

Staff Report for Landmark Designation



Application #: DES-26-001

Proposed Landmark: House of Seven Gables, Heritage Village Museum & Park, Largo

Property name: **House of Seven Gables** / Starr Winter Residence / Seven Gables Inn

Street address: 11909 125th Street Community: Largo (unincorporated)

Applicant: Monica Drake, Historical Museum Operations Manager

Property owner: Pinellas County

Request: Staff-initiated application for the designation of the historic resource located at 11909 125th Street commonly known as the House of Seven Gables located in Heritage Village, a part of the Pinewood Cultural Park, as a Landmark on a Landmark Site as per Sec. 146-6(a), Pinellas County Code

Prepared by: Tom Scofield, Principal Planner, Historic Preservation Specialist, Pinellas County Housing & Community Development Department

Prepared for: The Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board

Public hearing scheduled for **Wednesday, January 21, 2026**, beginning at 1:00 p.m., in the Assembly Room, Pinellas County Courthouse, 5th Floor, 315 Court Street, Clearwater.

The following Exhibits are included as attachments to this staff report:

- Exhibit A – Current Photos (includes figures A-1 through A-12)
- Exhibit B – Historic Images (includes figures B-1 through B-7)
- Exhibit C – Location Maps (includes figures C-1 through C-4)
- Exhibit D – Application for Landmark on a Landmark Site
- Exhibit E – Florida Master Site File Form for Seven Gables
- Exhibit F – As-built Floor Plans & Elevation Drawings
- Exhibit G – Historical Overview

Part 1 – PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION [as per Sec. 146-6(d)(1)a, Pinellas County Code]

Property Location [as provided by the Pinellas County Property Appraiser's Office]

Parcel ID Number: 09-30-15-00000-230-0100

Legal Description: The Heritage Village museum campus is located on the land parcel identified as the West ½ of the West ½ of Section 09, Township 30, Range 15 lying East and South of Ulmerton Road and East of County Road 123 less Walsingham Road on the South and less the East 60 feet of the Northwest ¼ of the Southwest ¼ also less that part described commencing at the Southwest

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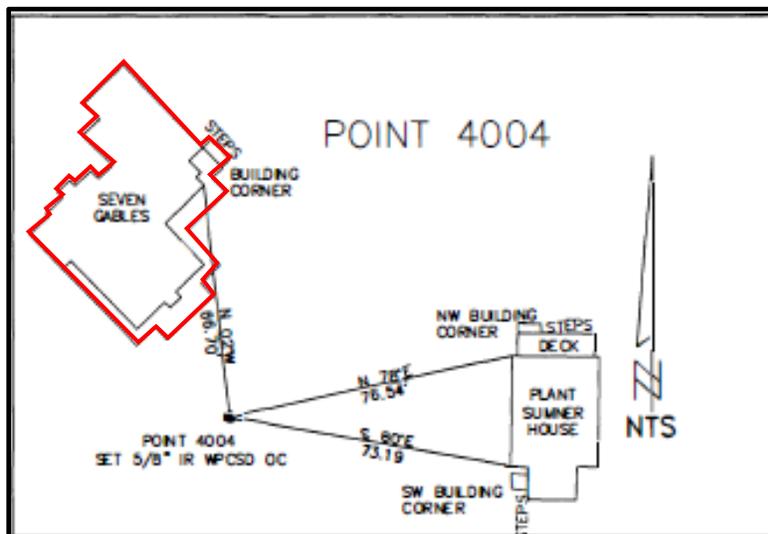
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corner of the Southwest ¼ of the Northwest ¼ then South 89 degrees, 09 minutes, 32 seconds East 329.48 feet then North 17 degrees, 38 minutes, 19 seconds East 205.54 feet for the point-of-beginning then North 17 degrees, 38 minutes, 19 seconds East 1,091.76 feet then curve right radius 1,837.86 feet arc 77.80 feet chord bearing North 18 degrees, 51 minutes, 04 seconds East 77.79 feet then South 89 degrees, 05 minutes, 07 seconds East 341.48 feet then South 07 degrees, 30 minutes, 44 seconds West 1,128 feet then North 88 degrees, 59 minutes, 16 seconds West 550 feet to the point-of-beginning per O.R. 16892/2147 containing 92.26 acres.

On the museum campus, the easternmost building corner of the House of Seven Gables is located 66.7 feet at a bearing of North 02° West from a survey monument established as POINT 4004 on the survey document titled 'HERITAGE PARK 2003 SURVEY' as prepared by the Division of Survey & Mapping, Pinellas County Public Works Department (location is depicted in the image below).

Maps of Property to be Designated [as per Sec. 146-6(c)(5), Pinellas County Code]



Proposed Landmark Site for the House of Seven Gables, Heritage Village

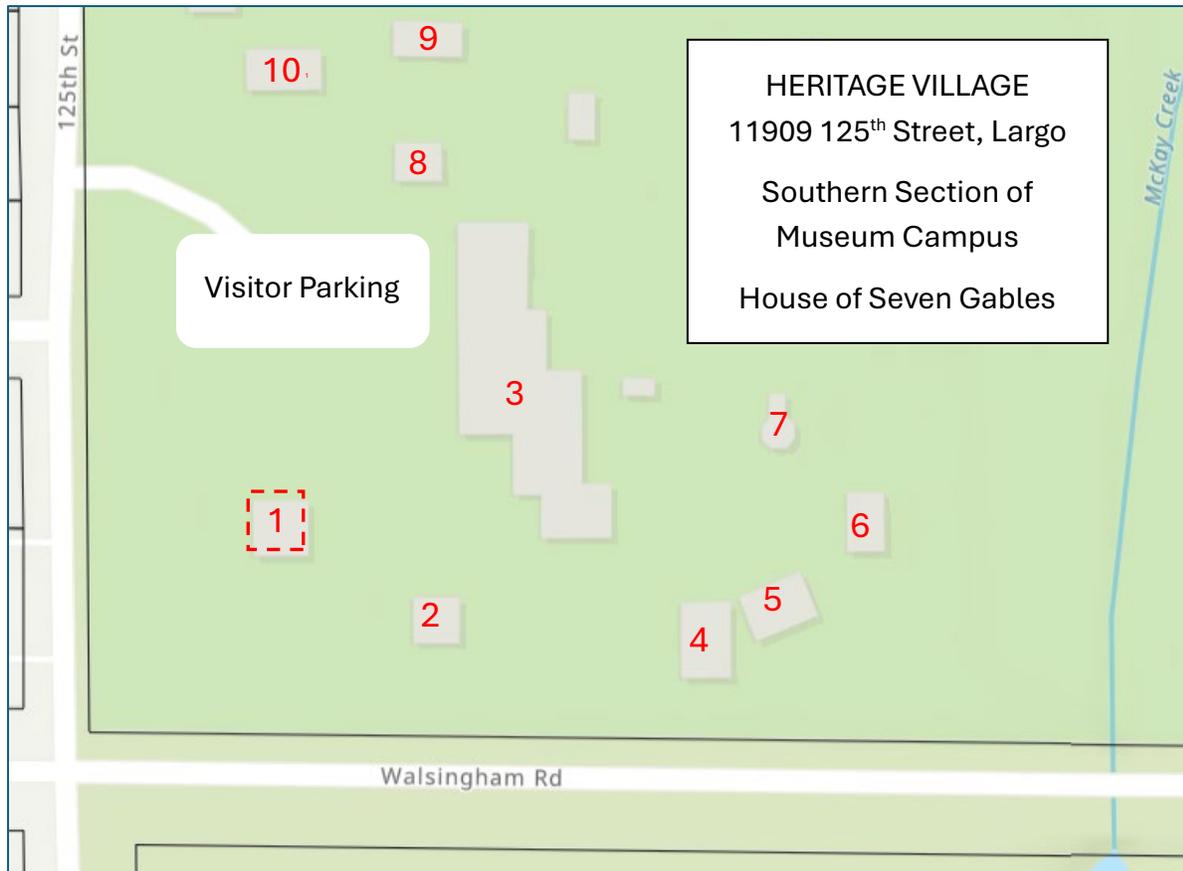
The Landmark Site, as per the definition provided in Sec. 146-1, Pinellas County Code, is proposed to be the area beneath the eaves, porches and steps of the building as indicated by the red line in the image above. This map detail has been taken from a survey document titled 'HERITAGE PARK 2003 SURVEY' as prepared by the Division of Survey & Mapping, Pinellas County Public Works Department, November 2003.

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 = Resource proposed for designation as a Landmark on a Landmark Site as per Sec. 146-6 Pinellas County Code

1. House of Seven Gables (subject of this application)
2. Plant-Sumner House
3. Heritage Village visitor center & administrative offices
4. Safety Harbor Church
5. Safford Pavilion
6. Sponge Warehouse
7. Boyer Cottage
8. Madeira Beach Cottage
9. McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin
10. Sulphur Springs Depot

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Physical Description of Resource [as per Sec. 146-6(d)(1)a, Pinellas County Code]

Resource: House of Seven Gables

Resource type: Building (currently a museum exhibit--formerly a single-family and multi-family residence)

Photographs: Current photos provided in Exhibit A of this staff report; historical photos provided in Exhibit B

Date of construction: 1907

Architectural style: Queen Anne

Architect: Unknown Builder: Unknown

Architectural description:

Exterior: The main block of the balloon-frame building is 2-stories in height following an irregular plan with full-height floors and covered by a moderately-pitched gable roof with three ridgelines. Two of the ridgelines intersect forming a cross-gable with an exposed gable at each end. The third ridgeline projects off the southwestern arm of the cross-gable covering the southeastern wing of the house that terminates with the fifth gable end. The primary façade that at onetime overlooked Clearwater Harbor when the building was in Downtown Clearwater, is currently located on the southwest side of the building facing the intersection of 125th Street and Walsingham Road. The secondary façade that at onetime faced inland is currently located on the northeast side of the building and serves as the entrance used by visitors when touring the house at Heritage Village. Two brick chimneys are located on the ridge along the front ridgeline.

A single-story veranda begins at the former harborside (front) entry and wraps around the eastern end of the house ending at the inland (back or rear) entry. The veranda at the front entry is integrated into the end of the southwestern arm of the cross-gable, is partially covered by a hipped roof on the front and back of the southeastern wing, runs beneath the second floor at the end of the southeastern wing, and has no roof for a short section towards the rear. A sixth gable end is located on the first floor over the harborside (front) entry and a seventh gable end placed on the southeastern wing, hence the name "The House of Seven Gables." The veranda is connected to a 2-story entrance porch integrated into the northeastern arm of the cross-gable providing shelter for the back entry and balcony above it. A 2-story gallery porch is located on the backside of the northwestern arm of the cross-gable with a covered balcony on the opposite side.

Fenestration consists of single, paired, and multiple window openings both symmetrically and asymmetrically positioned on the harborside (southwest) façade with a centrally aligned entrance. Fenestration on the inland (northeast) façade consists of single window openings symmetrically

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positioned with an offset entrance. Windows are wood, 1-over-1, double hung sash with board surrounds, simple cornices, and sills. A square bay window is located on the second floor on the southeast side. The three exterior entrances consist of single-leaf doors with solid panels on the bottom and divided-light panels above.

The exterior is primarily clad with wood, horizontal drop siding with rounded shingles placed in aligned rows on the gable ends. The four gable ends on the main roof also display paired brackets with decorative barge boards. Decorative features on the porches include turned wood columns and railings with a rounded arch motif. The foundation for the building consists of brick-faced masonry piers placed at building corners and evenly spaced along the sill beams.

Interior: The room layout for the first floor reflects the fact that the primary façade for the residence was the side that once overlooked Clearwater Harbor. The front entry leads directly into a large room with the main staircase to the second floor serving as a divider between the large Parlor and smaller Drawing Room. A 'Sitting Alcove' (consisting of an enclosed portion of the veranda) is accessible at the front entry or from the Drawing Room. The Dining Room, separated from the Parlor by pocket doors, is located towards the rear of the house. Located at the back of the Dining Room is the rear entry to the house (currently the entrance used by museum visitors) and a Butler's Pantry that provides a walk-through to a second "service" staircase and the Kitchen. A fireplace is located at the far end of the Parlor with a second fireplace in the Drawing Room. A freestanding cast-iron stove provided heat for the Dining Room. Walls in all rooms on the first floor are finished with varnished, tongue-and-groove beadboard. The Dining Room features a built-in bookcase that covers the entire wall.

On the second floor, there are four (4) bedrooms, each with a closet, and one (1) full bathroom, all accessed from an interior hallway. The "master suite" includes a second room that likely served as a Dressing Room or Nursery. A fireplace is in each of the two front bedrooms. Walls in all rooms on the second floor are finished with varnished, tongue-and-groove beadboard.

Character defining features:

- All building elements, features, and details associated with the exterior and interior of the building as described in the Architectural Description above.

Existing conditions:

- An existing condition assessment was performed by Paul Palmer, AIA, LEED AP, Renker Eich Parks Architects, St. Petersburg with the following findings:
 1. Exterior Wood Elements: There are a few locations of damaged wood elements in need of repairs. At the bottom of the corner post of the back porch. The flooring support beam at the back porch and the skirt board fascia.

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2. Porch Flooring Support Beams: There are rot-damaged flooring support beams at the outer corners of the north porch. Some temporary shoring and repairs have been made.
3. Exterior Painting: The exterior painting is in fair condition. Some of the painting elements in the off-red color have UV fading and slight chalking. Estimated life remaining is three to five years.
4. Exterior Door Hardware: Many of the exterior door hardware sets are in fair to poor condition and are in need of refurbishment and treatment to limit oxidation and provide protection against the elements.
5. Exterior Door Weatherstripping: Most of the exterior doors need better weather stripping to reduce air infiltration and water penetration.
6. Exterior Door Repairs: The back porch screen door is racked slightly in its framed opening.
7. Exterior Window Glazing: Some windows have damaged or missing glazing putty.
8. Interior Door: Closet door finish is in fair to poor condition, NE bedroom 2nd floor.
9. Interior Painting: Some of the painted walls, ceilings and flooring are in need of repainting. The majority of finishes are lacquered, and in good condition. The painted finishes are typically in closets and the service stair. Upstairs trunk closet walls and ceiling. Service stair treads. Nursery room walls, ceilings, doors, and door frames. Nursery room closet. and upstairs bedrooms and halls.
10. Firebrick Repointing: Repoint firebrick that has masonry grout that is in poor condition. Main fireplace in main parlor room, first floor. Fireplace in bedroom directly above, on second floor.
11. Roofing: Replace existing asphalt shingle roof covering with 30-year high-wind-rated shingle. Install peel & stick self-adhering underlayment in lieu of felt.
12. ADA Accessibility: Construct ramp to the first-floor level.

