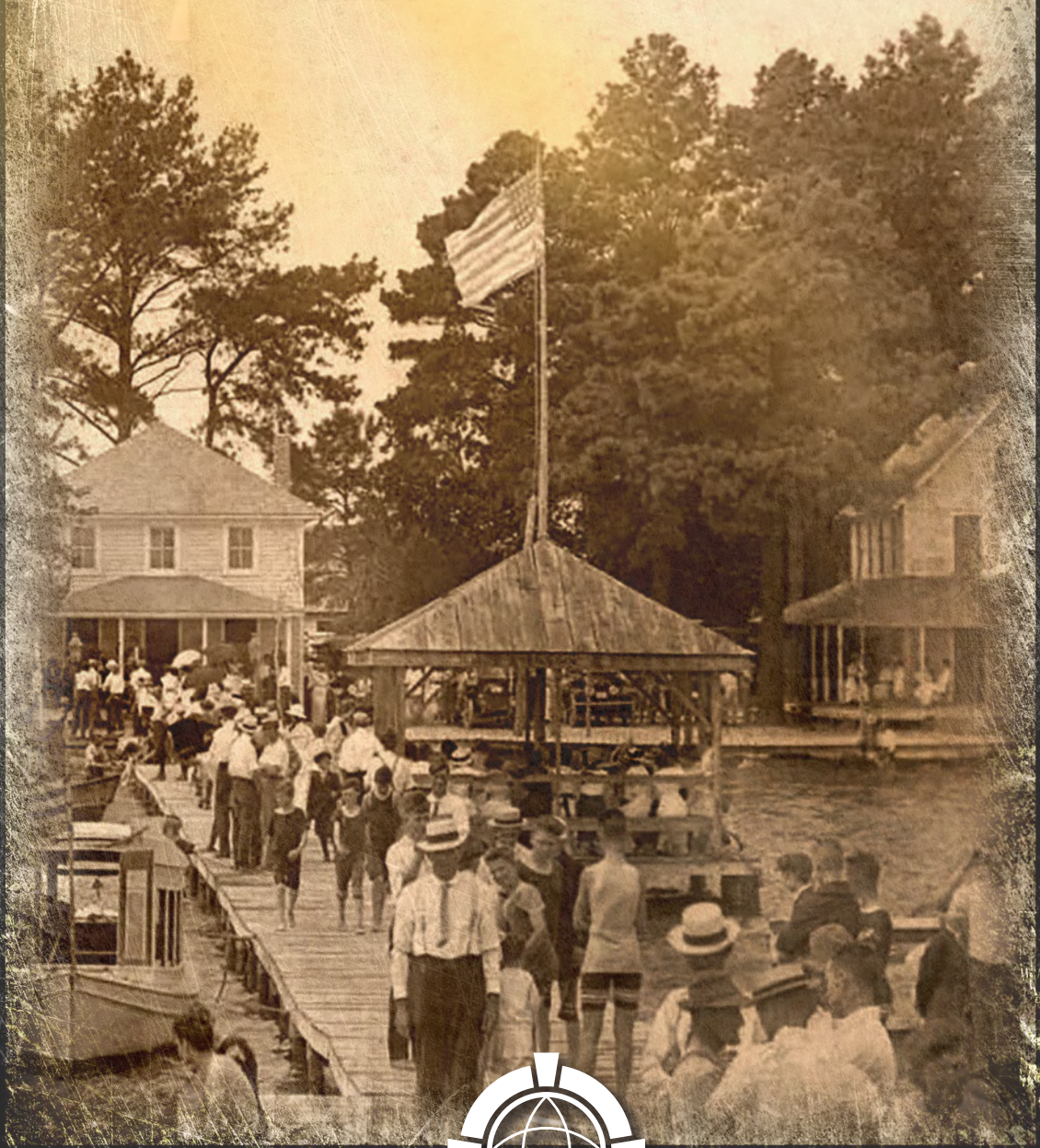


DELAWARE BEACH REWIND



DELAWARE BEACH REWIND

Delaware Beach Rewind brings together historic photographs, postcards, and film footage to explore the many ways Delaware's coastal places have changed over time. These images reflect a range of shoreline experiences—from resort destinations and working waterfronts to community gathering places shaped by segregation and everyday life. This booklet offers a closer look at the people, places, and moments behind those images.

The lands and waterways featured in this booklet are part of the ancestral homelands of the Lenni-Lenape people in northern Delaware and the Nanticoke people in southern Delaware. These communities lived along Delaware's coast and waterways long before European settlement and continue to have a presence in the region today.

