

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Architecture and Real Estate Development in Central and South Florida from the Boom Period to the Great Depression, 1920-1935

C. Geographical Data

The nominated properties are all located on the larger of the two islands that form the Davis Islands Subdivision, which is surrounded by the waters of Hillsborough Bay and Seddon Channel.

(See Continuation Sheet for UTM List)

See continuation sheet

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 for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

June 16, 1989
Date

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.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

8/3/89

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Summary of Historic Context

The Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands consist of a group of twenty-one buildings that are significant under criterion C as outstanding examples of the eclectic Mediterranean Revival style within the context of the development of Florida "boom period" architecture in Tampa, Florida. These properties are among the most important visible surviving elements of the subdivision founded by real estate developer D.P. Davis, whose plan for the man-made islands called for integrating Mediterranean style architecture with "Venetian" canals and winding, palm-lined avenues to create a multi-functional neighborhood of residential, commercial, and public buildings in close proximity to parks and a variety of recreational facilities. The Davis Islands subdivision sums up the aim and spirit of the brief and exuberant Florida real estate boom of the 1920s, a period of unprecedented growth in the economy and population of South and Central Florida. The buildings included in this multiple property group represent some of the best examples of the Mediterranean Revival categories of architecture in Tampa and typify the building plans, materials, and decorative elements found in similar "boom period" projects in the state.

The Development of Tampa before the 1920s Real Estate Boom

Although the area at the mouth of the Hillsborough River was known to Spanish explorers as early as the sixteenth century, it was not studied in detail or well-mapped until 1757 when Juan Baptista Franco visited Hillsborough Bay and sailed up the river during an exploratory expedition. During this voyage, his map maker noted several small, grassy islands located near the site on which Davis Islands would rise many generations later. The Spanish government made little use of the information gathered by Franco's party, and no permanent settlement was made during either the Spanish or British colonial periods. Florida became an American territory in 1821, and the town of Tampa grew up around Fort Brooke, which was established at the mouth of the Hillsborough River in 1824 to counter the hostile actions of the Seminole Indians. The small civilian settlement next to the fort became the seat of Hillsborough County in 1834,

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Poor transportation facilities and primitive conditions hampered Tampa's development for decades after its founding, but in 1884 the South Florida Railroad connected Tampa with Jacksonville on Florida's east coast, and two years later Vincente Martinez Ybor moved his cigar manufacturing operations from Key West, Florida, to "Ybor City" in Tampa. These events proved to be such a great benefit to the community that a year after the establishment of Ybor City, the population of Tampa grew from a mere 800 persons to over 2,000.

In 1888, deep water port facilities were constructed at the railroad terminus on the west side of the Interbay Peninsula at Port Tampa, seven miles south of downtown Tampa, and Tampa quickly became an important industrial and commercial center on Florida's west coast. Many other cigar factories located in Ybor City, and new manufacturing areas were established in Palmetto Beach (south of Ybor City) and in West Tampa (on the west side of the Hillsborough River). As the population of Tampa grew, suburbs began to extend in all directions from the downtown area, aided by the construction of bridges across the Hillsborough River and new street railways that provided rapid access to the new residential areas.

By 1901, the population of Tampa stood at approximately 15,000, and the number of residents was even greater if one included the cities of West Tampa, Port Tampa City, and the immediate environs outside the city limits. In addition to cigar manufacturing, the ship building and the phosphate industries, and citrus and vegetable farming brought continuous growth to the city as the twentieth century entered the 1910s. Tampa also became an important financial center through its banks and the firms underwriting the cargoes that passed through the nearby port.

Tampa's newly wealthy professional men, merchants, and manufacturers erected large and well-appointed mansions in the residential subdivisions of Hyde Park and Tampa Heights. Building lots along Bayshore Boulevard overlooking Hillsborough Bay were particularly favored by Tampa's wealthy residents between ca. 1905 and the early 1920s. The vista offered by this silk-stocking area of columned mansions did not go unnoticed by D.P. Davis when he began to plan his Davis Islands development in 1924.

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The Economic and Social Foundations of the Florida Boom and its
Collapse, 1917-1930

The World War I era was particularly important for Florida's port cities. Both Tampa and Jacksonville were used as locations for the construction of transport ships and as supply depots and embarkation points for men and materiel destined for the war in Europe. The shipping channel between the mouth of Tampa Bay and the city of Tampa was widened and deepened so that large vessels could be berthed on Sparkman Bay near downtown, rather than at Port Tampa farther south on the peninsula. By the war's conclusion, the state of Florida stood on the verge of a short but vigorous period of economic growth and population expansion.

Thousands of persons had immigrated to Florida during World War I to work in the various industries generated by America's role in the global conflict. Many others had become familiar with the state as a result of having been stationed during their military service at one of the numerous military installations that had been established mainly in the coastal areas of the peninsula. The war also made heavy demands of the state's natural resources and transportation system, as raw materials and agricultural products of all kinds were in great demand. The end of hostilities saw an immediate drop in the requirement for Florida's goods and services, leading to a depressed economy state-wide, but the attention focused on the area during war made many businessmen and developers aware that the region was still largely a frontier from which the shrewd investor could make a fortune through the application of a modest amount of capital in the proper areas.

