NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 10-90	RECEIVED 2280	OMB No. 1024-0018
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	DEC 1 9 2001	
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM	NAT. REGISTER OF HISJORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	1532
This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16 the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property bein classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories an items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word	A). Complete each item by marking "x" ng documented, enter "N/A" for "not app nd subcategories from the instructions.	in the appropriate box or by entering blicable." For functions, architectural Place additional entries and narrative
1. Name of Property	······································	
historic name AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT		
other names/site number		
2. Location		·····
street & number various	N/A	□ not for publication
state <u>Florida</u> code <u>FL</u> county <u>N</u>	assaucode089	zip code <u>32034</u>
3. State/Federal Agency Certification		<u> </u>
□ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation stand         Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements         ☑ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend         □ nationally □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         Signature of certifying official/Title         □ national requirements         □ nationally □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         □ statewide ⊠ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for add         □ statewide ⊡ statewide ⊡ bate         □ statewide ⊡ statewide ⊡ statewide ⊡ statewide         □ national requirements         □ statewide ⊡ statewide ⊡ statewide         □ national requirements         □ statewide ⊡ statewide ⊡ statewide         □ national requirements         □ national req	s set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opin that this property be considered significa ditional comments.)	ion, the property ant
State or Federal agency and bureau	······	—
4. National Park Service Certification	ure of the keeper	Date of Action
<ul> <li>entered in the National Register</li> <li>See continuation sheet</li> <li>determined eligible for the</li> </ul>	m A Dal	L. 28-02
National Register  See continuation sheet.  determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.		
removed from the National     Register.		
□ other, (explain)		

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Nassau Co., FL County and State

5. Classification				· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)					
⊠ private □ public-local	<ul><li>☐ buildings</li><li>☑ district</li></ul>	Contributing	Noncontribut	ling			
<ul> <li>public-State</li> <li>public-Federal</li> </ul>	☐ site ☐ structure	67	35	buildings			
	object	0	0	sites			
		1	0	structures			
		0	0	objects			
		68	35	total			
Name of related multiple property listings (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)		Number of contrib listed in the Natio	outing resources p onal Register	previously			
"N	A"	3					
6. Function or Use							
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from instr	ructions)				
DOMESTIC: single dwelling	·	DOMESTIC: single dwo	elling				
<b>RECREATION &amp; CULTURE: ou</b>	tdoor recreation	RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation					
COMMERCIAL		COMMERCIAL					
7. Description				······································			
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		<b>Materials</b> (Enter categories from	n instructions)				
OTHER: frame and masonry vern	acular	foundation CONC	CRETE				
LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENT	TURY REVIVALS:	walls CONCRETE					
Colonial Revival		WOOD					
		roof <u>ASPHALT</u>					
		other					

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

### 8. Statement of Significance

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

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

#### **Criteria Considerations**

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

#### Property is:

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

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas	of Sig	nifica	000
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(Friter c	ategorie	s from in	structions)
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ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

#### **Period of Significance**

1935-1965

#### **Significant Dates**

1935

1964

### Significant Person

NA

#### **Cultural Affiliation**

NA

### Architect/Builder

Patterson, George/Boyer & Boyer, architects

Rivers, Willie S./Brookins, Sanford/Johnson, Frank, builders

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): State Historic Preservation Office preliminary determination of individual listing (36

- CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National
  - Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

- Primary location of additional data:

  - Other State Agency
  - Federal agency Local government

  - C Other

#### Name of Repository

#

Nassau Co., FL County and State American Beach Historic District Name of Property Nassau Co., FL County and State

 4
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See continuation sheet

10. Geog	raphical	Data
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Acreage of Property

approx. 40 acres

### **UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1 1 7	4	5	6	9	4	0	3	3	8	2	5	4	0	
Zone	Eas	sting	g					N	orth	ing				
2 1 7	4	5	7	4	2	0	3	3	8	2	5	4	0	

#### **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 Joel McEachin/Robert O. Jones, Historic Sites Sp	ecialist
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation	date December 2001
street & number 500 S. Bronough St.	telephone <u>850-245-6333</u>
city or town Tallahassee	state FL zip code 32399

#### 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 various	
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 amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

### Section number 7 Page 1 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA

### **SUMMARY**

The historic architectural resources of the American Beach Historic District are identified as being of significance from 1935, when American Beach was established as a resort community by the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Insurance Agency of Jacksonville, Florida, through 1965, the first year following the passage of the Civil Rights Act. The end of state mandated segregation of public and private facilities led to the decline of American Beach as patrons were free to go elsewhere for recreation. The buildings constructed by 1965 were determined by the use of the Nassau County Property Appraiser's records or through oral sources. The resources are predominately single-family homes, of which 71 contribute to the historic district. The great majority of these are vacation homes that exhibit no formal architectural style but are identified as frame or masonry vernacular construction. The property comprising American Beach was bought, platted, and sold by the Pension Bureau, and of the original historic community, 116 acres remain, and of that, approximately 40 are nominated to the National Register. The following section provides an overview of the current and original appearance of the built environment of American Beach in relation to its unique historical development.

### **SETTING**

American Beach is an unincorporated community located on the south end of Amelia Island in Nassau County, Florida. The Amelia River separates a coastal barrier island, Amelia Island, which is approximately thirteen miles long and two miles wide at its widest point, from the mainland on the north, the Nassau River on the south, and the Intra-coastal Waterway on the west. The west side of Amelia Island is composed of extensive salt marshes along the Amelia and Nassau Rivers, while the east side along the Atlantic Ocean is composed of coastal dunes, with one of the largest dunes being located just south of Lewis Street in American Beach. The dune vegetation, of sea oats and grasses, progressively gives way to a thick canopy of oaks, pines, sable palms, and saw palmetto.

