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THE BACKGROUND HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE 8BR240, ALSO KNOWN AS THE HOTEL SITE, LOCATED AT CAPE CANAVERAL AIR FORCE STATION, BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

Jordan Falchook

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Archaeological Site 8BR240, also known as the Hotel Site, is currently one of the many Florida coastal archaeological sites that are under threat of sea level rise in the next 25 years. The Cape Canaveral Archaeological Mitigation Project (CCAMP) has been tasked with mitigating the potential loss of the site in the near future by surveying this site and compiling a report, which will also include a background history of the site. With limited time and resources available for conducting this historical research, as well as other issues encountered along the way, the following report represents the partially completed portion of this research, which will need to be continued at a later date.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological site 8BR240, located on the sand dunes at present-day Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, was the early twentieth century site of a large wooden fishing pier often referred to as the Canaveral Pier, and a small hotel that was called the Canaveral Harbor Inn. While some midden staining and moderate amounts of prehistoric pottery sherds have been found at the southern end of the site in 1993 (Van Voorhies 1993:3), further surveying and analysis will still need to be conducted to interpret their meaning. Until that is undertaken, much of the focus at 8BR240 has still remained on the more recent hotel and pier that once thrived there. Both structures were built in 1928 at site 8BR240, and were the last vestiges of a completely different time on Cape Canaveral before the Space Race began to transform the landscape in 1950 into what it is today. By the late 1950s, both the hotel and pier had been destroyed, taking with them some of their last secrets. As site 8BR240 continues to be accessed for its archaeological potential, the integrity of the site remains in the balance with the possibility of eventual destruction from sea level rise in the next 25 years or so. Thorough background research into the history of the site therefore needs to be done to provide some context and assistance for the interpretation of what has been, or may still be found at the site. The following report focuses on the background history of site 8BR240, the Hotel Site.

BACKGROUND OF ISSUES

In order to better understand the artifact assemblages and features that have been found at the Hotel Site, a comprehensive history as best as possible of the occupation of site 8BR240 is desired. However, several issues have been encountered in compiling the site's history. One of the main issues that has occurred is that there are very limited resources available which may contain information on the Canaveral Harbor Inn, the Canaveral Pier, or about the location itself. The latter is especially true in regards to the history of the site before and after the existence of these two structures at this location.

One of the reasons that these resources are so limited is because Cape Canaveral was very sparsely populated before the 1950s. Aside from a lighthouse that had first been established inland near the cape itself in 1848 (Witt 2010:24-26), there was practically no real infrastructure or industry on Cape Canaveral until well into the twentieth century. For the few settlers who lived on the cape during these early years, which comprised of only 94 people in 1900 (Levy et al, 1984:54), they had to essentially be self-sufficient in an environment that was then an isolated wilderness.

In the next several decades, the population did not change very much. According to U.S. Federal Census records for Canaveral, the population after 1900 continued to remain under 100

people until it peaked to 148 in 1930, before dropping down to 137 in 1940 (Levy et al.

1984:54). As a result of the small population size of Cape Canaveral in general during the first half of the twentieth century, the remoteness of the location of the Canaveral Harbor Inn and the Canaveral Pier, and the relative obscurity of these two structures, very few photographs exist of either today. This unfortunate consequence may have also been partially influenced by the Great Depression, which made photography a luxury that was too expensive to enjoy for many of the working class people who lived or worked on Cape Canaveral in the years prior to World War II. Lastly, since the hotel and pier existed between 60 - 90 years ago, the likelihood of locating any relevant existing photos outside the few public and private sources that are already known to have them continues to greatly diminish as time goes by.

Books, maps, previous archaeological reports, period newspapers, and aerial photos thus became the main sources for information in compiling the background history of the Hotel Site, which caused some issues in their own regards. Since both the Canaveral Harbor Inn and the Canaveral Pier were not generally well known outside of Brevard County or Florida, no books written specifically about either structure are known to exist. What information did come from books was located in only a few that were generally written about Cape Canaveral or Brevard County alone, and the information that these books contained about either the Canaveral Harbor Inn or the Canaveral Pier were typically quite limited in their scope.

Period newspapers, specifically the Cocoa Tribune, were found to have the some of the best information that was relevant to the history of site 8BR240. However, these editions of the Cocoa Tribune were only located on microfilm, and were not allowed to be checked out. Only a few microfilm copies are also known to exist in archives throughout the state. While utilizing the microfilm copies of the Cocoa Tribune did provide a substantial amount of information, the

process was almost prohibitively slow, and also relied on the fact of whether or not certain occurrences at either the hotel or pier were actually written about in the newspaper at the time.

