



Port Norris

The Past for the Future

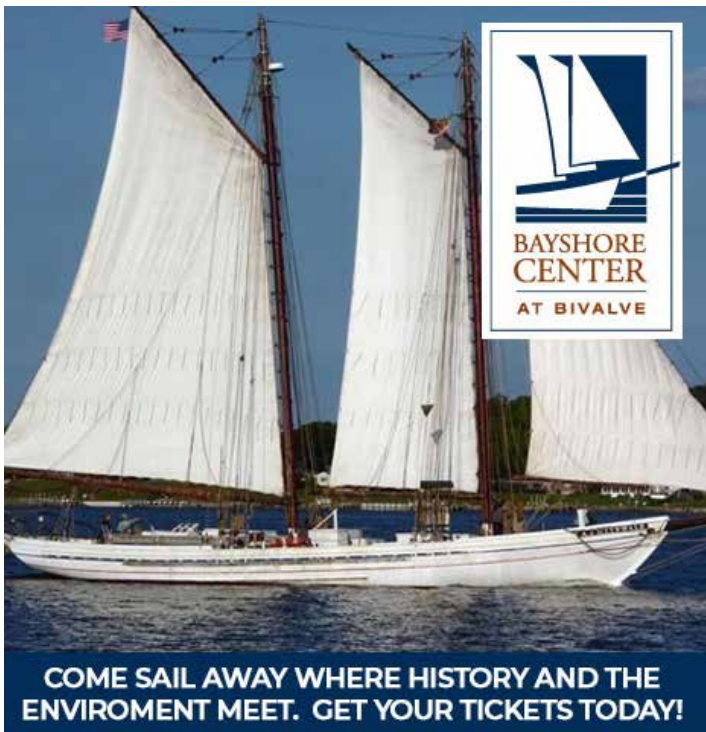
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Visit our website for many historic journeys.



Sail the A. J. Meerwald and support the PNHS



COME SAIL AWAY WHERE HISTORY AND THE ENVIROMENT MEET. GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!

The A.J.Meerwald sets sail Thursdays through Sunday, Morning, Afternoon and Evening. Better hurry and get your tickets today because they sell out fast.

For Public Sails schedule and tickets, go to bayshorecenter.org/events/

For information on Private Charters, and Education Sails go to bayshorecenter.org/events/

It is so important in this unprecedented time to support one another. The Bayshore Center at Bivalve (BCB) is offering a promotion for sailing on the A.J.Meerwald which will not only benefit them, but the Port Norris Historical Society (PNHS) as well. If you purchase tickets for the remainder of this sailing season, and you enter the promotional code PHNS2020, not only will you have a great experience, but you will be supporting us, the PNHS.

The BCB will donate back \$10 to the PNHS for every ticket sold. How can you pass this up? You will be helping both groups at the same time and we all need your support.

Many sailing dates left for the year! Don't forget to add the promo code PNHS2020. Thank you as always.



Photo: Rachel Cobb

Herman M. Wessel

Elkins Park, Pa.

May 24, 1981

TO THE CLASS OF 1931,
 Fort Norris N.J. High School.

GREETINGS:

Amanda Doubllass asked me to write you a note on the occasion of your fiftieth anniversary as graduates of Fort Norris High School. I am not sure what such a note should contain. What can a man who has been sixty-two years out of college offer that would not be boring to you? But I will try.

Like most of you, I was born in Fort Norris. Like most of you I went through the Fort Norris schools, which in my day ended with the eleventh year. I too had Elizabeth Buzby in the high school as a Latin teacher. Did you? when the new brick building was built and the four year high school was established, I am not sure. But I returned to Fort Norris in 1919-1920 and began my teaching career in that building. There were about 85 students and five teachers including Albert Steelman, who was also the principal of all Commercial Township Schools. Where were you that year: in swaddling clothes, in elementary grades,--you definitely were not in high school.

I chose to live at home that year. I had lost my only brother during the terrible "flu" epidemic of 1918, and my parents were very shattered over his death. Do you remember the Wessel store on Main Street, diagonally across the street from the Bank? That building no longer exists. After my parents left in 1924, I think the building was occupied by an A and P. store. Is that right? My brother's son, who was a year old when his father died, is now a pediatrician in New Haven, Connecticut and is connected with Yale University Medical School. His monthly column appears in PARENTS magazine; perhaps you or your children or grand-children may see it.

