

May is Historic Preservation Month—Happy May! And as a pandemic stress reliever, a (socially distanced) stroll through any of the city’s historic districts could prove a soothing tonic to the times. The city has FIVE Historic Districts and two are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Delray Beach is committed to historic preservation and we need to think of ways to enhance and expand that reputation. Studies have shown that listed historic properties maintain their values longer in economic downturns and regain them faster when the economy improves.

So take a stroll through one of our districts. Or a safe drive. You won’t be disappointed. And use this as a study guide with your kids on Delray/Florida history (if school says OK).

Old School Square Historic District

The Old School Square Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2018. The Complex at 51 N. Swinton Ave. also is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The high school and gymnasium were designed in 1926

in the Mediterranean Revival style by Sam Ogren, Sr., the city's first registered architect. Ogren also designed several Mediterranean Revival structures along NE 1st Avenue, today known as Banker's Row.

Two-story Mediterranean Revival residences of the 1920s are on the west side of the street while one-story Minimal Traditional cottages of the 1930s line the east side.

The district contains another nationally registered house, the Sundry House at 106 S. Swinton Ave. The Queen Anne style wood structure that today serves as a restaurant, exotic garden and hotel. Delray Beach's first Mayor, John Sundry built this house in 1902 for his family and they lived there for nearly 80 years.

Architectural styles throughout the district include Vernacular, Bungalow, and Mission and Mediterranean Revival styles dating between 1902 and 1945.

The district was listed on the local register of Historic Places in 1988.

West Settlers Historic District

Settled in 1894, the West Settlers area is the site of the first African-American community in Delray Beach.

African-Americans from north and west Florida, Georgia and South Carolina were the first to settle the area, laying the foundation of a strong agricultural economy in the region.

The community was self-sufficient and successfully petitioned the then Dade County School District in 1896 to build a school for their children.

Settlers utilized local materials and their own construction knowledge. Known as the “Red Line” for the painted tin roofs, the “shot gun” houses that once occupied the east side of NW 3rd Avenue were developed for Henry Flagler’s railroad workers.

Isaiah Bruin, one of the community’s earliest builders, constructed many residences along NW 3rd and 4th Avenues, including the Susan Williams House, which is now located at the S.D. Spady Cultural Museum at 170 NW 5th Ave. The house was once the home of noted educator Solomon D. Spady and was the first house west of Swinton Avenue to have running water and electricity.

The La France Hotel (1949), 140 NW 4th Ave., was once the only hotel in Delray Beach that welcomed African-Americans during segregation. Owned by Charles and Francenia Patrick, the hotel welcomed celebrated black musicians and civil rights figures. The Patricks built their

homestead next door at 400 NW 2nd Street.

The community was designated the West Settlers Historic District in 1997.

Nassau Street Historic District

The smallest district, but the only one east of the Intracoastal Waterway.

Two rows of charming seaside cottages reflect what was being built by wealthy northerners in Delray in the 1930s Depression: Small homes with top notch craftsmanship. Built originally as winter getaways.

Cottages were built in the Colonial Cape Cod Revival style, which incorporated detailing derived from early wooden folk houses of Eastern Massachusetts.

The original 18 houses retain their dominant architectural elements such as accentuated front doors with overhead fan lights and carved wood features.

It became the first historic district when it was designated in 1988, a month before Old School Square was designated.

Marina Historic District

Another example of Colonial Cottage style architecture but with others genre included. (See below)

The Boyd Building (Now home to the popular Deck 84 restaurant) was designed in 1939 by noted architect Gustav Maass and is a distinctive example of a commercial building in Streamline Moderne Style.

The Marina Villas, four cottages just west of the city marina, were designed by Samuel Ogren, Sr., in a Mediterranean style.

And a cottage at 707 SE 1st St. was moved from Boca Raton in the 1930s and designed by noted architect Addison Mizner, who designed the Boca Raton Hotel and Club.

Some notable residents: Peter Kolean, a very well known artist of modern Delray, lived on Palm Square. Peter Duchin, the famous New York society band leader, would dock his yacht at the Marina and stay in one of the Marina Villas.

It is perhaps the most walkable district in the city, although, ironically, there are few sidewalks.

The district joined the local register in 1988 and was listed on the National Register in 2014.

Del-Ida Historic District

The district was platted in 1923 during the Florida land boom. It is 58 acres and the neighborhood boundary streets are Northeast Fourth St., Northeast Eighth St., North Swinton Ave., and Northeast Third Ave.

There are about 150 structures in the district. Houses date to the 1920's. Architecture styles are Spanish Mission, craftsman bungalow and the ornate Mediterranean Revival.

There also are wood frame houses built in the 1930's and 1940's. Unique to this neighborhood is that some streets are on a diagonal creating triangular blocks. The community has three triangular shaped parks.

Residents are interested in preserving their historic homes. The neighborhood was once advertised as "new blood for Delray" and residents hope to preserve the historic buildings that once made this the premier place to live in Delray Beach.

It was named to the local historic register in 1988.

