

NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NJPH



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THE INITIATION OF RURAL MAIL DELIVERY IN NEW JERSEY

R. F. D.
Moorestown,
MAY 18 1903
N. J.

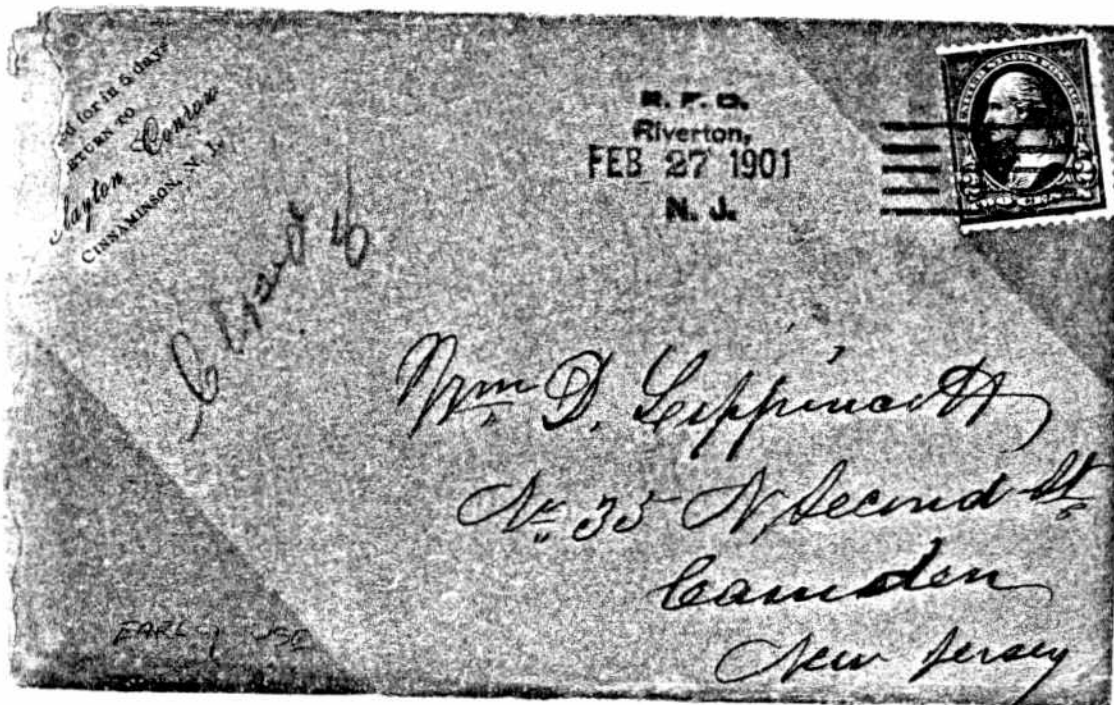


*Mary Helen James
Heston B.S.
Heston
Pa.*

"3" ROUTE

Moorestown, NJ 3 in bars

May 2, 1903



Riverton, NJ 1 in bars

February 27, 1902

the daily delivery of personal and business mail has been a welcome and routine phase of our US postal system for many years. Yet, it may be difficult as well as impossible for the majority of people living today to visualize that time, 80 years ago, when it did not exist for those homes in rural areas throughout the nation.

For example, until the mid 1890s, the rural population in New Jersey had been obliged to leave their homes and farms and travel up to several miles to post offices for their daily mail because there was no system for its delivery to them as it was to their city friends. Also, during the busy planting and harvesting seasons, these trips could not be made more frequently than once or twice a week.

In 1896, pressure from agricultural associations and many interested individuals forced the Post Office Department to recognize the rights of farmers to receive their mail daily, so Congress earmarked a small appropriation for this purpose, and the Department set in motion a powerful new catalytic force all over America. The nation was divided into certain rural components then, through a new postal system of more convenient communication. The rural population was integrated with the urban people and the result was a more unified national civilization.

