

Bayonne – A City of Beauty From All Angles
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There is much civic pride in the city of Bayonne and rightfully so, The peninsula-shaped city not only offers a multitude of services for its residents, but those who know Bayonne say there is beauty in all of its angles.

Visitors to the area seem to express similar sentiments and are most impressed by Bayonne's wide, tree-lined streets. Many comment on the beauty of its modern architecture and ultramodern housing.

This is Bayonne of 1979 – modern and developed. Its has come through more than a century of change and growth.

Looking at all that is Bayonne today, it is difficult to imagine that these bustling areas were once thick with woodlands. Wolves, beavers, rattle snakes and foxes played amidst Indian settlements. Bayonne first became incorporated on March 18, 1869, through a majority vote of its 4,000 residents.

Looking back, the Indian deed to Constable Hook was signed in 1664 by Oratamin, chief of the Hackensack Indian tribe. That land purchase included Weehawken, Hoboken, Jersey City and West Hoboken. The estimated cost was \$73.50 for 11,250 acres.

According to the chronicles of the Bayonne Historical Society, Henry Hudson first set foot on North American soil when he disembarked on Bayonne soil on September 11, 1609. The first residents were the Dutch who had immigrated to Bayonne from New York in 1655.

Peter van Buskirk on Constable Hook built the first house in Bayonne about 1720 and it is said that the attic of this house later served as a stopover for runaway slaves making their way to Canada. The house stood until 1910.

Peter Van Buskirk died in 1733 at the age of 70 and is just one of a multitude of citizens past and present who make up the history of Bayonne.

Bayonne had its place during the Revolutionary War. The area of Bayonne known as Bergen Neck was vital territory during Revolutionary days and its defense mandatory to prevent a complete British invasion.

When the British fleet arrived at Kill Van Kull, enemy troops were close as Staten Island. Meanwhile, Colonial troops were occupying Fort Delancy in Bayonne, which was situated at what is now 52nd Street and the American forces suffered many severe attacks.

It was in September of 1782 that Fort Delancey was burned to the ground and evacuated. Later, in days of glorious triumph George Washington traveled to Bayonne.

Another more modern day political issue was whether women should be allowed to sit on bar stools. There had been ordinances that prohibited the weaker sex from sitting on bar stools, but this was later nullified.

The city has numerous "raids" of some of its taverns with arrests of scores of persons on gambling and vice charges. Such raids often induced political disagreements, most of them centered on the late Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague who was the Democratic boss of Hudson County.

During the speak easy days, of the 1930's, Bayonne shared in the national spotlight when a mobster was gunned to death in a gang war. In 1929, Bayonne's elected officials were under close scrutiny by a grand jury.

As early as 1884, Bayonne was a meeting place for New York politicians. The famous LaTourette Hotel on the Kill Van Kull provided the central point of activity, although many owned large estates in the city and would enjoy boating and yachting or carriage rides through the countrysides.

The hotel was destroyed in 1949 to make way for new residential development.

The Bayonne Bridge, which linked Bayonne to Staten Island, was constructed in 1940 and the New Jersey Turnpike, completed in the early fifties, also had a link to Bayonne. This helped to bring in larger industries to replace some of those that had left because of economical reasons, among them, Tide Water Company, one of the first to settle in Bayonne.

Bayonne is far from an industrial vagrant. And it is continuing its provincial character, consisting primarily of multiple dwelling units of two and three families. However, large apartment buildings have been or are being constructed to provide housing for the elderly and the low-income residents.

Bayonne continues to grow its present 75,000 population and only because of the move to suburbia has the population dropped in recent years.

But the city is still the industrial center for the labor market that brings many employees into the community.

George Washington passed through Bayonne while passing through the Kill Van Kull while citizens of Bergen gathered to applaud and cheer as a decorated barge floated

down the Hudson Bay. The year was 1789 and Washington was on his way to New York to be inaugurated as the first President of the United States of America.

From this point through the 1800's, Bayonne's development was progressing at a rapid pace and land was being cleared to make way for homes and roads. When the War of 1812 broke out, it seemed to have little effect on the early settlers of Bayonne.

Farmers were flourishing. There was a gristmill at Constable Hook and a general store at Bergen Point. Enterprise and livelihood came chiefly from agriculture as well as from fisheries and oyster beds. Life seemed relatively smooth and enjoyable as well as progressive in the face of death and disease. In the 1830's, a cholera epidemic spread thorough the area taking its highest toll in the area known as Currie's Woods.

Still life went on and in 1834 by an act of Congress; New Jersey was given the land west of the Hudson River. In 1840, Hudson County was enacted by the legislature.

The establishment of a stage route through Bayonne in 1850 accelerated progress.

Bayonne's pride in its development included its waters. But it was not until 1864 when the Jersey Central Railroad opened, that an era of industrial and shipping magnitude blossomed. The Constable Hook section was used as a distribution center for the coal that was brought into the city by rail from the Pennsylvania mines. The oil refineries that came later stimulated the city's economy greatly. On Constable Hook, the Prentice Refining Company was the first oil refining plant to be established.

The first bank in Bayonne was organized in 1886. The Mechanic's Trust Company was located at Bergen Point. By 1891, Bayonne boasted a community of 19,000 people with needs to be served. First delivery of mail was established in 1889 with Thomas Brady as the first postmaster.

One of the first projects undertaken after Bayonne became a city in 1869 was the building of five elementary schools. In 1892, older students were transferred to Schuyler Hall at Bayonne Point and in 1910; the first new high school was built.

Form the sparsely occupied areas of the early Indian settlements to the Van Buskirk family on Constable Hook; this area had a population of about 4,000 persons by the year 1890.

Of those who saw Bayonne grow from a totally rural community to a small city was its first Mayor, Harry Meigs Jr. who served five terms. The home of Mayor Meigs was at the Newark Bay shore where he lived until his death in 1887.

Meigs was s wealthy New York businessman who purchased a tract of land running from Newark Bay to Avenue C between 10th and 11th Streets. That portion of 10th Street was named Meigs Street and the bottom portion of Kennedy Boulevard was known as Meigs Avenue.

In 1888, the city fathers replaces Meigs Street with numeral 10 and in 1895, city planners replaced what is mow Kennedy Boulevard with Hudson County Boulevard and the name of Meigs was gone forever from the signposts of Bayonne.

If the residents of Bayonne were displeased at any time with the name of their city, they could have been faced instead with Saltersville or Centerville. When Bayonne became a township in 1861, the area consisted of five villages and real estate developments – Constable Hook, Bergen Point, Bayonne, Salterville, and Centerville. City fathers decided that Bayonne, then a mid-town real estate development for the wealthy was the proper title for its community.

As cities go, little Bayonne isn't very exceptional. But it has generated more political excitement in its history than some of the huge urban centers of modern America.

A year later, Lombard and Ayers was established but in 1886 it became the Tide Water Company. The Giant Humble Oil refineries, which stand on Constable Hook Road, are part of the Standard Oil Refinery, which was built in 1877.

When immigrants started to pour into Bayonne from Ellis Island, they came through Bayonne's Centerville station on the Center Railroad. Here relatives and friends and many new arrivals made their homes in Bayonne often greeted them.

That is why the city is an ethnically mixed community – Jews, Italians, Irish, Poles, Dutch, German, and Negroes as the predominant races.