

SITE NAME Wayside Inn, 27459 Old 41 Road

A. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Moved from Fort Myers to Bonita Springs prior to 1920, the Wayside Inn is located on the northeast corner of Old 41 Road and Ragsdale Street in Township 47 South, Range 25 East, Section 35 (Bonita Springs USGS Quadrangle 1987) in Bonita Springs, Lee County, Florida. The Wayside Inn originally served as the servants' quarters for the Royal Palm Hotel in Fort Myers. The irregular, two-story building has a wood frame structural system. The exterior of the Wayside Inn is primarily clad in weatherboard and board-and-batten siding. The west façade, facing Old 41 Road, consists of two enclosed porches on the first and second stories. The first level on this façade features two-over-two single-hung aluminum sash and four-pane aluminum awning windows flanked by faux shutters. A pent roof covered with composition shingles wraps around the north, west, and south sides of the enclosed porch on the first story. Board-and-batten siding has been applied over the exterior of the enclosed porch on the second story, which is topped by a shed roof covered with composition shingles. Horizontal board-and-batten siding is also found in the gable ends, covering the original gable vents.

Seven separate entrances are found on the south elevation, along Ragsdale Street. These doorways are not visible in a 1920 photograph of the Wayside Inn. Several of the historic two-over-two and four-over-four double-hung wood sash windows along the north and south sides are intact. The windows on the south façade are shaded by metal awnings. A cross-gabled roof, covered in corrugated metal, tops the Wayside Inn. Exterior ornamentation includes cornerboards, wood window and door surrounds, and decorative cast metal seahorses. The westernmost wing of the building, which can be seen in the 1920 photograph, along with the chimney on the south slope of the roof, is not evident in a 1950s photograph. The building appears to have been used recently as an apartment building, but it is unclear what the current use of this building is.

B. DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wayside Inn is significant in the history of tourism and community planning in Bonita Springs. This building originally housed servants of the 1887 Royal Palm Hotel in Fort Myers. It was purchased by Bertie and David Sumner and moved from Fort Myers to Bonita Springs prior to 1920 by Captain George Randolph. The building was moved by boat up the Imperial River in pieces. The hotel was purchased to accommodate the large number of tourists who flocked to the area for hunting and fishing. While the building was once known as the Bonita Hotel, it is listed in the 1920 U.S. census as the Wayside Inn (The Southwest Florida Pioneers Historical Society). The Wayside Inn is the oldest surviving example of a hotel in Bonita Springs. Its location at the intersection of Old 41 Road and Ragsdale Street places it at the heart of historic Bonita Springs.

This building is an example of the Frame Vernacular architectural style. This historic resource has been extensively altered and no longer retains its historic physical integrity. However, this resource retains its historic associations with the settlement, growth, and development of Bonita Springs. Research has revealed historical associations with local persons or events. It is located within the concentration of resources that compose the proposed Old 41 Commercial Historic District. Therefore, the Wayside Inn could contribute to a potential local and *NRHP* historic district comprised of the historic

SITE NAME Wayside Inn, 27459 Old 41 Road

buildings along Old 41 Road. This resource is eligible on an individual basis for designation by the Bonita Springs Historic Preservation Board. However, this building does not presently appear to be individually eligible for listing in the *NRHP*.

C. HISTORY AND REFERENCES CITED OF PAST WORK AT SITE

Briggs, Mildred.

1998 *Pioneers of Bonita Springs (Facts and Folklore)*. Bonita Springs Historical Society, Inc., Bonita Springs, Florida.

Nutting, E.P.

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

The Southwest Florida Pioneers Historical Society

2004a *Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920 - Population*. Found online at http://www.rootsweb.com/~fllee/records/census/boni1920_full.htm.