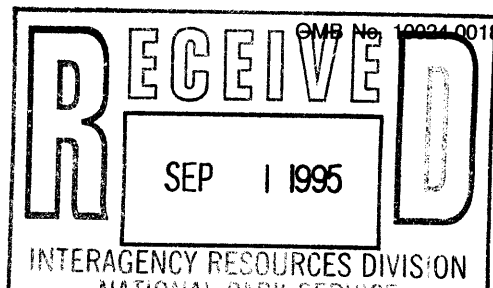


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



1150

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  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 KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number South of County Road 316 and North of Lake Kerr  n/a not for publication

city or town Fort McCoy  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Marion code 083 zip code 32134

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 8/28/95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Florida 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:)

Edson H. Ball 9/29/95  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the  
National Register

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	
17	6	buildings
0	0	sites
1	1	structures
0	0	objects
18	7	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)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Secondary Structure

COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/

Agricultural Outbuilding

Storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Secondary Structure

COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/

Agricultural Outbuilding

Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete; Wood Piers

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Metal

other

Narrative Description

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

**Kerr City Historic District**

Name of Property

**Marion County, Florida**

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution 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.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement

Community Planning and Development

Entertainment/Recreation

Agriculture

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1885-1945

**Significant Dates**

1885

1886

1920

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 40.5 Acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	4 2 4 0 6 0	3 2 4 9 4 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	1 7	4 2 4 7 0 0	3 2 4 9 8 6 0

3	1 7	4 2 4 9 2 0	3 2 4 9 5 4 5
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	1 7	4 2 4 3 6 0	3 2 4 9 0 2 0

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 Joyce E. Cusick/Sherry Piland, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date August 1995

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

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number 7 Page 1

The Kerr City Historic District is a rural, Quaker settlement in Marion County, Florida. It developed with a twofold purpose: as a resort and as a farming area for vegetables and citrus trees. The district contains 18 contributing and 7 non-contributing properties. The contributing properties include eight residences. The other historic buildings associated with the early settlement include a blacksmith shop, barn, and various grove equipment storage buildings. A working Texaco gasoline pump with its frame shelter, and a boathouse situated on Lake Kerr date from 1925, and are included in the district. The non-contributing buildings in the district, built between ca. 1960 and 1985, include six residences and a frame boat storage structure.

**SETTING**

The Kerr City Historic District comprises approximately 40.5 acres of the original 205 acres of the 1886 plat, and contains the significant remaining buildings of the historic community (see District Map; because Kerr City does not have assigned addresses, buildings are identified by site number). The district is bordered by Hill Street on the west and Beulah Avenue on the north. The east boundary consists of lot 7 of Block 20 and lot 9 of Block 19. Lake Kerr provides a natural southern boundary.

Kerr City is located off Highway #316 in the northeastern corner of Marion County, and is situated on the northern bank of Lake Kerr. Kerr City was platted as a 26-block grid. The early settlers often purchased lots adjoining their homesites for small citrus groves. This ensured that settlement was not dense and enabled the community to retain a rural ambiance. Orange groves flourished on the blocks north of Beulah Avenue and throughout the district surrounding the residences. Citrus groves were also planted near the lake on Lots 4-8 of Block 19, and on Lot 2 of Block 17. Killed in the Big Freeze of 1894/95, the groves were replanted and flourished until the freeze of 1985 destroyed them. They have not been replanted to date; however, a few sour orange trees have sprouted from the roots and remain in the historic district.

The high, rolling, pine land, with oak hammocks and sandy soil, rises from the banks of Lake Kerr at 25 feet above sea

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 7 Page 2

level with a gradual slope to a height of 66 feet. Only one long leaf yellow pine tree in excess of 3 feet in diameter survives from the vast pine forest that covered Marion County in the nineteenth century. Many other large, long leaf yellow pines that sprouted after the original trees were cut down in 1884 to make way for the buildings and orange trees are now fully matured and scattered over areas that were formerly citrus groves. The historic buildings and single-lane, sandy roads appear much as they did in the pioneer days of this early settlement. The canopy of huge oak trees along Beulah Avenue, the main road, and other roadways, is a vista that transports one back in time to the 1880s, when Kerr City was an active bustling community. The drooping, heavy branches of the huge oaks, some nearly 300 years old, provide a thick, leafy canopy that shades the lanes and houses. The district also contains apple and pear trees, white dogwood, Sabal (cabbage palms), sweet bay trees, azaleas and tall, colorful camellias planted around the turn of the century.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Originally several small commercial buildings were constructed in the blocks just to the west of the historic district, fronting along Main Street and Ohio Avenue. A hotel (Site C) was built in 1884, overlooking Lake Kerr. The remaining blocks were planned for residences and citrus groves. About 25 houses were built in Kerr City between 1884 and 1894.

