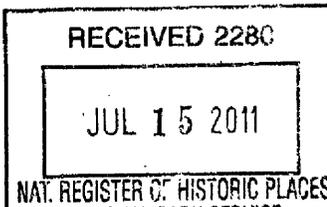


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



577

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 DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number Village of Boca Grande

2. Location

street & number Bounded by Gilchrist Av West, 5th St North, Palm Av East, 3rd St South N/A  not for publication

city or town Boca Grande N/A  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Lee code 071 zip code 33921

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.)

Burton C. Mattick/DSHPO 7/7/2011  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
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) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8-24-11

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	
34	15	buildings
0	2	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
34	18	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

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE TRADE/ Business/Office
- COMMERCE TRADE/Retail
- TRANSPORTATION/Train Depot
- RELIGION/Religious /Church
- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling, Residence
- LANDSCAPE/Park
- INDUSTRY/Telephone Transmission Tower

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE TRADE/ Business/Office
- COMMERCE TRADE/Retail
- COMMERCE TRADE/Shopping Mall
- RELIGION/Religious /Church
- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling, Residence
- LANDSCAPE/Park
- INDUSTRY/Telephone Transmission Tower

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- NO STYLE/Wood Frame Vernacular
- NO STYLE/Masonry Vernacular
- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Mediterranean Revival
- Modern Movement/Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Brick
- walls Stucco
- Wood
- roof Tar and Gravel
- 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.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
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)

- COMMERCE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1900-1953

Significant Dates

c. 1900

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown

Blder: Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

#

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 23 apprx

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	7	4	3	6	0	2	9	5	9	4	8	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2	1	7	3	7	4	7	8	0	2	9	5	9	4	8	0

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

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 Mikki Hartig, Consultant/Carl Shiver, Historic Preservationist

organization Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation date May 2011

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
DESCRIPTION

**SUMMARY**

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District represents the historic commercial core of the town of Boca Grande. The district contains a collection of commercial and residential buildings built between c. 1900 and 1953. The district is generally centered in the vicinity of Park Avenue and Palm Avenue, the main business thoroughfares in the town. The historic district contains 54 resources, 36 of which are contributing buildings (67 percent), and 18 resources that are noncontributing (33 percent). The noncontributing resources include 15 buildings, 2 sites, and 1 structure. Two buildings, the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway Depot (NR 12/13/79) and the First Baptist Church of Boca Grande (NR 12/2/09) are already individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The contributing building resources are confined to four architectural styles: Frame Vernacular, Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, and Art Moderne. Most of the buildings are Frame Vernacular and are all either one or two stories in height. The most prevalent building material is wood and most of the commercial buildings feature traditional storefront windows and entrances. In addition to the commercial buildings, the district contains nine contributing single family dwellings, and two historic church parsonages. The noncontributing buildings are either new construction (post-1953) or historic buildings that have undergone extensive inappropriate alterations. The district also features two noncontributing public parks. Sam Murphy Park is a small green space in the center of town that contains benches and a fountain. The Railroad Bike Trail Park borders the historic railroad right-of-way that is now used as a public bicycle and pedestrian path that extends almost the entire length of the island. The district also contains one non-historic structure, a cellular telephone signal tower.

**SETTING**

The unincorporated Town of Boca Grande is a small community located in Lee County on Gasparilla Island, a seven mile long barrier island bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the west and Charlotte Harbor on the east. Its name—Spanish for “Big Mouth”—comes from the mouth of the waterway, called Boca Grande Pass, at the southern tip of the island. The island is one of a chain of islands that separate the Gulf from the mainland. Two thirds of the island is located in Lee County and one-third is located in Charlotte County. Boca Grande is found entirely in the Lee County portion of the island. The closest major cities are Ft. Myers to the south and Sarasota to the north. It is part of the Cape Coral–Fort Myers Metropolitan Statistical Area. Boca Grande is home to both seasonal and year-round residents. The population of the island varies from about 600 to over 3,000, depending upon the season.

One of the major attractions of Boca Grande is the Gasparilla Inn (Photo 1), located about a city block north of the historic district. The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is surrounded by noncontributing commercial buildings, outside its boundaries because they were constructed post-1953. Some historic buildings are found near the boundaries but could not be included within the district because of their isolation. The

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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
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terrain throughout the district is flat, and the city streets are all two lanes (Photos 2-3). Both diagonal and parallel parking is available in the business core (Photo 4), and most of the residential buildings have driveways at one side of the residence (Photo 5), although only a few of the houses have associated garages. Building lots are generally narrow, and commercial buildings are built out to the sidewalk with virtually no setback. The residential buildings have slightly deeper setbacks from the street. The two churches within the boundaries of the district occupy corner sites and have minimal front and side yard setbacks.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

All of the contributing buildings within the district boundaries are in good to excellent condition and limited to one and two stories in height. They have a variety of uses, including retail, office, residential and religious. Construction materials and scale vary. Some of those along Park Avenue have a somewhat unified appearance because they are joined with party walls (Photo 6). Commercial buildings in the district tend to fill the entire lot on which they are sited and most of them have service alleys at the rear or separating them from other buildings on the city block. A number of storefront entrances are recessed (Photo 7) and many structures have awnings or street canopies extending over the sidewalk (Photo 8). The most common roof plan is flat with a raised parapet. Common elements in building height, display windows, knee walls, door openings, and general storefront design can sometimes be seen. A few of the commercial buildings have second-floor residential space and occupants. In general, the buildings have a regular form and plan, are front-facing, and are one to two stories in height. Entrances vary, including multiple storefronts, those that are centrally placed, or those placed at the corner.

**Commercial Architectural Styles in the District**

The various distinct styles of historic and non-historic commercial architecture that can be seen in the historic district include: Frame Vernacular, Masonry Vernacular, Art Moderne and Mediterranean Revival. The construction of commercial buildings in Florida during the late 19th and early 20th centuries generally mirrored national trends. Most commercial buildings were concentrated in areas where land value was high, and this influenced lot size and the form and plan of buildings.

Most commercial buildings were rectangular in plan and had a narrow street facade which was the visual focus of the building, providing its identifying features. Facades were organized into distinct zones and sections commonly referred to as one- or two-part blocks. One-part blocks were one story in height and formed by structural framework, such as columns or pilasters, kick plates, and a cornice topped by a parapet. Large display windows, with transom windows above, were incorporated to display merchandise and to provide natural light to the interior. The front wall space above the transoms and street canopy provided a place for signage. Other materials such as doors and decorative stylistic elements were often limited to the street level or the roof

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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
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cornice. From about 1900 to 1940, the form of commercial buildings in Florida and the historic district changed little although new materials and stylistic influences began to appear.

