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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 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 Palmetto Armory

other names/site number VFW Post 2488/MA1519

2. Location

street & number 810 Sixth Street West N/A  not for publication

city or town Palmetto N/A  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Manatee code 081 zip code 34221

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.)

Barbara E. Mattick/DSHPO 8/23/2012  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, 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) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 10-17-12  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Palmetto Armory  
Name of Property

Manatee County, FL  
County and State

**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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE: military facility

SOCIAL: civic

RECREATION AND CULTURE: music facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE: masonry vernacular

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASBESTOS

other N/A

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY

SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1937-1962

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Carroll, E. W., engineer

see continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of Repository

# \_\_\_\_\_

Palmetto Armory  
Name of Property

Manatee County, FL  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	4	4	5	3	8	3	0	4	4	6	4	8
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
4															

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 Robert Marble; Andrew Waber, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date August 2012

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

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

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

#### Photographs

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

#### Additional items

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

#### Property Owner

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

name Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2488

street & number 810 Sixth Street West telephone 941-722-9588

city or town Palmetto state Florida zip code 34221

**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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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

<b>PALMETTO ARMORY</b>
Name of Property MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
County and State N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 1

### SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Palmetto Armory is a two-story masonry vernacular brick building located in Palmetto, Florida, that was constructed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1937. While the building does have some Art Deco influence, overall it has a very simple, functional form similar to factory buildings of the time. It has little ornamentation and the brick itself is part of the aesthetic. The property is open, with a parking lot on the east side and some grassy spaces on the other three sides. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2488 uses the first story for its clubhouse and the second story for some storage. The building has undergone some changes since its construction, primarily to the first floor interior and the main entrance.

### SETTING

Palmetto is located on the Gulf Coast of Florida near the southern terminus of the Sunshine Skyway that spans Tampa Bay. The city's southern boundary is the Manatee River, while the mouth of Tampa Bay is to the west. Palmetto is at the crossroads of Southwest Florida's largest commercial centers and is the hub of Manatee County's agricultural industry, ranking eighth in the state in agricultural income. The city has a population of about 14,000, with more inhabitants just outside the city limits. It also enjoys a sizeable number of winter residents and visitors.

The armory is located in a mixed residential and commercial area in the heart of Palmetto, with the City Hall one block to the east on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the Woman's Club and Lamb Park across the street to the west, and the Palmetto Historical Village one block west on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. At the time the armory was dedicated in 1937, the elementary and high schools were less than one block to the north on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and the commercial district was still concentrated in the immediate area. On the east side of the building is a parking lot that is used by the VFW and owned by the city. On the other three sides are neighboring properties listed on the National Register as contributing resources in the Palmetto Historic District (NR 1986).

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

#### Exterior

The basic structure of the old armory is a wood frame building with a brick veneer laid in a running bond pattern. It is a two-story rectangular building that is 70 by 86 feet in size, on a concrete foundation, with 6x10 sills, 3x8 floor joists, and sub-floored with 1x6 planks; it has 2x6 side wall studding and 2x4 partition studding between rooms. Floor joists on the second story are 3x10, and it is also sub-floored.<sup>1</sup> Most of the first story windows on all sides have been painted over, while the second story windows are protected by painted concrete blocks that fill the window openings.

The building's axis is in a north-south direction, with the main entrance located on the south elevation (Photo #1). Perpendicular to the south elevation is a concrete sidewalk leading from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to the main entrance. A flagpole is at the south end of the sidewalk. Left of the entrance is an air conditioning

<sup>1</sup> The Palmetto News, October 21, 1937, 1.

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condenser unit with a metal duct going into the building. A concrete ramp runs from the east parking lot to the main entrance that is sheltered by a metal shed roof, above which is a faint mortar outline of the original gabled portico roof (Photo #2). A running bond brick pattern is consistent from the ground to the roof on a parapeted gable wall that is capped by metal coping. Near the wall's peak, and centered horizontally, is a round vent that provides some north-south ventilation to the upstairs of the facility. Fenestration consists of six multi-light windows downstairs and six larger ones upstairs. The first story windows are side-hung casement windows that have been painted over. One of the smaller windows on the west side of the entrance has been modified to accommodate an air conditioning duct. Upstairs, windows are a combination of rigid multi-light frames with top-hung casement windows centered in the lower three-fifths of each frame, currently behind concrete blocks installed for protection.

The east elevation contains the kitchen service ground entrance in the approximate midpoint of the elevation, and just north of that is a kitchen exhaust system duct that extends up the wall above the eaves (Photos #3-4). The brick continues in the running bond pattern. There are five evenly spaced brick pilasters, behind which are support columns that run from the ground to the roof trusses. The asphalt shingle roof has darkened somewhat with age, to the point that one can imagine seeing the original slate roof that was there in 1937. A rain gutter runs along the eaves, with downspouts located at each end and in the middle of the elevation. A VFW sign is posted between the first and second pilasters above the first-story windows.

The north elevation is similar to the south elevation, as the north elevation features a parapeted gable wall with a round vent capped by metal coping. It also has six windows upstairs and six on the first story. The rear entrance may or may not have had a portico, though no portico outline shows on the bricks above the small metal roof. A fire escape leads up to the second story and a small shed-like structure, possibly a pump house before city water was available, is between the base of the fire escape and the rear door. The remnant of what appears to be a block chimney runs up to the level of the second story windows at the west end of the elevation. The second story windows are the same size as on the other three sides, though one was modified to create the fire escape exit. The first story windows are generally smaller than those at the opposite end, and all windows are covered with wood boards (Photo #5).

The west elevation of the building is about 15 feet from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which makes it the closest side to any road. It is also the only elevation that has no entrance. As with the east side, five evenly spaced pilasters are part of the running bond brick work forming the elevation. Rain gutters run along the eaves, with downspouts at each end and in the center. One air conditioning unit sits on the ground and three smaller units are mounted on the wall, one in a window and two others with lines running through windows. The windows are the same size as those on the east side, and the second-story windows are all blocked in, while two of the first-story windows remain clear (Photo #6).

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**Interior**

First Floor

The first floor (Attachment 3) of the building is currently used by the VFW for its clubhouse, and the layout reflects that purpose. A suspended ceiling has been installed below the original cypress wood ceiling in the downstairs common areas and linoleum tile covers much of the floor. The original cypress walls have also been covered with more decorative paneling and wainscot in many of the first floor rooms. Just inside the main door is a small entryway (Photo #7), with a set of stairs behind a door on the east side leading to the second floor (Photo #8), and an open area on the west side that is framed by pillars and portions of walls (Photo #9). Straight ahead is the original lobby (Photo #10), where game machines sit along its south wall to the east (Photo #11) and a bar is now located near the lobby's northern edge, extending into what had been a room on the west side. East of the lobby are two restrooms and an office in the southeast corner of the building that has the original cypress board walls exposed (Photos 12-13).

The west side of the lobby is more open to accommodate a recreation area that includes pool tables and some seating (Photo #14). What was originally the east wall for the rooms on the west side is now evidenced by a half wall, pillars and beams running along the ceiling (Photo #15). Approximately 60% of the south wall of the former supply room now consists of sliding glass doors that open north into the room, but is now a dance and presentation area (Photo #16). Roughly 70% of the original wood floor is still exposed and maintained. In the northwest corner of that room is the original supply room's munitions storage safe, which is now used for storage. Against the north wall is a 6'x8' platform, raised about 6" to serve as a small stage (Photo #17).

On the north side of the first floor is the rear (north) entrance, which is partially obscured by a non-historic wall (Photo #18). A secondary entryway located on the west side of this wall leads to the main corridor. This ten-foot-wide hallway separates the dance and presentation area from the rooms on the east side, with linoleum tile flooring (Photo #19). The north end of the hall has some shelves containing reading and viewing materials and two restrooms are east of that area (Photo #20). The northern restroom retains the original ceramic tile floor and cypress board wall that extends eastward into what was originally a locker room (Photos #21). The adjacent restroom to the south appears to have been added, though the warded lock keyhole on the door hints of age. The locker room in the northeast corner is used as a utility storage closet (Photo #22) and the small room just south of that is the VFW auxiliary office (Photo #23). Though not as spacious as the dance and presentation area across the hall, a large room for dining and other group events is also located on the east side, between the auxiliary's office and the kitchen (Photo #24). It continues with the suspended ceiling and wainscot over paneling, but the paneling is closer to the original wallboards in appearance, indicating that it was possibly an early project (Photo #25). On the south wall, near the door leading into the kitchen, is a closed serving window. The kitchen also has a suspended ceiling, but the northern third of it is different from the rest in appearance, and the two ceilings are divided by a beam that originally supported a wall (Photo #26).

