



Sandy wrenched former cottages off their foundations, swept away walls, and filled ground-floor businesses ceiling deep.

ANGELS' CIRCLE

In the traffic triangle where Hylan Boulevard meets Fingerboard Road, Angels' Circle (*map p. 261, F2*) stands as a "people's memorial" to 9/11. It began as an impromptu outpouring, but has remained intact, indeed has flourished, in the years since 2001. After the planes hit the Towers, a resident of the neighborhood, Wendy Pellegrino, planted a flag and a hand-lettered sign, "God Bless Our Heroes," on the traffic island. From that seed, the memorial grew until today it looks as if a flight of assorted angels has alighted on the site. Cherubic or mourning, wings spread or folded, large and small, they stand among rows of memorial cards interspersed with candles, religious images, rosaries, poems, and objects of personal significance. A local florist tends the plantings with help from neighborhood volunteers. At night the circle is illuminated; a memorial service takes place annually on September 11, and at Christmas, in accordance with Staten Island tradition, the intersection becomes a feast of lights.

South Beach occupies the site of Oude Dorp, Staten Island's original Dutch settlement of 1661. Long an Italian neighborhood, it today also has an affluent community of

Russians. Midland Beach, just to the south of Old Dorp, was known in the nineteenth century for resort hotels, theaters, Ferris wheels, shooting galleries, bathing pavilions, and beer gardens, some sponsored by the German breweries of Stapleton and Clifton. The beach and amusements attracted as many as 40,000 weekend visitors from stifling New York. Eventually the resorts succumbed to fire, water pollution, and economic downturn; the City took over the dilapidated beachfront in 1935 and constructed the 2½-mile Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Boardwalk, from the southern end of Fort Wadsworth to Miller Field. Visible offshore are Hoffman (the larger) and Swinburne Islands (*see p. 21*).

New Dorp was settled in 1671 by Dutch, French, and English farmers and fishermen. The Vanderbilt family had large land holdings, and from 1842 until 1863, part of William H. Vanderbilt's farm occupied what is now Miller Field, site of the Elm Tree Lighthouse. Part of New Dorp lies on sandy lowland close to the beach, but the neighborhood also reaches inland to hilly Moravian Cemetery.

The Moravian Cemetery

The Moravian Cemetery (*map p. 261, D3*) occupies 113 acres of landscaped knolls, hills, and meadows on the southeast flank of Todt Hill. It is owned by the United Brethren, whose white steepled church (1844) and earlier Dutch-Colonial style building (1763) stand near the entrance from Todt Hill Road.

WHERE MARSH MEETS THE SEA

Where Marsh Meets the Sea (2007), a glass photo mural by Michael Falco installed near the pedestrian entrance of the St. George Terminal, celebrates Staten Island's closeness to the sea. Images of bridges, boats, marsh grass, and birds fade into one another, surrounding a photograph of John A. Noble (*see p. 70*) and his two sons exploring the Island's waterways in their rowboat.

Ferry history

Ferries established by European settlers crossed the East River as early as 1642, but generations earlier Staten Island's Native Americans, the Lenape, had crossed the kills and New York Bay by canoe, establishing routes that the Dutch would follow. The first public Staten Island-to-Manhattan service began by 1708, and by 1780 ten ferry lines made the crossings to New Jersey, Brooklyn, and Manhattan in boats powered by sail, oar, and setting pole. The best-known craft were periaugers, flat-bottomed, single- or double-masted boats that could also be rowed or poled, swift but not stable. In the early nineteenth century, ur-capitalist Cornelius Vanderbilt (*see p. 141*) began his own journey with a single periauger, first his father's, then his own. He spent his adolescence haunting the docks; even as a teenager he showed his competitive mettle and strategic capacities, imposing his own rules, commanding his own

New Dorp (Swash Channel Range Rear) Light

The New Dorp Light (1856), situated on a hillside above the Moravian Cemetery (*map p. 261, D4*), looks like, and is, a house with a tower poking out of the roof. Originally it served as the rear light of the Swash Channel Range Light, indicating safe passage through one of the natural channels in the sandbar across the harbor mouth. When built, the lantern room at 192 feet above sea level offered a view across the cemetery as far as Sandy Hook in New Jersey. The government's right-of-way to the lighthouse was a narrow path through the surrounding forest, not wide enough for a horse and wagon, but until the cemetery trustees and the Lighthouse Board quarreled over land rights, the trustees allowed keepers to haul supplies with a horse and wagon up the hill on the cemetery road. In 1878, the trustees prohibited use of their road, and for eleven years the lighthouse keeper had to carry everything on foot or on horseback. Eventually the government ceded its right-of-way to the cemetery in exchange for access to their road. In 1964, the light was deactivated and ten years later the abandoned building was bought at auction by a private citizen who restored it board by board, nail by nail.

