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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 Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant

other names/site number City of Vero Beach Municipal Power Plant

2. Location

street & number 1246 19th Street n/a not for publication

city or town Vero Beach n/a vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Indian River code 061 zip code 32960

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.)

Boyer W. Perry 1/14/99
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:

determined eligible for 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 D. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 2/20/99

Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant
Name of Property

Indian River Co., FL
County and State

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	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	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)

Government: Public Works

Industry/Processing/Extraction: Energy Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Government: Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Masonry Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Metal

roof Other: Tar & gravel

other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning & Development

Period of Significance

1926-1949

Significant Dates

1926

1937

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

See Continuation Sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant
Name of Property

Indian River Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	5	5	9	4	7	0	3	0	5	6	9	7	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 Ruth Stanbridge/Indian River Historical Society & Barbara E. Mattick/Historic Preservationist Supervisor

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date January 1999

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

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 City of Vero Beach

street & number 1053 20th Street telephone (561) 978-5151

city or town Vero Beach state FL zip code 32960

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

SUMMARY

The Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant, built in 1926, is located in downtown Vero Beach on a two-acre site adjacent to several major transportation corridors. The masonry vernacular building has a large open floor space with ceiling heights up to 35 feet. Multiple-pane windows on the north wall allowed light into building while windows on the east and west provided cross ventilation and air circulation. A large portion of the south wall was constructed of removable panels of metal and wood. Additional concrete block office and storage spaces were added in the late 1930s and early 1940s on the west side of the building. Until 1995, the building housed six working generators. Today, the building is vacant except for a non-working 1937 diesel generator.

SETTING

The Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant is located on approximately two-acres of a city owned property south of 19th Place and on the west side of the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) tracks. The zoning for this area is designated by the City of Vero Beach comprehensive land use plan as M [Industrial] Zoning. The site has approximately 298 feet of frontage on 19th Place with an average depth of 215 feet. This two-acre site is generally flat and slightly above street grade while drainage is handled off-site by street storm drains. The site has access from curb cuts located on both 19th Place and 12th Court.

The northern border of the diesel plant site is 19th Street. This was once a two-lane, neighborhood access road, but is now the four-lane, eastbound lane of a major state road, State Road 60. The westbound lane is 20th Street, the original State Road 60, located a block to the north of 19th Street. This divided section of State Road 60 is known as the "Twin Pairs." A city owned parking lot is located between 19th Place (eastbound State Road 60) and 20th Street (westbound State Road 60). On the western edge of the power plant property is 12th Court, a city street, which connects with the Twin Pairs. This road ends one block to the north at 20th Street and one block to the south of the power plant. Other transportation corridors important to this site are U.S. 1 located one block to the east and north, and the original Old Dixie Highway located one block to the west. The double tracks of the FEC are located on the eastern border of the property. These double tracks allowed equipment and diesel fuel needed to support the city's electrical service to be shipped to the city's generators. On the southern edge of the diesel plant property is a vacant block of land where an early citrus packing house was once located.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant is a one-story building of brick and concrete (Photo 1). Its foundation is poured concrete with support pilings rising thirty-five feet. It has a nearly flat roof with a concrete

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capped parapet, slightly raised in the central bay of the main elevation. The brick elevations are accented with molded concrete belt courses and a water table. The original plans for the roof called for a reinforced concrete slab, but a wooden roof was used instead. In a hurricane in 1928, a third of the wooden roof was ripped off causing damage to the generators. When repairs were made, the reinforced concrete slab was put in place. The diesel plant contains 12,470 square feet with ceiling heights ranging from 16 feet to 35 feet.

On the main block of the building, the main (north) elevation (Photo 2) has three bays: a central entrance flanked by large window areas in slightly recessed panels. A smaller window area is above the entrance. The east and west elevations (Photos 3 & 4) are similar, having six bays with smaller, paired, multi-paned windows in slightly recessed panels. Pilasters separate the bays. The south wall consists of removable panels of sheet metal (Photo 3). These panels allowed the large generators to be moved in and out of the building.

