

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC "LUCY" THE MARGATE ELEPHANT

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Margate City

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
2nd

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

COUNTY

Atlantic

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Margate City

STREET & NUMBER Vantor and Washington Avenues

CITY, TOWN

Margate City

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Atlantic City Surrogate's Office

STREET & NUMBER Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Margate City

STATE

New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1969

FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

John Milner, AIA Architect of the restoration, has provided the following description:

The most appropriate early description of Lucy the Elephant was written by her inventor, James V. Lafferty, and included in his petition to the Commissioner of Patents dated May 19th, 1882.

"My invention consists of a building in the form of an animal (i.e. an Elephant) the body of which is floored and divided into 2 rooms, closets, etc., and the legs contain the stairs which lead to the body, said legs being hollow so as to be of increased strength for properly supporting the body, and the elevation of the body permitting the circulation of air below the same, the entire device presenting a unique appearance, and producing a building which is well ventilated and lighted.

A chute communicates with the front of the body and extends to the ground where it may be connected with a sewer or other conduit for conveying slops, ashes, etc., to the sewer or conduit, said chute being of the form of the trunk of the elephant and containing trussing . . . for supporting the front of the body, said trussing being concealed by the covering or wall of the trunk.

The lower end of the chute enters or is connected with a box around which is a seat, said box resting on the ground or proper supports thereon and concealing said lower end of the chute and the connection with the conduit and presenting the appearance of a trough from which the animal is feeding or drinking.

An upper story may be supported on the body, access whereto is had from the floor by means of stairs which are properly located in the walls of the body and sustained in position, said story being in the form of a howdah which completing the semblance of a bedecked elephant, acts as the observatory of the building.

It will be seen that the structure is novel and unique."

Lucy was assembled basically as a large frame box, composed of massive 12" x 12" timbers. The structural frame was carefully braced with diagonal members, providing a rigid system which has successfully withstood heavy winds and storms for nearly a century. Lucy's shape was achieved by applying curved built-up members over the frame and enclosing the whole composition with sheathing boards and heavy terne plate.

Legend tells us that Lafferty used a live elephant, which he chained to the beach, as a model for Lucy. But in fact, Lafferty and a man named William Free

(continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) "architectural folly"
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1881 BUILDER/ARCHITECT James V. Lafferty

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural Follies are now generally accepted as a legitimate architectural expression. They are still a strange and startling sight to those used to structures of a traditional form. "Lucy" is one of those now rare examples of what G.E. Kidder-Smith calls Zoomorphic vernacular and she is the last of the American breed--two others, one at Cape May, New Jersey and the other at Coney Island have long since disappeared.

Constructing oversized elephant-buildings is not a new idea--in the 19th century the practice approached the significance of a cult. Clay Lancaster, in his book on Architectural Follies, discusses the breed at length, from Ptolemy's dummy on wheels, Phillip of Burgundy's 15th century mechanical elephant, Henri II had several elephant automatons propelled by men inside and two great French schemes for elephant-buildings that never materialized, one for Louis XV by Ribart and the other for Napoleon by Alavoine.

Lancaster goes on to place Lucy in this genealogy:

"Such grandiosity as that of an Elephant Triumphant would be out of place in America, but by the very virtue of abandoning the superficial trimmings Americans often were able to bring the essential features to realization. An elephant building exists in America. It is referred to as the Elephant House, or, more usually, as the Elephant Hotel at Margate City, near Atlantic City, New Jersey. No pedestal or platform supports this elephant, for he is a pleb pedestrian with feet planted firmly on the ground. In the practical American manner he is depicted in a feeding attitude. Summer vacationists have flocked to this section of the Atlantic coast for several generations, and a good percentage still go to view the baggy-kneed landmark. Constructed by James V. Lafferty about 1883, the monster has an overall length of about seventy-five feet, the height to the peak of the original howdah surpassing this measurement by ten feet. Over a million pieces of timber went into the construction of the thing, plus four tons of bolts, bars, and nails, and twelve thousand square feet of tin for covering it--according to the leaflet passed out by the proprietors.

Twin newel stairways are in the hind legs, one for ascent and the other for descent. The interior space is divided up into rooms devoted to the ordinary purposes of a house, including a reception room eighteen feet square, dining room, kitchen, and several bedrooms.

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CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER

designed the building without any such aid. J. Mason Kirby, a Quaker from Philadelphia, performed the actual construction, which eventually cost Lafferty \$38,000.

