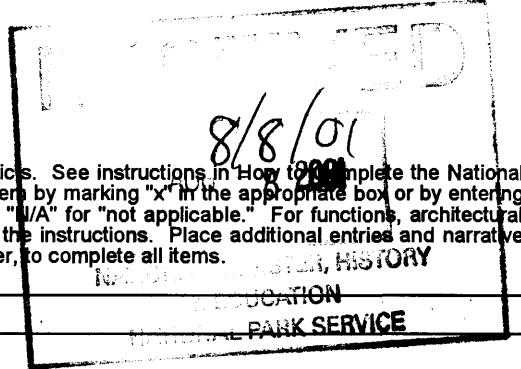


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1011



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 any 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 HISTORIC OLD TOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

other names/site number Downtown Lake Worth

2. Location

street & number Bounded by FEC, M Street, Lucerne Ave., and 1st Ave. South N/A  not for publication

city or town Lake Worth N/A  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Palm Beach code 099 zip code 33460

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.)

Janet Sydney Matthews 7/31/2001  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida Division of Historical Resources  
State or 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  See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper  
Entered in the  
National Register

Date of Action

10/11/01  
9/21/01  
EB

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)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
46	13	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
46	13	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(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

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Business

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium

DOMESTIC/Hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Business

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium

DOMESTIC/Hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE/Masonry Vernacular

MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL

ART DECO

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco

walls Stucco

roof Tar and Gravel

other

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, landmark, survey, engineering record.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1912-1949

Significant Dates

c. 1912

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown

Blder: Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of Repository

#

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 16 apprx.

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | 2 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 |  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 | 1 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | 2 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

3 | 1 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | 2 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 |  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 | 1 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | 3 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 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 Sherry Anderson, Historic Consultant/Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist  
organization Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation date February 2001  
street & number 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333  
city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 33460

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 amend 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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HISTORIC OLD TOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

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**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Historic Old Town Commercial District encompasses approximately 16 acres and comprises a total of 59 mainly commercial buildings. Of these 46 contribute to the historic character of the area, while 13 are considered noncontributing. The historic buildings date mainly from the 1920s, and the majority of them can be architecturally classified as Masonry Vernacular. Other styles represented in the district are Mediterranean Revival, Moorish Revival, and Art Deco. Most of the buildings in the district are simple in design, displaying few defining characteristics. The contributing buildings in the district were all constructed between c. 1912 to c. 1949, with the majority erected between 1920 and 1949. All of the noncontributing buildings in the district were constructed after 1951. Two landmark public buildings are found within the boundaries of the historic district. These are the City Hall (N.R. 1989) and the Palm Beach Community College Museum of Contemporary Art (originally the Park Theater).

**SETTING**

The City of Lake Worth is located on the east coast of south Florida, in Palm Beach County. Other communities located in Palm Beach County, such as West Palm Beach, Lantana, Boynton Beach, and Delray Beach, developed simultaneously with Lake Worth, and together they form a continuous urban environment. The city of Lake Worth extends several miles along the western edge of Lake Worth, a part of the Intracoastal Waterway located between the mainland and coastal barrier islands. The municipality encompasses approximately six square miles and has a permanent residential population of around 30,500. Because of its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and its associated recreational facilities, such as the Municipal Casino, public beach, and fishing pier, Lake Worth attracts many tourists and seasonal residents. The downtown commercial area features a large number of art galleries, antique shops, restaurants, and specialty shops.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

The Historic Old Town Commercial District constitutes approximately five blocks of the historic commercial core of the city of Lake Worth. It is defined by mainly one- and two-story commercial buildings situated along the two main commercial corridors, Lake and Lucerne avenues, along J Street between Lucerne Avenue and 1st Street South, and H Street between Lake and Lucerne. The approximately 16 acre area is roughly bounded by the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks on the west, M Street on the east, Lucerne Avenue on the north, and 1st Avenue South on the south (Photo 1). Most of the buildings along the Lake/Lucerne corridors abut one another (Photo 2). Non-historic construction is generally similar in massing, materials, and setbacks with the historic buildings in the district.