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Physically isolated from Big Talbot Island in Duval County until the construction of State Road A1A in 1949, the south end of Amelia Island stayed for the most part undeveloped and unpopulated for most of its history. This situation changed significantly in the 1970's with the development of up-scale resort communities that eventually surrounded American Beach. Except for the development of the small community of Franklintown immediately after the Civil War, the first significant development on the south end of Amelia Island was American Beach in 1935. The 225 acres that originally constituted American Beach has since been reduced to the platted 116 acres. Platted in 1936 and 1941, American Beach is composed of approximately twenty-eight blocks, mostly containing either eight or sixteen lots, for a total of 323 lots. Of the total number of lots, 122 are occupied by buildings, two-thirds of which were constructed by 1965. The remaining lots are vacant. Of these blocks and lots, 23 blocks and 204 lots are within the National Register district.

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **CONTINUATION SHEET**

### Section number 7 Page 2 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA

The platted community provided for roads arranged in a rectangular grid. Lewis Street is the main access road that runs east/west from A1A, and stops at the beach. The street furthest east is Gregg Street that runs north/south and parallels the ocean. Houses are built east of the street adjacent to the beach. Gregg Street intersects with, and crosses Lewis Street. The next street west of Gregg Street is the north/south Ocean Boulevard which also crosses Lewis Street. The street from the beach access to these two intersections formed the historic social hub of American Beach (Photo #1). The land this far inland is sandy, relatively flat, with little vegetation (Photo #2). West of Ocean Boulevard the land rises. Waldron Street runs north/south along a ridge, and residents have a view of the ocean to the east (Photo #3). South of Lewis Street, this land rise takes the form of a large sand dune (Photo #4). Further west and south of Lewis Street the unplatted land has been sold to a separate development. West of Waldron Street the land again is flat, with dense vegetation and an oak tree cover. Off of east/west Lewis Street (Photo #5) and Julia Streets, the other streets run on a north/south rectangular grid.

Most of buildings in American Beach are single family detached houses with the remainder being multifamily structures, commercial buildings, several mobile homes, and one motel. Of the 71 contributing properties in the American Beach Historic District, thirteen were constructed for commercial use including a hotel, apartments, and restaurants. Most of the two-story houses are concentrated along Gregg Street and Ocean Boulevard near the ocean, with single-story, usually smaller, houses located in the wooded lots west of the beach. The extent of demolition from Hurricane Dora in 1964 has not been determined since neither building permits nor Sanborn Maps exist to reveal the number or location of buildings constructed before that time. However, according to records of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, local research and oral tradition, around thirty structures in American Beach have been demolished over the years.

The district includes contributing buildings constructed less then fifty-years ago. Many of the buildings exemplify the use of materials such as metal-frame windows, and exterior siding of synthetic materials not typically associated with the historic period ending in the immediate post war period. Many of buildings documented as being constructed in the historic period tended to have some degree of alteration often in response to the corrosive beach environment in an effort to reduce maintenance expenses. Many of the alterations include the use of artificial sidings such as asbestos tiles, vinyl, aluminum or stucco finish, as well as the replacement of original wooden double hung or casement windows with aluminum or vinyl clad windows or jalousie windows.

The buildings in American Beach with few exceptions reflect no particular architectural style and are defined by their construction materials. Nationally, by the 1930's, residential architecture tended to be simpler in style, design, and size compared to the earlier Victorian and revival styles. With few remaining buildings identified as being constructed in the 1930's, most of the houses reflected to some degree the recent trends in residential architecture, such as the Modern and Ranch Styles. In addition, most of the buildings documented in American Beach were originally built as vacation homes and not as primary residences; therefore, they are modest in size, construction materials, and design.

All but two of the contributing resources in the district have frame or masonry vernacular construction. Some buildings include Minimal Traditional, Ranch, and Modern elements. The number of frame to masonry

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 3

### AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA

buildings is roughly even. The wood frame houses tend to be constructed on raised pier foundations, and the masonry buildings are constructed on continuous foundations or concrete slabs. Masonry elements in these houses, including piers, foundations, exterior walls, and chimneys, tend to be concrete block rather than brick. Most of houses were constructed with front or side porches or small front stoops, but many of them have been enclosed for additional living space. Over half of the buildings have front or side gable roofs, compared to hipped roofs. Gently sloping or flat roofs are few. By far, most windows are a variation of a double hung sash, usually with a metallic aluminum or bronze finish. Other types of sashes include wooden and aluminum casement and crank out windows, jalousie windows, as well as fixed, plate glass windows and sliding glass doors. A few original, wooden double hung sash style windows were identified, but most structures appear to have replacement windows of a contemporary style and finish. In addition to window replacement, numerous buildings have evidence of the use of artificial sidings made of asbestos, aluminum, or vinyl, as well as the covering of the exterior in vertical wood paneling or a stucco finish.

Constructed in 1938, the Hippard House at 5406 Ervin Street (NR 2001), now known as "Miss Martha's Hideaway," reflects the Colonial Revival Style, popular between 1880 - 1955 (Photo #6). Constructed of hand made concrete blocks formed on the site with sand and shells, the house has a symmetrical facade balanced with a central entryway and windows. Other Colonial Revival features in the house include window pairs with multi-pane glazing, accentuated front door covered by a decorative crown supported by slender columns, and a side facing gable roof.

Typical examples of frame construction include 5479 Waldron Street, built in 1940 (Photo #7). It is built on block piers with a side gable roof, front gable porch extension. The metal roof has exposed rafter ends, and the exterior has been surfaced with asbestos shingles. Several houses are built on pilings such as 5424 Ocean Boulevard, built in 1955 (Photo #8). Parking is beneath the house on a concrete slab. The roof is a gable on hip, and a screened porch faces the ocean. The exterior has horizontal siding. A Modern Style frame house is at 5406 Waldron Street, was built in 1965 (Photo #9). It is constructed on wooden pilings, natural wood exterior, and a broad western sloping roof over lapping a short eastern slope. The eastern roof slope shelters an open deck that spans the ocean front elevation. One frame building at 5461 James Street was constructed in 1930, but moved into the community during the historic period.

