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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: The Beach Club
Other names/site number: The Beach Club of Rye Beach
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2450 Ocean Boulevard
City or town: Rye State: New Hampshire County: Rockingham
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following
level(s) of significance:
 national statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
 X A B C D

Elizabeth H. Muzzey 10/29/13
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Jon Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

12-24-13
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Clubhouse

RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Clubhouse

RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports Facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Tudor Revival

OTHER: locker houses

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood & Stone

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph - The Beach Club is a mostly wood-framed, four-building complex, C-shaped in plan, which is grouped around a 50 x 100 foot swimming pool, located at the northeast corner of Ocean Boulevard (State Route 1A) and Sea Road in Rye Beach, NH. The club buildings, which range in age from 1882 to 1990, are built upon the beach. The club shares its neighborhood with several large houses and a former summer boarding house (The Drake House, ca. 1872), located just across Ocean Boulevard to the west and south. Originally developed as an affluent, summer-home community in the late 19th century, the neighborhood is tree-lined with expansive house lots and long, open views to the ocean. Along New Hampshire's coastline, Rye Beach was the most fashionable seacoast resort in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The club's beach-side setting is level and open, with an expansive lawn belonging to the Drake House across the boulevard, and a triangular-shaped parking lot at the front entrance of the club. While a single-story summer home abuts the club immediately to the north, the setting overall is dominated by Sawyers Beach, which abuts the club to the north and east, and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. The Beach Club, which has historically catered to summer people since its founding in 1925, consists of four buildings: the oldest, which dates from ca.1882-1899 (with numerous later renovations), is a one and one-half story, intersecting gable-roofed, stone and wood-framed Clubhouse with modest Queen Anne and Tudor Revival detailing; the second is a one-story, flat-roofed, wood-frame bath house (changing rooms), called the North Locker, which stands on the north side of the pool and dates from about 1900; the third is a long, one-story, gable-roofed, wood-framed bathhouse, called the West Locker, which dates from 1974 and borders the pool on its west side; and the fourth, called the South Locker, which borders the pool on the south side, is one-story, gable-roofed, wood-framed bathhouse, built in 1990 to replicate an older, structurally-failing bathhouse on the existing footprint. The large saltwater pool, which is the central

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amenity of the club, is a 2007 in-kind replacement of the original 1929 pool. While the clubhouse rests upon a stone foundation, the three bathhouses, along with a large wooden deck that surrounds the pool and connects all buildings at grade, are raised about two feet above beach level and anchored into the ground below the sand on concrete or stone posts. Overall, the compound retains a remarkable degree of integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. While some renovations to the complex have occurred, all of the important character-defining elements present in 1929, when the then four-year-old club re-opened with its first swimming pool, are still present and intact today. The club was established in 1925, taking over the facilities of an existing bath house and store. Prior to 1925, the year of club incorporation, the site was occupied by Locke's Pavilion, a commercial bath house and candy store, offering towel and changing room rentals, confections, canoe rentals, hot salt-water bathes (and massages) to vacationers at local summer hotels, boarding houses and summer homes.

Narrative Description

Setting and Location – The Beach Club is located in the Town of Rye, part of Rockingham County in the southeastern portion of New Hampshire. The club's beachfront setting is nearly the geographical center of the Rye Beach Village District, a one-square-mile area of Rye with special land-use and municipal-service powers. Rye Beach is located about mid-way along New Hampshire's 18-mile coastline between Maine to the north and Massachusetts to the south. The coastal highway, also known as Ocean Boulevard (Route 1A), makes an S-turn just south of the site; the highway borders the south and west sides of the club property, while on the north side, abutting the club, stands a new 1.5-story, wood-frame summer house. On the west side of the highway, just north of the club, is Eel Pond, a large body of brackish water that drains into the ocean. From most points on the club property, the National Register listed Isle of Shoals, can be easily viewed in clear weather about nine miles offshore to the east. The coastline here is largely flat and open with the land gradually sloping down to a series of long sandy beaches punctuated by outcroppings of rocky shoals. One of those outcroppings is located just east of the club property at the end of Sawyers Beach. A recent site survey of the club property measured the lot area at about 51,000 square feet or 1.5 acres. The 32-space parking lot on the south side of the club is at grade with the coastal highway (Route 1A), but lacks curbing on the west and south sides; on the east side of the lot, a low granite curbstone separates the parking from the beach area. Over the years, both the state and the Beach Club have added large rocks here as rip-rap protection against large waves that break over the compound and parking lot during winter storms. Between the rip rap and the curbing is a flat buffer area covered with crushed granite stone which acts as a ground cover. Within that buffer area, the club has placed a wooden bench facing the ocean.

The Clubhouse (contributing resource) – The Clubhouse is a combination of three structures: a 1.5-story, five-bay, wood-framed section, built about 1882, a 1.5 story, two-bay, stone-walled addition, built in 1899, and a single-story, wood-framed addition with a five-sided end wall, built in the early 1930s, that extends northerly from the original rear side of the 1899 stone addition.

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Known to members as “The Bubble Room,” the defining feature of this space is its open ceiling supported by two collar-beam wood trusses with king posts. The collar beams, which are attached to the rafter beams by wood pegs and bolted iron straps, are decoratively scrolled on the lower sides at either end. Using the same method, the lower ends of each rafter beam are bolted and pegged to wood knee braces that, in turn, are attached to the wall structure. The king posts are rounded, having been turned on a lathe and decoratively scribed. By contrast, the lower end of each post has been trimmed flat into a large tenon that is mortised and pegged into each collar beam. The butt of each tenon has been rounded and extends through the bottom of the two collar beams like a wooden tongue. The ceiling boards, which are painted bluish-green, are defined by convex molding battens shaped to resemble rope or cabling. The nautical theme of the room is further defined by a pair of ships’ lanterns hanging from each collar beam and a crown board, trimmed with a wave-like pattern, which runs around the perimeter of the room at the top of the wall.

The ca. 1882 wood-framed section rests upon stone or concrete footings, while the stone-walled section is supported by a stone foundation without a cellar. The combined structure is capped with a side-gable roof finished with architectural asphalt shingles; originally (at the time of the club’s founding), both roofs were wood shingled. The roof eaves on the front wall of both sections have been left exposed without boxed cornice or fascia board. The most prominent feature of the facade is a large exterior chimney centrally located on the front (south) wall of the 1899 stone addition. Within the ground floor, the chimney is wide, reflecting the width of the interior stone fireplace, but as it rises through the roof eave, it tapers inwardly on the west side to about half its lower width. The chimney stack is topped with a tapered concrete cap and screened flue cover. Extending from the roof and abutting the west side of the chimney, there is a shed dormer with three 4-light casement windows; (originally these windows were 9-light wooden casements.) Like the rest of the addition, the chimney is constructed of uncoursed stone (similar to large river stones), reportedly collected by the builder from the nearby beach.

The other dominant architectural features of facade (south side) include the cross-gable window dormer centered over the entrance door of the framed section, the shed-roof entrance porch above the door, and the distinctive four parallel end gables of the adjoining South Locker standing just west of the Clubhouse. Visually, the Clubhouse is a hybrid of two architectural styles. The older framed section (west half), painted white with blue-gray trim, is decorated with modest Queen Anne detailing, principally scalloped wood shingles covering the tympanum area within the west gable and the centered window dormer over the main doorway. The “newer” stone-walled addition (east half) features Tudor-Revival detailing on its gable end facing the ocean; originally, the pediment was faced with vertical half timbering that was replaced sometime in the early-to-mid 20th century with white-painted wood shakes. The east-gable pediment, which is cantilevered nearly two feet over the ground-floor, contains other extant Tudor Revival details, including decoratively scrolled vergeboards at the roof ends, a series of decorative wood brackets supporting the cantilevered pediment, and a wide roof overhang that extends nearly another two feet beyond the gable wall.

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The front and west walls of the wood-frame section are covered with wood clapboards and trimmed with corner boards. The use of corner boards at all intersecting wall surfaces continues on the north elevations (within the private area of the club) clad with wood shingles painted the same blue-gray. All of the wood trim on the north and west side of the building is painted white.

Overall, the Clubhouse possesses a series of intersecting roof shapes, especially on the west, north and east elevations where small additions or renovations over the years have modified the roof lines. Minor changes to the roofline completed in 2008 include the removal of a gable window dormer on the north roof of the 1899 stone addition, the addition of a second gable on the east side of the stone addition, the addition of a cross gable on the north side of the kitchen roof to increase interior space; and the conversion of the east-side gable end of the office wing into a hipped roof. Overall, these were relatively minor alterations, and with the exception of the two window dormers, are not plainly visible from either the public thoroughfares or the beach.

While all of the Clubhouse's window locations and dimensions remain intact, the window units themselves have been replaced in recent decades. The exceptions are the front (south side) windows of the wood-framed section. The original sash (that is, at the time of the club's founding in 1925) were 2/2 sliding wood units, while the replacements are 6/6 sliding wood sash with true-divided lights, installed in the late 1950s within the period of significance. These first-floor windows are accented with grey-blue wood shutters, whose date of origin is unknown, but were not present on the building in the 1920s or 1930s. The front windows in the 1899 stone addition are a combination of 12/2 casements on the ground floor, 2/2 casements in the shed-roof dormer near the stone chimney, and a combination of large 2-bay and 3-bay units on the east, north and west sides.

