Long Beach Island Region
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
Intersection of State Route 72
and County Road 607
Surf City Vicinity
Ocean County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1014

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LONG BEACH ISLAND REGION

HABS No. NJ-1014

Location: Including Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Harvey Cedars, Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom and Surf City, New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, Intersection of State Route 72 and County Road 607, Ocean County, New Jersey.

Significance: Long Island Beach is significant as one of the earliest resorts along the New Jersey Shore, first developed during the early nineteenth century. Prior to its resort development, Long Beach Island played a key role in the prosperous whaling industry.

History: Since the first whalers settled around the turn of the seventeenth century, the residents of Long Beach Island have both struggled against and depended upon the sea. In 1690, a man named Soper acquired land in "Great Swamp" near the present town of Surf City, located off of the shore of what is now lower Ocean County. Aaron Inman, a New England whaler, purchased Soper's patent and built a home on the bay side of the island. He and his three sons watched for whales from a crow's nest rigged up on a pole facing the ocean. Harvey Cedars was a center of the industry until the American Revolution, when whaling was no longer profitable.[1]

Though Philadelphians were visiting Tucker's Beach during the Revolutionary War years, no resorts existed on the main part of the island until Joseph Horner opened a boarding house on the south end of the island in 1815. Seven years later, he sold the business to a group of his guests, Philadelphia businessmen who remodeled the house into a "first-class seaside hotel."[2] The popularity of this resort, known for several years as the Philadelphia Company House, then as the Long Beach House, inspired others to "open increased accommodations to the public, by the creation of a new resort, two miles farther up the beach, known as Beach Haven."[3]

Inspired by Horner's example, a group of Burlington County farmers formed the Great Swamp Long Beach Company and built a similar hotel at Great Swamp, now Surf City, between Barnegat and Central Avenues. The Mansion of Health, completed in 1822 and later nicknamed "Buzby's Place," was "furnished in the best manner for the convenience and comfort of visitors, and the natural advantages over any other on the sea coast" were numerous.[4] An account written the following year described it as a "large house 120' long, and about one-tenth of a mile from the sea,

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[1] "Long Beach Island Rich in Sea Lore," unknown newspaper (Collection of the Ocean County Historical Society, n.d.), n.p.

[2] H. C. Woolman and T. F. Rose, Historical and Biographical Atlas of the New Jersey Coast (Philadelphia: Woolman and Rose, 1878; reprint, Toms River, NJ: Ocean County Historical Society, 1985), 46.

[3] Woolman and Rose, 46.

[4] John Fanning Watson, Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania of the Olden Time, in "End of the Line for 'Mansion,'" The Sandpaper (Wednesday, June 13, 1990), 2.

well kept, and supported by a goodly number of inmates."[5] Despite the resort's instant popularity as a rugged, healthful location, the hotel was in poor condition within thirty years. In 1847, Captain Sammy Perrine opened a competing resort, the Harvey Cedars hotel. Originally constructed around an 1816 home, the hotel was rebuilt in 1887 and became a YMCA.[6] Today the building houses the Harvey Cedar Bible Conference. "Uncle Sam" Perrine was a well-known fiddler who, with his friends, supplied the music for dances held in the dance hall south of the hotel.[7] Perrine was later the captain of the first life saving-station on the shore.

Prior to the establishment of life-saving stations in the latter half of the nineteenth century, early hotels often functioned as temporary shelters for shipwreck victims. Captain Thomas Bond maintained a government house of refuge on his Long Beach House property.[8] Another house of refuge, built at Harvey Cedars, was later moved down the bay to Beach Haven and remodeled into the Hotel DeCrab. In the 1870s, the houses of refuge were replaced by six life-saving stations, each equipped with trained six-man crews and Francis lifecars. The crewmen and their families settled near the improved stations, which were located at Barnegat City, Loveladies, Harvey Cedars, Ship Bottom, the Terrace, and Holgate, two miles south of the Tucker's Island station. In 1915 the federal government combined the Life Saving Service, responsible for the coast, and the Revenue Cutter Service, into the U.S. Coast Guard.