The fact that these two structures also existed about 60-90 years ago has also made compiling a history of site 8BR240 more difficult because the chances of finding any living eyewitnesses who could still provide accurate first-hand accounts of either the Canaveral Harbor Inn or the Canaveral Pier have really diminished over time. Any children who grew up on Cape Canaveral near the end of the existence of the hotel and pier during the 1940s, or grew up on Cape Canaveral Air Force Station prior to the demolition of both structures during the 1950s, are likely to be the youngest of these potential eyewitnesses at about 70 years old today. Several first-hand accounts were documented though during eyewitness interviews conducted by Nancy Lorenz in 1993 (Cantley 1993:Apppendix IV), and another set of interviews were conducted by the Cape Canaveral Oral History Project during 2007, and some of the individuals interviewed on either of these occasions may still be living today. However, the age of these individuals at the time of their interviews should be taken into consideration in regards to some of the accuracy or the extent of their accounts, as some of their recollections may have been affected by their age or how long ago it was.

General inconsistencies and similar terminology were also issues that have made compiling a background history of site 8BR240 difficult as well. Some of the printed sources that contain information about the Canaveral Harbor Inn indicate that the hotel was built in 1926, while others indicate it was built in 1928. There have also been rumors of a casino being located in the hotel itself, which most people today would associate a casino as being a place where people gambled. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, the word casino typically meant an enclosed beachside recreational facility that had amenities like a dance hall, and

showers and changing rooms for beachgoers. This dual meaning of the word casino has also contributed to some of the prior confusion in the background history of the site.

Other issues have arisen with the fact that an earlier pier had also existed at site 8BR240. However, only a few scans of low quality photos of this much smaller and more primitive pier exist. This earlier pier is yet to be identified by a specific name, but it is believed to have been built by Samuel Jeffords. When this older unnamed pier is coupled with the fact that the Canaveral Pier was also referred to as just "the pier" by many of the locals who lived there, along with the existence of another pier owned by the Cape Fish Company just a little further north on the south side of the cape itself, the general usage of the term pier in the past on Cape Canaveral has also led to some confusion in the history of site 8BR240.

Lastly, the fact that the Canaveral Harbor Inn, the Canaveral Pier, and the property they were built on that comprised site 8BR240 was acquired by the military and U.S. Government in 1951 has also led to difficulties in researching the site. With the construction of Cape Canaveral Air Force station rapidly under way during the early 1950s, records of what happened to the structures at site 8BR240 may not have been substantially documented during the rush to build the base and required facilities due to their non-strategic importance. Whatever military records may still exist, potentially including some maps and aerial photos, still may not be available to civilian researchers or are known about by them.

METHODOLOGY

In order to compile a background history of site 8BR240, several different methods of research were utilized. The initial research focused on trying to locate local reference materials at

the Florida Historical Society (FHS) and the Brevard County Historical Commission (BCHC). Between these two locations, a few books with limited information were located, but fortunately the archives at these respective facilities also contained several period photographs, aerial photos, and maps with varying degrees of information about the Canaveral Harbor Inn and the Canaveral Pier. Microfilm copies of the Cocoa Tribune were also found at BCHC, which became very important in compiling this report. Several historical coastal charts of the Canaveral Bight were located online as well, but not much else has been found about either structure on the internet. Mr. Tom Penders, the principle archaeologist from CCAMP, also kindly provided more maps, coastal charts, and scans of period photos to augment the other resources listed above. Lastly, prior archaeological reports about 8BR240 were also utilized for research. Two of these reports even contained transcripts of two separate interview projects of several different people who lived or worked out on Cape Canaveral at the time, and were familiar with the Canaveral Pier or the Canaveral Harbor Inn.

RESULTS

As a result of the time constraints to research and compile a background history of site 8BR240, and the numerous issues that were encountered in doing so, only a partially completed background history of the site follows in this report. It is important to note in regards to the history of the Hotel Site to that some midden staining and moderate amounts of prehistoric pottery sherds were found at the southern end of site 8BR240 during a prior archaeological survey in 1993, which referred to this region of the site as 8BR240B (Van Voorhies 1993:3). Further surveying and analysis will still need to be done to determine the significance of these

finds. Due to this, the results for the background history of the Hotel Site for this report will therefore start with the earliest historic-era occupation of the site that is known at this time.

