

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. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items. Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A) by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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).

1. Name of Property

historic name BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER

other names/site number site # 8LL103

2. Location

street & number East of Park Avenue, between First and Second N/A not for publication

Streets

city or town Boca Grande

N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Lee code 071 zip code 33921

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.)

Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 2/22/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State of 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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain.) _____

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action 3.30.95

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)
Category of Property (Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

Historic Resources of Lee County, Fl.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ School
DOMESTIC/ Institutional Housing
SOCIAL/ Meeting Hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ Meeting Hall
SOCIAL/ Civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival
VERNACULAR

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls STUCCO WOOD/ Weatherboard
BRICK
roof Ceramic Tile; Asphalt
other Terra cotta; coquina stone

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 67) 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)

EDUCATION

RECREATION AND CULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1929-1945

Significant Dates

1929
1930
1936
1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: N. Gaillard Walker

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 Approx. 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	117	374540	2958840
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 Stephen Olausen/ Sherry Piland, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date February 1995

street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Fl. zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

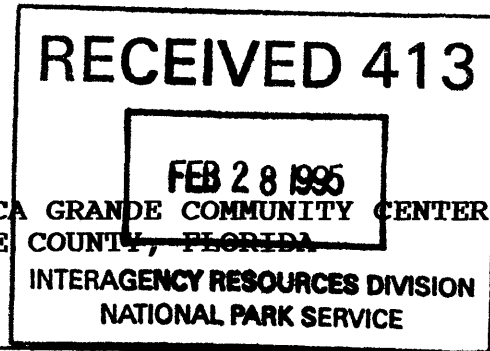
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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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SUMMARY

The Boca Grande Community Center occupies a block of land in the unincorporated community of Boca Grande, Lee County, Florida. The Community Center is comprised of three contributing buildings: the Boca Grande School, the Boca Grande School Teacherage, and the Boca Grande Community House. The complex contributes to the Historic Resources of Lee County, Florida, multiple property group under property types F.3, **Education Buildings** and F.4, **Government and Public Resources**; and under historic context IV, **The Great Depression and World War II, 1928-1945**.

SETTING

The Boca Grande Community Center is located on block 5 in the Boca Grande Subdivision, an attractive residential area. It is bounded by Second Street on the north, an abandoned railroad right-of-way on the east, First Street on the south, and Park Avenue on the west. The property is landscaped with a variety of tropical plants and trees, including palm, cypress, and oak. The grounds contain three parking areas, a basketball court, two tennis courts, and a playground. The Boca Grande School (now the Boca Grande Community Center) is located on the southern half of the block, while the Boca Grande School Teacherage (now a private residence and Department of Transportation office) and the Boca Grande Community House (now a multi-purpose meeting center and Boca Grande Art Alliance store) are located on the northern half.

DESCRIPTION

BOCA GRANDE SCHOOL: Exterior

The Boca Grande School is a one-story Mediterranean Revival style building constructed with a brick and hollow tile structural system (photo 1). The building rests on a concrete foundation. Originally, the building had a U-shaped plan that encompassed a central courtyard (photo 2). The irregular shape of the building as it appears today was created by a two room addition at the northwest corner of the building in 1936. The

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building has both gable roofs and flat roofs with ceramic barrel tile coping. The exterior walls are covered with smooth stucco.

The main (south) facade consists of a center block with two projecting wings that enclose the courtyard on three sides. The classrooms are accessed through the arcaded walkway around the courtyard (photo 3). The west projecting wing terminates at the facade with a low gable roofed segment (photo 4). Below the gable roof is a single double-hung sash window with a masonry surround. The facade of this wing features a decorative terra-cotta crest above a blind coquina arch (photo 5). The east projecting wing terminates at the facade with a two-story tower (photo 6). The hip roof of the tower is surfaced with ceramic barrel tile. A polychromatic ceramic tile band encircles the tower just below the roofline. The second story of the tower is pierced by arched openings with keystones and masonry sills. The tower flares below the arches to a square base that extends to the ground. A pair of terra-cotta crests are located near the flared roof. The base of the tower contains a blind arch above a single double-hung sash window with a masonry surround.

