

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Weekapaug Inn

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 25 Spray Rock Road  not for publication

city or town Westerly  vicinity

state Rhode Island code RI county Washington code 009 zip code 02891

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Edward Bonderson 12/7/2006  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

Edson H. Ball 1-25-07  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Weekapaug Inn  
Name of Property

Washington County, RI  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4	2	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC: hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation CONCRETE  
walls WOOD: shingle; WOOD: weatherboard  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof ASPHALT: shingle  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Weekapaug Inn  
Name of Property

Washington County, RI  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

**Period of Significance**

1939

**Significant Dates**

1939

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Doane, Ralph Harrington

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 8 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	2	6	9	7	8	8	4	5	7	8	8	5	9
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Zachary P. Miller, President of Development

organization Goosewing Hotels and Resorts, Inc. date October 2006

street & number 28 Pond View Drive telephone 401 635-8737

city or town Little Compton state Rhode Island zip code 02837

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The Weekapaug Inn, Inc.

street & number 25 Spray Rock Road telephone 401 322-0301

city or town Weekapaug state Rhode Island zip code 02891

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**DESCRIPTION**

The Weekapaug Inn (1939) is a small seaside hotel, located in a southern Rhode Island beach village. The inn is a 2½ -story, gable-roof, shingle-and-clapboard covered structure, located on a low peninsula set between Quonochontaug Pond (on the east) and Mud Cove (on the west), and the Weekapaug Boat Harbor (on the south), within sight of Block Island Sound (on the south).

The inn faces Spray Rock Road, which runs along the east side of the Boat Harbor and Mud Cove. The inn's driveway passes over a narrow causeway separating Mud Cove and the Boat Harbor. The inn is oriented north-south, its entrance elevation facing west, its water side facing east. The entrance elevation faces a macadam parking area. A small cluster of outbuildings is located north of the inn.

Though a long building, the inn has a domestic scale. It is built in seven sections, whose gable roofs are all oriented in the same direction, but which are alternately slightly shorter and taller. On the entrance elevation, the second, third, and fourth sections of the building project several feet. The inn thus has the appearance of three gable-roof houses joined by shorter, smaller hyphens.

The building is set on a concrete foundation; the lower story of the inn is built on a steel frame and is set on reinforced concrete columns, though all of the structural elements are enclosed in wood. There are stairways in the center of the building, at each end of the building, and in each of the hyphens surrounding the central section as well.

The exterior walls are painted clapboard on the ground story, unpainted shingles above. On the front and rear elevations, the second floor overhangs the first slightly; oversize drops mark the corners of each section. The wide eaves are broken by a series of large gable-roof dormers; the central gable has a long shed dormer on both elevations. The entrance is marked by a plain, flat-roof porte-cochere. The fenestration is regular, with single double-hung (6/6) windows on the ground story and paired windows on the second story and in the dormers. Second and third level windows have working shutters.

On the east side of the inn, there is a short two-story ell, which houses the dining rooms. The ell has a gable roof, a second-story open veranda, and an open deck on the second story of the east end (facing the pond).

The interior of the inn is simply organized and finished. The guest rooms (each with a bathroom) are ranged along double-loaded central corridors that run the length of the building. On the ground floor, there is a central entry hall with common rooms. The structural members are cased in wood; fireplaces are trimmed with a simple molding; otherwise, interior surfaces are unembellished. The partition walls are painted Homosote

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with batten seams. Floor are oak. The entire north end of the hotel on this floor is given over to a modern kitchen, with a dining room in the ell. On the second level, there are again common rooms at the center of the building; the registration desk, a simple counter, is located at the top of the stair from the entry hall. As on the ground floor, dining rooms are located in the ell. The third level contains smaller guest rooms and dormitories with shared bathrooms. The attic is unfinished.

There are two notable additions to the inn, both at the north end. On the north side of the dining ell, there is a flat-roof two-story addition, containing additional dining facilities, constructed in 1970-1. Projecting north from the dining ell is a long low single-story shingled structure. Called Executive Suites since its construction in the mid-1970s, this building is divided into six small living units for the inn staff, each marked by a door and a window. A plain open porch along the length of the building faces a parking lot.

