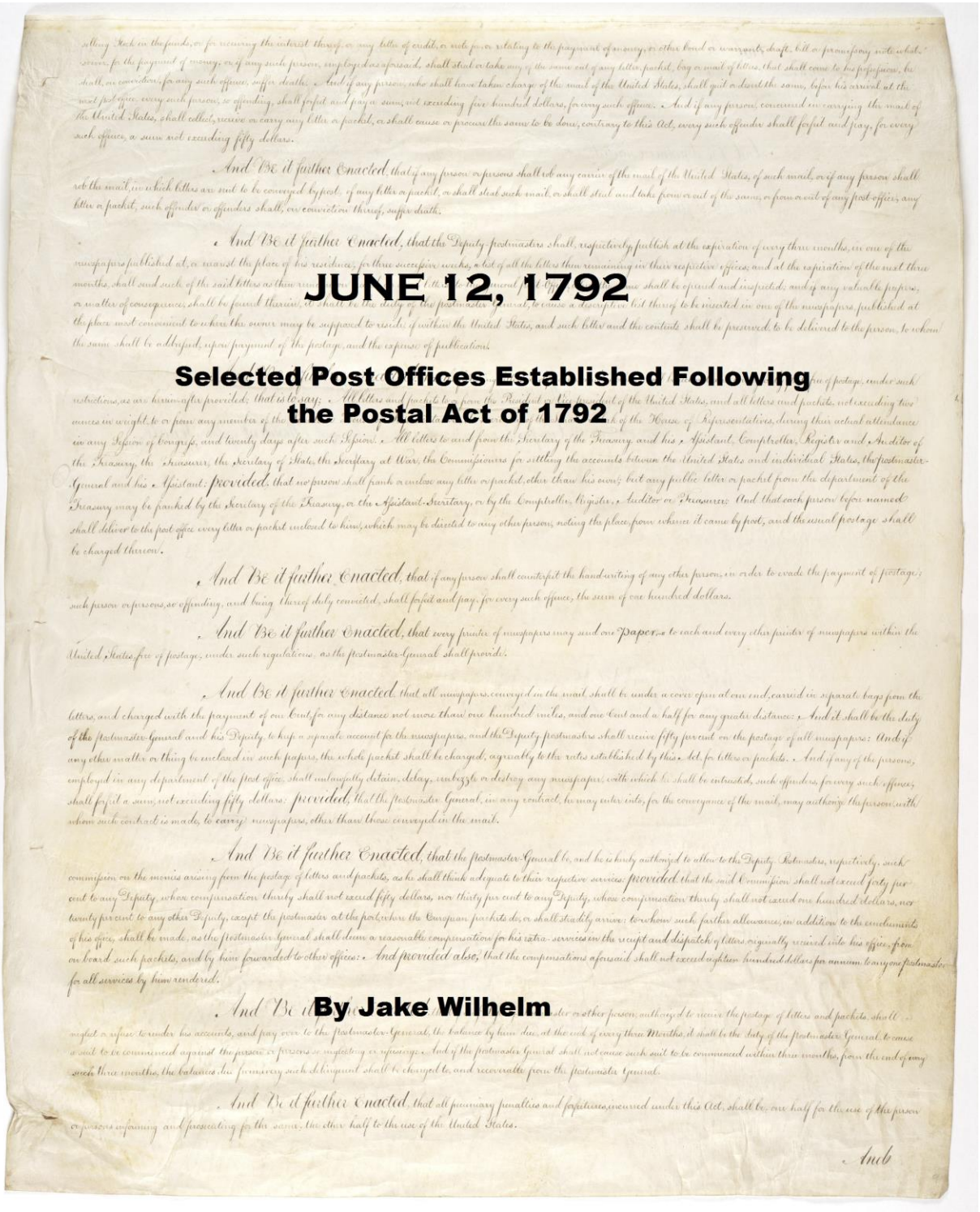

selling back in the funds, or for receiving the interest thereof, or any letter of credit, or note, or writing relating to the payment of money, or other bond or warrant, draft, bill or promissory note, what-soever, for the payment of money, or of any such person, employed as aforesaid, shall steal or take any of the same out of any letter, packet, bag or mail of letters, that shall come to his possession, he shall, on conviction, for any such offence, suffer death. And if any person, who shall have taken charge of the mail of the United States, shall quit or desert the same, before his arrival at the next post-office, every such person, so offending, shall forfeit and pay a sum, not exceeding five hundred dollars, for every such offence. And if any person, concerned in carrying the mail of the United States, shall collect, receive or carry any letter or packet, or shall cause or procure the same to be done, contrary to this Act, every such offender shall forfeit and pay, for every such offence, a sum not exceeding fifty dollars.

And Be it further Enacted, that if any person or persons shall rob any carrier of the mail of the United States, of such mail, or if any person shall rob the mail, in which letters are not to be conveyed by post, of any letter or packet, or shall steal such mail, or shall steal and take from or out of the same, or from out of any post-office, any letter or packet, such offender or offenders shall, on conviction thereof, suffer death.

And Be it further Enacted, that the Deputy postmasters shall, respectively, publish, at the expiration of every three months, in one of the newspapers published at, or nearest the place of his residence, for three successive weeks, a list of all the letters then remaining in their respective offices; and at the expiration of the next three months, shall send such of the said letters as there remain to the General Post-Office, which shall be opened and inspected, and if any valuable papers, or matter of consequence, shall be found therein, it shall be the duty of the postmaster-general, to cause a description of such thing to be inserted in one of the newspapers published at the place most convenient to where the owner may be supposed to reside, if within the United States, and such letter and the contents shall be preserved, to be delivered to the person, to whom the same shall be addressed, upon payment of the postage, and the expense of publication.

JUNE 12, 1792

Selected Post Offices Established Following the Postal Act of 1792

And Be it further Enacted, that the members of the Senate and House of Representatives, shall be entitled to receive free of postage, under such restrictions, as are hereinafter provided; that is to say: All letters and packets to and from the President of the United States, and all letters and packets, not exceeding two ounces in weight, to or from any member of the Senate or House of Representatives, during their actual attendance in any Session of Congress, and twenty days after such Session. All letters to and from the Secretary of the Treasury, and his Assistant, Comptroller, Register and Auditor of the Treasury, the Treasurer, the Secretary of State, the Secretary at War, the Commissioners for settling the accounts between the United States and individual States, the postmaster-General and his Assistant; provided, that no person shall frank or enclose any letter or packet, other than his own; but any public letter or packet from the department of the Treasury may be franked by the Secretary of the Treasury, or the Assistant Secretary, or by the Comptroller, Register, Auditor or Treasurer: And that each person before named shall deliver to the post office every letter or packet enclosed to him, which may be directed to any other person, noting the place from whence it came by post, and the usual postage shall be charged thereon.

And Be it further Enacted, that if any person shall counterfeit the handwriting of any other person, in order to evade the payment of postage; such person or persons, so offending, and being thereof duly convicted, shall forfeit and pay, for every such offence, the sum of one hundred dollars.

And Be it further Enacted, that every printer of newspapers may send one paper, to each and every other printer of newspapers within the United States, free of postage, under such regulations, as the postmaster-General shall provide.

And Be it further Enacted, that all newspapers, conveyed in the mail, shall be under a cover open at one end, carried in separate bags from the letters, and charged with the payment of one cent for any distance not more than one hundred miles, and one cent and a half for any greater distance: And it shall be the duty of the postmaster-General and his Deputy, to keep a separate account for the newspapers, and the Deputy postmasters shall receive fifty per cent on the postage of all newspapers: And if any other matter or thing be enclosed in such papers, the whole packet shall be charged, agreably to the rates established by this Act, for letters or packets. And if any of the persons, employed in any department of the post office, shall unlawfully detain, delay, embezzle or destroy any newspaper, with which he shall be entrusted, such offenders, for every such offence, shall forfeit a sum, not exceeding fifty dollars: provided, that the Postmaster General, in any contract, he may enter into, for the conveyance of the mail, may authorize the person, with whom such contract is made, to carry newspapers, other than those conveyed in the mail.

And Be it further Enacted, that the Postmaster-General be, and he is hereby authorized to allow to the Deputy Postmasters, respectively, such commission on the monies arising from the postage of letters and packets, as he shall think adequate to their respective services: provided that the said Commission shall not exceed forty per cent to any Deputy, whose compensation thereby shall not exceed fifty dollars, nor thirty per cent to any Deputy, whose compensation thereby shall not exceed one hundred dollars, nor twenty per cent to any other Deputy, except the postmaster at the port where the European packets do, or shall thereby arrive: to whom such further allowance, in addition to the emoluments of his office, shall be made, as the Postmaster-General shall deem a reasonable compensation for his extra services in the receipt and dispatch of letters originally received into his office from on board such packets, and by him forwarded to other offices: And provided also, that the compensations aforesaid shall not exceed eighteen hundred dollars per annum to any one postmaster for all services by him rendered.

