United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name  Liberty Hotel

other names/site number  Liberty Apartment Hotel, Liberty Apartments

2. Location

street & number  1519 Baltic Avenue

city or town  Atlantic City

state  New Jersey code NJ county Atlantic code 001 zip code 08401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide X locally. X See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official>Title  Date

Deputy SHPO  Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets  X does not meet the National Register criteria. X See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official>Title  Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

X determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

X determined not eligible for the National Register.

X removed from the National Register.

X other, (explain:)  

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action
# Liberty Hotel

## Atlantic County, NJ

### 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)</th>
<th>Category of Property (Check only one box)</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x private</td>
<td>x building(s)</td>
<td>Contributing: 1 Noncontributing: 0 buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ public-local</td>
<td>□ district</td>
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<td>□ public-State</td>
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**Name of related multiple property listing**
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register</th>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: CONCRETE, BRICK
- walls: BRICK, STONE, STUCCO
- roof: RUBBER, ASPHALT
- other: WOOD, GLASS, METAL

**Narrative Description**
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
### Liberty Hotel

#### Name of Property

#### County and State

Atlantic County, NJ

### 8 Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.</td>
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<td>D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.</td>
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#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ETHNIC HERITAGE (African American)
- ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

#### Period of Significance

ca. 1928–1969

#### Significant Dates


### Criteria considerations

(mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>removed from its original location.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural Affiliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>a birthplace or grave.</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>a cemetery.</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>a reconstructed building, object or structure.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>a commemorative property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Architect/Builder


### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey 
  #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record 
  #

#### Primary location of additional data

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<tr>
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<td>State Historic Preservation Office</td>
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<td>Other State agency</td>
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<td>Federal agency</td>
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<td>Local government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>

Name of repository:
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property  Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
(See continuation sheet)

Verbal Boundary Description
See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification
See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  Corinne Engelbert, Carolyn S. Barry
organization  VHB  date  March-June 2019
street & number  101 Walnut Street  telephone  617-607-2631
city or town  Watertown  state  MA  zip code  02472

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets
Maps
A  USGS map  (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A  Sketch map  for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name
street & number

city or town

state

zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 et seq.)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this from to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
The Liberty Hotel is a five-story, brick, Italian Renaissance Revival-style building, built ca. 1928. The building occupies a quarter-acre parcel in the Northside neighborhood of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, New Jersey. The property, measuring 75 feet wide and 150 feet deep, is located on the north side of Baltic Avenue, mid-block between North Kentucky Avenue (west) and North New York Avenue (east) and extends north to the former right-of-way of Hobson Street, a narrow alley, in an urban neighborhood. The Liberty Hotel underwent interior renovations in the 1950s and exterior and interior renovations around 1979 when it was converted to an apartment building.

Site
The Liberty Hotel is set close to Baltic Avenue and abuts the rear edge of the sidewalk (Photo 1). Metal fencing runs along most of the east, north (rear), and west property lines. A narrow strip of lawn with ornamental shrubs lines the metal fence on the east elevation and a concrete parking area abuts the building at the rear elevation. A concrete courtyard is located between the two rear wings.

Exterior
The Liberty Hotel is a five-story, U-shaped, brick building that faces south onto Baltic Avenue. The south elevation (façade) is seven bays at the first story and six bays at the upper stories (Photo 1). The main entrance is recessed in the center bay of the first story under a metal and wood canopy (Photo 2) with a replacement metal sign reading “Liberty Apartments.” The underside of the canopy is coffered with projecting florets in alternating coffers. Fluorescent light fixtures are mounted to either side of the central coffers (Photo 3). The entrance is emphasized by three cast-stone arches, which encompass the entry and windows flanking the main entrance (Photo 4). The arches are embellished with dentil courses, bead-and-reel molding, and cartouches and volutes below the spring line. A 12-light, metal arched transom is located in the arch above the door. The entrance is flanked by two original, arched, 36-light metal windows with beveled glass. These arched window openings exhibit bracketed wood sills and stuccoed panels below the windows. A stuccoed finish covers the masonry of the main entrance on the façade. Above the first story, the building is accented by two, four-story, rectangular projecting bays positioned in the second and fifth bays. The projecting bays extend above the main roof height and are topped by pyramidal roof caps and accented by brick pediments between the fourth and fifth stories. The brick pediments incorporate header courses and oval disks. The building’s horizontal emphasis is derived from a simple stucco watertable at the first story, a corbel table, which incorporates a dentil course, egg-and-dart molding, modillions, and diamond panels, between the fourth and fifth stories, and a denticulated corbeled brick cornice. Fenestration consists of regularly-spaced, rectangular-shaped openings with sills of continuous brick headers and fitted with one-over-one, double-hung, replacement aluminum or vinyl sash windows.

The east and west elevations (Photo 5) are unornamented and are covered with stucco and scored, except for the upper levels of the first bay on the east elevation where the brick has been painted (Photo 6). The east elevation

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1 The Liberty Hotel appears neither on a 1924 map of Atlantic City nor in the 1927 City Directory. The hotel is first listed in the 1928 City Directory.
features two projecting bays with no window openings in the first and third bays. They are separated by a narrow bay consisting of window openings with brick sills on the upper stories. The remainder of the east elevation has regularly-spaced, rectangular window openings with simple, slightly-projecting surrounds and replacement sash. A three-bay-wide utility penthouse clad with metal siding occupies the sixth story on the east side of the building. The west elevation is six bays wide and the front portion of the first story abuts an adjacent building (Photo 8). An exterior entrance is located at the first floor in the second bay. A one-bay-wide utility penthouse clad in metal siding occupies the sixth story on the west side.

Rear Elevation
Two long wings with a narrow courtyard between them occupy the rear of the building (Photo 7). The east side of the north (rear) elevation features a parged brick exterior and one bay of rectangular-shaped window openings with brick sills. The east side of the wall has a projecting concrete-block stair tower slightly narrower and lower than the width and height of the wing. This stair tower was added ca. 1979 when the building was converted to apartments. Two exterior entrances are located at the first story of the east and west wings. The narrow, one-bay, north elevation of the inner courtyard encloses an interior, squared concrete-block stair tower, also added ca. 1979. The stair tower features four rectangular window openings with brick sills and concrete lintels and an exterior entrance at the first story. The east and west elevations of the interior courtyard features painted brick exteriors with rectangular window openings with brick sills. An exterior entrance is located at the first story in the final bay of the west courtyard elevation.

