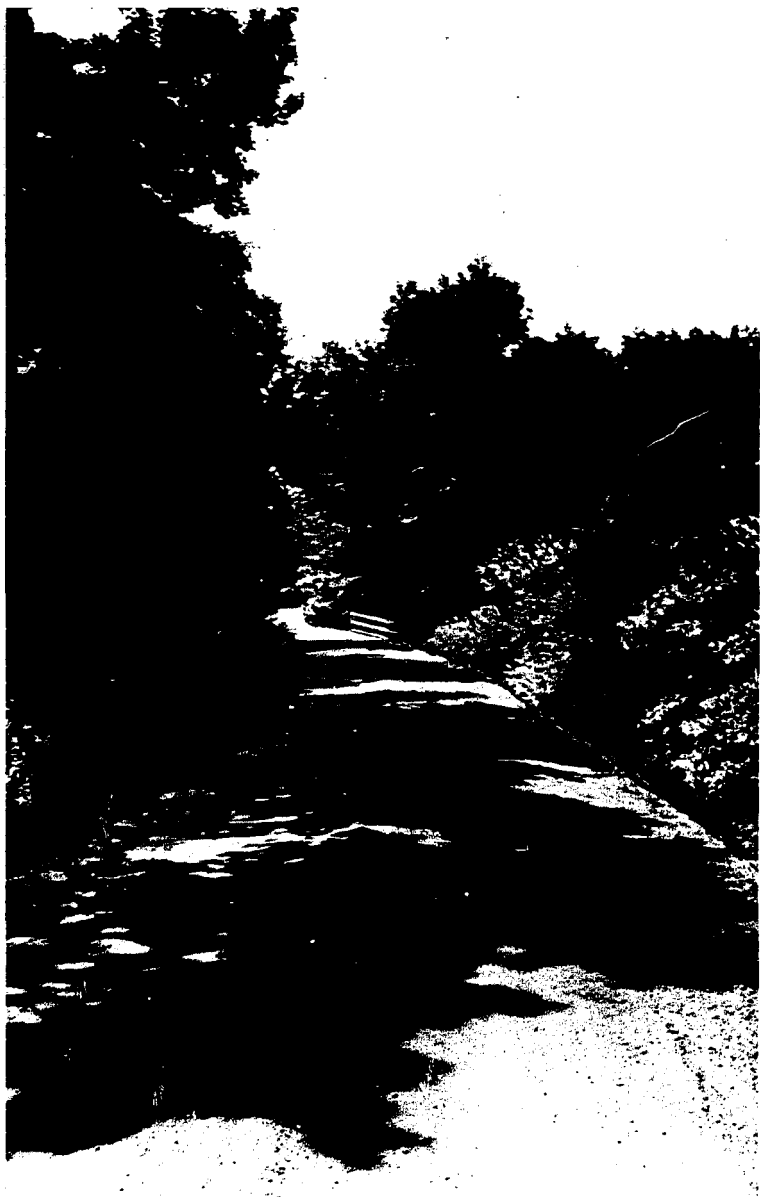


# **MATAWAN**

***1686 • 1936***





*The Minisink Trail As It Looks Today, East of US 9.*



# MATAWAN

1686 • 1936

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
*BY WORKERS OF THE*  
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECTS



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

**FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECTS**  
**NEWARK : 1936**

## FOREWORD

This is the story of Matawan Borough and Matawan Township from Indian times to today. It was written and illustrated with maps and photographs by the Federal Writers' Projects of the Works Progress Administration, and published as a contribution to Matawan's 250th anniversary celebration.

The date for the celebration was fixed as September 13, since on that day in 1686, it was believed, Stephen and Thomas Warne received a grant of land in what is now the center of Matawan. Under the leadership of the *Matawan Journal* elaborate plans were made for a 3-day celebration culminating in a pageant and other activities. A committee was appointed, consisting of Albert B. Smith, chairman; John Marz Jr., vice chairman; Mrs. Florence L. Carney, secretary; and Merritt J. Warwick, treasurer. Too late it was discovered from study of the original grant, with its difficult seventeenth century script, that the date was the "thirtieth" of September, not the "thirteenth". The date of actual settlement, however, is not yet known.

The Federal Writers' Projects came into being in the fall of 1935, as a constructive effort to relieve unemployment among thousands of professional writers throughout the country. More than 250 men and women are employed in New Jersey as writers, editors, photographers and typists. Most of them are collecting material for the New Jersey Guide, which will be a fact-filled book of unusual interest to the New Jersey resident as well as the stranger on our highways. Similar guides are being prepared in each of the other 47 States and the District of Columbia.

In presenting this book, acknowledgment is made for the painstaking help given by Miss J. Mabel Brown, publisher of the *Matawan Journal*, who twice read the final proofs and suggested a number of helpful changes and corrections. Mayor Edward W. Currie performed a similar service. An invaluable store of facts was obtained from the files of the *Journal* through the courtesy of Adrian Ely Mount, managing editor, who also read and criticized the entire manuscript. Many other residents of Matawan have been exceedingly helpful in assisting our staff; and to the entire community, we extend our warmest thanks for the opportunity to produce this book.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECTS.

472 Orange Street,  
Newark, New Jersey,  
November 3, 1936.





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## OLD NAMES AND NEW

The name *Matawan* or *Matavan* means "where two rivers come together" (*Matawan* and *Mohingson* Creeks). Both forms have been used almost interchangeably since pre-Revolutionary times although there was a period in the last century when the borough was called *Matawan* and the township was called *Matavan*. Perhaps the earliest reference to the name is found on Van Der Donck's map of New Amsterdam dated 1656, which shows an Indian village of the "Matovancons" on the Jersey shore. Summaries of local names follow:

**MOUNT PLEASANT**—Probably chosen by the 24 original Scotch settlers for their townsite at Freneau.

**NEW ABERDEEN**—An early name for the Mount Pleasant settlement and the surrounding area. It was either adopted by the immigrant Scots, or conferred by other colonists—just as we have "Chinatown" and "Little Italy" today.

**FRENEAU**—A late nineteenth century substitution for Mount Pleasant.

**NASHINAKIME**—Indian name for the Matawan district.

**FREEHOLD LANDING**—Early Colonial name for the Matawan district.

**MIDDLETOWN POINT**—Later name for the present Matawan Borough, adopted after the establishment of Middletown Township in 1693.

**MATAWAN TOWNSHIP**—Chosen in 1857 for the new township carved from Middletown Township. The name was taken from Matawan Creek.

**MATAWAN**—Substituted in 1865 for Middletown Point, to avoid postal confusion with Middletown.

There is only one other Matawan post office in the United States, and that in Minnesota. First cousins once or twice removed are *Matewan*, W. Va.; *Mattawan*, Mich.; and *Mattawanna*, Pa. There is no post office at *Matteawan*, N. Y., where a State hospital for the criminally insane is situated. It was after his release from that institution that Harry K. Thaw, slayer of Stanford White, passed through Matawan on his way south. The story is that he spent the time between trains in a billiard game at the old Aberdeen Inn behind the railroad station, and a friend interrupted to point out the station sign. "Good Lord, will I never get away from that place?" Thaw exclaimed.

## MATAWAN TODAY

With a population of about 3,000, Matawan Borough is village enough to have rambling old barns with hay-hoists only a block from Main Street, though the farms have long since been divided into residential plots. And it is urban enough to have garbage collection, city carrier postal service and a radio police car.

Human relationships are so compact that almost any resident can give the address of any high school teacher and tell where the teacher is spending the summer. Every street has a name and most of the houses have numbers, but not a great deal of attention is paid to them. Much of the mail carries no more specific address than "Matawan, N. J."; and directions are given by landmarks.

The business of the borough is transacted almost exclusively on Main Street, a more or less straight concrete thoroughfare which runs the length of the borough. In the 5-block stretch between Summit Street and Maiden Lane are most of the retail stores, the two banks, the post office, the public library, the motion picture theater and the borough hall.

A few of the shops are housed in extensions built to the sidewalk from old residences. For years a barber pole stood incongruously before an old house at 253 Main Street; and the public library, without benefit of Carnegie's bricks, concrete or steel, is still a charming little cottage that would excite covetous "Ahs!" from all rugged Americans who liked the rotogravure pictures of the playhouse built for Princess Elizabeth of England. Indeed, the diminutive library is so stamped with quaintness that one would expect to find in it no fiction more recent than the works of Thackeray, Dumas and James Fenimore Cooper. But the fact is that "It Can't Happen Here" and "Wake Up and Live" are both on the shelves—and the cards show that Miss Brande's success formula stays longer on the shelves between borrowings than does the Lewis novel.

Along the residential portions of Main Street and even sandwiched between business properties are Colonial, Georgian and Victorian homes. Under the great elms at the curbs are the stepping blocks on which the grandmothers of today's young motorists alighted in state from the chaise, the landau and the buggy. On some of the stones are initials of men who did not live to see Main Street paved from curb to curb. Narrow lanes—as narrow as those of old Manhattan—lead from Main Street. As noted above Matawan has its own Maiden Lane, and it has a Rabbit Lane, too. These and other side streets extend for a few blocks at most to the shores of Lake Matawan and Lake Lefferts, bordering the town on east and west.



*Main Street, Looking South.*

Inhabitants from the shores of New York's East River or Nebraska's North Platte will notice the trees of Matawan. No youngsters, these, but stanch old veterans of storm, drought and shrill winter blasts. There are elms and maples and giant sycamores—or buttonwoods, as they are more commonly called. Many of the sycamores are nearly 4 feet in diameter and date back to the first years of the Republic. Not only the trees but also the gardens reflect Matawan of yesterday. Marigolds and other old-fashioned flowers are found in many yards. Petunias, golden glow, zinnias, morning glories, blue flags and snow-on-the-mountain are favorites. Lilacs thrust their leaves through the fences beside roses of Sharon, hydrangeas and snowballs. Some cherry, apple and pear trees are survivors of a more rural community.

All of these things are true of the bulk of Matawan Borough, where the homes of the few wealthy citizens, the many well-to-do and the other solvent residents are clustered. The entire borough is not, of course, a verdant strip of paradise, nor is the township studded with sunken gardens and seven-bathroom mansions. No able-bodied person is on direct relief in Matawan Borough; but across Lake Matawan lies the district known many years ago as Africa, because of a Negro population that has since been largely replaced by whites. Through the center runs Atlantic Avenue, a street that would serve as a slide rule for the social worker. The south end, in farm country, has a scattering of homes with architecture ranging from the commonplace to the bizarre, three one-story houses having roof decks with unusual railings that are known locally as Spanish style—shingled sides to the contrary notwithstanding. Northward, across the Freehold railroad tracks, are somewhat more pretentious dwellings, marked by one in the English cottage style. This portion of Atlantic Avenue also has industrial development. Still further north and beyond the main line tracks of the New York and Long Branch Railroad is the least attractive portion of Atlantic Avenue. Here are houses with blistered paint or none at all, contrasting with a few better kept homes. Many of these dwellings are occupied by Negro workers in the brickyards and tile factories. This section adjoins the community known as Oak Shades, and is of a piece with it.

One of the most colorful local names, "Skintown," is sometimes given to the section of Atlantic Avenue lying between the two railroad lines. The story is that some years ago a contractor built several cheap houses and sold them at fancy prices.

The old Africa with its colony of manumitted slaves dating to pre-Revolutionary times is gone. But there is a new Africa west of the lake. On Orchard Street is Matawan's Harlem, albeit a diminutive one without a single cabaret, but with enough exhibition of human frailties in the more liberal tradition of Omar Khayyam to stimulate the missionary efforts of the pastor of the Second Baptist Church. The district

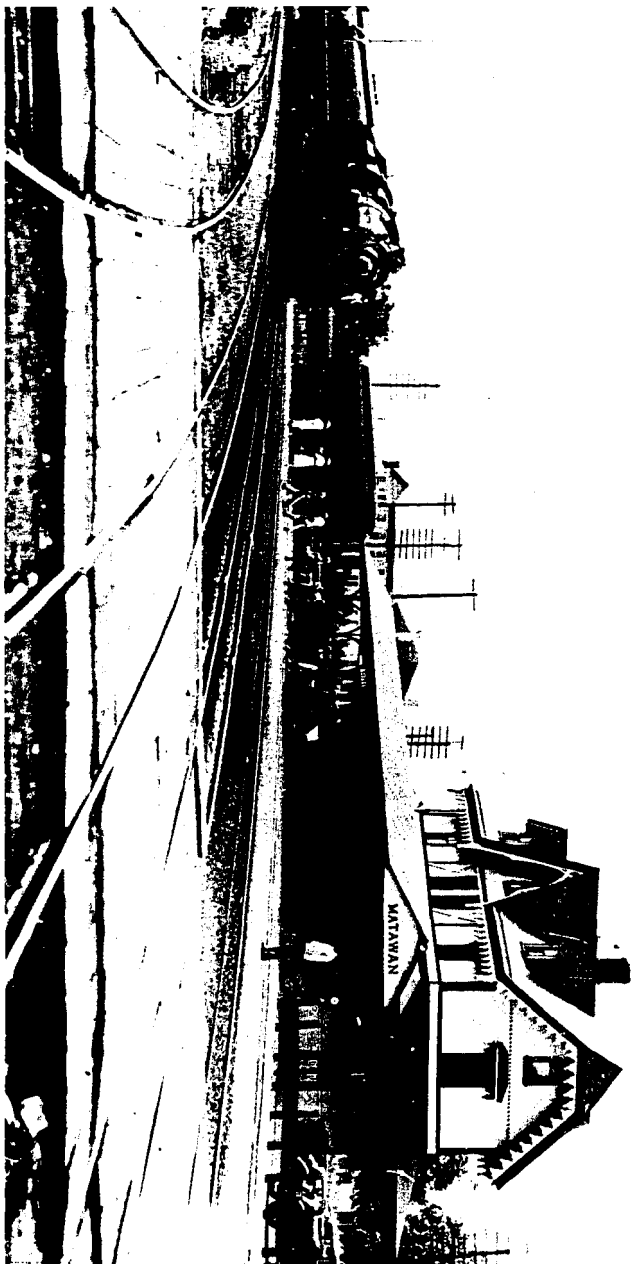
is really nothing more than a row of little houses, backed up against the lake shore; and most of the occupants are respected citizens. But there are enough exceptions to keep tongues busy and ears open elsewhere in town.

Not without reason, Matawan has been called a bankers' town. One of the most prominent families, the Terhunes, has a banking tradition of several generations; and other residents commute to the financial district of New York, part of a commuting population estimated at 300. In addition to its normal quota of factory workers and business and professional people, Matawan is the home of many persons who have retired. Few come here after a life at sea, although in earlier years the town attracted many old skippers. One was Captain Aaron Hopkins, on whose tombstone was carved a likeness of his sloop, the Lucy Hopkins. Captain Garrett Hiers, one of the best known masters, ran his sloop up the Hudson to get foundation stones for his house at 113 Main Street.

Matawan's chief link with New York City is the New York and Long Branch Railroad, although bus service is also provided. Over the double tracks run trains of the Jersey Central and Pennsylvania Railroads, the New York and Long Branch having no rolling stock. The line dips southward and inland to include Matawan on a curve so sharp that through trains are required to slow down to 35 miles an hour. The reason for the curve instead of a direct route that would have included Keyport is that when the railroad was planned nearly 70 years ago Matawan residents bought a large block of stock. Sixty-trip monthly commutation tickets to New York cost \$12.25. The running time ranges upward from 50 minutes on the Jersey Central to Liberty Street, and from 57 minutes on the Pennsylvania to Pennsylvania Station. The two lines diverge above Perth Amboy; the traveler may choose in advance between the ferry ride across the Hudson that the Central offers, or the chance to note daily progress in construction of the new tube tracks and bridge at the Pennsylvania's Newark station. Steam locomotives are used all the way to Jersey City on the New Jersey Central trains, and on Pennsylvania trains as far as the Rahway junction with the electrified main line. Most of the New Jersey Central locomotives are of the familiar camel-back style with the cab straddling the boiler instead of being placed behind the firebox. This design gives greater visibility for the engineer, and permits the use of a much larger firebox, once essential in the burning of hard coal. Known to railroad men as "hogs," the camel-backs are no longer built, because of new fueling methods.

Government of Matawan Borough is by a mayor and borough council of six members. The mayor's term is 2 years; two councilmen are elected every year. The present mayor is Edward W. Currie, a Democrat, although the community has normally been Republican. The councilmen are Albert B. Smith, Robert G. Thixton, August J. Muehlhausen, Jr., Merritt J.

*The New York and Long Branch Railroad Station, Used by Trains of The Jersey Central and Pennsylvania Lines.*



Warwick, R. L. Cartan and George W. Parker. There have been some warm campaigns in recent years, with strongly worded broadsides distributed from house to house and charges of libel made as a consequence. Torchlight parades, common many years ago, were revived by the Republicans in 1916 but failed to make a permanent comeback. The vote for local officials (1,407 in the 1935 borough election) is small enough to allow effective campaigning by the buttonhole method. Political meetings are held in American Legion Hall, Odd Fellows Hall and the high school auditorium. A few votes are cast for the minority parties, but the united front movement is hardly big enough to be measured. White-robed members of the Ku Klux Klan assembled in the First Baptist Church on Main Street one night about 12 years ago when the Klan movement was well organized throughout the Nation. The church was filled, and a large crowd stood around the building as a visiting Klan official harangued the Monmouth County members. Other gatherings were held elsewhere in the county, usually in churches. Growing resentment of Protestant as well as Catholic churchgoers against these secret activities had much to do with the collapse of the Klan movement.

Crime has not been a critical problem in Matawan, although Police Chief Edwin C. Sloat has 4 special officers and 25 reserve officers ready for any emergency. The police reserve squad is a community enterprise, similar to the volunteer fire companies. Back in 1915 there was a complaint at a borough council meeting of considerable lawlessness in the community. As related in the *Matawan Journal* of June 10:

Report was made of crap shooting and other forms of gambling being in progress, and while the officers have been aware of these vices prevailing they had been unable to catch anyone in the act, as their approach would be discovered in time so that there was no evidence obtainable upon their arrival.

Several times in recent years New York and Newark gangsters have picked Matawan as the dumping ground for victims of a last ride. The strangest local crime over a long period was the shooting on June 18, 1934, of Patrolman John J. Flood. The young officer was summoned to police headquarters by the flashing of a red signal light outside. The moment he entered, he was fired on by a white-masked man seated at the chief's desk. Critically wounded in the head, Flood has never recovered entirely. The identity of his assailant and the motive are still a mystery.

Matawan Borough officials are proud of the fact that the State's anti-gambling law is so strictly enforced that not even one slot machine is in operation. Occasionally, however, new inventions are tried out in Matawan by the agents of enterprising manufacturers before the police catch up with them. Only recently one of the borough councilmen devoted a few minutes to trying his skill at a ball and pin game, and was amazed to receive \$1 in silver. Shortly afterward this type of machine

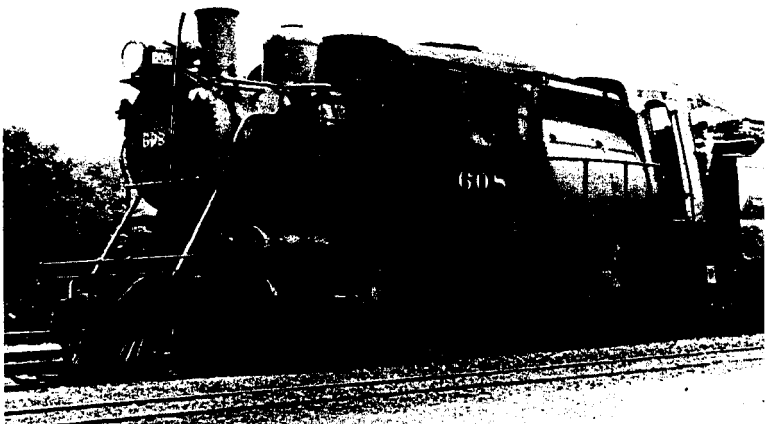


passed out of circulation, although what became of the councilman's winnings is still a subject for debate.

The assistant borough clerk, Mrs. Georgianna L. Leary, has handled Matawan's relief problem to the complete satisfaction of the taxpayers. Although one or two elderly persons who are unable to work receive direct aid, no able-bodied residents are kept on the relief roll if they are idle. In summer months those in need are required to work on surrounding farms, where they are paid up to \$1.50 a day. During the winter the borough distributes relief tickets, in exchange for work on streets and elsewhere at the rate of 40 cents an hour. The maximum food allowance is 75 cents a week for each person in the family, with an extra \$1 for milk when essential. Coal oil is provided for illumination, medicine is given on a physician's prescription and shoes and some clothing are distributed through charitable enterprise. Most of the unemployed are able to pick up odd jobs, such as snow shoveling, to pay their rent; and they gather wood for cooking and heating. Mrs. Leary takes a personal interest in the problems of her clients, marked by a determination to help them help themselves.

An important organization in the borough and township is the Matawan Public Health Association, formed in 1924 at the office of Dr. C. A. Gesswein. Supported by joint contributions of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Matawan Board of Education, the borough and the township, it has also been helped substantially by the Monmouth County Organization for Social Service. School nursing, a baby clinic, a dental clinic, parole work, bedside nursing and a number of other activities comprise the program. Mrs. D. E. Van Wickle was the first president of the association, and Mrs. Henry L. Zucker directs

*A Jersey Central Camel-back from the Vintage of 1902.*



its work today. Two full time nurses and a clerical assistant are employed. Affiliation with the National Organization of Public Health Nursing was effected this year (1936).