A typical masonry vernacular dwelling is the two-story apartment house at 1752 Lewis Street, built in 1959 (Photo #10). Built on a concrete slab, the block building has a side gently sloping roof and classical columns are used on porches. An unusual masonry vernacular home is at 5475 Gregg Street, built in 1949 (Photo #11). The two-story block building has a side gable roof above the main block, and two front gables above short extensions with the main entry stairs between them. The concrete stairs rise to the second story and go beneath an arch. A one-story concrete block house at 5443 Waldron Street has a minimal Ranch form, built in 1956 (Photo #12). It has a gently sloping roof, large picture windows, and ornamental medallions set into the eastern, main façade.

Typical of the commercial construction is the Lewis Motel at 5553 Gregg Street, constructed in 1950 (Photo #13). Built on a concrete slab, the one-story block building is in the shape of a wide "U." The rooms face the open courtyard and the ocean. The hip roof intersects at the corners, and is surfaced with composition

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 4 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA

shingles. The windows are filled with single hung wooden sash. In the southwest corner of the motel property is the district's only structure, a well. It is sheltered by a wooden enclosure. The well was drilled in the 1930s, and continues to serve the community's water needs.

Some of the builders have been identified as the owners of the property at the time of construction. These structures were probably the product of a skilled owner utilizing outside craftsmen. Contractors from Fernandina Beach and Jacksonville constructed other buildings. Fernandina Beach builder, Willie S. Rivers, constructed the houses at 5466 and 5472 Gregg Street for American Beach founder, A.L. Lewis. Rivers was also responsible for the construction of a pavilion and six cabins (no longer extant) constructed for the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Known as a boat builder, Rivers is also credited with the construction of the New Zion Baptist Church in Fernandina Beach. Two houses were identified as being built by Jacksonville contractor, Sanford A. Brookins (1882 - 1968). A native of Macon, Georgia, Brookins came to Jacksonville in 1904 where he served as a construction foreman for twelve years. Starting his own construction business. Brookins is credited with the construction of hundreds of homes and buildings in the Jacksonville area. In addition to constructing the 1949 house at 5475 Gregg Street, Brookins also built a family vacation home at 5485 Waldron Street in 1936, but it has been altered. Several builders and owners were identified as the architect or designer of the structure. Frank Johnson, a highly regarded builder, built the Hippard House at 5406 Ervin Street. Two houses in American Beach, 1823 Lewis Street (1955) and 1735 Julia Street (1965), have been attributed to Jacksonville architect, George Patterson, and the house at 5406 Waldron Street (1965) was designed by Boyer and Boyer, also from Jacksonville.

### Non-Contributing Resources

Non-contributing resources in the district include buildings that were built after 1965 or, if historic, are so altered that they no longer retain their historic character. An example of typical non-contributing resources is the duplex at 5430/5436 Ervin Street (Photo #14) that was built after 1965. A prime and unfortunate example of an altered historic building rendered non-contributing because of alteration is the house at 5466 Gregg Street (Photo #15). Built in 1935 for A.L. Lewis, this house was the first house constructed in American Beach. The original frame vernacular house, now resurfaced with stucco in response to the harsh coastal environment and with non-historic fenestration, no longer retains its historic character, and is, therefore, classified as non-contributing. A number of historic building at the west end of Lewis Street are excluded from the district because houses moved in from Franklintown in the 1970s separate them from the district. Among these excluded historic resources is the 1940s United Methodist Church building (Photo #16).

### **CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES LISTING**

(some resources have no posted addresses and are listed by lot number)

Address	Date	Story (1&2)/Material (masonry&frame)
1945 Burney Road	1963	2m

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number7 Page5	AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA	
5406 Ervin Street (NR 2001)(Hippard House)	1938 2m Colonial Revival	
5406-B Outbuilding	1938 1m	
5424 Ervin Street	1957 lm	
5461 Ervin Street	1948 2f	
5466 Ervin Street	1950 2f	
5473 Ervin Street	1955 1m	
5479 Ervin Street	1942 1f	
5491 Ervin Street	1959 1f	
5494 Ervin Street	1961 1f	
5431 Gregg Street	1939 2f	
5448 Gregg Street (NR 1998)(Ervin's Rest)	1938 2f	
5460 Gregg Street	1938 lm	
5472 Gregg Street	1938 2f	
5475 Gregg Street	1949 2m	
5487 Gregg Street (Reynold's Sandwich Shop)	1959 lm	
5500 Gregg Street (Sweet Tooth)	1958 2m	
5512 Gregg Street (Evans Rendezvous)	1948 lm	
5524 Gregg Street (Tino's Restaurant)	1962 2m	
5528 Gregg Street	1965 1f	

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 6	AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA
5553 Gregg Street (Lewis Motel)	1950 1m
5553-B Motel office building	1950 lm
Community Water Well	1930s structure
5572 Gregg Street	1965 1m
5577 Gregg Street	1959 lm
5581 Gregg Street	1959 lm
5584 Gregg Street	1950 lf
5603 Gregg Street	1965 2m
5461 James Street (historic move)	1930 lf
5478 James Street	1961 lm
Lot 79, BK 10	1961 1f
5484 James Street	1959 1f
5494 James Street	1959 1f
1815 James Street	1960 2m
1714 Julia Street	1955 lf
1735 Julia Street	1964 1m
1748 Julia Street	1956 1f
1752 Julia Street	1948 1f
1757 Julia Street	1959 1f

