

1481

AUG 25 1989

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name C.L. Johnson House
other names/site number 9PO 00284

2. Location

street & number 315 East Sessoms Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Lake Wales N/A vicinity
state Florida code FL county Polk code FL099 zip code 33853

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

George W. Percy Aug. 29, 1989
Signature of certifying official Date
George W. Percy, State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register 9/21/89
 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): _____

for _____ Date of Action
Signature of the Keeper

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RESIDENCE

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RESIDENCE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL REVIVAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood shiplap siding

roof asbestos tile

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1914-1939

Significant Dates

1914

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Johnson, Charles Leon

Architect/Builder

Unknown/ Johnson, J.J.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Bureau of Historic Preservation

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property one

UTM References

A 17 442462 3086700
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Block 17, Lot 11 and the W. 53 ft. of Lot 12, Lake Wales, Plat Book 1, pages 88A/88B.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary follows the historic and legal boundary of Block 17 and follows that boundary designated in the deed of sale to the current owner, 1969.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title R. Douglas Walton - Historic Sites Specialist/Janyce B. Ahl
 organization FL Dept of State-Bureau of Hist. Pres. date August 21, 1989
 street & number 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333
 city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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Section number 7 Page 1

C.L. Johnson House

Summary:

The C.L. Johnson House is a two story, wood frame, Colonial Revival structure with a hipped roof. Constructed in 1914, the house retains the integrity of its original design and is a fine example of the Colonial Revival Style. It is significant through its association with a founder of the Town of Lake Wales, Florida, and as a visible historic testimonial to the confidence possessed by the town founders in the future prospects of Lake Wales.

Setting:

Located at 315 East Sessoms Avenue, Lake Wales, Polk County, Florida, the property is contained within Block 17, Lots 11 and 12, of the City of Lake Wales. Sited on a lot approximately one acre in size, the house sits on the brow of a hill and overlooks Crystal Lake, less than one-twelfth of a mile south. Although not extensively landscaped, the site contains shrubbery and a variety of trees, including oaks, a palm, and an avocado. Originally the house was surrounded by open space, being the first home built in this section of Lake Wales. Since 1914, there has been much infill, and the house is now part of a residential neighborhood of detached single-family homes.

EXTERIOR

The C.L. Johnson House's construction consists of a continuous brick foundation, which is raised 5-6 feet above grade, and features a distinctive cross shape design motif; heart pine, simple drop, horizontal board siding; and a deck hipped roof covered with asbestos tile.

The main (south, or East Sessoms Ave.) elevation features a nine step stairway leading to the first story main doorway. The stepped abutments of the stairway each have two steps topped by a concrete urn. There is a plain handrail on the left end of the stairs, composed of two posts and one rail. A one story porch runs across the front and along both sides for about one-third the depth of the house. The porch roof is supported by paired square columns resting on brick piers. The left side of the porch has a wood balustrade sectioned between the piers. (See Photos 1 & 2)

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C.L. Johnson House

The right (east) side of the porch has been enclosed by the use of screening and the addition of a door perpendicular to the main doorway. The door is flanked by two eight pane sidelights and has three six pane transoms overhead. The porch is surmounted by a balcony with a balustrade, on the section of porch roof above the main entrance. A door permits egress between the balcony and the second story. The main roof slope contains a hipped dormer with three ventilation grills in the front. The deck of the hipped roof originally had a widow's walk, which has been removed.

The outstanding feature of this elevation is the elegant entrance doorway. The door has a large, beveled, oval-shaped glass in the center. Flanking the doorway are two oval sidelights combining beveled clear and stained glass designs. Overhead are three transom lights repeating the sidelight motif. (See Photo 4)

Fenestration is regular, with all windows being 1/1 double-hung wood sash, unless otherwise indicated. Window arrangement on each story consists of a pair centered on each side of the entrance and balcony door. (See Photo 1)

The east elevation features a continuation of the front one-story screened porch, extending north for two-thirds of the depth of the house. A large rectangular brick chimney with a corbelled cap is located near the top of the roof slope. (See Photo 2)

Fenestration consists of three pairs of windows equally spaced on the first story, and two equally spaced pairs on the second story.

