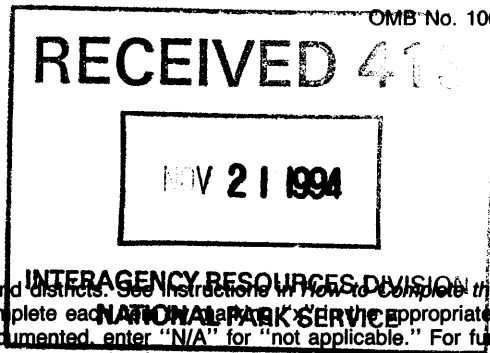


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 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 Mizell-Leu House Historic District

other names/site number Leu Botanical Gardens and Leu House Museum

2. Location

street & number 1730 North Forest Avenue N/A  not for publication

city or town Orlando N/A  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Orange code 95 zip code 32801

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 11/14/94  
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:)

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Entered in the National Register 12-29-94

Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Name of Property

Orange, Florida  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling  
Outbuilding/Garage  
Outbuilding/Kitchen  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Museum  
Office  
Office  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style/Wood Frame Vernacular  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Wood  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
other Wood: Porch  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration Settlement

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1888-1936

**Significant Dates**

1888

1936

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Leu, Harry P.

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Mizell, John Thomas (Builder)

**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:

\_\_\_\_\_

Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Name of Property

Orange, Florida  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 1 1/2 approx.

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	7
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4	6	5	0	6	0
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3	1	5	9	9	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3 

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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 W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date August 11, 1994

street & number 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 City of Orlando

street & number 400 South Orange Avenue telephone \_\_\_\_\_

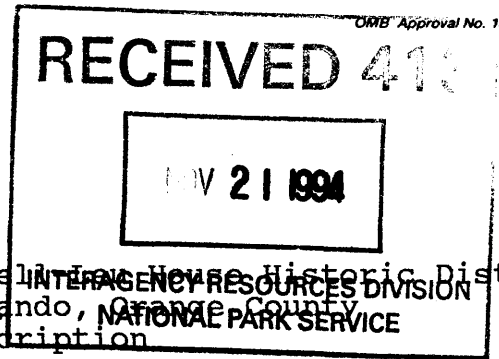
city or town Orlando state Florida zip code 32801

**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
INTERAGENCY RESOURCE DIVISION  
ORANGE COUNTY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Description

Section number 7 Page 1

### Summary Paragraph

The Mizell-Leu House Historic District comprises a large, two-story, wood frame residence and two small frame outbuildings that occupy approximately 1 and a half acres of the Leu Botanical Gardens, a city-owned public park and museum. The 56 acre attraction is located at the south end of Lake Rowena in a residential neighborhood that lies about a mile northeast of downtown Orlando. Originally constructed as a simple farmhouse by John T. Mizell in 1888, the Mizell-Leu House was enlarged and renovated by subsequent owners. The most important of these was Harry P. Leu, who purchased the former homestead in 1936 to be his country estate. Leu modified the main residence and the outbuildings both of which had been constructed before 1910. He also surrounded the house with gardens that were to form the basis for the present park. The resources included in the historic district, however, have been limited to the main residence and nearby outbuildings because of extensive changes that have been made to the gardens since 1961 when Leu donated the property to the city of Orlando.

### Historical Physical Development of the Mizell-Leu House

The farmhouse constructed by John Thomas Mizell in 1888 was reportedly a rectangular, two-story residence measuring 30 feet by 20 feet at the base. The long side faced the lake. It had a gable roof covered with wood shakes and a 10 foot wide porch on the lake side of the house. The exterior siding was weatherboard and the structures rested on a brick pier foundation. The interior walls were plaster over lath. The early farmhouse had just two rooms on the ground floor: a large room measuring approximately 20' X 20' and a smaller one 10' X 20' to the east. Both rooms had a fireplace in the end wall. The fenestration of the house was conventional wood sash windows. Upstairs, a 30-inch wide hallway provided access to three bedrooms, each of which measured approximately 10' X 15'.

The next owner, Duncan C. Pell, purchased the house and property in 1901-1902 and left his own mark on the house before leaving Orlando in 1908. The alterations made by Pell produced a structure with an east wing measuring 20' X 30' and a south wing measuring 40' X 30'. These additions were reportedly constructed for Pell by John Thomas Mizell, the former owner of the house. The south wing was used as a dining room. A small detached kitchen stood just a short distance from the rear of the house. The kitchen still survives today as an office and library of the Leu Gardens staff. The house featured a

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
Description

Section number 7 Page 2

one-story veranda on the north side of the building, and there was a small porch on the east (lake) side of the house.

