

2016

# National Register Nomination for the Waikiki Village Motel

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National Register Nomination for the Waikiki Village Motel

By

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Bachelor of Arts  
Randolph College, 2012

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## Abstract

The Waikiki Village Motel, built in 1963, embodies the Modern style of architecture that was prolific throughout the mid-century period in America. This building type constituted the majority of the development of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina during this era, but much of it has been lost to more modern development. The L-shape design and Hawaiian-style hut demonstrate the Modern form as an affordable destination for middle-class fun. The motel characterizes the boom in resort style development prevalent in the Palmetto State's Grand Strand after the destruction by Hurricane Hazel in 1954. It also represents the idea of "Populuxe" – forward thinking, modern, and populist during the mid-1900s – but is now seen as a past way of life inhibiting future development.

The span from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s was the zenith of growth and prosperity in Myrtle Beach due to the blank canvas left by Hurricane Hazel's destruction. S. M. Johnston, a local businessman, took advantage of cheap land and an ocean front view and built a motel that would serve the community for years to come. It stands as a testament to the early years of development in the beach town and the beginning of Myrtle Beach's tourist-driven economy. The same family has owned and operated the motel since 1970, demonstrating that a Mom-and-Pop run establishment can still be prosperous in the twenty-first century.

The Waikiki Village contributed to the growth of Myrtle Beach as a tourist destination in the South. It provided modern amenities, had the right location, and was

automobile friendly. The wave of Modern motels that hit Myrtle Beach in the post-Hazel years would define vacationing and leisure for growing middle class families as an escape from the mundane that was not too far from home and was also affordable. The Hawaiian style of the motel and ocean view gave visitors the sense that they were traveling to exotic locales like Honolulu, Hawaii, not Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, but all accessible through the family's stylish and affordable new automobile. This automobile would be the conduit that lured in visitors by their roadside signs and quirky attractions.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis is a National Register of Historic Places nomination that has been formatted to meet the requirements of the Graduate School. As a student in the Public History Program, it seemed appropriate that an applied thesis such as a National Register nomination, would best represent the Program's curriculum and goals. This project is also serving as a real-world example of applied historic preservation. The nomination for this property will be sent to the National Park Service for review as a tax credit project so that the current owner can receive federal tax credits to assist with rehabilitating the building. In order to make sense of both the format of the National Register of Historic Places and the master's thesis, the chapters are organized so that they maintain their themes and ideas within the criteria for the National Register.

The National Register is an honorary distinction bestowed upon a property in recognition for significance at the local, state, or federal level. The nomination requires a technical style of writing that gives a description of the property as it currently exists, as well as a contextual history of why it is significant. These two sections normally constitute Section Seven of the document, the narrative description, and Section Eight, the Statement of Significance. Section Seven of the National Register consists of a thorough architectural description of the buildings, sites, structures, and objects located on the property under consideration while Section Eight gives evidence for why this property matters and deserves recognition on the National Register. Section Seven also

includes an explanation of the building's integrity, including any alterations that have been made.

In order to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a property, in this case, a building, must meet one of the following criteria: “be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A), be associated with the lives of significant persons in our past (Criterion B), embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction...or possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity...(Criterion C), or have yielded or may be likely to yield information in history or prehistory (Criterion D).”<sup>1</sup> Under these criteria, the Waikiki Village Motel is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for contributing to the broad patterns of history through Community Planning and Development and Entertainment and Recreation of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Additionally, the motel is eligible for embodying the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture in the early 1960s, or Criterion C.

Within the format of this thesis, the themes are broken up into three chapters, the first of which is Section Seven of the National Register nomination. This chapter has two sections with an introduction to the architectural importance of the property coming first. Next, the motel and the Hawaiian-style hut are described in detail, and then the changes made over time are specified. The next chapter encompasses Criterion A, the broad patterns of history. The chapter has three subthemes within it. Throughout these chapters, photographs are included to illustrate the current condition of the motel as well as historic ones so that readers may see the chronology of the motel's history. A conclusion chapter

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, “National Register Criteria For Evaluation,” [https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_2.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm), accessed October 17, 2016.

summarizes and synthesizes the importance of the Waikiki in Myrtle Beach's recreational, developmental, and architectural history.

The Waikiki Village Motel serves as an important piece of mid-century architecture in Myrtle Beach's built environment. It represents a time of growth: growth in building, in tourism, and mobility. The motel was once one of many Modern motels, built to accommodate families on the move in their automobiles as well as serve the boost in tourism Myrtle Beach was experiencing. However, many of these motels have been replaced by more contemporary skyscraper condominiums. The Mom-and-Pop run Waikiki Village is a vestige of a time since past. The simple, streamlined architecture mixed with Hawaiian accents were meant to set the motel apart from others, which it seems to do more now than in the 1960s since it is one of the remaining Mid-Century Modern motels left among large scale condos. The motel is significant in representing this period of development in Myrtle Beach and demonstrating how much has changed since the boom of the 1960s.

## Chapter 2

### Architectural Significance and Description

The Waikiki Village has been a staple of Myrtle Beach's built environment since 1963. The Modern design and Hawaiian theme of the motel offered visitors a chance to seemingly escape somewhere more exotic than South Carolina's Grand Strand, which was a goal of the "Populuxe" motel. James and Louise Watts have owned and operated the motel since 1970 and have striven to maintain the building's appearance as it looked when they purchased it. Their daughters Nancy and Sandra continue to run the business today. The motel represents the period of Myrtle Beach's rapid growth and expansion as a tourist destination. Its minimal changes over the years, exotic style, and feel of nostalgia demonstrate its lasting ability to entice visitors to vacation there instead of the contemporary skyscrapers that exist along the coast today.

Coined by historian Thomas Hine, Populuxe is a synthetic word derived from populism and popularity, but also from luxury, or at least the illusion of it. The "e" at the end supposedly lends the moniker an air of richness, sophistication, and class.<sup>2</sup> During the postwar period, Americans began to experience an unprecedented level of consumption. The wartime economy transformed into a consumer one where citizens were wooed into buying almost anything by the advertising industry, particularly after being frugal since the Depression began in 1929 and lasting through World War II. However, Populuxe architecture did not begin until about 1954. Hine classifies this in-

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 6.

between time as a period of catching up on all the goods they were denied during the depression and the war, where Americans “produced a lot of cars, a lot of babies, a lot of appliances, a lot of suburbs.” In essence, the middle class was beginning to grow, and Americans were preparing to consume enough to furnish those houses in the suburbs, occupy their little ones, and pack up their new cars for a weekend of leisure.

