

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hotel Warwick (VHLC 121-40)

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner, 25th Street and West Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Newport News N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 23607 code 51 county in city code 700

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture ☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial ☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational ☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment ☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government ☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial ☐ transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	☐ no	☐ military ☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Thomas Becker

street & number 2410 West Ave.

city, town Newport News N/A vicinity of state Virginia 23607

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Circuit Courthouse

street & number 2501 Huntington Avenue

city, town Newport News state Va. 23607

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None to date has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date N/A ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☒ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date N/A
☐ fair	☐ unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The Hotel Warwick is a seven-story brick building constructed in the eclectic commercial architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s. Its design employs architectural devices and themes from both Gothic Revival and Art Deco styles. Erected in 1928 to replace an earlier hotel of the same name, the hotel also includes a two-story addition (1962) at the rear (east) elevation. The hotel site includes approximately one acre.

The primary architectural features of the hotel are the entrance and lobby on West Avenue (west elevation) and the north elevation (25th Street)

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS:

The hotel is constructed of dark red brick laid in running bond with terra cotta tile ornamentation. The first floor on the north and west elevations (the hotel's principal frontage on 25th Street and West Avenues, respectively) is clad with white terra cotta tiles, simulating stone and laid in regular courses, resting on a low grey terra cotta plinth. The entrance doorway on the west elevation is centered beneath a lancet arch opening is a false portico with parapet above. The parapet design includes pierced tracery and a central pilaster with an inset shield. The legend WARWICK is cast above the doorway in Old English raised letters. A metal marquee projects from the entrance to the municipal sidewalk.

The main elevation's first floor windows are casement type, with one group of windows (72-light, in four vertical panels of 18 lights) on each side of the entrance portico. All windows above the first floor consist of a large fixed pane above a small operable pane in the lower fifth of the opening, the original sashes (8 over 1 design) having been removed by a previous owner. The four window bays are recessed slightly behind the main plane of the facade, creating a pilaster effect rising from just below the third floor windows where there are three recessed ornamental terra cotta panels with scrollwork. The panels run horizontally, with one below each window and a center panel spanning the two center sashes. A terra cotta ribbon below the seventh floor windows surrounds the west, north and east elevations, except at the fire escape on the east elevation. Beneath each window the ribbon features a cartouche of three shields with cross and two floral medallions.

Capping the structure is a continuous terra cotta and brick false parapet. The parapet on the west elevation includes four low posts and a half post at the center, the post separated by an unpierced wall with a repeating arch and column design. The posts are centered on the pilasters on the west and north elevations. The lowest section of the parapet is formed by a continuous decorative terra cotta ribbon with designs suggesting Gothic tracery between the base of each post.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	___ education	☒ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
☒ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1928, 1962 **Builder/Architect** architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hotel Warwick was the first skyscraper, first tower hotel and first fireproof hotel in Newport News. The hotel's exterior ornamentation, Newport News' only remaining example of the eclectic commercial architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, combines familiar decorative features of the Art Deco and Tudor Revival styles. The hotel was used extensively during World War II to quarter military personnel assigned to work with the nearby shipyards, especially the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company's facility within sight of the hotel. Large sections of the hotel, and its annex building, now destroyed, were devoted exclusively to military use.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Hotel Warwick was erected in 1928 by the Old Dominion Land Company to expand an earlier hotel of the same name. The land company, one of the most important elements in the history of Newport News, was founded by Newport News' most significant businessman, railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington. Huntington's company controlled the hotel until the late 1920s, shortly before the present hotel was built.

Newport News arose quickly in the late nineteenth century from land which was farmed before the arrival of Huntington. The area had been settled as early as the mid-1600s. The sparsely-settled farm land included a port area which was important during the Civil War. Modern development of Newport News dates to the purchase of the site of the present hotel by the Old Dominion Land Company on 2 August 1881. The land company sought to develop the natural deep-water port on the James River for railroad piers, commercial shipping docks and commercial development of adjacent land. Huntington also controlled the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, which developed the riverfront area into a major rail yard.

