A MODEL RESORT.

The Place Where Many Kent Countians Spent the Summer—An Interesting History of Ocean Grove and Asbury Park.

Kent county was largely represented at Ocean Grove and Asbury Park during the past month. At least fifty persons visited the resorts and all returned home delighted. Space forbids any details of the visit, but we publish the following interesting account of its founding to give some idea of the character of the place. The original proprietor or owner was Mr. James A. Bradley who stated:

"One afternoon in May, 1870, I was walking down Broadway, New York, and suddenly ran against my friend, David H. Brown, Esq., Treasurer of the Ocean Grove Association, 'How is Ocean Grove getting along?' I asked. 'Very fairly,' said he, 'why don't you buy a lot? Those who have their names put down now have first choice.' Well, put me down for two,' said I. A few days after in company with Rev. W. H. Boole and George W. Chesman of Birmingham, Connecticut, Rev. Mr. Saxe and others, we started for Ocean Grove. We took the boat for Port Monmouth, thence by rail to Eatontown. The seashore route was opened a few days afterwards. After dining at Mr. Brown's country house at Eatontown, we drove to Ocean Grove in carriages. The turnpike company had just begun operations and from Great Pond to Ocean Grove was one of the worst roads that could be well imagined. I was completely taken with Ocean Grove and its surroundings—so much so that I purchased the first lot ever sold there the premium being $85.

"Having for some time previous been in bad health, I concluded to try what I had been recommended—sea air. Too close applications to business had made inroads on my constitution and my nervous system was seriously affected. So, a few days after purchasing the lots, taking two horses, carriage and tent, and John Baker, my colored man, I left the hum of the busy city behind, to become an inhabitant of the wild woods, where my wearied body and brain might rest, lulled to sleep by the murmering sea at night, and awakened in the morning by the songs of birds in the pine trees surrounding my couch.

"John and I arrived at Ocean Grove just at nightfall, and having gotten our horses under shelter in a barn belonging to Charles Rogers, near the present Ocean Grove school house, we entered the woods and about a half mile off, erected our tent on the beams of what was afterwards the Association Office, the first building ever erected at Ocean Grove. (This building stood near the Auditorium, and was afterward torn down or removed.) The building at that time was without roof. We were without light and soon after lunching on some crackers we lay down to sleep, our heads resting on the carriage cushions, and our covering being the carriage blankets. So we spent our first night in Ocean Grove, and so began an entire change in my mode of life and which led eventually to an almost complete restoration to health.

"In the morning Baker sighed and said, 'Mr. B., this is a wilderness place.' He was homesick, for let the reader, who perhaps has been on the same spot during the busy summer season, and heard the continuous click of the telegraph instrument and seen the vast throng of men and maidens call for their letters when the mail arrives, remember it was far different on the morning of which we are writing; although it was the 10th of June, not a soul was within hearing distance of us, I cheered him by saying: 'Oh don't be cast down,' and soon we were eating our morning lunch. That finished we proceeded to my lots on the lake, and pitched our small tent on the ground now built upon and owned by Rev. Alfred Cookman's widow. My large tent was erected on the lot owned by Wm. P. Breck, Esq., and so we began our Cruso life. During the day we occasionally saw Foreman Franklin's men, who worked about the grounds, and at night we were left to our solitude. Mr. Franklin's men tented on the lots now covered by Hayward cottages, but on Sundays went to their homes in the interior of the township.

"Baker was my steward, house keeper and cook, I procured a box and dug a hole in the ground, and put it in, and that was our ice house. We would sometimes drive to Long Branch, six miles away, and procure food, principally canned goods. Foreman Franklin's men indulged more in fresh meats than Baker and I, so I would trade canned goods for the old fashioned savory stew that gave muscle to the men who first removed briars and bushes from Ocean Grove and made its streets.