The availability of money and free time allowed families to afford this luxury. The post-war economy gave men jobs, houses, and a disposable income to purchase the influx of new products on the market such as automobiles. The affordability of vehicles made them more widespread than ever before, and became a focal point of entertainment for families. People attended openings of new highways, turnpikes, and bridges because of the freedom it gave them and the ability to explore the country.

For those living in or near South Carolina, Myrtle Beach became the destination for leisure during the 1950s. The Myrtle Beach Pavilion had long been a draw for locals, providing a space to rent bathing suits, dance to live music, and enjoy amusement park rides. The addition of U.S. Highway 17 through Myrtle Beach easily brought visitors to the Grand Strand. After President Eisenhower enacted the Federal Highway Act linking the United States together with an interstate highway system, people from farther locations could now experience Myrtle Beach. Once this became apparent, developers quickly started constructing motels and motor courts along the Grand Strand.<sup>3</sup> In 1963, S. M. Johnston, a native of neighboring Conway, South Carolina and budding entrepreneur, decided to build his first hotel, which was located along South Ocean Boulevard with

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara F. Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History, 1900-1980* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 93.

close proximity to the beach. The Waikiki Village became an iconic and highly sought after destination for vacation, particularly because of its Modern design.

The motel's sleek exterior and Hawaiian inspired hut in the center of the grounds drew visitors from all over the South. Additionally, the bright turquoise doors and large, bright sign lured guests to come stay here and indulge in the "vulgarity," or kitschy-ness, of the Waikiki, and most importantly, at an affordable price.<sup>4</sup> For many Americans, the era of the mid-1950s and early 1960s allowed access to luxury, leisure, and consumption, which they had never before experienced. Part of the "Populuxe" idea, as previously discussed, is that it is inherently meant for all. It is partially derived from populism, the idea that people should hold the political power equally, and applied to everyday life. The word is also derived from popular, which these motels certainly were in resort towns up and down the east coast. The Waikiki Village's owners exemplified this populist approach to lodging by making their motel affordable, fun, and family oriented.<sup>5</sup>

The name, colors, and architecture reflect a Hawaiian theme that was popular during the mid-century. According to Sven Kirsten, during the twentieth century, "Americans developed a strong affection for the Hawaiian Islands. Fueled by popular literature, music, and Hollywood movies, the people of mainland U.S.A. fabricated a romantic vision of Polynesia that ignored complex realities of native culture in favor of an idealized fantasy."<sup>6</sup> The important piece of this is the "idealized fantasy." The Waikiki Village uses styles that evoke Hawaiian imagery, such as the pyramidal roof, tiki letters,

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<sup>4</sup> Hine, *Populuxe*, 12. Hine defines Populuxe as vulgar, saying that "It is the result of an unprecedented ability to acquire, reaching well down into the working class, to the sort of people who had historically been able to have only a few mean objects."

<sup>5</sup> Waikikivillagemb.com, accessed October 6, 2016. The motel's website emphasizes catering to families and mature couples and being family oriented.

<sup>6</sup> Sven Kirsten, *Tiki Pop: American Imagines Its Own Polynesian Paradise* (Köln, Germany: Taschen and Muse, 2014), 11.

and bright colors, but nothing about the motel is actually Hawaiian. It is meant to serve as a “romantic vision” or “idealized fantasy” of Hawaii. Motels, particularly those located at the beach, were used to set themselves apart and draw in visitors and weary travelers passing through, setting themselves up as a South Seas Paradise.<sup>7</sup> This idea is important to the Waikiki and other commercial buildings of the time because by the late 1960s and early 1970s, roadside architecture shifted from grabbing attention to blending into the landscape.<sup>8</sup> The Hawaiian theme, or its illusion, has helped the Waikiki Village remain a staple along Ocean Boulevard for over fifty years.

## **2.1 Waikiki Village Motel**

Situated at the corner of South Ocean Boulevard and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, the two-story Waikiki Village Motel faces east towards the Atlantic Ocean. S. M. Johnston constructed the motel in 1963 in a standard L-shaped Modern style. The two-story building still reflects much of its original design and is one of the remaining examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture in Myrtle Beach. One of the defining features of the motel is the Hawaiian-style hut located in the angle of the “L” space. The hut is strategically located adjacent to Ocean Boulevard and was designed to catch the eyes of automobile traffic to lure them to stay at the motel.<sup>9</sup>

Constructed of steel, bricks, concrete, and glass, it features bright colors, a Hawaiian inspired hut, a flat roof, and L-shaped design, which was a popular design of that time period (Figure 2.1).<sup>10</sup> Many of these characteristics are shared with the

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<sup>7</sup> Kirsten, *Tiki Pop*, 285, 287-88.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Hess, *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture* (Tokyo: Toppan Printing Company, 1986), 121.

<sup>9</sup> Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile* (Boston: Little Brown, 1985), 184. Per Liebs, being bypassed was the greatest fear of the industry, meaning that motels needed this flashiness to attract customers.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 469.

International Style of architecture, which greatly prospered during the mid-century time period. “Populuxe” derives many of its attributes from International Style, although it adds a funky twist to it for visibility from motorists in their vehicles. The Waikiki uses a Hawaiian theme to make guests feel as though they are traveling to a far more distant and exotic location than South Carolina. It uses both the simplicity of the International Style to appear new, clean, and streamlined as well as the boldness of the Hawaiian theme to appear more exciting than a typical motel.

The motel faces east onto South Ocean Boulevard and the Atlantic Ocean. Its office is easily accessible from the street and is the closest portion of the motel to the boulevard. The two-story motel features an L-shaped design comprised of guest rooms spanning both the long and short portions of the “L.” A two-story addition of guest rooms between 1967-1969 began where the short end terminated. This addition parallels 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue South on the north end of the property and extends west towards Yaupon Drive, which borders the rear of the motel’s lot.

The lobby is situated in the east façade’s southern wing and has a storefront design to it. There is a single glass and steel frame door located on the right side of the central bay, with three plate glass windows with simple steel muntins north of the door and the same design just south of the door (Figure 2.2). However, a concrete pilaster interrupts the southern windows, leaving the window to the south separate from the two north of it. The concrete pilaster is one of four across the façade, with one just north of the door, one situated on the northeast corner of the façade, and the final one at the southeastern corner. Each of these pilasters holds up a structural member for the flat roofed awning overhead. The landscape in front of the motel’s entrance is concrete so

that cars could drive beneath the awning and quickly access the front office. A light blue concrete slab step differentiates pedestrian access from vehicular. The second level of the façade, similar to the first-floor design, is three bays wide, with each bay divided by pilasters. Each bay consists of two full-length sliding glass doors with turquoise fabric awnings above them.<sup>11</sup> The doors also feature black metal banisters to keep guests from walking onto the first-floor awning. Air conditioning units, which were a luxury for guests in the 1960s, are located adjacent to the doors.

