



# Somers Point Historical Society

Est. 1987

## History Starts Here!

745 Shore Road - Somers Point, NJ 08244  
Phone: 609-927-2900

Winter 2023

# Good Old Days!



The Somers Point Historical Society became the proud main sponsor of the Good Old Days Festival in 2022. This was an exciting move for us as we continue to make our organization more visible in the community and promote our local history through events such as this. 2023 will see the return of the 5k run, renamed the Good Old Days Run to Remember. Hope to see you all there!

### 2023 Schedule of Events

March 9 - Program presented by Cape Atlantic Paranormal Research Society at museum

April 22 - Eddle and the Cruisers Movie -- Gateway Theater

April 29 - Bayfest

May 9 - Porch Mixer at Gregory's

June 10 - Open House at Museum

June 20 - Museum open 6pm to 8pm

June tbd AJ Meerwald Cruise

July 8 - Museum open 10am to 1pm

July 18 - program (Pirates and Privateers) at museum 7pm

August 12 - Museum open 10am to 1pm

August 15 - Movie at the museum (The Crimson Pirate) 7pm

August 21 - Museum open 6pm to 8pm

September 9 - Good Old Days

September 15 - Grace Kelly Movie (To Catch a Thief) Gateway Theater

October 21 - Horsepower by the Bay Car and Boat Show

October 24 - Ghost Walk at Somers Mansion

December 1 - Christmas Parade

December 12 - Christmas Meeting

June, July, August museum will be open  
Second Saturday, 10am to 1pm  
Third Tuesday, 6pm to 8pm

Museum is also available by appointment:  
Email [somerspthistory@gmail.com](mailto:somerspthistory@gmail.com) or  
Call 609-204-6523



## THE RUN TO REMEMBER

5K - SOMERS POINT - NJ  
September 9, 2023



Continue to check our website:  
[www.Somerspointhistory.org](http://www.Somerspointhistory.org)  
for more information and  
additional event dates as they are  
added.

T-shirts may also be ordered on our  
website and are available for  
shipping.

# Message from the President

2023 is upon us and what a year we have planned at the Somers Point Historical Society. First and foremost, last years Good Old Days Festival was a great success with the Somers Point Historical Society taking over as the prime sponsor. Second, we will be celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the filming of the Movie "Eddie and the Cruisers" at Tony Marts by showing the movie at the Gateway Theater on April 22nd.



The months of February and March will see a remodeling of the museum and the addition of 2 new computers to help improve the effectiveness of serving our members and visitors. April we will again set up at Bayfest with our boat exhibits.

Our regular events, such as the Porch Mixer in May and Open House in June 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 along with the addition of the Eddie and the Cruisers t-shirts continue to be hot items, so don't be left out, get yours today.

The theme for 2023 will be Pirates and Privateers. Our Summer Program and Movie Night at the Museum will both reflect this subject along with the other activities through the year.

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 2023.

Thank You

Kirk Gerety  
President



## Eddie and the Cruisers 40th Anniversary Show

April 22, 2023

5:30 Doors Open

6:00 Live Performance & Meet and Greet

7:00 Eddie and the Cruisers Movie

Special Performance by:

Destinee Monroe and Billy Walton

Special Appearance by:

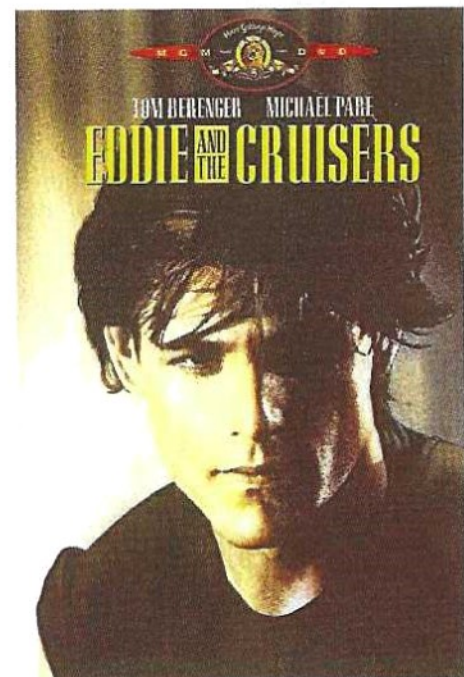
Michael "Tunes" Antunes aka Wendell Newton

