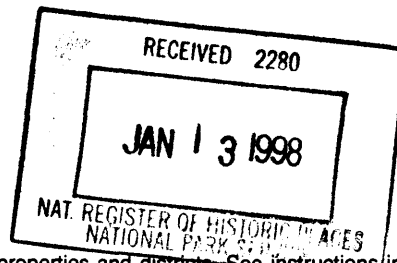


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 an 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 Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House

other names/site number Naylor House

2. Location

street & number 605 Route 9 North N/A not for publication

city or town Middle Township vicinity

state New Jersey code 034 county Cape May code 009 zip code 08210

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.)

[Signature] 12/22/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State of 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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

2/12/98

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Name of Property

Cape May County, New Jersey
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing		Noncontributing		
1		2		buildings
				sites
				structures
				objects
1		2		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls wood: weatherboard
roof asphalt
other

Narrative Description

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

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.)

N/A

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): N/A

- 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

ca. 1870 - 1877

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Thomas Beesley (Jr.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Name of Property

Cape May County, New Jersey
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.155 acres

Stone Harbor, NJ Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8	5	1	6	1	0	0	4	3	2	7	5	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

3

Zone	Easting				Northing									

4

Zone	Easting				Northing									

 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 Stacy E. Spies and Nancy L. Zerbe, Architectural Historians
Nancy L. Zerbe Historic Preservation
organization Consulting, Inc. date April, 1997
street & number 81 Rector Street telephone (908) 906-8203
city or town Metuchen state NJ zip code 08840-1540

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 Cape May County
street & number 4 Moore Road telephone (609) 465-1085
city or town Cape May Court House state NJ zip code 08210-1601

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 to amend existing 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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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

DESCRIPTION

The Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House is a two story, frame, Italianate style I-house with a modified rectangular plan, a projecting center bay, cupola, and entry porch (Photograph No. 1). Two two-story extensions and a single story extension are located at the rear of the house (Photographs No. 2 & 3). The walls are finished with wood clapboards, and the foundation and chimneys are constructed of brick. Overhanging eaves are supported by curved brackets and round-arch 2/2 windows are located on the primary elevations. The interior of the house reflects mid-19th century design with complex curved window moldings with graceful pilasters and marble fireplaces and mantles. The house faces east to Route 9, the primary local north/south route through Cape May County, and is located on a flat, grassy lot with a pond along the north property line. The driveway, located on the south side of the house at a right angle to the road, leads to a mid 20th century garage and shed (Photograph No. 3). The property is in overall good condition. The landscaping on the site includes shrubbery near the house and along the south side of the driveway, and some large deciduous trees.

The site is surrounded by the Cape May County Zoo to the west, by modern townhouse construction on the east side of Route 9, and by 19th century single family homes to the south. The route, historically a mix of commercial and residential uses, has modern commercial structures and a strip shopping mall 1 mile south at Cape May Court House.

The house has an I-house form that sits on a brick foundation and is embellished with Italianate features, possibly the result of consultation with a pattern book. It is estimated that it was constructed between 1864 and 1877 when Thomas Beesley was the resident. The main block of the house is rectangular in plan and contains 3 bays, with a center projecting bay containing the entrance. Paired rounded arch 2/2 windows on the first floor flank the paneled rounded-arch double door. The transom is composed of 8 lights that follow the arch of the doorway and the narrow sidelights that contain muntins in a diamond-pattern (Photograph No. 4). A gable roof entry porch with an arched soffit is supported by round doric columns. The steps are constructed of concrete over masonry blocks. An historic image of the house from the first half of the 20th century shows a frame porch along the length of the east facade and shutters for each window. Single round arch windows are located on the second floor. The roof features overhanging eaves with gable-end cornice returns above a wide frieze punctuated with brackets. Scrolled brackets are located at the corners of the buildings above the corner pilasters; simpler brackets are located elsewhere.

The projecting center bay is topped with a cross-gable containing a cornice return (Photograph No. 5). A small, round arch window is located at the attic level of the cross-gable.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

The window is topped with an unusual molded arch decorative treatment that is terminated by two triangular points at the ends. A narrow rectangular cupola is centered on the asphalt-shingle gable roof. It is adorned with attenuated brackets similar to those on the main block and with a dentil course at the sill line of its 2/2 round arch windows.

The north and south gable ends of the main block are punctuated by two bays of round arch 2/2 windows at the first and second floor. Two small, round arch 1/1 windows are located at the attic level above the cornice returns. Two internal brick chimneys with corbeled caps are located at the north and south gable ends.

The rear (west) elevation is defined by several one- and two- story extensions (Photographs No. 6 & 7). In the northwest corner of the main block is located a flat roof, single-story extension. This extension is part of the north parlor and contains four round arch 2/2 windows. This extension is integral with the construction of the main block of the house. A two-story, two-bay extension with a shallow-pitched gable roof is attached to the southern half of the west elevation. It is also two bays wide. This extension contains rectangular 6/6 window at the first and second floor, and two basement windows that have been covered. A brick chimney is centered in the west gable end. A shed roof, glass-enclosed porch is located on the south elevation. An historic image of the house taken in the first half of the 20th century shows a frame porch along this elevation. A second two-story extension is attached to the west gable end of the extension just described. This extension contains a single bay on the north and south elevations, is a single bay wide, and has a shallow gable roof. This extension is reported to have actually been a parsonage constructed in 1833. If so, its configuration has been greatly altered from the description provided in the 1831 Cape May Baptist Church Trustees' Minutes. A single story early 20th century extension is located at the west gable end of the second two-story addition.

The interior of the main block of the house features a center-hall plan and detailed moldings. One enters the house through the entrance on the east elevation and arrives in a hall with a straight-run stair leading to the second floor. The stair is fitted with a turned wood newel post and turned balusters, two per stair (Photograph No. 8). Ceilings on the first floor are 9 feet high and walls are plastered throughout the building. The hall is flanked by two parlors, the north parlor containing the more ornate ornamentation (Photograph No. 9). The moldings around the exterior door and the archways to the parlors consist of a fluted pilasters set on simple block bases. An exterior door is located at the west end of the hall and is a smaller version of the main door on the east elevation.

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

The north parlor contains a gray marble mantle and chimney breast on the north wall (Photograph No. 10). Two raised-panel doors are located on either side of the chimney stack and enclose cabinets set into the stack. Paired recessed panels on the north wall are located beneath the near-full-height round-arch windows. The raised center molding between the panels aligns with the muntins in the 2/2 windows, providing a vertical line from floor to ceiling. The windows are flanked by graceful, narrow fluted pilasters that begin at the sill line and end with a curved acanthus-leaf capital at the beginning of the arch. The room is encircled with a cornice molding and picture molding. The random width (average 6-inch) floor boards have been warped by water damage.

The window treatments in the south parlor contain recessed panels similar to those in the north parlor. An enclosed fireplace is centered on the south wall; disturbance in the wallpaper indicates the former presence of a mantel and two stovepipe openings (Photograph No. 11). Two raised-panel doors are located on either side of the chimney stack and enclose cabinets set into the stack (Photograph No. 12). The floor is comprised of 3-inch wood boards set on the diagonal.

The dining room is reached through an entrance at the west end of the hall and through an open entryway from the south parlor (Photograph No. 13). This room has suffered water damage from frozen pipes and has lost much of its plaster work. A fireplace is located at the west end of the room with stovepipe holes located in the ceiling above. 6/6 windows with simple moldings are located on the north wall. The 3-inch floorboards are set diagonally with a border of boards set at right angles to the walls.

On the south wall of the dining room is an entrance with 10-light paired doors leading to the enclosed porch. The enclosure contains a modern exterior door, windows, and decorative treatments.

