Volume 24,Issue 4

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

WINTER 2026

## OCEAN PIERS IN ATLANTIC CITY

*by Michael Connor*

President Sid Parker suggested this topic as a good subject matter for one or more articles for our newsletter. This article will be a survey of the major piers which were built. Some of these warrant their own article which may or may not appear on my "to do" list. With the exception of Howard's Pier (which was the first to survive more than a year) this survey will move from north to south and not by construction date. I will mainly discuss the piers as they were originally constructed. Many have had multiple incarnations as a result of storms and fires.

Discovered in the ACHS archives was an 1882 reference to Col. George Howard erecting at Kentucky Ave. what was claimed to be the world's first ocean pier. It was neither the world's first nor even Atlantic City's first. Brighton England can claim the first two. The Royal Suspension Chain Pier opened November 25, 1823 and what was known as West Pier opened in 1866. These piers no longer survive.

West Jersey Pier was built in 1880. History recognizes it as the first pier extending out over the ocean. It was destroyed later the same year. Little information about it could be discovered.

Howard's Pier opened July 12, 1882. The image below, right, shows how it appeared in an 1884 publication. Months after its opening, the pier suffered storm damage but was rebuilt. It was demolished in 1890 to enable an expansion of the boardwalk. While open it was a performance venue featuring the likes of Lillie Langtry and Harry Houdini. Bands and opera companies performed on the pier.What was first known as Iron Pier was constructed at Massachusetts Ave. While visiting Atlantic City in 1888 Henry J. Heinz was impressed with the amusement piers and leased this pier for advertising purposes. Radio and television advertising did not exist - Heinz saw this as an opportunity for publicity. Admission was free. Visitors could see various displays, sample products and view cooking demonstrations. A sunroom was constructed. Visitors could send free postcards and walk away with what became the iconic Heinz pickle pin.






This pin debuted at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, migrated to Atlantic City and on to various Worlds Fairs. The original pins were made of gutta percha. Later plastic ones can be found for seven bucks on e-bay. The two pictures below show the Heinz Pier in its heyday and after the 1944 hurricane. It was demolished rather than rebuilt.

The pictures to the right show the Heinz Pier in its heyday and after the 1944 hurricane. It was demolished rather than rebuilt.





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# Events and Happenings

| Program Logistics | Program Description |
|---|---|
| **RISLEY HOMESTEAD**<br>**8 Virginia Avenue**<br>**(near 400 block of Shore Rd)**<br>**Northfield, NJ**<br><br>**Saturdays & Sundays, 11am – 4pm** | The Risley Homestead is one of two 18th century houses in Atlantic County individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was home to many generations of Risley oystermen. The ACHS received the Homestead and its furnishings by bequest from Virginia Risley Stout in 1989. The Homestead is open Saturday & Sunday for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details about large groups. |



## HOLIDAY SWEET SALE

## Saturday December 19th 12:00pm – 3:00pm

**Atlantic County Historical Society**
**907 Shore Road**
**Somers Point**

**The Atlantic County Historical Society will be closed beginning December 20th reopening on Thursday January 7th, 2027.**

**OUR REGULAR HOURS ARE:**
**Thursday – Saturday: 10:00 – 3:00pm**

CORRECTION…

***A Trip Down Memory Lane, Fall 2026 Newsletter***



***The photo above was published in conjunction with an article about a flapper named Drusilla posing atop a beachfront hotel in Atlantic City, identified in the article as The Breakers.***

It has been brought to the attention of the ACHS, by longtime member Jack Holdzkom – an AC inlet native - that the pier actually shown in the above photo is the Million Dollar Pier, at Arkansas and Boardwalk. Mr. Holdzkom believes she was perched on the west side of the Traymore Hotel. The open area viewed beneath her outstretched leg would be Park Place. On the west side of that area would be Ohio Ave. and the conjoined Marlborough-Blenheim. The Dennis would be on the east side of Michigan Ave and opposite, The Shelburne. The Traymore would be just off the right edge of the picture below left.

ACHS members Tony Kutschera and Mike Connor both agreed with Jack's observation.





