

BENTON FILLING STATION
33 East Taunton Road
Berlin Vicinity
Camden County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1232

HABS
NJ
4-BERL.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Northeast Area Office
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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Location: 33 East Taunton Road
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Camden County
New Jersey

USGS Clementon, NJ Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.507620.4403210

Present Owner: New Jersey Department of Transportation
1035 Parkway Avenue CN 600
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: During the twentieth century gasoline stations have become one of the most pervasive types of commercial roadside architecture found in the United States. The Benton Filling Station is an early vernacular example of this building type and remains as one of the last relatively intact examples in Berlin Borough, New Jersey.

In February 1994 the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office determined that the three buildings comprising the Benton Filling Station are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C. The three buildings display a local level of significance in relation to the automobile's widespread effects upon the nation's environment, culture, and society. Furthermore, the buildings embody the distinctive characteristics associated with early gasoline stations, while also displaying individual elements unique to this particular station.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Benton Filling Station is an assemblage of three buildings, a ca. 1921 Bungalow-style residence (HABS No. NJ-1232-A), a ca. 1885 former railroad ticket agent building (HABS No. NJ-1232-C) moved to the site ca. 1935, and a ca. 1922 filling station building (HABS No. NJ-1232-B) moved to the site ca. 1941. The grouping was assembled by Wright C. Benton, owner and operator of the filling station from 1922 until his death in 1962. The filling station continued to operate into the 1970s, when it closed and the buildings were subsequently abandoned.¹

The Benton Filling Station is located at 33 East Taunton Road, Berlin Borough, Camden County, New Jersey. It is situated on the outskirts of the borough between the town centers of Berlin and Atco. Berlin Borough is located in central Camden County just south of the Burlington County line and is bordered on the north by Berlin Township and Burlington County, on the east by Waterford Township, on the south by Winslow Township, and on the west by Clementon Borough. Taunton Road serves as part of the boundary between Berlin Borough and Waterford Township. The three buildings comprising the complex front the west side of Taunton Road near the east boundary of an approximately eight-tenths-acre tax parcel.² The western (rear) portion of the parcel includes several small chicken coops and dog kennels. The portion of Taunton Road that the filling station fronts extends approximately one-tenth of a mile between New Jersey Route 73 (NJ Route 73) and the White Horse Pike (US Route 30) and presently functions primarily as a west bound off-ramp and a south bound on-ramp for NJ Route 73. NJ Route 73 is a full-access four-lane highway connecting the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge with the Atlantic City Expressway and is a principal route to New Jersey coastal areas.³ The highway crosses Taunton Road at an oblique angle immediately north of the filling station property. Three additional dwellings, two of which are vacant, front Taunton Road south of the filling station. Modern commercial buildings are located north of the filling station property along NJ Route 73.

Berlin, situated near the geographic center of Camden County, New Jersey, functioned as a transportation hub. It occupies an important location at the juncture of several transportation routes connecting Philadelphia with New Jersey shore points. As early as 1810 eight trunk roads converged at Berlin, including the main road connecting New Jersey's southeast coastline with the Philadelphia area. As a partial consequence of its central location within the region's transportation network Berlin became a regular stop for travelers and traders. As early as 1773 the stage between New Jersey's Great Egg Harbor and Philadelphia stopped at Berlin.⁴ The White Horse Pike (currently US Route 30) served as part of the primary route connecting Philadelphia with New Jersey shore points as well as Berlin's main street.

By the early nineteenth century Berlin consisted of several groups of houses concentrated near

¹Carville "Buck" Benton, telephone interview with Glenn Ceponis June 8, 1994. Mr. Benton is the son of Wright C. Benton, the former owner of the Benton Filling Station.

²To ensure clarity throughout the report, and especially within the building description section, project north will be located slightly east of magnetic north.

³NJ Route 73 narrows from a four-lane divided highway to a two-lane undivided highway below Cedar Brook, New Jersey.

⁴Alfred M. Heston, ed., *South Jersey A History: 1664-1924*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924), 369; Meredith Arms, "Borough of Berlin Cultural Resource Survey," September 1991. Report on file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, New Jersey.

four stores spread along an approximately one mile stretch of old Egg Harbor Road.⁵ By 1816 Samuel Shreve established a store and a tannery in Berlin that produced shoes and harnesses, while in the northern part of the village Thomas Wright began a charcoal works.⁶ Within twenty years, by 1836, Berlin contained approximately thirty houses, two taverns, two stores, and a church. During this time period the majority of Berlin's settlement concentrated along the White Horse Pike west of its juncture with Tansboro Road, Jackson Road, and New Freedom Road.

