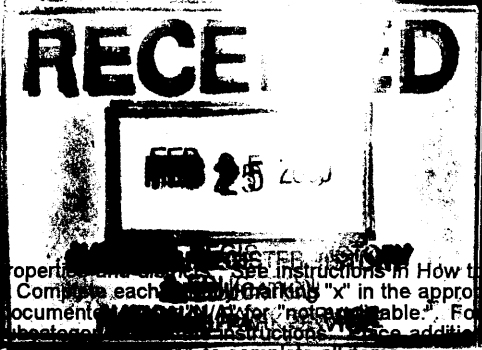


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and areas. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A) for information on how to use this form. If any item does not apply to the property being nominated, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural features, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Use additional sheets for additional entries and narrative descriptions. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.



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1. Name of Property

historic name PINECREST HOTEL, OLD

other names/site number Maharishi School of Vedic Science

2. Location

street & number 1609 S. Lake Lotela Drive

N/A  not for publication

city or town Avon Park

vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Highlands code 055 zip code 33825

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.)

Janet Snyder Matthews 2/10/2000  
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) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson A. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

3/24/00  
Date of Action

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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	2	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

DOMESTIC/Hotel

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Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

EDUCATION/Student Housing

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:Mediterranean Revival

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Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Pier

walls Stucco

roof Clay Tile; Asphalt Shingle

other

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Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926-1950

Significant Dates

1926

1936

1950

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Arch: Heim, William

Blder: Bennit and Moseley

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

#

PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
Name of Property

Highlands Co., FL  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2 apprx.

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	5	3	4	0	0	3	0	5	0	0	6	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 Mikki Hartig, Consultant/Carl Shiver Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date February 2000

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 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 Ken Krumpe, Maharishi School of Ayur-Veda, Inc.

street & number 1609 S. Lake Lotela Drive telephone (941) 452-5111

city or town Avon Park state Florida zip code 33825

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.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

**SUMMARY**

The Old Pinecrest Hotel, located at 1609 South Lake Lotela, Drive in Avon Park, Florida, is a two-story, irregular plan, Mediterranean Revival style building comprising five major segments that were constructed in three stages—1926, 1936, and 1950. The exterior of the stuccoed, wood frame former hotel features towers, clay tile roofs, ornamented chimney caps, arched windows, and balconies. The building extends—in an approximately linear arrangement—along the southeast shore of Lake Lotela and is approached by a circular entrance drive off S. Lake Lotela Drive on the east. The interior of the former hotel retains many of its original details and decorative elements, particularly in its public spaces. Notable elements include the open truss work of the main dining hall, stone fireplace mantles, cast concrete twisted columns, clay tiled floors, arched doorways and windows, niches, and original light and plumbing fixtures. The southernmost section of the hotel is the oldest (1926) and was designed to be the clubhouse of the Pinecrest Country Club. The next three sections—moving north and east were constructed in 1936. The 1950 addition is located at the north end of the building. Two of the three 1936 sections and the 1950 addition were designed to contain guest rooms. A middle section (oriented east-west) of the 1936 construction originally contained offices, utility areas, and some public spaces.

**SETTING**

Avon Park, Florida is located in the northeast corner of Highlands County, found in the central highlands of the Florida peninsula. The city is found approximately halfway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Three small lakes lie within the corporate limits of the community, and a fourth—Lake Lotela—defines the southeastern boundary of the city. Several highways intersect within Avon Park. U.S. Highway 27 defines the western corporate limit. State Road 64 originates in Avon Park and runs west to Bradenton. The nearest major metropolitan area is Tampa, eighty miles northwest. Avon Park is centered between Orlando and Ft. Meyers. The Old Pinecrest Hotel, currently known as the Maharishi School of Vedic Science, is located approximately two miles SE of downtown Avon Park. The original site encompassed 129 acres including the site on which the large two-story building stands. The hotel closed in 1973, and the 119 acre portion of the site containing the golf course was sold for continued use as a golf course. The remaining 10 acres, including the old hotel building was sold to the School of Vedic Science. Only about two acres are included in this nomination. The historic property is bounded on the north by residences, on the south and east by the golf course, and on the west by Lake Lotela.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

