



Timelines of
Point
Pleasant
History

The 1931 Reopening of the Manasquan Inlet

Did You Know:

The Point Pleasant Historical Society restored and duplicated the film Arthur Johnson made of the inlet reopening. It is part of *Yesterday On Film*, available on both DVD and VHS which also preserves two silent movie era shorts, film Mr. Johnson made of the local rescue efforts following the Morro Castle ship fire disaster, steam trains in Point Pleasant and other local scenes. It is available for \$25 at the Museum.

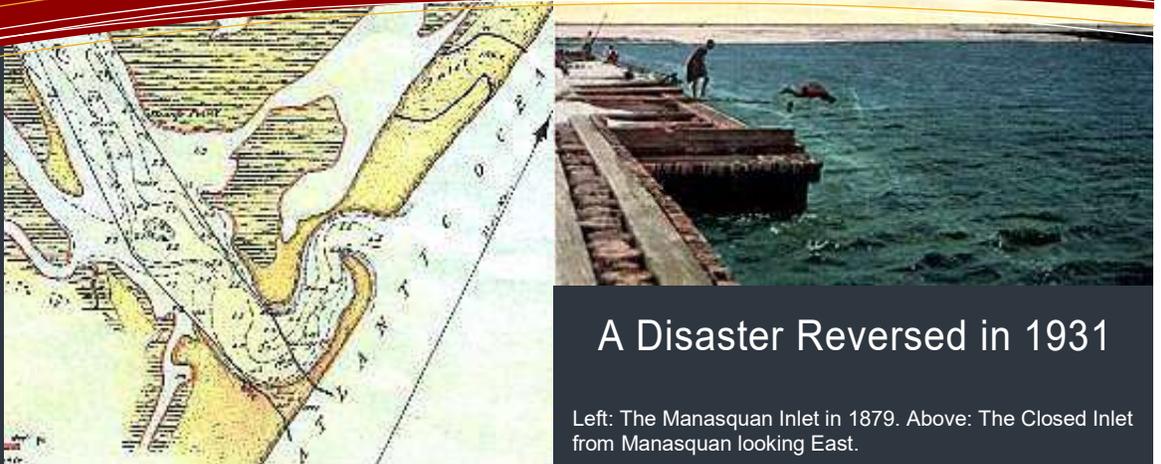


Point Pleasant Historical Society & Museum

416 New Jersey Avenue
PO Box 1273
Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742
(732) 892-3091

Web: www.pphsm.org
Facebook: @PPHSMNJ
Twitter: @PointMuseum
Email:

ppbhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



A Disaster Reversed in 1931

Left: The Manasquan Inlet in 1879. Above: The Closed Inlet from Manasquan looking East.

Following the 1926 opening of what is now known as the Point Pleasant Canal a disaster struck the maritime communities of Point Pleasant Beach and vicinity. Water from the Manasquan River started running through the canal and into Barnegat Bay, rather than down river and through the inlet to the ocean. The Manasquan Inlet closed completely. Sand built up behind the beach for several hundred yards.

Manasquan inlet had always been shallow, shifting and hard for large boats to navigate. There were no jetties and no dredging prior to the 1926 closing. All inlets naturally move, shoal, close and reopen. A detail from an 1879 Army Corps of Engineers map (shown to the right) illustrates the Manasquan Inlet making a sharp, hooking northward turn for about one thousand feet. Toward the top, it shows that in 1868, the inlet had been a couple of thousand yards farther north along the Manasquan beach, near the now recently abandoned Manasquan Coast Guard Station. In this map, the Core of Engineers was proposing to straighten out the inlet and stabilize it at what became its current, modern location. That project did not take place until 1931 and was forced upon the people by the inlet's disastrous and total closing, so total that people could walk from Point Pleasant Beach to Manasquan without getting their feet wet.

For the next few years after the 1926 closing efforts to reopen the inlet were made with varying degrees of success. At one time the National Guard and local firemen used high pressure hoses and managed to blast a narrow channel through. But it was a losing battle. The inlet was completely closed, and all the communities along the river were out of business as ports in 1928 and 1929.

Starting in 1930 a year-long effort was begun to reopen the inlet. The Army Corps of Engineers put up two temporary piers and begin building jetties. The corps also constructed a temporary wooden bridge across the sands to truck in boulders and equipment. The rocks for the jetties came from excavation for the Second Avenue subway in Manhattan and were shipped on flatbed railroad cars to Sea Girt and trucked two at a time to the inlet.

The project reached its climax on a snowy February 10, 1931 when a large crowd gathered to see the last scoops of sand lifted by a power shovel as the waters of the Manasquan River again merged with the sea. But dredging and other work continued well into the summer. The project cost an impressive \$600,000 in 1930-31. The communities of Point Pleasant Beach, Point Pleasant, Brielle and Manasquan as well as Ocean and Monmouth Counties each contributed \$25,000. The state matched the money and the federal government matched that total.

On August 29, 1931 the area celebrated the reopening of the inlet with a water parade. With New Jersey Governor Morgan F. Larson as the guest of honor, boats from all over sailed together from the Bay Head Yacht Club through the canal and inlet and back. Thousands watched along the banks. Arthur Johnson, the owner of Point Pleasant Hardware, made a 16 millimeter movie record of the construction project and the parade. The Point Pleasant Historical Society recently borrowed and restored the original 65-year-old films. They are a part of the society's *Yesterday On Film* video. — *By Jeff Heim*

Copyright © 2019 Point Pleasant Historical Society and Museum (PPHSM). All rights reserved. The material published on this website is intended for general information only. The PPHSM is not responsible for the content of any third-party website to which links are provided from this website. Any links to websites are provided for your information and convenience only. The PPHSM does not endorse or control these websites and cannot guarantee that material on those sites is in all respects accurate, complete and current. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise without prior permission of the Point Pleasant Historical Society and Museum, P.O. Box 1273, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742.