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*The* Atlantic County Historical Society has *received special project grants from the Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.*

# Member News

## Welcome

**NEW MEMBERS**

Eric Adelizzi, *McLean, VA*
Scott Stetzer, *Galloway, NJ*
Lauree McArdle, *Egg Harbor Twp., NJ (Returning)*

**LIFE MEMBERS**

Judith Schwartz, *Ocean City, NJ*
Tony Marino, *Egg Harbor Twp., NJ*
Rosalia Valenti, *Egg Harbor Twp., NJ*




## *Donations*

### *Friends $1 -$49*

Ken & Martha Corson, Charlene Canale, Elinor Veit, Teresita & Eugene Doebley, Susan Reitmeyer, Patricia Lipshultz, MarySue Lovett, Stephen & MaryAnn Gring, Jeannine Ingenito, Judy Braddock Smith, Elizabeth Naylor ~ *IMO* John Dilkes

### *Patrons $50 - $249*

Wayne & Megan Ernst, Ventnor Fountain Friends, Edith Delcher, Judy LaDrew Bayer, Babs Perry-Silva, Bob & Carol Warrington, Elinor Veit ~ *IMO* Richard Veit, Carol-Anne Heinisch ~ *IMO* Frank J. Ferry, Will & Amy Rozell ~ *IMO* Don Perry

### *Sponsor $250 - $1000*

Karen Lonkart *(Comcast Matching Donation)*
Michael O'Brien, Sid Parker,
Michael & Valerie Morello ~ *IHO* Sid Parker

## ACHS ANNUAL LUNCHEON

At the Annual Luncheon on October 17th, the following nominees to the 2027-2028 Governing Board at the Annual Luncheon were sworn in by Judge Mike Connor:

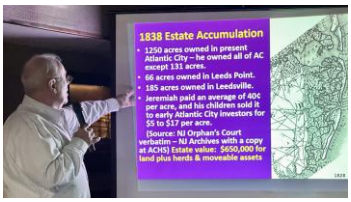
Cindy Mason-Purdie, *Vice President*
Charlene Canale, *Treasurer*
Ellen Hyatt, *Financial Secretary*
Mary-Sue Lovett, *Curator*
Kathy Fritz, *Asst. Librarian*
Will Rozell, *Trustee,* Lynn Wood, *Trustee*,
& Megan Ernst, *Trustee*



**L-R: Judge Mike Connor, Ellen Hyatt, Cindy Mason-Purdie Charlene Canale, Megan Ernst, Mary-Sue Lovett, Lynn Wood & ACHS President Sid Parker**

"***The "Bringing History to Life Award***" was presented to Board Member & Librarian Norman Goos, who also presented a Program entitled "*Born a Peacemaker, became a Patriot: 1st Lieutenant Jeremiah Leeds*".






**L-R: Norman Goos, pictured with wife, Marilyn, receiving his award; Norman presenting his program on Jeremiah Leeds.**


**Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board**

**President: Sid Parker**
**Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie**
**Recording Secy: Barbara Perry-Silva**
**Treasurer: Charlene Canale**
**Asst. Treasurer: Charles Morgan**
**Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt**
**Librarian: Rev. Norman Goos**
**Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz**
**Curator: Mary Sue Lovett**
**Asst. Curator: (vacant)**
**Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos**
**Historian: Diane Bassetti**
**Trustees: Ben Brenner, Mike Connor, Megan Ernst, Tom Kinsella, James H. Mason,V, Mike O'Brien, Heather Perez, Will Rozell, Judith Schwartz, Dana Shupp & Lynn Wood**

## A.C. PIERS…*continued…*




Garden Pier opened July 19,1913. In the top center of the picture to the right is B.F. Keith's Theater which housed stage shows and performers such as Sophie Tucker and Douglas Fairbanks. It was the site of the first Miss America Pageant. A ballroom was also located there. On either side were display spaces for companies such as Underwood Typewriters, Hoover vacuums and Pennsylvania Tires. The pier suffered extensive damage in the '44 Hurricane and a 1981 fire. It has undergone multiple extensive renovations. A truncated version exists today housing both the Atlantic City Arts Center and Historical Museum.