The kitchen extension is reached through doors from the dining room and enclosed porch. The door from the porch appears to be an exterior door and contains paired pointed-arch windows in the top half. The kitchen fixtures are modern. 6/6 windows are located on the south elevation and a large picture window is located in the north elevation. An enclosed winder stair with a board-and-batten door on the west wall leads from the kitchen to a chamber above (Photograph No. 14).

An early-20th century family room is located west of the kitchen. It is paneled with modern adhesive paneling and contains jalousie windows. An exterior door is located on the west wall.

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

The second floor of the main block of the house contains three chambers with 9-foot ceilings, each containing similar window molding treatments. At the top of the stairs from the first floor entry hall, there is a landing separated from the northern two chambers by three steps and from the south chamber by one step. The balustrade leading from the first floor turns to meet the doorway to the attic stairs, centered on the east wall of the landing. The landing also contains a doorway to the extensions on the west elevation of the house. The chambers' moldings consist of 2/2 round-arch windows with beaded muntins and 6-inch high baseboards with a simple bead at the top. The north and south chambers contain simple marble slab mantels supported by cast-iron brackets. Wall-to-wall carpet is placed on the floor.

The rooms in the extensions are not as fashionably adorned as the rooms in the main block. A modern tiled bathroom is located in this area, located next to a chamber with simpler 6-inch baseboards and 6/6 sash windows and an 8-foot ceiling. The west chamber is located above the kitchen and is reached via the winder stair from the kitchen and via a doorway from the aforementioned chamber. The room contains unadorned 6-inch baseboards and 6/6 windows with imperfect glass. The ceiling in this room measures approximately 7 feet. The flooring consists of 4-inch boards. Beaded boards comprise the closet in the southeast corner of the room.

An attic is located only over the main block of the house (Photograph No. 15). Of special interest are the numbered pegged rafters, which are less commonly found at the date of construction of this house. An earlier cedar shake roof is visible from the attic. The area contains plastered walls. An open stair leads to the cupola.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House, built ca. 1870, is significant under Criterion B as the home of Thomas Beesley (Jr.), a prominent local businessman and New Jersey Assemblyman and Senator, and under Criterion C as one of the most high style rural examples of Italianate architecture in Cape May County.

According to a 1761 Indenture in the records of the First Baptist Church of Cape May, the first recorded owners of the property were William Billings, Benjamin Johnson, and Nathan and Millicent Young.¹ In 1761, the church identified the need for a parsonage (or glebe as it was called by the British): "The Baptists in the County of Cape May standing in need of a glebe for a settlement of a minister of the Gospel, in the 14th day of Sept. 1761, purchased of Nathan Young and Millicent his wife, a tract of land, the original consideration being 171 pounds besides some interest upon it, etc. This property, containing about 60 acres, is a mile north of the Court House."²

The land was used as the Baptist parsonage between 1761 and 1857. In 1833, the church constructed a new parsonage described as "24 feet long by 16 feet wide and 17 feet post, to be weatherboarded with 3/4 siding cedar, and the roof to be 2 feet cedar shingles - the number of windows to be 11 and to be placed as follows 2 in front and 2 back in the lower story, and 3 front and 2 back in the upper story, and 2 four light windows in the S.W. gable end - the 4 windows in the lower story to be 15 lights - and the upper story to be 12 lights - the carpenter to finish the House complete for lath and plastering." and "to finish the lower Room of the new parsonage house in the following manner - To lath and plaster with one coat, and to paper the same - to put a cupboard on the West side of the chimney - the stairs to be carried up in the entry - to be open with Banisters."³

The last Baptist minister to live in the house was the Pastor James E. Wilson (1853-1857) who "found it an undesirable home and abandoned it for a more convenient residence in the village." The April 23, 1857 issue of the Cape May Ocean Wave included a notice of "Plantation for Sale" which stated that on Saturday, June 6, 1857, there would be a public sale of "the Plantation belonging to the first Baptist Church of Cape May, known by the name of the Baptist Parsonage, situated in the Middle Township of Cape May County, and lying on both sides of the Main Sea-Shore road, and adjoining lands of Mr. Samuel Eldredge on the north, and Richard C. Homes, Esq., on the south containing about sixty acres be the same more or less. This is a very desirable property, pleasantly situated one mile above Cape May Court House, where the Cape May Turnpike commences, leading to the City of Cape Island. There is on the head of the

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Cape May County, NJ

premises, about 15 acres of young thrifty growing timber, and about 15 acres of fresh meadow, the balance farm land. There is also, on the property a good two story dwelling-house and kitchen in good repair, together with a Barn, horse stable, cow shed, etc.”⁴

On June 13, 1857, the Trustees of the First Baptist Church reported that the property had been sold on June 6 to the highest bidder, James Westcott of Ellenville, New York, for the sum of \$1814. On October 27, 1862, James Westcott sold the property to Coleman F. Leaming and Hannah, his wife. On December 10, 1864, the Leamings sold the property to Thomas Beesley.⁵

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) owned the property from 1864 until his death in 1877.⁶ The 1872 Beers map on display at the Cape May Historical Society shows the property as belonging to the “Hon. Thos. Beesley”.⁷ Local history credits the house as having been built by Beesley during his thirteen year ownership.⁸ Although there is no documented record of this fact, it is likely that it is accurate for several reasons. First, stylistically, the house is consistent with the rural Italianate houses shown in contemporary literature such as Samuel Sloan’s 1852 The Model Architect⁹ and 1861 American Houses: A Variety of Original Designs for Rural Buildings¹⁰. Stylistically, it is unlikely that an Italianate house would have been constructed in rural Cape May County prior to 1864. In addition, during this time period, Thomas Beesley was both financially successful and publicly prominent. According to Jeffrey Dorwart’s history of Cape May, the post-Civil War era was a time of significant increase in the value of Beesley’s cancerine business: the crab-grinding business increased in value from \$2,000 in 1865 to \$12,500 by 1870¹¹. Beesley served in the New Jersey Assembly from 1865 to 1870 and in the New Jersey Senate from 1870 to 1873.¹² It is unlikely that a man of Beesley’s stature and wealth would have lived in a small house that the last Baptist pastor, James E. Wilson, found to be “an undesirable home”.

Following Beesley’s death in October, 1877, his wife held a sale of some of his personal property. According to the items advertised for sale in the December 5, 1877 edition of the newspaper, Star of the Cape, the amount of personal furnishings for sale appear too extensive to have been housed within the small Baptist parsonage: “1 good Piano, 1 large Wardrobe, 8 Dressing Bureaus, Tables, Chairs, Washstands, 1 good Cook Stove, Looking Glasses, Carpets, Matting, and many other articles too tedious to enumerate.”¹³

Two nineteenth century surveys of the property help support the theory that the house was constructed during Beesley’s ownership. An undated survey book by Coleman F. Leaming, probably compiled in the late 1860’s, illustrates the property based on a June 22, 1857 survey done by B. Swain. The survey shows the property as having been acquired by Thomas Beesley in December, 1864, and including a small gable roof house, probably the Baptist Parsonage.¹⁴ By

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Cape May County, NJSection number 8 Page 3

the time of a May, 1886 survey by N. C. Price, the house on the property appears to be the current structure.¹⁵ During the approximately twenty years between these two surveys, the ownership can be roughly divided into two time periods: the 1864 - 1877 ownership by Thomas Beesley, and the 1877 - 1886 time period when the property exchanged ownership four times. It is more likely that such a prominent structure was built during the stable, thirteen year ownership of the property by a leading citizen.