Lucy's skeleton is a large frame box of 12x12 inch timbers and 8,560 wooden ribs. Her skin is 12,000 square feet of heavy tin and 24 glass windows. Her body measures 80 feet in circumference and 38 feet in length. Her ears are 17 feet long, her tusks 22 feet. The trunk is 26 feet long and was designed to double as a chute for garbage disposal. The whole elephant weighs 90 tons.

Access to the interior was gained through two spiral staircases, one in each rear leg. The walls and ceiling are plastered and the floors were wood. A beaded wainscot extended around the perimeter of the main space, and miniature pointed doorways led to the side rooms. The original interior woodwork was in the Gothic Revival style.

The original domed interior space was partitioned into separate rooms in 1902. In 1928 a violent storm blew off the original ornate howdah, and it was replaced by the present howdah. With these two exceptions, Lucy has undergone only minor alterations and repairs. Most of her original fabric remains although in poor condition.

Although Lucy's present exterior appearance is somewhat weary, it reflects only surface deterioration. Her structural frame has remained in good condition, due largely to the ample air spaces around the timbers, which have eliminated prolonged dampness. These air spaces will greatly facilitate the installation of new heating, cooling, and electrical systems to be included as part of the restoration.

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Lucy" the Margate Elephant ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Twenty windows are for the admission of light, besides the eighteen-inch portholes that serve for eyes. Staircases to each side of the belly take one to the howdah, where, from an elevation of sixty-five feet, is obtained a wide vista of the sea. The cost of building the elephant is said to have been \$38,000.

Lafferty built a similar hotel on Coney Island at about the same time, though the latter one only survived until 1896 in which year the elephant was burned (or some say, was cremated). The Coney Island construction, billed as the 'Elephant Colussus,' was bigger than the one farther down the Atlantic coast; it had complete stories within the torso, the overall height amounting to 122 feet. The interior of this jumbo was put to good usage, one accommodating a cigar store and the other a diorama, later one or the other converted into an elevator shaft. Staircases were in the hind legs and one could engage a room in any part of the animal's anatomy. A third elephant, 'the Light of Asia,' was built at Cape May in 1885 but she died of neglect and vandalism in 1900.

A patent was taken out on the invention by James V. Lafferty. It was filed 3 June 1882, and granted on December the 5th. The description was accompanied by a diagram representing a side elevation and plan of the 'building in the form of an animal, the body of which is floored and divided into rooms, closets, and Etc., and the legs contain the stairs . . . said legs being hollow, so as to be of increased strength for properly supporting the body.' One wonders that old Mother Nature never thought of the supporting quality of hollow legs; but, on the other hand, how could Mr. Lafferty locate his stairs in them if they weren't? There is only a single large, rectangular room, however, the leftover spaces all portioned off into closets, and even inner-closets. The trunk was a useful member, having a chute inside (marked 'F' on plans) for the disposal of 'slops, ashes, etc.' In the next paragraph we read: 'The elevation of the body permits the circulation of air beneath it and removes it from the dampness and moisture of the ground . . . Furthermore, the body is exposed to light and air on all sides, wherefore it provides a healthy and suitable place of occupancy for invalids and others.'

For 90 years Lucy has been admired by children, a source of amusement for adults and occasionally a sobering influence--there is a tale that "sailors on ships in the Atlantic are said to have given up rum abruptly after one sight of Lucy towering on the beach looking directly out to sea at them."

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"Lucy" the Margate Elephant
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In the last several years the elephant has been the object of a preservation campaign with funding from Federal sources (National Park Service, HUD Bicentennial Commission), State and private donors. Her credentials include the National Register of Historic Places, and the Historic American Buildings Survey (National Park Service). During 1974, 12,000 visitors arrived and 18,000 more came in 1975. The elephant has been stabilized, painted and completely restored--she will have a new howdah when funds permit. Lucy is now almost unique and an important Victorian monument in the history of American architecture.

Addendum:

An architectural folly comes from the French folie which meant "Delight" or "favorite abode." The English gave the term the added connotation of something uncomplimentary reflecting the foolishness of the builder. More follies were built in America than anywhere else and they are usually incomplete due to the bad planning of the builder or out of scale and style, often whimsical. An architectural folly is now an accepted architectural category.

Many famous follies have long since disappeared: P. T. Barnum's "Iranistan," Mrs. Trollope's "Bazaar," and "Flower's Folly" at Fiskkill, New York. The old world had follies as well--the Tower of Babel, the Villa Palagonia in Sicily and near Paris the Désert de Retz--all now in ruins. The Brighton Pavilion, however, has been splendidly restored. Follies came in all sizes and shapes and made of a variety of materials, some designed by famous architects, many by anonymous craftsmen.

