

Historical Society of Ocean Grove



Museum Self-Guided Tour

Welcome

Welcome to the Museum of the Historical Society of Ocean Grove. We're pleased you can visit our museum.

In 2019, we are celebrating two important anniversaries.

The Historical Society was founded 50 years ago.

Ocean Grove itself is celebrating 150 years! Information about our events and programs is available in our kiosk.

Ocean Grove was developed as a planned community. It was one of the first to employ the flared setback technique for several of its east-west streets. By making streets progressively wider, flaring preserves residents' views and sheds and funnels summertime breezes from the Atlantic Ocean several blocks inland.

The vintage aspect of our town is carefully cultivated and maintained. You only need to look outside across the street to Auditorium Park and the buildings that surround it or take a walk around town to see what we mean. We celebrate our 150th year with a cherished past and a thriving future.

There are approximately 2050 homes in Ocean Grove, a large majority of them historic. The New York Times called Ocean Grove a museum of Victorian Architecture. The town is designated as a National Historic District.

In addition to our lovely homes, residents also reside in Camp Meeting Association tents. There are currently 114 tents ranging in size from 500 to 700 square feet with rental costs between \$4,500 to \$6,500 for the season.

Nearly 5000 individuals visit with us each summer here at the Museum or Centennial Cottage, our house museum. If you haven't had the pleasure of a tour of the Cottage please consider taking one. It is open today until 4 p.m.

We are a nonprofit organization entirely funded by membership, grants, and donations. We hope you will consider helping to support our museum and programs by making a donation of any amount as you leave.

Early History

Step over to the right wall and use our imagination to go back to the beginnings of a very rustic Ocean Grove. Ocean Grove was an

outgrowth of the camp meeting movement in the United States. Camp Meetings were often held for several days and a stand was always erected for preaching, surrounded by tents. In 1868, our founder William Osborn (pictured here), was searching for a coastal spot to establish a permanent camp meeting. He found it three blocks to the east in what we now call Founders Park. He bought eleven shorefront acres for \$50. The following year, Dr. Elwood Stokes (the impressive gentlemen shown here), held the first meeting on July 31, 1869, in Founders Park. The Camp Meeting Association was founded and by 1872, 232 acres were purchased and lots began to be sold. Our many books for sale in our museum store highlight the history in more detail, as do these descriptions, which highlight the early era.

Methodist camp meetings or open air religious revivals held in woodland or seaside settings lasted many days in the summer. Some, like Ocean Grove, grew into enduring, year-round communities with permanent homes and guest houses, hotels, inns gradually replacing the original tents. Ocean Grove is one of the few camp meetings sites still in existence in the United States.

If you'd like to spend more time with our early

history, the iPad on the wall as part of this exhibit provides much more detail.

The photos of tent living are fascinating, and in many ways, it's still very similar today. Tents remain one of the most popular sites in Ocean Grove today. Canvas is erected by May 15 each year over a front wooden platform transforming it into a large tented living area. A front porch is also part of the structure. Behind the tent portion is a wooden structure containing the kitchen, bathroom and often another room. Today, most of the tents are air-conditioned and many have stackable washers and dryers. Many of them are decorated beautifully. We include tours of tents with our walking tour.

The Great Auditorium

The Great Auditorium is, indeed, great. It has a storied history. The first auditorium was a preacher's stand and the congregation sat on pine planks. The second auditorium shown here in this photograph, was in a grove of trees in 1875. A permanent roof was added in 1876. This third auditorium could seat up to 3000. A new building was erected to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Ocean Grove and you see it in this photograph. It was completed in 1894 and with

seating for 10,000!

In 1907, the front of the Great Auditorium was extended to make room for the Hope Jones pipe organ, which was installed in 1908. It was then one of the largest in the world and is still known for its wonderful sound. Organ recitals are held each summer on Wednesday evenings and Saturday at noon.

Historical Perspectives from the 19th Century

These two photos were once in the Homestead Restaurant, a popular venue from 1915 until the late 1970's at the North End Boardwalk. This photo from the 1920's labeled the Children's Carnival is interesting because it's a very early version of photoshop. You can see that it's the same group of children—on the left they are seated, on the right standing. The photo was put together. They appear to be in Asian garb, but we don't know why. This second photograph highlights The Rough Rider Boys. It is rumored that when Teddy Roosevelt visited Ocean Grove he inspired this group and even paid for their uniforms.

We have devoted this section to early forms of transportation in Ocean Grove—from the ferry boat across Wesley Lake, to the Stagecoach, to Model T cars on Ocean Pathway.