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) was born and raised in Dennis Creek (called Dennisville after 1848).¹⁶ His 1864 purchase of this property near Cape May Court House is significant in light of several political and economic factors at the time: the struggle between Dennis Creek and Cape May Court House for prominence as the county seat, the importance of public works projects and how they affected development within the area, and the growth of Beesley's cancerine business in Goshen, a small community in close proximity to Cape May Court House. In the early nineteenth century, the two dominant communities in Cape May County were Dennis Creek and Cape Island (later named Cape May).¹⁷ Because of its physically central location, Cape May Court House had served as the county seat since 1745 when some Cape May County Freeholders petitioned the State Assembly to build a courthouse and jail on the plantation of Daniel Hand.¹⁸ In 1830, Cape May Court House was described as containing "a courthouse of wood, a jail of stone, fire-proof offices of brick, 2 taverns, 8 or 10 dwellings, and a Baptist church of brick."¹⁹

In 1833, the County's need to build a new courthouse led to a lengthy debate over where the county seat should be located. Prominent Dennis Creek businessmen fought hard to have the county seat relocated to Dennis Creek. As financially and politically influential men, the Dennis Creek elite had a strong influence with the County Freeholders. Between 1847 and 1848, the Freeholders from Dennis Creek and Upper Township attempted to gain political support from Cape Island (later named Cape May City) politicians by offering them a badly needed bridge to Cape Island in exchange for their support of the county seat's relocation to Dennis Creek. On April 25, 1848, a public vote was taken, and by an 89 vote edge, Cape May Court House was retained as the county seat. The victory was attributed to a strong public appeal by a Cape May Court House physician, Dr. John Wiley, and the inability of the Dennis Creek and Cape Island politicians to form a coalition.²⁰

Cape May County experienced a post-Civil War growth. Between 1865 and 1870, the County received more newcomers than it had in any previous decade. Between 1860 and 1865, the County increased by 123 people; between 1865 and 1870, it increased by 1090 people. New development in the off-shore areas was augmented by public works projects, especially the improvement of the bayshore and seashore roads, and the construction of the Cape May and

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Cape May County, NJSection number 8 Page 4Millville Railroad.²¹

When Beesley acquired this property in 1864, the controversy over the location of the county seat had already been settled in favor of Cape May Court House; the improvement of the Main Seashore Road along the front of his property had been implemented; the Cape May and Millville Railroad had been constructed along the rear of his property, connecting to a train station only a mile south of his property in Cape May Court House; and his business in nearby Goshen had grown considerably.

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) came from a prominent local family. His father, Thomas Beesley (Sr.) of Dennis Creek, was a successful and well respected farmer who amassed large land holdings and was involved in organizing several meadow-banking companies and county public works projects.²² Jeffrey Dorwart described him as one of the county's "nineteenth century business gentry elite tied together, like their eighteenth century whaler yeoman ancestors and kin, by intermarriage and political-economic associations."²³ The 1873 State of New Jersey Manual of the Legislature described Beesley's family as "one of the oldest in the State...his grandfather was a captain in George Washington's army and was killed at the battle of Monmouth in 1778."²⁴ Beesley's older brother, Maurice, was a respected doctor who "lived and practiced in ...Dennisville,...was an organizer of the New Jersey Historical Society, helped found the New Jersey State Asylum for the Insane, organized the Cape May-Millville Railroad, and was the first county superintendent of public schools appointed by the NJ Board of Public Instruction." In addition, Dr. Maurice Beesley served in the New Jersey Assembly from 1840-1842 and in the New Jersey Senate from 1842-1844²⁵, and authored a history of Cape May County.²⁶

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) gained his own prominence within Cape May County as a local landowner and farmer, businessman, and politician who participated in local civic activities. The 1873 legislative manual described Beesley as "engaged in farming and in the manufacture of fertilizers."²⁷ The inventory taken at the time of his death illustrates his agricultural pursuits: he owned five shares of the Cape May County Agricultural and Horticultural Society, a "hog in pen, 12 turkeys,...30 pair fowls, 1 horse wagon carriage, cider press, 3 tons salt hay, 2 tons fresh hay, horses, steer, cow, plot of corn fodder, wheat in the ground, 90 bushels sugar beets, 6 bushels turnips, and 10 bushels of small potatoes."²⁸

Lewis T. Stevens' 1897 history of Cape May County describes Beesley as having "received a modest education,...engaged in mercantile pursuits,...He became prominent as a counselor among men."²⁹ Beesley's mercantile pursuits were tied to his cancerine business in Goshen. An 1857 study of the geology of Cape May County described Cape May County as

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Cape May County, NJ

“remarkable for the immense number” of king crabs. The study proceeded to describe in detail Beesley’s cancerine business and to analyze the success of cancerine as a fertilizer. According to the study, Beesley and Mssr. Ingham had a mill at Goshen where they gathered up crabs, put the crabs into pens and allowed them to putrefy, ground the crabs as fine as possible, and mixed them with a small amount of deodorizing material. The cancerine was then put into bags and sold for \$25 - \$30 a ton. Although the study had mixed reports on the effectiveness of cancerine as a fertilizer, it did indicate that it was “very successful in wheat” and that the 1856 production level of several hundred tons was going to increase for 1857.³⁰

The May 21, 1873 issue of the Star of the Cape had an article announcing that “The business of catching king-crabs or horse-feet as they are commonly called, is about to commence. This is a business that stirs Goshen from centre to circumference. The preparatory steps have been taken already, such as building tents and shanties in which to live, and pen in which to throw the crabs, the caulking boats, the sharpening of spears, the cleaning up of lanterns, torchlights, etc. In a few days heavy requisition will be made on our store keepers for rations of crackers and cheese, after which the business of catching will begin in earnest. - These crabs are caught for Hon. Thoms. Beesley, he paying from \$2.50 to \$4.00 per thousand for them.”³¹

Although there is not extensive literature on Thomas Beesley (Jr.), there are numerous small references which illustrate his local prominence. The 1857 study of the geology of Cape May County includes two sections by Beesley: a “List of the Larger Wild Animals of the County of Cape May”, and a “Catalogue of the Birds of the County of Cape May”.³² A notice in the April 30, 1873 issue of the newspaper, Star of the Cape, discussed “the subject of obtaining good and reliable domestic help”, and praised one of “the best and most successful plan(s)” as the Wilmington Householders Association of Wilmington, Delaware. This association, which was reported to have “reliable agents in Sweden”, had recently supplied “two tidy buxom Swedish girls direct from Sweden” to two Cape May Court House residents, Hon. Thos. Beesley, and Dr. John Wiley.³³ Beesley’s obituaries credited him with being a member of the Masonic Order and as being “one of Cape May’s most earnest and unselfish representative men”³⁴ “one of (Cape May’s) most prominent and useful citizens”³⁵ “an exemplary, beloved and respected citizen; the fraternity (lost) one of its brightest jewels and an earnest and zealous workers(s)”³⁶. Stevens’ 1897 county history credited Beesley as being one of the incorporators of the West Cape May Land Company which was chartered by the Legislature in 1872 and in 1875 founded Sea Grove in West Cape May as a Presbyterian summer resort.³⁷ Albert Hand’s 1937 publication, A Book of Cape May, New Jersey, describes an April 17, 1861 ‘War Meeting’ in Cape May Court House at which “The entire county was represented by the leading citizens”, and credits Thomas Beesley as being one of five representatives for Middle Township.³⁸

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) died on October 16, 1877, and willed his property to his wife, Catharine A. Beesley. On December 4, 1877, Catharine A. Beesley sold the property to Jeannie S. Edson who sold it on November 22, 1879 to Albert D. Edson. On October 22, 1882, Albert D. Edson sold the property to Jeannie S. Edson who sold the property on February 25, 1884 to Caroline S. Cobb. On June 10, 1886, the property was sold to James Ballenger who owned the property until his death in 1897.³⁹ A review of Cape May County building agreements dating from 1857 to 1891 revealed one contract which appears to relate to this property. Contract Number 295, filed on September 19, 1887 by James Ballenger, is for a "building at Court House Farm."⁴⁰ As the May, 1886 survey of the property shows the current house, it is believed that this building agreement relates to a secondary structure on the site.