The south block of the building (Photos 1-5), completed in 1926, features aired front facing hip roofs that are linked by a single side-facing roof line, slightly narrower and slightly lower than those it abuts on the north and south. This portion of the southern component displays an overall symmetry. Chimneys adorned

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PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

with accentuated stucco and clay tile caps are located at the north and south ridge of the central roof line. The second story wall extensions are faced with tripartite windows. The center arch is slightly higher than the flanking arches. Twisted columns separate the windows which feature lintels, jambs, and sills covered with accented stucco. Seven-bay loggias are located on the first floor on the east facade and west elevation. The arches of the east loggia are enclosed with multi-light windows, while the west loggia (Photo 4) is open. The central bay entrance (Photo 5) is accessed by simple masonry steps. It has a heavy, stuccoed door surround set with decorative tile. The seven window bays above the east loggia have paired arched openings with accentuated stuccoed lintel, jambs, and sills, with twisted columns separating the window pairs.

The immediate neighbor to the original section of the building is similar in some respects to the 1926 block. Joining the two major sections is a connector (Photo 6) having a three-bay arched loggia on the first story and double-arched window bays above. The second floor windows on this connecting element are slightly deeper than their counterpart to the south, but otherwise are essentially the same, including the accentuated window surrounds. The west wall is set on two planes. The two bays of the south plane of the west wall are identical to the three described on the east. The north plane of the west wall has independently located window openings.

The west lodging component (Photos 3, 6-7) is essentially symmetrical, and the west and east elevations are nearly identical. The extreme north and south bays have single arched bays at the first floor level and paired arched bays of similar width above. The lower arches are unadorned; however, the paired upper arches have accentuated lintels supported by a centered, free standing twisted column. Arched openings at both levels were lined with ornamented wood balustrades. The five central bays consist of unadorned, paired window openings regularly spaced along each elevation. A shed roof extends slightly over the second and fourth bays, supported by knee braces. Wall surfaces below these roof extensions are slightly recessed between shallow pilasters. This section of the building is supported by masonry piers.

The connecting element between the two 1936 lodging components and intervening arcade is a three-story, octagonal tower (Photos 7-8). It is relatively unadorned, but otherwise features materials and methods of construction similar to the other portions of the original hotel. Windows and arched openings are found on the first and second floors. The tower has a flush-front, three-story south wall, but extends out at the first two levels on the north side. The tower's octagonal shape is not readily apparent until the third floor extends above the surrounding roofs. Two pair of five-light wood casement windows are centered on each of the third floor walls. Centered atop the third story of the tower is an octagonal lantern or cupola, itself surmounted by an octagonal finial

A five-bay arcade, links the three-story octagonal tower on the west with a three-story square tower on the east (Photo 8). It was finished with the same materials as the two other major original building components, but is somewhat more austere. On the second story, single and paired windows in simple wood frames are

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PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

staggered over the arched bays of the first floor loggia on the south elevation (enclosed with jalousie windows and fixed glass c. 1957). A chimney is centered on the north wall (Photos 8-9). Unlike the interior chimneys, it is tapered and has only a simple chimney clay tile cap. A square, three-story tower (Photos 1 & 10) is part of a connector linking the arcade with the east lodging block. It has paired window openings on its first and second levels. The third level, which stands above the adjacent roofing, features double arches separated by free-standing twisted columns. The tower is covered by a pyramidal roof.

The east lodging block (Photos 10-11) adjoins the arcade and tower block at its north end and extends to the southeast. It is basically rectangular with a clay-tiled hip roof, stuccoed wall surfaces, and a pier foundation. It closely resembles the western lodging component, yet some differences are discernible. It has a shed roof extension over its south end wall sheltering a three-bay balcony. The balcony is made of wood, with shaped floor joists, full-length posts, and balusters. Below that are paired wood porches, supported on pier foundations, with ornamented knee walls topped with small wood balustrades. The west and east elevations of this block are fitted with simple paired windows at the first and second level. In addition, the paired window openings are set in walls that are slightly recessed. Shed roof extensions on the east and west elevations are supported on shaped wood brackets.

