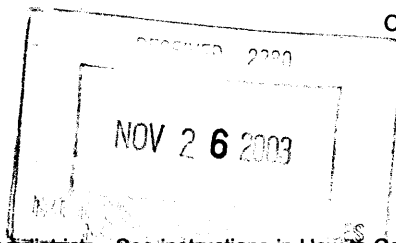


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Bounded by Palmetto Avenue, Lake and Main Streets N/A not for publication

city or town Sebastian N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Indian River code 061 zip code 32958

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.)

Justin Snyder, Matthews 11/24/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Edson R. Beall 1-6-04
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Choose as many boxes as apply)

- private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property
(Choose only one box)

- buildings
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, total.

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling
COMMERCE/Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

FRAME VERNACULAR
MASONRY VERNACULAR
MODERN

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE PIERS, BRICK
walls VERTICAL BOARD/BATTEN
MASONRY
roof METAL
other ASPHALT SHINGLES

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)

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1890-1951

Significant Dates

1890

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

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

Acreege of Property Approximately 8 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

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

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christiana Jackson-Brady, Consultant; Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date November, 2003

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name _____

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.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

SUMMARY

The Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West is situated on the Atlantic Coastal ridge in the City of Sebastian. The district encompasses historically significant resources on the west side of the Florida East Coast railroad tracks along some of Sebastian's first streets, including Palmetto Avenue, Main, Cross and Lake Streets. The district contains late 1800's and early 1900's buildings up to the 1950's within the city limits of Sebastian. There are 21 buildings in the district, 15 of which contribute to the historic character and 6 which are considered noncontributing resources.

SETTING

The City of Sebastian is located between the St. Sebastian River and the Indian River Lagoon on the East Coast of central Florida at the northern end of Indian River County. It has a population of 16,125 and is situated approximately twenty miles south of Melbourne and ten miles north of Vero Beach (the county seat). Sebastian has a sub-tropical climate and is principally a resort and residential city. The river, once the major highway for Sebastian's early frontier settlements, remains a major economic vein for the local family owned fishing businesses and benefits the city as a recreation area. Sebastian is known for its close proximity to Pelican Island, the nation's first National Wildlife Refuge. Paul Kroegel, who was designated the first Federal Game Warden by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, was one of the Sebastian area's early settlers.

The Sebastian Old Town Historic District, West is set high on the Atlantic Coastal Ridge on the west side of the railroad tracks. It is largely a residential area with narrow streets and lush vegetation. The district is within a block of the current City Hall that was originally built in 1928 as Sebastian's Grammar and Junior High School.¹ The district developed with the advent of the railroad in 1893 and several homes in the district were built and lived in by Sebastian's early pioneers and prominent citizens. The small town atmosphere of the area has been preserved.² Characteristics reflective of the simple, hard-working folks who settled in Sebastian are evident in the details of the rustic architecture, roads and landscapes. The district's architecture exhibits the pattern of growth consistent with the Progressive, Boom and Post-War eras in Florida.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West is a small area that developed primarily with the advent of the railroad in 1893 and remained the primary place to live throughout the 1950's. When the Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Indian River Railroad arrived in 1893, it suddenly provided a more efficient mode of

¹ The school is a Mediterranean Revival style building designed by the Ft. Pierce architecture firm Hatcher and Funke. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

² That portion of today's U.S. 1 which is located in the district was originally called South Central Avenue. It was four-laned in the 1950's when it was known as Dixie Highway.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

transportation that soon changed the settlement pattern that had previously fronted the river. As more people moved to Sebastian, homes, churches, businesses and schools were constructed closer to the railroad tracks which were located on the sand ridge less than a mile west of the river. Small agricultural farms and dairies were started on the west side of the tracks and fishing grew into a viable commercial industry. The area continued to develop and evolve with the invention of the automobile and with new construction during the Boom and Post-War eras. Buildings from all periods are scattered throughout the district.

The physical street plans, subdivision names, street names, plot plans, and designated open spaces within the Sebastian Old Town Historic District, West remain much the same as recorded on area maps from the early 1900's.³ Subdivisions that were platted in the early 1900's, such as A.G. Rose, Braddock, Vickers and W.A. Martin, retain the original names of those prominent families who settled or purchased property in that area of Sebastian. Main Street, Palmetto Avenue, and Central Avenue (to the East of the district) were the only streets in Sebastian for a long time.⁴ Louisiana and Palmetto Avenues began as pioneer trails and have had the least improvements of all the streets in Sebastian. Palmetto remains a narrow, meandering road with sandy shoulders amidst dense vegetation (PHOTO#1). Streets that were originally bumpy, dirt roads were paved in the 1920's with shell from the Ais Indian Tribe shell mounds once located along the river. Later, they were paved with asphalt to better accommodate cars and the town's growing population. Significant streetscapes include sidewalks along Main Street. They were installed in the 1920's when the street was widened as part of the town's planning efforts.

