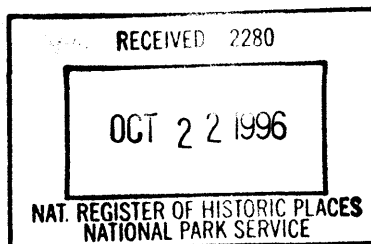


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name KREISSLE FORGE

other names/site number Kreissle Forge and Ornamental Iron Works

2. Location

street & number 7947 Tamiami Trail

N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Sarasota

☒ vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Manatee code 081 zip code 34231

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 10/10/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ entered in the National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ removed from the National  
Register.

☐ other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Coral D. Shree 12-2-96

Kreissle Forge  
Name of Property

Manatee Co., FL  
County and State

## 5. Classification

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

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

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

- ☒ buildings  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	5	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	5	total

Name of related multiple property listings  
(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)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Specialty Store

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/

Manufacturing Facility

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Specialty Store

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/

Manufacturing Facility

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

None

### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

roof Concrete Shingle

other

## Narrative Description

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

Kreissle Forge  
Name of Property

Manatee Co., Fl.  
County and State

## 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 road 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 of 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)

COMMERCE

ART

INDUSTRY

### Period of Significance

1947-1954

### Significant Dates

1947

1952

1954

### Significant Person

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Arch: Zimmerman, Ralph and William

## 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 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:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of Repository

# \_\_\_\_\_

Kreissle Forge  
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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	4	5	2	7	0	3	0	3	1	6	2	0
Zone	Easting			Northing											
2															

3															
Zone	Easting			Northing											
4															

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victoria "Mikki" Hartig/ Sherry Piland, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date October 1996

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

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

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

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

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

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

### Property Owner

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

name

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Kreissle Forge is located at 7947 Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41) in Manatee County, Florida. A one-story masonry building was constructed in early 1947. The building was extended to the rear in 1948 and to the south in 1952. A second floor was added to the rear addition in 1954. The building rests on a thick, poured concrete slab foundation. The low-pitched gable roofs are surfaced with metal or with masonry shingles intended to appear as shake shingles. A combination of wood, metal and stucco is used for the exterior wall surfaces. The building's original interior spaces still serve their intended purposes as metal forging facilities, merchandise showrooms, office, and storage spaces.

## SETTING

The Kreissle Forge is located near the Sarasota/Manatee county line, approximately 1 mile north of the northern boundary of the city of Sarasota and approximately 6 miles south of the city of Bradenton. Although it is located in Manatee County, the property bears a Sarasota address.

The building fronts onto the Tamiami Trail, a major Florida north-south transportation corridor. When this building was constructed, most of the surrounding area was undeveloped and Australian pine trees lined the narrow roadway on both sides for some distance north. Approximately 6 buildings, comprising all of what was ever constructed in the 1920s Somerset Subdivision, were located to the rear of the site. The prestigious Whitfield Estates Subdivision had been laid out approximately 1/2 mile north of the Forge in 1925, and several homes had been constructed before the failure of the Florida land boom put a hiatus on its further development until the end of World War II. Another less prestigious subdivision, Ballentine Manor, had been platted to the south in 1925, but received minimal development before 1927.

When the Forge's founder, George Kreissle, Sr., planned the construction of the Forge in 1946, he was encouraged to build close to the highway to attract business. He insisted, however, that the building be set back among the trees. This decision ultimately preserved the building's setting and its circular front drive when the Tamiami Trail was widened ca. 1950. A shallow circular drive now provides access to the Forge from the

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Tamiami Trail. Around 1960, a rock revetment/wall was placed across the front of the property to protect it from the threat of high-speed oncoming traffic approaching the bend of the roadway in front of the building. Other boundaries of the property are marked by a decorative split-rail fence, a vertical board fence, and by chain link fencing. In 1972, the Forge's site was again reduced when the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport, to the immediate southeast, was expanded. In this expansion, the six buildings in the Somerset Subdivision were demolished and the easternmost portion of the Kreissle Forge property was usurped for enlargement of runway areas.

