

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JAN 23 1990

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

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**

Historic Buildings of Middleburg, Florida

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Initial Development to the Civil War, 1835-1860

Steamboat Era of Development, 1865-1915

**C. Geographical Data**

Community limits of Middleburg, Florida.

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

Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

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**SUMMARY:**

The historic buildings of Middleburg are significant on the local level under Criteria A and C in the areas of Exploration and Settlement, and Architecture. The properties include some of the few surviving buildings dating from the community's two significant periods of development during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among them, are two antebellum buildings constructed during the 1830s and 1840s, when Middleburg was an important staging area for military operations during the Second Seminole War. Other buildings are associated with the post-bellum steamboat era, which saw Middleburg become a important port on the St. Johns River. The resources are also architecturally significant as representatives of relatively rare types and styles in the context of Florida history.

**HISTORIC CONTEXTS:**

**I. Initial Development to the Civil War, c1835-1860**

**Initial Contact and Settlement**

Middleburg is located in Clay County, which was formed from Duval County in 1858. The most prominent natural feature in the vicinity of Middleburg is Black Creek, a tributary of the St. Johns River. Because of their utility as avenues of transportation, Black Creek and the St. Johns River have influenced the development of the Middleburg area since the time of earliest human contact.

Archaeological evidence suggests that human contact with the area around the St. Johns and its tributaries occurred as early as 5000 B.C. During this period, inhabitants of the North Central Highlands visited the St. Johns area on yearly hunting and gathering trips. By 2000 B.C., the area was occupied on a year round basis by aboriginals who lived in camps and villages. For their subsistence, these people depended upon the abundant fish, shellfish, and game that the river region afforded. This

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lifestyle remained much the same through the initial stages of European settlement of the area.

Middleburg lies within the oldest continuously settled area of European occupation in the United States. During the First Spanish Period (1565-1763), the Spanish regarded the St. Johns primarily as a defense barrier against Indian and English encroachment toward St. Augustine, the colonial capital. They built a series of forts or outposts along the east bank, from the river's mouth as far south as Picolata, the latter also serving as a ferry crossing for travelers on the Apalache-St. Augustine trail. The Spanish did not, however, systematically exploit the resources along the St. Johns. They were more interested in lands that were heavily populated by Indians, a traditional source of wealth in the Spanish empire.

The British occupied Florida for a mere twenty-one years (1763-1784), but they left a lasting imprint. One of their acts was to divide the area into East and West Florida at the Suwannee River. With the transfer of Florida to England at the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, the Spanish, with few exceptions, evacuated the colony. To encourage demographic and economic growth, the British quickly invalidated Spanish land claims and instituted a liberal land policy, which by 1776 had amounted to 114 grants totaling 1.4 million acres. Sometime during the British Period, the Colville Plantation was established at the forks of Black Creek in East Florida. It was the first documented settlement in the Middleburg area.

Florida reverted back to Spain at the end of the American Revolution in 1783. The first permanent settlers of Middleburg arrived during the Second Spanish Period (1784-1821). Throughout the period, the number of farms and plantations along the St. Johns River increased. The Spanish conceded a number of grants along Black Creek, including one to John Fontane. The Fontane Grant was located on the south side of Black Creek, opposite the neck of land formed by the two prongs, and encompassed 500 acres. A second Spanish land grant in the Middleburg area was issued to George Branning. In 1814, Branning began clearing land about 3/4 of a mile above the fork of Black Creek. He

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built a log cabin, approximately twenty feet wide, and placed nine acres under cultivation. Branning was driven from his land by Seminole Indians in 1818, during the First Seminole War.

Once the United States acquired Florida under the terms of the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819 (ratified in 1821), new settlers began to arrive in the territory. Some Spanish subjects, including some of the first settlers of Middleburg, remained in East Florida, but the population of St. Augustine and the surrounding area became increasingly English speaking. In accordance with the Adams-Onis Treaty, the United States government agreed to confirm title to recipients of former Spanish land grants who had fulfilled the terms of the grants. Among the grants confirmed along Black Creek was that of John Fontane. George Branning was also given land under the Donation Act. The Donation Act, enacted by the United States Congress on May 26, 1824, instructed the Board of Land Commissioners of East Florida to examine all claims made by heads of families. If the commissioners were convinced that the claimant had been occupying the land before February 22, 1819, they could award a donation grant of 640 acres, the equivalent of a section under the government survey system.

