

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number FMSF# MA02037

2. Location

street & number Both sides of 4th Avenue East between 12th Street East and 14th Street E. N/A not for publication

city or town Bradenton N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Manatee code 081 zip code 34208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alissa Slade Stone, Deputy SHPD 7/10/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

John
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Carlson H. Beal 9.8.15

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

"N/A"

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling _____

DOMESTIC/Garage _____

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling _____

DOMESTIC/Garag _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

FRAME VERNACULAR _____

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick _____

walls Wood _____

roof Wood Shake _____

other _____

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY SETTLEMENT/EXPLORATION

MILITARY

TRANSPORTATION (MARITIME)

Period of Significance

1860-1925

Significant Dates

1860

1888

1925

Significant Person

Curry, (Captain) John; Curry, Samuel

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: unknown

Bldr: Curry, John

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

#

Curry Houses Historic District
Name of Property

Manatee Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than two

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	4	6	9	4	1	3	0	4	2	3	5	6
Zone	Easting			Northing											
2															

3															
Zone	Easting			Northing											
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sherry Svekis, Vice President

organization Reflections of Manatee (non-profit) date June 2015

street & number 1302 4th Avenue East telephone 941.746.2035

city or town Bradenton state FL zip code 34208

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Reflections of Manatee

street & number 1302 4th Avenue East telephone 941.746.2035

city or town Bradenton state Florida zip code 34208

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

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

5. Classification

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- private
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- public-Federal

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

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(Enter categories from instructions)

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DOMESTIC/Garage

Current Functions

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DOMESTIC/Garag

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Curry, (Captain) John; Curry, Samuel

Cultural Affiliation

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- University
- Other

Name of Repository

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2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sherry Svekis, Vice President

organization Reflections of Manatee (non-profit) date June 2015

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

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Curry Houses Historic District in Bradenton, Florida, features three homes built by or for the extended family of Captain John Curry who purchased 30 acres of land, including a fresh water spring, in 1859 from Dr. Franklin Branch. Branch constructed two buildings planning to operate a sanitarium, but they were instead used as a fort to house settlers for over a year during the Third Seminole War. Captain Curry purchased the property and immediately began building homes for his extended family. Upon his death in 1884, Captain Curry's property was subdivided among his heirs, a social tradition that influenced the development of town layouts and the switch from early agricultural beginnings to the eventual urbanization of Bradenton. The lots were officially platted in 1898 by the Town of Manatee, and those property divisions still exist today. The spring no longer flows freely but has been capped with a movable cement slab and the water is currently piped into an outflow. The surrounding land was modified for use as a city park. Lacking integrity, that parcel of land is not eligible for inclusion within the district. Modern residences and undeveloped lots separate the spring and the three Curry houses. Two of the Curry homes are listed on the 1860 census, and the third, constructed c. 1925 was built and occupied by one of John Curry's descendants. The three contributing resources represent the transition of a settlement area (1860) into the platted Town of Manatee (1898), and finally as part of the City of Bradenton by the 1940s. The two early homes represent the vernacular building tradition of early settlers, while the third resource is a 1920s bungalow that represents the more formalized architectural trends that would characterize the developing town in the early 20th century.

SETTING

The Curry Houses are located in the original settlement of the Manatee section of Bradenton about three blocks south of the Manatee River, approximately 6 3/4 miles from where it empties into the mouth of Tampa Bay. The district encompasses three city lots fronting 4th Avenue East, between 12th Street East and 14th Street East. There is no 13th Street in this part of the neighborhood, which is one block north of Manatee Avenue (State Road 64) in Manatee County, Bradenton, Florida. The boundaries of the district are the property lines of the three buildings, all of which are owned by the Reflections of Manatee, Inc. The district encompasses two historic dwellings located on the south side of 4th Avenue East, both sharing the same address (1302 4th Avenue East, but one of which is historically referred to as 1308), and 1305 4th Avenue East on the north side of the street. The only noncontributing building is a modern garage/shed behind the Sam G. Curry House (8MA1392) at 1308(A) 4th Avenue East.

The contributing buildings illustrate the changing needs and tastes of the Curry family. The two oldest houses (c. 1860) are vernacular buildings in the hall and parlor or I-house form. The houses are balloon frame and simple in design, materials, and workmanship, and modest in scale with cedar shake roofs. They are emblematic of the need to quickly build homes for the 29 Curry family members that came with John Curry to the

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 7 Page 2

CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

settlement in 1859. The other Curry homes from this period are spread far from these three houses thus creating a discontinuous boundary, and either reflect non-historic alterations or have been demolished.

The three contributing buildings are set very close together, all clustered on 4th Avenue East. The two oldest houses face north toward 4th Avenue East. In 1860, they were part of the 30 acres purchased by Captain John Curry defined as “all the lands between the Manatee River and present Manatee Avenue and between Main Street (now 15th Street) and Curry Street (now 12th Street East).¹ The third contributing house, the Theodosia Curry Lloyd House at 1305 East 4th Avenue is a one story bungalow that is representative of the homes built by the third generation of Manatee’s Curry descendants. It is a 1925 bungalow style residence with an open porch spanning three quarters of the main facade. There would have been a clear view north to the spring and the Manatee River when they were first constructed, as befits the importance of the water source and the river that was the prime means of travel, supply of news, merchandise, and export of goods. In the 1860s the spring was a “pool, twelve feet across” and ran into a brook called Spring Run, which emptied into the Manatee River.² The houses might also have had a view of a long one-story mercantile building constructed before 1848 by Henry Clark, then located on the western boundary of the district. Directly north on the Manatee River was the Curry wharf. The surrounding acreage supported kitchen gardens, and groves of orange, lemon, and guava trees. There were also plantings of sugar cane, agave, sisal hemp, and century plant.³ Pine, oak, magnolia, and hickory trees, as well as cabbage palms populated the uncultivated areas.

The surrounding neighborhood is composed of mostly single-family homes and vacant home sites. A few of the homes are historic; countless historic homes in the blocks to the west of the district were demolished in 2008 to make way for a since-failed riverfront development. One block to the east is 15th Street (formerly Main Street), which was the original business district when the Town of Manatee was created in 1888. A trolley line once ran along the eastern side of this street. Some businesses remain along this street presently, in addition to a nursing home, church, and Masonic Lodge #31.

One block to the south of the proposed Curry Homes Historic District is Manatee Avenue (State Road 64). Following a trail that connected the settlement of Manatee to Tampa Bay on the Gulf of Mexico, this road was constructed as a sand road in 1886, two years prior to the incorporation of the Town of Manatee. Manatee Avenue was the first real road between Manatee and then-Bradentown, 1.6 miles to the west. It remains the primary east-west thoroughfare from the Gulf of Mexico to present-day Bradenton.

¹ William Curry Harllee, Kinfolks, 1718-1719.

² Joe G. Warner, The Singing River: a history of the People, Places and Events along the Manatee, 75.

³ Steven M. Stowe, ed., A Southern Practice: The Diary and Autobiography of Charles A. Hentz, M.D., 386-387. As quoted in “Master Plan A Portion of the Village at Historic Manatee” by Renker Parks Architects Inc.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION

The first plat book, filed in 1898, shows the Curry family holding title to over 30 properties in an eight block area. The Curry Houses were built over a time span from c. 1860 to 1925 and represent three different architectural styles: Hall and Parlor (Amelia Curry house), I-House (Samuel G. Curry house), and Bungalow (Theodosia Curry Lloyd house). The relationship between the houses represents the social organization of a close, extended family, and the land use changes that accompanied village growth as an early agriculturally focused settlement gave way to higher density. The dwellings are in their original locations and their design has not been altered since construction; although some deterioration is evident, they still retain their original materials and workmanship. They are in various stages of restoration for future use as a museum and education complex. The Curry family used the residences for simple shelter. A number of houses were built for members of the Curry family in Bradenton outside of the original Manatee settlement, but few survive. The Henry F. Curry House constructed c. 1904 was demolished in 2004. It was a large frame vernacular building that was converted into apartments after his death in 1917.⁴ There are five other Curry family houses in Bradenton, the most significant of which is the large frame vernacular Jack Curry House at 1219 East 2nd Avenue, which was built c. 1890.

