

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only  
received JUN 28 1984  
date entered AUG 1 1984

1. Name

historic Murphy-Burroughs House

and/or common Burroughs House

2. Location

street & number 2505 First Street N/A not for publication

city, town Ft. Myers N/A vicinity of

state Florida code 012 county Lee code 071

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Ft. Myers

street & number 2200 Second Avenue

city, town Ft. Myers N/A vicinity of state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lee County Courthouse

street & number 2115 Second Street

city, town Ft. Myers state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Ft. Myers has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Division of Archives, History and Records Management

city, town Tallahassee state Florida

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Murphy-Burroughs House is a large two and one-half story frame residence designed in the Georgian Revival style. The building displays many of the decorative elements associated with the style, including a balustraded widow's walk, pedimented dormers, a dentiled cornice and other classically-derived elements. The building is sided with cypress clapboard painted white and covered by a steep hip roof punctuated by numerous dormers and a pair of brick chimneys. The house is dominated by a wide first story porch executed in a stylized version of the Tuscan order. The porch wraps around the south, west and north sides of the house. The interior of the residence is symmetrically arranged around a central stair hall dominated by an elaborate staircase. Additions to the house include an enlargement of an east elevation porch and a rear (north elevation) kitchen addition.

The Murphy-Burroughs House is built on a brick pier foundation screened by a wood lattice base. Its high hip roof is covered by asphalt shingles laid over the original cypress shakes. The roof terminates in a square balustraded widow's walk flanked by a pair of tall corbeled chimneys. Each elevation of the roof is punctuated by two pedimented dormers with the east elevation dominated by an additional central gabled pavilion. A wide shed roof porch, some portions crowned by a balustraded deck, wraps around the building. The porch is executed in a modified version of the Tuscan order with a plain frieze and finely dentiled cornice. A simple balustraded wood rail is used both on the main porch and other railed areas. Most windows are large one-over-one double hung sash.

The symmetrical main (south) elevation is dominated by a projecting gabled pavilion flanked by a pair of bay windows on its second story. The southeast corner of the house is marked by a semi-circular projection of the balustraded porch of the building which continues the entire length of the facade. The main entry to the house includes a pair of French doors with leaded glass sidelights and transom. Above the main entrance, a Palladian-like doorway with quarrelled sidelights and fanlight provides access to the second story porch. The gabled upper story of the pavilion is supported by a wide bracketed cornice and includes a semi-circular window with a Georgian keystone.

The west elevation of the building includes a continuation of the first story porch with a central balustraded deck. A bay window on the south end of the first story is the only original projection although in the 1960s a small bathroom was added immediately to the north of the window. The elevation also includes three large one-over-one double hung sash windows symmetrically located on the second story and two pedimented dormers above.

The north elevation faces the Caloosahatchee River and the main grounds of the property. The porch continues along the elevation, terminating at a kitchen addition. This addition, made at an unknown date, is the enclosure of what had been a relatively open rear servants access to the kitchen, pantry, and servants stair at the rear of the house. The addition extends off the main body of the house here behind which there are two brick piers which may have supported a cistern. The porch again has a balustraded deck and wooden steps leading to a small central door into the stair hall. A door from a projection on the second floor leads onto the roof deck and a one-over-one double hung window opens onto the porch deck. A modern air conditioning system unobtrusively sits on the porch deck and feeds the second floor.

The east elevation has a projecting pavilion on the second story which meets the second story of the north side. This elevation also has a large porch. The porch was originally a small covered entry porch with steps projecting east, serving as the central doorway of this side's parlor. This porch was enlarged in the 1960s after damage was done to the original porch by a hurricane. The addition extended the porch eastward and created a

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1901 **Builder/Architect** C.S. Caldwell/G.T. Barker

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed in 1901<sup>1</sup>, the Murphy-Burroughs House is a major cultural resource of the City of Ft. Myers. The building is significant through its association with the early development of the community and as an outstanding example of Georgian Revival architecture. The house is one of the first and one of the few remaining residences of its style and quality built in Ft. Myers in the early 20th century. The building is also an exceptionally fine example of Georgian Revival architecture, a style atypical of southwest Florida. The house has suffered a minimum of exterior and interior alterations and retains a great deal of its original integrity. It is an extremely important architectural resource.

