



the **SUN** by-the-Sea

**“A morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable.”** ~Thomas Jefferson

**“Newspapers develop pride in a community and perpetuate the story of individuals and events. Local history is important, it is the foundation stone to all history.”** ~George Boyer

## REMEMBERING CITY HISTORIAN GEORGE F. BOYER

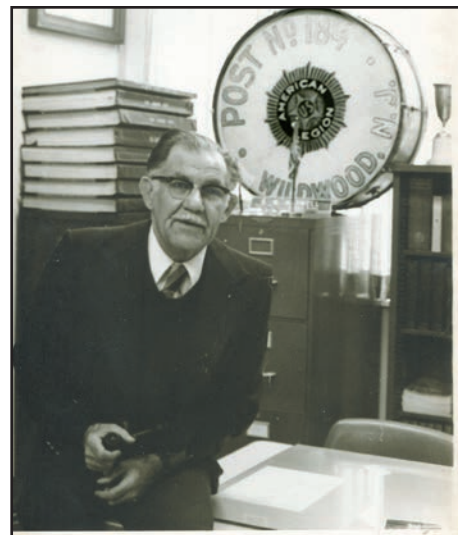
BY KATHY BOYER MAHER



George Frederick Boyer with his parents, Bertha Gabriel and George Garfield Boyer, 1905.



George F. Boyer in his grocery store at 3012 Pacific Avenue, Wildwood, NJ, 1950.



George F. Boyer in the museum on the second floor of City Hall, 1976. In 1990 the museum moved to its present location at 3907 Pacific Avenue, Wildwood, NJ.



George F. Boyer, Pottsville, PA, 1925.



George F. Boyer at the groundbreaking for Wildwood's new City Hall, 1962. The shovel became one of the first artifacts placed in the museum, founded in 1963.

“Who is George F. Boyer?”

Visitors see that name on the Wildwood Historical Society museum at 3907 Pacific Avenue, but few of them know that he was a butcher, a businessman, a fireman, a historian, a writer...and my dad.

Born in Philadelphia in 1904, Dad moved to Wildwood around 1932, working as a butcher in the Acme and later opening his own grocery store on Pacific Avenue, a busy shopping area in the 1950s. I loved “working” in the store when I was little, helping to bag groceries. Taught to be frugal, one day I refused to give a customer a paper bag for her dozen oranges, so I lost my “job” and was relegated to stocking shelves. I was disappointed when Dad gave up the store to become a full-time fireman, but I enjoyed hanging around the firehouse and watching the trucks tear off to fires, sirens wailing.

In those days (the late 1950s and early '60s) the firehouse was in the 4400 block of Pacific Avenue, next to the old City Hall. We lived right across the street in a spacious apartment above Ganser's Bakery. Oh, how I loved smelling the freshly baked bread as I left for school in the morning! On summer evenings, Mom and I would sit in the screened-in porch on the second floor of our build-

ing, watching passersby and waving to Dad as he worked. Little did I know that he would become Wildwood's first and only official city historian.

Earlier this year, when Anne Vinci, President of the Wildwood Historical Society, asked how my dad first became interested in the history of Wildwood, I realized that I had no idea. On the cusp between Barbie dolls and boys, I paid little attention to what my parents were doing with their time. I only recall that one day in 1963, Dad asked if he could “borrow” my 45-rpm record of Bobby Rydell's “Wildwood Days.” He knew an important artifact when he saw one: That record went into the newly founded museum of Wildwood history—and I never got it back!

In fact, I think that's probably how Dad got most of the artifacts for the museum: He sweet-talked people out of them. In 1962 a local newspaper wrote that “George Boyer, a Wildwood fireman with a weakness for New Jersey history, and a small group of local residents believe that hundreds of musty documents locked in attics, basements, and old chests could tell an extraordinary story about the history of Five Mile Beach. The group is seeking out the documents with the intensity of a batch of bloodhounds.” Luckily for Wildwood, those “bloodhounds,” led by my dad, were passionate about local history and saved many of the mementoes that would otherwise have been lost.

In November 1976, only a few months after his first book, *Wildwood: Middle of the Island*, was published and the museum was renamed in his honor, Dad passed away, but his legacy lives on. The museum continues to delight and inform visitors to the Wildwoods, just as Dad would have wanted!



George F. Boyer (left) at the Pure Food Beef Co., Philadelphia, PA, 1931.



Kathy Boyer Maher at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for the George F. Boyer Museum, June 2013.