The property was sold in 1906 to Joseph Woodward who further enlarged the old "farmhouse." Two front rooms were combined to create a large living room. A two-story addition to the rear of the house included a stairway that led to a second floor bedroom. Woodward also constructed a garage that today is used as the Garden Cottage. Joseph Woodward died in 1917, and the family used the property infrequently until Woodward's widow died in 1928. Several tenants occupied the residence until house and grounds were purchased by Harry P. Leu in 1936.

The house as we know it today is largely the product of the efforts of Harry P. Leu, the last private owner of the estate. The remodelling of the structure, which had become slightly dilapidated, was performed in just a few months. Leu removed the porches that then occupied the east and west sides of the house and enlarged the two-story north porch, screening in the ground level. New electrical wiring and fixtures were installed throughout the house. The dining room was provided with the bay window that gave a magnificent view of the gardens that Leu was to create. The first floor bedroom that had been occupied by Joseph Woodward was transformed into an office and study for Harry Leu, complete with bookshelves and a fireplace.

The renovations of the house included the installation of closets and new plumbing. Both of the old outbuildings were transformed into living quarters for a maid and grounds keeper. The house was also provided with a modern kitchen which took over a room at the back of the house. The dining room fireplace was sealed off, and the mantel and flue of the one in the living room was remodeled. The old pine plank flooring of every room in the house but the master bedroom was covered with oak flooring. The living room staircase was rebuilt to give it a more elegant appearance.

Although Leu made many significant changes to the residence, the Mizell-Leu house bears the imprint of each of its owners from 1888-1936.

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National Park Service

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
Description

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Present Appearance

Exterior (Photos 1-9)

The Mizell-Leu House is a two-story, irregular plan residence with a gable roof and a continuous stone and brick foundation. The residence has a large, two-story veranda on the north elevation and smaller, one story porches on the south end of the house and at the intersection of the south and east wings. There is also a brick terrace on the west elevation of the house. The two-story veranda has a flat deck roof and boxed columns on both stories. Both of the smaller porches have simple shed roofs supported by narrow square columns. The exterior siding is weatherboard. The various elevations of the house have been divided into irregular bays, and the fenestration exhibits a variety of wood sash and casement windows. The major sashes have 6/6 lights, while the casements have 10 lights in each leaf. A large, three-sided bay window overlooks the brick terrace on the west elevation of the house. The entrance doors to the residence are of the ordinary wood and glass panel variety, except for the French doors that open onto the east porch and both levels of the north veranda.

Interior (Photos 10-23)

The first floor of the Mizell-Leu House contains a large living room, a study, dining room, and a kitchen. There are two fireplaces downstairs, one on the south wall of the living room and another on the west wall of the study. The living room is located on the north end of the house, next to the veranda, while the study lies to the east side of the house near its own small porch. A bathroom is located next to the study, which was a bedroom during the Woodward era. The main stairs to the second floor are found in the living room. The dining room occupies the approximate center of the ground floor. Its most distinctive feature is the bay window that overlooks the gardens to the west. The south wing of the house contains a small hallway containing the rear stairs and a kitchen which abuts the south porch. There is also a small half bath that one enters from the porch.

The second floor contains four bedrooms. The two larger ones are found in the north and east wings and have private bathrooms. The two bedrooms in the south wing served as a nursery and nanny's quarters during the Woodward era and share a single bath. The north and south

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County

Section number 7 Page 4

Description

wings are connected by a short hall that runs between the main and rear stairways.

The Outbuildings

The Garden Cottage/Old Garage (Photos 24-27)

About 100 feet directly south of the main house is a one-story wood frame building that was constructed about 1906 as a garage during the Woodward era. The building has side gable roof with a long "catslide" rear slope. The exterior fabric is drop siding, and the small, rectangular plan building now rests on a concrete slab foundation. The structure is no longer used as a garage and has a four-bay main (west) facade that features two 6/6 light double hung sash windows located near the center of the elevation with a wood and glass mullioned door found near each end of the facade. The side elevations each have two 6/6 light double hung sash windows.