Individual Descriptions of Contributing Resources

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East (8MA1391)
Constructed c. 1860, remodeled in 1898

The home sits on a lot facing 4th Avenue and the Theodosia Curry Lloyd House (8MA1397) to its north. After Captain John Curry passed away in 1884, Samuel George and Amanda Curry inherited the house. They would deed it to their daughter, Mary Amelia, known as "Amelia", on August 18, 1899 when she first started teaching school. Born in the Manatee settlement in 1868, she would remain unmarried as an adult and served as a teacher and principal for the Manatee Academy School for fifty years. During the summer months, Amelia worked as the assistant post mistress in the Manatee Station post office for her father, who served as post master. She lived with her parents in their primary house, while using her small three-room house (8MA1391) as a rental unit to supplement her teaching income. In documents from 1906, it shows her monthly income listed at \$40. Amelia would inherit her parent's old house, known as the Samuel G. and Amanda Curry house (8MA1392), in 1925. She used both properties as rentals. The house in which she lived with her parents down the street was demolished sometime in the 1970s.

This is a small, three-room hall and parlor style home dominated by exterior recessed porches sitting on opposite corners (Photos 1, 4, 5). Each of these porches has two entryway doors leading into either the parlor or

⁴ Mitra Malek. Sarasota Herald Tribune, "103-year-old Curry house demolished in Bradenton." April 7, 2004.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 4

CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

the hall (Photo 2). The main facade has a pair of 2/2-light double-hung wood sash windows. The home has wood drop siding and sits on brick piers (Photo 3). Very little has changed in the appearance of the dwelling since it was completed around 1860. The original floors are made of heart pine. Interior investigations show that formerly there was no interior finishing on the walls until it was remodeled c.1900 when beaver board was installed. The windows were replaced in 1925, using newer wooden 2/2-light windows. In 1945, linoleum was installed over the pine flooring with layers of newsprint in between. Removal of the linoleum allowed researchers to approximate the date of its installation based on the year of the articles. The exterior changes to the dwelling consisted of the replacement of the roofing material. Its roofing was first cedar shake, then machine cut shakes from the former cedar company of Centralia, Florida. Punched tin roofing was placed over the shakes, which existed until the Reflections of Manatee received grant funds (from the Florida Division of Historical Resources Special Category Grant of 2003/2004) to replace the roofing materials with hand-spilt cedar shakes. Sometime after the turn of the 20th century, Amelia Curry purchased twelve feet of property on her western line (Photo 6) to construct a carport in which to protect her Model T car. Many remember her driving to school in this car, with its whitewall wheels and her small figure seen just above the steering wheel. The carport stands today but is in poor condition.

2. Samuel G. and Amanda Curry House, 1302 (historically 1308) 4th Avenue East (8MA1392)
Constructed c. 1860

This house fronts 4th Avenue to the north and is directly east of the Amelia Curry house (8MA1391), with both properties sharing the same lot (Photo 7). Samuel G. and Amanda (Andress) Curry were deeded the two Curry settlement houses under the probate that divided all of John Curry's property among his heirs in 1884. Samuel G. and Amanda lived in this home until 1877, when the construction of their newer home across the street to the west was complete. They would live in the new home with their daughter until their deaths, with Samuel passing in 1925 and Amanda in 1939. This 1860s house continued in use as a rental property for the family, and the later home they occupied for most of their lives was torn down by Curry descendants in the 1970s.

This I-house, a marked example of hall and parlor pre-railroad architecture, with double entryways at the front and the rear of the home, finds no similar residence within the settlement of Manatee, now the old section of Bradenton. It sits on brick piers with wood drop siding, a cedar shake roof and central chimney. The main (north) facade is dominated by the two-story section with gable attic above, and a hall extending from the center on its western side (Photo 8). Two entryways are present on the northwest corner, one leading south into the hall and the other leading east into the two story portion of the dwelling (Photo 9). The north facade exhibits two windows spaced equally within the lower floor of the I-house below a single window centered in the upper story of the facade. The windows are 2/2-light double-hung wood sashes with screens or hinges that indicate what once existed, per the east elevation (Photo 10). The hall's north facade shows one window of the same type and a door beside it. The hall section of the house has 5 doors: one entering from the north, one entering from the south, one leading to each of the downstairs rooms, and one leading directly into the stairwell.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 5

CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

There are two rooms in the second story above the parlor section of the house. The downstairs rooms can be accessed from the exterior, from the hall, and from doors that lead between them, under the stairway that bisects this section of the house. At the top of the stairs, there is a small landing, and doors leading to the left and right. From the west and south elevation, the numerous entry points are clearly shown (Photos 11-13).

A line of overgrown plantings of various crotons and ferns, followed at the rear by an ancient avocado and grapefruit trees, dominate the eastern line of the lot. To the rear of the property, an old garage building constructed in the late 1960s dominates the view. The west side of the lot is shaded by a row of oak trees.

3. The Theresa (a.k.a. Theodosia) Curry Lloyd House at 1305 4th Avenue East (8MA1397)

This is a modest example of the bungalow style constructed in 1925 (Photo 14). The house sits on the north side of 4th Avenue, facing south towards the Samuel G. Curry and Amelia Curry houses. The main (south) façade is dominated by an open porch (Photo 15). A pair of 4/1-light double-hung wood sash windows are set within the facade under the porch roof. Next to them is an entryway door. To the right of the porch are two more windows, one 3/1-light and 4/1-light. This window type is repeated in various sizes on the east and west elevations (Photos 16, 17). The rear elevation of the dwelling is dominated by an open porch with shed roof (Photo 18). A single 2/2-light double-hung wood sash window is set beside the porch.

Noncontributing Resource

The only noncontributing resource is a modern garage/shed behind the Sam G. Curry House (8MA1392), which is outside the period of significance for this district.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

CURRY HOMES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Curry Houses Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Exploration and Settlement, as the Curry family joined other early pioneer settlers in establishing residences and commercial operations in the 1860s. The district is also locally significant under Criterion B for its association with Captain John Curry who constructed the two ca. 1860 houses, and whose ships operated for both the Confederacy and the Union during the Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade, and who provided the boat for the escape of Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin shortly after the end of the Civil War. The period of significance spans from c. 1860 to 1925, and represents the approximate dates of when the district property was purchased by Captain John Curry who subdivided the land among his heirs, and the subsequent construction of housing to shelter the expanding family. The district is illustrative of the dynamic property division that marked the shift from early settlement land use to the creation of the first towns in the coastal areas of Florida. The contributing buildings comprise the three surviving and well-preserved homes associated with the Curry family. One of the houses is recognized as part of Florida's Civil War Trail as the home of Confederate soldier Samuel G. Curry, at 1302 4th Avenue East (8MA1391), who served in both the Confederate army and navy.⁵ It is recorded that he was in the Confederate Naval Battalion under Admiral Semmes. Towards the close of the Civil War, as the army of General Robert E. Lee retreated from Richmond to Appomattox, Curry was captured at Farmville, Virginia after an engagement at Sailors Creek. Instead of being released home, they held him as a prisoner of war for over two months.⁶

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Second Spanish Occupation

With the 1783 Treaty of Paris, the Second Spanish Period (1784-1821) began. Spain's intentions in Florida at this time were to create conditions that would help hold the territory and provide defense against its potential enemies: the United States to the north and the English in the Bahamas. To this end, Spain's commander, Bernado de Gálvez, ordered an experienced Naval officer at Havana, Jose de Evia, to inspect the entire coast from Tampa to Tampico to provide corrected naval charts and list stores and trade goods available for use of the crown, including those traded with Native Americans. Evia produced detailed charts of Tampa Bay, including the Manatee River, and located the fishing ranchos along the coasts. He talked and traded with a number of Indians who were in the area to hunt.⁷

⁵ Official Records, Union and Confederate Navies, War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. 17, p.700

⁶ Harllee, Kinfolks, 1771

⁷ Jack Holmes "Two Spanish Expeditions to Southwest Florida, 1783-1793", 97-107

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

CURRY HOMES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Several factors led to the First Seminole War, stemming from pressures of the plantation system expanding southward, the desire for pristine pasture land and timber, and the search for escaped slaves from neighboring states. Issues persisted between Spain, whom retained ownership of Florida at the time, and the United States, as Spain allowed the British military to station at Pensacola during the War of 1812. Much to the disdain of the United States, the British also supplied arms and training to the Florida tribes. With the growing threat to residents in south Georgia, and the reluctance of Spain to abate the situation, General Andrew Jackson rounded up volunteers to quell the developing conflict. Tensions culminated after General Andrew Jackson's attack and destruction of Negro Fort in north Florida in 1816, which operated as a defensible colony for escaped slaves and their Seminole allies.⁸ This attack forced many escaped slaves, including many free blacks and Seminoles, to migrate south to the Manatee River area.

