

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91000675 Date Listed: 6/14/91

Santa Rita Apartments
Property Name:

Atlantic New Jersey
County: State:

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrus
Signature of the Keeper

6/24/91
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The form does not have an Area of Significance indicated for Criterion A. Sue Pringle with the NJ SHPO says to add Community Development. The form is now officially amended to add this information.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Santa Rita Apartments
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 66 South Carolina Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Atlantic City N/A vicinity
state New Jersey code NJ - 034 county Atlantic code 001 zip code 08401

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | <u>1</u> | _____ buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | _____ | _____ sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | _____ | _____ structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | _____ | _____ objects |
| | | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
James Hall (James Hall) 4/12/91 (04/12/91)
Signature of certifying official Date
Acting Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrews 6/14/91
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: apartment building

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: apartment building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick, stone

roof asphalt

other copper bays and cornice

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Santa Rita Apartment house stands at the corner of South Carolina and Pacific Avenues in the midst of the principal architectural landmarks of the year-round community of Atlantic City. Unlike most of the city's apartment houses which were three or four story walk-ups, this nine story building towered over all but the two tallest hotels, making it one of the city's chief structures in its heyday. The building is distinguished by its vertical bands of copper bays at the corners and at points that subdivide the long South Carolina facade into thirds, and by its massive copper cornice. These are its chief ornament and gave the Santa Rita a striking presence that even now makes it a landmark in Atlantic City.

The Santa Rita occupies a plot which is fifty feet wide on Pacific Avenue and 150 feet along South Carolina Avenue, with its rear facade facing Memorial Street. The building fills its entire site on the first story but steps back on the west side above the second floor to assure light and air to the western apartments. Though the proportions are those of a slab, by the careful subdivision of the facade by its bays, the architect, J. R. Ogden, an Atlantic City resident, established a verticality of proportion that links the Santa Rita to the well-known progressive modern architecture of the Midwest.

The exterior is largely a diagram of function: the first story was devoted to retailing and restaurants and was set off by a cornice at the first story. The upper eight stories were devoted to flats with different room uses described by various window types. Living rooms are denoted by projecting bays while bedrooms and dining rooms are lighted by single windows set off by flush limestone lintels and slightly projecting sills that punctuate the orange-red brick walls. Windows are double-hung, one-over-one sash. On the west elevation a less expensive purple brick is substituted for the finished brick of the main facade at the point where the facade steps back from the property line. Segmental brick arches above the window openings were substituted for the cut stone lintels on the same wall.

The main entrance to the apartments was placed in the center of the long east wall in the optimal position for efficient access to each unit. The door opens into a modest corridor leading to an elevator. This was the principal means of access to the apartments, but as an obligatory gesture to grandeur, and in case the elevator did not work, the corridor ended at the foot of the handsome iron stair that rises to landings on the exterior wall. The stair is of rolled steel with wrought iron balusters, cast iron newels, and wood hand rails. In keeping with the evolving character of modern architecture, the steel is directly expressed by exposed rivets and bolts. The same directness of

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G NA

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1910-1940

Significant Dates
1910

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
J. R. Ogden - Architect
Augustus Cramer - Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Surrounded by the churches, clubs and institutions of Atlantic City's permanent community along Pacific Avenue, the Santa Rita Apartment brought modern, high-rise urban living to the resort. The building is visually striking with its green copper bays and cornice outlining its strong, simple form. The building had added significance because for a time it was the tallest structure in the seashore resort, and for a long time was topped only by the oceanfront hotels. The size of the Santa Rita denotes another purpose, for by its size across the street from the boardwalk hotels, it marks the maturation of Atlantic City as a metropolis in its own right and no longer as just a resort extension of Philadelphia. It was this development which transformed Atlantic City of the early twentieth century quite as much as the great boardwalk hotels. Finally, the Santa Rita was owned and developed by the Joseph Barstow family who were early developers and builders within the resort; by the end of the century they had risen to positions of importance in the local community. With the completion of the Santa Rita, it became their family headquarters, marking the building as the premier residence of its day in Atlantic City. In 1980, the building was one of sixty-five buildings selected as having significance in the Atlantic City Historic Resources Survey.

The location of the Santa Rita at Pacific and South Carolina Avenues, situated amidst the resort's chief buildings of its permanent community attests to its importance. To the east at Pennsylvania Avenue stands Paul and Seymour Davis's Gothic Presbyterian church (1908), diagonally across the street is Walter Price's Quaker Meeting (1926) while Horace Trumbauer's YMCA is immediately next door to the west (1908, 1912). Further west are the chief buildings of the Catholic community: Frank Berry's Spanish designed Knights of Columbus (1926), and across the street, E. F. Durang's handsome complex of St. Nicholas Church (1900) and parish buildings (1908).¹ Together these form a row of considerable architectural pretension, using the important architects from Philadelphia to convey the new found sophistication of the rapidly growing year-round population.²

The turn of the century marked the transformation of Atlantic City from a village supporting a resort to a permanent metropolis. The city's population had more than doubled from 13,000 to 28,000 in the decade between 1890 and 1900 and nearly dou-

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Abrahamson, Elaine. Atlantic County: A Pictorial History. Virginia Beach: Donning Co., 1987.

