



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 DOWNTOWN SARASOTA HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Bound by 1st st., Orange Av, State St., Gulf Stream Av & N Pineapple Av N/A  not for publication

city or town Sarasota N/A  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Sarasota code 115 zip code 34236

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Barbara E. Mattick / DSHPO 2/18/09  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4.9.09

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	
51	10	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
51	10	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

6

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/Professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Department Store
- DOMESTIC/Hotel
- DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/Professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE/Business
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
- RELIGION/Religious Facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Mission Revival
- Mediterranean Revival, Italian Renaissance Revival
- See Section 7, Page 1

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Concrete
- walls Stucco
- Brick
- roof Tar and Gravel
- 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)

- COMMERCE
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1909-1959

Significant Dates

c. 1909

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Zimmerman, Ralph & William

Blder: Unknown

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 19 apprx.

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid coordinates for Zone 17, Easting 347200, Northing 3024720

UTM grid coordinates for Zone 17, Easting 347800, Northing 3024500

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 Trish Slovinac and Marielle Lumanq, Architectural Historian

organization Architectural Consultants, Inc date March 2008

street & number 8110 Blakie Court, Suite A telephone (941) 379-6206

city or town Sarasota state Florida zip code 34240

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

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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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**Additional Architectural Styles**

NO STYLE/Masonry Vernacular  
LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Neoclassical  
LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style  
MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco; Moderne, Commercial Modern, Sarasota School

**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District represents the historic commercial core of the City of Sarasota. The district, which is centered on Main Street, consists of 61 buildings, of which 51 are contributing (83%) and 10 are noncontributing (17%). There is also one noncontributing site, Five Points Park, the only public green space in the district. The contributing resources represent a wide variety of architectural styles including Art Deco, Moderne, Commercial Modern, Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, with subtypes Italian Renaissance and Mission, Neoclassical and Neoclassical Revival, and Sarasota School of Architecture. In addition, six of the contributing resources are listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places: the American National Bank Building at 1330 Main Street, the Kress Building at 1442 Main Street, Worth's Block at 1490 Main Street, the DeMarcay Hotel at 27 S. Palm Avenue, the Roth Cigar Factory at 30 Mira Mar Court, and the Edwards Theatre at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue. The 13 noncontributing resources represent historic buildings that have undergone extensive alterations and those constructed after 1959.

**SETTING**

Sarasota is a city with a population of approximately 55,000 located in western Florida about 55 miles south of Tampa and 83 miles north of Fort Myers. It is located at the northwest corner of Sarasota County and serves as the county seat. The city is situated on Sarasota Bay, an inlet to the Gulf of Mexico. The downtown area contains a mixture of historic and modern buildings, most of the latter having been constructed within the last 30 years. Today, downtown Sarasota has a number of large hotels, office condominiums, restaurants, and specialty retail stores. Much of the recent commercial development has taken place south of the downtown core, along the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41), and east of downtown along Fruitville Road. Additional post-World War II commercial development has occurred on North Tamiami Trail and east of the trail along Ringling Boulevard. The city of Sarasota is the seat of government for Sarasota County. After a period of decline in the 1960s and 1970s, the downtown area has seen revitalization in recent years, including the restoration of historic properties. Currently, the downtown area is composed of a mixture of historic and modern buildings, dating from around 1909 through the present day, which serve as specialty stores, restaurants, offices, hotels, apartment buildings, and residential condominiums.

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**DESCRIPTION**

The research on the downtown district involved the examination of a variety of documentary sources including local property records, Sanborn fire insurance maps, city directories, and historic photographs that indicate that this area has historically been the commercial center of Sarasota since its founding in the late 19th century. The Downtown Sarasota Historic District is centered on the western end of Main Street, bounded by Orange Avenue on the east, Gulfstream Avenue on the west, First Street on the north, and State Street and McAnsh Square on the south. It also extends one block south along South Palm Avenue, South Pineapple Avenue, and Mira Mar Court, as well as one block north along North Pineapple Avenue. The district is surrounded by mixed residential and commercial areas to the north and south, newer commercial buildings to the east, and the divided, 4-lane Gulfstream Avenue and adjacent open space to the west. The terrain throughout the district is flat, and the streets are generally two lanes wide, with a central turning lane at intersections and diagonal parking or parallel parking on one or both sides of the streets. The streets have brick and concrete sidewalks which are lined with trees and lamp posts (Photos 1-9). The various building lots range from 25 feet in width to approximately 400 feet in width, and the buildings range in height from 1 to 10 stories in height, although the majority of the contributing buildings are two stories in height.

**Architectural Styles**

The contributing buildings within the district have a date range of c. 1909 to c.1959, and represent a variety of architectural styles including, Art Deco, Art Moderne, Commercial Modern, Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, Mission, Neoclassical Revival, and Sarasota School of Architecture. The majority of the contributing commercial buildings exhibit traditional glass storefront windows, with recessed entranceways and suspended canopies or cloth awnings.

**Art Deco**

Art Deco was an architectural style popular throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It derived its name from a 1925 art show in Paris, called the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes. It was mainly defined by its ornament, which, in the United States, included stylized floral patterns and repetitive geometric forms based on North and South American Indian art. Art Deco was widely used throughout Florida for commercial and apartment buildings, especially during the years of economic depression, in communities such as Miami and Sarasota that continued to grow despite the poor economic climate. Although Art Deco is not a predominant style in the Downtown Sarasota Historic District, the S.H. Kress Building (Photo 10) at 1442 Main Street is a fine example of the style, and is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1984). Constructed c.1932, the Kress Building displays many elements of the Art Deco style, including wrap-around storefront windows on the ground floor, a flat roof, polychromatic glazed terra cotta tile on the main

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facade, buff-colored brick, and Mayan influenced decorative motifs, such as the carvings above the windows on the main facade.

**Art Moderne**

The Art Moderne style gained popularity in the 1930s, essentially replacing the Art Deco style in most communities. Like the Art Deco style, Art Moderne continued to flourish in Florida's coastal communities during the Great Depression, and was usually applied to commercial and apartment buildings. Typical features of the Art Moderne style include flat roofs, often with raised parapets, smooth exterior surfaces, glass block, cantilevered overhangs, and rounded corners, mimicking the new streamlined shapes of automobiles and airplanes. The Downtown Sarasota Historic District retains five examples of the Art Moderne style. The Bay Drugs/Walgreen Agency building (Photo 11) at 1500-12 Main Street is an excellent example of this architectural style. Constructed c.1935, this building displays such characteristic features as the flat roof with a stepped parapet, rounded northwest corner, recessed entrances, some terra cotta details, and some glass block detailing.