This new system had developed considerable momentum by the time that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were closely contiguous and it rapidly made obsolescent the old fetch-as-fetch-can colonial postal system that rural dwellers had been forced to rely upon in previous years. Its name was RURAL FREE DELIVERY -- but that was only one-half of its full service! The first appropriation of \$40,000. was applied to establishing 82 "experimental" RFD routes in twenty-nine states to test the new system in all types of weather and road conditions. This took six months from the start on October 1, 1896. New Jersey was not represented in this initial tiny group of sources and routes, but it did receive four routes from two sources in Burlington County near the end of the next appropriation for 1897-98.

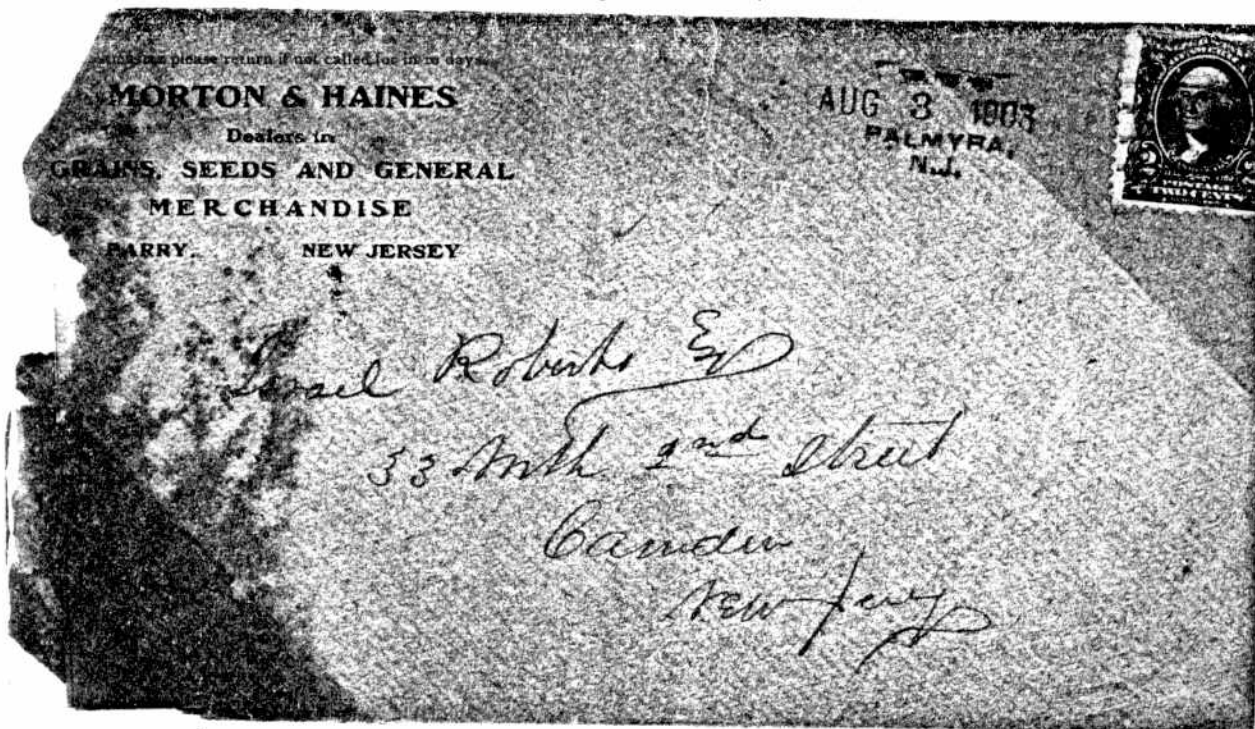
Three of these four routes were started in Moorestown on June 5, 1898 and one was at nearby Riverton on June 13, 1898. There is no clue now why

Burlington County, rather than any other predominantly agricultural one, was selected for these initial New Jersey routes. However, it must have offered certain typical rural characteristics that made it particularly suitable for this trial group. Also, it may have had a very interested and active member of Congress who sponsored the routes and worked hard to get them approved for his constituents! Major details are recorded as follows:

<u>Routes</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Established</u>	<u>People Served</u>	<u>Route Length</u>
3	Moorestown	Burlington	June 6, 1898	1840	54
1	Riverton	Burlington	June 13, 1899	750	15

The next six routes were activated from the new 1898-99 budget (in the same format as above).