Lake Worth was platted on a grid with avenues stretching east-west and streets extending north-south. The majority of the town lots were rectangular parcels laid in blocks that were oriented north-south with most of

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the buildings facing east or west. The commercial core is the exception with blocks platted east and west so that buildings face north or south. Recent streetscape improvements include the installation of decorative sidewalk pavers, parallel on-street parking, the planting of palm trees, and the installation of modern street lighting. The downtown core is pedestrian friendly and bicycle lanes have been incorporated into the traffic flow. The main thoroughfares, Lake and Lucerne avenues, are one-way traffic pairs, running east and west.

The major north-south traffic corridor through the historic district is Dixie Highway. Although a number of historic commercial buildings once lined this major thoroughfare, most of them were demolished due to pressures from development. Several historic buildings in the central business district were demolished when Dixie Highway was widened by 32 feet in the 1970s. Historic residential development is located immediately south of the proposed district boundaries and consists of a significant concentration of historic resources that may constitute a residential historic district. While the downtown commercial core consists primarily of low-rise Masonry Vernacular buildings, the adjacent residential area is composed of apartment buildings and residences which feature Craftsman, Bungalow, and Frame Vernacular detailing.

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLES**

The historic district displays a variety of building types and styles from the 1910s through the 1940s (Photo 3). The typical historic commercial building in the Historic Old Town Commercial District is a one- or two-story block Masonry Vernacular style building with a flat roof and limited detailing on the street facade. The one part block is a free-standing building usually one or two stories with elaboration on the front elevation. Two-story commercial buildings usually feature a visual horizontal division between the first and second stories. The first floor has been traditionally reserved for retail shops, while the second floor has been occupied by offices or residential apartments. The historical storefronts on the street level usually featured recessed doorways flanked by plate glass display windows. The sidewalk area in front of the building was sheltered by a suspended canopy. In a number of instances, the original storefront configuration has been changed and the canopy removed or replaced with cloth awnings.

Masonry Vernacular

The Masonry Vernacular style buildings feature hollow clay tile, brick, or concrete block structural systems. The facade is usually symmetrical and the storefronts typically feature full-glazed wood doors, transoms, wood kick panels, and plate glass. Exterior materials are usually brick or stucco. Commercial vernacular designs were influenced by the Spanish Eclectic revival styles during the 1920s and the Art Deco and Modernistic designs of the 1930s and 1940s. However, most of the decorative detail is subtle rather than distinctive.

The Rowe Building located at 811 Lake Avenue is the exception (Photo 4). Although classified as

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Masonry Vernacular, the Rowe Building draws upon a number of stylistic references. Built in 1923, this commercial building features a hollow clay tile structural system, brick exterior, and a flat roof with a center parapet. Classical ionic columns adorn the upper facade in arched three-part windows. The sign board area between floors and the upper cornice features brick in a tapestry design. Barrel tile appears on the pent roof above the second story windows. This building maintains very good historic physical integrity and is one of the best examples of historic commercial architecture in Lake Worth.

More common, however, are the Masonry Vernacular buildings with limited decoration. The commercial building at 17-25 South J Street, built in 1923, is a typical example (Photo 5). The building features a hollow clay tile structural system and a symmetrical facade with storefronts on the first level and offices above. Decorative detailing is limited but includes a stepped parapet, clustered scuppers, and rock-faced concrete block at the street level. This building has experienced some modification typical to the district, including replaced windows, removal of the storefront awning, and some infilled window openings. The former Lake Worth National Bank building is another two-part Masonry Vernacular commercial building located at 800-802 Lake Avenue (Photo 6). It was constructed around 1940 and features a concrete block structural system, stuccoed exterior, flat roof, and a symmetrical appearance. Decoration is limited to molded courses that accent horizontally.

The former Rose Apartments (later Cleve Hotel and Fountain's Department Store) was built around 1930 and is located at 728-730 Lake Avenue (Photo 7). This simple Masonry Vernacular building has experienced some alteration but still exhibits enough of its original character to be contributing. It features a hollow clay tile structural system, flat roof, replaced metal windows, and re-stuccoed exterior. Typical to the district, hotels such as this one existed in buildings that also housed retail shops and offices. The McCarthy Hotel located at 631 Lucerne Avenue is another example of this type (Photo 8). Except for replaced windows, this simple flat-roofed stuccoed building retains most of its original appearance. The original sign has even been retained. The hollow clay tile structural system, scuppers, and symmetrical appearance distinguish this building.

