

# Seaport's Ferry Service to "Beach Haven" Set for Summer of Smooth Sailing

By: Victoria Ford

The *Pohatcong II* is a 28-passenger pontoon boat employed as a water taxi from the Tuckerton Seaport to Beach Haven. Now entering its third summer in service, the 30-foot ferry was built in Florida. Its namesake was another passenger ferry long ago.

When the Tuckerton Railroad was built in 1872, beachgoers would take the train to Tuckerton and then hop aboard the original *Pohatcong*, a steam-driven paddle wheel that went from Edge Cove to Beach Haven's Dock Street. In 1886 the railroad bridge now known the Causeway was constructed, but steamship service aboard a smaller boat called the *Haven Belle* continued for 15 more years.

A passenger ferry has not connected the two communities since 1901.

Tuckerton Seaport executive director, Brooke Salvanto explained that a concerned benefactor loaned the seaport the funds to buy the ferry in 2018. Local foundations and business sponsors support the annual cost of operation.

According to Lori Pepenella, chief executive officer of the chamber, the Downtown Driven Program and Water Ferry Committee (comprising representatives of Beach Haven, Tuckerton, Tuckerton Seaport and Baymen's Museum, and the Ocean County Planning Department) discussed methods to make the dream a reality.

*Pohatcong* is an Algonquin word meaning "stream between split hills"; New Jersey's native people, the Lenape, were once part of the Algonquin nation. Today, the Nanticoke Lanape Tribal Nation is headquartered in Bridgeton.

The ecotour guide aboard the *Pohatcong II* one chilly spring day was Taylor Ketcham of Toms River, who said to keep eyes peeled for osprey, swans, cygnet and more as the boat wended its way down Tuckerton Creek the 2.5 miles out to the bay, with Captain Dick Gouldey at the helm.

Ketcham offered many fun facts as the craft sailed along.

Tuckerton, an early port of entry, gets its name from European settlers who had used Andrews Mills, Middle-of-the-Shore, Fishtown, Clamtown, and Quakertown before settling on Tuckerton, in honor of Ebenezer Tucker, who was born on Tucker's Beach and served as the town's postmaster, and a congressman.



Tour Guide Taylor Ketcham aboard the Seaport Ferry.  
Photo Credit: Victoria Ford



Ketcham entertained ferry riders with such tales as the ospreys' comeback after DDT almost wiped them out; she pointed out the giant mounds of clam shells piled high outside Parsons Seafood, to seed the bay; she pointed out the fallen trees along the creek's banks that don't get removed because their roots help keep the soil intact. She talked about the critical role of the marsh in the coastal ecology; she gave a quick lesson on decoys; she pointed out a cormorant poised on a piling,

a red winged blackbird in flight, a great egret gliding over the phragmites, and the long sleek profile of Seven Bridges Road (which has, funnily enough, only five bridges) in the distance, as well as the angular silhouette of Atlantic City's Borgata casino on the horizon.

Having reached the open waters of the Little Egg Harbor, the boat picked up speed and the personal flotation devices stored in the overhead rack clackety-clacked furiously in the wind and the grommets on the roof straps beat a chaotic tune. Normally the boat would go all the way to the Taylor Avenue dock in Beach Haven, behind Fantasy Island, on the other side of the bay.

The passenger limit is currently 10; the roominess allows for riders to bring aboard coolers or bicycles. Up to three bicycles can be accommodated; bicycle spaces should be reserved when booking round-trip tickets. Pets are not permitted on board, nor smoking/vaping. Reservation fees are non-refundable unless the trip is canceled by the ferry operator.

On the return trip, Ketcham covered the hybridization of the blueberry by farmer Elizabeth Coleman White. She also related the area's brief peanut farming industry thanks to the efforts of Philadelphia Industrialist Joseph Wharton. She mentioned the tannic acid and the bog iron ore that make the Creek water brown and about the Tuckerton Wireless tower that stood during World War II.

Back at the Seaport, the newly repainted Coast Guard vessel perched on the hill signaled the trip's nearing conclusion.

The ferry was christened on Sept. 28, 2018 and televised by NBC 10 Philadelphia. After passing all its needed inspections, the boat finally launched in November.

Educational eco-tours and "floating classroom" experiences for school groups were on the agenda from the start. And who doesn't love a sunset cruise? Officials were excited about its practical and tourism-friendly functions.

*Pohatcong II* is Coast Guard certified for the waters between Toms River and Atlantic City. Its first full season of operation was 2019. It was a resounding success; besides ferrying 618 passengers between the two seaside towns, there were 20 private charters. The chamber project won the New Jersey Tourism

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President's Award that same year. Pandemic year 2020 meant a reduction in passengers, but the Seaport still utilized the ferry for 558 on-water programs, including ferrying people to Long Beach Island, morning birding trips, sunset sails and holiday boat rides.

The service runs Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays from July 4 to Labor Day, weather permitting. The boat has a canopy and isinglass sides to

protect guests from the elements. The ferry is not wheelchair accessible. Kids 16 and younger must be accompanied by an adult; 13 and younger are required to wear life vests. Minimum age to ride is 2.

Departure times from the Seaport are 8 a.m., 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. A sunset sail departs at 5:30. Departure times from Beach Haven are 9:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. The sunset sail return trip leaves at 7. Reservations and no-contact online payment are required in advance. To reserve a round trip for \$12.50 per person, secure tickets at [tuckertonseaport.org/ticket-center/](https://tuckertonseaport.org/ticket-center/).

Start and return trips on the water ferry must be booked at the same time. Guests must bring a printed copy of their order/booking confirmations for their reserved seats or have the confirmations available on their cell phone or mobile device. All guests must be boarded 15 minutes prior to sailing. After that time, all reserved seats will be released, no exceptions.

Ferry trips may include some admissions to the exhibits and buildings of the Seaport.

The Seaport, at 120 West Main St. in Tuckerton, is a re-created maritime village on 40 acres with exhibits and folk-ways artisans that accentuate the baymen's way of life. There are also ecological exhibits telling the story of the pristine waters of the Mullica River watershed, the Pine Barrens and their importance to the health of the Barnegat, Manahawkin, Little Egg and Tuckerton bays.

There will also be some special complimentary Seaport Members Only Creek Tour dates, to be announced.

To comply with COVID-19 safety rules, the Seaport has added a new lighthouse gate and welcome booth to hasten boarding. A sanitizing station is provided. A sign reminds visitors to stay 6 feet apart, even when outside. All guests must wear a mask including children older than 2 years of age.

For updates and information on how to support the Downtown Driven program contact [brookes@tuckertonseaport.org](mailto:brookes@tuckertonseaport.org).



*Tuckerton Ferry returns to dock.*  
Photo Credit: Tuckerton Seaport