

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach other names/site number 8 Br 1609

2. Location

street & number 501 Ocean Avenue n/a not for publication city, town Melbourne Beach n/a vicinity state Florida code FL county Brevard code 009 zip code 32951

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [x] private, [] public-local, [] public-State, [] public-Federal. Category of Property: [x] building(s), [] district, [] site, [] structure, [] object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing buildings 0, sites 1, structures 0, objects 0, Total 1.

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] 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 [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Susanne P. Walker (Deputy), Date: 4/8/92, Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources.

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: _____ Date: _____ State or Federal agency and bureau: _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [x] entered in the National Register. [] See continuation sheet. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] See continuation sheet. [] determined not eligible for the National Register. [] removed from the National Register. [] other, (explain:) _____ entered in the National Register: Signature of the Keeper: Aelona J. Eyer, Date of Action: 5/14/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Frame vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Synthetics: Vinyl

roof Asbestos
other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Exploration & Settlement

Community Planning & Development

Significant Person

n/a

Period of Significance

1892-1942

Significant Dates

1892

1942

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Beaujean, Rufus W./ Beaujean, Rufus W.

Booth, Vincent R./ Guerin Construction Co.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	7
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5	4	2	8	8	0
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3	1	0	4	6	9	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 29, Block 3, Whitings Plat of Melbourne Beach as recorded in Plat Book 1, page 57, Public Records of Brevard Co., FL. Parcel ID: 28 380701 3 29

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lot that historically has been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gettys, Elinor M./ Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist
 organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date April 1, 1992
 street & number R.A. Gray Blq., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333
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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, Brevard Co., FL

SUMMARY

The Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, at 501 Ocean Avenue in Melbourne Beach, Brevard County, Florida, was built in 1892 and enlarged in 1942. It is a one story, frame vernacular building with a front gabled roof and cross gables. The sanctuary portion of the building forms a Latin cross. Two flat roofed additions on the rear elevation make the overall plan of the building a T. A hip roofed belfry is located over the main entrance at the south end of the building on the ridge line. The chapel rests on cement block piers and the exterior is covered with vinyl siding.

Setting

Melbourne Beach is a small beach community (population 3,124) located on the east side of the Indian River, across from Melbourne, Florida (population 59,856). The chapel is located in Melbourne Beach at the intersection of Pine Street and Ocean Avenue, near the post office, town hall, and residences. Originally surrounded by scrub (Photo 1), the chapel grounds are now landscaped with walkways, grass, shrubs and palms (Photo 2). A non-contributing masonry wall with pierced crosses separates the rear of the church property from a neighboring residence (Photo 3).

Exterior

The main entrance is on the south elevation, at the south end of the 1892 chapel (Photo 2). The entrance is a single door with nine lights in the upper half. It is sheltered by the original attached porch which has a steeply pitched gabled roof. The porch is approached by three steps flanked by stick balustrades. The sides of the porch have stick balustrades with glazing above. A small rectangular louver is located near the peak of the gable end. Above the gable, on the ridge line of the roof, is a square, hip roofed belfry with louvered sides and a cross at the peak. The east and west wings of the transept are visible from the south. Both have single stained glass windows and side entrances protected by attached porches.

The east elevation of the 1892 part of the building has two single, rectangular stained glass windows (Photo 4). The entry at the north end of the elevation, the east

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transept added in 1942, has a porch very similar to that on the main entrance, except that the upper portion is not glazed.

The north (rear) elevation has two flat roofed additions which fill the areas created by the addition of the transepts and the chancel (Photo 5). A rear service entrance on the east side is approached by five concrete, side steps. A single metal window is located east of the door. The central bay of the elevation is gabled and features a large, centrally located, round arched stained glass window. Another flat roofed addition with a small attached wooden porch is located at the west end of the elevation. This elevation carries the air-conditioning units and ducts and meter box.

The west elevation is very similar to the east elevation, with a covered entrance and two stained glass windows (Photo 6).