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Partial List of Publications In Which "Lucy" the Margate Elephant is Featured.

Cunningham, John T. The New Jersey Sampler.

Lancaster, Clay. Architectural Follies of America.

Boucher, Jack E. Absegami Yesteryear.

Devlin, Harry. What Kind of a House is That?

American Heritage, April, 1975.

Architecture Plus, The International Magazine of Architecture, November, 1973.

SO JEX, Convention Booklet, April 14, 1972.

Atlantic City & County ABC Book, Atlantic City Dept. of Public Relations, 1975.

Life, August 21, 1970.

American Home, July 1971.

Constructioneer, October 19, 1970.

Americana. The American Heritage Society, July 1974.

Architecture, New Jersey, November/December 1970.

My Weekly Reader, May 7, 1975.

Zur Zeit, Oct. 10, 1972.

Where, March 7, 1970.

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.

New York News Magazine, September 16, 1973.

House Beautiful, August 1974.

South Jersey Magazine, Summer 1974.

National Heritage, 1975.

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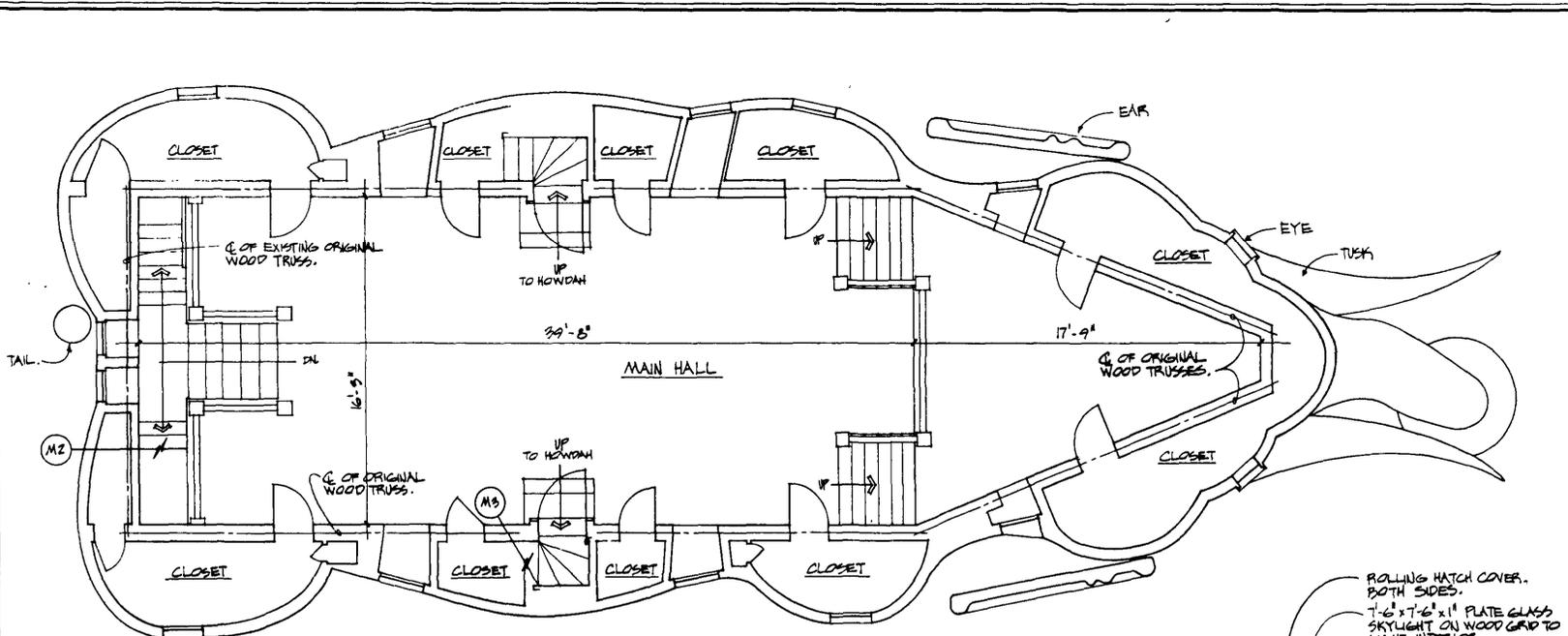
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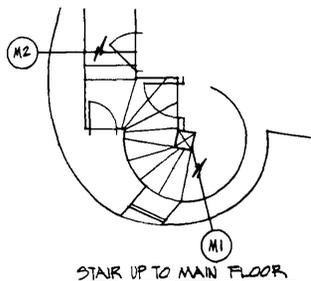
BEGINNING at a point at the intersection of the South Line of Atlantic Avenue with the west line of Decatur Avenue and extends (1) West along the South line of Atlantic Avenue, one hundred five and one half feet (105 1/2) to a point being the division line of lands of estate of Israel G. Adams, thence (2) to a point width, extending south between parallel lines one of which is the West line of Decatur Avenue and the other the said division line above mentioned twenty five hundred and seventy five (2575) feet more or less, to the Exterior line established by the Riparian Commission of New Jersey in Atlantic Ocean, said Decatur Avenue being forty feet wide.



