

Long Branch, New Jersey

The town of Long Branch NJ, is one of the largest cities on the Jersey shore. From the 1860s through the First World War, it was also the most glamorous.

Long Branch's early years as a resort town was a virtual "Who's Who"¹ of society. First Lady Mary Lincoln visited it in 1861, but it was in 1869 that Long Branch NJ had its first presidential visit by President Grant. The President continued to visit every summer that he was president, and continued for many years after that. In 1870, a racetrack² opened (which is still thriving today) and soon after casinos.

Long Branch NJ was in its heyday, such was its reputation that six other presidents visited it. Chester A. Arthur, Rutherford Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, Woodrow Wilson, and James Garfield were frequent summer visitors.

After an attempt was made on James Garfield's life, he was brought to Long Branch NJ in hopes of a recovery aided by the sea air. Indeed, a railroad spur³ from the main line to his house was built to make him more comfortable in his travels.

The 1920s witnessed the beginning of Long Branch's decline as a fashionable summer destination. Gambling laws stopped many of the rich and famous from visiting, and wicked⁴ storms eroded Long Branch's famed beachfront.

Sadly, the only remaining structure of Long Branch's former elegance is the St James Episcopal Church. Built in 1879, it is where all seven presidents worshipped. It has since been renamed Church of the Presidents and is located at 1260 Ocean Avenue.

Fortunately, today Long Branch NJ has enjoyed a rebirth. Visitors to Long Branch NJ can enjoy the beach, the new boardwalk, as well as Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park, a 33-acre county park with facilities for swimming, boating, and picnicking. Some of the summer bungalows have been replaced with high-rise condos.

There is also a large selection of outstanding restaurants as well as a lively nightlife for the young and hip⁵ – or the young at heart!

GLOSSARY

- 1** people of the highest social level
- 2** a usually oval course for racing
- 3** track
- 4** strong
- 5** fashionable



ACTIVITIES

1 Explain in your words the meaning of the following terms.

- 1 Be in one's heyday (v)
- 2 Attempt
- 3 Recovery
- 4 Boardwalk
- 5 High-rise condos
- 6 Outstanding
- 7 Lively
- 8 Young at heart

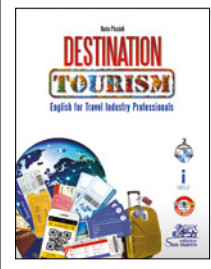
2 The dates below are very important in the history of Long Branch. List the events occurred in Long Branch in the following years.

- 1861:
- 1869:
- 1870:
- 1879:
- 1920s:

3 Answer the following questions.

- 1 Where is Long Branch?
- 2 When did Long Branch become a popular resort?
- 3 Who visited Long Branch first?
- 4 Why was James Garfield taken to Long Branch?
- 5 Who is Woodrow Wilson?
- 6 When did Long Branch's reputation start to decline?
- 7 What is the Church of the Presidents?
- 8 What does modern Long Branch offer to tourists?

4 Introduce Long Branch to a group of tourists. Focus on its history as well as on the facilities this seaside resort offers today.



- 5 Winslow Homer (1836-1910) was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1836. His artistic education consisted chiefly of his apprenticeship to a commercial lithographer, and a few lessons in painting. Later Homer worked as a free-lance illustrator for such magazines as Harper's Weekly. In 1859, he moved to New York City, where he began his career as a painter. He visited the front during the Civil War and his first important paintings were of Civil War subjects. In 1867, he spent a year in France. He travelled widely in the 1870s in New York State, to Virginia, and Massachusetts, and in 1881 he began a two-year stay in England, living in Cullercoats, near Newcastle. In 1883 he returned to America, where he settled at Prout's Neck, Maine, for the rest of his life. Look at the painting and then describe it. Focus, in particular, on the time of the day, the colours used, the prevalent lines, the women's dresses. Give also a definition of the place depicted.



Winslow Homer, Long Branch New Jersey, 1869; oil on canvas; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.