The northeast block, constructed in 1950, contains 24 rooms (Photo 12). At first glance, it appears to mirror the southeast block, but deviations are apparent. It accurately reflects the scale, massing, and surface finishes of the southeast block. A north porch and balcony configuration is essentially identical, as are the slightly recessed walls along the east and west elevations at the location of window pairs. Nonetheless, a slight variation in plan is reflected in the pattern of window placement.

**Interior**

The interior of the former hotel displays a great deal of its original architectural details, including most of the original light and plumbing fixtures. The walls and ceilings are plastered, having a textured finish in most of the public places, but being smooth in the guest rooms. Ceilings heights vary from 10 to 12 feet. The building retains most of the original glazed or wood paneled interior doors and door hardware. Although almost all of the window transoms and wood casement windows leading to the loggias remain, a number of the windows exposed to the weather have been replaced with vinyl clad units.

The floors in the major public spaces are clay tile, whereas those in the guest rooms are heart of pine. The fireplace mantles are large, made of rubble stone, and tend to be proportionately low to the floor. The primary public spaces, such as the lobby, large dining room, and lounge areas feature cast stone details, including twisted columns with ornate capitals, ornamented wood corbels, and niches.

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PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

The south block of the building was designed to have a first floor reception area, clubroom, pro-shop, bar and restaurant, locker room, office, public restrooms, power plant, and laundry. These spaces, although some now serve different purposes, remain virtually unaltered. In the lobby (Photos 13-14) cast concrete twisted columns rise from the clay tile floor to shallow arches that support the 12 foot ceiling finished with textured plaster. The first floor was also designed with and retains an interior walled staircase with a simple wood handrail. Ornate metal railings separate the top stair landing from the second floor dining area. The main dining hall (Photos 15-16) on the second floor was intended to seat 150 people. It is a large open space with exposed wood trusses that rest on ornamented brackets. There are fireplaces at both ends of the dining area. The west side of the dining hall has French doors that open onto an enclosed loggia (Photo 17). There is also a small "private" dining room on the second floor separated by a space presently used as a food service area. This space also features one of the typical rubble stone fireplaces found in various parts of the old hotel (Photo 18).

The lodging areas are similar to one another in material, design, and scale. They utilize a center hall plan (Photos 19-20). When completed by 1936, the west component had 28 units, the southeast had 26. The northeast component was constructed in 1950 with 24 units. All of these units (Photos 21-22) have remained essentially unaltered in their plans and interior finishes. Bathrooms for the guest rooms are generally located back to back.

**Alterations**

A separate two-story structure designed as employees' quarters was erected in 1936 just south of the main building. That historic building, with its twenty rooms, was demolished in 1995. Site additions that remain on the hotel property were constructed in 1957. These include a kidney-shaped pool and adjacent pump station (Photos 23-24) located northwest of the arcade section, a 20 room former strip motel (Photos 25-27) found immediately north of the swimming pool, and a children's classroom building (Photos 28-29) that stands south of the 1926 section of the hotel. The former strip hotel is a rectangular, one-story, masonry building. The classroom is also a one-story masonry building with a rectangular plan. Both the strip hotel and classroom building are excluded from the boundaries of this nomination.

The original building generally retains its original plan, materials, fixtures, and hardware. In response to personal comfort and maintenance issues, however, many of the originally open loggia and porch bays have been enclosed with glass. Most evident are the jalousie enclosures in the arcade installed in 1957. Regardless, the openings still read as originally open bays. Another notable alteration was the replacement in 1995 of many of the original wood casement windows with vinyl double-hung sash windows. The former hotel otherwise remains essentially unaltered. Its massing and essentially intact plan and interior spaces making it a significant Highlands County historical resource.



