

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 an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories 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 Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex

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

### 2. Location

street & number 317 Carolina Beach Avenue, North N/A not for publication

city or town Carolina Beach N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county New Hanover code 129 zip code 28428

### 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Stephen J. Crow SHPO 1/21/97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

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

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Joy Lee Apartment Building & Annex  
Name of Property

New Hanover Co., NC  
County and State

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

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
	4	structures
	1	objects
2	5	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic:hotel

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic:hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Art Deco

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Other: built-up, tar covered

other Molded plaster

Wood

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets

**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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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)

- Architecture
- Community Development
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1945;1948

**Significant Dates**

1945  
1948

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Lewis, Grover L. - Architect/Builder  
Bordeaux, William W. - Builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

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

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Joy Lee Apartment Building & Annex  
Name of Property

New Hanover County, NC  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	2 3 3 0 4 0	3 7 6 9 8 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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 Elizabeth W. Keane

organization Retrospective date November 1996

street & number 321 North Front Street telephone 910-341-3000

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28401

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Grover L. Lewis and wife, Blanch M. Lewis

street & number 317 Canal Drive telephone 910-458-8361

city or town Carolina Beach state NC zip code 28428

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Joy Lee Apartment Building &amp; Annex

New Hanover County, NC

Section number 7 Page 1SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Built shortly after World War II on the Pleasure Island beach strand, the 1945 Joy Lee Apartment Building and its 1948 Annex have provided lodging for generations of beach tourists. Originally a peninsula of the main land, Pleasure Island was created in 1930 when the Army Engineering Corps constructed Snow's Cut, a channel connecting the Intracoastal Waterway to the Cape Fear River. Bounded by the Cape Fear River on the west, the Atlantic Ocean on the east, and Snows Cut and Carolina Beach Inlet to the north, the island lies on a north-south axis and tapers to a point at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The town of Carolina Beach dominates the northeastern portion of the island and is laid out on a northeast axis grid with a mix of commercial and residential development extending along the beach. Situated on the west side of North Carolina Beach Avenue, the Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex are separated from the beach by a road and one row of cottages and motels.

The 1945 principal east-facing two-story duplex apartment building is positioned near the front of the property. The 1948 Annex, a quadraplex, is situated near the back of the lot. Located between the two buildings is a 1976 inground swimming pool surrounded by a concrete deck and screened by decorative concrete fencing. A non-contributing curving sliding board is positioned near the southeast corner of the pool. The grounds are sparsely planted with low-growing indigenous shrubs and enclosed by a variety of low concrete walls.

1945 JOY LEE APARTMENT BUILDING - contributing building

A two-story, double-pile concrete block building covered with stucco, the Joy Lee Apartment Building is characterized by three arched bays which open onto lower and upper story porches. The straight forward block form is enlivened by molded plaster diamond-shaped lozenges beneath the windows, fanciful concrete balustrades and walls, as well as a shaped parapet roof line concealing a built-up tar covered roof. The original main (east) elevation featured centrally located front doors on the first and second levels with sliding glass windows on either side of the doors.

In 1960, the north bay of the first level porch was enclosed to accommodate an office. Positioned in a recessed arched opening, the glass panel front door provides an entrance directly into the office area. Flanked by two-panel glass sidelights, the door is also enlivened by three vertical lozenges on either side. A sliding glass door is situated in the south wall of the office. Fenestration of the first level principal (east) facade includes a sliding glass window with a horizontal molded plaster lozenge underneath it. Similar windows are incorporated into the

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porch, one on the east side and one on the north side. The front (east side) porch window is recessed and features a molded cement keystone.

A 1957 modification incorporates a first level Deco-inspired centered portico over the front entryway. Composed of two brick piers, each topped by a trapezoidal cement pier with circular cutouts, the portico supports a business sign resting on a cement platform spanning the piers. The original sign, shaped like an oversized "L" with the words "JOY LEE APTS" nestled within it, was replaced in 1996 with a retro design incorporating a decorative seahorse in addition to the name. An ornamental cement pelican is positioned on top of and near the front of each brick pier, completing the portico design.

