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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 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). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mountain Lake Estates Historic District

other names/site number 8 Po 3611

2. Location

street & number U.S. 27A N/A not for publication

city or town Lake Wales vicinity

state Florida code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33853

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 7/22/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Robert Beyer

~~Entered in the~~
National Register

Date of Action

8/26/93

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)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
65	36	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
66	36	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(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

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling
RECREATION/Golf course

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling
RECREATION/Golf course

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/
Mediterranean Revival, Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco
walls Stucco
Brick
roof Tile
other Wood

Narrative Description

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

See 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development

Landscape Architecture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1915-1934

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Olmsted, Frederick Law, Jr.

Wait, Charles R.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Mountain Lake Estates
Name of Property

Polk, Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 896

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	117	44091010	31091081010
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	117	4430710	3109106210

3	117	44301010	31088580
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	117	44110410	31088760

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 Paul Weaver, consultant/W. N. Thurston, Historic Preservation Supervisor

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date July 21, 1993

street & number R. A. Gray Bldg., 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 N/A

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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Section number 7 Page 1 Mountain Lake Estates Historic
District, Polk Co., FL

SUMMARY

The Mountain Lake Estates Historic District is an exclusive residential subdivision located one mile north of Lake Wales, Florida. Initially developed in the 1920s, it was designed by the nationally renowned firm of Olmsted Brothers, Brookline, Massachusetts, around Mountain Lake (formerly Buck Lake) and Iron Mountain, the highest elevation in peninsula Florida. The historic components of the district are sixty-five residential properties, including El Ritero (NR 1985); the Colony House (NR 1991), a combination hotel-clubhouse; an 18 hole golf course; and a main entrance gate house. The integrity of the district is excellent. Alterations to historic buildings have been modest and new construction has respected the original plan and is compatible with the historic designed landscapes and architecture.

PRESENT AND ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Setting

The Mountain Lake Estates Historic District occupies approximately 896 acres of rolling sand hills near the city of Lake Wales in Polk County, Florida. It encompasses the exclusive residential and country club community surrounding Mountain Lake (formerly Buck Lake) designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. as a major segment of his overall plan for the development of the much larger landholdings of Frederick C. Ruth. Iron Mountain, site of the Bok Tower and Gardens (NR 1972, NHL 1993) lies adjacent to the eastern district boundary. The western boundary is defined by U.S. Highway 27. Citrus groves and woodlands adjoin the district on the south and north respectively.

The plan for Mountain Lake was a synthesis of the vision of developer Ruth and the imagination and technical skills of landscape architect Olmsted. Ruth recognized the beauty and development potential of Lake Buck and Iron Mountain. Through inheritance and purchase he was able to acquire holdings which eventually totalled 3,500 acres. He envisioned an exclusive winter resort at Mountain Lake which would incorporate strict architectural standards. Upon visiting the Mountain Lake tract assembled by Ruth, Olmsted immediately recognized its potential. He was particularly impressed by the height of Iron Mountain which offered an attractive distant outlook of the surrounding low, rolling hills and numerous lakes. He saw the creation of a

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development of exceptional beauty through selective planting of orange groves, placement of roads along the naturally picturesque and irregular forms of the land, retention of pines and other tall trees, and design controls.

Olmsted organized his plan for Mountain Lake around zones which remain recognizable today. The major zones were the residential section, the golf course, and the grove land. The Mountain Lake Sanctuary, now the Bok Tower and Gardens, originally a part of the residential zone, was subdivided during the 1920s to form the fourth major zone. The zones were separated by access roads. Olmsted placed the roads following the natural paths established by the rise and fall of the land as defined by wildlife and occasional hunters and fishermen as they moved through the property. He further organized the plan by natural borders such as the lakes, steeply rising or falling land, and stands of usable trees. He then took the residential plan to the block and lot level. He designed individual lots with an eye for construction sites affording scenic vistas.

The principal goal of the Olmsted plan was the preservation of an informal, natural landscape focused on Mountain Lake. The lake, nestled along the western slopes of Iron Mountain, provided a focal point for the landscape design. The overall design of the development and the design of individual estates and buildings were intended to harmonize and never intrude on this central element.

The Colony House, the first building constructed, was a centerpiece of the development. Sited atop a hill, the building was located on a peninsula formed by sections of Mountain Lake. Its southwest orientation provided a commanding southern vista of the lake, the golf course, and other key components of the development. On the north, the main entrance is on axis with a driveway covered by a graceful canopy of planted oaks. Because of its location, size, and architectural features, such as a loggia framed by gable ends, the Colony House was and remains a focal point of the Mountain Lake development.

For the golf course design, Olmsted and Ruth selected Seth J. Raynor, a civil engineer and one of the most celebrated golf course designers of his day. The golf course, designed in two nine-hole phases, was completed in 1920. A collaborative effort between Olmsted and Raynor, it was designed around the existing land forms, lakes, and stands of trees.

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In 1952, the original Olmsted Plan was reviewed by E. C. Whiting, senior partner at Olmsted Brothers, and former Olmsted associate William Lyman Phillips. They found that the plan had in general been followed. As Olmsted envisioned, the long-leaf pine was still dominant. Also as planned, live oak, camphor, eucalyptus, cypress, laurel fig and silk oak planted early in the development had matured and enhanced the beauty of the natural landscape. But the Depression and war years had resulted in a lack of funds for proper maintenance and a deterioration of the landscape. Whiting and Phillips produced a report which outlined measures to revitalize the plan and adapt it to current and future needs without compromising its integrity. The landscape architects made specific suggestions for pruning and controlling border and belt plantings. The Olmsted Review proved a valuable assessment of the state of the original plan. It has served as a guide for the corporation and individual property owners since that time.

Architecture

The great majority of historic buildings at Mountain Lake are detached, one and two story single-family residences. Most contain elements of Mediterranean architecture with Spanish and Italian detailing common. The residences date from the period 1916 to 1934 and are finely crafted, custom-built, upper income homes. With its prominent natural features, its curvilinear plan, and its high quality building stock, Mountain Lake Estates conveys a sense of one of Florida's premier resort communities of the early 20th century.

