

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0695041

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 15 1979
DATE ENTERED	MAR 2 1979

**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 Asbury Park Convention Hall

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Ocean Avenue

CITY, TOWN Asbury Park, New Jersey VICINITY OF

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
3rd. Cong. Dist.

STATE New Jersey

CODE 034

COUNTY Monmouth

CODE 25

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Asbury Park

STREET & NUMBER 710 Bangs Avenue

CITY, TOWN Asbury Park VICINITY OF

STATE New Jersey 07712

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Hall of Records, Freehold, New Jersey;
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. copy also available at: Asbury Park, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 710 Bangs Avenue

CITY, TOWN Asbury Park

STATE New Jersey 07712

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Between James A. Bradley and Helen M. Bradley, his wife and the City of Asbury Park, a municipal corporation of the State of New Jersey

DATE April 4, 1903

—FEDERAL —STATE COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Hall of Records and copy at City Hall, Asbury Park

CITY, TOWN Freehold, New Jersey and copy, 710 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, N.J.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Commonly referred to as "Convention Hall," it is comprised of two structures - Convention Hall and Pier, and "Paramount" Theater - joined by a 60 foot wide roofed enclosure of the boardwalk.

The Convention Hall measures 230 feet wide (north-south) and extends 215 feet easterly from the edge of the boardwalk. There is a 20 foot wide open promenade on the north, east, and south sides.

The main floor of the hall measures 115 feet wide by 100 feet deep, with 36 feet allocated for stadium-type seating on the north, south and west sides.

There is a stage on the easterly side with a 48 foot wide by 24 foot high proscenium opening. The perimeter of the structure encloses exhibition spaces above the promenade at the upper level of the seating.

Below the seating, at the level of and adjacent to the boardwalk, are spaces used for offices, shops, and amusements. Various ancillary spaces, such as an organ chamber, are included in the structure.

The Theater, presently known as the Paramount Theater, is located west of the Convention Hall, adjacent to Ocean Avenue.

It is 230 feet by 104 feet with an original seating capacity of 2005 (1242 in the orchestra and 763 in the balcony). The primary axis runs north-south, with a 40 foot wide by 28 foot high proscenium located at the northerly end. There is a 24 foot by 40 foot section of traps in the stage floor.

Various ancillary spaces such as property rooms, smoking lounges, etc., are included.

Conceived as "the finest structure of its kind along the Atlantic Coast" in the pre-war years of 1916, it was not until June, 1926, that the City Commissioners voted a \$2,000,000 bond ordinance for the construction of a "Convention Hall, Amusement Pier, and Theater."

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1928 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Warren and Wetmore

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by the prominent New York architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore, also responsible for many of Atlantic City's fine hotels, Asbury Park Convention Hall has been an important feature in the city's economy as well as an important entertainment center for the state.

The movement for a convention "auditorium" in Asbury Park dates back to 1916 when a group of local businessmen, hotel proprietors, and city officials proposed the construction of a 5,000 seat structure which would cost \$500,000. These people possessed the vision and foresight which was necessary to establish Asbury Park as a vital component of the Jersey shore, an area which was just beginning to naturally grow and flourish as an accessible resort for increasing multitudes of seasonal pleasure seekers. The convention auditorium was envisioned as a "building that will meet the needs of Asbury Park for years to come."

A period of ten years elapsed, however, before any further action was forthcoming in regard to the convention facility. In June of 1926 the City Commissioners passed a two million dollar financing ordinance for the construction of Convention Hall. Thus, construction estimates for the building had quadrupled from the time the building was first conceptualized until the financing ordinance was enacted. The architectural firm Warren and Wetmore of New York City was selected to prepare plans and specifications for the building. When the construction bids were received in January of 1927, the estimates for the building were in excess of three million dollars.

The plan to build a convention center in Asbury Park was steeped in controversy from the start. On the one hand, there were those who believed that the building was necessary for Asbury Park to meet the demands of tourists; on the other hand, there was an equally vociferous group who maintained that the increased public financial burden would be suicidal. Nevertheless, in 1928 the City Commissioners unveiled a massive \$4.5 million beachfront development plan which called for the construction of Convention Hall, the Casino building at the south end of the Boardwalk, and three beachfront pavilions.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Certified Copy of Riparian Grant: The State of New Jersey to James A. Bradley", Book 345 of Deeds, page 198, Monmouth County Clerk's Office.
 "Deed of James A. Bradley and wife to the City of Asbury Park, April 4, 1901
 "Ordinance No. 423", City of Asbury Park, June 15, 1926.
 The Asbury Park Evening Press, several articles from September 2, 1916- June 19, 1968 inclusive

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.45 acres Long - W73 59' 56"
 Lat. N 40 13' 25"

QUADRANGLE NAME Asbury Park QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	5 8.5 1 8.0	4 4 5.2 7 6.0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Convention Hall is located on the east side of Ocean Avenue between 5th and Sunset Avenues. The building is 275 feet wide (north to south) between

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Warren J. Buehler, Adm. Asst./Patrick M. Gilvary, Architect/Planner

ORGANIZATION
710 Bangs Avenue

STREET & NUMBER
Asbury Park

CITY OR TOWN
New Jersey

DATE
(201) 775-0900 9/15/78

TELEPHONE
New Jersey

STATE
STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

Deputy
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *[Signature]* DATE 12/29/78

TITLE Deputy Commissioner, DEP

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER *[Signature]* DATE 3-2-79

ATTEST: *[Signature]* DATE March, 1979

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Description (continued)

Convention Hall was designed in the Eclectic tradition, prevalent in the period 1870 - 1930, founded in both the Early Renaissance of Italy and Classical Period of the French Renaissance.