By 1818, Jackson would conquer the Spanish forts at Pensacola and St. Marks. Scottish trader Alexander Arbuthnot and British citizens (and former soldiers) Richard Ambrister, Edward Nicholls, and George Woodbine had supported the various native tribes and black settlements in Florida during the time.⁹ Andrew Jackson captured Arbuthnot in St. Marks and Ambrister in Suwannee and charged both with assisting the Seminole tribe, which led to their execution. Jackson succeeded in establishing military dominance over West Florida, which helped the United States to leverage the Adams-Onis Treaty with Spain in February 22, 1819, preparing the transfer of Florida to the United States as a territory. As an official territory by 1821, Florida was open to settlement by American citizens and settlers from the British Bahamas who relocated from Key West.

In attempting to locate the black refuge at Tampa Bay, scholars turned to the writings of historian John Lee Williams, who visited the lower Gulf coast in 1827. In *The Territory of Florida*, Williams reported that he had examined the bays of Tampa and Sarasota with care and explored the Oyster River for twenty miles.

“A stream that enters the bay joining the entrance of Oyster River, on the S.W. was ascended about six miles. It was forty yards wide, and six feet deep, but full of islands. At four miles from the mouth, a grass plain rises gradually from the west side to the height of fifteen feet, and skirted on the west with hammock land, that extended north and south as the eye could reach. The point between these two rivers is called Negro Point. The famous Arbuthnot and Ambrister had at one time a plantation here cultivated by 200 negroes. The ruins of their cabins, and domestic utensils are still seen on the old fields.”¹⁰

Williams included in his book a detailed map of Florida that outlined Tampa Bay, Sarrazota (Sarasota) Bay, and Oyster River, as well as the adjacent lands which are marked “Old Spanish Fields.” When comparing the local topography with Williams’ descriptions, it can be surmised that the Oyster River is actually the Manatee River

⁸ Adam Edward Wasserman. *A People's History of Florida* 1513-1876.

⁹ Knetsch, Joe. Florida's Seminole Wars 1817-1858, 19

¹⁰ John Lee Williams, *The Territory of Florida*, Facsimile Reproduction, 299-300.

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and that Negro Point lay at the confluence of the Manatee and the Braden rivers, within one mile from the Curry Houses Historic District. Artifacts dating to this time period have been recovered archaeologically from the area around Manatee Mineral Spring, just northeast of the district boundaries.

Settlement and Early Statehood

By 1821, the Manatee River area was the American frontier, further south than the last outpost of the U.S. Army. American vessels joined the fishing trade off the coast, and by 1834 a large fishing rancho owned by American Captain William Bunce was established at the mouth of the Manatee. Working these ranchos were people of multiple ethnicities, variously described as “negros, Indians, Spaniards, and Spanish Indians,” some having made their home in the area since the Second Spanish Period. Seminole Indians traded with these ranchos.

The United States government viewed the Seminoles and the multi-ethnic rancho populations with great disdain, complicated by the suspicion that runaway slaves found shelter among them. In 1830, the government decided that removal of all Indians in Florida to the Indian Territory in the West (present-day Oklahoma) was the best solution to resolve the ongoing conflict between the Seminoles and white settlers. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 created the Trail of Tears for the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickawa, Creek, and Seminole). By 1834, 3,824 Indians were removed to the west.

Resistance to the Indian Removal Act led to the Second Seminole War, the fiercest war waged by the U.S. government against American Indians, with more than 30,000 troops arrayed against the guerilla tactics of less than 3,000 warriors. The war left more than 1,500 soldiers and uncounted American civilians dead. The Manatee River was scouted by Lieutenant Levin M. Powell USN in 1836 as part of action during the Second Seminole War. Bunce’s fishing rancho on the Manatee River was destroyed in 1837, and by 1838, his second rancho was raided by the United States Army, whose members were compelled to transport all captured Indians to Oklahoma Territory. Lieutenant Powell visited the Manatee River again in 1843 and sketched the homesteads of the early settlers.¹¹

In 1841, Josiah Gates and his brother-in-law Miles Price first came to Manatee to seek lands for settlement. Tradition holds that Spanish guides took Gates and Price up the Manatee River to where a large pine tree marked the location of an ancient Indian village. Noting that the bank was free from the usual underbrush they came ashore and found a 12 foot pool of fresh water about four feet deep. This is where Gates staked his claim.

President John Tyler (1841-1845) signed the Armed Occupation Act in 1842, which encouraged civilians to settle and protect the land that the army had taken from the Seminoles after the Second Seminole War (1835-

¹¹ Warner, The Singing River, 6.

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1842). The Act provided each settler with a 160-acre plot of land and a year's supply of food and provisions. To obtain a "patent", or permanent title to the land, the settler had to erect a dwelling, cultivate a minimum of five acres, and live on the land for at least five years. Permanent settlers meant permanent displacement of the Indians who had utilized the spring site and surrounding areas. The colonization of the Manatee River had actually preceded passage of this law by a number of months. By the date of the act's passage, many of the original colonists had not only staked their claim, but also brought their families out to join them.

In the spring of 1842, Josiah Gates and his wife Mary, their family and slaves, along with his friend Henry Clark, wife Ellen, 10 year old son and one slave called Albert, returned to the spring. Clark homesteaded the spring site and 80 acres and Gates homesteaded the 80 acres to its east. Splitting their claims, they also took adjoining acres in a cleared area known as "Seminole Garden" where Gates had found 3-5 acres under cultivation the previous year. This settlement, located near the shore of the Manatee River around the spring site became the center of the community.

The Henry S. and Ellen Clark family, including son, Henry Alanson, also homesteaded the spring site in 1842. Clark claimed land west of Gates' property that included the spring. He erected a "crude store and residence adjoined, both of which were log cut and hand hewn from his own newly acquired timbers."¹² His was the first store on the river and as the first merchant he constructed a trading post near the spring.¹³ The spring district was the social center of the community. Clark was named U.S. Postmaster for the Manatee Settlement in January 1849. Settlers traveled to the trading post to receive their mail, draw fresh water from the spring, and attend church service at the Union Congregation Meeting House, which was located in the settlement.

Dr. Joseph Braden and his brother Hector Braden also claimed large tracts of land and were living in Manatee as early as 1843. Dr. Braden's first residence, of log construction, was west of the Gates and Clark properties, while his plantation lands were about a mile to the east of the Braden and Clark homes, at the confluence of the Manatee River and one of its major tributaries, which would come to be named the Braden River. The Bradens' acreage extended south along this creek several miles, and west to the Gates boundary. Their combined holdings were eleven hundred acres.¹⁴

Florida was admitted as the twenty-seventh state in the United States on March 3, 1845. It entered as a slave state, and the first decades of the Manatee settlement were dominated by the plantation economy that relied upon slave labor. Only 19 families owned slaves, but the slave population made up about a sixth of all individuals in the area.¹⁵ The Gates family had moved to Manatee with eight slaves, the Clark family with one.

¹² McDuffee, Lillie Brown. Lures of the Manatee: A True Story of South Florida's Glamorous Past, 27.

¹³ Joe G. Warner, The Singing River, 75.

¹⁴ McDuffee, 32-33.

¹⁵ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 249.

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Many other families in the river community also owned slaves. In addition to fieldwork, slaves cooked, cleaned, and laundered in households large and small, relieving women of the heavier tasks of housekeeping. Plantation owners such as the Bradens, Gambles, and Craigs transplanted large numbers of enslaved Africans (more than 70 each) to the Manatee wilderness to clear the land, dig the drainage canals, and cultivate the fields.

Although most of the early settlers in Manatee were primarily involved in agriculture, raising citrus, sugarcane, tobacco, vegetables, lumber and other agricultural products, the 1850 census records document settlers pursuing occupations such as merchant, hotelier, baker, butcher, tailor, physician, midwife, minister, farmer, fisherman, artisan, blacksmith, surveyor, and shipping merchant. The plantations provided work for many residents, as skilled builders were employed to oversee construction of the plantation mills, carpenters and coopers to build the hoghead barrels, and wagon makers and harness makers for the mules and oxen.