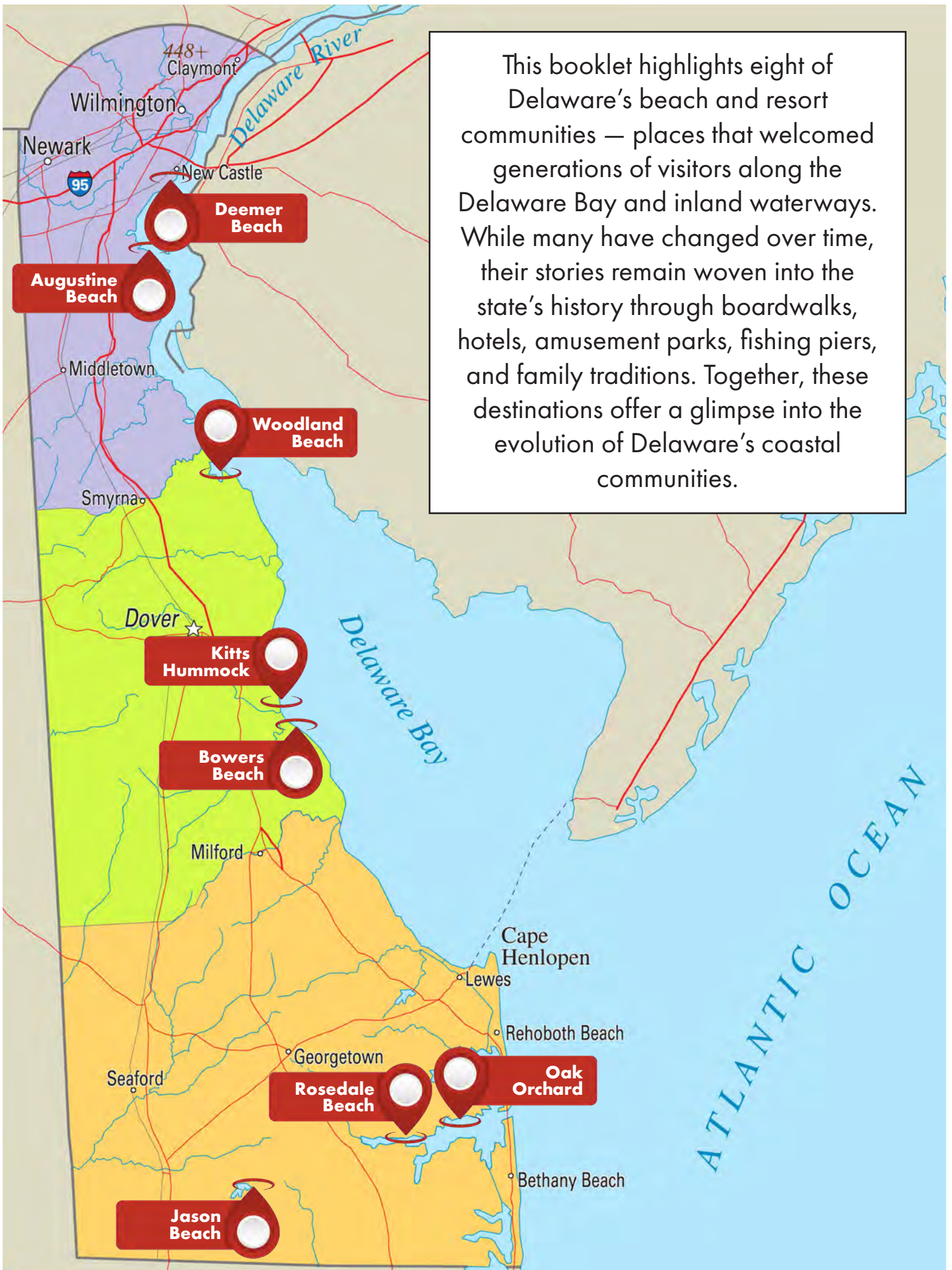


Front: Indian River House at Oak Orchard
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_04824d

Back: Two girls at Oak Orchard
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-003-001_12591n

Above: Two girls on Kitts Hummock beach
Circa 1898
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06671n

This booklet highlights eight of Delaware's beach and resort communities — places that welcomed generations of visitors along the Delaware Bay and inland waterways. While many have changed over time, their stories remain woven into the state's history through boardwalks, hotels, amusement parks, fishing piers, and family traditions. Together, these destinations offer a glimpse into the evolution of Delaware's coastal communities.



AUGUSTINE BEACH

Around 1814, Adam Diehl built a brick structure that became known as the Augustine Beach Hotel. Over time, the hotel grew into the centerpiece of one of Delaware's earliest and most popular resort destinations. In 1867, owner Simeon Lord expanded the complex with a dance pavilion, dining room, bar, and more than one hundred bathhouses.



