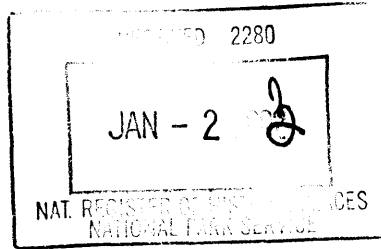


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 French, Seth House
other names/site number Fairview Cottage/VO7317

2. Location

street & number 319 East French Avenue N/A not for publication
city or town Orange City N/A vicinity
state Florida code FL county Volusia code 127 zip code 32763

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Barbara C. Mattick / DSHPO 12-20-02
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 H. Beall Signature of the Keeper
2/12/03 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	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

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER:Frame Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD

roof METAL CRIMP PANELS

other WOOD: porch

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)

ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT
EARLY SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

c.1876-1881
c. 1905-1925

Significant Dates

c.1876
c.1905
c.1915, c.1925

Significant Person

French, Seth

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

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid for reference 1: Zone 17, Easting 471110, Northing 3202580

UTM grid for reference 3: Zone, Easting, Northing

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 Sidney P. Johnston, Consultant; Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date December, 2002

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 Harriett French Boyd

street & number 3112 West Lake Mary Boulevard telephone (407) 322-0354

city or town Lake Mary state Florida zip code 32746

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

Summary

The historic Seth French House, also known as "Fairview Cottage," is located at 319 East French Avenue in Orange City, Volusia County, Florida. Setback approximately one hundred fifty feet from the street, the one-and-one-half-story wood Frame Vernacular dwelling contains approximately twenty-one hundred square feet of interior floor space. It displays an irregular plan with a steeply pitched front-facing gable roof, cross-gable and cross-hip extensions, and crimped metal panel surfacing. Other features include a veranda, screened porches, clapboard exterior wall fabric, six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows, and a foundation system of brick piers infilled with vertical-slat lattice. The house contributes to the sense of time, place, and historical development of Orange City through its location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It provides an important architectural link to the heritage of the city. Displaying a superior level of craftsmanship, the dwelling retains its late nineteenth century to early twentieth century character and integrity to a high degree.

Setting

Orange City is located in west Volusia County, approximately thirty miles north of Orlando and twenty-five miles southwest of Daytona Beach. U. S. Highway 17/92, known locally as Volusia Avenue, serves as the primary north/south corridor through the city, and Graves Avenue is the primary east/west thoroughfare. Graves and Volusia Avenues represent the center of the city. Most of Volusia Avenue in Orange City has been developed with buildings of relatively recent construction. East of the intersection of Graves Avenue and Volusia Avenue stand Dickinson Memorial Library and Park (NR, 1995) and Orange City Town Hall (NR, 2002).

The Seth French House is located on East French Avenue two blocks north of Graves Avenues and two blocks east of Volusia Avenue. It faces south at the head of Oak Avenue. The longer axis of the house is perpendicular to French Avenue with extensions at the main body near the rear, or north, elevation. A residential neighborhood radiates around the dwelling with houses of more recent construction standing to the north, and those of older origins to the south. The terrain is relatively flat and mature camphor, cedar, oak, and palm trees, accented by Boston ferns, coontie plants, Japanese plums, and a century plant, contribute shade and ambiance to the site.

Physical Description

Exterior

The front, or south, facade (photographs 1, 2) displays a steeply-pitched front-facing gable roof with a triangular attic vent in the gable end, a shed roof protecting a central paneled wood door in the upper story, and

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Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

a hipped-roof veranda that wraps across the south facade and east elevation. The roof of the veranda is supported, in part, by paired arrangements of two-by-two posts connected by two-by-four blocks with half-round notching. Historic-period photographs indicate that the roof of the veranda at one time displayed a shallower pitch than its present profile. Still, no formal balcony or porch is evident either from the pictures, or upon investigation of the porch roof structure. Instead, the front door on the upper story apparently simply emptied onto the roof of the veranda.

The clapboards are finished with cornerboards and face stringers in the gable end. Fenestration is symmetrical but irregular in size with six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows; the lower sashes exhibit a larger profile than the windows in the upper story. The windows display a thin, delicate frames and muntins. Louvered shutters supported by their original mounts protect the windows. The front door (photograph 3) displays a five-panel profile, large single light, molded cornice, and original handle and hardware.

The east elevation (photographs 4, 5) displays some of the irregular characteristics of the plan of the dwelling. A cross-hip roof projects from the east face of the gable, containing a tiered porch enclosed with stem walls and screen. A screen door provides access from the veranda into the first-floor screen porch; access to the sleeping porch above is provided by an outside wood-frame staircase. The irregular sizes of double-hung sash windows is evident along the elevation with two smaller windows piercing the upper story, and three double-hung sash windows opening along the first story.

The rear, or north, elevation (photographs 5, 6) exhibits a single, central double-hung sash window in the upper story, and a brick chimney truncated at the roofline. Protecting two rear doors, a partially-enclosed porch wraps across the rear elevation, terminating several feet short of the end of a two-story cross-gable extension (photograph 6). The porch consists of a shed roof supported by wood posts, newels, and balustrades. Doors opens near each end of the porch, and fenestration is irregular and asymmetric with two-light hopper windows and six-over-six double-hung sash windows.