The residences in the Kerr City Historic District consist of a variety of one and two-story, frame vernacular structures. The houses on Beulah Avenue are prominently identified by wood signs inscribed with their names on the front entrance porches. They have 20-foot set backs marked by concrete sidewalks from the front entrances to the Beulah Avenue right-of-way. The residences have both regular and irregular ground plans. Most of the houses have pine clapboard siding. Originally they rested on piers made of native pine. Such piers remain under the Anna Agnes Willmott House (Site #17) and the Joseph Stanley House (Site #21). Corrugated metal hip and gable roofs predominate. Most of the houses have central brick chimneys. Window placement and size vary; most windows are set in rectangular openings with plain wood surrounds. In a few of the houses the original, vertically divided, two-over-two, sash windows with hand-blown panes are still in place. Decorative details are few, a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

reflection of the Quaker lifestyle of the original owners. Most of the residences have full-width, one-story porches across the primary elevation. Columns of pine or sabal (cabbage) palm support the porch shed roofs. Secondary, rear porches are also common.

Generally, the interiors of the residences are finished with vertical, heart pine paneling. Ceilings are 10 feet high, while floors are generally heart pine, 1" x 4" tongue and groove. The original paneled wood doors and hardware are in place in most of the residences. Stairways are centrally located in most of the houses.

Originally, wood stoves provided cooking facilities in the kitchens as well as heat in the living rooms of the first floor, while smaller wood stoves provided heat to the bedrooms on the second floor. The stoves were vented through brick chimneys with double flues. In some of the residences, the wood stoves were eventually replaced with fireplaces. Between 1925 and 1934, mantels for the fireplaces were designed and fabricated by Moses Warren Brown, who worked for the Smiley family at their resort in New York.

### Alterations

The residences and other buildings of the Kerr City Historic District have maintained their original appearance. Between 1905 through the 1940s, the original pine foundation piers and wood entrance steps of most of the residences were replaced with concrete building blocks. The blocks were handmade by the Smiley family, two at a time, using a Miracle Block Maker, which is still on site. Knee walls made with the blocks have also been added to the first tier of the entrance porches of Lake Pines and Campforrest. Corrugated steel roofing panels manufactured by Molybdenum, in Massillon, Ohio, were used to replace the pine shakes early in the twentieth century after fire destroyed a number of the buildings.

Most homes in Kerr City had a hand pump for well water on the rear porch; only a few remain. Originally, frame privies/outhouses were located behind the houses. They had gable roofs and surface materials similar to the residences. These

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number 7 Page 4

have been replaced with bathroom additions, usually located on the rear or side elevations of the residences.

**LIST OF CONTRIBUTING HISTORIC RESOURCES IN THE DISTRICT**

Contributing Residences

<u>SITE #</u>	<u>NAME/ Location &amp; Legal Description</u>	<u>DATE</u>
1.	George Smiley House (Lake Pines) Beulah Avenue, Block XX, Lot 7	ca. 1885

The main facade of the George Smiley House, featuring a two-tiered porch, faces northwest (Photo 1). The house is set back from Beulah Avenue. The house has an irregular plan, a pyramidal roof, and 6/1 and 2/2 double hung, sash windows. An unusual interior feature of the house is a stairway off the kitchen, where the original telephone remains in place on the stair wall. The George Smiley House is further distinguished by an original bronze fireplace mantel (Photo 2).

3.	Asa Hunt House Beulah Avenue, Block XX, East 1/2 of Lot 4	1886
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The Asa Hunt house is a one-story structure with board and batten siding and a gable roof (Photo 3). The house is currently used as a storage building.

6.	Joseph Allman House (Winter Home) Beulah Avenue, Block XX, Lot 3, E 1/2 of Lot 2, and W 1/2 of Lot 4	ca. 1886
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This two-story gabled ell house faces northwest onto Beulah Avenue (Photo 4). The gable roofs of the two wings intersect. The entrance, which projects slightly, is located in the perpendicular wing extending to the west. A one-story shed roof porch extends across this wing. Three gables break the eave of the east elevation. A rear addition was made to the house in 1973, providing space for additional bedrooms and baths. Both double hung sash and casement windows are used in the house.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 7 Page 5

7. Stephen Carpenter House (Twin Oaks) 1885  
Beulah Avenue, Block XX, Lot 1 and  
west 1/2 Lot 2

This gabled ell house faces northwest onto Beulah Avenue (Photo 5), and consists of a two-story wing placed perpendicular to a one-story wing. The entrance is located in the one-story section. Windows are 2/2, double hung sash. A working, hand operated water pump remains at this house.

12. Alfred Smiley House (Palmpineoak) ca. 1920  
Salt Springs Avenue, Block XVIII,  
Lots 11 and 12

This one and one-half story, frame, vernacular residence faces northwest onto Salt Spring Avenue (Photo 6). A porch, with a flat roof, extends across the main facade. A large gabled dormer projects over the porch. The dormer has paired, 6/6, double hung sash windows. The end walls of the house are fenestrated with similar windows flanked by multipaned side lights. A diamond shaped window at the peak of the gable wall provides additional light into the upper story.