M. E. Blatt Co. Guide to Atlantic City. Atlantic City, 1929.

Boyd's Atlantic City Directory. 1911, p. 102. 1913, p. 107. 1918, p. 175.

Gopsills Atlantic City Directory. 1889, p. 24.

Funnell, Charles E. By the Beautiful Sea: The Rise and High Times of that Great American Resort, Atlantic City. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 1/7 acre Atlantic City, NJ Quad

UTM References

A 18 549420 4356790
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Santa Rita occupies a site beginning at the northwest corner of Pacific and South Carolina Avenues, then extending north 150 feet to Memorial Street, then west 51 feet to a point then south, parallel to South Carolina Avenue to Pacific Avenue, then east 51 feet to the beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The above site is entirely the site of the building, and has been historically associated with the Santa Rita Apartments.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc.

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city or town Philadelphia

date 9-14-90; revised 12-6-90

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expression is apparent in the steel frame clad only in its plaster fireproofing and projecting unadorned by detail below the planes of the ceiling.

Above the first floor each stair landing opens into a corridor that runs longitudinally down the center of the building, providing access to the individual units. Unlike most modern apartment corridors, the architect established a rhythmic articulation along the length of the hall by treating the vertical elements of the steel frame as pilasters. Deep baseboards and a picture rail add finish to these connecting spaces.

The apartments vary in size and luxury depending on their orientation, with those that face on the main street fronts facing the ocean typically being than those on the rear. Each of the apartments share common features that reserve exterior walls for public rooms, while bathrooms and kitchens were placed on interior walls, relying on mechanical ventilation to move air through the building. Equally unusual is the vestigial character of the kitchens in the original plan with tiny "Pullman" sinks and stoves in one alcove and a separate niche for the refrigerator, both opening onto the corridor. Such kitchens had become popular in turn-of-the-century speculative New York apartment buildings, particularly those which served the upper classes and which contained restaurants that could cater the individual apartments. In later modifications to the buildings, second bedrooms were converted into kitchens, indicating a shift to a more middle class clientele.

Detail is concentrated in the living rooms, which are invariably the largest spaces in each flat. Most feature a projecting, polygonal bay lighted by three double-hung sash with ample sills and moldings cantilevered from the steel frame. Plaster console brackets applied to the base of the encased steel beams provide a hint of "architecture" as an expression of the luxury of the building. Though the apartments were generally similar, most elaboration is reserved for the corner units. There the corner bay projects as a five sided alcove off the main parlor providing spectacular views up and down Atlantic City's chief avenue.

The building has been continuously altered and modernized over its entire history demonstrating both the importance of its location in the heart of the city and the adaptability of the original design. The most obvious alteration has been the cladding of the first floor shop fronts and cornice with a modern metal skin, itself a continuation of the original technology of stamped sheet metal. As could be expected given the nature of retailing, the commercial spaces have been altered numerous times leaving little historic fabric. The apartment levels and corridors are little changed with original trim and partitions in most units. To meet fire codes, most of the paneled corridor doors have been replaced by solid core doors with steel frames.

These minor alterations aside, the Santa Rita Apartment remains the best example of the period apartment house in Atlantic City, retaining a high degree of integrity and recalling the rise of a permanent community in the boom period of Atlantic City.

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bled again to 46,000 by 1910.³ Most of that population was housed not in single family houses but rather in small apartments that with the better known hotels, were the most important building types of the evolving resort. A cursory review of the Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide shows that more than a dozen apartment houses were constructed between February and November of 1910. Most were typically of the walk-up type of three or four stories, containing a dozen or so apartments and occupying two or three house lots.

Against that scale, the Santa Rita is all the more remarkable, towering over the smaller buildings, and containing more than 100 apartments. In an era when the tallest hotels of the resort such as Price and McLanahan's first tower for the Traymore Hotel or the concrete Blenheim wing of the Marlborough/Blenheim reached only eight and nine stories respectively, the Santa Rita's nine stories was epochal, offering the year-round community the experience of height. It was that novelty of life high above the ground that had only recently been celebrated in Henry Blake Fuller's novel, The Cliff Dwellers, which had been serialized in Harper's Weekly in 1893.⁴ That novel argued that great social changes were occurring in American society, and that a new modern lifestyle was evolving in which families could avoid the travails of cooking, household maintenance and the like by living in buildings in which those services were provided.⁵ When it opened in 1911, the Santa Rita was the first such modern apartment in Atlantic City.