The west elevation continues the irregular pattern of the house's plan. The face of the two-story cross-gable displays centrally placed double-hung sash windows, but a small double-hung sash adjacent to the larger unit on the lower story breaks the symmetry. A stringer-and-cornerboard system finishes the clapboard exterior wall fabric. Abutting the gable extension on the south is a flat-roof extension (photograph 7) with drop siding, cornerboards, and double-hung sash windows. A corbeled, hooded brick chimney pierces the flat roof, and interrupts the eaves of the main body of the dwelling.

Interior

Containing approximately twenty-one hundred square feet of floor space, the interior consists of fourteen primary spaces, including bedrooms, living room, parlor, hallway, kitchen, laundry, restrooms, and vestibule.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

Throughout most of the house, the walls and ceilings are finished with textured stucco, simple unadorned wood door and window casings, and wood toe plates. Carpets and linoleum finish most of the floors on the first floor. The front, or south, entrance opens into a parlor with a fireplace (photograph 8) standing along a canted wall at the northwest corner. The mantle is finished with carved brackets, a cornice adorned with fleur-de-lis, beaded and running tulip moldings, and a beveled mirror. A broad opening accented by a two-light transom divides the parlor from the living room (photographs 8, 9). A four-panel-wood door opens along the north wall, leading into the dining room, and a twelve-light French door opens along the west wall, leading into a bedroom. A built-in wood cabinet stands along the north wall.

In addition to the French door, the bedroom has two windows that open along the west and south walls, respectively, and a two-panel wood door (photograph 10) that opens into a restroom and laundry beyond (photograph 11). A small hallway extends east of the laundry into the dining room (photograph 12), where a distinctive system of French doors and double-hung sash windows provide natural interior lighting and access onto a screen porch (photograph 13). The dining room also contains a built-in china cabinet and series of steps and four-panel door leading to a half-turn staircase with landings (photograph 14).

The upper floor contains three bedrooms, a restroom, storage room, and hallways. Four-paneled wood doors mounted with decorative hinges and equipped with porcelain knobs separate the rooms. The upper floor plan displays an efficient cross-ventilation pattern (photographs 15, 16), and an unusual wall-to-ceiling forty-five degree canted profile to accommodate the pitch of the roof (photograph 17). Finished with textured stucco, the short wall system is punctuated by windows that extend from the floor to the canted walls. Trimmed with wood toe plates, the floors are finished with heart pine. The restroom contains its original fixtures (photograph 18), and the sleeping porch is finished with pine tongue-in-groove beaded boards (photograph 19).

Alterations

Exterior

The house, as built and occupied by Seth French from c. 1876-1881, consisted of the rectangular main block. On the first floor it included the wraparound veranda on the main (south) and east elevations, parlor, living room, dining room, kitchen, storage area, and small wraparound porch on the northwest corner. On the second floor it included the three bedrooms, stair hall, and vestibule. Subsequent owners made some changes. A two-story cross-gable extension was added on the west elevation (c.1905), a cross-hip extension was added on the east elevation (c. 1915), and a one-story flat-roof extension was added on the west elevation (c. 1925). All are set toward the rear of the building, and are not prominent as one looks at the main elevation. The c. 1905 and c. 1925 extensions on the west elevation display similar materials and fenestration found on the original section of the dwelling. Both exhibit six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows with frame, muntin, and casing profiles similar to those elsewhere on the dwelling. Some of the windows appear to be recycled from the

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

original walls of the house, and existing openings were used to provide passage from the additions to the original part of the house. The extensions display cornerboards that lap over the clapboards and drop siding, rather than being butted into the clapboards as on the original section of the house. Although the house was altered after French sold the property, it still retains its essential elements of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and overall form and circulation plan as French knew them. The integrity of the main part of the house is particularly striking (See historic photo).

Outbuilding

Constructed about 1915, a one-story wood frame garage (photograph 20) stands behind the dwelling approximately fifteen feet west of the northwest corner of the rear porch. Facing east, it displays a side-facing gable roof surfaced with crimp metal panels, wood shingle exterior wall fabric, and a single vehicle bay protected by a sliding door fabricated with beaded boards and mounted on a metal runner with hinges.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

Summary Significance Paragraph

The Seth French House fulfills Criterion B at the local and state levels because of its association with Seth French. French, a physician, was locally significant in the area of Early Settlement as one of the founders of Orange City. He was instrumental in securing the services of a surveyor to lay out the town plan of Orange City. The dwelling was completed about 1876 just north of the initial town plan and was later included within the expanded plan. In 1879 he also served in the state senate. The house is significant at the state level because it was French's residence when he served as one of Florida's early commissioners of immigration, an office created after the Civil War to encourage new settlement in the state. As Florida's immigration commissioner, French accompanied newspaper correspondent and travel writer George Barbour on his celebrated tour of Florida in 1880.