17. Anna Agnes Willmott House (Post Office) 1886  
Ohio Avenue, Block XXVI, Lots 3 and 4

This two-story, frame vernacular house faces north onto Ohio Avenue (Photo 7). A shed roofed porch extends across the first floor of the main facade, sheltering the centrally located entrance. A one-story gabled wing, with a shed roof porch on the east elevation, extends at the rear of the house (Photo 8). One of the window sills on the main facade of this house, which was used as the post office, has a slot for depositing mail (Photo 9).

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

20. Grant Smith House ca. 1900  
Beulah Avenue, Block XVII, Lot 1

This one story, frame vernacular residence is set back from Beulah Avenue and faces north (Photo 10). It features a front-facing gable roof, a shed roof porch across the facade, and a transom over the entrance door.

21. Joseph Stanley House (Campforrest) ca. 1885  
Beulah Avenue, Block XVI, Lot 12

This two-story, frame vernacular residence is one of the largest in Kerr City. It faces south onto Beulah Avenue (Photo 11). A two-tiered porch extends across the facade. The base of the porch consists of rusticated concrete blocks (Photo 12). The upper level of the porch as a decorative wood, jig-sawn railing. The entrance is centrally located and consists of a wood paneled door with twin lights in the upper half with a transom. A working hand water pump is located on the rear porch (Photo 13). Originally the kitchen was located in a separate structure. Around 1920, a large two-story addition was made at the rear of the house, connecting the kitchen to the main block and increasing the living area (Photo 14). An unusual brick fireplace distinguishes the interior (Photo 15).

Contributing Non-Residential Structures

The frame vernacular barns, garages, and storage buildings are in scale and keeping with the residences. Most are one story in height and have gable roofs.

<u>SITE #</u>	<u>NAME/Location</u>	<u>DATE</u>
#1a	Storage Shed rear of George Smiley Residence	pre-1945
#1b	Storage Shed rear of George Smiley Residence	pre-1945

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number 7 Page 7

2. George Smiley Garage 1912  
rear of George Smiley Residence

The exterior walls of this rectangular garage are of corrugated metal (Photo 16). The building also has a metal gable roof.

4. Blacksmith Shop ca. 1885  
Beulah Avenue, Block XX, East 1/2 of Lot 4

The structure, located south of the Asa Hunt House, has weatherboard exterior walls and a gable roof (Photo 17).

5. Texaco Gas Station 1925  
Beulah Avenue right-of-way, north of lot 4,  
Block XX

This shed-like structure consists of a poured concrete pad and pine tree trunk columns braced to support the low-pitched, metal gable roof (Photo 18).

8. Caesar's Barn ca. 1886  
Salt Springs Avenue, Block XIX, Lot 9

This barn has vertical rough sawn board siding on the exterior and a metal gable roof (Photo 19). It is set back approximately 70 feet south of Salt Springs Avenue, adjacent to a large meadow.

10. Agricultural Storage Building ca.1900  
Salt Springs Avenue, Block XIX, Lot 9

This rectangular structure was used to store citrus grove equipment. It has corrugated metal exterior walls and a metal roof (Photo 20).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 7 Page 8

14. Alfred Smiley Boathouse 1925  
Block XXIII, Lot 14, (near Lake Kerr)

This single story, frame boathouse is located adjacent to Lake Kerr (Photo 21). The rectangular structure has exterior walls of corrugated metal and a metal gable roof. A walkway and pavilion, just to the east of the boathouse, were erected ca.1960.

- 21a. Wood Storage Shed pre-1945  
rear of Joseph Stanley House

22. Alfred Smiley Garage 1912  
Beulah Avenue, Block XVI, Lot 14

This rectangular garage structure has corrugated metal walls, a metal gable roof, and a carport extension on its west elevation (Photo 22).

## LIST OF NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The six noncontributing buildings (5 rental cottages and a residence) and one noncontributing structure (a boat storage structure) in the Kerr City Historic District were built between 1964 and ca. 1985. The covered boat storage structure was built ca. 1970. A two-story frame private residence was built c1985. The one-story, concrete block rental cottages were constructed in 1964 to replace earlier structures that had burned. The replacement structures have retained the historic names of the original cottages. Two walkways with pavillions extending over Lake Kerr, one built ca. 1960 (Photo 23) and the other ca. 1985, are located outside the district boundaries.

9. Rental Cottage (Sunnyside) 1964  
Salt Springs Avenue, Block XIX, Lot 3
11. Rental Cottage (Lakeview) 1964  
Salt Springs Avenue, Block XIX, Lot 1

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number 7 Page 9

- |     |  |       |
|-----|--|-------|
| 13. | Residence<br>Salt Springs Avenue, Block XIX, Lots 9 and 10                                       | c1985 |
| 15. | Rental Cottage<br>Buena Vista Street, Block XVIII, Lot 14  | 1964  |
| 16. | Covered Boat Storage Structure<br>Buena Vista Street, Block XXVI, Lot 4                          | c1970 |
| 18. | Rental Cottage (Hillcrest)<br>Buena Vista Street and Ohio Avenue, Block XXV, Lot 6<br>(Photo 24) | 1964  |
| 19. | Rental Cottage (Beehive)<br>Buena Vista Street, Block XXV, Lot 4                                 | 1964  |

The original chimney and fireplace are still used in this cottage (Photo 25).