Important to the development of Berlin during the second half of the nineteenth century was the construction of a rail line through the village. In 1854 the Camden & Atlantic Railroad completed a rail line between Camden and Atlantic City, and by 1856 had constructed a rail station in Berlin. Following the establishment of a railway station in Berlin a land improvement company affiliated with the railroad auctioned a number of house parcels along East Taunton, Washington, and Haines Avenues to the public.⁷ While activities associated with the coming of the railroad fostered some growth, Berlin remained a small village, with a population of only about five hundred by 1886. Berlin's growth remained slow well into the twentieth century. By 1930 the borough's population totaled just under two thousand residents. Residential development during the first quarter of the twentieth century appears to have been centered south of the White Horse Pike along Thackara, Rich, West Broad, Estaugh, and West Taunton Avenues, with some additional development on the west side of town along Malan, North Franklin, and Cedar Avenues. During the first three decades of the twentieth century Berlin's industrial manufacturing base increased with the establishment of the Onlibest Hosiery Mill (1928), the Fisher Garment Company (1920s), the Atlas White Brick Company, the Robinson Lumber Company (1902), and the Baccellieri Brothers Fruit Press Plant. Residential and commercial development east of the town's center remained sparse into the first third of the twentieth century. Despite these residential and industrial developments the borough maintained the largest number of acres in agricultural production of all Camden County boroughs into the 1930s.⁸

Between 1905 and 1925 the amount of surfaced highway in the United States increased over 223 percent, rising from 161,000 to 521,000 miles.⁹ Many of these improvements followed enactment of the 1916 Federal Aid Act, which provided aid to states with highway departments. In 1917 the New Jersey State Legislature created the New Jersey Highway Department, making the state eligible for federal aid and sparking an intensive period of road building throughout the state.¹⁰ The emergence of the automobile as a primary form of transportation during the first

⁵Old Egg Harbor Road, also known for a time as Old Blue Anchor Road, comprised a portion of New Freedom Road. This road also appears to have comprised a portion of the White Horse Pike near its juncture with Tansboro Road, Jackson Road, and the White Horse Pike.

⁶George R. Prowell, *The History of Camden County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Company, 1886), 661; Heston, *South Jersey A History*, 369.

⁷Heston, *South Jersey A History*, 291, 369; Taunton Avenue should not be confused with Taunton Road. Taunton Avenue is located in the heart of Berlin Borough while Taunton Road and the Benton Filling Station are located on Berlin's eastern border with Waterford Township.

⁸Paul F. Cranston, *Camden County: Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary, 1681-1931* (Camden, N.J.: Camden County Chamber of Commerce, 1931), 93-95; Arms, "Borough of Berlin Cultural Resource Survey," 5, 7.

⁹Richard B. Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 434.

¹⁰Jerome H. Cranmer, *New Jersey in the Automobile Age: A History of Transportation*, The New Jersey Historical Series, vol. 23 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1964), 57-58.

quarter of the twentieth century reemphasized the prominence of area roadways and their relationship to development around Berlin. Automobiles made the sparsely developed areas lying between Berlin and its neighboring communities, as well as the areas along the town's fringes, increasingly accessible for development.

Over a fourteen year period beginning in 1911 substantial improvements were made to the White Horse Pike. A majority of these improvements came after 1918, at which time the White Horse Pike was designated New Jersey Route 3. Improvements between 1918 and 1922 included paving the length of the highway with concrete as well as leveling hills and straightening alignments.¹¹ Specific improvements made to the Atco-Berlin section of the White Horse Pike (including the area around Taunton Road) occurred between June 1918 and December 1919. The improved roadway consisted typically of two nine-foot-wide concrete lanes flanked by three-foot macadam shoulders with an additional three feet of soil shoulders. The area along the White Horse Pike west of Tansboro Road remained sparsely settled at this date, including the area in the vicinity of Taunton Road. This area contained a mixture of farms, dwellings, and undeveloped land, including two gravel pits. Trees and shrubs flanked much of the White Horse Pike along this section.¹²

In 1922 construction began on the Philadelphia – Camden Bridge across the Delaware River (later named Benjamin Franklin Bridge). In addition to linking the two cities the bridge provided Philadelphia area residents easier access to the primary route to Atlantic City and other New Jersey shore destinations. Prior to the bridge's completion, in 1926, travelers had to rely on slower and more congested ferry service to cross the Delaware River.¹³ In order to accommodate increased automobile usage of the White Horse Pike the New Jersey Highway Department widened the west side of the road with gravel in 1924. In 1926 improvements to Section 11A of the highway, between Berlin and Hammonton, included widening the east side an additional eleven feet, creating a twenty-nine-foot wide concrete road surface.¹⁴ Each of these improvements further facilitated automobile travel through the area and led to the increasing commercialization of areas along the White Horse Pike.

