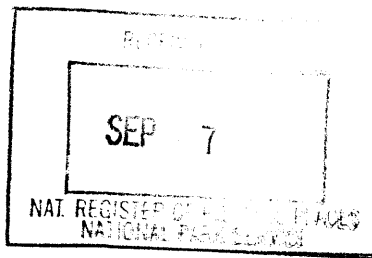


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number N/A; Florida Site File # SO2629

2. Location

street & number 6660 Manasota Key Road N/A not for publication

city or town Englewood vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Sarasota code 115 zip code 34272

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 9/12/2002
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida 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) _____

Signature of the Keeper
Robert A. Beall 10/31/02
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	
5	0	buildings
0	1	sites
3	0	structures
0	0	objects
8	1	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)

- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure/Water Cistern

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- VACANT/Not In Use
- VACANT/Not In Use
- VACANT/Not In Use
- VACANT/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- NO STYLE/Wood Frame Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Concrete, Wood
- walls Wood
- roof Asphalt
- 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

c. 1907-c.1941

Significant Dates

c. 1907
c. 1935
c. 1941

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown
Blder: Unknown

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

#

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 3.5 apprx.

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	3 6 2 6 2 0	2 9 8 2 7 2 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 David Baber, Sarasota County Historical Resources/Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September 2002

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

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Sarasota County Government

street & number 1660 Ringling Boulevard telephone (941) 951-5111

city or town Sarasota state Florida zip code 34235

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Hermitage-Whitney Historic District, located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in the vicinity of the town of Englewood, comprises five buildings and three structures that represent early twentieth century beachfront development on the barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico that parallel the coastline of Sarasota County, Florida. The major buildings include three Frame Vernacular residences: the Hermitage House, constructed c. 1907; the Hermitage Guest House, erected c. 1935; and the Whitney House, built c. 1941. There are also a wooden garage, a pump house, and two above ground wooden cisterns, all of which date from about the same period as the Whitney House. There is also a line of wooden pilings running along the beach the entire length of the Hermitage-Whitney which are the remains of an beach erosion barrier constructed in the late 1940s. In 1992, the Hermitage House was relocated approximately 90 feet east of its original location near the beach on the Gulf of Mexico, made necessary by continuing beach erosion that had reached the western foundations of the house. All of the other buildings and structures remain in their original location. The residences have been altered at various periods since their construction; however, all of the alterations were made prior to 1950. The buildings are presently vacant, and most of the windows and doors have been secured with plywood paneling to prevent entry and vandalism by unauthorized persons. For that reason, interior photographs of the buildings are unavailable; however, detailed descriptions of the interiors of the buildings are contained in the descriptive narratives.

SETTING

The Hermitage-Whitney Historic District is located on a sand dune ridge—actually the remains of an aboriginal midden—on the west side of Manasota Key Road only several yards from the Gulf of Mexico, approximately two and a quarter miles north of the Sarasota/Charlotte County line (See Attachments 1 and 2). The site lies near the mid-point of the Manasota Peninsula (also known as Manasota Key) across Lemon Bay from the city of Englewood, a community of about 44,000 residents that straddles the Sarasota/Charlotte county line. Manasota Key lies in the Gulf of Mexico off the south shore of Sarasota County and the north shore of Charlotte County. Lemon Bay is the largest body of water between mainland and key. The approximately 3-1/4 acre district is now a park of Blind Pass Park, a Sarasota County public recreational area. The district is found in the southwest corner of Sarasota County, about 35 miles from the city of Sarasota. The historic district is bounded on the north and south by privately-owned beachfront property, on the east by Manasota Key Road and on the west by the Gulf of Mexico.

Noncontributing Midden

The noncontributing aboriginal midden, atop which the buildings and structures of the Hermitage-Whitney Historic District stand, has produced some artifacts related to the Manasota archaeological culture. The period of aboriginal occupation dates from the 500 BC-AD 800 time span of the Central Peninsular Gulf

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 2 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

Coast region, an area around Tampa Bay southward to just north of Charlotte Harbor.¹ The time span is divided into early (500 BC-AD 400) and late (AD 400-800) sub-periods, based upon stylistic changes in secular ceramics and the increased appearance of Weeden Island ceramics. The culture is characterized by a fishing/gathering/hunting economy, shell and bone based technology, and a coastal estuarine-based settlement system.² The site has been severely disturbed by the construction of the twentieth century buildings and structures that comprise the historic district and other activities that have compromised the integrity of the site. Even so, the midden may have the potential for yielding some valuable information about the Manasota culture; but for the purposes of this nomination, it is considered a noncontributing resource.

DESCRIPTION

Hermitage House (Photos 1-5)

The oldest structure on the site is the Hermitage House (Attachments 2 and 3), an irregularly shaped, wood frame, one and a half story residence. Originally situated on the beach berm overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, the building was moved to its present location (See Attachment 3) east of the Whitney House in 1992, because over time, the beach eroded to the point that water reached the house at high tide. To protect the building, it was relocated approximately 90 feet to the east and elevated four feet on concrete pilings. The Hermitage House was built in four phases, beginning c. 1907, to satisfy the changing needs of the owners. The original residence consisted of a 12 foot by 28 foot one and a half story house with two rooms of different sizes downstairs, a stairs set along the inner wall of the larger room and two small bedrooms upstairs. The long axis of the house was sited parallel to the beach and had a side gable roof with a 6/6-light double hung sash window in each gable. Ten to twelve inch diameter wood posts were set into the sand for foundations. Board and batten pine and cypress were used for all the walls, inside and out, except for the second floor where triple beaded boards were used. The wood for construction of the residence was cut and milled at a sawmill in the town of Englewood on the other side of Lemon Bay and carried to the site on a barge. The windows in the exterior walls of the house were 2/2-light double hung sashes. The main door appears to have been located near the center of the west wall of the larger room and opened overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. A porch probably extended along the west (Gulf) elevation of the house. A rubble stone chimney for a fireplace, apparently added during a 1920s alteration of the house, rises from the southwest section of the building.

The construction of a detached kitchen, connected to the main house by a breezeway, followed sometime between 1907 and 1910. This ten foot by ten foot one story structure was built northwest of the

¹ George M. Luer and Marion M. Almy, "Three Aboriginal Shell Middens on Longboat Key, Florida: Manasota Period Sites of Barrier Island Exploitation," 1979, *The Florida Anthropologist* 32:34-45; "The Development of Some Aboriginal Pottery of the Central Peninsular Gulf Coast Region of Florida," 1980, *The Florida Anthropologist* 33:207-225; "A Definition of the Manasota Culture, 1982," *The Florida Anthropologist* 35:34-58.

