

Historical Views

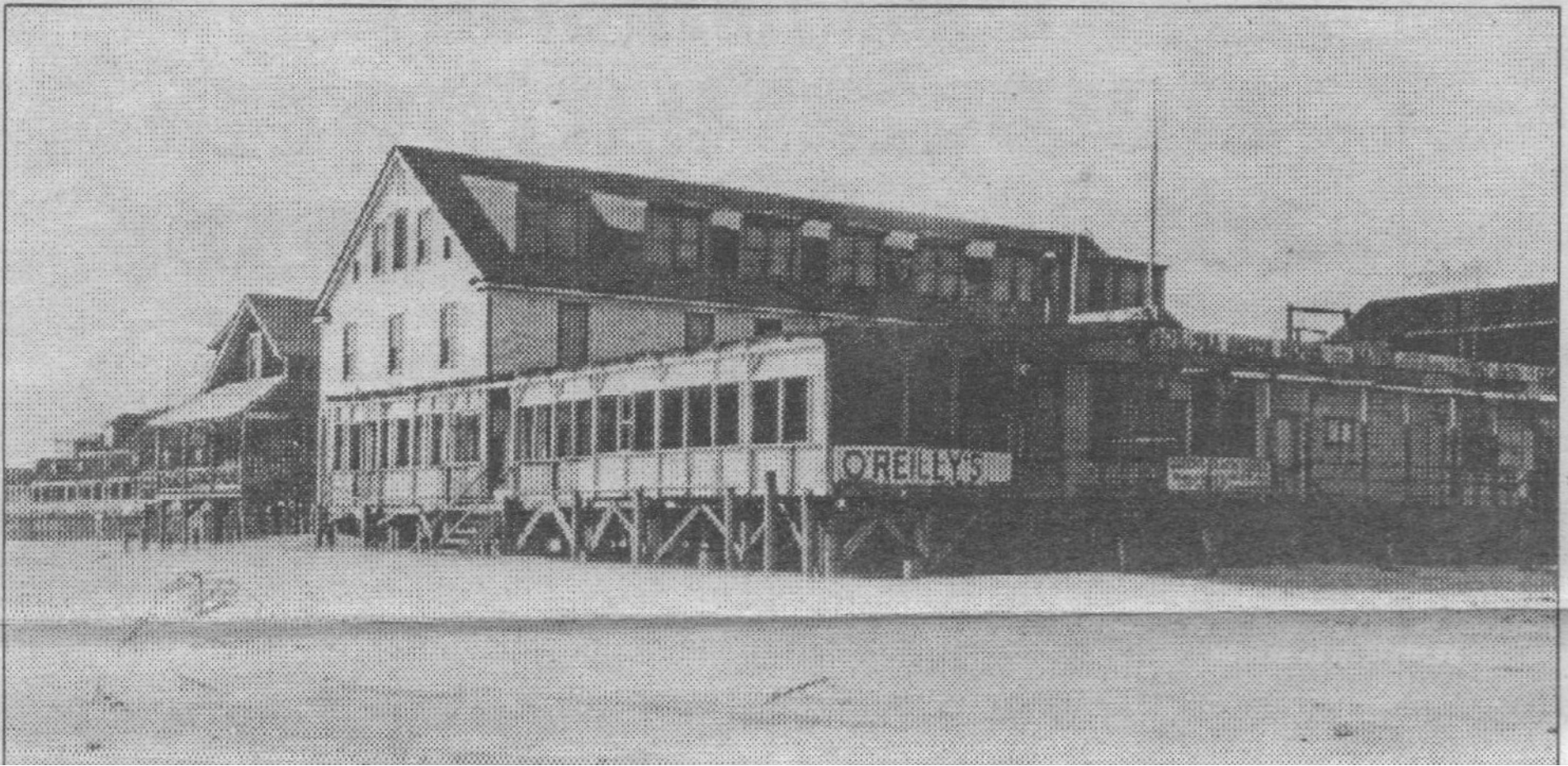
From The Rockaway Museum

by Emil Lucev, Curator

Dedicated To The Memory Of Leon S. Locke

of the Rockaways

The O'Reilly Brothers Queens Beach Company, Irishtown, Seaside-1913



After the closing of Camp Chaffe, Seaside's famous tent city in the old days at Rockaway Beach, the Queens Beach Company, owned and operated by the O'Reilly Brothers, bought a large piece of the west side of tent city land in the area of Beach 108 Street-boulevard to ocean. For the next six years the O'Reillys sold off about 64 lots to various persons looking to build at Rockaway Beach. The bungalow-building craze has just begun to set all over the peninsula, and canvas tents were on the way out!