**Commercial Modern**

There are five Commercial Modern buildings within the Downtown Sarasota Historic District. These buildings are generally classified by their masonry construction, and exhibit limited stylistic elements of the modern movement, preventing them from being classified as "Modern." The building at 1300 Main Street (Photo 12) is an excellent example of this building style. Constructed c.1951, this single story building contains large plate glass storefront windows, tiled surfaces underneath the windows, a flat roof with a straight parapet, and plate glass entrance doors with canted door frames. In addition, this building lacks ornamentation which was typical of the modern style.

**Masonry Vernacular**

Twenty-seven of the contributing buildings within the Downtown Sarasota Historic District represent what is generally referred to as the Masonry Vernacular style. While these buildings may have some decorative motifs across their facade, they exhibit no particular stylistic influences. Worth's Block (Photo 13), at 1490 Main Street, is a fine example of the Masonry Vernacular style, and is individually listed in the National Register (1998). This two-story brick building was built of brick c.1912 and features a wooden storefront facade on the first story, with large plate glass windows and a recessed entranceway. Above the entrance are pairs of double hung sash windows with arched brick lintels and projecting brick sills. The side elevation, along Lemon Avenue, contains individual double hung sash windows on both floor levels, as well as a secondary entrance, and a stepped parapet that continuously lowers from the front to the rear. The exterior of the building was encased in stucco and concrete panels around 1960, but these materials were removed and the storefront

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reconstructed in a 1997 restoration of the building. The Iwerson Block (Photo 14), at 1367-71 Main Street, is another excellent example of the Masonry Vernacular style within the downtown area. It was constructed c. 1909, making it one of the oldest buildings in the downtown area. This building is faced with rusticated stone on the second story and has modern metal and plate glass storefront facades on the ground level. The metal bar that once anchored the suspended canopy is still extant, but the individual store units now feature cloth and vinyl awnings. The original second story windows have been replaced with two-over-two single hung sash units, but retain their projecting sills and lintels. A simple cornice extends across the roof line, with three recessed "panels" containing air vents.

**Mediterranean Revival**

Although Mediterranean-derived styles date to as early as the 1880s, the Spanish Revival architecture was not popularized until the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego. These styles, including Italian Renaissance and Mission, were extremely popular in Florida and other states with a history of Spanish settlement. They were applied to a wide variety of building types, including residential, commercial, and apartment, with varying amounts of detailing. Typical features of these styles include gable or hip roofs faced with barrel tile or flat roofs with curvilinear parapets, plaster and terra cotta detailing, stuccoed exterior walls, and rounded windows. The Downtown Sarasota Historic District contains five examples of the Mediterranean Revival style, among them the Mira Mar Apartments (Photo 15) at 41-77 S. Palm Avenue. The building, constructed c. 1922, has a low-pitched gable and flat roof, arched entry porticos with Spanish style parapets, exposed rafters, tile awnings over some windows, and pointed arch masonry window surrounds. Wrought iron rails on the second-floor balconies provide intricate detailing, typical of the Mediterranean Revival style.

**Italian Renaissance**

The Italian Renaissance is a subtype of the Mediterranean Revival style. Drawing its influences from the Renaissance palaces of Florence, Venice and Rome, the style was popular in the United States from the 1880s through the 1920s. Like the Mediterranean Revival, it was applied to various building types, including commercial, private residential, and apartment buildings. The Edwards Theatre (Photo 16) at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue, which is listed individually in the National Register (1984), is a fine example of this subtype. It contains many of the common characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style, including barrel tile roofs, rounded arched entryways, quoins around the second story windows, and niches in the front corners, which contain small statues.

**Mission**

The Mission style is another subtype of the Mediterranean Revival style. Its popularity in Florida rose during the Land Boom of the 1920s. It was used on a wide variety of buildings, including churches, private residences,



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train stations, and commercial buildings. It has many aspects of the Mediterranean Revival, but tends to exhibit a flat roof with a curvilinear parapet and a greater simplicity of decoration. The historic district contains two Mission style buildings, both of which were individually listed in the National Register in 1984. The Roth Cigar Factory (Photo 17) at 30 Mira Mar Court is a fine example of the Mission style, with its massive corner piers, the flat roof with a curvilinear parapet with cartouche details, paired round arched windows within a rounded arch surround, and decorative wrought iron rails. The DeMarcay Hotel (Photo 18) at 27 S. Palm Avenue is also a fine example of the Mission style. It displays many of the associated features of the style, including a flat roof with a shaped parapet, rounded arched windows and entryways on the first floor, and barrel tile on the second level overhang. The ogee arched windows on the second floor are a novel feature of the building not normally associated with the Mission style.

**Neoclassical Revival**

The Neoclassical Revival style was used throughout the United States from 1890 through 1920, and again from 1925 through 1950, for many commercial and public buildings, as well as for private residences. Typical features included the use of stone, smooth masonry exterior walls, and cornices with classical detailing. The buildings in the Downtown Sarasota Historic District include the American National Bank Building (Photo 19) at 1330 Main Street, listed in the National Register (1998). The two-story base of the building is defined by colossal pilasters supporting a cornice decorated with triglyphs and dentils. Between the pilasters, defining the second floor level, are recessed panels with medallions. The top level of the building also has pilasters which are crowned with a Corinthian style capital. A second cornice with brackets surrounds the roofline, and "rusticated stone" surrounds the uppermost level windows.

One of the best-preserved small Neoclassical Revival commercial buildings in the district is the former Kickliter Hardware Store at 1586 Main Street, constructed c. 1924 (Photo 20). The small two-story building stands out among the neighboring Masonry Vernacular buildings, soaring skyward with piers flanking the main facade that rise above the parapet and terminate in urn finials. The ground level features a single storefront with plate glass windows that frame the central entranceway sheltered by an original suspended canopy that hangs from cables anchored into the second story. The second story exhibits classical pilasters that frame three sets of casement windows surmounted by fanlights that overlook decorative wrought iron balconettes. The pilasters support a classical entablature above which one finds a frieze containing glazed terracotta panels. The parapet is marked by a corrugated metal pent roof supported by dentils.

An example of the later period of the Neoclassical Revival is the First United Methodist Church (Photo 21) at 104 S. Pineapple Avenue which was constructed c. 1954. This building has engaged Doric pilasters across the facade of the sanctuary that frame round arches having blind oculus window motifs in their centers. The facade of the sanctuary has a pedimented roof with a simple entablature and another blind oculus window. The steeple,

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which appears to be derived from 18th century English classical church antecedents rather than “pure” ancient Greek or Roman models, also has classical features including cornices on the belfry and urns on the corners.

