

# The Story of Island Beach New Jersey

## THE SANDPAPER

Thomas P Farner



Barnegat Inlet seals off the southern end of Island Beach Peninsula and helps protect one of the Atlantic Coast's most

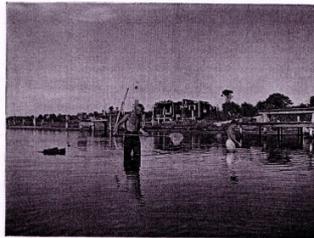
### FORGOTTEN BEACH

By RICHARD THRUENSEN

A ten-mile strip of isolated coast line, with superb fishing and a tradition of buried treasure, lies only an hour's drive from New York City. This refuge from civilization, unchanged since nature made it, may soon be opened to the public.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK ROSS

**T**HE late Henry Phipps, a C. P. could afford permissive hab itively inaccessible tre vestor who apparent possession. Phipps w realty holdings await died, in 1930, his nar with an array of asse scattered blank space ble of these undevelop point of view, was a coastline which the b characterized as, "i stretch of natural i Northeastern United This official tribute of an understatement a eulogy, for Island Bc w on the block. Faced New England syndi-



Among the pleasures of Island Beach is crabbing on the bay front. The crab box is towed through the sandy shallows. Many shacks are rebuilt houseboats.



Leaseholders pay the Phipps Estate \$100 a year for their shacks occupy. This project is the wor

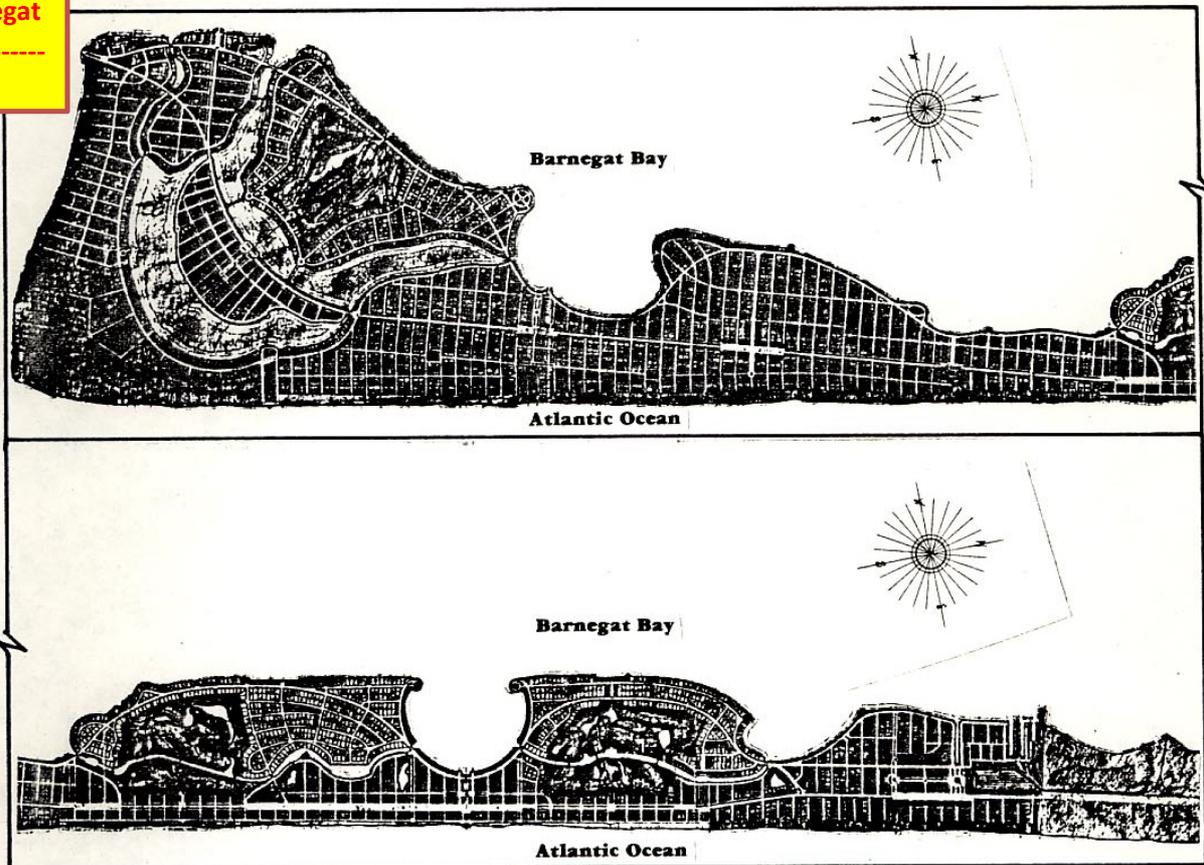


200 Plus

# So Near, Yet So Far

By THOMAS P. FARNER | May 26, 2016

Bridge to  
Barnegat  
light -----



**Barnegat Bay - Island Beach Town Plan - Jan. 28, 1927**  
Courtesy - University of Chicago College of Architecture  
Art and Urban Sciences

Standing at the base of Barnegat Lighthouse looking north across Barnegat Inlet, we can see Island Beach State Park. Google Maps tells us it is 50 miles away and will take over an hour to drive there. From a distance, the park looks like a time capsule of the Jersey Shore 200 years ago.

