

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED  
JUL 06 1990

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Syms  
other names/site number Eleni / SPI 1703

2. Location

street & number Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd. N/A  not for publication  
city, town Tarpon Springs N/A  vicinity  
state Florida code FL county Pinellas code 103 zip code 34684

3. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Tarpon Springs Sponge Boats  
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.  
[Signature] Date 6/29/90  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Bureau of Historic Preservation  
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.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
[Signature] 8/2/90  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Sponge Fishing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Sponge Fishing

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
walls N/A  
roof N/A  
other Wood: Hull

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)

Architecture (Naval)  
Maritime History  
Industry (Sponge Fishing)

Period of Significance

1935  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1935  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Samarkos Brothers

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property \_\_\_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**UTM References**

A 

1	7
---	---

3	2	7	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	1	1	5	5	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone Easting Northing

C 

--	--

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

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

B 

--	--

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

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

  
Zone Easting Northing

D 

--	--

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

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

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

N/A

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

N/A

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist  
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date June 27, 1990  
street & number 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333  
city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 DescriptionSummary

The sponge diving boat N.K. Symi was built in 1935 to gather sponges in the Gulf of Mexico. Its design is based on a Mediterranean prototype that predates the beginning of the Christian era and is one of only five remaining boats of the many constructed in Tarpon Springs between ca. 1907 and ca. 1940 to serve the sponging industry. The N.K. Symi is still a fully functional sponger. It is a deep draft vessel with a squared stern and wide hull tapering to a sharp, raised bow. It has two masts. The foremast is the taller of the two and carries a triangular sail. The short aftermast uses a spanker sail. The keel and ribs are constructed of heart pine and the planking is cypress. The ship is powered by a diesel engine and controlled by a tiller attached to a wooden rudder at the stern of the craft. The bulwark barely rises above the deck, and there are low housings over the rear engine compartment and the forward crew's quarters.

Setting

Home port for the N.K. Symi is the sponge docks of Tarpon Springs, Florida, located along the Anclote River in the northern part of town just west of U.S. Alternate Highway 19. The boat is moored on Dodecanese Boulevard in the vicinity of the former Tarpon Springs Sponge Exchange. The side of Dodecanese Boulevard opposite the docks is lined primarily with retail shops dealing in novelty items related to Greek culture and the sponging industry. Some restaurants, tourist excursion offices, and commercial maritime offices stand immediately along the wharf.

Present and Original Appearance

The N.K. Symi follows the traditional design of sponge boats built at Tarpon Springs. Its deck length is 45 feet, and the height of the mainmast is approximately 30 feet. At the stern of the boat are the stern sail mast and the rudder and tiller. Moving forward are the stern samson posts for tying lines and holding the tiller, the engine and air compressor control rods, and the helmsman's cockpit. Amidships are the rear and forward companionways, scuppers, the bridge pipe and center boom for hanging sponges, and the navigation lights. The mainmast is found forward of the crews' companionway, rising almost from the bow. At or in the bow there are the round tender's hatch, square storage hatch, diver's ladder, and anchor hoist.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Description

---

Auxiliary equipment associated with the sponge boats includes buoys for marking the diver's position, a collapsible propeller cage for protecting life lines and air hoses, tools benches and work tables for the cleaning of sponges, and lines for stringing sponges.

The N.K. Symi is in excellent condition and is well maintained. It continues to work as a sponge diving boat and has maintained its original use of both sail and motor power. The boat remains largely as it was constructed in 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Photographs

Inventory of Photographs

1. Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Symi
2. Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs (Pinellas County), FL
3. Paul Weaver
4. 1989
5. Historic Property Associates
6. View of Bow, Looking Northwest
7. Photo No. 1 of 5

1. Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Symi
2. Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs (Pinellas County), FL
3. Paul Weaver
4. 1989
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Detail of Stern, Looking Northeast
7. Photo No. 2 of 5

1. Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Symi
2. Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs (Pinellas County), FL
3. Paul Weaver
4. 1989
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Detail of Rear Companionway, Looking North
7. Photo No. 3 of 5

1. Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Symi
2. Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs (Pinellas County), FL
3. Paul Weaver
4. 1989
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Detail of Tiller and Stern Mast, Looking Southwest
7. Photo No. 4 of 5

1. Sponge Diving Boat N.K. Symi
2. Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks, Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs (Pinellas County), FL
3. Paul Weaver
4. 1989
5. Historic Property Associates
6. View of Stern, Looking North
7. Photo No. of 5

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Key to Illustrations

---

TARPON SPRINGS SPONGE BOATS

Identification Key for Boat Diagrams

1. STERN SAIL MAST - steadying boat in rough weater
2. RUDDER
3. TILLER
4. PROPELLER CAGE - for protecting lines and air hoses
5. BRIDGE OR PIPE - for hanging sponges
6. STERN SAMSON POSTS - for tying boat lines and holding tiller
7. CONTROL RODS - engine and air compressor controls
8. DECK SCUPPERS - for deck water drainage
9. STOOLS - for sitting and as work tables for cleaning sponges
10. NAVIGATION LIGHTS
11. FRESH WATER BARREL
12. DIVER'S LADDER
13. BOW SAMSON POST - for securing anchor and lines
14. ROUND BOW HATCH - for lifeline tender during rough weather  
and to store diving equipment
15. SQUARE BOW HATCH - for sponge storage
16. FORWARD COMPANIONWAY - crew's sleeping quarters
17. REAR COMPANIONWAY - engine room
18. REAR DECK PIT - helmsman's cockpit
19. CENTER BOOM - forward to rear - for hanging sponges and  
propeller cage
20. ANCHOR HOIST



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1

Significance

Summary

The sponge diving boat N.K. Symi (originally named the Eleni) is significant under criteria A and C as one of only five remaining watercraft constructed in Tarpon Springs expressly for the harvesting of sponges in the Gulf of Mexico. The unusual and functional design of the Tarpon Springs sponge diving boat developed as a result of modifying a traditional Mediterranean prototype to combine the benefits of a highly maneuverable sailing craft with the efficiency of motorized power. The boat was built by Greek craftsmen, and with other similar ships played a important role in the maritime history of Florida. Between 1905 and 1945 Tarpon Springs was internationally important as a commercial sponging center.

Supporting Narrative

NOTE: The boat is being nominated to the National Register under its present operating name rather than its original name or any of the names given to it subsequent to its launching in 1935 for the convenience of identification and location, since it continues to operate out of Tarpon Springs as a commercial vessel. Further, the sponge boat is not associated with any particular historical event that would require the use of any of its former names.

In 1907, two small boats of the double-ender type were brought from Greece on the deck of a steamship, and the construction of sponge diving boats in Tarpon Springs dates from that time. The work was done by Greek craftsmen from models, rather than drawn plans, with full-scale construction proceeding by rule of thumb. The first boats were sail powered "double-enders," a Greek type called a "sacoleve." Broad beamed, with little free board amidships, they had a decided shear fore and aft, rising sharply at the bow to the distinctive stem piece. Forward, their lines were quite convex differing in this way from the northern type of double-ender, by having a hollow waterline entry.

With the advent of gasoline engines, the shape of the stern was altered, and the boats using engines were built with a transom stern in order to house the bulky power plant and fuel tanks. Eventually, diesel power began to replace the earlier gasoline system. The lateen sail characteristic of the Greek and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

Significance

Turkish prototypes was soon supplanted by the two masted gaff-headed yawl rig, making the handling of the vessel easier and allowing the captain to switch between sail and motor power--or use a combination of the two--depending upon conditions. Nearly all of the diving ships constructed in Tarpon Springs after 1920 combined the use of sail and engine power.