Left: Augustine Hotel
Circa 1926
Resource ID:
9200-B29-001_0002d

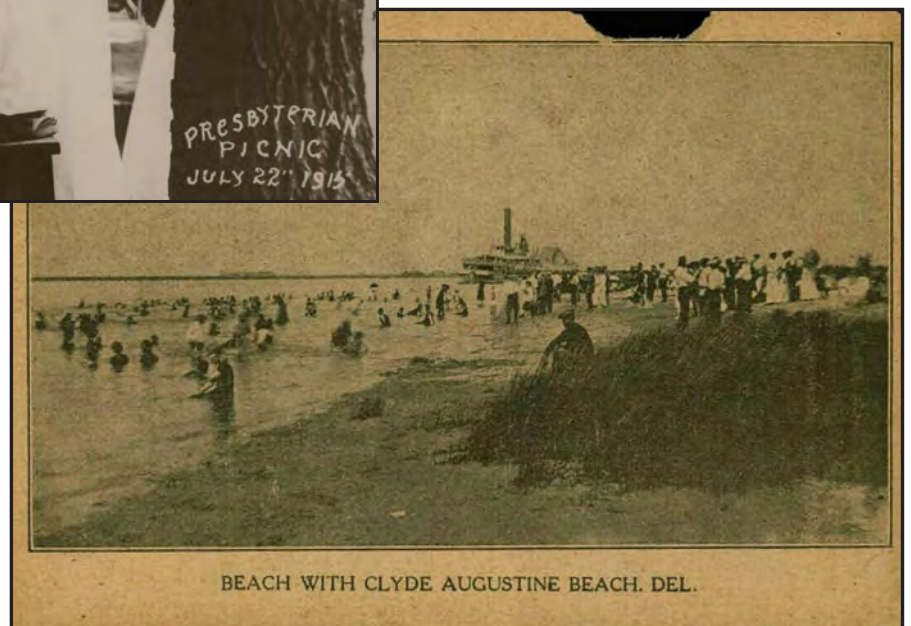
Below: Beachgoers swimming
and standing on the shoreline at
Augustine Beach near Port Penn
Undated
Resource ID:
1325-003-036_06682n



Between 1870 and 1920, Augustine Beach reached its height as a summer resort. Many visitors arrived by steamship from Philadelphia aboard vessels such as the *Thomas Clyde*, which regularly carried excursion crowds down the Delaware Bay. Newspapers and advertisements from the early twentieth century promoted dancing with a large orchestra, first-class meals, refreshments sold on the grounds, and newly built bathhouses.



Sunday School picnic at Augustine Beach
July 22, 1915
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06692n



Augustine Beach with Steamer *Thomas Clyde*
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01179d

The hotel was later listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and a State of Delaware Historical Marker was placed at the site in 2021.

DEEMER BEACH PARK

In 1925, New Castle industrialist Selden Deemer founded Deemer Beach Park as a local alternative to larger seaside resorts. Built along the Delaware River south of Army Creek, the park featured campgrounds, a boardwalk, amusements, a hotel, dining venues such as the Merry-Go-Round, a roller-skating rink, and a tidal pool created by connected river jetties.



Left: Deemer Beach Park Office
Undated
Resource ID: 9200-B29-001_0556d

Bottom: Deemer Park Midway entrance
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01401d

Visitors arrived by train, steamboat, and the Penn Ferry, and the park quickly became a favorite destination for family gatherings.