The house also possesses local significance under Criterion C as one of the oldest dwellings in Volusia County, closely tied to the original development of Orange City. The residence is a good example of Frame Vernacular construction from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The design of the dwelling is consistent with national and statewide trends in architecture from the 1870s to the 1920s.

Historical Context

Orange City, settled in the 1870s, was incorporated in 1882. In 1883, railroad tracks were extended through the settlement, connecting Blue Spring--a small river boat landing several miles west on the St. Johns River--with New Smyrna. The transportation link sparked a significant period of development. Surveyed in 1877, a town plan was expanded in the 1890s. A small commercial center emerged along Graves Avenue and numerous dwellings dotted the landscape. By 1886, the town boasted a population of nearly six hundred residents, and contained nine stores, three hotels, a library association and Woman's Christian Temperance Union organization, Masonic hall, several saw mills and churches, and a public school. Citrus played a vital role in the local economy.

Devastating freezes in the mid-1890s curtailed development. By 1900, the population had fallen to 414, but rose to 538 a decade later. The proximity of larger cities--especially DeLand and Daytona Beach, both of which experienced significant development during the era--hampered renewed growth and economic recovery. Nevertheless, over the following decade several small subdivisions were platted and a number of houses constructed. In 1909, citrus growers formed an association, and investors organized a realty company in 1915. Founded in the 1890s, a Village Improvement Association was formally incorporated in 1915. In 1919, the development of a library and park improved the visual appeal and cultural opportunities in the community. In 1918, Orange City became one of the first Florida towns to enfranchise women. In 1920, the population reached 542.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
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During the land boom of the 1920s, the city experienced some of the explosive growth patterns that occurred in many larger Florida cities. The population increased to 659 in 1925 and the commercial district expanded along the intersection of Graves and Volusia Avenues. Several new public buildings were constructed, including a church, school, and town hall. Some subdivisions were platted and numerous houses developed. The Orange City Development Company, a chamber of commerce, telephone exchange, and bank were organized between 1925 and 1927.

In the late-1920s, following the collapse of the land boom, the economy slowed and languished in the 1930s and the early-1940s. During the Great Depression decade, the population fell from 713 to 489. The Florida East Coast Railway, in its struggle to survive, initially reduced service to Orange City, then abandoned and dismantled its tracks in 1934. Relief efforts associated with the "New Deal," a nationwide series of programs created by the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt, provided funds to states and municipalities for a host of projects, including infrastructure improvements and the development of conservation, education, and recreation facilities. A number of small New Deal projects were initiated in Orange City during the period, helping to boost the economy. Events associated with World War II dampened growth that had resumed in the late-1930s. Following the war, development rebounded, some of which resulted in the destruction of some older buildings. Nevertheless, much of the city's historic building fabric remains intact.

Historical Significance

Born in 1824 in Potsdam, Jefferson County, New York, Seth French attended Lawrence Academy, and then apprenticed as a physician with his uncle, Elkanah French, in Natural Bridge, New York. In 1843, he earned a teaching certificate, taught school during several winter terms, and was accepted into the Vermont Medical College at Castleton, Vermont, where he graduated in 1847. That year, he opened a medical practice at Carthage, New York, but moved to California in 1848, and, like thousands of Americans pursued a dream of wealth by striking it rich during the 1848 California Gold Rush. After one brief period of mining, French deposited over seventeen hundred dollars in gold bullion. In 1850, he returned to his medical practice at Carthage, and married Harriet Guyot. He persisted in the practice of medicine in various New York villages until the Civil War, when he enlisted as a surgeon in a volunteer infantry regiment. He served in two regiments that participated in various battles, including Antietam, Fairfax Courthouse, and Fredericksburg. He was mustered out in 1863, after which he and his family moved to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, he and his brother, Alexander, helped establish a pharmaceutical business named Farr, French and Company. But, within a decade, French's rheumatism associated with his service during the war compelled him to look for a warmer climate in which to live. In addition, French was lured by the promise of riches from planting citrus and investing in real estate. In 1870, he visited central Florida, stopping at the nascent settlement of Sanford, where he purchased property and established a seasonal home.¹

¹Helen Zebley, *Southern Shoots from Northern Roots* (Thomasville: Helen Zebley, 1984), 2-4.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

Making various investment in Orange County real estate, French built large Queen Anne-style dwelling in 1872 in Sanford, planted a citrus grove, and purchased additional property in Orlando's downtown about 1877. By then, he owned thirty-five acres in Sanford, twenty of which had been planted in citrus. His Sanford home (demolished) stood about one mile south of the St. Johns River astride a road that he helped clear and which became known as French Avenue (now also known as U. S. Highway 17/92). During his summer visits to Eau Claire, French encouraged other professionals and business leaders to invest in and develop Florida real estate. By 1874, a group of investors had organized the Wisconsin Company, essentially a partnership that initially consisted of Allen Cameron, David P. Graves, William Holly, James Smith, J. C. Stillman, and John C. Thorpe. After their arrival in Florida, French bought into the partnership.²

