

THE HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

**DOWNTOWN
WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA**

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March 20, 1997

Dear Neighborhood Association:

Over the years each of West Palm Beach's historic neighborhoods have had to yell very loudly to be heard by our local government. Fortunately, the neighborhoods have had the foresight to band together and form individual neighborhood associations as well as an umbrella organization, the Neighborhood Coalition, to assist one another. The neighborhoods have successfully led the way for preservation efforts throughout the City. However, as each association is aware, the preservation of our neighborhoods is a continual struggle which demands constant time and effort to achieve individual and collective goals.

Now, the last remaining historic downtown neighborhood, the Hill Historic District, desperately needs the support of West Palm Beach's neighborhoods. Located in the 600 and 700 blocks of Datura, Evernia, and Fern Streets, this neighborhood consists of 48 houses, primarily Frame Vernacular in style. As one of the City's earliest neighborhoods, the Hill Historic District remains an important link to West Palm Beach's architectural and developmental history.

Threatened by the City's plans for downtown redevelopment, the Hill Historic District is slated to become a buffer zone. Instead of demolishing these invaluable structures for parking and courtyard apartments, the 48 Frame Vernacular houses can feasibly be restored for use as single or multi-family residences. Essentially, this area could be the perfect buffer between the new construction of CityPlace and the existing downtown without having to demolish the buildings.

At this time, there is no one to defend the Hill Historic District, so it is left to the citizenry to save this vital part of downtown. Because our downtown is the historic center of the City, this downtown neighborhood is representative of every neighborhood within West Palm Beach.

Within this packet you will find information and pictures on the Hill Historic District. Please look it over and share it with the Board and members of your neighborhood association.

Thank you very much for your support in this effort to save one of West Palm Beach's oldest neighborhoods.

Very Truly Yours,

Lawrence Corning
President, The Downtown Group, Inc.
Property owner within the Hill Historic District

Member of the...

- * Central Palm Beach
County Board of Realtors
- * Historical Society of
Palm Beach County
- * Florida Trust for
Historic Preservation
- * International Downtown
Association
- * Business Development
Board of PBC
- * Historic West Palm Beach, Inc.
- * Preservation Action
- * Chamber of Commerce
of the Palm Beaches
- * National Trust for
Historic Preservation
- * Preservation Foundation
of Palm Beach
- * Florida Redevelopment
Association
- * Florida Multiple
Listing Service
- * Florida Multiple
Listing Service
- * Florida PBC
Preservation Board

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111 ROSEMARY STREET

624 DATURA STREET



The Hill Historic Neighborhood

Location:

600, 700 Blocks of Datura Street, Evernia Street, and Fern Street.

Number of Historic Structures:

Within the neighborhood there are approximately 48 Historic Structures which includes mostly single and multi-family residential structures and outbuildings. Two hotels and two commercial structures are also located within the district.

Dates of Significance:

Early 1900s, from approximately the 1910s to the 1930s.

Architectural Style:

Predominantly Frame Vernacular, many of the houses feature wooden shingles. Several Masonry Vernacular and Mediterranean Revival structures can be found throughout the district as well.

Areas of Significance:

- Architecture,
- Association with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our local history,

The Hill Historic Neighborhood

There are many reasons to rebuild this area as a residential neighborhood, not the least of which are the pioneers who have lived here in virtual abandonment for many years. This area can be highly desirable for investment initiative in Downtown, particularly in the near future while commercial development still languishes. Although it is largely cleared of buildings, there are a number of historic structures here which predispose a neighborhood character and scale for new building. Other advantages include the neighborhood's ideal size and location - roughly seven square blocks within walking distance of Clematis Street, the Waterfront, the train station, and the Cultural Arts District - and its topography, a steep rise to the coastal ridge which provide unusual views (P. 79).

**Taken from the Downtown Master Plan of West Palm Beach-
Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk**

The Hill Historic District

Summary

The Hill Historic District is located in West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida. It is a residential area roughly bounded by South Rosemary (east), South Sapodilla and several properties on the 700 blocks of Evernia and Fern Avenues (west), the north side of Fern Avenue (south), and the south side of the 600 block of Datura Avenue extending up four properties on Florida Avenue (north). The Hill Historic District has a high concentration of outstanding Frame Vernacular homes and rooming houses. The district consists primarily of large two-story single family residences and rooming houses built between 1900 and the 1930s. Although the surrounding area has drastically changed, the remaining properties within the district maintain architectural and historical integrity. Location, building materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and design contribute to the overall integrity of the Hill Historic District.