Ft. Myers, as the name suggests, was originally settled as a military outpost, known first as Fort Harvie. This military cantonment occupied what is now downtown Ft. Myers and was renamed during the Seminole Wars in 1850 for a Col. Myers. The installation was abandoned and reoccupied on several occasions, but was finally abandoned by the military for good at the close of the Civil War. With the conclusion of hostilities, settlers soon began drifting into the area and by 1876 Ft. Myers was officially recognized as a town. Ft. Myers' early growth was slow, being one of a number of small frontier cattle towns created by the cattle trade of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in southwest Florida. People soon began the building of small houses and other structures along the Caloosahatchee River, but the town was still rough by Eastern and Northern standards. There was no rail service and few good roads.

During the 1880s and 1890s the resort potential of Ft. Myers was recognized and several hotels and tourist homes were built to accommodate the few winter visitors who arrived with each monthly ship to offload supplies. The most famous of these early residents was Thomas A. Edison, who had a winter home and laboratory brought down and assembled for him. However, Ft. Myers by-in-large remained an unimproved frontier town made up of little more than simple frame vernacular structures.

Two other early visitors to Ft. Myers were John T. Murphy and his friend, D.A.G. Floweree, both wealthy stockmen from Helena, Montana, who first visited the town in the winter of 1899. Initially drawn to the area in search of business ventures, both men found the area to their liking after Montana winters and spent the remainder of the winter in the town. Murphy engaged local businessman Harvie Heitman to act as his agent and purchased 450 feet of riverfront frontage for \$3,500 just east of the present-day Edison Bridge on which to build his winter residence.<sup>2</sup> Murphy sold a portion of his newly acquired tract to his associate Floweree, who also wished to winter in Ft. Myers, for construction of his residence.

In October 1899, Heitman received plans for Murphy's house from the architectural firm of G.T. Barker and Company of Knoxville, Tennessee.<sup>3</sup> After soliciting bids, the contract was awarded to C.S. Caldwell, a contractor from Tampa. Caldwell was also awarded the construction of the Floweree residence. The construction of both homes was carried out simultaneously. The local newspaper featured articles on the design and construction of the buildings, as there was great excitement in their construction. The articles described in detail the design of the house and the materials to be used and made mention of the Murphy-Burroughs house being lit by electricity. Construction of Murphy's house

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 2.45 acres

Quadrangle name Fort Myers

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	<u>117</u>	<u>4138210</u>	<u>29474610</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
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D			
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

That part of lot 3, block 4, as recorded in Plat Book 1, page 23. This area includes all significant properties.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
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state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title William R. Henry, Jr./Michael F. Zimny, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Division of Archives date June 14, 1984

street & number The Capitol telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *George W. Percy*

title George W. Percy, State Historic Preservation Officer date 6/15/84

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Entered in the National Register**

date 8/1/84

for *Delores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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large screenable outdoor seating and entertainment area. The porch terminates in a half circular shape, similar to that of the porch on the south side. The second floor windows closely parallel the windows on the west side and the usual pedimented dormers appear above.

The interior of the Murphy-Burroughs house has had only minor alterations. The plan reflects the symmetry of the main facade, with a central stair hall and rooms of equal size and shape on either side. On the first floor, a front parlor and a dining room occupy the east side of the house. A small butler's pantry and kitchen are located to the rear of the dining room. A large and beautifully crafted central stair hall occupies the central hall. The stair and hall are paneled and the stair baluster and rail are of carved wood. The stair rises a few steps to a large landing with a bench and then rises again to another intermediate landing, made necessary by the ceiling height of the rooms. On the west side of the stair hall is a front parlor and a rear library which includes the modern bath addition. There is another small lavatory at the rear of the house and another at the rear by the kitchen on the first floor. All rooms have either full paneling or wainscoting and an ornate fireplace. Paneled pocket doors separate the rooms from one another.