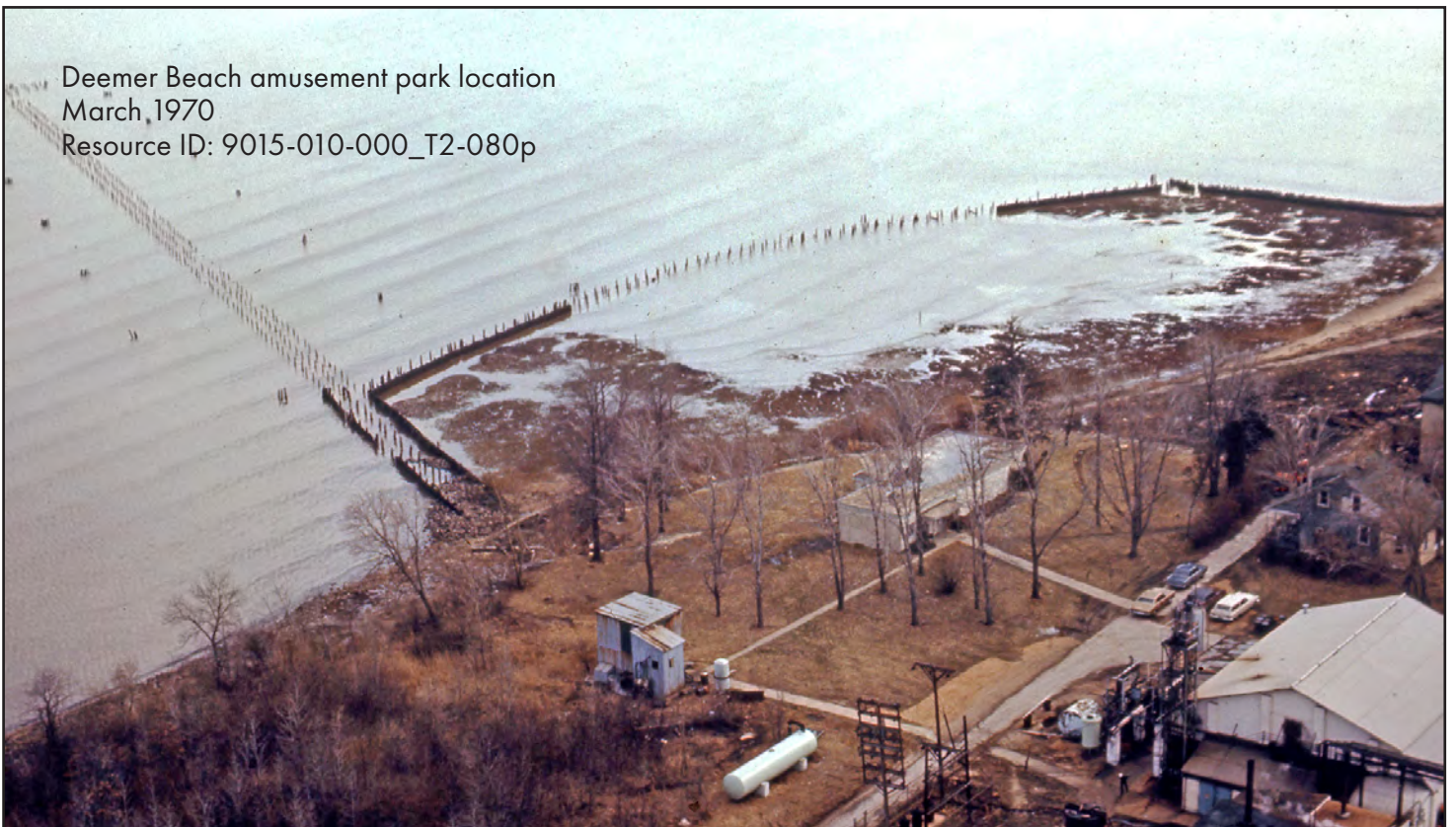


The park struggled during the Great Depression. In 1933, a hurricane destroyed the pool, a central attraction, and the resort never recovered. It closed soon afterward. Following Selden Deemer's death two years later, the property gradually declined. Today, only a few remnants of the former resort remain along the riverbank.

Deemer Beach boardwalk
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01402d



Deemer Beach amusement park location
March, 1970
Resource ID: 9015-010-000_T2-080p

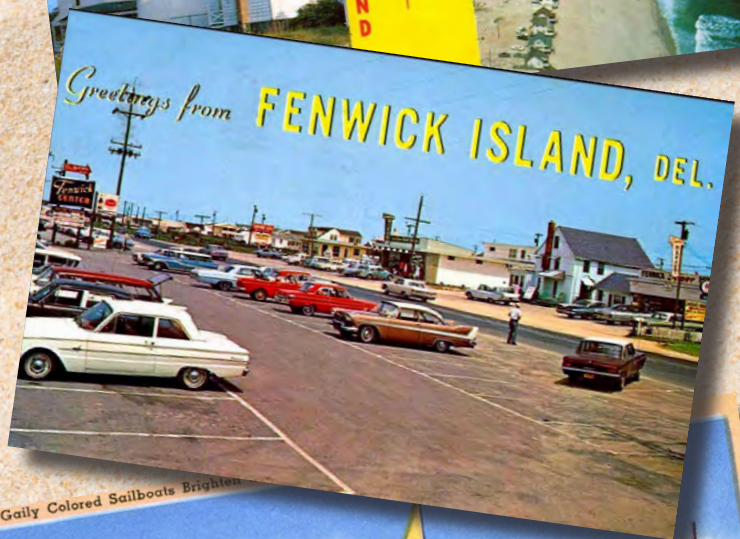


WISH YOU WERE HERE

These small, colorful keepsakes capture more than just sun and sand — they hold moments in time, from busy boardwalks and grand seaside hotels to quiet stretches of shoreline that have changed over time.

Postcards offer a clear visual record of the past. Often sent with handwritten notes, they show how people experienced these places in their own words. The images document buildings, clothing, leisure, and landscapes that may no longer exist. Together, they are both historical records and personal keepsakes, helping us see Delaware's beaches not just as they are today, but as they once were.