Threats:

- The only immediate threat to the House of Seven Gables is the deterioration of some exterior elements, as noted in the condition assessment above. Some of the bigger concerns include the failing of porch sill beams, weathering of porch decks, decay of wood siding, and cracking/loosening of window glazing.
- Over the long term it is important that hurricane straps be installed on the building at roof-wall and wall-foundation connections to better fortify the structure against high winds.

Rehabilitative or adaptive reuse proposals:

- Adaptive Reuse: The House of Seven Gables shall remain as an exhibit at Heritage Village for the foreseeable future.

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- Rehabilitation/Restoration: As-built drawings for the building are provided as Exhibit F to this staff report. Construction plans, drawings, and specifications for the second restoration of the House of Seven Gables (the first having been when the house arrived at Heritage Village in 1976) are being prepared as of the writing of this staff report.

Part 2 – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE [as per Sec. 146-6(d)(1)b, Pinellas County Code]

Historical Overview (see Exhibit G in this staff report for a detailed historical narrative)

Period of significance for resource: 1907-1917 & 1976-1977

- **1907-1917: The single-family residence was constructed in 1907 and occupied by the Starr family during the winter months until 1917.** Recommended as the first of two periods of significance—later additions/alterations removed to reveal original floor plan and original architectural elements, features and, materials repaired/preserved as part of the 1976-77 restoration.
- 1917-1944: Building converted to a multi-family residence and operated as a boarding house by various owners. Not recommended as a period of significance—building alterations made during this period were removed during the 1976-77 restoration.
- 1944-1975: Building converted back to a single-family residence and occupied by the Dietrich family (1944-1951) and Hemerick family (1951-1975). Not recommended as a period of significance—building alterations made during this period were removed during the 1976-77 restoration.
- 1975: The House of Seven Gables in downtown Clearwater sold to Don Williams and Dixie Walker as part of the future site for *Oak Bluffs*, a senior-living residential tower.
- **1976-1977: The House of Seven Gables donated by Williams and Walker to the Pinellas County Historical Society and moved to Heritage Village where it was restored as the second historic building on site.** Recommended as the second period of significance.

Historic Resource Integrity [as per Sec. 146-6(e)(1), Pinellas County Code]

Among the significance criteria to be considered for the designation of a local landmark is the integrity of the historic resources found on the proposed landmark site regarding location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. The following evaluation is provided for each of these elements:

First period of significance, 1907-1917 (when located on the harbor bluff in Clearwater):

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- Yes No Location – The House of Seven Gables was originally located in downtown Clearwater on the bluff overlooking Clearwater Harbor. Integrity of location was lost for this period of significance when the House of Seven Gables was moved to Heritage Village.
- Yes No Design – The House of Seven Gables currently conveys the appearance of its original design as a single-family residence which is also consistent with this period of historical significance (1907-1917). Integrity of architectural style, form, plan, massing, proportion, and scale for the building is in place and maintained.
- Yes No Setting – The setting for the House of Seven Gables was on the waterfront in Clearwater as part of one of the older residential neighborhoods immediately south of the downtown area. Integrity of setting was lost for this period of significance when the House of Seven Gables was moved to Heritage Village.
- Yes No Materials – Much of the original materials used in the construction of the House of Seven Gables remain intact and in place. Also, the effort has been made to ensure that any materials introduced later, such as part of the first restoration in 1976-77 or as part of subsequent maintenance of the building, are compatible in composition, dimension and appearance with original materials.
- Yes No Workmanship – Since much of the original construction is in place and materials are intact at the House of Seven Gables, the workmanship is representative of the work of craftsmen and trades workers of the era and consistent with this period of historical significance (1907-1917).
- Yes No Association – The association of the House of Seven Gables with other outbuildings on the property and the surrounding neighborhood in Clearwater was lost when it was moved to Heritage Village.

Second period of significance, 1976-1977 (after the move to Heritage Village):

- Yes No Location – The House of Seven Gables was moved to Heritage Village fifty (50) years ago and placed in its current position as the second building introduced to the museum facility and, therefore, maintains integrity of location for this period of historical significance (1976-77).
- Yes No Design – After the House of Seven Gables was moved to Heritage Village, the building was restored to its appearance as originally designed (1907-1917) removing or modifying any architectural alterations and additions from later historical periods and ownerships. Integrity of architectural style, form, plan, massing, proportion, and scale for the building is in place and maintained.

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- Yes No Setting – The House of Seven Gables was moved to Heritage Village 50 years ago and placed in its current position as the second building introduced to the museum facility and, therefore, maintains integrity of setting for this period of historical significance (1976-77).
- Yes No Materials – Much of the original materials used in the construction of the House of Seven Gables remain intact and in place. Also, the effort has been made to ensure that any materials introduced later, such as part of the first restoration in 1976-77 or as part of subsequent maintenance of the building, are compatible in composition, dimension and appearance with original materials.
- Yes No Workmanship – Since much of the original construction is in place and materials are intact at the House of Seven Gables, the workmanship is representative of the work of craftsmen and trades workers of the era and consistent with this period of historical significance (1907-1917).
- Yes No Association – The House of Seven Gables is directly associated with other historic buildings that have been moved to Heritage Village Museum & Park since the facility opened in 1976. As shown in the “*Map of Property to be Designated*” above, five (5) historic buildings are in the immediate vicinity of the House of Seven Gables (the dates in parentheses indicate *year built/year moved*): Plant-Sumner House (c. 1896/1976); Safety Harbor Church (1905/1977); McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin (1852/1977); Boyer Cottage (1878/1978); and the Safford Pavilion (c. 1890/1982). Also nearby, is the Heritage Village visitor center, archives and library which was constructed as a new building on site and opened to the public in 1977. The five historic buildings moved to the site would have otherwise been destroyed and by preserving them at Heritage Village provide an important connection to the history of communities in Pinellas County evoking a strong association with the past from the mid-19th century to the first decade of the 20th century. All six of the buildings listed above provide a direct, tangible link to the first decade of operation of Heritage Village Museum & Park.

General Significance Criteria [as per Sec. 146-6(e)(1), Pinellas County Code]

Among the significance criteria to be considered for the designation of a local landmark are general factors regarding the resource’s role in local, state and/or national history; association with persons contributing to the history of the county; architectural merit; and archaeological value or potential. The following evaluation is provided for each of these elements:

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- a. *The resources are associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, or architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, the county, southwestern Florida, the state or nation.*

Yes No

First period of significance, 1907-1917: The House of Seven Gables meets this criterion for important association with cultural, social, and architectural history of late 19th century Clearwater and western Hillsborough County and early 20th century Clearwater and northern Pinellas County.

Newspaper accounts of the period indicate that David Nevins Starr and Mary (Robertson) Starr, both from prominent families in Rockford, Illinois, were winter visitors to the settlement of Clear Water Harbor (now Clearwater) on an annual basis before the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway in 1888. The Starrs purchased the land on which Seven Gables originally stood in 1896 adding to their Clearwater holdings identified as the “Starr and S. Avery” development on an early real estate map. Construction of the house was completed before their arrival for the 1907 winter season. The elegant Queen Anne-style home was conservative in style and taste for the time and prominently placed on what was then known as “Orange Bluff” overlooking the harbor. During the season the Starrs, with their two children, spent a considerable amount of time with David’s niece, Mable, and her husband, John King Cheyney who lived year-round in Tarpon Springs. By 1891 Cheyney had established the Anclote and Rock Island Sponge Company aiding in the transformation of Tarpon Springs into the center of Florida’s sponge industry. Although the Starrs sold Seven Gables in 1917, they continued visiting the Pinellas Peninsula until Mary’s passing in 1921. After a time in Los Angeles, California and Orlando, Florida, David returned to Tarpon Springs in 1927 and, with his second wife Leadocia, had a home built near the Cheyneys in Tarpon Springs where he lived until his passing in 1933.

Second period of significance, 1976-1977: The House of Seven Gables is significant for its association with the cultural, social, and architectural history of Pinellas County and the national celebration of the American Bicentennial. The Bicentennial movement inspired the creation of numerous historical organizations and societies, along with the establishment of open-air museums like Heritage Village throughout Florida and the nation. In 2026, Heritage Village will commemorate its 50th anniversary, coinciding with America’s 250th celebration. This important milestone allows the earliest buildings that were moved to Heritage Village to be considered eligible for historical designation.

Refer to Exhibit G, *Historical Overview* for additional detailed historical information about the House of Seven Gables.

- b. *The resources are associated with the lives of persons significant in the county's past.*

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Yes No

First period of significance, 1907-1917: As outlined in the significance statement above and described in greater detail in the Historical Overview (Exhibit G of this staff report), David and Mary (Robertson) Starr, first owners of the House of Seven Gables, were from prominent families of status and wealth in the established social class of Rockford, Illinois. In the 1880s they joined friends and family in the emerging trend of the Northeast and Midwest elite on the annual migration to Florida selecting Clearwater and Tarpon Springs as their preferred destination. The collective investment in local real estate and business endeavors made by winter visitors like the Starrs fueled the transition of this locale and much of Florida from wild frontier to winter resort within a couple of decades. The Starrs also had a connection with John Cheyney, an early settler and “sponge hooker” in Tarpon Springs who played an important role in establishing the sponge industry in that community. David Starr’s niece, Mabel, married John Cheyney and the two families spent a considerable amount of social time together during the winter season.

Second period of significance, 1976-77: The vision, charity, and technical ability of local architect, Don Williams, was instrumental in the founding and creation of Heritage Village. Engaging with members of the Clearwater Junior League and Pinellas County Historical Society in an all-out effort to support the cause, he drafted the initial site plan for the historical museum and, with his business partner realtor, Dixie Walker, donated the House of Seven Gables as the second building moved to the park in 1976. Williams served four terms on the Clearwater City Commission and is the father of Pinellas County Commissioner, Karen Seel.

- c. *The resources embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or are the work of a master; or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

Yes No

The House of Seven Gables embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne architectural style. Popular in the United States from 1880 to 1910 during the Late Victorian period, the highly decorative, asymmetrical style is known for its eclectic mix of materials, textures, and historical motifs, often featuring wrap-around porches, towers/turrets, bay windows, steeply pitched roofs, varied wall surfaces such as patterned shingles, and decorative spindle work commonly referred to as “gingerbread.” Architectural features are reminiscent of English medieval forms but with layers of machine-made ornamentation made available and affordable through mass production.

- d. *The resources have yielded, or are likely to yield, information on history or prehistory.*

Yes No

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This significance criterion is typically applied to archaeological sites. Since the House of Seven Gables was moved from its original location in Clearwater, there are not archaeological deposits of historical interest associated with the house at its current location in Heritage Village.

- e. *The resources are listed or have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*

Yes No

The House of Seven Gables is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also, no official determination of National Register eligibility has been provided by the Florida Division of Historical Resources or National Park Service. However, a statement has been made by staff at the Florida Division of Historical Resources that open-air historical museums consisting of relocated historic buildings that were established as part of the American Bicentennial, such as Heritage Village, might be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic/Cultural Significance Criteria [as per Sec. 146-6(e)(2), Pinellas County Code]

A historic resource shall be deemed to have historic or cultural significance if it fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

- a. *The resources are associated with the life or activities of a person of importance in local, state, or national history.*

Yes No

The significance statement provided under criterion Sec. 146-6(e)(1)b above also applies to this criterion for persons of importance in local history that were associated with the House of Seven Gables. Also, refer to Exhibit G, *Historical Overview* for additional detailed information on these persons of interest.

- b. *It is the site of a historic event with a significant effect upon the county, state or nation.*

Yes No

The significance statement provided under criterion Sec. 146-6(e)(1)a above also applies to this criterion for Heritage Village's local association with the national celebration of the American Bicentennial during the Second Period of Significance, 1976-77.

- c. *The resources are associated in a significant way with a major historic event.*

Yes No

No historic event that meets this criterion is known to be associated with this property.

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- d. *The resources are exemplary of the historical, political, cultural, economic, or social trends of the community in history.*

Yes No

The significance statement provided under criterion Sec. 146-6(e)(1)a above also applies to this criterion for the association of the House of Seven Gables with the historical, cultural, economic, and social trends of history in the community of Clearwater for the First Period of Significance, 1907-1917 and the historical, cultural, and social trends in the Pinellas County community for the Second Period of Significance, 1976-77.

- e. *The resources are associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution which has contributed substantially to the life of the community.*

Yes No

The House of Seven Gables is associated in a significant way with Heritage Village, a continuing institution that has contributed substantially to the life of the Pinellas County community since its founding in 1976.

Architectural/Aesthetic Significance Criteria [as per Sec. 146-6(e)(3), Pinellas County Code]

A historic resource shall be deemed to have architectural or aesthetic significance if it fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

- a. *The resource portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive design element or architectural styles.*

Yes No

The high level of historic resource integrity (see the descriptions provided in the *Historic Resource Integrity* section above), for the House of Seven Gables including design, materials, and workmanship for the First Period of Significance, 1907-1917 and design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association for the Second Period of Significance, 1976-77, represents two different historical periods in Pinellas County history (the Late 19th-Early 20th century Development Boom and the Mid-20th Century Development Boom), fulfilling this significance criterion.

- b. *The resource embodies the characteristics of an architectural style, period or method of construction.*

Yes No

The significance statement provided under criterion Sec. 146-6(e)(1)c above also applies to this criterion for the characteristics of the Queen Anne architectural style embodied in the House of Seven Gables.

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- c. The resource is a historic or outstanding work of a prominent architect, designer, or landscape architect.

Yes No

The architect/designer/builder for the House of Seven Gables has not yet been identified.

- d. The resource contains elements of design, detail, material, or craftsmanship which are of outstanding quality or which represented, in its time, a significant innovation, adaptation or response to the southwest Florida environment.

Yes No

The House of Seven Gables has elements of design, detail, material, and craftsmanship that are of outstanding quality as a prime example of the type and style of residence constructed by seasonal residents from the Northeast and Midwest at the turn of the 20th century.

Staff Recommendation [as per Sec. 146-6(d)(1)f, Pinellas County Code]

It is the recommendation of the staff liaison for the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board that the historic building known as The House of Seven Gables, associated with the Heritage Village museum and park located at 11909 125th Street in the unincorporated portion of Largo as depicted on the Map of Property to be Designated included with this staff report, should be considered eligible for designation as a Landmark on a Landmark Site consistent with the significance criteria set forth in Sec. 146-6(e), Pinellas County Code.

In summary, this historic resource has met the significance criteria, as follows:

- *Historic Resource Integrity:*
 - First period of significance, 1907-1917 – Three of the six criteria have been met.
 - Second period of significance, 1976-1977 – All six criteria have been met.
- *General Significance* – Three of the five criteria have been met.
- *Historic/Cultural Significance* – Four of the five criteria have been met.
- *Architectural/Aesthetic Significance* – Three of the four criteria have been met.

