

JERSEY SHORE LANDMARKS

Shifting Sands

Island Beach - Past to Present

by Gordon Hesse

“To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist moving over a great salt marsh, to watch the flight of shore birds that have swept up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years...is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be.”

— Rachel Carson, *Under the Sea Wind*



Left: A diversity of plants bloom in spring at Island Beach State Park.

Below: This 180-degree panorama shows the former Forked River Life Saving Station No. 112 to the south and the park's natural dune system to the north, giving a sense of the expanse of dune and path.

Opposite Page: Autumn offers majestic views of the subtle changes in vegetation along the Barnegat Bay wetlands.





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It was formed from the sea and transformed from a peninsula to an island as tempests breached the beach barrier gushing into the bay; days and decades later, the sands returned, creating, once again, a peninsula.

The white sands of Island Beach's dunes are like those in an immense hourglass that mark time not in hours, but in centuries. Grain by grain of sand, it moves as a living thing, forming and reforming. It goes on still at Island Beach.

This seascape's system of dunes is held together by grasses, shrubs, and maritime forests. Today, along with its winds and waves, it can transport and evoke reveries of a realm of ages.

Island Beach has been called a "Rustic Paradise," New Jersey's "Forgotten Beach," and "A Museum Piece Of Oceanfront." It offers an idyllic expanse of trails through hearty pitch pine, red cedar, black cherry, red maple, American holly trees, and Atlantic white cedars.

These forests provide shade, food, water, and shelter for wildlife.

Because the salt spray off the ocean is deflected upward by the dunes, it can prune trees in the maritime forest by stunting new growth. When soil conditions are stable on the barrier island, tree seedlings can grow in the moist protected hollows behind the dunes. Some trees are twisted and bent by the forces of nature and seem to have been wrought rather than grown.

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The dunes harbor beach plum, bayberry bushes, and beach heather. Sight, hearing, smell, and touch intensify the moment, strengthening and refreshing. The salty air swirls with the likes of peregrine falcons, black skimmers, and nesting osprey. This is their domain, and you are a guest.

The bay side of Island Beach is lined with reeds and a muddy estuary that is home to blue crabs, herons, and other marine birds. The park is an excellent site for bird watching with osprey nests and paths to bird blinds. Island Beach is home to an estimated two thousand diamond-back terrapins, a species of turtles that reside in brackish estuaries.

Ray Bukowski, the manager of Island Beach State Park, is a Richard Stockton College graduate with a degree in Environmental Studies. He seems a perfect fit with his local background as an avid angler and hunter. He has been with the Department of Environmental Protection since 1992 with special experience in the Coastal and Land Use program. He recently offered me a tour of places I had never seen in my visits to Island Beach. He pointed out that most of the park's visitors focus their attention on the guarded beaches and bathhouses, but



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This man-made nest stand for ospreys (on the right) can be seen from the blind located near the Nature and Interpretive Centers. There are about thirty nesting pairs of osprey in the park.

they miss the park's natural beauty and unique ecosystems. According to Bukowski, there are now fifteen research projects being conducted at the park. He also pointed out that the *Asbury Park Press* had rated Island Beach State Park as New Jersey's best beach. The park is the largest undeveloped barrier beach in New Jersey and one of the largest in the United States. Bordered on the north by Seaside Park and Berkeley Township, Island Beach extends nearly ten miles

to Barnegat Inlet.

Popular activities at the park are surf fishing, hiking, biking, kayaking and canoeing, bird watching, and photography. Horseback riding is available by reservation from October through April, and the park has a six-mile bridle path.

The Fishermen's Walkway trail near Parking Area 7 provides a wheelchair-accessible boardwalk and observation deck. There is also the Tidal Pond Trail that leads to an enclosed bird observation blind overlooking Barnegat Bay. Glossy ibises, great blue herons, kingfishers, and the harder-to-find myrtle and cerulean warblers can be spotted. Migrating birds are best observed in May and October. The bounty of the sea attracts ocean anglers seeking stripers, fluke, bluefish, kingfish, blackfish, and the less common drum, false albacore, and cobia. Along the Barnegat shallows, bayside anglers land bluefish, weakfish, and bass.