For many years, the Kreissle Forge was virtually the last structure on the northern outskirts of the city. However, in the decades following World War II, the Tamiami Trail underwent substantial commercial development, and there are now few undeveloped properties on the nine-mile stretch between Sarasota and Bradenton.

**EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION**

The main facade of the Kreissle Forge faces southwest onto the Tamiami Trail (Photo 1). The original one-story, masonry building had an L-shape (Photo 2). Later additions have given the building its present irregular configuration. The original portion of the building is at the north end of the present complex.

A shed roof porch extends across the facade of the original section of the building, sheltering the centrally located primary entrance. Wood posts support the porch roof. The entrance (Photo 3) is placed within a six foot by six foot recessed area which divides the building into its two functional elements: the forge, to the north, and the sales and display area, to the south. Dutch doors lead into each section of the building. Located on the roof ridge over the primary entrance is a non-functioning, three-tier, pigeon house that serves as a cupola. The metal roof of the cupola is surmounted by an iron weather vane.

The forge portion of the building projects slightly and is further distinguished by a large exterior chimney (Photo 4). The name of the building is carried on the chimney, written in iron

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script. Opposite the chimney on the rear roof slope is a shed roofed dormer with four- and eight-light, wood framed windows set in a ribbon pattern. This dormer provides natural light to the interior of the forge room. A shed roof porch, supported by wood posts, extends along the northwest elevation of the building.

The sales/office area of the building is to the south of the forge. The original portion has a large, metal-framed display window. In 1952, a three-room, linear addition was placed to the south, extending the display area (Photo 5). It is easily distinguished from the original, for it is not as tall and it is much narrower in width. In addition, the southernmost portion of the addition angles slightly toward the west. The wall surface of the facade of the addition is taken up almost entirely with large windows. The display windows are framed identically and consist of square, fixed glass panels extending virtually full wall height, flanked by fixed, three-panel sidelights (Photo 6). A chimney is located on the roof ridge at about the mid-point of the addition (Photo 7). The chimney provides design symmetry only, for no interior fireplace or opening ever existed to access it. Originally a screened breezeway, approximately eight feet in length, served as a transition between the original sales area and this new display area. In the 1970s, the breezeway was enclosed with sliding glass doors to provide additional display space (Photo 8). On the rear elevation of this building segment is a shallow, shed-roofed storage space, clad in metal siding applied horizontally.

A large, rectangular workshop/storage building joins the north corner of the original building (Photo 9). It began as a one-story building, constructed in 1948; the second story was added in 1954. By its parallel placement, this addition helps form a small courtyard area (Photo 10). This portion of the building has a metal, gable roof and exterior walls clad in horizontal, corrugated metal siding. Access to the first floor is provided by a number of large sliding doors. When the second floor was added to this section, a second floor was also added over the rear section of the forge portion of the building. A small gap exists between the two second story additions (Photo 10).

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MANATEE CO., FL.**Section number 7 Page 4**INTERIOR DESCRIPTION**

The interior is functionally divided into the working forge area and a sales/display area. The work area consists of two large, adjoining rooms. Each room has a poured concrete floor. The west wall of the westernmost room is brick and contains three arched brick openings (Photos 11 and 12). The largest arched opening contains a "Buffalo" electric hammer. A smaller arched opening contains a fireplace for heating metal. The remaining walls in this room are surfaced with rough stucco. The interior of this room can be observed from the Dutch door entry way, which is left open when work is underway. The actual shaping and forging of hot iron can be seen in this artistic setting, as contrasted with the more common experience of seeing only the finished products in stores and museums. A secondary exit door is located on the north wall. Also on this wall are several groups of awning windows. The ceiling is opening, with the truss work revealed. The gable wall surfaces consist of pecky cypress. The north wall (Photo 13) is decorated with an operating handforged clock, with its workings built within the wall. This room also contains other items associated with the trade, such as an anvil, a water barrel to quench the iron, and fire tongs. An oversized handforged lock, handforged numerals, forged roses, and unfinished work also adorn the room, all to enhance a "spirit of creativity."

