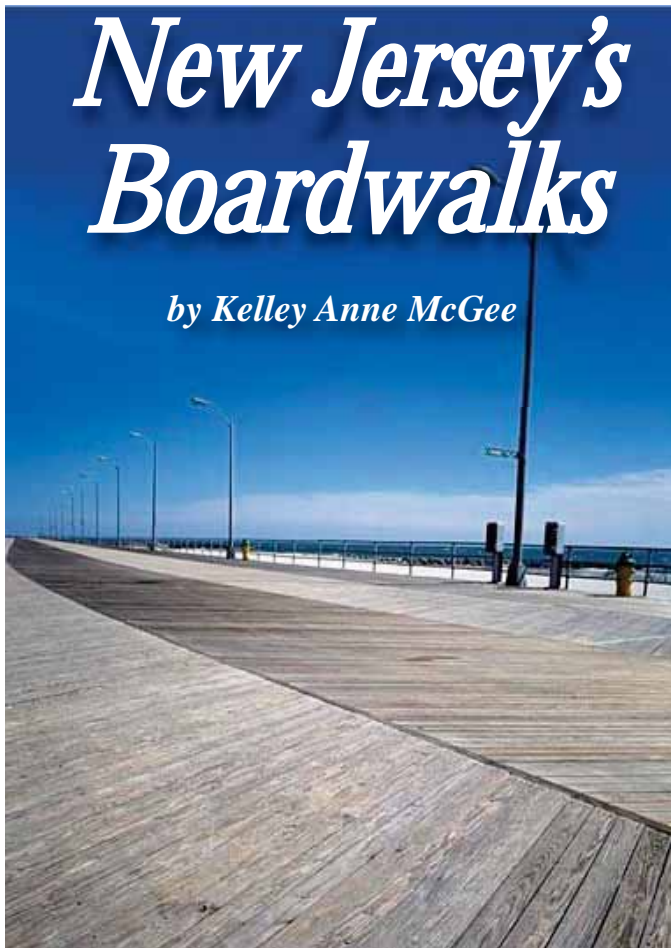


New Jersey's Boardwalks

by Kelley Anne McGee



Cape May was the first shore town in New Jersey to have a wooden promenade, built in the late 1800s. Atlantic City soon followed and added amusements to theirs in order to attract more tourists. Originally constructed to prevent guests from dragging sand into hotel lobbies, this clever idea eventually took off and soon boardwalks began popping up all along the Jersey Shore. While some are meant for a pleasant seaside stroll or jog, others offer all kinds of neat attractions and entertainment, and just like the shore towns themselves, each has its own distinct flavor. Depending on your tastes and interests, the Jersey Shore has plenty of them to choose from.

Built in 1904, Keansburg Amusement Park once operated a steamboat from its dock, which ferried in passengers from North Jersey and Manhattan for Saturday night dances held at the dancehall. Keansburg managed to survive the Depression and some even sought solace and escape there during such troubling times. But for many working, middle-class families with kids growing up during the 1950s and 60s, Keansburg was ideal. It was close, cheap and safe for kids to swim in the water with its baby waves. When the Garden State Parkway was constructed and expanded during the 1950s, this bayshore town, now with a rougher exterior and rowdy partiers at night, had trouble keeping pace with bigger and better boardwalks and has at times struggled to stay afloat.

Still, some find Keansburg worth returning to for a number of reasons like its convenient location, affordable prices, sunbathing at the free beach overlooking the Raritan Bay with nice views of the Manhattan skyline, concrete boardwalk (others originally made of wood washed away in storms) lined with mostly kiddie and a few adult rides, arcades, games of chance, food stands, a couple of bars and restaurants, an entertainment center, a water park, and a 2,500-foot fishing pier, where a bait and tackle shop is also located.

The pier charges an admission fee to fish the waters there, and fishing equipment may be rented. With the right bait and a little luck, fishermen can expect to hook flounder, blues, stripers and more. Those returning here on sentiment alone will be happy to know that vintage rides such as little boats, where young passengers can ring a bell while riding in circles on water, and the Sea Serpent (a small wooden roller coaster) still exist. Keansburg boasts America's oldest Spook House. Events include fireworks during summer.