The Colony House and a number of other buildings were constructed between 1916 and 1919, but the overwhelming majority date from the 1920s and the Florida Land Boom. During the early 1930s construction decreased dramatically. No buildings were constructed between 1934 and 1951. The post-1934 buildings mainly infilled occasional vacant lots or were constructed on the perimeter of the historic district. Many are concentrated at the north and south ends of the development.

The architecture of the district is of consistently high quality. The Mountain Lake Corporation controlled land use, density of development, setback and landscape and architectural design. The corporation constructed the Colony House and several of the original homes. Although modest in size and detailing

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when compared with the buildings constructed during the 1920s, these buildings set standards for style, scale, materials, and other architectural features.

The land use controls, landscape features, and the design and construction standards employed by the developers produced a visual cohesiveness throughout the district. The scale of buildings is consistent with buildings ranging from one to two-and-one half stories in height. All buildings are detached and share a similar setback. They are sited on generous lots at least two acres in size and have irregular ground plans. The broad sides of most buildings are oriented toward the lake, providing residents with sweeping views of this central feature.

The quality of design in the district is also attributable to the presence of highly skilled architects. All historic buildings were designed by professionally trained architects. In contrast to most historic districts in Florida, where vernacular architecture predominates, Mountain Lake contains an overwhelming concentration of well-defined architectural styles. Mediterranean or Spanish Colonial Revival influence predominates in the district. The Mountain Lake Company actively promoted architecture based on Spanish and Italian models in its advertising. Mediterranean influenced architecture in Florida dates primarily from the 1920s and is closely associated with the land boom. Architecture whose models came from Spain, Italy, and North Africa were popularized by a series of expositions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The California Building at the World Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 and the Electric Tower at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1900 introduced two distinct variations of Mediterranean influenced architecture. One was the Mission style and the other the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

Distinguishing features of the Spanish Colonial Revival included clay tile roofs, a stucco finish (smooth, textured, or shell dash), and the use of an arch motif on windows, doors, and porches. Casement and fanlight windows were common, along with double hung sash. Ornamental ironwork was sometimes used for window grilles and balconets. Exterior colors were most often white, yellow-brown, and rose.

Several of the most prominent residences in Mountain Lake are based on Italian precedents. The style which best describes this type of architecture is Italian Renaissance. It is found in

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early twentieth century houses throughout the country, but is considerably less common than the Spanish influenced styles. Prior to World War I, the style was primarily associated with architect-designed landmarks in major metropolitan areas. The style began with the landmark Villard Houses in New York designed by McKim, Mead, and White in 1883. By the late nineteenth century, a great many American architects and their clients had visited Italy and thus had first hand familiarity with the original models. After World War I, the style became more popular as vernacular interpretations spread quickly with the perfection of masonry veneering techniques.

Characteristics of the style included low-pitched, hipped roofs covered by ceramic tiles; arched first story fenestration; entrances accented by small classical columns or pilasters; upper story windows smaller and less elaborate than windows below; and a symmetrical facade. In the Mountain Lake District most Italian influenced buildings are based on popular interpretations rather than models taken directly from Italy.

There are only two examples of Colonial Revival architecture at Mountain Lake. The Colonial Revival style traces its roots to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, where many of the exhibit buildings sought to revive and interpret historic "colonial" types. These buildings were rich in borrowed detail, based largely on the classical tradition that produced styles now known as "Georgian," "Federal," and "Jeffersonian." The major elements of these styles were symmetrical facades, prominent porticos, molded details in bas-relief, rectangular windows with small panes, and fanlights over the main entrance. The two examples at Mountain Lake feature many of these and other elements associated with the Colonial Revival style.

The prevalence of masonry building materials is also characteristic of the district. Materials commonly found in buildings include tile, stucco, poured concrete, and concrete block. Most buildings have platform frame structural systems with stucco exterior finishes. At least eight buildings have masonry structural systems as well. All buildings rest on continuous concrete foundations. Basements, a highly unusual feature in most parts of Florida, are common at Mountain Lake. Most basements were constructed to house heating and other mechanical systems.

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The massing of most residences is irregular and complex. The residences are divided into blocks whose form and roof planes are distinct. The central block is frequently two stories in height and often contains the entrance, central hall, and main stair. Off the main block, a one-story glazed porch or porches can be found. Beyond the main block, generally on the least conspicuous elevation, a servant's wing and/or a two-story garage apartment is often encountered. The complex massing of residences is unified through common materials, finishes, ornamentation, and features such as doors and windows. Most buildings are covered by a series of multi-plane, gable or hip roofs sloping at roughly a 4/12 pitch. The roofs are finished with a variety of high-quality materials, including red barrel tile, French tile, slate, and metal shingles. Composition roofs have in some instances replaced original roofing materials.

The fenestration of most buildings is irregular. It is generally composed of numerous French doors and paired and individually placed casement windows with ranks of three and four lights. Window and door openings are both flat and round headed and frequently contain transom lights which follow the form of the opening.

Decorative detailing is common and generally located on the main elevation of the building. Detailing found on the residences at Mountain Lake includes broad eaves with exposed rafters, window grilles, balconies, gratings, wrought ironwork, loggia, arcades supported by columns with molded capitals, and canales.

Because of the warm climate and the importance of landscaping, certain features of residences at Mountain Lake are particularly important. These included glazed and screened porches; loggias, colonnades, and pergolas; and courtyards, patios, and terraces. These features serve as transitional elements between the interior and exterior of buildings and are an integral and highly significant component of the architecture and landscape architecture of Mountain Lake.

Interiors

No survey of residential interiors at Mountain Lake was conducted. However, floor plans of the majority of the buildings are on file at the maintenance department of the Mountain Lake Corporation. The plans were reviewed and provide evidence of

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common elements of interior design. The interior of residences was divided into a series of major spaces. Public spaces were located at the front and service spaces at the rear of most residences. The public spaces were formed by such rooms as a central hall, stair hall, living room, dining room, breakfast room, and glazed porch. The service spaces included kitchen, bathroom, pantry, and closets. Private spaces were set-off from the public and service spaces on one-story residences or earmarked for the upper floors on those rising two stories (see attached floor plan).