One-story, brick areas of similar design, but with sixteen-foot ceilings, are located on the east and west sides of the main block (Photos 3 & 4). The block at the northwest corner of the building contains the main public entrance to the power plant and served as an office and reception area. The long brick area on the east side of the main building housed the controls for the diesel engines and generators. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, a shortage of storage and office space resulted in the attachment of a concrete block and frame building with gable and shed roofs to the west side of the main building (Photo 5). The city's water system, originally housed at this location, was moved to a new building in the late 1950s.

On the interior, the main room has a series of large wells from four to eight feet in depth where the diesel generators were located (Photo 6). Two older 25 HP engines and a new 750 HP unit were moved into the new power plant building when it opened in 1926. In 1937, another 750-kilowatt diesel generator was added. When the building was vacated in 1995, six generators were located in this building. Five of these were in working order and were declared surplus property to be sold for use in third world nations. The only non-working generator unit was the 1937 diesel which has been retained and is prominently located in the middle of the main room (Photo 7).

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE

Located to the northwest of the brick power plant building is a metal storage shed, approximately 40 by 30 feet (Photos 1 & 5). This non-contributing building is not considered part of the diesel plant building and is slated to be removed from the site.

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**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Architect: Carter and Damerow (Building)
Engineer: Kennard & Sons (Site plan and electrical)
Builder: The Erlen Corporation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant, built in 1926, is significant at the local level under **Criterion A** in the area of **Community Planning and Development** as the first public utilities facility built by the town, and the oldest municipal building in the community. In 1919 the new town of Vero (later reincorporated as Vero Beach) began planning for its own electrical services for its citizens, a decision that had long range effects on the development of the community.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Florida, like many other southern states after the Civil War, was in poor financial circumstances, but rich in undeveloped land. To encourage rapid growth and increase the State's treasury, land was offered to homesteaders and land development companies. By the mid-1890s, Henry Flagler was also encouraging settlement along the east coast of Florida, as the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) was constructed south from St. Augustine.¹

Along the Indian River several small settlements had arisen in the 1880s; one of these was the homestead of Henry Gifford. In 1891, Gifford was appointed postmaster of the post office named Vero, then part of Brevard County on Florida's east coast. By 1897, the Florida East Coast Railway line had passed the community of Vero, but in 1903, the population had increased and the FEC built a small wood-frame station and freight depot on the east side of the railroad.²

¹Stanbridge, Ruth. A Historic Time Line, Selected Properties. 1996.

²Lockwood, Charlotte. Florida's Historic Indian River County. 1976

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**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

In 1911, representatives for a land investment group toured the low, swampy interior west of the railroad tracks. By 1913, this group, organized under the Indian River Farms Company, had purchased thousands of acres of land west of the railroad and laid out a town called Vero. The older settlement of Vero, east of the tracks, continued primarily as a residential area, with the school and post office moving westward across the railroad line and nearer to the new downtown district.³

The Florida "boom" brought a tremendous business for the Farms Company and the growing town. In 1919, the community of Vero initiated the formation of a bridge district that would allow a bridge to be built to the barrier island that lay in the Atlantic Ocean off Florida's east coast. On Labor Day 1920, the Vero Bridge was opened, and within five years the beach area was annexed and the town was renamed Vero Beach.⁴ This annexation increased the tax base and the need for electrical power, further promoting the building of a power plant and other municipal facilities.

Improved transportation by the railroad provided important links to the rest of the state, and by 1924, plans were underway to extend Osceola Boulevard west to create a cross state highway reaching from "the Atlantic to the Gulf."⁵ By 1926, the city street (Osceola Boulevard) was designated as a section of the Atlantic-Gulf Highway. Ten years later, this highway was called State Road 30, and was an important cross-state road.⁶ Currently, a modern eight-lane divided highway known as State Road 60 is located in the original alignment of Osceola Boulevard (20th Street) and 19th Place.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The original community of Vero, located south and east of the official town plat,⁷ had been built around the 1891 post office and the 1903 railroad depot.⁸ The largest number of residential homes and businesses were

³Haynes, R. P. Town of Vero, Plat Map. 1913.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Carter, R.D. Indian River County Map, 1926. 1928.

