

**The History of  
Ventnor, New Jersey**

by

**Sarah Thompson Smith**

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## Foreword

As President of the Council of Ventnor City, I am sure that I express the opinion of the entire official family when I state that the authoress has performed a most difficult task in a highly efficient manner.

Since the genesis of our wonderful community to the current era, Miss Smith has skillfully described, depicted and catalogued the development of every historical phase of our city's growth in a clear and interesting style.

I am certain that posterity will fully appreciate and welcome this literary gem as an invaluable addition to our bookshelves.

CARL VALORE

*President of City Council*

Ventnor City, N. J.

March 11, 1963

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## INTRODUCTION

Located on the Isle of Wight in the English Channel, a popular health resort and ideal holiday center has grown from the small beginning of a mere mill and an inn.<sup>1</sup> This town is Ventnor, England. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, an American couple visiting England was so impressed by the beauty of the locality, that in 1889, when the Camden and Atlantic Land Company decided to name the section of the land south of Atlantic City, they remembered Ventnor, England, and Mrs. S. Bartram Richards suggested that the name, Ventnor, would be fitting.<sup>2</sup> This name was suggested January 8, 1889 by Mrs. Richards who was the wife of the secretary-treasurer of the land company. It was formally adopted the following day.<sup>3</sup> The giving of a name is not the real beginning of a city. To learn how this city came about one must look at the earlier beginning of Atlantic City, the earlier history of Absecon Island, the beginning of Atlantic County, and even the time of the early explorers to America. This history will attempt to take the reader through that period of time to the present, and show why and how Ventnor has obtained the good reputation it has today and what it expects in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Ventnor Urban District Council, compiler, *Ventnor, Isle of Wight*. (Ventnor, Isle of Wight, England: Ventnor Urban District Council, [n.d.]), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, May 23, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, March 13, 1953.

CHAPTER I  
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*Early explorers.* Explorers sailing for the Dutch and the French are known to have sighted the islands, which include Absecon Island, off the coast of New Jersey. As early as 1524, Verrazano, an Italian sailing under the French flag, sighted the Jersey shore as he sailed from North Carolina to Maine.

When the Dutch interest in the new world was aroused, the East India Company sent Henry Hudson, an English navigator, on an expedition. Sailing in the "Half Moon," he followed a course southward along the Atlantic coast. In September of 1609, his log entries show that he sighted and sailed along Absecon Beach.<sup>1</sup>

The third explorer, another for the Dutch, was Captain Cornelius May who sailed along the Jersey coast in 1614. In 1623 he built a fort on what is now Big Timber Creek in Gloucester County, of which Atlantic County was originally a part.<sup>2</sup>

Early discoverers told of the vast bird life and the number of eggs found in the meadows along the shore.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch called the area, now Atlantic County, Eyren Haven. It was later shortened to Eyre Haven, and means "harbor of eggs."<sup>4</sup>

*Early Absecon Island.* For centuries before the European explorers and settlers sighted or set foot on Absecon Island, the only inhabitants of the area were Indians. These Indians of the Lenni Lenape Tribe called the island Absegami, meaning "little sea water."<sup>5</sup> The Indians made a strong bridge of saplings and vines across Beach Thorofare and came to the island to hunt and fish.<sup>6</sup> Evidences of their visits remained in the shell-mounds found here years after the white men controlled New Jersey.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, June, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 28, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 28, 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred M. Heston, *Heston's Hand-Book* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: A. M. Heston, 1900), p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> William Nelson, *The New Jersey Coast in Three Centuries* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1902), Vol. I p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> *Atlantic City Press*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Alfred M. Heston, *Absegami: Annals of Eyren Haven and Atlantic City* (Camden, New Jersey: Sinnickson Chew and Sons, Printers, 1904), Vol. I, p. 43.

The early white settlers in New Jersey had no trouble with the Indians who lived here. This resulted from their attitude toward the Indians' right to the land. A fair purchase was always made; no land was taken by force.<sup>8</sup> In 1832 Wilted Grass, the last chief of the Lenni Lenape, appearing before the State Legislature said: "Not a drop of our blood have you spilled in battle. Not an acre of our land have you taken but by our consent. Nothing but benison can fall upon New Jersey from the lips of a Lenni Lenape."<sup>9</sup> These were the Indians who were said to have summered on Absecon Island and who controlled what is now New Jersey until the coming of the English and Scotch from Long Island in 1645.<sup>10</sup>

Gloucester County was established in 1686 by the inhabitants. In 1694 it was formally given a name, and boundaries were set by the Province of West Jersey. That same year the people of the Great Egg Harbor section were allotted to Gloucester County. Thus, originally, Gloucester County included the present Gloucester, Camden, and Atlantic counties. Atlantic County was created in 1837.<sup>11</sup>

In 1678 Thomas Budd received 15,000 acres of New Jersey land, which included Absecon Island, in lieu of a debt of \$6,250 from a group of New Jersey proprietors.<sup>12</sup> Few houses could be bought for that sum today.

About 1700, the island was divided at Jackson Avenue by an inlet wide enough to permit the passage of ships.<sup>13</sup> As time passed, the ebb and flow of the tide gradually built up the sand until it became known as Dry Inlet. In accounts of the storms that have buffeted the island, it is recorded that the sailing ship, John W. Cannon, carrying \$250,000 in silver bullion was wrecked and sank here in 1836. It was covered with sand and the silver was never recovered.<sup>14</sup>

The first real settler on the island was Jeremiah Leeds. In 1804 he became interested in the island, purchasing some property, and the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> F. J. Harnett, "Absegami," *Know Your City* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: Amusement Publishing Company, [n.d.]), pp. 3-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Nelson, loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Frank H. Stewart, *Notes on Old Gloucester County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: The New Jersey Society of Pennsylvania, 1917), Vol. I, p. 289.

<sup>12</sup> Heston, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

next year bought the greater part of Absecon Island.<sup>15</sup> His son, Andrew, operated a hotel for the accommodation of those who came to the island to fish and hunt. It was located near the juncture of Baltic and Georgia avenues and was the first hotel of Atlantic City.<sup>16</sup> The Leeds family owned much of the land on the island. In 1810, Samuel Mickle of Woodbury recorded in his diary that he wrote a deed from himself and his cousin to James Leeds conveying 1,000 acres on Absecon Beach for \$250.<sup>17</sup>

Two important wars are remembered in connection with the island. No battles took place, but happenings relevant to the wars occurred there. In 1756, prior to the Revolutionary War, Faithful Steward, an English ship, was wrecked on Absecon Beach. Among other things, it carried a quantity of Stamp Act paper. Some of the stamps were salvaged and kept as souvenirs.<sup>18</sup> Less than fifty years after the Revolution, in 1812, the United States was once again at war with England. William Day, a deserter from the American forces, hid in a natural cave just south of Dry Inlet. He remained hidden there until hostilities ceased.<sup>19</sup>

Few today would recognize the Absecon Island of early accounts. In the days of the Lenni Lenape it was said to be a "rolling area of wind-swept hills on the edge of a continent."<sup>20</sup> Nelson<sup>21</sup> writes of an eighty-four-year-old man's recollection of the island about 1825. He spoke of the sand hills, and the wild life which included quails, rabbits, foxes, terrapins, wild fowl, minks, muskrats, and many types of snakes. When, prior to the building of the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, Richard Osborne described his impressions in his engineer's report, there was evidence of a little more settlement on the island. However, there is little in it to suggest any comparison to the present Absecon Island. The following excerpt illustrates this.

After crossing the meadows the next point of interest is the Beach of Absecum. This will afford a fine opportunity to the

<sup>15</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, 37th Anniversary Edition, March, 1940.

<sup>16</sup> News item in *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 1, 1923.

<sup>17</sup> Frank H. Stewart, *Notes on Old Gloucester County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: The New Jersey Society of Pennsylvania, 1934), Vol. II, p. 129.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, *loc. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 12, 1953.

<sup>20</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, 37th Anniversary Edition, March, 1940.

<sup>21</sup> Nelson, *loc. cit.*



lovers of bathing, the surf is in its way capable of pleasing the most fastidious, and though open to the broad Atlantic there is an absence of under tow, which, too frequently, causes loss of life on other portions of the coast — the beach slopes seaward very gradually and is perfectly even. The shore is diversified with sand hills, which, with a little expenditure, will afford to visitors a pleasant place to rest. Back of this are farms, now under cultivation, with an extended ridge along the shore line, covered with trees, which can be tastefully laid out in long and shady walks. Vegetables of all kinds can be produced in gardens on the farm land, sufficient for the wants of the visitors [visitors]. The beach extends for about ten miles southward to Big Egg Harbor affording opportunities for riding and driving. Boating and sailing can be found in the bay and sea and to sportsmen the shooting, in its season, offers every inducement. . . .<sup>22</sup>

*Atlantic City, South Atlantic City (Margate), and Longport.*

*Atlantic City.* Those who visited Absecon Island up to the middle of the nineteenth century traveled over either one of two stage routes which extended from Philadelphia and ended on the mainland. In order to complete their journey a boat trip was necessary.<sup>23</sup> On March 19, 1852 the New Jersey Legislature granted a charter for the building of the Camden and Atlantic Railroad. It was to extend from Cooper's Point in Camden to the present site of Atlantic City. In June of the same year the directors of the railroad sent Richard Osborne, a civil engineer, to make a pre-survey to determine the feasibility of the road. Samuel Richards, a glass manufacturer at Jackson, now called Atco, had had the idea of building a railroad as early as 1850. Records show that the meeting for the formation of the Camden and Atlantic Railroad Company was held at his home in Philadelphia in June of 1852. In October of that year he wrote Mr. Osborne to begin the formal survey. Samuel Richards and W. Dwight Bell then went to Absecon Island to locate the eastern terminus of the railroad. The charter granted to the railroad company limited them as to the amount of land they could hold. Therefore, it was necessary to organize the Camden and Atlantic Land Company, an act approved March 10, 1853. The company purchased land from

<sup>22</sup> Richard Osborne, *Camden and Atlantic Railroad Engineer's Report* (Philadelphia: Young and Duross, Printers, June 24, 1852).

<sup>23</sup> William P. Hamilton III, and Edward T. Francis, "The Atlantic City Trolley Lines." *The Marker*, Vol. 10, No. 1. ([n.p.]: North Jersey Chapter of National Railway Historical Society, 1951), p. 2.

the Leeds family for \$17.50 an acre, extending from the Inlet to Missouri Avenue in alternate strips. It also included the entire beach from Boston Avenue to Cincinnati Avenue in South Atlantic City (Margate).<sup>24</sup> On January 15, 1853 a map of the area was submitted by Mr. Osborne to the directors of the land company. Although several names had been suggested for this area, he placed his own choice of name on the map. This name, adopted by the directors, was "Atlantic City."<sup>25</sup>

Atlantic City was incorporated March 3, 1854. Eighteen votes cast in a cigar box elected Chalkley Leeds mayor, and a councilmanic form of government was set up.<sup>26</sup> The original city boundary line to the south was California Avenue, but in 1869 it was extended to Dry Inlet.<sup>27</sup> The railroad was completed in the middle of that year and was opened to public travel on July 4. Cottages, hotels, and stores were built in the city along the route of the railroad.<sup>28</sup> In 1860 the land company donated several blocks of land to creditors of the railroad company whose bonds it had guaranteed. This was done to save the corporation from bankruptcy. By 1885 the land company had disposed of most of its land in Atlantic City.<sup>29</sup>

*South Atlantic City (Margate)*. Just southwest of Atlantic City lay the land later to be known as Ventnor. Further down the beach, in 1885, the Borough of South Atlantic City was incorporated. In 1897 it was reincorporated as the City of South Atlantic City, and finally, had its name changed to Margate in 1909.<sup>30</sup> The lower part of South Atlantic City was known as Cedar Grove because of the vegetation there. In 1882, before the incorporation of the Borough of South Atlantic City, an elephant, the top of whose howdah extended sixty-five feet in the air, was constructed there. It was used to draw tourists to the Cedar Grove area, and at one time was used as a

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<sup>24</sup> Alfred M. Heston, *Absegami: Annals of Eyren Haven and Atlantic City* (Camden, New Jersey: Sinnickson Chew and Sons, Printers, 1904), Vol. II, pp. 76-77.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

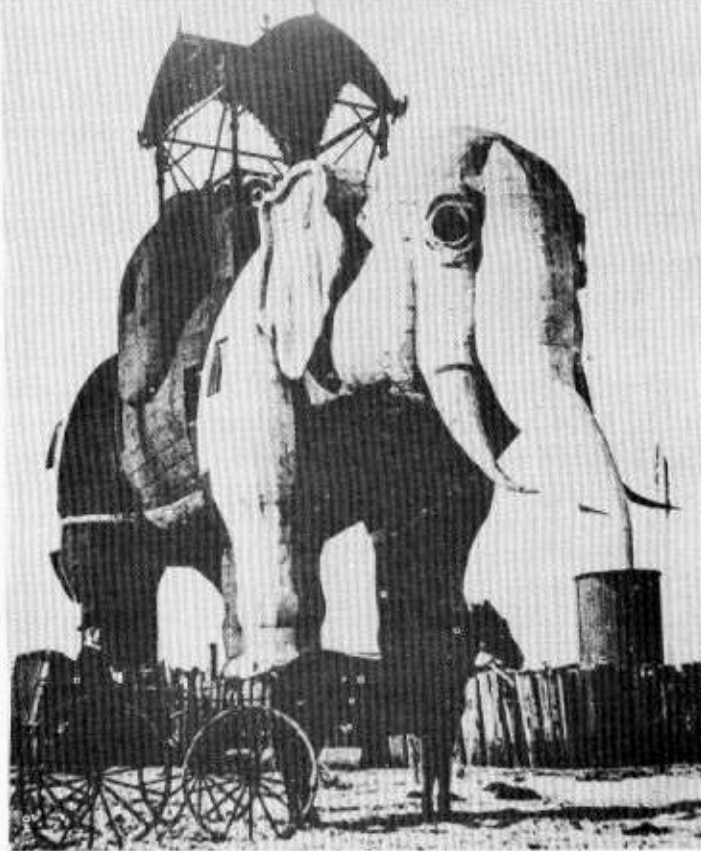
<sup>28</sup> Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Heston, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 84.

dwelling for them.<sup>31</sup> The elephant is still standing, although fifty feet back from its original position.

*Longport.* The southernmost community on the island is Longport, incorporated in 1898. It was named after James Long who owned the entire area until 1832.<sup>32</sup> In 1900 the population was reported to be eight people.<sup>33</sup> Real development of this resort did not come until later.



(Courtesy of Wilson Meyers)

FIGURE 1

THE MARGATE ELEPHANT

<sup>31</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Evening Union*, [n.d.].

<sup>32</sup> Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>33</sup> Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Jersey Shore* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1953), Vol. I, p. 532.

## CHAPTER II

### A CITY IS FORMED

*Before incorporation.* In the early 1850's John Lewis Rowand was requested by the land company to map the area and lay out the streets below Boston Avenue. This he did, naming the streets after state capitals and other large cities. However, it was not until the 1880's that development in this downbeach area got under way.

In 1881 the Camden and Atlantic Railroad Company extended its tracks from Florida Avenue in Atlantic City to South Atlantic City.<sup>1</sup> It was necessary to construct a trestle across Dry Inlet, raising the roadbed eight feet above the normal level.<sup>2</sup> Five years later the directors of the Camden and Atlantic Land Company authorized the president, Samuel Richards, to use \$5,000 for grading the land below Dry Inlet.<sup>3</sup> In doing so it was necessary to level twenty foot high sand hills and spread them over adjacent meadows. A Philadelphia newspaper,<sup>4</sup> in 1887, reported the proposed name of this section, now Ventnor, to be Atlantic Heights.