During the 1920s the use of automobiles for recreational activity exploded. In 1900 there were approximately 8,000 registered automobiles in the United States, this figure increased to approximately 1.3 million in 1913, and boomed to over twenty-six million by 1930.¹⁵ As elsewhere across the nation, the combination of increased automobile usage, better roadways,

¹¹Charles W. Wright, *The History of Berlin (Long-A-Coming)*, (Berlin, N.J.: Charles W. Wright, 1979), 149; New Jersey Highway Department, *Annual Report*, 1927, "Route #3 - Section #11A - Berlin To Hammonton," on file at the New Jersey State Library, Trenton, New Jersey.

¹²New Jersey State Highway Commission, Southern Division. "Route 3, Atco-Berlin Section, Camden County, As Constructed," 1919. Microfiche No. 0401-006-015. On file at Roadway Plans and Specifications, New Jersey Department of Transportation, Trenton, New Jersey.

¹³On July 4, 1923, three years before completion of the bridge, fifty thousand automobiles used ferries to cross the Delaware River from Camden to Philadelphia creating Camden's worst recorded traffic tie-up. Wright, *The History of Berlin*, 149; Cranston, *Camden County*, 93.

¹⁴New Jersey Highway Department, *Annual Report*, 1927; New Jersey State Highway Department, "Plan & Profile of Route 3 Section 11A, White Horse Pike – Widening, Hammonton to Berlin," 1926, Microfiche No. 0401-021-048. On file at Roadway Plans and Specifications, New Jersey Department of Transportation, Trenton, New Jersey.

¹⁵Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History*, 434.

and convenient travel routes, provided considerable opportunities for roadside commercial development. During the 1920s thousands of businesses serving motorists opened along America's roadsides. Common commercial enterprises catering to travelers included fruit and vegetable stands, motels, tourist camps, restaurants, stores, and gasoline stations.¹⁶ The gasoline station became one of the most pervasive of the commercial enterprises emerging along the nation's roadways.¹⁷ Areas along the White Horse Pike including the stretch near the intersection of the White Horse Pike and Taunton Road participated in this wave of automobile-related development. During the second quarter of the twentieth century at least two gasoline stations, a restaurant, a tavern, a fruit stand, and a motor court appeared near this intersection.¹⁸

The Benton Filling Station building is representative of the broad type of building associated with the retail distribution of gasoline during the 1920s.¹⁹ By 1920 approximately 15,000 gasoline stations existed across the county and over the next decade the number of stations increased by approximately 1,200 per year.²⁰ The introduction of gasoline filling stations along the nation's roadways during the first quarter of the twentieth century shadowed the expanding automobile industry, increased automobile registrations, and the expansion of highway systems. Prior to the development of this new demand for gasoline as a fuel, petroleum companies' primary products consisted of kerosene and various-use oils. Gasoline was considered principally a waste product of kerosene production, so oil companies had not provided for any systematized consumer distribution of the fuel. Prior to the advent of the "gasoline station" motorists typically filled buckets or cans with gasoline obtained from hardware stores, liverys, repair shops, and then carried the gasoline to their cars and poured it through a filter into the car's gasoline tank. Following the development of the gasoline pump in 1905 a more direct retail distribution of gasoline became practical. Early on this often took the form of "curbside pumps," where retailers positioned pumps directly along curbsides in front of groceries, hardware stores or other businesses that typically carried household petroleum products. Curbside pumps characteristically did not include associated buildings dedicated to attendant or consumer use.²¹ The first "drive-in" station not connected with a bulk distribution plant appeared ca. 1909 in St. Louis. The building consisted of a tin shed sheltering oil barrels and two converted, gasoline-filled, hot water tanks equipped with garden hoses for dispensing gasoline to automobiles. The following year the Central Oil Company of Flint, Michigan constructed the first building specifically intended for selling gasoline. This structure consisted

¹⁶Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979); Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 20.

¹⁷Daniel I. Vieyra, *"Fill'er Up": An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), xiii.