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 7	AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA
5454 Lee Street (shares lot w/1748 Julia)	1960 2m
5472 Lee Street	1945 1f
5478 Lee Street (hotel)	1940 2f
5492 Lee Street (Simmons' Restaurant)	1958 1m
5466 Leonard Street	1958 1f
5479 Leonard Street	1955 lf
5491 Leonard Street	1945 lf
5495 Leonard Street	1962 1f
1720 Lewis Street	1961 lm
1723 Lewis Street	1960 lm
1731 Lewis Street	1955 lm
1735 Lewis Street	1953 2m
1736 Lewis Street	1955 2m
1752 Lewis Street	1959 lm
1809 Lewis Street (Ocean Vue)	1940 2m
1823 Lewis Street	1955 2m
1830 Lewis Street	1940 lf
1943 Lewis Street (El Patio)	1960 1m
5424 Waldron Street	1955 2f

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number	7	_ Page _	8			N BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, N BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA
5437 Ocean Boulevar	rd			1953	2m	
5455 Ocean Boulevar	rd			1950	2m	
5475 Ocean Boulevard (Cherry House)			1945	1f		
5484 Ocean Boulevar	rd (Netty'	s)		1956	1m	
5486 Ocean Boulevar	rd			1956	2m	
5436 Price Street				1963	1m	
Lot 72, Bk 9 Price S	Street			1963	1m	
5406 Waldron Street				1965	lf	Modern
5443 Waldron Street				1956	1m	
5449 Waldron Street				1941	lf	
5455 Waldron Street				1963	lf	
5473 Waldron Street				1946	2m	
5479 Waldron Street				1940	lf	

### **Non-Contributing Resources**

5430-36 Ervin St.	not historic
5442 Ervin Street - altered	1958 lb
5460 (5454) Ervin Street - altered	1954 1
Lot 12, Bk 12, Ervin Street – trailer	date unknown

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 9	AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA		
5484 Ervin Street - altered	1944		
5436 Gregg Street - altered	1955		
5443 Gregg Street - altered	1948		
Public access small board walk (west end of Julia	St.) not historic		
5454 Gregg Street - altered	1937		
5466 Gregg Street - altered	1935		
5531 Gregg St.	not historic		
5537 Gregg St.	not historic		
5552 Gregg St.	not historic		
5564 Gregg St.	not historic		
5569 Gregg St.	not historic		
5576 Gregg Street - altered	1963 2f		
5599 Gregg St.	not historic		
Lot 9, Bk 11, James Street – trailer	date unknown		
5479 James Street	not historic		
1808 Julia Street – altered	1944 1f		
5473 Lee Street	not historic		
Lot 5, Bk 16, Lee Street, trailer	date unknown		
Lot 6, Bk 16, Lee Street, trailer	date unknown		

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 10 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, AMERICAN BEACH, NASSAU CO., FLORIDA

5473 Leonard Street	not historic			
Lot 14, Bk 16, Leonard St. – trailer	date unknown			
1748 Lewis Street	not historic			
Lot 35, Bk 5, Ocean Blvd. – trailer	date unknown			
5431 Ocean Boulevard - altered	1945 2f			
5441 Ocean Blvd.	not historic			
5443 Ocean Boulevard - altered	1942			
5467 Ocean Blvd.	not historic			
Lot 48, Bk 6, Ocean Blvd./Lewis	not historic			
Lot 73, Bk 9, Price Street	not historic			
Lot 74, Bk 9, Price Street	not historic			
5485 Waldron Street - altered	1936 1f			

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 1

AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

### SUMMARY

American Beach is nominated to the National Register for significance at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Community Planning and Development. The Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company developed American Beach as an ocean front resort for African-Americans. The company acquired the property in three parcels between 1935 and 1946. In addition to providing an open pavilion for company outings, and guest houses for company officials and employees, the Pension Bureau under the leadership of Abraham Lincoln Lewis had the parcels subdivided into lots to be sold for vacation homes. Around 125 acres of the platted sections of American Beach were eventually developed. American Beach meets Criterion Consideration G as the largest of several segregated beaches that developed in Florida as a result of legislated segregation that lasted until the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the initial effects of which were felt in American Beach in 1965. The period of significance therefore, is 1935-1965. American Beach was the most prominent of the Florida segregated beaches; was the most extensively developed; and retains the greatest concentration of historic resources of Florida's Black beaches.

### **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

American Beach and Southern Amelia Island has a long record of human occupation. Occupied by Native Americans as early as 4000 to 2000 B.C. Amelia Island was inhabited by the Timucuan Indians at the time of European contact. Except for the activities of Franciscan missionaries, there was little attempt by the Spanish to settle the Island. However, with the establishment of British colonies in South Carolina and Georgia, Amelia Island became a buffer zone between these two colonial powers. With the end of the American slave trade in 1808, Amelia Island and the new Town of Fernandina entered a short but very active period in Florida's history, resulting in the island being under four separate flags in 1817 (Tebeau, 1971:111). After Florida became an American territory in 1821, most of the growth on Amelia Island was concentrated around Fernandina at the north end of the island. Except for isolated plantations and farms, the south end of the island was wooded and undeveloped, a situation that would not change until the twentieth century.

Although visited and explored by nineteenth century archaeologists, Clarence Moore and Augustus Mitchell, the first modern archaeological survey of Amelia Island was in the early 1950's by pioneer Florida Archaeologists, Ripley P. Bullen and John W. Griffin (Ripley, 1952:37). Recognizing Amelia Island as a cultural transitional zone between the native cultures of coastal Georgia and the St. Johns River basin, Ripley and Griffin also were the first to note the presence of Spanish pottery at what is known as the old Harrison Home Site which was later identified as the location of two Spanish missions, Santa Catalina de Guale and Santa Maria de Yamassee (Saunders, 1991:126). The Harrison property was adjacent to, and included a portion of American Beach.