In 1888 the land company conveyed two blocks fronting on Atlantic Avenue between Portland and Corralis avenues to the railroad company and built a station there. Previous to this time the railroad company did not stop their trains for passenger service in the Ventnor area.<sup>5</sup> The following year the name Ventnor was adopted by a resolution of the Board of Directors of the land company.<sup>6</sup> This company had already constructed three cottages in the vicinity. Until recently all three were standing although not in their original locations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William P. Hamilton III, and Edward T. Francis, "The Atlantic City Trolley Lines." (*The Marker*, Vol. 10, No. 1 [n. p.]: North Jersey Chapter of National Railway Historical Society, 1951), pp. 2-4.

<sup>2</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, January 11, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred M. Heston, *Absegami: Annals of Eyren Haven and Atlantic City* (Camden, New Jersey: Sinnickson Chew and Sons, Printers, 1904), Vol. II, pp. 78-79.

<sup>4</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City." News item from the *Philadelphia Times*, July 20, 1887.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, News item from the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, April 17, 1907.

<sup>6</sup> Heston, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Richards of Philadelphia, formerly of Ventnor City, summer of 1958. Miss Richards is the daughter of one of the first families of Ventnor.

Realizing the impetus given the growth of Atlantic City by the building of the Surf House in 1853, the land company, in 1891, built the Carisbrooke Inn.<sup>8</sup> Samuel Richards, still president of the land company at that time, is given credit for his insight into the future of Ventnor.<sup>9</sup> This downbeach area was still largely sand dunes and wild life, and it is probable that many people saw only the foolish waste of money in the erection of so large a building. This inn, or hotel, occupied the block of land between Cambridge and Sacramento avenues and from Ocean to Ventnor avenues. The three original cottages built earlier on this block were moved to other locations.<sup>10</sup> The *Ventnor News* states that there were three hundred rooms in the hotel,<sup>11</sup> but a resident of Ventnor in those early days remembers it as being a beautiful hotel of four hundred rooms.<sup>12</sup> At any rate it was quite large, being five stories high, and had its own gas plant for lighting.<sup>13</sup> An approach to the inn, connecting it to the boardwalk, had a bridge passing over the railroad tracks. This was torn down in 1906.<sup>14</sup> The name of the inn was taken from Carisbrooke Castle, an estate in Ventnor, England. Carisbrooke Inn stood until the winter of 1910-11 as a landmark of Absecon Island. Many well-known families of Pennsylvania, New York, and Washington, D. C. spent quiet, restful summer vacations there.<sup>15</sup> The inn is remembered as the center of social life of early Ventnor.<sup>16</sup> No one seems to know the actual reason why the inn was torn down while it was still in good condition, but it is supposed that the vacationing families began to prefer private cottages to hotel life. When S. Bartram Richards assumed the duties of council president in 1914, he was presented with a gavel made from a piece of timber taken from the Carisbrooke Inn and tied with the city colors.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Heston, *loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City." Newspaper clipping dated June 25, 1891, no name.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, April 17, 1907.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to writer from Mrs. David G. Stuart dated July 24, 1958.

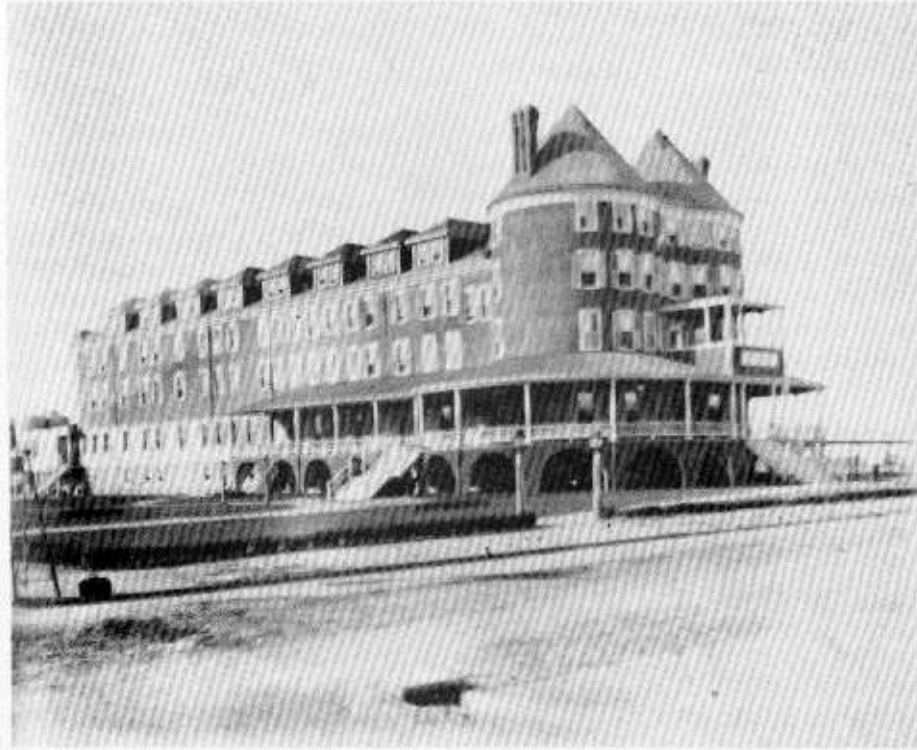
<sup>13</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, 1953), p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, [n. d.] Clipping in the Ventnor City Library.

<sup>15</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, August 23, 1896.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Richards, summer of 1958.

<sup>17</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, January 3, 1914.



*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*

FIGURE 3

CARISBROOKE INN PRINTED FROM A 1900 GLASS NEGATIVE



FIGURE 4

FIRST RESIDENCE HOUSE BUILT IN 1892

Until 1892, all construction in Ventnor had been done by the land company. That year the first residence house was built on Sacramento Avenue by Thomas J. Richards for his family.<sup>18</sup> By 1896 there were seven houses and a few other buildings constructed, according to a map made by A. H. Mueller and Company.

One of the three original cottages was moved to Sacramento and Ventnor avenues. This cottage served as the post office for Ventnor, and the owners, Mr. and Mrs. James Calvert, were post master and post mistress. A fourth class post office was conducted here until a year after Ventnor became a city.<sup>19</sup>

The Saint Leonard Land Company was incorporated in 1896. This corporation purchased all the land from Surrey to Cambridge avenues, and from the Inside Thorofare to the high water mark of the Atlantic Ocean. When the company remapped the area, laying out the streets and changing the names from those given by Rowand to names of English dukes, certain restrictions were imposed which still are effective today.<sup>20</sup> These will be discussed in a later chapter.

In 1897 the Ventnor Water and Light Company began business.<sup>21</sup> This was another property of the land company. Its location coincides in part with the water works today. It consisted of an artesian well, a small boiler, and a pump, with water mains which were two-inch galvanized pipes.<sup>22</sup>

The next year, 1898, the Ventnor Dredging Company filled in the marshy lowlands between Ventnor Avenue and Inside Thorofare with sand dredged from that body of water and a canal connecting it to Beach Thorofare. In doing so they not only eliminated the marshes, but they created deep waterways.<sup>23</sup>

By the turn of the century, however, not much progress had been made in the development of the resort. The streets were poorly lighted and indifferently paved. Train service was meager and fares were high. Until 1897 the water supply had been drawn from cisterns or surface wells. These conditions were a drawback to the development of Ventnor.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Leith Villa, a guest house on Newport Ave-

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<sup>18</sup> H. J. Souder, editor-in-chief, *Who's Who in New Jersey* (New York: National Biographic News Service, 1925), p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, August 31, 1907.

<sup>20</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Reporter*, February 14, 1958.

<sup>21</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, October 26, 1907.

<sup>22</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 3, 1935.

<sup>23</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, April 17, 1907.

<sup>24</sup> *Loc. cit.*

nue accommodating sixty guests,<sup>25</sup> and the Carisbrooke Inn were open only during the summer months for vacationing folks from nearby cities and states. In the winter these, as well as most of the homes, were closed, for the owners were summer cottagers. Few cared to brave the winters at the shore.

The political situation was no inducement for an increase in population. Politically, Ventnor was a part of Egg Harbor Township separated entirely from it by water. It was the only part of Absecon Island which still remained as part of the township. Those owning property had to pay taxes, but they derived little benefit from the money.<sup>26</sup>

The school problem arose about 1902. Until this time South Atlantic City had provided free education for the few children of Ventnor. However, they decided that the room taken by children of outside communities could well be used by their own, unless fifty dollars per pupil per year were paid as tuition. The township officials were unwilling to pay.<sup>27</sup>

*Incorporation of the city.* A newspaper article in February of 1903 reflected the attitude of those who owned property in Ventnor.<sup>28</sup> There was a desire for separation from the township in order that some good might come from the revenue being collected. S. Bartram Richards appeared before the state government and asked that legislation be passed enabling Ventnor to incorporate as a city.<sup>29</sup> The township opposed this move and presented their side also.<sup>30</sup> Despite the opposition of the township, the State Legislature granted the wish for incorporation by an act approved March 17, 1903. A copy of the act appears at the end of this chapter.

At that time only eight eligible voters resided in Ventnor, but twenty-one were required by law to fill all the public offices. Several prominent Atlantic City residents took up legal residence in Ventnor in order to satisfy this requirement. The city then had thirty-five registered voters, most of whom were living in the Carisbrooke Inn. Among these was Joseph Thompson, a lawyer and a former Atlantic City mayor, who drew up the incorporation papers, acted as advisor

<sup>25</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Daily Union*, August 18, 1898.

<sup>26</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, April 17, 1907.

<sup>27</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 22, 1922.

<sup>28</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Daily Union*, February 18, 1903.

<sup>29</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 16, 1907.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1907.





FIGURE 5  
ONE OF VENTNOR'S ORIGINAL COTTAGES AND ITS FIRST POST OFFICE



FIGURE 6  
6209 VENTNOR AVENUE  
ONE OF VENTNOR'S ORIGINAL COTTAGES

in governmental matters, and became the first city solicitor.<sup>31</sup> Notices were sent to the registered voters requesting their presence at a meeting April 8, to prepare a ticket for the election to be held April 13, 1903.<sup>32</sup> Following this meeting, small election leaflets were printed giving the names of the candidates on the Union Ticket, a combined group of democrats and republicans.<sup>33</sup> There was no opposition. Those elected were: mayor — Alfred B. McClellan, city clerk — E. Steelman Royal, city treasurer — C. Stanley Grove, collector of taxes — Lewis B. Scull, assessor — Frank M. Martin, chosen freeholder — C. C. Shinn, councilman-at-large — H. S. Scull, and council members — S. Bartram Richards, Frank Muth, and William B. Loudenslager.

E. Steelman Royal, newly elected city clerk, sent out notices concerning the swearing in of the city officials. The following is a copy of the one received by S. Bartram Richards.<sup>34</sup>

Dear Sir: —

You are requested to attend a meeting of the newly elected officials of Ventnor City to be held at the Carisbrooke Inn, on Monday, April 20, 1905 at 2:30 P.M. for the purpose of taking the oath of office.

Very truly,

E. Steelman Royal, City Clerk

The ceremony took place in the inn with over one hundred persons present. Mr. Royal swore in the officials. Being just twenty-two, he was the youngest city clerk in the state of New Jersey.<sup>35</sup>

## ACT OF INCORPORATION

### CHAPTER 51, LAWS OF 1903

An act to incorporate "Ventnor City" in the county of Atlantic, as a city, and fixing the boundaries thereof.

Be it enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the state of New Jersey:

1. All that part or portion of the County of Atlantic, formerly a part of Egg Harbor Township, situate on Absecon

<sup>31</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 3, 1935.

<sup>32</sup> This notice is in the possession of S. Bartram Richards' descendants in Philadelphia.

<sup>33</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 3, 1935.

<sup>34</sup> This notice is in the possession of S. Bartram Richards' descendants in Philadelphia.

<sup>35</sup> News item in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 21, 1903.

Beach, lying between the westwardly limit of Atlantic City and the eastwardly limit of South Atlantic City, the Atlantic Ocean on the south side as far as the jurisdiction of the state extends, and to the center of Beach Thorofare on the north, be and is hereby constituted a city of this state, and all the inhabitants of the state residing within the limits aforesaid be and they are hereby ordained, constituted and declared to be from time to time forever hereafter one body politic and corporate, in fact and in name, by the name of "Ventnor City."

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved March 17, 1903.<sup>36</sup>

[ventnormemories.com](http://ventnormemories.com)

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<sup>36</sup> New Jersey State Legislature, Acts of the *One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Legislature of the State of New Jersey*. (Trenton, New Jersey: McCrellich and Quigley, State Printers, 1903), p. 75.

CHAPTER III  
GROWTH — PART I

*General early description.* As it was said that Absecon Island is now far different from its early appearance, so is Ventnor City. It was sand dunes covered with evergreens, cactus, and wild grapes when the land company began development.<sup>1</sup> Building of new homes was confined, more or less, to the general area around Cambridge Avenue at first.<sup>2</sup> One of the early builders did stray as far as Nashville and Hillside avenues where he built twenty houses. These came to be known as the "old twenty."<sup>3</sup>

The grocery store of the time was located on the corner of Little Rock and Ventnor avenues, and was operated by the firm of Madden and Godfrey.<sup>4</sup> In the city's early years William Kuhl conducted a row of bath houses on the beach at Cambridge and Atlantic avenues. These bath houses had been built before the city was incorporated.<sup>5</sup>

Although the city was still quite young and the population was small, Carl Voelker decided to publish a local newspaper. In spite of the advice of friends to the contrary, Mr. Voelker set up a newspaper office in the office of Mr. Kuhl's bath houses.<sup>6</sup> On June 15, 1907, the first copy of the Ventnor News was issued. The newspaper office was soon moved to Atlantic City, later to a real estate office in Ventnor,<sup>7</sup> and finally, in 1911, to its own printing plant at 5218 Ventnor Avenue. Carl Voelker declared that the printing establishment was the first productive industry in the city proper.<sup>8</sup>

In 1905 Adolph Apel had hauled lumber across the thorofare and built a boat works in the Heights. Beginning when there were few homes in that area, his business of designing and building yachts and other boats grew until he became world known.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor." News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, August 23, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 3, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Frank Hepler, real estate agent, June, 1957.

<sup>4</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 27, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, March 1, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, June 10, 1911.

<sup>9</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

The nearest thing to a restaurant of which the city could boast was the Ventnor Lunch Room. It was opened in 1910 on the corner of Portland and Atlantic avenues.<sup>10</sup>

Noting the growth of the city, the Bartram Pharmacy in Chelsea opened a branch store in Ventnor in June of 1913. It was called the Ventnor Pharmacy.<sup>11</sup>

By 1921 there were several stores located within the city limits. A busy market in the summer was the truck wharf at 5019 Winchester Avenue. Boats arrived there daily with fresh vegetables, eggs, and poultry from the farms.<sup>12</sup>

It's hard to find anyone today who remembers that Ventnor once had an aerodrome. This was located in the Heights at 8th and D avenues, presently Somerset and Balfour avenues. Colonel Willowby, an air enthusiast, spent some time living in Ventnor Heights. With local help, he built the War Hawk, the largest airplane in the world at that time.<sup>13</sup> His hydroplane, Pelican, was also built there.<sup>14</sup>

By 1907 there were eighty houses in Ventnor, all of which were located north of Atlantic Avenue. The ocean washed up to the steps of Carisbrooke Inn at high tide. After storms the sand had to be cleared from the tracks before the trolleys could run.<sup>15</sup>

The county had started to build a road in 1899 from Atlantic City to Longport. It was dedicated June 14, 1900 as the Longport Speedway.<sup>16</sup> This road followed Atlantic Avenue mainly, but in Margate, Ventnor and Pacific avenues became part of the speedway. Being gravel surfaced, it posed quite a problem as traffic became heavier. Cottagers along the drive were forced to close their windows to keep out the yellow clouds of dust.<sup>17</sup> Although some held the belief that the Longport Speedway was synonymous with Ventnor Avenue, printed articles and maps refute this. It would have been impossible since, as late as 1919, Ventnor Avenue ended at Fredericksburg Avenue. A careless driver, in 1919, crashed through the fence erected

<sup>10</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 26, 1910.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1913.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1921.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1911.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Richards, summer of 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 15, 1911.