**Sarasota School of Architecture**

The Sarasota School of Architecture, predominant c.1941-1966, evolved from the International Style, a modern movement which first emerged in Europe and was dominant throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The International Style was distinguished by its simple forms, lack of ornament, rejection of history, and the use of industrial materials such as concrete, metal, and glass. The Sarasota School of Architecture blended these principles with traditional vernacular architecture to respond to the unique tropical and flat environment of Sarasota. Under the leadership of architects Ralph Twitchell and Paul Rudolph, designers sought to create a better place based on ideas of respecting the land, use of local materials, appreciation for history, and innovative construction techniques. This resulted in the creation of basic tenets including the use of simple volumes penetrating vertically and horizontally, elevation above the ground providing scenic views and the ability to capture more sunlight and gulf breezes, the incorporation of natural and indigenous materials such as wood and Ocala block, a clarity of construction, maximum economy of means, and honesty in details and connections. One building in the district represents the Sarasota School of Architecture style. The commercial building at 46-52 S. Palm Avenue (Photo 22), designed by the father and son team of Ralph and William Zimmerman in 1959, has strong characteristics of the Sarasota School, such as the full-facade windows, post and beam construction, and an integrated courtyard with a wide canopy and skylight.

**Noncontributing Buildings**

Thirteen buildings, or 25%, are considered noncontributing within the Downtown Sarasota Historic District. These are commercial buildings which are either historic buildings that have been extensively altered, thus losing their architectural integrity or less than fifty years in age. The most notable of the noncontributing buildings in the historic district is the former Hotel Sarasota (Photo 23) at 1341-1343 Main Street. Constructed c. 1925 as Beaux-Arts style hotel, it was Sarasota’s first high-rise building rising seven stories. It was modernized in the 1970s and now has retail space on the first floor and commercial offices above. A test removal of a portion of the exterior cladding in 2007 revealed that the underlying brick and original decorative details are still extant, making it a possible candidate for renovation using the federal tax incentives. The building at 1551 Main Street (Photo 24) is a 1980 near replica of the building at 1553 Main Street, constructed c. 1935. It was designed to imitate the facade of the earlier building. The restaurant at 1400 Main Street (Photo 25) was constructed c.1980 to replace a building destroyed by fire. Like many other modern infill structures within the City of Sarasota, this building was designed to be distinct, yet to blend in with the surrounding historic context. The dance studio at 1345 Main Street (Photo 26) was constructed c.1924, but retains a modernized facade, which compromises its historic integrity.

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### Integrity

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District retains a relatively high degree of integrity. Although a number of the contributing buildings have undergone some form of alterations, which primarily consist of replacement windows, replacement storefronts, new siding, and some new decoration or removal of existing decoration, these alterations are generally reversible. Overall, the Downtown Sarasota Historic District retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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LIST OF RESOURCES

**List of Contributing Buildings**

\* denotes a resource that is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places

<u>Address</u>	<u>Present Use</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>FMSF #</u>
<u>First Street</u>				
1296	Commercial	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO287
<u>Main Street</u>				
1300	Retail	Commercial Modern	c. 1951	8SO6618
1311	Retail	Commercial Modern	c. 1925	8SO2793
1319	Sports Bar	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945	8SO2794
1330*	Residential	Neoclassical Revival	c. 1926	8SO2389
1341-1343	Offices	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2795
1355	Restaurant	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1925	8SO276
1359-1365	Pub/Art Gallery	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1909	8SO1284
1367-1371	Restaurant/Art Gallery	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1909	8SO277
1373-1377	Bookstore/Pet Boutique/Bar	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1920	8SO2797
1379	Hair Salon	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1912	8SO6615
1383-1387	Retail Shops	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1920	8SO6616
1395	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1921	8SO2802
1425-1433	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8SO1282
1437	Skin Care Spa	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2806
1400	Mixed Use	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1932	Pending
1442*	Insurance Offices	Art Deco	c. 1932	8SO412
1448	Tobacco Shop	Art Moderne	c. 1924	8SO2807
1454	Art Gallery	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8SO6617
1472-1480	Hair Care/Art Gallery	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1931	8SO2809
1481	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1926	8SO2812
1484-1488	Book Store	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1920	8SO2811
1490*	Night Club	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1912	8SO2560
1500-1512	Men's Clothes	Art Moderne	c. 1939	8SO1281
1515	Women's Clothes	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8SO2813
1516-1522	Clothes Store	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1939	8SO2815
1519	Landscape Architects	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1936	8SO2814
1521	Home Furnishing	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8SO2816
1527-1537	Pawn Shop/Retail	Art Moderne	c. 1927	8SO1279
1528	Nightclub	Art Moderne	c. 1925	8SO1280

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Main Street (cont.)

1532-1536	Restaurant/Art Gallery	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2818
1540	Art Gallery/Women's Clothes	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1932	8SO2819
1541	Pawn Shop	Art Moderne	c. 1940	8SO1278
1548-1560	Business Machines	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1955	8SO2820
1553	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1935	8SO6620
1564-1578	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2821
1575	Real Estate Office	Modern-Sarasota School	c. 1959	8SO6621
1586	Investment Broker	Neoclassical Revival	c. 1924	8SO348
1592	Restaurant	Commercial Modern	c. 1948	8SO2822

Mira Mar Court

30*	Real Estate Office	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1923	8SO414
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N. Pineapple Avenue

25	Dinner Theater	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1948	8SO2928
61*	Theater	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1926	8SO410

S. Palm Avenue

27*	Hotel	Mission	c. 1922	8SO409
30-32	Interior Design/Jewelry	Commercial Modern	c. 1956	8SO6622
41-77	Mira Mar Apartments	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1922	8SO382
46-52	Art Gallery Modern-Sarasota School		c. 1959	8SO2414

S. Pineapple Avenue

104	Church	Neoclassical Revival	c. 1954	8SO6623
124-128	Boutique Spa	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1946	8SO2929
127	Antique Dealer	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1920	8SO353
136	Antique Dealer	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1951	8SO6624

State Street

1400	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2947
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**List of Noncontributing Buildings**

<u>Address</u>	<u>Present Use</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>FMSF #</u>
<b><u>Main Street</u></b>				
1345	Mixed Use	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8SO2796
1400	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1985	N/A
1410-1420	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1926	8SO2804
1435	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2805
1468	Antique Dealer	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1924	8SO853
1526	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1925	8SO2817
1551	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1980	N/A
1582	Investment Brokers	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1997	N/A
<b><u>N. Palm Avenue</u></b>				
1298	Restaurant	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1995	N/A
<b><u>S. Palm Avenue</u></b>				
16	Art Gallery	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1965	N/A

