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PRESERVING THE WILDWOODS

Preserving the Architecture, History, and Culture of the Wildwoods

A Newsletter of Preserving the Wildwoods: A Community Alliance

Fall 2022 | Volume 2 | Issue 3

It Took a Team to Save the Wildwood “Triangle House”

Taylor Henry, Preserving the Wildwoods Board Member

This summer we saved a quirky local landmark -- an A-frame known as the Triangle House or Pizza Slice House -- from demolition by moving it to a new location. While we will miss seeing it at Park and Bennett in Wildwood, it is still in Cape May County (just 20 miles north) and will be safe among peace, quiet, and lots of trees.

Preserving the Wildwoods sprung into action when we saw that new construction was approved on the property. Our role in the save involved coordinating with the property owners, securing funding and a final destination, and cleaning out the building. It took volunteers several days to remove contents (it was very, very full of stuff, including thousands of antique glass bottles which we gave to local collectors).

Crews from SJ Hauck Construction worked at the originating location over four June days to clear the area for their trucks, cut the building in half at the second level, brace it internally with beams, lift it up on jacks, then take off the second floor with a crane. It was transported in two pieces on trailers and put back together at a horse farm in Steelmantown, Upper Township. The building will either stay in Upper Township or return to Wildwood someday.

The story was picked up by the New York Post, NBC10, NJ.com, Philadelphia Inquirer, and USA Today Network.

The A-frame is a tiny building with a big history. One of two A-frames built on the island, it is more than just an example of quirky, kitschy architecture. Everyone noticed the unusual bright red triangle across from CVS; it brought joy to many generations.

It was built in 1961 by local veteran, businessman and hobbyist Glenn Dye (August 21, 1921-February 19, 2003) as the headquarters of the many clubs in which he was involved. It also served as an eye-catching attraction to drum up business for his apartment rentals, as well as his accounting office. In addition, Dye was an automotive executive, working for decades at Burke Motors across Park Boulevard. He was once listed as a noteworthy automotive executive by Marquis Who's Who.

Dye's hobbies included bottle and glass collecting, coins, stamps, gardening, birdwatching, photography, writing, and ham radio. He purchased the A-frame as a kit and put it together himself, but never lived inside. He actually lived just up the block on Arctic Avenue. The A-frame served as the headquarters for the National Association of Precancel Collectors, of which Dye was Secretary/Treasurer, as well



SJ Hauck Construction hoists the Triangle House into its new site. Photo courtesy Taylor Henry.

as Auntie Q's Old Bottles and CB Radio Station KBN900 3W2750.

SJ Hauck Construction offered significantly discounted services to move the building. Ed Bixby of Steelmantown Cemetery stepped up with a plan to keep it in Cape May County. The cooperation and responsiveness of the property owners, Pam and Mark of Mark Daley Contractors, and their team at Blue Homes Real Estate also made this possible. We are incredibly grateful to the property owners for working with us, and going above and beyond with their

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Letter from the President

Pary Tell, Preserving the Wildwoods President

Hi everyone,

It's hard to believe it's been almost a year since we reorganized and changed our name to Preserving the Wildwoods: A Community Alliance to better reflect our mission to preserve the architectural, historical, and cultural legacy of the Wildwoods. Over the past months, we were pleased to receive a grant from the Cape May County Division of Culture & Heritage to produce panels which showed before and after pictures and text which told the history of 10 buildings in Wildwood. (See related article in this issue.) Our timing was fortuitous since 2022 marked the first year of a three year Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) in Wildwood and our panels fit into their plans for Pacific Avenue. Because of this, the NPP also gave us funding for the project. We are now applying for a grant for 2023 to expand the project and include informational signage on some of Wildwood's historic parks.

We participated in several outreach events and were heartened by the amount of support from the community for our mission. A significant effort by our Vice President Taylor Henry resulted in the saving of the "pizza slice" building (also described in this issue) and we're happy to report that the Oceanview Motel, formerly the Admiral East, in Wildwood Crest has been saved from demolition.

We also want to thank William Cohen for all his work in creating our coloring book from the work of John Oliveri. The book describes all the different types of architecture found on the island. We gave them to children at one of our outreach events and one little boy said, "Look, it's Nana's house." Just the reaction we were hoping for.

As the busy season is winding down, we hope you'll join us for our annual meeting in November so we can meet all of you and thank you in person for your support in our first year.

Pary Tell

It Took a Team to Save the Wildwood "Triangle House"

Taylor Henry, PTW Board Member

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care, generosity and time.

