

Wildwood Historical Society, Inc.



George F. Boyer Museum

609-523-0277
WildwoodHistoricalMuseum.com

3907 Pacific Avenue
Wildwood, NJ 08260

*Gathering, preserving and
presenting the Wildwoods'
history*

2024 Museum Hours

April 4-May 25: Thursdays-Saturdays
10 am-3 pm

May 28-August 31: Mondays-
Saturdays 10 am-3 pm; Closed
Sundays

September 5-October 26:
Thursdays-Saturdays 10 am-3 pm

Closed for the winter every year from
November to March.

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Musical Snacking at Cookie's Fun Shop

by Rob Ascough, Treasurer

Speak to some about their connections with The Wildwoods, and they will attest to the island being about music almost as much as the beach and boardwalk. This is not a ridiculous notion — most who know of its past will be able to recite its towering musical history, from Chubby Checker first performing *The Twist* at the Rainbow Club, to Bill Haley and the Comets debuting *Rock Around the Clock* at the Hofbrau Hotel, to many legendary acts entertaining crowds at The Playpen long before Diamond Beach was filled with condominiums.

As someone born following the demise of the latter, my musical connection to The Wildwoods isn't as strong as that of others, although I can claim to having seen (what's left of) the Beach Boys perform at Convention Hall a couple years ago, as well as having made out some of the muffled sounds of Darius Rucker at the Barefoot Country Music Fest from the boardwalk, which I think maybe, sort of counts as an experience? Or not.

Clearly, I have never been in much of a position to view my favorite place in the world as a venue for music — one of my favorite things in the world — but that doesn't mean I don't have my own ways of relating the two. There's quite a lot processed by my ears that takes me back to my special spot at the southern tip of the Jersey shore; there's a lot that takes me back to certain moments in my life.

When I was a kid and the annual family Wildwood vacation was something I began anticipating on the last day of the previous vacation, a series of mix tapes (remember those?) was something I'd create in the month leading up to our departure. Over the course of 12 months, the 10-year-old version of me would carefully create and curate a list of songs that would become my family's soundtrack for the week, including the long E-ZPass-less treks on the Garden State Parkway. My parents, younger brother and I shared many musical sensibilities, and to this day think back to them enjoying what I created, and not just humoring me because they knew of all the work I put into transferring songs from 45's to blank cassette tapes that, once upon a time, could be purchased in pretty much any kind of store, stocked right next to rolls of film and later, disposable cameras. Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation* has a way of taking me back like few albums can.

As I got older, my taste in music evolved and drifted away from poppy fluff (like Janet Jackson) into the kinds of artists I'd later discover was really the realm of my parents — music like that of the Beatles, the Eagles, and Pink Floyd — as well

(continued on page 2)



The Fun Shop, a longtime boardwalk staple and the origin of many Wildwood regulars' love of music. Photo courtesy Wildwood Historical Society collection.



Fans of the Wildwoods' vintage motel architecture can celebrate the recent preservation of the Sun Deck Bungalows, a 1940s motel court that is now part of the neighboring Hotel Oceanic complex. Read Taylor Henry's story about the Sun Deck Bungalows on page 2. Photo courtesy Taylor Henry.



The two wings of the Sun Deck Bungalows in 1960, taken from a set of City of Wildwood tax survey photos. Photos courtesy Wildwood Historical Society collection.



Musical Snacking at Cookie's Fun Shop

(continued from page 1)

as heavy metal and grunge/alternative that permeated my high school years (which was what some people called rock in the early nineties when they couldn't quite make sense of the dark brooding of Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam.) Music went from being an interest to a passion, and The Wildwoods helped fuel it, much in the way the passion was fueled for the generation that came before mine in the clubs of Pacific Avenue.

One of my favorite parts of the annual vacation in those years was walking the entire length of the boardwalk with my mother, and our traditions included a round at Safari Golf, a stroll through the Boardwalk Mall, and counting how many eateries served pizza (it always felt like hundreds, although the annual tally proved a number much less impressive). Among those traditions was a stop at Cookie's Fun Shop, which continues in modern times as What Goes On at 3912 Boardwalk. The spirit of the boardwalk staple remains roughly the same, although three decades ago there was considerably more music for sale than there is today. Of course, the same can be said of just about all modern retail outlets — while there was a time CDs could be found for sale in places as unexpected as an aisle at my local Stop & Shop grocery store, nowadays one has to go to Amazon or find the rare "record store" to buy music distilled into Os and 1s on plastic discs.