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AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

### Franklintown

The south end of Amelia Island has been home to an African American community since 1862 when the Union forces occupied Amelia Island and freed slaves from adjacent plantations. With the end of the war, the Union Occupation forces issued special orders to set aside land for freedmen, particularly along the barrier islands south of Charleston, South Carolina. This small African American community in south Amelia Island, populated mostly by ex-slaves from the Samuel Harrison plantation, became known as Franklintown. The name originated from an ex-slave, Franklin E. Town, who attempted in 1872 to purchase property along the Belle River in Nassau County (Phelts, 1997:14). Town's relationship to the community is unclear. One of the early settlers in Franklintown was Gabriel Means, an ex-slave from the Harrison Plantation who enlisted in the U.S. Colored Infantry. During Reconstruction, Means paid \$340 for forty acres in Franklintown, where he constructed a two story house and established a farm. Gabriel Means later donated property in 1888 for the establishment of a church and school. According to oral tradition, members of the Harrison family donated two acres of land, which may have been the site of a slave cemetery, for use as burial grounds by members of the Franklintown community. Located on the west side of State Road AIA just south of American Beach, this small cemetery, which is surrounded by a modern subdivision, has been reduced to one half acre with approximately fifty-two graves marked. In addition to Gabriel Means, other early property owners of Franklintown included Stephen Drummond, Gilbert Hopkins and Robert Stewart, whose families over the years were involved in farming, fishing, and the raising of livestock (Martin, 1998:16).

The decline of Franklintown began in 1949, when the State of Florida built State Road AIA through the community, connecting Amelia Island with Duval County. The new highway forced the relocation of the Means house further to the north and the construction of a New Franklintown United Methodist Church. In the 1960's, most of the property owners sold their parcels to Union Carbide who intended to mine ilmenite, the raw material for titanium. The company moved the houses one half mile north to form a semi-circle around Hippler Road. It was called New Franklintown. When the Union Carbide Company failed to obtain the necessary permits for mining, it sold the property to the Amelia Island Company in 1972. In that same year, the Amelia Island Company, which developed the Amelia Island Plantation, purchased the New Franklintown properties, and relocated the 1949 church and one residence to Lewis Street in American Beach. After constructing a new concrete block church, the old wooden sanctuary served as a fellowship hall. Except for a name on maps, the existence of Franklintown today is reflected only in the cemetery, the church, and one residence that was moved to Lewis Street (Martin, 1998:15).

### Establishing American Beach

The most ambitious and intact of Florida's beach resorts developed by and for African Americans was American Beach located just north of Franklintown on the south end of Amelia Island. At one time encompassing 216 acres and one half mile of ocean front, American Beach was a real estate development of the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company under the leadership of A.L. Lewis (Neyland, 1970:53). Born in Madison, Florida, in 1865, Abraham Lincoln Lewis worked his way from water boy to foreman at a lumber-mill in East Jacksonville. Responding to the need for health and burial insurance, Lewis

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### Section number 8 Page 3 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

joined with six other founders to form the Afro-American Industrial and Benefit Association in 1901 at Bethel Baptist Institutional Church, in Jacksonville. In addition to Lewis, the founders included Reverend J. Milton Waldron, D.D. pastor of Bethel Baptist Institutional Church; Reverend E. J. Gregg, D.D.; E.W. Latson; A.W. Price; James Franklin Valentine; and Dr. Arthur Walls Smith. In addition to serving as treasurer of the company, Lewis also was the chief executive officer from 1919 to 1936 (Program – Anniversary, 1976:2).

After surviving Jacksonville's Great Fire of 1901, the company grew rapidly and soon had branch offices in Tampa, Fernandina Beach, and St. Augustine. By 1910, the Afro-American Industrial and Benefit Association constructed the first of its home offices at 105 East Union Street in Jacksonville. The company expanded its service to the community by establishing a savings department, pension bureau, as well as investment department in 1936. In 1937 with assets in excess of one million dollars, the name of the company was changed to the Afro-American Life Insurance Company (Program - Anniversary, 1976:3). It was at that time, Florida's only million dollar black business. The company expanded into other Florida cities, as well as into Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas. By 1956 when the new headquarters was constructed, the company had assets of eight million dollars. Elected president in 1919, A.L. Lewis directed the company until his death in 1947. At that time, Lewis owned more property and paid more property tax than any other black citizen in Florida. Lewis was also very active in numerous civic and social organizations such as the Masons and Odd-Fellows. Working with Booker T. Washington, he helped found the Negro Business League, as well as the National Negro Insurance Association. Long time member of Mount Olive A.M.E. Church, Lewis served as Sunday school superintendent for fifty-four years. He was also involved in the establishment of Lincoln Golf and Country Club in Jacksonville, and served as a trustee and treasurer of Edward Waters College (Neyland, 1970:58). A.L. Lewis and the Pension Bureau provided additional burial options for Jacksonville's African American community with the establishment of Memorial Cemetery, Sunset Memorial Cemetery, and Pinehurst Cemetery between 1911 and the 1920's.

### **Other Segregated Beaches**

Before the development of American Beach in 1935, segregation limited the opportunities for African Americans to use Florida's extensive beaches. In 1884 with the establishment of Pablo Beach (currently named Jacksonville Beach), which was connected to Jacksonville by the Jacksonville and Atlantic Railroad, the south end of the beach was open to African Americans for only one day of the week. On Mondays, the railroad carried African American beach goers for a one day excursion to the Coney Island Pavilion (Phelts, 1997:1). In 1899, Henry Flagler purchased the Jacksonville & Atlantic Railway, and by 1900 had extended it to Mayport to provide a direct port for importing coal. Beach property just south of Mayport was sold by Flagler for the establishment of a beach resort for the Company's African American workers. Called Manhattan Beach, the resort, which was a forty-five mile train trip from Jacksonville, was a popular destination for church excursions (Davis, 1925:349). With the end of rail service to Mayport in 1932, African Americans still went by car and bus to enjoy the pavilion and amusement park at Manhattan Beach, but in fewer numbers. Manhattan Beach ceased to exist with the purchase of most of the property by the United States Government for the construction of the Mayport Naval Base during World War II. In St. Augustine, African American real estate broker, grocer,

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and civic leader, Frank B. Butler purchased 78 acres of beach property on Anastasia Island from Edgar Pomar. Although many lots were sold and homes built, most of the property owners in Butler Beach sold their parcels to the State of Florida in 1958 for the development of a state park (Phelts, 1997:9). Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of Bethune-Cookman College, was so impressed with American Beach after visits at the Ocean Vu Inn, that she opened a beach for African Americans at Daytona Beach known as Bethune Beach. Founded in 1940, it had one large hotel, the Welricha Motel (Phelts, 1997: 56).