Without human intervention, Barnegat Inlet would gradually have worked its way southward. This persistent movement of barrier islands and inlets on the New Jersey coast is the result of littoral transport, a natural process caused by the combined actions of the waves and currents. The waves hitting the beach suspend sand, and the prevailing



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The Fisherman's Walkway provides a boardwalk that crosses from the bay through the dunes to the ocean beach. Many boaters anchor in the bay, wade ashore, and walk to the ocean.

south-flowing current carries the sand and deposits it further along the coast. Once a structure was built, such as Barnegat Lighthouse in 1859, engineers were forced to combat the natural processes. The construction of stone jetties, completed in 1940, helped capture the shifting sand and stop the island's march south.

Island Beach State Park is part of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, which marks the historical and coastal habitats along the 127 miles of New Jersey's Atlantic coastline, and more than 83 miles of shoreline along the Raritan and Delaware Bays.



For the native Lenni Lenapes, Island Beach provided fishing, clamming, hunting, and fruit-gathering grounds. It was a refuge for whalers, pirates, smugglers, squatters, and sportsmen. It has been the location for three Life Saving Stations, a steel magnate's ambitious vision for a resort, and the top-secret site of missile tests during World War II. Today, with its pristine dunes, wildlife, and vegetation, Island Beach provides recreation, educational programs, and a myriad of activities for nature lovers.

History Abounds On Island Beach

Beginning about seven thousand years ago, predecessors of the Lenni Lenape tribe of Native Americans traveled by dugout canoe to this land for turtles, shellfish, and fish, as well as to collect berries, nuts, and dried food for the winter. They left behind primitive fishing gear including stone sinkers, net weights, and spearheads.

Norse sagas suggest that the first trans-Atlantic visitors may have sailed close to its shores around A.D. 1000 during their North American expeditions. Florentine adventurer Giovanni da Verrazzano undoubtedly passed by on *La Dauphine* as he explored the coast of North America from the Carolinas to Newfoundland in 1524.

English explorer Henry Hudson's log described its shores aboard the *Halve Moon* on September 2, 1609 as

"...we came to...Ilands, which was in length ten leagues. The mouth of that Lake of water [Barnegat Inlet] hath many shoalds and the sea breaketh on them as it is cast out of the mouth of it... This is a very good Land to fall with, and a pleasant Land to see."

Dutch explorer Cornelius May christened the inlet "Barendegat" or "Breakers Inlet" in 1614. That same year, a map was published that correctly showed streams emptying into, what evolved into its current name, Barnegat Bay.

Island Beach was occupied by whalers as early as 1640, and whaling became an important industry after licenses were granted in 1684.

The whalers lived on the island in February and March during the migration season. They would row out to the whales offshore, harpoon them, bring them to the beach, cut them up, and boil the blubber for oil. A single whale could produce from forty to ninety barrels of oil. When the demand was high, as during the British blockade in the War of 1812, ox-drawn wagons loaded with oil would make the ten-day trip through the New Jersey Pine Barrens to Philadelphia, bringing in as much as \$60,000.

How did this barrier island remain in such a natural state after centuries of human activity? Part of the answer comes from tracing its ownership.

The earliest documents show a grant that conveyed the land by the Duke of York to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret in 1664. The land was conveyed to the Board of Proprietors of the Province of East Jersey in 1683. By 1756, James Alexander (Lord Stirling) acquired the land upon the death of his father, hence the name Lord Stirling's Island in its early days. These early owners, with large tracts of land, were absentee landlords.

Pirate Legends

There are tales of pirates landing on Island Beach but they may be what National Park Service Historian Bill Bolger calls "Fakelore"—the prod-

uct of fertile imaginations.

One such tale is noteworthy for its dramatic detail. According to the late Ocean County historian Pauline Miller, in her book *300 Years at Island Beach*, Kidd and the crew of his sloop *San Antonio* were reported to have captured the British brig *Starlight* out of Liverpool in January 1697. After transferring the valuables to his sloop, Kidd reportedly gave the crew and passengers the option of joining the pirate crew or walking the plank. The crew joined Kidd, but the passengers chose a watery grave. The night after, the pirates celebrated their success on the beach with captured liquor. Kidd and three others, however, slipped away in a longboat with treasure and buried it on a small island. They rejoined their shipmates, but were never able to return. This treasure of legend, which may have originated with a vendor who wanted to increase rentals of rowboats and shovels, has never been found.