² Jerald T. Milanich. *Archaeology of Precolumbian Florida*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994, 67-72.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

house. It also had a gable roof parallel to the beach. It had board and batten exterior walls and 2/2-light double hung sash windows. The foundation of the structure was concrete brick piers. The breezeway connected the kitchen to an addition that had been constructed north of the original house. This extension was a one-story wing, also with a gable roof, with the gable end facing west. The foundation for the combined structures was a combination of wood posts and concrete brick piers. The addition may have originally been a porch that was later enclosed or may have always been a room addition.

The original house had been constructed for Carl Johansen, a Swedish immigrant who had arrived with his family in the Englewood area around 1902. In 1913, he sold the property to its second owner who is reported to have added sleeping porches to the house.³ These appear to have been built north and south of the west wing addition. The most notable feature is an unusual set of windows in each addition located in the north and west walls. The six pane and single pane, single sash windows can be raised about four inches. Then the hinged sill may be opened inward to allow the sash to drop into the wall below the sill. This provides a completely open window for maximum air flow. Through the years, various interior partitions have been added or removed to meet the changing needs of the owners of the house. The stone fireplace located on the south wall of the south sleeping porch appears to have been constructed sometime after the sleeping porch was added.

The last major additions were added to the house sometime during the period from the 1920s to the 1940s when the building was reportedly used as an inn (See Attachments 4-5). A bathroom was added north of the original kitchen which had been converted into a bedroom (See phase four sketch). An extension east of the original house provided for a new enlarged kitchen, a bath east of the main hall, and space for a rear entrance and a closet. The area under the stairs was enclosed to house a half bath and storage cabinets. During this period, the porch to the south was also added, but was enclosed at a later date. The shed dormers for the second floor rooms are also later additions, probably dating from the 1940s. At that time the original roof was replaced with plywood. All of these newer additions had six inch square or nine inch square preformed concrete piers for foundations.⁴ The present wooden walkway leading to the main entrance of the building was added in 1993 when the house was relocated to its present site to prevent it from being damaged because of continuing beach erosion by the Gulf of Mexico.

³ Rebecca Spain, "The Hermitage," Architectural Documentation. Prepared for the County of Sarasota Parks and Recreation Department, November 1988, n.p.

⁴ Ibid.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 4

HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

OTHER BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Whitney House (Photos 6-9)

The Whitney House, constructed c. 1941, is a 32 foot by 26 foot structure with its long axis oriented east-west (See Attachment 6). The east side of the building is 7 feet 10 inches above grade. The residence has a hip roof, and a carport is located under the southeast portion of the house, and a storage area is found under the northeast portion. The exterior walls are wide weatherboard, and the main fenestration consists of 1/1-light double hung windows, except for one large picture window found in the center of the west wall. Twelve inch square piers, three bays deep (east-west) by two bays wide (north-south) are used for the foundation. Three 12 inch by 12 inch beams run east-west above these piers with 2 inch by 10 inch floor joists set at 16 inch intervals on center above the beams. The structure was designed to be hurricane proof, with cross bracing throughout and vertical metal pipes set in the exterior wall framing.

Wooden exterior stairs, running east-west, ascend to a landing on the north elevation of the building where two doors lead into the main west room and the former kitchen. The west half of the house is occupied by a large living room and a kitchen. The east half contains two small bedrooms and a bathroom. Four closets line the wall between the south bedroom and the living room, while one large closet space abuts the west wall of the north bedroom. A retractable ladder located in the hallway provides access to the storage space in the attic.

Guest House (Photos 10-11)

The Guest House located immediately south of the Hermitage House was constructed c. 1935 when the property was used as an inn (See Attachment 7). The long axis of this rectangular 18 foot by 36 foot building also runs parallel to the beach and has a side gable roof. Board and batten siding was used on the exterior of the residence, whereas rubbed finished vertical cypress boards were used throughout the interior. Each of the three bedrooms has an exterior door that opens to the west. They are connected to one another by small halls that also provide access to the two shared bathrooms found on the east side of the structure. Both halls have doors at both sides to insure the privacy of the bedroom inhabitants. Each of the bedrooms has its own sink separate from the connecting bathroom, each bathroom being provided with just a shower stall and a toilet. The ceiling is sheathed with cypress boarding and extends up to the roof ridge with exposed rafters. The major fenestration is paired 6-light casement windows.

Whitney Garage (Photos 12-14)

The Whitney Garage is a 14 foot by 24 foot building with its long axis oriented east west (See Attachment 8). It has a hip roof with exposed rafter ends, heavy weatherboard siding, and a wide drip edge

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Section number 7 Page 5 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

over the water table molding. The fenestration includes two 1/1-light double hung sash windows on the south and north sides. The vehicle bays contain swinging double wooden doors constructed of vertical tongue and groove boards with large metal strap hinges on the east side and a service door on the west side. The service door consists of heavy styles and rails filled in with tongue and groove boards laid in a herring bone pattern.

Whitney Pump House (Photos 15-16)

Directly east of the Whitney House is a 20 foot by 16 foot building (See Attachment 9). Built to match the appearance of the Whitney House, including a hip roof with exposed rafter ends, heavy weatherboard siding, and a wide drip board over the water table molding, this building served as a pump house to provide water to the Whitney House. Rainwater from the roof of the Whitney House was captured by gutters and conveyed by galvanized pipes to two cypress cisterns. The water in the cisterns was then transferred by electric pump to the Whitney House. The building rests on concrete piers and has a hip roof with exposed rafter ends. The fenestration consists of 1/1-light double hung sash windows. The main entrance is located at the west end of the north wall, while a rear entrance leading into a bathroom is found at the east end of the south wall. The wooden steps at the main entrance are no longer extant. A septic tank serves as the stoop for the rear door. The interior of the pump house consists of one large room containing the pumping mechanism and a small bathroom located in the southeast corner. A ladder built into the wall provides access to a storage space above the bathroom.

Wooden Cisterns (Photo 17)

The two cisterns are each approximately nine feet in diameter and nine feet high (See Attachment 10). They are each made of vertical cypress boards bound by five metal straps. The cistern tanks are supported by a heavy timber floor system that rests on concrete piers. Each cistern is covered by a round cover constructed of wood and covered by sheet metal with round vent holes.

Beach Erosion Barrier

A line of wooden pilings (Photo 18) extends along the beach, running the entire length of the Hermitage-Whitney site, angled inland at each end. These are "heart-of-pine" pilings that now extend only a couple of feet above the sand. They were installed in the late 1940s by Thurston Alexander in an attempt to control beach erosion.⁵ They rose originally to a height of about four feet and had a stack of several automobile tires around each piling. The rubber tires are no longer extant.