Few people on the Long Beach Island side of the inlet know Island Beach's story or have even been there. Its history involves a secret military project, an environmental disaster cover-up, and the now common battle between conservation and exploitation.

The first notice of the area appears in a letter from Samuel Grooms, surveyor general for the East Jersey Proprietors, dated Aug. 11, 1683.

"The tenth of next Month is also appointed to treat with other Indians to buy other tracts of choice Meadowing and Upland – and when I have been up in the country towards and at Barnegat, and agreed with the Indians thereabouts for such lands as we may see occasion to purchase in order to settlement there ... but also, for the sake of the Whale Trade, and other fishing trade; which is like to be there shortly."

At this time the area was in fact an island, separated from the rest of the Barnegat Peninsula by an inlet. By the time of the American Revolution, it was owned mostly by William Alexander, Lord Stirling, who would become one of George Washington's most trusted generals. Some maps of the time call it Lord Stirling's Beach or 9 Mile Beach.

In 1790, the Monmouth County sheriff posted this notice: "I have taken and levied on a certain tract of land which was William Alexander's, Earl of Stirling, at the time of his death, situate, lying and being in the Township of Dover, called by the name of 'Island Beach' to the value of six pence, which remains in my hands for want of a buyer."

During the next hundred years, there was little development. One of New Jersey Congressman William A. Newell's original life-saving stations was built there, but little else. Then in the 1890s came the first attempt to develop the area, when the land was purchased by the Sea Shore Realty Co. of New York. It proposed selling 25- by 100-foot lots; its advertising proclaimed it would become a Cottage City.

"Located on the narrow peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and famous Barnegat Bay, (it) gives the advantage of being actually several miles out at sea. It is but 72 miles from New York and 53 from Philadelphia, making it, 'the nearest seaside resort to Phila.' It has two beaches of white sand – that on the ocean front being the peer of any on the New Jersey coast, making surf bathing a chief attraction,

and, from its perfect safety, especially inviting. The bay shore is free from mud or marsh, and bathers who prefer comparatively still water, of a somewhat higher temperature than the ocean, can safely wade a long distance into the bay on a bottom disport and learn the art of swimming.”

The brochure continued, “Nearly every one knows of the wonderful growth and rapid rise in values of Real Estate at Atlantic City. Only a few years ago property at Atlantic City was worth but a song. How is it now? Worth more per foot on Ocean front than property is worth on the best streets in our large and old cities. What is the cause of this? It is simply the law of supply and demand.”

And finally, “There is no investment in the land that will pay a larger profit, and they ought to double in value before last payment. The investment is perfectly safe, and will yield a larger profit than Building Association, Saving Funds or Government Bonds.”

The Cottage City proved to be a pipe dream as the country was in a depression, and there is no record of any building taking place. Island Beach remained in its natural state. Then in February 1925, the Trenton Times ran an editorial supporting a revolutionary idea.

“The Toms River Courier thinks the State should acquire Island Beach, Brigantine Beach and some of the long stretches on the northerly end of Long Beach between Harvey Cedars and Barnegat City, as all will be needed in a comparatively short time. ... The State Board of Conservation and Development should be instructed to investigate the subject and open negotiations with the owners of these lands with a view of their purchase by the State. As the Governor has said, the value of the land will never decrease, and it could always be sold at a profit: and some portion of it should be acquired as a public reservation.”

As the politicians began to talk about preservation, Henry Phipps, a retired former partner of Andrew Carnegie at Pittsburgh Steel, was dabbling in the real estate market. The Asbury Park Press of May 22, 1926, broke the story.

“The Henry Phipps Estates of New York is to undertake a \$10,000,000 residential development on the Jersey coast on the uniquely located Island Beach, at Seaside Park, it was learned today. The transaction, marking one of the largest changes in land ownership along the Atlantic ocean in New Jersey in many years, involves a frontage of 14 miles at Seaside Park. ... As far as could be learned, the Phipps Estates plan to develop the property into a high grade summer residential community. ... A new road is to be cut

thru the center of the strip, which ranges in width from one to four miles, between the ocean and the bay.”

On June 7, more details emerged in the Press.

“The buyers are the heirs of Henry Phipps, steel magnate, and recently indulged in a successful development in Florida. They predict \$10,000,000 will be spent in developing the tract. It is reported the development will include all beach from Manasquan inlet to Barnegat inlet, one of the largest developments on the entire Atlantic coast.

“The land involved in the sale is in the townships of Berkeley, Ocean and Lacey in Ocean County. Ten engineers have been surveying the land for the Phipps estate, in which are associated Mrs. Bradley Martin and other prominent socially in New York.

“Some time ago the tract was suggested as a suitable site for a state seashore park by the State Department of Conservation and Development and park enthusiasts.

“The development (plan) of the Phipps estate calls for building of boulevards, setting aside of recreation space and construction of residences to harmonize in the making of a modern resort.”

An Asbury Park banker, Jefferson Fogal, boasted in August, “New York and Philadelphia capital is awakening to the fact that we are ideally located between two great centers of population ... Our ‘Acres of Diamonds’ are right here; not in Florida or distant points. Investment in our own coast cannot be wrong. ... It was Marshall Field, the merchant prince, who said ‘Buying real estate is not only the best way, the quickest way, and the safest way, but the only way to become wealthy.’”

