United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received   SEP 29 1986

date entered   FEB 18 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic   Seaford's Commercial Buildings T.R.

and/or common

2. Location

street & number   High Street and Pine Street   ____ not for publication

city, town   Seaford   ____ vicinity of

state   Delaware   code   10   county   Sussex   code   005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
____ district	____ public	_X_ occupied	_X_ agriculture	____ museum
_X_ building(s)	_X_ private	_X_ unoccupied	____ commercial	____ park
____ structure	____ both	____ work in progress	____ educational	____ private residence
____ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	____ entertainment	____ religious
____ object	____ in process	____ yes: restricted	____ government	____ scientific
	____ being considered	_X_ yes: unrestricted	____ industrial	____ transportation
	X NA	____ no	____ military	____ other:

4. Owner of Property

name   See Inventory sheets

street & number

city, town   ____ vicinity of   state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.   Recorder of Deeds, Sussex County Courthouse

street & number   The Circle

city, town   Georgetown   state   Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title   Cultural Resource Survey   has this property been determined eligible?   ____ yes   _X_ no

date   1986   ____ federal   _X_ state   ____ county   ____ local

depository for survey records   Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town   Dover   state   Delaware

7. Description

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Seaford Commercial Resources Thematic - Description

Seaford is a water town that was originally laid out in 1799 along the Nanticoke River where it intersected Herring Creek. Since its earliest days, the town's economy has been dependent on its transportation systems and the surrounding agricultural regions. Thus during the nineteenth century, oyster and fruit packing and general agricultural products processing dominated the economy of Seaford. The commercial sector consisted of stores for residents and those of the outlaying agricultural region as well as suppliers of goods and services to the packing houses and shipping lines.

The business district of the town developed along High Street, an east-west street paralleling the Nanticoke River. It is located on a ridge above the river and thus is protected from periodic flooding. Contiguous to High Street, between it and the river, there are industrial buildings, including many large warehouse and processing plants. To the north of High Street, there are also a few commercial buildings; most of this area is residential.

The commercial buildings in Seaford are predominately frame, but there are some significant masonry examples, such as the two banks (S-366 and S-6978) and the stores at 200/202 High Street (S-6980) and at 328 High Street (S-7001). Most of the commercial buildings are two story, and many contain living areas above or behind the portions used for commercial purposes. Most have their original showcase windows.

Interspersed between the commercial buildings are various dwelling houses, churches, and fraternal order buildings. They are both brick and frame. The remainder of Seaford is residential. A modern strip of shopping center and fast food restaurants is located on the north edge of town along the Stein Highway and on the east edge of town along Route 13.

The residential areas of Seaford range from the larger houses located on the west side of town to small inexpensive housing for the poor located in the north east part of town. The railroad serves as a dividing line between these two sections with a transitional area of worker's housing in between.

The area west of the Railroad was in fact a separate community during the mid-nineteenth century. It was established as Nanticoke City and was not incorporated into Seaford proper until the latter part of the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

The major employees in Seaford at the present time is the DuPont's Company Nylon Plant. In recognition of this industrial giant's contribution to the community, Seaford advertises itself as the nylon Capitol of the world. Other major employers are warehouses and wholesale suppliers. The commercial rector is still a strong force of the community.

8. Significance

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Seaford Commercial Buildings Thematic Resources

The Seaford Commercial Buildings Thematic Resources consists of 8 commercial
buildings that reflect the diversity of late nineteenth and early twentieth cen-
tury business pursuits of the town. All of the buildings, except the First
National Bank of Seaford on Pine Street, are located on High Street. During
their history, they have served different commercial functions, and one was con-
verted into a private dwelling. The buildings include two banks (S-366 and
S-6978) and six stores (S-385, S-6986, S-6987, S-6980, S-6990, and S-7001). At
different times during their history, they were used to sell hardware and
paints, dry goods, groceries, millinery, tinware, and other products. One
served as a Chinese laundry, and another was a tailor's shop. All of the
buildings are eligible for listing under criteria C as intact examples of late
19th and early 20th century commercial buildings in Seaford. Alterations if any
were very minor.