At Cookie's, I bought copies of Smashing Pumpkins' Adore, Everclear's Scenes From An American Movie Vol. One, and even a bunch of Metallica import singles that were unique in the way they included bonus songs from live performances. In my teenage years when I finally had my own car, I'd drive around the island in my Saturn and listen to the CDs I'd purchased. To this day, the song "Wonderful" brings me back to The Wildwoods just as much as Bobby Rydell's Wildwood Days. It's the kind of nostalgia that's not just heard, but touched and tasted, which I guess really does make music as important to it as the beach and boardwalk.

Wildwood Preservation Win: The Sun Deck Bungalows

by Taylor Henry, President

Local preservationists worried about the fate of the Oceanic cottages — two inward-facing, single-story apartment buildings joined by a courtyard — since 2020, when approval was granted to demolish them and expand the Oceanic Hotel in their place.

That changed this year when the World War II-era buildings got a paint job and new windows. It appears that now they will stay standing as part of the Oceanic Hotel for the foreseeable future.

"What else is going on at The Oceanic Hotel? New windows in the cottage units!" The hotel posted on Facebook in April. "Check out all the renovations for this upcoming season by booking your stay today at StayAtOceanic.com or (609) 522-6500."

The cottages' renovation is the latest preservation win in the Wildwoods. They were built in the 1940s and 1950s as part of the Sun Deck complex, among the first motels on the island pioneered by local carpenter Ben Schlenzig, who had previously completed the Ship Ahoy in 1939 and would go on to construct the iconic Rio Motel.

The cottages were initially advertised as the Sun Deck Bungalows. In 1950, Schlenzig built the second of the two Sun Deck Bungalows and a courtyard with a pool between them. That layout remains today, aside from the pool.

"While flashy attractions like roller coasters, the boardwalk, and bright neon signs often make the cut for postcards of the Wildwoods, ask anybody who has vacationed here and they will say that many of their memories involve sitting around the pool of some small rooming house, motel, or apartment building on a side street of Wildwood," Jackson Betz wrote for the Wildwood Historical Society newsletter in 2021. "It's often the plain, unpretentious, mom-and-pop places that serve as the setting for the best memories, and the Sun Deck Apartments, located almost across from the Wildwood Convention Center at Andrews and Ocean Avenue, are a prime example!"

Most of the Sun Deck was torn down in 1986 to build the Days Inn. Only the cottages, purchased by the Oceanic, remain of this rare pre-Doo Wop complex. They are also one of few surviving tourist courts, popular before rooms facing parking lots became the motel standard.

We are grateful to the Oceanic Hotel for preserving their cottages. Please support them by booking a stay there and requesting to stay in the newly renovated cottages!



From West Wildwood to Normandy, France

by Russ Strittmatter, Vice President

D-Day, June 6, 1944. West Wildwood native, Harry Morey, storms the beach in Normandy, France alongside thousands of other soldiers.

Turn the clock back about 36 years to 1908, and on the 700 block of Maple Avenue in West Wildwood, Harry was born to parents Sam and Ida Morey. Their son would soon develop a successful construction business in the Wildwoods, which flourished in the 1930's. But with World War II on the horizon, the world was about to change for everyone. Many young men, men just like Harry, heard our country's call for democracy and enlisted in the military services.

Harry Morey was one of these men. He said goodbye to his childhood sweetheart and wife Marian Morey in July 1943, and was off to Fort Dix for basic training. By September 12, 1943, Harry's carpentry skills had landed him in Fort Bovoir, Virginia. After some time spent in Virginia, an eight-day transatlantic troop ship ferried Harry Morey to the countryside of England.