The east and west elevations of the building are similar in design, consisting primarily of groups of three paired double-hung sash windows with 6/6 lights (photos 7 and 8).

A flat roof addition, constructed in 1936, projects from the rear (north) elevation (photo 9). The design of the addition is identical to that of the original building. The pattern of double-hung sash windows is continued on the addition. The east elevation of the addition has an arcaded walkway, like that of the courtyard (photo 10).

The rear elevation of the original building features a series of enclosed rectangular window openings that were blocked-in during a 1973 renovation (photo 11).

BOCA GRANDE SCHOOL: Interior

The interior spaces of the Boca Grande School remain largely intact. The building originally contained six classrooms, two offices, boy's and girl's bathrooms, and an auditorium. A 1936 addition to the building added two classrooms (photo 12). All of the rooms are accessed through an arcaded exterior hallway. The

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classrooms are approximately twenty-two feet in width and twenty-seven feet in length. The floors are original tongue-and-groove pine. The walls are smooth stucco and the original blackboard and pine molding and baseboards are still in place (photo 13). The auditorium also retains much of its original configuration (photo 14). The sixty-three by twenty-seven foot room features a pine floor that slopes to a raised stage and the original individual wood seats. The windows in the auditorium were infilled with concrete block in 1973.

Alterations to the interior consist largely of partitions added to cordon off spaces within the individual rooms and the use of drop ceilings to improve acoustics and conceal air conditioning vents. For example, a wood and glass partition has been added to create office space and a separated reading area for the current reference room (photo 15).

BOCA GRANDE SCHOOL TEACHERAGE: Exterior

The Boca Grande School Teacherage is a simple frame vernacular building with Craftsman style elements and a T-shaped plan (photo 16). The exterior walls have drop siding. The main facade faces west and is dominated by a gabled porch projection that intersects with the side-facing gable of the main roof. The porch roof is supported by square wood columns that rest on a knee wall. The porch has been enclosed and contains the centrally located primary entrance. The porch has aluminum awning windows; the remaining windows are double-hung sash with 6/6 lights.

The north and south sides of the building are identical in configuration and feature three double-hung sash windows with the central window placed slightly higher (photo 17). The rear (east) elevation consists of single double-hung sash windows with 6/6 lights at the corners, two entrances, and two six-light casement windows (photo 18). A wood deck has been added to the rear elevation.

BOCA GRANDE TEACHERAGE: Interior

Originally constructed as a duplex, the building has been converted to a single family residence by the partial removal of

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the center wall. Despite that alteration, the interior retains a significant amount of its historic appearance. It is divided into eight rooms. The original beaded board walls and ceilings are still in evidence in several rooms (photo 19). Original wainscoting, pine flooring, door and window molding, and baseboards remain in excellent condition.

BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY HOUSE: Exterior

The Boca Grande Community House is a masonry vernacular building with an irregular plan. The exterior walls are brick and a brick stringcourse encircles the building below the windows. The main gable roof intersects with gable extensions and a rear flat roof addition. The main (north) facade contains a central double door entrance, which is flanked on either side by four metal awning windows with three lights (photo 20). The entrance is sheltered by a small gabled portico supported by wood posts. The east elevation, with a similar entrance portico, features two gable extensions at the corners (photo 21). The entrance on this elevation is flanked by pairs of metal sash windows. The gabled extensions contain metal awning windows. An exterior end chimney is located on the west elevation. The rear (south) elevation consists of two additions that were constructed in the early 1940s.

BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY HOUSE: Interior

The interior of the Community House is divided into seven rooms. The most prominent interior space is a 40' X 50' multi-purpose room (photo 22). This room features a decorative wood truss ceiling, original lighting fixtures, brick walls, a large fireplace, and pine tongue-and-groove flooring. The meeting and lounge rooms in the north part of the building also have original flooring, molding, and doors. The 1940s additions at the rear of the building contain restroom/showers, a kitchen (photo 23), and an industrial arts shop.

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ALTERATIONS

The three buildings that comprise the Boca Grande Community Center retain their original design features to a high degree. Alterations have consisted primarily of rear additions and window replacements.