Setting

The Hill Historic District is a residential neighborhood within downtown West Palm Beach, just slightly southwest of the central business core. This endangered neighborhood sits isolated among mostly vacant land. The property directly to the south of the district now stands empty. Historically known as Palm Beach Heights, all the historic buildings in this area were demolished in the late 1980s and early 1990s to make way for a 70-acre development now called CityPlace. On the southwest edge of the district are five historic school buildings formerly known as Twin Lakes High School. This autumn the school will reopen as the Palm Beach County School of the Arts. Directly to the north is the National Register-eligible Clematis Street Historic Commercial District. These historic commercial structures once served the homes in the Hill neighborhood. Various non-contributing residential, commercial, and governmental structures are sporadically located around the western and northern perimeter of the historic district. East of the district are several parcels of vacant land and also large warehouse businesses.

The majority of the remaining historic buildings are sited on a hill at the highest point of Datura, Evernia and Fern Streets. Several auxiliary structures still exist behind the main houses. The setbacks are fairly uniform throughout the district, the houses are approximately 12 feet from the edge of the sidewalk. Over the years, the streets were significantly widened, so the remaining front yards are rather small. On-street, angled parking spots are present in front of the houses. Within these few blocks of remaining structures the feeling of an intact neighborhood has diminished only slightly. There are few vacant lots between the extant structures, therefore, the historic neighborhood fabric remains contiguous.

Historically, the Hill Historic District is one of the earliest neighborhoods in the City. The neighborhood was home to many of West Palm Beach's prominent residents and business

owners. The proposed district was platted in 1893 by Henry Morrison Flagler and his Model Land Company. Clematis Avenue developed as the town's main street and the center of business activity in West Palm Beach. Houses developed in and around the downtown area to accommodate new residents and visiting tourists. Since the first decade of the 1900s, homes and rooming houses were located in the Hill area. According to early Sanborn maps, most of the houses had one- and two-story garages, garage-apartments, and sheds located in the rear. Alleyways allowed access to the auxiliary buildings behind the houses. The streets had sidewalks and were lined with palm trees. Each yard was well kept and landscaped with tropical foliage. The Frame and Masonry Vernacular buildings that remain today within the Hill Historic District represent a small portion of the structures found in the neighborhood in the past.

Present Appearance

The Hill Historic District is a residential area consisting of five partial or complete blocks. There are forty-eight contributing historic structures within the proposed district. The district is made up of primarily large, two-story single-family residences or rooming houses on single-lot parcels. Several of the single-family residences have been divided into apartments. Two buildings are old commercial garages and one building is a small apartment building now serving as a rooming house. A large hotel, currently an adult living community, appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Two previously endangered buildings were recently moved into the neighborhood; each of the houses are historic and compliment the architectural and historical context of the neighborhood. There are also eight apartments and three garages within the district. Most of the buildings in the district were constructed in the 1910s and 1920s, but several were built in the 1930s. The buildings are generally two-story wood frame construction on concrete pier foundations. Most have exterior wood siding or wood shingles. The majority of the roofs are hipped or steeply gabled and were probably covered with wood or tin shingles originally. Today the roofs are primarily covered with asphalt roll or composite shingle.

The buildings in the Hill Historic District are similar in form and style. Frame Vernacular buildings predominate within the district. Of the 48 contributing buildings in the district, 37 are Frame Vernacular. A related style, Masonry Vernacular, is also represented in the district with four contributing examples. Two of the buildings are simple examples of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture, three are Bungalows, and two are influenced by Prairie architecture. The contributing outbuildings are all Frame or Masonry Vernacular. One lot serves as a yard for a contributing house. Eighty-five percent of the structures in the district are contributing.

The Frame Vernacular buildings within the Hill Historic District possess traditional stylistic features of early twentieth century residential structures such as clapboard or shingle siding, double-hung or casement wood frame windows, front porches with simple slat balusters, exposed rafter tails underneath the roof eaves, and dormers. Many of the houses have brick chimneys. In Florida, the Frame Vernacular style was built primarily during the early 1900s and is associated with the early years of south Florida's

THE HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT



620 EVERNIA STREET

624 EVERNIA STREET



development before the frantic Land Boom years. This style was typically designed and constructed by self-taught builders. Frame Vernacular buildings were the result of the builder's experience, available resources, and the local environment. Because of these influences, the Frame Vernacular designs in the Hill District display a diversity of elements.