In March 1880 the Virginia General Assembly chartered the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company, granting it the right to build a rail line from Richmond to Newport News and to purchase land for development. In October of the same year the legislature granted a charter to the Old Dominion Land Company, which immediately began purchasing sites and laying out a village.

The land company built the first Hotel Warwick, in the Italianate style, on the site of the present hotel in 1883. In 1886 another Huntington company, the Chesapeake Dry Dock and Construction Company, was established. This latter company became the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, now the world's largest private ship-builder and the city's major employer.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet #4

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/3

Quadrangle name Newport News South, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

118	3712	51410	410	913	01510
Zone	Easting	Northing			

B

Zone	Easting	Northing			

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Commencing at the northerly corner of the intersection of 24th Street and West Avenue and from the point of beginning thus established N26° 23'W a distance of 200'± to a point at the intersection of West Avenue and 25th Street; thence N63° 37'E a distance of 200'± to (see continuation sheet #4)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ronald E. Shibley

organization

date 1 June 1984

street & number 604-A Caroline Street

telephone (703) 371-8210

city or town Fredericksburg

state Virginia 22401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national X state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date August 21, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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#1 Newport News, Va.
Continuation sheet Hotel Warwick

Item number 7

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The north elevation repeats the design of the main facade, without the entrance portico, with seven bays of windows on the main wall and six posts in the parapet. The ground floor terra cotta wall includes two large windows opening into the lobby identical to those on the main facade, two small casement windows and a single glass door with aluminum frame and jamb. The east elevation includes two window bays (one on the north and one on the south) and a central doorway and firestair. The east wall parapet is identical to the main facade but without the half post at center.

The south wall is virtually without ornamentation, except for the four posts in the parapet wall which returns around from the east and west walls and the continuation of the terra cotta ribbon below the parapet. The south wall includes four bays of windows grouped at the east side of the wall and two bays, sixth and seventh floors only, on the west end. A single window is located in the south wall of the mechanical equipment room above the seventh floor.

The 1962 addition of two floors at the rear of the main building is built of plain red brick, laid in running bond, with a single ribbon of white stone below the second floor windows, forming the window sill, and a white stone capping ribbon. The four first floor windows are aluminum with a single fixed pane in the lower section and a single, semi-circular pane in the arch above each window. In addition to the four windows are a single arched doorway with glass door and two arched openings which are closed with masonry. The upper floor includes seven fixed sash metal windows. On the east elevation the addition is penetrated only by a single metal door on the ground floor. The south elevation is broken only by seven windows on the second floor.

The south wall of the main building is pargeted to cover the portion of the wall which connected to the wing destroyed by fire in 1961. The pargeted area covers floors one through five beneath the first two bays of windows on the west side.

The most significant feature of the interior of the hotel is the formal lobby across the west elevation. The entrance doorway is an ensemble of two doors flanking a central revolving door with the whole surmounted by a crenelated wall of dark-stained oak in the style of a Tudor castle battlement. The lobby resembles a small baronial hall. Two large square columns with base and capitals support large false beams with deeply carved plaster on their undersides. The posts and beams (steel covered with plaster) create six coffers, each with a simple applied plaster border and a two-tiered cast brass chandelier with eight arms.

The rear wall of the lobby includes the registration desk recessed below a broad arch on the north side with an architraved lancet arched doorway at center and a pair of doors for the elevators on the south side. The central arch gives access to the hallway which bisects each floor and to the main stairway, behind the bank of elevators.

The interior of the hotel contains no other features of architectural distinction. Each floor repeats the plan of the first floor with a hall and rooms occupying the area above the lobby.

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The Hotel Warwick's structure employs the technology of fireproof construction. The exterior walls are built of brick and concrete and the interior walls and floors are of steel and terra cotta. Hollow terra cotta blocks are laid in vaulted arches in the floors to support the weight of a thin concrete floor surface. The interior walls are of terra cotta with a surface coating of plaster. An unusually elaborate plumbing system, no longer fully operational, once provided hot water and ice water to all rooms.

A single outbuilding, a one-story brick and masonry block structure containing the heating equipment, is located in the southeast quarter of the one acre site. The remainder of the lot is used for parking.