The north elevation is the rear of the house, and has two first-story doorways, one being an uncovered doorway opening into the linen room, and the other, protected by a small screened one-story servant's porch, opening into the hall.

Fenestration for the first story is comprised (from east to west) of five single windows. The second story arrangement is four singles, a pair of windows, and two singles.

The west elevation has a one-story continuation of the front porch, extending for one-third of the depth of the house. The balustrade and roof support columns are identical to those of the

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C.L. Johnson House

front porch. A large rectangular brick chimney with a corbelled cap is located just above the eave/roof junction. The second floor bedroom has a doorway opening onto a small landing, from which an outside stairway descends parallel to the wall in a northern direction. The stairwell reaches the ground a few feet north of the north facade foundation.

Fenestration for each story consists of three pairs of windows. (See Photo 1)

INTERIOR

The plan of the C.L. Johnson House features a wide central hall on both floors, running from front to back, with rooms on each side. There are five rooms to the east of the hall: the parlor, the master bedroom, a sleeping porch, a bathroom, and the linen room. To the west of the hall are three rooms: the living room (a twin of the parlor), the dining room, and a large eat-in kitchen. A screened servant's porch is adjacent to the kitchen and at the rear of the hallway. The porch was used as the entrance for deliverymen and servants, and also as the dining area for the house servants.

The hall (both upstairs and down) and the dining room are decorated with wainscotting. All floors are made of native oak.

In the hall a stairwell rises two steps to a landing, makes a 45 degree right turn, rises thirteen steps (parallel to the west hall wall) to another landing, makes another 45 degree right turn, and then rises five steps to the upstairs hallway. (See Photo 3)

A bathroom lies at the north end of the second floor hall, and at the south end a door opens onto the balcony. To the east of the hall are two bedrooms, and a bedroom and sitting room are on the west side. On the north side of the sitting room is a bedroom and bath which are historic additions, being added on by the Johnsons in 1926.

Additional features of the Johnson House are the eight fireplaces, as there is one in each of the three upstairs bedrooms and the sitting room, and downstairs in the master bedroom, twin parlors, and the dining room. Seven of these fireplaces are still in working order. There are transoms over all hall doors, and 11 foot ceilings throughout the house. The attic contains a stairway leading to what was once the widow's walk. The floor of the enclosed porch has a trapdoor which leads to a basement housing the furnace.

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C.L. Johnson House

The original Johnson garage lies about thirty feet to the northeast of the Johnson House north elevation. Built in 1914, the one story structure is constructed of heart pine, and is sheathed with simple drop, horizontal board siding. The roof is front-gabled and covered with asphalt shingles. The front (west) elevation has two central doors that operate on an overhead roller track. A rectangular air vent is centered above the doors. (See Photo 5)

Alterations and Restoration Status:

The C.L. Johnson House has had one major addition and several minor changes during its 75 year history. The addition was a bedroom and bathroom added to the northwest corner of the second story. The addition is historic in itself, having been added by the Johnsons in 1926. It is compatible with the 1916 structure, since its construction utilized the same materials and style as the original house. The screened porch on the south elevation was added by the Johnsons at an unknown date.

Minor changes consist of the boxing in (with wood boards) of the cross gable under the balcony; the destruction of the widow's walk by Hurricane Donna in 1960; the conversion of a window on the north side of the linen room into a doorway in 1970; and the addition of an exterior stairway on the west facade in 1970, for the purpose of providing outside egress from the second-story northwest bedroom.

The building thus retains the essential integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and setting that reflects its period of significance. In addition, it demonstrates by its continuing use as a private dwelling the adaptability of the Colonial Revival style to the changing requirements of residential use.