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**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C, in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Architecture. The district has historically served and continues to serve as the commercial core of downtown Sarasota. The district contains fine examples of various architectural styles, including Art Deco, Art Moderne, Mediterranean Revival—with subtypes such as Italian Renaissance and Mission—Neoclassical Revival, and Sarasota School of Architecture. Although some of the original commercial structures have been replaced with recent construction and some demolition has taken place without the construction of replacement buildings, the Downtown Sarasota Historic District retains its sense as the original commercial center of Sarasota that developed from the period c. 1909-1959.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

**Early Development of Sarasota**

The earliest attempts to settle what is now Sarasota County occurred in the early nineteenth century, when Spanish fishermen established fishing camps in the area along the Gulf of Mexico before Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821. At the close of the Second Seminole Indian War in 1842, the Armed Occupation Act was passed to encourage settlement of Florida. Any "head of family or single man over eighteen" who was able to bear arms could apply for a permit to homestead 160 acres of land, provided he lived in a suitable habitation for five years and cultivated at least five acres. In 1843, Manuel Olivella and Jose Elzuardi each filed a claim for 160 acres of land, just north of today's Whitaker's Bayou.<sup>1</sup> By 1847, William H. Whitaker and his half-brother, Hamlin Snell, homesteaded 145 acres along Sarasota Bay just south of Whitaker's Bayou and planted orange groves and guava trees with seeds purchased in Cuba.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, more settlers, including Josiah Gates and Phillippi Bermudez, settled in the Sarasota area, but it was not until after the Civil War and the adoption of the Southern Homestead Act of 1866<sup>3</sup> that actual communities began to develop. In 1867, the John G. Webb family settled to the south of the Whitakers, in the area that would become present day Osprey.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1870s, a small community formed between Hudson Bayou and Phillipi Creek. By 1878, the number of settlers prompted Charles Abbe to establish the first post office in the area, which was designated Sara Sota on August 16 of that year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Snyder Matthews. Journey to Centennial Sarasota. (Sarasota: Coastal Printing, 1997) 39. Benjamin Fuller also purchase land near present-day Bowlees Creek in Bradenton.

<sup>2</sup> Matthews Edge of Wilderness 173-75.

<sup>3</sup> The act opened public land for sale in 160-acre plots in southern states, including Florida, for people having trouble finding enough money to buy land. The law was repealed in 1876.

<sup>4</sup> Grismer 48-53; Matthews Edge of Wilderness 273-278.

<sup>5</sup> Alford G. Bradbury and E. Story Hallock. A Chronology of Florida Post Offices. (The Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs, 1962) 75.

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In 1881, the State of Florida circumvented the Homestead Act, claiming an earlier Federal law deeded all swamp and overflow land to the state. This land, including close to 700,000 acres in the Sarasota/Manatee area, was sold by the state of Florida to various land speculators. Tax records reveal that most of the 700,000 acres in Sarasota and Manatee were sold to eight companies, including three railroad companies and the Florida Mortgage & Investment Company, Ltd., of Britain.

**The Ormiston Colony**

In 1884, the Florida Mortgage and Investment Company hired Richard Paulson to survey Sarasota. With him, he brought Louis Colson, an African American who would become one of the founding fathers of the "Overtown" community, which lies north of the downtown area. It was Colson who drove the stake in at Five Points, the beginning of the downtown commercial district.<sup>6</sup> The official plat was dated 1885, and recorded in the Manatee County Clerk of Courts in 1886. In the summer of 1885, John Selwin Tait, a Scotsman, worked with the Florida Mortgage & Investment Company to organize the "Ormiston Colony" to settle the village of Sarasota. The opportunity was advertised in an Edinburgh newspaper, promising a lot in town and a 40-acre estate nearby for the grand sum of 100 pounds Sterling.<sup>7</sup> On November 25, 1885, 23 families, a total of 68 people, left Glasgow for their new home. After stops in New York, Fernandina, and Cedar Keys, the colonists finally arrived in Sarasota on December 28, 1885.<sup>8</sup> Upon arrival, the group was disappointed to find that the town and estates were little more than a plat on a piece of paper. Most of these early pioneers, including Tait, abandoned the colony within three months; the John Browning family and a few individuals decided to remain.<sup>9</sup> Despite the initial problems, the Florida Mortgage & Investment Company refused to abandon the village, and in 1886, directed their local manager, A.C. Acton, to begin construction of the town.

Initial efforts focused on clearing Main Street from the wharf to Five Points, construction of a two-story boarding house northeast of Main and Central, and the erection of temporary houses for colonists. Carpenters and workers were brought in from Lakeland, under the direction of Captain Lewis Roberts. Additionally, colonists could work as laborers and earn \$1.25 to \$2 a day, depending on their level of skill.<sup>10</sup> Individuals also began to construct buildings in the new village. Dr. Thomas Wallace, an original colonist, built a clinic on Main Street near Palm Avenue. Furman and Charlie Whitaker, sons of William Whitaker, opened a general

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<sup>6</sup> The buildings that stood on the block known as Five Points were demolished after the 1950s. Today it is a city park established in the 1970s. Annie M. McElroy. But Your World and My World: The Struggle for Survival: A Partial History of Blacks in Sarasota County, 1884-1986. (Black South Press, 1986) 1-2; Kimberly Hinder. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Overtown Historic District. (2002. Florida Division of Historic Resources, Tallahassee).

<sup>7</sup> Matthews Journey to Centennial Sarasota 47-54.

<sup>8</sup> Grismer 94.

<sup>9</sup> It is rumored that some of the settlers called on Tait in the middle of the night with shotguns only to find that he had already left. Matthews Journey to the Centennial 59.

<sup>10</sup> Grismer 101; Matthews Journey to the Centennial 62-63.



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store across from the clinic in March 1886; and Hamlin Whitaker, another son of William, opened a meat market at the northwest corner of Main and Palm in April 1886, followed by a livery stable at the northeast corner of Main and Palm in the fall of that year.<sup>11</sup> While seemingly the advent of a solid community, in reality, the village consisted mostly of the construction workers brought in to construct buildings essential to attracting new settlers.

