



"Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life." ~Rachel Carson



## WildWood by-the-sea: Nostalgia & Recipes WILDWOODS BOARDWALK

"The Boardwalk" is an excerpt from the forthcoming book "Wildwood-By-The-Sea: Nostalgia and Recipes" by Anita Hirsch

The Boardwalk in Wildwood-by-the-Sea stretches from the welcoming arch in North Wildwood at 16th Avenue, down to the end of Wildwood at Cresse Avenue, a distance of about two miles.

Also referred to as "the Boards" or "the Walk," some form of the Boardwalk has been in Wildwood since 1899 when 150 yards of boards were laid directly on the sand at Atlantic Avenue near Oak, and taken up in the winter. To go for a stroll at the turn of the century, the dress was formal. No one wanted sand in their shoes. The boards gave them the opportunity to enjoy a walk closer to the ocean. By the next year the Boardwalk was moved even closer to the ocean, extended, and made more permanent by building onto pilings laid between Oak and 26th Streets.

By 1925, as the beach continued to grow, a petition was filed to move the Boardwalk out to Beach Avenue. This new Boardwalk was held up by precast concrete pilings rather than the old cedar pilings which became worm infested and rotted. Only two years later the Boardwalk was extended from Montgomery south to Cresse Avenue. And again in 1928, the Boardwalk was extended north to 16th Street by North Wildwood Mayor George Redding.

As it grew, the Boardwalk became important for fun, food, and shopping. The first roller coaster was built in 1910. Riders enjoyed a carousel at Cedar Avenue. Soon the Boardwalk Promenade began to attract everything from top hat and cane vaudeville acts to international stars. Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington played at Scully's Convention Hall between Spicer and Spencer. The Starlight Ballroom and Hunt's Plaza attracted Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller in the 1930's.

Arcades and games of chance multiplied. Many remember stopping to watch the Pig Slide where bets were placed as to which pig would get down to the bottom of the slide first. Machines in which you could put one or two cents and purchase a photo card of a movie star like Buster Crabbe or Johnny Weissmuller were popular. In the Vista scope, for a penny you would see a movie of ten sequentially displayed cards.

Spin the numbered wheels and the winner received a food prize. Throw a dart to break a balloon, pick up a duck from the floating water and choose a winning number, play the Kentucky Derby Race at Bobby Dee's where the prizes were cigarettes or aim a rifle with real 22 shots in the shooting galleries.

Arcade games from which you

would collect coins or tickets to win prizes were ski ball or fascination, the latter which was invented in the 1920's and debuted at the 1933 World's Fair. For twenty cents a game, rubber balls are tossed over a grid of 25 holes, with players hoping to be the first to get a line of balls.

Movie theatres were built. The Regent Theatre opened in 1915 at Lincoln by William Hunt. In 1946 he added air conditioning to the 1500 seat theatre. When Mr. Hunt died in 1970, Marty Falk purchased the theatre, had it gutted, kept only the original marquee and renamed it the Boardwalk Mall. There was also the Nixon Theatre, and the Strand opened in 1947.

Piers held the amusement rides. The four men who were responsible for the piers were Joe Barnes (Fun Pier) Gil Ramagosa (Sportland Pier), George Coombs (Marine Pier and Mariners Landing) and William Hunt and his son's Bud and Guy (Hunt's Pier). Bill and Will Morey founded Morey's Pier in 1969 and opened the giant slide. The Morey family began to purchase the three main piers, refurbish them and add more exciting rides and a water park.

Fudge, taffy, and candy became a sweet to eat and to take home. Douglass Fudge began in 1919. Charlie Douglass had a pavilion built across from the store so hot and tired walkers could rest in the shade. Mallins Candies begun in 1946 by Jimmy Mallin, brought a mechanical taffy pulling machine from England in 1953.

Ice cream and waffles and rectangular topped cones that held a block of strawberry, chocolate and vanilla ice cream were cool treats. The 28 flavors of Howard Johnson's ice cream was a popular stop. Kohr's ice cream still has two shops on the Boardwalk.

Restaurants opened. In 1909, Earl and Mabel Groff established a hot dog stand at Magnolia near the Boardwalk which later became Groff's Restaurant. The Zaberer brothers started out with hot dog concessions on the Boardwalk. Their mother operated Zaberer's Holliday's on the Boardwalk with early bird specials and Sunday dinners.

During World War II, the Boardwalk lights were dimmed at night to prevent German submarines from using the lighted coast to target the silhouettes of allied ships. The sides of the lights facing the ocean were painted black. Still eleven ships were sunk within sight of Cape May County.

The most prosperous years for the Boardwalk were the fifties. The piers flourished and the rolling cars were replaced by the tram car. The Starlight Ballroom drew about 6000 teens weekly to the record hops. The public



The four men who were instrumental in building the piers and rides on the Boardwalk: left to right: Joe Barnes (Fun Pier), Gil Ramagosa (Sportland Pier), George Coombs (Marine Pier and Mariners Landing) and Guy Hunt (son of William Hunt of Hunt's Pier).

was looking for challenging rides and games.

Boards had to be replaced in 1973 and the wood purchased was from the inaugural seating stands for President Nixon in Washington, D.C. About 30 to 40 trailer truck loads of lumber were brought to Wildwood. In 1976, the reviewing stand wood from President Carter's inauguration was purchased to redeck part of the Boardwalk.

Folks still like to stroll along the ocean, the boards have to be replaced regularly and shopping and food has changed to keep the Boardwalk vibrant and a destination. The odors of corn popping, peanuts roasting, sausage, hot dogs and peppers grilling, pizza and pretzels baking are irresistible. Cotton candy, Taylor Pork Roll, Lime Rickey made with fresh squeezed limes, and Funnel Cakes beckon you to try them.

### FUNNEL CAKES

This Pennsylvania Dutch treat is popular along the Boardwalk. The reason for the name is that the batter of this fried snack is allowed to drip into the hot oil from a funnel. The batter should be thin enough to run out of the funnel.

- 2 eggs
  - 1 1/2 cups milk
  - 2 tablespoons sugar
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 2 cups unbleached flour
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder
  - 3-4 cups cooking oil
  - 6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- Yield: 6 funnel cakes.

Beat the eggs in a medium bowl. Add the milk and sugar and mix well. Combine the salt, flour and baking powder. Add this to the milk mixture. Beat with a whisk until smooth.

Add enough oil to an electric skillet so there is 1 1/2 inches of oil to the pan. Heat the oil to 360 degrees. Using a funnel with a 3/8 to 1/2 inch hole, put your index finger over the bottom of the funnel, allowing the batter to run slowly into the hot oil. Slowly move the funnel in circles larger and larger to make a circular pattern in the oil. The funnel cake will be about 8 inches in diameter when completed.

Fry until golden brown on one side and then using a tongs, turn and fry the other side until it too is golden brown. With the tongs, remove the funnel cake to a paper towel lined plate. Drain a few minutes.

Place funnel cake on a serving plate. Add the confectioner's sugar to a sifter or strainer and shake over the funnel cake.

Thank you to the Wildwood Historical Society for research and photos for this article.

Taffy Machine from Book 4, Walmart 0256 disc, #2423



VIEW OF BOARDWALK, WILDWOOD, N. J.



Kiddie Land at Night, Casino Arcade, Wildwood By-the-Sea, N. J.



1941 Charlie Zaberer's Hot Dog Stand "endearing storefront with patriotic flair"



Mallins Taffy Machine



Wildwood Boardwalk Postcard that shows the Fun Shop and Grandpas' Restaurant which are no longer there.