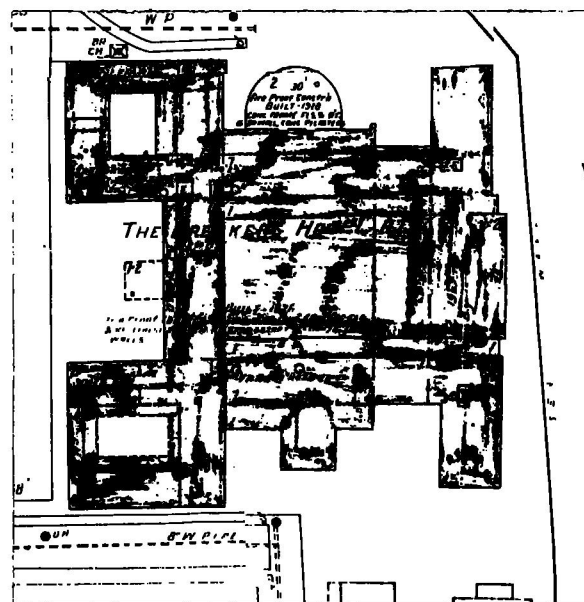
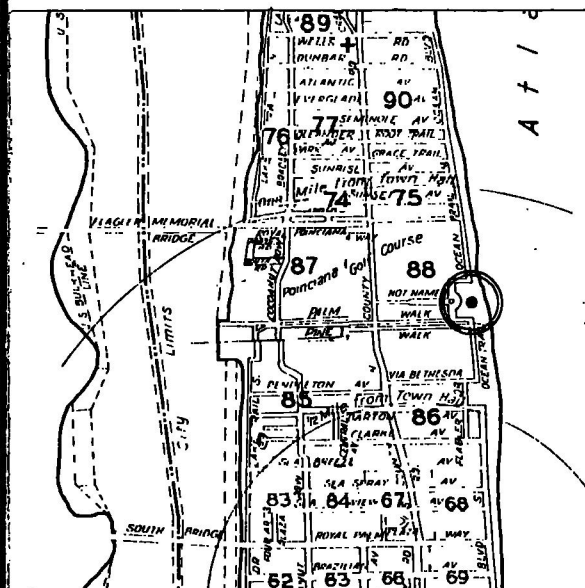
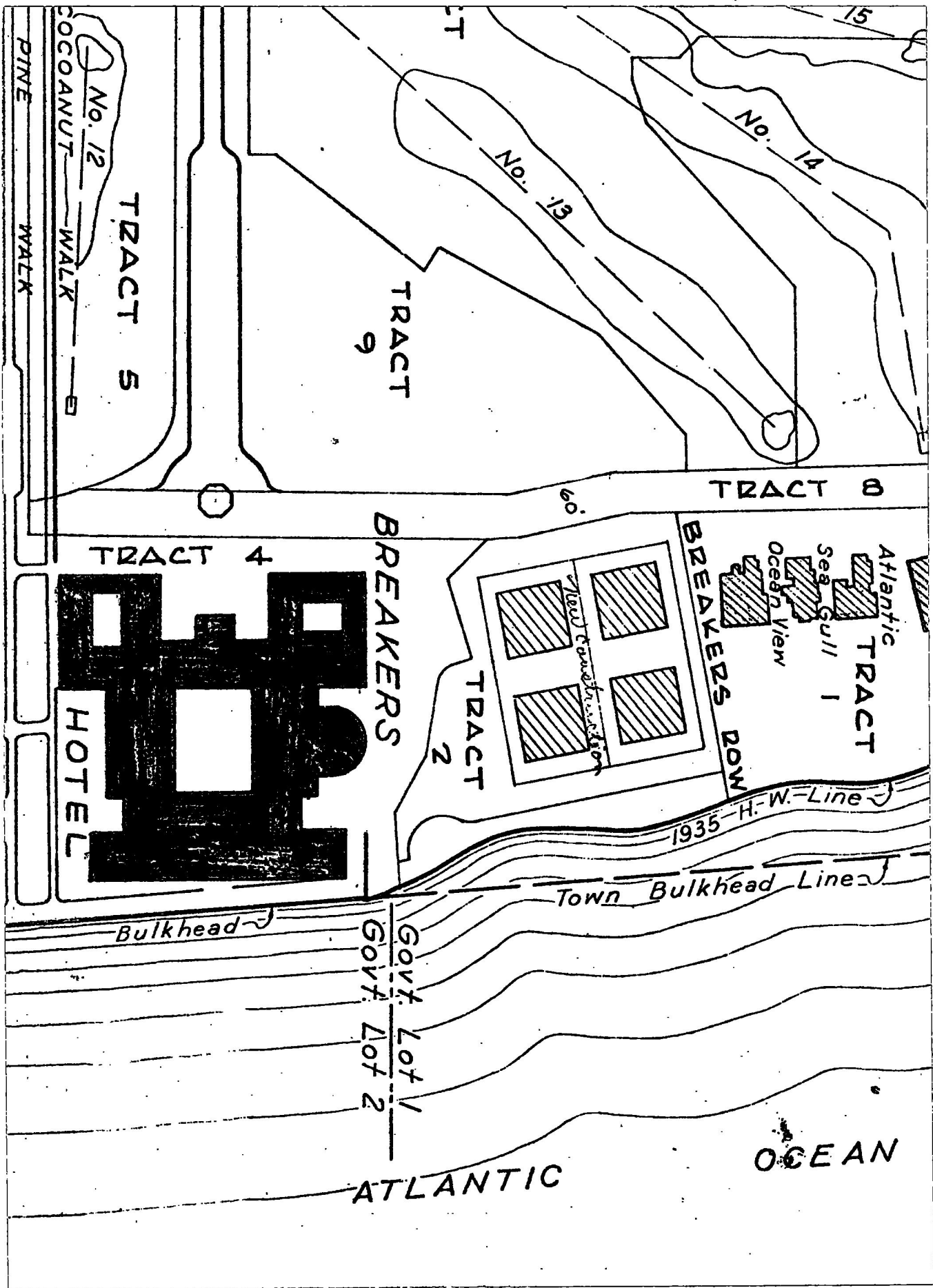


