



SOMERS POINT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

history starts here!

Winter/Spring 2022



West Jersey Baptist Church built in 1886
Now the Somers Point Historical Society Museum

EMAIL NOTIFICATION

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***History
Starts Here!***

A Message from the President

2022 is upon us and what a year we have planned at the Somers Point Historical Society. First and foremost, we have a couple new Board Members that we will introduce to you as the year progresses. Secondly, This years theme will be Eddie and The Cruisers. 2022 is the Fortieth Anniversary of the Filming of the Movie “ Eddie and the Cruisers” at Tony Marts in 1982. Covid once again has caused some delays in our programming with the postponement of our Installation dinner at the Crab Trap. We will be rescheduling and will keep you posted. Our February programs are also being pushed back further in the year.

As of now, our first event of the year will be the Eddie and the Cruisers Kickoff Concert on Friday, April 22nd at 7 pm, doors open at 6pm, taking place at the VFW on Bethel Road. This event will be a joint venture along with the folks at Tony Mart Cares. Our second new event will be the showing of the movie “Eddie and the Cruisers” at the Gateway Theater on Bay Avenue on Friday, May 27th at 7 PM. Next, the Somers Point Historical Society will be the prime sponsor of the Eddie and the Cruisers Beach Concert on the Fourth of July Weekend. This theme will follow through the rest of the year including the Car Show in October.

Our regular events, such as the Porch Mixer, Flea Market and Open House will all take place this Spring, so please check the schedule, city calendar, our website, Facebook or Instagram for dates and times. The Beermuda. Triangle t-shirts have continued to be a hot item, so don't be left out, get yours today. The U.S.S. Somers exhibit will officially go on display at our open house in June. We will also be adding a movie or 2 to our summer night programs at the Museum. One last note for the Spring, the A.J. Meerwald people have contacted us about doing a presentation at the Museum on April 10th at 5pm, so mark your calendars.

In closing, the Somers Point Historical Society's Board would like to wish all of you a Happy New Year and we hope to see you at some of our events in 2022.

Thank You

Kirk Gerety
President



FIGHTING BLUE LAWS IN SOMERS POINT?



Somers Pt. Businessmen Begin 'Open Sunday' Fight

SOMERS POINT—Opening shots in a battle to keep "open Sunday" liquor ordinance in their present status were fired Tuesday night at a joint meeting of the Somers Point Beverage Association and the Point Business Men's Association, at the Ocean City-Somers Point Country Club. Members of city council were guests of the two associations.

The Point will take a referendum vote on the "open Sunday" liquor ordinance in the November general elections.

Joseph DiOrio secretary of the association opened the meeting and gave a brief resume of the situation. He introduced George F. Roberts, who spoke on behalf of the beverage association who urged the open Sunday vote.

\$20,000 WEEK PAYROLL

Roberts stated that more than 10 per cent of the entire revenues and taxes necessary to operate the city and schools is derived from real estate taxes and liquor license fees. He pictured the tavern business as the resort's major industry employing more than 300 persons. Weekly payrolls were placed at \$20,000 during the summer season.

Roberts then stated a few things that would happen if these places were forced to close on Sunday, including property re-assessment resulting in at least a 5 per cent increase to each individual taxpayers bill. A request would be made to the mayor and council to reduce the license fees which are now \$750 each.

NO ONE INJURED

He then said that to his knowledge he knew of no way in which any individual has been injured by these establishments being open on Sunday, that the hours do not conflict with church hours, and that a great percentage of the licensees and their families are active church members.

DiOrio then called upon citizens to express their views as follows: George Hyatt, president of the Business Men's Association, said that at the recent meeting of the association they voted to support the

Beverage Association. Chief William Morrow said that, "speaking as a police officer," he had no complaints from anyone in this community about the selling of liquor on Sunday.

Councilmen Charles Adellizzi, Joseph Weintraub, Thomas Wigglesworth, Charles Mink and Richard Herbert all agreed that the city depends on the cafes for their taxes and fees.

COUNCILMAN VOTES 'NO'

Councilman Bornt Johnson did not take a definite stand. Councilman Earl Seaman, a member of the Methodist Church, stated that he would vote "no" because of his beliefs.

Others called upon were Judge Richard Thompson, Richard Hagenbucher, president of Kiwanis; Theodore Meskers, Forrest Conover, Wil-

liam Godfrey, Stanley Haines, Elmer Carty, Thomas Bogie, Earl Shaw, John Willard and Samuel Benner. They all agreed to support the Beverage Association.

