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Congress Hall Hotel: An Historic Structure Report

Michael Calafati
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CONGRESS HALL HOTEL:

AN HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

Michael Calafati

A THESIS

in

The Graduate Program in Historic Preservation

Presented to the faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

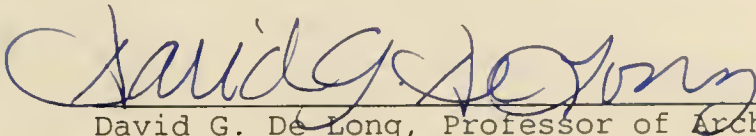
1991



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Foreword

Whomever intervenes to repair damage, arrest deterioration and restore the original appearance of a building must possess adequate knowledge about what is to be done and the subject receiving such intervention. This report seeks to establish a path for Congress Hall's preservation by presenting a balanced approach to its history, its existing physical condition, and its non-physical constraints.

This type of report is commonly referred to as an historic structure report. The present dilemma is, however, that a standardization format for historic structure reports does not exist.¹ This also provides me an opportunity. I believe that this balanced approach to understanding Congress Hall has resulted in a model for a pre-intervention document. The culmination of such a report, before the program is set and action is taken, has been realized and the temptation to arrive at possible end scenarios has been avoided.

¹United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service. Cultural Resources Management. Cultural Resources Management Bulletin. Washington, DC: A National Park Service technical bulletin, Vol. 13, no. 4, 4th quarter 1990.

1.0 Introduction

Congress Hall is a hotel located in Cape May, New Jersey. It is a composite structure of exterior brick bearing walls and light frame and heavy timber construction. It was built in 1879 as the third Congress Hall. It contains 64,000 square feet enclosed under a mansard roof with an additional 13,000 square feet under a three story high colonnaded veranda.² It is attributed to J. F. Meyer. It is presently in a neglected condition and its future is uncertain.

Congress Hall Hotel is the largest remaining beachfront hotel which dates from Cape May's late 19th century popularity as a premiere seaside resort. Its monumental scale provides needed contrast in the historic district where domestically proportioned structures prevail.

The documentation of this building's history and existing physical condition as well as the mechanisms of deterioration and non-physical constraints can serve as the foundation of a program for its stabilization, rehabilitation, and preservation. The building's preservation, in turn, will reinforce the historic integrity of Cape May in an era of

²These figures do not include a structurally independent annex and connecting element which contain an additional 24,000 sf. Total contiguous building area of the complex is 88,000 sf.

diminishing context.

1.1 Statement of Significance

Cape May has one of the largest intact collections of wood-framed and sheathed buildings from the second half of the 19th century in the United States. It contains over 600 summer houses, old hotels and commercial structures that give the resort a homogeneous architectural character. It remains today a living textbook of (late 19th century) vernacular American building.³

Cape May was popular through most of the 19th century as a seaside resort. During this period many large-scale hotels dominated the resort's beachfront. Through fire, demolition, and redevelopment most hotels of this type no longer stand (fig. 1). Congress Hall is the only surviving grand hotel of that era. Moreover, its monumental scale stands in stark contrast to the small scale structures which predominate in the city's historic district. It survives as an anomaly which provides some much needed variety and enrichment of the historic scale.

³Carolyn Pitts, National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, "8. Statement of Significance" (10 February 1976).

In terms of building type, its preservation is necessary to maintain as an important example of a large eminent hotel on the beachfront. This is especially true in the contemporary context where the proliferation of small converted homes operating as Bed and Breakfast inns have obscured the definition of what is historic accommodations in the seaside community. Fortunately, Congress Hall is not only the most important surviving hotel but Congress Hall was arguably the most important hotel.

1.2 Threats Facing Congress Hall

Deferred maintenance, original design flaws, and economic pressure constitute threats to Congress Hall's continuance. Up until the summer season of 1990 the building was in seasonal use, as it has always been since its construction in 1879. It is suffering from deferred maintenance as it has been in marginal operation in recent years. Only those repairs absolutely necessary to keep the building in operation have been made in the last twenty years or more.

As a consequence much damage has been self-inflicted. Defective plumbing has been a greater source of water damage than roofing problems. Alterations performed without any

apparent thought, like the removal of load bearing elements, have caused nearly catastrophic failures. Still other damage is the result of poor original structural design. The foundations have not prevented differential settlement and the trusses over the dining room which provide column free spaces have permanently deflected. Inherent design features like the multi-story colonnade require that the columns hold the roof down against ocean front winds as much as they are called upon to support the roof.

Economic and development pressures are also significant. The site is severely underbuilt, given its location in a commercial zoning district which would permit as much as 80% lot coverage. Presently, the buildings occupy only 22% of the site. The site has a contiguous area of 3.76 acres or 163,786 square feet. The bulk of the residential lots in the vicinity contain approximately 5000 square feet. The Congress Hall site could theoretically yield thirty-three 5000 square foot lots.⁴

⁴The threat of subdivision of large historic properties on the New Jersey shore is not uncommon. Spring Lake has suffered the loss of historic buildings so that beachfront properties could be subdivided.

1.3 Need to Preserve Congress Hall

Market pressures which would sub-divide the site, the elevated cost of renovation, and the difficulty in retrofitting to meet existing building codes place the building's continuance in danger. The property's market value would be higher if it were divided into many smaller parcels.

These immediate threats coupled with Congress Hall's historic importance, make documentation and assessment of the hotel's history and existing physical condition and the development of a program for the stabilization and preservation an important endeavor.

PART I HISTORY

2.0 History

Tandem presentations of Cape May's history and that of Congress Hall are important as a means of focusing in on Congress Hall's role in the development of the City as a popular resort.

2.1 Cape May's History

The need to understand Cape May's early history cannot be underestimated. Tourism, from its origin as an after-thought to agriculture and other trade to the current Bed and Breakfast inns, has been the impetus for Cape May's physical evolution.

2.1.1 Early History

For the purpose of establishing the necessary historic background in order to appreciate the important events prior to the construction of Congress Hall, there is possibly no better account of Cape May's early history than that which is

contained in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form for the Cape May Historic District which states:⁵

"A brief history of the City of Cape May indicates a substantial claim as the oldest seashore resort in America. Long before the first Europeans explored the coast of the New World, Cape May County was inhabited by a branch of the Lenni-Lenape tribe of Indians (the Kechemeché) who found the climate and wild life excellent. Cape May was actually discovered by Sir Henry Hudson on August 28, 1609. He entered the Delaware Bay and landed a few miles north of Cape May Point.

Cape May was named for Cornelius Jacobson Mey, a Dutchman representing the Dutch West India Company. Mey explored the coast in 1621. Shortly after his visit, in May of 1630, Samuel Godyn and Samuel Blommaert representing the same company, made the first land purchase in the county. They bought from the Indians a tract 4 miles along the bay from Cape May Point northward and 12 miles inland. A New Netherlands colony was firmly established. In 1632 Davi Pieterse DeVries, an eminent seaman became the first resident patron land owner in Cape May. He was to establish a fishing industry, particularly that of whaling. In 1638 English colonist from New England migrated to expand the whaling industry and Town Bank, (or Cape May Town) was founded. The English assumed control of the area in the 1660s.

In 1687 Doctor Daniel Coxe of London, a Quaker, began organization of a government and established headquarters at Town Bank on Coxehall Creek. He constructed a manor house called Coxe Hall which became a religious meeting house and town hall. In 1692 the West Jersey Society bought all of Dr. Coxe's holdings - 95,000 acres.

In the 18th century the whalers and farmers developed an economy based on the resources at hand and created the foundation for the flourishing seaside resort that grew to international fame in the 19th century."

The tourist industry in Cape May grew out of what was

⁵Carolyn Pitts, National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, "8. Statement of Significance" (10 February 1976) for the Cape May Historical District.

originally an incidental benefit of geography, arguably distant third place after farming and fishing.

2.1.2 History of Cape May in the 19th Century

Eventually the benefits of Cape May's geographic position helped tourism to overtake farming and fishing as the primary industry. Indeed, the Nomination Form concurs:

"Cape May began to flourish as a resort after the War of 1812 when regular steamboat traffic on the Delaware River picked up passengers at New Castle, Delaware. Many of these passengers were Southerners who had traveled north by the Frenchtown and New Castle Railroad. In 1816, Thomas Hughes built the first Congress Hall at Cape Island.

In 1830 a contemporary writer comments: 'Cape May Island is a noted and much frequented watering place, the season at which commences about the first of July and continues until the middle of August or the first of September. There are six boarding houses, three of which are very large, the sea bathing is convenient and excellent, the beach affords pleasant drives and there is excellent fishing in the adjacent waters.'

Cape May's reputation as a resort was anchored earlier in the 19th century than the vast majority of the structures which remain from that century. In 1876, Edward S. Wheeler wrote:⁶

"In 1812, the present site of Cape May City was already the location of a considerable hamlet; even then popular as a place of resort in summer. 'Cape Island' was purchased of Dr. Coxe, through his agents, by William Jacoks and Humphrey Hughes, in 1689 - a tract of five hundred and forty-six acres, or more. Jacoks sold to Thomas Hand, and Randall Hewit bought an interest in the

⁶Edward S. Wheeler, Scheyichbi and the Strand (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1876): 72-74.

Island. Hand, Hewit, and Hughes held the property until 1700, and it was long cultivated and fertile land. But in the mean time the settlement increased, and the corn-fields were narrowed. In 1829, Watson, the annalist, visited Cape May City, 'a village of about twenty houses,' says he, 'and the streets were very clean and grassy.' "

Very rapidly after the war of 1812 Cape May began to assume a distinctive character as a watering place, and its history from that time becomes modified accordingly. Gradually the fashions of Cape May have changed - are changing still, and not for the worse.

For an idea of the earlier methods of travel, and the ways and manners of sea-side visitors in the olden time, nothing can be better than the following, from Lippincott's Magazine: 'Strange old sloops and bateaux used in those times to move slowly down the Delaware, bearing eager Philadelphians on pleasure bent. Other sojourners would drive miserably down in their dearborns, dragged by tired nags through the interminable sandy road from Camden. On the adoption of steam for navigation, a modest steamboat was conducted by. Mr. Wilmon Whillidin, and cut its way down the long Delaware in what was deemed a fleet and stylish manner, greatly improving the prosperity of the place. The customs of those earlier times were very primitive and democratic. Large excursions of gay girls and festive gentlemen would journey together, engaging the right to occupy Atlantic Hall, a desolate barn of a place, fifty feet square, whose proprietor was Mr. Hughes. Then, while the stragglng villagers stared, these cargoes of mischief-makers would bear down upon the ocean, ducking and splashing in old suits of clothes brought in their carpet-sacks, and gathering the conditions of a fine appetite. The major-domo of Atlantic Hall, one Mackenzie, would send out to see what the neighbor had a sheep to sell; the animal found, all the visitors of the male sex would turn to and help him dress it. Meantime, parties of foragers would go out among the farmers around the neighborhood for Indian corn. When the mutton was cooked and the corn boiled, an appetite would have accumulated sufficient to make these viands seem like the ambrosia of Olympus. Those were fine, heart-hold times, and when our predecessors at Cape May went down for a lark, they meant it and they had it. At night, when dead-tired after fiddling and contra-dances, the barn-like hall was partitioned off into two sleeping-rooms by a drapery of sheets. The maids slept tranquilly on one side of the curtains, the lads on the other. Successive days brought other sports, -fishing in clumsy

boats, rides in hay-wagons over the deep white roads, the endless variety being supplied, after all, by the bathing, which was the same and ever new. These primitive bivouacs were succeeded by a steady service of steamers on the Delaware and the erection of substantial and civilized hotels.'

Thomas H. Hughes, Jonas C. Miller, R. S. Ludlam, and the Messrs. McMakin were among the first to erect large and commodious boarding-houses. Increasing custom demanded multiplied conveniences, and a host of varied places of entertainment grew up, from the small and modest restaurant to the monster hotel with its fifteen hundred guests at once. Meantime private cottages became numerous, the resident population enlarged, and a city was built 'where,' says a writer in 1856, 'a few years ago corn grew and verdure flourished.'

The Nomination Form further elaborates on Cape May's popularity in mid-century:

"The famous and well-to-do became frequent visitors. Henry Clay arrived in August of 1847, and Abraham Lincoln in 1849 and the following while they served as President of the United States: Franklin Pierce in 1855; James Buchanan in 1858; Ulysses S. Grant in 1873; Chester A. Arthur in 1883, and Benjamin Harrison in 1889. At the peak of the summer season in the 1850s, as many as 3,000 visitors a day arrived by steamer and this influx continued through the 1880s.

Cape May enjoyed an international reputation as a spa from the mid-century until the early years of the twentieth century when Atlantic City became more fashionable. The town was incorporated as a city in March of 1851, and the name was changed from Cape Island to Cape May City. Its only rivals in the United States were Newport, Rhode Island; Saratoga Springs, New York; and Long Branch, New Jersey.

While Cape May flourished as a resort, famous for its atmosphere and entertainment, a number of famous hotels were constructed. In 1853, the Mount Vernon, then the largest hotel in the world, was built (fig. 2). It burned in September of 1856. The United States Hotel built in 1843, burned in the disastrous fire of 1867. Since many of these large summer 'palaces' were timber, they were vulnerable to fire and the Great Fire of 1867 leveled two city blocks.

In spite of the damaging fires, Cape May retains a very

great number of the buildings of the second half of the 19th century. There is an almost complete showcase of late-Victorian architecture. The so-called eclectic styles so fancied by a new rich America are all there. Most of these buildings were conceived and constructed by individual carpenter-builders, using textbooks and trade journals. They improvised freely on what they thought to be traditional styles - Greek Revival, Gothic, Queen Anne, Italianate, Elizabethan, Eastlake, Mansard, etc., but these borrowings were not always historically accurate. Rather these romantic statements were an architectural vernacular that produced picturesque styles that Americans held to be the height of fashion. Many of the buildings in Cape May must have been designed by creative local carpenters using the handbooks of construction that were standard reference. These 'pattern books' includes designs, cost of material, chatty advice on good taste and had some pretensions as to guides to culture. The parvenu client was anxious to display his wealth in the form of a fine house in the latest fashion. Cape May has a number of excellent examples of the elegant summer residence.

Distinguished architects at work in Cape May during the second half of the 19th century included Samuel Sloan, Stephen Decatur Button, and Frank Furness."

2.1.3 Development into the 20th Century

Returning to the Nomination Form, it concludes:

"There are also a number of significant structures of the first decades of the 20th century designed by distinguished architectural firms such as the Philadelphia firm of Zanzinger, Medary and Borie."

Indeed important architectural works were not limited to the 19th century. East Cape May, within the City of Cape May's municipal limits, became the focus of development which was only partially realized. In 1905 a large brick, concrete and steel hotel, the Hotel Cape May, was begun. It remains an

imposing anomaly which would seem more at home in New Jersey's more urban seaside settings like Asbury Park or Atlantic City.

During this period several fine examples of period revival homes were built in the portion of the city which the Hotel Cape May dominated. Next to the grand hotel on the beachfront is the 1911 George W. Boyd House, designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Seeburger, in the Georgian Revival style.⁷ A few blocks away the 1912 Nelson Z. Graves House was built in the Mission Revival style.⁸

The inability of East Cape May to catch on as a new center of real estate investment and development, however, is indicative of the economic general malaise which afflicted Cape May after the initial decades of this century until the post World War II era. First Atlantic City overtook Cape May's position as the New Jersey shore's premiere resort. By the turn of the century the supremacy of rail travel over travel by boat was secured. Atlantic City benefitted from its geographic location as the nearest ocean resort to Southern New Jersey's nearest large population center, Philadelphia. What had been Cape May's geographic advantage became its liability within

⁷Carolyn Pitts, Nomination Form, "7. Description" (10 February 1976).

⁸George E. Thomas and Carl Doebley, Cape May, Queen of the Seaside Resorts (Philadelphia: The Art Alliance Press, 1976): 156.

a short period.

2.1.4 Post World War II Era

Atlantic City's tenure, however, as the most favored New Jersey shore resort was limited. Newly built limited-access highways (i.e. the Garden State Parkway and the Atlantic City Expressway) in the post World War II era linked other portions of the New Jersey shore with the major population centers. These other less developed areas between Cape May and Atlantic City and further north were able to develop quickly in a way which readily accommodated the automobile.

The automobile culture provided the impetus for motels, drive-through restaurants, and drive-in theatres which could not easily be retrofitted into older cities like Atlantic City and Cape May. It is ironic that the "Wildwoods" (i.e. North Wildwood, Wildwood and Wildwood Crest) became the best known automobile-oriented resorts, as they are just a few miles north along the coast from Cape May.

While Cape May was surpassed in popularity by other resorts, it entered a period of relative inactivity. Cape May's large hotels and homes continued their seasonal lives without much fanfare. This period, bracketed by World War I and the

Vietnam War era, saw relatively little change. The local fishing industry, the Coast Guard base and the expected summer tourist trade constituted the city's economic base. During these dormant years the city took on a shabby yet comfortable appearance. It is of this period that much of the older local population speaks of with affection. During this period many older structures were painted white with green trim. The pace was slower and development appeared to control itself.

The impetus for change came in the early 1960s. Cape May has always been in the path of potentially devastating hurricanes, but most often the severe damage has been inflicted from intense storms during the non-hurricane season. One of these Northeasters, named in accordance to path they usually follow up the Atlantic coast, caused substantial and widespread damage in March of 1962. The effort to rebuild in the wake of the spring storm was the motivation for both continued post-war style motel development and the reawakening of the city to its 19th century popularity. These parallel efforts have often conflicted with each other.

Large and small motor inns alike were built along Beach Drive. Fortunately the bulk of these, with several notable exceptions, were built at either east or west of the city's historic district. Efforts to limit and control further construction by both residents and non-residents resulted in

the surreptitious listing of the City as a district on the National Register of Historic Places on 29 December 1970.⁹ National Register regulations at that time permitted the entire city except federally owned properties, namely the Coast Guard base, to be placed on the register. Today a well defined district would have to be delineated. Furthermore, placement on the National Register was done without any property owners' consent. Regulations were amended in 1980 to require a major of property owners in the district to agree to designation. Had these two revision been in place at the time of Cape May's nomination to the register it is doubtful that it would have been placed on the register.

Continued interest in Cape May's architectural heritage further elevated the city to the status of to that National Historic Landmark on 11 May 1976.¹⁰ Carolyn Pitts, an historian with the National Park Service in Washington, DC, completed an amended Nomination Form. In large part her

⁹Numerous newspaper articles and letters written about and by City officials during this period decried the listing without their participation. They feared possible Federal and State control over growth and development.

¹⁰History Division, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Catalog of National Historic Landmarks (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1987): 155. The catalog states that Cape May Historic District, 1840s-1920s, is significant as one of the largest extant collections of late 19th-century frame buildings in the United States. In its more than 600 seashore houses and hotels is a almost complete showcase of late Victorian architecture, with many buildings in eclectic and vernacular versions of traditional formal styles.

efforts sought to include numerous building which were largely documented by HABS teams in 1973 and 1974.¹¹

The 1970s realized important change. Many large lumbering wood frame houses and former rooming houses were converted into so-called Bed and Breakfast establishments. These alternate accommodation usually provided less expensive and more personal service than the ubiquitous New Jersey shore motel. Within a short period the Bed and Breakfast model of accommodations gained wide popularity. Each year more and more Bed and Breakfast inns opened to satisfy the apparently insatiable appetite of tourists. Conversions of older structures into Bed and Breakfast inns were generally agreed as a viable way of preserving them and had a rippling effect throughout the City's tourist-based economy. The number of restaurants and shops augmented to keep pace. Today Cape May enjoys a considerable reputation for its fine accommodations and restaurants.

The popularity of the Bed and Breakfast inns was not and is not without its detractors or detrimental side effects. In the recent past Cape May did not foresee Bed and Breakfast inns conversions as having a negative impact on the

¹¹William B. Bassett, compiler, Historic American Building Survey of New Jersey (Newark, NJ: New Jersey Historical Society, 1977): vi-x and 24-30.

community. Eventually, however, it became a big business, consuming more and more of the city's amenities. Parking and water, for example, are perennially in short supply and to date the City has no comprehensive plan to deal with the seasonal deficit. By the late 1980s the number of converted structures operated as small accommodations had reached a saturation point whereby more Bed and Breakfast inns were no longer desired by many citizens. It seems now that every block in Cape May has its story of further conversions blocked by neighbors' objections. In the past decade or so the City has had trouble in agreeing on what its image should be. Those already operating Bed and Breakfast inns often have blocked those wishing to make conversions adding to divided sentiments in the community.

Bed and Breakfast inn controversies aside, many of the owners of Bed and Breakfast inn have indulged in Victorian fantasies. The use of the word "victorian", so necessary during the 1960s and 1970s to foster a Cape May image, itself has become problematic. Cape May is guilty of placing victorian before all manner of words which serve only to obscure their true meaning. Relatively few realize that victorian refers to a period and cannot be distilled to a singular style. The desire for things victorian have had resulted in contributing

post-victorian structures to be victorian-ized.¹² These exterior alterations no doubt have their interior counterparts whereby rooms have been embellished to the point where they no longer resemble their original summer-only status.

Fortunately, in 1986 New Jersey amended its Municipal Land Use Laws which enabled municipal governments to establish bodies to regulate changes to historic structures. Accordingly, Cape May's Historic District Commission, an advisory body, evolved into the Historic Preservation Commission, an entity created in 1988 and having jurisdiction over exterior changes to all structures in the City's historic districts. This new power, however, has yet to have a substantial test in the City. Since the Historic Preservation Commission replaced the Historic District Commission, for example, a notable victorian era building has been razed in order to provide off street parking.¹³

Contemporary preservation efforts, therefore, do not exist as some partnership between the municipal government and the townspeople but are primarily due to the acts of individual

¹²For example 811 Columbia Avenue, an early 20th century bungalow, and 209 Perry Street, an early 20th century Dutch Colonial Revival house have been victorian-ized. Both houses have recently been remodeled to either obscure or remove original character defining features.

¹³The Evening Star Villa was demolished in October of 1989.

property owners and the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts (MAC). MAC is a non-profit organization which receives its funding from state grants and income from tours which it conducts of the City's historic district and the Physick Estate, a stick style house attributed to Frank Furness. The City does not give it any support other than leasing the Physick Estate to MAC.

The result is a townscape which gets better and worse at the same time. Individual properties improve but the context is continually compromised. The cohesion of a surviving 19th century town is eroded annually. The intrusions posed by post-victorian constructs was not lost on Vincent Scully who called Cape May's motels examples of "stupefying banality."¹⁴

Despite post-victorian intrusions, Carolyn Pitts appropriately wrote:¹⁵

"The community still maintains the nostalgia of past elegance and whimsical romance. The resort retains those qualities of an era most closely associated with Southern hospitality and charm, gracious living and a century that had supreme confidence in itself."

¹⁴Vincent Scully, Architectural Digest, "Architecture: Frank Furness" (March 1989): 34.

¹⁵Carolyn Pitts, National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, "8. Statement of Significance" (10 February 1976).

2.2 Congress Hall's Social and Physical History

2.2.1 Previous Congress Halls

All previous Congress Halls were located on the same site as today's hotel. This site is a city block away from the intersection of Cape Island Road (now West Perry Street which becomes Sunset Boulevard further out of town), leading from the bay, and the road from Schellinger's Landing (now called Lafayette Street). This intersection in the vicinity of Congress Hall became and remains the center of town.¹⁶ It is valuable as it is where the central district of Washington Street comes closest to the beach.¹⁷

In 1816 Thomas H. Hughes built the first Congress Hall Hotel at Cape Island.¹⁸ According to historian Robert Crozier Alexander:

"It was a large frame building three stories high and 108 feet long and 32 feet wide with not a square inch of plaster on its walls and not an ounce of paint upon its boards. It was weather-boarded on the outside and rooms were partitioned off with common boards. The ground floor consisted of a single large room which was used for a dining hall with the lodging rooms in the upper stories. When the boarding house, for such it was called, contained one hundred boarders, it was considered very full and it was then in the height of the season.

¹⁶Thomas: 21.

¹⁷Thomas: 23.

¹⁸Robert Crozier Alexander, Ho! For Cape Island! (Cape May, NJ: Robert Crozier Alexander, 1956): 24-25.

This house was supposed to be one of the largest houses of its kind in the United States at the time and Mr. Hughes was censured for erecting such a mammoth affair. For a time, the house bore the name of 'Tommy's Folly' and it was generally asserted that it would never be filled. This pessimistic prediction proved to be entirely unfounded and the house was crowded year after year. It was then known as the Large House or Big House until the bathing season of 1828 when, in appropriate ceremonies, the visitors named it Congress Hall. The maximum price of board at this house in the 1820s was ten dollars per week."

Thomas H. Hughes was the son of Ellis Hughes, Cape Island's first postmaster. He was born in Cape Island in 1769 and died in Cape May in 1839. After holding positions as sheriff and the state legislator, he served as congressman for the district from 1829 to 1833.¹⁹ The eventual naming of Congress Hall was similar to that of other hotels in the city that celebrated the nation: National Hall, The Hotel Lafayette, and The Mount Vernon - none of which stand today.

The operation of Congress Hall after Hughes' death in 1839 until 1850 is not clear. Presumably Jonas Miller continued to manage Congress Hall when he acquired it in 1835. By 1850, however, the Congress Hall site was divided by Miller, then who laid out Congress Street and South Lafayette Street and sold cottages bordering those streets.²⁰ Jonas Miller who also engaged in shipbuilding and chandlery, was born in Essex

¹⁹Alexander: 26.

²⁰Thomas: 24.

county, NJ in 1786.²¹ Miller also had been an inn keeper at Port Republic, NJ.²² Congress Hall passed to Waters Burrows Miller, Jonas Miller's son, in 1851. For a time it was under the joint management of the father and son pair. Waters B. Miller was born in Gloucester county in 1824. Waters Miller totally rebuilt Congress Hall in 1854. His interests, however soon extended beyond the hotel industry and served as mayor of Cape May and state senator after he sold Congress Hall in 1863 to Jacob Frank Cake who married Waters B. Miller's sister, Letitia Pauline.

Cake was a business man of considerable reputation in hotel operations. Prior to the Congress Hall purchase he operated the Columbia House.²³ For a time, while Congress Hall was under ownership and management, he operated the Willard and the Metropolitan Hotels in Washington, DC.²⁴ Congress Hall stayed under the Cake family management late into the century even after Jacob Cakes's death.²⁵ Under Cake's stewardship the

²¹Information regarding Jonas Miller's occupation, place and date of birth was obtained from Mrs. Robert C. Shenk (1735 Stanford Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025) in a letter to the Cape May Historical Society dated 15 November 1990.

²²Morgan: 13.

²³Cape May Star and Wave, "Congress Hall" (12 May 1864): 2.

²⁴Cape May Star and Wave, "Mr. J. F. Cake" (24 December 1874): 3.