Therefore, it is the staff opinion that the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board should forward to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, a recommendation for APPROVAL of the request submitted by the property manager for designation of The House of Seven Gables, associated with the Heritage Village Museum & Park located at 11909 125th Street in the unincorporated portion of Largo, as a Landmark on a Landmark Site as provided for in Sec. Chapter 146-6, Pinellas County Code.

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EXHIBIT A: CURRENT PHOTOS



Figure A-1: House of Seven Gables, Southwest side (former harborside façade)
Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025



Figure A-2: House of Seven Gables, Northeast side (former inland façade)
Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025

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Figure A-3: House of Seven Gables, Southeast side
Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025



Figure A-4: House of Seven Gables, Northwest side
Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025

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Figure A-5: House of Seven Gables, View facing West

Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure A-6: House of Seven Gables, View facing East

Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025

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Proposed Landmark: House of Seven Gables, Heritage Village Museum & Park, Largo



Figure A-7: House of Seven Gables, Porch post and railing detail
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure A-8: Left, Door at front entry (Southwest side—former harborside façade); Right, Door at back entry (Northeast side—former inland façade)

Source: Source: Pinellas County Housing & Community Development, December 2025

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Figure A-9: House of Seven Gables, 1st floor, Parlor
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure A-10: House of Seven Gables, 1st floor, Dining room
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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Figure A-11: House of Seven Gables, 2nd floor, Bedroom
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

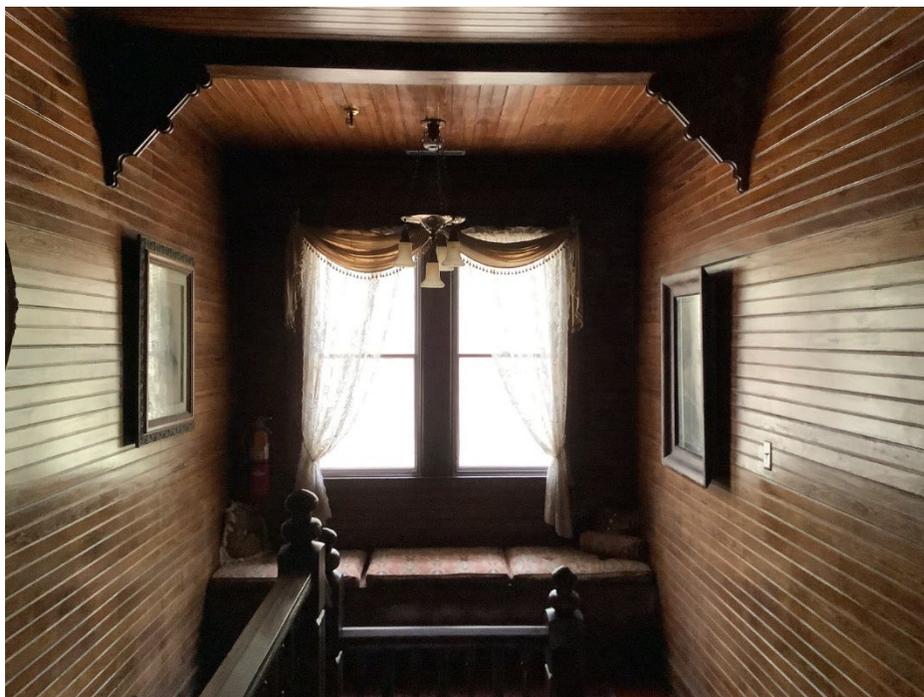


Figure A-12: House of Seven Gables, 2nd floor, Landing on main staircase
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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EXHIBIT B: HISTORIC IMAGES



Figure B-1: House of Seven Gables at original location on bluff overlooking Clearwater Harbor, ca. 1960
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure B-2: House of Seven Gables at original location in Clearwater from the inland side, ca. 1960
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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Figure B-3: House of Seven Gables before being loaded on barge for relocation to Heritage Village, 1976.
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure B-4: House of Seven Gables being moved on a barge in the Intracoastal Waterway, 1976
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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Figure B-5: House of Seven Gables being moved on a barge positioned for offloading, 1976
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives



Figure B-6: House of Seven Gables during restoration after move to Heritage Village, 1976
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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Figure B-7: House of Seven Gables at Heritage Village after restoration, 1978
Source: Heritage Village Library & Archives

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EXHIBIT C: LOCATION MAPS

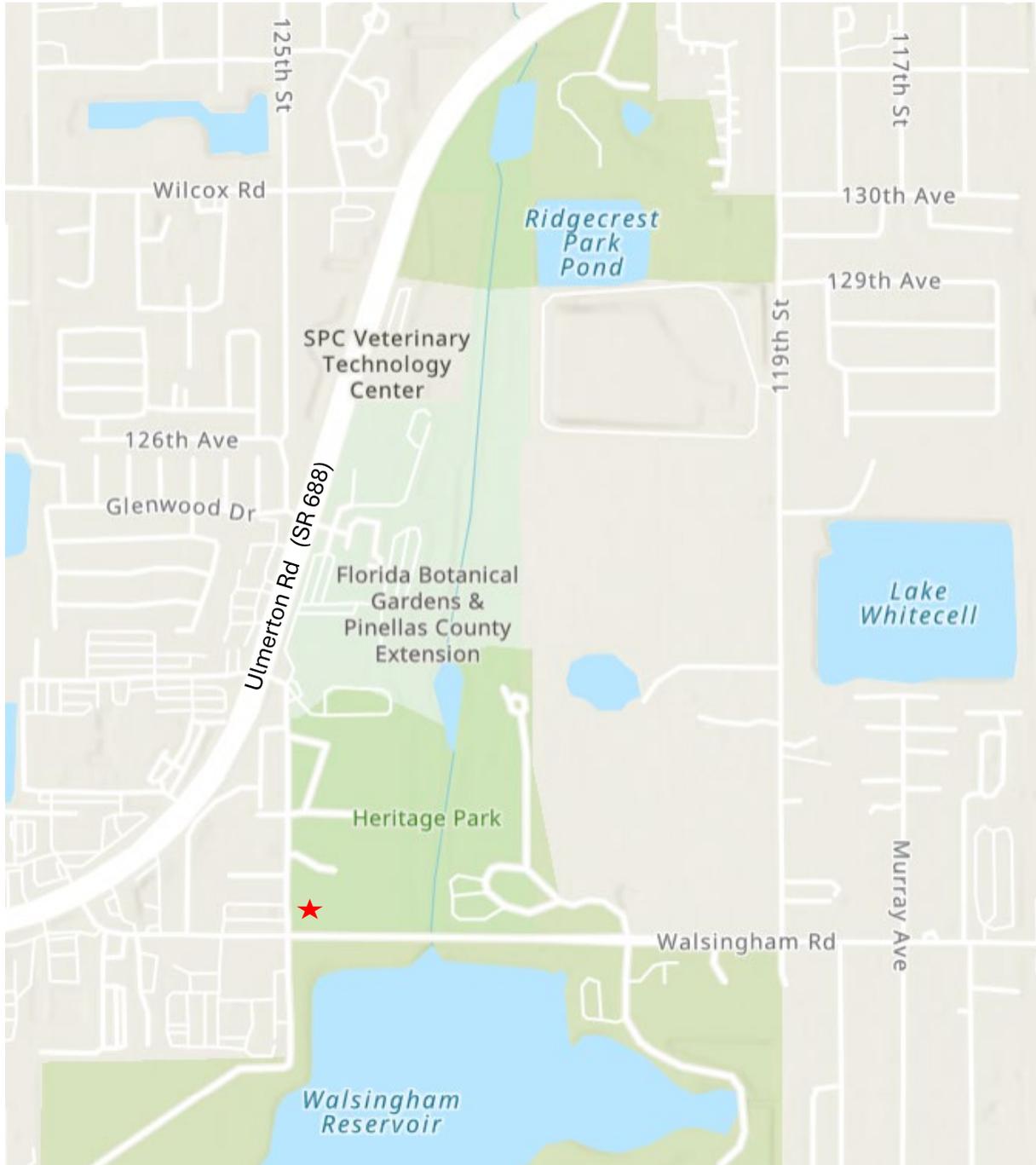


Figure C-1: Ridgecrest vicinity of Pinellas County (location of subject building indicated by red star)

Source: Capture from Pinellas County EGIS, October 2025

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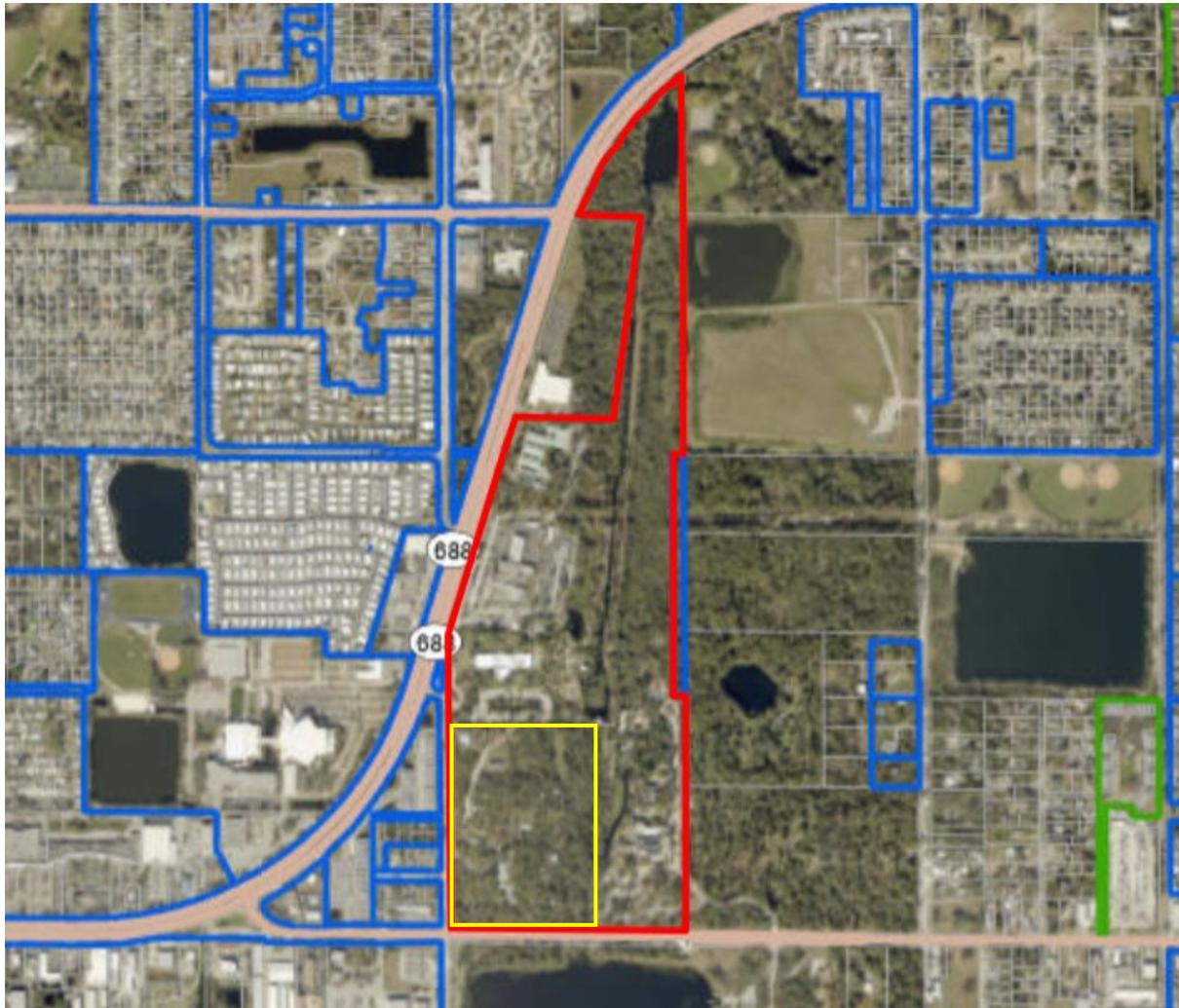


Figure C-3: Land parcel associated with subject property (outlined in red) and grounds of Heritage Village (outlined in yellow)

Source: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, October 2025

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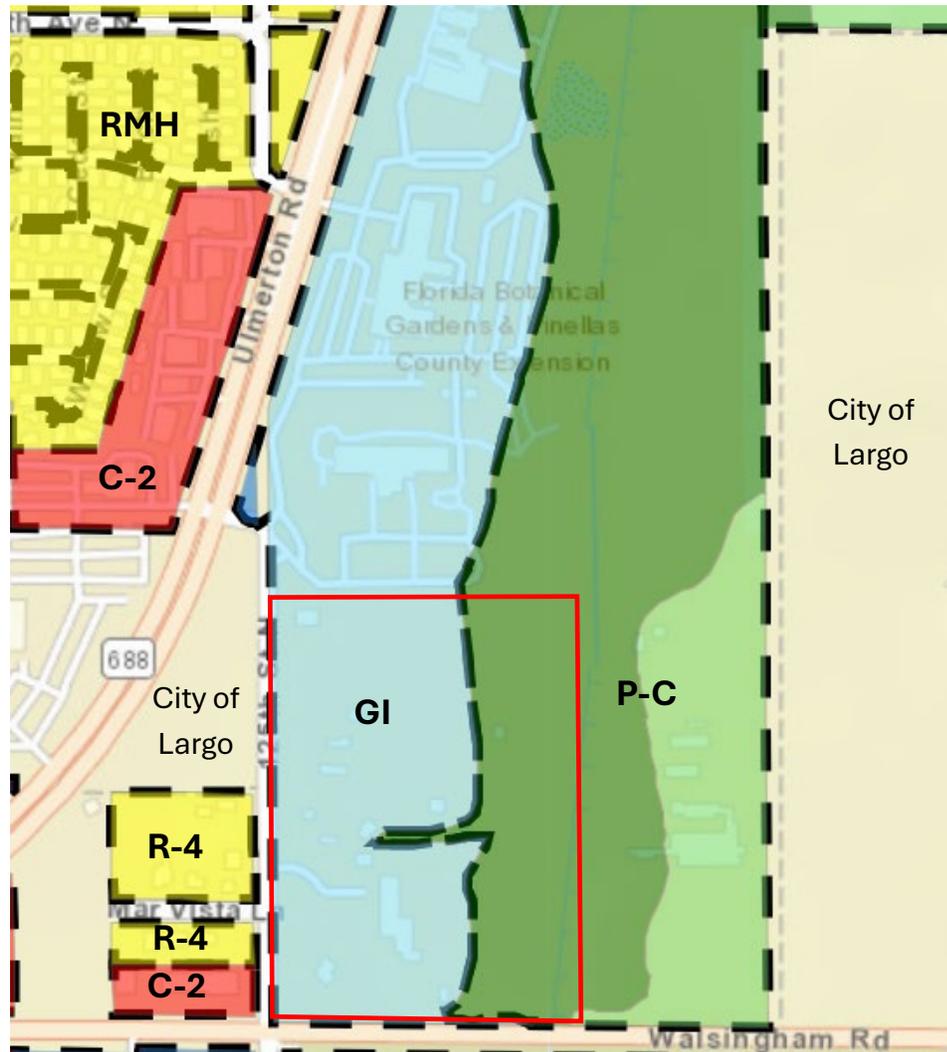


Figure C-4: Zoning and Future Land Use (grounds of Heritage Village outlined in red)
 Source: Pinellas County EGIS, August 2025

Future Land Use:

-  = Institutional (I)
-  = Preservation (P)
-  = Recreation/Open Space (ROS)
-  = Residential Urban (RU)
-  = Commercial General (CG)

-  = City of Largo

Zoning:

- GI** = General Institutional District
- P-C** = Preservation/Conservation District
- R-4** = 1, 2 & 3-Family Residential District
- RMH** = Residential Mobile Home District
- C-2** = General Commercial & Services District

Staff Report for Landmark Designation



Application #: DES-26-001

Proposed Landmark: House of Seven Gables, Heritage Village Museum & Park, Largo

EXHIBIT D – APPLICATION FOR LANDMARK ON A LANDMARK SITE



December 19, 2025

Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board
310 Court Street
Clearwater, Florida 33756

Subject: Historic Landmark Designation – House of Seven Gables

Dear Historic Preservation Board:

This is a letter of consent allowing for submittal of the application to consider designation of the House of Seven Gables as a Landmark on a Landmark Site by the Board of County Commissioners with a recommendation to be provided by the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board. The house was moved to the current Pinellas County property in 1976. In its current location at Heritage Village, the house meets the 50-year criteria for local, historic landmark designation.

