

SITE NAME Bonita Springs Elementary School, 10701 Dean Street

A. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Originally constructed as two buildings in 1921 and 1927, the Bonita Springs Elementary School is located on the north side of Dean Street, between Horne Avenue and Pullen Avenue in Township 47 South, Range 25 East, Section 35 (Bonita Springs USGS Quadrangle 1987) in Bonita Springs, Lee County, Florida.

The one-story east wing, constructed of brick in 1921, features a T-shaped plan and is topped by a hipped roof, covered with 5-V crimp sheet metal. This wing is oriented south, facing Dean Street. This portion of the south façade features a stepped parapet topped with a corbelled cornice. A recessed panel reading, "1921 Bonita Springs School," in low relief is found above five nine-over-nine single-hung metal sash windows. The original one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows are no longer extant.

The 1927 irregular, two-story west wing has a terra cotta tile structural system and is clad in a decorative brick veneer. This west wing is topped by a cross-gabled roof covered with 5-V crimp sheet metal and features a low parapet, topped with a corbelled brick cornice, at the gable end on the south façade. The fenestration consists of three bays of twelve-over-twelve single-hung metal sash windows on the first and second floors. A brick string course is found above the second story windows. The two wings were joined in the early 1940s by a one-story brick connector, topped by a flat roof, visible on the south façade.

A one-story enclosed porch is found on the west façade of the west wing, facing Pullen Avenue. This porch serves as the main entrance into the school. It features a flat roof and grouped twelve-over-twelve single-hung metal sash windows set in arched openings united by a label molding.

A non-historic masonry gymnasium is found to the east of the school, while three non-historic masonry buildings containing additional classrooms are found to the north.

B. DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the 1920s, the Lee County Board of Public Instruction undertook a campaign to improve its school facilities and curricula. Bonita Springs Elementary School is located on land donated to the Board in 1913 by Bonita Springs resident J.R. Walker. In 1917, the area's residents voted to assess a tax to issue an \$8,000 bond for the construction of a new school. It was not until 1919, after World War I, that plans drawn by a Tampa architect by the name of Conrad were accepted for the school. The first set of bids for the school's construction were considered too high, so Conrad was asked by the Board in 1920 to revise the plans so that the construction costs would be within budget. In April 1921, a bid by a local contractor, R.L. Welch, was accepted. The three-room Bonita Springs School was completed in time for the 1921-1922 school year.

The population of Bonita Springs climbed to 315 during the Florida Land Boom, leading to overcrowding at the school. In 1926, a \$983,000 bond was let to build new schools in Lee County. Architect N. Gaillard Walker designed the new two-story school building, which was constructed by local builder L.C. Luppens in 1927.

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Due to the economic troubles of the Great Depression, the original school building fell into disrepair and was closed in 1931. It remained closed until after World War II, when Bonita Springs experienced its next period of growth. At this time, Bonita Springs School became overcrowded again, and the upper grades were removed to another building (Olausen and Shriver 1996).

This building is an example of the Mediterranean Revival architectural style. This historic resource retains its historic physical integrity and its historical associations with education and the settlement, growth, and development of Bonita Springs. This building is not sited in an area comprised of a contiguous collection of historic resources, so it is not located within a listed or potential historic district. Bonita Springs Elementary School is currently listed in the *NRHP* and is considered potentially eligible for designation by the Bonita Springs Historic Preservation Board.

C. HISTORY AND REFERENCES CITED OF PAST WORK AT SITE

Olausen, Stephen and Carl Shriver

1996 Bonita Springs School National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Bureau of Historic Preservation. Copies available from at the Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources, Tallahassee.

Nutting, E.P.

1986 *The Beginnings of Bonita Springs Florida*. The Friends of the Library, Bonita Springs, Florida.