The third decade of the twentieth century opened with some promise of accelerated growth, but no one could have anticipated the dimensions of the changes that would be brought about by the boundless post-war optimism of the "jazz age" or the succession of natural and man-made disasters that would cause this bubble to burst in Florida almost as soon as it began. Financial collapse and a tropical hurricane came suddenly and together in 1926. Two years later came another devastating killer hurricane, followed a year later by the stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression. In spite of these setbacks, during the brief period

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of luminescent prosperity the state made greater gains in population growth, the construction of public works, and the development of programs for the general welfare of its people than in any comparable previous period.

From just under a million (968,470) people in 1920, the population of Florida rose to 1,263,540 in 1925 and 1,468,211 by 1930. All of Florida was growing, but the most dramatic increase was in the central and southern portions of the peninsula, particularly along the Atlantic Seaboard. Jacksonville, in north Florida, remained the state's largest city with 129,549 persons, but Miami had risen during the decade from 29,571 residents to second place with 110,637. Tampa took third place, its population increasing from 51,608 to 101,161. St. Petersburg was fourth with 40,425. Thirteen new counties were created between 1921 and 1925, only four of which were in the northern part of the state. Railroad construction, which had slowed in development between 1900 and 1920, reached new heights in the next decade, only to decline rapidly during the Depression as short lines and feeder lines were discontinued.

Climate and accessibility to the populous Northeast via the railroads account for some of the growing interest in Florida even before the boom. However, it was the truly revolutionary development of a statewide system of public highways and roads in the 1920s that facilitated travel and allowed the boom to become widespread. Road building had previously been largely the function of local governments, but during the boom period and thereafter, the state road department committed itself to the creation of a vast network of hard-surfaced highways. From less than 748 miles of state roads completed or underway in 1920, the system grew to 3,254 miles by 1930. Private enterprise also accounted for many major and minor road improvements. George S. Gandy, a Philadelphia transportation expert, came to Tampa in 1903 and became obsessed with the idea of constructing a bridge and streetcar line across Tampa Bay to connect Tampa with St. Petersburg. Financing for the project was made available in 1922, and two years later the Gandy Bridge was opened, reducing the travel distance between the two cities from forty-three to thirteen miles.

Although it was not apparent during the early 1920s, the state government had, in fact, committed itself to too much

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change too quickly, and this attitude was taken up by local governments and private enterprise who failed to see the dangers of promoting growth and financing it with public bonds that could not be repaid with existing system of taxation. There was too much construction of streets, roads, utilities, and public buildings in many instances; but the state was in no mood to listen to words of prudence or caution.

The increased mobility that the automobile provided the American public seemed to fill the nation with wanderlust and a dissatisfaction with the established national centers of urbanization and industrialization. This attitude, perhaps brought about as a reaction to the strains of the war period, helped drive people to new and less developed places. The material prosperity of the country provided the time, as well as the means, for travel and speculative enterprise. Also, the confidence of the presidential administration of Calvin Coolidge in the continuing prosperity of the nation put a high premium upon business enterprise of a bold sort that promised sudden wealth. Florida seemed to be the place where the adventurous spirit of the American Frontier could be renewed in the staid and settled East. New residents were also drawn to the "tropical paradise" by the assurance that the state would levy no income or inheritance taxes, thereby offsetting any nagging doubts they might have had that coming era of prosperity might be brought to an abrupt end.

Architecture and Real Estate Development in Central and South Florida from the Boom Period to the Great Depression, 1920-1935

The Florida Boom burst into full flower first in Miami and Coral Gables, quickly followed by Palm Beach, Boca Raton, Tampa and St. Petersburg. The storybook transformation of Miami Beach from a tropical jungle to a modern city in less than a dozen years was enough to convince George E. Merrick and his associates that they had truly found the end of the rainbow. They invested in homes, public buildings, and streets for the well-planned city of Coral Gables and made preparations for even more elaborate developments to come elsewhere.

Although there had been some land speculation in Miami Beach since the community was founded with the arrival of the South

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Florida Railroad in 1896, development of the area had been relatively slow as the community was carved out of the wilderness. It was only at the end of World War I that local developers, led by Carl Fisher, a Midwest industrialist who had arrived in Miami Beach in 1913, decided to change their strategy for marketing their land holdings. Fisher raised the price of his building lots to make them more enticing, mounted an intensive advertising campaign, and to accommodate the resulting influx of curious visitors and prospective customers, built a luxurious 150 room hotel where the visitors could reside and enjoy the pleasures of the beach while shopping for property.

The land boom began to get underway with the opening of the Flamingo Hotel on New Year's Eve of 1920, an event which featured a grand ball for the hotel guests, local dignitaries, and many distinguished regular winter visitors. Fisher's aim was to make Miami Beach Florida's "Mediterranean Coast" with architecture to match. Buildings both private and public were designed to reflect Spanish and Italian architecture, many having a combination of both.

In the winter of 1924-1925, the incipient boom that had been gathering force since 1921 became a reality. Instead of the usual slowing down of business at the end of the winter season, more and more people came. Speculation broke wide open in the late summer of 1925. For a brief period the Miami Herald had the largest advertising section for real estate of any newspaper in the United States. In the same year the Miami News could boast the single largest issue printed anywhere in the country, celebrating the opening of its "Miami News Tower" building and the twenty-ninth birthday of Miami Beach. The twenty-two sections of the newspaper totaled 504 pages and required fifty train carloads of newsprint.

