



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 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

other names/site number LE240

2. Location

street & number 469 St. Francis Street N/A not for publication

city or town Tallahassee N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Leon code _____ zip code 32301

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.)

Alisse Gotane, DSHPO 6/8/18
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Bureau of Historic Preservation, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State
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) _____

James Salter
Signature of the Keeper

8-1-2018
Date of Action

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	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	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)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

AGRICULTURE: warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- 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)

Agriculture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1907-circa 1930

Significant Dates

1907

1908

Significant Person

Wahnish, Alfred

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dyer, E.B., builder

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	6	7	6	0	4	2	9	3	3	7	0	0	1	6
	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 Andrew Waber, Historic Preservationist; Shayrn Thompson

organization Florida Division of Historical Resources date March 2018

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6430

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32399

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 Richard R. Barnett; Cigar Factory LLC

street & number 1901 Miller Landing Road telephone _____

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32312

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 REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 7 Page 1 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Summary

The Wahnish Cigar Factory and Warehouse are two brick buildings located in the All Saints neighborhood of Tallahassee, Florida. Both buildings have flat roofs and rest on a concrete slab foundation. The original poured concrete flooring in both buildings remains and is still visible in parts of the factory and in most of the warehouse. Fenestration consists primarily of one-light fixed arched and rectangular windows. The factory building exterior features a stepped roof, a one-story historic storage room addition, and decorative arched lintels over the windows on the north elevation facing St. Francis Street. There are bay door openings on all four elevations. In the two-story factory, the first floor mostly features a large open space on the west end. On the east side, a kitchen, bathrooms, freezer, and office spaces have been installed. There is a staircase and elevator installed on the east wall. The second floor of the factory has a remarkably high degree of integrity, still retaining its character-defining open space with original wood tables, wood floors, wood support posts, and wood drying racks. The one-story warehouse, built in 1908, also retains much of its integrity. The warehouse actually is the result of two different expansions, and the remnant of the original exterior wall can still be seen. There is a removable partition wall that bisects the warehouse and an office and bathroom installed, but the character defining open space and bay door openings are all still retained as is the original flooring. The buildings have seen a number of changes over the years, much of it relating to modernization and later usages of the space. There was a third building that was constructed circa 1925-1930, which has since been demolished. Despite this, the buildings retain sufficient integrity to qualify for listing in the National Register.

Setting

The Wahnish Cigar Factory and Warehouse is located in the All Saints neighborhood of Tallahassee, Florida. Located within the Big Bend region, the city of Tallahassee serves as both the state capital of Florida and the county seat of Leon County. It is also the home to two major state universities, Florida State University and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. The cigar factory and warehouse is located at the intersection of South Macomb Street and St. Francis Street. The immediate surroundings are mixed use commercial and residential, with commercial buildings primarily to the south and west and residential buildings primarily to the north and east of the factory. Historically, the All Saints neighborhood was associated with the adjacent railroad and businesses.

Physical Description

Wahnish Tobacco Factory Exterior

The Wahnish Tobacco Factory is a two-story brick building with a flat roof and poured concrete foundations. Fenestration consists primarily of one-light fixed windows (Photos 1-3). The main entrance of this building faces St. Francis Street on the north. Prominent features of this building's exterior include arched lintels over

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the windows on the north, enclosed bay doors on three ends, and a distinctive stepped roofline. The exterior retains a high degree of integrity. On the north end of the building, there is a non-historic wood deck constructed. The south end of the building's exterior is visible from the second story.

Wahnish Tobacco Factory Interior

The first floor of the Wahnish Factory is perhaps the most impacted by post-Wahnish era changes (Photos 4-6). It is still mostly open on the west end, with a kitchen, bar, office space, bathrooms, and office space installed on the east. Drop ceilings have been installed on this floor to allow for HVAC ducts. Partition walls were also installed on the east end for the bathrooms, offices, and kitchen (Photos 7-8). On the east wall of the first floor is a staircase, which was likely installed sometime after the Wahnish era, as a second floor doorway opens right above the staircase (Photo 9). Also along the wall is historic wood shelving likely dating from the Wahnish era and was in some way connected to the tobacco operations (Photo 10).

The second floor of the Wahnish tobacco factory retains a very high degree of integrity (Photos 11-14). Most of this floor is a single open space with brick walls, wood floors and ceilings, and wood posts supporting the ceiling. The exposed wood beams used as drying racks are still visible on this level. The wood tables are mostly in-kind replacements. On the east wall is the elevator, which was installed during the McGowan era and was originally part of a department store in Tallahassee (Photo 15). There is evidence of an opening in the floor near here. Also on this side of the floor is a single bathroom.

Wahnish Warehouse

The warehouse is a single story brick building connected to the south wall of the factory (Photos 16-18). Most of the window and door openings in this building have been either boarded over or infilled but all openings remain very much visible (Photos 19-22). Despite the addition of the partition wall, bathroom, and office, the building retains a high degree of integrity on the interior. It still retains its character-defining open space with exposed wood beams and wood support posts.

Alterations

The Alfred Wahnish Tobacco Warehouse and Cigar Factory previously consisted of three buildings located in the commercial/industrial area that developed in the southern part of Tallahassee during the turn of the 20th century. The earliest building, the factory, was constructed in 1907, followed by the warehouse in 1908. There was a third building adjoining the south wall of the warehouse that was built circa 1925-1930, which has since been demolished. The building in its current configuration reflects its 1908-circa 1925 appearance, during its most significant earlier period during the shade tobacco boom years (Figure 1).

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The tobacco warehouse complex retains its basic architectural integrity. Alterations over the past 83 years have been minimal, even though other businesses have utilized the building at various times since the 1920s. The property was acquired in the late 1940s by the McGowan family of Tallahassee and utilized by them for their business, the McGowan Electric Company. When the McCrory's store in downtown Tallahassee was remodeled, the freight elevator was purchased by the McGowans and installed in the southeast corner of the two-story warehouse. The elevator retains the original pulleys, wheels, brakes, and weights. The building's foundation and original dirt floor can still be seen under the wood elevator cage. At about the same time the elevator was installed, the floor of the one story brick addition, which was dirt, was covered with concrete.

