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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

MAY 1 2 1988 date entered

received

For NPS use only

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

Type all entries	—complete applicable se	ections		
1. Nam	e			
historic	Barclay Court			
and∗or common				
2. Loca	ition			
street & number	9-11 South Pennsyl	vania Avenue		$\underline{\mathrm{NA}}$ not for publication
city, town	Atlantic City	vicinity of		
state	New Jersey code	034 county	Atlantic	code 001
3. Clas	sification			
Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered NA	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible X yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture _X commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Own	er of Proper	ty		
name	Mackler, Goldenber	g, & Sayegh		
street & number	11 South Pennsylva	nia Avenue		
city, town	Atlantic City	vicinity of	state	New Jersey 08401
5. Loca	ition of Lega	I Description	on	
courthouse, regis	At	lantic County Cour	thouse	
street & number	Ma	in Street		
city, town	Ma	ys Landing	state	New Jersey 08401
	esentation i	n Existing	Surveys	
	c City Historic Buil Survey	ding		DIL - 2/9/88 eligible? yes no
date 1980			federal st	ate county X loca
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7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
excellent	deteriorated	unaltered	$\underline{\hspace{0.1cm}}^{\Lambda}$ original si	ite
good X fair	ruins	_^ altered	moved	date
X fair	unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Barclay Court Apartments stands between Atlantic City's two principal avenues, Pacific and Atlantic, on Pennsylvania Avenue. Surrounded by churches, and the principal shops of the commercial district, it was central to the entire fashionable portion of the city. The building is U-shaped in plan with the wings addressing the street, and framing a deep courtyard that leads back to the main entrance which in turn opens into an elevator lobby. To the north of the Barclay Court is a smaller, three story apartment, and to the south, the fire house of Engine Company No. 1. which is a handsome early twentieth century landmark. The rear of the building backs up to Gordon's Alley, guaranteeing light and air to the building's residents.

The exterior was designed in the fashion of the modern classicism that had evolved in the American midwest, and which had become a popular commercial style because it could be adapted to a broad variety of functions. Typically, window openings were accented by soldier coursed lintels that described the steel framing, and by tile ornament that suggested capitals of classic design; the top of the building, was also given emphasis by a projecting cornice and paneled parapet again designed to recall abstracted classical elements. These features, with the large central court give the building a strong identity, one which was reflected in the name Barclay Court, an important asset in the commercial economy of Atlantic City. The materials of the exterior represent the principal construction systems as well. Brick bearing walls, internal steel frame and hollow tile floors were listed as the construction system in the original announcement of the building in 1917, and were confirmed in the award of the contract to the J. Mathis Construction Company.

Where midwestern architects might choose chaste brick and limestone, the local Atlantic City architect, J. Vaughn Mathis, chose a less restrained palatte of materials, one which reflected contemporary practice in the city which already had Price and McLanahan's dazzling brick and tile hotels. The facade is accented by three tones of brick, deep red for the front sun porches, tan for the court walls and a pink red brick for the sides and rear. Cast stone sills and cornices, and parapet copings are intended to imitate limestone, but the tiles are variously bright blue and yellow, giving the Barclay Court a hint of Victorian polychromy which differentiates it from its more staid neighbors.

Because Atlantic City sold itself as a great summer resort, the Barclay was designed to provide exterior porches or sunrooms for the majority of its apartments. These became the principal feature of the facade, both at the street front, and on the entrance facade at the end of the court. The largest, two bedroom apartments at the front of the building have sunrooms lighted by pairs of windows on the side, and by three sliding windows across the front. The one bedroom apartments facing the court, to the rear, open onto the steel framed porches above the entrance. Only the smallest apartments on the rear of the building were denied this amenity.

Like most buildings of the period, window sizes and configuration denote interior uses. The sliding windows of the front sunrooms light the living

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1799 1800–1899 X 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications		law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1917	Builder/Architect J.	Mathis and Sons/J.	Vaughn Mathis

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Barclay Court Apartment survives from the early twentieth century heyday of Atlantic City recalling the time when it was truly the nation's vacation spot, before tropical resorts and then casinos replaced the historic city of the past. ¹ It is of note because its bright tiles and varied brick colors gave it an exuberant commercial character which typified so much of the resort experience. ² The building was known in the 1920s as a residence of significance, housing Wanamakers, and later Mayor Jackson; and it is the work of local architect J. Vaughn Mathis (1882-1964) who did so much to shape his native city in a career which spanned the resort's greatest era of prosperity from 1905 until the Depression. ³ Finally, after a generation of change, focussed on the casino referendum of the early 1970s, the Barclay Court is one of the surviving buildings that conveys the historic character of early twentieth century Atlantic City. ⁴