This is also our children's area with vintage photographs of kids enjoying their summer in Ocean Grove, as well as costuming and hats kids can play with when they visit us.

Cultural and Intellectual Prominence

Cultural and Intellectual Prominence has been part of Ocean Grove's history from the very early years. Some of that is highlighted here, where you get a sense of the magnitude of seating in the Great Auditorium. And, some of the renowned visitors – those who spoke and those who entertained. They included:

Prominent religious speakers such as:

Norman Vincent Peale
George Beverly Shea
Billy Graham
Billy Sunday
Evangeline Booth

Entertainers that always appreciated the fine acoustics in the Auditorium, including:

Johnny Mathias and the Beach Boys, shown in photographs here. But also:

Judy Collins
Shirley Jones
Seals and Croft

Patti Page
Tony Bennett
Pearl Bailey
Paul Anka

And many more

Noted speakers, such as:

Bob Hope
Booker T. Washington
Will Rogers, shown here in a photo
Andrew Carnegie
Helen Keller
William Jennings Bryan
And more

And, of course, magical music. A booklet promoting the Hotel Le Chevalier, which was at 37 Webb at the turn of the 20th century noted that:

“Music is acknowledged to be most elevating and refining. The music heard at Ocean Grove reaches a degree of perfection and inspiring sublimity rarely attained save above the stars.”

Ocean Grove’s proximity to New York City made it possible to bring great entertainers to the Auditorium. Many stars from the Metropolitan Opera have visited here and continue to do so. Here are photographs of Amelita Galli Curci and Anna Case. Enrico Caruso, and other renowned stars from the 1920s and 1930s performed in the

Auditorium. Marion Anderson, was here, as well as Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Edy. Bands and Orchestras, including John Philip Sousa, shown here in this wonderful portrait on the back wall, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, the United States Marine Band and Air Force Band all performed in the Auditorium. Musical offerings continue with our many summer concerts and performances.

Where did you stay if you were coming for a performance? Perhaps at one of these hotels or boarding houses featured on this fascinating map from the early 20th century. And, who managed all this activity in the Auditorium? The same group that continues to do so today—the Auditorium Ushers, which are shown here from 1903.

Many Presidents came to Ocean Grove:

Ulysses S. Grant, whose sister had a home here.

James A Garfield

William McKinley

Teddy Roosevelt

William Howard Taft

Woodrow Wilson

Richard Nixon

As well as many of our New Jersey Governors.

Our Library

The back area of our museum also serves as our library and research area. Here we have binders

with information regarding the historic homes of Ocean Grove, as well as the hotels and inns. Our collection of other books, highlight aspects of the Victorian age and beyond.

Architecture of Ocean Grove

The Period of Significance: Ocean Grove's Architectural Importance is highlighted here. This exhibit focuses on Ocean Grove's architecture and looks at many styles—Queen Anne, Craftsman, Cottage and Bungalow, Colonial Revival, and more.

No Vehicles on Sunday?

Throughout the museum, you will see artifacts that allude to Ocean Grove keeping the Sabbath on Sunday. Until 1979, no vehicles of any sort were allowed on the streets on Sundays, moving or stationary. All vehicles had to be taken out of town. As you can see from these signs, even bicycles were prohibited. The beach was closed, as were all stores and refreshment stands. Only restaurants could be open on Sundays. The hours of closing were midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday.

So, what happened in 1979 you ask?

Although Ocean Grove reverted to being a part of

Neptune Township with a court decision in 1921, the Camp Meeting Association continued to exercise local ordinance enforcement powers until 1979, when a newspaper deliverer successfully sued to end the resort's blue law banning Sunday vehicular traffic and requiring it to disband its police force and municipal court. The Camp Meeting still owns all the land in town and leases it to homeowners and businesses for a 99-year renewable term at a very modest rate. The Camp Meeting Association currently keeps its beach closed on Sunday mornings between 8:30 am and noon, and the town is still dry, that is, the sale of all alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

A look at Ocean Grove in 1890

This interactive exhibit allows you to discover what it would have been like to visit Ocean Grove in the summer of 1890. You can browse various hotels, from the sliding scale of daily fees at the Howland House to the luxurious surroundings of the Turkish baths and relaxing parlors at Dr. Barr's Hygeia Hotel. Enjoy an ice cream cone at Day's, shop for everything from clothing to carpets at C. C. Clayton's or take your soiled clothing into Chue Jue's Chinese laundry to be cleaned. Entertainment in The Summer of 1890 in the form of musicals or recitations could be found in the parlors of the larger hotels or you could join the crowds at Aunt

Polly's Singin' Skewl. And at the Auditorium there were always international preachers, musicians, missionaries and Temperance meetings. Take your time to explore and see how residents and visitors spent the summer of 1890!