The inn is surrounded on three sides by a rough lawn dotted with large boulders. There are some foundation plantings of salt-tolerant shrubs (rose of sharon, hydrangeas, wild roses). The property as a whole is edged on the south and west with the low trees and shrubs characteristic of Rhode Island coastal areas. The view to the east is kept open.

The north end of the site is occupied by the inn's service buildings. Several of these date from 1939, when the inn was constructed; others have been added since. All have been modified. Northwest of the inn is a garage (1939), housing for employees in two small buildings (both 1939), a caretaker's house (1939), and a later cottage (c.1970). At the south end of the site on the Boat Harbor are the inn's cabanas (between 1939 and 1954).

**Garage (contributing, 1939):** The garage is a long low wooden structure with a shed roof and a short overhang at the bay doors; originally 15 garage doors faced a parking lot. The garage is now in disrepair, its doors removed and boarded over. It is used for storage.

**Elks (contributing, 1939) and Pagoda (contributing, 1939):** Located at each end of the garage, these two small wooden buildings were constructed as employee housing. Both are single-story, gable-roof, board-and-batten structures, with entrances at the gable end. Both are set on concrete blocks. Elks is the longer of the two and may have been added to since construction.

**Caretaker's House (contributing, 1939):** A tiny, almost-square shingled cottage with a single window in each elevation and a south-facing door. The building has a gable roof and is set on concrete blocks.

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**Pond House (non-contributing, c. 1970):** A small gable-roof shingled structure built as staff housing. Like its predecessors, it set on concrete blocks. Sliding doors in the gable end open to a small deck.

**Cabanas (non-contributing, between 1939 and 1954):** Located at the south end of the site, the cabanas include four rows of shed- and gable-roof shingled structures, containing changing rooms for the inn's guests. The cabanas are now overgrown with vegetation. They have been repaired and altered with a variety of materials, including T-111 panels.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Weekapaug Inn (1939, Ralph H. Doane, architect), a hotel on Rhode Island's southern coast, is significant for its exemplification of an important theme in the state's history: the development of the beachfront for seaside recreation. Its history embodies important aspects of Rhode Island's relationship with the sea, including the destruction of many of the state's beach resorts in the hurricane of 1938.

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rhode Island's beaches and coastal waters have drawn summer visitors, but historic buildings associated with this phenomenon are rare--most have been victims of harsh weather and later development. The Weekapaug Inn is a notable exception. As an institution, the inn dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the destruction of the first inn building in 1938, a new inn was built near the original site and has operated as a beach resort ever since.

Weekapaug is a small village on Block Island Sound at the west end of Quonochontaug Pond, a particularly pleasant site along both pond and ocean. Summer visitors have rented houses here since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century; by the 1880s a number of small cottages and larger houses had been built by Rhode Islanders and out-of-state visitors. Always diminutive in scale, Weekapaug was one of several beach villages along Rhode Island's southern reach, including Misquamicut, Quonochontaug, Browning Beach, Shady Harbor, and Green Hill. These resorts were characterized by modest summer houses and small boardinghouses and hotels--a contrast with neighboring Watch Hill, the site of dozens of expansive summer houses, and the state's more glamorous resorts, such as Narragansett and Newport.

The first Weekapaug Inn was built in 1899 by Frederick C. Buffum and his wife Phebe Perry, both natives of southern Rhode Island. Located on a barrier beach between the sound and the salt pond, the inn was a rambling shingled structure with broad verandas, much added to during the four decades following its construction. Housing about 120 guests in the early 1930s, the inn was patronized by visitors who valued the beautiful beaches, the sailing, the family atmosphere, and unpretentious entertainments.

The first Weekapaug Inn was destroyed on September 21, 1938, when New England's worst hurricane blew through the state. Few of the state's coastal buildings were left undamaged by the gale, especially on the south coast, as high winds at a high tide inundated the state's beach communities. The inn was damaged beyond repair (a large section had washed out to sea), and its small outbuildings were swept away. Even the shape of the beach on which the inn sat was altered as a breachway had opened between ocean and pond.

Following this destruction, a new Weekapaug Inn was constructed almost immediately by the second generation to own the inn, Margaret C. and Frederick C. Buffum, Jr. A new site was selected, a small peninsula



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of land just east of Mud Cove along the west end of Quonochontaug Pond; the new location was near the old site, but was higher and drier, and was not directly on the beach. The new inn used some rescued materials from the old, and some furnishings as well. It opened in June, 1939.