The building has a flat roof with an ethylene propylene diene terpolymer (EPDF) roofing system, a recent replacement for the original tar and gravel. The roof features two towers with pyramidal, asphalt shingle roofs that rise from the façade’s projecting bays (Photo 1). Masonry and aluminum coping runs the length of the east and west elevation roof lines. The remaining edges are covered in metal coping. A stair tower rises from the south end of the interior courtyard. Two one-story penthouses, mentioned earlier, one on the east and west wing, rise from the roofline. They are clad in metal siding and feature metal doors. A small utility room is located on the southern portion of the roof. It is clad in metal siding and accessed via a metal door. Vent fans, vent pipes, and several drains are dotted throughout the roof. Access to the roof is via a door in the stair tower at the front portion of the building.

Most of the building’s exterior alterations likely occurred during the ca. 1979 renovations. It appears that as part of the renovations, the building’s exterior was painted and metal grilles associated with packaged terminal air conditioners were installed below many of the windows. In addition, a visual analysis suggests that the windows were replaced with aluminum sash and casing at this time; however, the introduction of vinyl sash throughout the building indicates that many of the windows have since been replaced. A historic image of the building from 1947, indicates that the building’s original windows likely consisted of paired one-over-one sash with center mullions (Figure 6).

Interior
The interior of the building was renovated in the 1950s to upgrade the hotel guest room and in about 1979 when it was converted to an apartment building. By the addition of the two stair towers, it is not known how much of the hotel’s layout was changed. Presently, the building contains 67 one-bedroom residential units. A large lobby is located at the south side and provides access to the interior from the entrance vestibule (Photo 9). A management office is located in the southeast corner of the building at the first floor and an unfinished basement is located beneath the east wing of the building. Vertical access between the first and fifth floors is provided by three runs of ca. 1979 stairs and an elevator. One set of stairs is located in the front of the building near the main entrance (Photo 15). Two sets of stairs are located in the back of the building, servicing the east and west wings. On each floor, the east wing features a double-loaded corridor, and the west wing features a single-loaded corridor on the west side of the wing (Photo 13). A double-loaded corridor at the front of the building connects the two wings on the second through fifth floors. Most of the building’s interior finishes likely date to the 1950s or ca. 1979 (Photo 14). The lobby was gutted during the 1979 renovations and is now characterized by non-historic finishes including a lowered drywall and acoustic ceiling tile (ACT) ceiling, contemporary light fixtures, vinyl floors, gypsum wall board (GWB) walls, wood window sills, and wood baseboards (Photo 9). A ramp and two ca. 1979 flights of stairs provide access to the raised first-floor residential level. The ramp and stairs feature pipe metal handrails. Non-historic metal doors separate the lobby from the residential corridors. Additional non-historic metal doors provide access to the management office, a bathroom, a laundry room, a stairwell, and a short corridor that provides exterior access to the courtyard. Mailboxes are recessed into the wall adjacent to the management office. Finishes within the management office include vinyl tile flooring, GWB walls, and ACT ceilings.

All three of the stairs within the building appear to have been installed in 1969 and feature a combination of concrete block and GWB walls as well as metal handrails, newel posts, bannisters, and steps (Photo 15). Contemporary light fixtures are affixed to the walls. Metal non-historic fire doors separate the stairwells from the corridors.

Finishes in the interior corridors include ACT ceilings, wood window sills, contemporary light fixtures, GWB walls, wood baseboards, and a combination of vinyl and epoxy flooring over hardwood (Photo 13). Non-historic pipe metal handrails are affixed to one side of each corridor. Unit entries are replacement metal doors with metal frames (Photo 14). Interior finishes within the individual units typically consist of GWB walls with wood baseboards, wood window sills, drywall ceilings, and contemporary light fixtures. The flooring consists of vinyl tile or laminate wood floors in kitchens (Photo 10), vinyl tile or vinyl sheet floors in the bathrooms, and carpet in the bedrooms. Flooring in living rooms (Photo 11) and corridors varies and includes carpet, laminate wood, and vinyl tile. Most of the bathrooms have ACT ceilings (Photo 12). Interior doors in the units are flush hollow-core wood or replacement six-panel wood doors. Most closets feature vinyl accordion doors. Kitchens and bathrooms feature contemporary fixtures and finishes.

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Statement of Integrity
Overall the building retains a modest state of preservation. The most significant changes have been in the lobby, where all historic finishes and fabric have been removed, and the space is now dominated by the three-flight, handicapped ramp that extends along three sides of the space. Steel and glass fire doors have been placed in the north wall to provide entrance to the residential block. The hallways were altered when the building was converted to apartments by the installation of handrails on the outer walls by probable installation of dropped, acoustic tile ceilings and installation of boxed fluorescent light fixtures (Photo 13). Individual units were altered by the installation of kitchenettes (Photo 10) and the covering of wall surfaces with gypsum board (Photo 11). In addition, as mentioned, steel fire stairs were installed in 1979 (Photo 15) to meet fire code requirements.
Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph
The Liberty Hotel was an important place of accommodation for African American tourists in Atlantic City during decades of segregation in the early and mid-twentieth century. The Liberty Hotel was constructed ca. 1928 in the black “Northside” neighborhood during the heyday of Atlantic City’s resort tourism. It provided modern, comfortable lodgings, food, and entertainment to African American visitors and residents when nearly all of the city’s other hotels were closed to black lodgers. The Liberty Hotel was regularly and prominently listed in popular African American-focused travel guides and newspapers of the time, including The Negro Motorist Green Book, Ebony Magazine, and the Baltimore Afro-American. It was a popular choice of lodging for prominent African American entertainers and public-figures, such as boxer Sugar Ray Robinson, singer Mahalia Jackson, entrepreneur Billboard Jackson, and locally significant individuals like Claiborn Morris Cain. The Liberty Hotel possesses Criterion A significance at the local level in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Entertainment and Recreation. Its period of significance extends from ca. 1928 to ca. 1969, the National Register’s 50-year cutoff date. The building ceased to operate as a hotel in 1979 and was converted to residential apartment use.

Criterion A – Ethnic Heritage (African American) & Entertainment / Recreation
Early twentieth century Atlantic City was characterized by segregation and intense racism and discrimination; the Liberty Hotel was one of a small number of establishments that provided accommodation for African American tourists. Atlantic City’s identity as one of the most popular seasonal resorts on the East Coast began in the late nineteenth century and reached a peak in the early twentieth century. The city’s world-famous Boardwalk, beaches, luxury hotels, and nightlife scene provided endless opportunities for relaxation and entertainment for individuals and families alike. Atlantic City grew in parallel with the Great Migration. As African Americans moved out of the South in large numbers many found employment in the city’s tourist establishments. The number of hotels, motels, resorts, restaurants, and entertainment venues that catered to African American tourists who flocked to the city’s Boardwalk and beaches grew in tandem with the city’s African American population. Establishments that provided lodging, food, and amusements to African American tourists were located in the segregated Northside neighborhood.