By Jake Wilhelm

And Be it further Enacted, that every postmaster or other person, authorized to receive the postage of letters and packets, shall neglect or refuse to render his accounts, and pay over to the Postmaster-General, the balance by him due, at the end of every three Months, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster-General, to cause a suit to be commenced against the person or persons so neglecting or refusing: And if the Postmaster-General shall not cause such suit to be commenced within three months, from the end of any such three months, the balances due from every such delinquent shall be charged to, and recoverable from the Postmaster General.

And Be it further Enacted, that all pecuniary penalties and forfeitures, incurred under this Act, shall be, one half for the use of the person or persons informing and prosecuting for the same, the other half to the use of the United States.

And

COPYRIGHT

Title : June 12, 1792: A History of Selected Post Offices Established Following the Postal Act of 1792

Author : Jake Wilhelm

Cover design: Jake Wilhelm.

Original “Postal Act of 1792” document Library of Congress image

This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Harry Shepherd,
my friend and philatelic mentor

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 4
Author's Foreword 5
What is postal history? 6
The Postal Act of 1792 10
Windsor, Vermont 15
Manchester, Vermont 19
Vergennes, Vermont 23
Nantucket, Massachusetts 27
New Bedford, Massachusetts 32
Hudson, New York 37
Warwick, New York 43
Rockaway, New Jersey 48
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 52
Reading, Pennsylvania 57
Frederica, Delaware 62
Port Tobacco, Maryland 66
Chaptico, Maryland 70
Tappahannock, Virginia 74
Urbanna, Virginia 79
Kinsale, Virginia 84
Martinsburg, West Virginia 87
Salisbury, North Carolina 92
SOURCES 96
ABOUT THE AUTHOR 106

Author's Foreword

What makes America great?

It's the people, it's the places.

Every community has a story, and every community's story clicks into place to frame our nation's history. That's the case with the eighteen places featured in this book. This is not only a book about postal history; it's the tale of Everytown, USA.

Here, you'll find a village with marble sidewalks, you'll meet the Confederate spy that dressed like a lady to hijack a ship, you'll get to meet the patriots and the not so good folks, you'll voyage from whaling towns to tobacco port towns, from the first American Methodist church to the oldest Catholic parish in the original 13 colonies – basically, you'll visit communities specifically picked by the United States Post Office to expand our nation.

The book *June 12, 1792* features post offices that were established on June 12, 1792, a mere twelve days after the implementation of the Postal Act of 1792 that made the United States Post Office an official department of the United States government.

As established on June 1, 1792, the post office was tasked by President George Washington and Congress to grow our country via a better communication system. Our young country started that June day needing an organization to pull isolated communities together so the nation could transition from clusters of tiny towns to a big village.

That day, we got it.

And we did it. America was the first nation to have an effective postal system that gave both rich and poor equal voices. That's because the postal system wasn't just about letters filled with family gossip.

If it was as simple as that, we might not even be here.

No. We're here because our Founding Fathers made the postal system the nation's paperboy.

The Postal Act was mainly created to ensure the media could afford to send their words across the nation. Affordable? Thanks to the special rates set in the Act, sending a huge newspaper hundreds of miles cost one-sixth of what it cost to send a single 'wish you were here' letter the same distance.

This ability to get national newspapers into the most hinter of hinterlands directly led to that strong public input Americans are so famous for. Since the post office delivered current newspapers on time, government types couldn't do whatever they wanted and not expect a public reaction. If the government started to spiral into the same tyranny the British had unleashed on its Thirteen Colonies or descend into incompetence, the postal system ensured the American public would always be there to nudge them back in line.

It's all about freedom, and so is this book.

What is postal history?

Every story in this book concludes with a brief mention of what types of postal history items you might find from the featured community.

These little 'afterwards' are not meant to be a catalog. To me, it's a way to prove the same theory I've promoted in my *PMCC Bulletin* articles – once you learn about a community, you'll understand your item's place in history. The special knowledge of a community might lead to an exhibit; it might lead to a satisfying collection.

Maybe you don't have a postal history item anywhere within sight. Maybe you don't know what the heck I'm rambling on about.

Simply put, postal history is another word for the study of items that have gone through the postal system. When you send a check in the mail, you have created a piece of postal history. Hopefully it's not a bounced check…

That piece of mail began its journey at your local post office and traveled to the postal facility nearest the address you mailed it to. It might have made a few stops along the way in regional sorting areas. Either way, there are people that study the routes taken by a piece of mail, the post offices themselves and how they operate. Other people study what's in the envelope – better hope that check was good. Either way, that person is a postal historian.

The study of postal history only branches out from there. A person might specialize in the mail sent by and to the founding families of Hobunk County, or maybe they specialize in Southern Colonial mail and the systems that carried it. There are also folks that only study the postmarks. Postmarks are what a post office applies to a piece of mail that has entered into the mail stream – most postmarks show the city and date the item was processed. Postmark study is considered a branch of postal history.

So, you can collect history anyway you like. It could be an envelope with a letter; it can even be a piece of envelope with only the postmark on it, or anything in between.

The communities in this book offer interesting prospects for the postal historian. Here are a few things to keep in mind. Every community I've written about has colonial roots, and all handled mail in a time period that a postmark – usually the main evidence showing mail was handled by them – was not applied because they were not an official post office.

Never fear. Sometimes post offices applied other markings, maybe in pencil 'Held at Hobunk Post Office' or 'carried via Hobunk'. These are called holding or transit marks. Another tip is to find the address of the person who sent the item. Usually someone will have written on the item something like John Smith, Hobunk, and if so, chances are it was then carried through Hobunk's post office. It's detective work well worth pursuing. Besides, having something from a citizen of Hobunk, even if it was never touched by a local postal employee, still qualifies as postal history from that area. That factoid needed to be thrown in there just to confuse you.

It's not really that confusing – postal history can be and is fun!

In America, the collecting of postal history is divided into two historical eras. Stampless and adhesive.

Until 1856, stamps (also known as adhesives) were not required by the US post office. This means most pre-1856 items fall under the stampless moniker. Way back then,

folks generally wrote on a sheet of paper, folded it and handed it off to the post office. The post office then applied something that proved they had processed it. Otherwise known as, they slapped a postmark on that puppy.

The main markings utilized at this time are called manuscript, straight line, oval, and circle. 'Manuscript' means the postal clerk dabbed their pen in ink and signed the town's name to the cover to prove the post office had indeed processed it and not some jerk pretending to be the post office to save that three cents; the clerk would add the cost of mailing the letter beside the town mark. So, you might find a West Hobunk scribble on the left side of your cover with the numeral '3' written next to it.

Straight-line cancels will probably have been the first official postmark used by our post offices. A regular man-made rubber ink stamp divulged the town name and state in one or two lines. They were in use from the Colonial era and well into 19th Century. Oval postmarks are (imagine this!) oval in shape and often the first "pretty" type of cancel a community used – they are mostly found in the 1820 to 1840 era. Again, the mark generally shows the town and state, and a numeral will have been entered in the rate column to show how much the letter cost to mail. Circle postmarks – they're the same deal as the oval, just in a circle, and most entered the scene in the mid-1830s and were in use into the 1860s.

Most of these cancellation devices came in two pieces, one for the town information, one giving the numeral in the rate column.

To further confuse the issue, there is the fancy cancel class. The entire cancel might be a special, striking design -- such as town and state info inside the drawing of a bird. In addition, line, oval and circle cancels may have been embellished with nifty little designs to add zip to their mundane message.

Determining the year a stampless cover was mailed can be tricky. Most early cancels never had the year's date. If you're lucky, you can just open the stampless cover and find the date written inside. Other times, well, you may never know.

Values? That will depend on the scarcity of items that hail from your favorite post office's stampless era. That can be tricky. Real tricky. Sometimes items from a large city can be as rare as something from a tiny town. Sometimes, tiny town offerings are less expensive than a large city.

It doesn't always depend on the type of postmark used. Literacy was a problem in the early Post Office era. Simply put, not many folks knew how to read and write, so they didn't send many letters. A large post office may have only processed a dozen letters a month, while a smaller post office serving a county seat, port town or an industrial area may have had to hire on staff to handle the mail.