The north elevation is nine bays deep, with the first eight bays consisting of individual guest rooms (Figure 2.3). The final bay is a vending machine area on the first level and a porch on the second. Square, reinforced concrete columns divide the bays across the elevation and reflect division of each guest room. Vertical black metal bannisters run between each column to form a porch. Each bay is identical in design, with one deviation. The bays feature a turquoise metal door with a clear transom above it, two square casement windows with transoms painted turquoise above and turquoise painted bulkheads below. The pattern that alternates between the bays is the placement of the doors. The doors are reflectively symmetrical, meaning that they are a reflection of each other with the concrete column dividing them along the center. Therefore, sometimes the doors are on the left side of the bay or the right side, but the windows are always the same configuration (Figure 2.4). The final bay, which connects to the short side of the “L” is open on the first level, but the second level is enclosed and features a large casement window, turquoise painted transom, and large air conditioning unit beneath the window.

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<sup>11</sup> The awnings were located in this location from the 1990s until Hurricane Matthew hit on October 8, 2016. The hurricane damaged the fabric and the awning structures, removing them from the walls of the building. Owner Nancy Watts Hall plans to reinstall them as soon as possible.

The short end of the “L” is the east elevation’s northern end. It is five bays wide, but only four of the bays feature the same entrance pattern as the north elevation (Figure 2.5). The fifth bay is the northwestern corner of the building and consists of the same double sliding glass door design as above the office. The second floor has a black metal banister to protect guests from falling out of the sliding glass window, but the first-floor doors open onto a concrete patio. However, the patio is also a pathway from the nearby parking lot to the stairwell in the corner, or to the pool in the center of the motel’s yard. The reason this bay differs from the previous ones on both levels is because this was a later addition to the original structure. It begins the wing that projects westward parallel to 15th Avenue South.

Heading in an east to west direction, the west wing’s north elevation does not have breaks in the wall. Just before the center of the wing’s north elevation, concrete columns create five bays that resemble the original portion of the motel (Figure 2.6). The first bay is smaller than the others, as it is a hallway, not a guest room. The remaining four bays are guest rooms and differ from the rest of the motel, featuring three full-length glass windows, one of which is a sliding door. However, the balconies have the same black metal bannisters across their porch, and vertical square columns divide the bays.

The west elevation of the building features two wings, the northern one projects west and parallels 15th Avenue South, which is the addition. The east wing, which is the original short side of the “L,” projects south adjacent to South Ocean Boulevard. The northern wing’s elevation is blank (Figure 2.7). The original wing’s west elevation is four bays wide, but instead of the standard square concrete columns, these bays feature black metal columns, which express the division between each guest room on that elevation.

The corner of the wings' intersection has an enclosed stairwell of white concrete and the first level has a shed roof upheld by turquoise wooden posts to create a cookout station (Figures 2.8).

The cookout station has two wooden countertops, one on each side, which run along the enclosed stairwell walls and are covered by a shed roof (Figure 2.9). This area originally housed grills for guests, but for safety reasons, the grills were moved further from the building. The west elevation of the original building has a different window configuration on both the first and second levels; there are fewer and smaller ones than the elevations that face the pool area. This change is most likely due to the fact that this is a secondary facade, meant for easy access to the vehicle, and not meant to provide a great view or accessibility to amenities like the pool. The northern room lacks windows, but has an air conditioning unit to the right of the door. The center room has a double casement window to the door's left with an air conditioning unit beneath it, and the final room on the southeastern corner has the same double casement window, but right of the door. All three of the doors are the standard turquoise doors used throughout the motel. The southwest corner has an exposed stairwell down to the first level.

The south elevation has two sections; the first is the westward projecting wing (Figure 2.10) and the second is the original L-shaped structure (Figure 2.11). The western wing has a window configuration similar to the west elevation of the original building. The first bay is four bays long and resembles the northern elevation with the white concrete columns. The window configuration is also similar to that of the west elevation, and not the design of the pool facing elevations. The thirteenth bay southern elevation is like the western elevation's southern wing since it features black metal columns instead

of the square concrete columns. The first eleven bays are guest rooms while the last two are part of the front office. Moving east, the first four bays of both levels do not feature any guest rooms, but do have air conditioning units in the first and third bays, and the fourth has an opening to a hallway and a casement window to the right of the hallway. Beginning with the fifth bay, there are turquoise doors with air conditioning units beside them, but no windows along this elevation until the front office. The office projects south slightly and features three pilasters dividing the elevation in half (Figure 2.12). The thirteenth bay has four picture windows across it. An air conditioning unit covers the second window.

The motel's landscape features a boomerang-shaped pool in the central space of the "L" and a square shaped Hawaiian-style hut with a pyramidal roof to the east of it. The hut is a focal point of the landscape, with overhanging eaves and a pyramid capstone atop the asphalt shingled roof; it serves its primary purpose of drawing in visitors from the road with an exotic design, which is why it is situated closely to the main drag of South Ocean Boulevard (Figure 2.13). This structure houses six motel rooms, three of which are accessible from the north elevation, the remaining three from the south elevation. These rooms have the same turquoise doors as the rest of the motel, but feature three full-length glass windows between each room (Figure 2.14). The northwestern corner of the hut has a small shed addition with a door on the north elevation and two smaller doors on the west elevation (Figure 2.15). This area house pool and hot tub equipment. The hut's façade, or east elevation, has four full-length windows on the north and south ends with a brick façade in the center with "Waikiki Village" in black tiki letters (Figure 2.16).

The southwestern corner of the hut features a second, smaller hut that is connected to the main structure's rear elevation. It is also square with a pyramidal roof and pyramid capstone at the top. This smaller hut houses an indoor hot tub. The walls are primarily sets of double sliding glass doors that lead out to the large pool and kiddie pool (Figure 2.17).

The motel has forty-three guest rooms in total, including the rooms in the hut. Seven different room styles cater to everyone from couples to families, and twelve rooms adjoin with a shared door to allow families to all stay together. Nearly all of the rooms are equipped with kitchenettes, helping families maintain an affordable vacation by cooking for themselves, but also demonstrating that by 1963, Myrtle Beach had not become the tourist destination that it is today. Restaurants were not around every corner as they are now, making kitchenettes necessary if families were spending a week at the beach.

