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From "Beach Front Palaces" to Preservation Dilemmas: The History and Historic Preservation of the Two Defining Structures of Asbury Park's Shorefront Landscape

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FROM "BEACH FRONT PALACES" TO PRESERVATION DILEMMAS: THE
HISTORY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE TWO DEFINING
STRUCTURES OF ASBURY PARK'S SHOREFRONT LANDSCAPE

Calista K. Cleary

A THESIS

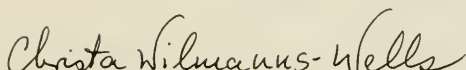
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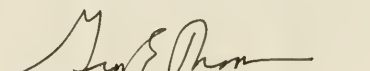
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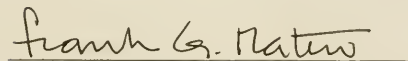
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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

1996


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INTRODUCTION

Lauded in 1910 by New Jersey's Governor as a "veritable 'Paradise by the Sea'," singer Bruce Springsteen has more recently referred to Asbury Park, New Jersey as "Newark by the sea."¹ Located on the central New Jersey coastline (Figure 1), Asbury Park was one of the most prominent New Jersey shore resorts around the turn of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, like many of the more developed New Jersey shore cities, such as Wildwood and Atlantic City, Asbury Park has been plagued by a host of urban problems that have become particularly acute in the past two decades. Amelioration of these problems is increasingly being sought in revitalization through architectural preservation. But such preservation must also salvage a cultural and historical as well as an architectural legacy. Although it is no longer a shorefront resort, the past two decades have also witnessed the city's attempts to rehabilitate its beachfront landscape as part of a larger scheme of economic renewal.

Describing Asbury Park's second beachfront Casino in 1929, the reporter who chronicled the previous buildings which had occupied the site waxed poetic about the location:

There are now few, if any, spots on the Jersey

¹Rutgers University Special Collections. Asbury Park promotional pamphlet, (Asbury Park, NJ: Thomas C. Whitlock, 1910); Tova Navarra, *The New Jersey Shore: A Vanishing Splendor* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1985), p. 20.

Coast as desolate as those first viewed by the pioneers of Ocean Grove and James A. Bradley, founder of Asbury Park, as they struggled thru the soft sand and surveyed the surrounding barren countryside from the top of wind swept dunes, envisioning perhaps villages covering the lonesome land but never, by any stretch of the imagination, glimpsing such pretentious resorts as have since arisen.²

Today, this landscape evokes a similar sense of desolation, albeit for different reasons. In 1870 Bradley had reacted to the untamed wilderness; in 1996 one is struck by the seeming abandonment of this landscape. A quick visual survey of the area from the Casino, on the southern end of the boardwalk, to the Convention Hall, at the middle of the mile-long boardwalk, includes a variety of shuttered amusement complexes, a half-built and subsequently abandoned condominium high-rise, and an empty boardwalk (Figures 2, 3 & 4). In fact, it is at points hard to reconcile this vista with a multitude of photographs and postcards from the late nineteenth century through the 1960s which depict the area as vibrant and thronged with crowds (Figures 5,6,7,8,9 & 10). On the other hand, after examining the architecture, studying the history, and listening to residents' fond recollections of a vital shorefront, one can not look at this landscape without a sense of promise and possibility, both for what the area has been, in the not too distant past, and what it might

² "From Bathing Booth To Beach Front Palace: Evolution of Casino From Time When Asbury Was Young," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, 2 June 1929, sec. 2.

be in the future. Though much of the historic and cultural fabric of this landscape has been lost in the recent past, much still remains. While not the only answer, historic preservation may offer a partial solution to the dual imperative of revitalization and conservation of the architectural and cultural fabric of the Asbury Park shorefront.

This study examines the history of the area (Figure 11) particularly since the late 1920s, by focusing on its defining structures--the Casino/Carousel building (Figure 12, 13, & 14) and the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater (Figures 15, 16, 17 & 18). Furthermore, this thesis investigates the relatively recent role of "official" historic preservation in this landscape, examining the preservation successes and failures of the 1980s and 1990s in order to address several questions about historic preservation. These questions include, "What does historic preservation have to offer depressed urban areas, can historic preservation become an important component of community revitalization, and in what ways can historic preservation undergird economic renewal?" In addition to addressing these questions, another purpose of this thesis was to draw together a variety of scattered and fragmented sources concerning this landscape and its defining structures.

The two buildings, the Casino/Carousel Building and the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater are the architectural

symbols and tangible reminders of a time when Asbury Park was one of the most prominent New Jersey shore resorts. Just as the landscape has changed from the 1920s , so has the economy. The city's fortunes have declined since the late nineteen sixties due to a variety of factors: construction of the Garden State Parkway which drew people to more southerly points on the New Jersey Shore, race riots in the 1970s, a dramatic decline in home ownership, a declining tax base, and closure of the remainder of the shorefront amusement area in the late 1980s. These are perhaps foremost among the problems of the city. Today, Asbury Park is a city trying to revitalize itself knowing full well that it can no longer rely primarily on a strong resort economy and that a waterfront resort district can only constitute part of a larger redevelopment plan. The municipality now faces the double and potentially contradictory pressures of preventing further loss and deterioration of its shorefront architectural and cultural resources and fostering redevelopment as a means to revitalize the economy.

CHAPTER ONE

Background History of the Shorefront Landscape of Asbury Park, 1871-1926

Although they were not built until the late 1920s, the Casino/Carousel building and Convention Hall/Paramount Theater became part of a larger urban plan envisioned and realized by Asbury Park's founder, James A. Bradley, throughout the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. On a smaller scale, these buildings also became the anchors of a beachfront amusement landscape largely unforeseen and undesired by the staunch Methodist Bradley. Asbury Park's amusement area, like several other early amusement parks, developed originally from the strategic use by resort hotels and railroads of mechanical amusement rides to attract additional visitors. The history leading up to the construction of these two buildings demonstrates "many of the basic changes occurring in the American way of life that set the stage for the emergence of the amusement park, and which, historically, made it a cultural symbol of the rising, new American lifestyle."³ Bradley founded Asbury Park, which he hoped would be a middle class bastion of morality, leisure, and uplift, at a time when American cultural values were in

³Richard W. Flint, "Meet Me in Dreamland: The Early Development of Amusement Parks in America," *Nineteenth Century : Victorian Resorts and Hotels* 8 (1982): 99-107.

transition. Examining amusement parks as a manifestation of this change, a scholar describes an aspect of this change in values:

...by the end of the century impatience with the old restraints surfaced among a new generation of Americans, the urban working class. Leisure, once spent in edifying activities of moral and social value, was now the new market for entrepreneurs who found a swelling urban population with increased time and spending power.⁴

The emergence of Asbury Park's beachfront amusement landscape, especially under James Bradley's tenure, suggests a similar impatience on the part of the middle class.

Asbury Park grew out of its neighboring town to the south, Ocean Grove, a Methodist retreat which had been established several years earlier (Figures 19 & 20). While on a trip to Ocean Grove in the summer of 1870, James Bradley learned that a five hundred acre tract of wooded, undeveloped land abutting Ocean Grove on the north was for sale. Apparently, Bradley, like others in Ocean Grove, feared that the parcel would be purchased by someone who opposed Ocean Grove's religious enterprise. To prevent this from happening, he bought the five hundred acre plot of land for ninety thousand dollars and named it Asbury Park after the first bishop of the Episcopal Methodist Church ordained in

⁴Ibid.

America, Francis Asbury.⁵

While he was a brush manufacturer with no formal training in urban planning, Bradley's plan for the city drew on the most current urban planning ideals of the period. Bradley clearly employed many ideals which later coalesced in the City Beautiful Movement in the late nineteenth century: the careful planning of spaces between buildings to facilitate movement and create sweeping vistas, the large-scale use of water, the installation of modern services, and a general concern with public health and welfare.⁶ Furthermore, Bradley sought to create a resort that would both capitalize on the natural advantages of the location and avoid overdevelopment.

In laying out the town, Bradley realized these ideals in a myriad of ways. He made the house lots especially large, and he allocated parkland and the waterfront for future community recreation and respite. The east-west avenues were widened from one hundred to two hundred feet as they approached the ocean for two reasons: they provided sweeping ocean views and they also facilitated the flow of ocean breezes believed to be particularly healthful. In fact, "to further emphasize the feeling of spaciousness, the streets

⁵Russell Roberts and Rich Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 22-23.

⁶Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 214.

were made wider than in any other resort town (a feature that still startles first time visitors)."⁷ In 1881 Bradley funded construction of a modern sewer system which permitted connection of every lot by 1885 and was "hailed throughout the country as a model of efficiency and functionality."⁸ Furthermore, in 1884 Bradley helped establish a system of gas and water works. After the extension of the railroad south from Long Branch to the Asbury Park-Ocean Grove station in 1875, Bradley oversaw construction of a trolley network.⁹ The trolley originally connected the train station with the shopping district, beachfront, and residential areas from Deal Lake to Main Street.¹⁰

Asbury Park was incorporated in 1874, and its founder exercised careful control over its phenomenal growth and development in the following two and a half decades of the nineteenth century. The town grew so rapidly that, by 1877,

⁷Roberts and Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore*, p. 22.

⁸Franklin Ellis, *History of Monmouth County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck and Co., 1885), p. 866. ; Russell Roberts, "The Town That Mr. Bradley Built," *Compass Magazine*, summer 1995, pp.15-16.

⁹Harold F. Wilson, *The Jersey Shore : A Social and Economic History of the Counties of Atlantic, Cape May, Monmouth and Ocean*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1953, pp. 511-512..

¹⁰Kate Frank and David Glynn Roberts, "Historic Preservation Element of Asbury Park Master Plan", Asbury Park Planning and Zoning Office, adopted 12 March 1990s, p. 2.

there were two schools, three churches, a post office, and a newspaper (Figure 21). In 1877, in an attempt to make Asbury Park's Grand Avenue--the main thoroughfare of the town--live up to its name, Bradley purchased Educational Hall from the Centennial Exposition Grounds in Philadelphia and had it relocated there.¹¹ The sheer amount of people using the Asbury Park-Ocean Grove railway station located in north Asbury Park attested to the burgeoning popularity of the town. For instance, in 1883, 600,000 people arrived at and departed from the station from June to September. Within this same period, the highest number of excursionists in one day reached 5,500.¹² A guidebook published six years later in 1889 indicated that there were nearly two hundred hotels and boarding houses and eight hundred private residences. Additionally, at that time Asbury Park had a permanent population of three thousand and more than thirty thousand visitors in the summer.¹³

While Asbury Park boasted an increasing variety of cultural amenities in this period--ranging from an opera house to a variety of weekly papers--people were particularly

¹¹Wilson, *The Jersey Shore*, p. 512.

¹²Ellis, *History of Monmouth County*, p. 867.

¹³Roberts and Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore*, p. 22.; Wilson, *The Jersey Shore* p. 512.

attracted to the resort for its beach front. While Bradley undoubtedly attempted to capitalize on this resource, he also firmly believed in public access to and enjoyment of the ocean. Envisioning his town as one which would encourage his late nineteenth-century notions of morality and leisure, Bradley forbade the "carny-style amusements common at Atlantic City."¹⁴

However, in order to foster contemplative retreat and recreation, he did build bath houses, pavilions, and a boardwalk for beachgoers. While the first several bathing booths were actually constructed by local residents around 1873, Bradley quickly followed their example, constructing a number of similar booths (Figure 22). The first pavilion was not far behind:

The bath houses soon proved utterly inadequate and also there was a growing demand for a pavilion upon the beach at which people could rest, protected from the sun, and secure light refreshments.¹⁵

To meet these needs the first Asbury Avenue Pavilion was constructed around 1873 on the site which is occupied today by the Casino/Carousel building. The structure consisted of a roofed platform that extended out over the water containing a small enclosed central area for concessions. During the

¹⁴Roberts and Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore*, p. 23.

¹⁵"From Bathing Booth To Beach Front Palace: Evolution of Casino From Time When Asbury Was Young," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, 2 June 1929, sec. 2.

next several decades, Bradley enlarged the pavilion which came to be known alternately as the Bradley or Beringer pavilion. Construction of the promenade or boardwalk, on the other hand, proceeded in a much more piecemeal fashion. Though there was no boardwalk when the first bath houses were built, by 1877, a four-foot-wide walk extended north from the Asbury Avenue Pavilion (Figure 23) to Third Avenue. Residents appear to have seen Bradley's continuation of the walk to Fifth Avenue--far beyond the residential area--soon thereafter as simply another indication of his eccentricity. Unlike the more permanent boardwalks of today, this original walk was removed during winter or before storms. Despite the protest of employees, Bradley wanted the next wider, more permanent boardwalk located relatively low to the dunes and close to the ocean. Not surprisingly, this boardwalk was quickly and almost completely destroyed by a storm; Bradley specified that each of the two walks that followed be located farther and farther inland.¹⁶ By the fall of 1880, a brief description of the city in the Asbury Park Journal commenting on the city's amenities noted, "We have miles of walks; an Ocean Plaza [boardwalk] one mile long, and from sixteen to thirty-two feet wide."¹⁷

Despite Bradley's opposition, the 1880s and 1890s

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ellis, *History of Monmouth County*, p. 867.

witnessed the development of a shore front amusement area which extended with time from the Asbury Avenue Pavilion at the boardwalk's southern end to its northern end. Among the structures were the Asbury Park roller toboggan which stood on Ocean Avenue between Second and Third Streets and an additional pavilion north of Asbury Avenue. Though not located directly adjacent to the boardwalk, the Palace Amusement Pavilion with its merry-go-round and ferris wheel opened in the late 1880s (Figures 24, 25, & 26). Located across Lake Avenue from the Casino, the complex included a ferris wheel, which in all likelihood predated the one supposed first ferris wheel built by George G.W. Ferris for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.¹⁸

If the current Convention Hall and Casino constitute the third generation of structures in this shore front landscape, then the above buildings were the first generation. In 1903 Bradley sold the city the entire beachfront. After the purchase, "One of the first measures contemplated was the erection of structures to take the place of the old Bradley structures, which then were in the nature of antiques."¹⁹

¹⁸Frank and Roberts, "Historic Preservation Element of Master Plan", p. 2.; National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, Asbury Park Convention Hall, 2 March 1979.

¹⁹ "From Bathing Booth To Beach Front Palace: Evolution of Casino From Time When Asbury Was Young," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, 2 June 1929, sec. 2.

With the exception of the Palace Amusement building, the city replaced all of these structures with new buildings shortly after the turn of the century.

Since replacement of the Bradley Pavilion seemed like the most urgent task, the city constructed the first Casino (with an adjacent power station) on this site in the winter of 1903-1904 (Figures 27, 28, 29, & 30). Though the new building was a pavilion of sorts, this term was dropped in favor of Casino which connoted a sense of greater permanence than the word "pavilion."²⁰ In fact, the word "casino" has Italian roots and prior to the eighteenth century denoted a small summer house or pavilion designed for pleasure. Though nineteenth-century American casinos drew heavily on European antecedents, American resort casinos, unlike their European counterparts, often did not offer gambling. While the word casino is almost synonymous with gambling today, this connection was forged later in the twentieth century.²¹

Described by one newspaper account as a "glass enclosed, two-deck building, it extended westward over the boardwalk providing an arcade lined with stores and affording a cool and spacious dancing floor." The construction of this casino

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Richard Guy Wilson, "From Informality to Pomposity: The Resort Casino in the Later 19th Century," *Nineteenth Century: Victorian Resorts and Hotels*, (Philadelphia: The Victorian Society in America, 1982), p.111.

demonstrates on a less ostentatious level the late nineteenth century trend in casinos that Richard Guy Wilson highlights: their evolution from insubstantial wooden pavilions to notably pretentious structures.²² Apparently, city officials saw in the replacement of the old shorefront structures an opportunity to craft a renewed image for the resort as evinced in a 1905 promotional brochure:

This beautiful building is the first product of the new Asbury Park, having just been erected at a cost of \$75,000, on the beach front recently acquired by the city, at the foot of Asbury Avenue...the new Casino is a recreation place for the teeming thousands who promenade the boardwalk at all seasons of the year.²³

In the intervening time however, the Casino became the social center of the beachfront; it served as a dance hall, theater for both motion pictures and plays, and a concert hall. Constructed largely of wood, the Casino was particularly vulnerable to fire, which finally destroyed it in early 1928.

Soon thereafter the city erected the Fifth Avenue Arcade (Figures 31 & 32). Like the new Casino on the far end of the boardwalk, this building was a two-storied structure that extended out over the water and westward over the boardwalk.

²²Ibid, pp.109-116.

²³Monmouth County Historical Society, Asbury Park and Ocean Grove Promotional Pamphlet, 1905.

Both the Casino and the Fifth Avenue Arcade possessed an arcaded area over the boardwalk which permitted pedestrians passage through the building on the boardwalk. Its appearance after dark was luminous; "The numerous arch-ways disclosed are lighted by myriad electric globes which give to the beautiful structure at night the appearance of a blazing square."²⁴ Like the Casino, it was also destroyed by fire. Its destruction in 1927 then made way for the construction of Convention Hall. Along the boardwalk, between these two buildings the city also built several new bath houses (Figure 33) and pavilions, such as the Seventh Avenue Pavilion (Figure 34 & 35). Furthermore, in the late nineteen teens and early 1920s several other attractions, both city funded and privately owned joined the growing array of structures along the boardwalk. Among these additions were the Natatorium, located between First and Second Avenues (Figures 36, 37), and the scenic railway known as the Steeplechase at Second and Ocean Avenues (Figure 38). Both opened in this period.

In the early twentieth century Asbury Park developed and prospered, emerging as a rival of Atlantic City. Bradley, who relinquished control of the city in 1903 and died on June 7, 1921, probably would not have been altogether pleased with the comparison. Though he shunned the perceived moral

²⁴Ibid.

decline accompanying the town's growth and experience of modernity, he had in fact directly overseen much of the work that transformed Asbury Park from a wilderness into a cosmopolitan city. Notably, part of this cosmopolitan air derived from Asbury Park's assortment of retail establishments. Unlike other Jersey shore towns, which offered mainly beachfront, hotels, and restaurants, Asbury Park had a variety of department stores and shops, making it the commercial hub of Monmouth County. A promotional pamphlet from 1910 managed to tout both advantages of the resort with slogans on its cover, "Asbury Park: Where country meets the sea: New Jersey's Ideal Home City and the Best Family Resort in America" and "Commercial Centre of The North Jersey Coast."²⁵ On the other hand, a historical account describing the city in the early nineteen twenties, while perhaps overstated, overwhelmingly emphasized its oceanfront "manifold advantages":

Ideally located, easy to reach from Philadelphia, New York, or any of the immediate points, here where country meet the sea, with its accompanying array of sports, recreation and amusements that include ocean, lakes, woodlands, trees and beautiful country, is the enjoyment and happiness that any vacationist may seek. There is the widest and finest promenade in the world, where the boulevardier strolls and the wheel chair never lags. There are the Casino, the social centre of the beach; the Arcade and the pavilions and rest parlors the entire length of the walk; sea-bathing and continuous broad ocean beaches attract the

²⁵Monmouth Country Historical Society, Asbury Park Promotional Pamphlet (Asbury Park, NJ: Thomas C. Whitlock, 1910).

bather, while at the Natatorium one can enjoy every day in the year a hot salt-water tub bath or a plunge in one of the finest pools in America.²⁷

In large part due to these amenities, Asbury Park's year round population of over ten thousand people increased to one hundred thousand people during the summer.²⁸

In the late summer of 1916, a group of residents had issued the first calls for a convention hall in order to attract the large gatherings that Asbury Park was losing to Atlantic City.²⁹ Officials drafted a proposal for a 500,000 dollar Convention Hall and the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White prepared plans. There was a considerable amount of contention about the proposal, as many residents feared that completion of a Convention Hall would leave the city in debt. Ultimately, the proposal was defeated, but it generated a controversy which lasted ten years, culminating in an ordinance to build Convention Hall.

²⁷*History of Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1664-1920s*, vol. 1, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1922), p. 253.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Roberts, "The Town That Mr. Bradley Built," p.18.

CHAPTER TWO

The Newest Asbury Park: Realization of the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel in the late 1920s

Convention Hall

While a group of Asbury Park citizens had forwarded a proposal for a municipally owned convention hall in 1916, it was not until ten years later that such a plan actually came to fruition. In the intervening decade a private scheme for a convention hall was also defeated by opponents because it required private ownership of 400 feet of oceanfront. The city grew and prospered in the teens and twenties, but many people believed that a convention hall would attract the larger groups and business that was being lost to Atlantic City's facilities. Ultimately, the burning of the Fifth Avenue Arcade (located on the site of the present day Convention Hall) on June 2, 1927 paved the way for the erection of a Convention Hall. Less than a year later, on January 12, 1928, a fire destroyed the Casino as well. City officials quickly undertook plans to replace the burned building. About a month after the fire, the City Commission reviewed plans to build a new Casino which had become part of a larger beach program that included Convention Hall.

In part, the city sought to replace the Arcade and Casino so quickly because their loss dramatically affected the city's economy, which was based largely on beachfront

revenues. In fact, according to two Asbury Park residents and property owners, spokesmen for the delegation seeking to expedite construction of the Convention Hall and replacement of the Casino, Asbury Park was "on the economic rocks because of the loss of the Casino and Arcade by fire."²⁹ Not surprisingly, the \$500,000 1916 Convention Hall proposal had grown to a \$2,000,000 ordinance for a "Sea Convention Hall" in 1926. The beachfront opposite Atlantic Square (between Fifth and Sunset Avenues), while not the only site under consideration, was a strategic choice on the part of city officials; this location took advantage of close proximity to both the boardwalk and some of the city's best hotels. Furthermore, with completion of the Casino/Carousel Building, these two buildings provided strong visual, social, and economic anchors for the boardwalk.

Aside from location, officials noted several other important considerations. They wanted architects familiar with local beachfront building but also desired well known architects. In an attempt to satisfy both conditions, they selected three Asbury Park architects-- Ernest Arend, Arthur Cottrell and Kenneth Towner--to work in conjunction with the designers, the prominent firm of Warren and Wetmore, known for Grand Central Station in New York. Not surprisingly, one of the foremost concerns was the threat of fire. Therefore,

²⁹ "City Plans to Build \$1,250,000 Casino Bringing Beach Program to \$4, 500,000," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 February 1928.

the commissioners made assurances that "The pier will be strictly fireproof and is supposed to be the last word in construction, mechanically and architecturally."³⁰ Additionally, because of the size and projected expense of the proposal, officials sought residents' wholehearted approval and support for what several people referred to as "the largest [job] ever attempted by the city."³¹

The ordinance stipulated that the Convention Hall would be comprised of three component parts: a hall, a theater, and an amusement pier. The complex was to be located between Fifth and Sunset Avenues, with its main facade on its west elevation, facing Ocean Avenue. The characterization of the style of the building--"modern French Renaissance"³²--clearly evinced seemingly contradictory concerns: the building should incorporate the most up-to-date structural, mechanical, and design elements but simultaneously reference historical and traditional architectural forms. The building would extend from the west side of the boardwalk--where the theater would be located--to the end of the pier, extending 229 feet into

30 "Convention Hall Plans, Ask Bids Jan. 4," *Asbury Park Press*, 8 December 1926.

31 "Vote \$2,000,000 Ordinance For Sea Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1926.

32 "Bids on Convention Hall Exceed \$3,000,000, or \$1,000,000 More Than Funds Now Available," *Asbury Park Press*, 12 January 1927.

the ocean. The theater would seat 2,090 people whereas the convention hall would have a capacity of seating 4,300 people and provide 31,160 square feet of exhibition space on its balcony floor. The two units would be connected by a covered Arcade over the boardwalk (Figures 39, 40, 41, & 42).³³

Billed as "Asbury's Palace of Dreams"³⁴ in one newspaper account, the proposed Convention Hall was hardly a dream come true for everyone. City Commissioner Taylor, for one, had reservations about the cost of the project and "cautioned the public against becoming too enthusiastic over the expenditure of \$2,000,000, which he described as a 'helluva lotta money.'"³⁵ After the announcement that the lowest bid on the project was over \$3,000,000, \$1,000,000 more than allocated by the ordinance, opposition to the project--or at least its estimated size and cost--continued to increase. At that point, the city and its residents had two options: they could amend the building plans to meet the \$2,000,000 specified for in the ordinance, or they could repeal the

³³Ibid. For further architectural description of the building as built see National Register of Historic Places registration form, appendix ?.

³⁴ "Vote \$2,000,000 Ordinance For Sea Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1926.

³⁵Ibid.

ordinance and replace it with one which provided the increased funding necessary to build the hall.

The mayor, strongly in favor of the Convention Hall at the additional cost, believed that Asbury Park "should build for the future."³⁶ Despite his opinion, in February of 1927 city commissioners defeated an additional \$1,000,000 allocation that would have raised the cost of the Convention Hall to \$3,000,000. Though he had one commissioner on his side, three other commissioners opposed the added cost of the building, though not the idea itself. Residents seemed to be split on the proposal; some felt that the decision was a financially wise one for Asbury Park, while others believed the city would lose a substantial amount of outside investment with the delay.³⁷

By August of 1927, the city commission had approved construction of revised plans for a \$2,000,000 Convention Hall. The most substantial change in the original plans had been a decrease in the size of the hall in order to make the theater large enough to rent.³⁸ But, due to their lack of

³⁶"Bids on Convention Hall Exceed \$3,000,000, or \$1,000,000 More Than Funds Now Available," *Asbury Park Press*, 12 January 1927.

³⁷ "\$3,000,000 For Convention Hall Voted Down," *Asbury Park Press*, 7 February 1927.

³⁸ "City Plans to Build \$1,250,000 Casino, Bringing Beach Program to \$4, 500,000," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 February 1928.

further action, a group of citizens appeared before the board almost a year later, in July of 1928, to demand that the commission take action on the Convention Hall plans. Little more than a month later, the commission took such action by approving and filing the plans and specifications and voting to advertise construction bids for eight weeks.

The overwhelming support for the project, especially on the part of residents, undoubtedly stemmed in part from the Mayor's comments on how far Asbury Park had fallen behind Atlantic City in the intervening time:

While we have hesitated, Atlantic City has added \$100,000,000 in valuations. While the Traymores and Breakers and other imposing structures have been built over a period of 25 years, we can show only the Monterey, the Berkeley-Carteret, the Asbury-Carlton, and the Palace (Figures 43, 44, 45, & 46).³⁹

Not surprisingly, the mayor had employed the rivalry between the resorts for political purposes, albeit legitimate ones. The mayor, several of the commissioners, and residents saw the plan as a necessary investment in the oceanfront, Asbury Park's main attraction. People viewed further development of the shorefront as necessary to attract the tourists who then spent money in pursuit of health and recreation. By this point, the original Casino had burned and so construction of the Convention Hall was not the only imperative:

...we need replacement of the Casino and there is no doubt in my mind that we need replacement of the

³⁹ Ibid.

Arcade. We need an *amusement attachment* together with the necessary convenience to make the thing properly successfully [sic].⁴⁰

Casino/Carousel Building

Meanwhile, as the Convention Hall plans languished in the winter 1928, the Casino had been destroyed by a fire. Though firemen from nine communities battled the blaze, fire quickly reduced the highly flammable building to ashes, at an estimated loss of \$320,000.⁴¹ The loss of the Casino was compounded by the loss of the Convention Hall seven months prior. However, the city moved more quickly and decisively to replace the original Casino than they had to erect a convention hall. In fact, before the debris from the fire had even been removed, the city had plans (in rough form--ground plans) for the replacement of the original Casino. The plans to build the \$1,250,000 Casino brought the proposed plans for the beach program to \$4,500,000. In addition to the Casino, the beach program included the Convention Hall, three new beachfront pavilions, repairs to the existing jetty, and construction of a new jetty to protect the Convention Hall pier.

Preliminary plans indicated that the new Casino would be

⁴⁰ "\$2,000,000 Convention Hall Plans Approved," *Asbury Park Press*, 31 July 1928.

⁴¹ "From Bathing Booth to Beach Front Palace," *Asbury Park Press*, 2 June 1929.

very different from its predecessor; the new building would include development of all the land west of the original Casino to Lake Avenue. With dimensions of two hundred by three hundred feet, the new building would include: a Casino proper; arcaded areas running east-west, as well as over the boardwalk; stores and bathhouses to the west of the boardwalk; and a carousel pavilion, also to the west of the boardwalk. The Casino itself, one hundred by two hundred feet, was arranged so that "instead of running lengthwise over the sea, the long side of the new Casino will parallel the boardwalk."⁴² This section of the structure, which included a stage was intended as a theater, exhibition hall, and dance floor. Extending 150 east of the boardwalk, this section of the building was supported on reinforced concrete piers.⁴³ The portion of the Casino west of the boardwalk would include numerous shops, bathhouses and offices, many of which fronted on the arcade leading to the carousel pavilion at the western end of the complex. Plans called for the building's exterior to be completed in brick and cast stone or brick and Indiana limestone (the building was actually

⁴²"City Plans to Build \$1,250,000 Casino, Bringing Beach Program to \$4,500,000," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 February 1928.

⁴³"From Bathing Booth to Beach Front Palace," *Asbury Park Press*, 2 June 1929; "City Plans to Build \$1,250,000 Casino, Bringing Beach Program to \$4,500,000," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 February 1928.

constructed in brick and cast concrete), with copper trim and ornamentation depicting sea motifs (Figure 47).⁴⁴

Because the original heating plant and laundry structure, located to the south of the Casino, were not destroyed in the fire, city officials feared that leases on these structures might significantly delay beginning of the new Casino. With this possibility in mind, city commissioners directed the architects to divide the plans into two units, so that construction could begin on the burned eastern section, even if demolition of the heating plant was prolonged until leases expired.⁴⁵ This two-part construction scheme was not necessary, however, because by early May 1928 the remaining occupants had canceled their leases, making demolition of the structure possible. Given the turn of events, both sections of the structure could be begun at the same time; the president of the construction company even optimistically predicted that the western section of the boardwalk would be completed in less than five months, by October first. With the exception of the Natatorium, few buildings along the boardwalk would be

⁴⁴ "Construction To Start This Week On First Section," *Asbury Park Press*, 13 May 1928. For a further architectural description of the building as completed see Historic Sites Inventory Form, Appendix ?.

⁴⁵ "City Plans to Build \$1,250,000 Casino, Bringing Beach Program to \$4,500,000," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 February 1928.

affected by the short term loss of heat from the heating plant. In the meantime, water for the Natatorium would be heated by a small boiler located within the building.⁴⁶

By early September work on the Casino appeared to be proceeding at the expected pace, according to construction supervisors. The eastern end of the boardwalk was practically completed, and the western portion of the casino was ninety percent finished. Though the new central heating plant would not be ready to operate until the following January, the city had established a temporary heating plant at First Avenue. Since the temporary plant would be able to heat the Casino until the new plant was completed, the Casino could open as soon as it was finished and stay open throughout the winter.

At this point, with the Casino approximately a month from completion, work on the Convention Hall/Theater was running ahead of schedule. Considerably more than half of the steel for the pier had been installed, the theater was almost ready for the roofs, the walls of the water tower had been started, and the arches of the arcade that would join the two sections of the building were well under way. The theater was tentatively slated to open the following spring,

⁴⁶ "Construction to Start This Week on First Section," *Asbury Park Press*, 13 May 1928.

And the Convention Hall by early summer.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ "Casino Complete Within Month, Plan for Heating," *Asbury Park Press*, 6 September 1929.

