



Port Norris

The Past for the Future

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.



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2020 Legends will be announced in November

The Oyster That Ate Port Norris

The 2,000 people living here can't help it, their town is turning into a ghost town.

By David T. Shaw

The first building you come to on Main Street in “The World’s Oyster Center,” is Municipal Hall, a squat brick dwelling decorated with mesh grating. It is set at the edge of Main Street and a large sign in front proclaims its existence and hours of operation, along with a drawing of two healthy-looking oysters. Inside the building, aside from performing the duties of governing a small township, Mayor Clarence Berry and his sparse staff work at preserving what is left of the town of Port Norris, New Jersey. “The World’s Oyster Center” is a motto employed somewhat sheepishly by the 2,000 people residing here. Port Norris is empty of life, but not uninhabited.

At one point in time, between 400 and 500 boats set sail from the wharf on the Maurice River just one block south of Main Street. The oyster industry there employed thousands who worked on boats and in the shucking houses lining both sides of the river. They came by a trolley which ran the length of Main Street, from surrounding towns such as Dividing Creek and Cedarville and Bridgeton. A railroad ran up the bank of the river to collect the oysters and send them to all parts of the country. The size and taste of a Port Norris oyster was second to none and people paid handsomely for the delicacy. When the oyster season ended in May, the crewmen and shuckers went to Port Norris’s farms for the summer months as hand-laborers, picking blueberries, strawberries, and other vegetables. The produce was sold to nearby Seabrook Frozen Foods. Farming was as prosperous as oystering. But drive down Main Street today and much of that Port Norris is gone. The oyster industry succumbed to a parasite named MSX which hit in 1957 and has remained uncontrollable to this day. The farming industry expired when the oyster shuckers left and there was no longer hand-labor available. The farmers sold off their land to sand-mining companies, and work could be found only in the glass factories

around Millville and Glassboro to the north.

Now where once stood two-stood two-story houses with lacy trim stand homes in need of attention. Some houses are vacant eyesores, their windows boarded and doors padlocked. Others are occupied eyesores. A small irony is a hardware store which has withstood the years, a faded sign hanging above its door advertising BenjamineMoore paint; there is not a dwelling in Port Norris not in need of two coats. The trolley is long gone, the railroad all torn up. Seabrook Frozen Foods moved away years ago. Only a fraction of the oyster industry is left, and much of the farmland is no longer used for farming. Oddly, the town’s population has remained stable, perhaps in hope that the prosperity of past days will return. Two thousand people live in Port Norris, but almost no one works here.

THE LAST FARMER

In his den, Phil Capaldi, 75 years old, sits in a lazy chair watching television. He looks a decade younger. He is a square-shouldered man with a slight paunch. He has a round face and wears glasses. He is quick to make a joke when the occasion arises, and thoughtful when recalling the past of Port Norris; his voice rises when discussing what happened here.

“I was born right in this house, in 1910, lived here all my life,” says Phil. “My father came from Italy around the turn of the century and bought this farm in 1907 – around 20 acres then. He was a stone mason, but he wanted to buy a farm and be his own boss, never have to answer to anyone. Well, he was certainly mistaken. You’re not your own boss. You have the weather and the bugs and the market. You have Mother Nature.

“We averaged a hundred helping hand from the area, and we had migrant workers who’d come in the fall. Got them from a labor place up in Glassboro. Just go up and put in an order

for them. We had the camp for them down the road a bit, with about 20 rooms and a cook shed and laundry shed and showers and everything. When we went out of the business --- growing broccoli and cauliflower for the Seabrook company --- we tore the camp down. Didn't want to pay taxes on it.

"This country used to be quite a farming area, the largest produce market in the state was just up in Cedarville. That's not even mentioning the Seabrook company. But a few things hurt us. Most of our help was from the oyster industry, you see. The parents would work in the oyster houses and the children would go to school. Then in May, when the oyster industry shut down, the mother and father would come out of the houses and work on the farm and the children, they'd come and work on the farm and it was wonderful. But the MSX hit in '57 and destroyed everything. Everyone left. Just nothing left to do here.