We received many inquiries and proposals for the A-frame including putting it on a barge to create a floating AirBnB, using it as a she-shed, and moving it to a glamping resort on a lake. Because of the short turnaround time to get it to a new site, we had to go with whomever came up with a concrete plan the fastest and would be willing to fund the move themselves. The owners of the property wanted the move to be done right by professionals which is why we opted to work with SJ Hauck Construction.

Thank you to everyone involved for making this happen: the property owners Daley and Clark of Mark Daley Construction and William Macomber of Blue Homes Real Estate who donated the house and worked with preservationists respectively; all the volunteers who helped clean it out (especially Chris Jones, Chris Tirri, Cathy Smith, Karen Samuels, and Erin Henry); Bixby for funding the move and taking the building; SJ Hauck Construction for their incredible work prepping and moving the structure, and to all our favorite journalists for their coverage. It truly took a team to make this happen and everyone involved made this a success. We hope this success will inspire more local people to work with us to save the Wildwoods' buildings.

Folks are welcome to donate to a GoFundMe to offset the cost of renovating the A-frame at <https://gofund.me/92749513>.

The Story of 120 Nashville Road in Wildwood Crest

Ernie Russom, Community Member

Late in the spring of 1940 my father, Ernest Russom Jr., traveled to the Gables section of Wildwood Crest. In the community of Spanish-style houses, he hoped to rent a house for his mother, sister, aunt, and cousins to spend the summer. He and my grandfather would travel to the rented house during vacation from work at Westinghouse's Steam Turbine Division in Lester, PA. My father worked at Westinghouse while attending college at Drexel in the evenings. He would retire from Westinghouse after a forty-seven-year tenure.

His search concluded with a five-bedroom story and a half-story Spanish Cottage on Nashville Road. The house was built in 1927, atop Turtle Gut Inlet approximately five years after it was finally sealed. It was located at what is now six houses from the train that ran along Sunset Lake. The beach began one block away, past Seaview Avenue. The smooth stucco house had a terracotta roof. The open vestibule was capped by a distinctive patinated copper dome. The house was heated by a coal furnace with four-foot-high radiators in each room.

From the ocean to the bay, it was the only house on the south side of the street. Unimpeded sea and bay breezes kept the house cool.

The husband of the house's owner had recently passed. The widow asked my father to buy the house for \$10,000. The seemingly low purchase price was during the Depression. Inflation calculators equate this price to \$211,600 today. This price was a challenge to a young man who was one month short of his twenty-first birthday.

He found a way to buy the house. Moving in on July 4th, he completed the purchase one month later on his twenty-first birthday.

The house was bought fully furnished. Clothes were still in the closets. The house has a sunken living room with exposed ceiling beams and an ornate brick fireplace. The living and dining rooms have hardwood floors with mahogany piano piping. Bedroom furniture and kitchen cabinets were metal. The small bedroom closets stored seasonal clothes. Wardrobes were kept in two second-floor closets that ran the length of the house.

Approximately eighteen months after buying his summer home, my father left for the Pacific Theater to serve in World War II.

During the war, a Navy Shore Patrol used the house. The Navy's communication with the house was by a wire

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Pacific Avenue Gets Interpretive History Panels

Preserving the Wildwoods Editorial Board

Preserving the Wildwoods: A Community Alliance (PTW) partnered with the City of Wildwood's Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP), the New Jersey Historical Commission, and the Cape May County's Division of Cultural & Heritage to create panels that showcase the history of the Wildwoods and historic sites in windows on Pacific Avenue, focusing on vacant storefronts. Eight panels depicting historic buildings in Wildwood's Neighborhood Preservation Program district are displayed at the corner of Montgomery and Pacific Avenues, the heart of the district. More will be displayed in the coming weeks, including one at the Wildwood Historical Society's George F. Boyer Museum.

All panels can be viewed from the sidewalk at any time. The panels depict now-and-then photos along with written history of buildings in the NPP district, which stretches from Taylor to Oak Avenues and from New Jersey to Pacific Avenues. There are ten panels this year, with plans to produce more in future years.

Preserving the Wildwoods: A Community Alliance hopes to continue and expand this project. If any property owner or business is interested in partnering with PTW to create a display for their building, contact PTW at preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com.

The Story of 120 Nashville Road in Wildwood Crest

Ernie Russom, Community Member

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that ran south through bayberry thickets to the Navy Electronic Station.

