

# Wildwood Historical Society, Inc.



## George F. Boyer Museum

(609) 523-0277

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

3907 Pacific Avenue  
Wildwood, NJ 08260

*Gathering, preserving, and presenting  
the Wildwoods' history*

Issue 55. Summer/Fall 2025

## 2025 Museum Hours

*Until August 30:* Mondays through  
Saturdays 10 am to 3 pm

*Sept 4-Oct 12:* Thursdays,  
Fridays and Saturdays 10 am  
to 3 pm

Closed for the winter every year  
from November to March.

## Staring Into the Distance

*by Rob Ascough, Treasurer*

No matter the motel, sitting outside the room continues being one of my favorite Wildwoods pastimes. As we adults come to acknowledge many things later in life, this was handed down to me by my parents — we'd do this almost every evening at the Cape Cod Inn where we vacationed together for more than 40 years before the owners sold it and the building was renovated into condominiums. Because our annual Wildwoods vacations were at least a week in length and sometimes a little more, I figured I'd spent about a years' worth of days carefully studying the Tangiers Motel across the street. I remember when the rooftop sign on Ocean Avenue had bright neon that illuminated the skies above; I also remember when the neon was replaced with dim and uninspired rope lights.

Because of the situation with the Cape Cod Inn no longer being the motel we remember, the annual family vacation has migrated a few blocks south to the wonderful V.I.P. Family Motel—proudly celebrating its 60th year of business in 2025 and seemingly poised for at least another 60 (and we should all be extremely thankful for that). These days, evenings of sitting in plastic chairs outside our motel rooms are spent visually analyzing the Imperial 500 Motel across the way. Like the V.I.P., it is meticulously maintained by its long-time owners. Do yourself a favor and drive by on Atlantic Avenue at night, because not only is the neon sign on the roof always perfect, but the crown above the "I" actually twinkles.

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## Chubby Checker: Twisting Into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

*by Charles Wiedenmann, Volunteer*

On April 27, 2025, during a special episode of *American Idol*, Ryan Seacrest announced that Chubby Checker, the man who brought "The Twist" to the world, would be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. This marks the first time Checker has been nominated and inducted into the Hall of Fame, despite being eligible since 1986.

Chubby Checker, born Ernest Evans on October 3, 1941, was born in Spring Gully, South Carolina, but his story truly began in the heart of South Philadelphia. Growing up in a housing project with his parents, Raymond and Earle Evans, and his two brothers, young Ernest found joy and expression in music. By the age of eleven, he had already formed a street-corner harmony group, showing early signs of the entertainer he would become.

The summer of 1960 marked a turning point in music history—and it all started in Wildwood, New Jersey. Just 18 years old, Chubby Checker had secured a headlining gig at the Rainbow Club, a buzzing nightlife spot at Pacific and Spicer avenues. What followed would ignite a cultural revolution.

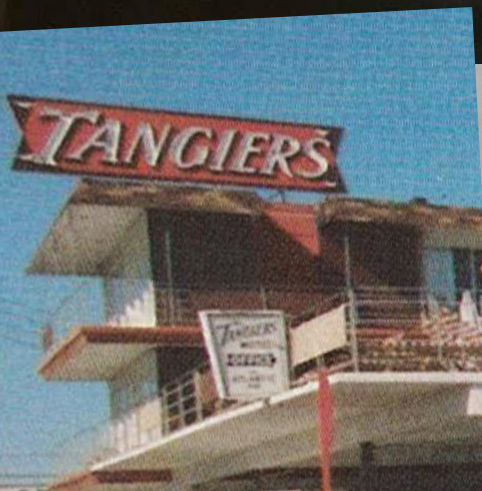
Checker introduced his version of "The Twist". The song quickly became a national sensation, topping the Billboard Hot 100 chart twice—first in 1960 and again in 1962—making it the only non-seasonal American recording to achieve this feat.

The twist craze was born not in a studio or a stadium, but in a modest Jersey Shore nightclub.

By August 1960, Checker was performing nightly at the  
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IMPERIAL 500



*Clockwise from below: The V.I.P. Family Motel, seen shortly after opening in 1965, celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. The Tangiers Motel no longer sports this stately neon sign, but the Imperial 500's neon sign still lights up Atlantic Avenue in Wildwood Crest at night. Courtesy Wildwood Historical Society collection*