*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*

FIGURE 7

ST. JOHN'S BY THE SEA REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY. THE CHURCH WAS VENTNOR'S FIRST; THE RECTORY WAS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL COTTAGES



*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*

FIGURE 8

there and toppled into the marsh beyond.<sup>18</sup> Early maps show that only a small part of the speedway ran along Ventnor Avenue.

*Government.* The affairs of government have been settled in various places since 1903.

Carisbrooke Inn was used as the meeting place for governmental purposes during the time of and just after incorporation in the months when the inn was open. During the winter months the council minutes show that the parsonage of St. John's by the Sea was used.<sup>19</sup> In the fall of 1907 the city hall on Ventnor Avenue between Troy and New Haven avenues was completed and occupied. It was erected at a cost of only \$6,000 and included space for the fire department, rooms for the tax collector and the police, and two cells. Upstairs were the council chamber and sleeping quarters for the caretaker.<sup>20</sup> In March of 1913 a newly remodeled city hall was dedicated.<sup>21</sup> A picturesque feature of the building was the growth of ivy stemming from the western wall and spreading around the building. A minister visiting England bought a sprig of ivy at Westminster Abbey. After his return he presented it to Chief of Police Frings who planted it beside the hall.<sup>22</sup>

After World War I some of the patriotic citizens of Ventnor began a drive to raise money to purchase the handsome structure at 5907 Winchester Avenue. This was to have been a community house in remembrance of the boys who lost their lives while serving their country.<sup>23</sup> Feeling sure this plan would be given full support, the James Harvey Post deposited \$750 on the house only to lose it when the remainder of the money could not be raised.<sup>24</sup>

Then, in 1924, council made a resolution to construct a new memorial municipal building on the south side of Atlantic Avenue between Newport and New Haven avenues.<sup>25</sup> Some other suggestions were made as to the location but all were rejected. In January of 1925 the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad Company offered the land bounded by Atlantic, Sacramento, Cambridge, and Ocean ave-

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 2, 1919.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, October 19, 1903.

<sup>20</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 27, 1930.

<sup>21</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, March 22, 1913.

<sup>22</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 19, 1929.

<sup>23</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 21, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1921.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, April 14, 1924.

nues to the city for \$65,000.<sup>26</sup> At last the way seemed clear to move ahead with plans to construct a memorial building. However, before the end of the next month they were again stopped. According to the title deed, the land when it ceased to be used for railroad purposes reverted to the original owner, the Camden and Atlantic Land Company.<sup>27</sup> Although the land company brought suit against the city and the railroad in an attempt to eject them from the land, the court ruled in favor of the city.<sup>28</sup> Once again Ventnor moved forward with its building plans. Architect Vivian B. Smith's plans for an Elizabethan-type building were accepted and construction got under way. As the impressive building took shape, visitors came from all around to see it. This posed a problem as the sightseers, desiring souvenirs, carried away pieces of terra-cotta needed in construction.<sup>29</sup> On Armistice Day of 1928 ceremonies for the laying of the cornerstone were held. Since the building was in honor of those who had paid the supreme sacrifice, the cornerstone had fittingly been cut from a boulder on the battlefield of Belleau Wood, France.<sup>30</sup>

Fearing the city government might be without a home for a time, council seriously discussed the bodily movement of the old city hall to the corner of the school grounds until the new building would be ready.<sup>31</sup> Offer was made by a Pittsburgh expert to have his company do the job. However, the contractors saw to it that the job was completed on time. On June 15, 1929, under the auspices of the American Legion, the dedication of the new building was marked by parades, speeches, dancing, and a big rally on the pier.<sup>32</sup>

This building which had been promised by Mayor Brehman in 1923, and by the two following mayors, Marston and Adams, was not completed until 1929 when Isaac B. Sweigart was in office.<sup>33</sup>

Ventnor City's councilmanic government got under way with its initial meeting April 20, 1903.<sup>34</sup> Among the first items of business to be settled by the new council was a division of assets and

<sup>26</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 29, 1925.

<sup>27</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 24, 1925.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, April 10, 1928.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1928.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1928.

<sup>31</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 28, 1928.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1929.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, December 11, 1924.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, April 20, 1903.



liabilities. A committee of three was appointed to meet with representatives from Egg Harbor Township.<sup>35</sup> They met June 24 in the office of the Township Solicitor with the result that they reported back to council on July 1 the liabilities were in excess of the existing assets.<sup>36</sup> Among the assets were a street scraper and a sprinkler, both in poor condition. The city accepted the sprinkler leaving the scraper to the township.<sup>37</sup>

Early officials exercised faith in the city's future. With only \$1,600 in the treasury, that sum having been given back by the township, they borrowed money on anticipated revenue to build a boardwalk.<sup>38</sup>

One of the factors contributing toward Ventnor's reputation as a fine residential city has been the lack of saloons or bars. Council minutes show that in 1905 a license for \$100 was issued allowing intoxicating liquors to be sold at Carisbrooke Inn.<sup>39</sup> Again in 1909 council permitted the inn to sell liquor.<sup>40</sup> The people in general were not favorable to this,<sup>41</sup> and 1909 seems to be the last time liquor was dispensed publicly in the city. Council, in 1912, refused to grant a license for a saloon,<sup>42</sup> and it has been consistent in its stand ever since.

Another early problem solved was the condition of the streets. Tenants moving in left their packing boxes lying in the streets already littered with discarded building materials.<sup>43</sup> These facts were brought to the attention of council by the mayor in his annual New Year's message of 1910. He stressed a need of system in the collection of trash and ashes.<sup>44</sup>

Since the time Alfred C. McClellan was sworn in as the first mayor, eleven others have taken the same oath. Because of business

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1903.

<sup>36</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, July 1, 1903.

<sup>37</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 22, 1922.

<sup>38</sup> Newspaper clipping in the Ventnor City Public Library dated April 20, 1903.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, June 14, 1905.

<sup>40</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 17, 1909.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, June 12, 1909.

<sup>42</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 10, 1912.

<sup>43</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City." News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, June 17, 1909.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1910.

interests in New York, Mr. McClellan sent in his resignation to council in September, 1906. The president of council was made acting mayor to finish out the term.<sup>45</sup> From 1903 to 1951 the mayors served a two year term. To enable them to carry out long range plans, the term was extended to four years.<sup>46</sup>

The following is a list of Ventnor's mayors and their term of office.

1903-1907	Alfred C. McClellan
1907-1911	S. Bartram Richards
1911-1915	James T. Bew
1915-1917	U. Dahlgren Albertson
1917-1919	Theodore W. Schimpf
1919-1921	Charles H. Godfrey
1921-1923	Amor W. Brehman
1923-1925	Almerin Marston
1925-1929	Carleton E. Adams
1929-1937	Isaac B. Sweigart
1937-1949	Harry S. Hodson
1949-	Warren E. Titus

In the first few years of its existence as a city, Ventnor's population was mainly centered around Cambridge Avenue. The real estate office of Grove and Carroll at Cambridge and Atlantic avenues became the voting place of the time.<sup>47</sup> By 1912 the population had spread out both directions and it became necessary to divide the city into two wards. The dividing line was Dorset Avenue. East of Dorset was the first ward, and west including the Heights was the second. It became necessary to increase the number of councilmen from four to seven.<sup>48</sup> The number of wards and councilmen are still the same.

Some of the problems besetting the city government will be discussed briefly with more detailed accounts concerning consolidation and commission government.

One of council's stormy sessions occurred in 1909 over the renaming of a street. In January of that year Councilman Shumway, a builder, introduced an ordinance to change the name of Grand Avenue and Dorset Place, a continuous street having two names, to Richards Avenue in honor of Samuel Richards.<sup>49</sup> This resolution

<sup>45</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 26, 1931.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, April 15, 1950.

<sup>47</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, September 7, 1907.

<sup>48</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, January 20, 1912.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 20, 1909.

was approved by the council on February 5.<sup>50</sup> Since Dorset Place was in the St. Leonard Tract, the St. Leonard Land Company asked council to repeal the ordinance.<sup>51</sup> All the streets in that section had been named for English dukes. Two weeks later the repeal was passed on the third reading, but Mr. Shumway refused to vote. Although he realized a small street had been named Richards Avenue, he felt an avenue of greater importance would be more fitting to honor the founder of the city.<sup>52</sup> Mr. Shumway told council they could have his resignation and then left the room.<sup>53</sup> When Mayor Richards, the son of the founder, read the resignation letter at the May 5th meeting, he asked council to refuse it. They did, and Mr. Shumway returned.<sup>54</sup>

It isn't odd to see domesticated house pets about as one travels through Ventnor. Prior to March of 1913, however, one often saw cattle, horses or poultry running at large on the city streets. An ordinance was passed that month to have all animals restrained by their owners. Penalties were provided for those who ignored this law.<sup>55</sup>

A Board of Health was established in 1908. One of their first complaints concerned a stable on South Wissahickon Avenue. The owner was ordered by the board to remove the stable. They were satisfied when he removed the horse; the stable is still there.<sup>56</sup> Another problem referred to the Board of Health was that of a tent village within the city limits. Promoters of the project had leased the block at Newport and Atlantic avenues extending back to Ventnor Avenue. They allowed families to spend the summer there living in tents.<sup>57</sup> Although several complaints were made about the lack of sanitary conditions, no official action was taken until 1935, and the ordinance introduced then to prohibit camping was aimed at an entirely different group.<sup>58</sup>

Ventnor has always been primarily a residential city. When it became apparent that business interests might encroach upon the

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, February 5, 1909.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1909.

<sup>52</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, April 24, 1909.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, April 21, 1909.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, May 5, 1905.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, March 19, 1913.

<sup>56</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>57</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, June 8, 1912.

<sup>58</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, June 27, 1933.

residential areas, council passed an ordinance restricting the businesses to certain locations.<sup>59</sup> Zoning ordinances also restrict the location of apartment houses and other multiple family dwellings.

In 1935 a coalyard in the rear of the buildings from 105 to 115 North Newport Avenue, and the Campbell Coal Company on North Portland Avenue were put out of business by an ordinance banning coalyards and junkyards.<sup>60</sup> This followed complaints by thirty-five residents who objected to the dust and noise created.<sup>61</sup>

Traffic and parking have created problems since the coming of the automobile. The *Jersey Times*, in 1954, spoke of traffic as being Ventnor's #1 problem. The article referred to 1926 when several measures were taken to relieve this same problem which was a major one even then.<sup>62</sup> Although each measure has had some degree of effect, the problem still exists and measures are still being tried in an effort to control and regulate traffic. Ordinance #2, in 1955, provided for the installation of parking meters in certain areas of the city.<sup>63</sup> There are those who believe this measure does more harm than good by driving customers and then businesses to cities nearby where parking is free.

Earlier in this section Ventnor's councilmanic form of government was mentioned. There have been attempts from both the outside and the inside to change this form of government. Twice the commission form has been pushed as a substitute. The first time was in 1912 when petitions were signed<sup>64</sup> by those who favored commissioners to councilmen, but when it came to a vote it was defeated.<sup>65</sup> Again in 1928 talk of commission government began.<sup>66</sup> The following year discontented citizens worked energetically to bring about the change.<sup>67</sup> Petitions were circulated in an effort to have a referendum held.<sup>68</sup> When the petitions were filed, the city clerk reported them to be short seventy-five names. The leaders of the movement were able to get one hundred five additional names, but the city clerk refused to accept them. This caused quite a furor. The city solicitor

<sup>59</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 1, 1921.

<sup>60</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, May 28, 1935.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, April 9, 1935.

<sup>62</sup> News item in the *Jersey [City, New Jersey] Times*, October 9, 1954.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January, 1955.

<sup>64</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, May 25, 1912.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1912.

<sup>66</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 20, 1928.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, January 3, 1937.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1938.

ruled that there was nothing in the statutes to make the clerk return the original petitions or accept additional names.<sup>69</sup> This seems to have put an end to the movement. These efforts to oust the councilmanic form of government came from the inside.

From outside, efforts have been made to put Ventnor under a commission form of government by annexing it to Atlantic City. This problem, which is prominent today, had its beginning in the late 1800's. In 1889 Atlantic City felt it would be only a short time until the names Absecon Island and Atlantic City would be synonymous.<sup>70</sup> Shortly after Ventnor's incorporation, Atlantic City papers stated that the joining of the two boardwalks and the desire of Ventnor officials to have one trolley fare for both cities was hastening the day when Ventnor would become part of Atlantic City.<sup>71</sup> In his annual message of 1907 Mayor Richards reminded the people of their recent existence under Egg Harbor Township's guidance. Using this as an argument he warned against "consolidation with any municipality to which our interests might be subordinate."<sup>72</sup> The following year the talk continued along different lines. Suggestions were made that the lower beach taxpayers of South Atlantic City, Lennig, Oberon, and Longport would be in favor of annexation to Ventnor. This would have meant one general government for the promotion of interests common to all. At the same time each town would maintain a borough form of government.<sup>73</sup> The State Legislature, in 1909, was being pushed to introduce and pass a bill that would have made annexation to Atlantic City a surety.<sup>74</sup> Inadequate school facilities were used as an argument for annexation.<sup>75</sup> Early in 1910 many Ventnorites signed petitions showing their desire to remain a city apart.<sup>76</sup> These early attempts to annex the city were accompanied by delegations of citizens, headed by the mayor, traveling to Trenton to protest any legislation that would force consolidation.<sup>77</sup> In the

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, June 14, 1939.

<sup>70</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Daily Union*, April 5, 1889.

<sup>71</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City." News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 21, 1907.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, newspaper clipping dated April 17, 1907.

<sup>73</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 25, 1908.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1909.

<sup>75</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, December 4, 1909.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1910.

<sup>77</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, March 20, 1953.

latter part of the twenties and early thirties a desire to merge Ventnor and Margate under a city manager was fostered by several men in civic and political circles.<sup>78</sup> The mayor of Margate favored the merger feeling that eventually all of the island would be under Atlantic City's government.<sup>79</sup>

Once more the question of annexation has arisen. In 1956 Mayor Titus pointed out that, if annexed, Ventnor would still need its present facilities. Therefore, it would not be advantageous from a financial point of view. As the law now stands, annexation would require a vote, and the people have indicated they want Ventnor to remain as it is.<sup>80</sup>

*Transportation.* Before incorporation, horses and trolleys were the means by which most people traveled any distance. In 1881 the Camden and Atlantic Railroad extended its tracks four and six tenths miles from Florida Avenue, through what later became Ventnor, to South Atlantic City, now Margate. At first service on this line was only available on Sundays, but in 1883 it was operated all year long to aid in the development of the lower beach. Opposition arose in 1888 when the railroad proposed to introduce electric street cars. Although steam motors had been prohibited in 1879, when the electric cars were opposed in 1888, the railroad was successful in instituting steam motor cars to South Atlantic City. These were called "dummy trains." Electric cars were finally used in Atlantic City in April of 1889, but the South Atlantic branch was not electrified until 1893.

