



# Port Norris

# Be a Part of History Today

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Port Norris Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of our unique village, located in Commercial Township in Cumberland County, NJ.



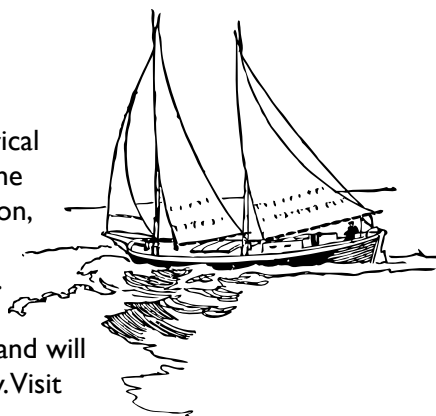
### Current Happenings:

**PNHS Next meeting: May 10, 2016 • 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street**

### Delaware Bay Watermen's Memorial Launch Remembering Those Who Died on the Bay

The Bayshore Center at Bivalve, The McBride Enterprises and the Port Norris Historical Society invite Bayshore community members, families, friends and artists, who recognize the importance of memorializing many who have been lost in the Delaware Bay, to help envision, support and bring into being a Watermen's Memorial.

The memorial will be located at The Bayshore Center at Bivalve on the Maurice River. It will be fully accessible to the public for viewing by land or from the river. The memorial will provide an opportunity for families to remember loved ones past, present and future and will offer a place of quiet contemplation, reflection, remembrance and connection with the bay. Visit the new website for more information [watermensmemorial.org](http://watermensmemorial.org)



There have been many lives lost on the Delaware Bay. The Watermen's Memorial will honor the names and their stories. This is not just past history. As recently as 2013 a young man, Josh Catlett, died while on a fishing boat and the list of so many others will follow as we verify each one.

To start, here is a young man's story which was sent to us by Sara Robbins Hoffman. His name is Andrew Highburger, a German American born in New York, in 1870. He was not married and, at the time of his death, had a mother and sister living in New York City. He was a laborer in the oyster industry. Andrew belonged to several organizations of the time, Red Men, Knights of the Golden Eagle, Stars of Victory Lodge, Shepherds of Bethlehem and faithfully attended the Bivalve Mission.

According to the story, on Nov. 15, 1905, Andrew's life was cut short at the young age of 35 when he tragically drowned while working on a float along the wharves of Bivalve. Sadly, he had only been in the area for one year. Andrew lived a Christian life and was always willing to lend a hand wherever he could. He often spoke of his mother and his sister in NYC, but no one knew their names or how to contact them. Nothing was found in his belongings either. Because his family could not be reached, with all of his local affiliations, they took it upon themselves to give him a loving burial.

*continued*

Join us for this exciting project  
May 5, 2016 . 4 - 7:00 pm  
Program at 4:30

A fund raising reception  
Enjoy a late afternoon stroll at the docks on the  
Maurice River and the museum at the  
Bayshore Center at Bivalve.

2800 High Street, Port Norris, NJ 08349

See what we are planning to commemorate the  
brave men who have lost their lives working on the bay.

Your \$25 contribution will help us build the memorial  
on the waterfront in Bivalve. This will be a place of  
inspiration and quiet contemplation. People will come  
from near and far to quietly remember their loved ones.

100% of the purchase of your ticket benefits the DBWM  
Live music • Raw oyster bar • Great food and drink  
Cash Bar Available • Rain or Shine

For online tickets, please go [bayshorecenter.org](http://bayshorecenter.org)  
Select "Sail tickets sold here"... Go to May 5  
and click on the Reception.

From there you will be able to buy your tickets.  
Should you wish to purchase a ticket offline,  
please call 856-785-2060 ext. 108.

The Bivalve Mission had loved him so much they all cried. Even his fellow workers, strong men, were so moved. Rev. MS Messier and Mr. Pepper spoke so fondly of him, giving touching testimonies. Mrs. Morton Bateman sang a solo and with Miss Yates sang a duet. There were floral arrangements considered to be exquisite which really showed how admired he was by all. The Red Men displayed floral arrangements and The Knights of the Golden Eagle brought Calla Lilies and the Stars of Victory brought a triangle made of stars. He was only a member a short time, but three Shepherds of the Bethlehem, were his pall bearers to a waiting carriage as his fellow workers stood with their heads uncovered and their eyes dimmed with tears as he passed along the wharves in Bivalve where he worked. He was buried at the Port Norris ME church.

It truly is a touching story of this young man, coming to make a life in the oystering industry and then losing his life, yet being so honored by those he had only known one year. We hope that over the years, his family did learn of his fate.

**There are so many stories to tell,  
each one is special.  
Please join us in this discovery.**



This photo is representative of a float at the wharves in Bivalve. It is not a photo of Andrew Highburger.  
Photo by Harvey W. Porch  
Courtesy of the Cumberland County Historical Society

## Picking of the Month

### April 5, 1888

The W.C.T.U. Hall will be dedicated on Saturday, April 7. Services in the afternoon and evening. General invitations are extended to sisters of adjoining unions. Mrs. J. T. Ellis will be present and conduct the services. The choirs of both Methodist and Baptist churches will unite and form the musical part of the programme.

### April 9, 1890

The schooners "Wm. C. Lore" and "David R. Lake" were blown ashore in the river Sunday night and quite a number of boats dragged their anchors and were badly tangled up; hardly a boat was gotten under way before eight o'clock yesterday morning. See More Pickings at [historicportnorris.org/pickings.htm](http://historicportnorris.org/pickings.htm)

## Membership and Renewal for 2016

We would love to add your name to our growing list of members. Please give some thought to joining the PNHS. Membership fees are for Individual - \$10, Family - \$15, Benefactor - \$50 and over, and Student - \$1 (no voting privileges) and entitles you to discounts on our merchandise. Click here to renew or join, [historicportnorris.org/membership.htm](http://historicportnorris.org/membership.htm).