I recall my childhood in Fort Norris with great clarity. I am sure you recall yours equally well. My friends in school were kind and warm. I still communicate and see occasionally Dorothy Rogers who became a doctor and still lives in Woodbury. She, Margaret Robbins and her husband, and Mrs. Wessel and I used to have annual dinners at one or the other of our homes, rotating year by year. The dinners stopped after Margaret's husband died, and travel became difficult. A couple years ago, my wife and I stopped for Dorothy Rogers and we all came to Fort Norris. It was on a Saturday afternoon, and the oyster shucking house on the end of Main Street was not operating. I did see one of the Robbinses, one who was a contemporary of mine in school.

With in the last month my contact with Fort Norris was a sad one. The daughter of Hammit Robbins, who lived in nearby Wyncote died. It was a shock to me, for I had not known she was terminally ill. I spoke to Hammit when he was at his daughter's home, and offered my sympathy. I recall his brother, Warren very well. Warren died at an early age, he was nearer my age when we were in school together. About five years ago, I saw Hammit and his wife, Martha and the Bertie Willans in the home of Dorothy Rogers. Both Hammit and Bertie were in the ninth grade in the high school when I taught there.

I recall Port Norris, the town that it was, the warm friendliness of the people toward my parents and to me, even though many of them did not feel very warm toward me during my teaching there. You see, or you may not see I introduced the idea of EVOLUTION to the boys and girls in the biology class,--and this caused considerable stir. I'll not go into that,--perhaps your parents may have told you about it.

What a change I see in Port Norris now! I compare it to the village in Oliver Goldsmith's poem--THE DESERTED VILLAGE. Do you know that poem? Bivalve--where are shipping wharves, the railroad tracks, the oyster floats, the ticking telegraphs of Lambert's Western Union office, the lines of sixty or more freight carloads of oysters daily going to Philadelphia and elsewhere? And the numerous stores selling all kinds of ship supplies,--Batezans', Fowlers, Yates,--all those names bring back memories to me along with Bucky Meredith's barber shop and his wife's restaurant, at which my parents and I ate many a Sunday dinner!! I don't know where I am, when I stand on the street in Bivalve and see only the banks on both sides of the Maurice River.

What sophistication has come to Port Norris! I remember only Main Street, Yock Walk, and Shell Road as the only named streets. Where did all the names come from? And why? And When? We gave directions by way of Al Garrison's store, or Fat Fashley's corner, or Doc Bradford's house, or Willis Robbins' store, or the A of P Hall, or past the post office, or next to Doc Day's, or perhaps where the Baptist Church stood, or the Methodist,-- and such. What nonsense now--names and numbers of houses--indeed what nonsense?

And the sophisticated fire fighting apparatus. I remember the first fire engine. A small hand pulled cart,--later the rope by which the men and boys pulled the cart was replaced by horse tongue,--and at the sound of the gong, the first horse which arrived had the job of pulling the cart. Last fall I visited the Oyster Festival on the Haleyville school grounds and noted the modern fire engines of today. A welcome change, indeed. I remember what the young progressive people who fought for fire engines in my childhood used to say: what this town needs is a number of good sized funerals! You see the older folks did not want new fangled ideas like fire engines and street lights take hold in their town. But I see the years did go by.

I am convinced that change did come. But all these new things cannot remove from my memory the happy days of shooting marbles on the sidewalks, or pitching horseshoes with the shoes given to us by the blacksmiths, of playing baseball with a home made ball with a penny hard rubber ball as the center and a nicke ball of twine covered sometime with tire tape, and batting the ball with an old pump handle. We did not have the luxury of spending money on our playthings. We built our sites from old cedar fence posts, covered the frames with newspapers and flour paste, and tails of any old rags that mothers would give us. We made whistles from the branches of trees fresh with the running sap in the spring, had our "punke" from dried out cat-tails so that the 4th of July firecrackers could be used in their proper way. As I write this on this CONGRESSIONAL MEMORIAL DAY, I recall the parades on Decoration Day led by the few Civil War veterans who were still living, followed by the Jr. Order of Mechanics (or some sort of lodge) dressed in their uniforms and carrying their guns to shoot over the grave of the last departed veteran who had been laid to rest in the cemetery back of the Methodist Church. And then the parade included festooned bicycles on which their proud boy owners had worked so hard to make them "pretty." And the Fourth of July festivities in the school yard, sometime ending with the chicken and oyster suppers plus all the other sales booths that had been put up to allure the youth of all ages! What festivities those were!