The Tuesday Gallery at 705 Lake Avenue is representative of the one-story Masonry Vernacular buildings in the district (Photo 9). It was constructed c. 1925 and features a flat roof with parapet wall, stuccoed exterior, and a recessed storefront entry. Modifications include the shingled roof and infilled transoms. Although it has experienced some alteration, its original massing, storefront configuration, and transoms are discernible.

Frame Vernacular

Only two buildings exhibiting the Frame Vernacular style remain in the district. The building located at 609 Lake Avenue housed Kerr's Bicycle Shop from 1929 to the 1970s (Photo 10). Constructed c. 1912, it is the

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oldest building in the district. It features a wood frame structural system, a weatherboard exterior with a stuccoed façade, a false front parapet, and a gable roof. The facade is classical in composition and displays square pilasters and a corbelled cornice. Another Frame Vernacular style building is the Carousel Antique Furniture Warehouse located at 806 Lake Avenue (Photo 11). This one-story, one-part commercial building features a wood frame structural system with a stuccoed exterior. The building displays a flush storefront and no distinguishable decoration.

Art Deco

Details of the Art Deco style include a stepped facade, a strong vertical emphasis, and low-relief ornamentation with stylized motifs. One landmark example of the Art Deco style is the Palm Beach Community College Museum of Contemporary Art (originally the Park Theater) at 601 Lake Avenue (Photo 12). This two-story building is covered by a flat roof, smooth stuccoed exterior walls, and curved corners. The symmetrical facade is distinguished by full-height striated decoration that gives the building a vertical emphasis. Alterations include the removal of its marquee and the enclosure of the recessed entrance.

Mediterranean Revival

Only one building, the former Scottish Rite Temple at 1000 Lake Avenue, expresses the Mediterranean Revival style (Photo 13). This two-story building is composed of a hollow clay tile structural system covered with stucco supporting a flat roof accented with barrel tile. Decorative elements include repeated arches on the first floor supported by square pilasters. This building has experienced a number of alterations over the years due to hurricanes and remodeling efforts; however, the original architectural style is still discernible.

Moorish Revival

The Lake Worth City Hall (N.R. 1989), formerly the Municipal Auditorium, located at 920 Lake Avenue, is an excellent example of the Moorish Revival style (Photo 14). This building which was designed by locally renowned architect G. Sherman Childs, is a two-story stuccoed structure that rests on a half-exposed rusticated basement, highlighted with stuccoed quoins at the corners and pilasters on the north and south facades. The shallow, barrel vaulted roof is surrounded by a highly ornamented parapet, featuring onion dome spires on the east corners and pyramidal capped spires on the west corners. Narrow obelisks frame each central side pediment.

Classical Revival

This style is an eclectic renewal of classically-influenced styles and features classical design motifs such as monumental columns or pilasters, rows of dentils under the cornice, moldings, and balustrades. This style



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was commonly used for government, civic, and mercantile interests because it symbolized strength and stability. Only one building, the former Bank of Lake Worth, at 803 Lake Avenue, displays the Classical Revival style (Photo 15). Its temple front classical composition consists of full-height pilasters and dentils at the cornice and above the entrance.

Mission

Only one building exhibits the Mission style in the district. The building located at 801 Lake Avenue features two-story, two-part massing with a flat roof and a central shaped parapet with corner battlements (Photo 16). An arched recessed panel resting on a flat sill with brackets distinguishes the upper cornice. A projecting second story window with wood panels and louvered coverings distinguish this building from others in the district.

**Noncontributing Buildings**

Noncontributing buildings compose 13 percent of buildings in the district. The majority of these are generally in character with the surrounding historic buildings in regard to uniform setbacks, relative height and width, and building materials. These buildings are less than fifty years of age. The building at 701 Lake Avenue is a typical example of a commercial low-rise building built in the area during the 1950s and 1960s (Photo 17).