Phil shrugs his shoulders and stares at his television.

"We got outta the business and went into mechanical harvesting of string beans. Snap beans. That was for Seabrook. When they left, went south, we had to get out of the snap beans. This was in '74 and we'd been growing a few acres of soybeans, experimenting with them. In '76 we went a hundred percent. Now we're strictly soybeans."

Soybeans have been Phil Capaldi's salvation. The move to soybean farming was easy since the same planters and cultivators used for the snap beans may be used for the soybeans. As Dominick, Phil's son, says "It was a crop that fit right in with us". There was no worry about the market because soybeans were in large demand. Meanwhile, other farmers in the area sold off their land, mostly to the sand companies. The Capaldis used this opportunity to increase their acreage.

Capaldi Farms is run by Phil, his brother Louis, and Dominick. The three of them operate the farm - now 750 acres - without difficulty, says Phil. They have more than 70 fields, each averaging 10 acres. Their farm is the largest in the area. "The price of soybeans is not what it should be", says Phil. "It's low because there was such an overproduction last year because so many farmers got into it - all through the west - and they put so many beans in storage. And then, our export is not what it should be. In fact, we don't have much of an export anymore."

The beans are measured by the bushel. This past year, the Capaldis averaged 30 bushels to the acre, which put them at about the national average. But it was a late harvest due to humid fall weather. Soybeans can be harvested only on dry days. Left in the fields too long, the vines become brittle and high wind or hard rain knocks off the top pods. The harvester will skip over these vines and leave them spread over the dirt, useless.

"C'MON," says Phil, Throwing on an overcoat. "We'll take us a ride out into the fields." He jumps into his pickup. On the truck's back fender is a bumper sticker with a waving American flag and the words, "I'm proud to be a farmer!"

Phil Capaldi's fat golden retriever is the only animal on the land. "We used to have a lot of pigs. In them days, everyone butchered their own hogs and made their own ham, bacon and lard. A lot of horses, of course, for plowing. And chickens for eggs. And a cow, too. But now it just ain't worth it. I mean, can you picture in the morning you gotta get up and milk the cow?"

Phil pulls out onto Main Street - Route 553 - and heads west. Besides his pickup, he has plenty of rolling stock: "Let's see now. We got six Oliver tractors, a Ford makes seven, two Internationals, that's nice, an Ace is 10, Macy-Ferguson 11 and a Caterpillar makes 12."

In about a mile he turns the truck onto a dirt road leading to the middle of a field. It is the largest plot the Capaldis own -- some 70 acres-- and it is being harvested at the moment by Louis and Dominick who ride the two combines. The soybean vines are close to two feet tall and drooping slightly and many of the top pods have fallen off. The field is the color of straw and bordered by woods. At the far end of the field, the two combines move side by side down the long rows. Phil views the pods which have not fallen to the ground. "Just got enough here to make it worthwhile," he says. The combines rumble past, chew up everything within reach of their headers and spit a wake of trash out their back. Louis and Dominick wave hello. Things are going well. With some luck it will be the last day of a long season.

Bouncing along in the pickup, leaving a trail of dust, Phil talks about the problems of soybeans. "Sometimes," he says, "when the weather gets too dry, not enough rain, and the plant is not growing the way it should, then there's a red spider, a little mite so small you can't even see it with a naked eye." "Naked" he pronounces "neckit" and holds a hand in front of his face with finger and thumb punched together. "Sucks all the juice outta the plant. You can spray it, but it gets expensive. Now, deer, they're a problem also. And they're pretty slick, too. We have to get a permit and go out at night and shoot at 'em. And rabbits? Geez"

He drives past woods and fields and houses. There is hardly any traffic. When a car does pass, Phil usually waves hello and the driver waves back. A strange car receives a glare of suspicion. He drives past his fields, harvested now, and looks this way and that over them. He passes a small farmhouse with an acre or two of broccoli, lettuce and cauliflower, most of which has died with the frost.