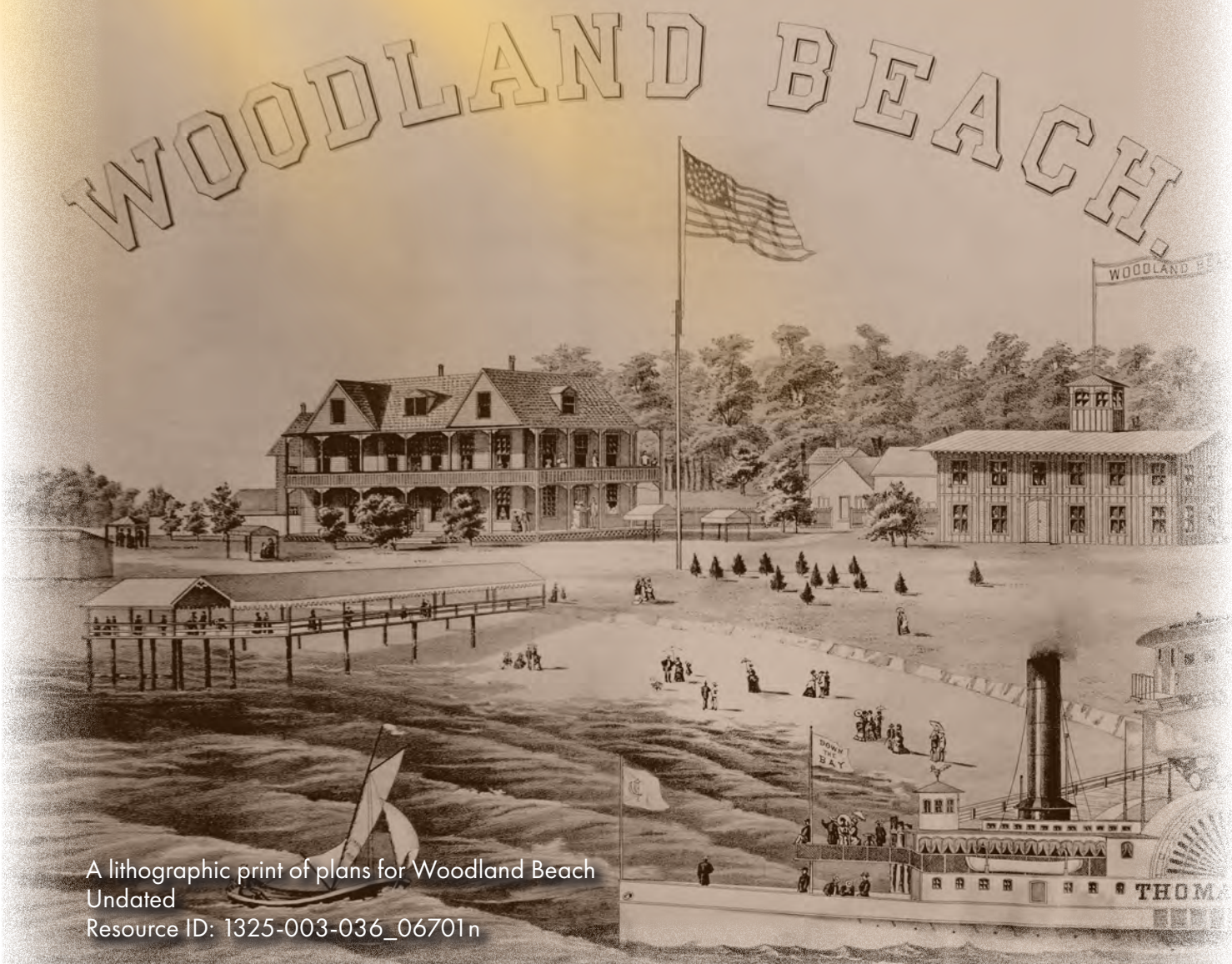




WOODLAND BEACH

During the 1880s, Woodland Beach developed into a popular resort destination. It served as the endpoint for the Kent County and Delaware Bay Railroad and was also accessible by daily steamboats from Delaware City and Philadelphia.

The resort offered many attractions, including the Woodland Park Hotel, a two-story pavilion with live music, dining, a bar, and a glass observatory. Visitors also enjoyed billiards, shuffleboard, and archery.



A lithographic print of plans for Woodland Beach
Undated
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06701n

Woodland Beach shoreline
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01136p



A forested park area with tables, chairs, and swings was nearby, along with facilities for fishing, swimming, and hunting. The surfhouse and pier were popular attractions, and a nearby grove provided shaded seating and gathering space.

