

Town of Stone Harbor  
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail  
Intersection of County Roads Nos. 619 and 629  
Stone Harbor  
Cape May County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1046

HABS  
NJ  
5-STHAR  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF STONE HARBOR

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NJ  
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Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, Intersection of County Road Nos. 619 and 629, Seven Mile Beach, Stone Harbor, Cape May County, New Jersey.

Significance: Stone Harbor is representative of the resorts which developed along the Cape May barrier islands as a result of the arrival of the West Jersey and Seashore railroad, in the 1880s.

History: Prior to the settlement of Stone Harbor, the southern portion of Seven Mile Beach was known as Leaming's Beach, acquired by Aaron Leaming in 1722. Early on, whalers leased the island from Leaming and operated a seasonal whaling station. In 1887, after a series of transactions, the land was acquired by the Seven Mile Beach Company, along with Avalon to the north. Other than facilitate the laying of railroad tracks, the Seven Mile Beach Company did little development to the Stone Harbor area. In 1891, a portion of the original property, extending from 80th Street to 94th Street, was sold to the Stone Harbor Improvement Company. By the next year, the company completed the Hotel Abbottsford Inn, and a series of cottages with picturesque names, "Brook's Cottage, the Senhart and the Oakes", lined 82nd and 83rd streets.<sup>1</sup> Though the first passenger train arrived in 1892, only a few more cottages were built. When the South Jersey Realty Company purchased the land in 1907, evidence of a previous unsuccessful development effort remained.

An abandoned excursion house and a deserted hotel, together with the arrival and departure of an occasional train at the tenantless little railroad station buried away among the picturesque sandhills of 'Second Avenue' served only to accentuate the fact that the tide of human interest had reached low water mark on Seven Mile Beach in the summer of 1907.<sup>2</sup>

Immediate urban improvements and a special financing plan resulted in the realty company's early success. After remodeling the Abbottsford Inn and establishing a commercial center, South Jersey began leveling dunes and draining basins.

The 1910s seemed to finally bring the boom for which Stone Harbor had been waiting. The first schoolhouse, and several churches were erected, suggesting the presence of a significant permanent population. By 1911, Stone Harbor Automobile Club advertised the opening of Ocean Parkway and motoring along the beach.<sup>3</sup> Though the jaunty auto pictured in the advertisement was carried on a freight car, a bridge into Cape May Court House, Stone Harbor Boulevard, encouraged cross-town

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<sup>1</sup> Pupils of the Stone Harbor School. A History of Stone Harbor, New Jersey (n.p., 1926), 9.

<sup>2</sup> A History of Stone Harbor, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cathy Johnson, "The History and Establishment of Stone Harbor," (The Cape May County Magazine of History and Genealogy vol. 8, no. 5, 1985), 355.

voyages to the mainland. The police and fire departments were established in 1912 and Stone Harbor was legally incorporated as a borough in 1914. A boardwalk which stretched along the beach for one and one-half miles was constructed in 1917, but was never rebuilt after a 1944 hurricane washed it away.

Today, Stone Harbor is known as one of the more elite resorts along the Jersey Shore. The commercial section, primarily boutiques and specialty stores, is a small-scale, village-like integration of the old and the new. Without boardwalk or amusements, the town enjoys the quieter pleasures offered by undisturbed beach and marshlands. The Wetlands Institute, located on Stone Harbor boulevard, encourages the preservation and study of such natural resources.

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Sources: Johnson, Cathy. "The History and Establishment of Stone Harbor." The Cape May County Magazine of History and Genealogy. 8 (1985): 353-54.

Pupils of the Stone Harbor School. A History of Stone Harbor, New Jersey. n.p., 1926.

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1991.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.