

THE JERSEY SHORE'S FIRST LUXURY CONDOMINIUM: A HARD-TO-BELIEVE HISTORY OF HARBOUR MANSION



BY
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A HARD-TO-BELIEVE HISTORY OF HARBOUR MANSION

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Prelude

Shortly after my wife and I bought our condo at 675 Ocean Avenue in the West End section Long Branch, New Jersey, in 2008, I started hearing all kinds of interesting stories from neighbors about the nine-story, 115-unit building, Harbour Mansion. Some of these stories involved mobsters, murders, corruption, and politicians. I didn't know what to believe.

During 2016-17, for the fun of it, I researched, wrote, and published an eleven-part blog series about the history of the building. It turns out some of what I heard is true, and some is not. I also discovered information about the building nearly all my neighbors had forgotten or never knew. I learned, for example, that Harbour Mansion was considered the Jersey Shore's first luxury condominium building in the 1970s.

To see my blog series online, in reverse chronological order, with the photos, newspaper clippings, and other images contained in this e-book, go to: <http://harbourmansionwelbhistory.blogspot.com>. Or, simply proceed reading the pages of this book. You could not make up some of the stuff I learned about Harbour Mansion. Neither could I!

Introduction

Construction of Harbour Mansion was completed in 1968, not 1965 as listed on the Harbour Mansion website and various realtor listings. That means the building is actually three years younger than most people believe -- how many of us wish we can make the same claim?!?

I came across this fact while researching the building for the short history I prepared and authored. If you or someone you know would like to share some historical information about the building, please email me at charlesanthonycmm@gmail.com or just let me know next time our paths cross.

By the way, when the building opened it was known as the Harbour Towers.

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Part 1: The previous mansion at 675 Ocean Avenue

Before there was Harbour Mansion, there was Harbour Towers. Before that, the property on what is now 675 Ocean Avenue in the West End neighborhood of Long Branch, N.J., was a vacant lot. It was only empty, however, for four years. Prior to that, a private mansion modestly referred to as the Seligman Cottage stood on the property.

Until the Mafia burned it down.



The Seligman Cottage at 675 Ocean Avenue, Long Branch, New Jersey (undated photo)

On the night of August 6, 1963, the large beachfront home was destroyed by a fire that a front-page article in the *Long Branch Daily Record* stated was of "undetermined origin" and "surrounded by mystery." Coincidentally -- or perhaps not -- it was the same night that the former West End railroad station was destroyed by fire.

The article also stated, "Mystery shrouds the name of the owner of a 20 room house valued at \$100,000 which suffered heavy damage to the upper stories of the building in a pre dawn fire.

"The building on Ocean avenue at Cedar, which formerly belonged to A.M. Wolf was sold about three months ago," the *Long Branch Daily Record* article continued. "Mr. Wolf refused to divulge the name of the new owner except to say that it was a man."

"Newspapers and rags soaked with some form of paint thinner or turpentine were found on the stairway leading to the upper floors, the Daily Record learned, although police and fire officials had not had time to confer and would not verify the report.

"Neighbors said the new owner had occupied the house recently and had many strange callers," the article continued. "One person told the police that a meeting last week of a large number of men was broken up when a police officer arrived on the scene to serve a summons on an occupant for property damage. The informant said that the men meeting at the house scattered in all directions at sight of a police car."

The article went on to state, "A woman at the scene of the fire said that she saw a big 'white car drive off' just after the explosion at the fire."

You can't make this stuff up. In 1970, a *New York Times* article on a State Commission of Investigation public hearing in Trenton on April Fool's Day removed some of the mystery surrounding the fire.

"Mr. Wolf, a former Manhattan liquor dealer whose failing business and extravagant personal expenditures led him to seek money from a reputed Mafia shylock in 1960, owned a 20-room beach home in Long Branch. He said that he took a loan of \$20,000 at an annual interest rate of 50 per cent in 1960 from Frank Sacco, a reputed Mafia loanshark from Scarsdale, N.Y.

"Mr. Wolf said that in 1963, Mr. Sacco gained the rights to his Long Branch home by telling him that he could use the title as security for another usurious loan," the *New York Times* article continued. "But he said that Mr. Sacco claimed the title on record and that he was evicted from the mansion on June 27, 1963.

"Mr. Sacco moved in with several alleged Mafia cronies the day after Mr. Wolf moved out. Witnesses and neighbors reported that the mansion was then apparently turned into a high-rolling gambling house, surrounded on weekends by long, black limousines, most of them with New York registration plates.

"Then witnesses testified a local real estate man expressed interest in developing the property, and the commission said this apparently led to the events of August 6, 1963, when the house was destroyed by fire," the article continued. "Mr. Riccio said there was clear evidence that the two fires had been deliberately set."

"I lived next door, at 661 Ocean Ave," wrote Terry Finnegan on the Historic Long Branch Facebook page. "I remember the Wolfe house, and the night of the fire."

It was quite an inglorious ending to Sam Wolf's ownership of the beachfront mansion. It also marked the end of the Seligman family presence at the site; Sam Wolf's mother was a Seligman. (Note: The Wolf family name also appears as "Wolfe" in some cases.)

"Sam Wolfe was quite the character, as was his mother," commented Pat Smith on Facebook. "My family went to many a party at that house in Sam's heyday."

Paul Dametz, the recently retired head of maintenance for Harbour Mansion and long-time Long Branch resident, also recalls the "big private house, a mansion" on the site before it became an empty lot.

A *Long Branch Daily Record* article on September 13, 1971, reported, "When the cottage was first built in 1877, it was owned by Bryce Gray, a dry goods merchant and banker. Within three years it was sold to Charles F. Woerishoffer and remained in his family until it burned.

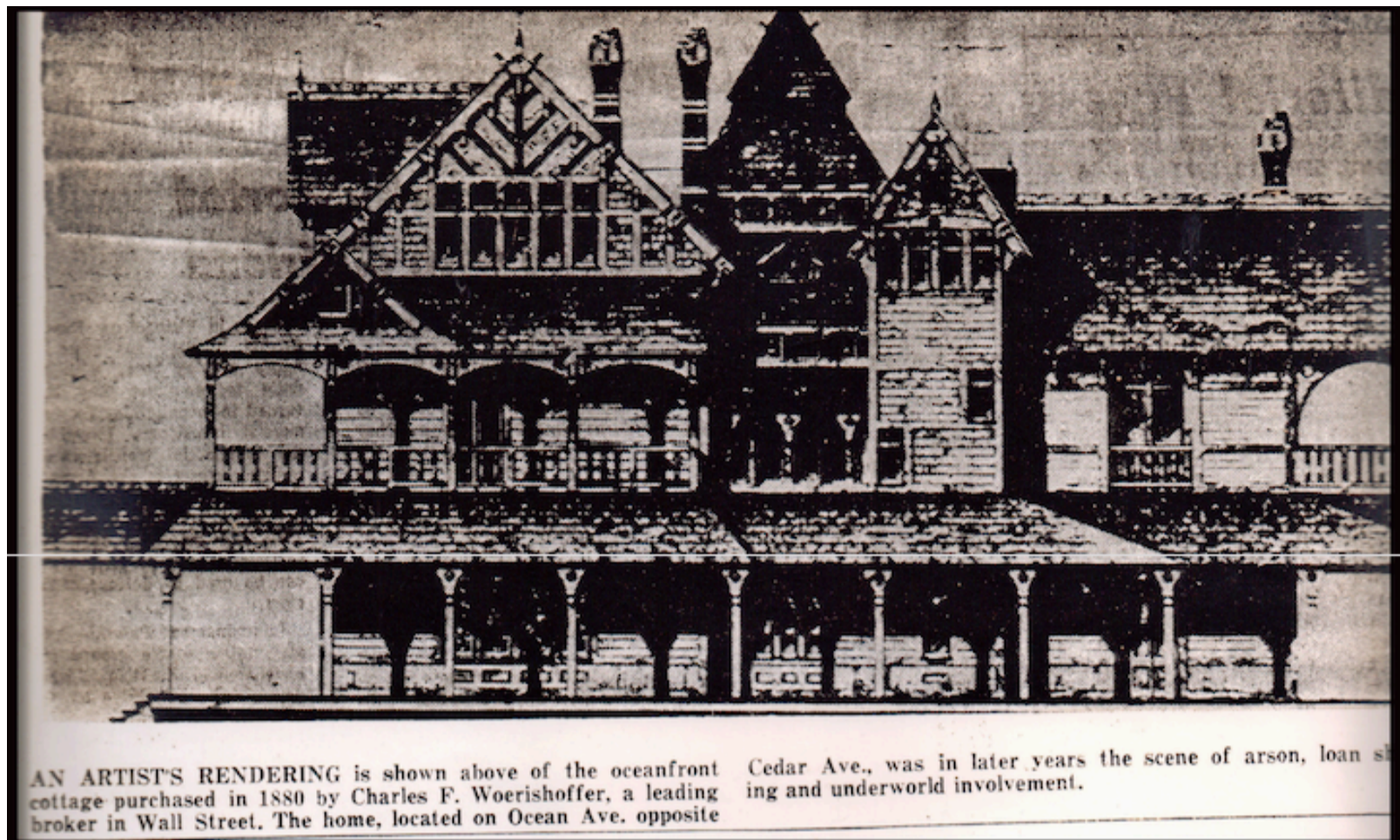


Illustration published in Long Branch Daily Record from Louis Barbour Collection, Long Branch Public Library

“An early, ‘wheeler-dealer,’ in the investment business, F. Woerishoffer was one of Wall Street’s most successful investment bankers, who outfoxed some of the most astute bankers in the hayday of the railroads,” the *Long Branch Daily Record* wrote. “During the time Woerishoffer was consummating his greatest financial deals, he was commuting regularly from his oceanfront home in West End to his office in New York City.”

“Following the magnate’s death in 1886, the property became home the home of Samuel M. Schafer, who founded the banking firm of Schafer Brothers in New York. The cottage was remodeled and the daughter of the owner, Mrs. Florence Wolf, inherited the property and lived there until her son’s involvement with loan sharks led to the loss of the house,” wrote the *Long Branch Daily Record*.

A write-up in a January 1984 Harbour Mansion newsletter edited by Sylvia Colby, who thanked Maxwell Colby, Esq., Mrs. Muriel Scoles of the Long Branch Public Library, David Finkel of the David-Pierce Abstract Company, and Mr. Edgar Dinkelspiel for assistance with research, corroborated much of the information in the 1971 *Long Branch Daily Record* article. It also added more details.

“In the 1920’s the city directory lists Mr. Schafer’s daughter Florence living there with her husband, Alfred Wolfe,” stated the Harbour Mansion newsletter. “It must be presumed they were tenants in the family property because it was not until 1940 that Mrs. Wolfe acquired the house from the Schafer estate. The deed indicates she bought it in partnership with her sister Minnie Guggenheimer, not to be confused with Guggenheimer copper millionaire family who also owned several properties in the area. Mrs. Guggenheimer’s husband was a very successful lawyer in New York and she was well-known in her own right as the person in charge of the Lewisohn Stadium concerts. It is interesting to note that among the people listed on the deed as having a courtesy right to the property when it was bought from the Schafer estate was the distinguished American actor, Louis Calhern, presumably because one of his four wives was a Natalie Schafer who must have been one of the heirs of the estate of S.M. Schafer.”

According to Beth Woolley of the Long Branch Historical Association, the Seligman Cottage which burned down shortly after Wolf vacated it got its name from a prominent Jewish family from New York. At one point, according to an old *Boyd's Monmouth County New Jersey Directory*, there were two Seligman homes listed at “Ocean ave cor Cedar ave, West End,” one of which was owned by James Seligman on what is now the Harbour Mansion site, and a third nearby on "2 Cedar ave." (In addition, a fourth Seligman was listed as living in the Hollywood Hotel near the corner of Cedar and Ocean, and a fifth on "Ocean ave nr Park ave, Elberon.")

In a 1894 *New York Herald* article, it stated Mr. Seligman "became the personal friend of President Grant and his associates as well as their banker. He built a cottage at Long Branch adjoining Grant's."

Previously, a 1874 article in the *Atlanta Constitution* stated, "President Grant has leased his Ocean avenue cottage at Long Branch for the season to Jesse Seligman, of New York, for \$3,000."

That was a huge amount of money to pay for a summer vacation home in 1874! The Seligmans highly valued the West End beachfront, as do the residents and other unit owners of Harbour Mansion at 675 Ocean Avenue and their neighbors today.

In the center of the above photo is the 20-room mansion, with its circular driveway, that occupied the property where Harbour Mansion now stands. The post card containing this undated photo was provided by Beth Woolley.

Part 2: Breaking ground -- and ethical codes and laws? -- for Harbour Towers

Construction of the nine-story building now known as Harbour Mansion (initially called Harbour Towers) began in the late summer of 1967, four years after the Seligman Cottage on what is now 675 Ocean Avenue burned down.

Terry Finnegan and Jonathan Poznansky, who lived in the Deauville Gardens (now BeachSide Manor) apartments next to where the private mansion once stood, wrote on the Historic Long Branch Facebook page that they recalled riding their bicycles on the 8-shaped driveway track on the property.

Paul Dametz, a long-time Long Branch resident, remembered clearing paths as a teenager for the trailer that served as a temporary office just before new construction started at the site.

According to www.long-branch.net, “By the latter part of the 1960’s, organized crime settled in Long Branch NJ, further tarnishing its image. Buildings became run down, houses became shabby, and many locals had to depend on welfare.”

Against this background of crime and deterioration, construction of what would shortly become the largest tax ratable in Long Branch proceeded at 675 Ocean Avenue. Some evidence suggests it was built with Mafia backing, with little regard to ethical codes or laws, possibly.

A *New York Times* article on a State Commission of Investigation public hearing held in Trenton on April 1, 1970, reported that Samuel de Bartolis, the Long Branch building and plumbing inspector, testified he had approved the apartment house while receiving nearly \$4,000 plumbing work from Nisac Realty, which constructed the building.

The *New York Times* article also reported that Charles E. Polk, chairman of the Long Branch Planning Board, said he had approved the apartment house and had received \$1,500 for landscape work at the building site.

“Neither Mr. Polk nor Mr. Bartolis saw any conflict of interest when that question was raised by the commission,” according to the *New York Times* article.

Among the people who testified at the State Commission of Investigation public hearing was Bernie Duze, who ran a local dry cleaning delivery service. Bernie’s daughter, Beth Woolley of the Long Branch Historical Association, recalled her father being very involved in getting the state to investigate what was going on in Long Branch. She recently donated documents and other papers from that time period to the Long Branch Free Public Library.

One of the notes from Bernie mentioned “Information of a payoff (\$5000) to Frank Condi for labor peace on Harbor Towers construction job was passed on by Frank Palaia (to Milton Garr).” A second note read, “Milt Garr – said owner paid protection on Harbor(sic) Towers to prevent strike.”

According to an August 11, 1970, Associated Press story with a Long Branch dateline, Frank Condi was an alias for Frank Cocchiaro, a “reputed Cosa Nostra strongarm who fled the state more than a year ago rather than answer questions about organized crime.”

Frank Palaia was the former Long Branch municipal court clerk. Milton Garr was secretary of the City-Wide Civic Association.

In another note donated by Beth, her father wrote that Wilbur Russell, a Long Branch councilman, and Wilbur Ray, a community center trustee, said that Henry R. Cioffi “took bribe for Harbor Towers.”

Cioffi was a city councilman at the time and subsequently served three terms as mayor. He was never indicted for any wrongdoing, and Beth recently stated, “Cioffi was the one person who my father thought was honest” when Paul Nastasio, mayor at the time, “got in trouble.” (Nastasio was criticized by a grand jury for preventing Police Chief Thomas Pesano “from doing his duty,” according to an April 4, 1970 *Asbury Park Press* article).

Despite the ethical code breaches and possible illegal exchanges of money during this turbulent period in Long Branch (or because of it, some may cynically suggest), ground was broken for construction of what is now Harbour Mansion shortly before Labor Day of 1967.



GROUNDBREAKING — Perched atop a bulldozer, Mayor Paul Nastasio Jr., looks over site of Harbor Towers Apartments, which is being constructed by Wareham Corp. at 675 Ocean Ave. In background, left to right, are Richard Bonello, attorney for firm; Paul Kiernan Jr., agent; and Frank Messina, owner and builder of the apartment building.

A front-page article in the *Long Branch Daily Record* of August 30, 1967, headlined “Hails new ratable,” featured a photo (above) of Mayor Nastasio and Frank Messina (“owner and builder of the apartment building”) at the groundbreaking ceremony, with the following text:

“The proposed construction of Harbor Towers Apartments at Ocean and Cedar avenues was hailed as another milestone in the advancement of the city by Mayor Paul Nastasio Jr., at ground breaking ceremonies for the apartments yesterday.

“He said that the new building, scheduled for completion next May, is another step to increase ratables in the city and called the extension of Ocean boulevard a ‘must’ to attract more developers interested in constructing high rise apartments.

“He said his administration is attempting to attract outside capital to help the city’s tax structure and to bring increased money ‘into circulation for businessmen and to increase employment and prosperity for the city.’”



That same day, the *Asbury Park Press* also ran a photo (above) of the groundbreaking ceremony with Mayor Nastasio and William Kraut (“president of the Island Apartments Inc. company which is developing the highrise

structure), describing Harbour Towers as a \$2 million, 9-story, 112-unit structure.”

Weeks after ground was broken, Terry Finnegan recalls “the construction workers spray painting a scoreboard for the workers on the upper floors” for the ‘67 World Series between the St. Louis Cardinals and Boston Red Sox.

Paul Dametz recalled “an old man in his 80s with a big mustache, who was quite a trip to keep up with” was the foreman for the construction project.



CHANGING SKYLINE—The West End section of Long Branch is developing a new skyline. Three major new oceanfront buildings are rising—the Royal Spa Hotel, San Alfonso Retreat House, and the Harbour Towers apartment house. The three structures represent investments exceeding \$7.5 million. In addition, the Harbour Isles Spa will begin construction on a 32-room addition this year. The San Alfonso building is the U-shaped structure bottom right, and Harbour Towers is the large building in the center.

Paul learned a lot during construction of the building, helping tradesmen with tiling, carpeting, electrical work, flooring and plumbing. He worked with Joe Hilton on crown moulding, and with Creative Kitchens inside each unit. He also helped build the stairs leading to the beach from the property. (“A lot of the contractors never got paid,” Paul recalled.)