As the resort plans developed, all was not roses. From the south side of the inlet there were objections, and on Aug. 29, 1927, according to the Press, “BARNEGAT CITY, Strong opposition is being voiced to the proposed filling in of bay lands from Barnegat Inlet to Seaside Park, as sought by the Barnegat Bay and Beach corporation under the application for nine miles of riparian rights. The tidal flow in the inlet will be decreased by at least one billion gallons four times a day, according to captains of bay fleets, who have joined other resort delegations in opposing the big development as now planned. Skippers say the

reduction of the bay surface by five square miles may so reduce the flow of water as to close the inlet channel to their boats.”

By 1929, capitalism in the United States was at its zenith, and on May 20, the Press reported, “Engineers of a private corporation were surveying Barnegat inlet between Barnegat City and Island Beach thruout the past week, it was learned today. Those engaged in the work would not divulge the names of their employers and would not enlighten questioners as to the purpose of their efforts.

“State Senator Thomas A. Mathis has long been interested in a bridge at that point but declined to comment on the surveying. Rumors circulated to the effect that within 10 days an application would be made by an unknown party to the Department of Commerce and Navigation at Trenton to span the inlet.

“The probable point at which the bridge would be constructed is five miles south of here. There has been some mention of a \$100,000 gravel road to the location where the span would be erected at recent meetings of the Ocean County board of freeholders.”

Few people at the time realized that the stock market crash of 1929 was the beginning of the Great Depression. In January 1930, the Press declared, “Announcement of the approval by the state board of commerce and navigation for a bridge across Barnegat inlet was made today by Senator Thomas A. Mathis. Senator Mathis, who proposed the bridge, declared the Barnegat Bridge company which will finance the scheme has agreed to begin construction as soon as the war department issues its permit.

“The period required for approval of the project by the war department is dependent entirely upon whether the proposal meets opposition by local interests, the senator said. If army engineers review the proposal without receiving objections it is probable that they will act favorably on the recommendation of the state board.”

As the nation sank into the Depression, the dreams of a Barnegat Inlet bridge faded along with the proposed Phipps resort city. And now we know why you can't get there from here.

Next Week: Park plans and war clouds.

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## Best Laid Plans for Island Beach

By THOMAS P. FARNER | Jun 02, 2016



10 bay, 2 story, natural wood shingle, c. early 1930s. This cottage was built for Henry C. Phipps, the Pittsburgh steel magnate who purchased the island in 1926.

As the Roaring '20s were coming to an end, it appeared that what is today Island Beach State Park would become another Jersey Shore community linked to LBI, by a toll bridge. Henry Phipps, a millionaire ex-partner of Andrew Carnegie, had purchased the parcel with the purpose of developing an exclusive resort while Ocean County Sen. Thomas A. Mathis was pushing for the bridge as part of a coastal highway stretching from Sandy Hook to Cape May.

As the Asbury Park Press of Aug. 24, 1929, described, "Plans for the bridge provide for steel and concrete construction, spanning Barnegat Inlet in a curve from Broadway in Barnegat City to the southerly end of Island Beach. It will have a double leaf bascule draw opening over the main channel affording a horizontal clearance of 100 feet between fenders. With the leaves closed there is a vertical clearance of 20 feet at high tide."

But as they say, "the best laid plans ..." In October, the stock market crashed; in September 1930, Phipps died; and by 1931, the nation was sinking into a depression. The Press ran an editorial on March 19, 1931, stating, "Senator Mathis's bill to lease tidewater lands for the construction of a privately-owned toll bridge over Barnegat inlet has passed the senate, but it should proceed no further. The measure is dangerous in policy and entirely unnecessary. When there is need for a bridge over the inlet it should be constructed by the state and maintained under public control. ... There is nothing to justify such a plan, nor is there reason to believe that it is designed in the best interests of the state. ... It involves too many dangerous implications, and violates too many precedents, to be accepted as anything but the most unwise sort of legislation."

One of the problems with the development of the resort was that it was part of Ocean, Lacey and Berkeley townships. This was overcome in August 1933 with a referendum. According to the Press, "Thirteen voters yesterday 'thronged' to the polling place in the guardsman's house at the entrance to the 10 miles tract of sand dunes south of here known as the 'Phipps estate,' and cast the momentous ballots that declared unanimously for the incorporation of the tract under the name Island Beach boro. ... The verdict rendered by these 13 votes gave Ocean County its 34th municipality, a municipality unique of its kind, possessing one of the smallest populations of any in the entire state and a source of potential wealth in miles of beach and bay front lots such as falls to the good fortune of few boros or townships in any county."

Following the vote, the New Jersey Courier described, "new borough with a voting population of fourteen, stretches for ten miles along the New Jersey coast line between Seaside Park and Barnegat.

"The borough has no railway station and no highway. Long and narrow, a mere strip of yellow-white sand dunes and patches of green heather beneath the sky, with here and there a few gnarled cedar trees, the borough separates Barnegat Bay from the Atlantic Ocean, protecting the mainland from the buffeting of stormy, Winter seas."

But it also announced, “The Henry Phipps estate in recent years planned to develop Island Beach as an exclusive seaside residential community. The construction of dwellings with a low, rambling architecture in harmony with the surrounding scenery was to have been encouraged. The economic depression was instrumental in preventing the carrying out of the plan, and it was said recently at the offices of the estate that no development of the property was contemplated at this time.”

