



PARTICIPATE IN PRESERVATION

**PRESERVE, CONSERVE, AND PROTECT
SENSE OF PLACE, COMMUNITY, SPIRIT**

A NEWSLETTER OF PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION, A 501c3 NONPROFIT
AND PRESERVING THE WILDWOODS, AN ACTIVISM COMMITTEE

WELCOME TO OUR 1ST NEWSLETTER

By Newsletter Editors

Thank you for picking up the first ever edition of Participate in Preservation, an effort of advocates in Wildwood and Cape May County to keep you informed on local preservation news, resources for property owners and residents, and how we can work together to preserve the places that matter to us. After reading this, we hope you have a better understanding of how preservation is the solution to problems like shrinking local communities, economic challenges facing small businesses, and loss of our sense of place.

We also aim to show that preservation IS progress. It is not against development as long as development contains a preservation ethic and respects the identity and spirit of its surrounding environment.

See **“WELCOME”**, pg. 2

RECTORY IS LOST, BUT NOT OUR CAUSE

By Taylor Henry, PIP Vice President

In early February, we met with BG Capital at the rectory and handed them our petition signed by 2,700 people and testimonies calling to save it.. They let us walk through and observe the damage wrought by the liquidation sales back in November. Doors, windows and woodwork had been ripped from the walls, and the floors were strewn with bricks, plaster and lathe. Their position was that the building was given to them in poor condition, and it was too far gone to save. (Interestingly, the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse was in much worse shape before it was restored.)



There was no convincing anyone in power that the rectory was worth saving. Despite our willingness to repair the building with our OWN time and money, the research we did to prove this building was irreplaceable, and our

See **“RECTORY”**, pg. 5

A FEW TREES GO A LONG WAY

By Gail Hayman Cohen, PIP Trustee



Often when people think of preservation, historic buildings come to mind first. But the story of our nation also unfolded on the land—the mountains, valleys, plains, and rivers that have harbored and inspired us for millennia.

Wildwood was originally a coastal forest, covered with Oak and Holly trees, grasses, salt hay, bayberries bushes and vegetation that grew abundantly across the island. It was nearly untouched until about 1880, when Wildwood Improvement Company under the leadership of Latimus Baker and his brother purchased 100 acres of land and proceeded to clear it for development, a mindset that has been handed down to this very day. Trees have almost all disappeared from

See **“TREES”**, pg. 2

PRESERVATION IS PATRIOTIC

By Joe America

Take a trip to your local Home Depot or any other chain store, and try to find the products made in America. Compare this to the pre-1960s homes that populate Cape May County. These homes were built from 100% American-made products and materials, many of which were produced in the Northeast.



If someone has a porcelain sink or tub original to their home, it’s possible it was built in Trenton before manufacturing jobs were lost to companies overseas. See if you can buy a bathroom sink that was produced in South Jersey now, or any sink made anywhere in America. Not likely. People who own old homes--and

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“TREES”, continued from cover page

that once made the island unique. Out of the nothingness of wild nature, the developers have turned The Wildwoods into a land of concrete and black tar roads. Our landscape reflects the physical, biological and cultural character of our community.

Besides being part of our historic landscape, why should we care whether there are abundant trees and indigenous plantings in our communities? Outside of the obvious fact that they make properties more attractive, they also provide numerous environmental, economic and even health benefits. Here are some examples.

Foliage reduces runoff. Trees absorb the first 30% of most precipitation through their leaf system, allowing evaporation back into the atmosphere. This moisture never hits the ground. Another percentage (up to 30%) of precipitation is absorbed back into the ground and taken in and held onto by the root structure, then absorbed and transported back to the air. Some of this water also naturally percolates into the groundwater and aquifer. Storm water runoff and flooding potential to urban properties is therefore reduced.

It helps small businesses. It has been proven that businesses on trees lined streets show 12% higher income streams, which is often the essential competitive edge needed for main street store success versus competition from plaza discount stores.

Trees absorb pollutants, converting harmful gasses (like tailpipe emissions that increase asthma and ozone) back into oxygen and other useful natural gasses. One adult tree removes 48 pounds of carbon a year.