1	Chatham	Morris	November 1, 1898	1375	21
1	Washington	Warren	November 1, 1898	470	20
1	Marlton	Burlington	December 1, 1898	600	20
1	Palmyra	Burlington	December 1, 1898	750	15
1	Mount Laurel	Burlington	January 1, 1899	500	23
+1	Moorestown	Burlington	April 3, 1899	500	22



Palmyra, NJ 1 in bars August 3, 1903

This must have been a replacement in Type 3 at a much later date.



Mount Laurel, NJ 1 in bars March 20, 1901

The setting up of a new route was a very detailed project carried out by an inspector assigned to the distribution office. It was his task to map the entire the route and mark on it every road and bridged stream, locations of dwellings, and the number of their residents to be served, plus the daily milage total traveled. He also required each carrier to keep accurate daily statistics about the different kinds of mail he collected and delivered (When doing research in another state on yearly records of routes, I was shown a well-annotated notebook, about 3" by 6", containing many pages of hand-written data compiled by a carrier on one route, between August and October 1897).

Also inherent in the early planning of the system had been the provision for the collection and the dispatch of rural mails and, strangely, it was the COLLECTION rather than the Delivery phase that publicized the system. This was done through the use of artful postal markings applied to the first-class mail channelled through it to recipients in other areas.

Beginning in December 1899, with the inauguration of the RFD system all over Carroll County, Maryland, the Department had furnished a type of small device for the use of each rural carrier in postmarking mail he collected for dispatch outside of his own route. Each resembled the

format of th pictured here.



This photo shows one typical device of the first two cancelling devices as used in Carroll County, Md and supplied to postmasters of the early routes in New Jersey. This was rectangular in shape, about $3\frac{1}{4}$ " long, a scant 1" wide and $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. The postmark section at the left contained hard rubber route source lettering affixed to a pressed cork foundation and a deep trench into which the carrier set the moveable rubber type for each date. The cancellation section at the right had five narrow bars with a route number bisecting the middle three in Type 1.

The handstamp was carried face down in a small brass shell with a narrow strip of black inked felt at the bottom upon which the indicia side rested when not in use. The whole duplex gadget fitted neatly into the carrier's palm when in use and was conveniently carried in his pocket at other times. Several of the earliest carriers interviewed in other states confided that they were proud of these little devices, and their reason for bringing them along was that they frequently had time to cancel their collected items for dispatch outside their routes while the horses jogged along between the boxes.

The use of the handstamp facilitated all record-keeping for the routes. It proved, too, the increases of business and justified the discontinuance of many of the smallest fourth-class offices, all indicating necessary annual increases in the RFD budget to effect further expansion of the RFD system. I have never seen one of the early New Jersey devices but am fortunate to own one in Type 3, used in my previous home town in Massachusetts.

Special Agent S.O. Edison, in charge of the early New Jersey routes, made a typical report on September 18, 1899 to Hon. Perry S. Heath, Postmaster General, as follows: "I have only inspected routes previously established. These I found running in a systematic order and giving perfect satisfaction to the patrons. Since their establishment the first- and second-class mail matter has greatly increased and has become the means of bringing the farmers on the routes in closer communication with the outside world."

The next inevitable result was the Postmaster General's Order No. 875, effective August 1, 1900, that "Rural carriers are authorized and required to cancel stamps on all letters collected by them, whether intended for delivery on the routes or for mailing from a collecting office." Thus, cancellation devices were made and distributed to every carrier of existing routes and to those activated in the future. It is now apparent that postal markings for the earliest New Jersey routes listed above will exist from mid-summer 1900 and in the same format as those in the Carroll County Plan shown above.

