



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 9, 2017 • 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street



North Port Norris Schools

By Carol Saul Gromer

North Port Norris was once called Middletown. Today, people pass through on their way south to Port Norris or north toward Millville without knowing the rich history steeped into the soil where the Port Norris-Haleyville Road and Sockwell Lane intersect. On the southwest corner of that location is a lonely looking plot overgrown with trees and weeds. Truth be known, that land is far from being lonely. Many warm memories hover there keeping it company. To learn its secrets, take a trip with me back in time to the days when that very spot was alive with the pounding footfalls of laughing children.

On this site was not one but two North Port Norris elementary schools. They didn't exist at the same time, of course, but one followed the other as the residents of the hamlet did their best to provide for the education of their children. Two students attending the older school in the mid 1890s were Maurice Sockwell and Jim Foster. Maurice tells that it was a one-room school with 45 students in seven grades. In 1898, at age 10, he took the job of school janitor. His jobs consisted of keeping the fire going in winter and sweeping the whole building with a broom for five cents a day. He also relates that as he got older, he and his friends had



**North Port Norris Elementary School
About 1882-1915**

1923 for Ruth) were Miss Edith Bateman, Miss Matilda Sockwell, Miss Fleetwood from Dividing Creek, Miss Brewster from Haleyville and Miss Hoffman from Leesburg.

Kathryn and Ruth Sockwell each wrote their memories of their days as North Port Norris students. Kathryn, wrote, "It (the new school) was one big room with large windows along the west side with a big heater on the north side. Blackboards ran all along the wall behind the heater, (behind) the teacher's desk and along half the east wall. There was a cloakroom located just inside the front doors. During the school day when each student went to the front to recite or to write on the blackboard, there was never a sound. No one threw spitballs. All came to learn and did. The big, round heater burned wood and coal. I was the janitor. I made \$3 per month and put my pay in the Millville bank. At the end of the school year, I had to put two or three big five-gallon cans of oil all over the school floor with a long-handled brush. That was a real job. I brushed it on the floor of the big room, then the cloakroom floor. In the vestibule, I was almost to the door and found I had made a mistake. There I stood in a circle. The only way out was to jump. Holding the pan of oil, I leaped. When I did, the pan flew up and oil came down all over me.

Sealed Proposals

Sealed proposals will be received at the school building, North Port Norris, N. J., on Friday evening, June 25, 1915, at 8 o'clock, and there publicly opened for furnishing all material and workmanship for a one-room frame school building to be erected at North Port Norris, N. J., the same to be in accordance with the plans and specifications which may be procured from the undersigned at his home at North Port Norris, N. J.

Each proposal must be accompanied by a certified check or cash to the amount of \$100. All checks to be made payable to the Board of Education, Commercial Township, and to be forfeited if the successful contractor fails to enter into a contract and furnish bond within ten days after contract has been awarded to him.

The Board reserves the right to reject any or all proposals if they deem it to their interest to do so.

By order of Building Committee of Board of Education of Commercial Township.

H. B. SOCKWELL, JR.,
Chairman Building Committee. Port Norris, N. J.

Bridgeton Evening News . Saturday, June 19, 1915

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1934

Miss Sadie Brewster, the teacher of the North Port Norris school, died February 1, of influenza, followed by pneumonia. Miss Brewster was an excellent teacher and the children of the North Port Norris school and all the teachers and supervisors who came in contact with Miss Brewster esteemed her highly. Her death is a loss to the schools of Cumberland County.

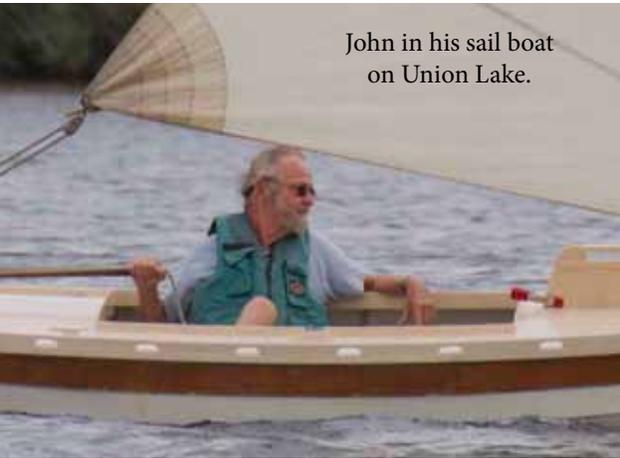
I wondered how I would ever get home. At that time, there was not much traffic, only a Model-T or two, so I ran home hiding behind trees away from the houses. I was a sight to behold. When asked what the kids did for recess, Kathryn related, "We took our cow, Daisy, up in the schoolyard to keep the weeds down. Since the cow went to the bathroom there on the schoolyard, kids covered their eyes with blindfolds and walked through. That was the most memorable game I recall."

Ruth paints a different picture of her school memories—at least during recess. She says, "One day, after lunch, all the kids were playing hide and seek. I was hiding in the cloakroom when the kids found me and were about to catch me. I jumped out of the window and our teacher, Matilda Sockwell, saw me. I had to stay in after school for a week" It might still be possible to see that window. It was the one located closest to the front on the left side of the building. At the end of its career in North Port Norris, the "new" school was moved to Shellpile (Bivalve). After being used as a school in that area, it was repurposed in the not too distant past as a restaurant. The infamous window of Ruth's jumping fame must still be there.