As the Great Depression wore on, Island Beach remained in its natural state, and in December 1937, the Trenton Times reported the state planning board had proposed a new park.

“The suggested site is a ten-mile stretch of unspoiled shore known as Island Beach, below Seaside Park. It is owned by the Phipps Estate. The price was not discussed for the reason, it was explained, that any figure mentioned might interfere with negotiations.”

As the state legislators talked, war clouds in Europe had brought the nation out of the Depression, and the talk of the park became more serious. The Nov. 19, 1940, Times told of a new debate.

“Development by the Federal Government of a seashore park along a section of the New Jersey coast, a plan proposed by the National Park Service, has become involved in a conflict of opinion as to whether it would not be preferable for the State to undertake the project.

“Considerable opposition to the Federal idea was registered at a meeting yesterday afternoon in the Assembly Chamber of State agencies and other interested groups called by Governor Moore to discuss the program. The result was a request the Governor appoint a committee to study the entire question and make recommendations on the course the State should adopt.

“Federal authorities have approved the creation of a national seashore park fronting approximately 17 miles on the Atlantic Ocean, south of Seaside Park to Surf City.”

On Sept. 7, 1941, the Times was optimistic, saying, “Conservationists interested in preserving seashores for public recreation and education are backing a movement for the establishment of Island Beach as a national park, to be administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. They point out that there is precious little seashore left that is unspoiled and thus eligible to become a

national park, and that Park Service administration would insure that the area would remain in its natural condition save for a few well planned developments needed for public use.”

But just as surely as the stock market crash of 1929 had doomed the plans for Phipps’ resort, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor altered the future of Island Beach. Bodies and oil covered it as U-boats prowled local waters, and men’s minds turned to war and not parks and preservation.

On Jan. 17, 1943, the Asbury Park Press announced changes that were to take place.

“Work on the construction on the Island Beach highway will be started Monday morning by the state highway department. ... Approximately nine miles of road will be constructed. Plans call for rebuilding of the present road, which is about five miles long, and an extension of about four miles to a mile south of coast guard station 112. ... The road is being built by the state as a military measure. The property, which is owned by the Phipps estate, will not be opened to use by the public.”

By Feb. 16, 1945, the U-boats were gone, but the Navy had plans. According to the Press, “A report that effective today the navy will utilize this 10-mile stretch of beach land to the exclusion of all civilian activities was verified today by Mayor Francis P. Freeman, who is local manager for the Phipps estate, owners of the tract.

“Navy public relations officers, asked for a news release on the development, said they would check on the matter, but they had no information available immediately.

“Coast guard officials in the area declined to comment on the report.”

The next day, the Press ran a story that today is hard to believe.

“A navy guard took over this long peninsula community yesterday and Island Beach’s entire year round population became navy civilian personnel.”

The Navy released a statement saying, "Johns Hopkins university has a contract with the bureau of ordnance (navy department) leasing Barnegat inlet property for research and development work."

The only information the Press could obtain was "The program to be carried on here is classified as secret and no other details were divulged. The bureau of ordnance handles all production of navy ammunition and equipment and conducts trials of new ammunition and weapons.

"Johns Hopkins university, located in Baltimore, has an applied physics laboratory that is carrying on certain experimentation for the navy."

What was about to take place at Island Beach would lead to events that the Navy would be proud of and others that the government would cover up.

Next Week: Jet engines and poison spray.

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The first successful flight was conducted on 13 June 1945 at Island Beach NJ.



This is a replica of the Bumblebee ramjet-powered missile. The booster was made of a cluster of four standard solid-fuel 5-inch caliber HVAR (High Velocity Aircraft) rockets with fins attached. The booster shown here uses real HVAR rocket bodies although they do not contain propellants. This replica is of one of several small scale Bumblebee vehicles tested. This object was donated to the Smithsonian in 1951 by the Johns Hopkins University.

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# Bumblebee Missile Should Never Fly

By THOMAS P. FARNER | Jun 09, 2016

When the U.S. Navy took over the barren 9-mile peninsula today called Island Beach State Park in February 1945 and drafted all of its adult citizens into government service, the only thing made public was that it would be part of a secret government project run by the Applied Physics Laboratory, a part of Johns Hopkins University. What was unknown was that the project was to develop a supersonic guided missile to shoot down enemy aircraft. Harold Dail worked on the project.

“When we first started, it was the only project in the laboratory that nobody else in the laboratory knew what we were doing at the time. ... It was really hush-hush, I told my wife. I said, ‘I cannot tell you what I do. Don’t ask me because I’m not going to tell you.’

“The Bumblebee project was called the Bumblebee project because the bumblebee is not supposed to fly because of the trajectory of body and wingspan, and he don’t know it, and he flies anyway. ... The Bumblebee project used ramjet engines in these rockets. The nose of it was bigger than the tail of it. The way it was shaped, it wasn’t supposed to fly.”

Walter Goss was the head of the project.

“It was an exciting time. We were making technical history at the time and we all knew it. ... The important thing was to get the job done. There was no second-guessing. That wouldn’t happen today. They want results. There is too much interfering. ... We were a young bunch ... if we had been older, we probably would have said, ‘There’s no way this is going to work.’ But we didn’t know any better, so we kept experimenting.”