The motel lobby and office most exhibits the Hawaiian theme. The main entrance to the office is lower than the rest of the room and has three steps leading visitors up to the main level. A black metal railing like the ones outside surround the split-level and provide assistance for the stairs. A large front desk greets visitors at the top of the stairs (Figure 2.18). Floral wallpaper with turquoise accents adorns the wall and blue indoor/outdoor carpet spans the length and width of the floor, except for a tile entrance on the north and east sides of the room as well as in front of the front desk. The desk sits beneath one of the two concrete structural beams that runs across the ceiling in an east-west direction. These beams continue to the columns on the exterior that support the building's second story and its porch. Behind the desk are two doors, one that leads to an

office with cinderblock walls, the second, which is closer to the western wall of the room, is a restroom. Both of these doors and their frames, along with all of the others in the lobby, are turquoise. A glass pane door in the southwest corner of the room leads to an open hallway of guest rooms.

A door in the center of the western wall leads to an owner's suite, which consists of a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment complete with kitchenette. The apartment is carpeted except for the kitchenette, which is linoleum, and the bathroom, which is tile. The north wall is composed of glass sliding doors that lead outside. The walls of the kitchenette and small breakfast nook are vertical wood paneling, while the living room is painted drywall. The two bedrooms are also a combination of drywall with wallpaper or paint and white wood paneling. The bathroom has white tiling until approximately four feet high where it transitions into wallpaper and a combination shower and bathtub.

The guest rooms are all very similar in design with only slight variances. Most contain carpeted floors in bedrooms and living rooms, linoleum or tile floors in the kitchens, tiling in the bathrooms, and drywall or vertical paneling on the walls (Figure 2.19). However, three rooms in particular are quite different from the other forty rooms. The first two are rooms 134 and 234, the north end of the original L-shaped design. These rooms exhibit exposed brickwork on the east wall of their room instead of drywall or vertical paneling (Figure 2.20). This feature demonstrates where the original building ended and shows how these two rooms were added on later without bothering to cover the exposed bricks. According to the owner, these are popular rooms to rent.<sup>12</sup> From the exterior, these rooms are distinguishable due to their narrow width, their concrete facade (as opposed to the glass facades of the original building), and their floor length windows.

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy Watts Hall, interview with author, October 13, 2016.

This bay is clearly an addition because of how much it deviates from the original style of the building.

Another room that varies from the standard rooms is Room 200. The Watts family used this suite, which is located on the second floor above the front office, as their living quarters during the summer when the motel was at its busiest. The apartment is much larger than the other rooms, has a large balcony that overlooks the ocean, the pool, and Ocean Boulevard, and separate bedrooms instead of a typical motel room with beds. The balcony is the roof of the covered patio on the first level. The starkest difference is the front door of this room; it has a diamond shaped stained glass window in the center (Figure 2.21). Louise Watts made this addition when the family lived there to differentiate and personalize the space. This room is not included in the motel's advertising, as it already remains booked throughout the year. It is a hidden gem for repeat visitors who know about this special suite.

The final variance between rooms in the Waikiki Village is the Hawaiian-style hut. These rooms, which were transformed from the original lobby and restaurant, are different in a number of ways. First, the interior ceilings are framed with Pecky Cypress wood and are angled (Figure 2.22). These six rooms are all efficiency rooms, meaning that they do not have kitchenettes or a living space, and instead are just a bedroom with a refrigerator, microwave or coffeemaker, and a bathroom. The one exception to this is Room 402, which has a small kitchenette complete with original terrazzo floor (Figure 2.23). The walls of these rooms are a combination of exposed cinder blocks and vertical paneling. Each room also has an original hanging light fixture from the restaurant in it

(Figure 2.24). A number of individuals rent these spaces because of their exotic style and affordable rates.

## **2.2 Architectural History**

Throughout its fifty-three years, the Waikiki Village has changed very little, and most of the changes that did occur happened early in its existence. S. M. Johnston, the original owner and developer of the motel, enlarged it between 1967 and 1969 by adding an additional wing of guest rooms along 15th Avenue South, connecting at the short end of the “L” structure. While this addition constituted the most significant change to the building, there were other small changes taking place throughout the property’s history as well. Besides the addition, many of the changes occurred because of evolving technology, which the motel needed in order to remain a relevant destination for lodgers. These include communal drink machines, new kitchen appliances, and the addition of wall mounted televisions and wifi connectivity. Other changes, such as fencing and signage, were in response to new city ordinances or laws dealing with safety. Therefore, much of the building remains as it did in the 1960s.

Perhaps the largest change was the building’s transformation from a redbrick exterior to a white stucco finish during the 1967-1969 addition (Figure 2.25). This change was due to Johnston building an ancillary wing onto the L-shaped structure, which added five more guest rooms on each level to the building. Johnston also transformed the Hawaiian-style hut into guest rooms. This space, which originally housed the motel’s office and a restaurant, now became six small guest rooms. The center of the hut’s facade originally featured a set of glass double doors with full-length single paned glass across the east elevation (Figure 2.26). Two sets of white pilasters flanked the front entrance,

with the outer pilasters serving as posts for lantern light fixtures. The terrazzo flooring of the restaurant and office can still be seen in two of these rooms, while the others were covered with carpet. Since the office was located inside the hut, a new office space was added to the front of the east elevation, which is where it is currently located.

During this renovation, the space in front of the Hawaiian hut became a putt-putt golf course complete with AstroTurf. Previously, this area was a parking lot. In the late 1990s, the owners added a shuffleboard deck adjacent to the putting green, making it half of its original size (Figure 2.27). Original bricks from a low wall surrounding the front of the property now create a separation between the shuffleboard deck and AstroTurf putting green and also the sidewalk of South Ocean Boulevard. Next to this new putting green, Johnston added a covered patio that was accessible from the new motel lobby (Figure 2.28). The patio stores the equipment for the games, but also is an outdoor welcoming center that leads visitors from the street to the motel's yard where they can access the pool, hot tub, and their rooms. The patio has three steps leading up from the driveway, separating it from the automobile's area and has landscaping at the patio's corners to make it seem more inviting. Four lanterns hang from the patio's ceiling, which have been there since the addition was made. The bricks used for the stairs and for the retaining wall are the same bricks used for the small wall around the putting green.