Many of the settlers acquired and settled former Spanish land grants. One of these was Gabriel Priest. Priest was a former Spanish subject who purchased the Fontane Grant on June 27, 1823. Priest moved to Alachua County around 1830. He prospered there, but continued to invest in land in the Middleburg area. At the outbreak of the Second Seminole War in 1835, he returned to Middleburg where he remained until his death in the 1860s.

During the 1820s and early 1830s, the Middleburg area served as a port of entry to the Florida interior. Located approximately ten miles inland from the St. Johns River, Middleburg offered one of the better landings south of Jacksonville. By 1828, there was sufficient settlement in the area to warrant the establishment of a post office at Whitesville, a community that was about two miles south of the present location of Middleburg.

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The concentrated settlement of Middleburg began during the 1820s with the establishment of a ferry crossing by Asa Clark. The settlement which developed around the crossing was known as Clark's Ferry. In September 1828, Clark sold the land and ferry boats to John M. Hanson for \$450. Hanson owned the ferry service until 1833. Despite the change in ownership, the name remained Clark's Ferry until 1833, when it became known as Gary's Ferry after Samuel and Charlotte Gary, its new owners.

Samuel Gary was a long-time Florida resident. In November 1824, he was appointed issuing agent on the St. Johns River by the federal government. As issuing agent he furnished rations and tools to the Seminole Indians for their move to a new reservation in interior Florida. In 1828, he moved to Clark's Ferry, and in June 1830 purchased the John Fontane Grant from Gabriel Priest. In June 1833, his wife purchased the ferry service and equipment from John Hanson. Three months later Gary sold the Fontane Grant to Thomas J. Brown. For the next decade the settlement which evolved into Middleburg was known as Gary's Ferry.

By 1830, a modest settlement had developed around the ferry crossing. In addition to the ferry operators, one of the first settlers was Isaac Varnes, who settled at the ferry around 1830 and operated a blacksmith shop. Varnes owned land on the north prong of Black Creek, close to the ferry and adjacent to the George Branning Donation. Another early settler was Ozias Budington from Connecticut, who married Samuel Gary's daughter, Susan. Varnes, Budington, and other early settlers of the area cultivated cotton, tobacco, and food crops, and harvested local timber products. They met with success until their farms and plantations were destroyed or abandoned during the early days of the Second Seminole War.

#### Development During the Second Seminole War 1835-1842

Hostility between the United States and the Seminole Indians was well established by 1821. Andrew Jackson's invasion of Florida in 1818 in pursuit of the Seminoles had served as a catalyst for the Spain's cession of Florida to the United States. After 1821, when the 1819 Adams-Onis

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Treaty was finally ratified, the United States Government viewed the Seminoles as a nuisance which obstructed settlement of the territory. It sought to isolate them on a reservation. Formal negotiations regarding the reservation issue occurred during the fall of 1823 in St. Johns County, near the banks of Moultrie Creek, south of St. Augustine.

When they signed the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, the Seminoles agreed to move to the center of the peninsula. The treaty established a four million acre reservation for the Seminoles, but it failed to eliminate tension between them and white settlers. The Indians frequently strayed from the reservation, and many whites believed that runaway slaves found sanctuary among them. The runaway slave issue was complicated by the fact that free blacks and the Indians' own slaves resided on the reservation. Clashes between Indians and settlers were frequent before the outbreak of war in 1835.

The Second Seminole War marks a watershed in the history of Middleburg. During the war years, the fledgling settlement was transformed into a major military encampment known as Ft. Heileman. The establishment of Ft. Heileman served as a catalyst for future development of the area. Much as military installations do today, the fort attracted civilians to fill a number of support positions at the fort.

Ft. Heileman was one of the most important military installations of the Second Seminole War. It was named for Major Julius F. Heileman, one of the first casualties of the war, who died at the battle of Micanopy. It was constructed between January and June 1836 by order of Major General Winfield Scott. Scott selected Gary's Ferry over Picolata, the principal colonial river port, because it had a better landing and road system. Ft. Heileman served as the quartermaster depot for the Army of the South as well as being a major military post, arsenal, hospital, and rest camp. It covered the tongue of land between the forks of Black Creek, and probably extended some distance inland. A smaller installation, Ft. Sanderson, was also located in the vicinity of Gary's Ferry.

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Of the buildings constructed during the occupation of Ft. Heileman, only one, the Clark-Chalker House (NR, 1988) at 3891 Main Street, remains. It was constructed under the supervision of Captain Michael M. Clark, the fort quartermaster. Built for use as housing for Clark and his staff, the house may have also been used as a hospital. The two and one-half story, Frame Vernacular style building, constructed of hand-hewn timbers and pegs, retains many of its original features.