Work proceeded at Island Beach on a launching pad and the development of the missile, “the flying stovepipe,” as it was nicknamed because an exhaust pipe from a P-51 Thunderbolt had been used to construct the missile’s body. Goss remembered, “It was pretty primitive in terms of what we know now.

... But it worked. It was just a case of try and see. We had plenty of failures, including the blast from the rockets causing launch stands and sandbags to catch fire.”

Then came the big day, June 13, 1945. “I was down in Silver Springs when the call came, and my reaction was ‘Whoopee!’ All our hard work had paid off. ... Down-range trackers were astounded as the blurred experiment swooshed past at 1,750 feet a second. C. Dixon Smith and Francis Burke, tracking near the launcher, remember it only as a fleeting fireball.”

Dr. Frank Bader later wrote, “The only outside spectators to the world’s first successful flight of a supersonic ramjet powered missile were four startled Norwegian fishermen entering Barnegat Bay past Island Beach in October of 1945. The four fishermen witnessed a fearful sight which they reported to the Coast Guard after docking.

“Without warning, a tremendous geyser of water appeared to erupt – a scant thirty feet from their boat – and this was followed by an earsplitting bang. The splash and bang were made by the impact of the Applied Physics Laboratory’s successful supersonic ramjet test vehicle after a nine-and-a-half mile flight from Island Beach, New Jersey, at over one-and-a-half times the speed of sound. Ashore, at Island Beach, Dr. Wilbur Goss and the AAPL crew enjoyed the elation of success after nine months of intense work around the clock.”

After the war, Goss explained, “Let’s take a typical test day at Island Beach. The field crew and the group from the Laboratory are swarming about like ants who have just been dispossessed of their ant hills. The intercom system which connects all stations is swamped with calls for final checks on camera motors, synchronizing pulse, radar and film exposure readings. The range boat is standing by to clear the range. The Safety Officer surveys everything with a watchful eye. Rockets can be unpleasant companions unless they are treated with respect.

“Birds are sometimes a bit ornery about their direction of flight. On one occasion a large specimen climbed straight up a few thousand feet and fell back near the launching ramp. There were some records broken that day for digging a fox hole in six inches of cement with bare finger nails. Then there was the case of one of the first birds flown. It was fired across the Island into the bay so that it might be recovered from the shallow water. A remarkably successful flight it went much farther than anyone had anticipated and landed a couple of hundred yards from a fisherman in a skiff. He was properly terrified by the huge geyser of water suddenly materializing from nowhere. Then he heard the sound coming and thinking that he was about to be the object of a second bombardment, dove overboard.”

It wasn't until after the atomic bomb had been dropped on Japan and the war was drawing to a close that a notice appeared in an Outdoor column in the Trenton Times Advertiser of Aug. 12, 1945.

"Now it may be told. The navy has established a project on the Phipps' Estate, which has an ocean front close to 10 miles long between Seaside Park and Barnegat Inlet. Billeted on the estate in small plywood shacks is a crew of 12 men doing experimental work for the navy as part of the applied physics laboratory of Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore.

"The tract is being used by the navy on a six-month basis with renewal clauses in the lease for the duration. All the wild rumors and guesses on the part of those who formerly frequented this part of the coast have now been put to rest."

Finally on June 9, 1946, newspapers across the country carried this United Press story.

"The Navy tonight revealed one of its most closely guarded wartime developments – a 'flying stovepipe' that has been flown successfully at speeds of more than 1,400 miles an hour.

"The 'flying stovepipe' is a ramjet engine originally designed to propel guided missiles. It was developed in the Navy's search for a supersonic missile to combat Japan's suicide planes and expected bomb attacks. The war ended before it could be put to practical use."

The Asbury Park Press the same day declared, "N.J., known to thousands of Shore fishermen, as North Point of Beach was the scene one year ago this week of the first successful flight of a new – and heretofore highly secret – 1,500 mile-an-hour rocket type aircraft engine, the navy announced yesterday."

But the Press also went further, pointing out, "The main disadvantage of the 'Stovepipe' is that it works at high speeds only. Catapults or auxiliary rockets are used to boost it up to its efficient operating speed.

“The navy envisioned ram jets of the future – not as the sole power plant of an airplane – but to take over the high speed range after other methods had pushed the plane to about 800 miles an hour.

“Hinting at even more fantastic speeds and power in models still behind the curtain of security, scientists who helped develop the ram jet commented tersely to newsmen, ‘we are just starting.’”

A few days later, the United Press reported, “Dr. W.H. Goss, in charge of propulsion developments at Johns Hopkins University’s applied physics laboratory, acknowledged that at some remote date such a pilotless plane might have peace time use as a mail carrier.”

The missile tests at Island Beach were completed, the lease had run out, and local criticism of the damage being done forced the Navy to move the operation to North Carolina. But there was one unforeseen consequence to Project Bumblebee at Island Beach that would also change history. Goss stated, “The mosquitoes, I remember, were just terrible. We finally got some Navy planes to spray the whole island with DDT. For a while there, it was heaven. We could go out and pick the wild blueberries you find all over the place and not have to worry about being eaten alive.”

The natural environment of Island Beach would be the perfect place to test the new chemical DDT.

Next Week: Death from the air.