There is also a shallow shed roof porch supported by carved brackets that extends the width of the main facade. The brackets are the only decorative feature on the exterior of the otherwise plain vernacular building. There is also a door at the rear of the building that is sheltered by a small, one-bay porch with a gable roof. The roof is supported by decorative metal posts. This structure has obviously been altered in the more than 80 years since it was constructed. Plans are being developed to return the building to its original appearance so it can properly become one the historic exhibits in the gardens.

Staff Office/Old Kitchen (Photos 28-31)

About 40 feet east of the old garage stands the building that was constructed about 1906 as a detached kitchen and changed into a servant's quarters by Harry P. Leu thirty years later (Photos 28-31). The one-story, slightly L-shaped building has a side gable roof and drop siding exterior fabric. The main windows are 2/2 double hung sash windows. A hip roof covers what appears to be an original ell at the rear (south) elevation of the structure. This ell also has a 2/2 light window in its west wall. A shed roof covers an apparent addition to the structure that now fills in the area between the ell and the main block of the building. Square 6/6 light windows are



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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
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Description

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found in the south and east walls of this addition. The main (north) facade of the structure is divided into three bays. The main entrance is located near the northwest corner of the facade and is sheltered by a small, shed roof hood supported by plain brackets. The other two bays of this elevation are occupied by 2/2 light double hung sash windows. The building has no decorative details and rests on short concrete piers.

The Mizell Family Cemetery

The only other site of particular historical interest that remains largely unchanged on the Leu Botanical Gardens property is the old Mizell Family Cemetery. The burial grounds lie several hundred feet southeast of the district boundaries and quite near the boundary of the botanical gardens at the intersection of Nebraska Street and Forest Avenue. The property was officially recognized as an important local landmark by the City of Orlando in 1976 and is well maintained by the management of Leu Botanical Gardens. Since the property lies at so great a distance from the group of buildings covered by this nomination and is not threatened, no attempt has been made to include the cemetery as a resource in this nomination proposal.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
Photographs

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List of Photographs

1. Mizell-Leu House Historic District
2. Hary P. Leu Botanical Gardens, 1730 N. Forest Avenue,  
Orlando (Orange County), Florida
3. William R. Adams
4. 1993
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Forest Avenue Entrance, Looking Southwest
7. Photo No. 1 of 35

Items 1-5 are the same for the rest of the photographs.

6. North Facade of Mizell-Leu House, Looking South
7. Photo No. 2 of 35
  
6. North Facade and West Elevation of Mizell-Leu House  
Looking Southeast
7. Photo No. 3 of 35
  
6. West Elevation of Mizell-Leu House, Looking East
7. Photo No. 4 of 35
  
6. South Elevation of Mizell-Leu House, Looking North
7. Photo No. 5 of 35
  
6. South and East Elevations of Mizell-Leu House,  
Looking Northwest
7. Photo No. 6 of 35
  
6. East Elevation of Mizell-Leu House, Looking West
7. Photo No. 7 of 35
  
6. East Elevation and North Facade of Mizell-Leu House,  
Looking Southwest
7. Photo No. 8 of 35
  
6. West Elevations of Main House and Garden Cottage,  
Looking East
7. Photo No. 9 of 35
  
6. First Floor Interior, Living Room, Looking Southwest Toward  
Dining Room
7. Photo No. 10 of 35

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
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- 
6. First Floor Interior, Study, Looking West Toward Living Room
  7. Photo No. 11 of 35
  
  6. First Floor Interior, dining Room, Looking West Toward Bay Window
  7. Photo No. 12 of 35
  
  6. First Floor Interior, Study, Looking East
  7. Photo No. 13 of 35
  
  6. First Floor Interior, Dining Room, Looking East
  7. Photo No. 14 of 35
  
  6. First Floor Interior, Kitchen, Looking West
  7. Photo No. 15 of 35
  
  6. First Floor Interior, Rear Hall Stairs, Looking West
  7. Photo No. 16 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, Master Bedroom in East Wing, Looking East
  7. Photo No. 17 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, Master Bedroom Fireplace, Looking West
  7. Photo No. 18 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, Sitting (Nanny's) Room, Looking Southeast
  7. Photo No. 19 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, North Bedroom, Looking North
  7. Photo No. 20 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, South Bedroom, Looking Southwest
  7. Photo No. 21 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, South Bedroom, Looking Southeast
  7. Photo No. 22 of 35
  