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**BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER
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SUMMARY

The Boca Grande Community Center is a complex of three buildings: the Boca Grande School, the Boca Grande School Teacherage, and the Boca Grande Community House. This complex is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level in the areas of education, recreation and culture, and architecture. The Boca Grande School and Boca Grande School Teacherage are the only surviving education-related facilities in the community. The Boca Grande Community Center contributes to the **Historic Resources of Lee County** multiple property group under property types F.3, **Education Buildings** and F.4, **Government and Public Resources**; and under historic context IV, **The Great Depression and World War II, 1928-1945**.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Boca Grande's first school, in 1893, was a small frame structure built by the citizens of the community. Because of low enrollment, the school was only open sporadically during the ensuing fifteen years. By 1908, growth was sufficient to warrant the construction of a larger building and a special taxing district was established to raise money for this purpose. In 1911 a two-story, frame building with four classrooms was erected on Gilchrist Avenue, on property donated by the Boca Grande Land Company.

The Gilchrist Avenue school remained in operation until the late 1920s when, once again, the community's population of school age children required a larger building. School enrollment nearly doubled in Lee County during the Land Boom years of the mid-1920s, placing a severe strain on what had become an antiquated system of small frame school buildings, most of which had been constructed in the 1890s and early 1900s. In response, the City of Fort Myers and the Lee County School Board undertook an ambitious program to construct new school buildings, upgrade equipment, and hire more qualified teachers. Eighteen new schools were constructed in the county between 1924 and 1929.

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HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

School

Boca Grande was selected to receive one of the new schools. Although the Gilchrist Avenue School remained in place until 1930, a new Boca Grande School was erected in 1929 on land provided by Francis and Louise Crowninshield. Money for the construction of the Boca Grande School was provided by residents of the community and the Crowninshields, who subscribed to a \$50,000 bond issue. Plans for the school were drawn by architect Nat Gaillard Walker. Walker, along with fellow architect W. O. Sparklin, was retained by the School Board to execute designs for other county schools during the expansion program of the late 1920s.

In November 1928, the School Board received seven bids for the erection of the school. The project was awarded to the Allen Lauretson & Company construction firm who offered the low bid of \$33,493. Construction of the school began early in 1929 and was completed in August, in time for the beginning of the school year.

The school, which accommodated grades one through twelve, had six large classrooms, two offices, indoor bathrooms, and a large auditorium. It was largely attended by children of local construction and railroad workers. During the mid-1930s however, students from the north end of Gasparilla Island were bused to the school. Due to the increased enrollment, which totaled as many as 180 students during the late 1930s, additional space was needed, and a two-room addition was constructed on the northwest corner of the building in 1936.

The Boca Grande School was closed in 1964 due to declining enrollment. The number of school children in the area steadily decreased after World War II as the phosphate shipping, guide fishing, and commercial fishing industries declined. The closing of Lee County's military bases after World War II also diminished the school age population. The Boca Grande School remained vacant until 1972 when, under a special bill passed by the Florida State Legislature, it was deeded to the community for use as a community center. The building was renovated in 1973 to provide meeting and office space for various clubs and organizations.

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Teacherage

In January 1930, the School Board voted to raze the old school on Gilchrist Avenue and construct a duplex teacherage on the northwest corner of the school property. Some of the materials used in constructing the teacherage may have come from the old school. One apartment in the frame teacherage was provided free of charge to the school's principal and his family, while the other was usually occupied by one or more teachers. The teacherage was vacant from 1964, when the Boca Grande School closed, until 1971, when it was converted to an office/residence for the Lee County Department of Transportation.

Community House

A third building, the Boca Grande Community House, was added to the school grounds in 1940. The multi-purpose brick building was proposed and funded by Louise Crowninshield. It served as a gymnasium for the Boca Grande School, a meeting place for various community organizations, and an auditorium for pageants, community dinners, school proms, and weddings. During World War II it was used by the local chapter of the U.S.O. as a center for entertaining soldiers stationed at bases in Lee and Charlotte counties. The community house still serves its original function as a meeting place and auditorium for community activities.