### Frame Vernacular Commercial Buildings

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District contains a surprising number of historic Frame Vernacular commercial buildings. Generally, by the end of the 19th century even small towns across America had begun to replace wood frame with masonry as the form of construction for commercial buildings. This change was often prompted by disastrous fires that destroyed the commercial centers of communities congested with flammable wooden buildings. The downtown section of Sanford, Florida, was swept by fire in September 1887,<sup>1</sup> but the scale of this fire was dwarfed by the great Jacksonville fire that devastated the commercial center of the city in 1901, resulting in the destruction of over 2,000 buildings.<sup>2</sup> Boca Grande did not begin to have definable commercial core until the 1920s and never suffered a major widespread fire in the area, allowing its wood frame buildings to survive.

The former **San Marco Theatre**, (Photo 9) at 321 Park Avenue, built in 1928, is a significant local downtown landmark and a good example of commercial Frame Vernacular architecture. The building has a rectangular plan, and the exterior fabric is weatherboard. A shallow shed roof portico dominates the primary facade. A 5V crimp metal gable roof covers the structure. The original fenestration has been replaced with 8/8-light double-hung vinyl sash windows, but the building continues to relay its historic public use, presence, and character. In 1951, the theater began to show movies again. It closed in 1973, and presently houses shops and a restaurant on the first floor and offices upstairs.<sup>3</sup>

**The Boca Grande Outfitters Building**, (Photo 10) at 375 Park Avenue, built in 1915, is a type of Frame Vernacular building of which there are several examples in the historic district. The first floor shop sells fishing tackle and sports clothes, and there are living quarters on the second floor. There is also a one-story wood frame garage and storage room (Photo 11) at the rear of the property that dates from probably 1925. The main building has a rectangular ground plan, is two stories in height, and has a front gable roof surfaced with V-crimp metal roofing. The first story is set back beneath the second floor veranda that is supported by square posts and has a shed roof covered with V-crimp metal sheeting. The veranda has a knee wall balustrade composed of vertical boarding. The main fenestration consists of 6/6-light wood sash windows with functional louvered blinds. There are also single plate glass display windows on the main facade and a lunette window in the roof gable. The exterior wall material is wood drop siding.

<sup>1</sup> Sanford Historic Downtown Walking Tour, <http://sanfordfl.gov/tour/wtour.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Great Jacksonville Fire of 1901, [http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo\\_exhibits/jacksonvillefire\\_intro.cfm](http://www.floridamemory.com/photographiccollection/photo_exhibits/jacksonvillefire_intro.cfm).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Blanchard, ed., Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, (Boca Grande: The Boca Grande Historical Society and Museum, 2006), 123.

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The small wood frame garage at the rear of the main building at 375 Park Avenue has a rectangular ground plan, is one story in height, and has a front gable roof surfaced in V-crimp sheet metal. The exterior wall material is drop siding, and there is a round louvered wooden vent in the gable end. There is a one vehicle bay with a modern garage door at the north side of the west elevation, next to which is a non-historic 1/1-light double-hung sash window. To the south side of the facade is a non-historic wood and glass entrance door that has been fitted with a screened door.

What appears to be one building at 471 Park Avenue (Photos 12-13) is actually two separate buildings with identical facades, the **Tarpon Coast Realty** at 471 A and, the **Dolphin Cove Restaurant** at 471 B. The south building dating from c. 1915 and the north one designed and constructed c. 1975 to match the earlier one. The building at 471 B also houses a golf cart rental outlet. The twin buildings are two stories in height and have front gable roofs surfaced with V-crimp metal sheeting. The major fenestration on the second story is 1/1-light double-hung wood frame sash windows. The ground stories have plate glass display windows and doors that provide entrance to the business units. The wooden stairs leading to the second floor of the south building are original. Access to the second floor of the north building is gained through the wood and glass paneled door on the street level. The buildings have a unified suspended canopy with a latticework balustrade.

**The Seale Family Inc. Building** at 430 East Railroad Avenue (Photo 14), constructed c. 1928, originally served as the offices of Henry Griffin, the building contractor who constructed many buildings on Gasparilla Island between 1928 and 1956. This distinctive wood frame building consists of two "false front" facades joined by a recessed "hyphen." The building has weatherboard siding, plate glass windows framing central doorways, high wooden parapets fronting pitched roof surfaced with V-Crimp metal roofing. The noncontributing Masonry Vernacular building at the rear of the lot houses the Boca Grande Golf Cart Rental and Sales Company.

The two-story Frame Vernacular building at **444 4th Street East** (Photo 15) was constructed in 1926 and is now used as a health food store on the ground floor and building contractor offices on the second floor. The two buildings next door at **446 4th Street East** (Photo 16) now comprise a single parcel that combines a one-story Wood Frame Vernacular building and a two-story Masonry Vernacular, both of which were also constructed c. 1926. The exterior of the wood frame building has been covered with stucco to match its masonry partner, but it retains most of its original exterior appearance. The buildings presently house a dry cleaning business, a limousine service office, and a manicure salon.

### Masonry Vernacular

In Florida before the Civil War, masonry construction was significantly less common than wood framing. Brick, the most common masonry material in the country, was not readily available because of a scarcity of clay in much of the state. Florida also lacked railroads for transportation of the material. After the Civil War, brick became more readily available, particularly in the 1880s, when railroads began to open the Florida peninsula. It

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was several years, however, before the rails expanded into the more southern parts of the state and the use of brick became the chosen material for the construction of commercial buildings in south Florida. Beginning in the 1920s, hollow clay tile and concrete block also became widely used in commercial construction. These new materials were as strong as fired brick, but were lighter and cheaper. In later years, concrete block rivaled as a structural material in Florida.

Masonry Vernacular buildings usually had regular or rectangular plans with continuous or slab concrete or hollow clay tile foundations. Commercial examples were most often one or two-stories in height. Roofs were usually flat with a parapet front wall. Ornamentation was usually simple, perhaps with some corbelling or cast concrete detailing.

Originally occupied by **Kuhl's Store**, the commercial building at 370 Park Avenue (Photo 17) was constructed c. 1926 and is adjacent to a similar two-story building at 360 Park Avenue (Photo 18), which was completed in 1941, just before the before the United States entered World War II.