Speculative real estate projects ruined sound ones by pushing them too far in the growing competition for customers. Some measure of the dramatic changes to the community wrought by the boom can be gathered from the Miami city records, which show that the municipal payroll grew 2,500 percent between 1921 and 1926, from \$140,000 to \$3,557,000. The assessed value of property within the city limits increased 560 percent during the same period, from \$63,800,000 to \$421,101,000. The number of

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miles of paved streets grew from thirty-two to 420. Building permits climbed from a value of \$4,478,000 to \$58,647,000.

D.P. Davis and the Founding of the Tampa Boom

Tampa was rescued from a serious economic recession by increased real estate activity. Two shipyards opened during World War I that had employed 5,000 men had shut down. A crippling strike had idled 10,000 cigar workers in 1920, and a severe west coast hurricane in 1921 added to the atmosphere of uncertainty. At the same time, almost unnoticed, an increasing number of tourists were coming in, mostly by automobile. Many of these were "tin canners" armed with tents, bedding and canned goods, pulling trailers or driving automobiles and trucks that had been modified to contain sleeping bunks and makeshift kitchens. At DeSoto Park near Ybor City in the winter of 1920-1921, these hardy tourists organized themselves into the "Tin Can Tourists of the World." The construction of the Gandy Bridge sparked real estate development, and D.P. "Doc" Davis had seen the development of low-lying and bay bottom land in Miami and Miami Beach, and set out to accomplish a similar miracle in Tampa.

David Paul Davis was born on November 29, 1885, in Green Cove Springs (Clay County), Florida. He came to Tampa in 1894 with his father, a river boat engineer who worked on the ferries plying Old Tampa Bay. Davis had little formal education, except for attending the public schools in Tampa. The youngster worked for a time as a newspaper boy for the Tampa Daily Times and later as a clerk in a hardware store. His real estate career began in Jacksonville in 1907 but was interrupted when he traveled to Panama, where the canal was under construction to work as a merchant supplying various necessities to the canal workers. He returned to Jacksonville at the beginning of World War I, operating a ferry on the St. Johns River between the city and Camp Johnston where soldiers waiting embarkation to the war in Europe were stationed. In 1915, while living in Jacksonville, he married his first wife, Marjorie H. Merritt.

After the Armistice in 1918, Davis left Jacksonville for Miami and returned to the real estate business as a salesman. D.P. Davis thrived in the competitive atmosphere of real estate

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promotion in Miami Beach and the nearby cities of Miami and Coral Gables, which were also gaining attention at the time. He gained a reputation for successfully marketing properties that other men had been unable to move, in one instance turning a \$40,000 profit on 400 lots in thirty days by applying \$1,000 in advertising and using his dynamic personal skills as a salesman to convince customers of the potential worth of the property. He used his personal capital to acquire and then dispose of other languishing subdivisions such as Alta Vista and Shadow Lawn, then used the new profits to develop his own projects. When he decided to return to Tampa in 1924, to explore the feasibility of developing a Miami-style project in his old home town, he was reported to have become a millionaire.

Davis, who envisioned the creation of a comprehensive island community, had little difficulty acquiring the small islands in Hillsborough Bay for which he paid \$150,000 to their private owners. Acquiring the city-owned submerged lands in the surrounding area, however, proved more difficult. The city hesitated to approve the massive project because of complaints by the resident along Bayshore Boulevard that the development would spoil their view of the bay. Davis agreed to the demand that the perimeters of the new, artificial islands would not come within 700 feet of the boulevard; therefore, the city accepted his offer of \$200,000 for the sale of municipal property. Davis further agreed to finance the construction of the bridge connecting Davis Islands with the city and to devote fifty-five acres of the subdivision to parkland which would be owned by the city.

In May of 1924 Davis set up his own company of D.P. Davis Properties, Inc. which was capitalized at \$3,500,000, with Davis and two partners as the only stockholders. Davis then contracted with the Northern Dredge and Dock Company of Minnesota to begin construction of the islands and obtained a permit from the city to construct a temporary wooden bridge between Bayshore Boulevard and the island, in order to make improvements to the property while the dredge and fill operations were still underway. Davis proposed to bulkhead and fill an area approximately 8,000 feet long by 5,700 feet wide at the base and 850 feet wide at the apex. The plan called for dredging 8,000,000 cubic feet of sand from Hillsborough Bay, 2,000,000 more than Carl Fisher had dredged from Biscayne Bay in creating Miami Beach.

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The subdivision plans for Davis' island community, with its canals, bays, palm lined streets, and spacious building lots were drawn by the G.F. Young Engineering Company of St. Petersburg. It is clear, however, that the basic outline for the plan, including the appearance of major physical features and the location of specific construction zones came from Davis himself. The firm provided twenty-six miles of streets lined with approximately 3,500 lots. Like the similar development at Miami Beach and Coral Gables under construction in South Florida, Davis Islands was designed to appeal to a resort and sports-minded public with an ample amount of leisure time and ready access to automobiles. Yacht basins, tennis courts, and a country club featuring a nine hole golf course were included in the facilities to be made available to residents of the islands. The houses constructed for the development were to range in size from rather small structures for the occasional recreational use of the absentee property owner to lavish villas for the permanent--and, of course, wealthy--resident. There were also to be luxury hotels and apartments for the seasonal visitor.