"Now these people here," says Phil, pointing to the house, "my father came and settled here around the same time theirs did. Now they've gone into the sand business. You see, they were digging a well for irrigation and they found a lot of sand. And the fellow who was doing the drilling said, "This is some wonderful sand here!" So, these brothers, the three of them, they kept thinking about it and thinking about it, and finally they got into it. They quit their farming and now they're just into the sand business. And they've done a wonderful job."

THE MINES

South Jersey is regarded as one of the nation's largest producers of industrial sand. Though deposits of common construction sand and gravel can be found almost anywhere, a unique recession of glaciers 10,000 years ago left this area with rare deposits of silica, a high-quality sand with properties that make it irreplaceable in the manufacture of light bulbs, television tubes, bottles, tile, glassware, dinnerware, porcelain, paint, iron, steel, insulation, water filters, fiberglass, cleansers and other industrial solvents.

The abundance of silica deposits in South Jersey was discovered early and glassmakers began operating in the early 18th century, and hence came glasshouses. Sand-mining companies followed, as suppliers to the glass factories.

One of the largest mining companies in the Port Norris area is The Morie Company, now in its 52nd year of operation. Started in 1934 as a mining company to extract gravel for a cinderblock plant in Vineland, the owners soon found themselves with a surplus of sand. By 1937 Morie's was selling industrial and filter sands as well as gravel. In the early '60s the block

plant was closed and the firm went exclusively into industrial and specialized sand. By 1961 it was also producing glass sand and had become the most diversified sand company in the northeast. As of today, The Morie Company is the fourth largest sand-producing company in the nation, with plants in Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee.

Sand can be mined in a variety of ways, from scooping the dry, loose material on top to dredging below the natural water table to blasting and crushing from quarries. The mines are multimillion-dollar investments.

Morie relies on dredging around Port Norris. Its operations are barely more noticeable than small ponds.

A closer look reveals the differences: the hue of the water, ranging from emerald green to sapphire blue, depending on the day's sky; the angular symmetry of the banks; the absence of weeds, lily pads, or other organic life; the huge black pipes nearly two feet in diameter that run out of the water. Quite suddenly the ponds become unnatural.

The mines are as deep as 50 feet. A working mine has a barge afloat in the middle that pumps the dredged sand through pipes to a nearby booster plant, in turn pumping it a mile or so to the main plant. The sand is then processed through a series of washings and filtering's until it is graded into specifications suited for its intended use.

When the mines are exhausted, they undergo a reclamation process. The land around them is sloped and cleared to make residential and commercial properties, or simply left as "attractive" lakes and wildlife preserves. The Morie Company had been stocking these "lakes" with bass and blue gills when they were finished, only to find nature doing an equally commendable job; birds stock the lakes for them by picking up fish eggs on their legs from natural lakes and dropping into Morie's man-made ones. As Ron Johnson, president of the company, says "It's impossible to keep the fish out of the mines."

In Port Norris itself, there has been only one mine closed. But to call this closed mine "attractive" is clearly a matter of opinion. In passing a mine, Phil Capaldi glumly observes, "We used to farm all this. Now look at it, all dug up."

Farther down the road, he points out a vast region of woodland which a sand company bought for mining. It was prohibited from drilling, he adds; when bald eagles were spotted nesting on the land. As he talks, a large bird turns slow circles high above the trees, effortlessly riding the thermals. Phil Capaldi brings the truck to a halt in the middle of the road and stares up. "Is that a bald eagle!" he asks, awed by the sudden credibility of his story. "My...it must be an eagle 'cause that's where they're at. That's their home."