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#3 Newport News, Va.
Continuation sheet Hotel Warwick

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The hotel rapidly became a center of business and commercial activity housing at varying times the city's first bank, first newspaper, the county government and the United States Post Office and Custom House. Most importantly, the Hotel Warwick served as company headquarters for both the railroad and the shipyard. During World War I the hotel served as a social center for the large military establishment at the nearby port. The Newport News Port of Embarkation, just across West Avenue from the hotel, was one of the principal exit and re-entry ports during the war. Entertainers W. C. Fields, Al Jolson, and Vernon and Irene Castle were among the hotel's most famous guests.

The present hotel Warwick was erected on the site of the original hotel, which had been remodelled several times, in order to expand the hotel operation in 1928. The Old Dominion Land Company was at the time owned by a group of local investors, the Huntington interests having sold their shares earlier in the 1920s.

The new hotel was built at a cost of \$350,000. Containing seventy-two rooms, all with private baths, the new brick structure raised the capacity of the Hotel Warwick to over 200 rooms.

During World War II the hotel was used extensively by the military establishment and by the workers and managers of the nearby shipyards. The ballroom was subdivided into twenty rooms and an older building nearby, now demolished, was converted into an annex to accommodate additional military guests. The entire second floor of the new hotel was used, at some points during the war, exclusively as a military barracks.

The Hotel Warwick towers above the flat landscape of Tidewater Virginia and is visible for miles up and down the James River. The rooms above the first floor offer commanding views of the harbor, where ships and submarines are a common sight. From the upper floors of the hotel the extensive shipbuilding and ship repair facilities of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company are clearly visible day and night.

Records of the hotel and its parent company were lost during several changes in ownership; therefore, no record exists which identifies the architect. There is no dedication plaque or cornerstone. The files of the local newspaper and the municipal building official do not contain any information on this question. The hotel's design is attributed locally to the firm of Ralph Bencker, of Philadelphia.

The hotel is now surrounded by high rise office and commercial buildings of recent vintage. Much of the city's architectural heritage was lost in the late 1960s through demolition and deterioration which continued into the 1970s. Today, only the Hotel Warwick and the United States Post Office and Custom House (1904, 1939), across 25th Street from the hotel, survive from an earlier era.

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Continuation sheet #4 Newport News, Va.
Hotel Warwick

Item number 9, 10

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Alexander Crosby Brown, Newport News' 325 Years: A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community. Newport News, Va.: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946.

Annie Jester, Newport News, Va., 1607-1960. Newport News, Va.: City of Newport News, Va., 1961.

William T. Stauffer, "The Old Farms Out of Which the City of Newport News Was Created, with Some Account of the Families which Dwelt Thereon," William & Mary Quarterly, Vol. XIV, No. 3, July 1934; Vol. XIV, No. 4, October 1934; Vol. XV, No. 2, April 1935.

Daily Press (Newport News, Va.), 24 April, 25 April, 7 October 1947; 1 June, 4 November 1962; 31 October 1963.

Times Herald (Newport News, Va.), 27 February 1984.