The first indication of historic-era occupation of site 8BR240 that is presently known is indicated on the 1906 No. 161 coastal chart. On this chart, a small pier is indicated extending out from the location of site 8BR240 into the Canaveral Bight, as well as a house just inland of the pier that was directly in line with it. Unlike the other homesteads depicted on the Banana River side of Cape Canaveral on this chart, this one is not identified by the owner's name, or labeled at all. Coastal charts from this time period are very limited, but the homestead and pier are not depicted on either the 1887 No. 162 coastal chart, or the 1900 No. 14 coastal chart respectively. While both of these early charts were created primarily for navigational usage, and therefore do not indicate any homestead locations on Cape Canaveral like the 1906 coastal chart does, the 1900 coastal chart does indicate a navigational buoy in the Canaveral Bight. With this being a vital detail for navigation, a pier should also have been indicated on the 1900 coastal chart if one existed at this time, as it would have also been a navigational hazard that was important to know about.

Unfortunately, very little is conclusively known about this early house and pier, but it is very possible that it was built by Samuel Jeffords just prior to the creation of the 1906 coastal chart. Jeffords was a business man who just after the turn of the twentieth century wanted to establish a small-scale fish fertilizer plant on Cape Canaveral that was going to utilize shark carcasses to make the fertilizer (Witt 2010:77). His name first appears in the U.S. Federal Census under Canaveral in 1910, which indicated that he lived on the Atlantic Coast side of the cape.

Two scans of undated photos of his house have been located with period handwritten captions on the back that say, "Sam Jefford's Place At Canaveral Pier," but it is yet to be

conclusively known if Sam Jefford's house at the "Canaveral Pier" is the same one depicted in the 1906 coastal chart, although it is very likely. A third scan of another very early photo of what appears to be part of an early wooden pier with small buildings has been located as well, which is titled, "Canaveral Pier Looking West 1915." These three photos and the 1906 coastal chart seem to confirm the existence of an early pier of some sorts at site 8BR240 well before the Canaveral Pier was built there in 1928.

This statement also seems to be confirmed by Nancy Lorenz's 1993 interview of Mr. Leonard Johnson, who was born in 1928, and lived at Cape Canaveral off and on until about the late 1940s (Cantley 1993:300). When handed a photo of the Canaveral Pier, Johnson is quoted as saying,

"Now there was a pier that put right north of this. We used to live right there where that old pier had been. The storm [Okeechobee hurricane] in 1928 washed it out including the pilings and everything. And there was ... one just between it and that Canaveral Pier, which is about 300 yards away. No, I mean 500 yards away or something like that. It got washed out in the '28 storm [Okeechobee hurricane] and it would have liked to have torn this one up but they rebuilt this one" (Cantley 1993:300).

While Johnson's recollection seems to indicate perhaps a little bit of confusion, or that there may have perhaps even been two piers at or immediately near site 8BR240 during 1928, he does confirm that the older pier pictured at the site in 1906 existed, and that it was destroyed in the deadly Okeechobee hurricane of October 1928 (Cantley 1993:300).

The next chapter of the history of site 8BR240 continues with the Florida land boom of the 1920s, which would shape the area of Cape Canaveral, and set future things in motion. It

started as a result of the fact that the United States emerged relatively unscathed and victorious from World War I in November 1918. The jubilation, optimism, and rapid economic growth that followed at the start of the new decade highlighted an era that would later be referred to as the "Roaring Twenties." This brought about a whole new class of visitors to Florida, many of whom were middle class families who were interested in buying houses and land in the state. With a rather rapid influx of interested land buyers flocking to Florida, a land boom emerged during the first few years of the 1920s.

This even affected Cape Canaveral too during the early 1920s, with plans by real estate developers to establish developments like Canaveral Harbor, Journalista Beach, Artesia, and De Soto Beach at the cape as quickly as possible. One of these such entities was the Canaveral Harbor Corporation, with T.L. Broughton as president, who sought to quickly establish and sell out their half of the planned community of Canaveral Harbor. During this time, proposals to establish a commercial port, and a rail line across Cape Canaveral just south of site 8BR240, were also being discussed. This could have drastically changed the fate of site 8BR240 if these plans came to fruition.