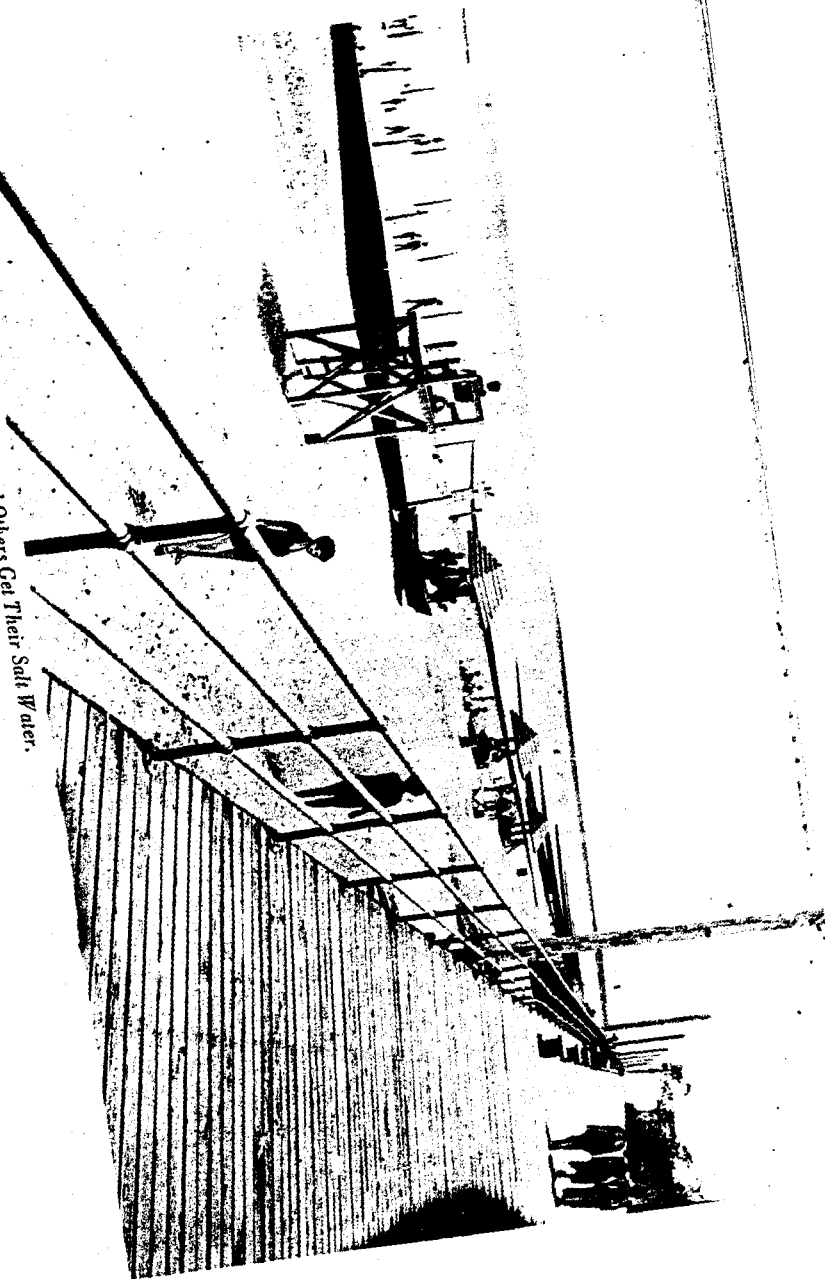
Three communities are within the boundaries of Matawan Township. Cliffwood, across Matawan Creek, was part of the 1,000-acre grant from the Proprietors of East New Jersey to A. Bowne prior to 1685. In 1860 it was chosen for an abortive real estate development, which included a dock and steamboat service at Raritan Bay to the north. Today it is a sedate community, with houses so sparse that it is difficult to pick the center of the settlement. Within a short distance of each other are three of the important civic structures: the plain, white frame building of Cliffwood Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1854; the two-story brick school, standing in an attractive grove with butterfly weed raising brilliant blossoms against the clay background of the yard; and the one-story firehouse of the volunteer company. Nearby are the overgrown ruins of brickyards and claypits, with three tall chimneys still standing as landmarks easily seen from the New York and Long Branch Railroad and many parts of Matawan Township. A few of the old farmhouses in Cliffwood seem to be sitting out an endurance contest with the abandoned chimneys.

On Raritan Bay is Cliffwood Beach, the township's salt water outlet. It is a fairly busy little resort, with a boardwalk illuminated by night, a casino for dancing, tennis courts and other facilities, but no merry-go-round or roller coaster. Summer cottages are bunched together in the conventional beach style just behind the boardwalk, and in the woods near the shore are larger houses and a picnic grove. The bay has been encroaching upon the beach at a rapid rate, one old resident recalling when the water line was 500 feet further out.

The community of Oak Shades that sprawls carelessly along the highway between Matawan and Keyport is marked by the spire of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church. In addition to Italian and Polish people, it houses many of the Negro workers in the ceramic industry. Oak Shades represents the casual growth of a housing district in an industrial area without control or restriction.

Cliffwood, Cliffwood Beach, Oak Shades and the remaining area of the township are governed by the township committee, composed of three members elected for 3-year terms. John Marz, Jr., of Cliffwood, is the present chairman; Paul R. Dolan and John D. Kearns are the other members, and Dr. Thomas F. Powers is head of the police organization. Existence of a borough nearly surrounded by a township has produced peculiar situations in Matawan, and the two annexations by which the borough has enlarged its territory have not simplified matters. In order to answer calls for police aid from the southernmost section of their territory, township police must pass through the borough, which

*Wood Bench, Where Malawians and Others Get Their Salt Water.*



has a police force of its own. When the annexation of 1932 was effected, a special jog was made in the boundary so that the home of the late Lewis H. Stemler, Matawan Road resident who had long been chairman of the township committee, could be left out of the borough. Loss of his residence in the township would have cost Mr. Stemler his job. Meetings of the township committee are held once a month in a little one-story frame building on Atlantic Avenue, the boundary between township and borough. In contrast with the relief situation in the borough, the township reported in 1935 that 940 of its 2,200 residents were on relief.

## LAKES AND LAND

The twin lakes of Matawan, flanking the borough on north and south, are the products of neither nature, nor a municipal bond issue, nor a grandiose real estate speculation. Perhaps unlike any other lake developments in New Jersey, they were a civic enterprise—almost as much so as an old-fashioned barn-raising. It is not to be denied that some of the promoters found the value of their real estate holdings increased, but the community also gained.

The story begins with Lake Matawan, which fills a mile-long ravine on the southerly side of the borough. As far back as the 1890's there was talking of damming Gravelly Creek at the present dam site. But old time residents shrugged apathetic shoulders at the prospect of converting a mosquito-infested marsh into a lake, just as they later opposed the foolish expense of an electric lighting system for the borough's principal streets.

A mild flood helped the agitators for a more beautiful Matawan. Mill dams on Gravelly Creek gave way with the freshet, which washed out the low bridge where the concrete structure on State 34 now spans the headwaters of Lake Matawan and flooded the lowlands. Here for a few hours was a preview of the lake to come nearly a generation later.

Not until 1914, however, did the agitation culminate in the first step of any group of citizens earnestly promoting a cause: formation of a committee. In that year the Matawan Lake Committee came into being, with authority to accept subscriptions. And cash was put on the line. Readers of the *Matawan Journal* wrote letters to the editor, enclosing \$10 bills; the Lyric Theater flashed slides of lake scenes from other towns; a New York engineer was hired to make surveys; and a young man named W. Oliver Diggin gave an address at the

1915 high school commencement, prophesying that the proposed lake would have a "far-reaching result" upon the "morals of our people."

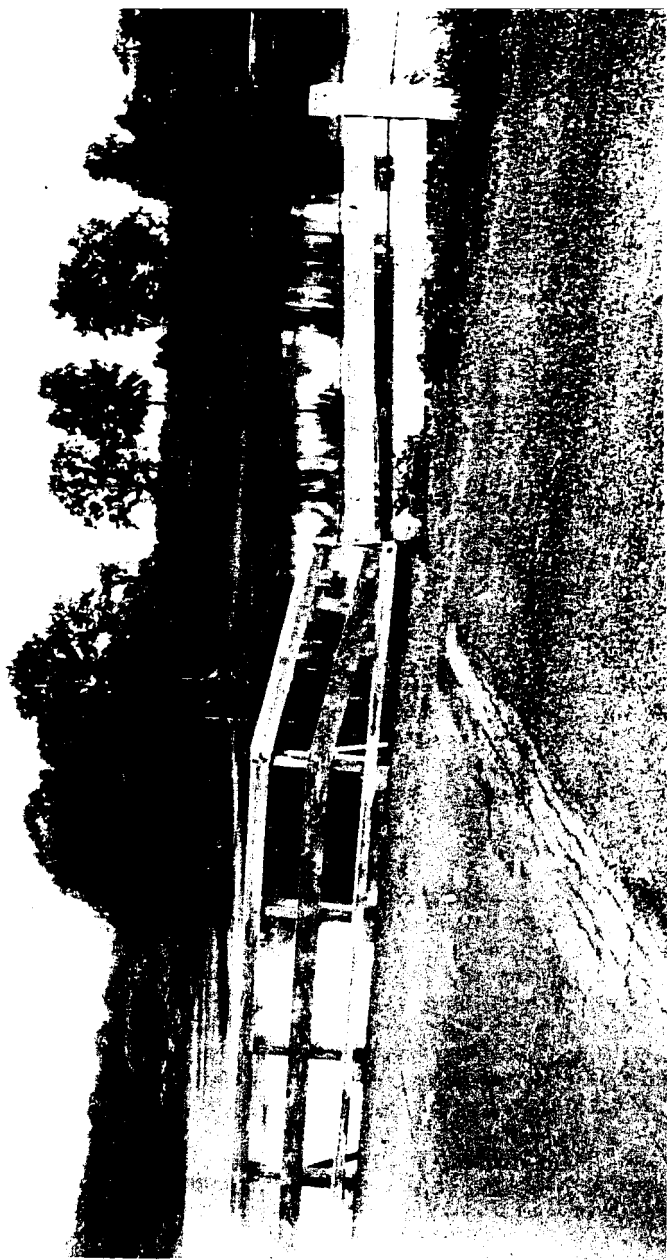
Early in 1916 the committee was formally incorporated, with Tunis R. Schenck as president; H. C. Higgins, vice-president; Ira Sheppard, secretary; and Christian Heuser, treasurer. Shares were sold at \$1 each, the subscription list being placed in George Heuser's barber shop at 188 Main Street every Saturday evening. In short order about \$1,500 was raised, and consent of the War Department was obtained for damming the creek.

Dissension over choice of a site, plus the advent of the World War, resulted in a 6-year delay. There was disagreement as to whether Matawan Creek or Gravelly Creek should be dammed to make a small lake, while a third faction argued for one big dam further downstream that would flood both stream beds. After signing of the Armistice there was warm debate on the most suitable memorial that Matawan could offer its returning soldiers. A community building, to house a library, gymnasium and other facilities for recreation and town affairs, was one proposal. The lake agitators promptly reported that the demobilized doughboys would be far less interested in literature than in a tree-sheltered nook where a canoe could drift for indefinite periods on moonlit evenings. The doughboys came home before a decision was reached.

With the spring of 1922 the campaign finally crystallized. Gravelly Creek was selected for a medium-sized lake, and work began. The committee had succeeded in raising about \$1,500; additional help was given by the borough and county. Owners of property along the ravine ceded flowage rights. Many of them went to work with axes and grubbing hoes to clear trees and brush from the banks. In only one instance, that of the Barney property, was it necessary for the borough to purchase land by authority of a special legislative act of 1915.

One year later, May 11, 1923, the valve in the Main Street dam was shut and the lake started to fill. Five days later the first rowboat was launched by impatient townspeople; and in less than a month water splashed over the top of the dam. The new lake was the talk of the community. Approximately 300 feet wide, it backed past the Little Street bridge to Church Street and beyond the filtering plant of the borough's water system. The maximum depth of 16 feet was more than enough for divers, and the shore line was sufficiently irregular to please young men and women fond of paddling canoes by the light of the moon.

With one dam completed, it was natural that the leading citizens should look for new marshes to conquer. Matawan Creek, long considered an alternate site, was chosen without the years of debate that preceded the building of Lake Matawan. Subscription books were opened again. It was the bull market period; the lake committee prospered.



*Formerly the Head of Navigation, Now State 28, on Matawan Creek.*

A \$15,000 fund was the goal of a campaign led by Jacob R. V. Lefferts. There were enough contributors in February 1928 to meet and decide that the new lake would be named for Mr. Lefferts. To many it seemed certain that Matawan was destined to enjoy the first real boom in its history of more than 200 years. One contributor proposed that the borough's name be changed to Matawan Lakes, to distinguish it from several less watered Matawans in other parts of the United States.

By October 1929, Lake Lefferts was overflowing the new dam. Matawan Borough had become a community between twin lakes. Like Lake Matawan, the new body of water stretched for approximately a mile and was 300 to 600 feet wide. The shore line, however, was much more uneven, being marked by several arms.

The community lost no time in exploiting the recreational possibilities of both lakes. Swimmers were encouraged by reports from the State health department showing the water to be exceptionally free from bacteria. Boaters and canoeists needed no encouragement. In fact, it was necessary for the borough council to pass an ordinance in 1931 prohibiting the use of motorboats on either lake. Shore residents had complained of the chug-chug until late hours at night and the oily film from the engines. The councilmen were considerably surprised after taking this drastic step to see a foot-power boat, equipped with a propeller, launched by Joseph Alloca.

Lake Lefferts has given the townsfolk two unexpected displays of natural phenomena. In the summer of 1931 floating islands dotted the surface of the lake. These were clumps of marsh grass and mud, forced upward by gas explosions from decaying vegetable matter in the new lake bed. The islands had nothing except nuisance value and were dragged ashore for burning after the sun had dried them.

On a January day in 1934 a skater tossed a lighted cigaret butt into an air hole on Lake Lefferts. Flames flared up. Other skaters joined in the accidentally discovered sport, starting bonfires at every airhole with such success that at least one pair of eyebrows was badly singed. There are wags who predict that Lake Lefferts' accumulation of gas will some day blast the entire lake into the lakeless and presumably jealous community of Freehold, but scientific basis for this theory is lacking.

The dam at this lake was reinforced in 1930 with 45-foot steel sheet piling and concrete to halt leakage. Thus strengthened, the lake was considered safe for a pair of swans, which were duly bought by the borough council. There was no little excitement when the swans made a nest, and indignation when snakes took all of the eggs except three. A snake was on the verge of swallowing these also when interrupted by an alert citizen who took the last eggs to police headquarters for safekeeping but not, it may be assumed, for hatching.

Both lakes have been stocked with black bass and other fish by the Federal Government and by the State fish and game commission. Lake Matawan, however, has no large fish, one theory being that refuse from the electro-plating factory at its head has killed them. The same source was blamed for bacteriological pollution of the lake in 1935, whereupon the company agreed to connect its drains with the borough sewer system. Residents of lake shore homes also contributed to pollution of the two lakes until their sewer outlets were sealed by order of the Board of Health and sewer connections were made.

The rich yellow-green color of Lake Matawan is noticed by almost everyone who takes more than a casual look in passing. No two explanations agree. With limited accuracy it may be said that the greenness is caused by algae and/or residue of copper compounds from the electro-plating plant, and/or greensand marl in the drainage area and/or peat bogs upstream and/or reflection from the belt of trees and shrubs along the banks and/or causes unknown. After questioning a number of highly respected and thoroughly dispassionate old residents, the editors of this book are inclined to accept the last-named explanation as the most reliable. It must also be noted that there are some who say Lake Lefferts is just as green. This contention, of course, confuses the issue and solves nothing.

One hope of some of the lake builders has not been fulfilled. Despite the fact that the lakes are borough-owned, their use by the public is restricted because practically all of the shore property is in private hands. Bathers may dive and swim at the combination highway embankments and dams; but the docks and floats along the steep, wooded banks are not public. Nor is there any footpath, bridle path or highway making a circuit of either lake. Some years ago former Mayor Christian Heuser ceded a parcel of land for a public approach to Lake Lefferts, but there have been no gifts since.

The old plan for a third lake in the tidal marsh between Lefferts Dam and the trestle of the New York and Long Branch Railroad is still discussed. The dam would be built where Aberdeen Road now crosses Matawan Creek, just west of the trestle, and would create a lake more than 600 feet wide and about one-half mile long.

Twenty years have gone since the shark tragedy of Matawan Creek, which sent reporters of 12 New York City newspapers scurrying 37 miles to get stories which aroused metropolitan interest. A 12-year-old boy, Lester Stilwell, was bitten by a shark near the old Propeller S. S. Wyckoff dock, while bathing with friends on the afternoon of July 12, 1916. His body, badly mangled, was recovered two days later. Stanley Fisher, a young man seeking the body, was also attacked, dying a few hours later. George Burlew of Keyport is a survivor. Shortage of food at sea was held responsible for the shark's presence in the creek.





*Lake Lefferts Looking Northeast from State 34.*

#### PARKS AND FLOWERS

Matawan Borough has two parks, each on Main Street at opposite ends of the business section. Memorial Park, about an acre in size, was established in 1928 as a civic memorial to war veterans. The land, adjoining Lake Matawan, cost slightly more than \$9,500. Trees, shrubbery and flowers for formal planting were contributed wholly by the community. Facing Main Street in the foreground is the bronze figure of a doughboy, minutely accurate from the grooves on the pineapple style grenade clutched in his upraised hand to the barbwire at his feet. The monument is the work of E. M. Viquesney, of Spencer, Indiana. A tablet bears the names of Matawan men who served in the World War. In the background is a 7-inch howitzer and carriage from the Benicia Arsenal, California, placed in 1929. Surrounded by shrubbery is a sun dial in memory of Elizabeth Clark Clegg, a Y. M. C. A. hostess of the World War and the only woman from Matawan who served overseas. The flagpole in the center of the park was the gift of the late Charles E. Close.

In more natural style is the larger Terhune Park at South and Broad Streets, the gift in 1930 of Judge Henry S. Terhune, who stipulated



*Terhune Park, Looking Toward South Street.*

that no building should ever be placed on the tract. Plans for development of the site were made by the late Carl F. Pilat, who used frequently to visit Matawan. With many old trees already standing, and a central green with winding paths, the park seems to be a happy extension of neighboring gardens. Ultimately, an underpass may be built to connect the park with Aberdeen Creek on the other side of Main Street. A strip of land was added to Terhune Park as a gift of former Councilman George S. Barrett. The tract is being developed as a bird sanctuary and botanical garden, with specimens of flowers, trees and shrubs indigenous to the area. Monmouth County, known as the meeting ground for wild flowers of the North and South, has a variety of flowers exceeded by few if any counties elsewhere in the United States.

Most showy of the wild flowers is the bright pink marshmallow, found in swampy ground and by roadside ditches throughout the summer. Close rivals are a familiar quartet whose roots seek drier soil—goldenrod, wild asters, joe-pye-weed and ironweed, the latter two hardly deserving the name that classes them in the less respectable branch of floricultural society. The clear blue blossoms of chicory are common in open fields, often accompanied by the lemon yellow flowers of the evening primrose. Butterflyweed makes occasional splotches of brilliant orange; the plant is often transplanted by amateur gardeners, but it seldom survives.

Despite the protection of State laws, many wild flowers have become quite scarce in the Matawan district. Some of these are bulbous plants, such as the red and purple trillium or wakerobin, and the rose- and white-streaked moccasin flower or ladyslipper, which is found in lonely wooded spots. These plants are often torn out by the roots. Deep in the woodlands may also be seen the bloodroot of early spring, and the wax-white, leafless stems of the saprophytic Indianpipe, capped with a bell-shaped flower.

Trailing arbutus, commonly called the shad-flower, is found on southern slopes in early spring, but only at unfrequented spots. There are still a few beach plums left, famous for the tangy jelly made from the fruit rather than for the humble little white blossoms. Along the shore may also be seen sea-lavender, which has become almost extinct; and the shad-bush, which blossoms when shad are running in the spring. On the edge of secluded streams the cardinalflower may occasionally be found; the lacy meadow rue and the pink turtlehead or snakehead still grow in sandy spots near roadsides. No rarity yet is the dogwood, which whitens the woodland each spring. Also rooted in untrodden soil of shaded spots are the partridgeberry and the wintergreen berry, frequently found together.

Geologically, the Matawan Township area has a cretaceous formation. It includes plastic clays, sand, gravel, loam and beds of greensand marl. The formation has a nearly horizontal series of strata lying upon

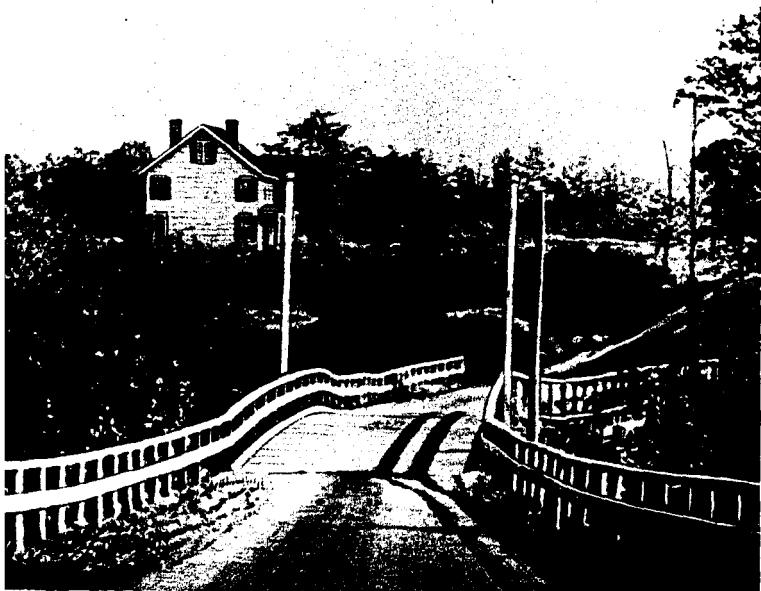
each other, all with a gentle descent or dip to the southeast. The plastic clays which form the lower strata have outcroppings in Matawan and include fire, potters and tile clay.