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PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA  
BUILDING LIST

**CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS**

<u>Address</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Style Date</u>	<u>Site File</u>
<u>Lake Avenue</u>			
501-503	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB9894
509	Commercial	Craftsman	c. 1930 8PB9895
511	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945 8PB9896
515-517	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945 8PB9897
601	Art Museum	Art Deco	c. 1939 8PB1710
609	Commercial	Frame Vernacular	c. 1912 8PB1711
611-613	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945 8PB6996
615	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB6997
617-619	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923 8PB6998
621	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB9898
705	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925 8PB6999
707	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923 8PB7000
709	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB7001
708-712	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925 8PB7364
713	Theater	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924 8PB0062
716-718	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB7826
717	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1930 8PB7002
720-722	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935 8PB7365
728-730	Hotel	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1930 8PB1712
800-802	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1940 8PB9899
801	Commercial	Mission	c. 1920 8PB1714
803	Commercial	Classical Revival	c. 1919 8PB1715
804	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1940 8PB9900
805	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923 8PB7003
806	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1915 8PB7379; 8PB1716
811	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923 8PB1717
913	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1949 8PB9042
915-917	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925 8PB9043
920	City Hall	Moorish Revival	c. 1933 8PB6259
921	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1930 8PB9044
1000	Social/Commercial	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1921 8PB1719; 8PB8986
1014	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1940 8PB9047

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BUILDING LIST

Lucerne Avenue

625	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945	8PB9044
631	Hotel	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923	8PB7367
701	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923	8PB7366
807	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945	8PB9902
1013	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945	8PB8968

North J Street

11	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8PB9903
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North H Street

9-15	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1946	8PB8987
17	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8PB8988

South J Street

8-12	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8PB7005
11	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8PB7004
17-25	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923	8PB7006
32	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8PB9904
32A	Garage	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8PB9904
35	Apartments	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1923	8PB7007

**NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS**

Address                      Function                      Date

Lake Avenue

513	Commercial	Post-1951
519	Commercial	Post-1951
521-525	Commercial	Post-1951
603-605	Commercial	Post-1951
701	Commercial	Post-1951
702	Commercial	Post-1951

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PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA  
BUILDING LIST

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706	Commercial	Post-1951
807	Commercial	Post-1951
809	Commercial	Post-1951
1030	Commercial	Post-1951

North J Street

13	Commercial	Post-1951
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South J Street

15	Commercial	Post-1951
27-31	Commercial	Post-1951

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Section number 8 Page 1 HISTORIC OLD TOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Historic Old Town Commercial District is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Architecture. The area was the original commercial and governmental center of the city of Lake Worth and still continues to serve as the commercial heart of the community. Lake Worth was platted on a grid with avenues stretching east-west and streets extending north-south. The downtown business area was platted with a different orientation from the surrounding residential subdivisions to take advantage of the main north-south highway linking Lake Worth with its neighboring coastal communities. The buildings comprising the district represent a diverse range of commercial styles popular in Florida during the first half of the twentieth century. The buildings were constructed mainly during the boom period of the 1920s, which witnessed changes to Lake Worth brought by tourism, commerce, agriculture, and transportation. The district is notable for its many Masonry Vernacular buildings as well as several examples of buildings displaying details of the Moorish Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Classical Revival, Mission, and Art Deco.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

During Florida's Colonial (1513-1820) and Territorial (1821-1844) periods, the area of Lake Worth remained largely unsettled. In 1845, Florida was admitted into the Union. Prior to statehood, twenty-four counties had been carved from the territory's original two. By 1860, the number of counties had climbed to thirty-seven. Although much of the State's development occurred in the panhandle, portions of the peninsula also experienced sufficient population growth for the creation of new counties. In 1844, St. Lucia County, which then included the Lake Worth area, was created out of Mosquito County. In the mid- 1850s, St. Lucia County was replaced by portions of Orange, Volusia, and Brevard Counties, the latter including Lake Worth. In 1874, the political re-division of South Florida brought the Lake Worth area into Dade County. Finally, in 1909, Palm Beach County was created out of the northern portion of Dade County that contained Lake Worth.