# Summer Memories and Recent Developments at the Boyer Museum

by Anne Vinci, Past President and Museum Volunteer

Summer memories, everyone's got 'em! My earliest summer memories go back to my childhood in southwest Philadelphia Most of us lived in row houses and if there were public swimming pools in the late 1940s, I was never made aware of such a thing However, we did have fireplugs, and when someone turned on the corner plug, every kid on the street showed up. My mom broke out my blue bathing suit with the white stars, and I joined the neighborhood kids luxuriating in the cool water until the local constabulary showed up to turn off the fireplug. My joy was heightened when my parents bought an apartment house in Wildwood, and I discovered Utopia in the form of the beach and ocean. My sister and I had our chores to do, but almost every afternoon, we could be found on the Rio Grande Avenue beach. What joy! We also discovered the Boardwalk, and arcade games like "Skeeball" and "X-Ray Poker" After a summer of saving coupons, I might walk away with a pair of plastic, salt and pepper shakers for my mom or a hand shaver for my dad. The rides were my favorite. I loved the "Caterpillar" located on Marine/Playland Pier, and while I was too timid to try anything challenging, I loved to watch and listen to the screams emanating from rides like the "Jack Rabbit" and something I thought was called the "Salt and Pepper Shakers". I did go on the Jack Rabbit ONCE, but never had the courage to try the Shakers. In fact, on a night when the wind was blowing just right, you could hear the sounds from the hawkers, and the screams from the rides right into your bedroom. No central air conditioning in those days!

Many, many years went by and I made my home here and I found myself volunteering at the local museum. I found I wasn't alone in my precious summer memories. Everyday I was lucky enough to meet people who didn't necessarily live here year around, but our island was their summer vacation destination. I would hear how they were now bringing their children here, as their parents did. I spent hours searching for photos of grandma and grandpa's home where grandchildren and cousins slept on the floor, because there were so many of them, and a front porch that held more memories. We also searched our binders for photos of the rides that were popular when they were children. My own children grew up with Hunt's Pier and the "Golden Nugget ride. During my tenure at the museum I came to realize what a wonderful place I live in. This island has provided so many great summer memories for every generation. There is no end to the stories we have; the best pizza on the boardwalk, the best hot dogs on the boardwalk. Where do you go for the best cheese steak? Cinnamon Buns?

One time I had done a piece on a local bakery. I asked

if anyone remembered "Marsh's Bakery" located at Poplar and New York Avenues. I received such an onslaught of comments! I found out they had "the best butter cake", "the best cinnamon buns", and every evening they had a 7:00 PM baking with an endless line. So many reached back in their memories and told me what made Marsh's Bakery special to them.

The same with a sandwich shop called "Luigi's" located on the corner of Davis and Pacific Avenues. A gentleman by the name of Jim Monaghan, a former resident, and Wildwood Catholic student, was more than forth-coming with information about Luigi. He said Mike Sedotti was the owner and the "artist" who made every sandwich perfect. He also mentioned "Sam Finocchairo" whose family owned the Marine Italian Bakery, and was told that Mike Sedotti ordered the same amount of rolls every day. When they were gone, that was it, and he sold out every day. Sam also told Jim that Mike was the only customer who ordered the bread slightly under-baked so that he could toast the rolls to perfection in his pizza oven just before making every sandwich. And, he never made more than one sandwich at a time. So many good things to recall, and the Wildwood Historical Society can help with their collection of binders on almost every subject on island history.

Under recent news, the museum hosted the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey, and it went exceptionally well according to Board Member Karen Bohme. Our Vice-president, Al Brannen has been busy all winter cleaning out the back room at the museum. As a result, they had a yard sale of surplus and non-Wildwood items. They made a bit of money and very importantly cleared up some space. (For those that don't know our local history, the "back room" served as the embalming room for the local funeral parlor at one time.) You should be receiving our summer newsletter very shortly. President, Kathy Skouras, does a fine job of gathering information and sending it out to our members. She also reported that visitor numbers are increasing as summer starts. You really are doing yourself a disservice if you don't at least come in for a look. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

The staff of the museum would like to give a shout-out to our friend and long-time volunteer, Ron Griffith of North Wildwood According to his brother-in-law, Bud Nelson, Ron is presently residing in an assisted-living facility, Victoria Commons, 610 Townbank Road, North Cape May, NJ 08204. He is in unit #115, and is very happy. If you get a chance, drop him a card. We all send good thoughts and best wishes to someone who faithfully gave back to his community. We miss you, Ron!

Below: Luigi's, located at 4500 Pacific Avenue. Right: Marsh's Bakery, located at 2711 New York Avenue. Courtesy Wildwood Historical Society collection; both taken 1960.



## Wildwood Historical Society and Preserving the Wildwoods Merge, Launch Historic Home Recognition Program

The architecture of the Wildwoods has been changing at an increasing pace. The welcoming appearance of cottages and homes that reflect the culture of the island is being lost, so two nonprofits have joined forces to honor those who preserve their properties.

The Wildwood Historical Society and Preserving the Wildwoods, two formerly separate nonprofits each focused on preserving the Wildwoods' history, merged this year and established the Historic Home Recognition Program to celebrate homeowners who have chosen to maintain or renovate their homes to their historic appearance.

In the newly launched program, homes on Five Mile Island that have retained their historic appearance and were built before 1951 receive a certificate of recognition and a metal plaque that can be affixed to the home or displayed as a garden stake.

"From the Spanish homes of the Gables in the Crest, to the cottages with the wraparound porches, large colonial homes, and quaint Cape Cods that are throughout our island, families have made the conscious decision to retain the beauty and culture that defines the Wildwoods," said Buck Russom, chair of the Preserving the Wildwoods committee. "With the Historic Homes Program, we can formally recognize families who have chosen to maintain the historic appearance of their homes."

