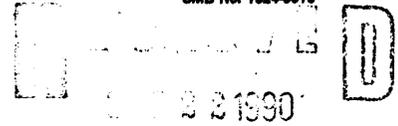


1760

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. 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. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Villa Bianca
other names/site number Grunwell House / 8CH 445

2. Location

street & number 2330 Shore Drive N/A not for publication
city, town Punta Gorda N/A vicinity
state Florida code FL county Charlotte code FL 015 zip code 33950

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
Suzanne P. Walker (deputy) 10/17/90
Signature of certifying official State Historic Preservation Officer Date
Florida Dept. of State - 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.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Richard Byrum 11/28/90
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
for

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

20th Century Revival/Mediterranean
Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

STUCCO

roof ASBESTOS

other WOOD/cypress

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1926

Significant Dates
1926

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Price, Maxwell Charles

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Villa Bianca

DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

Villa Bianca is a Mediterranean Revival style residence built in 1926 in Punta Gorda, Florida for Admiral Grunwell by Maxwell Charles Price. The house is a two story stucco over poured concrete block residence overlooking the Peace River. It is surrounded by the modest houses of the Solana Subdivision east of the City of Punta Gorda.

SETTING

The grounds of Villa Bianca reflect the tropical climate of Punta Gorda featuring a gigantic Cuban Laurel tree shading the loggia and garage. Citrus groves and other fruit trees are found on the property. A sense of time and place is experienced upon entering the Villa Bianca gates and travelling the palm and citrus lined road to the house.

DESCRIPTION

The "rear" (south) elevation is approached by a palm lined road approached through a tall stone gateway with "Villa Bianca" in relief on the posts. (Photo 1) The house is built of poured concrete blocks, probably fabricated on site. The symmetrical asbestos shingled hip roof is broken on this facade by a projecting two story gable which contained the original kitchen. A second story wood bracketed balcony is centered over the arched double entry doors. The gable structure contains a sixteen light casement window and a three part twelve light casement. Three raised concrete bands wrap around the building, similar to a water or belt course. One is at the eave level, the second at the second floor window level, the third at the first floor level. Windows in the other bays of the facade include two eight light and two ten light casements. Original steel casements, severely deteriorated due to exposure to salt air, were replaced with wood casements representing the original fenestration. (Photos 3 and 4)

The west elevation shows a massive exterior chimney that is vented and capped at its opening. Rain gutters are distinctive on this elevation and are anchored to the wall with an ornate fleur-de-lis bracket. (Photo 3)

The north elevation faces the river and is the main facade of the house. It is distinguished by a one story enclosed porch, a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Villa Bianca

third floor dormer, and stepped balconies at the second and third floor levels. Fenestration is regular with ten light casement windows in various groupings, and fixed transome lights in the arches of the porch. The main entrance is approached by a brick walk and stair to the porch. (Photos 2 and 6)

The north elevation is a significant scenic resource visible from the river as well as Interstate Highway 75. A long wood dock extends into the water to accomodate the mooring of both shallow and deeper draft vessels. Stone light standards line the seawalled shore.

The east elevation contains three bays. The southernmost is a shed-roofed addition of 1982 where the original kitchen was enlarged. This one story shed is surfaced with stucco and is compatible in form and material with the original features of the building. An exterior chimney is located on this elevation, matching the chimney of the west elevation. One six-light and four twenty-light windows are located on the east facade. The southern axis of the east facade is walled by an arcaded loggia framed by boxed wood columns leading to a utility room and garage. The columns are engaged and free standing and feature a Moorish-inspired arched top. Vertical board doors give entry to the utility room, according to the original plans. The courtyard formed by the loggia is a significant space in Villa Bianca. (Photo 5)

INTERIOR

The interior of Villa Bianca is intact except for a modernization of the original kitchen. The entry foyer is significant for the fine wood staircase leading to the second floor. (Photo 8) The formal living room is connected to the dining room by pocket wooden doors. The living room and dining room contain elaborately carved fireplaces imported from Italy. (Photos 9 and 10) The wood floors have been restored. A six inch molding encircles each room. The ceilings are coved gracefully through extensive plaster work. The chair rail that encircles the living room is also inlaid into the plaster. All doors of the house are cypress or oak, none are veneered. An interesting feature of each door molding is a slight bow in the wood that seems to have been designed into the finished wood.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Villa Bianca

SUMMARY

Villa Bianca is significant at the local level under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style in the Punta Gorda area. The property relates to the Florida Land Boom era of Punta Gorda's history. The period of significance is 1926, the date of construction.

SIGNIFICANCE

Villa Bianca was built in 1926, at the height of the Florida real estate boom. The estate was built in the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture, a style that became the trademark of this period of rapid growth and development in Florida history. Villa Bianca is located in the rural belt surrounding the city of Punta Gorda.