⁵ Sidney Crampton and Ann Murdock, interview with Rebecca Spain Schwarz at the Hermitage site, December 17, 1992.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Hermitage-Whitney Historic District is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Entertainment/Recreation. The district is significant as the location of the family home of Carl G. Johanson—one of the early settlers of the mainland town of Englewood and of Manasota Key—who moved to the barrier island in 1907. During the early 1930s, the property was used as a nudist colony. The property was purchased by Louise Plummer in 1937 and operated as an inn. In 1939, the land immediately south of the Hermitage was purchased by Alfred R. Whitney, a retired engineer, who built a home, garage, and a pump house and cistern system on the property. After Whitney's death in 1946, all of the buildings came under one ownership and were operated as a tourist lodging facility until 1960. This district boundaries encompass a rare remaining example of an early coastal pioneer home and a rustic tourist accommodation.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Pioneers began to settle in the Lemon Bay region in the late 1870s. Among the first residents of Englewood was William Goff who arrived in 1878 on the shore of Lemon Bay on the location of what would eventually become the town of Englewood. He built a log cabin on the banks of Lemon Bay where Cherokee Street is now located. This first settler of Englewood was born in Albany, Georgia, in 1845. He was the son of Steeley Goff, who brought his family from Georgia to Tampa about 1870. William Goff got a job on a schooner sailing out of Tampa to Boca Grande and Key West. On one of his trips to Boca Grande, he journeyed up Lemon Bay and decided there was where he wanted to make his home.⁶

In 1878, he selected a site of 60 acres of land facing the bay that comprised almost all of what would form the original plat of the town of Englewood. Goff sold the property in 1890 for \$1500 to a mineral company that believed that it might be a good location for a phosphate mine. The mining operation did not materialize, but other settlers had already begun to migrate to the area, and a post office was established the same year Goff sold his holdings. The first plat of Englewood was recorded on August 17, 1896, by three brothers, Herbert K., Howard S., and Ira Nichols, who named the new community after their hometown of Englewood, Illinois, as suburb of Chicago. The 2,000 acre town was laid out in 24 city blocks and 96 grove lots of ten acres on which lemons were to be raised for income, a plan that was doomed to failure.⁷

The Nichols brothers first heard about southwest Florida at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where they saw brochures extolling the beauty and agricultural productivity of the Lemon Bay area as "a land where the climate was second to none and lemons would thrive." The Nichols brothers bought their land

⁶ Josephine O. Cortes, The History of Early Englewood (Punta Gorda: Funcoast Publishing Company, 1976), 8.

⁷ Cortes, 56-57.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

in 1894, and a street plan for the “dream town” was drawn up by a Chicago engineering firm. The developers received much publicity in the Midwest newspapers, and several wealthy Chicagoans were among the first to buy property in the area on which they planned to build their winter homes. The development, however, suffered a fatal blow even before the town plat was recorded in 1896. A destructive freeze hit the area on December 17, 1894, when temperatures dropped to 17 degrees Fahrenheit. A following warm spell prompted new growth in the lemon and other citrus trees that had already been planted in area, but on January 5, 1895, the temperature plunged to 14 degrees, causing disastrous damage to citrus trees, especially lemons, all over the state. The freeze caused interest in land speculation in Englewood to virtually disappear. Another handicap for the promoters was the fact that Englewood had no railroad connection and could be reached only by train travel to Punta Gorda, from which the trip had to be completed by schooner. The town became settled by fishermen, loggers, and cattle ranchers.⁸

Little interest had been shown newcomers to the area in Manasota Key, then known as “The Ridge” and Peninsula Key. The first man known to live on the barrier island was Capt. Joseph C. Leach, who settled in the area as early as 1882. He occupied himself with farming and fishing in the vicinity of the key. In 1901 the United States government granted to Leach land that he had claimed under the 1862 Homestead Act. This included lots in Sections 26 and 27 of Township 40 South and Range 19 East, land which is now part of Blind Pass Park on Manasota Key.⁹ To the south of his land, the United States government in 1902 granted to Giles W. Chapman lots in Section 35 Township 40 South and Range 19 East.¹⁰ It was on a portion of this land that the Hermitage and associated buildings were constructed.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1902, the Carl G. Johanson family moved to Englewood. They had immigrated to the United States in Sweden 1873 and settled in Sanford, Florida, as members of a Swedish colony. After moving from Sanford to Arcadia and then Punta Gorda, Johanson purchased a sawmill on Lemon Bay and moved his family (wife Anna, daughters Isabelle, Ruth, and Edna, and mother Matilda) to a house near the mill. The mill was north of the community’s only store, which was owned by the Nichols Brothers who had founded Englewood in 1896. The mill was located on the Bay at the western end of Yale Street. Johanson purchased timbering rights from land owners in the Lemon Bay region, cut the trees and had the logs rafted along neighboring creeks and in the bay to the sawmill. There, horses pulled log carts to the mill where the logs were sawn into lumber.¹¹

⁸ Cortes, 58.

⁹ United States to Joseph C. Leach, January 27, 1900 (recorded March 29, 1901), Manatee County Deed Book W, p. 574.

¹⁰ United States to Giles W. Chapman, January 17, 1902, Manatee County Deed Book Z, p. 447.

¹¹ Cortes, pp. 78-79.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 3 HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

In 1907 Carl Johanson purchased 2-3/4 acres of land on The Ridge from Giles Chapman.¹² He cleared the land and then built the family home, which he called "The Hermitage," from lumber sawn at the mill and rafted more than a mile across the bay. Located near Blind Pass, the Hermitage was situated between the homestead of Capt. Leach, about a mile to the north, and the property of Giles W. Chapman to the south. Only two other families—who had arrived later than Johanson—lived on the key, which stretched more than 12 miles parallel to the mainland. Because there was no bridge between the Ridge and the mainland, when the Johanson daughters attended school in the mainland community of Pinedale, they boarded Monday through Thursday nights with a family that lived near the school. On Monday mornings Carl Johanson rowed them in his boat across Lemon Bay to his sawmill, and the girls then walked the approximately three miles north to school. On Fridays they reversed the route.¹³

Initially, the Hermitage was a 1-1/2 story board and batten frame home, with two rooms on each floor. The kitchen was detached and it was here that Grandma Johanson baked daily bread and prepared other foods for the family meals. They depended on the Gulf for much of their food. Turtle during the summer and fish year round, either fresh or packed in brine, provided the mainstay.¹⁴ Other staples—flour, rice, cornmeal, and dried fruits—they purchased at the Nichols Store in Englewood.¹⁵ When Grandma Johanson became seriously ill, the family moved back to Arcadia, where she could spend her final days in more comfortable surroundings. After she died they returned to the Hermitage for a short time. In 1913, Carl Johanson sold the Manasota Key property and moved from the Englewood area.¹⁶

Until 1927, when a toll bridge was constructed at the Charlotte County end of the island, there were no bridges across Lemon Bay linking Manasota Key with the mainland. The opening of the bridge made the barrier island accessible to tourists, but there was still no road along its length, and the key remained largely uninhabited.¹⁷ There was no electrical or telephone service, and there were few reliable sources of potable water. After several changes in ownership, the former Johanson home was purchased in the mid 1930s for use as a nudist colony, for which the still largely inaccessible island was ideal.¹⁸ The construction of a primitive sand and shell roadway by the later 1930s compromised the privacy of the nudists, and the colony disbanded. Louise Plummer, who had been one of the guests, purchased the Hermitage in 1937, "when she heard it was to be sold and was afraid it might fall into unfriendly hands."¹⁹ She lived there and took in paying guests for several years, although she did not operate it as a nudist resort. Meals, for \$1.00, were available to

¹² Giles W. Chapman to C. G. Johansen, September 14, 1907, Manatee County Deed Book 16, p. 370.