CHAPTER THREE

Grand Openings and Thereafter: The Openings and Subsequent Histories of the Casino/Carousel and Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1929-1985

Though the opening of the Casino preceded the opening of the Paramount Theater and Convention Hall by almost a year, the Casino's opening, unlike the later opening of the Paramount Theater, received relatively little attention. One of the events of carnival week in Asbury Park--the coronation of Queen Titania (the adult version of the famous Asbury Park Baby Parade) on August 26, 1929--was the first official event held in the Casino. While the Casino was not completely finished at this point, it was apparently complete enough to use for the event. The carnival director, Arthur Cottrell, even indicated that "all facilities of the new structure will be utilized for the ceremony."⁴⁸ There is little doubt that people made good use of the new Casino's dance floor four days later at the Queen's Ball at which Queen Titania and her court were in attendance. Throughout the late summer the Casino hosted B.A. Rolfe and his world famous dance orchestra afternoons and evenings with the exception of Sundays when there were free concerts held in the afternoon and evenings.

More than a year before the opening of the Paramount Theater in July of 1930, the city authorized lease of the

⁴⁸ "Titania to Receive Crown in Casino," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1929.

Convention Hall Theater--then under construction--to Walter Reade, an owner and operator of five theaters in Asbury Park.⁴⁹ According to the terms of the lease, Reade would pay the city \$55,000 a year for twenty years. The city would furnish and decorate the theater but Reade was responsible for providing "the necessary motion picture equipment, talking machines (Western Electric type) etc."⁵⁰ This was an important stipulation as "talking picture equipment is a costly proposition. Individual installations have, at times, cost as much as \$25,000."⁵¹ Furthermore, Reade was obligated to keep the theater fully furnished, equipped, and in good condition for the term of the lease. Restrictions in the lease even extended to the type of entertainment Reade could run:

He agrees, by the lease, to "operate such theater with first-class attractions, such as vaudeville, motion pictures, and dramatic attractions (with no burlesque shows, prize fights or any other objectionable entertainment)..."⁵²

49 Walter Reade was the assumed name of Walter Rosenberg, of Selma, Alabama, a nationally known theater manager. "City Votes Contract For 20-Year Period," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1929.

50 "City Votes Contract for 20-Year Period," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1929.

51 "Theater Attendance Boosted by Talkies," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930.

52 "City Votes Contract For 20-Year Period," *Asbury Park Press*, 30 June 1929.

The city, for its part, agreed not to lease any other boardwalk building for use as a theater during the term of the lease.

Between 1926, when the Convention Hall was proposed and 1930, when it was finally realized, motion picture producers had gone from making almost all silent pictures to almost all talking pictures. In fact, 1930--the year in which the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater opened--proved to be a year of record popularity for talking pictures.⁵³ The Convention Hall's Paramount Theater opened on July 11, 1930 with a shower of local publicity.

The Paramount Theater got its name from the fact that it was run by the Paramount Publix Corporation, purported to be the largest theater operating company in the world in the late 1920s. Known for its palatial and often fantastic movie "palaces" across the country, the Publix Corporation added the Paramount Theater on the Boardwalk to the other four theaters--the Mayfair, the St. James, the Savoy, and the Lyric--it operated in Asbury Park.⁵⁴ The actual appearance of

⁵³ Average weekly American attendance at talking pictures had increased from 57,000,000 in 1928 when they were introduced to 115,000,000 in the early months of 1930. "Theater Attendance Boosted by Talkies," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930.

⁵⁴ An article about the Paramount Publix Corporation which discusses Sam Katz, founder of Publix Corporation and his other theaters nationwide, also mentions the Uptown Theater in Chicago, "a theater done in Spanish style, massively decorated with carvings." Notably, the

the theaters figured in one of Publix's two most important ideals: beautiful houses and an atmosphere of charm and courtesy.⁵⁵

If the amount of newspaper coverage of subjects was a reflection of its readers interests, Asbury Park residents were particularly intrigued and concerned with the theater's most modern and related elements: technology, comfort, and uniformity. While articles discussed the film equipment, there seemed to be considerably more attention given to the technology of the building itself. The new building demonstrated modern technology in everything from its seating to its suspended steel roof girders and trestles to its load bearing capacities to its soundproofing. For instance, one article detailing the quality and technology of the seating noted that the Paramount seats had "naturally received the care and thought of not only the architects, builders, and management but experts with country-wide knowledge of seating from a scientific standpoint..."⁵⁶ Generally, features of

Uptown Theater is on the 1996 list of Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places released by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Founder of Publix Began As Pianist in Penny Show," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930; "Eleven Most Endangered 1996," *Preservation*, July-August 1996.

55 "Founder of Publix Began as Pianist in Penny Show," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930.

56 "Mid-Victorian Seats No Longer Part of Theater," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930.

comfort and uniformity in large part derived from the technology of the building. From the careful lighting to the padded floors to the back-supporting seats, patrons would realize that their "comfort and entertainment desire has been anticipated in a measure and scale never before attempted in Asbury Park."⁵⁷ Articles also placed considerable emphasis on the uniformity and its implied lack of social differentiation accorded patrons in the design of the theater. Ideally, the theater was designed so that views and sound quality would be equally good at any location in the theater:

Patrons who ask an usher for a good seat in the Asbury Park theater will be conducted to any vacant seat in the house. For there will be no such thing as one seat being a better seat than any other in the new Paramount.⁵⁸

Though the seats were richly upholstered, uniform vision line, back support, and seat pitch all gave credence to the headline "All Seats Equal in New Theater."⁵⁹

In honor of the theater's opening, the Asbury Park Press printed a special ten page Paramount Theater supplement on July 11, 1930. While the supplement consisted largely of advertisements, it contained several articles relating to the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "All Seats Equal in New Theater," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 July 1930.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

theater. Furthermore the front page detailed some of the features which made the Paramount "The most magnificent theater on the Atlantic coast:"

Resplendent in its dress of ivory white and gold; its new seats, softly cushioned, luxuriously upholstered for comfort and spaced widely apart for convenience...its newly installed heating and air conditioning system, which furnishes the fresh, healthful, and invigorating atmosphere...its sound reproducing equipment and magnasopic screen... (Figures 48 & 49) ⁶⁰

The following day an article indicated that the new Paramount had been filled to capacity on opening night. Two thousand people filled the theater for a gala charity performance including Broadway and Hollywood stars. As these guests left, there were hundreds who waited in line for the first midnight show. Thereafter, the theater offered continuous shows daily from 11 a.m to midnight.⁶¹

The Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel Building hosted an amazing array of conventions, concerts, films, plays, and other events in the years that followed. The Asbury Park beachfront, particularly the Convention Hall and Casino, fared relatively well in the early and mid 1930s given the nationwide depression. Ultimately, however, the resort's attempts to

⁶⁰ "Paramount Theater To Open Tonight," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 11 July 1930.

⁶¹ "New Paramount Filled To Capacity, Stars Open House," *Asbury Park Press*, 12 July 1930.

ensure its continued future as a resort and its economic security with the construction of the Convention Hall and Casino, in part, facilitated its decline and the subsequent decline and deterioration of the buildings. Under different circumstances these two buildings may have fared much better. However, their enormous original cost, subsequent cost overruns, costly litigation over the construction, and the economic legacy of the Depression coupled with a host of later problems--both specific to the buildings themselves, like their size and oceanfront location, and more general problems, such as a declining tax base--have turned the buildings from dreams into potential preservation nightmares.

Asbury Park was labeled the "City Beautiful" in the mid 1930s; most of these problems were still in the future. In fact, these problems were so distant that the mayor could claim, in 1936, that the city's values, and location would guarantee that Asbury Park would be "always attractive to millions who are seeking not only pleasure and recreation but above all, health and happiness"⁶² At the close of 1936, the Mayor, who had championed construction of the Convention Hall and Casino was no doubt pleased. Based on the four million dollars brought in by the convention industry in 1936, he predicted a record year for convention revenue in 1937. In a

⁶² "City Today Among Most Influential of Resort Towns," *Long Branch Daily Record*, 31 December 1936.

self-congratulatory tone the mayor noted that the Convention Hall and Casino, each with a seating capacity of five thousand, had been wise investments.⁶³ In the late spring of 1936, the Asbury Park Press ran a two page advertising supplement, the equivalent of the early twentieth century promotional brochures. With the headline "Asbury Park now has every facility for recreation," the ad detailed the multitude of amenities which made Asbury Park the most inviting of resorts. Its natural beauty aside, municipal ownership of the oceanfront "made possible the development of the boardwalk and beaches to the point where they stand preeminent in the world of recreation."⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, the Casino/Carousel and the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater were among the long list of attractions:

Two comparatively new buildings on the boardwalk, the Casino and the Convention Hall and Theater, are unexcelled anywhere in the world for beauty of architecture. In these two buildings are heard outstanding orchestras and the world's greatest artists.⁶⁵

The futures of the Casino and Convention Hall no longer looked so rosy by the late 1930s. These two structures had

⁶³ "Beach Income Hits 4 Million," *Long Branch Daily Record*, 31 December 1936.

⁶⁴ "Asbury Park now has every facility for recreation," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 11 June 1936.

⁶⁵Ibid.

become the city's "Big Problem." One newspaper article deemed them "white elephants" because of their unprofitable operation and costly construction and upkeep. Things were bad enough that, in 1939, Walter Reade returned the Convention Hall and Casino, though not the Paramount Theater, to the city after years of trying to operate them without success. Even with his considerable resources Reade could not make the buildings pay for themselves, not to mention turn a profit. Part of the city's problem was a ten million dollar debt, much of which had been accumulated because of the beachfront program, including construction of the Casino/Carousel and Convention Hall/Paramount Theater. Furthermore, the city had been sued by creditors who had loaned money for the improvement work; the litigation had cost the city an enormous amount over the course of three years.⁶⁶

People continued to use these two buildings for a variety of entertainment events in the early 1940s, if not as successfully as had originally been hoped. However, the onset of World War II dramatically affected the history of the boardwalk in the 1940s. In the spring of 1942 the Army instituted a coastal "dim-out" to protect ships along the coastline from becoming the easy targets of submarines;

⁶⁶ "City's Big Problem Now is What to do About Convention Hall, Casino," *Asbury Park Press*, 3 December 1939.

Asbury Park responded by erecting a twenty thousand dollar dim-out screen along the boardwalk.⁶⁷ Additionally, the war at least temporarily solved the problem of what to do with the Convention Hall. On September 8, 1942 the Navy took over the Berkeley-Carteret and Monterey hotels to house British soldiers and, three days later, the Army--with the city's permission--took over Convention Hall and the Sunset Avenue solarium. When the Army left the building in 1943, the Navy quickly took it over and occupied it until 1946.⁶⁸

In terms of the Convention Hall, Casino, and boardwalk the most momentous event during the Navy's "occupation" was the Hurricane of 1944. The hurricane and tidal wave, which hit on the Jersey Shore on September 14, 1944, was supposedly the worst disaster the New Jersey Shore had experienced in more than fifty years. Both buildings along with the boardwalk suffered considerable damage; in some places the boardwalk was completely destroyed. The level of destruction was enormous. It was evidenced particularly in a picture folder, a story of the damage caused by the hurricane told in 16 pictures and accompanying captions, which one could send

⁶⁷ Harold F. Wilson, *The Story of the Jersey Shore*, vol. 4 (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co.,1964), p. 120.

⁶⁸ "Army to Quit All Buildings in City November 29," *Asbury Park Press*, 12 November 1943.

as the equivalent of a giant postcard (Figures 50 & 51).⁶⁹

While the Convention Hall's foundation suffered extensive damage (fractures in the caissons, column caps and serious structural cracking)⁷⁰, the Casino had been more visibly damaged by the hurricane. Following the hurricane, the Casino remained partially closed to the public. The Perth Amboy Arena Corporation, which had leased the auditorium as a skating rink, sued the city to force it to repair the storm damage. In return, the city canceled their lease. Unfortunately, this action initiated a round of litigation which prevented work on the Casino for almost four years. Not surprisingly, people had differing ideas as to what ought to be done with the damaged structure. After studying its condition, the planning board offered their recommendation to the city council: the entire building east of the stores on the eastern side of the building should be demolished. The board had chosen this plan instead of two other plans, one which involved restoring the structure to its condition before the hurricane and the other which proposed demolishing all of the building except the section

⁶⁹ "A story told in 16 pictures of the 1944 Hurricane, Damage Caused to Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, N.J. By the Storm and Tidal Wave of September 14, 1944. Rutgers University Special Collections, New Brunswick, N.J.

⁷⁰ "Rebuilding and Refurbishing Slated at Convention Hall, *Asbury Park Press*, 19 October 1971.

west of the boardwalk.⁷¹

Within less than a week, a sort of proto-preservationist and owner of considerable shorefront property, Dr. Sebastian P. Vaccaro, responded to the plan contending that "it would be a 'desecration' to demolish the damaged building." Vaccaro based his appeal for saving the entire Casino mainly on aesthetic grounds, maintaining that the Casino remained an example of fine architecture and an attraction, even in its damaged condition. Fighting staunchly against the almost certain destruction, Vaccaro quickly retreated to negative arguments against demolishing the building, versus positive arguments in favor of its restoration:

And it is not practical to destroy it. If the Casino must be destroyed, it could undoubtedly be destroyed later at a cost much less than the present high prices.⁷²

Strangely enough, Vaccaro was trying to save the building by appealing to the monetary sensibilities of those in favor of razing the eastern section. Finally, Vaccaro in what was a wise observation, noted that loss of any of the city's modern structures, including the Casino/Carousel Pavilion and Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, would render Asbury Park

⁷¹ "Planning Board Advises Razing Eastern Section of Casino Building," *Asbury Park Press*, 18 November 1946.

⁷² "Vaccaro Declares Casino Removal Plan 'Desecration'," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 23 November 1946.

eminently less appealing to thousands of visitors. Ultimately, Vaccaro's plea prevailed and the Casino was repaired.⁷³

In the meantime, after forty-three months of occupation by various Allied Armed Forces, the Convention Hall was returned to the city in April of 1946. City employees rushed cleaning and rehabilitation for a speedy reopening, while other city officials sought compensation from the Navy for "wear and tear" to the Convention Hall. A few weeks earlier the city had leased Convention Hall for \$15,000 to Joseph Redicker who planned to bring in "big name" bands for dances.

On November 3, 1948, Asbury Park Press readers were greeted with the headline "Dewey Concedes To Truman." Beneath this headline they would have seen a story of more local import, titled "Casino Revival Voted in City" which discussed the city's plans to rehabilitate the damaged sections of the Casino, which had remained unused since the 1944 hurricane. A week later, the paper noted that given a choice between a plan which proposed reconstruction of the entire damaged portion of the Casino, or demolition of the most of the damaged section, voters overwhelmingly approved the former plan. The fact that residents supported the reconstruction plan, whose proposed cost was more than twice the other plan, indicated residents strong attachment and identification with

⁷³Ibid.

the building.⁷⁴ The Rediker Corporation, which had previously leased the Convention Hall, was involved with the renovation of the Casino auditorium. Though they operated the auditorium as an ice skating rink, their work made the space "useful for dancing, sports events, roller skating, trade shows, and all kinds of conventions".⁷⁵

This rehabilitation work on the Casino presaged the renewed success and popularity that these two anchors of the Asbury Park boardwalk--the Casino/Carousel Pavilion and Convention Hall/Theater--enjoyed in the 1950s. The Casino was not alone in receiving improvements in this period; after a four-year battle, Convention Hall received a wooden basketball floor and glass backboards. For years the city had been denied top high school and professional games due to the hall's terrazzo floor, which sweated under heavy use and became dangerous. In the early 1950s, Convention Hall was used for dance bands, singers, ice and roller skating shows, and midget auto races among other things. In 1955 Walter Reade Theaters, Inc. (which had leased the Casino and Convention Hall and continued to lease the Paramount Theater) sought a three-year lease of Convention Hall with decidedly more ambitious plans for the space:

⁷⁴ "City Pushes Plans for Casino Reconstruction," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 10 November 1948.

⁷⁵ "Armstrong Sees Nothing New On Lease," *Asbury Park Press*, 21 December 1954.

It is our thought not only to engage outstanding talent for the presentation of concerts, symphonies, arena spectaculars, outstanding name and dance bands, important lecturers and nationally known speakers, but also to provide a series of exhibits and displays in and around the building which will result in the Convention Hall becoming the cultural and 'want to go' place for all of New Jersey.⁷⁶

Some city officials opposed the proposed lease because, unlike other leases of Convention Hall which were limited to the evenings or summer months, Reade sought a full year lease. Officials believed the lease might deny the city use of the hall, which it used most of the year for various events. Despite opposition, Reade Inc. eventually received the three-year lease on the Hall.⁷⁷

A series of fights which began in Convention Hall in July of 1956 and culminated in a riot outside on Ocean Avenue were hardly the type of publicity that the Reade corporation had wanted to generate about Convention Hall. Though the police insisted that the riots were not racially motivated, in retrospect, they seemed to foreshadow the race riots that would occur in Asbury Park approximately fifteen years later. While the later riots happened on Springwood Avenue, rather than directly outside the Convention Hall, like the earlier

⁷⁶ "Reade Requests Lease On Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 31 January 1955.

⁷⁷ "City Against All-Year Lease for Auditorium," *Asbury Park Press*, 11 February 1955.

riot they generated a considerable amount of negative press about the city. And in so doing, they indirectly influenced the future of both the Convention Hall and the Casino.

Convention Hall and the Casino were the focus of a number of proposals involving cost cutting and modernization in the late 1950s. Among these ideas were an unrealized tower hotel above the Convention Hall arcade and a separate heating system in Convention Hall along with modification of the heating plant to the south of the Casino. The hotel was planned to fill "the need for more first-class, year round hotel accommodations to attract more convention business to the city."⁷⁸ The heating proposal, on the other hand, was intended to save the city approximately \$40,000 a year in beachfront heating costs.⁷⁹

Overall, these proposals speak to the condition of the two buildings as well as to the health of Asbury Park more generally. The buildings needed rehabilitation, and perhaps adaptive use or modification to fully serve the needs of the city. In turn, the loss of convention business and visitors—upon which the city's economy was largely based—was in part attributable to the condition of the buildings. If the 1960s evidenced an effort to address some of these problems, they

⁷⁸ "Convention Hall Hotel Proposed," *Asbury Park Press*, 1 February 1957.

⁷⁹ "Study Heat System In Beach Buildings," *Asbury Park Press*, 17 September 1958.

also represent the solidification of the Asbury Park's decline.

While they were more substantial structures, by 1960s the Convention Hall/Theater and Casino had outlasted the first and second generations of buildings previously on their sites. But in 1960s both buildings were approximately thirty years old, and obviously in need of repair and rehabilitation. The Convention Hall was the first to receive such treatment, when it got its first interior renovation in fifteen years in the early 1960s as part of a ten-year plan to rebuild the beachfront begun in 1959.⁸⁰ Among other things the renovation included a complete interior repainting, restoration of all the murals, installation of a new brass rail in the lobby, re-gilding of the organ grilles, and improvement of the sound system. As part of this work, city employees had also begun to replace lighting fixtures, but this part of the project would only continue as money allowed. City council was also considering re-roofing the entire building because the original roof was more than thirty years old. Notably, the city took pride in the fact that with the exception of a paint conservationist, the work

⁸⁰ "City Acts to Save The Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 16 June 1968.

was completed entirely by city employees.⁸¹ While perhaps not completely practical today, this type of arrangement might strengthen support for and visibility level of preservation by keeping jobs in communities and creating greater community connection with its architecture and history.

Convention Hall also witnessed a variety of additional changes in the early to mid 1960s. Among these were a fire which did \$8,000 of damage to the hall in 1963, installation of a new gas air conditioning in 1964, and completion of a new gas heating system (originally proposed in the late 1950s) in 1966.

Not surprisingly, fire and plans for modernization figured highly in the history of the Casino in the 1960s as well. A January 10, 1966 fire damaged the auditorium which was being leased at the time by Arena Attractions Inc. as an ice skating rink (Figure 52). While the fire caused considerable damage in the auditorium, the arcade, merry-go-round, and other sections of the Casino were not damaged. Furthermore, the fire strengthened the city's resolve to renovate and modernize the building, at an estimated cost of over one million dollars.⁸²

In May of 1966 the city applied for 1.75 million dollars

⁸¹ "Convention Hall Gets 1st Remodeling in 15 Years," *Asbury Park Press*, 14 February 1960s.

⁸² "Lebra Says Casino Repairs Should Start Soon," *Asbury Park Press*, 14 March 1966.

in federal aid for renovation and modernization of the Casino and Convention Hall. The figure represented 80 percent of the estimated 2.4 million dollars that would be necessary to renovate the two beachfront structures. The Convention Hall work was expected to cost 1.3 million dollars, while the Casino work was estimated at 1.1 million dollars. While the mayor had apparently received assurances that the aid would be available for both shorefront projects, pressure to reduce federal spending because of the Vietnam War had increased in the intervening time. Furthermore, the department of Commerce indicated that the need for aid was greater in other communities; in December Asbury Park received notification that both requests had been rejected. As a result, both projects were to be reduced to minimum repairs, or abandoned altogether.⁸³

Lack of federal funds was only part of the threat facing Convention Hall in the late 1960s. Because of its beachfront location, Convention Hall had sustained considerable erosion and deterioration over the course of almost forty years. The front (seaward) promenade had been closed because of the danger of falling masonry. Additionally, in June of 1968, the city's engineer, Leon Avakian, warned that portions of the Hall's superstructure would crumble into the sea within

⁸³ "Casino, Convention Hall Aid Is Sought By Asbury Park," *Asbury Park Press*, 25 May 1966; "City Bid for Aid Rejected," *Asbury Park Press*, 20 December 1966.

several years if deterioration was not halted. To forestall this possibility, he proposed that the city oversee construction of a four hundred and fifty foot breakwater centered on Convention Hall. The section between the breakwater and hall would then be filled in with sand. This plan served two purposes because it would allow for stabilization of the structure to facilitate repair of the caissons or underpinnings of the buildings, and it would add considerably to a shrinking bathing beach.⁸⁴

The city engineer was particularly pleased to learn in early September that the state would assume seventy-five, rather than fifty percent of the \$550,000 project. However, due to a storm and increased construction costs, the city requested a larger state grant of \$700,000 for the project in late 1968. The following spring the state granted Asbury Park the requested amount of money, though it would be given over the course of two years due to the statewide demand for beach protection funds.⁸⁵

Again, as was the case in the 1960s, the fortunes of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and the Casino/Carousel building in the 1970s were both indicative of and a result of

⁸⁴ "City Acts To Save The Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, June 16, 1968.

⁸⁵ "State Will Pay More For Beach Hall Repair, " *Asbury Park Press*, 4 September 1968.

their larger context—the declining circumstances of Asbury Park. Many factors, most of them not directly related to the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel combined to further the perception of Asbury Park as a dying resort. For instance, completion of the Garden State Parkway in July 1955 drew traffic and potential visitors to destinations further south. A series of racially motivated riots in the 1970s diminished the popularity of the resort. Furthermore, the 1970s marked the onset of a number of problems that would become particularly acute in the 1980s and 1990s: lax code enforcement which allowed absentee landlords to divide large old homes into cheap rooming houses and apartments; marked decline in homeownership; policies which contributed to the decline of neighborhoods; and city and county placement of special-needs people much in excess of the population, which contributed significantly to decreasing the tax base.⁸⁶

During the 1970s the city, along with the state and federal governments, spent substantial sums of money on Convention Hall and the Casino because they were seen as critical elements of the city's health, economic and otherwise. However, the growing sentiment of city officials as the decade progressed was that only private ownership would generate the funds necessary for the preservation,

⁸⁶Bradfield, "Can Asbury Park Be Saved," p.22.

rehabilitation, and continued maintenance of these municipal monoliths. Consequently, in the late 1970s and 1980s city officials looked towards redevelopment schemes, plans which incorporated historic preservation to greater and lesser degrees.

At the beginning of the decade, city officials were hopeful about receiving money to rehabilitate Convention Hall under a federal program designed by the Nixon administration to stimulate the economy, the Public Works Improvement Program. Under this program, aimed at areas with high rates of unemployment, the federal government would finance 80% percent of public works projects, creating jobs for the unemployed. Besides \$600,000--80% of the cost of rebuilding and refurbishing Convention Hall--city officials also sought the same amount for construction of the first phase of a municipal complex to include police headquarters and a jail.⁸⁷ When they discovered there was much less money available through the program than they had thought originally, city officials scrapped the plans for the municipal complex and reduced the scope and the request for federal money for Convention Hall from \$600,000 to \$346,800. The reduction meant that much of the planned interior work would have to be abandoned; the revised proposal eliminated such plans as replacing the second and third story windows with decorative

⁸⁷ "Rebuilding and Refurbishing Slated at Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 19 October 1971.

panels, refurbishing the restrooms, and repairing the roof of the arcade.⁸⁸ On the other hand, according to the revised proposal, most of the exterior work--including continued work on the foundation--would be completed. Hopes of receiving the money were not high though, given that there was eighty-two million dollars of federal aid requested and only forty million available. City officials had basically given up on getting the grant when in mid-February of 1972 Asbury Park received a \$361,000 grant for repairs to Convention Hall.⁸⁹ The fact that the federal government awarded Asbury Park the grant testified to the perceived importance of Convention Hall, even beyond the limits of Asbury Park. While presenting in favor of the project, Representative James Howard from New Jersey cited the continued ripple effect the work would generate: "a repaired and refurbished Convention Hall will have an uplifting effect on the economy of the entire shore area long after the work is done."⁹⁰ By early December of 1972 the work was almost completed; the badly deteriorated columns had been

88 "City Hopes Dim for U.S. Hall Funds," *Asbury Park Press*, 23 October 1971.

89 "\$361,000 Granted For Repair of Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 16 February 1972.

90 "Convention Hall Work Hopes Rise," *Asbury Park Press*, 15 January 1972.

reconstructed and minor interior renovations were complete.⁹¹

In addition to repair and rehabilitation, Convention Hall also experienced continuing use and damage in the 1970s. Unfortunately, the waterfront location also took its toll on the interior of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater; water intrusion had damaged the elaborate plasterwork in the proscenium and caused mildew problems in the theater. Additionally, the buildings aged mechanical systems failed with increasing frequency.⁹² Nevertheless, concerts continued and in mid-August of 1974 as an enthusiastic and nostalgic audience listened to Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons and Jay and the Americans, two of the 1960s most successful pop bands.⁹³ Less than a year later, Convention Hall suffered one in the series of fires that have occurred over the years in Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and the Casino/Carousel building. In this case, the fire was set deliberately, and caused considerable damage to the hall.⁹⁴

The damage caused to the Casino in the early 1970s

91 "Repair Puts Convention Hall In City on Firmer Footing," *Asbury Park Press*, 10 December 1972.

92 Historic Preservation Element of Master Plan, p. 8.

93 "Convention Hall Echoes To The Sounds of the 60s," *Asbury Park Press*, 19 August 1974.

94 "Blaze Damages Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 3 April 1975.

resulted from neglect rather than malicious intent; the Casino auditorium had been basically abandoned since the 1966 fire. Holes in the roof left by the fire were the cause of much additional damage, especially in the form of water damage to the floors and walls. In 1972 the city spent some of the insurance money to install a new fiberglass roof on the auditorium. Repairs continued the following year with installation of masonry, plumbing, and electrical systems.⁹⁵ In May of 1974, Asbury Park began celebration of its centennial with a rededication of the renovated Casino. The theme of the rededication party--"An old town with a new spirit"--reflected the renewed image of itself that Asbury Park had often presented more convincingly in the past.⁹⁶ However, activity at the Casino seemed to boost local business, and the Casino's new lessee, who had booked concerts, trade shows, flea markets, a circus, among other events, predicted that 1975 would prove a successful year for the Casino.⁹⁷

Revitalization of Asbury Park became an increasing priority in the late 1970s. As the city engineer stated in

⁹⁵ "City Workers Repair Casino Auditorium," *Asbury Park Press*, 28 October 1973.

⁹⁶ "Asbury Park Celebrates," *Asbury Park Press*, 20 May 1974.

⁹⁷ "Casino Arena Preparing For a Busy Year," *Asbury Park Press*, 29 December 1974.

1978, "The city is in dire need of a rebirth."⁹⁸ Plans for this such a rebirth generally focused on the beachfront area. Not surprisingly, plans for renewing the area, which most often centered on Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel building, evinced the often contentious relationship between redevelopment and historic preservation. Those in favor of redevelopment generally viewed preservation as an impediment to progress and generator of further bureaucratic "red tape", rather than as a process which might foster change and bolster redevelopment efforts.

In 1978, for instance, the newly established Urban Resorts Development Corporation, under the leadership of city engineer, Leon Avakian, proposed a civic-convention center on five beachfront blocks, including the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Berkeley-Carteret Hotel. The complex, which would be publicly and privately financed and owned, and "would include a sports arena, theater for the arts, exhibition hall, jai alai fronton, two high-rise hotels, a parking garage, and rooftop park."⁹⁹ According to the proposal, the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater would be converted in a convention and sports arena and theater for the arts. The plan called for renovation of the Berkeley-

⁹⁸ "Asbury Park Convention Complex Proposed," *Asbury Park Press*, 10 August 1978.

⁹⁹ "Asbury Park Convention Complex Proposed," *Asbury Park Press*, 10 August 1978.

Carteret with a 120-room renovation and adjacent jai alai fronton.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, one of the hopes for the new complex recalled one of the primary reasons cited in favor of building Convention Hall/Paramount Theater: luring conventioners away from Atlantic City. Ideally, this would happen because convention goers increasingly could not afford hotel rates in Atlantic City. Avakian optimistically stated, "This loss to Atlantic City's economy will be Asbury Park's gain."¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that economic concerns were understandably central, the proposal failed to consider the historic character of the area, and there was no mention of the potential impact of the complex on the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, Berkeley-Carteret Hotel, urban plan, or beachfront landscape.

It was hardly coincidental that Convention Hall/Paramount Theater was added to the New Jersey State Register of Historic Places the following spring, due principally to the efforts of three city officials. While the nomination was being considered, the city engineer requested that the city council seek a delay in nomination to the National Register "because the designation may delay

¹⁰⁰"Asbury Park Convention Complex Proposed," *Asbury Park Press*, 10 August 1978.

¹⁰¹ "Asbury Park Convention Complex Proposed," *Asbury Park Press*, 10 August 1979.

plans to construct a \$70 million convention-civic complex."¹⁰² Avakian asked that the nomination be postponed for six months until the feasibility study for the new complex would be completed, noting that several important, though unnamed, persons shared his concerns. The request apparently came too late, however, and at the end of March Convention Hall/Paramount Theater was included in the National Register of Historic Places.

The convention-civic complex was not the only redevelopment proposal forwarded in 1979 and when Convention Hall/Paramount Theater was added to the National Register in late March, the city was considering selling almost all of the city-owned property along the boardwalk. City officials were investigating a proposal formulated by Thomas and Carmen Ricci, amusement park owners who wanted to purchase the city-owned beachfront and redevelop it. Furthermore, the city council advertised the sale nationwide and alerted major amusement park corporations and developers of the upcoming sale. During 1979 city officials met extensively with the Ricci's, and offered the boardwalk property for sale in a offer particularly suited to their needs. Ultimately though, the Ricci's--the city's most interested and promising potential purchasers--declined to bid, citing overly

¹⁰² "City Delay Sought In Naming Hall To National Register," *Asbury Park Press*, 3 February 1979.

restrictive specifications¹⁰³, and the property remained unsold.

