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HISTORY

History of Toledo Beach Amusement Park

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Published 7:42 a.m. ET Oct. 19, 2020

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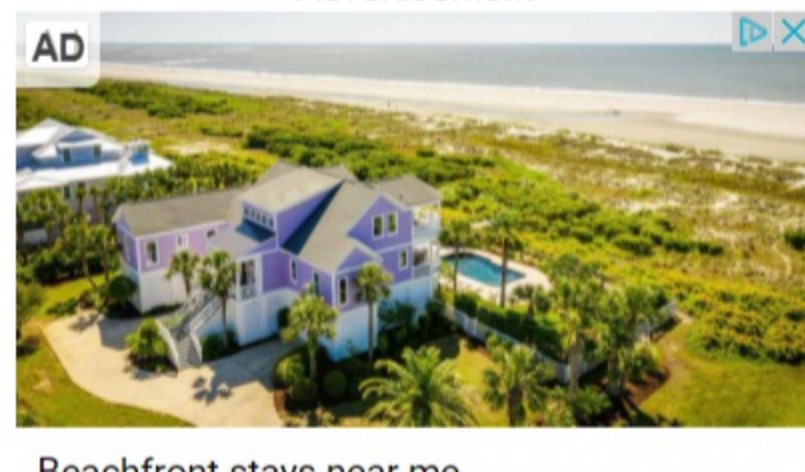


The Toledo Beach midway, circa 1950

Before there was a Toledo Beach Marina there was a Toledo Beach Amusement Park on the same land. Like the never-ending sunrises and sunsets on Lake Erie, the Toledo Beach Amusement Park had its ups and downs throughout the years. Before 1907 the 400-acre waterfront venue was called the Ottawa Beach Resort.

The Toledo Rail Light and Power Company bought the Ottawa Beach Resort in 1907 and created the Toledo Beach Amusement Park. An electric trolley service brought visitors from Ohio to the park. Many had no idea they crossed over the state line into Michigan. Calling it Toledo Beach added to the confusion. You will find many post cards of that era that say "Toledo Beach, Toledo Ohio" on them. All of them were wrong. The trolley also made stops at Lakeside, Lakewood, Allen's Cove and the Luna Pier along the way.

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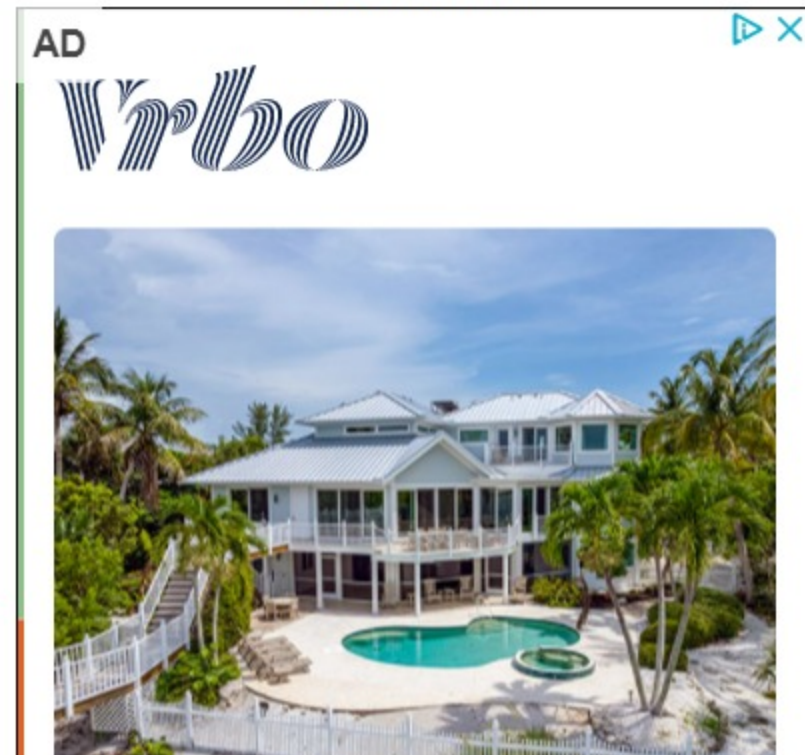


