

Salt Water Days

by Christine Glazer



Recently, while setting up a library display, I came across two intriguing photos in our file for the First Presbyterian Church. The photos were taken in 1900 at Asbury Park and showed Cranford folks, young and old, playing in sand and surf. They were labeled "Sunday School Salt Water Days". There was no other information available in our records. What were these "Salt Water Days"? To my surprise, I found the answer while researching an entirely different topic in a book entitled "Recollections II" by Gladys M. Whitehead.

"For many years, the annual Sunday School excursion to Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, always in July it seemed, was a big event in which much of the town participated.... All of the Sunday School officers and teachers and pupils were given a free ticket to ride the special excursion train.... Little did we pupils realize how much work the men on the committee did in arranging with the Pennsylvania Railroad for the special trains, which ran in two sections, guaranteeing payment, printing and sale of tickets to townsfolk for \$1.00 round trip, having the fire whistle blow to make sure, in event of threatened rain, that the train would go.

How we looked forward to this day at the beach! We saved our pennies so we could ride the merry-go-round and buy special goodies, like salt water taffy and popcorn, in packages of assorted colors and flavors, vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and molasses. We spent the morning on the beach, had lunch there, and didn't it taste good? In the afternoon, we were taken to the band concerts or sometimes to the Auditorium in Ocean Grove to hear "The Storm" played on the famous organ.

We have fond memories of the good times we had on the Sunday School excursions. They were discontinued in the early 1930's, I believe, when more people owned automobiles and did not go by train and it no longer paid to run the excursion.

One year, after Sunday School excursions to Asbury Park were discontinued, the Sunday School had an outing at "Osceola", the Sperry farm in Cranford, on the banks of the Rahway River. We took the trolley car and rode to Raritan Road, Clark Township, and then walked to "Osceola", where, in earlier days, the Vreeland Mill was located. We sat on the grass along the river bank,

played games, and were invited into the dairy barns and were given milk to drink. It was a beautiful day's outing in the country, and all came home tired after long walks and the fresh air."

If one looks closely at our photos, you may spy a young girl dressed all in white wading in the ocean. Perhaps, this was Gladys! I, also, remember train trips to Ocean Grove in the early 1950's with my grandmother. I was extremely proud of our free train pass which the Pennsylvania Railroad honored since my Grandpop was a brakeman on the Jersey Central Railroad. Sandy lunches, salt water taffy and organ concerts at the Ocean Grove Auditorium are all parts of my memories. Hopefully, our members will take time for their own "Salt Water Days" this summer.

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