While many of Boardwalk businesses stood their ground in the early 1980s (Figure 53), the future of the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, Casino/Carousel building, the Boardwalk landscape between them, and Asbury Park more generally appeared bleak. Asbury Park's Mayor at the time, Ray Kramer described the city's overall situation and the need for revitalization:

We aren't unique. We have the same problems as the other 31 cities in New Jersey. We suffer from old housing stock, high unemployment, the middle class moving to the suburbs and the shopping malls killing our downtown. We need private development.¹⁰⁴

Again in 1982 Asbury Park offered to sell city-owned property along the Boardwalk because of interest expressed by Robert J. Oberst, head of a Red Bank financial planning firm. Though similar to the earlier 1979 offer, this time the city included Convention Hall in the sale. The council did not advertise the sale as widely as the first, and Oberst was the only bidder. While Oberst was "interested in preserving the historical character of the Asbury Park oceanfront," Asbury

¹⁰³ "Register of Historic Sites Includes Convention Hall," *Asbury Park Press*, 28 March 1979; "City Will Sell Property at Boardwalk," *Asbury Park Press*, 20 June 1982.

¹⁰⁴Navarra, *The New Jersey Shore*, p. 20.

Park officials were disappointed at the \$2 million bid for the 125-acre strip bounded by the boardwalk and Ocean Avenue, which had a \$14 million replacement value.¹⁰⁵ So, in the early 1980s Asbury Park employees were still seeking the private investment that would provide the funds necessary for the renovation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and the Casino/Carousel building.

¹⁰⁵ Navarra, *The New Jersey Shore*, p. 20; "City will sell Property at Boardwalk," *Asbury Park Press*, 20 June 1982.

CHAPTER FOUR

Historic Preservation Successes and Failures in the 1980s and 1990s: The Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel building, 1985-1996

Compiled in the early 1980s, the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory documented historically significant sites throughout the county. The Asbury Park Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel were recognized as some of the most important examples of the county's resort-based architecture relating to recreation and entertainment. In briefly noting Asbury Park's historic resources, the author, obviously aware of the recent proposals for the oceanfront, offered the following recommendation:

Future redevelopment of Asbury Park's beachfront also should include the preservation and protection (by local ordinance and/or deed restriction) of several notable structures on or near the boardwalk, namely the Convention Hall (1303-33), the Asbury Park Casino and Carousel (1303-21), Palace Amusements Carousel and Ferris Wheel (1303-22), and the Berkeley-Carteret Hotel (recently renovated)."

Both the preservation and redevelopment pictures looked considerably brighter by the mid-1980s. By the early 1980s the cost of maintaining both the Convention Hall and Casino were prohibitive; therefore, they were both included in an Asbury Park waterfront redevelopment plan adopted in December of 1985. The structures were incorporated in the \$500 million dollar plan as public buildings which would be

rehabilitated with a combination of public and private funds. While the plan's goals were numerous, there were several that focused particularly on the two buildings: Rehabilitate Convention Hall to attract a larger number of convention visitors, rehabilitate the Casino and power plant (if economically and structurally feasible) as anchors of a new family entertainment center extending from Convention Hall to the Casino, maintain the city's boardwalk to ensure its continuing life and attractiveness for visitors, and reduce the city's direct involvement in property management for beach-related commercial activity.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the plan noted:

Convention Hall, the Casino Building and the Power Plant are important historic and architectural resources along the beachfront worthy of rehabilitation. The Waterfront Redevelopment Plan proposes that these buildings all be comprehensively rehabilitated, but in the case of the latter two, this is seen as dependent on the engineering and economic feasibility of rehabilitation that is yet to be determined.¹⁰⁷

After a year of negotiations on the part of the mayor and city council concerning the waterfront plan, in December of 1985 they selected a developer to implement the plan-- Carabetta/Vaccaro developer, who had recently finished renovation of the Berkeley-Carteret Hotel. As part of the

¹⁰⁶ Asbury Park Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, 1983, p. 2--4.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.3--10.

agreement, the group leased Convention Hall/Paramount Theater. Under the lease the group was responsible for operating, maintaining, and making substantial improvements--three to five million in renovations--to the structure. Included in the work were plans to enlarge the exhibition area to five times its original size, making it one of the largest of such spaces in the state. The group planned to use the Paramount Theater for cultural events. As in the past, the hope was that the expanded Convention Hall would become a site for large conventions.¹⁰⁸ For the Casino, the developer authorized a market potential analysis to determine the financial feasibility of rehabilitation and adaptive use of the structure.

Based on a multitude of factors ranging from the Casino's structural condition to its location, the authors of the market analysis recommended a redevelopment concept for the Casino focusing on beach recreation, restaurants and bars, and night-time entertainment. The proposal attempted to capitalize on the city's historical reputation as a beach resort and music center and complement the existing character of the boardwalk. The plan was based on year-round use and major components of it included several restaurants and bars, a restored carousel and auditorium, and a public plaza with a boat rental concession. Furthermore, the plan recommended

¹⁰⁸ "Redevelopment plan targets Convention Hall for Changes," *Asbury Park Press*, 6 December 1985.

both phased repair and rehabilitation, with the most critical stabilization work being done first, along with incremental redevelopment. After explaining the potential of this scheme, the report also detailed several plans, which though considered, were deemed impractical, including a retail mall, aquarium, and children's museum.¹⁰⁹ However, even when they submitted the report, members of the corporation noted that given the estimated cost of repairs needed by the Casino--\$6 to \$7.5 million--and the high annual rent necessary to finance the project--up to \$37 per square foot--the financial feasibility of "redeveloping" or adaptively using the Casino was questionable, especially without public funds.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the redeveloper determined that depending on the amount of structural rehabilitation necessary, most likely they could make a sufficient amount of money to justify the rehabilitation.

By mid-1986 the first step in Convention Hall's renovation, the acquisition of funding, was underway. The city had applied for a \$2.5 million Urban Development Action Grant, which if received would be lent to Carabetta/Vaccaro

¹⁰⁹ Market Potential Analysis For The Asbury Park Casino, Real Estate Research Corporation, June 1987, p.7.

¹¹⁰Letter to Joseph Carabetta, from Real Estate Research Corporation Vice President, Leonard Bogorad and Senior Analyst, JoAnn Symons, 15 June 1987.

developers to fund the \$10 million renovation.¹¹¹ By August of the following year actual restoration work had begun. The developer did not receive the grant, and in mid-1990s Ocean Mile Developers sought another grant, a \$3 million matching grant from the New Jersey Urban Development Corporation. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation work had stalled and would be at a virtual standstill until 1993, when Ocean Mile Development Group voluntarily closed the hall after being notified by the fire chief that the buildings were due for inspection.¹¹²

Similarly, stabilization work on the Casino/Carousel building had gotten off to a promising start only to be quickly stalled. In late 1987 an investigation surrounding a fire which destroyed 16 almost-finished townhouses revealed internal dissension in the Carabetta/Vaccaro partnership. By 1990s, the city had amended the waterfront development plan from a residential centered project to one based largely on entertainment. The city decided to continue with essentially the same developer under a new name, Ocean Mile Development Group, Carabetta's new venture.¹¹³

¹¹¹ "City to apply for federal grant for hall's renovation," *Asbury Park Press*, 24 July 1986.

¹¹² Paramount Theater/Convention Hall article summaries list, compiled by Shay Blum.

¹¹³Bradfield, "Can Asbury Park Be Saved?," p.22.

In the early 1990s the city had applied for a \$750,000 matching grant for stabilization work on the Casino from the New Jersey Historic Trust, to be matched dollar for dollar by the developer, Ocean Mile Development Group. The Trust highlighted the Casino/Carousel building in their May 1990 Historic Preservation Capital Needs Survey, and soon thereafter the Trust awarded the city one of the thirty-seven grants chosen from one hundred and twenty-five applications. The grant covered the work most critical in the stabilization of the Casino: replacement of the existing nonhistoric roof with a standing seam metal roof to match the original in configuration and appearance, repair or replacement of the Arcade roof, and restoration of the door and window walls on the north and south Boardwalk entrances to the arcade.¹¹⁴

Approximately a year later, various officials involved with the project met in a public hearing to determine why the proposed work had not begun. Questions about the structural and economic feasibility of the building, and a determination of why the work had yet to begin were the focus of the proceeding. The questions and responses of the participants were particularly indicative of their specific concerns about the project. For instance, David Roberts, the city planning director, expressed concern about the rate and amount of

¹¹⁴ Assembly Conservation and Natural Resource Committee. *Public Hearing on the Asbury Park Casino Building Historic Preservation Project*, 9 July 1991.

deterioration that had occurred since the application's submission a year-and-a-half earlier; New Jersey Assemblyman Daniel Jacobson, for his part, was anxious to see visible signs of work on the Casino, given the amount of state funds involved in the project. As a result of the hearing, the director of development for Ocean Mile Development agreed that his company was ready to begin work within four months provided a contract and lease were signed with the city.¹¹⁵

Despite notable setbacks in the preservation of these two buildings, Asbury Park's adoption of a Historic Preservation Element to their master plan on March 12, 1990 was a small, though not insubstantial victory for historic preservation in the city. Generally, this document was a concrete recognition of the existence and significance of historic structures and sites throughout Asbury Park. Formulated as a plan for protecting and preserving the city's historic sites and buildings, the plan delineated seven different districts, areas which share similar architecture, character, or function. This protection was realized in part by later amendments to the land development ordinance designed to protect the general character of sites and structures within these districts. Both the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel building and heating plant are a part of the Waterfront Resort District

¹¹⁵Ibid.

which also includes the Berkeley-Carteret Hotel and a variety of secondary buildings.¹¹⁶

The section on the waterfront resort/residential district focused almost completely on the three most significant structures within the area: Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, Casino and heating plant, and the Berkeley-Carteret Hotel. For the Convention Hall and Casino, the plan provided a brief history of each of these structures, details work planned for the near future, and suggests recommendations for the work. Regarding the Convention Hall the plan advised application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for a matching grant to fund restoration of the entire exterior of the hall; similarly, one of the three recommendations for the Casino entailed using an engineer's report as a basis for applying to the New Jersey Historic Trust for a grant to fund urgent stabilization work. The plan provided three overall recommendations prefaced by the notion that historic preservation and economic development, in fact, can be highly compatible.¹¹⁷

The adoption of historic preservation regulations to protect the character of the districts and give the ordinance the means to do this was the substance of the first

¹¹⁶Ibid, pp.1-22.

¹¹⁷Ibid, pp.7-12.

recommendation. After 1990 officials added such regulations as an amendment to the ordinance. The second recommendation involved developing a program to initiate listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places of any buildings eligible or possibly eligible. The recommendation highlighted several potential benefits of listing including Section 106 Review, but mistakenly stated:

If a property is listed, or has been judged eligible for listing on the State or National Historic Register , it is protected from demolition or unsupervised rehabilitation attempted by a public entity.¹¹⁸

Though it is a common misapprehension, a building's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places does not protect it from demolition. The third and final recommendation called for immediate action to rehabilitate Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and to stabilize the rapidly deteriorating Casino.¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, the Casino suffered a real setback in late October of 1990 when the Asbury Casino Corporation's lease on the carousel portion of the Casino expired. After sixty years of operation on the boardwalk, the carousel closed. The company, which owned the carousel and had leased

¹¹⁸Kate Frank and David Glynn Roberts, "Historic Preservation Element of Asbury Park Master Plan", Asbury Park Planning and Zoning Office, adopted 12 March 1990s, p. 20.

¹¹⁹Kate Frank and David Glynn Roberts, "Historic Preservation Element of Asbury Park Master Plan", Asbury Park Planning and Zoning Office, adopted 12 March 1990s, pp. 19-21.

the space for twenty years, also closed down the other amusements at the Casino due to "uncertainty about the City's plans to renovate the Casino and a loss of business in recent years as Boardwalk concessions closed as a result of the city's beachfront redevelopment plans."¹²⁰ While the company was involved in negotiations with Ocean Mile, who sought to purchase the carousel, Asbury Park Casino Corporation sold the entire carousel to another purchaser without offering the city right of first refusal to which it was entitled.¹²¹ The reassurance of the manager of the Casino corporation that the carousel would "stay intact, probably be refurbished, and have a good home,"¹²² were small comfort to residents, one of whom noted that while the actual building remained "as the symbol of Asbury Park,"¹²³ it had been gutted.

¹²⁰ "Asbury Park Casino carousel sold, dismantled," *Asbury Park Press*, 23 January 1991.

¹²¹ In fact, the horses that were sold were not the originals but fiberglass replacements. In 1984 by Asbury Casino Corporation had sold the original hand-carved wooden horses to a carousel museum. Nevertheless, this loss was substantial and compounded by the loss of the city's only other carousel two years earlier. In the summer of 1989, the Palace Amusements Carousel was auctioned off by its owners, Henry and Sebastian Vaccaro. "Asbury Park Casino Carousel sold, dismantled," *Asbury Park Press*, 23 January 1991. "Removing Century Of Our Memories--Boardwalk to bayou she goes," *Asbury Park Press*, 1 August 1989.

¹²² "Asbury Park Casino carousel sold, dismantled," *Asbury Park Press*, 23 January 1991.

¹²³Ibid.

The events in the wake of the adoption of the historic preservation element of the master plan were such that many of the recommendations have not been implemented. Ocean Mile was unable to match the funds for the Casino grant and the New Jersey Historic Trust was forced to withdraw the money. Ocean Mile spent \$60 million on the redevelopment project before the economy collapsed, and the company entered bankruptcy proceedings. In 1992, the city declared Ocean Mile in default of its developer's contract.¹²⁴ The resulting litigation continued until early 1996, severely hampering the city's efforts to revitalize the oceanfront. Though the Casino continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate, the city had not given up trying to investigate possibilities for its reuse, such as talking with representatives of the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma about using the building for a gaming casino.¹²⁵

After the voluntary closing of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater in July of 1993, the developer was unable to obtain the necessary financing. Therefore, after negotiations the control of the building reverted to the city. Asbury Park resolved to find funding to restore the building, though officials decided to concentrate on restoring the Paramount

¹²⁴Bradfield, "Can Asbury Park Be Saved?," p. 22.

¹²⁵Ibid, p. 27.

first because it was more versatile and potentially more profitable for the city.

In 1994 the city issued a \$1,000,000 bond in order to fund restoration work on the Paramount Theater. In September of 1994 New Jersey State Senator Dick LaRossa pledged to help find additional funding for the Convention Hall under a new state program aimed at New Jersey cities, saying, "The culture of a nation is in a building like this...We can't afford to lose it."¹²⁶ Soon thereafter, the city received a \$2 million state grant to fund work on the Paramount Theater. By late November restoration work on the theater was well underway.

City officials presented the interior restoration work as part of a larger, ongoing project which would encompass an exterior renovation in the future when more funds were available. As workers undertook roof repairs, asbestos removal, installation of new heating and plumbing systems, plaster removal, and a variety of other work, they discovered several unexpected, and since forgotten, elements of the interior. Among these surprises were an extensive gold leaf design on the ceiling which had been covered by black paint and grey Carrera marble underneath carpeting on the balcony stairs. Other work included cleaning and rehabilitation of the scagliola around the orchestra pit, cleaning of the rose

¹²⁶ "Helping Asbury Park--Head of Legislative Panel Looking To Revitalize City," *Asbury Park Press*, 28 September 1994.

granite along the theater walls, and repainting of the walls.¹²⁷

In early December the city retained the architectural firm of Ford, Farewell, Mills and Gatsch of Princeton to certify the work to be completed under the \$2 million state grant and to aid the city in submitting an application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for a historic preservation grant. The city did not receive this grant as the proposed work was too extensive.

Unlike the early 1960s restoration and renovation work on the Convention Hall, this project employed workers from outside the city. This arrangement sparked a protest by three hundred union members and Asbury Park residents who picketed outside the theater protesting the fact that no Asbury Park residents were employed on the project.

By early January of 1996, the work was complete. On January 8 the city celebrated the "rescue of its oceanfront landmark"¹²⁸ like they had its original opening in 1930s with a fundraiser, which was attended by 900 people. Following the reopening, the Metro Lyric Opera of New Jersey which had used the Paramount Theater for operas until it was closed in

127 "Treasures Uncovered At Asbury Park's Paramount Theatre As Work Continues," *The Coaster*, 23-30 November 1994.

128 "Making A Comeback: Paramount gala marks reopening," *Asbury Park Press*, 9 January 1995.

the 1980s, returned. Therefore, aside from the value of the restoration work, the reopening also represented a sign of promise and potential, a symbol that the city had "turned the corner."¹²⁹

Earlier in 1996 the city applied once again for a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust with plans for a more limited and feasible project--restoration of the water tower and windows. Fortunately, on July 17, 1996 Asbury Park received the requested grant.

¹²⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

Future Historic Preservation Prospects and Recommendations for Convention Hall and the Casino

In 1995 and early 1996, there was a renewed optimism regarding the fate of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and the Casino/Carousel building. In 1995 the Monmouth and Ocean Building Trades Council sought to purchase the redevelopment rights to Asbury Park's beachfront from Joseph Carabetta, of Ocean Mile Development Group. The group planned a \$250 million dollar shorefront entertainment and commercial project to include renovation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and the Casino/Carousel Building.¹³⁰ In mid-January, 1996, the mayor of Asbury Park, Carabetta, and James Gratton, president of the Building Trades Council, signed an agreement allowing for the transfer of development rights from Ocean Mile to the Building Trades Council. In addition to revitalizing the shorefront, the project was intended to generate hundreds of jobs for union members. At that point, James Gratton assured city officials that the council would have no problem securing the \$2.5 million in seed money

¹³⁰Interview with Chris Armitage, Director of Economic Development, Asbury Park, New Jersey, 10 October 1995; Bradfield, "Can Asbury Park Be Saved?," p. 27.

needed for the project.¹³¹ Much to the disappointment--though probably not the surprise--of city officials and residents, the building council was unable to come up with the necessary seed money by the deadline forty-five days later.

On a positive note, 1996 has also brought good news for the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater. On July 17, 1996, the New Jersey Historic Trust awarded the city a \$1.25 million matching grant for Convention Hall/Paramount Theater. The city will use the money to fund recent work on the theater and arena as well as to cover restoration work on the water tower and windows (Figures 54-67). A recent New York Times article titled "Grants That Aim to Use the Past to Help the Present," described the benefits of preservation projects, like renovation of the Asbury Park Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, recently funded under grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust:

Many local officials view the grants as a tool not only to save a piece of the past but also to build community pride and renewal. They and advocates of historic preservation say restoration also promotes tourism, creates jobs, and attracts new investments.¹³²

Importantly, those in charge of the project recognize not only the historic and architectural, but also the present

131 "Asbury Park, Carabetta, Unions Sign Off On Historic Redevelopment Agreements," *The Coaster*, 18-24 January 1996.

132 "Grants That Aim to Use the Past to Help the Present," *New York Times*, 4 August 1996, sec. 9, p.11.

day cultural significance of the project. Historically, entertainment was one of the main attractions of Asbury Park as a resort. The Paramount is, in fact, the only remaining intact Paramount-Publix Theater of the five that once existed in Asbury Park. In today's context of architecturally characterless "ten-plex" cinemas, the Paramount is both architecturally and culturally reminiscent of a period that produced movie "palaces," few of which still exist in the United States. Perhaps more importantly, the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater is a very visible symbol of the beginnings of a city's revitalization. It is hoped that the restoration of Convention Hall will be a first step in generating activity on the beachfront and in Asbury Park in general. Since the condition of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater has been reflective of the health of the city in the past, renovation may in fact boost the city's image of itself, and that held by outsiders. It is critical to the success of the project that city leaders seek the full support of residents for the work on the building, as they did when planning the building in the late 1920s. Furthermore, moves like employing city residents in the renovation work would really galvanize community support for preservation. Asbury Park's beachfront director conveyed considerable confidence that the Convention Hall/Paramount

Theater is "on its way back".¹³³ Slowly, but surely the city will complete renovation of the structure.

If the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater is the good news for the Asbury Park shorefront, then the Casino/Carousel is the bad news. Though the Carousel Pavilion continues to be used for flea markets, the arcade and arena were closed in the 1980s because having people in them was too much of a liability for the city given their deteriorated condition. Closing the Casino arcade further diminished the pedestrian traffic along the boardwalk, as people walking north from Ocean Grove along the boardwalk were likely to turn around at the Casino rather than detour around the building. Very recently, the city has removed potentially hazardous plaster chunks from the ceiling and secured the doors at the boardwalk entrances to the Casino arcade, again allowing pedestrians to continue along the boardwalk through the Casino. However, much of the building has deteriorated to the point that the cost, merely to stabilize it, would be prohibitive. Because large sections of the arena roof have collapsed, the arena has suffered virtually irreparable damage from water, vegetation, and animal droppings. Consequently, like so many other buildings that are too expensive to maintain, and too costly to demolish, it sits and deteriorates further (Figures 68-74).

¹³³Telephone Interview with Joe Palato, Beachfront Director, Asbury Park, NJ, 6 August 1996.

If demolishing the Casino would constitute "desecration" as Dr. Vaccaro maintained in 1946, then letting it stand in its present condition may well be an equal form of desecration. At this point, the most practical option for the city seems to involve reviving one of the three proposals presented in 1946 by the planning board after the Casino had been heavily damaged in a hurricane in 1944. This plan called for the removal of the seaward section of the Casino, the arena. While this is by no means an ideal solution, it would save a majority of the structure, and make the renovation and, especially, the continued maintenance of the structure more feasible financially. Most likely, because of the city's limited resources, and the fact that the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater has been given priority, this type of project will have to wait until more work has been completed on the Convention Hall, and the city can refocus its limited resources on the Casino. As for funding, the city will need to continue to seek state historic preservation funds, such as grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust, as well as any dwindling federal historic preservation funds available for such projects. Additionally, the city should attempt to get the Casino/Carousel Building listed on the National Register, which might benefit the building should it be partially renovated in the future.

While current preservation efforts on the shorefront

proceed slowly and in a piecemeal fashion, they will likely succeed for three reasons: they are only part of a larger plan for revitalization of the city, they are about renewing a community in addition to its buildings, and they are city-driven, rather than private efforts. In contrast, the redevelopment schemes of the 1970s and 1980s seemed to consider the shorefront in a vacuum; they were based on the idea that shorefront development would solve all the city's problems. More recently, the city has tried to assess its overall problems, realizing that shorefront preservation and development can only be successful as part of a larger program to revitalize the city. Some of these other strategies which may, in fact, complement preservation initiatives include a new state "urban initiative" program which targets a section of Asbury Park. With this program, the Local Neighborhood Council will "develop and implement revitalization strategies, using state and municipal resources to leverage private and non-profit sector investments and participation." Under the Urban Homeownership Recovery Program Asbury Park would qualify for millions of dollars of single-family construction financing targeted for urban areas where homeownership rates are below thirty percent.¹³⁴ And finally, the city officials have decided that they cannot necessarily rely on private redevelopment schemes

¹³⁴Bradfield, "Can Asbury Park Be Saved," p. 23.

for preservation and revitalization. Disillusioned with a variety of unrealized private redevelopment plans, Asbury Park has begun to secure its own past and future with renovation of the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater. And while private investment may follow in the future, the city needs to ensure that its architectural, historic, and cultural resources are not lost waiting for such investment.

Through the lens of historic preservation, this thesis establishes the importance of the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel Building to Asbury Park's identity, not only in the past, but in the present and future as well. Furthermore, this narrative chronicles the historical link between the state of these structures and the overall health of the city. Because of the deteriorated state of the Casino/Carousel Building, this type of documentation may soon be all that remains of the shorefront structure. Hopefully, the compilation of the scattered remnants of the historic development of Asbury Park's shorefront landscape, anchored by the Convention Hall/Paramount Theater and Casino/Carousel Building, will not only be a point of community pride, but also a contribution to planning, preserving, restoring, and maintaining these irreplaceable waterfront landmarks.



Ill. 1. Map of central New Jersey coastline showing location of Asbury Park.



Ill. 2. View of Boardwalk looking south towards Casino/Carousel Building from Convention Hall, 1995.



Ill. 3. View of Boardwalk looking north towards Convention Hall/Paramount Theater from Casino, 1995.



Ill. 4. View looking south from Convention Hall/Paramount Theater down Ocean Avenue, 1996.



Ill. 5. Postcard view of Boardwalk, 1907.



Boardwalk From Casino. Asbury Park, N. J.

Ill. 6. Postcard view of Boardwalk, 1908.



Ill. 7. Postcard view of Boardwalk, 1930.



Ill. 8. Postcard titled "General view of Boardwalk from Casino," 1937.



Ill. 9. Postcard titled "Bird's-Eye view from Convention Hall," undated.



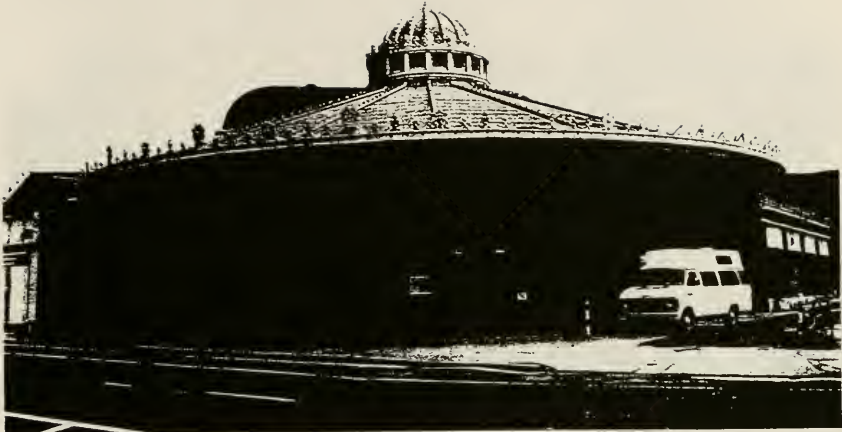
Ill. 10. Postcard view of Boardwalk looking north toward Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1951.



Ill. 12. Postcard view of Casino/Carousel Building, undated.



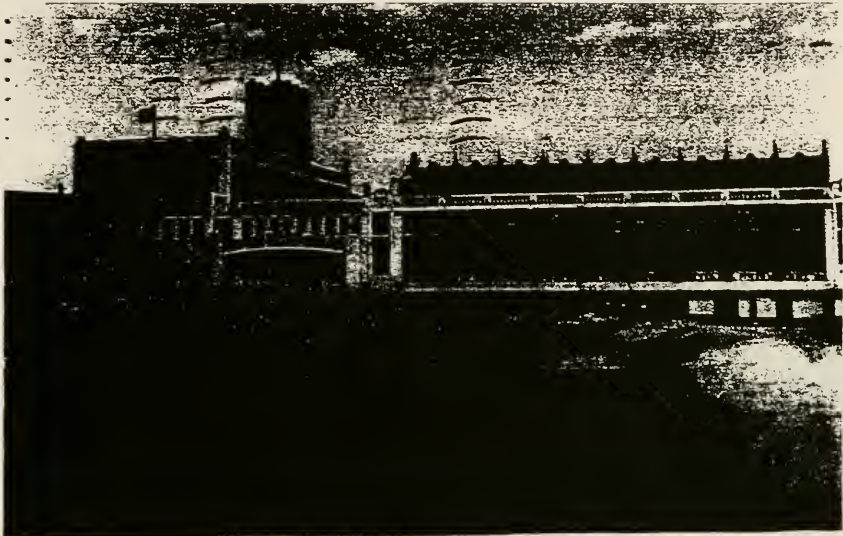
Ill. 13. View of Casino/Carousel Complex looking east, 1995.



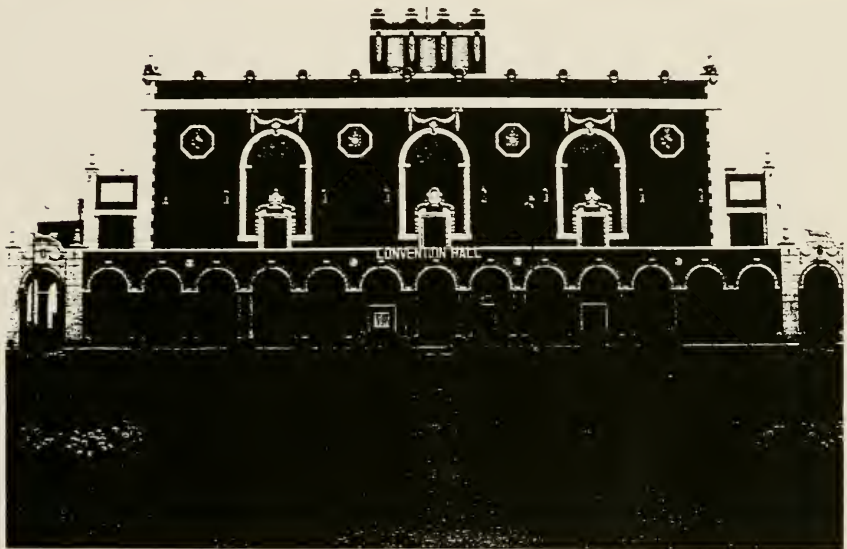
Ill. 14. View of Carousel Pavilion, 1995.



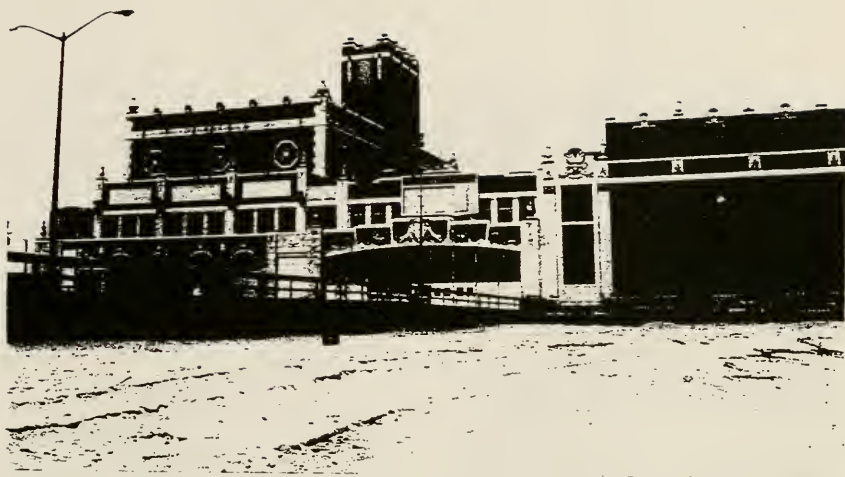
Ill. 15. View of a section of north elevation of the Casino/Carousel Building (notice open doors to arcade).



Ill. 16. Postcard view of south elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1936.



Ill. 17. View of front facade of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1996

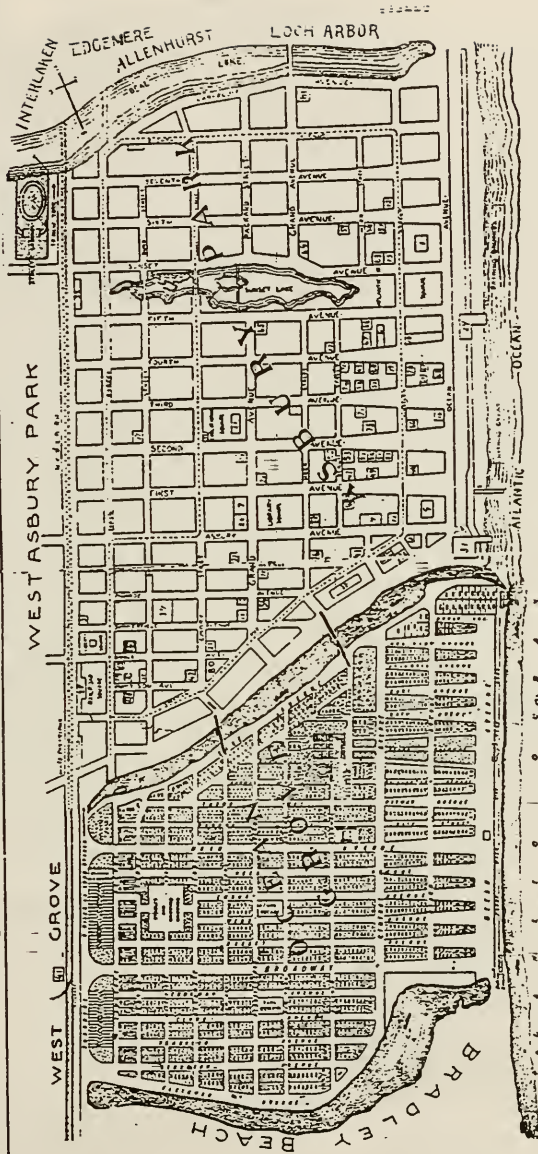


Ill. 18. Section of south elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1996.