Sincerely,

Paul Cozzie
Director
Parks and Conservation Resources



Application for Historic Landmark

Housing & Community Development Department



For office use only:

DES-26-001

CASE NO. ~~DES-26-001~~ DATE SUBMITTED: 10/25/25 BY: Monica Drake

PARCEL ID NO. 09-30-15-00000-230-0100 FILING FEE: \$ 0.00

Date of HPB Hearing Nov. 19, 2023 Date of BCC HEARING: TBD

To assist you in completing this application and providing sufficient information upon which to base a decision on your designation request, please read the following:

- Prior to filing this application, the applicant and/or authorized representative is encouraged to call (727) 464-3585 or visit the Housing & Community Development Department located at 310 Court Street, 1st Floor, downtown Clearwater, FL for a consultation with staff.
- The application must be completed in its entirety including the support documents requested under item 16 before a public hearing for review of the proposed designation is scheduled with the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board.
- If the current property owner is not the applicant, the property owner must provide a letter of consent with notarized signature expressing support for the designation. If the owner is a corporation, trust, or nonprofit organization, an authorized officer of the organization must provide a letter of consent notarized signature expressing support for the designation.
- The applicant or their authorized representative must be present at the public hearings at which time the designation application is reviewed. A public hearing will be held with the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Board and a second public hearing will be held with the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners. Failure to appear may result in denial of the request.
- Suspension of activities. Upon the filing of a designation request, no permits may be issued authorizing building, demolition, relocation or excavation on the subject property until such time as final action by the board of county commissioners has occurred. Any permits issued prior to filing of the designation request may be suspended.
- Public hearings will not be scheduled until a complete designation application is received by the Housing & Community Development Department. Please contact (727) 464-3585 if you need additional assistance or information in order to complete the application.

Thank you!

1. Address of property under consideration: 11909 125th Street, Largo FL 33774

2. Legal description of property under consideration (check here if additional pages are attached):
THE W 1/2 OF W 1/2 OF SEC 09-30-15 LYING E & S OF ULMERTON RD
AND E OF CR 123 LESS WALSINGHAM RD ON S & LESS E 60FT

3. Property Owner: Pinellas County

Mailing Address: 315 Court Street

City: Clearwater State: FL Zip Code: 33756 Phone: (727) 464-3000

Email: _____

4. Applicant Representative (if applicable): Monica Drake

Company Name: Heritage Village Museum & Park

Mailing Address: 11909 125th Street

City: Largo State: FL Zip Code: 33774 Phone: (727) 582-2938

Email: mmdrake@pinellas.gov

5. Disclosure information (This information must be supplied pursuant to County Ordinance No. 74-15):

A. If the owner is a corporation, partnership, or trust, list all persons (i.e. partners, corporate officers, all members of the trust) who are a party to such as well as anyone who may have a beneficial interest in the property which would be affected by any ruling on their application.

Paul Cozzie, Director of Parks & Conservation Resources

Spencer Curtis, Deputy Director of Parks & Conservation Resources

Specify interest held: _____

B. Is there an existing contract for sale of subject property: _____ Yes No

If yes, list names of all parties to the contract including all partners, corporate officers, and members of any trust:

If yes, is the contract conditional or absolute? _____ Conditional _____ Absolute

C. Are there any options to purchase on subject property? _____ Yes No

If so, list names of all parties to option including all partners, corporate officers and members of any trust:

6. Is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application being submitted concurrent with this application? ___Yes No

If yes, a COA is being requested for the following work: _____

7. Size of land parcel: _____ feet by _____ feet; _____ acres

8. Current zoning classification: GI & P-C

9. Current Future Land Use Map designation: Institutional and Preservation

10. Existing structures/improvements on site that are likely to be contributing historic resources:

Primary structure¹: House of Seven Gables Year built: 1907

Accessory structures²: _____ Year built: _____

Other exterior features³: _____ Year built: _____

11. Existing structures and improvements on site that are not likely to be historic resources:

Accessory structures: _____ Year built: _____

Other exterior features: _____ Year built: _____

12. Provide a narrative explaining the architectural, historical, and/or archaeological significance of the proposed historic landmark consistent with the criteria outlined in Section 146-6, Pinellas County Code and any changes made to the property. Attach additional pages and exhibits, as needed.

See section 12 attached.

¹ The principal or most dominant building located on a lot or parcel such as a dwelling, store, or school.

² A building which is subordinate to the principal building providing a support function such as a garage or shed.

³ Improvements on a lot or parcel that are not buildings but enhance use of the property such as a pool or fence.

13. Does the property owner own any property contiguous to the subject property? Yes No

If so, provide an address and/or legal description of the contiguous property:

12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo, FL 33774

14. Please provide the following exhibits as attachments to the application:

- a) Current photographs of subject property including every side of all buildings and structures.
- b) Any historic photographs of subject property, if available.
- c) Property owner's consent letter with date and signature.
- d) Copy of the Florida Master Site File form fo the property, if applicable.
- e) Copy of property boundary survey, if available.

Criteria for designation of a landmark on a landmark site [Sec. 146-6(e), Pinellas County Code]

The board of county commissioners shall have the authority to designate historic resources as a landmark on a landmark site or historic district based upon their significance in the county's history, architecture, archaeology or culture and/or for their integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or association, and because they:

1. Are associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, or architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, the county, southwestern Florida, the state or nation;
2. Are associated with the lives of persons significant in the county's past;
3. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or are the work of a master; or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
4. Have yielded, or are likely to yield, information on history or prehistory; or
5. Are listed or have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A historic resource shall be deemed to have historic or cultural significance if it fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

1. Is associated with the life or activities of a person of importance in local, state, or national history;
2. Is the site of a historic event with a significant effect upon the county, state or nation;
3. Is associated in a significant way with a major historic event;
4. Is exemplary of the historical, political, cultural, economic, or social trends of the community in history; or
5. Is associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution which has contributed substantially to the life of the community.

A historic resource shall be deemed to have architectural or aesthetic significance if it fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

1. It portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive design element or architectural styles;
2. It embodies the characteristics of an architectural style, period or method of construction;
3. It is a historic or outstanding work of a prominent architect, designer, or landscape architect; or
4. It contains elements of design, detail, material, or craftsmanship which are of outstanding quality or which represented, in its time, a significant innovation, adaptation or response to the southwest Florida environment.



History of Site before House was Built

The House of Seven Gables was located in the early “Clear Water Harbor” settlement. Land at the site was originally acquired by James Stevens in 1842 as the result of the Armed Occupation Act. Other early owners of the land (before a structure was built) included John S. Taylor and David B. Turner. David Nevins Starr and wife Mary acquired the tract in 1896. Starr retired from his business activities in Rockford, Illinois, and came to the area in search of a warmer winter climate. Members of the Starr family visited the area before the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway.

Architectural Information

It is considered a variation of a late Queen Anne style. Queen Anne houses first appeared in the United States around the mid-1870s. The popularity of Queen Anne architecture was brief in the United States, barely twenty years. In Florida, the style arrived somewhat late. Many of the Queen Anne houses in Florida are less elaborate than those found elsewhere.

Some of the identifying features of the style are asymmetry, steeply pitch roofs of irregular shapes, patterned shingles, bay windows and other projections and textures to avoid smooth walled appearance, a partial or full width porch, and very ornamental details.

The House of Seven Gables is a two-story house, with an irregular floor plan, resting on a brick pier foundation. The house is characterized by its gable roofs. It has 2 gable roofs facing south (main façade), 2 facing east, 1 facing north and 2 facing west, for a total of 7 gable roofs hence its name. Each gable accentuates verticality and highlights the main areas of the house by breaking with the strong horizontal lines of the elevation and giving it the illusion of extra height at key areas of the two-story house.

Another main characteristic of the house is its porch. It is a one-story porch that starts on the main façade (south side) and goes around the east and south elevations. The deck is bordered by a sawn balustrade which features arched panels beneath the handrail, turned posts supporting the roof flanked by shaped wooden brackets.

Other special architectural details around the house are the gable detailing such as the fish scale wood shingles, the gable ornamental panel and the sunburst motif.

The exterior walls are sheathed in wood drop siding. Most of its windows are one-over-one.

Style: General Characteristics & Specific Details - Interior

The house has a total of 13 rooms. On the first floor we can find the parlor, a side parlor, dining room, butler's pantry, kitchen, service room (+ service stairs). On the second floor there are 5 bedrooms, one bathroom and a storage room plus two screened porches. The first and second floor are connected by the main staircase that leads to a landing with a large window seat below double hung wood windows that once provided a grand view to the bay.

The interior walls and ceiling are stained wood.

Some of the most impressive architectural details on the interior include the main staircase with its spacious landing, the dining room built in cabinets, the pocket doors between the parlor and dining room.

Although the main character of the house has remained the same, the House of Seven Gables has gone through some changes throw-out the years. Based on historic maps there was an expansion done between 1923 and 1929 although there are no details about them, but some of the known additions to the house include

the bedroom addition on the east and the conversion of second floor porch into a storage room.

Restoration: Year moved & Repairs

In 1976, the house was floated down the Intracoastal Waterway and moved from Clearwater Bay to its present location in Heritage Village.

When moved to Heritage Village, the windows on the front façade were fixed glass “picture windows,” placed there by the owners to take advantage of the waterfront views originally available to the house. During the restoration undertaken by Heritage Village, it was changed to double-hung wood windows in an effort to match the original configuration. The 1976 rehabilitation of the house also included removal of the screening on the porch, repair of the beaded board walls on the first and second levels, repair of the (original) fire place and coffered ceiling in the dining room, treating for subterranean termites, a new floor and ceiling in the kitchen and the installation of modern day improvements such as air conditioning and a sprinkler system for fire protection.

Moving of the House to Heritage Village

The structure traveled from Clearwater to the area near Walsingham Road on a barge along the Intracoastal Waterway. Shortly after Seven Gables arrived at the “Pinellas County Historical Park,” carpenters, members of the Clearwater Junior League, and others donated their time to rehabilitate the structure. By the fall of 1977, crews had finished nearly all the major rehabilitative work on Seven Gables. A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place in October 1978.

Historical Connection 1976 USA Bicentennial Movement

The Pinellas County Historical Commission (PCHC) had been established years earlier, on February 21, 1961, by resolution of the Board of County Commissioners under the authority of Florida Statute Chapter 125.47. Although that statute was repealed in 1971, the Commission’s mission endured with renewed purpose.¹

By 1975, with the nation’s Bicentennial on the horizon, the Commission recognized an opportunity to translate national enthusiasm for history into a lasting local

¹ *Pinellas County Historical Commission, “Statement of Purpose,” 1975, Pinellas County Historical Commission Records, Box 16, Folder “1975,” Heritage Village Library & Archives Special Collection, Largo, Florida.*

legacy. On April 15, 1975, Mr. George Gramling wrote to Mr. G. Leonard Pucci, Chairman of the PCHC, enclosing what he called “the final draft of our statement of purpose.”² This document outlined “all the activities and potential activities the historical commission should endeavor to undertake,”³ capturing both the national mood of commemoration and the Commission’s local ambitions.

Reflecting on the Bicentennial spirit, Gramling observed:

“Today America is experiencing a renaissance, a period of artistic and intellectual revival. There is a reawakened public curiosity about the past... museums and national monuments report remarkable increases in attendance.”⁴

In his letter, Gramling underscored the enduring value of preservation, quoting George Brown Goode of the Smithsonian Institution, who in 1881 defined a museum’s purpose as preserving “the phenomena of nature and the works of man.”⁵ Guided by that philosophy, Gramling and the PCHC envisioned a county museum of record, research, and education—one that would preserve “the material foundations of knowledge, especially the materials relating to Pinellas County and the West Coast of Florida.”⁶

A Museum in the Making

By the mid-1970s, that vision was taking shape. Two urgent needs propelled the effort forward.

The first was the inadequate condition of the existing Pinellas County Museum and Archives, then located in the basement of the old county courthouse. Since 1961, County Historian Ralph Reed, working closely with the Junior League of Clearwater, had been collecting and cataloging artifacts that documented the county’s past. By 1975, however, the cramped basement quarters were overflowing and ill-suited for a growing collection.

The second need arose from the imminent threat to two historic homes facing demolition amid new development. The Junior League of Clearwater played a leading role in saving the Henry B. Plant Home, initially proposing a historical site to the City of Clearwater. Although the city expressed interest, it ultimately had neither land nor funds to support the idea.