By the late nineteenth century Atlantic City had evolved a strident and colorful commercial architecture whose principal virtue was the ability to attract attention to itself, and thus to lure the middle class customers who rode the rails to the seashore. Frank Furness' moorish Windsor Hotel; William Price's exotic Blenheim and Traymore hotels; Walter Smedley's French styled Dennis, and Warren and Wetmore's georgian Shelburne were the architectural apex of the trend towards the architectural hard sell. Ralph Bencker's opalescent tile ornamented Boardwalk National Bank, and domed Central Pier marked the same attitude in commercial facilities.

It could therefore have been anticipated that similar values would appear in residential buildings which competed as intensely as the great hotels for tenents. The names chosen make this clear. Exotic vacation spots (Riviera, Biarritz) vied with national history (the Revere, the original name of the Barclay Court, the Lafayette, and so on) for attention. Most of these buildings sought some relation between the name and some feature of the building - often the style as had been done with the great hotels. Presumably it was that desire which caused the renaming of the Revere as the Barclay Court in 1923, shortly after its construction, when the Wanamaker family which owned the apartment house memorialized one of its members, Barclay Warburton of Philadelphia.

The architect, J. Vaughn Mathis could have been expected to be acutely aware of Atlantic City custom. His family moved to Atlantic City in 1885 when his father, a carpenter/builder opened his business in the city. He would become a significant contractor, and interested his son J. Vaughn Mathis in the building business which he entered after attending the University of Pennsylvania from which he graduated in 1905. After a brief period with

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets.

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reet & number	3961 Baltimore Avenue		telephone (215) 386-6276	
y or town	Philadelphia		state PA 19104	
2. Sta	te Historic Pr	eservatio	n Officer Certif	ication
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	national state	local		
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Section number _		Page		County,	New Jer	rsey		

Description: (continued)

rooms of the largest apartments, while the small paned upper portion of the sash emphasizes the public character of the space. Pairs of one over one sash denote bedrooms, while single windows mark bathrooms and kitchens. Triple windows mark the location of the dining rooms. The smaller units received less definition, but kitchens, bathrooms and other spaces are apparent on casual inspection.

The plan of the building is similarly straightforward. At the end of the central court, is a sheltered vestibule, entered through a central arched doorway flanked by round headed windows that leads through an arched doorway into the elevator lobby. The elevator cab is on axis with the entrance, emphasizing the luxury of this building, a point reiterated by the uniformed operators, who manned the elevator into the 1950's. From the center, broad corridors lead to corner stairs; the stair to the north is of oak, while the south stair uses slate treads, and iron stringers, railings and newels, perhaps to give some degree of fire protection. The stairs are lighted by pairs of windows at the landing, filling the corridors with light, and making then a pleasant feature. The corridors then turn at right angles to provide access to the units in the front wings.

As the principal public zone of the building, the corridors were carefully detailed. Walls are lined with a wainscott of lincrusta, worked to look like leather and capped by a projecting wood molding. Apartment doors are framed in broad wood trim capped by a cornice, while the baseboards were deep and trimmed with a millwork cap. At the ends of the corridors, the hall widens to make a slightly more spacious entrance in front of a pair of doors which provided access to the two front apartments, arranged in mirror image, with all the rooms opening off corridors on either side of a central demising wall.

Millwork similar to that of the corridors enriched the interior of the apartments. It is their compactness and their hierarchic arrangement which gives them such an intensely urban character, recalling in miniature the flats of metropolitan New York or Washington, D.C. of the same era. The largest apartments are at the front; smaller apartments open onto the central court; the smallest apartments are on the sides and rear. Plans are similarly carefully conceived. On the largest apartments, the sun room and the living rooms are adjacent, and the full width of the unit. They are reached by a hall, from the entrance, which opens first through a large opening into the dining room which in turn provided access to the tiny modern kitchen. Beyond are the doors to a bedroom, then the white tiled bath, then another bedroom before finally opening into the front rooms.

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	County, New Jersey

Description: (continued)

The one bedroom apartments which were immediately adjacent to the front apartments are entered directly from the hall into a relatively large room serving both living and dining. A kitchen opened off one side, while a short corridor provides access to the bathroom and the bedroom. Efficiencies were still more compact, with a separate kitchen and bath opening from the multipurpose main room. These were concentrated at the rear of the building, adjacent to the stairs and the elevator. The original design contained sixty five apartments, of which twenty were the two bedroom variety, thirty had one bedroom and fifteen were efficiencies. That plan remains intact on the top three stories, and generally survives on the first two floors which were converted to offices on the north wing and into a club on the south in the 1970s. Those alterations were generally cosmetic in nature, leaving the building very much as it was originally constructed in 1917.