**NON-CONTRIBUTING HISTORIC SITES OUTSIDE OF THE DISTRICT**

Several sites have been identified in Kerr City where significant structures, that burned or were demolished, were once located. All of these sites, with the exception of Robert Henley House Site, are outside the district boundaries. The sites are identified by letter on the general Kerr City Site Plan.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Site A | Downing and Jones Steam Saw Mill<br>Salt Springs Avenue (Block I, Lots 1-5). |
| Site B | Robert Henley House<br>Beulah Avenue and Hill Street (Block XVII, Lot 1)     |
| Site C | Lake Kerr House (Hotel)<br>Ohio Avenue and Maine Street (Block X, Lot 1).    |

This hotel (Photo 26), overlooking Lake Kerr, burned in 1907.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number 7 Page 10

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Site D Quaker Church/School  
Hill Street, (Block XV, Lot 1)

This structure, built in 1885, was demolished ca. 1960 (Photo 27). Its foundation blocks, beams and sills remain scattered on the site. Desks used by the teacher and students have been stored within the district.

Site E Williamson Cemetery  
Hill Street (Block XV, Lots 2, 3, and 4).

The cemetery, dating from 1877, is not included in the district because it predates the period of significance for the planned community. None of the original Quaker settlers of Kerr City was buried there.

Site F General store  
Ohio Avenue and Maine Street (Block VI, Lot 19)

This store was located on Maine Street along with several other commercial buildings. The locations of some of these sites are also identified, but not included, in the resources of the historic district.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**Section number 8 Page 1

The Kerr City Historic District is significant under Criterion A for its association in the areas of Early Settlement, Community Planning and Development, Entertainment/Recreation (as a resort), and Agriculture (the development of the citrus industry) in Marion County. It is also architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C for its concentration of frame vernacular architecture typical of the rural areas of Marion County. The architecture of the houses and associated buildings reflects the simple life style of the settlers, mostly Quakers, from Michigan, Indiana, and other northern states who settled in Kerr City.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Planted by the Spanish and Indians in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, sour orange trees grew wild in Marion County, especially near the lakes and rivers where they were protected from most freeze damage. The earliest development of Marion County's citrus industry, however, took place in the mid-nineteenth century in south Marion County near Lake Weir and in the northern part around Orange Lake where trees were successfully grown from the seeds of oranges imported from China. At Lake Weir, the Reverend Nathan Brown planted seeds as early as 1847, while Dr. James B. Owens established his grove soon after near Orange Lake.

Following the Civil War, citrus cultivation was an important element in the growth of Marion County. Grove owners in Marion County experimented with grafting sweet orange cuttings of trees grown from seeds to the wild sour orange trees already established to produce edible fruit that was much in demand. By 1870, almost every property owner in Marion County planted orange trees. Large groves were located in the Orange Lake and Lake Weir areas.

By the 1870s and 1880s, the Florida peninsula attracted sportsmen, especially fishermen, and tourists from all over the United States and some foreign countries. After arriving at Jacksonville by steamship and/or train, tourists could transfer to river steamers for trips up the St. John's River to Palatka or continue along the St. John's, stopping at various landings and settlements.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 8 Page 2

Impressed with the climate and water ways, the lush landscape of rolling pine and oak covered hills, the citrus trees, and productive soils, many visitors purchased land and built homes in Marion County. Northern investors, hoping to make their fortunes, platted and developed towns in the 1880s, where the settlers grew citrus, corn and other vegetables, in addition to a little sugar cane and cotton.

Like the steamboats, the railroads also brought tourists and settlers to Florida. Many of the towns and communities that developed in Marion County during the 1880s, were platted as stations along railroad lines. The Florida Southern Railway Company secured steamboat connections by establishing a terminal in Palatka on the wharf of the St. John's River. The railroad, advertised as the "Orange Belt Route to Florida," was extended from Gainesville through Marion County to Ocala during the winter of 1881/1882.

During the winter of 1894/95, a major freeze completely destroyed Marion County citrus groves. Many of the settlers, who were virtually wiped out by the disaster, chose to return north to their former homes; others stayed and replanted citrus or vegetable crops and gradually returned to prosperity. The economy faltered after the loss of the orange groves, but the discovery of phosphate, used mostly for fertilizer, in Dunnellon in 1888, and the subsequent finding of large deposits in other areas of Marion County brought new prosperity to some residents. The Lake Kerr area was east of the major mining activity.

The short lived land boom in the early 1920s brought a new prosperity and the construction of new residences and commercial buildings. A number of large developments were platted and lots were sold to investors who wanted to own land in Florida. When the real estate boom collapsed, many of these platted settlements were abandoned by the investors, most of whom had not established homes on their lots. There was very little new construction in the 1930s, as the pine trees had been decimated and the economy was poor. Fieldstone (limerock) was quarried locally and utilized for some buildings, while Federal Government programs such as the WPA and PWA helped towns and cities build mostly brick buildings through a program of grants and loans.