Jenkinson's boardwalk opened in the late 1920s in Point Pleasant Beach. The shore town prides itself on its clean beaches and family-friendly atmosphere. The boardwalk offers several miniature golf courses, children's rides, arcades, games of chance, a fun house, fortune teller, a small train that rides the length of the boardwalk, gift and candy shops, a nice aquarium, food stands, casual restaurants, a tropical-themed bar overlooking the ocean, and a nightclub. But if boardwalk or casual food is not exactly your thing, there are several land-based and nice waterfront restaurants nearby, including a fishermen's co-op. During the summer special events such as beach movies and musical concerts are held, along with family and children's activities.

Day trippers can refresh themselves at one of the bathhouses before hitting the boards, while vacationers will find a variety of accommodations available from standard motel rooms to apartment and guest house rentals. Boaters and fishermen will find several marinas, and private and chartered or party boat rentals, as well as bait and tackle shops located throughout the Point Pleasant Beach area. Upcoming events include an Easter egg hunt and Easter parade, where folks stroll the boardwalk in their Easter finery and may compete for prizes in various categories.

Although it often gets a bad rap, unfortunately, thanks to shows like MTV and the reality-based series "The Jersey Shore", Seaside Heights does have its finer points and should not be overlooked. It took several years to construct the Seaside Heights boardwalk, and by the early 1900s it was up and running.

Overlooking a nice beach, Seaside's boardwalk contains both adult and kids' rides, including an antique carousel over 90 years old, and the world fa-

restaurants, a few bars, (one overlooking the ocean), gift and candy shops, a fortune teller, water park and a fishing pier.

Nearby are skiffs, pontoon boats and water sports rentals, as well as bait and tackle shops. The area is especially known for its fine crabbing. Within walking distance from the boardwalk, the shore town itself has stores, shops, restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

Throughout the year they host a variety of events here such as parades, shows, contests and festivals. Accommodations are plentiful from house or apartment rentals to motel rooms. If you decide to visit, don't forget to stop by Maruca's Pizza (home of the legendary tomato pie) to enjoy a slice of heaven.

Before the casinos came, Atlantic City had its Steel Pier and lured in tourists with death-defying acts such as women with horses diving from a high platform and landing into a pool of water below, or men being shot out of cannons. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the pier originally opened in 1898, and anyone who was someone ultimately ended up there to perform. Although it's gone through some changes due to years of neglect and then a devastating fire in 1982, Donald Trump's Taj Mahal rebuilt the famous icon and amusement pier.

Today the Steel Pier has rides for adults and kids, amusement games, assorted boardwalk food and live thrill shows such as high wire trapeze artists and the Motorcycle Globe, where men ride motorcycles in a 14-foot steel globe at tremendous speed. Of course, if you tire from the boardwalk scene, there's still plenty to do in AC itself from playing the slots at the casinos to fine dining, shopping, sightseeing, trolley and helicopter tours, museums, an aquarium, theaters, shows, concerts, relaxing boat cruises and exciting fishing excursions. Atlantic City's Convention Center hosts events from a beer festival to a boat show.

Those wishing to make the trip here by water may wish to dock at the Farley State Marina. Those staying on land have their choice of accommodations from smaller motels to fancier hotels in casinos. Atlantic City holds various events year round, including an annual Easter parade which dates back to the late 1800s and where some folks are known for wearing either stylish or outlandish hats.

Ocean City's original boardwalk dates to the late 1800s and overlooks a white sandy beach with a pristine coastline. The several mile-long boardwalk is chock full of amusements from rides for both adults and kids to all kinds of food, arcades, miniature golf courses, a water park, lots of shops, several theaters and a music pier. Other activities such as taking a ghost tour or visiting a historical museum are close by. But if you like to party, this may not be the place for you since you'll find no bars or alcohol.

For boating and fishing enthusiasts, there are several fishing piers, chartered fishing and party boats plus smaller crafts available for either crabbing or nature tours, water sports rentals, bait and tackle shops and a few marinas nearby. For real adventure, board a pirate-themed ship complete

with pirate crew, learn and sing sea chanteys, hear stories, and search for hidden underwater treasure



The Boardwalk at Asbury Park.

mous Skyride (picture a ski lift that travels a section of the boardwalk), a fun house, arcades, games of chance, miniature golf courses, food stands, several

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