In the 1970s, the two-story warehouse (Building 1) was remodeled for the McGowan's electrical lighting business. The ground floor was converted to the showroom, with the second floor and the adjoining one-story building used for storage (Building 2 and 3). To make the public area more attractive, the interior brick was sandblasted to remove white paint from the walls and the wood supports. The staircase in the eastern part of the room was moved against the eastern wall, and the 6/6 wood framed windows were replaced with metal framed, single-light fixed windows. The actual window openings and spacing were not changed. In addition, two doors were placed in the north wall (originally window spaces) to provide appropriate entry into the building. On the exterior, small concrete arches were placed over the doors to visually tie them with the arches over the second-story windows. No other structural changes have been made, although partitions of wood paneling have been used to create office and storage areas. Sometime after its original usage, the main entrance of the building was reoriented from its west elevation facing to Macomb Street to the north elevation along St. Francis Street. Despite this, the evidence of its original openings are still present along the west elevation.

Although the exterior of the building has been painted, a c.1908-15 photograph shows that rows of dark or glazed brick headers were used to emphasize the bond pattern and give some decorative detail to the facade of the building. In addition, a small diamond-shape of brick lattice work is centered on the building's west elevation. The flat roof is surrounded by a low parapet, with brickwork emphasizing the cornice. The floor of the second story of Building 1 is supported by a series of square posts running down the center of the building from east-west. A small office was situated in the southwest corner of the building, with a stairway to the second floor. This stairway was removed at an unknown time. Another stairway was situated at the eastern end of the building. This stairway was moved against the east wall during the 1970s renovation. At the time it was constructed, the building had a dirt floor.

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Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Summary

The Alfred Wahnish Tobacco Factory and Warehouse is being listed at the local level under Criterion A for Commerce and Agriculture and Criterion B for its association with prominent Tallahassee Jewish businessman Alfred Wahnish. The period of significance extends from 1907 until circa 1930. The factory, built in 1907 by Wahnish, was the largest cigar factory operating in Tallahassee when built. Its associated packing house was the last operating in Tallahassee when it closed in the 1920s. Built during the early 20th century shade tobacco boom which swept through the area, the factory figured prominently in the local aftermath of the Panic of 1907 and the collapse of shade tobacco prices which hit in 1908. Wahnish was a key figure in the creation of Leon County Tobacco Growers' Protective Association, which was formed in 1908 to help local tobacco growers resist the difficult economic conditions. In an effort to fight the situation, local tobacco growers decided to pack and store their tobacco in hopes of holding out for better prices. As the largest tobacco warehouse in town, the Wahnish Tobacco Factory and Warehouse was crucial to this effort. The factory and warehouse is the last remaining building of its kind still standing in Tallahassee. It is also one of the very few extant tobacco buildings in the region constructed during the early 20th century shade tobacco boom, which lasted from circa 1900 to 1908.

Historical Context

Cigar Industry in Florida

Although tobacco cultivation dates back to the earliest periods of English colonization, the overwhelming majority of its consumption was in the form of chewing tobacco, snuff, or pipe tobacco. It was not until after the War of 1812, when British soldiers exposed to Spanish cigars brought them back, that cigar smoking came in vogue first in Britain and then the United States. The Connecticut and Hudson River valleys became important early centers of domestic cigar making by the mid-1800s. Like many industries in the United States, the domestic cigar industry took off after the Civil War, aided by protective tariffs. This in effect doubled the price of most low-end cigars. This, in addition to the political unrest that was taking place in Cuba starting in the 1870s, drove many of the leading cigar makers into Florida. Although most famously associated with the Tampa area, the Cuban cigar makers established themselves throughout the state and were crucial to the establishment of a large industry in Florida. By the 1880s, cigar rolling machines greatly improved the efficiency of the cigar making process and lowered prices considerably. By 1906, there were 331 million cigars made in Florida alone. Throughout most of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, cigars were the most popular form of tobacco in the United States.¹

¹ Robert T. Pando, "Shrouded in Cheesecloth: The Demise of Shade Tobacco in Florida and Georgia" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 2003), p. 7-10.

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Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
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History of Tobacco Industry in Leon County Area

The origins of the tobacco growing industry in Florida begins in neighboring Gadsden County in the 1820s. John Smith, a native of Virginia, was credited with introducing tobacco to the area. Initially growing tobacco as a small secondary crop, the local farmers quickly realized through experimentation that the soils of the area produced a thin tobacco leaf ideal for using as cigar wrappers. The leaves had a distinctive spotted appearance. By the 1830s, wrapper tobacco emerged as a major cash crop in the area as they found customers in the northeast and in Germany. In Gadsden County alone, they reached peak production of 1.2 million pounds of tobacco in 1845, before production settled around 600,000 pounds in the 1850s. The industry collapsed in the state during the Civil War, as the Union blockade cut off access to the markets. The lack of capital during Reconstruction made recovery slow and difficult.²

In an effort to improve the quality of tobacco, Florida growers began experimenting with smuggled Sumatra leaf tobacco seeds in the 1880s. The Sumatra leaf, which was developed by the Dutch on the island of Sumatra, emerged in the 1870s as a popular wrapper leaf for cigars. It had a noticeable advantage over domestic American wrappers such as the Connecticut wrapper, in that the more useable surface area of the Sumatra made it four times more efficient as a wrapper. As a result, the Sumatra was cheaper for cigar manufacturers than the domestic leaves despite tariff duties put in place. Ironically, it is widely believed that the Sumatran leaf was developed from wrapper leaf tobacco smuggled out of the Gadsden County area by the Dutch prior to the Civil War. By the 1890s, local growers perfected a strain known as Florida Sumatra tobacco. They also experimented with different growing techniques as well. Recognizing the thinner more desirable leaves grown under shade in Cuba, farmers began growing tobacco under the shade of cheesecloth which covered entire fields. This method of growing tobacco received widespread attention and acceptance after the US Department of Agriculture conducted experiments in shade tobacco growing in Connecticut in 1900, effectively establishing the practice there.³

The growth of shade tobacco was greatly aided by the expansion of railroads. The rail lines most important to tobacco growing were the Seaboard Air Line, which ran east-west through Tallahassee and Quincy; and the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railway, which ran north-south from Columbus, Georgia, through Havana and Tallahassee, Florida, to Carrabelle on the Gulf coast. Tallahassee's location at a switchover or transfer point between the GF&A and the SAL made it an ideal location for storing and packing locally-grown tobacco.

² Pando, p. 16-18.

³ Pando, p. 11-12, 19-23.