Alas, recent research shows Kidd was in the Indian Ocean at the time of the aforementioned date and did not "turn pirate" until April of 1697. He did not return to the seas off the Mid-Atlantic region until April through June of 1699, just weeks before he was caught and later tried and hanged in England.

Colonial Activities and Ephemeral Inlets

The shoreline south of the Manasquan Inlet became known as Squan Beach and the land near the midpoint was occasionally separated after strong storms by a series of less permanent inlets. These breaches would occur on the north end of Island Beach, cutting it off from the rest of the Barnegat peninsula. They were given a confusing set of names—including the Old Inlet, New Inlet, and Cranberry Inlet—and approximate locations. Over the succeeding four hundred years, Island Beach was referred to as Nine-Mile Island, the Phipps Estate, and now as Island Beach State Park.

Cranberry Inlet was opened in 1750 and closed again by nature sixty

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years later. Based on old maps and current conjecture, it was located between modern day Seaside Park and Mantoloking. Cranberry Inlet was estimated to be 1,500 feet wide.

This inlet played an important role during the American Revolution as smugglers—familiar with the shifting shallows, tidal rips, and shoreline inlets—became privateers, authorized by the governor to prey on enemy ships. The line between pirate and privateers was often faint. Whaleboats carrying crews armed with pistols, pikes, and a small cannon or swivel guns could overtake bigger, slower ships. When they were successful, the proceeds were auctioned off in Toms River, Tuckerton, or Freehold. Seventy-seven naval

across the bay on flat boats and leave them there to graze on sea grass during the summers.

In the early 1800s, long-term dwellings began on the island. Around 1815, A. Haring began to clear native brush and trees to create a farm. The Haring Hotel, as it became known, was located near the center of the island, but closer to the bay. It included a barn for livestock, a chicken house, duck pen, icehouse, and a garden patch. The house had about twenty rooms, and included a tennis court and a lookout tower for guests to watch for ships coming up the coast or along the bay. Guests came for sailing, fishing, clamming, and crabbing in the summer and duck hunting in the fall. Eventually



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The park's Nature Center (right) is located in what was once known as Forked River Life Saving Station No. 112. It is adjacent to the Interpretive Center, which houses a variety of exhibits on dune formation, native plant communities, and the history of Barnegat Bay.

A vessel facing unfavorable strong winds could venture too close to shore, run aground, and break up in the waves. The winter of 1826-27 was fierce, and more than two hundred vessels wrecked along the shores of New Jersey. About 1830, the U.S. Government began to build crude shelters for survivors along the beaches. The first shelter built on Island Beach was a one-story barn with crude equipment for surfmen to use in rescue efforts. It became known as "Phillips Station No. 14."

From 1830 to 1837, between Point Pleasant and Barnegat Inlet alone, 125 ships foundered. The first Barnegat Lighthouse was built, across the inlet from Island Beach, in 1834. This fifty-foot high light was destroyed by waves and rebuilt in 1857 to 172 feet. It was retired in 1927 and remains an icon of the Jersey Shore.

In 1848, the U.S. Life Saving Service was enacted, but funding was sporadic. In 1849, the Phillips Station was replaced by Island Beach Life Saving Station No. 14, a larger structure that could accommodate a six-man crew.

The Civil War overshadowed progress on the life saving network, but after a vicious storm in 1870 caused the loss of many lives, efforts were renewed. In 1898, full-featured life saving stations were built with lookout towers, washrooms, messrooms, kitchens, offices, and boat rooms. The men of the U.S. Life Saving Service saved countless lives. Forty-one life saving stations were established, located about every three miles along the New Jersey coast. Three stations became operational on Island Beach: Island Beach Station No. 110, Cedar



Island Beach State Park Interpretive Center exhibit

This undated photo of what was most likely a pre-1915 life saving drill shows a crew moving a surfboat to the ocean for launching.

battles were fought off colonial New Jersey's coast.