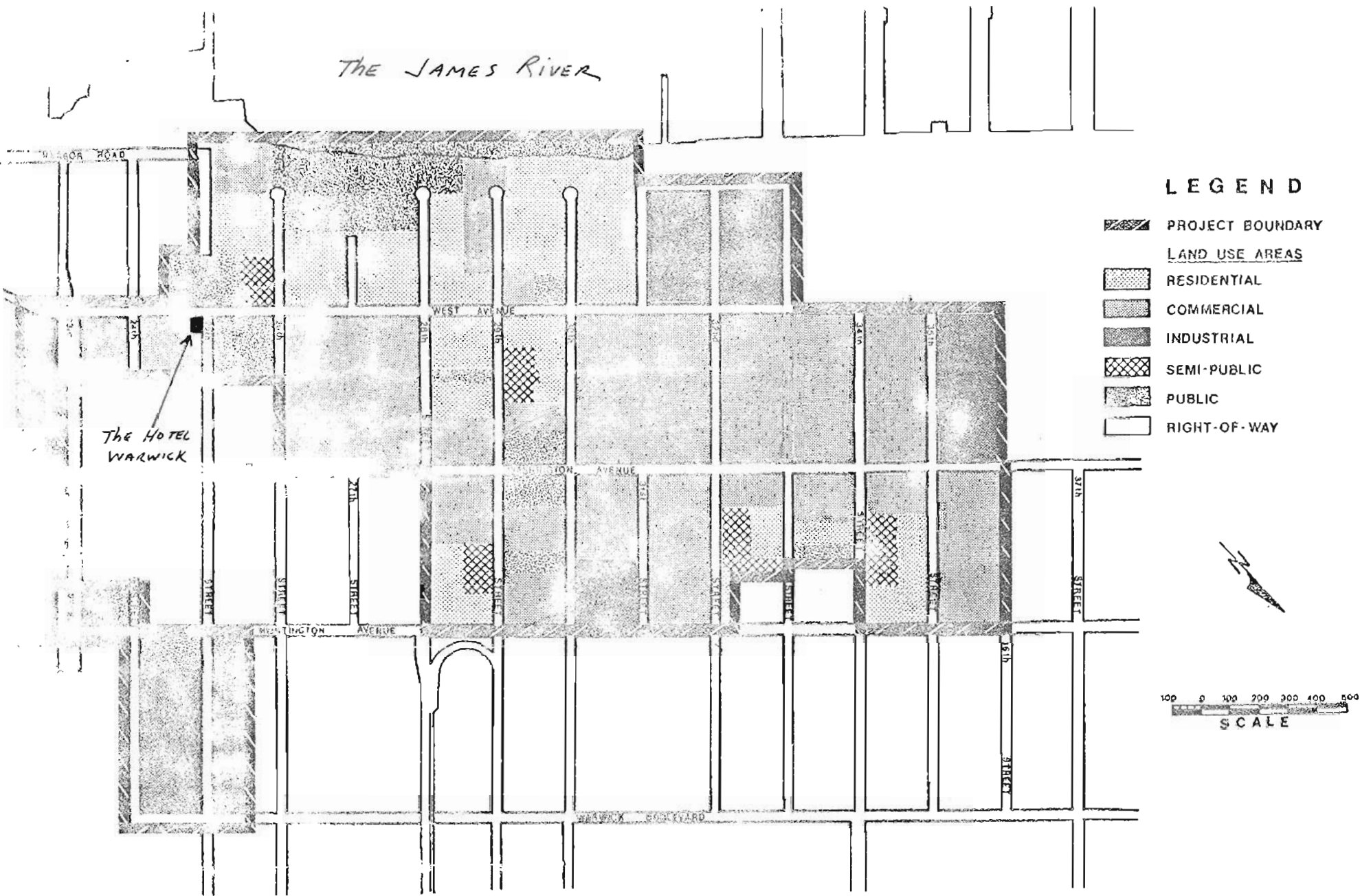
Deeds: Deed Book 13, p. 216-217 (1899)
Deed Book 1056, p. 1901 (1983)
Deed Book 433, p. 461 (1961)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - Verbal boundary description (continued)

a point; thence S26°23'E a distance of 94'± to a point; thence S63°37'W a distance of 12.5'± to a point; thence S8°24'W a distance of 21.92'± to a point; thence S26°23'E a distance of 88'± to a point; thence S63°37'W a distance of 175'± to the point or place of beginning, as shown of plat drawn by City of Newport News, Department of Public Works, and recorded in the aforesaid Clerk's Office in Deed Book 751, at page 428, to which reference is here made.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property of approximately 1/3 of an acre is on the same site of the original Hotel Warwick erected in 1883 by the Old Dominion Land Company. Thus, there has been a hotel on the land tract for over 100 years. The present hotel is built directly on the site of the 1883 hotel which was torn down in 1928.