To execute his plan to create an atmosphere of elegant living, Davis, not surprisingly, called in a Miami architect to design houses, hotels, and public buildings in what he called the "Venetian" style. That architect was Martin L. Hampton. Hampton had already become accustomed to employing the Mediterranean architectural vocabulary in 1919 when he assisted architect Addison Mizner in designing the Worth Avenue shops and apartments in Palm Beach, Florida. He subsequently became a senior member of George Merrick's architectural staff in Coral Gables and produced designs for Glenn Curtis, the developer of Miami Springs, including Curtis' own house and the Miami Springs Administration Building in 1924. A year earlier he had designed the Congress Building in the city of Miami. He had refined his knowledge of Spanish and Italian architecture by trips to Europe, and by the time he came to Tampa in November, 1924, to sign a contract with Davis was featured in newspaper accounts as specializing in Mediterranean architecture.

Hampton, however, visited Tampa only occasionally, producing the designs for the first six buildings on Davis Islands in his Miami studio. In late December when D.P. Davis awarded contracts for the construction of the buildings, it was announced that Tampa architect Franklin O. Adams would represent Hampton in

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overseeing completion of the projects. Hampton's office prepared designs for twenty structures on Davis Islands, seventeen of which still survive. That Franklin O. Adams was selected to represent Hampton on the scene is not surprising. The architect had already demonstrated his facility in using Mediterranean forms in his design for the First Presbyterian Church which was constructed in downtown Tampa in 1922. In 1924 he had also been appointed chairman of the architectural review board for the Beach Park Development Corporation, another Mediterranean theme subdivision which was under development on the west shore of the Interbay Peninsula, a project for which Adams prepared a number of house designs.

Adams personally designed twenty-nine of the more than 100 buildings and structures on Davis Islands that survive from the 1925-1935 period. These include residences, small apartment buildings, and such public facilities as the Marjorie Park Yacht Basin gatehouse and an above-ground municipal swimming pool. In addition to Davis Islands and Beach Park, Adams was associated with the other two Mediterranean theme developments in the Tampa area--Tampania and Temple Terrace--and produced designs for a great variety of building types in other parts of the city and state, employing more traditional and conventional styles.

Adams was born in Waterproof, Louisiana, and had received his architectural instruction at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He had supplemented his studies with trips to Europe and had worked for a number of architectural firms in the South before opening his own office in Tampa in 1914. During his long career he served several terms as president of the Florida Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and for a time was director of the organizations' South Atlantic Division.

D.P. Davis ultimately employed nineteen architects to work on Davis Islands, most of whom were based in Tampa. He also recruited locally and nationally in assembling his management staff, but preferred to hire those persons with whom he had worked in the Miami area. In addition to supervising architect Martin L. Hampton, Davis hired W.R. Gignilliat, who had been Carl Fisher's contract manager, to run his Tampa real estate office. Davis' advertising specialist was Charles Sperry, former editor of the Miami Real Estate Journal, which Davis had used to mount his successful marketing campaigns as a real estate agent in

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Miami Beach. His landscape architect was Frank Button, who like Hampton worked out of his Miami office to produce the landscaping scheme for the islands. Other sales and advertising personnel included Joseph P. White, a real estate specialist from Chicago, and Frank Montayne, who had been advertising manager for the Bridgeport, Connecticut, Telegram.

The process of selling the building lots on the still incomplete islands took only a short time, owing to the whirlwind activity of Davis and his staff, and the feverish speculative atmosphere of the real estate market as the Florida boom moved into high gear. Davis opened his sales office in downtown Tampa on October 2, 1924, and although dredging had not even begun, the first 300 residential lots went on sale two days later. Heavy advertising and a two lot per person limit caused potential buyers to form a line at the office doors the day before the properties went on sale. The following morning, the Hyde Park Section--the most desirable of the subdivision plats--sold out in three hours for \$1,683,000, a record figure in Florida at that time. The 1,000 lot Bay Circle section was offered for sale on October 14, 1924, and all but 41 lots were sold for \$2,711,000 by the end of the day. Lots averaged in price between \$2,500 and \$3,500, a low pre-development scale geared to a resale, profit-making market. Six months later, when actual construction of the islands was well underway, the prices had risen to between \$6,500 and \$10,000. Davis advertised that even at those prices the lots cost only half as much as those in Miami Beach's Venetian Isles development. In little over a year, by October 24, 1925, all of the lots held by D.P. Davis Properties, had been sold, and Davis Islands was withdrawn from the active real estate market. Sales had totaled an impressive \$18,138,000. Although this still did not top Carl Fisher's 1925 sales figure of \$23,000,000, it did surpass everything on the west coast of Florida.

During an almost daily barrage of reports detailing grandiose visions of Venetian canals, million dollar hotels, and feats of engineering, the actual construction of the first buildings began in mid-December, 1925. The Administration Building, tennis courts, and several houses on Aegean and Adalia avenues were the first structures to be completed. By the end of 1925, sixty-four building permits had been issued, and such major projects as the Mission style Davis Islands Coliseum, the country club, the Bay Isle Business Building, and the "Palace of

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Florence," "Venetian," and "Spanish" apartment buildings were underway. In March of that year, Davis and the Tampa City Commission selected a large site at the north end of Marjorie Park on which to construct the Tampa Municipal Hospital, the first such health facility to be constructed with city funds. Work also began on several small apartment buildings along East Davis Boulevard and on the seven-story "Davis Arms" Hotel, later renamed the "Mirasol." Originally, the hotel was meant to be ten stories in height and erected at a cost of \$2,000,000. It was scaled back in size and had cost only \$750,000 when it opened in 1926, an indication that Davis had already over-extended himself financially in his plans for the luxury appointments of Davis Islands. The first houses in the subdivision were ready for occupation by June, 1926.