THE OYSTER HOUSE

"You in a hurry are ya? Let me show you what the oyster houses look like!" Phil Capaldi hits Main Street and turns left past the Methodist church. He takes a right onto a road leading directly to the oyster houses and the Maurice River. This is Prospect Street. He drives past a small brick schoolhouse, boarded up with NO TRESPASSING signs nailed to it. At the end of Prospect, he turns left onto a dirt road parallel to the river. The oyster houses, the few that remains, hug the bank. Though it is the height of the oyster season, there is not much activity. On the opposite side of the road are shell piles, like small mountains, blocking the view of marshland behind.

"Used to be 500 boats that would go out and plant the oysters. Made a big day of it around here: first of May, first day of planting. I mean all the boats would go out. Now look around. There used to be all houses here, now torn down. Oyster business is just a skeleton of what it was. Un-Be-Lievable, Five hundred boats, three or four abreast! Now there's only 40, maybe 45, and some of 'em aren't any bigger than rowboat.

"At one time, there was a day they had 123 boxcars of oyster – this is back in the 20s –and they had to come down with an extra locomotive 'cause only one couldn't pull it. Imagine, 123 carloads. In them days, one oyster house down here would shuck as many as all the houses today combined...all because of MSX. "the man working the skimmer calls out the weight of the oysters and writes it next to the shucker's name on a sheet of paper tacked to the wall. The shucker also writes down the weight. Shucking oysters is piecemeal. Thirteen years ago, Neil Owens gave up his job as manager of the town's bank to join Reed & Reed Oysters. At the time, the firm was owned by his in-laws and the industries had just had two good years and looked like it was on the road to recovery. But judging by the despair in his voice, Neil Owens, now the sole owner of Reed & Reed Oysters, might rather be back at the bank. The man is a study in gloom. He greets Phil Capaldi warmly and seems pleased to have company. He is a man in his 40s, tidy, with a face as innocent as Sunday preacher's.

In his office Neil says that, indeed, it did look like the industry was making a comeback, but no, it had in fact gotten worse. He says the MSX organism thrives in water with high salinity and, thanks to last summer's drought, the past season was a banner year for the parasite. He says the Rutgers University Shellfish Research Lab down the road has been working closely with the oyster houses, but the lab still isn't close to developing a way to control the MSX.

He says the problem has been monitored for 30 years now. He talks of pathologist, parasitologists, immunologists, and marine biologists.

He says that of the 15,000 seed oysters he planted the past season, he got a return of barely 3,000. Phil asks about the large pile out on the floor, stating how healthy those oysters look. Neil says he purchased them the day before from an oyster house in Maryland --\$4,000 worth ---just to keep his house operating. He recalls earlier in the season placing an ad in the paper for shuckers and not receiving a single response! "I came here in 1973 with great promises, and here I am 13 years later. I'm afraid my balloon burst and my ship sank." As he sees Phil to the door, he grabs a container of freshly packaged oysters and hands them to him. "Here, Phil," he says. "Why don't you take these home with you?"

FLASHBACK

A quick inventory of Main Street in Port Norris, New Jersey prior to MSX; an ice plant, a pool room, a department store, a gas company, a jewelry store, a telegraph station, a hardware store, a firehouse, a barbershop, an ice cream parlor, a clothing shop, a Chevy agency, a radio shop, a laundromat, a shoe repair shop, a Chinese laundry, an A&P, an Acme, a train station, a Ford agency, two service stations, three theaters, five churches, one bank, and a hotel that burned down during Prohibition after a series of mysterious explosions.

