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National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of Kissimmee, Florida

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- I. Founding and Early Development of Kissimmee, 1881-1899
- II. Cattle, Citrus and Civic Improvement, 1900-1919
- III. Boom and Depression, 1920-1941

C. Form Prepared by

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organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September 30, 1993

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 11/18/93
 Signature and title of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
 State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Malcolm 11/3/94
 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

Page Numbers

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

G. Geographical Data

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

I. Major Bibliographical References

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Statement of Historic Contexts

Section E: Statement of Historic Contexts

- I. Founding and Early Development of Kissimmee, 1881-1899
- II. Cattle, Citrus, and Civic Improvement, 1900-1919
- III. Boom and Depression, 1920-1941

Setting

Kissimmee is a city of approximately 25,000 residents located in central Florida about 20 miles south of Orlando. The community occupies an area of relatively flat land on the north shore of Lake Tohopekaliga. The size of the town has grown slowly but steadily over the last few decades with increased population growth in central Florida, fueled in part by the economic influence of nearby tourist attractions such as Disney World and Sea World. The main transportation routes connecting Kissimmee with major Florida cities are U.S. highway 17/92 and 441. State Road 192 also serves the community, and the Florida Turnpike and Interstate 4 skirt the northeast and northwest edges of the city. Amtrak also maintains passenger service at the local CSX railroad station.

Historic Contexts

I. The Founding and Early Development of Kissimmee, 1881-1899

There had been little permanent white settlement on the north shore of Lake Tohopekaliga before to the founding of Kissimmee in 1881. The event that sparked the founding and early development of Kissimmee was the Disston Land Purchase. In 1881, Philadelphia industrialist and entrepreneur Hamilton Disston purchased four million acres of "useless and submerged" land from the State of Florida for \$1,000,000. The Disston Purchase included an area of Central Florida that extended on the Gulf of Mexico from Tarpon Springs south to Fort Myers and west to Lake Tohopekaliga. Disston was also granted the right to drain lands in the southern interior of the peninsula, for which he would receive half of the reclaimed land without additional charge.

Disston divided his Florida land sales operation into the Florida Land and Improvement Company and the Kissimmee Land

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Company. The headquarters for the Disston operations were located in Tarpon Springs, but "Kissimmee City", as it was originally called, soon became the center for the drainage operations that ultimately absorbed most of the company's resources. The Disston Company established offices at Kissimmee in 1881 and dredging activity began in January 1882. A post office was opened in May of the same year. Laborers came from many parts of the country to operate dredging equipment and to construct boats and a variety of buildings. By late 1884, canals had been dug to link several of the larger lakes in the chain of waterways found in the area. Other improvements included the deepening and straightening of the Kissimmee River and opening the Caloosahatchee River between the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Okeechobee. These projects gave steamboats direct access to Kissimmee from the Gulf, opening the area to rapid development.

Between 1881 and 1895 Kissimmee blossomed from virtual wilderness into a town of nearly 2,000. Development of the settlement was also fostered by the arrival of the South Florida Railroad in March 1882. Kissimmee became an important freight shipping center that supported citrus groves, cattle ranches, and sugar cane plantations. To adequately manage the volume of shipments from Kissimmee, the railroad maintained three sets of tracks and constructed a railway station near Ruby Avenue in 1889.

Two smaller railroads also operated out of Kissimmee during the 1880s. One was the St. Cloud & Sugar Belt Railway which laid track between Kissimmee and the nearby town of Narcoossee in 1888. The other was the Florida Midland Railroad which connected Kissimmee with the town of Longwood. The two short lines, however, found it difficult to compete with the South Florida Railroad and both were ultimately absorbed by the larger company. The South Florida Railroad was itself made part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1902.

The Town of Kissimmee was formally incorporated in 1883 and when Osceola County was created from portions of Orange and Brevard counties in 1887, Kissimmee was chosen as the county seat. A brick courthouse was constructed on South Vernon Street in 1890. A small commercial district emerged along Broadway Avenue between Dakin and Darlington avenues in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Another commercial developed area along Emmett Street near the courthouse. Scattered residential buildings dotted the landscape. By 1893 there were three

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railroad stations in Kissimmee and a number of warehouses stood near the railroad tracks.

The town had no formal plan to govern development, so that subdivisions grew up haphazardly. At the heart of town was the South Florida Railroad Company Subdivision which was platted in 1884 and revised several times. The area around the courthouse was Patrick's Addition (1882) which extended south to the railroad near which many of the settlement's early residential buildings were found. Numerous small subdivisions were added to the community before the end of the century.

