

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Sea Foam Motel

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 7111 South Virginia Dare Trail not for publication N/A

city or town Nags Head vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Dare code 055 zip code 27959

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. (\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Crow SHPD 10/29/04  
Signature of qualifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
____ entered in the National Register ____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
____ determined eligible for the National Register ____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
____ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
____ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
____ other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Sea Foam Motel  
Name of Property

Dare County, NC  
County and State

5. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property</b> (Check as many boxes as apply)	<b>Category of Property</b> (Check only one box)	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b> (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	1	1
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	1
		4	2
			buildings
			sites
			structures
			objects
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
Cat: DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
Cat: DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)  
Modern Movement

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)  
foundation brick  
roof asphalt  
walls brick  
wood  
other

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

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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**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1948-1964

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1948

1951

1964

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Sea Foam Motel  
Name of Property

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1.8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 18 446180 3973960  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**  
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**  
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Beth Keane, Preservation Consultant

organization Restrospective date October 2003

street & number 2001 Metts Avenue telephone 910-815-1096

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28403

**12. Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Sea Foam Properties, Inc. (c/o Lee Raver)

street & number 1788 Hungary Road telephone 804-262-8343

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23228

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Sea Foam Motel  
Dare County, NC

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 1948 Sea Foam Motel is located on the Currituck Banks (also known as the Outer Banks) of North Carolina. The Currituck Banks are part of a small maritime barrier peninsula incorporating the North Banks communities of Corolla, Duck, Southern Shores, Kitty Hawk, Kill Devil Hills, and Nags Head. This sandy strip of the Outer Banks is separated from the mainland, first by the shallow freshwater Currituck Sound, below which lies the expanse of Albemarle Sound. The beach-side Sea Foam Motel is located in the Nags Head community and sits on the east side of Virginia Dare Trail (NC 12) at Mile Post 16 ½.

The Outer Banks are a major tourist destination and thus, the area surrounding the motel is a mix of commercial enterprises including restaurants, stores, rental cottages, and various overnight accommodations. The one- and two-story brick motel is situated directly on the beach fronting the Atlantic Ocean. Several picnic tables and grills sit on the beach east of the motel for the enjoyment of the guests. The motel's three major sections were built several years apart and form a U-shape enclosing a large parking area on three sides. An in-ground swimming pool, a small children's playground, and a shuffle board court are located in the middle of the parking lot. The nominated parcel includes the Sea Foam Motel and associated recreational structures standing on a 1.84-acre tract referred to as Lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Block 8, Section A, of the subdivision known as Whalebone Beaches.

1. Sea Foam Motel                      1948/1951/c. 1955/1964                      Contributing Building

Built in 1948, the one-story, south-side section was the original Sea Foam Motel. It includes a two-story office located slightly off-center in the linear arrangement of motel rooms. The two-story east wing facing the beach was built in 1951. In the mid-1950s, a section of the two-story north wing was constructed and the three wings were joined by enclosing the corners. A two-story extension, including several additional rooms and a garage with a second-story apartment, was appended to the north wing in 1964.

The entire motel is sheathed with brick veneer, with the exception of the west side of the upper level of the beach front wing, which is sheathed with composite siding. The original one-story south wing features a low-pitched hipped roof, which extends beyond the north elevation, creating an exterior sitting area for the motel's guests. Each motel room has a picture window, a paneled wood door, and an exterior screen door. A segmentally-arched fascia board on the north elevation is supported at regular intervals by wood posts. The gables, wood trim, and signage of the motel are painted a vivid blue-green, mimicking the color of the ocean, while the white posts and railings provide a striking contrast.

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The motel's two-story office interrupts the linear arrangement of the motel rooms. The shed-roofed office projects slightly from the arcaded porch. The reception vestibule is located in the front area of the office and is two stories high on the interior. Sixteen large single-pane windows make up the front wall and flood the interior with light. Two doors located on the office's east and west flanking elevations provide access to the reception vestibule. Italic letters spelling "*Sea Foam*" are anchored on the roof of the office.