  6. Second Floor Interior, Rear Stairs, Looking South
  7. Photo No. 23 of 35

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Orlando, Orange County  
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- 
- 6. Garden Cottage, West Facade, Looking Southeast
  - 7. Photo No. 24 of 35
  
  - 6. Garden Cottage, South Elevation, Looking North
  - 7. Photo No. 25 of 35
  
  - 6. Garden Cottage, East Elevation, Looking West
  - 7. Photo No. 26 of 35
  
  - 6. Garden Cottage, East and North Elevations, Looking Southwest
  - 7. Photo No. 27 of 35
  
  - 6. Staff Office, North Facade and East Elevation,  
Looking Southwest
  - 7. Photo No. 28 of 35
  
  - 6. Staff Office, North and West Elevation,  
Looking Southeast
  - 7. Photo No. 29 of 35
  
  - 6. Staff Office, East Elevation, Looking West
  - 7. Photo No. 30 of 35
  
  - 6. Staff Office, South Elevation, Looking North
  - 7. Photo No. 31 of 35
  
  - 6. Lake Rowena, Looking North from Veranda of Mizell-Leu House
  - 7. Photo No. 32 of 35
  
  - 6. Rose Garden, Looking North from South Entrance
  - 7. Photo No. 33 of 35
  
  - 6. Rose Garden, Looking Northwest from Southwest Corner
  - 7. Photo No. 34 of 35
  
  - 6. Mizell Family Cemetery, Looking Northwest
  - 7. Photo No. 35 of 35

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Continuation Sheet

Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
Significance

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Summary Paragraph

The Mizell-Leu House Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under criteria A and B in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Social History. The main house was erected in 1888 by the Mizell family who had established a homestead on the land in 1862. In 1936 the property was purchased by Harry P. Leu, who enlarged the house and renovated two small outbuildings located nearby. A botanical buff, Harry Leu created extensive gardens on the old homestead, filling them with plants gathered in travels with his wife around the world. The couple lived in the house until 1961 when Harry Leu donated the estate to the city of Orlando. The property comprises the largest and most carefully planned former private garden estate in the city of Orlando. The gardens, most of which are not included within the boundaries of the district represent one of the most important collections of botanical specimens in the state of Florida.

Historical Context

The city of Orlando was founded in 1857 as a small settlement serving the basic needs of the surrounding farms and homesteads that began to appear in Central Florida at the beginning of the decade. The economy was based on cattle and cotton, and the village was largely isolated from the outside world because of a lack of transportation facilities. Florida's railroad network would not begin development until after the Civil War, and the transportation center nearest to Orlando was 30 miles to the northeast at Sanford, which was the southern steamboat terminus on the St. Johns River. When it was incorporated in 1875, the population of Orlando was only 85, and the town limits occupied just one square mile. The built-up section of the village employed only a fraction of that area.

Orlando joined the outside world in 1880 when the Peninsular Railway laid tracks through the settlement. Within the space of a decade the village was transformed into a bustling town with a population of more than 2,800 people. Due to its central location in the state, Orlando emerged as an important commercial center, serving the surrounding agricultural lands--particularly the large new citrus operations that had grown up in response to the coming of the railroad--by providing the financial backing and physical supplies for the development of large tracts of formerly unoccupied property.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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Orlando, Orange County  
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The economy of Orlando was still very much rooted in activities related to agriculture, but the railroad also brought settlers and visitors who were interested in that part of Central Florida as a tourist destination. Severe freezes and a national financial crisis in the mid-1890s slowed local growth for a time, but by the turn of the century Orlando once again began to develop rapidly. By 1910, the number of permanent residents had reached nearly 4,000, and over the following decade numerous residential subdivisions had been platted well beyond the center of town. Much of this new construction concentrated around the numerous lakes that are spread across much of the Orlando vicinity like a patchwork quilt. Many of the old pioneer homestead were bought up and platted as residential subdivisions.

Historic Significance - Early Development

The recorded history of the Mizell-Leu House and Gardens begins in 1858 when Angeline Mizell claimed a tract of wilderness on the south shore of lake Rowena as the family homestead. Her husband, David W. Mizell, was at nearby Fort Meade, serving in a U.S. Army unit engaged in fighting the Third Seminole War. The Mizell family had emigrated to Florida by way of Georgia in the 1830s and had settled in Columbia County in the northern part of the state near present-day Lake City. It was there that David W. Mizell, Jr. was born in 1833.