The public front entrance to the Clubhouse is through the doorway located in the center of the wood-frame section facing the parking lot. The private entrance, more typically used by members, is located through a pediment-topped wood screen between the west wall of the Clubhouse and east wall of the adjoining, four-gable South Locker building. The public doorway, beneath the cross-gable dormer, is sheltered by a shed-roof porch supported by two boxed posts, all constructed of wood. The door, a single-light wood unit, is a replacement. Handicapped access to the club is provided by a low concrete walk running parallel to the front wall of the wood section and screened by a low stone retaining wall. The east side of the walk slopes down at a low grade to meet the parking-lot grade for wheelchairs.

The north and west sides of the Clubhouse, set within the private areas surrounding the swimming pool, contain the kitchen, staff offices, and semi-circular, so-called "bubble room" end of the ballroom. All of these spaces have been added to a pre-existing building in the early 1930s after the swimming pool was completed in 1929. That pre-existing building the new club took over in 1925 consisted of the wood-frame ca. 1882 section and the 1899 stone addition, which together were known as Locke's Pavilion, a local bathhouse. Since the 1930s, the overall outward appearance of the building wings has remained relatively unchanged.

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Clubhouse Interior – In plan, the combined 1.5-story building has a backwards-L layout. On the ground floor, an entrance hall and lobby extends along the south side of the building and opens to a large dining and ballroom that extends along the east side. The most dominant interior space is the ballroom-dining room that functions as the center of social events when the swimming pool and deck with its outdoor tables and chairs are not being used. The most dominant architectural features of the open first floor interior are the large stone fireplace on the south wall of the dining room and the semi-circular end wall of the ballroom with its decorative carved roof trusses at the north end.

The rear or north end of the clubhouse contains a commercial-style kitchen with a take-out window allowing access by club members from the deck area around the pool. Other ground-floor spaces include bathrooms, several storage closets, circulation hallways, and office space for club management. A stairway to the finished half-story is located off the kitchen hallway. The upper level has been used almost continuously since the early 1930s as housing for club management. The apartment, which renovated in 2008-09, contains three-bedrooms with two full baths, a den, a living room, several closets and a shared kitchen.

The North Locker (contributing resource) – The North Locker dates from about 1900, the era of the Locke bath house, but club records have become scattered and misplaced over several generations, and are, therefore, presently unavailable to pinpoint exact dates for construction and renovations.¹ The building, which measures 30 x 60 feet, contains about 48 changing rooms; each room is a simple four-sided enclosure with closed walls at the floor but open at the ceiling, allowing in light from a series of clerestory windows. The changing room walls are either original wide boards (likely white pine) or tongue and groove boards added for later renovations made within the period of significance. The changing rooms themselves are small, mostly rectangular spaces with a wooden board for seating and hooks on the walls for clothing. The wood flooring below is also composed of wide boards, again likely white pine.

The clerestory windows, located just under the roof eaves, are the most distinctive features of the building other than its flat roof; the windows consist of wood-frame casements with 6 lights over the doorways and 8 lights over the walls, all true divided and believed to be original features. Most of the windows are hinged at the top and can be opened for ventilation. A central hallway runs down the length of the building from east to west and connects to four side halls that lead to doorways on the south wall facing the pool. The wooden doors, which are solid tongue and groove construction, are believed to be original. The exterior walls are clad with blue-gray wood shingles on the south side and boards and battens on the north and east sides. The entire structure rests upon a series of either stone or concrete posts driven into the ground soil below the beach sand. The building is rectangular in plan and cigar-box-shaped in form. Like the other “locker” buildings, it was constructed of dimensional milled lumber, mostly 2” x 4,” 2” x 6” and 2” x 8” pieces, held together with standard nails.

¹ Equally unavailable are the Town of Rye’s building department records, which apparently were misplaced during a recent change in storage keeping. Consequently, many of the dates supplied in this nomination are the deductive results of photographic research, past leader’s and manager’s memories, and various dates from original and secondary sources.

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Recently (2012-13), the building underwent mostly structural renovations to reinforce the foundation footings and strengthen the framework as well as the carrying capacity of the roof deck. However, two new exterior stairways were added on the east and south sides of the building to provide code-approved access to the roof deck; access had previously been provided through interior steps and a hatch in the roof. The renovations primarily involved the use of in-kind materials and similar construction methods used for the original structure. The exceptions were the use of wood-grained synthetic (PVC) stair treads, plus vinyl stanchions and railings for new fencing (code required) around the roof deck's perimeter. Previously, the deck had contained guard railing of a similar look and scale constructed of pressure-treated wood. Over the years, the guard rail around the deck has been replaced several times due to weathering, but the look and scale of the structure has remained generally similar. The roof is not exactly flat, but has a very shallow pitch with the ridge line running east-west, thereby allowing water runoff.

The West Locker (noncontributing resource) – This single-story building, with its series of seven doorways leading to small hallways and changing rooms, dates to 1974. The existing building replaced a long, narrow, wood-framed structure with a gable roof, which also held locker rooms, and dated to early days of the club's founding. A photograph from about 1940 shows the general shape and location of the original. The 1974 building was built longer (at the north end) and wider than the original to hold more lockers and to better accommodate pumps and filtering and heating equipment for the swimming pool. In addition to the enlargement, two cross-peak gables were added at either end of the long gable roofline that runs on a north-south axis. A functional cupola sits on the peak of the south-end cross gable, providing ventilation to the equipment below. The building is a long, rectangular structure built of standard dimensional lumber; like the other bath houses, most of its nailed framing members are 2" x 4" and 2" x 6." The building rests upon a poured-concrete foundation, which is raised several feet above street grade in order for the locker rooms to be at grade with the raised deck around the pool. Like all of the club's changing lockers, the building is uninsulated. The changing room partitions are made of plywood sheets with framing boards anchored into the concrete floor and side walls. Like the North Locker, the partitions do not extend to the ceiling, thereby providing air circulation. The open ceiling above the changing rooms extends almost the entire length of the building. The roof is supported by a simple triangular truss system made of rafter boards with a king-post board connecting the tie-beam board to the apex of the rafters. The roofing is asphalt shingle with a series of metal and plexiglass skylights provide further circulation and light to the interior. The changing rooms are simple enclosures with wall hooks for clothing and wood boards for bench-type seating. The doors to each changing room are made of the same stained plywood as the wall partitions. The south end of the building, where the larger of the two cross gables is located, holds a mechanical room with an oil-fired boiler, pumps, circuit-breaker board, water filtration system and other equipment for pool operations. The west and north-side exterior walls are clad with wide-lap wooden shingles (mostly stained or allowed to weather) punctuated by a series of 6-light casement windows top hinged to open for ventilation; each of the windows is decorated with non-functioning wood shutters. By contrast, the east-side wall, facing the pool, is clad with shingles lapped at the same width as the North Locker and the north and west sides of the Clubhouse. The location, function, form, materials and construction methods of the current structure do not depart dramatically from the look, feel and location of the

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1949 building prior to its enlargement and reconstruction. The current form and function of the West Locker does not detract from the overall significance of the Beach Club as a whole.

The South Locker (noncontributing resource) – This single-story, wood-frame building, which stands on raised concrete slab just west of the Clubhouse and north of the parking lot, resembles four attached, gable-front cabins facing the swimming pool. The structure, painted white, was built in 1990 to replace the original bathhouse, which likely dated to the 1880-1890s, and had developed serious structural problems. In footprint area (33 x 63 feet), height, overall form, roof profile, function, and construction materials, the current building was intentionally designed to closely resemble the original four-gable bath house. In plan, the building contains a series of five hallways, running on a north-side axis and extending from front to back wall. Corresponding to the hallways, are five entrance doors that open on the north side facing the pool. Two of the doors lead to bath and shower rooms for men and women, while the other three lead to hallways and the changing rooms within.

Like the other “lockers,” the building was constructed with standard dimensional boards and lumber. Like the West Locker, the changing room partitions and doors are plywood sheets framed and supported by standard 2” x 4” and 2” x 6” boards; similarly, the flooring material is either painted or unpainted concrete (depending upon the area and function). Similar to the other locker buildings, the changing rooms are closed at the floor and open to the ceiling to allow both privacy and improved air ventilation. The interior of the typical changing room is similar to the others with wall hooks for clothing and wood boards for seating. Some members, however, have customized their space and added metal bars for clothing hangers. Again, like the other lockers, the building is uninsulated and the roof open with no ceiling. Unlike the older West Locker, however, each roof gable is supported by a light truss system of rafter boards held together with tie-beam boards located about half way up the rise of the roof. At the peak of each of the four gable ends (north and side sides) are located triangular wood-slat ventilators for air circulation. As noted above for the West Locker, the look and function of the South Locker does not detract from the overall significance of the Beach Club as a whole.