Flushed with the apparent success of his Tampa project, Davis announced his intention to undertake a similar development at St. Augustine, Florida, to be called Davis Shores. During this same period, the thirty-nine year old entrepreneur married Elizabeth Nelson, a twenty-two year old Tampa socialite. The couple intended to complement their brief honeymoon by a trip to Europe as soon as Davis could wind up his affairs in Tampa and make sure the plans for the St. Augustine project were well in hand. The new 1,500 acre subdivision occupied much of Davis' available capital in securing a construction loan and paying for costly pre-development advertising. March, 1926, brought a general downturn in land sales and development activity in Tampa, but most of the persons involved in the real estate business expected sales to increase again by the beginning of summer.

The Collapse of the Boom in Tampa

Relief, however, was not forthcoming and by August it became clear that not only Davis Islands but all of the local, large-scale "Mediterranean" theme subdivisions faced failure if paying customers could not be found to buy property and construct houses in the neighborhoods. Davis and others waited in vain for the profits they had expected from the sale of their properties. Even though all of the lots on Davis Islands had been "sold", the property had, in most cases, been acquired with a downpayment and a mortgage held by the First National Bank in Tampa, or had been received with a simple promissory note by persons hoping to

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resell the real estate at a profit as the fever to purchase land during the boom drove up prices. Development bonds, often held by northern financial firms, had been used to pay for the subdivision improvements, including the installation of utilities, and these became worthless as it became clear that neither the interest nor the capital would ever be recovered.

By the fateful summer of 1926, Davis had received less than \$30,000 of the \$4,000,000 which he had expected as his share of the profits from the Davis Islands venture. Rumors that Davis was desperately seeking some means of avoiding personal insolvency proved true when it was announced in August, 1926, that Stone and Webster, a large construction and utilities company, would join Davis in completing the islands project. A new company was formed that gave Davis forty-nine percent of the stock and \$250,000 in cash and credits that he immediately devoted to his St. Augustine development. Soon after, Davis severed all connections with the further construction of Davis Islands. Stone and Webster now had sole control of the project and formed yet another corporation called Davis Islands Inc., with one of its own officers as president. However, nothing could be done to realize Davis' original dream for the subdivision. Only fourteen building permits for Davis Islands were issued in all of 1926, although construction that was already underway or well into the planning stage continued unabated. By the end of the year sixty houses were ready for occupancy, and work continued on the hotels, apartment buildings, and public facilities.

Three months later D.P. Davis traveled to New York City in the company of one of his sons and several Tampa acquaintances to prepare to sail to Europe to join his wife and other son in Paris, who had preceded him on a trip whose avowed purpose was to investigate development opportunities along the Riviera. On the morning of October 13, 1926, news reached Tampa that the flamboyant entrepreneur had been lost overboard two days out of port and had apparently died at sea. It was rumored that Davis had committed suicide in despair over his declining fortunes, but eyewitnesses testified that his death had been an accident. As a result, his wife and children received \$300,000 from an insurance policy that Davis carried on his life.

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Other Mediterranean Theme Developments in the Tampa Area

Although Davis Islands was the most ambitious of the Boom Period Mediterranean architectural theme subdivisions in Tampa, it certainly had competitors in what, at the time, seemed to be a real estate market with a limitless supply of new customers seeking houses designed in the most up-to-date romantic style. D.P. Davis' principal competitors were the Beach Park and Tampania subdivisions and the newly founded city of Temple Terrace, the latter of which was located about ten miles north of downtown Tampa.

1. Temple Terrace

Incorporated on May 18, 1925, the city of Temple Terrace was a well-planned and attractive suburb. Its location in a heavily wooded area on the banks of the upper reaches of the Hillsborough River made the site attractive to northern visitors and Tampa residents seeking a more rustic residential community. Temple Terrace, Inc. was founded on June 17, 1920 by three businessmen who decided to use a golf course and other recreational facilities as the focal point of the residential development. Like Davis Islands, the plan of the community featured winding streets lined by houses overlooking "islands" of green fairways. By 1923 there were seven houses built in the vicinity of the country club facilities, but the area remained too rural to be widely popular with prospective home buyers, and the developers never attempted to create the ambitious mix of large and small buildings of various functions that characterized Davis Islands. The majority of the approximately 60 buildings in Temple Terrace that were built during the boom period reflect the Mediterranean theme influence, but only a few of these meet National Register Criteria in the area of architectural significance.

2. Beach Park

The Beach Park Subdivision is a residential neighborhood located on the west shore of Old Tampa Bay. It was platted in 1924 and embodied some of the basic features of Davis Islands, including winding streets and the dramatic proximity of water and architecture. However, the project involved a much smaller area and used dredge and fill techniques to create several small peninsulas jutting out into the bay rather than islands of

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varying sizes completely surrounded by water. Only those properties on the west edge of the neighborhood have views of the bay, as the subdivision extends several blocks eastward. The development is purely residential in character, and of the fifty-one properties surviving from boom period, approximately ten may be individually eligible for listing in the National Register.