"One evening Baker and I took a stroll along the ocean and I proposed a bath. Baker smiled and said No, No.' 'But remember, John, cleanliness is next to godliness.' I took an ocean bath, but, oh, how different from the way bathers usually enjoy the surf the waves dashing over their heads. I laid down on the soft sand and allowed the water to just touch my body, and I can tell you, reader, it is somewhat lonely to trust yourself in the great ocean in the twilight and alone. After I had been lying on the beach for a little while, I looked around to see what had become of Baker. He had plucked up courage by my example and had really divested himself of his clothes, and, coward like myself, barely allowed the water to touch him. His dusky skin was somewhat in contrast with the white sand and the whole scene forcibly reminded me of Robinson Cruso and his man Friday.

"I have often met persons since the time I first camped out at Ocean Grove whose nerves were shattered by too close application to their profession, studies or their chase after the almighty dollar.' I was familiar with their sufferings, which, alas strong men look upon with contempt. Some were taking this or that 'nervine cure-all.' But the very best nervine for a man who is not absolutely past repair is to break away entirely from his calling or greed and camp out on the seashore, White Mountains, Adirondacks or in some other healthy locality, or travel in Europe, and patiently wait for the return of the greatest boon God has ever given to man—good health.

"During the camp meeting that took place in August we often heard the inquiry, Who owns the land on the other side of the lake? One day Rev. Wm. B. Osborne and myself went over, and at the risk of having our clothes torn from our bodies, worked our way through the briars until we reached Sunset Lake. And, like the red man of whom we read in tradition, we could say 'Alabama—here we rest;' for we stood on the banks of as beautiful a sheet of water as can be found anywhere. We returned to the Grove by way of the beach, and soon set to work to make up a company to purchase the land. We learned the owner would not sell the land in parcels, but the purchaser must take the whole or none. Here was a difficulty; 'Never mind,' said some the more land we have the more profit we will have.' Our company was to consist of eight persons, some of whom were very enthusiastic; but alas! when the cool nights of autumn came along, it chilled their enthusiasm, and their example had its chilling effect on me. But I often thought of the matter, and as soon as I heard that Bishop Simpson, of the M. E. Church urged the Ocean Grove Association to purchase it, to prevent its falling out into the hands of some one who was not in sympathy with the enterprise they had in their hands, I called on David H. Brown, and proposed he should join me in the purchase by taking one-eighth, the price asked being about $90,000. 'No,' said he, 'I am determined to have nothing to do with any enterprise in that neighborhood that would seem to place me in an inconsistent position, as I am now Treasurer of the Ocean Grove Association. This I will do; I will write to every member of the Association, and if they say buy it I am inclined to think I shall not oppose it, although I think we have enough land now. But if they do not buy it, you can. And as you wish me to negotiate the purchase I will do so, on condition that you advance the requisite amount to secure the property and if the Association decide to take it, your money to be refunded. We are to have a week's option to consider the matter. A majority of the Association decided not to purchase the land, although some urged it very strongly; so the property became mine—I at the same time assuring them that the property would be resold only to such parties as would appreciate the situation of the place. After the purchase the briars before alluded to, with the tangled underbrush, were removed at a cost of several thousand dollars. And very few would now suppose that the choice spots upon which are now erected beautiful cottages, was so recently a jungle.

"As stated above it was supposed that immense profits would result from the purchase of the land known as Asbury Park, but the man who has tried to meet every emergency that has arisen is wiser now than when he first risked a fortune in an entiraly new and untried scheme. There was not so far as he knew a seaside resort, an incorporated town on the American continent or in Europe where in the deeds the sale of intoxicating liquor was prohibited. 'With your restriction you can never make a seaside resort a success so near New York,' said the timid and the croakers, but the founder of Asbury Park, with an intense and lifelong hatred of the liquor traffic has given hundreds and hundreds of deeds which are on record at the County Clerk's office, and contain a protest against the curse of society which the American people strangely allow to exist; and yet Asbury Park, notwithstanding did grow, and its success has been so great that the anti-liquor clause is now a feature in the deeds of many seaside resorts started on the New Jersey coast within the past ten years.

"As the town grew a serious difficulty arose: 'How will you drain and sewer the place?' It was found that the people were not prepared to grapple with that question, so, again, another fortune was invested in demonstrating that seaside towns on the New Jersey coast could be sewered and every honse put in a complete sanitary condition.