The Swimming Pool (noncontributing resource) – The centerpiece of the club compound is the swimming pool, measuring nearly 50 x 100 feet, and built in 2006-07 to replace the original 1929 model. Like the original, it is a standard gunite-sided structure. The pool uses filtered and chlorinated saltwater taken from the ocean via a metal intake pipe that extends just beyond mean low water on the nearby beach. A standard fiberglass diving board stands at the north end of the pool. The pool is 12-feet deep at the north end and three feet at the south end; the original pool was 10 feet deep. The current pool is equipped with underwater lighting that models the look of the original lighting provided as a gift by Clement Studebaker, a Rye Beach summer resident and club member. According to club records, Studebaker, who belonged to the automobile manufacturing family, persuaded General Electric, which had recently developed the first underwater pool-lighting system, to install the new type of lights in the club’s first pool. Surrounding the pool on all four sides is a 10,000-square-foot deck constructed of mahogany boards. Traditionally, the deck was called “the platform” by club members. The current

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structure was installed in 2005 and designed to resemble the look and feel of the original deck installed in 1929 with the first pool.

The Canopy (noncontributing resource) - To the east of the platform and pool, before the beach begins, stands an open wood-framed structure known to club members as "the canopy". This structure functions like a cabana or shelter from the elements, primarily the summer sun, and is used in conjunction with the tables and chairs placed on the deck to the east of the pool through the summer season. The canopy, which dates from 1990 and measures about 25 x 8 feet, is held up by 10 boxed wood posts to support its hipped roof, which is covered with asphalt composite shingles. The shelter replaced a somewhat different looking structure of similar function constructed sometime in the late 1930s and likely replaced again in the 1950s. At the easternmost edge of the platform stands a guard rail with wood stanchions and pipe rails. The structure, which was built in 2005 to replace an earlier railing, functions to prevent people from falling onto the beach, which is located several feet below the height of the pool deck.

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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.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- 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.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (N/A)

Areas of Significance

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Period of Significance

1925-1963

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Beach Club is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Recreation/Entertainment and Social History as the only example in New Hampshire of seasonal, private club founded in the 1920s for swimming, sunbathing and socializing by a group of summer families from New Hampshire's exclusive seacoast resort, which culturally included adjacent Little Boar's Head in North Hampton, NH. The period of significance from 1925 to 1963 corresponds with the club's year of incorporation and the 50-year cutoff for the National Register program. While parts of the club compound have been repaired, replaced and upgraded over the years, the property retains a high degree of integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The property is the only private recreational facility and social club of its kind in terms of seacoast location and function.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Area of Significance: Social History

The Beach Club is significant as a unique example of a private recreational and social club located within one of New Hampshire's most upscale seaside communities, one whose history as a fashionable summer resort dates back to the 1840s. The Beach Club was established in 1925 in the decade after the First World War as the nation was experiencing a social transformation fueled by the postwar boom of the "Roaring Twenties" and the growing affordability of the automobile to the average American worker.

The club's purpose and physical layout was a product of evolving cultural attitudes after The Great War, as well as the class fears of affluent summer people in Rye Beach that their vacation refuge was increasingly being overrun by unwelcome outsiders using the beach. As an exclusive, private recreational facility, the early history of the Beach Club reflects the significance that recreation and, by association, tourism and travel played in the state's economic development during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Prior to the growth and improvement of local roads in the early 20th century, Rye Beach had been a relatively quiet summer destination for a select group of wealthy businessmen and their social set. By the early 1920s, however, as regional road networks improved and automobile ownership rates skyrocketed, Rye Beach (as well as other scenic coastlines in the region) was discovered by countless motorists who enjoyed touring, sightseeing, and motor camping. Ocean

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Boulevard (NH Route 1A) and its accessibility by the motoring public apparently brought many new visitors to the coast of Rye Beach in the 1910s and 1920s.² In reaction, the wealthy summer families who joined the club sought a physical and cultural enclave that would serve as a protected compound on the beachfront.

While some affluent Americans had been purchasing automobiles since the turn of the century, their numbers were not significant. The transformational effects, both physical and social, were not felt by most communities until the 1920s as highways gradually were improved and expanded. With rising prosperity (and wages) during the decade came greater opportunities for leisure time. As automobile ownership rates increased, the average motorist was no longer dependent upon schedules and the fixed routes of streetcars, railroads and steamboats. As one early historian of American recreation noted tongue-in-cheek, "The wealthy could make the fashionable tour in 1825, the well-to-do built up summer resorts of the 1890s, but every Tom, Dick and Harry toured the country in the 1930s."³

In December 1925, Ewing Hill, Jr. (1876-1948), the first president of the club, wrote an introductory letter to all "interested parties" in Rye Beach, Straws Point (also in Rye) and Little Boars Head in adjacent North Hampton. The letter contained the following excerpts: "All Rye Beach is concerned over the increasing tendency during the past few years of an element neither congenial nor desirable who are [sic] closing in on us from all sides. Many of these are distinctly unwelcome visitors." Hill, who was a wealthy advertising executive from St. Louis, continued, "There is an influx of transient motorists by day and night, who are more and more flocking to our bathing beach." He noted that negotiations had begun the previous summer (1924) to lease two local bath houses "for the purpose of converting both properties into a club for the protection and pleasure of the Rye Beach summer colony, their friends and guests. Finally, Hill wrote, "I think there is no doubt that upon the organization of the Beach Club depends the safety of Rye Beach. We occupy so prominent a position directly on the [Ocean] Boulevard on which travel so many thousands of people daily that the organization of our Club is now a matter of absolute necessity."⁴

Mr. Hill, and other wealthy Rye Beach "cottage" owners who shared this outlook, was a member of what one social historian called the "new plutocracy" that arose during the "Gilded Age" of the late 19th century when thousands of Americans were propelled into the ranks of the rich and powerful, largely by virtue of ambition, opportunity and business acumen. These newly rich came from all quarters of America's expanding manufacturing and financial sectors, including railroads, mining, timber, steel plants, packing houses and, especially in New England, textile and shoe factories.

² Beginning as early as the late 1910s, as Ford Model Ts became more affordable, skilled workers from nearby industrial cities in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts could afford for the first time to explore seacoast destinations they had once only dreamed about. "The Model T was the most familiar of all makes with half a million of them on the road before the World War. The two million cars of 1914 became nine million by 1921. In another five years, this number had doubled." (Dulles, p. 313)

³ Ibid, p. 319

⁴ Apparently, over the next 34 years, social circumstances at the beach didn't change much, as the fifth club president, Harold G. Hixon (1938-1947), recalled in 1959, adding that the same letter "could well be written today."

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Although essentially an urban group that lived near its factories and offices, this new elite increasingly saw itself, due to cultural attitudes inspired by Social Darwinism, “as a class, even a caste, and sought to insulate itself from the rest of American society.”⁵ They accomplished this by creating a series of interconnected social places both in the city and in the countryside. Examples included private men’s clubs, suburban estates, country clubs, prep schools, elite college campuses, and, at the farthest geographical distance, seasonal resorts. As the social anthropologist Stephen J. Hornsby noted, “Class segregation went hand in hand with spatial exclusion.”⁶

A local example of this was the intimate organizational connections between the Beach Club’s founders and the directorship of the nearby Abenaki Country Club, a private golf course established in Rye Beach near the future Beach Club in 1903. In 1937, 10 of the golf club’s 19 re-elected directors were (or had been) either directors or members of the Beach Club, including former Massachusetts governor (1925-29) Alvan T. Fuller of Little Boars Head, Arthur L. Hobson, Sr. of Haverhill and Boston, Wayman Allen and Samuel H. Allen of St. Louis, Ewing Hill, Jr. of St. Louis and New York; H. Clinton Taylor and Frank J. Holloway of Concord; and Abbott B. Drake and Frederick L. Thompson, a paper manufacturer and brother-in-law of attorney Frank Sulloway of Concord, NH, who also belonged to both clubs.

While the success of late 19th century American industrialization produced many examples of financial success like the men listed above, it also attracted poor immigrants by the thousands searching for work in the new factories and mills of New England. Over time, these immigrants, primarily from Europe and French-speaking Canada, culturally transformed the region’s mill towns and cities, like Manchester, New Hampshire, and Haverhill, Lowell and Lawrence in Massachusetts. As one regional historian characterized the trend, many native-born New Englanders, whether workers, managers or business owners, experienced a “cultural dispossession” that mourned the decline of New England’s “Anglo-Puritan colonial heritage.”⁷ Social examples of this dispossession by the native-born manifested themselves in the rise of organizations as varied as the Daughters of the American Revolution (founded 1890), which appealed largely to the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant class, and the Klu Klux Klan, whose membership numbers swelled in rural New England during the 1920s, primarily among poor, undereducated whites.