In the mid-1870s, the company purchased thirty-two hundred acres radiating east of Blue Spring on the St. Johns River in Volusia County. The company divided some of the property into five and ten acre parcels with prices ranging between twenty-five and one hundred dollars. In March 1876, French purchased a ten-acre tract from them for twenty-five dollars north of the emergent Orange City village. Later that year, French built his home on the property and planted citrus on about two of those acres, and later expanded his grove to six acres. Although he now maintained homes in Eau Claire, Orange City, and Sanford, French devoted much of his time promoting the Orange City settlement and developing property near it. In 1876, he acquired a one-eighth interest in the Wisconsin Company, and in 1878, acquired approximately four thousand acres in Volusia County from attorney and Wisconsin Company partner David P. Graves. In 1877, the company hired E. R. Trafford, an Orlando surveyor and agent for the Florida Land and Colonization Company of England, to lay out a town plan for Orange City. Trafford's Plan of Orange City established a plan for development, which left large tracts around the core of the settlement unplatted. As initially designed, the town plan stopped just south of French's home place. An expansion of the town plan in 1893 placed the French House in lot seven, block twenty-two, and squared off the town limits. The plan provided a system of blocks and lots with street names assigned for the Wisconsin Company members and early settlers, including French, Graves, Holly, and Thorpe. During the same period, Trafford laid out town plans Orlando and Sanford, and would later lay out numerous other subdivisions in Orange County and the area that became Seminole County.³

French aggressively pursued investments and professional associations in Orange City and Volusia County between the early-1870s and 1881. His real estate interests spilled over into education and politics. In 1876, he served as chairman of the first school district trustees for Orange City, and later served a term on the Volusia County Council. In 1879, voters elected him to the Florida Senate. His effectiveness in the senate resulted, in

²Zebley, *Southern Shoots from Northern Roots*, 6.

³Deed Book C, p. 482, Deed Book E, p. 188, 1874-1882 tax rolls, Map Book 1, p. 7, Map Book 3, p. 39, Map Book 16, p. 54, Map Book 17, p. 1, Clerk of Court, Volusia County Courthouse, DeLand, Florida; William Blackman, *History of Orange County, Florida* (Orlando: William Blackman, 1927), 94; Joan LaFleur, ed., *Our Story of Orange City, Florida* (Orange City: Village Improvement Association, 2000), 12; Arthur Francke, Alyce Gillingham, and Maxine Turner, *Volusia: The West Side* (DeLand: West Volusia Historical Society, 1986), 401; Zebley, *Southern Shoots from Northern Roots*, 7.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

part, in a political plum later that year, when the Bureau of Immigration, then consisting of Governor George Drew and William D. Bloxham, appointed him to a two-year term as Commissioner of Immigration. The position had been created as a cabinet level post by the Constitution of 1868, and J. S. Adams served as the first commissioner. Adams and his successors published pamphlets that advertised the benefits of planting citrus and owning property in Florida. Governor Harrison Reed (1868-1873) credited the immigration commission with attracting new residents to the state. In 1871, the Florida Legislature amended the constitution, combining the offices of surveyor general and commissioner of immigration. Then, in 1879, under chapter 3151 of the Laws of Florida, the legislature created a Bureau of Immigration, an action supported by Senator French and one that ultimately resulted in his appointment as the new bureau's commissioner.⁴

Still based in Orange City, French embarked on a campaign to promote immigration to Florida. Tireless in his efforts, he traveled widely to advertise Florida, ranging between Chicago and New York, and Lancaster, Liverpool, and London, England. He established Florida immigration offices in Chicago, Jacksonville, and New York. Back in Orange City, he reviewed the bureau's mail, responding to requests for information on the state. Between March 1879 and March 1881, French received ninety-two hundred letters representing fourteen foreign countries and thirty-eight states. More than one-half of the letters came from areas north of the Mason-Dixon line. He also traveled to every county in Florida, which in 1880 numbered forty. In early-1880, the *Tampa Sunland Tribune* endorsed French's efforts, and promised to "get up such statistics for this county..." Other newspapers, including the *Jacksonville Florida Times Union* and the *Savannah Morning News* reported that "Few men had done more to induce settlers to come to Florida..." They characterized French as a "New Yorker with a Western experience, a man of commanding figure, pleasing address, considerable wealth and one who had been eminently successful in all his private enterprises."⁵

Part of the impetus for his traveling included visiting farmers, politicians, and newspaper editors, and to compile statistics on various locations to include in several pamphlets that he compiled and published as commissioner. Among other items, French requested information on climate, population, resources, soil, and crops, such as citrus, cotton, oats, rice, and sugar. French prepared some of the early drafts and edited the manuscript in his Orange City residence. By March 1881, he and his offices had distributed seventy-five thousand pamphlets entitled *Semi-Tropical Florida: Its Climate Soil and Productions, with a Sketch of its History, Natural Features and Social Condition, Being a Manual of Reliable Information Concerning the Resources of the State, and the Inducements which it Offers to Persons Seeking New Homes and Profitable*

⁴Charlton Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), 292; Rowland Rerick, comp., *Memoirs of Florida*, 2 vols., (Atlanta: Southern Historical Association, 1902), 1: 362; Jerrell Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1974), 217; John Phelps, comp., *The People of Lawmaking in Florida, 1822-1991* (Tallahassee: House of Representatives, 1991), 34; Zebley, *Southern Shoots from Northern Roots*, 7; Michael Schene, *Hopes, Dreams, and Promises: A History of Volusia County, Florida* (Daytona Beach: News-Journal Corporation, 1976), 136.

