

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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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 Cape May Historic District

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Multiple

CITY, TOWN

Cape May

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

New Jersey

--- VICINITY OF
CODE

COUNTY

Cape May

CODE

3 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: recreation

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Cape May Mayor Bruce Minnix

STREET & NUMBER
City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Cape May

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cape May City Hall and Cape May County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Cape May

STATE

New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1961; 1973-1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

Cape May is located at the southernmost tip of New Jersey and is known as America's Oldest Seashore Resort. The City is entered on Lafayette Street with many boathouses on Yacht Avenue to the South. Lafayette Street and Washington Street are the two main east-west streets in the community, and, as such, are heavily travelled. The main residential streets are Hughes Street, Columbia Avenue, Beach Avenue, and New Jersey Avenue running East and West. The North-South residential streets are too numerous to mention. There is a four block commercial strip along Washington Street. Some of the newer structures in the core of town were badly designed but the general intimate scale is largely intact.

The following structures are those listed currently in the Historic American Buildings Survey:

Allen, George, House (Victorian House), 720 Washington Street. Frame with clapboards, 47' (five-bay front) x 42', with 58' 17' rear wing, three stories with attic and cupola at apex of hipped roof, one story porch surrounding three sides, central hall plan. Built 1863, Samuel Sloan, architect. Large and elegant Italianate villa, one of the State's most impressive 19th century seashore structures. Copy of original building contract exists.

Atlantic Terrace House (Minnix House), 20 Jackson Street. Frame with asbestos siding, approximately 20' x 60', three stories above raised basement, one story front porch, bay window with ogee roof on facade at second story. Built 1891-92, Stephen Decatur Button, architect. One of seven essentially identical houses. Baloon frame structures built on site of Atlantic Hotel.

Boyd, George W., House, 1501 Beach Drive. Frame with clapboards, 80' (six-bay front) x 74', two-and-one-half stories with dormers, one story front portico, two story porches on each side, hipped roof, two story rear wing, central hall plan. Built 1911, Frank Seeburger, architect. Symmetrical facade, Georgian Revival style.

Cape Island Baptist Church (Franklin Street United Methodist Church), SE. corner Lafayette and Franklin Streets. Frame, approximately 44' x 74', one story, entry through tower at NW. corner, open interior. Built 1879, C. H. Brown, architect. Large frame Gothic Revival church. Charles A. Shaw, contractor.

Cape Island Presbyterian Church (Community Center), 417 Lafayette Street. Frame with clapboards, 40' (three-bay front) x 60'. one story, arched doors and windows, corner pilasters, open one-stage cupola with Moorish "onion" dome, open plan with semi-circular chancel. Built 1853. Unusual chatri-type dome on cupola.

Continued

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input 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 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) History (early sea resort)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES circa 1850 - 1910

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cape May has one of the largest collections of late 19th century frame buildings left in the United States. It contains over 600 summer houses, old hotels, and commercial structures that give it a homogeneous architectural character, a kind of textbook of vernacular American building.

A brief history of the City of Cape May indicates a substantial claim as the oldest Sea Shore resort in America. Long before the first Europeans explored the coast of the New World, Cape May County was inhabited by a branch of the Lenni-Lenape tribe of Indians (the Kechemeché) who found the climate and wild life excellent. Cape May was actually discovered by Sir Henry Hudson on August 28, 1609. He entered Delaware Bay and landed a few miles north of Cape May Point.

Cape May was named for Cornelius Jacobson Mey, a Dutchman representing the Dutch West India Company. Mey explored this coast in 1621. Shortly after his visit, in May of 1630, Samuel Godyn and Samuel Blommaert representing the same company, made the first land purchase in the county. They bought from the Indians a tract 4 miles along the bay from Cape May point northward and 12 miles inland. A New Netherlands colony was firmly established. In 1632 Davi Pieterse DeVries, an eminent seaman became the first resident patroon land owner in Cape May. He was to establish a fishing industry, particularly that of whaling. In 1638 English colonists from New England migrated to expand the whaling industry and Town Bank (or Cape May Town) was founded. The English assumed control of the area in the 1660's.