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Tobacco Growing in Leon County

At the turn of the 20th century, many Leon County farmers attempted to diversify crops and end their reliance on cotton, which had become less and less profitable following the Civil War. Some of these farmers experimented with tobacco as a cash crop, and as early as 1884 John Qualey was growing tobacco and had a tobacco factory on his farm south of Tallahassee. The 1886-87 *Florida State Gazetteer* lists E.W. Dee & Co. as the only cigar manufacturer in Tallahassee during that early period.⁴

Inspired by the success of neighboring Gadsden County, farmers in Leon County took to shade tobacco growing as well. Hiring Gadsden County farmers as consultants, the first shade tobacco fields were planted in Leon County in 1898. By 1907, there were 275 acres of shade tobacco planted in Leon County. This variety had positive results and for the next decade and was a primary agricultural product in the county.⁵

Historical Significance – Criterion A Commerce and Agriculture

By the first decade of the 20th century several tobacco and cigar facilities had been established in the county in order to take advantage of the local production. Among the most prominent was the company owned by Alfred Wahnish, who not only grew tobacco on his farm, but had a large tobacco packing and shipping company, as well as various cigar factories. A contemporary newspaper account credited him with the success of the industry in the county, noting that “It is largely due [his] efforts that the culture of tobacco took root in Leon County. He was one of the pioneers in growing and curing it... it has become one of our leading industries.”⁶

Wahnish had a cigar factory in downtown Tallahassee as early as 1902, and in 1904 he was headquartered at the Bloxham Hotel with his factory located on South Adams Street. The El Provedo Cigar Factory, located at 3078 North Monroe Street, was also operating in 1904. It was owned by Julius Hirschberg, a relative of Wahnish. At this time, Hirschberg and Rosenberg had the largest tobacco operation in Leon County – the Lake Jackson Tobacco Growing Company. The company had 1,580 acres of land between Lake Jackson and the Ochlocknee River. In 1907, the year the partners sold their holdings to a New York Company, 80 acres were planted in shade tobacco and a packing house was situated next to the rail line.⁷

As Wahnish’s operations expanded in the purchasing and growing of tobacco, he was forced to take the leaves to Jacksonville to pack and cure as there were no facilities in Tallahassee large enough for the purpose. To solve

⁴ Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida 1860-1967* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1981), p. 52.

⁵ Pando, p. 26; Paisley, p. 52.

⁶ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Mr. A. Wahnish and Tobacco,” March 6, 1908.

⁷ Tallahassee City Commission minutes, vol. 3, p. 560; Steven Wahnish Sommers Interview; Paisley, p. 54.

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this problem, he set about constructing a warehouse and cigar factory near the Seaboard Airline depot in Tallahassee. In April 1907, Wahnish began ground preparations for the factory/warehouse. The brief mention of it in the August 2, 1907, issue of the *Weekly True Democrat*, states a “large two-story brick tobacco warehouse [was] being erected for the accommodation of the Wahnish Tobacco Company.”⁸ By March 1908, there were 150 people employed by the company engaged in work ranging from cigar making to packing, curing, and transporting tobacco.⁹

Shortly after the construction of the warehouse, the tobacco industry encountered difficulties. The Panic of 1907 sent the American economy into a deep recession, which affected many industries, including tobacco. The 1908 growing season ironically was also a good crop year for tobacco, which created an oversupply in a weak economy. Problems in the quality of the previous year’s crop exacerbated the problem. In the rush to capitalize on the high prices, new growers flooded the market with shade tobacco, much of it grown improperly or in poor soil. The tobacco companies could not sell off much of the 1907 crop as the 1908 crop was planted. As a result, local tobacco farmers suffered. By August 1908, the price of tobacco dropped so low that growers could only expect reimbursement of expenses. Refusing to accept this low price, a group of Leon County growers decided to take their tobacco off the market in the hopes of holding out for better prices. To help coordinate this, they formed the Leon County Tobacco Growers’ Protective Association (TGPA). Alfred Wahnish was one of the founders of the association. He offered the use of his facilities to pack their tobacco for \$.15 a pound, giving them the opportunity to sell direct to large buyers without the use of middle men. Most of the members of the association agreed to this arrangement.¹⁰

The desire of local growers to pack their tobacco led to an expansion of tobacco packing facilities in the community. Almost immediately after the incorporation of the TGPA, wagon loads of tobacco arrived at the Wahnish packing house. To make room for the expected increase in business, Wahnish hired E.B. Dyer and Company in August 1908 to complete an addition to his warehouse, which was finished in October.¹¹ When the warehouse was finished, it was according to the local newspaper “among the largest, if not the largest, in the state... he is succeeding with Leon County shaded Sumatra wrapper tobacco.”¹²

The resulting shock to the shade tobacco growing industry in Florida took over three years to return back to profitability. A big reason for the turnaround was the formation of the American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation,

⁸ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Tobacco Removed to Jacksonville,” September 7, 1906; *Weekly True Democrat*, “Local and Personal Items,” April 26, 1907.

⁹ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Mr. A. Wahnish and Tobacco,” March 6, 1908.

¹⁰ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Organization of Tobacco Growers,” August 14, 1908; *The Tobacco World*, “Florida Growers Organize,” vol. 28, no. 34 (August 19, 1908), p. 3; Pando, p. 25.

¹¹ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Leon County Tobacco Packing,” October 16, 1908; *Weekly True Democrat*, [untitled article], August 21, 1908.

¹² *Weekly True Democrat*, “Leon County Tobacco Packing,” October 16, 1908.

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which was created in 1910 with the merger of the 12 largest shade tobacco growers and instantly became the largest shade tobacco grower in the world. Although shade tobacco growing remained a dominant industry in Gadsden County for much of the 20th century, and it had a presence in Leon County for much of this time, the tobacco growing industry in Leon County never returned to its 1907 levels.¹³

By the summer of 1910, three cigar factories were in operation in Tallahassee. “Mr. A. Wahnish put about fifty cigar makers to work yesterday [August 18] at his packing house near the Seaboard depot. This morning as many more... and by the middle of next week he expects to have about one hundred and fifty men at work.” The new venture Wahnish was beginning was called the Tampa Stogie Manufacturing Company, which was to “... confine itself to cheap cigars and use Leon County tobacco as a product.”¹⁴ A little over a year later, it appeared that automation would replace hand labor at the cigar factory. By November 1911, the company made plans to install eleven machines capable of rolling between 5,000 to 7,000 stogies a day, exclusively using Leon County grown tobacco.¹⁵

Operating under the name of A. Wahnish, Sons, & Co., the company soon expanded operations into Tampa, opening a tobacco leaf warehouse there in 1914. At this time, the company began dealing in Havana tobacco and was marketing a combination Havana and domestic cigar under the name of Wasoco Picadura. They opened the warehouse in Tampa to allow for easier access to the Havana leaf tobacco. The large tobacco making operations in the Tampa area were also major customers of shade leaf tobacco used for cigar wrappers. Alfred Wahnish sent his son Sam Wahnish and brother in law Charles Goldsmith to handle the Tampa operations.¹⁶

¹³ Paisley, p. 54; Pando, p. 25-26.