In addition to its military function, Ft. Heileman quickly became a haven for civilian refugees from the war. During the early stages of the war the Seminoles destroyed virtually every settlement in the Florida peninsula. Reportedly, not a house was left standing from St. Augustine to Cape Florida. By the spring of 1836, with the exception of Micanopy, Gary's Ferry, and Newnansville, white settlers had deserted the interior. There were about 650 at Newnansville and between 700 and 800 at Gary's Ferry, where they felt secure because of the military installation.

Conditions at Ft. Heileman were difficult. The refugees lived in leaky, drafty shacks, about 10' by 10' in dimension, with makeshift beds. Disease was a major problem, particularly as warm weather approached. Of the 240 men stationed there in 1836, 130 were sick at one point. Many of the refugees were also infected with a variety of diseases, including measles, whooping cough, cholera, malaria, and other fevers. In July 1836 alone, fifty-two persons died at the fort. During the course of the war, fifty soldiers and hundreds of civilians died there.

From 1836 until 1841, Ft. Heileman played an important role in the war effort. In 1837 Colonel Benjamin Snodgrass, who commanded 950 mounted Alabama volunteers, was directed to guard Ft. Heileman. Perhaps the most distinguished visitor to the fort was Alexander Macomb, commanding general of the United States Army. He arrived April 5, 1839 and remained three weeks, inspecting the installation and attempting to arrange a parley with key Indian leaders. The war was generally a guerilla conflict with few major battles. Ft. Heileman's closest actual encounter with the fighting occurred in February 1840, when a train of twelve



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wagons returning from the interior was attacked by a band of from twelve to fifteen Indians. The role of the fort diminished after 1840, when the main supply depot was transferred from Gary's Ferry to Palatka. Although one source reported Ft. Heileman abandoned on June 18, 1841, another described ten companies of the U.S. Army's Second Dragoons headquartered there in 1842.

The war stimulated the first significant development of much of the Florida peninsula, including Middleburg. Land was cleared, roads were built, waterways were deepened and cleared of obstacles, fortifications were constructed, and the Indians were largely eliminated from Florida. Furthermore, the United States Government created a real estate boom in Florida by promising a land grant to any volunteer over eighteen years of age who enlisted to fight the Seminole Indians. As was true in the first years of American occupation, land development and speculation once again became a significant factor in the economy of peninsular Florida. Many settlers who had been drawn to Gary's Ferry during the war remained and helped to populate the area in its aftermath.

## Post-War Development and Decline

Growth in the post-war period depended on the continued use of Middleburg as a transportation center. The nascent steamboat industry found the St. Johns River and its tributaries perfectly suited for the low draft and highly maneuverable vessels. During the 1840s steamboats operated on a regular basis between Jacksonville and Black Creek. Sidewheel steamers soon plied the waters between Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, Middleburg, Palatka, and Sanford (Florida). The first boats involved in the river trade at Middleburg were the Ocmulgee, the St. Mathews, and the William Gaston.

During the 1840s and 1850s, Middleburg served as a port for the agricultural area encompassing what at present are Alachua, Clay, Bradford and Union Counties. Before the completion of the Florida Railroad in the late 1850s, early settlers of the area depended largely on water transportation for marketing their goods. Middleburg was

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the nearest river port for the settlers. River steamers moved up Black Creek to the landing there. Settlers hauled their cotton and other crops by ox or mule to Middleburg, where they would be loaded on boats for the long, slow ride down Black Creek and the St. Johns River. While in Middleburg, they would purchase basic necessities and coffee, tobacco, and the few other luxury items that they did not grow on their farms.

The development of Middleburg as a river port resulted in commercial and population growth. On July 18, 1843, the Whitesville post office was relocated to Gary's Ferry. The two locales had always been distinct, but during the Seminole War, much of the population of Whitesville had moved to Gary's Ferry, resulting in the relocation of the post office. During the 1840s the name Middleburgh replaced Gary's Ferry, apparently because of the settlement's central location between the two prongs of Black Creek. The post office was officially renamed Middleburgh on May 1, 1851. It was changed to its present spelling on September 8, 1893.