⁵*Tampa Sunland Tribune*, 1 January 1880; Zebley, *Southern Shoots from Northern Roots*, 7.

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SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL

Investments. French would compile and publish through Rand McNally in Chicago two issues of the pamphlet-- one in 1879 of a length of forty-four pages and a second edition appeared in 1881 consisting of sixty-four pages. After its release, Fernandina's *Florida Mirror* fairly gloated over the 1879 issue of *Semi-Tropical Florida*, commenting that French "had everything to do *de novo*...devoting two weeks to each county...and nearly two years of constant travel."⁶

Following the publication of the first edition of the pamphlet, French toured the state with newspaper reporter George Barbour. A columnist for the *Chicago Times*, Barbour had only recently completed a tour of the state with President Ulysses S. Grant in early January 1880. Later that month, Barbour and French embarked on a more extensive tour, traveling by horse-and-buggy, steamboat, and train to visit sites along the east coast, and made a cross-state trip with stops at Apopka, Brooksville, Cedar Keys, Eustis, Leesburg, Manatee, Sumterville, Tampa, and Zellwood. They visited with and stayed in the homes of state senator John Milton Bryan; William Fox of Chicago; William Hope; state senator H. T. Lykes; J. W. Marshall; A. S. Pendry, proprietor of the Ocklawaha Hotel; George Pratt, owner of the *Leesburg Advance*; state senator James Gamble Speer; T. K. Spencer, owner of the *Tampa Sunland Tribune*; and T. Ellwood Zell. Later, Barbour devoted chapter three of *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* (1882, 1884) to his tour with French, which comprised about thirty pages of the tour guide. Barbour's visit with French included staying three nights at his Orange City home, which the author characterized as "the cozy, hospitable home of the Doctor, his own Florida abiding-place." Barbour found at Orange City that "Already a good deal of land has been cleared, road and streets surveyed and opened in every direction, and lots set off for business and residence purposes, a school, churches, and shops." At nearby Blue Spring, Barbour and French could not resist the enchanting waters, "and, finding a retired nook, we plunged in and enjoyed the agreeable novelty of an open-air bath in mid-winter."⁷

The next year, French sold his investments in Orange City and Volusia County. In August 1881, he conveyed his Orange City dwelling and accompanying ten acres for thirty-five hundred dollars to Richard J. Marvin, a seasonal visitor and physician from Hastings, Minnesota. French's impetus for uprooting his investments in Volusia County stemmed, in part, from significant events contributing to Florida's late nineteenth century development, which included the Disston Land Purchase of 1881. The Disston transaction was tied directly to the Internal Improvement Fund land grant system that had been organized in the 1850s. Following the Civil War, the fund had become mired in debt. Because state law stipulated that no land could be conveyed until the debt was cleared, the fund's trustees began searching for investors who would help eliminate the debt. Through the connections of Governor William Bloxham, they found and negotiated with multi-millionaire Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphia steel magnate who had visited Florida in 1877. A close friend of the governor, Disston

⁶*Florida Mirror*, 18 December 1880; Seth French, comp., *Semi-Tropical Florida: Its Climate Soil and Productions, with a Sketch of its History, Natural Features and Social Condition, Being a Manual of Reliable Information Concerning the Resources of the State, and the Inducements which it Offers to Persons Seeking New Homes and Profitable Investments* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1879, 1880).

⁷George Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), 30-63.

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agreed to purchase four million acres in central and south Florida for one million dollars. Known historically as the Disston Purchase, the transaction included vast tracts extending between Lake Tohopekaliga near Kissimmee in central Florida to Fort Myers in southwest Florida. The transaction made thousands of acres available to railroad companies who constructed tracks, which in turn brought new settlers and tourists to the state. Part of French's motivation to leave Volusia County was to invest in properties farther south where the Disston Purchase promised rich rewards for investors and developers.⁸

French subsequently began acquiring property in DeSoto and Polk Counties. News of the proposed route of the Florida Southern Railway through the region and discovery of phosphate in the early-1880s captured his attention. Between 1882 and 1883, he assembled several thousand acres near Fort Meade and eventually at Bartow and Wachula. Still involved in immigration issues, French attended several meetings in Polk County to encourage and welcome Cuban immigrants interested in establishing cigar factories. He also used the development skills he had honed in Orange City and Sanford to develop property. In Fort Meade, French announced in late-1883 he would erect a "commodious hotel." By early-1884, carpenters had completed the three-story "French House," which he sold in 1885, and the new owner renamed it the Fort Meade Hotel. French also purchased a large section of Varn's Survey of Fort Meade and in 1884 hired a surveyor to re-subdivide the property for commercial development, which he named the Seth French Addition to Fort Meade. He also formed a partnership with a Mr. Mitchell with whom he purchased still more land and opened Mitchell and French's Addition to Fort Meade. In Bartow, he acquired several blocks in David Hughes' Addition, and in DeSoto County he owned nearly one hundred fifty acres and property in Wauchula's downtown. French planted citrus in DeSoto and Polk Counties. He continued to sell lots and develop property in those counties until the freezes of 1894-1895 plunged the Florida economy into a recession. A keen observer of economic trends, French in August 1895 wrote his son "people are leaving Florida all the time" over concerns about losses in citrus and property values, and payment of taxes. Distraught over his own losses, French was dismayed that the cold weather had destroyed most of his citrus trees in Sanford, DeSoto County, and Polk County. He hoped to eventually replant the trees and regain some of his lost real estate value, but his death in January 1896 cut short any meaningful recovery of his former financial standing, which his heirs struggled to regain in subsequent years.⁹

