

1229

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 BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1300 North Scenic Highway N/A not for publication

city or town Babson Park N/A vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33827

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.)

Cheryl W. King 9/4/97
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

10/17/97
Date of Action

BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Name of Property

POLK, FLORIDA
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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mediterranean Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Stucco

roof Tile
other Wood
Glass

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuations 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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1931-1947

Significant Dates

1931

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect/ Mr. Marlow

Builder/ Matthews, Charles H.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of Repository

#

BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Name of Property

POLK, FLORIDA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	4 4 7 7 6 0	3 0 7 9 3 2 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 Mary Morrison, Consultant; Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September, 1997

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 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 Babson Park Woman's Club

street & number 1300 North Scenic Highway telephone (941) 638-1621

city or town Babson Park state Florida zip code 33827

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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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

Summary

The Babson Park Woman's Club, 1300 North Scenic Highway, is located on an elevated parcel of land near Crooked Lake, the only lake in the state designated an "Outstanding Florida Water". The Clubhouse building, an excellent example of Mediterranean Revival Style architecture, was completed in 1931. Its builder, Charles H. Matthews, continued to maintain the building and did all repair work for 40 years, therefore helping to maintain its original character. Presently, the grounds and building are in good condition. The Clubhouse is a single-story Mediterranean Revival Style building with the original clay barrel tile roof, stucco exterior, double hung sash windows, and 12 foot ceilings. The distinctive style of the Woman's Club building makes it one of the few architectural landmarks of Babson Park. It is the best preserved and unaltered of the four Mediterranean Revival style buildings still existing there from the early Florida "boom" period. Until the 1970's, there were a number of these buildings in Babson Park, but few remain, and none remains in its original condition.

Setting

The setting of the Woman's Club has remained essentially the same over the last 65 years. The boundaries of the property are the original ones, and the building remains at its original location. The design, materials, and workmanship have remained consistent (Photo #12). No major restorative work has been necessary. At the time the Babson Park Woman's Club was being built, in 1930-31, the town of Babson Park was recovering from the Depression and was a steadily developing community. Upon entering the town from the north on Scenic Highway, the Babson Park Woman's Club was the first building to be seen. This location and the lovely hillside setting contributed to the Woman's Club furtherance as a prominent part of the early community.

The building was constructed on a hill facing Crooked Lake, a large, pristine, freshwater lake. Scenic Highway, the only main road in the area, bordered the west side of the property. The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was the east boundary. The two undeveloped lots that border the north and south sides of the property are owned by neighboring Webber College.

The building and landscaped grounds of the Babson Park Woman's Club were planned in a cohesive style with the architecture of the Webber College buildings. The college was located south of the Woman's Club on both sides of Scenic Highway. There was also a schoolhouse, church, post office, and grocery store in the community at this time, all located south of the college.

In 1975, the Post Office was relocated two lots south of the Woman's Club. Also, all but one of the original Webber College buildings were torn down and the campus was moved across Scenic Highway to the

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shores of Crooked Lake. This new campus is located southwest of the Woman's Club property. In 1957, an asphalt driveway was built south of the Clubhouse building, and a parking lot was added on the east side to accommodate automobiles. Today, many original longleaf pine trees that were saved when the land was cleared to build the Woman's Club and parking area, still grace the grounds of the Babson Park Woman's Club (Photo #12). Many of these trees are more than 75 years old, and reach heights of 50 to 75 feet. North Scenic Highway and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad continue to be the west and east boundaries, respectively. The two lots on the south and the north are still in their natural states and continue to be owned by Webber College.

Exterior

The Mediterranean Revival style building has a stucco exterior wall fabric over balloon type framing. All openings are double studded and bridge braced overhead. The fenestration of the building consists of large double hung sash windows, with barrel tile shed awnings on the west elevation (Photo #1). In addition, a pair of doors built of cypress provides access to the assembly room at the main entrance on the west side. The foundation is made of a continuous footing for the outside walls 20" wide and 8" thick. All concrete floors are laid 4" thick and reinforced with mesh 6" squares.

The covered terrace which serves as the main entrance to the assembly room is on the west side of the building facing North Scenic Highway (Photo #2). The terrace is made of the original slate tiles. An engaged asphalt topped awning covers the terrace which is reached by two sets of steps with wrought iron railings. The pair of double cypress doors lead from the terrace to the assembly room. The exterior doors of the library and ladies' lounge also open from the terrace.