Here is a list of names of those who bought from the O'Reillys, and later resold to others. They are as follows: Wolf Toder, Martin Devaney, Samuel Mulholland, James Coleman, Max Tweedy, John O'Rourke, Tierney A. O'Rourke, Georgeanna Paterson, Henry Kuestner Jr., Irving Golden, T.J. McWalters, Eugene Garibaldi, George Harvey, Mary Cleary, John Packenham, Mammie Thompson, Ferdinand Rassmessen, D. Kanofsky, W.F. Boskoer, Anna Judson, Jessie Ward, M. Calsing, H. Wilkenloh, J.C. Garbie, B. Gottelher, L. Kreuger, J. Dalton, E. Sullivan, W. Boskoer, M. Sullivan, G. Lawrence, N. Kramer, M. Johnson, W. Toder, S. Harris, A. Heer, G. Blum, F.J. Murphy, The Surf Improvement Co., F.L. Georgerrrs, I. Levy, I. Zaret, M. Maxwell, I. Snyder, C. Bettes, M. Johnson, J.G. Moir, P. Flanagan, G. Mellon, D. MacDonald, J. Moir, K. Lehane, J.C. Schrader, Edward Glinnen, W. Sullivan, G. Millon, A. Heer, J. McIntosh, W. Verity, J. Hahn, D. Rubbats, J. Colton, and George Isaacks.

They all did/helped to build a grand place, until the coming of Robert ('The Pharaoh') Moses, who came down from City Hall with his own commandments on how to destroy the Rockaways, whose competition with the city's Coney Island always seriously worried the city; and this is why the Rockaways never got rapid transit during the early to mid 20th Century.

A line to Rockaway at that time would have cut into revenues from lines to Coney Island, and deals with Brooklyn and Queens and Long Island real estate interests. When the Rockaways finally got rapid transit, revenues and real estate interests prevented a direct route to Penn Station in Manhattan. This was brought out by Historical Views long ago, and we still have the same old, same old Rapid Transit Service.

Today's Historical View was taken by the city planners for the new ocean boardwalk to be built through seaside in 1928. The first section of the walk was already up and running in Rockaway Park since 1923, the second section from Beach 109 Street east to Beach 56 Street was now being prepared for, as the park walk was nearing Beach 109 Street at left center in the photo. At the extreme left is the old St. Malachy's Orphanage, which became Stella Maris High School for Girls.

The building in the center of the photo is the O'Reilly Brothers Sea Breeze Hotel on the Beachfront, which also contained bathhouses for beachgoers. ~~Prior to O'Reilly Brothers, this structure was the centerpiece of the tent city grounds.~~ It was then known as Quigley's and contained a dancehall, bowling alleys, a meeting hall, and restaurant/bar service. Quigley was the proprietor at the time of tent city's closing. Later the place became McIntosh's New Alligator House, which suffered a disastrous fire in 1917. Next the O'Reilly Brothers ran it themselves, as well as their large hotel at the boulevard; both structures on Beach 107 Street. In contemporary time, the place was known as Fitzgerald's, which burned and was demolished several years ago. New housing is now slated for the site. The boardwalk caused this building to be moved up.

Directly behind the O'Reilly Hotel is the bungalow complex extraordinaire, which contained about 10 cottages (as they were called) on pilings, which elevated the buildings above the beach. Each cottage had six rooms, four of them bedrooms with baths. When the boardwalk came, it passed directly in front of the line of Glinnen cottages shown on the left. Three of Glinnen's cottages, directly behind the Sea Breeze Hotel, were condemned and torn down. The O'Reillys built a new brick hotel, bar and grill on the north side of the new boardwalk. When the Mighty Moses came along to build Shorefront Parkway, the road from "nowhere to nowhere," (as A. Joseph Geist, the founder of Old Playland so eloquently named it) the O'Reillys and Glinnen lost a lot more...as did many others.

At present, I wonder who will close the eyes of all the sardines in the Rockaways, when the can is full (if you will).