By 1847, literacy rates were climbing, and the Post Office rose to meet the new readers with the postage stamp. America's first postage stamp that prepaid the postage hit the scene in 1847, but use wasn't compulsorily until another postal act in 1856 dictated they better be used unless you wanted your letter thrown away. Postmarks became more prevalent in this time period. Remember that pre-paid stamp statement I just made? Believe it or not, you weren't always required to pay the postage – oftentimes that was the problem of the guy getting the letter!

That means stamps were awful important, and the post office needed to come up with some way to ensure folks didn't reuse the stamp, thus ripping off Uncle Sam.

Thusly, the duplex system of cancellation hit the market – a variation of the previous two-piece canceller of the past. A duplex device has one section bearing the town, date, state, time -- all the important stuff. The second piece is called a "killer" and in some way struck an inked mark across the stamp to keep Mr. Sticky Fingers from utilizing the stamp on his next bounced check. Killers come in a wonderful variety of flavors – from fancy little designs, to bars, to targets, to numbers, to pretty much whatever you can imagine.

Most offices used a rubber handstamp, duplex and otherwise, throughout this era (and some still do). Usually, the first cancels were the circle types already in use, modified as the decades went by. By the 1880s, most postmarks showed the year of mailing. About time, huh?

Later in the 19th century, medium to large size post offices switched to machine cancels. Pretty much the same duplex idea, with a dial or line-cancel to the side and something defacing the stamp on the other. You'll never guess why they're called machine cancels. OK, they're dubbed that because they get fed through a cancellation machine. Machine cancels also come in a dizzying variety, but most are considered common. And, just to confuse you *yet* again, many of these same post offices *also* used hand cancels in the same time period.

Now sounds like a great time to discuss value. Since every post office mentioned in this book remains in operation (even one town that only has a population of 13), postmarks from these locations are generally considered to be of minimum value, sometimes even if it hails from the stampless era. However, what that postmark is attached to can be something you'll need to mortgage the house for. It could be a rare stamp – and that holds nearly all value on that piece. But let's say you have an envelope with a nice Hobunk postmark from 1901 mailed by President McKinley the day before he was assassinated. Not only that, it holds the last letter he ever wrote. The cash register will ring on that one. All the other items Hobunk shipped out that day will be as close to free as you can get.

There's also mail from post offices that no longer exist. A very big cross section of the hobby here! Collecting DPOs (Discontinued Post Offices) is both very challenging and very rewarding. Sometimes post offices only existed for a week or a month – and everyone that's hip to the fact is on the hunt for one of a handful postmarks known to exist. Some people also collect first day and last day postmarks from DPOs – and even a last day in operation item from the 1950s (well within what's considered the common, modern history segment of our hobby) can fetch big bucks.

And – guess what! There's other neat postal history out there. Did you know ships had post offices and you can collect postal history from some of the most important ships of our nation's history? There's also mail flown on zeppelins, mail recovered from train wrecks, mail that – wait, you better not get me started, I'll never go away!

What's the real value to postal history?

Easy.

What beats holding in your hand a letter from a whaler, a future president, a war hero?

Now, let's learn the history behind some postmarks!

If you want to learn more about collecting postal history, I recommend contacting the Post Mark Collector's Club. Check out the website pmcc.com or contact your friendly writer at jakewilhelm@mail.com.

The Postal Act of 1792

America's Post Office might have been established in 1775, but June 12, 1792 is the day our postal service grew up.

That's when the Postal Act of 1792 was implemented, setting the nation into a new era of national expansion and communication rights for all.

The bill had been signed into law February 20th by the father of our country, George Washington. A mere three years had passed since the nation found its official start with the Constitution – the first Amendments themselves had only been finalized in 1791. In 1792, national things were still being worked out, and among those items on the to-do list was the post office.

Heated debate since 1789 had placed the existence of the Post Office in jeopardy many times. The Postal Act rescued it when three years of debate was solidified into one law of the land.

The Postal Act of 1792 officially created the Post Office as a cabinet position with the Postmaster General (also known as the Big Boss of the Post Office) operating under the authority of the Congress. The Congress also retained exclusive right to create new postal routes and post offices. A huge deal in the Act was the clause that provided guaranteed delivery of newspapers through the mail, keeping the public informed by postage rates so cheap the post office basically footed the bill. Among other things, the Act also set wages for local postmasters, prohibited postal employees from opening the mail (always a great idea!) and assessed the death penalty for robbing the mail.

Controversy, compromise and deal making had netted this final result for the postal cause. Originally, the debate centered on who should control the post office. The Federalists leading the country at the time wanted the nation to run the post office as an extra arm of the government. The minority Republicans sought a post office that operated as a basic private business, but maybe a little public funding could be in order as long as the government kept their noses out of things…

Federalists, Republicans? An easy way to keep track of the two major political parties from our nation's infancy is to remember that the Federalists of the new nation believed power should be concentrated in a centralized government. Republicans wanted states and people to have more power than the federal system. It's a battle that continues today.

Republicans, such as James Madison, the architect of the First Amendment, feared a government controlled post office would set the terms and conditions of the service. He was mainly afraid that meant censorship of the mail. As in Federalist mail gets through all day, every day, but darned if the Republican mail didn't up and get lost, sorry about that, fella!

At the beginning of our nation, the Federalists won the post office battle (of course, all mail got delivered, no partisan problems there!), and the Postal Act of 1792 made it pretty clear the feds were in charge. Congress had total reign of the US postal system until 1971 when the system was semi-privatized as a partially publicly funded service with a board of governors.

The full name of the Act is, ahem, "An Act to Establish the Post Office and Post Offices within the United States". The next major point of the bill was to declare the

government's position on using the postal system itself to help the country grow. That growth didn't just facilitate ensuring you got your junk mail from your local Federalist Representative. No, Congress took the challenge much more literally and launched a road building campaign to shame all previous road building campaigns. The net result hooked isolated communities to the existing postal network and began a trend of better friends through better roads, helping the country to expand internally and west of the Appalachians.

Many new post roads were created on paper that day in February, and every community in this book were either added to the existing roads or linked to main roads by their rivers and/or their freshly government expanded trails – anything to connect everyone with everyone the quickest way possible. June 12th began with less than 100 post offices on a single route running from Wiccassett, Maine to Savannah, Georgia. The day ended with nearly 40 new locations added to the list, creating a spiral of highways extending into the frontier territories west of the Appalachians.

The post office only grew from there.

The Act also established the cost of postage. Mailing a basic-rate letter ran from six cents traveling up to 32 miles all the way up to 25 cents for over 400 miles. Start adding pages to that missive to George Washington and you best start rooting around in your pocketbook for much more money.

Letter-rate sticker shock only made what comes next controversial. The postal act set a sweetheart rate for newspapers – as in one cent hauls the Weekly Tattler up to 100 miles, or one and half cents gets it any distance over 100 miles. This fire sale on newspaper rates was not uncalled for, since dispersal of newspapers was the main impetus behind the Postal Act. Again, the idea was to share the news of the nation with everyone – whether it was by letter or by the national newspaper - and newspapers would and shall be sent all points of the compass, even if Uncle Sam had to dig in his pockets to find the cash.

And he would pay. By the end of the century, 70 percent of the US Mail's weight was newspaper, but only represented three percent of the money earned. To compare, a four-sheet letter weighing about as much as the paper cost 24 cents to send 32 miles, yet the Tattler went that far and even further at one shiny penny.

Still, and this was another motive behind the three year debate, some insisted the news should travel for free. Madison chimed in with the idea of newspaper hitting customer's doors free of charge. He had a point. Madison and fellow Republicans saw the one penny delivery charge as a tax only the rich could pay. Basically, they feared that while the rich man's Federalist press could pay the bill, Republican newspapers that tended to run things on the cheap would not be able to afford the postage rate. Even head Federalist George Washington agreed with them, attempting several times to get the newspaper rate knocked down to zero. Although the cost was lowered in 1794, it still cost to send papers through the mail. No freebies here.

At least they were being sent. Pre-June of 1792, postal riders and stagecoaches only needed to transport newspapers if they had room – weight was at a premium, and weight cost money. Now local postmasters had to process the newspaper, even the Republican ones...

Those same postmasters were also better paid now. Pre-Postal Act, postmasters usually found their paychecks waiting at the end of a complicated system that began with

them pocketing 40 percent of annual receipts if the office made under $125 a year, 50 percent of net gross between $125 and $167, 30 percent to $165, and 20 percent if over $500. The new rates came in with the postmaster clearing 30 percent on the first $100, 25 percent on the next $200, 20 percent from $200 to $2000, plus $25 for handling foreign mail.