These are characterized as Type-1. The postmark section at the left has initials R.F.D in caps on the top line. The name of the route's source is in Upper and Lower case type below it with the full date and the state designation on the bottom two lines. The cancellation section has five thin lines with the route number bisecting the middle three. Both sections are completely unbordered.

Meanwhile, the following small group of three routes had been activated from three offices between July 1, 1899 and July 1, 1900:

1	Delaware	Warren	August 1, 1899	2470	20
1	Newton	Sussex	May 1, 1900	700	25
+1	Riverton	Burlington	March 1, 1900	900	18

It was a hectic few months after Order 875 was placed in operation to get a pending group of routes approved and operative either with a Type-1 device or those of a new format known as Type-2. The first revision was to show the route name in all caps lettering but with the initial letter larger than all the rest. My specimen is for Vincentown for a much later date of January 9, 1904 -- probably for route 2 with a five-bar cancellation in Type-2. The major revision tested and highly approved was to show the name in all caps of the same size. This provided much better visibility. The cancellation section continued to use the five-bar and route format.

3	Burlington	Burlington	October 1, 1900	2024	60
1	Camden	Camden	October 1, 1900	769	23
+1	Marlton	Burlington	October 15, 1900	456	20
4	Medford	Burlington	November 1, 1900	2113	83
5	New Brunswick	Middlesex	September 15, 1900	3176	108
1	Phillipsburg	Warren	October 15, 1900	508	18
1	Pittstown	Hunterdon	November 1, 1900	660	22
1	Stewartsville	Warren	November 1, 1900	618	23
4	Vineland	Cumberland	December 1, 1900)		
			January 2, 1901)	3252	87

R.F.D.
VINCENTOWN,
JAN 9 1904
N. J.

R.F.D.
PHILLIPSBURG,
MAR 21 1902
N. J.

R.F.D.
MEDFORD,
NOV 23 1900
N. J.

R.F.D.
CRANBURY,
FEB 13 1902
N. J.



Cranbury, NJ 3 in bars

R.F.D.
RIVERSIDE,
MAR 18 1902
N. J.



Riverside, NJ 1 in bars

Sewell, NJ 1 in bars

R.F.D.
SEWELL,
DEC 2 1902
N. J.



R.F.D.
VINELAND,
SEP 5 1903
N. J.

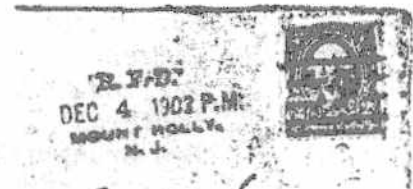
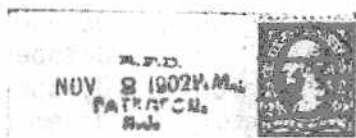
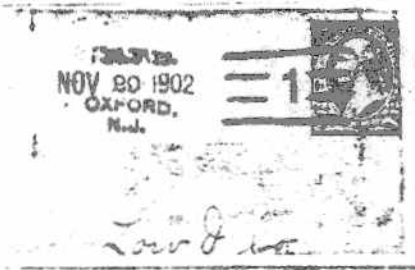


L. H. & H. Chapman,
1348 Pine St.,
Philadelphia Pa.

Vineland, NJ 1 in bars

All illustrations one-third actual size.