Image courtesy of Google Streetview showing one side of W Bennett Ave full of lush foliage and the other side bare. Which is more inviting?

They provide shade and lower air temperature. Asphalt and concrete streets and parking lots are known to increase temperatures by 3 to 7 degrees. A properly tree shaded neighborhood can reduce energy bills for a household from 15-35%.

Trees are one of the easiest and cheapest ways to raise property values. Research has proven that trees provide significant benefits for developers and property owners by increasing property values and selling prices up to 20%. One US study even determined that street trees and plantings were the single most important indicator of attractiveness in a community.

Let's make a difference in our communities by planting more trees and indigenous plants. A future with fewer trees is a future less secure for humans. If you'd like a FREE list of native trees and plants recommended by local horticulturist Steve Murray, email us at preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com with "TREES" in the subject line.

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION, INC. AN NJ NONPROFIT CORPORATION

The Corporation is organized for the following purposes: 1. To develop and foster awareness and appreciation of the historic sites and history of Cape May County, New Jersey; 2. To protect, preserve and promote the preservation of the historic resources of Cape May County by connecting all historic and cultural sites in Cape May County, weaving a historic fabric that will serve as an asset that enhances the quality of life for residents and offers a rich experience for visitors.

“WELCOME”, continued from cover page

Why a newsletter? There are lots of publications and organizations who approach preservation in their own unique ways. There are local blogs dedicated to nostalgia, magazines that capture the history of our people and places, and museums and nonprofits who specialize in caring for the artifacts of our past.

We, on the other hand, have a different mission: to take an active approach to preservation, believing that fighting to keep our favorite places still standing is just as important as documenting them. We act through advocacy and education, by having challenging conversations with stakeholders, and by staying steadfast to our values.

Who created this newsletter? This publication is edited by Preserving the Wildwoods, a committee of the Cape May County-based nonprofit Partners in Preservation (PIP). Preserving the Wildwoods was established as an informative [Facebook page](#) in 2019 before joining the PIP umbrella. An established nonprofit since the 1990s, PIP gives us guidance and support as we pursue our mission of strengthening the fabric that keeps us together, as people past, present and future.

PIP has also been involved with saving the J Thompson Baker House, maintaining Holly Beach Park, and staffing the Doo Wop Experience Museum.

THE MINI HOUSE: CARING FOR THE OLDEST BUILDING IN WILDWOOD

By Cathy Nesbitt Smith, PIP President

The Holly Beach Schoolhouse -- or the Mini House, as some people call it -- was built by the Wildwood Beach Improvement Company in 1883 at Taylor and Ocean avenues. This one-room, 200 sq. ft. building served many purposes: originally as the sales office and Borough Hall for Holly Beach and for religious services on Sundays. In 1885, it began service as Holly Beach School. Mary Van Valen, the daughter of Holly Beach's first mayor, was only 15 when she became the first teacher in the wooded seaside village that would one day become Wildwood. She taught 10 pupils, all children of settlers who worked in seafood industries.



This tiny structure was moved several times to save it from storms, most notably the Storm of 1890 which washed most of Holly Beach out to sea. In the 1970s, city historian George Boyer, who founded the Wildwood Historical Society, found the Mini House on West Taylor Ave being used as a tool shed. He got a group of dedicated locals together -- including Ridgway Moyers, owner of the shed -- and they moved it to its present location, Holly Beach Park, which itself once served as the site of Holly Beach Public School. This beautifully

preserved park in Wildwood also houses the original bell and maypole from the school.

Over the years, the park fell into neglect and vandalism, and that's when Partners In Preservation began caring for the building and park. As stewards, we painted the Mini House several times, planted flowers, cleaned benches, and washed the vintage Fisherman's Memorial. In 2018, the City of Wildwood got a Green Acres Grant to restore the park, and Partners In Preservation, who started renting the Mini House, erected a sign telling the history of the park.

