

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  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.

NATIONAL HISTORY SERVICE

AUG 29 2000

1172

1. Name of Property

historic name VILLA SERENA APARTMENTS

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 7014 Willow Street

N/A  not for publication

city or town Sarasota (Whitfield)

N/A  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Manatee code 081 zip code 34243

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Janet Snyder Matthews 8/21/2000  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida 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 9/29/00  
Signature of the Keeper 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.)

Historical & Architectural Resources of Whitfield Estates

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Mediterranean

Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

\_\_\_\_\_

roof Clay Tile

other Wood

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, National Register, National Historic Landmark, Historic American Buildings Survey, Historic American Engineering Record.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1926-1950

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Hosmer, Clarence

Blder: Douglas Williams Co.

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

#

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	3 4 4 9 2 0	3 0 3 3 2 4 0
	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 Mikki Hartig, Historic Consultant; Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation date July 2000

street & number 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

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 Christopher and Ruth Brown

street & number 7014 Willow Street telephone (941) 355-8599

city or town Sarasota state Florida zip code 34243

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1

VILLA SERENA APARTMENTS  
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

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**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Villa Serena Apartments at 7014 Willow Street in the Manatee County section of Sarasota, Florida, is a three-story Mediterranean Revival style building constructed in 1926. The essentially rectangular plan building is constructed of hollow clay tile surfaced in smooth, painted stucco. The building rests on a poured concrete foundation and features multi-planar roofs, including gable, flat, and shed. The flat roof areas are surfaced with tar and gravel, whereas the gable roof sections are covered by barrel tile. The building's main fenestration includes both historic and non-historic types, including casement, awning, and sliding varieties. Important visual elements of the building include an arched main entrance porte-cochere and an arcaded loggia on the third story of the main facade. Also found on the property is a historic one and two-story garage apartment constructed of the same material as the main building and exhibiting some of the same stylistic features..

**SETTING**

Sarasota is a city with a population of approximately 51,000 located in western Florida about 55 miles south of Tampa. The city is situated on Sarasota Bay, an inlet to the Gulf of Mexico. The Villa Serena Apartments are located about six miles north of downtown Sarasota just west of the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) in the eastern section of the Whitfield Estates neighborhood. The building is found at the northwest corner of Montgomery Avenue and Willow Street, just across the street from the clubhouse of the Sarasota Bay Country Club which, like the Villa Serena Apartments, was built in 1926. The property is situated about five blocks east of Sarasota Bay. The other buildings in the vicinity are mainly single family dwellings that are less than fifty years old.

The Villa Serena site is found directly across the street from the historic Whitfield Estates Country Club, presently known as the Sarasota Bay Country Club (Photo 1), and its adjacent golf course, which was designed by famed golf course architect Donald Ross (1872-1948), who provided the plans for more than 400 courses throughout the United States.<sup>1</sup> Except for the Country Club, the area surrounding the apartments is a single family residential neighborhood. The houses consist mainly of post-World War II Ranch style houses constructed after that part of the Whitfield Estates subdivision that was replatted as Whitfield Country Club Estates in 1957.<sup>2</sup> Seven mid-1920s homes are located in an area just northwest of the Villa Serena Apartments site on Lantana Avenue. Six of these are included the Whitfield Estates Lantana Avenue Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. The Villa Serena is not close enough to the district to have been included as part of its resources.

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<sup>1</sup> "Donald Ross, the Man Who Built Aronimink," <http://www,97junioram.org/club/ross.html>

<sup>2</sup> Plat Book 10, Page 15, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

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VILLA SERENA APARTMENTS  
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

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**DESCRIPTION**

Exterior

The Villa Serena Apartments building is a three-story Mediterranean Revival Style multi-family residential structure. Construction is of stuccoed hollow clay tile walls. The stucco is scored at the corners of the building to resemble stone building blocks. The essentially rectangular plan building rests on a high poured concrete foundation (Photos 2-3). The building has a flat roof surfaced with tar and gravel. It is surrounded by a high, plain parapet, except on the main (east) facade, where the roof of the arcaded third story loggia is covered with clay tile. Two stuccoed belt courses bordering a frieze area separating the second and third stories surround the building and providing a decorative element to the otherwise unadorned wall planes.