Such experience at a young age subsequently earned Paul a full-time job before the building was completed. He worked in the maintenance shop under the supervision of Harold Bennett, who he knew from another job in a Deal apartment building. Paul eventually became Harbour Mansion’s head of maintenance, a position he held for many years before retiring in 2014.

In an article published on January 21, 1968, the *Asbury Park Press* described Harbour Towers as a \$2.5 million, 118-unit luxury apartment building, adding “But there have been delays in construction...completion is expected in the spring. Paul Kieran Jr., real estate agent handling sales, reports the building is half rented at rents ranging from \$165 to \$400 a month.”

The *Asbury Park Press* article was accompanied by an aerial photo (above) captioned, “Changing Skyline.”

The building was not completed in the spring as hoped, but it opened that autumn. And, the fanfare and drama continued.

Part 3: The Mob in new Harbour Towers

The opening of Harbour Towers (now Harbour Mansion) at 675 Ocean Avenue was front-page news in the *Long Branch Daily Record* on September 14, 1968. It was also the subject of an article and photo in the *Asbury Park Press* the following week.



REFUGE—Anthony (Little Pussy) Russo who complained that he was harassed at his former Deal home by State Policemen who turned into his driveway and shone their bright lights into his bedroom

window, has taken refuge in Harbor Towers Apartments, above. It is also the home of Robert Basile Occhipinti.

Photo and caption from Long Branch Daily Record, July 11, 1969.

During the next 13 months, however, much of the news about the building referred to one of its early occupants: the Mafia. Suspected of owning the property and facilitating construction of the nine-story luxury building, organized crime elements apparently felt right at home in it. Why not? The building seemed like a great place for people with money, whether it was legally or illegally obtained.

“Because of the unique size of the tract – 175 feet wide by 1,007 feet deep – the architectural designing firm of Lawrence Rothman Associates, Yonkers, N.Y., tried to accommodate the maximum ocean view for all possible tenants. Each apartment has a balcony, and with the exception of those facing directly on Ocean Avenue, all other suites have some view of the ocean,” wrote the *Long Branch Daily Record* in an article under the headline, “Luxury apartments being readied.”

“The builders, William Kraut and Frank Messina, have attempted to satisfy the needs of their prospective tenants by inundating them with luxurious appointments. Most of the 115 units have more than one bath, with some having more than two baths. Chandeliers along carpeted hallways drip with crystals, while the lobby features a flowing fountain and a wrought iron gazebo, all done in royal blue and regal purple.

“A unique innovation in the building is the garbage disposal system which compacts the trash instead of burning it. The compacted waste is then baled and left for the municipal trash collectors,” the *Long Branch Daily Record* article continued.

“An indoor pool, and sauna area is another feature of the luxury building. Panavista windows will enclose the indoor pool which fronts on the ocean. The builders are planning terraced gardens along the back of the building which will run down to the private beach area.

“The building will be attended on a 24-hour basis by a parking attendant for cars, many of which will be accommodated beneath the building. Gas lights will flank the entire perimeter of the apartment.

“One, two and three bedroom apartments are included in the plan, but all the one bedroom dwellings have been rented, as well as two penthouse suites,” wrote the *Long Branch Daily Record*.

HARBOUR *towers*

OUTSTANDING FEATURES AND APPOINTMENTS INCLUDE

- Thermostatically controlled heating and air conditioning for year 'round comfort
- 24-hour doorman service
- Attended parking
- Private beach on the Atlantic
- Indoor swimming pool and sauna rooms for year 'round pleasure
- Indoor and outdoor garage and parking facilities
- Expansive terraces . . . each one offering a panoramic view of the ocean
- Kitchens are color coordinated and all appliances are color keyed . . .
 - Breakfast area in each kitchen
 - Wood finished cabinetry built ceiling-high
 - Stainless steel sink
 - FRIGIDAIRE Two door refrigerator
 - FRIGIDAIRE Dishwasher
 - FRIGIDAIRE Double oven
- Elegant bathrooms with vanitorium and colored ceramic tile and exclusive features
- Parquet flooring
- Abundance of Walk-In Closets in every suite. All closets are fitted.
- Hi-speed elevators
- Master TV antenna for color and black and white reception
- Laundry room on every floor
- Carpeted corridors

“Color coordinated kitchens feature double oven stoves as well as dishwashers. Ash cabinets with recessed closings give a sleek look to the kitchens.

“Each room has its own individually controlled thermostatic heating and air-conditioning unit,” concluded the *Long Branch Daily Record* article, which was accompanied by a front-page photo of the building captioned, “Luxury living is provided tenants in the Harbour Towers apartment complex on Ocean Avenue. The suites are being readied for Oct. 30 full occupancy.”

Eight days later, the *Asbury Park Press* published a photo (above) of the new building with the caption, “The recently completed 114-unit Harbour Towers in

Long Branch, will become the city's top ratable when it is added to the tax rolls."

The September 22 *Asbury Park Press* article attributed the information about Harbour Towers being the city's largest ratable to Tax Assessor William Stender, adding, "At present the largest in terms of income to the city are the Sea Verge, an apartment assessed at \$1.25 million, and the Harbor Island Spa, just south of Harbour Towers and assessed at \$988,000."

"Monthly rentals at Harbour Towers begin at \$295 on two-and-three-year leases. About 70 percent of the units have been rented and half that number are already occupied, Mr. Kraut said. Two penthouses rent for \$750 a month.

"Passing through the posh lobby, residents ascend in richly furnished elevators lighted from crystal chandeliers," wrote the *Asbury Park Press*. "The crystal glass lighting is repeated in the hallways which are papered in flock trimmed with velvet."

"We have tried to provide the same conveniences and more than a tenant would find in his own home,' Mr. Kraut said. He added that most of the tenants are former homeowners and about 30 per cent are from the New York City area.

"Mr. Kraut handles the business end of the partners' building projects, while Mr. Messina is in charge of construction. They said the new apartment here cost \$3 million."

The *Asbury Park Press* described Kraut, 29 years of age at the time, as "a self-made millionaire" who "completed high school at 16 and after three months at New York University, quit to begin his building career." The article stated, "Mr. Kraut and his partner, Frank Messina, 32, are regarded as wonder boys in the building business. They have erected six luxury apartments of about 2,000 units in the New York metropolitan area."

Three months later, a small article in the *Asbury Park Press* announced Harbour Towers "is now managed by R.E. Scott Co., Elizabeth." It also stated, "The management program at Harbour Towers is under the supervision of Joseph F. Fitzgerald, who also directs the management of the nearby 270-unit Pleasant Bay Apartments."

Paul Dametz who eventually became maintenance supervisor before retiring in 2014, recalls that the building had 16 people on its maintenance staff. They were responsible for the air conditioners, refrigerators, stoves and dishwashers in each apartment. He also recalls fixing problems that resulted from less than perfect construction work.

“There were lots of mistakes made when it was built,” Paul said. “The C-line (premium-priced units that faced the ocean) always had problems with water.”

Paul remembers that Mr. and Mrs. Max Zywtow of apartment 8A were the first people to live in the building. He also recalls some of the other residents of the building during the first year it was opened. They included Anthony (Pussy) Russo in unit 8B, Bobby Basile in 9B, and Larry Paskow in 8D.



Where dwelling is the right
of setting sun,
And the round ocean and
the living air,
And the blue sky and it
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WORDSWORTH

HARBOUR TOWERS

So near . . . to Manhattan or Newark or Philadelphia, yet traveling to vacation is made obsolete at Harbour Towers. You vacation at home, at your private beach on the Atlantic Ocean . . . of course, there's an indoor pool and sauna rooms.

So convenient . . . in the estate area of West End, adjoining the famed Harbor Island Spa, served by railroad, two blocks to shopping and a bus to Newark and New York stops at the entrance.

So elegant . . . private home suites include thermostatically controlled heating and air conditioning, terraces, doorman service and attended parking, color coordinated kitchens with unique appliances and built-ins, exceptionally large and exciting layouts.

TWO, THREE & FOUR BEDROOM SUITES

HARBOUR *towers*

675 Ocean Ave., West End, New Jersey 201-229-6010
DIRECTIONS: New Jersey Turnpike to exit 11, connecting to the Garden State Parkway. Proceed to exit 105 (Eatontown-Long Branch) and then continue to Monmouth Road. Turn directly onto Monmouth Road to Cedar Avenue and proceed to Harbour Towers.

Another Luxury Residence by THE WAREHAM ORGANIZATION
Owner-Management

Russo was known as a Genovese crime family member and the reputed boss of Monmouth County Mob activities who got his nickname as a cat burglar rather than a philanderer. A September 1, 1967, cover feature in *Life* magazine, “Brazen Empire of Organized Crime,” stated, “In Long Branch, for example, a town of 26,000 on the Jersey shore, Russo told the informant that the Mob had taken charge. Russo bragged they had fixed elections and maneuvered the ouster of a city manager.”

“What we got in Long Branch is everything,” Russo was quoted as saying in the *Life* article. “Police we got. Councilmen we got, too. We’re gonna make millions.”

The *Life* story helped make Russo synonymous with Long Branch for many years, and put a number of the city’s municipal officials on the defensive, although none were formally charged by prosecutors. In any case, Russo was difficult to ignore when he was in the Surf Lounge on Ocean Avenue or elsewhere in Long Branch.

“When it came to living the life, Russo was nothing if not a caricature of an old-fashioned mob boss. His hands covered with gaudy jewelry, he would drive around in a pink Cadillac convertible, radio blaring, reveling in the attention and intimidation he could provoke,” wrote the *Newark Star-Ledger* in a February 9, 1998 article.

“‘Pussy Russo,’ said Kevin McCarthy, chief of the U.S. Organized Crime Strike Force, ‘was a figure from a bygone era, when mobsters could afford to be flamboyant.’ Another investigator put it succinctly: ‘Pussy had a big mouth,’” the *Newark Star-Ledger* article stated.

Russo and Basile’s luxury residence was confirmed in an *Asbury Park Press* article on June 12, 1969, about an interstate extortion case involving Mafia boss Simone DeCavalcante, which stated, “Russo now lives in Harbour Towers apartments in Long Branch, as does Bobby Basile, the name used in New Jersey by Robert Occhipinti of Brooklyn. He is DeCavalcante’s cousin. The FBI tapes contain dozens of conversations between Basile and DeCavalcante dealing with a wide variety of crime.” (Three days later, the *Asbury Park Press* published an aerial photo of Harbour Towers with insets of Russo and Basile – see picture and caption below.)

Paskow was an owner of the Harbour Island Spa, located just south of Harbour Towers on Ocean Avenue. According to an *Asbury Park Press* article on January 13, 1980, Paskow was an associate of Russo, who oversaw the sale of the debt-ridden Harbour Island Spa to his mobster friends a year and a half before he was murdered there.

Paul Dametz recalls most units were empty after Harbour Towers opened, and the building owners “gave them away to family.” He believes the Mafia presence in the building during that first year made units difficult to rent.

“Every week something went on with the Mob,” Paul said. “It seemed like there was something in the *Long Branch Daily Record* every Monday about what happened in the building over the weekend.”

A *New York Times* article about an April 1, 1970, State Commission of Investigation hearing reported that Paul F. Anderson, a doorman at the building, “said he had observed such alleged Mafia figures going in and out as Simone Rizzo (Sam the Plumber) DeCavalcante, who allegedly controls the rackets in Monmouth County.”



HARBOUR TOWERS—Luxury apartments in this Long Branch beachfront building are occupied by Anthony "Little Pussy" Russo, upper left, and Bobby Basile, lower right. Russo was once Monmouth County mob boss for the Genovese family. He appears to be losing control to "Sam the Plumber" DeCavalcante's organization, of which Basile is a member.

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“One resident at Harbour Towers was Anthony (Little Pussy) Russo, a reputed DeCavalcante lieutenant who was jailed by the commission for not testifying and is now serving a three-to-five-year term in the State Prison on a perjury conviction.

“A commission investigator disclosed that Russo, while he lived in the apartment house had an unusual option to pay rent or not pay rent. The investigator said Russo opted to live rent-free,” stated the *New York Times*, which described the transition at 675 Ocean Avenue during the 1960s as “an apparent conspiracy that involved arson and municipal corruption, to erect a luxury apartment house on the property.”

Part 4: A new owner and a new name – Harbour Mansion



A year after Harbour Towers opened, it was taken over by a new owner, Fred Manocherian. And, it received a new name: Harbour Mansion. A major effort to also change the Mafia-tainted image of the building, however, had only limited success initially.

According to an *Asbury Park Press* article on October 3, 1969, the building “was sold Sept. 15 to Harbour Mansion Ltd.” and “is undergoing extensive alterations outside and in.

“We want to afford our tenants everything available in luxury living, but in a private way,” said Fred Manocherian, Harbour Mansion president. “We want it to live up to its name.”

The *Asbury Park Press* article mentioned Pan-Am Equities Inc. of New York as the new managing agent of Harbour Mansion. Pam-Am Equities, according to a May 1, 2014, article in *The Real Deal Magazine*, is “owned by members of the prominent Manocherian family... The Manocherians are among the Persian families – such as the Elghanayans and the Kalimians – who rose to prominence in New York real estate during the 1970s.”



A *Crain's New York Business* article on October 20, 2013, said Fred Manocherian found the New York Health & Racquet Club in 1973. A *New York Times* article on June 23, 1985, stated Fred Manocherian is “a real-estate developer in New York, is founder and president of the M.R. Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides educational services on automobile safety issues such as drunken driving.”

Why was Harbour Towers on the market after only one year? The reason is never explained in news articles from 1969-70, but it's likely the half-occupied building was failing to generate the kind of revenue

anticipated by its original owners.

According to Paul Dametz, who worked in the maintenance shop and became its supervisor until retiring in 2014, “Many times we were paid in cash. Often checks were bad.”

For sure, Pan-Am Equities and Manocherian seemed a different kettle of fish, so to speak, than the original owners of the building, whose operations appeared infiltrated – if not controlled – by organized crime. According to an *Asbury Park Press* April 2, 1970, article, which cited testimony from a State Investigation Commission hearing in Trenton, a former doorman, Paul F. Anderson, “told how Basile seemed to be running the business.

“He said the corporate owners, Island Apartments Inc., used one of the apartments for its office. He said there were three desks in the office for Basile, Messina and Kraut. ‘The figure of authority in that office was obviously Robert Basile,’ said Mr. Anderson, a college student in Florida. He said Basile dominated any conversations among the three and seemed to be in charge.”

Basile was “an underworld associate” of Anthony (Pussy) Russo, “the rackets boss of Monmouth County and a prominent Cosa Nostra chieftain” according to the *Asbury Park Press* article. William Kraut and Frank Messina headed the group that built Harbour Towers after buying the property from Frank Sacco, “a New York loanshark” that “has been described by federal authorities as a Cosa Nostra figure in Westchester County, N.Y., and has an arrest record dating back many years,” reported the *Asbury Park Press*.

This kind of front-page news in local newspapers from the SIC hearing in Trenton, along with published reports of Basile disrespecting the Long Branch police chief, Joseph D. Purcell Jr., made it challenging initially for Manocherian to change the image of the building.

Reports of New Jersey state police driving around the parking lot to check cars on the site during the first year the luxury high-rise was open also didn't help the building's image.



The *Asbury Park Press*, in the same April 2, 1970, issue reporting on the SIC hearings, ran an article headlined, “Harbour Mansion ‘Image’ Changing,” which explained how Manocherian and Pan-Am Equities “continued their efforts to change its image” as “they poured about \$200,000 into renovation.”

“The ‘new image’ sought by Fred Manocherian, Harbour Mansion president, and Mark Granfar, manager, is more along the lines of physical appearance than public opinion,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*, “But the nine-story structure at 675 Ocean Ave., West End, assessed at \$2 million, is getting a dual face-lifting anyway.

“Anthony Russo, former Monmouth County rackets boss who is now serving a 3-to-5 year prison sentence for perjury, moved out of the building before the new owners took over. And Robert ‘Bobby Basile’ Occhipinti, another figure, although still living there, has apparently cleared himself by cooperating with the SIC.

“Under the direction of the new managing agent for the building, Pan Am Equities, Inc., New York, remodeling began as soon as the sale was completed. It’s still going on.

HEALTH SPA

- Year-round Swimming Pool
- Sauna and Steam Rooms
- Massage Room
- Whirlpool Baths
- Exercise Room
- Party Room and Play Room
- PLUS
- Private Beach and Cabanas

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FRIGIDAIRE two-door refrigerator, dishwasher and double oven
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- Parquet flooring
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- Hi-speed elevators
- Master TV antenna for color and black and white reception
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ALL ROOM SIZES APPROXIMATE

“We want to make this a luxury apartment house which is more like a hotel in the way of service,’ said Mr. Granfar.” The *Asbury Park Press* article goes on to state, “Mr. Granfar said the apartment house, only about half full when Harbour Mansion took over, will soon have a waiting list.”

Certainly, Manocherian and Pan-Am Equities spared little expense in trying to renovate the building.

Six months earlier, in the October 3 *Asbury Park Press* article headlined, "Sale of Harbour Towers Paves Way for Mansion / Expensive Changes Slated," Manocherian said "a Paris designer, Pierre Francois, was hired for \$10,000 to oversee the renovations" of the one-year old nine-story structure.

"We want to make this place one of a kind. It will be unique," said Mr. Manocherian. He said tenants will be able to enjoy the following new features:

-- A spa. made way for by the removal of two apartments, including steam, massage and exercise rooms; sauna and whirlpool baths, and sun lamps.

-- \$35,000 worth of antique furniture.

-- White balcony railings and curbing to replace black ones.

-- A party room with kitchen facility.

-- Bronze lamps in the lobby and new fixtures in the bathrooms.

-- A \$3,500 bronze, marble, and cut glass fountain for the lobby.

-- A doorman who never leaves the door and a parking attendant.

-- Free use of the pool for a year.

