

Spring Lake Bathing Pavilion, North  
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail  
On the Boardwalk between Tuttle &  
Ludlow avenues  
Spring Lake  
Monmouth County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1092

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
SPRING LAKE BATHING PAVILION, NORTH

HABS NO. NJ-1092

- Location: On the boardwalk, between Tuttle and Ludlow Avenues, Spring Lake, Monmouth County, New Jersey
- Present Owner: Borough of Spring Lake  
Fifth and Warren Avenues  
Spring Lake, New Jersey 07762
- Present Use: Saltwater pool and bathing pavilion, with bathhouse facilities.
- Significance: This public project, together with the south pavilion, is ambitious for a small municipality. The pavilion has an open observation deck reminiscent of Victorian-era facilities, but executed in "modern" brick and concrete construction with decorative terra cotta, art deco details.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The pavilion was erected in 1931.
2. Architect: It was designed by E. Henry Schmeider, Borough architect and engineer.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Borough of Spring Lake
4. Builders, suppliers: Walter B.C. Bowker served as general contractor (\$102,078.21). Campion Dangler installed the plumbing and mechanical equipment (\$17,421); Marcel Krater of Freehold handled the electrical equipment (\$3,658.80).<sup>1</sup>
5. Original plans and construction: The Spring Lake Historical Society has an original plan of the ground floor.
6. Alterations and Additions: In 1991 upper level railings were replaced with vertical balustered cedar rails. Other railings are pipe rails. Recently the

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<sup>1</sup> Spring Lake Council Meeting minutes December 1930, courtesy of Mrs. Barbara Kolarsik.

400 bathhouses' tar roofs and ridge vents were removed and replaced with plastic roofing. Essentially, though, "decades of neglect"<sup>2</sup> has meant relatively few alterations.

B. Historical Context:

Early photographs and atlases show that in the 1880s the beachfront that is now Spring Lake possessed several recreational facilities--generally small pavilions and bathhouses scattered on the beach. In 1926, a pair of late-nineteenth century wooden pavilions, located on the sites of the present pavilions, served ocean-goers. The pavilions had been privately owned, and operated by lessors, although in 1907 the town took over the lease for the northern pavilion. Spring Lake's Council minutes from the first decade of the twentieth century reflect several efforts to regulate the pavilion owners.<sup>3</sup> These earlier buildings--"constructed with large Stick Style brackets and balustraded flat roofs that double[d] as observation platforms"<sup>4</sup> had by 1926 outlived their usefulness. Mayor Hill described these old buildings as "antiquated, too small," and "far from being...ornament(s) to our beautiful beachfront." The borough, according to the Mayor, had received "much unfavorable criticism from our summer guests."<sup>5</sup>

In October 1926, Spring Lake's Mayor Hill and Council requested that plans for two new bathing pavilions be executed by the borough architect and engineer, E.H. Schmeider. Once Schmeider's sketches were approved, the town passed an ordinance to construct the bathing pavilions, financed with a \$250,000 bond issue. The borough built the south end pavilion in 1929, and the north end in 1931. A

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<sup>2</sup> The Coast Star, July 5, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Council minutes courtesy of Mrs. Barbara Kolarsik. The Spring Lake Improvement Company, which originally owned the beach and leased it to the borough, apparently built the southern pavilion. The northern pavilion was owned by the North End Pavilion Company.

<sup>4</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Section F, page 27.

<sup>5</sup> Spring Lake Gazette August 20, 1931, as quoted in Patricia Colrick and Philomena Motzel, "Historical Notes on Our Bathing Pavilions," Spring Lake Historical Society, Inc. Newsletter (Vol. 12, no.1, p.1).

photo caption accompanying an article praising the north building's completion heralded "This attractive, substantially constructed group recently completed offers the bather every pleasure and convenience under the most ideal conditions."<sup>6</sup>

Spring Lake has been distinguished by its "genteel" landscape, broad and tree-lined streets, well-tended lawns, enormous private homes and hotels, and the shapely Spring Lake Pond.<sup>7</sup> Unlike so many Jersey shore communities, Spring Lake has prevented most commercial development on the beach. The bathing pavilions stand alone by the dunes; the pavilions' one or two shops are the only ones on the boardwalk.<sup>8</sup> After 1929, the city used a zoning ordinance to designate business areas, and hotel and residence zones; this was amended three years later to add a third zone for residence only. The business zoning clearly forbid, for example, "carousel, roller coasters, whirligigs, merry-go-rounds, ferris wheels or similar amusement devices."<sup>9</sup> Research might point to interesting issues relating to land use regulation prior to zoning, and the ordinance's appearance the same year that construction on the new pavilions began.

Spring Lake's stately setting provides a plausible explanation for why such a small town would be willing to construct such "substantial" public buildings. Nonetheless, it would be provocative to document just how unusual the \$250,000 bond issue was for a small shore community, and to examine the circumstances of its approval. Other wealthy, non-commercial towns chose not to build such complete facilities; what explains Spring Lake's undertaking such a major project?