The two-story, east section of the motel, originally detached, faces the ocean at right angles to the southern portion. A flat roof with a central gable defines this section. The rooms are, again, arranged in a linear fashion with covered porches on both the east and west elevations of the building. West-side flanking stairs rise from a raised central cement patio to the second-story. A four-board railing encloses the upper level porch. Flat doors on the west side and six-panel doors on the east side open into each of the rooms, providing direct access from either the parking lot or the beach. The addition of screen doors allows for fresh sea air ventilation. West-side windows on the first level of the north and south wings include single and double two-over-two double-hung sash with horizontal panes. Upper level windows include a picture window flanked on either side by four single lights. The beach side doors are flanked on one side by large picture windows. Two narrow passages lead through the motel from the parking lot to the beach. A utility room containing vending machines, ice machines, sinks, and fish cleaning tables is located on one side of the northern passage. Large block plywood letters forming the name of the motel are anchored in position on top of the north side of the roof.

The northern wing was built at two different time periods. In the mid 1950s, the first section of the north wing was constructed at right angles to the east wing of the motel and the north and south wings were joined to the east section by the addition of two-story corner units, thereby forming a U-shaped building. Similar to the east section, the north wing is two stories with a flat roof. Double-tier porches extend along the south and north elevations. The rooms are accessed only from the south side on the first level. The second-level rooms also include a door opening onto the second level porch on the north side. In 1964 the wing was extended with a two-story addition containing several additional motel units and an attached garage and apartment. The completed motel contains a total of fifty-one rental units.

Interior guest rooms vary in size and appointments. Many of the rooms are sheathed with the original knotty pine paneling, while the newer 1964 section is sheathed with sheet rock. Carpeting covers the bedroom floors, while the ceilings are covered with plaster or acoustic tiles. All of the bathrooms have ceramic tile floors and bath and shower surrounds. Many rooms retain the original white porcelain bathroom fixtures. Nineteen of the rooms also include kitchenettes, while the corner units comprise apartments with two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. The western end of the northern wing has an open garage and storage area on the first level and a modern apartment over it. The apartment includes a living room, bedroom,

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bathroom, and kitchen. All of the rooms are enhanced by a protected exterior sitting area with wood beach chairs to relax in.

On September 18, 2003, the Sea Foam Motel survived a direct hit from Hurricane Isabel. Although the storm surge swept through the first-floor, ocean-front rooms, damage was limited. Beach-side doors and windows were replaced with custom doors and windows made to match the originals. On the interior, carpeting was replaced, paneling was temporarily removed to dry out rooms and facilitate the replacement of insulation and damaged electrical wires.

2. Swimming Pool                      1948                      Contributing structure

A large in-ground swimming pool is located in the middle of the parking area. The cement pool is rectangular in shape with a curved wading pool section at the eastern end. A large cement deck surrounds the pool and it is enclosed by a new plastic picket fence. A small wood utility storage shed is located on the west side of the pool.

3. Playground                      ca. 1950                      Contributing site

A children's playground area is located north of the swimming pool. The site includes modern playground equipment, including a swing set and climbing equipment.

4. Shuffle Board Court              ca. 1950                      Contributing object

A cement "Magic Fingers" shuffle board court is embedded in the ground east of the swimming pool.

5. Sign                                  1999                      Noncontributing object

A large sign mounted on a tall vertical base is positioned on the property adjacent to the highway. The sign was erected to replace an earlier sign that was damaged by Hurricane Dennis in 1999. The top of the sign has a colorful design with the word "Welcome" underneath it. Below that are the words "Sea Foam" in Italics and "Motel" in large block letters. Below that is a rectangular area suitable for advertising messages.

6. Gazebo                              2003                      Noncontributing structure

A new gazebo, built to replace one destroyed by Hurricane Isabel on September 18, 2003, is situated on the beach about twenty feet east of the motel. The rectangular frame structure is elevated on wood posts, has a hipped shingle roof with circular rafter tails, and is enclosed with benches.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sea Foam Motel is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A in the area of entertainment and recreation for its contribution to the development of tourism and patterns of social and cultural development on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The modest one- and two-story motel represents the tremendous growth of the tourist industry to the Outer Banks in the post-World War II years. The construction of improved highways and bridges to the Outer Banks resulted in an influx of tourists to the previously isolated region and motor courts proliferated all along the island. The Sea Foam Motel is also eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C for architecture. The motel is one of the last and best preserved of the motor courts of the post-War era on the Outer Banks. The period of significance begins in 1948 when the original portion of the motel was built and extends to 1964 when the final section was added. The Sea Foam Motel meets Criterion Consideration G as the overall appearance of the motel today was not defined until the mid 1950s and 1964 additions, all built in the spirit of the "low-brow modernism" of the earlier sections. The motel continues to provide visitors to the Outer Banks with comfortable, affordable, and relaxing accommodations. Numerous vacationing families have returned annually for several generations to enjoy the special ambiance of the Sea Foam Motel.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND and CONTEXT  
for ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION**