Seaford, located at the junction of Herring Creek and the Nanticoke River, has
always been an important commercial center for lower Sussex County and the
Eastern Shore of Maryland. Throughout its history, the town's merchants have
supplied needed commodities to the area. Even today, a shopping excursion to
Seaford is important to the farmers and residents of the smaller towns in the
region. Seaford's location near the head of navigation on the Nanticoke River
made it accessible to the Chesapeake Bay and thus to Baltimore and Norfolk.
After 1857, Seaford was an important station on the Delaware Railroad; it also
served as the terminus for the Dorchester Branch connecting it with Cambridge,
Maryland, nearly thirty-five miles away on the Chesapeake Bay. Seaford has
always been surrounded by very fertile countryside which produces abundant agri-
cultural products shipped by water or sea from the town. In the late nineteenth
century, peach cultivation was extremely important as it was throughout
Delaware; until the advent of the yellows virus, peaches were packed in Seaford
to be shipped on the railroad. Oyster packing was also important to the town;
Chesapeake Bay oyster boats plied the Nanticoke with their abundant catches
which were cleaned and packed for shipping on the Delaware Railroad. Seaford
packing is still a significant industry in that the American Original
Corporation still packs clams in town.

Seaford was originallly laid out in 1799 by the heirs of Henry Hooper; it was
called Hooper's Landing and developed around the family wharf. Thereafter, lots
were sold, and the town grew but remained "a quiet, conservative place" until
the advent of the railroad in 1857. During this early period, the river served
as the principal business outlet providing transportation for the grain and
other farm products produced in the region. After the arrival of the railroad,
the town grew and was incorporated in 1865. The historian J. Thomas Scharf,

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHED SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _See Inventory_
Quadrangle name _Seaford West_   **Quadrangle scale** _1:2400_
UTM References   See inventory sheet

A | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
   Zone   Easting   Northing   Zone   Easting   Northing

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

E | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

G | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | H | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Inventory

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   Susanne N. Fox, Historian

organization Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation   **date**

street & number   **telephone**

city or town   **state**

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national   _____ state   _X_ 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs   **date** September 25, 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patrick Andrus   **date** 2/18/87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: **date**

Chief of Registration

GPO 894-788

NPS Form 10-900-a
(3-82)

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writing in 1888, described the town as having "churches, schools, banks, numerous stores, and all the attributes of a progressive rural community."

By 1882 Seaford's population had grown to about 2400. To service the residents as well as the surrounding area, Seaford's businesses included 26 general stores, 1 bakery, 2 dry goods and notions stores, 2 hardware stores, 2 drug stores, 1 cigar shop and 1 clothing store. In addition, there were 5 shoemakers, 2 tailors, 4 dressmakers, 2 milliners and 2 jewelers. By 1897 the population of Seaford had decreased by 400, but her mercantile enterprises had become more diverse to include cigar shops, a china shop, a sewing machine shop, a stove shop, and a confectionery shop. In addition, the town then boasted a silversmith and a watchmaker.

The buildings included as part of the theme typify the thriving commercial activity of the Seaford. The earliest building housed the First National Bank of Seaford (S-366) which was organized in 1865 with capital stock in the amount of $55,000. The bank was originally located on the corner of Pine and King Streets until it was moved to a new building on Pine Street in 1868 where it remained until around 1900.

Another early bank, The Sussex National Bank of Seaford, (S-6978) is included in the nomination. It was organized in 1887 and in that year moved to a new bank building on the corner of High and Conwell Streets. It was described by Scharf as being a "very neat and substantial structure" with "good safety-vaults, and well-furnished offices." A bank was in this building until the 1930's when the building was converted to a store.

Four of the nominated buildings were built before 1885 as they are shown on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of that year. They are the store at the southeast corner of High and Cannon Streets (S-6990); the J.W. Cox store (S-6986) and dwelling (S-6987) converted to a store in the 1920's; and the store at the northeast corner of High and Conwell Streets (S-6980).