After World War II, farmers continued to raise vegetables and cattle, and bred fine race horses. The dirt roads of Marion



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number 8 Page 3

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County were gradually paved, often bypassing the early settlements, leaving the residents and historic buildings set back from the main roads. Although several of these early settlements have disappeared, with only a cemetery remaining to attest to the bustling communities of long ago, several, like Kerr City, have survived with small concentrations of historic resources.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Lake Ker was originally identified and named by the surveyor Robert B. Ker in 1835. His field notes indicate that long leaf yellow pine trees covered much of the wooded and rolling land which would become Kerr City half a century later. Little information has been recorded about the Lake Ker area during the period from 1835 until the 1870's. Although no battles are known to have been fought in this area, buttons and other fragments of gear carried by soldiers during the Civil War (1861 - 1865) have been found, indicating that they traveled across the land and perhaps camped near Lake Ker. No professional comprehensive archaeological survey has been conducted in the area.

During the 1870s and early 1880s, and perhaps even earlier, the Thomas S. Williamson family operated a large sugar cane plantation on the northern bank of Lake Ker. Their family cemetery (Site E), established on the property in the 1870s, remains. They did not, however, receive deeds from the State of Florida until 1883. Williamson and his family are listed in the Marion County census of 1855, although it does not reveal where they were located. Government Lots 10, 11, 13, and 14 of Section 10, Township 13 South, and Range 25 East were granted on June 30, 1883, to Catherine Williamson (1817-1885), the widow of Thomas S. Williamson. On August 13, 1883, Lucy E. Williamson (1856 - 1894) was deeded Government Lots 8 and 9. In order to clear the title of other claims, Catherine Williamson also received a deed to the property from William A. Merdy Foy, which was filed in Marion County Circuit Court on April 1, 1884.

In January 1884, Florence and Robert Henley, an Indiana couple, made a wedding trip to Florida. During a steamboat excursion on the St. John's River they met old friends from Michigan, Hannah and Benjamin Swan. Both couples were active members in the Society of Friends (Quakers). They discussed

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

investing in Marion County land and developing it for settlement and citrus groves. The men subsequently traveled to Marion County to look at available property, including the rolling pine land of the Williamson plantation on the northern bank of Lake Ker. With its sandy soil, it was ideal for growing oranges and other citrus trees. They arranged to purchase land from the Williamson family for future settlement.

Ben Swan and Robert Henley purchased 149 acres from Catherine Williamson, widow of Thomas S. Williamson, Wade and Jeruska Williamson, and Lucy and Sherrod Haistens on December 1, 1884. A small parcel (3 acres) was retained by Lucy Haistens, but was later acquired by Swan and Henley. They also purchased 55.26 acres from Lucy Williamson Haistens to complete the acquisition of approximately 205 acres. Plats of the settlement show the spelling was changed to "Kerr."

The first post office was established at "Lake Ker" on October 8, 1884, with Zilla Terry, serving as the town's first postmaster. Terry also purchased a site overlooking the lake and built a three-story hotel, the "Lake Kerr House," which was in operation by December 1884 (Site C, Photo 26). The hotel and other early buildings constructed in Kerr City were built of the long leaf yellow pine trees cut down in 1884 and cleared from the lots to make way for the orange groves and buildings. The huge trees, which yielded heart pine, were locally planed by Downing and Jones who established their saw mill on Block I, Lots 1-5 (Site A). Ellsworth Martin, a carpenter and one of the early settlers, advertised in the first newspaper and built many of the simple frame vernacular houses.

A weekly newspaper, the Kerr City Advertiser, founded by H. M. Pratt, was first published December 24, 1884. The newspaper was sent north to attract potential settlers, even before the plat was officially recorded in the courthouse. The Kerr City Advertiser, "Devoted to the Interest of Southern Immigration," carried full page ads that offered: "Beautiful Lake Fronts on a Clear Water Lake, Secure from Frosts. Unimproved Lands surrounding the Lake at Low Prices. For HEALTHFULNESS and BEAUTY combined with GOOD SOIL this Lake Kerr Region is unsurpassed in the State."

Kerr City is one of the earliest planned communities in Marion County, developed independently by private owners. Unlike

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 8 Page 5

many other settlements in the area, it was not connected to a railroad and was planned specifically for residences and citrus groves. The settlers of Kerr City came to Florida in response to the ads that touted the wonderful climate and the good life to be lived by planting orange trees. Both the Henleys and Swans also spread the word among their friends and members of the Quaker faith. A column of each issue of the four page newspaper was devoted to the local social news, including names of visitors to the hotel and Lake Kerr, where the fishing was excellent. Many of the visitors purchased house lots and grove land and built homes in Kerr City.