David Wilson aka Kenny Hopkins

Gateway Playhouse - 738 Bay Avenue - Somers Point

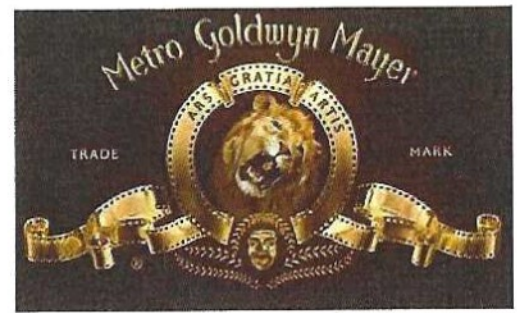
Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at:

[www.gatewaybythebay.org](http://www.gatewaybythebay.org)



# The Return of the Lion

Once again Leo the MGM lion could be heard roaring on Bay Avenue in Somers Point. The last time was in 1976 when *That's Entertainment II* was shown at the Gateway Playhouse. This time he could be heard again at the Gateway at a special showing of *High Society* with Grace Kelly, Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong and Frank Sinatra. This was an event sponsored by the Ocean City Historical Museum and Somers Point Historical Society. Leo has made many appearances both at the Gateway and the Ocean City theatres. For many years the roar could be heard at the Seaside Theatre, now the Gateway Playhouse. As a child I remember seeing *Singing in the Rain*, *Showboat*, *Kiss Me Kate* and so on. On Tuesdays in the summer, Pete and Lee Love, the owners, would bring back older movies, especially MGM musicals. In 1958 the Seaside became the Gateway, offering live shows. The original Gateway was the former Gateway Casino at the circle and had been a summer stock theatre offering live shows for several years. In fact, it was the largest summer theatre in the United States.



In 1965, the Shriver Theatre Company of Ocean City, leased it and the movies once again were shown. The opening show in July 1965 was another MGM musical, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*. Oddly enough the film cans for the 35-millimeter Panavision print were addressed to the Gateway Casino. By this time, I was working as a projectionist at the theatres in Ocean City as well as the Gateway. In a way Leo helped me pay my way through college and graduate school, and later provided extra income. When I first started working as an assistant projectionist in the theatres in 1959 at the Surf, a number of MGM musicals were shown including *Gigi*, *High Society*, *The Student Prince* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. By 1961 I was now a licensed projectionist. That summer we ran MGM's *Ben Hur* as a road show attraction. MGM provided a full list of instructions on how to run it. Later I ran it at the Village.



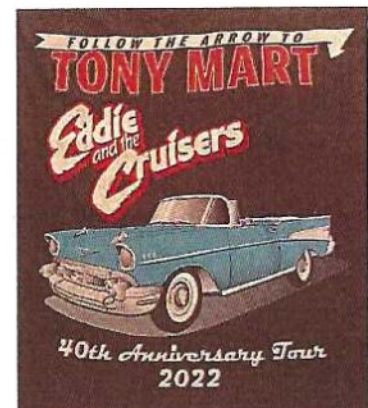
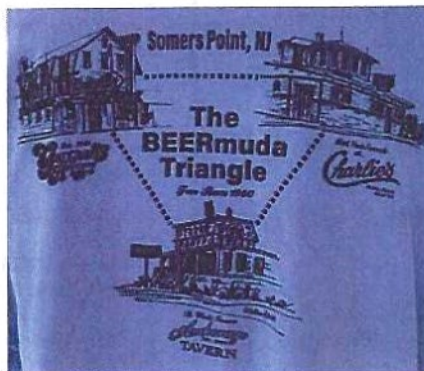
*The Unsinkable Molly Brown* A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Production

Over the years Leo would make many appearances - *Dr. Zhivago* at the Strand, *King of Kings* and *How the West was Won* at the Surf, *Bells are Ringing* and *Billie Rose's Jumbo at the Village*, *Fame* and *Victor Victoria at the Moorlyn*. In 1974, *That's Entertainment* was shown at the Village. At times the balcony had to be opened to accommodate the crowds. The *Glass Bottom Boat* played the Strand to better business than *Center City Philadelphia*. It was also run at the Gateway. Now he can always be seen and heard at the beginning of the *Bond* movies. Hopefully he will appear again on Bay Avenue in Somers Point. For now, he will be sorely missed on the Ocean City Boardwalk unless he develops a taste for Manco's pizza which is now playing at the Strand. There is hope he will once again make an appearance as new owners have bought the Moorlyn Theatre with the intention of showing movies.



