



Timelines of
Point
Pleasant
History

Clark's Landing



The First Amusement Area

Left: Clark's Landing at the
turn of the century

Did you know...

Roderick Clark built the first amusement area in Point Pleasant on the Manasquan River upon his return from the Civil War. While the beachfront remained undeveloped, thousands flocked to Clark's Landing.



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Long before people came to the Point Pleasant oceanfront Clark's Landing on the Manasquan River was a thriving resort. In fact, it was the first waterfront resort in the area. Founded by a disabled Civil War veteran, the grove drew thousands to boat, swim and picnic. In the early part of the twentieth century Clark's Landing boasted a dance floor, carousel and steam organ. This is the story of the remarkable local businessman who started the amusement business in Point Pleasant.

Roderick A. Clark was born to John C. and Eliza (Doak) Clark on January 25, 1843 in Great Bend, Pennsylvania. His father was an Irish immigrant who practiced many trades including furniture maker, surveyor and boat builder, a talent that was passed on to Roderick. His mother was a native of Baltimore, Maryland.

When young Clark was but five years of age his parents moved to Point Pleasant. John Clark had previously done survey work for the federal government along the Manasquan River and felt this was a perfect location to continue his boat building and surveying trades. The Clarks built a homestead on Herbertsville Road in which they housed boarders during the summer months. This homestead was destroyed during a forest fire in 1905.

After attending the local public school, Roderick Clark enlisted at Toms River on August 26, 1862 to fight in the Civil war, joining company F, 14th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry. He fought in many important battles under Generals Grant and Wallace including Cold Harbor, Spottsylvania, South Mountain and Monocacy Bridge, Maryland.

It was during this last battle that Clark was shot in the left foot and abandoned on the field with hundreds of dead or wounded soldiers. A day later he was recovered by Confederate soldiers and while being transported to Frederick City Army Hospital he was shot again, this time through the lung. His left leg had to be amputated below the knee and while convalescing he met his future wife, nurse Elizabeth Ott of Harper Ferry, Virginia. After his discharge from the army on September 3, 1865 they were married and came back to Point Pleasant.

Clark's Landing was started in 1872 as a boat building and rowboat-renting concern which over the next 30 years evolved into an entertainment destination known throughout the state.

Roderick Clark, a Civil War veteran, let his son manage the dance hall and ice cream saloon which was built on the bank of the river, while the elder Clark tended to the boats. Crabbing, fishing and bathing were also a major attraction.

For a time, patrons of Clark's Landing and the Inlet Pavilion could travel between the two establishments aboard the motor launch "Eagle" (pictured below) which made daily trips filled with excursionists through the thoroughfares between the Landing and the Manasquan Inlet. The dock was at the north end of the Inlet Pavilion with the water there deep enough for the dock to serve as a diving platform for those who cared to bathe.



In July, 1872 Clark purchased property on the Manasquan River at the bend on Arnold Avenue and built his home, just a few hundred feet from the schoolhouse where he taught for two years. That same year Roderick Clark was elected to serve four years on the Brick Township committee, followed by three years as a chosen freeholder. Later he was elected to the State Assembly.

Clark's Landing began as a boat building business which gradually evolved into a popular boating and fishing spot on the Manasquan River. Clark purchased two adjoining lots in 1875 and 1879.

When people came to rent boats, they would bring picnic lunches and enjoy the wooded seclusion at the Landing. These picnics prompted Mrs. Clark to baking pies which were sold to the visitors. This evolved into

the building of a two story pavilion on the river front in 1894 which was run by Clark's only son, Rosia.

Rosia's father had his hands full with the boat business while Rosia ran the entertainment end. A steam organ and electric merry-go-round were added in 1896 along with a steam powered ice cream machine. Expansion of the landing kept pace with its popularity into the new century with a larger pavilion and dancing platform in 1903. Clark's Landing became known throughout the state for its many attractions, from picnicking and dances to sailboat races and crabbing. Fireworks, free movies and a photo gallery were also popular. On a summer day in 1920, over two thousand picnickers occupied the grounds. During the winters the boats would go into sheds and

ice sailing and skating would become the main attraction.

As the elder Clark advanced in years he turned more and more of his affairs over to Rosia. On March 21, 1924 Clark's Landing was sold to H. R. Bills who, in turn, sold it to Leonard Patrick. The pavilion and other buildings on the property gradually fell into disrepair and were torn down. However the marina continued and the cottages were still rented for the season. In the mid 1970s plans were unveiled to build condominiums at Clark's Landing. A bitter fight by local groups failed to prevent the project which took up much of the property to the east. Clarks Landing was one of Point Pleasant's most loved amusement centers for many generations. Today a thriving modern marina and restaurant remain.

-- By Jerry Woolley

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Did you know...

In the early part of the 1900s, Roderick & Rosia Clark's Landing was one of two well known establishments that thrived along the southern shore of the Manasquan River, the other being Ralph Borden's Inlet Pavilion.