The loggia surrounding the Theater on the north, south, and east sides at street level, is created by semicircular arches supported on paired columns similar to the cortille at the Palazzo dell' Universita, Genoa (1634-1636) or the cortille at the Palazzo Borghese, Rome (c.1590).

The predominance of cast stone rustication including the quoins on the mass of the theater, the patterned brickwork and the chains forming wall panels, strongly suggest the influence of the French.

Although the placement of the ornamentation, in its symmetry and density, conforms to the classical masonry tradition, a predominance of stylized animal and plant forms, especially the geographically "correct" or symbolic use of seashells, dolphins and seahorses, suggests the influence of the early days of Art Deco. Other maritime themes are represented in the four copper sailing ships, nautical lanterns, and cast stone anchors. In addition, there is an abundance of floral decoration, pottery, and a few eagles in cast stone.

Of particular note is the brick infill in the three major semi-circular arches, on the west elevation above the loggia. Originally specified as cast stone rustication, they were executed in polychromatic brick of blues and purples. Starting from a deep blue at the base, the tone changes through purple to a sky blue at the keystone of the arch.

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Description (continued)

The interior of the complex is comprised of three major spaces: The Convention Hall, the Theater, and the Boardwalk.

Convention Hall

The entrance to the lobby of the Convention Hall is through six pairs of glass and copper clad doors framed in groups of two pairs by engaged stucco half-columns 34 feet 8 inches high, 3 feet 8 inches in diameter, on a base of cast stone 4 feet wide by 2 feet 7 inches high. Over each group of doors is pressed copper ornamentation and copper kalamein framed fixed sash rising to the foliated column capitals.

From the lobby to the main floor of the Hall are five pairs of similar doors. The lobby itself is approximately 46 feet wide by 40 feet deep by 34 feet high, with box offices and stairways on each side (northerly and southerly). The floor, finished in terrazzo, slopes 2 feet upward from the boardwalk to the interior doors of the lobby.

The easterly side of each stairway is guarded by a pair of travertine winged lions. An arched bridge, joining the exhibition spaces on the second floor, is located above the lobby. It is decorated with plaster angels and scrollwork and has a travertine capstone on the rail.

There is bronze grillwork on the western (entrance) wall and detailed bronze grilles at the box office windows.

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Description (continued)

The ceiling is suspended plaster with a coffered effect created by both encasing structural members and creating false beams. Within the coffers are (circle within square) decorative rosettes. The entire ceiling is painted to "imitate wood."

The Convention Hall, itself a multi-purpose space, is substantially less ornate, with the exception of the proscenium wall and ceiling. On each side of the proscenium opening are two pilaster-like, hand painted panels depicting seashore scenes. Between each set of pilasters is a 15 foot wide by 22 foot high organ screen. It is composed of four engaged columns, executed in pilaster, framing the bronze grillwork that covers the openings to the organ chamber.

The ceiling is plaster with a central plaster band 60 feet in diameter enclosing a center rosette approximately 6 feet in diameter. This rosette is encircled by eight smaller rosettes. Equally spaced along the circumference and intersecting the major band are four 3 foot diameter rosettes. Additionally, six other 3 foot diameter rosettes in square bands are symmetrically located on the ceiling. Each, except the four circumferential rosettes are utilized as electric light outlets and ventilation grilles.

Theater

The entrance to the Theater is at the south side through a section of the loggia enclosed as a foyer. The entrance lobby, measuring 26 feet wide by 16 feet deep, ramps upward and houses the box office. In comparison to the Convention Hall, the lobby of the Theater is much understated.

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Description (continued)

Of more significance is the mezzanine lounge and stairhalls. The mezzanine is reached by means of stairways located at either side and within the orchestra.

The mezzanine lounge is separated from the (east west) stairhalls by counter-thrusting elliptical arches measuring 5 feet-10 inches wide by 120 feet-4 inches high (to apex), with 2 feet-2 inch wide piers. All other walls within the lounge and stairhall area are articulated in arch forms by pilasters, windows, or vomitories. In addition to the arches, the ceiling is coved at each wall intersection, creating an artificial vaulted effect. Each arch was originally finished with delicate colored stenciled ornament. (This effect has been lost over the years).

The overall effect of the vaulted spaces, particularly with the indirect lighting and the loss of the stenciled decoration, is a cavernous feeling of strong Moorish influence.

The indirect lighting is accomplished through the use of composition caps located at each arch pier, within which are located the electric lighting fixtures.

