

Captain Young

Being born in 1853 to an oysterman and his wife in the village of Absecon in New Jersey, John Lake Young spent his life living along the Atlantic shore. A scrappy and enterprising individual, even as a young boy, Young was a businessman who had a talent for eyeing potential business opportunities and turning them into profitable ventures. Having been left fatherless at the young age of three, he forgoed attaining a formal education and pursued working instead to support himself and his mother.



John Lake Young

By the age of 30, Young was working as a carpenter, performing patch and repair work for the Atlantic City boardwalk and its pavilions. One day while working, Young came upon meeting Steward McShea, a successful baker from Philadelphia. With Young's entrepreneurial ideas and McShea's capital to invest, the two hatched a plan to launch a money-making venture.

Leveraging the popularity of roller-skating at the time, as partners the two built a rink, and opened it for business.

Immediately the rink was a popular hit, and partners quickly earned a lot of money.

Around the same time in 1884, Applegate's Pier was constructed at the foot of Tennessee Avenue. Standing at 625 feet long, and built with multiple decks, it featured an ice water fountain as one of its main attractions.

Though not the actual first pier built, Applegate's Pier was the first successful amusement pier built in Atlantic City.

When the popularity of skating waned, Young and McShea decided to refocus their business strategy.

Choosing a location opposite Applegate's Pier, the partners erected a carousel.

Built by renowned merry-go-round designer Gustav Dentzel, the new ride attracted legions of children and adults alike.



With this new venture, the partners made even more money than they had with their roller-skating rink.

The carousel operated every day of the week. On Sundays, hymns were played on the carousel's organs, hymnals were provided to riders, and riders would sing along to the organ music. Sundays proved to be one of the most popular days for ridership on Young and McShea's carousel.

By 1891 their partnership had amassed enough profits to purchase Applegate's Pier. Immediately they expanded the pier's length to 2,000 feet. They renamed it Young's Ocean Pier, and installed rides, midway games, and even an electric trolley.

To attract more crowds, the two installed an aquarium, ballrooms, and booked regular band concerts. Vaudeville show performances were given in the pier's theatre.

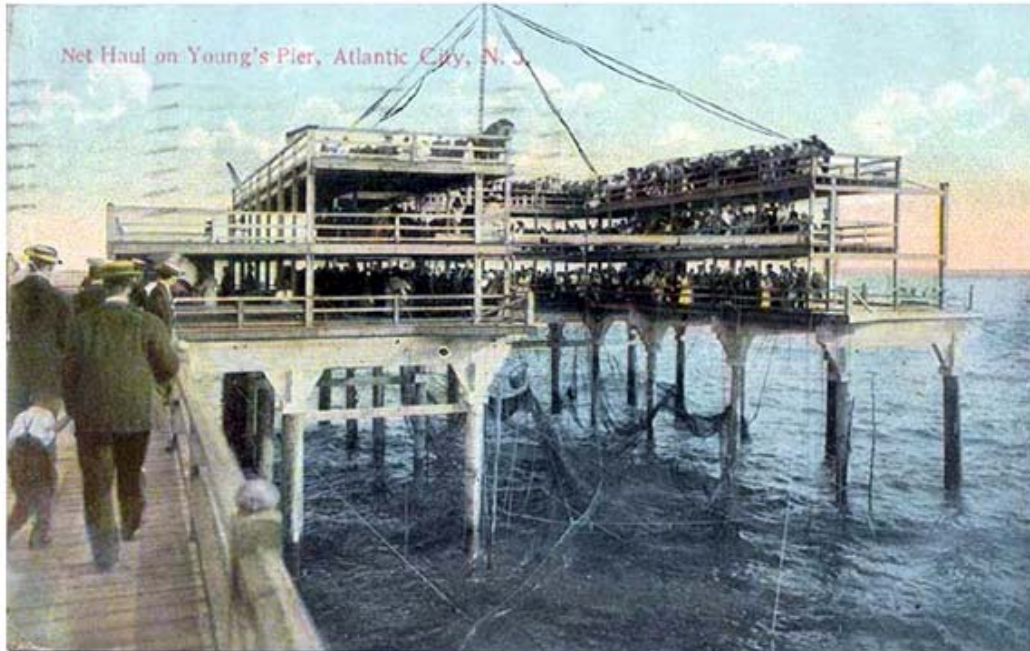


Entertainment like the renowned Cake Walkers delighted the public.

With the increased earnings from the pier's improved entertainment, Young and McShea also began raising rents on the merchants who occupied stalls and shops on the pier.

At the end of the pier visitors were permitted to fish for a fee. And ever the performer himself, Young organized a daily afternoon show, where net hauls of fish were unloaded to the enjoyment of spectators.

By some accounts, Young could identify upwards of forty-eight different species of sea creatures caught within his nets, including those which were weren't even native to the Atlantic Ocean!