RUTGERS EXPLAINS

According to Dr. Susan Ford, an assistant research professional at the Rutgers University Shellfish Research Laboratory, trouble in the oyster industry began a lot earlier than 1957. In the late 1800s the industry harvested between one and two million bushels of oysters annually. Starting in 1830, the oysterman had begun to actually “farm” oysters, rather than simply dredging the shellfish from their natural beds. Bed farming the oysters, the industry took advantage of the physical characteristics of the Delaware Bay to produce outstanding oysters. Fresh water from the Delaware River mixing with the salt water of the bay creates a gradient salt concentration and oysters thrive in water with about half the salinity of full-strength sea water. In the upper parts of the bay where the salinity level is low, vast natural beds of seeds oysters have formed over the centuries. Here they are safe from sea predators like crabs and oyster drills (small snails which bore through the oyster’s shell and eat the meat.) The oystermen found that by taking the seed oysters from these beds and transplanting them to the lower bay, the oysters grew rapidly, became a plumper, and acquired a better flavor. Though this method transplanted oysters compensated for the mortality rate.

By the turn of the century the State of New Jersey took over management of the seed beds and began leasing grounds to the oystermen who were permitted to dredge the 12,000 acres of seed bed in May and June, then plant the oysters on their leased grounds staked off in the bay. The industry grew tremendously under this farming method and it wasn’t long before Port Norris was “The World’s Oyster Center.” There was little change in the industry until the mid-1940s, when oyster boats were given permission to dredge with engine rather than sail power. Because of this greater efficiency, the removal of the seed oysters from their beds began to exceed the rate of new seed oysters “setting.” (An oyster begins life as larvae, swimming through the water until it attaches or “sets” itself to a clean and stable object on the floor of the bay.) By the late ‘40s the beds were severely depleted and the industry was forced to import seed oysters from Virginia to meet the demands of the market. Technology and greed had created an unforeseen problem in the industry. Nature couldn’t compete against man and his machines. It would retaliate, however, with a problem no oysterman had ever seen.

In the spring of 1957, the oystermen motored out to the lower bay, to their leased grounds from the previous season, expecting to pull up a rich harvest typical of past years. But what they reeled in must have been a surprise: the dredges brought up nothing but empty shells and dying oysters. That year between 50 percent and 85 percent of the oysters in the leased grounds died. The following year the mortality rate jumped to almost 95 percent and brought the industry to a standstill.

In 1958 a Rutgers parasitologist working with the Research Lab in nearby Bivalve, a mile south of Port Norris, discovered an organism in the tissue of both dead and living oysters from the regions of the bay worst affected. It was an organism never before seen, a sphere-shaped single-celled parasite that contained many nuclei. The scientist named it MSX, an acronym for “Multinucleated Sphere X (for unknown).” Thus, began a relationship with the mysterious organism now closing in on its 30th anniversary.

There are several theories concerning the origin of MSX. Some say it was brought to America by seed oysters imported from Japan (where there is, in fact, a similar parasite). Others

say MSX had always been present in the Delaware Bay as a harmless parasite until a mutation occurred making it a killer. There have been reports of MSX from Massachusetts to Virginia, but none as devastating as the ones from Port Norris.

In fact, in 1982, Rutgers saw a splendid opportunity and built its MSX research lab on the bank of the Maurice River. It was new development in Port Norris, but the lab has not been able to come up with a cure for MSX.

Rutgers is now trying to develop a strain of oyster resistant to MSX. Unfortunately, the cost of raising these oysters in hatcheries is expensive and at this time impractical for the industry. Though Rutgers’s Ford doesn’t see a means of controlling MSX in the near future, she remains optimistic about the Port Norris laboratory work.

“Were tackling the problem with some of the newest techniques in biology and trying to be practical about it at the same time. You’re dealing with oysters living in a bay with billions of gallons of water which is constantly moving, living underneath 15 to 30 feet of water. You can’t simply develop something to sprinkle in the water. I mean, were not talking about pesticing corn here, or say inoculating people. That’s why the people of Port Norris are frustrated, because they want it to be treated like a corn disease.

“One thing which has got to be made clear is that this parasite is strictly an oyster parasite and cannot be transmitted to humans. It can kill oysters but is in no way a danger to humans”. Ford neglected to mention its potential for killing an industry.