The greensand marl, composed in large part of mineral glauconite, has proved highly important to agriculture. Easily recognized by the dark green color, the marl was extensively used as fertilizer. Marine shells and the bones of extinct swimming reptiles have been found in these strata, pointing unmistakably to marine origin.

Matawan's climate is dominantly marine rather than continental. A monthly rainfall of 3 or 4 inches may be expected throughout the year. Although humidity is sometimes uncomfortably high, cooling breezes are usually constant during hot weather. Higher elevations on the north, west and south protect this area from the full sweep of winter storms.

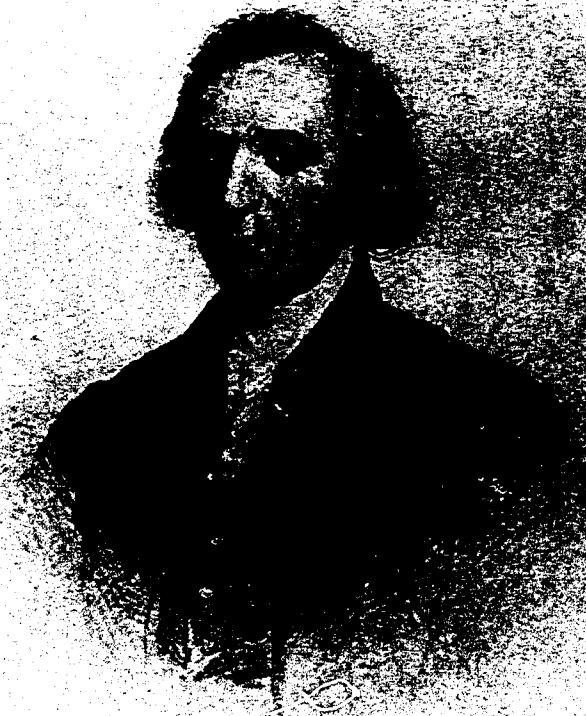
A mile or two toward the southeast rise the Mount Pleasant Hills. The highest of these is Beacon Hill, on which beacons were placed during Revolutionary times to warn inland patriots of the approach of British ships to New York harbor. The hill was one of a closely spaced chain of signal stations, used with an elaborate code system. Matawan itself has an elevation ranging from sea level to 115 feet. The land slopes in gentle undulations toward the shore of Raritan Bay, deeply cut in many places by ravines and wide expanses of marshland. Erosion has done much to fill the drainage channels.

*Gravelly Creek Bridge on Valley Drive About 1910.*





*Nature's Landscaping in Terhune Park.*



*Philip Freneau —*

*Philip Freneau, Revolutionary Poet of Matawan.*

# HISTORY OF MATAWAN

## TRAILING THE BLACK WAMPUM

Matawan lies at the crossing of two Indian trails, where the Chingaroras, one of the shore tribes and a branch of the Lenni Lenape, met their relatives, the Minnisinks, who came from the Kittatinny Mountains on the Delaware River for barter. The warriors were drawn by black wampum, part of the shell money of the Jersey coast. Colonial records of 1673 show that black currency was quoted at double the value of the white. Along the shores of Raritan Bay fragments of the black periwinkle have been found where the Indian money makers cast them away.

Sea food, perhaps even more than money, attracted Indians from the Delaware and beyond. In season when game was scarce they traded skins for the dried fish, clams and oysters of the Raritans and Navesinks, both known as Unami or fishermen. These trading journeys continued long after the white man's yoke had been laid on the land. As late as 1820 Indians were traveling over the Minnisink trail to the land of Seawanhacky at Navesink, to meet their brothers of the turtle, the totem of the fishing tribes.

The visiting Indians lived while on the coast in tepees which they brought with them on the trail, the poles dragging along the road. These they could put up or knock down in a few minutes. The Raritans and their neighbors in East Jersey lived in wigwams, a more permanent structure in which the poles were planted in the soil and covered with thatch of grass and clay.

These Indians from the Delaware and further west founded the reputation of the Jersey shore as a summer resort, many of them coming in the spring and lingering until fall while they angled for fish and enjoyed a change of diet. Some came from the long house of the fierce Iroquois or Six Nations in New York State. Others came from land as far away as the Great Lakes and Canada. When they returned, their ponies and their squaws were laden heavily with dried sea food.

The Iroquois were known as trouble seekers and when they came here summering the shore tribes took to the hills. To these visits of the fighting tribes are ascribed subsequent clashes with the white man who was well able to protect himself with modern weapons. In the shell heaps left by the Indians archeologists have found many relics, including cooking stones, kitchen and other implements and some skeletons. Among the implements are some attributed to the Iroquois and to Indians of Maine, California and Ohio.

Samuel Groome, one of the early proprietors of East Jersey, reported in 1683 that skins brought in great quantities to the Province by the Indians were taken to New York for sale. This Indian trade was apparently the earliest source of income for the Dutch and later for the English settlers who came into East Jersey.

One branch of the Raritans, known to the early Dutch explorers and traders as the Metavancons, gave their name to the settlement now known as Matawan, and to the creek of the same designation. An early Dutch map, that of Van Der Donck in 1656, places these tribesmen in the region of Monmouth County. Other Dutch traders and settlers referred to the name as Muttovang, and the English in 1683 through Governor Thomas Rudyard bought from the Indians a tract of land that seems to have included the town site, mentioned then as Mittevang.

There is no record of serious trouble between any of the shore Indians and the early settlers of Monmouth, although the Middletown pioneers built a fort with palisades such as Manhattan and Bergen had found necessary for protection of their people. Indians were imprisoned in the Middletown stockade for drunkenness.

Shell heaps and other relics are the visible remains of the Indian. The famous Minnisink trail is perpetuated, as nearly as Indian authorities can calculate, by a pleasant rural road stretching across the southern part of Matawan Borough and Township for about 4 miles east and west. This is the old path from the mountains to the sea.

*The Hawkins House Before Alterations.*





The trail passes through Freneau, where it forms the main intersection with US 9. The section west of US 9 is now known as Wilson Avenue; on the east it is the Mill Road, which continues to Crawfords Corner as Valley Drive and then as Dogtown Hill Road. Avoiding the swamplands, the trail is a good example of Indian engineering. Several branches of Matawan Creek are crossed at points shallow enough for easy fording. From Crawfords Corner the route of the Indian highway extends to Middletown and Navesink River.

Indians bound for southern points used a trail from Matawan via Wickatunk to Freehold, where it joined the Burlington path. There were also branch paths from Matawan to Seapeckameck (Keyport), and to Arewence (Cliffwood Beach). Another path ran to Machayis, near Marquis Creek, which is a variant of this name.

The Indians dwindled in this section until by the year 1750 there were very few in possession of land, and by 1850 there were only a few widely scattered families. Today an Indian is a curiosity. The black periwinkle disappeared with him.

The loss of the Indian caused a loss of the fur trade that he brought to the door of the settler. The trade followed the Indian westward. New Jersey was left to trap such game as remained, mostly muskrats, which are today still a source of income to farmers and their boys. The wampum that the Indian valued began to vanish with him soon after the white man arrived; substitutes were manufactured by the settlers, and sold wholesale to western traders.

There was a "tight money" situation in wampum in 1673 that caused an appeal to the Assembly for aid. Wampum, it was stated, was scarce because so much of it had been taken out of the country by the Indians. Apparently there was no Indian bank left with deposits in it. As a remedy, Governor and Council decreed a revaluation of wampum. For the black variety a stiver or penny thereafter would buy only six instead of eight strings. For a long time, however, the settlers in what is now Bergen County continued to make wampum with the aid of grindstones and tools for cutting and polishing.

#### ARRIVAL OF THE SCOTS

Matawan was brought into life through hatred and persecution in Scotland that followed the restoration of the British monarchy under Charles II, after the death of Cromwell and the collapse of the Protectorate. Scotch Presbyterians had been active with the Puritan Congregationalists in the overthrow and execution of Charles I. They were now harried and punished. For all dissenters from the Established Church there were many penalties devised.

The Scots found the situation unbearable for lairds and tenants alike. Seven of them were among the purchasers of East Jersey from the

Carteret Estate and they invited others of their countrymen to join them. They offered as inducements freedom of religion and a representative government for the settlers with the means to earn their bread in a new land.

Among other things, the Scots were told that good millstones were found in the hills. The land o'cakes had been grinding oats for many centuries. It sent many Scotch millers to East Jersey and founded an early milling industry that in time supplied a large part of the seaboard colonies and exported flour to the West Indies and Canada.

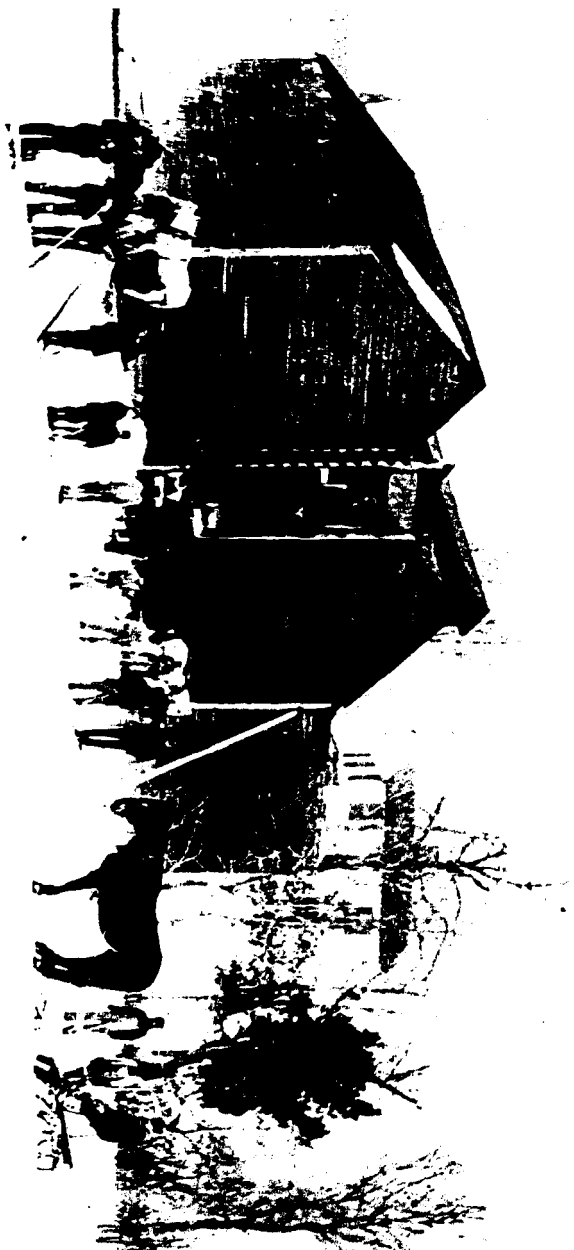
The birthday of Matawan, determined by the citizens for their 250th anniversary celebration in 1936, is in reality the date of an important real estate transaction. On Sept. 30, 1686, the Proprietors of East New Jersey made a grant of 400 acres to Stephen Warne and his son, Thomas, including all of the land between Matawan and Gravel (now Gravelly Brook) Creeks. The price was "thirteen pound sterling moneys of England" to be paid every March 25 for all time. Known then as Warne's Neck, the tract embraced what is now the central portion of Matawan Borough. The Indian name for Matawan Creek, "Nachenkine" or "Nashonakime," was used in the grant, along with the name "Mit-tovang."

The Warnes were English, and Thomas was one of the 24 Proprietors of East New Jersey. He had been living in a Perth Amboy house owned by the proprietors, from which he had been requested to move. Already the owner of 1,000 acres on the north side of Matawan Creek, in Madison Township, the younger Warne had a wigwam there in 1685 which may be called the first white man's home in the Matawan neighborhood.

Twenty-four Scotch Presbyterians, who had come to America a few years earlier, picked Warne's Neck for their settlement. The story of these colonists is an unusual one. Most of them had crossed on the ship Exchange, which landed its passengers at Staten Island on Dec. 19, 1683. Most of these were assisted emigrants. Some were described as "broken men," others as adventurers, merchants and younger sons who had to make their own way in the world because of entail of family property on the oldest son. Many of them had been condemned to banishment because they had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the King.

Some of the more influential among the East Jersey proprietors, seeking to help their fellow countrymen, had asked that these imprisoned men be turned over to them as colonists. A number of craftsmen were indentured for 4 years to work for their passage after their arrival in the New World. John Reid and John Hampton, Quaker overseers for the Proprietors, were in charge of the indentured workers.

Others of the 24 reached America after a disastrous voyage of the Henry and Francis from Leith with 200 emigrants led by George Scot, Laird of Pitlochrie, who was convoying many of the banished men



*Cutting Ice at the Foot of Park Avenue About 1910. The Horse-drawn Equipment is a Marking Machine.*

**RARITAN BAY**

**SCALE OF MILES**  
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1

**WARNES NECK**

**MATAWAN TOWNSHIP**

**CHINGGARORA TOWNSHIP**

**MINNISINK TOWNSHIP**

**WARNES NECK**

**OF 1686 AND**

**PRESENT MATAWAN TOWNSHIP, N.J.**

A horizontal number line with endpoints labeled 0 and 1. There are three tick marks between 0 and 1, labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $\frac{3}{4}$ , dividing the segment into four equal parts.

A horizontal number line with endpoints labeled 0 and 1. There are three tick marks between 0 and 1, labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $\frac{3}{4}$ , dividing the segment into four equal parts.

OF 1686 AND

COMPILED BY

IRENE FUHLBRUEGGE, STATE DIRECTOR

L.A. DICKINSON, DRAFTSMAN

"gifted to him." One-third of this company, including the laird, died of pestilence and were buried at sea. Of the survivors many were ill on landing at Perth Amboy. Tradition tells that they were befriended by a minister "a few miles inland" variously placed at Woodbridge, Topanemus and Middletown. Some of them later became residents of New Aberdeen. Some left families behind them in Scotland that were later brought to New Jersey. All were free men when they prepared to establish a village on Warne's tract, since the courts had ruled that Pitlochrie's death released them from any claims his heirs might make. By 1687 both groups were ready to carry out the law of the colony: that "they set themselves down in a group," for protection against Indians and to facilitate government and the collection of taxes.

Exactly when the 24 Scots came to Warne's grant is not known. It was probably between 1687 and 1689 that they bought 100 acres of land, to be divided into 24 lots. There have been reams of argument over the exact metes and bounds of this colony, but the original survey made by John Reid in 1701 places it in what is now the Freneau district. William S. Hornor, the historian, estimated that the lots began at a point about 300 feet south of Applegate's Hotel at Freneau and extended 978 feet north along Main Street. The Hawkins house, oldest in Matawan today, and the Applegate Hotel both stand on lot No. 8, which was originally appropriated to Patrick Canaan. In Reid's map, the settlement is named "Mount Pleasant."

The reasons for the choice may be guessed. The site was near good farm land, and conveniently close to Matawan Creek, whose 12-foot depth was ample for most of the sailing craft of that time. There was the possibility of trade with the little-loved English in their newly conquered town of New York, as well as with settlements in the hinterland. But it must be emphasized that the enterprise had all the earmarks of a political formality. The 24 lots were all of a freak size—40 feet and 9 inches wide, 4,800 feet long. This division may have been made to give each of the colonists frontage on the only existing road (approximately the route of Math Street today). It is more significant, however, that none of the colonists built on the needle-shaped lots, but chose broader and more fertile acres in the surrounding area.

More Scotch immigrants arrived before 1700 and after. It was not until 1701, however, that the survey of the original 24 Scots' holdings was returned to the Provincial office of registration. Meanwhile the colony had become known as New Aberdeen. The settlers decided that they needed property on the waterfront to provide for the ships that they foresaw would soon be carrying the fruits of their labor. So they bought two more acres on the creek, and looking ahead still further put up sheds for storing cargoes that they expected to receive and others to be shipped. The name of Aberdeen survives as that of a small creek.

Pitlochie's son-in-law, Dr. John Johnstone, an Edinburgh apothecary, had joined with the other Scots in the purchase of the town site. Besides Dr. Johnstone, the original New Aberdeen purchasers were John Halron or Hepburn, James Edward, James Reid, brother of John Reid; John Nasmith or Easmith, Peter Gordon, John Bowne, Walter Ker, who farmed later near Tennent; Patrick Canaan, James Melvin, John Hamton or Hampton, Quaker overseer; John Baird, John Reid, Quaker agent of the Proprietors of East Jersey, also surveyor-general; William Radford, gardener; William Ronald or Rennolds, Allen Caldwell or Colville, William Laning, Alexander Napier, later trustee of the Shrewsbury Presbyterian Church; Robert Rhea, John Campbell, William Clarke, Patrick or Peter Emley or Imlay, Peter Watson, later owner of 400 acres east of Freneau; and William Naughty.

A sawmill and a gristmill were early established, followed by a tannery and brickyards. For the mills, dams were built harnessing water power. Tradition is that one of these was near the site of the modern dam that holds back the waters of Lake Matawar. Roads were soon laid out to Middletown and Shrewsbury and later to Monmouth Court House, connecting with Burlington, Trenton and Pennsylvania.

Although the district continued to be referred to as Mount Pleasant, the town's name was gradually changed by common usage from New Aberdeen to Middletown Point, because it was the principal shipping point for the Middletown settlement. At that time Middletown comprised more than half of what is now the counties of Monmouth and Ocean, and a strip of Middlesex County. At times the Point was also called Freehold Landing.

Those were busy days in Middletown Point. Logs were coming down the creek to the sawmill beside the waterwheel. A stream of lumber went aboard the sloops coming from Manhattan to build up a greater city than any that men dreamed of in those days. Hand-craftsmen were turning out split shingles of cedar to put new roofs on houses already showing wear. From the woods around the town came the charcoal burners' carts with fuel for the quaint braziers that warmed the feet of New Yorkers, the warming pans that heated cold beds and the foot-warmers that went to church with the citizens.

At home and elsewhere the people of that day were also warmed by Jersey applejack, another famous product of Monmouth County, which yielded profit in the days of Colonial trade. Sloop loads of cordwood also went to the infant metropolis to be eaten up in wide-mouthed fireplaces. Other sailing ships went out to the West Indies with barrel staves, pork, beef, flour, grain, butter, cheeses and a few horses. Back with them came such luxuries as sugar, rum and molasses.

There is a record of one boat plying from Middletown Point to



*Freneau's Print Shop, Humbled by Later Additions.*

Africa in the slave trade. Slaves were common enough among the more prosperous people of East Jersey. Governor Andrew Hamilton, it is recorded, won ownership of an Indian girl slave in a lawsuit. Several whalers are said to have been fitted out at Middletown Point. There were yards in which sloops were built and there were many whale-boats that were used by fishermen and others along the coast.

Whale oil was in great demand for the lamps of that day among the well-to-do people. Candles served the multitude. Furs continued to be shipped long after the Indian trappers and traders had gone. The Jersey muskrat established a lasting reputation in world markets, where this fur is still sold.

The town acquired a physician when Dr. Peter Le Conte came here in 1734. He also became an officer in the Presbyterian Church.

According to one historian, Steen, members of the Scotch Presbyterian Church worshipped at Middletown Point from 1692 to 1705. Owing to the spreading out of the Scotch settlers after that year the church went to Free Hill (no longer in existence) and in 1729 or 1730 to Tennent, where it became the famous Tennent Church of the battlefield of Monmouth. No records mention a school until 1761, though it is probable that one came into existence much earlier. Another Presbyterian Church was built sometime before the Revolution, at the site of the old Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Main Street and New Brunswick Avenue, bought in 1763. The deed is still in possession of the First Presbyterian Church of Matawan. This congregation joined with the Shrewsbury Church in supporting a pastor, the Rev. Elihu Spencer.

### MATAWAN MEETS THE ENEMY

Matawan and the Pleasant Valley settlement went into the Revolution with boathooks, oars, cutlasses, whaleboats and duck guns as well as old flintlocks and other smooth-bores and with a white hot zeal for liberty and the rights of mankind. The latter views had come down to them from Scotch and English ancestors who backed Cromwell and the Roundheads in resisting a king, and later in trying and beheading him.

Like all the colonists, these people had endured taxation without representation, and repression and restraint on their efforts to build industry in a new land. They had all taken a part in wresting Canada from France for the British Crown. The Jersey frontier had suffered fire, torture and loss of many lives at the hands of the Indian allies of the French in these wars that had lasted the greater part of a century. New Jersey's reward was contempt, more taxation, and menaces and insults from British officers and soldiers.

