

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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AUG 31 1979
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

SAMUEL RICHARDS HOTEL

AND/OR COMMON

The American Hotel

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

106 East Main Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Mays Landing

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

034

COUNTY

Atlantic

CODE

001

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Atlantic a governmental corporation of the State of New Jersey

STREET & NUMBER

(mailing address) Murray Fredericks, Esq. 711 Guarantee Trust Building

CITY, TOWN

Atlantic City

— VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey 08401

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Atlantic County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

17 West West Jersey Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Pleasantville

STATE

New Jersey 08232

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED DATE _____

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Samuel Richards Hotel, known as the American Hotel, was constructed in 1837 by Samuel Richards, during the Post Colonial or Republican Period of American Architecture.

It is a rectangular three and a half story, stone and wood framed structure, with full basement, and measures approximately 44' - 0" long by 46' - 0" wide, exclusive of one story building additions and enclosures that have been made to the north (front), south and west exterior walls. Distinguishing exterior features of the original building include a one story, open entrance porch which wrapped around the front and a portion of one side of the building; four brick chimneys projecting above the roof surfaces; and a "Widow's Walk" located at the center of the roof, halfway along its ridge, which has since been partially removed. The overall appearance is of an unpretentious, functional building constructed with minimum concern for formal design, typical of those built in Southern new Jersey during the 19th century.

The structure is on its original site and foundations and rests on an irregularly shaped lot, with a frontage of 134.6' along Main Street, and 321.25' along Farragut Avenue. A 2-car masonry garage has recently been built on the rear portion of ground with access from Farragut Avenue. An original pond and adjoining decorative structure, constructed of New Jersey sandstone, exist on the West side of the site, between the building and the property line. The main building was originally built with a one story open front entrance porch with a shed roof, which extended around a portion of the West wall and which since has been partially enclosed and its shed roof and basic structure modified. Other modifications include an 18' - 0" wide by 38' - 0" long addition to the West wall, which appears to have enclosed a portion of the original open porch, and a 6' - 8" one story building addition to the South; (rear) wall.

The building was originally constructed with a wood shingled gabled roof an approximate pitch of 6" in 12"; the roof has since been re-surfaced with asphalt shingles. The basic roof structure consists of 4 1/2" by 3" roof rafters and 5 1/2" by 3" ceiling joists spaced 24" on center, with mortise and tenon joints throughout. All original exterior walls appear to be constructed of New Jersey sandstone, then covered with cement stucco, except for a small portion of exposed red brick surface on each gabled end, extending down for a distance of approximately 6' - 0" from the underside of the roof fidge.

Most recently, (after 1937) a fine stone aggregate/cement finish was applied over the entire existing stucco surfaces. Four brick chimneys extend above the roof, one on each side of the roof ridge on each end of the building and

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Atlantic County
New Jersey 031

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7. DESCRIPTION (continued)

provide fireplace openings at each floor in each of their respective locations. Typical windows which appear to be original, are approximately 2' - 10 1/2" wide by 6' - 0" deep, (sash dimensions), one over one, wood double hung units. It appears that hinged solid panel wood shutters existed at all original windows locations, but have since been removed. The windows which were used to enclose the front portion of the original entrance porch, are single units approximately 5' 6" wide by 6' - 0" deep, fixed, with six panes. Windows which were used for the building addition, along the west wall, which were used for the buuilding addition, along the west wall, which enclose a portion 4' - 8" deep (sash dimensions), one over one, wood double hunt units. Single, fixed, semi-circular window units occur high under the roof eave at each gabled end at the exposed brick locations.

The plan of each floor typically has a main center hall approximately 6' - 0" wide, running from the front to the rear of the building, with rooms to either side; the number of rooms on each side of the hall varies at each floor. On the first floor, the exterior entrance door, leading from the enclosed porch, is located at the front portion of the center hall and a rear door exists to a small exterior wood porch at the rear of the mail hall. Access to the basement and to the above floors is provided by a "U" type staircase located at each floor. Access to the attic is gained through a straight run stair located in the main body of the third floor center hall. A similar stair occurs directly above for access to the Widow's Walk. A straight run service stair existed between the first and second floors, adjacent the main staircase, at the rear, but is presently enclosed.

The ceiling height of each floor is approximately 8' - 10" high. Finish of the interior walls throughout the entire structure is plaster. Interior wood trim around windows and doors are simple in form, and 8" high wood bases with quarter round mouldings exist throughout, but appear to have been modified. Flooring appears to be 1" by 4" (actual) wood plank.