The architect of the building, J. R. Ogden, was a local Atlantic City man, who like the owner, Joseph Barstow, had begun in the 1870s as a carpenter, shifted to being a contractor in the 1880s and by the end of the century was styling himself an architect.⁶ The owner, Barstow had abandoned his contracting career at the turn-of-the-century and by 1889 was president of the Atlantic City Gas and Water Co. In that role, he was a major figure in the development of the city.⁷ Barstow himself acquired significant property holdings including the Santa Rita site which his family developed, operated and were among its first tenants. His architect had begun as a carpenter, then continued as a contractor, before finally taking the lofty title of architect. Though the major resort buildings had to reach the higher levels of taste of the urban centers so long as architecture remained rooted in the values of late nineteenth Century America, architects such as Ogden would have a place in Atlantic City, adapting contemporary taste to the local economy.

As architecture, the Santa Rita was one of the most up-to-date buildings of Atlantic City of its day, utilizing the spare vocabulary of recent Chicago design.⁸ Instead of using classical pilasters and columns to rhythmically articulate the exterior, the vertical bays gave the building the giant order of American commerce. That same spirit infused the choice of materials for the copper bays, which oxidized a brilliant green by the salt air causing the building to be one of the principal landmarks of Pacific Avenue. The Santa Rita also evokes the character of the most advanced resort architecture being designed

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by Price and McLanahan. In the Blenheim (1905) and the first wing of the Traymore (1906), bays were used to rhythmically articulate the elevation, establishing a modern ahistorical style that spread across the typical buildings of Atlantic City.⁹

As a building associated with the broad patterns of Atlantic City history, the Santa Rita embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period at the time of Atlantic City urbanization in the first years of the twentieth century making it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. The building possesses a high degree of integrity that makes it a worthy example of the heyday of Atlantic city.

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Notes

(1)The buildings cited are listed in Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, and George E. Thomas, Atlantic City Historic Building Survey (State of New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation, 1980).

(2)For a history of the evolving resort and its great aspirations, see Charles Funnell, By the Beautiful Sea, The Rise and High Times of that Great American Resort, Atlantic City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), pp. 76 ff. "The Perspective of Janus." For the architectural history see George E. Thomas, "The Architecture of Atlantic City: (An Introduction to History, Building and Society Along the Strand," in Atlantic City Historic Sites Survey, pp. 6-33, in particular, "Public Buildings, pp. 12-14.

(3)Funnell, p. 93.

(4)Henry Blake Fuller, The Cliff Dwellers (1893; reprint, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), the major discussion of the new high rise life is on pp. 5-6.

(5)These changes are discussed in David Handlin, The American Home (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), particularly in the section entitled "Good Housekeeping," pp. 415-425.

(6)Ogden is discussed in the Atlantic City Survey; his family came from Cape May where they ran a saw mill and operated a carpentry and contracting business. Barstow's career is similar; he appears in the Atlantic City Directories in the 1870s and 1880s as a carpenter; over time his children, all of whom share the same address at 14 N. Pennsylvania Avenue appear in the building business, as carpenters and later electricians, before turning their attention to real estate in the early twentieth century.

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Notes

(7)The development of the Atlantic City Gas and Water Company is discussed in William A. Gemmell, From Small Beginnings: A History of Southern Jersey Gas Company (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1987). The company was formed in 1873 by Philadelphia businessmen; at the turn of the century the question of whether to enlarge the business to include electric services was resolved by the more conservative operators selling the business to Philadelphia businessman Clarence Geist.

(8)The Santa Rita is included in the 1980 Atlantic City Historic Building Survey, #49.

(9)For a further discussion of Atlantic City's Architecture see George E. Thomas, William L. Price: Builder of Men and of Buildings (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1975).

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Bibliography: (continued)

Fuller, Henry Blake. The Cliff Dwellers. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

Handlin, David. The American Home. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1979.

McMahon, William. So Young... So Gay, Story of the Boardwalk, 1870 - 1970. Atlantic City: Atlantic City Press, 1970.

A. Mueller. Atlas of Atlantic City. Philadelphia, 1919. Plate 14.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, vol. XXV: 41 (October 12, 1910).

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, and George E. Thomas. Atlantic City Historic Buildings Survey. New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation, 1980.