¹³ Cortes, p. 81.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 83-86.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁶ C. G. Johansen and Anna C. Johansen to Ed Scott, recorded December 29, 1913, Manatee County Deed Book 45, pp. 79-80.

¹⁷ Cortes, p. 23.

¹⁸ Walter van B. Roberts, "Manasota Key, Florida: Some Reminiscences," 1978, pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Roberts, p. 10.

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SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
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non-boarders as well as her paying guests.²⁰ One of these was Alfred R. Whitney, a retired engineer, who in 1939 then purchased what had been the Chapman property immediately to the south of the Hermitage.²¹ He built a home, garage, and a pump house and cistern system. Remembered as an interesting, but sometimes arrogant man, Whitney used his engineering skills to design a building that would withstand hurricanes.²²

Soon after building a guest cottage between the Hermitage and the Whitney house, Plummer sold the Hermitage complex to Ruth Alexander in 1943. After Whitney died in 1946, Alexander and her husband, Otto Thurston Alexander, purchased the Whitney property.²³ The acquisition gave the Alexanders an extensive variety of quarters for their paying guests and other visitors. Later guests remember being moved from one cottage to another to accommodate the shifting demands of different groups staying at the Hermitage.²⁴ During World War II, electricity was brought to the key for the first time. By 1947, the bridge to Manasota Key was in bad condition, and no funds were available for repairing it. A second bridge connecting the key from the Sarasota County end was completed as part of the state road system in 1950. Regular phone service arrived in 1955.²⁵ Although it ceased to be a tourist accommodation after World War II, Ruth and Thurston Alexander continued to occupy the property until 1973 when Ruth died. Thurston Alexander continued to live in the Hermitage until his own death in 1978. The property went through various hands until it was acquired by the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department in 1986 as part of a 20 million dollar bond referendum, which had as one of its goals the creation of Blind Pass Park. The Hermitage property buildings became part of the county park development that included access to Blind Pass Beach. The buildings have been vacant since 1992.

Criterion A

Exploration/Settlement

The Hermitage-Whitney Historic District is significant for its association with the early history of the settlement of Englewood and Manasota Key. The earliest surviving structure on Manasota Key, the Hermitage, was built by Carl Johansen as a family home c. 1907 with wood which was locally milled and transported to Manasota Key by barge. Johansen, who was among the first permanent inhabitants of the key, constructed the home, which he called "The Hermitage," to provide a secluded refuge for himself and his family. The family

²⁰ Ibid.; Diana D. Harris, "An Endless Parade of Fascinating Residents," Englewood Our Town, February 20-21, 1993, p. 2.

²¹ Wm. E. Dunwody and Reba Dunwody to Alfred R. Whitney, April 29, 1939, Sarasota County Deed Book 158, p. 380.

²² Harris.

²³ Obituary in New York Times, October 8, 1946; Harold LeRoy Whitney and Alfred Whitney Griswold (executors of the Alfred R. Whitney estate) to Otto T. Alexander and Ruth S. Alexander, July 8, 1948.

²⁴ Harris.

²⁵ Roberts, p. 14.

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lived simply, depending on the bountiful fish and other sea life of Lemon Bay and the Gulf of Mexico to provide much of their food.

Entertainment/Recreation

The buildings and structures in the district are also important for their association with other historical contexts, including the nudist philosophy of the 1930's and rustic Florida tourist accommodations. Sometime in the 1930's, after the Johansen family's permanent departure from the Key, the Hermitage house was operated as a guest house for nudists until its purchase in 1937 by Louise Plummer. The naturalist movement was promoted in this country by organizations such as the American Sunbathing Association. According to an advertisement placed in the October 1950 issue of Sunshine and Health, the official journal of the association, the magazine was published for the scientific advancement of nudism and the education of the public in its principles and advantages.

The buildings and structures of The Hermitage-Whitney Historic District were also used to accommodate seasonal tourists to Manasota Key. Few early examples of these simple beachfront accommodations remain in Sarasota County, most having been replaced by modern motels, hotels, and condominiums. It is one of few sites of this type and date remaining on the southwest coast of Florida.

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HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA
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HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Begin at the intersection of the southerly property line of the said property and the low tide shoreline of the Gulf of Mexico and run northwest along said shoreline approximately 250 feet, then run southeast to the northeast side of Manasota Key Road, then run southeast along the northeast side of Manasota Key Road to the point of intersection of the southerly property line, thence southwest to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Hermitage-Whitney Historic District encompass all of the above ground historic resources associated with the Hermitage and Whitney properties.

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List of Photographs

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
2. 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood (Sarasota County), Florida
3. David Baber
4. July 2001
5. Sarasota County Historical Resources
6. Hermitage House, Southwest and Southeast Elevations, Looking Northeast
7. Photograph 1 of 18

The information for items 2 through 5 is the same for all of the following photographs.

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Hermitage House, Southwest and Northwest Elevations, Looking Southeast
7. Photograph 2 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Hermitage House, Northwest Elevation, Looking Southeast
7. Photograph 3 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Hermitage House, Southeast and Southwest Elevations, Looking Northwest
7. Photograph 4 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Hermitage House, Southeast Elevation, Looking Northwest
7. Photograph 5 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Whitney House, Southwest Elevation, Looking East
7. Photograph 6 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Whitney House, Southeast and Northeast Elevations, Looking Southwest
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1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. View Showing Garage, Cisterns, Pump House, and Whitney House, Looking Southwest
7. Photograph 8 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Detail of Northeast Elevation Eaves
7. Photograph 9 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Guest House, Southwest Elevation, Looking Northeast
7. Photograph 10 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Guest House, Southeast and Northeast Elevations, Looking North
7. Photograph 11 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. View of District from Manasota Key Road Near Garage, Looking Northwest
7. Photograph 12 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. View of District from Manasota Key Road Near Garage, Looking Southwest
7. Photograph 13 of 18

1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Garage, Northeast and Northwest Elevations, Looking Southwest
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1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Pump House, Northeast and Southeast Elevations, Looking Southwest
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1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Pump House, Detail Showing Concrete Pier
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1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
6. Cisterns, View from Northwest
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1. Hermitage-Whitney Historic District
- 6 View of District from Beach Showing Pilings, Whitney House, and Beach Cottage, Looking Northeast
7. Photograph 18 of 18