Ferries and roads were also important factors in Middleburg's importance as a transportation center. There were two ferries. One was operated by Charles Willey, on the site where the one belonging to Samuel Gary had previously been located. George Branning operated a second ferry and maintained a primitive bridge on the south prong of Black Creek. Important roads ran through the community, including the Jacksonville Road, the main overland route for all of Northeast Florida; the Green Cove Springs Road; and the Starke Road.

Railroads played a key role in the development of Florida in the nineteenth century, and had an indirect impact on Middleburg. Under the direction of David Levy Yulee, Florida's first United States Senator, the Florida Railroad was incorporated on January 8, 1853. Its proposed route was Fernandina to Cedar Key. Actual construction of the railroad did not, however, begin until 1855. Due to their booming economic involvement with the steamboat industry, the majority of the residents of Middleburg opposed the railroad, and the railroad bypassed it. Middleburg's only connection with railroads was the Trail

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Ridge Road which ran from Middleburgh northwest to the Florida Railroad during the late 1850s.

In addition to transportation, timbering, a component of Florida's economy since the colonial period, was also significant to the local economy. Ozias Budington operated a saw mill during the mid-1840s. In 1848 he sold the mill to Joseph W. Scott, who operated it only a few months before selling it to Paran Moody. Lewis S. Bennett was another mill operator during the period.

With only a few exceptions, exact locations and descriptions of structures existing in Middleburg during the 1840s and 1850s have not been documented. Population and commercial statistics, however, offer some idea of the development the community was experiencing during this period. Fifty-three heads of households were listed in the 1850 census. Most of the settlers of Middleburg were from the South, particularly South Carolina and Georgia. During the 1850s, the most prominent settlers were William S. Bardin, George Branning, Benjamin Frisbee, Joshua D. O'Hern, Gabriel Priest, John Scheufler, John G. Smith, William Tarrafuls, Isaac Varnes, and Samuel B. Thompson. Thompson was the main developer, and owned a hotel, general store, and three large warehouses. W.W. Hull, John Scheufler, Richard Dillion, Charles Willey, Edmund Waller, Stanislaus Glinkis, and Darlin C. Prescott also owned general stores by 1850. M.E. Haynes and James Spencer owned drug stores, and there was one physician, L.B. Slaid. John Gothfied Zeiger had a stable and Amaziah Gray had a tavern.

Educational and religious institutions also began developing in Middleburg during the years prior to the Civil War. Catholic and Baptist churches were constructed during the 1840s, although both disappeared by the 1850s. The first school was located on a lot southwest of the present United Methodist Church Building. The extant Methodist Church also dates from this period.

One of the prevailing themes of the political history of Florida during the nineteenth and early twentieth century was county subdivision. As Florida's population grew and new communities developed, residents in outlying areas

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continually lobbied for the division of Florida's larger counties into smaller, more manageable units. The tremendous size of many counties, the difficulty of travel, and the settlement of previously unpopulated or underpopulated areas following the construction of railroads and highways made reorganization of county government essential. The patronage, power, and economic benefits associated with local government were further incentives for reorganization. All of these factors to a greater or lesser extent played a part in the creation of Clay County.

On December 31, 1858, Clay County was formed and named for Henry Clay, a United States Senator from Kentucky who also served as Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams. Middleburg was selected as the temporary county seat. Within a year an election was held to select a permanent county seat. In October of the following year, Whitesville was selected as the permanent county seat by a margin of only two votes. In spite of its loss of the opportunity to be the seat of local government, with all the patronage and prestige associated with such a designation, Middleburg prospered as a trade center.

The Civil War, however, severely interrupted Middleburg's development. As was true in communities throughout the South, many residents of Middleburg joined the Confederate Army. Middleburg and its surrounding area was the setting for at least one of the relatively few skirmishes that occurred in Florida during the war years. In 1864, the town was attacked by the 4th Massachusetts Cavalry. The Union troops came from Green Cove Springs and crossed Black Creek at Middleburg where they burned Samuel Thompson's hotel and three warehouses used for storing cotton, feed, and other supplies. Many homes and businesses were also destroyed or looted. Captain J.J. Dickison, commander of Confederate forces in the area, was notified of the incursion and set off in pursuit. He and his troops engaged the Union raiding party at Halsey's Plantation, between Middleburg and Green Cove Springs, and inflicted heavy casualties without the loss of life of any of his force.