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

During its history Franklintown was an early beach destination for African Americans. In addition to other local Methodist churches taking summer outings to the area as guests of the Franklintown United Methodist Church, the Stewart family had constructed a pavilion on the beach for the use and enjoyment of local African American families and groups. Stewart's pavilion was the site of numerous company picnics sponsored by the Afro-American Life Insurance Company in Jacksonville (Phelts, 1997:30). The company's use of Franklintown for beach outings may have been through the influence of Earth M. M. White, first secretary of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, whose mother, Clara White, was born on the Harrison plantation. It was during these outings to Franklintown in the 1920s, that Abraham Lincoln Lewis, chief executive officer of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, conceived the idea of purchasing a large tract of beach front property on Amelia Island to develop a resort and vacation community for African Americans (Phelts, 1997:37).

The Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company purchased the properties constituting the original 216 acres of American Beach in three separate parcels over an eleven year period (Covenants, 1949:2). The first parcel was composed of thirty-three acres that had been a portion of the Suhrer Tract. Ferdinand Charles Suhrer, Jr., a Union veteran, acquired eighty-six acres of land on the south end of Amelia Island through a delinquent tax auction in 1875. In January of 1935, the Pension Bureau purchased the thirty-three acres with 1,000 feet of ocean front from the estate of Richard Delafield (Phelts, 1997:38). The second parcel, which included one hundred acres, was purchased in 1936 by the Pension Bureau from Olin and Cornelia Watts, who were probably serving as agents for the Pension Bureau. The land had previously been owned by members of the Harrison family. Most of this property was sold in the 1980s. The final eighty-three acres with 1500 feet of shoreline was granted to the Pension Bureau by the United States Government in 1946, reportedly through the efforts of Eleanor Roosevelt (Phelts, 1997:40).

As each parcel was purchased it was surveyed. The streets and lots were aligned in a rectangular grid with two east/west streets connecting A1A to the beach, and the north/south streets running parallel to the ocean. The lots in the first section closest to the ocean extended through the blocks, from street to street. The lots four streets from the ocean were back to back, extending from the streets to the center of the blocks. The great majority of lots were fifty by one-hundred feet in size, with the fifty foot side facing east/west, toward the ocean. It was intended that the small lots would keep the property affordable, and encourage narrow construction with space between buildings. In March of 1936, the Pension Bureau filed the first plat for

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American Beach which included approximately half of the thirty-three acres (Plat, 1936:41). This plat included eighteen blocks bounded by Lewis Street on the south, the Atlantic Ocean on the east, undeveloped properties on the north, and James Street on the west. In June of 1941, the Pension Bureau filed an additional plat identified as Section Two of American Beach (Plat, 1941:6). This plat was bounded by Lewis Street on the south, Ocean Boulevard on the east, A1A on the west, and undeveloped lands on the north. New street names south of Lewis Street included Carver Street, named after Tuskegee Institute's George Washington Carver, a friend and associate of A.L. Lewis.

The first and main street of American Beach, connecting State Road A1A on the west with the ocean on the east, was Lewis Street, named after A.L. Lewis. To the north of Lewis Street, also connecting State Road A1A and the ocean was Julia Street named after Lewis's mother, Julia Brown. The first street running parallel to the ocean was Gregg Street named after another founder, Reverend Elias J. Gregg. Waldron Street was named after the Reverend J. Milton Waldron, pastor at Bethel Baptist Institutional Church at the time of the establishment of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. A.L. Lewis's son, James H. Lewis, was the namesake for James Street. Louis Dargen Ervin, the first full time agent for the Afro-American Life Insurance Company and later Vice President who worked for the company for sixty-three years, was honored by the naming of Ervin Street. Another one of the founders, A.W. Price, was recognized with the naming of Price Street. Mary Avenue was named after Mary Sammis Lewis, first wife of A.L. Lewis, and great granddaughter of Zephaniah Kingsley, a noted planter during the Second Spanish and Territorial periods, on adjacent Fort George Island. Another street in the community was named after William H. Lee, who served as secretary, vice president, and board member of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. A.L. Lewis's grandson, James Leonard Lewis, was recognized in the naming of Leonard Street. The southernmost road in American Beach was named after I.H. Burney II, president of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company from 1967 – 1975 (Phelts, 1997:41). Other streets platted but not developed included Washington Street (Booker T. Washington), Carver Street (George Washington Carver), Lincoln Street (Abraham Lincoln), McKinley Street (William McKinley, U.S. President at the time of the founding of the company in 1901), and Stewart Street (Ralph Stewart, Jr., Secretary of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company).