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## Deadly DDT Comes to Island Beach

By THOMAS P. FARNER | Jun 16, 2016

If you are lucky enough to witness an osprey in flight over Barnegat Bay, it should remind you that its return to the area is a symbol of one of the greatest environmental battles of the 20th century. It had some of its earliest skirmishes on what is today Island Beach State Park.

The Jersey Shore has been at war with mosquitoes since the arrival of the first visitors, and by the first half of the 20th century, Ocean County had a commission to battle the invaders by draining swamps and removing standing water. Then during World War II, a new weapon was discovered, DDT. Quickly the US military began using the chemical to clear enemy beaches in the Pacific of the insect before landing troops; at home, there were also beaches crowded with tourists.

The Asbury Park Press of March 16, 1945 wrote, "The Ocean County Mosquito Extermination commission has asked for experimental quantities of the 'miracle' insecticide DDT powder for use on the

marshes this spring ... when it became known that the army was releasing limited supplies of the wonder powder.”

As the county waited, events were moving ahead. Barry Commoner, who would become one of the founders and leader of the American environmental movement, remembered, “During World War II, I served as project officer in the Navy’s development of aircraft dispersal of DDT. We made meticulous studies of aerosol production, aerodynamic distribution, insect kill, meteorological effects, and problems of flying tactics. Toward the end of our work, when we were justifiably proud of our system, we received a request for help from an experimental rocket station on a strip of island beach off the New Jersey coast. Urgent work was being severely hampered by flies; would the Navy please get rid of them. We doused the island with DDT. Within half a day the beach became a flyless paradise and the rocketeers went about their work with renewed vigor.”

The U.S. Department of the Interior monitored the test. Its report on Island Beach stated, “Birds were censused on July 8, when large numbers of gulls, terns, herons, shorebirds, barn swallows, purple martins, red wings, and other songbirds were observed.”

Then, “The southern 5 miles of Island Beach, in Ocean County, N.J., including the shallow water just off shore in Barnegat Bay, were sprayed by airplane on July 11 with an estimated one-half pound of DDT to the acre for the purpose of eliminating mosquitoes.”

The Press of July 19 broke the story.

“The U. S. navy test of DDT powder to exterminate mosquitoes on half of the Island Beach tract in Ocean County proved successful, according to Dr. Allen K. Brouwer, president of the county mosquito extermination commission. Sprayed by three sowing flights of navy planes from Philadelphia, the results were ‘nothing short of miraculous’ in the words of Thomas C. Roberts, Johns-Hopkins university scientist in charge of experimental work in the area.”

The future looked bright.

“Dr. Brouwer said: We are proud that the navy chose Ocean County to enact its first test of dichloro diphenyl trichlorethane in this state. We have every reason to believe that this pioneer work will show

the way to widespread use of the insecticide for the benefit of sea-shore New Jersey when sufficient quantities are available for peace time use. We also believe that no birdlife is destroyed directly by the use of DDT in this test.”

But Commoner recalled, “But a week later they were on the telephone again. A mysterious epidemic had littered their beach with tons of decaying fish – and all the flies in New Jersey had come to enjoy the fun. This is how I learned that DDT kills fish.”

The Press was silent until Aug. 3rd, when a front-page headline read “Sea Life Slaughter Laid to DDT Spray”.

It reported, “(M)ore than 75,000 small fish and hundreds of crabs have been killed, it has been learned.

“Efforts on the part of the Ocean County mosquito extermination commission to popularize the insecticide, widely used by the army and navy in combat areas and just now becoming available for civilian use, have met with scorching denunciations by sportsmen as results of the Island Beach test became known.”

Reports of crabs dying prompted Robert J. Hawley, a U.S. Game Management agent, to survey the site. “I am no scientist and do not know the causes which killed those fish and crabs ... but it does not take a scientist to know what killed them.

“The plane which sprayed the island, he said, flew to the west of the land, over the bay, as a northwest wind was blowing and the pilot depended on the wind to drift the spray down and over the land.

“The department of agriculture is now making exhaustive studies of DDT as to its harmful effect on beneficial insects and other form of wildlife, Mr. Hawley said, and has urged extreme caution in the use of DDT, particularly when broadcast by airplane.”

The battle lines were being drawn. The Trenton Times of July 30 ran, "In the tests made by the Department of Agriculture of the usefulness of DDT in killing mosquitoes, in no instances were injurious effects observed on warm-blooded wildlife."

The government would proceed, and the Aug. 6 Press stated, "Island Beach is due to get a second dose of the insect-killing DDT spray tomorrow, despite accusations that the potent chemical slaughtered fish in the Barnegat Bay area in recent weeks.

"Dr. Allen K. Brouwer, Toms River, president of the Ocean County Mosquito Extermination commission, urged patience on the part of the public today as it became known that another DDT application was being prepared.

"All scientific experimentation is done at a cost. In that manner, the lot of man in society is improved."

The Department of Interior report demonstrates the government knew a problem existed.

"On July 18 reports were received of the dying of many edible crabs, which had reappeared in the sprayed area; and on July 21, 150 dead or dying crabs were found over a 200-yard stretch, while those in adjacent unsprayed waters were healthy. Fiddler crabs and ground-inhabiting insects, on the latter date, were abundant and apparently healthy."

Then, according to the Press of Aug. 9, the government backed down.