The Weekapaug Inn was designed with 67 rooms and was constructed to withstand future hurricanes. The wood-framed building is set on a steel-framed ground story and is carried on steel-reinforced concrete columns. The steel and concrete elements are all cased in wood, and the interior partitions are wood frame. This ground level is designed so that a rising sea will break away the partition walls and wash through the building rather destroying it.

The inn was designed by Ralph Harrington Doane (1886-1941) of Boston, an architect who specialized in apartment buildings, parking garages, schools, and government buildings. A Canadian by birth, Doane was trained at M.I.T. As a young professional, he served as a consulting architect for the government of the Philippine Islands, where he supervised the design and construction of several government buildings (including the Philippine Capitol and some provincial capitols) from 1916 to 1918. On his return to the U.S. he opened an office in Boston and designed a number of apartment buildings in that city. His most notable design was the Motor Mart Garage (1927) in Boston, one of the earliest parking garages, for which he received the Parker Gold Medal from the Boston Society of Architects. He designed a number of schools in the region, including Rindge Technical High School in Cambridge.

When he was engaged to produce plans for a new Weekapaug Inn, Doane was near the end of a brief career based on projects that were as much engineered as designed. He proved a particularly apt choice for the Buffums. The 1939 inn is an early example of a building designed to withstand the hurricanes that periodically afflict Block Island Sound. The original plans, in the possession of the inn's owners, illustrate this consideration. The new inn's engineering was tested most intensely in 1954 when Hurricane Carol damaged many of the surrounding buildings, including the inn's 1939 boathouse, but left the inn substantially untouched.

Since its construction through the winter of 1938-39, the Weekapaug Inn has continued to function as a summer hotel. It is now operated by the fourth generation of the Buffum family which built the first and second Weekapaug Inns. The inn's historic significance is enhanced by an unusually complete archive documenting the Buffums' tenure in Weekapaug; letters, reminiscences, diaries, guest registers, employee records, even menus and recipes from the dining room, all give a richness and texture to the historic record of the inn.

NB: The area of Weekapaug near the inn is the site of several dozen moderate- and large-scale shingled houses, dating from both before and after the 1938 hurricane. Though not yet comprehensively studied or evaluated, it is likely that this surrounding area is eligible for the National Register as an historic district.

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**Index to Photographs**

The information numbered 1–3, and 5 is the same for all photographs, as follows:

1. Weekapaug Inn
2. Washington County, Rhode Island
3. Zachary Miller, photographer
5. Original digital file located at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Information specific to each photograph follows:

4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, west elevation. Facing southeast.
  7. Photograph 1
- 
4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, west and south elevations. Facing northeast.
  7. Photograph 2
- 
4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, south and east elevations. Facing northwest.
  7. Photograph 3
- 
4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, interior view of ground floor sitting room. Facing east.
  7. Photograph 4
- 
4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, interior view of first floor Garden Room. Facing south.
  7. Photograph 5
- 
4. October 2004
  6. Weekapaug Inn, interior view of second floor reception/front desk area. Facing west.
  7. Photograph 6

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4. April 2005

6. Garage, east elevation. Facing northwest.

7. Photograph 7

4. April 2005

6. Elks, south elevation. Facing northwest.

7. Photograph 8

4. April 2005

6. Pagoda, south elevation. Facing north.

7. Photograph 9

4. April 2005

6. Caretaker's Cottage, south and east elevations. Facing northwest.

7. Photograph 10

4. October 2004

6. Weekapaug Inn, north elevation, with Executive Suites at left. Facing south.

7. Photograph 11

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*Architectural Forum*. 1942. 76[suppl]:64.

*Architectural Record*

1925. 58:133–136.

1928. 63:193-278.

1930. 68:35.

1936. 79:436–466.

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Buffum, Robert C. “The Weekapaug Inn: The Best of All Possible Worlds 1899–1999”, 1999.

*Federal Architect*. 1936. 7:18.

*Pencil Points*. 1941.22[suppl]:60.

Scotti, R.A. *Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 2003.