In addition to these early shelters, the Barnegat Lighthouse was constructed in 1836 to assist ships navigating the Atlantic waters. The original lighthouse was replaced by the present structure in 1858. Lieutenant George Meade's report on the lighthouse's condition stressed that "it forms, in connection with Fire Island Light, on the other side, the true mouth to the great commercial harbor of New York."[9] The present concrete-washed brick tower stands more than 180' high and is equipped with a lens made of 1,024 prisms. Though the light's duties have been assumed by a lightship moored in the bay, the lighthouse continues to serve a symbolic function, now as part of a national park.

Ocean County, separated from Monmouth County in 1850, and the island was divided into six municipalities--Long Beach Township, Beach Haven, Ship Bottom, Surf City, Harvey Cedars, and Barnegat Light. The small communities between the boroughs are considered part of Long Beach Township. A board of trade was developed to

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[5] George Somerville, The Lure of Long Beach (The Long Beach Board of Trade, 1914; reprint, Harvey Cedars: Down the Shore Publishing, 1987), 49-50.

[6] Walter Ruddy, ed, Long Beach Island Journal (Glen Rock, NJ: W. and J. Ruddy, 1976), 12.

[7] Charles Edgar Nash, The Lure of Long Beach (Long Beach Board of Trade, 1936), 82-83.

[8] "Thomas Bond Pioneered Life Saving, Helped Open Up Island," Beach Haven Times (June 19, 1963), 4-D.

[9] A. Jerome Walnut, "Barnegat Lighthouse" (Barnegat Light: The Barnegat Light Historical Museum, n.d.), 2.

connect the island's "checkerboard" and give it "a voice representing all the municipalities."[10]

After being established as a city, Harvey Cedars developed into a prosperous resort, referred to in an 1878 article in Harper's magazine, as the "only practical seaside resort in America," conveniently located on the bay. Noting the stark, sea-swept landscape, the article adds, "What most visitors came for and staid (sic) for were the evening hops, the bathing and yachting, all of which are much better than at many other places we could name."[11]

Beach Haven, the most developed of the municipalities, was founded in 1874 by Archelaus Pharo, a wealthy Tuckerton merchant. After building a cottage for himself at 125 Second St. and one for Dr. Albert Smith at 121 Second St., Pharo worked with the Tuckerton and Long Beach Building, Land and Improvement Association to develop the area. The association immediately built Old Dock Road at the entrance to the steamboat landing. The commercial district centered around the Acme Hotel, the Hotel DeCrab, and housing for yacht club members. Two hotels, the Parry House and the Beach Haven House, as well as a Quaker meeting house were completed that year. Meanwhile, the Tuckerton Railroad bridge from Manahawkin to Long Beach was under construction. By the time the railroad arrived, June 18, 1886, several more hotels, the Beach Haven Yacht Club and the Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church, had been built. According to the New Jersey Courier, the railroad would end the "risk of life upon the ice in mid winter in order to go and come to this old isle of the sea."[12] Up to this point, travel to the island had been unpredictable and often dangerous.

The security of rail transportation brought continued growth at an even faster pace. In the 1880s and 1890s more homes were built in the residential area between Bay and Atlantic avenues; many of these Victorian "cottages" are still standing. Residents and visitors could play tennis at the yacht club, enter boat races, and participate in events sponsored by the Corinthian Gun Club. A building boom, inspired by the success at Beach Haven, swept across the island in 1870-80s. Long Beach City, today called Surf City, originally the site of the Great Swamp, was founded in 1873. The extreme north end of the island became Barnegat City in 1881. Using the Engleside Hotel in Beach Haven as a model, Benjamin Franklin Archer planned the Oceanic Hotel, a four-story building wrapped with balconies, located on East Fourth Street of the new city. In 1882, Franklin immediately began a second hotel west of the lighthouse, the Sans Souci. Though the railroad reached the island a few years later, the expected crowds did not, and neither hotel prospered. The Oceanic succumbed to the sea in the early 1920s, a decade before the Sans Souci was destroyed by fire. The

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[10] "Long Beach Island Holds Special Attractions for Many Vacationers," Trenton Sunday Times Advertiser (August 31, 1958, part 2), 1-2.

[11] William H. Rideing, "Along Our Jersey Shore," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, LVI (Dec. 1877-May 1878), 328-9.

[12] Carol Williams, "Railroad Altered Life on the Island," Asbury Park Press (Sunday, June 22, 1986), A37.

