

# MID-ATLANTIC HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPES SURVEY



## Augustine Beach Hotel

Port Penn Vicinity

St. Georges Hundred

New Castle County, Delaware



MID-ATLANTIC HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPES SURVEY

AUGUSTINE BEACH HOTEL (DE CRS # N00150)

1 Augustine Beach  
Port Penn vicinity  
St. Georges Hundred  
New Castle County, Delaware

By

Rebecca J. Sheppard  
Catherine Morrissey

With

Melissa Blair  
Katie Bonnano  
Andrew Engel  
Laura Keeley  
Jennifer Nichols  
Tim Pouch

Center for Historic Architecture and Design  
University of Delaware

2012



## Table of Contents

<b>PROPERTY NARRATIVE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: AUGUSTINE BEACH HOTEL TITLE TRACE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH OF AUGUSTINE BEACH HOTEL, CIRCA 1940</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: POMEROY AND BEERS ATLAS MAP OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE, ST. GEORGES HUNDRED</b>	<b>8</b>

## Property Narrative

The Augustine Beach Hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Current physical examination of the Augustine Beach Hotel while it is undergoing massive renovations, in conjunction with a review of the documentary records, confirms Thomas Scharf's statement in 1888 that Adam Diehl built the Hotel circa 1814.<sup>1</sup>

Adam Diehl arrived in the Port Penn vicinity in the late 1790s. In partnership with William Guier, a merchant in Philadelphia, Diehl first rented and then purchased land from the heirs of Peter Alrichs, located along the Delaware River, just south of Port Penn near Augustine Creek. Through the first decade of the 1800s, Diehl operated a highly successful large-scale beef cattle farm, grazing beef cattle on the marsh meadows of his 140-acre farm and then shipping them to Philadelphia for Guier to sell at market. In 1804, the two men owned an unprecedented \$14,000 of livestock, demonstrating the scale of their operation.<sup>2</sup> By 1816, however, the partnership seems to have dissolved and Guier sold his share of the land to Diehl. By this time, Diehl had constructed the "large brick house" that would serve as a hotel, restaurant, and bar to customers for the next two centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The plan of the building suggests that Diehl always envisioned it as a hotel, with a long central hallway dividing the front of the building from the rear, and an entry hall and staircase occupying a slightly off-center location. The first floor boasted a total of four private parlors, and two larger rooms for eating and drinking, each heated by a separate fireplace. The second floor plan mirrored the first in some respects, with private rooms above each of the four parlors, and a series of smaller rooms above the two large first floor spaces. Again, a central hallway provided easy access to each room.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scharf, J. Thomas, *History of Delaware: 1609-1888*, L. J. Richards & Co.: Philadelphia, 1888, p. 993; Augustine Beach Hotel, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> New Castle County Tax Assessment (hereafter NCCTA), St. Georges Hundred, 1803- 1804, Adam Diehl and William Guier; NCCTA, St. Georges Hundred, 1816, for Adam Diehl; New Castle County Recorder of Deeds (hereafter NCCRD), James Jameson to William Guier and Adam Diehl, I-3-392, 1810; NCCRD, John Alrichs to Adam Diehl, I-3-506, 1811; NCCRD, William Guier to Adam Diehl, R-3-249; Scharf, J. Thomas, *History of Delaware: 1609-1888*, L. J. Richards & Co.: Philadelphia, 1888, p. 993.

<sup>3</sup> NCCTA, St. Georges Hundred, 1816, Adam Diehl.

Evidence suggests that the attic was originally a large, open space with walls and ceiling finished with lath and plaster, probably used for a combination of servants' quarters and storage space. At an early date, likely before 1840, the attic was divided into a series of smaller unheated rooms lit by split dormer windows.

To the rear of the main block stood a two-story brick service wing, connected to the main building by a one-story piazza or passageway. The service wing most likely contained the kitchen and possibly servants' space on the second floor.

The cellar provides evidence of the support facilities required to operate such a large hotel. Divided into four sections (three for the main block and one for the service wing), the cellar reflects the plan of the upper floors. A brick wall with large arches supports the fireplaces of the private parlors, while a second brick bearing wall supported the wall along the north side of the entry hall and stair passage. In the central room of the cellar, the rear portion of the bay displays a sunken, brick-lined floor that appears to have served as an internal springhouse. A shallow trough or drain runs from this floor along the rear (west) wall to the opening into the service wing cellar, probably allowing fresh cool water to flow into the sunken floor area. The walls of the cellar below the main block were white-washed and large windows allowed plenty of light into the rooms to support activities such as butter churning, laundry, and other messy tasks.

