

MATAWAN-ABERDEEN
HOMETOWN SHOPPER™

Summer Issue 1996



Photo taken by Patten Studios, 197 Main Street, Matawan, New Jersey



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

155 Main Street ■ Matawan, New Jersey 07747-9998

(see article on page 4)

MATAWAN-ABERDEEN
HOMETOWN
SHOPPER™

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**The current hours
of the Matawan Post Office are:**

Window Service:

Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 5 pm

Saturday, 9 am - 12 noon

Box Lobby Hours:

Monday - Friday, 5 am - 6 pm

Saturday, 5 am - 5 pm

Telephone (908) 566-0854

Member of the
Matawan-Aberdeen
Chamber of Commerce

Member of the
Matawan Historical
Society

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MATAWAN U.S. POST OFFICE

Records indicate that the Matawan Post Office was originally established under the name of Middletown Point in 1794 or 1795, and that Jonathan Forman was the first postmaster. The name of the office was changed to Matawan on June 8, 1865. The earliest service to the Middletown Point Post Office was on a crossroad from "Brunswick (New Brunswick), via Spotswood and Middletown Point to Shrewsbury." The crossroad connected at Brunswick with the Main Post Road of the United States which ran from Scodic in Maine to Saint Mary's in Georgia. Postage rates at this time were based on distance. Each single letter mailed under 30 miles; 6¢, over 30 miles and not exceeding 60 miles; 8¢, etc.

The first mail carrier appointed to serve the post office was T. Harry Ronson, who served for the years 1904-1932. In the early days, his route was covered by horse and wagon. He left at 7 am and returned by 4 pm, no matter what the weather. About 1917, he reluctantly gave up the use of his fine horse, and purchased an automobile to handle the delivery of the daily mail.

In the late 1800's, the position of Postmaster was appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate, through the recommendation of the district congressman. Post offices were also classified into 5 classes according to the amount of postal business done. In 1917, under Postmaster Patrick J. Devlin, the receipts exceeded \$8,000 putting the Matawan Post Office in a second class status. Until the postal receipts reached \$10,000 a year, Matawan was not entitled to free mail delivery. In 1923, Village Delivery Service began requiring residents to be equipped with mail boxes. Between 1922 and 1930, the receipts of the post office nearly doubled due to the growth of the population by nearly 500; but the greatest factor had been the establishment of new factories and development of the industries which were already there.

In 1931, Congress apportioned \$79,000 for a new post office to be erected within 7 years. A Legal Notice, from the Treasury Dept., appeared in the Matawan Journal on July 2, 1936 which read: "proposals are hereby solicited for a site for a Federal Building at Matawan, NJ for the sale or donation to the U.S. of a lot conveniently located". Eleven owners offered their properties ranging from \$4500 to \$48,875. The property submitted by the Farmers & Merchants National Bank and Francis F. Simpson, situated next to the existing post office, on the easterly side of Main St., between Park Ave. and Little St., was selected and purchased at a cost of \$10,500. Announcement was made September 25, 1936 and title was vested with the government on June 19, 1937.

The building was designed by the office of the Supervising Architect, Public Buildings Branch, of the Treasury Dept. The contract was awarded to the J. L. Robinson Construction Co. of Baltimore, Md, in the amount of \$53,800, and completion had to be made in 210 calendar days. A

1938 news clipping described the new building as follows: "Designed in a colonial style, with a wood cornice and high metal roof with cupola, are features of the front portion. On the sides are gables. Exterior walls are brick with stone trim. The colonial entrance has wide steps with iron handrails and decorative lamp standards. The main floor contains a large public lobby, lock box alcove, and Postmaster's office. In the lobby is a postal screen containing parcel post, stamps, money orders and registry, and wicket windows. The basement has postal storage, in addition to the boiler and fuel rooms."

On April 30, 1938, a formal dedication ceremony was held. A limited supply of First Day Covers inscribed "To commemorate the dedication of the Matawan Post Office, Matawan, NJ", was available for collectors.

The four pieces of artwork, of artist Armin A. Scheler, mounted over the post office boxes in the front lobby, were presented to the post office in 1939. They represent a rural mill, an old hospital, the Glenwood Institute, and First Presbyterian Church. Inside the front lobby, a large piece of the artist's work is displayed showing Philip Freneau freeing his slaves. On your next visit to the post office, take notice of these pieces of artwork representing a part of Matawan's colorful history.

The post office was expanded to its present size in 1975 with the extension on the right side and back of building.

Alan Schnoll, a resident of Aberdeen, has been Postmaster of the Matawan office since December, 1992. He oversees the collection, processing, and distribution of mail in Matawan, Aberdeen and parts of Old Bridge. Postmaster Schnoll has indicated since many area residents commute to Newark and New York City each day, consideration is being given to extending hours one night a week. Also a post office sub-station is also being considered to be located near Route 34 and Lloyd Road, Aberdeen.

— Historical information obtained from the MATAWAN JOURNAL (volume 9-10) (Reference Books of the Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library)



U. S. Post Office approximately 1910 - 1937 located at 159 Main Street, Matawan.
Photo courtesy of Mr. C. Randolph Heuser.