In Matawan, or Middletown Point, the people were stirred by Philip Freneau, poet and editor, their neighbor, who voiced the spirit of the time in many ballads. Also for 9 years leading up to the struggle they had been led and encouraged by a fearless Presbyterian pastor, the Rev. Dr. Charles McKnight, whom they shared with the churches at Middletown and Shrewsbury. When the Stamp Act was announced by the British government, imposing heavy burdens, Dr. McKnight assailed the measure boldly as champion of his flock.

Dr. McKnight became a marked man among the Tories who clung to the Crown. These British sympathizers soon became refugees under the bitter resentment of the people. Enlisting with the British in New York, the Monmouth Tories guided the foe in raids scourging every town they could reach. They pointed out the homes of patriot leaders for invasion and destruction, harrying, burning, carrying off prisoners to die in prison hulks where disease lurked. Dr. McKnight was among



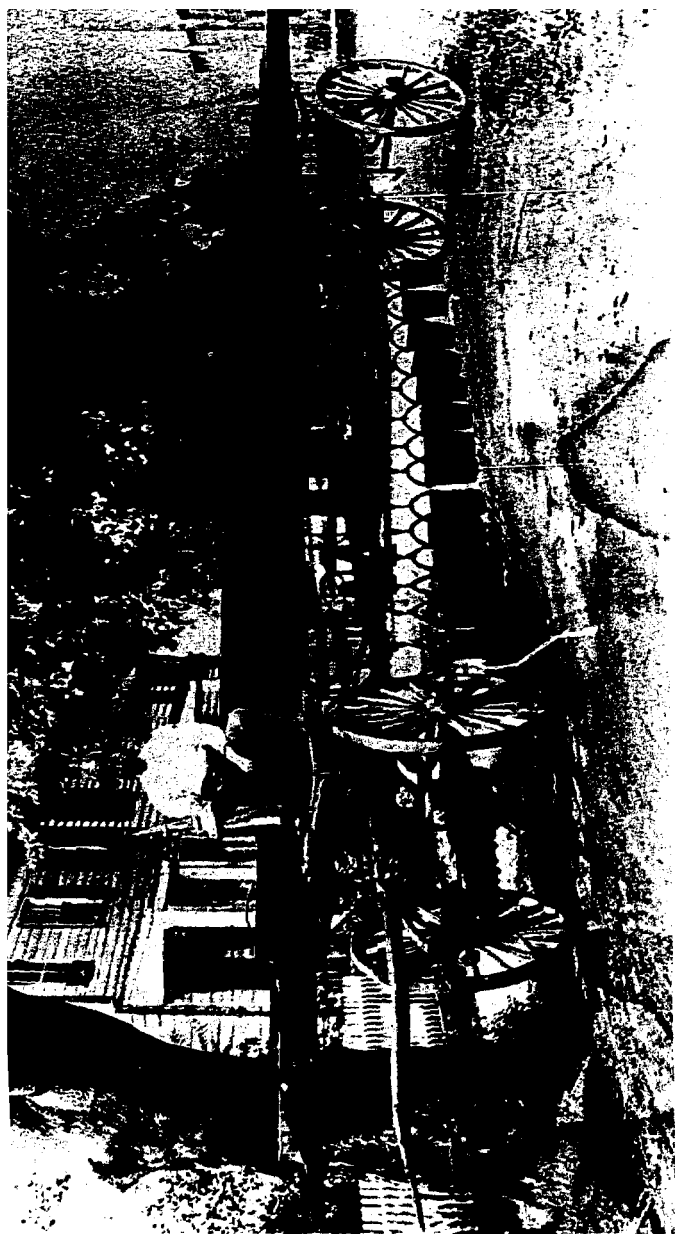
the victims. Carried off by soldiers he was thrust into the notorious sugar house prison in New York. There he became ill like thousands of others. He was released too late to recover his health and died Jan. 1, 1778. Friends found a grave for him in old Trinity Churchyard, New York.

Dr. McKnight's church in Matawan was burned the same year. This act was laid to British troopers who fell upon the town, burned its mills and warehouses, carried away several militia officers, fought with the Minute Men and fled when the country was aroused.

Freneau suffered, too, in British prisons, but he lived to strike back with his pen in scorching indictment of the inhuman treatment of American prisoners. He was sailing as supercargo on his own ship, *Aurora*, which was captured by the British in 1780. After confinement in the fever-ridden hulk, *Scorpion*, he was sent to the *Hunter*, so-called

*Home of Jonathan Forman, Known as the "Old Hospital".*





*Matawan's Hook and Ladder in 1877. William Lambert Is at the Bow and Charles Schilkie in the Stern Sheets.*

hospital ship, at Brooklyn. Thousands of American prisoners died on the prison fleet of 15 ships. Freneau, denouncing the wanton cruelties laid upon the prisoners, wrote:

*Better to sleep on ocean's oozy bed,  
At once destroyed and numbered with the dead,  
Than thus to perish in the face of day  
Where twice ten thousand deaths one death delay.*

Though born in New York (Jan. 2, 1752). Freneau was of Monmouth County stock on the maternal side. He was a child when his parents moved to Mount Pleasant. After tutoring by the Rev. William Tennent, pastor of the Old Tennent Church, he attended Princeton. Tradition is that Madison, a classmate at Princeton, unsuccessfully courted Mary Freneau, the beautiful sister of the poet. The courtship has been the theme of several romantic tales.

When Thomas Jefferson was Secretary of State. Freneau was his private secretary and French translator. and always his lifelong friend. At this time he became editor of the *National Gazette*, a newspaper that spoke its mind without fear or favor and even criticized George Washington, who was suspected of monarchical tendencies. Jefferson declared this journal "saved the Constitution." Previous to this Freneau had contributed to the *United States Magazine*. His pen name was Robert Slender, but afterwards he published an article on politics in the *Philadelphia Aurora*, signed O. S. M., which being interpreted meant "One of the Swinish Multitude."

After the Revolution Freneau published the *Jersey Chronicle* at Mount Pleasant in 1795 and 1796. He also published a volume of poems and the Monmouth County Almanac in 1795.

In the last years of his life he lived about two miles from Freehold. Anything but a total abstainer, Freneau left the village for his home one night during a blizzard. He fell into a ditch, broke his leg and died in the snow. That was Dec. 19, 1832, when the poet was 80 years old.

His grave is in one corner of the farm on the east side of US 9 at the southern end of Freneau, where he lived and had his printing press. In his honor the name Mount Pleasant was dropped and his own substituted in 1890 through the effort of Milton A. Fardon. The railroad station and the section still are called Freneau, although the land is within the limits of the Borough of Matawan.

Matawan furnished more than its quota of soldiers for the Revolutionary army, the Monmouth militia, and the Minute Men. Their records cannot be clearly segregated as part of Matawan was then a part of Freehold Township and enlistments were made in the Freehold companies.

Against the British afloat in New Jersey waters, the Middletown settlement struck back again and again. Its arm was the whaleboat

flotilla and it carried a deadly sting that made this coast unsafe for the foe. Supply boats, tenders and even small gunboats fell prey to these bold volunteers. They compelled the British admiral to station a guard ship off Sandy Hook. This ship was at times obliged to report that under the eyes of its officers, the Americans had surprised sailing craft carrying food to the British garrison in New York, driving off their crews, sinking, burning, beaching or capturing the vessels before the British could reach them. The whaleboats also made raiding difficult and dangerous for the raiders. They hit back promptly whenever the raiders came ashore in New Jersey.

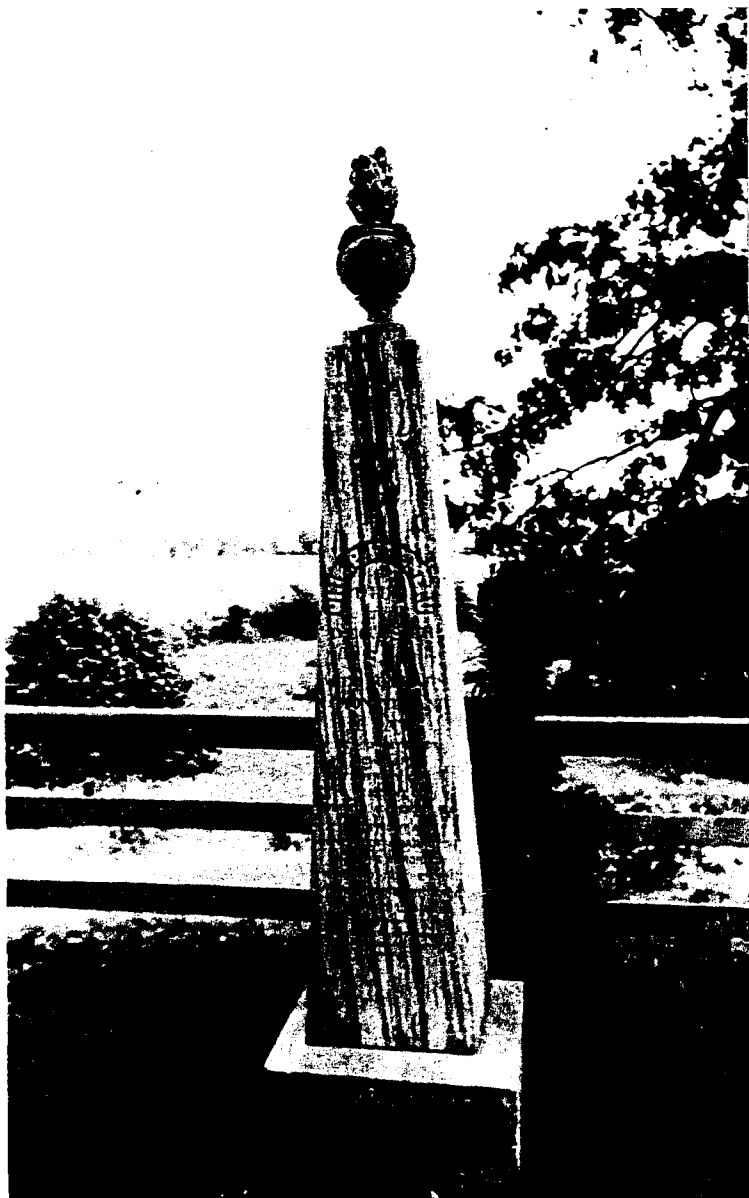
These minute men of the ocean used boats of the whaleboat type, some of them 30 feet long, light, strongly built, drawing little water, sharp at both ends, able to reverse quickly. They were manned by oarsmen—sometimes as many as 24—carefully drilled, always ready. Each boat carried an auxiliary fighting force of landmen from the militia men selected for proved heroism in action. To reinforce the flotilla its officers drew on other classes of boats as they could be found for raids or other service required.

Only a few names of these men live in history. Foremost is that of Captain William Marriner, who is believed to have lived between Matawan and Browntown. Others were Captain John Schenck, Thomas Geran, John Stillwell, James Conover, Samuel Carhart and James Ward. The Matawan boats joined with those from South River under the famous Captain Adam Hyler, and at times with others from the Raritan when a larger force was required for attack.

The versatile mounted infantry of the Pleasant Valley militia operated with the whaleboat navy of Raritan Bay and Matawan Creek as "marines." Pleasant Valley was a Dutch settlement in the present Holmdel Township, but its militia was commanded by Colonel Asher Holmes of English ancestry. A band of roving Tories and "pine robbers" in 1778 attacked the farm at Pleasant Valley of Daniel P. Schenck, a captain in the American army, and killed him. Mrs. Schenck pursued the band with a gun; recognizing one of them as the man who killed her husband, she took careful aim and shot him dead.

The grapnel was used by all as a means of making fast in boarding British sloops and larger vessels. Boathooks sometimes proved handy weapons at close quarters. But the men carried pistols and cutlasses. They also used duck guns, because these had a longer range than a musket while at close quarters charges of heavy shot were deadly. The larger boats carried a swivel gun at the stern which made pursuit by others dangerous. Leather muffled the oars, enabling them to approach an enemy without giving alarm.

Between expeditions the boats were hidden away in small branches of Matawan Creek or dragged ashore in thickets. Some of these were



*The Grave of Philip Freneau at Mount Pleasant Hall.*

above the Burrowes millpond, which in part covered the present site of Lake Matawan. They were portaged over the dam to the creek.

Probably this use of the millpond brought Tory vengeance on the Burrowes family and on the mills that were burned. More than 200 men of Skinner's Greens, guided by local Tories, achieved this destruction on June 3, 1778, coming in oared transports to Conasconk Point, thence moving toward Middletown Point by way of Bethany (now known as Hazlet). Young men of Bethany saw the raiders and guessed their objective. They reached Middletown Point ahead of the enemy by a short cut through the woods, swimming several streams, and spread an alarm. Others hurried away to arouse the militia, joining those at Matawan or the company of Captain Thomas Hunn at Freneau.

The alarm was too late to save the mills, warehouses and boats burned by the British, but the detachment sent to capture Major John Burrowes failed in its mission. He had received a warning, and as the soldiers approached he leaped from a rear window of his father's house (still standing at 94 Main Street). Handicapped by lameness he plunged into the shrubbery, made his way down the steep bank of the creek where there is now a lake, and swam to safety on the other side after losing one shoe in the mud of the creek.

Disappointed, the British soldiers fought savagely when they were resisted here and there in the village, and inside the Burrowes house. It is believed that here one of the invaders was killed and another wounded. Two Americans were killed, Van Brakle and Pierce. One American, Hoff, died of his wounds. Nearly 20 others were injured.

Not finding Burrowes the invaders seized his father, "Corn King" John Burrowes, one of the mill owners. In other houses they captured Lieutenant Colonel Smock, Captain Christopher Little, Joseph Conover and Joseph Wall, and other men of the settlement.

The raiders fled back to New York, but while the ruins were still smoking the whaleboat navy moved to retaliate. On a dark night soon after the raid, the flotilla rowed across the bay. A sharp east wind sent spray over the men. Through the Narrows they passed to the Long Island shore at New Utrecht, well within the British lines, unseen by patrol boats. Leaving the regular crew in the boat, Captain Marriner and Captain John Schenck with 10 armed men made their way to Flatbush. They sought the home of the Tory mayor of New York, David Matthews. As a prisoner he would have had a high value in exchange for an American. Unfortunately he could not be found.

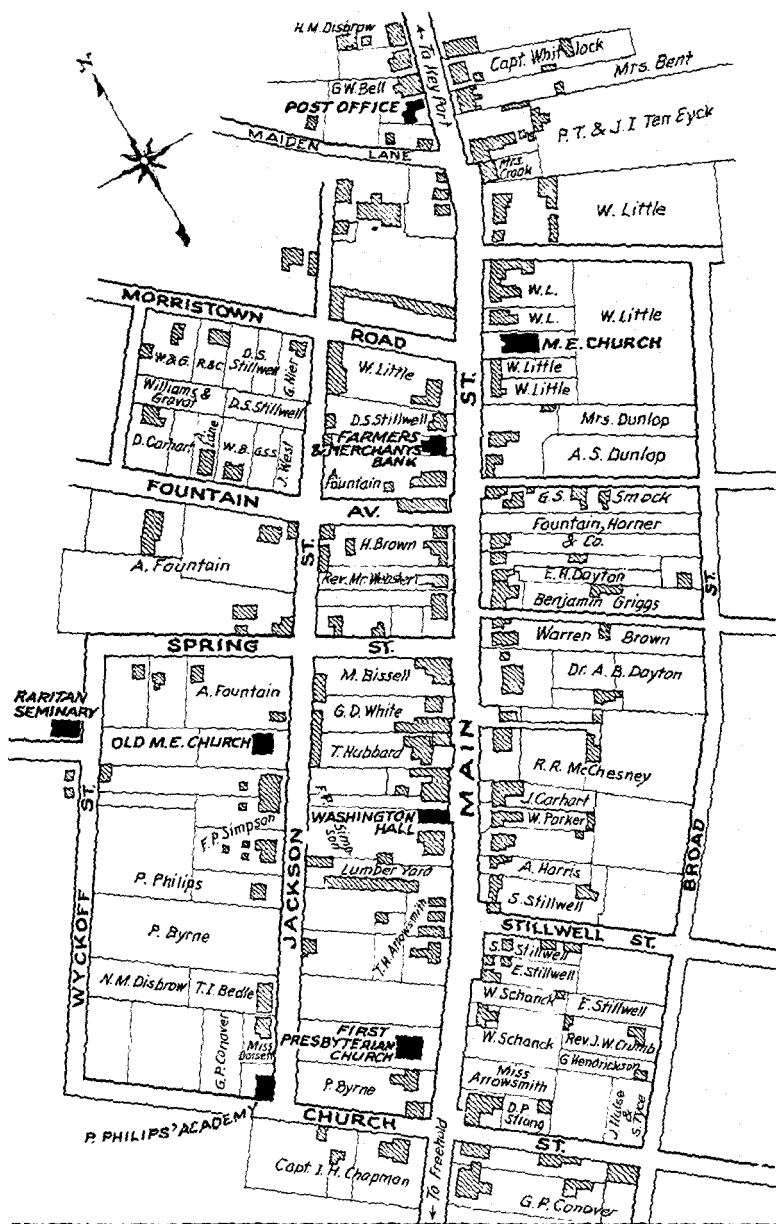
Going next to a house nearby the Jersey invaders released an American prisoner billeted there, Captain Alexander Graydon. Next they seized, at two other houses, a British officer, Major Moncrieff, and an influential Tory, Mr. Bache. Hurrying back to the boats with these prisoners, the Americans fled across the water at top speed, favored by



*Old Toll House, Next to Freneau Firehouse on US 9.*

wind and tide, reaching Keyport in an hour and a quarter. Docking at Matawan next morning before six, the volunteers sent their captives on horseback to General Washington at Morristown.

There was some profit in the seizures of British craft made by the whaleboat detachments. Many were taken into various small ports along the coast and sales of the confiscated property were held out of reach of the enemy. The proceeds went to the men engaged in the venture, just as the crews of the larger privateers with letters of marque were repaid.



## CENTRAL PART OF MIDDLETOWN POINT, N. J., IN 1855

COMPILED FROM MAP OF THOMAS A. HURLEY BY  
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT, W.P.A.  
IRZNE FUHLBRUEGGE, STATE DIRECTOR

L. A. DICKINSON, DRAFTSMAN



## GROWTH UNDER THE REPUBLIC

The menace of war and its miseries gone at last like an evil dream, the Middletown patriots put their energies into the growth of the town and the building of the youthful Republic. The whaleboat navy turned to boat building and peaceful cruising in the service of trade. Soon they were building sloops for coastwise trade and voyages across the bay to the Manhattan metropolis. They built new warehouses in place of those the British had destroyed and into them went Monmouth grain for the mill, beside many other products. The gristmill down on the creek was grinding again, drawing power from a water wheel.

With the clearing away of the forests the country for many miles around had become highly productive. More attention was given to fertilizing. Freneau in his newspaper devoted space to fruit culture and protection. Grain growing gave a large share of income to many farms.

Industry was stimulated. Before the year 1800 a potash factory was running and soon after a brickyard was opened.

*Terhune Homestead, Built in 1836.*





*The Farmers and Merchants National Bank, Founded 1830.*

John Quay's smokehouse and packing plant was built about 1810. Pork and beef from the county were brought here in large quantity and shipped out on sailing sloops, bound to many points. Quay put the packet Republican into regular service between Middletown Point and New York. When winds were contrary 3 days were occupied for the voyage of a heavily laden craft. By 1812 a weekly line of these packets was running.

When the War of 1812 came, wheat was the principal staple, with flour ground in New Jersey mills. Large shipments were carried across the State and shipped from Middletown Point.

Slavery had received attention in that early day. Many Negroes had been freed through the good will of their owners. Some of these had found shelter in a small settlement called Africa, east of the present Lake Matawan. Not until 1820 was an act approved freeing all the slaves in the State by a gradual plan of release.

At Middletown Point in 1807 was founded Trinity Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, first to be instituted here.

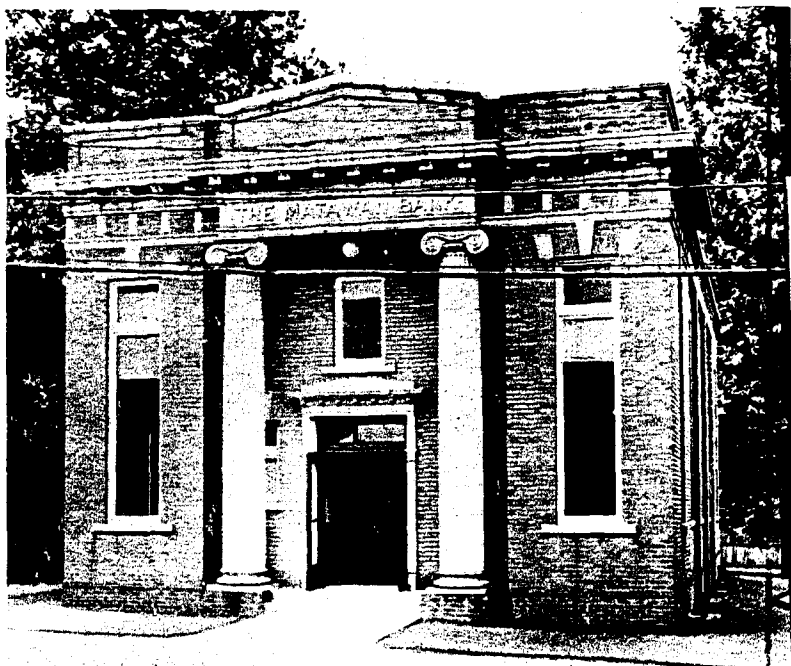
By 1815 the town was tanning hides from Monmouth cattle and using Monmouth tanbark. This industry had been long established in Newark. Its founding here was due to De Lafayette Schenck. Ambition stirred the people the same year to seek a share in the postal system of the nation, then developing with stage coach lines. With the aid of their representatives in Congress the first post office here was opened, with Cornelius P. Vanderhoof as postmaster.