Ill. 19. Map of Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, 1873.

ASBURY PARK AND OCEAN GROVE ROUNDABOUT

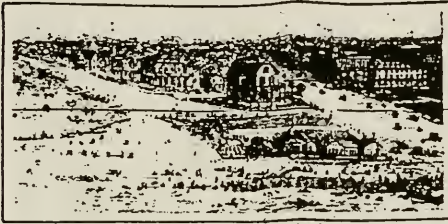


The Twin Cities by the Sea—Asbury Park and Ocean Grove.

From a promotional tabloid, late 19th century. (MCHA)

Ill. 20. Map of Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, late nineteenth century.

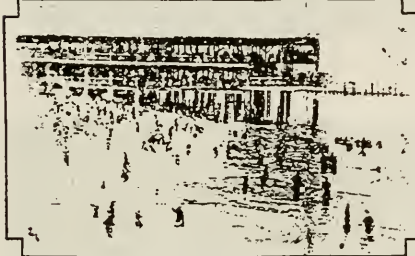
PICTURES RECORD STEADY MARCH OF PROGRESS



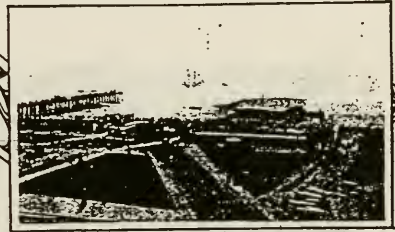
First, merely a group of bath houses



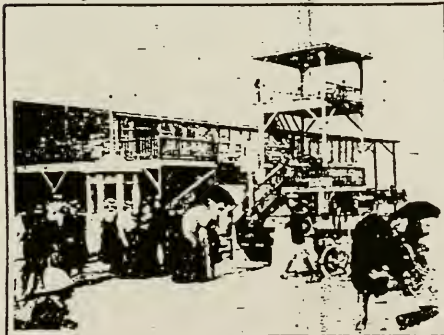
Then comes a real pavilion



It grows more pretentious....



A notable structure in the early days.

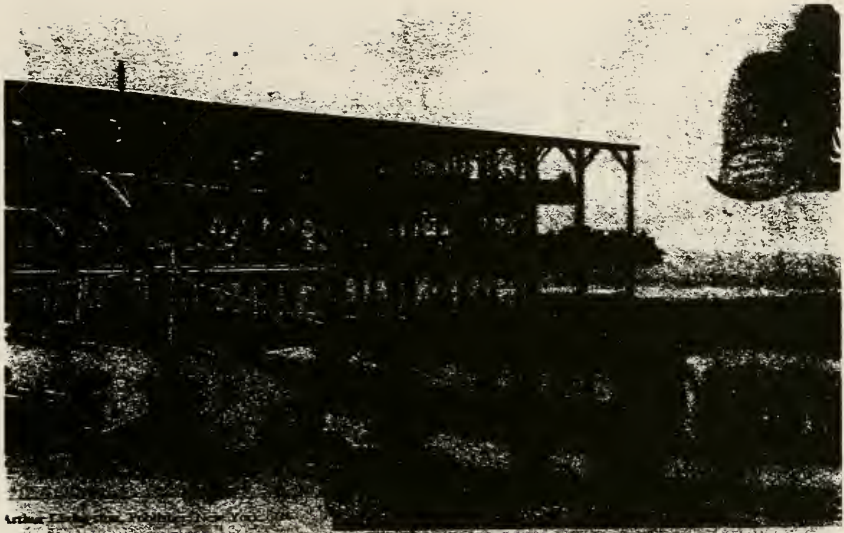


Then a trysting tower is added.



The first real casino, later destroyed by fire.

Ill. 22. Views of bathhouses, Bradley Pavilion, and original Casino, from Asbury Park Press.



Ill. 23. Postcard view of Asbury Avenue Pavilion, 1903.



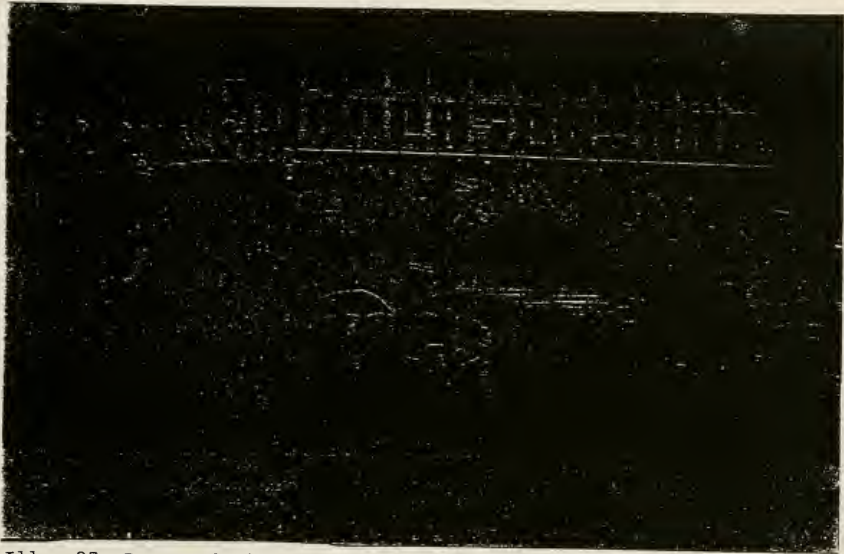
Ill. 24. Postcard view of Palace Amusements Pavilion with Ferris Wheel (across Lake Avenue from Casino).



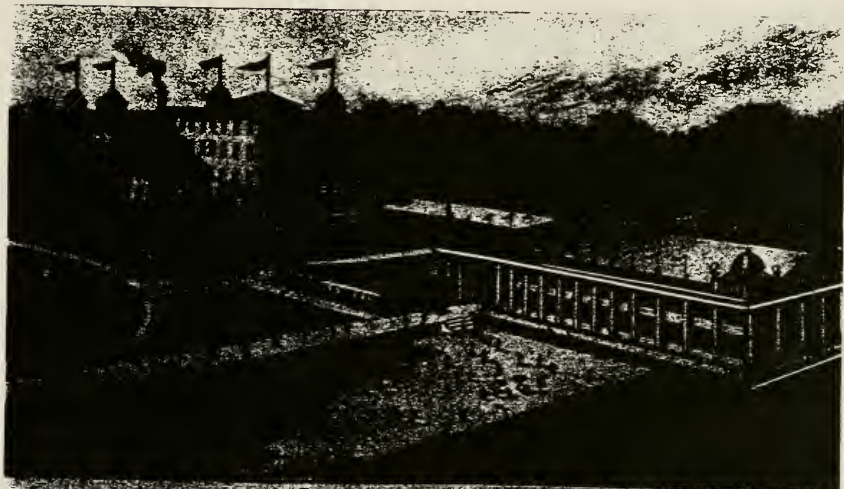
Ill. 25. Postcard view of Palace Amusements Pavilion, 1906.



Ill. 26. Current view of Palace Amusements Pavilion, 1995.



Ill. 27. Postcard view of original Casino, 1905.

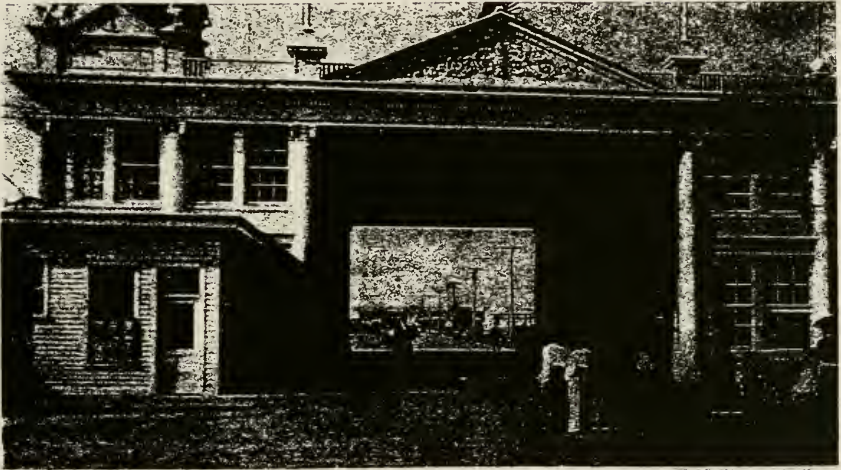


HOTEL PLAZA and CASINO, Asbury Park, N. J.
Containing Hotel Plaza, American and European Plaza. Finest Views on the Coast. Plaza Touring C

Ill. 28. Postcard view of Hotel Plaza and original Casino, undated.



Ill. 29. Postcard view of original Casino, 1906.



A vista through the Casino--Asbury Park, N. J.

Ill. 30. Postcard view of original Casino, undated.



Ill. 31. Postcard view of Fifth Avenue Arcade (located on present day site of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater), 1917.



Ill. 32. Postcard view of Fifth Avenue Arcade, 1908.



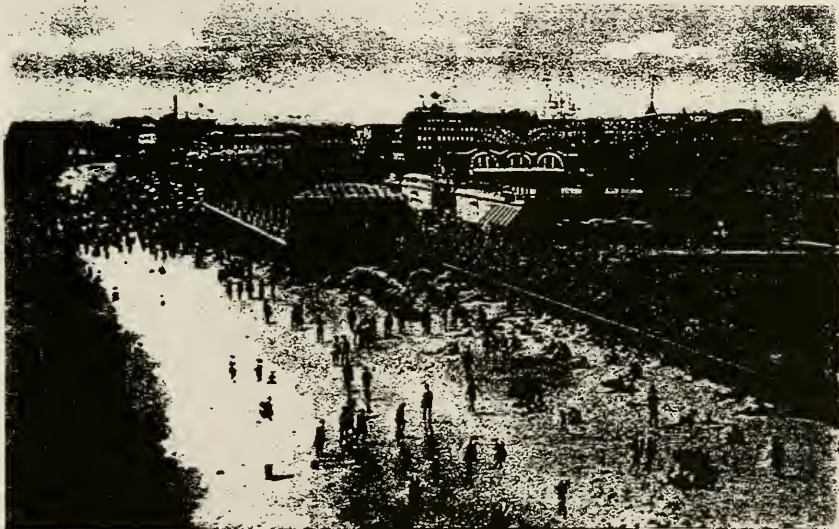
Ill. 33. Postcard titled "The New Bath Houses and Board Walk," undated.



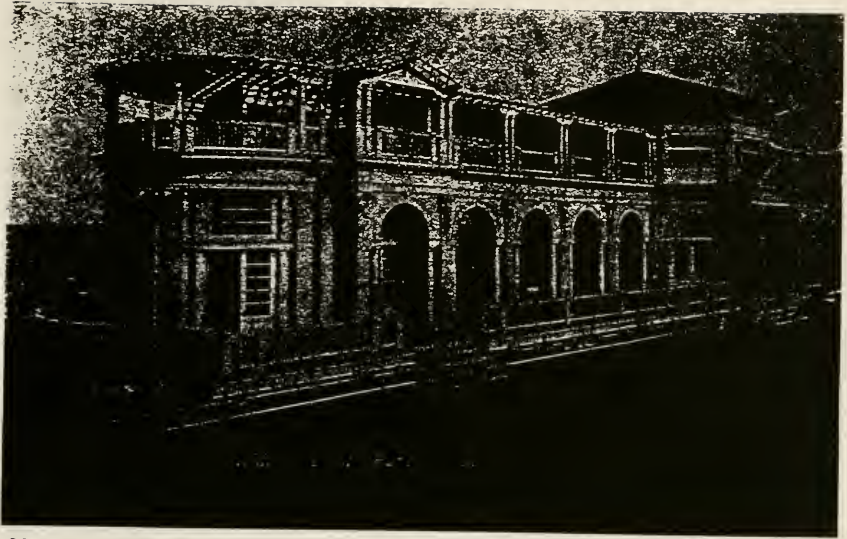
Ill. 34. Postcard titled "Board Walk and 7th Avenue Pavilion," 1913.



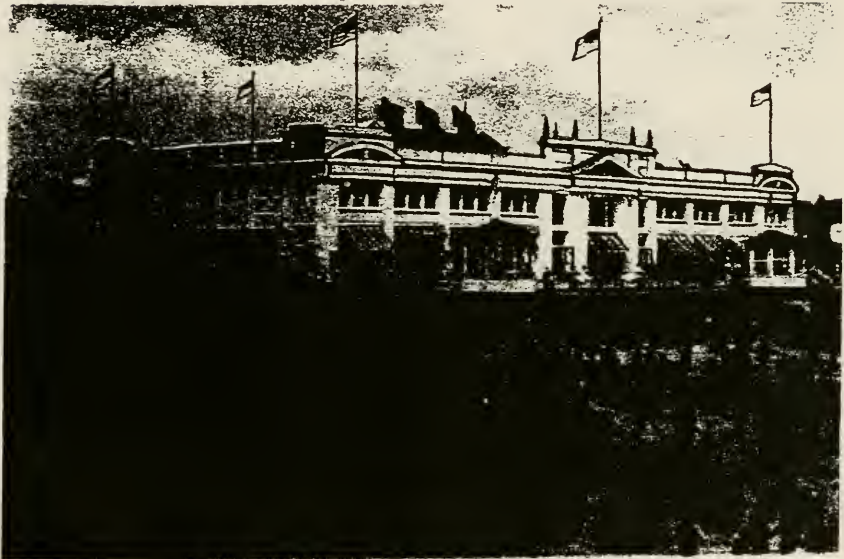
INTERIOR OF NATATORIUM, ASBURY PARK N. J.
Ill. 37. Postcard titled "Interior of Natatorium," 1915.



Ill. 38. Postcard view of Boardwalk showing Steeplechase Roller coaster
in background, 1922.



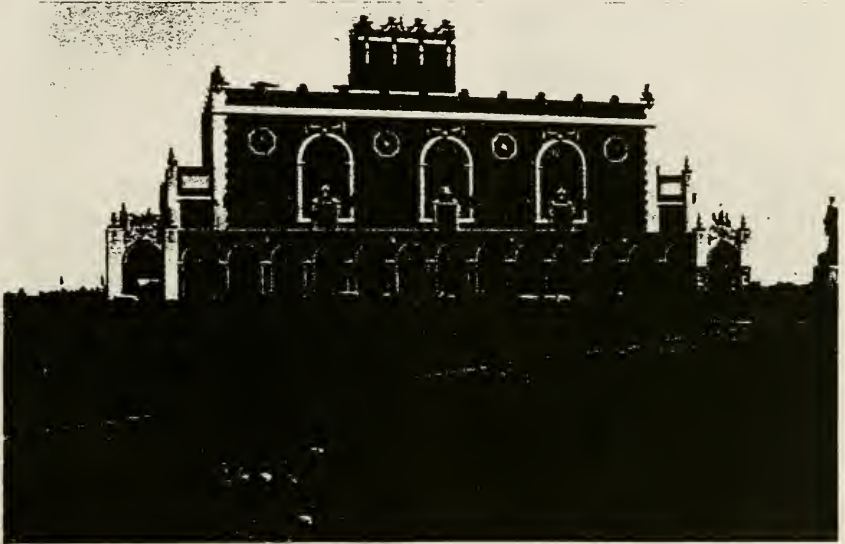
Ill. 35. Postcard titled "New Seventh Avenue Pavilion," 1908.



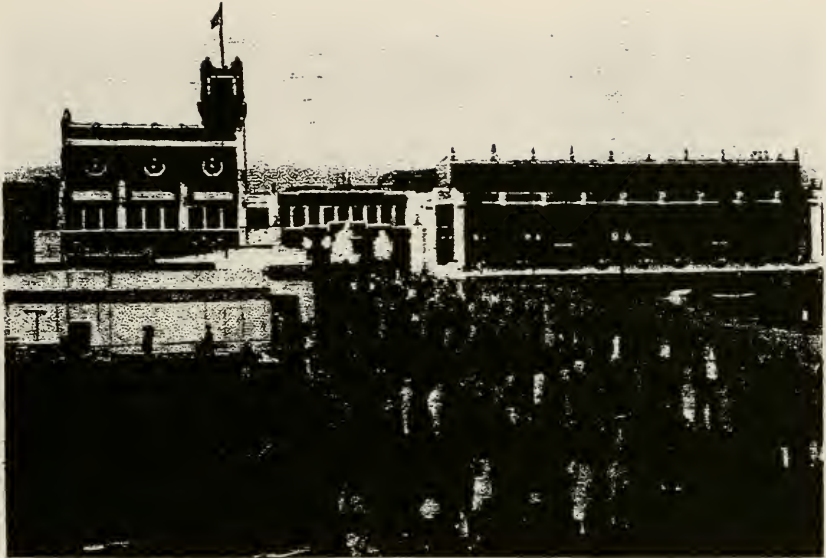
Ill. 36. Postcard view of east side of Natatorium, 1929.



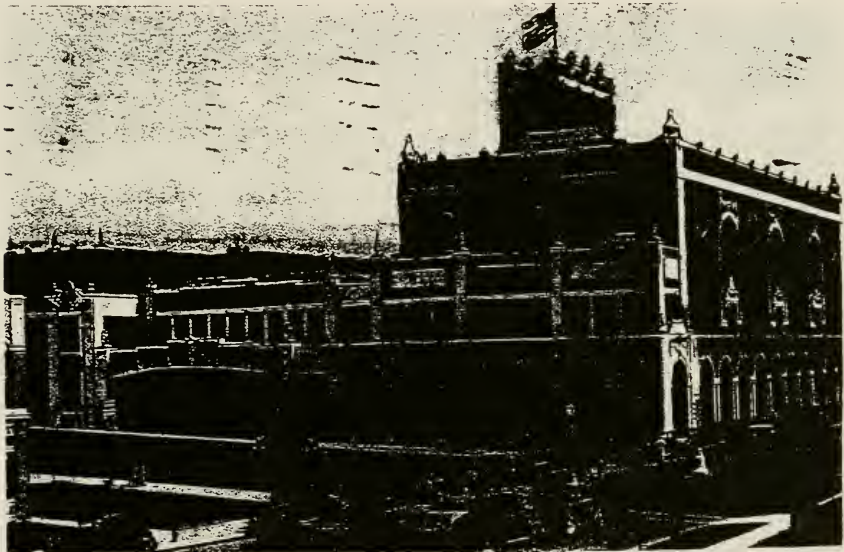
Ill. 39. Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, c. 1930.



Ill. 40. Postcard view of front facade of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, undated.



Ill. 41. Postcard view of south elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1937.



Ill. 42. Postcard view of a section of north elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1931.



Ill. 43. Postcard titled "Asbury Convention Hall," 1934.



Ill. 44. Postcard titled "The New Monterey by Night," 1923.



BERKELEY-CARTERET HOTEL, ASBURY PARK, N. J.

Ill. 45. Postcard titled "Berkeley-Carteret Hotel," 1932.



Ill. 46. Postcard view of Asbury-Carlton, 1925.



Ill. 47. Postcard view of Casino/Carousel Building, 1931.



Ill. 48. Interior view of Paramount Theater, c. 1930.

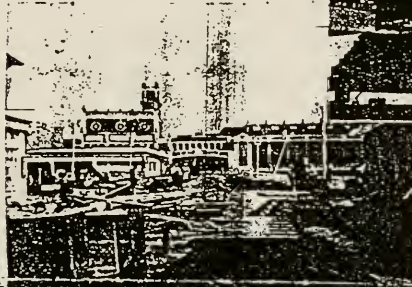


Ill. 49. Recent interior view of Paramount Theater, 1996.

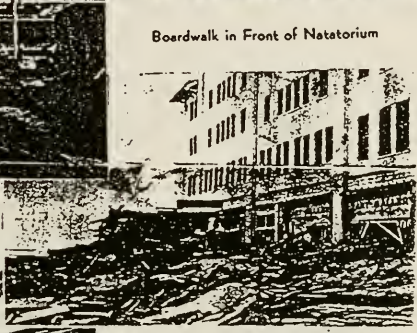
16 Pictures
of the
HURRICANE
of 1944
damage caused in
Asbury Park & Ocean Grove



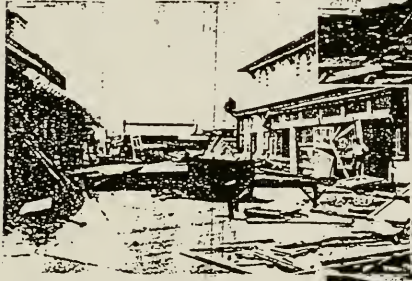
Boardwalk in Front of Natatorium



Boardwalk near Convention Hall



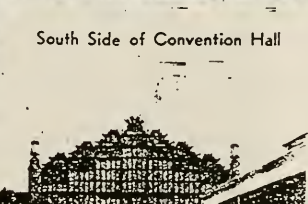
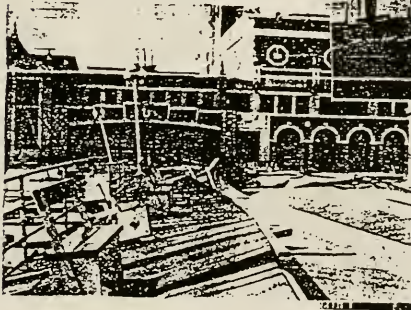
North End Hotel, Ocean Grove



He thinks it a mess and doesn't know where to start



South Side of Convention Hall



Ill. 50. Front side of 1944 Hurricane Picture Folder.

From _____

No writing except name and address on postpaid.

To _____

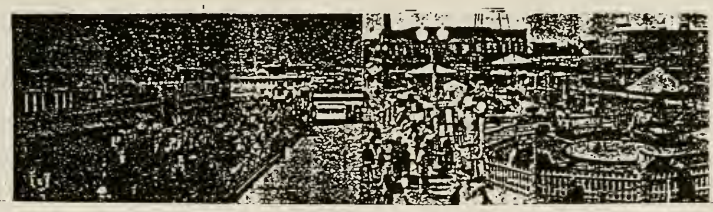
Stamp
1½c.

Picture Folder
 A story told in 16 pictures of the
• 1944 HURRICANE •
 Damage caused to
Asbury Park & Ocean Grove, N. J.
 By the Storm and Tidal Wave of
SEPTEMBER 14, 1944

Published by the Asbury Park Boardwalk Company, 612 Second Ave., Asbury Park, N. J.—A. P. 1111



What's left of Asbury Park Boardwalk in front of Casco. Debris is piled up in front of Solarem.



Ill. 51. Back side of 1944 Hurricane Picture Folder.



Ill. 52. Sign remaining from use of Casino arena as an ice skating rink in the 1960s, 1996.



Ill. 53. Aerial view of Asbury Park shorefront showing Boardwalk, Casino/Carousel Building, and Convention Hall/Paramount Theater.



Ill. 54. Sign outside entrance to the Paramount Theater advertising the Metro Lyric's 1996 season performances.



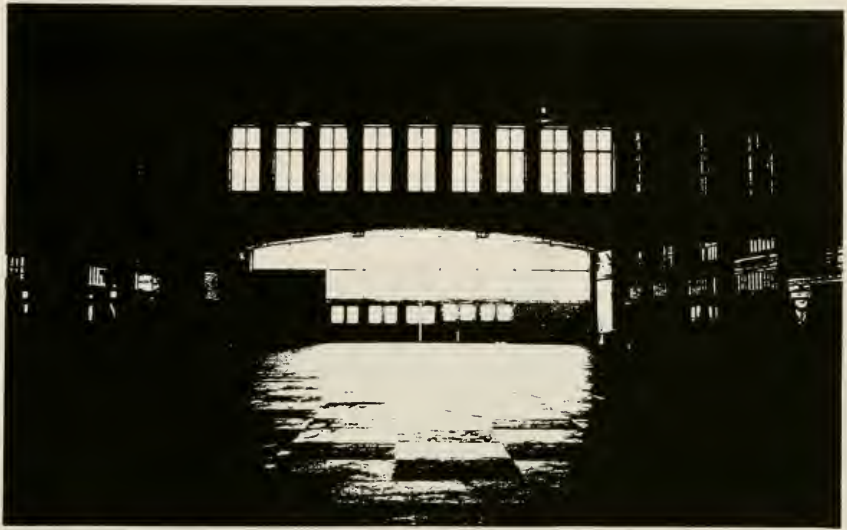
Ill. 55. Restored lighting fixture and wall plaster in the Paramount Theater, 1996.



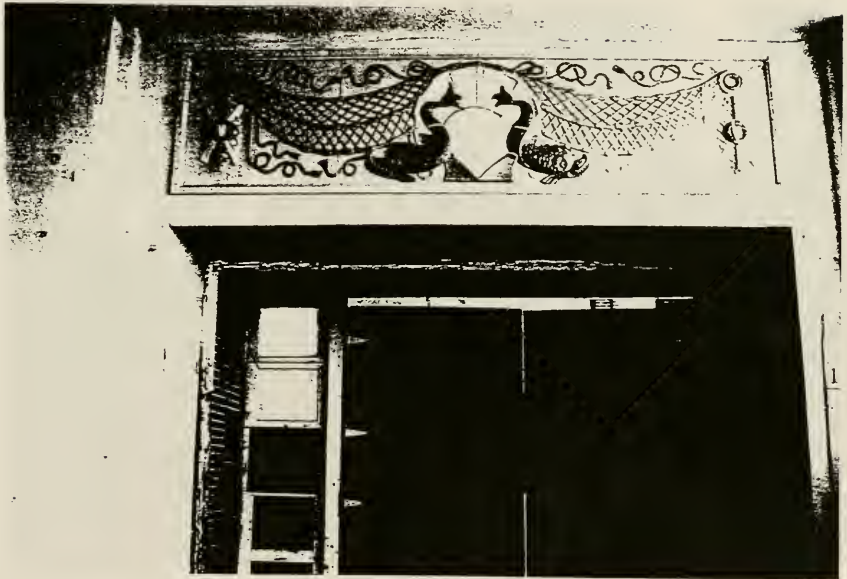
Ill. 56. Restored staircase leading to balcony of Paramount Theater, 1996.



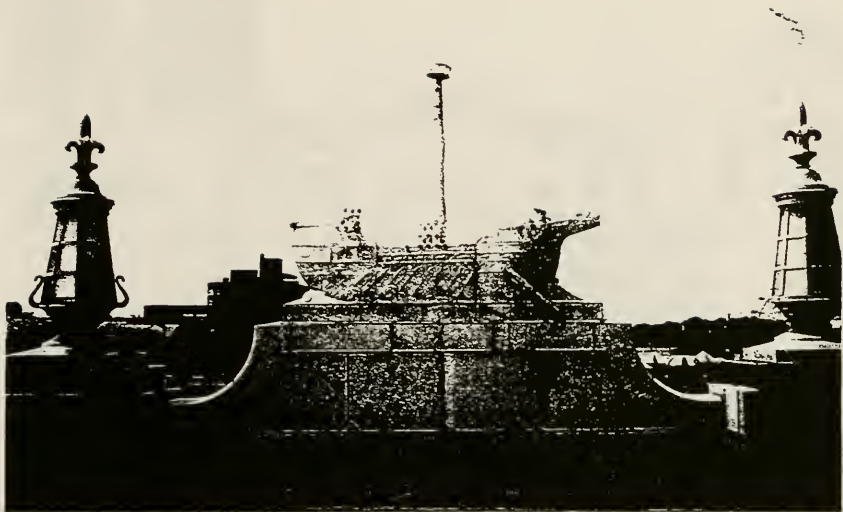
Ill. 57. Restored inner ticketing lobby of Paramount Theater, 1996.



Ill. 58. Convention Hall Arcade, 1996.



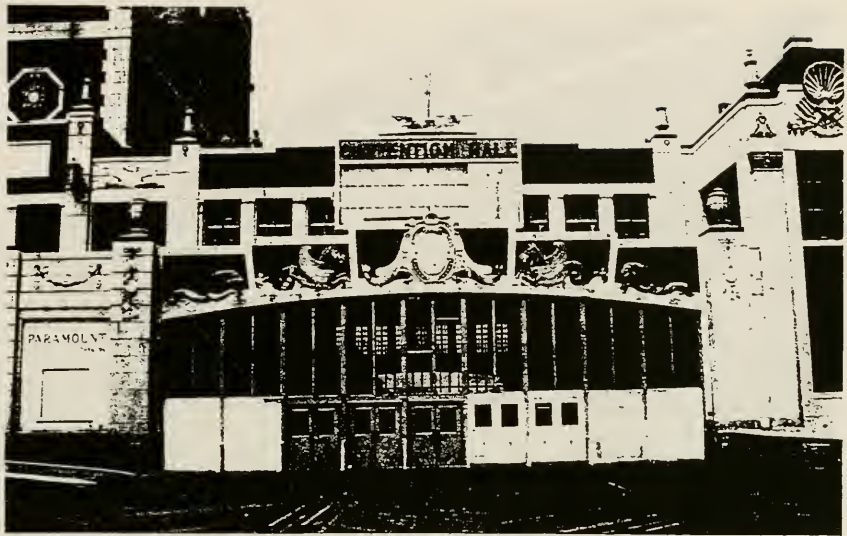
Ill. 59. Detail over arcade doors into Convention Hall Arena, 1996



Ill. 60. Weathered and deteriorated Spanish Galleon detail on Convention Hall, 1996.



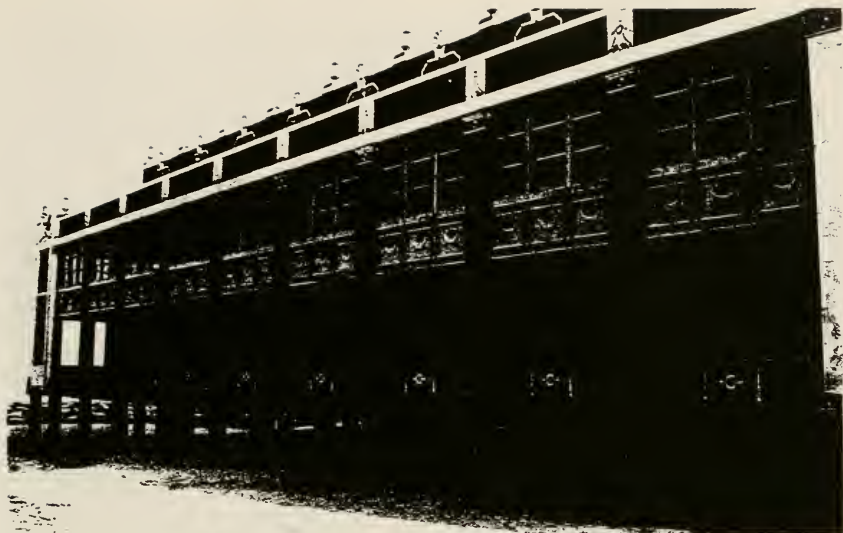
Ill. 61. Unrestored interior of Convention Hall Arena, 1996.