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C.L. Johnson House

Summary:

The C.L. Johnson House is significant under Criterion B: Commerce, as the home of Charles Leon Johnson, one of the four founders of the City of Lake Wales, Florida. The construction of the house in May 1914, only three years after Lake Wales was founded, was a visible symbol by Johnson to prospective citizens, showing both the faith he had in the future of the town and in his Lake Wales Land Company. Although the Johnson House was not the first house built in Lake Wales (the best available documentation indicates it was the seventh), Johnson was the first of the four town founders to build and reside in Lake Wales. The house was his only residence throughout the span of Johnson's active business and civic career, and remained so until his death in 1953.

Additionally, it is significant under Criterion C: Architecture, as a fine example of a Colonial Revival style house which has been preserved with few alterations.

Historic Context:

Polk County is located in the center of the Florida peninsula, part of an area that was reserved for the Seminole Indians during Florida's territorial period. In 1842, the Armed Occupation Act encouraged settlement, and white pioneers started to come to the area. James Whidden brought his family in 1843, and became the first white settler in what would later be Polk County. Other settlers came and established homesteads nearby. They were small scale farmers, hunters, and fishermen. The Territory of Florida attained statehood in 1845, and Polk County, named after President James K. Polk, was created from the eastern portion of Hillsborough County and small parts of two other counties. Polk County was landlocked, however, and like many Florida counties it did not begin to prosper until the coming of the railroad in the 1880's. However, the railroad routes were quite limited, and even with the increasing development, most of the county remained rural timberland.

The genesis of Lake Wales development dates from 1902, when G.V. Tillman of Belleville, Georgia, scouted the territory around Lake Wales, a wilderness about 20 miles east of Bartow, to determine its potential for naval store production. Tillman was very impressed by the economic potential and beauty of the area,

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and remained in the vicinity, awaiting an opportunity to develop his dream of constructing a city on the shores of Lake Wales.

About 1905, the timberlands of Polk County began to attract additional attention from out of state businessmen. In the nineteenth century, the absence of a rail line in the area had hindered land development. Thus large stands of longleaf pine remained, inviting opportunity to exploit a national demand for naval stores. Until the late nineteenth century North Carolina had dominated the naval stores market, but as that state's production declined, the industry moved southward, and by 1905 Florida had become a national leader in supply of the material. Turpentine and rosin, extracted from the sap of the trees, were major components for paint and varnish, shoe polish and leather dressing, soap, oil and grease, printing ink, paper manufacture, and plastic. Thus, the naval stores industry, specifically the production of turpentine, provided the first economic activity in the area that became Lake Wales. This naval stores potential was what attracted a businessman to the area in 1905 who would be pivotal to the future of the Lake Wales area - Charles Leon Johnson.

Charles Leon Johnson was born in Blackshear, Georgia, on March 14, 1871. At the age of twenty, he left the family farm to serve as a railroad conductor for the Waycross Air Line Railroad. Continuing to reside in Blackshear, he married Eliza Belle Riggins in 1893. While working for the railroad, Johnson struck up a friendship (sometime around 1895-1896), with the gentleman who would literally change the course of Johnson's life. This man, Alexander Sessoms of South Carolina, owned a turpentine still alongside the railroad. Sessoms persuaded Johnson to quit the railroad and be his manager in a turpentine and naval stores facility in Hudson, Florida. Johnson would receive a salary of fifty dollars a month plus one-third interest in the company.

In 1903, the business was sold for \$150,000, of which Johnson received one-third. He then left Florida and moved back to Blackshear, pursuing business interests there and in Alabama. His interest in Polk County began in 1905, when he traveled to Bartow to investigate the potential for naval stores production. Encouraged by the potential of the wilderness that was Polk County in that era, he entered into partnership with Albert Sessoms, G.W. Deen, J.M. Bell, and B.F. Bullard to form the Sessoms Investment Company in January, 1906. The Company proceeded to buy 180,000 acres of land in the Bartow area, paying

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from \$2.25 to \$2.50 per acre. Turpentine distilling operations were begun on the property in 1909, but as the tracks of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad approached the area a year later, Johnson and three other stockholders sought additional ways to benefit financially from the new transportation system coming to Polk County. They decided that the company acreage around Lake Wales would be a good site for a town with an economy based on citrus, timber sales, light industry, and truck farming.