Francis and Louise Crowninshield

Francis and Louise Crowninshield were instrumental in securing the land and the funds for the Boca Grande School and Community House. A Delaware native, Louise was the daughter of Colonel Henry A. and Mary du Pont. She developed an early appreciation for history, nature, and the arts. In 1900 she married Francis B. Crowninshield, heir to the wealth of a ship merchant family of Salem, Massachusetts. The couple settled first in Boston, where Louise engaged in various charitable activities. In the ensuing years, they established seasonal residences at Marblehead, Massachusetts and Montchanin, Delaware. By 1916, Francis had become attracted to the tarpon fishing of the Boca Grande area and built a lodge there where he and Louise

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began to spend their winters. During the 1920s they constructed a large estate in Boca Grande, which is extant. As she had done in the other places she lived, Louise became involved in local charitable and historical organizations. She sponsored a health clinic at Boca Grande and founded the Boca Grande Woman's Club. She was also a member of the Florida Historical Society, the Historical Association of South Florida, the Florida Audubon Society, and the Florida Forestry Association. In 1949, Louise Crowninshield was one of the founding trustees of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and continued to be one of the most prominent figures in the development of American's historic preservation movement.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Boca Grande School, with its landscaped courtyard, arcade, tower, and terra cotta ornamentation, is an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style applied to a public building. The building was designed by prominent Fort Myers architect N. Gaillard Walker, who was engaged by the School Board in 1926 to draw plans for a variety of educational facilities throughout the county. His plans for the Boca Grande School, incorporating indoor bathrooms and spacious, well-ventilated, and well-lit classrooms, contributed to a healthy learning environment for the students. Walker came to Fort Myers during the land boom and designed numerous residences and commercial buildings. Among his other works is the 1926 Jewett-Thompson House in Fort Myers (NR 1988).

The buildings of the Boca Grande Community Center have little external ornamentation and the interior spaces were well designed for their intended functions. Both the Boca Grande School Teacherage and Boca Grande Community House were constructed with functional vernacular designs. The Community House is one of the few brick structures in Boca Grande.

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Barany, Schmidt, Weaver, and Partners, Inc. Historic Preservation Study and Land Use Master Plan for the Boca Grande Community Center. Boca Grande: Friends of the Boca Grande Community Center, May 1993.

Board, Prudy Taylor and Patricia Pope Bartlett. Lee County: A Pictorial History. Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company, 1985.

Grismer, Karl H. The Story of Fort Myers. Fort Myers Beach: Island Press, 1982. Facsimile reproduction of 1949 edition.

Interviews by Stephen Olausen:
Pansy Cost, March 8, 1994.
Gary Maltezo, March 8, 1994.
Creighton Sherman, March 8, 1994.

Lee County School Board. Minutes, 1910-1911, 1926-1929.

Stone, Donald O. and Beth W. Carter. The First 100 Years: Lee County Public Schools, 1887-1987. Fort Myers: School Board of Lee County, 1987.

Whitehill, Walter Muir. Louise du Pont Crowninshield, 1877-1958. Winterthur, Delaware: Anthoensen Press, 1960.

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BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lee County unincorporated; Boca Grande PB 7 PG 1, all of BLK 5 and vacant R/W (OR 1086/1085).

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Boca Grande Community Center and encompasses all of the property deeded to the Lee County School Board by Francis and Louise Crowninshield in 1929.

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Section number Photo Page 1

1. Boca Grande Community Center
2. Lee county, Florida
3. Stephen Olausen
4. March 1994
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Boca Grande School, main (south) facade; view looking northwest
7. Photo 1 of 23

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs

6. Boca Grande School, facade courtyard, view looking north
7. Photo 2 of 23
6. Boca Grande School, arcaded courtyard walkway, view looking northwest
7. Photo 3 of 23
6. Boca Grande School, oblique view of facade, facing northeast
7. Photo 4 of 23
6. Boca Grande School, detail of blind arch, main (south) facade; view looking north
7. Photo 5 of 23
6. Boca Grande School, east wing of main (south) facade; view looking north
7. Photo 6 of 23
6. Boca Grande School, west elevation, view looking northeast
7. Photo 7 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, east elevation, view looking west
7. Photo 8 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, west elevation of rear addition; view looking southwest
7. Photo 9 Of 23