The second level of the principal (east) facade preserves the original covered porch with three arched bay openings. Fenestration includes a centrally located six-panel wood door flanked by sliding glass recessed windows. A fanciful concrete balustrade, incorporating two rows of open cement circles topped with a cement handrail, encloses the north and south bay portions of the porch. A three-rail cement fence extends partially onto the platform area and encloses the central bay opening.

Originally positioned on the south side of the building, stairs leading to the second level porch were moved to the north side in 1956. The stairs rise from the back to the front along the north side of the building. The first level of the north facade incorporates a sliding glass window similar to those on the front. A small bay addition enlarging the dining area was added in 1976. The bay incorporates a sloping metal hipped roof, a single narrow window in both the east and west side, and a sliding glass window on its north side. A glass block window is positioned west of the bay. Second level fenestration of the north wall includes two louvered windows each embellished with a lozenge, and a small two-over-two single sash window situated west of the louvered windows. Each window is topped with a curved vinyl awning supported by wood spikes.

The south wall fenestration consists of four recessed two-panel louvered windows, symmetrically arranged: two on each level, each embellished with a horizontal lozenge. Each window is topped with an awning identical to those on the north side. Attached in 1996 to the southeast corner of the south wall, a fanciful seahorse ornament echoes the seahorse design of the business sign. A low rock wall suitable for small landscaping material nestles against the south wall foundation.

A 1958 one level den addition to the west (rear) facade of the building is currently utilized as a maintenance area and laundry room. Entrances include a two-panel wood door with four

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glass lights in the west wall and a glass-louvered door in the south wall. A decorative glass block window wraps around the southwest corner. Two recessed windows; one a single pane of glass, the other a fixed window with eighteen panes of glass, complete the fenestration of the west wall of the addition. Three access panels and two plain wood doors provide entrance to utility areas in the north side of the addition. A sliding glass door is located in the west wall of the main block of the building.

A 1976 spiral cement staircase ascends to the roof at the southwest corner of the addition. Entrances opening onto the roof, which is employed as a second level sundeck, include a six panel wood door and a very narrow plain wood door. A recessed two-panel window with a molded lozenge beneath it and a glass block window complete the fenestration of the second level west wall. A fanciful concrete balustrade surrounds the sundeck.

The lower and upper level interior apartments employ similar floor plans. An arched opening is incorporated into a stone-face dividing wall between the front living room and the dining area behind it. The dividing walls incorporate gas fireplaces which were added in 1960. Both apartments contain two equal-sized bedrooms positioned on the south side and an interior hall and bathroom. A small kitchen is located in the northwest corner of each apartment behind the dining area.

**1948 REAR ANNEX - contributing building**

A two-story double-pile Annex comprised of four apartments was built in 1948. Located to the rear of the lot west of the pool area, the Annex is a more fully-developed example of Moderne design. Designed and constructed by the owner, the Annex complements the Joy Lee Apartment Building in its Art Moderne/Deco stylistic details. Quite dramatic in appearance, the principal (east) facade of the Annex includes two end porches with segmentally arched lower sections and curved upper steel and concrete supports supporting a flat cantilevered roof. A 1976 centered double-stage curving, floating stairway rising to the second level porticos replaced the original steps which were situated on the outer side walls of the Annex.

The fenestration of the first and second main (east) elevation is identical. Two casement windows are symmetrically arranged near the center. When air conditioners were added in the 1950's adjacent windows were covered over with a panel painted with the diamond motif. Each apartment includes a two-panel wood door with six glass panes opening onto a covered portico. Flanking each door is a sliding glass window. The second level portico is enclosed by a 1976 fanciful decorative cement balustrade that echoes the balustrade on the second level of the main building.

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Originally, the north and south facades of the Annex included four symmetrically arranged windows on each side, two on the first level and two on the second level. Mr. Lewis had intentionally designed the interior halls of the apartments, in conjunction with the windows, to act as a wind tunnel pulling the ocean breezes through the apartment. When mechanical air conditioning was added in the early 1950s, the windows were closed over with panels which are each embellished with a large vertical diamond lozenge.