Jim Foreman

**Beermuda Triangle and  
Tony Marts/Eddie and the  
Cruisers  
T-shirts are still available!**



**T-shirts are available for local pick up by calling 609-204-6523 or 609-457-3034 or can be ordered at [www.somerspointhistory.org](http://www.somerspointhistory.org). Donation for local pick up is \$20 and \$25 if shipping is required.**

# News From The Past

## The Somers Point News

Saturday - January 10, 1914

### Great Nor'easter Last Week

## BAYFRONT HIT HARD--BOATS GROUND TO PIECES BY THE HEAVY TIDES

The severe storm of last Saturday and Sunday swept the beach front of Somers Point with the high velocity of wind from the northeast and the consequent heavy tides. While houses were rocked to and fro, no great damage was sustained by the residents. Along the water's edge, however, havoc and destruction were spread the whole length of the city front.

Several tides covered Harbor Lane, just below the new Bay Avenue, and the low spot in Bay Avenue ayt Annie Avenue. Near the drain pipe under New Bay Avenue the wind drove the splash over the highway nearly half way.

The "liquid holdings"-stood well. the rain filled the low spots here but the tides could not reach over the high sod banks.

Steubers wharf was torn to pieces, letting the big gasoline tank drop into the water. The entire walk was ripped up and scattered over the beach a few blocks away. Several of the boats tied up here were sunk or damaged. The remnants of the anchorage wharf floated away. The rear of Dr. Roe's four small houses on the beach suffered from the rough weather. Diether's wharf and A.F. Kapella's private wharf were destroyed. The Yacht Club wharf withstood the furious storm in good shape until the gasoline tank from Steuber's wharf struck it and ripped off a few stanchions and part of the hand rail near the clubhouse. Inside the house a small wet spot appeared on the floor but no damage was done to the furniture.

Diether and those who left their boats about his wharf, stood the most damage. The wind drove the tides into this corner at a furious rate, which ground up the frail craft into kindling wood. Pratt's big pleasure boat sank out of sight. The rear of Henfy Holmes's property and his neighbor, Barbor's wharfage were ripped up in a jiffy. Mr. Keen's swift cruiser, which still held its heavy engine, moored off Delaware Avenue, was driven on the beach and split from stem to stern. Mr. Buntin managed to save his boat by removing the machinery after she came ashore Sunday morning.

All day Sunday and Monday steam trains carried passengers and freight through here and over the Shore Fast bridge in order to reach Ocean City and points below. The damage to the Pennsylvania bridge at Corson's inlet stopped traffic by that route entirely. It looked strange on Monday morning to see a long train of loaded coal cars run the W.J. and S.S. tracks with a locomotive on each end. The crew had been on duty since early Sunday morning.

## Atlantic City Press - 1951 Old Bradford House and Depot Were Meeting Places When Somers Point Became A Boro

by Donald Balsley

The first meeting of the newly elected mayor, council and borough officers was on April 29, 1886 at the 'Bradford House'. Joseph Thompson, master of chancery, administered the oaths of office.

The Bradford House, owned by John Townsend and Harry VanSant, was then on Shore Road, now Goll Avenue, and was where now live George R. Balsley, his wife and son John. Many tales were told of the happy hours spent there by our old timers. It was a place of charming atmosphere, where men were wont to meet and discuss business, enjoy a fine meal, which would invariably include local game and fish.

A pool table was there also, and old Jake Barrett, who was famous in these parts because he built the best sneak boxes, and was a great gunner, was champ for many years. As he grew older his eyes dimmed, but he was a tough old fellow. He used to chew the strongest tobacco and a big quit it was, but never once did he spat.

If you would like to know more about the old Bradford House get in touch with Alonzo Atkinson, or Elby Doughty, who reside on Delaware Avenue.

At this first meeting the mayor appointed committees and council adjourned.

The next meeting was May 3rd, 1886, and David W. Barrett was appointed as keeper of the pound. Even now (1951) we should have a small run and shelter for stray dogs and cats that our police department have to keep for a short while so that owners may claim them. Pets are very dear to some people and should be handled with every consideration.

### Needed Officials

The duties of our officials and the complexities of operating as a borough mount and we discover it is a requisite there should be chosen a surveyor, marshal, street supervisor and superintendent of public roads and a solicitor.

Charles W. Clement was elected marshal. His grandson, Charles Clement, lives on Meyran Avenue. His widow, Mrs. Mary A. Clement, at one time was postmaster. She now lives with her grandson.

Charley stayed active in the affairs of the borough for many years and was a freeholder for many terms. At one time he won over his opponent, Mrs. Celia Champion, by one vote. As I remember him he was well liked and a most industrious old fellow, never moved fast, but was always busy. He farmed a fair amount of land, had a cow, a team or two, chickens, pigs. Let us not forget his old barn filled with salt hap in the loft. The remembrance of those happy days make me imagine its fragrance in the air even now.