All residences contain at least four bedrooms, each generally with a private bathroom. An attached servant's wing, generally containing two bedrooms and connecting bathroom, is a frequent feature. Also common are guest cottages and garage apartments, either attached or detached, originally designed for servants or chauffeurs.

Alterations

The overall integrity of the historic buildings at Mountain Lake is excellent. The massing of buildings has generally not been changed, except for occasional additions. Seven of the larger residences have been converted to condominiums. The original roof forms, finishes, decorative detailing, windows, and fenestration pattern generally remain. The most frequent change appears to be the replacement of original casement windows with awning or fixed glass types. Pools have been added to many estates, although they were an original feature of a few. On the interior, the historic floor plan and most detailing are probably intact. Kitchen and bathroom remodeling are probably the most common interior alterations which have occurred.

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CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY LIST

Note: Residences in the Mountain Lake Estates development are identified by an assigned property or building number. Streets are not named, and no street numbers are designated. An asterisk (*) indicates a property which has been previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Property Number	Construction Date	Original Owner	Architect
None*	1915	Colony Club	Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
1	1922	C.F. Edgerton	Charles R. Wait
3	1920	Franklin L. Gunther	H. deV. Pratt
4	1919	George L. Babcock	Wait
5	1921	Charles G. Sanford	Pratt
6	1920	William L. Abbott	
8	1917	August Heckscher	Olmsted
9	1924	Charles H. Alvord	Franklin Abbott
10	1924	Alvah Crocker	Pratt
11	1930	William G. Bibb	
12	1924	F. Coit Johnson	Pratt
16	1927	Edward W. Bok	Wait
17	1923	Alvah Crocker	Wait
18	1925	Henry M. Crane	Wait
20	1924	Daniel B. Miller	Abbott

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21	1921	Caroline E. Dudley	Pratt/additions by Williams & Barratt
22	1923	Caroline E. Dudley	Wait
23	1922	H. Newton marshall	Wait/additions by Abbott
24	1923	F. Kingsbury Curtis	Wait
25	1930	Mrs. William H. Nichols, Jr.	Marion Sims Wyeth
26	1921	Charles W. Gordon	Abbott
27	1927	Horace T. Cook	Frank Eaton Newman
28	1918	F.J. Kingsbury	Wait/additions by Abbott
29	1922	Edward W. Bok	Wait
30	1919	Robert Gilmor	Olmsted
31	1928	Joseph R. Ensign	Abbott
32	1922	Edward Woodman	Wait
33	1916	Frank S. Washburn	Olmsted
34	1916	H.E. Goodman	Olmsted
35	1916	Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.	Olmsted/additions by Pratt
36	1921	Drs. S.S. Kneas & D.J. McCarthy	
37	1928	Mrs. R.W. Cox	Howell & Thomas
38	1923	Roger W. Babson	Wait

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39	1926	Thomas N. McCarter	Abbott
40	1931	Mrs. Walter H. Martin	R.G. Hanford
41*	1930	C. Austin Buck	Wait
42	1928	William P. Starkey, Sr.	Wait
43	1926	Irving T. Bush	
44	1924	John H. Goss & Milton J. Warner	Abbott
45	1925	Thomas Williams	Abbott
46	1924	Clifford Hemphill	Newman
47	1929	Dr. A.R.L. Dohme	Wait
48	1928	Alfred H. Chapin	Wait
49	1926	James L. Hamill	
50	1926	Isaac T. Mann	
51	1920	H.D. Kingsbury	Wait
52	1917	H. Perry Mills	
53	1918	W.H. Warner	F.B. Meade/ James Hamilton
54	1919	Conrad Hubert	
55	1924	Winslow S. Pierce	Pratt
56	1924	A.M. Billstein	Abbott
57	1925	John E. Zimmerman	Abbott
58	1924	Mrs. Arthur A. Parks	Wait

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59	1922	Katherine E. Silsbee	Wait
60	1926	Thomas D. Webb	Wait
61	1921	H.T.B. Jacquelin	Wait
62	1934	E. Foster Clark	Wait
63	1928	William L. Abbott	
64	1926	George M. Laughlin, Jr.	
65	1925	James W. DeGraff	Wait
66	1928	Frederick S. Ruth	Wait
67	1925	August Heckscher	Abbott
68	1917	Frederick Archibald	H.E. McCormick
69	1920	S. Scott Joy	S. Scott Joy
70	1930	George T. Fulford	Abbott
71	1927	Allen Tobey	Abbott
		Colony Club Golf Course	
		West Gate House	

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NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY LIST

Property Number	Date
2	1983
7	1980
14	1955
15	
19	1964
72	1961
73	1951
74	1965
75	1981
76	1979
77	1974
78	1969
79	1969
80	1969
82	1970
83	1970
86	1972
87	1973
89	1974
90	1974
91	1975

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92	1976
93	c1976
94	1976
95	1973
96	1977
97	1979
98	1981
100	1983
101	1982
102	1984
104	1984
105	1984
107	1986
109	1987
112	1989

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SUMMARY

The Mountain Lake Estates Historic District is significant under Criterion A for its association with the early twentieth century development of the Lake Wales area as a winter resort, and under Criterion C in the areas of community planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. Its contributing resources include fine examples of the work of nationally prominent masters including Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Charles R. Waite. Its landscape design and residential architecture, carefully integrated with its natural rural setting, created a distinctive example of early twentieth century winter resort development in Florida.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Florida Resort Communities/Mountain Lake

One of the major trends in Florida's history after the Civil War was the development of winter resort communities. Seasonal visitors were attracted to interior towns, particularly in the pineland areas, by the mild climate, attractive natural setting, bountiful hunting and fishing, and, in some cases, healthful mineral springs. By the turn of the century, spurred by Henry Flagler's efforts to convert St. Augustine into the "Winter Newport" and changes in recreational interests, the focus was shifting to the coastal areas. However, as the twentieth century progressed, inland communities such as DeLand, Winter Park, Lakeland, and Lake Wales challenged the seaside resorts of Ormond Beach, Daytona Beach, Palm Beach, and Miami.

