



# Ocean Grove

In 1869, a group of Methodist leaders came together as the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association to establish the seaside religious retreat originally consisting of tents erected seasonally to provide a place for respite, worship, and recreation. As popularity grew, permanent buildings for worship and year round cottages were also constructed, making Ocean Grove one of the first planned communities of the Victorian era.

Legendary stories of the ban on parking and driving wheeled vehicles defined the uniqueness of Ocean Grove as a Christian resort. In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant came to Ocean Grove on a Sunday. A wooden picket fence with a swing gate blocked his way at the entrance to town. The civil war hero had to leave his horses and carriage and walk one half mile to his sister's house on Wesley Lake before giving a speech to an eagerly awaiting crowd of 5,000 people. In 1916 two stone pillars were erected, and a chain was used to prevent access into the town's two entrances. Police were in charge of opening and closing the "gates" and he would remain stationed in a little gate house at the Main Avenue entrance. The "blue law" banning the use of vehicles on Sunday was enforced well into the 1970's. In 1981, Ocean Grove's municipal authority was folded into a neighborhood of Neptune Township, however, the land still controlled by the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association

Today, the gates pillars still stand welcoming all peaceful people to enjoy this close knit Victorian neighborhood by the sea. Ocean Grove is truly a unique place renowned for its seaside beauty, historic architecture, and stringent requirements for maintaining its characteristic Victorian charm. Ocean Grove contains the largest assemblage of Victorian architecture in the country (NRHP 1976, SRHP 1977) including the famous summer tents around the Great Auditorium (circa 1894), still one of the largest programmed venues at the Jersey Shore.

The site of Ocean Grove was chosen in part because of its exceptional natural features, specifically the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Wesley Lake to the north and Fletcher Lake to the south. The neighborhood was the first planned community to employ the flared setback technique for several of its east-west streets. By making streets progressively wider as they proceed eastward, flaring preserves residents' viewsheds and funnels summertime breezes from the Atlantic Ocean several blocks inland. The beach and boardwalk with its pavilion and pier, like the rest of the neighborhood, is quiet and family-friendly. The downtown district runs east-west along Main Avenue and is the central location for shopping and dining. Downtown is walkable from everywhere in the one square mile neighborhood including neighboring Asbury Park. Many of the buildings on Main Avenue are mixed use, with commercial uses at street level and living space above.

The Ocean Grove Chamber of Commerce and Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association sponsor public activities that encourage social activity and create an overall sense of community. In addition to a wide variety of religious services, popular events include the annual Spring and Fall Giant Flea Markets, arts festivals, holiday festivals, car shows, Halloween parade, concerts, scavenger hunts, movie nights, and many more. The neighborhood is home to several community groups including Ocean Grove United, the Historical



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