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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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 the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name OUT OF DOOR SCHOOL

other names/site number Out-of-Door Academy; Site File #8S02240

2. Location

street & number 444 Reid Street N/A not for publication

city or town Sarasota N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Sarasota code 115 zip code 34242

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 9/26/94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida 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

10-28-94
Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

~~Out of Door School~~
Name of Property

Sarasota 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)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	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)

EDUCATION/ School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete pier

walls wood siding, cypress timbers

roof asphalt; foam over metal

other brick

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)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1924 - 1944

Significant Dates

ca. 1924

1932

1935-36

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Fanneal Harrison

Catherine Gavin
Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Ralph Twitchell

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:

Out of Door School

Name of Property

Sarasota Co., Fl.

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid 1: Zone 17, Easting 345560, Northing 3018880

UTM grid 3: Zone, Easting, Northing

UTM grid 4: Zone, Easting, Northing

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 August 1994

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

city or town Tallahassee state Fl. 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

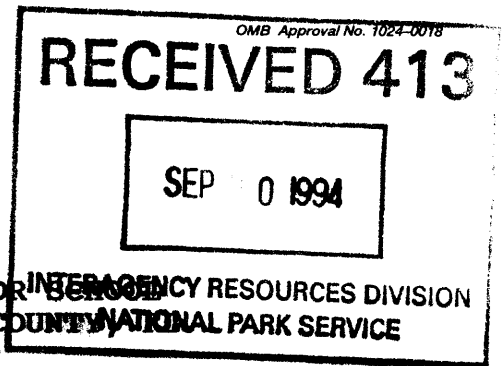
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1



SUMMARY

The Out of Door School is located at 444 Reid Street on Siesta Key, near Sarasota, Florida. Although most of the early buildings of the school have been demolished, three survive and continue to portray the historical and architectural significance of the school. The nominated property consists of the Boys' Residence, the Theater, and the Library. All three buildings are of frame construction. Two of the three buildings were designed by Ralph Twitchell, noted Sarasota architect. Only one of the buildings remains in its original location.

PRESENT AND ORIGINAL SETTING

The Out of Door School (presently called the Out-of-Door Academy) is located on Siesta Key, an island five miles long and about a mile wide at its widest point, west of Sarasota.

The school occupies an irregular parcel of approximately five acres, bordered by Reid Street to the north, Gleason Avenue to the west, Ralph Street to the south and Higel Avenue to the east. Reid Street was not constructed until the late 1950s. Prior to its construction, the school property extended across Ocean Boulevard (formerly known as Siesta Drive) to the Gulf of Mexico (see Site Plan 1). The campus thus developed as two distinctive areas. The waterfront parcel was arranged in an informal manner and contained classroom cottages, a girls residence, a theater, an arts and crafts building, a bath house, and a dining room/kitchen structure. The parcel south of Ocean Boulevard consisted of buildings arranged around a rectangular quadrangle. This more formal and traditional quadrangle site plan, designed by architect Ralph Twitchell, served not only as a means to organize the buildings but as a playground.

Following the construction of Reid Street, the school's property between Reid Street and Ocean Boulevard was sold. That parcel is now occupied by private residences and by the Siesta Key Chapel. In 1977, the waterfront school property north of Ocean Boulevard was sold and is now the site of a condominium. The sale of that property resulted in several changes to the remaining campus and its quadrangle plan.

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Terminating the quadrangle axis on the west and serving as the focal point of the campus is the Boys' Residence (photo 1). Originally several small buildings were aligned along the south side of the quadrangle, including the Library and several classroom structures. Buildings along the north side included a garage, laboratories, workshops, stores, classroom structures and administrative buildings. The longitudinal axis of the campus opened to the east into a large playing field and beyond to undisturbed nature. The library building was moved to near the center of the open space in 1992 (photo 2). Between 1963 and 1991, the buildings that were originally along the north and south sides of the quadrangle were replaced by modern structures of different scale and designs, but sited to preserve the central open space. With the exception of the Theater, the buildings on the waterfront parcel have been demolished. The Theater was moved to the southwest corner of the main campus in 1974 (photo 3).

There are presently two entrances to the campus, one off Gleason Avenue and a secondary entrance from Reid Street. The campus setting is now isolated from the tourism and steady traffic of Siesta Key, allowing the remaining school grounds to retain much of their original character as a camp-school in a natural setting. The surrounding buildings consist of the Siesta Key Chapel, single family residences, and multi-unit low-rise condominium developments, constructed over the last two decades.

THE BOYS' RESIDENCE

The Boys' Residence was built as a dormitory ca. 1924. It presently houses the administrative offices, and art and foreign language studios. The building has an irregular E-shaped plan (photos 1 and 4). The frame structure, surfaced with 3" tongue-and-groove vertical wood siding, rests on concrete piers with an open crawl space beneath. Each section of the building has a gable roof with exposed rafters. The original metal roofing material has been covered by several layers of foam, as a temporary measure prior to the installation of a new metal roof.

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Exterior

The main facade of the building faces west onto Gleason Street. Two deep courtyards on this facade are formed by the projecting wings of the building. They originally connected the main living spaces with the outdoors, providing light and ventilation. The main entrance to the building is from the northern courtyard (photo 5). A brick wall across the end of the northern courtyard contains the school logo on its west face and a wall fountain on its east face (photo 6). A tree has been planted in a fountain basin in the center of the courtyard (photo 7). The center wall of each courtyard space is dominated by a brick exterior chimney.