UPDATE

An even quicker inventory of Main Street in Port Norris, New Jersey in the year 1986: Sal & Joe’s General Store and Service Station, Dragastine’s Friendly Service Station, Laws & Laws Hardware and Plumbing Supplies and Service Station, The G&L Variety Store and Service Station, Newcomb’s Market, the Westside Luncheonette, three churches, a bank, and the town hall.

BACK WITH PHIL

“Neil’s more or less disappointed with the oyster business,” Phil Capaldi says driving through the center of town, oysters by his side. “You see, his partner died a few months back. This partner was 57 years old and had a heart attack and died like that” Phil snaps his finger.

“Nope. I don’t think it would take much for Neil to go back into the banking business. He was well-liked and we all had high regards for him. But there were those couple of years there in the early ‘70s, and the oyster business was more or less handed to him. You know, it’s like I said about being your own boss. In the banking business, they’re always breathing down your back. So, Neil says, “Aw, I’ve had it.’ Like when my father bought the farm. He didn’t want no boss. Same with Neil. Neil thought the oyster business was a bed of roses. But there’s no such thing as a business that’s a hundred percent good. If there was, who’d do anything else?”

Down the road a bit, Phil reflects on his own business. “It was a pretty good crop this year, but like I said, we lost a lot of them on the ground. “I just hope they don’t break down today, that they get in a full day and finish up. Those combines have so many moving parts, you know. So many moving parts...”

MAYOR SUNSHINE

The mayor of Commercial Township, which includes the towns of Haleyville, Mauricetown, Laurel Lake, and Port Norris, is Clarence Berry, 50 years old and born in Port Norris. The Berry family has been in the area for generations, going back “hundreds of years”, and have made a name for themselves in the salt hay industry. Salt hay, which grows abundantly in meadows along the river, was once used to make rope but is used today primarily for construction sites and for mulching shrubbery and the shoulders of highways. The salt hay industry used to employ quite a few people in Port Norris, but mechanical harvesting has drastically reduced that number. The mayor’s salt hay business, which he inherited, employs three.

But Mayor Berry supplements this and his government salary with another business he owns which seems 100 percent, and profitable, too.

The mayor—who is a friend of Phil’s and whom Phil calls “Sunshine” – manufactures coffin mattresses. Berry began Coffin Shells, Inc. 20 years ago after a brief period of manufacturing excelsior (finely curled wood shavings used for packaging, or, in this case, mattress stuffing.) He sold his excelsior to casket companies on the East Coast and after a while “one business led into the other”

Almost unsuccessfully at first. There is a story Phil likes to tell, about “Sunshine” getting the idea to stuff mattresses with the less expensive salt hay rather than the excelsior. The results were not good. Salt hay has a slight odor to it, and it is hollow and has living organisms in it. Berry quickly went back to using excelsior. When asked about this endeavor, he vehemently stated, “We do not use salt hay in our mattresses!”

Phil still gets a good chuckle just thinking about this. Mayor Berry says he now produces three types of mattresses at his plant: the standard excelsior model, an adjustable spring type mattress, and a steel-frame model bedded with cotton. In his first year of operation, Berry’s plant produced 17,000 mattresses, or “units” as he calls them. The company has grown steadily over the two decades, and this year Berry anticipates sales reaching 150,000 units. His company, which is located in Port Norris, employs 25.

So why do anything else?

Well, Mayor Berry has a genuine concern for his hometown. He had been the town clerk for seven years before taking his mayoral oath three years ago. He is bringing results. He is seeking re-election.

“We’ve tried to address the sub-standard housing problems and clean up the town of Port Norris”, he said last spring over the phone. “We just got a grant of \$350,000 from the government, a “Small Cities Block Grant” it’s called, and were going to do a face lift on Main Street and just a general upgrading on everything. What qualified us was the fact that we’re an area with high unemployment and sub-standard housing”.