THE BREAKERS





GENERAL INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME OF STRUCTURE

Breakers Hotel

ADDRESS OF STRUCTURE

South County Road
Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida
33480

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Breakers Row, Plat 1, As in PB 31, p. 40 TR1 and TRS 3
to 13 inclusive

PRESENT OWNER

The Flagler System
P.O.Box 910
Palm Beach, Florida, 33480

ARCHITECT

Shultze and Weaver

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

1926

FUNCTION

Commercial

ZONING

PUD-A Planned Unit Development

PREVIOUS SURVEYS

NRHP Inventory 1972, HABS 1972

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description

From Florida Master Site File

The Breakers Hotel is the second to bear that name and stand on the same site. The building is basically H-shaped, but closed in on the east side creating the one-story Grand Loggia. The foundation is reinforced concrete with spread footings. There are seven floors above the public rooms in the central pavilion and five floors on the east-west pavilions which flank it. There are 425 guest rooms and 300 servants' rooms. The exterior walls are 8 inch thick interlocking clay tiles which are painted a light buff. These are trimmed with ornamental cast stone with cement mouldings and cornices. Interior partitions in the basement are terra cotta partition tile. On the bedroom floors, gypsum block was used for all partitions, except at stairways and elevator shafts where tile was installed. The frame of the building is reinforced concrete, consisting of floor slabs reinforced in two directions supported by concrete beams and columns carrying down to the spread footings.. The towers and wide spans in the main rooms in the ground floor are constructed with structural steel.

The hotel has a porte cochere on the west front which projects from the entrance loggia. It is two stories and framed by large corner piers to which are engaged double cast Corinthian pilasters. Within this rectangular frame, including the entablature and balustraded flat roof above, are three arched openings springing from the entablature block of paired Ionic columns on a common plinth. These openings are balustraded at the ground with large urns incorporated into the balustrade at each bay. The double driveway passes through a pair of similar arched openings on the north and south ends. The ceiling is a stuccoed barrel vault with groined intersections at the arches. The intrados of the arches

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description (cont'd.)

are decorated with rosettes.

The west entrance loggia extends along the west wall between the two projecting east-west pavilions. White Doric pilasters are engaged to the buff stucco wall opposite the exterior Ionic columns. Concrete pavers are used for the floor. This loggia is stopped on the north end by the wall of the service wing. On the south it passes across the end of the north porch to the Wheel-Chair patio, an open court paved with concrete pavers and used for the storage of wicker chairs. It is surrounded by an arched cloister framed by rectangular piers and shallow pilasters. On the south and east walls under the groined vaulted ceiling are shops. It is separated from the larger adjacent north porch by larger scaled piers.