The Steel Pier Company constructed its namesake which opened June 18, 1898. It had iron pilings and steel girders. Ultimately extending almost 2300 feet into the ocean it housed multiple entertainment venues. It featured big bands, famous singers and musical groups as well as high diving horses and water circuses. Notable owners included corporations controlled by Frank Gravatt, George Hamid and Donald Trump. The structure present there today was constructed after a December 1982 fire destroyed what various storms left of the original.



Steeplechase Pier was adjacent to Steel Pier. Below is an overhead view of both piers followed by a view of Steeplechase Pier from the Boardwalk. This pier was constructed between 1899 and 1902 and was


Steeple Chase and Steel Piers


Steeplechase Pier and Boardwalk, Atlantic City, N.J.

initially called Auditorium Pier. Coney Island amusement entrepreneur George C. Tilyou purchased it in 1908 and renamed it. Entrance was had through a clown's mouth and then a revolving barrel. Another entrance subjected visitors to blasts of air which lifted ladies' skirts. This was the first Atlantic City pier to feature what we now call amusement rides. Coney Island had migrated south. The earlier piers featured vaudeville, singers, bands and orchestras as well as exhibitions. Boardwalk strollers may remember seeing Mammy's Restaurant with its cooks in the front windows flipping food in frying pans in which the food was served. The pier suffered damage from storms and fires. It closed in 1986 and was destroyed by fire in 1988.




Central Pier exists today. When built in 1884 it was called Applegate's Pier. Subsequent owners Young, Young & McShea , and Schiff added their names upon purchasing. It was rebuilt in the 1920's with some Art Deco features. It is presently called Central Pier Arcade and Speedway and is exactly that. It has a go-cart track and an extensive collection of arcade games including skee-ball.

Million Dollar Pier was built in 1906 at Arkansas Ave. It originated as an entertainment venue with a 4000 seat theater, ballroom, aquarium, roller rink and Greek Temple among its features. Showman Captain John Lake Young bragged about spending over a million dollars for its

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# Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

# Lafayette

**1757-1834**

*In September 1757, the Marquis de Lafayette was born to nobility in the south-central part of France, and a day later he was baptized Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier. At a young age, he fell in love with America and in 1776 is quoted as saying, "*The moment I heard of America I loved her; the moment I knew she was fighting for freedom, I burned with a desire of bleeding for her; and the moment I shall be able to serve her, at any time or in any part of the world, will be the happiest one in my life.*"[i]*

*The following is a brief account of how Lafayette helped America attain its independence, and became almost like a son in the affections of George Washington and the nation.*

*It also has a local connection. On a return visit to America in 1824, Lafayette was escorted by General Enoch Doughty, a prominent citizen of Absecon. Later, in 1895, Enoch's daughter, Sarah N. Doughty, remembered this honor to her father by naming the Atlantic City, NJ chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, after Lafayette.*

*Though the author of this article is unknown, we can infer from the text that it was written in 1934. The complete 7-page typescript from which this is abstracted is located in ACHS Historical File, People J-1.1.*

*Information in brackets was added by this transcriber.*

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Monsieur de Lafayette, a young Captain of artillery in the French Army, stationed at Metz, was a guest at a banquet given in honor of the Duke of Gloucester, a brother of George III. The absorbing subject of conversation on this occasion was the "Rebellion of the American Colonies." Already fired with a zeal for the cause of liberty, Lafayette became convinced that those American colonists were brave men, well within their rights and he resolved then and there "to go to America and offer his services to a people struggling to be free."[ii] He was only nineteen years of age, vastly wealthy and married to a woman he dearly loved[iii], his prospects at home for honor and happiness were bright; to join the patriot army would take him from his native land, his wife and all his coveted ambitions and lead him into a struggle that seemed as hopeless as it was just.

Still, he was determined to make the sacrifice. The news of his decision brought protests from his family and the French King withheld his permission. Undaunted, Lafayette offered his services to Silas Deane, America's Representative in Paris. Deane accepted his offer, promising him the rank of Major General in the American Army. Refused assistance by the King, Lafayette bought and equipped at his own expense a ship, calling it La Victoire.

