

Wildwood Historical Society, Inc.



George F. Boyer Museum

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WildwoodHistoricalMuseum.com

3907 Pacific Avenue
Wildwood, NJ 08260

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

Issue 56. Winter/Spring 2026

2026 Museum Hours

April 2-May 23: Thursdays-
Saturdays 10 am-3 pm

May 26-Sept 5: Mondays-
Saturdays 10 am-3 pm

Sept 10-Oct 10: Thursdays-
Saturdays 10 am-3 pm

Tram Car Saved from Scrap Yard

by Taylor Henry, President

A retired tram car engine was rescued from the scrap yard by the Wildwood Historical Society this winter. We are relieved it is now safe and awaiting its next chapter. The plan is to remove the Coca-Cola wrap, patch up rusty spots, reattach the overhang with new posts, and return it to the blue and yellow color scheme. The finished product will be moved inside the Wildwood Historical Museum where patrons can sit behind the wheel, hit the "watch the tram car please" button, and have their photo taken. We have already begun making space for the finished car.

The engine, old #8, is one of the 1963 fleet that was fabricated in Camden, NJ and commissioned by Gilbert Ramagosa, son of Sebastian Ramagosa who was responsible for bringing the first five tram cars to Wildwood in 1949. Previously the state-of-the-art electric vehicles were part of the 1939 New York World's Fair. There are several traditional tram car engines still in operation on the boardwalk from all eras: 1949, 1963 and 2007. While we will get #8 looking spiffy for photo ops, it will not be fit for operation. It was retired at the end of the 2025 season.

Many thanks to Pat Rosenello, president of the Special Improvement District for donating #8 to the Wildwood Historical Society, Righter's Auto and Towing and the tram car maintenance team for carefully transporting it to us, ABS Signs for the pending restoration, and to everyone who has made a purchase or donation on our website, wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com.

Additional thanks to the following news outlets for covering the story: CBS (channel 3); ABC (channel 6); NBC (channel 10); Cape May County Herald; NJ.com; Philly Voice; Wildwood 365; Wildwood Video Archive.

We still have a long and expensive road to restore the car and install an opening large enough to bring it indoors, which we estimate will cost tens of thousands. We are an independent nonprofit trying to preserve history as best as we can, so please consider making a purchase or donation. Talking Toy Tram Cars are available in our gift shop at wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com. At just \$17.99, they're the best price anywhere on the internet and an ideal way to support the cause.

Renewing your membership by sending back your dues in the enclosed envelope is another way to support preservation of the tram car. Thank you again for your support, and we are excited for the next phase of our tram car restoration project!



Above: At right in this photo of the tram car being dropped off is one of two elephants believed to have originated from Jungleland on Fun Pier. It later spent decades on the roof of Rocky's Liquor Store. ABS Signs restored and installed it last spring.

Fun Fact: Tram Car #8 is the same age as the Wildwood Historical Society. It was built in 1963, the year our organization was established.



Above: Before the car was delivered to us, it was in such rusty condition that the posts holding up the car's roof broke, causing the roof to collapse. The car will be restored by ABS Signs and original roof reattached.

Watch the Wildwood Historical Society, Please

by Rob Ascough, Treasurer

In case you haven't heard the news, the Wildwood Historical Society is saving a tram car locomotive. In fact, we will do everything in our power to keep this story in the news as it unfolds in the coming months (and possibly) years, because this is important for many reasons.

Having observed the process by which we acquired "#8" has taught me a lot of things about the tram cars that I thought I knew so much about, such as the fact that a tram car locomotive was designated #8 in the first place. I suppose it makes sense that each were assigned numbers, but I didn't ever give something like that any consideration. While I can't say I have any kind of deep personal connection with #8 aside from the fact that it is now in the hands of our historical society, I surely rode in cars that it pulled along the boardwalk throughout the years. Then again in all my summers spent on the island, there is no doubt I have been a passenger in cars pulled by every locomotive. If each one could talk, I'm sure the stories told would be fascinating.