Interior design features include cast iron ornamental fireplaces and mantels, although some fireplaces have been either removed and/or blocked up. a 5' - 8" wide by 6' - 6" high victorian ornamental framed mirror is located at the first floor center hall. The frame appears to have an oak base and is covered with heavily formed leafed plaster, painted gold, and appears to have installed sometime after 1870.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1837 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Samuel Richards Hotel or the "American Hotel", as it is more commonly known, was built in 1837 and is significant for its historic association with the development of Mays Landing. Samuel Richards was the man responsible for contracting the building of the structure, however evidence suggests that the actual building was done by a man named William Veal, a later owner of the hotel. The building is a uncommon example of New Jersey sandstone construction. The fireplaces are of New Jersey bog iron, probably forged at Batsto or Pleasant Mills, considering Richards' associations with the iron industry. It is one of only two historic hotels remaining in Mays Landing, a town which in the mid-1800's boasted of no less than eight fine hotels and taverns.

Samuel Richards was a prominent Philadelphian who acquired a great deal of property in Mays Landing in the early part of the 19th century. He had investments in the iron furnances at Weymouth, Batsto and Pleasant Mills.

The function of the structure has, from earliest histories, been that of a tavern or public house. According to all major bibliographical references in the year 1837, "Samuel Richards now tore down the old house and erected a new one near the site of the middle tavern (formerly known as Wescotts') at Mays Landing, within a few steps of the Court House and Offices." William Wescott (Wescoat) became proprietor and was then succeeded by James Pennington. These names appear on the original tavern license, available at the Gloucester County Historical Society Library. The two persons aforementioned were also prominent businessmen at that time in the town. An advertisement signed by the lessee, William Wescott stated that the hotel, "affords great facilities for the transaction of business."

The hotel business flourished in the town because of the need for overnight accommodations for the crowds attending court sessions. Going to court as a witness, litigant or official was an event which required preparation and some pocket money to meet expected and unexpected expenses. In the great majority of instances, it meant an overnight stay. The American Hotel entertained many of the dignitaries of the Country, however, no records remain at this particular time of its' history, to certify this data. There are records, however, to support that many functions were held there such as the Hamilton Township Meeting, elections and special town meetings.

Because Mays Landing is situated on the Great Egg Harbor River, which feeds to the sea, much trading and commerce occured in the town. In addition it was the center of a thriving ship building industry. Salesmen, merchants and ship captains and crew needed a place to stay and the American Hotel filled the bill.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

A number of important Mays Landing and Atlantic County citizens have owned the hotel and tavern. One of the earlier owners was John E. Champion, a former Atlantic City Councilman, and Mays Landing resident. Another early owner was William Veal, previously mentioned as being the probable builder of the place. Mr. Veal is remembered most in the annals of the town for building the "Veal Opera House" which is no longer standing, but was a source of culture in Mays Landing for many years.

In 1891, a business review publication stated that a George Norcross was the owner and proprietor of the American Hotel. The description sums up what the American Hotel was all about and offers special insight into the character of the place. It described the hotel as follows;

"It is a commodious structure and contains in addition to parlor, reading room, saloon, etc. 15 comfortably furnished sleeping apartments. The dining room will readily seat 80 persons at one time and cuisine is all that could be desired, the bill-of-fare comprises the best the markets afford. It is a licensed house and contains a good bar, well stocked with the choicest of foreign and domestic wines and liquors. Both permanent and transient boarders are accommodated, the prices are very reasonable and guests are assured every consideration. Mr. Norcross is a native of this place and has long been regarded as one of its enterprising businessmen."

It is not known precisely when the hotel began to deteriorate as an accommodating place to stay, but a local octogenarian as the "bar" was quite an active place for the local men. There is evidence to support that the hotel was more of a boarding house at least since WWI and continued as such until the 1950's. At that time it became the home to some senior citizens of Russian extraction and became known around town as "The Russian Embassy". Atlantic County acquired the property in January, 1978 for the sum of \$50,000, when the last of these Russian folks passed away.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

"The Daily Union", History of Atlantic City & County copy. 1899.

Notes on Old Gloucester County, Vol. I, II, II. Frank Stewart; Phila., 1917.

"Business Review of the Counties of Burlington, Atlantic and Gloucester" Pa. Publ. Co., Phila., 1891.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The property nominated is on an irregular L-shaped lot approx. 134.6' by 321.25 by 278.89' by 53.41' by 136.12' by 142.65. It is bounded by the North by Main St., on the West by Farragut Ave., on the South by the old Reading Seashore Line railroad bed and the East by a residential property.