However, this urge to wall themselves off from other classes was hardly unique to Rye Beach’s well-to-do summer residents. As Dona Brown, a prominent social historian of the New England vacation industry, noted, most exclusive resorts were, by their nature, “designed to surround the vacationer with congenial company – and to keep out influences and people such vacationers might find disturbing and ‘uncongenial.’”⁸

⁵ Hornsby, p. 1

⁶ Ibid, p. 1

⁷ Conforti, p. 209

⁸ Brown, p. 174

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Even today, most family summer-home communities are relatively socially homogenous. As Janet Elinor Schulte noted in her 1993 PhD dissertation, *Summer Homes: A History of Family Summer Vacation Communities in Northern New England, 1880-1940*, "Summer homes were built in neighborhood settings by people who shared class and ethnic backgrounds, value systems, and outlooks on life." One of the apparently shared outlooks that vacationers, both local and beyond the region, seemed to share about native New Englanders was their basic integrity, whether earned or not. It was simply true of the times that most small-town, rural people in New England and New Hampshire were largely old-stock Yankees; and for affluent vacationers, escaping from the cities with their swelling populations of immigrant workers, Yankees were a racially and ethnically safe alternative.

Brown also studied the class contrast between the Maine seacoast communities of York Harbor and the distinctly less fashionable York Beach. Quoting the famous magazine editor William Dean Howells of *The Atlantic Monthly*, whose family vacationed at York Harbor, Howells wrote in 1900 that his summer place had "a cluster of opulent architect-built cottages surround by a small private beach and a luxury hotel." By contrast, he wrote, York Beach was "lined with rows of the humbler sorts of summer cottages" filled with "people several grades of gentility lower than ours."⁹

Just a few miles south of Little Boars Head and Rye Beach, Hampton Beach, , was by the 1920s to 1930s evolving into a New Hampshire version of York Beach. Starting in the 1840s, Hampton Beach had been consciously developed and promoted as a seaside resort like Rye Beach and Little Boars Head, but never rose to their exclusive status as "fashionable." Just as the two were the preserves of the elite, the other was the domain of the working class. What likely alarmed founders of the Beach Club, like Ewing Hill, Jr., was that since 1903, when the State of New Hampshire completed Ocean Boulevard (Route 1A), their coastal preserves had become about a 10-minute drive from Hampton Beach. Also, both of these deeply interconnected coastal villages were about the same distance from US Route 1, the early pre-Interstate highway developed in the 1920s, connecting the coast of northern New England with the rest of the East Coast.

One other likely source of Mr. Hill's concern was the rest of Rye's coastline to the north of Sawyer Beach. Here, beyond the physical preserve of the Rye Beach Village District, whose boundary ended just north of the Beach Club, enterprising local people had begun converting some of the their coastal property along the highway to auto-tourist camps and cabins in the 1920s.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid, p. 175

¹⁰ The Rye Beach Village District is about a one-square-mile area within the Town of Rye that retains its own taxing and land use regulatory powers. Historically, the reason for organizing in 1905 was the hotel operators' and summer residents' desire for water for firefighting, as well as for sidewalks, street lights and police protection. One of its first acts was to arrange for water service with the Hampton water company and to purchase fire-fighting equipment.

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New destinations that catered to the growing motoring tourist market developed north of the Rye Beach Club including Hughes Cabins at Jenness Beach or Pooles Cabins, north of Wallis Sands Beach.¹¹ From Hughes Cabins, for example, a visitor could stroll down Jenness Beach and spend the day just outside the sands of the Beach Club.

Area of Significance: Entertainment/Recreation

By the early 20th century, Rye Beach was leaving the Victorian grand resort era behind and looking forward toward a new era of greater personal freedom offered by the automobile and other emerging technologies such as commercial air travel. The First World War (1914-1918) had been a cataclysmic political and cultural experience for all nations involved. Its many upheavals changed the course of history and brought the first shocks of modernism and the gradual rejection of Victorian values to the United States.

The decade of the 1920s that followed, often called the “Roaring Twenties” or the “Jazz Age,” brought rapid social change, technological innovation, and the breaking of cultural and social customs dating to the Victorian period. It was also the age of Prohibition (1920-1933) when rum runners were known to use Rye Beach as a dumping off place for illegal cases of liquor.

For those who could afford them, swimming pools became an emblem of a new, explicitly modern version of “the good life,” valuing leisure, pleasure and beauty – a distinct break for New England culture from its self-denying Puritan attitudes. Some cultural historians who study the issue argue that the rise of the swimming pool in the 1920s, especially the rapid increase of large public pools in urban neighborhoods, where most Americans still lived, contributed to the undermining of Victorian standards, especially regarding women’s bathing suit styles. During this period, younger swimmers began pushing the envelope regarding cultural standards of public decency and slowly changing popular attitudes about the female body in public. This was especially true for the culture at municipal pools, which became enormously popular during the 1920s through 1940s, as cities built them for their growing populations, many of which were recent immigrants.

In America, more so than Europe, the newer styles of swimsuit became a matter of great public controversy, especially along public beachfronts. Just before the 1920s, Annette Kellerman, a celebrated Australian swimmer of the time, appeared on Boston's Revere Beach in a one-piece woolen outfit and was arrested for indecent exposure. Moreover, she attracted so many imitators that the American Association of Park Superintendents felt compelled to issue its first “Bathing Suit Regulations” in 1917. In the 1920s, the village district government of Hampton Beach felt compelled to employ a “bathing censor” to maintain standards of decency and keep inappropriate bathing outfits from scandalizing its family-friendly beach.

¹¹ Neither of these businesses exists today and the cabins are gone.

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The cultural shifts in attitude proved to be overwhelmingly popular to the American public. In the early 1920s, the pioneering swimwear maker, Jantzen, literally made waves with its popular promotion of the Jantzen "Diving Girl," featuring a tight, red one-piece suit (as opposed to baggy wool "bathing dress") worn by a slim young woman in a bathing cap. Although quite modest by contemporary standards, the image created a great stir, but also launched a new trend in swim suits.

Jantzen later promoted its "Savage Swim Trunks" (modeled by an 18-year-old James Garner from Hollywood High School) in the late 1940s and the risqué "Double Dare and Temptation" costume (modeled by Norma Jean Baker.) Finally, the bikini, designed by a French mechanical engineer was unveiled at a 1946 Paris fashion show, revealing, according to the fashion designer Diana Vreeland, "everything about a girl except her mother's maiden name." Changing bathing fashions in American permitted men to appear bare-chested only after the late 1930s.

How these cultural shifts played out at the Beach Club, in and around its large, new swimming pool of 1929 isn't precisely known; however, those few photographs discovered from the late 1930s and 1940s show a mix of traditional and more modern styles at the pool's edge. As expected the older generation was almost formally dressed with the men in summer suits with ties and the women in long dresses.

The cultural changes noted above were a long time coming, although there had been signs as early as the late Victorian period that bathing protocol at seaside resorts was beginning to change. Most noticeably, men and women were more frequently entering the surf together, and even holding hands, even if only to steady each other. However, others like Felicia Holt, writing for the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1890, argued strenuously against the practice, even for men and women married to each other.¹² Nonetheless, popular opinion in the press could vary regarding whether swimming should be considered proper activity for respectable women, especially 'promiscuous' swimming that involved any outfit revealing more skin than thought necessary. Playing in the surf was initially done cautiously as many Americans in the 19th century did not know how to swim. But, according to contemporary accounts, walking the beach and playing in the surf were undoubtedly two of the greatest attractions that the local seacoast offered to summertime visitors.

Vacations at the fashionable Victorian resorts like Rye Beach were often mannered and almost choreographed. Each day, especially for women, seemed to promise modest variations on the same routine: morning strolls about the resort grounds, a late morning ride to the bath houses and the beach (fully clothed), lolling on the great hotel piazzas after lunch, lawn games such as bowling or croquet in the afternoon, or perhaps a wagon ride to a local historical site.

¹² In 1900, one of the principal developers of Ashbury Park on the Jersey Shore began a public relations campaign against women walking along the main boulevards in their bathing suits. He wrote that hundreds of women, and likely as many men, "tried to save the price of a bath house by walking from their hotels to the beach in their bathing costumes." (Aron, p. 77)

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Unmarried women and men's events were always supervised or chaperoned. Most events were communal affairs, including various games and outings. Everyone was even expected to dress up and dine together in large halls over multi-course meals. People almost always dressed formally, except when they retreated to the beach. Nonetheless, one of the perennial attractions of the seashore was playing at the tide's edge in the surf and sand. Despite the best efforts of the local resorts to provide a range of games and other amusements on their grounds, guests still enormously enjoyed their regular mid-day trips down to the beach.

Prior to the Civil War, surf bathing (not to mention swimming) was largely considered dangerous, questionable for good health, and potentially scandalous. Early Victorian mores strongly objected to people, especially women, exposing parts of their body in public. However, public attraction to the long sandy beaches for walking, driving, picnicking, reading, napping and general relaxing proved irresistible. Despite the cultural taboos, beachside recreation in its many forms was quite popular as early as the 1860s, judging by the number of bath houses the local hotels and boarding houses had built for their guests by that decade.

The old swim suits covered a lot of skin. The Victorians had different ideas about exposure to the sun and even to the ocean water. Fashion dictated that a true lady's skin required protection from the sun not because the sun rays were damaging, but because tanned skin was considered a sign of the lower class. Some people, most of whom didn't know how to swim, often read of warnings by "experts" that the surf and cold ocean waters could overwhelm a person's nervous system.