In the spring of 1886, John Hamilton Gillespie, the son of the Florida Mortgage & Investment Company's president, arrived in Sarasota to take control of the village's development. He initiated further improvements, including widening streets, constructing a dock along the bay, laying a wooden sidewalk between the wharf and Five Points,<sup>12</sup> and digging wells. Four additional buildings were erected along Main Street, including two homes, a rental property for town meetings, dances, and church services, and a one-room schoolhouse. Gillespie also built the De Soto Hotel at Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue, meant to provide accommodations for prospective investors. The De Soto Hotel officially opened on February 25, 1887 with a grand ball; it was the first major social event in Sarasota.<sup>13</sup>

In 1887, the village of Sarasota made an unsuccessful bid to become the seat of Manatee County.<sup>14</sup> The failure of the attempt, along with the yellow fever epidemic in 1888, ushered in a small recession, and the already small population declined slightly.<sup>15</sup> With no industry other than fishing and farming, Gillespie realized the colony would not survive without access to a railroad.<sup>16</sup> He persuaded three Boston capitalists to join with him, and together they formed the Manatee & Sarasota Railway and Drainage Company. A lack of funds, however, brought the project to a halt, and in 1891, the Arcadia, Gulf Coast, and Lakeland Railroad Company was given land to construct a small rail line between Sarasota and Bradenton. The train completed its maiden trip on May 16, 1892, and quickly earned the nickname "Slow and Wobbly" because of its dilapidated Civil War era engine and poorly constructed tracks. After two years of irregularly scheduled trips, the train was retired in 1894, leaving the Sarasota area without a working railroad until 1903.<sup>17</sup> In the mid-1890s, Gillespie returned to Scotland. His departure had no major impact on the village of Sarasota; its growth remained stagnant.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 62, 65. All of these original structures were demolished for new construction.

<sup>12</sup> An intersection in downtown Sarasota now marked by Five Points Park.

<sup>13</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 65; Lillian G. Burns. "John Hamilton Gillespie." Sarasota Origins 1 (1988): 22. All of these buildings have been demolished.

<sup>14</sup> Pine Level, the previous county seat for Manatee, became the seat for DeSoto County, when it was created from the eastern portion of Manatee County in 1887.

<sup>15</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 65.

<sup>16</sup> Burns 27.

<sup>17</sup> Burns 27; Elmer G. Sulzer Ghost Railroads of Sarasota, Manatee, and Desoto Counties. (Sarasota: Sarasota County Historical Commission and the Sarasota County Historical Society, 1971) 36; Gregg Turner. A Short History of Florida Railroads. (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003) 100-101; Gregg Turner. Images of America: Railroads of Southwest Florida. (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 1999) 19.

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A series of events at the end of the nineteenth century brought Sarasota out of its lull. The first of these was the Great Freeze of 1896, which had completely destroyed the citrus trees and devastated the vegetable industry in the northern part of the state. However, in the southern part of the state, the freeze only killed the year's fruit and vegetable crops, but the citrus trees survived. This enticed settlers into the area, where there was a better guarantee of not losing their investment due to extreme weather. The Spanish-American War of 1898 brought thousands of troops to Florida, and with them, a high demand for fish and cattle.<sup>18</sup> The De Soto Hotel in Sarasota was sold to a group of Tampa businessmen, who renovated and modernized the building. The Sarasota House followed suit. In 1899, Sarasota received two telephones, one at the post office and the other in Harry L. Higel's office on the wharf; and C.V.S. Wilson and his wife started the first newspaper in the village, the Sarasota Times.<sup>19</sup> By the turn of the century, Sarasota had hit a second boom period, which would eventually lead to its development as a desirable winter resort.<sup>20</sup>

**The Turn of the Century Development: from Village, to Town, to City**

The turn of the century prompted optimism and an excitement over growth and development in Sarasota. In August 1902, the citizens of Sarasota set official boundaries for incorporation as a town. The boundaries included all of the original platted areas, as well as additional parcels to the west and south. On October 14, Sarasota held its first election; Gillespie, who had since returned from Scotland, became the first mayor.<sup>21</sup> On October 20, 1902, the town council held its first meeting, and a week later, they adopted a set of 26 rules and procedures to follow during their meetings. On November 14, 1902, Sarasota was officially recorded as an incorporated town in the Manatee County Clerk of Courts.<sup>22</sup> By August of the following year, the town of Sarasota owned its roads, prompting the first tax levied on property owners. Those who owned property on the south side of Main Street were taxed for new sidewalks; those on the north side were taxed to maintain the existing boardwalk. Additionally, the women of the community, who could not hold an official office, formed the Town Improvement Society, prodding the men for improvements in sanitation, street lighting, and sidewalks.<sup>23</sup>

In 1903, the United States & West Indies Railroad & Steamship Co., a subsidiary of the Seaboard line, completed construction of a rail line from Tampa to Sarasota via Palmetto. This was the "first train consisting

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<sup>18</sup> By May 1898, 28,000 troops were stationed in Tampa alone, and relied on the Sarasota and Manatee areas for fish and cattle, prompting a growth in these industries. Matthews Journey to the Centennial 78.

<sup>19</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 124.

<sup>20</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 62-65; Federal Writers' Project 270.

<sup>21</sup> Also elected were five aldermen: J.B. Turner, Dr. J.O. Brown, George W. Blackburn, W.J. Hill, and Harry L. Higel; a clerk: B.D. Gullett; and a marshal: T.F. Blair. Grismer 136; Matthews Journey to the Centennial 82.

<sup>22</sup> Grismer 136.

<sup>23</sup> Burns 30; Matthews Journey to the Centennial 85.

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of a baggage car, day coach, and Pullman," in Sarasota.<sup>24</sup> Two months following its opening in Sarasota, the company reorganized as the Florida West Shore Railway, and began construction of spurs in all directions, leading to increasing settlement in Sarasota.<sup>25</sup> The passenger train station in Sarasota was constructed at the northwest corner of Main Street and Lemon Avenue; the freight station sat to its north.<sup>26</sup>

In 1908, under the mayoral term of George Franklin, the town council authorized an electric light and power company to serve the town, and a bond issue for paving the streets was passed by the citizens.<sup>27</sup> In 1910, a tax was levied to widen Main Street, and the council built a seawall along the bay, and also passed the first automobile regulations.<sup>28</sup> In 1910, following a feud with Harry Higel, Gillespie decided to sell all of his holdings in Sarasota to Owen Burns. That fall, Gillespie retired from public life, after serving as mayor for six of the eight years since the town incorporated.<sup>29</sup> Three years later, in May 1913 while Higel was serving as mayor, Sarasota incorporated as a city, to be effective on January 1, 1914. A.B. Edwards was elected as the first full term mayor.<sup>30</sup>

**Palmer, Ringling, and Burns as Developers**

As Sarasota continued to prosper, wealthy northerners, including Ralph Caples, Bertha Honore Palmer, Calvin Payne, Owen Burns, and brothers Charles and John Ringling, visited and purchased land in the Sarasota area, stimulating further growth. Caples was the first to visit Sarasota, arriving in 1899; he and his wife purchased their first home in 1909. Throughout his time in Sarasota, he owned 55 city lots, and constructed the Caples Building on Main Street (south side between Palm and Pineapple).<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Palmer and her family first visited the area in 1910, and not long afterwards purchased more than 80,000 acres of land, forming the Palmer Farms Growers Cooperative, the Palmer Farmers experimental station, the Bee Ridge Farms, and the Bee Ridge Homesites. Additionally, Mrs. Palmer established a showplace estate along Little Sarasota Bay, and founded the

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<sup>24</sup> Sulzer 36; Turner 100-101.