In 1858, David and Angeline Mizell headed south with other family members to the Orange County frontier. The Mizells first lived in the vicinity of what is now the city of Winter Park. In 1862, about the time that Angeline was building a log cabin on their new homestead on the south shore of Lake Rowena, David was serving the Confederacy in the Civil War as a corporal in the 8th Florida Volunteers. He was invalided out before the end of the year and returned to Orlando. He was appointed sheriff of Orange County in 1868 but was killed a year and a half later while attempting to arrest a settler named Moses Barber for alleged cattle rustling. Barber and two other men thought to be responsible for the murder appear to have themselves met an untimely end, having become the victims of frontier justice.

David Mizell was buried in the family cemetery which today is one of the attractions of Leu Gardens property. His was the first grave dug in the plot that today holds 36 members in marked and unmarked graves. Angeline Mizell continued to live with her children in log cabin she had erected until 1888, when her son, John Thomas, married and built a new residence on the property. The wood frame "yellow

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
Significance

Section number 8 Page 3

farmhouse" forms the core of the present Leu House. The structure was two stories high and measured 30 feet by 20 feet at the base.

In 1902, the Mizells sold the farmhouse and property to Duncan C. Pell, a member of a socially prominent New York family that began to winter in Orlando in the early 1890s. Pell began to make additions to the old farmhouse soon after making his purchase. One of his contributions to the property was the construction of a detached kitchen now used as a library and office. Pell's stay in the house, however, lasted only until 1906, when he sold the property to Joseph H. Woodward. The new owner of the estate had been born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and had amassed a fortune in the steel industry and other financial enterprises.

Joseph Woodward was sixty-three when he purchased the Mizell House and 20 acres of property from Duncan Pell for \$20,000. His original purchase did not include the parcel of land containing the Mizell Family Cemetery. He appears to have acquired that portion of the property in 1909. Woodward made a number of changes to the house, and is reported to have constructed several outbuildings to house domestic servants and staff employed to maintain the grounds. None of these buildings survives except the car garage that today serves as the Garden Cottage at Leu Gardens. Joseph Woodward died in 1915, but the family retained title to the estate until the death of his widow in 1928.

Historic Significance - Harry P. Leu

The house was occupied by a variety of tenants until 1936 when the old Mizell homestead was purchased from the Woodward estate for \$40,000 by local businessman Harry P. Leu. Harry Paul Leu was born in Orlando in 1884, just four years after the arrival of the railroad and five years before John Thomas Mizell built the "little yellow farmhouse" on the shore of Lake Rowena. He attended grammar school in Orlando and began his first regular job at the age of 12 as a delivery boy for the Reporter Star, Orlando's evening newspaper.

Shortly after graduating from high school Harry Leu began to work for the Florida Gas & Electric Company, but about the time Duncan Pell purchased the Mizell House, he left for New York City to acquire more education in the management field. He enrolled in two schools to save time and studied bookkeeping, shorthand, and a variety of courses devoted to management and marketing techniques. Upon his return to Orlando in 1904 he became the bookkeeper for the Cain-O'Berry Boiler

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Mizell-Leu House Historic District  
Orlando, Orange County  
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Company. Harry quickly assumed other duties as well, taking over as timekeeper, shipping clerk, and, eventually, sales manager.

The company repaired steam locomotives and supplied boilers to Central Florida "hard rock" phosphate mining companies and to the sawmills and turpentine producers that began rapidly exhausting the vast stands of pine forest that spread across the Florida peninsula. Cain-O'Berry also began to supply these and other industries machinery and equipment for replacement and repairs. The company also began to include supplies for the growing citrus industry in its inventory. At the encouragement of his employers, Harry Leu began acquiring stock in the company, by 1926 becoming its major share holder.

He took over control of the company, changing its name to Harry P. Leu, Inc. By 1930, the company ceased manufacturing boilers and repairing locomotives. Leu made the company a major provider of mechanical and electrical equipment to railway lines and industries throughout Florida and the southeastern United States. Leu became president of the Southern Industrial Distribution Association and played a major role in benefiting the economy and social welfare of his native Orlando, serving as president of the Orlando Chamber of Commerce and becoming a member of the Masonic Lodge, Rotary Club and other organizations having the purpose of benefiting the citizens of the community. Among his many acts of philanthropy was the donation of \$50,000 in 1964 to support Orlando Junior College.