On November 22, 1897, Francis Van Blunk, Executor and Trustee of James Ballenger, deceased, sold the property to Harold M. Browning. On June 16, 1900, the property was sold to Belin R. Powell who sold it on April 25, 1916 to John H. Powell. On February 3, 1941, the property was sold to Viola B. Elters, who later became Viola Naylor, wife of Russell Naylor, Jr.⁴¹ Upon Mrs. Naylor's death in 1994, the property was deeded to Cape May County, the current property owner.⁴²

The Thomas Beesley House is one of the best rural examples of Italianate style architecture in Cape May County. The 1980 Middle Township Historic Sites Survey identified two hundred seventy five structures which were fifty years or older. Of these, the Thomas Beesley House is one of the best examples of Italianate style architecture, and the best example located outside of a developed community such as Cape May Court House.⁴³ The house's symmetry, arched windows, center projecting bay, cupola, and ornate bracketing are all typical of the 1860's - 1870's Italianate style.

Although the architect or designer of the house is unknown, the design was undoubtedly influenced by contemporary pattern books. For example, architect Samuel Sloan, who designed some buildings in Cape May City, published in 1861 a book entitled American Houses: A Variety of Original Designs for Rural Buildings. His "Design III" bears a strong resemblance to the Beesley House with its central projecting bay flanked by two windows on each side, bracketed returning eaves, and cupola.⁴⁴

The interior of the main block of the house is noteworthy for its Italianate detailing, including the wood paneling, ceiling plasterwork, and marble fireplace in the north parlor. The center section of the rear addition is part of an earlier structure, probably the Baptist parsonage that was constructed on this site in 1833. However, the downstairs room, currently a kitchen, has

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been extensively modernized. The only extant historic feature is the winder staircase leading upstairs to a small bedroom.

The house has retained an excellent degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The structure has retained both its exterior and interior Italianate detailing. In terms of setting, the house retains its rural setting, and its key relationship to one of Cape May County's main north-south arteries, Seashore Road or Route 9. Historically, the house was part of a large "plantation". The Baptist Church records indicate that their parsonage property was about 60 acres;⁴⁵ the 1860's survey of the property indicate that it included 77 acres;⁴⁶ the 1886 survey of the property describes it as 74.2 acres;⁴⁷ and the 1960 history of the site describes it as "remarkable...is the fact that this plantation of about 60 acres appears in the year 1960 much the same as when William Billings was the original owner of the land."⁴⁸ In 1992, the property consisted of 57 acres which were purchased by the County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program in two phases: approximately 55 acres in 1992 and the remaining 2.15 acres in 1994 upon Mrs. Naylor's death.⁴⁹ Today, the entire property is owned by Cape May County and is incorporated into the county park and zoo. Therefore, the house and its associated property have been preserved.

Footnotes

1. Records of the First Baptist Church of Cape May, as quoted in "Preserving History, Old Cape May County Plantation", by M. Catharine Stauffer, The Cape May County, New Jersey Magazine of History and Genealogy, June 1960, Volume V, Number 6, pp. 228-230.
2. Ibid., p. 228.
3. Ibid., pp. 230-235.
4. "Preserving History, Old Cape May County Plantation", by M. Catharine Stauffer, The Cape May County, New Jersey Magazine of History and Genealogy, June 1960, Volume V, Number 6, pp. 230-231.
5. Ibid., p. 232.
6. Ibid., p. 232.
7. "Topographical Map of Cape May County, New Jersey From Recent and Actual Surveys Under the Direction of F. W. Beers".

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

8. Stauffer, p. 237.
9. Samuel Sloan, The Model Architect.
10. Samuel Sloan, American Houses: A Variety of Original Designs for Rural Buildings.
11. Jeffrey M. Dorwart. Cape May County, New Jersey The Making of an American Resort Community, p. 117.
12. Lewis Townsend Stevens. The History of Cape May County, New Jersey From the Aboriginal Times to the Present Day, pp. 363-364.
13. "Public Sale of Valuable Personal Property", Star of the Cape, December 5, 1877.
14. "Baptist Parsonage & Hall Purchase" survey, copy by Coleman F. Leaming based on a June 22, 1857 survey by B. Swain.
15. "Map of James Ballenger's Farm" by N. C. Price, May 26 & 27, 1886.
16. Stevens, p. 364.
17. Dorwart, p. 86.
18. Julius Way. An Historical Tour of Cape May County, New Jersey, p. 33.
19. Lewis Townsend Stevens. The History of Cape May County, New Jersey From the Aboriginal Times to the Present Day, p. 258.
20. Dorwart, pp. 86-89.
21. Ibid., p 115.
22. Joan Berkey. New Jersey and National Register nomination for the Thomas Beesley House, Upper Township, New Jersey, Section 8, page 3.
23. Dorwart, p. 85; as quoted in Berkey, Section 8, page 3.
24. F. L. Lundy, compiler. State of New Jersey Manual of the Legislature, 97th Legislative Session, p. 64.

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Continuation SheetThomas Beesley (Jr.) House
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25. Berkey. Section 8, page 3.
 26. Stevens, p. 363.
 27. Lundy, p. 63
 28. "Inventory of Personal Property of Thomas Beesley".
 29. Stevens, p. 364.
 30. George H. Cook. Geology of the County of Cape May, State of New Jersey, pp. 105-109.
 31. "Goshen" column, Star of the Cape, May 21, 1873.
 32. Cook, pp. 137-138.
 33. "Domestic Help" Star of the Cape, April 30, 1873.
 34. "Funeral of Ex-Senator Beesley" Star of the Cape, October 24, 1877.
 35. "Death of a Prominent Citizen" Star of the Cape, October 17, 1877.
 36. "In Memoriam" Cape May Wave, December 15, 1877.
 37. Stevens, pp. 370-371.
 38. Albert Hand. A Book of Cape May, New Jersey, p. 76.
 39. Stauffer, p. 232-233.
 40. Cape May County Building Agreements, 1857 - 1891.
 41. Stauffer, p. 232-233.
 42. March, 3, 1997 telephone interview with Barbara Ernst, Cape May County Planning Board.
 43. New Jersey Historic Sites Survey of Lower and Middle Townships, Sea Isle City, and Stone Harbor, 1980.

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Continuation Sheet**

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cwpe May County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 10

44. Sloan. American Houses: A Variety of Original Designs for Rural Buildings, Design III, Figure 118.
45. Stauffer, p. 228.
46. "Baptist Parsonage and Hall Purchase" survey, based on a June 22, 1857 survey by B. Swain.
47. "Map of James Ballenger's Farm" by N.C. Price, May 26 & 27, 1886.
48. Stauffer, p. 227.
49. March, 3, 1997 telephone interview with Barbara Ernst, Cape May County Planning Board.

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Section number 9 Page 1

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

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Maps

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"Topographical Map of Cape May County, New Jersey From Recent and Actual Surveys Under the Direction of F. W. Beers", 1872. (Original on display at the Cape May County Historical Society; copy available at the Cape May County Public Library).

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

Section number 9 Page 2

May 26 & 27, 1886 "Map of James Ballenger's Farm" by N. C. Price. (Part of an N. C. Price survey book in the records of the Cape May County Clerk's Archives and Records Room).

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Stauffer, M. Catharine. "Preserving History, Old Cape May County Plantation". The Cape May County, New Jersey Magazine of History and Genealogy. June 1960, Volume V, Number 6.

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated is Block 99, Lot 46.02.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the 2.155 acres surrounding the house which were donated with the house to the County in 1994.