² George Gramling to G. Leonard Pucci, April 15, 1975, *Pinellas County Historical Commission Records*, Box 16, Folder “1975,” Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, Florida.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Pinellas County Historical Commission. *Statement of Purpose*. 1975. *Pinellas County Historical Commission Records*. Box 16, Folder “1975.” Heritage Village Library & Archives Special Collection, Largo, Florida.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *Ibid*

Undeterred, the Junior League joined forces with the Pinellas County Historical Commission to find an alternative. In a September 2, 1975 letter to D. A. Minotti, President of the Greater Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, Gramling reported:

“At the present time, Pinellas County has proposed a 10-acre tract of land, \$30,000, and the two frame houses facing the courthouse; the Junior League has committed \$30,000 and the Henry B. Plant home.”⁷

Overcoming Obstacles and Gaining Recognition

Progress, however, met resistance. The Greater Clearwater Chamber of Commerce initially objected to moving the museum outside the city. Gramling, in his reply to Minotti, urged cooperation and warned that “the deadline for submitting projects for the Bicentennial funds was rapidly approaching.”⁸ Despite opposition, the PCHC persisted and ultimately secured a \$25,000 Bicentennial grant—the second-largest awarded in Florida.

Less than a month later, on September 24, 1975, a letter confirmed that the Pinellas County Historical Commission’s project—then called *Heritage Park*—had been designated an official Bicentennial Project by the State Bicentennial Committee.⁹

By March 1976, the St. Petersburg Times announced that the County Commission had “approved \$60,000 to construct a temporary Florida Cracker-style building to house the new museum.”¹⁰ Soon after, the Plant-Sumner House and the House of Seven Gables were relocated to the site.

History of Occupants

- David N. and Mary Starr were the first occupants of the house. The Starrs also had a connection with John Cheyney, an early settler and “sponge hooker” in Tarpon Springs who played an important role in establishing the sponge diving industry. Cheyney had served as manager of the Anclote and Rock Island Sponge Company as early as 1891, nearly fourteen years before the first Greek sponge divers arrived in the region. Starr’s older brother, Henry, had a daughter named Mabel. This woman, David’s niece, married John Cheyney. David Starr frequently visited with John and

⁷ Pinellas County Historical Commission, “Status on Pinellas County Historical Park Correspondence,” 26 August 1975, Special Collection 16, Folder 1975.

⁸ Pinellas County Historical Commission, “Collection of Comments and Ideas for Review by the Pinellas County Historical Commission for Further Action,” 19 November 1974, Heritage Village Library & Archives Special Collection, Box 16, Folder 1974.

⁹ Cynthia Bowman to Gary Wetherington, September 24, 1975, *Pinellas County Historical Commission Records*, Box 16, Folder “1974,” Heritage Village Library & Archives Special Collection, Largo, Florida.

¹⁰ St. Petersburg Times (St. Petersburg, Fla.), March 8, 1976, p. 28,

<https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/march-8-1976-page-28-70/docview/2035445016/se-2> (accessed October 6, 2025).

Mabel Cheyney during his later years, and discussed business ventures, including Cheyney's investments in a lumber mill and in citrus and developments around the Lake Butler region.

- After selling Seven Gables in 1917, Starr continued to visit the region. He lived the last six years of his life in Tarpon Springs.
- A number of owners and occupants stayed at the structure through the mid-1920s, including an Episcopal minister named Arthur R. Cornwell who lived at Seven Gables during the construction of his church's rectory.
- Chester and Lucy Masslich owned the building from 1925 through 1943. During part of this period, city directories referred to the structure as "Seven Gables Inn" or noted that the boarding house had "furnished rooms." The rooming house also included a gazebo by this time. For a brief period, near the height of the land boom, a "binder boys" club met/stayed at the home. These speculators often sold prime tracts of land for handsome profits during the land boom of the 1920s.
- Many tenants stayed in the guest rooms at the structure.
- Charles and Clara Dietrich acquired the house during the mid-1940s. They came from Ohio by way of Orlando. The Dietrich family sold the house in 1951 and returned to Orlando.
- The Hemerick family acquired the house in 1953 and made necessary repairs. They owned the structure through the mid-1970s. Williams & Walker architects acquired the site from the Hemericks, and donated the structure for a planned historical museum that became Heritage Village. This structure and the Plant-Sumner House were scheduled to arrive before the museum complex had even been built.

Section 14.

a. Current photographs/elevations

South-East Elevation



East Elevation



South-West Elevation



North-West Elevation



Staff Report for Landmark Designation



Application #: DES-26-001

Proposed Landmark: House of Seven Gables, Heritage Village Museum & Park, Largo

EXHIBIT E: FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE FORM FOR SEVEN GABLES

Page 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Update (give site#)	<p>HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE Version 3.1 6/05 <i>Consult Guide to Historical Structure Forms for detailed instructions.</i></p>	Site #8 <u>PI-11521</u> Recorder # _____ Field Date <u>8 / 15 / 2005</u> Form Date ___/___/___
Site Name(s) (address if none) <u>House of Seven Gables</u> Multiple Listing [DHR only] Survey # _____ National Register Category (Please check one: consult with Site File before using last four): <input type="checkbox"/> building <input type="checkbox"/> structure <input type="checkbox"/> district <input type="checkbox"/> site <input type="checkbox"/> object		
LOCATION & IDENTIFICATION		
Address (Include N,S,E,W; #; St., Ave., etc.) <u>Heritage Village – Pinellas County Government, 11909 – 125th Street North</u> Cross Streets (nearest / between) <u>Ulmerton Road / Walsingham Road</u> City / Town (within 3 miles) <u>Largo</u> In Current City Limits: <input type="checkbox"/> y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n <input type="checkbox"/> unknown County <u>Pinellas County</u> Tax Parcel #(s) <u>09 / 30 / 15 / 00000 / 230 / 0100</u> Subdivision name <u>not applicable</u> Block _____ Lot _____ Ownership (Please check one): <input type="checkbox"/> private-profit <input type="checkbox"/> private-individual <input type="checkbox"/> city <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> county <input type="checkbox"/> Native American <input type="checkbox"/> private-nonprofit <input type="checkbox"/> private-unspecified <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> federal <input type="checkbox"/> foreign <input type="checkbox"/> unknown Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) <u>Pinewood Cultural Park – Pinellas County Government</u> Route to (especially if no street address) _____		
MAPPING		
USGS 7.5' Map Name & Date <u>Clearwater 1974</u> Township <u>30S</u> Range <u>15E</u> Section <u>09</u> ¼ section: <input type="checkbox"/> NW <input type="checkbox"/> SW <input type="checkbox"/> SE <input type="checkbox"/> NE <input type="checkbox"/> Irregular-name: _____ Landgrant _____ UTM: Zone <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 17 Easting _____ 0 Northing _____ 0 Plat or other map (map's name, location) <u>not applicable</u>		
DESCRIPTION		
Style* <u>Queen Anne (Revival)</u> Exterior Plan* <u>irregular</u> Number of Stories <u>two</u> Structural System(s) * <u>wood frame</u> Foundation: Type(s) * <u>piers</u> Material(s) * <u>brick</u> Exterior Fabric(s) * <u>drop siding</u> Roof: Type(s) * <u>cross-gabled</u> Material(s) * <u>asphalt shingles</u> Roof secondary strucs. (dormers etc.) * <u>not applicable</u> Chimney: No. <u>3</u> Material(s) * <u>brick</u> Location(s) * <u>Gable: pitched roof, ridge, Gable end: pitched roof, exterior, Gable: pitched roof, offset (slope)</u> Windows (types, materials, etc.) * <u>DHS; wood; 1/1, DHS; wood; paired; 1/1, DHS; wood; ribbon (3); 1/1, DHS; wood; ribbon (4); 1/1 Casement; wood, rectangular</u> Main Entrance (stylistic details) <u>On the main façade & east elevation is a one-story veranda whose hipped roof supported by turned posts flanked by shaped wooden brackets, deck bordered by a balustrade with turned balusters which feature arched panels beneath the handrail.</u> Porches: #open <u>one</u> #closed _____ #incised _____ Location(s) <u>N & S/ENTRANCE</u> Porch roof type(s) <u>hipped roof</u> Exterior Ornament <u>Vergeboard that has been decorated with a quatrefoil and foliate cutouts, fish-scaled shingles & knee brackets</u> Interior Plan* <u>irregular</u> Condition (Please check one): <input type="checkbox"/> excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good <input type="checkbox"/> fair <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> ruinous Surroundings (N=None, S=Some, M=Most, A=All/nearly all): <u>N</u> commercial <u>N</u> residential <u>A</u> institutional <u>N</u> undeveloped Ancillary Features (No., type of outbuildings; major landscape features. Use continuation sheet for descriptions of interior, landscaping, etc.) <u>The House of Seven Gables located in Heritage Village at Pinewood Cultural Park – a Pinellas County government program. See attached sheet.</u> Archaeological Remains _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Check if Archaeological Form completed c Consult Guide to Historical Structure Forms for preferred descriptions (coded fields at the Site File).		
DHR USE ONLY ***** OFFICIAL EVALUATIONS ***** DHR USE ONLY		
NR DATE ___/___/___ DELIST DATE ___/___/___	KEEPER-NR ELIGIBILITY <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no SHPO-NR ELIGIBILITY: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> potentially elig. <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient info LOCAL DESIGNATION: _____ Local office _____ National Register Criteria for Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> a <input type="checkbox"/> b <input type="checkbox"/> c <input type="checkbox"/> d (See National Register Bulletin 15, p. 2)	Date ___/___/___ Date ___/___/___ Date ___/___/___
HR6E063R06-05 Florida Master Site File / Division of Historical Resources / R. A. Gray Building / 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250 Phone (850) 245-6440 / Suncom 205-6440 / Fax (850) 245-6439 / E-mail fmsfile@dos.state.fl.us Computer File P:\FSFIDOC\S\MOM\mom_docs\SS_FORM_V3.0.doc		