²⁵Lewis Townsend Stevens, The History of Cape May County, New Jersey from the Aboriginal Times to the Present Day (Cape May City, NJ: L. T. Stevens, 1897): 378. William E. Meehan, Handy Guide to Philadelphia and Environs, including Atlantic City and Cape May (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally and Company, Publishers, 1895): 178.

hotel grew by accretion (fig. 3).²⁶ It was enlarged in 1865 and managed to escape the fire of 1869.²⁷ In 1874, despite the business depression of the early 1870s, Congress Hall's porches were replaced by ones having an uniform design and a new wing was added (fig. 4)²⁸

The existing Congress Hall is at contrast to the previous Congress Halls. Today's structure is approximately one-half the size of the hotel which burned in the great fire of 1878. The interior of the previous Congress Halls, however, were not even lathed and plastered. The bare backs of the clapboard without lath and plaster formed the interior finish.²⁹

Prior to 1878 three presidents stayed in Congress Hall, James Buchanan in 1835, Franklin Pierce in 1854 or 1855, and Ulysses S. Grant in 1873.³⁰

Presumably Pauline mentioned in Stevens' book is the same as L.P. Cake advertised in the Rand, McNally guide.

²⁶Thomas: 50.

²⁷Thomas: 31.

²⁸Thomas: 30.

²⁹Thomas: 22.

³⁰"Congress, Old and New" (Cape May City, NJ: Saturday, 13 July 1901). Publication name cannot be determined. Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives; Stevens: 364 and 377; Pitts says 1855, Morgan says 1854.

2.2.2 Architect J. F. Meyer and the Original Construction

Cape May's great threats are storms and fire. On 9 November 1878 Cape May was ravaged by the largest of the Victorian era (compare figures 5 and 6). It began in the Ocean House across from the Congress Hall on Perry Street.³¹ Congress Hall was one of nine hotels to burn along with approximately 30 cottages.³² Although the hotel remained under the Cake family management until the late 19th century, the Congress Hall site had been bought by the Congress Hall Hotel Company of Cape May four months prior to the fire. Edward Collins Knight, a Philadelphia businessman as well as a Cape May cottager who acquired and improved the Atlantic Hotel in 1876, lead the rebuilding of Congress Hall after the fire.³³ Whether or not E. C. Knight and his associates, which included Murrell Dobbins of Mount Holly and Alexander M. Moore of Philadelphia, acquired Congress Hall before the fire or acquired the Congress Hall Hotel Company of Cape May after the fire is not clear.³⁴

E. C. Knight was a descendant of a family that came to America

³¹Thomas: 10.

³²Stevens: 434.

³³Thomas: 31.

³⁴Stockholders are mention in two Cape May Star and Wave issues (25 January 1879 and 7 August 1879); Moore is mentioned in several newspaper articles including The Record (17 January 1915). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

in 1678, three years before William Penn. Mr. Knight was the first president of the Guarantee Trust and Safe Deposit Company; first president of the American Steamship Company, which operated the first trans-Atlantic passenger ship flying the American flag between New York and Liverpool; president of the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad, the North Pennsylvania Railroad, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, director of the Pennsylvania Railroad and also headed a sugar refining company.³⁵

Congress Hall was the only rebuilt hotel in the burned district to be rebuilt after the great fire of 1878.³⁶ The Congress Hall region was redeveloped after the fire of 1878 along pre-fire lines on a somewhat diminished scale. Before the actual reconstruction, however, the lot was subdivided creating Congress Place. The move assured that the rebuilt Congress Hall could not be as large as its predecessor.³⁷ The new Congress Hall was thus less than half the size of its predecessor.³⁸ This subdivision also paid for the construction, at least to some degree, of the existing Congress Hall.³⁹

³⁵Evening Bulletin (20 July 1931). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

³⁶Herbert Beitel and Vance Enck, Cape May County, A Pictorial History (Norfolk, VA: The Downing Company/Publishers, 1988): 166.

³⁷Thomas: 62.

³⁸Thomas: 32.

³⁹Morgan: 14.

In January of 1879 the new owners hired J. F. Meyer to design a new Congress Hall. The Cape May Daily Wave reported on 25 January 1879:⁴⁰

"From the plans of the architect, Mr. J. F. Meyer, the proposed building is to be constructed of brick (fire-proof), three stories high with a mansard roof, and is to front on Washington street. It will consist of 200 rooms, 169 of which will be bed-rooms, accommodating 400 or 500 persons. The building will be of a triangular shape, the angle fronting on the ocean, with a large lawn like that of old Congress Hall. A porch will surround the whole building, and is so arranged that the sea breeze will strike every room and create a draft throughout the whole structure by means of a 'funnel' in the main hall. The main hall on the first floor, in which will be the office, is to be 44 feet square. Also on the ground floor will be the dining hall, 18 feet by 105 feet, and a parlor 38 feet by 41 feet. Attached to the main building on the Perry street side, and fronting on Washington street, is to be a single story structure, in which will be the kitchen, pantry, bakery, laundry and restaurant. On the first floor of the hall will be a fine large billiard room and ladies' and gentlemen's toilet rooms, &c.

The main hall is open all the way up to the top of the house, and contains the 'funnel' through which the fresh sea air will be distributed through the house.

The bedrooms on the first and second floors are approximately 15 feet by 15 and 9 feet by 15 feet, with communicating doors in every room. The halls throughout the building will be 8 feet wide.- There will be forty-five rooms on the second floor, single and double. On the third and fourth floors there will be sixty-eight rooms each.

The building will be 153 feet front on Washington street and 203 feet on Perry street.

In the preceding account, that portion of Washington Street

⁴⁰Thomas: 62 based on Cape May Star and Wave (25 January 1879).

became known as Congress Place. A review of these numbers indicate, in general terms, there must have been one room per window on the third and fourth floor.

Even basic information on the architect, J. F. Meyer, is elusive, if not impossible to locate. He was based in New York from 1866 to 1875 but never in the same location in that city for more than two years.⁴¹ From 1876 to 1892 he was located in Philadelphia but again never at the same address for more than two years. In the Philadelphia directories he was not always listed as an architect and does not appear every year. Furthermore, it curious to note that his office was located at 430 Walnut Street for a time from 1877 to 1878. 430 Walnut Street, the Penn Marble Building (since demolished), was the same address of Stephen Decatur Button, an accomplished architect with many notable works still standing in Philadelphia, Cape May and elsewhere.⁴² Button's Windsor Hotel and addition to Congress Hall were constructed immediately after Meyer's initial design was completed.

A review of other hotels in the city of a type and scale

⁴¹Dennis S. Francis, Architects in Practice: New York City, 1840-1900 (New York: COPAR, Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979): 55. This publication lists Meyer as John F., not J. F.

⁴²Apparently 430 Walnut Street was an address well known to Philadelphia based architects. Lloyd Titus, an architect who also worked in Cape May, was based at this address in the early 20th century.

similar to Congress Hall indicate that Meyer's design was the embodiment of the archetypical Cape May hotel.⁴³ The Stockton Hotel of 1869 (fig. 7), the Windsor of 1879 (fig. 8) and the Colonial Hotel of 1895 were all constructed with an L-shaped or modified L-shaped plan.⁴⁴ The Stockton Hotel, the New Atlantic of 1870 (fig. 9), and the Hotel Lafayette of 1881 (fig. 10) were all constructed with giant verandas as was the new Congress Hall (fig. 11).⁴⁵ Of these, the Stockton also had multi-story columns. J. F. Meyer's design, however, did not exude the sophistication of the Stockton design which articulated its corners and entrances by pairing columns.⁴⁶ In fact some of the columns of the colonnade of Congress Hall are spaced irregularly for no apparent reason. Furthermore, the building brick exterior walls do not show the horizontal lines of clapboard one expects in a Cape May hotel.⁴⁷

The multi-story columns supporting the continuous veranda roof taken together with its name, Congress Hall, suggests that even its design took inspiration, like many of its multi-columned full porch predecessors and contemporaries, from an icon of the early republic, namely Mount Vernon. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that Congress Hall shares these

⁴³Thomas: 32.

⁴⁴Thomas: 120.

⁴⁵Thomas: 57.

⁴⁶Thomas: 58.

⁴⁷Thomas: 62.

features with George Washington's Virginia home.

2.2.3 Late 19th Century Growth and Alterations

Only a few months after the new Congress Hall's completion in time for the 1879 season, Knight and Dobbins appeared to have switched allegiances and hired Stephen D. Button to make additional improvements. The Cape May Daily Wave of 7 August 1879 reported:

"Architect S. D. Button is now was engaged in completing the working plans for the changes he is directed to make. One hundred feet is to be added to the dining-room wing, extending it to the bluff. This will add seventy-five first class rooms in the most desirable part of the house, and make the dining-room the largest of any watering place hotel in the country. The rotunda is to be enlarged to four times its present size and surmounted by a handsome and decorated tower, affording it an extensive view of the ocean and island, adding to the beauty of the entire structure. The cookery arrangements are to be remodeled, and the building on Perry street surmounted with a fine Mansard roof, and the present restaurant moved to another portion of the building and an elegant bar and billiard room constructed from the present restaurant and bar. The entire building is to be painted similar in color to Congress Hall, Saratoga. These changes will make Congress Hall the largest hotel on the coast.

In addition, Mr. Button is preparing plans for three beautiful cottages on Congress street, for E. C. Knight, and three equally handsome ones for Mr. Dobbins."

Button's entrance tower, constructed at the intersection of the two wings, has since been removed. Evidence of it, however, and of the subtle enlargement of the mansard at the

terminus of the extended wing, also by Button, remain.⁴⁸ Other aspects of this account are apparent hyperbole. Approximately 60 additional rooms were built and additional floors may have been built upon the Perry Street annex but it did not get a mansard roof. Another Button design, a music pavilion on the lawn, was mentioned in the Cape May Ocean Wave of 10 April 1880:

"In addition to the other important improvements now being made to the new Congress Hall, the contract for still another has been given within the week to Messrs. Hand and Ware, of this city, for immediate erection of a music pavilion on the lawn, having a capacity of two thousand square feet. The structure will be one story, and occupy the angle opposite the main entrance, formed by the two main wings. The design is very unique and appropriate, being furnished by the masterly hand of S. D. Button, architect."

Shortly thereafter, John Philip Sousa conducted on the Congress Hall lawn in 1881.⁴⁹ By 1882 the bandstand, no longer standing, was constructed in the form of a shell on the lawn.⁵⁰

Later in the decade Congress Hall saw further improvements which included new sanitary fittings and many cosmetic treatments.⁵¹ By the season of 1895 an elevator and electric lights were installed and further sanitary changes were made.⁵²

⁴⁸Thomas: 62.

⁴⁹Beitel: 168 is courtesy of the Cape May Historical Museum.

⁵⁰Morgan: 18.

⁵¹Cape May Star and Wave (14 August 1889).

⁵²Cape May Star and Wave (27 April 1895).

Presidents also favored the new Congress Hall. President Chester A. Arthur came to Congress Hall in 1883.⁵³ For more than two months during the 1891 season, President William H. Harrison located his executive offices in Congress Hall while he spent the summer in a cottage at Cape May Point.⁵⁴ These presidents who frequented the present Congress Hall along with Presidents Pierce, Buchanan and Harrison who came before the great fire of 1878, had given Congress Hall a substantial claim as a summer White House by the end of the century.

2.2.4 Change in the 20th Century

Twelve years after E. C. Knight died in 1892, Annie Collings Knight, his daughter, acquired Congress Hall from the Congress Hotel Company. Shortly thereafter Congress Hall was closed. The periodic improvements made up until the turn of the century ceased and by 1915 Congress Hall was on the verge of collapse.⁵⁵ Rumors persisted that it was to be torn down.⁵⁶ Speculation that its furnishings were being taken out and that it might be subdivided or replaced by another large hotel or

⁵³Nomination Form: continuation sheet, item no. 8, page no. 2.

⁵⁴Stevens: 394.

⁵⁵Thomas: 39 and Cape May Star and Wave, "Old Landmark Like A Sphinx" (7 August 1915): 1.

⁵⁶The Record (15 January 1915). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

a municipal park sparked Annie C. Knight to send a telegram to The Evening Bulletin to refute the stories which it printed.⁵⁷

A period of inactivity and neglect began somewhere between 1908 and 1912 and ended when a dispute over the hotel's assessed value was settled in 1920.⁵⁸ By the early months of 1920, however, work had begun on the updating of Congress Hall.⁵⁹ It was during this period that the hotel enjoyed a renaissance (figures 12 through 15). The number of rooms was reduced from approximately 300 to approximately 100 and the marble floor in a portion of the first floor was installed.⁶⁰ The following table presents the distribution of rooms which was presumably the result of alterations during this period.

TABLE 2.2A Room Summary

<u>Floor</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
4th	31	Above mansard
3rd	31	Floor below mansard
2nd	31	Piano nobile - first full guest floor
1st	6	Located at the end of the Congress Place wing

TOTAL	99	

⁵⁷The Evening Bulletin (14 August 1919) and a telegram from A. C. Knight to the City Editor of the Evening Bulletin dated 14 August. Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

⁵⁸The Record (15 January 1915) and The Evening Bulletin (4 March 1920). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

⁵⁹The Evening Bulletin (4 March 1920). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

⁶⁰Interview with Curtis Bashaw on 2 October 1990.

After Annie C. Knight completed these renovations and alterations in 1920, Congress Hall could accommodate a capacity of 300, a reduction of more than half (based on an average of three occupants per room), and charged \$42.00 and up per week, one of the highest published weekly rates.⁶¹ The reduction in the number of rooms was achieved by removing roughly every other wall between rooms, doubling the room size. In addition, every third guestroom, the size of an original guestroom, was converted into a private or semi-private bathroom thus obviating the need for common hall bathroom facilities. All rooms were interconnected with doors which permitted a flexible combination of single room and suites with private and shared bathrooms (fig. appendix 8.1.2).

Congress Hall operated under Annie Knight's direct management until her death in 1931 at age 70. The hotel continued operation until the season of 1941 under the direction of the Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities on behalf of Annie Knight's only heir, her brother Edward Collings Knight, Jr. Although E. C. Knight, Jr. died

⁶¹Pennsylvania Railroad System, New Jersey Shore Resorts, A guide to seaside resorts in New Jersey served by the Pennsylvania Railroad (1923): 92. Of the 24 hotels listed.

in 1936, the Pennsylvania Company did not successfully sell it to its next owners, the Congress Hall Corporation, until 1942.⁶²

The Congress Hall Corporation operated the hotel for the next 16 years. During this period apparently little changed at the hotel, perhaps mirroring few changes overall in Cape May.

In 1958 the hotel changed hands again when it was purchased by Congress Hall, Cape May, Inc., a corporation controlled by politician Charles Sandman and the Ramagosa family of Wildwood, NJ. The new owners immediately installed a swimming pool.⁶³ The following year the separate cocktail lounge building, now Uncle Bill's Pancake House, was converted into a Howard Johnson's restaurant. In 1961 the hotel was leased to Lewis Morey, a Wildwood, NJ motel developer and manager, who painted the building, built a miniature golf course, installed air conditioning units on the fourth floor, and attempted to build a detached 27,000 square foot Polynesian style saloon, the Mai Alai, on the Congress Hall site.⁶⁴ The proposed Mai Alai was the source of much controversy during that summer season and was in effect successfully blocked by

⁶²See chain of title, appendix 8.3.

⁶³The Bulletin (8 May 1958). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

⁶⁴"Congress Hall renovated for new season" (30 April 1961) and "Residents win delay on bar" (21 June 1961). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

a consortium of objecting parties including the City itself, the neighboring Windsor Hotel and the Cottagers Association.

During the Ramagosas' tenure as owners, Congress Hall's historical and architectural importance was first recognized. During this time, Carolyn Pitts, by now an architectural historian at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, wrote in a windshield survey:⁶⁵

"Outstanding example of Victorian Hotel. Congress Hall. Probably the most important hotel-type in Cape May. Present structure built in 1879. First building on this site in 1812 when lawn of several acres ran down to the sea. Bathhouses situated where ground dipped down to the sea (roofs only could be seen from the lawn). First structure was built in 1812 by Jonas Miller. It was rebuilt in 1816 by Thomas Hughes and again enlarged in 1853. Ornate exterior trim and gas-lit interiors made it a famous hostel. Among the guests were James Buchanan in 1835, President Pierce in 1855, President Grant opened the hotel in 1873 and President Harrison had his executive offices at Congress Hall in 1891. The present structure now under renovation. Interior restoration underway. Still needs some modern facilities. The building is a large L-shaped brick structure with a full length veranda on three sides. Brackets on the columns are star shaped and some bracket porch details are intact. Lawn should be restored (originally an elaborated gazebo stood on the Congress Street side). Character of a sea-side spa of 19th Century depends on beach front properties. Proper restoration of these is essential. Kitchens on Perry Street a rectangular brick mass. Should be restored."

⁶⁵Carolyn Pitts, CAPE MAY Victorian Structures within Project I Urban Renewal Area (June, 1964): 5-6. An early "windshield" survey. Available at the City Hall's Construction/Zoning Office.

In 1962 the Ramagosa family reassumed active management.⁶⁶ Their return, however, did not necessarily minimize attempts to remold Congress Hall's image. By 1967 they had partially colonial-ized and exotic-ized Congress Hall. Press accounts of the then 90 year old hotel referred to its colonial style and spoke of its colonial color scheme.⁶⁷ The hotel advertized its "Fife and Drum" Dining Room, its "Yankee Doodle" Cocktail Lounge and the "Foreign Mart", a fantasy pastiche of flimsy wooden facades merely superimposed over the Perry Street facade of the annex (figures 23 and 24).⁶⁸ Also in 1967 the erection of a ferris wheel on the Congress Hall beach was proposed. This effort, too, was blocked for a time by the a consortium of groups. Before the issue was settled, however, Congress Hall was purchased by its present owner, the Christian Beacon Press, in late 1967.

The Christian Beacon Press is an organization controlled by the Reverend Carl McIntire of Collingswood, NJ, a Fundamentalist minister. At the time of purchase Reverend McIntire was well known on the local, state and national levels. Although he himself rejected the label of extreme-

⁶⁶"Owners reassume role in Congress Hall operation" (June 7, 1962). Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

⁶⁷"Cape May Hotel Gets 'Facelifting'" (26 April 1964). Obtained from Temple University Urban Archives.

⁶⁸The Sunday Evening Bulletin Magazine (11 June 1967): 14-15. Obtained from Temple University's Urban Archives.

right winger, his national reputation is the result of his self-styled protestantism which espouses anti-communism, staunch patriotism, and hawkish politics.

He first emerged on the Cape May scene in the late 1950s. He acquired the Hotel Cape May in 1963, then known as the Admiral, and renamed it the Christian Admiral.⁶⁹ At various times his organization has owned the Christian Admiral Hotel, Congress Hall, the Virginia Hotel, the William Weightman Cottage, the Morning Star Villa, the Evening Star Villa (demolished after being sold by the Christian Beacon Press), and the Windsor (razed by fire during Christian Beacon Press ownership).⁷⁰ This collection of historic structures in Cape May was unparalleled and made Rev. McIntire the largest single owner of historic buildings in town. It was a role Rev. McIntire did not especially seek. The purchase of these usually vast buildings all in seasonal use was motivated by the need to provide inexpensive accommodations for the large numbers of congregants which he led. Of this considerable roster of structures, however, only the Christian Admiral and Congress Hall remain under the Christian Beacon Press' ownership today. Now 84 years old, Rev. McIntire's real estate holdings and recognition have diminished.

⁶⁹Current Biography Yearbook, 1971 (Bronx, New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1971): 248-251.

⁷⁰Thomas: 40.

In the 23 years of Christian Beacon Press ownership, Congress Hall's situation, like that of the City of Cape May itself, has both improved and worsened. Although now for sale, the Christian Beacon Press was not motivated by capital gains and until recently had kept the hotel off the market. In the process of 23 years of continual ownership and management, a duration only exceeded by the original owners after the 1878 fire, Congress Hall was able to avoid undue development pressure experienced elsewhere in the City. Maintenance during this period suffered, however. It appears that many usual maintenance procedures, let alone preventive measures, were routinely deferred until problems resulted which absolutely necessitated their attention.

Postponed maintenance coupled with the building's inherent design deficiencies and uninformed alterations over the years have resulted in a scenario for disasters. In the early hours of Sunday, 13 August 1978, a structural failure caused the evacuation of Congress Hall Hotel. The failure was caused when a steel beam at the first floor ceiling level spanning the lobby from the exterior brick wall to a wall flanking a portion of the central stairs slipped off its bearing at the stairwell end. Apparently the steel beam in question was installed in the late 1940s or early 1950s (under Congress Hall Corp. ownership) when a masonry wall, mirroring the

masonry wall at the stairwell side, was removed to create a more open lobby area.⁷¹ This uninformed alteration caused the failure which, although not catastrophic, prompted an overall evaluation of the structure and continued attention on the part of municipal and state officials regarding the building's condition.⁷²

The ensuing scrutiny during the late 1970s and early 1980s produced a litany of corrections, additions, and modifications required in order to keep Congress Hall operating. This list included major items such as providing a complete smoke detection system, installing additional means of egress from the guest floors, enclosing stairwells, and providing fire separations between numerous areas of the hotel to lesser items such as repairing plaster, painting and replacing locksets. Slowly, and not without debate, the owners complied with most of these items. A phased program of compliance was apparently agreed upon and the hotel remained in operation.⁷³

Financial problem soon supplanted building code violations as obstacles to continued operation. Many times during the 1980s

⁷¹Letter from Hugh McCauley of Rietz and Rietz to Bob Smith, Building Inspector (11 June 1979). Obtained from the City of Cape May.

⁷²Letter of Philip Paul, P. E. to Construction Official (25 August 1978).

⁷³The City's building file has many letters from this period and then suddenly no more.

the Christian Beacon Press failed to make timely payments on municipal property taxes and water and sewerage bill. By 1990 these problems and other financial woes apparently forced the Christian Beacon Press to file for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 in United States Bankruptcy Court, Camden, NJ. The 5 June 1990 filing was prompted by the holder of Congress Hall's mortgage, North Jersey Savings and Loan, which moved to place Congress Hall and the Christian Admiral on the auction block. In addition to not meeting a final balloon mortgage payment of \$1.6 million in 1989, the Christian Beacon Press owed \$59,983 in taxes and penalties together with \$152,303 in water and sewer bills at the time it filed for bankruptcy.⁷⁴

Today the Christian Beacon Press is actively seeking a purchaser so that it can pay off its debts and retain control of the Christian Admiral Hotel, east on Beach Avenue from Congress Hall in East Cape May and immediately in front of Shelton College, also operated by the Christian Beacon Press. Congress Hall has been placed with a local realtor and advertisements have appeared in the local newspaper, The Cape May Star and Wave, as well as a national publication, the Historic Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Preservation News. At the time of the completion of this report, no purchaser has acquired Congress Hall, and its operation during the upcoming season is in doubt.

⁷⁴Cape May Star and Wave (14 June 1990): 1 and A12.

Fig. 1: (Top) Congress Hall, right, and the Windsor Hotel, left, as they appeared before the Windsor burned in 1979.

Fig. 2: (Bottom) Mount Vernon Hotel, destroyed by fire 1856.



3000 Rooms
1/2 dining, 25000 Capacity
Tennis Rooms seated 2000
Veranda
CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY: PARSON Sept

Fig. 3: (Top) Congress Hall in the 1850s.

Fig. 4: (Bottom) Congress Hall prior to the great fire of November, 1878.

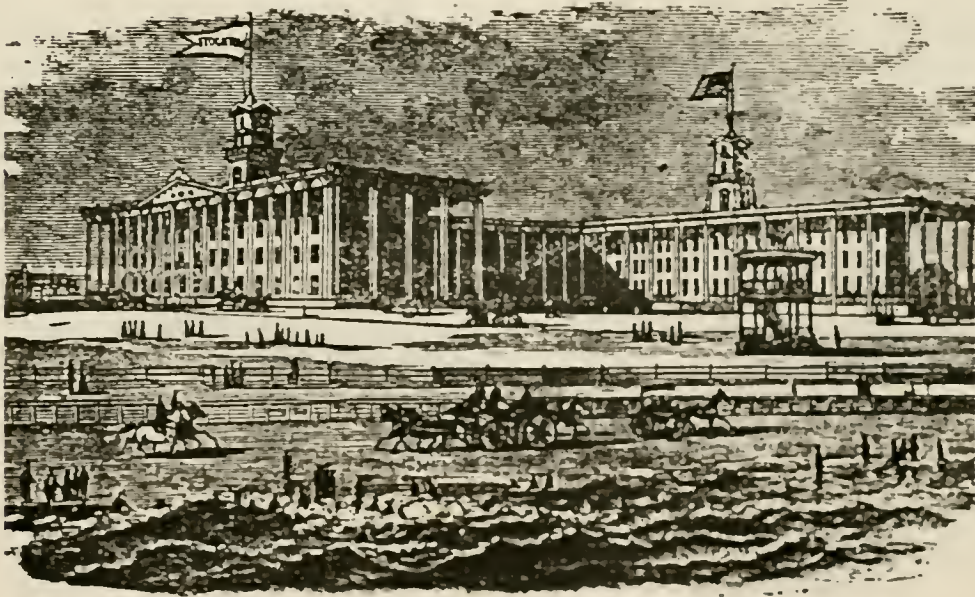


Congress Hall—1858

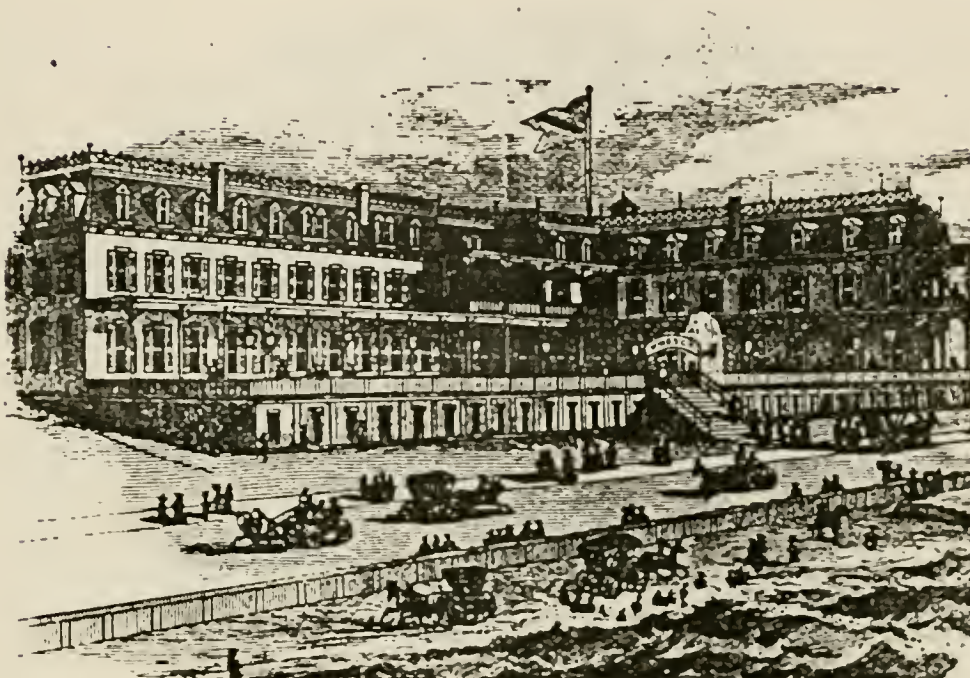


Fig. 6: (Top) Detail of the fire district.

Fig. 7: (Bottom) Stockton Hotel, built 1869/demolished 1911.



- Fig. 8: (Top) Windsor Hotel, built 1879/burned 1979.
Fig. 9: (Bottom) The Atlantic Hotel, built c. 1840/burned 1878.