On the twentieth of April [1777] he sailed from a port in Spain with a company of…Frenchmen, all of whom had been promised commissions. After a voyage of seven weeks the party reached South Carolina…On the 25th of June [they] started for Philadelphia by land route.

After a month's journey covering 900 miles they reached their destination. The cordial welcome they had anticipated was not forth coming. The party presented themselves first to John Hancock, the President of Congress who sent them to Mr. [probably Robert] Morris a Congressman…Mr. Morris then presented a Mr. [James] Lovell [a representative from Massachusetts[iv]]…Mr. Lovell treated them graciously and walked away, naturally they were disappointed and resented this treatment. Lafayette had not come to America for small and selfish ends, again he appealed to Congress with the following message, "After the sacrifices I have made, I have the right to exact two favors, one is to serve at my own expense and the other is to serve as a volunteer." This note scored his point. Congress had been weary of the airs and demands of foreigners but could not debate this offer. On July 31st, he was informed that his services had been accepted and that he was to have the rank and commission of Major General in the U.S. Army. His appeals [on] behalf of the officers who accompanied him on this trip were with one or two exceptions of no avail. The most Congress ever did for the majority of them was to pay their passage back to France.

***Continued on page 6***

Another dinner party figures conspicuously in Lafayette's career, a group of distinguished people were gathered in Philada., among the guests were Washington and Lafayette, this was their first meeting and the beginning of a friendship which lasted during their lives. At this time Washington invited Lafayette to become a member of his military family, saying, he could not offer him the luxuries of Court…but he was now an American soldier and would…accommodate himself to the privations of a republican camp.

A battle for the defense of Philadelphia occurred in Sept. at Chadd's Ford on the banks of the Brandywine. This was [Lafayette's] first engagement and his zeal and courage won the admiration of all who saw him, after that day, the army forgot he was a foreigner and regarded him as one of themselves, he received a wound in the leg which incapacitated him for a month or more, during that period he was cared for by the Moravians of Bethlehem.

We find him in camp at Valley Forge during…the trying winter of 1777 and later starting on an expedition to invade Canada, after weeks of inactivity in Albany, the attempt was abandoned….

[In 1778], the hearts of all were gladdened by the news that through the efforts of Benjamin Franklin, France had acknowledged the independence of the U.S. and a fleet was on its way to help them in their struggle.

The war goes on, at Barren Hill [PA] and Monmouth we see Lafayette exhibiting great resourcefulness and bravery….

In Sept [1780] he accompanied Washington on a trip up the Hudson River [to West Point] and was with him at the time of [Benedict] Arnold's treachery and witnessed the trial and execution of [Major John] Andre'….

As the white flag flies over Yorktown in Oct 17 [1781, most sources say Oct 19], Lafayette is heard to say "My respect for the talents of Lord Cornwallis gives the capture an additional value to my mind. After this attempt, what English General will attempt the conquest of America?"

Returning to France he was received with enthusiasm, made a Field-Marshall and given command of the King's Regiment of Dragoons.

In 1784 we find him coming back to America where he spent five months, visiting [George Washington] at Mount Vernon [for the last time] and being feted wherever he went.

A few years later France was plunged into that orgy of Terror which reigned during the French Revolution [1789-1799], Lafayette was obliged to flee the country, his property was confiscated and his estate sold. For five years he was confined in a dungeon until released by Napoleon in 1797….

In 1824 Congress sent him a formal invitation to visit the U.S. as a guest of the Nation and offered to place a Government Frigate at his disposal for the trip. He accepted the invitation but preferred…to come as a private individual.

He arrived in August [1824] and stayed until Sept of the following year. He visited every one of the 24 states and everywhere was hailed with enthusiasm….[v]

In New Jersey the Triumphal Arch under which Washington had once passed was reconstructed…Governor [Isaac] Williamson selected General Enoch Doughty an outstanding citizen of Absecon, old Gloucester County,…to command the Military Escort that met Lafayette at the State border.[vi]

General Doughty rode by Lafayette's side across New Jersey to Trenton. A medal was issued bearing on one side the likeness of Washington and on the other that of Lafayette. When the local chapter D.A.R. was formed Miss Sarah N. Doughty daughter of the General was appointed Organizing Regent and she asked and was granted the privilege of naming the Chapter "General Lafayette," in memory of the honor conferred upon her father.