The house at 632 Evernia Street, c. 1912, features wood shingle siding and an unusually shaped, slightly cantilevered second floor. It has a hipped roof, six-over-one and eight-over-one double-hung windows, and rafter tails underneath the cantilevered section. The Ferguson House at 636 Evernia Street, 1914, and the Halpern House at 624 Evernia Street, c. 1917, are two examples of Frame Vernacular houses whose designs perhaps came from a pattern book. Virtually twins, both houses' doorways are off to the right, hipped dormers extend off the front of the roofs, and each has a porch supported by simple square columns. Other elements found on the Ferguson House are leaded glass sidelights flanking the front door, one-over-one double-hung windows, and a simple slat baluster on the second floor porch. The Halpern House has knee braces underneath the roof eaves, slat balusters on the upstairs and downstairs porches, as well as a leaded glass transom over one of the front façade windows. The Thompson Apartments at 710 Fern Street, 1922, were constructed by prominent local developer and contractor Cornelius J. Meerdink. This two-story apartment building has low, hipped roof with rafters underneath the eaves. Wooden shingles are found on the second floor and the first floor is stucco. This building also exhibits several Craftsman elements such as small Prairie-style windows and a pergola located at the building's central entrance. This building has been slightly altered with the addition of louvered windows.

Three of the district's Masonry Vernacular buildings were once used in a commercial capacity. 306 and 314 Rosemary Avenue, c. 1930 and c. 1923, are examples of the simple Masonry Vernacular buildings found in the district. Although both buildings' windows are boarded up, their primary characteristics are still apparent. Both buildings are constructed of hollow clay tiles on continuous concrete foundations. They each have flat roofs with a parapet, smoothly scored stucco walls and large commercial bays. The two remaining Masonry Vernacular structures are very similar in their size and form. However, one served in a commercial capacity, 113 ½ Rosemary Avenue, c. 1925, and the other as a garage, 318 Sapodilla Avenue, 1924. Both have roughly scored stucco walls and built-up parapets screening flat roofs.

Mediterranean Revival, a common style found throughout West Palm Beach, is only represented by two buildings within the Hill Historic District. The two Mediterranean Revival buildings were both originally hotels constructed during the Boom years of West Palm Beach. Built in 1924 by Cornelius J. Meerdink, the Hotel Alma at 560 Datura Street is a largely massed building with roughly scored stucco exterior, cast stone decorative columns, arched openings, and a flat roof. The Hotel Evernia is a smaller Mediterranean Revival hotel with a barrel tile roof, stucco exterior, exposed rafter tails underneath the roof eaves, and wood frame casement windows. Built for Ila Sapp in 1924, the Hotel Evernia has interesting features such as half-timbering in the parapet and small Mission style parapets on the east and west facades of the building.

There are three Bungalows in the Hill Historic District, one building has been somewhat altered and one was moved into the neighborhood to save it from demolition. The Bungalow style was a part of the Craftsman movement. The Bungalow is an outgrowth of the English Arts and Crafts movement, which rejected the industrial age and machines in favor of hand-crafted building traditions. These homes feature elements such as low-pitched gable or hipped roofs, dormers, front porches, and exposed rafters. The bungalows at 625 Fern Street, c. 1917, 627 Fern Street, c. 1912, and 213 Rosemary Avenue, 1918, incorporate many of these characteristics. The Van Valkenberg House at 213 Rosemary Avenue is particularly notable due to its ornate exterior details. The porch features decorative woodwork along the porch rail and the top of the porch as well. Elaborate brackets are located on the porch posts just below the roof eaves and there is a small balcony on the north elevation of the house.

The two houses which exhibit Prairie influences stand side-by-side in the Hill Historic District. These houses are located at 115 Rosemary Avenue, c. 1922, and 117 Rosemary Avenue, c. 1925. Mostly applied to residential structures, the Prairie style emphasizes horizontal lines and low-pitched roofs with wide overhanging eaves. Although the two Rosemary Avenue houses are very simple and plain, their most distinguishing features are their low-hipped roofs with the wide eaves.

The buildings within the district remain in good condition. Few changes have been made to the buildings over the years. As mentioned earlier, two complimentary historic structures were recently moved into the neighborhood. Hopefully, this action will spur more restoration and rehabilitation activities within the neighborhood.

Alterations

Alterations are generally limited to the replacement of the original wood frame windows with aluminum frame, louvers, or jalousie windows, the enclosure of front porches, and the addition of window air conditioning units. Few window openings have been changed. Most of the buildings remain structurally intact with good integrity.