The central patio is an open court surrounded by the major public rooms. The main lobby is on the west, the dining room on the north and the Grand Loggia and the promenade on the south. At the west end is a wide balustraded terrace leading to the main lobby. The cast concrete balustrade is set between moulded concrete pedestals. The high arched openings of the lobby wall are set into stuccoed reveals with engaged Ionic columns between the arches. On the north and south walls, rectangular openings are framed by double engaged Ionic columns and a cast concrete balustrade below the window sill. Concrete steps lead up to the doorways on the axis. There is a balustrade all around the central patio, interrupted only by a centrally placed dish-shaped fountain. In the center of the patio is a sunken reflecting pool enclosed by a cast balustrade. A concrete walk surrounds the pool.

At the main entrance on the west front of the hotel are three adjacent arched openings which frame the main entrance doors. A modern

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description (cont'd.)

revolving door has been installed in the central opening. This is flanked by double doors set deep in the stuccoed reveal. The doors are bronze and contain five square panels each. The doorway to the shopping arcade on the south wall is recessed on a porch. Double bronze doors duplicate the main entrance doors on the west. On the east and west walls of the central patio are axially located wooden French doors with fifteen lights each. They are set into plaster reveals framed by an engaged movable lower section and a fixed top. In the east and west walls of the patio, windows are set into arched openings framed by engaged Ionic columns. All bedroom windows on the upper floors are bronze sash which has successfully replaced the original wood sash.

Imported antique tiles have been used on the hipped roofs, with the exception of the service area, where flat roofs were covered with red shale tile surrounded by cast stone balustrades. Twin towers on the north and south ends of the major bedroom block are located at the intersection with the lower being a square mass with rectangular windows. The octagonal tile-roofed mass encloses an open belfry on the four cardinal compass points. Flag poles are located on the top of each tower.

The Breakers Hotel is one of the few remaining grand hotels with the original public rooms retaining the elegance of a past era. Since it has been in constant seasonal use since it was opened in December of 1926, it has been properly maintained and continues to be in good condition.

The Breaker's Cottages

All fourteen of the Breaker's cottages are built in Shingle Style architecture. The Shingle style became popular during the 1870's and 1880's. The trend was set in Newport, Rhode Island, by H.H. Richardson

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description (cont'd.)

when he completed the Watts-Sherman House in 1874. The style is noted for its open interior plan and it soon spread to become a favorite style at all the Northeastern seacoast resorts. It was carried to Palm Beach by the same people that had adapted it in the North.

All the Breaker's cottages are of the same architectural style and for that reason, only two are here described in detail.

The Lotus Cottage

The Lotus Cottage is a two-story frame structure with a finished attic. The central core has a roof with cross gables covered with asbestos shingles. A service lean-to runs the full length of the south side and a double office in the same lean-to style connects the southeast corner with the south wing. Exterior wall surface is hand split around the north half of the house and shows Greek Revival influence by featuring paired Doric half columns. The same columns appear on the north corners of the second floor where the building is recessed and a false balcony is created on either corner. Between the two balconies is a rectilinear bay with two sets of windows. All windows are 6/1 double hung sash. A bolection cornice is used on the eave of the core building.

The interior is centered around a large hall with an open staircase. The hall traverses the core and off it are the front and middle parlors and the dining room. The hall continues on the second floor with a master bedroom and bath to the east and a series of three interconnecting bedrooms to the west. The hall ends south with a bath. The third floor (attic) has three more bedrooms, a trunk room, a playroom and bath.

The "Spray" Cottage

This building is in fair condition for the many years of open exposure to the Ocean which it has endured. As a result of the thickness of the

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description (cont'd.)

paint applies over the years, the sharp mouldings and interstices have all been obliterated.

The house is a modified U-shape resting on rectangular brick piers with lattice infill. Walls on the first floor are white clapboard. This finish is terminated at an 18 inch deep belt course, the top moulding being a continuation of the second-floor window sills. The corners are terminated by 5 inch corner boards simulating pilasters. Walls of the second floor, as well as the gable wall and dormers are finished with natural finish cedar shakes. The 18 inch cornice at the eave is composed of simpler membering than the belt course below. The structural system of the house is wood frame and not accessible.