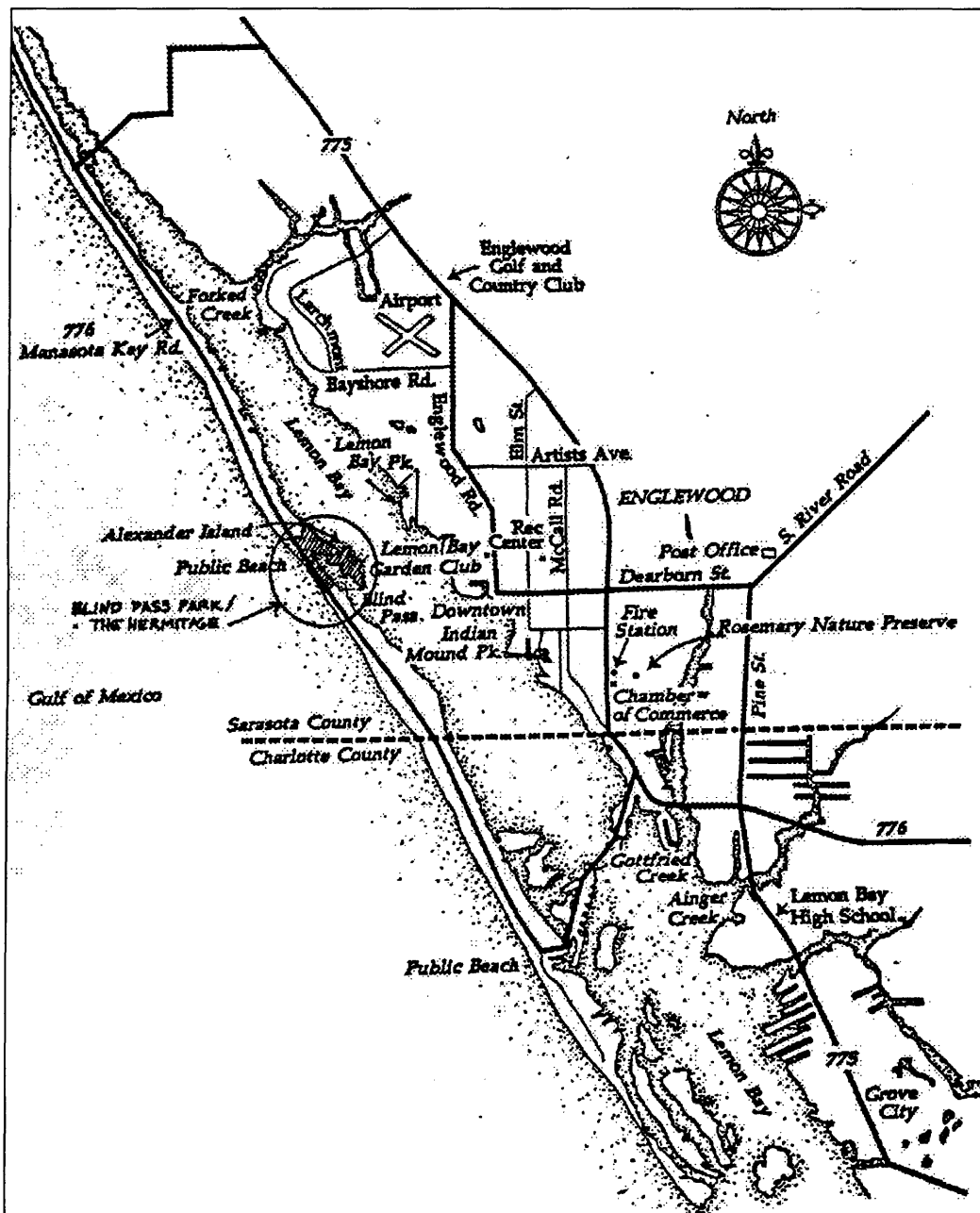
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HERMITAGE-WHITNEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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ATTACHMENT #1—LOCATOR MAP



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ATTACHMENT #2—LAYOUT OF BLIND PASS PARK