¹⁴ *Daily Democrat*, August 26, 1919.

¹⁵ *Weekly True Democrat*, “Big Cigar Factory to Operate Here,” November 17, 1911.

¹⁶ *United States Tobacco Journal*, “A. Wahnish, Sons & Co. Open New Lead Warehouse in Tampa,” October 31, 1914, p. 15.

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Employees of the Wahnish Cigar Factory, circa 1915.
(source: State Archives of Florida)

During the earliest years the cigar makers in Tallahassee were primarily Cuban. The El Provido Cigar Company alone employed roughly 300 Cubans in its factory. By 1904, most of them left for Tampa, however, and African Americans were then employed in their place as cigar makers in the Leon County factories.¹⁷ Among the most significant African-Americans involved in the industry was Edward A. Pottsdamer, who worked first for Hirschberg then for Wahnish before setting out on his own to form the E.A. Pottsdamer Cigar Company. Alfred Wahnish's son, Sam, recalled that in 1915, when his father's business was known as the Leon Cigar Co., about 35 African Americans were employed as cigar makers. They were trained by Manuel Roffe, a Cuban. At that time, the factory turned out about 10,000 cigars a day. Sam Wahnish stated that the cigars were rolled by hand and that the workers were employed on a "piece work" basis. He stated that his father then owned a large farm (about 2,000 acres) near present-day Paul Russell Road, and had about 50 acres planted in shade tobacco. They had at least two brands of five-cent cigars, the Florida Hiway and Tallahassee Booster¹⁸ A newspaper article in August 1919 noted that Wahnish started up the factory for the season, with 30 hands, and expected to employ 150 workers at the peak operating period. "With Mr. Wahnish is associated this year, his son, Mr. S.A. Wahnish

¹⁷ Sam Wahnish, "Old Times I Remember... In Big Bend," *Tallahassee Democrat*, December 3, 1962.

¹⁸ Sam Wahnish, "Old Times I Remember... In Big Bend."

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who has spent the last two years in Tampa. The young Mr. Wahnish is now manufacturing cigars in a small way but expects soon to enlarge, to add two ten cent lines to his stock, and put salesmen on the road. The Tallahassee Booster, Palm Smoker and Essecco, are his present well-known line of five cent cigars.”¹⁹

By 1922, the tobacco industry in Leon County entered into a period of considerable decline. As a result, Wahnish moved to diversify his business activities. By this time, Wahnish was the largest shade tobacco grower in the county and was running the only remaining packing house in Tallahassee.²⁰ Alfred Wahnish, A.C. Spiller, and George V. Stine incorporated as the Hill City Manufacturing and Machine Company and including “an improved rim for automobile tires which enables a change of tire in a few seconds... and an apparatus for converting pine stumpage into naval stores.” At that time, “eighteen different machines were installed” in the company’s shop.²¹ The Hill City Manufacturing Company evidently did not meet with success because only five years later, in March 1927, Wahnish leased his cigar factory to a bakery concern. At that time, the *Daily Democrat* reported that “the bakery plant is located in the former Wahnish warehouse building near the depot. Practically all of the lower floor of this large building has been used, all of which has been painted white, with concrete floors and other sanitary conditions incorporated.”²²

While this newspaper article seems to indicate that the building was no longer used for tobacco related activities, the 1927-28 Tallahassee City Directory lists three businesses in operation at 469 St. Francis Street – the Leon Baking Company, the Leon Cigar Co., and Henry Wahnish (leaf tobacco).

The A. Wahnish Company Tobacco Warehouse and Cigar Factory is significant because it is the only known building of its kind remaining in Leon County. It is also one of the few standing tobacco buildings in the entire area dating from the brief period of the shade tobacco boom that lasted from circa 1900 until it collapsed in 1908. The factory played a central role during a particularly stressful time for the local industry following the Panic of 1907. The presence of the factory and warehouse was crucial to the establishment of the Leon County Tobacco Growers’ Protective Association, which was formed in an attempt to help protect the interests of growers in the area at this time. The tough lessons learned from the collapse of shade tobacco in 1908 was essential to the standardization and revival of shade tobacco growing primarily in Gadsden County in the 1910s. By the 1920s, the Wahnish Warehouse and Cigar Factory was the last tobacco packing house left in Tallahassee. It is an important link with the county’s agricultural past and with the types of industries that developed during the early 20th century. The tobacco industry was also one of the most visible symbols of the Jewish presence in the city. Some of the families engaged in the tobacco industry became major contributors to

¹⁹ *Daily Democrat* Aug. 26, 1919; Gerald Ensley, “Pottsdamer was Prominent Black Businessman, Landowner,” *Tallahassee Democrat*, April 26, 2015.

²⁰ *Ocala Evening Star*, “Raises Tobacco in Northern Florida,” September 9, 1922.

²¹ *Daily Democrat*, July 5, 1922.

²² *Daily Democrat*, 26 Aug 1919.

**United States Department of the Interior
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the local Jewish community and were among the founders of the first synagogue in the community, Temple Israel in 1937. This inextricable link between the Jewish community and tobacco is a major reason why the Wahnish Tobacco Factory was added to the Florida Jewish Heritage Trail.

Historical Context – 1927-present

In September 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Agency (FERA) took over the Wahnish building to repurpose into a mattress factory. The mattresses produced were distributed amongst the poor. The FERA mattress making program began in the summer of 1934. Nationally, the program came about in conjunction with the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation (FSRC), which was tasked with redistributing surplus supplies, primarily crops, which were withheld by the federal government in an attempt to help regulate and stabilize prices. By this time, many families who were struggling financially had been unable to buy new beds since the stock market crash of 1929. The purpose of the program was also to provide employment to thousands of people, primarily women, and to find an outlet for the surplus cotton that the federal government held. The Tallahassee FERA mattress factory was a collaborative effort. The federal government provided the funds for employment and the raw materials and the city and county governments furnished the building and covered operational expenses such as utilities. With a stated goal of producing 12,000 mattresses, the FERA factory initially employed a small labor force of 23 people, which included the supervisor C.B. Clark. Despite its lofty goals, the FERA mattress making program almost immediately ran into opposition which partially curtailed much of its efforts. The manufacturers of bedding materials feared the competition from the government and the effects it would have on the prices of raw materials. In September 1934, the same month the Tallahassee factory opened, the FERA officially called off the program. Despite its short life, the FERA managed to produce over a million mattresses nationally in 1934.²³

Around the same time as the FERA was using the Wahnish factory, the building was occupied by the National Insecticide Corporation, a maker of insecticides and fungicides which was founded in Tallahassee in 1933. Although the exact dates of its usage of the building is unknown, the company was listed in the 1934 city of Tallahassee directory at this address. By 1937, the company changed its name to the National Products Corporation and relocated to Orlando. By 1938, the building was vacant and remained vacant for several years.²⁴

The property was acquired in the late 1940s by the McGowan family of Tallahassee and utilized by them for their business, the McGowan Electric Company. When McCrory's store in downtown Tallahassee was

²³ *Daily Democrat*, "Mattress Mill to Open Here Friday Morning," September 6, 1934; Janet Poppendieck, *Breadlines Knee Deep in Wheat: Food Assistance in the Great Depression* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), p. 164-165.