Ill. 62. Arcade entrance to Boardwalk on south side of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1996.



Ill. 63. Section of north elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater showing water tower (slated for restoration under 1996 New Jersey Historic Trust Grant), 1996.



Ill. 64. North elevation of Convention Hall Arena, 1996.



Ill. 65. East elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater, 1996.



Ill. 66. South elevation of Convention Hall/Paramount Theater Arena, 1996.



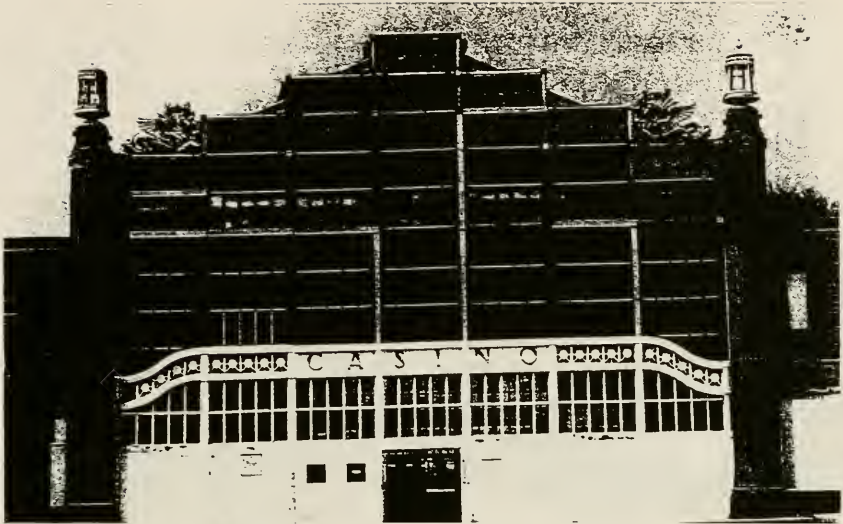
Ill. 67. Arcade entrance to Convention Hall Arena, 1996.



Ill. 68. View of Casino/Carousel Building looking east, 1995.



Ill. 69. View of deteriorated Casino Arena, 1996.



Ill. 70. South Boardwalk entrance to Casino Arena, 1996.



Ill. 71. Interior of Casino Arcade, 1996.



Ill. 72. View of Carousel Pavilion, 1996.



Ill. 73. View of Carousel Pavilion, 1996.



Ill. 74. Copper window detail on Carousel Pavilion, 1996.

APPENDIX A

2/21/74

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Asbury Park Convention Hall

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Ocean Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY/TOWN

Asbury Park, New Jersey

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
3rd. Cong. Disc.

STATE

New Jersey

VICINITY OF
CODE

034

COUNTY

Monmouth

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Asbury Park

STREET & NUMBER

710 Bangs Avenue

CITY/TOWN

Asbury Park

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey 07712

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

Hall of Records, Freehold, New Jersey;

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. copy also available at: Asbury Park, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

710 Bangs Avenue

CITY/TOWN

Asbury Park

STATE

New Jersey 07712

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Between James A. Bradley and Helen M. Bradley, his wife and the City of Asbury Park, a municipal corporation of the State of New Jersey

DATE

April 4, 1903

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records and copy at City Hall, Asbury Park

CITY/TOWN

Freehold, New Jersey and copy, 710 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, N.J.

DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Commonly referred to as "Convention Hall," it is comprised of two structures - Convention Hall and Pier, and "Paramount" Theater - joined by a 60 foot wide roofed enclosure of the boardwalk.

The Convention Hall measures 230 feet wide (north-south) and extends 215 feet easterly from the edge of the boardwalk. There is a 20 foot-wide open promenade on the north, east, and south sides.

The main floor of the hall measures 115 feet wide by 100 feet deep, with 36 feet allocated for stadium-type seating on the north, south and west sides.

There is a stage on the easterly side with a 48 foot wide by 24 foot high proscenium opening. The perimeter of the structure encloses exhibition spaces above the promenade at the upper level of the seating.

Below the seating, at the level of and adjacent to the boardwalk, are spaces used for offices, shops, and amusements. Various ancillary spaces, such as an organ chamber, are included in the structure.

The Theater, presently known as the Paramount Theater, is located west of the Convention Hall, adjacent to Ocean Avenue.

It is 230 feet by 104 feet with an original seating capacity of 2005 (1242 in the orchestra and 763 in the balcony). The primary axis runs north-south, with a 40 foot wide by 28 foot high proscenium located at the northerly end. There is a 24 foot by 40 foot section of traps in the stage floor.

Various ancillary spaces such as property rooms, smoking lounges, etc., are included.

Conceived as "the finest structure of its kind along the Atlantic Coast" in the pre-war years of 1916, it was not until June, 1926, that the City Commissioners voted a \$2,000,000 bond ordinance for the construction of a "Convention Hall, Amusement Pier, and Theater."

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Description (continued)

Convention Hall was designed in the Eclectic tradition, prevalent in the period 1870 - 1930, founded in both the Early Renaissance of Italy and Classical Period of the French Renaissance.

The loggia surrounding the Theater on the north, south, and east sides at street level, is created by semicircular arches supported on paired columns similar to the cortille at the Palazzo dell' Università, Genoa (1634-1636) or the cortille at the Palazzo Borghese, Rome (c.1590).

The predominance of cast stone rustication including the quoins on the mass of the theater, the patterned brickwork and the chains forming wall panels, strongly suggest the influence of the French.

Although the placement of the ornamentation, in its symmetry and density, conforms to the classical masonry tradition, a predominance of stylized animal and plant forms, especially the geographically "correct" or symbolic use of seashells, dolphins and seahorses, suggests the influence of the early days of Art Deco. Other maritime themes are represented in the four copper sailing ships, nautical lanterns, and cast stone anchors. In addition, there is an abundance of floral decoration, pottery, and a few eagles in cast stone.

Of particular note is the brick infill in the three major semi-circular arches, on the west elevation above the loggia. Originally specified as cast stone rustication, they were executed in polychromatic brick of blues and purples. Starting from a deep blue at the base, the tone changes through purple to a sky blue at the keystone of the arch.

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3

Description (continued)

The interior of the complex is comprised of three major spaces: The Convention Hall, the Theater, and the Boardwalk.

Convention Hall

The entrance to the lobby of the Convention Hall is through six pairs of glass and copper clad doors framed in groups of two pairs by engaged stucco half-columns 34 feet 8 inches high, 3 feet 8 inches in diameter, on a base of cast stone 4 feet wide by 2 feet 7 inches high. Over each group of doors is pressed copper ornamentation and copper kalamein framed fixed sash rising to the foliated column capitals.

From the lobby to the main floor of the Hall are five pairs of similar doors. The lobby itself is approximately 46 feet wide by 40 feet deep by 34 feet high, with box offices and stairways on each side (northerly and southerly). The floor, finished in terrazzo, slopes 2 feet upward from the boardwalk to the interior doors of the lobby.

The easterly side of each stairway is guarded by a pair of travertine winged lions. An arched bridge, joining the exhibition spaces on the second floor, is located above the lobby. It is decorated with plaster angels and scrollwork and has a travertine capstone on the rail.

There is bronze grillwork on the western (entrance) wall and detailed bronze grilles at the box office windows.

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Description (continued)

The ceiling is suspended plaster with a coffered effect created by both encasing structural members and creating false beams. Within the coffers are (circle within square) decorative rosettes. The entire ceiling is painted to "imitate wood."

The Convention Hall, itself a multi-purpose space, is substantially less ornate, with the exception of the proscenium wall and ceiling. On each side of the proscenium opening are two pilaster-like, hand painted panels depicting seashore scenes. Between each set of pilasters is a 15 foot wide by 22 foot high organ screen. It is composed of four engaged columns, executed in pilaster, framing the bronze grillwork that covers the openings to the organ chamber.

The ceiling is plaster with a central plaster band 60 feet in diameter enclosing a center rosette approximately 6 feet in diameter. This rosette is encircled by eight smaller rosettes. Equally spaced along the circumference and intersecting the major band are four 3 foot diameter rosettes. Additionally, six other 3 foot diameter rosettes in square bands are symmetrically located on the ceiling. Each, except the four circumferential rosettes are utilized as electric light outlets and ventilation grilles.

Theater

The entrance to the Theater is at the south side through a section of the loggia enclosed as a foyer. The entrance lobby, measuring 26 feet wide by 16 feet deep, ramps upward and houses the box office. In comparison to the Convention Hall, the lobby of the Theater is much understated.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Description (continued)

Of more significance is the mezzanine lounge and stairhalls. The mezzanine is reached by means of stairways located at either side and within the orchestra.

The mezzanine lounge is separated from the (east west) stairhalls by counter-thrusting elliptical arches measuring 5 feet-10 inches wide by 120 feet-4 inches high (to apex), with 2 feet-2 inch wide piers. All other walls within the lounge and stairhall area are articulated in arch forms by pilasters, windows, or vomitories. In addition to the arches, the ceiling is coved at each wall intersection, creating an artificial vaulted effect. Each arch was originally finished with delicate colored stenciled ornament. (This effect has been lost over the years).

The overall effect of the vaulted spaces, particularly with the indirect lighting and the loss of the stenciled decoration, is a cavernous feeling of strong Moorish influence.

The indirect lighting is accomplished through the use of composition caps located at each arch pier, within which are located the electric lighting fixtures.

The proscenium opening is an elliptical arch measuring 39 feet wide by 28 feet high, surrounded by a cast plaster archivolt approximately 26 feet wide. The ornamental moldings creating the archivolt begin with a 4 foot wide architrave, surrounded by a wide band of squares with fleurons at the center.

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Description (continued)

Beyond the band of squares are three wide bands of three rows of perforated plaster ornamentation in intricate geometric design. The outermost band of ornamentation repeats that of the first large band.

The ceiling of the theater is suspended plaster with numerous plaster ornamental discs or rosettes. The principal ceiling motif measures 36 feet in diameter and consists of offset concentric light panels of amber cathedral glass, interspersed with reinforced plaster ornamentation of floral character and female nudes, and perforated ornamentation for ventilation.

The minor rosettes vary in size from 9 feet to 4 feet-8 inches in diameter, and also serve as light and vent grilles.

Boardwalk

Seven pairs of glass and copper kalamein doors enclose the Boardwalk at the north and south entrances. Above the doors is a variety of cast stone ornamentation on the exterior, with steel framed sash above rising to a height of approximately 35 feet, allowing daylight to penetrate the space.

Sixty feet wide, the Boardwalk has spaces allocated for shops and amusements on each side. Stucco covered piers, 3 feet-6 inches widerise from cast stone bases. Stucco capitals adorn the top of each pilaster.

A coffered ceiling is created by encasing structural elements, as well as by creating false beams. Between the beams are located flat plate glass skylights. Above the flat plates are gabled metal skylights.

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Description (continued) -

The floor of the Boardwalk is polished concrete diagonally scored and tinted contrasting colors. Being the most utilized of the three major spaces, and consequently the most maintained and "modernized" the Boardwalk has undergone substantial changes over the years.

Contemporary aluminum storefronts have replaced the copper kalamein framing. Various plastic and glass illuminated signs have been placed over the original pressed copper sign boards. Grilles have been placed over windows originally opening to the dressing rooms.

A variety of high-intensity lights and radiant space heaters have been hung from the ceiling.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

Convention Hall is essentially a steel frame and masonry building. Large steel roof trusses span the major spaces. Most significant, perhaps, is the foundation of the Hall itself. It is comprised of steel jacketed, reinforced concrete piers resting on timber piles. The groups vary in number of piles; some as many as 32, the majority averaging 10-15 piles per pier.

The years of wind, weather, and the scouring effect of the sea have caused severe damage to the piers, including corrosion of the jackets and deterioration of the concrete.

Major efforts have been undertaken in recent years to protect the substructure, including building a seawall around it.

SIGNIFICANCE

RIK	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
EMIS/UMIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PRE-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
30-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
30-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
30-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN
30-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
30-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
30-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER/SPECIFY
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1928 BUILDER ARCHITECT Warren and Wetmore

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by the prominent New York architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore, also responsible for many of Atlantic City's fine hotels, Asbury Park Convention Hall has been an important feature in the city's economy as well as an important entertainment center for the state.

The movement for a convention "auditorium" in Asbury Park dates back to 1916 when a group of local businessmen, hotel proprietors, and city officials proposed the construction of a 5,000 seat structure which would cost \$500,000. These people possessed the vision and foresight which was necessary to establish Asbury Park as a vital component of the Jersey shore, an area which was just beginning to naturally grow and flourish as an accessible resort for increasing multitudes of seasonal pleasure seekers. The convention auditorium was envisioned as a "building that will meet the needs of Asbury Park for years to come."

A period of ten years elapsed, however, before any further action was forthcoming in regard to the convention facility. In June of 1926 the City Commissioners passed a two million dollar financing ordinance for the construction of Convention Hall. Thus, construction estimates for the building had quadrupled from the time the building was first conceptualized until the financing ordinance was enacted. The architectural firm Warren and Wetmore of New York City was selected to prepare plans and specifications for the building. When the construction bids were received in January of 1927, the estimates for the building were in excess of three million dollars.

The plan to build a convention center in Asbury Park was steeped in controversy from the start. On the one hand, there were those who believed that the building was necessary for Asbury Park to meet the demands of tourists; on the other hand, there was an equally vociferous group who maintained that the increased public financial burden would be suicidal. Nevertheless, in 1928 the City Commissioners unveiled a massive \$4.5 million beachfront development plan which called for the construction of Convention Hall, the Casino Building at the south end of the Boardwalk, and three beachfront pavilions.

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Significance (continued)

Convention Hall was ultimately completed in 1929, yet the controversy continued. The skeptics who ten years earlier had suggested that the Hall was unnecessary in an entertainment sense and a potential burden financially were able to triumphantly point to Asbury Park's "white elephant." The beachfront development project was laden with a variety of cost overruns: the Depression had set in; Asbury Park was close to municipal bankruptcy, with a debt burden of \$10 million (most of which was traceable to the beachfront); and litigation regarding some of these problems carried all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Moreover, there were a variety of entertainment flops at Convention Hall from the outset. Theater magnate Walter Reade leased the building for several years following its completion, but the operas, theater performances, and conventions which he provided were usually unsuccessful.

During the years from 1942 until 1946, the U.S. Army Signal Corps and U.S. Navy occupied Convention Hall for wartime training purposes. The history of Convention Hall has been a great deal brighter in the post-World War II era. Following the departure of the Armed Forces in 1946, Convention Hall was leased by a promoter for Big Band dances. The bands of Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, Charlie Spiwak, Glenn Miller, and others performed before Convention Hall audiences. The Hall was also utilized for ice and roller skating shows, boxing matches, basketball games, beauty pageants, and a wide variety of other events.

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Significance (continued)

During the past decade Convention Hall has been used for rock concerts, a number of trade shows, conventions, lectures, political rallies and debates, basketball tournaments, wrestling matches, and a variety of other special events. More recently, the Paramount Theatre, an impressive component of the Convention Hall complex has had performances by the N.J. State Opera, N.J. State Orchestra, a vaudeville revival, and a film festival.

Architecturally, Asbury Park Convention Hall is an unusually fine example of 1920's eclecticism employing Italian and French designs. Colorful and grandiose in concept, the complex has ornamental details that incorporate motifs within the context of the design sources. The complex exemplifies the conservative aspect of the 1920's style with its reminiscences of popular Colonial Revival detailing and some lingering art nouveau motifs. The quality and excellent repair of the interior ornaments and finishes heightens the architectural significance of Convention Hall.

6 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Certified Copy of Riparian Grant: The State of New Jersey to James A. Bradley",
 Book 345 of Deeds, page 198. Monmouth County Clerk's Office.
 "Deed of James A. Bradley and wife to the City of Asbury Park, April 4, 1921"
 "Ordinance No. 423", City of Asbury Park, June 15, 1926.
 The Asbury Park Evening Press, several articles from September 2, 1914-
 June 19, 1968 inclusive

7 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.45 acres

Long - W73 59' 56"
 Lat. N 40 13' 25"

QUADRANGLE NAME Asbury Park

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 518,511,800 | 4,45,276,000

B | | |

C - ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D ZONE EASTING NORTHING

E | | |

F | | |

G | | |

H | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Convention Hall is located on the east side of Ocean Avenue between 5th and Sunset Avenues. The building is 275 feet wide (north to south) between

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CCODE

8 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Warren J. Buehler, Adm. Asst./Patrick M. Gilvary, Architect/Planner

ORGANIZATION

710 Bangs Avenue

DATE

(201) 775-0900 9/15/78

STREET & NUMBER

Asbury Park

New Jersey

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

9 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS

NATIONAL STATE Y LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy Commissioner, DEP

DATE

12/29/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service,
Recording Historic Buildings, 1970.

Fletcher, Bannister, A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method, Robert Maclehose and Co., Ltd., Glasgow W3, 1896,
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The Asbury Park Evening Press, September 2, 1916; June 30, 1926;
June 19, 1966.

Warren and Wetmore, Et. Al., Architect's Drawings, 1926.

Turner Construction Company, Personal Contact

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

5th And Sunset Avenues. Convention Hall is 285 feet in length (west to east) beginning at the curb on the east side of Convention Hall and extending to the rear deck of Convention Hall.

Situated on a beachfront parcel, facing west, on an axis with a long green space and Sunset Lake which extends to the North Asbury Park Railroad Station (1303-32). The north and south entrances are aligned with the Asbury Park boardwalk.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Urban Suburban Scattered Buildings
Open Space Woodland Residential Agricultural Village
Industrial ~~Residential~~ Commercial Highway Commercial Other

SIGNIFICANCE:

See "Asbury Park Convention Hall," NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, listed 1979.

ORIGINAL USE: Convention hall, theater, arcade PRESENT USE: Same
PHYSICAL CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Poor
REGISTER ELIGIBILITY: Yes Possible No Part of District
THREATS TO SITE: Roads Development Zoning Deterioration
No Threat Other

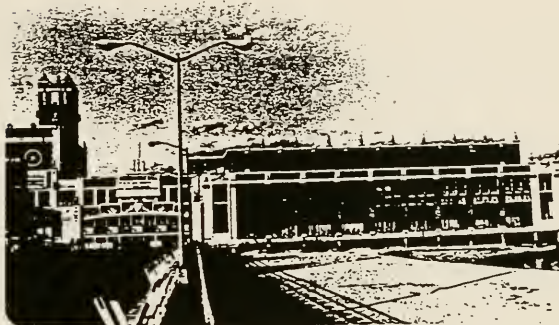
COMMENTS:

Listed on the National Register in 1979.

REFERENCES:

1. Asbury Park Press (March 28, 1928).
2. "Asbury Park Convention Hall," National Register of Historic Places, 1979.

RECORDED BY: Gail Hunton DATE: November 1980
ORGANIZATION: Monmouth County Park System/Monmouth County Historical Assn.



View Northeast, from boardwalk

APPENDIX B

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION
BUILDING COMPLEX SURVEY FORM

HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY NO. 1303-21

HISTORIC NAME: Asbury Park Casino and Carousel
LOCATION: Lake Avenue at Atlantic Ocean

COMMON NAME: Asbury Park Casino and Carousel
BLOCK/LOT: 227-2,7

MUNICIPALITY: Asbury Park
USGS QUAD: Asbury Park
OWNER/ADDRESS: City of Asbury Park

COUNTY: Monmouth
UTM REFERENCES:
Zoning/Northing/Easting
NEGATIVE FILE NO: 2/30-36A; 3/2-8

SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

	A CASINO	B CAROUSEL	C HEATING PLANT	D
DATE	1928-29 <i>Lot 1.00</i>	1930-32	1930 <i>Lot 1.01</i>	
BUILDER/ARCH.	Warren and Wetmore (see References)	Philadelphia Toboggan Co.	Same as (A)	
FORM/PLAN	Complex	Circular	Complex	
STORIES	1 and 2	1	1 and 2	
FOUNDATION	Concrete and concrete piers	Concrete	Concrete	
EXTERIOR WALL FABRIC	Tan brick and cast concrete	Steel frame and glass	Tan brick and concrete	
STRUCTURAL SYSTEM	Steel frame	Steel frame	Steel frame	
ROOF/ CHIMNEYS	Combination: gable, double hip, monitor	Conical with domed cupola	Combination	

ADDITIONAL
ARCHITECTURAL
DESCRIPTION

- (A) Casino built on a steel frame with tan brick curtain walls, and concrete facing, trim, and floors. Beaux Arts Classicism is evident in features such as the enriched cornices, figure and relief sculpture, fluted columns, and urns, but the overall effect of the composition is eclectic. The main entries lie on the north and south facades, aligned with the boardwalk; they are articulated by two stories of steel-framed opaque glass panels, monumental columns, and a stepped gable with sculpted seahorses. The building contains an auditorium/theater, arcade, stores, and bath houses. The carousel (B) is incorporated into the west end, and the heating plant (C) is a separate building on the southwest corner of the complex.
- (B) The carousel is a three-row wooden machine which rotates on a steel frame. It has a lively and colorful combination of wooden decoration, crestings, mirrors, lights, and hand-carved horses and gilded carriage scenes, and seahorses. Enclosing the carousel is a semi-circular pavilion of steel and glass, with a bracketed facade of round arch openings, under a crested conical roof and clerestoried cupola. The doors are recent replacements, and do not repeat the original paned glass motif of the upper portion.
- (C) Heating plant disguised in a building which combines neoclassical and Moderne elements in a mannered composition: multiple levels of colonnades; round arch windows; Spanish roofing tile; rooftop promenade; and Moderne tower (boiler room chimney) articulated by piers, curved base, urns, and sculpture in relief.

CONDITION COMMENTS	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION, 109 WEST STATE STREET, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625 (609) 292-2023

LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

Siting: Faces north, west, and south at the southernmost end of the Asbury Park beachfront.

Topography: Level

Vegetation: None

Water: Bound on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the southwest by Wesley Lake, originally a fresh water lake with an outlet to the sea (closed off).

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Urban Suburban Scattered Buildings
 Open Space Woodland Residential Agricultural Village
 Industrial Downtown Commercial Highway Commercial Other Beach/Boardwalk

SIGNIFICANCE:

Along with the Asbury Park Convention Hall (1303-33), the Casino is the most significant public structure in Asbury Park. The two sites are the principal remaining landmarks of a once-reknown boardwalk and resort. The casino complex reflects the grandiose yet playful character of seaside resort architecture, as well as the classical stylistic preferences of New York architects Warren and Wetmore, who also designed the Asbury Park Convention Hall and the New York Grand Central Terminal.

The Casino Carousel is additionally significant; the wooden apparatus, with hand-carved figures and exquisite pavilion, is one of only 284* operating carousels of its kind remaining in the United States. (See also 1303-22.) It was the last carousel, Number 87, built by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, one of America's foremost carousel-makers. The figures are attributed to carver Frank Carretta of that firm.

The Asbury Park Casino is the second one on the site. The earliest beachfront structures in Asbury Park, which was founded in 1871 by James Bradley, were scattered bath houses. They were replaced later by large rustic open pavilions of wood. The first casino was a sprawling two-story frame building, which burned in 1928. Construction on the present casino began in that same year.

* 1981 Census by the National Carousel Association.

ORIGINAL USE: Casino and Carousel

PRESENT USE: Same

REGISTER ELIGIBILITY: Yes Possible No Part of District

THREATS TO SITE: Roads Development Zoning Deterioration

No Threat Other (Possible)

COMMENTS: The City of Asbury Park (current owner) is in the process of selling the boardwalk (including the casino) to a private developer.

REFERENCES:

1. Sanborn Maps, Jersey Coast Series, v. 2 (1930).
 - * 2. Asbury Park Press: Feb. 15, 1928; March 28, 1928; May 11, 1928; May 13, 1928; June 2, 1929; Dec. 31, 1930; Aug. 11, 1974.
 3. Correspondence between Gail Hunton and Frederick Fried, National Carousel Association.
 4. Frederick Fried, *A Pictorial History of the Carousel* (A.S. Barnes, 1964).
 5. Monmouth County Historical Association, Asbury Park Vertical File.
- * The Asbury Park Press of March 28, 1928 reported that the casino plans were prepared by Warren and Wetmore of New York and that local architects Arthur F. Cottrell, Ernest Arend, and Kenneth Towner were retained as associates for the project.

RECORDED BY: Gail Hunton

DATE: November 1980

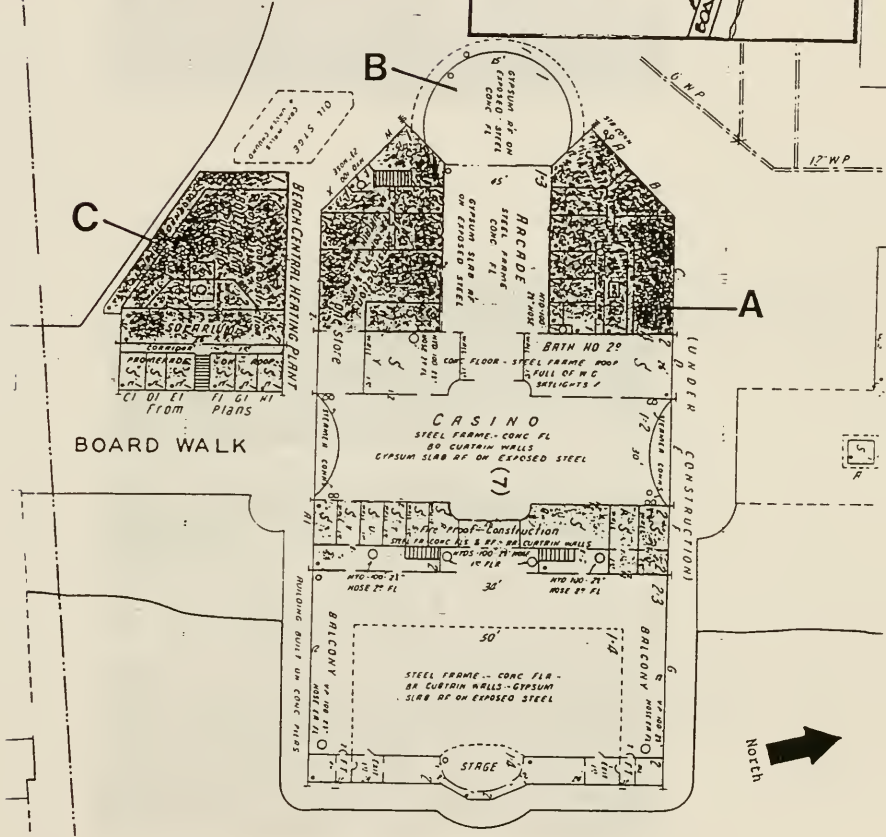
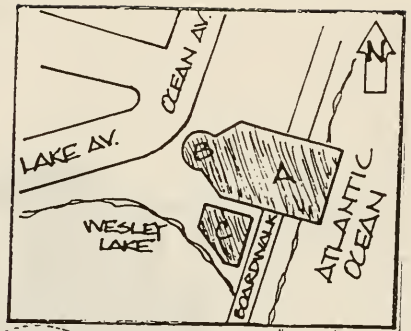
ORGANIZATION: Monmouth County Park System/Monmouth County Historical Association

1303-22

Asbury Park Casino and Carousel

Location Map (right) :

Sanborn Map, 1930 (below) :





Casino, view North
(from boardwalk)



Carousel, view East
(from Lake Avenue)



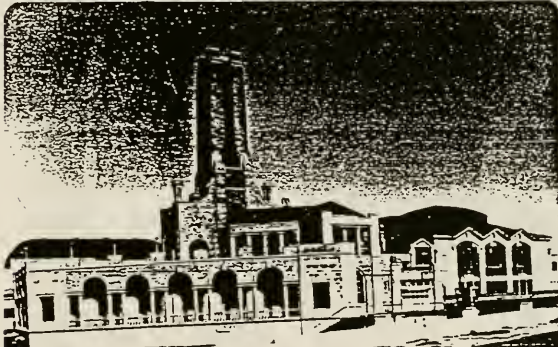
Carousel



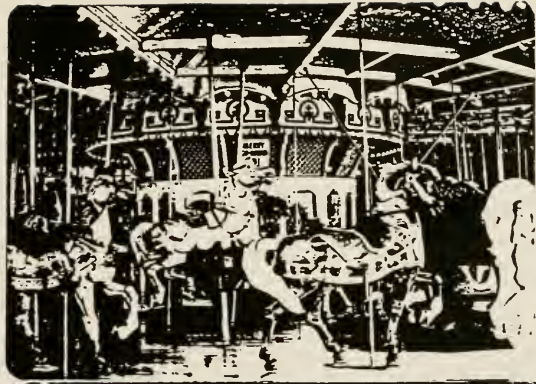
Complex, view East
(from Lake Avenue)



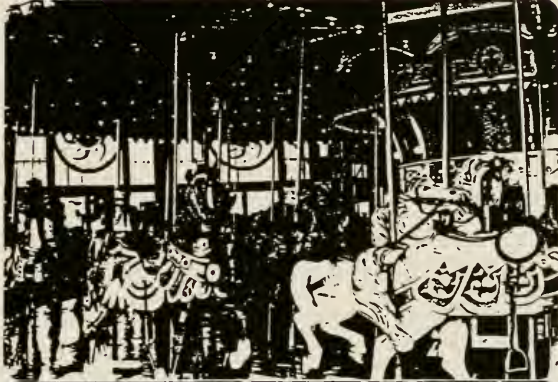
Complex, view Northwest
(from jetty)



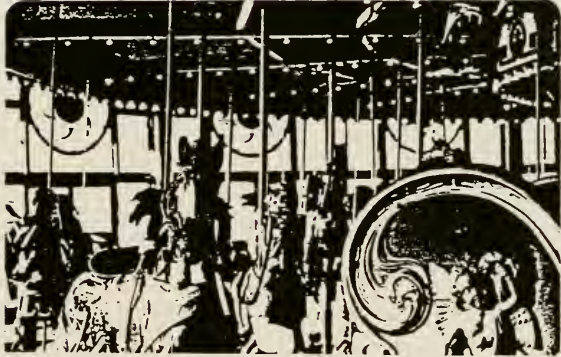
Heating Plant (C)
View Northeast



Carousel



Carousel



Carousel

APPENDIX C

Asbury Park NEW JERSEY



Historic Preservation Element Asbury Park Master Plan

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1.0 BACKGROUND HISTORY OF ASBURY PARK

The City of Asbury Park was founded in 1871 by James A. Bradley, a wealthy brush manufacturer and devout Methodist from New York. Bradley discovered the land that was to become Asbury Park while vacationing in Ocean Grove, a Methodist retreat formed several years earlier. As described in his diary, Bradley happened upon the area and, recognizing its resort potential, quickly began negotiations for its purchase. In 1871, Bradley acquired 500 acres of land contained east of the railroad, between Wesley and Deal Lakes, for \$90,000. He named his community Asbury Park after Francis Asbury, the founder of Methodism in America.

From the beginning, James Bradley was a thoughtful developer. His intent was to create a community that would provide its visitor with a true escape from the sanitary and social problems that plagued the Nineteenth Century American city. The community's atmosphere would offer spiritual and physical rejuvenation to affluent business classes by providing morality and leisure.

Bradley viewed the physical environment as the key to achieving his goals for the community. Between 1871 and 1920, he was instrumental in the design of the area lying between Deal and Wesley Lakes, from the Atlantic Ocean to the railroad then under construction to the west. In addition to designing a community that would promote morality and leisure, he consistently strove to avoid undercutting the natural advantages of its seaside location by overdevelopment.

