

SCUTTLEBUTT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Museum Society President, Nancy Howard

This is my first opportunity to reach out to all the members of our Museum Society and friends of The Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum. I am delighted to do so yet I'm torn about where to begin. I'm trying to imagine what you as Society members want to hear from me as President.

Let me tell you a little about our Board of Directors.

Most of the Board members were actually born and raised in Ocean City and are intimately knowledgeable about our Museum and its importance. Melanie Ayres Merryweather, Janet Holland Cherrix, Amanda Esham Cropper, Alfred Harrison, Joe Moore, Lou Parsons, JD Quillin, Maggie Steimer, John Lynch and Newt

Weaver were born and raised if not in Ocean City within a few miles of the Boardwalk. Tom Wimbrow, Hal Adkins and Hunter "Bunk" Mann are from a little further west but have deep roots in the area. Bob Rothermel, Gordon Katz, Tom Perry and I have travelled the farthest to be part of the Museum Board. Melanie now lives in Cambridge and is an active Board member; Bob hails from Pennsylvania and married into an Ocean City family, Gordon still lives in Ellicott City and knows as much about the history of our town as anyone on the Board and Tom Perry settled here from Baltimore. I, on the other hand, moved to OC 40 years ago from Washington, D.C. and never looked back. I didn't know a soul in town. I've always been a bit of a history buff and I was drawn to the Museum.

But enough about us. Now I'm going to ask a favor of you. What would you like to hear from the Museum/Board/us? Do you have any special interests that we might be able to share in the Scuttlebutt? In future messages I'll be able to tell you about some of the ongoing efforts of the Society and some of our past accomplishments. At this time let me tell you that we are working with the Coast Guard and the Indian River Life-Saving Station on an event June 20 to celebrate their 100th anniversary. We'll be holding our second annual Storm Warriors 5K on Saturday, November 14. You will find further information on these two events on our website.

Also on the website are opportunities for you to donate to our efforts including shopping in our gift shop, volunteering, making donations, and becoming a member. Aside from the standard membership categories we now have an opportunity to support the Museum monthly and we have established a fund with the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore. All donations are, of course, tax deductible.

So, I look forward to hearing from you on any level. Questions, comments etc. contact me at neffie-howard@comcast.net.

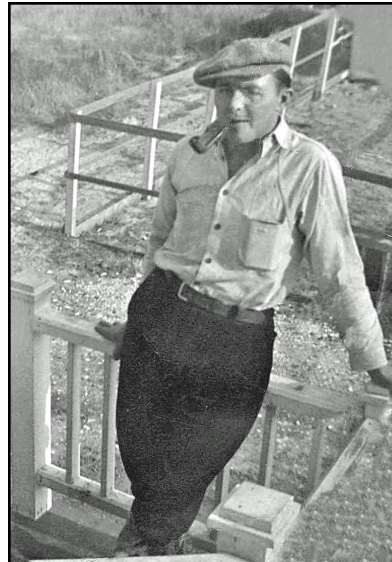
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A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

PHILADELPHIA AVENUE AND 8TH STREET

BY AMANDA CROPPER

The property at 8th Street and Philadelphia Avenue was purchased in the early 1920s by my grandfather, John D. Ayres. This is where the Midway Shopping Center is now located. The property began as a parking garage, called The Lankford Parking Garage. Back in the day, visitors didn't want their cars sitting out in the salt air, so they rented space in one of what I believe were three parking garages in Ocean City. The property went from Wilmington Lane (or "the alley", as we always called it) to Philadelphia Avenue. Just to the south of the garage, and adjacent to that property, my parents, Lester and Ethel Esham, built the Ocean City Dairy. They bought raw milk from farmers in Berlin and surrounding areas, brought it to the dairy and pasteurized and bottled it for delivery to homes, rooming houses and hotels. As well as the white milk there was the most glorious chocolate milk and whipping cream. Dad, unbeknownst to Mom, I'm sure, would let me have great spoonfuls of the whipped cream. During the war, German soldiers would be brought to the dairy by American GIs to work at the dairy.



Lester Esham at Esham's Dairy Farm circa 1940

Tragically, in April of 1942 Grandfather Ayres caught fire while tending a trash fire on the property; and died from his injuries.

In 1952 the dairy was leased to Koontz Creamery, but this was fairly short-lived. Also in that year, Mom and Dad converted the garage into the shopping center. Mr. Frank Sacca, a dear friend of my Dad, was the leader of the orchestra that played every Sunday night at the band shell on the beach at Somerset Street. Dad was a trombonist and my brother Jack was the percussionist in that orchestra. Mr. Sacca lamented to his family that poor Lester was building this shopping center way up on 8th Street, and who in the world was going to travel that far up the beach to shop.