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## Development of Middleburg as a Steamboat Port

The three decades after the Civil War constituted a period of renewed growth for Middleburg. Steamers laden with goods and passengers going to and from Middleburg once again plied the St. Johns River and Black Creek. Sawmills were busy producing timber for rapidly expanding Jacksonville and more distant markets. During the two decades following the war, Middleburg was surpassed only by Palatka as a port on the lower St. Johns and its tributaries. Cotton, lumber, and agricultural products were the principal exports of the post-war years. Citrus cultivation became the staple of the river trade from the mid-seventies to the mid-nineties. Land values along the St. Johns increased in the late 1870s as entrepreneurs converted more property into orange groves. Orange Park, Mandarin, Satsuma, Orange Mills, and Orange City were but a few of the communities whose origins date to the citrus boom of the late nineteenth century. By the early 1880s, the shipping business was booming at Middleburg. The steamer **Twilight** made daily runs to Jacksonville carrying freight and passengers. The firm of Long and Budington had two freight boats in continuous operation. Numerous other vessels made the trip to Jacksonville as well. They included steamers, barges, lighters, and pleasure craft.

The ferry business also remained an important part of Middleburg's transportation system during the late nineteenth century. There were five ferries in operation at or near Middleburg during the 1870s and 1880s. By 1873 Albert S. Chalker operated a ferry on the south prong of Black Creek, and in 1877, a public ferry service managed by Mathew Knight began operating. George Branning and his family owned a ferry from the 1850s until 1885, when the county took it over. George R. Frisbee began a ferry service in 1878, and James Register established another the following year.

Based largely on the river trade and the expanding local agricultural and timber economy, the population of

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Middleburg quickly exceeded pre-Civil War levels during the 1880s and 1890s. By 1890 it had risen to over 700. In the mid-1880s, the village included a grist mill operated by Henry Ayers; a nursery, probably providing citrus trees, owned by Ozias Budington; general stores owned by A.S. Chalker and M.F. Geiger; a saw mill operated by J.M. and A.H. Moss; and a drug store owned by R.E. Norman. A number of private residences were constructed during this period. Among the most notable of those still standing is the Bardin House at 3881 Main Street, built for Henry S. Bardin, Martha Ann Chalker's brother. Middleburg continued to prosper through the mid-1890s. In 1895, the town boasted three general stores; the Fairhead, Shawn and Company Saw Mill; the Middleburg Brick Works; the Black River Phosphate Company; and many citrus and vegetable growers. By 1900 the population of greater Middleburg exceeded 1300 inhabitants.

Economic calamity descended upon the village in the 1890s, however. First came the "Great Freeze" of the winter of 1894-1895, which destroyed the citrus industry in North Florida. During the last days of December 1894, a blast of arctic air entered Florida and pushed temperatures lower than had been previously recorded. The temperature at nearby Starke reached fourteen degrees. Much of the orange crop remained on the trees unharvested. Following the freeze, fruit as much as a foot deep lay scattered beneath the trees.

Although much fruit was lost, tree damage was relatively slight during the December freeze. The plight of the railroads and shippers was, however, even graver than that of the growers. Hundreds of cars and boats were left idle for lack of fruit, and thousands of men, those whose jobs had been to buy, sell, and haul, or to operate the boats and railroads, were laid off. Nevertheless, there was a certain amount of optimism among those dependent on the citrus industry because tree damage was not severe.

The worst, however, was yet to come. In February 1895, communities throughout the state experienced record low temperatures. The second freeze destroyed what little fruit was left. During the few weeks of unseasonably warm weather between the freezes, the orange trees had begun to bloom

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again and filled with sap. After the second freeze, they split open, dripped sap, and froze again. When spring finally arrived and all the countryside began turning a bright, fresh green, the outlines of bare orange trees stood bleakly against the sky.

For the grower, shipper, and others directly or indirectly dependent on the citrus industry for their livelihood, the future was bleak. Some of the trees would bear fruit again, but the freeze caused years of hardship and forced many individuals involved in the citrus industry to seek new occupations. The commercial citrus industry in Middleburg was destroyed by the 1894-1895 freeze. Local growers switched to strawberries, figs, grapes, plums, and pecans in an attempt to maintain an income and recoup lost investments.

The second calamity to strike Middleburg during the 1890s was the decline of its steamboat trade. By the late 1880s, the railroad had eclipsed the river steamer as the principal carrier of freight in the St. Johns River region. The train, because of its speed, could move freight more cheaply and more quickly to larger markets, an asset quite appealing to farmers cultivating perishable produce. Moreover, Jacksonville, with its strategic location began to monopolize river trade. Later improvements to the Jacksonville port assured that city's position as the maritime capital of the river. By the late 1890s freight traffic on Black Creek was reduced to a trickle.