Life was good in England as a million men prepared to break Hitler's Atlantic wall. As they readied for a cross channel assault on France, the Western Allies built up on British soil one of the largest and most powerful invasion forces in history. The 2 months prior to what would become known as "D-Day" saw troops, equipment, and supplies pour into Britain at a near constant rate as the allies prepared themselves for the upcoming military confrontation.

Operation Overland, with General Eisenhower in command, began on June 6, 1944.

Between 6:30 A.M. and 7:30 A.M., waves of allied troops moved ashore. More than 150,000 troops disembarked on Normandy Beaches on D-Day.

On June 12, 1944 Harry Morey wrote one of the 600 love letters he sent to his wife from 700 Maple Street during his time at war, which are now in possession of the Wildwood Historical Museum. He wrote, "I am somewhere in France safe and sound." Harry landed on Utah beach, and because of his construction skills, began clearing the beach for incoming landing crafts. He wrote that he was "proud to be in France and would not have missed June 5, 1944 for the world." Harry closes this historic love letter with, "I love you more and more each day. Your loving hubby forever, Harry."

As of June 15, 1944, Harry lived in a beach fox hole with a tin roof. He wrote to Marian, "honey, who could ask for more!" Even living on a beach in the middle of a war, Harry remained optimistic for the sake of his beloved wife.

Paired with this article are three images. One is of the handwritten love letter written by Harry to Marian at 700 Maple Street, and the other a photo of Harry and Marian, very much in love, in West Wildwood from 1927. The final photo is a photo taken by Harry Morey in 1945 of a soldier named Fuchs in Le Harve, a port city in the region of Normandy, France.

If you would like to learn more about Military history and the Wildwoods, stop by and take a look at our extensive collection of military memorabilia. Visit the Wildwood Historical Society, located at 3907 Pacific Avenue, Wildwood, NJ 08260. Our hours of operation are listed on the front of this newsletter, and it is completely free!

Volunteer With Us!

We are always in need of volunteers to help maintain and organize our collections, interact with visitors, and more. You choose your hours and days. To inquire, please visit our museum during our spring or summer hours of operation listed on the front of this newsletter.

Book Signing and Meet-the-Author: Jewel of the Sea by Frederick Ackers

July 17, 2024, 10 am to 3 pm, at our museum



My name is Frederick Ackers. I have always visited the Jersey Shore since I was 3 years old. I've been starting to write a book series. My first book is called The Jewel of The Sea. It is a story of a vigilante named Nightshade. He is a banker by day, hacker by night. He is trying to stop an evil organization called The Syndicate. They try to harness rare powers from jewels and crystals for the weapon. My first book is The Jewel of The Sea. It takes place in Wildwood as well as Cape May. The lighthouse on the cover is the Hereford Inlet lighthouse but in the book I called it the Anglesea Lighthouse. Proceeds from the signing will be donated to the historical society. A way for me to give back to the island who created so many memories and where I call my second home.

—Frederick Ackers



My Dear Wife Marian
June 12, 1944
Well honey I guess you wondered what had happened you didn't hear from me but I'll bet you nearly guessed. Yes I am somewhere in France and am safe & sound as you hoped. I am proud to say. Well Marian as I landed on the beach & had gone inland a little ways guess what?

Then and Now



History shows that most mixed-use buildings started off as a house but later added a business on their bottom floor. This was not the case with 5611 Pacific Avenue. This corner store in Wildwood Crest opened in 1912. It was recently sold but the new owners plan to restore the house and keep the commercial space.




Visit <https://www.wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com/research> to buy a vintage photo of your favorite Wildwood spot for just \$10!

Membership

Please renew your membership if you haven't done so recently! If you have already done so, thank you! Donations are welcome, too! Membership donations help cover the costs of newsletters and mailings, and help us keep the lights on at the museum!

Visit wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com to renew your membership, view past newsletters, buy items from our gift shop, and get a hit of Wildwoods history!

Follow us on social media!

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The Wildwood Historical Society, Inc. received an operating support grant administered by the Cape May County Culture & Heritage Commission, from funds granted by the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Other ways you can donate!



Subscribe to our free monthly E-newsletter too! Visit wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com

Our Team

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Your name could be here! Stop in to the museum to become a volunteer.

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