In 1846, Henry S. Clark was sworn in as justice of the peace. His store had become the center of the little community and Seminole Indians came to trade deer hides, alligator skins, and other pelts for bright cloth, molasses, and sugar. Clark decided to build a 40-ton schooner to be able to bring more goods to his store, and employed blacksmith and shipbuilder Thomas Kenny for the task. Kenny had established his blacksmith shop that same year, providing the smaller planters with needed services such as horseshoeing, wheelwright, plow repair, etc.¹⁶ The years 1846 to 1850 saw new growth in the town; original parcels were divided as land was sold to new settlers. Prior to 1848, the town received its first minister, a Presbyterian preacher, when Edmund and Electa Lee purchased property from Josiah Gates. Electa became the town's first school mistress.

After Henry Clark's death, Ellen Clark sold the bulk of her property holdings that included Manatee Mineral Spring to Dr. Franklin Branch who had moved from Tampa to Manatee in 1849. Branch, a Methodist minister, became the second postmaster at the trading post. Branch had a professional and personal interest in the Spring, described as "a pool, twelve feet across, caught the clear water as it boiled out from a depth of four feet from a white sand bottom. It ran into a small brook that was called Spring Run which emptied into the Manatee River."¹⁷ Dr. Branch had heard of the health-giving qualities of the spring's mineral water and envisioned building a sanatorium at the site, but it appears that it was never built. He did build two large, strong houses near the river and spring with a small apothecary shop. Dr. Branch became the town's first physician.¹⁸

As the town matured and the settlers prospered, they made improvements to their homes. In 1850, Dr. Braden erected what came to be known as the Braden Castle. Overlooking the confluence of the Manatee and Braden Rivers, it was constructed out of large tabby blocks with walls 20 inches or more in thickness. The house was

¹⁶ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee: A True Story of South Florida's Glamorous Past, 49, 54.

¹⁷ Joe G. Warner, 77.

¹⁸ Warner, Singing River, 76-77.

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two stories with spacious halls upstairs and down, four large square rooms on both floors, and four sturdy chimneys.¹⁹

In 1851, Josiah Gates replaced his house with a fine new residence-hotel. The twenty-room, three-story frame home had ten bedrooms and a thirty by fifteen foot dining room. It was built before steam sawmills had entered the area and the materials were sawed, split, and hewn by hand, even the thin planks for the weatherboarding with a whip or pit saw.²⁰

Third Seminole War (1855-1858)

The Third Seminole War, also known as the Billy Bowlegs' War, broke out in 1855 when conflicts largely over land arose between whites and Seminoles who remained in Florida. Civilian surveyors and military detachments kept constant pressure on the Indian lands, all part of a plan to force the Seminoles to emigrate. Tensions eventually became skirmishes, and military casualties led to the Third Seminole War. In the Manatee settlement, the Indians had previously been well known trading partners. But, when Indians attacked the Braden plantation and burnt several homesteads in the Sarasota area, settlers hurried to the Manatee settlement and Branch's buildings became a refuge for people coming in from the surrounding countryside for safety.

Settlers recall Branch's buildings as fortress-like, but its stockade was additionally reinforced by the influx of people. For nearly two years, settlers from as far away as Peas Creek to the north, Myakka River Valley to the east, Sarasota Bay to the south, were guarded by soldiers under the command of Major Captain Joseph B. Scott. The camp was formally designated Lower Camp of Camp Armstrong, and changed to Camp Smead in December 1856. Locally, it was known as "Camp Manatee" by the soldiers and "Branch Stockade" by the civilians.²¹ Major Scott used carts to carry water from the spring south to his camp which was some distance from the spring.²² On November 28, 1856, Dr. Branch was hired as the Army Doctor; a position he had formerly held in Fort Brook. The settlers remained at the fort from January of 1856 to early spring of 1857.

Manatee County

Manatee County was split from Hillsborough County in October of 1856, and the little village of Manatee became the county seat. It encompassed the area between Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor and inland to the Kissimmee River and Lake Okechobee. Two of its prominent citizens, first settlers Josiah Gates and Joab

¹⁹ McDuffee, *The Lures of Manatee*, 37.

²⁰ McDuffee, 69.

²¹ Janet Snyder Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 214-215.

²² Renker Parks Architects Inc., "Master Plan, A Portion of the Village of Manatee." Prepared for Reflections of Manatee, Inc. Exhibit 2.8 Letters regarding Camp Smead, Camp Armstrong/Manatee - dated November 1856. Returns of Military Posts 1800-1916 Roll 1543.

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Griffin, made joint donations for a court house lot. Ezekiel Glazer was appointed as probate judge and Josiah Gates as the treasurer and justice of the peace. Edmond Lee was the first clerk of the court.²³ DeSoto County, to the east, would separate from Manatee by 1887, and finally Sarasota County would form separately to the south by 1921.

Prior to the Civil War (1861-1865), the depression of 1857 took a heavy toll on the area's sugar and molasses industry. The owners of the two largest plantations were both heavily indebted, having borrowed and given their land and slaves as security. Captain Robert Gamble, whose plantation holdings included over 3,450 acres (1,500 under cultivation) and 190 slaves, lost his property to the firm of Cofield and Davis in 1858. Joseph Braden was foreclosed on the same year, although the Braden family was never evicted from the property.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE—CRITERION A, EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

As an example of the early efforts to establish trade and maintain homesteads, the Curry Houses Historic District is significant under Criterion A for Exploration and Settlement during the period of 1860-1925. These frame vernacular houses reflect the early building traditions and layout of the Manatee settlement as it continued to grow. Little remains from the other pioneering families to attest to this period, and furthermore, the Curry family played a significant role in local history during and after the Civil War.

In 1859, Dr. Branch returned to practice medicine in Tampa and put his property up for sale. On December 5, 1859 Captain John Curry (1811-1882) purchased 30 acres of property for \$3,000 near the river, including the spring, two fortress houses, and 320 acres inland, as well as the machinery and livestock at the sugar operation. Captain Curry also paid \$3,700 for the entire Gamble plantation cattle and stock, and \$1,250 for another local cattle herd.²⁴ Originally from the Bahamas, the 29 member Curry family moved to Manatee from Key West. Captain Curry built several new houses on the property with the help of his brother-in-law, Joseph Bartlum, also a native of Key West.²⁵

By 1860, the frontier county of Manatee had recorded great gains from the deprivations of the Seminole War. Bumper crops and the natural prairies supported 32,000 recorded herd of cattle valued at \$200,000.²⁶ Sarasota settler William Whitaker and Manatee's William H. Wyatt were among the first pioneers in the area cattle industry. They worked the ranges from February to October, marking and branding. The cattle industry

²³ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee: A True Story of South Florida's Glamorous Past, 102.

²⁴ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 258-259.

²⁵ Joan Berry Dickenman, The Homesteaders: Early Settlers of Nokomis and Laurel, p. 20.

²⁶ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 249.

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contributed to the finances of the growing county government, and with a profitable market in Cuba, many of the pioneers became “cattle kings.”²⁷

Civil War Years

The local representative from the Manatee area, Ezekiel Glazier, attended the Florida Secession Convention. Other men from the village, whose names appear as soldiers of the Confederate States of America, include those whose families were early settlers and whose descendants are still living in Manatee County today. Familiar names include the Addisons, Asa Bishop, Henry Clark, Benjamin Curry, John Curry, J. Curry, Sam Curry, William Curry, the Griffins, John Jackson, Edmund Lee, the Lowes, Hiram McLeod, Richard Roberts, the Turners, the Vanderipes, the Wiggins, and the Williams.²⁸ The local area provided the Confederacy with two crucial products - salt and beef. Salt was collected near the mouth of the Manatee River where salt flats are still found today. It took a month and a half to drive the cattle north to reach the railroad at the Georgia border, where they were slaughtered and cured with salt from the coast.²⁹

Meanwhile, a tight Union blockade of the coast led to many deprivations. Anything not produced at home became scarce or nonexistent, and residents were left to brew “coffee” from parched corn and bake cakes with cornmeal. Union raiding parties would take livestock and valuables if they could find them. Union soldiers destroyed the machinery at both the Gamble and Braden plantations. Union blockaders also captured many of the boats that once plied the river and gulf. By 1864, when the men who survived the war returned to Manatee, the industry and commerce of the village had been wiped out and the vessels that carried the mail and the trade from gulf ports were gone.

