

1980

FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE
HISTORIC ST. AUGUSTINE PRESERVATION BOARD
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

I. LOCATION & LEGAL DESCRIPTION

FDAHRM 802== Site No. 8551024 1009==
Site Name: Potter's Wax Museum 830== Survey Date: 7808 820==
Address: 1-3-5 King Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084 905==
Instructions for Locating: _____
_____ 813== County: St. Johns 808==
Location: City of St. Augustine 23 868==
(subdivision) (block) (lot)
_____ 868==
Owner of Site: Name: Potter, George L. ;
Address: 1 King Street
St. Augustine, FL 32084 902==
Occupant or Manager: Potter's Wax Museum/ Plaza Hotel 904==
Type of Ownership: Private 848== Zoning: HP-2
NR Classification Category: Building 916== Recording Date: _____ 832==
UTM: 17 469940 3306660 890== Location: T07S R30E S18 812==
(zone) (easting) (northing) (T) (R) (S)
Map Reference: USGS St. Augustine 7.5 MIN 1956 (PR 1970) 809==
Recorder: Name & Title: Nolan, David (Historic Sites Specialist) ;
Address: H.S.A.P.B. 818==

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

Condition of Site:	Threats to Site:
() <u>Excellent</u> 863==	() <u>Zoning</u> 878==
(X) <u>Good</u> 863==	() <u>Development</u> 878==
() <u>Fair</u> 863==	() <u>Deterioration</u> 878==
() <u>Deteriorated</u> 863==	() <u>Borrowing</u> 878==
	() <u>Transportation</u> 878==
Integrity of Site:	() <u>Fill</u> 878==
(X) <u>Altered</u> 858==	() <u>Dredge</u> 878==
() <u>Unaltered</u> 858==	() <u>Other</u> 878==
(X) <u>Original Site</u> 858==	
() <u>Restored - Date:</u> 858==	
() <u>Moved - Date:</u> 858==	

II. SITE DESCRIPTION, continued.

Original Use: Commercial 838== Present Use: Museum, Other: Hotel 850==
Date: +1888 844== Period: 19th cent. 845== Culture: American 840==
Architect: _____ 872==
Builder: _____ 874==
Style: Masonry Vernacular 964==
Plan Type: Rectangular 966==
Exterior Fabrics: Brick, concret block, stucco _____ 854==
Structural Systems: Masonry, brick 856==
Features of Structure: (942)
Window Type: Fixed sheet, metal jalousie, DHS 2/2 942==
Foundation: Brick wall 942==
Roof Type: Flat, parapet 942==
Secondary Roof Structures: Shed, porches; spanish mission on rear section 942==
Porches & Balconies: Open two-story wrap around porch on east and north sides. 942==
Chimney Location: End, exterior 942==
Materials: (882)
Chimney: Brick stuccoed with metal cap 882==
Roof Surfacing: Built-up, clay tile 882==
Ornament Exterior: Jigsaw rafters on porch roof, clay tile cornice decorative iron work on porches, decorative brick work, frieze work. 882==
Quantitative Data: (950-954)
Chimneys: 1 952== Dormers: _____ 954== Stories: 2-3 950==
Other: _____ 956==
Surroundings: Mixed Commercial/Residential 864==
Relationship to Surroundings: On corner lot and across the street from waterfront. _____ 859==

III. PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographic Records Numbers: _____ 860==
Contact Prints



IV. SIGNIFICANCE

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Commerce, Hotels, Tourism

920==

Statement of Significance: (911==)

ARCHITECTURE

This two to three-story Masonry Vernacular building at 1-3-5 King Street was constructed in 1888. Mediterranean elements include the clay tile cornices, ornamental iron work on the porches, decorative brickwork, jigsaw rafters on the porch roof, and the stucco finish. The two-story wrap around porch with decorative frieze faces the waterfront and the Plaza. The original brick exterior is concealed beneath the stucco and the original wooden posts and balustrades on the porches have been replaced by ironwork. Large signs advertise the museum from two sides of the parapet and a hotel sign rises above the flat roof. In addition to its proximity to the bayfront and downtown area, the museum-hotel is situated at the foot of the Bridge of Lions. Additions to the two-story structure include a three-story apartment building on the south side facing Charlotte Street, the western border. A one-story concrete block addition on the Marine Street side was added after 1930. The coral exterior creates an interesting swirled effect and the mission parapet with arched openings accents the building. Decorative ceramic tile ornaments the facade.