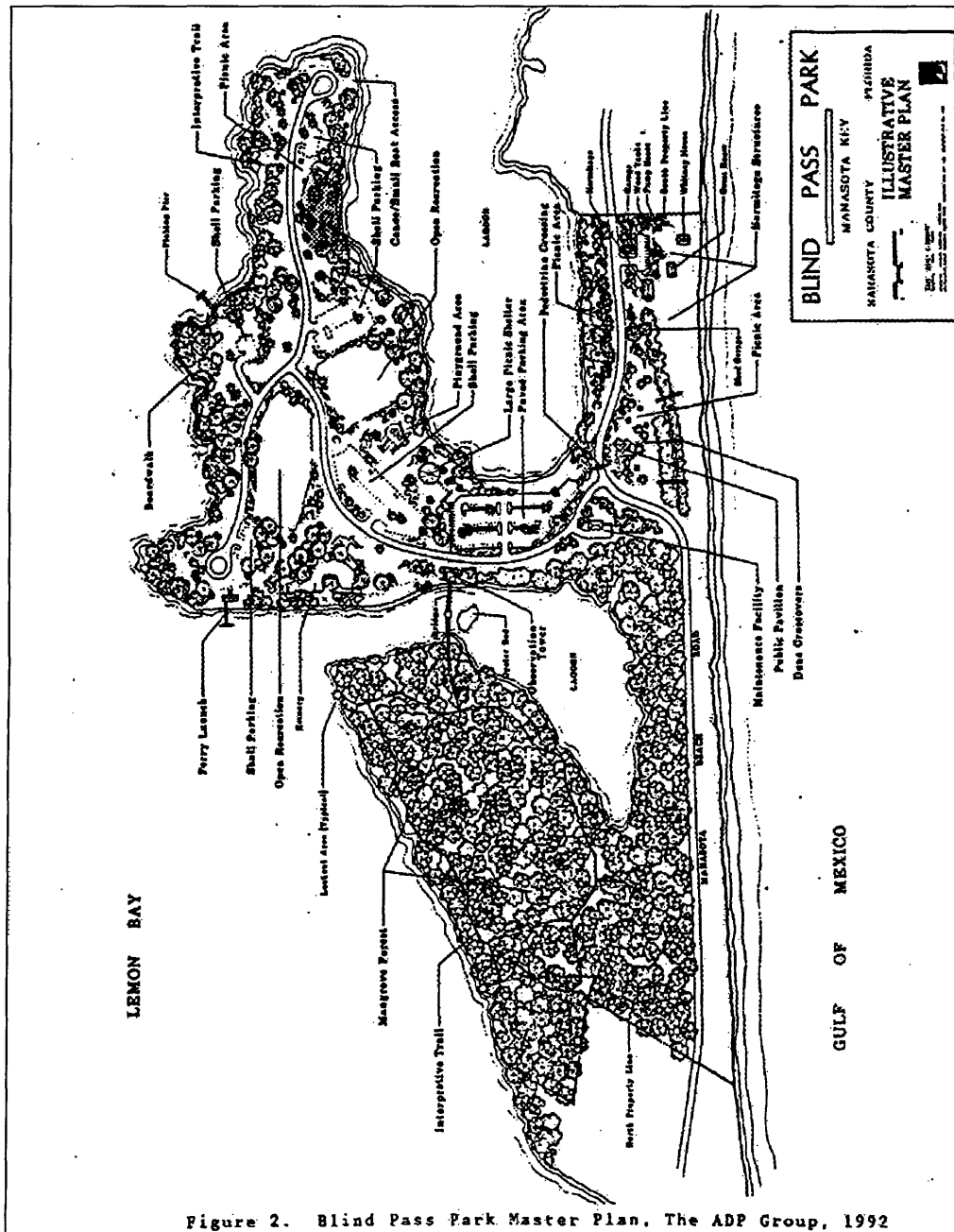


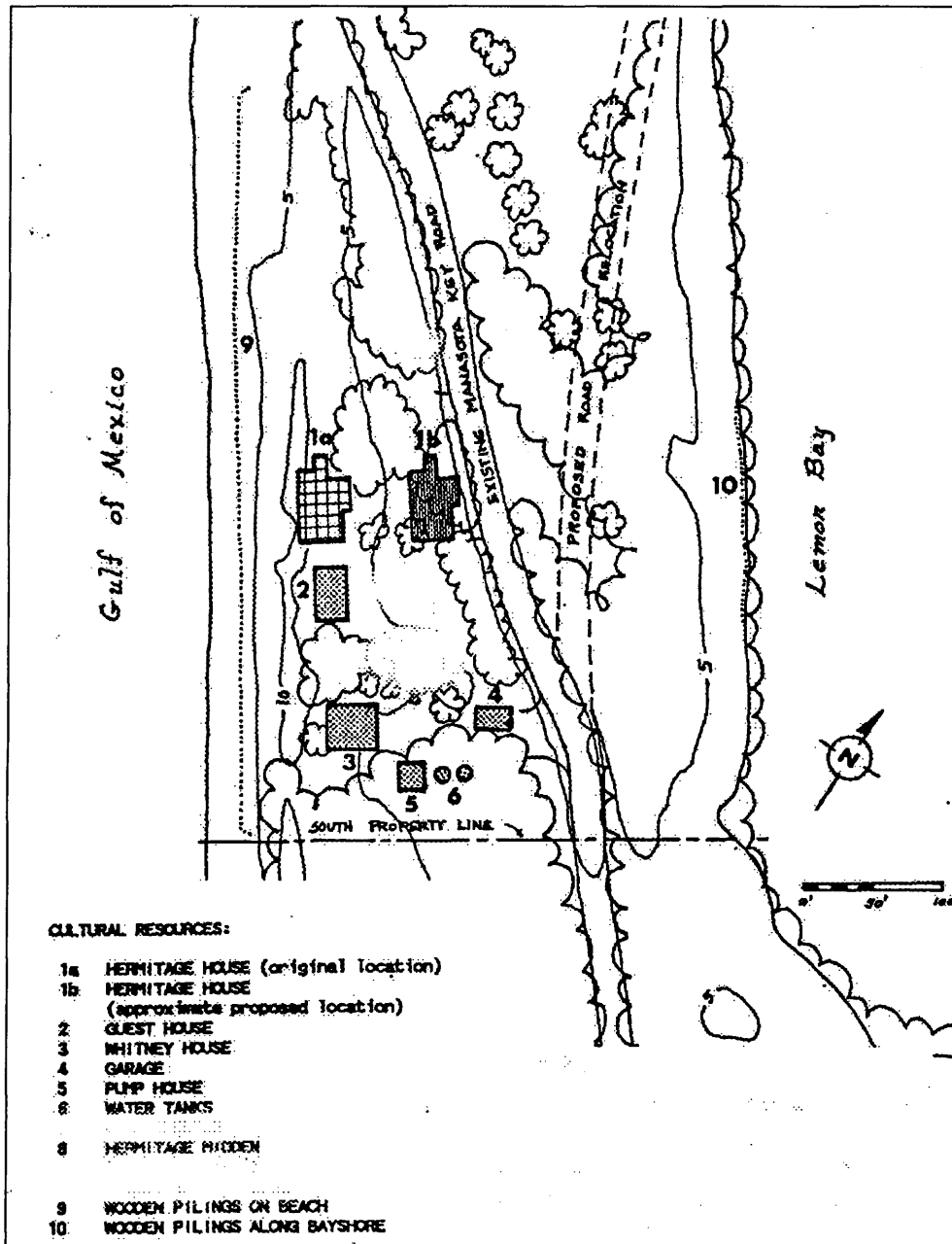
Figure 2. Blind Pass Park Master Plan. The ADP Group, 1992

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ATTACHMENT #3—HERMITAGE HOUSE RELOCATION