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**GEOGRAPHIC DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Weekapaug Inn property is identified in the Westerly Town Zoning Map as Plat 157, Lot 161, having an address of 25 Spray Rock Road. The property is in two non-contiguous parcels; the smaller section of the property is separated by the watercourse between Mud Cove and the boat harbor and runs the length of Spray Rock Road to the adjacent parcel of land (Plat 158, Lot 2) occupied by the Weekapaug Yacht Club.

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the full extent of land historically associated with Weekapaug Inn, since its construction in 1939.

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**Figure 1:** Ground Floor: Plan of existing conditions



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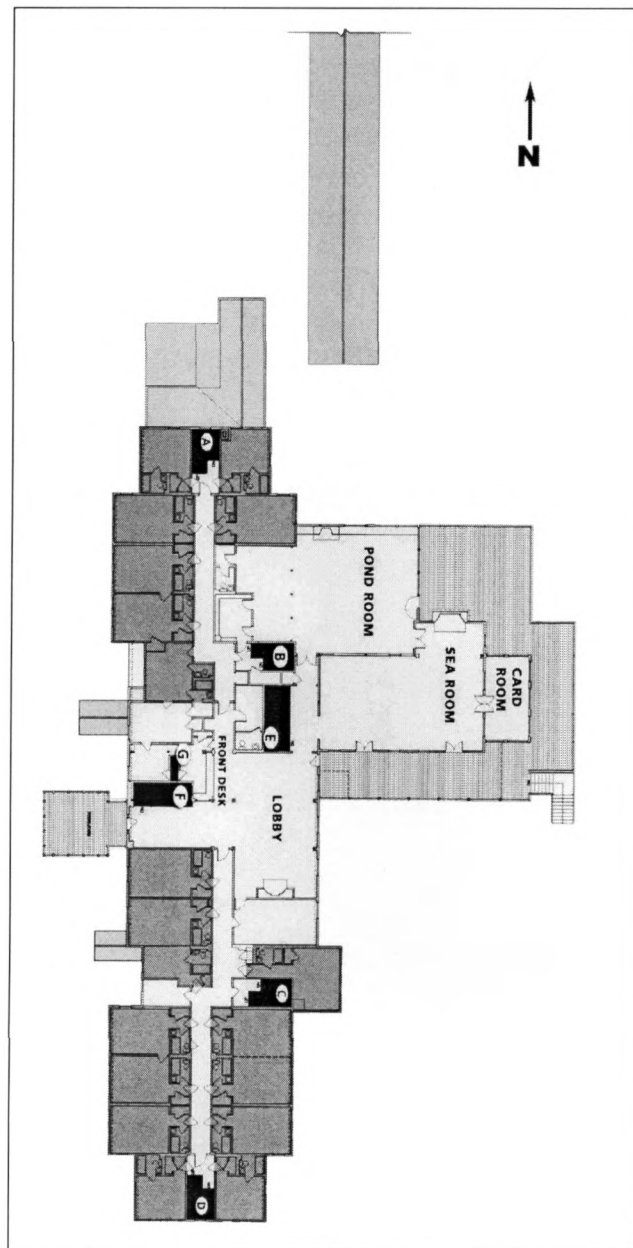
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**Figure 2:** First Floor: Plan of existing conditions