The Camden and Atlantic Railroad, the West Jersey Railroad, and the West Jersey and Atlantic Railroad were consolidated in 1896 to form the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad under the control of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

A short time later the trolley loop at Albany Avenue was removed and a new loop was built in Ventnor.<sup>81</sup> This started a series of events which resulted in strained relations between the city and the transportation company. In the early 1900's the company began charging an extra fare of five cents when entering Ventnor. The city officials protested. There also was feeling against the unsightly

<sup>78</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, December 18, 1934.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1926.

<sup>80</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, February 3, 1956.

<sup>81</sup> William P. Hamilton III, and Edward T. Francis, "The Atlantic City Trolley Lines." *The Marker*, Vol. 10, No. 1. ([n. p.]: North Jersey Chapter of National Railway Historical Society, 1951), pp. 4-6.

freight yard belonging to the railroad, located between Cambridge and Portland avenues.<sup>82</sup> Toward the end of 1907 it looked as if the differences would be settled. The transportation company removed a switch at Cambridge Avenue and promised to remove the loop.<sup>83</sup> The following year the city imposed a mercantile license on certain vehicles including trolleys. Feeling this was unfair, the trolley company threatened to take the ordinance into court to test its legality.<sup>84</sup> Since the company had not fulfilled its promise to remove the loop, Ventnor City took that matter to court. In December the court ruled that the railroad company would have to remove the loop. This meant all of Atlantic Avenue on the north side of the tracks could be improved. At that time Atlantic Avenue was a gravel surfaced road on the north side of the tracks only. The gravel surface extended from Jackson Avenue to Cambridge and then from Portland Avenue to Fredericksburg. A driver going from Atlantic City to Margate by way of Atlantic Avenue had to turn north at Cambridge Avenue, drive to Ocean Avenue and turn west, drive to Portland Avenue and turn south, drive to Atlantic Avenue and turn west and then continue on his way. This was necessary because the loop tracks were far above grade and Atlantic Avenue had not been surfaced between Cambridge and Portland avenues.<sup>85</sup> As the year 1909 began the city was still hopeful that the loop would be removed.<sup>86</sup> When time passed and the loop remained, many people felt that the city had waited long enough. Some of Ventnor's longsuffering citizens literally took matters into their own hands and began removing the loop.

The West Jersey and Seashore Railroad protested, but the city protested louder about the condition of Atlantic Avenue. It was surfaced on one side only and anyone unfortunate enough to find himself on the ocean side of the tracks would find himself in a fix. There was not sufficient grading to permit the driving of vehicles across the tracks.<sup>87</sup> By the end of September the trolley company was ready to work out an agreement with the city. They requested permission to reconstruct the loop. Granted this, they promised to take up a spur which lay in the most traveled part of Atlantic Avenue, straighten

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<sup>82</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, January 15, 1907.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1907.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1908.

<sup>85</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, December 19, 1908.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1909.

<sup>87</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, September 9, 1911.

the tracks at this part, lower the tracks which were then six inches above the city's established grade, deed to the city the land in the fifty foot right of way outside of twenty-three feet three inches reserved for the trolley cars, fill in the entire space which the company reserved for the trolley cars, and pave thirty-one street intersections.<sup>88</sup> The city was in agreement and granted the use of the loop for ten years.<sup>89</sup>

In 1908 when the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad had leased the trolley lines to the Atlantic City and Shore Railroad, they retained the right to operate trains on the trolley lines. As time passed, steam locomotives were used to move freight cars to freight sidings along the line.<sup>90</sup> One of the freight yards in the lower part of the island was located at the Savannah Avenue (Douglas Avenue) loop in Margate. The run was often made at night and residents complained that it was too noisy. In July of 1925 the mayors of Ventnor and Margate requested that the railroad company remove the freight yard and make the use of the steam locomotive unnecessary.<sup>91</sup>

Trolleys continued to run on Atlantic Avenue and to use the Portland Avenue loop until 1955. The Atlantic City Transportation Company, then owners of the line, decided to convert to buses. The Atlantic City and Shore Railroad, in 1926, had considered the question of a bus franchise to be operated on Ventnor Avenue, but it had never materialized.<sup>92</sup> Talk of bus conversion began again in 1950, but the cost seemed prohibitive.<sup>93</sup> Within five years, however, the way was made clear. On July 11, 1955 Ventnor City became the third community on Absecon Island to approve the trolley bus conversion. The trolley company turned over the right of way which had been reserved for their use to the city. They promised to remove, at their own expense, all property connected with the operation of the trolleys.<sup>94</sup> Ventnor was to pay \$100,000 to the company. A small group of residents circulated a petition against the use of Ventnor Avenue by buses. Since the change appealed to most, the trolleys were removed and Ventnor Avenue was used by the buses. The twenty-

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1911.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1911.

<sup>90</sup> Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 11, 1925.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1926.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1950.

<sup>94</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 12, 1955.



eighth of December of that year marked the final run of the trolleys on Absecon Island, and in the state of New Jersey.<sup>95</sup>

*Other utilities.* Telephone, gas, electric, and water services have been available to citizens of Ventnor City since the city began.

Bell Telephone had begun business as the Delaware and Atlantic Telephone Company in Atlantic City in 1881. In the summer of 1903 council had requested the telephone company for the use of their poles for lights.<sup>96</sup> By 1907 Ventnor could boast of two telephone companies, Bell, and the old Atlantic Coast Telephone Company. The city fathers felt that corporate rivalry meant civic progress.<sup>97</sup> The Atlantic Coast Telephone Company was bought out by Bell in 1916. In 1927 Bell Telephone service was transferred from the Margate building, used since 1912, to the then new Neptune Exchange office in Ventnor.<sup>98</sup>

One of the first bills received by the new city in 1903 was from the Atlantic Electric Light and Power Company. It was for electric lights furnished the city.<sup>99</sup> The Atlantic City Suburban Electric Company was formed in 1905 and started distribution in the lower part of the island. This included Ventnor. These two companies, along with two others, merged to form the Atlantic City Electric Company. This company has continued to serve the city with electric power ever since.<sup>100</sup> Because of complaints from the taxpayers concerning the excessive rates charged by the electric company in 1908, it was suggested that the city construct its own electric light plant. Those submitting the plan believed it would mean a saving to the city and to the residents.<sup>101</sup> They were, however, unable to obtain enough support to bring it to a vote in council.

The Consumers Gas Company began business in Atlantic City in 1900. This company served the young city by supplying it with gas for home lighting and cooking. The residents of Ventnor Heights in 1908 were indignant at the company for their refusal to extend their mains across the thorofare. The people were forced to use oil

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, December 29, 1955.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, July 27, 1903.

<sup>97</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 13, 1907.

<sup>98</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 13, 1927.

<sup>99</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, June 8, 1903.

<sup>100</sup> Information obtained from Wilson Meyers, Director of Public Relations, Atlantic City Electric Company.

<sup>101</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 1, 1908.

lamps for illumination and unsafe oil stoves for cooking. Mains were extended to the Heights in 1910. In 1909 the Consumers Gas Company and another gas company of Atlantic City were purchased by Clarence Geist, and the two became the Atlantic City Gas Company. In 1933 this company was bought out by the Public Service Corporation. The name was changed to the South Jersey Gas Company in 1947. Just ten years ago the gas company converted to the use of natural gas.<sup>102</sup>

One of Ventnor City's biggest assets is its water. Earliest residents had to provide themselves with water as best they could. In one case the family collected the water that fell on their roof and stored it in a cistern. Although the first water company and the first equipment used were a far cry from the present plant and machinery, it was a big step in the right direction. The pure, refreshing artesian well water Ventnorites enjoy today was enjoyed by those who lived here before the city was incorporated. The Ventnor Water and Light Company had served the city since 1897. In the administration of the second mayor, the city decided to buy the water company and the sewer plant. The citizens present at the council meeting showed by a standing vote that they favored the move.<sup>103</sup> A special election was held in June and again the citizens cast in favor of the city purchasing the plants. This meant the creation of a bond issue of \$57,000 for the water works and \$15,000 for the sewer plant.<sup>104</sup> After the transaction was completed, the city laid larger mains and sewer pipes in the streets and surfaced the streets with gravel.<sup>105</sup> Improvements were made over a period of years. In 1913 a tall stack to carry off smoke was completed.<sup>106</sup> Steam was the power used at that time to run the plant. In the latter part of 1919,<sup>107</sup> and the beginning of 1920,<sup>108</sup> the city purchased the two properties between the water works and Winchester Avenue. The main building, which is used at the present time, and the reservoir were completed in 1923.

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<sup>102</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 149.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, April 22, 1908.

<sup>104</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, June 13, 1908.

<sup>105</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City." News item from the *Atlantic City Press*, November 3, 1935.

<sup>106</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, September 27, 1913.

<sup>107</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, November 10, 1919.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 1, 1920.

It was suggested about this time that electric power be used instead of steam. The steam power method was costly, but electrification of the plant presented many problems. The idea was not forgotten and it became a reality in the late 1940's. E. Lynas Wood, chairman of the water and sewer committee, suggested that the \$30,000 cost be spread over a period of three years to prevent a sharp rise in taxes.<sup>109</sup> When the electrification was completed, the last puff of smoke emitted from the old stack. This was on Labor Day of 1949. The cost of maintenance and operation was drastically cut by the change.<sup>110</sup>

At present there are seven active wells. The eighth, the original well, has been filled in with concrete. It was condemned when a reaction of the metal pipes and sulphur in the water caused salt to form. Alloy steel would prevent any such contamination, but the cost is prohibitive. A constant check is made to be sure the water is pure.<sup>111</sup> In the summer all seven wells run, but in the winter only two or three are needed, depending on the height of the water in the reservoir. The reservoir can hold a total of 510,000 gallons of water. The pumps are placed 155 to 170 feet down the wells which are 810 feet deep. Because of the deep well pumps, a well which could yield 250 gallons per minute can now yield 500 to 800 gallons. Auxiliary motors, run by gasoline, are available for the well pumps and the main pumps in case the electricity would fail. No purification is needed for Ventnor's water. The state's minimum requirement of chlorine is added only because it is compulsory throughout the state.<sup>112</sup>

*Police department.* In 1903 Ventnor City had a one man police department. It was Benjamin F. Comley, a Civil War veteran, who was appointed at that time to be the guardian of the young resort. His house served as the police station. Mr. Comley remained the city's sole protector until July 4, 1906 when Harry H. Frings was added as the first patrolman. The increase in the summer crowds required the addition of a night patrolman, and the two men worked twelve hour shifts.<sup>113</sup> Since only one man was on duty at a time, his territory covered the whole city, and he had to walk it. Later, "beat

<sup>109</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, August 16, 1948.

<sup>110</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 5, 1950.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Mr. W. Margerum, Councilman and Chairman of the Water and Sewerage Department, 1953.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Gilbert Gale, Superintendent, Ventnor City Water Works, Fall of 1959.

<sup>113</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, June 15, 1929.

pounding" gave way to bicycles. When more protection was needed, two lifeguards took over the duties of policemen during the summer evenings.

In those early days the city lacked a jail, and the few prisoners arrested had to be taken to Atlantic City. At that time police clubs were made from cut down billiard cues.<sup>114</sup>

Two years after his appointment as a patrolman, Harry Frings became acting chief when Ben Comley resigned. The same year marked the date of the establishment of the police court and the first use of Ventnor's jail in the newly erected city hall. In July of 1908, Marceline, star clown of the New York Hippodrome, was charged by an agent of the S.P.C.A. of having ill treated a horse. He not only had to pay a fine of \$10, but also had the dubious honor of being the first occupant of the city jail.<sup>115</sup>

Six call boxes with regular manual phones connecting to the Coast Telephone Company were installed in 1908. It became the duty of the operators to keep a record of all calls to the police department and to make a weekly report of them.<sup>116</sup>

It was not until 1913 that council felt the police force had grown to a sufficient number to be designated a regular police department.

In 1917 William Sprague was appointed acting chief in place of Harry Frings who was demoted to a patrolman. The following year the importance of Sprague's post was recognized and he was named chief. However, in 1919, the same politicians who removed Frings from office to give Sprague the job, dismissed Sprague and restored Frings as acting chief. Sprague took his case to court and in 1922 was reinstated as chief of the department. His victory in the court did not go over well with the police force. They refused to work with Sprague and a "walk-out" occurred, leaving the city without protection. The Coast Guards volunteered to guard the city at night during this time. The "walk-out" was successful for the city officials restored Frings as chief and the police force returned to duty.<sup>117</sup> Evidently William Sprague was satisfied with having been chief again for a few days and was willing to step out of the department.<sup>118</sup> Frings remained chief of police until 1930 when he retired.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1930.

<sup>115</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 25, 1908.

<sup>116</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 27, 1930.

<sup>117</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Lewis Johnson, Captain of Police, August, 1959.

The city officials then wanted John A. Barnshaw, Sr., a retired Atlantic City captain of detectives, to head the force. Since they were unable to bring him in as chief, they created the position of Director of Police and Public Welfare, placing him over the fire department and the beach patrol as well. He held this post until 1932 when the State Legislature made it impossible for a man to collect a pension in one city and hold office in another. Following Barnshaw's resignation Maurice C. Mower was made acting lieutenant, then acting captain, and finally police chief, the office which he has held ever since.<sup>119</sup>

The installation of a new fire alarm system in 1915 enabled the officers and headquarters to keep in contact. The policemen could call headquarters from police boxes located on almost every other street. By use of a green light at night and a horn by day, headquarters was able to contact the officers on duty, and a good reason was required from any who did not answer the signal.<sup>120</sup>

A Model T Ford became both the police car and city ambulance prior to the radio equipped cars of the early 1930's. The radio equipped cars were a first for Ventnor City in the South Jersey area.<sup>121</sup> At present, they are the only means of communication between the patrolling officers and headquarters, the police call boxes having been eliminated within the past decade.<sup>122</sup>

A merger of the Ventnor, Margate, and Longport police took place in 1931. This was done in order to do away with the red tape involved in crossing city lines.<sup>123</sup> Pleasantville merged later and the joint police force lasted several years.

In the early thirties summer policemen were added to strengthen the force. In the forties and early fifties boardwalk policemen were on duty to patrol the walk in the summer months. The only extra summer police now employed are two men who check the parking meters at beaches three and six.

From just one man in 1903, the police force grew with the city and there now are twenty-six full time policemen in the department.<sup>124</sup> Until the school year 1958-59, policemen guarded the cross-

<sup>119</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Lewis Johnson, Captain of Police, August, 1959.

<sup>121</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Lewis Johnson, Captain of Police, August, 1959.

<sup>123</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 6, 1931.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Lewis Johnson, Captain of Police, August, 1959.

ings for the schools in Ventnor City. Retired policemen took over the post then and relieved the regular police officers from that duty. They were sworn in as special Ventnor school guards.<sup>125</sup>

About twice a year classes are held by the state police or the F.B.I. Although, at one time, it was compulsory for all policemen to attend these classes, at present either volunteers or those designated as representatives of the city attend.<sup>126</sup>

The police station and the jail are located in the city hall. The station includes photographing, fingerprinting, radio, and record rooms.