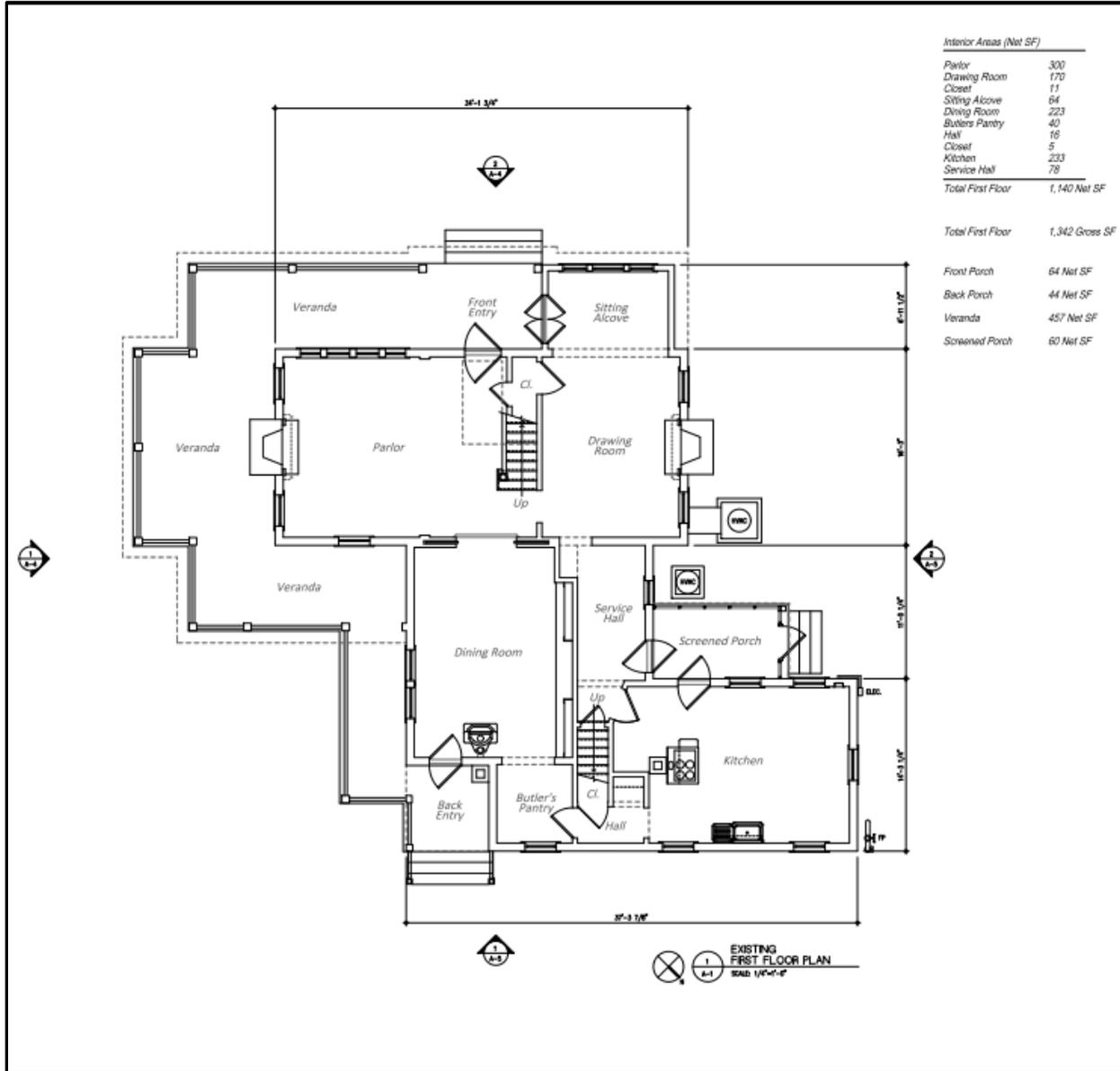
Staff Report for Landmark Designation



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EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SHEET NO.: A-1 OF SHEETS	SHEET TITLE: FIRST FLOOR PLAN	PROJECT NO.: 200403 DATE: 04/29/2004 DRAWN BY: PJP REVISIONS:	As-Built CAD Drawings HISTORIC HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES 11929 125th Street North, Largo, Florida 33774 Pinellas County 400 S. Ft. Harrison, Clearwater, Florida 33756	 RENKER · EICH · PARKS ARCHITECTS <small>LLC, AA 000447 1600 Dr. North Lottor Hwy. N. Street North • St. Petersburg, Florida • 33704-4205 • (727) 921-0800</small>
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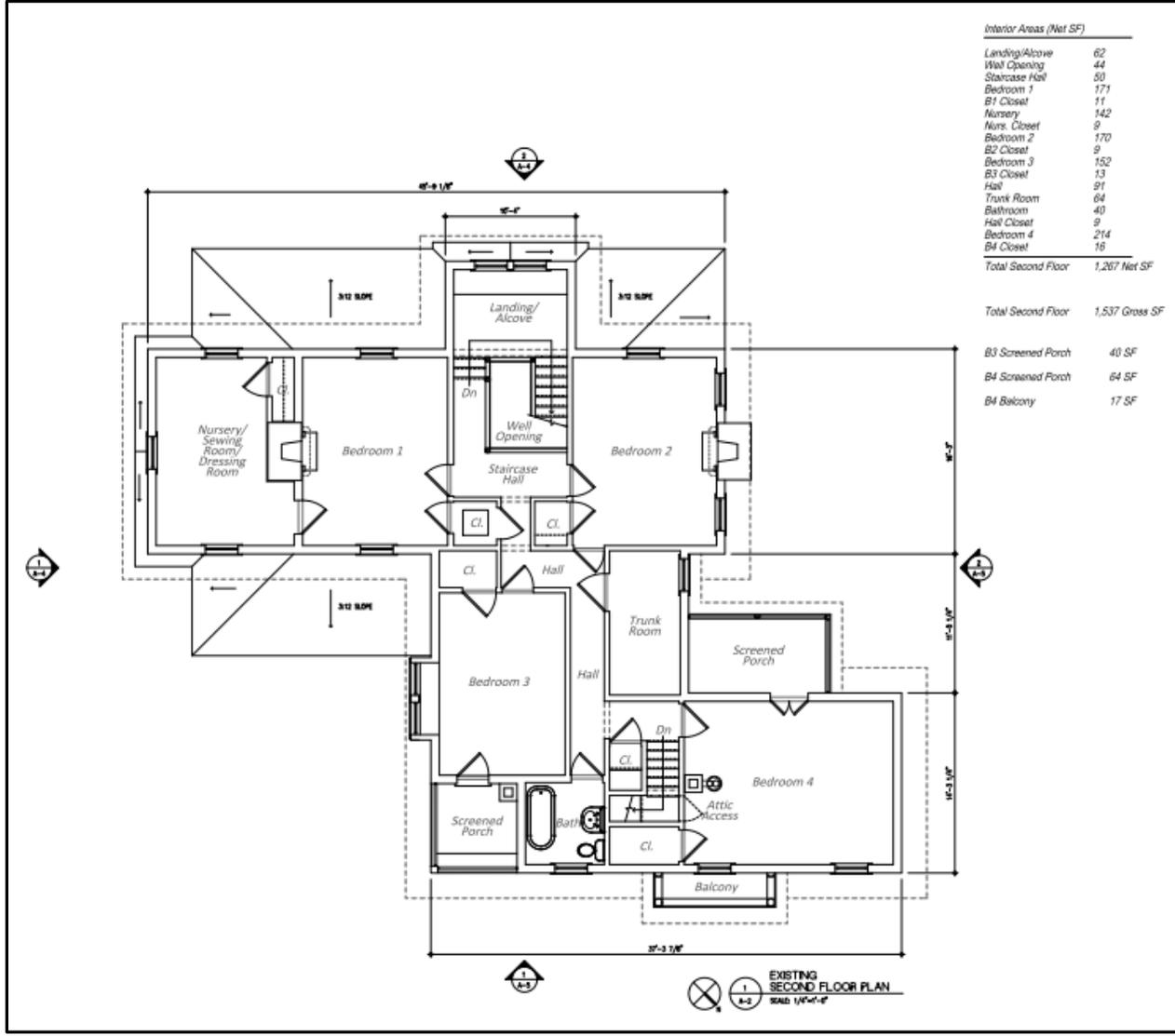
Staff Report for Landmark Designation



Application #: DES-26-001

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EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, SECOND FLOOR PLAN



SHEET NO. A-2 OF SHEETS	SHEET TITLE SECOND FLOOR PLAN	PROJECT NO.: 200403 DATE: 6/29/04 DRAWN BY: JPP REVISIONS:	As-Built CAD Drawings HISTORIC HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES 11909 125th Street North, Largo, Florida 33774 Pinellas County 400 S. FL Harrison, Clearwater, Florida 33756	 RENKER · EICH · PARKS ARCHITECTS <small>LL, AA 000447 1600 Dr. North Luther King Jr. Street North • St. Petersburg, Florida • 33704-4203 • (727) 921-0900</small>
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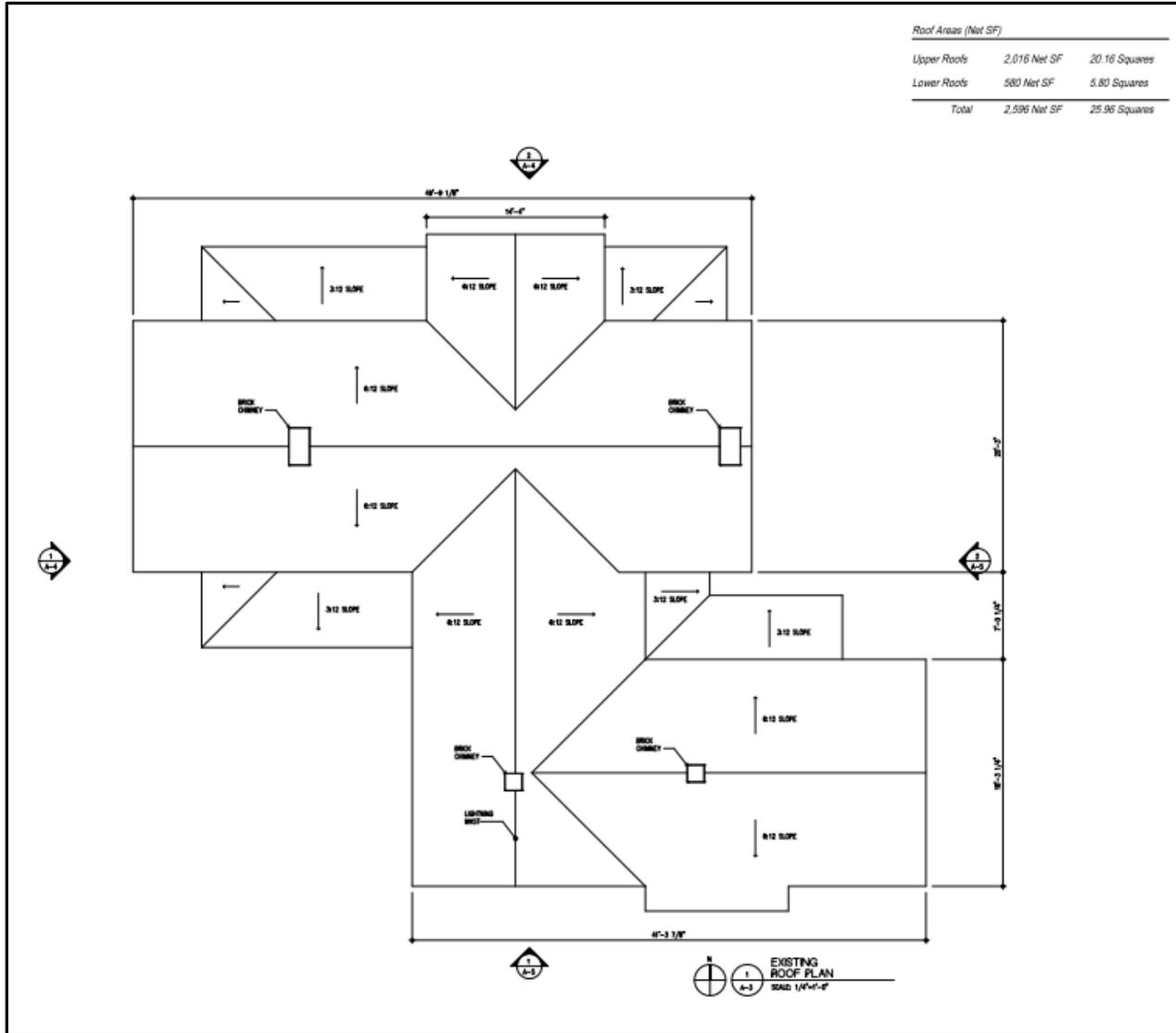
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EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, ROOF PLAN



SHEET NO. A-3 OF SHEETS	SHEET TITLE	PROJECT NO. 22848 DATE: 04/07/2020 DRAWN BY: JPP CHECKED BY: JPP	As-Built CAD Drawings HISTORIC HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES 11569 125th Street North, Largo, Florida 33774 Pinellas County 400 S. Ft. Harrison, Clearwater, Florida 33756	 RENKER · EICH · PARKS ARCHITECTS <small>LIC. ARCH. 0001447 1400 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street North St. Petersburg, Florida 33714-1001 (727) 821-1000</small>
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EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, SOUTHEAST ELEVATION (Originally the Harborside façade)



EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, NORTHEAST ELEVATION (Originally the Inland-side façade)



SHEET NO. A-5 OF SHEETS	SHEET TITLE	PROJECT NO.: 22040 DATE: 04/20/20 DRAWN BY: JPH CHECKED BY: JPH REVISIONS:	As-Built CAD Drawings HISTORIC HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES 11929 125th Street North, Largo, Florida 33774 Pinellas County 400 S. FL Harrison, Clearwater, Florida 33755	 RENKER · EICH · PARKS ARCHITECTS <small>45, AA 000467 1616 St. North Lutzler Way at Street North • St. Petersburg, Florida • 33705-4255 • (727) 621-1882</small>
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Application #: DES-26-001

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EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, SOUTHWEST ELEVATION



EXHIBIT F – AS-BUILT DRAWINGS, NORTHWEST ELEVATION



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EXHIBIT G: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The following is an excerpt from a narrative prepared by James Anthony Schnur on the history of The House of Seven Gables:

The House of Seven Gables: Winter Residence for the Starr Family

David Nevins Starr purchased land at the original site of The House of Seven Gables in 1896. Although born in Illinois, David came from a family with connections to antebellum Florida. His father, Melancthon Starr, a native of Albany, New York, married Lucretia Mary Nevins, a native of Norwich, Connecticut in December 1839. They exchanged vows in New York City, and shortly thereafter, Melancthon became a broker and merchant who handled cotton transactions between southern farmsteads and northern merchants. His work brought him, Lucretia, and their infant son, Henry Nevins Starr, to Tallahassee in the early 1840s. While in Tallahassee, Lucretia gave birth to two daughters, Florida Lucretia (born 3 August 1842, a day before Congress passed the Armed Occupation Act) and Elizabeth Smith (born 5 January 1846). Despite the profits he earned from this work, family histories claimed that Melancthon despised the institution of slavery. In the late 1840s, he decided to leave Tallahassee and return to New York City, where he worked as a cashier in a Wall Street bank. In 1850, the family headed from New York to the Midwest. According to one account as soon as the family came over the ridge and saw the small settlement on the Rock River, Lucretia became captivated by the beautiful village of Rockford, Illinois. The Starrs decided to stay in Rockford, the county seat of Winnebago County and the birthplace of their youngest three children: Chandler (born 29 April 1851), David Nevins (born 9 October 1853), and Lucretia (born 20 April 1857). They had settled in Rockford by the time census agents visited their home on 20 December 1850.¹

As the Starr family grew in the community, the town of Rockford transformed into a city. During the early 1850s, Melancthon ran a dry goods market at the center of town. He soon formed a banking partnership with Thomas D. Robertson known as Robertson and Starr, a firm that later became Winnebago National Bank. He joined the local Unitarian church, one of two in Illinois at the time, and his strong feelings against chattel slavery led him to support the Republican Party. Though Melancthon enjoyed great success in business, the spring of 1857 brought him both joy and sorrow. On April 20, he and Lucretia celebrated the birth of their youngest child and her namesake, Lucretia

¹ Census records described in this narrative reside in building files located at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Newton Bateman, Paul Selby, and Charles A. Church, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois (Chicago: Munsell Pub. Co., 1916), 1227; Raymond F. Kearney, House on the Hill: 405 Summer Street (Rockford, Ill.: R. F. Kearney, 1981), 1-3.

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Starr. Six days later, Melancthon's wife passed away. Ellen Marilla Townsend, a young schoolteacher from New England, arrived in Rockford by 1859. Melancthon fell in love with Ellen, and they exchanged vows on 5 August 1861. Ellen raised the younger children and joined her husband in supporting the prohibitionist movement by forming a local chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Before his death in November 1885, Melancthon served as vice president of the Winnebago National Bank, brought speakers to appear at Rockford's Lyceum programs, and helped to fund and establish the Rockford Public Library in 1872.²

The Starr children contributed to the development of Rockford during that city's early years. Henry Nevins Starr, the eldest child, followed his father's footsteps by operating Andrews & Starr Dry Good in or about 1858. He later served as proprietor of the Holland House, a famous hotel in Rockford, worked as treasurer of the John P. Manny Mower Company, and went on to be Rockford's mayor in 1891.

In their youth, David and Chandler Starr became baseball pioneers. Many young men gathered to play cricket in Rockford during the city's early years. By 1865, an insurance agent named John Lewis had moved from Cincinnati to Rockford and brought along a book of baseball rules. With assistance from older brother Henry, David and Chandler decided to create a baseball to Lewis's specifications by getting an old shoe sole for the core, covering it with yarn, and using an orange peel as a model for the ball's cover. The Starr brothers helped to bring together the Forest City Baseball Club in Rockford, a notable team during the early years of professional baseball. Albert Goodwill Spalding, a member of this team, went on to pitch for the Boston Red Stockings of the National Association and the Chicago White Stockings of the National League during the 1870s, where he compiled an amazing win-loss pitching record of 253-65. Spalding, an associate of the Starrs, later founded the company that manufactures sports balls of many kinds to this day.

David Starr, the fifth of Melancthon's six children, became the first family member to acquire substantial landholdings in Florida. As a young man, David courted Mary Palmer Robertson, the daughter of Thomas Duncan and Elizabeth Ann Taylor Robertson. The 1870 census places the Robertson, Starr, and Manny families as neighbors along the same street in Rockford. One of the city's largest landowners during the 1800s, the Robertson family became prominent in the city's expanding business enterprises. By 1870, Thomas Robertson listed his profession as attorney-at-law, his family's real estate carried a value of \$147,000, and his personal estate exceeded \$50,000. Mary Robertson exchanged vows with David Nevins Starr on 30 December 1879. By this time, Starr

² Ibid., "History of Rockford" and "RPL History," available at the Rockford Public Library website, <http://www.rpl/rockford/org>; "Rockford, Illinois," city website with chronology of events available at: <http://www.rockfordillinois.com/chron.htm>.