**The Temptation Restaurant** (Photo 19), at 350 Park Avenue, is a World War II era Masonry Vernacular building. Construction began in 1939 but was interrupted by war shortages before it was completed c.1946. It is two stories in height and has a simple rectangular plan. Construction is stucco over concrete block resting on a poured concrete slab. Wood entrance doors, wood framed display windows and transom windows appear on the primary facade at street level. The first floor storefronts have accommodated the Temptation Restaurant and Package Store since the building was completed. The interior of the restaurant displays original Art Deco period decorative elements such as floor and wall tile and light fixtures. The second floor has historically been in use as residential space and presently remains in such use.

The post-World War II era saw little growth in the commercial area. **The Van Fleet Building**, located at 340 Park Avenue (Photo 20) abuts The Temptation Restaurant on the south. It was completed c.1945 by the same builder as the Temptation Restaurant and is very similar in design and materials. The first floor is occupied by offices, with residential space in on the second floor. **Hudson's Grocery**, originally Whidden's Grocery & Gulf Gas Station, at 441 Park Avenue (Photo 21) was completed in 1948 and heralds the type of small concrete block convenience store that is now familiar today. The facade was covered with vinyl siding around 1983. The gas pump on the front of the building is only a historical ornament, since there are no gas stations on the island today.

### Mediterranean Revival Style

Spanish and other Mediterranean-influenced styles of architecture reflecting a tradition of Spanish colonial architecture were most commonly constructed in California, Arizona, Texas and Florida. Principally, Mediterranean derived styles were Italian Renaissance, Mission, and Spanish Colonial Revival which were

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popularized at the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition at San Diego. Identifying features of Mediterranean-influenced architecture include clay tile roofs, stucco exterior walls, straight or arched windows, arcades, ceramic tile decoration and ornate low-relief carvings highlighting arches, columns window surrounds, cornices and often parapets. Plans were usually irregular. Foundations were most often continuous. Primary exterior wall finishes were stucco.

The only notable example of the Mediterranean Revival Style in the historic district is the former **Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad Depot** (Photo 22) at 433 4th Street West, which was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. The Boca Grande Railroad Depot, built between 1905-1907 by the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad, was acquired by Seaboard Coast Line Railroad in 1926. The railroad continued to bring visitors to Boca Grande until the Boca Grande Causeway opened to automobile traffic in 1958. The depot was restored in the 1970s and a number of shops, offices and a restaurant now occupy the old building.

#### Art Moderne

The Art Moderne style broke from the more flamboyant and decorative styles of earlier years. The style began to become popular after 1930, when industrial designs began to exhibit streamlined shapes. The concept of rounded corners to make automobiles and airplanes more aerodynamic was applied to many things such as kitchen appliances, jewelry, and many other products in addition to architecture.

Art Moderne buildings in Florida were generally located in coastal communities where tourism remained popular during the Depression. The style was usually applied to commercial and apartment buildings. They had flat roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, glass blocks, horizontal grooves, cantilevered overhangs, and rounded corners to emphasize a streamline effect. Plans were irregular, foundations were continuous concrete, and primary exteriors were stucco. Ornamentation included asymmetrical facades, rounded corners, lines in walls. There are two Art Moderne Style buildings within the proposed district, both being modest examples of the style.

**Fugate's**, (Photo 23) located at 428 4th Street West, is a simple 1936 Depression era Art Moderne masonry building that is minimally altered on the exterior, although a one-story addition with several storefronts was constructed on the west in c.1947.<sup>4</sup> The structure is constructed of stucco over concrete block on a continuous concrete foundation. Curvilinear stucco banding adds a stylistic detail to the exterior walls. The building has a flat roof with a plain parapet beneath which is a wide frieze that curves just above the main entrance to the building.

<sup>4</sup> Suzanne Fugate, granddaughter Jerome Fugate, Sr., telephone interview with Mikki Hartig on October 18, 2007.

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Fugate's has been a commercial fixture for many years on the island. The store was built for Jerome Fugate, Sr. in 1936. The building originally contained a general store and a pharmacy. On the south, there was an open roofed cocktail lounge until after World War II, when a roof was constructed over the open patio to accommodate a dress shop. Additions on the west made c.1947 provided space for a beauty and barber shop, the Boca Grande Clinic, and a physician's office. The Fugate family continued to own the building and operate Fugate's until 1982, when it was sold outside of the family.<sup>5</sup> The store continues in operation today and still bears the Fugate name on the exterior.

**Cabbage Court**, now the Boca Grande Village Inn (Photo 24), located at 333A Park Avenue, is two-story stucco over concrete block building with minimal stylistic details including stepped masonry exterior stair walls. Cabbage Court is a plain example of the style. Its Art Moderne details being limited to the continuous cornice on the parapet and the stringcourse on the frieze. The doorways also feature cantilevered eyebrows.

#### Frame Vernacular Houses

All of the contributing single family dwellings are classified as Frame Vernacular. They are small in size, from one to two stories in height with simple ground plans, gable or hip roofs, front porches, and wood sash windows. Most of the residences are found on Palm Avenue and date from 1909 to 1946. These were originally winter homes, and all of them were constructed within or immediately adjacent to the downtown business district.

The house at **342 Palm Avenue** (Photo 25) retains most of its original features. It was constructed in 1910 for Mary Frances Whidden of the Boca Grande pioneering Whidden family. It is 1½ stories in height, and has a side gable main roof sheathed in V-crimp metal. A long shed dormer occupies the front slope of the main roof. The house has a rectangular ground plan, wood drop siding exterior fabric, 6/6-light and 1/1-light double-hung wood sash windows, and metal awning windows. The house rests on a brick pier foundation that is masked by wood lattice. A screened porch occupies a portion of the main facade. The porch is accessed by a set of wooden steps with a wooden hand rail. A wood and wire screen door opens onto the porch. A non-historic metal fire escape stairway is found on the south elevation of the building.

The Frame Vernacular house at **341 Palm Avenue** (Photo 26), constructed in 1935, is a one-story residence with a cross-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The building has weatherboard exterior fabric and rests on brick piers masked by weatherboard skirting. The original screened porch has been enclosed with metal awning windows, and the main fenestration for the building is 1/1-light double-hung sash windows. A one-bay portico occupies the center of the main facade. The small structure has a gable roof that is supported by square wooden posts. A short flight of concrete steps provides access to the porch. At the rear of the property is a

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
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small one-story Frame Vernacular garage. Although originally a residence, the property has been rezoned for commercial use and is now occupied by a tree trimming and maintenance service.