Although Sebastian is now a rapidly growing city, the district retains a small town atmosphere. Buildings historically served as residential and agricultural purposes. Setbacks are fairly regular per street. Single-family dwellings comprise most of the district. Most are small one-story cottages. Some have rustic metal and wood post fences outlining their property lines. Masonry buildings that are few in number are made of concrete block, hollow tile or brick. The district is significant locally for its representation of this community's historical development. It reflects a consistent pattern of growth and follows historical events and innovations, such as the railroad and automobile. The majority of the contributing buildings are wood frame vernacular and they were built by the area's early settlers. Significant buildings that remain within the district's boundaries include the Rose/Hall House at 1025 Palmetto Avenue, built ca.1890 (PHOTO #2). This was the early home of Murray Hall who was one of the very first FEC Railroad Station Masters in Sebastian. According to the Florida Master Site File form completed in the 1990's, Murray Hall was a telegrapher. He was responsible for teaching some of the local young men Morse code, which gave them the opportunity to pursue a career outside of Sebastian.

Another building significant to Sebastian's early history is the Bill Ryall home located at 1056 Palmetto Avenue. According to the Florida Master Site Form completed by the Sebastian Area Historical Society, the

³ See attached plat maps of the Sebastian Area.

⁴ *More Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1992]), Preface.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

Ryall's were the original owners of this Sears & Roebuck home, which was brought by railroad boxcar, with each piece carefully marked for assembly.

Landscape

The hilly topography in the district is a prominent characteristic in the landscape. The elevation rises from the Indian River lagoon towards the west atop the sand ridge.⁵ Major landscape features include lots with substantial vegetation (PHOTOS #3 & 4). In general, vegetation is dense in the district especially along Palmetto Avenue. A number of mature trees are scattered throughout the area, including trees from the original homesteads, such as silk oaks. Native plants associated with the sand ridge, such as scrub oaks, scrub hickory, and scrub pine, remain in some areas. Other plants include sea grape, hibiscus, bamboo, banana and a variety of palms (PHOTO #5).

Architectural Styles

MODERN

After World War II, traditional styles were not as popular as variations of modern styles that began just before the war. According to A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia and Lee McAlister, the Minimal Traditional, Ranch, Split-level, Contemporary and Shed were the most common modern styles from the 1940's. Minimal traditional style houses, dominant in the 1940's and 1950's, were generally one-story and had simplified detailing, dominant front gables, and low roof pitches.

Examples that exist from the Post-War period in Sebastian include a building located at 1100 Main Street, and the residence at 1113 Palmetto Avenue (PHOTO #6).

WOOD FRAME VERNACULAR

The wood frame vernacular is a folk type of architecture that utilizes local building materials and has no other apparent visible style. Usually these were modest dwellings built without architectural plans by local craftsman. The vernacular was a common method of construction in early Florida and buildings characterized with this style usually lack distinct architectural features or ornamentation characteristic of a defined style. Generally, wood vernacular buildings were constructed in response to their surroundings. Porches, large windows and well-ventilated rooms are some common characteristics. The wood frame vernacular style in Sebastian was commonly used in the late 1800's and early 1900's and was employed by the hard-working families who settled there.

⁵ The sand ridge is part of the ancient Atlantic Coastal Ridge, a significant topographical feature in Indian River County.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 4

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

The Fern Devane residence at 1100 Palmetto Avenue, built c.1908, is a fine example of the style in the district (PHOTO #7). This side gabled rectangular plan building has all original one over one double hung wood windows and features a metal roof. A second excellent example of the wood vernacular style is the J. Beugnot house located at 1068 Main Street. This front-gabled house retains its original clapboard siding and predominantly 2/2 double hung windows.

Contributing Resources:

List of Contributing Resources

There are a total of 15 contributing resources, including outbuildings, in the Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West; 12 are primary buildings. Many were significant to the development of the town and were associated with Sebastian's early citizens listed below.