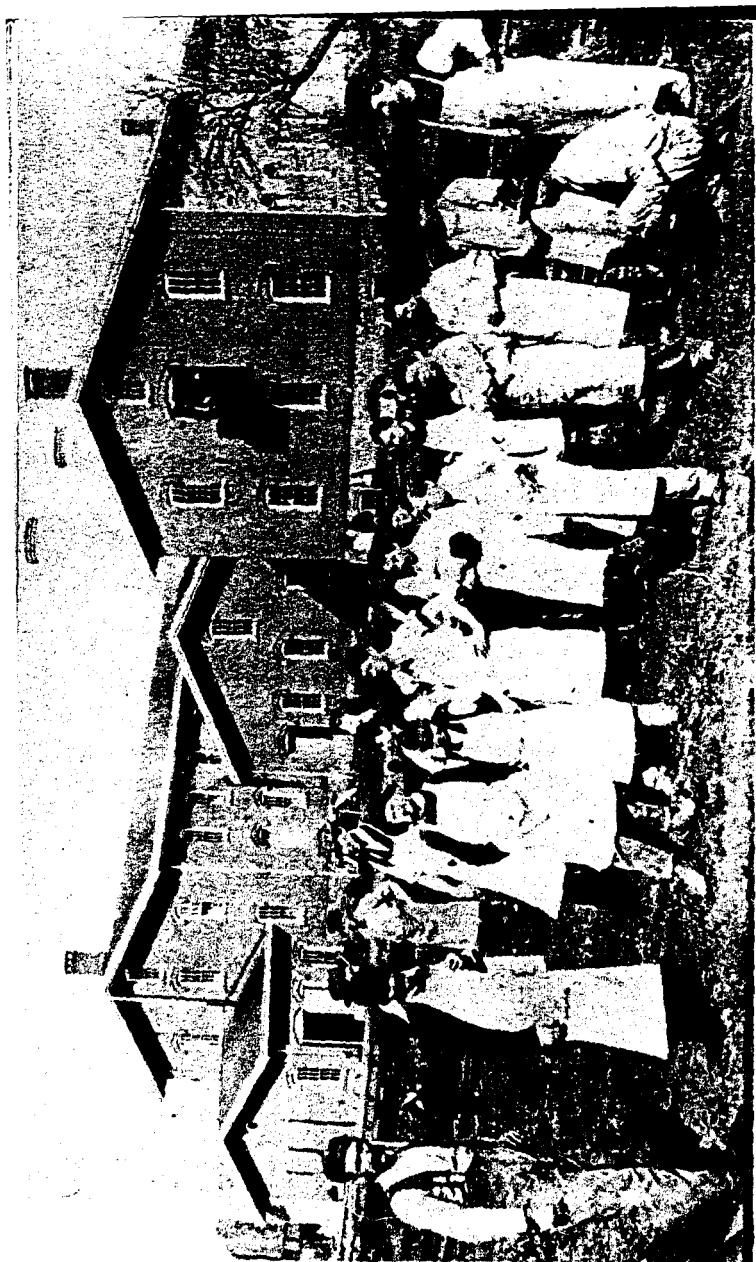
Thomas I. Bedle came in 1828 and opened a shoe store. His son, Joseph D. Bedle, born here, was Governor of New Jersey from 1875 to 1878. The house where Governor Bedle was born has been razed, but at 267 Main Street is the dwelling where he once lived. A business front has been added, used today as an insurance office.

Private banking methods had become inadequate by 1830. In that year a group of merchants and others obtained a charter, for the Farmers and Merchants Bank with an authorized capital of \$50,000. De Lafayette Schenck, already active in industry, became its first president, and William Little, cashier. Little was then postmaster also, an office that he held from 1820 to 1853. This was one of the first banks in the county and for 34 years the only one. It now occupies a modern building on Main Street, built in 1914. Earlier quarters of the bank were in the brick building next door at 146 Main Street, now occupied by the electrical store of August Kattner, Jr. The original office was at 143 Main Street, where the Matawan Bakery now stands.

The year 1831 was an important one for Middletown Point and all Monmouth. The age of steam arrived here at the county's port and center of trade. When Captain Bent steered the first steamboat up Matawan Creek to the landing, Monmouth people came from miles around to see the new wonder. In all the stores and taverns and on the wharves everyone debated its advantages. The more progressive asserted that

*The Matawan Bank.*





*The Rue Pottery Works and Workmen in 1860. The Plant Is Now the Home of the Matavan Tile Company.*

slooping was not fast enough for a wideawake port. The sloop captains, an influential part of the community, naturally opposed the change. They feared with good reason the loss of the carrying trade long in their hands.

In the end a meeting was held at the hotel of Tunis J. Ten Eyck in 1834 with the aim of procuring a steamboat for the trade with New York. It was asserted that this trade had outgrown the sloops run by Fountain, Hornor and Company. Among these sloops was the packet Monmouth which sailed between the Point and old Washington Market, on Hudson River in Manhattan. Captain William S. Hornor was master of this vessel.

The progressives had other advanced ideas. They startled their opponents by announcing a daily stage line to be run in connection with a daily steamboat. The stage joined the port with the county seat at Freehold and with Keyport. They published the following notice in the *Monmouth Democrat* of Sept. 22, 1836:

For New York and Middletown-Point the new Steam-boat, Monmouth, Capt. J. Green, will ply regularly between Middletown Point and New York, foot of Robinson Street, every day, (Sundays and Mondays excepted) touching at Keeler's Dock, (Narrows) L. I., & Key Port, N. J., etc. Fare to and from Middletown Point 50 cents, Keeler's Dock, 25c.

N. B. Oct.—A Daily Line of Stages will run from Keyport to Middletown Point and Freehold. Conveyances can be had to any part of Monmouth County, N. J. Middletown Point, Aug. 24, 1836.

The steamer made only one trip a day and carried the mail. If through fog or accident she did not reach New York that day, the steamer kept on until she did, and delivered the mail one day late to the New York Post Office. In the winter the boat was often frozen in the ice and had to be chopped out.

There was much steamboat rivalry between Keyport and Middletown Point in 1852. Keyport put into service the Wilson Small against the John Hart, running from the Point to New York and touching at Keyport. These boats steamed out of Keyport at the same hour, 8:30 a. m., across the bay and up the Narrows at top speed, racing against each other. They were obliged to reduce speed, however, on entering the harbor, and at times one of them found her course obstructed by some slow sailing craft that the other avoided. Such races were frequent in steamboat days.

Of Middletown Point in 1834 there is preserved a description published that year in Gordon's Gazetteer, which said:

It lies on a bank elevated about fifty feet above the stream, fronting a marsh on the opposite side; contains a Presbyterian Church, from seventy-five to one hundred dwellings, many of which are very good buildings, eight or ten stores, four taverns and a grist-mill. This is the market of an extensive country, and large quantities of pork, rye, corn, cord-wood and garden truck are thence sent to New York.



*The Stage That Met All the Trains in the Gay 90's.*

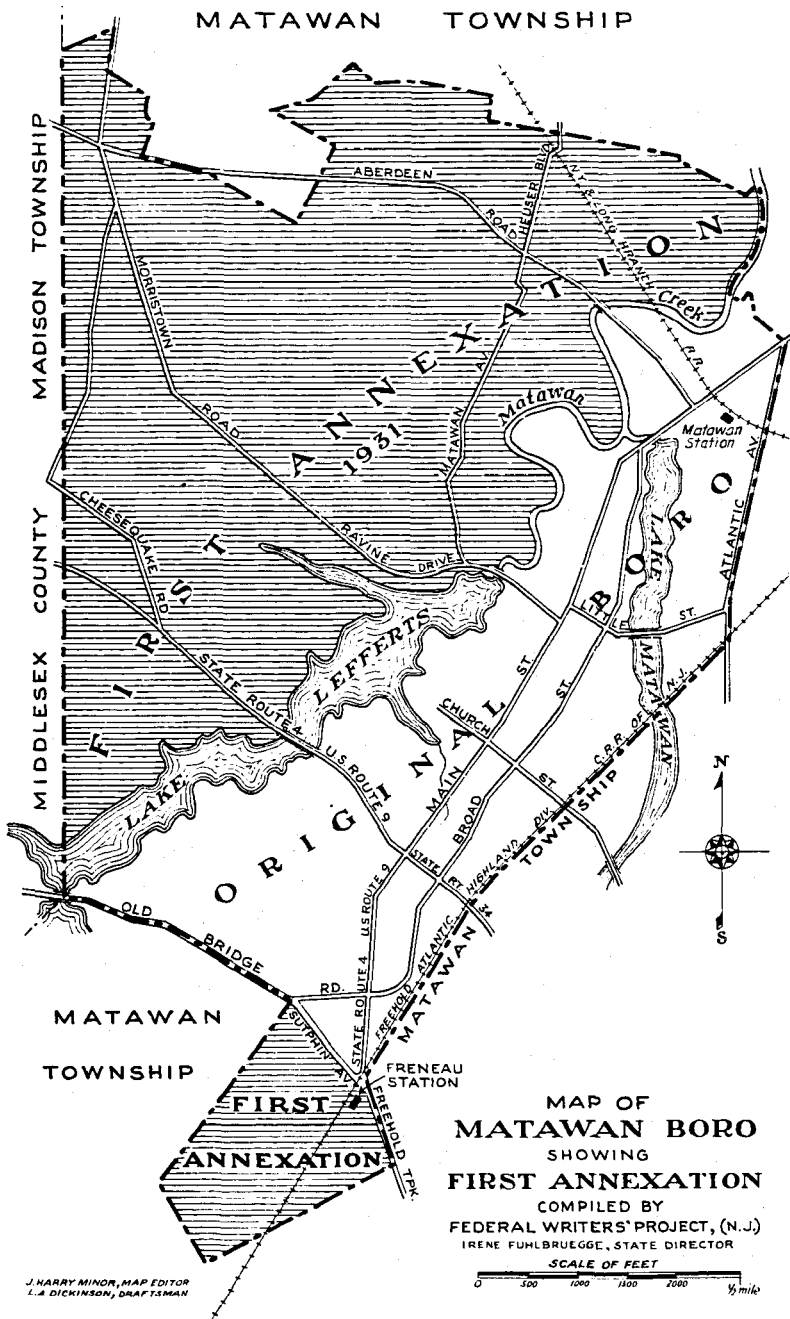
By this time appeared the beginning of the decline in the use of the port by the larger cargo vessels. The channel silted, hindering navigation. The Middletown Point Navigation Company was formed in 1837 and cleared the channel. But the ships found it necessary to sail at high tide. When the work was not completed as low tide approached it was necessary to move the vessel to Keyport and to transport the remainder of the cargo there in pushcarts. Gradually the filling of the channel took the ocean trade away from Matawan.

Stage lines were then reaching out from Middletown Point to many other towns and villages. There was competition with two lines to the county seat, connecting with the steamboat Wave, Captain Joseph Stoney. From Long Branch also John Van Woert ran another stage line to the same boat in 1839, carrying the mails, however, to Keyport. In 1849 the Four-Horse Line of stages was advertised, and others were operated by Charles C. Higgins of Freehold, reaching many towns and using 60 horses.

Plank roads offered a step ahead for the ambitions of the growing town. An act incorporating the Monmouth County Plank Road Company was adopted in 1850. The road was 60 feet wide, connecting Middletown Point and Keyport with Freehold by way of Marlboro. This first plank road in the county, built in 1851, like others of the same material, soon wore out.

Farmers along the route also rebelled against the tolls, declaring they had not been paid for the land they had furnished nor for the

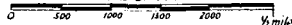
# MATAWAN TOWNSHIP

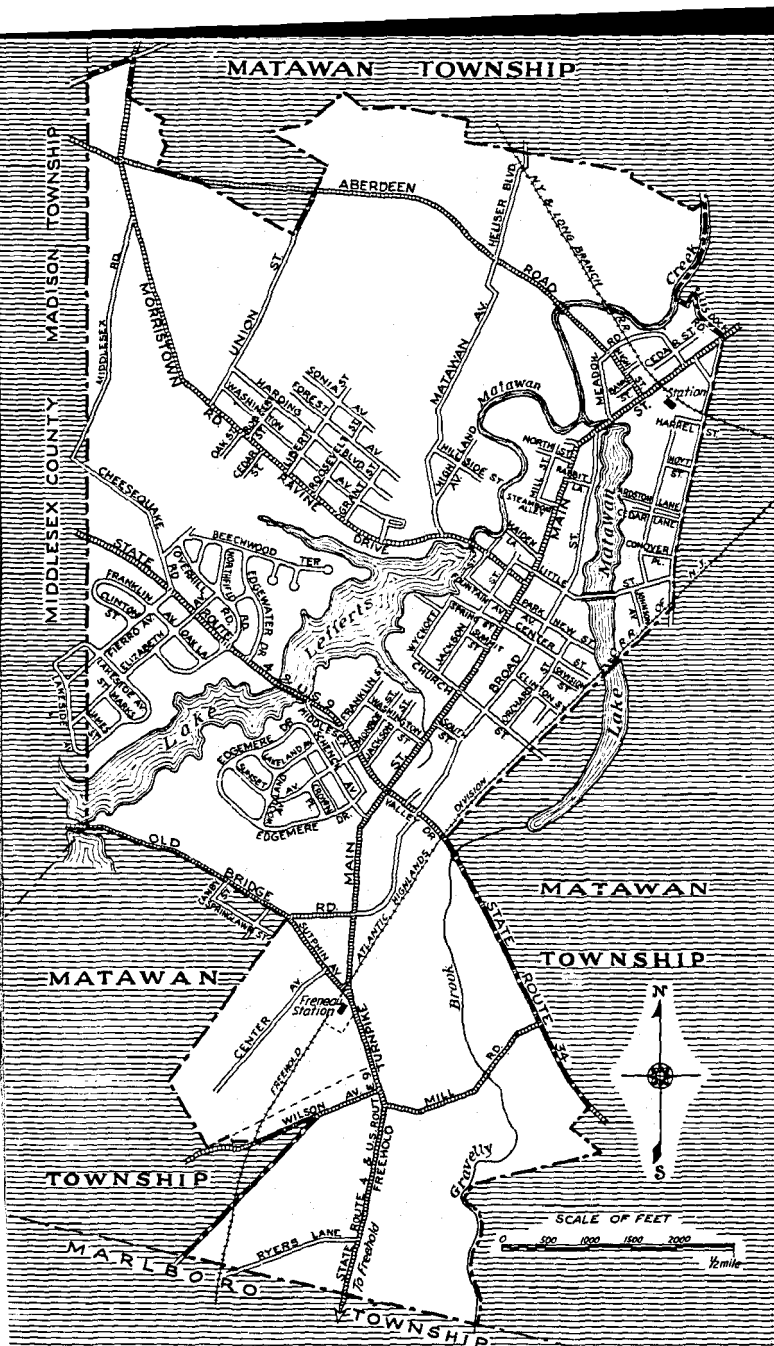


## MAP OF MATAWAN BORO SHOWING FIRST ANNEXATION

COMPILED BY  
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT, (N.J.)  
IRENE FUHLBRUEGGE, STATE DIRECTOR

SCALE OF FEET





## MAP OF PRESENT MATAWAN BORO

COMPILED BY  
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT (NEW JERSEY)  
IRENE FUHLBRUEGGE, STATE DIRECTOR

J. HARRY MINOR, MAP EDITOR

L. A. DICKINSON, DRAFTSMAN



work they had done in grading the road. Some of them broke down the toll gates. The company allowed them to use the unpaved portion of the right of way beside the plank road. In the end this dispute paved the way for another advance—the turnpike. The old planks were torn up and a stone surface was laid. Other turnpikes came soon.

Farmers between Middletown Point and Holmdel formed a company in 1859 which built a road between the two places. Toll gates were erected at either end of the road and toll was collected there for vehicle or beast using the road. Cattle-raising flourished, and in the spring there were droves of calves along the road, brought from New York by boats, on their way to the farms. This early turnpike became part of the township road system after building of the railroads which took away its business, and lately has been taken over as part of the State highway system in Route 34.

At one time bog iron was hauled over the earlier road to Middletown Point and carried by sloops to Peter Cooper's iron works in New York. The iron was found on fields at what is now Reya's Corner, and later was replaced by a higher grade from Pennsylvania mines.

Middletown Point showed interest in its history in 1857 when the township of Matavan was created out of the western part of Raritan Township thus going back to the ancient name by which the creek had been known to the first settlers. Matavan became Matawan by a legislative act of 1882. Middletown Point, however, continued to be used as the designation of the business center until 1865, when it was changed to Matawan to end postal mixups with Middletown. On April 13, 1885, the village was organized as a borough under the old commission act, retaining the name of Matawan. The borough's population then was 1,437.

The Civil War was no serious interruption to either business or pleasure in Matawan. Wealthier residents, of whom there was always a substantial number, escaped military service by hiring substitutes. Perhaps this system explains the fact that there were seven deserters from the infantry company enlisted in Matawan, out of a total of 89 officers and men. Many volunteers came, however, from homes of the less well-to-do; there were scattered enlistments in other regiments and the waterfront sent recruits to the Navy. Captain Jeremiah V. Spader was in command of the Matawan men, who formed Company I of the 29th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers. The first colonel was Edwin F. Applegate, editor of the *Monmouth Inquirer*, who was succeeded by William R. Taylor.

Company I was mustered in for 9 months' service at Camp Vredenburg, near Freehold, Sept. 20, 1862. A few days later the regiment was manning the defenses of Washington and building more forts. Some of the men told later of seeing Lincoln as he came down the lines on inspection, grave and kindly of aspect. Soon Company I and the regi-

ment were part of the Army of the Potomac under Burnside, and part of its picket line near Aquia Creek, Va. They came under fire there and soon after went through the Battle of Fredericksburg, crossing the Rappahannock in the face of a heavy bombardment. Then they dug in and held the position 2 days in spite of Confederate artillery attacks.

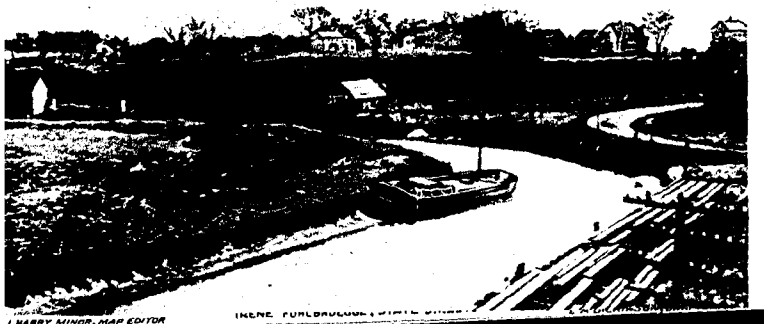
Chancellorsville was another severe test. There the regiment lost some of its men among the killed and wounded. It held its line 2 days before it was relieved. There was a skirmish in June 1863 at Brandy Station before the 29th Regiment was ordered back to Washington and then home. It was mustered out at Freehold on June 19, 1863. Five men had died of disease during the campaign, and nine had been discharged for disability.

Middletown Point veterans organized J. G. Shackelton Post of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1883 with 65 members, increased later to 117. The post was named for Dr. J. G. Shackelton, assistant surgeon of the 29th Regiment. One by one the veterans have passed away, and in 1928 a few survivors turned over the post's flags and duties to Raritan Post of the American Legion in Keyport.

While turnpikes were still building, the farmers hauling produce to the boats at Middletown Point talked of the railroads under construction to other ports. Producers with the longer hauls were easily convinced that steam transport would save their horses and time. But others nearer town opposed this new means of carrying crops to market, and the stage coach and wagon train owners agreed. All of them protested to the legislature in 1841 against the movement for a railway. The progressives were rebuffed and the idea went to sleep. Its slumber was encouraged by the Camden and Amboy Railroad monopoly west of the county, which tapped other sections through stage coaches and wagons.