Cranberry Inlet was sealed by a storm in 1812. A series of sales and swindles tied up land on the island for many years, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, these were straightened out in large measure. Due in part to the shifting shorelines, surveys vary greatly. For example, the southern tip of Island Beach added nearly half a mile from 1839 to 1874.

Early Inhabitants

Island Beach remained uninhabited until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although farmers on the mainland would move their cattle

the land included homes, Cook's Tavern (near Barnegat Inlet), and two hotels.

Records show that another old hotel (of unknown origin) had been purchased by Abner Reed, and it, in turn, was rebuilt in 1876 by his son, Joseph. The Reed Hotel for sportsmen was built with lumber from wrecked vessels that had lost their loads of mahogany, Spanish cedar, and hardwood. This hotel was torn down at the beginning of the twentieth century, probably after 1924.

Life Saving Services

Early mariners considered the area between Point Pleasant and Barnegat Inlet to be treacherous.

Creek Station No. 111, and Forked River Station No. 112. These last two stations were named for a site directly across the bay and staffed from fall to spring. To reach the stations, horse teams pulled broad-wheeled hay rigs around the dunes.

During this time, surfboats were developed for rescue operations. They ultimately were designed much like present day lifeguard boats, but larger and heavier. This became the standard boat used for all launchings through the surf for rescues until 1915.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, sailing ships were phased out in favor of steamships, and the need for the life saving service declined.

About 1975, Cedar Creek Station No. 111 was demolished. The two remaining stations have been given a new purpose: one has become the Island Beach State Park Nature and Interpretive Center, with exhibits the history of Island Beach; the other, located close to the park entrance, is used as a maintenance building.

Elegant Resort Envisioned

The shore beaches became more accessible in 1881 when the Pennsylvania Railroad extended its line to Toms River and over a trestle to Seaside Park. The first bridge to connect Island Beach via Seaside Heights to the mainland to the west was completed in October 1914.

In 1926, Henry W. Phipps, Jr. (1839-1930), business partner of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie and a real estate investor, purchased most of Island Beach. Phipps, an early investor in Florida real estate in Palm Beach and Miami, had envisioned an exclusive seashore resort and had elaborate plans drawn. He hired Francis Parkman Freeman as the foreman of his ocean estate and built what became known as the Ocean House, the Bay House, and the Freeman House. Freeman managed Phipps' Barnegat Bay and Beach Company, which also administered nearly one hundred land leases.

Phipps is perhaps best known today for the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Schenley Park, Pennsylvania, an 1893 gift

to the city of Pittsburgh. He also funded the Phipps Institute for the Study, Treatment and Prevention of Tuberculosis at the University of Pennsylvania as well as the first inpatient facility in the U.S. for the mentally ill that was part of an acute care hospital in 1912.

In 1928, Freeman wed New York elementary school teacher and writer Augusta Hueill Seaman, the popular author of more than forty children's mystery books. Several of her later works are set at Island Beach. They include *The Pine Barren's Mystery*, *The Stars of Sabra*, *The Curious Affair at Heron Shoals*, and *The Case of the Calico Crab*.

The stock market crash of 1929 squelched Phipps' vision. He died in 1930, and the estate largely remained unchanged, occupied for short periods by anglers and hunters with passes. Freeman was a naturalist with sensitivity to the delicacy of the landscape. His admonition to leaseholders and guests had four conditions that reverberate today:

"Leave things be.

Don't trample the sand dunes.

Don't pick the flowers.

Don't annoy the osprey."

In 1933, Freeman, his wife, and Joseph Tilton, a retired Coast Guard captain, created the Borough of Island Beach. It continued to exist as

a legal entity until 1965.

Pearl S. Buck, 1938 Nobel Prize-winning author, was a notable guest who summered at Island Beach in the later part of the 1930s. Best known for her book, *The Good Earth*, she stayed at the decommissioned Cedar Creek Life Saving Station.

As early as 1920, the New Jersey Department of Conservation and Development had suggested that Island Beach be acquired as a state park. This call was renewed in 1937 when the New Jersey State Planning Board proposed that Island Beach become an "Ocean Front Park." Although primarily seen as a recreation destination, the proposal mentioned conservation of its natural beaches. It recommended bathing, boating, picnicking, camping, and fishing as main attractions for as many as 30,000 visitors a year. A recreation center was envisioned for tennis, archery, dancing, shuffleboard, and outdoor bowling. A boardwalk and a ramp for seaplanes were also proposed.