	MSF#	Street Address/TRS	Name	Function	Style	Yr.Built
		Palmetto Avenue				
1	IR00105	1025 Palmetto Ave.	A.G. Rose/M. Hall House	Résidence	FV	c. 1890
2		1025A Palmetto Ave.		Outbuilding	FV	c. 1920
3		1025B Palmetto Ave.		Outbuilding	FV	c. 1920
4		1025C Palmetto Ave.		Outbuilding	FV	c. 1920
5		1036 Palmetto Ave.	F. Carpenter House	Résidence	FV	c. 1910
6	IR00826	1049 Palmetto Ave	H. Field House	Résidence	FV	c. 1921
7	IR00145	1053 Palmetto Ave	Gulledge Letchworth Phelps	Résidence	FV	c. 1925
8	IR00146	1056 Palmetto Ave	Bill Ryall House (Sears)	Résidence	FV	c. 1927
9		1056A Palmetto Ave.		Garage	FV	c. 1927
10	IR00104	1100 Palmetto Ave	Fern Devane House	Résidence.	FV	c. 1908
11		1101 Palmetto Ave.		Résidence	FV	c. 1930
12		1113 Palmetto Ave.		Résidence.	Mod	c. 1950
		Main Street				
13		1036 Main Street		Résidence	Mod.	c.1951
14		1068 Main Street	J. Beugnot House	Résidence	FV	c.1900
15		1100 Main Street		Comm.	Mod	c. 1949

Code to Styles:

FV-Frame Vernacular

Mod-Modern

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 5

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

Noncontributing Resources:

Noncontributing buildings are found scattered throughout the district. There are 6 noncontributing buildings, 5 are primary structures. The Orva Carpenter House lacks integrity and the others are not yet fifty years old.

List of Non-Contributing Resources:

		Main Street			
1		1048 Main Street		Residential	c. 1957
		Cross Street			
2		1215 Cross Street		Residential	c. 1963
		Palmetto Avenue			
3		1033 Palmetto Ave.		Residential	c. 1958
4		1041 Palmetto Ave.		Residential	c. 1961
5	IR00144	1044 Palmetto Ave.	Orva Carpenter House	Residential	c. 1930
6		1053A Palmetto Ave.		Outbuilding	c. 1960

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

SUMMARY

The Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West in Sebastian, Florida, is significant under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Community Planning and Development. The district contains late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings within the city limits that reflect significant characteristics and periods of development since the arrival of the railroad in 1893. Daily life centered around many of these buildings for decades and several are associated with the private and public lives of citizens who shaped the community. Many of Sebastian's leading citizens lived within the district's boundaries at one time and a few homes still remain under family ownership. This area was a central focus of community life as Sebastian was transformed from a small fishing village, to a town, and then a city. The district's significant period ran from 1890 to 1951, encompassing various growth and architectural trends in Indian River County. Original street plans, historic oaks and a distinctive topography along the ridge are important aspects to the district's significance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The land of early Sebastian was the site of settlements dating back thousands of years. Archaeological studies indicate there were prehistoric inhabitants living in the area as early as 850 B.C. One of the earliest written records of the Sebastian area dates to a map recorded in 1605 by the Spanish soldier Captain Alvera Mexia who was sent by the Spanish governor of St. Augustine to improve relations with the Ais Indian Tribe. During Mexia's visit, he documented and recorded the area and named the St. Sebastian River.¹ The Ais Indians, whose tribes once lived along the Florida's east coast, northeast of Lake Okeechobee, found the land between the St. Sebastian River and the Indian River Lagoon ideal for their survival with plenty of fish and game. Eventually, however, in the 1700's they were nearly decimated. Evidence of their existence has been found in the shell mounds, pottery and other artifacts they left behind.

Settlement was sparse in Florida even after it was ceded to the U.S. and became a territory in 1821. A few people moved to the area after the passage of the Armed Occupation Act in 1842; however, the events of the Civil War deterred many persons from settling permanently until the late 1880's.

In 1882, Thomas New, a retired Methodist minister from Detroit, Michigan, established a post office in Sebastian and gave the area its first official name, 'Newhaven.'² Two years later, in 1884, Sylvanus Kitching, a native of Warrington, England, became the postmaster and changed the name from Newhaven to Sebastian after

¹ *Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, Inc., [1990]), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 33.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

the St. Sebastian River. Settlement grew at a slow pace and according to the Florida State Census of 1885, 26 adults and 16 children lived in Sebastian.³

Progress remained gradual until the advent of the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Indian River Railroad, which arrived in Sebastian in 1893. Fishing had already begun as a means of survival, and now became increasingly important to the local economy as a commercial industry. The first shipment of fish by rail took place in 1895. Sebastian was one of nine fishing hubs along the Indian River Lagoon, shipping fish to markets as far north as New York. The introduction of the railroad helped spawn the construction of buildings closer to the tracks situated along the sand ridge just west of the Indian River. Louisiana Avenue, once a wagon trail that ran parallel to the tracks, was the first named street in Sebastian. Palmetto Avenue and Main Street, running perpendicular to the tracks, followed. The area quickly became the site of a new church, school, homes and businesses in the late 1800's and early twentieth century.