The changing economic character of Atlantic City had considerable impact on the Barclay Court. Bankruptcy in 1931, was followed by a fire in 1936 that damaged the interior. Newspaper accounts of the fire indicate that the building residents were evacuated, with most of the damage confined to one apartment. The iron newel and slate tread stair in the south east corner of the building which differs from the panelled wood newel and oak tread stair in the north east corner is probably the result of the fire. The continuity of millwork throughout the building would seem to indicate that fire damage was limited. It returned to its use as an apartment and remained a prestigious address in Atlantic City into the 1960s when it was the home of Mayor Richard Jackson. By the 1970s, the building was under-maintained, and eventually was acquired by a law office which refurbished the first and second floors of the north wing. New doors were cut into the facade, and interior finishes were renewed. Despite those changes, the fundamental character of the building survives. The exterior, masonry, and the millwork of the openings remains intact, and the plan has been preserved; the Barclay Court retains a high degree of integrity, and thus communicates much about the lifestyle of Atlantic City in its heyday.

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		raye_	****	County,	New Je	rsey		

Significance: (continued)

Duhring, Okie and Ziegler, the prominent Philadelphia colonial revival firm, Mathis returned to Atlantic City, joining his father's firm which was renamed J. Mathis and Son. He simultaneously practiced architecture under his own name developing an enormous business that had designed 3,000 buildings by the Depression. Newspaper accounts of his work, and the Mathis obituary, listed the Seaside Hotel (Atlantic City Inventory #60, at Pennsylvania Avenue; the Knickerbocker Hotel; the Guarantee Building; and numerous houses in and around Atlantic City, as well as public schools in Cape May and Pleasantville, N.J. It is clear from the available documentation that some of these projects were alterations and renovations to existing structures. The Guarantee Building for example was designed by Addison Hutton in 1888 and an additional story was added by Mathis in 1923. Similarly, the Seaside Hotel was the work of the important Boston architects Lockwood, Greene and Co., who designed the Atlantic City Convention Hall. Mathis' work on the Seaside Hotel apparently referred to later alterations to the existing building.

Mathis has additional importance, for he was active in Atlantic City planning during and after the Depression and World War II. He wrote "Post War Planning for Atlantic City" calling for the city to perceive its physical needs, and to respond to them so that the resort could resume its leadership position after the war. After World War II, Atlantic City lost its pre-eminence to Miami, and other resorts leading to the decision in the 1970s to pass the casino referendum which had far reaching consequence, not the least of which was the demolition of most of the city's great hotels as well as a large portion of the buildings of the year round community. In the process, most of Mathis' buildings were demolished, leaving the Barclay as one of the best examples of his career.

Because of the importance of the resort industry, Atlantic City's hotels, piers, and boardwalk have been extensively studied, but the buildings of the permanent community have been ignored. Atlantic City in the early twentieth century had become a good sized city, with a population of 65,000 with numerous landmarks including institutional buildings, schools, churches, banks and even the Blatt Braunstein Department Store. The cottages of the 1880s and 1890s were supplanted by apartment buildings which by the 1920s became the typical residences of the year round population. It was these buildings that gave Atlantic City its urban character in its 1920s heyday.

In the early twentieth century, scores of apartment buildings were constructed north of Pacific Avenue. Evidence from the <u>Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide</u> suggests that there were two distinct generations: the buildings before 1925 which tend to be low two or three story walk up flats and the buildings just prior to the Depression which were closer to the

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Section number	8	Page	3	Barclay	Court,	Atlantic	City,	Atlantic
Section number		raye		County,	New Je	rsey	-	

Significance: (continued)

boardwalk and are generally tall like the big hotels. 11 The Barclay Court, with elevator service and the architectural distinction of its tile ornament formed an early example of the prestige apartment in contrast to the small six or eight unit two or three story buildings. Most of these buildings were designed by the local architects, Mathis, S. Hudson Vaughan, and Vivian B. Smith, architects who were all active before the Depression. It was this group which developed the regional variant of the over-styled, ambitiously named buildings which appealed to the sense of grandeur of the local promoter/entrepreneurs celebrated by Louis Malle in his 1970s film Atlantic City. Where the Mueller Atlas of Atlantic City depicted hundreds of these buildings in the 1920s, only a handful now survive, and mostly in such deteriorated condition as to not warrant rehabilitation.