The history of Middleburg after 1900 is the reverse of most Florida communities. The community's population and economy continued to decline. In 1910 the population was 150 fewer than ten years before. Several general stores remained in the community, together with a brick yard and saw mill. However, the railroad, the key to economic prosperity at the time, was located seven miles away at Peoria, and was accessible to Middleburgers only by stagecoach or wagon. Middleburg's decision to exclude the railroad forty years before resulted in its virtual isolation by the end of the century.

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During the 1910s, Middleburg's downward spiral continued. Although several impressive residences were built, the overall population declined to only 851 in 1920. Still, the infrastructure of a community remained. This included a school, two churches, five stores, a blacksmith shop, a saw mill, a cotton gin, a newspaper, and a library. Several houses were added to the residential areas during the first half of the 1910s. By 1915, however, new construction had virtually ceased, and Middleburg's second period of development had ended.

## Depression and Recovery

While communities in much of the rest of Florida experienced a frenzied period of expansion and development during the 1920s, Middleburg stagnated. The isolation of the community, due to its outmoded transportation system, caused it to be ignored by the many land speculators that came to the state during the land boom. Middleburg entered a protracted period of economic depression from which it did not recover until World War II.

During the national Great Depression, several projects sponsored by the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps assisted the local economy. A community center building was constructed in Middleburg by the CCC in the late 1930s. Also, Camp Blanding, an army training installation located approximately ten miles southwest, was constructed in the mid-1930s. Camp Blanding ultimately grew to the fourth largest army facility in the state. The proximity of the camp with its large payroll, benefited the Middleburg economy. Soldiers often visited the community seeking entertainment and many relocated their families there during the war.

At the conclusion of the war, however, most of the families who had moved to Middleburg left. The community was once again largely excluded from the enormous development that took place in Florida during the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, development has intensified, and the population of Middleburg has dramatically increased. There is no indication that the



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development of Middleburg will slow during the remainder of  
the twentieth century.

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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I. Name of Property Type Wood Frame Buildings in Middleburg, Florida 1835-1915

II. Description

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

III. Significance

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

IV. Registration Requirements

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

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See continuation sheet for additional property types

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Stephen Olausen/ Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist  
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date January 1990  
street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333  
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Middleburg, Florida, 1835-1915

## II. Description:

The historic wood frame buildings of Middleburg embody vernacular designs consistent with the era in which they were constructed. They are primarily located along Main, Palmetto, and Wharf Streets, in the oldest area of the community. The buildings serve primarily residential functions. They are erratically placed with varying setbacks on wooded lots of different sizes. The haphazard placement of the buildings is indicative of the organic growth the community experienced throughout its historical periods of development. It is evident that property sizes and building styles have direct correlations to the conditions of the local economy at the time of their development. Architecturally, the most impressive buildings were constructed during the Steamboat Era when economic prosperity in the community reached its zenith.

According to data compiled during the 1988 survey of historic properties in Middleburg, most residences are Frame Vernacular designs built between 1835 and c1915. Other styles represented are Colonial Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne. The designs of the historic buildings of Middleburg are consistent with popular trends in architecture during the periods in which they were constructed. The following descriptions of styles are included to provide a context for the historic architectural designs in evidence in Middleburg.

**Frame Vernacular**

Frame Vernacular is defined as the common wood frame construction techniques of lay or self taught builders. Prior to the Civil War, vernacular designs were local in nature, transmitted by word of mouth or by demonstration, and relying heavily upon native building materials. With the coming of the American Industrial Revolution, mass manufacturing became the pervasive influence over vernacular house design. Popular magazines featuring standardized manufactured building components, house plans, and house decorating tips flooded consumer markets and helped to make building trends universal throughout the country. The railroad also aided the process by providing cheap and efficient transportation for manufactured

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building materials. Ultimately, the individual builder had access to a myriad of finished architectural products from which he could pick and choose to create a design of his own.