Interior

All wall partitions, ceilings, and all studded and furrowed places are lath with #1 cypress lath set 1/4" for key and nailed to every stud. The assembly room has three pairs of large double hung sash windows (Photo #7). The ceiling height measures 12 feet, with stained cypress beams (Photo #10). The walls and ceilings of all walls are plastered with one coat of gypsum plaster and finished with sand lime.

The floors in the assembly room are ruff grain pine (Photo #11). All other wood floors in other parts of the building are flat grain pine. Floors were sanded, filled and varnished with two coats of floor varnish. The stage at the north end of the building is elevated 2' and built with steps up to it from the main floor. These steps have 6" risers of cypress with 12" tread of pine. The wood on the stage received two coats of varnish at construction also. Floor joists and wood sills near the ground are made of selected heart of pine and creosote. Single cypress doors with small glass panes are installed in the library (formerly the gentlemen's lounge), ladies'

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lounge and kitchen.

In the kitchen (Photo #8), the counters on either side of the sink along the west wall are 36" high and 22" wide. Cupboards above the counters are 12" wide. The original stainless enamel kitchen sink remains installed and measures 22"x44". Five double hung sash windows allow for ventilation. Entry from the outside is through the previously mentioned cypress door. An uncovered terrace was built south of the kitchen. It is of poured concrete 12' long and extends 44" from the south wall of the kitchen.

The library is in the northwest portion of the building adjacent to the stage area. It has a door leading from it to a small offstage area and bathroom. The outside entrance is the previously mentioned cypress door opening onto the covered patio building entrance on its north side. Three double hung sash windows are installed in the library as well as a fireplace. The men's bathroom, currently not in use, is located off-stage right. There is one double hung sash window on the north wall.

The ladies' lounge and bathroom are located on the west side of the building to the south of the covered terrace entrance which is the previously mentioned cypress door. Entry to the lounge from the assembly room is through a door on the west side of the room to the north of the kitchen. The bathroom which adjoins the ladies' lounge has two wooden stalls; the partitions are 7' high. The floor of the bathroom is ceramic tile and there is one double hung sash window in the bathroom area. All water pipes in the building are 3/4" or larger and made of galvanized iron.

The basement is located in the center of the building. It is 10'x10' and 7' in height, with 6" concrete walls and 4" concrete floor. There is one swing window for light and ventilation on the east side and one cypress door entered by means of an exterior stairway on the east side of the building (Photo #4). The basement is used to house the heating system for the building. The attic is reached by ladder stairs in the ceiling above the stage-left or east side of the stage area. A portion of the attic (10'x20') is floored with #2 common flooring. There is one light fixture in the attic.

Alterations

The Babson Park Woman's Club building retains its architectural integrity to a large degree. There was an addition to the assembly room on the south side of the building in 1952 (Photos #3-4). This addition allows for increased seating capacity and is built with matching materials to every extent possible. The interior and exterior walls are of plaster and stucco to match those of the original building. Three pairs of double cypress doors were hung in the addition: two pairs on the south side opening onto the driveway and parking area, and one pair on the west side opening onto the kitchen terrace (Photo #9). The windows are roll-out casement style.

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The roof is flat and is not tiled. The concrete floor is carpeted. A less significant alteration is the addition of a small storage area on the northeast corner of the building. This addition was built to store chairs and grounds maintenance equipment (Photo #4).

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**BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

Summary

The Babson Park Woman's Club's building is significant under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Social History for its continued service to the community as a social and cultural center since its construction in 1931. The Woman's Club building is one of the oldest public buildings of the Babson Park community. It is significant under Criterion C as the best example of Mediterranean Revival style architecture in Babson Park and is one of the last remaining public buildings of the town's early development. Babson Park, since its founding, has never been incorporated, and it has centered its existence around the Babson Park Woman's Club, and other public institutions that have played a most important part in the history and development of Babson Park.