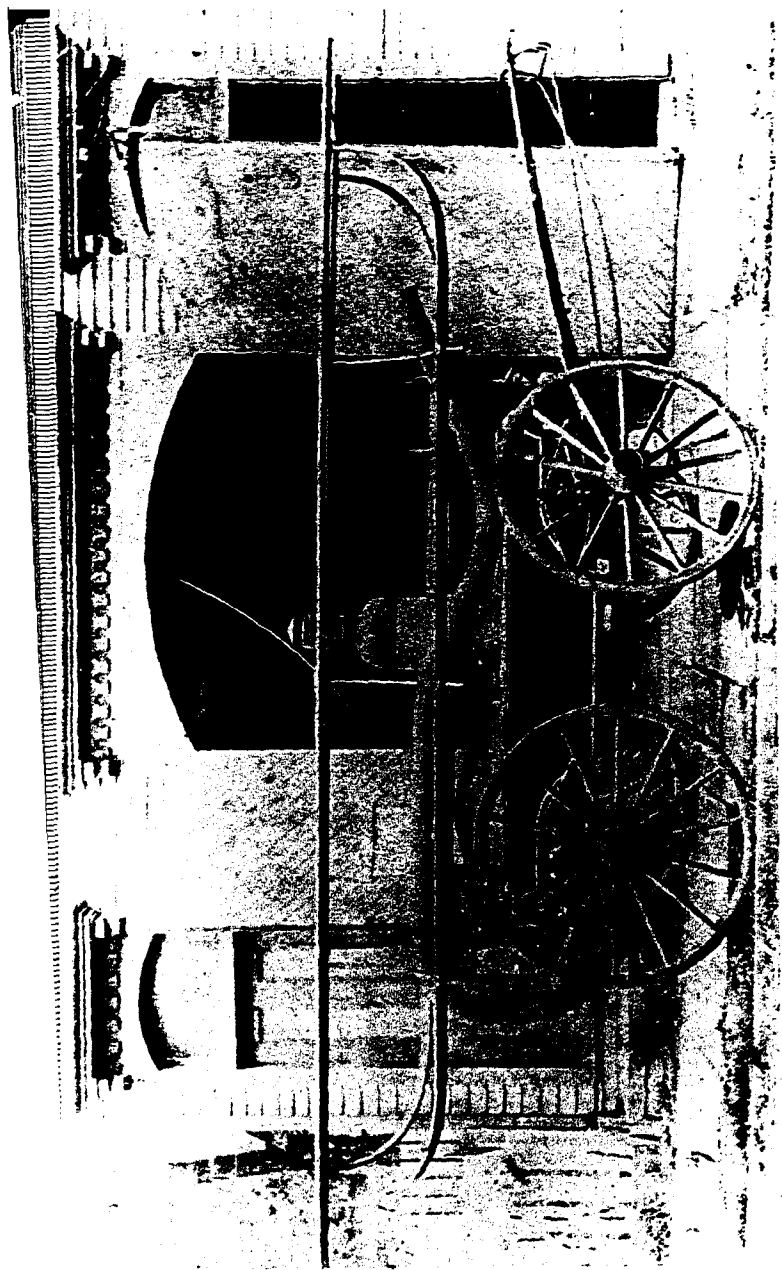
When peace came with the end of the Civil War, Middletown Point was carried along with the new spirit of an expanding nation. While former soldiers conquered the prairies and built railroads to the Pacific Coast, others here saw that railways meant growth. Business men joined with farmers in 1868, asking the legislature for a charter. This was granted to the New York and Long Branch Railroad Company, which

*When Matawan Creek was a Waterway (View from Railroad Trestle).*



*The Walter D. Brown Farmhouse, 189 Fremont Avenue, Built About 1810 and Twice Moved.*





*Old Hand Brake Engine, Purchased in 1869 from the New York City Fire Department.*

still owns the line although the only trains to Matawan are operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Central Railroad of New Jersey, joint lessees.

Laying of a single track from South Amboy to Long Branch was completed on June 21, 1875, after Matawan residents had bought one-third of the original issue of capital stock—to the great dismay of less moneyed Keyport, whose townfolk purchased only a few thousand dollars' worth of shares and saw their community left off the route. Rubbing salty words into the Keyporters' wounded pride, the *Matawan Journal* commented on May 1 of that year:

The Keyport Weekly charges that people from Matawan "paid \$100,000 to bend the railroad line to suit her purposes, and avoiding the straight line which would have accommodated Keyport." Just so, brother. And, to think, we are guaranteed seven per cent a year for our money. And then too, that widening of the main northern entrance to Matawan (Main Street) which we are ready to take care of, will make it so much more convenient for the people of Keyport to come to Matawan to trade.

Opening ceremonies, with President Grant and 500 other guests present, were held in Long Branch a few days after completion of the line. The first schedule called for six passenger trains and one freight each way daily. By October the *Journal* was able to report that "a number of the flagmen have been taken off the less important places on the line of the railroad, the public having become accustomed to looking out for the trains." In the spring of 1876 the same newspaper related that "seven carts and horses arrived at Matawan station from Long Branch, and the work of grading and beautifying the grounds will be begun immediately." The grading was done, but there is no evidence of any beautifying undertaken either then or during the next 60 years. A legislative act of 1869 had given permission for extending the line to Elizabethport, where it connected with the main line of the Central. Under an agreement made in 1882 with the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New Jersey Southern Railway, bonds were issued and the road was double tracked for its entire length.

Another company obtained a charter in 1867 for the Monmouth County Agricultural Railway from Freehold by way of Matawan to Keyport. Lacking sufficient funds the company went into receivership and the property was sold in 1876. It was renamed the Freehold and New York Railway by New York purchasers with wider aim who completed it in 1880. It is now part of the Freehold division of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, passing through the eastern section of the borough and crossing Lake Matawan on a trestle.

Along with the railroad another great enterprise came to Matawan. This was the telegraph, established here in 1870, though it had served the larger cities and the Army in the Civil War.

In the years following the Civil War much thought was given to the remaking of farms in New Jersey, aided by the State and Federal governments which established the State College of Agriculture at New Brunswick. In this effort Middletown Point was active with representatives in the Monmouth County Agricultural Society. William Spader was president of the society for several years. Grain-growing, once the chief dependence of Monmouth, was shifting to the prairie States and to the Northwest. In place of wheat, the former staple, potatoes, vegetables and dairy products were developed. Monmouth in recent years has become one of the three counties of New Jersey leading in potato crops.

One more advance of importance was scored in 1870. From candles and whale oil lamps of Colonial days the town had gone to kerosene lights. Now came the new illuminant, gas, with local business men backing the enterprise and building works for the purpose on the road between Matawan and Oak Shades. They did not know that invention moving swiftly would soon produce in the adjoining county of Middlesex the incandescent light and the electric power circuit that was to rebuild industry the world over. But the rise of human needs that followed has brought with it new uses for gas and greater sales.

While the coming of the Electric Age still lagged, enterprising capitalists built a horse car railway from Keyport into Matawan in 1887. Edison several years before had built an experimental electric railway at Menlo Park, but the horse car was then the dependence of all the large cities and of hundreds of others. The line reaching the Matawan railroad station was found a real addition to public convenience. There were pleas from outlying sections for extensions, but these waited on another move of the wheel of progress. This came in 1903 when the horse car line was electrified and became part of the Jersey Central Traction system, running out of Keyport to Perth Amboy on the north, and south to Red Bank, Highlands and other shore points. It connected with Matawan, Cliffwood and Freneau.

The world moved on still further and moved fast. In 20 years the trolley was out of date with the coming of the motor bus. The traction company accepted the verdict in 1923 and suspended its service. It was replaced by the present bus service of the Rollo Transit Corporation, at first joining Keyport, Matawan and Freneau and later extending to Freehold, Red Bank, Asbury Park, New York and other points. Since the bus service here was begun the Public Utilities Commission has authorized its substitution for eight trains on the Central Railroad of New Jersey between Matawan and shore points.

With 1890 arrived a nineteenth century marvel—the telephone service. The company used the New York and Long Branch Railroad's right of way for a trunk line. Aberdeen Inn, next to the railroad station, sheltered

a switchboard resembling grandfather's clock. Business was small at the outset. The operator received 20 percent of the tolls collected as an incentive to sell the service. For a long time the telephone was a curiosity, one of the sights that brought many people to town from the surrounding country. At first there were only two telephones, both public, one at "Central," the other at Slater's drug store. By 1910 there were 300 telephones on the exchange serving Matawan and Keyport jointly, or about one-third of the number at this time.

On May 2, 1896, Matawan was incorporated as a borough under the mayor and council act of 1878, thus ending the commission form of government set up 11 years earlier. The borough has twice been enlarged. Property owners on the shore of Lake Lefferts voted on May 12, 1931, by 46 to 29 to leave the township. The second addition was authorized on May 23, 1933, when residents of the Freneau section approved the transfer from township to borough government by 66 to 51.

## CHURCHES

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The First Presbyterian Church is the oldest in Matawan, having been organized by the early Scotch settlers of New Aberdeen (Matawan). These Scotsmen, who worshipped in a body as early as 1692, also conducted services at Free Hill, near Wickatunk, prior to the removal of the seat of worship to the Tennent Church.

A law passed in 1705 permitted the registration of dissenting houses of worship. These records have confused many historians, causing them to assume that the date given on the registration of the Presbyterian Church, made after 1705, is the correct date of the organization which in reality was earlier.

Prior to his death in 1709, John Boyd, a Scotch clergyman, preached in the vicinity of Matawan. In April 1767 Rev. Charles McKnight was installed as pastor. The church where he preached was burned to the ground. It was situated on the site now known as old Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Main Street and New Brunswick Avenue.

In 1798 Presbyterians rebuilt the church with receipts from a legalized lottery, operated under the terms of an act of the New Jersey Legislature. So far as can be determined this was one of the last lotteries approved for such a purpose by the State.

The earliest records of a Sunday school in Matawan are those of the classes formed by the Presbyterians in 1818. Parents contributed from \$1 to \$1.50 quarterly, depending on their means, and the children



*The First Presbyterian Church, Tower by Stanford White.*





*The First Methodist Church, Erected 1854.*

brought the large copper cents of that period. The Tract Society, of which Mrs. William Little was treasurer, was also active at the time. Bibles were a rather expensive luxury; the society bought scriptural excerpts and Bible stories from publishing houses, distributing them by horse and buggy to homes where they were needed. The two Hitchcock chairs now in the church were purchased in 1820 for \$15.

The known pastors since the early nineteenth century are:

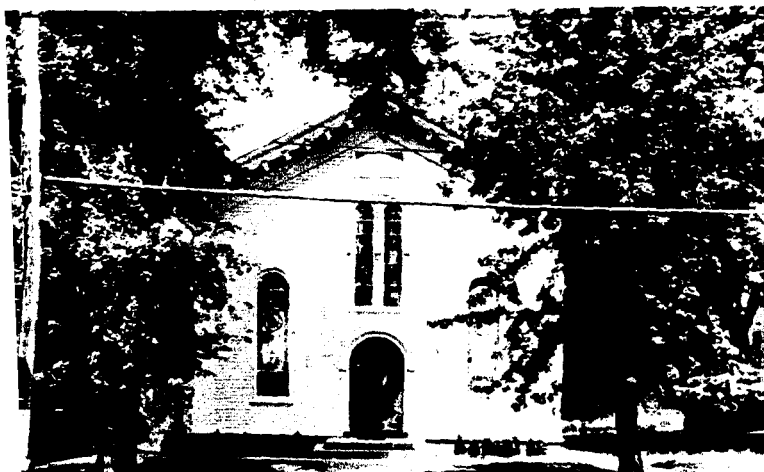
Rev. Eleazer S. Barrows.....	1816-1817	Rev. William H. Ford.....	1881-1882
Rev. Eli F. Cooley.....	1820-1823	Rev. Robert Kent.....	1882-1889
Rev. George S. Woodhull.....	1833-1834	Rev. W. C. Alexander.....	1889-1893
Rev. Joseph L. Shafer.....	1834-1836	Rev. Alexander H. Young.....	1894-1907
Rev. Charles Webster.....	1838-1856	Rev. Edwin I. Stearns.....	1909-1912
Rev. James O. Dennison.....	1868-1871	Rev. Charles Bruce.....	1912-1925
Rev. J. H. Kaufman.....	1871-1873	Rev. William H. Dilts.....	1926-1935
Rev. James M. Anderson.....	1874-1881	Rev. Robert Berger.....	1936-

The pastorate of Rev. Charles Webster from 1838 to 1856 marked an era of rapid growth for the church. During the term of Rev. W. C. Alexander, 1889 to 1893, a large organ was installed and alterations were made to the front of the present church on Main Street, including a new tower, designed by Stanford White. The church membership reached its peak during the pastorate of Mr. Dilts.

#### FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Members of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Matawan worshipped between the years of 1783 and 1788 in a building at what is now 144 Main Street. These congregations were under the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Conference. Circuit preaching continued intermittently with occasional pastoral leadership until 1836, when the first church building was erected on the site now occupied by a garage at 173 Jackson Street. Eighteen years later the church building was sold

*The First Baptist Church, Erected 1850.*



and the new owners moved it to Main Street, where it was destroyed in the great fire of 1901.

The trustees, faced with a building problem for the second time in the church's history, obtained in 1854 a lot on Main Street opposite Ravine Drive and in the same year laid the cornerstone of the present building. Nine memorial windows have since been added. In 1867 the parsonage was built.

While a circuit station from 1836 to 1841, the church was served by the following preachers: Rev. Mulford Day, Rev. J. Loudenslager, Rev. George Wharton, Rev. Samuel Jacquett, Rev. N. Chew, Rev. T. I. Campfield, Rev. John Long and Rev. L. R. Dunn.

In 1841, the church was made a regular station. The pastors who have served since are:

Rev. G. Gaskill.....	1841-1843	Rev. L. O. Manchester.....	1882-1884
Rev. James O. Rodgers.....	1843-1845	Rev. Henry G. Williams.....	1884-1886
Rev. Wesley Robinson.....	1845-1847	Rev. A. H. Eberhardt.....	1886-1889
Rev. L. R. Dunn.....	1847-1849	Rev. Samuel O. Chattin.....	1889-1892
Rev. Abraham Palmer.....	1849-1851	Rev. James L. Howard.....	1892-1895
Rev. W. H. Jeffries.....	1851-1853	Rev. William S. Barnart.....	1895-1897
Rev. E. M. Griffiths.....	1853-1855	Rev. James H. Batton.....	1897-1898
Rev. A. H. Mead.....	1855-1856	Rev. D. N. Stafford.....	1898-1900
Rev. John W. Kramer.....	1856-1858	Rev. J. F. Heilerman.....	1900-1904
Rev. George H. Neal.....	1858-1860	Rev. D. E. Lyon.....	1904-1906
Rev. B. F. Woolston.....	1860-1862	Rev. J. W. Morris.....	1906-1909
Rev. Charles Hartranft.....	1862-1864	Rev. Benj. C. Lippincott.....	1909-1915
Rev. George H. Hughes.....	1864-1865	Rev. Leon Chamberlain.....	1915-1917
Rev. Henry Belting.....	1865-1868	Rev. John Allen.....	1917-1919
Rev. Milton Relyea.....	1868-1870	Rev. E. F. Reed.....	1919-1923
Rev. Albert Matthews.....	1870-1872	Rev. S. K. Moore.....	1923-1924
Rev. William Zane.....	1872-1875	Rev. R. S. Carlisle.....	1924-1926
Rev. William Moffett.....	1875-1878	Rev. Edward Mount.....	1926-1931
Rev. George A. Maddock.....	1878-1881	Rev. E. F. Reed.....	1931-1935
Rev. J. G. Crate.....	1881-1882	Rev. J. A. Naylor.....	1935-

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Baptists in Matawan held services 20 years before a church was built. As early as 1830, Rev. Thomas Roberts, then pastor of the Middletown Church, occasionally visited the village and preached at private homes. These meetings continued until the formation of the regular Baptist parish in Keyport, when the village of Matawan was made an outlying station where the visiting preacher met his people once a month at the Mount Pleasant School House.

By 1849, the number of Baptists had increased to such an extent that it was decided to erect a meeting house in the village. In December of that year a lot was purchased and a building was erected on Main Street and dedicated in 1850. The first pastor in the new church was the Rev. Job Gaskill.



*Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church, Erected 1850.*

Preachers came and went in rapid succession until 1866 when Rev. F. A. Slater began his long pastorate. He retired in 1889. Preachers from that year to the present follow:

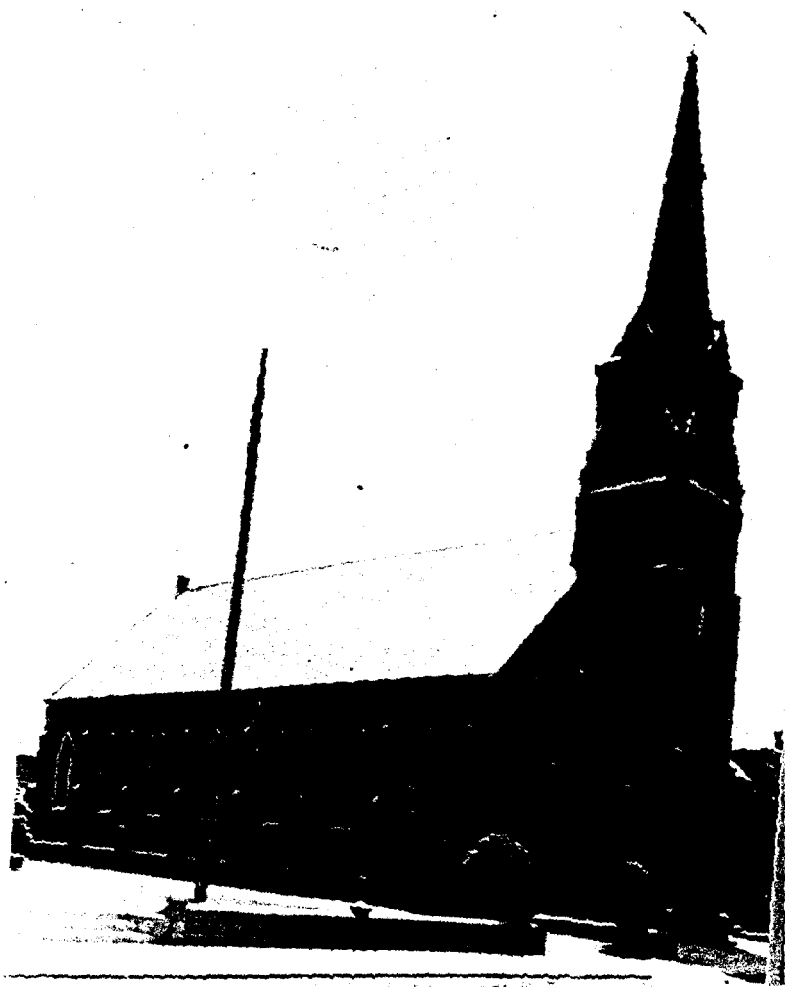
Rev. C. L. Percy.....	1889-1894	Rev. I. L. Holmes.....	1914-1917
Rev. H. J. Whalen.....	1894-1898	Rev. W. W. Ludwig.....	1919-1930
Rev. J. Y. Irwin.....	1899-1903	Rev. Karl H. Koeker, Jr.....	1931-1936
Rev. Samuel Bower.....	1903-1914	(Successor not named, Sept. 20, 1936)	

During the last years of the pastorate of Rev. J. W. Crumb, who served from 1854 to 1858, fire destroyed the meeting house. The church was rebuilt on the present site, a short distance away from the original location on Main Street, now occupied by the home of Charles E. Smith.

#### TRINITY PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church of Matawan was established when the Episcopal parish at Middletown Point was incorporated in 1850. Rev. Fernando C. Putnam was appointed missionary to the Point and was named rector of the parish. He served only 2 years, resigning in 1852.

Through the liberality of Colonel John Travers, who lived at the mouth of Cheesapeake Creek, the present red stone building was erected. Bishop Doane laid the cornerstone in 1850 and consecrated the church



*Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church.*

in the following year. From the time of the resignation of Mr. Putnam until Rev. F. Maxwell Reilly took charge in 1859 only occasional services were held. The church was served largely by students from the General Theological Seminary of New York in its early years.

Rev. C. Theodore Leibt.....	1864-1866	Affiliated with Keyport.....	1879-1916
Rev. James E. Kenny.....	1866-1867	Rev. Benjamin Dagwell.....	1916-1919
Rev. L. Hodgson.....	1867-1868	Rev. Albert P. Mack.....	1920-1926
Rev. R. B. Chetwood, Jr.....	1869-1870	Rev. J. H. Schwacke.....	1926-
Rev. John Brazer Draper.....	1878-1879		

The church, situated on Main Street, is a stone edifice with a modified Gothic belfry surmounted by a cross of wrought iron, the gift of friends in Keyport.

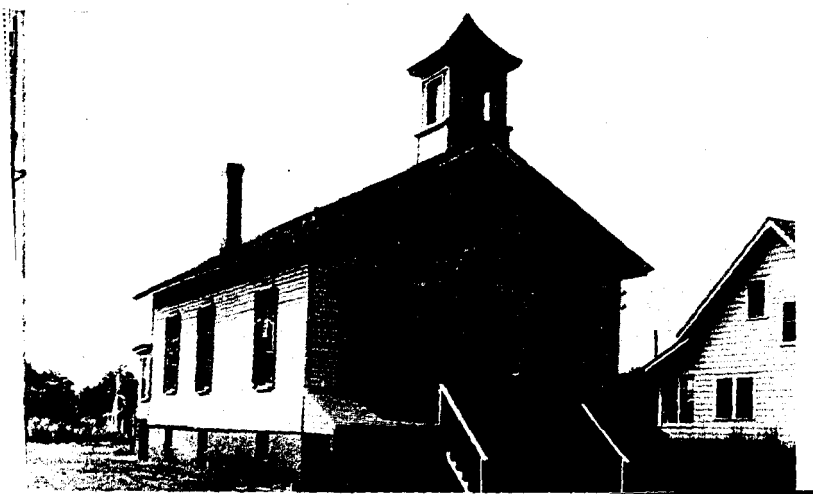
#### ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Since there is no Roman Catholic Church in Matawan Borough or Township, persons of the Catholic faith worship in St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Keyport, on the Matawan-Keyport road just beyond the Matawan Township boundary.

The church was organized prior to 1854. The brick building now at the rear of the present structure was the first church. When the new church was built in 1880, the former edifice was used for a time as the parochial school.

Rev. John Kelly, of South Amboy, was the priest in charge for more than 20 years. He was succeeded by Father McGovern in 1876, who remained for one year; then followed Rev. Gerard A. Spiering, and Rev. Michael C. O'Donnell. In 1923, Rev. Joseph P. Linnane took up his work as priest. During his pastorate a parochial school and convent were built and the parochial residence and church cemetery were improved. The Rev. John P. Burke, who took charge of the parish after the death of Father Linnane in 1929, built a new rectory.

