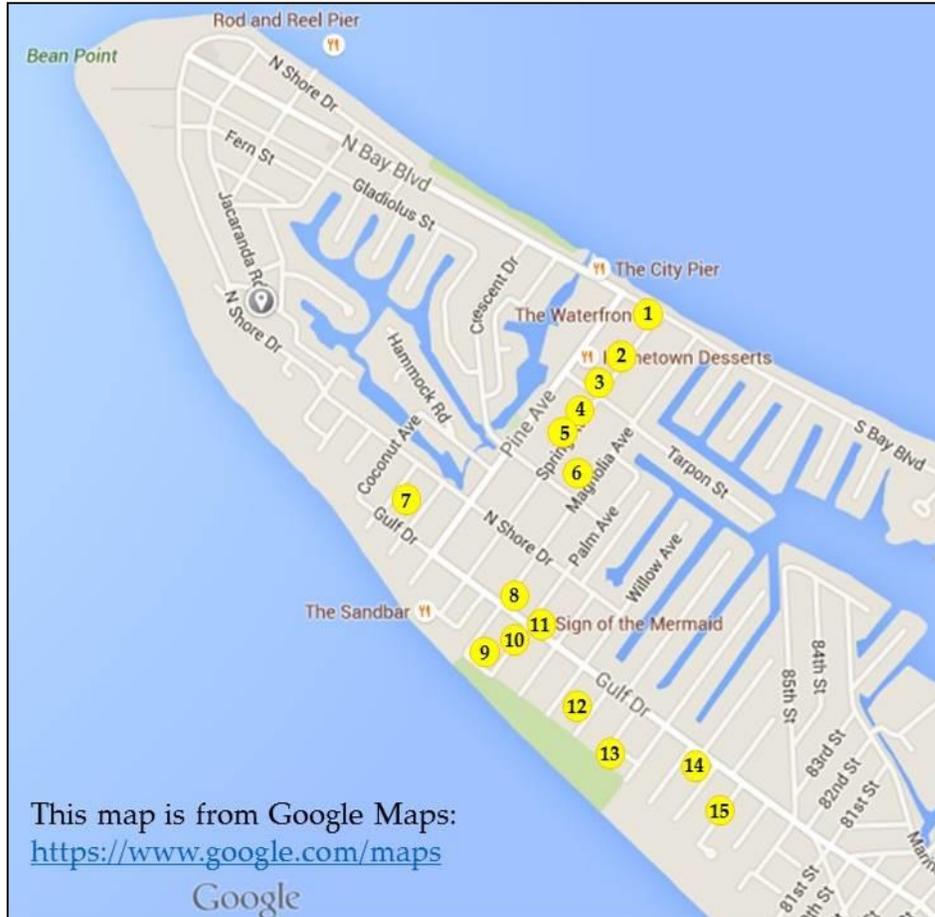


Historic Anna Maria City Tour Additional Sites



Tips

These sites are spread over about 2 miles.

Public parking, water fountains and restrooms are available at Bayfront Park on North Bay Boulevard.

Many of these historical buildings are private homes. This walking tour does not grant entry into these places. Please be respectful when taking photographs and do not trespass.

Thank you for taking the Historic Anna Maria City Tour! We hope you enjoy a short trip back to old Florida.

Anna Maria Island Museum and Historical Park

402 Pine Avenue, Anna Maria City, Florida 34216

Trolley Stop 42

(941) 778-0492

Museum Hours: January-April: 10am to 4pm; May-December: 10am to 1pm; closed September

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A Brief History of Anna Maria City

In the late 1800s, George Emerson Bean, a former Union soldier living in Tampa, requested a homestead on Anna Maria Island. The government gave him 160 acres on the north end, running from about what is today Bean Point to Magnolia Avenue. Bean moved his family here in 1893, becoming the first homesteader on the Island. He and his sons built a large wooden house and dock near the current Rod & Reel Pier.

George Bean died in 1898. His daughter, Mary, and her husband, Wilbur Hall, inherited his home while his son, George Wilhelm "Will" Bean, inherited much of his land.

In 1911, John and Caroline Roser, and their son, Charles, moved to the north end of the Island. Local lore says that the Roser family invented the Fig Newton cookie and sold it to the company that became Nabisco for one million dollars.