INTERIOR

The original 1892 building corresponds to the nave of the present building. Two stained glass windows depicting Biblical scenes are located on the east and west walls (Photo 7 & 8). A central aisle leads north from the main entrance to a chancel at the rear wall of the chapel. A large, round arched stained glass window is located directly over the altar. The chancel also includes a pulpit and lectern. Doors on the east and west walls of the chancel lead to a Pastor's Robing Room and a Bride's Room (Photo 9). A transept crosses in front of the chancel (Photos 10 & 11). Side doors to the chapel are located at the east and west ends of the wings. Stained glass windows depicting the four gospels are located on the north and south walls of each wing. The walls and ceiling are panelled with knotty pine and the floor is carpeted. The pews date from 1892 and 1942.

HISTORIC ALTERATIONS 1892-1942

The original 1892 building was basically a box, 24 feet long and 17 feet, 3 inches wide, resting on two to three-foot pine posts (Photo 1). It seated seventy people. Screens were added to the windows in 1895. The next year,

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1896, the foundation posts were replaced with masonry piers, and a ceiling was installed. In 1924, a hurricane blew the chapel off its foundations and caused significant damage. Extensive repairs were required, and services did not resume until December 1927. Electricity was added in 1941 to run an organ, but electric lights were not installed until 1947. A bell and belfry were installed in 1931. A cross was added to the top of the belfry in 1957.

The first major alteration was made in 1942 when the addition of transepts and a chancel on the north side of the original building changed the configuration of the chapel from a rectangle to that of a Latin cross. The altar was moved back to the new chancel at the north end. Pews, made to match original 1892 pews, were placed in the transepts, doubling the seating capacity to 140. The interior was panelled with knotty pine to match the 1892 interior. All interior panelling was refinished with linseed oil and zinc. The entire roof was resurfaced with asbestos shingles.

NON-HISTORIC ALTERATIONS

In the 1950s and 1960s, damage from flood waters and termites prompted the trustees to launch a "save the chapel" campaign. The floor was found to be five inches lower than the crown of the adjacent streets. This condition accounted for frequent flooding experienced over the years. The chapel was raised two feet above the existing grade, deteriorated beams were repaired or replaced, and the grounds were filled and graded. Carpeting and air-conditioning were installed in the 1960s. Between 1967 and 1973 two small rooms and outside rest rooms were added on the north sides of the transepts, making the building T-shaped. These additions are not visible from the main elevation. Porches similar to the original one on the main elevation were added to the east and west transept doors at this time.

Because the chapel is located on a small strip of land between the Indian River and the Atlantic Ocean, it has always been subjected to very harsh climatic conditions. In 1974, the exterior, which would not retain a paint finish, was sandblasted and treated with Textured Coating, a fiberglass material. This finish caused further problems, and in 1987, the only feasible solution to the preservation

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problem was to protect the building with vinyl siding. Nearly all of the original 1892 and 1942 materials are extant.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Framing for the large, arched, stained glass window over the altar was installed in 1942. Although no date is recorded for the installation of the stained glass, its dedication to Eva R. Sweet Winter, who died in 1955, indicates that it probably dates from the mid-1950s.

In 1979 and 1985, stained glass windows were installed in the nave and transepts, and stained glass was inserted in top halves of the transept doors. Great care was taken to retain the original window openings.

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SUMMARY

The Melbourne Beach Community Chapel, built in 1892, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Community Planning and Development as one of the earliest extant non-residential buildings of Melbourne Beach, Florida. Many of its founders were involved in the early development companies which sought to establish a beach resort community between the Indian River and the Atlantic Ocean in the late nineteenth century. Its 1942 addition reflects the impact of World War II on the small community.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Major Cyrus E. Graves, a Civil War veteran from Boston, came to the Melbourne area in 1883 looking for a place to invest his money. He purchased 400 acres on a barrier island across the Indian River from Melbourne, a community which had been established in the late 1870s. His first efforts to develop the area included the planting of pineapples which he planned to market commercially.

Graves had little experience in promoting enterprises. Alfred Wilcox from Buffalo, New York, however, provided the assistance Graves needed to create a resort. Wilcox had come to the area after hearing of it from a relative, Rufus Beaujean, who had arrived there with his family from western New York state in the late 1880s.