At the front of the apartment building is a shell and gravel circular drive that passes through the porte-cochere at the front of the building (Photos 4-6). The area immediately beneath the porte-cochere is paved with concrete. Both ends of the porte-cochere are blocked with large terra-cotta planters; therefore the driveway is not used for vehicle access. The cast stone lions in the green spaces in front of the building are not original to the site. Like the main building, the gable roofed porte-cochere is constructed of hollow clay tile surfaced with smooth stucco. The roof of the porte-cochere is covered with variegated clay tile and is supported by rectangular piers topped by arches. There are three round arches on the east elevation and a single arch at each end of the structure.

The porte-cochere abuts a small, one-story extension of the main building that contains a foyer or sitting room. On the northern side of the apartment building, a paved driveway leads through an archway connecting the main building with the garage apartment to a parking area at the rear of the apartments (Photo 7). A second driveway connects the parking area with Montgomery Avenue. The L-shaped apartment garage is located northwest of the apartment building and is set back farther from Willow Street than the apartment building (Photo 8-10). The site originally featured a one-story garage with seven vehicle bays that was located at the rear of the present parking area next to the extant garage apartment. All but two bays of this structure were demolished c. 1983.

The site contains an abundance of mature plantings. Trees include a towering banyan tree (*ficus benghalensis*) whose existence clearly predates the construction the apartment complex. Also found on the property are a smaller banyan tree and numerous varieties of palm trees. In addition, there are large oak trees, two towering and majestic Cuban laurels, and a variety of citrus trees on the grounds. Other plantings include bamboo, bougainvillea, and a variety of ferns and cacti.

The first and second stories of the main facade are separated into nine bays (Photos 2-3). The third or penthouse level of the building features a seven-bay loggia consisting of round arches supported by short paired columns (Photos 11-12). At either end of the loggia is a small roof terrace or patio that provides access to the two

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MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

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of the third floor apartments. The loggia is covered by a low-pitched hip roof, surfaced in barrel tile. The loggia is reached from the inside of the building by a stairway with a second floor landing and provides the primary access to the two apartments on the penthouse level. The apartments are flanked on the north and south by enclosed former sleeping porches located next to the open roof terraces. Paired, steel, multi-light casement windows, installed c.1932 provide the fenestration for these areas. Shed roofs surfaced with asphalt shingles cover the porches.

Most of the windows in the building are not original. On the main facade (Photos 2-3, 5), independently placed paired, aluminum, single light horizontal sliding windows are found on the first and second levels and pierce the wall at either side of the two entrance doors on the third floor beyond the front wall of the loggia. Independently placed single matching windows are found on each of the two lower stories of the north and south blocks of the building, both on the main facade and the rear elevation. Horizontal, rectangular-shaped, single-light louvered windows have replaced most of the small wood sash windows found on the first two stories of the north and south elevations (Photos 13-14). Except for several windows on the penthouse level, windows on the rear elevation match the contemporary aluminum slider windows that are found on the primary facade. Original decorative wrought iron balconetes are found on the first and second stories of all four elevations. These were accessed by French doors that have been replaced by aluminum slider doors. An original masonry cartouche with a shield motif is centered on the front wall plane of the primary facade at the second level.

The rear facade is relatively unadorned (Photos 15-17). A recessed metal stairwell, covered by a flat wooden roof above the third level of the stairwell, divides the wall plane of the western elevation. Metal fire stairs, which may be original, presently fill the stairwell. These stairs provide a secondary access to the central hall on the first and second floor and to the rear entrances of the two penthouse apartments. South of the stairwell is a masonry chimney that originally served an incinerator.

### **Interior Description**

Except for the division of the original 3,000 square foot penthouse that occupied the entire third floor into two apartments, the building retains its original floor plan. The primary entrance to the building is from the first floor porte-cochere which leads to a central first floor lobby and reception hall (Photo 18). A solid oak stairway with turned balustrades ascends from the lobby (Photos 19-20). The central hall provides access to two secondary halls, one at either side of the stair landing on the first and second floors (Photo 21). Each of these halls provides access to two apartments for a total of four apartments on each floor. The first and second floor apartments contain a living room, small dining room, kitchen, one bedroom, a single bath, and two closets. All of the apartments have oak floors.