The west (rear) elevation features double porticos which were added in the 1960s. Exterior doors identical to those on the east facade open onto the porticos. The sliding glass windows adjacent to each door are embellished with the signature diamond lozenge. Echoing the front facade, the upper level porticos are enclosed by circular cement balustrades. A two-story bay projection in the center of the west facade includes a wood door on each level providing entrance to a utility room. Identical floor plans in each apartment include a dining/living area, two bedrooms, a small kitchen, and a bathroom.

### 1954 and 1976 WALL SYSTEM - noncontributing structure

After suffering irreparable damage during Hurricane Hazel in 1954, the original cinderblock walls surrounding the apartment building were replaced by a brick-capped cinderblock wall which extends along the sidewalk on either side of the front entry walk paralleling the front of the building. Two additional brick piers identical to the ones flanking the entryway are perpendicularly situated at the end of the cinder block wall near the corners of the building. A separate 1954 stepped cinderblock wall runs the length of the property along the northern border. The replacement walls were constructed with slots to allow water to flow around them during heavy storms. In 1976, a fanciful concrete fence was added to screen the swimming pool area.

### 1976 SWIMMING POOL - noncontributing structure

An inground rectangular shaped cement swimming pool was added to the property in 1976. The swimming pool, situated between the two buildings and surrounded by a cement deck, is enclosed by a cement fence incorporating decorative circles and ovals. A metal gate in the fence consists of 1/2" plate metal aluminum. A non-contributing sliding board situated in one corner of the pool was added in recent years.

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New Hanover County, NC

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### INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The 1945 Joy Lee Apartment Building and its 1948 Annex retain high degrees of architectural design integrity that is unusual in Carolina Beach resort properties. The climate of the North Carolina barrier strands such as the one that supports Carolina Beach, requires heavy maintenance of buildings because of harsh salt air, strong sunlight, and vulnerability to fierce winter storms and hurricanes. In addition to natural conditions that affect beach-front buildings, those that are associated with the tourist trade receive heavy use, and are often updated or replaced in order to remain competitive with current beach resort tastes.

Not surprisingly, the Joy Lee Apartment Building and its Annex have sustained a degree of change within the last forty-nine years. Minor improvements in 1954 after Hurricane Hazel include replacing original second hand windows and doors with new ones, adding the diamond lozenge plaster reliefs under the windows, and replacing the bathroom shower stalls with bathtubs. The 1957 addition of the lanai and portico on the main elevation contributed to the Art Deco flavor of the apartment building. The rear elevation was modified in 1958 with the addition of a one-level den and upper level sundeck and shortly after the north porch was enclosed to accommodate an office. The latest improvements date to 1976 and include the addition of a rear bay and installation of spiral cement rear stairs which ascend from the inground swimming pool screened by a fanciful, decorative concrete privacy wall.

Like the 1945 Apartment building, the 1948 Annex retains a significant amount of its original integrity. As with the main building, post-Hurricane Hazel windows were installed on the north, east, and south elevations, and diamond embellished panels to match those on the main building were added. The Moderne character of the building was enhanced in 1976 with the addition of the circular design balustrades and the centered floating stairway leading to the upper level porticos.

Today the Joy Lee Apartment Building and its Annex are regarded as landmarks of the immediate post-war resort development in Carolina Beach. The bold, blocky forms of both buildings are unchanged and exert a strong presence in the surrounding streetscapes. The original stuccoed block walls, reminders of the tremendous popularity of cinderblock construction which occurred all over the country during the 1940s, provide solid backgrounds for the distinctive parapeted roof of the main building and the cantilevered roof of the

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annex, as well as the plethora of Art Deco and Moderne decorative detailing. In all, the 1945 Joy Lee Apartment Building and its 1948 Annex display a high degree of original integrity in a beach-front resort context that is characterized by constant architectural change and rebuilding.