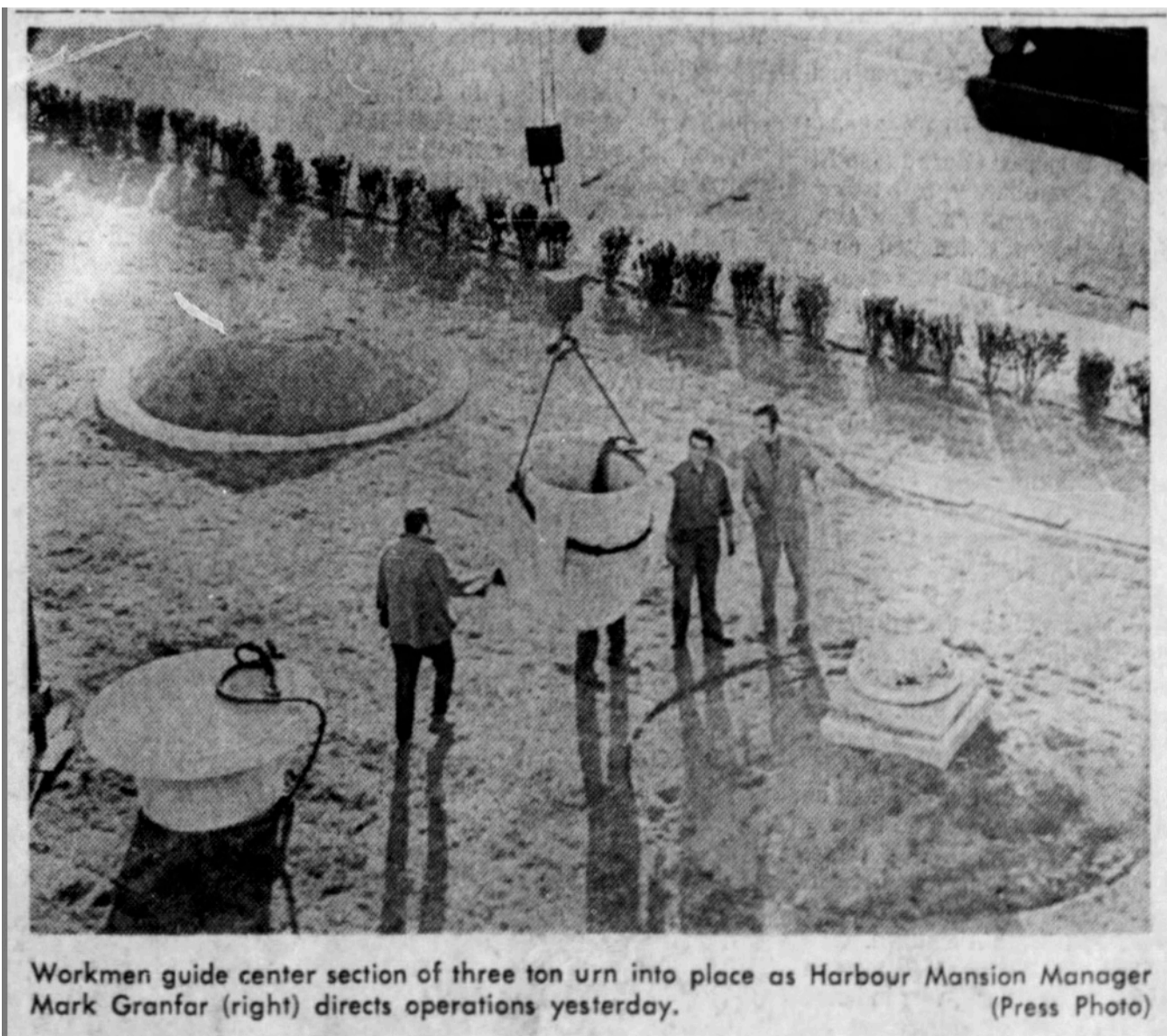
-- Postcards

bearing the tenant's name.

-- A protected playground and garden on the roof.

-- \$10,000 worth of shrubbery and trees, including 200 poplars on both the building's north and south.

-- A fountain flanked by flagpoles where the old 'Harbour Towers' sign stood."



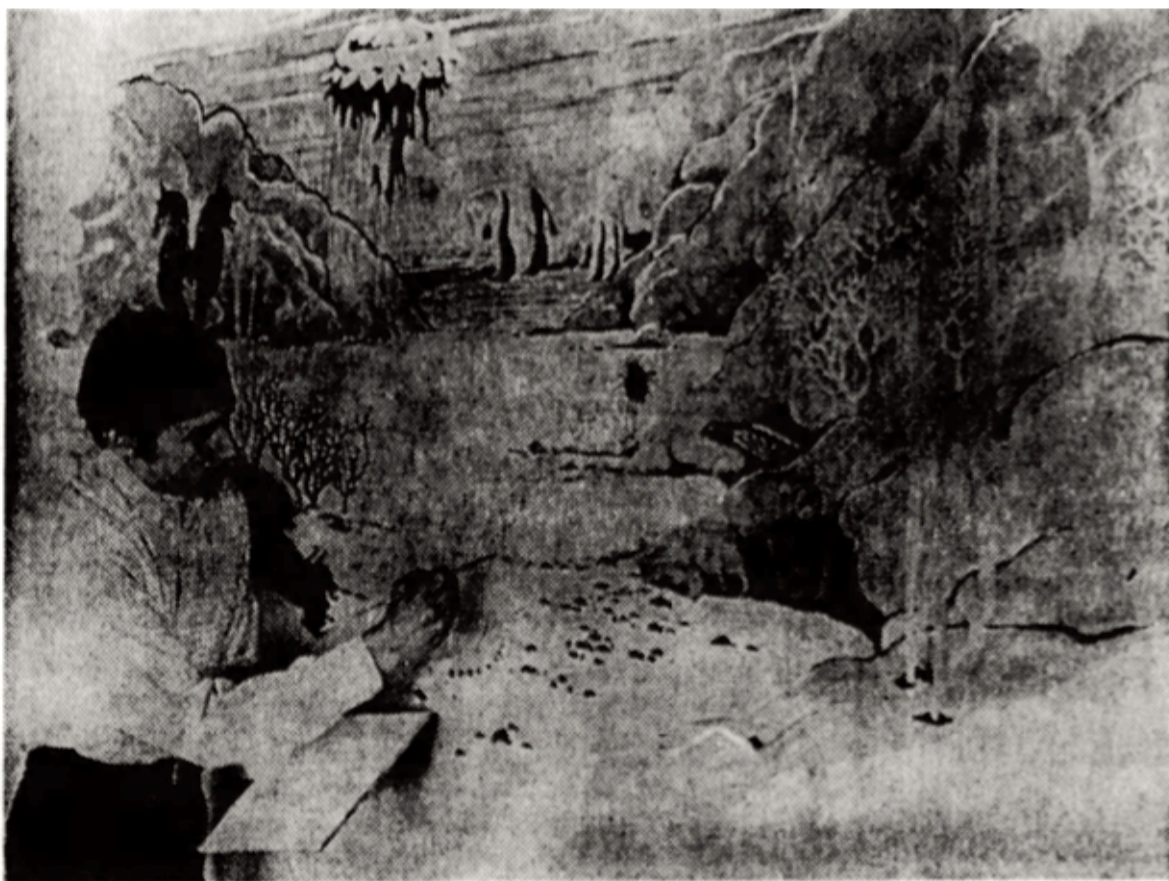
Workmen guide center section of three ton urn into place as Harbour Mansion Manager Mark Granfar (right) directs operations yesterday. (Press Photo)

On October 30, 1969, just six weeks after Pan-Am Equities bought the building and changed its name to Harbour Mansion, Ocean Avenue passersby were surprised by activity on the front lawn of the luxury high-rise. As the *Asbury Park Press* reported in an article headlined “‘Mansion’ Gets 3-Ton Urn” the following day:

“It took workmen nearly an hour yesterday to assemble a giant, three-piece, three-ton, marble urn in front of Harbour Mansion, 675 Ocean Ave. It was one step in the extensive renovation of the nine-story structure by the new owners, Harbour Mansion Ltd., who bought the building (formerly Harbour Towers) Sept. 15.

“‘Not only the steps – the whole 175-foot beachfront will be redone.’ Said Mark Granfar, the apartment house manager, to a woman who had asked if the passageway to the beach would be improved.

“‘We’re going to put in cabanas and showers...that’s the idea,’ said Granfar. ‘We have tenants coming from Europe or Florida – they were not expecting it, you know,’ he said of the new look in the lobby.”



On May 13, 1970, five weeks after the SIC hearings, the *Asbury Park Press* published a photo (below) of Barry Seace, a Red Bank High School art teacher, putting the finishing touches on one of two acrylic murals of underwater scenes he “was commissioned by Pan Am Equities” to paint in the Harbour Mansion pool area.

Dametz recalls the changes that began taking place when Manocherian and Pan-Am Equities took over and renamed the building Harbour Mansion were not embraced by all of the original tenants.

“Most of the people who first moved in were much older,” he said. “After Manocherian bought the building, more younger people moved in and started using the amenities. That upset many of the older people.”

An additional public relations challenge for Manocherian and Pan-Am Equities was the legal and financial troubles of another tenant, Jack Levin, owner of Asbury Park’s bankrupt Levin Department Store. Levin “used to advertise himself as the ‘King of Values’ and testified ”he had lost \$50,000 playing the horses,” according to a November 16, 1969, *Asbury Park Press* article. The story also explained that “a half dozen hearings in federal bankruptcy court have established that the store has debt of more than \$600,000” and “so far \$62,463 has been realized from the sale of remaining assets.

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OCEAN AV—Contd

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 643 West End Nursery School 222-1879 | 8d Arlo Ray 222-8183 |
| Seashore Day Camp & Nursery 222-6464 | 9a Stright Graodon 229-5688 |
| Surfside Pool & Cabana Club 222-9642 | 9b Maham Eleanor M 229-5697 |
| Cittadine John F @ | 9c Finnegan Richd A 222-5588 |
| 644 Ferrantelle-Salon De Coiffure 222-9547 | 9d Gold Stanley |
| 648 Weston I Geo & Sons Inc investments 222-0211 | 10a Kowalaki Timothy |
| Anschelewitz Barr Ansell & Bonello Iwys 229-5600 | 10b Cotte Geo |
| NEW COURT ST BEGINS | 10c Cicalese Arlene 229-5420 |
| 656 West End Manor hotel 229-2000 | 10d Orwasher Louis |
| West End Manor Restaurant 222-9811 | 666 Mottley T P @ 229-0864 |
| Iivento Chas K @ 222-1530 | 672 Mendez Carlos Rosario |
| 660 Parsons Rufus N real est @ 222-0559 | 675 Harbor Mansion 229-6010 |
| 661 Deauville Apartments | 2a Vacant |
| 1a Tenner Irving 222-0335 | 2b Vacant |
| 1b Ozmola Joseph J 229-1292 | 2c Bernstein Murray 229-0978 |
| 1c Strauss Ben | 2d Francovie J |
| 1d Rettig Danl 229-4132 | 2e Vacant |
| 2a Eisenstadt Joseph G 229-9581 | 2f Eichler Geo M 229-6544 |
| 2b Oamola Joseph J 222-4720 | 2g Vacant |
| 2c Davidson Mortimer 229-5582 | 2i Sahar Anthony I |
| Deauville Garden Apartments | 2j Magidson R |
| 2d Bradley D 229-8867 | 2k Granfar Mark 229-6010 |
| 3a Dunley Thos | 2l Bennett Harold 229-0814 |
| 3b Palatini Lynn @ | 2m Vacant |
| 3c Joseph Virgil 229-2987 | 2n Vacant |
| 3d Dawson Margt 229-2977 | 3a Vacant |
| 4a Mc Hugh Peter J 222-8846 | 3b Halpern Arnold L 229-8326 |
| 4b Mc Hugtt Peter M | 3g Schachnow Morris E 229-1070 |
| 4c Banwater Linda 229-9521 | 3d Wittel F B 222-3103 |
| 4d Bywater Linda 229-9521 | 3e Bressman B 222-3458 |
| 5b Oodstein Edw 229-2914 | 3f Epstein B |
| 5b Doecher Wm | 3g Vacant |
| 5b Mc Hugh Barry | 3h Vacant |
| 5c Satzinger Mary Mrs | 3i Primavera E |
| 5d Lyons Harry | 3j Kaye Irving 222-5405 |
| 6a Rappaport Barbara 229-1390 | 3k Vacant |
| 6b Patrick Virginia 229-8739 | 3l Josephson Geo B 229-1344 |
| 6c Brown Pamela | 3m Vacant |
| 6d Gray Patricia 222-5886 | 3n Feldman D R |
| 7a Johnson Ralph | 4a Kernis G |
| 7b Garcia Manuel | 4b Vacant |
| 7c Rosenthal Sara | 4c Kirkpatrick R A 229-5928 |
| 7d Cohen Phyllis 222-6545 | 4e Vacant |
| 8a No Return | 4f Massar M K 229-8539 |
| 8b Poznansky Benj | 4g Vacant |
| 8c Africano Arth 229-8240 | 4h Karstadt S |
| | 4i Vacant |
| | 4j Braderman Merwin W 222-7361 |
| | 4k Vacant |
| | 4l Lesko Harry R 222-8702 |
| | 4m Vacant |
| | 4n Vacant |
| | 5a Vacant |
| | 5b Carney C F |
| | 5c Woodring Morris J 222-1449 |

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OCEAN AV—Contd

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8d Vacant | 8j Kligman R |
| 8e Vacant | 8k Vacant |
| 8f Burrow Robt 222-3177 | 8l Belote Will Y 229-8598 |
| 8g Vacant | 8m Kessler L |
| 8h Woelfle E | 8n Wood W J 229-8958 |
| 8i Woelfle Wilbur F | 9a Vacant |
| 8j Baughman G H Jr 229-6548 | 9b Vacant |
| 8k Edwards B | 9c Posner S 229-4399 |
| 8l Vacant | 9d Hartford George F 229-3367 |
| 8m Carlton Edythe 222-2902 | 9e Becker Nathan 229-3777 |
| 8n Zamelaky H | 9f Van Pelt Wm J 222-1313 |
| 8o Vacant | 9g Shannon Robt M 229-7965 |
| 8p Vacant | 9h Petzing Edwin R 222-6814 |
| 8q Rappaport H | 9i Tanner Marvin L 222-7046 |
| 8r Lehman E | 9j Golden Mark 229-7138 |
| 8s Levin J | 9k Rental Office 229-8400 |
| 8t Klein G | 9l Gordon A J 229-8695 |
| 8u Bishop W C 222-0667 | 9m Vacant |
| 8v Brower Joseph 222-3746 | 9n Nitto Roger |
| 8w Brudner Murray 229-7086 | A Vacant |
| 8x Bressman L B 222-9117 | B Bergman G |
| 8y Danzig Saml E 222-7104 | CEDAR AV BEGINS |
| 8z Vacant | 692 Summer Res |
| 8a Capps Gary F 229-8039 | 700 No Return |
| 8b Vacant | Rear Summer Res |
| 8c Kialak Julius I 229-8320 | 701 Harbor Island Spa North hotel 222-5800 |
| 8d Weiner Robt 229-0899 | 705 Albee Boutique Inc clo 229-2793 |
| 8e Tretsky Richd K 229-7766 | Salon De Steven At The Harbor Island Spa hair stylists 229-9733 |
| 8f Goldstein Joseph L 229-8017 | 701 Swatsky Ruth Jewelry Inc STERNBERGER AV BEGINS |
| 8g Richlin Sam 229-1910 | 717 West End Racquet Club amusements 229-4141 |
| 8h Aud S | 732 Fountain Gardens Apartments |
| 8i Brodey Abe 222-1364 | A Smith Bernice |
| 8j Vacant | B Roberson Thos J 229-5376 |
| 8k Packin Reney 229-3455 | C Deluca Sally Mrs 229-4541 |
| 8l Sager Victor 229-8417 | D Heaps Doris |
| 8m Vacant | 1 Dribben Rose Mrs 229-3293 |
| 8n Zywotow Max D 222-7575 | 2 Eden Ade 229-8953 |
| 8o Vacant | 3 Olivadotti Rocco 229-9564 |
| 8p Dornfeld M 222-4189 | 4 Dick Carol 229-6795 |
| 8q Paskow Larry | 5 Tretsky Saml 229-1599 |
| 8r O'Leary Morgan 229-8339 | 6 Mayer D E |
| 8s Genadio Adeline D 229-3907 | 7 Garey Barnett H 222-8806 |
| 8t Vacant | 8 Vacant |
| 8u Burke Joseph J 229-5252 | 9 Armstrong James |
| 8v Gorelick Ray L Mrs 222-5353 | 10 Corey Eliz M Mrs |

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Nearly every article about Levin's ongoing tribulations mentioned his residence.

“Mr. Levin lives at Harbour Mansion (formerly Harbour Towers) where rents range from \$350 to \$950 a month,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*. “It is a luxury

apartment next door to the Harbour Island Spa where he once summered while maintaining a palatial home in nearby Deal.”

By the time a 1970 Long Branch directory of homes was published (see above), less than a third of the Harbour Mansion units were listed “vacant.” It appears, therefore, that the new owner of the renamed building on 675 Ocean Avenue had some initial success with his luxury rentals, despite the adverse publicity about the previous owners and some tenants.

Part 5: Harbour Mansion: the playground for all ages

The new owner of Harbour Mansion spared little expense in upgrading the nine-story building at 675 Ocean Avenue in Long Branch during the early 1970s. Fred Manocherian, head of Pan Am Equities, articulated his vision to provide tenants “everything available in luxury living” to the *Asbury Park Press* a month after purchasing the property. That included playgrounds for the young and old.



Miss Denise Daum, Elberon, Long Branch, a life guard at Harbour Mansion, West End, Long Branch, and Miss Yicki Blumenthal, a resident at the luxury apartment house, use the ladies' sauna at the newly completed health-spa. Other facilities in the addition include whirlpool baths, message rooms, steam rooms, an entertainment kitchen and an exercise room still under construction.

Harbour Mansion Complex Opens Health Spa Facilities

Up on the roof, the highest playground in Long Branch, if not the entire Jersey Shore, was constructed. It featured a sliding board, swings, “everything,” recalled Paul Dametz, who worked in the Harbour Mansion maintenance shop and became its supervisor until retiring in 2014.

The rooftop playground, located on the west end (Ocean Avenue side) of the building, was surrounded by a 15-18’ fence topped by barbed wire. The high fence did not deter some youngsters from climbing on it, which led to a guard being hired to supervise activities. Within two years, Dametz recalled, a hurricane knocked down the fence and the playground was dismantled and closed.

The “playground” for adults, however, fared better.



On May 10, 1970, the *Asbury Park Press* published an article (see photo, caption, headline) announcing the opening of a health spa in the “\$2 million luxury apartment house.”

“Newly completed facilities in the indoor swimming pool area include men’s and ladies’ sauna baths, steam rooms, whirlpool baths, massage rooms and a kitchen,”

wrote the *Asbury Park Press*.