Occupation of Curry Houses by Union Captain Bartholf and the Second Colored Regiment

By October 1863, Confederate supplies had been cut off from most sources and the army was dependent upon Florida for supplying beef; an estimated 1500 head of cattle a week was being driven north to Tallahassee and the railroad at the Georgia line. John W. Curry (son of Captain John Curry) was enlisted under Captain John McKay as part of this effort. Salt works and sugar mills also provided crucial items to the Confederate commissary. The Gulf blockade kept most outside goods from entering Florida, while Union raiding parties tried to destroy Florida’s ability to supply the Confederacy with needed goods.³⁰ In August 1864, Union naval

²⁷ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 177.

²⁸ Ibid., 253.

²⁹ Ibid., 257.

³⁰ Ibid., 258-262.

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forces raided the town of Manatee and destroyed a large saw and grist mill jointly owned by Josiah Gates, John Curry and Ezekiel Glazier.³¹ Arvid Curry, the seven-year old grandson of Captain John Curry, recounted:

“The combination saw-mill and grist-mill, the main dependence of the people for their daily bread, was burned to the ground by Union sailors. The Confederate cow-boy soldiers were in hiding in the nearby thickets, and were more than anxious to pick off the intruders but the good “horse sense” of the old heads, prevented a tragedy. Father [John W. Curry] was among the hidden cow-boys, and his persuasions, and the plea of old Judge Glazier, and the admonitions of old Judge Gates, prevailed.”³²

Lillian McDuffee, for her 1933 book Lures of the Manatee, interviewed many of the local women about their memories of events during the Civil War and published many letters saved from these women. She recounted:

“Its large wheel was turned by steam and it provided ample service for the entire neighborhood. There were grounds for uneasiness, for this was the first place the boatmen headed for when they came ashore. Three women, wives of the owners hastened to the river to intercede with the officers to spare the mill. Mary M. Gates, Mary Ward Curry, and Abigail Glaizer. “You have us licked,” they argued, “spare us this one mill to grind meal and grits for our children.” With the assurance that their treasure should be left unharmed, the women returned to the Glazier home flattered by their successful mission, but no sooner than they reached the door than a loud hammering noise was heard; pick and axes were being used to breaking up the machinery. Soon the mill was a sheet of flames.”³³

From August 1864 to March 1865, the Second Regiment, United States Colored Troops, Infantry, under Captain John F. Bartholf began an occupation of the village of Manatee, and used one the Curry homes as headquarters.³⁴

Arvid Curry recalls: “[A] company of colored troops were landed and took possession of one of grandfather’s houses in the village. They set guards all around the town, and sent out searching parties in all directions. But it was like searching for a needle in a hay-stack. These cracker, cow-boy soldiers however, knew how to avoid being trapped, and led the scouts a lively chase without results. A few scared negroes were run in however, and these they persuaded to go away with them.

³¹ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 258.

³² Arvid P. Curry, in Harllee, Kinfolks, 1744.

³³ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 143-155.

³⁴ Arvid P. Curry, in Harllee, Kinfolks, 1744-1745.

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On one occasion, an Apollo like officer in blue, with a sword dangling at his side, his mustache waxed and twisted until it resembled the horns of a Texas steer, strode boldly into my grandfather's sanctum, his living room, where there were only terrified women and children assembled, and looking them over coldly, asked Aunt Amelia [Amelia (nee Curry) Sawyer Wyatt] where her husband was. "He is away fighting for his country" was the reply. "Then he must be in the Union Army," said the officer. "No," replied Aunt Amelia, "He is not in the Union Army, and if you Yankees don't look sharp, my husband with a few more like him, will give you the greatest licking of your lives." "Good enough," said the officer. And turning to my mother [Elizabeth Abigail Hutchinson Curry] he asked: "Where is your husband." "I don't know," replied my mother, "and if I did, you and the whole Yankee army together couldn't make me tell." "Very good," replied the officer, and walked out and back to his men.³⁵

Although Arvid was just seven years old at the time there is no doubt this story was repeated many times in his childhood. His memory of the figure of a Union Officer coming into his home, and no doubt looking him over as well, was very clear when he recounted it years later. The Officer referred to was Army Officer John Francis Bartholf, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Infantry of Colored Troops.

Post-War Development

Freedman's Bureau inspector George F. Thompson visited the river and Manatee County late in 1865. He was impressed with the possibilities of commercial fishing and citrus growing. His report saw agricultural possibilities as limitless and the area safe for northerners. His report bolstered what had previously been publicized in the Country Gentleman; author H.T. Williams discussed raising sugar cane, rice, tobacco, and fruits and urged settlers, soldiers, and emigrants to take advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862 and improve Florida, where "[they] will have all that wealth can bring to their door" and that the "life of the Florida settler is one continual round of comfort and happiness."³⁶

In 1866, county officials including John W. Curry, H.R. McLeod, W.H. Vaderipe, D.L. Hawkins, and J.G. Williams took up the issue of relocating the county seat to a more central location. It was moved to Pine Level despite loud protests from the people along the river and it being the residence of only five families. The courthouse in Manatee was sold by highest bid to J. W. Curry for \$128, and given to the Methodist church. The contract for the purchase was signed by Ezekiel Glazer and James Cooper; E.F. Gates and Oden Ange were witnesses.³⁷

³⁵ Harllee, Kinfocks, 1744-1745.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁷ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 188.

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The Manatee settlement in 1867 had but one small store and little river traffic. But the Currys, the Gates, the Glaziers, the McNeills, the Vanderipes, and the Wyatts were soon joined by an influx of settlers. It included settlers from the north as well as elsewhere in Florida and across the war-ravaged south. Many new settlers, such as John and Bartholomew Forgarty homesteaded open lands several miles west of the village. The Fogartys were master shipbuilders and contributed greatly to the reconstruction of the area. They founded the area known today as Fogartyville. Dr. John Pelot, a Confederate soldier who had been physician at Andersonville Military Prison, his wife Mary, and her parents Phariba and General James Cooper, purchased the Braden plantation holdings. The Coopers and Pelots were once prominent plantation families from Middle Florida; the war had decimated their holdings and they could no longer sustain cotton production or the dictates of the Federal Bureau agents. The arrival of Dr. Pelot brought a physician to the area for the first time in many years. His practice soon extended for a radius of about 50 miles.³⁸

The summer of 1867 also brought Manatee its first yellow fever outbreak. Captain Archibald McNeill was returning from delivering a boatload of cattle to Havana when the boat's engineer was stricken ill. Dr. Pelot diagnosed the case. Eventually all of Manatee was quarantined. Captain John W. Harllee was the cousin of a new settler whose parents had been killed by the disease. He visited Manatee after the quarantine was lifted and fell in love with Mary Ellen Curry, daughter of the elder Captain John Curry. They married and Captain Harllee purchased part of the original Clark property from Clark's widow (remarried) Mrs. Ellen McNeill. By 1872, the river settlement's new post office was established under the name Manatee.

Agricultural Development

The cattle industry thrived after the Civil War. The mouth of the Manatee River was the shipping point for all the cattle within a 50 to 60-mile radius and a good trade operated between Manatee and Havana, Cuba. Inspectors of marks and brands became an important position requiring a bond of \$500 to \$1000. On April 6, 1868 John W. Curry and James Vaneripe were sworn into office as inspectors.³⁹

The Florida Fruit Growers' Convention held the first general display of Florida fruit at Jacksonville in 1874. Manatee was not represented, but C.M. Cooper, nephew to James Cooper, attended and wrote to his uncle in Manatee about it, urging him to plant more orange and lemon trees. Until this time, only Gates, Lee, J.W. Curry, and Whitaker in Sarasota were growing fruit for commercial purposes. The next year or so did witness more grove planting in the area, although adequate shipping methods were still in the future.⁴⁰

³⁸ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 183.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

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By 1879, turpentine and rosin became an important commodity and helped to take the place of the cattle industry that was shut down when hostilities between Cuba and Spain ceased.⁴¹ Shipments of green vegetables first filled many ships' holds on the way to Cedar Key; by 1885, these shipments connected with the new railroad in Tampa.