3. Tampania

Tampania was the least ambitious of the Boom Period subdivisions and contains the fewest resources surviving from the 1920s. One property, however, the Tampania House is listed in the National Register (9/12/85). The 130 acre tract was platted in 1924, but the first lots were not put on sale until June, 1925. The neighborhood lies near Westshore Boulevard, just northeast of Beach Park. The development features a simple grid street pattern rather than the winding scheme of the other Mediterranean theme subdivisions in Tampa. Not more than a dozen original buildings survive from the development, and these are widely dispersed. None of the buildings in the neighborhood, other than the Tampania House, was deemed eligible for listing in the National Register.

The General Collapse of the Florida Boom in Central and South Florida

The decline of the boom began in 1925, almost at the moment that the land buying fever had reached its height. A shortage of housing for the rapidly growing populations of Miami, Coral Gables, Tampa, and St. Petersburg led to rent profiteering that produced resentment. The situation got so bad that some developers even tried setting up tents to accommodate customers that came their way. Many disgusted home buyers in Tampa contracted to build homes in the less "exclusive" established neighborhoods, preferring to erect a modest and comfortable bungalow at reasonable market value rather than trying to acquire a "dream home" in a still undeveloped subdivision at vastly inflated prices. Endless delays in construction were caused by the strong demand for building materials, making these supplies scarce. The overburdened transportation services broke down, and the movement of building supplies was slowed so much that the building boom lost momentum that could never be regained.

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On August 18, 1925, the Florida East Coast Railroad announced an embargo and permit system on carload shipments except for fuel, petroleum, livestock, and perishable materials. The problem arose from long delays in unloading freight cars in such boom areas as Miami where the cars were being used by consignees as warehouses because all of the existing storage facilities were already full, primarily containing building supplies. At one time there were 851 carloads of freight on the Miami sidetracks and another 150 outside the usual waiting areas at Jacksonville. Several hundred others clogged the railyards at Tampa or were waiting at spurs enroute to their destinations. On October 29, the embargo became statewide. These restrictions were not removed until February 26, 1926.

The story of steamship service was much the same. In Miami, the port was not yet fully developed, and docking facilities and labor were scarce. In late December, 1925, the New York Times reported that thirty-one ships lay off Miami Beach waiting their turns to come into harbor and unload. Early in January, 1926, the Prinz Valdemar, which had been undergoing renovation to become a floating cabaret, slowly capsized and blocked the harbor for more than a month before army engineers could cut a channel around the sunken vessel.

Florida also began to get a bad press in northern newspapers. However sound the real estate market may have been in the early stages, the temptation to fraud proved too great to resist when trading became frenzied and buying purely speculative. The flow of population and financial resources to Florida also caused some American communities to start an active anti-Florida campaign to stem the flow of people and money to the sunshine state. The boom was definitely finished when a hurricane struck Miami and other points along the east coast on September 17, 1926. There had been no major hurricane along the Atlantic Seaboard of Florida since 1910, and much of the lower peninsula knew nothing of tropical storms. Much of the boom period construction had been undertaken by builders who had no knowledge of the necessary safeguards against the force of wind and water in a heavy blow, nor did local government have the maturity to require adequate building codes and inspection procedures to enforce them.

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Fortunes that had been made during the height of the boom were just as quickly lost with the onset of the bust. Between 1926 and 1930, the assessed value of real estate in Florida dropped from \$623,000,000 to \$441,000,000. Florida's two major railroads experienced such a sharp decline in revenues that both went into receivership by 1931. Even the most cautionary banks could not fail to be caught up in the inflationary spiraling of business, nor could they withstand the strain of the sustained deflation and depression that followed the end of the boom. By 1926, heavy withdrawals, coupled with the failure of land buyers to make payments of their mortgages, began to produce failures among the whole spectrum of financial institutions.

Between December, 1925 and November, 1926 banking resources fell from \$943,000,000 to \$300,000,000, and more than forty banks--most of them in the boom areas--closed their doors. More than half of these managed to reorganize and reopen, but the financial disaster had only been postponed not averted. Bank failures in 1929 began in Florida even before the collapse of the stock market. On July 17, in Tampa the Citizens Bank and Trust Company failed to open its doors after paying out \$1,200,000 to its customers the day before. Five affiliated banks in Tampa and four in other towns in the immediate area also closed. Any hope for a renewed attempt to complete development of the Davis Islands subdivision or any of the other major Mediterranean theme projects founded in Tampa during the boom was, therefore, at an end.

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Photographs

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1. Aerial View of Davis Islands, Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands
 2. Tampa (Hillsborough County), Florida
 3. Burgert Brothers Photographers
 4. 1925 (Copy)
 5. Tampa Public Library
 6. View Looking North
 7. Photo No. 1 of 4

1. Aerial View of Davis Islands, Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands
2. Tampa (Hillsborough County), Florida
3. Burgert Brothers Photographers
4. 1927 (Copy)
5. Tampa Public Library
6. View Looking Southwest toward Currituck Channel
7. Photo No. 2 of 4

1. Aerial View of Davis Islands, Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands
2. Tampa (Hillsborough County), Florida
3. Burgert Brothers Photographers
4. 1928 (Copy)
5. Tampa Public Library
6. View Looking North toward Downtown Tampa
7. Photo No. 3 of 4

1. Aerial View of Davis Islands, Mediterranean Revival Style Buildings of Davis Islands
2. Tampa (Hillsborough County), Florida
3. Burgert Brothers Photographers
4. 1937 (Copy)
5. Tampa Public Library
6. View Looking Northeast
7. Photo No. 4 of 4

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I. PROPERTY TYPES

The general style of the buildings constructed during the period 1925-1932 is Mediterranean Revival. The consistency in style is largely the result of the "theme" previously established in Miami that had been widely and successfully advertised. The romantic associations with Spanish colonial settlement of Florida also provided ample justification for promoting Mediterranean architecture, but there was little interest in historical accuracy, thereby resulting in an extremely eclectic mixture of Spanish and Italian forms based upon the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo styles extending from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. All of these modes were, of course, adapted to the American notion of the comfortable and functional modern building, particularly the family home.