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Second Floor

At the south end of the building, one set of stairs to the east, just inside the main entrance, leads up to the second floor (Photo #27), which is one large open room (Attachment 4) used only for storage at present (Photo #28). Five complete trusses support the roof, running from the foundation to the center of the building at the top. They are built of wood with Teco split-ring connectors, 3x6 roof purlins, 1x6 roofing boards and connected with crossed braces. An interesting and beautiful complexity exists in the trusses. On the east side toward the south end stands a roughly eight-foot partition wall and some tile flooring that form the beginning of a narrow (approximately 9 x 30 feet) dressing room. The room was never completed and can be readily removed to restore the original floor layout (Photo #29). The 1x3 pine gym floor has 1940s-1950s era court markings and is still protected by wood finish. Basketball goals are at both ends of the court. The south goal is especially impressive with 4x4 timbers running vertically, horizontally and diagonally to form a support structure that is visually interesting, as well as functional (Photo #30). At the north end is an emergency exit leading outside to a fire escape that was installed in the 1950s (Photo #31). Barely noticeable from the second floor court is the fact that one set of stairs at the south end of the court has been removed.

The walls are covered with cypress wallboards placed vertically on all four walls, to a height equal to the base of the ceiling on the sides. Above that at the north and south gable ends, narrower tongue and groove boards laid horizontally form the wall covering. The trusses connect to the support columns on the east and west walls, with cypress wall boards encasing the joints in structures that gradually slant to blend into the wall at a height of about four feet, creating what has been described as a "sculptural quality" in their appearance (Photo #32). Also along the east and west walls are two rows of built-in bench seating, running the room's full length (Photo #33). The northwest corner of the room includes a small orchestra pit (Photo #34).

Alterations

The exterior of the building retains much its 1937 appearance with a few exceptions. The main entrance now has a handicap access ramp, with the original brick portico replaced by a metal porch roof, ostensibly to make way for the ramp. Metal ductwork extends vertically outside the east side of the building as part of the kitchen exhaust system. A fire escape from upstairs has been added to the north side and many of the window openings have been blocked up to protect from vandalism and potential storm damage. The windows are still in place and the protective blocks could readily be removed to restore the original appearance.

In the original layout, the armory's first floor consisted of a 30x40 foot lobby, a 10-foot wide hall running north from the lobby through to the rear wall, and rooms on both sides of the lobby and the hall. Though no original or "as built" plans have been located, a newspaper article regarding the building's dedication in 1937 indicated that rooms included non-commissioned officers' and supply rooms on the west side, a commissioned officers' room on the east side, and an apartment for the caretaker, consisting of a sitting room, bed room, kitchen, and rest room. At the north end, there were also a dressing room, toilets, and showers. The second floor consisted of one large room, with two rows of built-in seating,



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running the room's full length on the east and west sides. An orchestra pit was in the northwest corner, along with a refreshment booth.<sup>2</sup>

Based on interviews with the commander and first sergeant of the last National Guard unit to occupy the armory, and a review of a WPA-era stock "Armory Florida National Guard" floor plan, the actual room usage downstairs probably differed only a little from the description above, but the original layout is readily ascertainable.<sup>3</sup> The building has been occupied by VFW Post 2488 since 1962. No record of changes made by the National Guard before 1962 was located, nor has the VFW kept plans and records of work that it has been done since the organization moved into the facility.

Below is a summary of apparent alterations created by comparing current observations with the 1937 Palmetto News description, early exterior photographs, "stock" WPA era armory plans, and recollections of former National Guard members who served in the armory. The list is not in chronological order nor in order of importance.

1. The main entrance brick portico was replaced by a concrete ramp with a small aluminum roof covering the entrance, probably after the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990. The VFW is looking into the possibility of restoring the portico look with complete access.
2. Concrete blocks were placed in sills outside of many of the windows, as seen in several exterior photos (Photo #35). The VFW states it is to protect the windows from vandalism. The goal is to restore the windows to their original appearance, but with adequate protection.
3. There were originally two sets of stairs inside the main entrance. With the second floor not in use except for storage, the west side stairs were removed c. 1986.
4. One of the two restrooms on the southeast side is original and another room was later converted by the VFW to accommodate club patrons (Photo #36).
5. On the west side downstairs, some interior walls were removed to gain more open space for VFW post activities (Photos #9, 14-15).
6. All indications are that the original kitchen was small and that the north wall was "bumped out" for more room. It is not known if that was done by the VFW or the National Guard (Photos #4, 26).
7. On the east side at the north end downstairs is a "VFW Auxiliary" office (Photo #23) and a restroom that do not appear on the stock armory plans. The door to the restroom has an old warded lock keyhole; thus, the rooms could possibly have been added by the 'Guard before 1962, perhaps to accommodate the school usage of the locker room to the north that occurred during the 1940s.
8. Drop ceilings and paneling cover, rather than replace, the original cypress board ceiling and walls in most common areas downstairs, for apparent aesthetic purposes. Photos #10-11 show examples of the ceiling, while Photo #26 shows relatively new wainscot over what appears to be older paneling.

<sup>2</sup> The Palmetto News, October 21, 1937, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> Don Flowers interview, December 2010; James Kanzler interview, January 2011.

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**PALMETTO ARMORY**

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N/A

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9. The northeast storeroom (Photo #22) was originally a locker room that extended west to the hall, as the same tile floor runs the length. A newer wall now separates it from the restroom (Photo #21) to the west.
10. Linoleum tile has been installed in many areas downstairs, presumably for easier maintenance and better resistance to the wear and tear of increased daily use. Wear patterns indicate the original flooring is still present underneath the tile (Photo #19).
11. According to the VFW, in c. 2007 a martial arts school began building a dressing room (roughly 9'x30') upstairs along the east wall at the south end, with free standing walls and ceramic tile placed on top of the gym floor (Photo #29). Everything ceased when it was noted that the upstairs did not meet accessibility and fire suppression standards.
12. A fire escape from the second floor on the north wall appears to have been added by removing part of a window frame and bricks from the wall. This was done when the National Guard owned the building, as minutes from a 1955 Palmetto City Council meeting show approval of the project (Photo #5).

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**ARCHITECT/BUILDER**

Foxworth, J. G., builder  
Walker, Charles, engineer

**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Palmetto Armory, completed in 1937, possesses significance under Criterion A at the local level in the areas of Military History and Social History. During its period of significance (1937-1962), it was used as a Florida National Guard armory and as a center for the local “home front” efforts during World War II. The armory also served Palmetto’s community as a venue for sports, entertainment, and social events, especially during the active post-war recovery period and ensuing boom years.

Additionally, the armory building is the last Works Progress Administration (WPA) building in the community that is still standing, and contains features, including exposed hand-made wooden trusses, no longer common in building construction. Although this building has undergone a number of changes, primarily to the first floor interior, much of the exterior and the second floor interior retain a high level of integrity. The second floor served as the drilling grounds for the National Guard unit and later hosted community gatherings and sporting events.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Development of Palmetto, Florida

The early settlement of Manatee County by merchants, plantation owners, Spanish fishermen, and former soldiers was concentrated on the north side of the Manatee River in the vicinity of Palmetto. During the Antebellum Period, planters from Middle Florida (Central North Florida) came to the area seeking new lands on which to improve their declining production. During its first 20 years of settlement, Palmetto was affected by the Second and Third Seminole wars and a Federal blockade on Ellenton and Palmetto during the Civil War. The Civil War’s end brought new prosperity to the area as settlers renewed operations, others moved in, and a plantation economy yielded to the citrus and vegetable industry. In the years immediately following the Civil War, Palmetto was still only a small cluster of houses, stores, and a few 40- to 60- acre farms. When a few entrepreneurs bought holdings from the pioneers, the potential for a town was seen and lots were laid out to sell.<sup>4</sup> A post office was established in 1872, and Joel Hendrix, a general store owner who also built a wharf for boats hauling supplies and settlers to the area, was the first postmaster.<sup>5</sup>

The citrus industry grew in and around Palmetto and the Manatee River between 1870 and 1880, and wharves were built for steamers hauling products north, since no railroads were in the vicinity then. Palmetto’s relatively deep water access on the Manatee River made it a major center for shipping fruit

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Abel, *100 Years in Palmetto: 1868-1968* (Palmetto, FL: Palmetto Centennial Association, 1967), 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Manatee River Journal*, March 28, 1889.