On the third floor, where there are now two one-bedroom apartments, each apartment includes an enclosed former sleeping porch. Cedar is used for flooring on each of these porches. Arched doorways separate some rooms

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MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

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within the apartments. (Photos 22-23). An original tiled corner fireplace is found in the living room of the south apartment (Photo 24).

All interior walls and ceilings are roughly textured plaster, although some ceilings have been lowered with acoustic tile. Work is presently underway to restore original ceiling heights in all of the apartments. Paired French doors separate the living room from the dining area in the first and second floor apartments (Photo 22) Most of the bathrooms in the building retain their original tile flooring, Vitrolite wainscoting, medicine chests and cast iron bathtubs. The building also retains some original hammered wrought iron wall sconces (Photo 13).

**Garage Apartment**

Projecting from the first floor of the north elevation of the main building is a stuccoed masonry wall with decorative barrel tile coping along the top and a large arched opening for passage of autos underneath (Photo 7). This wall extension connects the main building with an original garage apartment found northwest of the main multi-family building. The secondary structure has an L-shaped plan and is one and two stories in height. The building is constructed of stuccoed hollow clay tile and has a flat roof. There is one-story terrace deck on the south elevation of the building (Photo 8). The south elevation has an arcaded facade that reflects the appearance of the porte-cochere. The building contains two garage bays on the first floor (Photo 9) and what was originally the caretaker's (now owner's) two bedroom garden apartment on the second floor. Adjacent to the garage apartment on the south elevation was a seven-bay automobile garage (Photos 7, 9-10). In the early or mid 1960s, five of the seven auto bays to the south were demolished. In the 1980s, the remaining two-bay section was connected to the garage apartment and converted into additional living space, and the two remaining bays were converted into living space for the apartment.



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VILLA SERENA APARTMENTS  
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Villa Serena Apartments is significant at the local level under criteria A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture. It was the only multi-family building constructed in Whitfield Estates during the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s. It was designed as a residential hotel to attract prospective buyers of property in the subdivision. The building is a distinctive example of the use of the Mediterranean Revival style in the design of a medium size apartment structure and was intended to be an attractive focal point of the Whitfield Estates development. The building was designed by architect Clarence C. Hosmer, who played a prominent role in the development of the architectural character of Sarasota during the 1920s boom era. Several examples of his work in Sarasota are individually listed in the National Register. Villa Serena contributes to the **Historic and Architectural Resources of Whitfield Estates Subdivision, Manatee County, Florida**, multiple property group under historic context **I. Development of Whitfield Estates, 1925-1926** and is an example of property type **F.1 Residential Buildings**.

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

On August 16, 1926, Whitfield Estates, Incorporated transferred ownership of Lot 23, Block 52, and the East five feet of Lot 24, Block 52, to the Douglas Williams Company, Inc.<sup>3</sup> The deed indicated that the company had plans to construct a first class apartment building for which drawings, plans, and specifications had been presented to and approved by the seller. At the time, Whitfield Estates had an architectural review board and all construction and architectural plans proposed for the development were subject to their approval. The building's plans were drawn by prominent local architect Clarence C. Hosmer, who served as a member of the same review board. The Douglas Williams Company served as the contractor for construction of the building.

Clark Douglas Williams, the principal of the original corporate owner and developer of Villa Serena, was a New York banker. He had spent many years in and near pleasure resorts, and for a number of those years his hobby had been planning and building homes for other people that he would like to "live in himself."<sup>4</sup> A local newspaper article stated that completion of the Villa Serena was an "achieved dream" for him, and that he had spared no expense in its construction and furnishings and in making it the most modern of apartment buildings. It would be referred to in local newspapers as "Villa Serena, the unique apartment deluxe." The total cost of the building and its furnishings was estimated to be between \$94,000 and \$100,000.<sup>5</sup>

Construction took place quickly, for by the fall of 1926, the building was nearing completion and reservations were being taken for the apartments. The four room apartments were to be rented at \$225.00 per

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<sup>3</sup>Warranty Deed dated August 16, 1926, Deed Book 115, Page 12, and Miscellaneous Records, Pages 378 and 379, Document No. 92371, of the Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

<sup>4</sup>Sarasota Herald, October 3, 1926.

<sup>5</sup>Sarasota Herald, April 1, 1931, and Sarasota Herald-Tribune, October 19, 1939.