'Open Sunday' Backed In Point By Vet Groups

SOMERS POINT, Oct. 23—Commanders of two veteran organizations, as well as businessmen and officials of two fire companies, tonight pledged support of Somers Point's present "open Sunday" at a rally held in the Ocean-City-Somers Point Country Club.

The question of "open Sunday" as it pertains to taverns will be voted upon at next Tuesday's election.

Tonight's meeting was called by the Somers Point Beverage Men's Association and heads of all civic and veteran organizations in the city as well as individuals were invited. This is the second such meeting held. Last week city officials were invited and asked to state their views on the question.

George DiOrio, secretary of the liquor association, presided and explained the economic side of the question to the large crowd present.

Charles Harding, commander of the V.F.W. Post, and William Viet, commander of the Clark Eliason Post, American Legion, both stated that they had found the beverage business well conducted in Somers Point and saw no reason for Sunday closings.

Fred Rest, partner in a local theatrical enterprise, said that he would vote against any change because the start of a "Blue Sunday" could very well grow to include other businesses.

City Clerk Don Balsley cited a few figures on licenses and taxes and said that the city would lose financially with Sunday closings. Assistant Fire Chief Vic Giffort also spoke against a change, as did businessmen Harry Brown, Thomas Bogie and George Smith.

DiOrio said that there may be a third meeting before election, but no date had been decided upon.

Business Men Join Beverage Group in Fight on Blue Law

George Roberts and Others Warn Against Loss of City Revenue, Unemployment from Sunday Sale Ban

SOMERS POINT—George Roberts, speaking as a representative taxpayer and citizen before a large assemblage of businessmen and beverage men at the Ocean City-Somers Point Golf Course, Tuesday night, cited a 40 per cent loss of gross income by all businesses in the event of a majority "no" vote to the referendum "Shall Sale of Alcoholic Beverages Be Permitted in This Municipality on Sunday?"

Urging the group to vote "yes" to this question, he said Somers Point taverns make up a \$22,000 weekly summer payroll and employ roughly 300 persons. Ten per cent of the 1952 city revenue was derived from sale of liquor licenses, he said.

JOSEPH DI ORIO, secretary of the Beveragemen's Association, introduced Roberts early in the program. Mr. Di Orio, as program director, also urged the members of both the Businessmen's and Beveragemen's Associations to vote "yes" on the referendum and requested them to tell their friends and neighbors what Somers Point would lose in income and progress by a "no" vote.

Roberts warned that in the event of a "no" vote, tavern owners would have to ask for a lower tax assessment on their properties, with the result that home owners of Somers Point would bear higher tax bills.

ACCORDING TO ROBERTS, 650 people are solely dependent upon the Point liquor business. Tradesmen would suffer also by the Sunday prohibition, as businessmen would reduce employment of carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc. to improve their business property, he declared.

He contended that the Sunday sale of alcohol has in no way interfered with churches or church members.

"As a matter of fact many tavern owners are regular attending church members themselves," he added.

"The issue is non-partisan, with the question being, What is in the best interests of Somers Point?" he concluded.

REPRESENTATIVES of a cross-section of Somers Point interests were heard at the meeting.

George Hyatt, president of the Businessmen's Association, said that the merchants voted to cooperate with the beveragemen in fighting the Sunday prohibition. Both of them, he continued, have in the past donated generously to worthy civic projects.

William Morrow, police chief, testified that no complaint against taverns operating on Sunday has come to him from any citizen. If such complaints are warranted, Morrow said, he is sure the beveragemen can effect the necessary remedies.

RICHARD HAGENBUCHER, president of Kiwanis and former tavern owner, who is now a plumbing contractor, said that he would suffer by Sunday closure with the resulting decrease in business.

Sam Benner, gasoline service station owner, cited the possible loss of income to the city's service station owners and managers by Sunday closing.

Municipal Judge Richard Thompson spoke on behalf of the beveragemen, and Councilman Charles Adellizzi testified that \$3,000 needed to balance the 1952 city budget was raised by adding it on to the cost of retail liquor licenses.

Earl Seaman, Methodist church member who identified himself as a hater of the evils of alcohol, was a listener at the proceedings and was cordially welcomed by Mr. Di Orio. City councilmen, a boat-yard owner, a grocery business representative, and a lumberman were among others who protested the possible Sunday prohibition.



Check us out on Social Media!