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-
6. Boca Grande School, east elevation of rear addition; view looking west
7. Photo 10 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, rear (north) elevation; view looking south
7. Photo 11 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, interior, classroom; view looking southwest
7. Photo 12 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, interior, classroom; view looking northeast
7. Photo 13 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, interior, view of auditorium, looking west
7. Photo 14 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School, interior, classroom; view looking southwest
7. Photo 15 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School Teacherage, main (west) facade; view looking east
7. Photo 16 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School Teacherage, south elevation; view looking north
7. Photo 17 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School Teacherage, rear (east) elevation; view looking west
7. Photo 18 Of 23
6. Boca Grande School Teacherage, interior detail, bedroom; view looking southeast
7. Photo 19 Of 23
6. Boca Grande Community House, main (north) facade; view looking southwest
7. Photo 20 Of 23

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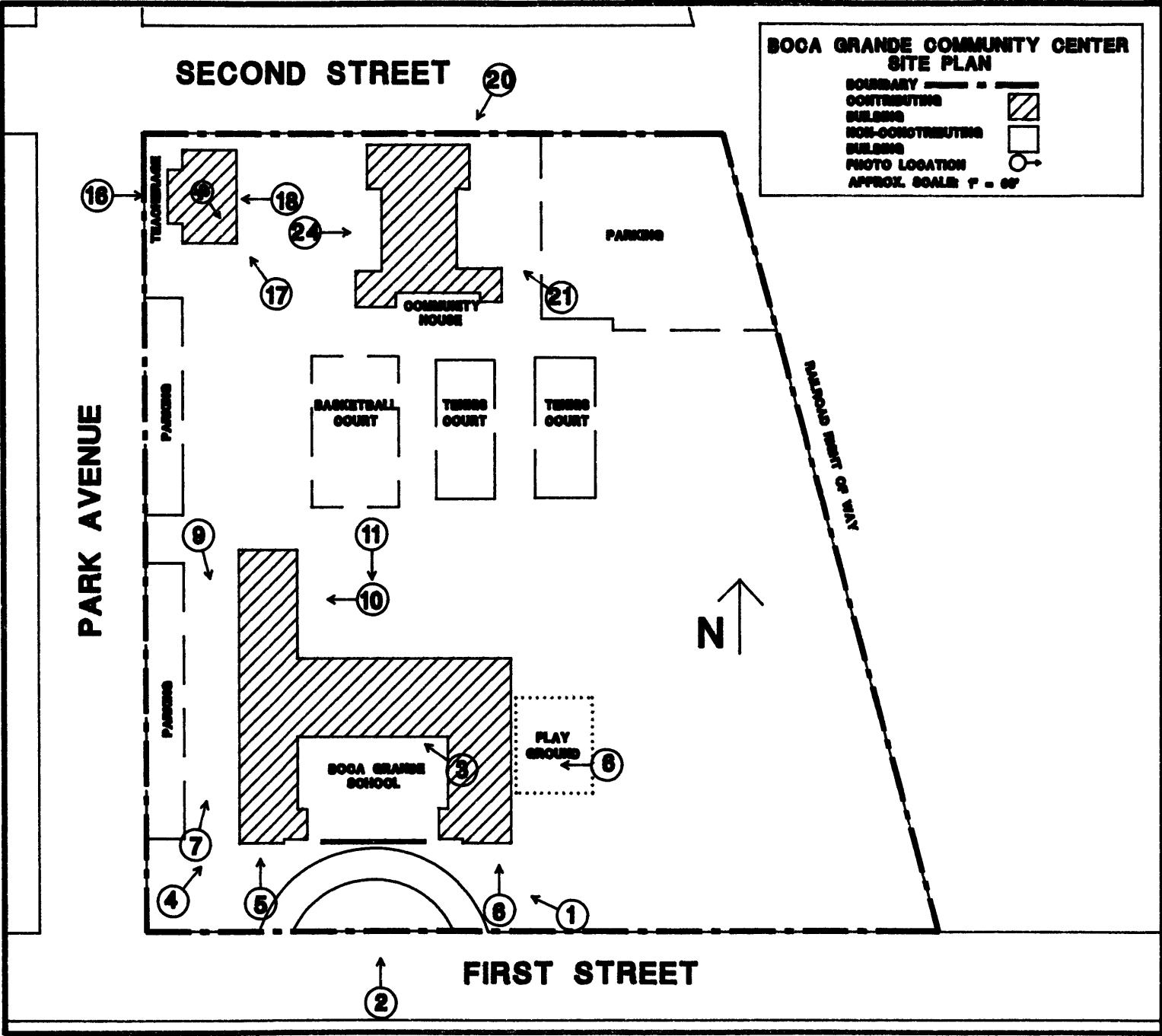
**BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER
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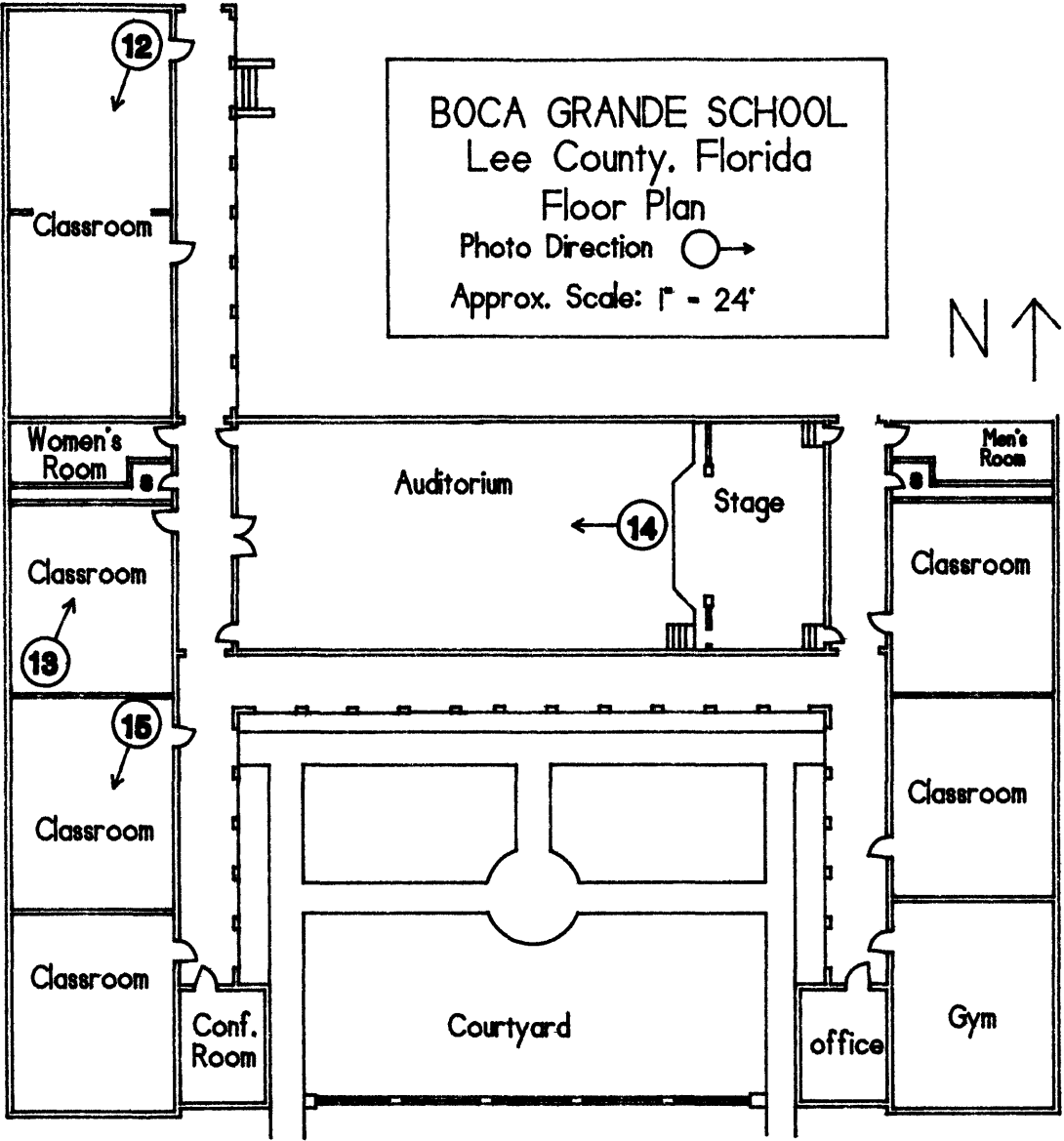
-
- 6. Boca Grande Community House, east elevation; view looking northwest
 - 7. Photo 21 Of 23