⁶Stanbridge, Ruth. A Historic Time Line, Selected Properties. 1996.

⁷Hayes, R. P. Town of Vero, Plat Map. 1913.

⁸Lockwood, Charlotte. Florida's Historic Indian River County. 1976.

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**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
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located in this area when Vero was incorporated in 1919. A small, private power plant furnished electric power on a limited basis to the homes and small businesses in this area. The entire generating unit consisted of two 25 HP engines that generated electricity only on certain days and for short periods of time. When the town incorporated, just as land speculation and rapid growth of the 'roaring 20s' began, the rapid growth overwhelmed the private utilities company. The company notified the town that they could no longer continue to supply power to the community and offered the town the electrical plant for \$9,000.⁹

Vero was only a year old, when the town council purchased the private power plant and began to seek a permanent location for this new municipal enterprise. The new site was found between the original community south and east of the railroad tracks and the main business district to the northwest. The site at the southwest corner of 19th Place was on the west side of the FEC tracks. The equipment purchased from the private power company consisted of the two diesel engines and a simple wooden and sheet metal shed. The power plant was relocated to the new site next to the FEC tracks and the wooden shed was reassembled to cover the generators. A new 100 HP generator was purchased by the town to expand and upgrade services.¹⁰

By 1922, the demand for electricity was such that a bond issue was needed to purchase additional equipment. The town paid McIntosh and Seymour Company \$32,867 for a new 100-horsepower engine and generator that were put into operation in March 1923.¹¹ In July, the town hired Harry W. Damerow, an engineer who had been in private practice, as superintendent of the new Light and Water Department. His duties included the management of the power plant with the right to hire and fire employees.¹²

The boom was on and demand for electricity increased. In April 1925, a \$100,000 bond issue provided for the construction of a fireproof plant to cost \$37,688, and the purchase of a new 750-horsepower unit at \$58,070. The expansion of the community's capabilities was timely, for the area of the town grew when the beach was annexed, and Vero Beach was formed in May 1925. The electrical engineering firm of Kennard & Sons designed the site plan and generating aspects of the new plant, and the local firm of Carter and Damerow

⁹Massey, Shuler W. History and Description of Vero Beach Municipal Power Plants. 1980-1983.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Short, Carolyn. Research information and published articles. 1983-1997.

¹²Short, Carolyn. Research information and published articles. 1983-1997.

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Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

designed the new brick building that replaced the old wooden shed at 19th Place.¹³ The building was of structural steel, reinforced concrete, and brick. It was 50 by 80 feet inside, with a brick office located at the north corner of the plant and a brick addition on the east to house controls and gauges of the diesel units. The contractor for the project was the Erlen Corporation

In an effort to bring the building cost in line with the contract price, a wooden roof was used in the original construction. At 3 a.m. August 8, 1928, a hurricane ripped off a third of the roof, allowing water to pour in and affect the equipment. Operations were stopped until 4:45 p.m. August 9.¹⁴ When repairs were made, the wooden roof was replaced with a reinforced concrete slab, as called for in the original design. Since that time, the building has suffered no further hurricane damage.

By 1928, the collapse of the great Florida land boom was being felt and the rapid growth of Vero Beach came to a screeching halt. Though slow, the recovery for the community was steady. Because of planning in the early 1920s, the local officials of Vero Beach had provided a solid infrastructure that was to sustain the local business community. The power plant grew even during the Great Depression; in 1937 a 750-kilowatt diesel was added to the existing equipment to give the plant a total capacity of 1,278 kilowatts. In 1947 a four-cycle super-charge Nordberg diesel, driving a 1,150 kilowatt generator, was installed, and in 1952 a 4,500 horsepower Nordberg diesel went on line.¹⁵

The well established electrical service offered by Vero Beach attracted several industries to relocate in the community. The first of these was the citrus industry. In 1926 when the Vero Beach Diesel Plant was opened, the county's principal industry was agriculture. Citrus production was the primary crop, followed by winter vegetables. The incentives offered by cheap power and major transportation corridors brought large citrus and vegetable packing plants into the city limits. Within a two block area near the Florida East Coast tracks and the Vero Beach Diesel Plant there were located four major packing facilities.