In 1932, Harry Leu married Mary Jane Schmidli, a woman twenty years his junior, who worked as a secretary for his company. After their honeymoon, the couple set up residence at the Colonial Court Apartments in the 600 block of Orange Avenue. The successful businessman, however, wished to present his bride with a grand estate and decided to purchase the old Mizell homestead. The old estate at that time was "out in the country." The house stood in the midst of a forest grove. Nearby were two frame outbuildings that had been erected during the Pell and Woodward eras.

The successful businessman set about transforming the aging and somewhat dilapidated country home into an estate surrounded by extensive gardens filled with plants gathered from all over the world. The house was extensively remodelled and outfitted with new plumbing and electrical fixtures. Both outbuildings were also renovated to provide living quarters for a maid and grounds keeper. In addition, he initiated the development of what later became the Harry P. Leu Botanical Gardens. Prior to the diruption of World War II, Harry Leu



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and his wife travelled widely, acquiring many rare varieties of camelias, azaleas, and other specimens for his botanical gardens and arboretum. He brought plants in by the train carload from other states and by the truck load from nurseries in Florida. His favorite plant was the camelia, and by the time he gave his gardens to the city in 1961, he had planted almost 3,000 camellia bushes and several hundred azaleas. The mature trees and shrubs that now dominate the park were only small plants when Harry Leu put them in the ground in the 1930s and '40s.

One acquisition which the Leus brought from their travels was the Sasanqua Camellia. This species had not previously been successfully grown in Florida, but eventually Harry Leu and his grounds keeper managed to achieve success in growing several varieties of this type of camellia in the gardens. Today visitors will notice many palms, coffee plants, tea bushes, orchids, kapok trees, and a wide number of exotic and delightful plants. For a time the estate also held pens for pheasants, peacocks, turkeys, and guinea hens. But as the neighborhood became more developed, the noise from the fowl proved to be a nuisance, and they were removed.

Development of the Gardens since 1961

Leu also contributed many rare and attractive shrubs and flowers to municipal building projects. In 1961, Leu donated his estate to the City of Orlando for use as a public park, but retained nine acres on Lake Rowena on which to build a new home. The city created a board of trustees to manage the property and agreed that the estate should be maintained solely as a public garden and that none of the property could be used for sports, recreational activities such as swimming or boating, or any commercial activity. Harry P. Leu died in 1977 at the age of 93. The gates to the Leu Gardens opened to the public in 1964, after the city had spent approximately \$700,000 in capital improvements to the estate. At first visitors were only allowed to drive through the gardens, but today walkways, and pathways have been provided for the leisurely study and appreciation of the gardens by patrons. The park today remains one of the favorite destinations of visitors to the Orlando area.

The area of the Historic District has been restricted to that portion of the former estate that includes the Mizell-Leu House and the nearby outbuildings because of extensive changes that have been made to the gardens since 1961. The first action the City took was

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replace the old dirt trails that wended their way through the gardens with paved roadways. This required the relocation of hundreds of trees and shrubs. When the garden was first opened to the public in 1964, visitors could only view the plantings by automobile. Pedestrian excursions were not allowed until paved footpaths were completed in 1966. The combination of automobiles and pedestrians, however, created a potential hazard, and in 1971, the city decided to allow pedestrian traffic only.

The size of the gardens was increased in 1967 when the Leus deeded the acreage on which they had intended to build a new residence to the City. Instead they bought a home at 750 Alba Drive near Lake Adair. Other improvements were made to the grounds. A Gazebo was built in the South Woods; a rose garden was laid out; two bridges spanning small ravines were constructed, and a greenhouse was erected to house over 10,000 orchids. Throughout the 1970s and '80s the present character of the botanical gardens continued to take shape. The Mizell Family Cemetery was officially dedicated by the City in 1976. Still another greenhouse was erected; a large fountain was placed in the rose garden, and numerous donations of new plants were made by generous benefactors. The "Desert Garden" had a grand opening celebration on June 27, 1987, and on October 16, 1987, the Wyckoff Overlook was dedicated by Orlando Mayor Bill Frederick. The rose garden was vastly expanded and dedicated in honor of Mary Jane Leu in 1990.