The resort era ended in 1914 when a major storm destroyed much of the resort infrastructure. Today, only the pier remains from Woodland Beach's early resort period, and the area is now a quiet coastal village.



Ladies enjoying Woodland Beach
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01127p

*SURF HOUSE
AND
PIER
WOODLAND BEACH
DEL.*



Above: Woodland Beach surf house and pier
Circa early 1900s
Resource ID: 9200-B29-001_1162d



Above: Woodland Beach cabins
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01135p



Above: Woodland Beach Hotel
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01128p



Right: Blendt's Place
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_01134p



OAK ORCHARD

Today, Oak Orchard is a quiet enclave along Indian River Bay, but in the 1920s and 1930s, it was a lively summer destination. Visitors came for its public beach and boardwalk, especially during the annual Big Thursday festivities each August.

Celebrated for its calm, shallow waters along the Indian River, the town once featured a boardwalk, bathhouses, and amusement attractions, including dance halls and a merry-go-round. One dance hall and a nearby store were later damaged during the 1962 Ash Wednesday Storm.

(continued on page 14)



Above: Atlantic Sands Motel
1962
Resource ID: 9015-032-001_28p



Above: Residents examine beach erosion
1962
Resource ID: 9015-032-001_5p



Above: Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk damage
1962
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_00755n



Above: Stuart Kingston Galleries
1962
Resource ID: 9015-032-001_20p



STORM OF '62

The three-day nor'easter began on Tuesday, March 6, 1962, and slowly moved up the Atlantic coast before passing Delaware on Thursday, March 8. By the time the skies cleared and the winds calmed, the damage along Delaware's Atlantic and Bay coasts was extensive. Estimated losses reached about \$50 million (about \$465 million today).

The storm claimed seven lives in Delaware and 40 along the East Coast.

Entire sections of boardwalks were destroyed, hundreds of homes and cottages were damaged or swept away, sand dunes were flattened, and coastal highways were washed out or buried in sand.

Left: Governor Elbert N. Carvel
surveys storm damage
1962
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_351p





(continued from page 11)

Big Thursday dates to 1852, when Delaware closed the oyster season from May 1 to August 10. The holiday marked the reopening of the season, and celebrations were held on the second Thursday in August when the date did not fall on a Thursday.



Buchanan's Bath House
1915

Resource ID: 1325-003-207_432p



Oak Orchard Carousel
1915

Resource ID: 1325-003-207_432Bp

KITTS HUMMOCK

Kitts Hummock was originally known as “Kidds Hammock,” a name tied to a local legend that pirate Captain William Kidd buried treasure in the area. While this story remains folklore, the term “hammock” refers to a natural feature — a stand of hardwood trees on slightly elevated ground.





In 1738, Jehu Curtis received a land patent for the area he called “Kitt’s Hammock.” By the early 1800s, the Pleasanton family operated a tavern in the area to serve visitors, and around 1846 a nearby hotel became a center of local social life. During the late 19th century, small cottages were built along the shoreline, many owned by Dover residents seeking relief from summer heat along the bay.



Top: Horse and buggy in Kitts Hummock
1885
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06674n

Bottom: Local fishermen
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-024-000_122p



Today, Kitts Hummock remains a quiet coastal community. It is also recognized as a sanctuary for horseshoe crabs, a signature species of the Delaware Bay Estuary and Delaware's state marine animal.

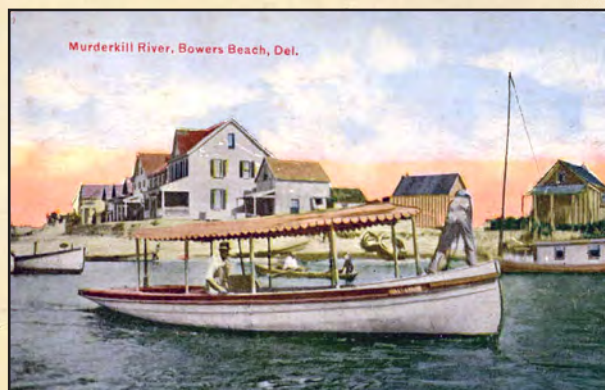


Top: Kitts Hummock Hotel
1885
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06673n