Now that the Postal Act has been explained, it's time to delve into the early American postal system.

It's pretty simple to imagine – America's postal system pre-Postal Act was basically the same service provided by the British Crown since the 1600s.

At least it was a bit better suited to a free land.

The British postal system of yore had flaws. The British were especially good on making sure folks they didn't like couldn't send letters telling all about how they happened to dislike the British. The same went for newspapers. Since papers needed to be carried by the postal system, that same postal system could say no go if there was all that junk on the front page about how everyone should break their chains and rise up against the British oppressors.

Selective mail delivery is just another term for censorship. Just ask Benjamin Franklin, the father of the American postal system. In the 1770s, he and William Goddard were the publishers of the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*. The paper was unkind to the British overlords, so the postal system prohibited the paper from leaving town.

Ironically, it was a postal system that Franklin helped operate. Franklin began his postal career as postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. In 1753, he was declared deputy postmaster of the colonies and served alongside William Hunter. During his time in office, Franklin wrangled the inefficient, debt ridden British system into something that actually made money. He also established a postal route from Maine to Florida. He lost his job in 1773, partially due to his affinity for the Patriot cause, partly because he opened mail belonging to the Royal Governor of Massachusetts, then published said writings in the *Chronicle*.

Franklin didn't linger on the unemployment line for long. In 1774, Goddard went before the Continental Congress and laid out his plan for a postal system that served the public and not the government. The new government simply adored the idea. In July, 1775 they placed Franklin in charge of a postal system by and for Americans.

Initially, Franklin set up the postal system as an organ of the Revolutionary Cause – he wasn't concerned about that letter home from summer camp going to Mom's house, but one best make room for flyers extorting one to join Ye Olde Patriot Cause. During the war, Washington used the mail system quite effectively to communicate with his armies and the Congress.

The war time postal service was operated not by Franklin, who was too busy as Envoy to France, but his son-in-law Richard Bache. The nation's first full-time Postmaster General was born in England as the 18th child of two apparently very patient parents. Bache and his brother immigrated to New York City in 1760. 1762 saw him in Philadelphia where he soon laid eyes on Franklin's only daughter Sarah. Franklin wasn't too enthused – Bache was seen as a gold digger and didn't really ever lose that image. Still, the guy was Franklin's son-in-law and father to his seven grandkids, so it seemed natural to give him a job...

Bache maintained Franklin's current system throughout the war. In 1782, he retired, moving to a career as a director of the Bank of North America. He retired in the early 1800s, and passed in 1811.

The Postmaster General spot had gone to Ebenezer Hazard in 1782. A publisher from New York, he began his postal career in 1775 as New York City postmaster, but became the surveyor general for the post office in 1776.

While he extended the postal routes a little to the west as Postmaster General during the Continental Congress years, he was mainly kept busy in the fight to not only have the post office recognized as a crucial entity in the country – he also tried to get some heat in his office. Really. One of the most famous battles he had with Congress and George Washington was trying to get them to OK the hiring of someone to lay the fire in his office every morning.

1781's Articles of Confederation instilled a working postal system by and for the people. There was plenty of work to do when the US Constitution was finally ratified by all states in 1789. In the process, the Constitution cemented the post office into place.

Now someone had to make everything work. It wouldn't be Hazard. 1790 saw Washington giving Hazard notice to quit his office immediately. Hazard never did get a fire starter.

Washington awarded Samuel Osgood the honor of being the nation's first federally appointed Postmaster General.

Samuel Osgood defined the term patriot. He led a company of volunteers against the British in the action that started it all, the Battle of Lexington and Concord, in spring of 1775. Following the war, Osgood served in the Massachusetts and New York Legislatures before Washington gave him the postmaster gig. Osgood began the process of getting all the ducks in a row for the new postal system. When the national capital ditched New York for Philadelphia in 1791, Osgood resigned so he could stay home.

Timothy Perkins took the reins. He's another interesting character. He served in the militia during the Siege of Boston before progressing up the military ladder to become Washington's adjutant general and quartermaster general. One of his many jobs during the war was overseeing the construction of the Great Chain, a barrier of chains brought across the Hudson River to stop the English from sailing inland – and that's just one of the stories you will learn more about later in this book.

As Postmaster General, Perkins oversaw the transition of the post office from a child's ratty set of building blocks to a professional operation. He implemented the Postal Act of 1792 and gave crucial input to the Postal Act of 1794 that further streamlined the operations. He left the job in '94, and by 1795 was the nation's third Secretary of State. He served until 1800, marshalling the country's foreign interests under Washington and John Adams. In 1803, he was elected to the US Senate as the Gentleman from Massachusetts. He only served one term.

In 1812, Massachusetts sent him to the House of Representatives, and he served there until 1817. Concurrently, he also happened to be head of a party that, ironically given all he had done for his country, was working on getting Massachusetts to secede from the Union. That anti-American activity killed his political career and the man who spent several crucial years sowing the seeds of the modern postal system spent his remaining years as a gentleman farmer.

When Perkins died in 1829, it still only cost six cents to send a basic letter. Of course, that same six cents only carried the letter thirty miles. Inflation, it appears, is not a new concept.

Windsor, Vermont

The Birthplace of Vermont

On the same day Vermont established itself as an independent nation, shirking the chains of England for once and all, it also outlawed slavery, gave voting rights to all men, created a public school and the government promised to pay for any land it took from a citizen.

Pretty heavy, brave stuff for the 18th Century – and this first step towards an America that gave human rights to all began in our feature town, Windsor, Vermont over in Windsor County. On July 8, 1777, delegates met at the Windsor Tavern, a small establishment on Main Street, to bring into being the Constitution of the Free Republic of Vermont.

Windsor had been in the forefront of controversy pretty much since its inception as a spot on the map in 1761. That's when New Hampshire created a section of land dubbed the New Hampshire Grants. This area, speckled with 138 proposed town sites, opened new land to extend New Hampshire to the south. Windsor became a dot on the Connecticut River, one of many ready for settlement. Settlers flowed into this area – but wait, not so fast. New York colony had earlier rights to this unsettled land, rights they had ignored. Once people started thinking the property was great, New York petitioned King George III to hand the land over to them. It was done.

This led to one of the many beginnings of American Independence. Steamed at New York and even angrier at England, New Hampshire Grant pioneers, including Ethan Allen and the famed Green Mountain Boys, spent much of the next decade and a half locked in skirmishes with the other side. Americans were just plain tired of doing what the mother country told them to do…

Some of those Americans were the small group of pioneers led in from Connecticut by Captain Steele Smith. The pioneers established the town on the west bank of the Connecticut River, under the shadow of Mount Ascutry, one of the famed Green Mountains. Windsor's location on the water and a strong stream now called Mill Brook provided power for a saw mill and a grist mill. From those two mills would emerge a 19th century manufacturing powerhouse in New England, including at least one factory making some of the first products that would be sold by Americans in Europe.

First, there was the matter of breaking away from England.

In January of 1777, New Hampshire Grant delegates met in Westminster and declared independence, creating a republic named New Connecticut. In June, as war raged, delegates met in Windsor to decide how far to take this whole freedom thing. A decision to create a constitution evolved from this meeting. One month later, delegates met up again in a humble stone building called the Windsor Bar, an establishment owned by Elijah West.

And, if it wasn't for a bad thunderstorm, Vermont may have never existed.

The constitution meeting began July 2nd, even as British troops led by General Burgoyne entered New Connecticut. The British soon captured Fort Ticonderoga, 95 miles to the northwest, then Mount Independence (closer by 12 miles). By the fifth, they were chasing American troops across the territory, aiming straight for Windsor. On the seventh, American troops made their stand at Hubbardton, about 70 miles from Windsor, allowing time for other American forces to flee. Things were still heading for Windsor, and folks began to sweat.

The debate over the finer points of the constitution soon became debates about whether or not everyone should leave town while the going didn't involve ducking cannon fire. Even this debate was hot. By July 8th, a majority of the delegates were highly interested in evacuating post haste.

Then a severe thunderstorm settled over the village, the sort of storm that makes people huddle inside and hope it goes on its merry way. Delegates were forced the stay the night and that was all the time they needed to understand something much bigger than their personal safety was in the works. The delegates worked through the night and before they did evacuate, established the main points of the Constitution, adjourned the meeting...then lit out steps ahead of the advancing Brits.