Subsequent owners and occupants of the Seth French House in Orange City included R. J. Marvin and Alice Marvin, J. E. Taylor and Frank S. Taylor, and Frank and Annabelle Straight. An early settler of Orange City and a member of the first town council in 1882, Marvin also maintained a summer residence in Hastings, Minnesota, and served as secretary of the Volusia County Board of Health. He died in 1896, and his widow,

⁸Deed Book H, p. 407, Clerk of Court, Volusia County Courthouse; Michael Gannon, ed., *New History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1996), 259-260, 268-269; Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*, 1: 348-351.

⁹Canter Brown, *Fort Meade, 1849-1900* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 88-94; Seth French, Inventory and Appraisal Book 1, p. 231, Clerk of Court, Orange County Courthouse, Orlando, Florida; *Fort Meade Pebble*, 4 January 1895; Seth French to Alec V. French, 6 August 1895, Harriett French Boyd Papers, Lake Mary, Florida.

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Alice Marvin, conveyed the Orange City property in 1901 to J. E. Taylor. Within several years, Taylor sold the property to Frank S. and Effie Taylor, who maintained their residence in Orange City into the late-1930s. A native of Massachusetts, Taylor visited Jacksonville in 1875 and moved to Orange City several years later. He developed property in Orange City, and managed his father's orange grove until the 1890s freezes destroyed it. Taylor also helped organize the First National Bank of DeLand, and served several terms on Orange City's town council. Subsequent owners of the dwelling were Frank and Annabelle Straight. They lived in Orange City for several decades, and in 1959 subdivided the ten-acre parcel into Straight subdivision. Eventually, they sold the surrounding property for residential development, and retained only two lots associated with the original dwelling. Later, Harriett French Boyd, a great-granddaughter of Seth French, acquired the dwelling and property and has played an instrumental role in recognizing the achievements of her ancestor. In addition to this National Register nomination, she has provided the impetus for the installation of the Dr. Seth French Historic Marker astride French Avenue in Sanford, the Seth French Room at the Museum of Seminole County History south of Sanford, and co-sponsoring a Great Floridian nomination, which was awarded in 2000. The Great Floridian plaque is located on the southeast corner of the Seth French House, which Mrs. Boyd presently owns and leases.¹⁰

Architectural Context

Frame Vernacular, the prevalent style of residential architecture in Florida, refers to common wood frame construction techniques employed by lay or self-taught builders. The term "vernacular" does not imply inferior or mundane architecture. Dwellings and other building types characterized as vernacular lend themselves to categorization by building form associated with a particular era and region of the country, rather than classification within a particular genre of formal architecture. The Oxford English Dictionary defines vernacular as "native or peculiar to a particular country or locality...concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental."

Before the Civil War, residents relied upon local materials and their own methods and designs to construct houses. The Industrial Revolution permitted standardization of building materials and parts, which exerted a pervasive influence over vernacular house design. Popular magazines helped to make architectural trends universal throughout the country. The railroad provided cheap and efficient transportation for manufactured building materials. Ultimately, individual builders had access to finished architectural products from which to create their own designs. Many popular vernacular building forms of the Antebellum period were used by builders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

¹⁰Pleasant Daniel Gold, *History of Volusia County, Florida* (Daytona Beach: Pleasant Daniel Gold, 1927), 271; Deed Book H, p. 407, Deed Book 32, p. 88, Probate C2412, Probate Book 2, p. 653, 1899-1930 tax rolls, Clerk of Court, Volusia County Courthouse; *Volusia County Record*, 9 May 1896.

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Frame Vernacular dwellings are typically one or two stories in height, with wood frame structural systems and pier foundations. They display a variety of footprints, plans, and forms, including composite, I-house, irregularly massed, single- or double-pen, and saddlebag. Early models often have steeply pitched gable or hip roofs that accommodate attic space. Board-and-batten, horizontal drop siding, weatherboard, and wood shingles are common exterior wall surface materials. Porches, most commonly simple entrance or end models, protect entrances. Fenestration is regular, but not always symmetrical. Windows consist of double-hung sashes or casements, and paneled wood doors often contain glazings. Exterior decoration is sparse and limited to ornamental woodwork.