Taking action on their ideas on April 10, 1911, Johnson, E.C. Stuart, G.V. Tilman, and B.K. Bullard (son of B.F. Bullard of the Sessoms Company), who were all either partners or stockholders in the Sessoms Company, incorporated as the "Lake Wales Land Company, Inc.". They then purchased 5,000 acres of land around Lake Wales from the Sessoms Company.

Approximately twenty miles east of Bartow, the Lake Wales property was uninhabited wilderness in 1911. The first order of business for the land company was to develop an industry that would generate capital to help finance development of the area and provide employment as a lure to draw immigrants to Lake Wales. Thus, Johnson established the C.L. Johnson and Company Turpentine Complex in 1912, the first industry in Lake Wales.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE, CRITERION B

The C.L. Johnson House is significant as the residence of Charles Leon Johnson, one of the four founders of Lake Wales, Florida, for its association with Johnson's commercial and social interests and activities from 1914 through the 1930's and as a tangible symbol of Johnson's faith in the future of Lake Wales.

As Lake Wales continued its slow but steady development, Johnson was a key figure in the process. In 1915, Johnson was a founder and director in two new ventures. One was the Florida Ice and Power Company of Lake Wales, which owned the local water and electric concession. The other was the Lake Wales State Bank (now the First Union Bank of Florida), the town's second bank, which within six months became the preeminent bank of Lake Wales.

Johnson's other interests included the citrus industry, as he was both one of the founders and a member of the Board of Directors of the Lake Wales Citrus Growers Association, organized

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C.L. Johnson House

in 1918. He was also the founder and president of the Cooperative Fruit Company, which opened for business in 1925.

Johnson's consummate interest in Lake Wales as more than just a business venture was evident in his educational, religious, and civic activities. In 1914, about the same time he moved into his new home on Sessoms Avenue, he succeeded in having a school district established in Lake Wales, and in having a school building constructed. When Lake Wales was legally incorporated as a town in May 1917, Johnson sought and won the position of Tax Assessor in the first town election, held on June 5, 1917.

In the religious sphere, Johnson believed that religion would play an important role in the character development of the citizens of Lake Wales. Accordingly, he started the funding campaign for, and was a trustee, member of the Board of Directors, and steward of, the First Lake Wales Methodist Episcopal Church, South, constructed in 1916.

In a town as small and with as few public entertainments as Lake Wales, the social life of the citizens revolved around group activities in individual homes, to an extent which is now difficult to appreciate. As one of the town's most important citizens, the Johnson House was the scene of entertainment which had social, civic, religious, and business implications, depending on the occasion and his guests. A man of Johnson's stature in the community would, as was traditional in Southern society, make use of the ambiance of his home to enhance his position in the community. He entertained in his home such prominent and diverse figures as Florida Senator Spessard L. Holland; Roger W. Babson, author and syndicated columnist; Edward W. Bok, author, editor, and builder of the Bok Tower; Methodist Bishop Warren Candler; and Frederick Ruth, founder of the town of Mountain Lake.

Johnson continued to play an active and influential part in the business, social, and civic affairs of the community through the Depression decade of the 1930s. Then, in semi-retirement, he continued to occupy the house in which the Johnsons had raised six children and much of his public as well as private life had been centered. He continued to live there after his wife's death in August, 1941. He died at home on March 7, 1953, one week shy of his 82nd birthday.

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C.L. Johnson House

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE, CRITERION C

The C.L. Johnson House is significant as an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, which was popular from about 1880-1955. The style was the result of an awakening in interest in our colonial architectural heritage, credited to the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. From its beginnings in New England houses, the Colonial Revival style spread across the nation to become the dominant house style during the first half of this century.