Vero Beach was also chosen as a site for a World War II naval air training facility because it could offer the electrical energy needed to house thousands of recruits. The government of Vero Beach had also promoted an early airline industry with a air field beginning in 1927.¹⁶ With the beginning of World War II, the facilities

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Massey, Shuler W. History and Description of Vero Beach Municipal Power Plants. 1980-1983.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Lockwood, Charlotte. Florida's Historic Indian River County. 1976.

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**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

and municipal infrastructure offered by the city encouraged the United States Navy to open a navy air station at the Vero Beach Airport. This station provided training facilities to both navy and marine fighter pilots along with a new field of photography, aerial photography. After World War II, the facility reverted to the city who was able to rejuvenate the airport and in 1948, the Brooklyn Dodgers established a major baseball training base in the city at the old air field facility.¹⁷ In 1998, the Dodger organization will celebrate 50 years in the City of Vero Beach. In 1957, the city's municipal services which now included electricity, water and sewer, attracted yet another industry. The Piper Aircraft Company purchased airport grounds and built new buildings to house a growing small airplane industry.

The population of Vero Beach had grown from 800 in 1920 to over 8,700 in 1958 when the city decided that the diesel plant had reached its capacity and plans were made to build a new steam electric power plant on the Indian River.¹⁸ The old diesel plant was to be used as backup for the new plant. Several times after the new power plant went on line, the diesel units of the old plant were called upon to provide start up electricity after regional power blackouts. The diesel units were kept in working order until 1994, when the city sold them for use in third world countries. Today, only one 1937 diesel unit (now inoperable) remains in the 1926 diesel power plant, the City of Vero Beach's oldest municipal building.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Short, Carolyn. Research information and published articles. 1983-1997.

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Section number 9 Page 1 **VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
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Maps

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Section number 10 Page 1

**VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT
Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL**

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property consists of lots 1 through 7 of Block 12 of the Edgewood Addition to Vero Beach; also the south 210 feet of the north 425 feet of block 5 of the Dr. Richard E. Bullington's Subdivision, Indian River County.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the site encloses all the historically significant resources associated with the Vero Beach Diesel Power Plant constructed in 1926 with the additions to the building during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

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Vero Beach, Indian River Co., FL

1. **VERO BEACH DIESEL POWER PLANT**
2. **1246 19TH PLACE, VERO BEACH, (INDIAN RIVER COUNTY), FLORIDA**
3. **C.F. KORKER**
4. **MARCH 1995**
5. **INDIAN RIVER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES**
6. **LOOKING SOUTHWEST TO FRONT AND EAST SIDE OF POWER PLANT**
7. **1 OF 7**