“An exercise room adjacent to the pool area is still under construction. Also under construction by the Thomas Procter Co., Long Branch, are stairs and a platform for cabanas on the private ocean beach.

The article quoted Mark Granfar, building manager (and nephew of Manocherian, according to Dametz), stating “All these new facilities are presently being extended to tenants at no additional charge.”


Another Pan Am Equities executive, Allan Morrow, was credited as stating “more than \$300,000 has been spent on renovations and improvements” since ownership changed the previous September, and “several hundred thousand dollars more are scheduled to be invested.”

The *Asbury Park Press* article also stated the “three ton marble urn” which flanks the street entrance to the building was “once used in the film *High Society*,” released in 1956 and featuring Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby.

Construction of the “Ocean Club,” as an *Asbury Park Press* headline on July 26, 1970 called it, was completed quickly.

“Included in the project was the construction of a triple bulkhead with a boardwalk, stairs to the beach and the installation of 100 aluminum cabinettes,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*. “The bulkhead is bolstered by several hundred tons of jetty rocks” and the facilities include “a fully equipped exercise room, a game room, card room and party kitchen.”

What more could adults at Harbour Mansion want in their playground? Apparently, observing the popularity of the Harbor



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IN LUXURY & HEALTH.**

featuring:

- Private Beach and Cabanas
- Finnish Saunas
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- Solarium
- Massage Rooms
- Open Year 'Round
- Indoor Pool
- Steam Rooms
- Hydro Therapy Whirlpools
- Sun Lamp & Ultra Violet Rooms
- Party Room & Catering Facilities
- Limited Membership

Annual and seasonal memberships start at only \$350. Please mail coupon today for your FREE* invitations to use our facilities.

*initial fee

Ocean Club Pool and Spa, Ltd.
675 Ocean Avenue, West End, New Jersey 07740
(Ground Floor of Harbour Mansion)

Please send me free invitations

Name

Address

Phone

Visiting Date

Island Spa next door, Pan Am Equities wanted more patrons for the “Ocean Club, Pool & Spa Ltd.”

Harbour Mansion management sought a variance to open its spa to the public. The Long Branch Board of Adjustment denied it on January 7, 1971, contending “the public spa would increase traffic and the apartment building didn’t have enough parking spaces for the increase,” according to an *Asbury Park Press* article on March 30, 1971, which also wrote the spa was built after a building permit had been obtained under the previous zoning code.

An appeal by Harbour Mansion to overturn the Long Branch Board of Adjustment decision against issuing a variance for the spa was denied on February 8, 1972. Superior Court Judge Merritt Lane Jr. said Harbour Mansion “failed to show special reasons why a public spa should be allowed in the commercial beachfront zone,” according to the *Asbury Park Press* the following day.

The board of adjustment attorney, Irving Teicher, was attributed in the *Asbury Park Press* article as saying, “A spa is nice, but I don’t think that it can be broadly interpreted to promote the general welfare of the community,” and arguing “the spa would serve only a limited number of residents and that the board found it would create parking and traffic problems if it were opened to the public.”

It would’ve been ironic if a shortage of parking spots was a major reason for the failure of the Harbour Mansion spa to be open to the public. According to Dametz, Harbor Island Spa bought some property on its northern border from the previous owners of the lot where Harbour Mansion (formerly Harbour Towers) was built.

Dametz heard that Harbor Island Spa was able to open the northern expansion of its property without an inspection. A legal review of the situation commenced a few years later and in 1970, shortly before a court hearing in which he was to appear, Samuel de Bartolis, the Long Branch building inspector, died, Dametz said.

His plans for a public spa scuttled, Manocherian proceeded to make Harbour Mansion a private playground. Dametz recalled that the Pan Am Equities head would regularly arrive from New York City by helicopter and host parties “every

other weekend” for tenants. He also remembered the foot traffic in the building required carpeting to be replaced regularly.

“The fish pond in the lobby drew a lot of attention,” Dametz recalled.

“I remember the fountain with the goldfish,” said Barbara Lavroff Taylor, who as a young girl would visit her grandparents, Al and Ida Gordon, at Harbour Mansion with her brother, Michael Lavroff. “I also remember the doormen had uniforms with braids.”

“There was a certain attractiveness to the building; an opulence,” recalled Michael. “Our grandfather liked the big balconies, and fishing off the jetties.”

“It was truly a private beach at the time,” Barbara remembered.

It was a beach, Michael recalled, where his grandfather once saw a dead body. Around the same time, his grandfather also observed a break-in at the dry cleaner across Ocean Avenue. He called the police, who arrested the perpetrator.



A new luxury building like Harbour Mansion notwithstanding, the early 1970s were still a challenging time for Long Branch. The city's best days seemed far behind. West End Park was referred to as "the hippie park," and people could be found sleeping on the beach a block away.

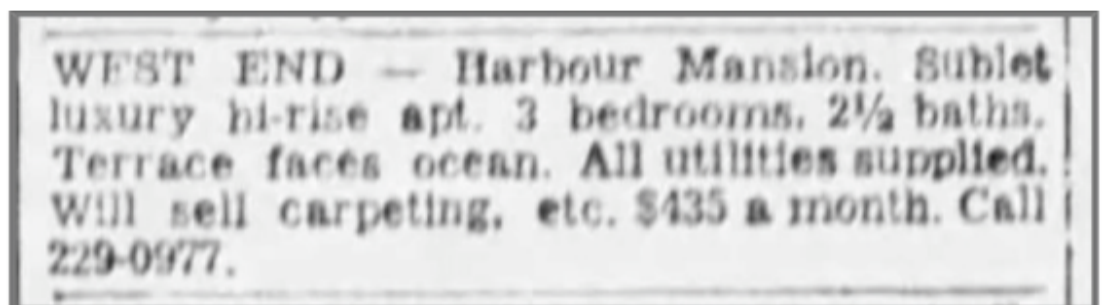
Despite investing in changing the image of the building from a mob hangout to a luxury playground, Pan Am Equities was occasionally still a victim of bad publicity from one of its tenants. In the early 1970s, the tenant who drew unwanted attention to Harbour Mansion was Jack Levin, owner of the bankrupt Levin's Department Store in Asbury Park.

In October of 1970, Levin and his son Stanley were indicted by a federal grand jury for fraudulent transfers of store receipts in 1968 'in contemplation of bankruptcy,'" according to an *Asbury Park Press* article on April 7, 1971, which also stated Levin "lives in a \$400 a month apartment at Harbour Mansion, Ocean Ave., Long Branch."

In a previous article about Levin's legal and financial troubles published on August 28, 1970, the *Asbury Park Press* wrote, "Though he contends he has no money, he has been living in a \$400-a-month apartment in Harbour Mansions, an oceanfront apartment project in Long Branch."

The *Asbury Park Press* reported that Levin's Department Store's debts "mounted from \$66,673 to \$966,263" between July and November 1968. The Department of Justice seized "\$172,000 in a Philadelphia bank account on grounds it is cash taken from the bankrupt store."

By 1972, however, there was little question that Harbour Mansion was among the elite buildings on the Jersey Shore.



WEST END -- Harbour Mansion. Sublet luxury hi-rise apt. 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths. Terrace faces ocean. All utilities supplied. Will sell carpeting, etc. \$435 a month. Call 229-0977.

An article headlined "Luxury High Rises Begin to Flourish in Area" published by the *Asbury Park Press* on March 19, 1972, seemed to prove the success that Manocherian and Pan Am Equities had achieved in less than three years.

"The tops in the area for 'luxury' and rent is Harbour Mansion, on Ocean avenue in Long Branch," wrote the *Asbury Park Press*.

“There, you can rent a penthouse, if one of the two units were vacated, for \$890 a month. The rentals for the one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments range from \$260 to \$670.

“The 10-story, 115-unit building features a heated indoor pool, a private beach, steam rooms, sauna baths, a small gym, sun lamp rooms, card rooms, a solarium, a children’s recreation area on the roof (there are only a dozen children in the building), a doorman 24 hours a day, TV cameras watching all entrances and the garage, masseurs and masseuses on the payroll – and soon a limousine service will be started for trips to New York and Newark.

“The building is expected to become a cooperative – meaning the apartment units will be sold to the tenants by the owner, Pan Am Equities, New York, which will continue to manage the building. Prices are expected to range from \$30,000 to \$60,000.

“Harbour Mansion is fully rented, and there is a waiting list.”

Part 6: Harbour Mansion goes condominium

The advertisement in the *New York Times* seemed almost too good to be true. It listed a series of “carefree living” features and recreation amenities at the Harbour Mansion “high rise luxury condominium on the ocean,” all available for low maintenance fees and taxes and attractive financing terms.

Peter Vallone Sr., a newly elected New York City councilman from Queens, decided to make the drive to 675 Ocean Avenue in Long Branch with his father-in-law, Angelo Buttigheri, after seeing the advertisement. Even though the fuel shortage of 1973-74 made people think twice about long drives, they figured the gas coupon offered to them made the trip worthwhile. They also had heard that Abe Beame, who had just become New York City’s mayor, frequented Long Branch.

Vallone and Buttigheri were very impressed with what they saw at Harbour Mansion. They also found the low-rate financing offered and monthly maintenance fee locked-in for three years too good to pass up. They decided to go in together on a two-bedroom unit, closed on the \$37,500 purchase on April 11, 1974, and bought furniture from Huffman-Koos the following weekend.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

New Jersey

Harbour Mansion

high rise
**LUXURY
CONDOMINIUM**
on the ocean

An hour from New York City. Convenient to sources of transportation.
Featuring the most complete and luxurious facilities in:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>CAREFREE LIVING</p> <p>Your own private oceanfront terrace.</p> <p>Your own individual year round temperature control.</p> <p>Your own total</p> | <p>RECREATION</p> <p>Your own private beach and cabana—swim, sun or fish. +</p> <p>Your own private spa fully equipped including: saunas; steam, massage and exer- cise room; ping-pong and pool tables; ping-pong tables and other recreational facilities.</p> <p>Your own private pool year round + lifeguard</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Fantastic

5 room suite—huge 27' x 13' living room
+ 2 large bedrooms —1 1/2 baths, dining area, center hall
+ terrace on the ocean

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|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| * GUARANTEED MAINTENANCE | \$87 mo. + |
| PRESENT TAXES | \$74 mo. + |
| 30 YEAR 7½% FINANCING | ? |
| TOTAL MONTHLY PAYMENT ON ALL CASH BASIS | \$161 only |

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TOTAL PRICE \$39,800—Cash \$9,950

Comparable values for a huge 3 bedroom suite as well as a 1 bedroom
and a one of a kind 8 room penthouse with a 2,000 foot terrace
on the ocean.

See our fabulously furnished models
daily and weekends 10 AM to 6 PM

675 OCEAN AVENUE, WEST END, N. J.

Directions: N.J. Turnpike south to Exit #1, Garden State Parkway south to
Exit #05, Follow Route # 36 east to just before 4th traffic light, then make right
turn...bear left at McDonalds, 3 miles to Ocean Avenue at
Harbor Mansion.

CALL NOW (201) 229-8400

The advertisement is not an offering. No offering can be made until an Offering Plan is filed with the Department of Law of the State of New Jersey. The advertisement is made pursuant to the Securities Law of the State of New Jersey.

“It was a nice escape from New York and reporters,” Vallone recalled recently, when asked why he chose Long Branch over Long Island or another place in New York for the location of his vacation home. “It’s also much easier to get here by car.”

Vallone and his wife and their three sons and extended family, including Buttigheris, have continued enjoying Harbour Mansion on summer weekends for over 40 years, even as he rose to become New York’s Speaker of the City Council in 1986 and Democratic nominee for Governor in 1998.



On June 30, 1973, Harbour Mansion would become the first “Live-in, Play-in and Share-in” luxury apartment condominium on the New Jersey Shore, after being “approved by the state Attorney General to officially operate as a profit-sharing condominium apartment complex,” according to a *Long Branch Daily Record* article the previous day.

“‘Old world charm and new world convenience’ the theme at Harbour Mansion, is reflected in the tasteful elegance of all the apartments, which range from one, two and three-bedroom models to penthouses, priced from \$37,000,” wrote the *Long Branch Daily Record*.

“Each apartment features a private terrace (most facing the ocean) spacious, airy rooms, walnut parquet floors, and abundance of walk-in closets, the finest in sound insulation materials, and modern appliances designed to make living more carefree and enjoyable.

“Within the building are a host of activities and services for the Harbour Mansion owner – year ‘round fresh water indoor-outdoor pool, Finnish Saunas, steam room, whirlpool baths and massage rooms, health club, private card rooms, poolside snack bar, and a recreation suite for games or just plain relaxing. Plans for an outdoor pool are being finalized.

“Each Harbour Mansion owner is also entitled to a ‘Cabanette’ on the private beach fronting the building. Another exclusive privilege is access to the famed Harbour Island Spa, where special dietetic, medical or regular dining service and maid or valet services may be enjoyed at special rates,” stated the June 29, 1973 *Long Branch Daily Record* article.

REAL ESTATE

First Jersey Shore condominium ready

On June 30, Harbour Mansion becomes the first “Live-in, Play-in and Share-in” luxury apartment condominium on the New Jersey Shore.

This Saturday the eleven story luxury building on the oceanfront in West End, has been approved by the state Attorney General to officially operate as a profit-sharing condominium apartment complex.

“Old world charm and new world convenience” the theme at Harbour Mansion, is reflected in the tasteful elegance of all the



Harbour Mansion

Source: steam room Harbour Mansion is

It apparently took almost a year after announcing its intention to convert Harbour Mansion from rentals for Fred Manocherian and his Pan Am Equities company to proceed with sales of the building’s units. Plans for converting the nearly four-year-old building to condominiums were first published in the *Asbury Park Press* on July 9, 1972.

In a large article published on the first page of its real estate section that Sunday, the *Asbury Park Press* quoted Mark Granfar, resident manager of the building, as saying condominium prices “would be comparable to those at the Imperial House, an 18-story luxury condominium being constructed on Ocean avenue, across from St. Michael’s Roman Catholic Church.”

REAL ESTATE Pages C1-C4
TV SCHEDULE Pages C5-C6

COINS Page C7
STAMPS Page C7

ASBURY PARK SUNDAY PRESS

Section C

ASBURY PARK, N.J., SUNDAY, JULY 9, 1972 C1

Harbour Mansion Switches To Condominium Complex



LONG BRANCH — Luxury apartments in the 18-story Harbour Mansion apartment building at Ocean Avenue, West End, will begin to be sold as condominium units this month.

Mark Granfar, resident manager for Pan Am Equities of New York City, owners of the building, said condominium prices will be established later this month, but he said they would be comparable to those at the Imperial House, an 18-story luxury condominium being constructed at Ocean Avenue across from St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church.

One-bedroom units at the Imperial House, which opened Friday, will sell for \$28,000; two bedrooms, \$32,000; and three bedrooms, \$38,000.

Mr. Granfar said that the present 116 tenants in the building will be given “a very special price.” He said most of the tenants favor the condominium concept.

“We want to keep all our tenants,” said Mr. Granfar, who added that the majority of them are wealthy, semi-retired people and had previously owned homes in Deal and the surrounding vicinity.

They now pay rents ranging from \$250 a month for certain one-bedroom apart-

ments to \$600 a month for larger units.

Harbour Mansion has two- and three-bedroom apartments and two-bedroom units which have libraries. All but 11 units have an ocean view.

Mr. Granfar said many of the tenants have requested the building be transformed into a condominium because they would be able to use ownership of the units as a tax deduction.

And he believes the change will be “the beginning of a condominium boom in the shore area.”

The manager believes that his building leads the way in what he terms as a “trend toward condominium living.”

“We’ve just emerged from the growing pain stage,” he said. “The building has settled physically as well as tenant-wise.”

Mr. Granfar said it takes about five years before a new building, especially one off the ocean, begins to operate functionally, because of initial plumbing, drainage and other problems.

“We’ve gone all through that,” he said.

Pan Am Equities, which owns about 200 luxury apartment buildings, most of them in New York City, purchased Harbour Mansion three years ago from Island Apartments Inc. The building is four years old. Pan Am paid Long Branch \$12,000 as a rental lease.

Pan Am retrofitted the exterior and interior and added some new facilities. Renovation of the lobby, with gold chandeliers, red plush carpeting, bronze busts pouring into a gold fish-filled pond and statues, cost \$60,000, according to Mr. Granfar.

Harbour Mansion's features, which are exclusively for tenants, include a sun deck and outdoor swimming column, 175 feet of beach, heated pool, gymnasium, Finnish sauna and steam rooms, massage parlors, hydro-therapeutic baths, free exercise classes, game rooms and new card room.

Mr. Granfar said Pan Am has other plans for expanding its facilities and services in keeping with the “Miami Beach of the North” concept.

He said the management prides itself on providing “absolute superb” service. “If a tenant needs anything, we’ll have someone there in five minutes, even if it’s just to change a light bulb.”

The building has an electronic surveillance system, long television cameras and monitors and 24-hour-a-day maids.

Only a few of the tenants have school-age children. Among the tenants are some retired generals, business and professional persons and a few professional athletes, Mr. Granfar said.

Woman Joins Agency

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP — Katia K. Wakeman, Middletown Township, has joined the Lincetti office sales staff of the Berg Agency, it has been announced. Mrs. Wakeman attended the American University in Washington, D.C. She is married to Lloyd Wakeman and they reside in Middletown.

Now it

“Mr. Granfar said that the present 116 tenants in the building will be given ‘a very special price.’ He said most of the tenants favor the condominium concept.

“‘We want to keep all our tenants,’ said Mr. Granfar, who added that the majority of them are wealthy, semi-retired people and had previously owned homes in Deal and the surrounding vicinity,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*.

“Mr. Granfar said many of the tenants have requested the building be transformed into a condominium because they would be able to use ownership of the units as a tax deductible. And he believes the change will be ‘the beginning of a condominium boom in the shore area.’”

“‘We’ve just emerged from the growing pain stage,’ he said. ‘The building has settled physically as well as tenant-wise.’ Mr. Granfar said it takes about five

years before a new building, especially one off the ocean, begins to operate functionally, because of initial plumbing, drainage and other problems.”

Paul Dametz, who worked in the Harbour Mansion maintenance shop and became its supervisor until retiring in 2014, recalled some of those early problems.