The east forecourt of the building is paved with concrete squares incised and inscribed by many of the graduating students who drew pictures representative of themselves in the squares, along with their name and years of graduation. The concrete panels, each about one foot square, were originally used to form concrete walkways that began in front of the school Library in 1932 and wound among the buildings. Many of these individual blocks, once located throughout the campus, have been relocated to the rear of the Boys' Residence. Their designs graphically show the shifting of interests and social attitudes during the half century of the school's operation (photo 8). Blocks cast in the early thirties are decorated largely with animals and simple designs, while more recent graduates depicted peace signs, rockets, and other symbols of modern times. The blocks form a historical documentation of the lives of the children who have come to study at the Out of Door School.

The doors and windows of this building are original, with the exception of six new hollow-core doors and nine new aluminum windows. A variety of windows were originally utilized, singly and in pairs: six-light wood casement; eight-light wood casement; ten-light metal casement and a 2/4 metal casement. Some of the original ten-light French doors have been replaced with fifteen-light French doors; others have been replaced with hollow-core doors

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Interior

The interior layout of the building has been altered in the process of transforming it from a dormitory to offices and classrooms (photo 9). Although additional wall partitions have been added, the modified king post and cross-rafter trusses which frame the roof structure are still visible. This design feature originally opened the interior space vertically, enhanced ventilation and cooling, and imparted a rustic effect. The trusses and the roof decking remain unpainted, as original (photo 10). Around 1930 the seventh grade class painted brightly colored murals on the upper wall section within the roof trusses of the original living room space. The murals were intended to depict progress. Three large stone fireplaces, two of them presently painted, are located in small alcoves in what was originally the central living space (photo 11).

THE CATHERINE GAVIN MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Catherine Gavin Memorial Library, designed by Ralph Twitchell, was constructed in 1932. In 1992, the Library was moved from its original site immediately to the south and east of the Boys' Residence to its present location at the eastern edge of the original campus quadrangle. It was moved to provide space for an additional modern classroom building. At present, the building is located in a low area which is susceptible to periodic flooding. In order to protect the building and its contents from flooding the structure is set on 28" cast concrete piers which elevate the floor line approximately 39" above the lowest point of the grade.

Exterior

The building is constructed of heavy cypress timbers and clad in 1" by 12" wide boards of this material overlapped horizontally (photo 12). The complex gabled roof was originally covered with wood shingles, but is now surfaced with asphalt shingles. The main facade of the T-shaped building faces west. The central entrance is approached by a short flight of wood steps or by a handicap access ramp which extends to the south. Eight foot pecky cypress timbers enframe the doorway and support a small gable located over the entrance. The door is a thick

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panel of pecky cypress with hammered wrought iron hinges. Directly above the door is original carved lettering denoting the building as the "Library".

All doors and windows in the building are original. The north elevation features a large, 12-light fixed glass window flanked by very small 4-light wood casement windows (photo 13).

The central section of the east elevation projects and contains a large stone chimney (photo 14). The north and south walls of the projection contain paired six-light casement windows.

The central portion of the south elevation is recessed and contains a multi-light door, no longer used because of the change in grade of the building (photo 15). Originally, this side of the building opened onto a landscaped terrace. The doorway is flanked by paired 6-light wood casement windows. The windows and door are framed by pecky cypress timbers.

In spite of the unfortunate relocation and elevation of the building, it retains its original design, building fabric, and historical and architectural significance. The building now serves as the east termination of the quadrangle (photo 16)

Interior

The unaltered interior of the Library consists of a large reading room and a small alcove. The reading room is designed with a tall open-trussed roof of 12" by 12" timbers and 4" by 4" intermediate rafters supporting a decking, all of pecky cypress. The entrance is on axis with a large boulder fireplace contained within the gabled alcove (photo 17). The fireplace is flanked by benches placed under large windows. The reading room is provided with extra illumination by the large window on the north elevation. The library shelves are placed at the south end of the reading room, behind the librarian's desk. The interior walls are covered with unpainted pecky cypress.

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THEATER

Exterior

The Theatre was designed and built by Ralph Twitchell c.1935-36 (photo 18). The structure was designed as a simple rectangular block covered with a gabled roof and is set on pre-cast concrete piers. In 1977 an addition was placed on the east elevation and the primary entrance was relocated from the west facade to the east elevation, beneath a small inset porch. The original entrance, on the west, is flanked by triple panels of aluminum awning windows. Two secondary entrances are located on the south elevation (photo 3).

All of the original windows have been replaced with aluminum awning windows; the original doors have also been replaced with modern wood doors. Except for the north facade, the original cypress lap siding remains intact. The north facade has been reclad in pecky cypress which closely matches the original siding in size and color. The 1977 addition was also sheathed in cypress to match the original.

About 1974 the theater was moved from its original site on school property north of Ocean Boulevard to its present location. The move was necessitated by the sale of the north parcel of school property. The original building design has been maintained overall, despite its relocation and small addition. As one of the structures designed by Ralph Twitchell, it remains an important historical element of the campus.

Interior

The auditorium space of the Theatre opens under a large hammer beam wood truss which spans the short dimension of the rectangular block. The 1977 addition, which does not intrude upon the main hall, provided needed utilitarian spaces. In November of 1978 the foundation of the building was repaired, an interior wall was relocated, and termite-damaged wood flooring was replaced.

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SUMMARY

The Out of Door School fulfills criteria A, B, and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level. Under criterion A, the school is significant as a unique private educational institution. The school, which opened in the spring of 1924, is one of the oldest independent schools in the State of Florida. It was the first (and perhaps only) school in the United States based upon the Decroly progressive educational method, which originated in Belgium. The Out of Door School has served the educational needs of the children of many prominent Sarasota residents as well as students from throughout the country and some foreign countries. It continues today to provide an alternative to public education.