The second floor includes another central stair hall which is used as a large sitting room. To the right of the stair hall are two bedrooms, each with a fireplace, and a bath which they share. To the south and occupying the central bay pavilion is a small office or den room. Two more bedrooms and a bath are in the left side. A smaller hallway leads to the servant's stair at the rear and a storage closet in the kitchen attic. The third floor at one time housed the servants but is now used for storage. It includes five rooms and a bath, all with plain beaded paneling. These rooms are lighted by the dormers. A small stair rises from this floor to the attic above.

The house is located on a 2.45 acre site fronting the Caloosahatchee River. The site is at the northeastern corner of the intersection of First and Fowler Streets and is bounded by the river to the north, an apartment complex to the east, First Street to the south, and Fowler Street to the west. A white wood picket fence with two pedestrian gates and one vehicular gate border the street faces of the lot. The grounds are heavily landscaped and contain several ornamental walks and statues, a grotto, a screened gazebo (built in the 1960s) and a concrete tennis court, reputed to be the first private tennis court in Ft. Myers. This sort of site development is typical of the period of the house's construction. In addition to the main house, there are two other buildings on the site: a caretaker's house and a garden shed. It is not known whether there were originally any other out-buildings.

Contributions:

- 1 (curse blog)
- 1 (curse blog) (structure)
- 1 (curse blog) (side)

non-contributing per site plan:

- gate to (curse)
- gate (object)
- shed
- caretaker's house (blog)
- unidentified bldg.

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was begun in March of 1900 and the house was occupied in 1901.<sup>4</sup>

The construction of Murphy's residence was to be a catalyst for a building boom in Ft. Myers. Other prominent citizens erected equally substantial homes in a variety of architectural styles along the east side of town, creating a residential neighborhood with a unique expression of social and economic status. The addition of these residences hastened the transformation of Ft. Myers from a rugged frontier town to a settled community with an ever increasing year-round population supplemented by a growing seasonal population.

Following the construction of their residences, Murphy and Flowerree began construction of a seawall along their river frontage. So successful was their private seawall that plans were soon made by the city for the construction of a similar seawall from present day Monroe Street to Billy Creek, with the property owners conceding a 75 foot wide easement along the river frontage for the construction of a public boulevard. Opposition was expressed by the waterfront property owners, who had no intention of yielding their frontage to the city. Murphy and his neighbors realized the importance for such a development in the downtown area and had a seawall built at their own expense. Finished in 1912 after four years of construction, the new seawall "lifted Ft. Myers face out of the mud."<sup>5</sup>

Murphy was also to become embroiled in one of the town's most bitter and lengthy controversies. In 1906, Ft. Myers' first locally owned banking institution, the Bank of Ft. Myers, was established. Within a short period of time, factional differences resulted in the establishment of a second bank, the First National Bank of Ft. Myers. Murphy was to align himself with the newly instituted First National Bank, becoming a major shareholder and having a seat on the Board of Directors. The two banks remained bitter rivals for years to come. Opinions have been expressed which suggest that the rivalry between the two institutions benefits Ft. Myers while, conversely, others argue that it retarded expansion and growth. Of a less controversial nature was Murphy's early support for the establishment of a fire company, of which he was one of the initial subscribers. Murphy no doubt played a substantial role in the many civic improvements and social affairs that happened in the city. Although he seems to have been unmarried at the time of his life in Ft. Myers, he had two daughters and they seem to have made great waves in Ft. Myers' society.