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New Hanover County, NC

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1945 Joy Lee Apartment Building and 1948 Annex building are eligible for National Register listing under criterion C for architecture and criterion A for community development. The 1948 Annex is also eligible under Criteria Consideration G for properties less than 50 years of age.

The town of Carolina Beach enjoyed a renaissance during the early 1940s. Following a disastrous fire which destroyed the commercial district of the town on September 19, 1940, masonry concrete block became the preferred construction material. Block was more resistant to fire than traditional wood construction and was better able to withstand the destructive forces of hurricane-strength winds. The national war effort also contributed to the scarcity of other types of building materials. Accordingly, the owner-designed Joy Lee Apartment Building was constructed using homemade cement blocks fabricated with a hand-operated cement block press.

Similar masonry buildings constructed in Carolina Beach within a ten-year time frame include the 1938 Carolina Beach Drug Store, the 1942 Carolina Beach Town Hall, and the 1944 Ocean Plaza Hotel. While stylistically somewhat different, the buildings share similar shapes, forms, and materials and are representative of a trend toward masonry and stucco construction which occurred in this beach resort community just before and after World War II. Resistant to the damaging effects of wind and water, concrete block construction was particularly suited for the damp environment of beach front communities. While the basic design of concrete block buildings tended to be rather boxy and plain, it was easy to jazz them up with stuccoed wall surfaces, molded designs, and steel and casement glass block windows. Brightly painted, the buildings began to be associated with the festive beach environment.

The 1948 Annex is considered eligible for nomination because it is tied so closely in time and place with the original building. Also designed by the owner and constructed with concrete blocks, the building's design is compatible with but not identical to the original apartment building.

Several styles incorporated into the original design of the Joy Lee Apartment Building helped to create a distinct vernacular interpretation of beach architecture. The Art Moderne Style is symbolized by smooth stucco wall surfaces, a flat roof, and glass block windows; while the Spanish Mission Style is incorporated by the molded parapet roof line. The flat, cantilevered roof of the

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Annex building is reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style. An admirer of the Art Deco movement, the owner embellished the buildings in 1954 with molded cement diamond lozenges underneath the windows, while in 1976 he replaced the three railing portico balustrades with circular concrete balustrades and added the floating stairway to the Annex Building, thereby creating a distinct and fanciful flavor to the buildings.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND and BEACH RESORT DEVELOPMENT

Unpopulated stretches of sand characterized New Hanover County's beaches until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The remoteness of the shore from population centers and the general population's lack of significant leisure time combined to leave beaches undeveloped until improved transportation routes and vehicles provided the means to get to the beach and the time to enjoy it once one had arrived.

The development of a beach culture in American society is directly related to the increase in leisure time for the American worker. The Industrial Revolution in North Carolina took hold during the second half of the nineteenth century. Agricultural workers and subsistence farm families left the countryside to gather in urban centers where factory jobs were available. Early on, working conditions were poor, often involving a sixty-hour, six-day work week. To rectify this situation, trade unions pushed for and won increased wages and reduced working hours. Eventually, the average worker obtained greater income and more free time, leading families to spend their newly acquired leisure time at the beach. Improvements in transportation also helped to promote the popularity of beaches. Train and trolley lines built by development companies could move more people long distances in relatively short periods of time, allowing families to leave behind the pressures, heat, and dirt of the noisy city for a day, or longer, at the beach.

Joseph Winner originally conceived the plan for a sea side town and summer resort for the Federal Point area in New Hanover County in 1886, to be known as the Town of St. Joseph. Although successful in developing the area into a popular destination for day trips for Wilmington's citizens, the isolated location prevented the infant settlement of St. Joseph from fully developing into an established community.<sup>1</sup>