Throughout the Civil War, this area of Florida's southeast coast remained sparsely settled, the population consisting mainly of subsistence farmers, fishermen, and a few Seminole Indians who had avoided being transported to the western Indian Territories. The population of the area began to increase significantly in 1870 when the first permanent community was established along the eastern shore of Lake Worth, currently the site of the city of Palm Beach.<sup>1</sup> Isolated homesteads were founded throughout the region in the areas now making up the cities of West Palm Beach and Lake Worth. One indication of the growth in the settlement of the Lake Worth area was the establishment of postal service in 1880.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Donald W. Curl, Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History, (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1986) p. 13-17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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HISTORIC OLD TOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

The late 1800s saw a substantial increase in ship traffic along the Atlantic coast and water routes such as the Intracoastal Waterway and the small rivers extending into the interior of the peninsula. The construction of a canal connecting the Lake Worth area with Pablo Creek, near Jacksonville, was proposed in 1881. In his survey of the area, the canal engineer, James Kreamer, reported that a great variety of fruits and vegetables were already being grown in the Lake Worth area, which by 1886 had about 200 residents.<sup>3</sup>

Water routes were used as the primary means of transportation until the 1880s when railroads began to gain ascendancy. By 1888, the Jupiter and Lake Worth Railway had constructed a line extending from Jupiter to the north end of the Lake Worth waterway. Called the Celestial Railway, this rail line provided service for the area until Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway absorbed it in 1896. Upon the arrival of the F.E.C. Railway in West Palm Beach in 1894, much of the immediately surrounding areas began to grow rapidly. However, the completion of the new railroad extension linking West Palm Beach with Jacksonville initially had little influence on the growth of the settlement that would become the Town of Lake Worth.<sup>4</sup>

Following the completion of the railroad from Jacksonville to Miami in 1896, the east coast of Florida began to develop rapidly, as the permanent population increased and the masses of winter tourists began to arrive.<sup>5</sup> The F.E.C. became the primary mode of transportation for tourists traveling south to Florida and crops and goods traveling to northern markets. Although the railroad encouraged significant development in the towns along its right-of-way—notably West Palm Beach, Boynton Beach, Delray Beach, and Boca Raton—Lake Worth remained a small agricultural community during the 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1912, the state of Florida initiated an ambitious land reclamation program that would strongly affect the development of Lake Worth. Consisting of a series of massive dredging projects, the reclamation program created new areas for settlement and agricultural land out of previously submerged lands. Area citrus growers and truck farmers profited greatly from land reclamation, and a general population and building boom ensued in southeast Florida.

As a result of the program, development in the Lake Worth area was accelerated. The Palm Beach Farms Company platted the community of Lucerne, now known as the City of Lake Worth, and began development of the town site as a new agricultural community.<sup>6</sup> While its main focus was placed on agricultural development, the company did much to promote residential settlement in Lake Worth. In 1912, the

<sup>3</sup> Historic Properties Associates, Inc., "Historic Properties Survey of the City of Lake Worth, Florida Phase II," 1991, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Pettengill, "The Story of Florida Railroads, 1834-1903," *Railroad and Locomotive Historical Society*, July 1952, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> Donald W. Curl, *Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History*, (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1986) p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> "Town of Lake Worth Growing Fast," *Florida East Coast Homeseeker*, October 1913, pp. 367-98.

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company hired an engineer to plat a town site. Shortly thereafter, the name of the town site was changed from Lucerne to Lake Worth, since there was already a Florida town of that name.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of 1912, the Town already contained 308 residents and seventy-seven buildings. Construction of another forty-eight buildings had begun by 1913, the same year the Town of Lake Worth was incorporated. By 1914, a small commercial district had emerged around Lake Avenue and Dixie Highway and Addition No. 1, a tract of land equal in size to the original town plat, had been platted along the town's southern boundary.<sup>8</sup> Little more than a year after its founding, the Lake Worth Water, Light, and Ice Company was providing electric power and water to the 600 residents<sup>9</sup>.