In a city that experienced great loss of its urban fabric in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century, the Liberty Hotel is among the very few surviving examples of a mid-sized hotel that catered to African American tourists. It is “one of the few relics of Atlantic City’s old Northside community that remains extant today1.” Nearly all of the hotel’s competitors have been demolished. The Liberty Hotel remains a symbol of the once-thriving Northside neighborhood and the city’s African American tourist industry. Until recently, this history has largely been overlooked in favor of tourist establishments on the city’s Southside. Despite major changes, the Liberty Hotel retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

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Little is known about the construction and early history of the Liberty Hotel. Directory research indicates that the Liberty Hotel was completed by 1928 and map, deed, and newspaper research supports this approximate date. Mueller’s 1924 atlas of Absecon Island indicates that construction of the building could not have predated 1924. At that time, two rows of five three-story, wood-frame buildings occupied the land the future Liberty Hotel would be built on. About half of the buildings fronted Baltic Avenue, and the other half faced a small dead-end street known as Hobson Street, located between Baltic and Brooklyn avenues (then known as City Avenue). The area bounded by Mediterranean, North Kentuck, Baltic, and North New York avenues appears to have been almost entirely residential; however, a number of industrial buildings were located in the vicinity. The Atlantic City Electric Company, the Seashore Supply Company, and Abbotts Alderny Dairy were all located within a block of the future site of the Liberty Hotel. In addition, the railroad tracks of West New Jersey Seashore Railroad, formerly the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, were located less than one block away, terminating in a large railyard between Arctic, New York, Atlantic, and South Carolina avenues. The neighborhood was still in its infancy and much undeveloped land was located just to the north.

Upon its completion, around 1928, the Liberty Hotel was known as the Liberty Apartments and then the Liberty Apartment Hotel (It was not until the 1930s that the building began to be referred to as the Liberty Hotel.) The 1928 Atlantic City business directory classified the building as an apartment building, one of over 300 in Atlantic City. Research did not yield information about the identity of the original architect and builder; however, a newspaper article from February 29, 1928 noted that the Liberty Hotel Association, “owners of a large apartment structure at Baltic and New York avenues,” was going into receivership. The association’s board members were Patrick Doran, president; Joseph A. Paxson, vice president; Ralph Weloff, secretary; and Enoch “Nucky” L. Johnson, treasurer. All four men were white and lived in neighborhoods outside of the Northside. Patrick Doran was the chief of police. Ralph Weloff (b.1892) was a café proprietor and active in the real estate industry. The most prominent of the board members was Enoch “Nucky” L. Johnson (1883-1968). Johnson was a politician, businessman, and racketeer. He was the boss of the
political machine that controlled Atlantic City from 1911 until his imprisonment in 1941. In 1928, he lived at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, one of Atlantic City’s most luxurious establishments.

By the end of 1928, Liberty Apartments had been acquired by the Northside Apartment Hotel, Inc. through a sheriff’s sale. The board members were Thomas Taylor, Charles Tilton, and William Zimmer. All three men were white Americans and lived outside of the Northside. Taylor (b. 1889) was the president and appears to have also worked as salesman and manager of a plumbing supply company. In 1930, he lived with his family at 201 North Lancaster Avenue in Margate City. Charles Tilton (b.1880) was vice president of the Liberty Hotel. Census and phone directory records indicate his primary occupation was as a builder and contractor. In 1930, he was living with his family at 201 Ventnor Avenue in Ventnor City. William Zimmer (1888-1979) was the secretary of the Liberty Hotel. He had a background in banking and worked as a bank teller and was later the secretary of a bond and mortgage company. He lived with his wife, Louise, at 60 North Harrisburg Avenue in the Lower Chelsea neighborhood of Atlantic City. The three men likely oversaw the management of the hotel until the building was sold in 1936.

For most of its early history, the Liberty Hotel appears to have functioned as an apartment hotel. Apartment, or residential, hotels, were one of the most popular types of multiple dwellings in United States during the first few decades of the twentieth century. A hybrid of an apartment and a hotel, they offered greater privacy than rooming houses and superior accommodations for long-term residents than did transient hotels. Like hotels, they typically had stately lobbies and grand dining rooms. They also employed doormen, bellman, receptionists, and maids, which eliminated the need for servants. This made apartment hotels economical for residents, allowing residents to lead a more luxurious lifestyle than could be independently maintained. This was especially true for seasonal residents. Apartment hotels appealed to a broad segment of the population. Some catered to the wealthy by offering opulent suites with private baths. At the lower end, they typically featured single rooms and were marketed to young men and women beginning their careers. Numerous apartment hotels fell somewhere in between, featuring one- or two-bedroom apartments and appealing to working
individuals and childless couples. Apartment hotels first emerged in major cities such as New York, in the 1880s. The model was replicated in cities throughout the United States, the prevalence of apartment hotels declined in the mid-twentieth century as suburban homeownership gained popularity.

On January 8, 1936, the Ember Company, Inc. acquired the land from the Northside Apartment Hotel, Inc. at a sheriff’s sale. The transaction was the result of a lawsuit in the Atlantic Circuit Court, which established that the Ember Company was owed $4,749.75 in damages. William Zimmer, white, appears to have been the primary individual associated with the Ember Company. The 1938 and 1946 City Directory list Zimmer as the manager of the Liberty Hotel, as it had then become known as, and the 1940 U.S. Census describes him as a trustee of an apartment hotel (likely the Liberty Hotel) with an income of $4,000.

Advertisements for the Liberty Hotel from the mid-twentieth century indicate that the apartment hotel consisted of 141 guest rooms with showers and baths. As with many other establishments in Atlantic City, the Liberty Hotel was associated with a restaurant to better accommodate patrons. The partner restaurant to Liberty Hotel was called The Green Parrot and was located next door at 1517 Baltic Avenue (Figure 2). The restaurant was known for its “great southern cooking.” It is unclear if the restaurant was constructed at the same time as the hotel, but it existed at least before World War II. The 1949 Sanborn Map depicts a one-three-story restaurant at 1517 Baltic Avenue immediately adjacent on the east side of the Liberty Hotel. At that time, the restaurant was separated from the hotel by a narrow alleyway.

In 1947, Ember Company, Inc. sold the hotel the property to the Liberty Hotel Company, incorporated in the same year. The company appears to have been owned and operated by Reuben Levy (1904-1964) and Anna Levy (1911-2003). Reuben was born in Pennsylvania, and his wife, Anna (1911-2003), was born in New Jersey. Atlantic City directories from the 1920s and 1930s indicate that Reuben worked as the manager of a drug store and later as the President of Kenapac Pharmacy Inc. Upon purchasing the Liberty Hotel in 1947, it appears that Levy switched careers. He was listed as the general manager of the hotel in the 1954 and 1957 city directories. They were both white and they appeared to have lived a comfortable middle-class life, first at 4712 Therese Place in the Lower Chelsea neighborhood of Atlantic City and later at 118 N. Frontenac Ave in Margate City.