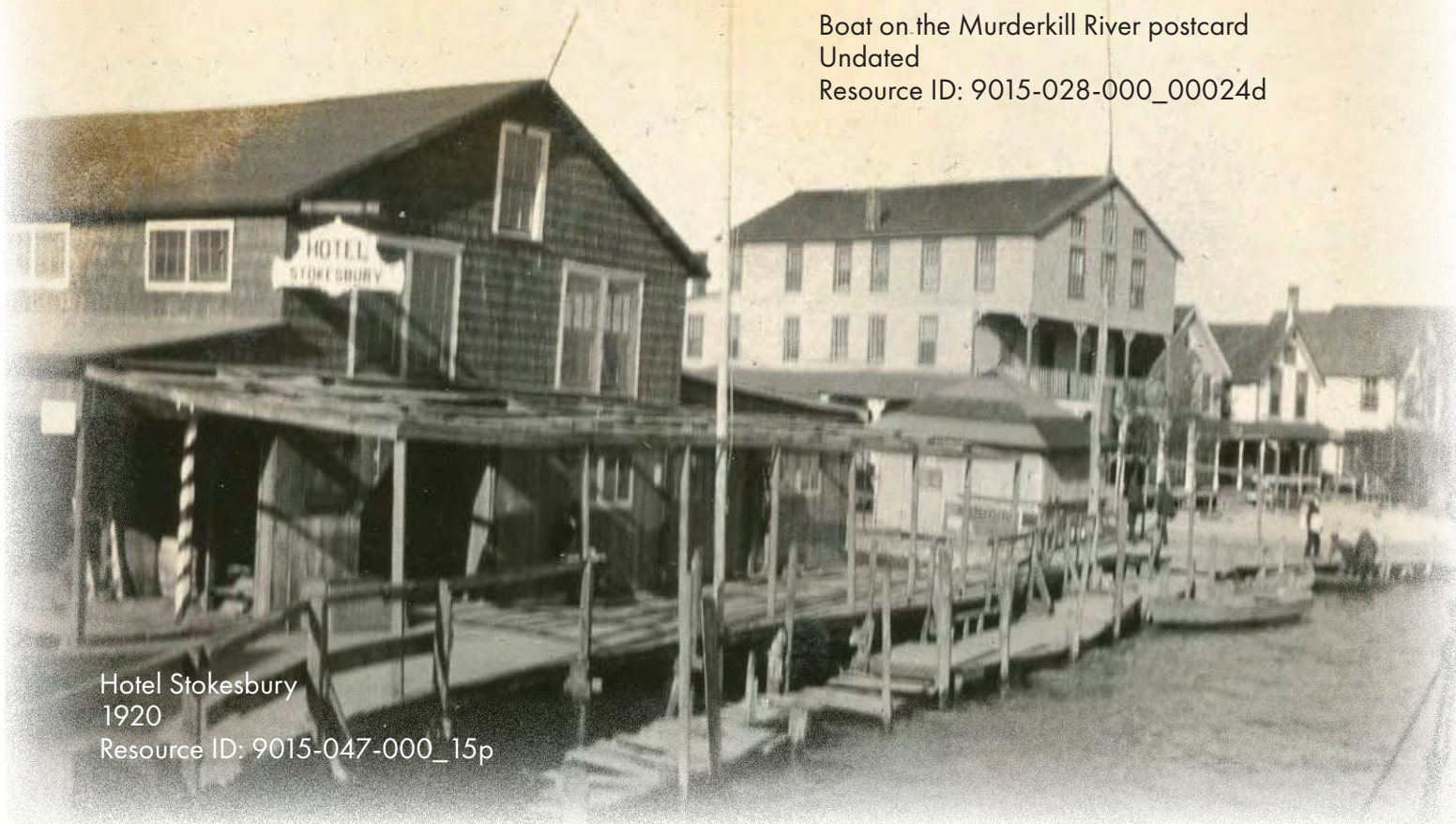
Bottom: Kitts Hummock residents
1885
Resource ID: 1325-003-036_06677n

BOWERS BEACH

One of the earliest settlements along the Delaware Bay, Bowers Beach sits between the St. Jones and Murderkill Rivers. It was originally called Whitwell's Delight, named in the late 1600s by Francis Whitwell. The land changed hands several times until 1734, when John Bowers purchased 420 acres. From that point forward, the area became known as Bowers Beach and remained in the Bowers family for several generations. By the 1800s, much of the property was owned by Joseph Wood and later divided among multiple owners. Bowers Beach was first incorporated on March 9, 1907, and reincorporated as the Town of Bowers in 1962.



Boat on the Murderkill River postcard
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_00024d



Hotel Stokesbury
1920
Resource ID: 9015-047-000_15p

Throughout its history, Bowers Beach developed as a fishing community along the Delaware Bay, with records describing heavy activity at the docks during peak seasons. Little survives about early leisure use; summer visitors did travel to the area, and newspaper accounts mention the beach in connection with oyster harvest traditions. Today, Bowers Beach continues to celebrate its maritime heritage through community events and festivals.



Kent Cottage
Undated
Resource ID: 1325-003-207_002p

Despite changes over time, the town has retained its small-town character and remains a popular destination for fishing, swimming, birdwatching, kayaking, and sailing.