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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and vegetable crops to Cedar Key and other points for transfer to the railroads that had routes to markets in the Northeast.<sup>6</sup>

In 1884, Henry Plant ran rail service from Tampa, which allowed for direct shipment of produce north and brought settlers into the area. He also initiated regular steamer service to Key West, with a stop at Palmetto and Manatee.<sup>7</sup> To ship produce from the expanding agricultural industry, two major wharves were built and commerce increased as Palmetto grew in importance as a produce shipping port. As families moved into the community to take advantage of the school and social life, more rooming houses were built. Fruit and vegetable buyers set up shop, farms were more like agricultural factories, and local merchants had stores to supply growers' needs. A transient labor force came to town on trains to pick and harvest produce and left at the end of the season to pick crops in other areas. In 1895, a narrow gauge railroad ran two-and-one-half miles north from the Hendrix dock to Memphis, Florida, near the orange groves.<sup>8</sup> The local packinghouse was supplied by the Palmetto Crate and Lumber Company.

A severe yellow fever epidemic hit Palmetto in 1888, causing several deaths and sending many residents into the countryside to avoid contact with victims, almost halting the vegetable industry<sup>9</sup>, but it survived, and Palmetto was billed as the largest vegetable shipping point on the Manatee River.<sup>10</sup> The hard freeze that hit the citrus industry to the north spared local growers, but they were led to diversify production by moving to yearly vegetable crops that provided income without long-term dependence on the health of citrus trees.<sup>11</sup> By 1900, tomato and cabbage growing had surpassed citrus production in Manatee County. Palmetto had nearly 1,000 inhabitants, two churches, the county's first bank, the Manatee State Bank, and the Peninsular Telephone Exchange.<sup>12</sup>

The start of the Seaboard Airline Railroad direct service north was a huge event in Palmetto's history to that time<sup>13</sup> and it started a decline in the need for water transportation. Railcars full of fruit and vegetables had to be iced, so an ice plant was built at the foot of the People's Wharf.<sup>14</sup> By 1915, 3,000-4,000 boxes of fruit were shipped each week during the height of the season.<sup>15</sup> The Manatee Fruit Company packinghouse was the largest producer in the area, with an annual production of 125,000 boxes. The Atwood Grapefruit Company shipped 30,000 boxes annually and began advertising grapefruit nationally.<sup>16</sup> Between 1910 and 1915, Palmetto saw more building and development than during any similar period in its history, and Main Street, which ended at Lamb's Wharf, was a flurry of activity. Most of the development during the period supported the area's agricultural economy. There were at least nine packinghouses in the vicinity of Palmetto in 1917, though production value peaked and was not reached again until after 1930.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "Address of A. D. Williamson to Kiwanis Club, Bradenton, FL. July 27, 1926" Palmetto Historical C Abel, 100 Years in Palmetto.

<sup>7</sup> Charlton W. Tebeau, A History of Florida, (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 283.

<sup>8</sup> Abel, 100 Years in Palmetto: 1868-1968, 81.

<sup>9</sup> Manatee River Journal, March 28, 1889. "Palmetto." Bradenton, FL

<sup>10</sup> A Complete General Directory of Manatee County. 1897. M.D. Cushing, Printer. Bradenton, FL. 66.

<sup>11</sup> Alice Myers, National Register Application for Palmetto Historic District nomination. 1985. Sec.8, p11.

<sup>12</sup> Tampa Tribune "Mid-Winter Edition," January 21, 1900. Tampa, FL

<sup>13</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Railroad Commission, (Tallahassee, FL: Tallahassee Book and Job Print. 1902)

<sup>14</sup> Manatee County Incorporation Records, 1901; Deed, July 1, 1903, Deed Book 8, p.111, Bradenton, FL.

<sup>15</sup> Manatee River Journal, February 15, 1915. "County Manager Gumprecht Predicts Much Better Prices."

<sup>16</sup> Manatee River Journal, November 16, 1916. Big Profits Shown by Manatee Farmers."

<sup>17</sup> Compiled from the Annual Reports of the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, various years.

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In the first two decades of the twentieth century, a boom in development and construction led to the building of more homes and the creation of more businesses, including two lumber companies. Palmetto and Bradenton were linked by the first bridge across the Manatee River in 1917, opening the south side of the river to more direct transportation. After World War I, Palmetto remained a support community for the agriculture industry expanding around it. During the 1920s, the industry in Florida was affected by the immense attention and money being made in real estate development. As the boom in Miami and Fort Lauderdale spread to the rest of the state, many people wanted to be in the real estate business. Many of Palmetto's farmers halted their produce operations to engage in real estate speculation and development, but as the boom busted, many returned to their fields. Agricultural production rose and continued to develop and expand into the 1930s and 1940s, with new cash crops, such as gladiolas and other flowering plants.<sup>18</sup>

The increasing popularity of the automobile led to the development of a growing local tourist industry, until the Great Depression slowed things down. In the 1930s, local government entities, including the school system, struggled to adjust budgets to cope with reduced tax revenues, as special interest groups called for tax cuts. A frequent point of discussion in the local paper was whether or not to repeal the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment and bring an end to prohibition. Although the area was spared the climatic calamities that affected other parts of the country, and agriculture remained the predominant local industry, lower crop prices contributed to a financial decline.<sup>19</sup> Canning plants for grapefruit and tomatoes operated during the harvest seasons and lumber and crate mills made products to support agricultural operations. As the economy slightly improved later in the decade, tourism showed potential once again, and Manatee County was advertised as the "Garden Spot of Florida," with an emphasis on outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, golf, spectator sports, and relaxing on the Gulf beaches.<sup>20</sup>

### Development of the National Guard<sup>21</sup>

Until the start of the twentieth century, states relied on volunteer militias to fulfill the role now played by the National Guard. During the late nineteenth century, in the post-Civil War climate rife with civil unrest due to numerous labor strikes and economic depressions, the militia became more of an "agency of the state, a means of maintaining order and protecting property."<sup>22</sup> The first three decades of the twentieth century brought about further evolution to the National Guard, as a result of two wars (the Spanish-American War and World War I) and a border conflict with Mexico. Between 1903 and 1933, several acts passed by Congress federalized, organized, and strengthened the National Guard. Although still state-based, federalization resulted in the National Guard becoming a supplementary component of the military, instead of being solely for civil defense. About this change in function and purpose, historian Robert Fogelson stated:

<sup>18</sup> Alice Myers, National Register Application for Palmetto Historic District nomination. 1985. Sec 8, p14

<sup>19</sup> Jules A. Frost, "Manatee County and Bradenton: A Word Picture" WPA project. Circa 1936.

<sup>20</sup> Pamela Gibson, "Good Times in Hard Times: The Draw of the Tourist Industry to Manatee County 1937-1938."

<sup>21</sup> Emily Foster, NRHP registration form for Ft. Homer Hesterly Armory in Tampa, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Robert M. Fogelson, *America's Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1989), 41.