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worked in the store of his brother-in-law, C. W. Brown. By the early 1880s Starr was already traveling to the Pinellas Peninsula.³

An early edition of the *West Hillsborough Times* noted that David Starr purchased land on the Pinellas Peninsula as early as the spring of 1886. Although he did not acquire the Seven Gables property until 1896—ten years later—Starr came to the small settlement of Clear Water Harbor with C. W. Brown two years before the Orange Belt Railway arrived. The following account appeared in the 1 April 1886 edition of the newspaper:

*(T)he winter just past found Mr. Brown, with quite a crowd of relatives and friends, citizens pro tem of our town. They leased the 'Orange Bluff,' and occupied it as a home for some months. Among the relatives of his, was a Mr. David N. Starr, a brother-in-law of Mr. Brown, and it was to this gentleman that the last sale, of one lot, was made.*⁴

The article then inferred that Brown and Starr had visited Florida on earlier occasions:

*Taking into consideration the fact that, these parties are not strangers to our State, and made these purchases just on the eve of their departure, and after they had spent sufficient time in Clear Water to get their eyes fully open, and the influence they wield at home, we are constrained to believe that another wedge has been entered, that will soon open up things on our side of the county.*⁵

Starr, Brown, and other unnamed family members most certainly arrived by steamship. They stayed in the region during the winter months, and returned to Illinois as spring thawed the Rock River. Without a direct rail connection to Clear Water at that time, the correspondent believed that “the lack of speedy and frequent communications with the balance of the world” hindered settlement. Nevertheless, the article mentioned “the day is close at hand” for the arrival of the railroad, because of the resources that will follow “whenever such individuals can be induced to settle near our door.”⁶

Although the Starrs visited the area by the mid-1880s, they continued to call Rockford their permanent home. The Starrs welcomed the arrival of two children, Virginia and Clinton Starr. Meanwhile, David worked in various business ventures during the 1880s and 1890s. Florida’s mild

³ Ibid; “Robertson, Thomas Duncan,” available at: <http://www.chicago-scots.org/clubs/History/Names-R.htm>; Ruth N. Lunde, board member, Rockford Historical Society, to Mrs. Sheahan, 3 April 2000, copy available in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

⁴ West Hillsborough Times, 1 April 1886.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

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winter climate may have attracted Starr to spend time in Florida: According to research conducted by a member of the Rockford Historical Society, David Starr spent part of 1900 at the city's tuberculosis sanitarium. Mary Starr's father, Thomas Duncan Robertson, passed away on 4 February 1902. Robertson's last will, written in September 1897, named three major beneficiaries: wife Elizabeth, son William T., and daughter Mary P. Starr. Rockford city directories between 1903 and 1920 place the Starrs in that community, but do not list any occupation. The size of Mary's inheritance may have provided them with more than enough funds to allow David to retire and continue his involvement in Florida real estate. Early maps of Clearwater subdivisions often describe the area north of Harbor Oaks (between Druid, Fort Harrison, and Turner) as the "Starr and S. Avery" development.⁷

The House of Seven Gables occupied a prominent location along the bluffs overlooking Clearwater Bay. The home sat on a large plot of land in the Markley's Shore area, due west of the present-day Pinellas County courthouse. This asymmetrical structure included wings and gables in many directions, an impressive porch, and other features typical of Queen Anne homes from the late 1800s and early 1900s. First occupied in 1907, the House of Seven Gables served as the winter residence for the Starrs until 1917. As the Starrs enjoyed their retirement, they also spent a great deal of time with a family member who moved to Florida and married an early resident of Tarpon Springs.

Mabel Starr Englebretson—daughter of Henry Starr and niece of David Starr—married John King Cheyney in Rockford on 17 July 1897. Her union with Cheyney marked her second marriage. Cheyney, an 1858 native of Philadelphia, worked in Pennsylvania banks from the age of sixteen. By 1889, he became a paymaster along the Altoona stretch of the Pennsylvania Railway. His father, Waldron Cheyney, had cultivated a partnership with Hamilton Disston and acquired large tracts of land in Pasco and western Hillsborough counties. John Cheyney decided to move to Florida to look over his father's land holdings in 1889. Shortly after settling in Tarpon Springs, he expressed an interest in the phosphate business but soon thereafter took notice of the local sponge industry along the Gulf of Mexico and the Anclote River. At that time, nearly all spongers along the Florida coast based their operations out of Key West. By 1891, John K. Cheyney had established the Anclote and Rock Island Sponge Company. Cheyney soon brought associates from Key West, Apalachicola, Philadelphia, and other areas; he purchased land on Bailey's Bluff, an area where divers brought their sponge harvests to cure and entered into partnerships with other early families. H. F. Pent constructed a launch for Cheyney's boats, including the *Asa Lowe* (named after a

⁷ Lundy to Sheahan, 3 April 2000; "Robertson, Thomas Duncan," available at: <http://www.chicagoscotts.org/clubs/History/Names-R.htm>;

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member of the pioneer Lowe family in Anona) and the *Silver Spray*. Soon, many of the early Tarpon residents—including members of the Fernald, Meres, Noblit, and Pinder families—engaged directly or indirectly in the sponge diving industry. Cheyney helped to transform Tarpon Springs into the center of Florida’s sponge industry. By the early 1900s, a formal sponge exchange existed; Cheyney hired John Cocoris, a Greek immigrant who encouraged others to move from Greece and the Aegean Islands to Tarpon.⁸

The Starrs and Cheyneys spent a great deal of time at Seven Gables during the winter months. With the Cheyneys living in the area throughout the year, they probably checked on the house during their frequent visits and business trips to Clearwater. By early 1910, fifty-six-year-old David and fifty-three-year-old Mary hired a live-in cook, Fanny Williams. An African American and native of Alabama, the forty-two-year-old Williams claimed to have eleven children at the time of the census. It remains unclear where Fanny Williams lived on the property, whether she occupied the structure when the Starrs returned to Illinois, if any other members of her family lived or worked at the house, and how long she remained on the premises. A June 1913 Sanborn fire insurance map shows properties along Bay Avenue but fails to include the western portion of the Starrs’s property, Seven Gables, or the bluff. It does, however, indicate the presence of a small, one-story structure close to the road with the label “servts”; this tiny building, probably comparable in size to the restored Boyer Cottage [at Heritage Village], may have served as Williams’s residence.⁹

Though the Starrs sold the House of Seven Gables on 3 April 1917, they continued to visit the Pinellas Peninsula. For example, the 20 April 1918 *Tarpon Springs Evening Leader* announced that “Mr. and Mrs. David Starr, of Rockford, Ill., arrived last night to be the guests for a time of Mr. John K. Cheyney. They will be welcomed by a host of friends here.” Later that year, both the Starrs and Cheyneys watched as twenty-year-old daughter, Starr Cheyney, briefly entered noncombat military service at the end of the First World War. She served in the United States Navy as a “landsman” at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. After the war ended, Starr Cheyney went on inactive duty on 30 January 1919 and received her discharge papers on 28 October 1920 with the rank of “Yeoman 3 Class Female.” The Cheyneys looked forward to their daughter’s return. In March 1921, the office of

⁸ Tarpon Springs Leader, 5 January 1961; *Makers of America: An Historical and Biographical Work* by an Able Corps of Writers, Published Under the Patronage of the Florida Historical Society, Jacksonville, Florida (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1909-1911), vol. 4, 68-70; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 229; R. F.

⁹ Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; “History of Seven Gables,” manuscript researched by Bill Heath and Mike Sanders and compiled by Ken Ford, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Sanborn Map Company, *Fire Insurance Maps: Florida* (Teaneck, N.J. : Chadwyck-Healey, 1983), June 1913 map, microfilm reel 1.

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the *Clearwater Sun* “was brightened” when Starr Cheyney telephoned them to say she had just celebrated her birthday and “was old enough to vote.”¹⁰

By 1920, the Starrs had returned to Rockford. Mary did not feel very well in the autumn of 1921. After the Starrs arrived in Los Angeles, California, Mary passed away on November 5. David returned her body for burial at the family lot in Rockford’s Greenwood Cemetery.¹¹ As he reached his late sixties, in 1922 or 1923, Starr married Leadocia R. Hyans, a native of Louisiana twenty-eight years younger than him. By April 1927, Starr decided to purchase land in Tarpon Springs and have his final retirement home built. While staying at the Cheyney’s home during a visit from Orlando, the Starrs saw a lot on the corner of Banana and Lemon streets in Tarpon that interested them. In a thirty-six-hour period culminating on April 13, Starr acquired the land and contacted contractors Humphreys and Joy to build him a large cottage house costing about \$10,000. David Starr enjoyed his new home, but his health started to deteriorate by the late 1920s. While driving with his wife on the afternoon of 28 April 1933, David quickly became ill and they promptly returned to their home at 122 Banana Street. By four o’clock, Starr had passed away. By April 27, members of the funeral party took a train from Tarpon springs to Starr’s final resting place, a cemetery in his second wife’s hometown of Baton Rouge.¹²

Seven Gables: A Boarding House

The House of Seven Gables served as a private residence, rooming house, and social club during the next twenty-seven years. Joseph B. Carse acquired the property from the Starrs on 3 April 1917. A native of New York, Carse probably came to Pinellas County to take advantage of the frenzied real estate speculation that resumed after the end of World War I. Substantial improvements to roadways connecting towns, regular train service, and other enhancements in transportation brought newcomers to the region after Armistice Day. Carse occupied Seven Gables for barely two years before selling the property to Annie D. Kelley on 16 April 1919. Sometime in or about July 1920 Kelley allowed the new pastor of a local church to live in the House of Seven Gables for approximately three years while architects designed a new rectory.¹³ Annie Kelley’s generosity benefited Arthur Temple Cornwell, Rector of the Church of the Ascension in Clearwater.

¹⁰ “Seven Gables Actual Ownership Information ,” compiled on 22 by William R. and Elizabeth H. Heath; Tarpon Springs Evening Leader, 20 April 1918, 29 April 1918; Tarpon Springs Leader, 28 March 1921, 13

¹¹ Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Lundy to Sheahan, 3 April 2000.

¹² Tarpon Springs Leader, 13 April 1927, 28 April 1933; St. Petersburg Times, 26 April 1933. Files at Heritage Village include a certified copy of David N. Starr’s death certificate.

¹³ Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; “Seven Gables Actual

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A native of Bayonne, New Jersey, born 27 October 1873, Arthur moved to Tarpon Springs as an eleven-year-old child in 1884. The following year, his parents—Arthur Temple, Sr., and Catherine DeCoudress Cornwell—decided to settle in Bradenton, then known as Braidentown. Arthur’s father began his duties as a Manatee County judge, while the Cornwell family played an important role in establishing an Episcopalian church on land donated by Captain John Fogarty at Fogartyville along the Manatee River. By 1889, the congregation constructed Christ Episcopal Church on Sarasota Avenue, the first formal church for Episcopalians in Manatee County. In 1891, the elder Cornwell acquired the *Manatee River Journal*, a weekly with a circulation of 300. By May 1903, Judge Cornwell became the first mayor of the newly incorporated City of Braidentown. He also served on the Manatee County Commission and the Board of Public Instruction.¹⁴

The younger Cornwell followed in his father’s business and religious footsteps. After graduating from the East Florida Seminary, now the University of Florida, Arthur worked as editor and general manager of the *Manatee River Journal*. He married Holly Murphy, daughter of a cattle rancher, in 1898. They had three daughters: Ellene Stanley, Emma, and Elizabeth. Arthur spent approximately nineteen years in the newspaper business and other commercial pursuits before beginning his training for the Episcopal ministry with a priest who individually tutored him. After his ordination in 1910, Arthur and his family served in several churches. By 1920, Cornwell came to Clearwater from a parish in Bolivar, Tennessee.¹⁵

The Cornwells lived in the House of Seven Gables for nearly three years. They witnessed the wrath of the October 1921 hurricane that damaged structures throughout Pinellas County, though left their imposing house on the bluff untouched with only a few broken tree branches on the property. Soon after his arrival, Rev. Cornwell established two important goals for his tenure at Ascension: to obtain parish status for the church and to oversee the construction of a new house of worship. He realized his first goal by 30 March 1922, when the area’s Episcopal bishop signaled his approval of a new parish. He then sought to replace the small wooden building erected in 1887 at the former Haven Street and Fort Harrison. Services began in the new white stone Gothic structure in 1925. He remained in Clearwater and was buried in Clearwater cemetery after his death in 1955.¹⁶ The Seven Gables property offered ample space for picnics and other family activities. One daughter,

Ownership Information,” compiled on 22 by William R. and Elizabeth H. Heath.

¹⁴ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 251; Sabine Brumby Korosy, *The First Hundred Years, 1885-1985: The Church of the Ascension* (Clearwater: n.p., 1985), 11-13; Ollie Z. Fogarty, *They Called It Fogartyville: A Story of the Fogartys and Fogartyville* (Brooklyn: Theo. Gaus’ Sons, Inc., 1972), 102-106, 113, 150, 157, 162-163, 172.

¹⁵ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 251; Korosy, *The First Hundred Years*, 11-13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, *Clearwater Sun*, 11 May 1984.

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Bradenton native Ellene Stanley, remembered frequent visits to the house when returning from her classes at the Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) at Tallahassee. In a 1984 interview, she recalled her family's time at the thirteen-room home in the 1920s:

I'd come home from FSU on holidays and in the summertime. Seven Gables was a lovely place to live and a nice place for young people to gather. I was one of three girls, and we brought our dates there. We had picnics and card parties and enjoyed it very much. It was a very nice time in my life...We had a dock out there and the bay was so clean and clear we'd swim off the dock. We had a boat we went fishing in. The fish and scallops and clams were so good.¹⁷

Stanley, a graduate of the high school at nearby South Ward, returned to the area after graduating from the State College for Women. As her father completed plans for building the new church, she exchanged vows in 1924 with John Chestnut, Sr., an entrepreneur who came to the region as an insurance broker. While John worked at Guarantee Abstract and Trust Company's offices in Clearwater, she began her teaching career at Clearwater's North Ward and South Ward schools. The Chestnuts had three children, including John Chestnut, Jr., who later in life served as a county commissioner. By 1984, Ellene Stanley Cornwell Chestnut lived in Oak Bluffs, a retirement complex in downtown Clearwater located on the former site of Seven Gables.¹⁸

The House of Seven Gables changed hands twice in 1925. On April 29, Annie Kelley sold the property to Edith C. Moore. By this time, Rev. Cornwell had moved into the new rectory at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. Seven months after acquiring Seven Gables, Moore decided to sell it to Chester B. and Lucy S. Masslich on December 17. During much of the next eighteen years, the Masslichs rented the property. Physical changes to the property occurred during this period: A comparison of drawings from Sanborn fire insurance maps indicates that later owners of the residence expanded the original home sometime between 1923 and 1929. Details about this expansion remain unclear, in part because the recessed location of the home on the property did not allow full access to Seven Gables for an accurate rendition of the structure. For example, as late as the 1949 revision, the waterfront side of Seven Gables—an addition probably built in late 1910s or early 1920s—appeared one-story in height even though the second story had been added by that time. Meanwhile, by 1923 the former servant's home had disappeared, though two small structures, possibly outhouses, appeared on the southern property line halfway between Bay Avenue and the Seven Gables. By April 1929, these small buildings disappeared and a dwelling with an assigned address of 418½ Bay Avenue and an adjacent outbuilding appeared at the northern

¹⁷ Clearwater Sun, 11 May 1984.