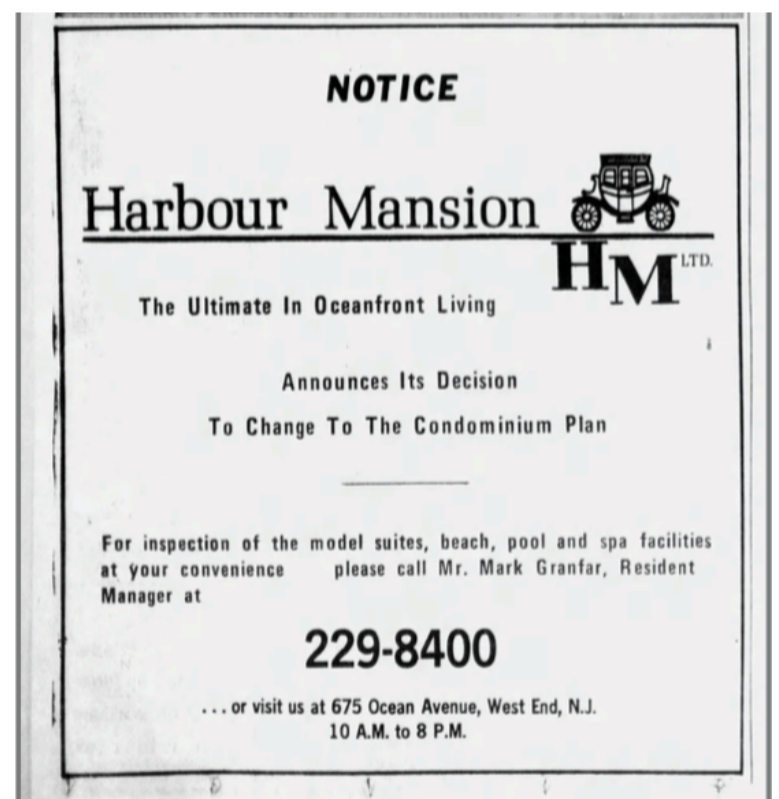
“The C line (premium-priced units that face the ocean) always had problems with water,” Dametz said. He recalled that plans to have a rooftop garden were scuttled because “there were too many problems with roof leaks.”

Plans to have an outdoor pool at Harbour Mansion were nixed by Long Branch officials because there wasn't enough parking on the premises, Dametz also recalled. "The pool was supposed to be in the back of the building, but the city wouldn't let them do it."

Still, Granfar explained, “management prides itself on providing ‘absolute superb’ services. “If a tenant needs anything, we’ll have someone there in five minutes, even if it’s just to change a light bulb,”” he told the *Asbury Park Press*, which wrote in the conclusion of the July 9 piece, “Only a few of the tenants have school-age children. Among the tenants are some retired generals, business and professional persons and a few professional athletes.”

“The doormen were truly service people who would help residents,” recalled Barbara Lavroff Taylor, who as a young girl would visit her grandparents, Al and Ida Gordon, at Harbour Mansion along with her brother, Michael Lavroff.

Dametz confirmed Pan Am Equities employed valets to park cars, kids to carry groceries, a gardener, lifeguards and beach boys at Harbour Mansion in the early 1970s to “provide all the services in the world.



“Fred Manocherian spared no expenses,” Dametz said. “It was the best building in the area.”

LET'S VISIT

Dr. & Mrs. Lester A. Barnett, Harbour Mansion

ASBURY PARK SUNSET PRESS, Sun., Oct. 18, 1970, 8B



The Barnett apartment is on the seventh floor of Harbour Mansion. This view is of the street side on Ocean Avenue.

LONG BEACH — Leaving a spacious bathroom home in the Elberon section for an oceanfront condominium unit in Harbour Mansion was a quiet step for Dr. and Mrs. Lester A. Barnett.

At first, Mrs. Barnett had misgivings about the long trek from the garage, up the elevator, to the eighth floor, but this she found that the 14-day downtown life gains from the car and which were into a car.

She also mentioned about prices, about space for their extensive art collection, and about other areas for their visiting grandson.

“When we step in and close the elevator, it’s a wonderful snug home,” Mrs. Barnett says.

It’s best experience to visit than a house, and much more so, she continues. “We have experienced everything. When things start flying, we get a better idea of the real and important things in life. I was content to sit on the plane before taking it, but an elevator ride is a lot of fun.”

And also when grandchild Jonathan, one of the couple’s daughters, and grandson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Greenman of Baltimore, come to visit, the lobby car-ramp and auto garage areas in the ground floor are used. There are also a billiard room, a pool table, a bar, a lounge, a dining room, a bar, and a kitchen. “There are many other amenities for the use of guests,” she says.

The elegant lobby serving the 115 apartments at Harbour Mansion, has red carpeting and a large chandelier. The lobby is a grand entrance to the Harbour Mansion.

Many of the paintings and graphics in the couple’s apartment have been purchased in the past few years, but it is mostly in the Elberon section. In Barnett is the better authority on the subject, according to his wife.

Many of the hangings are of the traditional style, but the Barnett’s newest acquisitions are a collection of art paintings in a variety of styles. The wallpaper is a light blue, and the couple’s art collection is a mix of styles. The couple’s art collection is a mix of styles.

When the Barnetts moved to the new apartment in November, Mrs. Barnett called a good friend, Ethel Kaufman of Ocean City, to help professional decorating advice.

“The yellow wall was chosen for walls throughout the living area, as a background for paintings and a change from the muted color scheme of their former home. Copying of things

the area and the remainder in the bedroom is, while clipped wall drug. Furniture was “renewed” and refinished, as General being given.

THE BARNETT’S son James, a junior at Massachusetts College, has a private color scheme in the bedroom. Walls are dark blue, carpet red and bed and desk white. Upholstery is red, white, and blue. Glass, silver, and other decorative accessories, used in the apartment for decoration. The large window also looks out onto the ocean.

“The apartment is a beautiful one,” Mrs. Barnett says. “It’s a wonderful experience to visit than a house, and much more so, she continues. “We have experienced everything. When things start flying, we get a better idea of the real and important things in life. I was content to sit on the plane before taking it, but an elevator ride is a lot of fun.”

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“The yellow wall was chosen for walls throughout the living area, as a background for paintings and a change from the muted color scheme of their former home. Copying of things

The great service enjoyed by residents was also highlighted in a full-page *Asbury Park Press* feature about the Harbour Mansion home of Dr. and Mrs. Lester A. Barnett, who moved to an eighth-floor oceanfront apartment in the building from an Elberon house in November of 1971. In the article, Mrs.

Barnett mentioned “the 24-hour doorman lifts packages from the car and whisks them onto a cart.”

“We have marvelous maintenance,” Mrs. Barnett was quoted as saying in the October 15, 1972, *Asbury Park Press* article. “When things need fixing, we just push a button on the wall and someone comes up immediately.”

In the article, which featured six photos of the interior of the Barnetts’ apartment as well as pictures of the building’s lobby and exterior, Mrs. Barnett stated their new home was “less expensive to run than a house, and much easier.”

**YOUR OWN
PRIVATE BEACH**

**YOUR OWN
HEALTH SPA
with year round pool**

**YOUR OWN
LUXURY CONDOMINIUM
home**



**all for the price of ONE
is awaiting your inspection at
Harbour Mansion**

Harbour Mansion, the first luxury condominium on the beautiful Jersey Shore just 55 minutes from Manhattan.

Harbour Mansion was carefully built with all the modern conveniences. Luxury layouts with huge closets. All utilities are included in your low maintenance charges, which are frozen at the present rates for three years.

All Harbour Mansion, your home is secure and safe with our 24 hour doorman service, electric, audio-visual surveillance system and double slot locks.

As for fun... "it's all here." Without leaving your home. Private ocean-front terraces, indoor-outdoor swimming pool, complete spa, including saunas, massage, steam and sun rooms, whirlpool, slenderizer, card and game rooms, coffee lounge, and housekeeping service if desired.

And, just a few short steps from your home, "it's all there." Boating, fishing, riding, shopping, houses of worship, and even race tracks. All this yet only 55 minutes from New York City.

It's a whole new concept in year 'round ocean-front living.

Harbour Mansion, on the Atlantic Ocean...and you can own it all...for the price of one.

Harbour Mansion
675 Ocean Avenue, West End, New Jersey
(201) 229-8400 - Model suites on view 10AM-6PM daily

DIRECTIONS: N.J. Turnpike to Exit 11, Garden State Parkway, south to Exit 105. Follow Rt. 36 east to just before 4th traffic light, then make right...bear left approx. 3 miles to Ocean Avenue and Harbor Mansion.
This offer is made by prospectus only.

“And now when grandchild Jonathan, son of the couple’s daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs. Robert Grossman of Baltimore, comes to visit, he can enjoy the beach or the indoor year-round pool and games rooms in the ground floor spa area. There are also saunas, steam rooms, whirlpool baths, a sun deck, and exercise rooms in the spa. On the private beach, each

condominium has its own cabanette.

**YOUR OWN
PRIVATE BEACH**

**YOUR OWN
HEALTH SPA
with year round pool**

**YOUR OWN
LUXURY CONDOMINIUM
home**



**all this awaits your inspection at
Harbour Mansion
the AFFORDABLE one**

Harbour Mansion is a truly luxurious condominium on the beautiful Jersey Shore about 50 minutes from Manhattan.

Harbour Mansion was carefully built with all the modern conveniences. Luxury layouts with huge closets. All utilities are included in your one maintenance charge.

All Harbour Mansion, your home is secure and safe with our 24 hour doorman service, electric, audio-visual surveillance system and double slot locks.

As for fun... "it's all here." Without leaving your home. Private ocean-front terraces, indoor-outdoor swimming pool, complete spa, including saunas, massage, steam and sun rooms, whirlpool, slenderizer, card and game rooms, coffee lounge, and housekeeping service if desired.

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“The elegant lobby serving the 115 apartments at Harbour Mansion has red carpet, blue velvet-covered antique French furniture, smoked glass pillars, and a fish pool centered with a bronze and marble statue of three maidens,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*, which went on to describe in detail the artwork, furnishings and color scheme in the Barnett home.

The *Asbury Park Press* article ended by stating “Dr. Barnett was chief of surgery at Monmouth Medical Center for 10 years and is now chief of the medical board” and “Mrs. Barnett involves herself in community activities. She was chairman of Asbury Park Branch, American Red Cross; president of the Service League of Monmouth Medical Center and president of the hospital’s Combined Auxiliaries, and has been president of the Sisterhood to Temple Beth El, Asbury Park. Presently, she is a member of the board of Channel 13, New York, WNET, national education television, where her main concern is securing supporting memberships.”

Dr. and Mrs. Barnett’s daughter, Bobbi Grossman, eventually moved to Harbour Mansion with her family. She was living in the oceanfront unit formerly occupied by her parents when she moved out during the summer of 2016.

Pauvre Louis Quatorze!

Pool Louis the Fourteenth. Born 300 years too soon! Ah, how the king who built the Versailles would have appreciated Harbour Mansion Condominium apartments with Old World elegance and ultra-modern conveniences.

- private beach
- year 'round swimming pool
- fully equipped spa
- private oceanfront terrace
- 24-hour electronic security
- coffee lounge & card room
- housekeeping, maid & valet services
- one hour to New York City.

Harbour Mansion: fit for a king. You deserve no less.

It's a whole new concept in oceanfront living.

Harbour Mansion
 675 Ocean Avenue, West End, New Jersey
 (201) 229-8400 • Model suites on view 10AM-6PM daily

DIRECTION: N.J. Turnpike to Exit 11, Garden State Parkway south to Exit 105. Follow Rt. 36 east to just before 4th traffic light, then make right... bear left approx. 3 miles to Ocean Avenue and Harbour Mansion.
 This offer is made by prospectus only.

Another Harbour Mansion resident featured in the *Asbury Park Press* was Charles P. Roman, described in a January 4, 1973, article as the “brain” behind the Charles Atlas muscle-building mail order enterprise.

“When strong man Charles Atlas died at the age of 79 on Dec. 23, he left his guiding spirit on earth – specifically at Harbour Mansion in West End, Long Branch,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*, which stated that Roman lived on Norwood Avenue, Deal, until recently moving to Long Branch.

The articles about the Barnetts’ Harbour Mansion home and Roman were quite a contrast from the publicity about Mafia-connected and legally troubled residents that the building received just a few years

earlier!

Eleven days later, the Appellate Division of the Superior Court refused to reduce the 1969 tax assessment of \$2 million for Harbour Mansion, "noting the Monmouth County Board of Taxation had valued the property at \$2,081,100," according to an Asbury Park Press article on October 27, 1972, which also stated the building was bought from its original owners for \$2.66 million in September of 1969.

"The court said the apartment owner failed to prove the city of Long Branch discriminated against it or that there was no common assessment level in the city," reported the *Asbury Park Press*.

The following spring, after moving forward with plans to convert rental units into condominiums, Granfar stated in a *Long Branch Daily Record* article that Harbour Mansion offers the apartment home owner several financial benefits he might not find in a brand new building: stable tax rate and minimum maintenance charges.

22 - Record Fri., May 18, 1973

Harbour Mansion Luxury Condominiums



Converted from rental, this 11-story luxury apartment building offers owners Old World Charm, modern convenience and stable tax rate on the oceanfront in West End, Long Branch.

Builders and developers envision the New Jersey Shore as the northern version of Florida's "Gold Coast." Four luxury condominiums are going up on the Atlantic Ocean in Monmouth County. But Harbour Mansion is the first such condominium to be ready for occupancy.

Harbour Mansion, which is owned by Pan Am Equities, a management consultant company headquartered in New York City, has elegant one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments and penthouses, priced from \$37,000. All feature private terraces, with most facing the Atlantic Ocean.

Harbour Mansion was originally built for rental, but was converted this year to condominium apartments for private ownership. According to Mark Granfar, resident manager, Harbour Mansion offers the apartment home owner several financial benefits he might not find in a brand new building: stable tax rate and minimum maintenance charges.

"Since the building was built several years ago, all assessments have been made," Granfar explained, "and the tax rate has been stabilized. A Harbour Mansion owner is not likely to get hit with additional taxes. Nor is he likely to come up against unexpected maintenance charges, because all "new building kinks" have been fully worked out."

"As a matter of fact," Granfar added, "the monthly maintenance charges, which are quite reasonable, have been fixed for a minimum period of three years."

The Harbour Mansion lobby with its French Provincial accoutrements and graceful George Karru sculptured fountain sets a tone of elegance that is echoed throughout.

Each apartment home features spacious, airy rooms, walnut parquet floors, and an abundance of walk-in closets and "Masterpiece" kitchens designed to make meal planning and entertaining a downright joy.

Each Harbour Mansion owner is entitled to a private "cabanette" on the private beach fronting the building.

For literature and additional information about Harbour Mansion ownership, contact: Mark Granfar, Resident Manager, Harbour Mansion, 675 Ocean Avenue, West End, N.J. 07740, (201) 229-8400.

Cherenson, Carroll, & Holzer

It is sound business practice for both publicly-owned and private companies in the real estate industry to have a vital interest in communications. They recognize the importance of maintaining good relations with the public via area newspapers, consumer and trade publications, and the financial community.

In seeking this type of service, many of New Jersey's Realtors, builders, developers and business firms have turned to Cherenson, Carroll & Holzer (OTC) to provide corporate financial and public relations services.

The firm, headquartered in Livingston (NJ), maintains offices in New York City's financial district and in Miami (Fla.). Its activities encompass a broad range of functions in communications including: the preparation, printing and distribution of interim and annual reports, the dissemination of corporate news, writing and placing feature stories in nationwide daily media, business and trade publications, and many other related public relations functions.

Cherenson, Carroll & Holzer is today one of the 50 largest public relations agencies in the United States. Its clients are widely dispersed throughout the country with particular concentrations in metropolitan New York and New Jersey, Florida, Washington (DC), Ohio, Tennessee and California.

Pauvre

“Since the building was built several years ago, all assessments have been made and the tax rate has stabilized,” Granfar explained in the May 18, 1973, *Long Branch Daily Record* article. “A Harbour Mansion owner is not likely to get hit with additional taxes. Nor is he likely to come up against unexpected maintenance charges, because all ‘new building kinks’ have been fully worked out. As a matter of fact, the monthly maintenance charges, which are quite reasonable, have been fixed for a minimum period of three years.”

The fixed maintenance fee, along with the many features and amenities available when units were offered for sale, were among the attractions for the Vallone and Buttigheri and Barnett families and other early buyers of Harbour Mansion condominiums.

According to the *Long Branch Daily Record* article, Harbour Mansion was the first of a handful of luxury condominiums to be ready for occupancy on the Atlantic Ocean in Monmouth County, which builders and developers envisioned “as the northern version of Florida’s ‘Gold Coast.’”

Part 7: Changes at Harbour Mansion and West End in the 1970s

Shortly after converting Harbour Mansion from rental to condominium units in the mid-1970s, Pan Am Equities turned the building at 675 Ocean Avenue in Long Branch over to the condominium association. The level of luxuries and services provided to unit owners changed quickly, recalled Paul Dametz, who

worked in Harbour Mansion's maintenance shop and became its supervisor until retiring in 2014.

"We had 18 people on the maintenance crew, but within a year we were down to four," Dametz said. "When the board took over, they didn't want to spend the money."

Dametz recalled that the big urn on the front lawn, fish pond in the lobby, red carpeting and various other furnishings, fixtures and decorations were removed shortly after the building went condominium. He also said that valet parking, the gardener, pool workers, beach boys and the kids that carried groceries from owners

Ocean Front Condominiums **COMPARE!** and see what you save at Harbour Mansion

When you're making one of the most important purchases you'll ever make, you owe it to yourself to shop and compare.

It's all there
At Harbour Mansion, the unique high-rise condominium, you see exactly what you get—not pictures or movies. Harbour Mansion is complete in every sense of the word.

See it to believe it
Every promised facility is there. You don't have to depend on idealized drawings. You can stand on your terrace overlooking the ocean, stroll on your private beach, see your cabanette, your indoor pool and health spa, your card rooms for entertaining, your beautiful lobby with 24 hour doorman, your lovely kitchen and bathrooms. The dimensions aren't "approximate", they exist.

Peace of mind, too
When you buy into an established condominium you can be sure the snags and uncertainties have been worked out. The dollars too are established and guaranteed, not optimistically estimated. You know where you stand and what the future holds. There are no unpleasant surprises in store!

MORE for your money
You'll find you get a lot more for your money too. Harbour Mansion was built before construction costs escalated to today's astronomical heights. No corners were cut in building Harbour Mansion. It's an investment that will appreciate over the years as you enjoy a life style unique to Harbour Mansion.