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In the spring of 1912, the Southern Realty & Development Company began negotiating with the New Hanover Transit Company for the purchase of their holdings on Federal Point. On April 6, 1912, Mr. Pate, the development company's president, announced he had closed a deal with Captain John W. Harper, a representative of the transit company. The deal included a steam train, a steamboat pier on the Cape Fear River, and a rail line across the point, all of which had been constructed to transport visitors from Wilmington to the island's beaches. Two pavilions, a number of bath houses, and 200 acres of land running along the beach for nearly two miles were also included. Shortly thereafter, the new company purchased an additional 772 acres.<sup>2</sup>

Plans by the company to develop Carolina Beach into the finest resort on the North Carolina coast included building several modern hotels for year-round occupancy and the construction of a trolley line from Wilmington to the beach. In the fall of 1913, the property was surveyed and a short time later building lots were staked off and salesmen were hired to travel all over the South to market the property.<sup>3</sup>

By May 28, 1914, a newly installed electric light plant allowed incandescent lights to be strung along the strand. A new pumping station was installed and two artesian wells were sunk. On June 5, 1914, in honor of the grand opening of the "new" Carolina Beach, a round trip from Wilmington to the resort was offered by Captain Harper of the steamer Wilmington for an excursion rate of ten cents. Mr. Pate's dream of constructing a trolley line from Wilmington to Carolina Beach was not realized, however, partially due to the financial depression that followed the outbreak of World War I in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

In August, 1919, a fire destroyed the entire steamboat pier on the Cape Fear River. Mr. Pate advised the public that while service to the beach on the steamer, Wilmington, would be discontinued until further notice, those who wished to visit the beach could do so over a fine modern highway, the new Federal Point Road, between Wilmington and Carolina Beach.<sup>5</sup> Never-the-less, by the early 1920s Carolina Beach remained strictly a summer resort due mainly to storms, fires, and the lack of an adequate water supply.

The town of Carolina Beach officially incorporated in 1925. During 1926, a well was dug in Carolina Beach which provided a flow of 1500 gallons of water per twenty-four hour period; and although by 1927, a reservoir held 200,000

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gallons of fresh water, still only a few families chose to live at the beach the year around.

Development in Carolina Beach hit its stride following the completion of a new highway from Wilmington in the Spring of 1929 and the construction of Snow's Cut, a channel excavated through the peninsula connecting the Intracoastal Waterway to the Cape Fear River. On June 5, 1930, the Carolina Moon pavilion formally opened the summer season with a big dance. Construction began on two new motels, one of which contained sixty rooms. The Ocean View Hotel, the new Bames Hotel, and the Greystone Inn threw open their doors for the 1931 season. During that same year, thirty new cottages were erected on Carolina Beach.<sup>6</sup>

Although by 1940 the permanent population was still only about 640, Carolina Beach remained a favorite travel destination for those who wished to enjoy a day or a week at the beach.<sup>7</sup> Big bands frequented the town, drawing huge turnouts for evening dances; while oceanfront boardwalk establishments attracted the teenage crowd.

Nearby Wrightsville Beach was also undergoing a renaissance. A 1939 newspaper article by David Brinkley reported "Wrightsville Beach is undergoing the most general refurbishing program in its history and will present a new face to the thousands of people expected to visit the resort during the 1939 season."<sup>8</sup> He went on to report that the beach was in the process of being widened and strengthened, that jetties were being constructed and a total of 20 buildings were added, including two small hotels, fourteen cottages, one grocery store and three amusement establishments.

In the face of increasing competition from Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach development was dealt another setback on the night of September 19, 1940, when a devastating fire broke out in the Carolina Beach Pavilion burning many of the business establishments to the ground. The citizens of Carolina Beach looked over the ashes of what was once its main business district and immediately planned to rebuild a bigger and better resort to replace what was destroyed by fire.<sup>9</sup>

Carolina Beach drew most of its visitors from nearby Wilmington, which in 1940 was still a small, compact municipality.<sup>10</sup> By 1942, however, Wilmington had been transformed from a staid city into one of the busiest and most important governmental defense points in the entire southern United States. The

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building of Camp Davis, a massive anti-aircraft training center at Holly Ridge, and the opening of the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company on the Cape Fear River nearly doubled the city's population to approximately 80,000.<sup>11</sup> Thousands of people flocked to the city seeking jobs in the rapidly expanding defense industries. While many of the workers found housing within Wilmington, some of the overflow settled in nearby Carolina Beach.