When my father returned from war, the house was slowly modernized over the next forty years. The heavy terracotta roof was causing the house to settle into the sand of the old inlet. This was rectified by the installation of an asphalt roof in the early 1960s.

Metal furnishings were replaced with wooden pieces that were delivered by the local train. Old windows and wooden screens that had to be re-painted each year were replaced. Telephone service was connected. A gas furnace and water heater were installed. The fireplace now uses gas.

Through the modernizations, the original design of the house endured. The living and dining rooms' archways, pebble plaster finishes, as well as chandeliers and sconces remain from 1927. The walnut interior doors and baseboards are finished with tung oil varnish.

Before my father passed in 2013, he gave his permission to have a fiberglass terracotta-style roof installed atop "His" house.

Although my wife and I have our name on the deed, this family home will be passed on to our sons. In 1940, my father bought a family home. That is what it will remain.

120 Nashville Road in Wildwood Crest (right) is a Spanish-style cottage from the golden age of Art Nouveau. The Russom family has preserved the house for nearly 100 years.



Eight interpretive panels show then-and-now scenes of buildings along Wildwood's Pacific Avenue. The panels (below) transform a previously unused storefront (above) into a teachable moment. Left to right: Pary Tell, Elizabeth Appleyard Buckley, Pete Byron, Mary Lou Wilson, Taylor Henry, and Gail Hayman Cohen. Photos courtesy of Preserving the Wildwoods.



The Housing Dilemma in Wildwood

Part 2: Solutions

Michael Hirsch, PTW Board Member

[Editor's Note: This is part two of Michael Lorin Hirsch's award-winning masters' thesis on housing issues facing Wildwood, originally published in September 2006. Due to space considerations, we are printing an excerpt of the final chapter of his thesis. To read the full text including footnotes, please visit our website at: <https://preservingthewildwoods.com/s/MLHDPC.pdf>]

There are constraints to Wildwood's buildable land, primarily because it is in an island community. There is concern of overdevelopment and the negative impacts that go with it. The natural resources are protected by state and county regulations.

The provision of affordable housing conflicts with municipal priority to maximize ratables. The Master plan recommendations of 2002 include; developing a Land Use Plan to generate ratables and maximize long-term tax stability, balance economic development with the need to preserve environmental resources, and to ensure decent, safe and sanitary housing for all residents. On March 23, 2005 a zoning ordinance was passed allowing for 25-story buildings in the hotel/motel zone. The city hopes to lure a big hotel chain like Marriot or Hilton. Ratables are the reason. The Mayor said high-rises could be the "ticket to tax relief and to (Wildwood) being a first-class tourist destination."

The proposed projects will be "condotels", where a portion of the units will be sold to individual owners, but they will be rented as typical hotel rooms when not in use by the owner. In December, 2005, the commissioners in Wildwood passed an ordinance limiting motel stays to 30 days. Low-income residents live in motels year-round, many of which don't have full kitchens or adequate heat. The Mayor says that much of the affordable housing in the City is substandard. In a recent article he says, "The county needs to do something." The Mayor goes on to say that they have hired an expert to investigate requiring developers to construct some low-income housing in addition to high-end residential. This is a wise decision.

Town master plans and housing policy generally emphasize owner-occupied over rental housing. Recently, neighboring Wildwood Crest revised its Land Use Plan. Affordable housing for seasonal workers is identified on a list created by the public outreach process. This housing would have to be created in the Multi-Family zone which is primarily in the Hotel/Motel zone. I think there has to be incentives for this; in the fierce luxury condominium market I haven't seen any advertisements for new seasonal workforce housing.

"Racial and ethnic minorities are much less likely than the rest of the population to be homeowners. As of the fourth quarter of 2000, the white (non-hispanic) homeownership rate in the United States was 73.9 percent—much higher than the 47.8 percent rate for black households and the 47.5 percent rate for Hispanic households (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001) (Listoken 465)."