Severe freezes hit first during the winter of 1885, and again in 1894-1895. Although the freezes seriously damaged crops, the Manatee area fared much better than northern areas of Florida. Although a few growers may have given up, more moved to the area to take their place in a burgeoning industry.

Manatee and Bradenton

**The town of Bradenton had three name changes: "Braidentown" (1880); after incorporation (1903) the "i" was dropped; by 1923, the "w" was dropped.*

By 1881, the settlement of Braidentown along the river west of Manatee contained two boarding houses, two stores, a meat market, post office, livery stable, and warehouse with wharf. Steamers came up the river from Cedar Keys bringing passengers and freight.⁴²

Orange growers were using crates to send their fruit by steamer to Cedar Keys and then by rail to the northern markets. Growers experimented with shipping unripe fruit, timing their shipment so they would be perfectly ripe when they reached New York. In Samuel G. Upham's Sunland (1881), most of the growers listed in Manatee are familiar names from the early settlement years: Mrs. Mary M. Gates, Sam Gates, Edmond Lee, A.A. Robinson, Ezekiel Glazer, Doctor Pelot, J.W. Curry, J.W. Harlee, Samuel Mitchell, W.H. Vanderipe, Daniel Lloyd, Henry Clark, Warburton Warner, Arch McNeill, Doctor Casper, Emil Broberg, Reid, and Wilson. Soon added to that list was Colonel Charles Foster, who had purchased a large part of the Braden plantation lands from Dr. Pelot and was planting 4,000 young orange trees.⁴³ Manatee (and the State of Florida) was being promoted by a Bureau of Immigration, created in 1879. One of its commissioners was local Manatee resident A.A. Robinson. He began an advertising campaign and wrote many letters to northern publications extolling the virtues of the area for wealth, and health.

Another promoter was Dr. George Casper who purchased the Manatee Mineral Spring and surrounding 2.38 acres from John Curry and opened a drugstore. Casper traveled the country bringing wrapped grapefruit to northern cities as enticement to get people to move south hoping to encourage economic growth within the area. He attended the Philadelphia Centennial where a small model printing press was made available for purchase.

⁴¹ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 243.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 245-246.

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Casper ordered a press and in 1882 operated a newspaper called the Manatee County News from his home. It ran and sold subscriptions for only five months but returned all subscription monies when it ended.⁴⁴

A year later another paper, the Gulf Coast Progress, began. A surviving issue contains many advertisements for businesses including J.W. Harllee and W.H. Vanderipe, merchants at Manatee selling dry goods and groceries. Harllee also advertises fine wines, liquors, and cigars; Braidentown merchant C.E. McNeill, son of Captain Archibald McNeill touted everything from ready-made clothing to the latest style of stoves. Mr. Henry F. Curry is thanked by the editors on behalf of the Braidentown townspeople for cutting down brush and giving them back their view down to the river's mouth.⁴⁵

In 1886, Dr. Enos E. Johnson, a druggist from Indiana who bought Casper's drugstore in 1883, writes that he was "appointed school trustee on the board with John W. Curry and Joe B. Wyatt. During this year we built the first sidewalk in Manatee. We built from the Curry Store via Harllee's Store to Main Street, thence up Main Street to the post office at Gates' and on to Wiley's and Captain Hough's, a distance of three-fourths of a mile."⁴⁶ The first road was constructed between Manatee and Braidentown was 1886. It was a road of sand, but included a bridge across Ware's Creek. This road greatly enhanced the value of building lots in Braidentown. It is still a main east-west thoroughfare and is known as Manatee Avenue.

When DeSoto County was carved from Manatee County in 1887, an election was held to choose a new county seat, one nearer the points of population. Several communities sought this honor, including Manatee, Sarasota, and Palmetto. The surprise winner was the small, new village of Braidentown, which would change the future of the neighboring settlement of Manatee. On May 5, 1888 Manatee was incorporated and Josiah Gates was elected by popular vote to be its first Mayor. Board of Alderman included J.B. Wyatt, A.E. Stibbins, H.T. Glazier, A.P. Curry, and J.L. Hough.⁴⁷

The year 1889 saw the establishment of the Manatee County State Bank, the operation of a gasoline powered Bee Line Ferry which carried passengers and freight between Palmetto and Braidentown, and the paving of Manatee County's first street. The shell for the project came directly from the Manatee River oyster beds. The Board of Health subsequently ruled that only dead oyster shell could be used in paving; the live oysters had created a terrible odor that did not dissipate quickly.

By 1903, Manatee would have a new courthouse, and it's judge, John Graham, built a house on the Manatee River at the end of Main Street. It was the first house to be electrified. He developed a new trolley line and an

⁴⁴ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 254.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 279.

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electric power plant. The coming of electricity, powering first lights, then electric irons and electric fans, was a cause of joint celebration between the towns of Manatee and Bradenton during the Christmas holidays in 1903. The trolley line, which also had its inaugural run that year, put the Manatee River towns on the map as modern cities, worthy of northern investors. It connected Main Street with Fogartyville on a twenty minute schedule. Whatever the initial excitement, the trolley ran little more than a year, never developing the patronage to support its upkeep.⁴⁸

The years between 1900 and 1910 were years of expansion and innovation. The automobile was now an increasing fixture in the landscape, and sales offices opened as did the necessary repair shops. In November of 1906, the first bridge across the Manatee River was completed. In 1907, the city received an appropriation of \$70,000 from Congress to deepen the river channel to accommodate deeper draft vessels traveling from Bradenton and Tampa Bay. A new bridge was completed in 1919.⁴⁹

The 1920s were the boom years. One form of tourism was the “Tin Can Tourist”, and one of their associations adopted Manatee as its home base. They later became known as “The Camping Tourists of America” and set up a large community at the site of the Braden Castle ruins. The Braden Castle Tourist Camp maintains the same area today. The tourists continued to come in the 1930s, some wishing to reside permanently. Trailer parks, later called mobile home parks, blossomed everywhere. The area weathered the Great Depression of the 1930s, thanks to such significant industries as agriculture and fishing, and it experienced a surge in population after World War II. This residential growth was supplemented by development in industry, retail, education and tourism. Life took on a modern appearance in the county as the population multiplied and businesses spread out of the corporate limits. The year 1944 was important for both the cities of Bradenton and Manatee. At first Manatee was the larger more important city, but through the years, Bradenton assumed leadership. In 1944, the two cities were consolidated and today the city of Manatee has lost its identity.⁵⁰

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE—CRITERION B, JOHN AND SAMUEL CURRY

Captain John Curry, Shipbuilder and Sailing Master

By the time John Curry was 18 years of age, he and his father had built a 60-ton sailing vessel, the Matchless. Captain Curry sailed this twin mast schooner until 1859. The Matchless was built in Key West, Florida, and used as a slave ship in its early years, while its later years were spent as a Coast and Geodetic Survey sailing vessel. The ship was acquired by Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1885. The schooner was rebuilt in 1895 at a cost

⁴⁸ McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee, 254

⁴⁹ Arthur C. Schonfield, Yesterday's Bradenton, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

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of approximately \$50,000. This ship was the last sailing vessel to be owned and operated by the Coast and Geodetic Survey, in service from 1885-1915. By executive order dated April 1, 1917 the ship was acquired by the Navy and used as a patrol ship in World War I, then was returned to the Coast and Geodetic Survey after the Armistice. Afterward the ship belonged to the National Weather Bureau Office until 1930. NOAA's history includes a photo of the Matchless, the only known picture of such a survey ship while under sail.⁵¹

During the Civil War, the Curry family was committed to the Confederacy. John Curry, two of his brothers and other settlers of Manatee were enlisted in the "Home Guard" providing cattle and provisions to the Confederacy.⁵² Captain Curry owned a variety of ships, which he sold to the Confederacy. The shallow draft ship Ariel, which had transported the Curry family to Manatee, was sold to the Confederate government and worked as a blockade runner early in the Civil War. It was captured by the Union steamer, Huntsville, off the Dry Tortugas on March 14, 1862.⁵³ By January 1863, the Ariel had been fitted with one gun for service in the East Gulf Blockading Squadron. With only a four-foot draft, the ship could operate much closer to shore than the command and supply ships the Ariel serviced.⁵⁴ The ship saw extensive service for both the Union Navy and Army enforcing the blockade against the Confederacy, participating in more than 100 engagements. After the collapse of the Confederacy, the Ariel was decommissioned and sold at Key West on June 28, 1865, to John Curry for \$1,270.⁵⁵