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After 1900, ... the national guard underwent a remarkable transformation. By the end of World War I, it was a federal as well as a state force - a force that served as the backup for the army, rather than as the "policeman of industry," a force whose mission was to defend the country against foreigners, not against other Americans. Once the guardsmen took on this new role, they stopped thinking of the lower classes as potential rioters, other Americans stopped looking at the armories as symbols of repression, and it became possible to turn what had long been a fortress into a coliseum and community center.<sup>23</sup>

Beginning with the 1903 Dick Act, the National Guard was formally recognized as the U.S. Army's primary reserve force. In 1916, the National Defense Act was passed, which affirmed the term "National Guard," gave the President authorization to utilize the National Guard during times of national emergency or war, and authorized for the first time pay for active duty guardsmen. Amendments to this Act enacted in 1920 federalized the National Guard and reorganized its administration. Finally, the National Guard Mobilization Act of 1933 made the National Guard a component of the U.S. Army.<sup>24</sup> Under these acts, two modern divisions were created within the National Guard: the Army National Guard and Air National Guard. These divisions were directly accountable to the United States Department of Defense, although still operated by each state.<sup>25</sup>

### Florida National Guard

Florida was the first state to organize its militia under the new federal standards in 1903, creating the 1st and 2nd Regiments. Guard units were formed under each regiment, and guardsmen began attending military service schools. The state funded active-duty pay, training camps, and a state arsenal, while federal funds gave the Florida Guard equipment and uniforms. In recognition of its organizational efforts, the state militia underwent an official name change in 1909, from the Florida State Troops to the Florida National Guard.<sup>26</sup>

Following the national trend, from 1903 until 1916, the Florida National Guard was utilized mostly for keeping civilians peaceful. For instance, it was called upon eleven times to protect prisoners from lynch mobs. With the passage of the National Defense Act in 1916, however, federalization of the Florida National Guard began in earnest. From June 1916 until spring 1917, it was called upon to provide protection to the Mexican border, due to that country's revolution. The second calling of the Florida National Guard into federal service was provided by the First World War. However, guardsmen were inducted into the Army to serve in the War as individuals, not as Guard Units.<sup>27</sup> After World War I, membership in the Florida National Guard dwindled, as did state and federal funds. Nevertheless, Florida guardsmen continued to protect and assist the state's citizens by subduing civil uprisings, rebuilding after hurricanes, and helping to control the 1929 Mediterranean Fruit Fly outbreak.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Fogelson, *America's Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order*, 213.

<sup>24</sup> The Army National Guard, "Constitutional Charter of the Guard," n.d., <<http://www.amg.army.mil/history/Constitution/default.asp?ID=13>>

<sup>25</sup> Nancy L. Todd, "Studying Armories: DoD's Legacy Program Funds New York State Survey, CRM 19, no. 1 (1996): 7

<sup>26</sup> Florida Master Site File, "Old West Palm Beach National Guard Armory" NRHP Registration Form, 22 April 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Hawk, "Mexican Border to World War 1916 - 1919," Florida National Guard Heritage Center, 2004,

<<http://www.floridaguard.net/history/read.asp?did=1315>> (29 September 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Florida Master Site File, "Old West Palm Beach National Guard Armory."

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Florida Armories

Prior to 1935, there were only ten National Guard armories in Florida. Scattered around the state, most of these armories were built according to the late nineteenth century ideal of castellated fortresses. These earlier armories were built during a time when fears of labor strikes, farmer rebellions, and riots called for intimidating and defensible fortresses that could aid in protecting American cities. As the National Guard's role moved from policing to being a reserve force to the army, especially after World War I, the armory underwent a transformation, as well. While it was once needed as a fortress and symbol of military strength, it evolved into more of a community center, which led to less imposing architectural styles for new facilities.<sup>1</sup>

The construction of Florida armories was funded by individual counties until 1901, when a Florida Supreme Court decision ruled that the state was responsible for funding armory construction. Though bound by the court decision, state coordination of armory funding was slow, sparse, and unpredictable.<sup>29</sup> It was not until the mid-1930s, with the availability of funds through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), that armory building in Florida caught up to the needs of the National Guard.

After assessing its armories in the early 1930s, the Florida National Guard determined most to be inadequate, and searched for ways to fund new facilities. By this time the nation was in the Great Depression and roughly a third of the population was unemployed. In order to provide work and relief to the unemployed, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the WPA, which funded construction of hundreds of public buildings and projects in Florida, including National Guard armories. Individual counties had to submit proposals for local projects and some local money had to be pledged to the project. By the end of 1941, the WPA had funded construction of 17 armories in Florida, bringing the total number in the state to 27.<sup>30</sup>

The Florida National Guard saw extensive federal participation during World War II. Florida guardsmen, as a part of the Army's 31st "Dixie" Division, took part in various missions in the Pacific theater of operations against the Japanese forces. To accommodate its loss of guardsmen to service in the War, the state legislature enacted the Florida Defense Act in 1941, creating the Florida Defense Force. This was a purely volunteer, civilian militia, and was disbanded in 1946.<sup>31</sup> The Florida National Guard has served in almost every war and foreign conflict since the Second World War, in addition to aiding the State of Florida during times of domestic emergency, such as dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes. Today, the Guard is a "highly trained force" over 15,000 soldiers strong.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Robert Hawk, "The Spanish-American War and After 1898 - 1903," Florida National Guard Heritage Center, 2004, <<http://www.floridaguard.net/history/read.asp?did=1311>> (September 29, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Florida Master Site File, "Old West Palm Beach National Guard Armory."

<sup>31</sup> Robert Hawk, "Florida's National and State Guard: The Second World War," Florida National Guard Heritage Center, <<http://www.v.floridaguard.net/history/read.asp?did=1319>> (September 29, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Florida Master Site File, "Old West Palm Beach National Guard Armory."

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**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The National Guard came to Palmetto in 1923, due mainly to the efforts of two men: Fred Condo, a guardsman who had moved from Lake City and wanted to continue with the Guard; and John Owen, a former soldier who agreed to organize a local company. After writing several letters of inquiry, Owen received a call from the Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. J. Clifford Foster, who many consider the person most responsible for establishing the National Guard in Florida. Foster said that one opening for a new National Guard Company existed in the state. He would send application papers, but advised Owen that seven towns were applying. As it turned out, Palmetto got Company I of the 154<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and John Owen was commissioned as a second lieutenant and Fred Condo was appointed sergeant in what was the first National Guard company in Manatee County.<sup>33</sup>

Capt. Caius A. Rowlett was the first commander for Company I of the 154<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which became the 124<sup>th</sup> Infantry the next year, and the unit saw its first state duty in 1927 during a riot in Tampa by a mob attempting to lynch Benjamin Levins, a suspect jailed for the “ax-murder” of a family of five. By 1929, Fred Condo had been commissioned and was appointed company commander, in time for the unit’s next active state service, the 1929 and 1930 Mediterranean Fruit Fly Campaign.<sup>34</sup> During the next decade, the company served under three more commanders and won several trophies for its performance as a unit and its rifle team’s success in competition.<sup>35</sup>

When Company I was formed in Palmetto in 1923, there was no armory in town, so a meeting place had to be found. The city council was not interested in helping with the effort, until it was pointed out that the National Guard company would bring an annual payroll of \$10,000 - \$12,000 to the city. The second floor of the City Hall building was deemed large enough to accommodate the unit for drills and other training activities, so it became the first home in Palmetto for Company I. The unit operated there for 14 years, though it was not the most desirable permanent arrangement for the Guard or the city.<sup>36</sup> The onset of the Great Depression was most likely one reason for the longevity of Company I’s stay in the city hall location, but that also aided in getting a dedicated “home” for the unit.

The WPA had nine administrative districts in Florida, with Manatee County and seven other counties in District 7, headquartered in Tampa.<sup>37</sup> In Palmetto, the WPA was responsible for building a new high school gymnasium and a state farmers’ market in addition to the National Guard armory, which the last of the three still standing.<sup>38</sup> After the WPA built a new gym for Palmetto High School in 1936, a request was submitted for an armory, with the local National Guard unit, city council, Kiwanis Club, and Congressman J. Hardin Peterson working with the WPA district director to get approval from the state headquarters to proceed with the project, which was granted in August of 1936.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Abel, *100 Years in Palmetto: 1868-1968*, 116-117.

<sup>34</sup> UF Digital Collection; “Florida State Troops/National Guard historical summaries by county.”

<sup>35</sup> *The Bradenton Herald* (Bradenton, FL) Page 7d. April 24, 1955. “National Guard Units in County Long in Service.”

<sup>36</sup> Abel, *100 Years in Palmetto: 1868-1968*, 117.

<sup>37</sup> USF Digital Collections. “Florida WPA Administration Districts, October 20, 1935.” <http://guides.lib.usf.edu>

<sup>38</sup> Editorial, *The Palmetto News* (Palmetto, FL), November 4, 1937.

<sup>39</sup> *The Palmetto News*. August 13, 1936. p 1. “Armory Project is Approved.”