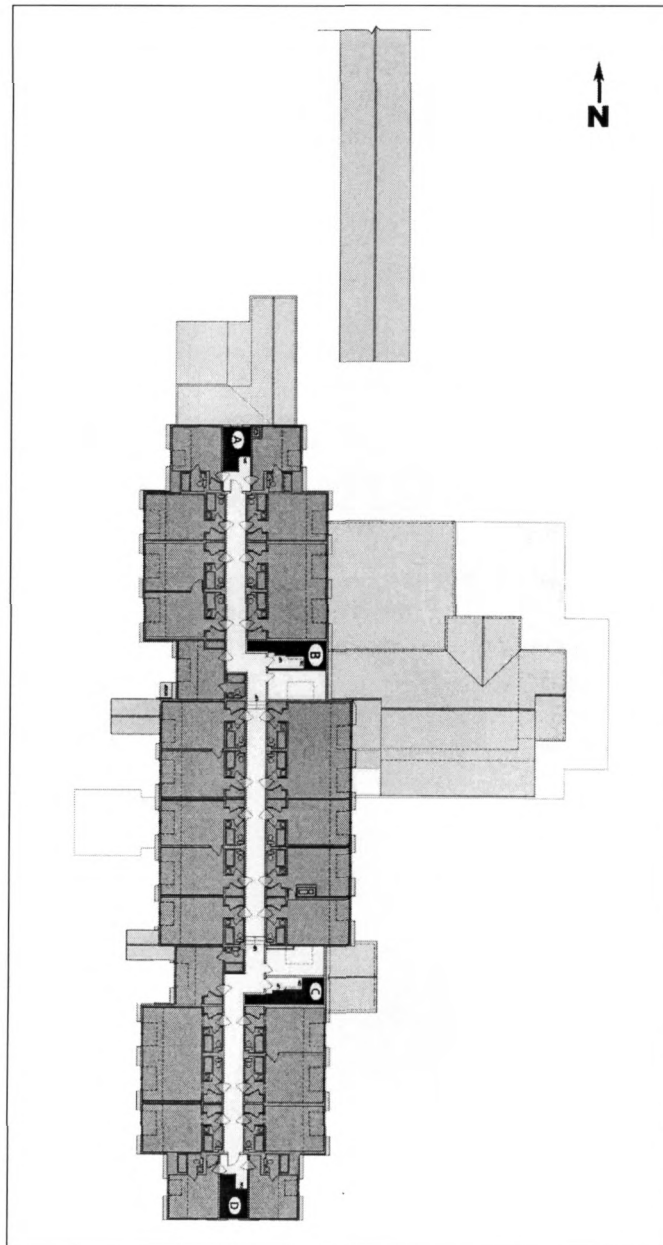


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**Figure 3:** Second Floor: Plan of existing conditions





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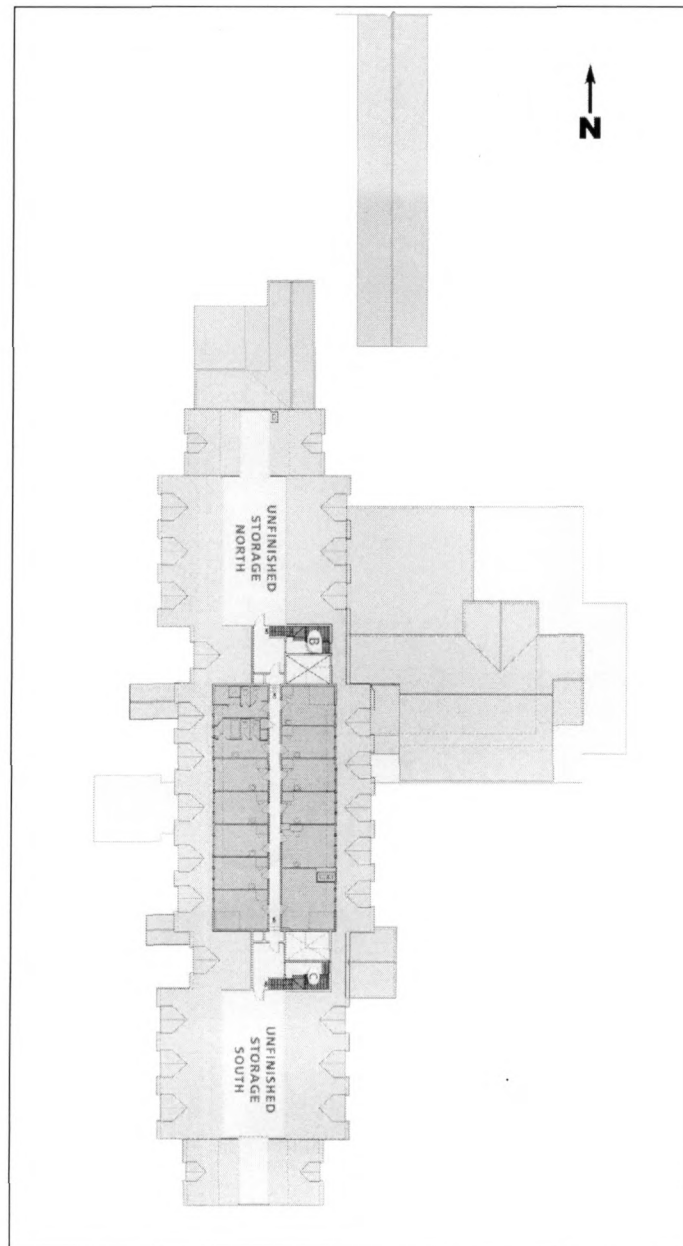
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**Figure 4:** Third Floor: Plan of existing conditions