The store at the southeast corner of High and Cannon Streets (S-6990) has had diverse uses since it was constructed in 1884. Originally it housed three different stores. The east section was a hardware store; in the middle was a grocery store; and the west section contained a millinery store. By 1897 the hardware store had been replaced by a grocery store, and the middle portion was an office. In 1904 the millinery store had become a dry goods store. By 1910 the stores had changed again; in that year the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map showed that a tailor had his shop and workshop in the east and center. In the west section was a grocery store. During the 1920's and 1930's the community's telephone office was in the building.

The two frame commercial buildings on the north side of High Street between Pearl and Cannon Streets were built by Joshua W. Cox as a dwelling (S-6987) and a store (S-6986) where he ran a dry goods store until the early twentieth century. The dwelling (S6987) was converted to a store in the 1920's.

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To the east on the north side of High Street there is a brick commercial
building (S-6980) that has been used for many commercial purposes since it was
built between 1910 and 1923. There was a commercial building on the lot
because in 1885 and 1897 the Sanborn Fire map shows that stoves and tinware were
sold there, but 1904 it had become a dry goods store in the eastern portion
whereas a grocery store was in the eastern portion. In 1910 the eastern portion
of the earlier building contained a Chinese laundry, and the western section was
vacant. By 1923 the present building had been contructed and housed a store and
dwelling.

The two remaining buildings being nominated are stores built after 1900. The
earliest one is Burton Brothers Hardware Store (S-385), already listed on the
National Register. It was built between 1897 and 1904 by William S. Burton, a
Laurel tinsmith. Besides selling hardware, he also had a tinshop, carriage
repository, and harness shop on the property. By 1923 the building was no longer
being used as a hardware store, but had instead become a moving picture theatre
and pipe shop. During the 1930's a general store was located in the building as
well as the pipe shop. To the rear was a bakehouse with an iron oven. Today
there is a hardware store run by the Burton Family.

The final building nominated is a store on the north side of High Street
(S-7001) between Pine and Arch Streets. It was built between 1910 and 1930.

Architecturally, each of the properties nominated is significant because they
are excellent examples of intact late nineteenth century and early twentieth
century commercial buildings. Original showcase windows remain in most of the
stores, as does much other exterior detail. The pressed tin exterior of Burton
Brothers Hardware Store (S-6990) reflect a practice common to the town. Another
characteristic typical of the commercial buildings in the town is the com-
bination of store and dwelling in one building as in the store and dwelling at
200/202A/202 High Street (S-6980) and at 218 High Street (S-6987). The two
banks (S-6978 and S-366) are significant because they are typical banks built in
Delaware throughout the period.

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Seaford's historic commercial architecture was heavily influenced by the

Italianate style. A majority of the Town's sixty commercial buildings employed

this style. The building materials were almost split between masonry and frame.

The Burton Brothers Hardware store (S-385), the first National Bank of Seaford

(S-366), the store at High and Cannon (S-6990) are all examples of Italianate

influenced buildings. The Hardware store and the Bank are readily recognizable

Italianate buildings while the store at High and Cannon is a local interpreta-

tion, that eliminates the decorative work associated with Italianate architec-

ture but retains the mass and scale of the style. The rest of Seaford's

Italianate style commercial buildings have lost integrity. The Queen Anne style

was used in less than 20% of the commercial buildings in Seaford. A similiar

percentage of domestic buildings were constructed using that style. Queene Anne

buildings represent a higher percentage of buildings in the theme because they

are somewhat more difficult to alter since they lack the flat high fronts of

Italianate buildings. 200/202 High Street (S-1980) is a particularly good

example of Seaford's Queen Anne style. It is a combination dwelling and store.