After the Koontz company left, Mom and Dad converted the dairy into the Jahlee Apartments. The name is derived from all the members of our immediate family – Jack, Amanda, Hannah, Lester, and Ethel Esham – and was Mom's creation. My brother and his wife, Jack and Lolly Esham, eventually bought the apartments from Mom and Dad, and they and some of their children make this their home.

In about 1968, my then husband and I bought the shopping center from Mom and Dad. After five years, we bought the property just to the south, and extended the shopping center by two more stores. A couple of years later, we also bought the property across the street, on the west side of Philadelphia Avenue, from the Benjamin family, and have used that as the parking lot for the shopping center.

Bailey's drug store was always in the shopping center, with Halcolm Bailey being the pharmacist. Originally there was a soda fountain on the north wall, presided over by Grace Parker of "The Grace Parker Breakfast" fame at the Presbyterian Church. Brit's market with Lester Brittingham was a gathering place for some of the local men, my Dad among them. I think brown liquor was involved in the late afternoons. Dave Lankford was the butcher and Cottontop Hudson was the man of all other things.

Continued.....page 3

CURATOR'S CORNER

Once again Ocean City is coming alive with anticipation for the upcoming summer season. Thanks to the Town of Ocean City and the dedicated crew from Public Works, the picket fence surrounding the boardwalk near the Museum has been totally replaced and a new safer public friendly ramp has been installed at the southern end leading to the Inlet.

While we are excited about the 2015 season I would like to share with you some of our accomplishments in 2014. We welcomed 14,250 visitors through our doors and 1,400 people attended our free summer programs which included a new program presented by Science Communicator, Kelly Taylor with Assateague Island National Seashore entitled "An Island Tail: The Case of the Wild Horses."



Curator Sandra D. Hurley

Our outreach to the community extended to Worcester County Libraries, Mayor's New Year's Day House, Downtown Association's Crab Soup Cook Off, Democratic Club of Ocean Pines, National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Indian River Life-Saving Station's Maritime Heritage Festival, History Weekend at Pocomoke State Park and Sunfest. We also participated in the National Blue Star Museum Program for active service members and their families, Salute to the Services and Smithsonian Magazine Day.

Other events held include; Children's Day on the Bay in August, Local's Week during the last week of October, International Museum Day on May 18th and our annual Holiday Open House held the first Sunday in December. Several book signing events by local authors were also held throughout the year.

Two new exhibits were completed in 2014. The first, a temporary exhibit, "All Paws on Deck" showcased seaworthy animals and their contribution to mankind's journeys over the oceans. It is on loan from the Museum of Maritime Pets in Annapolis. This exhibit closes in May so this may be your last chance to see it. It will be replaced by "The U.S. Coast Guard - A 100 Year Celebration" opening in June of 2015. Our second new exhibit, "Little Keeper's Day Room/Play Room" was designed for our youngest visitors. It is a hands on place where kids can perform a rescue, dress up as a surfman or just take time out to color, play games or read a book.

As you can see there is a lot of activity at our little "treasure" on the boardwalk. So, if you have not visited the Museum in a while, now is the time to come!

A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE CONTINUED.....

Next was The Garland Lane Shop. Garland sold the most wonderful clothes and accessories, and was the high water mark for glamour. Then there was Hooks Bakery. Mr. Hooks only had the bakery open in the summertime. The fragrance that came from that bakery in the early morning would make you swoon. There may have been a Laundromat, but I'm drawing a blank on that one. The southernmost store was the Plantation Restaurant, run by the Cowger family from Pocomoke, which was also only open in the summer. I had my first, but not last, scrapple and egg sandwich there.

WELCOME ABOARD NEW MEMBERS!

The President and Board of Directors take great pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

FAMILY

Monte Richardson

Ocean City, Maryland

Julie West

Gambrills, Maryland

OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND – THEN & NOW LOT 53 – THE “CHARLES LUDLAM HOUSE” AND THE “WILLIAM P. LAWS HOUSE”

BY GORDON E. KATZ

Two of Ocean City's older buildings are situated on lot 53 at the southwest corner of Caroline Street and Baltimore Avenue. Both buildings are over 100 years old. The larger building on the corner was constructed in 1903, most likely by Berlin contractor David J. Adkins. The date when the smaller building on the southerly part of the lot facing on the west side of Baltimore Avenue was erected is uncertain, but it is shown on the Sanborn Map Company map of Ocean City drawn up in August 1911.