²⁴ R.L. Polk and Company, *Polk's Tallahassee City Directory 1934* (Jacksonville, FL: R.L. Polk & Co., 1933), p. 239; United States Department of Agriculture, *Notices of Judgement Under the Insecticide Act* (Washington, DC, November 1938), p. 384-387.

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Section number 8 Page 9 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

remodeled, the freight elevator was purchased by the McGowans and installed in the southeast corner of the two-story warehouse. The elevator retains the original pulleys, wheels, brakes, and weights. The building's foundation and original dirt floor can still be seen under the wood elevator cage. At about the same time the elevator was installed, the floor of the one story brick addition, which was dirt, was covered with concrete.²⁵

In the 1970s, the two-story warehouse (Building 1) was remodeled for the McGowan's electrical lighting business. The ground floor was converted to the showroom, with the second floor used as the primary warehouse and the adjoining one story building (Building 2 and 3) was also used as a warehouse. To make the public area more attractive, the interior brick was sandblasted to remove white paint from the walls and the wood supports. The staircase in the eastern part of the room was moved against the eastern wall, and the 6/6 wood framed windows were replaced with metal framed, single-light fixed windows. The actual window openings and spacing was not changed. In addition, two doors were placed in the north wall (originally window spaces) to provide appropriate entry into the building. On the exterior, small concrete arches were placed over the doors to visually tie them with the arches over the second-story windows. No other structural changes have been made, although partitions of wood paneling have been used to create office and storage areas. In February 1978, the McGowan Lighting Center received a Certificate of Appreciation for Preservation of a Historic Site. The certificate was awarded by the Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board and the Downtown Improvement Authority.

Historical Significance Criterion B – Alfred Wahnish

Alfred Wahnish was pivotal to the development of the shade tobacco industry in Leon County and in the economic recovery of the area following the Civil War and Reconstruction. He also played a crucial role in the recovery efforts from the Panic of 1907 and was an undisputed leader in the tobacco industry in Tallahassee. Wahnish was a Sephardic Jew born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1871. The son of a merchant, Wahnish arrived in Boston in 1884, where he first became involved in the tobacco industry as a traveling cigar salesman. After a brief time in New York and Denver, Wahnish relocated to Jacksonville sometime after 1895, where he opened his first tobacco factory. The factory burned to the ground during the Great Fire of 1901, and Wahnish moved for a brief period into Pensacola, where he was the proprietor of the El Amo Cigar Factory by 1903. By 1904, Wahnish established himself in the city of Tallahassee. The following year, the El Amo Cigar Co. was listed as among the first telephone subscribers in the city of Tallahassee, a good indicator of that the business was up and running at that point.²⁶

²⁵ McGowan interview, 1991.

²⁶ Sam Wahnish Oral History Interview by Stanley Garfein [undated], University of Florida Oral History Project, p. 3-4; J. Wiggins and Company, *J. Wiggins & Co.'s Jacksonville City Directory* (Jacksonville, FL: J. Wiggins and Co., 1901), p. 437; Wiggins Directory Publishing Co., *Wiggins' Pensacola City Directory 1903* (Columbus, OH: Wiggins Directories Publishing Co., 1903), p. 229; C.S. Clough, compiler, *Directory of the City of Tallahassee Florida* (Tallahassee, FL: B. Hillson, 1904), p. 99.

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Wahnish was a close business associate of the Hirschberg and Diamond families, both of whom were also major early investors in shade tobacco growing in Tallahassee. Alfred Wahnish was one of the major players in the emerging boom in shade tobacco that swept through the area from circa 1900 until 1908. The location of the Tallahassee Seaboard Air Line Depot along a major switchover point between the GFA and SAL rail lines made it an ideal location for a cigar factory and packing house. When the Wahnish factory was built, it was the largest of its kind in the city. Alfred Wahnish emerged as a central figure in the aftermath of the Panic of 1907 and the collapse of the shade tobacco industry. He was a cofounder of the Leon County Tobacco Growers' Protective Association and was particularly outspoken in convincing the group to engage in packing and storing the tobacco to await better prices for their crop. Although the industry never returned to its pre-1907 levels in Leon County, shade tobacco growing did have a presence in the county well into the 20th century. Wahnish remained an active proponent of shade tobacco for the rest of his life. He won first prize in the 1918 state fair for his exhibit on shade tobacco growing.²⁷ By the early 1920s, he was the largest shade tobacco grower in Leon County and the Wahnish factory was the last remaining tobacco packing house in Tallahassee.

Wahnish was one of the founders of the Tallahassee Boosters Club, which was a forerunner of the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce. Created to promote the city, the Boosters were instrumental in a number of causes aimed at promoting Tallahassee. Advocates of good roads, the Boosters helped bring the Old Spanish Trail, the Dixie Highway, and the North-South National Bee Line Highway into Tallahassee. They also advocated for federal government spending in the community during World War I. They also pushed to make the city more business friendly, successfully recruiting the Elberta Crate Company to set up in Tallahassee. One of Wahnish's most successful cigar lines, the Tallahassee Booster, took its name from the Boosters Club.²⁸

Alfred Wahnish's business activities while in Tallahassee centered around two locations: his factory and warehouse in downtown Tallahassee and his tobacco plantation, Wahnish Plantation, located near what is now Blairstone and St. Augustine roads in Tallahassee. The Wahnish Plantation was sold by Alfred Wahnish's family after his death and has since been demolished and developed. Hence, the factory and warehouse is the best remaining resource associated with the active professional life of Alfred Wahnish.

²⁷ *Pensacola Journal*, "Leon Exhibits at State Fair," November 22, 1919.