The principal component of the Queen Anne style that was was used is the assym-

metrical floor plan. Classical detailing was not popular but some Gothic

Revival and Colonial-Revival elements were. The lack of elaborate details is

the common expression of Queen Anne Architecture in Southwest Delaware. The

decorative elements usually found are the towers and some form of elaborate cor-

nice.

The second Queen Anne building included in the theme is the Sussex National Bank

of Seaford (S-6978). Constructed in 1887, it is a low one story building. It

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has a very elaborate tin cornice and decorative brick work over the windows and the door. This building is fairly unique in Southwest Delaware and is the only such building in Seaford.

The other two Queen Anne style buildings are examples of the preferred form for detached buildings on small town lots during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. These gable front buildings, the Cox Dry Goods store (S-6986) and 218 High Street (S-6987) are good examples of the type and are the only ones in Seaford that still possess sufficient integrity to be eligible for the National Register. Buildings of this type are very easily altered by the removal of the recessed front door and the side display areas and their replacement by a flush front door and display windows.

The last building of the theme is 328 High Street (S-7001). This is one of the few moderne influenced buildings in Southwest Delaware. While similiar in some respects to Italianate buildings, the ornimentation has been dropped except for the two ball finals at the parapet. The height has also been reduced to a low two story appearance rather than the higher 2 or 3 story height found in earlier buildings. In addition to its stylistic influence, this building is one of the few in Southwest Delaware that uses cement blocks as an architectural element by exposing it on the principal facade. Usually this material is employed in foundations or on side and rear walls only.

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION

During the summer of 1986, the central business district and most of the historic section of Seaford was surveyed by a team from the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey recorded information on all pre-1945 buildings and structures within the survey area. That area was bounded by the Nanticoke River, the Railroad, by Route 20 and by business Route 13. In all over 494 properties were added to the state inventory.

As part of the survey, all buildings and structures were evaluated as to National Register eligibility by BAHP staff. A number of individual dwellings and commercial buildings were judged eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. No eligible historic districts were identified. National Park Service guidelines were used to evaluate all buildings in Seaford. Delaware's comprehensive plan identifies Seaford as part of the Nanticoke Drainage. The historic context is one of increased urbanization of small Delaware towns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

During informal discussions with city officials, a request was made to nominate eligible buildings in Seaford's commercial district. Accordingly, all 60 commercial buildings were re-examined for integrity and for any type of unifing theme either geographic, historical or architectural. That re-evaluation determined that of the buildings considered, all except eight had undergone significant loss of integrity. Most of the buildings had been updated with modern first floor store fronts or had an entire new facade placed over the original store front. A significant percentage of those changes are not reversible.

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As a result of that re-evaluation, it was determined that the eligible commercial buildings were related by their nature as commercial buildings and further by their relationship with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century development of Seaford and the surrounding community that used Seaford for commercial purposes.

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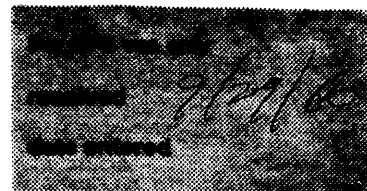
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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Seaford Commercial Buildings Thematic Resources
State Sussex County, DELAWARE

Nomination/Type of Review

Cover Substantive Review   accept *Patrick Andrus* 2/18/87

Determined Eligible

Date/Signature

1. Building at 328 High Street   Substantive Review   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87 Eligible*

   DOE/OWNER OBJECTION   Attest

2. Building at 200--202A High   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*
   Street

   Attest

3. Building at High and   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*
   Cannon Streets

   Attest

4. Building at 218 High Street   Substantive Review   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*

   Attest

5. Cox, J.W., Dry Goods Store   Substantive Review   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*

   Attest

6. First National Bank of   Substantive Review   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*
   Seaford

   Attest

7. Sussex National Bank of   Keeper   *Patrick Andrus 2/18/87*
   Seaford

   Attest

8. Burton Brothers Hardware   Keeper
   Store
   (Already listed)   Attest

9.   Keeper

   Attest

10.   Keeper

   Attest