The Plaza area--a central green with surrounding buildings on the bayfront--is an essential feature of the St. Augustine town plan listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Plaza has been the favorite place for the town's monuments from colonial through modern times, and it has been a periodic focal point for community improvement drives, tree plantings, etc. It has included many different features over the years, including an alligator pond and an open bandstand popular for music and political rallies. The Plaza is bordered by churches, commercial and governmental buildings representing a range of construction dates of over 180 years. The buildings around the Plaza have changed over time. There have been rebuildings on sites after fires and demolitions, and the scale, mass and style of the surrounding buildings have changed over the years. The area includes St. Augustine's tallest building, the Atlantic (formerly First National) Bank. There have been conscious attempts over the years to model or remodel buildings in Spanish or St. Augustine Colonial Revival style. The skyline above the Plaza is lined with the Spanish Renaissance Revival towers and domes of the Flagler era. The area has been augmented by the creation of additional adjacent green areas west of Government House with public monuments put in after World War I. The Plaza is not only a famous scenic site for tourists, it is

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V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. "Real Ordenanzas para nuevas poblaciones," Hispanic American Historical Review, Vol. 4 (November, 1921), pp. 743-53; Anon., "S. Augustini pars et terrae Florida," 1588; Archivo General de Indias 54-5-9/47 and 49 (Stetson Collection).
2. Juan Jose Elixio de la Puente, "Plano . . . de la Plaza de San Agustín," January 22, 1764; Mariano de la Rocque, "Plano Particular de la Ciudad de San Agustín," April 25, 1788; Ramon de la Cruz, "Inventario," June 4, 1821, East Florida Papers, Bundle 260, No. 1.

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also located at the center of the town's commercial, religious and governmental life. As a result, traffic and parking problems plague the area, and many significant buildings in adjacent areas have been demolished for parking lots.

HISTORY

The concept of a plaza or public square has been central to Spanish urban planning in the new world since the late 16th century. According to a 1572 royal ordinance, the plaza was to function as the principal recreational and meeting area in the community and was to be surrounded by the most important governmental and ecclesiastical buildings. The St. Augustine Plaza dates from this period, although only one of the stipulated buildings, the Governor's Mansion, actually fronted the Plaza before the early 18th century.(1) In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the plaza became surrounded by a cluster of newer civic and religious structures, including the Bishops' House (later the British Statehouse and Spanish provisional church) at the corner of St. George and King, the Accountancy and Treasury building at the corner of Cathedral and Charlotte, the public school at the corner of St. George and Cathedral, and the parish church (now the Basilica-Cathedral). The Plaza itself contained several colonial structures, most notably the non-extant stone guardhouse at the eastern section and the still standing constitution monument at the then center of the square.(2) Construction of Trinity Episcopal Church and the Public and Fish markets were major changes introduced in the 1820's and 1830's, although the "Public Square" went only as far as Aviles (Hospital) Street just west of the above markets. In the 1870's trees, plants, and fountains were added to beautify the "Plaza de Constitucion," a Confederate monument was erected, and the Plaza was extended east to Charlotte Street. By the late 1880's, the Plaza was ringed by large structures, notably the St. Augustine Hotel. Smaller commercial buildings replaced the hotel after the devastating fire destroyed the hostelry and severely damaged the Public Market and Cathedral in 1887. In 1893, Cathedral Place was extended from St. George Street to Cordova Street, thus forming a smaller Plaza to the west of Government House. Although the massive 18th century coquina Rosario redoubt had been earlier demolished to widen Cordova Street, the west Plaza area was still engulfed by the monumental Flagler hotels on the south and west and by a cigar factory on the north. Dramatic alterations were seen in the Plaza area in the 1920's. A bandstand was built in the center of the Plaza, the Ponce de Leon statue was unveiled to the east, the tall First National Bank building was constructed, and the Bridge of Lions was opened at the east end, formerly the Plaza basin. In the last two decades, demolition of the Bishops' House and Bishop Block have altered the view in the northwest corner of the Plaza.(3)

This brick building at 1-3-5 King Street is located on the site of a wooden building which burned in the 1887 fire. The current structure replaced the three-story frame commercial building by 1888, also serving as a dry goods and clothing outlet.(4) By the turn of the century the Surprise Store occupied the first floor of the building. The store and J. W. Estes, the proprietor are described in a Tatler article of 1896.