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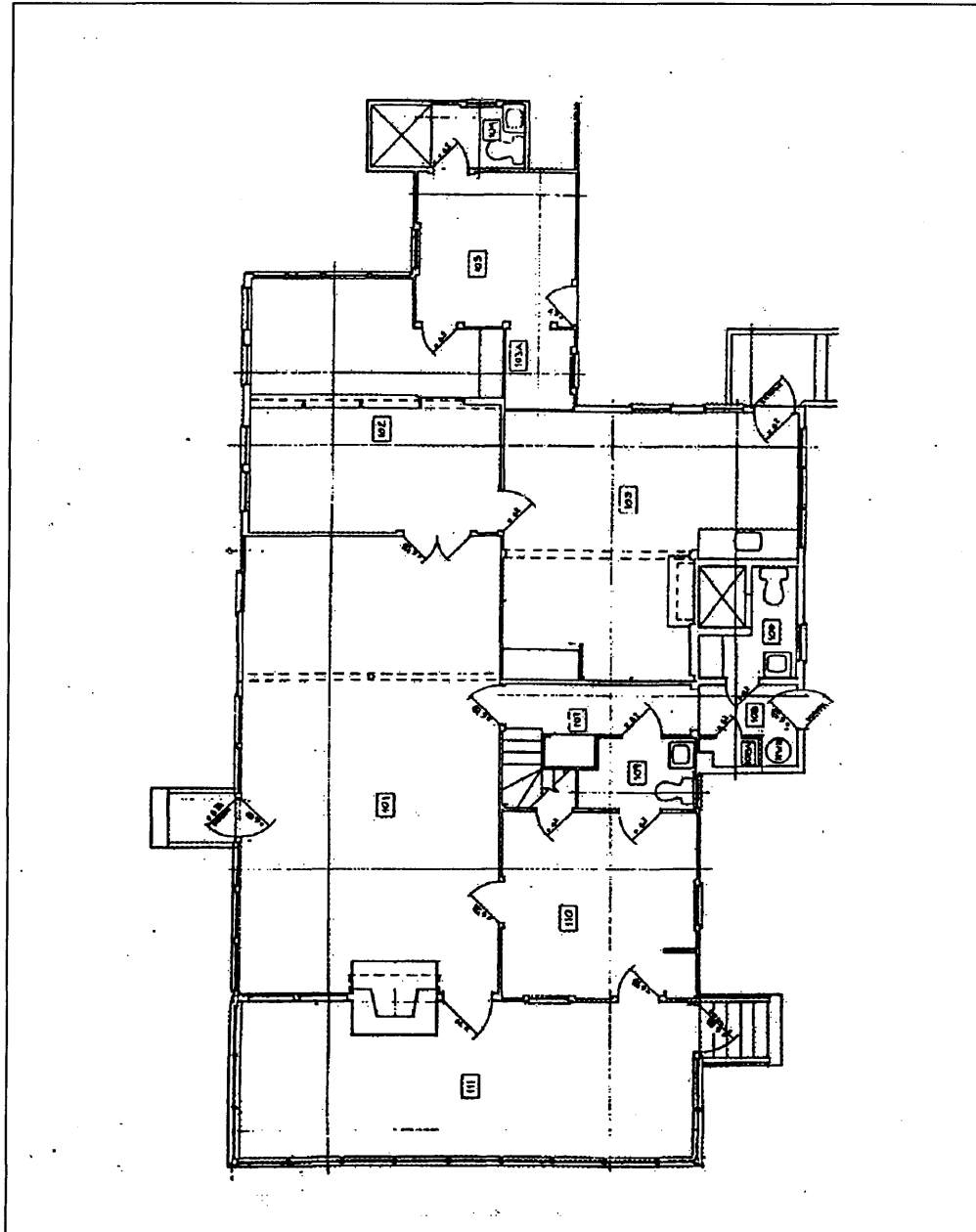
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ATTACHMENT #4—THE HERMITAGE, FIRST FLOOR PLAN

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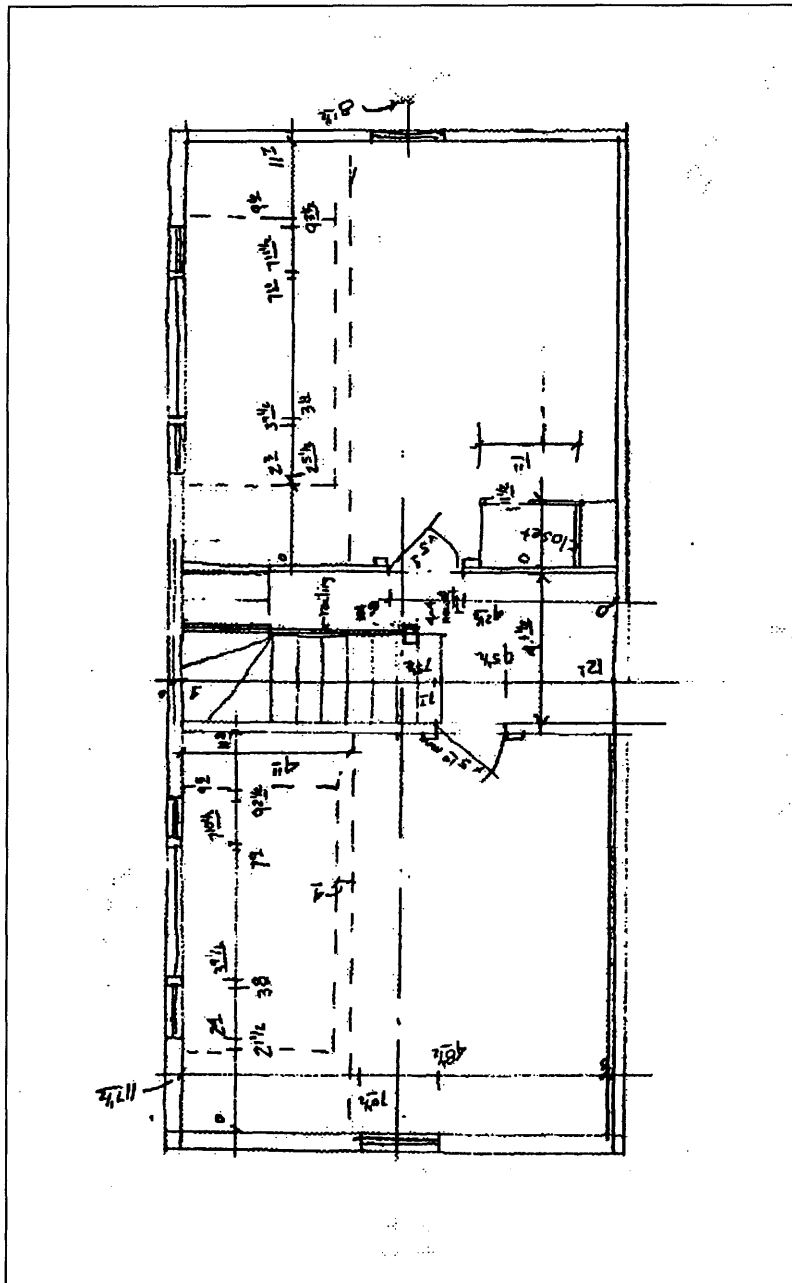
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ATTACHMENT #5—THE HERMITAGE, SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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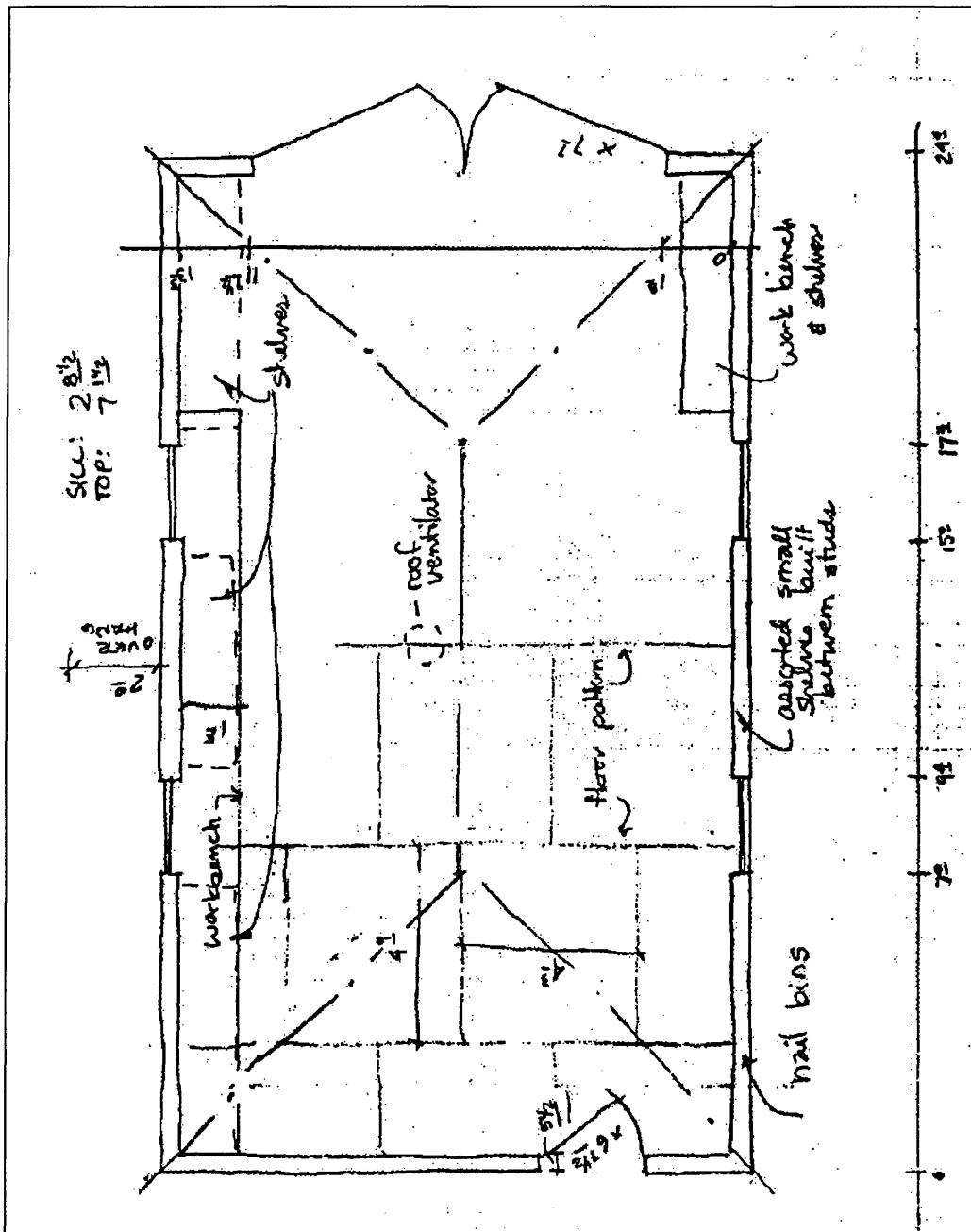
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ATTACHMENT #8—WHITNEY GARAGE