### Frame Vernacular Hotels

The **Palmetto Inn** at 381 Palm Avenue was originally built in 1900 as a private residence (Photo 27). In 1913, the two-story building was transformed into an inn. In 1985, the inn was converted into five one bedroom rental suites with fully equipped kitchens, sitting rooms and separate bedrooms for hire for a night, a week a month or longer.<sup>6</sup> Despite alterations to the exterior, which included sheathing the building with vinyl siding, the old inn remains an important historical and visual landmark.

Although the **Anchor Inn** (Photo 28) at 450 4th Street East, constructed in 1925, was built as a boarding house, it exhibits the characteristics of Frame Vernacular single family dwelling. This simple two-story building has an L-shaped ground plan and rests on a concrete wall foundation. The original wood exterior siding has been covered with vinyl siding. The main fenestration consists of 1/1-light double hung sash windows that have been fitted with decorative wooden blinds. The one-story veranda extends along the two street facades of the hotel and has a shed roof supported by square wood posts. The decorative brackets on the posts are not original. Both the main roof and veranda roof are surfaced with V-Crimp metal sheeting. The veranda features a balustrade having a plain handrail and stick balusters. The building underwent a complete renovation in 2005. The Anchor Inn now consists of four suites with entrances from the courtyard and pool area (Photo 29). These entrances are out of view from the street, preserving the historic views from 4th Street and Palm Avenue.

### Historic Wood Frame Churches

There are three churches in the Downtown Boca Grande Historic District, two of which contribute to the historic character of the District. The **First Baptist Church of Boca Grande** (Photo 30) at 421 4th Street (NR 2010) is an excellent example of an early 20th Century Carpenter Gothic Revival church with a Combination Plan interior. Completed in 1915, the church is well preserved and minimally altered. The church is of balloon frame construction with original beveled wood siding on the exterior and is covered by an intersecting gable roof dominated by a wood frame bell tower containing the original church bell. Original lancet windows pierce each elevation.

**Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church** (Photo 31) at 390 Gilchrist Avenue was constructed c. 1916, the year that the congregation purchased Lot 1, Block 16, on the corner of Gilchrist and Fourth Street for \$1. The building

<sup>6</sup> A pillar of Boca Grande rebuilt The Palmetto Inn, <http://beta.bocagrandetalk.com/page/content.detail/id/505812/A-pillar-of-Boca-Grande-rebuilt-The-Palmetto-Inn.html?nav=5046>.

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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
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has a rectangular ground plan, a front gable roof surfaced with metal sheeting. The exterior fabric is wood drop siding, and the fenestration is 3/1-light double-hung wood sash windows. The small wooden bell tower has a pyramidal roof topped with a small cross. The church has an integrated front porch featuring short square columns atop a balustrade wall. The church exhibits no direct historical style references.

**Noncontributing Historic Buildings**

The Gothic Revival style **Boca Grande United Methodist Church** (Photo 32) at 300 Gilchrist Avenue was completed in 2009. The church is a larger and more elaborate version of the 1925 church that was demolished in 2006. The original Frame Vernacular church parsonage at 325 3rd Street West (Photo 33) is still found on the property and is a building that contributes to the historic character of the district.

There are no municipal, county, state, or U.S. government buildings in Downtown Boca Grande Historic District. The former Boca Grande Mercantile Building at 390 Park Avenue was constructed in the first decade of the 20th century. The second story of the brick building was badly damaged by fire around 1980 and was removed in the reconstruction of the building. The street level of the building was also substantially compromised by changes to the storefronts and the application of stucco over the original red brick. The U.S. Postal Service leases an office in the building at 390 Park Avenue (Photo 34).

The building at **370 East Railroad Avenue** (Photo 35) was constructed in 1930. It is now a commercial condominium with six property owners, and its present fanciful "historic" appearance dates from 2006. The style of the building is difficult to classify. The most distinctive features are the latticed screen in the gable end and the arched display windows at the street level of the main facade. The exterior siding is vinyl imitating wood drop siding, and the windows have been fitted with top-hinged louvered blinds, often called Bahama shutters. The two-story porch on the facade has been enclosed. Although attempting to exhibit a "historic" appearance, there is nothing about the present appearance of the building that reflects commercial wood frame architecture of the early 20th century.

**Non-Historic Buildings**

There are non-historic commercial buildings in the Downtown Boca Grande Historic District that exhibit a variety of neo-historic revival styles and construction types. The wood frame building at **333 Park Avenue** (Photo 36) that stands in front of the Cabbage Court Hotel attempts to mimic a historic Frame Vernacular building. Constructed in 2000, the building has a rectangular ground plan, sits on high concrete piers and is covered by a gable-on-hip main roof that has been surfaced with V-Crimp metal roofing. The exterior walls are sheathed in board-and-batten siding, and the main fenestration is 9/9-light windows with vinyl sashes. The north elevation has a two-story veranda that runs the length of the building. The veranda is sheltered by an

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extension of the main roof and is supported by plain wooden posts. The veranda is bounded by a balustrade with simple handrails and stick balusters. The exterior of the building is unpainted.

The **Boca Grande Fire Department Building** (Photo 37) at East 360 Railroad Avenue appears to be constructed of wood, but the basic construction material of the c. 2004 facility is concrete block with a covering of vinyl imitation weatherboard and stucco. There is a one-story porch with a shed roof supported by square wooden columns. The two-story office section of the building features a three-story hose tower and 2/2-light sash windows with decorative louvered blinds.

The three-story building at **421 Park Avenue** (Photo 38) attempts to look like a Frame Vernacular commercial building dating from the first decade of the 20th century, but it is actually a concrete block building constructed in 1976. The present street facade and south elevation of vinyl siding dates from only about 2006. Previously, the exterior was sheathed in what appeared to be rough, unpainted wood shingles. The ground floor is occupied by a retail shop and restaurant. The upper floors contain residential apartments.

At the rear of **477 Park Avenue** (Photo 39) is two-story wood frame residential building constructed in 1991. It features a recessed first story with a full-width veranda on the second story. The building has a side-gable roof surfaced with asphalt shingles. The veranda is supported by square wooden posts, and an exterior wooden stairway with a stick balustrade leads to the veranda which continues the stick balustrade for the width of the facade. Three sets of French doors provide access to the second floor from the veranda. The ground story has a wood and glass panel main entrance, and large double wood panel doors open onto a storage room. The fenestration consists of 8/8-light metal frame sash windows.