The 80-ton schooner Dudley was also used as a blockade-runner. Curry family history tells the story of the two Curry boys, William and Amos, making a run with the ship after Union forces spotted them. Rather than have the ship captured, they set it ablaze. "The vessel was being chased by a Federal Gunboat, and when capture seemed inevitable the crew dumped part of the cargo and set fire to the sloop before escaping to shore in a small tow boat."⁵⁶

John Curry and the Escape of Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State

In the last days of the war, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and members of his cabinet retreated from Richmond, Virginia. They travelled to Georgia, where they separated; Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, was to head south to Florida and on to Havana, and then meet Davis in Texas. Davis was captured soon afterwards but Benjamin, traveling under a false name and in disguise, made his way south to the Manatee

⁵¹ National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NOAA Central Library, "NOAA History - Tools of the Trade/ Ships/C&GS Ships/Matchless," <http://www.history.noaa.gov/ships/matchless.html>, accessed 7/12/2014.

⁵² "Walking Tour of Manatee," http://www.reflectionsofmanatee.org/08_WalkingTour.html.

⁵³ McDuffee, Lures of the Manatee, 131.

⁵⁴ I.D. Solomon, "Steamers, Tenders, and Barks: The Union Blockade of South Florida," Tampa Bay History No. 18 (Fall-Winter 1996): 5-17.

⁵⁵ McDuffee, Lures of the Manatee, 131.

⁵⁶ Harllee, Kinfolks, 1719.

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River.⁵⁷ With a large reward out for his capture, and long prison terms for anyone found assisting his escape, providing Benjamin shelter and transport was a dangerous commitment. That did not deter those in Manatee still loyal to the Confederacy, including John Curry.

By that time, Benjamin's aim was to make his way to the Bahamas and then on to England. Benjamin first arrived at Gamble Plantation, on the north side of the river, hoping that the plantation's resident agent, Archibald McNeill, would agree to chance the blockade and sail him to safety. McNeill declined, having lost his sloop to the blockade and not knowing the inside waterways that would be necessary to effect the escape. Benjamin spent the first few weeks hidden at the Gamble Plantation, while a plan was developed for his escape. A boat provided by John Curry took him to the south side of the river and he spent a few more weeks hidden at the home of Captain Frederick Tresca while everything was readied. Judge Ezekial Glazier and Jeff Bolding, a trusted Whitaker Freed slave, took Benjamin to Whitaker's bayou at Sarasota Bay by hiding him in a wagon load of freshly butchered beef covered over with palmetto leaves.⁵⁸

There were few boats available for the journey; during the war, frequent Union landing parties had captured or destroyed all boats as "contraband of war". However, John Curry had hauled out a boat or two and secreted them in the woods; he provided one of them to Benjamin for his escape. It was an open sixteen-foot yawl. Captained by Fred Tresca with Hiram A. McLeod along as sailor, they made their way down the Gulf coast. Near Charlotte Harbor they had to put in and lower the mast to hide from a Yankee gunboat. They pulled up under some mangrove bushes and waited two days before setting out again. They sailed John Curry's 16-foot boat all the way to Indian Key, a distance of over 250 miles. There, they learned that there was now a \$500,000 reward for Benjamin's arrest. They traded John Curry's boat for a larger craft owned by William Bethel, a relative of Captain John Curry; it was a yawl sloop called The Blonde and outfitted with what Benjamin called a "Leg-O- Mutton sail" that could take them across the Gulf Stream to safety in the Bahamas.⁵⁹

From there, assisted by the blockade runner Captain Archibald McNeill, he reached Bimini in the Bahamas. His escape from Florida to England was not without hardship: at one point he pretended to be a Jewish cook on McNeill's vessel, to deceive American soldiers who inspected it—one of whom stated it was the first time he had seen a Jew do menial labor. The small sponge-carrying vessel on which he left Bimini bound for Nassau exploded on the way, and he and the three black crewmen eventually managed to return to Bimini. McNeill's ship was still there, and Benjamin chartered it to take him to Nassau. From there, he took a ship for Havana, and on August 6, 1865, left there for Britain. He was not yet done with disaster; his ship caught fire after departing St. Thomas, and the crew put out the flames only with difficulty. On August 30, 1865, Judah Benjamin arrived

⁵⁷ Matthews, Edge of Wilderness, 263-270.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

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at Southampton, in Britain.⁶⁰ Benjamin never returned to the United States and spent his later years in Britain, becoming qualified as a barrister. In his final years, he suffered from health issues, dying in Paris on May 6, 1884.

Samuel G. Curry and the Civil War

Samuel George Curry, owner of the house at 1302 (historically 1308) 4th Avenue East (8MA1392) which was constructed c. 1860, was born to John and Mary (Kemp) Curry on March 22, 1843 at Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas. He migrated to Manatee with the Curry family in 1860 at the age of 17 years.

Samuel is most remembered for his military service to the Confederacy. At just 19 years of age, Samuel enlisted in Tampa on March 5, 1862, as a private of Company K, 7th Regiment Florida Infantry before being transferred to the Navy in April 1864. Samuel was assigned to the C.S.S. Chattahoochee on April 10, 1864. According to his war records, he participated in an expedition consisting of 7 boats, 60 navy men and 30 army men who fought against Union forces at Apalachicola on May 3, 1864. He is next found on the rolls of the C.S. ironclad Georgia at Savannah from September to December 1864. He also is listed as having served on the C.S. Ram Savannah at Savannah. It was blown up to keep it from being captured by Union forces. After the capture of the city of Savannah by General George Sherman's forces, he proceeded by foot to Charleston, South Carolina. He is listed on an undated roll of men transferred to the C.S.S. Charleston. He next proceeded to Wilmington, North Carolina, and was present at Fort Fisher at Wilmington, North Carolina, during the bombardment that took place there. Before its capture he was moved to one of the Confederate forts on the James River near Richmond, Virginia. He was enlisted under Admiral Semmes in the Confederate Naval Battalion and was present during the retreat of General Lee's army from Richmond to Appomattox. After a three-day engagement at Sailors Creek, near Appomattox, he was captured April 6, 1865, near Farmville, Virginia and was held as a prisoner of war for over two months. He was released upon taking the Oath of Allegiance to the U.S. Government at Newport News, Virginia on June 25, 1865, and was given an honorable discharge.⁶¹

After the war, Samuel G. became a merchant in Manatee. He married Amanda (Mandy) Andress in 1866 with the Reverend E.F. Gates officiating. Samuel served as the postmaster of Manatee from 1894-1898. At the death of John Curry, Samuel and Amanda were deeded the two Curry houses under the probate that divided all of John Curry's property among his heirs. These two homes were of the property "set aside" for Joseph Curry who dispersed them according to their current residents. Samuel and Amanda lived in the larger home until 1877, when the construction of their newer home across the street to the west was complete. That newer home (since demolished) was described by old neighbors as having a wraparound porch on three sides.

⁶⁰ Meade, Robert D. Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman (reprint ed. 2001). New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶¹ Army records as listed in Harllee, Kinfolks, 1770-1771.

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Upon their move to this new home, Samuel's old house was used as a rooming house, and Amanda listed her occupation as running a rooming house in the 1897 Town of Manatee Directory. Recently, a Manatee resident, Richard Hayworth, came forward with a journal of his mother's, which described the house her parents rented in 1905. The address was 1308 4th Ave E., the historic address of the Samuel G. Curry House. She noted that the house had no running water or electricity, and they retrieved their water from the spring. Not only did the family live in the Curry rooming house, but her father was employed by Sam Curry and was a sharecropper growing celery.

Both Samuel and Amanda would live along 4th Avenue until their passing, with Samuel in 1925 and Amanda in 1939. Both are buried in the Fogartyville Cemetery near today's downtown Bradenton.