In 1905 Sebastian was located in St. Lucie County, a jurisdiction created out of Brevard County. Ft. Pierce was chosen as the county seat and according to the census of 1910, 321 people lived in Sebastian, making it the largest community in the immediate area.⁴ In addition to fishing, citrus and pineapples were the major cash crops in the local economy. The community's activities centered on social events at the church and school, which were both located in the middle of town. By 1918, Sebastian had a Woman's Club, a doctor, a wooden road bridge across the St. Sebastian River, two church buildings, a hotel, and a two-story wooden schoolhouse. Still, Sebastian remained fairly rural in comparison to its neighbors, Vero and Fellsmere.

Like the rest of Florida, St. Lucie County residents experienced prosperity and growth during the Florida Land Boom of the 1920's. This led to significant expansions. In Sebastian, economic expansion was influenced with the construction of Dixie Highway and US 1. Improved access meant an increase in population and growth of the area, which led directly to the incorporation of Sebastian as a municipality in 1924.⁵ Meetings of the Town Council were held regularly and records from that time indicate the town's desire to hire engineers for survey and planning purposes.⁶ Businesses, modest homes and large two-story residences were built along the river and in town when the Bank of Sebastian opened its doors on Main Street in 1924.

³ Ibid., Sebastian Area Chronology.

⁴ Florida State Census, St. Lucie County, 1910.

⁵ *Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1990]), 5.

⁶ *More Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1992]), 60.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

By 1925, the town of Vero had expanded such that it became the City of Vero Beach. It was chosen as the county seat of the newly formed Indian River County that included Sebastian in its jurisdiction. In 1925, Main Street in Sebastian was paved and a Municipal Power and Ice Plant was built to supply electricity and ice to the area. In 1926, designs were completed for a modern Sebastian grammar and junior high school (NR 2001). The building, located along Main Street, was completed in 1928, and the former two-story wooden school located on Louisiana Avenue (east of the district) was dismantled and sold.

The effects of the Depression were widespread in Indian River County. In 1929, the Bank of Sebastian closed, selling their assets to the Farmers Bank of Vero Beach for \$21,628.72.⁷ In 1933, despite the economic downturn in previous years, Sebastian was designated as a City by an Indian River County ordinance.⁸ The town experienced little growth until after World War II. During the 1950's several new residences were constructed, highways were widened and improved, and large new subdivisions were platted west of the original town area. In 1968, Sebastian was characterized as a quiet, peaceful, happy and dignified community reflecting a steady growth. Today, it is currently one of the fastest growing communities in Indian River County. Increasing development and consistent pressures on historical resources have prompted city officials to order a draft Preservation Ordinance.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

When the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Indian River Railroad began offering service to Sebastian in 1893, the development of the community changed. The central focus of the community's daily activities grew less dependent upon the river and shifted to an area along the ridge closer to the railroad. Trains provided a more advanced means of transportation, which increased the number of settlers and visitors to Sebastian. It also provided a faster means of shipping, which resulted in the growth of the local agricultural and fishing industries. The trains facilitated the area's development by making it easier to haul agricultural products to market and provide dry goods and building products to the area's early settlers. In 1894, a depot was constructed on the east side of the tracks near the junction of Main Street and Louisiana Avenue.⁹ In 1905, the first two-story wood vernacular schoolhouse was built on the west side of Louisiana across from the depot adjacent to the district's east boundary.¹⁰ Early resident, Lydia Edwards Gullede described her memories,

⁷ Ibid., 151.

⁸ *More Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1992]), Preface.

⁹ *A History of Indian River County: A Sense of Place* (Vero Beach: Indian River County Historical Society, [2000]), 42.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 4 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

“In those days Louisiana was like Park Avenue. The church, the schoolhouse and Baughman’s store and post office were all on the west side. The Groves, the Fosters, and the Council’s lived there.”¹¹

During the early 1900’s, Sebastian continued to develop along Main Street and Palmetto.¹² Buildings were, for the most part, built by locals in the wood vernacular style. Subdivisions were platted and named after the families who first purchased land there. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, life remained hard and the landscape was fairly rural. Carbide lights, cisterns, wood stoves, and out-houses were not uncommon sights. Social life was centered around the school and church.