Neo-Mediterranean Revival

There are two Neo-Mediterranean Revival style buildings in the historic district. The most elaborate of these is the **Galleria of Boca Grande** (Photo 40) at 420 Railroad Avenue East, which was constructed in 1991. The two-story building has an irregular ground plan and is constructed of concrete block surfaced with smooth stucco. The first story facade exhibits a main entrance located at the top of a stoop with concrete steps flanked by curved balustrade walls. To the left of the entranceway is a plate glass display window and other fenestration on the street level includes what appears to be paired 4/4-light wood casement windows. The two-story main body of the building has a pyramidal roof surfaced with clay tile. The one-story wings have a complex hip roof also surfaced with clay tile. The second story of the main facade has a recessed balcony with three arches supported by thick columns. The balcony has a metal railing and is accessed by French doors. The north elevation of the building features a walled patio sheltered by a large cloth canopy.

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Non-Historic Structure.

The **Sprint Building and Service Tower** (Photo 41) at 390 E. Railroad Avenue, constructed in 1983, dominates the skyline. The building is red brick at the base of the tall metal cellular telephone broadcast tower has been provided with a Romanesque Revival appearance to give it a more "historic" appearance.

Non-Historic Parks and Green Spaces

**Sam Murphy Park** (Photo 42) at 355 Park Avenue was established in the 1980s by the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association. It is surrounded by a thick hedge and features ornamental plants suitable for the semitropical climate of Central Florida and a re-circulating shallow reflecting pool. It is open to the public without charge. The park, located at 350 Park Avenue in the heart of Boca Grande Village, is a tribute to the late local environmentalist Samuel W. Murphy Jr., a graduate of Harvard Law School who had a distinguished law career and was a past president of the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association.

The **Railroad Bike Trail Park** (Photo 43), which runs through the center of Boca Grande along the old railroad right-of-way, is paved and landscaped on both sides with palmettos and other plantings. The 6.5 mile trail runs the length of the island.

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BUILDING LIST

**CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS** \*Listed in the National Register

<u>Address</u>	<u>Present Use</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>FMSF #</u>
<u>Third Street West</u>				
325	Parsonage	Frame Vernacular	c. 1925	LL00938
<u>Fourth Street East</u>				
444	Retail/Offices	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1926	LL02475
446	Retail/Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 1926	LL02475
450	Hotel	Frame Vernacular	c. 1925	LL00873
<u>Fourth Street West</u>				
421*	Church	Gothic Revival	c. 1915	LL00947
421A	Parsonage	Frame Vernacular	c. 1933	LL00947
428	Retail	Moderne	c. 1936	LL01816
433*	Retail/Offices	Mediterranean Revival	c. 1909	LL00104
<u>Gilchrist Avenue</u>				
390	Church	Frame Vernacular	c. 1915	LL00851
<u>Palm Avenue</u>				
310	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1925	LL00880
311	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1940	LL00879
311A	Storage	Frame Vernacular	c. 1940	LL00879
330	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1946	LL00878
340	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1946	LL00877
341	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1935	LL01712
341A	Garage	Frame Vernacular	c. 1935	LL01712
342	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1910	LL00952
370	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1915	LL00876
380	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1930	LL00874

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BUILDING LIST

Palm Avenue (cont.)

381	Hotel	Frame Vernacular	c. 1900	LL00875
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Park Avenue

321	Restaurant	Frame Vernacular	c. 1928	LL00903
333A	Hotel	Moderne	c. 1953	LL01815
340	Retail/Offices	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1945	LL00904
350	Retail/Offices	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1939	LL02476
360	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1941	LL00905
370	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1928	LL01704
375	Retail	Frame Vernacular	c. 1915	LL00907
375A	Residential	Frame Vernacular	c. 1925	LL00907
431	Retail	Frame Vernacular	c. 1917	LL00911
441	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1948	LL00912
441A	Residential	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1948	LL00912
471A	Restaurant/Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 1915	LL00913

East Railroad Avenue

330	Contractor	Metal Frame	c. 1926	LL00845
384	Retail	Frame Vernacular	c. 1925	LL02418
380	Retail	Commercial Style	c. 1926	LL00843
430	Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 1926	LL00840

**NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS**

<u>Address</u>	<u>Present Use</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>FMSF #</u>
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Fourth Street West

421B	Fellowship Hall	Frame Vernacular	c. 1962	LL00947
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Gilchrist Avenue

300	Methodist Church	Neo-Gothic Revival	c. 2009	N/A
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BUILDING LIST

Palm Avenue

351	Apartments	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1978	N/A
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Park Avenue

333	Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 2000	N/A
371	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1979	N/A
390	Retail	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1910	LL00908
411	Retail	Mediterranean Revival	c. 2003	N/A
421	Retail	Mixed Vernacular	c. 1976	N/A
471B	Restaurant/Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 1975	N/A
477	Apartments	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1991	N/A

East Railroad Avenue

360	Fire Station	Faux Victorian	c. 2004	N/A
370	Offices	Frame Vernacular	c. 1917	LL02477
390	Utility Building	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1983	N/A
420	Retail	Neo-Mediterranean Revival	c. 1992	N/A
430A	Golf Cart Rental	Masonry Vernacular	c. 1980	

Noncontributing Sites

Sam Murphy Park	355 Park Avenue	N/A	1980	N/A
Railroad Bike Trail	Length of Island	N/A	1985	N/A

Noncontributing Structure

390A	Signal Tower	Metal Frame	c. 1983	N/A
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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
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SIGNIFICANCE

**SUMMARY**

The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C, in the areas of Commerce, Recreation/Entertainment, and Architecture. The historic district has historically served as the commercial core of downtown Boca Grande which mainly served the needs of tourists and sportsmen. The district contains distinctive examples of a variety architectural styles, including Wood Frame and Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, Moderne, and Gothic Revival. Although some of the original commercial structures have been replaced with recent construction and some of the historic buildings have suffered insensitive alterations, the Downtown Boca Grande Historic District retains its sense as the original commercial center of the community that developed from the period c. 1900-1953. The preservation of the historic character of the district has been maintained in part by the restrictions placed on automobile traffic on the island. No bridge linked Gasparilla Island to the mainland until 1958, and there are no gas stations on the island. Residents and visitors are encouraged to walk or use electric golf carts for local travel and shopping errands.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The earliest settlers of European descent came to Gasparilla Island to fish. By the late 1870s, several fish ranches were operating in the Charlotte Harbor area. One of them would later be at the north end of Gasparilla Island in the small village called Gasparilla. By 1879, a successful fish ranch on the north end of the island with permanent structures and 30 employees was operating in the village of Gasparilla. With no means of refrigeration for preserving their catch for shipping, the fish were salted. In the later part of the century, an ice factory in Punta Gorda and ice houses built along Charlotte Harbor greatly improved the ability to send fish to northeastern markets.<sup>7</sup>