Then &



REHOBOTH BEACH BOARDWALK



BETHANY BEACH



FENWICK ISLAND



BOWERS BEACH

NOW

This “Then and Now” spread pairs historic photographs from Delaware’s coastal communities with modern images taken from the same or similar locations.

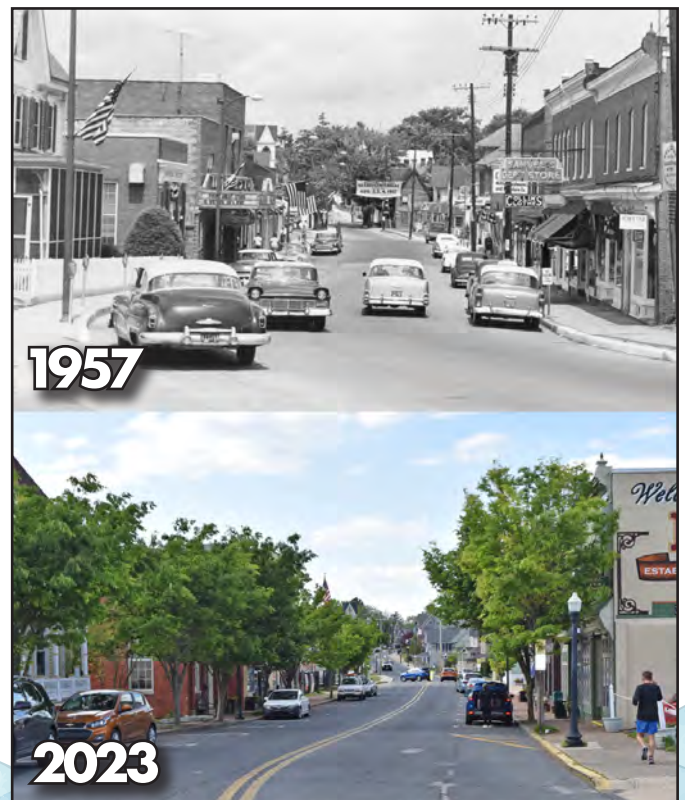
Together, these side-by-side views show how familiar places along the coast have changed over time—and in some cases, how much they have stayed the same. The images highlight shifting shorelines, evolving communities, and the lasting presence of Delaware’s beach towns.



LEWES



REHOBOTH BEACH BOARDWALK



MILTON

ROSEDALE & BEACH



Rosedale Beach sits on land shaped over time by Indigenous peoples, European settlement, and Black community life. In the mid-1900s, Rosedale Beach became an important vacation and entertainment destination for Black visitors during segregation. The Rosedale Beach Hotel and Resort offered rooms, meals, dancing, and live music. Performers included Count Basie, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, and James Brown.

Top: Rosedale Beach Hotel
Undated
Resource ID: 9015-028-000_4577d

Bottom: Rosedale Beach fishing pier
1952
Resource ID: 1500-007-490_394n





Rosedale Beach Picnic
1953
Resource ID: 1500-007-490_400n



Picnic Boat Ride
1952
Resource ID: 1500-007-490_402p

The resort was listed in *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, which helped Black travelers find safe and welcoming places during segregation. After the end of legal segregation in the 1960s, the site changed over time as storm damage, development, and shifting travel patterns affected its use. Today, little remains of the original resort, but place names such as Rosedale Road and the Rosedale Public Boat Ramp help preserve its history.



Rosedale Beach
1952
Resource ID: 1500-007-490_398n

JASON BEACH

Jason Beach is located at Trap Pond in Sussex County. In the 1950s, Trap Pond had segregated beaches. Jason Beach was the area set aside for Black families and included picnic areas, bathhouses, concession stands, and swimming areas.



The beach was named for Dr. William C. Jason, a former president of Delaware State University and church leader. Jason Beach was a popular gathering place for churches in the region, which used the site for outings and Sunday School activities. As the site became more widely used and a jukebox and dance floor were added, some church gatherings shifted to nearby Strawberry Landing.

After legal segregation ended in 1964, Jason Beach gradually fell out of use. The area was later known as Cypress Point, but the name Jason Beach was restored in 2022.

DELAWARE BEACH REWIND

List of Exhibit Videos:

Rehoboth Beach Parade, circa 1940s — 9051-000-001_16mp

Rehoboth Beach, 1960 — 1540-000-001_053mp

Indian River Inlet, 1950-1969 — 1540-000-001_043mp

Ash Wednesday Storm, 1962 — 1660-010-017_001mp

Hurricane Donna, 1960 — 1540-000-001_025mp

Rehoboth Beach, 1963-1964 — 1540-000-001_061mp

Rehoboth Beach and Bethany Beach, 1987 — 1540-000-001_084mp



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