

FOUR: HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES



Aerial View of Nokomis Looking North from Roberts Bay, November 1937

Introduction

Nokomis has a significant prehistoric, colorful pioneer and early history, which are described in the sections below. Figure 4-1 shows historic sites and other significant historic structures within the Nokomis Center.

Pre-History of the Nokomis Area

Prehistoric groups lived in the Dona and Roberts Bay area of Sarasota County for thousands of years. These coastal dwellers include the Manasota and Safety Harbor Cultures. These cultures depended upon shellfishing, hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild plants for their food. In adapting to a coastal environment, these cultures created ingenious ways to use the natural resources to make their tools, vessels, and ornaments. Within and adjacent to the Nokomis Center are significant archaeological resources as well as areas of high probability for containing archaeological resources. Therefore, under County Ordinance No. 98-051, certain new development is subject to review and approval by the Historical Resources.

There are also opportunities to protect significant cultural resources with the nomination of an archeological district in the vicinity of Shakett Creek and through ongoing County and State resource management and habitat restoration projects.

Pioneer and Early History of Nokomis

The pioneer homestead of the Jesse and Caroline Varn Knight family, settled in 1868, was located in the vicinity of the area now known as Nokomis. The Venice Cemetery (now known as the Jesse Knight Cemetery) is located on land originally owned by the Knights and has served as a cemetery since the 1880s. Members of many of the area's pioneers and their descendants are buried here. There is a historic marker located on Colonia Lane for the Venice Cemetery.

In 1888, Darwin Curry established the first "Venice" post office in his home just south of Shakett Creek. There is a historic marker in this location on present day Portia Street. Upon his death in 1901, his son, Claude T. Curry, took over as postmaster and, in 1908, began constructing his home where it remains today in its original location at 1212 Lucille Street. By 1911, Mrs. Potter Palmer owned most of the land around Roberts Bay. The Seaboard Air Line Railway was completed to a terminus south of Roberts Bay. In 1912, the original Venice post office was moved to a location along the railroad tracks in present day Nokomis, and then moved again in 1916 to the railroad terminus within the present day City of Venice.

In 1917, Alfred F. Wrede established the first post office with the name of "Nokomis" southwest of the original "Venice" post office. That same year, renowned orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Fred Albee, purchased 112 acres from the Sarasota-Venice Company. With Ellis W. Nash, Dr. Albee created the Nokomis Subdivision, by subdividing the property into 130



The Pollyanna Inn on Tamiami Trail, circa 1925

lots, with streets radiating from two inner avenue circles and the new asphalt highway, which eventually became U.S. 41. Concrete bridges connected the subdivision to Laurel on the north and Eagle Point on the south. In 1923, Dr. Albee and his wife moved into their Mediterranean Revival style mansion, "Point O' Palms" at Cherokee Place on Fiddler Island. Dr. Albee also constructed a two story-Mediterranean Revival commercial building at the southeast corner of Pocono Trail and Tamiami Trail in 1925 where he organized the Venice-Nokomis Chamber of Commerce and later the Venice-Nokomis Bank, with A. L. Joiner and A.W. Bell as vice-presidents. The Pollyanna Inn, a 35-room hotel located across the street from the bank building, opened on January 8, 1922, adjacent to Shakett Creek.

A two room school house was constructed in 1924, in the Mediterranean Revival style. Two new wings were added in 1927. The school opened as 12-year school and the first High School class graduated in 1930. The high school portion was called Venice-Nokomis High School until it was replaced by a new Venice High School in 1955. It returned to an elementary school serving Nokomis students. The 1920s building was replaced in the 1950s or 1960s by a new building, which was demolished a few years ago for the new Nokomis Community Park.

Figure 4-1

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