*St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church.*





*The Second Baptist Church.*

#### CLIFFWOOD METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Cliffwood Methodist Episcopal Church was established in the 1840's. The first meeting was held in a little schoolhouse. Later growth necessitated the use of the Morristown School in adjoining Madison Township. Increasing demands for expansion brought about the erection of the present building on Cliffwood Avenue in 1854. Money was obtained by donation, subscription, and festivals. Edward D. Hyrne of Keyport conducts the services.

#### ST. JAMES AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

St. James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was formed in 1843 at a meeting in the front room of the house now occupied by Mrs. Matilda Conover. Subsequent meetings led to the decision to build a church which was erected in 1851. This building is on Atlantic Avenue, southeast of Lake Matawan, and can be reached by crossing Little Street bridge. Rev. Raymond Z. Taylor is pastor.

#### SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH

The Second Baptist Church of Matawan was organized in 1889. Fireside meetings were held at the homes of members until the spring of 1890 when a room in Bissel Hall, then situated on Main Street near Spring Street, was rented. The following year an abandoned skating rink was purchased. This formerly stood on the corner of Jackson Street and Fountain Avenue. It was remodeled for church use and occupied until 1908 when it was destroyed by fire.

Temporary quarters were found in the district school building on lower Broad Street while the present building on Orchard Street, a one-story and one-room brick structure, was being erected. In 1917 the building was enlarged by its Negro congregation. The pastor is Rev. William J. Hutchinson.

## SCHOOLS

The graded school system of Matawan Township dates from 1895. It was established under an act of the legislature in 1894 providing for consolidation of all school districts in townships, boroughs, towns or cities. John S. McCurdy is supervising principal for the 3 schools in borough and township, with an enrollment of 1,250 pupils.

Matawan High School, most recent of the buildings, was built in 1924 at a cost of \$175,000. It stands on an 8-acre plot at Broad and South Streets, adjoining the old building, which is now used exclusively as a grade school. Of Georgian architecture, it is a two and one-half story brick structure. There are 13 classrooms and a study hall, an auditorium seating 527, special manual training and domestic science classrooms, a lunch room and a gymnasium with 300 seats.

Classical, scientific, normal, commercial and general courses are offered. The school is on the approved list of the State board of education. In the 1935-36 school year there were 388 students and 14 teachers. Seventy-six pupils were graduated in 1936, the largest class in the history of the school. This record, exactly double that of 1933, was partly due to admittance of pupils from Laurence Harbor.

In 1920 the senior class of the high school inaugurated a custom still followed. The income from the annual senior play was used to take the entire class to Washington, D. C., for a 3-day sightseeing trip. Busses are still chartered for the tour, and teachers act as chaperons. In the fall the whole school participates in a circus to raise money for athletics. Community interest was aroused in the spring of 1936 by an intramural swimming meet at Lake Lefferts. The contesting groups were known as the Matawan "Ca'fish" and the Laurence Harbor "Eels."

During 1922-1924 the Matawan High School baseball team gained distinction under the direction of Coach Benjamin W. Davis by winning the Central New Jersey championship in all 3 years. Unofficial records show that the Matawan nine won 63 out of 65 games played, losing only to Keyport and Neptune. One of the outstanding diamond classics was staged on Decoration Day, 1924, when Henry Schanck, the strapping Negro pitcher for Matawan, faced Stanley Carhart of Keyport in a brilliant 16-inning duel. Both flingers went the full time, the Mats nosing out their rivals, 3 to 2. The athletic field was improved in 1935 by WPA workers.

Matawan grade school is in the old grade and high school, originally an 8-room structure built in 1895 at a cost of \$16,000. In 1908 an addition was erected, costing \$22,000. During the next 15 years the





*The Matawan High School.*

need for a separate high school grew constantly more pressing but action was delayed again and again by the citizens. With only 12 classrooms and more than 900 students it became necessary to run double sessions and even then classes were so large they were almost unmanageable. Finally, in 1923, funds were voted for a high school. The board of education in August 1936 decided to call a special election for approval of a two-room addition to the high school as a WPA project.

In 1935-36 there were 664 enrolled in the grade school with 17 teachers in charge. Mrs. Lorena Hobrough is the principal. The building contains 18 classrooms, 6 of them having been converted from the auditorium and basement, a teachers' room, and medical and dental clinic rooms. The first ungraded class was started in 1930 with 12 pupils from the third, fourth and fifth grades.

The Chickering grand piano used by the grade school was acquired in 1895 under peculiar circumstances. In that year, it is recalled by old residents, the *New York Press* offered a piano to the most popular school in New Jersey, the winner to be decided by coupon ballots clipped from the newspaper. Matawan went to work to get that piano. Citizens' committees were formed, parties and entertainments were held—everybody was buying and clipping coupons, with newspapers being shipped into town almost in carload lots. With 141,000 votes Matawan beat her nearest rival, Hampton Junction School, by about 40,000. Arrival of the piano was celebrated with a parade, speeches, and a lunch prepared by women of the clipping committees.

The Cliffwood Grade School on Cliffwood Avenue had an enrollment of 198 in the 1935-36 school year. There are six classrooms, three teachers and the principal, Luther A. Foster. This is the only school in the township standing on the site of one of the old district schools. Cliffwood grade school was well prepared for future expansion. Originally a wooden structure, brick additions were made in 1912 when two

rooms were added and in 1922, when four rooms were added. Two of the rooms, left unfinished, were completed several years later. One of the rooms has been put to use; the other will remain vacant until the juvenile population of the community increases sufficiently to justify its occupancy.

An attendance officer and nursing service are contracted for the schools, and a dentist is employed on a part time basis by the board of education. Lewis H. Blood is president of the board and Edwin H. Dominick is clerk. Other members are Henry L. Zucker, George W. Mandeville, Garrett McKeen, Dr. William H. Pengel, Dr. Thomas S. Powers, Charles Bogart and Charles Kortenhaus.

There are no separate schools for the 243 Negro pupils in Matawan schools. They numbered 27 in the high school, 137 in the grade school and 79 in the Cliffwood school during the past year.

The per capita cost for education in the township for 1934-35 was \$80.93, next to the lowest in Monmouth County. Raritan Township spent \$78.97, and the highest per capita cost was \$121.88 in Middletown Township. With a net taxable valuation of \$3,916,208, local school taxes in 1935-36 were \$64,561. A total of \$14,293 was received from the county and State. Teachers' salaries were first reduced as a result of the depression in 1932; cuts up to 10 percent have not yet been restored. High school teachers' salaries range from \$1,200 to \$2,070, and grade school salaries from \$1,000 to \$1,700.

The district has provided free bus service since 1927 for more than 100 eighth grade and high school pupils. In January 1935 one of the school busses became snow-bound on State 34. The 16 children were forced to stay overnight at neighboring farm houses and were not returned to their homes until 2 days later.

Prior to 1895 and the beginning of the present school system, the section had district schools. There were five of them, each a small wooden structure with little classification of pupils. School 46, the "Upper District School," is known to have been in existence in 1800 next to the site now known as Mount Pleasant Cemetery. After half a century of use, the school was rebuilt in 1850. It is now St. James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Atlantic Avenue. The "Middle District School," No. 47, was situated on Church Street, at Jackson. It is now a two-family house at the foot of Church Street. School 48, the "Lower District School," still stands at the foot of Rabbit Lane and what is now the Broad Street extension. It once served as a hall of the Colored Knights of Pythias Lodge, and is now a two-family residence. The other two schools were No. 45, at Cliffwood, on the site of the present school; and No. 58, in the Oak Grove School District. The latter stood on the Holmdel Township side of Oak Grove Road, about 800 feet south of Mohingson Brook.



*The Cliffwood Public School.*

The first student to be graduated from the high school in the class of 1895, the course then being only a year in length, was F. Howard Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd became principal of the district in 1919, succeeding William L. Miller, who established a high scholastic reputation for Matawan High School during his 24-year term as the first principal. As president of the State teachers association, Mr. Lloyd was active in getting the teachers' tenure law passed by the State legislature in 1919. When the new building was dedicated he presented a flag on behalf of Columbia Council, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, of which he was past councilor. His successor as supervising principal, Mr. McCurdy, began his work in 1923.

Matawan has no private schools at present, but for 81 years an academy exerted a strong influence on the community. Opened in 1834 in a single room over the bank, it soon outgrew its quarters and a two-

*The Matawan Grammar School.*



story building was erected at the northwest corner of Church and Jackson Streets. The cost of \$1,020 was met by sale of shares to the more prominent citizens. With a handsome cupola and pillars, the school was a pretentious one. Later it was occupied by the Middle District School.

Known as Middletown Point Academy, this school rapidly became one of the most famous private schools in the country, attracting students and sometimes their families from New York, Philadelphia and as far away as St. Louis and New Orleans. Philetus Phillips, who became principal in 1836, was a man of inventive genius. One of his accomplishments was a chicken house so designed that in cold weather the chickens could open and close the door. The school was coeducational, with a "male department" and a "female department." Painting and embroidery were among the courses for young women. In the earliest years the principal attempted to keep the boys and girls from exchanging stray glances by hanging a curtain between the two sections. The curtain is said to have been torn in more than one place. One of the first two students was Henry Stafford Little, who later became prominent in the State and gave large sums to Princeton University.

In 1857 the stockholders erected another building on a site opposite the original school and the institution became known as the Collegiate Institute of Middletown Point. In 1859 Garrett A. Hobart, later vice-president of the United States, was a student here. Probably the most distinguished teacher was a young man of 19 who came to the institute from Nova Scotia in 1873 to instruct in mathematics and the classics. Thirty-seven years later Robert Laird Borden became prime minister of Canada, serving through the war period until 1920, holding membership in the war cabinet of the British Empire and representing Canada as its chief delegate at the Peace Conference. Young Borden made a number of friends in Matawan and showed keen interest in local flora. He was grieved to learn that the trailing arbutus, known in Nova Scotia as the mayflower, was commonly called the shad flower.

When the building was enlarged to its present dimensions in 1874, the name was again changed, this time to Glenwood Institute. Early in the twentieth century, under the ownership of Colonel C. J. Wright, the military system was introduced and the name was changed to Matawan Military Academy. By 1915 competition from the free public high schools forced the academy to close. The old building has since been remodeled into an apartment house. Some of the books from the library are still to be found in the Matawan Library, with which it was merged.

## CIVIC AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Outstanding among the civic and fraternal organizations in Matawan are a woman's club, an American Legion post with three affiliates, and six branches of national lodges. There are also political clubs and Polish and Italian organizations.

The Matawan Woman's Club, organized in 1915 at the home of Mrs. P. J. Devlin, has a membership of about 140. Mrs. Charles E. Hunt is president. Its activities are conducted through four departments: civic affairs, fine arts, home and garden. The garden department conducts an annual flower mart in May. The club led in the park movement in Matawan and has taken a prominent part in all campaigns for civic betterment.

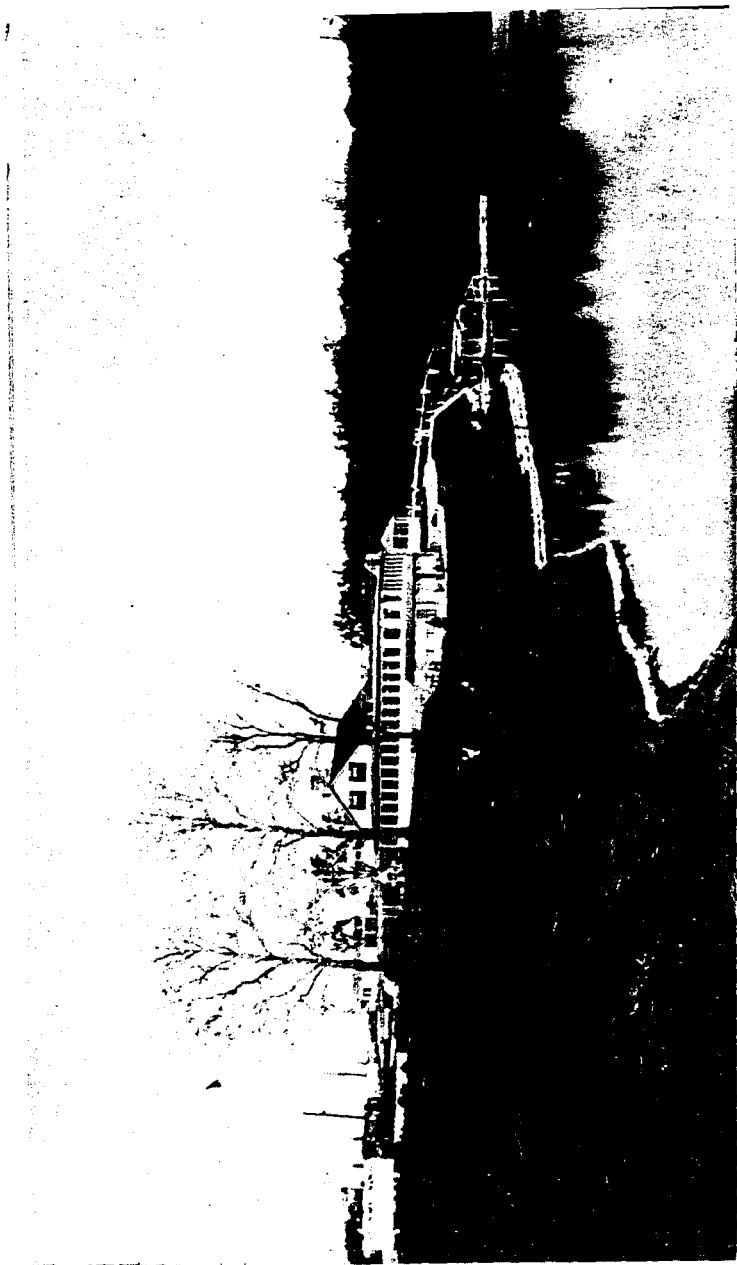
Matawan Post of the American Legion received its charter in 1919. There are 175 members. Adiel Strang is commander. Connected with the post are the American Legion Auxiliary, organized 1923, 60 members, Mrs. James Martin, president; the Junior American Legion Auxiliary, organized 1936, 22 members, Miss Maro Watson, president; and the Sons of American Legion Squadron of Matawan Post, organized 1936, 32 members, Harold Martin, captain.

Knickerbocker Lodge, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, oldest lodge chapter in Matawan, was founded in 1847. Harold Disbrow is the present noble grand. William Hyer, Sr., heads White Oak Camp of Woodmen of the World, which was organized in 1889 and has 184 members. Columbia Council, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, organized in 1896, has a membership of 146. J. Franklin Dominick is councilor.

There are 165 members of Matawan Masonic Lodge, organized in 1910. Irving A. Gemmell is worshipful master. Trinity Masonic Lodge, the first to be chartered in Middletown Point, began functioning in 1807 with John Mott as first master, but disbanded less than 10 years later. Aberdeen Lodge was chartered in 1868; Judson G. Shackleton was the first master. Finally, with only five paid-up members left, the charter was forfeited in 1878. It is an unusual fact that these same five members helped establish the present lodge 32 years later.

Sirius Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, organized 1920, has 136 members; Mrs. Grace Lines is worthy matron. Olive Branch Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, organized in 1904, has 40 members. Louis Becker is master.

Thirty sportsmen banded together in 1934 to form the Algonquin Rod and Gun Club. John Marz, Jr., of Cliffwood, is president. The Matawan Glee Club, started in 1933, has 12 members. The club gives about six programs annually in Matawan or vicinity. H. M. Munson is the director.



*Buttonwood Manor on the Shore of Lake Lefferts.*

The Matawan Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1887, has had no president for 2 years. Although the office was filled at elections in 1934 and 1935, the presidents-elect declined to serve. The group of 18 members meets monthly with three vice-presidents, representing the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist churches, available for the chair. Since repeal the organization has conducted no public campaign for the return of prohibition.

The Parent-Teacher Association, organized in 1932, has rapidly grown to a membership of 100. Mrs. Warren Donnell heads the organization.

The only Negro woman's organization is the Phyllis Wheatley Club of which Mrs. Reubin Simmons is president. It was formed in 1929 and has 23 members.

Young women of Matawan have two clubs: the Junior Woman's Club, which was organized in 1923, has a membership of 28 and is headed by Miss Madeline Egan; and the Young Woman's League, formed in 1935. Miss Joan LeFavre is president of the league, which has 25 members.

The club which was for years the most active of all in Matawan and which excited the greatest interest throughout the community, is no longer in existence. This was an organization of domino players, active from about 1900 to 1920. Matawan, long a domino-playing town, saw this diversion reach a climax about 30 years ago in a feverish tournament which lasted all of one winter and set a record of 1,200 games.

This was a competition between 10 Matawan and 10 Marlboro Town-ship men, nearly all between 60 and 80 years old, who met once a week during that winter for all-night games. When 1,200 games had been

*Conover House, 58 Edgemere Drive, a Modern Home.*



played the score was tied; spring was coming and the Marlboro contestants declared they must get to their plowing. To decide the winner one player from each side was picked for one game. Marlboro Township won. With nearly all of the players dead this tournament has become almost legendary in Matawan.

The popularity of dominoes is credited by older Matawan residents to the fact that at the turn of the twentieth century card-playing was still regarded as a snare of the devil whereas even the most hell-fearing preacher admitted that there could be no harm in dominoes provided, of course, that no money was involved, and it is said there was never a penny in bets on any of the games—at least among the players themselves.

Persons from various parts of Monmouth County came to Washington Hall to witness the annual spring dramatic shows presented by the Matawan Literary Society, founded in 1869 and active until Jan. 30, 1919. The first program, presented March 9, 1870, included a New York band, president's address, "Pearls of Thought," a poem, dramatic readings, pantomime and a play. William V. Simpson was the first and last president of the organization. Members included 14 lawyers, 9 doctors, 4 ministers, 1 missionary, 53 teachers, 4 newspaper writers and the premier of Canada.

## **FIREFIGHTERS AND FIRES**

Matawan was the first town in Monmouth County to organize a volunteer fire company (bucket brigades excepted). Washington Engine Company was formed in 1869. This was the first regular fire-fighting unit in Matawan. Eight years later, in 1877, a second company was organized with a membership of 38 men and was named the Matawan Hook and Ladder Company.

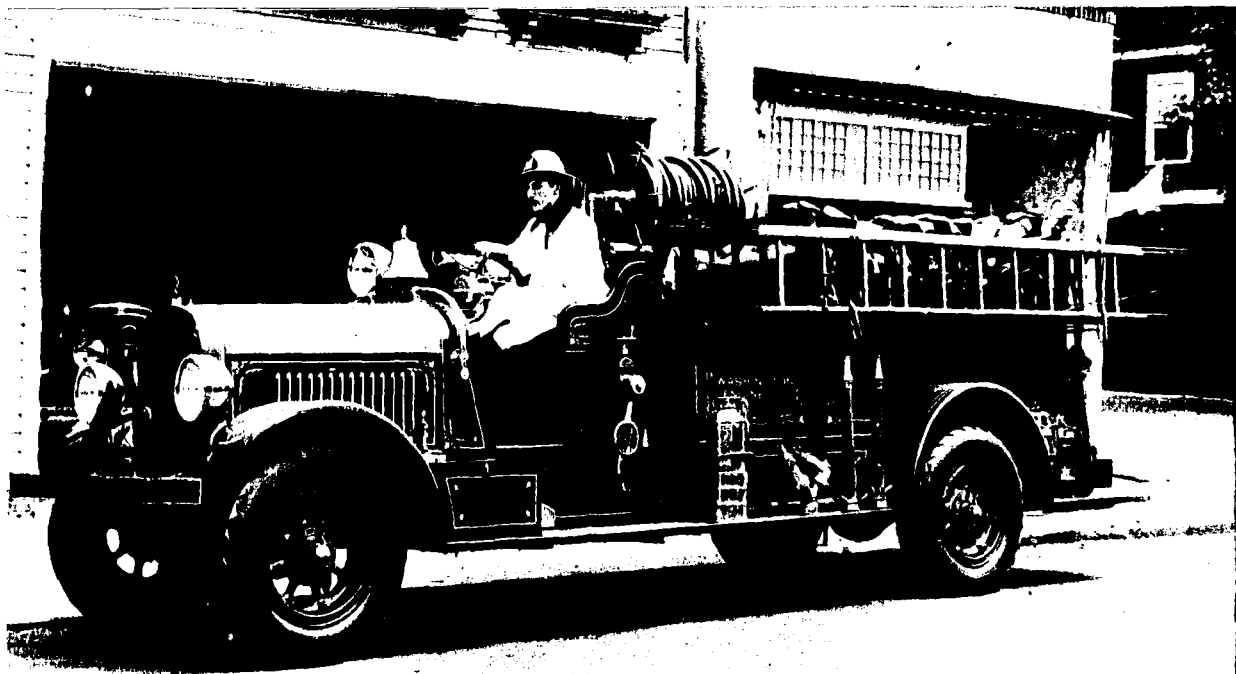
In 1903, two years after the big fire, M. E. Haley Hose Company joined the list of fire companies. Midway Hose Company was also organized in that year. A first aid squad was formed by the Matawan fire department in 1934.

The Freneau Independent Fire Company, formed in 1912, is now unofficially a part of the Matawan fire department, since the Freneau section of Matawan Township has been annexed by the borough.