Top Secret World War II Experiments

At the outbreak of World War II, access to Island Beach fell under the control of the Second Defense Command and was restricted due to fears that it might be a site for enemy

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The "Flying Stovepipe" fires away from the Island Beach launcher. Fashioned from the exhaust pipe of a Thunderbolt fighter plane, this six-inch diameter missile attained a supersonic speed of 1,200 miles-per-hour on June 13, 1945.

spies and saboteurs landing off of German U-boats.

In 1944, a top-secret missile launch pad was built on the dunes of Island Beach. A team of thirty scientists and technicians from Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory in Maryland were sent in a rushed effort to develop an anti-aircraft guided missile defense system for the U.S. Navy, which was looking for a weapon to counter kamikaze suicide attacks. Nicknamed the "Bumblebee Project"—because, like a bumblebee with a body too big and wings too small to theoretically fly—it appeared to defy the laws of flight.

The concrete launch pad and thirty-foot launcher were located south of the former Cedar Creek Life Saving Station No. 111. (Today, that site is the location of the park administration building.) The team of experts experimented with fuel mixes, booster rockets, and ignition and early guidance systems. The first launch flew 250 yards seaward, struck a wave, turned around, and headed back toward the launch site; another erratic ramjet climbed vertically thousands of feet, only to fall back near the ramp.



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The southern tip of Island Beach overlooks Barnegat Inlet. It has no roads, only narrow trails through a maritime forest and hearty vegetation sculpted by the strong, salty winds. A solitary shack is visible amongst the dunes.

On June 13, 1945, the world's first supersonic ramjet surpassed the speed of sound (767 miles per hour) when it reached the speed of 1,200 to 1,500 miles per hour before it crashed into waters more than six miles away from the launch site. By August, another secret project, the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ended the war with Japan.

The post-war development of the

fledgling missile program was moved to White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico. By the early 1950s, this technology had been so well developed that a Talos missile could hit a drone in mid-flight twenty-five miles away.

Sportsmen's Shacks

When Island Beach was purchased by Henry Phipps in 1926, there were reportedly dozens of fishermen and hunters who had constructed simple



The Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone is 1,600 acres of highly productive tidal marshes, creeks, ponds, and open water.

structures from which to fish, clam, crab, and hunt throughout the year. They were often constructed of little more than driftwood and tarpaper; access was by beach buggies, with Ford Model As the preferred vehicle.

When foreman Freeman managed the properties, he established strict rules for the private camps and required owners to sign lease agreements for \$25. a year.

During World War II, when the military were present on Island Beach, the leases were suspended. After the war, caretaker Freeman complained that servicemen had broken into twenty-seven of the dwellings. The leases resumed after the war.

In 1952, there were eighty-three leased properties. Then the rents for the shacks went up. By 1953, the leases were \$325. a year, forcing thirty-three of the remaining leaseholders to give up their properties. By 1994, the leases were \$1,200. a year. Today, only eight shacks remain.

The basic shack accommodations could be as simple as a kerosene heater or potbellied stove, water from a cistern or shallow well, and batteries or generators for electricity.



Photo by Mike Mano courtesy of the Air Support Squadron

The Ocean House was built for Henry Phipps in the late 1920s. After the state purchased the land in 1953, it became known as the Governor's Ocean House (or by locals as the Governor's Mansion) and is used as an official retreat.

Some of the remaining shacks have the comforts provided by solar panels and propane tanks. (See page __ for an intimate portrait of one of these now iconic shacks.)

Island Beach State Park Created

The State of New Jersey purchased the 2,694-acre Phipps estate on July 1, 1953 from Phipps' heirs for \$2.75 million. The state wanted to preserve the natural beauty of the island and provide recreational facilities for swimmers, hikers, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The park officially opened in 1959.

After the State purchase, a paved road was built. Phipps' beachfront home officially became the Governor's Ocean House when Robert Meyner was governor. It has been visited by such dignitaries as Lady Bird Johnson (wife of President Lyndon B. Johnson), the daughter of Soviet leader Alexei Kosygin, presidential candidates Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, and Vice President Joe Biden.

