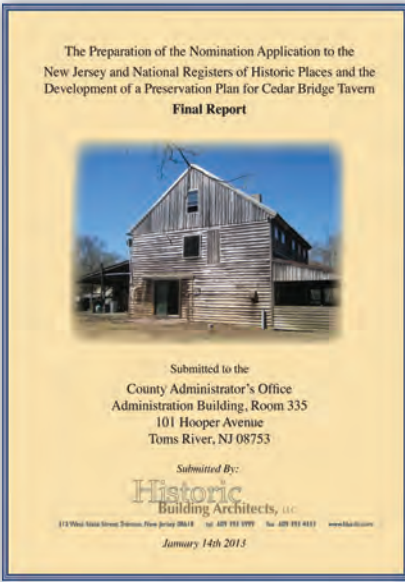


Report to NJ Historic Trust  
Photo credit: Historic Building Architects



# Cedar Bridge Tavern: National Register of Historic Places

By: Victoria Lassonde

**T**he Cedar Bridge Tavern in Barnegat Township, now believed to have been built in 1816 with a kitchen added on around 1830, may be about to secure its rightful and prestigious place on the National Register of Historic Places, thanks to the concerted work of a group of invested and dedicated people from several different cooperating agencies. The official nomination was submitted to the National Park Service in the spring, and a response is pending.

The property is currently patrolled by Barnegat Police and Ocean County Security and monitored by several surveillance cameras. The site is currently off limits to the public without a county Parks & Recreation guide.

The property's previous owner, Rudolph Koenig, a somewhat reclusive and mysterious man, occupied the historic building as his residence from the time he purchased it in 1959. He originally bought about 200 acres (for \$12,000) and eventually sold all but five of those acres to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. The Board of Chosen Freeholders bought the property on December 27, 2007 on the condition that Mr. Koenig retained a life estate to allow him to live at what was his home for the remainder of his life. Koenig passed away in January of 2012.

The Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department handles all maintenance and care, doing the physical hands-on work. Paid for largely by a New Jersey Historic Trust grant, Historic Building Architects of Trenton was contracted to investigate, analyze, date and guide the vision for the site by way of the formal Preservation Plan. Architectural historian Joan Berkey acted as a researcher and consultant on the project and wrote the actual nomination. The combined project has been nominated for special recognition for quality.

Berkey's research into the building's history, especially as it relates to its use as a tavern, combined evidence from archival records, as well as local lore, "to convincingly argue why it's significant and deserves to be listed."

*Continued on page 17*

# 1938



Photo credit: American Building Survey

# BEFORE PURCHASE



Photo credit: C&H Staff



Photo credit: Rudy Koenig

# TODAY

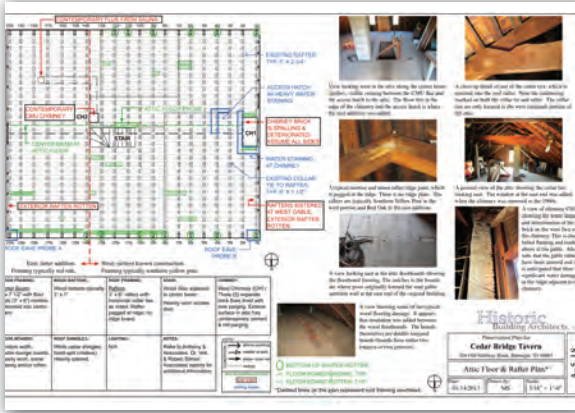


Photo credit: C&H Staff



Photo credit: Historic Building Architects

Photo credit: Historic Building Architects  
Copy of Mr. Detailed Pages



Hart described the architectural team as “science-fiction-meets-history,” with their sophisticated technology. Their objective was twofold, he explained – both to investigate what was there and to determine what it would become.

They know one feature in the renovated building will be a “demonstration kitchen.” Ceiling cuts

revealing once-exposed beams (since plastered over), will remain open even after the plaster is restored, so the cut section can show the beams for contrast. One room of the house will be dedicated to Koenig himself, Hart added, since he was the loving caretaker of the property for so many years, and “he really tried to preserve the integrity of the structure.” If not for him, the building likely would have succumbed to deterioration and vandals long ago.

While every building she researches is different, Berkey said, this was the first tavern she worked on specifically for a National Register nomination, and certainly the oldest. One of the Cedar Bridge Tavern’s most interesting features is it still has the bar in it – not the original bar, conclusively, but certainly an early one, perhaps second-generation or moved from another tavern.

“That’s what made this building so special,” she said.

To paraphrase her summary statement of significance: “Whether in rural or urban settings, most (17th- and 18th-century) taverns were domestic in scale and appearance, not surprising since almost all were dwellings converted for tavern keeping by their owners or operators.