Foot of Jackson Street, Cape May, N. J.
DIRECTLY ON THE SEA SHORE. OPEN ALL THE YEAR.
THE ATLANTIC HAS BEEN GREATLY ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

Fig. 10: (Top) Hotel Lafayette, built 1882/demolished 1968.
Fig. 11: (Bottom) The New Congress Hall, 1879.



HOTEL LAFAYETTE,
CAPE MAY, N. J.

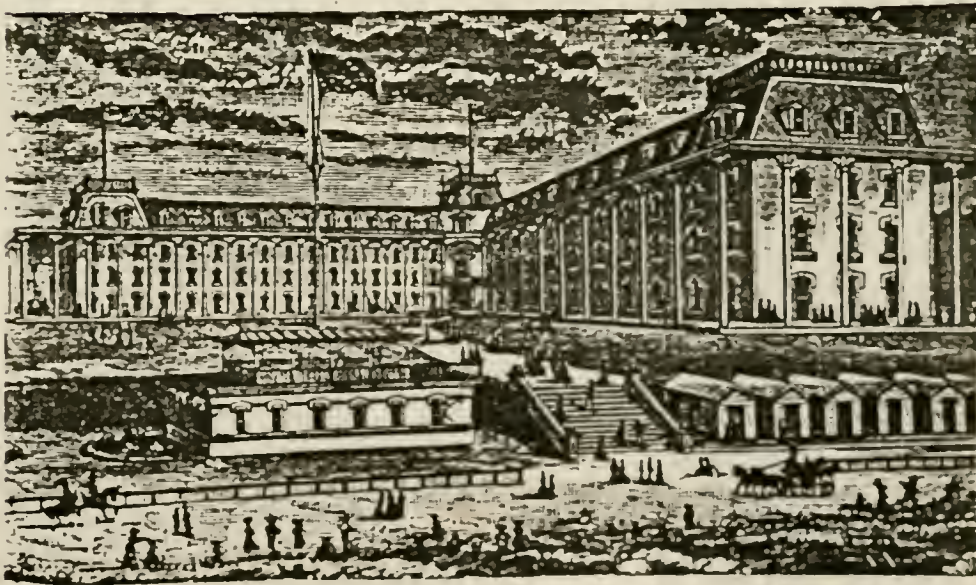


Fig. 12: (Top) A 1928 photograph of the staff. Annie C. Knight is seated front row and center.

Fig. 13: (Bottom) A view of the ocean front lawn taken from the main entrance stair tower, c. 1928. The Windsor, designed by S. D. Button, can be seen at the right through the columns.



Fig. 14: (Top) Congress Hall dining room in the 1920s.
Fig. 15: (Bottom) Congress Hall lounge in the 1920s.



Fig. 16: (Top) Map of the Congress Hall neighborhood corrected to 1902.

Fig. 17: (Bottom) Map of the Congress Hall neighborhood corrected to 1917.

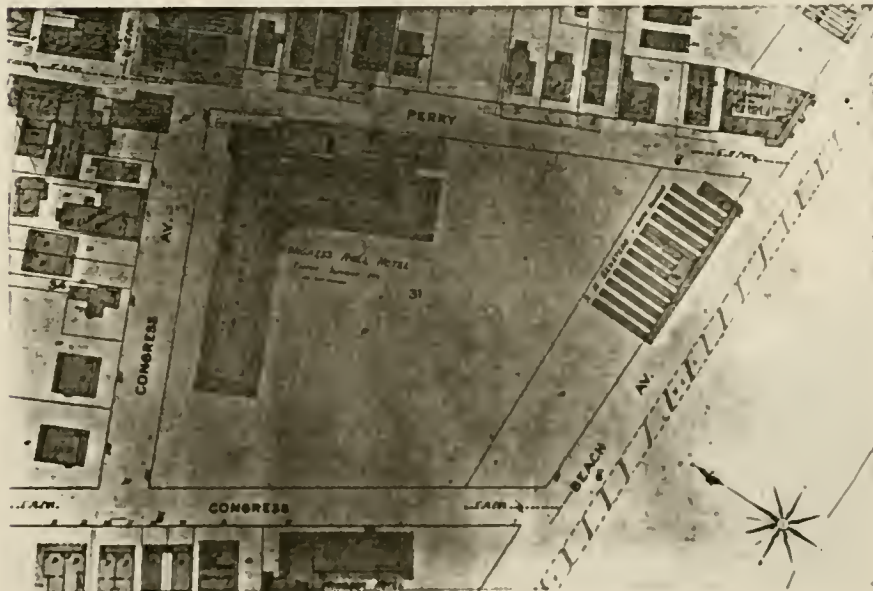


Fig. 18: (Top) Overall view of Congress Hall looking north.
Fig. 19: (Bottom) Congress Hall looking northeast.



Fig. 20: (Top) Congress Hall looking northeast along Congress Place.

Fig. 21: (Bottom) Congress Hall looking southwest along Congress Place.

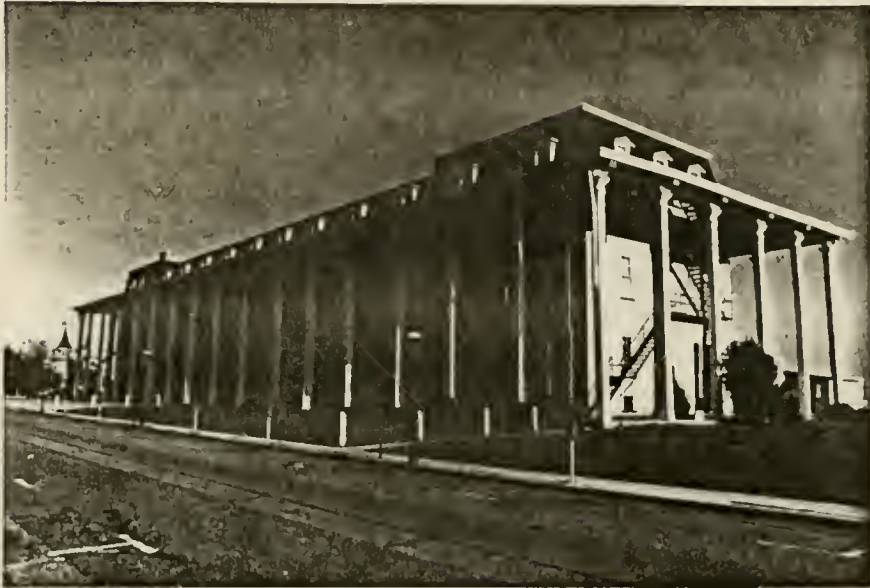


Fig. 22: (Top) Overall view of the annex facing Perry Street looking south from Carpenter's Lane.

Fig. 23: (Bottom) Detail view of a "Foreign Mart" facade superimposed on the Perry Street annex.



3.0 Inventory of Existing Materials and Systems of
Construction and Evaluation of their Condition

The scope of this inventory and evaluation is limited to the L-shaped structure known as Congress Hall. It does not include the connected structure fronting on Perry Street known as the annex or the one story element which links Congress Hall to the annex. The reasons for their omission in these sections is due to their ancillary use, their systems of construction appearing more conventional, and their contribution to the historic context, although significant, being lesser than that of the monumental impact of Congress Hall proper. Their omission does not mean to imply, however, that their role in Congress Hall's rejuvenation is trivial. Indeed, the potential role the annex and connector can play is important as will be illustrated in following sections.

The deterioration that Congress Hall has experienced is either on-going or contained. It can be classified as either progressive or arrestive. The degree of interrelationship between such mechanisms varies. Progressive deterioration processes will envelope more than one material or system of construction and will eventually claim the building.

Arrestive processes are discrete, self-contained and often have no or limited impact on adjacent materials or systems. In isolation the deflected structural trusses can be regarded as arrestive deterioration. Put these trusses in the path of a progressively larger source of water (roof leak) or even a small constant source of water (leaking plumbing) and the pending structural failure of the trusses is no longer arrestive.

3.1 Horizontal Closure

Closure against above the building's cornice line is achieved by a shed roof over the verandas and a mansard roof over the building proper. Various roofing systems which have been installed over the years in a piecemeal fashion are employed. There are four major types of roofing area and four types of roofing materials employed. Roof conditions vary widely as does the range of roofing types and areas.

3.1.1 Mansard Roof

The mansard roof itself is composed of two major roof areas. The uppermost roof, the first area, is perceived to be the nearly flat area above the vertical face of the mansard

(figures 24 and 25). It is entirely roofed with rolled asphalt sheets. Although the roll roofing is not original, it gives no evidence of previous roofing types used at this location like metal. Slope at this area is less than 1 in 10.

The vertical face of the mansard constitutes the second area. It is covered by both slate shingles and asphalt shingles. In general terms, the mansard roof areas which face the water no longer retain their cut slate tile. At these locations asphalt shingles appear to have replaced or been placed over the slate (fig. 26). The way in which the asphalt shingles cover the mansard have obscured the edge ridge conditions which were originally white (or a light color) painted wood and the pleasant accentuation of the outline has been lost (compare figures 11 and 18). The mansard roof areas which face Congress Place and Perry Street, however, still retain their slate tiles (fig. 27). Slope at this area is 1 in 1/4.

The third roofing area consists of the dormers at all windows of the fourth floor. They have a marginal area of roof areas over the single and paired windows. All dormers been recovered with asphalt shingles, except along the elevation facing Congress Place. These dormers still retain their flat metal soldiered roof. Slope at this area is 1 in 3.

The asphalt roll roofing on the uppermost area of the mansard

roof is in good overall condition. The condition of the mansard's vertical faces varies greatly. Substantial areas of the slate are largely intact and appear to be functioning well. Where repairs have been necessary pitch or tar has been used to smear failing areas (fig. 28). This unfortunate approach is fairly limited but unsightly where evident, especially on the northeast elevation of the Perry Street wing closest to the ocean. Slate predominates at areas facing away from the ocean.

The mansard's asphalt shingles are nearing, if not already passed, their useful life. They have begun to cup and are brittle.

Cupping and brittleness are a problem at dormer locations as well. The dormers with flat metal roofs are faring better than their veranda counterparts but still require replacement.

3.1.2 Veranda Roof

The roof over the three story veranda is the fourth major roof area. The veranda roof is covered by both standing and flat metal roof and rolled asphalt roofing. As with the mansard roof, those areas which face the water no longer retain their original metal roof. At these locations the rolled asphalt

has replaced, supposedly, the metal roof. The roof areas which parallel Congress Street, Congress Place and Perry Street, however, still retain their standing seam metal roofs. The metal roofs were created by a series of 18 inch by 24 inch sheets of metal. From the bottom of the mansard to within 36 inches from the edge, approximately 8 feet, they are oriented with their length parallel to the slope. These panels are joined by both soldered connections and standing seams running parallel to the slope. For 36 inches at the perimeter they are soldered only and form an integral gutter. Slopes at this area range from 1 in 6 to 1 in 9.

The veranda's roof, as the nearly vertical face of the mansard, appears to be in covered by original materials at areas where it does not face the ocean. The metal roofs at these locations are beyond their useful life although they still continues to function. Surface rust and crimping of the standing seams caused by foot traffic. There are few areas of total failure, however (fig. 29).

The roll roofing applied to the balance of the veranda is in good overall condition and appears to be in the middle of its service life (fig. 30). There is one significant failure, however, at the southernmost tip of the Perry Street wing (fig. 31). Area and shape of the failure together with this end's proximity to the ocean, indicates that beachfront winds

contributed to this failure. The failure is so complete that the sheathing boards are exposed. Fortunately these types of failure are not found over occupied interior spaces.

3.1.3 Minor Roof Areas

A fifth and minor roofing area is the elevator penthouse which is clad in slate shingles at the vertical faces in the zone of the mansard and by sheet metal at the upper inclined roof areas. Slope at this area is 1 in 1.

Metal roofing at the elevator penthouse is good condition. This is no doubt due to the effective slope.

The following table summarizes roofing materials and locations.

TABLE 3.1A Existing Roof Type by Zone

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Roof Type</u>	<u>Area (sf)</u>	<u>%-zone</u>	<u>%-overall</u>	
Uppermost roof	Asphalt roll	14,519	100	43.7	43.7
Mansard face	Asphalt shingle	2,883	50	8.6	17.2
	Slate shingle	2,883	50	8.6	
Dormer roofs ⁷⁵	Asphalt shingle	489	73	1.5	2.0
	Metal	177	27	0.5	
Veranda roof	Asphalt roll	7,905	65	23.8	36.8
	Metal	4,315	35	13.0	
Elevator	Metal	96	100	0.3	0.3

TOTAL		33,265		100%	100%

Note: The annex and the connecting structure which have multiple roof levels and types are not included in the above table. The annex and connector have approximately 8,110 square feet of roof area.

3.1.4 Storm Water Removal

The mansard roof drains its water onto the veranda roof with the exception of a segment of the mansard which parallels the annex. At this location a concealed integral gutter collects the water above the bracketed cornice (fig. 33). Otherwise the removal of storm water from the areas listed in the preceding table is completely achieved by a system of concealed integral gutters, dams and drains with exposed

⁷⁵Based on preliminary field investigation, it was assumed that only the 14 dormers which face Congress Place are tin.

leaders. The leaders are relatively newly replaced aluminum sections where they are not missing entirely. Integral gutters are typically found where the metal roofing remains (fig. 29). Dams, angled to divert storm water towards drains, are typically found where the asphalt roll roofing is employed (fig. 32). The following table summarizes areas which each gutter, drain and leader serves.

TABLE 3.1B Roof Area per Drain

<u>Drain No.</u>	<u>Roof Area (sf)</u>	<u>%-Total</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1	1,224	4	
2	1,824	6	Mean tributary area
3	2,432	8	Undersized
4	2,660	8	Undersized
5	1,440	5	
6	1,284	4	
7	3,432	11	Undersized
8	3,872	12	Largest tributary area; undersized
9	3,198	10	Leader missing; undersized
10	2,688	8	Undersized
11	1,054	3	
12	1,776	6	
13	783	2	
14	891	3	
15	1,120	4	
16	1,431	4	
17	648	2	Smallest tributary area

TOTAL	31,757	100	

Note: Drain numbers are keyed to roof plan (fig. 34).

Although they may be subject to hidden diversions below the

roof area, most drains appear to be in good working order. An important exception occurs at a malfunctioning drain occurs at drain no. 14 which occurs at the integral gutter along the northeast elevation (fig. 33). The drain, on level with the fourth floor line at the base of the mansard roof, is diverting at least a portion of storm water it collects into the building. Inside the building it travels horizontally and drips into an adjacent bathroom on the third floor. Here it puddles on the bathroom floor where it seeps through to the second floor ceiling and drips onto a second floor bathroom. At the second floor it seeps through to the first floor ceiling over the main dining room where it drips down onto the floor and presumably through the floor to the crawl space. Where the water seeps through the third and second floors it does so immediately adjacent to the top and bottom chord of truss T4 (fig. 38). The effects of the water at these locations could not be documented.

Leaders are missing only in a few locations. Where leaders are missing they invariably cascade down along the fascia boards which enclose the heavy timber posts of the veranda colonnade, thereby accelerating rot.

Furthermore, the drains and leaders are too few and too small. The four inch diameter drains which are found on Congress Hall can support a maximum of 2100 square feet of

roof area per drain.⁷⁶ Accordingly six of the seventeen drains are undersized. In other words, 35% of the drains serve 57% of the roof area.

3.1.5 Roof Ventilation

The absence of belvedere or a gable end precludes the possibility of ventilating the space beneath the roof in a traditional manner. Accordingly, several sheet metal vents have been placed on the uppermost roof. These vents are approximately 12 inches in diameter and are spaced approximately 70 feet from each other. Although the present vents do not appear to be more than a generation old, presumably vents have been employed since the 1920s to vent the mansard roof. Photographic evidence indicates there were six roof mounted vents where now there are four (compare figures 12 and 18).

Roof ventilation is inadequate. Roof vents have not been replaced and those remaining are rusted not unlike the metal roof over the veranda.

⁷⁶Charles Ramsey and Harold Sleeper, Architectural Graphic Standards, 8th edition, John Ray Hoke, Jr., editor-in-chief (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1988): 359.

3.2 Vertical Closure

Vertical closure is achieved by brick, wood and glass, namely brick bearing walls, wood and glass double-hung windows and doors. In addition to their inherent material characteristics, their performance has been effected by the severe conditions of the seaside environment.

3.2.1 Exterior Masonry Walls

The exterior walls of Congress Hall proper as well as its Perry Street annex are entirely brick. These brick walls are structural as well as enclosing. As such Congress Hall is a masonry bearing wall structure, an anomaly in Cape May. It has been speculated that at least some of the bricks from the pre-1878 structure were reused in its 1879 reconstruction.⁷⁷ The brickwork is a common bond with every 8th course headers.

It can be argued that the pretense for such a use allowed the new owners to make certain claims after rebuilding Congress Hotel after the fire of November, 1878. Indeed, published advertisements exaggerated claims that the third Congress Hall was the only brick hotel on the Atlantic coast and practically

⁷⁷Morgan: 14.

fire proof.⁷⁸

For a complete summary of the exterior brick wall areas, refer to the following table.

TABLE 3.2A Exterior Masonry Wall Summary

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Area (sf)</u>	<u>%-Total</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1	3,428	18	Long elevation facing Congress Pl.
2	1,077	6	Short elevation facing Congress Av.
3	3,608	19	Long elevation facing Beach Av.
4	157	1	Main entrance wall.
5	4,165	22	Long elevation facing Congress Av.
6	1,077	6	Short elevation facing Beach Av.
7	5,352	28	Long elevation facing Perry St.

TOTAL	18,864	100	

With few notable exceptions and despite deteriorated brick surfaces and mortar loss, the masonry which comprises the exterior walls are substantially intact.

Shortly after Congress Hall's completion, the brick was covered with paint (fig. 35). The mortar appears to be largely as intact as the masonry units. Perhaps the historic use of a protective paint layer outweighed the negative consequences of painting brick, namely trapping vapor.

⁷⁸William E. Meehan, Handy Guide to Philadelphia and Environs, including Atlantic City and Cape May (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally and Company, Publishers, 1895): 178.

Areas of concern include substantial evidence of rising damp which effects at least 400 square feet of exterior wall concentrated at the southern most area of the Congress Place wing (fig. 36). It reaches a height up to the first floor window sills. At these locations the brick has lost its paint. Paint loss and mortar is most dramatic at the upper limit of the rising damp where the moisture evaporates out into the atmosphere (fig. 37).

The concentration of masonry damage at low wall areas may not only be the result of rising damp but may also be due to the protection which the perimeter veranda gives the masonry. Accordingly, deteriorated brick is not restricted to one zone of the masonry wall which faces the annex, a wall without the perimeter veranda.

Other substantial problems have resulted from water infiltration at the integral gutter along the northeast facade which is the only stretch of wall without the veranda (fig. 33). Exterior structural problems are evident by arching of brickwork over windows and separated mortar joints.

3.2.2 Exterior Doors and Windows

Regularly spaced double hung windows are employed exclusively

at Congress Hall. In the lower three floors at the brick exterior walls they appear singularly in a 4 over 4 arrangement. At the fourth floor they appear either singly or in pairs at the dormers in a 2 over 2 arrangement (fig. appendix 8.1.4).

At certain first and second floors locations the sill of the windows are modified to meet a divided swinging panel which when opened with the window above creates the effect of a door opening out onto the veranda or a second floor balcony as the case may be (fig. appendix 8.1.7). Such panels beneath a window which true function is not revealed when closed are called jib doors.⁷⁹ They are not typically found in Cape May, where double hung windows sill more commonly extend down to floor level and have a pocket overhead to receive the lower sash when such effect is desired.⁸⁰ Although unique to Cape May, jib doors were previously used in other locations such as Owen Biddle's Philadelphia House and are proposed in various villa designs by A. J. Downing and Calvert Vaux.⁸¹

Doors, which comprise relatively few exterior openings, are

⁷⁹John Flemming, Hugh Honour and Nikolaus Pevsner, A Dictionary of Architecture (Baltimore, Penguin Books Inc., 1976): 159.

⁸⁰The Physick Estate, George Allen House and Jackson's Clubhouse are notable examples.

⁸¹Based on a conversation with Hugh McCauley, 3 October 1990.

of panel construction. The following table summarizes the double hung windows and doors.

TABLE 3.2B Exterior Door and Window Schedule

<u>Floor</u>	<u>Windows</u>	<u>Doors</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
4th	97	--	All windows are dormers and are double hung, 2 over 2. 43 are paired; 11 are singular. End windows at corridors used to access fire-escape.
3rd	97	--	All windows are double hung, 4 over 4. 3 are tripled (over main entrance); 94 are singular. End windows at corridors used to access fire-escape.
2nd	97	--	All windows are double hung, 4 over 4. 3 are tripled (over main entrance); 94 are singular. 28 windows have jib doors below. End windows at corridors used to access fire-escape.
1st/Ground	67	12	All windows are double hung, 4 over 4. 28 windows have jib doors below. 12 door leaves occur in 8 entrances. Figure does not include 6 blocked windows in main dining room.

TOTAL	358	12	

Window conditions greatly vary. They are generally neglected and abused. Some appear inoperable. Counterweight cords are often missing or damaged. All windows are closed during the off season by drilling sheetrock screws halfway into the window jamb just above the lower sash.

Glass breakage and missing panes are the greatest single source of water to enter the building during the off-season. The lack of routine repair has created an ever increasing problem.

The lack of adequate painting, the sea air, poorly draining sills which collect standing water and the roosting of pigeons have conspired to accelerate rot.

Doors experience the same problems as windows. They are much less numerous, however. All doors appear to be original except the door at the end of the Congress Place wing.

3.3 Structure

Congress Hall employs a composite structure of unit masonry and wood. The building's exterior envelope from roofline to grade is brick. It is assumed that its foundations are at least partly brick or other unit masonry. The balance of the structure, framing of the roof, veranda, colonnade, interior partitions and floors, is entirely concealed wood frame. Both standard light frame and heavy timber construction is employed.

3.3.1 Masonry Bearing Walls

All exterior brick walls at Congress Hall are load bearing. Because portions of the first floor are column free by means of trusses which span approximately 40 feet, certain expanses of the exterior brick walls support all of the dead and live loads above the first floor level. The brickwork is a common bond with every 8th course headers. The through wall assembly of the exterior masonry wall is not clear. A thickness of four wythes would yield a thickness of 18 inches as has been suggested.⁸² Notwithstanding the header course, it is possible that the wythes of brick are not connected or there is a

⁸²Interview with Skip Hallowell of C. W. Grimmer and Sons, the fabricator and installer of the fire escapes.

substantial cavity.⁸³

Problems posed by exposure to salt air, rising damp, and efflorescence are indeterminable. They can not remained unchecked, however. Considerable areas of wall require repointing now. Areas of brick disintegration ought to monitored.

The differential settlement caused by the foundation of unknown design and capacity is responsible for marginal areas of cracking and arching of bricks over windows.

3.3.2 Queen Post Trusses

Interior dividing walls between some of the rooms on the second floor conceal structural frames which permit column free spaces on the first floor below. These so-called Queen Post trusses span the width of building, approximately 40 feet, in nine locations. Each truss is composed of 8 inch by 10 inch vertical and inclined members, a bottom chord of 3 - 3 inch by 14 inch, a top chord of 3 - 3 inch by 8 inch members and 6 - 1 inch diameter metal rods. The paired center vertical

⁸³ Speculation based on two separate conversations with Carl Baumert (16 October 1990) and Hugh McCauley (3 October 1990).

members are spaced far enough to allow the corridor pass through unnoticed (fig. 38).

This type of structural frame design was used elsewhere in Cape May. Another hotel built after the great fire of 1878 indicates an analogous situation and design (fig. 39).⁸⁴ The Queen Post truss is not a strict truss as it is an incomplete frame. If loaded symmetrically it is stable but it has a tendency to be unstable laterally and if loaded unsymmetrically (fig. 40).⁸⁵ In this situation, each Queen Post truss is braced laterally by exterior masonry bearing walls at each end and by interior wood stud walls which comprise the corridor and other dividing partitions which behave as structural diaphragms.⁸⁶

Remedial work to correct the Queen Post trusses' deflection

⁸⁴Agreement no. 105, Copy of Agreement and Specifications for the erection of a Hotel at Cape May City for James Mooney by Charles McCaul, Contractor (Filed 2 April 1879 with Jonathan Hand, Clerk): 5. Obtained from the Athenæum of Philadelphia.

⁸⁵Harry Parker, Charles Merrick Gay and John W. MacGuire, Materials and Methods of Architectural Construction (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958): 528.

⁸⁶Conversation with S. Harris on 6 February 1991. Queen Post trusses are not trusses because they are in bending. They are trussed girders. Queen Post trusses are difficult to analyze. Even a simple Queen Post truss is impossible to solve manually. They cannot be solved algebraically. The computer has helped. A program developed at Georgia Tech., "Strudel Program", can do it. Failure tends to be most common in shear.

was taken in 1978 according to drawings executed by Keast and Hood of Philadelphia (figures 41 through 47). The truss lower chords were badly rotted at bearing end. Rotted wood was replaced. Some rot on the lower chords and diagonal splitting was corrected by the installation of reinforcing plates and new seat made of steel.

3.3.3 Interior Framing

Other, more conventional, wood framing systems are employed in the partitions and floor framing through out the building. Interior partitions are typically wood stud construction with wood lath and plaster. Even at Queen Post truss locations a stud layer with lath and plaster flank each face. In addition, the entire partition framing on the floors above the second floor are wood stud construction. The third floor partitions transfer their loads directly down onto points of perpendicular intersection of the upper chord of the Queen Post truss. In one open spot viewed, the floor joists appear to be 3 inches by 8 inches (actual not nominal) at 16 inches on center.⁸⁷

Locally the condition of the more traditional light framing

⁸⁷Room 307.

of the partitions and floors is in good condition. Their evaluation, however, independent of the masonry bearing wall and structural truss is difficult to make. Individual walls and floors are out of plumb but presumably in good condition. Their distortion is primarily due to the differential between the long term deformation of the trusses and settlement of footings and masonry wall foundation.

3.3.4 Perimeter Veranda

The next structural anomaly encountered are the three story tall wood posts which support the veranda roof. Each post is encased in a wood sheathed enclosure, also three stories tall, which give the appearance that these are 16 inch wide vertical structural columns. The columns are spaced from 10 to 16 feet on center. Due the proximity to the ocean and height of the open volume underneath the veranda, the columns are called upon as much to resist uplift forces and to prevent the veranda roof from flying away as they are called upon to support it up against gravity.

These 55 multi-story columns surround most of Congress Hall and support a roof over its perimeter veranda. Each 35 foot high column is unbraced. These monumental elements consist of one continuous 8 inch by 8 inch heavy wood member resting

on a brick pier which is approximately 12 inches square in plan and rise about 2 feet above grade. The wood post base and top of brick pier are joined by a centered pin which is 3/4 inch in diameter and extends into each element by approximately 10 inches.⁸⁸ Each column is faced with one inch thick wood planks in such length that an overall dimension of 16 inches by 16 inches is created (figures 49 and 50).

⁸⁸Letter from O'Donnell and Naccarato to Louis Di Gregorio (1 May 1987). Obtained from the City of Cape May's Construction Zoning Office file for Block 1028 / Lot 1.01.

3.4 Exterior Features and Finishes

There are few exterior features and finishes which can appear here that are not in other sections of this report. Congress Hall is not a victorian building dense with exterior applied ornamentation. Its monumental L-shaped form, mansard roof and colonnade are intended as its primary visual impact. Although second to its monumental effect and not as dense as other late 19th century buildings, Congress Hall does have a wealth of subtle detailing. The brick coursing veiled under paint, jib doors, louvered shutters, decorated cornice and column capitals are all evident but restrained enough to explain perhaps why its style has been termed colonial by novices (figures 51, 52 and appendix 8.1.3).