26 Harris, “Barbizon Hotel for Women,” 3.
29 Atlantic County Registry of Deeds, Northside Apartment Hotel, Inc. to Ember Company.
30 William Zimmer was the signatory on the 1947 deed.
33 “The Green Parrot.”
35 Atlantic County Registry of Deeds, Ember Company Inc. to The Liberty Hotel Company, December 12, 1947, bk. 1369, p. 240.
37 United State Census Bureau, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940.
Under the ownership of the Levys, the Liberty Hotel was modernized and creative marketing solutions were used to keep business growing. In 1953–1954, in preparation for Atlantic City’s Centennial Celebration, the Liberty Hotel underwent a major renovation to attract and accommodate the large crowds expected that summer. The renovation cost thousands of dollars and included the installation of multiple antennas for televisions in some rooms. At that time, the hotel had 141 rooms with private baths and showers, two elevators, and maid and bellman service.\(^{40}\) In the summer of 1955, the Liberty Hotel introduced a new cost saving plan for visitors.\(^{41}\) This was a “buy more, save more” type of plan where guests would only pay for six days if they booked rooms for a week and pay for 12 days if they booked for two weeks. The hotel also had a “honeymoon plan” in place to attract guests. The hotel’s new cost-saving plans and special packages for guests made it a popular place for convention attendees to stay. At that time, Atlantic City was the most popular city in the United States for hosting conventions, and the Atlantic City Convention Hall had a seating capacity for 50,000 people.\(^{42}\) The Liberty Hotel was known for its “exceptional service and choice location” near the city center, beach and boardwalk, and popular restaurants and nightclubs.\(^{43}\)

The Levys maintained ownership of the Liberty Hotel until ca. 1979 when it was sold and converted to residential apartments. Reuben Levy died in 1964.\(^{44}\) The significant decline of tourism to Atlantic City and the changing nature of the neighborhood likely led to the permanent closure of the Liberty Hotel in the 1970s (see section below on Ebbs and Flows of Atlantic City’s Tourism Industry [Early to Mid-Twentieth Century] and Redlining and Urban Renewal in Atlantic City and the Northside). Anna Levy sold the property in 1979.\(^{45}\)

**Employees of the Liberty Hotel**

Little is known about the employees of the Liberty Hotel during its approximately fifty-year existence; however, like the hotel’s visitors and residents, it appears they were mostly African American. The 1930 U.S. Census listed 11 individuals, all African American, living and working at the hotel. These employees ranged from 21–39 years of age and were born in Ohio; Maryland; Pennsylvania; Georgia; Washington D. C.; South Carolina; and the West Indies. Most were unmarried. They included a clerk, a houseman, five bellman, and three maids. It appears that the manager of the hotel was Florence Gross, a 28-year-old African American woman who paid $50 a month in rent.

In 1942, the President of the Green Parrot, the associated restaurant of the Liberty Hotel, was Mrs. Clara Barnes. Clara Barnes (b. 1895) and her husband, Henry Barnes (b.1894), were both African American. They were originally from South Carolina but had relocated to Atlantic City by 1930.\(^{46}\) At that time, according to the 1930 population census, they resided at 121 North New York Avenue (not extant), less than 500 feet from the Liberty Hotel. They were both employed as bellmen at hotels. The name of the hotel(s) they worked is unknown, but given the proximity, it is possible it was the Liberty Hotel. A few years later, in 1938, the Barneses resided at 1517 Baltic Avenue, the location of the Green Parrot, where Clara was employed.\(^{47}\) In the 1941 city directory the Barneses continued to reside at the same address, and Henry was employed as an elevator operator, possibly at the Liberty Hotel.\(^{48}\)

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\(^{40}\) “Liberty Hotel Prepared for Atlantic City’s Big Centennial Year Crowd,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 19 June 1954.

\(^{41}\) *Washington Afro-American*. “Liberty Hotel introduces plan to reduce room costs,” 9 August 1955.

\(^{42}\) *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol. 1957-1968.


\(^{46}\) United States Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*.

\(^{47}\) *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol. 1938-39.

\(^{48}\) *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol. 1941 (New York: R. L. Polk, 1941).
During the mid-twentieth century, between at least 1950–1957, the resident manager of the hotel was Walter Huff (1895–1967), an African American born in Georgia. He had a long career at the Liberty Hotel and was one of the eleven individuals working and living in the hotel in 1930. At that time, he was employed as a bellman.49

Visitors and Residents of the Liberty Hotel
From its opening ca. 1928 through its closure in about 1979, the Liberty Hotel appears to have served both long-term residents and vacationers. The most locally significant known resident of the Liberty Hotel was Claiborn Morris Cain (1883–1962). According to Johnson’s book *The Northside*, Cain lived in a penthouse at the Liberty Hotel in the mid-1930s. He was an important figure within the Northside African American neighborhood through the early and mid-twentieth century.51 His contributions to the neighborhood included his 25 years of work as Executive Director of the Northside YMCA. After working to secure newly available federal funding for a low-income apartment complex in the Northside that would be named the Stanley S. Holmes Village (immediately adjacent to the Liberty Hotel. In 1937, Cain was selected to manage the complex, the first federally-funded housing project in the State of New Jersey. In 1936, prior to the completion of the apartments, he resigned his position as Executive Director of the YMCA and began living in the Liberty Hotel. Author Nelson Johnson referred to Cain as “a giant of his generation” and noted that “few people in Atlantic City history left a mark comparable.”52 In 1941, Cain was awarded the city’s Citizen Award by the Mayor for his civic work.53

The 1940 U.S. Census listed five African American families residing at 1519 Baltic Avenue. All were paying between $40 and $46 dollars per month in rent. They included Charles P. Harris, a hotel bellman, who lived with his wife, Florence, and five children; Clara Brown, a 31-year-old woman; Allen Richard, a secretary at City Hall and his brother George Allen, a teacher; Spencer Copening, a hotel waiter, who lived with his brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister, Edna, who was a domestic servant for a private family; and Edward Huntley, an editor of a music company. The monthly income of the residents ranged from $200 to $1,145. All were born in Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, or New Jersey.54 In 1950, residents included Roscoe Howell, a utilityman for Atlantic City’s auditorium and convention hall; Louise Tucker, a waitress at Lew’s Bar; Sharpless E. Currey, a city fire fighter; Mary E. Thompson, an insurance agent for Progressive Life Insurance Co.; and Betty Goddard, a cafeteria worker at the YWCA.55

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the Liberty Hotel was a favored lodging for prominent African American travelers to Atlantic City. In 1952, boxer Sugar Ray Robinson (1921–1989) and entrepreneur Billboard Jackson (1878–1960) stayed at the Liberty Hotel.56 In 1955, Mahalia Jackson (1911–1972), a prominent American gospel singer, stayed at the hotel while she was in town to sing at the Atlantic City High School. 57 Golfers stayed at the Liberty Hotel, as they were allotted golf privileges at the Apex Golf Club, and The golf club hosted an amateur golf tournament in collaboration with the Liberty Hotel.58