To be fair, the boardwalk's tram cars can best be described as a beloved nuisance. Who hasn't been walking side-by-side in conversation with someone while carefully balancing slices of pizza just out of reach of swarming seagulls, only to be startled by the blaring of Floss Stingle's famous recording to immediately vacate the path of a lumbering lump of yellow metal. I certainly don't envy the drivers that relentlessly press on through shoulder-to-shoulder evening crowds expecting the recording to part bodies like some kind of Biblical figure.

Yet even possessing some truly disruptive qualities, I imagine very few who've ever strolled the boards haven't counted on a tram car in a moment of desperation, whether it be to save tired feet from having to endure a two mile hike back to the car or just to avoid a drenching when Mother Nature unleashed fury from the skies. Most of us are guilty of grouching about the cost of a ride on the tram car increasing every year (as if it should be immune to the rules of inflation) but few haven't resisted the urge to keep turning their heads to look for one when needed the most. Like a good friend (or neighbor), the tram car is always there.

Restoring a tram car is a task the Wildwood Historical Society will gladly talk about, although we don't have many details to share right now. That's because to our knowledge, no organization has ever taken on the task of restoring something like a tram car locomotive, so we are merely feeling our way through this process as we move along. At this moment there is no way to accurately declare a period in which we will have #8 on display; there is nothing we can do to answer one of the most typical questions we are asked: "How much will it cost?" That's because your guess is as good as ours. It is a perfect example of why your support will always be welcome, whether it be purchasing a membership in the society, purchasing merchandise, or dropping just a few dollars in our donation box. Everything goes toward the tram car locomotive restoration and the society's many other projects in service to the community.

All we can do is promise that the end result will be worth the wait and effort. Watch the Wildwood Historical Society, please.

The Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet: Cape May's Revolutionary War Legacy

by Cathy Nesbitt Smith, Partners in Preservation Committee

2026 is the 250th anniversary of the Revolution, and there's no better way to celebrate than to relive the only battle fought in Cape May County: the Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet.

This was a major victory for the war effort. It ended the British blockade of Delaware Bay, allowing supplies to be delivered to Philadelphia for the war. The British moved away from the coast instead of proceeding with their previous plans to go to New York.

The island that now makes up the Wildwoods was once two separate islands. Turtle Gut Inlet separated the two, but it was

filled in artificially in 1922 to create one large island.

The waters around Cape May and the Wildwoods were of great importance during the Revolutionary War because they form the opening of Delaware Bay. In 1776, Philadelphia served as our capital, and the only way to reach it by water was through Delaware Bay. Ships were the main method of transporting goods.

To prevent the Americans from receiving war supplies through the port of Philadelphia, the British Navy established a blockade of Delaware Bay with their many ships.

In early June, the brigantine *Nancy*, loaded with supplies—386 barrels of gunpowder, 50 firelocks, 101 hogsheads of rum, and 62 hogsheads of sugar—set sail for Philadelphia.

The future "Father of the Navy," Captain John Barry, was alerted that the *Nancy* was headed his way and would need protection, since she only had an eleven-man crew and six cannons. She was hardly a match for the British *Orpheus's* 32 guns and the *Kingfisher's* 16 guns.

Barry received a flag code from the *Nancy* signaling that she needed help. Barry, in turn, signaled the *Reprisal* and *Wasp*. Longboats from all three vessels set out to aid the *Nancy*.

In the early hours of June 29, blocked from entering Delaware Bay, the *Nancy* headed for Turtle Gut Inlet under a heavy fog. The British lost sight of her. When the fog lifted, the British closed in to attack the *Nancy*. The *Nancy's* captain, Hugh Montgomery, decided it was best to run the ship into the shoreline of Turtle Gut Inlet. This would give them distance from the British and allow the crew to carry supplies to the shore.



Above: Turtle Gut Inlet as it looks today.

