



Timelines of
Point
Pleasant
History

The Devastating Storm of 1938

The Point Pleasant Beach Boardwalk Never Recovered...

"Waves forty to fifty feet high swept along this section and in a gulp carried sections of the walk out as though they were match sticks."



**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



On September 21, 1938 what is often regarded as the worst hurricane in recorded history for the Point Pleasant area struck. It is known simply as The Hurricane of '38 as storms were not named then. The entire southern end of the boardwalk, which used to stretch all the way to Bay Head was destroyed and has never been replaced. The Bay Head boardwalk was also extensively damaged. Here is part of the report on the storm from the Ocean County Leader, published two days later:

Hundreds of people were forced to abandon their summer homes along the beachfront last Wednesday afternoon when a tidal wave struck the Jersey coast and left in its wake thousands of dollars worth of damage.

More than 3,800 feet of boardwalk at Point Pleasant Beach, with large iron electric light standards, and four summer homes were ripped up and washed back a block from the beach. Some homes on the beach were undermined.

More than 75 feet of the Point Pleasant fishing pier, including the new section which was built this past spring, was swept away, and the rest of the pier was badly damaged.

Heavy damage resulted at the Atlantic Baths and at Ridsen's Casino. The large platform fronting the Atlantic Baths was carried away, and the front of the pavilion crushed by the high seas. The wide platform in front of Ridsen's Casino was tossed from its piers and moved several feet away from the building. The Alcazar restaurant was wrecked and tables and chairs carried back several blocks from the beach.

Atlantic apartments, owned by Richard Withington, was badly undermined, and a garage in the rear was completely wrecked.

Traffic was halted along Ocean Avenue after 5 o'clock in the afternoon as sections of the boardwalk and other debris washed on the roadway and carried from two to three blocks from the beach. A section of walk with an electric light standard standing upright was washed against the west end of the Atlantic apartments.

All that section of the boardwalk from the southern end of the borough to the south side of Arnold Avenue was out in less than a half an hour. Waves forty to fifty feet high swept along this section and in a gulp carried sections of the walk out as though they were match sticks.

Lawns for blocks away were inundated, trees and shrubbery were uprooted, cellars filled with water as a gale came from the northwest. Never in the history of the shore had a storm taken so much damage in such a record time. Seamen described it as a tidal wave. Hours before the damage resulted there was a heavy whistling of wind off shore. Suddenly waves began to dash under the boardwalk and within minutes the long stretch of boardwalk began creaking, suddenly snapped and washed out. As sections of the walk were ripped up, combers would toss them back and the water would carry them to Ocean Avenue, a block away.

Borough authorities immediately placed special police all along the beach to prevent people from carrying away lumber or other property.

The raging seas, many of them being 50 feet high, pounded their foamy masses against the local beachfronts in such a ghastly manner that the entire section of the Point Pleasant Beach boardwalk from Arnold Avenue to the Beacon Hotel was wrecked.

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