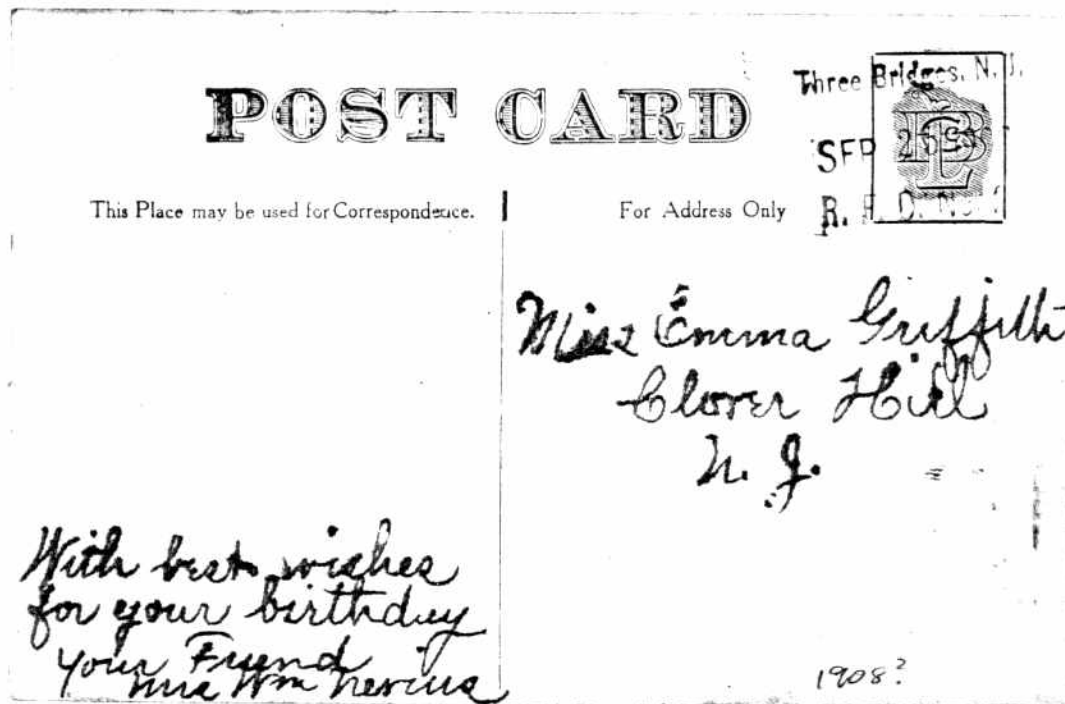
The final alteration in the official RFD format is identified as Type-3 for the many new routes started between January 1902 and July 1, 1903, and as necessary replacements for the weary ones in Type-1 and Type-2. The route's source name continued : as all caps but it was placed below the dateline but above the state designation and the canceller bars were reduced from five thin to four thicker ones. Several more counties -- Gloucester, Monmouth, Passaic, Salem, and Somerset -- were evident as locations of these new routes.



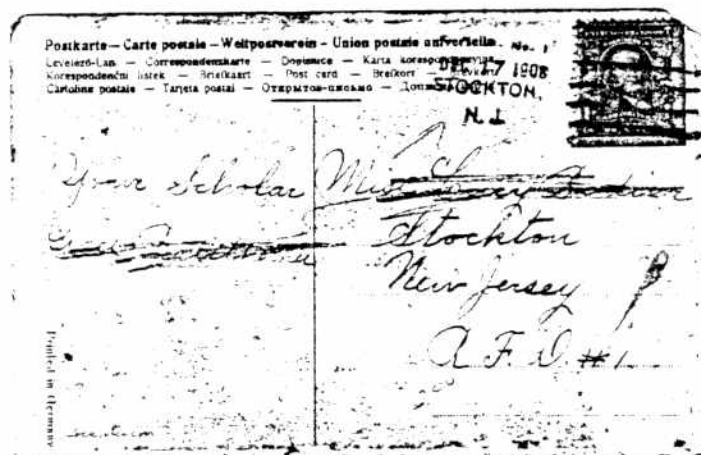
A change in the time designation in some of the Type-3 markings was the addition of either "AM" or "PM".

On May 9, 1903, the responsibility for the RFD program was moved from the First Assistant PMG to the Fourth Assistant PMG. He initiated several changes in policies, one of the most important of which for postal historians was that, as of about July 1, 1903, no more official devices were to be supplied to rural carriers for the cancelling of mail collected for dispatch from their distributing offices. This ruling applied to new routes and to replacements of earlier devices, for whatever reason.

This latter phase produced an entirely unexpected result. The RFD system was held in such high esteem by some postmasters that, for a few years after the cutoff date, some permitted the use of their Type-3 devices while others obtained devices in many styles and formats from local sources without official approval. These are classified as Type-0, for Oddity, even though they represented truly official routes; their value is questionable.