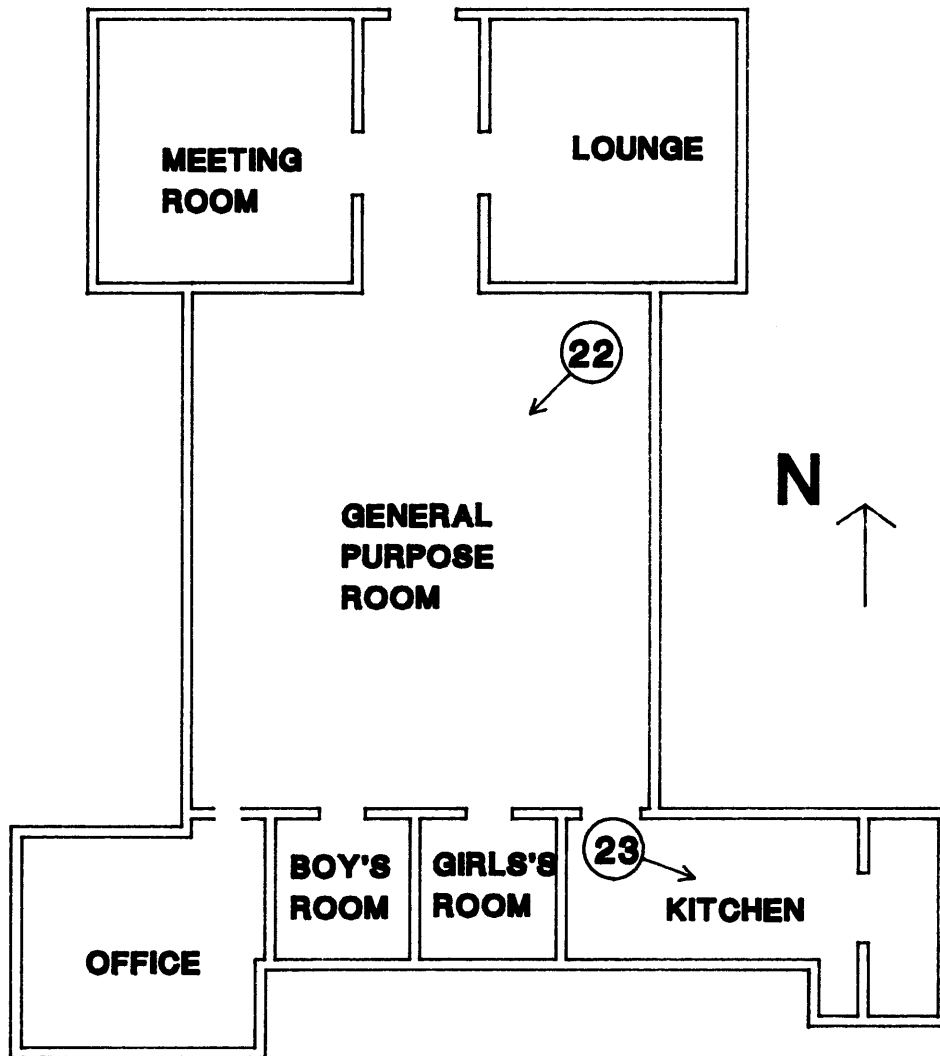
 - 6. Boca Grande Community House, interior, view of General Purpose Room, looking southwest
 - 7. Photo 22 Of 23

 - 6. Boca Grande Community House, interior view of kitchen, looking southeast
 - 7. Photo 23 Of 23



BOCA GRANDE SCHOOL
Lee County, Florida
Floor Plan
Photo Direction 
Approx. Scale: 1" = 24'





**BOCA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER
Floor Plan**

Photo Direction 

Approx. Scale: 1" = 22'