The Wildwood Historical Society and Preserving the Wildwoods merged this year to form a stronger, more unified presence in the community. This will enable the organizations to pool their resources and expertise to make a more significant impact in preserving the Wildwoods' history and culture.

Founded in the 1990s, Preserving the Wildwoods was originally Friends of the J. Thompson Baker House and later Partners in Preservation. Some notable accomplishments were the organization's involvement in rescuing Holy Beach Park and the A-frame house at Bennett and Park.

As part of the merger, Preserving the Wildwoods became a committee of the Wildwood Historical Society, founded in 1963. Members can expect the same involvement initiatives and volunteer opportunities. The merged entity will continue to stand for historic preservation and education, supporting community initiatives and events that promote the Wildwoods' unique character.

To learn more about the Historic Home Recognition Program, visit [wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com](http://wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com).

## Staring Into the Distance

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It's a small but terrific detail that likely goes unnoticed by many.

In true island form, there was one evening during our recent stay when the clouds became menacingly dark and eventually opened to produce a spectacular thunderstorm. Having seen this coming, we made a stop at Sea Shell Ice Cream on the way back from the boardwalk so we could enjoy heaping cups of mint chocolate chip as the deluge temporarily buried the Wildwoods. There is something magical about a storm on the island, from the way the streets quickly turn to rivers, to the smell of the chilly rain mixing with hot asphalt and concrete. Even a few letters in the perfect Imperial 500 Motel sign began flickering before settling back into their normal, steady glow. Just as quickly as things turned ominous, the sound and spectacle of an ice cream truck returned to greet vacationers that had become restless. Some things in the Wildwoods stay the same forever, while others change in the blink of an eye. The weather falls into the latter category.

However, we couldn't be included among those who'd grown eager to see the storm end. In our eyes, it hadn't lasted long enough. And we'd already had our ice cream.

## Chubby Checker: Twisting Into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

(continued from page 1)

Rainbow Club, and soon appeared on American Bandstand, the hit Philadelphia-based show hosted by Dick Clark. That appearance catapulted the twist from a local phenomenon to a national craze.

During the 1950s and '60s, Wildwood's club scene exploded. On any given summer night, you could catch acts like the Supremes, Frankie Avalon, the 5th Dimension, and, of course, Chubby Checker. While Atlantic City catered to older crowds and big band acts, Wildwood became the epicenter for youth culture.

In 2015, Checker was on hand for the unveiling of a 12-by-40-foot mural in Wildwood paying homage to "The Twist" singer, who first performed his iconic dance at a local club.

The mural, dedicated at the corner of Pacific and Garfield avenues, is the third honoring music stars who played the Jersey shore town.

Despite his significant contributions to music and culture, Checker had not been recognized by the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame until now. At 83, his induction is a long-overdue acknowledgment of his impact on the music industry.

The 2025 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony will take place on November 8th at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, California. The event will be streamed live on Disney+, with a special airing on ABC at a later date and available on Hulu the next day.

Joining Checker in the Performer Category are Bad Company, Joe Cocker, Cyndi Lauper, Outkast, Soundgarden, and The White Stripes. Other honorees include Salt-N-Pepa and Warren Zevon (Musical Influence Award), Thom Bell, Nicky Hopkins, and Carol Kaye (Musical Excellence Award), and Lenny Waronker (Ahmet Ertegun Award).

Chubby Checker's induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame is not just a personal triumph, but a celebration of a cultural icon whose music and dance moves brought joy to millions and left an indelible mark on American pop culture.

And it all started in Wildwood.

## New in Our Gift Shop!

Pick up a signed copy of *Wildwood Exit*, a novel by Pennsylvania author Joel E. Turner about a deadly vendetta at a restaurant in Wildwood, or a beautiful colorful map print of North Wildwood, featuring illustrations of historic scenes around town, in our online gift shop at <https://www.wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com/shop> or in person!





## Then and Now



The Panoramic Motel at 21st and Surf Aves in North Wildwood is shown (left) in a brochure photo that was taken in 1966, the year Norman and Thelma Danella opened the motel. Earlier this summer, the Panoramic was renamed the Beach House and had its lively Jet Age plastic sign removed and its flagcrete painted over. You can't beat original midcentury flair, but we wish the new owners the best!

Visit <https://www.wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com/research> to buy a vintage photo of your favorite Wildwood spot for just \$10!

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### Membership

Please renew your membership if you haven't done so recently! Memberships and donations help cover the costs of newsletters and mailings, and help us keep the lights on at the museum. To donate, scan one of the QR codes shown to the left.

Visit [wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com](http://wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com) to renew your membership, view past newsletters, buy items from our gift shop, donate a vehicle, or get a taste of Wildwoods history!

Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State, and the Cape May County Board of County Commissioners through the Division of Culture & Heritage



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