Hotel and boarding house operators solved the modesty issue of how to change for play in the surf by constructing what were called "bath houses," but are more accurately described as changing rooms. Since the hotels located south of the Beach Club, like the Farragut, had rocky beach fronts, most of these changing shelters were located at Jenness Beach, the closet sandy stretch near the hotels. These bath houses, located directly on the upland beachfront, were the functional antecedent to the Beach Club when it served as the store and viewing "pavilion" for Mr. Reuben Locke's numerous changing rooms and saltwater baths. In that narrow sense, the clubhouse is the only known surviving property associated with the bath house era in Rye Beach.

The clubhouse is not, however, the only historic resource on the New Hampshire seacoast associated with Victorian-era bath houses. That distinction belongs to a set of former fish houses in Little Boars Head at the north end of North Hampton State Beach off Ocean Boulevard (listed to the National Register as part of the Little Boar's Head Historic District.) Most of these small 1-story wood-frame shacks were first built in the early 19th century by local fishermen whose livelihoods, prior to the growth of the tourism industry, compelled most local people to support their families on farming and fishing. This cluster of former fish houses, now converted to bath house use, is the largest such remaining on the New Hampshire seacoast. Their original purpose was to store dories, lobster traps, long lines, nets, and other equipment for those who fished along the coast. With each outing, the dories were pulled across the sand and launched into the ocean. This method of fishing became obsolete when boats became motorized. Nonetheless, the

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basic gable-front rectangular form of these small shacks was perfectly suited for adaptation by vacationers looking for a place to change at the beachfront.

Prior to the construction of the clubhouse's ca. 1882 core as a store and office for Reuben Locke's bath house operation, a series of older bath houses had stood on and nearby the present site of the Beach Club. Beside the Locke and Jenness families who owned a great deal of the Jenness Beach land, a local man named Edward Sawyer also operated several bath houses that were available for rental by hotel and boarding house guests. However, a fire apparently started by local boys playing with firecrackers on the Fourth of July 1882, destroyed most of the houses, except Sawyer's. He eventually expanded the number from five to seven sometime in the 1920s. A photo taken around 1915 shows the arrangement of the original five; a raised wooden water tank and framed building in the right frame belongs to Mr. Locke's bath house operation. The tank contained the saltwater that would be heated for bathing by paying guests.

The oldest portion of the Beach Club compound is the 1.5-story wood-frame section containing a central gable-front window dormer above. This framed building was likely constructed about 1882, just after R.J. (Reuben Jenness) Locke (1863-1950) purchased the 0.63-acre site from his aunt, Mary A. Jenness (1841-1897), his mother's younger sister. Historically, the Jenness family, one of Rye's oldest families along with the Lockes, had owned this section of beachfront since the 18th century.¹³

Originally, this section consisted of two rooms; the front (south side) contained a candy shop (also offering sodas and cigars) and the rear room held office space. The earliest known photograph of Locke's establishment was probably taken in the early 1890s. Locke, his father and an uncle earned their living as carpenters and likely the building's builders. Prior to starting his business, Locke had helped his father run a truck farm and raise chickens commercially. Initially, the bath houses, which stood where the pool and "lockers" are today, contained 50 changing rooms.

The two-room building was remodeled in 1899 when Locke added the large stone and wood-framed "pavilion" to the east side of the store. This stone addition, known in the pre-Beach Club days as the "Pavilion," is reported to rest upon a deeply-dug stone foundation (no basement). Before the club acquired the building, Locke had kept the rear porch (or pavilion) with its square stone columns, open to the weather. In the initial conversion to club use in 1928-29, the pavilion was enclosed and converted into a dining room, a use still in place today.

¹³ Like most rural communities which were relatively insular in the days before railroads, streetcars, and automobiles, many of Rye's better known families gradually intermarried so that the family trees often contain surnames (and given names) of other established families. It's no surprise then that Reuben Jenness Locke, who was also directly descended from Capt. John Locke, the 17th century English-born pioneer settler of Rye, was a Jenness on his mother's side. Jenness Beach, on which the Beach Club anchors the south end, had probably been in the family since early 1800s.

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A new feature added to his offerings was hot salt-water bathes. According to Varrell, these became a popular and relatively unique service and considered the only similar bathes located north of Newport, R.I. Locke's operation could service up to 95 people during the course of day. Hot bathes were provided in 12 porcelain tubs and massages were offered by nine African-American masseuses Locke employed. Locke also provided a diving float and live guards in nearby boats during the regular bathing hours.

In addition, Locke maintained changing rooms for public rental. First priority went to local hotel and boarding house guests whose hosts had likely reserved a certain number of rooms for their clientele. In the early years, he had 50 rooms, but by the turn of the century, as he added more bath house structures, that number grew to 175 rooms.

Locke's daily routine involved going down to the beach each morning before 10 o'clock, measuring the water temperature, and then broadcasting his findings via series of steam whistle blasts to the any and all within earshot. Hotel (and boarding house) guests would arrive at the beach fully dressed since modesty was expected.¹⁴

The last year of Locke's bath house operation was the summer of 1923. The following summer, the Beach Club incorporators began renting the facility from Locke. During the summer of 1924, negotiations began to lease both Locke's and Sawyer's bath houses "for the purposes of converting both properties into a club for the protection and pleasure of the Rye Beach summer colony, their friends and guests."

Historical Background

Many of the Beach Club's founding families had been coming to Rye Beach, or nearby Little Boar's Head in North Hampton, since the late 19th century when the New England seacoast sprouted dozens of summer hotels catering to the wealthy and an emerging class of white-collar professionals who could afford both the time and money for leisure. The heat of northeastern summers made the New England coastline with its cold ocean currents and cool onshore breezes an attractive alternative to the sweltering cities.

Across New England after the Civil War, the non-urban communities experienced a gradual decline in population and economic growth. For seacoast towns, especially those whose fortunes were tied to shipping, this decline had occurred much earlier as the great age of the West Indies trade was stifled by the War of 1812. But especially after the Civil War ended, economic growth mainly concentrated itself where water power was available (like Manchester and Nashua, NH)

¹⁴ In August 1865, just after the end of the Civil War, a *New York Times* correspondent described the daily ritual at Rye Beach after visiting the Farragut Hotel: "About 10 o'clock bathing begins, and the beach from the bordering bath houses to beyond the furthest breakers is a scene of life and frolic. The hotel attendants ring the bathing bell, parties from the private houses cross the pastures knapsacked with robes d'eau. It is curious to observe the multitude in their oceanic uniform enjoying the flow of spirits which the waves impart." (*The New York Times*, Aug. 16, 1865).

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and the railroads lines ran. Rye had neither of these advantages; however, it did have incredible ocean vistas, fresh air and wide open spaces.

Rye's 19th century decline in fortune for its native sons is reflected in the town's population trends between 1850 and 1900. While the town had enjoyed modest but continuous growth between 1790 and 1850, the 1850s marked the first noticeable decline (5.1 percent) in 60 years, a trend that continued during the 1860s where the population declined precipitously by 18 percent. The 1870s witnessed a small rebound of 2.2 percent, but the contractions returned in the 1880s when the population dropped again by 12 percent. By 1890, Rye's population of 978 was almost exactly what it had been 90 years before at 975 in 1800. Rye's first actual population surges wouldn't occur until after the Second World War when suburbanization of the largely undeveloped town boosted residents by 59 percent in the 1940s, 63.7 percent in the 1950s and almost 26 percent in the 1960s.

For the Rye Beach locals, most of whom had traditionally earned a living from fishing and/or farming, this 19th century trend of declining agricultural activity was first countered in 1847, three years after the Eastern Railroad (later the Boston & Maine) opened between Boston and Portsmouth. While Rye Beach was not directly along the line, two stations (North Hampton and Greenland) were close enough for coach and wagon service to coastal locations. That year, the first seasonal hotel, the Ocean House operated by Jonathan R. Jenness, opened along the Rye Beach coastline. A year later, another local man, John C. Philbrick, opened the Atlantic House constructed on his family's 18th century farmstead. Like many of Rye's future hoteliers, both Jenness and Philbrick who came from farming and fishing families, had seen the future as New Hampshire's agricultural importance declined.¹⁵

Many others in Rye followed, making the transition from occupations their forebears had followed since the late 17th century to craftsmen, painters, laborers, teamsters, shop keepers, hotel staff, grounds keepers, and even domestics. This trend was typical of other local populations in New Hampshire resort destinations, like the White Mountains, whose communities were gradually transformed by tourism and summer home business in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The early Rye vacation spots were fairly rudimentary in style and accommodations, but they appealed enough to a first generation of visitors that, as the number of vacationers grew, other local investors were encouraged to build larger and more opulent places, especially after the Civil War.

In other cases, fire destroyed the original buildings and the hotel men were forced to rebuild, usually on a grander scale with more resort-like services, such as private bath houses on the beachfront. By the 1870s, the period judged by local historians as the peak of Rye's grand hotel

¹⁵ "By 1870, New Hampshire had a work force of 120,000, of whom 46,500 were engaged in manufacturing – virtually equal to the number in agriculture." (Garvin, p. 2)

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era, the town hosted six large hotels and numerous smaller boarding houses, most of them operated by local people.¹⁶ In the immediate Beach Club neighborhood, the three-story, mansard-roofed Drake House, built in 1872 across the road from the club, survives as a rare example of a boarding house (now apartments) from that period.