Three Bridges NJ R.F.D. No. 1 Type 0



Stockton, NJ December 17, 1908 1 in bars
Illustration is one-third actual size.

ARTHUR HAINES,
DEALER IN
Groceries, Paints, Oils, Glass, Brushes,
GENERAL MERCHANDISE,
TABERNACLE, N. J.

R. F. D.
MEDFORD,
MAY 21 1901
N. J.



Winters & Samuel O. Allen
Tabernacle
New Jersey

Route 2

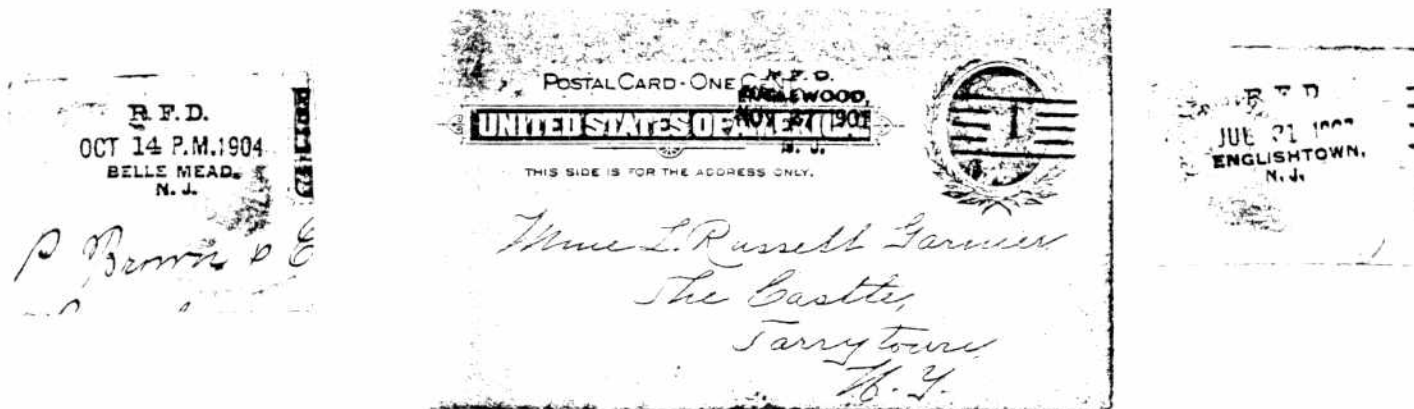
To Open Pull Either Wire

R. F. D.
DELAWARE
NOV 4 1901
N. J.



Mrs. Lura U. Miller
Johnsboro
Pa.

How well we know that many earlier collectors of postal markings cut off the cancellation section and retained only that of the postmark. Of course, that still is proof that a route was established, but which of several is usually uncertain. Several of the illustrations in this article are of this variety; here is a potpourri of additional markings, mostly incomplete, some of them showing quite late dates of use.



Englewood, NJ November 27, 1901 1 in bars

Rural Free Delivery
Wagon Used at
Englewood about
1905.

Rural Free
Delivery
Wagon
used at
Englewood
about 1905



All illustrations are
one-third actual size.

By June 30, 1902, 184 petitions for new routes had been filed with the Post Office Department. Of these, 136 had been approved and were in operation. By December 1, 1904, another 30 routes had been started, making a total of 166 from 90 New Jersey post offices. If you have a 1905 POST OFFICE GUIDE, look in that state's listing and you will see small numbers following some post office names. se refer to the number of RFD routes functioning from there as of December 1, 1904; however, postal markings will not exist from all of them. It is not surprising that Burlington County maintained its leadership for the largest number of routes, while