Grover Lewis, a masonry construction worker, together with his family moved to Carolina Beach from High Point, North Carolina, in March, 1941. Mr. Lewis found employment with the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company and moved his family into the Marianne Cottage on North Carolina Avenue, slightly north of the business district of Carolina Beach. When the lot next door was filled in by a storm in the fall of 1944, the Lewis's decided to purchase it.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Lewis immediately began designing the apartment building he named Joy Lee after his daughter. Long shipyard hours required Mr. Lewis to hire William Bordeaux to build the basic concrete block building, while Mr. Lewis created the archwork architectural interests. The Lewis family hand fabricated the blocks used in the building's construction. After being packed and molded by the block press, the cement blocks were placed on wooden pallets to dry. The block press enabled the Lewis's to produce two blocks at a time, approximately fifty per evening.<sup>13</sup>

The Moderne-inspired duplex was rented to beach vacationers. Each apartment consisted of a living room, a dining room, a kitchen with an ice box, two bedrooms, each with a closet, and a central hall. Considered luxury units at the time, they came equipped with private porches, private baths with showers, and hot and cold running water.<sup>14</sup>

After the war, the Lewis family decided to remain in Carolina Beach and Mr. Lewis returned to his pre-war craft of masonry construction work. For the next ten years, Mrs. Lewis ran a nearby roominghouse, as well as the Joy Lee Apartment complex. The growth of the town nearly doubled during this time period; by 1950, there was a year round population of 1,080.<sup>15</sup>

Due to the popularity of the Joy Lee Apartment Building as a vacation destination, in 1948 Mr. Lewis added the Annex building. More fully developed in the Moderne style, the Annex was designed and constructed by Mr. Lewis, utilizing concrete blocks from a Wilmington cement factory. An inground swimming pool was installed in 1976 between the Joy Lee Apartment Building and the Annex Building as a means to remain competitive with recently

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constructed motels in Carolina Beach. Mr. Lewis designed and built a decorative concrete screen to enclose the pool area. At the same time, he replaced the three-rail concrete balustrades on the porticos of the buildings with fanciful circular concrete balustrades and added the centered curving staircase to the Annex.

Carolina Beach experienced widespread devastation from fierce storms several times during the past 50 years. Hurricane Hazel roared ashore with 150 mile-per-hour winds on October 15, 1954, destroying 362 buildings and damaging another 288.<sup>16</sup> Hurricane Diana in 1984 and Hurricane Fran in September, 1996, each caused widespread destruction in the town. Suffering only minor water damage and some roof damage, the solid masonry construction allowed the Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex to weather these storms intact.

The Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex were constructed at a time when beach resort development was experiencing unprecedented growth. Modern transportation improvements, such as new highways and reliable automobiles, provided the public easy accessibility to the island; while public utilities, including electricity and a reliable water source, enticed an increasing population into enjoying a beach vacation. The promotion of concrete block as an inexpensive and uncomplicated building material encouraged the construction of more hurricane resistant buildings. Concurrently, union efforts and advances in technology resulted in more pay and a shorter work week for the average employee. Many chose to spend their increased leisure time and disposable income at popular beach resorts.

### CONTEXT: ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of the typical beach house changed during the early twentieth century from traditional Victorian-era styles to more modern designs which became closely associated with the beach environment. The Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex are a unique combination of several popular architectural styles, including Mission Style, Art Deco, and Art Moderne. Designed by the owner using hand made cement blocks, the Joy Lee Apartment building reflects the owner's desire to incorporate several popular beach

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architectural styles into one building, while the Annex reflects a more sophisticated and fully developed Art Moderne Style.