The development of Kissimmee began to slow down by the mid-1890s, due in part to financial reverses suffered by the Disston Company. State officials were dissatisfied with the results of Disston's reclamation projects and refused to award him ownership of the additional lands he claimed. The nationwide Panic of 1893 and the Great Freeze of 1894-1895 that destroyed much of Florida's citrus production also dealt Disston a financial blow from which he was unable to recover. Unable to make the government honor his claims to additional state lands, and his finances in shambles, Disston committed suicide in 1896. Disston's Florida land fortune, valued at 2.2 million dollars in 1894, was sold at auction in 1901 for a mere \$70,000.

The failure of the Disston reclamation projects and the Great Freeze of 1894-1895 proved to be a turning point for the residents of Kissimmee. By the end of 1896, Kissimmee had lost more than a quarter of the population it had enjoyed on the eve of the twin disasters and it continued to decline until the end of the century.

II. Cattle, Citrus, and Civic Improvement, 1900-1919

Despite the setbacks Kissimmee had suffered, the situation began to improve with the beginning of the new century. The next two decades were marked by a significant expansion of cattle ranching industry and a rebirth of the citrus industry, both of which brought about significant improvements to the city's economy. The continuing roles played by rail and river transportation facilities helped the community weather the difficult economic period it had just experienced. Agricultural products could be shipped directly to major markets, and the community was easily accessible to tourists and settlers. The excellent transportation facilities led to the development of a thriving tourist trade that did much to aid the revitalization of

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Kissimmee. During the first two decades of the twentieth century the population of the city more than doubled, increasing from 1,132 in 1900 to about 2,722 full-time residents and an additional 1,000 winter vacationers by 1920.

Cattle ranching, the oldest industry in the Kissimmee area began to expand throughout Central and South Florida after 1900. Reclamation projects initiated during the Disston era opened thousands of acres of range land and attracted a large number of cattlemen to the Kissimmee area. Further dredging during the period from 1900-1916 greatly increased the amount of range land available to cattle ranchers in the southern half of the peninsula. By 1905, Kissimmee had become the "cow capital" of Central Florida, with Osceola County leading the state in beef production by transporting over 50,000 head of beef annually.

The recovery of the citrus industry also bolstered the economy. The citrus groves that had been destroyed by disastrous freezes of the 1890s had been largely replanted, and by 1905 the new trees had begun to fully bear fruit. In 1910 groves in the Kissimmee area produced approximately 100,000 boxes of oranges. Large citrus packing houses once stood along the railroad tracks near Ruby Avenue. Unfortunately, these and other buildings in Kissimmee associated with the citrus industry have been demolished.

Improved economic conditions allowed the town to make a number of civic improvements that transformed the appearance of the community from that of a frontier cow town to a modern twentieth century municipality. The city began paving all of its major streets with brick in 1911. Some of that paving is still visible in the historic area of the city. The nation-wide "City Beautiful" movement had its effect on Kissimmee as well, evident today in the landscaped oblong medians in the center of Broadway Avenue. The divided boulevard ran from the intersection of Stewart Avenue north to Main Street and featured a bandstand at the intersection of Monument Avenue and electric lighting along its length. The bandstand and original lighting fixtures have since been removed, but the green spaces that divide Broadway Avenue remain intact and are significant elements of the downtown area's historic appearance.

The city funded a number of projects designed to provide the residents of Kissimmee with modern amenities. A municipal electric power plant was completed by 1909, and a two-story masonry high school that stood where city hall is located today

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opened in 1910. By 1914 the city could boast of having a municipal waterworks and the beginnings of an extensive sewerage system. Local lumber mills and brick factories provided the materials for the construction of both commercial and residential buildings. At least one company produced artificial stone and cast concrete block that is still evident on buildings in Kissimmee that date from that period.

New construction in the commercial district led the city government to pass ordinances requiring the use of fireproof building materials in the commercial area led to the replacement of wood frame structures with masonry buildings. Residential construction kept pace with the expanding commercial area. In 1911, the Kissimmee Valley Gazette announced that a building boom was well under way, and that real estate assessments had risen over \$700,000 since 1909. The newspaper reported that more than 150 buildings had been constructed in the city in 1910 and over fifty houses were under construction. Subdivision activity amounted to seventeen plats between 1909 and 1915, most of which pertained to residential areas. Local lumber mills were hard pressed to provide enough lumber to meet the needs of the building boom.