The North Dare Outer Banks community known as Nags Head from its early beginning was destined to become a resort community. By 1830, Nags Head boasted a hotel with accommodations for 200 guests. An 800-foot railway carried guests from the sound side hotel to and from the beach. Guests arrived via the *Neuse*, a steam packet that sailed regularly between Elizabeth City and New Bern with stops at Roanoke Island. Following the Civil War and before the three-mile Wright Memorial Bridge was completed in 1930, boats remained the principal means of transportation to and from the Banks. Visitors disembarked on the west side of Roanoke Island and traveled overland to Manteo from where they would board a sailing vessel for the short trip to Nags Head. With the construction of the Old Nags Head Pier in the 1890s, passengers could disembark from their boat directly onto the North Dare Outer Banks island. (Conway, pp. 13-16).

Nags Head developed into a family resort, informal and easygoing, frequented by families from Elizabeth City, Hertford, and Edenton. It was common for women and children to spend the summer at the beach with the husband and father joining the family on the weekends. Many of the regular visitors built summer cottages along the sound shore, enjoying the easy access to the calm waters for sailing, crabbing, fishing, and swimming. By the turn of the



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twentieth century, however, visitors began building their cottages nearer the ocean (Stick, p. 56-57).

The resort area was initially confined to a two-mile stretch in the Nags Head vicinity until access by automobile was provided by the construction of the bridges and roads in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Regular ferry service was also established across both the Croatan Sound and the Oregon Inlet. With the new roads, bridges, and ferries, the Outer Banks was no longer isolated from the outside world. Thereafter, the resort development began spreading southward toward Bodie Island and eventually to Hatteras and Buxton and north past Kill Devil Hills to Kitty Hawk and Southern Shores. Roanoke Island, across the sound, also became a tourist destination with the opening in the summer of 1937 of Paul Green's symphonic drama *The Lost Colony* in the Waterside Theater at Fort Raleigh (Stick, p. 57).

Several additional developments in the 1930s helped secure the reputation of the Outer Banks area as a tourist destination. In 1927, a bill was passed in Congress authorizing the construction of a national monument to the Wright brothers at Kill Devil Hill. The owners of Kill Devil Hill and the adjoining property donated the land for the monument. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first flight, the cornerstone for the Wright Memorial was laid and by early 1931, actual construction of the memorial was in progress (Stick, p. 246).

By the end of the Depression, tourism to the Outer Banks increased greatly and the locals dealt with the influx of visitors in a variety of ways. Initially, guests were accommodated in spare bedrooms in private homes or cottages. Several enterprising Manteo citizens even built small cottages behind their houses. Tourist homes began to open their doors to the traveling public. In Manteo, the Eleanor Dare Tourist Home was opened by Edna Bell in her 1930s Colonial Revival residence and Cannady's Rest-Over, a large Queen Anne-style house on Sir Walter Raleigh Street, also offered overnight accommodations. Oceanfront establishments included the First Colony Inn (NRHP, 1992), the Arlington, and Parkinson's. Several smaller tourist homes and one tourist cabin development, the Breakers Motor Court (DR 560), opened at Kill Devil Hills (Sandbeck, p. 77).

In 1946, Theodore Meekins (1870-1954) and his wife, Rosa Midgette Meekins (1881-1954), began acquiring ocean front parcels of land in the subdivision known as Whalebone Beaches, just south of Nags Head, near the former site of Roanoke Inlet. The Meekins and Midgette families have been associated with the Outer Banks since the eighteenth century. On February 13, 1946, they purchased Lots one, two, three, four, and eight in Block eight, Section "A" in Whalebone Beaches (Deed Book 29, p. 439). The following year, on May 16, 1947, they purchased Lot numbers six and seven in Block eight of the Whalebone Beaches subdivision from Edward and Margaret Oast (Deed Book 31, p. 639). The Meekins proceeded to build the first section of the Sea Foam Motel, opening the doors to vacationers in 1948. The one-story brick

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motel was one of the first motels on the beach to include an in-ground swimming pool. In 1951 a second two-story, beachside unit was added to the complex.