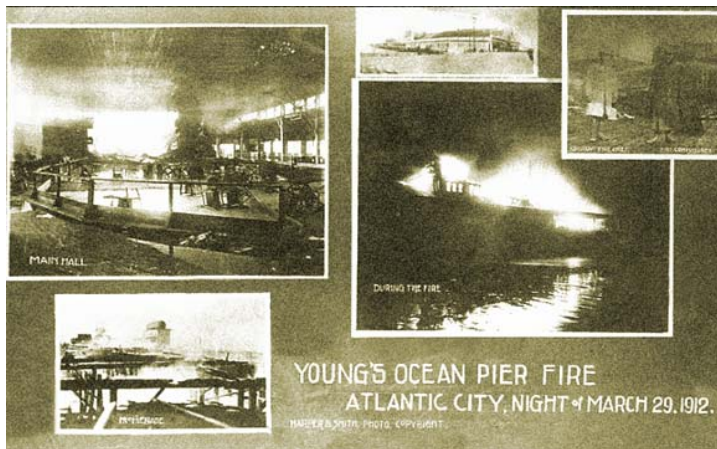
Period Postcard Illustrating Young's Daily Fish Net Haul with Excited Onlookers

Naturally, as with their earlier efforts, the pier was an immediate money-making operation. So profitable, indeed, that McShea retired in 1897, leaving the pier in the sole ownership of Young.

In addition to the fishing and entertainment, Young installed one of Atlantic City's first amusement rides in 1902, christening it "The Flip-Flap Railroad." Featuring a 360-degree vertical loop, the ride was actually a rollercoaster, and was an immediate hit with thrill seekers.



Flip-Flap Railroad AKA Looping-the-Loop, c. 1902



Unfortunately, the shape of the rollercoaster's loop was more of a true circular loop, rather than teardrop-shaped loops that are employed in modern-day roller coasters.

As a result, riders felt forces of up to 12-gs while traversing the circle. Although many passengers complained and suffered from neck and back injuries, surprisingly the coaster remained in operation until 1912.

Shortly thereafter, in the same year, a fire destroyed Young's Pier. But ever the showman, Young took advantage of the tragedy. Young charged curious onlookers nickel admission to get a closer look while workers disassembled the charred remnants of his burned-out pier.

The New Million Dollar Pier



All of this, though, was just a warm up. Young promised a new pier that would "cost a million dollars," and on the new extravaganza, which extended into the ocean 1,775 feet from Arkansas Avenue and the Boardwalk, he built a three-story Italianate villa complete with conservatory and classical statuary. An international butterfly collection embedded in plate glass captured

visitors in the reception hall and dining room. Fishing chum Thomas Edison had a hand in designing the exterior lighting for Young's marble mini-palace, whose address of No. 1 Atlantic Ocean was an official stop on the U.S. Postal route.

You are looking at Number One Atlantic Ocean, the home of Capt. John Lake Young, located at the end of Young's Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The pier was built in 1906 and contained amusements that ranged from a giant aquarium to a massive ballroom and games galore.

Young knew the value of publicity so he built his own home at the very end of his pier, one thousand feet over the Atlantic Ocean, and called it Number One Atlantic Ocean. The villa, appointed with furniture commissioned in Europe, was featured in newspapers around the country. The home and formal gardens were outlined with thousands of miniature electric

The pier itself was a glorious profusion of pennants, towers, and elongated galleries. It attracted stars, statesmen, and, of course, paying customers. Roller skaters scooted on the ballroom floor beneath strings of lights that swept up to the ceiling. The likes of Lily Langtry strode the boards of the Hippodrome stage. Famed operetta composer Victor Herbert, a friend of one of Young's partners, headed the marquee on occasion. In town to address a convention in 1911, well-fed President William Howard Taft dined at No. 1. The next year, bitter rival and Bull Moose candidate Teddy Roosevelt - one of history's great upstagers - drew an overflow crowd for a campaign speech.

In the 1930s, Million Dollar hosted circus performers, dance marathons, western shows, a smorgasbord of popular entertainment. Young, who wintered in Palm Beach, Fla., died there in 1938, and impresario George Hamid leased the pier for the next 10 years.

Hamid's Million Dollar Pier stayed busy with big bands and show business headliners. In 1949, fire claimed the front of the pier, including the huge ballroom. The following year, a new operator installed amusement rides on that site, creating the pier's 1950s profile. The great rooftop Seagram's sign ran electrified "horses" round an oval, an amusement all its own that prompted betting on the Boardwalk.

The original company that Captain Young had helped establish sold Million Dollar in 1963, and it changed hands again in 1969. The next year, the Hippodrome was demolished without a single wailing note from the departed minstrels and musicians who had played there. A 1981 fire took the ocean end of the pier, speeding the development of the ship-shaped Ocean One mall. Now The Pier at Caesars is recasting the site for the 21st century.

The ol' captain, no doubt, would be stunned by the scale and special effects of the current enterprise, though Million Dollar was of considerable size and did boast the Wizard's lighting effects.

These music records were recorded on the Million Dollar Pier (click)

[COPENHAGEN](#)

51406-L

Artist->FRY'S MILLION DOLLAR PIER ORCHESTRA

Author->CHARLIE DAVIS

[BLUE EVENING BLUES](#)

51406-R

Artist->FRY'S MILLION DOLLAR PIER ORCHESTRA

Author->ART KAHN AND VIC. BURNON