The N.K. Symi, originally named the Eleni was built in 1935 in shipyards along the banks of the Anclote River by the Samarkos Brothers. At that time there were nearly 100 similar vessels operating out of Tarpon Springs, most of them similar in design. The dramatic fall in the demand for Tarpon Springs sponges after 1946 and the microbiotic diseases that devastated the sponging grounds a short time later left the industry in shambles. Little more than a decade later, the sponge boats that had once lined the wharf a Tarpon Springs had largely vanished. The N.K. Symi, however, has continued to function as a sponger. Today five vessels are all that remain of the great sponge fleet at Tarpon Springs: four diving boats and one hooking boat. Of the diving boats only three--including the N.K. Symi--remain seaworthy.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

---

Frantzis, George. Strangers at Ithaca. St. Petersburg, 1962.

Lovejoy, Gordon. The Greeks of Tarpon Springs. Masters Thesis, University of Florida, 1938.

Olausen, Steve. Interview with George Brillis, June 21, 1988, Tarpon Springs.

Pent, R.F. A History of Tarpon Springs. St. Petersburg, 1964.

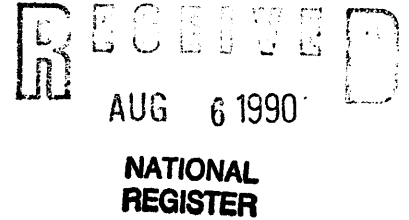
Rozees, Eileen and Lou. Sponge Docks Tarpon Springs, Florida: America's Sponge Diving Birthplace. Tarpon Springs, 1973.

Stoughton, Gertrude. Tarpon Springs, Florida, The Early Years. 1975.

Work Projects Administration. Florida Merchant Marine Survey. (typescript). Tallahassee: Florida State Library Board, 1938.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**