The history of the building corresponds to the general trends of popularity of Atlantic City. It was erected in 1917, as the Revere Apartments, on one of the resort's more fashionable streets by developer J. Stuart Blackston who's local newspapers admiringly referred to as "Commodore... clubman and motion picture magnet". At the corner of Pennsylvania and Pacific was the large First Presbyterian Church which was erected in 1908; diagonally across the street was the Post Office, which has since been converted to a Federal Building. Their presence demonstrates the centrality of the Revere/Barclay Court's neighborhood within early twentieth century Atlantic City. The construction of the handsome Engine Co. No. 1 fire house next door to the Revere in 1917 by Stout and Reibenack, architects, further confirms the importance of the area - and no doubt helped minimize the fire damage to the building when it burned in February 1936. The building was immediately repaired, and remained a prestigious local address into the 1960s when it housed Mayor Richard Jackson.

By the early 1920s, the boom in Atlantic City was so great that buildings such as the Revere were sought as investments for wealthy Philadelphians. In 1921, Blackston sold the Revere to Mrs. Norman McLeod, better known as "Bessie Wanamaker, the daughter of merchant John Wanamaker. 15 At that time the building was renamed the Barclay Court - using the name of a Wanamaker -in-law (Barclay Warburton). The McLeod's in turn sold the apartment house in 1925 to a partnership in which they remained involved subject to a mortgage for \$750,000.00, one of the highest prices recorded for a property to that date in Atlantic City. 10 She would remain a co-owner of the building into the 1940s. After a generation of casino activity, the Atlantic City which supported the permanent population has been largely demolished, leaving only a handful of buildings such as the Barclay to convey the character of the old resort. As a rare surviving building from the heyday of Atlantic City, in a style which conveys something of the color and verve of the great early twentieth century

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Significance: (continued)

resort, and as the work of J. Vaughn Mathis, the most prolific of Atlantic City's architects, the Barclay Court typified the year round community of Atlantic City, itself one of the nation's principal resorts, and deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Footnotes:

- 1. Atlantic City has been the subject of numerous studies, the best of which is Charles E. Funnell, By the Beautiful Sea, the Rise and High Times of that Great American Resort, Atlantic City, New York, 1975; topical materials are found in William McMahon, So Young ... So Gay, Atlantic City, 1970. This year, a new picture book has been published for the Sesquicentennial of the county; Elaine Conover Abrahamson, Atlantic County, a Pictorial History, Norfolk, Va, 1987. The Revere was mentioned in the Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, Vol. 32 No. 2 (10 January 1917).
- 2. Atlantic City architecture is treated in a variety of sources, the most complete being George E. Thomas, "The Architecture of Atlantic City; An introduction to History, Building and Society Along the Strand," in Atlantic City Buildings Survey, a study prepared under the auspices of the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania by Venturi Rauch and Scott Brown, and Clio Group, Inc., 1980. It would be noted that that study was undertaken as an adjunct to an architectural studio which focussed on the boardwalk, and thus did not research the apartment buildings and institutions which served the permanent community. See also George E. Thomas, William 1. Price: Builder of Men and of Buildings, Ph.d. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975; and "A House Built on Sand" Via, Vol. VII, 1985, pp.
- 3. Mathis career is reported in his obituary, Atlantic City Press, 2 April 1964; and he was discussed in the Press, 19 February 1932, which described him as already having designed 3000 buildings in the city.
- 4. Though it is hard to come up with exact numbers on losses and survivals of buildings of the Barclay Court type, Atlases of the City, notably the 1923 Mueller Atlas of 1923 show literally hundreds of small apartment buildings between Pacific Avenue and the bay. Of these, some 95% have been demolished during the transformation of the resort into a modern casino center. No more than a dozen of the brightly colored early twentieth century apartments survive.