²⁸ Sam Wahnish, "Bit of History," *Tallahassee Democrat*, June 3, 1974; The Automobile Blue Book Publishing Company, *Official Automobile Blue Book 1919* (New York: The Automobile Blue Book Publishing Co., 1919), p. 226.

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Section number 9 Page 1 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

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Section number 9 Page 2 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
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Weekly True Democrat. "Big Cigar Factory to Operate Here," November 17, 1911.

_____. "Leon County Tobacco Packing," October 16, 1908.

_____. "Local and Personal Items," April 26, 1907.

_____. "Mr. A. Wahnish and Tobacco," March 6, 1908.

_____. "Organization of Tobacco Growers," August 14, 1908.

_____. "Tobacco Removed to Jacksonville," September 7, 1906.

_____. Untitled article, August 21, 1908.

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Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses all of parcel number 410180000030 of the Leon County Property Appraiser's Office files.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all of the property historically associated with the Wahnish Tobacco Company operations.

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Section number Photos Page 1 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Name of Property: Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

City of Vicinity: Tallahassee County: Leon State: Florida

Photographer: Erin Vaughn Date Photographed: February and March 2018

Description of Photographs(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera

1. Exterior view of cigar factory north elevation, facing south
4. Interior view of cigar factory first floor, facing northwest
9. View of cigar factory staircase, facing south
11. View of cigar factory second floor, facing west
12. View of cigar factory second floor, facing southwest
13. View of cigar factory second floor, facing west
15. View of cigar factory elevator, facing southeast

Name of Property: Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

City of Vicinity: Tallahassee County: Leon State: Florida

Photographer: Andrew Waber Date Photographed: March 2018

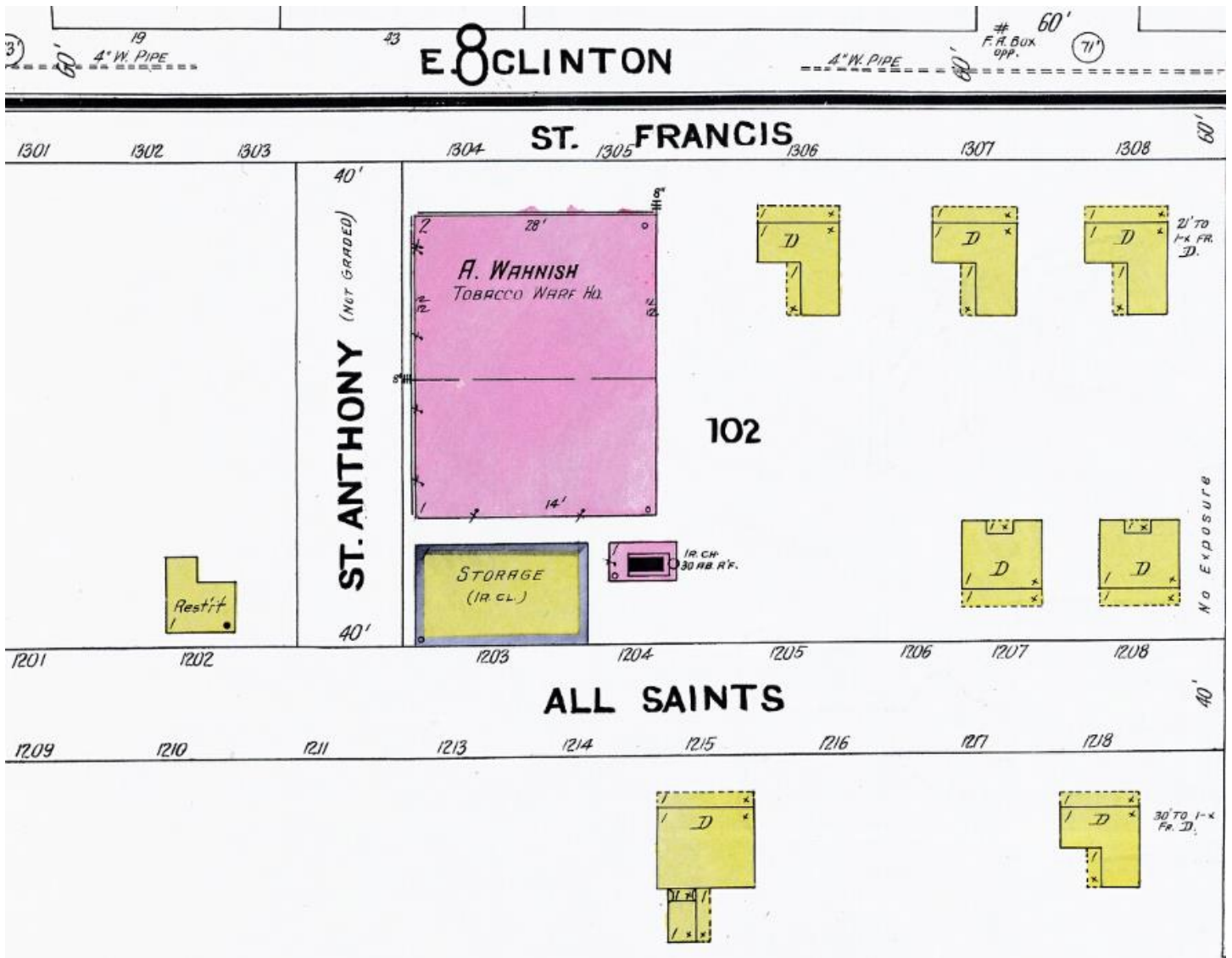
2. View of west elevation, facing northeast
3. View of tobacco factory east elevation, facing west
5. Interior view of cigar factory first floor, facing southwest
6. Interior view of cigar factory first floor, facing southeast
7. View of cigar factory first floor room, facing southwest
8. View of cigar factory first floor utility space, facing south
10. View of cigar factory shelving, facing east
14. Detail view of cigar factory second floor drying racks, facing west
16. View of tobacco warehouse east elevation, facing southwest
17. View of tobacco warehouse west elevation, facing southeast
18. View of tobacco warehouse south elevation, facing north
19. Interior view of tobacco warehouse, facing west
20. Interior view of tobacco warehouse, facing east
21. Interior view of tobacco warehouse office, facing west
22. Interior view of tobacco warehouse west entrance, facing west

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Section number Figures Page 1 Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Figure 1



1909 Sanborn map view showing Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse
Source: Sanborn Map Company, Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida
(New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), p. 1.

