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Wildwoods-by-the-sea is New Jersey's favorite heritage tourism destination!

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by Ron Emrich, PNJ Executive Director



The Lights of Wildwood, image courtesy of <http://blog.32poems.com/798/im-happy-because>.

The people of the Garden State have spoken- at 217 votes (as of midnight last night, when the poll officially closed) the Wildwoods, with outstanding boardwalks, thrilling amusements, and one of the world's most intact collections of mid-twentieth century resort architecture, is New Jersey's favorite heritage tourism destination!



The Hereford Inlet Lighthouse, North Wildwood. Photo by Sara Andre.

While the Wildwoods' 217 votes undoubtedly won the contest, other nominees also garnered significant support. The [Hereford Inlet Lighthouse](#), a restored historic landmark in North Wildwood, came in second with 134 votes, while the [Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms](#) in Parsippany and the [Cadwalader Heights Historic District in Trenton](#) each ended up with close to 50 votes. The [Alice Paul Institute](#) in Mount Laurel was our fifth place nominee, garnering 27 votes.



The Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms. Image courtesy of the Craftsman Farms Foundation.

Visit [PNJ's Flickr page on the contest nominees](#) to learn more these sites, all outstanding places to become immersed in our state's great heritage!

“The Wildwoods” refers collectively to the four New Jersey communities with Wildwood

comprising part of their municipality name — specifically the Borough of Wildwood Crest, City of Wildwood, Borough of West Wildwood and the City of North Wildwood. The area has been a popular seaside vacation destination since the late 19th century, but the post-World War II popularity of the Jersey

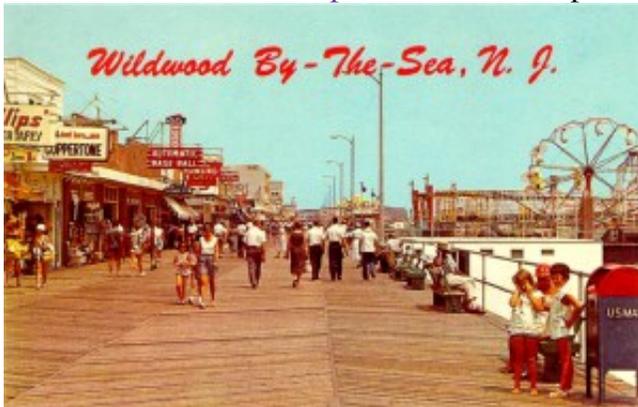
Shore spurred unmatched growth and development in the area.



One of the Wildwoods' landmark motels, the Caribbean! Photo courtesy of Michael Hirsch.

Wildwood's outstanding collection of mid-twentieth century architecture, particularly motels, is a direct result of this, as is Wildwood's secure spot in the memories of baby boomers across the northeast as THE Jersey Shore vacation destination of their childhood.

The Wildwoods earned additional recognition in mid-twentieth century popular culture. Both "The Twist" and "Rock Around the Clock" were first performed in the Wildwoods, where many popular musicians of that era had summer gigs. Although most of the popular venues of the time are long gone, the Wildwoods' place in rock-and-roll history is assured. This history even earned the area a place on this year's list of ["50 Authentic American Experiences 2009,"](#) published by TIME magazine.



The Wildwoods is an interesting case study in heritage tourism because that heritage is largely unprotected. The Wildwoods' Doo Wop motels were included on PNJ's 2005 list of the "10 Most Endangered Historic Sites in New Jersey," and subsequently, on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's ["11 Most Endangered"](#) list in 2006. Today, demolition of these one-of-a-kind examples of 1950s and 1960s roadside architecture for replacement with contemporary condos continues at an alarming rate. The Doo Wop Preservation League, a non-profit dedicated to raising awareness of the Wildwoods' unique place in mid-century architectural history, is working hard to educate the public and encourage respect for and admiration of the area's Doo-Wop architecture. They offer tours, lectures, and mid-century themed events throughout the summer months.

The area's pre-Doo Wop history is not forgotten. Attractions such as the [George F. Boyer Historical Museum](#), the J. Thompson Baker House, and the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse (a close second in our heritage

tourism contest results) recognize the earlier history of the Wildwoods and engage the public in this piece of the Wildwoods' story.

Congratulations to our winner and all of our nominees, and thanks to everyone who participated in the contest! In addition, PNJ would like to express our sincere thanks to our generous prize package donors, without whom this contest would not have been possible: [Leith Hall](#), one of Cape May's premiere historic inns, and [Cucina Rosa](#), one of the area's best Italian restaurants!

Now, get out there and VISIT NEW JERSEY'S HERITAGE!

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February 25, 2010 5:31 pm

It is wonderful to see what some caring people can do on a project. The Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Gardens is a must see for tourists visiting the Wildwoods. Paul DiFilippo deserves a lot of credit for his tireless work on this project. Everyone should be shore to visit the Lighthouse and Grounds.

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