Tour 5
The Ghosts Of Victory
(1.7 miles)

1. The Lime Kiln
2. The Twine House
3. The Lighthouse Point Lighthouse
4. The Press House Bait Store
5. The van Dohren Farmhouse
6. The Crown Hill Cemetery
7. The Hotel Victory Ruins
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The island’s rugged coastline, from the Miller Lime Kiln Dock to Lighthouse Point and beyond, is usually the first glimpse visitors have of South Bass when arriving by ferry. This tour gives a closer look at the landmarks along the south coast, travels inland to view a wine press, farmhouse, and cemetery, and ends at South Bass State Park, site of the ruins of the monumental Hotel Victory, which dominated the western shore in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

1. The Lime Kiln. At the Miller Boat Line’s south shore dock is the Lime Kiln, a decaying, angular limestone structure. The kiln was actually a primitive furnace that was used for burning and reducing limestone to the granular substance that is a component of mortar. The kiln functioned for only a short time during the 1860s. Arched stoking holes can still be seen at its base.

2. The Twine House. East of the dock, in the Miller Boat Line parking lot, stands a large, white frame structure that was built around the turn of the century. Twine houses such as this one were relatively common in coastal areas; they were used to hang fish nets for drying or repairing as well as for winter storage.

3. The Lighthouse Point Lighthouse (usually referred to as the South Bass Light or South Bass Lighthouse). On a rise behind the Lime Kiln is a building constructed in 1897 that originally served as both keeper’s residence and lighthouse. A massive brick house is connected to the old light. A replacement light in a nearby steel tower was installed in 1962; it is automatic and thus eliminated the need for a keeper. The Ohio State University now uses the brick building as a residence for Stone Lab staff.
4. **The Press House Bait Store.** We now follow Langram Road to Put-in-Bay Road, where we turn left. The road leads us past the Maple Leaf Cemetery, through a winding, wooded vale, and again past the Viking Longhouse and the de Rivera Wine Facilities. We turn left (west) on Meechen Road, which ends at Catawba, where we see the Press House Bait Store on the northeast corner. Erected in 1865 by German immigrant and vintner Max van Dohren, this is one of the finest examples in the islands of a wine-press house; moreover, the interior of the building still contains some of the original pressing equipment. The structure is board-and-batten in design, with a stone foundation and a gabled cellar entrance.

5. **The van Dohren Farmhouse.** Adjacent to the Press House is van Dohren's rambling home, which remained in the hands of his descendants until 1978. The long windows and peaked window moldings are typical of the Italianate style.

6. **The Crown Hill Cemetery.** Across Catawba from the van Dohren farmstead is the fence-lined cemetery that serves as the final resting place of island notables such as José de Rivera, Valentine Doller, and John Brown, Jr. The grave of de Rivera, who originally donated the land for the cemetery, is located near the entrance; the grave marker is of limestone covered with lime
whitewash. In the center of the cemetery, surrounded by a grove of trees, stands Valentine Doller’s grand mausoleum. Romanesque in design, it was built in 1905 of both smooth-dressed and rough-hewn granite. The mausoleum is noted for its beautiful carved floral patterns.

7. The Hotel Victory Ruins. Near the end of Catawba Avenue in South Bass Island State Park are the remains of the once palatial Hotel Victory. The original resort site covered one hundred acres, twenty-one of which were reserved for the hotel itself and its
grounds. The hotel was commissioned by Toledo resort developer James K. Tillotson and a group of investors; together they hired E. O. Fallis, prominent Toledo architect, to design the building. The Feick Construction Company of Sandusky built the massive frame structure, laying its cornerstone in September 1889. The hotel opened for business in 1892, but construction was not entirely completed until 1896. The edifice was once said to be the largest
resort hotel in the world. It was six hundred feet long by three hundred feet deep and boasted more than eight hundred rooms. The auditorium could seat seven hundred; the spacious dining room could serve one thousand people, employing hundreds of waiters, maids, and bellhops. The facility offered its own dentist, tailor, stenographer, and manicurist as well. Numerous parlors, wine cellars, and shops were part of the grand hotel’s features.

Grounds of the Hotel Victory showing the Rustic Bridge, 1908. The swimming pool, ruins of which can still be seen at the State Park, was immediately to the left of the bridge.
which also included a greenhouse, photographic darkroom, laundry, livery, barber shop, billiard room, ice cream parlor, and newsstand. The entire project, including furnishings, cost an estimated $750,000, but the hotel changed hands numerous times and was never a financial success. Just twenty-three years after it was completed, the Hotel Victory burned on the evening of 14 August 1919 in a spectacular fire that may have been caused by faulty electrical wiring. The ruins of the glorious, multitowered Queen Anne style structure remain in the park and include the pedestal where the hotel’s namesake, a statue of Victory, once stood, an empty, crumbling eight-foot-deep cement swimming pool, and clumps of twisted iron.

Main dining hall, Hotel Victory, seating 800 people