*Fire department.* Several leading citizens met in John Snyder's boathouse at Weymouth Avenue and the bay to discuss the need for fire protection. This meeting in May of 1906 resulted in the formation of the Ventnor City Fire Company, a volunteer organization. Six fire extinguishers constituted the apparatus first used. These were rented and placed in the homes of the members. This newly organized fire company wanted to collect money to purchase a piece of motor apparatus, but before they could, the city government bought an auto chemical engine in 1907 much to the volunteers' displeasure.<sup>127</sup> This was the only automobile apparatus in the whole state. It operated under gasoline power and averaged twenty-five miles per hour.<sup>128</sup> It was delivered in September and housed in the new city hall.<sup>129</sup> This equipment was a white elephant to the city; none of the volunteers could run it. Finally it was discovered that David Stuart, an engineer at Carisbrooke Inn, knew how to operate the engine. He was hired to drive it and became the only paid member of the department.<sup>130</sup>

Council introduced an ordinance to create a paid department of three men in 1908. The reason given for this move was the failure of the volunteers to arrange for repairs and care of the auto chemical engine. Council felt three men could give ample protection if the volunteers helped out in serious fires.<sup>131</sup> This ordinance was not passed.

<sup>125</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 5, 1958.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Lewis Johnson, Captain of Police, August, 1959.

<sup>127</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>128</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 10, 1907.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, September 21, 1907.

<sup>130</sup> *Ventnor Crier*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>131</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, April 4, 1908.

Ventnor's first fire call was to the home of the street supervisor, 6411 Winchester Avenue.

As the result of a serious fire in Ventnor Heights, the need for better equipment and a larger department were readily seen. A bond issue was passed enabling the city to purchase a Webb pumper and hose car. Shortly after the delivery of this engine, a call was received from Longport for help in extinguishing a serious fire. The Webb arrived far ahead of the horse drawn company from Atlantic City. This settled all arguments as to the supremacy of the gasoline engine over the horse drawn truck.

When the balance of the bond issue was used on additions to the city hall instead of fire equipment, some of the members withdrew from the fire company and formed their own company.<sup>132</sup> This group, headed by Carl Voelker, collected enough money to purchase a hand drawn ladder truck. They acted as an auxiliary to the fire company.<sup>133</sup>

An ordinance was passed creating the Ventnor City Fire Department at council's initial meeting in 1910. William Kuhl was elected chief and continued to hold the post until 1918.

In 1912, when the skeleton of a full time department was organized, David Stuart was promoted to captain. This meant that he was head of the paid department. An ordinance in 1934 resulted in the organization of a full time paid department as it is known today. David Stuart was named chief and he remained chief until his death in 1954.<sup>134</sup>

The underground cable fire alarm system, installed in 1915, sounded the alarm in several places and started a good pressure of water. This served the city well until the new Gamewell alarm system took its place in 1929. According to a newspaper at the time it was installed, there was little this alarm didn't do. Among its accomplishments were the following: it recorded the alarm by minute and second, swung open the doors, lifted the brass pole coverings, started the water pressure, and woke the sleeping firemen.<sup>135</sup>

The fire department, under Captain Stuart, installed the first traffic signal in the city in 1926. This "silent policeman" stood in the middle of the intersection at Dorset and Ventnor avenues. It was later moved because of the danger of automobiles hitting it.

<sup>132</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>133</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, December 4, 1909.

<sup>134</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, April [n. d.], 1954.

<sup>135</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Evening Union*, June 15, 1929.

The state underwriters association lowered the steep insurance rates in Ventnor following the opening of the new fire house in the spring of 1928. This fire house, in use at the present time, is located at New Haven and Winchester avenues.

Residents in the Heights began requesting that a fire house be located there. They stressed the danger of the drawbridge being open or jamming when the engines would be needed on that side of the thorofare. When a new drawbridge was under construction the following year, a small frame building was erected at Surrey and Calvert avenues, equipment was purchased, and two men were placed on duty for each shift.<sup>136</sup>

Before 1921 the fire apparatus was used as the city ambulance. From 1921 until 1929 the police car was used.<sup>137</sup> Then, in 1929, a regular ambulance was placed in service for around the clock emergency use.

At present the department consists of the chief William M. Stewart, two captains, and twenty-four men. Many of these are new to the department for in the eight year period from 1950 to 1958 fifteen men retired, the greatest for one year being 1953 when nine men retired.

The equipment is a far cry from the original six extinguishers. A station wagon, a half ton truck, and the chief's car are used as well as three pumpers and an aerial truck.

The following is a comparison between Atlantic City and Ventnor as to size, population, and fire fighting:

	<i>Atlantic City</i>	<i>Ventnor City</i>	
Size in square miles.	16.4	1.9	Ventnor is approximately 12½% or 1/8 the size of Atlantic City.
Population	62,000	8,000	Ventnor is approximately 14% or 1/7 the size of Atlantic City.
Number of Fire Houses	9	2	
Number of Fire Alarms	891	116	Ventnor receives 13% the number of calls.

<sup>136</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>137</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, July 1, 1921.



In addition to the regular fire alarms, the fire department received 94 emergency calls for pumping cellars, lock outs, etc., and 367 ambulance calls in 1958.<sup>138</sup>

*Banks.* The Ventnor City National Bank was organized July 27, 1912, having received its charter from the Comptroller of the United States on the previous day. On the twenty-seventh, the stockholders met in the Hotel Chelsea. A committee was appointed to find a temporary building to be used as a bank until a suitable lodging could be secured.<sup>139</sup>

The bank opened for business October 1, 1912 on the ground floor of the building at Little Rock and Atlantic avenues.<sup>140</sup> Many people waited at the doors before 9 A. M., anxious to be the first to open an account. By the end of the first day, deposits surpassed \$25,000. All but one of the city's merchants became customers.<sup>141</sup> Banking was carried on here until 1914 when the offices were moved to the new bank building at Surrey and Atlantic avenues.<sup>142</sup>

In 1921 two separate groups launched movements to organize a trust company. Only one was successful since the state commission would only issue one charter.<sup>143</sup> The Ventnor Trust Company opened its doors for business on the corner of Victoria and Atlantic avenues, August first of that year.<sup>144</sup> The two banking institutions continued as separate businesses until 1931 when they merged. At that time the Ventnor City National Bank took over and guaranteed the assets of the Ventnor Trust Company. On October 26, 1931, the trust company opened as an office of the Ventnor National Bank.<sup>145</sup>

Ventnor City's bank was the first on the island to have the safeguard of tear gas installed.<sup>146</sup> It was chosen by the federal government as a United States depository for postal savings funds and also as a special depository for public money. Only a national bank can

<sup>138</sup> Information obtained from William M. Stewart, Chief of the Ventnor City Fire Department.

<sup>139</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, August 26, 1934.

<sup>140</sup> S. Bartram Richards, "Scrapbook of Ventnor City", news item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, November 12, 1912.

<sup>141</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, October 4, 1912.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Robert Bartlett, summer, 1958.

<sup>143</sup> *Ventnor News, op. cit.*, February 2, 1921.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1921.

<sup>145</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, October 26, 1931.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, August 27, 1931.

qualify for this.<sup>147</sup> In 1935 it was authorized by the federal government to make loans and mortgages.<sup>148</sup> Although classed as a country bank, it maintained a certain degree of liquidity comparable to banks in large cities.<sup>149</sup>

In September of 1957 the Ventnor City National Bank became the Ventnor branch office of the Boardwalk National Bank of Atlantic City. After the merger of the two banks, the Victoria Avenue building and the old post office were remodeled into modern banking offices and the Surrey Avenue building was sold.

*Missionary homes.* A group of Pennsylvania people interested in spreading information about missionaries and aiding them heard of Dr. Albert Henderson, a missionary to Burma. He had no home to go to while on furlough in 1907 so this group decided to help him.<sup>150</sup> Mrs. Thomas Richards of Ventnor rented the old post office for the missionary's use. Then the group, called the Pennsylvania Medical Missionary Society of which Mrs. Richards was a member, rented a house on Portland Avenue for him. They later bought this house.<sup>151</sup> In 1911 the Pennsylvania women formed the Ventnor Auxiliary to the Pennsylvania Medical Missionary Society.<sup>152</sup> It was incorporated as the Interdenominational Foreign Missionary Society with Mrs. Richards president.<sup>153</sup>

When the Northern Baptist Convention was being held in Atlantic City, Mrs. Shumway invited the ladies to a tea to be held in the Janvier cottage on the corner of Portland and Ventnor avenues. As a result, Mrs. George W. Doane who was interested in missions bought that house and presented it to the society.<sup>154</sup> In 1922 it was moved from the corner of Portland and Ventnor to North Portland Avenue.<sup>155</sup> The number was increased until there were six cottages.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, March 3, 1933.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, February 16, 1935.

<sup>149</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, 37th Anniversary Edition, March, 1940.

<sup>150</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 9, 1929.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Richards, summer of 1958.

<sup>152</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, December 9, 1911.

<sup>153</sup> H. J. Souder, editor-in-chief, *Who's Who in New Jersey* (New York: National Biographic News Service, 1925), p. 191.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Mrs. Charles H. Harrison, member of the Board of the Society for Foreign Mission Welfare, July, 1958.

<sup>155</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, May 8, 1922.

These homes, known as the Furlough Cottages, are for the free use of missionaries on temporary leave of absence from their work.<sup>156</sup>

Mrs. George W. Doane of South Orange, New Jersey, was the daughter of the famous hymn writer, Dr. William Howard Doane. She had wanted to become a missionary but was unable to because of an eye affliction. When she heard of the problems faced by missionaries on leave, she decided to do something about it.<sup>157</sup> Buying a house and giving it to the Medical Mission Society was not enough. Mrs. Doane then bought a large brown frame house on South Portland Avenue, and named it for her husband. Next she bought the surrounding lots, had white stucco buildings erected, and named them after members of her family. After that she purchased some houses and remodeled them to suit her purpose while others were purchased and torn down to make room for new buildings.

Since Mrs. Doane's death, the work of the Society for Foreign Mission Welfare which she founded and incorporated, has been carried on by a board of eight members. Several new motel-like buildings have been erected as well as a large recreation hall. The lot between Ocean Avenue and Atlantic Avenue was bought at auction from the transportation company and was made into a park. Except for the church and rectory, the entire block bounded by Ventnor, Portland, Ocean and Sacramento avenues is owned by the society. The houses, known as the Houses of Fellowship, are rent free for two weeks or a month in the summer and in the winter for the entire school year. When the missionaries first arrive they find the apartment stocked with food. One missionary recently remarked that he had come home "all in," but after a rest in the Houses of Fellowship he felt like a new man. For just that purpose Mrs. Doane made the houses possible.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> H. J. Souder, *loc. cit.*

<sup>157</sup> News item in the *Philadelphia Record*, October 30, 1941.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Mrs. Charles H. Harrison, summer of 1958.

CHAPTER IV  
GROWTH—PART II

*Post office.* A few years after Ventnor City was officially named, a fourth class post office was opened in the home of Emma and James Calvert on the corner of Sacramento and Ventnor avenues.<sup>1</sup> Residents including Postmistress Calvert, desirous of having free delivery of mail, requested a change soon after the city was incorporated. Council passed a resolution during their second meeting to send a letter to Atlantic City's postmaster requesting his influence in having the city's mail delivery placed under the Atlantic City Post Office.<sup>2</sup> On May 1, 1904 the fourth class post office was abandoned.<sup>3</sup>

When Carl Voelker opened his printing establishment at 5218 Ventnor Avenue, he also had a small stationery store and a sub post office there.<sup>4</sup> Not until 1917 did Ventnor once again have its own post office. The latter part of that year the Ventnor Branch of the Atlantic City Post Office opened for business in the building later used by the Ventnor Trust Company at Victoria and Atlantic avenues.<sup>5</sup> It continued there until a new building was erected adjacent to that building at the Victoria Avenue end of the structure.<sup>6</sup> When the Ventnor City National Bank took over the Trust Company in 1931, the post office building became the property of the bank according to the terms set up.<sup>7</sup> The last lease executed for the use of this building by the postal authorities was for ten years beginning in 1948.<sup>8</sup> When the lease ran out it was not renewed. Instead, a new post office building was erected in the 6300 block on Ventnor Avenue. It was dedicated Saturday, June 20, 1959, and officially opened the following Monday.

In 1938, Dr. Carlos Godfrey, Director of Public Records in New Jersey, had asked if Ventnor wanted to drop the word "City" from

<sup>1</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 31, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, April 27, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> *Ventnor News*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, October 12, 1912.

<sup>5</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, May 3, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, February 17, 1922.

<sup>7</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, October 26, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 108.

its name since the post office operated under the name Ventnor.<sup>9</sup> Council sent the reply that the postal authorities had made a mistake and should correct it.<sup>10</sup> The post office has been Ventnor City ever since.

*Real estate.* It didn't take long for the small settlement of an inn and three houses to grow to a fair sized community. According to official records in 1907, there was more construction work in comparison to population being done in Ventnor than in any other municipality in the state of New Jersey.<sup>11</sup> Building continued, and in April of 1910 the last piece of "woods" remaining in Ventnor was cleared away. This was an area of cedar wooded hills between Troy and Buffalo avenues south of Ventnor Avenue.<sup>12</sup>

One company, known as the Ventnor Syndicate, built a high sea wall of concrete four hundred twenty-five feet south of Atlantic Avenue in the lower part of Ventnor. They pumped sand from the thorofare and made six side lots and two beach front lots in each block. A September gale in the early twenties hit the sea wall, which was a concave on the ocean side, and it collapsed. The lots which had been sold as building lots were suddenly just a part of the beach again. In 1925 the city built a wooden bulkhead three hundred feet south of Atlantic Avenue extending from Buffalo to Fredericksburg avenues. The cost of the bulkhead and the sand which had to be pumped in again was assessed from the people who owned the land since the city was giving them protection.<sup>13</sup>

The city's first apartment house was erected on the northwest corner of Little Rock and Atlantic avenues in 1911. The first beach front home was erected at Little Rock and the beach by Howard G. Harris. This house was recently torn down for the erection of The Monaco Motel Apartments.<sup>14</sup>

In September of 1922 the National Exhibition Company held the Atlantic City Building Exposition on the Million Dollar Pier. A bungalow was built on the pier as an illustration of good building

<sup>9</sup> *Atlantic City Press, op. cit.*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, September 26, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 27, 1907.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1910.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, formerly with C. J. Adams, Real Estate, summer of 1958.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mr. Howard Campbell, early Ventnor resident and builder, September 7, 1959.

materials and furnishings available to those interested in building. Posters advertised, "The Bungalow Beautiful," "The Home Electric," and many people visited the exhibition. After the building exposition closed, A. Conrad Ekholm, the general manager, moved the house to 7001 Winchester Avenue in Ventnor City and lived there with his family.<sup>15</sup>

Another "Home Electric" was built in 1925 at 7300 Ventnor Avenue by Julian A. Hillman and H. C. Krauskopf of the Atlantic City Electric Company. It was an illustration of the many new labor-saving conveniences.<sup>16</sup>

*St. Leonard's Tract.* The St. Leonard's Land Company was incorporated June 13, 1896 by Israel G. Adams, Clement J. Adams, and Clarence L. Cole. The first president was Dr. Philip I. Marvel.<sup>17</sup> The company purchased all the land bounded by the center line of Surrey Avenue to the center line of Cambridge Avenue and from the high water mark of the Atlantic Ocean to the center line of Winchester Avenue and Inside Thorofare.<sup>18</sup> The corporation applied to the Court of Common Pleas to vacate the streets within these boundaries. The area had been mapped by Rowand, but the St. Leonard's Land Company remapped it laying the streets out two hundred fifty feet apart instead of three hundred feet. They named them for English dukes.<sup>19</sup> The St. Leonard's Association was formally incorporated November 18, 1921.<sup>20</sup> This association of home owners drew up the following restrictions.<sup>21</sup>

(1) no building shall be used as a slaughter house, bone boiling establishment, piggery, or any other purpose which would create a public or private nuisance.