One feature that evolving technologies replaced was the brick lattice wall on the north elevation. During the 1967 to 1969 renovation, the owner removed the brick latticework wall to make way for drink and snack machines.<sup>13</sup> However, these machines were only added on the first level, but Johnston removed the decorative wall from both

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<sup>13</sup> While the additional wing and conversion of the hut began in late 1967, the brick wall was not removed until 1969. Nancy Watts Hall personal photograph collection.

the first and second floors (Figure 2.29). This new exposed area became a porch for a room that was enlarged from the former hallway of the second level. While decorative brick and cinderblock features are components of Modern design, they are not the main focal points of the motels. Additionally, this latticework wall was tucked away in the northwest corner of the building making it difficult to see from the main thoroughfare of South Ocean Boulevard. Therefore, this element was not a defining feature of the motel.

The railings of the porches are another feature that have changed over time. Originally, the railings were more in line with the motel's theme: Hawaii. Instead of the current black, vertically oriented metal railings, the original railings were horizontal and stained wood.<sup>14</sup> They consisted of three horizontal pieces of stained wood held up by small metal posts to make them almost appear like they were floating (Figure 2.30). However, these railings did not provide enough security against falls and were therefore replaced with the more durable black metal railings for safety reasons. Although the original rail posts were more fitting with the motel's theme, insurance reasons led the Watts family to transition to a safer option in 1977. It was around the same time that the railings were changed that the owners added a matching fence around the pool. Again, for insurance reasons and local ordinances, the pool had to be enclosed by a fence of at least five feet in height.<sup>15</sup>

### Hurricane Hugo

The arrival of Hurricane Hugo in September 1989 caused massive damage to South Carolina. Among the top three most devastating hurricanes in the state's history,

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<sup>14</sup> Nancy Watts Hall personal photograph collection.

<sup>15</sup> The Code of Ordinances, City of Myrtle Beach, SC, Appendix A, Zoning.

Hugo was not as devastating as Hazel had been thirty-five years earlier for the Waikiki.<sup>16</sup> When Hurricane Hugo hit, the motel sustained only minor damage, with the building's sign receiving the most harm. Before Hugo, the sign was attached to second level of the east elevation (Figure 2.31). The motel name was displayed in black tiki letters over a turquoise background. Beneath this was a marquee with interchangeable letters and a neon vacancy sign east of the marquee. After Hugo's destruction, it was more difficult to place the sign where it had been previously located due to ordinances by the City of Myrtle Beach (Figure 2.32).<sup>17</sup>

Another consequence of Hurricane Hugo was the loss of the exposed rafter tails on the motel's Hawaiian hut. Before the storm, the hut had turquoise rafter tails that protruded past the eaves on all sides (Figure 2.33). Hugo damaged so many of them that the Watts family decided to remove them and replace the cornice without any rafter tails exposed. However, the small addition on the rear of the hut still retains this feature.

### More Amenities

By the mid-1980s, the Waikiki Village Motel was thriving, but the owners continued to improve the grounds and amenities available to their patrons. First, James Watts built a kiddie pool for children to swim in at the northeast corner of the pool deck. That diminutive pool is about two feet deep and square in shape. In the early 1990s, the owners decided to include an indoor hot tub as well, which they built adjacent to the children's pool to the south. A matching Hawaiian-style hut that extended from the original hut structure enclosed the new hot tub. It features exposed rafter tails reminiscent

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<sup>16</sup> Wall text, *Horry County Beaches*, Horry County Museum, Conway, South Carolina.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy Watts Hall: The Code of Ordinances.

of the original hut and six sets of sliding glass doors, two for each elevation (since the fourth elevation connects to the Hawaiian hut).

The owners updated the interiors of the rooms over the years to keep them in working order and more attractive, while still maintaining their integrity. The biggest change was the addition of sheetrock over the once exposed cinderblock walls. Mr. Watts made this change early on to ensure that the rooms appeared more polished and finished. However, he chose to leave the brick exposed in rooms 134 and 234 for an historic effect. Other changes that the owners made were functional or aesthetic, including new kitchen appliances when necessary, new televisions, new carpeting, and interior paint over the paneling. Structurally, the building has not changed notably since the large scale addition and renovation between 1967 and 1969. The intent of the Watts family always has been to maintain the original design of the motel and preserve its history by remaining a mid-century type of experience.



Figure 2.1 Northeast oblique of Waikiki Village Motel. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.2 South end of east elevation, front office. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.3 North elevation of motel with pool and hut addition. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.4 Reflectional symmetry of guest rooms, north elevation. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.5 East elevation with addition projecting west. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.6 North elevation, 1967-1969 addition. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.7 West elevation, 1967-1969 addition. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.8 West elevation of original structure. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.9 Cinderblock enclosed patio with cookout station, northeast oblique. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.10 South elevation of 1967-1969 addition. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.11 South elevation, original structure. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.12 South elevation of front office. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.13 East façade, Hawaiian-style hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.14 North elevation of Hawaiian-style hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.15 Shed addition on hut for pool equipment.  
(Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.16 Detail of Hawaiian-style hut, looking south. (Photo by the author).



Figure 2.17 Sliding doors on additional hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.18 Front desk in lobby. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.19 Typical room in the Waikiki Village Motel. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.20 Exposed brick wall in Room 134. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.21 Stained glass window, Room 200. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.22 Pecky Cypress ceiling framing in Hawaiian-style hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.23 Terrazzo flooring in Room 402. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.24 Original light fixture in Hawaiian-style hut.  
(Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.25 Original design and red brick finish of Waikiki Village Motel, circa 1963.  
(Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure 2.26 Original Hawaiian-style hut entrance. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure 2.27 Putting green and shuffleboard deck. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.28 Covered patio, looking west. (Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.29 Brick lattice wall. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure 2.30 Original location of sign. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure 2.31 Current Waikiki Village sign.  
(Photo by the author.)



Figure 2.32 Original exposed rafter tails. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)

## Chapter 3

### Statement of Significance: Broad Patterns of History

The development of the Waikiki Village Motel represents a time in Myrtle Beach's history when growth and prosperity were overwhelming. After years of being on the periphery, the Grand Strand became the largest attraction for vacationers in South Carolina, mainly due to the expansion of roadways in the early-to-mid-twentieth century, as well as the blank canvas and cheaper real estate left by Hurricane Hazel in 1954.<sup>18</sup> Businessmen like Collins and Burroughs, and later S. M. Johnston took advantage of opportunities and helped catapult Myrtle Beach to Southern stardom, and eventually international prominence. The Waikiki is the embodiment of the development and entertainment that was rampant during the late 1950s and early 1960s in Myrtle Beach. It contributed to the growth and expansion of a town that before 1950 had a population of 3,345, and brought in more than \$25 million in state taxes in 1966.<sup>19</sup>