As time moves along, it erases many treasures. What remains for those who care are the words left by people who lived with and loved those things, people and places. Through their eyes we can peer into life as it was in days so long ago. Now that you know a bit of the history of the southwest corner of Sockwell Lane and the Port Norris-Haleyville Road, stop there on some quiet day. Listen for a few moments. It might not be the wind you hear rustling the leaves and grass, but echoes from the past that linger because you remember.

Thank you Carol for the history of North Port Norris Schools. All of Carol's pictures and news clippings can be see on our website. [Click here to see more.](#)

In Tribute to John T. Guidera



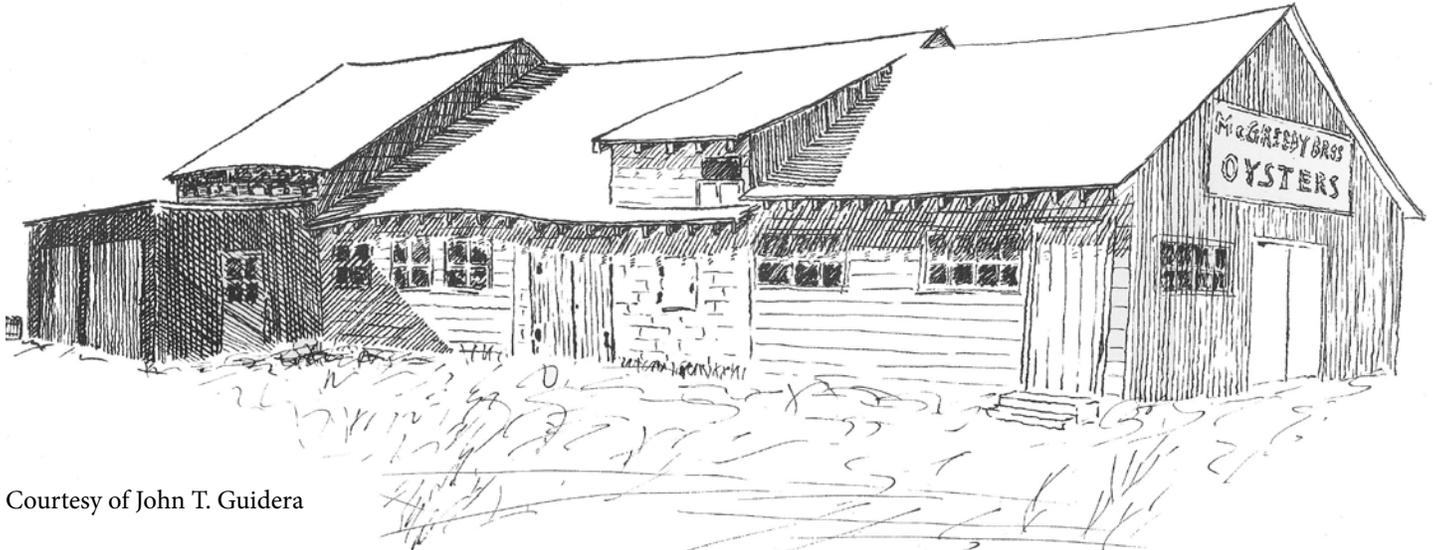
John in his sail boat
on Union Lake.

The PNHS has lost a dear friend and member. John T. Guidera, 74, of Millville, passed away on Thursday evening, February 23 at Inspira Medical Center, Vineland after a brief illness.

John, a retired social worker, found time for his many interests. An avid sailor, he was a member of the Union Lake Sailing And Tennis Club and the Traditional Small Craft Association. He was a prize winning artist whose first love was watercolor, but who was also becoming very proficient in oil painting. John was most proud of being accepted as a member of the American Artists Professional League in New York City. As an enthusiast of local history, he spent many hours exploring the little towns and roadways of South Jersey and reading everything ever written about the area.

John gave generously of his time to support the PNHS. We are grateful to him for the use of three of his line drawings which were incorporated into our first cookbook and two others not yet in print.

John was a kind and talented man and will be missed by all of us. His memory will remain with the PNHS forever. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Gloria, his wife of 50 years, our member and good friend, as well as their entire family.



Courtesy of John T. Guidera

A Special Evening

Thank you to the Mauricetown Historical Society for inviting the Port Norris Historical Society to a wonderful social evening on April 18th at their beautifully restored society home. Following a delicious buffet, we were given a tour of the cookhouse and a tiny cottage on their grounds. We sincerely appreciate their hospitality and look forward to working with their members on future projects.





WE RAISED THE ROOF,
NOW THE CEILING'S COMING DOWN
2ND WEEK IN MAY. WATCH OUR
WEBSITE FOR UPDATES

[CLICK HERE](#)

Membership and Renew for 2017

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

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**

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, we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!

SAVE THE DATE Legends of Port Norris

**Annual Fundraiser
Legends of Port Norris Dinner
Sunday, November 12, 2017
Ramada Inn, Vineland, NJ
2017 Nominations due by June 13th.**

**Click Here to Nominate a
Port Norris Legend**

Please Note: Meeting dates and times are posted on the website each month along with the approved minutes from the last meeting. Everyone is always welcome. [Click here to view.](#)



NORRIS ASKS

Do you know how far back Horseshoe crabs date?

Horseshoe crabs are often called "living fossils" because fossils of their ancestors date back almost 450 million years—that's 200 million years before dinosaurs existed. They will be coming ashore along the Delaware Bay in May and June. Learn more and see how you can help save the Horseshoe crabs. <http://returnthefavornj.org/>



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