Convenience plus
By car, Harbour Mansion is only one hour from the Lincoln Tunnel. The New York Bus stops at the door! Free parking, close to shopping, schools and houses of worship, and you are protected by an electronic security system aside from 24 hour doorman.



**7 1/2%
30 YR.
FINANCING
AVAILABLE**

Fantastic values
in one to four bedroom suites. Example: Apt. 7-L, with its 15 ft. terrace on the ocean, center hall, huge living room, 2 master bedrooms, dining room, eat-in kitchen, 1 1/2 baths, big closets, walk-ins, heat and air conditioning thermostatic controls in each room. This beautiful 5-room suite is only \$44,000!* Guaranteed maintenance, which includes gas, electric, heat, health spa and pool, is only \$86.98 per month. Present taxes, (tax deductible), are only \$114.00, with total monthly expenses of only \$200.98.

Other terrific values include:
2 bedrooms, 2 baths, from \$42,511; 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, from \$57,190. One-of-a-kind penthouse with gigantic 2,500 ft. terrace on the ocean, 4 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths, \$95,000.

*Maintenance charge is guaranteed for 1 year from Jan. 1, 1974.

IMMEDIATE & FUTURE OCCUPANCY

Harbour Mansion

(201) 229-8400 or better yet, take a drive and convince yourself. 675 Ocean Ave. West End, N. J.

cars to their units were among the services eliminated.

“The urn was sold to someone in New York. They got a good price for it. I saw it on TV later years later,” Dametz said. “Carpet that was easier to maintain was put in. The board just didn’t want to continue spending the money to maintain some of the luxuries. The people who lived in the building didn’t seem to care. They were mostly retired. The younger people weren’t usually there. The beach looked like a ghost town, even in the summer.”

Nearly a year and half after becoming a top Jersey Shore “Live-in, Play-in and Share-in” luxury apartment condominium (*Long Branch Daily Record*; June 30, 1973), “immediate & future occupancy” units remained available. An advertisement in the *Asbury Park Press* headlined “Ocean Front Condominiums / Compare! / and see what you save at Harbour Mansion” ran on September 29, 1974, with subheadings that included “More for your money” and “Fantastic values.”

“Harbour Mansion was built before construction costs escalated to today’s astronomical heights,” the advertisement stated. “No corners were cut in building Harbour Mansion. It’s an investment that will appreciate over the years as you enjoy a life style unique to Harbour Mansion.”



Indeed, judging from classified advertisements around the time, it seems the value of a 3-bedroom, 2½-bathroom unit at Harbour Mansion would increase approximately 50 percent between 1974-1978.

Dametz remembers that Pan Am Equities bought some remaining condominiums in order to facilitate the transfer of ownership of the building to the association. The helicopter flights from New York with Fred Manocherian, head of Pan Am Equities, and the parties he regularly hosted, came to an end.

Still, the living was easy for those who were in the building year-round or just there during the summer. Wood from the massage room was used by Dametz and his crew to construct a new sauna. Amenities like a steam room, indoor pool and gym remained available to owners and their guests. A second floor

unit was converted to a club room for anyone in the building to use. Unit owners continued storing their beach chairs, umbrellas and other summer items in their cabanas on the bulkhead. All these amenities remain available to today.

Sylvia Kalb, who moved from Lakewood with her husband, Joseph, shortly after purchasing a unit in 1974 and still resides in the building, remembers that Harbour Mansion “was very nice” and “everyone liked it.”



“When it first went condo, everybody was anxious to help with the TVs, steam room and other things,” Kalb recalled recently.

Perry Vallone, whose family bought a unit at Harbour Mansion in 1974, recalls the pool and spa area on the first floor having a bar and lounge for neighbors and their guests to hang out and enjoy.

After visiting her grandparents in the building for several years, Barbara Lavroff Taylor and her brother, Michael Lavroff, and their mother, Dee

Gordon (who still resides in the building), began living in Harbour Mansion in 1977. Barbara remembers the then-private beach being a lot less crowded than it is today, and also recalls the swimming area in the beach being marked with poles and ropes.

“A wave sent me and the raft I was on careening into one of the poles, and the lifeguard rescued me,” Barbara recalled.

Michael recalls a lot of driftwood and globs of tar on the beach. He says the ocean by Harbour Mansion is a lot cleaner now than it was during the 1970s. He also remembers ashtrays outside the elevators and people smoking all over the building, including the lobby and pool area. Barbara says the building was a lot less family-friendly than it is today.

Both Barbara and Michael have many memories of the West End neighborhood, including the now-closed movie theater on Ocean Avenue in which they both worked. Although it's hard to picture now, they recall it was a twin theater, with the larger room downstairs holding 300-500 people and the smaller room upstairs holding around 100-150.

"I remember in '77 when 'Between the Lines' with Jeff Goldblum, John Heard and Lindsay Crouse opened," Michael said. "Southside Johnny (who performed in the film) was there. A member of his band or entourage was smoking and I said something. He turned around and said, 'Howard (son of theater owner Ed Grant), call him off!'"

Michael remembers the great jukebox at the Laugh Inn Saloon, which was next to the Brighton Bar. He also recalls the Turntable on Brighton Avenue being a "fun place" to shop. It was also "where Bruce Springsteen used to hang out," according to Long Branch resident Ginny Falvo in a Long Branch Patch article posted February 14, 2012.

Michael also remembers the Inkwell Coffeehouse being on the northwest corner of Brighton and Second avenues, where Rocky's and Criminals and Tacos recently operated, and a liquor store being located on Brighton Avenue.

Michael and Barbara recall that the business on the southwest corner of Brighton and Second avenues, currently the West End Bar and Grille and previously Arena Restaurant and Lounge, constantly changed hands.

They also remember the annual firemen's fair was held on the grounds where the 7-11 convenience store currently stands. And before they were banks, Michael and Barbara recall the Hardee's on Second Avenue between Brighton Avenue and West End Court and the miniature golf course on the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Ocean Avenue North.

Barbara recalls as a young girl being told to "watch out for the hippies" in West End Park. Orfeo D'Ambrisi, a barber on Brighton Avenue for over 50 years before closing his shop this past summer, remembers people sleeping on the beach in West End being fined by local police.

In her 2010 book, *The City Beyond the Bluff / The Life and Times of Long Branch*, author Sharon Hazard described the West End neighborhood during



(Aerial view of Harbour Mansion [center foreground) and West End neighborhood from early 1980s)

the early years of Harbour Mansion as “a melting pot of cultures” “where anything could happen.”

West End Park was “a hangout for ‘hippies’ and counter-culture activities,” Hazard wrote. “During this time, West End was referred to as the Haight/Ashbury of the east coast. Coffee houses and head shops dotted the area and had names like TurnTable, the Inkwell (whose most recent spot is just a few blocks south of the original Inkwell on Second Avenue), Kosmic Kitchen, and Mother’s Antiques. Of course, there was a surf shop.”

In the late 1970s, Harbour Mansion was jolted by two events involving criminal activities. One involved an indictment of a Neptune man in 1979 charged with obtaining money on June 15, 1978, by “pretending he was an expert in repairing and installing television security systems and would purchase and install a system for Harbour Mansion,” according to the *Asbury Park Press* on April 29, 1979.

A far bigger story, however, involved the murder of an ex-tenant of Harbour Mansion (when it was called Harbour Towers) next door at Harbour Island Spa on April 26, 1979: Anthony “Little Pussy” Russo, the reputed Mafia boss of Monmouth County who was shot to death that night while on furlough from prison.

“When Pussy Russo was killed, the FBI, Long Branch Police and New Jersey State Police came here, locked doors and asked questions,” Paul Dametz recalled. “Everyone in Harbour Mansion was interviewed.”

Articles in the *Asbury Park Press* in late April 1979 about Russo’s murder did not make any reference to Harbour Mansion. Perhaps this was evidence that efforts by Pan Am Equities to improve the building’s reputation by disassociating it from its organized crime past and converting it to a luxury condominium before transferring ownership to the association of unit owners, had some success.

Part 8: 80s romance in Harbour Mansion

PANORAMA/LIFESTYLE



Irving and Catherine Robbins take a stroll. They have been dubbed "happiest couple" at Harbour Mansion condominiums in Long Branch.

DON LORD/Asbury Park Press

Couple finds love has no age limit

By PATTI MARTIN
Press Staff Writer

It is the classic love story — boy meets girl, boy and girl fall in love, boy and girl wed.

elevator at Harbor Mansion condominiums.

"We both got on the elevator and just started talking," Catherine Robbins recalled. "In the time it took to get to my floor, I knew he was a special man."

That "first date," by all accounts, went smoothly.

"But I didn't even kiss her good night," Robbins recalled.

Mrs. Robbins then asked Robbins for a date — to her apartment for a home-cooked meal.

So on July 14, the couple got dressed up — she in a pink knit suit, he in a white blazer and dark pants — and drove to the courthouse in Jersey City.

"People wanted to know where we were going," Mrs. Robbins said.

"We told them we were going to a

There exists no documentation on the number of love affairs that began inside the walls of Harbour Mansion, of course. One such romance involving a couple who met in 1986, however, was documented in the *Asbury Park Press* two years later.

“It is the classic love story — boy meets girl, boy and girl fall in love, boy and girl wed,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press* on August 10, 1988, under a photo of an elderly couple holding hands on the Long Branch boardwalk with Harbour Mansion in the background, and the headline, “Couple finds love has no age limit.”

“Two years after a chance encounter in an elevator, Irving R. Robins and Catherine Palaia Calandriello exchanged wedding vows — and celebrated the bride’s 80th birthday,” the *Asbury Park Press* article continued.

“‘I wanted to make an honest woman of her,’ Robins said laughing, recalling the Long Branch couple’s July 14 marriage. ‘Actually, we fell in love and that’s that.’ Love — the second time around — came quite unexpectedly for the couple, who both admitted they had planned to spend their remaining years alone.

“Enter the unexpected — onto an elevator at Harbour Mansion condominiums,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*, which quoted the new Mrs. Robins as saying, “We both got on the elevator and just started talking. In the time it took to get to my floor, I know he was a special man.”

“It was like we had known each other forever,” Mr. Robins told the *Asbury Park Press*, which reported “he had forgotten to ask his elevator-mate her name, apartment number or telephone number” and “had to call around the building to find someone who knew her.”

“Once Robins obtained the elusive telephone number, though, he called the now Mrs. Robins and asked her to go out for dinner and dancing the following Saturday,” stated the *Asbury Park Press* article, which went on to explain how the relationship grew and resulted in their marriage in a Jersey City courthouse on July 14, 1988.

“Dubbed the ‘happiest couple’ by residents of the building, the Robins can now be seen most weekends dancing at the Shore Casino and most days walking the Long Branch boardwalk,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*.

“Very nice people,” recalled Ken Mellone, who began working at Harbour Mansion in 1983 and is currently a security guard at the building. “A very elderly sweet couple. I knew them both well. I used to wash their windows.”

Also seen around the West End neighborhood during the 1980s was Albert Finney, the actor who starred in the 1982 movie *Annie*, parts of which were filmed in Woodrow Wilson Hall at Monmouth University (Monmouth College back then). Barbara Lavroff Taylor, who resided at Harbour Mansion at the time, recalled seeing Finney at The Flame on the corner of Ocean Avenue and West End Court, where Tre Amici was more recently located.

A CENTURY OF HISTORY

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the Civil War, the West End-Elberon area became very fashionable as a summer resort for the affluent. They built huge rambling frame mansions along the shore which were called "cottages". An old map of the area shows that in 1883 the land where our condominium now stands was occupied by one of these "cottages" belonging to C. F. Woerishoffer, a stockbroker. The original deed shows that Mr. Woerishoffer acquired the land in 1878. Whether the house was already there or whether he built it is unclear, but it is assumed that the latter was the case. The map shows us not only a house, but also stables at the north-west corner of the property near Ocean Avenue, and two outbuildings in back of the house near the ocean. The pilings along the water's edge that were uncovered by a recent storm may have supported a private boardwalk.

In 1887 the Woerishoffer property was purchased by S. M. Schafer. In the 1920's the city directory lists Mr. Schafer's daughter Florence living there with her husband, Alfred Wolfe. It must be presumed that they were tenants in the family property because it was not until 1940 that Mrs. Wolfe acquired the house from the Schafer estate. The deed indicates that she bought it in partnership with her sister Minnie Guggenheimer, not to be confused with Guggenheim copper millionaire family who also owned several properties in the area. Mrs. Guggenheimer's husband was a very successful lawyer in New York and she was well-known in her own right as the person in charge of the Lewisohn Stadium concerts. It is interesting to note that among the people listed on the deed as having a courtesy right to the property when it was bought from the Schafer estate was the distinguished American actor, Louis Calhern, presumably because one of his four wives was a Natalie Schafer who must have been one of the heirs to the estate of S. M. Schafer.

The saga of 675 goes on. Mrs. Wolfe had a son Samuel who was in the liquor business in New York. Rumor has it that Samuel met with financial reverses and got into the power of loan sharks who threatened his life if he didn't pay up his debts. To rescue him, his mother conveyed the property to him in 1960. It was sold at a sheriff's sale in 1964. Although arson was never proved, the beautiful old house burned to the ground under rather suspicious circumstances shortly afterward. Our condominium rose phoenix-like from the ashes.

The first history of Harbour Mansion appeared in the building's January 1984 newsletter. It was edited by Sylvia Colby, who thanked Maxwell Colby, Esq., Mrs. Muriel Scoles of the Long Branch Public Library, David Finkel of the David-Pierce Abstract Company, and Mrs. Edgar Dinkelspiel for their assistance in researching the information.

Not all news articles mentioning Harbour Mansion during the 1980s, however, were quite so heartwarming. There were also stories of intruders, vandalism, and a burglary.

On July 9, 1982, the *Asbury Park Press* reported that “residents of the Harbour Mansion, 675 Ocean Ave., complained to the council about intruders on their private beach.

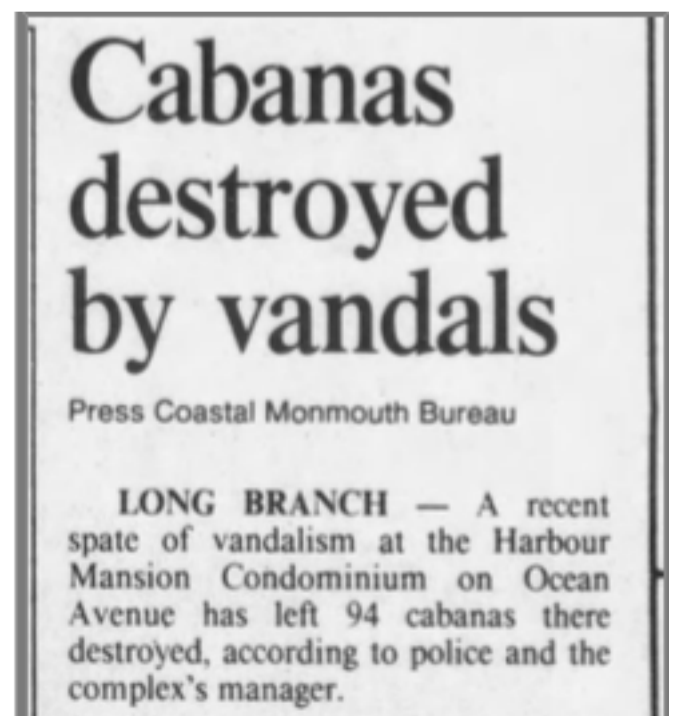
“Dan Wallace, who said he represented 114 residents of Harbour Mansion, complained of people bathing on an unprotected beach, litter and dogs on the beach and vandalism to private lockers,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*.

Wallace was quoted in the article as saying, “We have a terrible problem down there,” to which Mayor Philip D. Huhn responded, “I am acutely aware, not only of the garbage down there — it’s disgraceful, it’s a mess — but I am concerned about the safety of the people down there” and stating if there is a bathing accident on an unprotected beach, the developers of Harbour Mansion and the city could be held responsible.

Fifteen days later, in an article headlined, “Special guards to patrol Long Branch beach,” the *Asbury Park Press* reported that “In an attempt to stop people from swimming in an unprotected beach at Brighton and Ocean avenue, the city will authorize special guards to be posted at the beach today and tomorrow” and mentioned, “At a City Council meeting two weeks ago, residents of the Harbour Mansion complained about people bathing on the beach, located behind the proposed Sea Colony high-rise.”

On April 23, 1987, the *Asbury Park Press* reported, “A recent spate of vandalism at the Harbour Mansion Condominium on Ocean Avenue has left 94 cabanas there destroyed, according to police and the complex’s manager.

“Connie Yurko, building manager of the condominium complex at 675 Ocean Ave., said the cabanas were vandalized repeatedly over the last two weekends,” wrote the *Asbury Park Press*. “While the cabanas have been a target of vandals in the past, she said most of the recent



attacks were more vicious and damaging.”

The *Asbury Park Press* article mentioned that a \$1,000 reward was being offered to anyone who came forward with information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible, and included the quote from Yurko, “This was just malicious. This was out-and-out destruction. It’s a disaster scene here.”

Unfortunately, the news wasn’t any better on June 10, 1987, when the *Asbury Park Press* wrote, “About \$4,000 worth of jewelry and \$100 in cash were reported stolen from the Harbour Mansion at 11 a.m. May 30.”

With Long Branch’s golden period long gone and the city’s renaissance not yet begun during the 1980s, did these newspaper reports accurately represent a growing fear of burglaries and vandalism around Harbour Mansion? Or, did they present a distorted picture of any safety and security concerns?

“I think vandalism was more of a concern, especially to the beach deck and cabanas,” said Ken Mellone recently. “I don’t recall any burglaries, mostly walkers coming onto property or people trying to park to go to the beach or boardwalk. We were not a gated community back then.

“Very classy; upscale, clean, friendly,” is how Ken described Harbour Mansion around that time. “We would open and close the front door for residents and guests. Very wealthy residents. Professional people; doctors, lawyers, very well off retired people. Nice people; very considerate of workers. More like family.”

“Never really any safety concerns at Harbor Mansion, but there was the occasional, once or twice a summer, incident of stolen chairs and boogie boards from the cabanas, usually by kids just reaching under the locked cabana doors to take whatever was within reach,” recalled Perry Vallone, who

lived full-time in the building during part of the ‘80s while a student at Monmouth University. “I don’t recall specific incidents of damage to the cabanas, except by hurricanes of course.”