49 United States Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930.*
50 Nelson Johnson, *The Northside: African Americans and the Creation of Atlantic City* (Medford, New Jersey: Plexus, 2010), chap. 5, Kindle.51 While most often referred to as C. Morris Cain, Cain’s first name is spelled as both Claiborn or Claiborne in various resources.
53 Thomas D. Taggart Jr. to C. M. Cain, December 5, 1941, African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey, Atlantic City, NJ.
54 U.S. Census 1940.
55 U.S. Census 1950.
The hotel was also a popular choice for travelers in town for conventions during the mid-twentieth century. In the summer of 1954, members of the Club Estrolita of Philadelphia and the Ten Pals Social Club of Baltimore stayed at the Liberty Hotel while in town for a convention. That summer the hotel hosted guests from Washington D.C., Baltimore, Atlanta, Detroit, Indianapolis; New York City and Albany, New York; and Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee; among other cities.

**Atlantic City’s Development as a Tourist Destination**

From its initial development in the nineteenth century, Atlantic City saw immense and rapid growth due to its proximity to major urban centers and its inexpensive and convenient train service. Its beautiful seashore and cooling ocean breezes provided an accessible respite from the hot summers in nearby cities. People built summer houses and entrepreneurs established lodging, dining, entertainment and amusement venues for people of all ages, tastes and incomes.

By 1870, over 1,000 full-time residents lived in Atlantic City, with the population ballooning in the summertime as tourists flocked to the city. The first boardwalk in the United States was built in Atlantic City, opening to the public on June 26, 1870. Eight-feet wide by one-mile long and standing approximately one foot above the sand, the first Boardwalk allowed people to experience the amenities of the resort and proximity to the seashore without having to deal with some of the inconveniences posed by sand. The Boardwalk was a success and eventually became the hub of commerce, entertainment and innovation within the city.

**Formation of the Northside Neighborhood**

The population of Atlantic City during the last two decades of the nineteenth century was predominantly white. By 1896, Atlantic City’s population grew to over 22,000 residents, many of whom moved to the city to work for the growing tourism industry in restaurants, hotels, boarding houses and entertainment venues. The increase in residents led to a significant increase in the development of what would eventually become the Northside neighborhood, an area of the city roughly bounded by Atlantic Avenue on the south, Arkansas Avenue and the bay on the west, Abescon Boulevard to the north, and Connecticut Avenue to the east (Figure 1).

By the early 20th century, the demography of the city was rapidly changing. The population of Atlantic City had more than doubled from the 1890s to over 46,000 people in 1910. Many of the residents who moved to Atlantic City in the early twentieth century were African Americans who came from elsewhere in New Jersey, the southern states, and the Caribbean. Most came to work in tourist industry jobs, which was considered an attractive alternative to working as a domestic servant. By 1915, the city’s black population was over 11,000, comprising approximately 27% of the city’s population.
permanent residents and 95% of the hotel workforce. The percentage of African American residents was then more than five times larger than any other northern city. As the City’s African American population increased, a policy of segregation emerged, resulting in changes to the city’s neighborhood demographics. Blacks were only welcome on the Southside to work, bathe on a restricted section of the beach, and walk on the Boardwalk. In 1880, 70% of black households had white neighbors; by 1915 that number had fallen to 20%. Barred from most recreational facilities, restaurants, and hotels in the Southside, black residents established a thriving neighborhood known as Northside. Arctic Avenue, stretching between Virginia Avenue and Arkansas Avenue, was the commercial backbone of the Northside neighborhood, featuring shopping, hotels, boarding houses, and churches. Many of the businesses were owned by African Americans who catered to the City’s Northside residents, as well as black tourists, who were barred from the Boardwalk and stayed in hotels and boardinghouses located on the Northside.

The heyday of Atlantic City as a resort city was during the 1920s. A large part of its popularity was driven by the fact that Prohibition, which began in 1920, was essentially unenforced in Atlantic City. Recognizing that alcohol was essential for the tourist-based economy of the resort, local authorities generally turned a blind eye on alcohol sales and consumption, and rumrunners were easily able to deliver shipments of the contraband to nearby beaches and docks. The Boardwalk was the hub of Atlantic City’s cultural and performance sector during the 1920s, with stunts, shows, big band music, parades and pageants providing entertainment to enthusiastic visitors. In 1929, just months before the stock market crashed, the New York Times described the Atlantic City Boardwalk as “A magnificent proof of America’s newly found wealth and leisure. It is an iridescent bubble on the surface of our fabulous prosperity.”

Indeed, the 1929 city directory referred to Atlantic City as “the world’s premier pleasure and health resort. No resort compares with it in popularity, comfort, pleasure and health-giving qualities the four seasons through.” During this period of prosperity, Atlantic City’s population peaked at approximately 67,609 people living full-time in the city between the years of 1926 and 1929. There were 1,200 hotels and boardinghouses throughout the City that could provide lodgings for 300,000 tourists, and the most popular tourist activity, the Boardwalk, featured six piers filled with various recreation and amusement opportunities.

71 Johnson, *The Northside*, chap. 5.
73 Johnson, “A Plantation by the Sea.”
76 Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, chap. 3.
77 Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, chap. 3.
80 *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol.1929.
82 *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol.1929.
The stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression led to a decline in tourism to Atlantic City as families did not have the means to vacation. Atlantic City actually suffered more economically during the Great Depression than most other cities because of the lack of diversification of its economy. Compounding Atlantic City’s decline in tourism in the 1930s was the lifting of Prohibition in 1933, which diminished the city’s intrigue as a place to buy and consume illegal alcohol. By the mid-1930s, Atlantic City’s 75-year reign as one of the country’s premier seaside resorts had come to an end.

The increased competition for seasonal vacation destinations meant that Atlantic City’s tourism continued to suffer in the post-World War II period. As airfare became more affordable many people were choosing to visit more distant locales, such as Florida or the Caribbean.

However, despite the general decline of seasonal tourism in Atlantic City, the location still remained a popular destination for tourists throughout the mid-twentieth century due to its beaches and its convention traffic. Indeed, during the mid-1950s, Atlantic City played host to more than 10 million visitors annually. In 1957, the City had 31,000 hotel rooms and about 12,000 other rooms in either cottages or boardinghouses.

The general decline in tourism in the twentieth century coincided with the national movement towards greater suburbanization and the implementation of urban renewal and redlining, all of which had devastating implications for the Northside neighborhood. City officials believed that “renewal” would help usher in a new era of tourism to Atlantic City as they removed perceived slums and, in some cases, constructed modern replacement buildings (see Section below on Redlining and Urban Renewal in Atlantic City and the Northside.)