However, as land speculators caused rapid inflation in the prices of land in Florida, and the state experienced a year of unusually severe weather variations and natural disasters, the land boom just as quickly came to an end by 1926. This down turn in the real estate market was quite evident that year by the fact that the Merritt Island Real Estate Company held an event that was probably rather costly to them called Canaveral Harbor Day to try to stimulate public interest in their half of the Canaveral Harbor development. Using chartered buses to bring potential public buyers and investors from Orlando out to the coast, followed by a ride out to Canaveral Harbor in a long caravan of cars, the guests were finally treated to lunch when they arrived. While there,

they got to view the development, and hear some talks from the realtors about how worthy of an investment buying land out there still was. However, the real estate market continued to stay stagnant, and any hopes of a resurgence in the Florida land boom came to a decisive end when the Great Depression began in October 1929.

While plans for the commercial port and rail line did not work out during the 1920s, new endeavors on Cape Canaveral were emerging. For many years, commercial fishermen from near and far sailed to the Canaveral Bight to take advantage of the excellent fishing there. With their holds full of blue fish, sea bass, red snapper, king mackerel, or shrimp, these commercial fishing boats had to travel as far as St. Augustine or Ft. Pierce to unload their catch, as there was no usable pier located at Cape Canaveral to do so (Cocoa Tribune, 24 April 1928:1). Sparked by stories of the success of the fishing boats from the F.S. Johnson & Sons Fish Company in the Canaveral Bight during the beginning of 1928, and through their public appeal for a commercial and public use fishing pier to be built on Cape Canaveral (Cocoa Tribune, 24 April 1928:1), wealthy Chicago businessman Henry W. Ewing decided to fund this venture (Cocoa Tribune, 23 August 1928:1). In regards to the background history of site 8BR240, this point in time is where a lot of inconsistencies have been encountered, but the following period accounts from the Cocoa Tribune newspaper seem to be rather hard to refute.

According to an August 23, 1928 Cocoa Tribune newspaper article, a large wooden pier and breakwater was planned to be built on the coast of Canaveral Harbor at a cost of about \$20,000. This would become the Canaveral Pier when it was finished. Constructed of creosoted pilings and timbers, the pier was going to be 315 feet in length, and 12 feet wide (Cocoa Tribune, 23 August 1928:1). A T-head that was about 40 feet by 50 feet in dimension was planned for the end, which sat in about 15 feet of water, and was intended to accommodate a fish processing

building. A breakwater of vertically driven pilings forming a V-shaped wall about 100 feet out in the water was also going to be built to protect the fishing boats when they were loading, unloading, or were at anchor (Cocoa Tribune, 23 August 1928:1)

This same Cocoa Tribune newspaper article that featured these planned characteristics of the Canaveral Pier further reported that, "the pier to be built will occupy a site approximately 300 feet north of the Canaveral Harbor Casino, Mr. Ewing owning 309 feet of ocean frontage there, which he purchased for the purpose recently" (Cocoa Tribune, 23 August 1928:1). In compiling the history of site 8BR240, this statement has a very profound meaning. Based on this information, the casino (called the "Canaveral Harbor Casino") already exists at the future site of the Canaveral Harbor Inn, as the hotel was later often referred to as being located 300 feet south of the Canaveral Pier. With virtually no other landmarks in the immediate area to give their readers in 1928 a better idea of the location of the new pier, the fact that the article did not mention the Canaveral Harbor Inn, or any hotel for that matter (Cocoa Tribune, 23 August 1928:1), seems to conclusively prove that the Canaveral Harbor Inn was not built in 1926 as some written sources have erroneously indicated (Arnold 2009:63, Cantley 1993:92, Osborne 2008:37).

It also indicates that the casino as of August 1928 was a separate structure in itself, and was most likely a beachside recreational facility, and not an established place to gamble as the definition of a casino means today (Buchner et al. 2008:127). This is likely where some of the inconsistencies about references to the casino and the Canaveral Harbor Inn come from. However, it does not exclude the possibility that the Canaveral Harbor Inn perhaps did have some of the attributes of either meaning of the word casino in the future.

Getting back to the history of the pier, the first piling for the Canaveral Pier was driven on September 5, 1928 by contractor W.D. Joyner (Cocoa Tribune, 6 September 1928:1), and preliminary construction on the pier was finished just after mid-October 1928 (Cocoa Tribune, 25 October 1928:1). The breakwater was completely shortly after that, and the pier was operational by the opening of the fishing season that year on November 15, 1928 (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). At this time, 27 shrimpers had already arranged docking privileges at the pier, which was now under the management of W.C. Constable, who was the manager of the F.S. Johnson & Sons Fish Company (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). The immediate popularity of the pier with local fishermen truly demonstrated how important it was to have a pier at the Canaveral Bight, led to further construction at site 8BR240.