A large opening from the forge area leads into a second work space, to the east. This room also has an open truss ceiling and pecky cypress gable wall surfaces.

All of the interior wall and ceiling spaces of the adjoining office (Photo 14) and showroom addition (Photo 15) are decorated with examples of work produced by the firm. The ceilings of these spaces are open to reveal the truss work. The 1952 showroom addition consists of tile flooring, large display windows, and a width of only about seven feet (Photo 16). A double leaf door, with four-lights on each side, leads into the 1952 breezeway area from the original display/office area (Photo 17). A step down helps to define this area as an addition.



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**NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS**

A detached storage building/display area was placed near the north end of the building shortly after it was constructed (Photo 18). From 1950 until 1975 it was used as a single car garage. In 1975 it was returned to its original use. The building has a shed roof over the shallow display area on the south facade. The exterior walls are surfaced with board and batten. It has been modified with the addition of a wood shingled parapet supported on ornamental metal columns. The front facade features a metal framed sixteen light glass display window with a rear partition obscuring the rear storage space.

The remaining non-contributing buildings are obscured from view off U.S. 41 by the westernmost portion of the structure, as well as by landscape vegetation and fencing. Around 1988 an open-ended Quonset hut was placed on the northeast corner of the parcel to serve as a vehicle shelter. Around 1970 a wood and metal storage building was placed at the southeast corner of the parcel.

When the building was enlarged in 1952, a carport was added to the rear of the addition. In 1960, a wood garage was added adjacent to the carport.

**CONCLUSION**

The Kreissle Forge has been well maintained and preserved. Its physical features continue to convey its historic character, identity, and integrity. The unaltered detail and components of the interior of the forge room provide further testimony to the building's distinct historic use.

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The Kreissle Forge is the oldest hand forge in continuous operation the State of Florida, according to a survey conducted by the Florida Blacksmith/Artisan Association. In addition, it is one of only a few such forges in the country that produce custom ornamental iron by hand. The Kreissle Forge meets National Register Criterion A at the local level in the areas of Commerce, Art, and Industry, and Criterion Exception G. The Kreissle Forge has been in continuous operation at the same location since 1947. The ornamental ironwork produced at the forge has made a significant contribution to Sarasota's built environment and reflects a disappearing craft heritage.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

Sarasota

Sarasota evolved from a small, 1880s fishing village to a modern city incorporated in 1902. Significant development took place in Sarasota during the 1920s as part of the Florida Land Boom, and the population consequently expanded. New subdivisions were created within Sarasota and the surrounding suburban area. The Land Boom came to a halt in the mid-1920s. Speculators who had earlier purchased land were stuck with depreciated property and half completed subdivisions. In September 1929, the entire country was rocked by the Stock Market Crash, the portent of further financial devastation throughout the country. As the nation suffered through the Great Depression of the 1930s, the only substantial projects to lessen the economic stagnation of the Sarasota area were improvements assisted by the federal government through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Late in the 1930s, Sarasota and Manatee Counties formed the Sarasota-Manatee Joint Airport Authority and acquired land for the construction of a modern airport just north of the Manatee/Sarasota County line. Part of the funds for construction came from the WPA. During World War II, the airport was converted to military use.

At the end of the war, a surge of development took place in Sarasota. This boom was concentrated not in the center of the city but, for the first time, in the newly developing suburbs and outlying areas. During the ten years following the war, Sarasota's population increased nearly 85%. To facilitate this expansion, several highway improvements were made, including the widening of U.S. 41 for several miles to the north and south of the downtown area. This major thoroughfare saw considerable

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commercial development. One of the businesses to locate on U.S. 41 after World War II was the Kreissle Forge.

Iron Work and Forge Welding

Iron, which is one of the strongest metals, has been long overlooked as a creative medium in modern times; most artisans prefer to work with more precious metals such as gold, silver, or bronze. Yet, in ancient times iron was considered a precious metal. Sumerians called it "the metal of the heaven" because they first discovered it in meteorites. Evidence of this belief in the magical powers of iron is still seen in the "lucky horseshoe" tacked over doorways. Supernatural powers were also attributed to ancient ironworkers because of their unique skills and the drama of transforming rock-like masses into works of art and utility. The skills of smithing were usually passed from father to eldest son, and ironworking techniques were often kept secret and handed down through the family.