George Goldsborough, a wealthy gentleman farmer from Talbot County, drew lot 53 at the Atlantic Hotel Company stockholders' meeting held on August 31, 1875. George owned a large estate on the Miles River called “Ashby”, where, among other pursuits, he operated a “stock farm for breeding fine-blooded horses”. His wife Eleanor was the daughter of the prominent Baltimore businessman Lloyd N. Rogers, from whose estate she received a substantial inheritance in 1860, and the great-great-granddaughter of Martha Washington, from Martha's first marriage to Daniel Parke Custis.

George and Eleanor did not build on their lot in Ocean City, but chose instead for their own reasons to erect a handsome cottage on what is now the northwest corner of North 1st Street and the Boardwalk. Shortly after George's death in 1899, Eleanor sold the unimproved lot 53 to Captain Joshua J. Dunton, the keeper of the U.S. Life-Saving Service station in Ocean City, for \$100. Dunton, who had developed several other nearby properties, opted to sell the vacant lot to fishing boat captain Charlie Ludlam in 1902 for \$300.

Charlie Ludlam and his partner John Hagan had arrived in Ocean City in early 1897, and set out the first fish pounds. Pound fishing was a lucrative enterprise in its early years, providing Charlie with the means to build his large residence featuring a “distinctive three-story octagonal tower”. The original purpose of the smaller building on the south side of the property, which Charlie had erected by 1911, is not known.

Clinton T. Coffin paid Charlie \$1,500 for the smaller building and lot in 1915. Clinton was only 21 years old at the time, but Charlie considered him creditworthy, taking back a mortgage of \$1,400 that was repaid in full within five years.

According to the Draft Registration card that Clinton completed on June 5, 1917, he worked for the Baltimore, Chesapeake & Atlantic Railroad. There is no record of subsequent military service; apparently his “defective vision” (as noted on his registration) and infant son precluded him from becoming a soldier. The 1920 federal census shows that he was operating a grocery store on the first floor of the building, where he lived with his wife Sara and son Samuel on the upper floor.

The remainder of Clinton's life after the 1920 census was enumerated on January 2 is mostly a mystery. One potential clue about him is a conveyance that he executed later that year on December 20, in which he gave the Ocean City property to Sara in consideration of “love and affection”, reserving for himself a life estate. What is known is that Clinton had died by 1925, when Sara sold the lot and building to Arthur M. Adkins, a piling contractor, and moved in with her father Samuel J. Massey at his boarding house located next door to her former residence.



W.P. Laws and his wife sit in the living room of the Ocean City house that he has called home for 43 years.

Figure 1: From *The Washington Star*, June 12, 1977.

THEN & NOW CONTINUED

Arthur and Eva Adkins sold the property to their adopted daughter Lola Birch in 1933. Less than a year later, Kathryn Laws, the wife of William P. Laws, bought the property from Miss Birch. William P. Laws, originally from Salisbury, came to Ocean City in 1919 after his discharge from the Army for temporary work as a butcher. He ended up spending the rest of his life in the resort, operating a grocery store and butcher shop on the east side of Baltimore Avenue between Dorchester Street and Talbot Street that was a fixture in the community for over half a century. Kathryn, a Pennsylvania native who moved to Ocean City in the 1920s as a schoolteacher, was the organist for the Presbyterian Church. Their small living room was dominated by an organ that she used for practice (see Figure 1). The house remained in the Laws family until 1995.

Charlie Ludlam sold the larger building to amusement and lunch room operator Lloyd Jester in 1920 for \$4,000. Jester and his family lived there for about a year before he sold it to a Virginia attorney named John Letcher. John was the son of Virginia's Civil War governor, also named John Letcher. John's sister Margaret had married Robert J. Showell, the brother of Ocean City hotel and bath house owner John Dale Showell. Margaret and Robert, who listed himself as "retired" in the 1920 census, most likely used the house as their residence.

After Robert J. Showell died in 1926, John Letcher gave the house and lot to his sister and her four adult children. Margaret had returned to her hometown of Lexington, Virginia, by 1930, and the house was probably rented out. Shortly before her death in 1936, Margaret and her children sold the property to Winfield S. Wallace, who owned the neighboring "Wallace Hotel" on Caroline Street, and Walter A. Jarmon, a railroad fireman who operated a small rooming house on the east side of Baltimore Avenue just north of North Division Street. The two men converted the first floor into the "Regal Restaurant" in 1938, and rented rooms on the upper floors as summer apartments. Jarmon bought out Wallace's interest in 1939.