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2022 Schedule

April 10	A.J. Meerwald Program - 5pm Museum
April 22	Eddie and the Cruisers Kickoff Concert - 7pm VFW
April 30	Bayfest
May 21	Flea Market - Gregory's Parking Lot
May 27 or 28	Eddie and the Cruisers 40th Anniversary Movie - 7pm Gateway
June 11	Open House/Summer Opening 10 am to 2pm USS.Somers Exhibit Debut
July 4	Eddie and the Cruisers Night - 7pm Beach Concert
July 21	Program (TBA)
August 18	Program (TBA)
September 4	Richard Somers Day
September 10	Good Old Days
September 16	Movie Night (Grace Kelly) - Gateway
October 15	Horsepower by the Bay
October 25	Ghost Stories at the Mansion
November TBA	Penny Auction
December 2	Christmas Parade
December 13	Christmas Open House - Museum

T-Shirts Still Available www.somerspointhistory.org



BEERMUDA TRIANGLE
T-SHIRTS \$20 donation



HORSEPOWER BY
THE BAY 2021
T-SHIRTS
\$20 donation

Where were you in '52? (The Twister - not Chubby Checker) by: Jim Foreman

On the morning of September 18th, I was under a desk in Mrs. Carney's third grade classroom in the old Dawes Avenue School. Suddenly, shortly after 11:45, the windows started rattling, trees shaking and a booming noise. At first, I thought that the Russians had dropped the BOMB. After all, we had to go down to the ground floor every two weeks for air raid practice. On Wednesdays, we sometimes had an assembly during which a film was shown either about the danger of communism or about the devastation that could be caused by the atom bomb. Initially this looked and sounded like a scene in one of the *Warner_Pathe Neesreels* shown at the Seaside Theatre. It was not a bomb this day, but a small tornado which was termed a twister. It did reek havoc here. For instance, it imploded the roof of the school. The roof was never properly repaired; thus enabling water to make its way through the walls of the building leading to its eventual crumbling. It was later determined that beach sand was used in the concrete. Subsequently, the building had to be demolished. Windows were also broken and a door splintered. According to Superintendent Royal Hinz, "The winds must have caused a great vacuum. Several of the rooms have damaged ceilings caused by the terrific suction". There were no reported student or staff injuries, but 146 children on the playground had to take refuge inside.

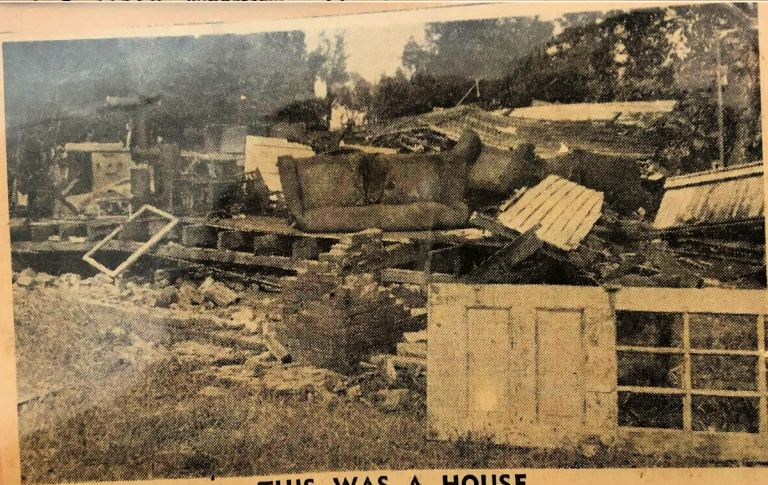
Dawes Avenue School was not the only casualty of the event. The damage was spread throughout the town. The storm first struck in the area of the Beesley's Point Bridge. It wrecked the home of Roy Garrison on Atkinson Avenue. In total eighteen houses were damaged at an estimated cost of \$150,000. The garage at the Mink Bottling Company, located behind the red bungalow next to what is now Primos ended up in the bay. The home, next to what is now the Parkshore Plaza Condos, lost its roof. Kirk Gerety remembers playing in the field next door (now the location of Parkshore Plaza Condos) some years later and finding portions of the roof. The greenhouses at Colonial Florist were flattened. Trees were uprooted and telephone poles were downed. My aunt, Margaret Winslow, told me that the chimney at her home on West Connecticut Avenue was blown down.

Only two people required medical attention at Shore Memorial Hospital. Roy Garrison, whose house was leveled and Herman Meskers, proprietor of Colonial Green Florist (now Fischer's) who was injured when the greenhouse was flattened. Mayor Chapman reported that the police, under Chief William Morrow, and the firemen, under Chief Mark Lashley, assisted by Thomas Oliver and Orville Mathis, were able to provide assistance in damaged areas. The Marine Defense Unit under Commander Ralston MacClausland and Linwood Police, under Chief William Price, as well as Northfield police, were able to provide assistance.