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Section number 8 Page 1 PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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**SUMMARY**

The Old Pinecrest Hotel is significant at the local level under criterion C in the area of architecture. The building was designed by architect William Heim, who was prominent in the construction of a variety of public and private buildings, including movie theaters, hotels, and schools, in Avon Park and other parts of Florida from the 1920s through the 1950s. The Pinecrest Hotel is the largest and most elaborate Mediterranean Revival style building in the immediate Avon Park area and was among the most ambitious of the projects undertaken by William Heim during the 1920s. The building—whose completion was spread over a period of 24 years—is an excellent example of the adaptation of the Mediterranean Revival style to a large hotel complex. Noteworthy features displayed by the building include ornamented chimney caps, clay tile roofs, exposed and ornamented rafter ends, arched loggias, and stuccoed wall finishes. The architectural theme is also expressed in the interior by stuccoed reliefs, clay floor tiles, arched doorways and windows, stone mantles, and other details. The Old Pinecrest Hotel is currently owned by the Maharishi School of Ayur-Veda, Inc., considered by some to be a religious organization. Criterion Consideration A, therefore, applies.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

**The Founding and Development of Avon Park**

Avon Park was founded by Oliver Crosby, who first arrived in the area in 1884. Born in New York in 1852, Crosby spent much of his youth in Danbury, Connecticut. He established an eighteen acre nursery there and worked as an ornamental horticulturist for about twelve years before he made his first trip to Florida. Employed as the Florida editor of the South magazine, he was sent to Florida by the publisher of the periodical, Obadiah Clough, to solicit advertising for the journal. In addition to South, Clough published illustrated booklets and folders advertising resort hotels, steamboats, railroads, and towns located mainly in the southern states. Crosby's trips to Florida convinced him of the potential for making large profits on land development in the still largely unpopulated state. Large tracts of property could be acquired cheaply and resold at a large profit to settlers and developers, if the property was advertised in Clough's publications. Clough decided to finance the venture and in 1886, Clough conditionally acquired 20,000 acres of land in central Florida that included the present area of Avon Park. Crosby became the main force behind attracting investors to the area and in 1887 acquired Clough's interests in the property and founded the Florida Development Company, with himself as president, to handle land sales.<sup>1</sup>

Crosby headquartered himself in Jacksonville and began efforts to advertise the community, which he named Avon Park after the English author William Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon. Crosby

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver M. Crosby, "Avon Park's History, 1885 to 1896," unpublished manuscript, 1919. P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, 3-17.

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PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICACE

published a map of the township in 1886 and issued a revised version in 1889. On the new plat Crosby provided a detailed plan of the settlement, consisting of grid street patterns, four parks, and residential lots around the lakes. Outlying areas were reserved for citrus production.<sup>2</sup> Crosby published a handbook called Florida Facts, that extolled the virtues of Florida and Avon Park. He also issued another publication Homeseeker that promoted the new development.<sup>3</sup>

A post office was established at the new settlement in 1888, and a general store began operations the same year. In 1889, a stage and freight route was established from Ft. Meade, located about 20 miles to the northwest, and construction of the Hotel Verona—to house potential settlers and land buyers—was completed in the same year. By 1890, a sawmill was in operation, making lumber available for the construction of houses and other permanent buildings. The population of Avon Park in 1890 stood at sixty-four permanent residents.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 400 acres had been planted in citrus by 1892. Over the next two years, a number of improvements were made to the community, including the construction of a school and a new post office.<sup>5</sup> The winter of 1893 saw the climax of success for Crosby in Avon Park. Approximately 100 structures had been built, and the Verona Hotel was full to capacity for the season. Early in 1893, the Bank of Avon Park had been established and by December had assets of \$183,000. Several additional residential subdivisions were established, and new commercial buildings were appearing in the downtown area.<sup>6</sup>

Further development of the community was curtailed suddenly by a devastating freeze that struck central Florida in the winter 1894-1895, destroying the citrus crop. The severe cold also killed the trees, shattering the industry underpinning the local economy. Avon Park became almost a ghost town overnight. The population dropped from 500 to 128, and tourists sought destinations farther south to insure themselves a warmer winter climate. Citrus production at Avon Park would not recover completely until the second decade of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> The economic regeneration of Avon Park began with the arrival in 1912 of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Avon Park benefited enormously from being a destination of the rail line, spurring growth of the citrus, vegetable farming, cattle ranching, and timber related industries which now had easy access to outside markets. The railroad also made it easier for tourists and new settlers to reach the community. The Town of Avon Park was incorporated in 1913. The population of the community had stood at 225 in the year 1900; however, by 1920, it had risen to 890.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of acres of citrus had been planted in the vicinity of Avon