¹⁸New Jersey State Highway Commission, Southern Division. "Route 3, Atco-Berlin Section, Camden County, As Constructed," 1919. Microfiche No. 0401-006-015; New Jersey State Highway Department. "Plan, Route S-41 (1927) Section 4B, Interchange at Route 43 and Taunton Road," 1952. Microfilm No. 0414-005-055; Benton telephone interview with Glenn Ceponis June 29, 1994.

¹⁹Historic references use the term gasoline station to generally describe filling stations, gasoline stations, and service stations. The Benton station functioned only as a filling station.

²⁰Keith A. Sculle, "The Vernacular Gasoline Station: Examples From Illinois and Wisconsin," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1 (Spring/Summer 1981): 57.

²¹Vieyra, *"Fill'er Up,"* 3-4; Curbside pumps were eventually eliminated due in part to the associative dangers and inconveniences of storing gasoline directly at roadside.

of a post-supported canopy covering a driveway and a single gasoline pump.²²

From its modest beginnings the gasoline filling station evolved over the next four decades to include a variety of plan types.²³ A majority of early filling stations were elemental in design and merely provided basic shelter for an attendant. Other designs incorporated small office spaces, display stands, and rest rooms. Most of the stations built during the 1910s and 1920s used designs generated by station owners, often in concert with the contractors hired to construct the buildings.²⁴ Many of these stations, especially those within city boundaries, used traditional building forms to blend within their surroundings. By the late 1920s and early 1930s designs often combined the basic filling station with repair garages forming "service stations". From the 1930s onward service station design became more distinctive architecturally, relying less on past imagery and incorporating on a more universal basis the standardized designs supplied by petroleum companies.²⁵

While larger oil companies, vying for visual recognition of their product and larger market shares, turned toward standardization of station buildings, the majority of early gasoline stations were not professionally designed. The Benton Filling Station (HABS No. NJ-1232-B) is consistent with typical design patterns common to vernacular gasoline stations of the period.²⁶ The Benton Filling Station provided just enough space to house a single attendant with a desk, safe, compact heater, and toilet.²⁷ Its small scale, rectangular plan, hipped roof, and stucco exterior are also common to the building type. Unusual in its design, however, are the building's two primary facade doorways. While possibly intended as separate entrances for customer and attendant use, only a single door was actually used. Oil display racks and later a desk blocked the other door.²⁸

Wright C. Benton owned and operated the Benton Filling Station beginning in 1922. Prior to his moving the filling station to its current location, adjacent to his residence (HABS No. NJ-1232-A), on Taunton Road the building was located at the northwest corner of the White Horse

²²John A. Jakle, "The American Gasoline Station, 1920-1970," *Journal of American Culture*, 1 (Fall 1978): 520-521.

²³For a more complete explanation of the American gasoline station's evolution see Jakle, "The American Gasoline Station." Jakle identifies nine gasoline station types including: the curbside, the shed house, the house with canopy, the house with bays, the oblong box, the small box, the small box with canopy, and the canopy with booth. Under Jakle's typology the Benton Filling Station appears to be most similar to the "house," especially in terms of size and materials; however, the building conveys stronger commercial than domestic imagery and in this way resembles the later "small box."

²⁴Sculle, "The Vernacular Gasoline Station," 56

²⁵Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 98, 102; Jakle, "The American Gasoline Station," 538-539.

²⁶Carville "Buck" Benton believes his father hired a contractor to construct the gasoline station; however, it is unclear if Mr. Benton, the contractor, or a combination of the two generated the plans for the building. A search of former Gulf Oil Company archives has produced no specific information relating to the Benton Filling Station, nor has it produced any comparable examples of known company station designs. The Gulf Oil Company archives are now part of the Chevron Corporation and following its acquisition the Gulf archive has been decentralized; therefore, the current search of the primary Chevron/Gulf archive cannot be considered conclusive.

²⁷Paul Truesdell, "How Re-Designing Of A Filling Station Doubled Its Business," *National Petroleum News* 16 (June 6, 1923): 23.

²⁸Benton interview, June 29, 1994. Mr. Benton remembers no time in the history of the station that both doors were utilized and could not provide a definitive explanation as to the existence of the second door.

