



This tour is based, in part,  
on an article written for  
**TOMS RIVER TOWNSHIP'S  
ANNUAL FOUNDER'S DAY**  
in the June 1994 issue of the  
**Ocean County Observer**  
by then Mayor Joseph H. Vicari



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Joseph H. Vicari, *Freeholder Liaison*  
Barbara W. Steele, *Director*  
(732) 929-2000

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# Village of Toms River

## Historic Walking Tour Toms River Township

*"The Official Ocean County Seat"*



c. 1850  
**Ocean County Courthouse**

**Ocean County  
Board of Chosen Freeholders**

John C. Bartlett, Jr. • James F. Lacey  
John P. Kelly • Gerry P. Little  
Joseph H. Vicari

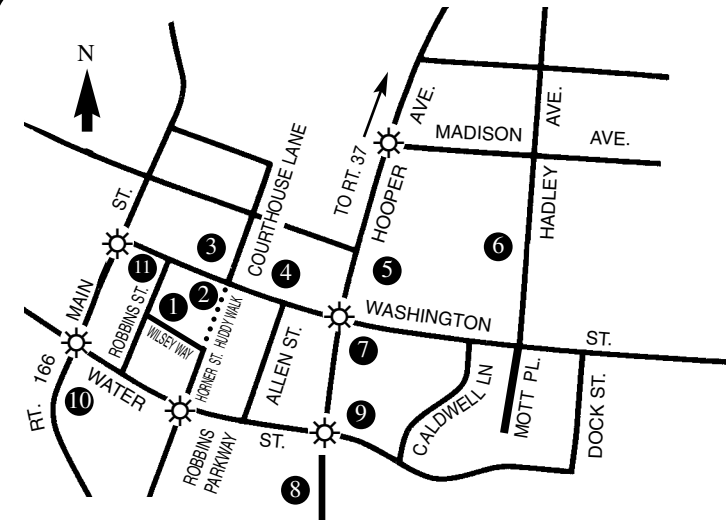
## ABOUT TOMS RIVER:

At one time Toms River was part of Shrewsbury Township in Monmouth County. In 1767, a group of residents petitioned the Royal General Assembly to create their own municipality. The 441 square mile township ranged from which is now the Monmouth County line at its northern border to Oyster Creek in present day Lacey Township in the south to the Burlington County line in the west and to the Atlantic Ocean on the east.

The name given to the area was Dover Township, and it was established 80 years prior to the founding of Ocean County in 1850. Over the years, many areas have seceded from the township to form separate municipalities.

Entwined with the history of Dover Township was a neighborhood within it, the Village of Toms River. When the county was formed, the residents elected to name Toms River as the official county seat. Because the postal designation name was Toms River, which included even more of the town, that name became better known and was more popular in use, much to the confusion of even long-time residents. The situation was resolved in 2006 when, by popular election, the name of the township officially was changed from Dover to Toms River Township.

Modern day Toms River Township is 41.6 square miles, which includes the mainland and areas on the Seaside peninsula. In 1990 the population was 76,371, in 2000 - 89,706 and an estimated 94,660 in 2005.



## WALKING TOUR LEGEND

1. Toms River Town Hall  
Veterans' Memorial & Blockhouse Monuments
2. Toms River Branch, Ocean County Library
3. High School Hall of Fame
4. 1850 Courthouse
5. County Administration Bldg.
6. Ocean County Museum
7. Old Methodist Cemetery
8. Cultural & Heritage Commission
9. Toms River Maritime Museum
10. Huddy Park
11. Col. Charles Waterhouse Historical Museum

## THE TOUR

This walking tour of the village or downtown area of Toms River is approximately ten blocks and can take less than a half-hour if no stops are made. If you visit the museums, browse through the library and stop at the County Administration Building to pick up literature, it can take two hours.

### TOMS RIVER TOWNSHIP

① Start at the Toms River Township Municipal Building at 33 Washington St. Publications in the lobby area are of interest. Pick up a copy of the Historical Toms River Water Street Walking Tour, a self-guided walk pointing out historic, privately owned homes along the Toms River Water-front District on East Water Street. It starts in the area where this tour ends.

Weekdays 8:30 am to 4:30 pm  
(732) 341-1000

### TOMS RIVER BRANCH OCEAN COUNTY LIBRARY

② At 101 Washington St., the Toms River Branch houses the Hugh Wheeler room, which contains expansive information on the history of the area and the genealogy of its residents. A Chris Freeman light sculpture graces the ceiling. Also of interest is the Elaine McConnell Art Gallery on the first floor. The library frequently sponsors entertaining and educational programs, has displays in the lobby and hosts exhibitions. A coffee shop is housed in the former Presbyterian Church of Toms River which dates to 1853.