As the sole original property owner, he premeditated the shape and layout of the area even before the first structure was built. He first set aside parklands and waterfront areas to provide the community's future population with passive and active recreation. He then commissioned Frederick and Isaac Kennedy, the same surveyors who laid out Ocean Grove, to prepare the plat for Asbury Park. While both Ocean Grove and Asbury Park were planned with a grid of streets featuring east/west avenues that widen as they approach the ocean, the plan for Asbury Park possessed more urban scale blocks to facilitate lots of greater width and depth and was remarkable in the 100 foot width of the avenues which provided a spaciousness lacking in village-like Ocean Grove (see Figure 1). With the 100 foot wide avenues flaring to 200 feet at the ocean, it was said that the design provided an ocean view from three blocks west of the beachfront. The design also served to funnel ocean breezes so that their cooling effect could be felt all the way to Main Street.

Bradley also introduced the most modern innovations of his day, many of which resulted from the social consciousness emanating from the City Beautiful Movement in the late Nineteenth Century. Asbury's sanitary sewer system was completed in 1881 and received commendations for its modern efficiency by the State Department of Health as well as the sanitary reformers of that time. Later, a trolley system was constructed that circulated from the train station through the shopping district and beachfront and then through the residential areas near Deal Lake to Main Street and back to the station (see dotted lines on Figure 1). A secondary spur connected Eighth Avenue to Asbury Avenue along Emory Street and crossed Sunset Lake via a bridge which was converted to a pedestrian bridge after the trolley's demise. Much of the original track is believed to be under the asphalt roadbed that exists today.

In addition to thoughtfully planning the community's infrastructure and setting aside

open space, Bradley assured a rich variety of character for Asbury Park by donating lands to religious and civic groups, offering only large residential lots and restricting deeds as to land use and building location long before anyone thought of euclidian zoning. These practices produced an orderly built environment featuring the beachfront and parks, the religious area contained around Library Square Park, the commercial areas of Main Street and Cookman Avenue and the hotels and boarding homes that stood in the blocks just west of the ocean.

Bradley believed that the public had the right of access to the ocean and added to its natural appeal by building a boardwalk, pavilions and bath houses for public use. He preserved other public parklands, including the lands surrounding Wesley, Sunset and Deal Lakes, Bradley Park and Library Square. On Grand Avenue, he donated land for several churches and the library and installed a public auditorium imported from Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition.

Bradley carefully supervised the development of land in Asbury Park, as the construction of streets, hotels and grand "summer" homes spread gradually from south to north as a natural extension of Ocean Grove (see Figure 2). Property in Asbury Park became in great demand after the completion of the New York and Long Branch Railroad in 1876. The railroad connected Asbury Park to Northern New Jersey and New York, making it a very accessible urbanite retreat. Its inclusion on the railroad line helped the City to outpace other developing resorts not linked by rail. By the 1890's, Asbury Park was one of the most successful resorts in New Jersey. Its overnight visitor capacity grew from 11,000 in 1885 to 33,000 in 1908. In the early part of the century, Asbury Park had a daily summer population of thirty to fifty thousand. For entertainment, the community featured a beachfront and boardwalk, carousels, a toboggan and two opera houses in addition to eight churches and numerous parklands for spiritual rejuvenation.

Finally, the growth of the resort trade caused the emergence of one of the earliest and most well developed Central Business Districts in Monmouth County. The Cookman Avenue shopping district was exceptionally prosperous, attracting vacationers, local and regional shoppers on an habitual basis.

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANT SITES

The historic development of the City of Asbury Park is the basis for identifying the significant sites and districts to be preserved into the future. The physical elements of the City, such as its buildings and parklands, must be identified in terms of their proper historic context and recommended for preservation, if warranted. The criteria for preserving a specific site or district on the local level include architectural, historic or social significance and aesthetic or artistic value, all relative to the municipality's built environment.

The City's development, as described above, was based on the formal plan conceived by James Bradley and inspired by the similar but more condensed layout of Ocean Grove. The formal grid pattern remains, as do the parklands he set aside. Bradley's original plan should be viewed as the first historic asset worthy of preservation. It includes:

- The grid street pattern and many of the street names, chosen for leaders

of Methodism in America. These include Asbury Avenue, Emory Street, Bond Street and Kingsley Street.

- The flared street design, gradually widening to 200 feet at Ocean Avenue. The intent of this original design, although modified somewhat east of Kingsley Street by the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, carries through from First Avenue to Sunset Avenues, as well as Seventh Avenue.
- The beachfront with its parallel boardwalk structure lined with pavilions and major buildings devoted to cultural activities and entertainment.
- Wesley Lake, the surrounding parklands and the two footbridges over the Lake connecting Asbury Park to Ocean Grove.
- The open space corridor formed by Sunset Lake and Park, Atlantic Square Park and Bradley Park.
- Deal Lake and surrounding parklands.
- Library Square Park.
- The religious and institutional buildings around Library Square Park, including the Asbury Park Public Library, the First United Methodist Church and the the Trinity Episcopal Church.

Of these elements of the original Bradley plan, the most significant is the beachfront and boardwalk, which give the municipality its character and identity. The waterfront location was the impetus for the City's resort development and has since been used as an anchor of economic survival. During more prosperous days, the Asbury Park boardwalk was renowned throughout the country for its grandeur. This image was created by the boardwalk and the structures built upon it.

Today, two of the most significant structures of several that once occupied the beachfront remain: The Casino (1929) and Convention Hall (1928). These buildings were designed by the architects Warren and Wetmore, who are also credited with New York's Grand Central Station. The two buildings are outstanding examples of the eclectic movement in architecture of the early Twentieth Century and are unique because of their orientation spanning from Ocean Avenue over the boardwalk and right up to the water's edge. The Convention Hall is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, while the Casino is considered eligible for listing. Originally, these buildings were tributes to the City's splendor and prosperity; today they are a reminder of what Asbury Park once was and can be again in the future.

Also of major significance in the City's past, the Central Business District, located between Main Street, Lake Avenue and Summerfield Avenue, has strong physical character with historic roots. The area contains several significant sites and many supporting structures which create, overall, the image of a downtown rich in its own history.

At the heart of the business center, on Cookman Avenue, sits the building which was once the home of one of the Steinbach brothers' first department stores. The building

was constructed in 1897, enlarged in 1912 and a fifth floor added in 1920. The building has been vacant since the early 1980's and was seriously damaged by fire in 1989. The fifth floor has been removed as a result of the fire, but the owners are pursuing financing necessary for its rehabilitation as a combination of retail and office space. The building is listed on the State Register of Historic Places and is eligible for listing on the National Register.

The Steinbach Building was (and remains) the most significant building relevant to the commercial development and viability of the Central Business District. The structure was considered the largest department store in Monmouth County before 1930 and was advertised to be the world's largest resort department store. The department store was the magnet that drew shoppers from all over Monmouth County and represented the anchor for all of the smaller retail shops along Cookman Avenue.

Adjacent to the Steinbach Building, across Emory Street, is the Byram Building (1885; additions 1916), now used by MidLantic National Bank. This building is one of four still within the Central Business District which housed the first four banks established in Asbury Park and was once used as the summer office of President Wildrow Wilson.

Next to the Byram Building is the Asbury Park Press Building (1916; addition 1930), which was home to the County's largest newspaper, the Asbury Park Press, for over 80 years. While the headquarters for the Press has moved to Neptune Township, the Press Building on Mattison Avenue remains occupied by a small portion of the paper's operation as well as the City's only radio station.

Across Cookman Avenue from the Steinbach Building stands the Seacoast Trust Company (1922), now containing Press Plaza Pharmacy on the ground floor and law offices on the second floor.

While all of the structures described above are important remnants of the local historic character, other physical elements intrinsic to the fabric of the district have remained intact. These elements include a predominant building height of three to four stories; flat roofs with eclectic entablature typical of the period (i.e., architraves, friezes and cornices borrowed from classic Roman and Greek styles); storefront facades ranging from 15 to 30 feet in width; 19th Century window treatments on upper floors; consistent building lines and setbacks; and narrow side streets that predate the automobile. All of these features remain, although some buildings have been "modernized" by unenlightened owners over the years. The integrity of the major buildings is relatively high, however, and the area is a historic, aesthetic and potentially an economic asset to the City of Asbury Park.

Another significant area in the City is located around, and in the vicinity of, Library Square Park. The land use pattern in this area dates back to James A. Bradley's original plan, where Grand Avenue was to be a street for showcasing stately institutional and residential structures. Bradley's concept has survived to the present day, as civic and religious structures dominate the neighborhood. The park continues to serve its original intent of providing relief from the intensity of urban development and an attractive setting for the dignified buildings that surround it, all in the tradition of the City Beautiful Movement of which Bradley was an enthusiastic disciple.

The Asbury Park Public Library and many churches of various denominations are

located

here, as are numerous well preserved early 19th Century homes. Some of the homes have been converted into multiple dwellings, professional offices or funeral homes, but have retained their architectural character. Overall, the age, condition and types of land uses contained in the vicinity of Library Square Park and Grand Avenue give the neighborhood a dependable and sturdy character, an asset which is often lacking in a City struggling to reverse the process of urban decay.

The residential character of Asbury Park also presents a certain image which is largely the result of the common age and design of the structures. In general, the City's one to two family housing stock dates back to the first three decades of the 20th Century, just following the Late Victorian era. At that time, home design was influenced by many formal styles and usually resulted in an overall eclectic appearance, featuring a diversity of elements.

The predominant styles which influenced the construction of the City's housing stock include Colonial Revival, Spanish Revival, Queen Anne and Italianate. Again, few buildings are of one style, or of "high style" in the City. Many are vernacular, imitating various high style elements in their design. The best collection of early resort-residential homes are found in the area between Main Street, Sunset Lake, Bergh Street and Monroe Avenue and were built between the 1870's and 1920's. Other good examples can be found along Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Avenues between Bergh and Main Streets.

Physical elements that are common within the fabric of the residential building stock are characterized by a 2 to 3 story building height; the uniformity of setbacks; wood, stucco or brick exteriors; front porches; bay windows (particularly on the east side); dormers with gable roofs; sash windows and roof cornices. The rhythm and aesthetic quality that these physical features create is present throughout the City's residential neighborhoods, both in the original City east of the railroad and in the residential areas latter annexed to the west.

While the economic stress endemic to poor urban areas has caused Asbury Park's housing stock to suffer over the years causing pockets of decay in many of the residential areas, several sections stand out and are remarkable in their character, condition and location. The most notable of these are:

- The elaborate homes on Sunset Avenue facing Sunset Lake.
- The stately single family homes facing Deal Lake on Deal Lake Drive west of Emory Street.
- The residences around Library Square Park.
- The one and two family type homes along Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Avenues between Bergh Street and Main Street.
- The cluster of single family homes on the north side of the 900 block of Sunset Avenue.

In terms of higher intensity residential and commercial uses, the north end of the City, from Deal Lake Drive inward to Sunset Avenue between Main Street and Park Avenue, contains a few dated structures with aesthetic character - most notable of which are the

Santander apartment building and the Deal Lake Court townhouses. Otherwise, the area east of Main Street is sprinkled with some old hotels (most of which have been converted to rooming or boarding homes) and once proud apartment buildings that are important with respect to local development and potential aesthetic appeal, but are presently in a deteriorated condition caused by the virtual extinction of the resort economy in Asbury Park and their incompatibility with modern construction, fire and health standards.

3.0 BREAKDOWN OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In formulating a plan for preservation of Asbury Park's historically significant buildings and sites, the description of significant areas offered in Section 2.0 can be used as a basis for identifying historic "districts" which share common physical elements.

3.1 Waterfront Resort/Residential District

The Waterfront Resort/Residential District would be generally described as being within the two blocks east of Bergh Street and Webb Street, including the two major structures east of the boardwalk structure and the boardwalk itself. Within this district there are three buildings of historic significance which overshadow all others. One of the three, the Berkeley Carteret Hotel, is privately owned and was substantially rehabilitated several years ago with private funds and a 3.5 million dollar UDAG grant. Much of the original Art Deco interior was restored in the process, although the guest rooms were reduced in number and increased in size to conform to modern preferences. The other two buildings, the Convention Hall and Casino buildings, are publicly owned and are in various states of disrepair.

Convention Hall

Convention Hall was constructed in the late 1920's based upon the design of Warren and Wetmore, architects with offices in Manhattan and Asbury Park and the designers of Grand Central Station in New York. The building was conceived as a modern facility for the accommodation of cultural events ranging from motion pictures and concerts in the Paramount Theater to exhibitions and larger entertainment events in the Hall, with a skylit arcade over the boardwalk in between fronted with a variety of tourist oriented shops and eating places.

For many years, the Convention Hall hosted performances by world famous entertainers ranging from the biggest of the big bands to the most popular of rock groups. The Hall has been home for many trade shows each year, as well as folk festivals, cotillions and religious revivals.

With Asbury Park's decline as a resort and the subsequent dismantling of the tourist fueled economic engine that supported the City since its inception, the Convention Hall gradually failed to support itself financially and became more of a liability than an asset. Symptomatic of this decline was an attrition of the staff of City public maintenance employees as the tax base eroded and budgets were slashed to keep pace. The net effect on public buildings was that the most immediate problems were attended to while routine preventative maintenance was deferred. While a stone seawall was constructed

in the late 1960's with grant funds to protect the underpinning of the Hall, exposure to the harsh beachfront environment caused water intrusion which, in turn, damaged some of the elaborate plaster work in the proscenium as well as creating mildew problems in the Theater. In addition, the natural aging process caused the mechanical systems in the building to break down with increasing frequency, further detracting from the reputation of a facility which was already suffering from the poor image pinned on the City after the devastating civil disturbances of 1969/70.

By 1983, the financial burden of keeping the Convention Hall facility open became so severe, that the building was incorporated into the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan as a public building to be rehabilitated through a joint private/public initiative. By 1986, a Redeveloper Agreement was signed with the development consortium selected and designated by the Mayor and Council after a year of negotiations. Soon thereafter, a lease was executed giving the Redeveloper the responsibility of operating and improving the facility, the rehabilitation of which was assigned to Phase I of the Agreement because its prominent role in attracting and supplementing the convention hotel trade targeted for the area near the Berkeley Carteret Hotel.

While the Redeveloper has been able to stabilize the building through the repair the roof to prevent further water damage and has replaced much of the mechanical systems, a strategy for its total rehabilitation and restoration has only recently been formulated. This development strategy consists of:

- Bringing in a professional fundraiser/manager to create a private nonprofit for the Paramount Theater and generate the funds necessary for its complete restoration, including the seating, carpet, plasterwork, painting and modernization of the operating systems.
- Use of the arcade as a festival market with restoration of the skylight and interior storefronts.
- The substantial rehabilitation and interior expansion of the Convention Hall. With the current fixed seating, the Convention Hall offers approximately 35,000 square feet of exhibition space on the floor in in the mezzanine. Replacement of the fixed seating with retractable seating and the expansion of the exhibition hall to the outer walls of the building should yield over 50,000 square feet of exhibition space, thereby rendering the facility more competitive with larger modern convention hotels built in New Jersey in recent years.
- Application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for matching funds for the restoration of the exterior of the entire complex.

In the immediate future, the Redeveloper has become more concerned with the exterior appearance of the facility and has been searching for a cost effective way to finance the restoration of the windows, brick work and terra-cotta, stone and copper ornamentation which make the building so remarkable.

Casino Arena/Heating Plant

On the south end of the boardwalk adjacent to the eastern terminus of Wesley Lake is a complex of buildings known as the Casino Arena and Heating Plant. These structures

were constructed almost concurrently with the Convention Hall and were also designed by Warren and Wetmore. Where the Convention Hall offered two auditoriums of different sizes for more formal entertainment, the Casino was oriented to amusement entertainment. The complex features an indoor amusement park with a large carousel to the west of the boardwalk arcade and a large arena extending over the beach. The Arena's auditorium was formerly used for roller skating and ice skating and then for rock concerts and flea markets until hurricane damage and an improperly installed roof caused plaster to fall from the 40 foot ceiling, presenting a serious hazard to the public. As a result, the Arena has been closed to the public through most of the 1980's.

While the Arena's roof problems continued to worsen with the onslaught of Hurricane Gloria in 1986, the City's ability to deal with the problem continued to weaken. Despite the closing of the Arena, however, the arcade remained open and the amusements continued to provide entertainment to ever dwindling seasonal crowds. The night of 23 September 1987 then brought a sudden thunderstorm with swirling winds which were originally believed to be a tornado. These winds blew down one entire bank of doors on the north side of the arcade, leaving the ornate window-wall above suspended from the roof with no support beneath. The copper statuettes which straddled the top of the wood frame window-wall were distorted by the winds on both ends of the arcade and several have fallen and have had to be removed.

As a result of this latest setback, both entrances of the arcade have had to be fenced off from the public, which now must walk around the west (carousel) end of the building and then up the alley between the Casino and the Heating Plant to reach the south end of the boardwalk. The inconvenience that occurs further deters strollers from continuing north as they pass from Ocean Grove to Asbury Park and many of them turn around and head back to Ocean Grove. The Asbury Park boardwalk has become even more isolated and deserted as a consequence.

The Casino Building is earmarked for rehabilitation by the Redeveloper in either Phase 1 (1 July 1987 to 31 December 1990) or Phase 2 (1 Jan. 1991 to 31 Dec. 1995) of the Redeveloper Agreement. Uses contemplated by the Redeveloper reflect a need for high rent generating capacity to offset the staggering costs of rehabilitating the building. A market study, performed in 1987, recommended a concept for the complex focusing on beach recreation, restaurants and bars, and night-time entertainment generating a rental income upwards of \$35 per square foot.¹ The recommendation was based upon a preliminary assessment of rehabilitation costs by the Redeveloper's architect from between 6 and 7.5 million dollars.² The cost estimate assumed replacement of the roof over the Arena with a new copper roof, which may be impractical, and included several hundred thousand dollars for "historical research", which is unnecessary. However, because that analysis was preliminary in nature, problems may exist that are not ascertainable by the naked eye and costs could rise as a result. It is clear, and the preliminary analysis recommended as much, that a more detailed study is required of a structural engineer in order to determine the best course of action to preserve the building.

It is also clear, based upon the market study, that the financial feasibility of restoring the Casino without government assistance is doubtful. Given that conclusion and

¹ Real Estate Research Corporation, Market Potential Analysis for the Asbury Park Casino (June, 1987): Page 7.

² *Ibid*; Appendix

considering the programs currently and potentially available to the City and the Redeveloper in the near future, the following sequence of steps is recommended as the long range plan for the Casino Complex:

- Engage a structural engineer to prepare a detailed written study of the physical condition of the Casino Building and the estimated cost of stabilization on an itemized and prioritized basis.
- Use engineer's report as support documentation for the preparation of an application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for stabilization of the building through the performance of emergency repairs to include, at minimum, the replacement of the roof over the Arena, the repair of the roof and ceiling over the Arcade and the repair of the entrance doors and window walls at the north and south boardwalk entrances to the Arcade. Once repairs are made, the objective will be to reopen the Arcade to the public, thereby rejoining the boardwalk on the Ocean Grove and Asbury Park sides of the building.
- Pursue an application to the Urban Heritage Park Commission in accordance with Urban Heritage Park Act now pending in the State Legislature. Application would involve the total rehabilitation and restoration of the Casino complex as well as the construction of the Casino Plaza and Esplanade around the carousel to create a multipurpose indoor and outdoor entertainment complex featuring everything from nightclubs to boat concessions to street performers and farmers markets. Ultimately, this urban park would recapture the excitement of the amusement mecca that was so much a part of Asbury Park's past, but would present it in a tasteful, sophisticated modern context.

The Heating Plant was constructed in 1930 as a service facility to the new Casino and Convention Hall, as well as other boardwalk facilities that followed. As with the Convention Hall, the rehabilitation of the Heating Plant would entail a structural engineering assessment and the formulation of a work plan for rehabilitation.

The building, as with the Convention Hall and Casino, is supported by concrete piers resting on pilings.³ The roof, which is partially clay tile and partially quarry tile on concrete slab, needs to be repaired and made water-tight.⁴ The building may also require structural reinforcement to make it sound and significant removal of debris. Exterior rehabilitation would include the replacement of windows and a cleaning and repointing of the brick and sandstone facing.⁵ Total restoration would ultimately require repair and restoration of stone, bronze, copper and wrought iron ornamental elements and statuettes.

The rehabilitation of the Heating Plant is contemplated by the Redeveloper as part of an adaptive reuse of the building as a cogeneration facility to create energy for heating and

³ Warren and Wetmore, Architects, *Construction Plans for the Central Heating Plant* (February, 1929): Sheet #1001.

⁴ *IBID*: Sheet #3.

⁵ *IBID*: Sheet #202.

cooling from the heat generated from the production of electricity. Both the electricity produced and the water heated or cooled from the process are supplied to buildings connected to the facility within its "heating district". The Heating Plant is ideally suited for this use, as it was at one time a steam generating plant which generated heat for all of the buildings on the Boardwalk, including the Convention Hall. The steam was carried through a concrete masonry tunnel which remains intact today and which could be reused to accommodate transmission lines from the new cogeneration plant.

Together with the Casino Arena Building and its carousel, the Heating Plant building, while not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is considered eligible, and is therefore subject to comment by the ONJH and possible oversight by the National Park Service with respect to exterior rehabilitation.

Berkeley Carteret Hotel

The Berkeley Carteret Hotel, as was touched on earlier, was the most visible blighting factor on the beachfront for eight years and was home only to pigeons. However, in 1985 and 1986, Henry and Sebastian Vaccaro, local builders with roots in the Asbury Park area, purchased the building and proceeded to rehabilitate, restore and enlarge the sixty year old former resort hotel into a first class convention hotel with large luxurious guest rooms and meeting rooms to complement the classically restored ballrooms. The total rehabilitation and restoration represented a 15 million dollar investment and the hotel was considered the harbinger of redevelopment to come.

The Berkeley Carteret was originally financed by a group of area business men, led by Arthur C. Steinbach. It is constructed of concrete, steel, red brick and stone and features an innovative equilateral cross design to maximize the available ocean view.

The hotel was open from 1925 until World War II, at which time it was requisitioned by the Federal Government for the Royal British Navy, then as a Mid-Shipman School, and last, as a Naval Hospital. In 1976, by economic necessity, it began operating as a Senior Citizen's home. It faced bank foreclosure shortly thereafter. The City took possession of the tax delinquent property in 1978. In 1981, it was sold to two Delaware developers, who then resold it to the Vaccaros in 1983.

Secondary Buildings

Other buildings either within or on the fringe of the Waterfront Residential/Resort Historic District are:

1. The Palace Amusements Building
2. The Belmont Hotel
3. The Metropolitan Hotel
4. The Santander Condominium
5. The Deal Lake Court Townhouses

The Palace Amusements Building is now considered of secondary significance because the elements that gave the building its historic stature, the carousel and "ferris" wheel

(actually, the Palace wheel is believed to have predated the first wheel built by George W.G. Ferris for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893), have been sold by the owners, dismantled and removed from the complex. The carousel's pavilion, which is the only remaining legacy of the original 1887 site, was originally constructed of glass and has been altered severely over the years. The pavilion is now constructed of wood and its open sides were replaced with overhead doors and then with glass storefronts. The other secondary buildings listed above are described in the Appendix.

3.2 Downtown Historic District

The boundaries of the Downtown Historic District would be essentially congruent with the zoning district boundaries for the B1 (Central Business District) Zone. That is generally between Summerfield Avenue to the north, the railroad to the west, Wesley Lake to the south and Grand Avenue to the east.

As was mentioned earlier, the Downtown has a distinctive character typical of older "town centers" and efforts are needed to enhance that character and encourage the historically accurate facade restoration of those buildings which have not already been altered beyond recognition. However, as the entire downtown area was spawned from the construction of the Steinbach Brothers Department Store, any historic preservation strategy must begin with the Steinbach Building.

The Steinbach Building

The current status of the Steinbach Building has degenerated into that of a fire damaged, vacant eyesore which has become even more of a blighting impact on the Cookman Avenue area than it has been since the store closed its doors and the building was boarded up. The building was purchased several years ago by the Vaccaro brothers and other partners and one attempt was made at securing federal Urban Development Action Grant funds for its rehabilitation into retail space on the lower two floors and offices on the upper three floors. When that attempt failed due to lack of sufficient support by local lending institutions, the owners decided to wait until residential redevelopment on the edges of the downtown brought enough economic impetus to try again. According to the Vaccaros, a deal on the purchase of the building which could have led to its rehabilitation was being negotiated when a mysterious arsonist's fire destroyed the fifth floor of the building and caused smoke and water damage to the remaining building.

With a restructuring of the partnership that owns the building, a dialogue has commenced between the owners and the City with assistance being offered by the Redeveloper to find an appropriate use for the building and pursue possible avenues of financing. Discussions have been held with a representative of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) regarding a portion of the financing, and the possible procurement of the underused Parking Authority garage either by the owners of the Steinbach Building or the UDC is being explored. The concept of a "factory outlet" mall is being investigated as well, and inquiries are being made to determine the interest within the factory outlet industry.

It is clear that the economic future of the downtown district depends heavily on the future revitalization of the Steinbach Building. The preservation of the building gains additional importance from the fact that it is listed on the National Register of Historic

Places.**Asbury Park Press Building**

If the Steinbach Building is the most significant historic building in Asbury Park's downtown, the Asbury Park Press Building would have to be considered the runner-up. As the home of the Asbury Park Press from its construction in 1916 until approximately 1986, when the Press moved to its new complex in Neptune Township, the building was the hive of public information activity for Monmouth County. Additionally, because the building has not been substantially altered other than by a 1930 addition, it was considered eligible for listing on the National Register in a Historic Sites Inventory published in 1984.

In addition to the above, the location of the Press Building in close proximity to the Steinbach Building and other buildings of secondary historic significance reinforces the framework of buildings around which a historic district can be fashioned.

Asbury Park Post Office

The Asbury Park Post Office is located on the west side of Main Street between Bangs Avenue and Summerfield Avenue and represents the most significant architectural building within the edge of the proposed Downtown Historic District. The building forms the third component of the complex of public buildings which also includes the Transportation Center and the Municipal Office Complex between the railroad tracks and Main Street (NJ Route 71). More information about the Post Office, which is considered of primary significance because of its listing on the State and National Register, is available in the Appendix.

Secondary Buildings

Along with the buildings of primary significance described above, the proposed Downtown Historic District contains several buildings which together provide a theme which reinforces the downtown's tradition as a bustling retail, professional and finance district. These buildings are:

1. The Byram Building (601-603 Mattison Avenue)
2. The Asbury Park and Ocean Grove Bank (308 Main Street)
3. First National Bank (701-705 Mattison Avenue)
4. Merchants National Bank (649 Mattison Avenue)
5. Seacoast Trust Company (572-576 Cookman Avenue)
6. Winsor Building (400 Main Street)
7. 704, 710, 716, and 718 Cookman Avenue

Buildings 1 through 5 represent the five original bank buildings in Asbury Park, all of which were constructed in the first or second decade of the Twentieth Century. Two of the buildings, the Byram Building (MidLantic National Bank) and the Asbury Park and

Ocean Grove Bank (Core States/New Jersey National Bank) remain as financial institutions. The other bank buildings have become either entirely used as offices or as upper level offices above ground level retail.

Most of these buildings have had some alterations or have undergone "modernization" over the years and none of them were considered individually significant enough to qualify for listing on the National Register when surveyed in 1980 as part of the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory (see Appendix). However, the facades of most of these buildings are capable of being restored, especially 308 Main Street (which was internally restored in 1989), 649 Mattison Avenue and 572-576 Cookman Avenue. The location of these five original bank buildings at or near prominent corners in the downtown make them appropriate focal points around which to cultivate a historic district.

The Winsor building was constructed in 1904 by Henry C. Winsor, a President of the Asbury Park and Ocean Grove Bank. When surveyed in 1980, the Winsor Building was considered "an excellent example of a well designed commercial-apartment investment property of the early 1900 period with typical business stores on the first floor and apartments on the second floor".⁶

When the Winsor building was surveyed in 1980, the owner was supposedly restoring the street level storefronts, which were characterized by cast iron Corinthian columns centrally located in each common entrance to shops and second story apartments.⁷ However, in the later part of the decade, the executors of the estate of the building's last owner were forced by order of the Municipal Court Judge to vacate the second story apartments because of Housing Code violations. After renovating the apartments at an excruciatingly slow pace, the executors proceeded to gut and remodel most of the ground floor storefronts, removing the Corinthian columns and original storefront windows and installing modern metal frame windows and a uniform series of backlit sign frames along the frieze.

This action by the executors precluded them from receiving funding under the City's Rental Rehabilitation Program because the Office of New Jersey Heritage rejected the ground level modifications as an impairment of the historic integrity under their Section 106 review. The work was then finished without public funding assistance, despite the fact that the building had been listed on the National Register based on the 1980 survey.

Four store buildings on the south side of the 700 block of Cookman Avenue were listed in the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory as being notable representative examples of early Twentieth Century retail structures within the Asbury Park Central Business District. One of these buildings, 718 Cookman, has since been converted entirely into offices and substantially altered. However, the other three buildings, as well as several additional buildings along Cookman Avenue that were not listed in the Inventory, remain essentially uncompromised and are worthy of the protection that the proposed Downtown Historic District would bring them, once supported by appropriate zoning controls.

⁶ Monmouth County Historical Association, et. al., Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory, (Inventory #1303-24, November 1980).

⁷ *Ibid.*

3.3 Grand Avenue Institutional/Professional District

As was described earlier, the north/south spine formed by Grand Avenue was developed early on in Asbury Park's history as a formal boulevard and a nexus of monumental religious structures. Of the two original formal parks that provided the setting for many of these majestic buildings, Library Square and Educational Square, Library Square remains intact. Educational Square formerly existed in the block bounded by Grand Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue and Emory Street and was the site of Educational Hall, a 1500 seat octagonal pavilion which was relocated from the grounds of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial and served as a public hall until replaced by private homes near the turn of the Century.⁸

The proposed Grand Avenue Institutional/Professional District would consist of the properties fronting on Grand Avenue north of Sewall Avenue and south of Fifth Avenue, as well as the properties facing Library Square Park on Asbury Avenue, Heck Street and First Avenue. Buildings of primary significance in this district would be:

1. The Asbury Park Public Library
2. First Methodist Church (First United Methodist Church)
3. Trinity Episcopal Church
4. First Baptist Church

Of these four structures, the first three were considered eligible to be listed on the National Register by the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory in 1980.

Secondary Buildings

The only building of secondary significance listed within the proposed Grand Avenue Institutional/Professional District on the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory is the Metropolitan Hotel. Constructed in the 1920's and expanded with a substantial motel addition in the middle part of the Twentieth Century, the hotel was in full operation until 1987, when it was sold to an investor who failed to pursue plans to renovate the complex and allowed the interior to fall into a state of disrepair.

While it is located within the Waterfront Redevelopment Area, the Metropolitan is not designated as a property to be acquired and its many internal amenities offer an opportunity for adaptive reuse, possibly as a congregate senior citizen apartment or condominium complex.

In addition to the larger buildings of primary and secondary significance, the proposed Grand Avenue Institutional/Professional District contains numerous large residential homes, most of which have been altered into either multifamily apartments, professional offices or a combination of both. Because of the traditional institutional nature of Grand Avenue, and its origin within the eastern edge of the Central Business District, it is recommended that the conversion of these larger homes into professional offices be encouraged as a natural transition from the downtown commercial area to the

⁸ Monmouth County Historical Association, et. al., Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory, (Inventory #1303-38, November 1980).

northern residential areas. If the restoration of these remaining homes can be tied to their conversion to offices as part of the creation of an enclave of professionals along Grand Avenue, they would be more apt to be preserved from the wear and tear normally associated with tenant occupied residential buildings. The successful cultivation of professionals along Grand Avenue could also serve to contribute to the revitalization of the Cookman Avenue retail core, particularly at lunchtime.