There is a brick chimney on the north wall terminating in corbelling and terra cotta chimney pots. A similar one is located at the eastern end of the south wall. There is also a small plain brick chimney on the service wing to the west.

The main entrance door on the east veranda is wood panelled with two vertical panels between the horizontal panels. There is a fixed transom above. The rear west door is modern glass jalousies with a fixed three light transom over the door. All door trim is plain flat wood except for the crown mould located over the head trim.

All windows are double hung sash. Window trim is plain flat jambs, heads and sills except at the second floor where the sills are a continuation of the belt course. There is also a projected crown moulding over the east windows. Dormer windows are framed by small pilasters with simple moulded capital supporting the projected cornice and the raking cornice moulding in the pediment. There are no shutters, but pintles are in place. The porch across the east front returns around the south side of the house. On the east it consists of four bays

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Description (cont'd.)

defined by paired square pilasters, separated by one baluster and rail. At the second bay from the north the bay is open to the wood steps leading to grade. The main roof and dormers are gabled, with a hipped roof over the south one-story wing which appears to have been added. There are asbestos shingles. There is a plain banded cornice under the eaves which projects approximately 12 inches. There is a single dormer on all sides except the west. Side walls are natural stained shingles. Their pedimented cornice and wall is painted white.

The "Spray" is the southernmost of a row of three similar cottages south of the Breakers Hotel. It is bounded on the south and east by an asphalt road with asphalt drives on the north and south. There is a whitewashed wall on the south and a latticed rear yard on the southwest corner. The house faces the Atlantic Ocean on the east and is screened on the west from the Golf Course by Australian pines, which also form a hedge on the west.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Architectural Significance

The plight of the present day Breakers Hotel is the same that has befallen the world's other great hosteleries. The building is reflective of a way of life that no longer is possible. It was a strange dichotomy of incredulous granduer, uncomfortable formality and the absence of modern technological luxuries. In the tradition of the wooden structures that preceeded it, the present Breakers Hotel is possibly the most prestigious of all American resort hotels. Its guest lists read like pages from the social register, since guests were screened until lately.

The Breakers is important to Palm Beach history because it is contemporary with the Royal Poinciana-the first hotel on the island. It is important to American history in that it epitomizes the Florida Boom years and is one of the last of the great hotels.

More important to modern day Palm Beach than the history and prestige is the existence of the open space known as the Breakers Ocean Golf Course. This is the property lying between Cocoanut Row, S. County Road and Royal Poinciana Way and between S. County Road and the hotel proper. Due to its island nature, Palm Beach available land use is limited. From the beginning this has caused the town to develop a concentrated, tight urban fabric. Complementing and offsetting the close knit pattern are the vast open vistas of ocean, lake and golf courses. It is this delicate balance of solid and void that gives Palm Beach its magnificent and unique urban atmosphere. This was realized by leading urban designers as far back as 1930. Architects Bennet, Parsons and Frost gave their views:

As the privately owned open spaces (empty lots) disappear, the public open space must replace them to preserve the character of Palm Beach.

Breakers Hotel

Architectural Significance (cont'd.)

The Breakers course is the most important of all the island courses simply because it already is and has always been visually a public space. Since it is traversed by the island's main motor artery, Florida AIA, and bordered by two other important arteries, it can be viewed from the street and therefore, it is appreciated more than those courses which are surrounded by buildings or screened from view by hedging. Likewise, its loss would be more greatly felt. The golf course space is essential to the character of Palm Beach, not in its function as a golf course but rather in the scale of negative relief to positive space it provides to the town as a whole.

At the turn of the century Palm Beach society was known as "the cottage colony." Yearly visitors to the island began to find hotel rooms too small and inadequate for their expanding needs. Mr Flagler responded by constructing a series of cottages on the ocean and one near Whitehall that could be rented for the season. Although an entire family would frequently occupy a cottage, even to the point of bringing their own household staff, social activities continued to revolve around the hotel, as the cottages were very much a part of the Florida East Coast Hotel System. The hotel cottages became so popular that individuals began to erect their own cottages on town lots. It was to such a cottage on Chilean Avenue that Paris Signer brought Addison Mizner in 1918, to recuperate from pneumonia. The shingle cottage was the first stage of private development that Palm Beach went through. Such cottages remain scattered throughout the town today.

PHOTOGRAPHY