The Mountain Lake Estates Historic District is located approximately one mile north of Lake Wales, Florida. It is situated in the central highlands region of the state, an area that experienced little development prior to the turn of the century. The production of lumber and naval stores were the initial economic activities in the vicinity. Among the first to recognize the developmental potential of the area was G. V. Tillman, who first visited the Highlands Ridge area in 1902. In 1906, Tillman and three other men formed the Sessoms Investment Company for the purpose of dealing in real estate and promoting the naval stores industry in the area. The company purchased 180,000 acres of land in the region, and by 1911, the same group, joined by E. C. Stuart, formed the Lake Wales Land Company. Stuart and Tillman later became officials of the Mountain Lake

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Corporation and part of their land holdings would form essential pieces of the development.

The extension of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad from Haines City in June, 1911 ended the relative isolation of Lake Wales, which previously could be reached only by sand trails. It provided an avenue to northern markets for the products from the naval stores and citrus industries and an access for prospective settlers, among them the wealthy visitors and prospective seasonal residents, who subsequently formed the Mountain Lake colony.

In 1885, Robert J. Ruth of Baltimore, Maryland, had acquired 1400 acres of raw land north of present day Lake Wales. The family's land holdings eventually became vested in Ruth's son, Frederick C. Ruth, a prominent New York real estate developer. In 1914, Frederick, by then residing in New York, moved to Lake Wales and began acquiring additional land for a planned development. On December 12, 1914 Ruth formed the Mountain Lake Corporation. He was voted president of the corporation, and Frank S. Washburn and G. V. Tillman became vice-president and secretary-treasurer of the corporation, respectively. Other members of the board of directors were E. C. Stuart and M. E. Gillet. On December 15, Mountain Lake Corporation purchased key pieces of the development from the Lake Wales Land Company. These parcels covered 570 acres and included Iron Mountain and land on Buck Lake. Between 1914 and 1918, the corporation acquired additional acreage, bringing its total holdings to 2,800 acres. The initial Mountain Lake development included the Colony House (NR 1991), an eighteen-hole golf course, private residences, and several hundred acres of citrus groves. The capital investment in the construction of Mountain Lake was, for its time, large. During the 1920s it added an additional 700 acres, bringing its holdings to a total of approximately 3,500.

During the 1920s, the community experienced its most expansive period of growth. The Colony House continued receiving a steady stream of guests and forty-five homes were constructed at Mountain Lake during the decade. The continuing development of Mountain Lake, and the prosperity of the citrus industry may have insulated Lake Wales to some extent against the more dramatic effects of the Boom's collapse. The speculative bubble began to deflate in August, 1925 when the Florida East Coast Railway announced an embargo on freight shipment to South Florida. Rail lines and ports in the Miami and West Palm Beach

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area had become clogged with incoming building materials. Bankers and businessmen throughout the nation had begun to complain about transfers of money to Florida. Newspapers suggested fraud in land sales. Florida's governor and a score of representatives from the state's press held a "Truth About Florida" meeting in New York in an effort to counter disparaging publicity. Not much helped, however. Property values that in some locations had soared to exaggerated levels during the Boom's peak fell precipitously, bringing over-extended speculators down with them. Conditions worsened in 1926 and construction activity in most parts of the state shut down in 1927. The Great Depression descended upon Florida, three years in advance of the rest of the country.

The collapse of the Florida Land Boom and the onset of the Great Depression affected Mountain Lake much as it did the rest of the country. Between 1930 and 1934 only six residences were constructed there, four of them in 1930. No additional residences were constructed until 1951. Mountain Lake remains a secluded, tranquil community of over 100 residences, approximately 40 of which have been added since 1934. The Olmsted plan, the historic residences, and the Colony House are little changed since originally constructed.

Landscape Architecture/Olmsted Brothers

Until the mid-nineteenth century, there was no precedent in the United States for a residential development as a completely planned, self-contained unit independent of its urban context. The first professionally planned residential developments were Llewelyn Park, New Jersey, designed by Andrew Jackson Davis in 1853, and Riverside, near Chicago, Illinois, by Frederick Law Olmsted, Calvert Vaux, and Company, in 1869. Olmsted conceptualized the planned residential development as a synthesis of rural and urban living, adapting undulating street patterns, generous lots, deep setbacks, and architectural design restrictions to the natural contours of the land, its prominent natural features, and its native flora.

During the first several decades of the twentieth century, planned residential developments throughout the United States typically shared these characteristics. Among the prototypes of the period were Shaker Heights, Ohio and the Kansas City Country Club District, Kansas City, Missouri. Regional distinctions among these developments resulted from the use of local materials

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and the adaptation of local history or myth for architectural models. Spanish revival architecture found favor in California, the Southwest, and Florida, while Greek Revival was popular in the South, and the Prairie School was common in the Midwest. The Tudor, Colonial Revival, and Bungalow styles were ubiquitous.

Fred Ruth envisioned Mountain Lake with many of these concepts in mind. He turned to Olmsted Brothers, the nation's foremost landscape architects to plan the development, and the Mountain Lake Estates Historic District reflects particularly the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

In 1895, following his graduation from Harvard, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. joined his father's firm of Olmsted and Eliot, in which his half brother, John Charles Olmsted was also employed. In 1898, following the death of Charles Eliot and their father's retirement, Frederick Law, Jr. and John Charles established the firm of Olmsted Brothers. Olmsted Brothers operated from 1898 until 1961. During the early twentieth century Olmsted Brothers was by far the largest landscape architecture firm in the United States. In 1917, during the early stages of the Mountain Lake development, the firm employed a total of forty-seven individuals in addition to four principals. Commissions for the firm reached their peak during the 1920s. Their home office, now a National Historic Landmark, was continuously located at Brookline, Massachusetts during these years. They also operated branch offices at Fort Tryon Park, New York; Palos Verdes, California; Baltimore, Maryland; and Lake Wales, Florida. The Lake Wales office exclusively served the Mountain Lake Corporation and individual clients at Mountain Lake. It was located at the Dixie Walesbuilt Hotel in downtown Lake Wales and was headed by Olmsted associate William Lyman Phillips.