Diehl owned the Hotel until 1837, when he sold it to Samuel Pedrick. Pedrick operated the hotel for about twenty years, until his debts forced a sheriff's sale to Woodward Warrick, a resident of Gloucester County, New Jersey (just across the Delaware River from the hotel). Warrick never occupied the property, but likely hired a manager or rented it out. In 1864, he sold it to Jonathan Draper, who held on to it for only three years before selling to Simeon Lord, a hotelkeeper from Philadelphia who envisioned a grander future for the Augustine Beach Hotel.<sup>4</sup>

Simeon Lord invested significantly in the Augustine Beach Hotel. According to Scharf, he built 100 bath houses on the beach to entice tourists, as well as adding a dance pavilion (the one-story frame addition on the north end of the Hotel) and renovating the dining room. He may have been the one to remove the walls of the entry

---

<sup>4</sup> NCCRD, Adam Diehl to Samuel Pedrick, X-4-390, 1837; NCCRD, Woodward Warrick to Jonathan Draper, Z-7-195; NCCRD, Johnathan Draper to Simeon Lord Jr., M-8-465, 1864.

hall and those between the two northern rooms, to create the current large open space on the first floor. All of Lord's efforts were tied to a plan to bring city-dwellers out to the resort by steamboat from Philadelphia and Wilmington. Lord, and later his son, also Simeon Lord, ran the hotel until 1893, when he sold it to James H. Gam.<sup>5</sup>

From the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century, the property passed through several sets of hands, all of whom tried, with varying levels of success, to operate the hotel and resort. By the 1940s, it was described as a taproom and from that point forward the various owners limited themselves to food and alcohol, rather than renting rooms.

In late 2011, following the death of the most recent owner, a local resident purchased the property and is now engaged in renovations designed to revive the building first as a restaurant and bar, and eventually as a hotel as well.

---

<sup>5</sup> NCCRD, Simeon Lord to James H.S. Gam, R-16-20, 1894.

## Bibliography

Beers' Atlas of Delaware, 1868. Pomeroy and Beers, Philadelphia, 1868.

Delaware Historical Society, Photo Collections.

New Castle County Probate Records, Delaware Public Archives.

New Castle County Orphans Court Records, 1740-1900; Delaware Public Archives.

New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Delaware Public Archives.

New Castle County Tax Assessments, Delaware Public Archives.

Scharf, J. Thomas., History of Delaware: 1609-1888, L. J. Richards & Co.: Philadelphia, 1888.

United States Population Census, manuscript returns, 1800-1930.

## Appendix A: Augustine Beach Hotel Title Trace

20111014-0062631, October 10, 2011  
Augustine Inn Restaurant to Albert J. Rossi

T-155-272, September 6, 1981  
William D. Bisson and Edward Simpson to The Augustine Inn Restaurant

D-110-111, April 25, 1980  
Delaware Trust Co. to Willam D. Sisson and Edward Simpson

G-105-125, September 20, 1978  
New Castle County Sheriff Sale to Delaware Trust Co.

V-78-498, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966  
Harvey G. Cole to R. Cooper Moor

E-73-309, June 22, 1964  
Harvey G. Cole to R. Cooper Moor

X-71-420, January 28, 1963  
New Castle County Sheriff Sale to Harvey G. Cole

Q-59-569, February 13, 1957  
Viola Taxis (widow of Tommy Taxis) to Augustine Beach Hotel Inc.

L-45-534, November 9, 1945  
Augustine Beach Land Company to Tommy Taxis

X-36-542, May 14, 1930  
Bayard W. Allmond to Augustine Beach Land Company

X-36-552, July 24, 1929  
Delaware Beach Corporation to James E. Otis, James Mott and Alice C. McClister assignees of the Augustine Beach Land Company

W-32-536, July 24, 1924  
Augustine Beach Land Company to Delaware Beach Corpoartion

Y-2-141, June 10, 1911  
Alice Cordery to Augustine Beach Land Company

Y-22-137, February 3, 1906  
James R. Mott to Absalom Cordery

X-22-216, February 3, 1906  
James E. Otis to Absalom Cordery

L-18-422, February 23, 1901  
John Gam to Absalom Cordery

X-17-130, March 15, 1899  
G. Gam to Emma M. Gam

U-17-116, October 8, 1898  
James H.S. Gam to John Gam

R-16-20, December 15, 1894  
Simeon Lord Jr. to James H.S. Gam

O-9-193, March 25, 1871  
Sheriff Sale to Simeon Lord Jr.

C-9-423, January 25, 1870  
Simeon Lord to Simeon Lord Jr.

M-8-465, August 29, 1867  
Jonathon Draper to Simeon Lord Jr.

Z-7-195, October 20, 1864  
Woodward Warrick to Jonathon Draper

X-4-390, April 4, 1837  
Adam Diehl to Silas Pedrick

I-3-506, January 24, 1811  
John Alrichs to Adam Diehl and William Guier

I-3-392, October 15, 1810  
James Jameson to Adam Diehl and William Guier

Appendix B: Historic Photograph of Augustine Beach Hotel, circa 1940



Photo Courtesy of the Delaware Historical Society

## Appendix C: Pomeroy and Beers Atlas Map of the State of Delaware, St. Georges Hundred