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101 Washington St., Toms River, NJ 08753-7625

Telephone: 732-349-6200

www.theoceancountylibrary.org

Susan Quinn, Director

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PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Bob Vosseller, 732-349-6200, ext. 5905
Rvosseller@theoceancountylibrary.org

Ocean County Library digitizes local newspaper

TOMS RIVER – If you read the front page of the Sept. 6, 1917 edition of *The Tuckerton Beacon* you'd learn some very interesting things.

You could have bought a Trumbull Cycle Car with four new tires for \$140. The cost for canners to purchase tomatoes went up from 20 cents a basket to 60 cents and Republican James H. Bogart of Island Heights was running for the position of Ocean County Sheriff.

Now, historic gems like that and many others can be read online thanks to a special program headed by the Ocean County Library's new digitization committee.

Through a partnership with The Great John Mathis Foundation/Bass River Historical Society and the *Asbury Park Press* – Gannett Company Inc. the Ocean County Library recently completed digitizing *The Tuckerton Beacon*. The publication is one of the oldest newspapers in Ocean County and is now available at www.theoceancountylibrary.org/beacon.

A special event to celebrate the digitization has been scheduled for 3 p.m. on June 20 at the Tuckerton Branch located at 380 Bay Ave., Tuckerton. Call 609-296-1470 for details.

"This marks Ocean County Library's first project in digitizing Ocean County newspapers and as far as I know is the first online digital archive of an Ocean County historic newspaper," Supervising Librarian Elizabeth J. Cronin said.

The weekly newspaper was originally named *Coast Pilot* when it hit newsstands in 1889. It was published by Walter Sawm. A year later the newspaper changed its name to *The Tuckerton Beacon* to better identify itself with its coverage area of southern Ocean County. In 1910 it was purchased by E. Moss Mathis of Tuckerton who sold the publication in 1930 to George Willits Parker of Barnegat.

The newspaper's proudest accolade was a 1939 letter by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during the paper's 50th anniversary. Roosevelt wrote to Parker saying, "I trust that all the fine things accomplished in your community during the past 50 years may be but the prelude to finer things to be achieved in the years that lie ahead."

It was later acquired by Mary Ann Cox and sold in the late 1970s to Mark Goodson, said Linda Reddington. She was hired by Cox and stayed on as an editor after it was purchased by Gannett in the early 1990s.

Due to copyright restrictions, only the years 1917 to 1922 may be accessed remotely. Users have to be in a library branch either using a library computer or the library's Wi-Fi to access the complete archive of 1917 through 1987.

Pete Stemmer, the secretary and treasurer of The Great John Mathis Foundation/Bass River Historical Society said his organization provided \$10,000 for the project and the Ocean County Library provided approximately \$7,000 in additional funds. Innovative Document Imaging, East Brunswick, converted the library's microfilm to a digital searchable archive.

"We wanted to see the money in our treasury was used toward historical research in the area and the Tuckerton Beacon has been a local newspaper since the 1880s," Stemmer said.

Permission to digitize material still under copyright for access within the library was granted by Gannett. The Ocean County Library's technology, collections, information services and administration departments were involved with the project.

Cronin said OCL's Digitization Committee is charged to identify other local newspapers and collections for digitization, to look for grants and other funding and to work on partnerships with other local historical organizations to bring more Ocean County history into the digital world.