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Wildwood Gifts Support Preservation of Tram Car #8

We're thrilled to report that our 2026 Wildwood History Calendar fundraiser was a huge success, thanks to your incredible support! The calendars were a hit, and we're grateful to everyone who purchased one (or more!). The goal of the fundraiser was to support the preservation of Tram Car #8, an iconic piece of Wildwood history. And with your help, we sold out of calendars and raised \$1,600! All proceeds will go directly towards the restoration efforts, helping us keep the tram rolling for generations to come.

But the fundraiser doesn't stop here! We're continuing the momentum with our exclusive Tram Car gifts, perfect for holiday shopping or treating yourself. From practical items like magnets and keychains to fun puzzles and ornaments, there's something for everyone. And don't forget the bestselling Taking Toy Tram Car - it's a must-have for any Wildwood enthusiast! (\$17.99, best price online!) Here's a look at what we have in store:

- Tram Car Magnets—Stick 'em anywhere!
- Vintage-Style Stickers—Rep the Doo Wop
- Posters—Decorate with Wildwood history
- Keychains—Take a piece home
- Puzzles—Fun for all ages
- Holiday Ornaments—Deck the halls with Tram Car #8!
- Taking Toy Tram Car—Bestseller!

Shipping note: We currently ship once a month, so thanks for your patience! Shop now and support preservation: wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com/shop. Your support means the world to us, and we're honored to have you be a part of our efforts to preserve Wildwood's history. Stay tuned to our social media for updates on our progress, and thank you again for your support!

Right: A sampling of the tram car-themed items available from the Wildwood Historical Society online shop.



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The longboats from the three American vessels came to their aid. Under heavy fire from the British, they unloaded two-thirds of the supplies ashore. Unable to hold out against the British cannons, Captain Montgomery ordered the crew to abandon ship. He then improvised a fuse by wrapping gunpowder in one of the sails. The fuse led to the remaining supply of gunpowder. It was lit as the men abandoned the Nancy.

The British, unaware that a fuse had been set, boarded the ship just as the Nancy exploded, killing many men. The British retreated further away from Delaware Bay with damaged ships.

The Americans lost one man. Lt. Richards Wickes is buried at Cold Spring Cemetery.

The Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet took place fifteen months after the first battle of the Revolutionary War. It was the only battle fought in Cape May County.

We will be having events throughout the year. Follow www.wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com for updates. Look for our "250th Revolution Anniversary" display inside the Art Pavilion.

Partners in Preservation is a committee of the Wildwood Historical Society. Visit www.preservingthewildwoods.com or contact partnersinpreservation@yahoo.com.



Above: Today, a memorial plaque marks the site of the Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet.

Then and (Almost) Now



Did you know that different eras of tram cars are easily identifiable by their body shape? Tram cars built in 1963, like the one currently being restored by the historical society, have squared-off bodies, unlike the more streamlined rounded bodies of the original 1939 fleet. The postcard on the left shows one of Wildwood's 1960s tramcars passing the Flyer coaster at Hunt's Pier in the early 1980s. Timmy Smith's 2022 photo on the right shows tram car #8, currently in the historical society collection, rolling down the boardwalk.

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

Our Team

Taylor Henry, *President*

Carolyn Vinci, *Vice President*

Rob Ascough, *Treasurer*

Larry Lillo, *Secretary*

Board: John Serpico, Mary Lou Wilson, Cathy Nesbitt Smith, Buck Russom

Kathi Johnson, *Museum Manager*

Bruce Tell, *Assistant Manager*

Volunteers: Al Alven, Jackson Betz, Bruce Harris, Julia Ittah, Chris Pohle, Karen Samuels, Pary Tell, Anne Vinci, Lew Vinci, Charles Wiedenmann

Advisory: Alan Gould, Susan Fox Hirschmann, Michael Hirsch, Mike Mattera

In Memoriam: Bob Scully, Bob Bright, Al Brannen

Subscribe to our free monthly E-newsletter too! Visit wildwoodhistoricalmuseum.com

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 to renew your membership, view past newsletters, buy items from our gift shop, donate a vehicle, or get a taste of Wildwoods history!

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