Architectural Significance

The Seth French House displays the adaptability of Frame Vernacular architecture. Based upon double-pile concepts with vague gable-front inspired concepts of the Greek Revival, the original cottage was a rectangular box one room wide and four rooms deep. Breaking the formal symmetry of the original cottage, additions in the early twentieth century changed the relatively simple, symmetrical, rectangular dwelling into an irregularly massed cross-plan dwelling. Displaying a narrow profile popular in developing urban regions of New England and the upper Midwest during the mid-nineteenth century, the Seth French House, as originally constructed, mirrors the words of travel-writer George Barbour: "Even the houses, the old and the few (very few) new ones, somehow do not look Florida-like." Later modifications to the dwelling between c.1905 and c.1925 expanded its profile and gave the house its unusual ambiance and combination of forms. The dwelling links the architecture of Florida's upper St. Johns River region with landscape of traditions that French brought with him from New York and Wisconsin. The house contributes a sense of time, place, and historical development of Orange City into the 1920s boomtime through its ambiance, linkage, and character.¹¹

¹¹Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*, 58; John Jakle, Robert Bastian, and Douglas Meyer, *Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 125-126.

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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
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List of Photographs

1. 319 East French Avenue
2. Orange City (Volusia County), Florida
3. Sidney Johnston
4. 2002
5. historian, DeLand, FL
6. View showing front (south) facade, facing north
7. Photograph number 1 of 20

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. View showing front (south), facing north
7. Photograph number 2 of 20
6. Detail view showing front (south) door, facing north
7. Photograph number 3 of 20
6. View showing front (south) facade and east elevation, facing northwest
7. Photograph number 4 of 20
6. View showing east and north elevations, facing southwest
7. Photograph number 5 of 20
6. View showing north and west elevations, facing southeast
7. Photograph number 6 of 20
6. View showing west elevation, facing east
7. Photograph number 7 of 20
6. View showing parlor and living room, facing north
7. Photograph number 8 of 20
6. View showing living room, facing northwest
7. Photograph number 9 of 20
6. View showing first-floor bedroom and restroom, facing north
7. Photograph number 10 of 20

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- 6. View showing laundry, hall, and dining room, facing east
- 7. Photograph number 11 of 20

- 6. View showing dining room, facing west
- 7. Photograph number 12 of 20

- 6. View showing dining room, facing southeast
- 7. Photograph number 13 of 20

- 6. View showing staircase from upper-floor hall, facing west
- 7. Photograph number 14 of 20

- 6. View showing upper-floor hall and room arrangement from northernmost bedroom, facing south
- 7. Photograph number 15 of 20

- 6. View showing upper-floor hall and room arrangement from sleeping porch, facing west
- 7. Photograph number 16 of 20

- 6. View showing upper-floor southernmost bedroom, facing southeast
- 7. Photograph number 17 of 20

- 6. View showing upper-floor restroom, facing north
- 7. Photograph number 18 of 20

- 6. View showing sleeping porch, facing south
- 7. Photograph number 19 of 20

- 6. View showing outbuilding, facing north
- 7. Photograph number 20 of 20

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SETH FRENCH HOUSE
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RESIDENCE OF FRANK S. TAYLOR, FRENCH AVENUE

c1910 On file in Florida State Photographic Archives

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Deed Book C, p. 482.

Deed Book E, p. 188.

Deed Book H, p. 407.

Deed Book 32, p. 88.

Map Book 1, p. 7.

Map Book 3, p. 39.

Map Book 16, p. 54.

Map Book 17, p. 1.

Probate C2412.

Probate Book 2, p. 653.

Tax Rolls. 1874-1930.

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- Francke, Arthur, Alyce Gillingham, and Maxine Turner. *Volusia: The West Side*. DeLand: West Volusia Historical Society, 1986.
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**SETH FRENCH HOUSE
Orange City, Volusia Co., FL**

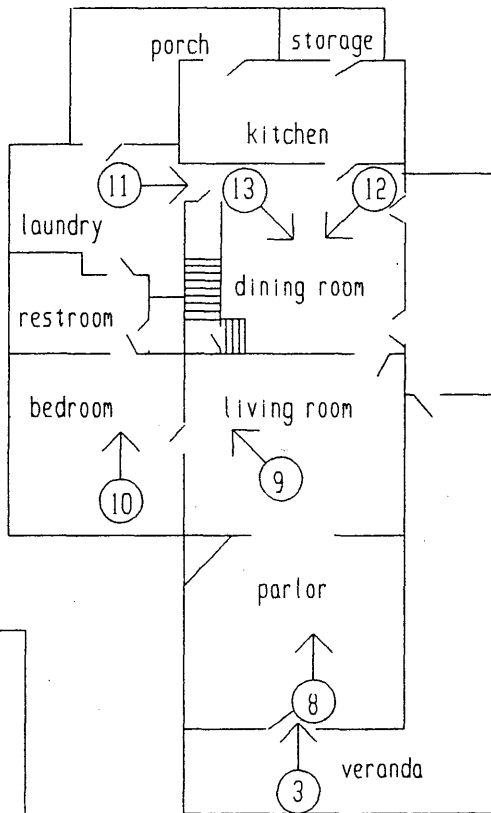
Verbal Boundary Description

See attached scaled site plan. The building occupies and the boundary contains lots 13 and 14 of Straight subdivision.