Non-Contributing Resources

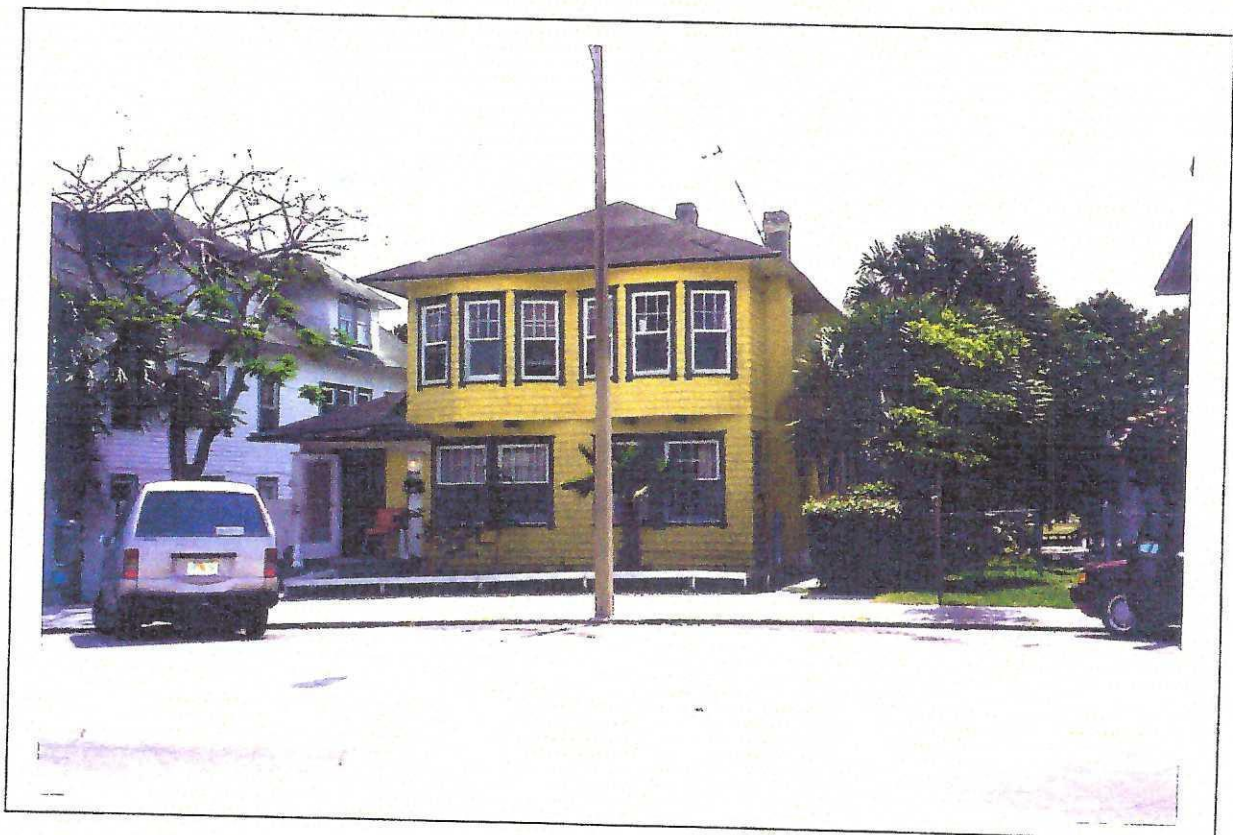
There are eight non-contributing resources within the Hill Historic District. Six of the non-contributing properties were built after World War II. Two of these properties include an auto parts warehouse, two are apartment buildings, one building is a one-story concrete block day care center, and one is a duplex. Three of the non-contributing resources were built during the period of significance, but have been severely altered. In each case, there are no historic features left intact. However, due to their simple architectural designs, it is possible to restore these properties so they once again contribute to the district.

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628 EVERNIA STREET

632 EVERNIA STREET



Contributing Buildings

Address	Site Name	Date Built
111 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1922
113 1/2 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1925
115 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1922
117 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1925
213 Rosemary Avenue	Van Valkenberg House	1918
306 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1930
314 Rosemary Avenue		c. 1923
305-307 Sapodilla Avenue		c. 1920
309 Sapodilla Avenue		c. 1920
313 Sapodilla Avenue		1930
318 Sapodilla Avenue		c. 1924
318	garage	c. 1924
403 Sapodilla Avenue	Dutch House	c. 1917
403	garage	c. 1917
601 Evernia Street	Wax House	1917
609 Evernia Street	Hotel Evernia	1924
610 Evernia Street	Adrian and Ruth Pearson House	c. 1912
610	garage	c. 1920
613 Evernia Street	Franklin and May Ellen Powers House	c. 1916
616 Evernia Street		c. 1912
616	cottage	c. 1912
616	apartment	c. 1912
620 Evernia Street		c. 1912