The founders of the school, Miss Fanneal Harrison and Miss Catherine Gavin, were well-known social workers and educators who had worked abroad for a number of years before coming to Sarasota. Their importance in the history of Sarasota's educational development meets criterion B.

Under criterion C, the school buildings reflect the environmentally sensitive work of noted Sarasota architect Ralph Twitchell. Twitchell is considered the father of the modern architecture movement in Sarasota.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

As Sarasota evolved from a wilderness to a small town in the late nineteenth-century, settlers were also drawn to nearby Siesta Key because of the plentiful fishing and the seclusion the island offered. Beginning in 1907 efforts were made to attract tourists to Siesta Key by constructing a hotel, bath houses on the beach, and dredging a canal. These efforts proved largely unsuccessful until a bridge was erected in 1917, joining the Key to the mainland. A second, more modern bridge was constructed 10 years later, and that, coupled with the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s, made Siesta Key real estate appealing for a short time, with many northerners erecting winter homes along the Gulf and the island's inland bayous and canals. When the bottom fell out of the real estate market in the late 1920s, development on the Key virtually came to a standstill until after World War II.

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Sarasota County's school system dates from 1878 when a Miss Abbe started the first school in Sarasota after having been asked repeatedly by parents to help them teach their children. As the area slowly grew, more schools were built. However, by the 1920s the school system was struggling to accommodate the increased population resulting from the real estate boom of the 1920s. Some schools were so overcrowded that classes were conducted by two shifts of teachers, and some classes were held in barracks. To ease the situation, a construction program was undertaken and in 1925 and 1926 a number of new public elementary and high schools were constructed.

Siesta Key provided an ideal setting for the Out of Doors School, established in 1923 by Fanneal Harrison and Catherine Gavin. They based their school on the theories of Belgian educator, Dr. Ovid Decroly. This school fulfilled a desire for a private and progressive school for Sarasota children. There had been few alternatives to public education in Sarasota. Josephine Y. Pearce conducted a small private school in the city beginning in about 1912. Pearce, known as an excellent teacher, was originally from British Honduras and was a graduate of Sophie Newcomb College. When the Out of Door School was established, she merged her school with it and became a teacher for the new school. The Out of Door School represents an important element in the educational history of the area.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCEFanneal Harrison

Miss Fanneal Harrison was born in Decatur, Georgia, and grew up in Atlanta. Her father, Z. D. Harrison, served as a Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia in Atlanta. After graduation from Atlanta's Washington Seminary, Miss Harrison studied medicine for two years at the University of Michigan and then spent two years working in childrens' clinics in Atlanta and Boston. During World War I, she spent five years with the American Red Cross in Europe as the organizer and director of health camps for undernourished, orphaned, and destitute young children. She also worked in Belgium for two years with the American Citizens' Relief Committee, headed by Herbert Hoover, organizing and directing a campaign for better health habits among school

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children. She received the French Epidemic Medal for fighting the Spanish influenza epidemic among refugee children in 1918. At the end of the war, Harrison was sent to Czechoslovakia where she organized the first Junior Red Cross in Europe.

Catherine Gavin

Catherine Gavin was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1885. Prior to the outbreak of World War I, she worked with Girls' Club Camps and Camp Fire groups. During the war, under the auspices of the Knights of Columbus, Gavin ran a hotel in Paris and organized entertainment for war workers on leave. She then spent several years working for the Junior Red Cross in Czechoslovakia, followed by three years of service in Belgian schools with Hoover's Relief Committee. During these years in Europe, Gavin made a study of progressive methods in elementary education and became acquainted with several prominent educational innovators: Cizek in Austria, Decroly in Belgium, and Bakule in Prague. Gavin and Harrison became acquainted while working with the Junior Red Cross in Belgium.

Ovid Decroly and the Decroly Educational Method

Dr. Ovid Decroly, a Belgian physician and educator, was to the progressive education movement in Europe what Dr. John Dewey was to the movement in the United States. Decroly (1871-1932) studied medicine at the University of Ghent. This was followed by further studies in Berlin and Paris. He then settled in Brussels where he began his work in the field of mental illness. This led to his interest in education. In 1901 he established the Institute for Abnormal Children, a school with a home-like atmosphere. In 1907 he opened a similar program for normal children, the Ecole de l'Ermitage. Decroly's approach to education assimilated his outlook as a physician, psychologist, and educator. The program he developed, known as the Decroly method, was centered on a curriculum that analyzed childrens' needs in the areas of food, shelter, defense, and work. Within the framework of his program, children were encouraged to develop their individual interests. Taking advantage of natural curiosity, the child was encouraged to observe, collect, classify, experiment, draw his own deductions and make his own generalizations. The program accorded a larger place to the

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natural sciences than they usually received in the elementary school program. Decroly described his method as one that "let the child prepare for life by living." The aim was to create an environment of freedom, but without disorder or chaos, where children might lead natural lives in which mental, physical and emotional growth could be equalized. By the early 1920s, his method was adopted by some classes in the Brussels public school system. In 1925 Dr. Decroly was appointed Chairman of Child Psychology at the University of Brussels, an indication of his expertise and reputation.

In 1925, one of his many followers and the director of his school in Brussels, Amelie Hamaide, published a textbook, La Method Decroly. The book was translated into five languages. The 1924 English translation, entitled The Decroly Class, was dedicated to Misses Harrison and Gavin and Miss Mabel Bragg, all of whom had worked in Belgian schools.

The direct influence of Decroly on the Out of Door School was strong during its founding years. As a demonstration of his faith in his method and in Harrison and Gavin, Dr. Decroly sent Amelie Hamaide to introduce his method in America at the Out of Door School. During her tenure at the school, Mlle. Hamaide also served as a biology instructor. The following year, Decroly sent his daughter, Suzanne, to the school for a year to continue the implementation of this method.