Based on the Georgian and Adams styles, Colonial Revival is characterized by an accentuated front door with a pediment, fanlights, and/or sidelights; an entry porch supported by columns; an emphasis on symmetry, and paired windows. The Johnson House is a member of the subtype featuring a hipped roof with full-width porch, which comprises about one-third of the Colonial Revival houses built prior to 1915.

One of only eight Colonial Revival style buildings in Lake Wales, the Johnson House was constructed by local builder J.J. Johnson (no relation), a Bartow contractor. Brickwork for the foundation, porch piers, and chimneys was done by Otto Moody, a local mason.

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C.L. Johnson House

Published Material

Ahl, Janyce B. Crown Jewel of the Highlands, Lake Wales, Florida. Lake Wales: Lake Wales Library Association, 1983.

Hetherington, M.F. History of Polk County, Florida. St. Augustine: The Record Co., 1928.

History of Florida, Past and Present, Vol. II. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1923.

Lake Wales Highlander. "Florida Ice and Power Company, New Company At Lake Wales", September 7, 1915.

_____. "Work on New Structure Will Probably be Started This Week--A Thoroughly Modern Building", May 25, 1916.

_____. "Lake Wales, The Magic City Of The Scenic Highlands of Florida", December 12, 1918.

_____. "Bishop Candler Visits Here", December 7, 1919.1

_____. "C.L. Johnson Dies; One Of City's Founders", March 9, 1953.

Lake Wales News. "Building", March 6, 1914.

Ledger. "C.L. Johnson graces Lake Wales ", April 23, 1988.

McAlster, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Knoph, 1986.

Unpublished Material

Historic Property Associates, Inc. "Historic Properties Survey of Lake Wales, Florida", 1988.

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C.L. Johnson House

- 1) C.L. Johnson House, 315 East Sessoms Avenue
- 2) Lake Wales, Polk County, Florida
- 3) Unknown
- 4) 1989
- 5) Janyce B. Ahl
- 6) South and west elevations, camera facing northwest
- 7) 1 of 5

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs

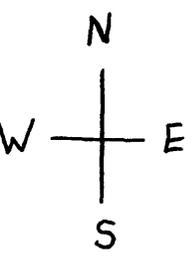
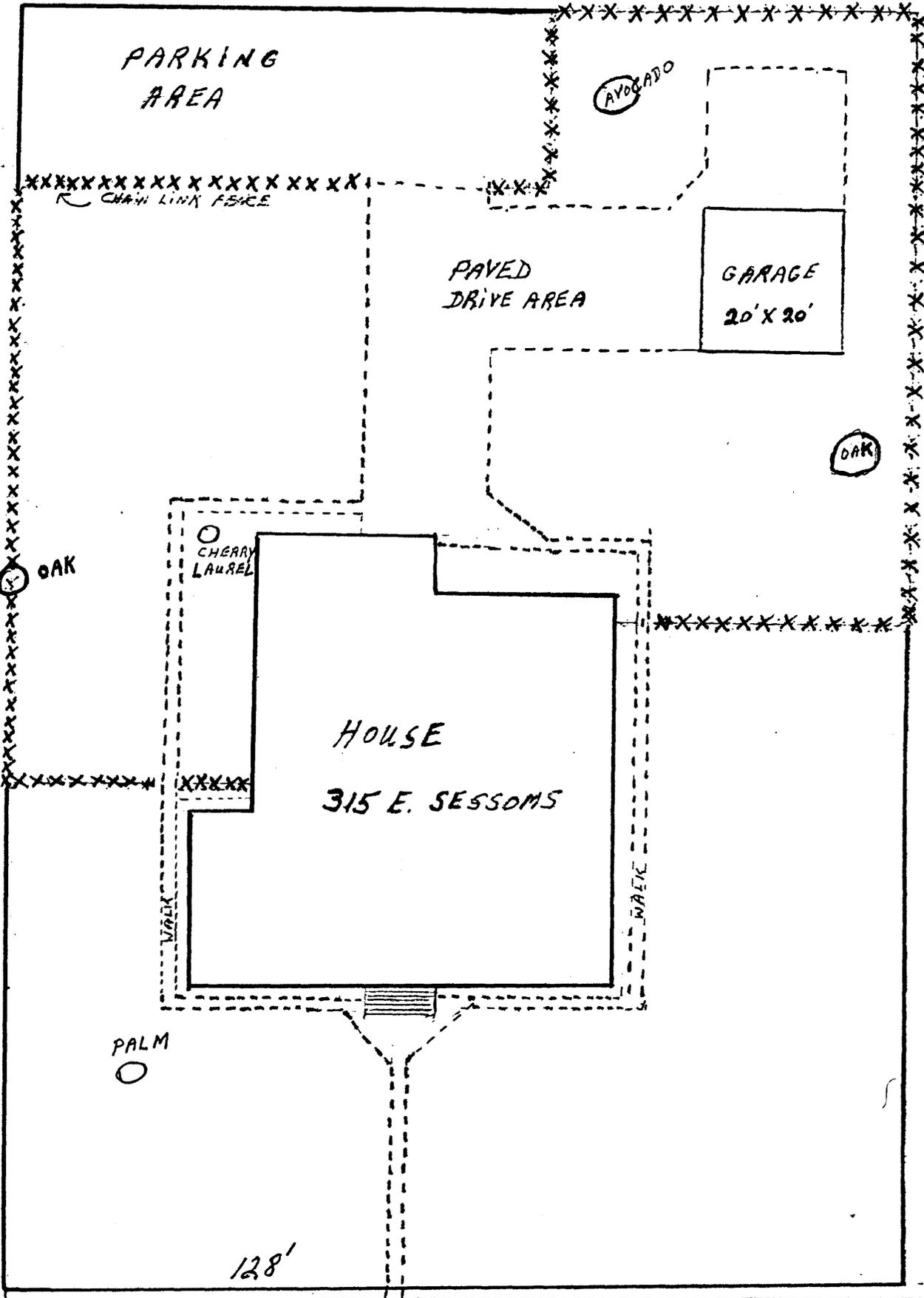
- 6) South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
- 7) 2 of 5