Mon. - Thurs., 9 am to 9 pm,  
Fri., 9 am - 5 pm  
During school year, Sun., 1 pm - 5 pm  
(732) 349-6200

### HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

③ Cross the street to 54 Washington St. where the Toms River School's Hall of Fame is located in the administrative offices. The hallway is lined with photographs, biographical information and other memorabilia about leading alumni. As one person fondly said, "There's a lot of history on those walls."

Usually open: 8 am to 4 pm, weekdays.  
(732) 505-5545

## 1850 COURTHOUSE

④ Head east to the most imposing structure in the area, the 1850 Ocean County Courthouse at 118 Washington St. Styled in the "Greek Revival" fashion, it is easily identified by its six majestic columns. Today the Courthouse houses the offices of the Ocean County Clerk, the Ocean County Surrogate and the courts and their associated offices. The County Clerk's office has materials of interest in the reception area. You also might stop to read the war memorials which are located throughout the grounds. Look for the Revolutionary War cannon on the lawn.

Weekdays 9 am to 4:30 pm,  
(732) 929-2018

### COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

⑤ Continue east and cross Hooper Ave. Take note of the modern County Administration Building on your left at 101 Hooper Ave. This is home to the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders who govern the county's affairs. Information is available in the lobby, and from the Ocean County Public Affairs and Tourism Department in Room 109.

Weekdays 8:30 am to 5:00 pm,  
(732) 929-2000

### OCEAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

⑥ Continue your walk on Washington St. for one block, turn left to 26 Hadley Ave., the Ocean County Historical Museum. A former Victorian home, it offers the most comprehensive history of this area, from Native American artifacts to furnishings and clothing depicting life during the Victorian period. A special room features the industries of the past.

Museum & Research Center  
Tues. and Thurs., 1 pm - 4 pm  
Museum; Tues. and Thurs., 1 pm - 3 pm  
(732) 341-1880

## OLD METHODIST CEMETERY

⑦ Retrace your steps to the Washington St./Hooper Ave. intersection. Cross the street and explore the Old Methodist Cemetery on the southeast corner. Find the tombstones of soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War.

### OCEAN COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION

⑧ Across the street at 14 Hooper Ave. is the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission which has information about the county's museums, theatres and art galleries. After your visit, enjoy a restful pause in the garden gazebo.

Weekdays 8:30 am - 5:30 pm  
(732) 929-4779

### TOMS RIVER SEAPORT SOCIETY MARITIME MUSEUM

⑨ Head south on Hooper Ave. toward the Toms River. If being near the water is what drew you to the area, be sure to stop at the Toms River Seaport Society Maritime Museum at the corner of Hooper Ave. and West Water St. across from the Toms River. It is a working museum. You will find a number of boats indigenous to the area under restoration. Some of the "fleet" have very special histories of their own, such as the 12-foot sneakbox that the late F. Slade Dale sailed from New Jersey to Florida in the 1920's.

Tues., Thurs., and Sat., 10 am to 2 pm.  
(732) 349-9209

### HUDDY PARK

⑩ Cross the street. On your left, you will pass Stoutenburgh Park, named after a 1920's Commodore of the Toms River Yacht Club. Enjoy the view along Water Street as you head west to Huddy Park located just before the Main St. intersection. A block house built in modern times to serve as a historic memorial of a Revolutionary skirmish with the British. Read the sign in the park which details how the hanging of Captain Joshua Huddy caused an international incident during the war. Walk across the picturesque bridge which is named after Thomas Luker. Some historians believe Toms River is named after him.

## COLONEL CHARLES WATERHOUSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

⑪ Head north on Main St., turn right and go to the second floor at 17 Washington St. While not devoted to Toms River, this museum captures the larger history of our country from Colonial days to the present. The permanent collection includes the paintings and sculptures of Col. Waterhouse, the first and only Artist-in-residence of the USMC and frequent lecturer and guide. A gallery features rotating exhibits of Col. Waterhouse's illustrations and those of other area artists.

Thurs. - Sat., noon to 4 pm  
(732) 818-9040

## THANK YOU

We hope your walking tour has helped you enjoy the heritage of this riverside community. Even though Toms River Township is the seventh largest municipality in the state, it is this very special village area that makes it feel "small town." Thank you for taking time to share it with us.



*A special thank you to  
Ocean County Historian  
Pauline S. Miller  
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