Exterior features which are purely additive to the forms as outlined above are the various balconies at the second floor level, louvered shutters which occur at nearly all first floor windows, metal fire escapes attached at the ends of the wings, continuous concrete paving around the building beneath the veranda, a canopy over the dining room entrance, and the Congress Hall sign over the main entrance.

In a manner similar to the brick walls and wood windows and doors, all exterior feature suffer the abusive environment of the sea air. Applied wooden ornamentation is largely intact.

The shutters apparently have suffered the most deterioration. Generally they are inoperable having been painted and/or nailed into the open position. Column capitals are roosting places for pigeons which foul the horizontal surfaces. Poorly working leader are a continuous source of water running onto the column enclosures.

Cantilevered balconies are closed to guests' use. Their capacity to support is apparently limited to their own weight (figures 53 and 54).

Fire escapes are badly pitted and pose a danger to any would be user (fig. 55). These escapes were installed approximately 10 years ago (fig. 56).⁸⁹ Their welded and bolted plate steel construction have deteriorated to a point whereby the City's Construction Official issued a notice of unsafe structure on 29 May 1990.

Site concrete which skirts the building around the veranda dates from at least the 1920s. It has heaved and does not appear level and true at any location. Each slab is imprinted with a 12 inch by 12 inch square pattern which gives a large

⁸⁹According to building permit to install fire escape at the end of the Perry Street wing (9 May 1980) and drawing to install fire escape at the end of the Congress Place wing (4 June 1982). Building permit and drawing information obtained from the City of Cape May's Construction/Zoning Office.

tiled effect. The lifting and upsetting of the concrete slabs may be due to inadequate depth. Cracking is limited to horizontal lines of the vertical face at the concrete's edge (fig. 50). Actual surface deterioration is negligible. Pigeon droppings on this surface are found everywhere. They are washed away routinely during the season and not at all during the off-season.

3.5 Interior Features and Finishes

The walls, doors, ceilings, floors and trim of the typical floors of Congress Hall are not distinguished by extraordinary features. Walls are typically plaster over wood lath on wood stud wall construction. Walls typically have a high wood wall base. Room entrance doors are typically panel construction with a transom panel above and are cased in a substantial trim which compliments the wall base. In addition, each guestroom entrance has a lockable fully louvered over door which swings out into the common corridor. These doors provide means of additional ventilation.

Floors throughout the guests rooms and corridors are random planking. Area carpets and wall to wall carpets are used throughout the building. Hexagonal tile floors are typical in the 1920s bathrooms and square vinyl composition tiles, possible containing asbestos, are typical in the 1950s bathrooms. The dark and light marble tiles in the lobby area were installed during the renovations of the early 1920s.⁹⁰

Black mold on the plaster is pervasive (figures 57 and 58). Its control is difficult due to the lack of a climate control system and moisture laden sea air. Mold problems are

⁹⁰According to Curtis Bashaw.

exacerbated by leaking plumbing and the extra moisture created by bathrooms. The problem appear greatest on the third floor which is just beneath the veranda's overhang which shield the rooms from any direct sunlight.

Unfortunately the pleasant architectural features of the room entrance doors and transoms have been lost with retrofitting utilizing sheet metal panels in 1988.⁹¹ In an attempt to establish a fire resistance rating, the transoms and doors have been sealed on the guestroom side. This treatment is unsightly as it has an unfinished appearance (fig. 59). Door conditions are further complicated by floors which are out of level (fig. 60).

⁹¹Building permit in the City's Construction/Zoning Office.

3.6 Enabling Systems

3.6.1 Plumbing Systems

Because Congress Hall was not built to operate as a hotel beyond the summer season and because the role of indoor plumbing was undergoing redefinition during the period of its construction, no historic heating or plumbing systems original to the building are evident.

From the period 1879 to the early twentieth century, guests used either private "conveniences" in their rooms or communal facilities which were located on each floor. The need to provide elaborate bathing facilities in the hotel itself were probably obviated by Congress Hall's bath houses which were on premises close to the ocean. A spring well located near the corner of Perry Street and Congress Place may have satisfied domestic water needs and water tanks on roof of the annex building provided water pressure for cooking (fig. 16).

During the early 1920s Congress Hall underwent its first major renovation. The quantity of guestrooms was decreased and the size of the remaining guestrooms was enlarged. The communal bathrooms on the guest floors were removed and in their place bathrooms in adjoining pairs of rooms were installed. A

typical bathrooms consisted of all white enameled cast iron fixtures (pedestal sink, toilet and a tub built into two walls with a shower) in a white tiled room (fig. 61). Guests were afforded private or semi-private facilities, not having to share a bathroom with more than one other guestroom, depending on occupancy.

The next generation of plumbing was installed in the 1950s.⁹² The number and color of fixtures in the renovated bathrooms remained the same, however (fig. 62). Of the 70 guest bathroom, approximately one half dates from the 1920s and one half from the 1950s.

There are many locations at the exterior masonry wall where the retrofitting of the plumbing system is evident. Wood enclosures surround vertical sections of sanitary lines. The annual routine of draining plumbing fixtures for the winter is accomplished by hose bibs located through out the building extending from the ceiling. These fittings are unsightly and present an unusual image overhead.

For a period since World War II, Congress Hall provided guestrooms with heating and air conditioning by means of electric self-contained through units. Evidence of the

⁹²The approximate decade of each installation was initially indicated by Curtis Bashaw on 2 October 1990.

outlets which served these units remain in the guestrooms below the windows.

The state of mechanical climate control and plumbing conveniences is Congress Hall's leading deficiency after structural and finish problems.

If it were possible to continue Congress Hall in seasonal operation only, the plumbing systems in Congress Hall would still require immediate renewal. The current plumbing system does not deliver adequate water pressure to all fixtures. Problems with individual fixtures prevent certain rooms from being rented. Leaks in the system cause damage to finish and sustain mold and mildew blooms.

These operational problems facing the plumbing system compound problems with its installation. Plumbing lines installed next to structural members, especially members which make up the queen post truss, present a threat of accelerating structural failure (fig. 42).

3.6.2 Electrical Systems

Because Congress Hall was built before Cape May had electric service and even before electric service was available, no

system is original to the building.

Presumably the first generation of electric service is a porcelain knob and tube system (fig. 63). It is likely that this installation dates from the 1920s when the building was renovated after sitting idle for several years. The second generation of electric service appears to be the system currently in operation. Because evidence of the knob and tube system can be found in several locations, it is presumed that the second systems was installed as a redundant system and the first system was merely abandoned.

The current service enters Congress Hall from a utility pole on Perry Street via of an underground cable into an above grade concrete masonry block wall transformer vault appended to the south end of the annex. From this point the system splits to leads to several panel locations through out the building serving the annex and each wing of each floor.

Panels for each floor are typically located in the utility room. From these panel locations at the second, third and fourth floors distribution to the circuits is achieved externally by rigid plastic conduits which exit the building and travel up to the level of the veranda roof. At the veranda roof the conduits travel horizontally. For circuits at the fourth floor level, the conduits enter at individual

points for each room. For circuits at the second and third floor levels, rigid metal conduits extend down through the veranda roof along the masonry and enter individual rooms as needed (figures 64 through 66).

Presumably circuits serving the first floor travel in concealed locations below the floor in the crawl space.

Frayed wires pose the greatest single deterioration problem in the electric distribution system. This is especially true where rigid plastic conduits have been placed on the veranda roof. Exposure to the sea air environment coupled with the sun's ultraviolet rays have damaged the conduit to a point where the actual wires which carry current are exposed to view.

3.6.3 Elevator

An elevator has been in operation since the season of 1895.⁹³ The present elevator is an electric automatic four stop model with a cab which appears to be of post World War II vintage. It operates in the original shaftway. Its penthouse is clearly seen protruding above Congress Hall's roof. Fortunately, the protrusion is relatively small (fig. 12).

⁹³Meehan: 178.

The vintage of the cab, the halting manner in which it operates, and the broken windows in the penthouse, indicate it need immediate attention.

Fig. 24: (Top) View of upper mansard roof over Congress Place wing looking southwest.

Fig. 25: (Bottom) View of upper mansard roof over Perry Street wing looking southeast.



Fig. 26: Transition between asphalt and slate roofing shingles at the west corner of the Congress Place wing.

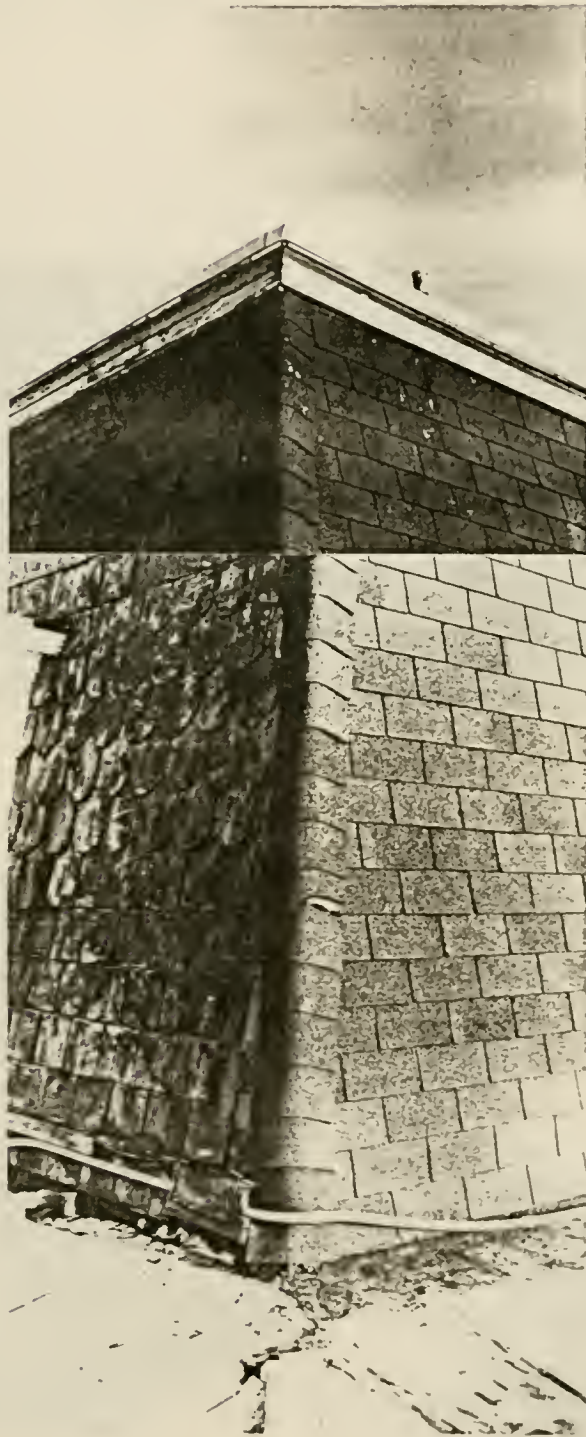


Fig. 27: (Top) Double dormer facing Congress Place. Notice slate shingles to the right and asphalt shingles to the left.

Fig. 28: (Bottom) Pitch applied over slate shingles as a hasty remedy at the mansard roof facing the annex. View looking west.

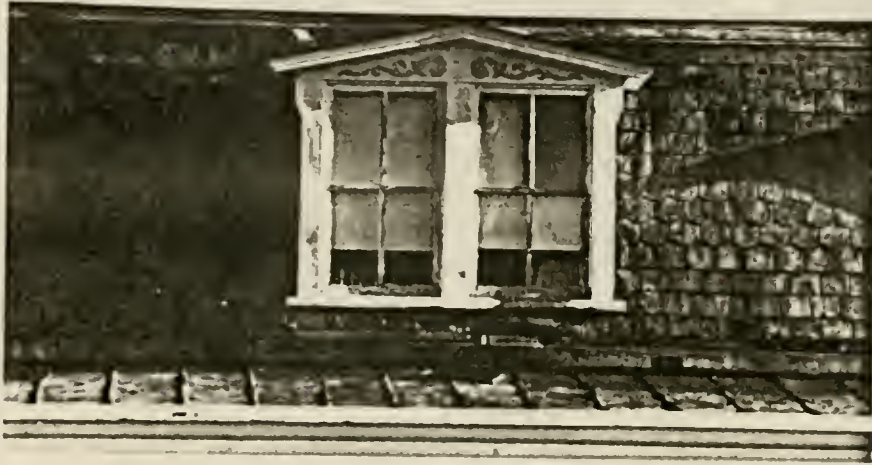


Fig. 29: (Top) Metal roofing failure at the Congress Place veranda roof.

Fig. 30: (Bottom) Roll roofing to metal transition at the south end of the Congress Place wing.

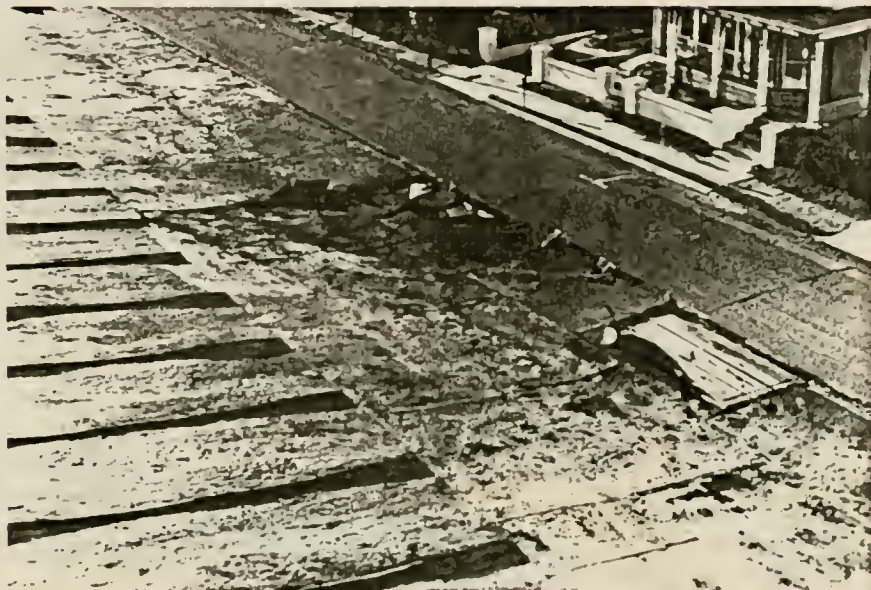


Fig. 31: (Top) Major failure at roll roofing south end of Perry Street wing.

Fig. 32 (Bottom) Dams along veranda roof.

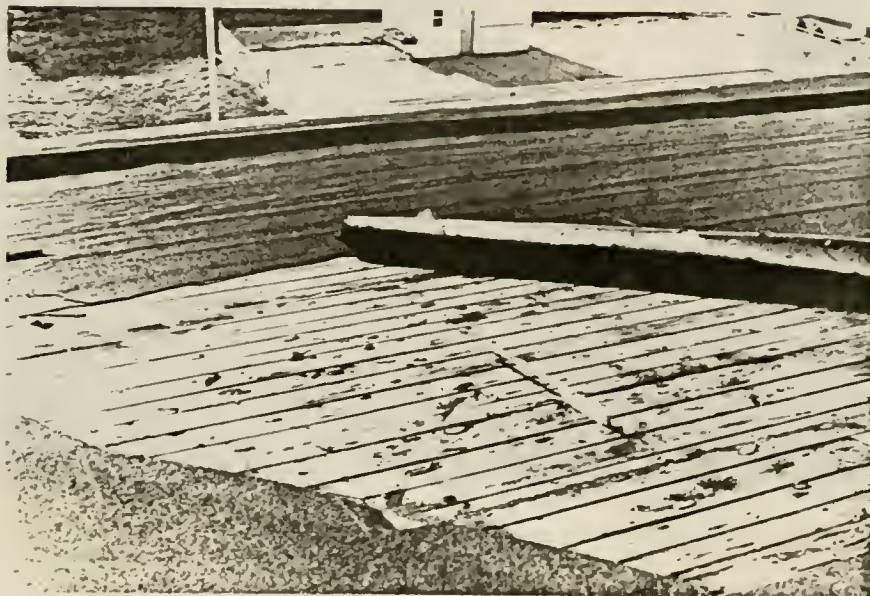
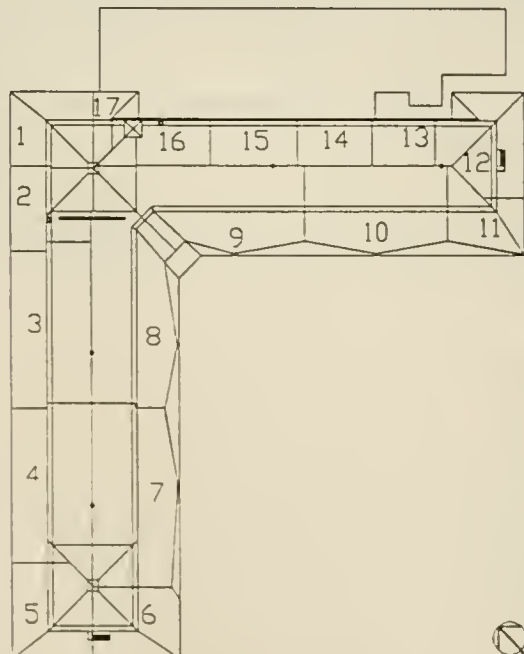


Fig. 33: (Top) Congress Hall's northeast elevation facing the annex looking west.

Fig. 34: (Bottom) Roof drainage key plan (not to scale).



ROOF DRAINAGE KEY PLAN

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 FEET

Fig. 35: Transcribed Agreement to Paint Congress Hall.

S.D. BUTTON
Architect and Superintendent
Rooms 39 and 40, Penn Marble Building
No. 430 Walnut Street
(BELOW FIFTH)
PHILADELPHIA

Item no. 2 in the folder, an agreement:

Philadelphia, April 5, 1880

I hereby agree to paint all of the brick work of the new Congress Hall buildings located at Cape May City, NJ the whole of the outside Brick Work of all of the buildings to have two coats with best quality of white lead paint with linseed oil made in colors to suit the Owners and Architect to have two full coats put on in the best manner and to be done immediately all mortar to be cleaned off of face of wall and to be made a first class job of two coats work and to be done to the satisfaction of the said owners and S. Button Architect for the

(over)

Sum of Nine Hundred dollars \$900 payments to be made as the work progresses leaving 300 dollars to be paid when the entire job is completed to the satisfaction of the Owners and architect all materials workmanship labor freight cartage etc. included in the above estimate.

S. D. Button

Geo. W. Smith
A. M. Morse
Jacob G. Neafie
for the Co.

Cape May County
Clerk's Office
Agreement between
Geo. W. Smith
A. M. More
J.G. Naefie
as to painting the
New Congress Hall
Buildings
Filed April 7, 1880
Jonathan Hand,
clerk

Fig. 36: (Top) Peeling paint due to rising damp at south end of Congress Place wing facing the ocean.

Fig. 37: (Bottom) Detail of flaking paint and delaminating brick face caused by rising damp.

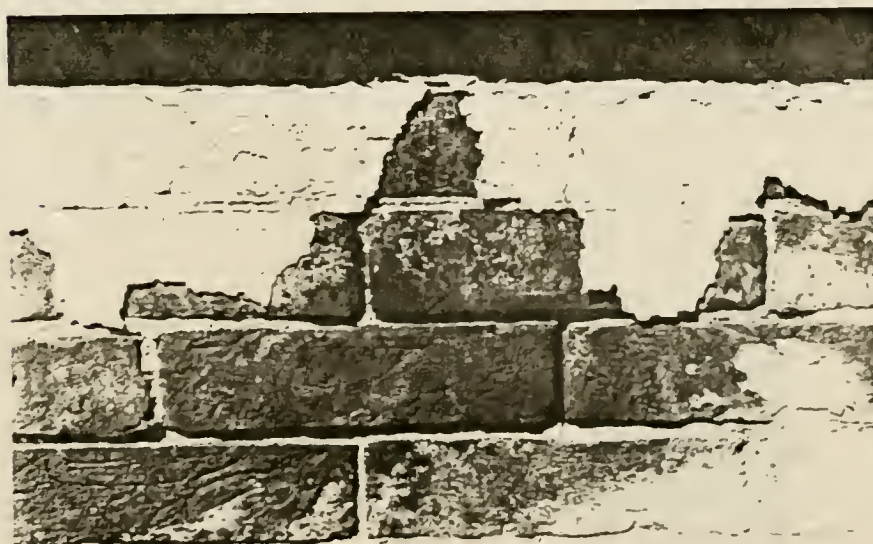
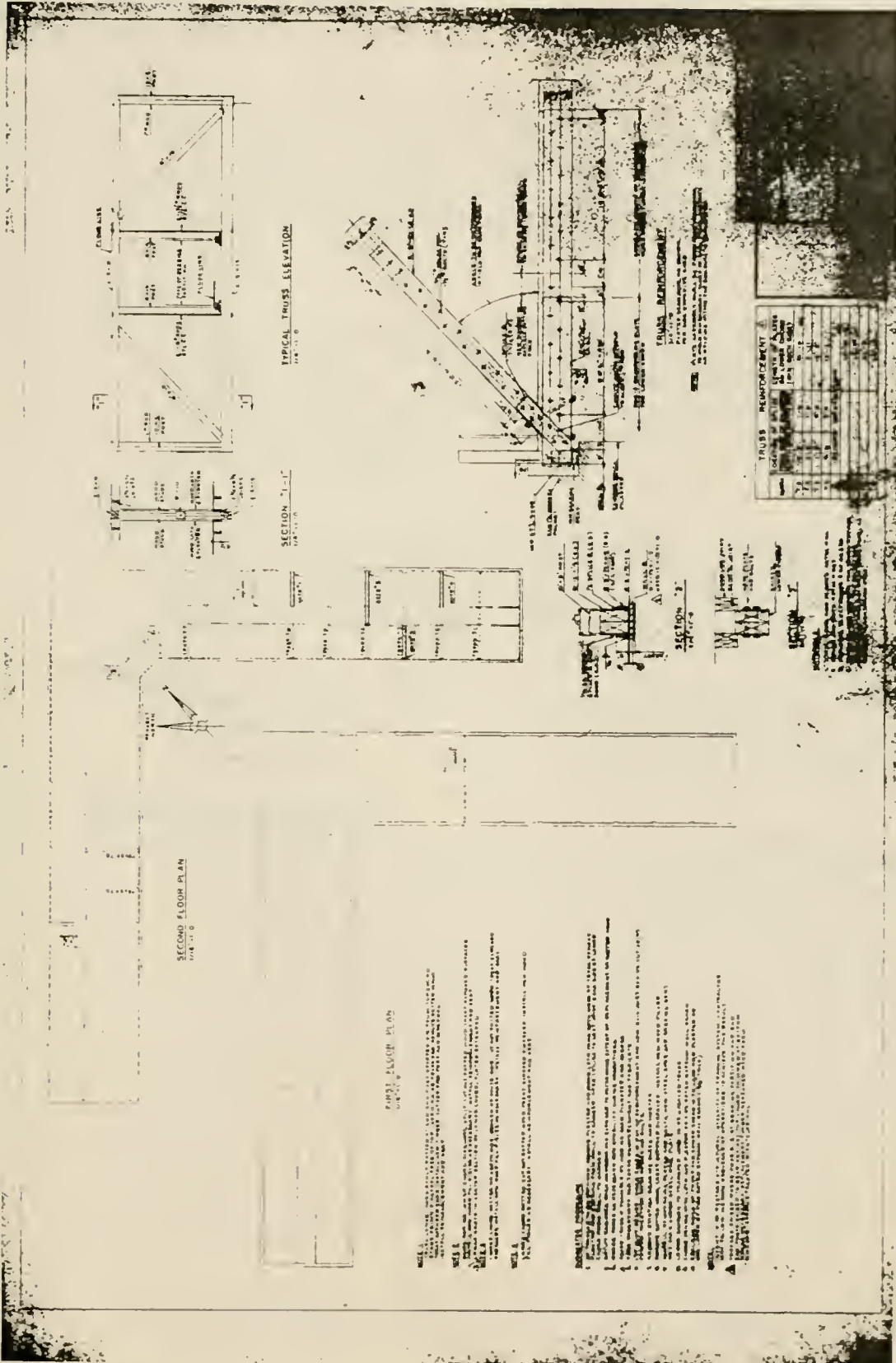


Fig. 38: Keast and Hood Drawing.



Drawing Notes Transcribed from Keast and Hood Drawing.

From lower left corner:

Note 1

Truss lower chord badly rotted at end. End post 2-1/4 from top chord. Studs above diagonal free of top chord. Raise truss end. Remove rotted wood. Treat exposed ends. Install new timber. Cut for end post and diagonal. Install reinforcement and seat.

Note 2

Some rot on lower chord. Diagonal split. Cut out rotted wood. Treat exposed surfaces. Install new wood. Fill pieces as necessary. Install reinforcement and seat. Record information (5-19-80): Large knots in center section of lower chord; plates extended.

Note 3

Lower chord rotted on north side. Broken on south side. Cut out rotted wood. Treat exposed surfaces. Install new wood. Fill pieces as necessary. Install reinforcement and seat.

Note 4

Lower chord rotted. Cut out rotted wood. Treated exposed surfaces. Install new wood. Fill pieces as necessary. Install reinforcement and seat.

Suggested Procedure

1. At trusses to be repaired, remove plaster and wood lath from both sides of truss. Remove plaster and furring from wall to hangar. Open ceiling to next joist each side of lower chord from wall to hangar.
2. Notify engineer when members are exposed to determine extent of replacement of rotted wood.
3. Shore truss as necessary for stability during operations.
4. Raise truss if possible by jacking near pilaster and hangar.
5. Take dimensions for truss reinforcement and fabricate.
6. Cut joist beside lower chord in way of reinforcement, add new 3 x 10 joist beside cut joist, fasten together with spikes or bolts.

7. Remove existing bearing block and mortar.
8. Remove rotted wood, treat exposed surfaces, install new wood filler.
9. Install reinforcing plates and bolts, new steel shoe and bearing seat. Dry pack under steel wall plate.
10. Lower shoring to transfer load to reinforced truss.
11. Close ceiling with lath and plaster or fire rated gypsum wallboard.
12. Enclose sides of truss and lower chord with lath and plaster or one layer of fire rated gypsum wallboard (5/8" thick).

Note:

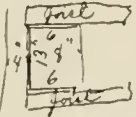
Intent is to restore structural integrity of framing system. Contractor may follow his own sequence of operations to achieve this result.

Record information (5-19-80): Trusses raised where possible at bearing partition and end. End posts raised to bear against top chord, shimmed at bottom where necessary. Replacement timber seasoned wood from "Windsor" surface treated with "Cuprinol."

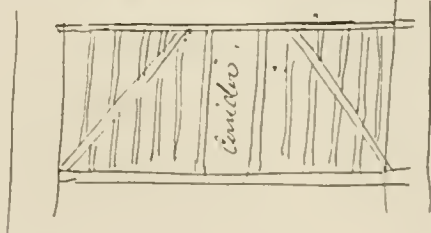
Fig. 39: Reproduced from specifications dated 1879.

