



The regularly scheduled March 2026 public meeting will be held on **Monday, March 2, 2026**, starting at **7:00 PM**. Point Pleasant resident and Environmental Commission Chairman, Dennis Blazak, will present a program about THE HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS that local development has caused in our area. **Meeting location:** Point Pleasant Borough Municipal Building, 2233 Bridge Ave., Point Pleasant Borough. The meeting is free and open to the public and you need not be a member to attend.

Each month, our newsletters will be organized around a theme that highlights a significant aspect of our history. This month's focus is about fishing. This month's "History Term Paper," is authored by PPHS member and veteran commercial fisherman Jim Lovgren, and will examine the history of **The Fisherman's Dock Cooperative, Inc.**

THE FISHERMEN'S DOCK COOPERATIVE, INC. ***A Historic Fishing Dock***

Most Point Pleasant Beach residents are aware of the fishing boats that work out of the Fishermen's Dock Cooperative. They are a welcome attraction to both residents and tourists, who watch them coming and going out of the Manasquan inlet daily. Both the fishing industry—commercial and recreational—and tourism played equal roles in the founding of Point Pleasant Beach. The opening of the Point Pleasant canal, and modernization of the Manasquan inlet in the 1920's and 1930's brought with it explosive growth for the local fishing industry. The new inlet provided safe access to the local fishing grounds, along with the offshore grounds from the Mud Hole to the Hudson Canyon. Being close to the major markets of New York City and Philadelphia was also a boon for the commercial industry, as shipping products by train or truck was easy and cheap.

This development provided significant opportunities for individuals prepared to meet the challenges of commercial fishing, attracting immigrants from Sweden and Norway to the region. By the 1950s, small private docks had appeared, and the fishing industry had become the town's largest employer. Carlson's dominated the waterfront at that time, with the Snow Dock just getting established right next door for clam boats. Next to the Coast Guard station, on Inlet drive was Barmore's and across Cooks Creek from them was the Simpson dock. These were all privately owned docks and would service any boats they could. Smaller boats, typically skiffs under thirty feet, were far more common than today's larger vessels. Draggers, measuring over sixty feet, were gradually dominating the industry because they proved to be the most efficient method for catching fish. Most larger boats fished out of Carlsons, [the present-day Atlantic Capes dock], and out of state boats would pack their fish there.

Because private individuals owned the docks, fishermen had to accept whatever prices were set for their catch. This led many to wonder if they were receiving fair treatment. That changed in 1953, when seven local fishermen joined together to create what is now one of the most successful seafood cooperatives in the country. Two years before, these men purchased a large waterfront property, between the Snow dock, and what is now Southside Marine, and operated it, as the Fishermen's Dock. All the while they were dreaming of something much larger.

Agricultural cooperatives played a significant role in the past and were highly effective at helping small farmers market their products. By working together, these farmers were able to secure better prices than they could have received from private companies. Seafood cooperatives began to emerge, with the Fishermen's Dock Co-op being one of the first.

Founded on July 1, 1953, the organization began with seven fishermen and quickly grew when five more joined soon after. To become a member, a fisherman had to promise to pack his fish only at the Cooperative, unless they were in another port at the time. The price per share is fifty dollars, and since you need to buy two, the total comes to one hundred dollars. During this period, there was no restriction on the number of shares an individual could purchase, resulting in several fishermen acquiring fifty shares each. Owning more shares did not give any special benefits to the buyer, they did it to raise capital so they could improve and expand the dock. In 1954 they did just that, by purchasing the Simpson dock on Channel drive, and using that as their main operational dock. This was a critical purchase because the original dock property was not well suited for any expansion of operations, with Will's Hole Throughfare being narrow, and hard to navigate, besides the dock waterfront was dominated by an old eighty-foot-long barge, that served as the pack out platform and office.

By purchasing the Simpson dock the members now had over three hundred feet of bulkheaded dock, with a pack out building, and office with a bathroom. Local fishermen joined by the dozens as the dock became more successful, with membership reaching close to sixty by the end of the decade. During the 1960's Barmore's dock closed, and later would become the Shrimpbox restaurant, while Carlsons continued in a slow descent as basic maintenance was not performed and the dock itself started to fall apart. They would go out of business in the 1980's. While the Co-op was successful, it eventually had to limit membership after its establishment, as it could not accommodate or provide wharfage for so many boats. *(over)*

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Over the last two decades Co-op membership has ranged from ten to fifteen members, with about a dozen boats at any one time. These boats are much bigger than they were in the fifties, with an average length of seventy-five feet now, compared to forty or so in the beginning.

For over seventy years the Fisherman's Dock Cooperative Inc. has survived the invasion of the foreign fleet, the devastating effects of pollution, which culminated with the great fish kill of 1976, overfishing, warming ocean waters, and a less than friendly government agency created to supposedly help them. Many families have lived here for generations, and plenty of local young people earned their first paychecks unloading boats at the dock. It is now the oldest operating seafood Cooperative on the east coast, [tied with the Belford Seafood Co-op, and is historically significant because of its success and longevity as a Cooperative.

The writer, Jim Lovgren, who has had family Co-op members since 1954, is just putting the finishing touches on a book that documents the complete history of the Cooperative along with local and fishing industry history. He is hoping for publication in 2026.



(above) The William Simpson fish dock on Channel Drive circa 1946



A grand view of some of the 1970's Coop Fishing Fleet in port.

***Special Thanks to everyone who donated cookies for the Bennett Cabin Christmas Weekend in December! Your support is greatly appreciated.
- Sharon Morris***

***PPHS membership fees are payable in April!
Don't delay...send in your form, \$10 duesAND
PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING A FEW DOLLARS MORE TO HELP!***