By mid-October 1928, plans for what would become the Canaveral Harbor Inn were now set in motion. With T.L. Broughton still as president of the company, the Canaveral Harbor Corporation scheduled to start construction on a small hotel at Canaveral Harbor (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). The plan for the hotel was to be a two story, Mission-Revival style hotel, which was to be sided in stucco. With just 10 rooms planned at this time, "the hotel was also supposed to have two ten-foot enclosed glass porches, a barber shop, post office, and a large ball room" (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1).

In another twist in the history of site 8BR240, an article in the October 18, 1928 edition of the Cocoa Tribune indicated that the hotel "will front 69 feet on Honeywell Trail, and will occupy the location on which the casino is now situated" (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). The article further states "the pouring of concrete for the foundation will also begin the following Monday" (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). These statements are also quite important in compiling the history of site 8BR240. While they do not expressly state the fate of the casino already located there or even its name, which has to be the Canaveral Harbor Casino due to the location's southern proximity to the new Canaveral Pier, the article also does not mention that the hotel is going to incorporate the existing casino into its structure (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1).

Instead, the fact that the articles states that the new hotel is going to "occupy the location on which the casino is now situated," and "that a concrete foundation is going to be poured" (Cocoa Tribune, 4 October 1928:1), seems to elude to the likelihood that the casino was demolished during the construction of the hotel without expressly saying so. Another Cocoa Tribune article from December 27, 1928 also seems to rule out the possibility that the hotel was built in front of the casino, leaving it still standing, as this article states that the hotel is "occupying a location a few yards from the seashore" (Cocoa Tribune, 27 December 1928:1). With that said, the history or fate of the Canaveral Harbor Casino that once stood at site 8BR240 prior to the construction of the Canaveral Harbor Inn is still not conclusively known, but it is very likely that it was demolished during the construction of the hotel.

In regards to the hotel's location on Honeywell Trail, this is likely the previous name of Pier Road. Honeywell Trail was probably named after Clinton P. Honeywell, who was a lighthouse keeper at the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse from 1891-1930 (Witt 2010:11). Since the first official pier located off of this road was just being finished when the reference of Honeywell Trail appeared in the article from the October 18, 1928 Cocoa Tribune edition, the name of the road likely had not been changed yet (Cocoa Tribune, 18 October 1928:1). It is unknown exactly when this name change occurred though.

December 1928 brought a new milestone for site 8BR240. The hotel was completed at a cost of about \$25,000 by contractor Neal Wiggins in time for its formal opening on December

31, 1928 (Cocoa Tribune, 27 December 1928:1). From its beginning construction plan of just having 10 rooms, this was later altered during construction to increase the total number of rooms to 16, before reaching a final 21 room total when construction was completed (Cocoa Tribune, 27 December 1928:1). Now under the management of George Burgess, who leased the hotel from the Canaveral Harbor Corporation, it had a spectacular formal opening and New Year's Eve party (Cocoa Tribune, 27 December 1928:1). Known then as the Canaveral Harbor Hotel when it first opened, a local orchestra called the Merrymakers played for a crowd of 200 people there that night who enjoyed a festive evening of dining and dancing, while they rang in the new year (Cocoa Tribune, 27 December 1928:1).

CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen, the background history of site 8BR240 is only partially complete, and will need to be continued when time and resources will allow it. With what was written in this report though, several important conclusions can still be made about the site, the hotel, and the pier. First, an earlier pier that was smaller and more primitive existed at the site in 1906. This pier is likely to have been built by Samuel Jeffords, and was destroyed in the Okeechobee hurricane of 1928. Second, a casino called the Canaveral Harbor Casino existed at site 8BR240 before either the pier or hotel was built there, and was most likely the beachside recreational version that was popular during this time. Third, the Canaveral Harbor Inn was not built in 1926, but in 1928 on the location of the Canaveral Harbor Casino, which probably resulted in the demolition of the casino. Fourth, Pier Road was probably known as Honeywell Trail before the Canaveral Pier was built, and the name was changed later at an unknown date. Lastly, the

Canaveral Harbor Inn opened for business on December 31, 1928, and was known as the Canaveral Harbor Hotel at the time. These are the conclusions that can be made at this time from the information that is contained within this report.

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