In the 1960s, state park officials decided to return the land to its uninhabited state and required that camps with life-leases be vacated

within three years after the death of the leaseholder or leaseholder's spouse. It is now operated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry State Park Service.

After the 1953 purchase, Governor Alfred Driscoll lauded the land as a "jewel." He said "There's nothing quite like it in the United States of America." He hoped many people would visit to "catch the inspiration of wind and wave, of dune, tree, and flower...and come away strengthened and refreshed."

With as many as one million visitors each year, it appears his hopes have come true. ♦

Gordon Hesse is the author of "All Summer Long - Tales and Lore of Lifeguarding on the Atlantic," "Children Of The Sky - The Odyssey of Álgar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca," and "Cuban Blues - A Memoir." His new coffee table book, "Island Beach State Park," is being published by Jersey Shore Publications in 2015. Please refer to page __ for more information.



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Island Beach State Park

When You Go



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Summer Activities and Programs

Swimming, snorkeling, surfing, and sunbathing draw the most summer visitors. Two well-outfitted bathhouses, showers, concessions, and lifeguards on the beach provide safety, comfort, and convenient services.

The Park's Nature Educators offer a wide range of daily and frequent experiential programs for children and adults to discover this unique barrier island ecosystem; emphasis is on purposeful fun.

Offerings include age-appropriate hands-on activities, stories, crafts, and hike tours to direct children's natural curiosity about the animals and plant life. Programs also cover how Barnegat Bay was once a commercial hub for market gunners, baymen, and salt hay farmers. Daily programs are free.

Surfing, coastal cooking, a beginner's surf fishing clinic, and birding kayak tours are in the mix for a fee.

The Sedge Islands along Island Beach became New Jersey's first Marine Conservation Zone. They include about 1,600 acres of tidal marshes, creeks, ponds, and open water. Special kayak tours provide a deeper understanding of this unique ecosystem.

For most programs, participants are encouraged to bring sunscreen, drinking water, and bug spray.

Cautions and Restrictions

From May to October, Island Beach has mosquitoes, greenhead flies, and ticks. Insect repellent is advised during these times of year. Poison ivy abounds, so the careful hiker will follow established trails.

Swimming is prohibited when lifeguards are not present and flotation devices are not allowed in bathing areas. Portions of the ocean beach at the extreme southern end of the designated bathing area have been set aside for windsurfing and surfing. Scuba diving and underwater fishing are permitted along 2.5 miles of ocean beach just north of Barnegat Inlet. Scuba divers must register at the park office just prior to their first

dive each year. Proof of current diving certification is required.

Four-wheel drive vehicles are permitted onto the beach with a permit.

Island Beach State Park requires visitors to "Carry In/Carry Out" their garbage.

Detailed information about permits and facilities is available at: www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/island.html.

Nature and Interpretive Centers

The Nature Center (the former Forked River Life Saving Station No. 112) is located seven miles from the park's entrance. It contains several tanks of live creatures and a science laboratory. The smaller building is the Interpretive Center. Between them, five themes are depicted: geology of island and dune formation, park flora, park fauna, tools used on the island in earlier times, and the political history of the island.

Georgian Court University was integral to preserving four hundred specimens of plants found on Island Beach. Other highlights of the displays include a 1929 Model A Ford converted into a beach buggy and a sneakbox, a low-sided boat with a spoon-shaped bottom designed for duck hunters.

The Interpretive Center is open on



Above: For a quiet space free from crowds, Island Beach offers miles of serenity on empty beaches for fishing, reading, and relaxing.

Left: The park has two beach houses and guarded beaches for swimming. In the summer, entrance to the park is limited by parking spaces. Early arrival is recommended.

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weekends beginning in June and daily during the summer from June until early September.



The Interpretive Center has numerous displays, including a large model of the Reed Farm, tools of the baymen, and four hundred varieties of plants found on Island Beach.