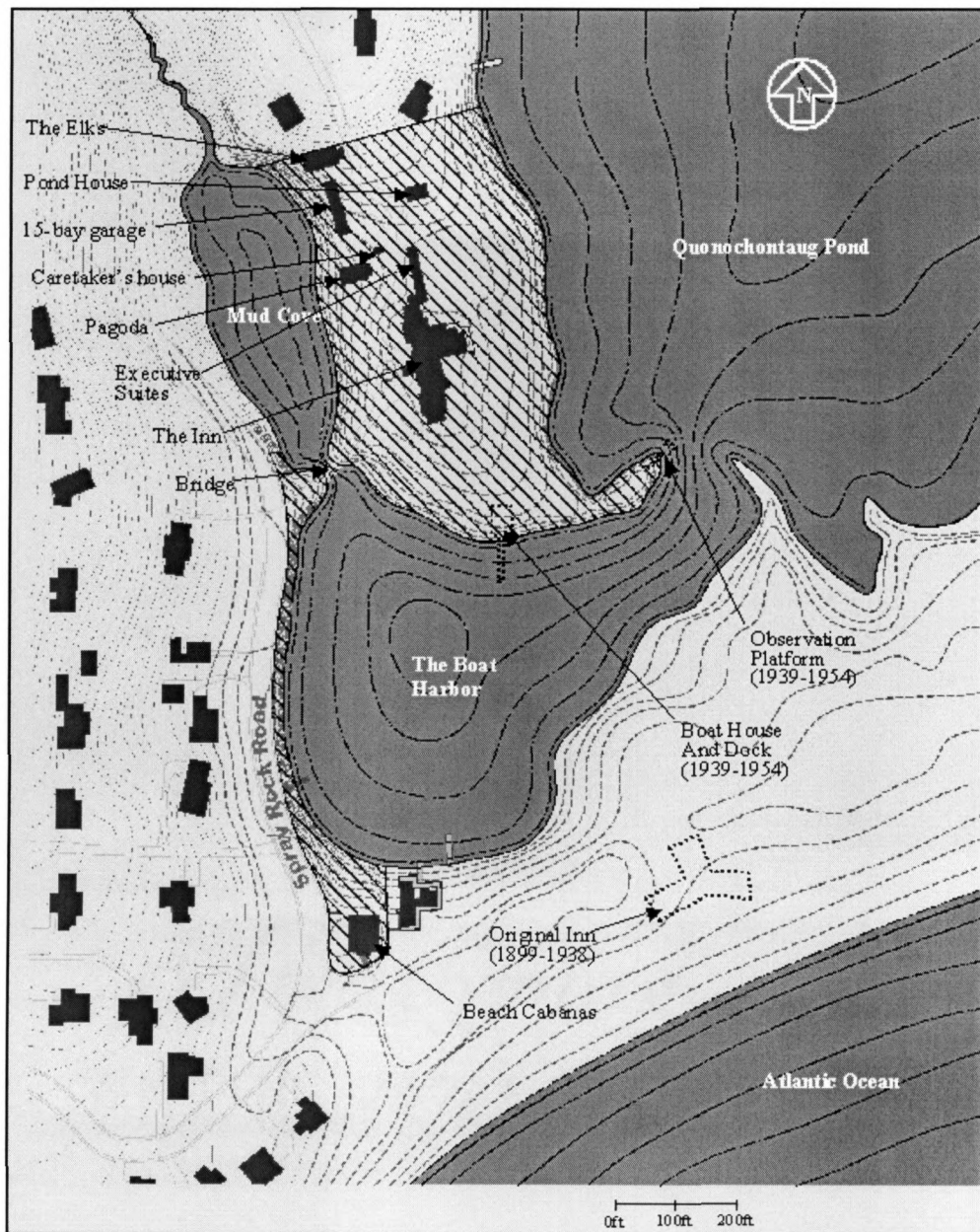


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Figure 5: Weekapaug Inn site plan



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Figure 6: Aerial view of Weekapaug Inn, summer 1939. Boathouse and pier no longer extant. Facing west.