- 6) View of entrance hall, camera facing north
- 7) 3 of 5

- 6) View of entrance hall, camera facing south
- 7) 4 of 5

- 6) West elevation (front) of garage, camera facing east
- 7) 5 of 5

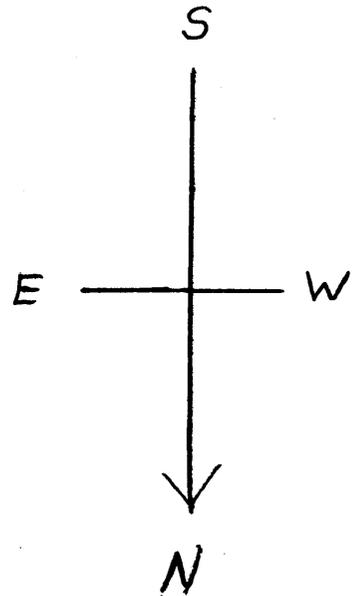
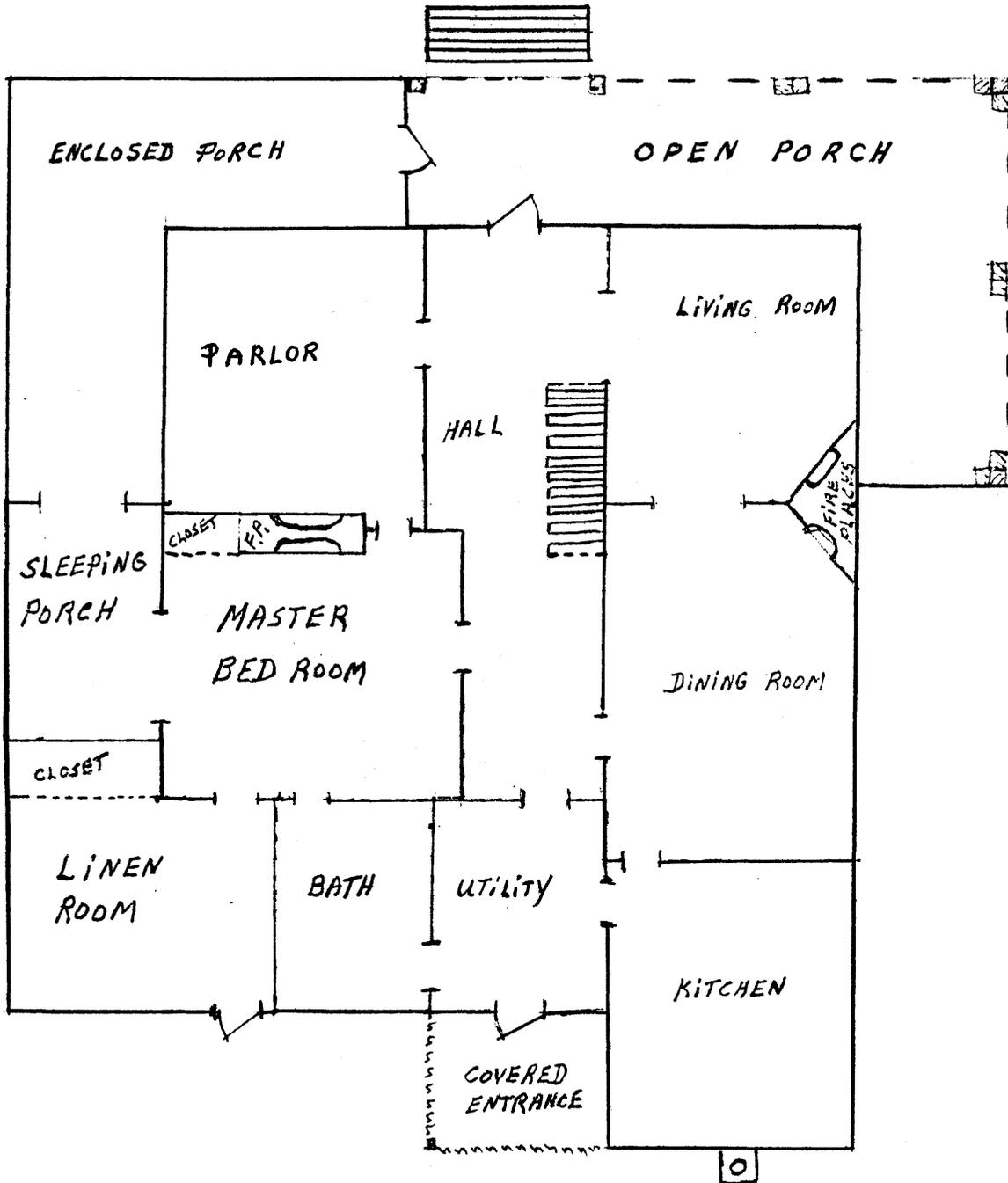
PAVED ALLEY