<sup>25</sup> Sulzer 31-34; Matthews Journey to the Centennial 94.

<sup>26</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. (New York: Sanborn Map Company, November 1913) 3. Both of these buildings have since been demolished.

<sup>27</sup> Gillespie served as mayor for the first five years since Sarasota incorporated as a town. In 1907, Jacob Chapline was elected mayor, followed by George Franklin in 1908. Gillespie would be elected as mayor again in 1909. Burns 35, 37; Jeff LaHurd. Sarasota: A History. (Charleston: The History Press, 2006) 176.

<sup>28</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 90.

<sup>29</sup> Burns 39; Francis J. Puig. Spend A Summer This Winter In Sarasota: Four key figures in Sarasota's development. (Sarasota: Archaeological Consultants Inc., 2002) 3.

<sup>30</sup> The elections were officially held on December 6, 1913. The three councilmen elected were J.W. Baxter (first ward), T.W. Yarbrough (second ward), and George L. Thacker (third ward). Burns 39; Grismer 175.

<sup>31</sup> LaHurd 148.

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Palmer Bank at Five Points.<sup>32</sup> Calvin Payne first came to Sarasota in 1911. His biggest contributions to the city were the creation of the Payne Terminal, where the fishing industry relocated after the Hurricane of 1921.<sup>33</sup>

Owen Burns first came to Sarasota in 1909; he made it his permanent home in 1910. That same year, Burns purchased 75% of the incorporated town of Sarasota from Hamilton Gillespie for \$30,000, which included hundreds of lots, large tracts of undeveloped land and Gillespie's 110 acre golf course.<sup>34</sup> As a result of Burns' land investments; he became one of the city's first developers and promoters, committed to making Sarasota a tourist destination.<sup>35</sup> In March 1911, Burns organized the First Bank of Sarasota and served as its first president. Through the bank, he provided mortgages to prospective buyers in Sarasota; in 1913, it was chartered as a national bank by the US Treasury. Burns pursued additional ventures in Sarasota, which had a direct impact to the city's development. In 1911, he founded the Sarasota Board of Trade to promote the area as a tourist destination. He also formed the Burns and McAlpin Construction Company, which was hired to replace the original boardwalk with concrete; they also built the seawall along the bay. Additionally, he organized the Burns Transportation Company, which transported building materials to Sarasota from Tampa by steamer.<sup>36</sup>

After visiting Sarasota several times, John and Mable Ringling purchased a home on Shell Beach in 1912. Charles, his brother, first arrived in Sarasota in 1912 to visit; he soon initiated construction of a home along the bay. John and Charles, along with their brothers Albert, Alfred, and Otto, were partners in the Ringling Brothers Circus; Charles oversaw advance billing and production, and John was the route agent. In the years before World War I, John and Charles Ringling spent their winters in Sarasota and the rest of the year following and managing the family circus. The circus remained their primary focus until the advent of the Florida land boom.<sup>37</sup>

**The 1920s and the Florida Land Boom**

Prompted by concerns that the cities of Sarasota and Venice were not receiving sufficient funding for road construction, a group of Sarasota businessmen led the way to separate from Manatee County. As a result, Sarasota County was formed from the southern portion of Manatee County in 1921, with the City of Sarasota as the county seat.<sup>38</sup> In September 1921, a hurricane forced the reconstruction of Sarasota's waterfront due to the

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<sup>32</sup> Matthews *Journey to the Centennial* 91-93. This building was demolished in the early 1960s.

<sup>33</sup> LaHurd 154.

<sup>34</sup> Burns 39; Puig 3.

<sup>35</sup> Puig 2.

<sup>36</sup> Puig 3; LaHurd 148-149.

<sup>37</sup> Weeks, David C. *Ringling: The Florida Years, 1911-1936*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 67, 71-72; Grismer 166-170, 319. At the time of their initial arrival in Sarasota, the Ringling brothers owned the Barnum & Bailey circus, but they were operated as two separate shows. They were combined to one show in 1918, after the end of World War I.

<sup>38</sup> Grismer 199; Elizabeth D. Purdum, ed. *Florida County Atlas and Municipal Fact Book*. (Tallahassee: Institute of Science and Public Affairs, 1994) 116.

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demolition of most of the wooden boat houses and docks on the bay. With the reconstruction, fishing was relocated to Payne Terminal, and the bayfront was developed purely for recreational purposes.<sup>39</sup> The early 1920s saw a building boom in Sarasota, using the architectural theme of Spanish Revival, reportedly introduced by the New York architect, Dwight James Baum. Between 1922 and 1923, property values within the city tripled, and in 1925, the number of building permits issued tripled from the previous year.<sup>40</sup>

During the first six months of 1925 alone, \$19 million in real estate transfers occurred in Sarasota, which contained only 5,500 residents.<sup>41</sup> Large tourist hotels and commercial buildings were constructed, recreational facilities were expanded, and a 4,000-foot harbor channel was dredged.<sup>42</sup> Both John and Charles Ringling participated fully in the boom and competed for recognition on both a personal and a professional level. John Ringling, in association with Owen Burns, initiated the development of the keys through his Ringling Isles Corporation and built the Ringling Causeway (1925-1926) to span the bay to the islands.<sup>43</sup> Individually, Burns also constructed numerous buildings through his construction company, including the El Vernona Hotel (later the John Ringling Hotel and John Ringling Terrace), the bungalows along Burns Court, and the new Ringling home, Ca'd'Zan, designed by Dwight James Baum.<sup>44</sup>

Not to be outdone by Owen Burns, or his brother John Ringling, Charles Ringling founded the Ringling Bank and Trust Company and developed land on the mainland. He purchased the old Gillespie golf course from the Sarasota Golf Holding Company on June 7, 1924. On the former golf course, he platted the Courthouse Addition, which incorporated both a business and residential section. Approximately 250 acres would be devoted to residential purposes, while four blocks would be dedicated to business construction which required project approval by the Ringling interests. Ringling also donated land in the newly platted subdivision for the Sarasota County Courthouse, provided that the building cost at least \$150,000. In 1925, the County authorized a bond issue for \$500,000 to construct the courthouse and hired Dwight James Baum to design it.<sup>45</sup>

The 1925 Sanborn Maps in general show a decrease in residential construction within the downtown area (17%), most of which was now located to the north and south of the downtown, and east of Lemon Avenue; commercial construction increased to approximately 83% of the downtown area. They also indicate that by this time, roughly 90% of Main Street, between Gulfstream Avenue and Orange Avenue, had been developed, mostly with masonry construction. Additionally, the maps show that by 1925, a third of the original buildings

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<sup>39</sup> Marth 91.