Cash flow improved during the Boom period of the 1920’s as was typical in other Florida towns. This was a significant period of development for Sebastian. The Bank of Sebastian was built and opened in 1924 and Sebastian became incorporated as a town in 1925. A Municipal Power and Ice plant was constructed that same year. Some ordinances at the time prohibited the following:

- “To ride a bicycle on the streets of the Town at a faster rate of speed than 15 miles per hour.
- To maintain, manage or control any lottery, wheel of fortune, or any other gambling device.
- To hitch any horse, mule or any other animal to any of the shade trees upon the streets or within public parks, or on any private premises without the permission of the owner.”¹³

The availability of the automobile made Sebastian more accessible to tourists during the 1920’s. City officials made a concerted effort to improve and widen roads as well as establish sidewalks on Main Street and Central Avenue (U.S.1). Main Street was extended a few blocks west of Louisiana and a modern school designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, was constructed and opened there in 1928. During the “Boom” period, additional subdivisions such as Edgewater were platted, but growth did not extend much farther west of Louisiana Street until the 1950’s. Community life revolved around the downtown. Sunday school picnics, civic affairs and public gatherings, such as plays and political rallies, were common. The highlight however, were hand-cranked movies run by Rodney Kroegel in the original town hall.

By 1930, Sebastian was a happy little community despite the negative impacts of the Great Depression. As one resident recalled,

¹¹ *More Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1992]), 53.

¹² In the 1950’s the Federal Government four-laned Dixie Highway. This included the South part of Central Avenue (as it was called in the city) and later became U.S.1.

¹³ *More Tales of Sebastian* (Sebastian River Area Historical Society, [1992]), Preface.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 5 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

“Main Street was more busy than we are now...within a few blocks were the grocery, a dry goods store, a hardware store, a laundry, an ice house, the post office, the railroad station and the city jail...and there was a drug store on the corner of US1 and Main.”¹⁴

Major fires during the 1930's destroyed buildings along Main Street including the Hardee mansion. A plaque was placed in front of the Hardee Oak as a remembrance of the site. Bob Hardee, whose family moved to Sebastian in 1889, was the first tax collector for St. Lucie County when it was formed in 1905 and served twice on the Sebastian City Council.¹⁵ Bob's daughter, Meta was the first woman to serve on the Sebastian City Council.¹⁶

Few buildings were constructed in Sebastian during the 1930's and 1940's and the area experienced little growth. The new school, which featured a large baseball field and upstairs auditorium, was a major recreation area for the local children. The post-war years in Sebastian brought the third period of significant physical development of the city. During the early 1950's, a few modern homes, duplexes and efficiencies were built on vacant lots next to the older vernacular structures downtown. The ensuing decades resulted in a somewhat urban atmosphere on the west side of the railroad tracks along Main Street and U.S1 (South Central Ave.), while Palmetto Avenue remained a quaint residential street with well-kept residences. The adjacent orange groves and a dense landscape added to the charm and warmth of the neighborhood.

The most significant change came in the late 1950's when the Federal Government decided to extend U.S.1 through the middle of town along part of Central Avenue. As a result, the second City Hall, located on Main Street, was demolished leaving the City in need of office space. Consequently, in 1957, the first publicly owned City Hall was built housing the Police Department and the Volunteer Fire Department, which was organized in 1949. The building was located on the corner of Main Street and U.S.1 in the City Park.

In 1982, the city outgrew the building and moved to the first floor of the former 1928 Grammar and Junior High School building on Main Street. The former City Hall then became the home of the first publicly owned library in the City of Sebastian. Since 2002, it has served as office space for the Chamber of Commerce and the Sebastian Historical Society.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The district is significant locally for its representation of growth patterns and architectural trends associated with the Progressive, Boom and Post-War eras in Florida. It contains late nineteenth and early twentieth

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 93.

¹⁶ Ibid., 94.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 6 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

century buildings within Sebastian's city limits, many of which were built by Sebastian's first settlers. The buildings, streetscapes and landscapes in the district reflect the community's growth and development, and they are significant for their association with local historical events and the citizens who have contributed to shaping this community.

Excellent examples of early twentieth century wood vernacular buildings are the F. Carpenter House, 1036 Palmetto Avenue, and J. Beugnot House, 1068 Main Street. District residents and business owners were instrumental in the development of this small fishing village during the period of significance.