“Cedar Bridge Tavern was built about 1816 on what was then a stage route between Mt. Holly and Little Egg Harbor. Significantly, the original section of Cedar Bridge Tavern retains its early 19th-century bar, a character-defining feature not known to survive in any extant Early American New Jersey tavern. It also retains most of its original interior floor plan, including bar room, dining room, and bedrooms, along with most of its original doors, trim, windows, and fireplaces.

“Based on the intact nature of historic deposits, the identification of features associated with a possible pre-1840s out kitchen, and the identification of two important related out-building sites opposite the tavern, the Cedar Bridge Tavern site is also significant ... for its ability to provide information on 19th-century farmsteads, taverns, consumerism, entertainment, and foodways in the New Jersey Pinelands region.”

The farming aspect is one of particular interest to Ocean County Freeholder John Bartlett, who is zeroing in on that specific part of the property’s history, according to county historian Tim Hart, who led a tour of the property. In the re-landscaping process, the farm history will be considered.

Currently, the Parks and Recreation staff is in the process of removing all garbage and non-historic elements (e.g. the sauna and Jacuzzi Koenig had installed), with the intent to return the site to a state it could have been in the 1830s – no electrical wiring or plumbing.

Continued on page 19

Europeans definitely occupied the site from as far back as 1740, Hart said. And the experts are sure there was another tavern very near the spot where the existing Cedar Bridge Tavern stands today, possibly even on the very same foundation – just not the same structure.

So far, about 10 dumpsters full of non-historic trash have been removed from the site, and a number of small items donated to thrift stores. The Park’s crew has ripped out Koenig’s stands of bamboo, taken out his satellite dish and antennae and taken down the trees that were growing on the roof. A lot of foliage and trees have been cleared to provide a fire buffer and because “they were really confusing the perspective,” Hart explained. The building and surrounding property looks increasingly more like the 1938 Historic American Buildings Survey photos and report conducted by the New Deal Era program employing otherwise unemployed architects by the National Park Service. The report on the Cedar Bridge Tavern is online at the Library of Congress.

Room 101 - Bar Room - Probe 102A, Plaster Ceiling	Color or	Description Based on
P30	Seen Under	Visual Examination
	Reflected Light	Under Reflected Light
		Microscopy (10x-60x)
Substrate	Washed Plaster	Includes Hair
Layer 1	Washed Plaster	
Layer 2	White	
Layer 3	White	
Layer 4	White	
Layer 5	White	
Layer 6	White	highly reactive to 1
Layer 7	White	in HCL
Layer 8	White	
Layer 9	White	
Layer 10	White	
Layer 11	White	
Layer 12	White	
Layer 13	White	
Layer 14	White	
Layer 15	White	
Layer 16	White	
Layer 17	White	
Layer 18	Light Gray	highly reactive to 1
Layer 19	Very Light Gray	in HCL
Layer 20	Light Gray	
Layer 21	Light Gray	
Layer 22	Very Light Gray	
Layer 23	Gray	
Layer 24	Light Red	
Layer 25	Greenish Gray	
Layer 26	White	

Notes and Comments:  
This plaster ceiling sample included 23 layers of materials followed by a light red pink, a greenish gray, and a relatively modern white finish layer. A layer of wallpaper (see above) was above this, followed by a D&W ceiling.

Material #2-5Y 9/2  
Benjamin Moore #225 Chantworth Cream  
Sample P30 seen at 20x.

Section VIII - Material Analysis - Paint Analysis with Photomicrograph - Cedar Bridge Tavern  
Historic Building Architects, LLC  
January 14th, 2013  
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Details of Paint Samples  
Photo credit: Historic Building Architects

Along the way, some interesting signs point to Koenig’s lifestyle as an eccentric bachelor living alone in one place for 50-plus years, including bathtubs and boats he had buried in the ground for fish and frog ponds. One feature in his expansive garden was a manmade lily pond. Inside the house, remnants of Koenig’s love of 19th century furniture and curiosities tell of a man with varied interests and eclectic tastes. These items have little monetary value, but were never the less treasured by the World War II decorated veteran. The mostly-empty rooms are in a state of clearing out, with clusters of furnishings here and there that may stay as part of the finished product. Still many decisions are yet to be made.

Under the direction of well known archeologist Dr. Richard Veit, students from Monmouth University conducted an excavation exercise in 2010 that uncovered over one thousand artifacts from the early 19th century including the remains of an 1830 era outside kitchen among Mr. Koenig’s extensive garden and cluttered grounds. In 2014, Hart said, the students will return to do more digging without the need to avoid an active garden and innumerable obstruction. Among other goals, the students hope to find traces of “the village” that existed around the site, especially across the (still unpaved) road.

By this fall or winter, according to Hart, the goal is to have the place cleaned up enough to begin limited access, before any more extensive renovation takes place. The first floor of the historic tavern will be open to the public as part of the Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department’s Pinelands Jamboree on Saturday, October 12 (10AM to 4PM). And of course the public is invited to join the annual celebration of the Skirmish at Cedar Bridge held each year at the site at 2:00 PM on December 27.