In the summer of 1888, Wilcox made a deal with Graves. According to their agreement, Wilcox was deeded 160 acres of Graves' land south of what is now Ocean Avenue to just south of present day Sixth Street. Wilcox agreed to clear land, build a pier on the Indian River, a railroad to the ocean, and a bathhouse. By 1889, Wilcox and investors he had recruited from Buffalo had built the Melbourne and Atlantic Railroad and a road which ran from a pier on the Indian River across the barrier island to the Atlantic Ocean. Others had begun to settle in the area, and that same year saw the construction of several houses and a boarding house called Myrtle Cottage, and the application for the establishment of a post office. Rufus Beaujean became the first postmaster in 1891 and chose the name of Melbourne Beach for the new community. The population was 28.

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In the Big Freeze of 1894-95 most of the pineapple crops of Graves and others were destroyed. At the same time, two of the officers of the development company died. Little progress was made in the development of Melbourne Beach as a resort until 1908 when growth was revived under a new company, the Melbourne Beach Improvement Company, headed by G.E. Ryckman. Ryckman had been an officer in the old company. Other stockholders included the Beaujeans and Henry Whiting, who had been a resident in Melbourne Beach since the late 1880s. Under the new company, the community, which had become run down, was rejuvenated. The Villa Marine Hotel was constructed in 1912, and in 1915, a power plant was built and a Woman's Club was founded.

In 1921, a bridge was built across the Indian River from Melbourne to an area just north of Melbourne Beach that was to become another development, Indialantic. The competition from another resort motivated the people of Melbourne Beach to incorporate their community. After its incorporation in 1923, the streets were improved, law enforcement and electricity on a regular basis were provided, and a Casino pool was built. Melbourne Beach thus participated in the 1920s Florida Land Boom. After 1926, however, the boom collapsed, and Melbourne Beach fell into an economic depression that was not alleviated until the 1950s. The 1930 permanent population of 72 increased to only 90 in 1940.

Because of its climate and terrain, Florida was the site of many military training installations during World War II. The war brought the establishment of the Banana River Training Station and the Melbourne Naval Air Station in Melbourne in 1939 and October 1942 respectively. Enlisted men came to Melbourne Beach for recreation. Some undoubtedly returned to the beach community to live after the war, accounting for the rise in Melbourne Beach's population to 230 in 1950. The first large population increase, however, came with the introduction of the space program at nearby Cape Canaveral in 1958, as reflected in the population figures for Melbourne Beach in 1960 (1002) and 1968 (estimated 2500). The collapse of the space program in the early 1970s, however, significantly slowed the area's tremendous growth rate, and the community's population has remained at about 3,000 since 1980.

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Melbourne Beach remains a small beach town, with present population of 3,124.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

With the establishment of a post office in 1891, Melbourne Beach had become a real community, and the town's residents felt the need to construct a place of worship. In the 1880s, a handful of residents had formed the Melbourne Beach Union Sunday School to provide religious instruction to the town's children and offer worship services for adults. The community's population at that time was somewhere between 15 and 28 people, and most, if not all, belonged to the community chapel. The group was non-denominational and met in the homes of members or under a tree if the weather was pleasant. Later, services were held in a boarding house known as Myrtle Cottage (built in 1888, destroyed in 1987), but it was felt that the settlement needed a proper church.

Because the congregation was non-denominational, it did not have the financial resources and backing of an established denomination. In 1890, however, Henry Whiting, an active member of the Sunday School, a stockholder in the Melbourne Beach development company, and owner of all of the lots in the Whiting Subdivision, donated land for a chapel at the present site, stipulating that the chapel must remain a non-denominational institution. It is possible that he felt a non-denominational church in the development would appeal to more potential investors and provide a general purpose meeting facility. Work on the structure began under the supervision of Rufus Beaujean. The chapel was erected at a cost of \$200 and held its first services on January 10, 1892.

The new chapel was little more than a hollow shell, unfinished on the inside, and sparsely furnished; its windows were without glass or screens (Photo 1). The simple little building was subject to various hazards. In 1893, the chapel narrowly escaped destruction when woods that stood near the church caught fire. Land in the area around the building was cleared to avoid a recurrence of the danger. The absence of window screens often forced the congregation to meet at Myrtle Cottage, and because there was no stove in the chapel, severely cold weather sometimes

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preempted worship. Heavy rainstorms often left the chapel flooded. Physical improvements were made in 1895, when the windows were screened and, in 1896, the original pine foundation posts were replaced with masonry piers, and a ceiling was installed.