The General's sword and epaulettes and the medal worn by him upon the march through the State are to be seen in the New Jersey Historical Society. In addition, the ACHS museum has a commemorative plaque which was given to Enoch Doughty. It depicts a likeness of Lafayette, the Nation's Guest, presumably as he

***Continued on page 7***

## Looking Back through the Files.....*continued*

looked at the age of 67 in 1824. [See below.]




On May 20, 1834, General Lafayette passed to his eternal home. When the news reached Washington, Congress adopted a resolution to wear badges of mourning thirty days in appreciation of the "French Friend of Liberty who cast his lot with the Revolution." [This article concludes with mention of an American celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Lafayette's death to take place on "May 20th this year." [1934]

[i] George Carll Williams, *Lafayette, Fighter for Freedom,* 1934, title page, p. 3; ACHS Call No. L887 Laf.

[ii] Lafayette was only two years old when his father was killed at the age of 25 fighting the British in the battle of Minden. One can't help but wonder if his father's death at the hands of the British influenced his opposition to them. Ibid., p. 3.

[iii] Lafayette married Adrienne, daughter of the Duke of d"Ayen, at age 16. She was only 14. Despite it being an arranged marriage at a young age, their devotion to one another was exemplary. During the French Revolution, when her sister, mother and grandmother were beheaded, she asked to share imprisonment with her husband, enduring its filth and horror with him for more than two years, 1795 to 1797. Ibid., p. 4, 17-18.

[iv] Ibid., p. 7.

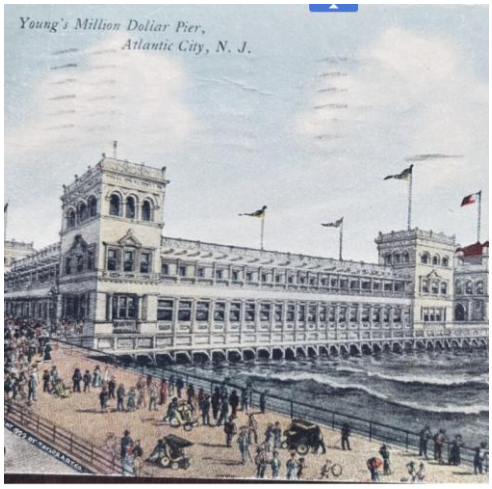
[v] Lafayette was accompanied on this tour by his son, George Washington Lafayette, who was born in 1779 while his father was on a one-year return to France. The elder Lafayette said that his son's name was "a tribute of respect and love for my dear friend." – Ibid., p. 20 and Wikipedia.

[vi] An interesting story accompanies Enoch's selection. Lafayette was a major general on George Washington's staff and no person of lesser rank was permitted to escort him on his return tour. Thus, Enoch Doughty was made "Major General of the Day" so that he would be a proper escort. According to Ewing, his permanent title of brigadier general was given him the following year in 1825. - Sarah W. R. Ewing, "Absecon's Two Brigadier Generals," ACHS Collection Box 6A, folder 42g. His military duty was real, however. In his quest for a pension, Doughty attested to his time served in the War of 1812 as Captain of Militia in the Coast Guard NJ. Dated 3 April 1871, this handwritten document was signed just 11 days before he died. – ACHS Ms Box 28, folder 16b.

## A.C. PIERS… *continued…*

Construction, hence its name. Young constructed a marble mansion on the pier and assigned it the address of #1 Atlantic Ocean. The mansion's formal garden was lit by Young's friend Thomas Edison.




The pier suffered through Atlantic City's decline and in the 1980's was rebuilt as the Shops on Ocean One. Caesars purchased it in 2006 and renamed it as "The Pier Shops at Caesars." The pier has never succeeded as a shopping venue. It remains an impressive ocean front structure still seeking a profitable use.

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# ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Where Atlantic County History Comes to Life*




## Our Mission:

- To collect and preserve historical materials exemplifying the events, places, and lifestyles of the people of Atlantic County and southern New Jersey.
- To encourage the study of history and genealogy.
- To provide historical and genealogical information to our membership and the general public.