Historic Context

Babson Park, Polk County, Florida

The area now known as Babson Park was originally called Crooked Lake, named for the pristine 50-mile shoreline lake that was its central feature. In 1870, there was a small camp of Seminole Indians living on Crooked Lake among abundant wildlife and natural resources. In 1885, what is now Babson Park was one of the outposts in Central Florida—a break in the wilderness. By the early 1900s, settlers began to come into the area. Land purchase and development was encouraged even more with the completion of the first Atlantic Coast Line Railroad passenger train to Crooked Lake in 1912. At that time, real estate speculation was affecting south and central Florida, and by 1917, the promotion and development of the south side of Crooked Lake and Hillcrest Heights was begun by Irwin Yarnell and H.E. Fairchild. Two hundred acres on the south side of Crooked Lake included the Crooked Lake school, the Babson Park Citrus Exchange packing house, and numerous residences.

Noted economist and statistician, Roger Babson, purchased 400 acres on the northern townsite section in 1923. Babson developed a townsite plan and built buildings which included a bank, real estate offices, stores, and numerous other businesses. The name Crooked Lake was changed to Babson Park. This small community was experiencing the post-World War I growth boom and with a thriving downtown, Babson Park was in its most prosperous condition. The Babson Park Improvement Company, with its northern and local capital, played an important role in the development of the community. Industries included citrus and lumber.

Roger W. Babson was nationally recognized as an economist and statistician. As founder of the *Babson Reports*, he published a well-known nationwide newsletter, in which he made financial predictions. He was one of the few pundits to predict the 1929 Stock Market failure. He founded the Babson Institute and Babson College in Babson Park, Massachusetts; he also authored books on economics and religion. Roger and Grace Babson were pioneers in encouraging women to pursue careers in finance and business. As a result, they

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Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

founded Webber College for Women. With the land bust of the 1920s, several businesses and the bank in Babson Park folded, but Babson, along with his wife, Grace, established the college in the abandoned buildings in 1928. By donating properties for Webber College, the Babson Park Woman's Club, parks, and other community uses, Babson was truly a philanthropist and prominent land owner in Florida. He was once even a candidate for President of the United States on the Prohibition ticket. Ultimately, the small community of Babson Park, would slowly revive with various small businesses and new family residences.

Woman's Clubs

Woman's clubs were formed in the United States in response to women's desires for intellectual stimulation and out of an awareness of and willingness to meet community needs. Until 1889, such groups were strictly local organizations. The Sorosis Club celebrated its twenty-first anniversary in 1889 by convening a meeting of women's groups from across the country. The result was the creation of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

Florida's first such club for women was organized in Green Cove Springs in 1887. The goal of its members, mostly winter residents, was village improvement through the introduction of order and cleanliness, and the provision of a "social centre for intelligent intercourse of women with one another." The group was incorporated in April 1889 as "The Ladies' Improvement Association of Green Cove Springs, Florida." After solving the village's immediate health problems, the club took up other objectives, such as literary pursuits, the creation of parks, and the digging of wells.

Meanwhile, other clubs had been established in Florida, and on February 21, 1895, the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs was created in Green Cove Springs. There were six charter members: the clubs in Palmetto, Green Cove Springs, Orange City, Crescent City, Fairfield, and Tarpon Springs. Clubs pursued various activities depending upon their community's needs, but many chose the establishment of libraries as a major project. In 1898, five woman's clubs in Florida had established libraries. Over the years the clubs have contributed greatly to the welfare of their communities in other ways as well, providing cultural activities, support of the war effort during the World Wars, and ministering to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged and children. The Florida Federation was admitted to the General Federation of Woman's Clubs January 25, 1898, and was incorporated April 12, 1915. The Florida Federation remains an active organization with a membership of over 30,000 women, and publishes the quarterly magazine, *Florida Clubwoman*.

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Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

Historic Significance

On November 16, 1923, a large group of men and women met at Crooked Lake school to form an organization to the further development of high ideals in the community. From this group, the Babson Park Woman's Club organization was formed with the purpose of providing civic and educational benefits to the community. The group spent 7 years raising funds for the clubhouse, every towns person donating money to pay for building costs. This was truly a community effort, and the Babson Park Woman's Club played an integral part in the community life of Babson Park during the 1930's.