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Spring Lake's National Register of Historic Places, Section F, page 25.

<sup>8</sup> The boardwalk itself from the 1880s was a series of privately-maintained walkways. The borough consolidated the walkways and took responsibility around 1904. The WPA in 1939 allowed the completion of the current boardwalk. Spring Lake's National Register of Historic Places, Section F, pages 25-6.

<sup>9</sup> Copies of Spring Lake ordinances, courtesy of the Borough Clerk's Office.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION<sup>10</sup>

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The pavilion is built on a rectangular plan, echoing the openness of "Victorian" era wood pavilions, but was constructed in masonry and given "modern" decorative details in terra cotta trim.
2. Condition of fabric: The pavilion is in fair condition; renovations are planned for Fall 1992-Spring 1993.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a high one-story, rectangular structure with an observation roof deck.
2. Foundations: Concrete piles reach 45' below the boardwalk level, resting on hard earth. The building's foundations are over built, especially when compared to the roof's sagging spandrels, which require extra support.
3. Wall construction: The walls are of masonry, concrete and brick. The pool terrace area is surrounded by a wall of decorative concrete blocks.
4. Structural system, framing: The structural system is of masonry, brick, and brick-enclosed steel columns.
5. Porches: Most of the second floor is an open observation deck, except for the two small reading rooms.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The boardwalk entrance doorway is trimmed with green-glazed terracotta in an art deco design; the lettering above the door spelling "ENTRANCE" is also stylized art deco lettering.
  - b. Windows: Round nautical-style windows vent to street level from the utility area under the pool. A wide band of green-glazed terra-cotta surrounds each

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<sup>10</sup> Detailed structural description relies upon Kaplan Gaunt DeSantis Raciti, Architects, Feasibility Study: Spring Lake Pool and Pavilion North and South (January 1992).

window.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: There is a flat-topped, hipped roof of wood trusses, rafters, and beams. Perimeter beams are failing and are temporarily supported by additional columns. The wood soffits create an attic space. Inclined portions of the roof are covered in artificial shingling.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: (reference is to Spring Lake Historical Society files)

a. Cellar: Utilities

b. First floor: The first floor contains a simple entrance hall, rest rooms, and offices. Five feet above street level is the pool, while the flanking bathhouses are 5' below the first floor.

c. Second floor: The second-floor observation platform is entirely open, except for two enclosed "reading rooms," presently empty, in the northwest and southwest corners.<sup>11</sup>

2. Stairways: The stairway leading from the first to the second floor is open and has pipe rails.

3. Flooring: The pool decking is reinforced concrete, and is integrated into the perimeter block wall. The pool floor consists of two 6" concrete layers (apparently without reinforcing steel), resting on beach sand (no gravel). The pool walls have reinforcing steel.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceiling finish of the second floor is beaded wood.

5. Decorative features: Polychrome terracotta tiles in five patterns adorn the walls and columns of the pavilion--a lighthouse, birds in flight, leaping fish, a pelican with frog, and a sailboat. Although the artist of the north pavilion tiles is unknown, Robert Vanderhoff, a truck driver who delivered sand and gravel to the job site, believed that Bowker

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<sup>11</sup> Spring Lake Historical Society, Inc. Newsletter.

commissioned "someone in Sayreville" to do the tiles.<sup>12</sup> Additional decorative terracotta includes the main entrance door, signage for the men's and women's rooms, and trim of bathhouse perimeter wall. Also of note are the decorative concrete blocks of the perimeter wall, and the gentle bowing out of the building's east face.

D. Site:

1. General Setting: The east facade of this rectangular building gently bows out toward's the beach, while the pool lies immediately to the west of the building. In conjunction with the northern pavilion, a new boardwalk was constructed along its length; the boardwalk consisted of brick foundations, reinforced concrete, and creosoted wood. The boardwalk bows out as well, echoing the pavilion's shape. The pavilion reaches out over the boardwalk, creating an arcade.
2. Outbuildings: The pool is flanked by 400 bathhouses, in a north and south group. They are five feet below street level, enclosed by ornamented yellow brick and terracotta walls. Both pools--the 45' x 100' adult pool and 12' x 30' children's pool--are set in a terrace elevated 5' above street level. The bathhouses are 5' below street level. Originally, laundry services and locker rooms were located under the pool terrace. Two pumps filled the pool in one hour during swimming hours, bringing in 2,000 gallons of filtered water each hour directly from the ocean; in this arrangement, the pool is refilled four times each day. The "filtering" seems to have been though six feet of sand.<sup>13</sup>

Prepared by:  
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Summer 1992

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<sup>12</sup> "Pavilion Tiles tell Intriguing Tale of Spring Lake Yesteryear," The Herald Extra, (August 16, 1989), p.1. Bowker's daughter, Viola Quinn, lives in Spring Lake. Bowker also built Spring Lake's community house, incinerator, and private homes.