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SIGNIFICANCE

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month and would include gas for cooking and heating and a single garage space.<sup>6</sup> An October 3, 1926 article in the Sarasota Herald, entitled "Villa Serena Is Dream of Architects" compared the building to an Italian palace on the banks of a Venetian canal, although it was not a waterfront site.

The Douglas Williams Co., Inc. held an open house upon the building's completion in October, 1926 and it was opened to visitors and prospective tenants during the afternoon and evening of Sunday, October 10. It remained open to visitors during those hours until October 14th.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, in the later part of 1926 and through 1927, large, often full-page advertisements, continued to appear in the Sarasota Herald.<sup>8</sup>

Edward Watson, a Boston investment banker, visited Sarasota in 1925, perhaps encouraged to do so by Williams in anticipation of the upcoming plans for the building of the Villa Serena, and was so impressed with the city that he encouraged his son, John Watson, to relocate to Sarasota.<sup>9</sup> The two men decided to become associated with C. Douglas Williams in the development of Whitefield Estates, and John Watson and his wife occupied an apartment in the Villa Serena. On December 16, 1926, a Certificate for Incorporation was filed for the Watson-Williams Son Co.,<sup>10</sup> and on December 28, 1926, Douglas transferred ownership of the Villa Serena property from C. Douglas Williams, Inc. to the new corporation, indicating that a business alliance had been formed between the three men. The younger Watson became the property manager for the Villa Serena and involved in its promotion.<sup>11</sup>

Advertisements for the apartments in the Villa Serena appeared in the "1928 Guide to Hotels and Apartments, Sarasota, Florida," an annual promotional guide published in the city for a number of years. Promotions to attract tenants in that publication identified John Watson as the contact for inquiries of prospective tenants. During the mid and late 1920s, the Sarasota Herald consistently published substantial sales promotions and large displays for both the Villa Serena and homes available in Whitfield Estates.

On July 28, 1930, ownership of the Villa Serena Apartments passed to Robert Burns Butterworth, a financier from Chatham, New Jersey.<sup>12</sup> Following the sale, the newspaper indicated that Butterworth planned to retain the entire top floor of the apartment building as his personal residence, while the remainder of the building would be remodeled. It appears, however, that other than the enclosure of the third floor sleeping porches, no

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<sup>6</sup> Sarasota Herald, October 3, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Sarasota Herald, October 10, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> Sarasota Herald, October 2, 1927.

<sup>9</sup> Sarasota Herald, December 5, 1926.

<sup>10</sup> Incorporation Book, \_\_, p. 27, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

<sup>11</sup> "1928 Guide to Hotels and Apartments, Sarasota, Florida", a promotional brochure, copy on file with Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>12</sup> Deed Book 104, Page 61, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

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structural or substantial alterations were actually made. His plans also called for the construction of a private swimming pool, tennis courts, a private garden, and other "exclusive appointments."<sup>13</sup>

On April 20, 1932, Butterworth purchased the balance of Lot 24, Block 52, and five more lots adjacent to the original Villa Serena site from Whitfield Properties.<sup>14</sup> In the mid-1930s, an Olympic size concrete swimming pool was installed on the property at the rear of the building, behind the parking garage. The pool was fed by an artesian well that still remains on the property; however, the pool was filled in sometime in the 1980s.

During the time he owned the property, Butterworth and his wife occupied the penthouse apartment in the building. Robert Butterworth died of a heart attack at age 57 on March 26, 1936, in Chatham, New Jersey.<sup>15</sup> His wife, Anna Belle, daughter, Marcia Butterworth Walden, and son-in law, Ramond Walden inherited the Villa Serena.<sup>16</sup> On October 4, 1939, they sold the entire Villa Serena property to Harry Allen Gregg and his wife, Harriett Gregg, of Nashua, New Hampshire.<sup>17</sup> Harry Allen Gregg was involved in manufacturing and banking in New Hampshire. Gregg was the Senior Partner of Gregg & Son, Chairman of the Board of Indian Head National Bank, President of New Hampshire Bank Shares, Inc., and Vice-President of Hall-Gregg, Inc.<sup>18</sup>