The curatorial staff of Leu Botanical Gardens and Leu House Museum are dedicated to the preservation of the Mizell-Leu House and the two small wood frame outbuildings. Plans are underway to develop a management program for the structures that include stabilization of historic fabric, the making of necessary repairs, and the implementation of a new regular maintenance schedule.

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Boundary Description  
and Justification

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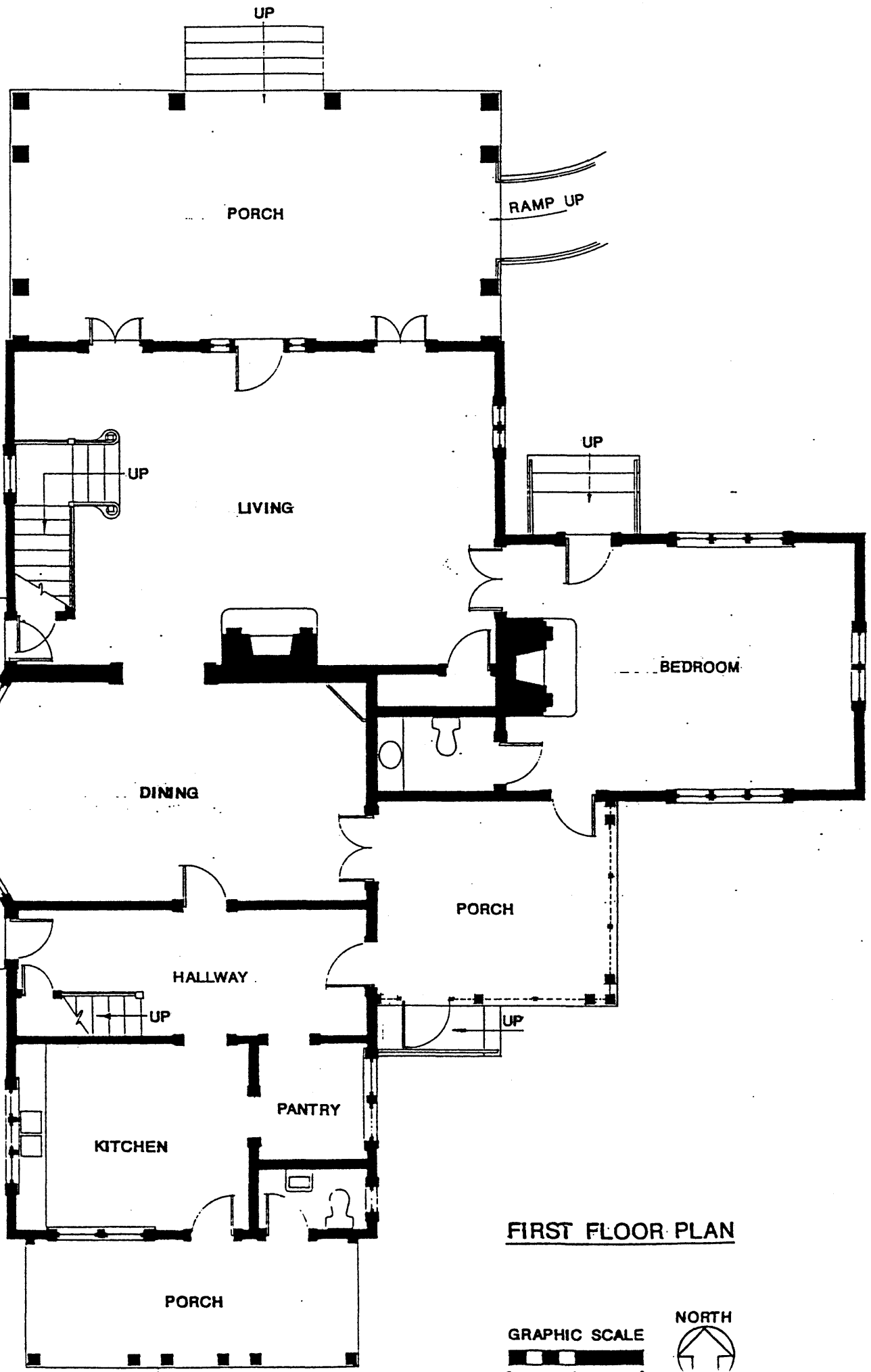
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### Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Mizell-Leu House Historic District are those shown on the accompanying map.