Walter Jarmon died in 1962, and his widow Lottie sold the lot and building to Benjamin and Mary McAllister from Hurlock, Maryland, in March 1963. The McAllister couple continued to operate the Regal Restaurant on the site until 1996, when they arranged a sale to a group of New Jersey businessmen for \$235,000. Soprano's Pizza, the current occupant, opened in the former Regal Restaurant space in 2001. Gerasimos Alivizatos bought the building from the New Jersey group in 2004 for \$445,000.

The Maryland Historical Trust declined in 2003 and again in 2007 to designate the Charles Ludlam House as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. The 2007 review stated, "The single family dwelling has been converted to commercial uses, the windows have been replaced and the roof clad in composite shingles. The construction of enclosed spaces in the ground floor and a restaurant kitchen prevent the building from conveying its significance as an early twentieth century dwelling. Research conducted did not identify events or persons of local, state or national importance". I disagree with the latter statement. Charlie Ludlam was certainly a person of local importance, inasmuch as he played a key role in establishing an industry that fueled the local economy for more than thirty years.



Figure 2: The Charles Ludlam House and Regal Restaurant in 1993. A portion of the William P. Laws House can be seen at the left. From the Ocean City Museum Society archives.



Present day view of the southwest corner of Baltimore Avenue & Caroline Street showing the William P. Laws House and the Charles Ludlam House.

Photograph by Sandy Hurley

100 Years Ago

From *The Baltimore Sun*, May 9, 1915:

Bank For Ocean City.

Seaford, Del., May 8. – Tired of having to go six miles to Berlin to deposit their money, and thinking it time to have a bank of their own, residents of Ocean City have made application for authority to J. Dukes Downes, State Bank Commissioner, to build a bank. The applicants are Levin D. Lynch, John M. Mumford, William B. S. Powell, Thomas W. Taylor and Charles T. Jackson, all of Ocean City. The bank is to be known as the Bank of Ocean City, and the capital is to be \$20,000.

→ Curator's note: This was actually the second attempt to organize a bank in Ocean City. An application in September 1914 for a charter for the "State Bank of Ocean City", submitted by George B. Conner, Harry J. Cropper, Irving S. Mumford, John M. Mumford and Lemuel Wyatt, was rejected by State Bank Commissioner J. Dukes Downes. Commissioner Downes initially rejected the new application, forcing the applicants to take their case to court. A compromise was reached among the parties, and the Bank of Ocean City received its state charter in July 1915. The bank opened for business in 1916 in a building on the northeast corner of Dorchester Street and Baltimore Avenue. Today, the Bank of Ocean City has six offices: three in Ocean City, including the original office on Dorchester Street, one in West Ocean City, now the main office, one in Ocean Pines and one in Berlin.



The photograph on the left was taken during a snow storm circa 1917. It shows the building that houses the Bank of Ocean City.

Photograph from collection of George and Suzanne Hurley

50 Years Ago

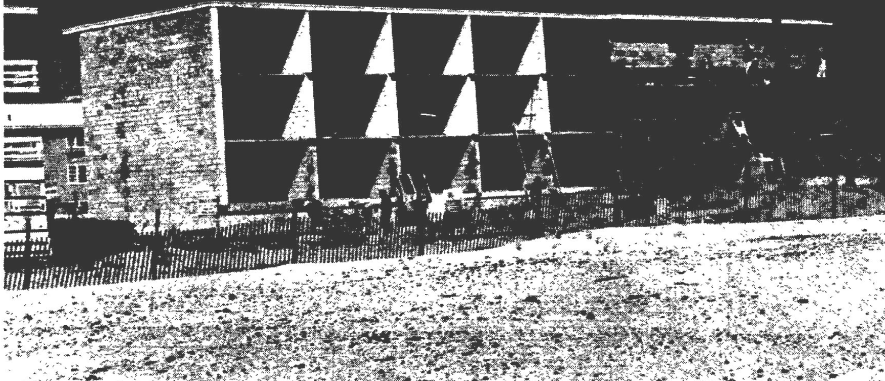
From *The Daily Times* (Salisbury MD), May 29, 1965:

(Opposite Page)