The age-old art of forge welding involved heating pieces of iron near the melting point and hammering them together. If heated too much, the iron will crumble; if heated insufficiently, it will not fuse properly. The proper temperature is ascertained by the highly developed skill of observing the exact color of the heated iron. As early as the 1700s, groups of planters in the southern United States reportedly commissioned European craftsmen to come and teach talented slaves the art of ironwork. Early architectural wrought ironwork in the colonies was produced by local blacksmiths who spent much of their time making items of utility such as horseshoes, tools, cooking utensils, and hardware. The role of the blacksmith gradually changed. At one point the blacksmith operated a general all-around repair shop. With thousands of horses to be shod, the smith was one of the most important men in the settlement of the frontier. When farm utensils broke, the smith could in some manner repair it. In the early twentieth century, the smith was still shoeing the horses and sharpening the plow shares.

Ironwork was also produced for architectural ornament, such as window guards, fences, balconies, or gates. Its cost, however, usually limited its use to the finer homes, public buildings, parks, cemeteries, and churches. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the new interest and popularity in various architectural revival styles greatly influenced ironwork design in the United States. The subsequent publication of numerous design handbooks with ironwork patterns

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publicized the various ironwork styles and motifs. Unfortunately, most smiths worked anonymously and few signed their work. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain specific early makers and dates of production. There were a few companies producing iron-artwork in the first decades of the nineteenth century in the United States, such as F. Krasser & Company of Boston, Massachusetts, which produced decorative gates, balconies, and grills for Yale University, Harvard University, and the Abbot Academy at Andover, Massachusetts. They also produced gates for private estates, churches, and banks.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, Parisian Edgar Brandt, a master craftsman-designer, gave impetus to a new conception of design forms and textures by the rich inventiveness of his compositions and by an entirely original approach that resulted in a wrought iron texture that is akin to beaten silver. Examples of his work at the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs Modernes at Paris in 1925 had an immediate effect upon ironwork designed and executed in the U.S.

The most prominent American ironworker was Samuel Yellin. Yellin is credited with establishing iron as an art form in the United States. Born in Poland, he apprenticed with a Russian smith at age seven, and by the age of seventeen had become a master craftsman. He came to the United States in 1906, and spent most of his enormously successful career in Philadelphia. Yellin raised the standards of wrought-iron craftsmanship to its apex during the 1920s. His Arch Street Metalworkers Studio employed over two hundred craftsmen and was instrumental in teaching the craft to others. Often working with prominent architects, Yellin received several large commissions during the 1920s, including the decorative iron work for the Sarasota County Courthouse (NR 1984). Yellin, however, expressed concern for his craft tradition:

These old craftsmen knew every branch of their work, they lavished as much skill and creative ability on a small handle as upon a great gate. No detail was overlooked, no matter how small or insignificant . . . The sincere nature of craftsmanship and the proper use of materials for ends to which they are well adapted is little understood today. This is not because there is any lack of information on the subject, but because the perfection of the mechanical means of production at our disposal has blinded many

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to the simplicity of the means which produced great works of the past.

The mechanical means to which Yellin was referring was the modern technology of cast iron that made it possible to mass produce iron work by pouring the hot iron into molds. A mold permits the production of unlimited numbers of an item, while each piece is worked individually in forged work. The increased mechanization of all forms of manufacturing during the early twentieth century understandably affected the character and use of ironwork. The cost of cast iron was less than that of forged work, and the hand production of metalwork became a disappearing art form. The smith was gradually replaced by factory production methods.

Although both wrought and cast iron enjoyed an unprecedented period of popularity in architectural ornament during the late 1920s, the onset of the Depression caused a decline in building activity and in the use of ironwork. Many of the country's older ironwork shops went out of business during this period. A few others held on through World War II, only to fail at the end of the war. By the 1950s, the trade itself began to wane in popularity and was threatened with dying out altogether in its traditional form. As a result, during the past 40 years, uninteresting steel, aluminum and plastic substitutions for traditional ironwork have proliferated, accompanied by a drastic decrease in skilled artisans.