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Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

Section number Photograph Page 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

For all photographs:

Property Name: Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Property Location: Middle Township, Cape May County
New Jersey
Location of
original negatives: Offices of Nancy L. Zerbe Historic
Preservation Consulting, Inc.
81 Rector Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840-1540

Photograph No. 1 of 16:

View: Front (east) facade of house, looking west
Photographer: Stacy E. Spies
Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 2 of 16:

View: Rear (west) facade of house, looking southeast
Photographer: Stacy E. Spies
Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 3 of 16:

View: Rear (west) additions to house and 2 outbuildings, looking northeast
Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe
Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 4 of 16:

View: Interior of front (east) facade doorway, looking east
Photographer: Stacy E. Spies
Date: September, 1996

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Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Photograph _____ Page 2

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

Photograph No. 5 of 16:

View: Front (east) facade projecting cross gable and cupola, looking northwest

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 6 of 16:

View: North side facade of house, looking southeast

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 7 of 16:

View: North side facade of rear additions and garage, looking southwest

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 8 of 16:

View: Front staircase in main hallway, looking southeast

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 9 of 16:

View: North parlor, looking northeast

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 10 of 16:

View: Marble fireplace in the north parlor, looking north

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 11 of 16:

View: South parlor, looking southeast

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

Date: September, 1996

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Section number Photograph Page 3

Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Cape May County, NJ

Photograph No. 12 of 16:

View: South parlor, looking south

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 13 of 16:

View: Dining Room, looking southwest

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

Date: September, 1996

Photograph No. 14 of 16:

View: Winder stair in kitchen, looking west

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: May, 1996

Photograph No. 15 of 16:

View: Interior of cupola, looking southeast

Photographer: Stacy E. Spies

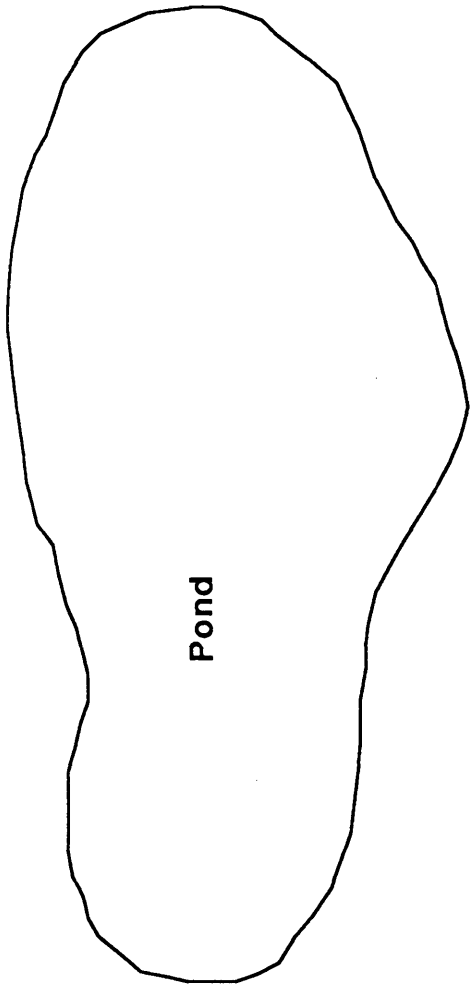
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Photograph No. 16 of 16:

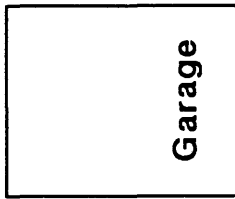
View: May 26 & 27, 1886 "Map of James Ballenger's Farm" by N.C. Price