N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife

The N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife sponsors Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center Workshops. The workshops explore both the natural and cultural history of the Barnegat Bay area with hands-on methods including marsh walks, kayak tours, and conventional fishing, crabbing, and clamming techniques. Investigation of the marine

environment is done using nets, microscopes, field guides, and more. Whether it's seining near an eel grass bed to observe the importance of submerged aquatic vegetation, or learning how to clean and cook seafood, the activities provide first-hand insight to the wise use of New Jersey's natural resources, to their importance, and to the Division's role in their management.

The Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament, sponsored by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, was held this year on May 18 and drew 560 anglers. More information is available at www.njfishandwildlife.com/gaft.htm.

Friends of Island Beach State Park

The Friends of Island Beach State Park is a non-profit, all volunteer organization with the mission of enhancing the interpretive, educational, recreational, and research programs and events at Island Beach State Park and encouraging protection of the barrier island's ecosystem. For more information, visit www.thefriendsofislandbeach.org.



An estimated 2,000 turtles and terrapins, like this Northern Diamondback, make Island Beach their home.

Conserve Wildlife Foundation

Conserve Wildlife Foundation's partnership with Island Beach State Park enhances visitors' experiences and connects more people to the outdoors. They are a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife through research, education, conservation, management, and citizen engagement. For more information, visit www.conservewildlifenj.org.

New Jersey Beach Buggy Association

The New Jersey Beach Buggy Association (NJBBBA) is dedicated to the preservation of the park's natural beach resources. Since 1954, it has promoted beach access for all beach users. The NJBBBA not only builds protective fences and plants dune grasses to protect the beaches, it also works with community leaders and other groups to keep them open for all types of uses.

The NJBBBA also sponsors or assists charitable programs throughout the year. On National Hunting and Fishing Day, special needs children are invited to spend a day on the beach learning about fishing and nature. The Association is also active with youth fishing programs. The NJBBBA Youth Fishing Tournament is held in September for ages sixteen years and under. They also sponsor Veteran Fishing Days each year where members take groups of disabled vets out for a day of fishing, lunch, and fun. More information is available at www.njbbba.org.

Many other organizations, too long to list here, are involved in sharing the mission of preserving the natural beauty of Island Beach. ♦

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Most of the beach buggies at Island Beach have had a long life. This 1930 Model A Ford was donated by the DeSaules Family and is still running. Its frame was lengthened to carry large pieces of driftwood, which they used to build their shack. It is now the "mascot" of New Jersey Beach Buggy Association and was on display at this year's Beach Plum Festival.

Early Days at the Iconic “Judge’s Shack” The Hartshornes at Island Beach



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Representing buildings that evolved with function and activities, the Judge’s Shack depicts a style once commonplace, but now disappearing.

The allure of Island Beach’s stark beauty and rustic living caught the Hartshorne family early on. Family records give a peak back in time to a budding romance with this unique beach.

For them, it began Fourth of July weekend, 1924, when Ellen and Richard Hartshorne, a young attorney, traveled down the shore from New Brunswick a few years after they married and stayed at the historic Reed Boarding House on Island Beach.

The couple spent their days sailing up and down Barnegat Bay, canoeing, swimming, sunbathing, reading, and walking “way down the beach out of sight of any living soul.” Evenings were spent sitting on the beach.

Apparently this was their first time visiting. On the drive home, not unlike their counterparts ninety years later, they encountered “awful traffic.”

An invitation from a Toms River dentist to his shack years later provided the Hartshornes and some of their four children the new experience of traveling by beach buggy. They were charmed by Dr. Loveman’s gable-roofed driftwood shack with its

suspended fishnet ceiling holding a variety of large seashells. They were hooked by the experience, and in ensuing years, with warm memories of that time, Mr. Hartshorne kept looking for a suitable shack for his growing family.

In November 1942, the Hartshornes purchased a small, thirty-year-old shack for \$200. Lease No. 65 was located near the northern-most life saving station. Its bare walls were covered with pasted calendars and newspapers. Features included a cast iron sink, a freestanding heating/cooking stove, a table, a pair of green rocking chairs, and cots in two small bedrooms. Tools were kept in a low, hinged-lid bench. It had minimal electricity and no running water.