"The second spraying of DDT, the navy's deadly insecticide which it has been charged was responsible for the death of many fish and crabs as the result of a July 11 test at Island Beach, did not take place, it was announced today.

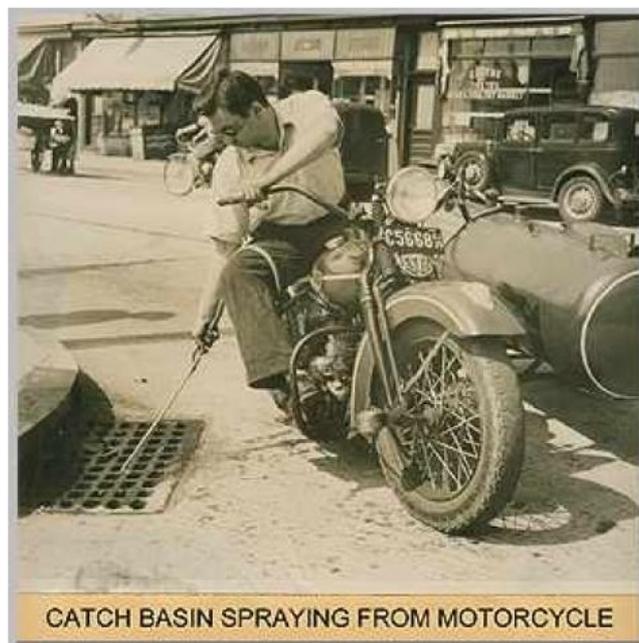
"A communication from the department of interior in Washington, thru which the Phipps estate, owners of Island Beach revoked its permission to the navy to spray the area, caused cancellation of the second spraying."

But some suggested another culprit.

“Dr. Brouwer, pointing out the natural cause of death of many small fish in bays like Barnegat, said, ‘The physical shock or trauma caused by heavy drops of rain on the water often kills many fish which may be swimming close to the surface.’”

The tide was now running against the environmentalists. The Press of Oct. 10, 1945, wrote, “Nearly 200 residents of Seaside Park signed a petition ... testifying to the marked reduction of insects in the Island Beach area following spraying by the navy of the area with the insecticide DDT. ... Residents asked that additional spraying in the area be authorized, stating that birds and wildlife were not killed in the initial application. It is hoped a way may be found so there will be no interruption of the progress of mosquito extermination work by such splendid groups as the Ocean County Mosquito Extermination commission.”

The battle ended with the Press story of April 25, 1946. “The Ocean County Mosquito Extermination commission has decided to set up a spraying program covering street catch basins and highway drains with two percent solution of DDT in cooperation with the county road department.”



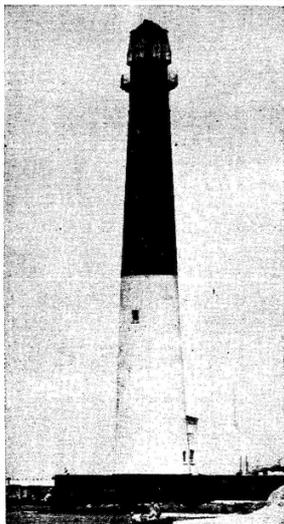
Science had won,. Kids would ride their bikes behind trucks spraying clouds of DDT, and old-timers would tell stories of watching osprey catching fish in Barnegat Bay. It would be over 15 years until

Rachel Carson read the Island Beach report and used it in her book *Silent Spring*, which would start the battle again, this time with a different winner: the ospreys of Barnegat Bay.

Next Week: Island Beach, Park or Resort?

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## National Park Urged to Save Virgin Oceanfront



*State Board of Commerce and Navigation President Advocates the Acquisition of Wild Island Beach Area Above Barnegat Light*



200 Plus

## State Steps in When Congress Fails

By THOMAS P. FARNER | Jun 23, 2016

The battle for Island Beach didn't involve thousands of troops storming ashore from landing craft. Instead it pitted environmentalists against developers, fighting for the support of politicians and the citizens of New Jersey. World War II was in its final stages, and the United States Navy occupied Island Beach, using it as a testing site for guided missiles when the opening salvo of the battle was fired.

On Jan. 25, 1946, an Asbury Park Press article stated, "Charles R. Erdman, Jr., commissioner of the state Department of Economic Development, has recommended to Gov. Walter E. Edge and the state legislature that the state purchase Island Beach, a 10-mile strip of privately-owned land in Ocean County, for development as a public seashore playground."

Erdman continued, "Wisely developed, it offers opportunities for surf and bay bathing, for boating and fishing, and at the same time provides adequate space for recreational facilities and the preservation of a stretch of wild and untouched seacoast and dunes without the encroachment of one upon the other.

"The site has unusual natural advantages, combining scenic beauty with its picturesque dune formations and wide beaches with rare vegetations."

He noted the issue had been discussed for 20 years, but "The Department of Economic Development now believes that the acquisition of Island Beach, to be developed and maintained as a public seashore playground for the people of New Jersey, should be no longer delayed."

It didn't take long for the gauntlet to be picked up the next day in the Press. "Shore real estate men and others close to the situation expressed doubt today that the state or federal government would ever purchase Island Beach, a 10-mile strip of privately-owned land extending from Seaside Park to Barnegat Inlet, for development as a public seashore playground. It is owned by the estate of the late Henry C. Phipps, multi-millionaire steel magnate."