The prosperity of the 1950s, along with massive highway construction, encouraged a considerable expansion of the country's tourist industry. Increasing numbers of summer cottages and small motels were constructed on the beach side of the island during the 1940s and 50s. Americans were embracing the idea of a beach vacation and the Outer Banks, although still rather remote, offered an idealistic setting with its windswept beaches and relaxed atmosphere. The Sea Foam Motel provided appealing amenities including one of the first swimming pools associated with a motel on the beach, a playground for the children, fish cleaning stations, and outdoor grills and picnic tables. Although Nags Head was still a seasonal resort, the motel was able to add a substantial wing in 1951, providing a separate two-story section facing the beach and at right angles to the original building. Several years later, it expanded once again, adding another two-story component and enclosing the corners, thereby creating a U-shaped motel encircling a central parking lot and swimming pool. The expansion of the motel followed national trends in which it became more profitable for motels to include fifty or more units.

Both Theodore and Rosa Meekins died in 1954 and their sons, Theodore S. Meekins Jr. and Percy W. Meekins inherited the property. Theodore and his wife, Goldie H. Meekins, continued to operate the motel for the next twenty-two years. They expanded the motel once again in 1955 adding another two-story section to create a U-shaped complex surrounding a large parking area with a swimming pool in the center. The final addition was made in 1964 when a two-story addition was added to the 1955 north-side wing, adding several additional guest rooms and a two-car service garage with an overhead apartment unit.

On May 12, 1976, Goldie Meekins, widow of Theodore S. Meekins, Jr., and Percy W. Meekins and his wife, Elizabeth G. Meekins, sold the property to a newly formed company known as the Sea Foam Corporation (Deed Book 233, p. 859). On April 12, 1989, the Sea Foam Corporation transferred title of the property to Sea Foam Properties, Inc., a North Carolina Corporation (Deed Book 623, p. 672). The new owners have continued operating the motel in the same tradition as the Meekins family. The motel retains its 1950s ambience with its pine-paneled walls, original tiled bathrooms, and screen doors that allow circulation of the fresh ocean breezes through the rooms. Vacationing families have continued to return to the Sea Foam Motel for several generations, appreciating the simple amenities and old-fashioned personal service the motel provides.

#### ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The motel evolved from a series of distinct cabins, popular during the 1920s and 1930s, into a continuous line of rooms preferred after World War II. Motels consisting of individual cabins,

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cabins, although desirable for their sense of privacy, were economically impractical as business operations. Each had to have separate heating, plumbing, and electrical connections. By joining the rooms together, great economies in construction could be realized by the single, shared mechanical and electrical systems. In addition, the maintenance of connected rooms and the surrounding landscape was easier and more efficient. Instead of exhibiting individual architectural flair like the cabins of the 1920s and 1930s, the post-war motels looked pretty much the same. Differentiation was achieved by clever names, elaborate signs, and other cosmetic amenities (Margolies, p. 93).

Postwar affluence coupled with a housing shortage brought record numbers of people into motor courts throughout the country. For many returning veterans, the highway hospitality business seemed an ideal place to get started in business. The romanticized ideal of the independent roadside inn seemed especially welcome after fifteen years of depression and war. By 1948, there were over 26,000 motor courts, twice the 1939 census. Another 15,000 were built between 1949 and 1952. Most were small-scale and individually owned, offering friendly service and individual attention to customers (Margolies, p. 90).

The architectural expression of post-World War II motor courts tended to be more practical and modest than the exuberant styles of the prewar years. For the most part, the post-war motels were relatively small, nondescript interconnected lines of motel rooms with an attached registration office. By today's standards, the motels of the 1940s and early 1950s were still rather Spartan affairs. In 1951, an average establishment included twenty-five rooms, but fewer than six percent of all motels had pools, fewer than eight percent had restaurants, and fewer than twenty-eight percent had any carpeting on the floors of the rooms. As in prewar auto courts, the motel of the 1950s still had virtually no interior public spaces, other than a small registration area (Margolies, p. 92).