Gregg and his wife maintained a winter home in Sarasota beginning in the 1920s but never lived in the Villa Serena. Gregg immediately took an active role in the community that would become his full time home in his later years. He was an early sponsor of the Whitfield Estates Country Club; the Players of Sarasota, a theatrical group formed in the 1930s; and the West Coast Symphony Orchestra. He maintained his winter home on Siesta Key until he died there on January 3, 1972.<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Gregg survived her him until her death in Sarasota in 1996.<sup>20</sup> By 1955, the Villa Serena property was titled in Harriett Gregg's name and, on May 27, 1955, she sold the property to Karl F. Karel of Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>21</sup>

Since the 1960s, the property has had several owners, including a group of Chicago investors who left the building vacant for several years, except for three months each year when they came to Florida. Beginning in the late 1960s and into the 1980s, the building was known as Golf King Towers. In 1983, the property was purchased

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<sup>13</sup> Sarasota Herald-Tribune, April 1, 1931.

<sup>14</sup> Deed Book 124, Page 127, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

<sup>15</sup> Obituary of Robert Butterworth, unidentified Chatham, New Jersey newspaper, April 3, 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Probate Files, Manatee County.

<sup>17</sup> Deed Book 1634, Page 269, Public Records of Manatee County.

<sup>18</sup> Sarasota Herald-Tribune, January 3, 1972, and Gregg, Hugh, son of Harry Allen Gregg, in a telephone interview with Mikki Hartig on September 30, 1999 between Sarasota, Florida and Nashua, New Hampshire, and "Whose Who In Sarasota," taken from a promotional brochure, 1941. Copy on file with Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Whose Who In the East, A biographical dictionary of noteworthy men and women of the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern States, published by Marquis-Who's Who, Incorporated-a non-profit foundation, Chicago, IL, 1951, p. 328.

<sup>21</sup> Miscellaneous Records, Book 334, Page 177, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida.

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MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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by a religious group, the Messengers of Hope, who used the building as their headquarters. The present owner acquired the property in 1997 and has undertaken efforts to completely restore the building to its 1926 appearance.

**Clarence C. Hosmer, Architect**

Before moving to Sarasota in 1924, Clarence C. Hosmer worked in Chicago in 1923-1924 as the managing director of the Architectural Exhibition League. Hosmer was responsible for gathering and classifying exhibits and supervising the engraving and printing of them.<sup>22</sup>

Like many other architects, Hosmer was drawn to Florida by the real estate boom of the 1920s. He arrived in Sarasota in late 1924 and went into partnership with architect Thomas Reed Martin. Martin was also from Chicago, and the two men had been acquainted before arriving independently in Sarasota.<sup>23</sup> Hosmer and Martin collaborated on several Mediterranean Revival style buildings, including the Batchellor-Brewer Model Home, built in 1926 to promote the Avondale Subdivision (N.R. 2/10/92). They also designed Prairie style Lemon Bay Women's Club in Englewood, Florida, in 1926 (N.R. 8/11/88).

By April of 1926, Hosmer had established his own firm.<sup>24</sup> During his six years of practice in Sarasota, Hosmer designed numerous residential and commercial buildings in the city and Sarasota County. Hosmer's independent design credits in an around Sarasota during the 1920s include the Frank and Matilda Binz House (N.R. 8/5/94); the First Presbyterian Church;<sup>25</sup> the Cornish Apartments, located south of downtown;<sup>26</sup> and the This Week in Sarasota building on Pineapple Avenue,<sup>27</sup> all of which are still standing. Hosmer believed that small homes should be given just as much attention by the architect as large homes, since small homes contribute to, or detract from, the ambience of their more expensive neighbors.

While practicing architecture in Florida, Hosmer was active in the Florida Association of Architects. In November 1925, he was elected to the Board of Directors and in 1926 elected Secretary/Treasurer. Hosmer was also appointed to the "Committee on School Building Standards" of the American Institute of Architects. In 1927, he was honored by the American Institute of Architects by his appointment as representative to the Scientific Research Department of the national organization.

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<sup>22</sup> Sarasota Herald, January 24, 1926.

<sup>23</sup> Dickson, Jean, granddaughter of Thomas Reed Martin, in a personal interview with Mikki Hartig of Historical & Architectural Research Services in 1994 in Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>24</sup> This Week in Sarasota, February 26, 1925.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., and Sarasota Herald-Tribune, May 6, 1940.

<sup>26</sup> City of Sarasota Historic Designation Nomination Proposal, prepared by Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>27</sup> This Week in Sarasota, May 21, 1925.