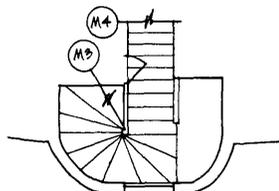
MAIN FLOOR PLAN

ORIGINAL INTERIOR FINISHES; INTEGRALLY COLORED PLASTER (GASTRIC PINK) WALLS AND VAULTED CEILING WITH BEADED BOARD DADO. DOOR AND WINDOW TRIM, RAILINGS AND OTHER WOODWORK (LARGELY BRITANT) IS GOTHIC REVIVAL IN STYLE. ALL WOOD WAINSCOTING AND TRIM WAS ORIGINALLY STAINED AND VARNISHED.

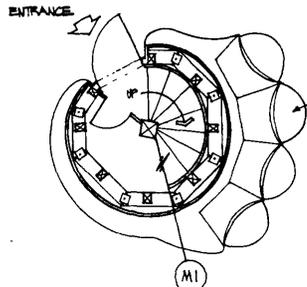
ROLLING HATCH COVER, BOTH SIDES.
 7'-6" x 7'-6" x 1" PLATE GLASS SKYLIGHT ON WOOD GRID TO LIGHT INTERIOR.
 DECK ORIGINALLY TIN COVERED.



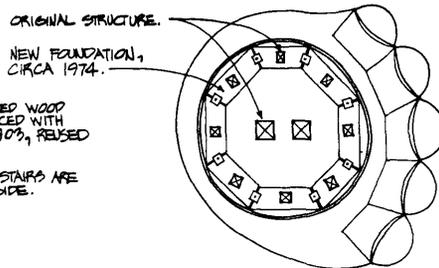
STAIR UP TO MAIN FLOOR



STAIR UP TO HOWDAH

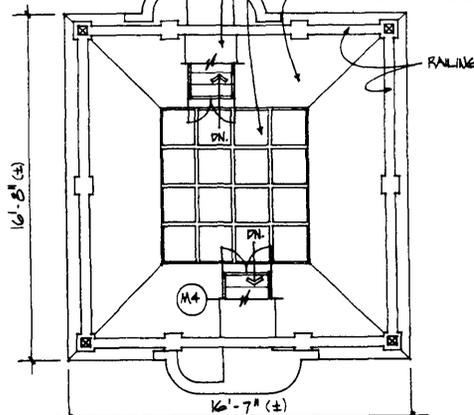


RIGHT REAR FOOT PLAN



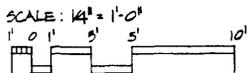
RIGHT FRONT FOOT PLAN

ORIGINAL TIN COVERED WOOD TOES WERE REPLACED WITH CONCRETE CIRCA 1909, REUSED CIRCA 1975.
 LEGS, FEET AND STAIRS ARE SIMILAR ON LEFT SIDE.



HOWDAH PLAN

(M) /# INDICATES MATCH LINE



DRAWN BY: JEFFREY C. BOURNE 1976
 PREPARED FOR THE
 SAVE LUCY COMMITTEE - INCORPORATED
 BY JOHN D. MILLNER, AIA, ARCHITECT
 UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