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; Federal Writer's Project, "Avon Park," P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, unpublished manuscript, 1937, 64, 69.  
<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Thirteenth Census. 1910. Population. 3 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1911), 2: 304; Federal Writer's Program, "Avon Park," 66-67.  
<sup>5</sup> Crosby, "Avon Park," 6; Lee, "Avon Park," 10-12; Maxwell, Avon Park, 49.  
<sup>6</sup> Federal Writer's Program, "Avon Park," 71-72; Maxwell, Avon Park, 48, 96; Crosby, "Avon Park," 12-13.  
<sup>7</sup> Crosby, "Avon Park," 17-18.  
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; 15-16; Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census. 1930. Population. 3 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1931), 1; 205; Federal Writer's Program, "Avon Park," 74.

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PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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Park by 1922, and packing houses stood along the ACL tracks, holding crates of oranges and grapefruit awaiting shipment to distant markets. The city also boasted an orange and grapefruit juice canning plant, and a citrus nursery covering 500 acres that was established to develop new varieties of fruit.<sup>9</sup>

Like many other parts of the state, Avon Park benefited somewhat from the economic forces that were driving the Florida Land Boom that had begun in Miami during the first half of the 1920s. New residential subdivisions were established, and hotels were constructed in the vicinity of the community's scenic lakes to attract winter visitors. The land speculation bubble in Florida began to burst in 1926, although not all communities were adversely affected at the same time. The economic collapse struck first at Miami Beach where the over-extension of credit for land deals combined with a devastating hurricane in 1926 to bring development to a halt. In other parts of the state, land development continued at an ever decreasing rate almost to the end of the decade, and large projects—like the construction of the Pinecrest Hotel—were undertaken in the confidence that any downturn in the economy was merely temporary. Hopes for full recovery and a renewal of the pace of land development activity that had marked the Boom years, however, were dashed by the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Avon Park weathered the economic difficulties of the pre-World War II decade better than many other Florida communities. In 1930, the population stood at 3,528 residents and by 1940, the number had dropped only to 3,125. A number of important buildings—including the Art Deco style Park Theater designed by William Heim in 1935—were constructed in the community during the Depression. Avon Park and the rest of the nation emerged from the Great Depression with the economic activity spurred by the growth of defense industries during World War II. Avon Park served as the location of an Army Air Corps training facility, Hendricks Field.<sup>10</sup> During the post-war period, Avon Park continued to grow and now has a population of approximately 8,500.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pinecrest Hotel was constructed on land purchased in 1890 by one of Avon Park's early settlers, Royal Page Davidson, for the construction of his residence. In 1924, the property passed to Davidson's son, Royal Page Davidson, Jr. The following year, he hired local architect William Heim to design a clubhouse and hotel for the Pinecrest Country Club and golf course overlooking Lake Lotela. The clubhouse for the golf course was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$50,000, but the collapse of the Florida Land Boom delayed construction of the resort hotel to be linked to the clubhouse—also to be designed by Heim—until 1936. The clubhouse featured a first-floor reception area, a clubroom, a pro-shop, a bar and restaurant, a locker room, offices, public restrooms, a power plant, a laundry, and a large staircase leading to the second floor which

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<sup>9</sup> Maxwell, *Avon Park*, 144-145.

<sup>10</sup> Sebring Historical Society, *Bulletin* 34 (April 1978), n.p.

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Section number 8 Page 4 PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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contained a grand dining room which seated 150. There were also smaller dining rooms on the second floor to accommodate more intimate parties. An arcaded loggia located next to the large dining room allowed guests to dine in the open air with an appealing view of Lake Lotela.