Windsor was tapped to become the Vermont Republic's new capital. This is a job the little town held until 1808, when the capital moved to Montpelier. The town boomed as professionals moved in to run the new government, bringing with them the talents required to lift a town to the next level.

When the capital moved to Montpelier, Windsor was also well established as a major manufacturing hub. Again, it all had to do with water. Being on the river and fed by a strong brook, Windsor could harness all the waterpower it needed and then send the finished goods down the river. Plus, the town landed the lucrative honor of playing home to the first toll bridge across the Connecticut River, meaning all traffic had to run through town.

In the meantime, after years of harsh debates, Vermont became the 14th state in 1791. The following June, the first US post office in Vermont came to life on Main Street, with Alden Spooner serving as postmaster through August 1793. The post office had actually been established in 1784; Spooner was the first postmaster under the federal government. He served for just a little over a year.

The 19th century brought Windsor prosperity. By 1820, Windsor was the largest town in Vermont. A permanent dam built on Mill Brook in 1834 provided a continuous water supply year round, and major factories made their home along its waterway.

Including a state-of-the-art factory that is said to have brought precision to the Industrial Age. Led by Nicanor Kendall, Samuel Robbins and Richard Lawrence, the Robbins and Lawrence firm created and patented equipment used in creating fine detail, interchangeable parts. This is primarily due to an 1846 contract they landed with the US

Government to produce 10,000 rifles for the army – in a time when production at this scale was all but unheard of.

The firearms needed to be made fast, cheap, and reliable, and the firm learned on the fly, crafting the genesis of modern precision machinery in the process – modern precision equipment as seen on assembly lines around the world today.

Keeping up with production led the founders to individually or together develop the right equipment to make sure all the pieces fit together with no margin for error. When all was said and done, they had created machines such as the profiling machine, and two important milling machines. Milling machines are used to basically carve precision parts out of material such as steel. This type of machine is still used in firearms production, and the universal type milling machine came from this unique group of men.

Robbins and Lawrence is also one of the first American weapons manufacturers to deal on an international level. A demonstration of the Robbins and Lawrence produced weapons at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London netted the firm a pretty medal for their innovations, a contract with the British Army to produce 25,000 rifles for the Crimean War – plus English manufacturers bought 141 of their metal working machines, bringing the "American System" of mass production to the world.

While the firm went bankrupt in 1855, the equipment, talent and patents led directly to the creation of Winchester Firearms and Smith & Wesson, who would soon lead the world in weapons innovation. The factory wasn't done yet. Another gun maker used the factory during the civil war to produce 50,000 rifles for the Union Army. Today, the building serves as the American Precision Museum.

Windsor was also home to factories creating machinery, furniture, tin and leather goods. The reason for folks to build their factories in Windsor was even more evident when the Vermont Central Railway opened its first length of track in Windsor in 1849. This gave manufacturers a clear shot to markets along the East Coast and the passenger service brought many customers to their doorsteps.

Windsor also played host to the first state prison in Vermont – which would come into play in everyday life. Prisoner labor was utilized in a number of the factories. The best known of these is the American Hydraulic Company; in 1829, they began using prisoners to assemble their innovative "Revolving Hydraulic Engine" water pump, another device that led to the modern age as it made dispersal of water much more affordable and effective.

In 1865, the Windsor Manufacturing Firm took over the old Robbins and Lawrence works and cranked out machine tools, rifles, sewing machines and sawmilling equipment. By 1869, they were the largest employer in town, and would remain that way until they moved operations in 1879.

The 20th Century started out well for skilled employment in the area, but the 1970s recessions and jobs going overseas nailed the community hard. By the 1980s, heavy manufacturing was on its way out of Windsor. In the late '80s, final work whistles blew for the last two major employers. The Cone Automatic Machine Company and a Goodyear Tire and Rubber shoe sole factory shuttered their doors, bringing Windsor's commercial past to a slower pace.

Downtown Windsor features a scattering of small shops and craftsmen, plus two small-scale breweries. Windsor, home to about 3300, is primarily considered a bedroom

community for folks who work in Hanover and – ironically reversing the origins of the state – some now travel *to* New Hampshire to work in Lebanon.

Whatever happened to the historic Windsor Tavern? First of all, it was promptly renamed the Constitution Tavern. It functioned as a tavern until 1848, when it was converted to retail and small manufacturing space. In 1870, it was moved off Main Street and became a tenement. Eventually, a small park was created in its old spot. In 1901, when citizens created a preservation effort for the old tavern, the poor old building was about to fall down. It was moved to a new spot on Main Street in 1901 and restored to its formal glory and is now part of the Windsor Historic District. Now dubbed the 'Old Constitution Tavern' and property of the State of Vermont, it features a museum complete with interpretive displays that explain how the tavern became famous.

There's another building in the Historic District that will float any post office aficionado's boat. Not far from the Old Constitution House is the 1852 Italianate style US Courthouse and Post Office, a two and half story brick building. It's no longer a court house – but it still holds the post office.

Like every other early community in the USA, Windsor is ripe with postmark and postal history offerings. Pre-post office era pieces sometimes feature Windsor holding and transit marks. An obvious prize piece would be anything dealing with the Constitution meeting.

A straight line postmark has been reported as far back as July 13, 1792. Straight line and manuscript cancels were used until the mid-'20s; circle postmarks came about in the 1830s and are relatively inexpensive. Keep in mind, a lot of mail went through the post office, sometimes even more than a larger city would have processed. Government has to spread its message of red tape somehow... That makes post-1792 stampless items fairly easy to find – anything dealing with government business to 1808 would be desirable.

Of course, a manufacturing powerhouse like Windsor is a gold mine for commercial items. How about an early stamped cover from the nice folks at Robbins and Lawrence with a Windsor postmark just barely nudging a US #1? Items from the railroad and the State Prison would also be key specialty items. For the uber-specialist, how about covers from the Constitution House through the ages, tracking her evolution from public house to factory to tenement to mail sent out by the restoration committee?

Manchester, Vermont

The Village with Marble Sidewalks

There aren't too many communities in America with marble sidewalks, but the Village of Manchester, Vermont is one of them. The tiny village in Bennington County comes complete with four miles worth of overly fancy sidewalk material, all installed between 1850 and 1890 when this spot became a resort area.

There's more to Manchester than being a resort. Isn't there always? In Manchester's case, it served as a crossroads before and during the Revolutionary War, at several times playing host to the Green Mountain Boys.

Manchester began like other Vermont communities – as part of the New Hampshire Grant. Manchester was founded in 1761, but unlike our previous town's story, Manchester grew slowly. For much of its first 100 years, it was considered a gathering of inns and taverns against a no-named mountain that would eventually be called Equinox Mountain.

The village and the Township it belongs to sits in a Bennington County valley tucked between the afore-mentioned mountain and the Green Mountains. When first settled, this marshy area went by the charming name "Seven Mile Swamp". And swamps make for poor commercial exploitation. Lowlands unsuitable for anything but to look at, early settlers planted farms and sheep ranches against the mountain slopes. Eventually two roads crossed in front of and behind the mountain, and where these roads met became the home of Manchester. Enough was here for Ethan Allen and the Mountain Boys to grab a breather when they marched through in 1775 and again in 1777. These guerilla fighters were known for their drinking abilities, so they made much use of the offerings available at the Marsh tavern and the Stagecoach Inn.

The Marsh Tavern and the Green Mountain Boys... Well, the boys would do much more than just knock back a few at the bar. During a meeting of the Safety Council held at the Marsh Tavern, Ira Allen, younger brother of Ethan Allen, came up with an innovative idea to pay for the Revolutionary War - by seizing land belonging to those darn English-loving Tories. Not only did this idea take root throughout the American

cause, but the first such seizure of property was the Marsh Tavern itself. The British lovin' former owner was encouraged to high tail it very swiftly towards the Canadian border.

Here we are again, back at the year 1777. Ironically, our Revolutionary War tale involving Windsor takes up again on July 9, 1777. While American forces held Burgoyne's redcoats at Hubbardton, remaining troops retreated down the south highway, coming through Manchester on the ninth. Ethan Allen, Seth Warner and the Green Mountain Boys split off here, camping behind Equinox Mountain, and again making use of the Marsh Tavern as they regrouped for the next action. In August, they left to take part in the Battle of Bennington, where they successfully defanged Burgoyne's men when they caught the British attempting to secure horses and supplies for their men. The American success softened the British enough for a solid trouncing by the other soldiers that came through Manchester on July 9th.