NUMBERS 1 TO 5 ARE THE SAME FOR ALL PHOTOGRAPHS

6. **LOOKING SOUTH AT MAIN ELEVATION OF POWER PLANT**
7. **2 OF 7**

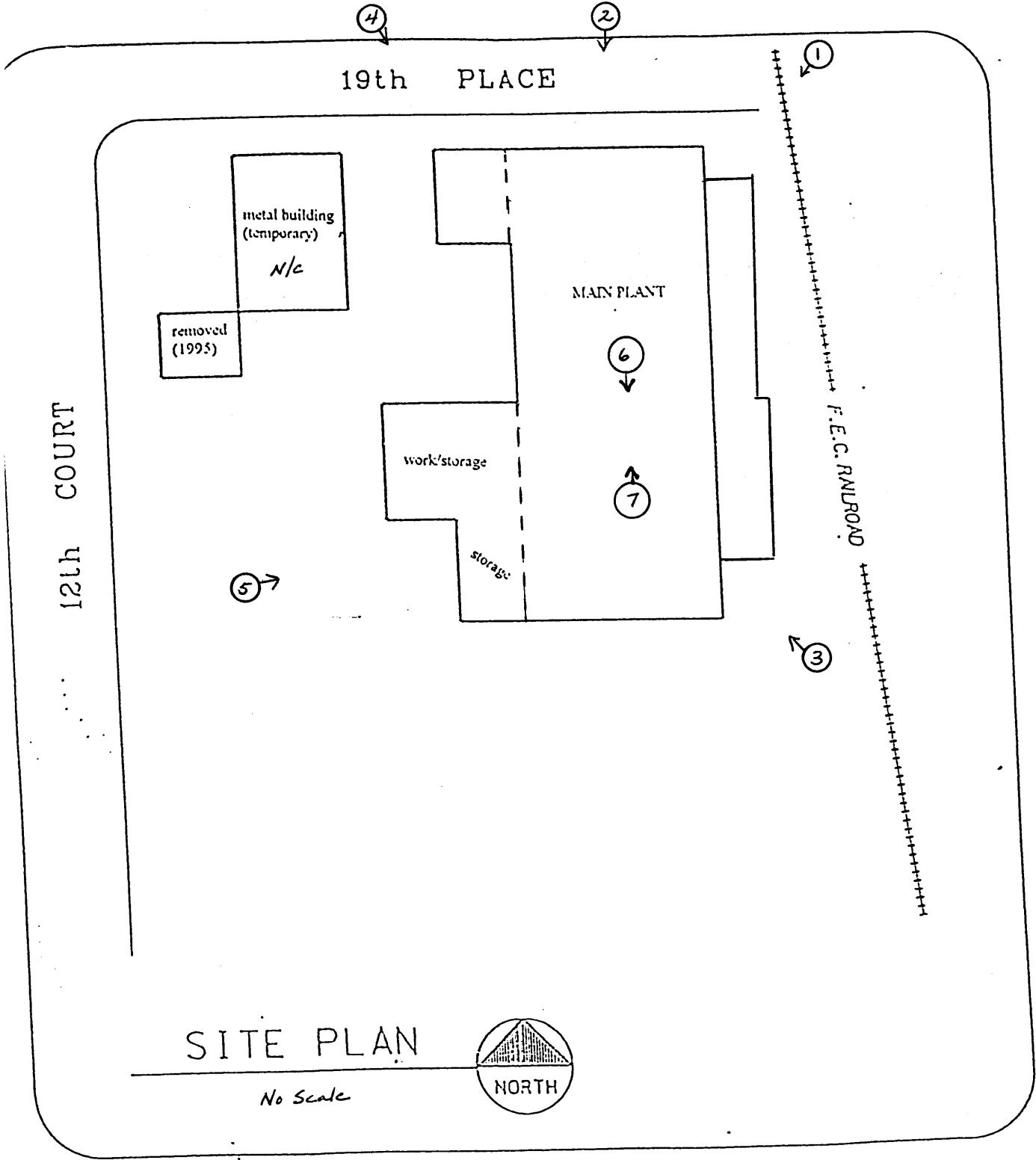
6. **LOOKING NORTHWEST FROM BACK AND EAST SIDE OF POWER PLANT**
7. **3 OF 7**

6. **LOOKING SOUTHEAST TO FRONT AND WEST SIDE OF POWER PLANT**
7. **4 OF 7**

6. **LOOKING EAST TO WEST SIDE OF POWER PLANT, SHOWING CONCRETE BLOCK ADDITION**
7. **5 OF 7**