The Waikiki Village is an extant representation of how Myrtle Beach's built environment developed during the 1950s and early 1960s. Its continued presence plays an important role in examining why the concept of Mid-Century Modern motels arose when they did, why they were so widespread, and why they are in danger now. The Waikiki was among those motels that helped catapult Myrtle Beach into one of the most visited

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<sup>18</sup> Eldred E. Price, Jr. "Myrtle Beach," *South Carolina Encyclopedia* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Institute for Southern Studies, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Edward B. Borden, "Tourism: A Top SC Industry," May 1968. "Tourism in South Carolina" Vertical File, Box 2, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.; Becky Billingsley, *Lost Myrtle Beach* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014), 32.

locations along the east coast, and brought it the reputation internationally as a place for entertainment along the beach.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.1 History of Myrtle Beach**

Myrtle Beach differs from other beach resort towns along the eastern seaboard. The marshy landscape of Horry County isolated Myrtle Beach, formerly called New Town, from transportation networks. While many beach towns became destinations by the late nineteenth century, Myrtle Beach did not seriously develop until later in the twentieth century. In 1887, railroads assisted in uniting Myrtle Beach to other cities like the port city of Wilmington, North Carolina, which helped foster growth for the beach town.<sup>21</sup> The Sea Side Inn, a small oceanfront hotel, was the first attempt at establishing a resort presence, which ferries and trains supported by bringing visitors to the coast. In 1905, three businessmen, Franklin A. Burroughs, Benjamin G. Collins, and James E. Bryan Sr., created the Myrtle Beach Development Company whose objective was to purchase, improve, and resell swampland that they cleared and drained to make inhabitable.<sup>22</sup> Burroughs and Collins, the organizers of the Myrtle Beach Development Company and original developers of the town, built a dance pavilion in 1908 next to the Sea Side Inn. Over the years, the Myrtle Beach Pavilion became a large draw for tourists as a place of recreation and leisure.

The main draw to Myrtle Beach came in 1927 with the opening of the Ocean Forest Golf Course and Country Club. By 1929, the Ocean Forest Hotel, which many called the “Million Dollar Hotel” because of its luxury, splendor, and grandeur,

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<sup>20</sup> According to Billingsley, “About 50% of the Grand Strand’s visitors came from neighboring states North Carolina and Georgia. Significant numbers also traveled from New York, Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, and the eastern provinces of Canada.” Billingsley, *Lost Myrtle Beach*, 133.

<sup>21</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History*, 13.

accompanied the club and solidified Myrtle Beach as a resort town.<sup>23</sup> The clientele of this hotel would be much different from the middle-class lodgers at the Waikiki. The lack of strong middle-class in America prohibited most citizens from experiencing leisure in general, let alone in the form of a “Million Dollar Hotel.” However, the construction and popularity of this hotel created a precedent for developers in Myrtle Beach and encouraged businessmen to start more building projects. Unfortunately, the opening of the hotel coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression. However, unlike most cities in the United States, Myrtle Beach benefited from a number of positive changes during the Depression and the New Deal such as the improvement of highways, making places like Ocean Forest more accessible to the people who could afford to visit, and even bringing visitors to more modest attractions.<sup>24</sup>

World War II affected Myrtle Beach much like it altered the rest of the world. Rationing, Victory Gardens, and a female work force were all normal parts of life during the war. However, while tourism slowed during the war years, it did not stop. Rationed gasoline meant less travel by automobile, which in turn meant less business for motels, which were situated away from locations of mass transit, such as train stations. But once the war ended, fun and veterans, returned to the beach. Myrtle Beach Farms, businessmen Burroughs and Chapin’s new company, constructed a new pavilion to replace the one that burned in 1944. This building would become “the beloved Myrtle Beach Pavilion ... and was the first structure of its kind along the Grand Strand.”<sup>25</sup> This Pavilion drew crowds from all over Horry County and eventually all over the South to come and enjoy dances,

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<sup>23</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Lesta Sue Hardee and Janice McDonald, *Myrtle Beach Pavilion* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 7.

beach views, musical acts, and amusement park rides. It spurred the growth and development that was headed for Myrtle Beach.

The real development of Myrtle Beach came after Hurricane Hazel ravaged the coast in 1954. The city was determined to reinvent itself after the destruction, and the futuristic style of “Populuxe” became the trend of the era.<sup>26</sup> Instead of motels that had developed earlier in the decade, themed Modern motels were intended to be part of the destination instead of only a means of getting to the destination. The City of Myrtle Beach was eager to advertise the “many beautiful ultra-modern hotels that have been built in recent years to house the traveler,” as a way to draw more visitors to their town.<sup>27</sup> They were familiar to families traveling to new locations, which provided a sense of security to this new phenomenon of family automobile travel. This familiarity came in the form of their layout. The proximity of the car to the motel reflected similar patterns of movement that visitors felt at home, but even more so, the suites that the Waikiki provided, with kitchenettes, color TVs, and couches, allowed visitors to feel like they were right at home during their vacation. However, the Hawaiian theme, which was drastically oversimplified, led them to believe in a false sense of place that was idealized for its bold and simple depiction.<sup>28</sup> The affordability and ease with which these motels accommodated families, familiarity, and their automobiles made them the top choice for the traveling nuclear family of the 1950s and 1960s. As Katherine Fuller’s 2002 thesis states, “Ironically, these tourists wanted the motels, restaurants and activities to be

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<sup>26</sup> Billingsley, *Lost Myrtle Beach*, 85.

<sup>27</sup> “Welcome to South Carolina,” Brochure, The Research, Planning and Development Board, “Tourism in South Carolina” Vertical File, Box 2, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>28</sup> Lydia M. Brandt, *First in the Homes of his Countrymen: George Washington’s Mount Vernon in the American Imagination* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 173.

different from home, but not so strange as to make them uncomfortable. The motels of Myrtle Beach ... were developed with those ideas in mind.”<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2 Development of a Resort Town & Entertainment Center**

After Hurricane Hazel, developers took advantage of the cheap land and transformed Myrtle Beach into a tourist industry. Where small cottages had once dotted the landscape, hotels and motels became the new normal. Because of the devastation from the hurricane, building boom, and the eagerness of businessmen to make money, Myrtle Beach became the state’s greatest number of midcentury motels.<sup>30</sup> These motels helped spur the development of Myrtle Beach as a middle-class tourist destination. The Waikiki Village was one of the dozens of Modern motels constructed during the span of 1955 to 1965, helping establish Myrtle Beach’s “Golden Era” during the 1960s.<sup>31</sup> The motels were themed, inviting, and affordable, but also provided the sense of familiarity necessary for them to feel comfortable. The Waikiki’s turquoise accents helped make it distinguishable from other motels along the strip of Ocean Boulevard, and the Hawaiian inspired cabana caught motorists’ attention and drew them into the property.