Those two thousand troops coming through Manchester continued south to Fort Miller, then to Saratoga to regroup and join up with other American forces. In Saratoga that September, just weeks after the Battle of Bennington, 10,000 American troops forced 8,000 British to a defeat that would become the United State's first significant victory; the Battles of Saratoga are considered the turning point of the Revolutionary War. It was after this British loss that Americans were able to bounce back and start regaining lost territory.

Post war times brought a steady influx of settlers into the Manchester area for lumber milling, sheer raising and working nearby marble quarries. Still not enough people to bump the village from a rest stop to a standard town, but enough to give the community purpose. Eventually, a new area called Town of Manchester and then another, less official section dubbed Manchester Center, were developed alongside the village. These two communities would eventually eclipse Manchester Village in population, but not importance...

On June 12, 1792, Abel Allis was appointed the Manchester's first postmaster. He served until 1803.

Manchester's entire image changed in 1852 when, while watching the railroad chug through town, an 'aha' moment popped open in the mind of Charlie Orvis. How about trying to entice a new type of person to leave the railroad carriages and come into town? Those people are better known as tourists. As in folks from New York looking for quick vacations or long-term stays in the lap of luxury.

Orvis seized the opportunity to convert the area into resort heaven. The Green Mountain Boys might not have been thrilled with all those New Yorkers gallivanting about on good Vermont land, but that's progress for you. This time period is when more buildings were built and when those marble sidewalks found their way into town. Areas of Equinox Mountain were developed as resort land, and finally, the village of Manchester grew into its own.

As in a pretty big deal. Charlie Orvis made his influence known in this new community with the Equinox House resort hotel.

The Marsh Tavern comes into play again. While the tavern had changed hands many times since that durned Tory fellow, it had fallen into disrepair. In 1839, a marble porch with distinctive columns was slapped onto the edifice and that establishment was called the Vanderlip Hotel, and therefore in 1853, it was in direct competition with

Orvis's grand scheme of things. That hotel and its nifty 285-foot line of columns would eventually become a part of the Equinox House, and play such a key feature of Equinox House design that the columns still serve as a trademark feature of the Manchester landscape.

When construction began in the mid-'50s to combine Orvis's own homestead with a shop next door to create a hotel, Orvis was in direct competition with Martin Vanderlip's hotel. There it is, across the street and built around those distinctive columns. So, naturally, Orvis built bigger and better, soon leaving Vanderlip in the dust. When Equinox House was completed in the 1860s, it featured luxury accommodations, 1400 acres of grounds, a supply of fresh spring water from Equinox Mountain (billed as healthy and you better drink this if you want to cure what ails you), an 18-hole golf course, a weight scale for customers to weigh themselves before they left to prove they had gained weight during their stay, a carriage road to the top of the mountain, livery stables, trout fishing, and even lawn tennis. The aforementioned spring water was so successful that it was bottled and sold in the Northeast.

The hotel rivalry ended in 1880 when Orvis triumphantly purchased Vanderlip's hotel and added it to his complex by building a bridge over the road.

Equinox House wasn't just for any tourist seeking an escape from New York summer heat. During the Civil War, Mary Todd Lincoln and her sons stayed at the hotel twice, once in '63, then in '64 in a suite Orvis built especially for them. Son Robert Lincoln fell so much in love with the area that he later built an impressive estate called Hildene in town; and his daughter once lived in a grand home across the street from the hotel.

Equinox House also played host to Presidents Benjamin Harrison, Ulysses S. Grant and Theodore Roosevelt. Despite its grand resume, by the 1970s the hotel was a long shuttered series of buildings falling into disrepair, when it was declared a National Historic Place. Restored in the 1980s, it was reopened. Currently, the restored yet again Equinox House is a 200-unit resort operated by HEI Hotels and resorts. That weight scale is still there, but probably not used to reveal how much weight guests gained while splurging on room service.

Remember the Equinox House also offered trout fishing? That was a bigger deal that it seemed. In 1856, Charlie's son Franklin opened a tackle shop to cater to those very trout aficionados. The tackle shop eventually grew into a full-scale sporting goods chain with locations in the US and UK.

Initially, Franklin offered hosts guided tours and then, this really neat fly fishing reel he had developed. Fly fishing was very big back then, and now. Simply put, fly fishing involves tying to one's fishing line a piece of fishing tackle that looks like – imagine this! – a fly. The fly is cast out and, with flicks of the wrist from the man woman or child behind the rod, the flashy lure attracts the attention of trout looking to score some flies, and a match made in heaven for every trout fisher is quickly made.

By 1874, Charlie had perfected what's considered the first modern fly reel and was well into a fishing tackle business, offering a myriad of flies to his clientele. Mail order catalogs were sent to select customers through the US, earning Orvis title as one of the first major American mail-order companies. Fly fishing really took off in 1892 when Charlie's daughter Mary Orvis, now head of the mail order department, published the ground-breaking fly fishing encyclopedia *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*.

The Orvis firm fell on hard times in the 1930s and was sold to a group that would go onto develop a special Bakelite dipped bamboo fly fishing rod that soon became the benchmark of the industry and key to the future of the sport to come. The firm sold to Leigh Perkins, Corp in 1966. Orvis' current incarnation features fishing and shooting equipment tailored for higher end clientele, plus extensive classes in how to do the above correctly.

Orvis employs 300 locals in the headquarter location and 450 fly fishing rods pour from their factory every month.

Today, Manchester is basically three towns in one. There's Manchester the village (where the post office lives), the Town of Manchester and Manchester Center. About 4400 people live in the area. The village is still considered the diamond of the community, but it's not as uppity a location as it was in the 1800s. Back then, mill workers from the Town of Manchester would jump off the sidewalks to avoid dealing with tourists, unless dealing with tourists involved yelling mean things to them and the fancy pants that pandered to them, then in that case, well, they interacted just fine.

Manchester continues to be a popular resort hot spot. Fishing, two major golf courses, and the nearby Bromley Mountain, Magic Mountain and Stratton Mountain ski resorts keep people coming year round. The village is also home to the Southern Vermont Art Center and the 950-acre Equinox Preserve.

The Stagecoach Inn is still there, and relatively the same…now the original, elderly building is called Ye Olde Tavern and comes complete with stories and leaning doorways.

As a small village, then a small community, Manchester postal history doesn't come through the market that often. As always, colonial and Revolutionary War material would be worth mortgaging the house for and needs to be proven by transit marks, return addresses and the like. Post 1792 material from just about anywhere in the Manchester area would be a great addition to any collection. Very affordable circle postmarks popped up around 1834; manuscript markings were used until then.

Commercial covers from the Equinox House and the early Orvis Mail Order Company will definitely stand out; many even qualify as entry level pieces. Lincoln family material exists from here and is worth keeping an eye out for, as would mail sent by Presidents and the like staying at the Equinox.

The Town of Manchester had several mills going in the late 1800s and commercial covers abound. At the turn of the century, the area had four marble quarries going – covers from those commercial operations and marble related businesses in town should offer up some striking commercial covers.

Vergennes, Vermont

The Town of Heroes

There are names, and then there are names. The story behind the naming of Vergennes, Vermont was deeply entrenched in the minds of the Revolutionary War veterans who founded the city.

Ethan Allen himself suggested naming the Western Vermont community after the French foreign minister that not only negotiated the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the war but seeded the rebel cause long before the conflict began.

Charles Gravier, the Count of Vergennes, had taken the French loss to England in the French-Indian War in America as a personal insult – then, England went and won the Seven Years War. As a true Frenchman who hated England with a passion, he wanted to ensure England was knocked down a peg or two. So, the Count convinced King Louis XVI to send money to those rabble-rousin' rebels in America.

The Count even went so far as to establish a dummy company to filter money to the cause (wouldn't want the British to catch on) and he helped secure arms and volunteers for the cause. Sounds like the sort of fellow Ethan Allen might have known in person. French assistance, illegal to begin with then later through French troops and weaponry, played a huge part in the American victory. Not so good for the French, though…the American cause virtually drained the royal coffers and directly led to the French Revolution.

The Count died in 1787, one year before Vergennes was founded. The City of Vergennes…well, although Vergennes is a little over half the size of Manchester, it is indeed a city, and was chartered as such when the paperwork was filed in 1788. It was the

first city in Vermont when papers were filed in the much larger Windsor and the third city in the US when Vermont became the 14th state. Today, the Addison County community is the smallest of Vermont's nine cities with a population of 2600.

The area to be known as Vergennes was originally a patch of Otter Creek just below a set of roaring falls in an area known as home to tribes of the Abenaki and Iroquois nations. Nearby, the Dutch operated a trading post until abandoning it in 1673 after the Third Anglo Dutch War. Early settlers came following the area's inclusion in the New Hampshire Grant, but hanging onto that land was harder that it seemed, thanks to Otter Creek's walking distance from the New York border. Much of the worse fighting between Vermont and New York took place around here.

