

VILLA LAS PALMAS  
315 Alachua Avenue (corner of  
Alachua Avenue and Fourth Street)  
Fernandina Beach  
Nassau County  
Florida

HABS No. FL-360

HABS  
FLA,  
45-FERB,  
9-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

VILLA LAS PALMAS

HABS No. FL-360

Location: 315 Alachua Avenue (corner of Fourth Street and Alachua Avenue), Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida.

Present Owner: Arthur I. and Jilie E. Jacobs.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Significance: The Villa Las Palmas is a magnificent structure and a remainder of the elaborate but tasteful expressions of eclecticism found in many houses of the early twentieth century. It should also be noted that the house is situated on a part of the site of the now destroyed home of David Yulee.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1908-1909. An article in The Fernandina Record, March 13, 1909, states that Nathaniel B. Borden was planning to erect "a very handsome residence." By October of that year a note in the Florida Times-Union indicated that the house had been started and that the structural elements had been erected. It was observed that the house promised to be "among the handsomest, if not the most so of any private residence in Fernandina." (Florida Times-Union, October 5, 1908)

In late December, Mrs. Florence Borden held a party for her husband's niece, Annie Byrnes Borden. This event was to "inaugurate the partial completion of [his] magnificent home." By this date the floors were laid. (Florida Times-Union, December 18, 1908) The house was completed sometime in 1909 since a social dance was given in the house in January of 1910 and no mention of construction was made. (Florida Times-Union, January 2, 1910)

2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Villa Las Palmas was built on the east 25' of lot 2, the east 25' of lot 3, and lots 23 through 31 of Block 15 of the original plat of the City of Fernandina which was lithographed and issued by the Florida Railroad in 1857 and enlarged, revised, and reissued by the Florida Town Improvement Company in 1887 and 1901. The chain of title is drawn from the Deed Books and Mortgage Records of Nassau County, Florida:

- 1908 Deed, March 3, 1908, recorded May 19, 1909 in Book B-7, page 196. The east 25' of lot 2, the east 25' of lot 3, and lots 27 through 31 of Block 15 were sold for \$1,300 by  
Charles W. and Annie M. Yulee  
to  
Nathaniel B. Borden.
- 1908 Deed, March 3, 1908 recorded May 19, 1909 in Book B-10, page 63. Lots 25 and 26 of Block 15 were sold for \$600 by  
Samuel A. Swann  
to  
Nathaniel B. Borden.
- 1909 Mortgage Deed, May 25, 1909, recorded June 2, 1909 in Book B-6, page 370. A \$5,000 mortgage was taken out on part of lots 2 and 3 and lots 25 through 31 of Block 15 by  
Nathaniel B. Borden  
to  
The People's Bank for Savings.
- 1910 Deed, October 8, 1910, recorded October 11, 1910 in Book 13, page 2. Lots 23 and 24 of Block 15 were sold for \$500 by  
Sylvester W. and Florida L. Manucy  
to  
Nathaniel B. Borden
- 1926 Quit Claim Deed, recorded January 26, 1926 in Book 61, page 199. All claims to lots 23 and 24 of Block 15 were relinquished by  
Nathaniel B. Borden  
to  
Florence R. Borden.
- 1937 Mortgage Deed, November 1, 1937, recorded November 3, 1937 in Book 91, page 563. A \$9,000 mortgage was taken out on part of lots 2 and 3 and lots 25 through 31 of Block 15 by  
Nathaniel B. Borden  
to  
Nathaniel B. Borden, Jr.

- 1944 Deed, June 23, 1944, recorded July 1, 1944 in Book 123, page 350. Part of lots 2 and 3 and lots 23 through 31 of Block 15 were sold by Nathaniel B. Borden, Jr.  
to  
Harry F. Sahlman.
- 1944 Deed, June 28, 1944, recorded July 1, 1944 in book 123, 349. Part of lots 2 and 3 and lots 23 through 31 of Block 15 were sold by Florence R. Borden  
to  
Harry F. Sahlman.
- 1944 Satisfaction of Mortgage, recorded July 1, 1944 in Book 117, page 324. This satisfies the \$5,000 mortgage between Borden and The People's Bank.
- 1944 Satisfaction of Mortgage, recorded July 1, 1944 in Book 117, page 325. This satisfies the \$9,000 mortgage between Borden and Borden, Jr.
- 1944 Deed, September 16, 1944, recorded October 13, 1944 in Book 124, page 114. Lots 1, 32, 34, and 100' of lot 2 of Block 15 were sold by Florida Yulee Neff and Yulee Noble and Sherman Miles  
to  
Harry F. Sahlman.
- 1974 Deed, recorded May 2, 1974 in Official Record Book 170, page 331. Lots 1, 2, 3, and 23 through 34 of Block 15 was sold by Lawrence Arenson, Executor of the Harry F. Sahlman estate  
to  
Arthur I. and Julie E. Jacobs.
4. Original plans, construction: None available. The 1909 Sanborn map showed Villa Las Palmas and noted that the outline was from plans indicating construction in process. The outline was the same as the structure today.