In 1687 Doctor Daniel Coxe of London, Quaker, began the organization of government and established headquarters at Town Bank on Coxehall Creek. He constructed a manor house called Coxe Hall which became a religious meeting house and town hall. In 1692 the West Jersey Society bought all of Dr. Coxe's holdings - 95,000 acres.

In the 18th century the whalers and farmers developed an economy based on the resources at hand and created the foundation for the flourishing sea-side resort that grew to international fame in the 19th century.

Continued

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 8	5 0, 9 0, 0, 0	4, 3 1, 1 4, 6, 0	B	1, 8	5 0, 9 6, 3, 0	4, 3 0, 9 2, 0, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
c	1, 8	5 0, 5 0, 6, 0	4, 3 0, 8 3 2, 0	D	1, 8	5 0, 5 0, 8, 0	4, 3 1, 0 4, 2, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean from Sixth Avenue on the west to the Coast Guard base on the east (Buffalo Avenue). Bounded on the north by Cape May Harbor to Schellingers Landing to Cape Island Creek and thus westerly to West Perry Street and then northwesterly to Broadway and Southwest on Broadway to Cape Island Creek (former location of creek) to the southwest to the Atlantic Ocean and back to Sixth Avenue.

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

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

2/10/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory, 1961, # 599.2, # 599.4 - state

Historic Sites Office
Department of Environmental Protection
Box 1420
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Code: 34

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Carroll Villa, 19 Jackson Street. Frame with clapboards, 36' (three-bay front) x 59', side annex and rear wing, three stories with cupola at apex of hipped roof, one story arcaded front porch. Built 1882, porch widened 1892, annex built 1895. Built for George Hildreth by Charles A. Shaw, contractor.

✓ Chalfonte Hotel, NW. corner of Howard and Sewell Streets. Frame with clapboards and beveled siding, roughly "L" shaped, 100' x 200', three stories with belvedere, elaborate arcaded two story porches. Built 1875, 1876 as private house, additions 1879 and later converted it to hotel use. Oldest and most ornate large hotel in Cape May. Records also include material on adjacent staff quarters and cottages. Designed and built by the owner, Henry W. Sawyer. William Moore and Brothers, contractors.

Colonial Hotel, Beach Drive between Ocean and Gurney Streets. Frame with clapboards and shingles, "L" shaped, four stories with attic and raised basement, octagonal towers with pyramidal roofs flank main entrance, mansard roof, one story porch. Built 1894-95, William and Charles Church, architects; South wing added 1905.

Congress Hall Hotel, Beach Drive between Congress Place and Perry Street. Brick, "L" shaped, one wing twenty bays by three bays, the other seventeen bays by three, three-and-one-half stories, three-story verandah, mansard roof. Built 1879, J. F. Meyer, architect. Benjamin Harrison, twenty-third President of the United States, had his executive offices here in the summer of 1891. Fourth building on site. Furnished with Eastlake appointments from Chicago. Jacob Cake who owned the Willard Hotel in Washington was also manager of Congress Hall. The "Cake Walk" was named for him.

Cook's Villa, 9 Perry Street. Frame, two-and-one-half stories with dormers, mansard roof, two story porches with pierced tile inserts in railings. Built 1878-79, Frank Furness and George Hewitt, architects. A copy of original building contract and specifications exist.

Hildreth, George, House ("Lyhano"), 17 Jackson Street. Frame with clapboards and panelling, two-and-one-half stories with dormers, mansard roof, octagonal bays flank entrance, two-story porch with ornamental trim between bays, bracketed cornices at both first and second stories. Built 1882.

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Jackson's Clubhouse (Victorian Mansion), 635 Columbia Avenue. Frame with clapboards, 44' (five-bay front) x 37', two and three stories with cupola at apex of hipped roof, elaborate one-story porch surrounds three sides, bracketed cornice, central hall plan. Built 1872 as private "gentleman's club." Stephen Decatur Button, architect. Built for Edward Lear, a famous minstrel. A superb Italian villa with its original furniture. A copy of the original building contract and specifications exist.