620	garage/apartment	1919
624 Evernia Street	Joseph Halpern House	c. 1917
627 Evernia Street	Edgar Castlen House	c. 1912
627	apartment	c. 1920
628 Evernia Street	Pine Tree Apartments	c. 1912
631 Evernia Street	George and Edith Brown House	c. 1912
631	apartment	c. 1917
632 Evernia Street		c. 1912
635 Evernia Street		c. 1917
636 Evernia Street	Eli & Luella Ferguson House	1914
708 Evernia Street	Rev. Charles Edington House	c. 1921
710 Evernia Street	John Srinka House	c. 1917
617 Fern Street	C.L. & Mary Fayot House	c. 1912
625 Fern Street	Miss Jessie Bell House	c. 1917
625	apartment	1921
625	apartment	1923
627 Fern Street		c. 1912
639 Fern Street	Nahum Allen House	1921
703 Fern Street	John L. & Bessie Grier House	c. 1923
705 Fern Street		1932,
enlarged in 1940		
710 Fern Street	Jeanette Thompson Apartments	1922
560 Datura Street	Hotel Alma	1924
607 Datura Street		c. 1924
624 Datura Street	Ruth and Rutyer der Nerderlander	c. 1921

Non-Contributing Properties

Address	Site Name	Date
600 Datura Street	Riggs Auto Parts	1972
610 Datura Street	Riggs Auto Parts	1972
626 Datura Street		1966
630-638 Datura Street	Hilltop Apartments	1950
617 Fern Street	rear apartment	c. 1912
629 Fern Street	Hollister Hall Apartments	1941
712 Evernia Street		1924
303 Sapodilla Avenue		c. 1949

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary:

Located in downtown West Palm Beach, the proposed Hill Historic District is architecturally significant because of its concentration of modest early twentieth century residential structures. The majority of the buildings are Frame Vernacular, the City's earliest building form. Masonry Vernacular, Prairie, Bungalow, and Mediterranean Revival style buildings also exist within the district. The district contains forty-eight contributing structures including various auxiliary structures. At least one of the contributing structures is individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. As one of the City's earliest residential areas, the proposed district is associated with the development of West Palm Beach. Many of the houses were built between 1900 and the 1920s as tourists and new residents began flooding into south Florida. Because this district is one of the last remaining intact residential areas adjacent to the City's downtown core and is also endangered, the Hill Historic District is recognizably a significant part of the architectural and developmental history of West Palm Beach, Florida. The Hill Historic District is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register.

Historic Context

At the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, southeastern Florida was still a wilderness. The first permanent settlement of Europeans was established in present day Palm Beach County during the 1870s. Most settled on the east shore of Lake Worth, now the site of the Town of Palm Beach. These early settlers established farms on both sides of Lake Worth and cultivated primarily pineapples. Vegetables for northern shipment quickly became more profitable and replaced pineapples as the major produce grown in the area.ⁱ

In 1892, Henry Morrison Flagler visited the area and investigated a route to Miami in an effort to expand his Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Indian River Railroad. The beauty of the area and the warm tropical climate inspired Flagler to create an exclusive resort community on the island of Palm Beach. Flagler envisioned the resort as a paradise, an escape from the overcrowded northern cities and commercial development. To accommodate commercial activity, Flagler purchased property on the west shore of the island from Captain O.S. Porter and Louis Hillhouse for a total of \$45,000. On this property, Flagler established a town that would serve as the business district of Palm Beach.ⁱⁱ