Frame Vernacular is the most common architectural style found throughout the United States. Frame Vernacular houses pre-dating 1920 are generally two stories in height, with a balloon frame structural system constructed of pine, and a brick pier foundation. They have regular plans, usually rectangular, but often L-shaped plans were used to maximize cross-ventilation. The interior spaces contain two rooms (hall and parlor), two or four rooms divided by a central hall, or two rooms with a stairway on the side. They have gable or hip roofs with pitches steep enough to accommodate attic space. Horizontal drop siding and weatherboard are the most common exterior wall surface materials. Wood shingles were originally used to cover the roofs, but they have nearly always been replaced by metal or composition shingles in a variety of shapes and colors. The main facade of Frame Vernacular residences is often placed on the gable end, making the height of the facade greater than its width. Porches are also a common feature of the style. They include one and two-story porches. Fenestration is regular, but not always symmetrical. Windows are double-hung sash with multi-pane glazing, and doors contain recessed wood panels. Decoration is sparse. It is generally limited to ornamental woodwork, including a variety of patterned shingles and truss-work in the gables, turned balustrades and porch columns, and porch brackets under the eaves.

#### Italianate

The Italianate style, along with the Gothic Revival, began in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to the formal classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable for about two hundred years. The movement emphasized rambling, informal Italian farmhouses, with their characteristic square towers, as models for Italian-style villa architecture. Italianate houses built in the United States generally followed the informal rural models of the Picturesque movement. In America these Old World prototypes were variously modified, adapted, and embellished into an indigenous style with only hints of its Latin origin.

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The first Italianate houses in the United States were built in the late 1830s; the style was popularized by the influential pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing published in the 1840s and 50s. By the 1860s the style had completely overshadowed its earlier companion, the Gothic Revival. Most surviving examples date from the period 1855-80; earlier examples are rare. The decline of the Italianate style, along with that of the closely related Second Empire style, began with the financial panic of 1873 and the subsequent depression.

Identifying features of the Italianate style include two or three stories (rarely one story); low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath tall narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above; and windows frequently with elaborate crowns, usually of inverted U-shape. Many examples featured a square cupola or tower.

#### Queen Anne

Queen Anne was a popular residential building style in the United States between 1880 and 1910. The name of the style is misleading. It actually draws most heavily upon earlier Jacobean and Elizabethan precedents, rather than the more restrained Renaissance architecture of the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714). English architect Richard Norman Shaw is most often credited for developing the style in his designs for grand manor houses during the mid-nineteenth century. The first American example is generally considered to be the Watts-Sherman House in Newport, Rhode Island, built in 1874. This half-timbered example, together with a number of contemporary patterned masonry structures, were most closely associated with the manor houses of Shaw and other English architects.

Beginning around 1880 the style was adapted to wood frame structures and was spread throughout the country by pattern books and the first architectural magazine, **The American Architect and Building News**. The expansion of the country's railroad network beginning in the 1870s furthered the diffusion of the style by making pre-cut architectural details available to all sections of the nation. Factory made spindlework, decorative vergeboard, variegated wood shingles, windows, and porch columns could be combined into a myriad of picturesque designs. During the first decade of the twentieth century the elements of Queen Anne style were adapted to the first asymmetrical examples of the Colonial Revival Style. By 1910,

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Colonial Revival had largely supplanted Queen Anne as the dominant high-style of choice for residential structures.

**Colonial Revival**

Colonial Revival was the dominant style for American residential architecture during the first half of the twentieth century. In Florida, however, the popularity of the style during the era was eclipsed by the Bungalow and Spanish Revival styles. The term "Colonial Revival" refers to a rebirth of interest in the early English and Dutch houses of the Atlantic Seaboard. The Georgian and Adam styles were the backbone of the Revival, which also drew upon Post-medieval English and Dutch Colonial architecture for references.

The Colonial Revival style was introduced at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. The centennial of the Declaration of Independence sparked renewed interest in the architecture of the colonial period. Many of the buildings designed for the Exposition were based on historically significant colonial designs. Publicity for the Exposition occurred simultaneously with efforts by several national organizations to preserve Old South Church in Boston and Mount Vernon. At about the same time, a series of articles focusing on eighteenth century American architecture appeared in the *American Architect*, *Harpers*, and the *New York Sketch Book of Architecture*. The publicity the Colonial Revival style received helped to make it popular throughout the country.

**III. Significance:**

The historic wood frame buildings of Middleburg are significant on the local level for their association with the Antebellum (1835-1860) and Steamboat Era (1865-1915) periods of development of the community. They embody building types and vernacular and high-style architectural designs that are relatively rare in the context of Florida history. The Clark-Chalker House, the oldest building in Middleburg, dates from c1835, when the community became an important military base of operations during the Second Seminole War. There is some evidence to suggest that this structure served as headquarters for Generals Winfield Scott and Thomas Jesup. Another building in this property type, the United Methodist Church, was

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constructed in 1847 during the first period of concerted development in the settlement.