Today, the architectural ironwork industry is experiencing what could be termed a revival. Although it is a rarity for new ornamental iron forges to be established, in recent years the value of hand crafts has grown in the public's appreciation. The ironworker has become a respected artist, although contemporary ironworkers rarely have the technical capabilities of earlier craftsman. Artist-blacksmith organizations have recently formed and creative work in iron is again being widely exhibited and published. An additional factor in the recent increased interest is the more common availability of hot dipped galvanization to permanently prevent rusting of the finished products. Although there are many quality metalworking shops capable of fabricating steel by cutting and welding, they lack skilled blacksmiths to work shapes over the forge. Fine quality ironwork is still produced by those rare ironworks such as the Kreissle Forge, but the limited availability of skilled craftspeople makes some designs difficult to obtain and/or cost-prohibitive. Only a few fabricators, such as the Kreissle Forge, have been able to continuously provide experienced blacksmiths and an efficient

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fabrication shop capable of coordinating shop drawings for architectural projects and for the production of traditional ironwork.

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The Kreissle Forge and Hand Wrought Iron Company was founded in 1946 by George Kreissle, Sr. For nearly four centuries, the Kreissle family has been identified as ironmongers. George Kreissle, Sr., recognized as an ornamental blacksmith and master-artisan, was born into the field, his family sustaining itself as blacksmiths since the 1700s. George Kreissle, Sr. was born in 1908 in Leutkrich, close to Lake Constance, Germany, near the Swiss and Austrian borders. At the age of 14, after attending public school for eight years, George began his own ornamental blacksmith apprenticeship without pay for four years. During his apprenticeship, one day of each week was devoted to theory and involved a concentrated study of the trade and techniques. After completing his apprenticeship, he was required to work for a qualified ornamental metal making firm operated by a master mechanic. A final examination piece was required before he was able to gain the status of a master metalsmith.

In 1927, ambitious and confident with his hard-earned master craftsman station and encouraged by his grandmother, Kreissle emigrated to the United States, bringing his skillful art to his new home. In 1929, he established, Freeport Ornamental Ironworks, a large plant in Freeport, Long Island, New York. The shop employed mostly other German workers and became highly successful. Later that year, Kreissle returned to Germany to marry and immediately returned with his new wife to the United States and new ironworks. The ironworks undertook many commissions for ornamental ironwork for several great estates constructed on the North Shore of Long Island during the 1930s. Their work was also incorporated into the design of many Long Island apartment buildings during the same period. The firm specialized in ornamental gates and interior stairrails, and were responsible for producing many railings and stairwells during the 1930s and early 1940s commissioned by nationally recognized builder Levitt in his construction of a substantial number of residences on Long Island. At the advent of World War II, the Freeport Ironworks received a large contract for fabricating tons of forgings for the United States Navy. Shortly thereafter, Kreissle began plans to sell out his Long Island plant and establish his forge in Florida.

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Kreissle hoped to return more to the artistic side of his trade with less pressure from the push for mass fabrication and production. He felt pressured by what he considered an overwhelming constant push for production to complete orders at his Freeport Ironworks plant on Long Island, New York, and he saw the move as an opportunity for an exciting new venture. It was Kreissle's intention to start his ironwork business over, only on a smaller scale. He hoped to get away from the recent push for mass production and again work with his hands in order to get "back in touch with my art and myself." Acquaintances and banking agents attempted to discourage him from giving up his established business, but to no avail. The Freeport business was sold and the family proceeded to explore possibilities in Florida, ultimately choosing Sarasota where "no one knew us" after first determining the east coast as too "busy."

Kreissle was able to meet a need in the Sarasota area. In 1924, prominent Sarasota architect Thomas Reid Martin had briefly established his own ornamental ironworks to fill his design and construction needs. After Martin ceased producing his own ironwork, he sought another source for the ornamental work. Some of the Kreissle Forge's earliest commissions were obtained from Martin and his son, architect Frank Martin.