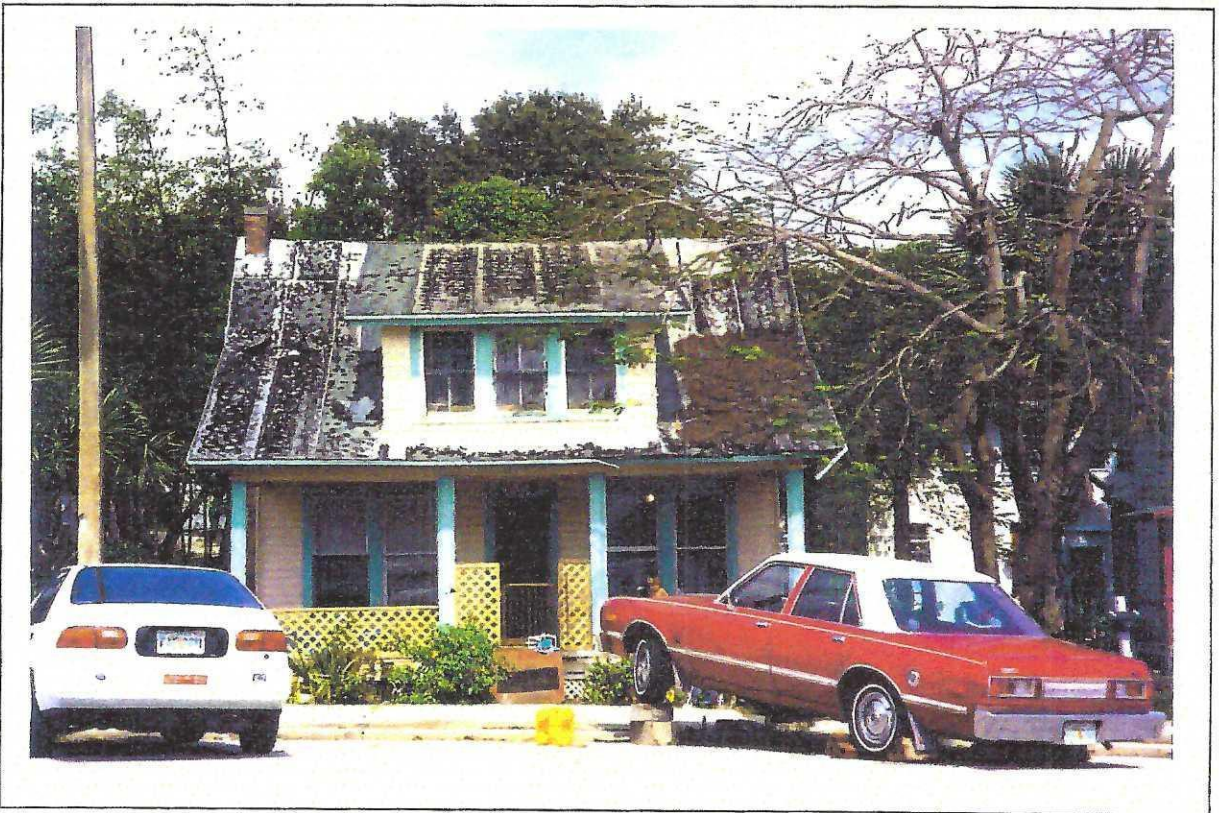
In November 1893, under the auspices of the Model Land Company Flagler filed the original plat for the Town of West Palm Beach. The 48-block site extended from Lake Worth to Clear Lake. The Avenues were laid out in alphabetical order from Althea on the north to Fern on the south.ⁱⁱⁱ The avenues ran alphabetically from Lantana on the east to Water on the west. Flagler's East Coast Railroad reached West Palm Beach the same year, bringing building materials, tourists, workers, and settlers. Flagler cut a shell-topped road through the middle of the town and this eventually evolved into Clematis Avenue.^{iv}

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636 EVERNIA STREET

625 FERN STREET



Lots on the newly platted Avenues surrounding Clematis began to be sold in early 1894 and many of the buyers were employees working on Flagler's construction projects and railroad line. The new property owners erected tents and shanties for temporary housing. Soon the "shanties" were replaced by one- and two-story frame houses and a construction boom was underway.^v On November 5, 1894 the new community voted to incorporate as a town.^{vi}

The first census taken in 1895 recorded 1,192 persons living in the town, and listed the property value at \$133, 926. In 1896, two fires in the downtown commercial area prompted the Town Council to enact a new building code. The new code required all buildings in the downtown to be constructed of brick or stone or have a brick or stone veneer. As a result, West Palm Beach's downtown soon had many new masonry commercial buildings.

By 1900, West Palm Beach had electricity, a sewer system, a water pumping station, paved Avenues, and telephone service.^{vii} Despite the advances, the town's population dropped to 564 residents. This decrease in population was attributed to the decline in construction activity and also nationwide recessions.

In 1903, the Town Council petitioned the Florida Legislature for a city charter, which was granted soon after. Phenomenal population growth along the east coast of south Florida resulted in the creation of Palm Beach County from Dade County, in 1909, and West Palm Beach was named the county seat.^{viii} The completion of the Palm Beach Canal in 1917, providing access to inland farming areas, made West Palm Beach the shipping point for the county's agricultural products both by rail and by water.^{ix} Flagler's railway system and the Model Land Company continued to promote the development of the community and ambitious developers and builders platted subdivisions and constructed houses.

