

Town of Pleasantville
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
County Road 585, North of U.S. Highway 322
Pleasantville
Atlantic County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1040

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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 PLEASANTVILLE

HABS No. NJ-1040

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Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, County Road 585, North of U.S. Highway 322, Pleasantville, Atlantic County, New Jersey.

Significance: The present town of Pleasantville, due east of Atlantic City, encompasses the former communities of Risleyville, Mt. Pleasant and Smith's Landing. The communities are representative of the early eighteenth-century bay towns which grew up along Shore Road, the main transportation artery prior to the railroad. Today, Pleasantville, has been subsumed by the urban build-up leading to Atlantic City.

History: The present town of Pleasantville, due east of Atlantic City, grew up along the old Shore Road. It encompasses the former communities of Risleyville, Mt. Pleasant and Smith's Landing. Each of the three communities had a scattering of houses, schools, churches and cemeteries by 1872.¹ By 1877, the towns had consolidated and the Pleasantville post office was built. A By 1901, Pleasantville's population of 2,182 was "large enough to afford a good supply of labor, either male or female," to the numerous local industries of the time, including, "the Composing Machine Company, employing 12 persons; a paint factory, employing 9; and a mill and scroll sawing works with 12 employees."²

Rail service through Pleasantville to Atlantic City was first provided by the Philadelphia and Atlantic City Railway in 1876. The line was set up to compete with the already existing Camden and Atlantic, which had been running between Philadelphia and Atlantic City since 1854. In order to reduce expenses and cut prices, the Philadelphia and Atlantic City built a narrow gauge line. Narrow gauge tracks were faster and less expensive to install, and therefore resulted in a more cost-effective operation.³

Pleasantville at one time had two operating trolley systems. The Atlantic and Suburban Line began in 1903, and the Shore Fast Line started an electric line in 1906. Both lines offered service to Atlantic City as well as within Pleasantville. The Suburban line also went to Northfield, Linwood and Somers Point.⁴ The Philadelphia and Atlantic City Railway also offered service between Pleasantville and Somers Point by rail, and then across the Great Egg Harbor Bay to Ocean City by ferry. This service lasted from 1880 to 1918, when a roadway was built.

¹ Beers, Topographical Map of Atlantic County, 1872.

² John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr., New Jersey Postal History (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc. 1977), 29; "A 1901 Industrial Directory." Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook. (October 1988), 27.

³ J. Howard Savell, Bicentennial History of Pleasantville (n.p., ca. 1976), 27; Don Wentzel, "Pleasantville's Railroads." South Jersey Magazine 16 (Spring 1987), 2-4.

⁴ Savell.

Many of the buildings in Pleasantville date from the 1910s and 1920s. Verona Boulevard was the route from the inland areas, including Philadelphia, into Atlantic City, and seems to have developed at this time. There is a noteworthy commercial block at the northwest corner of Main Street and Verona Boulevard. An unusually intact Studebaker dealership remains further east on Verona and is a good example of a 1920s automobile showroom. Outside of the commercial district, Pleasantville disappears into the urban development along Route 9. A continuous strip linking the mainland suburbs of Atlantic City, Route 9 offers the services necessary to support growing residential neighborhoods. New condominiums, such as Sassafras Run, suggest the need for even more housing in the area.

Prepared by: Camille Gatza
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Sources: Kay, John L., and Smith, Chester M., Jr. New Jersey Postal History. Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977.

"A 1901 Industrial Directory." Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook. (October 1988): 26-7.

Savell, J. Howard. Bicentennial History of Pleasantville, 1776-1976. n.p., ca. 1976.

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.