The estate is located in the Solana Subdivision, platted in 1887. The subdivision was an agricultural development of small farms based upon the cultivation of pineapples, for which the soil, elevation and location were perfectly suited. Because the area was located on the line of the Florida Southern, later the Atlantic Coastline Railroad, the farms had excellent transportation access for the shipment of the fruit. Solana farms became famous for the smooth Cayenne pineapple, which was said to grow to 13 pounds in weight.

During the Florida Boom period a number of Mediterranean Revival style homes were constructed in the subdivision, mostly for speculative purposes. In 1926, the Punta Gorda Herald reported that Solana was developing faster than any other section of Charlotte County. Seventeen homes were under construction and two were being rebuilt. An 80 room apartment building was also planned.

The Solana Improvement Association sought to have the subdivision annexed into the City of Punta Gorda, in order to obtain public improvements. The community desired a municipal pier, paved streets, and street lighting. Though city officials met with members of the association, annexation never came to pass.

The Herald reported on November 12, 1926, of the construction of the Grunwell home, with the headline, "Grunwell Home in Solona will be City's Best". The home was to be designed by Maxwell Price and built by Beverly Smith. It would contain

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2 Villa Bianca

"11 rooms, spacious, well-lighted and beautifully decorated with every convenience and many unusual luxuries. The structure will rise to a third floor where there will be a balcony overlooking the broad waters of Punta Gorda Bay. There will also be two porches on the 2nd floor and three bedrooms with private bath. On the lower floor, the two main rooms, living and dining rooms, will extend 46 feet, the entire length of the building, and will open onto a broad veranda. A kitchen, breakfast room, and study will adjoin them and from the kitchen an arcade will lead past a shower room and pumphouse to an attractive two car garage. The building will have a typical tropical American appearance, with a touch of the Mediterranean shore. It will be built of tile, on a solid poured foundation, and oak flooring and oak veneered doors will be used throughout. There will be four fireplaces in as many rooms. The grounds of the home have been owned by Mr. Grunwell for several years and were planted some time ago to beautiful palms and shrubs which will enhance the beauty of the dwelling as soon as it is completed and the lawn cleared and planted."

ALFRED GILBERT GRUNWELL

Alfred Gilbert Grunwell was born in Arlington, Virginia in 1875 and grew up in Virginia. He attended Pennsylvania State University and studied medicine in Germany. After completing his medical studies, Grunwell joined the U.S. Navy and served as a doctor during the Boxer War in China and the Spanish American War. Grunwell set up the first Naval Hospital in Guam after the Spanish American War. He retired from the service in 1913.

In 1920 Grunwell decided to move to Florida for his health. He was intrigued by the topography of Punta Gorda and decided to purchase property. Grunwell purchased a home on Retta Esplanade for a town residence, a 40 acre grove on Shell Creek, and the two acres in Solana where he built Villa Bianca. Villa Bianca became his country estate.

Having spent a year in Italy, Grunwell was greatly impressed by that country's art and architecture. His concept of Villa Bianca was shaped in part by his admiration of Italian

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3 Villa Bianca

architecture and fine craftsmanship. Maxwell Charles Price was hired as architect for the project primarily because of his reputation for providing the best quality available in design and building.

Grunwell planted the citrus groves that remain on the property today. Horticulture continued to interest Grunwell in Florida and his grove and plantings flourished. Villa Bianca was planted with oranges, grapefruit, mangos, guava and other tropical fruits of the area.

Grunwell was active in the community of Punta Gorda, and was a member of Rotary International and other organizations. During the Depression Grunwell was appointed head of the economic recovery administration in the county. He became involved as receiver for one of the failed banks during this period. Grunwell had served as a country doctor when he lived in Virginia, often for no compensation. In Punta Gorda, he served only occasionally as a doctor, usually in emergencies. He never took pay for his services. He was close to Doc McQueen, Punta Gorda's general practitioner.

In 1934 Grunwell's wife died. He married Hattie Griffin a year later. After Grunwell died in 1949, Hattie sold the property to his son Gilbert Grunwell. He lived in the house after his own retirement in 1966 until 1982, when the present owner purchased the property. The current owner, Robert McQueen, is descended from Doc McQueen, Punta Gorda's town doctor.

CONCLUSION

Villa Bianca is among the residential property types of historic resources found in and around Punta Gorda. It reflects the romantic architectural styles popular among Punta Gorda's prominent citizens who settled along the riverfront during the Boom period. Begun in 1924 and completed in 1926, the property embodies the affluence and economic growth of the era. It stands in contrast to the older residences of Punta Gorda, which were built on city lots in a much greater density.

The Mediterranean Revival style was popular during the boom period of the 1920's, as elsewhere in Florida. The subdivisions being platted adjacent to Solana used the style as a means of advertising the elegance of the houses. Most of the examples surviving from this era, however, are much more modest in scale

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

Villa Bianca

and materials than Villa Bianca. These homes could more properly be considered Mission style bungalows, rather than Mediterranean Revival villas.