The first house constructed at American Beach was at 5466 Gregg Street, and was completed in August of 1935 for A.L. Lewis. He built a second home immediately next door at 5472 Gregg Street in 1938, and he sold the first house to his son, James H. Lewis. Another early home constructed in American Beach was by Louis D. Ervin at 5448 Gregg Street in 1938 (NR 1998). Ervin's daughter, Mabel, married Ernest Latson, son of Afro-American Insurance Company founder, E.W. Latson. This house is still owned and used by descendants of Louis D. Ervin. In 1937, Jacksonville dentist, Carey Verdell Freeman, who also served as president of the Negro Business League, constructed a home at 5454 Gregg Street in 1937. Business owner, Martha Hippard, who operated a restaurant, lounge, grocery store, and bakery in Fernandina Beach, had a twostory masonry home constructed at 5406 Ervin Street in 1938 by contractor, Frank Johnson. Secluded at the end of Ervin Street, the house is today referred to as "Miss Martha's Hideaway." The Hippard House (NR 2001) was constructed of concrete block manufactured on site with sand containing coquina shells. "Miss Martha's Hideaway" also included a separate party house, now converted into a garage, that was used to host

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dance and club parties for civic and fraternal organizations. A German craftsman, Frank Xavier Mayer, is credited with the carpentry work on the house (Phelts, 1997:43-48).

During the years of A.L. Lewis' presidency of the Afro-American Insurance Company, company beach picnics were held on the Forth of July (Phelts, 1997:64). This continued the Franklintown tradition Lewis had experienced prior to the founding of American Beach. The beach was a popular weekend retreat ever since its inception, and in addition to the few early houses constructed, the temporary shelter of tents lined the shore. Early commercial concessions were also conducted from portable and makeshift stands.

For the first ten years, construction at American Beach had been almost exclusively private vacation homes except for a pavilion and company cabins. But in 1945, Ralph and Ada Lee, who owned two houses at American Beach, saw the need for public accommodations and opened a facility called Ocean Vu-Inn at 1809 Lewis Street (Photo #17) that included a restaurant, ballroom and twenty-one guest rooms. Contrary to deed clauses for properties purchased in American Beach, the Ocean Vu-Inn was the first business to sell beer and wine. The Lees' business developed a nation-wide reputation for its exceptional sea food, music, and relaxed, progressive ambiance. Nationally known jazz musicians played at the Ocean Vu-Inn. A frequent visitor at the Ocean Vu-Inn was noted educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, who was for a time an agent of the Afro company, as well as serving on the Board of Directors in the 1940's. In 1952, the Ocean Vu-Inn was sold to Alonzo and Pauline Davis, who owned a business in Downtown Jacksonville known as Ducks Inn. They changed the name to Duck's Ocean Vu-Inn, and continued to attract visitors from throughout the country. With the decline of visitors to American Beach that started after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Ducks Ocean Vu-Inn closed in the late 1980's.

The platted lots sold slowly with only twenty-five sold by 1940 (Phelts, 1997:66). Most were sold to professionals, mainly morticians, physicians, attorneys, and educators from Jacksonville and Fernandina Beach. However, because of its reputation, American Beach hosted numerous noted African Americans over the years. In the summer of 1939, the beach was visited by folklorist and author Zora Neale Hurston, who was married to Albert W. Price III, grandson of A.W. Price, Sr., one of the founders of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. During the 1940's and 1950's, American Beach was visited by songwriters and musicians such as Billie Daniels, Cab Calloway, Ray Charles, and James Brown; and sports figures such as Joe Louis and Hank Aaron (Phelts, 1997:66-70). In addition to visits by actor Ossie Davis, American Beach provided vacation homes for actress Barbara Montgomery, jazz drummers Billy Lionel Moore and Allan Moore, Jr., and New York artist Bradley S. Phillips. Gwendolyn Sawyer Cherry, the first female Black State Representative, U.S. Federal Judge, Henry Lee Adams, Jr., Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander Shaw; and county judge James Ruth all had homes on American Beach. Williams' Guest Lodge attracted presidents from historically black colleges and universities such as Frederick D. Patterson from Tuskegee Institute and George Gore of Florida A&M University (Phelts, 1997:66).

From the time it opened in the 1930's until the early 1970's, American Beach attracted each summer thousands of visitors from twenty-nine states (Phelts, 1997:74) throughout the Southeast, eastern states, and the mid west. Many of these visitors came by bus as part of large group excursions which greatly taxed the limited public facilities available on the beach. In response to this growing popularity, the Pension Bureau of the Afro-

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American Life Insurance Company opened the fully equipped A.L. Lewis Motel in 1950 (Photo #13) (Phelts, 1997:74). The motel, which was located on a large lot between Gregg Street and Ocean Boulevard, fronted east to the ocean, and had twenty-two rooms designed to accommodate four guests each. The motel supplemented other lodging facilities such as William's Guest House at the north end of Gregg Street, that was constructed in 1949 and destroyed by Hurricane Dora in 1964.

Where Lewis Street intersected with the beach was a public access road, and many cars parked and drove on the beach (Photo #1). At that intersection was also the crossing of the beachfront Gregg Street, north and south. Vacant lots at the southwest corner of Lewis and Gregg Streets, served as a parking lot. The parking lot was originally property of the United States Government and housed barracks during World War II for soldiers doing beach patrols. This area was known as the "cross roads" (Phelts, 1997:84). This was a social gathering center and popular restaurants and clubs mostly located near the "cross roads." The most popular and notorious was Evans' Rendezvous (Photo #18). Popular with adult college students, the club served food, liquor, provided entertainment, and was in operation from 1948 until 1980. Operated by Willie B. Evans, Sr., Evans' Rendezvous had an open porch facing the ocean and a two hundred seat dining room. While still working for the Civilian Conservation Corps in Folkston, Georgia, Evans was so impressed with the crowds at American Beach he arranged to buy a quarter lot on Gregg Street, next to A.L. Lewis' house. Lewis liked a quiet sober neighborhood and conducted Sunday school at his home. Evans built a small wooden club, Sunny's Spot, in 1942, but was drafted for World War II in the fall. When he returned in the summer of 1946, Sunny's Spot operated day and night. By fall Lewis offered Evans a land swap; Evans' quarter lot for a full lot on the south end of Gregg Street. A small building served the overflowing crowds for two years until a larger building was built two years later (Phelts, 1997:92-94).