<sup>13</sup> "Historical Notes on Our Bathing Pavillions," p.1.

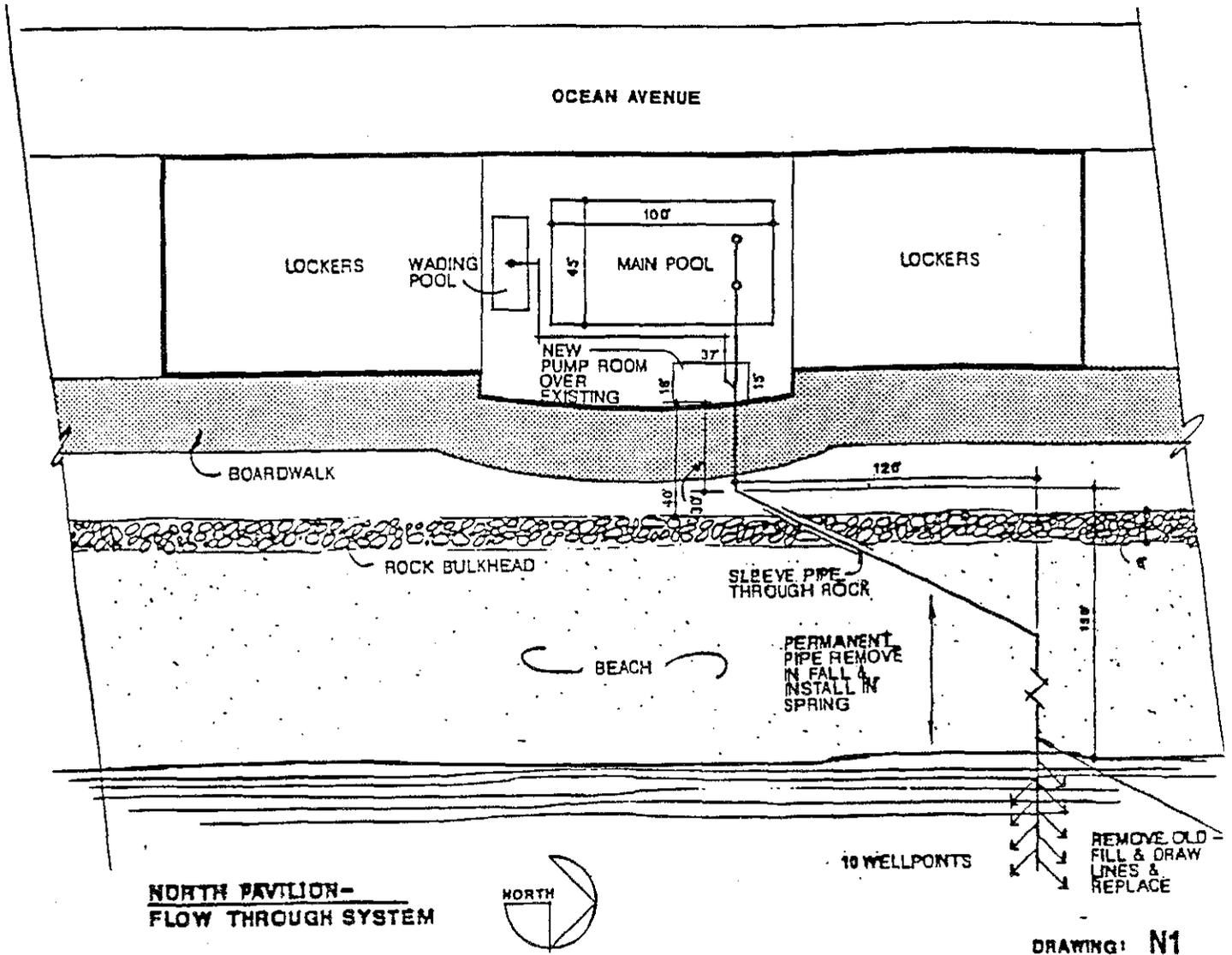
PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old views: The Spring Lake Historical Society has a few early images.

B. Primary and unpublished sources: The Spring Lake Historical Society has two folders on the pavilions--including contemporary articles and historical materials. Also helpful is a feasibility study for restoring the buildings dated January 1992, by Kaplan Gaunt DeSantis Raciti, Architects. The Mayor's office has the Spring Lake Council Meeting Minutes, and in the basement of the municipal building are boxes containing tax files, rough plans, and construction estimates. See also 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 the Interior, 1991).

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The 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 Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian. The project was completed during summer 1992. The project historian was Alison Isenberg (University of Pennsylvania). The photography was produced by David Ames, University of Delaware, Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering.



North pavilion floor plan extracted from:

Citizens Advisory Committee, "Report & Recommendations for Restoration of Pools & Pavilions," Memorandum to the Spring Lake Mayor and Council, 17 January 1992.