Founding and Early History of the Out of Door School

Miss Harrison returned from her work in Europe about 1922 and visited her family's stately winter residence, Harroak, on Siesta Key. Apparently with some financial backing from her father, she purchased the former Gleason Ranch, just east of Harroak. The newly purchased site was combined with additional property owned by Miss Harrison's family for the location of a school. The parcel, by 1930, consisted of 20 acres of pine and woods, a 600-650 foot stretch of beach, and several small ponds. The entire school plant was located five miles from the center of Sarasota. Although Harrison and Gavin intended to hold as many classes out of doors as possible, a few rustic frame buildings were constructed for the pupils and the Gleason ranch house was converted to a girls' residence. The tree shaded campus, nestled

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deep in the woods, was bordered on one side by the Gulf of Mexico. An artesian well supplied water to the school.

The first class of ten students was convened in the spring of 1924. The first full year of school was 1924-1925. From the onset, probably by mutual consent, the responsibilities and duties were divided. Miss Harrison was the owner and director of the school and handled the educational and business aspects of the school operation. In addition to teaching, Miss Gavin was responsible for the physical plant and landscaping.

The school began with three teachers in addition to the co-founders. They were Josephine Pearce, Amelie Hamaide, and Emily Harrison, the older sister of Fanneal. Emily Harrison, who had earned a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, taught at the school only briefly. Her experience included sixteen years of teaching in both public and private schools from elementary to college level. All of the unmarried female teachers lived in a cottage on the campus.

Fanneal Harrison believed that the knowledge was not gained solely from books, but that "healthy bodies, interesting play and companionship are important as well as giving children a chance to gain some sense of social responsibility." The standard subjects, taught from nursery school through the ninth grade, were integrated with a schedule of outdoor activities. The school, as the name implies, made the most of Sarasota's warm sunshine. Harrison stressed the importance of rest and fresh air, freedom, and as much time as possible in the open. Classrooms were small individual frame buildings called "huts". Weather permitting, classes were usually held out of doors, using tables and benches in front of the buildings.

At first the school operated as a boarding school for the children of winter visitors and offered classes from nursery school through the ninth grade (over the years, class offering have varied; at times the school provided high school classes). During the early years of its operation, the school started what may have been the country's longest bus route. A chauffeur left Sarasota in the early fall to pick up boarding pupils at "bus stops" centrally located in Massachusetts and Vermont and brought them south to Sarasota for the beginning of the fall term. The school also attracted many day pupils from the families of prominent year-round Sarasota residents, including children of

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city councilmen, attorneys, judges, writers, and artists. James Lambert, the son of the inventor of Listerine Mouthwash and President of Lambert Pharmaceutical, was one of the early students as were the children of cartoonist Frank Willard, creator of "Moon Mullins."

During the 1925-1926 school year, thirty students were registered. They were offered a combination of academics and practical learning, such as carpentry for both boys and girls. In fact, the children gained so much carpentry skill they were able to form somewhat of a working "army" and construct several of the school buildings. The school program provided a short opening announcement or spiritual service. Morning lessons included conversational French. Dinner, at one o'clock, was preceded by a swim and followed by a rest period. The children rested an hour on a mat, usually napping in the sun or listening to the teachers read to them. Afternoons were devoted to the arts, crafts, sculpture lessons, music, poetry, dramatization, sewing, cooking, dancing (taught by Tinsley Harrison Weathers, sister of Fanneal), nature study, sports, and private lessons in piano and other instruments.

Swimming, was an important daily activity. Utilizing a protected swimming area, formed by a steel net, every child, even those in the pre-school group, was taught to swim. Nude swims, known as "salt or skin swims," (well documented in photographs in the school's brochures) were co-educational until about 1933 when some parents began to object. Even the teachers undertook "skin swimming" among themselves. The school's recreational program also included tennis, sailing, basketball, and canoeing. Horseback riding instruction was provided until 1962. In addition, hours of leisure time were spent in which each child followed his or her own particular hobby.

Regular weekly supervised excursions were also undertaken by students. The trips included excursions to Treasure Island, a boat ride to Saint Armand's, visits to large food and fruit producing centers, to the Ringling Brothers' Circus winter quarters, to Tarpon Springs to observe sponge fishery, to St. Augustine, to the Everglades, and to the Bok Tower in Lakes Wales, Florida. Among the most notable of the excursions were the visits to the home and laboratory of inventor Thomas Alva Edison in Ft. Myers, Florida, to celebrate his birthday during the last three years of his life. The school also regularly

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received visits from prominent citizens and from visitors to Sarasota, such as Eleanor Roosevelt.

Although enrollment increased during the school's first five years to 50 day students and 20 boarding students, the school faced a deficit of approximately \$7,000 following the stock market crash of 1929. It would have been compelled to close had it not been for the prompt actions of a group of concerned parents who covered the bulk of the debt to keep the school open. Several wealthy retired residents also lent financial assistance. A plea went out to the community in the offering of \$25,000 in preferred stock with a par value of \$100 per share, and a dividend rate of 8%. This stock was non-cumulative and non-voting except in case of non-payment of dividends after 1935. It was to be the sole lien against the property. The effort proved more than successful, for in May, 1930 the school was able to purchase additional adjacent waterfront property for \$8,000.00. The seller, Mary Gordon DeForest, accepted free tuition for her three grandsons, in partial payment for the property.

The school continued in operation without interruption and in spite of the collapse of Florida's real estate boom and the advent of the Great Depression, grew steadily. In 1930, the school was accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools. Positive publicity about the school helped it attract residential students from across the country, including Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and California. A student from India was even enrolled.