During the years of America's involvement in World War I, development in Lake Worth slowed considerably, as local residents joined the rest of the country in assisting the war effort. Despite the redirection of the nation's economy, one infrastructure project that would have a profound effect on the development of Lake Worth as a resort town was the construction of a wooden draw bridge across Lake Worth, connecting the town with the barrier island.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1920 and 1926, Lake Worth, like much of the rest of south Florida, experienced tremendous development and growth as a result of the Florida Land Boom. The 6,000 miles of railroad track and 1,600 miles of roadway that had been completed during this period literally paved the way for a massive population increase, and subsequent real estate and building boom.<sup>11</sup> As the rush for land in Florida intensified, the population of Lake Worth soared. The population of Lake Worth increased from 1,106 residents in the early 1920s to 6,000 by 1930. The town limits were expanded several times during the boom, and in 1925, the town was reincorporated as a city. Building kept up with the rapid population explosion during this period, as many homes and commercial buildings were built. Commercial and industrial activity was largely contained between Dixie Highway and the F.E.C. railroad tracks. Residential neighborhoods, first developing west from the train tracks to A Street, included Lake Worth Heights in early 1924 and College Park in December of the same year. This rapid pace of growth and development continued unabated as the Land Boom reached its peak in the winter of 1925.<sup>12</sup>

Several factors contributed to the failure of Florida's real estate market. Real estate speculators pushing up land prices had a negative effect on the economy, and in the spring of 1925, many investors began to cancel Florida real estate transactions, as they became panicked by rumors of bogus real estate ventures. Also, the

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<sup>7</sup> Lake Worth Herald, February 28, 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Lake Worth Herald, February 20, November 5, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Lake Worth Herald, February 28, 1963.

<sup>11</sup> Historic Properties Associates, Inc., "Historic Properties Survey of the City of Lake Worth, Florida Phase II," 1991, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Curl, p.88.

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volume of construction materials being shipped by rail into Florida became unmanageable, so that in August of 1925, the F.E.C. railroad refused to ship anything but perishable goods, halting much of the new building construction in south Florida. Two hurricanes struck south Florida in 1926 and 1928. The 1926 storm devastated Miami, and the 1928 hurricane entered the peninsula at Palm Beach on September 16, 1928. The eye passed directly over Lake Worth, and few buildings escaped unharmed as some 8,000 homes and hundreds of commercial buildings were destroyed throughout Palm Beach County. Many buildings in Lake Worth were swept from their foundations, and much of the city was left inundated by floodwater. The storm killed thousands of people in the nearby Lake Okeechobee area and precipitated a rapid decline in real estate development in Lake Worth.<sup>13</sup> After the New York Stock Market crashed in October 1929, undeveloped Florida real estate became virtually worthless.<sup>14</sup>

Following the 1928 hurricane, most of the construction in Lake Worth was relegated to repairing damaged structures. However, a limited amount of new construction was undertaken in the succeeding years, and the economy was assisted by federally sponsored New Deal construction during the 1930s. These federally assisted projects gave way to accelerated growth in the late-1930s, as the city began to recover from the most severe effects of the Great Depression. This modest growth continued into the 1940s and gained momentum with the military build up that accompanied the country's entrance into World War II. While there were no military installations constructed in Lake Worth, the area experienced significant population growth which can be attributed largely to southeast Florida's role as a host for training bases and industries associated with the war effort. During the war, the city's population increased from 7,406 in 1940 to 10,615 by 1945. Following the war, the number of residents continued to increase as the economy prospered. These new residents erected homes in those neighborhoods that had been platted during the 1920s but had not developed during the Land Boom. Lake Worth's population has continued to grow since the immediate post-World War II era. In 1980, the population reached 27,048, and leveled off during the 1990s to about 30,500 by the year 2000.

**SIGNIFICANCE IN COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT/COMMERCE**

The Historic Old Town Commercial District is significant as a representative example of the pattern of commercial development typical of South Florida communities during the first half of the twentieth century. The development of the railroads and canal systems promoted flourishing tourism, agricultural, and commercial industries in many cities along the southeastern coast. Cities developed near the railroad which followed the coastline. Easy access to beaches and a growing interest in the undeveloped areas of Florida created several building and development booms that culminated in the Florida land boom of the 1920s.