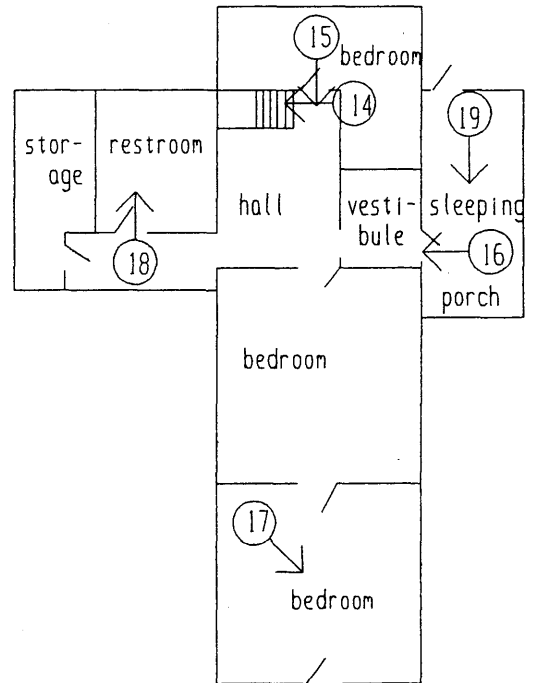
Boundary Justification

The boundary contains the above-described lots, and encloses approximately one-half of an acre historically associated with the dwelling.

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



Seth French House
Orange City, FL
floor plan

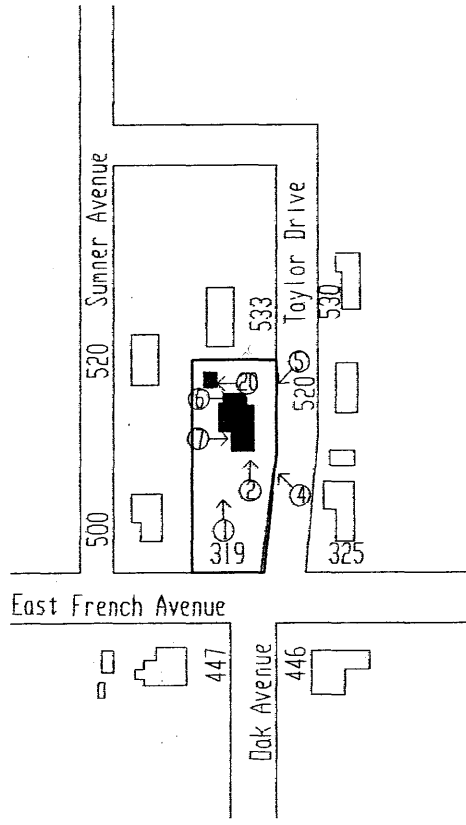
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SCALE IN FEET

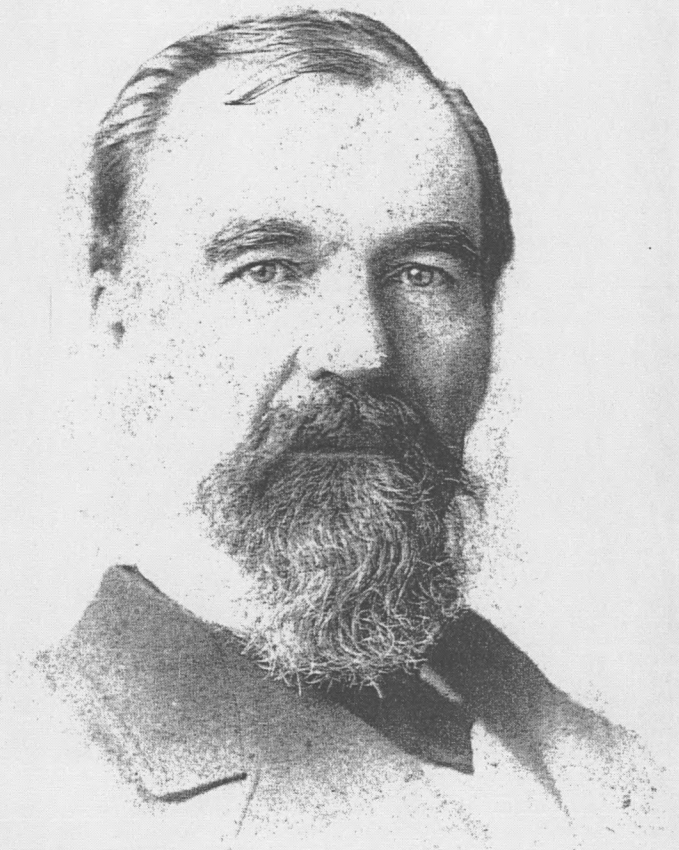
map prepared by Sidney Johnston



Seth French House
 Orange City, FL
 site plan


 — boundary
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 SCALE IN FEET
 map prepared by Sidney Johnston



Dr. Seth French