

ORMOND HOTEL
15 East Granada
Ormond Beach
Volusia County
Florida

HABS No. FL-380

HABS
FL-380

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Southeast Region
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Ormond Hotel

HABS No. FL-380

Location: 15 East Granada
Ormond Beach
Volusia County
Florida

Present Owner: Milton Pepper
Box 1422
Ormond Beach, Florida, 32176

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: None. Presently being razed.

Statement of Significance: The Ormond Hotel, constructed in 1887, is significant for its' architectural merit and its' historical relationship with Henry M. Flagler and the growth of tourism and auto racing in Florida. Situated on a thin peninsula between the Halifax River and the Atlantic Ocean, the hotel is a huge, sprawling frame structure, the last remaining frame hotel once a part of Flagler's chain of luxury hotels.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The original structure was completed in 1887 and then expanded until the final addition was made in 1905.

2. Architect/Builders: The architect was George Penfield, a fourteen year old boy. The original building was financed by Wall Street millionaire Steven Van Cullen and constructed by John Anderson and Joseph Price.

3. Original and subsequent owner: The owners were John Anderson and Joseph Price. In 1890 Henry M. Flagler purchased the fledgling hotel and railroad for \$112,000, forging the second link in his East Coast Hotel Company. Allowing Anderson and Price to remain as managers, Flagler increased the hotel's size from 75 to 150 rooms in 1890, and to 300 in 1899. By 1905, Flagler had expanded the hotel to its' largest size, adding three wings, to the north, south, and west. He painted the hotel the traditional "Flagler Yellow". Flagler also built a railroad bridge parallel to the wooden bridge which allowed trains to deliver the private cars of the Ormond Hotel's wealthy guests to the hotel door. After World War I, patronage of the hotel declined. In 1949 the East Coast Hotel System sold the hotel to Robert Woodward who converted it into an unsuccessful hotel management school. Woodward then sold the hotel to Reverend C.A. Maddy for \$ 175,000. Maddy converted the hotel into a retirement home. However it was managed poorly and went into receivership. In 1965, Thomas Wetherall purchased the hotel and under his ownership the south was shortened to allow for the widening of Granada. Purchased then in 1978 by Paul and Peter Francis. In 1988 it was purchased by Milton Pepper and in 1992 Milton Pepper had the structure razed.

4. Alterations and additions: Henry M. Flagler had the north wing built in 1902, the south wing in 1904, and the west in 1905. The west wing, or the Rockefeller wing, projects from and eliminates the original 1888 entrance. The south wing was shortened in 1967. Until 1905 a balcony skirted between the north and south tower.

B. Historical Context:

The impetus to build a hotel at Ormond came only after the construction of a railroad from East Palatka to the banks of the Halifax River in 1886. A wooden bridge was then constructed across the river in 1887 making access between the mainland and peninsula permanent. The narrow gauge railroad had been constructed with the financing of Steven Van Cullen White, who stayed in Ormond with his sister-in-law recuperating from an illness. White quickly realized the financial opportunities created by the completion of the railroad, as did John Anderson and Joseph Price. Anderson and Price approached White with their idea to build a hotel on the peninsula. Against the judgment of many people who looked skeptically upon the chances for success of a hotel in the wilderness, White agreed to finance the hotel. Construction of one of the most famous hotels on the east coast of Florida soon began.

The Ormond Hotel opened its' doors on a seasonal basis on January 1, 1888, with each of its' rooms renting for \$4.00 a night. The season usually ran from the first week of January to the first week in April. However, the resort was so remotely located that it was financial unsuccessful in the first two seasons it was open. Henry Flagler had watched the building of the Ormond Hotel closely, fearing it as a competitor to his newly constructed Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine. In 1890 he purchased the hotel and increasing the room capacity to 300 in 1905. The hotel operated as a self-contained community, housing facilities for all the resorts activities. The grounds and support facilities at this time included a separate kitchen, power house, laundry, lumber shed, green house, rose garden, stables, two servants barracks, saltwater swimming pool, casino, putting green, croquet

and tennis courts, stores, motion picture theater, garage and grandstands. The hotel had itself over 400 rooms.