Roger W. Babson, the prominent land owner and developer, offered several lots in Babson Park from which to choose as a location for the clubhouse. The members of the organization agreed upon the highest lot, which had a prominent location at the northern entrance to the town, alongside the railroad to the east and public Hwy. 8 to the west, overlooking scenic Crooked Lake and not far from the downtown businesses. Roger Babson, not only donated the lot, but also motivated the local ladies with his statement that the women "could not put up a building good enough to stand by his." This caused the ladies to be "slightly peeved, but they gritted their teeth" and carried through the 7 year endeavor of fundraising for the building construction. Charles Matthews of Babson Park was awarded the contract. Construction began in September, 1930 and was completed January, 1931. For the following 40 years, Matthews was retained as advisor and made all repairs, thereby preserving the original integrity of the clubhouse. The building was constructed of the same Mediterranean Revival style as the original downtown business buildings which had now become the first Webber College. Those original buildings, although altered slightly, remain today.

In 1933-34, a library was begun in the Babson Park Woman's Club and existed for many years of the club's long history. Other educational endeavors included Webber College forums, a reading circle, and Speaker's programs covering literature, poetry, biography, law, and travel. The Babson Park Woman's Club members worked with the local PTA and elementary school. In 1935, the Clubhouse was used for eye and medical clinics as well as for tonsil operations for needy community children. Through fundraising efforts, the Club provided food, clothing, glasses, and funding for the PTA milk fund. During the World War II years, 1942-45, the Club members realized the necessity of helping in the war effort, and so the Babson Park Woman's Club was turned over for war effort work, including Red Cross activities. A Victory War Committee, established of local community leaders, conducted war effort activities.

Architectural Context

Mediterranean Revival is an eclectic style containing architectural elements with Spanish or Middle Eastern precedents. Found most commonly in those states that have a Spanish Colonial heritage, Mediterranean

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Revival broadly defines the Mission, Moorish, Turkish, Byzantine, and Spanish Eclectic revival styles which became popular in the Southwest and Florida during the early twentieth century. The influence of those Mediterranean styles found expression through a detailed study in 1915 of Latin American architecture made by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue at the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The Goodhue exhibit prominently featured the rich Spanish architectural variety of South America. Encouraged by the publicity afforded the exposition, other architects began to look directly to Spain and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, where they found still more interesting building traditions.

Mediterranean Revival buildings in Florida display considerable Spanish influence. A popular building style in Florida during the 1920s, construction continued following the collapse of the land boom and even into the 1930s. Identifying features of the style include flat (sometimes hip) roofs, usually with some form of parapet; ceramic tile roof surfacing; stuccoed facades; flat roof entrance porches, commonly with arched openings supported by square columns; casement and double-hung sash windows; and ceramic tile decorations.

Architectural Significance

The Babson Park Woman's Club is architecturally significant in that it was intentionally designed to match the Mediterranean Revival style of the existing downtown buildings. The use of stucco, along with the clay barrel-tile roof, gives the clubhouse elements of the Mediterranean Revival style with its own distinctive character. Ornamentation incorporates distinct characteristics in a way that makes a statement. For example, the single, and paired, double-hung sash windows with clay barrel-tile awnings; the original slate tile entrance; the paired cypress doors; and cornice returns, each give the Babson Park Woman's Club its integrity and makes it one of the few architectural landmarks of Babson Park. Thus it became an integral part of the architectural style characteristic of the early 20th century development of this small town.

Conclusion

In today's modern era of rapid social change resulting in many women joining the labor force outside the home, and the displacement of the sense for community, the Babson Park Woman's Club still stands as a community center after 65 years playing a vital part in the struggle to provide civic and educational benefit to the community. The building continues to be used for annual meeting dinners of Defenders of Crooked Lake (formed to preserve the quality of life around Crooked Lake), church functions, fashion shows, bake sales, and as a library. Continued support is provided to Florida Bi-Partisans and Operations Bookstrap, Girl and Boy Scouts, both Babson Park Elementary and Frostproof High School, Babson Park Fire Department, food drive for needy families, and care of the sick and elderly. As recently as December, 1995, the Babson Park Elementary School Gnat Chorus performed at the Woman's Club.

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**BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

Verbal Boundary Description

The Babson Park Woman's Club is bounded by Scenic Highway on the west, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad spur track on the east, and undeveloped lots owned by Webber College to the north and south. (see site plan).

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all of the historically significant property associated with the Babson Park Woman's Club including the building and the original property lot.