Enrollment during the 1930s was in the range of 100-125 students. In 1932, a nursery school for two-to-four year olds was added and combined with the kindergarten and the first grade in "The Tiny Tots Workshop" on the beach side of the property. That year also brought about some landscaping improvements and new plantings by a local landscape designer, Pearson Conrad.

In 1934 and 1935, eight-week fall sessions were held in the mountains at Camp Rockbrook, a 400 hundred acre estate near Brevard, North Carolina. The camp was owned and conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Carrier, whose daughter was an Out of Door School student. Here the students were given opportunities for work and play in a different environment. The tradition of excursions continued and trips were made to the Pisgah National Forest,

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Cragles Mountain Range, Taxaway Falls, and Connestee Falls. The students took canoe trips down the French Broad River, and visited talc mills, horse-breeding farms, map-making plants, commercial apple orchards, and tanning factories. Many days ended with a traditional camp fire. Overall, the atmosphere in North Carolina was conducive to the school's continued primary goal of health combined with scholastic work. When these fall sessions were completed, the students returned to Sarasota for the winter term. The school moved as a whole from North Carolina to Florida either in the school buses or by train. Day students began their fall term in October at the Sarasota home of Pearson Conrad, under the supervision of teacher Josephine Pearce.

At both facilities, students continued to be taught by teachers with extensive training and experience. The teachers came from the Sorbonne, Dartmouth, Vassar, Cornell, Radcliff, Cambridge and Harvard and a high quality of work was maintained. The entire learning program was planned according to the individual needs of the child, and outdoor work and play was designed to give the child the "utmost in health and happiness". A resident graduate nurse trained in pediatrics was on staff. The children were regularly weighed and measured and any change in physical condition was promptly noted. An experienced trained dietician supervised the children's diet.

Each group of children had its own pets which were to be shared with the other students. Pigeons, canaries, goats and a pony roamed the grounds. A monkey named "King Tut", was kept in a cage on the school grounds. Boarding students were permitted to bring pets, such as dogs and snakes, from home. Some students raised turkeys, ducks, rabbits or other animals. Other students turned their interest towards special projects such as running the unique country school supply store, gardening, or building activities. All of these things were intended to have the children appreciate the world about them through actual experience rather than through abstract study.

Boarding students cared for their own rooms, under the supervision of house mothers, and all students shared in the care of the classrooms. In a weekly hour of "school service," every child was given a simple task to perform, such as raking the drive and watering flowers in order to develop a sense of responsibility for the care and attractiveness of his surroundings. The "service" hour was usually followed by

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entertainment, such as a play, an operetta, or a lecture. A magazine, the Palm Leaf, was prepared each month by a different grade, giving each class the responsibility and experience of editing and mimeographing a credible magazine. Even the Tiny Tots wrote little stories and made drawings for the magazine. The children also worked out a successful form of student government, based on a village structure with a weekly town meeting where school problems were discussed.

The Parents' Club of the Out-of Door School was an active organization and each year, in cooperation with the faculty and students, undertook a project. In 1932, all groups worked together to build a new school library. Architect, builder, and Parents' Club member Ralph Twitchell agreed to design the library with the assistance of the children. The Mother's Club donated funds for its construction. The Parents' Club furnished the Library with a modern, complete collection of books for children. A school library had been one of Catherine Gavin's dreams and the building was named in her honor following her death in 1933.

In 1934 the Parent's Club began a building fund for a children's theater on the school grounds. The Theater was designed and built by Ralph Twitchell around 1935-1936. The Players of Sarasota, a now-thriving amateur organization, made its modest start in the Out of Door School Library in 1932, then briefly utilized the new Theater before constructing its own theater in 1936. In 1977 the Siesta Key Actors Theater (SKAT) entered into a 15-year contract with the school to use the theater for rehearsals and performances in exchange for renovating the structure. SKAT was founded by William Shroder and his wife, Layne Kantor Shroder. Mrs. Shroder and her brother, Tim Kantor, were the children of Pulitzer Prize winning author MacKinlay Kantor and had attended the Out of Door School. Kantor lived on Siesta Key from 1936 until his death in 1977. That year the theater was named the MacKinlay Kantor Theater in his honor. The Theatre continues to be used by a variety of local groups and serves as an election polling place.

By 1938, enrollment had reached 100 day and 35 boarding students and Fanneal Harrison passed the management of the school to her nephew, Harrison Raoul. She retired the following year, but maintained a continued interest in the school until her death in 1973 at the age of 92. Harrison Raoul, the new director and

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Headmaster, had attended the school before studying at Antioch College at Yellow Springs, Ohio.

In 1938, it was decided that the students would not return to North Carolina for the fall term that year, but would instead spend the term in New England. This decision was made under the suggestion and advise of Dr. Leigh, President of Bennington College, who was vacationing in Sarasota in April of that year. Leigh explained the mutual advantages of moving the location of the fall term to the parents and faculty. His college gave courses in education, training and child psychology and with a good school close at hand, students in these courses would be provided with a practical laboratory. On the other hand the school would have the advantages of the Bennington Library, their laboratories and gymnasium. Raoul searched for a suitable location for the school and was able to secure the Wilbur Estate in Manchester, Vermont, eighteen miles from Bennington.

Harrison Raoul remained in control of the school for only a short time. In 1942, the school's ownership passed out of the Harrison-Raoul family for the first time.