One thing that’s for sure, per realty listings like the one pictured from



the *Asbury Park Press* on May 7, 1981, is that the values of Harbour Mansion units continued climbing.

Harbour Mansion unit owners as well as other people in the area were also impacted by the closing of two Long Branch institutions during the mid-1980s: Harbour Island Spa and the Long Branch Pier.

Since the opening of Harbour Mansion (formerly Harbour Towers) in 1968, the Harbour Island Spa was its neighbor to the south. To this day, in fact, some people in Long Branch still confuse the two properties.

Some people believe that the owners of the property on 675 Ocean Avenue between 1962-1968 may have allowed Harbour Island Spa to expand beyond its northern boundary without the knowledge of city officials. This encroachment initiated a history of parking issues at Harbour Mansion which still exist today.

Even after Harbour Mansion changed owners, its residents were able to enjoy Harbour Island Spa's amenities, which included "special dietetic, medical or regular dining service and maid or valet services at discounted rates," according to a 1973 *Long Branch Daily Record* article. This convenience turned into an eyesore, however, around the mid-1980s.

"The resort once thrived," wrote Randall Gabrielan in his 2009 book, *Long Branch, New Jersey: Reinventing a Resort*, which mentioned that Harbour Island Spa's "pool was a center of game activity, including mah-jongg, canasta, and other card playing," but "fell on hard times by the late 1980s resulting in a mortgage foreclosure around 1987. The vacant place, which attracted the homeless and firebugs, was damaged by a number of incendiary blazes including two in 1992 that caused serious damage."

"They were running a pretty shady operation the last year, not even washing their pool towels, just putting them in dryer I was told," said Peter Vallone Jr., who worked at Harbour Island Spa when it closed (in 1985, he believes). "They didn't pay any staff for last two weeks."

Peter, Perry and their brother, Paul Vallone, and cousins, Joe Buttigheri and Anthony Constantinople, all worked as lifeguards for Harbour Mansion as youths, when the sand and waters behind it were a private beach for its

condominium owners. Because state law at the time required a lifeguard whenever it was open, the building's indoor pool was part of their responsibilities.

“Loved working as a lifeguard,” recalled Peter, “even though back then we were solely responsible for all duties, including cleaning the pool and pool area, enforcing all the rules, security, putting up the umbrellas, pretty much everything -- all while only one or two of us were on beach watching the water. Proud to say no one ever died, and my brothers and I made multiple saves.”



Aerial view of Harbour Mansion (center foreground) with Harbour Island Spa to its left and "big ditch" on the right from early 1980s

“In those days, the lifeguards were run by the building -- there was no outside beach and pool service provider -- which was basically the head lifeguard, who reported to the live-in building manager, overseeing a crew of six or so guards,” remembered

Perry. “Lifeguards not only lifeguarded, but cleaned the pool area, including bathrooms and showers, and the beach, which often meant digging holes along the beach and raking hundreds and sometimes thousands of mussels into the holes and then covering them with sand.

“We no longer get many mussels on our beach for some reason, but back then there were days where there was a sea of mussels all across the high tide line,” said Perry, who continues to enjoy summer weekends at Harbour Mansion with his brothers, cousins and other family members. “The lifeguards were also

responsible for making sure only residents used the beach. I recall many an awkward conversation asking people to pick up their stuff and move to the 'free beach,' which was the beach in front of the big ditch, which eventually became the Renaissance.”

Paul Dametz, who worked in the building’s maintenance shop and became its supervisor until retiring in 2014, recalls the first major beach replenishment project at Harbour Mansion occurred around the mid-1980s.

“The beach was over 400 feet long when it was completed,” Paul said recently. “Many people couldn’t get to the water. We needed to build walkways, and we installed showers in front of the bulkhead.”

Many people around the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area recall advertisements for the Haunted Mansion, if not the spooky attraction itself. The Long Branch Pier was more than just that to many people in Harbour Mansion and others locally, particularly those who were young during the 1970s and ‘80s.

“It included rides, games of chance, Wizard’s World, and the famous Haunted Mansion,” wrote Sharon Hazard in her 2010 book, *The City Beyond the Bluff / The Life and Times of Long Branch*. “The waterslide on the west side of the boardwalk was part of the amusement area. It was also known as the Fishing Pier.

“This final pier lasted through years of steady decline until an early-afternoon fire destroyed it in 1987 caused by a gas leak ignited by electrical arcing under the boardwalk,” Hazard wrote of the June 8, 1987, blaze on the pier, the remains of which was destroyed by a storm five years later before the city tore it down in 1997.

“I remember going to the pier on summer nights during my teen years in the late '70s and spent time at the arcades and on the rides,” recalled Barbara Lavroff Taylor. “During the early '80s, Pier Pub was a very popular nightspot for the young crowd. The drinking age was 18, and then went to 19, I believe in 1982, before it went up to 21. Thursday nights you could get 25-cent Meister Braus, and they had dance and trivia contests where you could win bottles of cheap champagne -- J. Roget!”



Aerial view of Long Branch Pier from the early 1980s

Perry Vallone also remembers the Pier Pub fondly. He recalls that's where he met his wife!

There exists no documentation that the elderly newlyweds Ira and Catherine Robbins liked to enjoy themselves at the Long Branch Pier. But, it can be safely assumed that numerous people walking to or from the pier saw them holding hands on the boardwalk many days.

Part 9: Neighbors move into the Harbour Mansion beach and next door

The 1990s was not a period of major changes inside the walls of Harbour Mansion, but residents of the building on 675 Ocean Avenue were impacted by changes to its beach access, to the property directly to its south, to businesses just north, and other parts of Long Branch.

Perry Vallone, who was Harbour Mansion's attorney for part of the 1990s, recalls public access to the Harbour Mansion beach from Ocean Avenue was created during the 1990s, when the Villas at Harbour Island was built at the site where Harbour Island Spa operated before closing in the mid-1980s.



“The law at that time required developers of beachfront property to provide a public access,” Perry said. “Incredibly, the initial proposal had the access right on our southern property line, on the outside of the fence enclosing the Villas! One of my accomplishments as an attorney for the association was to get the Villas to agree to enclose the public access within their property and fence and landscape the boundary line, in addition to agree to share the expenses of maintaining the beach.”

As a result of the construction of the Villas at Harbour Island and the public access pathway directly outside its southern property line, therefore, Harbour Mansion no longer had a private beach for its residents by the late 1990s. West End neighbors and other area sunbathers, including students from Monmouth University (known as Monmouth College until 1995) were able to gain access to the beach. Harbour Mansion residents didn't have to pay an access fee as long as they had a badge. The arrangement continues to this day.

According to a *New York Times* article published on November 1, 1996, equity and bank financing for the Villas at Harbour Island was being provided by the Kushner Companies – yes, the same Kushner family that made major news during Donald Trump’s successful U.S. presidential campaign -- who bought the abandoned property for \$1.1 million in 1993 from CitiBank, “which foreclosed on the property four years earlier when the former owner defaulted on its loan and filed for bankruptcy.”

BUSINESS DAY | ABOUT REAL ESTATE

Old Oceanside Spa to Be Razed for Town Houses

By RACHELLE GARBARINE NOV. 1, 1996

For nearly a decade, a five-story building has sat empty on a bluff here overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. But by the end of the year, work is expected to begin on a \$10 million luxury town house complex to replace it.

The development, the Villas at Harbor Island, will have 55 residences priced from \$250,000 to \$500,000. They will rise over the next 18 months on a six-acre site along Ocean Avenue in this old Monmouth County resort city, 70 miles from Manhattan.

New York Times, 11/1/96

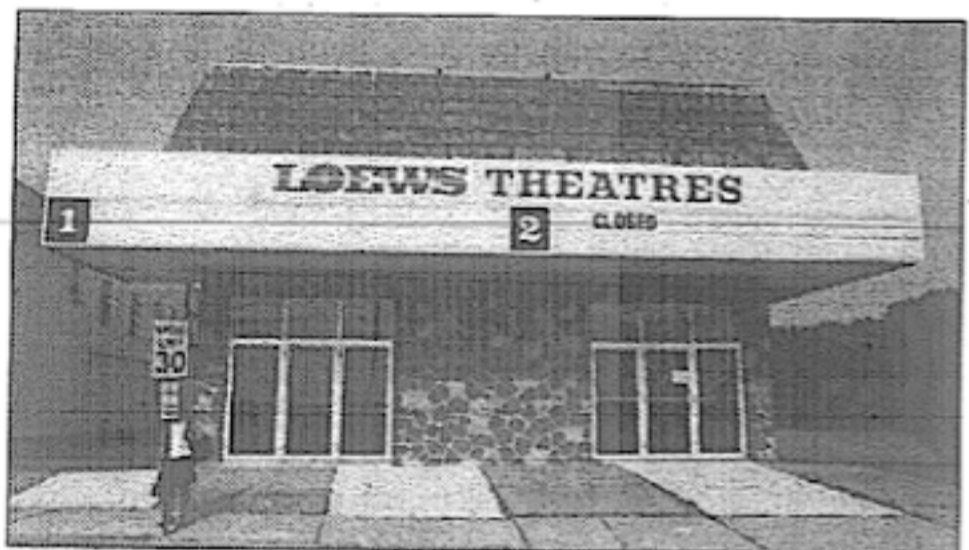
Charles Kushner, president, stated “oceanfront properties are in limited supply” and location was a principal reason for the purchase, according to the *New York Times*, which also wrote that to many people in Long Branch, “the Kushner project represents the start of the city's rebirth,” and included the quote from Mayor Adam Schneider, “It shows there is renewed confidence in the city's oceanfront.”

“The site is between two luxury condominium buildings, in the city's West End district,” the *New York Times* wrote. “It is less than a mile from Deal to the south, where some homes sell for millions of dollars. The nearby redevelopment district, part of Long Branch's five miles of shoreline, has been designated with the aim of injecting new economic life into the city.”

The two luxury buildings referred to by the *New York Times* were Harbour Mansion (built in 1967-68) and Ocean Cove, which was built in 1984. A third luxury high-rise, the Imperial House, built in 1972-73 across Ocean Avenue from St. Michael's Church, stood south of Harbour Mansion and Ocean Cove.

Construction of Renaissance on the Ocean, where Mac's Embers, West End Nursery School, Seashore Day Camp and Nursery, and Surfside Pool and Cabana Club formerly stood before becoming a parking lot to West End Theater patrons and "the pit" to beachgoers, did not start until 1999.

The West End Theater transitioned from a popular entertainment option for Harbour Mansion residents and other locals -- and a place where some young people like Michael Lavroff and Barbara Lavroff Taylor could work part-time -- to an abandoned building by the mid-1990s, after it was sold by Grant Theaters to Sony. The final films screened at the theater, which was last branded Loews Theatres, were "Village of the Damned" and "Circle of Friends" on June 18, 1995.



THE LAST PICTURE SHOW — The West End movie theatre closed this week. No word yet on the fate of the building.

Atlanticville, 6/22-28/95

According to the June 22-28, 1995, issue of *Atlanticville*, "Apparently the last movie was shown there this past weekend. Both the West End and Community (Movie Theatre in Eatontown) are owned by Sony, which recently opened the super theatre complex at the Monmouth Mall. The closing of the Community and West End is part of a long-term plan."

"When the Grants owned it they showed a lot of great movies, more indie and hip films young people wanted to see," recalled Beth Woolley, who frequented the West End Theater as a teenager. "Sony bought it just to close it down when they opened the multiplex at Monmouth Mall. They put it on the market with the stipulation that no first run movie theater could open in it."

”Once a grand resort, Long Branch began losing residents and businesses to shore communities farther south in the 1950's,” continued the November 1, 1996, *New York Times* article. “While the boom in the 1980's brought a spate of redevelopment, including some 500 condos, prosperity remained elusive.

“To reverse that trend, the city, in partnership with local resident and business groups known as Long Branch Tomorrow, approved a redevelopment plan for the mostly desolate oceanfront strip this summer. There, they envision a new village with 1,300 market-rate residences and 600,000 square feet of office and retail space,” wrote the *New York Times*. “Long Branch will use tax and other incentives, such as helping developers acquire sites and expediting the approval process, to draw investment to its shoreline and by extension to the rest of city.”

The "new village" referred to in the article was, of course, Pier Village, eventually constructed in the new millennium. The *New York Times* also mentioned that the 250-room Ocean Place Hilton, which is now known as the Ocean Place Resort and Spa, opened in 1990 and was “the last sizable investment to have been made in the city” before the Villas at Harbour Island.

OCEAN FRONT HI-RISE
Open HOUSE
HAPPENING
SUNDAY NOV. 10th 12-3PM
HARBOUR MANSION...
MULTI UNITS
You must come to 642 Ocean Ave., Long Branch, Realty World Lifestyles Realty And we will escort you there. Only way permitted by Condo Association.
**REALTY WORLD
LIFESTYLES REALTY
571-1110**

Asbury Park Press ad, 11/10/91

Susan Diamond, who moved to Harbour Mansion in 1996 with her husband and their youngest son (one of the few school-aged children in the building at the time) said she walked the nearby boardwalk daily, mostly in the spring and summer.

“The boardwalk was okay, but I avoided it at night,” Susan said of her first years as a resident. “We moved into the building, not Long Branch. West End is better now. It has more restaurants and is better maintained.”

Lois Gerber, whose parents, Martin and Florence Gerber, bought a unit in Harbour Mansion in 1995, recalls Long Branch was in decline during the 1990s. She was told by a neighbor in 2001 that it wasn't safe to be on the boardwalk in broad daylight. The area where the pier formerly

stood had many small houses and bungalows considered substandard. She was not convinced of the danger, however, and walked north without incident.

Lois remembers the Foodtown supermarket on West End Court before it became a Stop & Shop in 2011, and the Hollywood Pharmacy on Ocean Avenue in West End. Some neighbors recall the pharmacy was owned by Marilyn Dishler, who eventually became part of the security staff at Harbour Mansion.



Asbury Park Press ad, 3/7/93

Susan said a majority of the residents during the 1990s were original owners who were retired. These neighbors “were protective” of the building, looking out for what was going on, and she recalls a group of the ladies use to exercise in the pool.

“My mother led the classes with tapes from her boombox when she was active enough to do it,” Lois recalled.

The indoor pool, in fact, is what drew Susan and her husband, Richard, to Harbour Mansion.

“We had a friend in the penthouse who we visited,” Susan recalled. “We wanted to swim, and it was the only place in the area with an indoor pool. He suggested we buy an apartment. I was afraid of hurricanes, but we did it. It was also a way of getting out of taking care of our house and property.

“The maintenance guys were very nice,” Susan continued. “They were available to take care of things around our unit for a nominal charge for years.”

Paul Dametz, one of the building’s original employees, was in the middle of his long tenure as Harbour Mansion’s head of maintenance during the 1990s. Ken Mellone, formerly in the maintenance department, began his current overnight shift as a security guard in 1998, shortly after the death of Jim Homer, who also was a maintenance worker before becoming a security guard. Ken recalls that Robert Hislip, an employee until 2015, also joined the security staff during the 1990s.

Lois recalls the dated mirrors in the building and her parents' apartment, and the desk in the middle of the lobby. The furniture currently in the second floor club room was formerly in the first floor lounge room.

Lois remembers there was no gate at the entrance to the Harbour Mansion property, and parking was "catch as catch can." The beach wasn't as big as it is now and the jetties were fully exposed, she recalls.

Although the pool area was recently modified, Susan doesn't think much has changed with the physical structure of the building. She does feel, however, the general atmosphere in the building is different now.

"I like it. There are many more younger people walking around now," she said. "Of course, we were one of the younger people when we moved in, but we're one of the older ones now."

JAMES ERIC HOMER, 44, LONG BRANCH, died Tuesday at River-view Medical Center, Red Bank. He



was a security guard for 20 years at the Harbour Mansion in Long Branch. Mr. Homer was a member of Asbury Park Elks Lodge 128, attended Long

Branch public schools and graduated Elizabeth Prep School in 1971. Born in Oceanport, he was a lifelong Long Branch resident.



Part 10: It's party time at Harbour Mansion!



Beach party, Labor Day weekend 2011

It took a few years after the start of the new millennium for Harbour Mansion to begin feeling like a 21st century place rather than a building stuck in the 1980s. There weren't structural or cosmetic changes that made a major difference in the years between 2000-09. But, there was definitely a cultural change in the building, driven by younger people buying condo units.

Lori Greenberg, who moved from the Sea Verge apartments to Harbour Mansion in 2001, recalls it took a few years for her new home to feel like a fun place to live.

“The first couple of years I was just living here,” Lori said. “People were older. I remember a lot of women in their 90s would get dressed up and play mahjong downstairs.”

“I sat on the beach by myself,” Lori said. “I recall only two other people around my age. As time went on, little by little, more younger people moved in. Then a little later we started getting involved with each other. And then we started a beach circle where we would sit by each other and socialize. It started little, and then it got bigger.”



Young twins in beach circle, 2009

Joe Principe remembers a similar change during the first decade of the new millennium. He and his wife bought a unit in Harbour Mansion in 2002 and moved into the building in 2003. He recalls neighbors were older and seemingly set in their ways as far as the building’s appearance was concerned.

“The philosophy was, ‘Why do you change something that’s not broken?’”

he said of his first years in Harbour Mansion. “The lighting in the hallways was poor. I remember there were ashtrays on each floor, and mirrors around the outside of the elevator doors. There was even a cigarette machine in the garage. Things were getting tired looking, but Paul (Dametz) and his crew really maintained the building. They knew all its ins and outs. The maintenance staff was very helpful.

“The building started changing when younger people started moving in around 2006-2007,” Joe said.

The changes happened little by little, Joe recalls. Shortly after he moved in, he brought his own treadmill for everyone to use in the gym and also donated artwork for its walls. Within a few years, rugs in the elevators were replaced by tile flooring. The first-floor bathrooms were changed, as were the locker rooms and rug in the pool area. The lobby was redesigned.

Ray Ambrosino and his wife, who grew up in Long Branch, attended a birthday party hosted at Harbour Mansion in the summer of 2007 by her uncle, Steve Magistro, who had recently bought a unit. Ray considered the building run

down, but saw its potential. Like Lori, Joe and other people who had recently bought a unit in it, he understood the value of beachfront property. He asked a realtor to show him units available for sale.

“I looked out the window and thought, ‘This is it,’ I fell in love with it right away,” Ray recalled.