In 2019, the city began an annual tradition of decorating the park in lights for a free event called Winter Wonderland. It is a wonderful creation with a light show that the public really enjoys, but PIP would like the event to emphasize the history of the park. The Mini House gets made up as Santa's Workshop, making it difficult for visitors to learn the park's history. This history is important because it shows us how far we've come since this community was settled in the 1880s. PIP wants to be part of the Winter Wonderland event, where the history of the Holly Beach School House is respected. After all, it's the one time of year hundreds of people can look into the house, imagining how 10 students went to school here and where our history started.

PIP Board of Directors

Cathy Nesbitt Smith, president
Taylor Henry, vice president
Kathleen Johnson, secretary
Theresa Williams, treasurer
Dennis Pierce, Gail Hayman Cohen,
David Williams, Pary Tell, trustees

Partners In Preservation's 5th Annual Plant Sale

First two weekends in May, Saturdays and Sundays 8 am to 2 pm
At The Doo Wop Museum, 4500 Ocean Ave, Wildwood NJ 08260

Hot dogs, ice cream and other treats.

Or join us for breakfast of coffee and breakfast sandwiches.

Large patio pots or hanging plants for Mothers Day! Bedding plants, 4 1/2 pots, of herbs, veg. & house plants. Check the Facebook group "PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION" for photos of plants ahead of time. Limited supply, so arrive early, or call/email for pre-orders: 609-214-2253 or 609-729-4515

Partnersinpreservation@yahoo.com

For a good cause: all proceeds go directly to Partners in Preservation!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SUPPORT IN FAVOR OF RESOURCE CENTER FOR ARTS, HISTORY, AND PRESERVATION

By Steve Murray

(Ed. note: This letter was originally written as a testimonial to save the St. Ann's Rectory. But since the rectory was demolished, we changed the reference of it to past tense. PIP still has a goal of finding the right location for a Resource Center.)

For the last thirty five years I have been directly involved in historic preservation in Cape May County, in particular, the Wildwoods. I was a member of the team that restored and operated the Island's most important historic structure, the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse,, and authored an award winning book on the Wildwoods' maritime history. I was extremely honored to receive the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Award in 2005 and the Cape May County Heritage award in 2009. That being said, one could see there is no greater advocate for local historic preservation than myself.

This letter originally served as my strong support for the preservation of the Saint Ann's Rectory in Wildwood. It was a beautiful Victorian "Stick Style" building, the last of its kind to survive in the City. This was the same architectural style as the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse. But it's not just the beautiful old architecture that made it important. Or of its importance as part of the Island's diverse religious heritage for 111 years. When a building



survives for so long, I believe it actually becomes part of the "soul" of a town, an important part of the "sense of place" that is recognized collectively by many generations past, present and future.

Developers and well-meaning but short-sighted civic leaders, thinking only of increased ratables, have already decimated the Island of so many architecturally and historically important structures. Up until recently in the Wildwoods, there were more Victorian era buildings, with a larger variety of unique styles, than there are in Cape May. What a shame. Ask most any visitor or resident if they are happy with what has happened. In my experience the vast majority definitely are not.

PIP's goal of restoring a historic building in Wildwood and establishing a Resource Center for Arts, History and Historic Preservation that would benefit all of Cape May County, is one of the best ideas I have heard in decades. There is a great absence of culture on the Island but a great yearning and need for it. A major goal of this project is also to serve as a venue where all of the historic and cultural organizations in the County could meet to work together with their common goals. This center would also enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike and in the long run produce much more economic benefits to the City than the ratables from a new row of condominiums would.

Please write to us! We want to hear your support, thoughts and questions about preservation. Send your letter to the editor of Participate in Preservation at preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com and it may appear in the next issue.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

HELP US ACHIEVE AN ACTIVE AND HOLISTIC PRESERVATION ETHIC

We all know that historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations. However, preservation is not possible without education. It is our strongest tool in building a preservation ethic in our communities. People need to understand what preservation is about, its benefits and value before they can become advocates.