(2) there would be one building, including if desired, a private garage erected on a single lot.

(3) buildings erected on these lands are for cottage resident purposes and garages over which could be built living quarters for servants.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mrs. A. B. Ekholm, July, 1958.

<sup>16</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, March 18, 1925.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>18</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Reporter*, Howard L. Berger, downbeach editor, "A History of St. Leonard's Tract," February 14, 1958.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>20</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, March 1, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Reporter*, Howard L. Berger, downbeach editor, "A History of St. Leonard's Tract," February 21, 1958.

(4) the foundation of all buildings in the tract not to be more than 7 feet above the established grade in Ventnor.

(5) said lands should not contain buildings to be used for sanitarium, hospital, home for cripples, home for infirm, home for old aged, establishment for mental defectives, tuberculosis, hotel, inn, boarding house, public or private or other public or quasi public institutions.

(6) property lines for building purposes were to be maintained so that no building would be erected nearer than 20 feet from the front line or nearer than 5 feet of the side lines with the exception where a property owner controlled two or more contiguous lots, he could construct on any part of said lots without regard to intervening sidelines. This of course provided that the building is not within designated distance of outside line and another provision that bay windows on front of building may extend two feet beyond main body of house. These still apply today.

Restrictions had been imposed on the lands in 1898 but they lasted only for thirty years. This made the establishment of new regulations necessary. The early restrictions did not apply to land south of Atlantic Avenue because at that time the ocean came near to the avenue. In 1909, however, restrictions were placed on lots to a point two hundred feet south of Atlantic Avenue as they were sold.

These regulations do not apply oceanward of the point two hundred feet south of Atlantic Avenue. This explains how it was possible to have the Oxford and Cambridge apartments, and the Ventnor Motel erected within the easterly and westerly limits of the tract. All three buildings are south of the southerly limits.<sup>22</sup>

*Ventnor Heights.* In the early 1900's Harvey Shumway organized the Wheelock Company for the development of what he called the Wheelock Tract. This was the area now known as Ventnor Heights. At that time it was mainly meadows and marshlands. The company dredged and filled the land in. They built a bridge from Ventnor over to the Heights and erected some houses, mostly boat houses, on the waterway.<sup>23</sup> The first one was built by Mr. Shumway at the waterfront intersection of avenues A and 10th, now Edgewater and Surrey avenues. It was later moved to Grand (Dorset) Avenue<sup>24</sup> and is now known as the Dorset House.

<sup>22</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Reporter*, Howard L. Berger, downbeach editor, "A History of St. Leonard's Tract," March 7, 1958.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>24</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, June 14, 1913.

In 1905 the development company, as owner of the bridge, was requested by council to remove it since the approach had been built without authority or permission.<sup>25</sup> The following year the Wheelock Company asked council for permission to construct a bridge from Somerset Avenue across Inside Thorofare.<sup>26</sup> In August of the same year the company asked council to sign a petition they had drawn up to have the county build a bridge at Dorset Place.<sup>27</sup> The county started construction the latter part of 1908. The old bridge was torn down and the only ways to cross over to the Heights were by boat<sup>28</sup> or as one home owner did, by crawling across a plank on his hands and knees.<sup>29</sup> On July 24, 1909, the new bridge was formally accepted.<sup>30</sup>

Besides the Ventnor Boat Works, the only other place of business in the early days was a general store just over the bridge.<sup>31</sup>

Development was slow. Most of the houses were owned by residents of Ventnor proper who rented their homes and lived in the Heights in the summer. It was not until the middle twenties that the area began to grow.<sup>32</sup> The Dorset boulevard was completed in the fall of 1925 leading many downbeach visitors through the Heights on the way to their destination.<sup>33</sup>

In the latter part of the twenties the name was changed from Ventnor Heights to New Ventnor.<sup>34</sup> Although now officially just a portion of Ventnor City, many people still refer to the area as Ventnor Heights. At the same time the county started to rebuild the draw-bridge at Dorset Avenue.<sup>35</sup> It was completed and opened May 29, 1930.<sup>36</sup>

The early residents had their hardships. In February of 1908 the water mains leading to the Wheelock Tract became frozen. The

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, July 23, 1905.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, May 23, 1906.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1906.

<sup>28</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, September 19, 1908.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1909.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1909.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Betz, summer residents in Ventnor Heights since 1908, August 29, 1959.

<sup>32</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 26, 1926.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1925.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1928.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1928.

<sup>36</sup> Frank M. Butler, *The Book of the Boardwalk and the Atlantic City Story* (Atlantic City, New Jersey: The 1954 Association, Inc., 1953), p. 64.



people had to carry water from the island since relief would come only with warm weather thawing the ice.<sup>37</sup>

*Ventnor Gardens.* Frank J. Pedrick and Sons, builders in Ventnor, erected several houses in the western end of the city in its early years. Later the sons bought land on the north side of the thorofare extending approximately from Troy to Baltimore Avenue.<sup>38</sup> Having no way to reach these meadows it was necessary to fill in that part of the thorofare separating their land from Ventnor.<sup>39</sup> Byron Jenkins, a member of council at that time, objected on the grounds that it would create drainage problems. He has since been proved to be right.<sup>40</sup> Pedrick lost his money and then the land in the depression when he was unable to keep up the taxes. It remained undeveloped until John Mahoney took some of the lots off the city's hands and built homes there just prior to World War II.<sup>41</sup>

Homes now occupy the 200 block in the Gardens from Wissahickon Avenue to and including Wyoming Avenue.

*Ventnor Bay Estates.* The latest real estate development is taking place at the present time. The land at the extreme end of Dorset Avenue was bought by developers who announced plans for a community of six hundred homes. In 1955 the developers and the city drew up legal agreements for the purchase and development of the area. In the early stages of building some legal difficulties arose, but were soon ironed out. Recently, however, trouble has been brewing over different interpretations of the original land sale, and agreements concerning utilities and grading. Both the city and the developers claim the other is responsible for supplying utilities and grading the streets.<sup>42</sup> Counter suits were filed and were settled by the court. Some time in February of 1960 the principal suit in which the developers are charging the city with breach of contract should come up in court.

*Schools.* Prior to 1903, the children in the Kuhl family had had to walk from their home on Portland Avenue to South Atlantic City's city hall on Washington Avenue to attend school.

<sup>37</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 8, 1908.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, December 28, 1925.

<sup>40</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>42</sup> News item in the *Downbeach Crier*, [Ventnor City, New Jersey], January 16, 1959.

Since South Atlantic City no longer provided free education for children of other communities, Ventnor had the choice of providing for its own or paying tuition to South Atlantic City. Provision was made in 1903. The parsonage of St. John's by the Sea Reformed Episcopal Church was available for use as a schoolhouse since it was not used during the school months.<sup>43</sup> Mr. Loudenslager, a councilman, secured twelve desks, two blackboards, and an assortment of books which had been discarded by the Atlantic City schools. These cost Ventnor nothing.<sup>44</sup> With these materials accumulated, council hired Lillian Hellfritch to teach Ventnor's seven children of school age.<sup>45</sup>

When St. John's parsonage was found to be too small, Mrs. Hellfritch moved her class to her home on Winchester Avenue between Portland and Newport avenues.<sup>46</sup>

Although in 1908 there had been only fourteen children, the enrollment in 1909 had increased to sixty-two. The Board of Education, therefore, requested the use of the council chamber for school purposes.<sup>47</sup> By April, that room in city hall was too crowded. It was evident that an addition would have to be made or a school built. The parents urged the city to build a school on the lot which had been set aside for that purpose.<sup>48</sup> In December, council told the Board of Education to advertise for bids for a schoolhouse site. They felt the lot bounded by Portland, Monmouth, Sacramento, and Winchester avenues was not centrally located.<sup>49</sup> This school lot was sold for \$20,000 and in January of 1910 the plot on Ventnor Avenue between Oxford and Dudley avenues was bought for \$17,000. Vivian B. Smith was engaged as architect and the work began. The additional teachers needed came from Atlantic City through an offer of \$200 more than they had been paid there.<sup>50</sup> The Oxford Avenue School, as it was called, was formally accepted from the contractors January 2, 1911.<sup>51</sup> Ventnor City was proud of this school building

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, February 2, 1904.

<sup>44</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 22, 1922.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, 1903.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Mrs. Joseph Crowe, nee Kuhl, August 25, 1959.

<sup>47</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, September 4, 1909.

<sup>48</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, April 3, 1909.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, December 18, 1909.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, Secretary to the Ventnor City Board of Education, October 23, 1958.

<sup>51</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 11, 1911.

which was unusual for those times. After a visit, Superintendent H. M. Cressman, in a letter, commended the city for its "model school."<sup>52</sup>

The original flag pole is said to have been brought to Atlantic City by a lumber schooner in the early 1890's. It once served as a flag staff at the old Pleasure Bay Tavern, Missouri Avenue and the Thorofare.<sup>53</sup> The weather vane on top was more than fifty years old in 1914. It had been made for Jonas Higbee, one of Absecon Island's first settlers, who placed it on top of his flag pole in front of the tavern.<sup>54</sup>

At the present time Ventnor holds its own commencement exercises, but in the early days the county schools had a joint commencement. In June of 1911 it was held in Pleasantville and included three Ventnor pupils. They were Minnie and Josephine Kuhl and Jack Smith.<sup>55</sup>

An addition was made to the Oxford Avenue School in 1914.<sup>56</sup> However, Ventnor was building rapidly and the school became overcrowded again. At first double sessions were held<sup>57</sup> and then the Troy Avenue School was built in lower Ventnor. In 1920 additions were made to this building and 1923 saw the completion of four rooms at either end.<sup>58</sup> The need for this school is clearly seen through the council minutes of 1919. In January it had been necessary once again to use the council chamber and ante-rooms as school rooms during the day.<sup>59</sup>

The school on Troy Avenue was built primarily for the younger children in that part of town because of the distance traveled to Oxford Avenue and the inability of many to attend in inclement weather.<sup>60</sup> The older children all attended the Oxford Avenue School. Their number increased so, that in 1927 the kindergarten rooms had to be taken for grade classes and the kindergarten children had to attend classes in the basement of St. John's parish house.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>52</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 10, 1912.

<sup>53</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, June 6, 1941.

<sup>54</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, March 21, 1914.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1911.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, October 23, 1958.

<sup>57</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, September 13, 1919.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, October 23, 1958.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 13, 1919.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, March 20, 1916.

<sup>61</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, February 11, 1927.

Another school was needed. Suggestions were made to remodel the Troy Avenue School, but these were scrapped.<sup>62</sup> Money was appropriated to build a new school on the site of the old city hall. Residents in the Heights urged council to split the appropriation and provide kindergarten facilities in Ventnor Heights.<sup>63</sup> They didn't, however, and children from kindergarten through fifth grade, living in Ventnor Heights, still attend Oxford Avenue School. The old Wanamaker Mansion on Atlantic Avenue between Dorset and Dudley avenues was offered for use as a school while the new school was being built. The offer wasn't accepted and the crowded conditions continued until the new school was completed March 26, 1930.<sup>64</sup> A contest was held to choose a name, with the result that it was called the Ventnor Avenue School.<sup>65</sup>

Ventnor City's children of high school age have always attended Atlantic City High School, but there have always been those who wanted Ventnor to have its own. When the building of the Troy Avenue School was proposed, Mayor Schimpf suggested the use of the building to introduce the high school curriculum.<sup>66</sup> Then, in 1919, the citizens petitioned for a high school.<sup>67</sup> By 1926 there were two hundred Ventnor pupils attending Atlantic City High School. Judge Joseph Thompson, whose wife was president of the Ventnor City Board of Education at that time, felt that Atlantic City would no longer be able to accommodate these children and Ventnor would have to provide a high school.<sup>68</sup> The original intention for the site of the Ventnor Avenue School was to use it for a high school. Plans and a drawing were made, but council voted the idea down.<sup>69</sup> In his New Year's message for 1934, Mayor Sweigart stressed the advantage of building then while government aid was available.<sup>70</sup> For some reason the citizens must not have favored this plan, for in November the *Atlantic City Press* reported the public to have rejected the proposal to build with a PWA loan.<sup>71</sup> The following year the problem re-

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1926.

<sup>63</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 27, 1928.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, October 23, 1958.

<sup>65</sup> *Atlantic City Press*, *op. cit.*, [n. d.]

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 1, 1918.

<sup>67</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, October 18, 1919.

<sup>68</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 1, 1926.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, October 23, 1958.

<sup>70</sup> *Atlantic City Press*, *op. cit.*, January 2, 1934.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, November 7, 1934.

mained the same. The school board said the city's bonded indebtedness prohibited the loan.<sup>72</sup> The Wanamaker site was offered for a high school in 1939, but it was not accepted.<sup>73</sup> The question of a downbeach high school is still being discussed although nothing has been settled. If one were built in Ventnor City it could accommodate children from both Margate and Longport.

A booklet printed in 1918 pointed out several interesting facts about Ventnor's public schools. In 1916 and 1917 vocational classes in cooking and woodworking were held with forty-three women and fifteen men in attendance. During regular school time a coach was employed to assist individual pupils with weaknesses in spelling, arithmetic, composition, and phonetics. French, German, and Spanish were taught to elementary children with the emphasis on ear training. In 1916 and 1917 Ventnor took first place in the county spelling contests. It also received the county banner for teamwork in arithmetic, and the county cup for chorus singing. Kindergarten and first grade classes especially enjoyed the opening and closing months when school was conducted for them on Ventnor Pier.<sup>74</sup>

Samuel O. Myers was the superintendent in early Ventnor. He resigned and Halliday R. Jackson became principal in 1915. He was made supervising principal later and held that position until it was abolished. Ventnor's three schools continued under the county superintendent and the three school principals. In 1946 the position of supervising principal was re-created with that title being given to Mrs. Mary V. Peters, then principal of the Ventnor Avenue School. In 1952 Mrs. Peters' title was changed to Superintendent of Schools and remained that until she retired in 1954. At that time Miss Elizabeth Butler became superintendent.<sup>75</sup>

The Ventnor City Board of Education consists of five members appointed by the mayor for a term of five years. The present board is made up of the president, Mr. J. Benjamin Brick; the vice-president, Dr. A. G. Merendino; and Mrs. Harry Subin, Mr. John Lloyd, Jr., and Mr. Joseph Le Chard. Miss Marian Maulick is Secretary to the Board.

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, September 27, 1935.

<sup>73</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 12, 1939.

<sup>74</sup> *The Ventnor City Public School*, Publication Booklet (Atlantic City, New Jersey: Shaner and Knauer, Printers and Stationers, 1918).

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick, October 23, 1958.

Mr. Brick remembers starting school in the old city hall council chamber. Miss Florence Somers was the teacher. She taught all eight grades, a total of twelve pupils, for fifty dollars a month.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to its public schools, Ventnor has a parochial school, and has had in the past two private schools and a school of music and languages.