Later History of the School

The school was purchased in 1942 by Dr. Harold Guy Coolidge, who held the property for only one year. He sold it to Dr. and Mrs. Adam P. Kephart of Blowing Rock, North Carolina. The Kepharts' stated they were committed to carrying on the policies and traditions which had made the school so successful. They intended to operate the school not simply for financial gain, but as a memorial to their only son, who was killed in military action in 1942. Although there had been doubts as to whether or not the school would be able to continue in operation due to wartime restrictions, the students returned in 1943 to find an "improved operation and modernized buildings". The new Headmaster, Hollis Scofield, announced that he intended to strengthen the foreign language department.

Enrollment increased in 1945, necessitating an increase in the school teaching and residence staff. It was about this time that housing facilities at the school were converted to other uses and only a few students resided at the school. This was no doubt related to shortages resulting from World War II. Prior to

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the war, the Out-of-Door School housed sixty residential students.

The Kepharts retained ownership until 1948 when their interest was sold to the recently formed Out of Door School Organization, consisting of approximately thirty parents who held stock in the school.

Enrollment during the early 1950s stood at about 160-175. During the 1950s the school was accredited by the Secondary Education Board; hard tennis courts were added to the campus; and in 1958 the decision was made to no longer board students.

In 1963, a new and modern classroom building was erected for the lower school on the site of the stables which had been demolished ca. 1956. During the 1960s, the school consistently maintained an enrollment of between 160 and 216 students.

For the 1972-1973 school year, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Gleason became stockholders and administrators of the school. Through their personal management, the Gleasons reinforced the school's long standing philosophy that the key to education was the development of self-discipline in the children and individualized teaching at all levels. Montessori methods were used in the pre-school and children were screened for hearing and visual problems. In 1972 a portion of the campus just to the south of Ocean Boulevard was sold for \$75,000, for the construction of Siesta Key Chapel.

Although enrollment in 1974 was approximately 175 students and the teaching staff consisted of sixteen full-time teachers, another portion of the school property, the gulf front parcel on the north side of Ocean Boulevard, was also sold. Several of the original school buildings were subsequently demolished, although at least two, the Theatre and the Girls' Residence (demolished 1990) are known to have been moved across Ocean Boulevard onto the remaining portion of the school campus. Although the Headmaster of the school cited dangerous traffic conditions for the students trying to cross Ocean Boulevard to the beach, economics no doubt played an important part in the final decision to sell this highly valuable portion of the original campus.

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In June of 1977 a group of 120 families pooled resources and purchased the school through a non-profit organization, the Out-of-Door Academy of Sarasota, Inc. This move was perhaps inspired by a volatile enrollment, which had dipped to 98 in 1975, and then increased to 135 by 1977. The new group amended the school's name to The Out-of-Door Academy, and vowed to continue the innovative tradition of the school. Enrollment increased to 175.

During the 70 years of its existence, the Out of Door School has not changed its fundamental character or the goal of providing sound education and friendly supervision in an appealing, natural environment. It continues to serve the educational needs of Sarasota residents who desire a unique alternative education for their children. Currently, the school conducts classes for grades Pre-K through 8th and has a enrollment of 478 students.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Ralph Twitchell

Ralph Twitchell is considered the founder of the "Sarasota School," a term used to describe a body of modernist architecture, designed by a group of architects in the Sarasota area during the 1940s and 1950s. Most of the architects of the "Sarasota School" had worked for Twitchell. Twitchell, an Ohio native, was a graduate of Columbia University. He began his career in New York City, working for several prominent architectural firms, including Carrere and Hastings. In 1925, after traveling and studying abroad for two years, he accepted a position in Sarasota with architect Dwight Baum. Twitchell served as Baum's office manager and on-site architect during Baum's frequent absences from Sarasota. By April of 1926, Twitchell had received his Florida architectural license and established his own architectural office and construction company. In the late 1930s, Twitchell began to explore the possibility of developing architecture integrated more directly with Florida's climate and terrain. Using native construction materials, he produced an innovative body of work, distinguished by its attention to the environment and by its open spatial relationships, axial projections of architectural planes, and interiors and exteriors linked by wide expanses of unobstructed

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glazing. In 1941, Paul Rudolph briefly joined Twitchell's firm as a draftsman and in 1949 they formed a partnership. Twitchell and Rudolph drew national and international attention from the architectural press in developing innovative housing solutions in the modern tradition, utilizing new construction materials and techniques. Because he was trained in the Beaux Arts tradition, Twitchell is considered to be the link between traditional and modern architecture in the Sarasota area. Twitchell retired from practice in 1966 and in 1976 was honored by the American Institute of Architects for his lifetime contributions.

Twitchell was associated with the Out of Door School from its inception. As he recalled in an interview in 1977, he investigated the Decroly Method while visiting New York with his wife. Enrolling his children in the school's kindergarten was an important motivation for his move to Siesta Key where he eventually built a home, established an office, and became active in community and civic affairs. His three children attended the school and throughout the 1930s the entire family was actively involved in the school. Twitchell also claimed to have contributed substantial financial backing for the school and to have designed and built five buildings for the school, including the Library and the Theater. He is thought to have designed the Boys' Residence, but which other campus buildings he designed is unknown. It is likely that Twitchell also developed the master plan for the campus. While he was overseeing construction on the campus, Mrs. Twitchell was responsible for the public relations of the school and often scheduled dramatic events for fund-raising purposes.

The educational philosophy of the school paralleled Twitchell's own thinking, as incorporated in his architecture. In accord with Decroly's progressive ideas about education, the historic architecture of the Out of Door School conveys an ideal of learning in nature. Set in undisturbed nature, the school buildings were designed as rustic structures, situated picturesquely amid trees, palms, and rich native vegetation. This parallels the concept imbedded in Twitchell's work that in the Sarasota area's warm sub-tropical climate one might live fully in nature. The buildings he designed for the Out of Door School are significant as documentation of his early work.