According to the memoirs of Florence Henley, the Henleys, along with a group of several other families, arrived in Kerr City in the fall of 1885. Besides selling lots for houses, businesses and five acre tracts for orange groves in the "new and growing town of Kerr City," Ben Swan and Robert Henley operated Lake Kerr Nurseries, supplying citrus trees to the new settlers in the community. While their homes were being constructed, the Henleys and the Stephen Carpenter family stayed in the old Williamson cabin. The Henleys were seasonal residents who usually returned to the north during the hot summers. The Robert Henley home (Site B) was destroyed by fire in 1888.

One of the early focal points of the community was the building used as a church and school. The Quakers probably held their Sabbath meetings in the hotel until the church/school building was completed in 1885. As was the custom in many early Marion County settlements, the church building was utilized for regular school classes to teach the children during the week. The building was demolished ca. 1955 (Site D, Photo 27).

The Carpenter House, "Twin Oaks," (ca. 1885) appears to be one of the earliest surviving residences in the community (Site #7, Photo 5). The Carpenters also purchased half of the adjoining lot for a small orange grove. Also constructed ca. 1885 were the George H. Smiley House (Site #1, Photo 1), "Lake Pines," and the Joseph Stanley House (Site #21, Photo 11), "Campforrest." Another early settler was Joseph Allman, a visitor from Salem, Ohio, who arrived on December 9, 1884, with plans to spend the winter. Allman built the residence now called "Winter Home" (Site #6, Photo 4) in 1886. He is also listed as one of the contributors to the cost of publishing the first newspaper.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**Section number 8 Page 6

By 1886, Kerr City had a population of 100. The name of the post office was officially changed to Kerr City on July 21, 1886, with the postmaster listed as Summer L. Satterthwaite. A stagecoach made a daily trip for a fare of \$1.00, between Kerr City and Norwalk, a community on the St. John's River in Putnam County, where the steamships docked. The steamboats provided residents with transportation to Palatka, which was the nearest banking center for Kerr City. Besides Downing and Jones, there was a planing and shingle mill operated by the Ford Brothers. J. Swan had purchased and was managing the hotel from its first owner Zilla Terry. A. G. Elliot was the town dentist, while medical care was provided by Dr. J. Terry. Miss Catherine Terry taught the children, and John Titcomb, a civil engineer, was the surveyor for Kerr City. Asa Hunt, from Michigan, built his modest one story, frame, vernacular house in 1886 (Site #3, Photo 3).

Lots 1-4 of Block XXVI, were deeded to Anna Agnes Willmott by R. B. Henley for \$ 250 in February of 1886. The Willmotts built a two-story building with a post office and general store on the first floor and living quarters on the second floor (Site #17, Photo 8). A mail slot in the northwest window of the front elevation allowed settlers to mail letters anytime (Photo 9). The second floor living quarters had no interior access from the first floor store and post office. The one-story kitchen wing was entered through the store as well as from the outside and provided dining space. Robert K. Willmott became the new postmaster and the post office was officially transferred from Summer L. Satterthwaite in August of 1887. Lake Kerr Post Office was the name assigned in December 1888.

By the late 1880s, the Kerr City groves were beginning to produce oranges, and vegetable crops were also doing well. The produce was shipped north and brought prosperity to the settlers who had worked hard to build their community. Groves and fields outside the community were also owned and worked by the settlers. Although the population was still estimated at about 100 persons, Kerr City had a resident land agent to handle sales of lots valued at \$5.00 to \$20.00 per acre. There were also a grove contractor, W. F. Jobes; a hardware store owner, T. N. Lewis, who was also a physician; and a florist, Edwin Booker. Miss Nellie Bodgaw was the only teacher.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 8 Page 7

In 1893, Joseph Stanley purchased the house known as "Campforest" (Site #21, Photo 11). Located on Beulah Avenue, it was the Kerr City stopping place for the stagecoach, which remained a vital link for mail and passenger service between Ocala and Norwalk, and later Ft. Gates. The Stanleys had originally come to Kerr City in 1884, and bought land from Robert Henley in 1886.

In May 1893, George Smiley purchased the house known as "Lake Pines" from Ben Swan (#1, Photo 1). George Howland Smiley (1858 - 1942) and his wife Lillian Fletcher Smiley (1861 - 1944) first came to Kerr City in the mid-1880s to visit their brother-in-law Ben Swan and his wife Hannah. The Smileys operated a resort owned by the family since 1869 in the Shawangunk Mountains of Ulster County, New York. Along with their sons Charles and Alfred Fletcher Smiley (1890 - 1975), they retired each winter to Deland, Florida. After Charles died, the Smileys wanted a quieter place to rest than Deland, and decided to make Kerr City their winter home. On their trips to Florida, the Smiley family traveled by train and steamship from New York to Jacksonville, then changed to a river steamer for the remaining trip on the St. John's River to Norwalk and later Ft. Gates. At Ft. Gates the Smiley party would disembark with their luggage and wait while Alfred walked to the barn (Site #8, Photo 19) at Kerr City, hitched one of the family horses named Caesar to a surrey and returned to Ft. Gates landing for his family and their staff. Caesar was made famous by a friend of the Smileys, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings in her Pulitzer Prize winning novel, The Yearling.