And even Erdman admitted "he had heard rumors that the Phipps interests were planning to develop Island Beach. This possibility gained credence when a Shore real estate man, said to be close to the Phipps interests, expressed belief that development of the tract would begin as soon as the war ended."

The Trenton Times of Jan. 27, 1950, reported on the progress of the battle.

"Dr. George H. Shull of Princeton, chairman of the Island Beach National Monument Committee, reports important progress toward its goal of having the nine-mile stretch of natural seashore between Seaside Park and Barnegat Inlet preserved as a wild life sanctuary administered by the National Park Service as a national monument.

"Last Spring, the trustees of the Phipps Estate, owner of nearly all of Island Beach, let it be known that they had received an offer of a million dollars from a big real estate firm for the northerly 118 acres of

Island Beach, plus an option on a portion farther down the peninsula, the object being to develop a big seashore real estate project.”

Environmentalists across the country protested and were given a reprieve when “As a result of these activities, the proposed sale to the real estate company has been called off, and the friends of a wild life sanctuary are to be given a period of five years in which to secure the necessary funds.

“In the meantime, a bill to authorize the establishment of Island Beach National Monument as a part of the National Parks system was introduced in the United States Senate ... and less than a week later, it was passed by unanimous vote of the Senate. It will go to the House of Representatives for consideration early in this new session.”

But there was a catch to the bill; it contained no money, and the purchase “can be done only if the many friends of Island Beach as a wild life sanctuary give ardent support to the financing campaign that is about to begin. The bill just passed by the Senate makes no provision for a contribution from the national Government toward the purchase of Island Beach from the Henry C. Phipps Estate.”

The Asbury Park Press of June 13, 1950, tried to sum up the opposing sides.

“Proponents of an Island Beach national park warn that unless action is taken now to preserve a portion of such land in its natural state, something that is unique in nature will be irrevocably lost to man and his sciences. This Barnegat peninsula boro, which has been so preserved by its owners, offers a last opportunity, they say, to prevent that loss.”

Unfortunately, “The plan is not without opponents. Principal opposition is from political and governing interests within the county and their objections are financial. Whereas the plan’s sponsors offer abstract values, opponents’ arguments are in cold cash. They see in the plan loss of development possibilities running to millions of dollars.”

The Press explained the opponents had some powerful political support.

“The bill remains in the public lands committee of the House where it is reported to be favored. Reports indicated, committee members said, that lack of endorsement by local representatives was delaying action on it.

“Rep. James C. Auchincloss, Third district Republican whose approval would be sought under rules of legislative courtesy, then disclosed that altho he had no personal objections to the plan, it was being opposed by State Sen. W. Steelman Mathis and the Ocean county board of freeholders. Mr. Auchincloss urged that public hearings on the proposal be conducted.

“Since then Senator Mathis, his father, County Republican Leader Thomas A. Mathis, the Ocean freeholders and the council of the nearby boro of Seaside Heights have publicly announced opposition to the park plan. They object on the grounds that the plan would limit development of the area and that the county would lose a source of potential tax revenue.”

Delaying tactics in the House of Representatives prevented the bill from ever reaching a vote. The Press ran an editorial on Sept. 21, 1950.

“Campaign-minded Congressmen, anxious to recess and go home within the next few days, are forgetting or overlooking a piece of legislation of particular interest to Monmouth and Ocean counties and the state of New Jersey.

“The Island Beach National Monument bill has passed the Senate of the Eighty-first Congress and is now in the hands of the House committee on public lands. It reportedly has many proponents in the lower house. Opposition has been nebulous. But time is running out.

“It is hoped that Representative Auchincloss, from this district, and all New Jersey Congressmen will act before it is too late to take advantage of this opportunity. If, in the rush to come home and campaign, congressmen overlook the Island Beach park bill, they may find that their words are not heard over the sound of their inaction.”

No vote was taken, and for the want of a vote, the national park was lost. Environmentalists turned to plan B, having Island Beach preserved as a state park. Here they were more successful and were able to celebrate their victory when the March 27, 1952, Press reported, “Governor Driscoll told THE PRESS

yesterday that he intends to sign the appropriations bill containing a \$2,700,000 allotment for the purchase of Island Beach, which the state plans to turn into a bathing beach and wildlife sanctuary.”

What turned the tide of battle? The citizens of New Jersey had taken up arms.

“Ocean County’s two legislators, Sen. W. Steelman Mathis and Assembly woman Lettie E. Savage, both voted for the bill, altho they previously had been counted as opposed to the Island Beach project.

“Senator Mathis, who had hoped that Island Beach could be turned into a real estate development, stated that altho he is still opposed to the park proposal, he had been ‘snowed under with mail’ in favor of making it a state recreation area.

“With this apparently last obstruction to the project removed it is to be hoped that the state will act with all possible speed to acquire the property. As one of the last remaining strips of primitive coastline Island Beach should certainly become public property to insure its preservation for the public’s use.”

There would be more skirmishes as some tried to turn Island Beach State Park into a Coney Island and others pushed to link it to LBI, but the war was over. As you look across Barnegat Inlet to the natural dunes and lack of development, you can tell who was the winner: the citizens of the Garden State – change that, the citizens of a natural state.

Next Week: 1916... don’t go near the water.

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