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SIGNIFICANCE

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Hosmer left Sarasota for Houston, Texas, in 1930. From Texas, he moved to East Orange, New Jersey, where he was associated with the New Jersey Housing Authority. His last position before his death in 1940 was with the Masonite Corporation.<sup>28</sup> It seems likely that Hosmer left Sarasota in 1930 because of the collapse of the real estate market in the late 1920s. Hosmer's various jobs which followed his departure probably can be attributed to the unstable business climate in America during the Great Depression. During his career, Hosmer designed buildings for over forty years in at least four states. His ability to adapt to a wide variety of both prevalent and regional styles of architecture, including Arts and Crafts, Classical, English Cottage, and Mediterranean Revival, attests to his talent and attribution as a master architect. His services were utilized by wealthy and prominent individuals and developers and he and his work became well respected and recognized throughout his lifetime, despite the number of times he moved his practice.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Although the majority of its original windows have been replaced, the Villa Serena largely retains its distinctive Mediterranean Revival style character. This is expressed strongly in the porte-cochere and by the third story arcaded loggia. The building also retains its wrought iron balconets on the exterior, and few major changes have been made to the interior, except for the division of the third floor into two apartments. Original wall finishes and moldings are still present throughout the building, as are doors and associated hardware. Original tile and wood floors are still extant, and the wood flooring of the living spaces has had later coverings removed and been refinished in the ongoing renovation of the whole building. In many cases, the apartments retain their original bathroom fixtures and tiling. The walls and stairways in the public spaces have had their original color scheme restored. As the design work of architect Clarence C. Hosmer, Villa Serena represents an important phase of Hosmer's career in Sarasota.

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<sup>28</sup> Sarasota Herald-Tribune, May 6, 1940.

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VILLA SERENA APARTMENTS  
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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### Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 23, 24 and the Easterly 10 feet of Lot 25, Block 52, Whitfield Estates, recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 33, Public Records of Manatee County, Florida

### Boundary Justification

The above boundaries encompass all of that portion of the site historically associated with the Villa Serena and its related secondary structure.



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**List of Photographs**

1. Villa Serena Apartments
2. 7014 Willow Street, Sarasota ( Manatee County), Florida
3. Carl Shiver
4. August 2000
5. Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation
6. Main (North) Facade of the Sarasota Bay Country Club, Looking Southwest From the Third Story Loggia of Villa Serena Apartments
7. Photo 1 of 24

**Items 1-5 are the same for all of the following photographs, except where noted.**

6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 2 of 24
  
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 3 of 24
  
6. Porte-Cochere and Graveled Driveway, Looking South
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6. Porte-Cochere and Graveled Driveway, Looking Southwest
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6. Porte-Cochere and Graveled Driveway, Looking Northwest
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6. Arched Driveway Between Apartments and Garage Apartment, Looking West
7. Photo 7 of 24
  
6. Apartment Garage, Main (South) Facade, Looking West
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6. Garage Apartment, South Elevation, Looking North
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6. Garage Apartment, South Elevation, Looking Northeast

7. Photo 10 of 24

6. Third Story Loggia, Looking North

7. Photo 11 of 24

6. Third Story Loggia, Looking South

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6. North Elevation, Looking Southwest

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6. South Elevation, Looking Northeast

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6. West (Rear) Elevation, Looking, East

7. Photo 15 of 24

6. West (Rear) Elevation, Looking East

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6. West (Rear) Elevation, Looking East

7. Photo 17 of 24

6. First Floor Lobby, Looking East From Hall

7. Photo 18 of 24

6. Stairs Between First and Second Floors, Looking West

7. Photo 19 of 24

6. Stairs Between First and Second Floors, Looking East

7. Photo 20 of 24

6. Second Floor Hallway, Looking North

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3. Mikki Hartig
  4. October 1999
  5. Historical & Architectural Research Services
  6. South Apartment, Third Floor, Dining Room, Looking Northeast
  7. Photo 22 of 24
- 
3. Mikki Hartig
  4. October 1999
  5. Historical & Architectural Research Services
  6. South Apartment, Third Floor, Living Room, Looking Southwest
  7. Photo 23 of 24
- 
3. Mikki Hartig
  4. October 1999
  5. Historical & Architectural Research Services
  6. South Apartment, Third Floor, Living Room, Looking Northeast Toward Fireplace
  7. Photo 24 of 24