While most of the residents prospered during the early 1890s, for various reasons a few of the Kerr City settlers fell on hard times, passed away, or simply left. George Smiley began to acquire some of the property by paying the back taxes. After the big freezes of the winter 1894/95, which completely destroyed Marion County citrus groves, many of the settlers, who were virtually wiped out by the disaster, chose to return north to their former homes. George Smiley continued acquiring the groves, businesses and homes of the settlers of Kerr City. Because fire was a threat to the frame buildings of Kerr City, in the early twentieth century, he replaced the pine shake roofs of the surviving buildings with corrugated steel. George also made concrete rusticated blocks in a Miracle Block Maker, with son Alfred's help, to reinforce and replace the original pine piers

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

of the buildings and as knee walls on the first story porches of his house and the Joseph Stanley House. George Smiley essentially salvaged the community and saved it from the abandonment and destruction suffered by many other early settlements in Marion County. He replanted the citrus groves and maintained them throughout his life.

Alfred Smiley attended school in the winter in the Kerr City School and later enrolled in college at Stetson University in DeLand where he met Ruth Hon. They married in 1912, and lived in the Stephen Carpenter House until they purchased the Joseph Stanley House later in the year. Alfred Smiley brought the first automobile to Kerr City in 1912, and built a garage to store it (Site #22, Photo 22). George Smiley also purchased an automobile in 1912, and built a garage (Site #2, Photo 16) south of Lake Pines for it.

After managing the resort in New York for six months of the year, Alfred and Ruth Smiley would return each year along with their four daughters, Ruth Josephine, Doris, Virginia and Marjorie, who were born between 1915 and 1933. The girls had tutors at the resort in New York and did not attend school in the winter in Kerr City. The staff who worked for the Smileys at the New York resort traveled to Kerr City with the family each winter. They assisted in maintenance of the properties and in caring for the family during the winter sojourn. Moses Warren Brown and his brother were staff members from New York who built the brick mantels that were added to the fireplaces from 1925 to 1934 (Photo 15).

By 1920, the Smileys owned most of the historic buildings, groves and vacant lots of Kerr City. Only three other private owners besides the Smileys still owned lots in the historic community. Other lots had been vacated by their owners. Alfred Smiley continued his father's acquisition of land and buildings and maintained the groves and property. He also made a number of improvements, such as installing bathrooms inside the two-story houses in the 1920s.

The Alfred Smiley House, "Palmpineoak" (Site #12, Photo 6), was built overlooking Lake Kerr in the 1920s. Using materials on site from earlier construction, the two-story house maintains the frame vernacular style and appearance of the 1880s Kerr City houses. During the 1920s, the Grant Smith House (Site #20, Photo

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetKERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDASection number 8 Page 9

10) was moved to its present location from a site on the lake east of Kerr City.

Alfred Smiley eventually acquired all of the original lots and blocks of Kerr City. The Quaker Church and School, which was last used as a school c1900, was demolished c1955, after vandals had largely destroyed it. Many of the other 1880s buildings were also lost to fire, vandalism and deterioration. During the 1960s, five one-story concrete block houses (Photos 24 and 25) were built near the lake, four of them on foundations left from the historic houses that had burned. Large oaks and other trees nearly hide them, so that they blend into the landscape. Now only a few sour orange trees remain of the thriving citrus groves that were cut down and removed after the freeze in 1985, which completely destroyed the groves, leaving behind a large open meadow and wooded areas where pine trees flourish again.

Descendants of George and Alfred Smiley still own most of Kerr City. A grandson of Alfred Smiley and the son of Doris Smiley Payne, Arthur Brennan, and his wife Gwynne, now own most of the buildings and land within the boundaries of the Kerr City Historic District. They moved from New York with their children in 1973 to manage the family properties. The Brennans maintain the properties, renting some of the houses to visitors, sportsmen and tourists. Future plans include restoration of the blacksmith shop and the various nineteenth century wagons and farm implements. The remaining historic buildings and single lane sandy roads appear much as they did in the pioneer days of this early settlement in Marion County.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The vernacular residences and associated buildings of Kerr City are architecturally significant at the local level as important examples of early rural vernacular architecture in Marion County. Vernacular architecture embraces a diversity of folk and mass-produced building forms that were transmitted by memory or by pattern book. Vernacular buildings were designed and constructed by lay builders who drew upon traditional building techniques and contemporary stylistic preferences for their inspiration. These vernacular structures can be amalgams of building traditions and style, or may reflect the personality of the builder. Primary consideration was given to providing

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number 8 Page 10

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functional and comfortable spaces for the owners. Vernacular buildings frequently reflect a local adaptation to landscape, climate, and cultural patterns.