Section number 10 Page 1

---

Sponge Diving Boat N.K Symi

---

10. Geographical Data

---

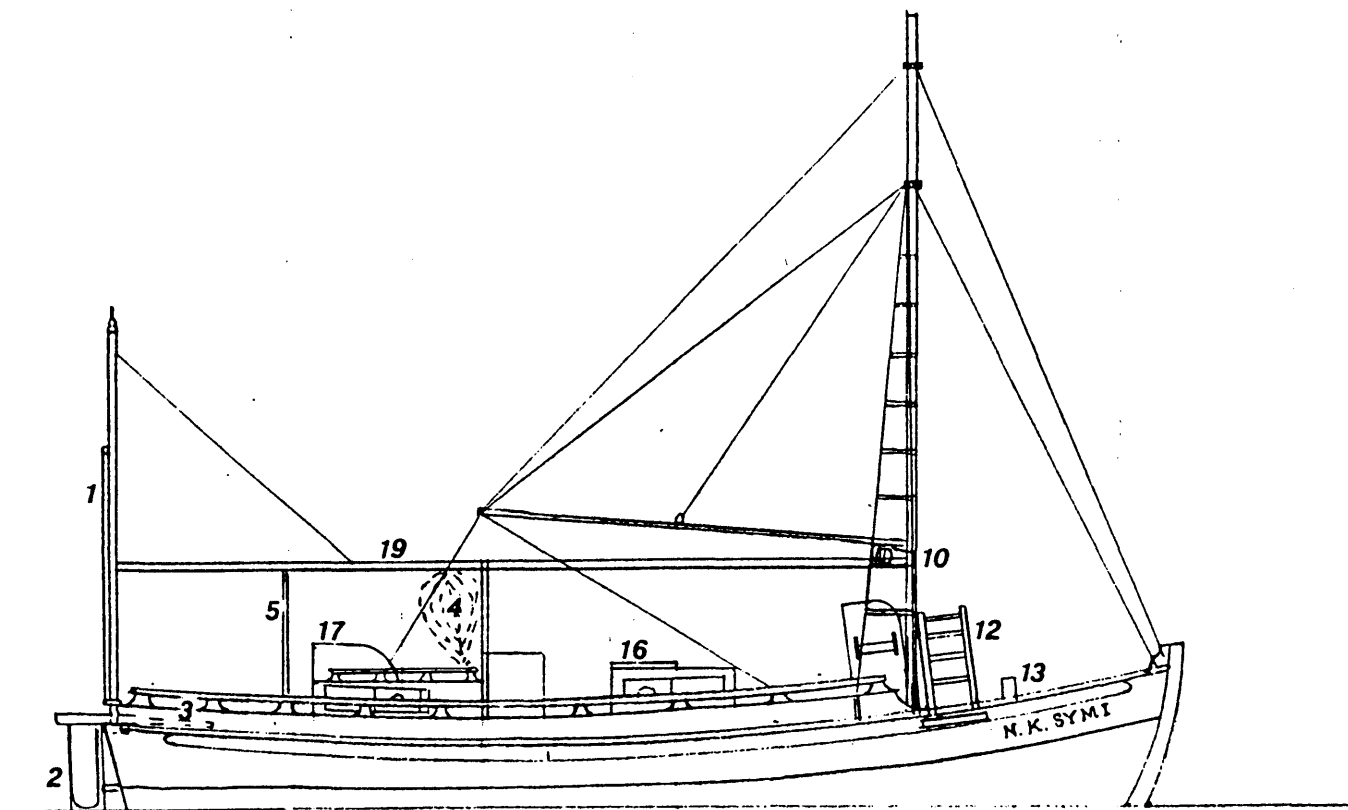
Acreage of property: Less than one

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the historic resource is limited to the extreme dimensions occupied by the vessel only. No other spaces or geographical location shall be considered as contributing or necessary to the significance of the property.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary limits are made sufficient by the physical integrity of the vessel which is maintained in changes of location, since it is a floating vessel and not associated specifically with a constrained physical location such as a museum or unchangeable mooring berth.



N.K. SYMI

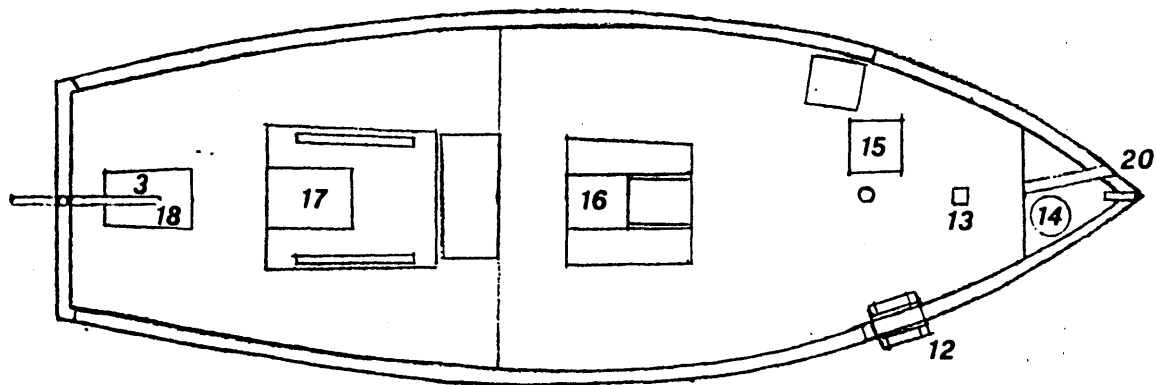
DECK LENGTH: 45'

MAST HEIGHT: ± 30'

SPONGE BOATS - TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

JUNE 1989 R.SPAIN



N.K. SYMI

DECK LENGTH: 45'