While a Donald MacIntosh gets credit for being the first settler when he settled in above the falls, he wasn't the first or nicest. In fact, MacIntosh was foreman of a group of Scottish immigrants who took the land by force from a Joshua Hayes in 1766. MacIntosh happened to be operating under direction of English army Colonel Reid. Later, Ira Allen of the good old Green Mountain Boys discovered this little fact and swept though the small settlement, burning out the houses and telling all concerned to leave. They did.

Eventually, three small towns cropped up in this area around the giant Otter Creek waterway – New Haven, Panton and Ferrisburg. But would they be settled?

Not straight away. By the Revolutionary War, settlers weren't so keen to call Otter Creek home, what with all the bullets flying around. When General Burgoyne came through the area in 1777, most settlers left. A later incursion by General Carleton convinced the rest it was time to pull up stakes.

Frustratingly enough, those who bailed knew they had left behind a virtual gold mine. In an era where industrialization was dependent on water power, the three town patch of Otter Creek was begging to be exploited – in fact, MacIntosh had already built a grist mill below the Otter Creek Falls.

Why? The Vergennes sits in a 500-foot wide section of the creek that is punctuated by the three waterfalls pouring down from the cliff known as Otter Creek Falls. Swift, consistent water – wow. Throw in the fact there was an easy route to Lake Champlain – so good even a sleeping dog could pilot a riverboat through the channel – and there's no doubt people wanted to return ASAP.

When the war ended, settlers poured in. And, here's the funny part. When the three towns considered the prosperity that would come from studding the riverbank with waterwheel driven factories, they didn't just decide to see which town would do better. Instead, all three towns combined their portions of Otter Creek Falls waterfront to form the new city. It was dubbed a city because they expected major growth.

There was growth, and Vergennes went on to become a major Vermont industrial hot spot through the 19th century. It began as soon as waterwheels hit the swift creek. To help them grow, the US post office was established in 1792 with Alexander Brush as postmaster. He served until June of the following year.

In 1807, the new Monkton Ironworks facility dominated the town; it was one of America's first large steel foundries. By 1812, it had nine forges, giant blast and air furnaces, a rolling mill and a wire factory.

And soon, the US Navy as a customer. With the War of 1812 raging, the winter of 1813 saw Vergennes' safe port and skilled labor as a perfect place for Commodore Thomas Macdonough to park his fleet over the winter and, oh by the way, have a few

more ships built. In charge of Lake Champlain defense, Macdonough was prepping for an inevitable British invasion in 1814. Monkton Ironworks was tapped for fitting the current fleet and helping the local shipyards build new ships.

Prime on the new ship inventory was the giant 26-gun *Saratoga*, completed in 40 days. From Vergennes' shipyards also came the 17-gun schooner *Ticonderoga* (originally meant to be the newest cargo ship for the Vergennes area), the brig *Eagle*, the 146-foot frigate 37-gun *Confiance* (the largest ship ever built in Lake Champlain) and six two-gun gunboats.

500 American troops were stationed in Vergennes as well. Vermont Militiamen were also brought in, but many were released from action during the winter, told to be ready to come running if the English attacked. The British navy formed a small force at the mouth of the creek May 14, 1814, and a series of American cannons along the river were fired, bringing forth the militia. Between American forces on land and lake, the English were repelled.

Macdonough's fleet left Vergennes in August of 1814, and their fate was determined September 11, 1814 when the fleet confronted a British invasion fleet in Cumberland Bay. When the cannon smoke settled, McDonough's men and ships had won one of the most important naval battles of the war.

Simultaneously, the British were routed in Plattsburgh by a force of Vermont and New York militiamen finally working together. Men from Vergennes flowed out to meet the fight and supplemented a weakened American Army force. The local troops were led by General Samuel Strong, a retired Vermont militia man, Revolutionary war hero and the city's mayor; at his side was Major Jesse Lyman. The men of Vergennes effectively ended all British efforts in this certain patch of former colonies.

The war ended on the East Coast Christmas Eve, 1814. The great ships built in Vergennes were eventually stripped then left to rot and sink in New York's hunk of Lake Champlain. As she rotted, the *Confiance* also evolved into not that great of an example of Vergennes craftsmanship – she was the first to sink, mainly due to flimsy construction and poor choice of building materials. The *Ticonderoga* was refloated in 1958 and now resides in the Skeensboro Museum.

Ironically, the 1815 Treaty of Ghent that ended the war also killed the Monkton Ironworks. The ships they helped build had secured a victory, but that victory ended the embargo on British goods that had given American producers a monopoly on the market during the war. The Brits soon released cheaper goods onto the market, and this was a battle the ironworks could not win. By 1816, the foundry was closed.

Vergennes hiccupped but survived thanks to the other industries it had on tap and its lock on river traffic. In 1824, the Champlain Canal opened, connecting Lake Champlain with the Hudson River (and then to the Atlantic Ocean) and business was off the hook for Vergennes and their ever growing port.

Until the railroad bypassed the city. By the 1850s, the same tracks that gave prosperity to Windsor had nicked Vergennes's Achilles heel. The city, dependant on providing access to Lake Champlain, found they were no longer the only transportation game in town. The railroad offered cheaper transportation and the land around Vergennes was too steep for an effective rail route.

Still, Vergennes and their lake access were able to compete well into the 1870s thanks to a Canadian timber boom, which resulted in logs coming across the lake to

Vergennes to be processed. Here, they did everything from processing logs to building carriages.

The 1880s saw Vergennes slipping down to mainly an agricultural hub – they were still in the middle of prime agricultural commerce traffic - but river traffic continued to fall off and attempts to build a railroad spur from the creek just didn't do the trick.

The Great Depression of the 1930s spelled the end for most of the creek-side industry. However, the spark plug company L.F. Benton, founded in 1907, continued to flourish. Since 1956, it has been known as Goodrich Sensors and Integrated Systems and employs about 800, making it the city's major employer.

The town has also managed to become the place to see a wonderfully preserved late 19th century era Main Street that mainly features Italianate buildings constructed in the 1870s Lumber Boom.

Dominating the cityscape is the 1897 Opera House. Built for $12,000, it not only entertained folks, it was also used for town meetings, rallies, debates, even weddings and school graduations. Although the proud old girl was abandoned in the 1970s, she was faithfully preserved in the 1990s, in turn spurring an entire renovation of Main Street.

One post office serves Vergennes. Vergennes postal history would be led by any commercial cover from Monkton Ironworks. A note home from a Navy sailor while McDonough's fleet called Vergennes home, well, that would be a key find to any collection.

Except for expensive manuscript cancels in the 1700s and special box and oval cancels in the early '20s, stampless era covers are quite affordable. Early Vergennes abounds in covers, commercial and otherwise, plus adhesive offerings will include high-postage packages and urgent letters sent by water. How about one with a Vergennes postmark just nuzzling a 90-cent crimson? Shipping covers should be fairly easy to find, especially from the main Vergennes based shipper, the Lake Champlain Steamship Company (founded 1813).

Nantucket, Massachusetts

The Whaling Capital of the World

What began as an investment in a young America evolved into the whaling capital of the world for more than 140 years.

Although the heyday and wealth of the Nantucket, Massachusetts monopoly on the whaling world is in the past, the petite island 30 miles from Cape Cod retains much of its hardy yet elegant character. Today, Nantucket is enjoying a heyday of another sort – especially in the summertime.

To get to today's summer, let's start at the beginning. Before European colonization, the island was home to the Wampanoag speaking people, the Nantuceute. They were a small group existing on farming and cod fishing. In the 1600s, the island became a refuge for other Native Americans fleeing European settlement on the mainland.

Nantucket belonged to the New York Colony when the island was deeded in 1641 to Watertown, Massachusetts businessman and Deputy to the General Court Thomas Mayhew. Although he was highly interested in creating something out of it, the island remained isolated until the '50s when he decided to sell shares to folks sharing his interest in colonizing the island. When all was said and done, his initial shares had been divided between the 31 families that would start a home on the island.

In 1659, the first permanent settlers, Thomas Macy and his family, came ashore with several other people. Macy had come to America with his parents in 1640, fleeing religious persecution like many early American pioneers. Sadly, he had just faced persecution from Puritan authorities in Salisbury, Massachusetts when he gave shelter to a group of Quakers during a rainstorm. Burned by all that, he set off for the island to get things ready for the others.