The proscenium opening is an elliptical arch measuring 39 feet wide by 28 feet high, surrounded by a cast plaster archivolt approximately 26 feet wide. The ornamental moldings creating the archivolt begin with a 4 foot wide architrave, surrounded by a wide band of squares with fleurons at the center.

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Description (continued)

Beyond the band of squares are three wide bands of three rows of perforated plaster ornamentation in intricate geometric design. The outermost band of ornamentation repeats that of the first large band.

The ceiling of the theater is suspended plaster with numerous plaster ornamental discs or rosettes. The principal ceiling motif measures 36 feet in diameter and consists of offset concentric light panels of amber cathedral glass, interspersed with reinforced plaster ornamentation of floral character and female nudes, and perforated ornamentation for ventilation.

The minor rosettes vary in size from 9 feet to 4 feet-8 inches in diameter, and also serve as light and vent grilles.

Boardwalk

Seven pairs of glass and copper kalamein doors enclose the Boardwalk at the north and south entrances. Above the doors is a variety of cast stone ornamentation on the exterior, with steel framed sash above rising to a height of approximately 35 feet, allowing daylight to penetrate the space.

Sixty feet wide, the Boardwalk has spaces allocated for shops and amusements on each side. Stucco covered piers, 3 feet-6 inches widerise from cast stone bases. Stucco capitals adorn the top of each pilaster.

A coffered ceiling is created by encasing structural elements, as well as by creating false beams. Between the beams are located flat plate glass skylights. Above the flat plates are gabled metal skylights.

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Description (continued)

The floor of the Boardwalk is polished concrete diagonally scored and tinted contrasting colors. Being the most utilized of the three major spaces, and consequently the most maintained and "modernized" the Boardwalk has undergone substantial changes over the years.

Contemporary aluminum storefronts have replaced the copper kalamein framing. Various plastic and glass illuminated signs have been placed over the original pressed copper sign boards. Grilles have been placed over windows originally opening to the dressing rooms.

A variety of high-intensity lights and radiant space heaters have been hung from the ceiling.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

Convention Hall is essentially a steel frame and masonry building. Large steel roof trusses span the major spaces. Most significant, perhaps, is the foundation of the Hall itself. It is comprised of steel jacketed, reinforced concrete piers resting on timber piles. The groups vary in number of piles; some as many as 32, the majority averaging 10-15 piles per pier.

The years of wind, weather, and the scouring effect of the sea have caused severe damage to the piers, including corrosion of the jackets and deterioration of the concrete.

Major efforts have been undertaken in recent years to protect the substructure, including building a seawall around it.

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Significance (continued)

Convention Hall was ultimately completed in 1929, yet the controversy continued. The skeptics who ten years earlier had suggested that the Hall was unnecessary in an entertainment sense and a potential burden financially were able to triumphantly point to Asbury Park's "white elephant." The beachfront development project was laden with a variety of cost overruns: the Depression had set in; Asbury Park was close to municipal bankruptcy, with a debt burden of \$10 million (most of which was traceable to the beachfront); and litigation regarding some of these problems carried all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Moreover, there were a variety of entertainment flops at Convention Hall from the outset. Theater magnate Walter Reade leased the building for several years following its completion, but the operas, theater performances, and conventions which he provided were usually unsuccessful.

During the years from 1942 until 1946, the U.S. Army Signal Corps and U.S. Navy occupied Convention Hall for wartime training purposes. The history of Convention Hall has been a great deal brighter in the post-World War II era. Following the departure of the Armed Forces in 1946, Convention Hall was leased by a promoter for Big Band dances. The bands of Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, Charlie Spiwak, Glenn Miller, and others performed before Convention Hall audiences. The Hall was also utilized for ice and roller skating shows, boxing matches, basketball games, beauty pageants, and a wide variety of other events.

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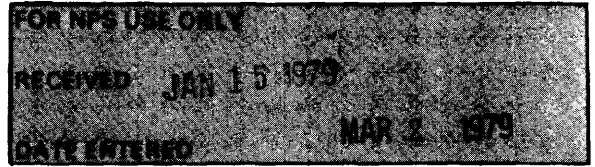
Significance (continued)

During the past decade Convention Hall has been used for rock concerts, a number of trade shows, conventions, lectures, political rallies and debates, basketball tournaments, wrestling matches, and a variety of other special events. More recently, the Paramount Theatre, an impressive component of the Convention Hall complex has had performances by the N.J. State Opera, N.J. State Orchestra, a vaudeville revival, and a film festival.

Architecturally, Asbury Park Convention Hall is an unusually fine example of 1920's eclecticism employing Italian and French designs. Colorful and grandiose in concept, the complex has ornamental details that incorporate motifs within the context of the design sources. The complex exemplifies the conservative aspect of the 1920's style with its reminiscences of popular Colonial Revival detailing and some lingering art nouveau motifs. The quality and excellent repair of the interior ornaments and finishes heightens the architectural significance of Convention Hall.

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Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

5th And Sunset Avenues. Convention Hall is 285 feet in length (west to east) beginning at the Curb on the east side of Convention Hall and extending to the rear deck of Convention Hall.