African American Tourism in Atlantic City
The popularity of Atlantic City as a seasonal resort destination for African American tourists paralleled the growth of the city’s black population, which doubled between 1920 and 1950. By 1900, the beaches and hotels in Atlantic City had become segregated with African American tourists barred from whites-only businesses and beaches. The two biggest attractions for Atlantic City tourists were the famous Boardwalk and the beaches. However, Jim Crow-type practices enacted around the turn of the twentieth century ensured that African American beach-goers would not have the same opportunities for sunning and swimming as their white counterparts. The growing African American middle-class that vacationed in Atlantic City frequented the segregated Missouri Avenue Beach, more popularly known as “Chicken Bone Beach.” This beach was popular with both tourists and the working-class families who were often employed in the city’s tourist industry. In addition to traditional beach-going leisure activities, many black entrepreneurs and entertainers who frequently stayed and performed in Atlantic City would put on concerts or skits at the beach to entertain guests. These performers included entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. (1925–1990), musician Louis Jordon (1908–1975), comedian Moms Mabley (1894–1975), as well as showgirls from Club Harlem, a night club on Kentucky Avenue founded by Lewis “Pops” Williams that emerged as the city’s chief venue for African American jazz performers. Other popular African American celebrities and political figures who were known to frequent Chicken Bone Beach included Martin Luther King

84 “Atlantic City: Shaped by Corruption and Gambling.”
87 Polk’s Atlantic City Directory, vol. 1957-58.
88 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
Black-owned lodgings and restaurants, largely located in the Northside neighborhood, and blacks-only beaches provided opportunities for both black entrepreneurs of Atlantic City and African American tourists. These businesses and places provided respite for African American tourists from all over the country as they were barred from the often grander whites-only destinations near the Boardwalk. Black tourists typically stayed in black-owned, wood-frame boardinghouses, apartment hotels, or small hotels. Within the segregated Northside neighborhood, the social life on Arctic Avenue was often described as just as active as that found on Atlantic Avenue, the dividing line for the Northside neighborhood.

Despite efforts to keep blacks separate, the total number of African American tourists was still important to white politicians and city leaders as their dollars helped support Atlantic City. Money was funneled to the Atlantic City Board of Trade and the Northside Chamber of Commerce from white City leaders for advertisements in African American-focused newspapers. Advertisements catered to African American churches, community centers, social organizations, and honeymooners all over the East Coast.

*The Liberty Hotel in African American Tourist Guides, Magazines, and Newspapers*

Important to the early-twentieth-century tourism in Atlantic City, especially the Northside, were *The Negro Motorist Green Books* (aka *The Green Books*). These were travel guides for African American tourists published nationally by Victor Hugo Green (1892-1960), a former mail carrier from New York City, from 1936 to 1966. The guidebooks were necessary during the Jim Crow era, a time when travel for African Americans was inconvenient at best and dangerous at worst. They identified locations, businesses, and services throughout the country that were friendly and welcoming to African Americans, and gradually introduced international establishments. They were published until just after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, and other factors. The annual publication first contained information on Atlantic City establishment in 1938 and included a listing for the Liberty Hotel as one of nine hotels listed in Atlantic City. The other hotels included were the Attucks at 134 North North Carolina Avenue, Bay State at 334 North Tennessee Avenue, Randell Hotel at 1601 Arctic Avenue, Russell Hotel at 23 N. Kentucky Avenue, Hotel Ridley at 1806 Arctic Avenue, Scott Hotel at 15 Illinois Ave., Swan at 136 Virginia Ave., and Wright’s Hotel at 1792 Arctic Avenue. Of these, only the Bay State and Liberty hotels remain standing.

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92 Ronald J. Stephens, “Chicken Bone Beach.”
95 Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, chap. 3.
96 Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, chap. 3.
Subsequent *Green Books* also identified black-friendly tourist homes, restaurants, taverns, and night clubs within Atlantic City. The 1949 edition of the *Green Books* listed twelve hotels for African American tourists in the city. Liberty Hotel was the first on the list and the only one bolded and in large font. The other hotels listed in 1949 were largely similar to those in 1938, with the exception of Russel and Scott, which were no longer shown, and the addition of the Lincoln Hotel at 911 North Indiana Avenue, Luxon at 601 North Ohio Avenue, Apex Rest at 1801 Ontario Avenue, Villanova at 1124 Drexel Avenue, and Burton’s at 10 North Delaware Avenue. An advertisement for the hotel in the 1955 *Green Book* boasted that a stay at the Liberty Hotel came with a private bath, telephone, golf course, radio or television, outdoor parking, and bathing and beach. The Liberty Hotel was consistently listed in *Green Books* until at least 1962.

In addition to being featured in the *Green Books*, the Liberty Hotel was regularly advertised in *Ebony* Magazine through the 1960s and up until at least 1971. *Ebony* was established by John H. Johnson (1918–2005) in 1945 in Chicago as a monthly magazine for an African American audience. The magazine’s cover photograph featured popular and prominent African Americans and, inside, advertisements sold products with pitches geared towards a similar audience. The magazine included a “Vacation Guide” section that highlighted various hotels, motels, campgrounds and resorts at popular seasonal destinations all over the country, as well as contact information for travel agencies that would be helpful in trip planning. Atlantic City was a popular featured destination and Liberty Hotel was among the few lodgings in the city advertised in the magazine.

The first advertisement featured in the *Ebony Annual Vacation Guide* from June 1960 was from the Atlantic City Board of Trade Convention Bureau. The advertisement sold Atlantic City as a perfect destination for any type of tourist, “whether you seek sophisticated excitement of glamorous night life, or languorous relaxation on our beautiful beach and boardwalk.” That year’s publication advertised six resort lodgings in New Jersey, four of which were located in Atlantic City, including Newsome’s Guest Houses at 126 North Indiana Avenue (extant) and 303 North Indiana Avenue, the Park Plaza Motel (not extant) at the intersection of Illinois Avenue and Bacharach, the Jamaica Motel (not extant) at the east side of the intersection of North Carolina Avenue and Adriatic Avenue, and, finally, the Liberty Hotel on Baltic Avenue. The Liberty Hotel was advertised as “The Honeymoon Haven” and also perfect for tourists, vacationers, and convention attendees. It came recommended by the Greyhound Bus Company. The various amenities of Liberty Hotel included its central location with two parking lots, room service to the newly renovated guest rooms, golf privileges, and proximity to the famous Harlem Club.