C. L. Johnson House
 315 East Sessoms Avenue
 Lake Wales, Polk County, Florida

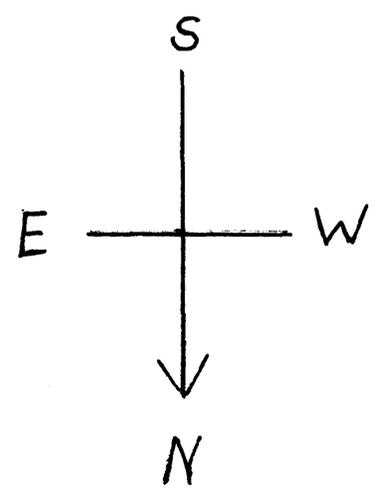
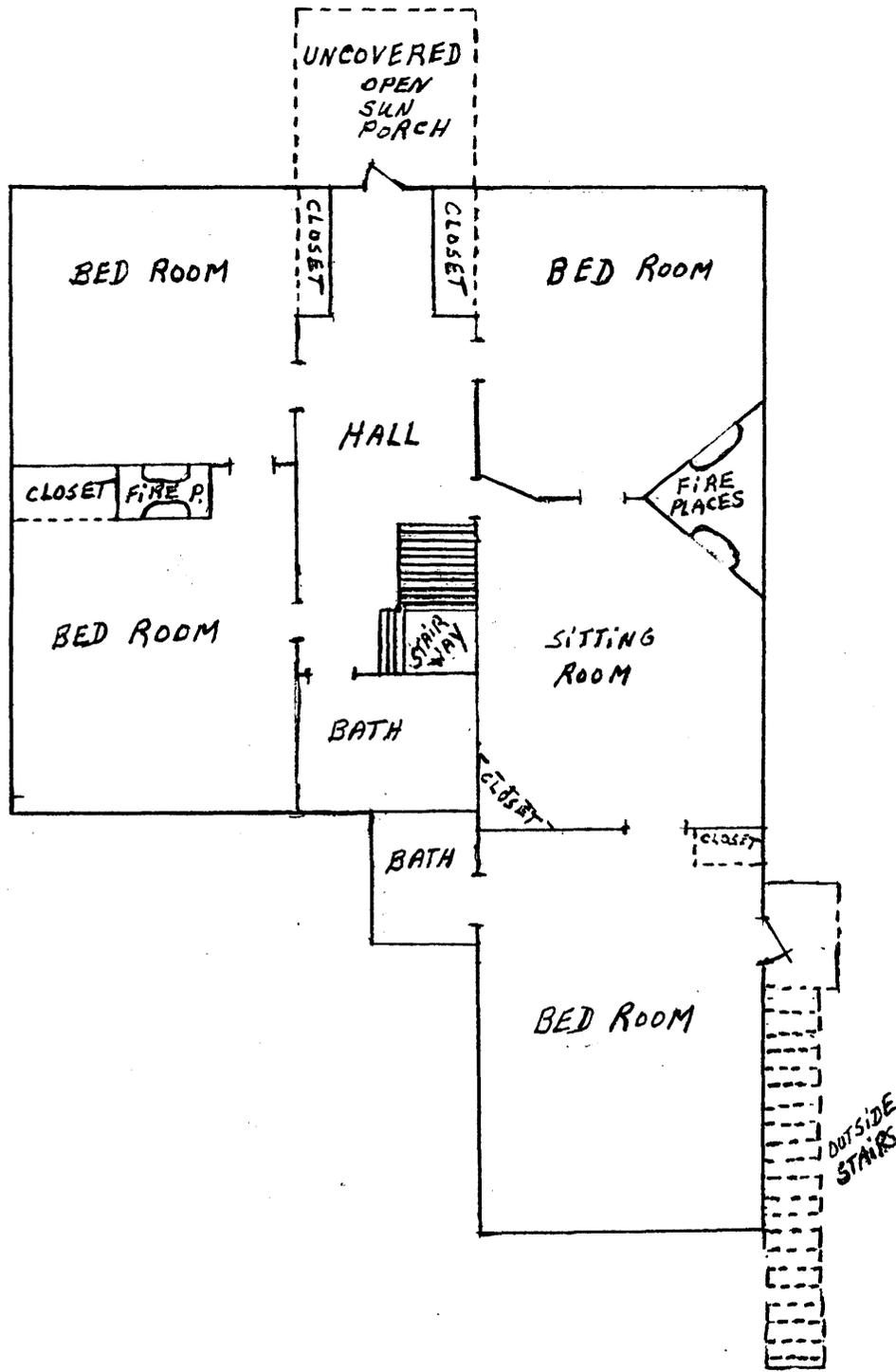
(1" = 19.6')

SESSOMS AVE



FIRST FLOOR

C.L. JOHNSON HOME
 315 E SESSOMS AVE
 LAKE WALES, FLA.



SECOND FLOOR

C.L. JOHNSON HOME
 315 E. SESSOMS AVE
 LAKE WALES, FLA.