

The History of Brigantine

Information collected from Wikipedia and Brigantine Beach County [website](#).



Brigantine Beach is known as one of the most peaceful and beautiful places in all of South Jersey. Its story begins in the 1500s. The Lenape Indians called the beautiful island "Watamoonica," which means "summer playground."

Looking for a water route through the New World to the Orient, the Dutch were the first to explore New Jersey's coastline.

According to one of the logbooks from Henry Hudson's ship "Half Moon,"

Brigantine Beach was first sighted on September 2, 1608: "This is a very good land to fall in with, and a pleasant land to see..." It is believed that Captain William Kidd buried treasure under the sand of Brigantine Beach.

Many ships wrecked off the shoals of this island, probably some of them of the "brigantine" type. In sailing, a brigantine or hermaphrodite brig is a vessel with two masts where only the forward mast is square rigged. Originally, a brigantine was a small ship that had both oars and sails. By the 17th century, the term meant a two masted ship. The name "Brigantine," then, probably came from this maritime term.

Several families owned the island in the 1700s. During the American Revolution, American privateers hid in the island's inlets and attacked disabled and

unsuspecting British ships. During this time, shipbuilding, and salt (distilled from seawater) manufacturing were the area's primary industries. Brigantine Beach was used by whalers as a place to attack whales migrating from New England. Now, Brigantine's Marine Mammal Stranding Center assists sick and injured whales, dolphins, seals, and sea turtles. Also, the Brigantine Wildlife Refuge is a state-protected haven for birds, rabbits, and foxes.

During the late 1800s, a number of attempts were made to significantly develop Brigantine. The island's name was changed to "North Atlantic City" for a short while during this development period.

Also, during this time, Brigantine was connected to Philly by a new railroad. In the 1890s, 16 trolleys moved people up and down the island, and steamboats ferried them back and forth between Brigantine and Atlantic City. Because travel to and from, and up and down the island was so easy, and access to Philadelphia and Atlantic City was created, a number of hotels were created to accommodate the tourists and those who came to Brigantine, including U.S. President Grover Cleveland.

Brigantine flourished, but hard times and terrible weather put a damper on things. By 1917, the city had mere 54 full-time residents and ran on a budget of \$5,400.

Automobile access to Brigantine was created in the 1920s, and large-scale development was initiated by the Island Development Company, who had acquired the title to most of the island property from the Brigantine Land and Transportation Company.

Atlantic City and Brigantine were connected by a bridge in 1924. Prosperity returned, and a boardwalk, a school and a golf course were built. While most Jersey shore lighthouses were built for navigation, the Brigantine Lighthouse was built, but only as an attraction and landmark.

Brigantine began a number of infrastructure improvement projects, including streets and sewage and water facilities. The city issued bonds for these projects; however, the 1929 Stock Market Crash and the beginning of the Great Depression greatly decreased the demand for new homes, causing the Island Development Company to stop operations and pass its remaining properties to the city.

Brigantine Beach survived major storms in 1944 and 1962, and its success ebbed and flowed. During the second World War, the Brigantine Inn was the site of the Coastal Warning Service of the US Army.

After the war, Brigantine grew with constancy. Now, the city's year-round population is roughly 12,600.