In addition to Evans' Rendezvous, the El Patio at the north of the "cross roads" was a large club. There also was Reynold's Sandwich Shop (Photo #19), and Netty's Place. The Sweet Tooth was directly north of Evans' Rendezvous, but a more quiet, family oriented establishment (Photo #1). The atmosphere and crowds that typified the "cross roads" was in contrast to the more relaxed atmosphere of the Ocean-Vue several blocks west.

### Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Although hastened by the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the decline of American Beach as a vacation destination for African Americans started with the destruction caused by Hurricane Dora in September of 1964. In addition to Williams' Guest Lodge, the hurricane also destroyed the "Blue Palace," the summer home of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Harris from Atlanta, Georgia, which had been built in 1951 (Phelts, 1997:81). The beach erosion caused by Hurricane Dora required a U.S. Office of Emergency Planning revetment project at American Beach in 1965. Just as segregation had given birth to uniquely African American institutions, such as the Afro-American Life Insurance Company and American Beach, integration hastened their decline. Vacationers sought out new destinations that previously had not been options. As the fortunes of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company continued to decline in the 1970's and 1980's, the descendants of A.L. Lewis progressively sold their various holdings in American Beach, the last being one hundred acres of undeveloped

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land that sold in the 1980's. With the continued decrease in the number of summer visitors, the many restaurants, lodging facilities, and clubs developed on American Beach have all closed, the only exception being the American Beach Villas, formerly the A.L. Lewis Motel (Phelts, 1997:119).

In 1970, the Amelia Island Company began to purchase property on the south end of Amelia Island and began development of an extensive, gated resort community. In addition to buying the properties constituting Franklintown, the company purchased property along Lewis Street near State Road A1A for the construction of a warehouse and maintenance facility for the new resort known as Amelia Island Plantation. In 1995, the Amelia Island Company acquired the one hundred acre parcel sold by the Lewis family in the early 1980's. This original but undeveloped part of the American Beach was cleared for a nine hole golf course and sixty homes. Other developments of Summer Beach/Ritz Carlton resorts are on the north, and Plantation Point/Florence Point developments are on the west side of State Road A1A. These new resort developments have resulted in increased property values and various pressures on the American Beach ownership.

Although not attracting the number of visitors it once had, American Beach still occasionally draws large crowds on holiday weekends. The property owners formed American Beach, Inc. in 1982, later known as the American Beach Property Owners' Association, Inc. The organization initiated several community projects, such as new sidewalks and palm trees along Lewis Street. In addressing parking and beach access concerns in American Beach, the Nassau County Commissioners, the Amelia Island Company, and the Plantation Park came together to establish a six acre beach front park just south of American Beach. Opened in 1990, the park was named in honor of Isadore Burney II, past president of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Presently American Beach is composed of approximately one hundred homes, mostly vacation and beach homes, and one motel. Although American Beach has continued to attract new owners, some homes, such as "Ervin's Rest" at 5448 Gregg Street, are still occupied by original owner families.

American Beach was created as a very specialized community; a segregated planned beach resort. It thrived as one of the premier such resorts until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the social changes that followed. Despite these social changes, the harsh coastal environment, and local developmental and economic pressures on the community, it survives with a high degree of physical integrity and its unique environmental setting is intact. The historic resources associated with other such beach resorts have largely been lost to similar pressures, making the American Beach community uniquely associated with and representative of an earlier period of African American life.

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Section number 9 Page 1 AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

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### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

See scaled boundary map.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary of the American Beach Historic District encompasses the greatest concentration of historic resources in the community including significant portions of the platted thoroughfares.

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Section number <u>Photos</u> Page <u>1</u>

AMERICAN BEACH HISTORIC DISTRICT, NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

### **PHOTOGRAPHIC LIST**

- 1. American Beach Historic District
- 2. Nassau County, Florida
- 3. Joel McEachin
- 4. 2001
- 5. Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation
- 6. Beach access, Sweet Tooth, looking east
- 7. Photo #1 of 19

The information for items 1-5 is the same for the following photographs.

- 6. View of Ervin's Rest and Ocean Blvd. from Waldron St., looking east
- 7. Photo #2 of 19
- 6. Ocean Blvd. and Waldron St. ridge, looking north
- 7. Photo #3 of 19
- 6. American Beach historic marker and edge of dune, looking south
- 7. Photo #4 of 19
- 6. Lewis St., looking east
- 7. Photo #5 of 19
- 6. Hippard House (NR 2001), looking east
- 7. Photo #6 of 19
- 6. 5479 Waldron St., looking southwest
- 7. Photo #7 of 19
- 6. 5424 Ocean Blvd., looking southeast
- 7. Photo #8 of 19
- 6. 5406 Waldron Blvd., looking northeast
- 7. Photo #9 of 19
- 6. 1752 Lewis St., looking south
- 7. Photo #10 of 19

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- 6. 6475 Gregg St., looking northwest
- 7. Photo #11 of 19
- 6. 5443 Waldron St., looking west
- 7. Photo #12 of 19
- 6. Lewis Motel/American Beach Villas, looking west
- 7. Photo #13 of 19
- 6. 5430/5436 Ervin St., looking northeast
- 7. Photo #14 of 19
- 6. 5466 Gregg St., first house in community, looking east
- 7. Photo #15 of 19
- 6. United Methodist Church, looking north
- 7. Photo #16 of 19
- 6. Ocean-Vue Inn/1809 Lewis St., looking northwest
- 7. Photo #17 of 19
- 6. Evans' Rendezvous, looking east
- 7. Photo #18 of 19
- 6. Reynold's Sandwich Shop, looking west
- 7. Photo #19 of 19