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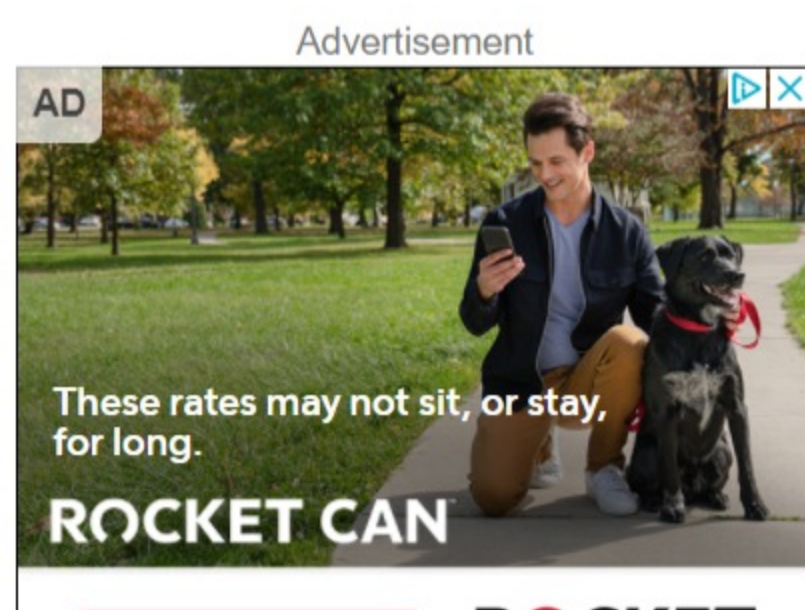
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There were times when the park was shut down during hard economic times then reopened. It perhaps enjoyed its high point in the early 1900s and slowly declined after the electric interurban trolleys stopped running in 1927.

Starting in the early 1900s the trolley cars of the Toledo, Ottawa Beach and Northern Railway made runs every 15 minutes to the Monroe County, Michigan, lakeside amusement park. Riders would depart the crowded cars and traverse the sidewalks to their favorite attraction.

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The magnificent Toledo Beach Dance Hall was built in 1905. It also served as a roller skating rink. Other attractions followed like the giant water slide which was built in the lake. The slide was heavily damaged by a storm in 1917. The original dance hall was electrified by its own power plant and provided quite a nighttime view. There were floods, storms and fires that damaged or destroyed facilities over the years. This included dance halls and restaurants. In spite of it all the park managed to keep going.

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Nationally famous early aviator Harry Atwood landed his sea plane at the Toledo Beach Amusement Park in LaSalle, Michigan, on June 26, 1913. It was kind of a big deal at the time as most Americans had not seen a plane in person or seen one fly. Harry Atwood attended the Wright Brothers Flying School in 1911 in Dayton. His plane was built by the Wright Brothers. He made national news when he actually landed a plane on the White House lawn in 1911.

When your flight instructors were Wilbur and Orville Wright you do special things. It may well have been the first time an airplane ever flew in the skies of Monroe County. A year later, in July, 1914, Harry Atwood returned to Monroe County and landed his plane at The Piers Park Resort in Monroe. While at the Piers he and two female companions dined at the luxury Hotel Lotus then returned to Point Place in Ohio. Both stops were paid promotions. The top speed of Harry Atwood's plane was 45 mph.

Toledo Beach was advertised in the early 1900's as a getaway from the industrial waterfront of Toledo. It was only accessible by the trolley line from downtown Toledo. The park did enjoy a renaissance in 1950 with the addition of a number of new rides and facilities, like the giant outdoor roller skating rink, the train ride, midway of games and more. It was referred to as the "New Toledo Beach."

The new amusement park operator in 1950 was the LaSalle Resort Corp., an organization led by brothers Virgil and Nelson Gladioux of Toledo. Virgil Gladioux purchased the amusement park acreage in 1961 and planned to construct a large marina on the lakefront property. The former amusement park was dredged and the Toledo Beach Marina built and opened in 1962. The Gladioux family owned the facility for nearly 60 years. The family sold the marina in 2007.

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Local history via podcast

The Monroe News' popular monthly series "100 Years Ago" is adapted to our podcast series. Here's the link where you can catch up, and here's the most recent episode:



Harry Atwood landed his sea plane at the Toledo Beach Amusement Park on Lake Erie in LaSalle on June 26, 1913. The plane was built by the Wright Brothers.

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