The majority of the buildings were constructed of hollow clay tile covered with stucco or brick veneer. Some of the larger structures have a reinforced concrete frame with hollow tile infill. Stuccoed buildings feature smooth, rough cast, and textured stucco finishes on the exterior. Original exterior paint colors and the use of picturesque staining, or "coloristic effects" are difficult to determine as most of the buildings have been repainted a number of times since they were built due to the hot and damp climate of Tampa. Most of the buildings have continuous poured concrete or brick foundations, although some of them rest upon masonry piers with a stuccoed or masonry veneer infill. The buildings feature a variety of roof shapes, from hip and gable to pyramidal and flat surrounded by parapets. The parapets may be plain, shaped, or crenelated. Clay tiles are almost universal for all sloped roof surfaces, the exceptions being the house at 124 Baltic Circle and certain secondary structures--such as garage apartments--which formerly had clay tiles on the roof.

The buildings display a great variety of plans, from formal and symmetrical to extremely irregular and picturesque. The houses in particular range from quite small compact structures to mansions that are elaborate in their planning and details. Arched windows and bays, balconies, courtyards, and gardens play a large role in the planning of the larger structures, and buildings large and small often feature French doors and wood or metal casement windows typical of Mediterranean Revival

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buildings. Such windows and doors, however, are by no means universal, and some buildings feature the more traditional double hung wood sash window. Even these, though, may be used in combination with the more picturesque forms of fenestration. In certain cases the original windows have been replaced with jalousie or aluminum sash or awning windows.

Ornamentation includes reliefwork in cast concrete or applied stucco in the form of cartouches, medallions, decorative borders, or a wide variety of figurative and geometric elements. Also used widely is a great variety of glazed and unglazed terra cotta tile and wrought metal work. Many houses have one or more chimney, and these are usually covered with stucco and capped. The interiors of the buildings include beamed or vaulted rooms and passageways, tiled or stone flagged floors, arched doorways, and decorative metalwork, such as chandeliers and sconces.

The grounds of the larger houses and apartment buildings may feature walled gardens and courtyards, and in some cases the properties are elaborately landscaped with a wide variety of tropical plantings.

Only three property types are represented in this multiple property nomination: Single family residences, multi-residential structures, and one commercial/professional building. The general style of the buildings constructed between 1925-1932 is Mediterranean Revival. The consistency in style was the result of architectural standards placed on construction by the developers during the period of significance. The designs for the buildings range from simple to elaborate and involve a wide range of construction costs. The majority of the buildings are constructed of stuccoed hollow clay tile. The stucco may be smooth or rough cast.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY TYPES

A. Houses: All but four of the properties covered by this nomination are single family dwellings. These range in size from small, one-story structures with a relatively simple plan occupying a single lot to large, complicated plan residences extending over as many as three lots. Stylistically, they all derive their general appearance from the eclectic Mediterranean Revival vocabulary, but the smaller and less expensive structures

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tend to be much simpler in the use of decorative detail. The houses are not grouped according to size or decorative program but are spread mainly along the west side of the large island north of Currituck Channel. The majority of the houses have either a detached garage, or more often, a garage apartment. These structures are generally contributing and are constructed of the same materials as the house.

B. Multi-Residential Structures: Three of the buildings included in the nomination are multi-residential structures, two apartment buildings and one residential hotel. These are all found along East Davis Boulevard and are multi-story structures whose main facades embrace a courtyard. They vary in size and in their massing and use of decorative details, but like the houses are all clearly Mediterranean Revival structures. They employ the same materials and construction techniques as the single family residences.

C. Commercial Buildings: The Bay Isle Business Block at 238 East Davis Boulevard is the only Commercial/Professional Office structure constructed during the historic development of Davis Islands. It is clear that the D.P. Davis intended to construct other commercial buildings along East Davis Boulevard, but the failure of the real estate boom ended his plans for the creation of a comprehensive community composed of residential, commercial, and recreational elements. The Bay Isle Building uses the same stylistic vocabulary and building techniques as the other structures covered by this nomination.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAVIS ISLANDS BUILDINGS

Each of the building type described in Section F. II. share characteristics of the eclectic Mediterranean Revival style in the areas of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Although the structures represent the skills and esthetic visions of a number of individual architects and their clients, each demonstrates a high degree of workmanship and similarity of intention in conforming to the original stylistic guidelines established by D.P. Davis, the founder of the comprehensive community. These guidelines continued to govern construction on Davis Islands even after Davis severed his connection with the project in 1926. The buildings in the subdivision represent some of the best examples of eclectic

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Mediterranean Revival style in the Tampa area and derive further visual and physical importance from their island setting. The original plan of the community is still very much evident in the relationship to one another of the historic buildings, street plans, canals and bays, and tropical landscaping, even though most of the post-1932 construction does not follow the original guidelines set down by D.P. Davis.