About this time, 1886, John Townsend, the first listed councilman, engaged Jobwin Steelman to erect for him a home at 20 E. New Jersey Avenue, where now resides the present city clerk. This residence was sold to Capt. Walter Sooy, postmaster, in 1890.

On May 3, 1886, an ordinance was passed to have the borough accurately surveyed and mapped for roads, streets and avenues.

### Met In Depot

The depot of the P. & O.C.R.R. was offered council as a meeting place and accepted with thanks.

The third meeting, May 10, 1886, was an adjourned meeting and was held in the railroad station. The Mayor's salary was set at \$50 a year by resolution and the clerk's was to be \$40 per year.

The committee on licenses and police was instructed to procure handcuffs, a star and a pistol, at a cost not to exceed \$10 - yes! ten dollars! Incidentally the handcuffs are still in town and if you would like to see them let me know and I'll tell you where they are. Also at this time the first borough seal was ordered.

The fourth meeting was May 18, 1886. By now it was apparent it cost money to grow and be on your own. One of the first ordinances to be passed was for the licenses of cartmen, peddlers, boarding houses, markets, hucksters, butchers and stores.

### First Public Debt

The mayor and clerk were empowered to borrow \$100 to meet the current expenses of the borough. Oh, for those good old days.

The clerk was instructed to find out who owned the property from which fell two large trees that were laying across Shore Road, and to notify the owner to move the obstacles at once. They had been there over a week. Traffic wasn't heavy and there weren't any curbs so you could drive your horse or team around the fallen trees, without much trouble.

### Doubtful Honor

And while we are off the beaten path let me mention a few of interest for Chief William Morrow. The first recorded robbery in Atlantic County happened in Somers Point in 1794. Sam Somers was robbed of a trunk containing bonds, deeds, etc., to the value of 1000 pounds sterling. Twenty pounds reward was offered but o one ever earned that reward.

2023

## The Year of the Pirate and Privateer

With ur 2023 heme being year of the Pirate and Privateer I thought I would delve into he differences between the two.

Pirate vs Privateer – Is there a difference?  
Yes there is!

A pirate is someone who often attacks merchant vessels, seizing all items they want, which often includes the ship itself. They are known to plunder at sea and pillage the port towns they visited. Pirates act on their own and answer to no one. They are, in essence, a criminal.

A privateer is someone who often attacks enemy ships, seizing not only the cargo, but the ship itself. A privateer's ship is a privately owned warship, sanctioned by the government to carry out these attacks.

Some famous pirates include:

- William Kidd (Captain Kidd) (1645-1701)
- Edward Teach (Blackbeard) (1680-1718)
- Bartholomew Roberts (Black Bart) (1680-1722)
- Henry Every (Long Ben) (1653-unknown)
- Anne Boney (1700-1782)

Some famous privateers include:

- Sir Frances Drake (1540-1590)
- William Kidd (Captain Kidd) (1645-1701)
- David Hawley (1741-1807)
- Jonathan Haraden (1744-1803)
- Noah Stoddard (1755-1850)

Oddly enough, the names of the pirates are more well known than the names of the privateers.

William Kidd (Captain Kidd) was both private and privateer during his lifetime.

Pirates have been romanticized though the years in movies and stories, but they were indeed a formidable foe should you come across one on the high seas or even on land. You did not want to be on the bad side of a pirate.

There were three pirates known to have frequented the New Jersey Coast and growing up I can remember hearing stories of Captain Kidd's treasure being buried here. I'm sure that is a familiar story to many people growing up in towns along the coast.

Due to its many barrier island, the New Jersey Coast was the perfect place for a pirate to pillage and hide out. The bay was much deeper then and would have afforded larger boats then it can today. We were essentially a shipbuilding town with many large boats coming in and out of Somers Point.

The New Jersey Coast from Long Island down through Cape May was a hot spot for many years.

Captain Kidd is said to have buried his treasure on Long Island and along the coast in several places including Cape May and Brigantine Inlet.

Edward Teach, a/k/a Blackbeard, and his intimidating appearance, was so named because of his long, thick, black beard. Blackbeard was only actively a pirate for two years. It is alleged that he buried his treasure in Cape May and Burlington.

Bartholomew Roberts, a/k/a Black Bart, was the most wanted pirate of all and had reportedly looted and captured between 400 and 450 ships. It is said he sunk his treasure in the Delaware Bay.

None of these reported pirate treasures have ever been found.