Photographer: Nancy L. Zerbe

Date: March, 1997



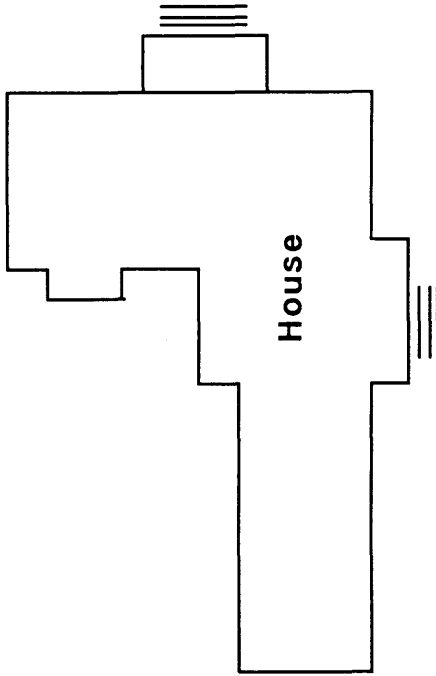
Pond



Garage

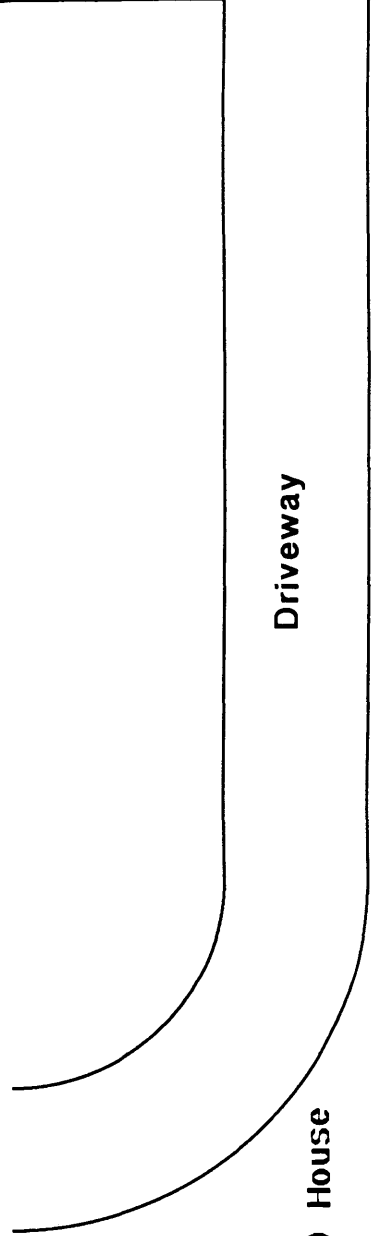


Shed



House

U.S.
Route
9

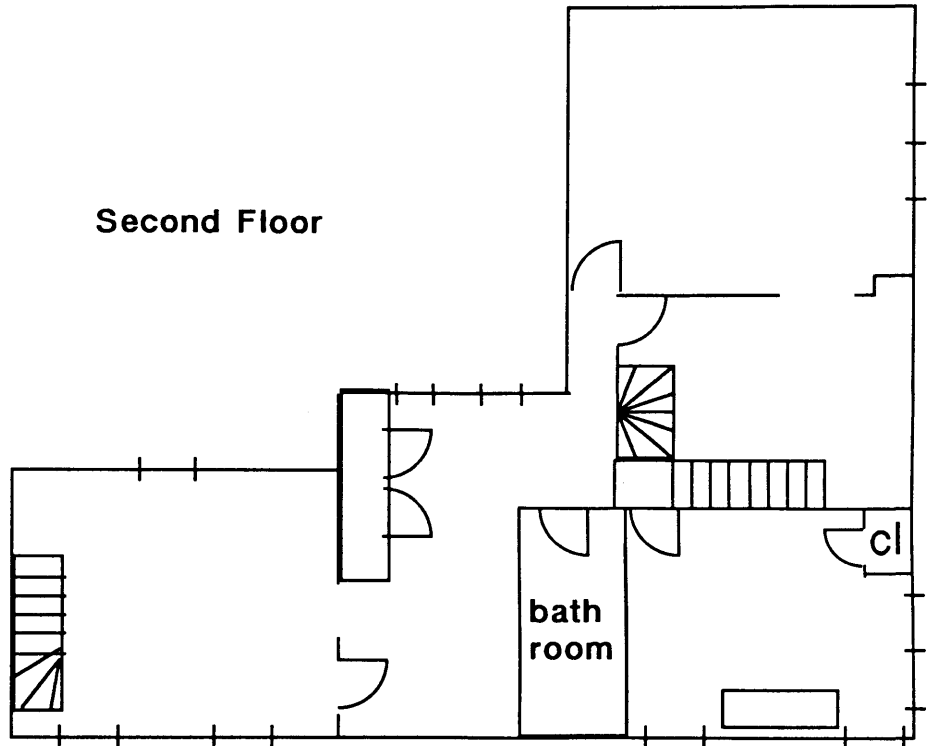


Driveway

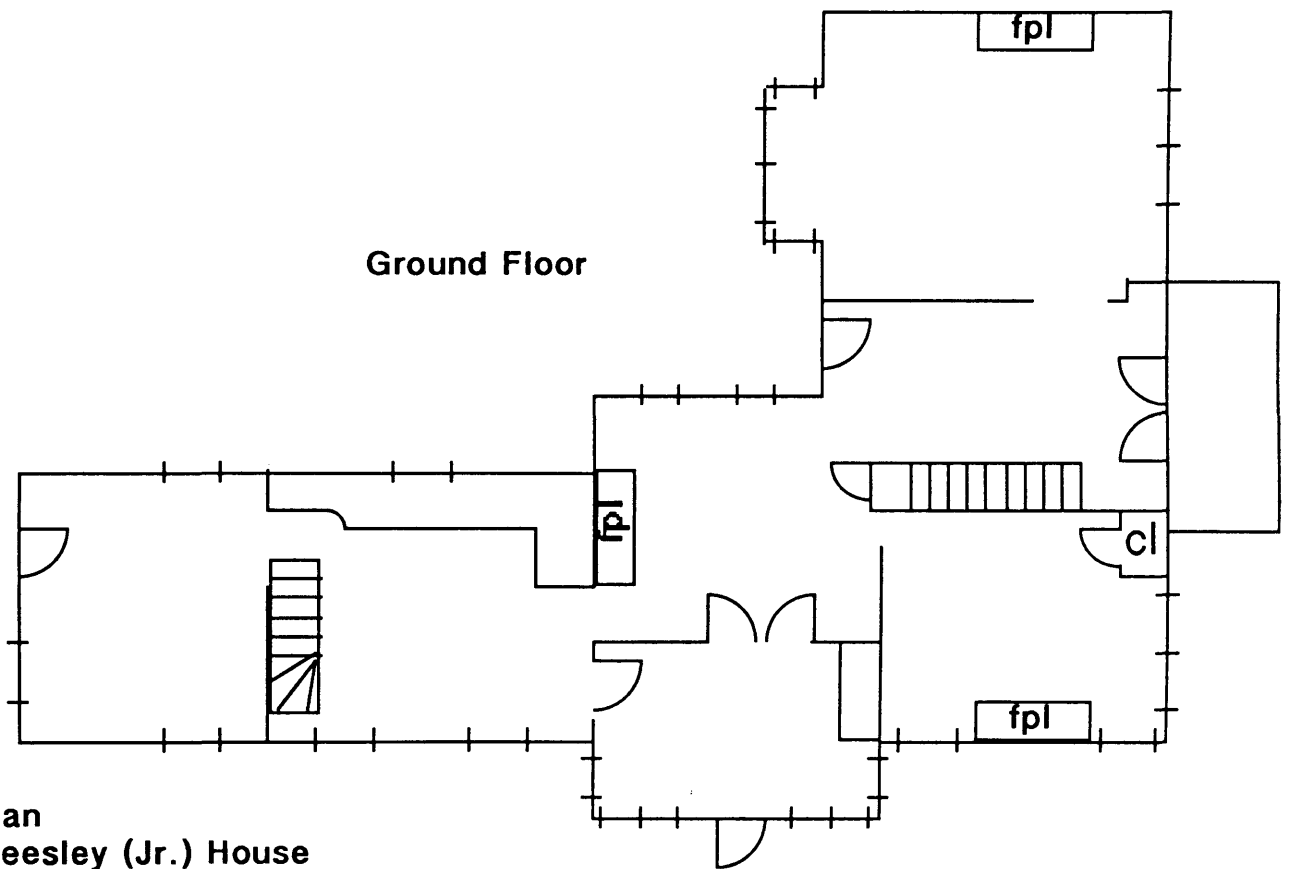
Site Plan
Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Middle Township
Cape May County, New Jersey