"Money has not been lost on the purchase of Asbury Park, but the slight profit made (a mere salary to its founder) would disgust the ordinary speculator, and although the calculation as to profits has been a disappointment, the enterprise is a grand success.

There will never be another seaside town on the Atlantic coast from Sandy Hook to Barnegat Inlet with as wide streets and open spaces as Asbury Park, because nearly all the land north and south of Asbury Park had been mapped out or is owned in smaller parcels than the original tract of Asbury Park. Future generations will have opportunities to ornament the town by statuary, vases, gardens and fountains.

Asbury Park was the first seaside resort on the American Continent to adopt a perfect system of drainage. We have fifteen miles of street mains. We have miles of walks; an Ocean Plaza one mile long, and from twenty to fifty feet wide.

Asbury Park has the purest water in the world from our Artesian wells, the analysis of which was made by the late Professor Cook, State Geoligist.

Asbury Park has nine church edifices—Episcopalian, Reformed, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, African and two Presbyterians. A public library, hotels, boarding houses, stores of every variety necessary to a large population are established. Two weekly papers with circulations of 3,000 copies, and two daily papers the year round, and in summer four daily papers; a post office, salary $2,300; four public halls—Educational Hall, being the same name it bore when it stood on the Centennial grounds at Philadelphia—seating over 1,500 people. We have also an opera house seating over 1,500.

The Asbury Park Auditorum seats 2,500, and is located on Ocean avenue. Asbury Park has facilities for the largest conventions, and in the case of the Christian Endeavor Convention—which is the largest in the world—or similar conventions, the Ocean Grove Auditorium, seating 9,000, could be secured.

In 1871 the only means of reaching New York from Ocean Grove and what is now Asbury Park was by stage to Long Branch, which was then the nearest railroad station, thence by railroad to Sandy Hook, and by steamer Jesse Hoylt across the bay to New York. The travel between Long Branch and what is now Asbury Park was so light that daily trips could not be sustained. To keep up daily trips, the founder of Asbury Park gave the use of his rockaway with a horse of William Poland, Jr., as a subsidy. Poland added his own horse. The horse donated was used up in the service, but the old carriage remains, and has since been used as a plaything to amuse the children who were born since the time of the historical facts here recorded.

There are eight hundred cottages, besides hotels. The finest Masonic lodge-room in Monmouth county was erected by the late Allen R. Cook, who was for a long time the esteemed Superintendent of Asbury Park. We have also one of the best planned school-houses in the State, with a daily attendance of seven hundred; the school lot was donated, and fronts on three streets.

Asbury Park was assessed in 1869 at $15,000. The assessed valuation in 1894 was over $3,150,000.

Streets running at right angles to the sea are from one to two hundred feet wide, an advantage possessed by no other seaside resort on the Jersey Coast. The depot grounds are the finest on the line of the Long Branch Division of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and with adjoining streets cover four acres.

In the matter of electric lights Asbury Park was the pioneer along the Monmouth coast.

The First National Bank of Asbury Park was organized for business in the early part of 1886. Its success has been great. The deposits in the summer average $500,000. The Asbury Park and Ocean Grove Bank was opened to the public on Tuesday, September 20, 1887.

The first car line in Monmouth county had its birth in Asbury Park. The cars are propelled by electricity, power being supplied by the company's own dynamos.

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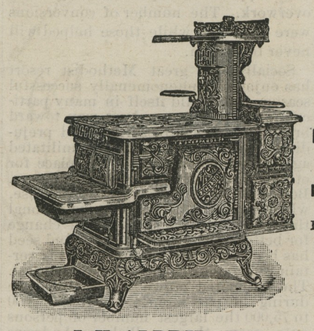

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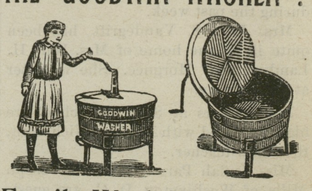

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