✓ Johnson, Eldridge, House (The Pink House), 33 Perry Street. Frame with clapboards, 20' x 55', three stories, two-story porch on front and east side, gable roof with gable end to street, side hall plan. Most ornamented porch in city. Built 1882, moved to Perry Street from original location at 225 Congress Place in 1970.

Lewis, Joseph, House (The Baronet), 819 Beach Drive. Frame with shingles, 40' x 80' with rear wing, three stories over raised granite basement, large one-story porch on front and two sides with open deck above, central hall plan. Built 1870, raised, and stone basement and porch added 1905. Land was owned by John C. Bullitt of Philadelphia.

Macomber Hotel, NW. corner of Beach Drive and Howard Street. Frame with shingles, three-and-one-half stories above raised basement, two-story porch, gable roof on front with shed dormers along sides. Built after 1918. Good example of early 20th century C. Shingle Style adapted to large building.

McCreary, John B., House (Christian Science Society), SW. corner of Gurney and Columbia Streets. Frame with clapboards, originally frame with board and batten, 18'-6" (four-bay front) x 24', rear wing, two stories with four-story corner entrance tower, one-story porch on front and portion of South side, irregular plan. Built 1869-70, Stephen Decatur Button, architect, porch altered 1945. Notable Gothic Revival villa with elaborate trim. A copy of the original building contract and specifications exist.

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New Jersey Trust and Safe Deposit Company, 526 Washington Street. Brick, 28' x 77', one story, elaborate limestone cornice, entrance formed by beveled corner, open interior with mezzanine level offices at rear. Urbane, small-scale Renaissance Revival building. Built 1895, Thomas Stevens, architect.

Physick, Dr. Emlen, House, 1048 Washington Street. Museum. Frame with beveled siding, 60' x 52' with 22' x 35' rear wing, two-and-one-half stories with dormers, gable, mansard, and hipped roofs, four ornate chimneys, one-story arcaded porch on side elevations and portion of front, central hall plan. Built 1879, attributed to Frank Furness, architect. Unique stick style/shingle style villa.

St. John's Church (Church of the Advent), SW. corner of Washington and Franklin Streets. Frame with board and batten, cruciform, 72'-6" x 66'-9", one story, porches at intersections of arms of crosses, hipped and gable roofs, open interior with carved beams, trusses and braces. Built 1867, Henry Sims, architect. Simple Victorian Gothic style with original fittings and stained glass.

Schellenger, Jeremiah, House, 1284 Lafayette Street. Frame, two-story, octagonal plan. Built about 1860.

Stockton Cottage, 26 Gurney Street. Frame with clapboards, 20' (three-bay front) x 70', three stories, gable roof with gable end facing street, acroterion at apex of gable, ornate one-story porch on front and portion of side with open, balustraded deck above, modified side hall plan. Built in 1871-72, Stephen Decatur Button, architect. Best preserved of eight originally identical cottages designed in the "Swiss Style." Copies of the original building contract and specifications exist.

Windsor Hotel, Beach Drive between Windsor and Congress Streets. Frame with clapboards, "L" shaped, seventeen-bay front, three-and-one-half, three, and two-and-one-half stories with mansard roofs and dormers, one and two story porches. Built 1879, Stephen Decatur Button, architect. Second Empire style interpreted in a large frame structure. Built for George Whitney of Glassboro.

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There are a number of other fine houses and hotels that have not yet been recorded for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

At the eastern end of town a planned community was to be developed by the railroad interests but was never fully realized. The most conspicuous building is the Christian Admiral Hotel (belonging to Reverend Carl McIntire) which originally cost over \$1,000,000.

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Cape May began to flourish as a resort after the War of 1812 when regular steamboat traffic on the Delaware River picked up passengers at New Castle, Delaware. (Southerners who had traveled North by the Frenchtown and New Castle Railroad.) In 1816, Thomas Hughes built the first Congress Hall Hotel at Cape Island.