At wall in Dining Room - which is with an iron row
 of 600 4 three inch bridging -

for the completion of the Building and the
 Various kind of work
 The joists for floor throughout to be 3 x 12
 double same every four feet in the 2^d 3^d & 4th
 stories with a tie rod between of 3/4" Diam iron
 with nuts and Washers & bearing plates complete
 all double joist to be Spruce or white pine
 Tie rods to be upset at the ends. The 1st floor
 joist to seat upon a Girdler formed of three
 3 x 12 joist spiked together except the Dining
 Room Girdler which must have four joist
 spiked together. The 1st floor to have
 two rows of 2 x 3" bridging. All other floors
 to have three rows of bridging same size all
 well nailed with 10 penny nail. Centre all
 the joists at 16 in 2^d & 3^d floor to have
 80 Archrod to each floor 7/4 x 1 1/4" iron
 28 in long as per sketch

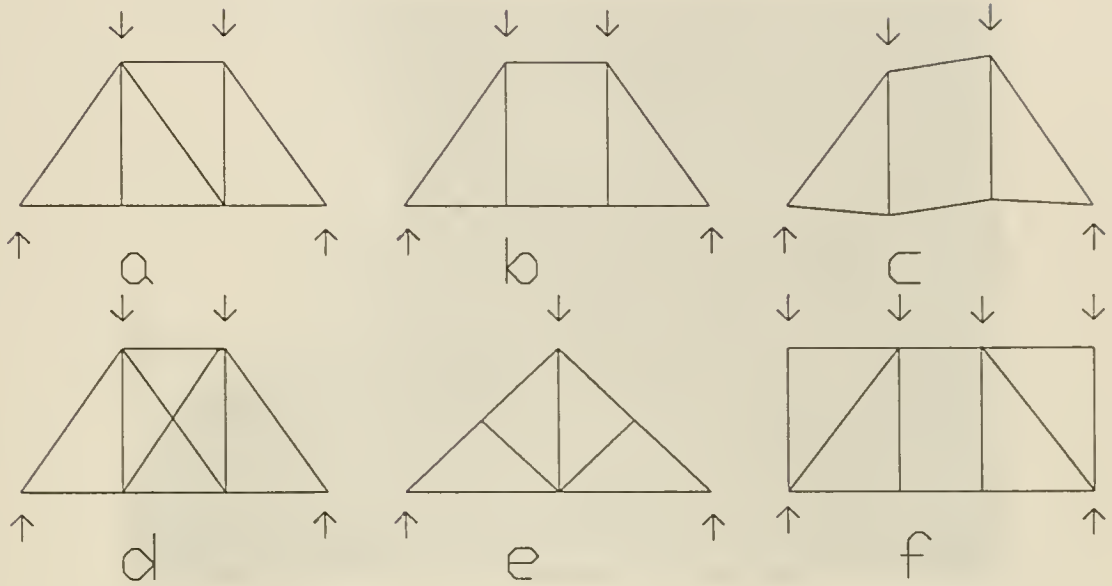


Truss all over partitions as per sketch



The Studding to be 3 x 4 throughout the
 Building strips all outside walls as mentioned
 in the description of the building Stud
 to be Centred, at 16 in

Fig. 40: Complete and Incomplete Frames.



- a = Complete Frame
- b = Incomplete Frame
- c = Distorted Frame
- d = Redundant Frame
- e = King Post Frame
- f = Queen Post Frame

Fig. 41: (Top) Detail view looking down on bearing end of truss T4 at east end. Note proximity and number of plumbing lines.

Fig. 42: (Bottom) Shoring at dining room of truss T6, east end.



Fig. 43: (Top) A portion of a typical truss open to view with the back side of the adjacent plaster wall's lath open to view.

Fig. 44: (Bottom) Detail of failure at bearing end as viewed from the dining room.

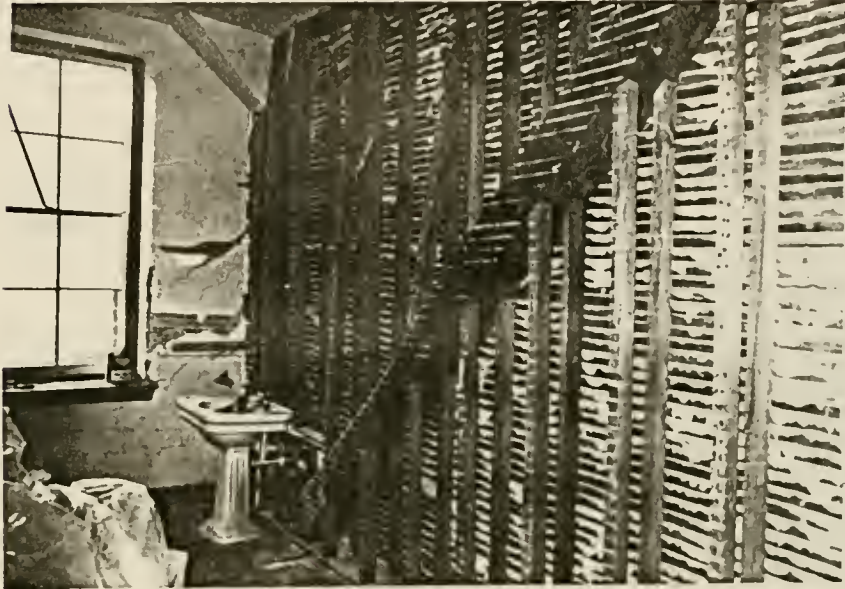


Fig. 45: (Top) View of new steel plates bolted to reinforce the truss.

Fig. 46: (Bottom) Detail view of above.

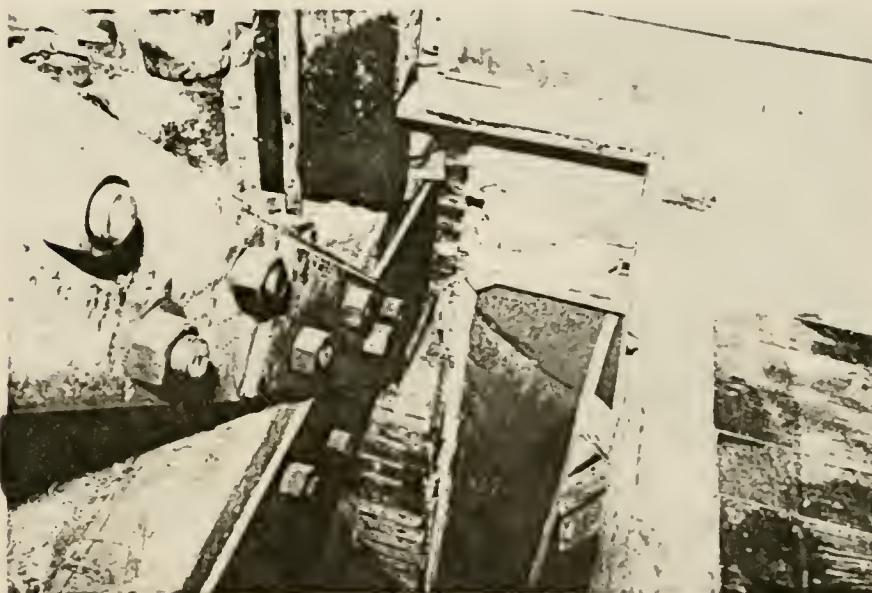
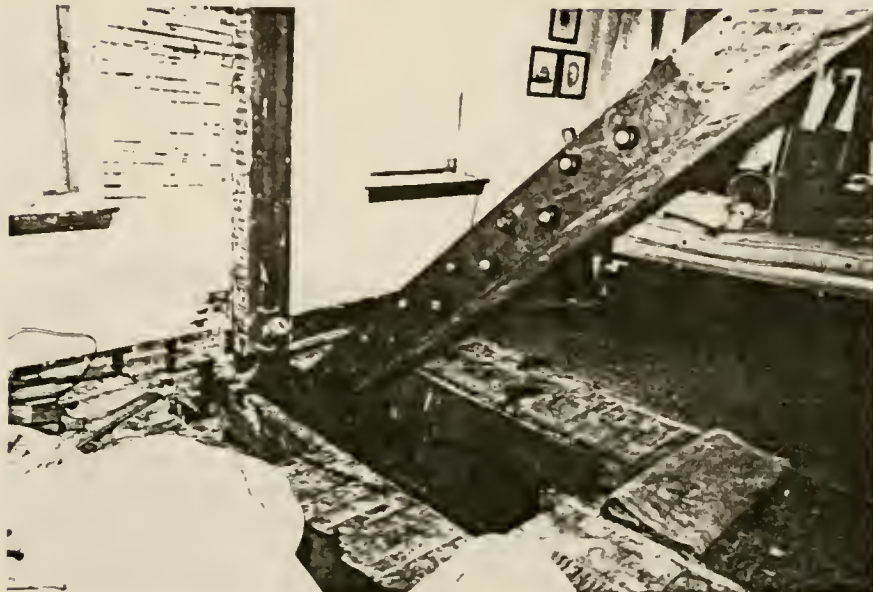


Fig. 47: (Top) General view of truss bottoms as viewed from dining room. Truss T4 is open to view.

Fig. 48: (Bottom) Detail view of typical 3 by 8 inch (actual) floor joists.

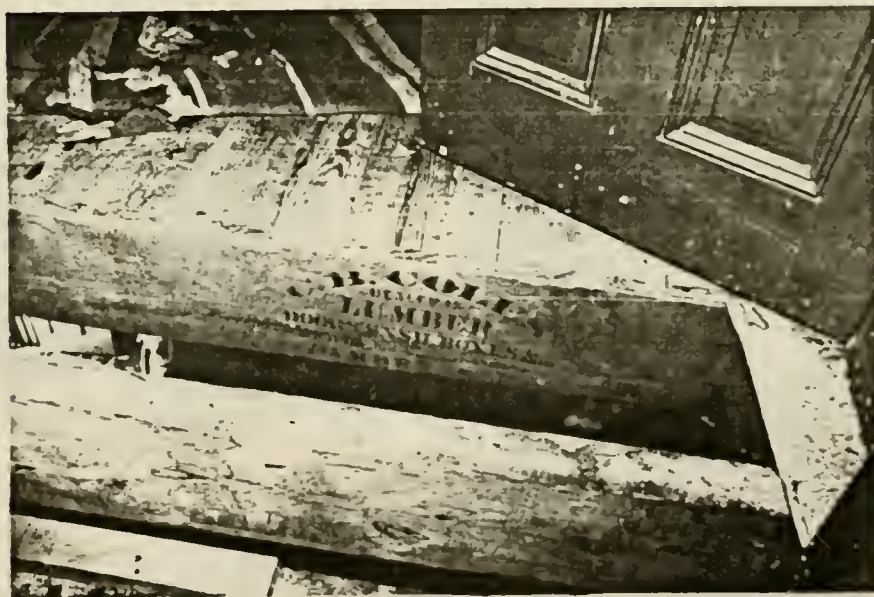


Fig. 49: (Top) Column base detail.

Fig. 50: (Bottom) Concrete breakage.

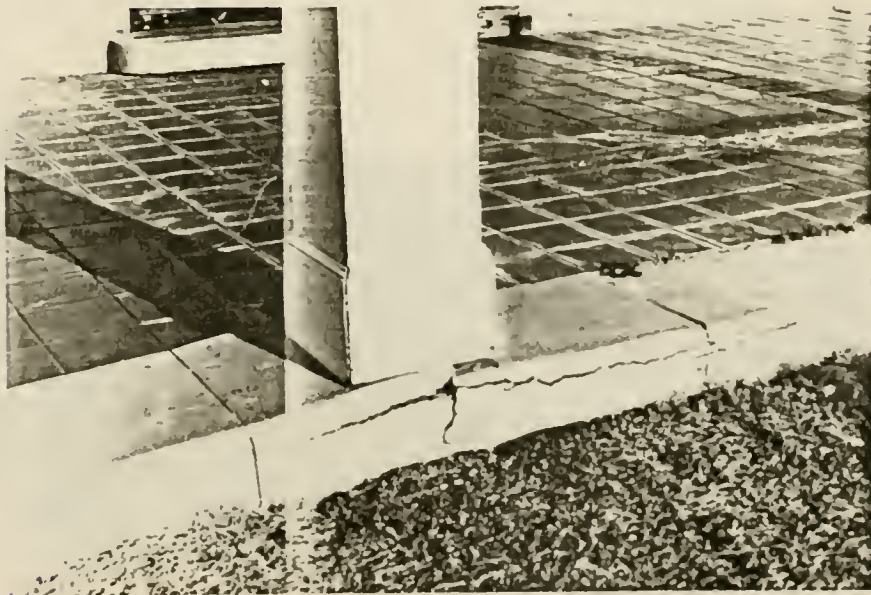


Fig. 51: (Top) Cornice and column detail along end of Congress Place wing.

Fig. 52: (Bottom) Overall view of Congress Place wing looking south.

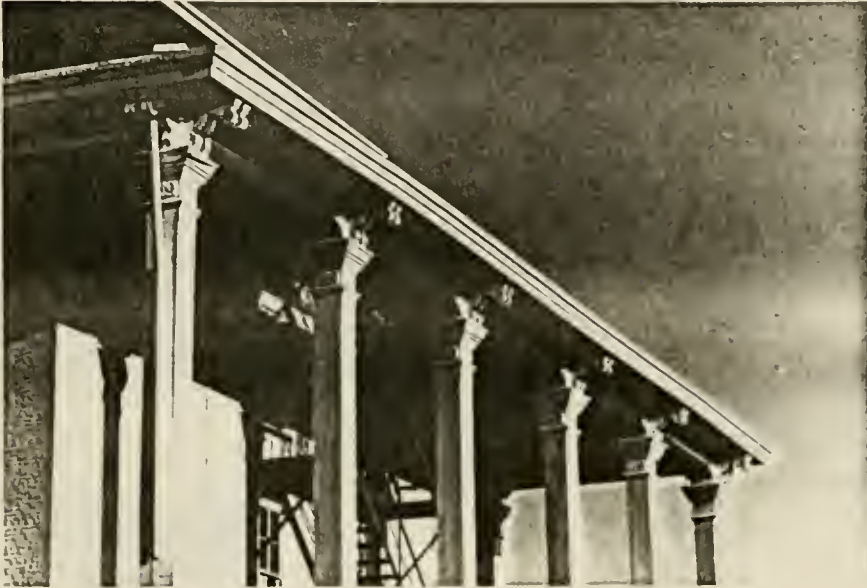


Fig. 53: (Top) Deteriorated second floor balcony at Congress Place wing closest to main entrance.

Fig. 54: (Bottom) Typical railing detail at second floor balconies.

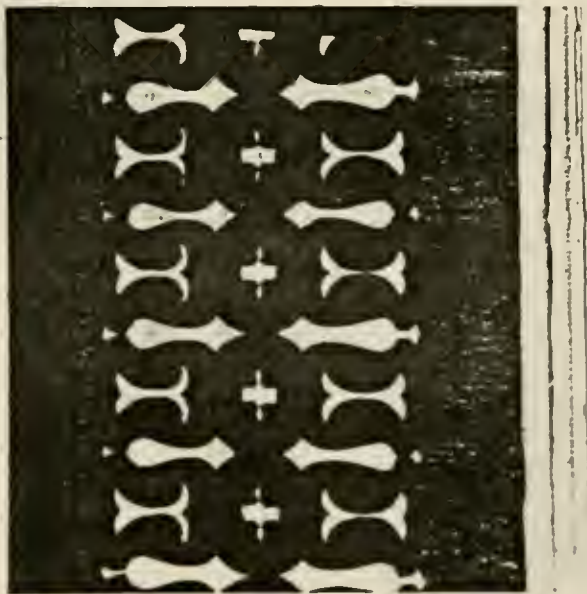
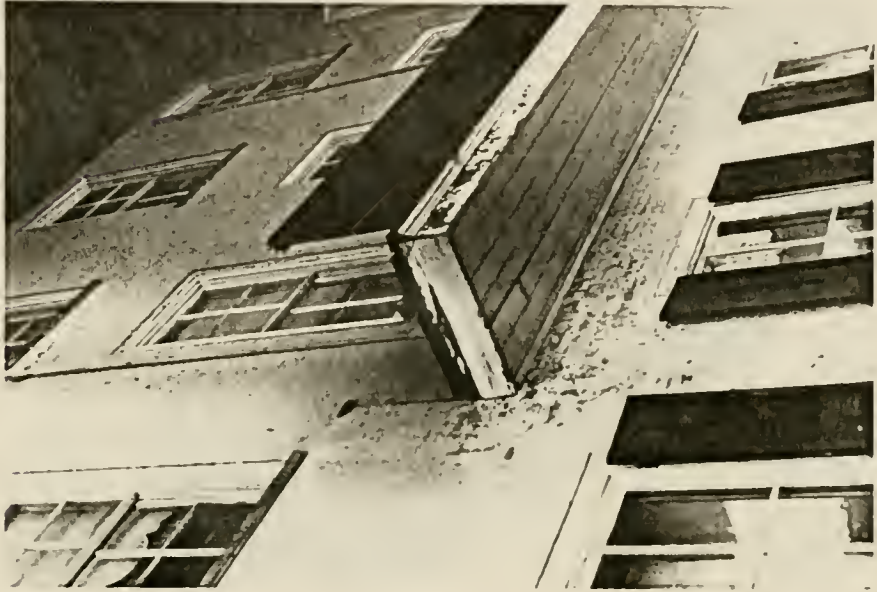


Fig. 55: (Top) Corroded fire escape at the end of the Congress Place wing.

Fig. 56: (Bottom) Installation of Perry St. wing fire escapes in 1980.

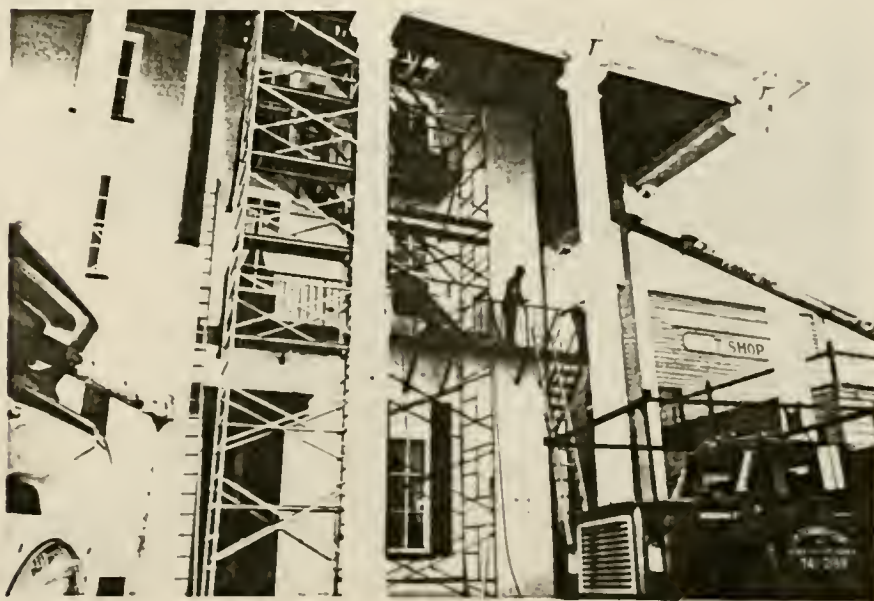


Fig. 57: (Top) Mildew bloom in the bathroom of room 306.
Fig. 58: (Bottom) Mildew bloom in guestroom 316.



Fig. 59: (Top) Applied sheet metal and sealed transom as a means of increasing the fire separation between rooms and corridor.

Fig. 60: (Bottom) The entrance door to guestroom 307 indicates the severity of localized deflections.

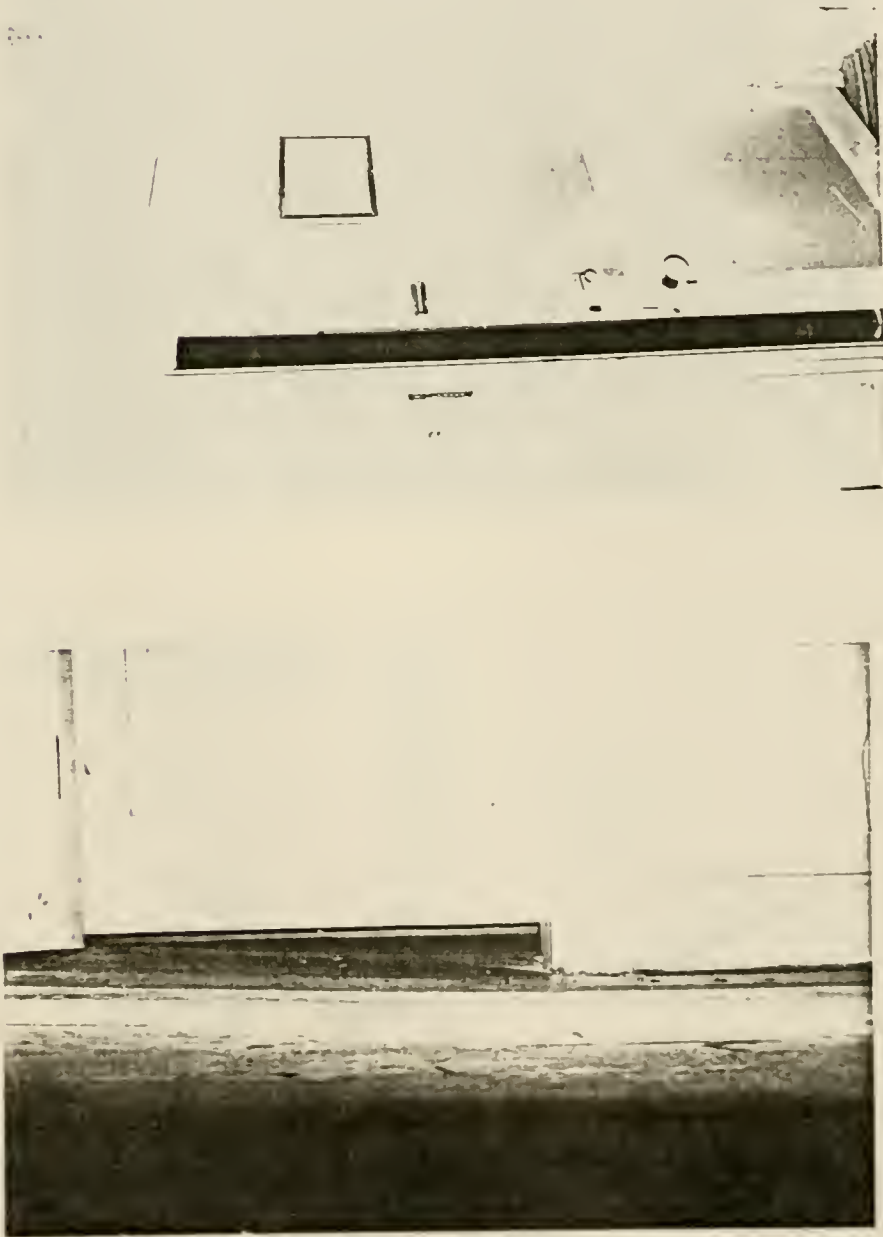


Fig. 61: (Top) A typical 1920s bathroom installation in room 423.

Fig. 62: (Bottom) A typical 1950s bathroom installation in room 316.

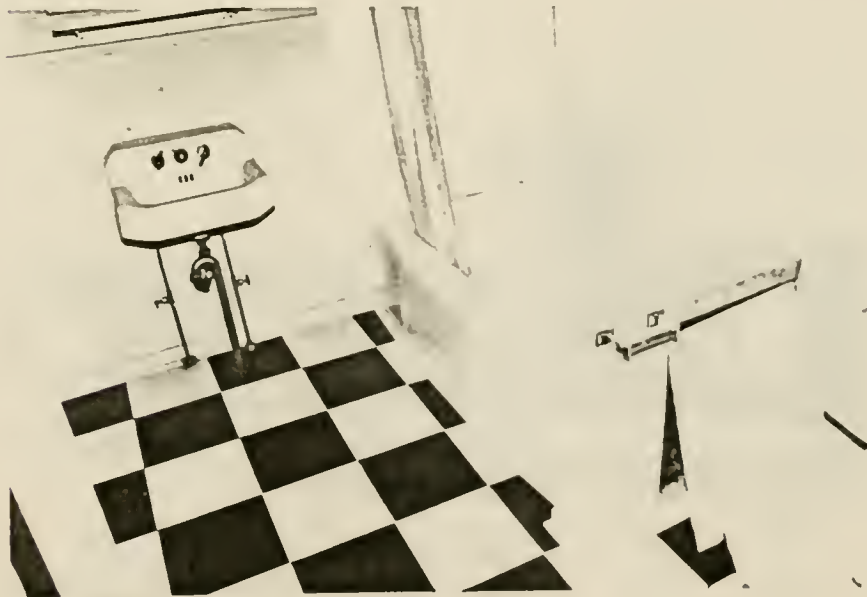


Fig. 63: (Top) Knob and tube wiring running in void between truss and floor framing.

Fig. 64: (Bottom) Electrical conduits as they cross over the mansard roof. The elevator penthouse is to the right.

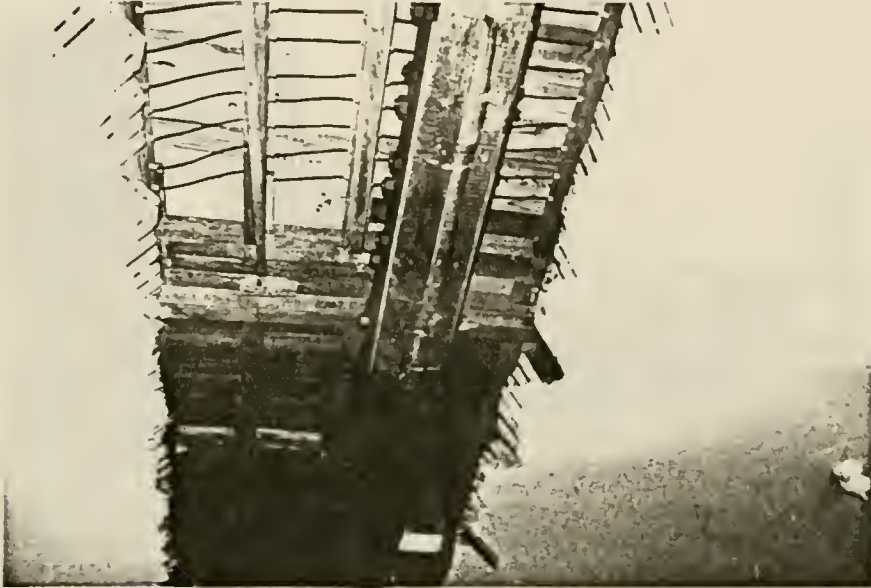
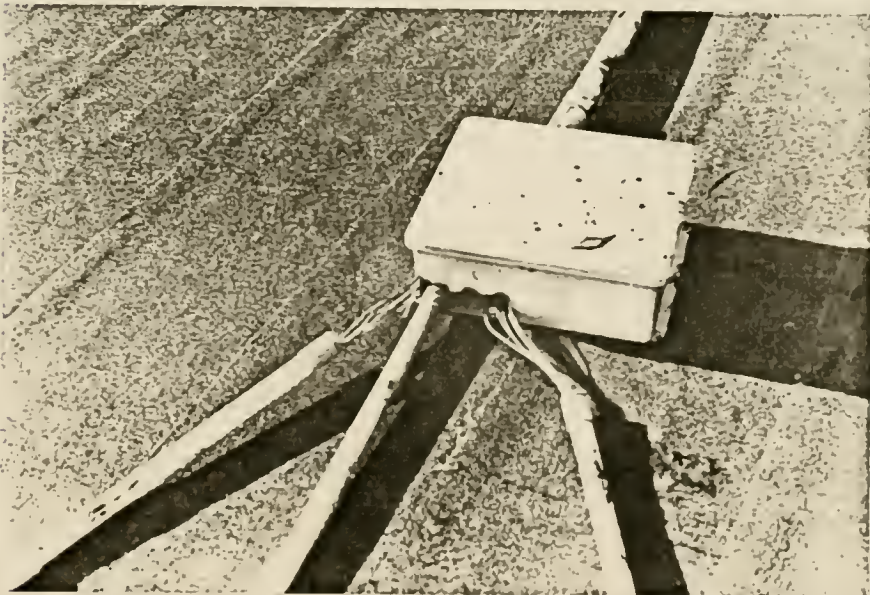


Fig. 65: (Top) Plastic electric conduits as they lie on the veranda . View looking northeast.