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Construction began on the Palmetto Armory in the fall and the \$30,000 project was completed the following August. It was dedicated in October of 1937 with a community reception and open house, American Legion flag presentation, dedication ceremony, and a ball that lasted until midnight. So big was the occasion that the local paper devoted much of an entire edition to the dedication day, details about the armory itself, and the histories of Company I and the Florida National Guard.<sup>40</sup> It was noted then that Company I's chaplain, Maj. J.T. Jenner, was the first Florida chaplain to ship out to France with the American expeditionary forces in World War I (Photos #36-37).<sup>41</sup>

The WPA based its armory construction program on the idea that the buildings would be civilian facilities as much as military facilities, to be used about 75% of the time for community activities.<sup>42</sup> The interior of the Palmetto National Guard Armory reflects this. The two-story brick building had offices, a supply room, rooms for meetings & classes, a kitchen, restrooms, and showers. The multi-purpose second floor was a venue for dances, concerts, sports, and other activities and it had a small bandstand, basketball goals, and seating along the walls.<sup>43</sup> During its 25 years with the National Guard, the building fulfilled a vital civic need. It was used for many community social events and supported important civic functions when needed, in addition to military use. Palmetto had no civic center, so the armory's availability for public use, along with having the well-respected Company I in the community, were a double blessing. A short time after the armory was dedicated, the American Legion began sponsoring a series of Friday night dances upstairs, "... catering to the junior dancing set."<sup>44</sup> Several fundraiser benefit dances were also advertised in local papers and townspeople who lived in Palmetto years ago also speak of taking dance lessons upstairs in the armory. With Palmetto High School less than a block away, the girls' physical education classes and sports teams used the upstairs court and downstairs locker rooms and showers for several years.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, high school basketball games and tournaments were held in the armory from time-to-time.<sup>46</sup>

Company I enjoyed only three years in its new armory when it was activated for federal service in November of 1940, and sent to Camp Blanding, Florida. After stints at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and other locations in the United States, the unit eventually was shipped out with the 31<sup>st</sup> Division for combat duty overseas and was deactivated in December of 1945, following the end of World War II.<sup>47</sup> From 1940 until 1947, Palmetto had no local National Guard company, though there was a Florida Defense Force (later known as Florida State Guard) unit, made up of volunteers who received uniforms, equipment, and weapons but no pay. The force helped manage and maintain the armory during the National Guard's absence, in addition to conducting its own training and drills. Though the goal was to prepare for a military defense of the state, this force was called to active state duty seven times during and immediately after the war to protect prisoners from mobs and to alleviate the distress and suffering caused by hurricanes.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The Palmetto News. October 21, 1937. pp 1-8. Various Articles and Editorial.

<sup>41</sup> The Palmetto News. October 21, 1937. p 7. "Maj. JT Jenner was First Florida Chaplain to Go Overseas."

<sup>42</sup> Fogelson, America's Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order, 211.

<sup>43</sup> The Palmetto News. October 21, 1937. p1. "Official Opening of Palmetto's New Armory Saturday."

<sup>44</sup> The Palmetto News. November 4, 1937. p2. "American Legion to Sponsor Dances."

<sup>45</sup> Alice Myers, Palmetto Historical Commission. Letter to FL Division of Historical Resources. March 11, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> The Palmetto News. January 27, 1938. p 2. "Split Games at Palmetto Armory on Tuesday Night."

<sup>47</sup> UF Digital Collection; "Florida State Troops/National Guard historical summaries by county."

<sup>48</sup> Hawk, "Florida's National and State Guard: The Second World War"

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When the United States entered World War II, more than 600 men from Manatee County, including many from Palmetto, were already serving in uniform. The local National Guard unit was mobilized in November of 1940, sent to Camp Blanding, Florida, and eventually reassigned and shipped with its division overseas for combat in the Pacific theater of operations during the war. Manatee County had an Army Air Corps bomb group that billeted and trained B-17 crews at the present Sarasota Bradenton Airport, a small Army camp in Bradenton by the ball field, a few smaller sites nearby, and a popular recreation center downtown to serve troops in the area. With agriculture still the main industry north of the river and many local young men away in the service, at least 600 workers were brought from the Bahamas to help in the groves, packinghouses, and farms.<sup>49</sup>

During World War II, there was a flurry of activity centered on emergency defense measures, including maneuvers within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>50</sup> Palmetto devoted a good deal of effort to planning and preparing for potential attacks originating at sea, though that decreased as the war progressed and threats appeared less likely. A volunteer Florida Defense Force was established to partially replace the National Guard units. The Florida Defense Force unit maintained the armory and used it as its base of operations. The Florida Defense Force, which was renamed the Florida State Guard in 1942, was created in response to the federalization of the Florida National Guard in order to assure adequate protection during times of domestic emergencies in Florida. Regular meetings and training for Company 5 of the local civilian defense corps, as well as drills and meetings of the area's air raid wardens, were also held in the armory.<sup>51</sup>

The community had numerous "home front" activities going on, and the school continued having physical education classes and sporting events on the second floor. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Red Cross held its first benefit dance in the armory and first aid and other classes were reported to have been conducted there during the war.<sup>52</sup> The Manatee County Defense Canning Kitchen, established under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture and the county agricultural extension service, was an important activity that utilized the armory's kitchen facilities five days a week. Members of the Woman's Club, girls from Palmetto High School, and numerous other volunteers from around the county, spent time preparing and canning fruits and vegetables that were brought in by local farmers. Canning was done on a share basis, with some of the food donated to local institutions. By January of 1943, more than 7,000 cans were processed in a month.<sup>53</sup> At Christmas, volunteers also prepared fruitcakes to send to Manatee County men in the armed forces.<sup>54</sup>

Due in part to drawing the armed forces down to a peacetime level after World War II, the Florida State Guard unit remained in the armory until 1946, when it was announced that a new unit would be formed and assigned to Palmetto. With the formation of Company M 211<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the National Guard was in Palmetto's armory again. The assistant to the adjutant general of the Florida National Guard was so impressed with the way the citizens of Palmetto embraced and supported the new unit that he requested

<sup>49</sup> *The Palmetto News*. November 18, 1943. p 1, "Bahamas Labor Camp Being Established in Palmetto."

<sup>50</sup> LTC G. Warren Johnson, "World War II Comes to Manatee County," Circa 1970. Essay.

<sup>51</sup> *The Palmetto News*. April 23, 1942. p 4. "Local Defense News."

<sup>52</sup> *The Palmetto News*. December 25, 1941. p.6. "Benefit Dance Palmetto Armory December 30."

<sup>53</sup> *The Palmetto News*. February 4, 1943. p1. "Palmetto Defense Kitchen Doing Fine Work."

<sup>54</sup> Myers, Letter to FL Division of Historical Resources.

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forty copies of the Palmetto News to send to other towns and cities, as a way of promoting similar local support for the Guard throughout the state.<sup>55</sup> By 1950, Company M had become a tank unit,<sup>56</sup> which led to concerns that more space was needed to accommodate armored vehicles.

The 1950s brought the biggest growth spurt that Manatee County had ever seen, as the number of residents almost doubled during the decade.<sup>57</sup> Servicemen who had trained in the area returned to settle and brought their families. The tourist trade rebounded after being affected by war restrictions, and the development of air conditioning did its part to contribute to this resurgence.<sup>58</sup> Veterans not only went to work in civilian jobs, but they also became active in the community through civic organizations and local politics. They sponsored entertainment in such venues as the trailer park auditorium, school auditorium, Woman's Club, and the armory.<sup>59</sup> The influx of people led to a boom in residential and commercial construction. This growth was aided in part by infrastructure projects such as the DeSoto Bridge on the Manatee River and the Sunshine Skyway spanning Tampa Bay.<sup>60</sup> The agricultural center in Palmetto included the University of Florida extension service for Manatee County and the county fair venue. The effort to build an area hospital gained traction after the war ended, resulting in the construction of the Manatee Veterans Memorial Hospital in Bradenton, which opened in 1953. The completion of the DeSoto Bridge a few years later provided a direct link to the hospital from Palmetto. Loan opportunities for businesses and new residents wanting to build in the community increased with the opening of the Palmetto Savings and Loan Association.<sup>61</sup> For about a decade, students from Palmetto went to Bradenton for high school, so the opening of Palmetto High School in 1957, on land opposite the agriculture center on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, was welcomed news. With segregation still practiced in Florida, African American students attended Lincoln Memorial High School and it would be almost another decade before all of Palmetto's high school students were all together on the same campus.