5. Alterations and additions: Sanborn maps from subsequent years show no visible changes in the house. During the period of ownership by the Sahlmans (1944-1974) the interior received many cosmetic changes and "modernization."

The present owner is attempting to restore and rehabilitate the interior. He plans no major changes except for replacement of cracked and damaged plaster in the walls and ceilings with either plaster or sheet-rock. The walls will then be papered or painted. The lookout at the peak of the roof will be floored with cyprus to make a deck. (Interview with Jacobs)

- B. Historical Context: The site of Villa Las Palmas was originally the location of the garden of the David Yulee home which had been west of the Villa Las Palmas. A marker shows the location of the old residence of one of Florida's most important builders and developers. (See Thompson, Yulee, and Fairbanks)

The Villa Las Palmas was built by Nathaniel B. Borden. Borden had been in the lumber business since he was 17. In 1878 he began to work for Mosely, Wheelwright and Company of Boston, a lumber company. In 1888 he became a partner in W. A. Wheelwright and Company of New York. Retiring from this firm in 1892, Borden moved to Fernandina and founded N. B. Borden and Company to export lumber to Europe, the West Indies, Cuba, and the Canary Islands. In Fernandina, Borden became a city councilman and later Mayor. He was an active member of the Board of Trade. He was constantly involved in Cuban politics and was Spanish Consul in Fernandina. (Makers of America, Vol. I, 446; Florida Times-Union, July 28, 1938)

- C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Post card showing the house, looking northeast. In possession of George Davis and others in Fernandina Beach, Florida. n.d.

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Florida Abstract and Title Insurance Company. "Tract Book."  
Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Jacobs, Arthur I. Fernandina Beach, Florida. Interview,  
August 17, 1974.

Nassau County. Deed Books. Nassau County Courthouse, Fernandina  
Beach, Florida.

3. Secondary and published sources:

Fairbanks, George R. "Moses Elias Levy Yulee," Florida Historical Quarterly, 18 (1940): 165-67.

The Fernandina Record, March 13, 1909. Florida Historical Society. Makers of America, and Historical and Biographical Work by an Able Corps of Writers. 2 vols. Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell. 1909.

Jacksonville, Florida Times-Union, October 5, 1908; January 2, 1910; July 28, 1938.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Fernandina, Florida; February 1909. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, 1909. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida, Library East, Map Room.

Thompson, Arthur W. "David Yulee, A Study of Nineteenth Century American Thought and Enterterprise." Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1954.

Yulee, C. W. "Senator Yulee." Florida Historical Quaterly, II (1909): 26-43; II, no. 2 (1909): 3-22.

D. Supplementary Material:

The following inventory of the furnishings of the house was taken from the Nassau County Deed Books, Book 123, page 351. This inventory was included in a purchase contract between Borden and Sahlman at the time Sahlman bought the house in 1944:

"All furniture in parlor or drawing room to wit:  
piano, sofa, 5 chairs, table, music cabinet, rug;  
Billiard Room: table, desk, sofa, 4 chairs, desk  
chairs, Morris chair, 2 book cases, rugs; Dining  
Room: table, chairs, two china closets, 1 serving  
table, 1 sideboard, rugs; Southeast Sitting Room:  
3 chairs, rug; Bedroom: chiffoniere, bureau,  
vanity dresser, sofa, 3 chairs, bed, 2 rugs; Guest  
Room: bed, bureau, chiffoniere, desk, sofa, 3  
chairs, matting; Middle Room: twin beds,  
chiffoniere, dresser, and 3 chairs; Little Room:  
Bed, bureau, 1 chair, rug; Kitchen: Range Oil  
Stove, 2 tables, 2 chairs; Hall: Bookcases,  
mirror, hatrack (but Grandfather clock reserved;  
Porches: 3 swings, sofa.

Prepared by: Phillip A. Werndli  
Historian  
HABS-Fernandina Beach, Florida  
August 23, 1974

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Bicentennial Commission of Florida. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, this project was completed during the summer of 1974, at the HABS Field Office, Fernandina Beach, Florida, by Charles Edwin Chase, (University of Florida), project supervisor; Phillip A. Werndli, (University of Florida), project historian; Janice Fahey, (Rhode Island School of Design), and Frederick Wiedenmann, (University of Florida), architects; Grady J. Reich, Jr., (University of Florida), and Roger Swayze, (University of Oregon), student architects.

ADDENDUM TO:  
VILLA LAS PALMAS  
315 Alachua Avenue  
Fernandina Beach  
Nassau County  
Florida

HABS FL-360  
*FLA, 45-FERB, 9-*

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:  
VILLA LAS PALMAS  
315 Alachua Avenue  
Fernandina Beach  
Nassau County  
Florida

HABS FL-360  
*HABS FLA,45-FERB,9-*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001