Fig. 66: (Bottom) Broken plastic electric conduits and junction box on the veranda roof.



PART III INTERVENTION

4.0 Initial Recommendations

The continued seasonal occupancy of Congress Hall is crucial. Occupancy assures that some of the minimum efforts needed to keep this structure viable will be made. Without occupancy the passive and active systems which keep the building erect and defend it from fire may fail without notice and hasten the building's demise. Occupancy, however, implies that minimum standards to insure public safety will be met.

4.1 Immediate Action and Emergency Repairs

In order to maintain Congress Hall in a viable condition for rejuvenation, emergency repairs in the short term are key. These priority items are:

1. Replace broken glass , patch roof and take other remedial efforts to seal the building's envelope from water.
2. Correct storm water drainage system to prevent infiltration.
3. Disable all electrical service until the safety of

the system can be determined.

4. Test emergency systems such as smoke detectors and alarms to determine their readiness as soon as the above item permits. Detection systems should be operational year-round, not just during seasonal occupancy.

The above list will only maintain a minimal level of safety for the property. Items such as glass replacement and drain, leader and gutter maintenance and corrective work will insure protection against the greatest ambient threat, water infiltration. Problems regarding storm water removal range from troublesome at the locations where water is not carried to grade at the veranda columns causing rot in the heavy timber posts to potentially disastrous where diverted rain water into the building by a malfunctioning drain may cause irreparable damage at a Queen Post Truss over the dining room. These measures are vital to the structure whether or not occupancy will continue.

If occupancy in the near term is contemplated as well, these items must be added to the above list:

5. Replace wiring electric wiring as warranted.
6. Evaluate structural system. The Queen Post trusses which were repaired over ten years ago ought to be

reopened for inspection. A unique opportunity is available in that the structural engineer, Carl Baumert of Keast and Hood, still is available for follow-up inspection and evaluation. Corrective measures and shoring should be based on this evaluation.

7. Replace fire escapes and augment emergency egress lighting.

The evaluation of the plumbing system and its leaks is also important but not necessarily crucial to public safety. Otherwise these measures must be taken altogether. Of these items, one should not take precedent over the others. The tentative state of the electrical system may prove so problematic that its complete replacement is warranted. The mere appearance of the electric circuitry may justifiably warrant the closure of the building as an unsafe structure.

4.2 Maintenance

The role of routine maintenance cannot be undervalued. The casual approach which maintenance has been given in the recent past appears to accelerated the building's rate of deterioration. These routine inspection of the systems and materials discussed in the preceding section would have obviated the need to take emergency action now. The fire escapes are definitive examples. They are approximately 10 years old and already require replacement. There are numerous examples of steel fire escapes in the same sea air environment which are twice as old and still quite serviceable due to their routine care.

A scheduled maintenance program should be established for all items mentioned slated for emergency repair and should grow as the list of stabilized features grows.

4.3 Structural Reinforcement

The most obvious structural deficiency of the building is the permanent and distinct deflection of the Queen Post trusses. This condition and the structurally indeterminate nature of the Queen Post trusses constitute a substantial disadvantage. For these reasons long term prophylactic measures to insure at least limited viable role of the existing structural frame are recommended. For example, the installation of continuous steel girders at or below the first floor ceiling level centered between the trusses and the construction of masonry piers to support them may be an effective way of augmenting structural stability. Such a redundant system must be carefully designed and installed as it would be a rigid system. In order to be successful it would have to do its work in deference the existing deteriorated truss system.

The possibility of termite infestation, although not discovered, warrants inspection as the clearance between ground floor framing and grade is low.

5.0 Feasibility Study

The feasible uses or reuses of Congress Hall must acknowledge the multiple forces which have shaped Congress Hall. The building's physical organization, monumental scale, context, history and traditional role in Cape May must be reckoned with local zoning regulations and prevailing building codes.

5.1 Uses and Occupancies

Consideration for any use of Congress Hall beyond residential could not be in keeping with the all of the previously mentioned aspects. These physical and social constraints would happily limit Congress Hall to a structure of primarily residential use with at least some other complementary uses, such as ancillary retail and services on the premises.

Adaptation to use as multiple dwelling structure, R-2 as defined by BOCA, is possible.⁹⁴ It would require substantial reconfiguration of the interior to facilitate domestic

⁹⁴Building Officials and Code Administrators, International, The BOCA National Building code/1990, 11th edition (Country Club Hills, IL: Building Officials and Code Administrators International, 1989): 51. BOCA is the prevailing general building code throughout the State of New Jersey.

layouts. Cellular or repetitive residential units would not require the vast support of the first floor spaces. To keep these first floor spaces in their present use would be problematic as their separation from the residential units above would be necessitated. To alter the first floor to accommodate additional residential units would deny the building's original layout.

Reuse or continued use as a hotel, R-1 as defined by BOCA, would make the greatest sense in terms of the building's configuration and internal organization. Continuation as a hotel coincides with contemporary space planning allocations and preserves the building's and site's traditional use. To this end the following tables establish the contemporary design criteria for a hotel of similar size as Congress Hall. This will be adequate to make gross comparisons.

TABLE 5.1A Floor Assignments for a Typical Hotel of 100 Guestrooms

General Data and Approximations

	Typical Hotel 100 Rooms	Congress Hall Hotel (existing layout)
Height of building above ground	Ground floor plus 6 typical guest floors 75 ft	Ground floor plus 3 typical guest floors and attic 60 ft
Ground floor area	10,000 sf	16,000 sf *
Typical guest floor area	6,000 sf	16,000 sf
Guestrooms per typical floor	17	31
Stairways on the typical floor	2	3 **
Elevators (1 guest and 1 service)	2	1
Typical guest floor area per room	350 sf	515 sf

* Not including annex and connector which have a total gross area of 24,000 square feet on four levels.

** Not enclosed and not including fire escapes.

⁹⁵Table adapted from "Preliminary Schedule of Space Allotments and floor assignments" by Frank Harrison Randolph, P.E. in Joseph De Chiara and John Hancock Callener, editors, Time-saver standards for building types, 3rd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1990): 991-992.

TABLE 5.1B

Space Allotments for a Typical Hotel of 100
Guestrooms

	Productive area sf	Support area sf
<u>Public space</u>		
Lobby and front office		1,100 g
Lounge		600 g
Corridors adjoining (total of above, 1,900 sf)		
Men's toilet for guests		150 g
Women's toilet for guests		100 g
Women's restrm for guests		100 g
Coat checkroom		120 g
Bellman's checkroom		40 g
<u>Concessions</u>		
Barber shop	180 b	
Valet shop	100 b	
<u>Rental spaces</u>		
3 shops, 800 sf ea.	2,400 g	
3 storage rms, 200 sf ea.	600 b	
<u>Food/beverage</u>		
Main dining, 90 seats	1,500 g	
Main kitchen		1,100 g
Bake shop		200 g
Coffee shop, 50 seats	800 g	
Bar and cocktail lounge	750 g	
Private dining rm (250+500 sf)	750 g	
Banquet-ballroom	1,400 b	
Banquet-ballroom foyer		450 b
Banquet-ballroom storage		140 b
Banquet-serving pantry		350 b
Employees' dining room		220 b
Steward's storeroom		400 g
Beverage storerooms		180 b
China, glass, and silver storage		300 b
Receiving room		180 g
Garbage room		80 g

⁹⁶Ibid.

TABLE 5.1B Continued

	Productive area sf	Support area sf
<hr/>		
<u>Guest-rooms</u>		
102 rooms, each 250 sf incl. bath, closet and vestibule	25,500 t	
Auxiliary space, add 40% of above for corridors, stairs, elevators, maid's closets, walls, and partitions.		10,200 t
 <u>General spaces</u>		
Manager's office		140 g
Secretary's office		100 g
Accounting office		150 g
Sales and reservations office		140 g
Photocopy room		40 g
Linen room		350 b
Laundry		700 b
Men's toilet and locker rm		360 b
Women's toilet and locker rm		360 b
Maintenance rm		400 b
Furniture storage		250 b
Records storeroom		250 b
General storeroom		200 b
Boiler room		600 b
Water-heater tank space		150 g
Fuel storage		200 g
Transformer vault		100 g
Refrigeration compressor rm		400 b
Fan rooms, ventilation equipment		400 b
 <u>Circulation, misc. spaces</u>		
Add for basement corridors, walls, stairways, and elevators		2,500
Add for ground floor stairways and elevators		500
 <u>Total Productive area</u>		
	33,980 SF	
 <u>Total Listed support area</u>		
		23,800 SF
<hr/>		
<u>Grand Total</u>		57,780 SF

Key: basement (b), ground floor (g), typical guest floor (t), not applicable (-), not summarized (*).

Although Congress Hall has a lower floor to area ratio than the contemporary hotel model described, the typical guest floor area per guestroom compares favorably. In the detailed space allotment breakdown Congress Hall again fairs favorably. The gross area sustaining 102 rooms is 35,700 square feet (productive and support areas) or 350 square feet per room. Congress Hall's 99 rooms occupy 51,000 square feet (productive and support areas) or 515 square feet per room. This extra margin may adequate area for suites, vertical services, additional means of egress and amenities common to hotels in resort locations.

Non-guestroom space in the contemporary hotel model accounts for 22,000 square feet or 38% of the total gross area. The corresponding areas in Congress Hall accounts for 37,000 square feet or 42% of the total gross area. As with the guestroom spaces, the extra margin of 4% (3,500 square feet) can be utilized to provide enhanced amenities and perhaps permit the continued separate operation of retail shops in the annex which front Perry Street.

5.2 Zoning

A review of applicable municipal zoning ordinances explains the degree site's underbuilt nature and its development limitations under present regulations.

TABLE 5.2A Zoning Data

Street Address:	251 Beach Avenue
Block / Lot:	1028 / 1.01
Zoning District:	Commercial C-2, Beach Business
Historic District:	Primary
Building Area:	Main building of 64,000 gross square feet on four levels plus a structurally independent annex and connector structure of 24,000 square feet on four levels. Total building area is 88,000 square feet.
Site:	3.76 acres (163,786 square feet).
Building/Lot Coverage Ratio:	22% (main building, annex, connector and veranda area divided by 3.76 acres).

Congress Hall's limitations regarding use, area and bulk are determined by its location in the C-2 zoning district as described in the following tables.

TABLE 5.2B Zoning Use Limitations⁹⁷

Uses by Right:

1. Apartments above commercial uses.
2. Arts, crafts, fine arts and other studios for teaching.
3. Bicycle rental.
4. Business, administrative and professional offices.
5. Commercial recreation limited to tennis and other racquet sports, miniature golf, dance halls, billiard parlor, bowling alleys, health clubs, theatres, but excluding drive-in theatres.
6. Drinking establishments. licensed for on-premises consumption.
7. Eating establishments except drive-in facilities with curb service.
8. Hotels and motels.
9. Libraries, art galleries, museums.
10. Personal services such as, but not limited to, beauty and barber shops.
11. Public parking lot or garage except that no automobile service facilities or gasoline sales are permitted.
12. Retail sale of goods or prepared food.
13. Taxi stations.
14. Travel agency.

Accessory Uses:

1. Off street parking facilities.
2. Private and semi-private recreation facilities (subject to further qualifications).
3. Storage of goods (subject to further qualifications).
4. Uses which are clearly incidental and accessory to the uses by right and conditional uses, including dining or other service facilities, conference and meeting facilities and exhibit space in conjunction with hotels and motels, provided such uses may not occupy the equivalent of more than 25 percent of the total floor area of the principal use.

Conditional Uses:

1. None.

⁹⁷City of Cape May Zoning Ordinance: 19-39 to 19-41.

TABLE 5.2CZoning Area and Bulk Limitations

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Lot size	2,500 sf	
Lot size per hotel unit	600 sf	
Building setback line	10 ft	
Lot width	25 ft	non-residential uses
	40 ft	hotel/motel use
Habitable floor area	500 sf	apartments above commercial uses
	300 sf	per unit including bath
	330 sf	per unit with cooking facility
Rear yard setback	12 ft	
Side yard setback	None or 6 ft., if any	non-residential uses
	6 ft	hotel/motel use
Parking		One per guest sleeping room plus one per each peak shift employee (hotel/motel use).

	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Building height	35 ft	
Lot coverage	60 %	commercial uses
	75 %	hotels and motels
	80 %	mixed uses

The possible redevelopment scenarios permitted on this site vary widely. The approved permitted uses, such as parking lots, miniature golf courses, bowling alleys and drinking establishments, would destroy the site's context. It would be all too like the context common elsewhere on the New Jersey shore. Unfortunately, the immediate context is already compromised by automobile oriented pseudo-victorian buildings of various quality constructed within the last generation.

Although the likelihood of sub-division and permitted uses in

this zoning district threaten the building and site, the structure's demolition would not be permitted without the Historic Preservation Commission's permission.⁹⁸ The Commission could delay the issuance of a demolition permit by 6 months. The delay is designed to permit further search for alternatives to demolition. Even so, the redevelopment possibilities of the site would have any but the most concerned owners contemplate razing the building.⁹⁹

In a worse case scenario, using a minimum lot size of 2500 square feet, the 163,786 square feet Congress Hall site could yield approximately 65 lots or as many as many as 272 hotel units.¹⁰⁰ Ironically, single or multiple dwelling construction in this zone is specifically prohibited.

⁹⁸Although this did not protect the Evening Star Villa which was demolished in 1988 with the Commission's permission. The owners who demolished the building did not provide any documentation of financial burden, they merely claimed it at their hearing.

⁹⁹This is not to suggest that any owner, present or would be, would pursue such a course of action either deliberately or by neglect, however great the temptation may be.

¹⁰⁰Cape May Zoning Ordinance, Section 19-16.2 Table 1 (revision date 30 March 1988): 19-40.

5.3 Building Code Compliance/Adaptation

5.3.1 BOCA National Building Code Requirements

In many key respects Congress Hall does not comply with the prevailing building code in the City of Cape May and the State of New Jersey, The BOCA National Building Code/1990. Limitations in area and height as dictated by use group and construction type according to the following table.

TABLE 5.3A BOCA Limitations Summary

<u>Category</u>	<u>Boca requirement</u>	<u>Existing compliance</u>
Use Group	R-1, hotels where occupancy in primarily transient in nature, making use of the facilities for a period of less than 30 days and R-2, boarding house and dormitory, at upper floors of annex [309.2].	Mixed uses, including R-1, R-2 and M
Construction Classification	3A, noncombustible/combustible and protected [Table 401]	A composite structure with protected combustible structure. ¹⁰¹
Height Limit	3 stories and 40 ft. [Table 501].	4 stories and approx. 60 ft. at highest point.

¹⁰¹Assumes all existing plaster and 5/8" thick sheetrock covering wood structural members affords a one hour (minimum) fire resistance rating.

TABLE 5.3A Continued

<u>Category</u>	<u>Boca requirement</u>	<u>Existing compliance</u>
Height Exception	Installation of an automatic sprinkler system throughout the building will permit the above height limit to be increased by twenty feet to a maximum of 4 stories [503.1].	Sprinkler installation would permit existing height.
Area Limit	9,600 sf per floor [Table 501].	Existing 16,000 sf per floor exceeds limit. Does not include 24,000 sf of first floor area (main building plus annex).
Area Exception	Installation of an automatic sprinkler system throughout the building will permit the above area limit to be increased by 100% [502.3].	Sprinkler system installation would permit as much as 19,200 sf per floor.
Area Reduction	20% reduction of area limit required for floors above the second floor for construction type 3A [Table 501.4].	Third and fourth floors will not be able to exceed 15,360 sf without a variation. Area on the third floor is 15,598 sf, slightly less on the fourth floor.

Compliance with the BOCA code's limits is not possible without the installation of an approved fire suppression system, segregation of the main building from the annex and connector with a fire rated assembly and the granting of a variation for a marginal excess areas on the third and fourth floors.

A deliberated approach to the rehabilitation of Congress Hall to meet these requirements is warranted. Compliance with prevailing building code requirements can be achieved in this manner thus protecting the welfare of the public, assuring the building's continued use, and maintaining the buildings historic character simultaneously. Two such qualitative assessment approaches exist through the BOCA code.

Section 513.0, "Special Historic Buildings and Districts" of Article 5, "General Building Limitation", states:

"513.1 Approval: The provisions of this code relating to the construction, repair, alteration, enlargement, restoration and moving of buildings or structures shall not be mandatory for existing buildings or structures identified and classified by state or local government authority as historic buildings, subject to the approval of the board of appeals, when such buildings are judged by the code official to be safe and in the interest of public health, safety and welfare regarding any proposed construction, alteration, repair, enlargement and relocation. All such approvals shall be based on the applicants's complete submission of professional architectural and engineering plans and specifications bearing the professional seal of the designer."

This blanket exemption provides a means to minimize any negative impact necessitated by complying with building codes. It appears to be seldom used, however. Perhaps this is because the burden of discretion is placed on the local code official.

The alternate approach is found under Article 32, "Repair,

Alteration, Addition to, and Change of Use of Existing Buildings." Although it not intended to be used in conjunction with the other articles of the BOCA code, it provides a potentially meaningful way to arrive at an equivalent degree of occupant safety as would the other sections of the BOCA code. Under Article 32 a structural analysis, as recommended in this report's approach to emergency repairs, must be provided to determine a structure's adequacy. The structural capacity that would be required of Congress Hall under this article is summarized in the following table.

TABLE 5.3B Minimum Uniformly Distributed Live Loads¹⁰²

<u>Space</u>	<u>Live loads in pounds per sf</u>
Hotel Guestrooms	40
Public Rooms	100
Corridors serving Public Rooms	100
Corridors	80

5.3.2 Fire Code

New Jersey's Uniform Fire Code is based on The BOCA Basic/National Fire Prevention Code/1984 with modifications. It requires structures in use to retrofit in order to be compliant as structures in continual use are not exempt.

¹⁰²Table applies provided that impact loading and concentrated loads do not govern.

Congress Hall Hotel is, as defined by the code, a type Bg life hazard use as it is a hotel exceeding three stories but has fewer than 100 rooms. As such it is subject to inspections at least once every 12 months. This building type and use group was to have been code compliant by June 16, 1989.¹⁰³ The following table summarizes the Uniform Fire Code requirements as they apply to Congress Hall.

Table 5.3C Uniform Fire Code requirements¹⁰⁴

Fire suppression system:

Required for use group A-2, nightclubs as defined by BOCA, with an occupancy load of 50 or greater.¹⁰⁵

Required at all ballrooms, use group A-3, which exceed 12,000 sf and are located within use group R-1.

A Fire Suppression System is not required for a kitchen exhaust system when serving completely enclosed ovens, steam tables or auxiliary equipment which does not produce grease laden vapors. Equipment venting grease laden vapors shall be equipped with an automatic fire suppression system.

¹⁰³ NJAC 5:18, Subchapter 4 - Fire Safety Code, p. 18-80, 4.1 "Code adopted; scope" (d).

¹⁰⁴ Uniform Fire Code (N.J.A.C. 5:18): Subchapter 4, Fire Safety Code.

¹⁰⁵ A fire suppression system Page 18-85 4.7 "Fire Suppression Systems" (a) Required at use group A-2, nightclubs as defined by BOCA, with an occupancy load of 50 or greater.

TABLE 5.3B Continued

All storage and workshops and rubbish, laundry and similar rooms shall be equipped with a suppression system or a smoke detector system connected to an approved continuously staffed location in the building unless a 1 hour fire separation is achieved.

Standpipe System:

Not required as this building is not higher than six stories above grade.

Automatic Fire Alarms:

Required in R-1 Use Group. Ionization or photoelectric type approved. All common area detectors shall be wired to electric meter. Battery operated detectors permitted in guestrooms.

Manual Smoke Alarms:

Required in accordance with the Uniform Construction Code.

Means of Egress:

All stories utilized for human occupancy having an occupancy load of 500 or less shall be provided with two means of egress. All occupants shall have unobstructed access to the fire escape without having to pass through a room subject to locking.

Egress width capacities shall permit 113 occupants at stairways and 150 occupants at doors, ramps and corridors per unit (with an automatic suppression system).

All means of egress shall be equipped with artificial lighting. Means of egress lighting must be connected to an emergency electrical system when serving Use Group R-1 containing more than 25 sleeping rooms. All means of egress shall be indicated with a self-illuminating "Exit" sign (with a minimum of one hour illumination in the event of power loss).

Means of egress doors shall not be required to swing in the direction of travel if the occupant load is less than 50; have self-closing hardware when opening onto a passageway or exit stair; all existing doors (guestrooms doors and all others) shall meet the 15 minute rating as established by HUD regulations.

TABLE 5.3B Continued

Existing doors - Guestroom doors and doors separating fire-rated areas scheduled for re-use shall be rehabilitated to meet the minimum 15 minute rating as established by HUD Rehabilitation Guidelines No. 8
Replacement doors - To be replaced with doors having a 20 minute label or shall be 1 3/8 inch solid core wood.

Protection of Interior Stairways and Other Vertical Openings:

All interior stairways and other vertical openings connecting four to six floor levels shall be enclosed with approved assemblies having a fire resistance rating of not less than one hour with approved opening protective.

Compliance with the State's fire code for continued use as a hotel would entail a partial installation of a fire suppression system (sprinkler) were occupancy exceed certain limits as in the dining room and enclosing all vertical opening would have to be segregated as to prevent vertical draft. Therefore, the three internal stairways would have to be enclosed.

5.3.3 Barrier-Free Accessibility

The existing degree of non-compliance with Subchapter 7 of the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) of the State of New Jersey regarding Barrier-Free (Handicapped) accessibility is not great.

Table 5.3D Barrier-Free Requirements

Applicability:

Provisions apply to all buildings unless exempted by NJAC 5:23-7.3 [NJAC 5:23-7.2(a)].

Exemptions:

Historic buildings and sites shall be exempted with regard to those provisions of the subchapter which would change the historic nature of the building [NJAC 5:23-7.3(a)7].

Alterations:

No alterations shall be made which reduce or diminish the degree to which any building or facility meets the criteria of the subchapter [NJAC 5:23-7.8(a)]. When existing entrance, stairs, elevators, or toilet rooms are altered to be constructed in accordance with the subchapter without regard to percentage relationship between cost of alterations and the physical value of the building or facility. However, this requirement shall not apply where it would necessitate alterations of load bearing structural members [NJAC 5:23-7.8(b)].

Use Group R-1:

All public facilities shall be made accessible including, but not limited to, entrances, parking lots, lobbies, vending machine areas, laundry areas, game rooms, conference facilities, exercise rooms, locker rooms, restrooms and swimming pools. Furthermore, four percent (rounded off to the next whole number) of units and the route of travel to each unit shall be made accessible.

This structure need not request a waiver of a barrier-free access ramp. All public functions are at grade level and would, therefore, not necessitate a great alterations to accommodate the physically disabled. The number of hotel room required to be barrier-free, a total of four, can easily be accommodated on the first floor of the Congress Place wing as there are six rooms at that end.

Congress Hall is an indispensable link to Cape May's 19th century eminence. Its position in the center of the City's beachfront district, its monumental form and its survival largely intact can only serve to increase its importance as time continues. While not an example of supreme artistry, Congress Hall is a masterful piece of urban design and planning. It is an icon of a time, place and a way of vacationing which has no greater peer in Cape May.

While, or even before, physical stabilization can begin all parties concerned ought to seek ways to minimize the non-physical considerations which undermine its future. A partnership between the Owners and the City, however, seems unlikely. Unfortunately Congress Hall's precarious state lie with its economic viability and the economic times. If real estate pressures heat up, Congress Hall's property might become too valuable for its own good. If the economy slackens a little but not too much, Congress Hall may see its third century a few years away in a battered but albeit

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29 Nov 1860, p. 3, col. 2	Cake's house under construction
12 May 1864, p. 2, col. 2	Cake's purchase
10 Dec 1874, p. 3, col. 1	
24 Dec 1874, p. 3, col. 4	Cake's personality
02 Oct 1875, p. 3, col. 3	
02 Sep 1876, p. 3, col. 1	Knight's other properties
25 Jan 1879, p. 3, col. 3	New Congress Hall
07 Aug 1879, p. 2, col. 1	Enlargement
06 Mar 1880, p. 3, col. 1	
29 May 1880, p. 3, col. 1	
10 Apr 1880, p. 2, col. 1	Button's music pavilion
14 Aug 1889, p. 3, col. 1	Improvements
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7.6 Figure Credits

- Fig. 1 Thomas: cover jacket.
- Fig. 2 Thomas: 81.
- Fig. 3 Alexander: 22.
- Fig. 4 Morgan: 9.
- Fig. 5 From a map purchased by the author.
- Fig. 6 Morgan: 4.
- Fig. 7 Meehan: 173.
- Fig. 8 Meehan: 174.
- Fig. 9 Thomas: 83.
- Fig. 10 Thomas: 88.
- Fig. 11 Meehan: 178..
- Fig. 12 Morgan: 29.
- Fig. 13 Morgan: 29.
- Fig. 14 Morgan: 28.
- Fig. 15 Morgan: 28.
- Fig. 16 Atlas obtained from the City of Cape May and photographed by author.
- Fig. 17 Atlas obtained from the City of Cape May and photographed by author.
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- Fig. 32 Photographed by author.
- Fig. 33 Photographed by author.
- Fig. 34 Computer generated graphics by author.
- Fig. 35 Obtained from the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
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- Fig. 37 Photographed by author.

Fig. 38 Drawing obtained from Keast and Hood.
Fig. 40 Computer generated graphics by author.
Fig. 41 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
Fig. 42 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
Fig. 43 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
Fig. 44 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
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Fig. 56 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
Fig. 57 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 58 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 59 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 60 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 61 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 62 Photographed by Glenn Green.
Fig. 63 Photograph obtained from Keast and Hood.
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Fig. 66 Photographed by author.

8.1.1 through 8.1.8

Obtained from Photoduplication Services at the
Library of Congress.