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**BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
Babson Park, Polk County, Florida**

PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY

1. Babson Park Woman's Club, 1300 N. Scenic Highway
2. Babson Park, Polk County, Florida
3. Patty McKeeman
4. September 14, 1996
5. Babson Park Woman's Club files
6. Detail of shed awning, facing east
7. Photo 1 of 12

Items 1 - 5 are the same for the remaining photographs except where noted:

6. West elevation, facing east
7. Photo 2 of 12

6. South elevation showing addition, facing north
7. Photo 3 of 12

6. East elevation showing addition and storage room, facing west
7. Photo 4 of 12

6. North elevation, facing southeast
7. Photo 5 of 12

6. West elevation showing detail of window, shed awning, and cornice return, facing east
7. Photo 6 of 12

6. Interior showing paired windows, facing east
7. Photo 7 of 12

6. Interior showing original kitchen, facing west
7. Photo 8 of 12

6. Interior showing addition, French doors, casement windows, facing south
7. Photo 9 of 12

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**BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
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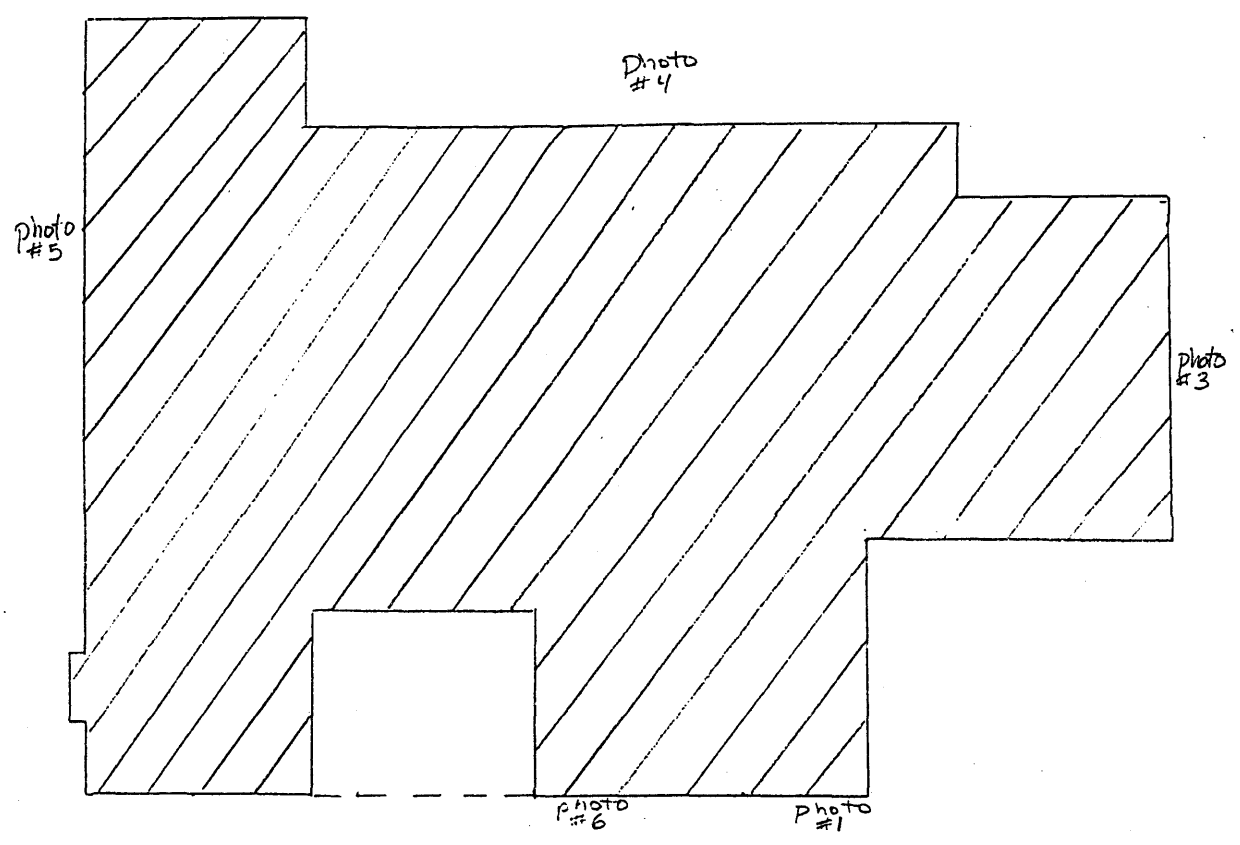
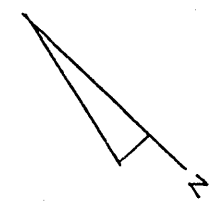
6. Interior showing main assembly room, stage, and ceiling beams, facing north
7. Photo 10 of 12

