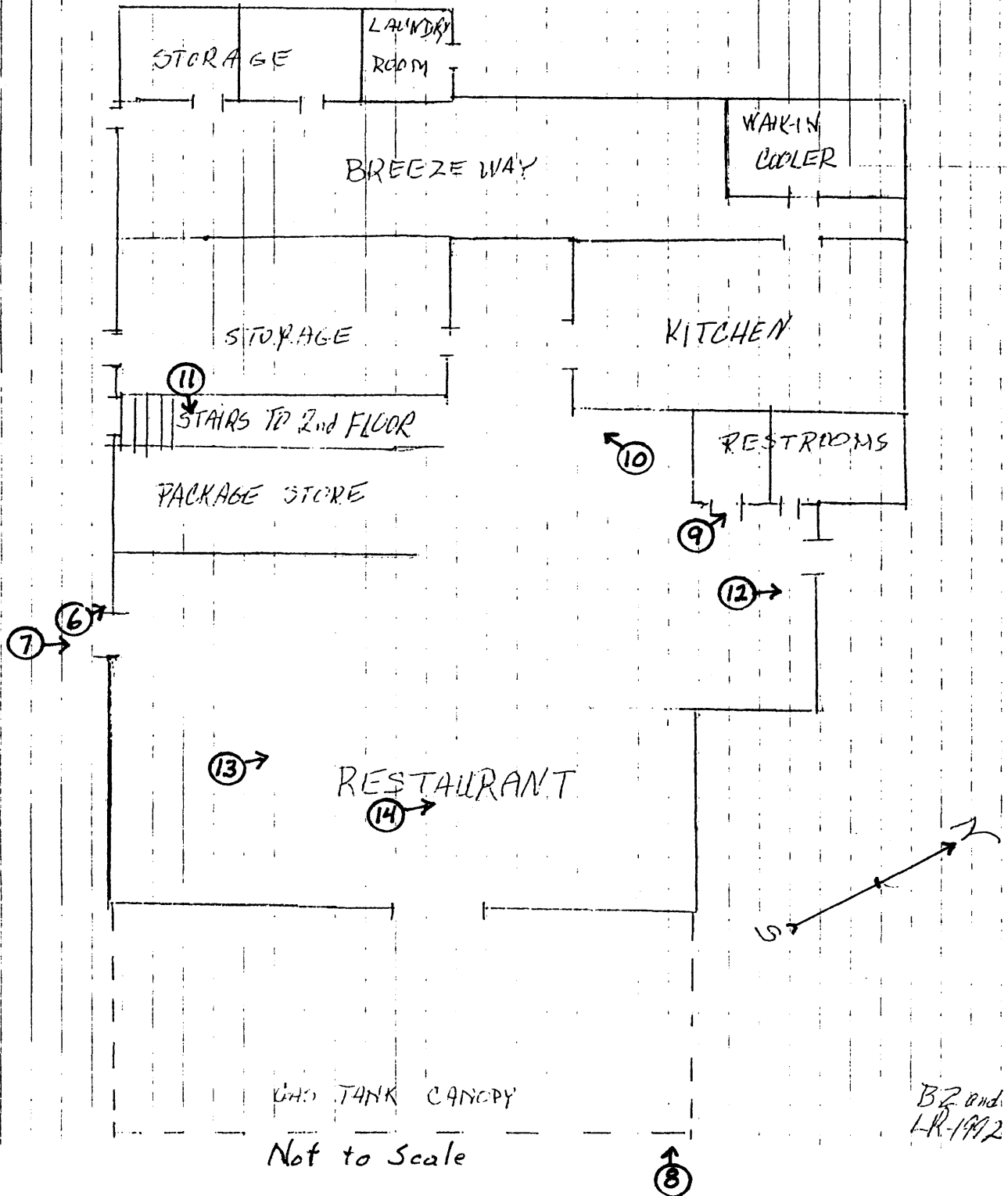
Yeahaw Junction, Osceola County, Florida