### Boundary Justification

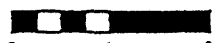
The boundaries shown on the map enclose the best preserved elements of the present Leu Botanical Gardens and Leu House Museum property as they developed during the period from 1888 to 1936. Excepted from these boundaries is the Mizell Family Cemetery.

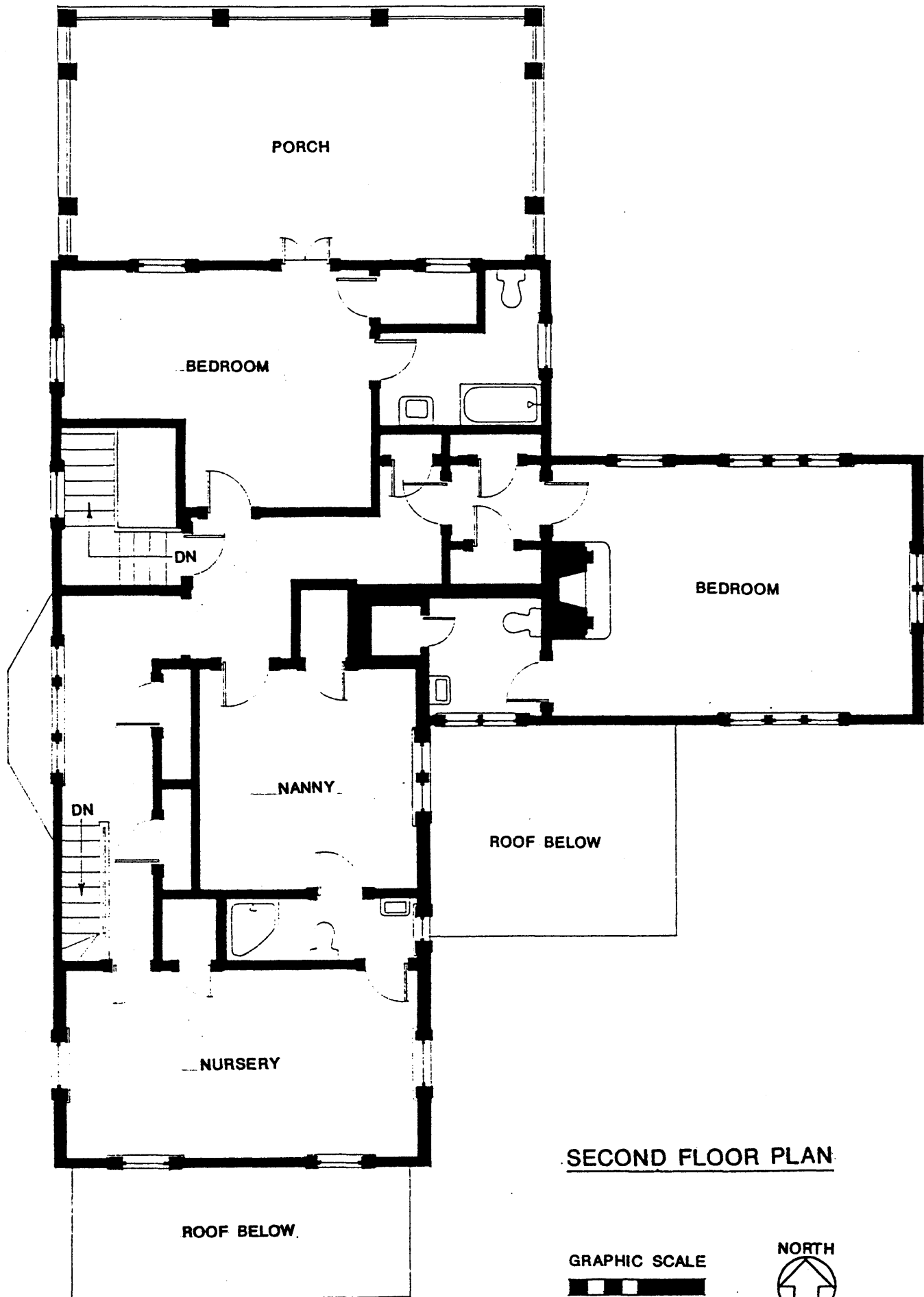


**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

**GRAPHIC SCALE**

**NORTH**





SECOND FLOOR PLAN