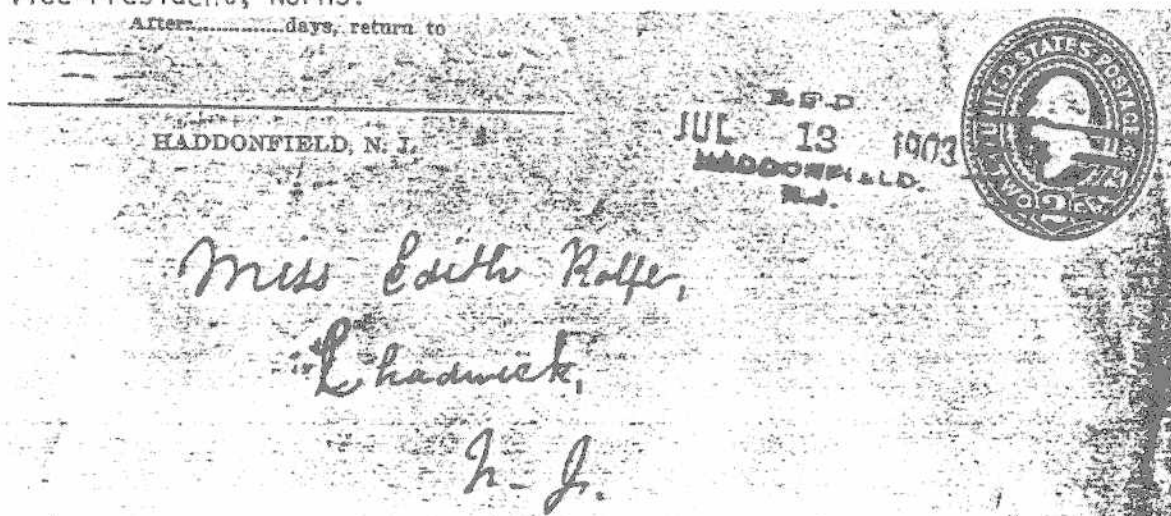
the honor for the highest number of routes from a single post office went to New Brunswick in Middlesex County, where five routes operated. Only Hudson and Atlantic Counties, of New Jersey's 21, did not have routes in this early period.

The social and economic changes that resulted from the efficient functioning of this infant branch of the postal system were prompt, manifold, and permanent. The flow of population to farm areas increased noticeably, but postal communication could hardly keep up with it. Roads and transportation were greatly improved. The price of farm land increased as it was made to produce in ever larger quantities the food so essential to an expanding nation. Newspaper and magazine circulations shot upwards, and farm families found the time to read, enjoy, and learn from them. Mail order catalogs were eagerly accepted for news of equipment, furnishings, and clothing to make farm living more productive, comfortable, and enjoyable. The 'communication circle' was completed when the rural carriers delivered the items that had been ordered from the catalogs they had delivered in the first place. The permanent benefits that the initiation of the RFD system brought to New Jersey have been significant.

-Edith R. Doane-

Acknowledgements:

The data presented in the Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, January 1959 are reprinted here by permission. Many of the covers illustrated here are presented through the courtesy of William C. Coles, Jr, Vice-President, NJPHS.



REVIEW OF PRICES REALIZED IN RECENT SALES

William A. Fox had in his sale of May 9, 1978 147 lots of New Jersey covers including stampless with manuscript markings as well as those with handstamp strikes, a number with cancellations on various stamps, a number of patriotics, express covers, and railroad items.

Prices, in general, reflected the demand for New Jersey items. Listed below are a few selections with the prices realized, some showing listings in the recently republished American Stampless Cover Catalog.

Lawrenceville s/l 36 x 2 (cat. \$50.) realized \$30., another Lawrenceville s/l 33½ x 2 (50) brought 32.50. Suckasunny in red s/l (100) at 32.50 with weak strike (as always). An Amboy oval (20) brought 26 while a black Bridgetown oval (35) went for 26. A Stanhope oval in red (40) at 42.50. One of the highlights was a negative Haddonfield (150+) realized 180. A Flemington oval listed at 30 brought just 30.

Many lots had two or more items so that it is difficult to compare with the catalog, but all seemed to have brought satisfactory prices. Some few single items were German Valley red circle (50) went for 70, a Hammonton balloon (35) at 47.50, a Lawrenceville rimless (30) at 37.50, Middletown Point, Monmouth Co. N.J. (150+) at 110.