After the devastating 1940 fire which destroyed many of the frame structures at Carolina Beach, cinderblock construction became a popular substitute. Not only was it deemed more durable, but because of the war effort, more traditional building materials were in short supply. The popular manufacture of block started with the 1900 invention of Harmon S. Palmer's cast-iron machine with removable core and adjustable sides. It was a durable, practical design which marked the beginning of the modern concrete block industry. Both the Portland cement industry and the concrete block industry experienced a phenomenal growth in the first decade of the twentieth century. Concrete block provided a relatively inexpensive and rapid method of construction. A block machine often cost less than one-hundred dollars, and the manufacturers promised that operating experience was unnecessary. Advertisers pointed out that concrete block was fireproof, required no paint and little repair, and would "last practically forever."<sup>17</sup>

In 1945 when owner Grover Lewis designed the Joy Lee Apartments, building supplies were scarce because of the war effort. Mr. Lewis, an experienced mason, located and purchased a hand operated cement block press. The Lewis family, turning out two blocks at a time with the block press, produced approximately fifty blocks per evening. Grover Lewis designed the building, his family assisted in manufacturing the cement blocks, and William Bordeaux, a local builder, accomplished the actual construction. Several of the architectural design elements, including the Art Deco diamond lozenges and the circular cement railings and staircases can be attributed to later additions by Mr. Lewis. Several motels in the vicinity, including the Paradise Inn across the street, display identifiable circular design cement handrails designed and built by Grover Lewis.

Similar construction occurred during this time period in the commercial district of Carolina Beach, including the Carolina Beach Drug Store. Somewhat distinct with its battlemented roof line, it resembles the Joy Lee Apartment Building in shape and form. The Carolina Beach Town Hall, built by the Works Progress Administration in cooperation with the Town of Carolina Beach in 1942, is similar to the Joy Lee Apartment Building with its stuccoed masonry construction and Moderne stylistic details. Also built in the Art Moderne Style, circa 1944, the Ocean Plaza Cafe is a third masonry commercial building

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constructed in Carolina Beach during approximately the same time period. The flat-roofed, stepped-parapet building features smooth cement stucco finishes, horizontal belt courses, curved glass block walls and windows with steel framed casements.

Due to the increasing popularity of the Joy Lee Apartments as a vacation destination, the Annex was constructed in 1948, utilizing cement block from a Wilmington block factory. While similar in form and structure to the original building, the cantilevered roof line and the curved walls enframing the porches of the Annex achieves a more fully developed Moderne effect than the Moderne/Mission Style of the Joy Lee Apartment Building. Architecturally, they are tied together with similar stuccoed concrete block construction, Art Deco inspired concrete balustrades, diamond shaped lozenges, and brightly painted exteriors.

The Annex accommodates four identical apartments, each comprised of a living/dining area, two small bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The Annex retains a remarkable degree of architectural integrity. Minor modifications include the 1976 replacement of a three-railing cement balustrade enclosing the upper level porticos with a fanciful circular one and the addition of the free floating staircase. Also several windows were replaced with decorative panels in the 1950s when air conditioning units were added to the building.

Through hurricanes and floods, the Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex have been tested by some of nature's mightiest forces. While the town of Carolina Beach has replaced many of its earlier structures with contemporary hotels, motels, and cottages, the Joy Lee Apartment complex is an original, built by hand by the determination and ingenuity of a World War II shipyard worker. The Joy Lee Apartments and Annex have provided Pleasure Island vacationers the opportunity to experience and enjoy an example of immediate post-war Moderne-Deco architecture that is a rare and unique survivor among later, dense beach-front development. The solid construction of the Joy Lee Apartment Building should ensure its survival, while continuing to provide Carolina Beach visitors with a glimpse into the past.