John Charles and Frederick Law, Jr. formed a balanced partnership. John Charles, nearly twenty years older than his half-brother, was widely regarded at the turn of the century as among the most experienced and skilled landscape architects in the United States. When he and Frederick, Jr. became charter members of the American Society of Landscape Architects in January, 1899, John Charles was chosen as the Society's first president. A skilled designer, he was also a highly competent business administrator. During the early twentieth century, he headed the firm and administered more than 3500 commissions. His

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business ability resulted in the continuity and unparalleled growth of the firm.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., by far the more outgoing of the brothers, was generally responsible for meeting clients and developing the overall design concepts of a project. He would then turn the project over to a staff member who would complete the remaining details of the design and supervise its execution. He developed Olmsted Brothers highly sophisticated filing system, and was responsible for hiring and training the firm's staff of talented people and nurturing their development. His skill at staff development and belief in delegating authority led to greater freedom for himself. Relieved of day-to-day administrative responsibility, he was able to seek out work in new fields, particularly urban planning; create societies, commissions, and conferences; and promote academic instruction.

Among Olmsted Brothers' more important commissions were the Biltmore Arboretum, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, the Boston and Baltimore Park systems, and the Acadian National Park System. During the 1920s they were responsible for the plan of Palos Verdes, California, which, along with Beverly Hills, was the prototypical up-scale subdivision of Southern California.

Architecture

Frederick Law Olmsted's plan for Mountain Lake adapted the concept of country estates to the natural setting of Iron Mountain and Lake Buck. The country estate is a well-defined landscape type characterized by a spacious setting and a synthesis of interior, architectural and landscape design. In the early twentieth century, country estates in the United States were frequently modeled on French Renaissance chateaus, Italian villas, and English country homes. A wide variety of architectural styles, revived and adapted to modern materials and lifestyles, became popular, but in Florida, the Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles quickly became predominant.

Mediterranean Revival buildings in Florida display considerable Spanish influence. A popular building style in Florida during the 1920s, it remained so after the collapse of the land boom even into the 1930s. It was adapted for a variety of building types, ranging from grandiose tourist hotels to two-bedroom residences. The popularity of the style became widespread, and many commercial and residential buildings

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underwent renovation in the 1920s to reflect the Mediterranean influence. 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.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCEDevelopment of the Lake Wales Area

Mountain Lake was distinct from many other developments of the time in part because of its rural setting. The developers controlled land use, density of development, and setback through restrictive covenants, in sharp contrast with the often speculative, less rigidly controlled development of other Florida communities dating from the same and earlier periods. Its plan, landscape features, and restrictive covenants were designed to supplement rather than supplant the natural environment. It appealed, largely for this reason, to residents more interested in the peace and quiet of a rural retreat than in the social and recreational attractions of the more popular resorts.

Most of the visitors and permanent residents came from New York and other areas of the Northeast. All were wealthy; most were prominent business executives. Among these were E. W. Rice, Jr., the president of General Electric; Frank S. Washburn, president of American Cyanamide and the Goodman Manufacturing Company, largest manufacturer of mining equipment in the United States; James Mitchell, President of Alabama Power and Light Company, Ltd.; and Elmer A. Sperry, President of Sperry Gyroscope Company, New York. Other prominent residents from the world of business and finance included E. T. Bedford, a pioneer in the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, who served as president of Mountain Lake Corporation beginning in 1919; Alexander Glass, Chairman of the Board of the Wheeling, West Virginia Steel Corporation; Percy Ballantine, heir to the Ballantine Brewery; Guy P. Gannett, New England media mogul; George M. Laughlin, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation; and Roger W. Babson, economist and pioneer technical analyst of the New York stock market. Babson gained national attention by correctly predicting the collapse of the stock market in 1929.

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Two residents prominent in other fields were Paul Starrett and Edward W. Bok. Starrett was one of the nation's leading builders. Having practiced architecture with the Chicago firm of Burnham and Root, he turned to the construction business in 1905. The long list of his major construction projects includes the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in New York, the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and the Empire State Building. Edward Bok was most widely known and influential as publisher of the Ladies Home Journal and author of several autobiographical books that chronicled his highly successful career. After building his Mountain Lake home in 1922, he acquired a 25 acre tract atop nearby Iron Mountain, where he created the Mountain Lake Sactuary and built an imposing carillon tower. A native of the Netherlands, he donated this property, now known as the Bok Tower Gardens (NR 1972, NHL) to the American people in appreciation for the opportunities that he had enjoyed in this country.

Bok's gardens, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and the magnificent Singing Tower designed by Milton B. Medary immediately became one of Florida's major tourist attractions. Other Mountain Lake residents who made notable contributions to the development of the Lake Wales area include August Hecksher, who developed extensive citrus groves and acquired a major interest in local banking, and Roger Babson, who, with his wife, Grace, established Webber College in nearby Babson Park, Florida.

While the Mountain Lake colony has maintained its seclusion and privacy, its residents have been major contributors to the economic, social and cultural development of the area.

Landscape Architecture

As an example of landscape architecture, Mountain Lake reflects the genius of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., in two ways. One is in the validity of his original conceptual design, which has remained unaltered and was, in fact, reaffirmed by the reassessment conducted in 1952. The other is his ability to recognize and nurture, or at least utilize, the talents of others. In this case, his design concepts were converted to detailed plans by William Lyman Phillips, manager of Olmsted Brothers' Lake Wales office, and Seth J. Raynor, who designed Mountain Lake's golf course.