3.4 Sunset Lake Residential District

The remaining historic districts to be proposed as part of this plan are designed to recognize residential areas retaining good examples of original architecture, to preserve these remaining legacies of Asbury Park's heritage and to control new scattered infill construction so as not to impair the character of these districts.

The first proposed district, the Sunset Lake Residential District, was the only district to be recommended in the Historic Sites Inventory. The district would include the properties with frontage on Sunset Avenue between Main Street and Park Avenue with the exception of the commercial property at the corner of Sunset Avenue and Main Street. While there are other similar residences scattered around the residential area north of this district between Main Street and Webb Street, there is not another collection of such structures in one place as exists in the area demarcated.

If it is determined by the Planning Board in the future to expand this district, the logical direction would be to include the Sixth Avenue side of the block and possibly the north side of Sixth Avenue as well. Another possible district for the future would be both sides of Eighth Avenue between Emory and Webb Streets, where four residential structures were considered notable for surveying within the Monmouth County Historic Sites Survey. To expand that district one block north to Deal Lake Drive would take in the homes facing Deal Lake that were mentioned earlier.

3.5 Early Resort Residential District

- Some of the oldest and grandest residences surveyed as part of the Monmouth County Historic Sites Survey were found in the area bounded by Main Street, Asbury Avenue, Fourth Avenue and Bergh Street. As was mentioned earlier, most of these homes were constructed between the late 1870's and the first two decades of the Twentieth Century and were dominated by Queen Anne and Colonial Revival eclectic styling.

While few of these grand old homes, with the exception of 415 Second Avenue and 509 Second Avenue, were considered outstanding enough to be individually listed on the State and National Registers, there are enough notable structures to justify their preservation through the designation of a historic district. All of the pertinent structures are described and mapped within the Historic Sites Inventory, which is included in its entirety in the Appendix of this Plan.

3.6 Southwest Neighborhoods

The residential neighborhoods within the Southwest Quadrant, bordered by Asbury Avenue, Memorial Drive, and the Neptune borders to the south and west, developed historically as housing for the work force which powered the resort based economic engine of prosperity in the early days of the City. As such, the housing stock dates back predominantly to the 1920's and later. However, despite the fact that the

prevailing character of the homes in this area tended to be more modest and simple than those in the more affluent eastern neighborhoods, they exhibit strong character nonetheless and that character is worthy of preservation.

As the rest of the City declined in the later half of the Twentieth Century due, in part, to the demise of the resort economy and the exodus of middle income families that were the backbone of the tax base, the hardest hit area was, and remains, the Southwest Quadrant neighborhoods. Rising property taxes and unemployment was the cancer that caused homes to be abandoned or neglected by absentee landlords, or even by families who could simply not keep up with the carrying costs of a house. Many deteriorated homes gradually became the property of the City, which, in turn demolished the structures and created vacant, buildable lots.

For almost fifteen years after the civil disturbances of the late sixties-early seventies desolated Asbury Park, the City's inventory of vacant lots grew as a slow construction industry in the early 1980's scared away any potential investors. With New Jersey's economic resurgence in the mid '80's, the City's many housing programs aimed at prompting private construction began to pay dividends, just when it seemed that the State's building boom was going to pass the City by.

While the City has benefited from substantial new construction on scattered lots throughout the Southwest Quadrant, concern over the quality of the infill development has emerged. The area where the original fabric of the housing stock has remained the strongest is in the area between Prospect Avenue, Memorial Drive and Asbury Avenue. As was touched on earlier, this fabric consists primarily of 2 1/2 to 3 story wood frame rectangular structures with either front porches or porticos, gable or hip roofs, some of which include gable or shed roof dormers. Many of the older homes include the elements of Queen Anne or Colonial Revival styling also found in the homes described in the Eastern Resort/Residential District.

Many of the newly constructed homes are simple modular boxes, most are one story ranches turned perpendicular to the street so that the front door faces the side lot line. While the one story boxes are the cheapest for the builders to erect and the demand for affordable housing remains strong, these "quick and dirty" one story boxes were not intended for rectangular urban lots and represent a disservice to the neighborhood in the long run. While the City has successfully convinced some builders to at least put a front porch or portico on the new homes, an ordinance with teeth is the only sure solution to prevent the remaining lots from being filled with incompatible construction.

3.7 Northwest Residential Expansion Area

Probably the last area of the City to be developed was the area north of Asbury Avenue and west of Memorial Drive. This area is characterized by a mixture of homes built in the 1920's or earlier and homes built after the second World War. Because the ages of the homes vary more than in other residential neighborhoods, it is more difficult to justify the establishment of a historic district. However, within this neighborhood there are some remarkable older residences and the prevalence of single family uses within these residences makes them special in a City with a housing stock that has been ravaged by multifamily conversions over the years.

Possibly because of their age or because of their relatively simple styling, none of the

homes in the Northwest Residential Expansion Area were evaluated as meriting individual notation in the Historic Sites Inventory. In addition, the inconsistency in age or common styling was likely the reason why no smaller portion of the area was identified as a potential historic district.

Despite the above, however, there are groups of homes that have some local significance, even if not meriting attention based on the criteria of a regional survey. These homes are located as follows:

1. Locust Drive- The homes along Locust Drive that back up to Deal Lake are unique because their floorplans are reversed to take advantage of their lake frontage. The entrances facing the street are actually service entrances through kitchens, while the formal living and dining rooms area arranged to face the rear yard lake views.

The neighborhood within this short street that spans one block from Bridge Street to Jeffrey Street is also unique because of the small triangular green space formed by the merger of Locust Drive and Fifth Avenues and because several of the homes on smaller 40 foot wide lots have detached garages in their front yards with short driveways to the streets. The larger homes on the lake side were built on pairs of 40 foot lots. A couple of these homes are outstanding and probably deserve a second look in terms of their historical significance.

2. Sunset Drive- Another short street which provides an eddy from the busy traffic flow of the wide east/west avenues that traverse the northwest area. Like Locust Drive, Sunset Drive has a solid core of homes built between 1920 and 1950 with rear yards sloping down to Deal Lake and panoramic views of the water. The Sunset Drive block differs from Locust Drive because the homes across the street from the lakefront homes actually front on Sunset Avenue and have detached rear garages which front Sunset Drive in a fashion similar to the service alleys which split nine of the blocks in the northwest area. The homes on the Sunset Avenue side of the block are Dutch Colonials, a popular style among single family home builders in the northwest area, flanked by a Colonial on the west end of the block and a three family house on the east end that was the home of Kendall Lee, Asbury Park's most illustrious City Manager.

3. Central Court and Drummond Court- These narrow streets were cut between Fourth Avenue and Deal Lake because the southerly meander of the Lake cuts off Fifth Avenue and left an area wider than half a block to the west. Central Court amounts to two short dead end streets on either side of Central Avenue on the lake side of Fourth. Drummond Court is a narrow one-way street spanning two blocks west of Prospect Avenue along the north side of Fourth Avenue.

These two streets are similar to Sunset Drive in that the lake front homes face the rear of the homes fronting the main avenue and the garages of the homes on Fourth Avenue face the rear street as if it were a service alley. The lakefront homes in these areas, and in particular the Drummond Court area, are dominated by more modern, sprawling

ranch houses built within the last twenty-five years.

4. 900 Block of Sunset Avenue- This block stands out because of its row of what in real estate vernacular is termed "Seashore Colonials". These homes are all of similar size and style, are characterized by their narrow lots, and shine with the pride of home ownership, resplendent in colorful awnings, manicured lawns and prominently hung American flags.

The first three of these proposed districts share the distinction of being zoned exclusively for one family use throughout their history and for that reason have not been tainted by the intrusion of multifamily conversions and landlordism which have threatened other residential areas in the City.

While the single family zoning will continue to protect against conversions, the creation of historic districts recognizing the unique features of these lakefront areas through special design and property maintenance regulations within the Land Development Ordinance might help to preserve the character and integrity of these streets in the face of a property tax burden which often drives owners to decisions having a negative impact on their properties. It may very well be the case that regulations such as these will require positive economic incentives in the form of property tax relief on building improvements.

4.0 ROLE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN FUTURE OF CITY

There is much that can be done to actively protect the remaining historic resources of local and regional significance in Asbury Park. These initiatives can be in conjunction with and complementary to the City's economic development goals. In essence, the preservation and maximization of historic resources is a form of community beautification that can produce substantial economic benefits.

4.1 Recommendation 1: Historic Preservation Regulations

It is recommended that the Asbury Park Land Development Ordinance be reviewed as to how its standard bulk and design requirements can be improved to better protect the general character of structures within various zones in the City. In particular, regulations preserving parklands as historic sites and controlling land use, height and setback requirements protect the pattern and rhythm of development and should not be either overly permissive or restrictive to the point of posing impediments to owners seeking to enhance their properties within their historic context. In terms of protecting the City's historic character, regulations can be tailored to preserve the vistas surrounding Sunset Lake, the character of Library Square Park and vicinity, etc..

Specific areas with an overriding style or theme, identified in this Plan as districts, should be protected through the adoption of Historic District regulations. These regulations can be incorporated into the design requirements of the Land Development Ordinance and would apply to new infill development as well as additions or alterations to existing structures within the district.

In the proposed Downtown Historic District, design criteria for facade improvements

and street graphics, especially signage, should be incorporated into the Land Development Ordinance. Signage regulations should be targeted towards elimination of nonconforming signs. The City should provide economic incentives in the form of low interest loan pools from local banks and/or tax relief to encourage owners to conform the facades and signage on their buildings to the new design criteria of the District.

The specific criteria for the Downtown District should be developed jointly by the City, the Greater Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce, building owners and merchants as part of an overall revitalization plan for the downtown. The cooperation of owners and merchants is even more important in the absence of State or National historic designation to lend credibility to the City's action. A movement towards advancing a "town center" theme for the Central Business District centered around a Downtown Historic District will most likely succeed if the impetus comes from within the district itself. The City's role, however, should be to plant the conceptual seed, lend technical support and provide economic incentives where feasible given the City's tenuous financial condition.

The City staff can educate residents about historic value, potential districts and structures which are obvious candidates for rehabilitation and/or reuse. This function is particularly important in economic boom periods, when real estate speculation is most active.

The City should also continue to pursue housing rehabilitation programs, particularly for owner-occupied homes, in order to prevent the deterioration of the housing stock that will erode or erase the historic quality prevalent throughout Asbury Park's neighborhoods. Investment is the only method to prevent decline in the condition of housing, many of which are owned and occupied by elderly residents on fixed incomes or by low and moderate income families struggling to keep their homes in the face of rising costs.

4.2 Recommendation 2 Listing On State and National Registers

The City should pursue a program of initiating the listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places of all buildings deemed eligible or possibly eligible by the Historic Sites Inventory (see Appendix), particularly its own Casino Complex and Heating Plant. If a property is listed, or has been judged eligible for listing on the State or National Historic Register, it is protected from demolition or unsupervised rehabilitation attempted by a public entity. Criteria for historic preservation can be imposed on an eligible structure regardless of whether formal application has been made for listing on the Register. Additionally, if the eligible property's rehabilitation includes public grant or loan funds or is assisted through tax abatements, the Office of New Jersey Heritage within the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has the power to review the project plans in light of the effect on the structure's historic integrity.

The State review process, known as Section 106 Review, is important to Asbury Park because several structures in serious disrepair have been judged to be eligible or have already been listed on the State or National Registers. The structures which must undergo a Section 106 project review if improved with public monies include the Casino Arena Complex, Heating Plant, Convention Hall, Steinbach Building, Winsor Building (400 Main Street) and the Asbury Park Post Office.

For initiatives to be financed with private resources, the federal tax code, as amended in 1986, allow investors to claim an Investment Tax Credit equal to 20% of the project's capital cost as of 1 January 1987. This is the primary available economic incentive to owners for registration of their eligible buildings.

4.3 Recommendation 3 Immediate Action

As was stated repeatedly within this Plan, the two most significant buildings in Asbury Park are its beachfront Convention Hall and Casino complexes. The Convention Hall will require a total overhaul to avoid further neglect due to obsolescence and the Redeveloper will need financial assistance to make such a project feasible. However, the deterioration of the Casino has reached desperate emergency proportions. The prolonged exposure of the interior of the Arena auditorium to the severe ocean, wind, water and salt elements due to the progressive loss of the roof since 1980, not to mention the damaging effects of its pigeon inhabitants, has accelerated the Casino's deterioration to the point of dilapidation and the hopes of saving the building become more faint with each month that passes.

The City's action in developing a redevelopment plan that seeks to privatize the management of these two monumental structures underscores the fact that the cost of their maintenance without a strong resort economy has long been beyond this tiny municipality's limited resources. While the City and Redeveloper have included the Casino's rehabilitation in their Redeveloper's Agreement, a market study done almost three years ago has already estimated the costs to be prohibitive. If the building is to be preserved for future generations of New Jerseyans to appreciate, the only answer would appear to be direct financial intervention by the State government.

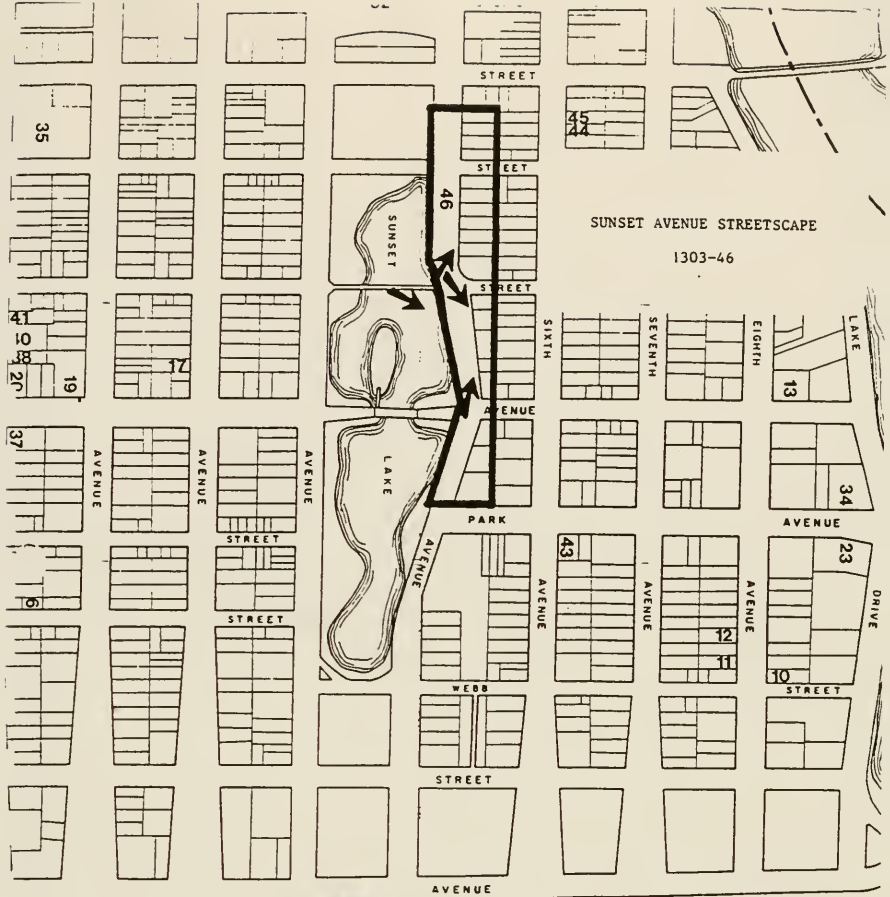
This State financial intervention could begin with an immediate stabilization grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust to repair the roof and reopen the Arcade to public access. Further rehabilitation assistance in the form of an outright legislative budget appropriation may be needed to shore up the building's underpinning and replace windows broken by weather and vandals. The proposed Urban Heritage Park Act, however, provides the best hope of securing a new life for the building and its place in Asbury Park's future.

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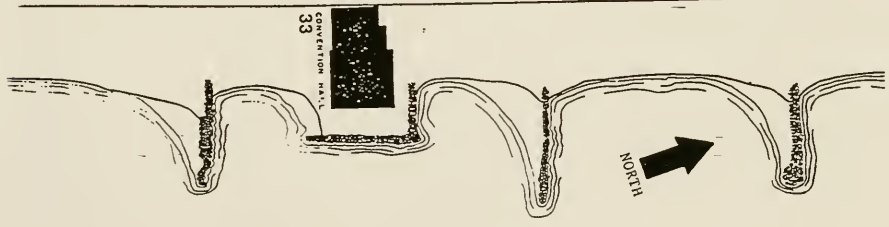
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ASBURY PARK MASTER PLAN
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

APPENDIX



SUNSET AVENUE STREETSCAPE
1303-46



APPENDIX D



PUBLIC HEARING

before

ASSEMBLY CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
The Liberty Park Casino Building Historic Preservation Project

Sally A. 1991
Boardwalk
Ocean Grove, New Jersey

MEMBER OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Daniel P. Jacobson, Vice-Chairman

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman John A. Willaplano
District

Jeffrey T. Climpson,
Office of Legislative Services
New Jersey Conservation and
Natural Resources Committee

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
Office of Legislative Services
Public Information Office
Hearing Unit
State Office Annex
Trancon, New Jersey 08625

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NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY

ASSEMBLYMAN DANIEL P. JACOBSON (Vice-Chairman): We're ready to begin. This is a meeting of the Assembly Conservation and Natural Resources Committee -- a hearing on-site. I am going to be Chairman today in place of Tom Duch, and John Villeplano will be substituting for Mr. Duch. Joe Mecca, from Passaic, who was supposed to be here today, called late last night and said he had a last minute conflict and wouldn't be able to make it. However, for everyone present, as we usually do at public hearings, have a court reporter and there will be a transcript of this hearing available to everyone; members of the public, if they need it, as well as all of the Committee members.

The purpose of this hearing-- It is an oversight hearing to determine the status of the Casino Restoration Project. As many of you know, John Villeplano and I sponsored legislation that was signed into law by the Governor last August, that contained an appropriation for a \$750,000 grant to restore the casino, in terms of putting on a new roof and sealing the building. That grant was to be matched dollar for dollar by the City's designated redeveloper, Ocean Mile.

At this point, almost a year later, work has not yet begun. John and I are very concerned about the status of the project. One of the reasons we had the hearing right here is, you can see the condition of the casino, and it will also be very easy for witnesses to point out various structural aspects of the building and the work that has to be done.

But the bottom line is this: We are very concerned that if we wait much longer when repairing this roof and sealing this building, the building will be lost forever, and it is a very historical structure and a very important structure for Asbury Park and its redevelopment.

With that brief opening comment, I would just like to ask-- John, do you have a quick comment you want to make, and then we will get underway?

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAFRANO: Well, I think the one aspect of this, Dan, that we should probably also stress is, the \$750,000 was part of a much larger appropriation that came from the Green Acres Commission. This was one of the projects that was designated. Now, it is not the situation that this is one of the only projects in the State. The competition is ongoing on a daily basis for money. If this money was appropriated, or approved approximately one year ago, people have been out there looking and wondering how come it hasn't been spent.

Our situation is that if we don't get off the dime at some point in time, these funds could be reprogrammed. We will do everything in our power not to have that happen, but just one quick look at the building would indicate that if it is not shored up and made weatherproof, it is going to continue to deteriorate at a rapid pace. If those moneys -- \$750,000 -- are not available in the future, there really would be no -- I think nothing over the horizon, there really would be no -- I

So, I look at this as one of the last hurrahs for the casino. The State has made its investment. The State has indicated that it wants to be here; that it wants to shore up this historic structure. It is important for us, as legislators, to keep that money in line, but we also need the cooperation and help of the redeveloper, the City, and everybody else who is here this morning. I think that by pulling all of the people together who are responsible for not only making this decision, but for making the decisions in the future to make this building water tight and weatherproof, that we would be in a very good position to really understand where we are as a community to shore up the casino.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thanks, John. Also, I just want to tell you, I promised all the witnesses that we are going to try to have a time limit. We are going to try to hold this hearing to about an hour-and-a-half, so I am going to be fairly aggressive in trying to point the testimony to answer the questions that we are looking for.

To begin, let me just take note of a letter -- which is where John and I became involved -- of January 22, 1990 from Stephen Patron, who is the CEO of the Ocean Mile Development Group. I would just like to read one paragraph of it, so everyone knows where we start our from, so we can find out what happened from there. This is a letter to Mayor Smith and City Manager Sam Addeo, advising that Ocean Mile will match any State grant that is secured through an application by the City.

Please allow this letter to confirm the commitment of Ocean Mile Development Group to provide the matching funds for the City for this project in the amount of \$750,000, based on the cost estimate prepared by the City Engineer dated January 19, 1990. This commitment is based upon the status of Ocean Mile Development Group as the City's designated redeveloper, and subject to the execution of a lease for the complex that is satisfactory to Ocean Mile Development Group, the City of Asbury Park, and the New Jersey Historic Trust.

So, we began in January of 1990, about a year-and-a-half ago. The match was based on those two factors: the execution of a lease satisfactory to both parties -- the City and the redeveloper -- as well as Ocean Mile continuing -- as being the redeveloper.

With that, I would like to call as the first witness, or witnesses-- We would like to find out about the City's Redevelopment Plan and the requirements under it pertaining to the casino. I think it would be appropriate to hear from Sam Addeo, City Manager, and Anne Babineau, the attorney for redevelopment, and any other -- anyone else you want to bring up with you, Sam.

Just as you know, those microphones are just for the transcribing. They are not for volume. If you could all just identify yourselves for the record--
S A M U E L J. A D D E O: I'm Sam Addeo. I am the City Manager of Asbury Park.

A N N E S. B A B I N E A U, ESQ.: Anne S. Babineau, Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, attorney for the City in connection with the redevelopment project.
G E O R G E M. F L O Y D: George H. Floyd, Assistant City Manager.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. The first question we would like to know that establishes-- what specifically are the requirements for the developer under the redevelopment agreement -- the modified redevelopment agreement -- pertaining to the casino?

MR. ADDEO: Go ahead.

MS. BABINEAU: In connection with that, I think that the best place to answer that question is to start from the Redevelopment Plan itself. As far as the Redevelopment Plan is concerned, it is a Redevelopment Plan that was enacted quite some time ago. The casino building and the power plant were recognized as historic structures that are of great value to the City.

I would like to just read two sentences from that plan which address themselves to both the Convention Hall and the casino and power plant: "The Convention Hall and the casino building and the power plant are important historic and architectural resources along the beachfront, worthy of rehabilitation. The Waterfront Redevelopment Plan proposes that these buildings all be comprehensively rehabilitated, but in the case of the latter two, this is seen as dependent on the engineering and economic feasibility of rehabilitation that has yet to be determined."

As far as the redevelopment agreement was concerned, the redevelopment agreement first entered into in 1966 called for the developer to implement the Redevelopment Plan, including redevelopment in connection with the casino. The timing of the casino redevelopment was not to be handled in the first phase. All that was to be done in the first phase was to deal with

issues of economic feasibility; namely a determination of whether the facility could attract, and be used for uses that would be sufficiently economic to make it worthwhile to proceed with the project.

In the first phase of the project, from an economic only last year, a feasibility study was done from an economic perspective to talk about the kinds of uses that could be entertained in both the casino and the power plant. The conclusion was that, dependent upon the amount of structural rehabilitation that needed to be done, it looked like uses could be put in both buildings that would enable the developer to justify doing the rehab. In other words, they concluded they could make a sufficient amount of money using the buildings to make it economic to proceed with the rehabilitation. So that was the first phase of the project with regard to the facility.

In the meantime, the structure had begun to very substantially deteriorate due to, primarily, one major storm that had blown out the doors of the facility -- as you can see, they are no longer visible -- and had done structural damage -- worse structural damage to the roof of the building. I think at about that time, a major effort was underway in the City to try to find some way of accelerating the rehabilitation of the facility beyond what had been agreed to in the initial redevelopment agreement.

About that time, through Dave Roberts, in the Planning Office, as well as the City administration, applications were made to the Trust to try to get money for at least some immediate stopgap measures, so that the facility could be stabilized and at least held in status quo until some major redevelopment could be done.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So, now what are we talking about, late '89?

MS. BABINEAU: About late '89 is when those applications were initially considered.

The redevelopment agreement called for very major redevelopment along the waterfront and, for a variety of reasons, that did not proceed as quickly as the City had called for in the redevelopment agreement. And coincidentally, about this same time -- 1989 -- the entire redevelopment agreement was subject to some very strong questions as far as the City was concerned. During that period, the City had to think hard about whether it was going to continue this project, given the lack of progress with this same developer.

About this same time, the entire project took a major turn from a largely residential and somewhat commercial project to a much more commercial project with educational entertainment pavilions as the major anchor for that project. During that period, the City addressed whether or not they would continue with this developer, but in a major new way; the major new way being with these changed uses in that area of the Redevelopment project along the waterfront.

I think I can truly say that during that period, there was a very substantial question about whether the developer's status would be continued for Ocean Mile Development Group. At this point, we have lived through that period, and the City has elected to stay with Ocean Mile Development Group with a new development scheme for the waterfront. Much has been talked about in the press regarding the modification agreement that was entered into, and you alluded to it this morning in your opening remarks. The City's original redevelopment agreement has been amended. That amendment was just formally signed on May 21, and the City has elected to stay with this developer, with a new development scheme for the foreseeable future with a set of clear deadlines for performance by the developer during that period. That performance is being closely monitored.

Now, getting back to the casino, in conjunction with the modification agreement, again there was a major commitment made by the developer to implement the Redevelopment Plan. Now I have to get back to what I started with; namely a Redevelopment Plan that calls for rehabilitation of the casino and power plant building, if they could be done from a structural and economic perspective, from a feasibility perspective. Hence, the modification agreement reflects what had been the understanding in the Redevelopment Plan, and that is that there would be a requirement to rehabilitate this facility as part of getting the designation of redeveloper for the whole project. There would be a requirement to proceed with rehabilitation, but only if that were feasible from an economic perspective.

As soon as we completed the execution of the modification agreement, work was underway at that time on the structural feasibility, and I believe the developer is prepared to address that structural feasibility issue, at least in some way, today at this meeting.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Now let me just make sure I have it straight: Under the redevelopment agreement now in force, the modified agreement, the redeveloper will conduct an economic feasibility study. It is his option that he is allowed, under the agreement, to conduct an economic feasibility study?

MS. BABINEAU: Actually, the focus at this point is more on structural feasibility because, from the perspective of economic feasibility, I think the City's position would be that that hurdle had been cleared already, in that there were uses that appeared to be feasible from an economic perspective earlier when the original feasibility study was done focusing on economics.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Let me back up then: What does the redeveloper then have to do under the agreement, via-a-via

the casino? One, it has to execute some type of-- isn't there some type of a lease agreement that has to be signed? What specifically is that?

MS. BABINEAU: Obviously, this is a City-owned facility, and the developer, in order to do the rehabilitation, will have to have a lease in place. We are, in fact, in the process right now of firming up that lease. However, the lease, to my way of thinking, is not the critical element; rather, the feasibility study is the critical element. The lease-- What we are doing with the lease is patterning what was done in conjunction with the Convention Hall lease. There is really not any major mystery about that document. We are in the process now of ironing out the details and making it work for the casino. It is my judgment that within the next week, or maybe two, we should be completed with that process.

However, to date, we have been consistent with that original Redevelopment Plan, in that the City has been taking the position that they want that rehabilitation done if it is feasible, and that feasibility analysis from a structural perspective is what is underway at the present time.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. So, under the redevelopment agreement, the lease-- There was a deadline which you are going to meet a little late, as far as getting the lease signed. Is that correct?

MS. BABINEAU: That's correct. Under the modification agreement, a deadline of 20 days had been set from that May 21 date. We are a little bit behind in conjunction with that. Frankly, it has turned out to be a little bit bigger project than anybody had realized. But it is following shortly after that deadline.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you anticipate that within a couple of weeks or so the lease will be signed.

MS. BABINEAU: Exactly.

MR. ADDEO: Just to correct one thing, Assemblyman, I believe your letter alluded to the fact that the lease had to be signed by May 21. That wasn't entirely accurate.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: It was 20 days from May 21.

MR. ADDEO: Twenty days from May 21.
ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, yeah, thanks. All right. So then, at that point-- So you have to get the lease signed. The lease has to be signed, and then the redevelopment-- So the only requirement after that--

MR. ADDEO: Excuse me, I think, to spell out the chronology-- The lease has to be signed, but I think at this point, as Ms. Babineau said, there is very little more that has to be done, since it is being patterned after the Convention Hall lease. I think the chronology is that the Council has to authorize entering into the agreement with Historic Preservation. Now, it is my understanding that the City was never able to enter into that agreement until just very recently. So there was nothing we could do up until this point anyway.

The City Council also, Wednesday evening, culminated several months of negotiations and some work on the part of Dave Roberts and Eric Cohen, who are here today, and entered into a contract -- or passed a resolution to enter into a contract with Eric Cohen. He is an architect who has been working with Dave Roberts. This is to allow the City to have the technology, or the study to take a second look at anything that Ocean Mile should discover in their feasibility study. So, we are trying to get the capability in-house to have our own look at the building.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you are going to do your own structural analysis?

MR. ADDEO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Pretty much. When do you think that will be done, Sam?

MR. ADDEO: Dave Roberts can probably speak to that. Dave or Eric could probably speak to that better.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, we'll get Dave up here, too. All right. So just to sum up, one last question I have -- just so I make sure I understand it perfectly clear-- Under the redevelopment agreement -- under the modified redevelopment agreement -- how can the redeveloper not do the restoration of the building? Under what circumstances can the redeveloper -- will that building not be restored?

MR. BABINEAU: If it is not feasible. Feasibility takes into consideration the condition of this building, which is in a state of fairly serious deterioration.

One thing I think the City would like to convey today in the context of this hearing is that this is a structure that is very much valued by the City, and that the City is very much appreciative of the assistance of Historic Preservation in, not only the short run, but in the long run, to the extent that but for that kind of assistance, it would be very difficult to make the numbers work. It would be very difficult to try to get a developer to come in and do what the City very much wants to be done. You know, there is a very big gap sometimes between wanting to preserve a historic structure like this, which is very much a part of the history of Abury Park, and then getting it done.

We are hoping that the nature of the uses that can be put in here will generate a sufficient amount of dollars in order to make the restoration worthwhile from an economic perspective. But those are the kinds of considerations that are in play, and, frankly, we really can't give a straight answer to that question in terms of what it is that might cause the house of cards to fall apart. But once we do get those specific numbers, we will be in the best position to determine whether that project is feasible from those two perspectives.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Sam, a real quick follow-up so we can get to the next person: You mentioned -- and I just want to reemphasize it-- You mentioned you are going to have basically a second opinion from the City. You are going to get in there and also do your economic feasibility?

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Structural.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Structural -- yeah, structural feasibility, not economic.

MR. ADDEO: Yeah. We are going to take a look at the building also, so that we have data. I think Dave Roberts can speak to what has been done already. The building has been looked at, so this decision isn't being made in a vacuum.

MR. FLOYD: I think it was our intent to make sure that the City's interests were being protected; that we do have our own engineer take a look at the building, and also to review the report that we will be getting from the developer.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: The question I just have to ask is: If your report shows that it is structurally feasible, and hence economically feasible, and the redeveloper showed differently-- what happens then if you are in disagreement?