He also talked about his concern for the oyster industry, “which has just about gone down the drain, more or less.” And has applied to the government for a \$500,000 grant to help save it. “It would be administered in small interest loans, like to the individual oysterman to keep his boat in repair...otherwise they’re going to sink in.” To date, no decision has been made on the grant. The mayor also had praise for the sand-mining companies in the area, “They do employ a few people around here.”

Mayor Berry is optimistic about the future of Port Norris, no matter how glum things may be now. I think Port Norris is on the rebound for the simple reason that we’ve got Atlantic City and the Pinelands on the east of us. The Pinelands can’t be developed and you can’t be some ordinary person to go into Atlantic City and buy. Then on the west of us, I understand there’s no waterfront property for sale. So were squeezed here in between these two places. Eventually, they’ve got to build around here. They don’t call the mayor “Sunshine” for nothing.

EPILOGUE

Phil Capaldi is standing in the rows of one his soybean fields, in a town the inhabitants still call “The World’s Oyster Center.” Besides him, dwarfing him, is one of the combines he uses to harvest the soybeans. It is a machine with balloon tires that reach the farmer’s shoulders. At the moment it is broken, jammed with the pulverized vines of the plants. Phil Capaldi watches as Louis and Dominick work at the harvester, poking its innards with a long pole in hopes of freeing the machine. They’ve been working at it for nearly an hour. Phil shakes his head. Today would have been the end of a long season.

A visitor, though sensing the disheartenment of the situation, asks for a picture of the farmer. Phil Capaldi does not seem agitated by the request, but looks uncomfortable. He stands next to the combine, squinting into a low sun. The visitor asks him to pose a smile. The farmer’s expression grows somber and he raises his hands to his hips. “Now just what am I supposed to be smiling about?” he asks.

Editors Note: We reprint this article under the Fair Use Law. We have not been able to locate the author and the publication no longer exists. Atlantic City - October 1986.

PHILIP CAPALDI 1910 - 2004

Recognized as a Legend of Port Norris on November 21, 2010

Visit his Legend page: historicportnorris.org/legends-8.htm

ALSO SEE

Louis Capaldi 1925 - 2017 historicportnorris.org/legends-7.htm

Recognized as a Legend of Port Norris on November 21, 2010

Dominick Capaldi 1941 historicportnorris.org/legends-64.htm

Recognized as a Legend of Port Norris on November 12, 2017



Port Norris Pickings

October 6, 1888 There will be a democratic parade here this evening and a banner stretched across the Main street at the Post Office. There will also be a meeting at the Wigwam next to the Post Office. A club will come from Bridgeton to participate in the parade.

The Republican Club meets tonight in the K. of P. Hall.

October 2, 1890 The stone and sand is being carted for the G. A. R. hall. Let the good work go on. It is to be a nice building and in a good location on Main street. *(This is the PNHS present day Meeting Hall)*

October 9, 1890 The whooping cough has become an epidemic among the younger members of our population.

New Membership Levels

We have made some changes to our Membership beginning in 2020, with the addition of one NEW level. Donations of \$50 or more that were previously listed as BENEFACTOR will now be designated as PATRON. BENEFACTOR levels have changed to \$30 Individual and \$35 Family. General Individual and Family remain the same. (See the yellow box at right). All members receive merchandise discounts. Please check our website for listings of additional benefits. We are grateful for your ongoing support which helps us meet the needs (heat, electric, etc.) of maintaining our building.



NORRIS ASKS

What farming family in Port Norris received a Century Farm Award in 2014?

The Capaldi Family. Dom and Mary Capaldi receive the Century Farm Award for their farm,



Capaldi Farms, which had been in operation in the same family for 100 years.

Read More: historicportnorris.org/tomorrow-14.htm



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.](#)

Membership and Renew for 2020-21

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 - \$30 Family \$35.00
 Patron - \$50 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.

Membership fees are tax deductible.

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For a complete list of committees see our website. [View Here](#)