Pike and Taunton Road. Following his move from Philadelphia to Berlin Borough in 1921 Wright C. Benton hired a local contractor to construct the Bungalow style house that is presently part of the Benton Filling Station property. Benton purchased the house lot from Charles Snowden Bundesman in September 1921.²⁹ The previous year Bundesman had purchased approximately five-and-one-half acres of land, including Benton's lot, from Clarence and Hilda Coyle of Berlin. This parcel extended along Taunton Road south to the White Horse Pike and included both the parcel where Bundesman constructed his residence and the corner lot where Benton constructed his filling station.³⁰ Ca. 1922 Wright C. Benton and Charles S. Bundesman formed a business partnership that included a restaurant run by Bundesman and a filling station operated by Benton. These businesses occupied separate buildings, constructed ca. 1922, located on the parcel between Bundesman's dwelling and the White Horse Pike.³¹

Benton's filling station, known for a time as the Pyramid Gas Station, consisted of a small rectangular office building with a gasoline pump island located in front of it.³² A gravel drive curved from the White Horse Pike between the station building and pump island and proceeded onto Taunton Road. Like many filling stations from this period the Benton Filling Station focused operations on the retail sale of gasoline and motor oils. It did not operate as a full service station and did not include facilities for repairing automobiles. The Pyramid Restaurant (since demolished) was located west of the filling station along the White Horse Pike. During Benton's tenure at the corner of the White Horse Pike and Taunton Road the filling station was affiliated with the Gulf Oil Company. The Gulf Oil Company operated a bulk distribution center southeast of Berlin in Hammonton, New Jersey and supplied gasoline to numerous other stations in the vicinity of Berlin, including an extant station immediately east of the Route 73 (formerly Route S-41) Bridge across the White Horse Pike and a station on Milford Road and Wright Avenue in Berlin.³³

Benton operated the filling station at the corner of the White Horse Pike and Taunton Road into the 1930s. Ca. 1929 Benton purchased Bundesman's share of the Pyramid Restaurant and became sole proprietor of both the restaurant and filling station. Sometime following construction of NJ Route S-41 (currently Route 73) Benton began operation of a filling station at his residence near the juncture of NJ Route S-41 and Taunton Road. During this period it is unclear if Benton operated filling stations at each location or only ran the station adjacent to his residence.³⁴ Benton's operation of a filling station at the Taunton Road location coincided with

²⁹Camden County Deeds, Deed Book 491, page 524-525; Benton interview, June 8 1994. Mr. Benton could not recall the full name of the contractor; however, he stated that it was a local contractor by the name of Cook who constructed the dwelling and may have been involved with the construction of the filling station.

³⁰Bundesman's residence remains (Sept. 1994) at the northwest corner of Taunton Road and the White Horse Pike.

³¹Benton interview, June 8 and 29, 1994

³²*Camden City Directory*, 1925 (Camden, N.J.: The Delaware and Atlantic Telegraph & Telephone Company, 1925), 90; Benton interview, June 8 and 29, 1994. The names, Pyramid Restaurant and Pyramid Gas Station are derived from the restaurant building's pyramidal roof form.

³³Long-A-Coming Historical Society, "A History of Berlin Borough," 1977. Unpublished manuscript on file at the Marie Fleche Memorial Library, Berlin, New Jersey; Bulk stations generally maintained storage facilities near rail lines and sold to retailers from trucks and generally did not included facilities for selling directly to consumers. At this date Camden County contained ten bulk stations. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Business, 1940*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1941), 36.

³⁴Benton interview, June 29, 1994.

the construction of NJ Route S-41.³⁵ The new highway, begun during the late 1920s, connected the newly constructed Tacony-Palmyra Bridge with the White Horse Pike at Berlin.³⁶ This new divided highway allowed traffic north of Philadelphia to by-pass the city, providing a more direct route to Atlantic City and other New Jersey shore points. At this date NJ Route S-41 terminated at the White Horse Pike, with a one way cross over and ramp connection with the White Horse Pike and Taunton Road. One such ramp connection passed directly in front of Benton's house and filling station.³⁷

During the mid-1930s Benton moved a former nineteenth century railroad ticket agent building (HABS No. NJ-1232-C) alongside his residence for use as a gasoline station.³⁸ The small board-and-batten building was relocated from Williamstown Junction, New Jersey – approximately two-and-one-half miles southeast of Berlin.³⁹ The building appears to date from ca. 1885. Its construction followed the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad's acquisition, under foreclosure proceedings, of the Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railroad Company's narrow gauge shore line.⁴⁰ The Philadelphia & Reading Company did not build a station or associated buildings at Williamstown Junction until May of 1885.⁴¹ Benton apparently used this building in a similar manner to the station he had at the corner of Taunton Road and the White Horse Pike. The building included a small office space for an attendant and a rear addition provided a single rest room and a small storage closet.