In those early post-war years, a building boom was underway, the area was growing, and entertainment and recreational activities appeared to be on the rise, as well.<sup>62</sup> The VFW also announced that it would begin sponsoring professional wrestling upstairs in the armory on Thursday nights,<sup>63</sup> and occasional dances were advertised regularly. What is arguably the biggest community use of the armory came in 1954, when the Jaycees booked the "Bobby Lord radio and television show, talent search and dance"<sup>64</sup> on Saturday nights, for a run that lasted about one year. Starting with his own television show while a freshman at the University of Tampa, Bobby Lord went on to record "rockabilly" and country chart records, perform on ABC's "Ozark Jubilee" and the "Grand Ole Opry" for years. He eventually had his own nationally syndicated television show that reached 40 markets in the United States and 34 countries around the world. After a long run in Palmetto, the Jaycees and the Bobby Lord band decided

<sup>55</sup> The Palmetto News. April 3, 1947. p 1. "Palmetto National Guard Company Mustered into Service Last Night."

<sup>56</sup> UF Digital Collection; "Florida State Troops/National Guard historical summaries by county."

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Reports for Manatee County. Years 1920 - 2000.

<sup>58</sup> Florida Area Guide, [www.Thefloridaauthority.com/florida\\_area\\_guide\\_stp\\_cl.asp](http://www.Thefloridaauthority.com/florida_area_guide_stp_cl.asp).

<sup>59</sup> The Palmetto News. 1950-1960.

<sup>60</sup> The Palmetto News. 1954 - 1957.

<sup>61</sup> Abel, 100 Years in Palmetto: 1868-1968, 120.

<sup>62</sup> The Palmetto News. June 1946. "Social & Personal."

<sup>63</sup> The Palmetto News. January 1946. Posted advertisements.

<sup>64</sup> The Palmetto News November 1954. "Jaycees Move Lord Show to National Guard Armory."

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to end the Saturday night productions in 1955, at about the same time that Bobby Lord began his stint on the "Ozark Jubilee."<sup>65</sup>

Around the time the Bobby Lord show ended its run in Palmetto, serious discussions were taking place about the need for more space by the National Guard to accommodate the tank company then assigned to the armory, and plans were underway for building a larger armory on a more spacious plot of land. As was the case with getting the original armory for Palmetto, it took the efforts of several entities to get to the start of actual construction, but they paid off, and groundbreaking for a new armory became a reality. In the meantime, at some point between the initial discussions about the need for a new armory and its construction, Palmetto's National Guard unit became Company B 124<sup>th</sup> Infantry and no longer used tanks. The company was the only unit with ties to the old and new armories in the city.<sup>66</sup>

For the remainder of the decade and through 1962, the Guard unit's last year in the original armory, the local papers appear to reflect fewer community events being held in the facility. The latter part of the fifties is also when the new campus for Palmetto High School was constructed, a municipal auditorium in Bradenton was opened, and other potential venues were built. As a result, the armory's upstairs hall was in less demand for social events. However, it continued to be used for basketball and other sports and recreational activities on a reduced scale.

A land swap agreement between the City of Palmetto and VFW Post 2488 allowed the new armory to be located partially on land owned by the veterans' group, and when the old armory became vacant in 1963, the VFW gained ownership of it for use as its clubhouse. Almost 50 years later, the brick parapeted gable walls and their metal coping remain as the dominant features in the building's silhouette and it retains many of the character-defining features of a WPA-designed small armory. In Palmetto, the WPA was responsible for building the high school gymnasium, a state farmers' market, and the National Guard Armory. The Palmetto Armory is the last of the three standing. Though the National Guard moved out long ago, Palmetto's original armory still has its connection to the military, through the veterans in Post 2488, some of whom served in the 'Guard when the armory was active.

<sup>65</sup> The Palmetto News. March 3, 1955. p 3. "Bobby Lord Show Closes After Long Palmetto Run."

<sup>66</sup> The Bradenton Herald. May 19, 1963. pp. 6-7b. "New Palmetto Armory 'Best in the State'"

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Begin at a point on the southern line of the southwest quarter of section 14, which is 30 feet west of the southeast corner of said southwest quarter of section 14, go northerly along a line which is parallel to and 30 feet west of the east line of said southwest quarter, said line being the west lane of 8th Avenue in Palmetto, Florida as it exists today a distance of 900 feet more or less to a point which is the intersection of said west lane of 8th Avenue & north lane of 6th Street as it exists today, go westerly along said north lane of 6th Street 190.2 feet for a point of beginning, continue westerly along said north lane of 6th Street 188 feet to the east side of 9th Avenue as it exists today, go northerly along the east side of said 9th Avenue 136 feet to the south lane of 6th Street Drive as it exists today, go easterly along said south lane of 6th Street Drive 188 feet to a point, go southerly 136 ft to a point of beginning less east 88 feet used by the city for a street & parking lot p-34-s pi#27422.0000/5.

**Boundary Justification**

The above described boundaries encompasses the property historically associated with the Palmetto Armory.



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**PHOTOGRAPHIC LIST**

1. Palmetto Armory, 810 Sixth Street West
2. Palmetto, Manatee County, Florida
3. Robert Marble
4. December 2011
5. 715 4<sup>th</sup> Street West, Palmetto, Florida 34221
6. View of main (south) facade and east elevation, facing northwest.
7. Photo 1 of 37

**Numbers 1-5 are the same for the following photographs, except where noted:**

4. January 2012
6. View of main (south) facade main entrance ramp, facing west.
7. Photo 2 of 37
3. Carlos Ugarte
4. May 2012
6. View of east elevation, facing west.
7. Photo 3 of 37
4. January 2012
6. View of kitchen exhaust ductwork on east elevation, facing west.
7. Photo 4 of 37
4. January 2012
6. View of rear (north) elevation and fire escape, with east elevation, facing southwest.
7. Photo 5 of 37
6. View of west elevation with portion of north elevation, facing southeast.
7. Photo 6 of 37
4. January 2012
6. View of main (south) entrance taken from former lobby north wall, facing south.
7. Photo 7 of 37
4. January 2012
6. View of east side stairs at south entrance, facing southeast.
7. Photo 8 of 37
4. January 2012
6. View of former west stairs area looking toward former orderly room, facing west.
7. Photo 9 of 37

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Section number Photos Page 2

4. January 2012

6. View from south entrance, facing north. Open area was originally lobby.

7. Photo 10 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of original east lobby wall with entrance to office area, facing east.

7. Photo 11 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of original northeast corner of lobby and former entrance to restroom, facing northeast.

7. Photo 12 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of original southeast corner of lobby and entrance to office area, facing southeast.

7. Photo 13 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View from inside former orderly room looking toward former commander's office, facing north.

7. Photo 14 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View from inside former orderly room looking toward lobby, facing southeast.

7. Photo 15 of 37

3. Carlos Ugarte

4. May 2012

6. View of former supply room, facing northwest.

7. Photo 16 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of former supply room, facing north.

7. Photo 17 of 37

4. July 2012

6. View of main corridor from the rear (north) entrance, facing south.

7. Photo 18 of 37

6. View of main corridor, facing north.

7. Photo 19 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of rear (north) entrance, as seen from main corridor, facing north.

7. Photo 20 of 37

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Section number Photos Page 3

6. View of original north restroom with some fixture changes, facing east.

7. Photo 21 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of former north end shower room, facing north.

7. Photo 22 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of hall entrance for auxiliary office, facing north.

7. Photo 23 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View from main corridor looking toward dining/recreation room, facing east northeast.

7. Photo 24 of 37

6. View of south wall of dining/recreation room with kitchen door, facing east.

7. Photo 25 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of former north wall of kitchen, facing east.

7. Photo 26 of 37

6. View of east side stairs at south entrance, facing east.

7. Photo 27 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of second floor court from northeast corner, facing southwest.