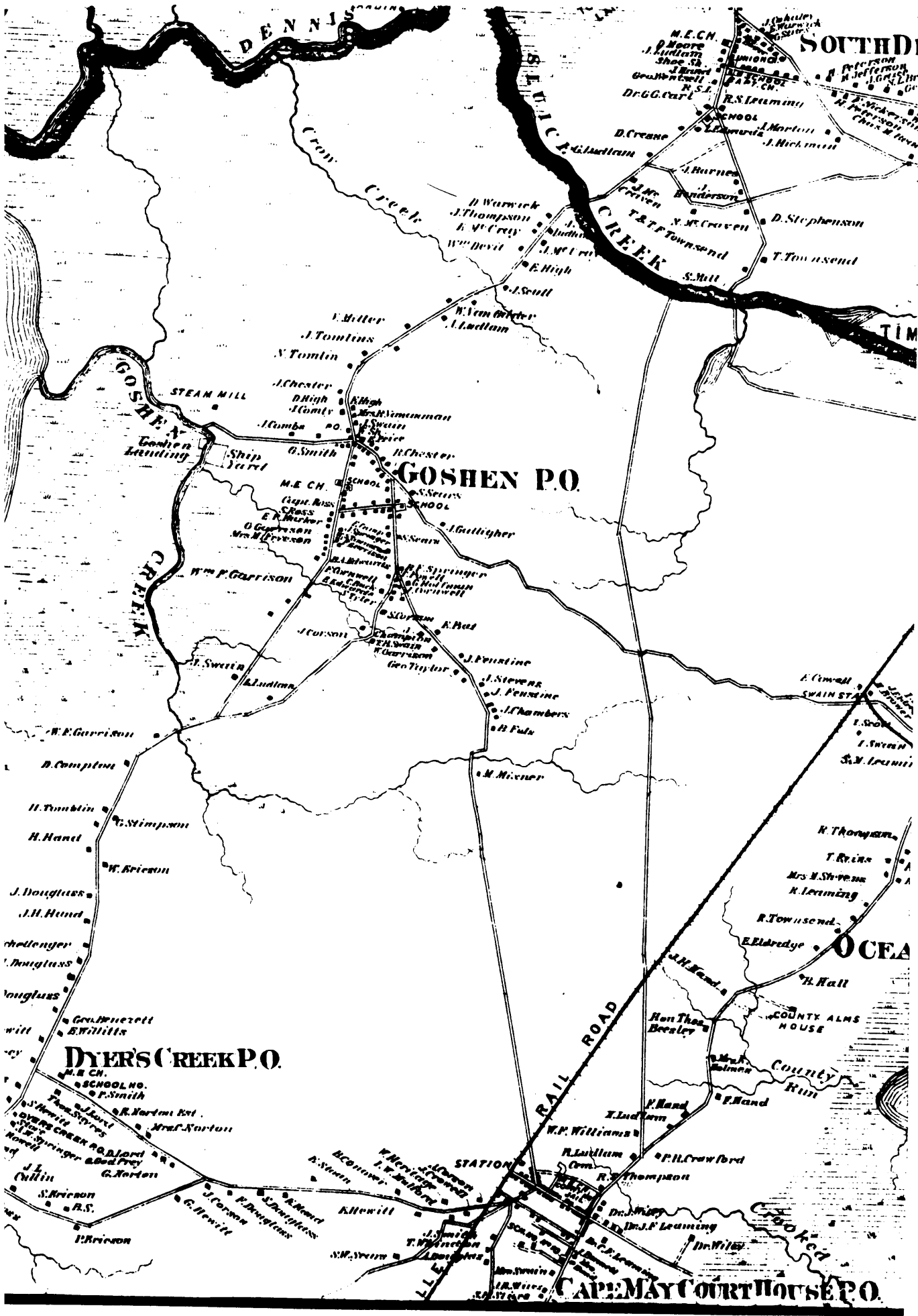
Second Floor



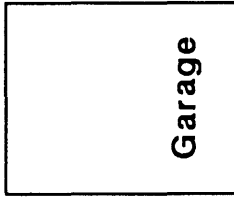
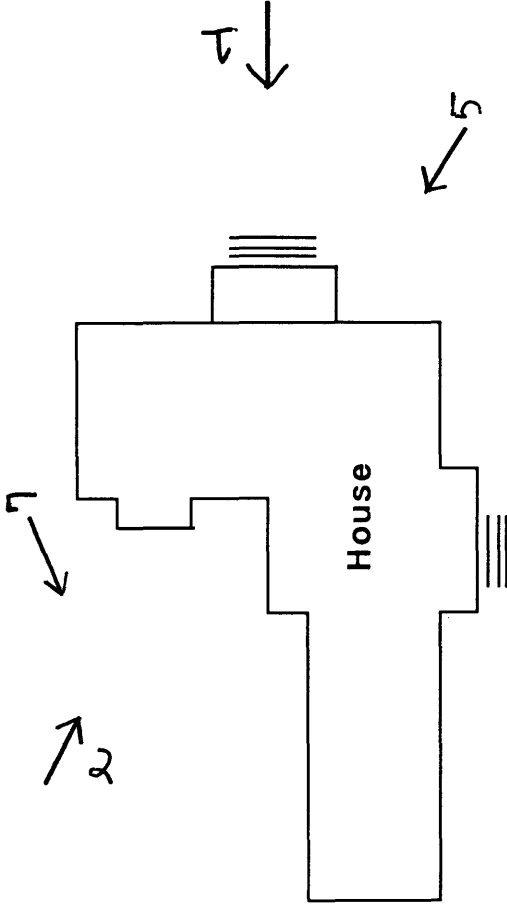
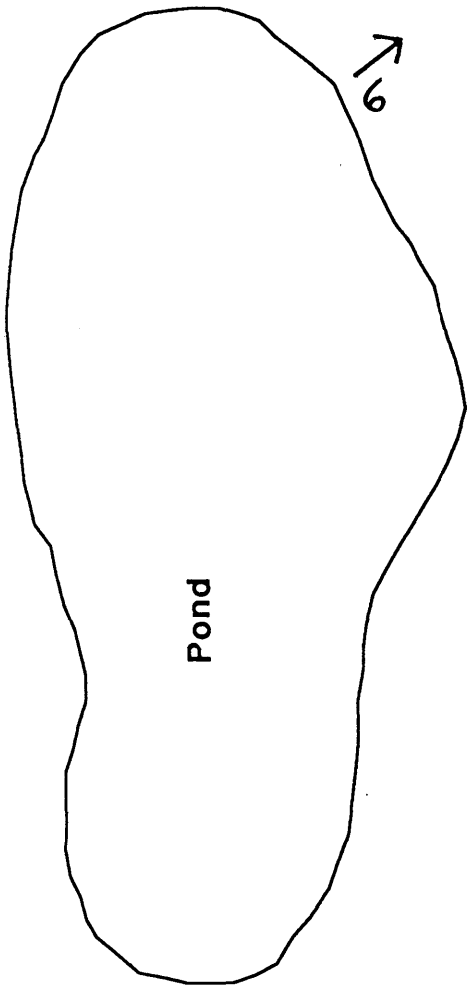
Ground Floor



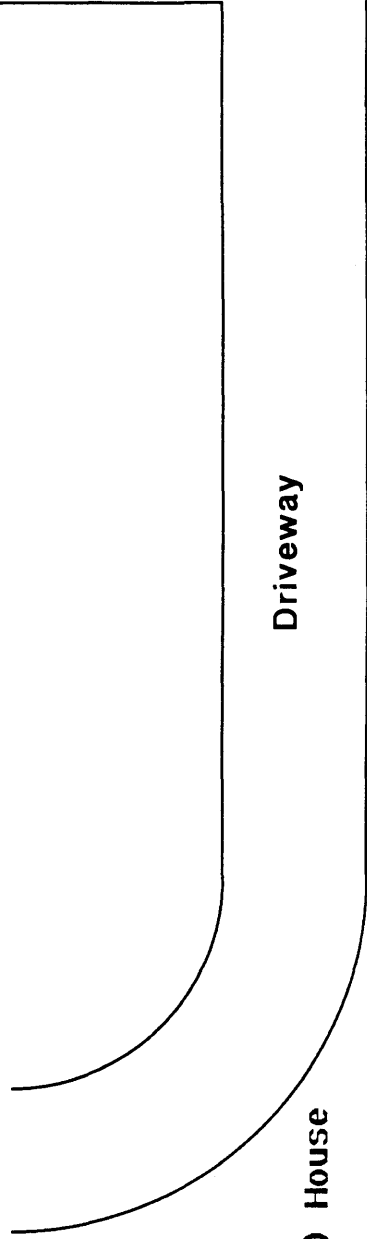
**Interior Plan
Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Middle Township
Cape May County, New Jersey**