Nineteenth century industrialism made it possible to standardize and mass produce building elements and disseminate them across the country. Decorative features were often applied liberally, exhibiting stylistic references without in and of themselves constituting a style of architecture. The fine craftsmanship of the Kerr City residences, with their general lack of decorative elaboration, reflects the simple life style of the settlers, mostly Quakers, who settled in Kerr City. The Joseph Stanley House (Photo 11), which was the stage stop, exhibits a slightly more elaborated and prosperous aspect; however, this is primarily seen in the decorative jig-sawn railing on the second tier of the entrance porch.

The architecture of Kerr City is also significant for the materials used. Originally constructed almost entirely of native, long leaf, yellow pine that was cut and milled on-site, the small concentration of historic buildings has retained most of the original materials including some of the porch columns of full pine trunks.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number 9 Page 2

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number   9   Page   3  

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Kerr City Plat, 1886.

Kerr City Plat, 1885. Hand drawn original.

Personal and Telephone Interviews, Conducted by Joyce Cusick

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Mr. Arthur Brennan

Mr. Ken Coomer

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Kerr City Historic District boundary is shown as a solid dark line on the accompanying map. The district is bordered by Hill Street on the west, a portion of Beulah Avenue on the north, and includes Lots 11-14 of Block XVI, all of Blocks XVII and XVIII, Lots 1-9 of Block XIX, and all of Blocks XX, XXV, and XXVI. Lake Kerr provides a natural southern boundary.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary encompasses the most significant concentration of extant resources located in the Kerr City community. Those resources are associated with the founding and subsequent development of the community during the period 1885-1945. No significant concentration of historic resources associated with the development of Lake Kerr are located outside the boundary shown on the district map.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1

**KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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1. George Smiley House, Kerr City Historic District
  2. Marion County, Florida
  3. Joyce E. Cusick
  4. October 1993-March 1994
  5. Marion County Planning Department, 2631 S.E. 3rd Street, Ocala, Fl.
  6. Main (north) facade on left, west elevation on right; view looking southeast
  7. Photo 1 of 27

**Items 2, 3, 4, and 5 are the same for the remaining photographs unless otherwise indicated**

1. George Smiley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Interior detail, fireplace; view looking southeast
7. Photo 2 of 27

1. Asa Hunt House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade on left, east elevation on right; view looking southwest
7. Photo 3 of 27

1. Joseph Allman House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (North) facade on right, east elevation on left; view looking southwest
7. Photo 4 of 27

1. Stephen Carpenter House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade, view looking southeast
7. Photo 5 of 27

1. Alfred Smiley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade on right, east elevation on left; view looking southwest
7. Photo 6 of 27

1. Anna Agnes Willmott House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade, view looking south
7. Photo 7 of 27

1. Anna Agnes Willmott House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade on right, east elevation on left; view looking southwest
7. Photo 8 of 27

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Section number Photo Page 2

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1. Anna Agnes Willmott House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Detail, north facade window, showing mail slot; view looking down into sill of window
7. Photo 9 of 27
  
1. Grant Smith House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade, view looking southeast
7. Photo 10 of 27
  
1. Joseph Stanley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (south) facade, view looking northwest
7. Photo 11 of 27
  
1. Joseph Stanley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Detail, main (south) facade on left, east elevation on right; view looking northwest
7. Photo 12 of 27
  
1. Joseph Stanley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Detail, water handpump on rear porch; view looking northwest
7. Photo 13 of 27
  
1. Joseph Stanley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. East elevation on left, rear (north) elevation on right; view looking southwest
7. Photo 14 of 27
  
1. Joseph Stanley House, Kerr City Historic District
6. Interior detail, fireplace; view looking southeast
7. Photo 15 of 27
  
1. George Smiley Garage, Kerr City Historic District
6. West and south elevations; view looking northeast
7. Photo 16 of 27
  
1. Blacksmith Shop, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade, view looking southeast
7. Photo 17 of 27
  
1. Texaco Gas Station, Kerr City Historic District
6. View looking east
7. Photo 18 of 27

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photo Page 3

**]KERR CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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1. Caesar's Barn, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (north) facade, view looking southeast
7. Photo 19 of 27
  
1. Agricultural Storage Building, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (south) facade, view looking northeast
7. Photo 20 of 27
  
1. Alfred Smiley Boathouse, Kerr City Historic District
6. West elevation, view looking southeast
7. Photo 21 of 27
  
1. Alfred Smiley Garage, Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (south) facade, view looking northwest
7. Photo 22 of 27
  
1. Walkway and pavillion, Kerr City Historic District
6. View looking southwest, toward Lake Kerr
7. Photo 23 of 27
  
1. Rental Cottage (Hillcrest), Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (east) facade, view looking northwest
7. Photo 24 of 27
  
1. Rental Cottage (Beehive), Kerr City Historic District
6. Main (east) facade, view looking northwest
7. Photo 25 of 27
  
1. Lake Kerr House (Hotel), Kerr City Historic District
3. Unknown
4. Unknown
6. Historic photo, main (south) facade; view looking northeast
7. Photo 26 of 27
  
1. Quaker Church/School, Kerr City Historic District
3. Unknown
4. Unknown
6. Historic photo, main (south) facade; view looking northeast
7. Photo 27 of 27