Other historic wood frame buildings date from the period of Middleburg's development as a major steamboat port on the St. Johns River system. Located on Black Creek, a tributary of the St. Johns, Middleburg became an entrepot for surrounding agricultural areas. The increased wealth that entered the community is evidenced by the appearance of more elaborate building forms. Buildings constructed during this period exhibit vernacular adaptations of contemporary high-style architectural designs. Among the most prominent of these buildings are the Bardin House, built in the Italianate style, and the Frosard Buddington House, designed using Queen Anne style precedents.

**IV. Registration Requirements:**

For wood frame buildings to be eligible for nomination under this cover, they must have been constructed during one of the context periods described in Section E. In addition they must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1) **Individual buildings that are exceptional examples of a style or type of architecture:** Buildings nominated under this area of significance must retain their original appearance to a high degree. A building that has been altered by significant additions, the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which they were constructed, or the removal of significant architectural details is excluded from eligibility for nomination under this criterion.

2) **Individual buildings with historic associations with persons or events significant on the local level:** Integrity requirements for buildings with important historic associations should be less stringent than for those nominated for their architectural significance alone. Buildings, however, that have been radically altered to the point where they exhibit little of their original design are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

3) **Groups of buildings of a similar design or that have associations with important events within the periods of significance:** Districts nominated under this criterion should



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possess a concentration of relatively well preserved resources. Contributing buildings must meet the basic criteria for integrity outlined in National Register of Historic Places guidelines.

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**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

A comprehensive survey of Middleburg was undertaken in 1988. A comprehensive survey is a systematic, detailed examination of historic properties within a defined geographic area. The Middleburg survey was undertaken to determine the exact nature, extent, and character of historic properties. Using the definition of the National Park Service, historic properties are buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts significant in national, state, or local history or pre-history.

The methodology used when conducting historic property surveys consists of a series of progressive steps. In the case of Middleburg, the initial level consisted of research in existing historical literature to determine the periods, activities, and personalities significant to the development of the community and to identify previously recorded historic buildings, other standing structures, and historic period archaeological sites. During this phase, because there were insufficient funds to adequately survey archaeological sites, it was determined that only buildings constructed before 1940 would be considered for listing on the final inventory of sites surveyed. The intermediate level included field survey to locate or confirm the location of extant properties, evaluation of preliminary research and field survey, recording site data, and compilation of a basic inventory. The third level consisted of an analysis of properties by theme and period of significance, evaluation of the significance and concentration of the historic buildings, and recommendations for National Register nominations and locally recognized landmarks.

The format for recording survey data was the Florida Master Site File form for standing structures. (The Florida Master Site File is the state's inventory of historic resources.) Forms were set up on a D-Base III data processing program. The forms were updated as additional information was generated and then were printed out in hard copy. Analysis of the data, particularly the results of the field survey, was facilitated by the D-Base program. Information about historic properties was recorded on a computer disk filing system, and an inventory of those evaluated as being significant to the history of Middleburg was provided in a final report.

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In accordance with the survey criteria, 45 buildings were recorded during the course of the project. The survey team field inspected each building, photographed it and recorded its location on a base map or United States Geological Survey map. The team noted its condition, integrity, and any threats to it. After the completion of field work, the team recorded the aforementioned information along with the legal description of each property and its address.

The development of a historical context for evaluating properties in Middleburg constituted a major portion of the survey. The consultant's team of historians conducted a preliminary literature search, focusing on the chronological development of the community and emphasizing important events, individuals, and significant themes associated with the development. They conducted research at the Clay County Courthouse, Green Cove Springs; the St. Augustine Historical Society Library, St. Augustine; the State Library of Florida and the Library of the Bureau of Historic Preservation, both in Tallahassee; and the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. The research information formed the basis for the preliminary and final historical reports and the historical information included on the Florida Master Site File forms.

Based on the visual reconnaissance, information gleaned from cartographic sources, newspapers, and other primary source materials, and discussions with informants, the survey team established a range date of construction for all standing structures, and determined an exact year for some. They included the date of construction on the Master Site File form in the appropriate place, entering either the range date or the exact date.

After the architectural and historical research was completed, a map showing concentrations of historic buildings was prepared to aid in identifying areas where historic districts might be created. Using computer generated data, a detailed analysis of building types, materials, and alterations was made to determine the integrity of the resources. The results of this analysis, along with all information gathered in the other stages of the survey, were incorporated into a

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final report, the individual Master Site File forms, and the National Register nominations.

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