Plans for building a parochial school in conjunction with St. James Roman Catholic Church were discussed in 1931. Ground was broken in March of that year<sup>77</sup> and the school opened for classes September 14, 1931.<sup>78</sup>

At 106 South Surrey Place the St. Leonard's School by the Sea was opened in 1921. It was a day and boarding school for girls. Rev. Alfred McClure and Miss Abby McClure were principals.<sup>79</sup> Consuls, army officers, and others who required a good home as well as a good school for their daughters while they were away on official business sent them to this private school.<sup>80</sup> St. Leonard's was primarily a tutoring school on a secondary level. After Rev. McClure and his daughter died, Miss Nancy Johnson, who was a teacher in the private school, became principal. She continued to be principal until the school closed in 1934. During those five years all the girls were high school age. The school was closed because the depression had depleted the funds and because Miss Johnson wanted to return to public school teaching.<sup>81</sup>

For those interested in music and languages, William Stobbe, a noted linguist and musician, opened a school at 116 Newark Avenue in 1910.<sup>82</sup>

On North Newport Avenue the Ventnor Private School was started in the middle 1920's. Mrs. Zimmerman, a registered nurse, conducted a private day and boarding school for nursery and kindergarten age children. It lasted nearly thirty years, closing upon the retirement of Mrs. Zimmerman and her assistant.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Marian Maulick.

<sup>77</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 22, 1931.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1931.

<sup>79</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 27, 1918.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1918.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Nancy Johnson, teacher in the Ventnor Avenue School, October, 1959.

<sup>82</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, June 18, 1910.

<sup>83</sup> Information supplied by Mr. Damask of Ventnor City whose children attended the school.

In 1913 the state of New Jersey was looking for a site on which to locate a normal school in the southern half of the state. Council passed a resolution to make an effort to have the normal school located in Ventnor City.<sup>84</sup> Nothing came of this so in 1917 a resolution was made to endorse Pleasantville as the location.<sup>85</sup> Neither site was accepted; in 1922 the state located the normal school at Glassboro.

*Recreation.* Being a resort city, one would immediately think of bathing as the main type of recreation in Ventnor. Although this is true, there are several other ways by which people, both past and present, have found relaxation.

In August of 1903 William Kuhl, who operated a row of bath houses at Cambridge Avenue, was appointed as the first lifeguard.<sup>86</sup> Since that time the number of guards and protected beaches have increased as the need arose. That first summer there were two protected beaches, by 1912 there were four,<sup>87</sup> and now there are nine. Ventnor's lifeguards now number twenty-nine; most of whom are college men. The record of the city's lifeguards has been outstanding. For at least the past twenty-seven years, and possibly longer, there have been no drownings. Seven times Ventnor has held the South Jersey Lifeguard Championship. They also hold the National Lifeguard Championship as a result of the meet held in Atlantic City in 1948.<sup>88</sup>

Because of their low pay, the guards in 1937 threatened to strike.<sup>89</sup> Within a month they received a raise.<sup>90</sup>

The beaches in Ventnor have been said to be among the finest. The gradual slope was one of the features stressed by Richard Osborne in 1852 (see page 8). Lifelines necessary at many coastal beaches are not needed here. The quality of the sand is also exceptional because it is fine grained.

In 1912 a playground commission was appointed which leased the beach block between Newport and New Haven avenues for a period of

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<sup>84</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, November 5, 1913.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, April 2, 1917.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, August 3, 1903.

<sup>87</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 17, 1912.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Captain John Goudy, captain of the Ventnor City Beach Patrol, September 8, 1959.

<sup>89</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 16, 1937.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1937.

three years to be used as a city beach.<sup>91</sup> This was known as the MacQuire Block and the beach block between Suffolk and Somerset avenues, which the city also leased, was known as the Waterall Block. The two blocks were leased for the consideration of the taxes levied on them until the city purchased them; the Waterall Block through condemnation procedures in 1919,<sup>92</sup> and the MacQuire Block in 1920.<sup>93</sup> Two years later the city purchased four lots between Lafayette and Melbourne avenues.<sup>94</sup>

Some resorts have limited the number of bathers who come to the shore for the day only by charging admission to the beaches. A beach fee was recommended for 1934 with the idea of fencing off the city owned beaches and providing admission to residents by free ticket or a nominal fee.<sup>95</sup> On investigation, the mayor found the cost of fencing prohibitive.<sup>96</sup> The following year plans were made to fence the beach between Suffolk and Somerset avenues to be used by residents, renters, and their guests for the fee of one dollar,<sup>97</sup> but in July it was decided against for that year.<sup>98</sup> Five years later it was suggested that Ventnor residents be issued a tag for free admission to the beach while outsiders would pay a small amount.<sup>99</sup> The idea went no further than the suggesting stage and little more was said until the building of the Garden State Parkway. Serious thought was given the idea of beach fees then, for many feared the Parkway would cause an influx of visitors.<sup>100</sup> Property owners favored the fee feeling it would lessen the contemplated tax increase, but city merchants argued that it would hurt business and renting.<sup>101</sup> Although backers of the plan have not given it up, the use of the beaches is still free.

Along with the pleasures of bathing, one thinks of the enjoyable walks on the boardwalk. One of the first official acts of the city was to borrow money for the erection of the boardwalk. The city solicitor appeared before the State Riparian Commission to ask that Ventnor be granted a strip of land running along the ocean front, fifty feet in

<sup>91</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, March 6, 1912.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, November 3, 1919.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16, 1920.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1922.

<sup>95</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 2, 1934.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1934.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1935.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, July 30, 1935.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, March 3, 1940.

<sup>100</sup> News item in *The [Philadelphia] Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1954.

<sup>101</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, January 14, 1955.





*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*  
FIGURE 11 (above)  
AN EARLY BEACH SCENE

FIGURE 12 (right)  
READY FOR BATHING



able once again to walk the boardwalk from one end of the city to the other.<sup>111</sup>

Back in 1908 Mr. Shumway had suggested that three public pavilions be built on the walk, one at either end and one in the middle.<sup>112</sup> Just one was built, a small pier with a small meeting room. This was open during the summer months only.<sup>113</sup> It was completed in 1914,<sup>114</sup> and used through 1926 when plans for a new and larger pier were made. The plans called for a Spanish styled auditorium centered between Cambridge and Cornwall avenues with two smaller buildings on either side connected by arcades. One of these was a sun room and the other, the year following its completion, was used for the Ventnor branch of the county public library.

Early in the morning of August 1, 1940, several alarms were turned in reporting a fire on the pier. The stucco over wood proved to be an easy prey for the flames and in a short time the large auditorium was reduced to ashes. The two smaller buildings were saved. These, as well as many homes, would probably have been destroyed had not the wind shifted, sending the flames and smoke oceanward.<sup>115</sup>

The present auditorium is a large glass enclosure which was completed and opened in May of 1942.

The piers were used for dances and concerts, and the second one was even used as a roller skating rink.<sup>116</sup> Since 1948 the Easter Sunrise Services have been held on the present pier.

Plans to open a public library were set for the spring of 1928. When the opening day arrived, books could be read on the premises only because of a disagreement between the PTA and the city council. Circulation did not begin until the latter part of November.<sup>117</sup> A polio outbreak closed the doors for a time in 1939. Two other times the library building was closed, but the books were transferred to city hall; once after the pier fire in 1940, and again after the hurricane in September of 1944.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, May 20, 1952.

<sup>112</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 15, 1908.

<sup>113</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Evening Union*, August 1, 1940.

<sup>114</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, November 16, 1914.

<sup>115</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Evening Union*, August 1, 1940.

<sup>116</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>117</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 23, 1928.

<sup>118</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, June 24, 1955.

Ventnor City has had a fishing pier since its completion in 1919.<sup>119</sup> It was enlarged in the early twenties and again extended in 1929.<sup>120</sup> The pier end, too rigidly built, gave way in the storm of 1928. When it was rebuilt it was made to sway slightly with the pressure of the water.<sup>121</sup> Admission to the fishing pier was free for about the first two weeks. Because it was so overcrowded, the authorities decided to make admission by membership card only.<sup>122</sup>

Tennis is a form of recreation enjoyed by young and old alike. A few years after buying the Waterall Block, the city made tennis courts at the end of the block which fronts on Atlantic Avenue. Shortly afterward they made courts on the MacGuire Block.<sup>123</sup> The Middle States Tennis Tournament was held on the city tennis courts.<sup>124</sup> The Newport Avenue courts were badly damaged in the hurricane of 1944. They were never really fixed up again and finally were sold to be used as a playground for the parochial school.

In the summer of 1943 the city made shuffleboard courts adjacent to the Suffolk Avenue tennis courts.<sup>125</sup>

Before Ventnor became a city, it was a favorite area for gunners. After incorporation, the city found it necessary to prohibit gunning and posted twelve signs warning those who followed the sport.<sup>126</sup>

Boating is a form of recreation which has always been a favorite in Ventnor. Down by the ocean or back by the bay one can see all types of boats during the summer. In 1907 the Ventnor Motor Boat Club was established. The members of the club gave of their time and labor, and using material supplied at cost, erected Derby Hall as their club house. It was situated at Derby Avenue and the bay on what was said, in 1908, to be the highest point in Ventnor City. The building had a basement and two floors all done in oak. The main room was a spacious reception hall with an eight-foot long stone fireplace.<sup>127</sup> The club continued until 1913 when it was disbanded.

<sup>119</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, July 14, 1919.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, September 23, 1929.

<sup>121</sup> *Ventnor Crier*, *op. cit.*, August 16, 1948.

<sup>122</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, July 26, 1919.

<sup>123</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 26, 1922.

<sup>124</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] Crier*, 37th Anniversary Edition, March, 1940.

<sup>125</sup> *Atlantic City Press*, *op. cit.*, July 17, 1943.

<sup>126</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, August 31, 1903.

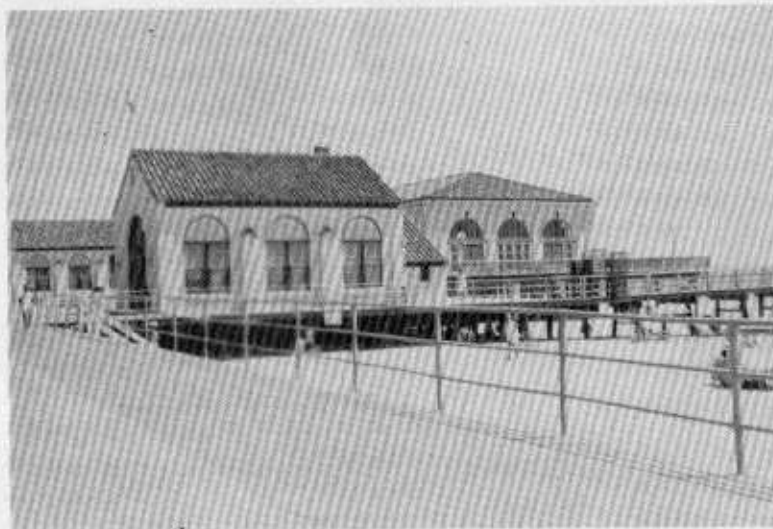
<sup>127</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, February 1, 1908.



*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*

FIGURE 10

BATHING ON THE LAND SIDE OF THE BOARDWALK



*(Courtesy of Elizabeth Richards)*

FIGURE 13

THE PIER, THE LIBRARY, AND THE SUN ROOM

The reason given was that the waterway on which the club was located was not wide enough or long enough to permit hydroplane racing.<sup>128</sup> Later the building was used as a meeting place,<sup>129</sup> and at present is a private home.

Pushmobile races for young boys were sponsored in the earlier days by the Ventnor News and by those interested in recreation for children. The first race was in 1911.<sup>130</sup>

Having a place and facilities for children's activities have always been major concerns of those interested in youth. The children in the early years of the city enjoyed watermelon parties, roasting marshmallows on the beach, rolling hoops, walking on stilts, crabbing and sailing.<sup>131</sup> There was plenty of room for them to play. In 1925 the city closed the school grounds on weekends and holidays. Many stressed the need for the city to provide playgrounds for its children.<sup>132</sup> The following year the St. Leonard's Land Company donated two blocks adjacent to their development to be used as a playground.<sup>133</sup> In the late thirties, the Old Timers, a group established to stimulate interest in recreational activities, planned the use of two streets to be roped off for roller skating one night a week.<sup>134</sup> A roller skating rink was opened in Ventnor Heights in 1938. Eleven sites were designated as public playgrounds in 1940. From time to time facilities have been installed at beaches three and six for the children to use. The municipal recreation ground at Surrey and Calvert avenues in Ventnor Heights is used by the Little League baseball teams. In 1955 this area was named Titus Field in honor of Mayor Titus.<sup>135</sup>

Early risers find enjoyment in horseback riding along the beach or bicycling on the boardwalk. These activities are limited to the hours before 9:00 A.M. when there are few bathers and pedestrians about.

Ventnor had no theater until 1922 when the first Ventnor Theater opened its doors on the same location as the present one.<sup>136</sup> In March of 1936 the building burned, with damages estimated above

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, September 27, 1913.

<sup>129</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, October 8, 1939.

<sup>130</sup> *Ventnor News*, *op. cit.*, December 9, 1911.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Richards, summer of 1958.

<sup>132</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 2, 1925.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1926.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, October 2, 1939.

<sup>135</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, June 13, 1955.

<sup>136</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 10, 1922.

\$100,000.<sup>137</sup> In record time the theater was rebuilt. It was declared to be 100% fireproof, and opened again in July of the same year.<sup>138</sup>

A controversial Ventnor sport was auto racing. There wasn't any question about people enjoying it; it had its enthusiasts in the spectators and racers alike. The controversy came in whether there ever was a Ventnor Track. The course itself was two miles long, running from Jackson Avenue to Fredericksburg Avenue, and was known as the Ventnor Track. Those who know Ventnor would immediately wonder why there would be any controversy since Ventnor's boundaries are Jackson and Fredericksburg avenues. The trouble dates back to the races of 1907. Newspaper accounts in early August told of the coming races sponsored by the Atlantic City Automobile Association.<sup>139</sup> The week of the races the accounts boasted of the fact that the Ventnor Track held two racing records.<sup>140</sup> Following the races, however, the accounts proved to be an apology since Ventnor had robbed South Atlantic City of its glory through no fault of Ventnor City. The track had always been termed the Ventnor Track or Ventnor Course even though it was entirely in South Atlantic City.<sup>141</sup> For those who knew South Atlantic City, its eastern boundary was Fredericksburg Avenue and what is now known as Coolidge Avenue was then called Jackson Avenue. An early map shows the bleachers extending from Mobile (Douglas) Avenue to Franklin Avenue. Two miles from that point would take one either into Ventnor or Longport. An Atlantic City resident remembers the races and said they were held in Ventnor.<sup>142</sup> In a book about Atlantic City and Absecon Island, printed in 1909, one of the places of interest to visit was the automobile racing course on Ventnor's beach.<sup>143</sup> Official races were also held on this track in 1905 and 1906.<sup>144</sup> Most of the available material seems to support the ones who placed the track in Ventnor.

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, March 28, 1936.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, July 11, 1936.

<sup>139</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, August 3, 1907.

<sup>140</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, August 10, 1907.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, 1907.

<sup>142</sup> Information supplied by Mr. Thomas Ritson of Atlantic City, January 22, 1960.

<sup>143</sup> Atlantic City Police Beneficial Association, *A compilation of information about Atlantic City and Absecon Island*, 1909.

<sup>144</sup> Frank M. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Two "might have beens," as far as recreation is concerned, were a horse race track and a marina. The racetrack was the dream of a corporation formed by the Atlantic City Driving Association. The entire capital of \$250,000 had been subscribed and the corporation had an option on eighty acres of meadowland, landward of Ventnor on a line with the Carisbrooke Inn. Their plan was to pump in sand to bring the land up to grade and to use the best materials to make the track one of the finest in the country. It was all planned in 1904, but for some reason the track was never realized.<sup>145</sup>

The marina was to have been located from Mile Stretch to Buffalo Avenue. Detailed plans were drawn by Ventnor City Engineer, John Somers. Local boatmen stressed the need of accommodations for smaller than the fifty-foot yachts as Somers' plans showed. Both Somers' plan and the plan for smaller boats included a drive around the marina as well as many other desirable features.<sup>146</sup> The drawback to the building of a marina was the lack of funds; Ventnor City could not afford it and private investors were not plentiful enough.<sup>147</sup>

*Convalescent homes and hospitals.* Ventnor has had three homes of a convalescent nature, although at present it has none.