In 1881, phosphate, used in the production of commercial fertilizer, was discovered in the Peace River Valley northeast of Boca Grande. This discovery would bring the railroad to Gasparilla Island and would result in the construction of both the port and the town of Boca Grande. "River pebble" phosphate was first mined in the Peace River near Arcadia and Zolfo Springs in 1888. "Land pebble" mining began in 1890, and by 1900, land mining had replaced river mining. The river valley itself became known as "Bone Valley" because of the thousands of bones and fossilized remains of mastodons and other prehistoric animals found in association with the phosphate deposits. The industry soon spread the length of the Peace River Valley, centering around Mulberry and Bartow.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Marilyn Hoeckel and Theodore B. VanItallie, *Images of America, Boca Grande* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 1950); p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Gene M. Burnett, *Florida's Past: People and Events that Shaped the State*, Vol. 3 (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 1996), p. 34.

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In the early years of the industry, the phosphate was brought to the Gulf of Mexico for shipment by two methods—rail and barge. At first it was transported by rail to Punta Gorda on the east side of Charlotte Harbor. In 1885, phosphate rock was discovered on the banks of the Peace River just above Punta Gorda, east of Gasparilla Island across Charlotte Harbor. It was this discovery that would turn the south end of Gasparilla Island into a major deep water port (Boca Grande Pass is one of the deepest natural inlets in Florida) and was responsible for the development of the town of Boca Grande. In 1897, the rails to the “Long Dock” in Punta Gorda were removed, and rail shipment of phosphate to Punta Gorda ceased. Far more commonly, phosphate was transported down the Peace River to Charlotte Harbor in barges, where it was transferred onto ocean-going ships near the deep water of Boca Grande Pass at the southern tip of Gasparilla Island.

The American Agricultural Chemical Company (AACC) was owned by Peter Bradley (1850-1933),<sup>9</sup> the son of William L. Bradley, the founder of the Bradley Fertilizer Company in Boston, Massachusetts. Peter Bradley dominated the phosphate industry of Central Florida and at first barged phosphate down the Peace River to Port Boca Grande, where it was loaded onto schooners for worldwide shipment. By 1905, however, the company determined that a railroad would be more efficient in transporting phosphate to the port. Rail transportation would also provide a means to transport fish from the Gasparilla Island and other nearby ports. Bradley and his senior associates decided to form a railroad company, the Alafia, Manatee and Gulf Coast Railway, and extend the six-mile Hull-Liverpool railroad 40 miles south to Boca Grande Pass and to continue on to Arcadia, Florida.

The AACC determined that the proposed terminus of the railroad should be located about a quarter mile north of the lighthouse on the harbor side of Gasparilla Island. In 1905 officials of the Agrico subsidiary Peace River Mining Company, along with engineers from the United States Army Corps of Engineers and 60 laborers, landed on Gasparilla Island, and surveying and construction of the railroad began. The only buildings on the island at this time were the lighthouse and the assistant keeper's house located at the extreme southern tip of the island. The railroad terminus with its 1,000-foot long pier would be built nearby. To accomplish this they needed a charter, and they purchased the old charter of the Alafia, Manatee & Gulf Railway in 1905. The AM&G had been formed on June 5, 1897, to run from Plant City in Hillsborough County to Charlotte Harbor in Lee County via Arcadia but could never raise the money to build the line. This name of the railway company was not acceptable to Bradley and he changed its name to the Charlotte Harbor & Northern Railway on July 5, 1905.<sup>10</sup> In 1906, construction began on the railroad and the two-mile long bridge connecting the island with the mainland. The rail line was completed in 1907.<sup>11</sup> Boca Grande soon acquired a growing market for goods transported by train.

<sup>9</sup> “Peter Bradley,” *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (James T. White & Co., 1936), vol. 25, pg. 282.

<sup>10</sup> Donald R. Hensley, Jr., “Charlotte Harbor & Northern Railway, ‘The Boca Grande Route,’” *Tap Lines, Shortline and Industrial Railroading in Florida and Georgia*, <http://www.taplines.net/0307/chn02.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore VanTallie, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 7; Arnold, Anthony unpublished history of American Agricultural Company history, undated, p. 121, copy on file at Gasparilla Inn.

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To increase the value of his investment, Peter Bradley decided to develop a town on the island. The town of Boca Grande had already existed on paper long before it became an actual town. In January 1897, Albert W. Gilchrist (1858-1926), an engineer and surveyor from Punta Gorda, who later became governor of Florida from 1909-1913,<sup>12</sup> filed a plat with Lee County encompassing six blocks along the Gulf of Mexico, just to the north of the 2-mile-long federally owned military reserve at Gasparilla's south end. On this plat, three blocks were on the Gulf of Mexico and three were situated to the west, separated by a street called Gilchrist Avenue. The cross streets were named First, Second, Third, and Fourth streets. This platted area, which Gilchrist named "Town of Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island," was placed at the widest part of the island and was therefore well suited for residential development.<sup>13</sup> However, for more than a decade, the streets were not actually laid out and no lots were sold. The area that Gilchrist platted was adjacent to what would be the site of the Gasparilla Inn Hotel. At the time the plat was filed, Boca Grande consisted of a "cluster of camps and a few rickety dwellings for fisher folk."<sup>14</sup>

After completion of the railroad in 1907, Peter Bradley, the president of AACC, and a senior associate, attorney James M. Gifford, took a careful look at Gilchrist's plan. At first, Peter Bradley had envisioned a quiet residential island community in Boca Grande that would have had houses and facilities largely to serve company employees and stockholders.<sup>15</sup> Bradley, along with Gifford, Gilchrist, and John Wall, became partners with the principals of the AACC and formed the Boca Grande Land Company.<sup>16</sup> Bradley purchased Gilchrist's and John Wall's holdings on the island for \$100,000.