Mrs. Hartshorne, employing her degree in Interior Decoration from the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, and her fourteen-year old daughter, Penelope, an aspiring architect, covered the walls with white fibre board, hung patriotic red, white, and blue striped curtains, and added blue bench cushions. Living room doors were painted blue, and

the bedroom sides were painted red. Son John’s grade school wood project, a fish weathervane, capped the shack’s gable to give its profile flair.

The beach itself provided decorations and furnishings. They found cork fishnet floats, large cable spools, heavy boat hatches, and wartime K-rations. Spools became outdoor tables and chairs; driftwood became boardwalks to hasten trips to the beach and privy.

Because of gas restrictions during World War II, trips from the family’s home in East Orange were made by taking the train from Newark to Seaside Heights. Leaseholders had to obey “wartime dim-out rules” and were not allowed to drive at night with lights. Coast Guardsmen on horseback patrolled the beach day and night. The tradition of skinny-dipping was timed in between these patrols.

Daughter Penny, as she was known to friends, recalled with enchantment the rare treat in the autumn to see the bayshore cedar trees covered with migrating monarch butterflies “blinking” their orange wings in

unison. These experiences were too rich for the Hartshornes not to share with others. They kept a record of their guests on printed cards that came inside Nabisco Shredded Wheat boxes.

After the war, New Jersey State Park development plans included opening a public bathing facility on the northern half of Island Beach. Richard Hartshorne, now a county judge, received permission to move his shack south amidst the dunes. A stone and gravel road was extended three hundred yards off the main road to the new site. In June 1952, the shack was jacked up, put on a flatbed truck, and transported six miles south from its original location. It was placed on a cement block pier foundation, and the screened-in porch was extended four more feet. A twenty-two-foot well was sunk and a hand pump affixed. Although the shack had wall outlets from its old location, it no longer had electric service.

Once settled in, from the southerly-facing porch with screens on three sides, the habitants beheld a vista with the ocean on the east; dunes, the Forked River Life Saving Station No. 112, and Barnegat Light to the south; and “the masts and sails of bay sailors, and after dark, a greenish glow on the horizon from the Garden



Gordon Hesse

The shack's porch faces southwest, providing views of the ocean to the left, the Forked River Life Saving Station No. 112 and Barnegat Light in front, and the tops of sails on Barnegat Bay above the dunes to the right.

State Parkway” to the west.

Life at the shack included gathering beach plums for jam and picking quarts of blueberries. Tender clams, taken right from the beach, and fish caught in the surf were added to the menus. Sometimes meals turned into festive occasions, with the men dressed in white dinner jackets and bathing trunks, the ladies in long dresses.

There were misfortunes: the shack was broken into many times. Vandals took items large and small, some of sentimental value, and left bullet holes and broken glass.

The Judge's Shack has become a romantic icon of a simpler time. It has been the backdrop for wedding

portraits and featured on the cover of the L.L. Bean catalog and in Hallmark calendars. It has been visited by more than one hundred guests, including the son of Emperor Hirohito's youngest daughter. Among longstanding guests are Hector Griswold, a family friend, and Bill Bolger, a National Park Service Historian. They speak glowingly of their fond memories of their times with the Hartshorne family and their support for preservation of this shoreline heritage structure that has survived the tempests of at least one hundred years. ♦

Judge Richard Hartshorne, outdoorsman and noted jurist, was born in 1888 in Newark.

He sculled on the Princeton University varsity rowing team and graduated from Columbia Law School in 1912. He was a U.S. Naval Reserve Lieutenant during World War I and an Essex County court judge from 1931-1951.

During World War II, while in his 50s, he commuted ten miles from his home by bike to the courthouse to cut down on the use of his car and save rubber and gasoline, which were being rationed.

A Republican, he was nominated in 1951 by Democratic President Harry Truman, against bitter opposition, to become a federal judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. He served until 1975.

His diversions included fishing, crabbing, sailing, dancing with figure skates, ice sailing, skiing, and playing tennis all year long. His daughter noted that his exuberance was even heard at his cellar ping-pong table.

He died in 1975.

—Gordon Hesse



Gordon Hesse

The interior of the shack reflects the rustic, yet vibrant times of when it was in regular use. The walls literally “talk” of simpler times. This view is from the porch entrance facing the two bedroom doors. On the right is the food preparation area.