After Flagler acquired the hotel, it became a very popular seasonal gathering place for the nation's wealthy and elite. As socialites seasonal migrated north and south, so did the staff of the hotel. The Ormond maintained a working agreement with several northern hotels, bring the entire staff south for the season. At times the Ormond Hotel was associated with the O-te-sa-ga Hotel in Cooperstown, New York, the Mt. Washington Hotel in Bretonwoods, New Hampshire, and the Mt. Pleasant Hotel in New Hampshire.

Prior to his purchase of the nearby "Casements" in 1918, John D. Rockefeller, Flagler's partner in the Standard Oil Company, for several seasons rented the entire second floor of the west wing, now know as the Rockefeller Wing. Rockefeller played daily on the Ormond Hotel's golf course, presided over the annual charity ball at the hotel, and frequently gave free automobile rides to young employees of the hotel. Rockefeller's presence provided great publicity for the hotel.

The Ormond Hotel found itself at the center of excitement during the early days of autoracing, a situation providing national prominence to the hotel. James Hathaway, a wealthy Massachusetts manufacturer vacationing at the Ormond Hotel in 1902, observed that the long stretches of firm sand surface of Ormond Beach would be the suitable testing site for the newly invented automobile. He consulted with the managers, John Anderson and Joseph Price, about the possibility of conducting a race on the beach. Anderson and Price agreed, hoping to garner national publicity from the venture. Before the March event was realized however, Ransom E. Olds and Alexander Winton held their own race on the beach, setting a one mile record of 57 miles-per-hour. The news was flashed to the nation by journalists from the Ormond Hotel's telegraph office.

Flagler sought to capture the momentum of this exciting new sport for the benefit of the hotel. In 1903, he constructed the Ormond Garage, capable of housing 100 automobiles. It subsequently became know as "America's Original Gasoline Alley". Yearly races were held and new speed records were continually set on the Ormond Beach course, lending the title to Ormond Beach as the "Birthplace of Speed".

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The Ormond Hotel is a massive, white, frame vernacular structure. The central core resembles a U-shape which opens to the east. At the two corners of the U, stand two towers. The north wing is five story and T in plan. The intersecting gable roof has regularly spaced hipped dormers. The west wing projects from and eliminates the original 1888 entrance. The west wing is five stories and rectangular. The four-story south wing is the simplest element of the structure. This addition has regularly spaced windows and is topped with a centrally located belvedere. A connecting kitchen is located on the northeast side of the north wing. Presently the Ormond Hotel is located on ten acres of land.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Brochure. "Hotel Ormond or Ormond Beach, Florida".
N.P.: N.D. circa 1925

Coast Gazette, March 17, 1890.

The Observer(Daytona Beach), January 2, 1937.

Schene, Micheal G., Hopes, Dreams, and Promises:
A History of Volusia County, Florida. Daytona
Beach: News Journal Corporation, 1976.

Strickland, Alice. "Florida's Golden Age of Racing",
in Florida Historical Quarterly. 45 (January,
1967).

Strickland, Alice. The Valiant Pioneers, Miami:
Center Printing, 1963.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory
Nomination Form, Rolla L. Queen.

Part. IV PROJECT INFORMATION

In November of 1991, Christopher David Doncsecz received a grant from the Florida Department of State's Bureau of Historic Resources to photographically document the Ormond Hotel for the Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, and for the Historic American Buildings Survey, Washington, DC. Other contributors were The Southeast Center for Photographic Studies for in-kind support, the Ormond Beach Historical Trust, Inc., for administering the grant, and architect, Herschel Sheppard, for his technical support.

The photographic documentation of the Ormond Hotel began in March of 1992 and the printing of the work and cataloging of the work was completed in June of 1992.

Prepared by: C.D.Doncsecz
Title: The O.H. Project
Affiliation: Photographer
Date: July 4, 1992