<sup>40</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 113; Puig 5.

<sup>41</sup> Weeks 99.

<sup>42</sup> Federal Writers' Project 270.

<sup>43</sup> Puig 11.

<sup>44</sup> Weeks 99.

<sup>45</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 111; Russell, Peg. Sarasota County: Dreamers of Our Past. (Sarasota: Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources, 2000) 25.

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along Main Street were replaced, mainly those that were built of wood.<sup>46</sup> The 1926 Sarasota City Directory reveals a large variety of business types within the downtown core, including hotels, real estate and law firms, clothing stores, furniture and hardware stores, pharmacies, cleaners, department stores, and cigar stores.<sup>47</sup>

The Hurricane of 1926 hit Sarasota hard, causing heavy damage. Further damage to Sarasota's economy resulted from the collapse of the Florida real estate market in 1926. In Sarasota, real estate values plummeted 40%, and local banks, including the American National Bank and the Bank of Sarasota, collapsed.<sup>48</sup> With the city suffering from diminishing land prices and decreasing construction, John Ringling's relocation of the circus winter quarters to Sarasota in 1927 gained him the reputation as the savior of Sarasota. This meant new jobs to construct and work at the winter quarters, and increased tourism from winter visitors to the site. As a result, Sarasota became synonymous with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, as well as the whole circus subculture. However, the relocation of the circus did not renew interest in the local real estate market.<sup>49</sup> Soon after the collapse of the Florida Land Boom, the October 1929 stock market crash, and the onset of the Great Depression, Sarasota County was left in a state of stagnation.

### Great Depression and the New Deal

Despite the crash of the Florida real estate market and the Great Depression, Sarasota saw an increase of 50% in its population between 1930 and 1940, as well as expanded public services.<sup>50</sup> Throughout the decade, tourism remained the primary industry. Sarasota boasted numerous recreational facilities and activities, including beaches, fishing, circus practices at the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey winter headquarters, the annual Sara de Soto Pageant, two golf courses, the Ringling Museum of Art, and spring training at Payne Park.<sup>51</sup> Although the New York Giants left Sarasota in 1927, other major league baseball teams including the Indianapolis Indians from 1929 through 1932, the Boston Red Sox from 1933 through 1958 (with the exception of three years during World War II), followed. Baseball provided inexpensive entertainment to Sarasota during the depression, World War II, and the post-war boom.<sup>52</sup>

The 1930 Sarasota City Directory indicates the same variety of commercial enterprises as shown in the 1926 directory. By this time, the Edwards Theatre, constructed c.1926 by the city's first mayor, A.B. Edwards, sat along North Pineapple Avenue, and the American National Bank buildings, also constructed c.1926, were located at the southwest corner of Main and Palm. The directory also listed the Palmer Bank Building at the

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<sup>46</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1925, 2-6.

<sup>47</sup> R.L. Polk, comp. Sarasota City Directory. (Jacksonville: R.L. Polk & Company, 1926).

<sup>48</sup> Matthews Journey to the Centennial 129.

<sup>49</sup> Weeks 150-51; Matthews Journey to the Centennial 130.

<sup>50</sup> Ruthmary Bauer. "Sarasota: Hardship and Tourism in the 1930s." The Florida Historical Quarterly 76 (1997): 137.

<sup>51</sup> Bauer 138. There are no remnants of the old park, but a monument was erected, presumably where home plate was located.

<sup>52</sup> LaHurd 121; Anon. 1939.

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corner of Main and Central. In 1932, the S.H. Kress Building was constructed along Main between Pineapple and Lemon, generating the largest building revenue of the year.<sup>53</sup> The 1936 Sarasota City Directory shows the same variety of business types within the downtown area, although a number of addresses are listed as “vacant.”<sup>54</sup>

By the mid-1930s, federal programs implemented by the Roosevelt administration provided jobs for the unemployed who were able to work. The programs were instrumental in the construction of parks, bridges, and public buildings, including the U.S. Post Office/Federal Building at 111 S. Orange Avenue, completed in 1934.<sup>55</sup> In response to the federal aid, Sarasota’s Chamber of Commerce became more financially stable, and was able to revive the Sara de Soto Pageant in 1935.<sup>56</sup> As the economy improved through 1936 and 1937, sales of clothing, automobiles, and groceries increased. Additionally, the city was issuing building permits in quantities not seen since 1927.<sup>57</sup> Through the latter half of the decade, the Public Works Administration continued construction projects in the area, including a soft water treatment plant and municipal auditorium in Sarasota, a water works extension to Sarasota Heights, and the repairing and paving of a section of US 41 in south Sarasota County.<sup>58</sup> Another program, the Federal Writers’ Project of the Work Projects Administration, hired local residents to author a guide to Florida, and its major cities. On a somewhat lighter note, the Work Projects Administration was also responsible for the construction of the Lido Beach Casino during this time. Ralph Twitchell, a young architect who had previously worked for Dwight James Baum, worked on the Casino.<sup>59</sup> Twitchell established a small practice in Sarasota in 1936, and in 1941, hired a young architect by the name of Paul Rudolph. The two borrowed from the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright and created buildings with strong horizontal planes, strip windows, and painted concrete block, which were generally screened from the main roads with vegetation or walls.<sup>60</sup>

It was not until the start of World War II that Florida, and the nation, truly came out of the Depression. Many of the servicemen stationed at the Sarasota-Bradenton Air Field and the Venice Air Base returned to make the Sarasota area their home after the war. During this period, Sarasota continued to develop as a winter resort.

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<sup>53</sup> Bauer 140; Polk 1930.

<sup>54</sup> Polk 1936.

<sup>55</sup> The U.S. Post Office/Federal Building was designed by New York/Connecticut architect George Albee Freeman with Harold N. Hall and Louis A. Simon. Sarah Latham Kearns. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, U.S. Post Office/Federal Building, 1983. Florida Division of Historic Resources, Tallahassee.

<sup>56</sup> Bauer 144. The Sara de Soto Pageant had been cancelled in 1933 and 1934.

<sup>57</sup> Bauer 145.

<sup>58</sup> S. Dawn Wise. An Institutional History of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works and Sarasota County, Florida 1933-1939. (Master’s Thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1995) 102.

<sup>59</sup> John Howey. The Sarasota School of Architecture, 1941-1966. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1995) 24; Patty Jo Smith Rice, Ph.D. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for the Architectural Resources of the Sarasota School of Architecture. (2002. Division of Historical Resources, Tallahassee) E5-7.

<sup>60</sup> Howey 24-34; Rice E6-8.