After 1916, construction slowed markedly as Kissimmee residents, like the rest of the nation, turned their energies toward winning the war in Europe. Subdivision platting fell flat and few buildings, residential or commercial, were erected. Although military bases were established in Florida during the war, there was little military related activity in Kissimmee. The period between 1900 and 1916 brought significant expansion to the commercial and residential sections of the town, and the city had undertaken many improvements in the municipal infrastructure. The last few years of the decade proved be merely a short pause in the continued growth and improvement of Kissimmee which was to resume in the 1920s.

III. Boom and Depression, 1920-1941

Florida experienced a period of spectacular growth and development between 1920 and 1926. The event that has become known as the "Great Florida Land Boom" began almost immediately after World War I and reached its peak in 1926. The boom had its beginnings in Miami and Palm Beach, but its influence spread across the state, reaching a feverish crescendo before its sudden and disastrous collapse. It is still difficult to sort out all

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of the causes of the phenomenon. After the European conflict, the government of Florida undertook a variety of measures to attract new settlers to the state. Among these was an extensive road building program that focused on areas attractive to tourists. The nation was experiencing a period of unrivaled--if ephemeral--prosperity, and many citizen had both the time and means to travel for pleasure for the first time.

The virtual completion of the state's railroad network by 1920 had an effect on the unfolding drama also. Passenger trains brought visitors in unprecedented numbers to the state, particularly during the winter season. Many northern tourists had never experienced anything like the exotic and "tropical" landscape they encountered, and a surprising number of these determined to relocate, inspired by the availability of desirable and affordable land. New state and county roads prompted many middle class Americans to travel by automobiles, in which the both lived and traveled. "Tin can" tourists became a common sight in many parts of the state, as visitors congregated in loosely organized motor camps.

Slowly at first, a few real estate promoters began to develop communities and subdivisions that used the theme of "Spanish" style architecture to attract customers, but by December of 1924 20,000 people were reported to be arriving in Florida each day. The previous fall, the Florida legislature had approved a constitutional amendment prohibiting both income and inheritance taxes, an open invitation to potential investors. The resulting capital influx accelerated an already well developed surge of land purchasing. Property values rose dramatically. In virtually every city and town new subdivisions were platted and lots sold and resold for quick profits. Osceola County and Kissimmee shared in this growth. Property assessments in the county nearly doubled from six million dollars in 1917 to ten million by 1927. Bank deposits swelled. In Kissimmee, the population grew from 2,722 in 1920 to nearly 5,000 by 1925. Building construction in commercial and residential districts surged. Between 1924 and 1926, nine subdivisions were platted in the community, and new construction filled many lots that had been left vacant from earlier periods of development. To provide building materials, new supply and manufacturing operations opened and older ones were expanded.

Florida's speculative land bubble began to deflate in 1925. Bank deposits in the state had risen from 180 million dollars to 875 million between 1922 and 1925, but began to decline in the

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late months of 1925. Bankers and businessmen throughout the nation began to complain about transfers of money to Florida. Newspapers suggested fraud in land sales and many investors withdrew their money. In 1926, forty Florida banks collapsed, including the Bank of Osceola County in Kissimmee. Real estate assessments declined by 182 million dollars between 1926 and 1928. Devastating hurricanes that hit southeast Florida in 1926 and 1928 killed thousands of people and dealt the final blow to the speculative fever.

The effects of the bust in Kissimmee were moderated somewhat by the town's diversified economy, which continued to be based on citrus, cattle, and the railroad. By 1930, the population had decreased to 3,163. Construction slowed after 1926, and few important buildings were erected. The full brunt of the Great Depression made its impact in the early 1930s. Between 1929 and 1933, 148 Florida state and national banks collapsed. Deposits and investments fell, and annual income per capita declined by nearly one-half. Approximately one out of four Floridians was receiving some type of public relief and assistance by 1933. Nevertheless, the population of Kissimmee rose moderately during the Great Depression from 3,163 in 1930 to 3,379 in 1935. Citrus and cattle continued to play vital roles in the economy. Osceola County ranked second statewide in cattle production, with over 32,000 head in 1932.

Subdivision development and building construction remained slow throughout the 1930s. To promote growth, the city of Kissimmee offered free building lots to investors who would construct houses that ranged between \$4,000 and \$7,500, but there were few takers and Kissimmee experienced no further significant development until the period after World War II.