Serving Matawan Township today are Matawan Township Hose and Chemical Company of Oak Shades and Cliffwood Volunteer Fire Company.

In the early days the equipment of the Matawan fire companies was the envy of nearby towns, according to newspaper writers of the period. We are told that "many a slur was hurled at the apparatus and the laddies"





*1936 Version of Fire-fighting Apparatus, Manned by Washington Engine Company No. 1.*

when a new engine for Washington Engine Company was unloaded from a boat at Keyport. There was better feeling between the two towns after the Matawan firemen responded to a call to the great fire in Keyport in 1878.

When a conflagration threatened to destroy the town of South Amboy in 1890, a locomotive and flat car were sent to Matawan to get the engine and men of the hook and ladder company. Word was sent in advance to have the fire engine ready to load on the flat car. So smoothly were the plans carried out that the firemen and equipment reached the scene of the fire, 8 miles away, within 20 minutes. In those days Keyport, South Amboy and Freehold were without regular fire companies of their own.

The most disastrous fire in Matawan's history destroyed a block of six buildings, the major part of the business district of the town, in the early morning of Jan. 27, 1901. The loss was above \$100,000. Incendiaries were blamed for starting the blaze in the business section, and when fires broke out in other sections of the town a "reign of terror" ensued. A highly colored account from an out-of-town newspaper says "women wept and prayed in the streets while men armed themselves with shotguns and patrolled in front of their properties."

The fire destroyed the entire row of business buildings on the west side of Main Street between Spring and Summit Streets, including the Odd Fellows Hall, just across Summit on Main Street. Housed in the old opera house, it was the last building to be burned.

Keyport returned the help given in its fire of 1878 by sending men and equipment to Matawan. They arrived at the fire just at the moment when the only fire engine in Matawan broke down.

William A. Rodgers, borough clerk of Matawan, was the hero of the fire. He was then, as now, secretary of Knickerbocker Lodge of the Odd Fellows. When the building in which the lodge rooms were situated caught fire, Rodgers risked his life to run in and save the original charter of the lodge, issued in 1847. Mr. Rodgers, incidentally, is the oldest borough clerk in New Jersey in years of continual service. He has served 50 years.

Until recent years the fire companies of Matawan Borough were supported by fairs and other public entertainments staged by the members. They are now supported entirely by borough appropriations.

Matawan Township fire companies are maintained partly by grants from the township committee and partly by receipts from carnivals and other affairs sponsored by the companies.

## INDUSTRY

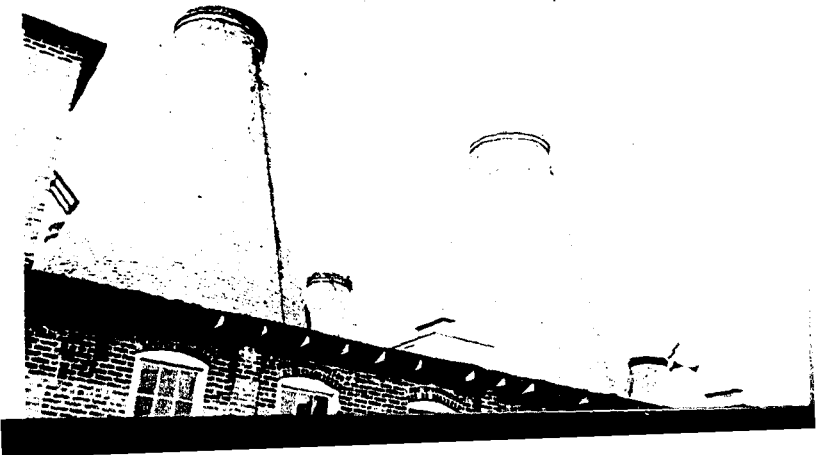
Electro-plating equipment and tiles are the chief industrial products of Matawan. Spurs of the Central Railroad of New Jersey serve the factories, in contrast with the wagons and sloops of generations ago.

The Hanson-Van Winkle-Munning Company, situated on Church Street and amalgamated in 1911, is said to be the world's largest manufacturer of electro-plating equipment and supplies. The Matawan plant, occupying 150,000 square feet of floor space, has about 300 employees, including office help. It is the largest industry of borough and township. The corporate tree is somewhat complex. The local predecessor was the Levett Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1909, which manufactured nickel-plating supplies for a short time and went bankrupt. In 1911 the assets of this company were taken over by the Munning-Loeb Company, which later became known as the A. P. Munning Company. Competitors' plants were absorbed in 1927, when the present corporate name was adopted. One of the competitors was the Abraham Van Winkle Company of Newark, founded in 1820 and the oldest electro-plating concern in the country. The Hanson-Van Winkle-Munning Company has other plants in the United States and an affiliate in Kobe, Japan.

The Matawan Tile Company, 32 Main Street, established in 1902, has 60 employees at present. Its tile was used in the construction of the Boston subway system, in the shower rooms of the new Rutgers University gymnasium in New Brunswick and in the swimming pools on Dollar Line steamers.

The Mosaic Tile Company, situated at Elm Street and Atlantic Avenue, has been shut down since 1932 but will resume operations this fall (1936) with from 80 to 100 workers. This company entered Matawan in

*Matawan Tile Company Kilns Raise Their Snouts Skyward.*





*Grapes on the Judson S. Reid Farm, Valley Drive*

1919 from Zanesville, Ohio, through purchase of the Atlantic Tile Manufacturing Company plant, established in 1910. It furnished the tile used in the construction of the Eighth Avenue (Independent) Subway in New York City.

Wooden barrels are manufactured by the Muehlhausen Cooperage on Harrison Avenue. This firm was established in 1925, has 35 employees, and supplies barrels to the largest chemical companies in the United States (E. I. du Pont de Nemours, American Cyanamid) and to soap and food products corporations.

The Frank Anderson basket factory on Atlantic Avenue, established in 1908, makes baskets and tomato and berry crates, principally for the

home market in Monmouth County. It employs 20 workers when operating full-time during the summer months. In the winter the factory operates with a reduced staff, supplying baskets to greenhouses.

The Matawan plant of the National Lead Company on Lloyd Avenue is closed at present.

The historic Matawan sawmill, operated until 1920 by the firm of Cartan and Devlin, was recently dismantled. Rafts of logs were purchased as far away as Chesapeake Bay and towed to the sawmill which stood on Matawan Creek at the site of the former dock and landing. The company has continued in business with a lumber and fuel yard and a feed store.

The Dunlop and Lisk Pottery Company, 27 Washington Street, is the oldest business in Matawan. The firm was established in 1852 and has operated continuously since. Until recent years the company manufactured stoneware, flower pots and drain tile but it is now a wholesale house. The firm of Hutchinson, Inc., of Johnson Avenue, is a wholesaler of plumbing and heating equipment.

In the past the industrial products of Matawan have included pianos, piano boards, glaze fruit, rice flakes, iron castings, carriages, harness, chemicals, canned vegetables, catsup and tar products. During 1917 and 1918 a factory which made tree nails cut from locust wood, used in the construction of wooden vessels for the United States Shipping Board fleet, was in operation.

There are no local branches of trade unions, although there are many individual workers who carry union cards, including several members of the International Typographical Union. The town is virtually 100 per cent open shop.

There have been few strikes in the history of Matawan, most of them being of spontaneous origin without the direction of any labor organization. More than 20 years ago some of the brick-yard workers walked out with a demand for monthly pay days instead of seasonal pay-offs. A strike of 40 molders at the piano plate factory in 1913 was described in eight and one-half lines in the *Matawan Journal*. Perhaps the last strike was one of seven men at the Cliffwood Brick Company, who quit work in 1916 when an increase of 12½ cents a day was refused. The strike was lost after one day.

There are two banks in Matawan: Farmers and Merchants National Bank (oldest in Monmouth County, chartered in 1830) and The Matawan Bank, established in 1915.

The *Matawan Journal*, only newspaper in the town, is published every Thursday by the Brown Publishing and Printing Company. The paper was founded in 1869 by David A. Bell who published it until 1890. In that year it was purchased by Benjamin F. S. Brown, who published it until his death in 1920. He was succeeded by Miss J. Mabel Brown, his daughter, who also publishes the *Keyport Weekly*. Miss Bernice W. Brown,

another daughter, is secretary of the company, and Adrian Ely Mount is managing editor of both newspapers.

An estimate of Matawan Borough's importance as a trading center may be obtained from the following list compiled in August, 1936, of business establishments within its boundaries:

Automobile sales agencies.....	4	Highway diners .....	1
Bakeries .....	1	Inns and restaurants.....	6
Banks .....	2	Jewelry stores .....	1
Barber shops .....	4	Laundries .....	2
Beauty shops .....	3	Lunchrooms .....	3
Blacksmith shops .....	1	Meat markets .....	3
Building loan associations.....	3	Motion picture theaters.....	1
Building supplies, coal.....	1	Photographic studios .....	1
Coal and ice.....	1	Plumbing and heating (whsl.).....	1
Confectioneries .....	4	Printing shops .....	2
Dairies .....	2	Real estate offices.....	11
Department stores .....	2	Refreshment stands .....	3
Drug stores .....	2	Service stations .....	8
Drygoods stores .....	1	Shoe repair shops.....	3
Electrical appliance stores .....	2	Tailors .....	2
Five- and ten-cent stores.....	1	Taverns .....	8
Garages .....	4	Undertakers .....	1
General stores .....	1	Used furniture stores.....	2
Groceries (chain).....	5	Watch repair shops.....	1
Groceries (independent) .....	7		
Hardware stores .....	3	Total.....	111

## AGRICULTURE

Crops produced in the Matawan-Keyport area have for years been recognized on the market and by consumers as having outstanding quality. The soil is largely sassafras sand, with some small areas of loam. It is well drained, warm and early enough to ripen crops from one to two weeks ahead of other sections. Truck crops, especially the early market garden crops such as tomatoes, peppers, sweet potatoes, peas, melons, cucumbers, and sweet corn grow especially well.

Men still talk of the quality of cantaloupes and tomatoes grown in the Matawan area 30 to 40 years ago and sold in New York. During the past few years much of the land has been taken over by Italian farmers. Many are high class producers who pride themselves on putting up the grade and pack that maintains the old time reputation.

Apple trees of the earlier varieties are scattered throughout the section, bringing prices which compare with those received anywhere else in the State. While there is as yet no large acreage of grapes, there are many

*Main Street, 1936, Looking North.*



producers with from one-half to one and one-half acres. Part of this is used for wine, especially that produced by the Italians. The remainder is sold in small baskets to the consumer either from roadside markets or at the Newark Market.

Monmouth County is known for its outstanding farm poultry flocks, with larger specialized poultry plants of from 2,000 to 4,000 layers. The Matawan area has its share of both types and the high quality eggs find a ready market from roadside stands. The Marcy farm on US 9 is known for its black Jersey giants. Two other important products of the area are dahlias and gladioluses, which are grown in commercial quantities.

Produce grown in this area is marketed in Newark and New York, as well as from roadside stands. Most stand owners can boast of having the same buyers come back year after year. Farms range in size from 15 to 75 acres, a few being larger. Family workers in many instances take care of all operations except in the busy harvest season.

Changes in transportation during the past 30 years have perhaps even exceeded those which have taken place in crops and methods. From 1910 to 1918 as many as 50 to 75 carloads of vegetables and fruits were moved each day from Hazlet and Freneau stations. Now all of the producers have changed from railroads to trucks, using either commercial trucking companies or their own equipment.

The county agricultural agent, Elwood Douglass, has predicted for years that this particular area will be one of the last in the State to go out of vegetable production. Only the increased value of the land, making it suitable for real estate development, would end farming operations.

*Dawn of the Motor Age on Main Street.*







*Eaves of the Hawkins House, Oldest in Matawan.*

## HISTORIC HOUSES

### THE HAWKINS HOUSE

The house now owned by Mrs. Marion Hawkins stands on the north side of Mill Road about 200 yards east of State 4 on lot No. 8 of the original grants. The side facing the present road has been severely altered but the rear of the building is in its original condition, with great Dutch overhanging eaves, original siding and sash of ancient glass in wood-doweled frames. The mullions are unusually heavy—over an inch in width.

In character the building strongly resembles the Sip Manor House, formerly in Jersey City (1664), and the Demarest House in Riveredge (1680). Many interior details as well would seem to place the date of construction as prior to 1700, making it the oldest house in the township.

Before remodeling, the house contained a hall running from front to back with entrances at both sides and four rooms opening from it. Interior partitions were unplastered and formed of vertically placed boards of uniform thickness and widths up to 14 inches. Floor joists were added to about 4 by 6 inches and spaced about 4 feet apart. One of the original interior doors still remains with its original hardware.

First recorded occupants of the house were Major Thomas Hunn and his wife, Phoebe, who operated it as a tavern during and after the Revolution. Unauthenticated rumor states that it was used as a hospital during the war.

## THE BURROWES MANSION

The Burrowes Mansion at 94 Main Street was the scene of a Revolutionary War episode when the young wife of Major John J. Burrowes, Jr., defied invading British troops.

Before the Revolution, the house was bought by John Burrowes, Sr., who engaged in the grain and produce business with John Watson at warehouses which stood behind the mansion on Matawan Creek. Burrowes soon became the "Corn King," and when Watson died he married the widow, Hope. Their son, John, one of seven children, married Margaret Forman, a sister of Mrs. Philip Freneau, and despite the handicap of a deformed foot, became a gallant soldier.

With the outbreak of the war, young Burrowes and his brother-in-law, John Forman, organized the First New Jersey Company, mustering the contingent in the garden of the mansion. On one of Major Burrowes' visits home, the Taylors and other Tory families plotted to capture him. With a party of "Greens" from Staten Island, they broke in the door and were met by his young wife clad in a nightgown and shawl, standing on the stairs.

"What do you want?" she asked. The situation caused an awkward silence to fall on the group. Finally an evasive reply from the spokesman for the mob:

"Your shawl to bind the wound of one of our men shot in the fracas outside."

"You'll not get my shawl or anything else here to aid a British subject," she replied defiantly.

The man seized the shawl and struck her across the breast with the hilt of his sabre, causing a wound which affected her health for many

*The Burrowes House, Built in 1723.*



years and eventually caused her death. With guns and pistols the mob raced through the house in search of their quarry, only to discover that the young major had escaped by a rear window during the few moments' delay. In wrath and indignation they carried off John Burrowes, Sr., who was incarcerated in a prison ship for several months.

In retaliation, Dr. Henderson, a son-in-law of Burrowes, hastened to Middletown and captured a loyalist, Mr. Taylor. Subsequently, an exchange was effected.

Soon after the war, Major Burrowes was drowned. In 1781, the elder Burrowes became sheriff of Monmouth County, remaining in office until his death in 1785.

During the next 100 years the house changed hands several times. More than once it served as an inn, being known in 1851 as Steamboat Hotel. The street next to the mansion is still known as Steamboat Alley, one of Matawan's most colorful names. The house was at one time occupied by a Negro clergyman.

Near the end of the nineteenth century Dr. Aaron Pitman, a dentist, was the owner of the property, which gained the name, "Pitman House." Acquired in 1904 by Benjamin F. S. Brown, publisher, it was given to his children upon his death in 1920 and is now owned by them. It is used by Mrs. Thora Thomsen for her Colonial Tea House.

The mansion, erected in 1723 by John Bowne, is said to be of his own design and construction. The original building was approximately 30 feet square, finished on the exterior with hand-split, round-cut shingles, and on the interior with unusually elaborate woodwork. There is something about the proportioning of the arch in the entrance hall and the stairway that suggests the work of shipwrights, but the mantel in the living room, a later addition, is of graceful design and most delicate hand-carving, one of the best examples of work of the locality. Many additions and alterations have been made to the building since its erection.

### "THE OLD HOSPITAL"

We do not know when the Old Hospital was built. It stands on Ravine Drive at the corner of Wyckoff Street, overlooking the creek, where passed much of the traffic of olden times.

During the Revolution it was occupied by Samuel Forman and his wife, Helen Denise. They had reared a large family of four sons, who became officers in the Continental Army, and three daughters, two of whom married officers. The third, Eleanor, married Philip Freneau. Their fourth son, David, who became a general, was so violent in his dislike for Tories that he was known as "Black David."

The home was turned into a hospital for the Continentals and has since been known by its present name.

Architecturally there is little left of the original building as it must have been a century and a half ago, but historically its interest is great to the community.

#### CHERRY HALL

The fine old Colonial brick building which stands at 211 Main Street, and is now the home of Warren B. Hutchinson, was built in 1836 by Garret P. Conover and is a beautiful example of fully developed Georgian architecture. Bricks for the building were made locally from clay from the Terhune Park gully. The particularly delicate mouldings and dentils of the cornice and the unornamented frieze band, all extremely simple in character and perfectly proportioned, are worthy of note. The gables, too, are most pleasing. The porch at the entrance door is a more recent addition to the facade.

Life at Cherry Hall was romantic and informal a century ago and gave inspiration to the children that lasted throughout their lives.

#### THE VAN PELT HOUSE

Now located on State 4, a short distance from the south line of the borough, stands a charming little farm house, built about 1810, and twice moved before settling down in its present position. It is now owned and occupied by Walter D. Brown. A great beam in the old barn is carved with the initials of two Van Pelt brothers and the date.

The older portions of the house have been added to, but nothing has been lost in the effect of the whole. It is surprisingly reminiscent of Long Island work of 150 years ago, with its shingle siding, low eaves and long sloping pent roof at the rear. In the summer months it is nearly hidden from the road, and is best seen when the foliage is off the trees.

#### THE VOORHEES HOUSE

About 100 years ago, residents called this house "Potter's Folly"—and no wonder. An inspection of the beautiful carvings and excellent workmanship proves that the building must have been costly. Potter is reported to have left town soon after building it. Some reports say it was built in 1830, others as late as 1838.

William Parker, principal of Middletown Point Academy, acquired the house in 1844 and boarded students there until about 1856. Dr. Alfred B. Dayton, a prominent physician, bought the property about a year later. Since 1907 the house has belonged to Mrs. James E. Voorhees, a direct descendant of Thomas Warne, who occupies it with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Neidlinger.

The massive 22-room structure has clinging ivy on the brick wall on either side. Two maple trees shade the entrance to the walk. Behind the house is a spacious garden.



*Cherry Hall, Built in 1836 by Garret P. Conover.*

The house is particularly of architectural interest for the Greek revival cornice, with open scrolls set in the frieze band with triglyphs between, which should be compared with the cornice of Cherry Hall. Notice the change in taste. The delicacy has been lost and rather too monumental an effect has been created by the rigid formality of classicism. The heavy lintels over the windows, too, detract from the ease and grace of the design.

A secret compartment in the house, between the third floor and attic, is 15 feet wide and 6 feet high. In the musty room a bottle of good whisky and a hatchet were found.

## THE TERHUNE HOMESTEAD

The Terhune homestead, at the southwest corner of Ravine Drive and Main Street, has many ties with Matawan's history. It was built in 1836 by William Little, grandfather of Miss Margaret Little Terhune, the present occupant.

Mr. Little—lumber dealer, merchant, ship-owner, postmaster—was one of the town's pioneers. He founded one of the early schools and obtained a charter for the Farmers and Merchants Bank. His son, Henry Stafford Little, was president of the New Jersey State Senate, president of the Central Railroad of New Jersey and a substantial donor to Princeton University, of which he was a graduate. The banking tradition has been carried on by three grandsons, Henry S. Terhune, president of the Farmers and Merchants National Bank of Matawan; John Terhune, president of Long Branch Trust Company, and the late James L. Terhune, head of what is now the Second National Bank and Trust Company of Red Bank.

The large white house has Sheraton and Chippendale furniture and other antiques for which tempting sums have been offered and declined. A hedge surrounds the property and four English linden trees and a large elm stand in front.

The building has been considerably altered since its erection but the small windows under the eaves give a clue to its antiquity and the alterations have not affected the gracious charm of the old homestead.

*Not a Children's Playhouse, but the Public Library.*



## MOUNT PLEASANT HALL

Mount Pleasant Hall, the home of Philip Freneau, stood on what is now US 9, just seven-tenths of a mile south of the present Freneau railroad station. The house burned down in 1818 while the family was at church, but Freneau's print shop remains as a connecting wing between a newer house facing the highway and an addition to the rear. Despite its disadvantageous position the one-room shop still presents a charming picture with its tiny windows and very low ceiling.

Only 15 acres of what was once an estate of nearly 1,000 acres are left today, although the estate is said to be the largest within Matawan Borough. Known as "Poet's Dream," the farm is easily recognized by the long, straight driveway, flanked with maples.

The poet's grave is on a knoll about 100 yards southeast of the print shop, shaded by an old oak and an old locust tree, overlooking the beautiful valley and the rolling hills beyond. A monument marks the grave. Freneau's mother is buried with him and a story persists that the plot is also shared by his dog. It was a much later owner of the property, however, who buried a dog at the knoll.

Nearly every day tourists drive in to see the grave. Clarence Ware, who lives in the house now, graciously serves as guide, pointing out the grove of locust trees near the monument where Freneau is said to have written many of his poems and, incidentally, to have courted handsome Eleanor Forman, who became his wife.

Mr. Ware, an upstate New Yorker, bought the property 20 years ago because he liked the driveway, and without being aware of the important grave under the oak tree. "I didn't know anything about Freneau," he explains. "He just came with the place."

The inscription on the tombstone, headed "Poet's Grave," concludes with the lines:

*Heaven lifts its everlasting portal high,  
And bids the pure in heart behold their God.*





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