Villa Bianca, as designed by Maxwell Charles Price, a well known local architect, is an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style. In addition, it exemplifies expert craftsmanship and the extensive use of fine materials, some of which were imported from Italy.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1 Villa Bianca

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

BOOKS

Blumenson, John J.G. Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945. American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tennessee. 1979.

Covington, James W. The Story of Southwestern Florida. New York, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1957.

Frisbie, . Peace River Pioneers. E.A. Seamon, Miami, 1974.

Harner, Charles E. Florida's Promoters: The Men Who Made It Big. Trend House, Tampa, Florida. 1973.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York. 1984.

Tebeau, Charlton W. A History of Florida. Updated Version. University of Miami Press, Coral Gables, Florida, 1971, 1980.

NEWSPAPERS

Punta Gorda Herald

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 1 Villa Bianca

1. Villa Bianca, 2330 Shore Drive
2. Punta Gorda, Florida
3. Gladys Cook
4. 2-18-88
5. Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc.
6. Entry Gates, camera facing north
7. 1 of 11

Items 1-5 are the same for all of the photographs.

6. North Elevation, camera facing south
7. 2 of 11
6. Southwest Elevation, camera facing northeast
7. 3 of 11
6. South Elevation, camera facing north
7. 4 of 11
6. East Elevation, loggia, camera facing south
7. 5 of 11
6. Detail, North Elevation, camera facing southwest
7. 6 of 11
6. Interior, north porch, first floor
7. 7 of 11
6. Interior Detail, Staircase
7. 8 of 11
6. Interior Detail, Fireplace
7. 9 of 11
6. Interior Detail, Fireplace
7. 10 of 11
6. Interior Detail, Third floor
7. 11 of 11

CHARLOTTE HARBOR

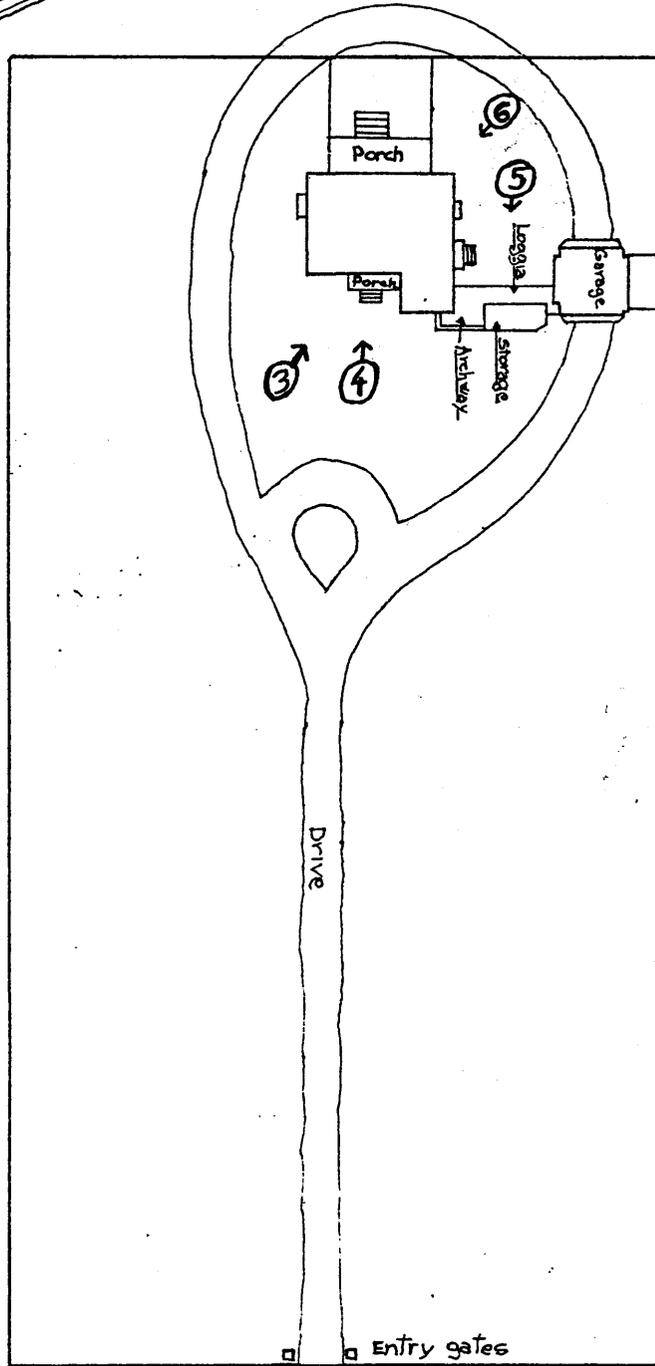
Dock
②

SITE PLAN

Villa Bianca
Punta Gorda, Florida

Scale: 1"=30' (approx.)

① → photograph # and direction



-Villa Bianca-
Punta Gorda, Florida

①

SHORE STREET

Entry gates

Drive

Porch

Loggia

Storage

Porch

Storage

Archway