By the turn of the century, some of the better-to-do families both in Rye Beach and adjacent Little Boars Head, had built large summer homes known, rather euphemistically, as “cottages.” Good locations for home building along the coast were readily available since few farmers had historically built directly near the ocean, preferring instead to reserve those largely flat but rocky areas for pasture.¹⁷

These summer estates became another source of employment for the local population as they required tradesmen to build and maintain and caretakers to operate and safeguard year-round. In New Hampshire, where all municipalities depended upon the property tax for public revenue, they were especially welcomed by town government.¹⁸ As former State Architectural Historian James Garvin noted, “The summer home movement created a new economic force to counterbalance a long, slow decline in agriculture and property values in New Hampshire.”

Prior to the early growth of railroads through New England in the 1830s to 1840s, wealthy New Englanders tended to vacation close to home. Although Rye is a fairly early example of a New Hampshire farming and fishing community adapting to the new industry of tourism, it was hardly the oldest in the region. Nahant, MA, a peninsula community in Lynn on the North Shore of Boston, became a popular vacation destination for so-called Boston Brahmin families as early as the 1810 and 1820s. Indeed, as Varrell noted, most Rye Beach vacationers came from within a 70-mile radius during the mid to late 19th century. But as the geographical reach of the railroad grew, more and more people travelled to its shores looking for respite from the heat and crush of city life.

Not surprisingly, some resort areas like Rye attracted people from the same social and geographical background. Nahant, as noted, had been a fashionable haven for Boston’s Beacon Hill set since the 1810s. Newport was known to cater mainly to New Yorkers, especially after the Civil War, when wealthy southern planters, an earlier clientele, no longer felt welcomed. For its part, Rye Beach earned a reputation for attracting people from the mid-West, especially St. Louis and Cincinnati. As the official history of the Abenaki Country Club notes on its website, “Rye Beach was known as the ‘St. Louis of the East’ at the turn of the century with most of its

¹⁶ According to local historian William Varrell, in the early 1870s, about 1,500 people vacationed at Rye Beach annually and spent an estimated \$135,000 during the season compared with \$75,000 that farming generated for the local economy. (Rye on the Rocks, p. 44)

¹⁷ Writing in 1903, Langdon Parsons, an early town historian and son-in-law of Reuben J. Locke, observed, “Rye as a summer-hotel town has perhaps reached its full growth, although it may be otherwise but it has almost unlimited room for individual and family summer homes, and the number of these is certain to be on the increase for many years to come.”

¹⁸ Then there was the benefit to the local property tax base; as Garvin noted, quoting statistics published in 1900 and 1906 by the NH Bureau of Labor, “By 1899, \$10,442,352 had been invested in summer property in New Hampshire; by 1905, this figure has more than doubled, totaling \$22,285,179.”

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summer population coming from the mid-west cities of St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, along with a fair sprinkling of New Yorkers, Philadelphians and a few genuine New Englanders.”

These were largely family affairs where mothers and children were deposited at a local resort for the summer months with fathers joining them as they found breaks from their jobs. For the truly wealthy, these vacations were often summer-long affairs, involving mothers and children away from their homes for months and fathers occasionally taking weekends to join them.

In 1929, the year the swimming pool was added and the club compound took on the appearance it retains today, the Wall Street financial markets crashed, leading to the Great Depression of the 1930s. While the businesses and assets of some club members were undoubtedly adversely affected, a club history published in 1959 bears no mention of substantial social fallout from that period.¹⁹ Instead, the 1930s at Rye Beach appears to have been a decade when expanding membership for the incipient organization was a leading priority. New families moving to the area, for example, were often invited to join if deemed appropriate by the membership committee. The other targeted group was the summer hotel trade, especially at the nearby Farragut Hotel on Ocean Boulevard. However, as Harold G. Hixon (1884-1970), club president from 1938 to 1947, recalled in his brief 1959 history, “This did not prove too satisfactory, so guests from the Farragut [had] to be processed and screened by our membership committee the same as other prospective members.”²⁰ The 1930s also witnessed the hiring of initial support staff; the first permanent manager, for example, was hired in 1932, followed by a married couple who began serving as fulltime caretakers in 1933 along with the addition of seasonal waitresses and a towel boy.

A partial list of the early leadership, who provided both time and funds to keep the young organization solvent and growing during the 1930s through 1950s, reads like a partial who’s who of New England politics and industry. There were political figures like former Massachusetts Governor Alvin T. Fuller (1878-1958), former New Hampshire Governor Huntley N. Spaulding (1869-1955), and former New Hampshire Governor Hugh Gregg (1917-2003), father of Senator Judd Gregg, also a longtime club member. There were industrialists like Horace N. Stevens, Jr. (1914-1980), scion of the J.P. Stevens & Company family, one of the largest textile producers in the world during the 20th century, and W. Parker Straw (1878-1953), the third generation of his family to head the Amoskeag Company’s textile mills in Manchester during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and grandson of New Hampshire Governor Ezekiel A. Straw (1819-1882), the founding manager of the Amoskeag Company in 1851. There were prominent corporation heads like Wilbur H. Norton (1904-1963), a self-made man from Hampton, NH, who rose to the presidency of Montgomery Ward & Company in 1946 at the age of 42 and, later, a board member of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank. There were also descendants of distinguished old New England families like E. Francis “Frank” Bowditch (1912-1990), a great great grandson of Nathaniel Bowditch of Salem, MA, who achieved fame as author of the *American Practical*

¹⁹ Harold Hixon, Story of the Beach Club of Rye Beach, privately published pamphlet, 1959.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 9-10.

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Navigator (1802), the navigation “bible” of the United States Navy and Merchant Marine. All of these men, with the exception of former governor Hugh Gregg, served as club president during the early decades of the club’s history.

While the Beach Club survived the economic depression of the 1930s, the war years of the 1940s nearly ended its existence. As Harold Hixon, who presided during that turbulent period as club president, recalled, “The club barely survived. Memberships dropped, almost ceased to exist, and activities were at a standstill. The beach was patrolled by Coast Guardsmen night and day. A complete black-out was enforced at night. Nobody was allowed after sunset at the Beach Club or on the beach.” By the end of the war, the organization found itself in “a battered financial condition” and facing the task of rebuilding financially.²¹ Several of the club’s lenders, including Reuben J. Locke, the previous owner, who held a \$10,000 mortgage on the property, wanted either reductions in principal or payment in full on outstanding notes. Eventually, with help from its board, the club found a bank in Concord, NH, which lent the organization enough money to consolidate its debt under better terms and interest.

By the late 1940s through the 1950s, as post-war recovery took hold, the club once again found itself both solvent and so popular that membership reached capacity with a resultant waiting list for the first time. By 1954, the list had become so considerable that the board’s executive committee voted to reserve future memberships only for those summer residents with addresses in Rye and North Hampton.

Through the 1950s, the club also experienced the effects of the post-war baby boom as children, especially young teens, became a significant force for the first time in the club’s social life. Just as cultural changes in the decades before had gradually liberalized attitudes toward bathing attire, allowing the social phenomenon of a “beach club” to exist for the first time without Victorian censorship, so too had attitudes toward summer recreation and the “proper” comportment of young people in public. During these post-war years, America began to embrace a new culture of youth where the interests and needs of young people became a new (and profitable) demand in the marketplace. Indeed, as early as 1954, the club acknowledged the importance of this growing segment of membership and began earmarking a larger portion of its budget to cover social activities catering to youth. Longtime members, such as Patricia (Sullivan) Meyers of Manchester, NH, whose father, John L. Sullivan (1899-1982), served as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under President Roosevelt and, later, as Secretary of the Navy under President Truman, recalls that she and many of her peers, including several cousins from the William F. Harrington family of Manchester, spent good portions of their postwar summers at the club, using it as a gathering place and springboard for other social events.²² For the boys, recalls

²¹ Ibid, p. 6

²² William F. “Will” Harrington, Jr. (b. 1910), a Manchester attorney and later municipal judge, served as club president from 1948 to 1950. The Harringtons and Sullivans were related by marriage to several of Manchester leading industrialists of the 19th century, such as Frank P. Carpenter, president of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, Aretas Blood, his father-in-law and president of the Amoskeag Locomotive Works, and Charles H. Manning, a chief engineer for the Amoskeag Company. Some of

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former club president F. Sugden Murphy, some of those “events” in the late 1950s included caddying at the nearby Abenaki Country Club, to which many of the Beach Club families also belonged. It was not unusual, Murphy said, for a senior member of the golf club to drive over to the Beach Club on a summer’s day and scoop up several teenagers hanging around the pool for a paid stint on the links carrying clubs for someone’s father or uncle during an afternoon round.