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Name of Property: Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

City of Vicinity: Tallahassee County: Leon State: Florida

Photographer: Andrew Waber Date Photographed: March 2018

2. View of west elevation, facing northeast
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16. View of tobacco warehouse east elevation, facing southwest
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19. Interior view of tobacco warehouse, facing west
20. Interior view of tobacco warehouse, facing east
21. Interior view of tobacco warehouse office, facing west
22. Interior view of tobacco warehouse west entrance, facing west

Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

469 Saint Francis St.
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

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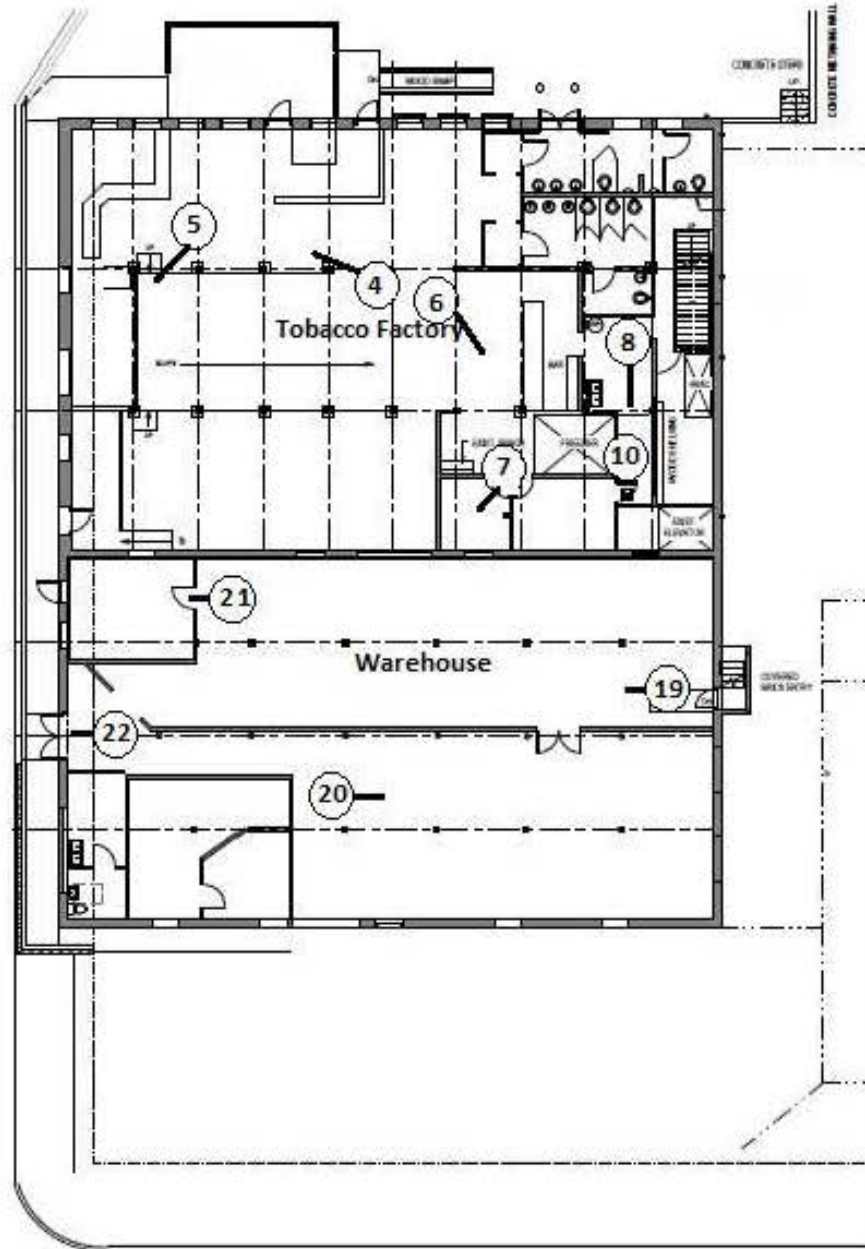
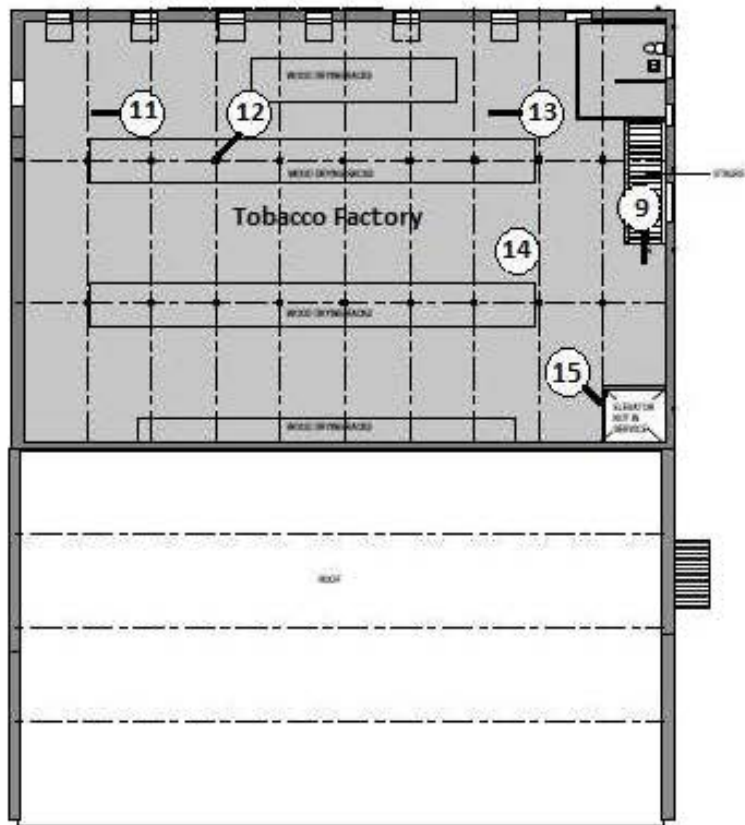
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Date: 3/12/2018

0 40 80 160 Feet

0 10 20 40 Meters

Basemap Source: Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



**BARNETT
FRONCZAK
BARLOWE
& SHULER
ARCHITECTS**

CIGAR FACTORY

Title: _____ Drawn By: _____

Project Code: _____ Checked By: _____

18 MARCH 2018

Scale: _____

EXISTING
CONDITIONS

Legend:



EXISTING FLOOR
PLANS

Title: _____ Date: _____

EX1.1

108 South Union St., Tallahassee, FL 32301
Phone: 904.224.9441 Fax: 904.224.9474

2 SECOND FLOOR EXISTING

EX1.1 1/8" = 1'-0"

1 GROUND FLOOR- EXISTING

EX1.1 1/8" = 1'-0"

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Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

469 Saint Francis St.
Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

16R 760429 3370016



1:1,000

Date: 3/9/2018

0 40 80 160 Feet

0 10 20 40 Meters

Basemap Source: Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community


Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse

469 Saint Francis St.
Tallahassee, Leon County,
Florida 32301

UTM:
16R 760429 3370016

USGS Quad: Tallahassee
Datum: WGS84

Legend

 Wahnish Cigar Fcty. & Tob. Whse.