Ca. 1941, following the widening of NJ Route S-41, Wright C. Benton relocated his original filling station building from the White Horse Pike to the Taunton Road site.⁴² Benton located the building on the north side of his dwelling, close to the existing gasoline pumps. The New Jersey Highway Department made further improvements to NJ Route S-41 in 1952. These improvements raised the existing grade in the vicinity of the Benton Filling Station by approximately two-and-one-half feet. This grade change covered most of the exposed foundation wall of the dwelling and required raising both the filling station and former railroad

³⁵Benton interview June 8 and 29, 1994.

³⁶Construction on the 4.1 mile section including the crossing at Taunton Road began September 29, 1930 and was completed August 14, 1931. New Jersey Highway Department, *Annual Report*, 1931.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸New Jersey State Highway Department, "Plan & Profile of Route S-41 Section 3-B & 4-A, Widening Kresson to Route 43," 1940; Benton interview, June 8, 1994.

³⁹Mr. Benton referred to this building as a former railroad ticket agent building, and while this is certainly possible, no documentary evidence has yet confirmed the building's original function.

⁴⁰The Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railroad Company was chartered in 1876 following heavy use of the Camden & Atlantic Railroad during the centennial year of 1876; however, a derailment of a train at the line's public opening is blamed for a distrust of the narrow-gauge line and resulted in the company's prolonged receivership and ultimate sale to the Reading Company. Photographic views of the Williamstown Junction Railroad Station show a building with similar stylistic elements and materials to the building at the Benton property. Charles W. Wright, Papers, on file at the Marie Fleche Memorial Library, Berlin, New Jersey; George W. Cook and William J. Coxey, *Atlantic City Railroad: The Royal Route to the Sea – A History of the Reading's Seashore Railroad 1877-1933*, (Oaklyn, N.J.: West Jersey Chapter National Railway Historical Society, 1980), 35, 90-91.

⁴¹Cook and Coxey, *Atlantic City Railroad*, 35, 90-91.

⁴²Mr. Benton recalls the filling station building being relocated to the current site prior to the former railroad building; however, New Jersey State Highway Department plans from the period indicate through location, size, and shape of the buildings that the railroad structure appeared at the site before the filling station.

building on new footings.⁴³

Benton continued operating the filling station until his death in 1962. The station remained in operation into the early 1970s under the direction of Benton's son-in-law, Harvey Burkhart. Throughout its history the Benton Filling Station operated only as a filling station and did not perform automotive repairs. Following its closure in the 1970s the buildings comprising the Benton Filling Station have been vacated and are presently in a severe state of disrepair.⁴⁴ Proposed improvements (September 1994) to the NJ Route 73 and US Route 30 interchange consists of replacing the NJ Route 73 bridge over US Route 30 as well as realignment of several associated access ramps, including the southbound exit ramp from NJ Route 73 onto Taunton Road. These improvements will require relocation or demolition of the Benton Filling Station.

PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The Benton Filling Station Complex is an assemblage of three primary buildings with secondary sheds and coops, not directly associated with the operation of the filling station, located west of the main grouping. The parcel contains approximately eight-tenths of an acre. The three primary buildings include a Bungalow-style residence (HABS No. NJ-1232-A) flanked on the south by a late nineteenth century former railroad ticket agent building (HABS No. NJ-1232-C) and on the north by a 1920s gasoline attendant's building (HABS No. NJ-1232-B). The latter two buildings were moved to the site ca. 1935 and ca. 1941 respectively. The single-story residence has a rectangular plan with its gable end facing Taunton Road. The rectangular plan, nineteenth century former ticket agent's building, is located approximately eighteen feet south of the residence. The single-story, rectangular plan, filling station building is located immediately northeast of the residence.

The complex is located immediately south of the intersection Taunton Road and NJ Route 73. The three buildings are set back approximately thirty feet from the west side of Taunton Road. Two narrow concrete islands, formerly used to support gasoline pumps, are located between the complex and Taunton Road. The driveway area consists of hard-packed dirt. The area north, south, and west of the buildings is thickly overgrown with vegetation.

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⁴³Benton interview, June 29, 1994.

⁴⁴Ibid.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken in response to New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) planned improvements to the New Jersey Route 73 and United States Route 30 interchange in Berlin Borough and Waterford Township, Camden County, New Jersey. The project will replace the NJ Route 73 bridge over US Route 30 as well as realign several associated access ramps including the southbound exit ramp from NJ Route 73 onto Taunton Road. Proposed highway improvements will require relocation or demolition of the three buildings comprising the Benton Filling Station Complex.

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Date: April 1995