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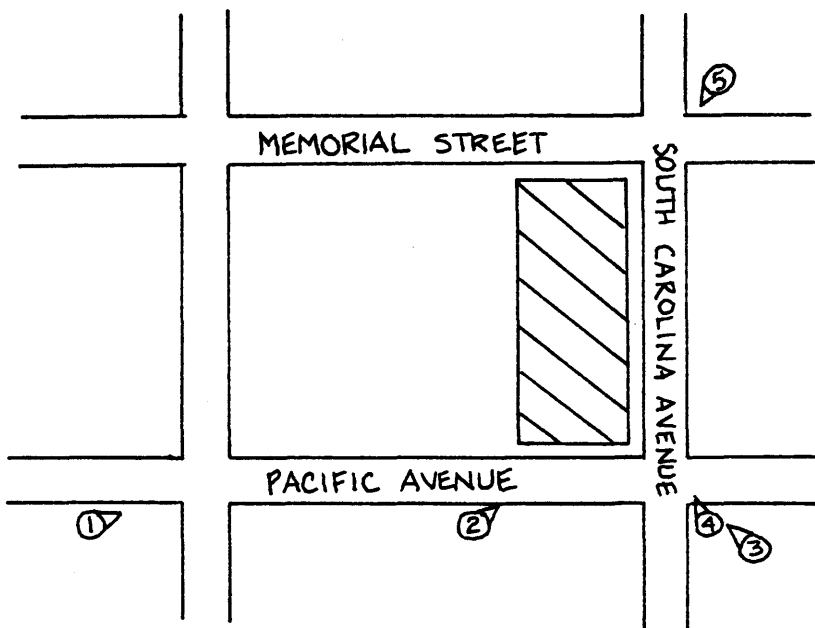
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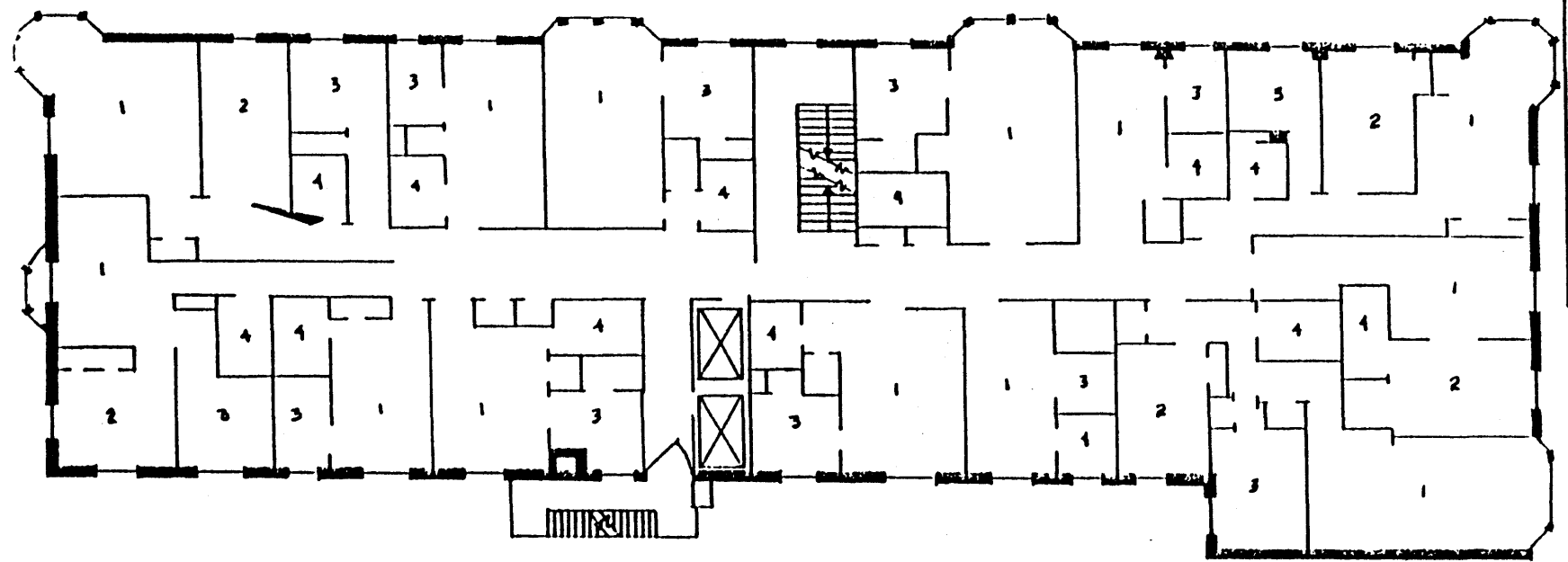
Santa Rita Apartments
66 South Carolina Avenue
Atlantic City
Atlantic County, New Jersey



PACIFIC

SANTA RITA APARTMENTS
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY
(Atlantic County)

SOUTH CAROLINA



8TH FLOOR PLAN (NO SCALE PROVIDED)

- 1 LIVING ROOM
- 2 BEDROOM
- 3 KITCHEN
- 4 BATHROOM