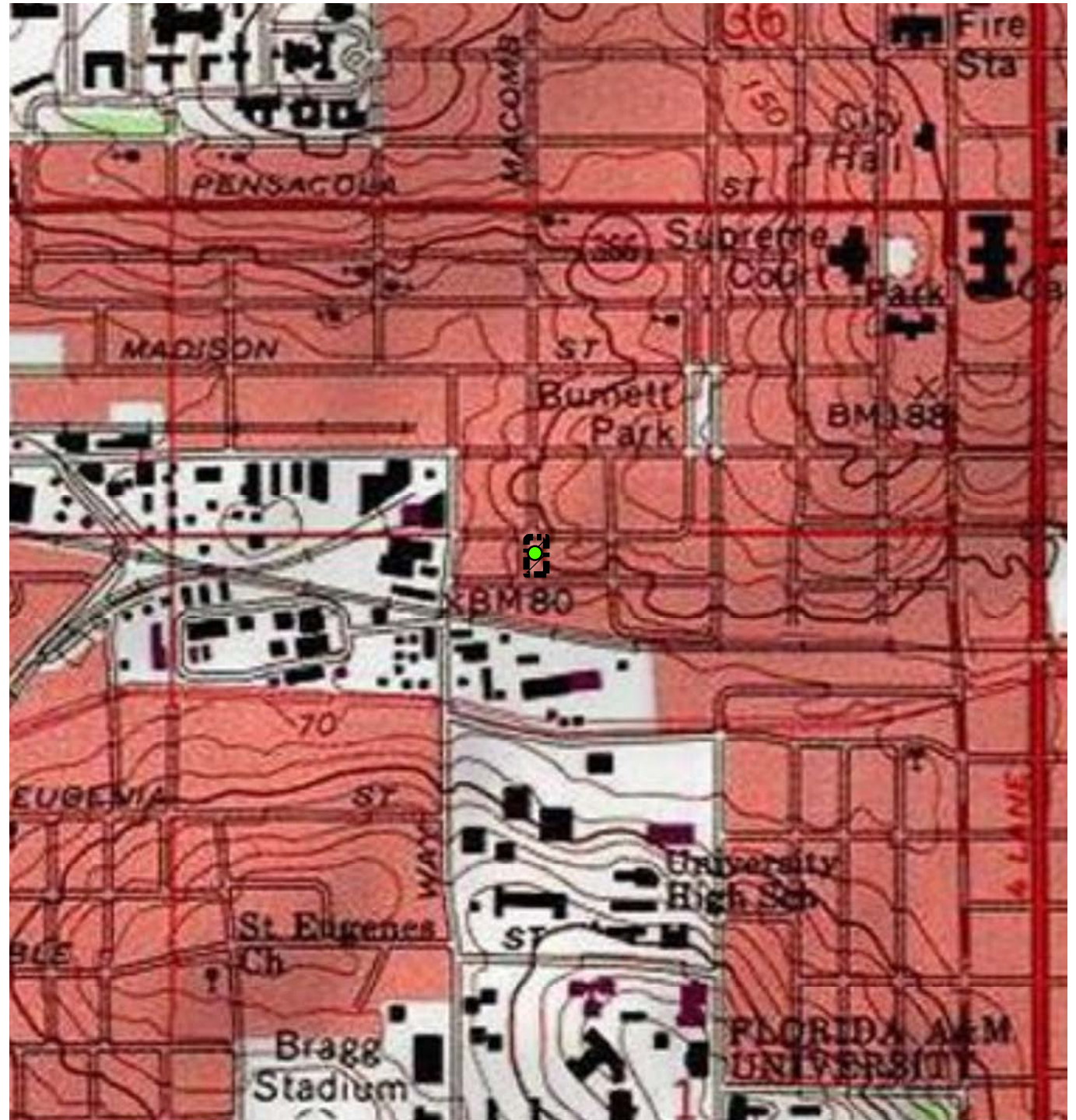
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Meters

Source: Copyright:© 2013 National
Geographic Society, i-cubed







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STYLIZED GRAFFITI TAGS ALONG THE ROOFLINE

ETHOS

GRAFFITI TAGS AND BUBBLES

ETHOS

STYLIZED TAGS

STYLIZED TAGS

ETHOS

STYLIZED TAGS
RAIDERS
KULC
STYLIZED TAGS







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EXIT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/22/2018 Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018 Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018 Date of 45th Day: 8/6/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 8/1/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

**TALLAHASSEE-LEON COUNTY
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD**

423 EAST VIRGINIA STREET
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301
850-488-7334 (tel) 850-488-7333 (fax)

April 16, 2018

Attention: Ruben A. Acosta
Survey and Registration Supervisor
Bureau of Historic Preservation
Division of Historical Resources
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: National Register Nominations
Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse, 469 St. Francis Street, Tallahassee,
Leon County

Dear Mr. Acosta:

I'm writing in regard to the nomination of the Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse, located at 469 St. Francis Street, Tallahassee, FL to the National Register of Historic Places. The Tallahassee-Leon County Architectural Review Board met on April 4, 2018 to review the nomination. The ARB agreed that the Wahnish Cigar Factory does meet criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is acknowledged that the Wahnish Cigar Factory is eligible under criteria A and B.

Thank you for your consideration of the Architectural Review Board's comments, and please let me know if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



Melissa Stoller, Ph.D.
Historic Preservation Officer/
TTHP Executive Director



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RICK SCOTT
Governor

KEN DETZNER
Secretary of State

June 18, 2018

Dr. Julie Ernstein, Deputy Keeper and Chief,
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Ernstein:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Wahnish Cigar Factory and Tobacco Warehouse (FMSF#: 8LE00240), in Leon County**, to the National Register of Historic Places. The related materials (digital images, maps, and site plan) are included.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Ruben A. Acosta
Supervisor, Survey & Registration
Bureau of Historic Preservation

RAA/raa

Enclosures