As Joe had done a few years earlier, Ray began serving on the condominium association board of trustees shortly after purchasing his unit. In his opinion, the cultural mindset of the building with some exceptions was to utilize a “Band-Aid” approach by being reactive rather than developing specific intermediate- and long-term goals. He remembers the rusty chain link fence by the ocean, ceiling tiles falling, the dingy hallways and dated smoky glass around the building.

“It seemed like everything stopped after the mid-80s,” Ray said.

Ray and other younger people in the building, many who bought a condo unit as a second home to enjoy during the summer and other weekends in the year, wanted to enjoy their time in the building as much as possible. A Fourth of July beach party was organized in 2008, with a small group of unit owners and friends bringing food and drinks to share. The following summer, after a sand



May 2009, after beach replenishment

replenishment project significantly expanded the beach, a caterer and disc jockey were hired for the beach party.

Subsequently, Labor Day Weekend parties and other social gatherings, including a clambake, were organized. The condominium association eventually invited all unit owners to the beach parties and subsidized the costs. More events inside the building were added to the social calendar, giving everyone an opportunity to meet and get to know others in the building.



September 2008, before beach replenishment

In just a few years, the Harbour Mansion culture had changed. Gone were the days when “people almost frowned if you were having too much fun,” Ray recalled.

It was also a contrast to when the public was first able to access the Harbour Mansion beach, just before the new millennium.

Although Lori and Joe don’t remember non-

Harbour Mansion unit owners and guests on the beach being an issue, Joe recalled a group of women from the building “would see who was on the beach; they knew who belonged there.”

The *Asbury Park Press* published a letter on June 14, 2002, by Avery Grant, who complained about Mayor Adam Schneider’s “vision of the beachfront as a new wealthy zone” and seemingly difficult access to the Renaissance on the Ocean and Harbour Mansion beaches.

“Harbour Mansion is blocking an easement to the beach with a fee structure and signage that does not belong in a public trust easement to the beach,” the letter stated. “It belongs within their lifeguard area. Others must be allowed to pass through to these public areas. This is a restrictive move on the part of a

private entity that doesn't really want public access at all, and never did. It is disconcerting that the City Council voted 5-0 to allow this."

"Unfortunately, the resolution passed by the City Council would include both citizens who just want to walk down the easement to arrive on public trust lands commonly referred to as 'the beach,' as well as those who 'wish to use that portion of the beach owned and controlled by Harbour Mansion Condominium Association," a separate letter by Brian Unger published in the *Asbury Park Press* on May 21, 2010, stated. "That's awfully close to a private entity managing or controlling access to a public beach."

Another significant change for residents of Harbour Mansion and many others in Long Branch and the Jersey Shore area was the opening in 2005 of Pier Village, just a boardwalk stroll or short drive away from the building.

"For anyone who hasn't visited the Long Branch oceanfront lately, the reaction to the new community called Pier Village can only be open-mouthed astonishment," reported the *New York Times* on July 30, 2006. "The sad features that defined this place not so long ago — the tumbledown housing, the abandoned pier, the defunct and rat-infested water slide — are gone, magically replaced by what looks like the set of 'The Truman Show.'"

"Through the 1980s and 1990s, weekend beachgoers just headed farther south, avoiding the place altogether," stated another *New York Times* article about the city on September 30, 2007. "But Long Branch is now hot, hot, hot. The boardwalk has been rebuilt, and the beaches have been replenished with



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Asbury Park Press; March 4, 2007



Photo from piervillagenj.com

sand. There are new condominium towers and town houses.”

“Everybody loved it,” recalled Lori. “It was great to have good restaurants and nice shops we could walk to. Actually, I was much more thrilled with it then than I am now.”

Everybody was very excited,” Joe agreed. “Everyone talked how it was going to bring Long Branch up.”

Pier Village was quite a contrast to the Long Branch beachfront Joe first experienced in 1989, when he stepped out of the Hilton (now Ocean Place) and said, “Oh, my God.” He remembered “everything was burned out.” Joe didn’t return to Long Branch for 13 years, when he decided to purchase a unit in Harbour Mansion.



Asbury Park Press; July 25, 2009

Even as the Harbour Mansion culture was changing and some minor improvements inside the building began to be visible, a multi-million-dollar façade renovation and window replacement project became a hot topic of debate among unit owners as the first decade of the new millennium rolled along.

Joe remembers discussing the project in 2003 when he first served on the condominium association board of trustees. He recalls discussions about financing of the project “frightened people; no one wanted to come up with that kind of money.”

“People pushed back on the project because of its huge cost, but at the same time they were complaining about water leaks in their units,” Joe said. “We knew it had to be done because of the age of the building. The board had to educate people on the need for the project, but people procrastinated on it for some time.”

“The DCA (New Jersey Department of Community Affairs) was going to fine us if we didn’t do masonry repairs to the exterior of the building,” explained Ray, who served on the condominium association board by the end of the decade.

Lois Gerber, a current condominium association board trustee whose parents bought a unit in Harbour Mansion in 1995, first learned about the façade restoration and windows replacement discussions around 2004.

“At that time, the trustees wanted to move forward with both facade renovation and window replacement,” Lois said. “However, board membership changed after the next election and no action was taken. The rest is history when the NJ DCA responded to reports of facade instability and falling pieces and ordered Harbour Mansion to remediate.”

In August 2009, the Harbour Mansion Condominium Association Board of Trustees finally agreed to move forward with the part of the project involving the restoration of the façade and its financing plan.

Joe and Ray also recall during the mid- to late-2000s Harbour Mansion was among the first buildings involved in the Long Branch Coalition of Condominium Associations, which originally focused on boardwalk-related issues, trash/utilities reimbursement, assessments and a few other common topics with the city.



Asbury Park Press, March 9, 2007

Part 11: Harbour Mansion survives Superstorm Sandy and moves forward



New facade on Harbour Mansion, February 2013

By 2009, as a cultural change driven by younger unit owners was becoming more apparent inside the building, Harbour Mansion began to look differently outside as well. That's when the long-planned façade restoration and waterproofing project was finally undertaken.

The \$2.2 million project prevented unit owners from accessing their balconies for a year or longer in many cases. Dust getting into units caused the project to be delayed in 2010 and again in 2011. The condominium association board spent countless hours trying to keep the project moving forward to a conclusion. It finally succeeded in early 2012, when the last of the spandrels were secured, weep holes

cleared, balcony surfaces scarified and coated, and new balcony railings installed. The freshly waterproofed building sported a fresh coat of “Amarillo white” base paint by the project's conclusion.

And then, on October 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy struck Long Branch and the rest of the Jersey Shore, inflicting severe and costly damage up and down the state's coast and elsewhere in the United States.

Long Branch police knocked on the doors of Harbour Mansion residents the day before, asking them to evacuate. Some did, but others chose to stay. They were fortunate as the storm caused no damage to condo units and minimal damage to the building's exterior. Power was restored in the building eight days later.

"I felt very safe inside the building," recalled Lori Greenberg, who began living in Harbour Mansion in 2001. "But the noises outside were scary. We could hear the wind damaging the building next to us. But our building was a rock.

"There was a real sense of community among those of us who stayed," Lori said. "We had fun together, and actually missed it after things started getting back to normal."



(Lori recorded and shared this video of Superstorm Sandy reaching and beginning its destruction of the bulkhead and beach deck.)

Harbour Mansion's beach bulkhead and

cabanas, however, did not fare as well as the building. They were washed away by Superstorm Sandy, causing the rear of the parking lot to become unstable. Eventually, the parking lot needed to be closed for several months. In total, the storm caused nearly \$1.6 million worth of damage to the property.

Most of the damage caused to the Harbour Mansion property by Superstorm Sandy was not covered by insurance. This resulted in unit owners receiving an assessment for the repairs barely a year after paying for the façade restoration and waterproofing project.

Paul Dametz, who worked on the property since the mid-1960s and became Harbour Mansion's head of maintenance before retiring in 2014, said



View from beach, four months after Superstorm Sandy

Superstorm Sandy was the most damaging weather event in the building's history.

“We lost the whole bulkhead, just a year and a half after we redid the deck flooring,” said Paul. “We had some other bad storms in the past, but they never did more than shift some of the bottom steps to the beach.”

“I’ve never seen so much damage to property,” said Lisa Williams, building

manager at Harbour Mansion since 2010. “But, the building fared well. No windows were damaged, and there was no flooding because the water never got to the building. I attribute it to the building being well above sea level.”

The parking lot was repaired and, in 2014, a new bulkhead deck was opened. In 2015, new cabanas were made available to unit owners.

Since Superstorm Sandy struck, a series of major interior improvements have also been made, most noticeably new light fixtures, carpeting and wallpaper in the hallways of each floor, and a new bar-height countertop/wall, flooring and fresh paint in the pool area. The kitchen area in the lounge room was also upgraded. This past spring and summer, the first floor lobby and hallways were completely redone.



Remains of Harbour Mansion bulkhead days after Sandy

Considering few investments besides maintenance were made in the building shortly after it finished converting to condominiums in the mid-1970s, the improvements were overdue.

“Up until about five years ago, the building looked the same for many years. Not one thing had been redone.” said Lori. “I was very happy to make the changes as part of our decorating committee. We were very glad to see the board wanted to make the changes.”



Bulkhead reconstruction, November 2013



Bulkhead reconstruction, March 2014

“The board started working in unison to get things done,” said Ray Ambrosino, current board president and a trustee of the condominium association for most of the years since he first bought a unit at Harbour Mansion in 2007. “We were able to do many renovations throughout the building, such as the inside pool area, lounge, rebuild our bulkhead, cabanas and parking lot after Superstorm Sandy, and get financial approval to go forward with multiple improvements elsewhere in the building.”

Now, Ray points out, the bar has been set high for future possibilities.

“The culture has changed. People expect a lot more,” he said. “They have high, sometimes unrealistic, expectations of

what the board can do. But, that’s a good thing from where we were. The pendulum has certainly swung. Owners now ask about valet parking, cabanas on the beach, and an outdoor pool. The board has some great challenges

ahead, and we need to be realistic of what we can accomplish and in what time frame. However, we do believe in thinking outside the box.

“Through the years, we have retrained staff per their new expectations,” Ray continued. “We want to make it the second greatest place in the world, only second to Disney! We still have room to grow.”

Joe Principe, who bought a unit in 2002 and served as a board trustee during part of that time, agrees the changes at Harbour Mansion have been positive but more changes will need to be carefully considered.

“As a board member you have to think outside of the box and think what’s best for everyone,” he said.

“Everyone has grand ideas, but they don’t think about how they’re going to be financed. People don’t think of all the repercussions.”

“We have to bring in changes to enhance the property and bring it into the 21st century,” Joe continued. “There are still things that can be changed going forward. You have to plan, have a target. Otherwise, values won’t increase.”



Redone ground floor lobby, July 2017

And, just how do the values of Harbour Mansion units compare to those of its neighboring high-rise buildings to the south, Sea Cove and Imperial House, which were built 16 and five years, respectively, after Harbour Mansion (then Harbour Towers) opened in 1968?

“There is still a disparity between what people pay for a unit at Harbour Mansion compared to those in nearby buildings, but that gap is closing,” Ray said. “Recent sales have sold close to or above asking price.”

“We’re still a little bit lower compared to the other high-rises but, since 2014, the agents I brought into the building are amazed by the changes,” said Lori, a real estate agent with Re/Max Elite in Long Branch. “They love when listings come up. As a realtor, it’s great to have people come here.”

Compared to neighboring buildings, however, there are cultural advantages that existing and potential owners see in Harbour Mansion today. Lori believes there is “a real sense of community” in the building, pointing out that “people are coming in and staying; some are moving to larger units.”



Beach party, July 2014

“We enjoy our time together and the beach, and we have parties together,” Lori said. “We have great camaraderie, and are more accepting of different people. We have large groups of friends you don’t normally get in a place like this.”

“The camaraderie in the building has changed dramatically through the years,” Ray said. “It doesn’t matter what race, religion,

partner choice or age you are, when we have social events everyone enjoys one another.”

“People are coming to Harbour Mansion to purchase units in order to enjoy the ocean and access to the beach,” said Joe, who feels the Long Branch beachfront “will always have value because it’s by water.”

“Water is magic,” Joe said. “People cling to the ocean and pay for the value of the ocean. When you sell your apartment, it’s the ocean that sells it. When you drive into the property, the first thing people look at is the ocean.”

As the building approaches its 50th birthday, many of Harbour Mansion’s residents are optimistic about its future. The building has never existed as an

island, however, and its future fate is at least partially tied to those of the West End neighborhood and, more generally, Long Branch.

“I wish it would have stayed a little more artsy like I read about,” said Lori about West End. “I don’t like it when businesses come and go for the summer. I don’t like the chabad. I wish the bars and businesses were more neighborhood-oriented.”

Still, Lori is pleased with the broader changes around Long Branch, and is optimistic about the city’s future.

“It’s great, and I’m happy we’re part of it,” Lori said. “I believed in Long Branch when I came, hoping it would have a revival. And, it has. When you tell people you’re from Long Branch, you get more positive comments. They mention Pier Village and the tiki bar (by Ocean Place). You see Long Branch people in Naples and elsewhere in Florida now. You wouldn’t before.”

Joe continues to have mixed feelings about how the West End neighborhood and Long Branch in general have evolved.

“It didn’t progress as fast as I thought it would. It didn’t get built up like I thought,” said Joe. “We could’ve had more retailers, like in Asbury Park. It’s despicable what happened on Brighton Avenue last year, with the taking down of trees. Parking and traffic remain a problem in West End. There was going to be a new building next door to us, but the real estate market crash put everything on hold.

“I purchased here for the access to the beach,” Joe said. “Long Branch itself was on the way up, but you had to look outside the box to visualize the changes. It took a while. I had mixed feelings about Long Branch at the time I bought my unit 15 years ago. I still do. I think the town can do more. Look how long it took to get our boardwalk redone after Sandy.”



P-Funk North at social event, Labor Day weekend 2017

Ray thinks the future of the city and neighborhood are bright as the economy strengthens and entrepreneurs take advantage of opportunities in the area.

“The fire (on Brighton Avenue in 2012) negatively impacted the town, businesses and people. In the past, West End used to have higher end boutiques. It was a happening place. People came from local towns such as Deal,” said Ray.



New cabanas on beach deck, May 2015

“I’ve been told that West End’s demise was caused by Pier Village. The town has certainly been trying to bring people to the area with events like Art in the Park, car shows, Sunday concerts and the weekly farmers market. However, more can be done after the summer ends,” continued Ray. “Some exciting things are happening all over Long Branch, including West End. It’ll be exciting to see the theatre (New Jersey Repertory Company) in West End.

“I was happy to hear when the City Council approved the West End Overlay District, instead of keeping it the same for another 10 years. Changes in West End are going to be driven by entrepreneurs. The government can and should only do so much,” Ray said. “I’d like to see some of what happened in Asbury Park happen here. West End seems to be only seasonal, which will make it a challenge.

“Pier Village phase 3 (The Lofts) should be good. With the recent purchase of Pier Village, we are seeing a lot of positive developments and expansions,” continued Ray. “The downtown landscape is certainly changing and has momentum.”

And the future of Harbour Mansion?



“We’re turning up in the economic cycle,” Ray said. “We’re in the beginning an expansion. I only see it getting better and I do see Harbour Mansion becoming one of the most sought-after property in the West End section of Long Branch. And, if the ferry actually comes, watch out!”



Beach deck, summer 2017

Postscript

Visit from a historical figure

When a Harbour Mansion resident saw an unfamiliar but distinguished-looking elderly gentleman in the parking lot standing next to a car with two passengers as he stared up at our building earlier this year, she approached him and asked if she could help him. He politely replied he owned the building many years ago and just wanted to see what it looked like now since he was in the area.

“Oh, you must be Mr. Manocherian,” our neighbor, Noreen Bruns, said to the man.

Fred Manocherian, who as the head of Pan Am Equities did indeed own Harbour Mansion from 1969 until turning it over our condominium association in the mid-1970s, beamed when our neighbor correctly identified him. He introduced Noreen to his wife and daughter, who were in the car after walking around the ground floor of the property with him a few moments earlier.

“It was truly an amazing coincidence that the only tenant we spoke to yesterday knew who Fred was,” Fred’s wife wrote to Charley Bruns afterwards. “We enjoyed the trip down memory lane.”

“My whole family has many memories of our time in apartment 2c,” Fred’s daughter added in an email afterwards. “My father just turned 87. He still works seven days a week and exercises every day. He is a force and a good human being who remembers where he started. This recognition meant so much to him. And to me.”

In a phone conversation with Charley afterwards, Fred said he last visited the building about 30 years ago and noticed many changes since that time. He also answered questions about why Pan Am Equities bought the building from the original owners in 1969 and why his company decided to sell it after investing to make it a luxury property.

“The building was half-finished when I bought it,” Fred said, adding he had no idea the Mafia was involved with its construction. “It had a temporary certificate of occupancy. A bank asked me to get involved to save it. I looked at it and saw the potential.

“When the majority of units were sold, we turned the building over to the association of owners,” Fred explained. “The building was far away from central Manhattan, which was the core of our business. It wasn’t easy for us to manage.”

Fred Manocherian, who is also the founder of the New York Health & Racquet Club, is among the most significant figures in the history of Harbour Mansion. To read more about Pam Am Equities’ purchase of the building, investment in making it the first luxury condominium on the Jersey Shore, and eventual divestment of the building, see parts [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#) of the Harbour Mansion West End Long Branch history blog. You can read the entire history of the building in reverse chronological order at: <http://harbourmansionwelbhistory.blogspot.com/>.

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Since the last blog about the history of Harbour Mansion was posted in 2017, I was saddened by the passing of Paul Dametz in 2020, Sylvia Kalb in 2021, and Beth Woolley in 2022. I will always remain grateful for their significant contributions to my blog series. Without the memories and time they shared with me, much of the history about the building and its neighborhood would never have been known to me or, perhaps, you.

April 23, 2023

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About the author

Charles Lopez Bruns, who researched and wrote this history of Harbour Mansion, bought a condo unit in the building in 2008 and began living there year-round in 2012 with his wife, Noreen.

Charley is a communication consultant and writer, and former journalist, corporate communication director and adjunct professor at Monmouth University and other New Jersey colleges. His first book, Fatherlands: Identities of a Cuban American, was published in 2021 and is available in print and digital formats.

You can read more about Charley at www.charlesanthonycomm.net. He can be reached at charlesanthonycomm@gmail.com and is often seen around the West End neighborhood, Ocean Avenue boardwalk and, on summer weekends, the Harbour Mansion beach.