Recalling the growth and evolution of the club in 1959, former president Hixon observed that, in a few short decades, the club had become a vital part of Rye Beach’s social and recreational scene. “It has been the meeting place for two and three generations with a fourth about to enter its life. Without it, Rye Beach would be just another beach. With it, Rye Beach is known as a place where a family can come and enjoy, with congenial people, a wonderful summer. A fine, safe beach with a beautiful pool unsurpassed anywhere, Rye Beach, because of the Beach Club, offers the finest facilities for clean, gracious, healthy living.”²³

To this should be added the fact that the club is the only known private recreational facility of its kind on the coast of New Hampshire, and one of the few, if any, measured by location, siting, design, function, amenities and cultural association, located on the coast of New England. Today, the club’s beach-front setting remains historically intact, while architecturally the compound itself retains a remarkable degree of integrity measured by location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. In New Hampshire, the property is simply unique and reflects its historical significance as the only private recreational facility and social club of its kind in terms of seacoast location and function in the state.

these related families summered at Straw’s Point, just north of Rye Beach, a summer colony of Manchester families established by former NH Governor Ezekiel Straw, who served as the first “agent” (manager) of the Amoskeag Company in the mid 19th century. The Sullivans, by contrast, and the Charles B. Manning family before them, summered at Little Boar’s Head in a “cottage” built in 1898 for the widow of the late US Senator and NH Governor Charles H. Bell (1881-83).

²³ Ibid, p. 16

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Deeds

Book 560, Page 291, Mary Abby Jenness to Reuben Jenness Locke, Rockingham County Registry of Deeds. June 21, 1893.

Book 841, Page 54, R. Jenness Locke to Beach Club, Rockingham County Registry of Deeds. October 25, 1928.

Plans

Plan #513 by J. Arthur Brown, surveyor, of land of R. Jenness Locke, dated October 1928, as recorded with deed of land (Book 841, Page 54). Rockingham County Registry of Deeds.

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Interviews with Club Members

Patricia (Sullivan) Meyers of Manchester, NH and Washington, DC

Frank A. Drake of Rye Beach, NH – former club manager and son of Philip S. Drake, club manager for 25 years (1949-1974)

F. Sugden Murphy, Jr. of New Castle, NH - former club president (1990-91)

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Rye Historical Society, Rye Beach Village District, Town of Rye
Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.165 acres

UTM References: 19T 356054.92m E 4759905.43m N

Verbal Boundary Description – The nominated property is described by the bounds that follow the records for Tax Map 2, Lot 022 (2450 Ocean Boulevard), as contained in the Town of Rye Assessor’s records. The boundaries are further indicated in “Figure 1: Present Site Plan” of this document.

Boundary Justification – The nominated property’s boundary reflects the last professional land survey for the Beach Club as checked and confirmed in January 2011; and is believed to closely follow the bounds assumed to be accurate in 1928 when the Beach Club corporation assumed ownership of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Frederick Lee Richards, Jr.
Street & number: 124 Warren Street
City or town: Concord State: New Hampshire Zip Code: 03301
E-mail: flichardsconsulting@gmail.com
Telephone: 603-225-1978
Date: September 17, 2013

Photo Log

Name of Property: The Beach Club
City or Vicinity: Town of Rye
County: Rockingham State: New Hampshire
Photographer: Frederick L. Richards
Date Photographed: June 2013
Description of Photograph: Front (south) elevation & partial east elevation, showing Clubhouse and white South Lockers; camera facing northerly
1 of 15

The Beach Club

Name of Property

Rockingham, NH

County and State

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: East elevation from beachfront, showing Clubhouse (left),
Bubble Room (behind folded yellow umbrellas) and Canopy (below flagstaff); camera facing
northwesterly

2 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: Front (south) and west elevations, showing Clubhouse (right),
white South Lockers (middle), and brown shingled West Lockers (left); camera facing
northeasterly

3 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: January 2013

Description of Photograph: West elevation of shingled West Lockers facing Ocean
Boulevard (Route 1A south); camera facing easterly

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Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: Swimming pool from north end, showing Clubhouse (left behind
umbrellas), white South Lockers (middle), and gray West Lockers (right); camera facing
southwesterly

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The Beach Club

Name of Property

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County and State

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: Swimming pool from north end, showing gray Clubhouse (left and middle) and white South Lockers (right); camera facing southeasterly

6 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: The Bubble Room (foreground) and Dining Room (background) in the Clubhouse, showing one of two collar-beam king-post roof trusses with ship lanterns and the stone fireplace at the south wall of building (background); camera facing southerly

7 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: Stone fireplace within the front (south) wall of the Clubhouse, part of the larger dining room and common space for club members; camera facing southerly

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Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: The open ceiling of the Bubble Room with its five-sided end wall (north side), showing one of two king-post roof trusses with ship lanterns; camera facing northerly

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Name of Property

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County and State

Name of Property: The Beach Club
City or Vicinity: Town of Rye
County: Rockingham State: New Hampshire
Photographer: Frederick L. Richards
Date Photographed: June 2013
Description of Photograph: Swimming pool from south end, showing portion of West Locker (left margin), gray North Locker with roof deck (middle background), and Canopy (right background) behind folded umbrellas; camera facing northeasterly
10 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club
City or Vicinity: Town of Rye
County: Rockingham State: New Hampshire
Photographer: Frederick L. Richards
Date Photographed: March 2013
Description of Photograph: South-side elevation of North Locker (facing the pool), showing stairs leading to roof deck (behind white railing) and portion of diving board (right); camera facing northeasterly
11 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club
City or Vicinity: Town of Rye
County: Rockingham State: New Hampshire
Photographer: Frederick L. Richards
Date Photographed: June 2013
Description of Photograph: North elevation of North Locker with roof deck and flagpole (left) and north and west elevations of brown shingled West Locker (middle); camera facing southeasterly
12 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club
City or Vicinity: Town of Rye
County: Rockingham State: New Hampshire
Photographer: Frederick L. Richards
Date Photographed: March 2013
Description of Photograph: Interior corridor of North Locker, showing doorways into changing rooms ("lockers") and clerestory window above doorway (with checkered signal flag) leading to swimming deck; camera facing southerly
13 of 15

The Beach Club

Name of Property

Rockingham, NH

County and State

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: March 2013

Description of Photograph: Interior of a larger changing room ("locker") in the North Locker building; camera facing northeasterly

14 of 15

Name of Property: The Beach Club

City or Vicinity: Town of Rye

County: Rockingham

State: New Hampshire

Photographer: Frederick L. Richards

Date Photographed: June 2013

Description of Photograph: Central corridor (running east-west) in the North Locker, showing door opening to smaller corridor leading to changing rooms (central midground), racks for surfboards, and connecting passage to north end of West Locker (background); camera facing westerly

15 of 15

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Name of Property

Rockingham, NH
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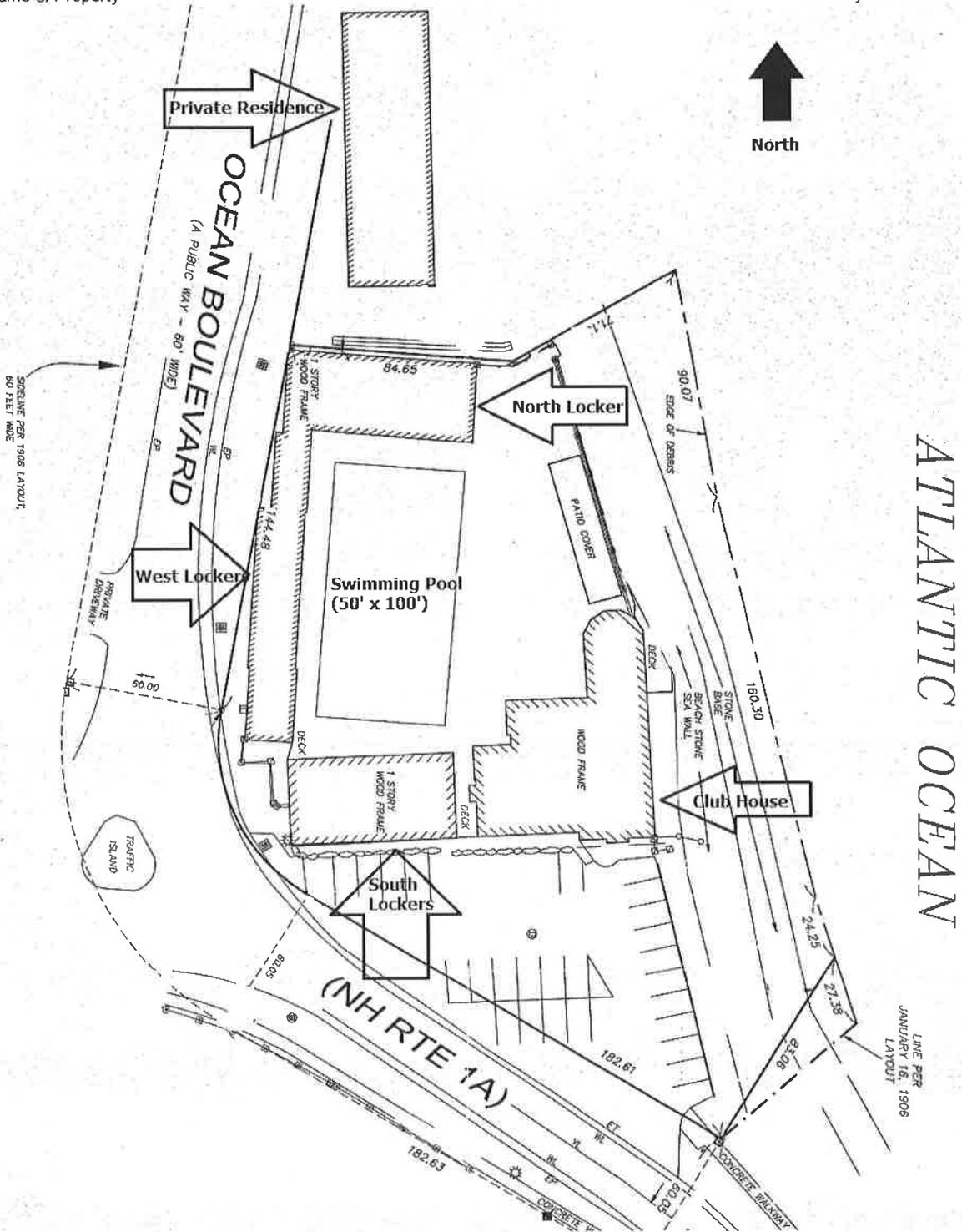