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Significance: (continued)

- 5. For a discussion of Atlantic City and its values see George E. Thomas, "The Architecture of Atlantic City..." op cit.
- 6. The names of Atlantic City apartments, like those of Wildwood and Cape May make a strong effort to play on current events; see George E. Thomas and Carl E. Doebley, Cape May Queen of the Seaside Resorts, Philadelphia, 1975, p.
- 7. "J. Vaughn Mathis" Atlantic City Press, 2 April 1964.
- 8. The number of commissions was cited in an article on Mathis as a collector of antiques, Atlantic City Press, 19 February 1932.
- 9. J. Vaughn Mathis, "Postwar Planning for Atlantic City", Atlantic City Press, 11 April 1943.
- 10. The Lafayette, the Knickerbocker, and the Guarantee Building cited above have been demolished or disfigured leaving only the Barclay Court as Mathis' best surviving building.
- 11. Unfortunately the Atlantic City Survey of 1980 pays little attention to the apartment houses of the permanent community. The presence of numerous large commercial establishments and clubs make it apparent that Atlantic City had become a metropolis dependent on a major industry, but a metropolis nonetheless. A survey of a decade of the Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide from 1917 to 1927 makes it clear that forty or fifty apartment houses a year were being described as many as eight apartments appearing in a single issue (31 January 1917, vol. 32:4). A similar frequency occurred through the decade with only a handful having greater character than the Barclay.
- 12. "\$750,000 Price Paid" Atlantic City Press, 24 January 1925.
- 13. A.H. Mueller, Atlas of Atlantic City, Philadelphia, 1923, pl. 3.
- 14. "150 Routed in Fire" Atlantic City Press, 24 February 1936.
- 15. Bessie Wanamaker made news when she was injured in an accident on the "Scenic Railway" or roller coaster, in 1893 Funnell, op. cit. p. 74; she was married to Norman McLeod, described by the <u>Press</u> 24 February 1936, as "a Philadelphia society man".

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		County, New Jersey

Significance: (continued)

16. "\$750,000 Price Paid" <u>Atlantic City Press</u>, 24 January 1925, described the sale as being arranged by Malcolm McLeod, brother in law of Mrs. Norman McLeod, "daughter of John Wanamaker and sister of Rodman."

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		raye _		County,	New Jer	rsey		

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Mueller, A.H. Atlas of Atlantic City, Philadelphia, 1923, pl. 3.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, Vol.32:2 (10 Jan 1917), Vol.32:4 (31 Jan 1917).

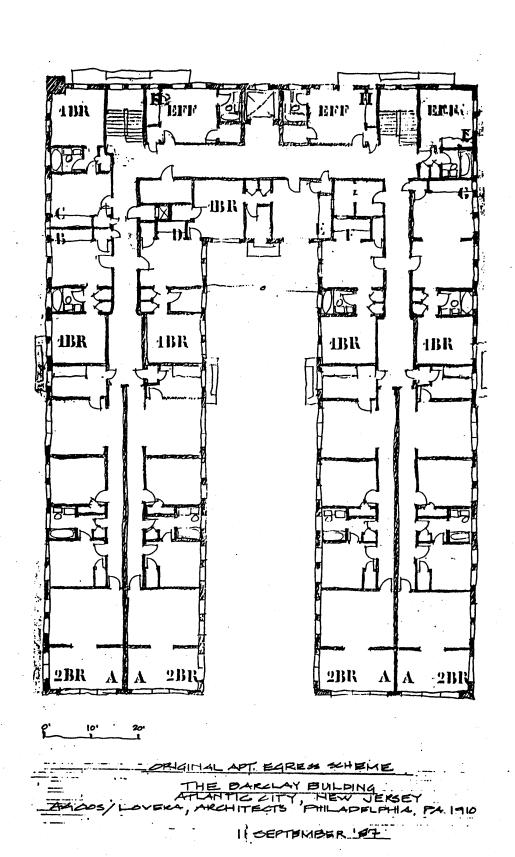
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Thomas, George E. <u>William 1. Price: Builder of Men and of Buildings</u>, Ph.d. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975.

"\$750,000 Price Paid" Atlantic City Press, 24 January 1925.

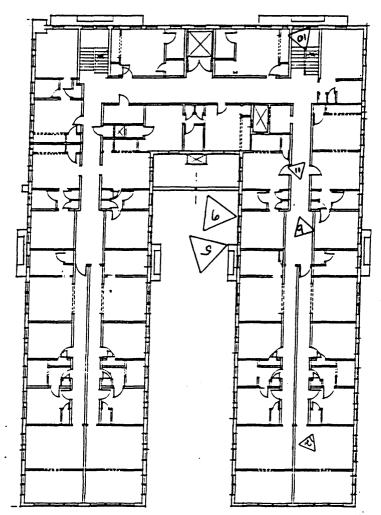
Barclay Court Atlantic City Atlantic County, New Jersey Atlantic City Tax Map (11/06/87) Scale: 40' = 1" PENNSYLVANIA 110 50' 8(8) Press Bytevich church (F)



Barclay Court Atlantic City Atlantic County, New Jersey







Barclay Court, Atlantic City Photographic Views

Plan, 1987 Agoos/Lovera Architects