Following Murphy's death in 1914, the property was sold to New Jersey businessman Howard Cole. He subsequently sold the property in 1919 to Nelson Thomas Burroughs, whose family has retained ownership to the present, hence the name Murphy-Burroughs House. Nelson Thomas Burroughs was a self-made man, born in Tecumseh, Michigan. He amassed a fortune in banking, land investment and stock raising in Iowa, after having served in the Civil War. He wintered in Palm Beach and other parts of Florida, but was to visit Ft. Myers and become satisfied with its climate and other amenities. He purchased the house and continued to winter there with his family until his death in 1932. The Burroughs family was active in local affairs as well as the society scene in Chicago and other cities around the country and the world. Nelson Thomas Burroughs' daughters Mona and Jettie were active in society affairs and were prominent members of the garden club, doing much to enhance and promote the beauty of Ft. Myers. The Burroughs house was to be the site of many a lavish entertainment, well attended by the people of the city, including Mrs. Thomas Edison. The house remained in the Burroughs family until 1983 when it was willed to the City of Ft. Myers. The city is presently undertaking a feasibility study for its adaptive re-use.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Fort Myers Hotel, The Famous Resort Begins its Fourth Season." The Fort Myers Press, 17 January, 1901, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Karl H. Grismer, The Story of Ft. Myers, 1949, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>"John T. Murphy to Have a Beautiful Modern Home Built in Ft. Myers." The Fort Myers Press, 26 October, 1899, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>"Two Fine Residences." The Fort Myers Press, 15 March, 1900, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Karl H. Grismer, The Story of Fort Myers, 1949, p. 181.

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Grismer, Karl H. The Story of Fort Myers. St. Petersburg, FL: St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1949.

Fort Myers Planning Board. Historic Fort Myers. Fort Myers, 1982.

"Fort Myers Hotel Notes" The Fort Myers Press, 5 April 1900, p. 1.

"John T. Murphy Dies." The Fort Myers Press, 23 May 1914, p. 1.

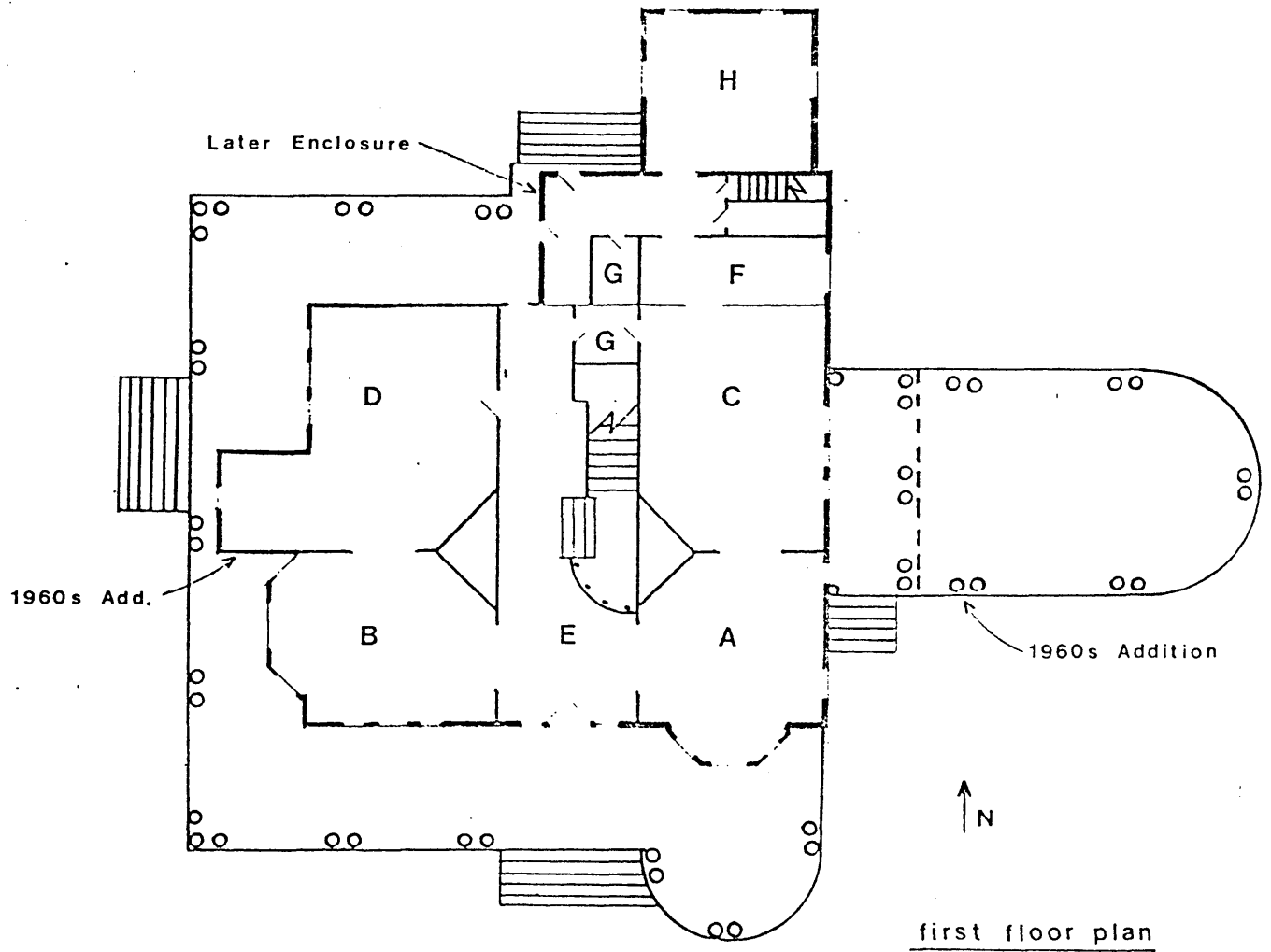
"John T. Murphy to Have a Beautiful Modern Home Built in Fort Myers." The Fort Myers Press, 26 October 1899, p. 1.