In 1911, Will Bean, Wilbur Hall and Charles Roser, among others, started the Anna Maria Beach Company. The goal of this company was to turn the north end of the Island into a booming tourist destination. The company laid out streets and sidewalks, constructed a water system, built vacation cottages, and established the City Pier. The developed land was incorporated as Anna Maria City in 1923. After initial success, the Anna Maria Beach Company went bankrupt in the late 1920s due to a bank failure in Tampa. Both Bayfront Park and the City Pier were given to Anna Maria City by the company to pay the taxes the company owed.

1) 111 South Bay Boulevard, Lorraine Cottage.

In 1922, this site held one of the original homes on the Island. In 1930, Eleanor Gill and her husband, architect Cory Schamber, bought the one-room house for \$300. Soon after, a storm blew the house away. The Schambers gathered lumber from a ship that had overturned in the storm and built a new house. They called it Lorraine Cottage after their daughter. The new house had five rooms. The interior was paneled with pine from the ship. The central feature of the house was a unique circular fireplace. The builders used a wagon wheel as the layout for the fireplace opening.

In 2004, while serving as the Waterfront Restaurant, Lorraine Cottage burned in a fire. The owners rebuilt the house, preserving as much of the original building as they could, including restoring the original fireplace.



2) 504 Spring Avenue.

George Wilhelm “Will” Bean, son of the first homesteader on the Island, had this house built in the 1920s. In 1911, Bean started the Anna Maria Beach Company to develop the north end of the Island into a resort community. Bean had many cottages built along Pine and Spring Avenue to rent or to sell as vacation homes.

3) 428 Spring Avenue, Pioneer Cottage.

This cottage was built around 1910. It is thought to be the first cottage built in the Anna Maria Beach Co.’s resort community. Bean himself lived in this cottage briefly, most likely in the years before his home at 503 Pine Ave. was completed in 1913.



4) 415 Spring Avenue.

This house was built in the 1920s. The most famous occupant of the house was Mayor D. Henry Clay. In 1961, Clay was vice mayor of Anna Maria City when the mayor, Max Woodland, mysteriously vanished. In Woodland’s absence, Clay took on the role of mayor. Clay’s lasting contribution to the city is the use of numbers on houses. Before Clay’s term, cottage names such as “Lorraine Cottage” and “Cozy Corner” were used to identify homes.



5) 411 Spring Avenue.

This house was built sometime around 1923. It served as the home Harry “Uncle Sam” Ditmas who became Island postmaster in 1922. He had moved to Florida in 1916 and had worked as a minstrel and burlesque manager before moving to the Island. Ditmas was nicknamed “Uncle Sam” because he was tall and thin with a white beard and he often wore a wide brimmed hat. In the 1920s, the mail truck was the only automobile on the Island. Ditmas decorated it to look like a covered pioneer wagon.

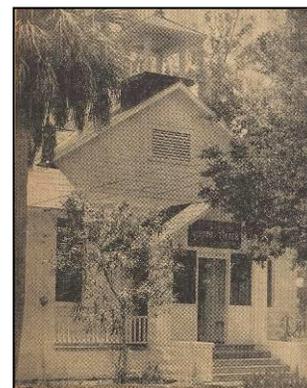


6) 407 Magnolia Avenue, Anna Maria Island Community Center.

The Anna Maria Island Community Center sits on the site of the Island's original one-room schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was in use from 1914 until 1950, when the large number of students necessitated a new building in Holmes Beach. In the 1950s, the Hutchinson and Scanio families lobbied the School Board and the city for land to provide Island youth with recreational facilities. The old schoolhouse and a surrounding block of land on Magnolia Avenue were designated as a youth center.

In 1959, the Scanios' son, Benji, died and they asked that, in place of flowers, people make donations to the youth center to build a baseball park. Major league players Warren Spahn and Earl Torgeson joined the effort to raise money, clear the land and build the field. By 1961, the field was ready and renovations on the schoolhouse were completed. The Anna Maria Island Youth Center was officially dedicated on July 2.

