

## 1904 “Unknown from the Sea” Monuments

### Point Pleasant, Toms River, Manahawkin

With so many potter’s graves for victims of the mighty Atlantic along the Jersey Shore, the State of New Jersey erected three monuments in 1904 at unmarked graves where the unknown dead who fell victim to the sea were laid to rest.

The ships of origin are nameless for those buried at the plots within White Lawn Cemetery in Point Pleasant and Riverside Cemetery in Toms River. However, numerous victims from the *Powhatan* disaster were buried in the plot within Old Manahawkin Cemetery, located at The Old Manahawkin Baptist

Church on Route 9 and Lakeshore Drive.

The *Powhatan* sailed from Havre, France in March 1854 with over 300 people on board, including immigrants and crew, and encountered an enormous storm, described as a hurricane within a blizzard, on April 16, 1854 while en route to New York. The storm overpowered the stranded packet ship with freezing waves and blinding snow. Bodies washed up on southern New Jersey beaches for days afterwards, but more than half were never recovered.

“The *Powhatan* is commonly misquoted as the ‘Absecum’ wreck,” Deb Whitcraft, curator of the New Jersey Maritime Museum said, “because so many bodies washed ashore there. The boat actually ran aground in Great Swamp, which today is Surf City.”

The body count was so great they were put on wagons and distributed to several local cemeteries, including Old Manahawkin Cemetery. “Other mass burial plots for *Powhatan* victims are in Smithville, Barnegat, and Pleasantville,” Whitcraft explained.



“Unknown from the Sea” monument at White Lawn Cemetery in Point Pleasant.

Jill Ocone

“Villagers cleaned and dressed the bodies, which were then apportioned so that no single cemetery would be overburdened or overwhelmed.”

The *Powhatan* remains the worst maritime loss of life along the Atlantic coast.



Monument at Old Manahawkin Cemetery. Numerous victims from the *Powhatan* disaster were buried here.

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## Bollard from an Unknown Vessel

### Chippy’s Fresh French Fries, 404 Ocean Avenue, Point Pleasant Beach

A large, rusted bollard with two vertical bits stands in front of the offices of Chippy’s Fresh French Fries, a few feet from the road. A bollard is welded to a vessel’s deck to secure the mooring lines. “One of the fishing boats on Channel Drive pulled it up in their nets while fishing,” Chippy’s owner Jim Miller said. “My father, Charles Miller, saw it, purchased it, and moved it (with a lot of help) to where it is now.”

An air of mystery surrounds the bollard, including where it was found, the boat that hauled it in, and the ship it came from. Despite the unknowns, the elder Miller thought it would look nice in front of his building, and his son agrees. “Nonetheless, It’s an interesting conversation piece,” Miller said.

*continued on page 38*



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