

ATLANTIC CITY

Ellis Island Connections

Blue Comet

The Blue Comet was New Jersey's premier train line; it took visitors to Atlantic City for their trips to the beach, casinos, and the amusement park. Roy B. White, president of the Central New Jersey Railroad at the time, designed the train in 1928. White was born in Metcalf, Illinois, and traveled from Southampton to New York aboard the S.S. Europa in 1931. The train operated from 1929 to 1941, taking passengers from Communipaw Terminal in Jersey City to Atlantic City. Although the Blue Comet could not compete with the speed of the Pennsylvania Rail Road's train to Atlantic City, it made up for that with its luxurious interior. The train ran on schedule 97% of the time for its first five years. It was successful until the Great Depression, when it was reduced to one round trip per day. Roy B. White also served as president for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company and even had a tugboat named in his honor.

Steel Pier

Atlantic City's most iconic attraction is its boardwalk lined with various recreational activities. Along the boardwalk is the infamous Steel Pier, an amusement park originally built in 1897. Severe weather destroyed the original pier, but it was rebuilt by future mayor Edward Bader and his construction company in 1904. For the next seven decades, Steel Pier was dubbed the "Showplace of the Nation." Lebanese immigrant George Hamid played a key role in its success. Hamid was born Broumana, Lebanon (then part of the Ottoman Empire) in 1896. As a youngster, he learned acrobatics and began working with Buffalo Bills Circus. In 1907, he immigrated with the troupe aboard the S.S. *Potsdam*. Hamid spent the next decade learning show business before opening his own circus in 1920. In 1945, he purchased and revamped Steel Pier. Through his experience in show business and booking, he secured performances for acts like the Beatles and the Supremes.

Casinos

Casinos and gambling are synonymous with Atlantic City. Since 1976, when gambling became legalized in New Jersey, casinos have dominated the Atlantic City skyline. Many hotels from the heydays of Atlantic City's resort era were converted into modern casinos. The legalization of gambling harkens back to the Prohibition Era when vacationers flocked to Atlantic City to indulge in alcohol and betting. In the 1920s, the American mafia largely controlled the flow of alcohol into the city. In 1929, all the major players in organized crime gathered for "The Atlantic City Conference." Attendees included Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Bugsy Siegel, Vito Genovese, and the infamous Meyer Lansky. The mob bosses gathered to discuss the future of alcohol and gambling in the U.S. after Prohibition. Lansky was an immigrant from Belarus who arrived with his mother and brother in 1911 aboard the S.S. *Kursk* from Libau. For Lansky, the trip also served as a honeymoon for him and his wife. Years later, Lansky became instrumental in the establishment of casinos in Florida and Cuba but is most well known in Las Vegas where he played a key role in the success of the Flamingo Hotel and Casino.

Miss America

The "Miss America Pageant" was founded in 1920. Contestants would participate in beauty contests to determine who would hold the final crown. Atlantic City hosted the pageant for 25 years before Bess Myerson became the first Jewish American woman to win. Her parents were Jewish immigrants from Russia; her father, Liebe Myerson, immigrated to New York in 1903 aboard the S.S. Finland. At 21 years old, Myerson won the "Miss New York City" competition, placing her in the running for Miss America. Myerson was encouraged to use a pseudonym to sound "less Jewish," but she did not oblige. After winning the pageant, Myerson transitioned into a career in television and politics. She hosted a few game shows and became a panelist on "The Today Show." In 1969, Mayor John V. Lindsay appointed her the first Commissioner of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs. She also worked in consulting for several consumer products companies and served on the presidential commissions on violence, mental health, workplace issues, and hunger.

Edward Bader served as the mayor of Atlantic City during the Roaring Twenties, the city's peak era. His father, Dan Bader, immigrated from Germany in 1853 aboard the S.S. Advance. Bader got his start in Atlantic City as a superintendent for his father's contracting company. Bader's success rebuilding the Steel Pier led to more work in the city. His next project was to pave five miles of Albany Avenue. He also served as mayor during the beginnings of the "Miss America Pageant."

Claridge Hotel

Architect John McShain was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Irish immigrant parents. His father owned a construction company, which McShain took over at age 21. Under his leadership, it became one of the most prominent construction companies in the country. From the 1930s to 1960s, they worked on many buildings in Washington, D.C., such as the Pentagon, the Jefferson Memorial, and the 1946 reconstruction of the White House. In Atlantic City, McShain designed and became part owner of the Claridge Hotel, nicknamed "Skyscraper By The Sea." The hotel opened in 1930 and became a casino in 1981. Marilyn Monroe was a special guest at the hotel when she judged the 1940 Miss America pageant. McShain traveled from the Bahamas to New York aboard the S.S. *Carinthia* in 1936.

Monopoly

Charles Brace Darrow is credited with the invention of the popular board game, "Monopoly." However, iterations of the game existed before Darrow gave it this name. Activist and game designer Elizabeth Magie created the first version of the game in 1903. She called it "The Landlord's Game;" she intended for it to be an educational game explaining the single-tax theory and warning people about the negative impacts of monopolies. Several other variations were developed before 1929, when Darrow created his own version and called it "Monopoly." He was born in Pennsylvania and lost his sales job in the 1929 Stock Market Crash. He saw his neighbors playing a game where the goal was to buy and sell property, which inspired him to make his own. With the help of his family, Darrow made the game on oilcloth and carton. In 1935, Parker Brothers bought the rights to the game, making Darrow the first millionaire game designer in history. Many of the street names in Monopoly come from real Atlantic City streets. The prices of properties in the game reflect the actual hierarchy of real estate values at the time. Darrow traveled from Gibraltar to New York aboard the S.S. *Andrea Doria* in 1954.