In 1976, the Youth Center began including adult classes, such as aerobics, bingo and income tax services. In 1978, the organization's name was changed to the Anna Maria Island Community Center. By the late 1970s, the Community Center was outgrowing the one-room schoolhouse, which was in great need of repair. Islanders came together to raise money for a new building by hosting fundraisers such as dinners at Fast Eddie's and the Sandbar, carwashes, and dances. In 1983, the old schoolhouse was demolished and the new building was completed. In 2005, the building was updated to its current form to offer more services to a larger number of residents.



The Community Center in the old schoolhouse on Magnolia Avenue.

7) 210 Elm Avenue.

This cottage was built in 1931. The interior features cypress woodwork and tongue and groove cypress ceilings. Stories passed down by islanders say that this building was originally used as a real estate office and then as a fishing shack. Its known history starts in 1946 when O.O Ransdell bought the home.

Ransdell's daughters, Miriam Ruth and Martha Madden inherited the house after his death. Martha was an artist who used the garage as a studio. She remodeled the bathroom using tiles that she hand-painted herself.



8) 9807 Gulf Drive, the IGA Foodliner.

On April 13, 1946, the IGA Foodliner opened as one of the few grocery stores on the Island. Tampa native Ignazio Ernesto “Ernie” Cagnina bought the store after his return from service in World War II. In the war, Cagnina was part of the U.S. Army force that invaded Normandy on D Day. Upon his return, he successfully ran the IGA for 48 years. The Cagnina family was dedicated to serving the islanders. They provided food to struggling families and threw Christmas parties for Island children. After Cagnina died in 1994, the IGA fell on hard times. The new owners were unable to keep it going. In 2004, sisters Ginny Dutton and Jane E. Wright opened a café and antique shop in the building named “Ginny’s and Jane E’s at the Old IGA.”



The IGA Foodliner in the mid-1900s.



Ginny and Jane E's in 2015.

9) 302, 304, 306 and 308 Gulf Boulevard, the Red Houses.

These cottages were built in the early 1900s. Originally, there were five houses, but today only four remain.



302, 304, 306 and 308 Gulf Blvd. in the early 1900s and in 2015.



10) 117 Palm Avenue.

Cory Schamber, an architect known for his unique style, built this house in 1939. Schamber also built Lorraine Cottage on South Bay Boulevard.

117 Palm Avenue in 2015.



11) 9707 Gulf Drive, Palm Cottage.

A professor from Palmetto, Florida built this cottage in 1913 as part of the first development on the Island. He named it Palm Cottage. It is constructed largely of wood. It served as a family home for many years. It went on to become a day care center and then in 1992, it became the Sign of the Mermaid restaurant.



Palm Cottage in 2002 (left) and 2015 (right).

12) 101 Willow Avenue.

This house was built in 1924. In 1944, the Moss family, who had been summering on the Island since 1921, bought it. In the early 1950s, Elizabeth Moss taught 4th grade at the schoolhouse on Magnolia Avenue. Her home was a social center. She hosted Cub Scout and Brownie Scout meetings, as well as church events, charity fundraisers and house parties.



13) 101 Mangrove Avenue.

In 1924, James Alexander Robbins, his father, and his uncle, bought a lumber mill in Willow, Florida. Their lumber business, Robbins Lumber Co., was successful and Willow became a thriving sawmill town. In 1925, James and his wife, Alice, built this home using lumber from the mill. This house served as their summer home and has now been passed down through three generations.



14) 121 Maple Avenue.

This house was built in 1928. It demonstrates the “stucco over frame” architectural style in which a thin layer of plaster or “stucco” is applied over the wooden structure. Stucco is used as a coating because it is durable and low maintenance.



15) 107 Beach Avenue, Castle Cottage.

English architect A.I Alvinson built this unique cottage in 1928 in the style of a French Normandy home. The best known occupants of this house were the Torgeson family. In 1948, the Boston Braves baseball team began using Bradenton for spring training. Earl Torgeson, a player for the Braves, bought this home and lived here with his family for many years. His daughter, Christine, went on to become Miss Florida in 1966.



107 Beach Avenue in 2015 during a restoration.

Thank you for taking the Historic Anna Maria City Tour!

Thank you to our wonderful sponsors who made this tour possible. We appreciate their support and dedication to preserving the unique history of this island.