Kreissle saw the move to Sarasota as an opportunity to follow a longtime ambition and dream to "build a landmark smithy" that was artistic as well as practical. Kreissle had his own ideas about the architecture and layout of his new building. He set his thoughts and plans on cardboard, including rough building and room dimensions. He selected the architectural firm of Ralph and William Zimmerman Architects to work with him and draw up the actual building plans. The building was constructed almost exactly as he had first envisioned it, with a large golden anvil on the side of a circular driveway to emphasize the forge; large handforged lettering, "Kreissle Forge" across a large chimney; a cupola with large weather vane on top; hand forged hardware; Dutch doors; a shake roof; wood gutters; and "most impressive showrooms."

From the time the building was completed in early 1947, the Forge and the Kreissle family immediately became involved with the increased building activity of Sarasota's postwar expansion, and their work was used in many of the postwar subdivisions being developed in the Sarasota area. They produced everything from hinges, hardware, and window grilles to entrance posts, street markers, lawn furniture, and ornamental work on buildings. During the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the Forge was the only firm

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producing custom ornamental work in the Sarasota area. Among their clients were many of the practitioners of the Sarasota School of Architecture such as Paul Rudolph, Tim Seibert, and Victor Lundy, who are credited with fashioning the transition from traditional to modern architecture. In addition to exterior decorative ironwork, the Forge also produced furniture pieces to adorn the interior of the homes designed by these members of the Sarasota School.

From 1947 up to the present, the Forge has produced much notable work, including custom iron gates at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Church on Longboat Key; the staircase of the 1960 Sarasota Herald Tribune Building; and exact replicas of the original imported iron entrance gates at Ca'd'Zan, the John Ringling home in Sarasota (NR 1982 as Caples'-Ringlings' Estates Historic District). These gates now stand as a secondary entrance to the museum while also providing access to the historic Asolo Theater interior, presently housed in a contemporary new building. They also produced ironwork for the Cathedral of St. Augustine; the Catholic chancery in St. Petersburg; Sarasota's Church of the Redeemer; Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church in Whitfield Estates; and countless intricate staircases, fences, grilles, lighting fixtures, furniture, gates and door and window hardware in private homes and businesses in Sarasota and throughout the United States. In 1969, the Forge was commissioned to reproduce historic ironwork for the Tri-Centennial Celebration in Charleston, South Carolina. Their work remains on permanent display there. In 1979, the Kreissle Forge crafted a pair of hand-wrought iron entrance gates for the South Florida Museum-Bishop Planetarium. The gates include over 600 hot-forged scrolls, 250 tapered spikes and 200 tie bands each. All of their commissions were carefully designed for aesthetic beauty as well as practical function. Because they are handmade, each design is original, and although they may be similar, no two pieces are exactly alike.

Kreissle's son George, Jr., followed in his father's footsteps, having grown up in the trade. George, Jr. was the proud recipient of several national awards while still a student at Sarasota High School. He spent his after school hours at the Forge acquiring skill and working side by side with his father. His devotion to the trade was honored when he received first prize as well as the outstanding achievement award in the metal division in the National Industrial Arts Awards Contest, sponsored by Ford Motor Company in 1950, having competed against 4,000 other students while also bearing the distinction of being the youngest entrant. His award was based on "his design and



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beauty of execution" of a wrought bell fixture. After his graduation from the New York Trade School as a smith, George, Jr. was sent to Leutkirch, Germany to study the trade under his uncle, Xaver, a master metalsmith and the German town's "artist in iron." After this apprenticeship, George, Jr. returned to work with his father and the smithy became truly a family affair. George Sr.'s daughter, Edna, worked in the office and sometimes helped in the forge increasing her sales abilities. George Sr.'s wife, Pia, tended to other details of the business. When George, Jr. married his wife, Mecky, she also joined the family in the business. George Kreissle, Sr.'s two grandsons have also been incorporated into the family business. In 1994, the Kreissle Forge and Joey Kreissle, one of the grandsons, were presented with Craftsmanship Awards in the category of custom metal work by the Construction Association of South Florida for the continued quality of the work produced at the Forge.