6. Interior (1981) showing main assembly room, facing south
7. Photo 11 of 12

3. Photographer unknown
4. circa 1932
5. Babson Park Woman's Club files
6. Historic photograph showing west (main) and south elevations
7. Photo 12 of 12

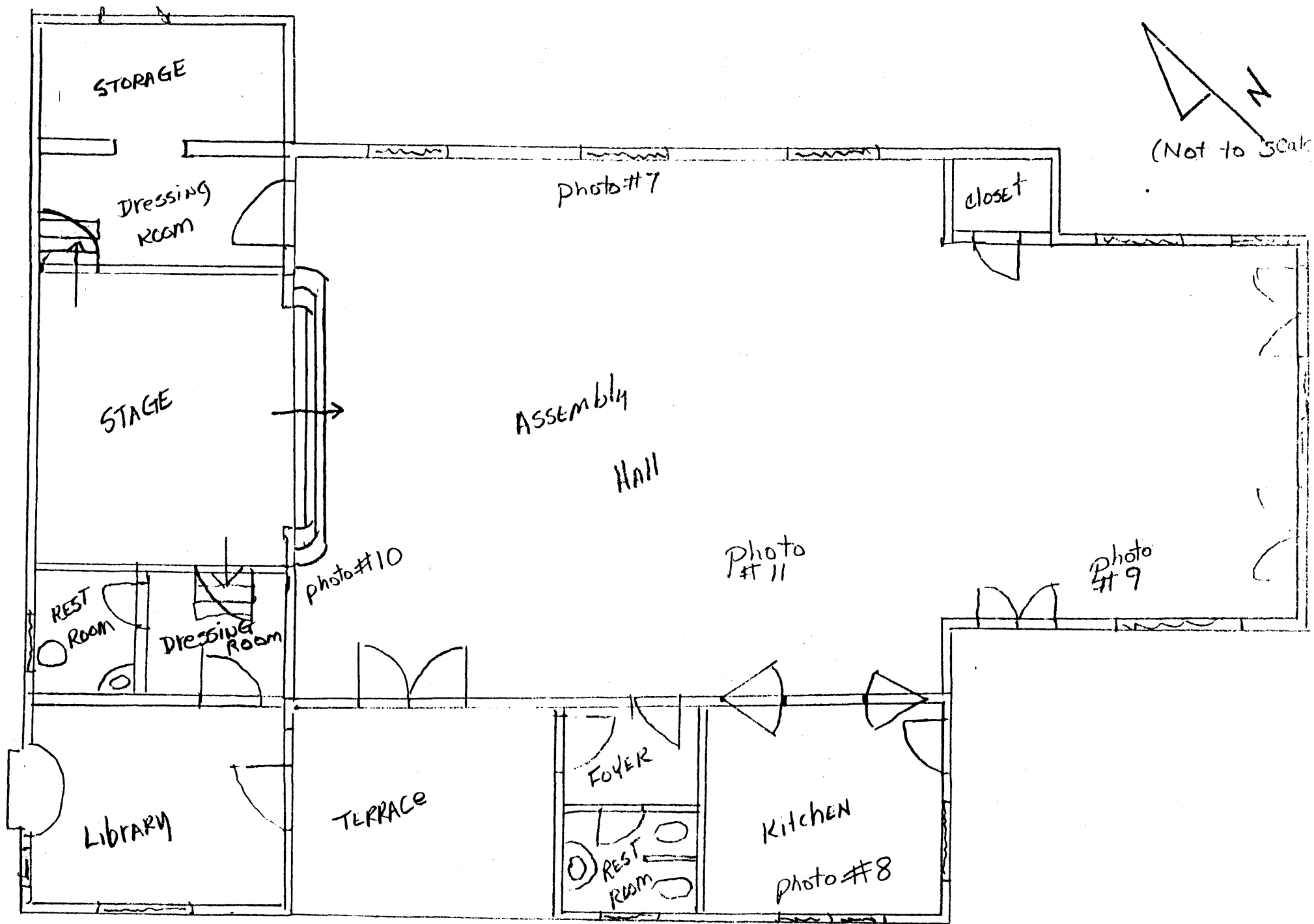
295'