The character of the Boys' Residence, with its wood siding walls, trussed ceiling, and stone fireplaces, was that of an

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Adirondack camp (photo 19). Attributed to Twitchell, this was a "northern" structure imported into the sub-tropical climate of Florida. Important to the character and function of the building was the well-designed relationship between the interior and the exterior via several small courtyards which provided light and cooling ventilation. They also articulated a relationship between life and learning in school and out of doors.

The Catherine Gavin Memorial Library of 1932 is particularly important in the Twitchell oeuvre because it testifies to his sensitivity to style, materials, and construction detail. Consistent with the school's philosophy to involve students first hand in all aspects of creative learning, the building was designed and constructed with their active collaboration. The children mixed cement, laid bricks, and did wiring and shingling (photo 20). Heavy construction was completed by several carpenters. The entire cost was about \$2,000.

The iconographic program for the Library derives from the nineteenth-century Emersonian idea that learning is best achieved in nature through direct experience. It conveys the organic philosophy of connecting site and climate to architectural form which Emerson inspired in American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. The character of the building's exterior and interior is that of a rustic cabin, revealed through a carefully studied, sophisticated, and meticulously articulated design. Twitchell conceived the Library as a rustic cabin, an oasis of solitude and learning in nature. The placement of the fireplace in the alcove furthers a sense of enclosure, of warmth and security. Twitchell's design intention is made clear in the way he sited the Library, carefully set back from surrounding school buildings and connected to the campus quadrangle by a small path which led back into an undisturbed natural setting enclosing the Library. Unfortunately, the idea of a rustic retreat for learning and contemplation was lost with the move of the building to the middle of the campus quadrangle in 1992.

CONCLUSION

The Out of Door School has local significance for its architecture, and for its role in the educational development of the community. The construction of the school was linked to the settlement and development of the island of Siesta Key. The

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school played an important role in numerous community activities. Over the years, the school's theater has been the meeting place of church, civic, and social organizations. Many of Sarasota's leading citizens have been associated with the school. Established as a unique and progressive school, its early educational methods and pristine learning environment are not likely to be duplicated in modern times.

The historic school structures have architectural significance through their association with Ralph Twitchell, a master architect and builder. Although two of the three buildings have been relocated, they continue to retain their integrity of design, feeling, materials, workmanship and association and serve as visual reminders of the school's early beginnings and unique existence.

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Interviews by Mikki Hartig:

Burns, Lillian, first graduate of the Out of Door School in 1930 and former Out of Door School teacher; and Cole, DeForest, former Out of Door School student. January 20, 1993.

Clarke, Polly Raoul, niece of Fanneal Harrison and daughter of Harrison Raoul. January 7, 1994.

Cole, DeForest, and Cole, Gordon, former Out of Door School students. January 26, 1994.

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Counselman, Natalie Galbrith and Kantor, Tim; former Out of Door School students. January 12, 1994.

Gleason, Mrs. Edwin, former Headmistress and owner. January 5, 1994.

Pattinson, Zell Herlberg, former Out of Door School boarding student. January 21, 1994.

Shroder, Layne Kantor, former Out of Door School student and co-founder of the Siesta Key Actors' Theater. January 12, 1994.

Twitchell, Sylva Hutchins. January 22, 1994.

Out-of-Door Academy

Files, Clippings, Scrapbooks and Photographic Collection

Palm Leaf, Out-of-Door School student magazine, miscellaneous clippings

Out-of-Door Association Minutes, 1952-1958.

Out of Door School and Out-of-Door School Informational brochures, 1924-1976.

Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources

Collection of letters from Phyllis Colville, former Out of Door School teacher, to her family, 1931-1934.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Parcel 1

Beginning 425 feet South of the NE corner of the SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 1, Township 37 South, Range 17 East; thence run South 170 feet; thence South 75 35' West 670 feet to a street; thence North 23 10' West 188 feet along the side of said street; thence North 75 35' East 740 feet to the P.O. B. in Section 1, Township 37 South, Range 17 East, excepting therefrom that portion of the Easterly part of said tract which lies within the area of the public highway along the East side of said tract.

Parcel II

Lots 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, Plat of Ocean Beach, as per plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 278 of the Public Records of Manatee County, Florida, and Plat Book A, Page 48 of the Public Records of Sarasota County, Florida.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Verbal Boundary Description includes the entire Out of Door School campus. The boundary is drawn to include only the historic structures on campus and the historic quadrangle space. These resources share a common period of historic development and are linked by their location, design and association.

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1. Out of Door School, Siesta Key, Florida
2. Sarasota County, Florida
3. Mikki Hartig
4. January 1994
5. Historical and Architectural Research Services, 3708 Flores Avenue, Sarasota, Florida 34239
6. Boys' Residence; main (west) facade on right and north elevation on left; view looking southeast
7. Photo 1 of 20

Except for the historic photos noted below, Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs

6. Library, rear (east) facade; looking west across campus quadrangle
7. Photo 2 of 20
6. Auditorium/Theatre, south elevation, camera facing north.
7. Photo 3 of 20
6. Boys' Residence, east facade, camera facing west.
7. Photo 4 of 20
6. Boys' Residence, north and center wings; view facing east
7. Photo 5 of 20
6. Boys' Residence, detail of south courtyard; camera facing northwest.
7. Photo 6 of 20
6. Boys' Residence, detail of south courtyard; camera facing northeast.
7. Photo 7 of 20
6. Student paving squares, outside of Boys' Residence, camera facing west.
7. Photo 8 of 20
3. Unknown
4. c.1930s
5. Out-of-Door Academy, 444 Reid Street, Sarasota, Florida 34242
6. Boys' Residence, interior group living area.
7. Photo 9 of 20