The June 1965 publication of *Ebony* prominently highlighted Atlantic City as a vacation destination at the beginning of the Vacation Guide section. The advertisement, created by the Atlantic City Board of Trade Convention Bureau, pitched the city to families with “good clean fun for everyone” and plenty of activities on the beach and Boardwalk for both adults and children. The Vacation Guide from that year listed six lodging options in Atlantic City for vacationers. These were the same as what was listed in the 1960 article with the addition of Sprigg’s Hotel at 18 North Delaware Avenue and the

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104 “Ebony’s Annual Vacation Guide,” *Ebony*, June 1965, 183,
Gem Hotel at 505 Pacific Avenue. That year there was no stand-alone advertisement for the Liberty Hotel. The lodging was only listed in the table for New Jersey establishments where it was characterized as having “comfortable accommodations.”

The June 1971 edition of Ebony, featured baseball greats Hank Aaron (b. 1934) and Willie Mays (b. 1931) on the cover, and still featured Atlantic City as a great vacation spot for African American tourists. However, the Atlantic City Board of Trade advertisement in the Annual Vacation Guide was much smaller and less prominently located on the bottom of the page as compared with earlier years. The advertisement simply defined Atlantic City as “Vacation-Land, USA” with its “Famous Boardwalk” and “Beautiful Beaches.” The only Atlantic City resort lodgings promoted that year were the Park Plaza and the Liberty Hotel. That year, the Liberty Hotel promoted a “Summer Vacation ‘Bonanza,’” with a discount on a four-day stay and admission to a number of entertainment options, including Steel Pier, Ocean World, Sky Tower, Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum, and the Million Dollar Pier amusement rides.

**Hotels, Motels, and Other Seasonal Lodgings for African American Tourists**

From the start, the Liberty Hotel was one of the most popular lodgings for African American tourists in Atlantic City and was well known to provide for all tourists needs. In 1941, it was listed as one of more than 200 Atlantic City hotels in the city directory. An advertisement from the summer of 1942, described the Liberty Hotel as “the most modern and best equipped hotel for colored people in the East.” Guests were catered by top-notch service from maids and bellmen. Telephones were available for guests and room-service meals were catered by the adjacent Green Parrot restaurant. The building had a prime location near transportation and amusements. In addition to these amenities, the Liberty Hotel offered parking. The associated parking may have been located east of the hotel on the same block at 1515 Baltic Avenue. The parking structure is depicted on the 1949 Sanborn Map as a one-story building that could accommodate 30 cars.

Other comparable hotels for African American tourists to Atlantic City at that time were Wright’s Hotel (not extant) at 1702 Arctic Avenue, the Hotel Ridley (not extant) at 1806 Arctic Avenue, and the Lincoln Hotel (not extant) at 911 North Indiana Avenue. Wright’s Hotel was constructed during an earlier wave of tourist-focused development in Atlantic City, but was for several decades in the twentieth century a prominent example of lodgings focused on African American tourists. The building was constructed by Nathaniel Webb in the 1850s and was one of the earliest dwellings constructed after the City was incorporated. The building predated the early twentieth century transition of the North Side from a predominantly white to a predominately African American neighborhood. The building was owned by Calanthe Ryan for a number of years and known as Ryan’s Cottage. In 1913, it was sold to Solomon and Mary Wright who operated a boarding house, called Wright’s Hotel, for seasonal black workers. During the resort heyday of the early twentieth

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111 “Liberty Hotel,” Afro-American.
112 “Liberty Hotel,” Baltimore Afro-American, 30 May 1942.
114 Kennedy and Waltzer, Monopoly: The Story Behind the Word’s Best-Selling Game, 29; Liberty Hotel,” Afro-American.
century, tourists staying at Wright’s Hotel would frequent popular restaurants and clubs in the busy and vibrant Northside neighborhood. An advertisement from the 1930s described Wright’s Hotel as “First Class Accommodations.” The hotel remained open into the mid-twentieth century, but eventually closed in 1972 and was demolished in 1973.

The Hotel Ridley was established in 1900 by local activist and entrepreneur Maggie Ridley and her husband, Alonzo. The Ridleys established a number of affordable and safe boardinghouses for African American workers in Atlantic City throughout the late nineteenth century in an effort to overcome the stigmatism of the Northside slums and to protect African Americans from Jim Crow-era practices. After it opened around the turn-of-the-century, the Hotel Ridley became popular with African American middle-class families and it was often advertised in the Green Books. According to historic aerial images, the building was demolished sometime after 1970 and the property is currently a parking lot.

For decades, Wright’s Hotel (not extant) and the Hotel Ridley (not extant) advertised to and housed similar clientele to that of the Liberty Hotel. The three hotels were even located near one another in the Northside. A postcard of Wright’s Hotel and Restaurant depict the building in 1926, just before the construction of Liberty Hotel. At that time, the building was a three-story, five-bay wide, tan brick building with a wrap-around open and enclosed porch (Figure 2). This was a fairly low-rise building when compared to the mid-rise, five-story Liberty Hotel. Similarly, a historic image of the Hotel Ridley depicts a four-story, two-bay-wide, clapboard building with a café on the ground floor. Both buildings were part of an earlier wave of tourist establishments in the city and could not offer the same modern amenities as the 141-room Liberty Hotel.

The hotel that was most similar to Liberty was the Lincoln Hotel (not extant) at 911 North Indiana Avenue. The Lincoln Hotel Apartments was a five-story ca.1930 building with over 200 guest rooms and apartments occupying a large site just north of Atlantic Avenue (Figure 3). The building featured a dance studio, grocery store, and other amenities for short- and long-term guests.

By the mid-twentieth century, modern automobile-centric motels were being added to the city’s landscape and were advertised alongside the Liberty Hotel. The 1957 city directory described Atlantic City as “a city of hotels and motels, both large and small.” That year, there were over 50 motels available to visitors. Some of the motels specifically advertised to an African American audience included the Park Plaza Motel (not extant) at the intersection of Illinois Avenue and Bacharach and the Jamaica Motel (not extant) at the east side of the intersection of North Carolina Avenue and Adriatic Avenue.

The policies associated with redlining and urban renewal were developed during the Great Depression and expanded significantly in the post-World War II period. In 1933, as part of the New Deal programs and policies, passed under President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945), a housing department was established in the Public Works Administration (PWA). The National Housing Act of 1934, which established the Federal Housing Administration, was a New Deal policy that addressed the need for affordable housing.