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The 1940 Sanborn Maps reveal that nearly all of the downtown core had been developed with all but five wooden buildings on Main Street having been replaced with masonry ones. Also by this time, most of the residences along the immediate side streets of the district had been removed, with a few exceptions along South Pineapple.<sup>61</sup> The highly commercial nature of the downtown is further substantiated by the city directories of the period.<sup>62</sup>

**Growth Following World War II & Modern Development Trends**

Following World War II, road improvements and the increased use of automobiles caused an influx of tourism in the area. Flashy signs, modern buildings, and tourist attractions—in addition to the nearby Gulf beaches—brought in many visitors. During the 1950s and early 1960s, street improvements in downtown Sarasota led to serious economic changes. In 1953, the street names throughout the city were changed. Later, the Tamiami Trail (adjacent to the historic district) was widened to four lanes, which increased the flow and amount of traffic. In addition, a bypass, Bayfront Drive, was created along the bay to connect the northern portion and southern portions of the Tamiami Trail without having to travel along Main Street. This change led to the decline of the downtown area because businesses began to relocate along the northern and southern portions of the Trail closer to the growing residential subdivisions. The 1954 Sanborn Maps show that no individual residential buildings remained within the downtown core.<sup>63</sup>

In 1956, Sarasota County sold its public beaches and recreation facilities to outside developers. The result was widespread development without any overall city plan. Between 1960 and 1970 the population of Sarasota County exploded by 64% when the number of residents increased from 76,895 to 120,413.<sup>64</sup> The 1963 Sanborn Maps also show the beginnings of substantial changes in the downtown area; with most of the older buildings on the south side of Main Street between Palm Avenue and Pineapple Avenue having been removed by this time.<sup>65</sup> During the last several decades, Sarasota County, along with the rest of Florida, has benefited from the influx of retirees and tourists that have made Florida one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Modern suburb and mall construction changed the character of most of Florida's cities. Development and settlement have followed the construction of I-75 along Florida's west coast. With an estimated county population over 325,957 in 2000, the economy continues to focus on tourism. In Sarasota County, development has concentrated along the coast. Although the 1990s witnessed widespread new development, a new appreciation of Sarasota's distinctive character is evident with the revitalization of the downtown area, as well as the increased recognition of the area's significant historical architectural resources.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1929, rvsd. 1940, 2-6.

<sup>62</sup> Polk 1940, 1945, 1950.

<sup>63</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1954, 2-6.

<sup>64</sup> Charlton W. Tebeau. *A History of Florida*. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971)492.

<sup>65</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1963, 2-6.

<sup>66</sup> Matthews *Journey to the Centennial* 163; Purdum 116.



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**Areas of Significance**

**Commerce and Community Planning and Development**

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District exemplifies the pattern of a Main Street business corridor found in many cities throughout the United States. From its early settlement days, Main Street was generally composed of businesses, although a few residences appeared along the thoroughfare. By 1925, those to the west of Lemon Avenue were removed; while those to the east of Lemon remained intact until the business core spread to that area. Additionally, the side streets, such as Pineapple Avenue and State Street (then 6th Street), retained residential structures until 1940. Some of the businesses in the downtown core, such as hotels and restaurants, reflected those of a tourist destination. However, the businesses also catered to the permanent residents, particularly specialty stores for clothing and furniture, hardware stores, general discount stores, barbershops, and pharmacies. There were also live performance and movie theaters, and other recreational facilities, as well as churches. The Downtown Sarasota Historic District represents the consolidation of its commercial enterprises in a central location, with residential areas to the north, south, and east.

**Architecture**

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District derives its architectural significance primarily from the large variety of architecture, including fine examples of Art Deco, Art Moderne, Mediterranean Revival, with subtypes Italian Renaissance and Mission, Neoclassical Revival, and Sarasota School of Architecture styles. Additionally, five of the contributing resources, the Kress Building at 1442 Main Street, Worth's Block at 1490 Main Street, the DeMarcay Hotel at 27 S. Palm Avenue, the Roth Cigar Factory at 30 Mira Mar Court, and the Edwards Theater at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue, are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places for their architectural significance.<sup>67</sup>

As a whole, the buildings within the district reflect the various styles that were popular in Sarasota at different periods in time. The Mediterranean Revival and Neoclassical styles are predominant in buildings from the 1920s, while the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles are typical of those buildings constructed in the 1930s and 1940s. The Masonry Vernacular buildings date throughout the whole period of significance. The district attains uniformity through the use of similar materials, roof styles, and setback. Additionally, the buildings that contribute to the district vary in height, between one and ten stories, as well as in width, from approximately 25

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<sup>67</sup> Hartig; Kearns, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, DeMarcay Hotel; Kearns. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Edwards Theatre; Kearns. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Roth Cigar Factory; Kearns, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, S.H. Kress.

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ft to 400 ft, reflecting the needs of the various businesses. This mixture of uniform materials and differing sizes create an atmosphere of cohesive variety. Although many of the contributing buildings have undergone some alterations, including replacement windows and storefronts, they retain their architectural integrity, to a high degree, maintaining the historic downtown's sense of place.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Downtown Sarasota Historic District is roughly bounded by 1st Street on the north, Orange Avenue on the east, State Street and McAnsh Square on the south, and Gulfstream Avenue on the west. The exact district boundaries are shown on the scaled map of the district, attached to this nomination.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Downtown Sarasota Historic District encompass a cohesive collection of the historic commercial core of the city. The boundary is drawn to maintain the highest concentration of contributing commercial resources built during the period of c.1909-1959, while excluding noncontributing resources that were built after the period of significance. Some historic resources that have been altered to the extent that they are considered noncontributing resources were retained within the district boundaries.

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1. View from Orange Avenue and Main Street
2. Downtown Sarasota Historic District, Sarasota (Sarasota County), Florida
3. Trish Slovinac and Marielle Lumang
4. January 2007
5. Archaeological Consultants, Inc.
6. Looking West
7. Photo 1 of 34

**Items 2 through 5 are the same for photographs 2-24.**

1. View from Main Street and Lemon Avenue
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1. View of South Side of Main Street from Lemon Avenue
6. Looking Southwest
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1. View of North Side of Main Street from Lemon Avenue
6. Looking Northwest
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1. View of South Side of Main Street from Pineapple Avenue
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1. View of Main Street from Gulfstream Avenue
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1. View from McAnsh Square and South Pineapple Avenue
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6. North elevation, looking south-southeast
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1. Mira Mar Apartments, 41-77 South Palm Avenue
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1. Kickliter Hardware Store, 1586 Main Street
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1. Hotel Sarasota, 1341-1343 Main Street (Noncontributing)
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6. South elevation, looking north-northwest
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6. Northeast Facade and Southeast Elevation, Looking Southwest

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1. 1540 Main Street

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