Although the Lake Worth settlement was listed as a census precinct in 1910, the community lacked a

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Curl, pp. 93-94.



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commercial district.<sup>15</sup> The land on which the city of Lake Worth would develop was purchased in 1912 by the Palm Beach Farms Company, platted as the Town of Lucerne. The development company purchased approximately 60,000 acres, much of which needed to be drained. The new community was advertised throughout the United States and Canada in anticipation of a land boom. In the process of establishing a post office, the town's founders discovered that another Florida community had already adopted the name of Lucerne, and the prospective town was renamed Lake Worth. Postal service commenced in Lake Worth on August 23, 1912. The town site consisted of 300 blocks comprising 7,000 lots and extended almost three miles along the west shore of Lake Worth. To stimulate interest in the company's vast agricultural lands, free town residential lots were given to those persons who purchased \$250 farm tracts, which ranged in size from five to forty acres, depending on how much improvement would be required for cultivation.<sup>16</sup>

Within a year, the Lake Worth Board of Trade formed to promote development of the nascent commercial center of town. At the time, water and train service were the primary forms of transportation, but a narrow unpaved road (later the Dixie Highway) already stretched from Miami through Lake Worth to West Palm Beach. Ferry service was established to the barrier island across the Intracoastal Waterway, and crude thatched shelters were erected to accommodate swimmers. Soon after, a company formed to finance the construction of a bath house on the beach which included a dining area and a dance floor on the second floor. Other facilities on the mainland provided recreation for Lake Worth's inhabitants. A Club House (no longer extant), to serve as the civic and social center of the city, was constructed between Lake and Lucerne Avenues on the site of the present City Hall. The Palm Beach Farms Company also donated a two-mile parcel of land adjacent to the lake for use as a park.<sup>17</sup>

Settlement was rapid during this early period. In 1913, developers filed a new plat south of the original town plat. Addition No. 1, which was equal in size to the original plat, was drawn to satisfy the increasing demand for town lots. The Bank of Lake Worth opened in 1913 and the Florida East Coast Railway Company built a depot that same year. Due to the construction boom, the city created a building permit ordinance in order to regulate building construction in the city limits. By 1915, 600 people lived in Lake Worth.<sup>18</sup> To support the building boom, several building supply businesses were established. Approximately 77 buildings were constructed in 1912 and another 48 were started in 1913. The commercial area centered around Lake Avenue and the Dixie Highway, with residential areas extending north and east of the downtown business district. Water hydrants were installed along Lake Avenue, and electric power and water service were established. A

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<sup>15</sup> Archaeological Consultants Inc., "A Historical Resources Survey of a Segment of SR 805 (Dixie Highway), Lake Worth, Palm Beach County, Florida," 1991, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> "Town of Lake Worth Growing Fast," Florida East Coast Homeseeker 15 (October, 1913), 367-398.

<sup>17</sup> Palm Beach Times, July 3, 1952.

<sup>18</sup> Historic Property Associates, "Historic Properties Survey of the City of Lake Worth Phase II, 1991, pp. 9-10; Archaeological Consultants Inc., p. 7.

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school house was constructed in 1916.<sup>19</sup>

A wooden draw bridge was constructed in 1919 to connect the mainland to the barrier island. In the same year, E.M., Laura, and Mary Brelsford sold 1,000 feet of lakefront property to the city to be used as a public beach. A 50-year deed restriction limited development to the construction of a casino with a bathing pavilion and pump house.<sup>20</sup> Architect W.B. Eckler drew the plans, and in 1920 the city commission passed a \$100,000 bond issue to finance the project. Complementing the Mediterranean Revival style casino were a salt water pool and a 300-foot fishing pier. The casino quickly became a major tourist attraction.<sup>21</sup> The six-story Mediterranean Revival style Gulf Stream Hotel (N.R. 1983), constructed in the early 1920s, was also helped lure tourists to the community.