According to the 2000 census, 15.1% of Wildwood residents are living below poverty level, compared to 12.4%, which is the U.S. average. Approximately 15% of the residents of Wildwood are black or Hispanic. By driving affordable housing off Wildwood's barrier island community,

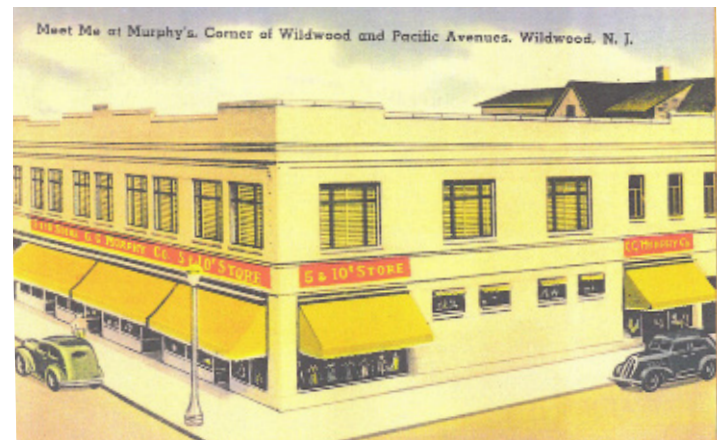
it forces the workforce to commute approximately three miles to the mainland.

The concept of balance in community by requiring a majority of residents to be homeowners may not be pertinent to a community with a seasonal economy. In Banff 50% of the housing is rental. According to the 2000 Census, 43% of the housing units in Wildwood are renter-occupied. Until Wildwood has a year-round economy, it cannot be expected to achieve the 70:30 ratio proposed by Remington.

One definition of affordable housing is housing in which a person is spending no more than a third of his income on rent. Based on the survey I conducted over the summer of 2005, the average seasonal worker in Wildwood, New Jersey, spends more than \$80/week on housing and earns approximately \$240 a week, a maximum based on minimum wage. (\$6.15 is the minimum wage in 2006). Talking about affordable housing, low-income housing, and seasonal housing are not exactly the same thing. I am surprised that most planning data that is collected is based on the Census. The Census does not explain why there are 14,161 vacant housing units in Wildwood with a household population of 15,252.

In 1999, Cape Cod had approximately 5 million visitors a year to the National Seashore. Banff, Alberta has approximately 4.2 million annual visitors to the Banff townsite. These are interesting numbers for comparison to the 3.5 million visitors to The Wildwoods, NJ in 2002. Perhaps Cape Cod and Banff are places we should look to for reference as a community rather than Atlantic City, NJ or Ocean City, MD.

By allowing The Morey's Piers Organization (TMO) to build housing for approximately 500 seasonal employees is a benefit to the community, which relies on tourism for its economy. There will be no increased transportation demands since seasonal workers walk and bike to work. Having residents in under-populated areas like downtown; land where my client proposes to build housing, will give a sense of community and quality-of-life benefits that made these areas attractive in the first place. High-density construction in the town center will provide vitality to Pacific



Murphy's department store (above: 1930s; next page: early 2000s) would make an ideal spot for housing for boardwalk employees. Courtesy Wildwood Historical Society.

Avenue and the shops, restaurants and internet cafes will be filled with paying customers. With more people living downtown it will become a more vital, active place than it currently is.

There are three properties where I propose The Morey Organization build housing for seasonal employees. *[Editor's Note: Due to space limitations, only the third property recommendation is printed below.]*

The C.G. Murphy Company building has been vacant for years. Pacific Avenue in Wildwood in the summer looks like the seasonal employee zone. It has the look of a college town commercial strip. Some may see this as negative, but it is enlivened and vital. The seasonal workers use the internet cafes, laundromats, and one-of-the-few bookstores in town.

The Murphy building opened on April 4, 1929 as part of a chain of 5 & 10 cent stores operating in twelve states. The building is across Wildwood Avenue from the Crest Savings Bank which is a National landmark. From an urban design point of view, these two prominent and historic buildings provide an attractive portal. An excellent way to view this intersection and both buildings have a story to tell. Whatever the tenant, it should be something active. A family sports-related or branded restaurant would be excellent and yet another opportunity for spreading the Morey's Piers Organization identity. A destination-dining experience like a beach location for Chickie + Pete's sports themed restaurants from Philadelphia is my recommendation.

There is approximately 7,500 square feet available for a restaurant. According to Wildwood zoning one parking space is required for every four seats or 150 sq. ft. of floor area, whichever is greater. Without having a layout of the restaurant, a rough total would require 50 parking spaces. (using the 150 sq. ft. total). By demolishing the rear portion of the building, the Stokes Architecture proposal has 22 spaces. Perhaps this is why this property remains vacant?

I asked Jack Morey if parking was his hesitation for developing the site and he said, "The Murphy building is not yet feasible for commercial as the cost for rehabilitation will not support what a tenant will pay." Does there have to be condominiums built as part of this development to make it feasible?

There is no parking requirement for housing over commercial space in Wildwood. In this space it is beneficial, since most of the seasonal employees walk/bike to work.