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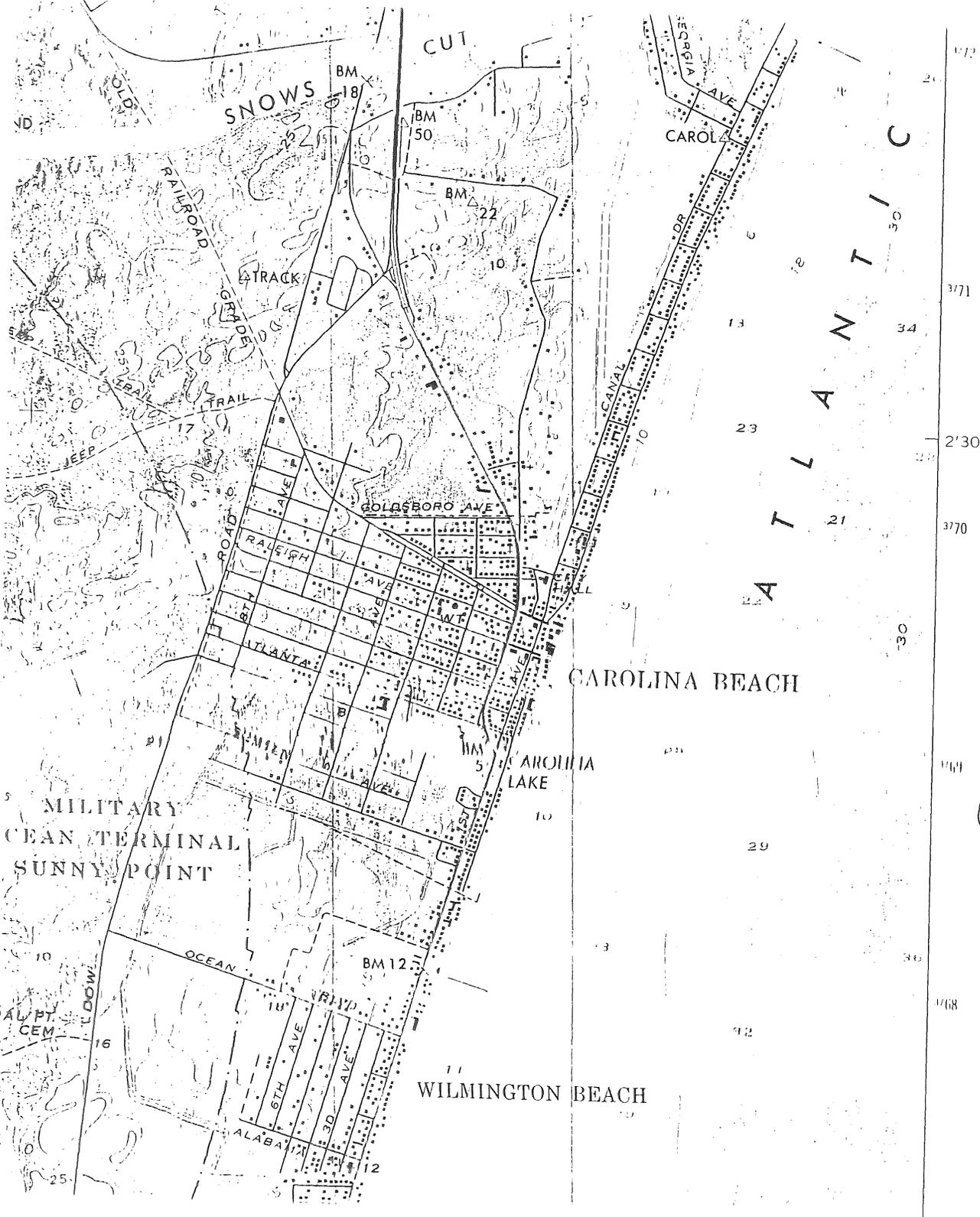
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New Hanover County, NC

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries for Joy Lee Apartment Building and Annex are located on city block #4, Lot #9, parcel #14 based on the county tax maps 88-18 and 88-19 of Carolina Beach, New Hanover County, North Carolina. The lot measures 125 ft by 50 ft.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the 1945 Joy Lee Apartment Building and the 1948 Annex.



JOY LEE APARTMENTS #1  
 ANNEX (NR)  
 NEW HANOVER CO., NC.  
 ZONE 18  
 N 3769860  
 E 233040

CAROLINA BEACH QUAD