Or mail your check to: Port Norris Historical Society, PO Box 187, Port Norris, NJ 08349.

Thank you for your support. Membership is key to applying for grants as well as your dollars help us continue with all of our endeavours.

### See us on Facebook and our website [historicportnorris.org](http://historicportnorris.org)

If you are getting this email from a friend and would like to be added to our list, please [click here](#) and we will add you. If we received your email at one of our events and you do not wish to receive this newsletter, click here [web@historicportnorris.org](mailto:web@historicportnorris.org), we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!

**SAVE THE DATE • JUNE 4th • BAY DAY**

## Moment in History: Biographical Review

Avid Robbins Lake, a retired merchant and a fruit grower of Port Norris, was born in the village in which he now lives on the 31st of December, 1859. His parents were Samuel and Mary (Robbins) Lake, the former of whom was also a native of Port Norris, where he was born on September 3, 1826, and where he grew up.

Samuel Lake must have possessed the force of authority as a sort of inherent faculty; for he was the captain of an oyster vessel when he was not more than fifteen or sixteen years old, beginning his career as a boatman before that time even. He was recognized as the most youthful commander in the service in that part of the country, and at an unusually early age became an oyster dealer. This was before oyster planting had become a regular industry, and the young man had but little competition to encounter. In a comparatively short time he was the owner of three schooners and one sloop, all devoted to the oyster industry; and he eventually became the largest dealer in that most popular species of shell-fish in his generation and locality. He continued in this business until five or six years before his death, giving his personal attention to the enterprise, frequently visiting his boats and looking after his men. He always lived in Port Norris with the exception of three years passed in Bridgeton, while his children were at school.

Mr. Samuel Lake was first a Whig in politics and later on a Republican. Besides his oyster beds he owned quite a large amount of land in the vicinity of Port Norris, and was a man of wealth. He married Miss Mary Robbins, a daughter of Mr. David Robbins, a large farmer in this locality, whose name has descended to the subject of the present sketch, his grandson. Mrs. Lake, who was born in February, 1833, was the mother of four children, three of whom grew up to maturity: Daniel, who lived to the age of seventeen; Myra, who is now the wife of Theophilus Newcomb, a resident of Newport; David Robbins; Robert L. The parents have departed this life.

These good old people were at first members of the Baptist Church at Dividing Creek; but, when the Baptist church was established in the old school-house at Robbinstown, they were among its primary organizers. Mr. Samuel Lake was an earnest and active supporter of the Baptist denomination in this locality; and it was greatly due to his efforts that the church structure, now occupied by the congregation to which he belongs, was built. Such was his interest in the success of the deserving attempt to

establish a church here that he circulated the subscription papers in and about Bridgeton, and received donations amounting to one thousand dollars, which was a great help, coming as it did from outside generosity. It was, however, hardly generosity so much as recognition, as he had for years, while he was in the oyster business, furnished the Bridgeton church fairs with his oysters free of charge; and now the grateful congregations returned his kindness with their hearty support, financial as well as otherwise, for his new church. Mr. Samuel Lake was at the time of his death one of the most highly respected and honored citizens of the place, not only because of his wisely and justly accumulated wealth, but also for his sterling integrity and general earnestness of character.

David Robbins Lake, son of Samuel, received his early education in the common schools of Port Norris. Then he went with his parents to Bridgeton and attended the high school, thus completing his school education.

After leaving the high school he went into the oyster industry with his father. With the sturdiness and pertinacity of character that early developed themselves in this young man, he started at the very bottom of the ladder to learn the business, in order to get a thorough hold of it. He continued in the oyster business with his father until 1883, when, at the age of twenty-four, he married Miss Abigail Hand. About that time he built a store on the corner of Market and Main Streets in the town of Port Norris. Here he intended to do business personally; but, owing to the poor health of his wife, he took her to Colorado, and they spent the winter in the vicinity of Denver and at Pueblo. They returned here in the spring of 1886, when she died, leaving no children. Mr. Lake sold out his store in Port Norris, and during the three years of his widowhood was engaged in the oyster business again. After this period he returned to his old interest in the grocery trade, and went into his old store, where he continued successfully engaged for over four years. In December, 1894, he sold out his interests in his grocery business, as the indoor life did not agree with his health. Being the owner of a very good tract of land amounting to about seventy acres, in and adjoining the town, he decided to cultivate a part of it especially for fruit-growing purposes: and he accordingly set out a large number of peach-trees and plum-trees, and devoted quite an acreage to the culture of blackberries and strawberries.

[Click here to read more](#)

<http://historicportnorris.org/biographical-reviews.htm>

Sources: *Biographical Review Leading Citizens of Cumberland County New Jersey 1896*



### NORRIS ASKS

## Do you know how many Square Miles are in Commercial Township?

Answer: According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2010, the township had a total area of 34.438 square miles (89.194 km<sup>2</sup>), including 32.129 square miles (83.214 km<sup>2</sup>) of land and 2.309 square miles (5.980 km<sup>2</sup>) of water (6.70%).



© Port Norris Historical Society 2016

**Officers**  
 Rachel Cobb, President  
 Richard Smith, Vice-President  
 Alvina Baum, Secretary  
 Robin Berry, Assoc. Secretary  
 Liz Hoffman, Treasurer

**Trustees**  
 Rev. E. Barnes  
 Eileen Bernhardt  
 Virginia Campbell  
 Joanne Hickman  
 Sam Ricci



Photo: Rachel Cobb