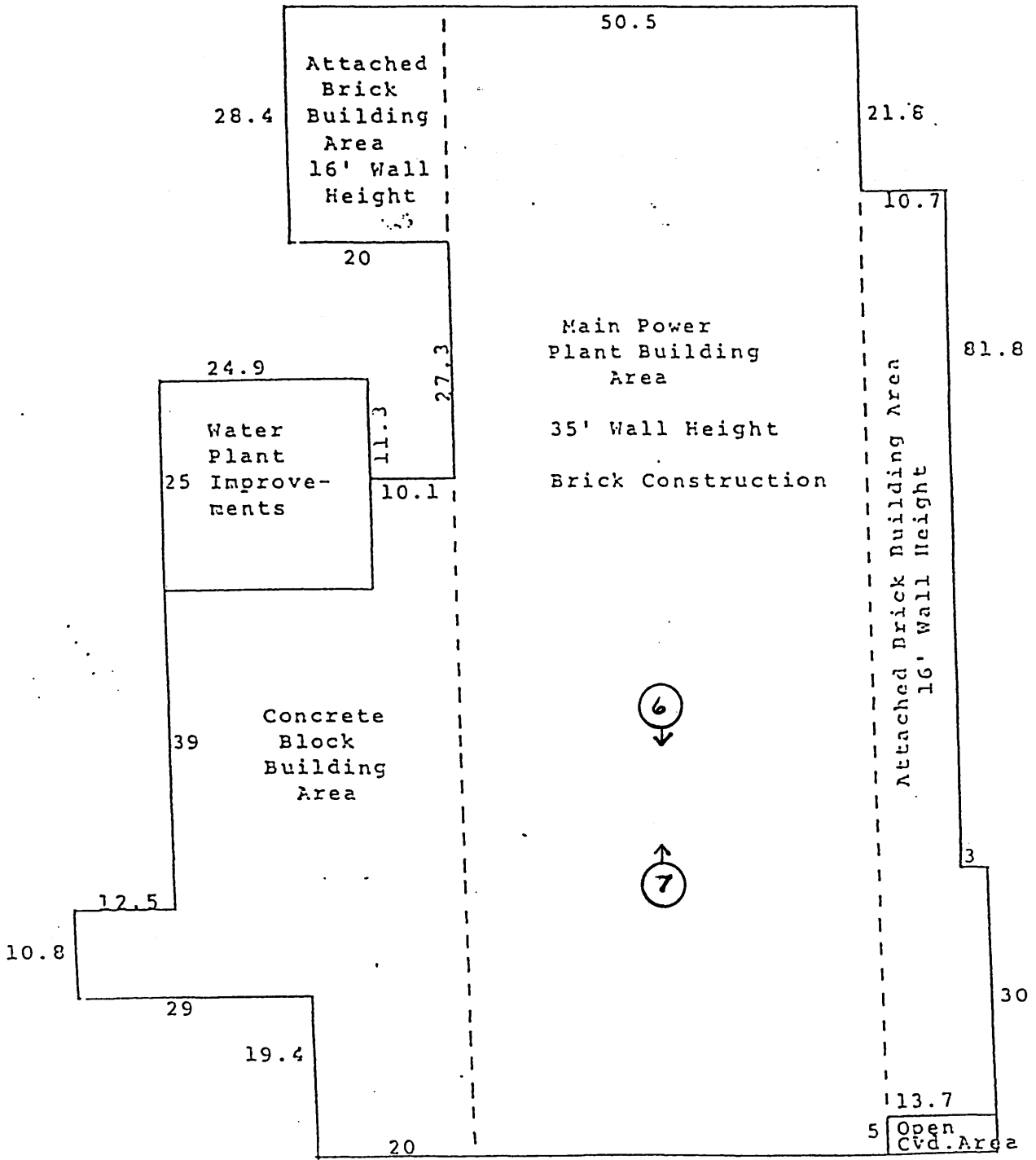
6. **INTERIOR, CAMERA FACING SOUTH TO BACK WALL**
7. **6 OF 7**

6. **INTERIOR, CAMERA FACING NORTH TOWARD FRONT ENTRANCE AND NON-WORKING 1937 GENERATOR**
7. **7 OF 7**



CITY OF VERO BEACH
 OLD MUNICIPAL POWER PLANT
 1246 19th PLACE
 VERO BEACH - FLORIDA

Site Plan: Vero Beach Diesel Plant
 Indian River County



Building Sketch: Vero Beach Diesel Plant
Indian River County