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CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRADENTON, MANATEE COUNTY
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East (8MA1391)

T/R/S 34S / 17E / 25

PARCEL 3203200059

LEGAL: W1/2 OF LOT 2, ALSO E 12 FT OF LOT 3 BLK F BROBERG PLAT TOGETHER WITH E 1/2 OF LOT 2 BLK F, BROEBERG PLAT PI#32032.0005/9

2. Samuel G. and Amanda Curry House, 1302 (1306) 4th Avenue East (8MA1392)

T/R/S 34S / 17E / 25

PARCEL 32032.0005/9

LEGAL W1/2 OF LOT 2, ALSO E 12 FT OF LOT 3 BLK F BROBERG PLAT TOGETHER WITH E 1/2 OF LOT 2 BLK F, BROEBERG

3. Theresa (a.k.a. Theodosia) Curry Lloyd House, 1305 4th Avenue East (8MA1397)

T/R/S 34S / 17E / 25

PARCEL 3198010059

LEGAL: W1/2 OF LOT 2, ALSO E 12 FT OF LOT 3 BLK F BROBERG PLAT TOGETHER WITH E 1/2 OF LOT 2 BLK F, BROEBERG PLAT

Beginning at the east lot line of 1305 4th Avenue East, run north on said line to the rear (north) lot line of the property, then run west along said lot line to the west lot line of the property, then run south along the west lot line and proceed south across 4th Avenue East to the west lot line of 1302 (1308) 4th Avenue and continue south the rear lot line of 1308 and 1302 4th Avenue East and continue east along the south lot line to the east lot line of 1302 4th Avenue East and run north along the east lot line of 1305 4th Avenue East, the point of the beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the historic district encompass 1305, 1306, and 1308 4th Avenue East which are all of the contributing historic resources in the Curry Houses Historic District. There are no other contributing resources in the historic district.

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CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
2. Curry Houses Historic District, Bradenton (Manatee County), Florida
3. S. Robinson-Svekis
4. May 2015
5. Reflections of Manatee, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. Main (North) Facade, Looking South
7. Photo 1 of 18

Numbers 2-5 are the same unless otherwise noted.

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. Northeast Elevation, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 2 of 18

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. West Elevation, Looking East
7. Photo 3 of 18

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. South Elevation, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 4 of 18

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. South Elevation, Looking North
7. Photo 5 of 18

1. Amelia Curry House, 1302 4th Avenue East
6. West Elevation, Looking East
7. Photo 6 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. North Elevation, Looking South
7. Photo 7 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. North Elevation, Looking South
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CURRY HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT
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1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. Northwest elevation, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 9 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. East Elevation, Looking West
7. Photo 10 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. West Elevation, Looking East
7. Photo 11 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. Southwest Elevation, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 12 of 18

1. Samuel Curry House, 1308 4th Avenue East
6. South Elevation, Looking North
7. Photo 13 of 18

1. Theresa Curry House, 1305 4th Avenue East
6. Main (Southeast) Facade, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 14 of 18

1. Theresa Curry House, 1305 4th Avenue East
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking North
7. Photo 15 of 18

1. Theresa Curry House, 1305 4th Avenue East
6. East elevation, Looking West
7. Photo 16 of 18

1. Theresa Curry House, 1305 4th Avenue East
6. West elevation, Looking East
7. Photo 17 of 18

1. Theresa Curry House, 1305 4th Avenue East
6. North elevation, Looking South
7. Photo 18 of 18

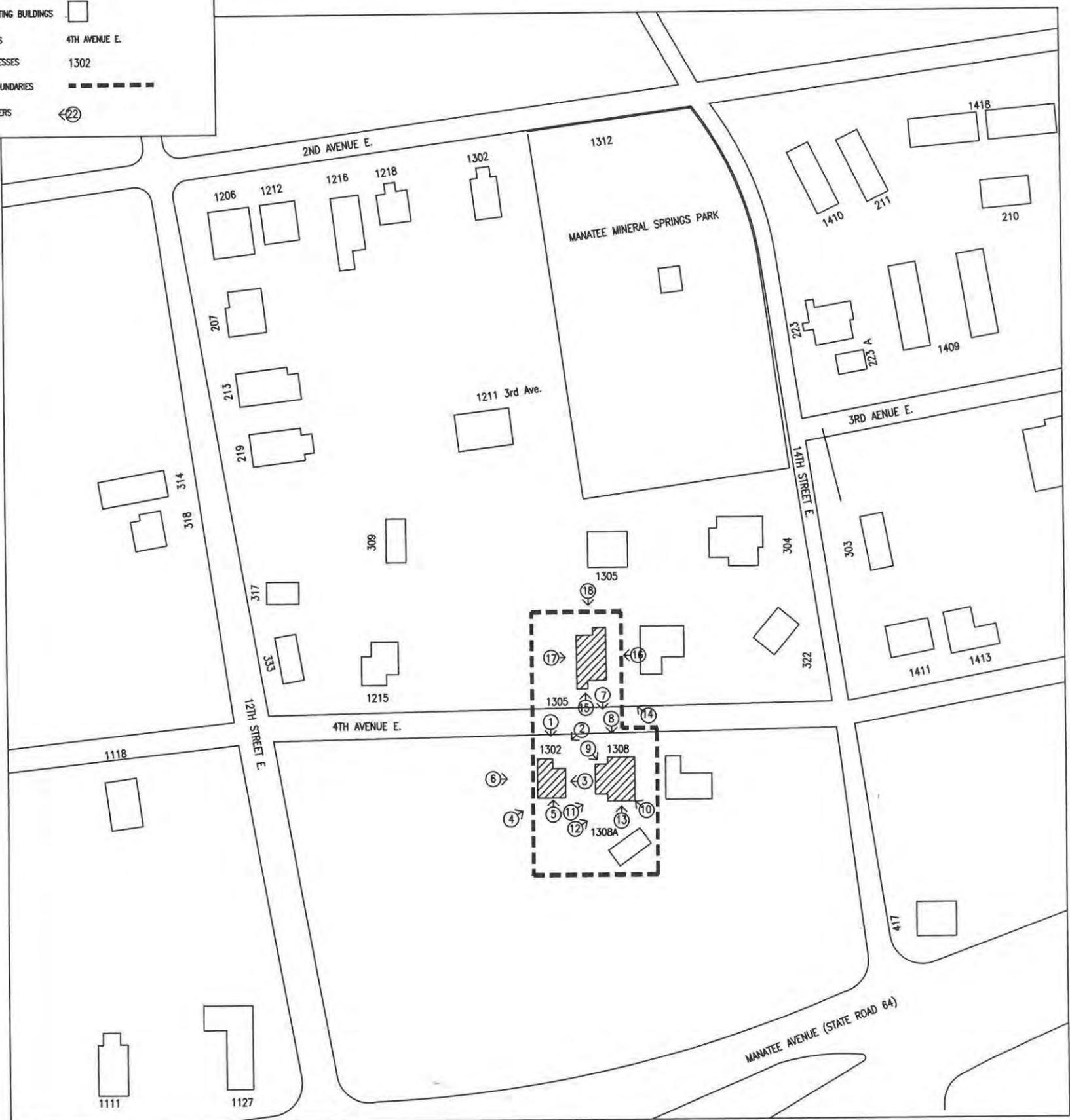


LOCATOR MAP

Curry Houses Historic District, Bradenton, Manatee County, Florida 34208
UTM References – 17 346941 3042356

LEGEND

- CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS 
- NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS 
- STREET NAMES 4TH AVENUE E.
- STREET ADDRESSES 1302
- HISTORIC BOUNDARIES 
- PHOTO NUMBERS 





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PLEASE







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Curry Houses Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Manatee

DATE RECEIVED: 7/24/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/24/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/08/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/08/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000571

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 9-8-15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



RECEIVED 2280

JUL 24 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RICK SCOTT
Governor

KEN DETZNER
Secretary of State

July 17, 2015

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief,
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs
Department of the Interior
1201 Eye Street, N.W., 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Curry Houses Historic District (FMSF #8MA2037), in Manatee County**, to the National Register of Historic Places. The related materials (digital images, maps, and site plan) are included.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6333 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Desiree Estabrook
Historic Preservation Supervisor, Survey & Registration
Bureau of Historic Preservation



Division of Historical Resources
R.A. Gray Building • 500 South Bronough Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850.245.6300 • 850.245.6436 (Fax) flheritage.com
Promoting Florida's History and Culture VivaFlorida.org