The surprise item was an N.B. (New Brunswick) 1796 (250+) which brought 550., while a frameless New Brunswick with outline letters (35) went at 60. A Princeton green circle with a green boxed 5 (10) surprised at 60. Two Schooleys Mountain (35) brought 40 and 60. A Shrewsbury in green (20) at 35.

Ten items of Patriotics and campaign covers went from 28 to 400. A Hackney & Bolton Penny Post properly used went at 1200.

In the manuscript lots, a Burlington of 1798 forwarded went for 95, a Waterford Works 1845 at 17, Roadstown at 18. A Six Mile Run cover brought 50 while a Woodstown with Way marking went at 16. In all, there were 26 lots with one particular cover pushing up the lot value. Lot 27 with mss. "Canal Service" and "Agent at Frenchtown (N.J.) please forward it" carried to Bucks County Pa, 'a rare Canal cover' brought 62.50.

Also, a "New Brunswick Canal & Steamboat Transportation Co." printed letterhead postmarked Philadelphia at 47.50 and a "Regular Steamboat Line between Phila. & Hartford, via Delaware & Raritan Canal" printed letterhead mss. Glassboro NJ brought 35.

-William C. Coles, Jr.

-0-

NJPHS AT SOJEX 1978

Vice President Gerry Neufeld opened the Spring meeting with six members and two guests present. After a reading of the minutes from the Fall 1977 meeting, without comment from the floor, Mr. Neufeld reported on publicity activities. Three releases have been sent out. The Secretary-Treasurer reported that our bank account stood at \$423.08, with a forecasted end-of-year position at about \$225.

Approval was given to become an affiliate member of NOJEX (\$1. per annum) commencing July 1, 1978. This will provide additional publicity for NJPHS but no additional services from the North Jersey Federation. NJPHS will participate in Batsto Day to be held on the first Sunday in September.

A suggestion to have logo lapel pins and charms made was not pursued when it became apparent that these could cost about \$2.50 each in lots of 200. A NJPHS award had not been requested by SOJEX, although there were four NJ postal history entries. It was proposed that future awards could be a piece of New Jersey-manufactured Lennox china. The members agreed to continue NJPHS awards at major NJ shows with three or more NJ postal history entries. A discussion of the newly republished American Stampless Cover Catalog provoked the observation that it would be nice to be able to purchase NJ covers at the prices therein, at least on a retail basis. The consensus indicated that it was impossible to do so in the northeastern part of the United States.

The meeting concluded with members returning to view the New Jersey exhibits again.

The Fall meeting will be held at NOJEX, on Sunday, October 29, 1978.

- Mark W. Swetland, Secretary -

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CRANBURY UPDATE

Since the publication of a Cranbury, NJ postal history review in Vol. I, No. 1 back in 1972, several developments have occurred worthy of note.

In 1971, the post office was removed to a new building at 65 N. Main St., with 5000 sq. ft of space. There are 7 city routes, 2 rural routes and 23 employees. The 1977 revenue was \$850,000. The present postmaster followed Wayne Stahl, 19 March 1974. Originally Mary Liedtke, she became Mary Moore on 5 March 1976, with her marriage to the postmaster of nearby Bordentown, NJ, making this possibly a unique man and wife situation, where each is a US postmaster.



- Vic Engstrom-

New Jersey Postal History

1771-1900

We go it

N. B. May 23

We are disposing of an extensive collection of quality New Jersey covers ranging from the Colonial era to late 19th Century. Rare early Colonials, manuscript D.P.O., Stage Coach & Canal Mail, quaker dates, Valentines, and virtually all Sampson listed Ovals or Circular datestamps can be offered. The adhesive era starts with the 1847 issue followed by an extensive selection of 1851-61 town cancels, Transatlantics, Patriotics, R.R., Fancy cancels, and many others.

This is a seldom-offered opportunity to acquire the many elusive and scarce New Jersey covers. Correspondence Invited, References Essential.



HADDONFIELD N.J.
Aug 1, 29



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