To accomplish this, historic preservation must be actively and holistically promoted to the general public. We have established this newsletter, Participate in Preservation, to inform on historic preservation issues, advocacy updates, events, and activities in Cape May County. The newsletter will be published four times a year and distributed via email, Facebook and hard copies. Our goals are the following:

- 1. To use the Newsletter as a tool to actively promote the appreciation, protection, appropriate use and development of buildings, communities and landscapes in Cape May County.**
- 2. To shine a spotlight on the historic places and organizations in Cape May County.**
- 3. To build through education and give voice to, a community who deeply cares about retaining and protecting our communal character and our spirit of place.**

Your help is needed in the form of information. Let us know what you are doing and planning, any events, important meetings, preservation issues you might be facing, ideas for articles, and more! Also feel free to send us any questions you have about preservation, and we may answer it in our next issue. Visibility can only help everyone's cause.

Please send your content to the newsletter committee at preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com, including "NEWSLETTER" in the subject line.

“PATRIOTIC”, continued from cover page

people who buy salvaged materials from old homes--are being patriotic by supporting American-made designs, products, and labor.

Take something as common as the walls and ceilings in your home. A modern building is made with drywall. Drywall is cheap and quick and easy to put up. But it's made in one of many factories that are owned by European multinational corporations. (Is it any surprise that “United States” Gypsum Corporation, the largest producer of drywall, is actually owned by a German corporation?) Every drywall board is exactly the same, and materials are sourced from wherever is needed to keep the price low; so if you were unfortunate enough to get drywall using raw materials from China, then you may even be facing toxic poisoning in your home due to contaminants.

An older home most likely has lime plaster walls. The lime was quarried in Western New Jersey or Eastern Pennsylvania. The local materials were delivered to your home's job site, mixed by a local craftsman, and applied by hand to build up your walls and ceilings.

Opponents of preservation will argue that tearing down our history and replacing our homes with new construction is “progress” and that the new construction creates jobs. They neglect to point out that renovating, restoring and maintaining existing homes create more jobs than demolition and new construction. So who's defining what progress is, especially for Cape May County?



The people of Cape May County have worked hard to establish a unique culture of classic American homes along with a large local business community that mostly rejects large corporate chains. An old home is a direct connection to the days when America had a manufacturing base, and local communities were thriving with good-paying jobs. When someone demolishes an old home, it is not just a building that is being removed. It is a statement that a hand-crafted home, built by a local skilled tradesman, full of materials manufactured and sourced from the local community, is not worth as much as a new building with materials sourced from faceless factories that will make overseas companies more wealthy.

Does being patriotic mean going back to a new construction condo full of materials and products made in China while eating a pre-made meal from a multinational corporation's franchise that has no connection to South Jersey?

Or is being patriotic about actually maintaining and preserving an old home, a home built from the ground up with American-made materials; choosing to support local small businesses with roots in South Jersey; and speaking out against elites who tell us that we have to lose our traditions in the name of progress?

Disclaimer: While we have taken every precaution to ensure that the content of this newsletter is both current and accurate and does not infringe on any rights of any person or entity, errors can occur. We assume no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

“RECTORY”, continued from cover page

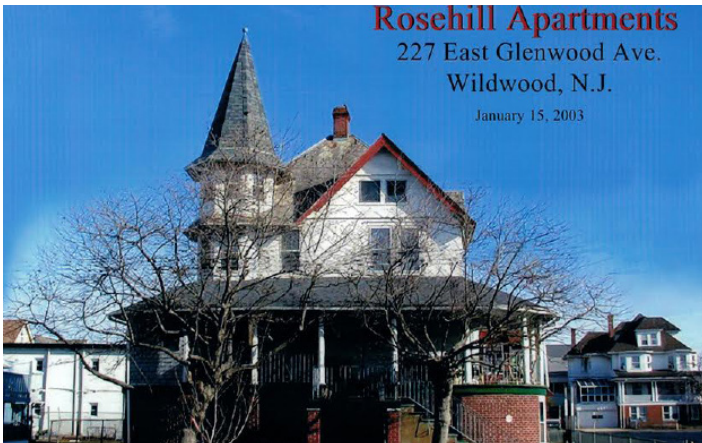
flexibility in exploring EVERY POSSIBLE OPTION to save this building and find an adaptable reuse, it was NOT enough. Still, we still held out hope for the March planning and zoning board meeting, where the renderings would allegedly be shown and where we could offer public comment.