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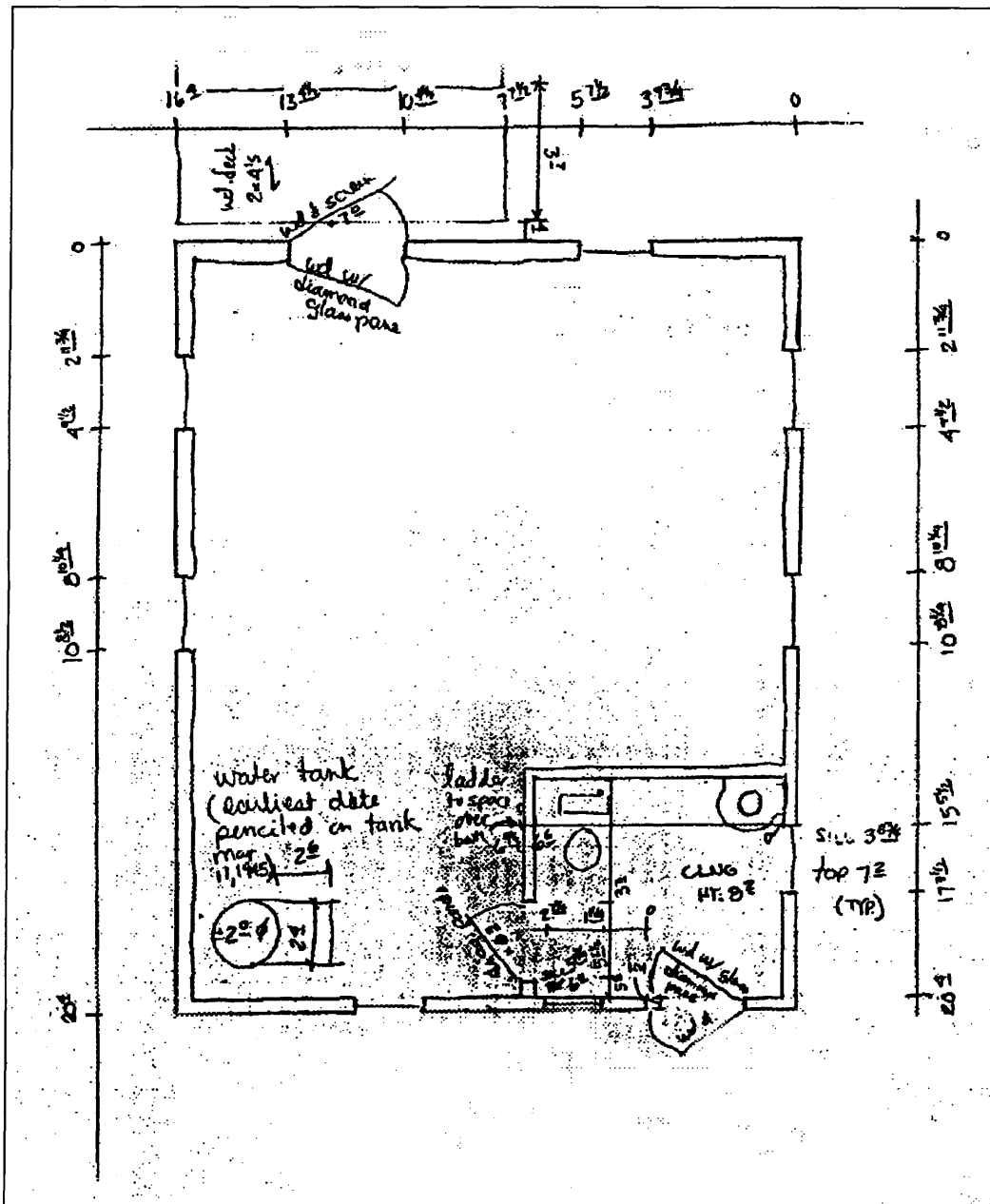
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ATTACHMENT #9—WHITNEY PUMP HOUSE

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ATTACHMENT #10—WOODEN CISTERNS

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