In the middle area of our museum, you'll see Sun, Sand and Modesty our featured exhibit this season, highlighting bathing costumes from the late 19th century and early 20th century. As you can see, the exhibition includes period costuming, vintage photos, and other antique artifacts from the museum's collection, as well as several items on loan from the Morris County Historical Society based in Morristown, New Jersey.

During the late 1880s, people began to flock to Oceanside beaches for popular seaside activities. The clumsy Victorian and Edwardian bathing costumes (shown here) were often very burdensome. They were accessorized with long black stockings, lace-up bathing slippers and fancy caps. Swimwear for men and for children are also featured in the cabinets.

In the early 20th Century a need for a new style bathing suit that retained modesty but was free enough to allow the young women to engage in swimming. By 1910 bathing suits no longer camouflaged the contours of the female body. By the

early 1920s, women's bathing suits were reduced to a one-piece garment with a long top that covered shorts.

This exhibit also includes a special focus on what is called the North End of Ocean Grove and includes a vintage North end sign and beach chair on loan from Bobbie Mitchell of Ocean Grove. At one time, that area included a large recreational complex that included a hotel, swimming pool, special underground access to the beach, a movie theater, bowling alley, and more.

Museum Collections

The case here holds commemorative paperweights and spoon collection. Commemorative spoons were once today's equivalent of postcards or photographs --today, of course, saved on your phone.

This antique pump organ still works and was donated by Philip May, a past President of the Society.

This beautiful desk and bookcase in the Eastlake style features a bust of Shakespeare in the center pediment. It is thought to have come from the Long Branch summer home of Diamond Jim Brady, the renowned philanthropist of the Gilded Age.

We are now featuring vintage pottery pieces from the workshop of famed Portuguese artist Rafael Bordallo Pinheiro, who in 1885 established a ceramics factory in Caldas da Rainha, Portugal where pottery is still being produced. These pieces, inspired by the sea, were used as everyday dishes in Portugal. They are from a collection owned by Arnold Teixeira, who is the proprietor of The Starving Artist restaurant next door to the museum. These whimsical pieces include fish platters, lobster serving pieces, covered casserole dishes with crabs and more.

The Eastlake style piece also holds some of our glass collection and other Victorian collectibles and porcelain.

The statue reproduction--Angel of Victory reproduction – inside the cabinet highlights the statue that once stood at the end of Main Street by the boardwalk. It was erected in 1878 to celebrate the battle of Monmouth during the revolutionary war. Unfortunately, the statue was no match for the elements and collapsed in 1922.

The Historical Society also commemorates those lost in World War II, as you can see here. A sad note is how many from such a small community were lost.

Ocean Grove Today

Sun—Sand--Ice Cream--Bike Riding—Music-- and Fun. That's Ocean Grove in the summer.

When people visit for the first time, we often hear things like:

I can't believe this is an hour away from Manhattan

It's like a step back in time

This town is so charming and peaceful

As these photos share, we not only celebrate a relaxed fun active summer, but there are also many activities throughout the year. December brings a wide variety of holiday events to our town.

As mentioned previously, music and art are also an integral part of our summer activities, with our Summer Stars classical offerings, organ recitals, and other entertainment. Ocean Grove is also a very diverse community. In fact, from the 1980s to the present, many gay and lesbian individuals began to buy and restore homes in Ocean Grove. As you walk around, you'll continue to see many of our wonderful homes being restored. You will also see that we pride ourselves in our lovely gardens and that we are a porch community. Nearly every home has a porch.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused extensive damage in Ocean Grove. Over half of the town's boardwalk was destroyed, and the town's fishing pier was also

destroyed. Ocean Grove was denied FEMA funding because the Camp Meeting Association is a nonprofit organization. While nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive FEMA funding, Ocean Grove was denied funding because the boardwalk was classified as being used solely for recreational purposes. The town formed the Together Campaign to address storm recovery. Hurricane repairs were estimated to cost well over \$3.5 million. The "Together" campaign raised \$1.5 million, The Camp Meeting Association appealed FEMA's findings and after a third appeal was awarded \$2.3 million for reconstruction efforts, including the rebuilding of the boardwalk.

Please feel free to spend time in our shop and pick-up our flyers about our many tours and events. We would also appreciate you signing in so we can keep track of our visitors. In addition, we have a survey. If your time allows, we would benefit from your participation. These are all state requirements for our funding. Enjoy your time in Ocean Grove!