118 Historic Aerials.
120 James Bean, “Remembering Atlantic City’s Black History.”
121 *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol. 1957-58.
122 *Polk’s Atlantic City Directory*, vol. 1957-58.
Program, designed to control the costs of mortgages and lower the rate of foreclosures by federally insuring housing loans that met federal standards. The program resulted in the practice of redlining. Federally insured housing loans were not accessible to neighborhoods that banks, along with the aid of federal agencies, had determined were undesirable and too much of a risk to supply and insure loans to. Many of these neighborhoods were in urban cores and were historically black neighborhoods. The Northside, which comprised a significant portion of Atlantic City, was among them (Figure 1).124

The earliest federal funding to create public housing also emerged out of the New Deal and the Public Works Administration (PWA). Atlantic City was the first in the State of New Jersey to take advantage of federal funding available for new housing under the PWA and within the immediate vicinity of Liberty Hotel.125 In May 1937, the S. Holmes Village was dedicated. The complex, constructed with federal funding under the PWA, cost $1,700,000.126

Subsequent laws, including the Housing Acts of 1949, 1954, and 1956, allowed cities to engage in neighborhood clearance by identifying areas as blighted in order to build public housing for both families and the elderly. These laws also established the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (1965), which had the goal of revitalizing inner cities by providing low-interest loans.127

Urban renewal did not have the impact of reversing the trend of economic decline of the city as officials anticipated it would. Many residents of the city left for the suburbs due to a continued lack of economic opportunity, an increase in crime, and a reduction in housing in some areas in the wake of urban renewal projects. Many of the city’s black residents moved inland to Pleasantville.128 By the late 1960s, the surviving portion of the former Camden and Atlantic City Railroad was scaled back to a commuter service as a result of widespread reliance on the automobile and the city’s declining economy.129

Recent History (Late Twentieth – Early Twenty-First Century)

It is likely that the city and neighborhood’s mid-twentieth century economic decline led to the closure of the Liberty Hotel in the 1970s. In 1979, the Liberty Hotel Company sold three parcels to Sencit-Liberty Associates.130 The parcels consisted of the 150x75-foot parcel upon which the Liberty Hotel stood, a vacant small irregularly-shaped parcel at 1521 Hobson Street, directly north of the hotel, and a vacant lot at present day 226 North New York Avenue. The parent company, Sencit Co. of Elizabeth, New Jersey, acquired four Northside buildings with the intent of converting them to federally subsidized apartments. This four properties were renamed as Liberty Apartments (previously the Liberty Hotel), Disston Apartments at 1711 Arctic Avenue, and Schoolhouse Apartments, which included two buildings at 61 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. All four buildings underwent extensive renovations. At the Liberty Hotel, these renovations included improvements to the mechanical systems and construction of two stair towers. The headline of a

125 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
126 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
127 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
128 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
129 Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams, chap. 3.
1983 advertisement for Liberty Apartments in the *Courier-Post* stated, “Seniors-Come & Move to Atlantic City.”\(^{131}\) In addition to senior citizens, the building advertised itself for handicapped and disabled individuals. Tenants would pay 30% of their adjusted income in rent.\(^{132}\)

\(^{131}\)“Seniors Come & Move to Atlantic City,” *Courier-Post* (Camden, NJ), 16 February, 1983.

\(^{132}\)“Seniors Come & Move to Atlantic City.”
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Latitude / Longitude Coordinates

1. Lat. 39.364541 Long. -74.432411
2. Lat. 39.364636 Long. -74.432175
3. Lat. 39.364271 Long. -74.431931
4. Lat. 39.364176 Long. -74.432176

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary includes the entirety of Atlantic City Block 402, Lot 30.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is limited to the current tax parcel upon which the Liberty Hotel stands. There appear to have only been minor adjustments made to the size of the parcel since the hotel was constructed around 1928. In 1936, the size of the parcel was 75 feet wide and 155 feet deep. Today the parcel is 75 feet wide by 150 feet deep.
Name of Property: Liberty Hotel
City or Vicinity: Atlantic City
County: Atlantic    State: New Jersey
Photographer: Corinne Engelbert and Marcio Tavares
Dates: February 6, 2019 and May 30, 2019
Digital files are stored at VHB, Watertown, Massachusetts

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0001.jpg. Façade and east elevation, photographer facing northwest.
2 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0002.jpg. Main entrance, photographer facing northeast.
3 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0003.jpg. Detail of canopy at main entrance, photographer facing north.
4 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0004.jpg. Detail of main entrance surround, photographer facing north.
5 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0005.jpg. Front (south) and side (east) elevations, photographer facing northwest.
6 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0006.jpg. Side (east) elevation, photographer facing west.
7 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0007.jpg. Side (east) and rear (north) elevations, photographer facing southwest.
8 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0008.jpg. Side (west) elevation, photographer facing southwest.
9 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0009.jpg. West side of the lobby, photographer facing west.
10 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0010.jpg. Kitchen in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s kitchens. Photographer facing southeast.
11 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0011.jpg. Living room in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s living rooms. Photographer facing southwest.
12 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0012.jpg. Bedroom in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s bedrooms. Photographer facing southeast.
13 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0013.jpg. Second floor corridor in west wing. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s corridors. Photographer facing south.
14 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0014.jpg. Entrance to Unit 307. Photo is representative of unit entrances. Photographer facing southwest.
15 of 15. NJ_Atlantic County_Liberty Hotel_0015.jpg. Center stair from third floor landing. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s stair towers. Photographer facing northeast.
Figure 1. Map of the Northside Neighborhood, n.d. (Source: African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey, Atlantic City, NH).
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Figure 2. Wright’s Hotel and Restaurant, 1926. (Source: Atlantic City Free Public Library, accessed February 2019, [https://www.acmuseum.org/?view=article&id=190:ryan-cottage-wright-s-hotel&catid=10012](https://www.acmuseum.org/?view=article&id=190:ryan-cottage-wright-s-hotel&catid=10012)).
Figure 5. 1958 postcard of the Liberty Hotel. (Source: eBay.)
Figure 6. Historic image of Liberty Hotel, ca.1947. (Source: Atlantic City Board of Trade Booklet, 1947, Atlantic City Public Library, Atlantic City, New Jersey.)
Figure 7. 1942 image from inside the Green Parrot restaurant. (Source: “The Green Parrot,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 May 1942.)
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Current Photographs

Photo 1. Façade and east elevation, photographer facing northwest.
Photo 2. Main entrance, photographer facing northeast.
Photo 3. Detail of canopy at main entrance, photographer facing north.

Photo 4. Detail of main entrance surround, photographer facing north.
Photo 5. Front (south) and side (east) elevations, photographer facing northwest.

Photo 6. Side (east) elevation, photographer facing west.
Photo 7. Side (east) and rear (north) elevations, photographer facing southwest.
Photo 8. Side (west) elevation, photographer facing southwest.

Photo 9. West side of the lobby, photographer facing west.
Photo 10. Kitchen in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s kitchens. Photographer facing southeast.

Photo 11. Living room in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s living rooms. Photographer facing southwest.
Photo 12. Bedroom in Unit 104. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s bedrooms. Photographer facing southeast.
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Photo 13. Second floor corridor in west wing. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s corridors. Photographer facing south.
Photo 14. Entrance to Unit 307. Photo is representative of unit entrances. Photographer facing southwest.
Photo 15. Center stair from third floor landing. Photo is representative of finishes within the building’s stair towers. Photographer facing northeast.