295'

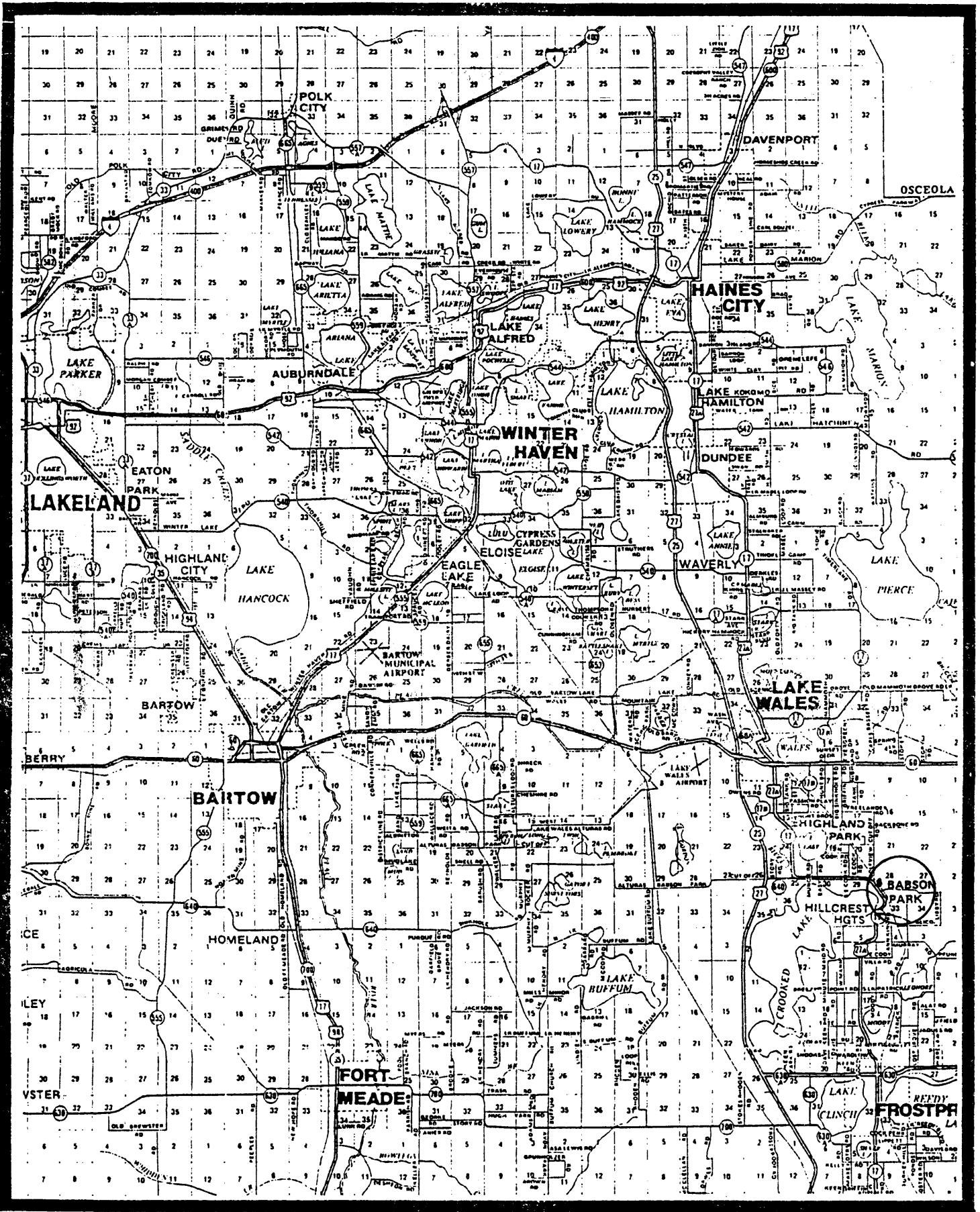


photos
2 + 12

BABSON PARK
WOMAN'S CLUB
SITE PLAN



BABSON PARK WOMAN'S CLUB
 FLOOR PLAN



Location Map