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Phillips was a graduate of Harvard University, where he received his Master of Arts degree in landscape architecture in 1910. In addition to overseeing the implementation of Olmsted's overall development design, he prepared landscape designs for a number of individual estates in Mountain Lake, including the C. Austin Buck estate, El Ritiro (NR 1985). In addition, he prepared the detailed plans for the Mountain Lake Sanctuary designed by Olmsted for Edward Bok.

Seth J. Raynor graduated from Princeton University with an engineering degree and established a successful surveying and landscaping business in Southhampton, New York. He became involved in golf course design in 1908, and by 1915 had gained national prominence in this field. Raynor and Charles B. Macdonald formed a partnership in 1915. They designed or remodeled over 100 courses over the next 10 years, with all but a dozen being attributed to Raynor. In addition to the Mountain Lake Course, Raynor designed the Everglades Country Club in Palm Beach, and the nationally prominent courses he was associated with were Pebble Beach, California, which he designed in 1919, and the Augusta Country Club, which he remodeled in 1926.

The landscape plans of individual estates were integrated with the overall plan of Mountain Lake through the participation of Olmsted and other landscape architects. More than twenty landscape plans can be documented to Olmsted or former Olmsted associates Bremer W. Pond or William Lyman Phillips. The landscape plans largely embodied features associated with estate designs dating from the 1880s through the 1920s. They were heavily influenced by the Ecole des Beaux Arts in which balance, symmetry and spatial hierarchies were applied to garden and landscape. They included features such as alleys or winding drives which conform to the natural contours of the land.

The basic consideration in estate designs was the individuality of the site. This principal resulted in lots of various shapes and sizes, ranging from two to twelve acres, based on the topography of the lot and surrounding block. The variety of lot size and shape avoided monotony, while the standards adopted by Olmsted and maintained by the Mountain Lake Corporation integrated individual lots with the development as a whole.

The landscape designs were further integrated through close cooperation between the landscape and building architects.

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Outdoor formal terraces and patios gave way to loggias and glazed and screened porches which formed transitional zones between interiors and exteriors of residences. Residences were sited, oriented, and designed to take maximum advantage of the attractive vistas envisioned by Olmsted in his overall plan for Mountain Lake. They were also subordinated to the landscape. They were intended to add to the interest of the landscape while never dominating it. They were horizontally oriented so as not to mar views from other residences. Service areas were inconspicuously located and screened. The desire for unobtrusiveness was even applied to color as white walls and light-toned roofs were restricted.

Architecture

Architecturally, the Mountain Lake Estates Historic District presents an unusual exhibit of mainly Mediterranean Revival residential designs as interpreted by several prominent architects from various parts of the country. While elements of other revival styles are found, and even predominate in a few individual buildings, very few of the contributing buildings are completely devoid of Mediterranean Revival features. The precedent was set by Olmsted himself, who, in addition to the overall planning of Mountain Lake, designed the Colony House, the hotel/clubhouse which served as an architectural model for subsequent buildings in the community. Olmsted was credited with the design of four of the early residences at Mountain Lake. Olmsted's designs were heavily influenced by the architecture of the Caribbean and Bermuda, whose climate was quite similar to that of Florida. His draftsman, Charles R. Wait, who designed subsequent additions to the Colony House, attributed the design of the building, in addition to the influences of Bermuda and the Caribbean, to models drawn from Spain and Italy. He summarized the building's style as being "Spanish Florida" which today is best described as Mediterranean Revival. In 1917, the Olmsted Brothers decided to devote their practice exclusively to landscape architecture, ending their design of buildings. Thus, the Colony House and the four residences were among the last of the firm's architectural designs.

Born at Wakefield, Massachusetts, Wait, like Olmsted, studied at Harvard where he received a Master of Science degree in 1905. Initially employed as a draftsman with Olmsted Brothers, he later became their in-house architect. After the firm decided to concentrate on landscape design, Wait resigned

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but continued to work with Olmsted Brothers as an associate. Wait became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1919. In 1920, he formed a partnership with Ernst May Parsons, a fellow Harvard graduate, and established the firm of Parsons and Wait in Boston, Massachusetts. But his influence on the development of Mountain Lake continued unabated throughout the 1920s, as he designed at least twenty-four additional residences, including El Retiro and the Edward Bok residence.

Franklin W. Abbott is known to have designed twelve Mountain Lake residences. He is believed to have worked from an office in New York City, but no additional information on his career is presently available.

Hardin de Valson Pratt, III designed six of the homes in Mountain Lake. A 1914 Harvard graduate, Pratt practiced in Boston, Massachusetts and Westerly, Rhode Island, but worked extensively in Florida in the 1920s.

Other architects whose work is represented at Mountain Lake include Frank B. Meade and James M. Hamilton of Cleveland, Ohio; and Marion Syms Wyeth, noted for his work in Palm Beach, Florida.

The historic residences in Mountain Lake also represent a high level of quality of construction. For the first construction in the development, Fred Ruth selected the firm of Aulick and Miller, of Tampa, Florida. One of the largest and best known contractors in the South, Aulick and Miller is credited with the construction of seventeen S. H. Kress stores through out the country, as well as many of the major office, commercial and public buildings in Florida cities. In addition to the Colony Club, the firm constructed a number of residences in Mountain Lake, including El Retiro.

CONCLUSION

There are 68 contributing resources (including 2 previously listed) in the district, all of which were constructed during or before 1934. Buildings that contribute add to the sense of time, place, and historical development of the district through their location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. There are an additional 36 buildings that are considered non-contributing. Non-contributing buildings post-date the period of significance and have no exceptional significance under the National Register criteria. No buildings

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have lost their integrity because of alterations, and only two of the original buildings have been lost (one due to fire and the other because of demolition). Even many of the non-contributing buildings embody the design, materials, setting, and other features of earlier buildings despite their more recent date of construction. Non-historic buildings are made less conspicuous by the large lot size of the estates, the maturity of shrubs and trees, and the subordination of architecture in general to the overall plan of the community. They do not detract from the overall integrity of the district.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Mountain Lake Estates Historic District are shown as a heavy black line on the accompanying map titled MOUNTAIN LAKE ESTATES HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries encompass the residential and recreational properties that reflect the development of Mountain Lake Estates during the historic period 1915 to 1934.