In the early 1910s, increasing numbers of tourists and new residents began seeking homes in the area. Looking for an escape from the cold, new residents desired to have houses in West Palm Beach in the shadow of the wealthy Palm Beachers. Between 1910 and 1920, the City's population increased from 1,743 to 4,090, a faster growth rate than most other cities in Florida. This influx of people contributed to the City's significant growth during this period and many of the homes in the Hill district were built during these years. Historically, the district was home to professional and business leaders as well as working class residents such as carpenters, plumbers, and barbers. Some notable residents of the Hill neighborhood include, Herbet S. Fairchild, president and manager of the Florida Abstract Company; Adrian Pearson, vice-president, secretary, and manager of the Atlantic Hardware and Supply; Elis Ferguson, owner of the Ferguson Undertaking Company; Samuel L. Sable, owner of Sable's Department Store; Joseph Halpern, owner of a major downtown department store, Halpern's; George W. Brown, president of Brown and Wilcox, prominent local builders and contractors; Walter Wilson; president and manager of Kelsey City Ornamental Ironworks Inc.; and Mayor Dutch, mayor of West Palm Beach from 1916 to 1920. Construction of homes in this area began around

1912. A large number of carpenters and builders lived in Hill neighborhood. It is likely these carpenters helped build some of the houses in the area.

As the Land Boom was at a high point, the growing wealth of the City was reflected through the improvements occurring in the Hill neighborhood. In May of 1925, the West Palm Beach contracting firm of Greynolds and Monroe graded Sapodilla from Okeechobee Road to Banyan Avenue. At this time, sidewalks were also being constructed along Sapodilla.^x On May 7, 1925, thirty property owners on Evernia Avenue appealed to the Board of City Commissioners to have their Avenue widened to 80 feet from property line to property line. According to the property owners, the Avenue could not handle the current traffic conditions so these changes needed to be made quickly. When the Avenue was to be widened, all the sewers, water mains, and public utilities were to be placed underground before the Avenue was paved.^{xi} Three days later the planning board and city commission met to discuss renaming Rosemary and Sapodilla Avenues south of Clematis. Although the Avenues to the north, Althea and Banyan Avenues, were later renamed First and Second Avenues, the names Rosemary and Sapodilla ultimately remained. During this joint meeting, a proposal to widen Fern Avenue was also discussed.^{xii} Rosemary Avenue was the next thoroughfare to be paved and widened. On May 26, 1925, the Post announced that Rosemary was being improved from Clematis to Okeechobee.^{xiii} Over the years, Sapodilla Avenue, which crosses through the middle of the Hill neighborhood, developed into an important traffic artery. In April of 1926, Sapodilla was being paved from Clematis to Fifteenth providing a "new north and south thoroughfare" connecting Okeechobee to Fifteenth.^{xiv}

During the 1920s, West Palm Beach experienced widespread development and growth throughout the City due to the Florida Land Boom. Major office and commercial projects were erected in the downtown including the City's first "skyscrapers" such as the Guaranty Building, the Citizens Building, the Dixie Court Hotel, the Comeau Building, and the Harvey Building. The Land Boom peaked in the winter of 1924-1925.^{xv} By 1927, the entire city east of Australian Avenue had been platted, although little building had taken place north of 36th Avenue or south of Southern Boulevard. However, when the Harvey Building opened in 1927 it was bankrupt, indicating that the Florida Land Boom had gone bust.

Several factors contributed to the failure of Florida's real estate market. In the spring of 1925, many investors began to cancel all Florida real estate transactions as they became panicked by the news of bogus real estate ventures. By August of 1925, the F.E. C. Railroad placed an embargo on all perishable goods, halting building construction in the area. The next unfortunate events were the two devastating hurricanes of 1928. On September 16, 1928, a hurricane swept right through Palm Beach County destroying nearly 8,000 homes and hundreds of commercial buildings. Real estate speculators pushing up land prices also had a negative effect on the economy. When the Stock Market crashed in October 1929, Florida real estate was valueless.^{xvi}

Between 1930 and 1960, West Palm Beach grew moderately, increasing by one-quarter to one-third each decade.^{xvii} Particularly after World War II, new residences erected

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627 FERN STREET

710 FERN STREET



homes in the neighborhoods that had been platted, but not built up, during the Land Boom.^{xviii} During the 1960s, housing and commercial developments constructed west of Australian Avenue caused a shift in the population and economic base away from the downtown and into the suburbs.