At the turn of the century, because of the difficulties within the development company, the pace of change in Melbourne Beach was slow. The community's boomtime activities in the 1920s, however, were contrasted by the events at the chapel. A hurricane that struck Melbourne Beach in 1924 blew the building off the foundation and caused significant damage. Extensive renovations had to be made with the cost underwritten by the congregation. Services were not resumed until the first Sunday in December 1927. When the congregation could not meet the payments on the chapel, it was deeded to the town which held it at no charge until 1937 when the Melbourne Beach Community Chapel was incorporated.

Melbourne Beach Community Chapel served a beach community, the population of which fluctuated, greatly increasing during the winter months. The chapel, therefore, did not have regular clergy, and the members conducted services themselves or relied on ministers who occasionally came over from Melbourne, or who were down from the north on their winter vacations. Dr. Vincent R. Booth, of Bennington, Vermont, who served during his winter vacations from 1939-1943, submitted a design for the alterations to the chapel in 1941. His plan, which created a Latin cross shape by adding a chancel and transept, doubled the seating capacity of the church to 140. Such an expansion was needed, for the influx of the military into the area beginning in 1939 had led to an increase in the population, and the chapel was still the only church in the beach area.

Many segments of both the permanent and non-resident communities participated in the remodeling of the chapel. The Woman's Club contributed money to recover the cushions on the pews, and the contractor, the Guerin Construction Company of Melbourne, completed the work at cost, believing that the addition was an asset for the entire community.

Rededication ceremonies were held on Easter morning, 1942. The bell, which had started as the dream of the

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children of the chapel in 1929, was finally installed that same year. The bell could be heard all over the community, and later served as the Melbourne Beach fire alarm.

Built in 1892, the Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach played a significant role in the early settlement and development of Melbourne Beach. It provided stability and a focal point for the isolated little beach community from the time of its early development, during the expansive years of the 1920s, and through the trying times of the 1930s. The addition of the transept and chancel in 1942 reflected the community's improved economy which was brought on by the establishment of a World War II military installation in nearby Melbourne. Because Melbourne Beach was such a small community, the Community Chapel is not only the oldest church "on the beaches" of Brevard County, it was also the only church in Melbourne Beach until 1964.

Although many of the other early buildings dating from Melbourne Beach's founding have been destroyed or altered significantly, the Community Chapel remains as a vibrant remnant of the work of the community's first settlers, and an example of the growth many Florida towns experienced as a result of World War II.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Minutes, Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, [1891-1968].

"Specification and Contract for Melbourne Beach Community Chapel," contract between the Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, Florida, and the Guerin Construction Company, Melbourne, Florida, [1941].

Warranty Deed, Henry Whiting and C.A., his wife, to H. Whiting, R.W. Beaujean and S.M. King trustees of the Union Chapel situated at Melbourne Beach, Fla., [1890], filed 1895 in Deed Book AA, page 76.

Secondary Sources

Fowler, Julia. The Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, Florida, Then and Now. Melbourne Beach, FL: n.p., 1982.

Thomas, Frank J. Early Days in Melbourne Beach, 1888-1928. n.p.: n.p., 1968.

_____. History of Melbourne Beach. n.p.: n.p., 1983.

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Photographs 1 Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, Brevard Co., FL
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- 1) 1) Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach
2) 501 Ocean Avenue, Melbourne Beach, Brevard County,
Florida
3) Unknown
4) 1893
5) Sterling Photo, Melbourne, Florida
6) S (main) elevation shortly after construction,
camera facing N
7) 1 of 11

- 2) 1) Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach
2) 501 Ocean Avenue, Melbourne Beach, Brevard County,
Florida
3) Unknown
4) 1991
5) Sterling Photo, Melbourne, Florida
6) S (main) elevation and surrounding grounds, camera
facing N
7) 2 of 11

Unless otherwise noted, the information for items 1-5 is the same for the remaining photographs.