7. Photo 28 of 37

3. Carlos Ugarte

4. May 2012

6. View of south end of court, with incomplete dressing room at left, facing south.

7. Photo 29 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of south end basketball goal, facing east.

7. Photo 30 of 37

3. Jeff Burton

4. October 2010

6. View of second floor court, facing north.

7. Photo 31 of 37

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Section number Photos Page 4

6. Close-up view of truss, column encasement and tongue and groove ceiling, facing south.

7. Photo 32 of 37

6. View of west side bleachers and column and truss joint encasements, facing south.

7. Photo 33 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of original second floor bandstand, facing northwest.

7. Photo 34 of 37

4. January 2012

6. View of second floor window showing protective block encasement on outside, facing .

7. Photo 35 of 37

3. Hawkins

4. October 1937

6. Historic view of main (south) facade, with Co I 124 Infantry, facing north.

7. Photo 36 of 37

3. Photographer unknown

4. ca. 1937

6. Historic view of south and west elevations from southwest, facing northeast.

7. Photo 37 of 37



Google earth

feet  
meters



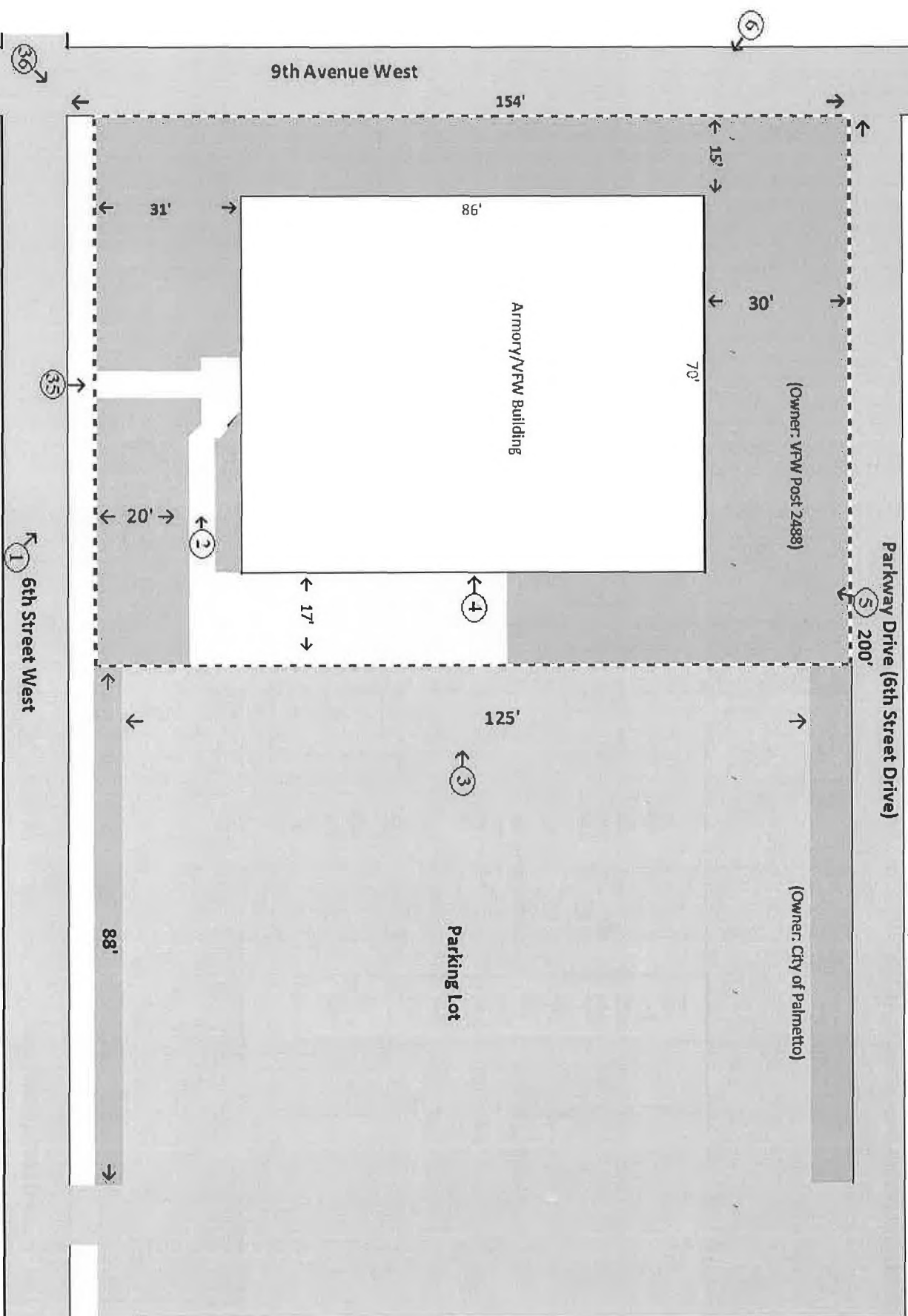
Palmetto Armory

17 R 344538.00 m E 3044648.00 m N

27.516637 -82.574216

Palmetto Armory  
 Palmetto, Manatee County, FL  
 Site Plan

North



Note: Measurements based on Google Earth Ruler.

Drawing is approximate scale, not exact.

← (30) Photos  
 ----- Historic Boundary

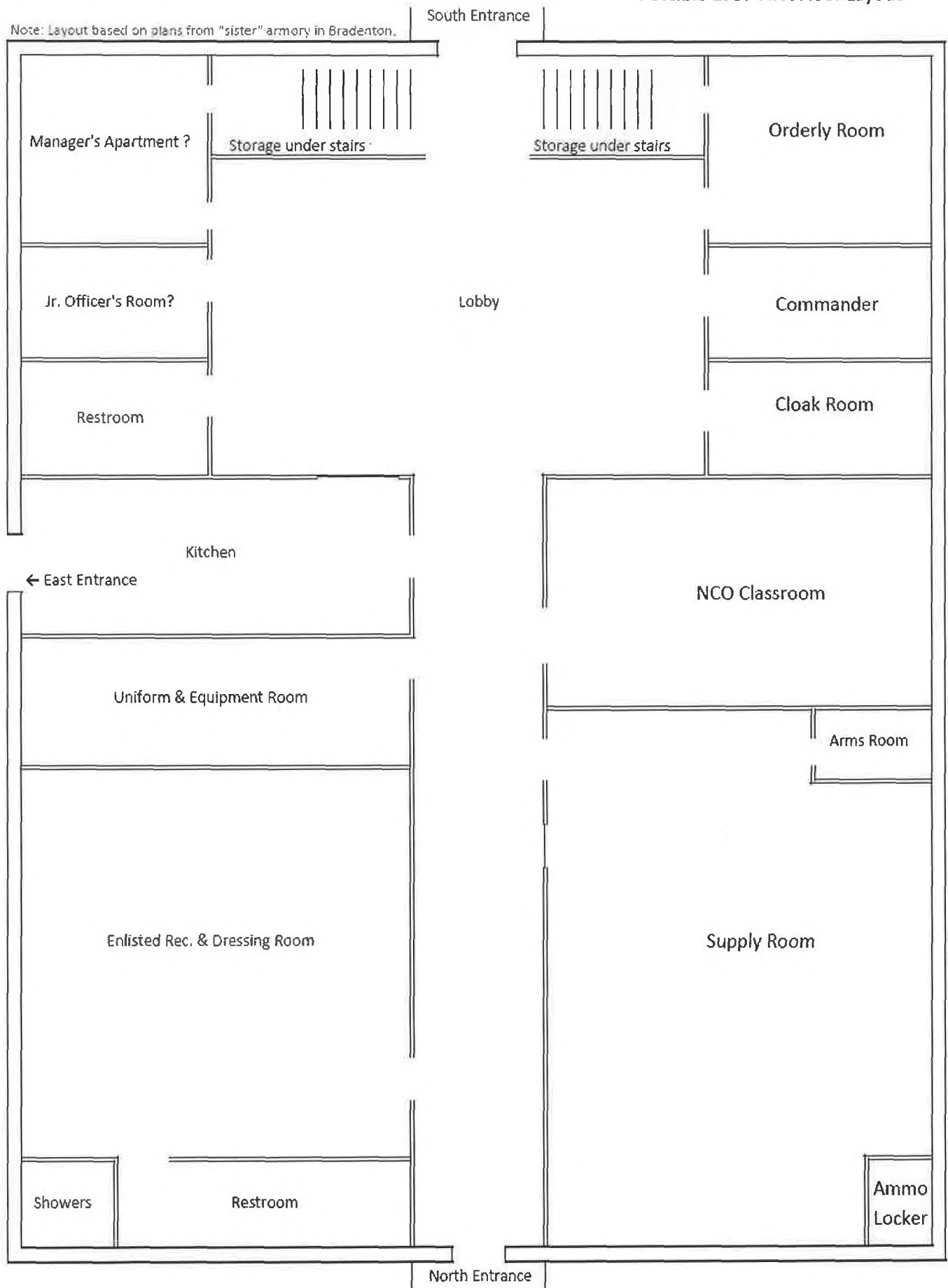
NORTH ↓

Scale: 1" = 10'

Palmetto Armory  
Palmetto, Manatee County, FL

Possible 1937 First Floor Layout

Note: Layout based on plans from "sister" armory in Bradenton.