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Property Types

SECTION F.1

I. Name of Property Type: Historic Residential Buildings of Kissimmee

II. Description:

The historic residential buildings of Kissimmee are a collection of eclectic styles and types that reflect national trends in architecture during the period from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. The buildings range from small, one-story wood frame vernacular houses to large two and one-half story Classical revival style residences. Residential buildings comprise the majority of the historic properties in Kissimmee. Most of these are found in a single district lying immediately west of the downtown commercial center of the city. Most of the residences in Kissimmee are wood frame vernacular structures. Among the other types and styles of residences found in the survey area are bungalows and Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Classical Revival, Queen Anne and Tudor Revival houses.

Residential buildings in Kissimmee generally range from one to two stories in height and have porches on the main street facade. The structures exhibit varying setbacks from the roads on which they front, a characteristic that serves as a clue to the period in which they were constructed. Nineteenth century structures are generally sited farther from the street or road than those built after 1900, and by the 1920s buildings in residential areas began to conform to standard setbacks.

More of the older buildings have an irregular ground plan, caused in part by the frequent use of polygonal bays and ells that extend from the main block of the house. The majority of houses have either gable or hip roofs and wooden structures have either weatherboard or drop siding on the exterior walls. A few older buildings have wood shingles on at least a portion of the exterior wall surfaces, usually in the gable area. Historic windows tend to be double hung wooden sashes with 1/1 or 2/2 lights. However, other light arrangements are found on some houses. In numerous cases historic features or materials have been replaced or obscured with more modern ones. Some residences have had aluminum or vinyl siding or asbestos shingles installed over the original wood siding. Original wood sash windows have been replaced with metal awning or sliding aluminum frame

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windows. Usually, however, the original window frame, size, and proportions have been maintained.

Porches are common throughout older residential areas. These may be either integrated or attached porches that extend the width of the main facade. Attached porches usually have a hip roof, regardless of the type of main roof found on the building. In addition to full width porches or verandas, one also finds one-bay entrance and end porches, plus formal porticos and tiered verandas and balconies. These structures are usually supported by wood posts or columns which may be square, round or turned. Some houses have columns with classical motifs including an entablature. A number of the porches on late 19th century and early 20th century houses have turned balustrades, spindle bands and other distinguishing ornamental millwork. Houses from this period may also have verge boards or decorative truss-work in the gable ends. A few of the handful of masonry Mediterranean Revival style that were constructed in the 1920s feature ceramic tile and terra-cotta decorative elements; however the use of decorative details on most residential structures built in Kissimmee after c. 1925 is sparse.

III. Significance:

The historic residential buildings of Kissimmee are representative of stylistic trends consistent with those of small communities throughout Florida during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are a number of homes that are excellent examples of high style architecture. Some represent the work of locally prominent architects and builders. Also, many served as the homes of prominent people important to Kissimmee's past.

IV. Registration Requirements:

For buildings to be eligible for listing under this cover they must be located in or near Kissimmee, have been constructed between 1881 and 1941, and meet at least one of the following criteria:

Buildings should represent styles or types of architecture that reflect the period indicated above and sufficiently retain the features and details of the historic period in which they were constructed. Residences may be significant local examples of a particular architectural style, be associated with locally important historical figures, or represent the work of local or regional architects or

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builders who have made a significant contribution to the architectural character of Kissimmee. Groups of buildings lacking individual stylistic distinction may significantly reflect a period of historical development in the community.

SECTION F. 2

I. Name of Property Type: Historic Commercial Buildings of Kissimmee

II. Description:

Kissimmee's historic commercial buildings represent the types of structures erected in the downtown business sections of small cities throughout the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The majority of these commercial buildings in Kissimmee are in a two block wide strip along the length of Broadway Avenue. They conform to a standard set-back from the street and generally fill the lot which they occupy. The buildings are all of masonry construction and range in height from one to three stories. Most of the buildings have a rectangular ground plan, although a few have irregular plans, due to the unusual lot shapes, caused by the intersection of some streets at a forty-five degree angle.

All of the structures have flat, built-up roofs surrounded by a parapet. Except for those that are detached or located on a corner, all of the buildings exhibit a single, primary elevation, where all public entrances, windows, and decorative elements are found. The first story of most structures is devoted to a traditional store front, consisting of one or more bays of plate glass display windows and an entrance. Upper stories normally have rectangular or arched fenestration, containing double-hung sash windows. The majority of the buildings are constructed of red brick; however in some cases the original material has been covered with stucco, metal, or other materials that were added at a later date. Original decorative elements include ornamental corbelled brick cornices and lintels, terra-cotta relief details, and applied ceramic tile.