The year 1963, which was when the Waikiki Village opened, was a record year for tourism in Myrtle Beach. According to the *Sun-News* newspaper, “tourists brought an estimated \$48.5 million to the Grand Strand and stimulated construction investments that totaled \$9.5 million during 1963.”<sup>32</sup> This growth was in part due to an aggressive marketing campaign by the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce. Since Hurricane

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<sup>29</sup> Katherine J. Fuller, “Populuxe Motels: Preservation in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and the Wildwoods, New Jersey” (master’s thesis, Goucher College, 2002), 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> New South Associates, “Horry County Historic Resources Survey,” 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Mowder, “The History of Myrtle Beach Tourism: A Look at the Events & Attractions that Made the Strand Grand,” *Myrtlebeach.com*, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://www.myrtlebeach.com/timeline/>.

<sup>32</sup> “1963 Sets Record For Tourist Business Along Grand Strand,” *Sun-News*, Jan. 2, 1964.

Hazel, the Chamber focused on five areas of activity for Myrtle Beach's economy to grow: travel promotion, business development, community development, public affairs, and membership affairs.<sup>33</sup> The Waikiki and other motels, shops, and entertainment centers added to this growth and continued to bring popularity to the Grand Strand. One of the main draws to Myrtle Beach was the Pavilion, which had been the epicenter of entertainment since 1920. Located less than two miles from the Waikiki Village Motel, the Pavilion featured a dance hall, amusement park rides, and was the home of the annual Sun Fun Pageant.

What made Modern motels so different from previous ones were that they were part of the destination, not just a stop along the way. Finding a lodging location that could provide entertainment outside of the beach was important to many families. Shying away from standard and mundane looking roadside architecture, which were meant to provide the same comforting interiors and exteriors all across the country, these styles promoted themselves as exciting, exotic, and a place of fantasy.<sup>34</sup>

In 1963, thirty-one-year-old S. M. Johnston saw the development of Myrtle Beach continuing to grow after Hurricane Hazel, and decided to construct his first motel, the Waikiki Village. This motel would be the first of over twenty beach resorts that Johnston would be associated with during his lifetime.<sup>35</sup> The Waikiki Village opened to visitors in 1963 as a Hawaiian paradise that was easily accessible by automobile to those on the east coast. Due to its popularity, Johnston enlarged the motel by another wing on the west side

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<sup>33</sup> Katherine Fuller, "Myrtle Beach Music and Motels," in *Looking Beyond the Highway: Dixie Roads and Culture*, ed. Claudette Stager and Martha Carver (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>34</sup> Jake A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>35</sup> Obituary of S. M. Johnston, *Sun News*, December 24, 2003.

to accommodate more guests sometime between 1967 and 1969.<sup>36</sup> He would also convert the hut in the center of the landscape from a restaurant and front office into six more rooms. However, by 1970, Johnston decided to continue developing land into resorts instead of managing them and sold the property to James Watts. Johnston, whom many referred to as “Mr. Holiday Inn” because of his knack for developing hotels, motels, and condominiums, would continue to be a “pioneer of the Myrtle Beach tourism industry” until his death in 2003.<sup>37</sup>

One of the selling points of Myrtle Beach was its ability to entertain. Not only was the town full of hotels and motels situated near the Atlantic Ocean, but the Myrtle Beach Pavilion started the reputation as a place to go for fun. The dancing, pageants, and eventually roller coasters at the Pavilion became a form of entertainment outside of the ocean all together. As passengers flocked to Myrtle Beach via Highway 17, developers took advantage of that real estate for recreational purposes. Miniature golf became a popular attraction along this stretch of roadway, and like the motels along Ocean Boulevard, these mini golf courses aimed to draw in visitors with outrageous themes and designs. Other forms of entertainment along the Grand Strand included Gay Dolphin Park, an amusement park with roller coasters and an oceanfront arcade, Serpent City, a reptile house that also featured exotic zoo animals like lions and monkeys, and the Grand Strand Amusement Park.<sup>38</sup> All of these entertainments opened during the 1960s as Myrtle Beach continued to grow and were located along or just off the two main drags: Ocean Boulevard and Kings Highway (Route 17) for easy access from many of the nearby motels.

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<sup>36</sup> Nancy Watts Hall.

<sup>37</sup> Nancy Watts Hall; Obituary.

<sup>38</sup> Billingsley, *Lost Myrtle Beach*, 97-98.

### 3.3 A Mom-and-Pop Enterprise

While the motel was built in 1963, one family has continuously owned it since 1970. James O'Neill Watts purchased the motel as an investment property in that year, thinking that he could make a large profit on it in a few years as development of Ocean Boulevard continued.<sup>39</sup> However, Mr. Watts and the entire Watts family, fell in love with the Hawaiian themed motel. From 1970 until his death in 1992, James Watts and his wife, Louise, ran a family-friendly establishment that brought many patrons back year after year. Louise, with the help of her two daughters, Nancy and Sandra, operated the Waikiki until her passing in 1999. Nancy and her sister have continued their family's business into the twenty-first century and maintain the close relationships with guests for which they have become known.<sup>40</sup> It is this personal touch, along with the nostalgia and novelty of the Waikiki, that keeps guests returning year after year.

For over forty years, the Waikiki Village has hosted couples and families from all over the United States and Canada. Its distinguishable design inspires passersby to pose for photographs in front of the Hawaiian hut, but is also stimulating for artists. In 2012, photographers Cynthia Farnell and Dan Powell debuted an exhibit on the Waikiki Village at the Franklin G. Burroughs-Simeon B. Chapin Art Museum in Myrtle Beach. Originally intended to focus on motel lobbies in Myrtle Beach, the artists decided to narrow their attention on the Waikiki alone due to its architectural significance, friendly guests, and devoted owner. The exhibit, "Wish You Were Here: A Photographic Essay," ran from January 15 through February 26, 2012 and was well received by visitors to the museum.

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<sup>39</sup> Nancy Watts Hall.

<sup>40</sup> While meeting with Nancy, she showed countless photo albums dating back to the 1970s of guests whom she still knows and with whom she keeps in contact. She knew everyone by first name and details about their life and family, and even collected Christmas cards, which have been sent to her by guests.