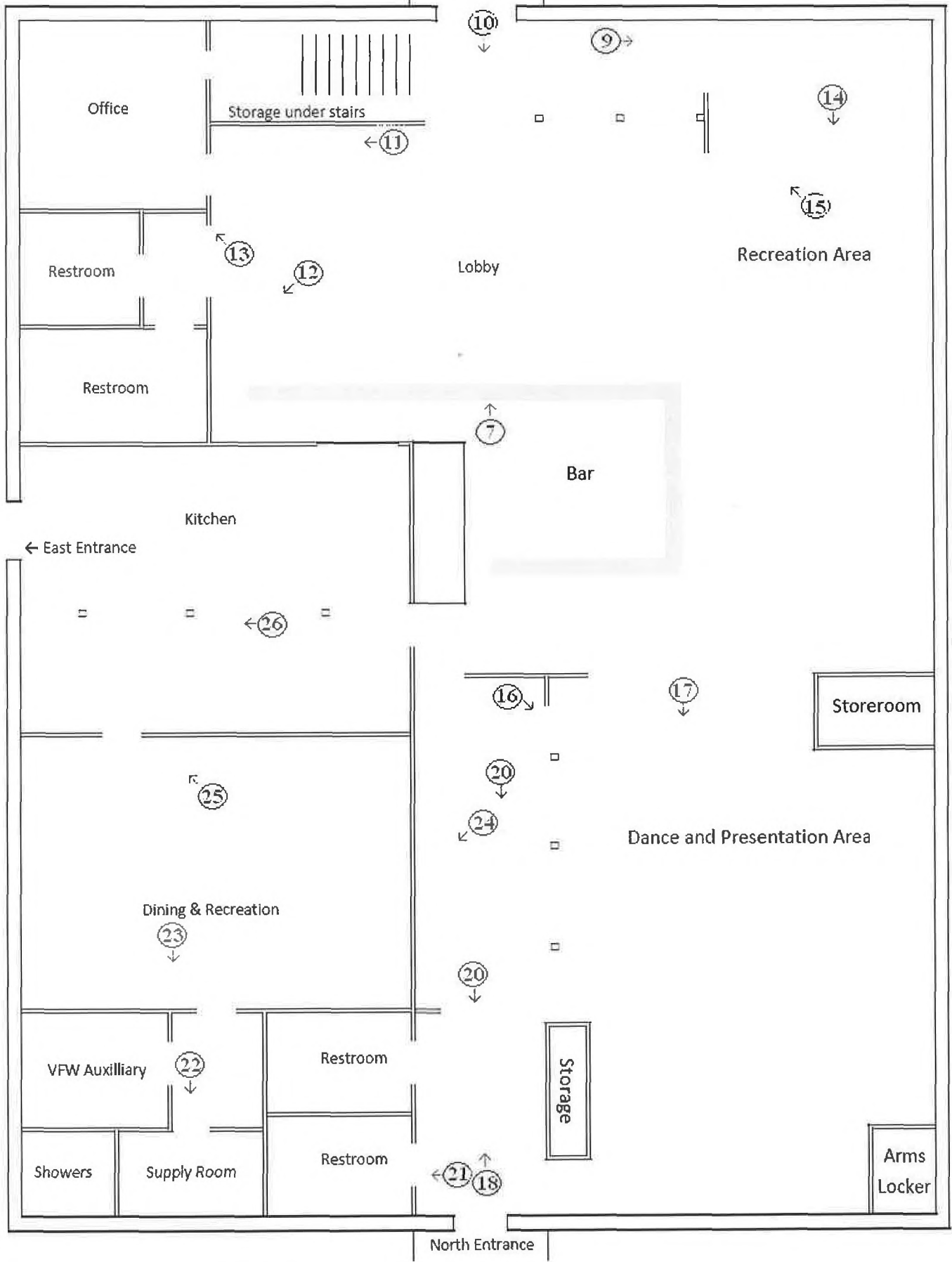


Palmetto Armory  
Palmetto, Manatee County, FL

Current First Floor Layout

NORTH ↓  
Scale: 1" = 10'

← (30) Photos



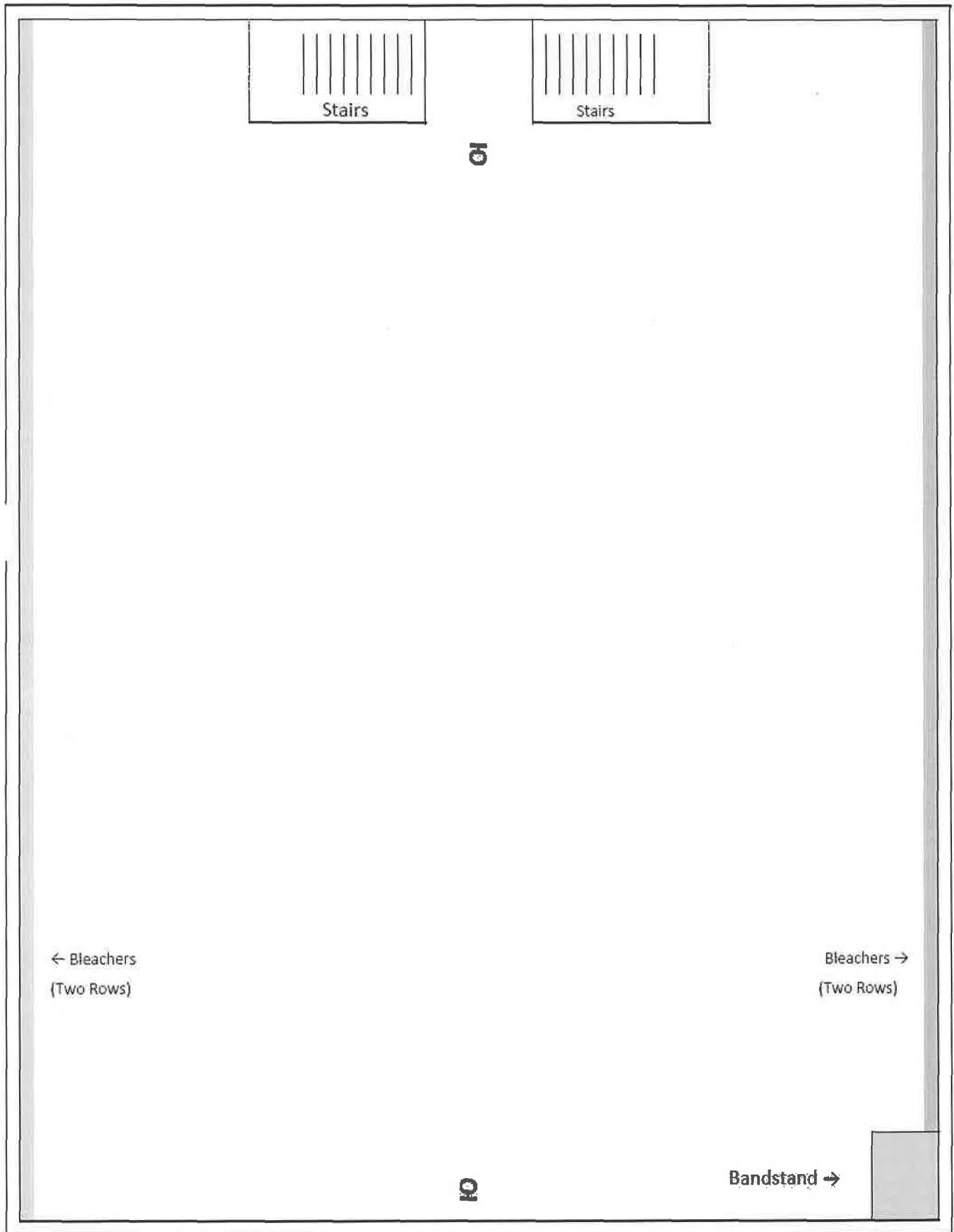


Palmetto Armory  
Palmetto, Manatee County, FL  
1937 2nd Floor Layout

NORTH ↓

Scale: 1" = 10'

South ↑



North ↓

NORTH ↓

Palmetto Armory  
Palmetto, Manatee County, FL  
Current Second Floor Layout

← (30)  
Photos  
Scale: 1" = 10'