III. Significance:

The historic commercial buildings of Kissimmee are significant for their association with the development of the downtown commercial area of the city during its historic period.

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They also represent national trends in architectural taste in small town commercial architecture during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A few of these structures may be individually eligible for nomination to the National Register as significant local examples of a particular architectural style or type.

IV. Registration Requirements:

To be eligible for listing under this property type a building must be located in the City of Kissimmee and meet the following criteria:

Buildings should represent styles or types of architecture that reflect the period indicated above and sufficiently retain the features and details of the historic period in which they were constructed. Individual commercial structures may be significant local examples of a particular architectural style, be associated with locally important historical figures, or represent the work of local or regional architects or builders who have made a significant contribution to the architectural character of Kissimmee. Groups of buildings lacking individual stylistic distinction may significantly reflect a period of historical development in the community.

SECTION F. 3

I. Name of Property Type: Historic Religious and Public Buildings of Kissimmee

II. Description:

Buildings included in this category were designed to fulfill the religious and other community needs of the citizens of Kissimmee. The property type specifically includes three properties in the community: two churches and the Osceola County Courthouse. It may also include any of the other contributing structures in the Kissimmee Historic District related to these functions. The religious buildings are primarily churches that reflect traditional medieval or classical revival styles. Significant features may include more towers, stained glass lancet or arched windows, and prominently located entrances. Buildings can be either wood frame or masonry constructions, with gable roofs or other roof forms. The most significant governmental structure in the community is the Osceola County Courthouse (listed in the N.R. 8/16/1977). This brick,

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Romanesque Revival style structure was constructed in 1890. The building has a tower, round arches, squat columns, and narrow windows that are among the features typical of the style.

III. Significance:

Although they account for only a small percentage of the total historic building stock of the city, the historic religious and public buildings in Kissimmee are among the most historically and architecturally significant resources in the community. They are the most stylistically well developed and represent a broad community effort. They also reflect the growing prosperity of the city during much of the historic period of development. These distinctive local landmarks also continue to serve their original function.

IV. Registration Requirements:

To be eligible for listing under this property type a building must be located in the City of Kissimmee and meet the following criteria:

Buildings should represent styles or types of architecture that reflect the period indicated above and sufficiently retain the features and details of the historic period in which they were constructed. The most important buildings in this category or individually eligible for listing in the National Register. The structures may be significant local examples of a particular architectural style, be associated with locally important historical figures, or represent the work of local or regional architects or builders who have made a significant contribution to the architectural character of Kissimmee. Even buildings lacking individual stylistic distinction may contribute to the overall character of a historic district.

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Geographical Data

Section G: Geographical Data

Buildings eligible for listing under this multiple property cover are located in or immediately adjacent to the corporate limits of the City of Kissimmee, Florida.

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Identification & Evaluation Methods

Section H: Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The Kissimmee multiple property nomination is the product of a comprehensive survey of historic buildings undertaken by Historic Property Associates for the City of Kissimmee February 1991. The survey encompassed all buildings and structures within the city limits that were constructed before World War II. The format for recording the properties was the Florida Site File form. A total of 430 properties, all but one of them buildings, were recorded by the survey.

Historical research was done on the history of Kissimmee and the individual properties recorded by the survey. Research was conducted at the Osceola County Courthouse, Kissimmee City Hall, the Osceola County Historical Society Museum, and the Kissimmee Public Library. Further background research was performed at the St. Augustine Historical Society Library (St. Augustine), the Florida State University Library, and the State Library of Florida (Tallahassee), the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida (Gainesville), and the DuPont-Ball Library at Stetson University (DeLand).

Each property was evaluated according to National Register criteria to determine its eligibility for listing in the Register, either individually or as contributing element in a historic district. The resulting data indicated the existence of a large potential district area and several possible individual candidates for listing not found in the district area.

All of the properties proposed for listing under this cover were reexamined before undertaking preparation of the final National Register proposals. The photographs, maps, site plans, and floor plans included in the proposals represent the resources as they appeared in the Summer of 1992. Although the district and individual proposals reflect what is at present eligible for listing in the National Register in Kissimmee, the historic contexts and property types included in this cover were broadly defined purposefully to allow for the inclusion of properties that may become eligible in the future.

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