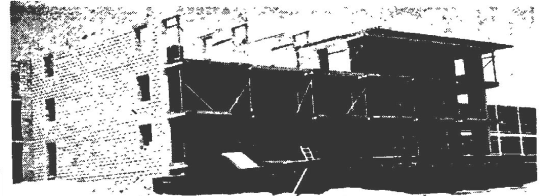
→ Curator's note: The new construction pictured on the next page, moving clockwise from the upper left, is the Sahara Motel, on the Boardwalk at 19th Street; the Kittiwake Motel, on the beach at 45th Street; the Quality Court Motel, located at 17th Street on the Boardwalk; Beach Place, "one of many new condominiums", on the beach at 70th Street; new rides on the pier; Caine Keys II, a residential development on the bay side between 105th Street and 110th Street; Ocean Playland, an amusement park on the bay at 65th Street; and an artist's rendering of Caine Tower, a proposed 17-story condominium on the beach at 120th St., slated to begin construction on October 1.

Caine Tower was never built.

BOOM AT THE BEACH



SAHARA MOTEL. Located at 19th St. and the Boardwalk, this new structure will add 45 motel units to the existing Sahara on Baltimore Ave. at 19th St. The new annex will open on Memorial Day. The Sahara is owned and operated by Hugh F. Wilde, and his wife, Patricia.



THE KITTIWAKE. Thirty efficiency units will make up the new Kittiwake Motel, located on the beach at 45th St. The structure will have a bulkhead seawall on the beach and all units will feature an ocean view. Builder of the Kittiwake is William Purnell Hall.



QUALITY COURT. Thirty-nine units in a five-story structure are planned for the new Quality Court, located at 17th St. and Baltimore Ave. Irvin Balnum, builder of the motel, said the Quality Court will feature a swimming pool, and five assorted shops as part of the project.

\$6,000,000 Spent In New Construction

Text and Photos By BOB CARPER Of The Times Staff

OCEAN CITY — Maryland's seashore resort builders and residents have started rolling out the red carpet for another bonus tourist year with an estimated \$6,000,000 worth of new construction.

Since Isaac Coffin built the first inn catering to vacationing sportsmen in 1869 on the offshore sandy island, Ocean City has grown to its present 40 million dollar assessable base. The resort continues to grow at a rate of about 10 per cent per year.

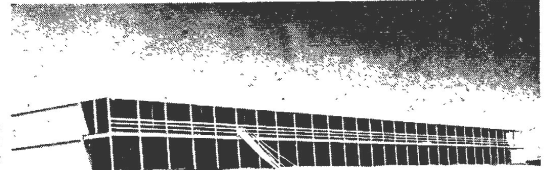
With annexation of North Ocean City in January, Ocean City stretched its boundary from 41st St. to the Delaware line, a distance of seven miles, and entered into the greatest expansion period in its history.

Nearly 50 new apartment houses, motels, and restaurants are being rushed to completion for the traditional Memorial Day opening.

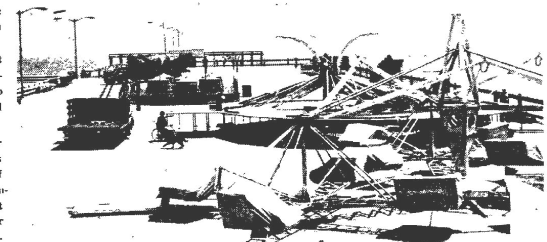
Expected to be a popular attraction at the resort this year will be the opening of "condominiums." Condominium ownership means that you actually own your apartment outright — complete with deed. Except for management of the building and joint ownership of the common areas, such as land, lobby, fresh water, heated swimming pool, and so on, the owner is not financially entangled with other occupants of the building. The owner is responsible for only his own tax bill, mortgage, and share of maintenance.

He benefits from the same federal tax advantage as other private home owners. The "town-house" land-lease arrangement goes with a deed to the apartment, and the option for purchasing or leasing the land on which it lies. The lease usually runs six per cent of the land value per year.

Among the many new structures greeting the resort visitor as he crosses the bridge into Ocean will be those featured on this page.



