

# Have Trailer Will Travel!

By Pat Johnson

The celebration of America's 250th Anniversary will stretch to nine more years of events in Ocean County until the anniversary of war's end (1783). Ocean County is a proud partner in RevolutionNJ, New Jersey's official organization charged with planning and promoting the state's commemoration of the Semiquincentennial. As part of that celebration the Ocean County Parks and Recreation and the Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission prepared a 16-foot long trailer proclaiming the roles that Ocean County played in the birth of our democracy. The trailer is titled "The War at the Shore" and it portrays the six most influential skirmishes in Ocean County.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, Ocean County wasn't the county we recognize now; Little Egg Harbor Township (including Tuckerton) was part of Burlington County until 1891 and Stafford and Dover townships were part of Monmouth County until the creation of Ocean County in 1850. Director of the Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission Tim Hart explained how most of the public's knowledge of the Revolutionary War in New Jersey centers around the "Ten Crucial Days" while "The War at the Shore" tells a larger story.

"We counted out how many days there were in the Revolutionary War from the shot heard round the world (in Lexington) to when the British leave New York --3,142 days," said Hart. "And between when Washington Crossed the Delaware and the Battle of Princeton—that's only 10 days."

In Ocean County privateers were capturing British ships and selling their cargo to finance the war and on land, "Pine Robbers," loyalist bandits, were attacking patriot homes. The artwork



Photo credit: Ocean County Parks & Recreation.

reproduced on the sides of the trailer highlight six of the most prominent events in "The War at the Shore."

The Defense of Egg Harbor (October 15, 1778) was the bloodiest. As many as 40 patriots died during a brutal attack by the British on a contingent of Polish Count Casimir Pulaski's Legion in what is now Little Egg Harbor. The Skirmish in Manahawkin (December 30, 1781) where Pine Robbers led by John Bacon forced patriot militias to retreat. Two Hundred Red Coats and loyalists attacked the blockhouse and salt works at Toms River during the Toms River Blockhouse Fight (March 25, 1782). Loyalists mostly burned the city to the ground.

During the Long Beach Island Massacre (October 1782) twenty-five privateer patriots seized cargo from a British vessel that ran aground. John Bacon's pine robbers ambushed the sleeping crew that night, killing 21. The last documented land engagement of the war, the Affair at Cedar Bridge (December 27, 1782) again pitted patriots against John Bacon and the loyalists. The Death of John Bacon at Roses Tavern (April 3 1783) ends his rampage when the Burlington Militia caught up with the bandit in a tavern near Tuckerton.



Hart is particularly proud of the depiction of the Toms River Blockhouse Fight on the trailer as the original hangs in Toms River South High School and now can be seen by many more people. The trailer appeared in 11 parades and participated in 82 events around the county, directly engaging 28,178 people and overall engagement of over 310,161 citizens.

To get children interested in history is a hard slog so the trailer comes packed with come-on's to tempt them to learn in a fun way—replica canons, giant chess and checkers sets to play with and there is always a dish of treats. They can also ring the “liberty” bell—an actual large bronze bell possibly salvaged from a ship wreck that was donated by Daniel Soper of Manahawkin, himself a descendant of Revolutionary War patriots. The liberty bell weighs over 400 pounds within its wooden cradle and rings true. Hart estimates it has been rung 10,000 times or more.

To engage the trailer for parades or other civic events, please contact Joseph at [rlatshaw@co.ocean.nj.us](mailto:rlatshaw@co.ocean.nj.us) or 732-929-4779. To learn more visit the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage website: <https://co.ocean.nj.us/OC/ch/fm250AmericanRevolution.aspx>



War at the Shore trailer at the Lakewood Fall Festival.  
Photo credit: Ocean County.

When the trailer is parked at Cedar Bridge Tavern County Historic Site and hosts school trips, students get to try on the dress of the Revolutionary War patriots and other period costumes.

The trailer will be present at many Semiquincentennial events including the Veterans Day Commemoration at the Ocean County Court House, Nov. 20 and the Affair at Cedar Bridge Commemoration on Dec. 1.