Thomas Beesley, Jr. House, Middle Township, Cape May County, NJ

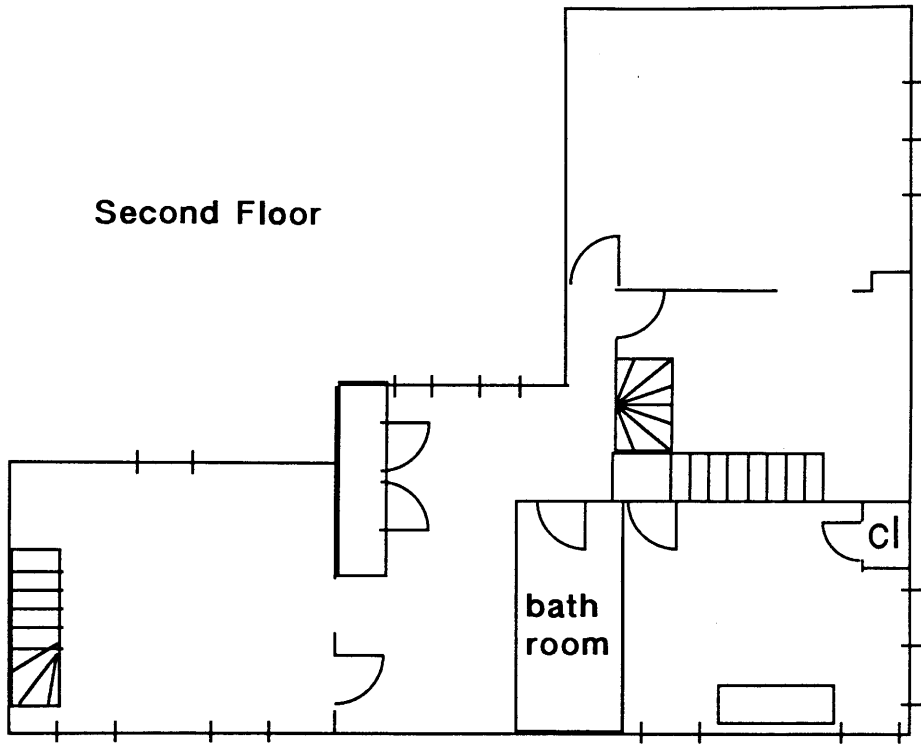


U.S.
Route
9

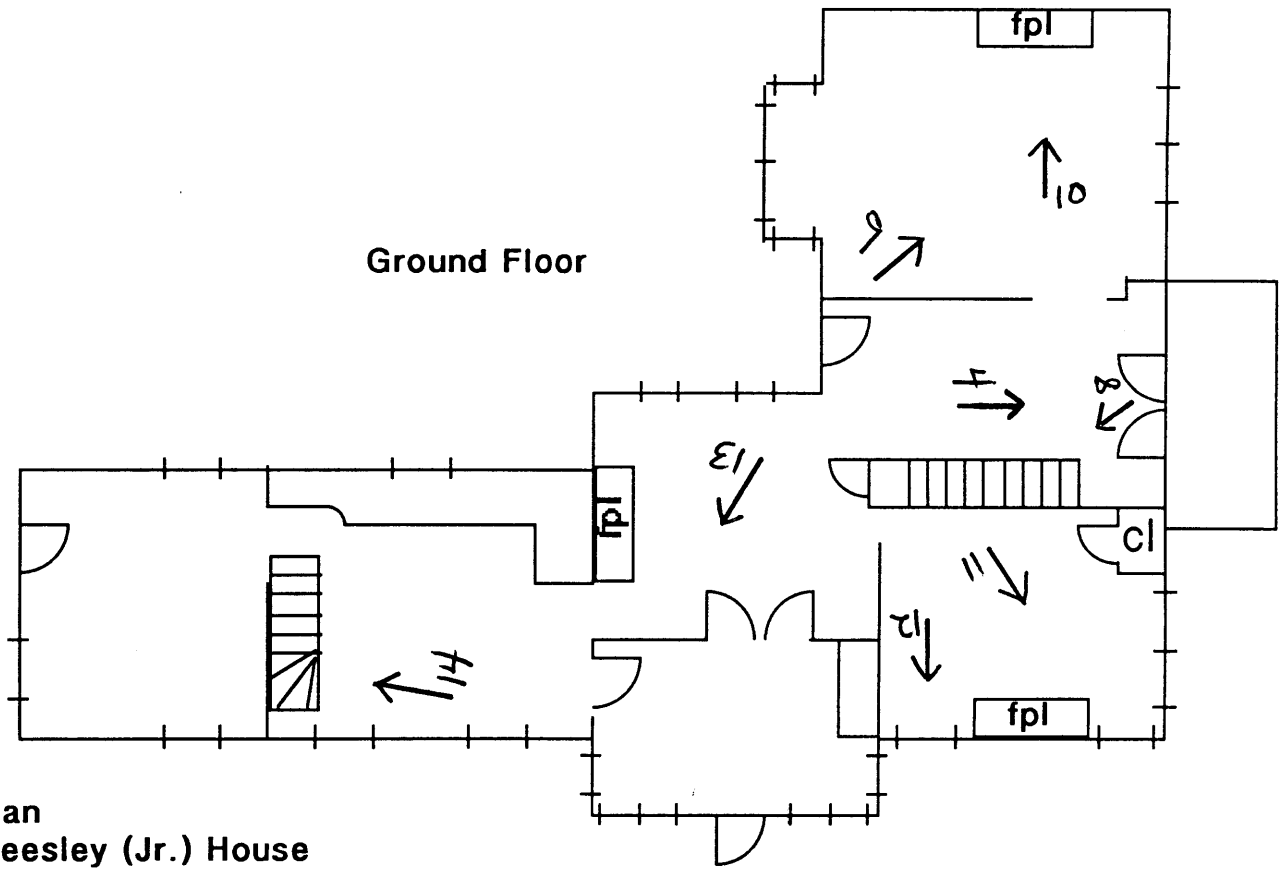


Site Plan
Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Middle Township
Cape May County, New Jersey

Second Floor



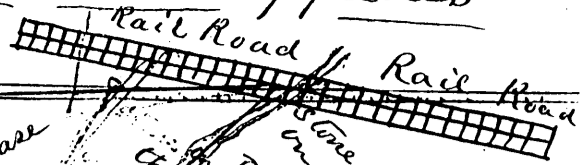
Ground Floor



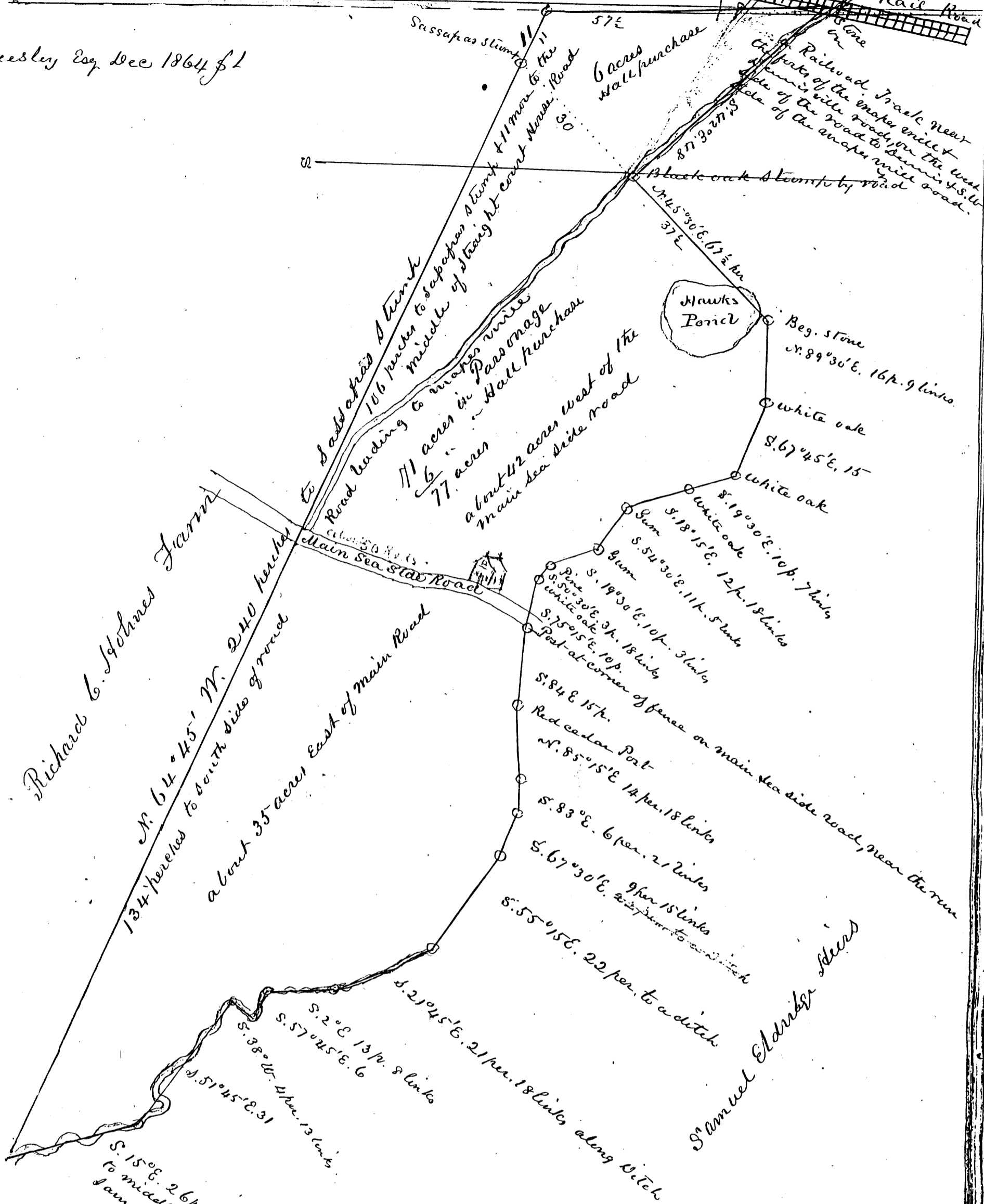
Interior Plan
Thomas Beesley (Jr.) House
Middle Township
Cape May County, New Jersey

Survey of Purchase of 77 acres

Straight Road Court House to Dennisville



Thomas Beesley Esq Dec 1864



The Draft of the Baptist Parsonage is copied from an original Draft made from an actual survey by Return B. Swan June 22nd 1857.
 The Hall Purchase was added by myself
 The above 77 acres are now December 1862 owned by Charles E. Elmer Esq & Coleman F. Learning
 Scale 20 perches. Sold Thomas Beesley Esq Dec. 1864