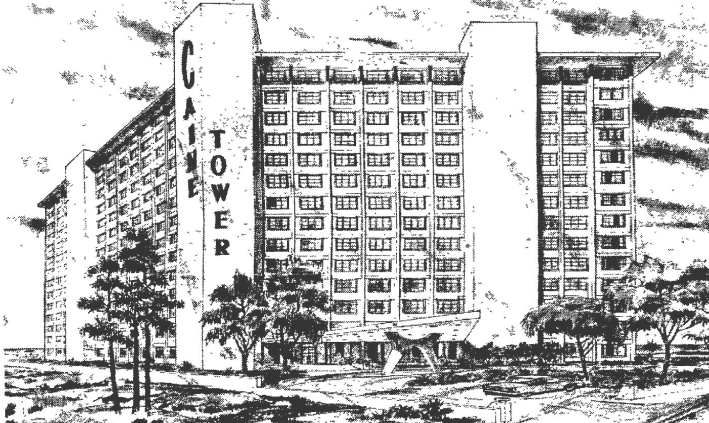
BEACH PLACE. One of many new "condominium" structures being planned and built for Ocean City is "Beach Place," located on the beach at 70th St. There will be 25 two and three bedroom "town houses" for buyers who desire a more permanent type of summer, or year-round, resort residence. Builders of the condominium are John S. Whaley and Daniel Trimper, Real Estate.



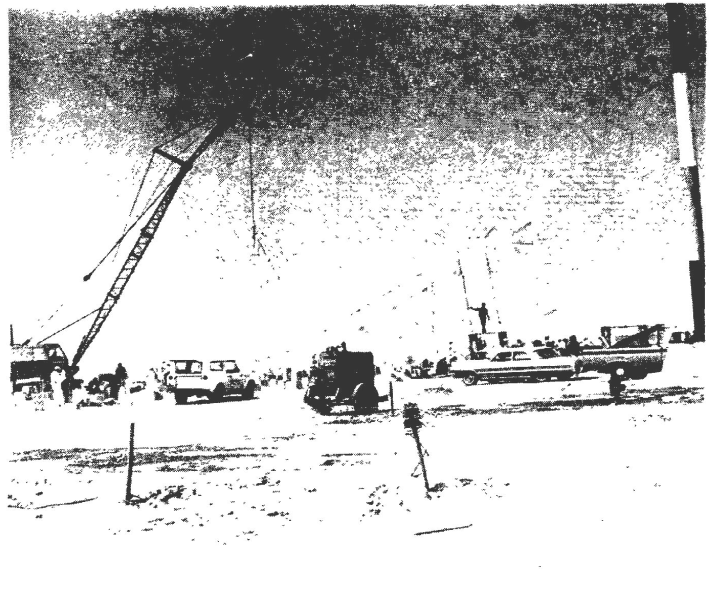
RIDES ON THE PIER. Workmen put together three of the 14 planned amusement rides on the Ocean City fishing pier for use this summer. George H. "Buster" Gordon, owner of the rides, said there will be several new additions this year, including a kiddie roller coaster, and an Italian "bumper-scooter." All 14 of the rides will be in operation by Memorial Day.



CONSTRUCTION AT CAINE KEYS. Giant earth-movers level and fill land between 105th St. to 110th St. for construction of "Caine Keys No 2." The development will feature its own sewer plant, all water-front lots, and there will be about 400 homes within its boundaries. The developer is James B. Caine, of Ocean City.



CAINE TOWER. Another of the condominiums planned for the beach resort is Caine Tower, located at 120th St. The "tower" will be 17 stories high, believed to be the tallest structure on the Eastern Shore. Construction is slated to begin Oct. 1.



ROLLER COASTERS AND AERIAL RIDES. A heart-stopping dip down a roller coaster or a scenic sky-ride over Isle of Wight Bay are among the features at Ocean Playland. Located at 63th St., Playland will have amusement rides imported from Germany plus shops and concessions. James B. Caine, developer of the project, said there will be parking for 1,000 cars when the \$2,000,000 amusement park opens in June.



**Ocean City
Life-Saving Station
Museum**

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We're on the Web!
www.ocmuseum.org

*The Times and Tides of
Ocean City, Maryland*

READERS' FORUM

Q: How long was the Shore Drive-In Theatre on Route 50 in operation?

A: William A. Carrier, from Keyser, West Virginia, and his business partner John S. Rokisky opened the Shore Drive-In Theatre, located on the south side of Route 50 about three miles west of Ocean City, in 1954. Carrier also opened the Stowaway Motel on the Boardwalk between 21st Street and 22nd Street in 1956. He and his partner Rokisky had a falling out, and the theatre property was eventually acquired by Walter Gettinger in 1958. Gettinger, who operated several movie theaters in the Baltimore area, had earlier purchased the Capitol Theatre on Worcester Street in Ocean City in 1955, and would later buy Carrier's Stowaway Motel as well in 1964.

We're not certain of the drive-in theatre's final year of operation, but we do know that it was still in operation in 1976. An interesting footnote to the theatre's history is that the fledgling Lutheran congregation in Ocean City held summer Sunday services there throughout most of the 1960s.