Figure 1: Present Site Plan

The Beach Club
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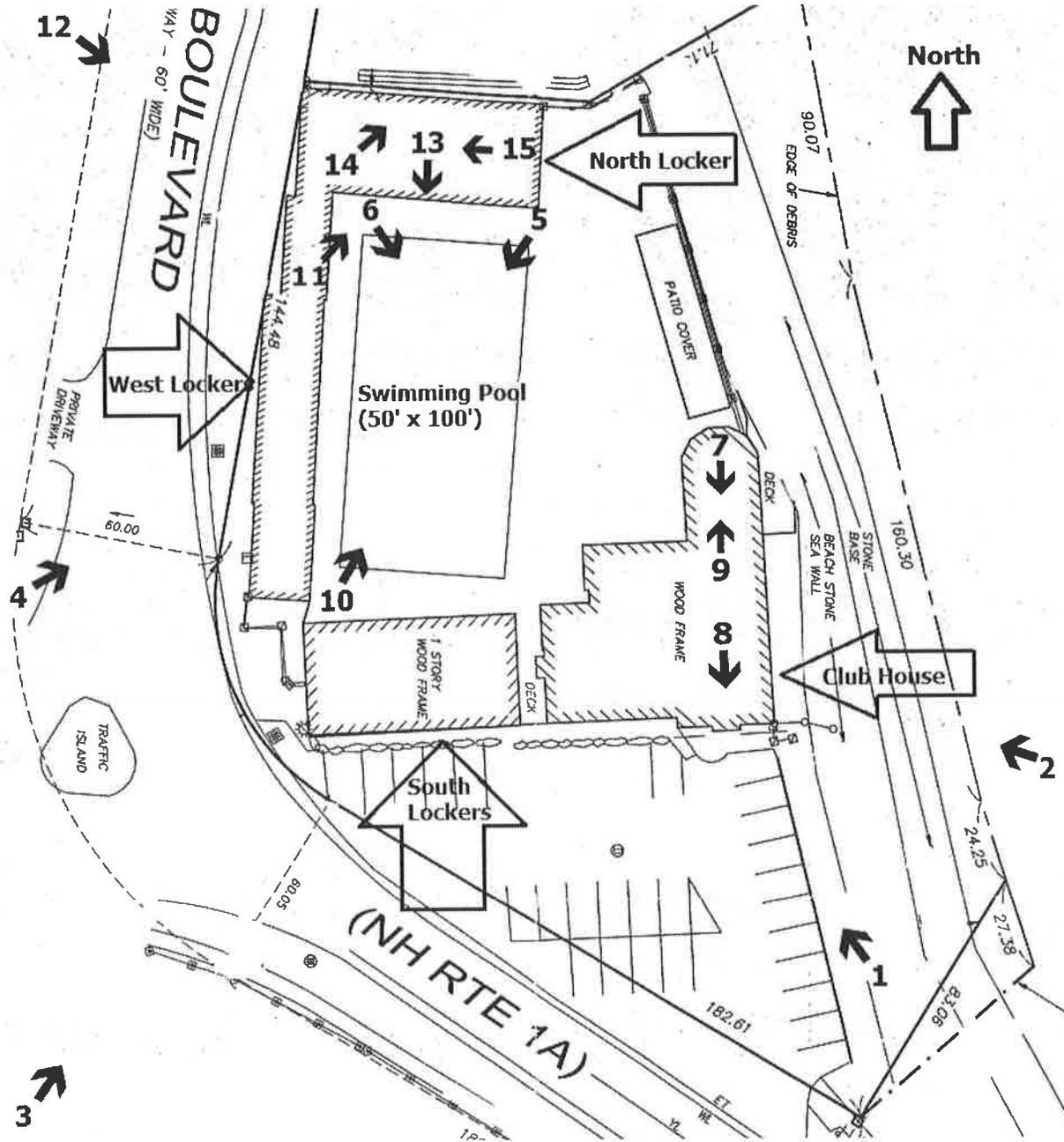


Figure 2: Photo Key Map

The Beach Club
Name of Property

Rockingham, NH
County and State

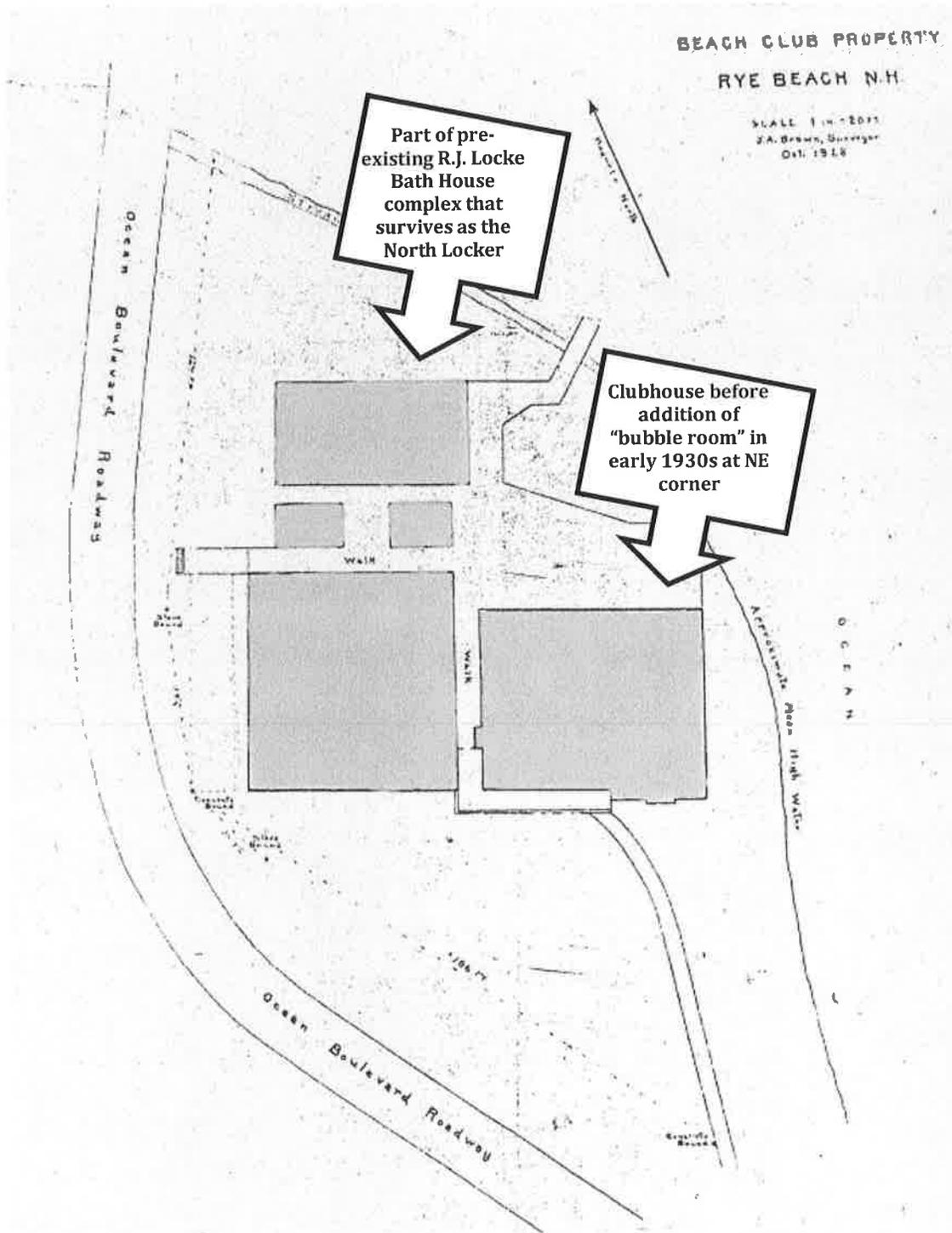


Figure 3: Pre-swimming-pool site plan showing Locke bathhouse layout when acquired by Beach Club in 1928

Figure 4: Location Map



Latitude: 42.978179 / Longitude: -70.765359
UTM: 19T 356054.92m E 4759905.43m N









NO PARKING
ANYTIME













BEACH ACCESS
SAWYER'S BEACH









NO
SMOKING