IV. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for inclusion in this multiple property nomination all of the structures had to be located in those sections of Davis Islands that were represented on the original plans of Davis Islands drafted 1925-1927 and developed between 1925-1932. Each of the structures must represent some variation of "Mediterranean Revival" architecture in its popular form as understood by American architects and the general public--particularly in Florida--during the period of the 1920s and early 1930s. These eclectic forms may include variations and combinations of Spanish Colonial, Mission, Moorish, Italian Renaissance, Venetian Gothic, Palladian, and other such types as are appropriate to the period and location under consideration.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State historic preservation office | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Specify repository: _____

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Identification & Evaluation Methods

The properties contained in this National Register Multiple Property Nomination Proposal were selected as a result of a variety of visual and physical surveys and documentary research conducted by the Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board and the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation between September, 1979 and March, 1989. In 1979, a city-wide survey of the historic resources of Tampa was conducted by the Preservation Board. This survey identified eight historically and architecturally significant areas within the city, including Davis Islands. The Davis Islands segment of the survey report identified only twenty-two properties of note, only eight of which are included in this nomination. It is unclear why only those twenty-two properties were recorded in the survey report; however the survey was intended to produce only an overview of resources in Tampa rather a comprehensive catalog. No National Register nominations for Davis Islands properties resulted from this survey.

A second survey was conducted in 1985-1986 by the staff of the Preservation Board in order to nominate eligible properties to the National Register. The survey identified 129 properties surviving from the period 1926-1932, some of which appeared to be individually eligible for the Register on the basis of historical or architectural significance, and others that appeared to be eligible only as part of a district nomination. The Board was also faced with the problem presented by the islands themselves. The two (originally three) islands comprising Davis Islands were man-made structures significant in the area of engineering and community planning. However, the islands themselves had undergone a number of substantial changes since their construction was essentially completed in 1928. This included the fusion of the two large islands into one irregularly shaped island with the closing of the southeast entrance of Currituck Channel when Peter O. Knight Airport was constructed through the use of additional dredge and fill operations in the 1930s.

The subdivision had also lost its golf course, and the area on which it stood was subdivided for the construction of houses. A large section of Marjorie Park has been claimed by subsequent expansions of Tampa Municipal Hospital, which itself has become a visually intrusive element of great magnitude. Intensive development of the islands, beginning in the 1950s, has resulted in the occupation of nearly every available building lot by residential and professional commercial structures. While these buildings are generally similar in scale and siting to the historic structures, they are mainly incompatible in style and use of materials to the original buildings, thereby isolating the historic built environment from its general surroundings. It was difficult, therefore, for the Preservation Board to develop a strategy for accomplishing its goal of nominating as many eligible properties as possible to the Register without facing serious difficulties regarding the nomination format. This problem was discussed

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Identification & Evaluation Methods

in depth with the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation in Tallahassee and the following options were considered.

1. The nomination of clearly significant properties, one at a time, using the individual nomination format.
2. Drafting a district nomination, including all or a portion of the islands.
3. Using the multiple property nomination format to nominate clearly significant properties associated with the original development of Davis Islands that embody the architectural theme prescribed by the original developers.

It was ultimately decided to use option three, since option one involved unnecessary additional labor and option two presented insurmountable problems in defining boundaries that would encompass as many "period" resources as possible while holding to a minimum the impact of non-contributing resources on the potential district. The Florida Review Board was, however, given the opportunity to give its opinion on each of 117 properties presented at its meeting on November 20, 1987. Of these the Board ultimately recommended that 89 of the properties be considered eligible for the National Register, based upon the presentations by the staff of the Bureau of Historic Preservation and the Tampa Preservation Board.

However, the Review Board recognized that the nomination faced certain difficulties in showing that each of these properties actually met the criteria established by the nomination and accepted the possibility that the number of resources actually included with the nomination, when forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register, might be reduced even further. To insure that as many properties as possible would be included, the Review Board recommended that the staff of the Bureau of Historic Preservation consult with the National Register on the possibility that a district nomination could still be undertaken. A copy of the Davis Islands nomination was sent to the National Register Office for a preliminary reading, but ultimately no solution could be found to the "district" problem.

In the interim, the historic resources of Davis Islands had begun to come under intensive redevelopment pressures. Many properties changed owners and underwent alterations, often with results adversely affecting its historic character. Some buildings were demolished and new ones erected on the site, because the developers felt that the historic building did not take maximum advantage of the spacious lots on which they were

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constructed. The rehabilitation and restoration of the historic buildings was also made difficult by rulings of the Regional Planning Council regarding construction in a "flood plain area" like Davis Islands, because the subdivision does not meet current standards for height above the high tide level.

In order to complete the revised nomination, now more than a year overdue in being forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register, the staff of the Bureau of Historic Preservation and the Tampa Preservation Board decided to directly reexamine all of the properties approved by the Review Board, eliminate from the list any that did not appear to meet current criteria for individual nomination because of insufficient significance, substantial alterations and those that had been subsequently demolished or significantly altered. It was also decided to defer submission of any properties whose current owners had objected to listing in the Register. The final assessment was that there were only twenty-one properties of the ninety initially approved by the Florida Review Board that met the criteria of the nomination and faced no problems of integrity, significance, context, or owner objection. It was, therefore, agreed upon by the parties concerned that it would be expedient to include only these properties in the multiple property nomination as best expressive of the original theme of the Davis Islands development. Subsequent additions to the list of included properties would be forwarded to the National Register Office as the situation dictated.

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