8.2.1 and 8.2.2

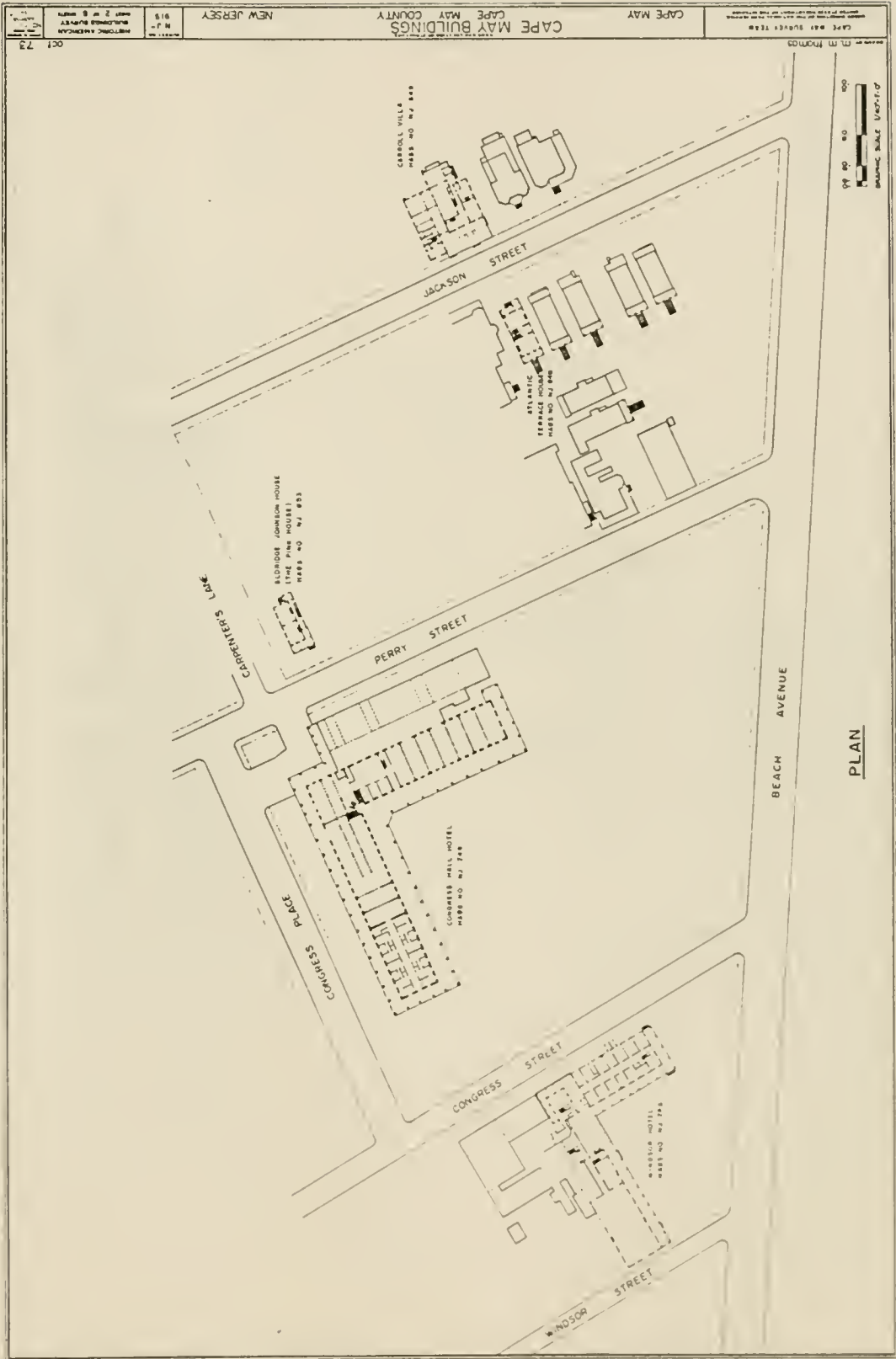
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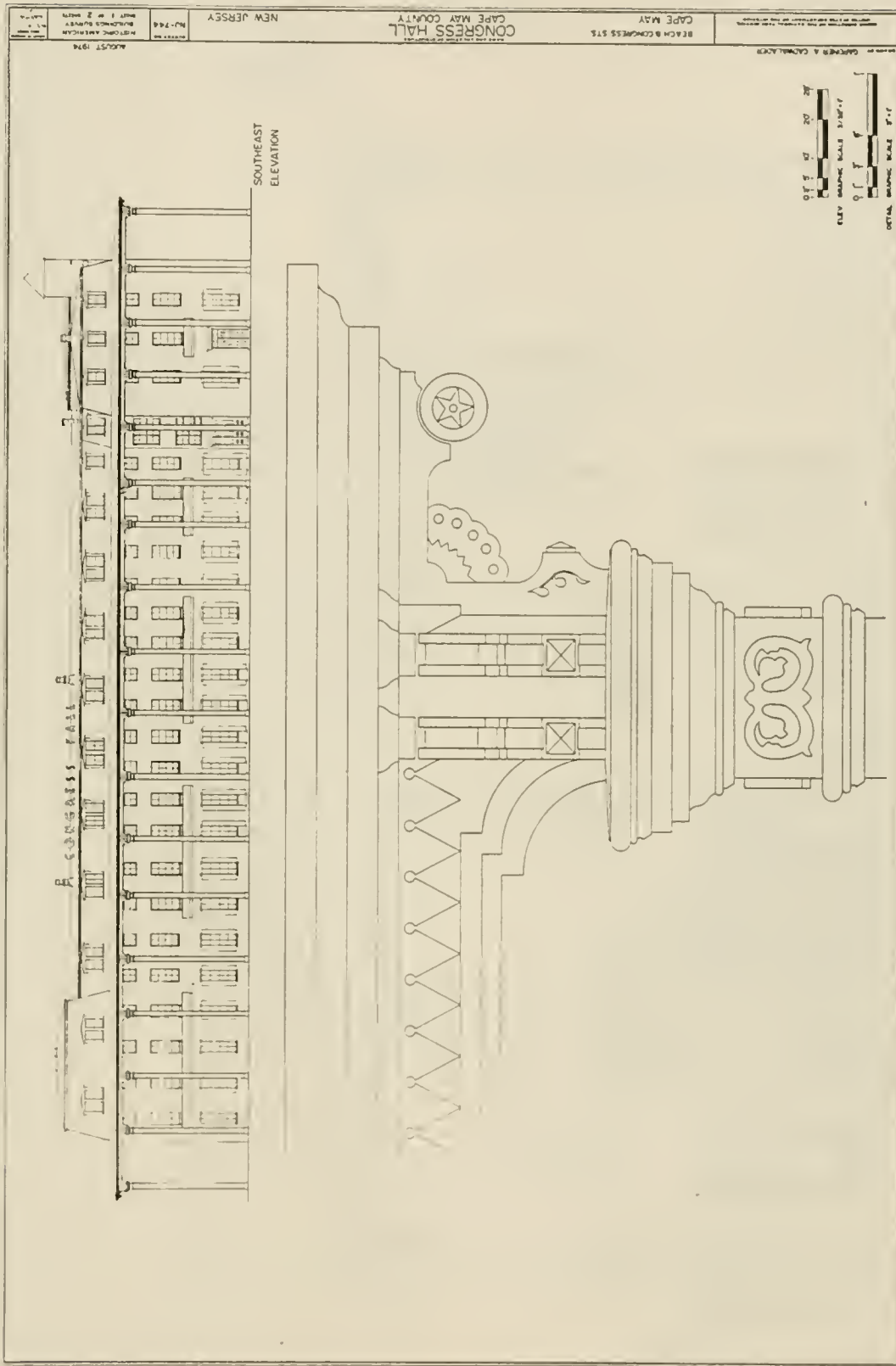
Computer generated graphics by author.

- 8.0 Appendices
- 8.1 Historic American Buildings Survey Documentation
 - 8.1.1 Area Map
 - 8.1.2 Area Site Plan
 - 8.1.3 Southeast Elevation with Column Capital Detail
 - 8.1.4 Detail of Southeast Elevation
 - 8.1.5 Overall View of Southeast
 - 8.1.6 Detail View of Southeast Elevation
 - 8.1.7 Detail View of First Floor Windows with Jib Doors
 - 8.1.8 View along Veranda looking Northwest
 - 8.1.9 Architectural Data Form

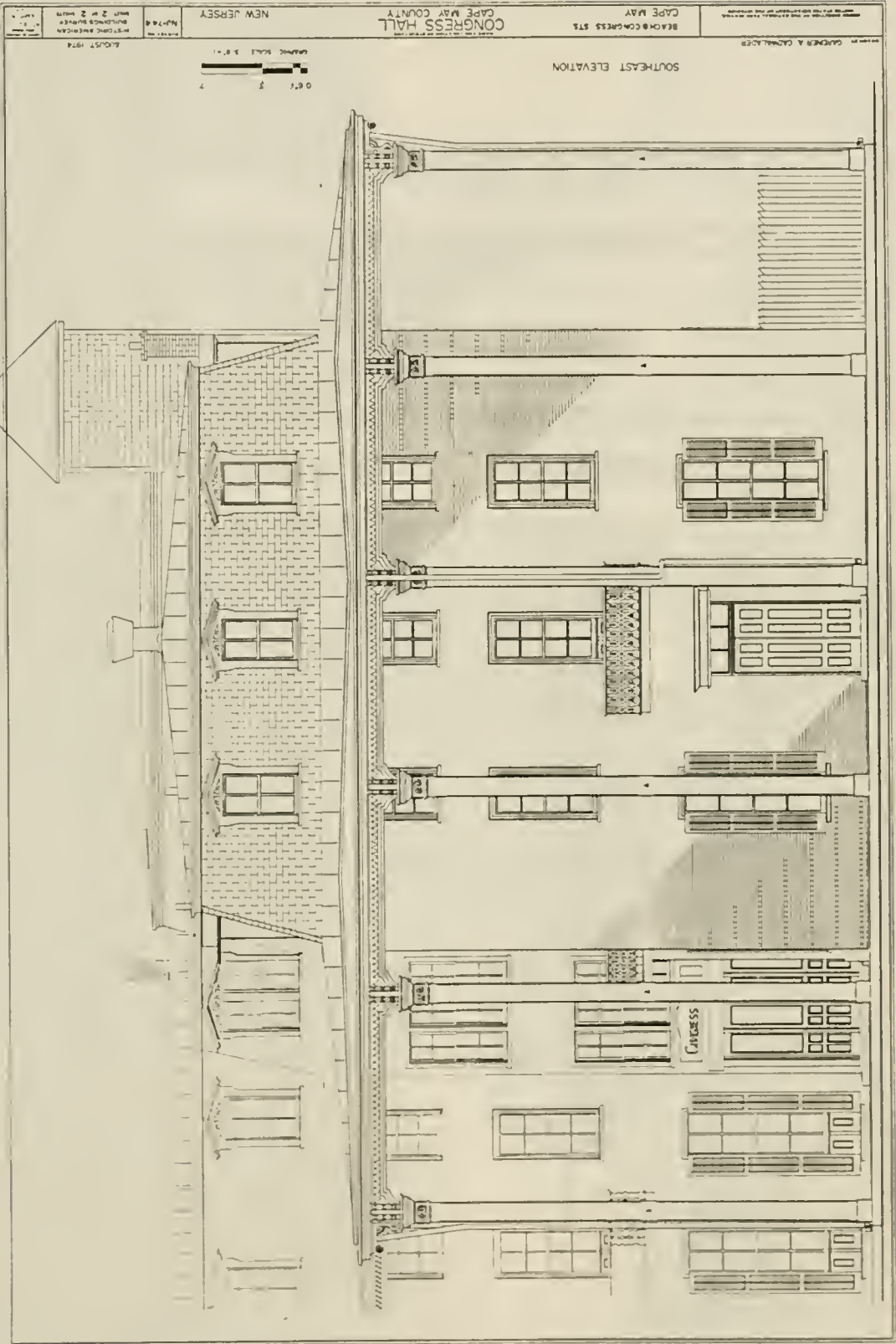
8.1.2 Area Site Plan



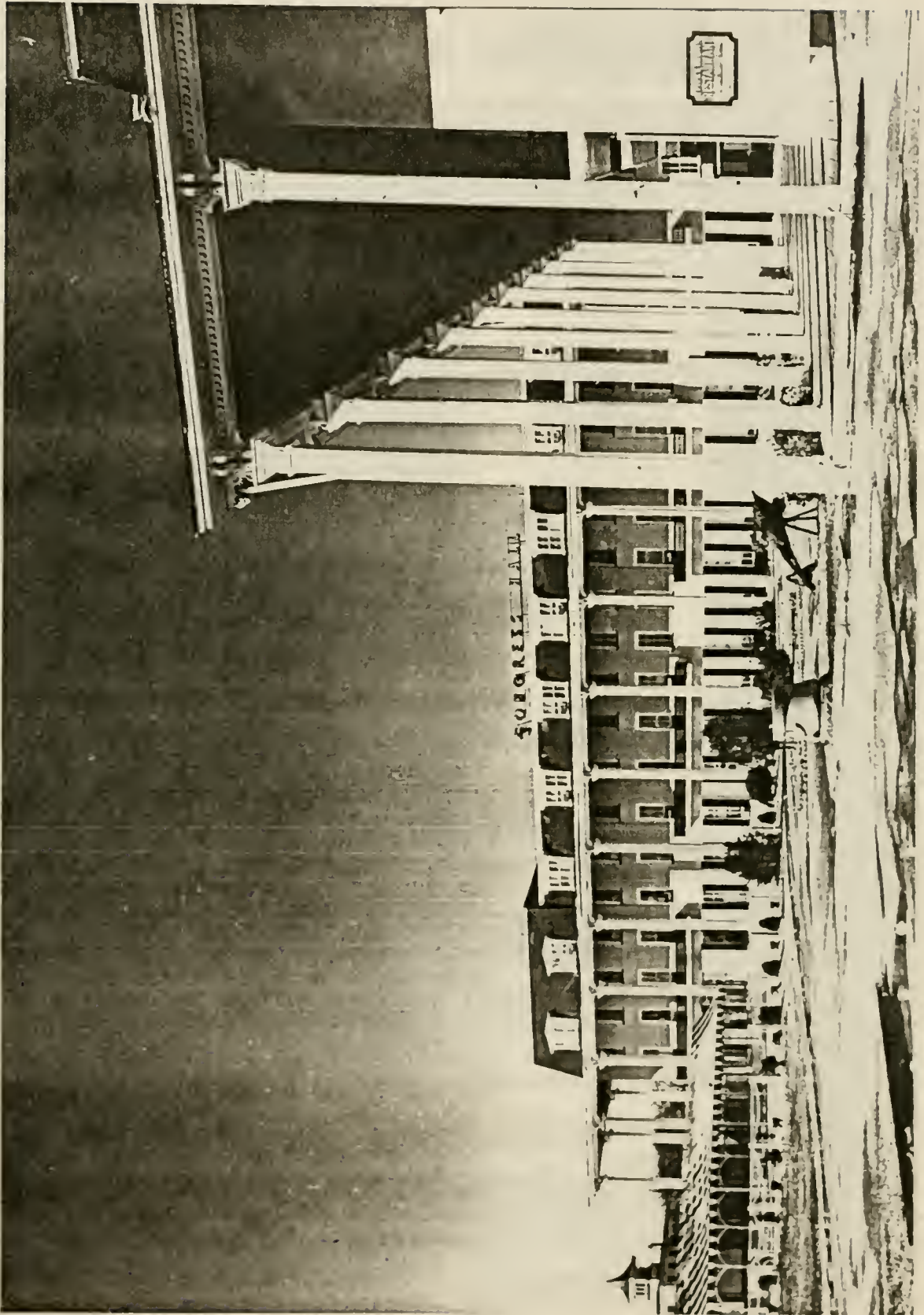
Southeast Elevation with Column Capital Detail

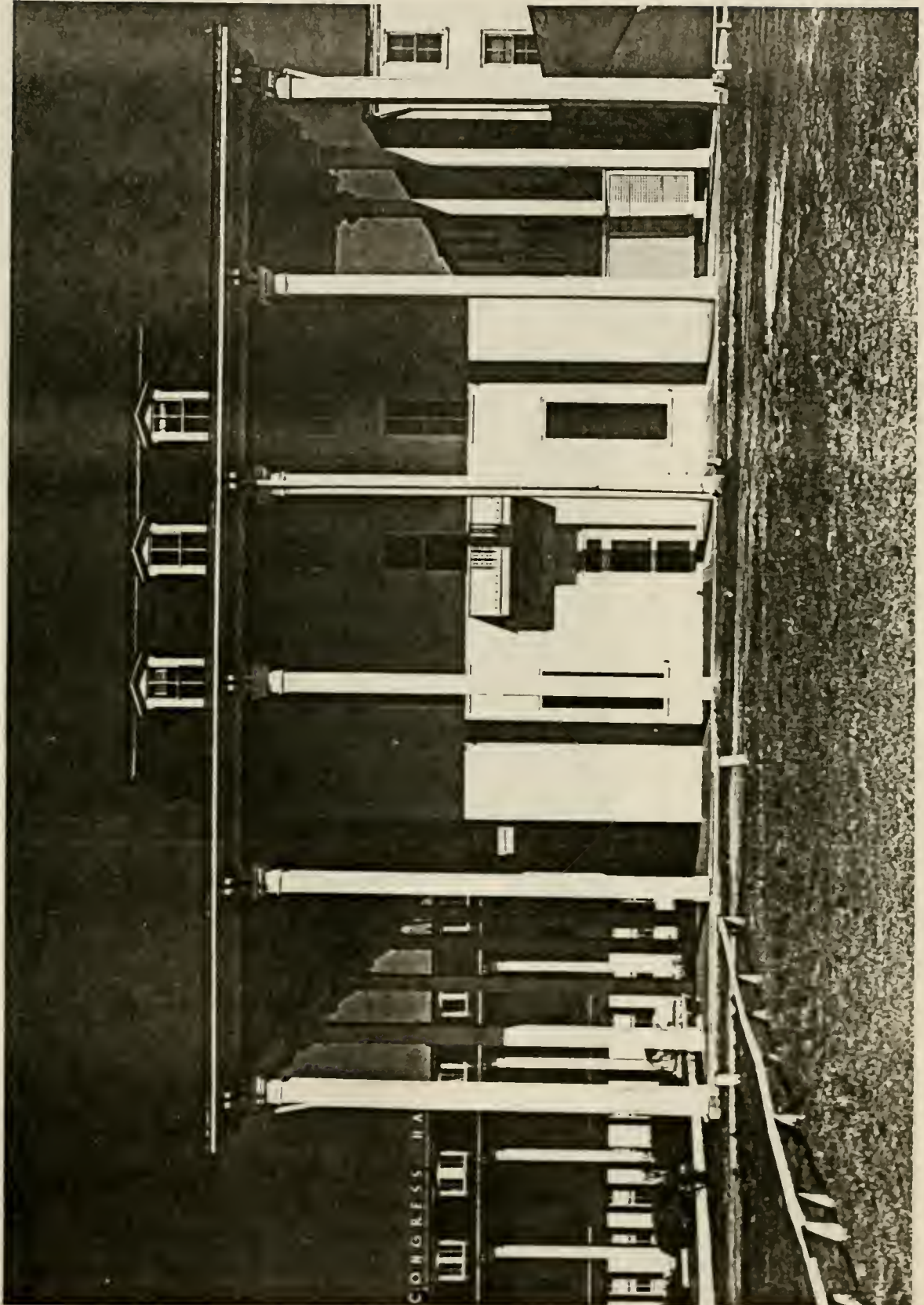


8.1.4 Detail of Southeast Elevation



8.1.5 Overall View of Southeast









8.1.9 Architectural Data Form

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

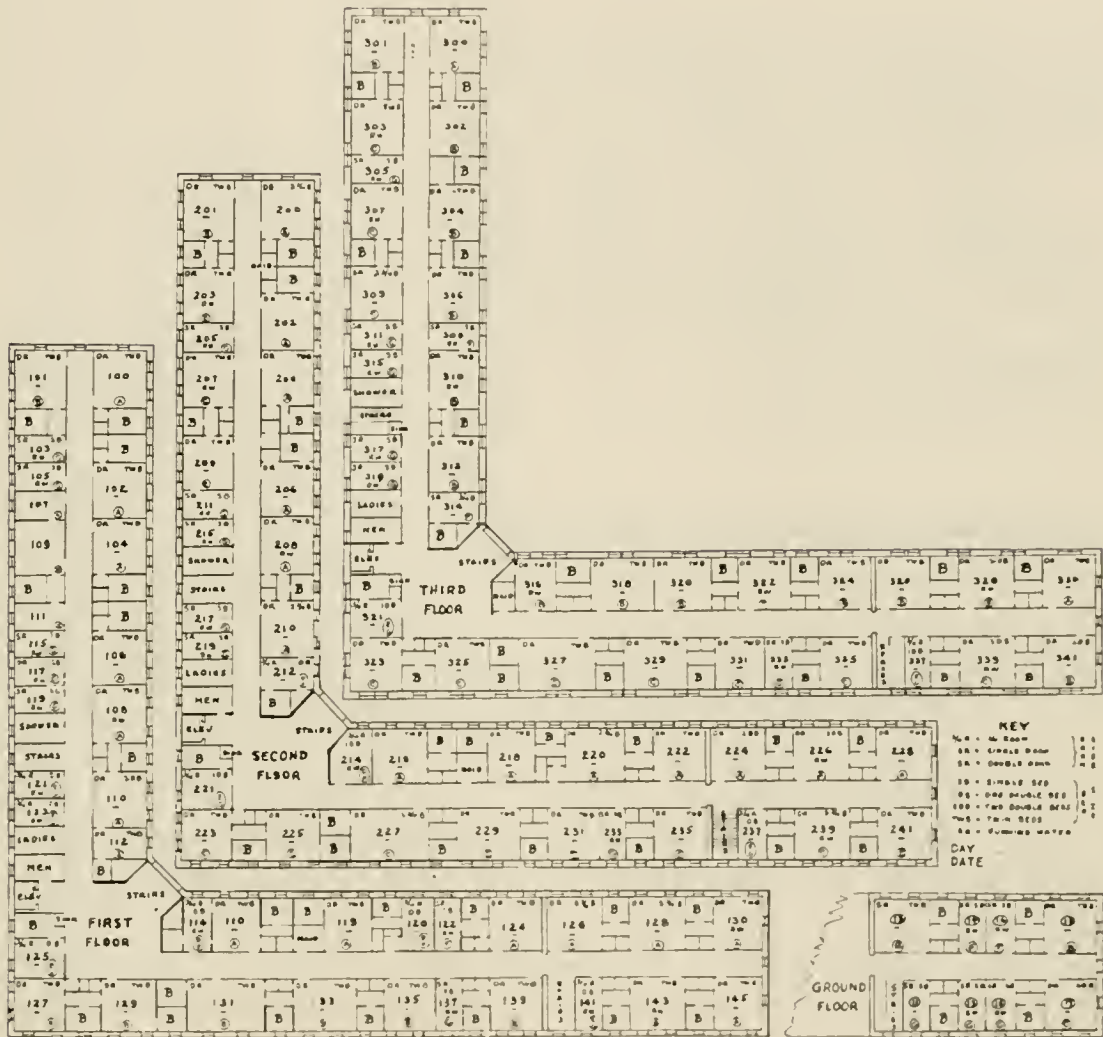
ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

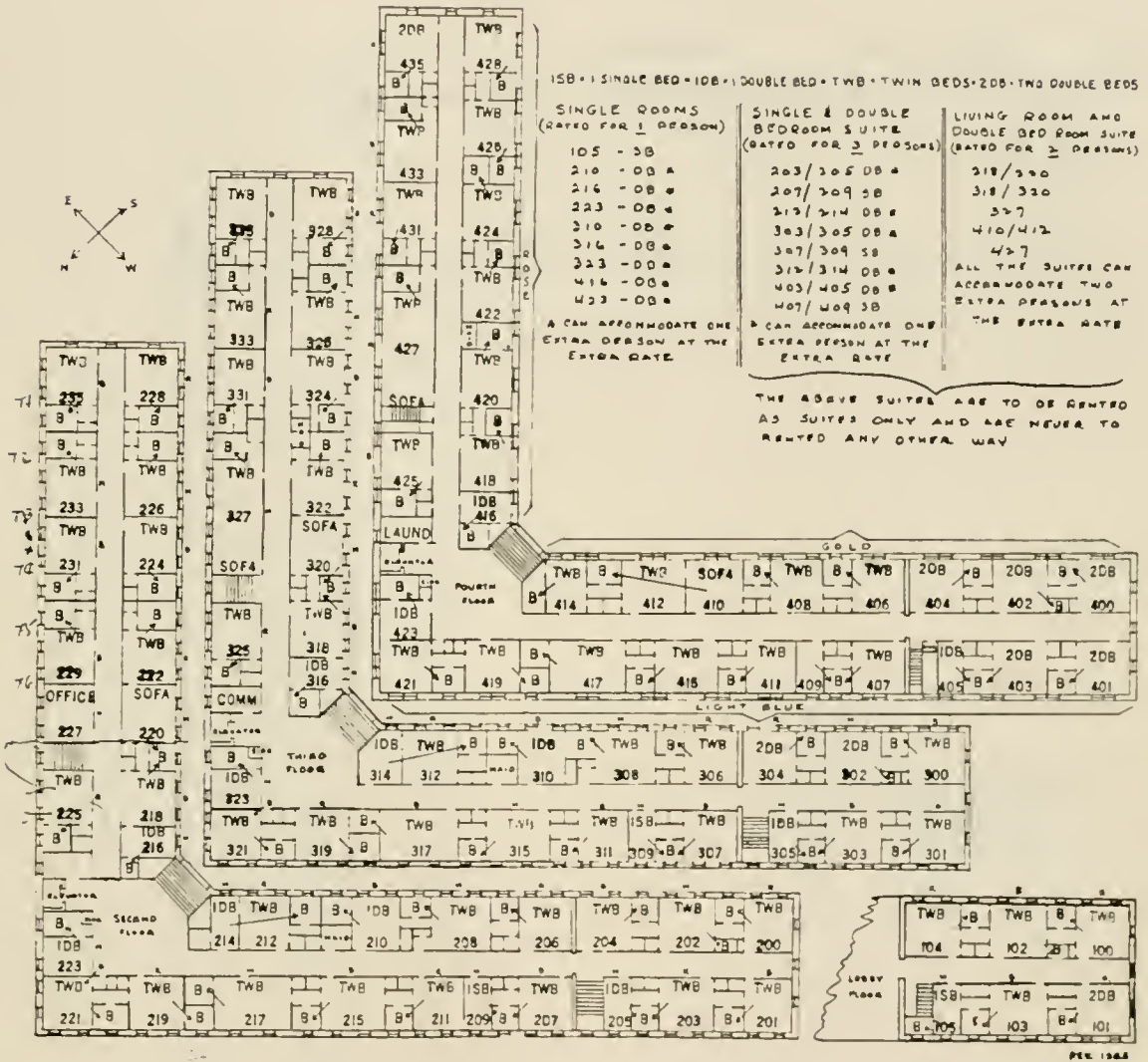
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
New Jersey	Cape May	Cape May
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)		HABS NO.
Congress Hall		NJ-744
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
Beach and Congress Streets		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
1879	J. F. Meyer	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)		
An excellent example of a mid-19th century hotel, the Congress Hall hosted many notable visitors, including several presidents, notably Benjamin Harrison, who established executive offices there in 1891.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
Second Empire features		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS)		
Brick		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
L-shaped, one wing 20 bays x 3 bays, the other wing 17 bays x 3 bays; 3-1/2 stories; 3-story veranda; mansard roof		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
Veranda supported by square wooden columns with decorated capitals and brackets; iron balconies on 2nd floor; several 1st-story windows convert to doors and open onto veranda; gabled domers with decorative trim		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)		
Cassett, William B. <u>Historic American Buildings Survey of New Jersey</u> . 1977.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION	DATE	
Druscilla J. Null, HABS	8/12/84	