Social, more of a boarding house than high-style hotel, provided adequate accommodations for the few vacationers who ventured to Barnegat City.[13]

The railroad brought increased growth, particularly to the area between Barnegat City and Beach Haven. The Peahala Gunning Club, established in 1882, gave its name to the beach a few miles north of Beach Haven. In 1890 W. S. Ringgold and J. L. Long converted one of their three cottages at Spray Beach into a hotel; a few years later there were twelve residents and a church in the neighborhood. Another gunning club built at the railroad stop at the Loveladies Lifesaving Station attracted more residents.

The convenience of rail transportation also instigated the expansion of maritime activities throughout the island, such as the point fisheries at Ship Bottom, and salt hay and seaweed harvesting.[14] By 1936, commercial fishing centered around five pound fisheries--Barnegat City Fishery, Surf City Fishery, Ship Bottom Pound Fisheries, Crest Fishery, and Beach Haven Fish Company. Using boats made on the island, the fishermen pulled in between 6 million and 10 million pounds of fish every year.[15] Today, evidence of these early fisheries exists only in the form of docks and sheds at Barnegat Light and Beach Haven. In the 1920s, the Barnegat docks were the site of the first cooperative fishery in America; today, fishermen share the area with local artists who have converted some of the buildings into shops and studios.[16]

In 1913, in anticipation of the opening of the automobile causeway the following year, work began on Ostendorff's Garage at the corner of Pearl Street and Bay Avenue in Beach Haven. Frederick Ostendorff's two-story brick building, the largest garage on the East Coast, accommodated 200 cars. The vast, warehouse-like space was also used for boat storage, boat building, and basketball games.[17] By June 20, 1914, motorists could drive across Barnegat Bay to Long Beach Island for the first time. Every driver traveling over the new causeway on opening day received a copy of George Somerville's The Lure of Long Beach, published by the Long Beach Board of Trade. Twenty-two years later, in his book of the same title, Charles Edgar Nash added to the mythology surrounding "the wide, sun-steeped, snow-white beach and the ocean's surfy, slow, deep, mellow voice, full of mystery and awe."[18] Clubs catering to the rising number of visitors arriving by car were built at Spray Beach, Beach

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[13] John Bailey Lloyd, Six Miles At Sea (Harvey Cedars: Down the Shore Publishing and The Sandpaper Inc., 1990), 53-57.

[14] Ocean County Historic Sites Survey, "Long Beach Island" (Toms River: Ocean County Historical Society, 1982), 7.

[15] Nash, 137-9.

[16] Ocean County Historical Sites Survey, 7.

[17] Lloyd, 100-3.

[18] Nash, 1-2.

Haven Terrace, and Harvey Cedars. By the 1930s, the Long Beach Island Chamber of Commerce predicted that "the building of the bridge at the northern end of the Island" would "assure a building boom to this community."[19] Though the proposed bridge was never completed and development is more concentrated in the south, residential neighborhoods stretch the entire length of the island.

Over the next twenty years, the Beach Haven North Development Company, financial sponsors of the garage, built the Ockonickon Hotel, a train station, a movie theater and neighborhoods of Cape Cod houses.[20] Described in 1914 as "progressive" and alert to the advancement of the times, Beach Haven had a "huge gas plant," "the purest of water," and the aforementioned "largest motor car garage on the seacoast of New Jersey."[21] By 1930, the board of trade could extol "stores of all descriptions and a moving-picture theater, with up-to-date 'talkie' equipment, and remarkably wide streets and avenues that are graveled impress one with the freedom of space."[22]

Today, the once-secluded stretch of beach "six miles at sea," offers all the conveniences and services of the mainland. Though the automobile altered this landscape, the sand and ocean continue to attract millions of visitors. The visitor can enjoy the quiet of a sand dune in Barnegat Light as well as the "social scene" at a Beach Haven bar. The network of streets, gas stations, and restaurants surrounding the Route 72 bridge contrasts with the broader boulevard and quieter neighborhoods in Harvey Cedars and Loveladies.

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[19] "Long Beach Island, New Jersey" (Long Beach Island Chamber of Commerce, 1930), 19.

[20] Lloyd, 50.

[21] Somerville, 56.

[22] "Long Beach Island New Jersey", 26-27.

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Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.