An atmosphere exists in the Kreissle Forge, save for the contemporary dress and presence of a few power tools, that is as much a part of the 18th century as of our own. This atmosphere pervades the family-centered business: three generations of parents, children, grandchildren, uncles and aunts laboring under the conviction that quality is something worked out of the raw material and not cast from a mold. The basic principles of the traditional trade survives contemporary pressures with a commitment to quality workmanship, thrift and industry, thus linking what was once a severely threatened but living craft and tradition to future generations.

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INTERVIEWS BY MIKKI HARTIG:

Kreissle, George, Sr., 15 January 1995, Sarasota, Florida.

Kreissle, George, Jr., 13 and 15 January 1995, Sarasota, Florida.

Patten, Clyde, Board Member, Florida Blacksmith/Artisan  
Association, Monticello, Florida, 17 January and 20 February  
1995.

Seibert, Tim, architect, 20 February 1995, Sarasota, Florida.

Wallace, Jim, Director, National Ornamental Metal Museum,  
Memphis, Tennessee, 17 January 1995.

West, Jack, architect, 15 February 1995, Sarasota, Florida.

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**Verbal Description**

Begin at northwest corner of Block 14, thence southeasterly along west side of said Block 14, 200 feet, thence east to point on east boundary of said Block 14, 170 feet south of northeast corner of said Block 14, thence north along east boundary 170 feet to northeast corner of said Block 14, thence west approximately 237.7 feet along north boundary to POB, Ballentine Manor, Bay Heights Section.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary, as shown on the enclosed site plan, includes all of the land that is presently associated with the Kreissle Forge.

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1. Kreissle Forge, 7947 Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL
2. Manatee County, Florida
3. Mikki Hartig
4. February 1995
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 3708 Flores Ave., Sarasota, FL 34239
6. Main (southwest) facade, view looking east
7. 1 of 18

Unless otherwise noted, items #1-5 are the same for all the remaining photographs

3. George Kreissle, Sr.
4. 1947
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 3708 Flores Ave., Sarasota, FL 34239
6. Historic photo of original building, view looking east. Main (southwest) facade on right; northwest elevation on left
7. 2 of 18

3. Sherry Piland
4. January 1996
5. Bureau of Historic Preservation, 500 Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Fl.
6. Detail, entrance area, main (southwest) facade; view looking northeast
7. 3 of 18

6. Main (southwest) facade, view looking southeast
7. 4 of 18

6. Main (southwest) facade, view looking north
7. 5 of 18

6. Detail, main (southwest) facade, view looking east
7. 6 of 18

6. Detail, main (southwest) facade, 1952 addition; view looking east
7. 7 of 18

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5. Detail, main (southwest) facade, breezeway area; view looking northeast
6. 8 of 18
6. View of 1948 rear addition, northeast elevation; view looking southwest
7. 9 of 18
6. View of courtyard area, view looking northwest
7. 10 of 18
6. Interior detail, forge workroom; view looking west
7. 11 of 18
3. George Kreissle, Sr.
4. 1947
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 3708 Flores Ave., Sarasota, FL 34239
6. Historic view of interior, forge workroom; view looking west
7. 12 of 18
6. Interior detail, forge workroom; view looking west
7. 13 of 18
6. Interior detail, office/showroom; view looking northwest
7. 14 of 18
6. Interior detail, 1952 display area addition; view looking southeast
7. 15 of 18
6. Interior detail, looking from breezeway into 1952 display area addition; view looking southeast
7. 16 of 18
3. Sherry Piland
4. January 1996
5. Bureau of Historic Preservation, 500 S. Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Fl.
6. Interior detail, looking from breezeway into original office/showroom; view looking northwest
7. 17 of 18

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6. Detached showroom on left; main facade of Kreissle Forge on right; view looking east
7. 18 of 18

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Approx. Scale: 0.5"=12.5'

Boundary — — — — —

Non-Contributing 

Photo Direction 