In 1830 a contemporary writer comments: "Cape May Island is a noted and much frequented watering place, the season at which commences about the first of July and continues until the middle of August or the first of September. There are six boarding houses, three of which are very large; the sea bathing is convenient and excellent, the beach affords pleasant drives and there is excellent fishing in adjacent waters."

The famous and well-to-do became frequent visitors. Henry Clay arrived in August of 1847, and Abraham Lincoln in 1849, and the following while they served as President of the United States: Franklin Pierce in 1855; James Buchanan in 1858; Ulysses S. Grant in 1873; Chester A. Arthur in 1883, and Benjamin Harrison in 1889. At the peak of the summer season in the 1850's, as many as 3,000 visitors a day arrived by steamer and this influx continued through the 1880's.

Cape May enjoyed an international reputation as a spa from the mid-century until the early years of the 20th century when Atlantic City became more fashionable. The town was incorporated as a city in March of 1851, and the name was changed from Cape Island to Cape May City. Its only rivals in America were Newport, Rhode Island, Saratoga Springs, New York and Longbranch, New Jersey.

While Cape May flourished as a resort, famous for its atmosphere and entertainments, a number of famous hotels were constructed - in 1853, the Mount Vernon - then the largest hotel in the world. It burned in September 1856. The United States Hotel built in 1843, burned in the disastrous fire of 1867. Since many of these large summer "palaces" were timber, they were vulnerable to fire and the great 1867 fire leveled two city blocks.

In spite of the damaging fires, Cape May retains a very great number of the buildings of the second half of the 19th century. There is an almost complete showcase of late-Victorian architecture which should be preserved and restored. The so-called eclectic styles so fancied by a new rich America

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are all here. Most of these buildings were conceived and constructed by the individual carpenter-builder, using textbooks and trade journals. They improvised freely on what they thought were traditional styles - Greek Revival, Gothic, Queen Anne, Italianate, Elizabethan, Eastlake, Mansard, etc., but these borrowings were not historically accurate. Rather, these romantic statements were an architectural vernacular that produced the "Picturesque" style Americans held to be the height of fashion. Many of the buildings in Cape May must have been designed by creative local carpenters using the handbooks of construction that were standard reference. These "pattern books" included designs, costs of material, chatty advice on good taste and had some pretensions as to guides to culture. The parvenu client was anxious to display his wealth in the form of a fine house in the latest fashion. Cape May has a number of excellent examples of the elegant summer residence.

This community still maintains the nostalgia of past elegance and whimsical romance. The resort retains those qualities of an era most closely associated with Southern hospitality and charm, gracious living and a century that had supreme confidence in itself.

There are also a number of significant structures of the first decade of the 20th century designed by distinguished architectural firms such as McKim, Mead and White, and the Philadelphia firm of Zanzinger, Medary and Borie. Earlier, some distinguished architects were at work--Samuel Sloan, Stephen Decatur Button, and Frank Furness.

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Beginning at the point where the incorporated city boundary meets the Atlantic Ocean shoreline at the west end of Cape May City, the national historic landmark boundary follows the shoreline in an easterly direction to the west boundary of the U.S. Coast Guard Receiving Center; thence north along the west Coast Guard property line to the shoreline of Cape May Harbor; thence westerly along the shoreline of the Harbor to the mouth of Cape Island Creek; thence southwesterly along the incorporated city boundary line, which follows the center line of the Creek, to the north property lines on the north side of Myrtle Street; thence northwesterly along these property lines to their intersection with Park Boulevard; thence south along the east curb of Park Boulevard to the intersection with West Perry Street; thence westerly along the southern curb of West Perry Street (Sunset Boulevard farther west) to the west property lines of the properties on the west side of the last residential street on the west end of Cape May City; thence southerly along the west property lines to their intersection with the incorporated city boundary; thence southwesterly along the incorporated city boundary to the beginning point.