Before the construction of the guest room sections of the hotel, Pinecrest served as the clubhouse for the Pinecrest Golf Course. The first nine holes, located east of the hotel, were also constructed in 1926 and were designed by nationally prominent golf course architect Donald Ross. Until the hotel was constructed, visiting golfers lodged at the downtown Jacaranda Hotel—also designed by William Heim—which had been completed in 1926. The bust of the Florida real estate market forced Davidson to sell the Pinecrest property before construction of the hotel had begun.<sup>11</sup> A new owner, E. B. Hitchcock, from Chicago, purchased the Pinecrest clubhouse and attendant property on January 4, 1936. He added nine holes to the golf course and undertook the completion the hotel according to Heim's original designs, employing Heim and his son, James, as supervising architects.<sup>12</sup>

In 1939, the Pinecrest was sold to joint owners Horace C. Wright and Mark Thompson. Horace C. Wright was the Chairman of the Board and CEO of the Sunbeam Corporation, and Mark Thompson was a Boston restaurant equipment distributor. During their ownership, the Pinecrest became known as an exclusive resort attracting the rich and famous and the infamous. Among the guests who vacationed at the hotel were the comedy team of George Burns and Gracie Allen, baseball greats Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and Chicago gangster Al Capone. Wright hired Robert King, Jr., manager of the Jacaranda Hotel, to manage the Pinecrest for one year. Wright then hired Thomas Flaherty a Chicago hotelier, who moved with his entire staff from Chicago to Avon Park to manage the Pinecrest.<sup>13</sup> During this decade, nine holes were kept open for use by local golfers in the off-season from May to November. During the season which lasted from December through April, only members of the Pinecrest Country Club and guests of the hotel were allowed to use the hotel's golf course.

**William Heim, Architect**

Architect William J. Heim moved from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Avon Park in 1920 after completing designs the E.M Brickell Building on East Main Street in downtown Avon Park. He had been commissioned to prepare designs for buildings that the Pittsburgh-Florida Fruit Growers Association planned to construct. Soon after setting up offices in the Brickell Building, he planned the Lake Bird Lodge, which the Association used to house and entertain prospective investors in the citrus industry. The Association also had him design their first citrus packing house in 1921 and a larger packing facility in 1923. Heim was also hired to

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<sup>11</sup> James Heim, Personal communication with Francis V. Tonello, 15 January 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Robert King, Jr., Personal communication with Francis V. Tonello, 29 August 1996.

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design other structures in the community, including the Jacaranda Hotel (1926), the Avon Park City Hall (1927), and the Pinecrest Country Club and Hotel. Heim became well-known for his designs for movie theaters, which included the Park Theatre in Avon Park, the Circle and Florida theaters in Sebring, the Dade Theatre in Dade City, the Auburn Theatre in Auburndale, and the Florida Theatre in Wauchula. In addition to indoor theaters, Heim also designed a number of drive-in theaters and was credited with devising the triangular towers that became a common feature of their construction. Among buildings elsewhere in Highlands County designed by Heim were the Sebring Fire Station and a number of residences in Sebring. Construction of the Pinecrest Hotel, 1926-1950, occupied more than two decades of his career. Upon his graduation from the University of Florida School of Architecture in 1950, Heim's son, James, joined his father's practice, creating the firm of Heim and Heim. They received commissions from county school boards to design buildings, including Avon Park Elementary School, Lake Placid High School, Woodlawn Elementary School, the cafeteria and gymnasium of Avon Park High School, and additions to the E.O. Douglas High School in Sebring.<sup>14</sup> The firm was also responsible for construction of the 1950 addition to the Pinecrest Hotel.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pinecrest Hotel is the largest and most elaborate Mediterranean Revival style building in the immediate Avon Park area and is certainly the most ambitious of the projects undertaken by William Heim, occupying his career from 1926 to 1950. There are only sixteen buildings in Avon Park identified as being in the Mediterranean Revival style. All but the Pinecrest Hotel are residences. Heim worked in a variety of styles. His Park Theater is an Art Deco style building, and the Avon Park City Hall displays Neoclassical influences.<sup>15</sup> The Pinecrest Hotel, therefore, is his only major structure reflecting Mediterranean Revival styling, in particular Spanish Eclectic. The Mediterranean Revival style is commonly associated with Florida during the Florida Land Boom, and it was particularly popular throughout the decade of the 1920s for buildings of all types of uses, both public and private. Noteworthy elements of this style used in the construction of the Pinecrest Hotel include ornamented chimney caps, clay tile roofs, exposed and ornamented rafter ends, arched loggias, and stuccoed wall finishes. Other character defining details of the original building include accentuated stucco, clay floor tiles, arched doorways and windows, stone mantles, cast stone twisted columns, decorative metal work, ornamental wood work, and two towers.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen A. Olausen, *Sebring: City on the Circle* (St. Augustine: Southern Heritage Press, 1993) 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Historic Properties Survey, Avon Park, Florida* (St. Augustine, Florida: Historic Property Associates, 1989) 28, 33-34, 39-40.