The Widener Home for Invalid Children was located on South Little Rock Avenue. No one seems to know when the home was opened there but newspaper accounts show that it remained there at least one summer season.<sup>148</sup> In January of 1912 it was removed to Longport to a new building erected for that purpose.<sup>149</sup>

At the time the Widener Home was in Ventnor, the North American Home operated two homes for invalid children; one on Surrey Avenue, and the other on Victoria Avenue. The two houses were connected at the back. After the Widener Home had been removed, delegates from the general area of the North American Home appeared before the State Senate asking that the home be moved. They offered to provide land for the use of the institution.<sup>150</sup> The managers agreed, promising to close the Surrey Avenue building at once and leave only twenty children in the Victoria Avenue house until Novem-

<sup>145</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 7, 1934.

<sup>146</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, May, 1950.

<sup>147</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, May 26, 1950.

<sup>148</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, May 20, 1911.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, January 27, 1912.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, March 23, 1912.

began holding services in the small chapel on Melbourne Avenue. The church building at Melbourne and Ventnor avenues was completed and used in 1926. At first called the Trinity Protestant Church, it dropped the word, protestant, and became the Trinity Methodist Church in 1939. About this same time a Methodist-Episcopal Church was built at Oakland and Ventnor avenues.<sup>173</sup> It was known as the Chelsea Ventnor M. E. Church.<sup>174</sup> In 1940 the Bible Presbyterian Church succeeded this group in using the edifice. They still are holding services there.<sup>175</sup>

In the latter part of the 1920's a group of Ventnor's Episcopal residents became desirous of having a high Episcopal church in the city. Following the proper procedure, Mr. Atkinson, of South Oakland Avenue, posted public notices to the effect that a meeting was to be held in his house for the formation of a church. Episcopal bishops and about twenty residents attended the meeting. The church was incorporated March 25, 1927. A little later they rented a store at Nashville and Ventnor avenues and held services there for about a year. Then they bought the home at 102 South Troy Avenue and used that as their church. About a year or so later a Mr. William Hall Bradford heard of the financial struggle the church was having and donated \$100,000 in stocks to be used in erecting a memorial to his sister. The home on Troy Avenue was sold and this money, along with the gift, was used to erect the Church of the Epiphany at Avolyn and Atlantic avenues.<sup>176</sup>

Somewhere between 1913 and 1918, the Roman Catholics began holding services in the chapel on Ventnor Avenue between Wissahickon and Newark avenues during the summer months. They continued to use it until 1921 when St. James Roman Catholic Church was completed and ready for services.<sup>177</sup>

The Jewish residents of Ventnor first held services in the Jewish Seaside Home on Newport Avenue. Later the part of the old city hall which housed the firehouse was used for about three years. The home on the corner of Troy and Ventnor avenues was next bought and used until the congregation decided to tear it down and

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.

<sup>174</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, July 23, 1934.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Mr. Clark S. Barrett.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Carroll Atkinson, naturalist, October 29, 1959.

<sup>177</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, April 29, 1921.



build a synagogue. While the synagogue was being built, in 1939, they met in a brick home on the other side of Ventnor Avenue.<sup>178</sup> Ten years later Beth Judah was enlarged. An old home being used as a Hebrew school was not only in poor condition, but it was entirely too small for the number of children attending. Plans were made and a modern school was built on Ventnor Avenue between Richards and Buffalo avenues. It was completed in 1956.<sup>179</sup>

*Interesting facts.* This section includes items too small to be a section by themselves, but worth recording.

Good weather has always been an important attribute to any city, and especially important to a resort city like Ventnor. The prevailing winds from April through October blow from the sea, giving Ventnor a lower mercury reading than the inland cities only a few miles away. The Gulf Stream also has its effect upon the city; it makes the bathing water warm, yet invigorating. In winter, the warmth given off the water is tempered by bracing air that has traveled through vast stretches of pine forests. The result is a mild and pleasant winter climate. These findings were the result of a study made by a group of physicians and health experts. The American Medical Association stated that seashore air has more oxygen and is easier to breathe. The chest expansion of city children can increase from one and one half inches to three inches after an eight week stay at the shore.<sup>180</sup> Good weather cannot last forever and Ventnor has had some rough encounters with the elements. In 1889, when development was just beginning, a severe storm battered the island for two days. The areas below Atlantic City were cut off from all means of communication with that city. Telephone and telegraph wires were down and train tracks were washed out.<sup>181</sup>

Another bad year was 1914. In the first week of January a storm hit the island with such force that it tore Ventnor's boardwalk from its fastenings and cast it as driftwood on Atlantic Avenue.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Mr. Witten, owner of Ventnor Hardware Company, Inc., January 26, 1960.

<sup>179</sup> Information obtained from Mrs. C. Tecott, Secretary to Congregation Beth Judah, January 25, 1960.

<sup>180</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, 15th Anniversary Edition, March 21, 1947.

<sup>181</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Daily Union*, September 11, 1889.

<sup>182</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, January 29, 1939.

The boardwalk was again damaged greatly by a storm lasting three days in February of 1920. The greater portion was destroyed and the balance was damaged.<sup>183</sup>

Again, in 1944, a large part of the walk was destroyed. During that storm some three hundred refugees sought city hall as a place of protection. The fire house also housed sufferers from the hurricane.<sup>184</sup>

A solid sea wall of snow and ice stretched along the beach in Ventnor City in February of 1934. The ice bank, reaching twelve to fifteen feet in the air in some places, had huge icicles hanging over the water's edge. Caves created on the ocean side by the incoming tide proved dangerous but challenging to local youth.<sup>185</sup>

Florence Bourgeois enjoys the distinction of being Ventnor City's first baby. Just about a year after the city was incorporated she was born. The parents, Counsellor and Mrs. George A. Bourgeois, resided at Derby and Atlantic avenues.<sup>186</sup>

The word "death" usually implies sorrow, but not as it was used in the *Ventnor News* in 1907. At that time the city was rejoicing that no deaths, as far as actual residents and transient population were concerned, were on record.<sup>187</sup> Ventnor truly was a health resort.

An organization, called the Board of Trade, was incorporated in 1916 to stimulate settlement in the resort. It continued as such until 1926 when it was suggested that the group call itself the Ventnor City Chamber of Commerce.<sup>188</sup> They did much toward publicizing the young city.

Another means of publicity was through the use of films. Travelers passing through the Reading Terminal in Philadelphia, in 1931, were attracted by films advertising Ventnor City. Shown every twenty minutes, they depicted the beach, boardwalk, public buildings, and private residences within the city.<sup>189</sup>

One private residence remembered by many older Ventnorites was a large barn-red house between Dudley and Dorset avenues, fronting on Atlantic. It was originally owned by Dr. Penrose, the

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<sup>183</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, February, 1920.

<sup>184</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, September 18, 1944.

<sup>185</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, March 1, 1934.

<sup>186</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 3, 1907.

<sup>187</sup> News item in the *Ventnor [City, New Jersey] News*, August 24, 1907.

<sup>188</sup> News item in the *Atlantic City Press*, November 12, 1926.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1931.



*(Courtesy of Mary V. Peters)*

FIGURE 16

A SIX-FOOT MAN DWARFED BY THE WALL OF ICE AND SNOW

brother of the Pennsylvania senator. The large rambling house had no electricity; light was provided by oil lamps. Later Mr. Young, of the Pearl Borax Company, bought and remodeled the house. Later still it was sold to Rodman Wanamaker and was known for years as the Wanamaker mansion.<sup>190</sup> In 1936 Ventnor City tried to persuade the president of the United States to make it the Summer White House, but the offer was not accepted.<sup>191</sup>

Another residence was unique because of its front door. A home on South Weymouth Avenue belonging to Mr. John G. Shreve was mentioned in the news in 1911. Although the house itself was not old, the front door at that time was more than one hundred fifty years old. It had been taken from the house at Seventh and Market Streets in Philadelphia where Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence.<sup>192</sup> The writer has been unable to ascertain whether the door there now is the same one. If it is, it would now be close to two hundred years old.

Ventnor has both a slogan and a song. Early residents used the slogan, "Live in Ventnor." When the Board of Trade served as Ventnor's Chamber of Commerce, it officially adopted the phrase, "If you want to live, live in Ventnor." It has remained Ventnor's slogan.<sup>193</sup>

The song, "Ventnor," was written by Alex W. Porter for a James Harvey Post American Legion minstrel show. This was an annual event directed by Comrade Porter. The cast of this show was invited by the Tioga Post of Philadelphia to present the show for the entertainment of the patients in the Veterans Hospital there. Mayor Sweigart, city officials, wives, and sweethearts accompanied the troupe. On arrival, led by the post's fifty piece band, they marched up Broad Street to the Tioga Post's headquarters where they were given a hearty meal before proceeding on their "errand of merriment."<sup>194</sup> In January of 1928 Mr. Porter presented the song to Mayor Adams at a council meeting. The councilmen, feeling the song was appropriate, voted to accept it as the official song of Ventnor City.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Betz, August 29, 1959.

<sup>191</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, March 23, 1936.

<sup>192</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *News*, April 29, 1911.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1922.

<sup>194</sup> Information received from Alex W. Porter, writer of the song, "Ventnor."

<sup>195</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 30, 1928.

“  
Song **VENTNOR**”  
Words and Music by ALEX. W. PORTER  
*Composer of*  
“ATLANTIC CITY ALL THE TIME”  
”

If you're looking for a place to hang  
your hat up,  
If you're looking for a place to call a home,  
Take a tip from me, the place you want to see,  
Is down in South New Jersey, down beside  
the sea, — in

**VENTNOR, VENTNOR,**  
The greatest place on earth to live  
is Ventnor,  
Healthy, Wealthy, ozone that is grand,  
Boating, Bathing, Fishing on the strand  
In our Ventnor, Ventnor, it's there we  
live as happy as can be,  
You can sport in gay Paree,  
New York town is grand to see,  
But if you want to live, you want  
to live in **VENTNOR**

## CHAPTER V

### LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

*Present description.* Ventnor City is a residential resort which has grown to be the second largest municipality on Absecon Island. The permanent population is between 8,000 and 10,000. West of Ventnor is Margate City, to the east is Atlantic City, the Atlantic Ocean is to the south, and on the north is Beach Thorofare. The thoro-fare is part of the inland waterway which extends from Maine to Florida. The water is thirty feet deep in some places. At the mean low tide it can accommodate boats drawing ten feet of water.<sup>1</sup>

Ventnor's largest industry is rentals.<sup>2</sup> Many of the older homes in Ventnor are large. Neither those interested in buying a home nor those interested in renting one for the summer desire these large dwellings. In most cases when one is bought it is torn down and a smaller house is built.

*Expectations.* As far as definite plans go Ventnor has the following hopes for future accomplishments. There are certain improvements which should be considered at once. In the western part of the city the surface water condition raises a problem with every heavy rainfall. Houses in this section are literally inundated and streets become almost impassable. The city hopes to correct this drainage problem in the near future.

Improvements in the Heights are looked for through the Ventnor Bay Estates.

The building of a bulkhead from Jackson to Austin avenues on the bay side of the island is necessary.

Definite repairs to the boardwalk are essential. Because of the high cost involved, council may consider cutting the width of the lower end of the walk.

In order to accomplish these improvements it would be necessary for council to earmark certain funds to be used as such.

When Mayor Titus came into office in 1949, the city's debt was four and one quarter million dollars. In his ten years in office that has been reduced to three hundred thirty-five thousand dollars. The

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<sup>1</sup> News item in the *Ventnor* [City, New Jersey] *Crier*, 10th Anniversary Edition, March 13, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Ventnor City Common Council, January 1, 1958.

city is required to pay one hundred sixty-two thousand of this in 1959-60. The next year the city should be almost debt free.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of a high school has been lessened for the next few years at least. Plans to build a parochial Roman Catholic high school for this area are under way. This should draw sufficient children from Atlantic City High School to ease the burden there.

The beach fee still remains a problem. From Seaside Park northward along the New Jersey coast the resorts all charge a fee. Enough Ventnor residents and businessmen are not convinced that it is needed here.

Consolidation of small municipalities is being studied on a state-wide scale. After careful study is given the problem, legislation will probably be passed in accordance with the findings. It is hoped that cities in the position in which Ventnor finds itself will be given the right to decide for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The economic picture is changing. Ventnor was once mainly a resort of wealthy families whose large homes were occupied only in the summer months. Now it is an all year round resort inhabited for the most part by middle class families. In the next ten to fifteen years the south side will probably show this difference as more and more of the old homes are replaced by small, modern, efficient ones. The increasing number of motels and efficiency apartments being built will also change the picture.<sup>5</sup>

*Conclusions.* The first section of this thesis has traced the growth and progress of Ventnor City from its earliest time until the present. The future lies ahead. Ventnor must choose what it will make of its future. The past lies as an example of good and a warning of what should be avoided.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mayor Warren Titus, September 8, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from Francis Quigley, City Clerk of Ventnor City, September 8, 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Clark S. Barrett, August, 1958.



FIGURE 14  
VENTNOR'S MOTOR BOAT CLUB HOUSE  
THE NAME, DERBY HALL, CAN STILL BE SEEN ON THE FRONT



FIGURE 15  
VENTNOR'S PRESENT CITY HALL



## ADDENDUM

Since the completion of the original text of this book, a few major problems have been resolved or changed so as to require this final page to bring the readers up to date.

Progress in the Heights area, known as Ventnor Bay Estates, was held up by counter suits started early in 1960. On January 26, 1962, Mayor Titus declared the verdict of the court case to be "a clear cut victory for the city of Ventnor City." Although the developers tried to contest the verdict, termination of litigation was declared July 23, 1962. Once more progress is evident in this area.

In his New Year's message for 1961 the mayor was happy to be able to state that the city was debt free, a goal for which he had been working since he entered office. This meant that money could be borrowed more advantageously and at a lower cost.

Improvements planned before could now be advanced. The drainage problem in the western part of the city became a joint project with Margate City. By summer of 1962 the long needed bulkhead from Jackson to Austin Avenues became a reality.

Plans for improvement of the boardwalk were changed when gale storms during March 5, 6, and 7 destroyed or damaged most of the walk. The entire walk and the three pier buildings were demolished. At present the erection of a new sturdy boardwalk is underway and will be completed for the 1963 summer season. Plans are also underway for a beautiful and functional recreation building.

Ventnor City's form of government came into the news again in mid-1962. On returning from vacation Mayor Titus learned of petitions being circulated in order to obtain a change in government from the Mayor-Council form to Council-City Manager. In October a special election was held to decide the issue. The election was preceded by active campaigning of both groups, those desiring the change and those supporting Mayor Titus and the existing form of government. On October 2, the people cast their vote for the Mayor-Council type of government.

Mr. Eugene Apel passed on a few interesting items not recorded in the book. His father, Adolph Apel, who started the Ventnor Boat Works, had assisted Colonel Willowby in the construction of his two planes. After Colonel Willowby was finished with the aerodrome, Mr. Apel bought it and had it attached to the boat works at Derby and Calvert Avenues.

Mr. Eugene Apel drove the first "Mile-a-Minute Boat" built by Apel Boat Works for General T. C. DuPont in 1913. In 1933 he was recognized by Council for winning the 125 cu. in. Hydroplane National Championship.