DESERT INN

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1st FLOOR

⊙ → Photo Key

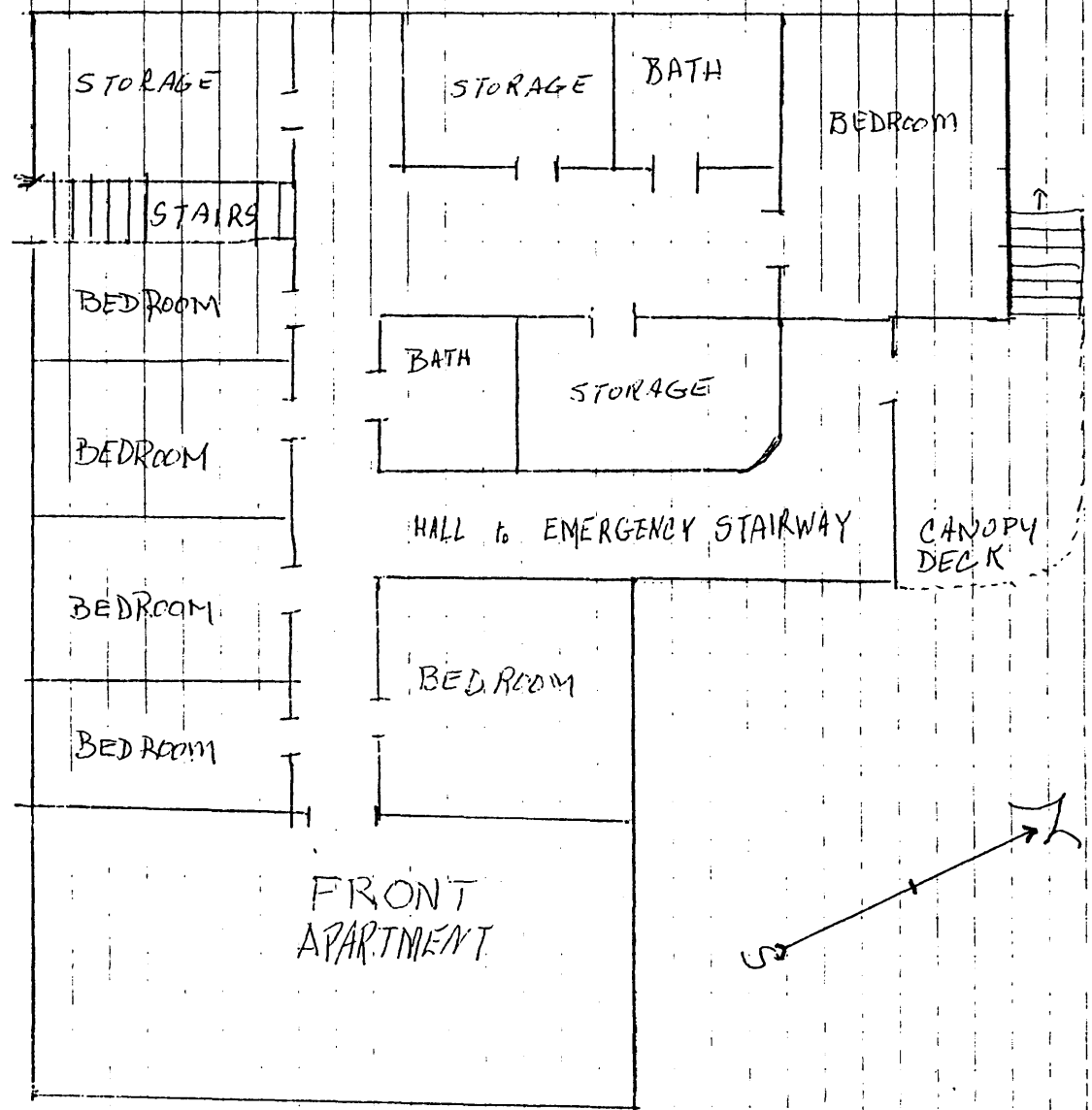


BZ and
LR-1992

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DESERT INN

2nd FLOOR



Not to Scale

LR-1992