The land boom provided the means for development in Lake Worth. The population in Lake Worth rose from 1,106 in 1920 to almost 6,000 by the end of the decade.<sup>22</sup> The early 1920s witnessed the construction of many commercial buildings. The Rose Apartments (Photo 7) 716 Lake Avenue was constructed around 1920. In 1922, fifteen new businesses were constructed and in the first two months of 1925, thirty commercial buildings were started. The Rowe Building (Photo 4) 811 Lake Avenue was built in 1923 and the Oakley Brothers Theater (Lake Worth Playhouse) was constructed in 1924 at 713 Lake Avenue (Photo 1). In 1921, construction started on the Scottish Rite Temple (Photo 13) at 1000 Lake Avenue. Construction lasted several years and the designs were initially drawn by architect Bruce Kitchell and revised by G. Sherman Childs. The building, finally dedicated in 1926, contained five stores on the first floor while the Masons utilized the top floors.

The advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration provided assistance for Florida's rebuilding efforts. Construction activity as a result of the public work programs continued throughout the late 1930s despite the economic constraints. The former school house, converted to the City Hall in 1927, was redesigned by Floyd King, and damage to the Casino from the 1928 hurricane was repaired. Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds were used to construct the Municipal Auditorium, the current City Hall (Photo 14). Several other notable buildings were constructed during this period, including the Lake Theater (Photo 12) at 601 Lake Avenue, constructed in 1939 for a cost of \$40,000.

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<sup>19</sup> Lake Worth Herald, June 21, 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Koontz, p. 205.

<sup>21</sup> Historic Property Associates, "Historic Properties Survey of the City of Lake Worth Phase II, 1991, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Archaeological Consultants Inc., p. 7.

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**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Historic Old Town Commercial District derives its architectural significance principally from the large number of historic Masonry Vernacular buildings remaining along these historic commercial corridors. In Lake Worth, the Masonry Vernacular buildings exhibit a range of decoration from plain stuccoed facades with typical storefronts to subtle decorative touches such as scoring, molded courses, and tapestry brick. Several buildings within the district feature architectural styles such as Mission, Moorish Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Art Deco, and Classical Revival.

Furthermore, several locally prominent architects designed commercial and public buildings in the downtown area. For example, G. Sherman Childs, who moved to the area in 1912 and became the City Engineer, designed the Municipal Auditorium and many other important buildings and residences in Lake Worth. He is also well known for his work as a draftsman and architect for prominent South Florida architect Addison Mizner. Childs also designed the Thurber Building at 17-25 South J Street.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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### **BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the Historic Old Town Commercial District are those shown on the accompanying historic district map.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries shown on the historic district map encompass nearly all of the major surviving historic commercial buildings associated with the downtown commercial core.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. 713 Lake Worth Avenue, Historic Old Town Commercial District
2. Lake Worth (Palm Beach County), Florida
3. Sherry Anderson
4. 2000
5. Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Sarasota, Florida
6. Main (North) Facades, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 1 of 30

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

1. Lake Worth Avenue
6. Streetscape, 800 Block of Lake Avenue, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 2 of 30

1. Streetscape of H Street, between Lake and Lucerne Avenues
6. Streetscape, Looking Southwest between Lake and Lucerne Avenues
7. Photo 3 of 30

1. 811 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 17-25 South J Street
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 5 of 30

1. 800-802 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South and East) Facades, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 6 of 30

1. 728-730 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northeast
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6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 705 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 609 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 806 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking North
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1. 601 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 1000 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South & East) Facades, Looking Northwest
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1. 920 Lake Avenue
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking Southwest
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1. 803 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 801 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking
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1. 701 Lake Avenue
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1. 804 Lake Avenue
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1. 15 South J Street
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking Southwest
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1. 27-31 South J Street
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking Southwest
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1. 35 South J Street
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking Southwest
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1. 807-809 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facades, Looking South
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1. 805 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking Southeast
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1. 625 Lucerne Avenue
6. Main (North) North Facade, Looking South
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1. 701 Lucerne Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade and East Elevation, Looking Southwest
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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1. 717 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade and West Elevation, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 26 of 30

1. 709 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking Southeast
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1. 707 Lake Avenue
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
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1. 720-722 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northeast
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1. 716-718 Lake Avenue
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 30 of 30