Following the national trend in the years following the end of World War II, motor courts proliferated all along the Outer Banks. The Sea Foam Motel followed the typical architectural formula for a post World War II American motel. The initial phase included a single row of approximately ten one-story motel rooms, set at right angles to the beach. Each room included a private bathroom and a covered front patio with several chairs, providing an outdoor extension in which to enjoy the ocean breezes. The rooms were enhanced with knotty pine paneling, carpeting, and tiled bathroom floors and bathtub surrounds. Vacationers were additionally enticed with a large in-ground swimming pool located in front of the motel, adjacent to the beach.

A number of motor courts and motels were built along the Outer Banks in the 1940s and 50s. The Wilbur and Orville Wright Motel, located in Kill Devil Hills, is one of the oldest motel courts on the island still in existence. Although it began in the early 1940s as a modest tourist

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home, by the 1950s it had been updated with a one-story side wing at each end of the central block. The motel features a gabled portico with a sloping roofline, sloping further with the extension at either side. By the 1960s, the motel expanded into a T-plan brick and concrete two-story building. Although the motel has been expanded upon several times, it remains an important motor court survivor in the competitive Outer Banks motel business.

Similar to the Sea Foam Motel, the Cavalier Motel, located in Kill Devil Hills, retains much of its original late-1940s character. Begun in 1949, the Cavalier originally was composed of eighteen flattop concrete-block cottage units arranged horseshoe fashion around the motel's driveway. Over the years the separate duplexes were gradually joined under one continuous porch, and in the 1960s were sheathed with brick veneer. Similar to the Sea Foam, the popularity of the Cavalier is enhanced by a centralized swimming pool, playground, and shuffleboard court. In addition, arcaded walkways located in the east unit provide passage from the parking lot to the beach. As with the Wilbur and Orville Wright and the Sea Foam motels, the survival of the Cavalier may be due to the maintenance of its 1940s-50s motor court origins. Many of the rooms retain 1950s glass and wood sash doors, horizontal two-over-two, double-hung sash windows, and original knotty pine interior walls.

The country's prosperity continued into the 1960s resulting in an increased interest among the population in vacation travel and, in particular, visiting the nation's National Parks and seashores. The travel industry responded by standardizing hotel accommodations, thereby the traveling public would not encounter any unpleasant surprises. In addition, the limited-access highway building of 1950s further encouraged large-scale development. The institution of the motel evolved into the motor inn or the motor hotel. These new accommodations were much larger, often 150 to 300 rooms. The rooms were in multistory buildings often arranged back-to-back along a central utility core. More elaborate than their predecessors, the new motor inns included swimming pools in lush landscaped surroundings, bars, restaurants, coffee shops, meeting rooms, lobbies, and telephone switchboard service for the rooms. Many of the motor inns developed into franchises attracting customers with their name recognition, including such well-known chains as the Holiday Inn, Howard Johnson's, and Best Western. By the 1970s, the franchised motel business took over the market with little variation among the different chains. Consequently, the mom-and-pop motor courts of the 1940s and 50s nearly disappeared (Margolies, pp. 114-115).

In recent years, the Outer Banks has experienced a real estate boom, resulting in the construction of strip malls, restaurants, franchise hotels, and large, multi-family houses. The overzealous building of the last twenty years has seriously threatened many of the area's historic architectural resources, particularly some of the 1940s and 1950s motor courts, motels, and hotels. In the last two years, the Silver Sands Motel, the Carolinian Hotel, the Vivianna, the Pebble Beach Motel, and the Sea Spray Motel, all in Nags Head, have been razed. The ca. 1955

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Tan-A-Rama Motel in Kill Devil Hills is currently in the process of being converted to condominiums. For almost half a century these facilities accommodated families and vacationers, many of them long-term customers (Sandbeck, p. 85). The Sea Foam Motel remains an important survivor of only one of a few distinctive, individual, and economical motels of an earlier era on the Outer Banks.

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Section 9 – Bibliography

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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**Sea Foam Motel  
Dare County, NC**

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the nominated property include Lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Block 8, Section A of the subdivision known as Whalebone Beaches, as shown on the accompanying Dare County tax map. The parcel includes 1.84 acres.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries encompass the original four parcels of land associated with the Sea Foam Motel.