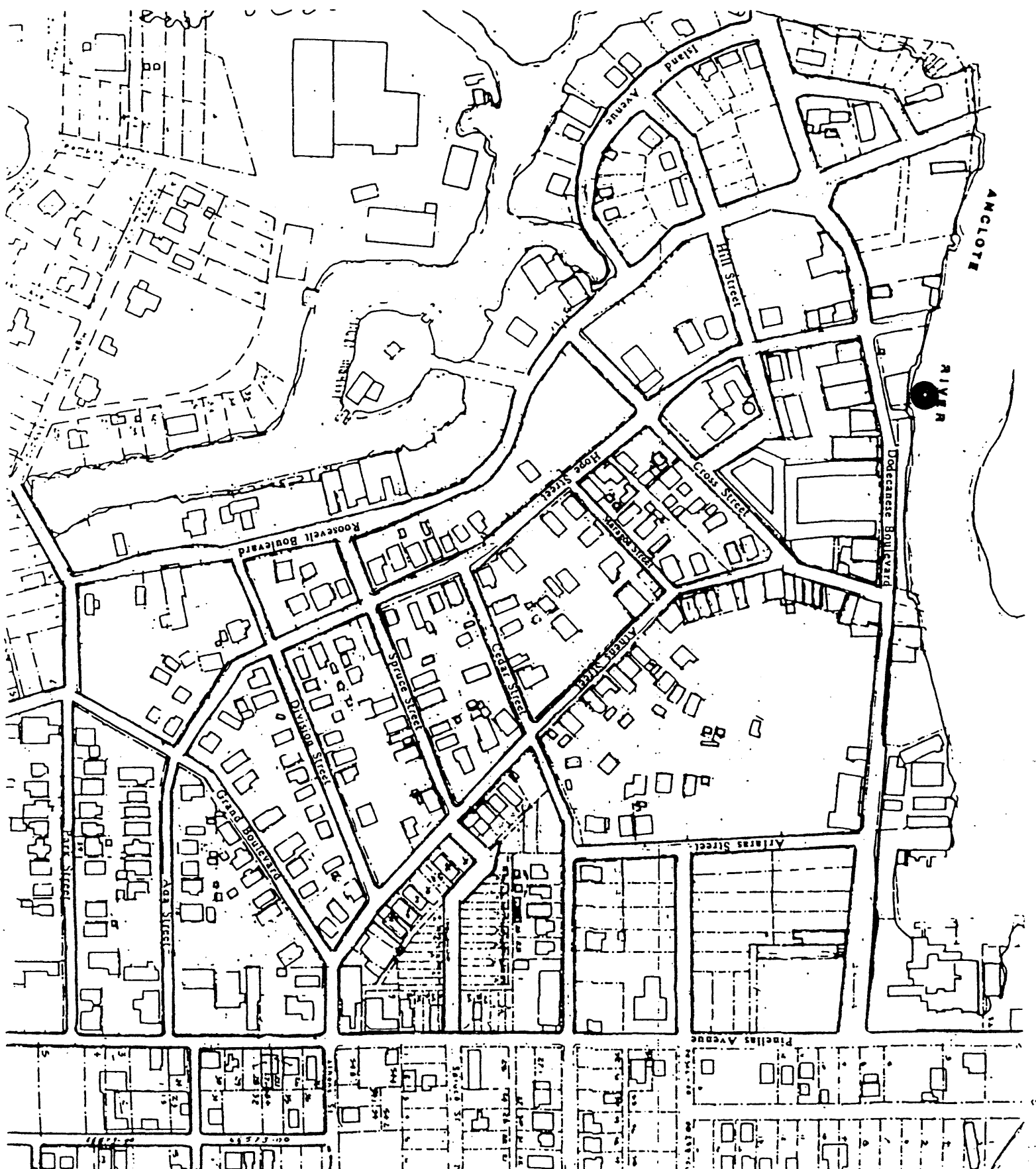
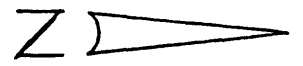
MAST HEIGHT: ± 30'

SPONGE BOATS - TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

JUNE 1984

R.SPAIN



ANCLOTE RIVER

RIVER

DODGEMAN BOULEVARD

Island Avenue

Hill Street

Roosevelt Boulevard

Hope Street

Arturas Street

Hope Street

Hope Street

Arturas Street

Arturas Street

Pineless Avenue

Arturas Street

Arturas Street

Arturas Street

Arturas Street