¹⁸ Ibid.; Straub, History of Pinellas County, 251.

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boundary. According to 1949 revisions of the Sanborn maps, these structures remained on the property without substantial modifications through the end of the 1940s.¹⁹

The Masslichs rented the building to local “binder boys” during the height of the real estate boom in the mid-1920s. Binder boys assisted realtors by searching for prospective buyers, accepting a binder (usually a deposit of about \$1,000) as a down payment on property, and passing the transaction along to an agent before the end of the binder’s financing period (usually one month, but sometimes longer). Often college-age and full of enthusiasm, their marketing efforts added fuel to the engine driving Florida’s real estate frenzy in the Tampa Bay area and southeastern Florida. In early research on the House of Seven Gables, Albert P. Rogers mentioned that he remembered the many meetings of binder boys during the mid-1920s. Rogers, who worked as a real estate broker in Clearwater for nearly fifty years, said that binder boys convened at Seven Gables for informal gatherings, card games, dinners, and other activities. Along with “bird dogs,” the male and female “couples” that also pounded the pavement in search of property purchasers, the binder boys encouraged many visitors to the area to acquire lands or homesteads along the Pinellas Peninsula. During their meetings at the beautiful home on the bluff, young and adventurous marketers certainly compared notes, practiced selling techniques, and tracked transactions. As the land boom sputtered during the late 1920s, many binder boys left the area in search of other work. Gatherings at Seven Gables probably ended long before the stock market crash of October 1929 which accelerated America’s economic depression.²⁰

By the 1930s, proprietors rented rooms at the structure to tenants. Known as the “Seven Gables Inn” and later listed in city directories as “Seven Gables, furnished rooms,” the one-time retirement home of the Starr family became a boarding house with a number of proprietors. By 1929 and until 1931, Keith A. and Myrtice P. Nisbet leased the building from the Masslichs and operated Seven Gables as a lodge during tourist seasons. In 1931, the Guzman family moved onto the property and opened a tearoom and rooming house. Charles V. Guzman, a native of Louisiana, had married a Floridian named Sally. By the time they moved into the house, Charles was in his mid-sixties and Sally approached her sixtieth birthday. At least three children lived with them in the early 1930s: a daughter named Cary Rebecca, and two teenage sons, Liddle H. and Gardner. The family had previously lived in Louisiana and moved into a dwelling on Osceola in Clearwater by the spring of

¹⁹ “Seven Gables Actual Ownership Information,” compiled on 22 by William R. and Elizabeth H. Heath; Sanborn Map Company, Fire Insurance Maps, June 1923, April 1929, and 1949 revision maps, microfilm reel 1.

²⁰ Michael Sanders, “Seven Gables,” undated manuscript, located in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

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1930. At that time, Charles worked as an engineer for a pile-driving company, Sally as a practical nurse, and Cary as a drug store cashier. When the Guzmans took control of Seven Gables, they featured outside dining along the exterior porches. Although the 1934 city directory lists no occupants for this property, genealogical research indicates that the Guzmans continued to live in Clearwater. Some family members occupy sites at the Clearwater Cemetery.²¹

Members of the Reilly family occupied the house during the mid-1930s. Neil Reilly lived in Seven Gables as a ten-year-old child in 1935. At the time, his mother took in five paying guests at the rooming house. The Reilly family lived downstairs, with part of the current kitchen area partitioned into sleeping space for him. His parents slept in the side parlor, and the older children slept in a detached garage (possibly one of the two structures appearing on the 1929 and 1949 Sanborn maps). During this time, the second floor had two bathrooms: the one presently in the building and another in the small room near the hall. Family members ascended the back stairs to get to the first bathroom; tenants used the other one. During the depths of the Great Depression, men often came to Seven Gables in search of work. While the family had no jobs to provide, Neil remembers his mother always finding some food for those in need.²²

The Wyllie and Reid families offered furnished rooms at Seven Gables between the late 1930s and 1944. Nellie C. Wyllie, a teacher at South Ward and widow of Alfred Wyllie, appeared in 1937 and 1939 directories as the occupant of Seven Gables. During the summer of 1938, Lee H. Reid arrived in Clearwater with his family and began his duties as a northern Pinellas County fuel agent for the Shell Oil Company. The Reids moved into the House of Seven Gables by the spring of 1939. For over five years, including most of the Second World War, the Reids lived in the house. In a 1977 interview, Reid remembered that he paid rent on the house to Helen Weber, a local realtor who represented the Masslichs. He recalled that the owners lived in the Philadelphia area at the time. His daughter slept on a “full-size double bunk bed” in the present kitchen, and the family cooked their meals in the small foyer near the side porch. The family ate in the adjacent room, which also served for a time as the father’s bedroom and sat atop a novelty in much of Pinellas: a basement area with a coal furnace. The elevation on the bluff allowed owners to place a basement on the site, although the date of the basement’s construction remains uncertain. Reid operated a filling station at 1740 North Fort Harrison by 1941, but tough financial times and wartime gasoline rationing during World War II forced the Reids to take in boarders in the two long and rectangular rooms on the second

²¹ See available issues of: R.L. Polk’s Clearwater (Pinellas County, Fla.) City Directory; Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Sanders, “Seven Gables” manuscript.

²² “Recollections of My Meeting with Neil Reilly on Oct. 11, 2002,” transcript of email message, located in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

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floor. He procured a sign that read, “Seven Gables Guest Rooms.” One tenant, Myrtle Williamson, rented the two small bedrooms above the living room for \$8 per week, while the longer rooms went for \$12 and \$15 per week. Williamson, then a religious director at Clearwater’s First Presbyterian Church, lived in Seven Gables for nearly four years, and often kept a small oil burning heater near the fireplace in one of her rooms. Although they rented the rooms, the Reids did not provide meals to any of their tenants, including Williamson. From 1939 to 1941, a stenographer named Clara L. Cole lived in the smaller dwelling on the northern portion of the property (418½ Bay Avenue). By the early 1940s, Reid sought to purchase Seven Gables but could not afford the \$25,000 price. The family moved from Seven Gables to another home in Clearwater when the Masslichs decided to sell the property during the spring of 1944.²³

The Dietrichs and Hemericks

Charles Fredrick Dietrich purchased the House of Seven Gables on 12 September 1944. Unlike the Masslichs, who used the property for a source of income, the Dietrichs acquired Seven Gables as their retirement home. They may have accepted occasional boarders, however, since city directories issued during their ownership mention furnished rooms at Seven Gables. An Ohio native born in 1872, Dietrich and his wife—the former Clara Mae Bennett of Michigan—had at least two daughters, Edith (born 1902) and Grace (born 1905), both natives of Ohio. Records from the 1910 federal census placed the family in Pulaski Township, Williams County, Ohio. At that time, Charles worked as a retail merchant of implements. The daughters married: Edith to a member of the Comstock family and Grace to Joseph Robinson. During a visit to the area, the Dietrichs “fell in love with the house on the bay” as soon as they saw it. They acquired Seven Gables and performed some restoration work, including the placement of a new tin roof on the structure. The labor and stair-climbing soon proved too much for the Dietrichs, especially as Charles approached his mid-70s. On 18 April 1951, the Dietrichs sold Seven Gables to John V. Neill and moved to Orlando to live close to their daughters. Neill held the property until 24 March 1953, when he sold it to a young Clearwater dentist.²⁴

When Frederick A. and Virginia M. Hemerick acquired Seven Gables, the structure required rehabilitation. During a July 2003 oral history interview, family members recalled that the paint had chipped along the walls, porch banisters required repair, and the interior required substantial work

²³ Ibid.; memorandum re: conversation with Lee Reid, 18 August 1977, located in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Clearwater Sun, 11 May 1984.

²⁴ Census records available at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Charles O. Comstock, Sr., grandson of Charles F. Dietrich to Donald Ivey, 29 May 1996, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; see available issues of: R.L. Polk’s Clearwater (Pinellas County, Fla.) City Directory.

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due to the wear-and-tear caused by years of tenants. Electric lights dangled from unsightly cords, and trash inside the home and on the grounds when the Hemericks first acquired the home provided evidence that vagrants had occupied the structure at some point. The family painted the house's exterior, and the dry wood absorbed quite a bit of paint. The children—Harriette, Judith, and David—helped their parents restore the house. The Hemericks also added a bathroom on the lower floor. According to later interviews, the Hemericks made some improvements to the structure with materials from other early buildings. For example, doors leading to the informal parlor may have come from an early grove house owned by the Brown family near present-day Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard and U.S. Highway 19. The family also installed some window air conditioners in the house that he purchased at the Seaboard Air Line depot, probably in the 1950s.²⁵

The interview revealed many details about life for the Hemericks during the twenty-two years they owned the home. The family originally came to the area in the mid-1940s. Frederick had joined the Army and transferred from Michigan to Drew Army Airfield during World War II. During some of their years at Seven Gables, the family enjoyed the services of an African-American maid, Eva Pollock, who cooked and cleaned for the family five days per week. One of the Hemerick children later took a job at Morton Plant Hospital at the same time the maid's daughter worked there. Outside of the home, the property included a cistern by the time Hemericks acquired it. The gazebo remained, and a slope of the bluff resembled a jungle with all of the wild plants and tiger lilies. The family maintained a dock on Clearwater Bay alongside the bluff, and had a boat moored to the dock for their use. A small Indian shell mound once sat in the front yard. One time, Frederick wanted to host a cocktail party and called a representative from the Campbell family's pavement company to bulldoze the mound. The children remembered seeing some bones along with the shells after the bulldozer left the scene.²⁶

By the late 1960s, the Hemerick parents grew tired of living in such a big house. Frederick and Virginia had purchased another house in Belleair and decided to move to their new home. By this time, their children had left for college and started working. Although city directories list the structure as "vacant" or having "no return" in 1969, 1971, and 1972, son David lived in Seven Gables during part of that time. The family also called Seven Gables "the halfway house of dentists" because Frederick often rented the home to new dentists who had recently graduated and started their professional practice.²⁷

²⁵ Transcript of interview of F. David Hemerick and Barber Hemerick Campbell by Ellen Babb and Alicia Addeo, 18 July 2003, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

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A Barge Ride and a New Home

The Hemericks decided to sell the House of Seven Gables during the spring of 1975. The attractive waterfront property attracted much interest, and the family sold the tract to Enterprise Building Corporation and the architectural firm of Williams and Walker. The new owners, Don Williams and Dixie Walker, finalized their plans for an adult congregate living facility on the site. Realizing the historical value of Seven Gables, Williams considered the structure a perfect fit for the newly planned Heritage Village under design in unincorporated Pinellas County near Largo. Williams had developed the initial site plan for the park as a member of the Pinellas County Historical Commission (PCHC). In early 1976, Williams and Walker agreed to donate the house to the Historical Commission. Park Director Kendrick Ford and PCHC Chair George Gramling met with Don Williams during the spring of 1976 to discuss the relocation of Seven Gables. The parties hoped to transport the house by July, but worried about a shortage of funds and the logistics of such a move.²⁸

The size of the structure called for an innovative plan. While moving companies frequently have to remove roofs or “cut” structures before taking them to their new sites, the size and architectural layout of Seven Gables made any such plan difficult or cost prohibitive. Also, the home’s location in downtown Clearwater would have required incredible effort to remove and relocate telephone and electrical wires, streetlights, tree limbs, and other impediments between Bay Avenue and Walsingham Road. Given these obstacles, Williams and others involved with the project decided that Clearwater Bay, rather than Bay Avenue, offered the best route. They developed a plan to lower the House of Seven Gables onto a barge, float the structure along the Intracoastal Waterway to a location south of the Indian Rocks Bridge, then transport the home along Walsingham Road to its new plot at the park. An article in the 9 August 1976 *St. Petersburg Times* hinted that Pinellas County commissioners needed to approve \$17,500 to fund this move, with other parties covering the remainder of the \$72,550 required for this plan. Roesch Housemovers coordinated the move. The site of the grand gabled home floating along the waterway attracted international media attention. By the early fall, the House of Seven Gables occupied its new site on the southwest corner of Heritage Village; the second structure placed at the new park, this large building sat next to its only neighbor at the time, the Plant-Sumner House.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid.; Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 16 June 1976.

²⁹ *St. Petersburg Times*, 9 August 1976; Interview of Ken Ford, former director of Heritage Village, by Stephanie Ferrell and Jim Schnur, 3 May 2003, Heritage Village, Largo.

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Workers and volunteers promptly began restoration efforts. Less than one month after Seven Gables arrived, volunteers from Carpenters Local 1275 in Clearwater and Local 531 in St. Petersburg offered their time to repair porch flooring, seal joints around windows, and repair beams and stairs that saved county coffers in excess of \$7,000. Students at the county's Vocational Technical Institute near High Point also did masonry work and other improvements with materials supplied by Pinellas County. Workers peeled layers of linoleum from the kitchen floor; the entire kitchen required extensive restoration. Park Director Ford remembered that most of the upstairs rooms "were in bad shape, except for the floor." At the 21 September 1977 PCHC meeting, Ford reported that workers had completed nearly all of the major renovations on Seven Gables. He hoped to have the structure painted during the fall and acquire appropriate furniture for the building so that public tours could begin by January 1978. By the fall of 1978, groups associated with Heritage Village prepared for the ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 7, an event that included many dignitaries. In time, park staff and associated groups acquired furniture and household materials to represent the earliest years of occupation.³⁰

This substantial project to preserve an elegant chapter of Clearwater's early history required great collaboration and coordination. The Board of County Commissioners provided resources to bring an important structure to a newly opened park. Don Williams and Dixie Walker donated the building, and Williams lent his talents to designing an early layout for the open-air historical museum. Oak Bluffs, Ltd., the company that constructed a senior residence on the site, and Enterprise Builders contributed nearly \$30,000 towards expenses. Harris Paint Company of Tampa donated paint and coordinated efforts through the Painting and Decorating Contractors Association to find members willing to volunteer their time to paint Seven Gables. General Telephone Company covered \$11,750 worth of labor and resources, while Florida Power Corporation assured the temporary lifting and relocation of electrical lines along the route. In addition, the Junior League of Clearwater, vocational students, local carpenters, members of the recently formed Pinellas County Historical Society, and many private citizens offered their support of this project.³¹

³⁰ St. Petersburg Times, 20 October 1976; Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, 20 October 1976, 21 September 1977, 20 September 1978; Ken Ford interview

³¹ "History of Seven Gables" manuscript; Charles W. Finegan, president, Harris Paint Company, to K. T. Ford, 17 September 1976; George F. Gramling, PCHC chair, to Finegan, 4 October 1976.