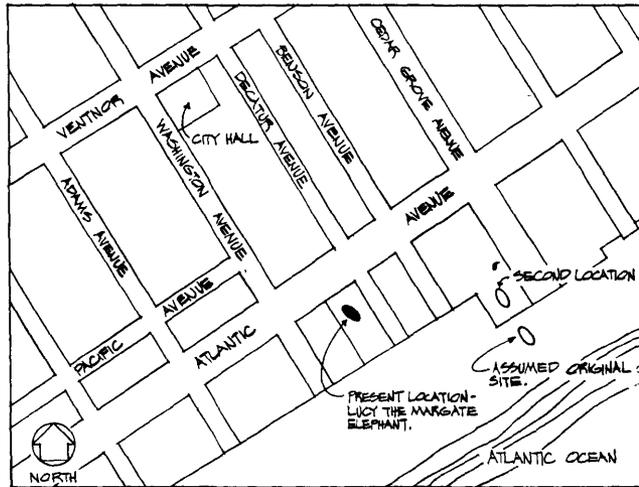
NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
LUCY THE MARGATE ELEPHANT
 ATLANTIC AVENUE & DECATUR STREET, MARGATE, ATLANTIC COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

SURVEY NO.
 HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 2 OF 4 SHEETS

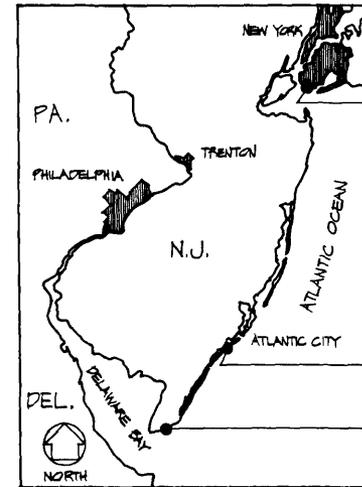
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
 SERIALS SERVICE

LUCY THE MARGATE ELEPHANT

ATLANTIC AVENUE AND DECATUR STREET, MARGATE, ATLANTIC COUNTY, NEW JERSEY



LOCATION MAP (SHOWING PART OF MARGATE CITY, NEW JERSEY)

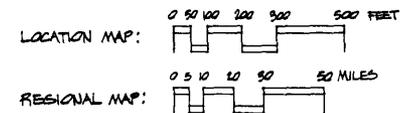


REGIONAL MAP

JAMES V. LAFFERTY OF PHILADELPHIA CONCEIVED THE HUGE PROMYDIA AS A REAL ESTATE PROMOTION TO SPUR DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH ATLANTIC CITY. DESIGNED BY WILLIAM FREE, THE WOOD FRAME-TIN CLAD STRUCTURE WAS ERECTED ON THE BEACH IN 1884 BY J. MASON KIRBY (CARPENTER) AND LORENZ BYE (TIN SMITH) AND IS A UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF THE AMERICAN "ARCHITECTURAL FOLLIES" OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD. ON DECEMBER 5, 1882, LAFFERTY WAS GRANTED U.S. PATENT NO. 268,503 FOR HIS INVENTION OF "AN IMPROVEMENT TO BUILDINGS". TWO OTHER ELEPHANT STRUCTURES WERE CONSTRUCTED ALONG THE EAST COAST BUT HAVE NOT SURVIVED. NICKNAMED "LUCY" CIRCA 1887, THE BUILDING HAS SERVED AS AN OFFICE, TAVERN, A RESIDENCE AND A TOURIST CURIOSITY, SURVIVING MANY STORMS. A HURRICANE IN 1903 UNDERMINED THE STRUCTURE, NECESSITATING ITS RELOCATION ABOUT FIFTY FEET

FARTHER FROM THE SHORE. SAVED FROM DEMOLITION IN 1969 BY THE SAVE LUCY COMMITTEE, INC., SHE WAS DONATED TO MARGATE CITY AND MOVED TO A CITY PARK TWO BLOCKS DOWN THE BEACH. INCLUDED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC SITES, "LUCY" IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING RESTORATION.

THESE DRAWINGS WERE PREPARED FOR THE SAVE LUCY COMMITTEE, INC. BY THE RESTORATION ARCHITECT JOHN D. MILNER AIA - WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA. THEY REPRESENT LUCY AS A COMPILATION OF ORIGINAL AND RESTORED FABRIC. MEASURED 1969-1975 AND DRAWN IN JANUARY, 1976 UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JOHN D. MILNER, PRINCIPAL, AND ROBERT L. DEBLET, ARCHITECT, BY JEFFREY C. BOURKE, CHARLES DU PONT AND BENJAMIN WALBERT.



DRAWN BY: JEFFREY C. BOURKE 1976

PREPARED FOR THE
SAVE LUCY COMMITTEE, INCORPORATED
BY JOHN D. MILNER AIA ARCHITECT
UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
LUCY THE MARGATE ELEPHANT
ATLANTIC AVENUE & DECATUR STREET, MARGATE, ATLANTIC COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 4 SHEETS

UNIVERSITY OF CONNERS
DRAWING NUMBER