A new town plat was filed on January 9, 1908.<sup>17</sup> On February 21, 1909, the Boca Grande Land Company decided to construct a resort hotel on the island.<sup>18</sup> Plans for the hotel were drawn and presented by Augustus D. Shephard, but construction of the hotel was postponed, because Bradley and other officers of the company decided to focus first on assuring that the Boca Grande development would be upscale and attract wealthy buyers. They did this by restricting the lots of Gulf Boulevard and Gilchrist Avenue to the building of residences with a minimum construction cost of \$4,000 and \$3,500. At first only a few homes were built but by a dozen years later, a few more lots were sold and large homes were built. Eventually, the list of early property owners included J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas Lamont, the du Pont family and other prominent names such as

<sup>12</sup> History of Boca Grande," Breeze Newspapers, 2006, <http://www.flguide.com/boca/history.asp>.

<sup>13</sup> Plat Book 1, Page 7, Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

<sup>14</sup> Hoeckel and VanItallie, *Boca Grande, Images of America*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Arnold, *A Brief History of Boca Grande*, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Lee County Government, Boca Grande Historic District, <http://www.leecounty.com/dcd/HistoricPreservation/HistoricDistricts/BocaGrande.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Plat Book 1, Page 37, Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

<sup>18</sup> *Island Reporter*, February 17, 1978.

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Crowninshield, Saltonstall, Payne, Cabot, Frothingham, Drexel, Biddle, and Eastman. The railroad built a depot in Boca Grande in 1910 which housed their offices on the second floor.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, a decision was made to move forward with the construction of what was first known as the Boca Grande Hotel to be ready for opening for the 1911-1912 season.<sup>20</sup> It soon became clear, however, that the original hotel was too small. Inspired by what railroad magnates Henry B. Plant and Henry Flagler had done in resort development, Bradley decided to develop the Boca Grande as a high class winter resort. Plant and Flagler had built sumptuous hotels next to their rail lines to attract passengers and prospective home builders to the town sites along their routes. Bradley and his partners decided to enlarge and promote the hotel as a world-class resort. To make the building more luxurious, Bradley and his associates hired prominent Tampa architect Francis J. Kennard to draw the plans for the hotel expansion.<sup>21</sup>

The Hotel Boca Grande, renamed the Gasparilla Inn, became a great success with a large group of Boston society people being its first guests.<sup>22</sup> By 1915, accommodation requests had grown so much that the company again called upon Kennard to draw plans to double the size of the hotel.<sup>23</sup> In response to the growing importance of the hotel, some individuals began to construct commercial buildings in what would become the center of town to serve the needs of not only wealthy winter residents but also railroad workers, fishermen, hotel employees, and other ordinary people who began to arrive in the nascent community.<sup>24</sup>

In 1915, the growing increase in winter visitors and residents spurred the further growth of the commercial center of Boca Grande. The Boca Grande Land Company employed A.H. Twombly, a sanitary engineer, to lay out and install sewers in the platted area of the town. In these early years, there were two grocery stores, a general mercantile store, and a drug store. Few extant commercial buildings in the historic district predate the 1920s. **The Boca Grande Outfitters Building**, (Photo 10) at 375 Park Avenue was built in 1915, and the **Palmetto Inn** (Photo 27), built in 1900 as a private residence, was converted into an inn around 1913. The southern half of the twin buildings at 471 Park Avenue (Photos 12-13) was constructed in 1915.

The commercial center of the island finally began to grow with new businesses in the 1920s, as can be seen in an aerial photo taken c.1920 (Photo 44). A pair of railroad tracks can be seen running into the center of town, with the railroad depot surrounded by a scattering of wood frame commercial buildings in the distance. By 1924, the land boom in Florida was at its height and the railroad depot saw increased activity as both wealthy and ordinary citizens flocked to the island for the winter tourist season (Photo 45). The AACC was determined

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 7-8

<sup>20</sup> Theodore VanItallie, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Theodore VanItallie, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Abbott, *Open for The Season*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1950, p. 120.

<sup>23</sup> History of Boca Grande, Breeze Newspapers, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Boca Grande, Lives of an Island*, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 12.

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to capitalize on it and make greater efforts to sell property to the wealthy for winter homes. Despite great and high pressure sales efforts, land sales during this time were unsuccessful.

In 1925, Colonel L.J. Campbell, President of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, saw an opportunity and entered into an agreement to sell property for the AACC on a commission basis. An auction of the company's land holdings and the Gasparilla Inn was scheduled for January 29 and 30, 1925, at the Tampa Bay Hotel in Tampa, Florida. Although no buyer could be found for the Gasparilla Inn, many land sales were made for a total amount of \$270,000 and virtually all of the undeveloped beachfront property and interior lots had been sold.<sup>25</sup> About the same time, S. Davies Warfield, President of the Seaboard Airline Railroad, was undertaking plans to extend his rail line on the west coast of Florida. Peter Bradley began negotiations with Warfield with regard to the CH&N Railroad. Eventually, a lease was negotiated which could later be converted to a sale. The effective date of the lease was December 31, 1925. Thus, the AACC was no longer in the railroad business having profited a little over one million dollars.<sup>26</sup>

The 1920s saw more construction in the downtown area in the wake of the 1920s Florida Land Boom, which also brought more tourists to the island. The **Anchor Inn** (Photo 28) was one of several small hotels and boarding houses erected to house tourists of modest means. The **Gaines Chevrolet Dealership**, 380 E. Railroad Avenue (Photo 46), constructed in 1926, demonstrated that the permanent population of Boca Grande had grown enough to warrant the establishment of such a business. The Griffin Builders offices at 430 East Railroad Avenue (Photo 14), constructed c. 1928, also indicted the growing importance of real estate development on the island during the 1920s. Before the 1920s ended, the town had a telephone office, several dress shops, a flower shop, several rooming houses, and the **San Marco Theatre**, (Photo 9). A variety of new residents came to the island to make it their home, some to start new businesses, and others to work for the railroad.<sup>27</sup>

The AACC sold the Gasparilla Inn to Barron G. Collier of New York City in March of 1930. Collier built a new golf course east of the Gasparilla Inn for its guests and opened a local bank. He purchased the telephone, lighting, and fire protection systems from the Boca Grande Corporation. The ACC had built and owned the powerhouse providing electricity for the island in 1909. The powerhouse remained in use until 1952, when Florida Power and Light took it over and began to provide electric service to the island.<sup>28</sup>

Few land sales took place during the Depression and during World War II, but construction did not cease completely. **Fugate's** (Photo 23), constructed c. 1936, was among the most important of the Depression era buildings erected in Boca Grande. Construction on the **The Temptation Restaurant** (Photo 19), at 350 Park

<sup>25</sup> A.B. Arnold, engineer for AAC Co. for 46 years, taken from a booklet he wrote on the history of the AAC, excerpt taken from a copy in possession of Historical and Architectural Research Services, pg. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Lee County Designation Report, Boca Grande Historic District, 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Boca Grande, Images of America, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