Although a few historical buildings in the district have been altered throughout the years, the area has retained much of its small-town character. Existing contributing buildings and streetscapes are mindful of the early settlement of the town. Sebastian area residents have a strong appreciation for their history and there is a momentum to preserve and restore this historical setting.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the Old Town Historic District, West are those shown on the accompanying scaled historic district map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries surround the Western, primarily residential, part of a significant concentration of intact historical buildings associated with the development of Old Town Sebastian. Although some historic buildings exist to the north and south of the district, the historic context and density of those areas have been altered extensively with new construction making it difficult to tie into the Old Town Historic District, West.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number PHOTOS Page 1 OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Topography, Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West
2. Sebastian, Florida
3. Anna Jackson, Historic Preservation Consultant
4. October 2002
5. City of Sebastian Engineering Department
6. Looking west on Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #1 of 9

Note: Items 2 through 5 are the same for all photographs:

1. 1025 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking Northwest from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #2 of 9

1. 1036 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking South from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #3 of 9

1. 1049 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking North from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #4 of 9

1. 1053 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking North from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #5 of 9

1. 1113 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking North from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #6 of 9

1. 1100 Palmetto Avenue
6. Looking South from Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #7 of 9

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number PHOTOS Page 2

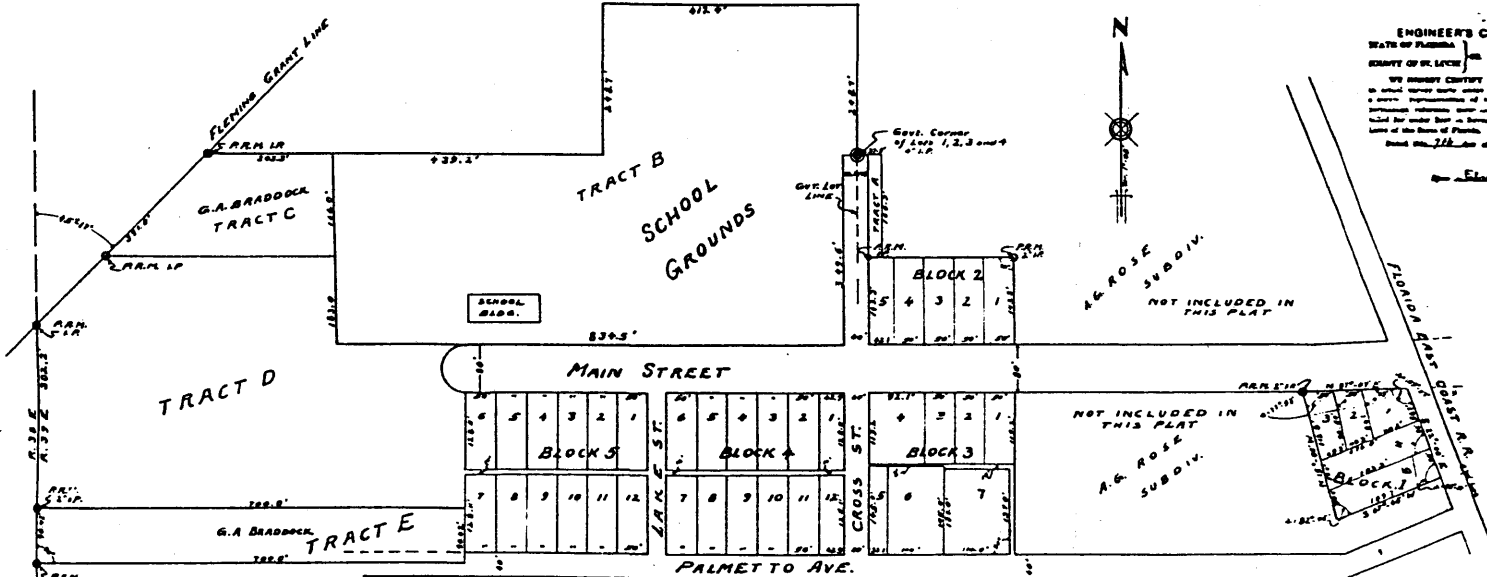
OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

1. Topography, Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West
6. Looking East on Palmetto Avenue
7. PHOTO #8 of 9

1. Topography, Old Town Sebastian Historic District, West
6. Looking East on Main Street from Lake Street.
7. PHOTO #9 of 9

REPEAT OF SCHOOL PARK SUBDIVISION SEBASTIAN INDIAN RIVER COUNTY FLORIDA

BEING PARTS OF GOV. LOTS 2, 3 AND 4
SECTION 6, TWP. 31S, R. 39E.



Act of Approvals

The foregoing plat is hereby approved by the City Council of the City of Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of November 1936.
 J. J. [Signature] City Clerk.

ENGINEER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF INDIAN RIVER

I, J. J. [Signature], duly appointed City Engineer of the City of Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida, do hereby certify that I have surveyed the foregoing plat and that it complies in every respect with the requirements of Chapter 10275 of the laws of Florida, and that I have caused the same to be recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of Nov. 1936.
 J. J. [Signature] City Engineer.

Scale: 1"=100'

In presence of:
 [Signatures and names of witnesses]

Act of Clerk of Circuit Court.
 State of Florida,
 County of Indian River.

I, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida, do hereby certify that I have examined the foregoing plat, and that it complies in every respect with the requirements of Chapter 10275 of the laws of Florida, and that I have caused the same to be recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of November 1936.
 [Signature] Clerk of the Circuit Court.

Act of Clerk of Circuit Court.
 State of Florida,
 County of Indian River.

I, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida, do hereby certify that I have examined the foregoing plat, and that it complies in every respect with the requirements of Chapter 10275 of the laws of Florida, and that I have caused the same to be recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of November 1936.
 [Signature] Clerk of the Circuit Court.

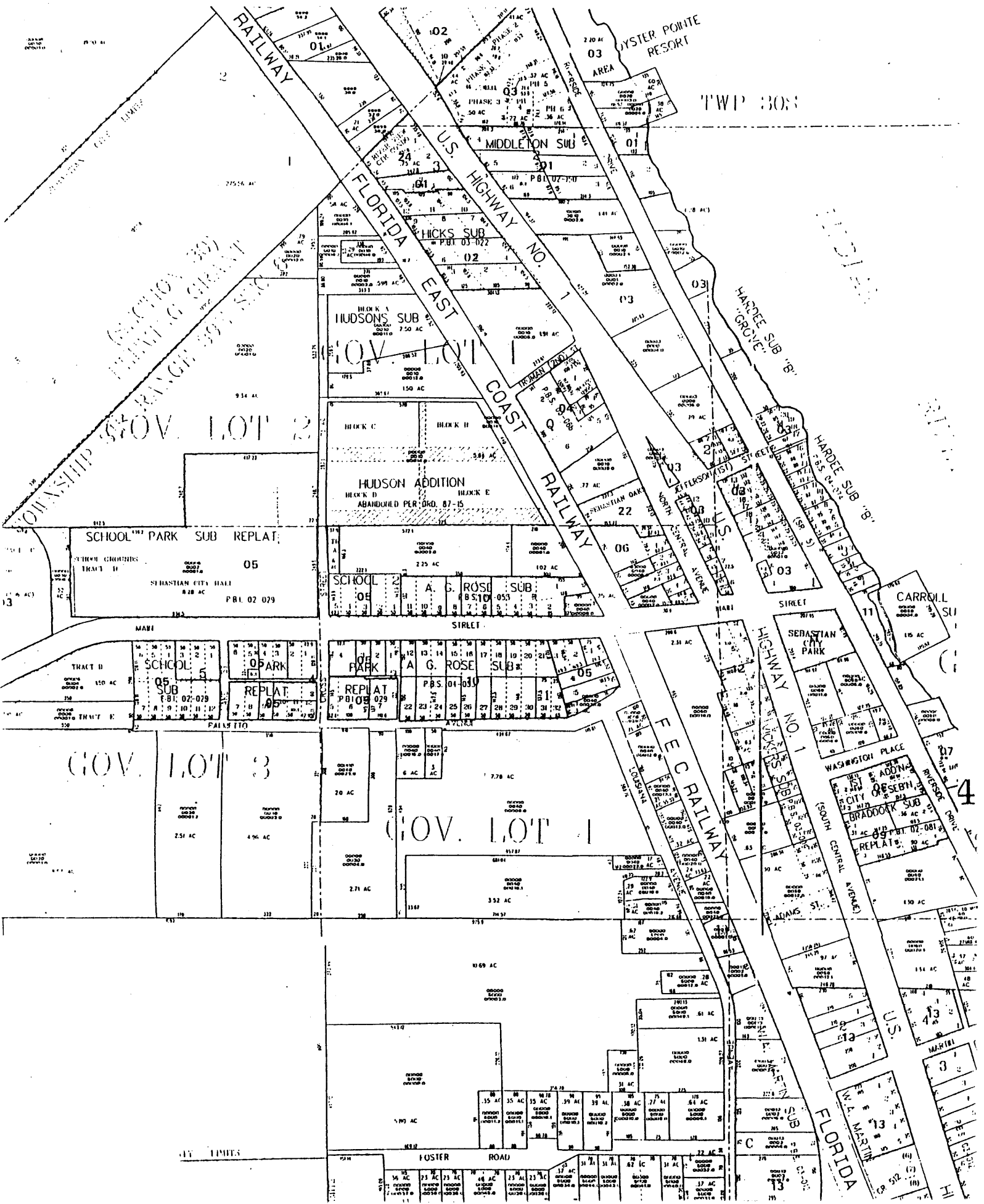
Engineer's Certificate.
 State of Florida,
 County of Indian River.

