

Add Some Local Lit to Your Summer Reading List

By Victoria Lassonde

Summer is a great season to be a book lover, as beach days bring perfect opportunities for soaking up great stories as you soak up the sunshine. With Ocean County as backdrop, many local authors have drawn inspiration from the pines, the bay, the sand and the waves to create engaging works that range from fictional, to factual, to purely pictorial. So as you assemble your essential summer reading list, be sure to include some of the following “local interest” titles that hit close to home, all published locally and available at nearby bookstores, gift shops or online book-sellers.



Down the Shore Publishing, a West Creek-based independent publishing house in business for 26 years, specializes in beach and coastal subjects – including history, mystery, culture and nature – in the form of literature, photography, video, note cards and calendars related to New Jersey and the Jersey Shore.

From the Down the Shore roster, publisher Ray Fisk made the following recommendations to enlighten and diversify a reader’s mind:

Cold Rolled Dead is award-winning investigative journalist Paul D’Ambrosio’s gritty and fast-paced debut novel of the mystery/thriller genre set on and around Long Beach Island and Ocean County, capturing local settings, outrageous Jersey politics and corruption.



Tales From an Endless Summer: A Novel of the Beach is a coming-of-age, surf-centric novel of a young man’s quest to find the meaning of life after Labor Day on Long Beach Island. Author Bruce Novotny graduated from Southern Regional High School and then moved out to California to be a screenwriter.

The Oyster Singer is an “episodic love story” by newspaper editor and columnist Larry Savadove that captures the essence of life and love in local waters, just off the beaten track. “Authentic settings, beautiful losers, and imaginative stories combine to create a poetic and delightful novel,” according to Fisk. Savadove is also co-author of *Great Storms of the Jersey Shore*.

For an amusing “blast from the past,” check out *The Tides of Barnegat*, a Victorian classic recently reissued with an introduction written by the late historian John Bailey Lloyd of Beach Haven. Originally published in 1906 and set in a place based on Barnegat Light and the mainland, this fun little potboiler novel was written by marine engineer F. Hopkinson Smith, the builder of Barnegat Lighthouse.

For those who may like their literary adventures in smaller, easier-to-digest portions, Fisk suggests two fascinating shore collections. *Shore Stories: An Anthology of the Jersey Shore* is an acclaimed collection of 40 short stories, essays, and poems (sprinkled with photographs), spanning the whole Jersey Shore but

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anchored with Ocean County material. The anthology includes renowned writers like Robert Pinsky and John McPhee, as well as some of the best from Island talents like Margaret Thomas Buchholz, Sandy Gingras and John Bailey Lloyd.

Shore Chronicles: Diaries and Travelers' Tales from the Jersey Shore 1764-1955 is a collection researched and compiled by Harvey Cedars author and historian Margaret Thomas Buchholz. The entries therein are first impressions of the Jersey Shore, by famous and unknown writers alike, in the days before the Garden State Parkway changed everything.

For a taste of local culture, dig into *The Bayman: A Life on Barnegat Bay*, in which author Merce Ridgway, an authentic baymen from a long line of baymen and one of the founders of Albert Hall and the Pinelands Cultural Society, "reveals the ... beautiful, simple life that inspired a true appreciation for this place."

Golden Light: The 1878 Diary of Captain Thomas Rose Lake is a real antique diary that chronicles a 19th-century way of life at the shore from the viewpoint of a seafaring man. Award-winning local poet Jim Kirk edited this found treasure, which Fisk described as "fascinating for sailors, but also for those of us who know what a privilege it is to get this private glimpse into the past."



For ecologist and environmental historian Kent Mountford, *Closed Sea: From the Manasquan to the Mullica - A History of Barnegat Bay* began as a Rutgers University student's thesis project and became a labor of love. The work was published with support from the Ocean County Historical Society and Tuckerton Seaport.

From the Seaport gift shop's selection of books, which make great souvenirs that can be enjoyed again and again, recommended by Folklife Center director Jaclyn Stewart:

Voices in the Pines: True Stories from the New Jersey Pine Barrens, written by Karen Riley, illustrated by Andrew Gioulis and published by Plexus, is a collection of firsthand accounts of Pinelands folk life, straight from the area's dynamic inhabitants. Described as quick, fun and educational, *Voices* preserves and celebrates the region's storytelling legacy.

A Devil in the Pines, written by award-winning children's author Stephanie Armiger and illustrated by Akiko K. Fry, is a work of juvenile fiction set in the South Jersey Pine Barrens in the 1950s. A centuries-old legend comes to life when two boys learn the Jersey Devil is real and their journey of discovery soon turns into a frightening adventure with a twist.



The Treasure of Tucker's Island, by John Calu and Dave Hart, is the first in a series of juvenile fiction books based in historical fact and set in or around Long Beach Island and the Pines.

The series follows a lovable group of local kids whose insatiable curiosity leads them on investigative adventures (and misadventures), from which they learn important lessons and make sometimes startling discoveries about the world they live in and the young men and women they are becoming.

Following *Treasure* are *Mystery of the Jersey Devil*, *Secret of the Painted Rock*, *The Lost Mission of Captain Carranza* and *Riddle in the Sand*.

From the Atlantic Books in Manahawkin, which has a "local interest" section conveniently located at the front of the store:

For a beach read described as "an irresistible blend of mystery and humor," check into *Wrong Beach Island*, an entertaining whodunit with "more twists and turns than a boardwalk roller coaster," written by Jane Kelly and published by Plexus.



When the body of a rich and famous vacationer famous vacationer washes up at the Jersey Shore, the story's heroine sleuth and her P.I. beau are on the case.

Hungry for a different kind of feast for the eyes? Try *Seasons of the Pines: A Photographic Tour of the New Jersey Pine Barrens*, by Bob Birdsall, with a foreword by Pete Dunne, of the New Jersey Audubon Society. In this vibrant, full-color volume, Birdsall's images capture "wonders it would take a trained naturalist a lifetime to muster," Dunne writes.

Down Barnegat Bay: A Nor'easter Midnight Reader, by Robert Jahn (1947 – 2009) writer and historian from Mantoloking, was originally published in 1980 and re-released as a sesquicentennial edition by Plexus. The beautiful volume is packed with maritime history and lore. One reviewer raved that he was catapulted "into an era when ... areas along the Barnegat Bay were filled with sailors, fishermen, Indians and farmers."



Exciting tales of shipwrecks, pirates and Native Americans, in addition to old scrapbook photos and documents, help to create a feeling of being transported through time, bringing to light the "life-affirming synchronicity of the past and present moment."

Monsters and witches and ghosts, oh my! For a little supernatural intrigue, check out *Haunted Jersey Shore: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Garden State Coast*, written by Charles A. Stansfield Jr. and illustrated by Heather Adel Wiggins. The collection of tales of the scary and strange divides the coast into haunted regions, Northern, Central and Southern Shore; Pinelands; and Northern and Southern Tidelands. In his introduction, Stansfield writes: "The happy resort image of New Jersey's seashore, with sun-filled days of innocent fun in this realm of sand and surf, stands in sharp contrast to its place in the spirit world. But the 127-mile-long string of beaches also has a dark side – a shadowy world of greed, violent death, betrayal and murder – with a number of tragic shipwrecks, the murderous actions of wreckers who lured ships into dangerously shallow waters, and many visits by ruthless pirates to these shores."