

AS SEEN IN
The **JOURNAL**
Publications



HISTORIC HAVENS

BY LORI DRAZ

The Jersey Shore has had its share of noteworthy visitors and residents throughout history. Everyone from moguls to mobsters, scoundrels to celebrities, pirates to presidents have spent time by our sandy shores. This month, we will focus on the last group of guests: those U.S. presidents who have called New Jersey their own.

While Virginia and Ohio may have produced the most presidents, New Jersey – and specifically the Jersey Shore – has been a favorite spot of many presidents.

Let's start our tour of presidential places at Seven Presidents Park in Long Branch. While this is one of the Monmouth County Park System's most popular parks, the roots of the grounds date back to 1869 when President Ulysses S. Grant declared Long Branch the nation's summer capital.

The park has seven prominent memorials dedicated to each of the seven presidents the park is named for: Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley and Woodrow Wilson. These are the seven presidents who spent time at the shore, but they are not the only presidents who have spent time in New Jersey.

George Washington did sleep here and fight here, most notably during the Battle of Monmouth. Washington's famous Christmas crossing of the Delaware landed him in New Jersey. Presidents Grover Cleveland and William McKinley enjoyed the shores of Point Pleasant Beach. It is also said that President Grover Cleveland spent time hunting and fishing in Waretown.

Perhaps the president who lived in New Jersey the longest was Richard Nixon. While most think of his connection to California (he was born there and is buried there on the grounds of his Presidential Library), he also had several New Jersey addresses.

His first residence was

a summer home in Mantoloking, where he vacationed during his vice presidency. Nixon also summured in Long Beach Island. There is even a story that says Nixon visited a Burger King in Stafford Township and spent over an hour signing autographs for customers.

Nixon returned to New Jersey after resigning from the Oval Office. He lived in Saddle River for nearly 10 years before moving to a condominium in Park Ridge, where he suffered a stroke that ultimately claimed his life.

Monmouth University's glorious Wilson Hall was the summer residence of President Woodrow Wilson. The spectacular building, formerly known as the Shadow Lawn mansion, was built in 1929 at a cost of \$10.5 million, a hefty sum even by today's standards. It was the private residence of former F.W. Woolworth Co. president Hubert Templeton Parson and his wife, Maysie.

The building now houses most of the administrative offices of the university, but is open to the public and well worth a visit. The sprawling mansion is a neoclassical French design, and each room has its own character. Among its many custom features, the building showcases 50 varieties of Italian marble.

The area is not limited to presidents. In her 2015 book, *Legendary Locals of Rumson*, author Roberta Van Anda shares an in-depth, historic look at some of Rumson's famous political residents. The family of Edith Carow spent summers in a home on the Parmly estate. Carow was Teddy Roosevelt's second wife and one of the nation's first ladies. The house was located on a little road off Ridge Road across from the high school.

Other high-ranking political figures in Rumson history include Cornelius Bliss who was Secretary of the Interior for President McKinley. He was asked to be his VP in his re-election bid but refused. Teddy Roosevelt was the second choice, and the rest is history.

Bruce Cortelyou spent summers in the little cottage on the Borden Estate. His father was secretary (now considered Chief of Staff) to McKinley and then to Teddy Roosevelt. He also served as Secretary of the Treasury and Postmaster General.

Dr. Eleazar Parmly was a friend of Abraham Lincoln's and wrote a poem about riding around Washington, D.C. in a carriage with President Lincoln.

Rumson also was home to Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, who came back to live in Rumson after serving on the Court.

Van Anda's book is a tremendous historic resource and full of fascinating stories about Rumson and its incredible estates. It is available in local booksellers, on Amazon and in Rumson's Oceanic library.

If you would like to learn more about the presidents, several lectures are coming up at Brookdale. On Thursday, Feb. 21 from 6 to 8 pm, historian and presidential scholar Gregory Caggiano will present "Booth, Lincoln and the Shot That Changed History." The program will cover the backstory behind one of the most controversial presidents in American history as well as the life and career of his assassin. It will also delve into the chain of events and politics that led to the American Civil War and Lincoln's untimely death at Ford's Theater. The program is open to the general public. The class fee is \$29, registration code is XHUMN 238; register at BrookdaleCC.edu/ContinuingEd/LifelongLearning.

On Fridays, March 8, 15 and 22, history instructor and journalist Daniel Radel will present a three-session series, "Meet the Presidents: Founding Fathers." This course begins with Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Wilson and an exploration of trust busting, the Square Deal, American imperialism and World War I.

The course then moves onto a study of Presidents Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, and will explore prohibition, the Roaring 20s, the stock market crash and Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II and the decision to drop the Atomic Bomb. The class fee is \$69, registration code is XHUMN 249; register at BrookdaleCC.edu/ContinuingEd/LifelongLearning.