- 3) 6) Non-contributing masonry wall at rear of the
property, camera facing NW
7) 3 of 11

- 4) 6) S & E elevations, camera facing NW
7) 4 of 11

- 5) 6) E & N (rear) elevations, camera facing SW
7) 5 of 11

- 6) 6) S & W elevations, camera facing NE
7) 6 of 11

- 7) 6) Interior, showing nave, camera facing N toward
chancel
7) 7 of 11

- 8) 6) Interior, showing nave, camera facing S toward rear
7) 8 of 11

- 9) 6) Chancel, camera facing N
7) 9 of 11

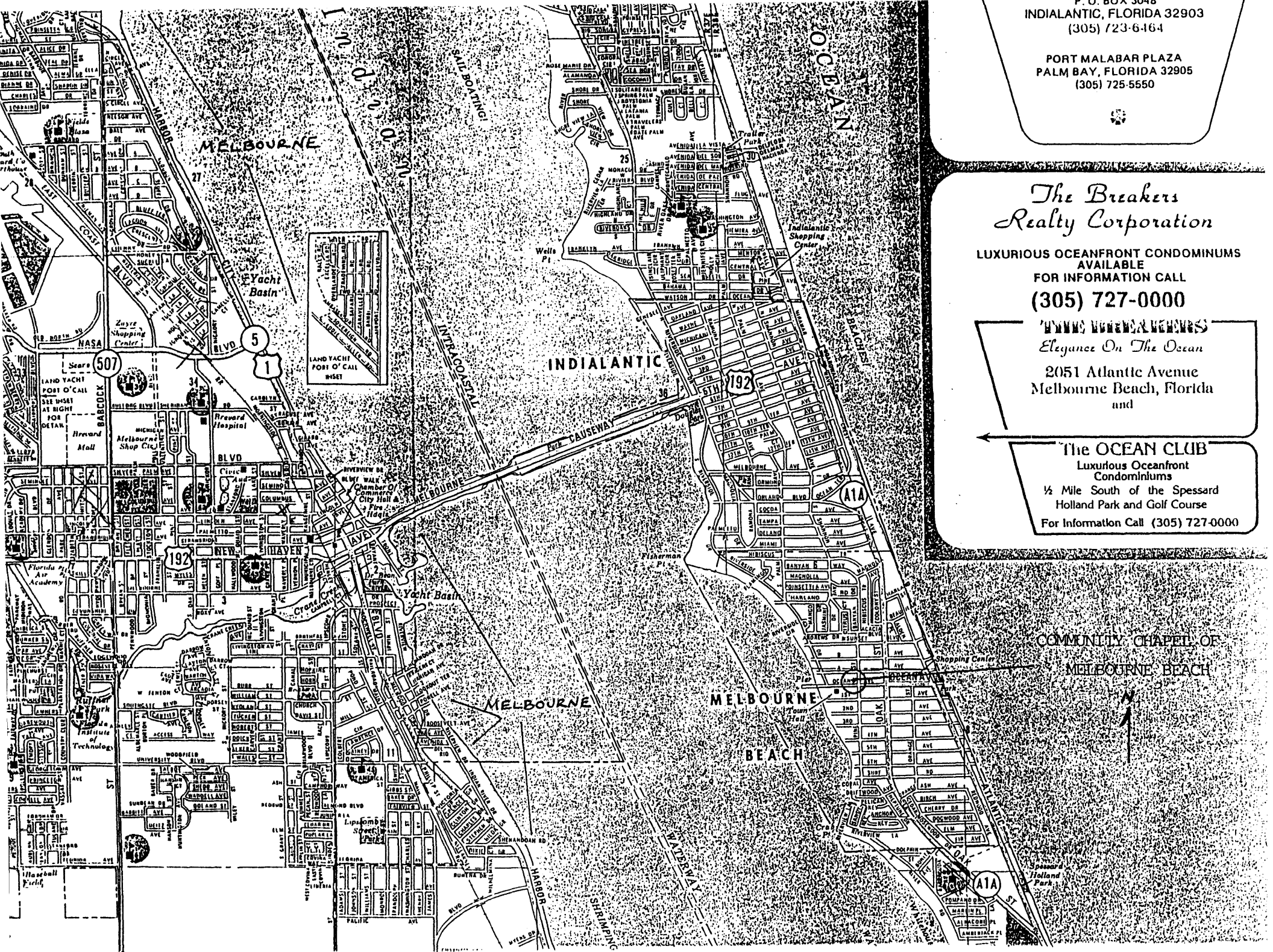
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Photographs 2 Community Chapel of Melbourne Beach, Brevard Co., FL
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- 10 6) E transept, camera facing E
7) 10 of 11