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6. Boys' Residence, detail of mural decoration; camera facing north
7. Photo 10 of 20
6. Boys' Residence; detail, typical fireplace; camera facing southwest.
7. Photo 11 of 20
6. Library, main (west) facade on right and north elevation on left; looking southeast.
7. Photo 12 of 20
6. Library, north elevation, view looking southeast
7. Photo 13 of 20
6. Library, north and east elevations, camera facing southwest.
7. Photo 14 of 20
6. Library, south elevation, camera facing north.
7. Photo 15 of 20
6. Library, main (west) facade; view looking east
7. Photo 16 of 20
3. Unknown
4. Ca. mid-1930s to 1940s.
5. Department of Historical Resources, Sarasota County
6. Library, interior fireplace and inglenook
7. Photo 17 of 20
6. Auditorium/Theatre; north elevation on left and west elevations on right; view looking southeast
7. Photo 18 of 20
3. Unknown
4. ca. 1930s or 1940s
5. Department of Historical Resources, Sarasota County
6. Boys' Residence; interior detail
7. Photo 19 of 20

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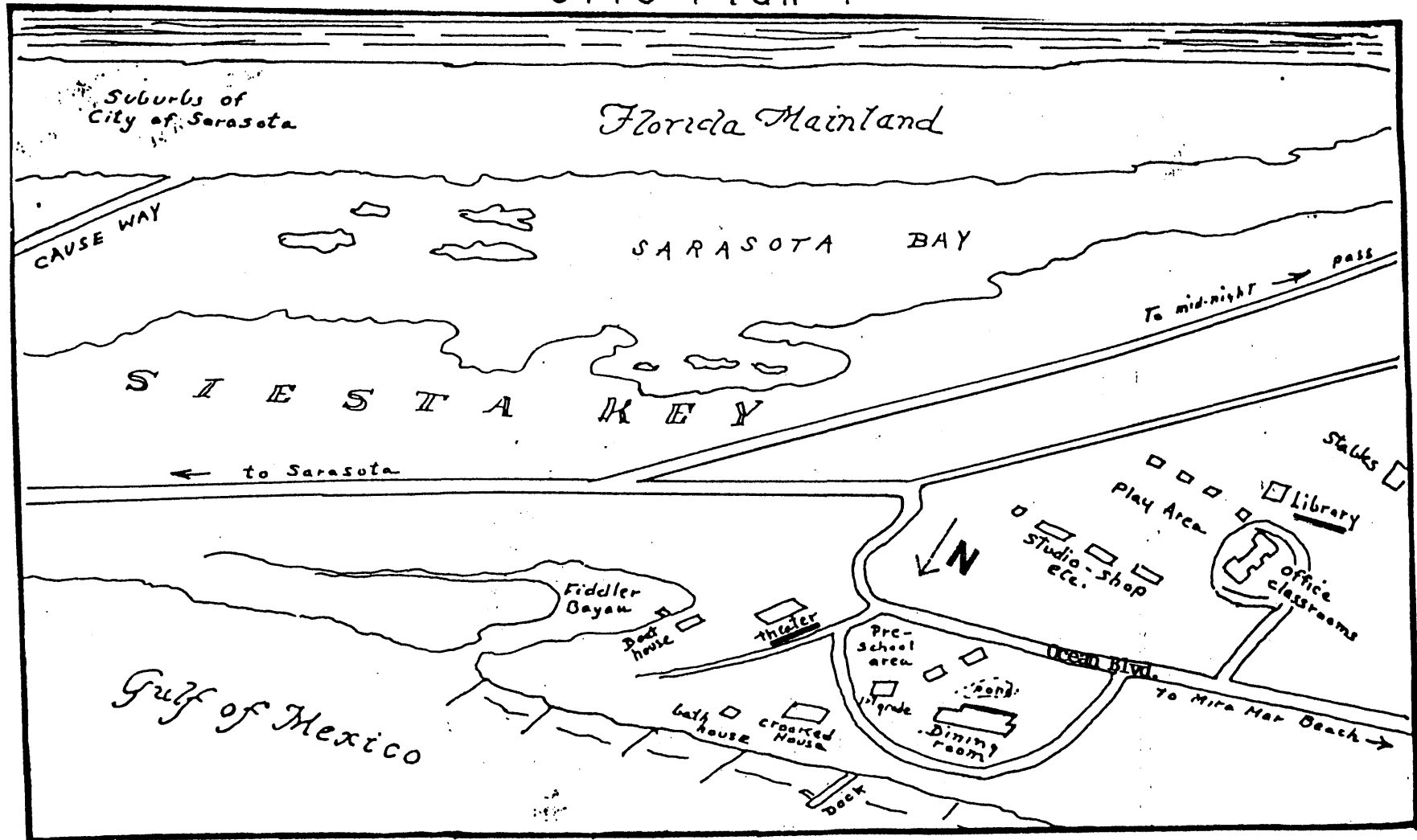
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3. Unknown
4. Late 1935 or early 1936
5. Out-of-Door Academy
6. Library, showing students helping in its construction.
7. 20 of 20

OUT OF DOOR SCHOOL

Siesta Key, Sarasota Co., Fl.

Site Plan I



DATE: ca. 1950

SHOWS ORIGINAL LOCATION OF THEATER AND LIBRARY BUILDINGS

APPROX. SCALE: 0.5" = 150'

OUT OF DOOR SCHOOL Site Plan 2
Siesta Key, Sarasota Co., Fl.


Contributing Building 

Photo direction 

Boundary 