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Items 1 through 5 are the same for all photos.

1. Mountain Lake Estates Historic District
2. Mountain Lake, Polk County, Florida
3. Paul Weeaver
4. June, 1992
5. Historic Property Associates, St. Augustine, Florida
6. Building 29, Edward W. Bok estate, entrance drive, camera facing South
7. Photo 1 of 32

6. Mountain Lake Colony Club, North elevation, camera facing South
7. Photo 2 of 32

6. Building 54, South elevation, camera facing North
7. Photo 3 of 32

6. Building 3, South elevation, camera facing North
7. Photo 4 of 32

6. Building 1, South elevation, camera facing North
7. Photo 5 of 32

6. Building 31, East elevation, camera facing West
7. Photo 6 of 32

6. Building 12, North elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 7 of 32

6. Building 17, South elevation, camera facing North
7. Photo 8 of 32

6. Building 27, North elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 9 of 32

6. Building 24, West elevation, camera facing Southeast
7. Photo 10 of 32

6. Building 60, South elevation, camera facing North
7. Photo 11 of 32

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6. Building 61, South elevation, camera facing Northwest
7. Photo 12 of 32

6. Building 67, East elevation, camera facing Southwest
7. Photo 13 of 32

6. Building 66, West elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 14 of 32

6. Building 63, West elevation, camera facing Northeast
7. Photo 15 of 32

6. Building 59, West elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 16 of 32

6. Building 58, South elevation, camera facing Northeast
7. Photo 17 of 32

6. Building 45, East elevation, camera facing West
7. Photo 18 of 32

6. Building 43, East elevation, camera facing West
7. Photo 19 of 32

6. Building 51, West elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 20 of 32

6. Building 35, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. estate,
South elevation, camera facing Northwest
7. Photo 21 of 32

6. Building 18, North elevation, camera facing Southeast
7. Photo 22 of 32

6. Building 21, North elevation, camera facing Southeast
7. Photo 23 of 32

6. Building 40, West elevation, camera facing East
7. Photo 24 of 32

6. Building 8, East elevation, camera facing West
7. Photo 25 of 32

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List

- 6. Building 25, East elevation, camera facing Northwest
- 7. Photo 26 of 32

- 6. Mountain Lake Golf Course, first fairway, camera facing North
- 7. Photo 27 of 32

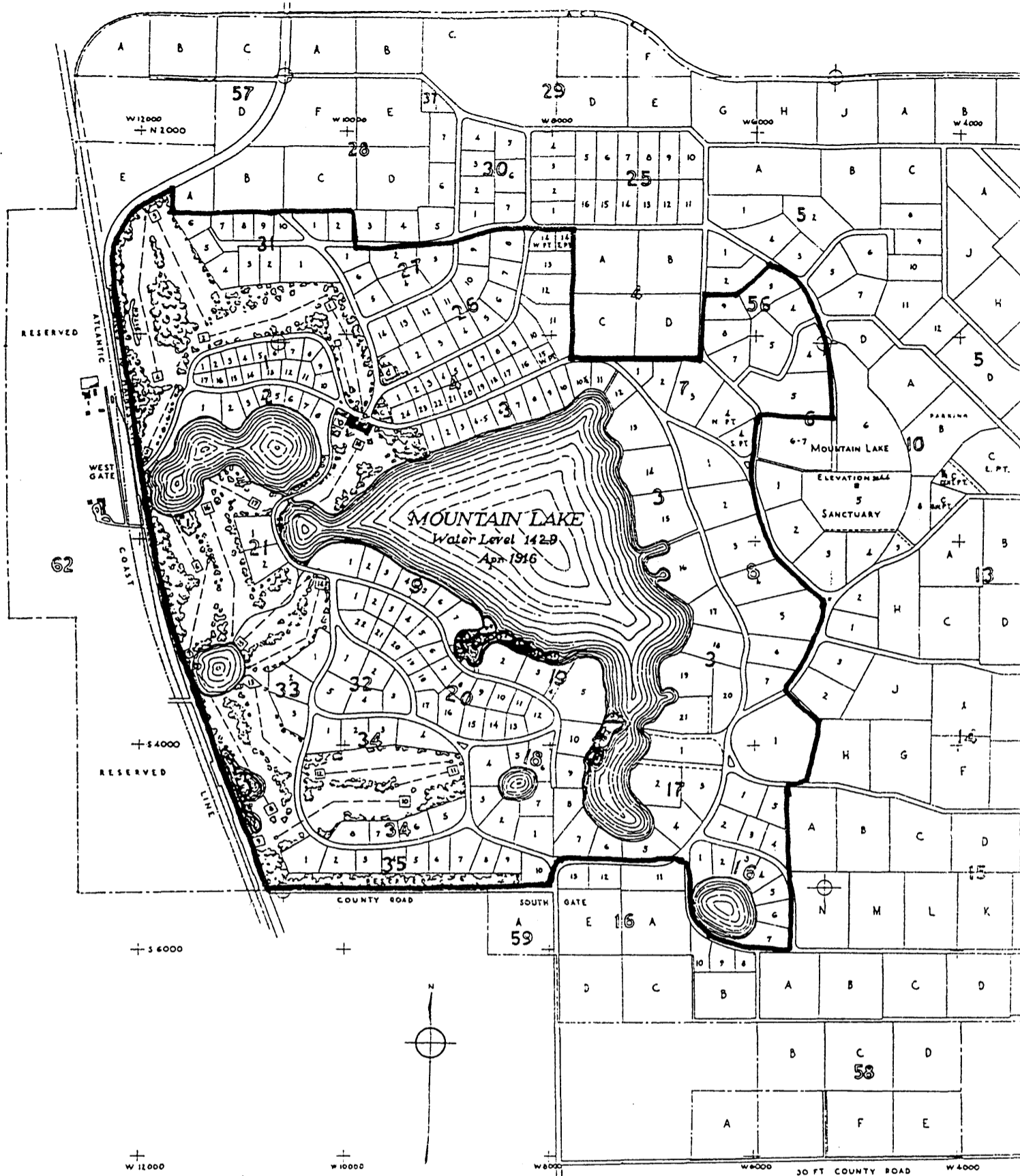
- 6. Building 19 (non-contributing), North elevation, camera facing Southeast
- 7. Photo 28 of 32

