

Ocean County Celebrates 175 Years

By Pat Johnson

Ocean County was created on February 15, 1850 from the lower half of Monmouth County. Lines were drawn from the Manasquan River south, encompassing Jackson, Plumstead, Dover, Stafford, Union and Brick townships. Little Egg Harbor was still part of Burlington County, only joining in 1891. Assemblyman Joel Haywood of West Creek introduced the bill to form the county and it was passed by one vote. Haywood then became one of twelve Freeholders.

In February of this year, the Ocean County Board of Commissioners (formerly the Board of Chosen Freeholders) held a ceremony to mark the anniversary by burying a time capsule in front of the Ocean County Administration building in Toms River.

Inside the capsule were more than 60 items from nearly 30 Ocean County departments and agencies including patches and pins from county law enforcement agencies, department annual reports, brochures and maps from Ocean County Parks and natural lands acquisitions, training guides, resource guides for seniors, county budgets and ratings information—all to give a snapshot of life in 2025 Ocean County. Ocean County

Commissioner Robert Arace served as the Master of Ceremonies at the event and quoted John Jay Chapman, an American author born in 1862. “One of the deepest impulses in man is the impulse to record, to scratch a drawing on a tusk or keep a diary…The enduring value of the past is, one might say, the very basis of civilization.”

“Today as we celebrate Ocean County’s 175th anniversary, we look back at its history –the enduring value of its past—and we look forward to its very bright future,” said Arace.

Arace then outlined the population growth and growth of services to the more than 650,000 Ocean County citizens. “We maintain more than 1,600 county lane miles, 35,000 traffic signs, 400 traffic lights and 259 bridges and culverts. We are a government housed in 135 county government buildings. We are home to more than 30,000 veterans and over 200,000 senior citizens. Ocean County was the first two-year college in the state of New Jersey and our vocational Technical Schools are award

Photo above, L to R: Commissioner Virginia E. Haines, Senator Carmen F. Amato, Jr. , Commissioner Robert S. Arace, Commissioner Jennifier Bacchione, Ocean County Historian Tim Hart, and Commissioner Frank Sadeghi. Photo credit: Ocean County.

winning. We have 27 Ocean County parks, 2 county-run golf courses, nearly 30,000 acres of preserved open space and 5,500 acres of preserved farmland. Our largest employer is Six Flags Great Adventure followed closely by Joint Base MacGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. We also have the largest public library system in the state of New Jersey and the list goes on."

A definitive timeline of Ocean County seminal events was also developed for the occasion. When Ocean County was set-off from Monmouth on February 15, 1850, it was the state's 20th county and the second largest but with a population of just over 10,000.

In 1862 railroads begin to service the area and tourism begins. Two bridges were built across Barnegat Bay in 1914 to the barrier islands and seaside tourism took off. More people discovered the attractions of the county.

"With everything they see and read that is in this time capsule, I believe the one thing that will stand out the most is the pride we take in our County. This is a county of opportunities, of diversity that we embrace and one of perseverance to make certain it is the best place to live, work, raise a family and retire."



Commissioner Frank Sadeghi assists the Buildings & Grounds crew seal the time capsule. Photo credit: Ocean County.

Arace also announced the formation of several contests to highlight the 175th anniversary; a poster contest for fifth and sixth grade students, an art contest for residents 18 years and older and an essay contest for 9th, 10th and 11th grade students. The theme for all three is "What makes Ocean County a great place to live." Each school will hold its own in-house contest and pick one entry for the county contest. Gift cards for art supplies for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes in the poster contest will be awarded and gift cards for books will be awarded in the essay contest. The deadline for the art contests is October 1.



Commissioner Robert S. Arace and Commissioner Frank Sadeghi. Photo credit: Ocean County.

To find information on contests go to co.ocean.nj.us, click on Meet Our Commissioners, then search, '175th Anniversary.' For more information contact Kristen Kosa at kkosa@co.ocean.nj.us.

The Ocean County Division of Public Information, Donna Flynn, director, planned the time capsule and contests to celebrate the 175th anniversary with assistance from the Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Timothy G. Hart director. Hart also serves as the Ocean County Historian and will give a presentation on "175 Years of Ocean County" at Cedar Bridge Tavern Historic Site on Sunday, July 13 at 2:00 PM. Registration is $5, call Ocean County Parks at (732) 506-9090 to register. The Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation also contributed, as did the Ocean County Department of Building and Grounds.