I, [Signature], duly appointed City Engineer of the City of Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida, do hereby certify that I have surveyed the foregoing plat and that it complies in every respect with the requirements of Chapter 10275 of the laws of Florida, and that I have caused the same to be recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of November 1936.
 [Signature] City Engineer.

Act of Approvals

The foregoing Plat is hereby approved by the Board of County Commissioners of Indian River County, Florida.
 Dated this 13th day of November 1936.
 [Signature] Chairman.

NW 1/4 Section 6 31s-39e Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida NE 1/4



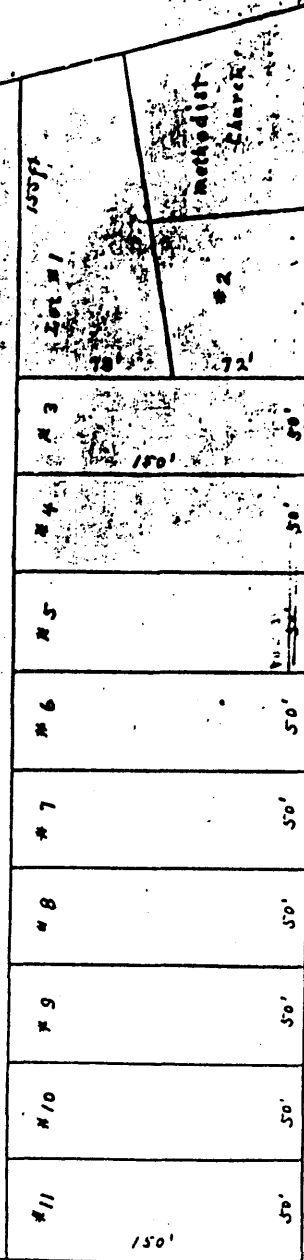
OLD TOWN SEBASTIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT, WEST
Sebastian, Indian River County, Florida

A G ROSE'S ADDITION

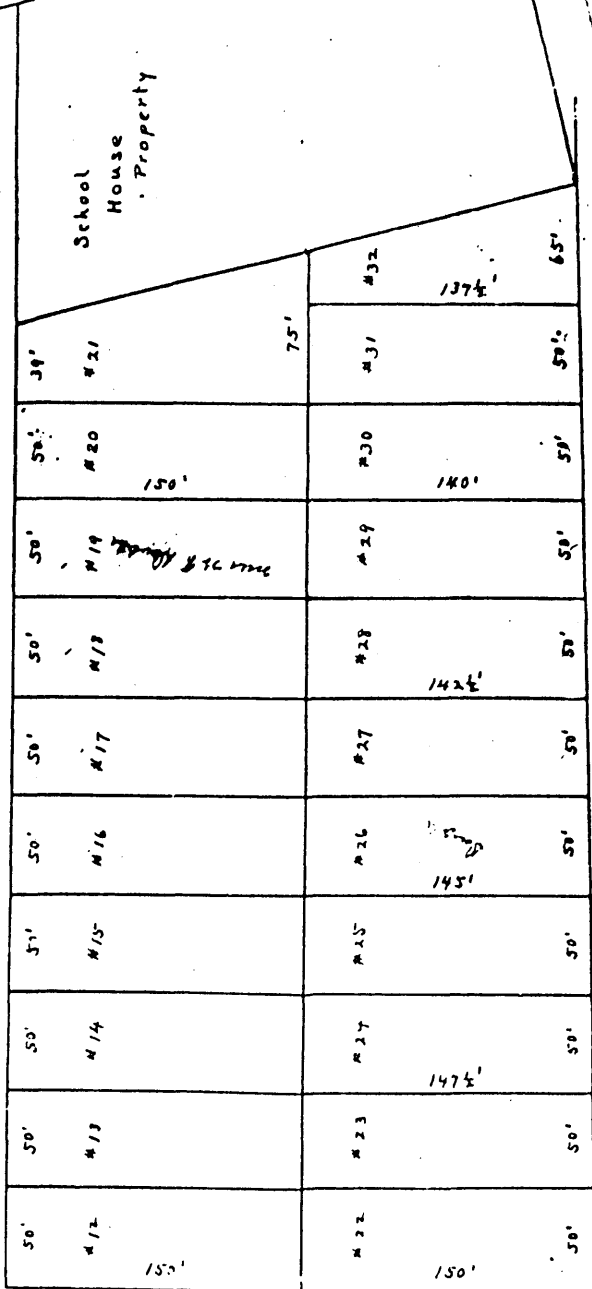
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71

George Braddock Property



Rose Avenue



Palmetto Avenue

Hart Aulas Property

R R Avenue