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PINECREST HOTEL, OLD  
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Approximately two acres of C-25-33-28-050-0040-0110, Maharishi School of c/o Mved-Neo, Avon Lake, OH 44012, Replat of Pinecrest Lakes ECT PER PB 3-PGS 7+8, Lots 11-12-13-14-15 BLK 4. The boundaries of property for the historic Old Pinecrest Hotel are those shown on the site plan accompanying the National Register nomination.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries shown on the site plan accompanying this nomination encompass that portion of the above property that includes all of the existing historic buildings associated with the original Pinecrest Hotel constructed between 1926 and 1950.



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PHOTOGRAPHS

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1. Old Pinecrest Hotel
2. 1609 S. Lake Lotela Drive, Avon Park (Highlands County), Florida
3. Ken Krumpe
4. July, 1998
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services
6. East (Main) facade and East Elevations, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 1 of 29

**Items 1-5 are the same for all of the following photographs.**

6. East (Main) facade and East Elevations, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 2 of 29
  
6. East (Main) Facade of Original Clubhouse and East Elevation of West 1936 Addition,  
Looking Southwest
7. Photo 3 of 29
  
6. Rear Elevation of 1926 Block, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 4 of 29
  
6. Main Entrance Door, 1926 Block, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 5 of 29
  
6. East Elevation, Connector, West 1936 Block, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 6 of 29
  
6. Octagonal Tower, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 7 of 29
  
6. Octagonal Tower and South Elevation of Arcade, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 8 of 29
  
6. West Elevation of East Block, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 9 of 29
  
6. South Elevation of East Block, Looking North
7. Photo 10 of 29

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6. Southeast and Northeast Elevations of Northeast (1950) Block, Looking Southwest

7. Photo 11 of 29

6. Northeast Elevation of Northeast (1950) Block, Looking Southeast

7. Photo 12 of 29

6. Main Lobby, 1926 Section, Looking Southwest

7. Photo 13 of 29

6. Lobby Staircase to Large 2nd Floor Dining Hall, Looking Southwest

7. Photo 14 of 29

6. Dining Hall, Looking Northeast from South End

7. Photo 15 of 29

6. Dining Hall, Looking South from North End

7. Photo 16 of 29

6. Loggia West of Dining Hall, Looking Southwest from Northeast End

7. Photo 17 of 29

6. Stone Fireplace in 2nd Floor Food Service Area, Looking South

7. Photo 18 of 29

6. Hallway, 2nd Floor, West (1936) Block, Looking Northeast

7. Photo 19 of 29

6. Hallway, 2nd Floor, at Juncture of 1936 and 1950 Blocks, Looking Northeast

7. Photo 20 of 29

6. Guestroom, 2nd Floor of West (1936) Block, Looking East

7. Photo 21 of 29

6. Guestroom, 2nd Floor of East (1936) Block, Looking South

7. Photo 22 of 29

6. Swimming Pool, Looking Northwest

7. Photo 23 of 29

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- 6. Swimming Pool and Northwest Elevation of West (1936) Block, Looking South
- 7. Photo 24 of 29
  
- 6. Southeast Elevation of Former Motel Unit and Rear of Main Hotel, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 25 of 29
  
- 6. Southeast and Northwest Elevations of Former Motel Unit, Looking North
- 7. Photo 26 of 29
  
- 6. Northwest Elevation of Former Motel Unit, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 27 of 29
  
- 6. Southeast and Northeast Elevations of Former Children's Classroom Building, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 28 of 29
  
- 6. Northwest Elevation of Former Children's Classroom Building, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 29 of 29