Lynn MacEwan

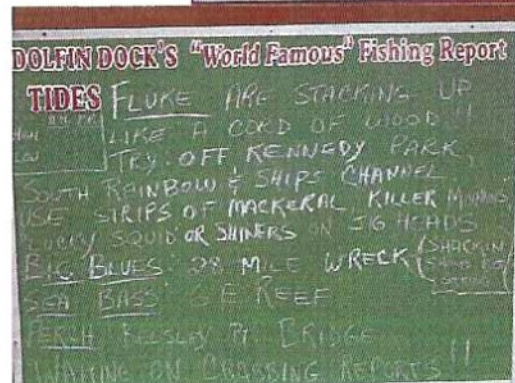
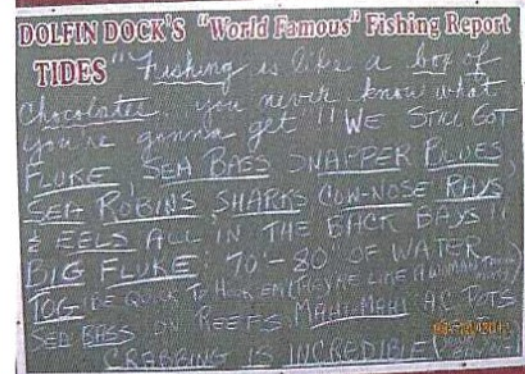
## Throwback Thursday

Throwback Thursday has become a very popular posting on our Facebook page. For those that do not use Facebook we have decided to share some of those popular posts here in our newsletter. The following is our Throwback Thursday post from September 2, 2021.



Not really old but a part of Somers Point history for sure!

Dolfin Dock was a staple in Somers Point for many years. The place to go to get your bait and fishing needs, rent a boat, dock your boat, get your fish weighed, maybe hear a tale or two or just drive by and read Rob's World Famous Fishing Report! You can even see it in Eddie and the Cruisers!



**Philadelphia Inquirer: April 26, 1907**  
**Some Things That Make Somers Point Popular**  
**Special to the Inquirer**

Present indicators point to a rosy future for Somers Point if the doings of the past year that persons who have not been here lately would hardly know it. Some changes, briefly enumerated are the new trolley bridge to Ocean City, the two bridges built of iron on Main Avenue, near the old Somers Mansion, the erection of the new City Hall, the macadamizing of the streets, the building of a street above high water mark across the meadow land to a new wharf built at the mouth of Bass Harbor, and a handsome new bridge, built of cement and stone, at Harbor Lane, the erection of a power house for generating of power for the Fast Shore trolley line, the electrifying of the branch of the West Jersey Seashore Railroad running into Somers Point, the laying of numerous cement sidewalks and the erection of a number of new cottages, chief among them the handsome large cottage of Willard Wright of Philadelphia on New York Avenue on the Daniel Frazier tract. The latter improvement is a great boom to the Frazier tract, where lots are speedily bought up and which promises to be one of the finest actions of Somers Point. The Frazier Company is in a measure responsible to a great extent for the boom in the town, as their methods have brought thousands of people to Somers Point, a great many of them becoming property holders. John M. Campbell is also a great boomer, and is very successful in selling properties at the Point.

A volunteer fire company, equipped with chemical engine, was recently organized. Their chief is Doc Andress, who won fame by his daring work in the Philadelphia Fire Department, where he served as district engineer until last year.

Somers Point is unsurpassed by its healthy climate. The blending of the sea air and the air from the pine forests, which surround the place, makes it one of the healthiest places in the country.

**2023 Officers**

**President - Kirk Gerety**  
**Vice President - Lynn MacEwan**  
**Secretary - Jim Foreman**  
**Treasurer - Walt Gregory**  
**Corresponding Secretary - Carol Dotts**

**Trustees:**  
**Dennis Tapp**  
**Mike Kedziora**

**Contacts:**  
**Kirk: email - Coupe1956@aol.com**  
**phone - 609-204-6523**

**Lynn: email - somersphistory@gmail.com**  
**phone - 609-457-3034**



# Somers POINT, N.J.

## Where Seashore and Country Combine Their Greatest Charm

The most picturesque and ideal location on the Jersey Coast. A combined climate of ocean and pine laden air. Well located for all outdoor sports.

The bay and river afford ideal boating, bathing and fishing; excellent gunning; good automobile roads; Country Club close by. Only a half hour from Atlantic City's Boardwalk by two fast trolley lines, or by automobile over the famous boulevard. Ten minutes from Ocean City Boardwalk, by fast electric line.

Excellent hotels and boarding houses. Paved streets, cement sidewalks, gas, electric lights, city water and other municipal improvements.

Somers Point offers unequalled opportunities for investors and home seekers. Only 90 minutes from Market St. Ferries, via Penna. R. R., Steam or Electric Line. For further information write the  
**CITY CLERK, Somers Point, N. J.**