Architectural Significance

The Hill Historic District is architecturally significant at the local level for its concentration of Frame Vernacular homes. During the early years of West Palm Beach's development, Frame Vernacular buildings were the primary structures found throughout the City. This style is synonymous with the early years of West Palm Beach's development before the onset of the Florida Land Boom.

The Hill Historic District contains 37 Frame Vernacular structures. These houses exhibit characteristics typical of the Frame Vernacular style. These vernacular structures were designed and constructed by local craftsmen from readily available materials. Post-and-beam and balloon-frame in structure, they are the town's earliest building form. Dade County pine, which is very hard and deters termites, was the principal frame building material.^{xix} They are primarily rectangular or ell in plan and mounted on masonry piers. The rectangular shape was very economical so it is very common within the neighborhood. Many of the Frame Vernacular features were a result of environmental concerns. Being raised on masonry piers allowed for air circulation under the house. The overhanging roof eaves provided shade for the sides of the house and dormers supplied additional attic circulation. Other common features are the pyramidal or gabled rooflines, roof overhangs with exposed rafter tails, wooden shingles, slat porch balusters, and dormers. Most of the buildings have horizontal clapboard siding with shingles covering the gables or second stories. Usually the buildings conform to standardized models with the aforementioned details added for decoration. The roof pitch and porch size varies from house to house. The windows that remain are primarily 1/1. Full-width entrance type porches are also common in this neighborhood.

Four examples of Masonry Vernacular buildings remain within the Hill Historic District. Masonry Vernacular structures are also among some of the earliest buildings found in West Palm Beach. Simple and inexpensive, stucco was often used to cover hollow clay tiles or concrete blocks. Three of the four Masonry Vernacular structures in the Hill district have roughly or smoothly scored stucco coatings and flat roofs. The additional Masonry Vernacular structure exhibits Craftsman/Bungalow characteristics such as battered porch piers.

Two examples of the Mediterranean Revival style also exist within the district, the Hotel Alma and Hotel Evernia. The Hotel Alma has roughly scored exterior walls and a flat roof. Other characteristics indicative of the Mediterranean Revival style are arched openings, cast stone decorative columns, and arched windows. The Hotel Evernia is much smaller in scale and has a smooth exterior stucco texture. The building also possesses a barrel tile roof, brackets under the roof eaves, and half-timbering in the front gable.

After considerable research, it appears the buildings in the Hill Historic District were not designed by architects. As previously mentioned, these early Frame Vernacular were primarily designed and built by local builders.

Conclusion

The Hill Historic District is architecturally significant based on its large concentration of early twentieth century Frame Vernacular structures. The houses in the district represent the years just prior to the Florida Land boom era. The Hill Historic District showcases a fine collection of some of the earliest housing stock within West Palm Beach. Built primarily in the 1910s and 1920s, these structures were home to the City's early business owners and leaders as well as working class residents.

ⁱ Donald W. Curl, Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History, Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1986, pp. 13-17, 26-27; J. Wadsworth Travers, History of Beautiful Palm Beach, 1929, p. 37.

ⁱⁱ Curl, p.37.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dade County Deeds, on file, Palm Beach County.

^{iv} "Origin of Clematis St." The Palm Beach Post, May 18, 1962.

^v Travers, p. 31.

^{vi} Curl, p. 49.

^{vii} Curl, pp.46-48.

^{viii} City of West Palm Beach Planning Department; Curl, p. 48.

^{ix} Curl, p. 90.

^x "Avenue Work Delayed on Account of Rock Shortage," The Palm Beach Post, May 19, 1917; "Sidewalk System Complete," The Palm Beach Post, May 19, 1917.

^{xi} "Evernia Householders Ask 80-Foot Avenue," The Palm Beach Post, May 7, 1925.

^{xii} "Sapodilla, Rosemary Avenue Names Will Be Changed By City," The Palm Beach Times, May 10, 1925.

^{xiii} "Officials Encouraged As Paving Progresses," The Palm Beach Post, May 25, 1925.

^{xiv} "New Artery Open," The Palm Beach Post, April 20, 1926.

^{xv} Curl, p. 88; Palm Beach County Plats; West Palm Beach Building Permits, on file Building Department, West Palm Beach City Hall.

^{xvi} Curl, pp. 93-94; files of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.

^{xvii} Planning Department.

^{xviii} West Palm Beach Building Permits.

^{xix} Mary Brandenburg and W. Dale Waters, Historic Preservation: A Design Guidelines Manual, City of West Palm Beach, Florida, 1992.