But demolition moved swiftly on the rectory and it was ripped down Feb. 10. We were truly surprised that this happened before the renderings for the site were even shown and approved. This painful loss is because of the large systemic, societal issue that has plagued us for many years, an inability to see value in anything besides fast, cheap and easy.

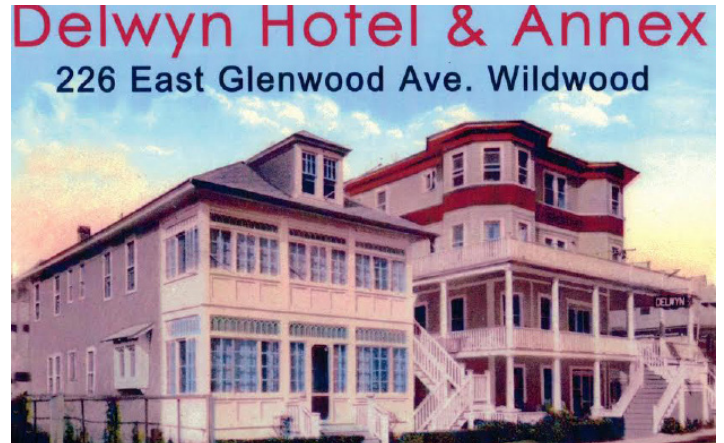


We mourn the loss of this rare 1909 Stick Style that had so much potential but stood in the way of very powerful forces. However, we refuse to let this sacred place die in vain, and we refuse to allow your signatures to save the rectory to have been futile. This experience has only strengthened our commitment to advocate for preservation at the systematic level, because that is the only way we are going to be able to make any significant change

There will be more petitions. There will be more of us showing up at meetings. And there WILL be more places that need to be saved and reused instead of being destroyed. We will be strong and carry on preserving our architectural and cultural heritage. Thank you to everyone for your continued support.



Rosehill Apartments
227 East Glenwood Ave.
Wildwood, N.J.
January 15, 2003



Delwyn Hotel & Annex
226 East Glenwood Ave. Wildwood

These early photos from the collection of photographer David Williams show two Victorian hotels in Wildwood. We are grateful for the #oldhouseheroes who keep these unique places still standing.

NEW NJ TAX CREDIT GIVES NJ DEVELOPERS INCENTIVE TO REHAB HISTORIC BUILDINGS

On January 7, 2021, Governor Phil Murphy signed the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act 2020 (ERA). The package contains a new “HISTORIC PROPERTY REINVESTMENT PROGRAM,” A \$50 million competitive tax program to leverage the federal historic tax credit program to support transformative rehabilitation projects of identified historic properties.

To receive tax credits through the program a project must (1) rehabilitate a property listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places, approved by State Historic Preservation Officer, or designated historic through a MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE, (2) create an income producing property, (3) demonstrate that a project financing gap exists and (4) include a developer who has an equity participation of at least 20 percent. For more information, visit www.njeda.com/economicrecoveryact

Anyone can easily nominate a site for the National Register of Historic Places, which simultaneously nominates it for NJ State’s list. For instructions, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/nrsr.htm>

Keep in touch

preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com

partnersinpreservation@yahoo.com

PIP website www.wildwoodnjhistory.com

PTW website www.preservingthewildwoods.com

Write to us

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

PO BOX 2538

WILDWOOD NJ 08260

A generous way to show your support and continue this newsletter is to make a tax-deductible donation!

Two ways to donate:

1. Mail a check to Partners in Preservation, PO Box 2538, Wildwood NJ 08260 (optional: write “Newsletter” in the memo)

or

2. Make a donation or become a member via PayPal at wildwoodnjhistory.com/donate

Thanks for your support!

Contributor Credits

Dennis Pierce: design & layout, writer

Taylor Henry: editor, writer

Gail Hayman Cohen: assistant editor, writer

Cathy Nesbitt Smith: writer

David Williams: photographer

Steve Murray: contributor

Stay connected on Facebook

facebook.com/preservingthewildwoods for more news and announcements

“Partners in Preservation” Facebook group, which focuses on projects like Holly Beach Park, plant sales and holiday house tours

“Wildwoods Preservationists” Facebook group, where we share exclusive news, calls to action, and other important announcements