

SITE NAME Imperial River Court Cottages, 27300 Old 41 Road

A. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Built circa 1945, the six Imperial River Court Cottages are located on the west side Old 41 Road between Goodwin Street and Wilson Street in Township 47 South, Range 25 East, Section 35 (Bonita Springs USGS Quadrangle 1987) in Bonita Springs, Lee County, Florida. Along with the Imperial River Court/Lilies Hotel (8LL1010), these resources are located within present-day Riverside Park, on the south side of the Imperial River. These buildings were constructed as part of the Imperial River Court tourist camp. The rectangular, single-story buildings are supported by concrete block piers and have wood frame structural systems. Each cottage features a two-bay façade, consisting of a single plywood-covered door and a plywood-covered window. The exteriors of the buildings are clad in T1-11 siding. Front-gabled roofs, covered in 5-V sheet metal, top the cottages. Exterior ornamentation includes wood cornerboards, gable vents, and exposed rafter tails at the roof. The Imperial River Court Cottages are currently undergoing rehabilitation as part of the City of Bonita Springs Park and Office Facility Master Plan for Riverside Park.

B. DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The original The Imperial River Court Cottages are significant in the history of tourism and community planning in Bonita Springs. These buildings were constructed in the mid-1920s as part of the Imperial River Court, established by J. Wallace Liles, one of the four Liles brothers who moved to the community from Ozark, Alabama. The Liles brothers were prominent players in the early development of Bonita Springs. Liles constructed the Imperial River Court/Liles Hotel (8LL1010) at the site to accommodate the large number of tourists who flocked to the area for hunting and fishing. The tourist camp was expanded in the 1940s and 1960s to include more cottages and parking spaces for trailers and mobile homes (Nutting 1986: 28-30). Other tourist camp cottages built along the Imperial River as part of the Imperial River Court or as part of other camps, such as Baird's Camp, are no longer extant. This leaves the Imperial River Court Cottages as the oldest examples of tourist court cottages in Bonita Springs. These buildings are simple examples of the Frame Vernacular architectural style and represent the architectural trends of the Boom Time era. The location of the Imperial River Court Cottages on the south bank of the Imperial River, just west of Old 41 Road, places them at the heart of historic Bonita Springs. These historic resources have been altered and no longer retain their historic physical integrity. However, these resources retain their historic associations with the settlement, growth, and development of Bonita Springs. Research has revealed historical associations with local persons or events. They are located within the concentration of resources that compose the proposed Old 41 Commercial Historic District. Therefore, the Imperial River Court Cottages could contribute to a potential local and *NRHP* historic district comprised of the historic buildings along Old 41 Road. These resources are currently locally designated by the Bonita Springs Historic Preservation Board. However, these buildings do not presently appear to be individually eligible for listing in the *NRHP*.

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C. HISTORY AND REFERENCES CITED OF PAST WORK AT SITE

Nutting, E.P.

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