West Bank Light

The West Bank Lighthouse, which serves as the front light for the Staten Island Range Light, is a metal spark-plug tower built in 1901. Located offshore, east of Great Kills Park (*map p. 6, C3*), it marks the Ambrose Channel, the

main entrance to New York Harbor, completed in 1914. The lighthouse was automated in 1980, converted to solar power in 1998, declared excess by the Coast Guard in 2007, and is now privately owned. The first keeper was the legendary Ed Burdge, who spent thirty-four years manning different lights around the Lower Bay, a quiet man whose celebrity outside the lighthouse service arose largely from a colorful interview in *American Magazine* in 1924. Burdge seems to have been born for the solitary life; physically courageous and independent, he enjoyed disabusing landlubbers of any romantic notions they might harbor about the quiet life of a lighthouse keeper:

I met a lady once who was all filled up with what she called the romance of the lighthouse...A lighthouse is about the noisiest place in the world...Forty or sixty tons of water, driven by a fifty-mile gale, racing in with the tide and slamming against a solid tower of stone and iron makes it about as quiet as when two railroad trains butt each other head on. Down at the floor level, there is a gas engine pounding away, with the exhaust exploding outside, the iron plates in the tower groaning, the fog siren screaming, and the bell ringing, and up in the light a stream of kerosene burning under a hundred pound pressure, and roaring louder than [a] gale. Nice, romantic spot—so quiet that the keeper can scarcely hear the whistles of steamers and tugs in the channel.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

When you visit (contact listings)—Transportation—Hotels—Staten Island restaurants

WHEN YOU VISIT

An alphabetical list of the Staten Island sights described in this book, with full contact information.

Alice Austen House

Spectacular view of the Narrows and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Historic house exhales a sense of a gentler, kinder past. Exhibits of Austen photographs.

Contact: 2 Hylan Blvd. T: 718.816.4506; aliceausten.org. Map p. 261, F2.

Transportation: A 15-minute ride on bus S51 from the St. George Ferry Terminal to Hylan Blvd and Bay St. Walk one block toward the water on Hylan Blvd.

Open: Tues–Sun 11–5; closed

Jan and Feb, major holidays. Grounds open every day until dusk.

Restaurants: On nearby Bay St: Montalbano, Italian Deli, 1140 Bay St, T: 718.448.8077; Tony's Brick Oven Pizza, 1140 Bay St, T: 718.816.6516; Bay Street Luncheonette, 1189 Bay St, T: 718.720.0922.

In the neighborhood:

Garibaldi-Meucci House, Fort Wadsworth.

Conference House

Historic house with period

furniture and cellar kitchen, exhibits, events. Beautiful water views, even with New Jersey's industrial shoreline in the background; walking trails including one to the southernmost point in New York State, locally known as "the South Pole," a literal red post stuck into the ground.

Contact: Visitors Center, 298 Satterlee St. T: 718.984.6046; www.conferencehouse.org. Map p. 262, A7.

Open: Tours are given Fri–Sun 1–4 from first weekend in April until mid-Dec.

Transportation: Bus S59 (Richmond Ave) or S78 Tottenville (Hylan Blvd) to Hylan Blvd and Craig Ave. Walk one block south to Conference House Park. Or Staten Island Railway to the last stop, Tottenville. Exit near intersection of Main

St and Utah St. Walk south on Main St. Turn right onto Craig Ave. Turn right onto Hylan Blvd. Turn left onto Satterlee St for the Visitors Center or right towards the Conference House. Walk takes about 15mins.

Restaurants: Towne Deli, 5373 Arthur Kill Rd, T: 718.227.1985; Angelina's, 399 Ellis St, T: 718.227.2900; Dock's Clam Bar, 240 Page Ave, T: 718.227.8500; Egger's Ice Cream Parlor, 7437 Amboy Rd, T: 718.605.9335.

Fort Wadsworth

Historic fort, spectacular views of the harbor and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Walking trails. Seasonal visitor center at the entrance with maps, information.

Access: 210 New York Ave (the extension of Bay St). T: 718.354.4500 (Gateway