"The Famous Resort Begins its Fourth Season." The Fort Myers Press, 17 January 1901. p. 1.

"The Popular Resort Rapidly Filling With Guests." The Fort Myers Press, 23 February 1899, p. 1.

"Two Fine Residences." The Fort Myers Press, 15 March 1900, p. 1.





MURPHY-BURROUGHS HOUSE

- |    |              |    |                |
|----|--------------|----|----------------|
| A. | Parlor       | E. | Reception Hall |
| B. | Sitting Room | F. | Pantry         |
| C. | Dining Room  | G. | Bathroom       |
| D. | Library      | H. | Kitchen        |

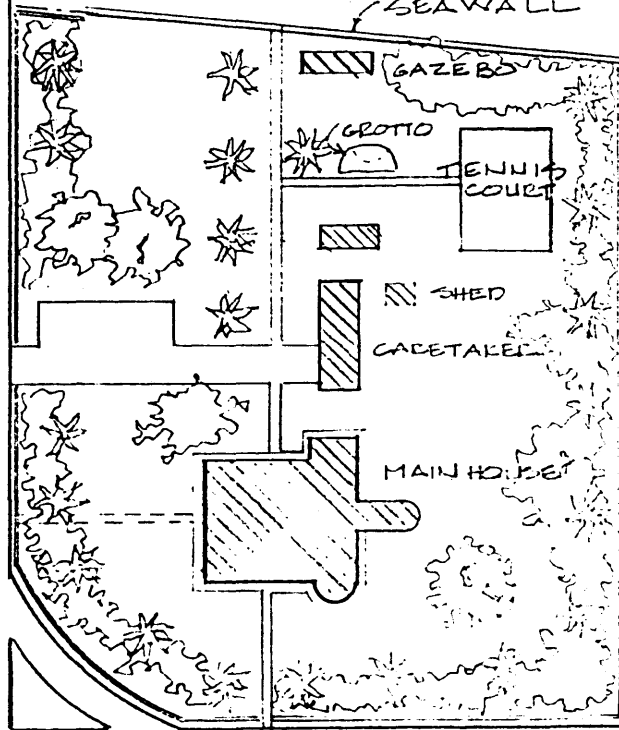
EPISON BRIDGE

CALOOSA HATCHEE RIVER

EDWARDS DR.

FOWLER AVE.

SEAWALL



FIRST ST.

BURROUGHS HOUSE  
SITE PLAN

N.T.S.