Although this storm was never referred to as a tornado by the Atlantic City Weather Bureau, it behaved as one. The newspapers referred to it as a twister. There was damage throughout the town. Fortunately, the first responders were able to take things in hand quickly and things got back to normal: the greenhouses were rebuilt; Mink's garage was replaced - this time with one of cinder block. The roof on Shore Road was also replaced; and my aunt got a new chimney. Somehow we survived Polio, Typhoid and Mother Nature that year and without help of CNN, MSNBC, FOX or Harry Truman. We did it ourselves.

Pictures and other information are from both the *Atlantic City Press* and *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

Freak Storm Wrecks Homes, Strews Ruin In Somers Point



THIS WAS A HOUSE

This wreckage was all that was left of the home of Walter L. Johnson at Atkinson Ave. and Spruce St., Hickory Point, adjacent to Somers Point, after the miniature tornado swept that section yesterday. Johnson said he was listening to a radio comedy program when his home collapsed. He escaped with minor injuries. (Press-Union Photo)
(See additional windstorm picture, Page 9)



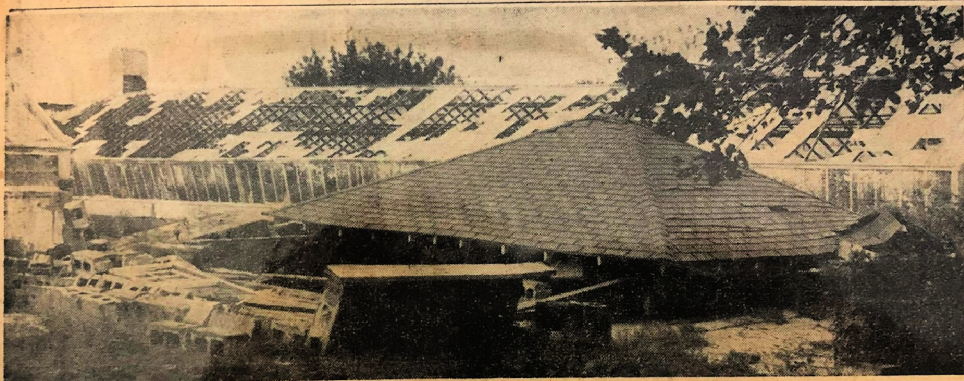
THE COLONIAL GREENHOUSES on Shore Road are shown after a windstorm whirled through Somers Point and the southern tip of Linwood yesterday. This greenhouse collapsed and windows of other greenhouses owned by Theodore Meskers were blown out. Meskers and his brother, Herman, said they had no insurance on the nursery section of the property.



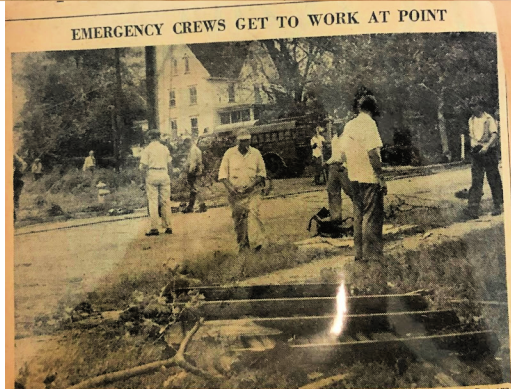
WALTER L. JOHNSON, of Atkinson Ave. and Spruce St., Hickory Point, near Somers Point, stands with his prized shotgun, one of the few possessions he managed to salvage after the storm demolished his home (in background). At his feet are his outboard motor and radio, among the few items left. Johnson said he was listening to a comedy show on the radio in his kitchen when suddenly his home collapsed on his head. (Press-Union photos)



Another victim of the big blow, which caused damage of \$100,000, is the Colonial Greenhouse.



Pictures above show some of the havoc wrought by a miniature tornado that swept between Somers Point and Linwood, shortly before noon yesterday. At left, the wreckage of two of the five greenhouses of the Colonial



EMERGENCY CREWS GET TO WORK AT POINT
EMERGENCY CREWS of the utility companies take over immediately after the blow at Somers Point to repair damage and get lines in working order in the earliest possible time. Here they are shown on Ocean Heights Ave. working amid the debris scattered by the storm. (Press-Union photo) (Additional pictures on Pages 1 and 13)