- 6. Building 74 (non-contributing), West elevation, camera facing East
- 7. Photo 29 of 32

- 6. Building 76 (non-contributing), West elevation, camera facing East
- 7. Photo 30 of 32

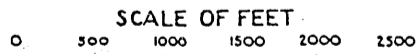
- 6. Building 86 (non-contributing), North elevation, camera facing Southeast
- 7. Photo 31 of 32

- 6. West entrance gatehouse
- 7. Photo 32 of 32



- LEGEND**
- ⊕ SECTION CORNERS
 - ⊙ COORDINATE CORNERS
 - 1- LARGE NUMBERS DESIGNATE BLOCKS
 - 1- SMALL NUMBERS DESIGNATE HOME SITES
 - A- LETTERS DESIGNATE GROVES
 - a- COLONY HOUSE
 - b- SWIMMING POOL AREA
 - c- BOWLING GREEN
 - d- TENNIS COURTS
 - CONTOUR INTERVALS TEN FEET
 - ELEVATIONS REFERRED TO SEA LEVEL, ATLANTIC COAST LINE BASE.

PRELIMINARY PLAN
MOUNTAIN LAKE
 POLK COUNTY · FLORIDA



PREPARED FOR THE MOUNTAIN LAKE CORPORATION
 BY OLMSTED BROTHERS · LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
 BROOKLINE · MASS · DECEMBER · 1916

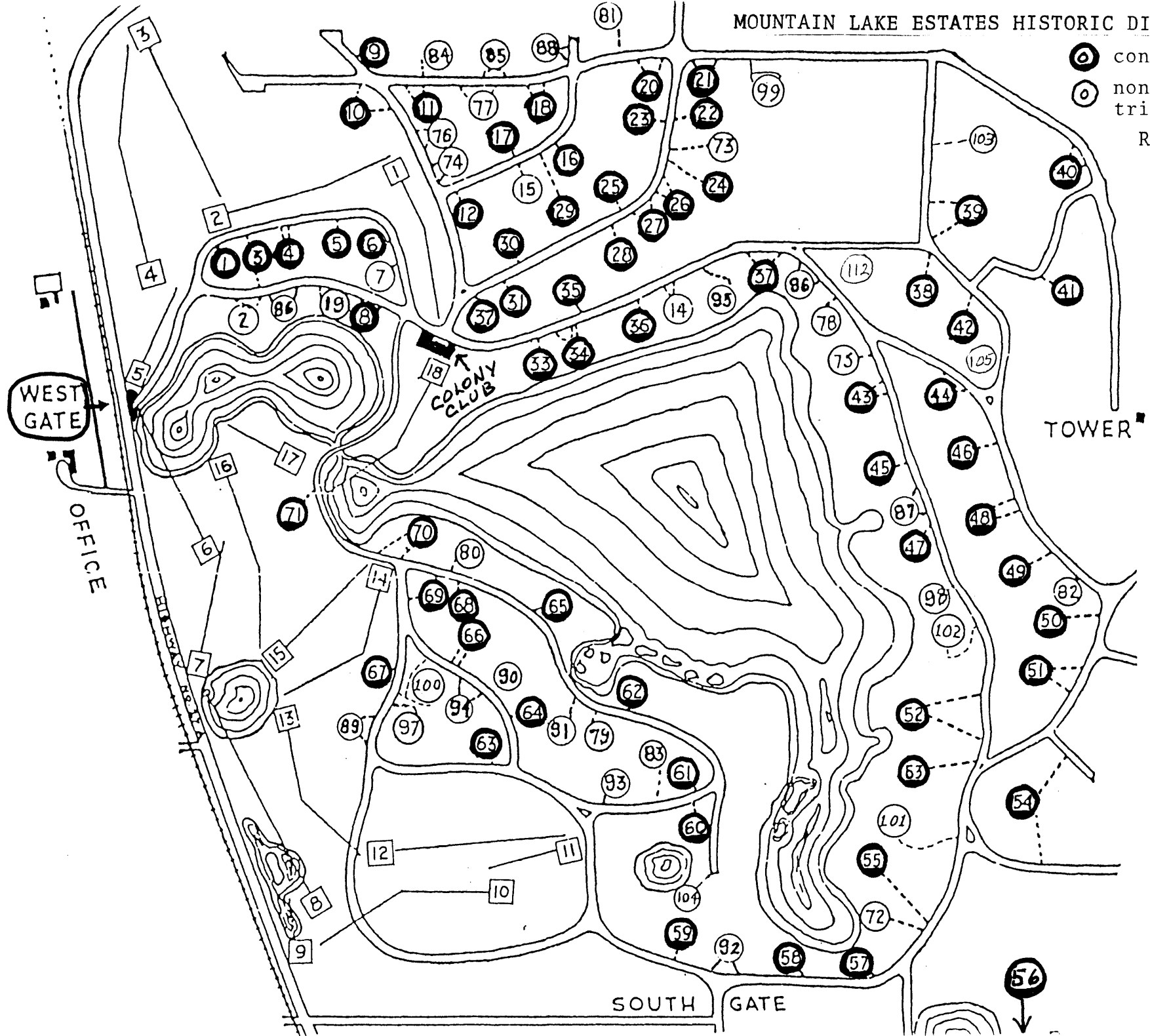
REVISED TO AUG-1958

MOUNTAIN LAKE ESTATES HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP

The District boundary is represented by the heavy black line.

MOUNTAIN LAKE ESTATES HISTORIC DISTRICT

- ⊙ contributing
 - non-contributing
- RESOURCES



MOUNTAIN LAKE ESTATES HISTORIC DISTRICT

Map of Photo Locations