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BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

Avenue Park Avenue and **The Van Fleet Building** (Photo 20) at 340 Park Avenue began in 1939 but was interrupted by building material shortages during World War II and was not completed until c. 1946.<sup>29</sup>

Barron Collier died in 1939, but the Collier Corporation retained ownership of the Gasparilla Inn until 1963, when a group of investors purchased Collier's holdings. One year later, Bayard Sharp, who had lived on the island for many years, took over sole ownership of the hotel. Bayard Sharp, along with property owners in Boca Grande, began a successful campaign to preserve the historic character of the village by fighting to limit the scope of future development.<sup>30</sup>

Passenger rail service to Boca Grande ceased in 1958, but freight trains continued to use the depot until the late 1970s. When the rail line was abandoned by the CSX Railroad in 1982, the rails and ties were removed. Bayard Sharp swapped a valuable piece of property on Gasparilla Island for the old railroad right-of-way. He raised funds to construct a paved bike path, creating the first bike-rail-to-trail in Florida. The trail was dedicated on February 23, 1985, and its ownership transferred to the nonprofit Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association. Sharp mandated that both bicycles and electric golf carts could use the trail.<sup>31</sup> Because of limited development that has taken place and the designation of the village of Boca Grande as a local historic district to protect the historic core of the island, Boca Grande has retained much of its historic character.

The downtown core of Boca Grande and the nearby Gasparilla Inn have historically been the centers of recreational and commercial activity on Gasparilla Island. The Downtown Boca Grande Historic District is a commercial area that has historically served the needs for goods and services for both visitors and permanent residents. The historic district is significant for its architecture, whose buildings are surviving examples of early Florida styles and types that embody the distinctive characteristics of their period of construction.

<sup>29</sup> Lee County Property Appraiser's records.

<sup>30</sup> Island Reporter, February 17, 1978.

<sup>31</sup> Two Florida Trails Worlds Apart, [http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/magazine/p08-13\\_winter08.pdf](http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/magazine/p08-13_winter08.pdf)

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DOWNTOWN BOCA GRANDE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Downtown Boca Grande are those shown on the map of the district that accompanies this National Register Nomination.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the largest concentration of historic resources associated with and contiguous to the historic commercial center of the community of Boca Grande.

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1. Gasparilla Inn, 500 Palm Avenue, Boca Grande (Lee County), Florida
2. Downtown Boca Grande Historic District (Boca Grande, Lee County), Florida
3. Mikki Hartig
4. 2007
5. Boca Grande Historical Society
6. Main (Southwest) Facade, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 1 of 59 (not shown on district map)

1. View of 4th Street West
2. Downtown Boca Grande Historic District (Boca Grande, Lee County), Florida
3. Mikki Hartig
4. 2007
5. Boca Grande Historical Society
6. Streetscape, Looking West from 428 4th Street West
7. Photo 2 of 59

**Items 2 to 5 are the same for the following photographs unless otherwise noted.**

1. View of Park Avenue
6. Streetscape, Looking North from near 321 Park Avenue
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1. View of Park Avenue
6. Streetscape, Looking South from near 428 4th Street West
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1. 330 Palm Avenue
6. View of Driveway, Looking Northeast
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1. 340-350 Park Avenue
6. West Facades, Looking Northeast
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6. Main (East) Facade and South Elevation, Looking Northwest
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1. 371 (383) Park Avenue
6. Main (East) Facade, Looking West
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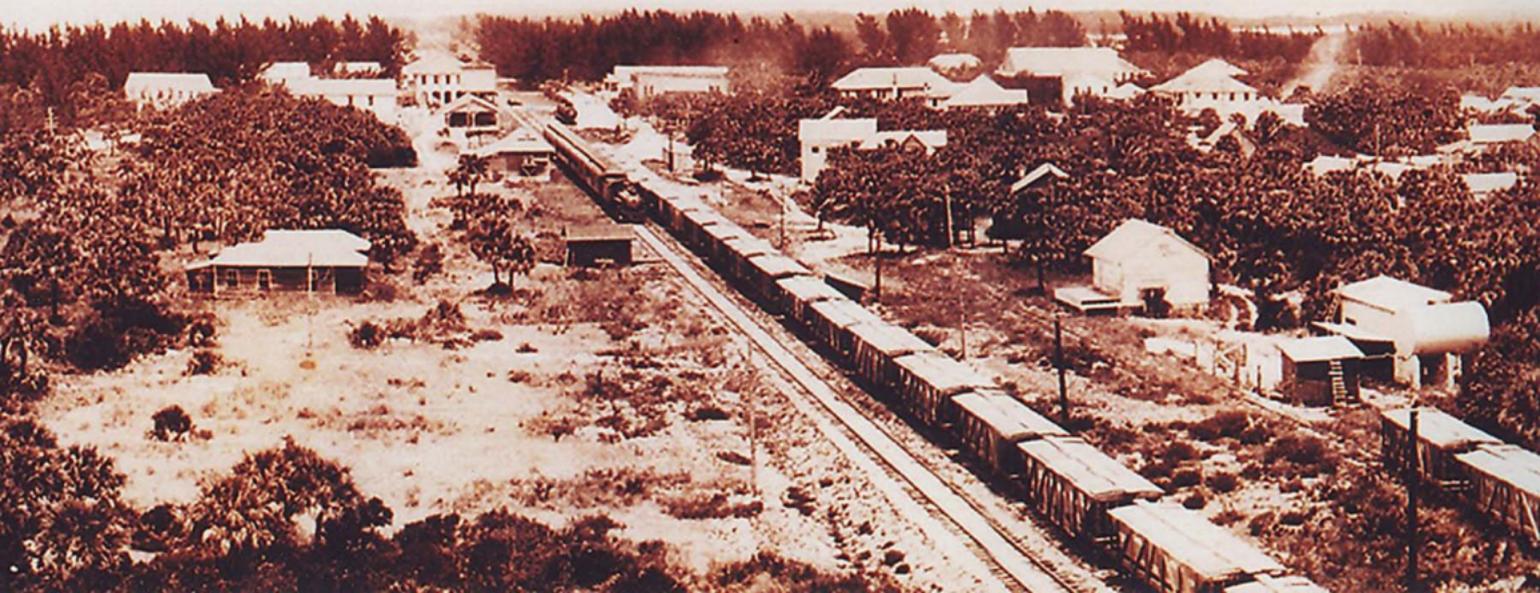


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