- 8.2 Drawings of Existing Conditions
 - 8.2.1 Diagram Plans of Guestroom Configurations, c. 1920s to 1950s
 - 8.2.2 Diagram Plans of Guestroom Configurations
 - 8.2.3 Roof Plan
 - 8.2.4 Fourth Floor Plan
 - 8.2.5 Third Floor Plan
 - 8.2.6 Second Floor Plan
 - 8.2.7 First Floor Plan

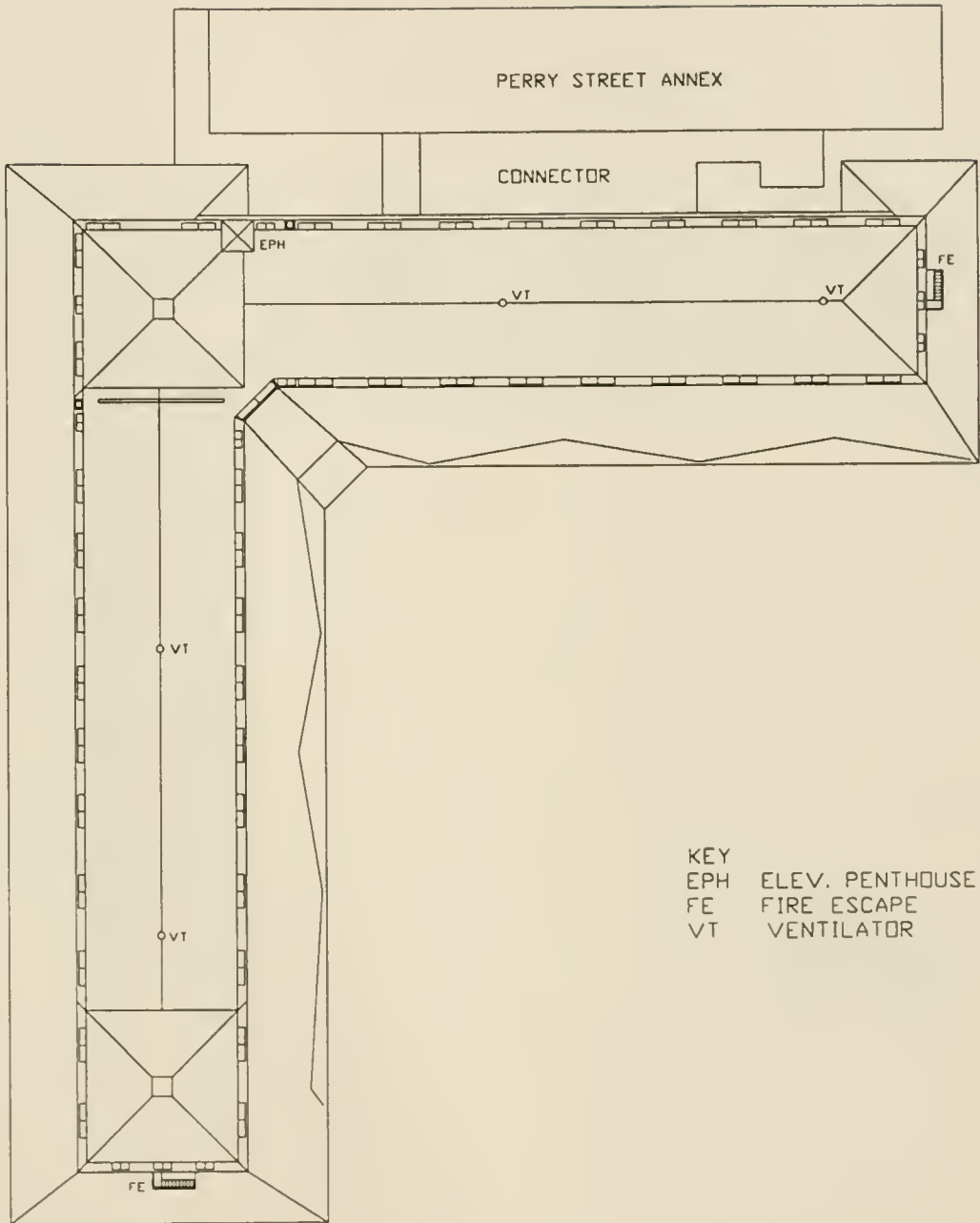
8.2.1

Diagram Plans of Guestroom Configurations, c. 1920s to 1950s



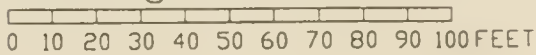


8.2.3 Roof Plan

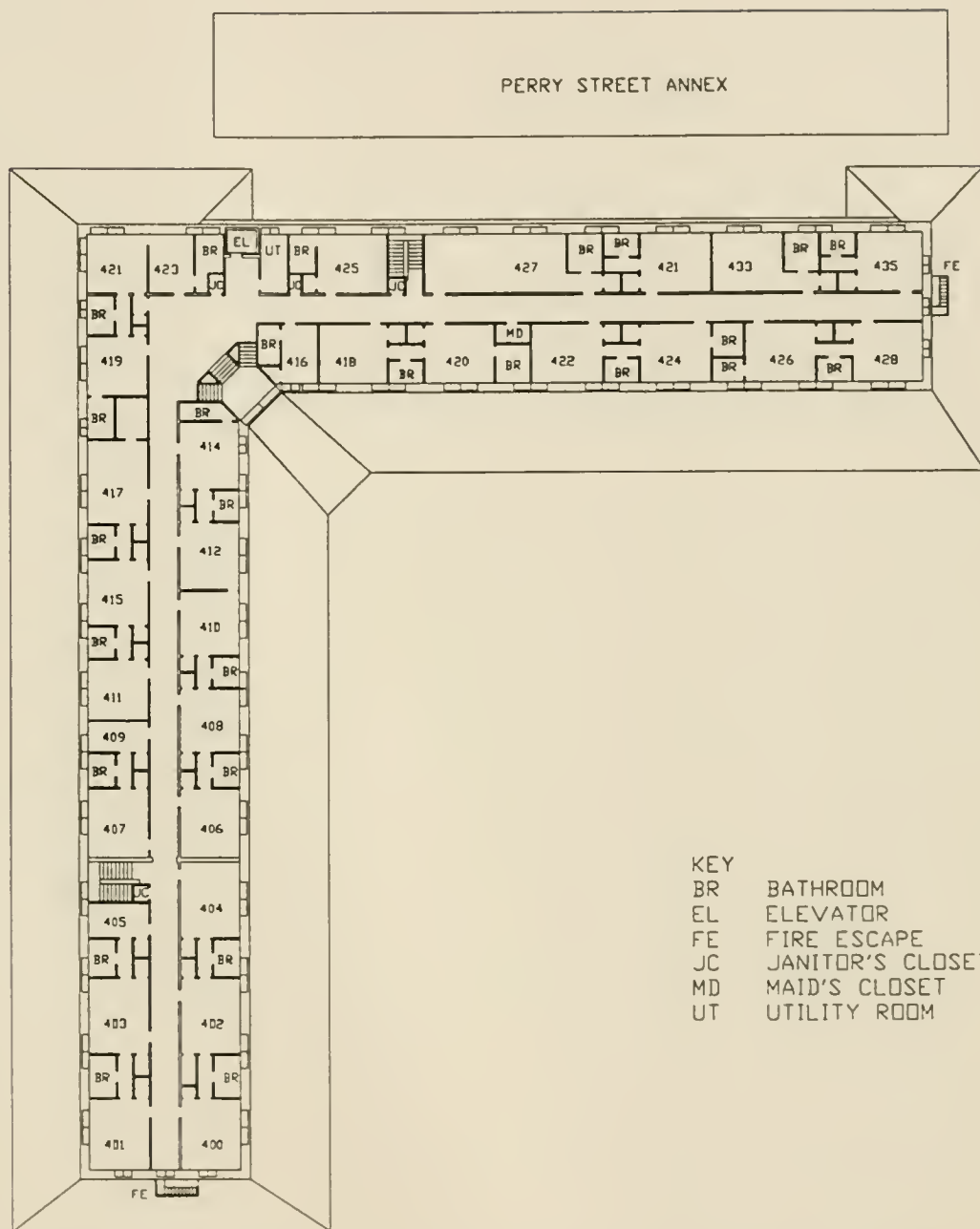


KEY
 EPH ELEV. PENTHOUSE
 FE FIRE ESCAPE
 VT VENTILATOR

CONGRESS HALL HOTEL, CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
 Existing Roof Plan



8.2.4 Fourth Floor Plan

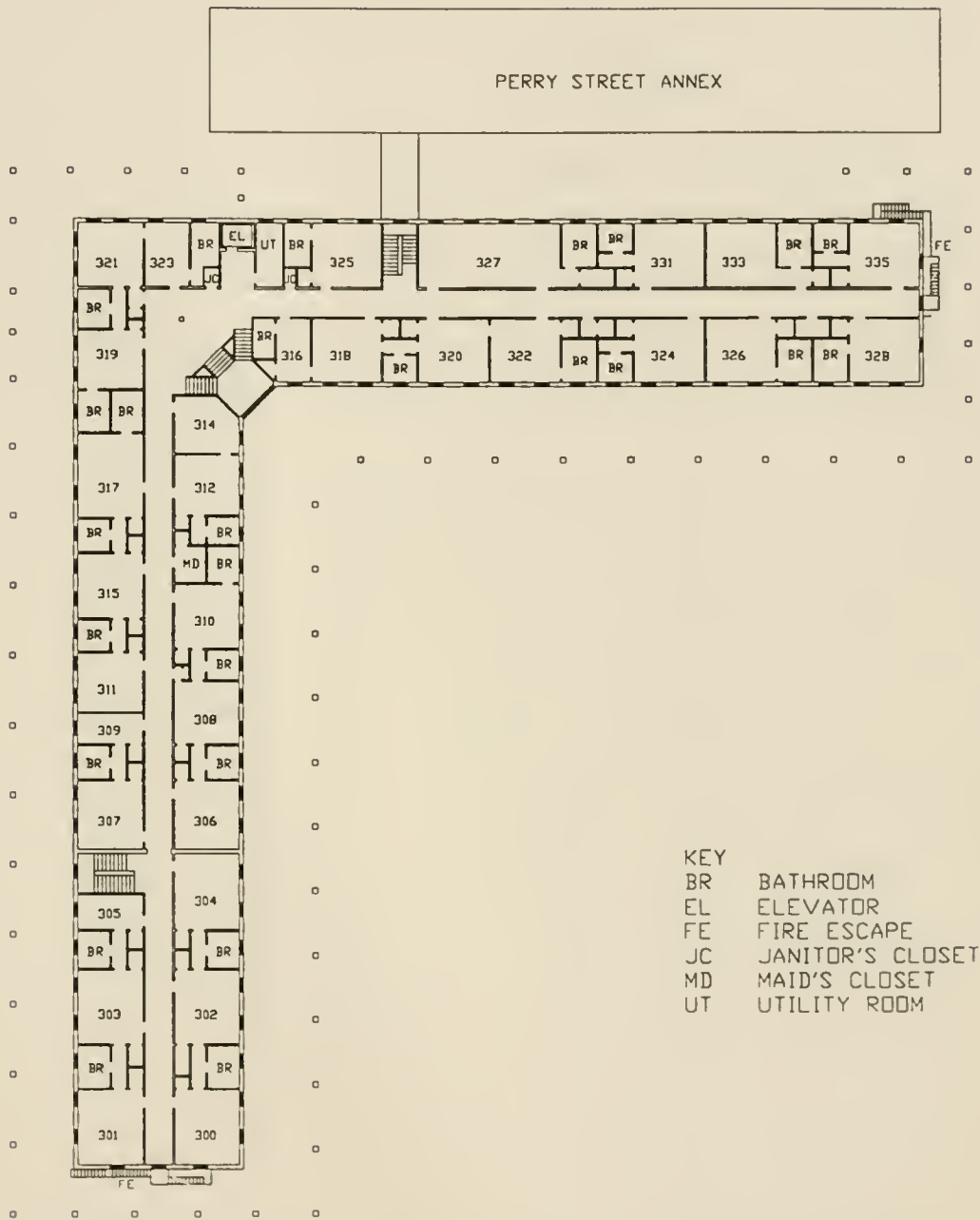


CONGRESS HALL HOTEL, CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
Existing Fourth Floor Plan

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 FEET

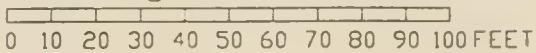


8.2.5 Third Floor Plan

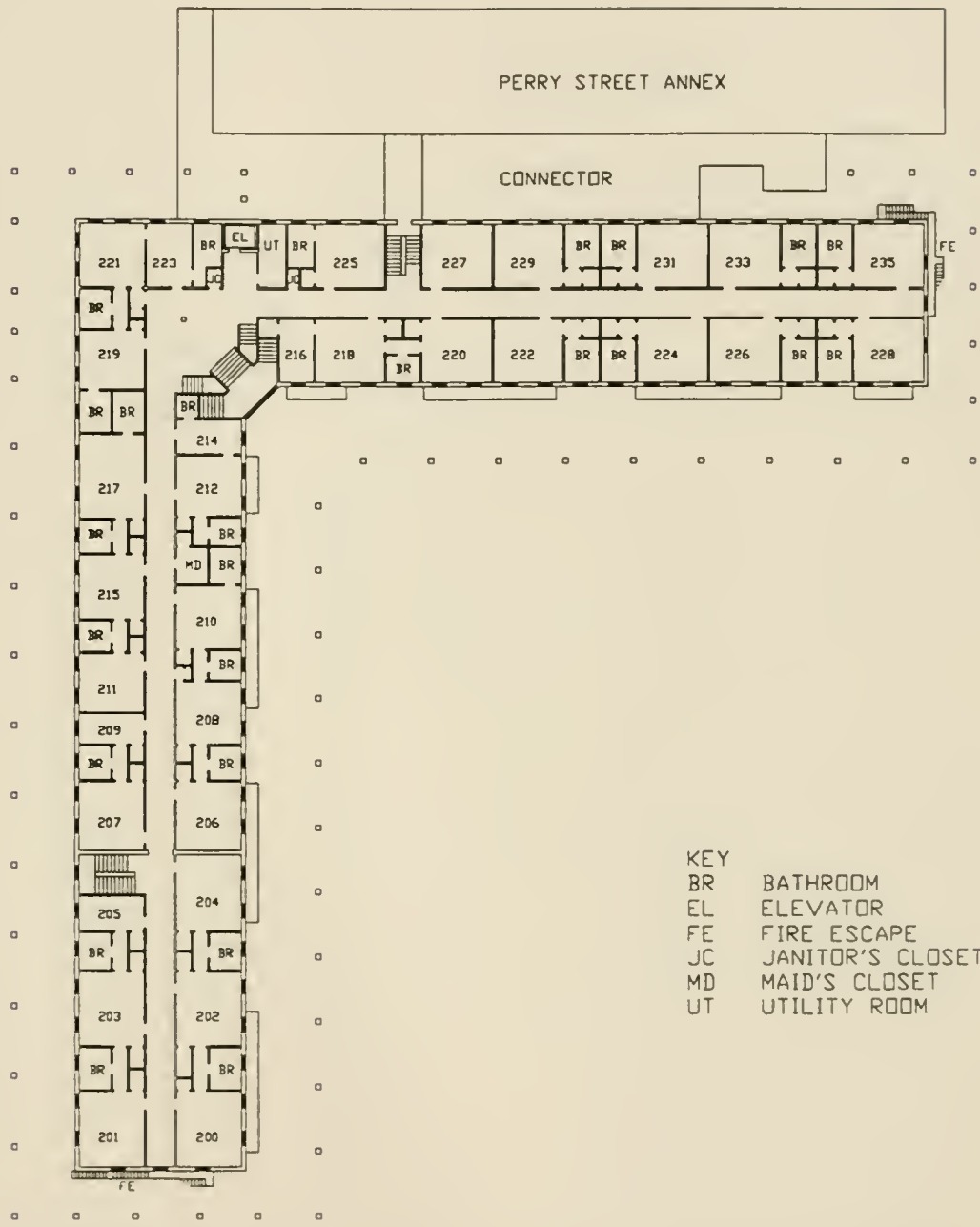


- KEY
- BR BATHROOM
 - EL ELEVATOR
 - FE FIRE ESCAPE
 - JC JANITOR'S CLOSET
 - MD MAID'S CLOSET
 - UT UTILITY ROOM

CONGRESS HALL HOTEL, CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
Existing Third Floor Plan

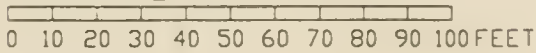


8.2.6 Second Floor Plan

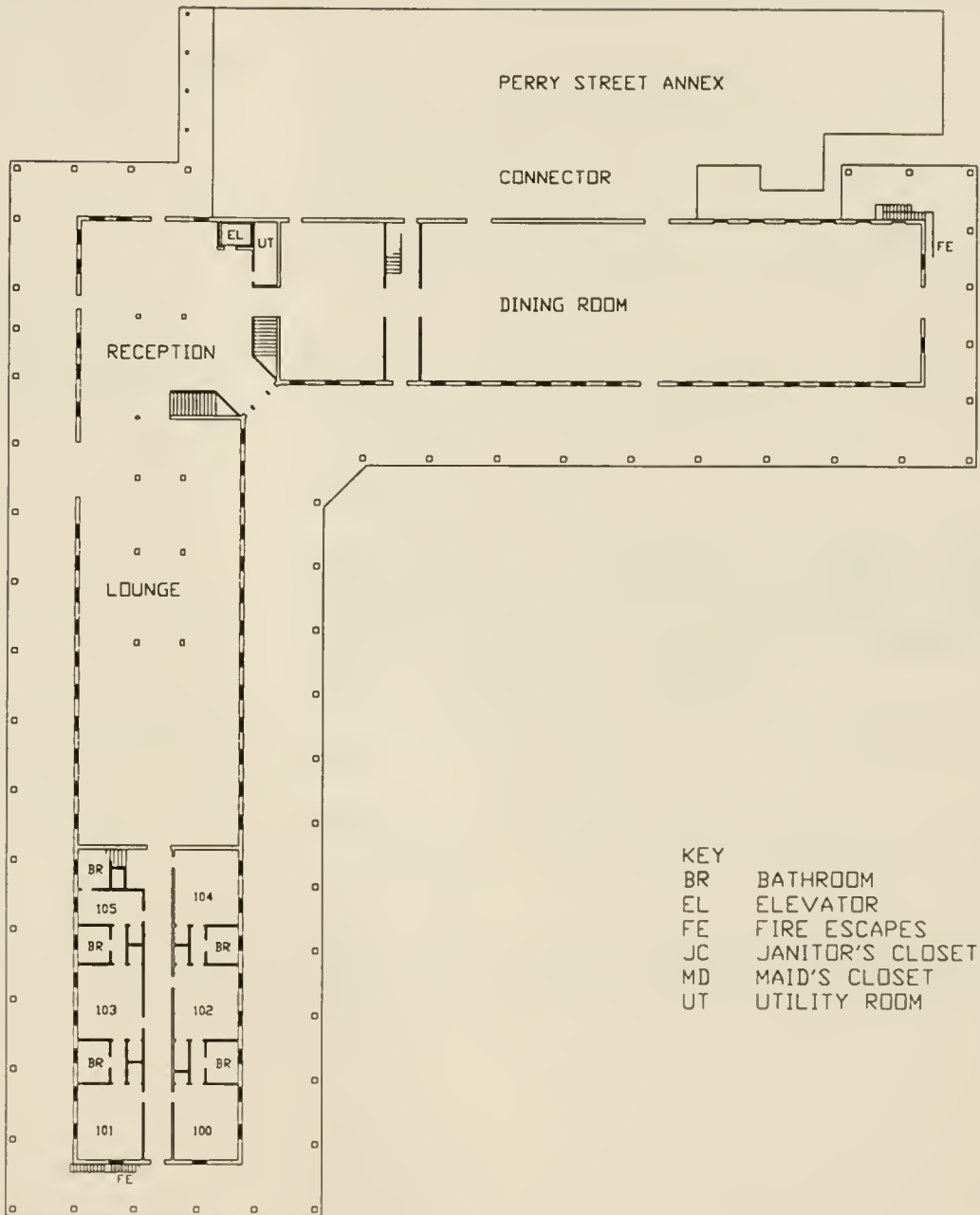


- KEY
- BR BATHROOM
 - EL ELEVATOR
 - FE FIRE ESCAPE
 - JC JANITOR'S CLOSET
 - MD MAID'S CLOSET
 - UT UTILITY ROOM

CONGRESS HALL HOTEL, CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
Existing Second Floor Plan

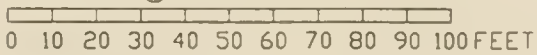


8.2.7 First Floor Plan



- KEY
- BR BATHROOM
 - EL ELEVATOR
 - FE FIRE ESCAPES
 - JC JANITOR'S CLOSET
 - MD MAID'S CLOSET
 - UT UTILITY ROOM

CONGRESS HALL HOTEL, CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
Existing First Floor Plan



8.3 Chain of Title

Chain of title information was compiled at the County Clerk's Office, 7 North Main Street, Cape May Court House, NJ.¹⁰⁶

13 February 1835 Book O pp. 544 et seq.

Samuel Richards and Ann, his wife
to
Jonas Miller

\$25,000.00. Recorded 25 October 1836.¹⁰⁷

27 May 1851 Book X pp. 552 et seq.

Jonas Miller and Mary, his wife
to
Waters B. Miller

\$42,000.00. Recorded 21 August 1851.
Recites book O, p. 544. Includes premises
as part of a larger tract of land. This
and all earlier titles are recorded in
books lettered A through Z.

01 October 1863 Book 29 pp. 500-502

Waters B. Miller and his wife
to
Jacob Cake

\$100,000.00. Recorded 01 October 1863.
This is the first title to appear in a
numbered book.

¹⁰⁶I am indebted to Rocco Salomone of North Cape May for his assistance.

¹⁰⁷Thomas: 24. The title mentioned (year 1850, Book 10, pp. 313-315, the first division of the land of the Congress Hall Plantation recorded) could not be located, however.

25 March 1867

Book 33 pp. 147 et seq.

Jacob F. Cake and Letitia, his wife
to
Alvin P. Hildreth

\$2,000.00. Recorded 16 May 1867. Covers part of premises in question. This title begins a short period of many transactions between the Cakes and Hildreth. It is possible that this is due to the subdivision of the overall parcel.

13 May 1867

Book 33 pp. 149 et seq.

Alvin P. Hildreth
to
Letitia P. Cake

\$2,000.00. Recorded 16 May 1867. Same premises as previous title.

15 August 1867

Book 33 pp. 247 et seq.

Jacob F. Cake and Letitia P., his wife
to
Alvin P. Hildreth

\$5,000.00. Recorded 15 October 1867. Recites book 29, p. 500. Covers part of premises.

28 October 1867

Book 33 pp. 266 et seq.

Alvin P. Hildreth
to
Letitia P. Cake

\$5,000.00. Recorded 29 October 1867. Covers same premises as previous title.

-
- 30 November 1878 Book 123 pp. 277 et seq.

State of New Jersey
to
Congress Hall Hotel Company of Cape May

\$398.00. Recorded May 8, 1896. Rights to Riparian Lands (land flowed by the ocean).
-
- 16 May 1904 Book 188 pp. 214-217

Congress Hall Hotel Company of Cape May
to
Annie C. Knight

\$70,000.00. Recorded 17 May 1904. Annie C. Knight purchases the hotel but not the beach (see previous title).
-
- 28 July 1920 Book 345 pp. 411 et seq.

Annie C. Knight
to
Congress Hall Hotel Company

\$200,000.00. Recorded 22 September 1920. On 18 July 1931 Annie C. Knight dies.
-
- 09 January 1942 Book 629 pp. 327-331

F. Mulford Stevens, Sheriff, County of Cape May
to
The Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities, a corporation of the Commonwealth of PA, and H. Wilber Bircks, Executors and Trustees under the will of Edward C. Knight, deceased of Philadelphia.

\$131,643.83. Recorded 19 January 1942. Edward C. Knight, Jr. dies a resident of Middletown, RI on 23 July 1936. As the sole heir to his sister's estate, his estate reacquires Congress Hall.

31 January 1942

Book 625 pp. 444-448

The Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities, a corporation of the Commonwealth of PA, and H. Wilber Bircks, Executors and Trustees under the will of Edward C. Knight, Jr., deceased

to

Congress Hall Corporation, a NJ corporation, Cape May, NJ

\$64,000.00 (\$70.40 Internal Revenue Stamps). Recorded 10 February 1942.¹⁰⁸

31 January 1942

Book 626 pp. 454 et seq.

Congress Hall Hotel Company

to

Congress Hall Corporation

Recorded 10 February 1942. The beach sold for \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration (\$1,100.00).

16 April 1958

Book 959 pp. 136-137

Congress Hall Corporation, a NJ corporation

to

Congress Hall, Cape May, Inc., a NJ corporation

\$74,000.00 (for \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration, namely \$81.40 in Internal Revenue stamps which are affixed). Recorded 18 April 1958. On 03 December 1965 Congress Hall, Cape May, Inc. merges with S. B. Ramagosa and Son, Inc.

¹⁰⁸According to Diana L. Hevener, a clerk in the County's Deed Room, the total estimated purchase prices are determined by dividing the value of tax stamps affixed to the deeds by \$1.10 or \$1.00 (after and before the 1920s respectively). This was a common practice.

15 December 1967

Book 1181 pp. 805-810

S. B. Ramagosa and Son, Inc., a NJ
corporation, Casino Park, Wildwood, NJ
to
Christian Beacon Press, Inc., a non-profit
corporation, 756 Haddon Avenue,
Collingswood, NJ

\$550,000.00 (for \$1.00 and other good and
valuable consideration, namely \$605.00
Internal Revenue meter tax stamp which is
affixed). Recorded 21 December 1967.

26 July 1976

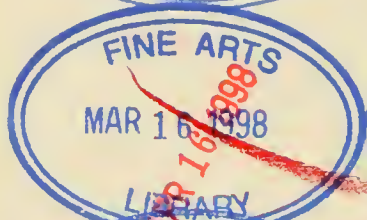
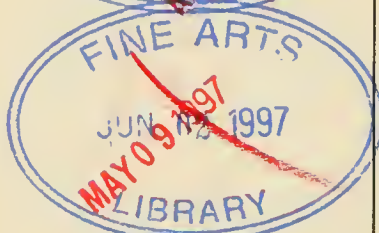
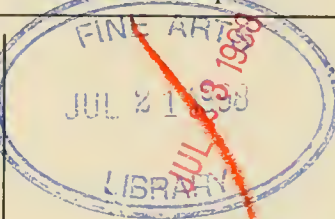
Book 1364 pp. 1040 et seq.

Christian Beacon Press, Inc.
to
Pierre's Holiday Enterprises, Inc.

\$170,000.00. Recorded 11 August 1976.
Lot 1.02 is carved out of lot 1.01. This
subdivision yields two lots, namely lot
1.01 at 3.70 acres and lot 1.02 at 0.396
acres (17250 square feet). Property now
known as Uncle Bill's Pancake House.

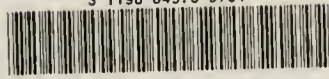
Anne & Jerome Fisher
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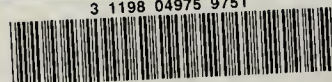
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