NEWPORT CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

NEWPORT CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

LAND USE PLAN MAP

EXHIBIT NO. NCRP-2
DATE: OCTOBER 1992

NEWPORT NEWS SOUTH QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

251 374

2610 000 FEET

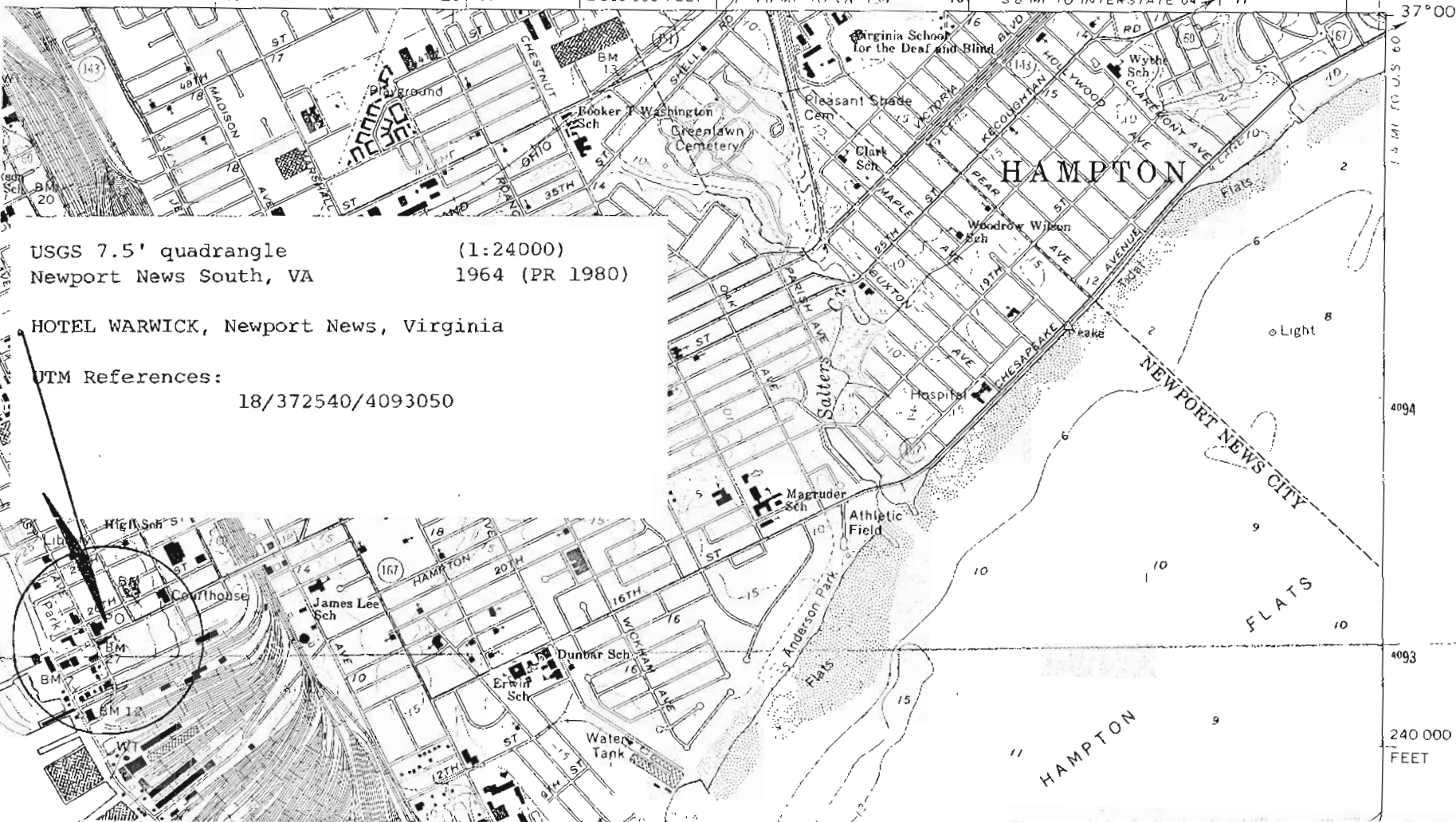
BUCKROF BEACH 7 MI.
16 MI. TO VA. 134

376

NORFOLK 12 MI.
2.8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 64 37

76° 22' 30"

5758 III SE
HAMPTON



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (1:24000)
Newport News South, VA 1964 (PR 1980)

HOTEL WARWICK, Newport News, Virginia

UTM References: 18/372540/4093050