The artists' attention to the motel embodies the cultural and architectural importance that this place plays for the community of Myrtle Beach, but also for Modern motels around the country.<sup>41</sup>

The Mom-and-Pop aspect of this motel is increasingly unique as more motels are bought out by national chains. The growth of the motel as architecture reflects the wants and needs of mobile Americans from the 1920s through the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> While the majority of motor camps, cottage courts, and motor inns were privately owned and operated in the early years of automobile travel, standardized roadside motels became the norm beginning in the 1960s. Howard Johnsons and Holiday Inns gave visitors the same experience whether they were in New York or Nevada. They pride themselves on having the same exterior architecture, interior room decor, level of service, and approximate price throughout the nation.<sup>43</sup> The design of Mid-Century Modern motels in places like Myrtle Beach aimed for the exact opposite. They wanted to stand out, be one of a kind, and were privately run. The fact that the Waikiki Village is still a remnant of this period in the evolution of roadside architecture makes it more significant now than ever. As large numbers of these motels succumb to demolition, it is important to remember their value and look at options that include preservation instead of destruction.

Modern motels have become significant as examples architecture from the recent past. While many people can remember when Mid-Century Modern buildings were constructed, they deserve consideration as important cultural and historic resources.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> A flyer for the exhibit reads: "The motel is a place whose existence has straddled major cultural shifts over time. Much of this history is manifested visually in Waikiki Village and its community."

<sup>42</sup> Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 23.

<sup>43</sup> Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, "Why Are We Looking at That? Mid Century Modern Architecture in South Carolina," (Columbia, SC), 2.

<http://shpo.sc.gov/research/Documents/WhyThat.pdf> (Accessed October 17, 2016).

Motels in particular are vestiges of the rise in the importance of the automobile. The use of prefabricated supplies made these buildings easier to construct than buildings in the past, which made constructing them so much more economical. These motels are also examples of the changing form of motel architecture, which constantly changes and both reflects and contributes to societal change.<sup>45</sup> They help to tell the story of the built environment and provide context to concepts like urban renewal, segregation, and advances in technology.<sup>46</sup> While many people find it difficult to embrace recent past architecture, the Waikiki Village Motel is an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern motel that so perfectly sums up the exuberance and abundance of the early-to-mid-1960s. To lose it, like so many other motels of the era and of Myrtle Beach, would be a tremendous loss for the community's history.

Myrtle Beach started out as a marshy, uninhabitable landscape that business transformed into a money-making destination. The development of roads like Highway 17 and Interstate 95 brought visitors from all over the east coast to enjoy the beach and other entertainment opportunities available to them. Without men like Burroughs, Collins, Johnston, and Watts, Myrtle Beach and the Waikiki Village might not have developed into the prosperous city and motel that they are, respectively. The combination of development and entertainment allowed the city to become the attraction it currently is. The Waikiki played a part in this story of development and served those who came to the beach for entertainment and recreation. It is a vestige of the growth and prosperity of Myrtle Beach that began in the 1960s.

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<sup>45</sup> Jakle, Sculle and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Campbell et al., "A Case Study on Mid-Century Modern Architecture: LBC&W" (paper presented at the South Carolina Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, Columbia, South Carolina, April 23, 2015).

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

The Waikiki Village is a genuine Mom-and-Pop owned and operated Mid-Century Modern style motel. While once one of many, the motel stands as one of the few remaining examples of this particular design. It represents the beginnings of Myrtle Beach's contemporary tourism industry and how it played a part in taking the Grand Strand out of the swampy backwoods that was isolated from the rest of the state and brought it to national recognition as a place for fun in the sun. The Waikiki developed during the post-Hazel push for more tourism by the Chamber of Commerce, and catered to the families that longed for a fun and affordable vacation. The automobile and advertising industry both played a role in keeping people mobile. Part of that mobility included these family vacations and the enjoyment that accompanied them. The Waikiki catered to that newfound idea of recreation.

While the landscape around it continues to develop high-rise resorts, the Waikiki Village plans to stay the way it is. The nostalgia of its design, layout, and color palette allow modern day visitors to get a sense of an authentic Mid-Century Modern motel that was inspired by the illusion of Hawaii, the automobile, and growth in the tourism industry. Instead of being a standard example of contemporary roadside architecture, the Waikiki aimed to be a prominent display as its own motel. It stands as a tangible link to America's social history. The design of Modern motels also offers a perspective on American architecture in the period of 1955 to 1965, and how these buildings served as

their own advertisements for automobile drivers. The Modern design elements gave it that air of newness and modernity while the Hawaiian inspired look brought attention to passersby, and continues to do so today. This streamlined, austere look of the motel juxtaposed with the laid-back simplicity of the Hawaiian-style hut make it distinctively “Populuxe.”

The Mom-and-Pop aspect of the Waikiki is another way that sets this motel apart. While many motels from that era face the wrecking ball in favor of high-rise complexes, the Waikiki Village has remained in the same family since 1970 and has continually operated as a motel since 1963. The family run business keeps the motel much as it was when it opened and helps it retain that mid-century feeling. The Waikiki Village Motel stands as a testament to Myrtle Beach’s development, its rise as a tourist industry, and the Modern movement that swept the country. It is a significant piece of the built environment in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

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Appendix A

Site Plan



Figure A.1 Site plan of Waikiki Village Motel. (Photo courtesy of GoogleMaps.)

**Waikiki Village**

**TYPE A**      **TYPE B**  
A, B, & BB rooms - no pool view.

**TYPE C**      **TYPE D**      **TYPE E**

**TYPE H**

*D, E, and H - Pool Area    Type F - Streetside    Type G - Pool Area    TYPE F and G*

**SUPER SAVER DAYS**  
Pay For 4 Nights And Get The 5th Night FREE!

April 3 - April 16	May 30 - June 9
May 1 - 14	Aug. 21 - Sept. 1
May 22 - 27	Sept. 18 - Oct. 1

NO ONE IS AUTHORIZED TO CHANGE ANY PART OF THIS RATE SCHEDULE.

**CATERING TO FAMILIES AND MATURE COUPLES**

Figure A.2 Room layout for the Waikiki Village Motel. (Photo courtesy of [www.waikikivillagemb.com](http://www.waikikivillagemb.com).)

## Appendix B

### Additional Photographs



Figure B.1 Waikiki Village after 1967-1969 addition. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure B.2 Original exposed cinderblock walls. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Watts Hall.)



Figure B.3 Current sheetrock wall. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.4 Standard kitchen in Waikiki room. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.5 Efficiency room in Hawaiian-style hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.6 Standard bathroom in Waikiki Village Motel. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.7 Indoor hot tub, smaller Hawaiian-style hut. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.8 Boomerang shaped pool. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.9 Kiddie pool. (Photo by the author.)



Figure B.10 View from Room 234. (Photo by the author.)