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"One of the most enterprising citizens of St. Augustine is Mr. J. W. Estes, proprietor of the Surprise Store at the junction of Bay and King streets, the most delightful location in the city. During the past summer he more than doubled his floor space. Having purchased the Aspinwall lot, he extended the store south and east, giving him almost one hundred square feet of floor. His store is the handsomest south of Savannah. There are two large windows about fifteen feet wide and one about twice that width, with two entrance doors. The ceilings are high. Shelves extending entirely around the sides are kept, constantly stocked with goods of the best quality, purchased at prices permitting him to sell them at a reasonable price. The latest and most approved cash system has been introduced, consequently there is no long waits for change.

"The dress-goods department is on the right of the west entrance. Here are crepons, cloths, henriettas, serges and novelty goods in every variety of color. Adjoining this is the silk department, where handsome moires, failles, taffetas, and Indias of riches dyes, velvets and satins are shown of all qualities.

"The next counter is devoted to wash goods, zephyrs, gingham, chintzes, percales, purchased under the most advantageous circumstances; then there are dainty muslins, lawns, nansooks, and mulls, Mr. Estes catering to the young people, especially, as he brings thousands of yards of dainty lace of every variety and quality to be used upon them. His lining and dressmaker's furnishings are up to date. Ribbons and gloves of all colors, size and lengths are to be had here.

"Towels, napkins, table damask, crash, furniture covering, cretonnes, chintz damask and tapestries, table covers, bed spreads, art cloths, constitute a department satisfactory to visit. Cotton goods and flannels to suit the most fastidious. Ready-made cloaks, capes and jackets of latest fashioning; with a full line of underwear for both ladies and men, girls and boys. Art embroideries, silks and threads, complete the first department.

"In the second store are gentlemen's clothing, ready-made and made to order. Gentlemen's furnishings, coats for waiters, overalls and sweater, children's ready-made clothes, shirt waists galore, overcoats and white duck suits. Adjoining this is a large shoe department, well stocked for men, women and children.

"We now reach the carpet and matting department. Here are floor coverings of every variety, rugs of every kind, shades of every color, and flimsy draperies and

fittings, mats and wall paper, and couches, inviting repose. Indeed, you can ask for nothing that it will not be forthcoming. Salesmen and women, polite and courteous, show goods advantageously without pressing you to buy. No stranger visits the store without expressing surprise."(5)

In 1904 a fire did an estimated \$80,000 damage to the Estes House, as it was then called. The walls of the building were left mostly intact and the entire structure was later restored. The building has been expanded several times over the years.(6) In 1934 the Estes House was leased by H. Gilbert, president of the Gilbert systems of Hotels. Remodeling included a new lobby on the ground floor, telephones in the rooms, redecorating, and refurnishing. The hostelry was given the name of Plaza Hotel.(7) The staircase in the lobby was salvaged from the Barcelona Hotel which was demolished in the 1960's. Also during the 1930's, George L. Potter discovered an interest in St. Augustine buying three blocks of the down town area. By 1949 he opened a Wax Museum on the first floor of the former Estes House. It was the first museum of this type in the United States and is still considered the largest. The exhibit grew over the years from the original thirty to 240 representations.(8)

ARCHAEOLOGY

For archaeological significance of the walled colonial city see Master Site File Form 8SJ10.

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3. Anon., "Copy of a Plan of the City of St. Augustine," 1833; John S. Horton, "View of St. Augustine, East Florida," 1855; 1885 and 1894 Birds-Eye Views; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1884-1958; St. Augustine Record, July 4, 1937 and February 5, 1950.
 4. Sanborn, 1884, 1888.
 5. Tatler, January 18, 1896, p. 27.
 6. Record, Sunday, January 3, 1954, p. 4-B.
 7. Ibid., Sunday, October 21, 1934, p. 5.
 8. Ibid., Friday, March 30, 1979; The Explorer, September 28-October 24, 1979.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

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ARCHITECTURE

there is a photo showing the earlier building of the Post. bldg. i.e. Ave

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