- 11 6) W transept, camera facing W
7) 11 of 11



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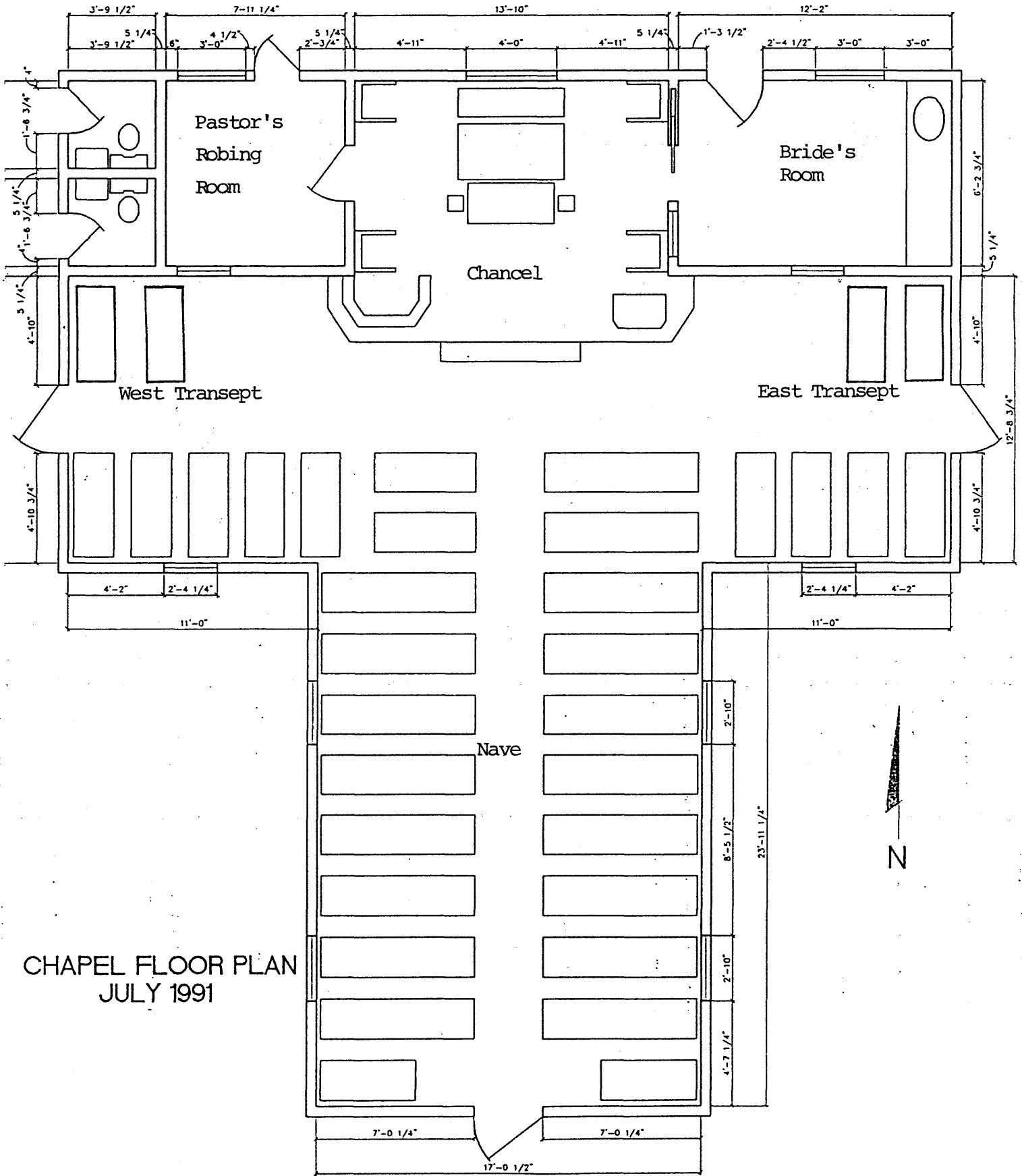
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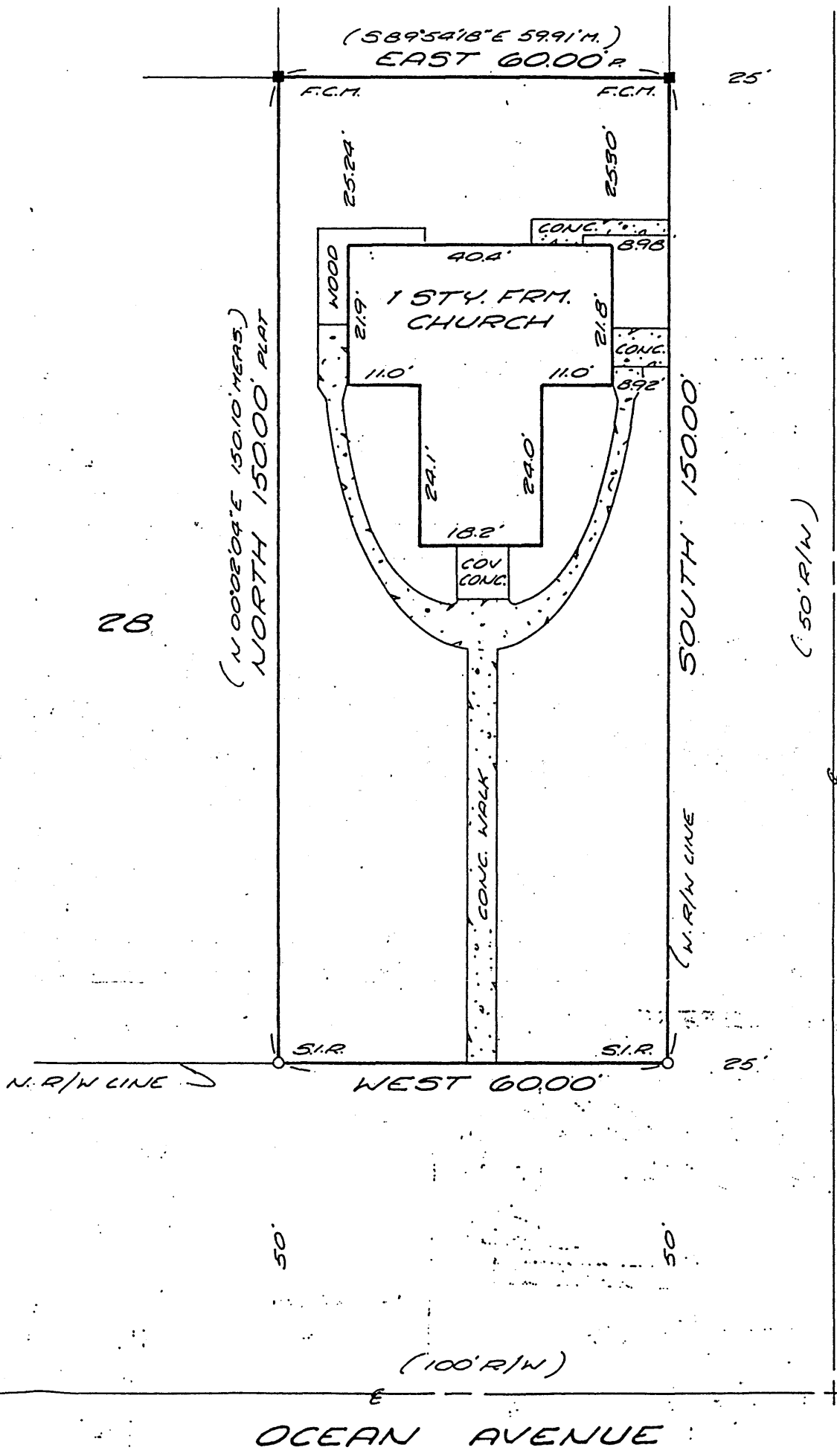
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MELBOURNE BEACH



COMMUNITY CHAPEL OF MELBOURNE BEACH
Melbourne Beach, Brevard Co., FL



CHAPEL FLOOR PLAN
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