I think I have said too much. I must not ^{let} my mind wander further. I am glad that Amanda made this request--I have had much pleasure in reminiscing. Let me wish you a happy 50th Reunion, and say how fortunate you were not to have been born a decade earlier--you might have had me for a teacher--but THEN WHO KNOWS, WHO IS THERE TO SAY WHICH OF US WOULD HAVE BEEN THE LUCKIER?

Sincerely, with the spirit of Port Norris

William H. ...

p.9.

P.S. You should know that you can't stop a school teacher from talking, or in this case, writing. All he needs is a captive audience. But I cannot close without mentioning a bit of the sports, both as a looker-on and as a participant that was part of my childhood and youth in Port Norris.

There were the summer baseball games, with a tall lanky man whose name I have forgotten as the pitcher. But a Davis--the son of the hotel owner--was the catcher, and a Pepper who played first base. Perhaps these were not all at the same time, for I am sure that "Pep" as he was called was younger than the other two. But what I remember most was sitting in the grand stand munching over my five cents bar of peanuts! What, peanuts--5¢ a bag, that was it. But what was more important to me was the building of the first tennis court in town. I was one of the boys, along with Morran Jeffries, Sonny Buckalew and others whom I have forgotten. We were motivated by a young Baptist minister who came to serve, one who was not too well accepted by the older folks, because he chose to walk around town in the hot summer days in an open neck shirt and rolled up sleeves. That's no dress for a minister, heat or no heat! I recall the corner lot, next to Charlie Robbins' store--I think I have the right name--which we cleaned, rolled, marked with lime, got a net somewhere, and each had a racquet and a couple balls--and there we began what was to become for me a life-long interest in participating games. I only wish I did not quit when my own son began to trounce me,--that was my mistake.

Speaking of the hotel owner, I recall the first automobile which came to town. It was owned by the hotel owner,--who else could afford or would afford the new fangled machine that scared the horses to no end when the two met each other. I think it was a Red Rambler--the auto I mean.

No radios, no television. A weekly nickel movie came late in my youth. Before that the annual medicine shows in the K of P hall. Occasionally the flickers--movies, showing the perils of Pauline or other serials for which we waited eagerly and anxiously from one Saturday to the next. Well, that's enough of a world gone by, and the past is past. What of the future? Who knows? But each of us should care, for there are moments when I'm frightened by what the scientists have done to us with their nuclear discoveries, or what man has made of those discoveries. I remember how conscience stricken Robert Oppenheimer was after the atomic blasts,--he foresaw the evil and the possible destruction that come to all of us. But let's hope, and for you tonight--keep your minds on the fifty years gone,--they were good years, I am sure. I feel that way about them.



Main Street

Port Norris Pickings

August 3, 1889

A large crowd of disappointed people were in Port Norris yesterday afternoon. The cause was the second failure (on account of rain) of the G. A. R. Post to show us a sham battle.

July 26, 1890

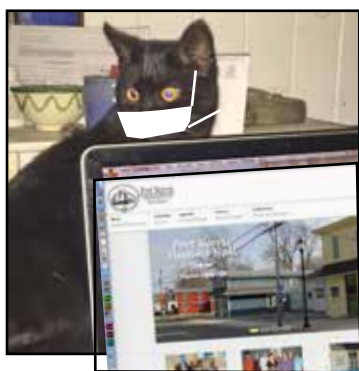
A game of base ball was played in the presence of a large crowd on Thursday between the Port Norris and Philadelphia teams, resulting in a victory for the Port Norris boys.

August 2, 1890

A very interesting game of ball was played yesterday between the "Muskrats" and "Minks." Wm. Cobb and Harry Green were the battery for the "Muskrats," and George Conahay and Walter Sharp for the "Minks." The score was 11 to 8 in favor of the "Muskrats."

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 was the town's name before Port Norris and before Dallas Landing?

Yock Wock Landing. Historically people have commented that this was the name before Dallas Ferry as it was part of the Yock Wock Swamp Tract. The Yock Wock Swamp, located

between Mauricetown and Port Norris, was once a vast cedar swamp.

Read More: cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=37



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.

**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 if 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!

Officers

Rachel Cobb, President
 Richard Smith, Vice-President
 Alvina Baum, Secretary
 Mary Linda Lacotte, Assistant Secretary
 Faye Hickman, Treasurer

Trustees

Eileen Bernhardt
 Virginia Campbell
 Gloria Guidera
 John Hickman
 Elizabeth Hoffman
 Joyce Massey
 Sam Ricci
 Rev. E. Barnes, Lifetime Honorary Trustee

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