The City should encourage development of this site. The increase in residents in the downtown area will cause greater demand for commercial activities. More restaurants and shops that are entertainment oriented. By spreading out the seasonal housing, it will encourage pedestrian traffic flow. This traffic will enliven the Cedar Avenue connector. Friends will walk to meet friends this way. Wildwood needs an east-west thoroughfare to entice pedestrian traffic further into town. Ideally the central parking will be located here.

Encouraging buildings that are in use should be a priority; rather than requiring fulfillment of parking regulations by the City of Wildwood. A central parking deck will entice commercial development in Wildwood. The 2004 Periodic Master Plan Reexamination recommends the creation of municipally-owned surface parking, as well as a multi-story public parking structure and the creation of a Parking Authority.

The Murphy Building's location on Pacific Avenue (a successful Main Street program) but also the Urban Enterprise Zone would allow it to qualify for incentives to rehabilitation. Also the G.C. Murphy Company Foundation currently is an independent, non-profit corporation that makes annual grants to civic, educational and charitable organizations. Perhaps they would be interested in supporting the preservation of this building?

I set out to identify the need for seasonal housing in Wildwood, New Jersey. In August 2005 I surveyed twenty-five summer employees. Research for my thesis revealed that local planning data is derived from the U.S. Census, which does not include information on the seasonal population.

Many of the workers I spoke with in Five Mile Beach pay \$100 a week for housing. Paying more than 1/3 of their income in rent makes the definition of their housing less than "affordable." 84% of the workers I spoke to lived in Wildwood, and 36% had two jobs.

Many of the seasonal workers live with multiple roommates and often had trouble giving me an exact number for their rent because it changed over the summer, or the weekly total wasn't consistent. Of the workers who gave me numbers, 40% spent more than \$80 weekly.

Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom and Cedar Point offer affordable housing to seasonal employees at discounted rates, and provide transportation to workers who can't walk to their jobs. The service industry hasn't replaced the industrial jobs that were plentiful in the past, and does not pay as well.

In "Communing with Nature" an article on Banff stressed that "cost and availability of affordable housing is...the biggest threat to the social health...for the community." If the seasonal staff, who often earn minimum wage are forced to live in overcrowded and less than desirable living conditions, how will Wildwood be perceived by the visitors who support and sustain our economy?

It is my recommendation that by building seasonal housing, TMO will make Wildwood convenient and attractive for seasonal employees. Building housing in downtown locations will benefit Wildwood by enlivening the area. There will be no increase in traffic because most of the workers can walk or bike to work. Affordable housing for the seasonal workforce is needed for the City of Wildwood to maintain its competitive edge with other first-class resort destinations.

What Is Style?

What is place? What is location? These words do not mean the same thing. For instance, every place has a location, but not every location is a place. A location is a name on a map or a series of numbers. A place is a piece of a whole environment that is painted with emotions and memories. What things make up the place where you live? What do you see when you're walking your dog, playing baseball, or visiting a friend?

The answers to the above questions will fall into three categories: buildings, people, and nature. Every place is made up of these three things. So, if every place is made up of the same things, why is each place you visit different? Well, just as every person has a different personality, every building, every block, every town, has its own personality, or using an architectural term: style. Styles change over time and country, but the elements that make up style always stay the same: color, shape, and

material. The different combinations of these elements used together make up different categories of style. Time plays an important factor in style, for as time goes by, new technology is created that allows buildings to change their shape, use new materials, or develop new colors. The earliest houses in America had very small windows because glass was hard to make and very expensive. As technology advanced, architects were able to build entire buildings out of glass.

We can find almost every 20th century style of building in The Wildwoods. Recognizing these styles is important to understanding the place in which we live. If you want to know more about the architectural styles of The Wildwoods, go to our website (preservingthewildwoods.com). As our gift to you for a donation of \$10 or more, we will send you a copy of our coloring book *Historic Architectural Styles of the Wildwoods*.

Keep in Touch!

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Get Involved!

It takes a team to create change. To meet our team and learn about Preserving the Wildwoods, visit <https://www.preservingthewildwoods.com/get-involved>.

The Historic Architectural Styles of the Wildwoods coloring book, available from Preserving the Wildwoods as our gift for a \$10 or more donation, takes a fun and interactive tour through the many eras of architecture on display around town.



HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF THE WILDWOODS
C O L O R I N G B O O K

PRESERVING THE WILDWOODS: A Community Alliance



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