MR. ADDEO: First of all, let me just say that practically our Planning Office, our Council, Ocean Mile's people who are working on this, have been working together, so this won't be a major surprise when-- You know, one day we won't pick up the phone and find out that the building can't be salvaged.

If, in fact, that is the case, then we will cross that bridge when we come to it because, quite frankly, this is what we have been faced with in Abury Park for the past decade, and all the wishing won't make it so. Wishing won't bring that building back. It has to be economically feasible. It has been difficult. But we feel we are working together fairly

well, and we are probably going to continue to, and we really don't want a lot of surprises. So, that is why we are keeping in contact with Ocean Mile.

MR. FLOYD: We're coming to that bridge very quickly, so. Probably within the next week or two we should be getting the engineering report from the redeveloper, and from preliminary reports it looks very positive at this point.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Good, okay. Thanks very much. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Can we hear next from Dave Roberts on the structural analysis -- the City one? For the record, your name and your title.

D A V I D R O B E R T S : Dave Roberts, Planning Director, City of Asbury Park.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAFRANO: Dave, we've heard a lot about the structural integrity, and it seems to me that the economic analysis of what can and what cannot be used in this facility is -- has been there, and I think people have made the commitment that, over time, there probably could be enough uses in that building to -- you know, to at least keep it alive. But now we are hearing, not a new thing, but it sounds to me that the structural integrity is a very, very important part. I think it is important for you, as Planning Director in Asbury Park -- and we will get into the redeveloper, I think, next on this structural question -- to, number one, give us a little bit more background on just what we are talking about structurally. What does "structural feasibility" mean? What has to be done in order for it to be structurally feasible to be corrected?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, basically, when we approached this problem of the building, originally we responded to the concern of the roof, which is, by visual observation, clearly the most critical, visible problem with the building. Without a roof,

without the ability to keep the elements out of the inside of the building, there is a clear process of deterioration that has been ongoing, probably, for the better part of the last 15 or 20 years.

What we did when we initially approached the opportunity of applying to Historic Trust was, we evaluated what would be the most critical aspect of the building to address with that application, since we were fairly certain that we could not do everything since there was a \$1.1 million cap on the match that the Trust could provide, and there was a clear signal in the application that -- not to apply for the total amount unless it was absolutely critical. We tried to come to an agreement as to what would be the most -- what was the most urgent thing that had to be addressed in order to keep the building from further deterioration.

Basically, because of the time constraints we had -- we had to file an application by, I believe, the end of January of 1990 -- we had originally asked the developer to do a structural analysis at that time, but we were not able to have that structural analysis done, in that the developer was not prepared to do it within the time frame that we had to submit the application. So I asked the City Engineer to do a visual inspection of the building and, based on that inspection, he basically agreed with our analysis that the roof system and the door system over both the arcade and the arena were the most critical things to address first. Based on his visual inspection, he felt that the caisson underpinning, the slab, and the wall systems, based on his knowledge of the history and the construction of the building, could probably be deferred until the overall rehabilitation of the building was done. When the big dollars were put into the building, those items could be addressed at that point, as long as not too long a period of time -- maybe a couple of years -- was to transpire between the

time we did the roof and the time we addressed the underside of the building.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Fine, okay. Can I stop you there for a second?

MR. ROBERTS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: We want to keep this kind of rolling along a little bit. So, the structural integrity we are talking about now is basically the roof. We are not-- Are we concerned about the pilings? Are we concerned about the structure of the whole facility? Or, are we just talking about roof and elements?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, basically, at this point we are considering all of those aspects. That is really the basic difference between the time we submitted the application and the present time. A year or more has transpired; almost a year-and-a-half has transpired since the time we submitted the application and the City Engineer did his original visual inspection, and the present time. Since that time, there has been continued deterioration on the underside of the building, enough so to cause the developer, who is basically putting up the money, to raise the question as to whether the wall and floor systems and underpinning of the building would be able to withstand the loading of a new roof. The basic concern -- and I will let the developers speak for themselves-- Their basic concern as it was expressed to me was that they wanted to make sure that when the new roof was put on, that the walls and underpinning could support it.

Our original scope of work, as we have been developing it over the last six to eight months, from the time that we found out that the Governor had signed the bill and we had started our initial explorations with the Trust as far as the scope of work, has really included a general stability analysis of the building with respect to the roof system. But, because of our initial assumption that the underpinning was stable,

there was not a specific inclusion in the scope of work of a detailed analysis of the structure, which would include the slabs and the wall systems.

Since that point in time when the developer raised the concern, the City decided that we, also, should explore those avenues because of the time period that has transpired since the original application. That is why we have expanded the scope of work to include those elements.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: All right. One final question real quickly: Is the structural feasibility being done in two sections -- the area that is the promenade behind us versus the area that used to be the old ice skating rink?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, my understanding -- and again, I will let Mr. Kirchgasser give you details on their structural analysis -- but my understanding is that the two are not going to be necessarily identical. Their structural analysis included the entire building and the power plant, I believe. Our structural stability analysis that our architect will conduct is specifically related to the arcade and the arena, which was included under the scope of work of our Trust agreement. We will look at all of those structural elements -- the promenade, the colons, the walls, the floors, etc. -- when he does that analysis. The developer will also be including those elements and possibly some other elements west of the arcade.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thanks very much, Dave.

Why don't we hear next from the representatives of Ocean Mills, if we could?

R O B E R T W. K I R C H G A S S E R: Robert Kirchgasser, Director of Development.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Could you spell that for the transcriber? I know they have a tough time. I have a tough time with your name, too -- spelling it.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: It's K-I-R-C-H-G-E-S-W-E-R.
ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: I just want to follow up a

little bit more on that structural integrity. It seems to me that this whole application is planned around structural integrity, structural feasibility. I just want to follow up a little bit more on Mr. Roberts, and maybe you can follow up on what exactly you are going to be doing to the building in order to determine, not if, but when and how it is going to be secured, weatherproofed.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: I can start from this particular case: The bottom line is that we have completed a structural analysis of the building, and are satisfied with the results that it is economically feasible to restore the building back to its original condition.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: When was that determination made? Is that a recent--

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: That report reached my hands on June 26, and has been going through an analysis process with the conceptual and economic feasibility that we have been working on for the use in the building itself.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So then your first report is that you think it is economically--

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Let me make sure. Your first report is that it is economically feasible to restore it?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: Yes. With the uses we are proposing for the internal portion of the building, the building will support the uses we want to put in it. It is structurally sound to the point where we can restore it within economic guidelines.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. What are the uses specifically?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: We have in the back portion that is arena, which was the old ice skating rink, the portion that is

east over the pilings-- We have proposed to put in there a live entertainment type complex that is themed in the New Orleans theme, the major music theme of jazz -- a jazz type entertainment complex. The center arcade area is to be developed at this time into a New Orleans type street -- a Bourbon Street type of facility -- complete with the retailing that goes in that area. The front 26,000 square feet of the building on ground level is to be developed into an 1890s type bar and saloon, and the carousel is to be restored back to its original condition.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: To follow, we've heard from businessmen on both sides of the aisle, so to speak, that the promenade is a major function, or a major factor in getting business traffic back and forth. If you determine that structurally it is feasible to restore the building, and economically it is feasible to restore the building, I guess the next question would be: With the \$750,000 that the State is going to send down your way, how soon, or how long-- How soon could we expect to begin to see some kind of work, especially on the promenade area, to open it up to pedestrian traffic?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: Our structural analysis tells us that that promenade area there is extremely dangerous at this point. Somewhere along the line, somebody cut out a series of support columns at both ends of the buildings. That glass that is hanging in that building right there (indicates) could fall at any time. If we took and opened that up at this time, we would not accept the liability of it. Someone is going to get hurt, and hurt bad.

I think our position at this time is, as soon as the State is willing to move forward with the grant, we are ready to move forward with the rehabilitation.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So be leally them, as soon as you can get the agreements -- the execution of, all the documents between the State and the City, you are ready to roll.

MR. KIRCHOESSNER: That is correct, sir. I have to add one point to that: I was brought on board on April 1 to take on this project. We have spent maximum efforts, and a full concept has been developed for the entire facilities, including the power plant, the casino building, and so on. We have everything from renderings to conceptual to feasibility documents, and we now know that it is economically acceptable to our town to bring it forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay.

MR. KIRCHOESSNER: It is part of the overall scheme, of course.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: As far as I am concerned, you've said it all. I think you cleared up a lot as far as all of us are concerned. When we get onto the State Historic Trust, I'm sure we will get some answers on how quickly we would be in a position to develop those documents that would allow for the participation.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: I have another question which is of great concern to me in terms of all this. I appreciate what you're saying. The only problem I can see is that there have been published reports that Mr. Carabatta has been considering selling his interest in the project. Is there anything you can comment on that, vis-a-vis if that is true, or how that would impact on the casino restoration?

MR. KIRCHOESSNER: I have been involved in projects of this scope now since 1963. This is not my first. We see, probably, 100 to 125 projects a year that move into the commercial entertainment/educational markets and disappear. In that particular marketplace, there is always somebody trying to make a quick buck. Mr. Carabatta is simply in this condition entertaining some equity investors in this project, regardless

of the rumors on the street. This is a very large, very expensive project to be built, with an awful lot of risk that has to come in here to be done!

I think a lot of people around do recognize that. Some other people do not. But when you are going to risk well over \$400 million in an area, you like to have at least some equity investors, and that is the process that is going on at the present time. There have been people making announcements and statements that I believe at this time could be considered somewhat inaccurate. Unfortunately, that sets everybody on edge when that happens.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you. Any other questions? ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you very much.

MR. KIRCHOESSNER: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Next we would like to hear from Harriet Hawkins, the Executive Director of the State Historic Trust. Harriet, for the record and for the edification of everyone here, since John and I are used to working for you, just please, your name, title, and exactly what the organization is and what its jurisdiction is and how it works. H A R R I E T H A W K I N S: Certainly. My name is Harriet Hawkins.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Could you speak up, too, Harriet, because that mike is not for--

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: That is for the tape.

MS. HAWKINS: It's for the transcript.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Yeah, so just speak up.

MS. HAWKINS: My name is Harriet Hawkins. I am Executive Director of the New Jersey Historic Trust. We are participants in this project to the extent that in the first round of grant awards from the Historic Preservation Bond Act, opened in 1990, the casino was granted an award -- a matching

grant award of \$750,000. Our scope of work will extend to the replacement of an existing nonhistoric roof over the casino area with a new standing seam metal roof to match the original roof profile configuration in appearance, repair or replacement of roof over the arcade; and restoration of doors and window walls on the north and south Boardwalk entrances to the arcade. As both Dave Roberts and Mr. Kirchgasner have pointed out, these are very critical to the continued stability of the building. That is the reason we gave the money for those elements.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Harrier, just to sort of make it complete, a little more about the Historic Trust. Why don't you describe the operation, the Board, the statutory basis for it, how you divvy up the money, and that type of thing?

MS. HAWKINS: Okay, sure. The Trust is an 11-member Board of Trustees, eight of whom are appointed by the Governor, three of whom serve ex officio. The organization was created in 1967 to promote public and private partnerships to advance preservation throughout the State. When the State enacted the first bond act to provide grants and loans for preservation projects, the Trust was named to administer the program. We are an agency within the Department of Environmental Protection.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Now, within the agency, you have professionals, architects, etc. who will review the project and its progress. Could you tell us about that and how that will work?

MS. HAWKINS: I should note just for the record that we are quite a small staff. Besides myself, there are three professionals who report directly to me. We also fund positions in the Office of New Jersey Heritage for the National Register and Review and Compliance.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: I'll make sure the shortage of staff is noted by the Vice-Chairman of the Appropriations Committee on my left. (Laughter)

MS. HAWKINS: We do not have a Contracts Administrator, but I have to compliment my staff for working very hard to try to get these-- We had 36 grants to get out from the first round. We are also in the middle of our second round, and we are well on the way to doing our contracts for the first round, in spite of having no Contracts Administrator. I have to compliment and acknowledge their hard work.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Good.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: This is a major league lobby fight now for a Contracts Administrator. In case everybody doesn't understand what is going on. (Laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, back to the casino project: What specifically has to happen next between the State, and I guess it would be the City? You don't really directly work with the redeveloper.

MS. HAWKINS: I should clarify that our grant is to the City of Asbury Park -- \$750,000. It is a matching grant. That means that each dollar that we give must be matched by the City. In this case, it is Ocean Mile Development Corporation which will be providing the match for the work. Since it is a reimbursement process, the grantee makes the first payments, and then they are reimbursed for the work that is under the scope of the contract.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, but what specifically now-- What agreements do you need between the City and the State, and what would be the time frame of those?

MS. HAWKINS: We have the contracts that are ready for signature. They need to receive final review by the City, but from our standpoint they are ready to be signed, returned to us, and then they will go through the concurrence and approval process.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you need then signatures from the City, and then you need the Trust Board to concur and approve?

MS. HAWKINS: Right, and our Attorney reviews; also the Finance Office in DEP, since they are the keepers of the Bond Fund. But it is an expedited concurrence process, compared to many contracts.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So that is all you need right now.

MS. HAWKINS: And then work would have to start. They would submit a reimbursement request. We have a quarterly reporting period. The grantees can submit requests every quarter for reimbursement, under the contract.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: I basically have a joint question--

MS. HAWKINS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: --to the developer and yourself, \$1.5 million -- \$750,000 from the State, \$750,000 from the developer-- Is that enough money to do the scope of work -- the restoration work that we need, the weatherproofing, at this point?

MS. HAWKINS: Dave? (to Mr. Roberts in audience; his response indiscernible)

Yeah. It is a much bigger project than that. This is simply what we thought were the really critical elements for the building.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So this is just to get the--

MS. HAWKINS: To stabilize it. It isn't a fact that--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: This is stabilization. This isn't full weatherproofing. This is stabilizing to prevent further decay.

MS. HAWKINS: It is just to get the roof on the building and repair the arcade wall, to keep the elements out.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: The scope of work that you drew out, though, in the contracts--

MS. HAWKINS: Is based on the application submitted by the City.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Will \$1.5 million cover that amount of money -- I mean, cover that amount of work?

MS. HAWKINS: Based on our costs-- We have worked very closely with Dave to cost it out, so we know what the work is projected to cost, unless there are substantial changes in the economy.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: (speaking from audience)

Basically, the amount of money that they have allocated--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Why don't we have you back up, because you have to go back to the microphone for the transcriber?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: The amount of money they have allocated and the scope of work they have defined-- I believe the moneys are adequate for that scope. The issue is that the scope of work that they define is not the total scope of what has to be done--

MS. HAWKINS: Right.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: --to this building to stabilize it.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: True, we know that.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Well, we understand that.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: That's true.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: We understand that.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: However, the scope of work that is going to be done-- Would it be accurate to say it will eliminate -- will stop the decline of the building? In other words, if the building keeps going as it is, it's gone. Do you expect the scope to at least hold in check--

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: The answer to that question is, "No."

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: The foundation under this particular building-- For those of you who are not acquainted totally with the building, this building is standing on wooden pilings. The concern I have on the building is the structural,

cracks that are appearing in the outer walls, and the floor condition -- the sanding out of the floor condition--from years of weather beaing from both the rains and punishment it has had. We are at a position where the entire floor inside of that casino, which is not in their scope of work, and the shoring up of the pilings underneath it, which is not in their scope of work, also have to be done.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you found that in addition then?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: That is correct.
ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But, Harriet, as far as the scope of work, though, from the application the purpose then is to put the roof back on and try to seal the building, at least from rain and those elements.

MS. HAWKINS: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But now you are additionally concerned with the structural integrity of the base of support of the building.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: Like any building, without a foundation you don't have a building.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Right. This will hopefully take care of the top, and you are concerned with the bottom.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: That is correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: In the scope of work they mentioned that the windows would be shored up -- the north and south window walls would be shored up under the scope of work. Would that enable you, then, to open up the promenade that you had mentioned was a safety hazard?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: Yeah. That area in there, according to the reports we are looking at now, is going to require that all that glass comes out of both ends of this building, and that a total new header system be put into that to support it, even the possibility of putting the column that was originally supporting that structure back in there.

Once that work has been done and the trusses are corrected inside -- there are some trusses that are in very bad diapical; they are less than 20% effective at this particular time -- and the roof structure is cleaned up on that arcade, then it can be opened, I believe. I wouldn't want to take any other position because there are things in there that can fall, very simply. If you open that up and create a wind tunnel again, I am afraid you are going to have trouble.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Just one last question while we've got you up there: Once the work begins in terms of the scope of work under the grant, basically the re-roofing and some of the stabilization of the walls, how long should that take? I mean, Harriet, how long do you expect to take? How long do you roughly expect it to take?

MS. HAWKINS: I would have to look at the schedule for the project. (pause while witness goes through her papers) Our time frame for the work under our grant is about 12 months.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, so about a year.

MS. HAWKINS: I mean, we're flexible--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But you constantly--

MS. HAWKINS: --but this is an estimate based on--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But you monitor it, every quarter, you said?

MS. HAWKINS: Yeah. The grantee reports to us every quarter. Plus, our staff is in continual conversation with many of our grantees, especially those who have work ongoing. They are kept up to speed with site reports and meeting minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. So, Mr. Kirchgessner, what is left, then? Ms. Babiniau told us that you are working on the lease agreement; that hopefully it will be done in a couple of weeks. You have completed your structural and economic feasibility study. Is there anything left besides the lease agreement between you and the City to get it going?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: I believe the only questions that still remain are the period of time it will take for them to conduct their feasibility study, and whether we can proceed forward before that is done.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: There is a 120-day period provided in the redeveloper agreement -- modification to the redeveloper agreement for that study to be done.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay, good. Thank you very much.

MS. HARKINS: Do you have any further questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: All right, Harriet, that's great. Thank you.

Next, we would like to hear-- We have the Mayor of Asbury Park, Thomas Smith, and City Councilman Dave Parrott. I thought maybe they could both come up and we could have some questions. And, Sam (addressed to Mr. Addo), could you-- Could we ask you some more questions -- you could come up with Dave and Tom -- so we could follow up?

A separate question, Sam, to follow up: The redeveloper says they are ready to go. The State says we are ready to go. What else do you see is left now before the construction starts, and do you need a feasibility study on the City's part if the redeveloper is determining that he is ready to go? Or anybody, that's fine.

MAYOR THOMAS B. SMITH: Our engineers will look at it and check the feasibility. What feasibility are you talking about -- economic or structural?

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Well, the redeveloper just testified that they have determined that the structural feasibility is such that you can justify it economically to go ahead and restore -- remove the building. It appears that the City is also now doing a feasibility study of its own -- a structural feasibility study. Do you need to complete your own

feasibility study now before you enter into the agreements with the State and the redeveloper?

MR. ADDO: I think the purpose of the City engaging in its own study -- and it's broader than just a structural feasibility study -- was to act as a safeguard on the restoration of that building. I really don't -- I think that -- Mr. Kirchgessner and the other people working on this set out with a very positive attitude. However, the City Council is normally cautious in these matters, and if, in fact, someone were to say that the building couldn't be restored, the City wanted an independent opinion.

Now, as I said before, we have been working very closely together. I think the question more directly would be, is there going to be a duplication of effort? I do not think there is going to be a duplication of effort. Mr. Roberts is working on a daily basis with Mr. Cohen. Mr. Cohen has spoken to Mr. Kirchgessner -- I mean, Mr. Roberts has spoken to Mr. Kirchgessner ongoing. It would be counterproductive if we all had the same goals to just keep re-inventing the wheel. That is not our intention.

Our resolution, that was passed by the City Council, is structured in such a way that if everything is going along towards the same common goal, then we won't get in each other's way.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Sam, what is left, and when would you be able to sign a contract with the State, as Harriet outlined, which they need to let the work to begin?

MR. ADDO: Well, she has the contracts today, and we'll sign them. We passed a resolution. They are -- in fact, we will add our voice to the lobbying effort to get them more staff, and we really appreciate everything they have done for us. As a matter of fact, there are other bills that we could pass to strengthen what they are doing. But, we are ready to sign them. You know, we passed a resolution already last Wednesday.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. So you are ready to sign the agreements, then, with the State, which means, then, that there-- where is Harriet sitting? (looking out into audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: Harriet is right there.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Harriet, which means then that once you sign the contracts with the State, and once the redeveloper begins work, the redeveloper can then be reimbursed?

MS. HANKINS: (speaking from audience) That is correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: That is correct, okay.

MS. HANKINS: Under the scope.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Under the scope, right. Did you bring the contracts today?

MS. HANKINS: Yeah, I-- (remainder of sentence indiscernible; no microphone)

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Perfect.

MAYOR SMITH: One thing is very important: As soon as possible, we would like to have this arcade open so people can pass through. It is very important to us, and to our beach concessionaires, too, to have that arcade open. At the present time it cannot be open because of the roof.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Councilman Parrott, do you have-- Since you guys are both there-- Since you gentlemen are both City fathers, although the form has been questioned of the other witnesses, I think it is appropriate that both of you make any statements you would like to make -- full statements about the project.

COUNCILMAN DAVID J. PARRETT, JR.: Well, in coming here this morning and hearing what Mr. Kirchgessner indicated, that they have concluded their study and the building, or the structure appears to be sound, or at least is economically sound so that they can move and they just need our approval, and they didn't know whether they could proceed, or move ahead without our having completed our

study-- I think, based on what he has indicated, that I am ready to cast my one vote to let him move ahead and get this project underway. The City taxpayers and this City need something more tangible than we have had over the years, so that people will know that we are about the business of rebuilding and revitalizing and bringing Asbury Park back to the jewel, or gem of the shore that it once was. This could be one of the catalysts. The Convention Hall certainly is much more of my concern, because once that is done we will bring back some of those shows -- other structures, other shows, and businesses that we once had.

The Mayor indicated, and I indicated at my last Council meeting, after calling and asking you gentlemen to give us some more input because my concern was that I wanted to see this promenade opened up-- I thought that moneys could be utilized to build a substructure in there wide enough that if these would be some material that might fall, it would be deflected and people could walk through there. We need that opened up before the 12-month period talked about. It should be opened up for next summer, if not by the end of this summer.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Dave, just for the record -- for the transcriber -- you have to give your name and title, and spell your last name, too.

COUNCILMAN PARRETT: It's David, middle initial "J," -- P-A-R-R-E-T-T -- Jr., Councilman, City of Asbury Park.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you very much, Dave. David does have some responsibility for this hearing. He and John and I have been talking a lot about the casino project and our concerns with it, and we thought this would be a good way to address them and get things moving, which seems to be happening now.

Mayor Smith, do you have a statement? Would you like to add anything?

MAJOR SMITH: No. The only thing is, we appreciate the support we are getting from the Heritage Trust. We also appreciate those people in the Legislature that passed a bill to allow us to get this money. It is very important to Asbury Park. As you can see, the Convention Hall and the casino are really the anchors. If we can rebuild the casino and get the Convention Hall on track, we will have something going for us in Asbury Park.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Any other questions, John?

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: I have nothing.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

COUNCILMAN PARBETT: Thank you for coming.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Dave, do you want to give some additional testimony? I'm sorry.

MR. ROBERTS: Yes, Dan. I just wanted to add one more point. It has to do with the continuity of events between the signing of the lease and the commencement of work.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Again, for the record--

MR. ROBERTS: Oh, yes. For the record, Dave Roberts,

City Planner, or Planning Director.

What we have done with the contract for professional services, and this is a fairly significant step, is to structure it in such a way that if the lease is signed while the structural feasibility of our professionals is taking place, the project can move right into the second phase, which would be the schematic design phase, which is when we determine what materials we are going to use, how it is going to be designed, etc., and then right into the construction document phase. So, there shouldn't be any interruption if the two things can go on independently.

What we decided to do was to basically jump start the process so we didn't have to wait for the lease to be signed before we did the structural feasibility analysis. But if the

lease is signed and the developer makes their commitment before our analysis is done, we are just going to move right into-- the architect will be authorized to move right into the design phase and the construction document phase. We expect that we could probably, within a several month period, be ready to go out to bid on construction. The critical thing at that point then will be the elements. If we have favorable weather this winter, we may be able to get the project finished by next summer, in which case--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So, once the -- and, Mr. Kirchgasser, if this is any different, please make sure it is consistent with your thinking -- City and the State-- The contracts are here. Apparently they will be signed today. It seems that the City is willing to sign them today. The lease, hopefully, will be signed within a couple of weeks. After the lease is signed and after the contract, is signed with the State, when should the actual work begin?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, we're hoping that we can get our professional team started within the next week or so.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: After that -- after the lease is signed?

MR. ROBERTS: No, within the next week: as of today I reviewed the contract with the City attorney yesterday. We made some modifications to it. The final draft has to be prepared. We can then sign the contract that the architect can get started on the structural analysis, and if the lease is signed during that period, he will be then authorized by the Council to proceed right into the next step. The resolution that authorized the contract specifically said that he will do the structural analysis and then he will only be authorized to proceed forward when there is a lease and a match from the redevelopment. So there is a mechanism built in that will allow him to continue right on through the contract.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: After the lease is signed, when would you expect the actual physical work to begin on the roof?

MR. ROBERTS: That's probably a question you might want to address to our architect, Mr. Cohen, because it has to do with the time period that he would need to make those documents available for bid.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Why don't we have Eric up? Is he here? (affirmative response) Mr. Kirchgesner, would you like to come up, too, and add to that also, if you would? Thanks. For the record, Eric, just your title and your name.

E R I C A L L E N C O H E N: It's Eric Allen Cohen, Architect/Planner.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Again, the question is very simple: After the lease is signed, after the contract is signed, when does the physical work begin on the building?

MR. COHEN: Well, we anticipate a schematic design effort and the normal scope of architectural services taking a few months. I think one thing that is important to point out is that after we complete the structural analysis, since the building has several anomalies to it in terms of its structural characteristics, we are going to be able to more carefully define the appropriate scope of work. So, we are going to need some flexibility in terms of making some decisions as far as the overall scope of work and the schedule.

But, we think it is consistent with the schedule that is outlined with the Trust that Dave has helped to establish: close to, perhaps 10 months to a year for the overall construction effort. We anticipate, if all of the funding is in place, to be able to go ahead within a few months to actually start the bidding process for construction documents. There are some decisions that can be made by the developer and/or the City if it is desirable to have a fast track process implemented, which would mean that we would be doing some of

the structural analysis and the in-depth preparation of structural documents and architectural documents for the trusses, and get that started; perhaps release a bid package for that, and then deal with some of the access issues and some of the ornamental metal fixtures, which are also part of the scope of work at a time later on, but going on simultaneously in the process.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So, Eric, it is about a 12-month process from start to finish.

MR. COHEN: At this juncture, that would be our best estimate.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: And, how much of that is physical work and how much of that is schematics and bids and that type of thing? In other words, how long will it actually take once you start work on the building to complete the scope of the work? Three months, four months, two months, six months?

MR. COHEN: Again, if there are no great hidden secrets -- and we are aware of a lot of the more severe conditions in the building-- When you start to probe a little bit more carefully and start to actually get into the process, there could be some factors that protract the process somewhat, but we anticipate that once we are completed with the design and document effort, which again would be a several-month effort, to be able to get the building under construction and completed within a time frame of nine to twelve months.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So, the construction is nine months. I just wonder about how much the preliminary--

MR. COHEN: Well, you have to understand something. The timing is essential when we begin the project. We are going to run into a winter weather season, so we could have some significant storms that may be an encumbrance to the construction.

ASEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay. Assuming, as best you can tell-- in other words, we are going to leave here today

under the impression that there is going to be a contract signed between the State and the City. We are leaving here today under the impression that they -- as Mr. Kirchgessner has testified -- have determined that it can be done economically, and they are ready to go. We are all going to leave here with that impression. There has been three-quarters of a million dollars of State funds appropriated.

I would like to know, and I know John would like to know, and the public would like to know -- everyone is curious -- when will we see a crane, or whatever, repairing the roof, or a workman on the side working on the building, assuming the lease is signed in two weeks or so?

MR. COHEN: Well, in fairness to the process, I think once we can--

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Your best guess, and I understand there could be contingencies.

MR. COHEN: Well, the contingency is based on the structural analysis. I think it is important, also, to point out one of the other factors involved in having our team do it: We are also seeking appropriate structural solutions that will be both cost-effective and within the spirit of the historic context of the building. We want to be able to make elective decisions. Because of the level of structural degradation that exists, we are very much concerned with the overall budget and how all of those pieces fit together. That is why, as have referred to, the mechanisms in the contract for pausing effectively. At the end of structural analysis, we will make a determination on the scope of the construction schedule and the budget for the structural components. If the funds are in place, we will then proceed to the next phase, which is the schematic design effort, which will give us a better overall feeling of where we stand with the quantification of a preliminary cost estimate to make sure we are on target with all of our project goals, as well as any adjustments we have to make to the construction schedule.

If all of that goes favorably within -- at this juncture-- I would say perhaps four months -- three to four months -- would be a reasonable time to complete all of the documentation, have the project ready to go to bid, and then, of course, depending on how long the bidding process is, construction can start immediately thereafter.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you would say, give or take, without any other contingencies, in three or four months you can let the bids go, and after the bids are let and agreed on, the construction could begin.

MR. COHEN: Without any surprises, I think that is fair at this time.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: So you could be talking four or five months or so. Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAPIANO: I think in a nutshell -- and this is probably the last thing I will say -- I don't want to be sitting here on July 9 next year doing the same harangue. We brought everybody together. Everybody is here. The State has made an investment. The City has put themselves up. The City said they want to do it. The developer said they want to do it. It is economically feasible and structurally feasible. I just don't want this thing to get mixed down in red tape. I don't want to be here a year from today. I hope this thing is open for next summer. That should be our goal.

MR. COHEN: But we all share the goal collectively. I think one other thing that is important to point out is, we have done a lot of preliminary work in terms of assessing the condition, just to get a good feeling on the concerns and the scope of the Trust and the City.

We all want to see this building saved and ultimately have Ocean Mile -- give Ocean Mile a suitable envelope for them to continue and achieve all of their goals as far as the redevelopment is concerned. But, as part of the process -- and this is an important issue! to focus on -- there are also

historic factors that have to be considered. During this design and review period -- and we're talking about a very ambitious schedule to complete some of these goals -- the Trust still has to have input for review and compliance of the standards set forth by the Secretary of Interior, which really mandates the type of solutions that we suggest for appropriate remedies for the building.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: The schedule, Mr. Kirchgessner-- Is that pretty much-- would you pretty much agree with that in terms of when the work can begin, in your estimation?

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: I believe that Eric has pretty well outlined the processes that we will be waiting on to happen.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Okay.

MR. KIRCHGESSNER: I don't believe there is any way around it due to a granting situation -- a historical grant. We would be happier if we were moving much faster, because we would like to start it as one of the milestones on this project. Basically, I have to agree with his timetable.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Any other questions, John?

ASSEMBLYMAN VILLAFIANO: I'm done.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you very much.

I would just like to wrap it up. I think we've-- Harrier, don't go anywhere, and City officials don't go anywhere, and we can get the contract signed.

The main point here, and one of the reasons John and I are so involved with this, is-- You know, we remember what happened to the St. James and Mayfair Theaters. They were basically victimized by a wrecking ball. We don't want to see that happen to the casino. That is why John and I are so aggressive on this. We will continue the oversight. This Committee does have jurisdiction over historic preservation, and the bill actually, that appropriated the money, went through this Committee, as well as through John's

Appropriations Committee. We pledge to all of you that we will continue our oversight of this project.

Today we seem to have made some progress. However, in my questioning about when the work will actually begin-- That basically underscores my concern that I want to see the work physically started more than anything else. So we will just keep going on it. We will be watching when the cranes come out, when the workmen come out, and we hope you can keep to that schedule.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

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