The small party was led by the man who would become the island's patriarch – Tristham Coffin. Not only had he headed one of the groups that bought a chunk of shares from Mayhew, he had was also the first person to take steps towards doing something

with the island. And here's a connection to later history – earlier in 1659, he came to the island to make sure the Wampanoag were kosher with Europeans moving in – and his translator was Peter Folger, future grandfather of Benjamin Franklin.

In another interesting move, vis-à-vis Native American relations, not only did the group purchase land from the tribe, Coffin and the others signed agreements that promised only land that was for the common good of the colony would be purchased from the Wampanoag – no individual sales were to be made.

More settlers came the following years. The colony's first town, Sherburn, was established at Capuam Harbor. Already, it was poised to become a major port town.

Ironically, the colony's initial intent was to raise sheep and maybe fish some of that cod the natives loved so much. True to form, early Nantucketers raised sheep, accruing 10,000 head before long, all cultivated to give the settlers wool for the lucrative New England wool market.

But, whales would end up supplanting not only the island's wool economy, but that of New England's.

This cash crop began as a fluke. For years, Wampanoag had harvested whales that washed ashore when the so called "scragg" whales migrated through the area every August. In the early '70s, settlers trapped and killed a whale in a cove, rendering the oil in the blubber for lamps and candles, and pulling out the baleen, whalebone used in many products of the day, such as corset pins and umbrella frames.

Whale oil and baleen were also known as liquid gold in the New World economy, and it wasn't long before whaling profits looked like a better bet than wool, especially since Nantucket was the closest bit of American land to the whale migration route.

A whale hunting expert was recruited, and during his time in the colony, he taught settlers how to hunt whales from boats. Settlers and Wampanoag began hitting the ocean in small boats. As profits rang up, larger boats were built, but the industry was hampered by the need to come home with every whale so it could be rendered on shore.

Eventually, the port at Sherburn couldn't stand up to the task of receiving the ever larger boats and their cargoes – mainly because silt had built up over the harbor crossing. Sherburn was moved to its current location and was eventually renamed Nantucket in 1794.

In 1711, Nantucket Island whalers accidentally came across a sperm whale, coveted throughout the world for the hundreds of gallons of high quality oil in their heads. Family and Nantucket fortunes were made by basically cornering the market on candles made from the oil, the superior lighting fuel for the age. Craving for profits led to much larger ships bearing equipment that allowed whales to be rendered at sea, negating the constant trips back home. By the mid-1700s, sophisticated factory ships plied the waters between the Arctic and the Carolinas. Before long, the ships would be traveling the world on trips that took years.

Sherburn grew with the whaling industry. Basically, someone needed to outfit and repair the ships, the required tradesmen and sailors needed places to live, eat, buy clothes and buy beer. Women became equals in this society - with men away for years at a time, most of these businesses were operated by the women they left behind.

One woman created a key part of the Nantucket legend. Nantucket has been known as a Quaker settlement but it didn't start out that way; initial settlers came from various Protestant faiths. In the early 1700s, Mary Coffin Starbuck converted to

Quakerism, eventually becoming a Quaker preacher while her husband Nathaniel led the local movement. Nantucket's other top families converted in short order. The order would hold sway over the island for 140 years, and this included running the town and the whale trade.

Population swelled. In 1700, 300 whites and 800 natives lived in the area. By 1840, nearly 10,000 people from around the world called Nantucket home.

Life wouldn't always be easy for this port town. Harsh times came during the Revolutionary War. As pacifists, the Quakers loudly voiced their objection to the war. Consequently, neither side of the conflict gave them respect, neither side gave protection. The harbor was looted and plundered by both sides during the conflict. British naval blockades kept whaling ships in port for the duration. Nantucket starved in their former splendor. It's said that between Nantucketers that did fight in the war and Nantucketers that fell to starvation and disease, 1600 died during the Revolutionary War.

Post war, things got back on track fairly quickly for the island. This is also when Nantucket Island became an Abolitionist stronghold and haven for escaped slaves. Slavery itself had been outlawed on the island in 1770. However, blacks were segregated to an area outside town called New Guinea (now known as Five Corners), and its here that many of the first free African Americans built their own town and put their stamp on the island forever. Many found jobs in town and on the ships.

The island, and New Guinea, also played host to a unique immigrant population. As whaling ships traveled the waters around the world, they began recruiting talented whaling crews from the Cape Verde islands, and many of them ended up staying in the US long after their service was done.

In 1792, the post office came to town. The first postmaster, William Coffin, was a direct descendant of Tristham and demonstrates how much the founding families figured into Nantucket history. He is listed as a whale merchant, no jaw dropping surprise there, but he was also once a suspected bank robber. In 1795, a still unsolved robbery at the local bank netted many suspects, and Coffin led the list. Nothing was proven, but the recriminations against him got so bad that he wrote a book explaining his innocence, and it wasn't called *If I Did It*.

His writing may also be better known to just about everyone. He is suspected in having ghostwritten the first book about the wreck of the Nantucket whaler *Exeter*. It's the ship that was bashed in by a giant whale, sinking with just about everyone aboard. You guessed it - the story eventually found its way into mainstream America as Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and more recently, the main source for the blockbuster movie about the *Exeter* wreck, *In the Heart of the Sea*.

Nantucket's post office wasn't your average affair. Imagine this: the day's mail might come on the morning ferry from Cape Cod, or it might come from a whaler just in from Chinese waters with letters from ships it met along the way. Oftentimes, clerks brought in mail for men that were at sea, holding letters for years at a time. It also must've been a prime seat to see some of the world's first stamps come through on letters sent from far flung locations – how about a 'Mom, I'm OK' letter mailed from British Guiana using one of those strange Cotton Reel stamps...

Despite hardships during the War of 1812 that again saw whalers quarantined in port, the whaling industry continued to grow.

Continued to grow until one day it didn't.

Beginning with the new kerosene industry in 1830, many things collided to throw the island off course. Kerosene powered lanterns proved to be a much cheaper to feed and actually provided better lighting. Seemingly rubbing in that fact, the town burned in 1846 when a knocked over kerosene lantern started a fire that roared through warehouses packed with blubber and oil. At the same time, better ports on the mainland in New Bedford and Salem came complete with better access to railroads. The Gold Rush in California sucked away men. When the Civil War came, Nantucket just couldn't take anymore hits. Of the 300 men who went to war, 73 never returned.

Finally, the harbor silted up just enough that heavily-ladened whalers couldn't cross the bar. In 1869, the last whaler, the *Oak*, left port and never bothered to come back. Instead of returning to her home port when the voyage ended in 1872, the *Oak* was sold in Panama for whatever the owner could get for her. By 1870, the peak population of 10,000 had dwindled to 4000 and once wealthy families were literally going hungry amongst fine china and sterling silver dinner service.

The preceding patch of Nantucket history saw many desperate gambles to save the town. One of the strangest schemes involved silk. In the mid-1830s, a group of merchants banded together to make Nantucket the first place in the US to produce fine silk.

How? The plan seemed simple. Import Chinese mulberry trees and the silkworms that just adored eating the leaves, spinning silk cocoons when they were done. One would take the silk, spin it, how many yards of what color do you want, sir? What little money these merchants had was spent fast bringing starter supplies from China, building a large factory, purchasing looms and hiring 20 local women to do the work. Presto, the Atlantic Silk Company was born.

It never really worked. Although some silk made it through the assembly lines, it was soon discovered why Chinese mulberry trees aren't well known as popular trees in New England. Mulberries dig hot weather, and that's something New England isn't known for. Combined with poor, sandy soil, saltwater fog and silkworms that couldn't take the cold, the mulberry scheme fizzled in 1844 at the cost of thousands of dollars.

Yet another reason why Nantucket became a ghost town, and the proud old lady would remain this way until…

Tourism. Tourists began flowing off the ferry boats in droves as the 1870s turned into the 1880s. Although Nantucket had hosted vacationers as far back as the 1840s, Nantucketers now turned their focus to anything that would heal the town, and that proved to be active recruitment amongst the big city tourists. Luck was on their side – a more sophisticated and cheap railroad system had taught city folks they didn't have to stay home. A simple hop on the train could whisk them nearer to paradise. To many, that paradise was the charming island of Nantucket. Hotels were built, ordinary people rented out rooms, the slogan, the buzzword for this effort was 'Two Boats a Day', and soon it became more than just two boats of visitors a day.

Currently, Nantucket is not just a town, it's a county. Between the island itself and the two smaller islands of Tuckernunk and Muskeaget, 10,000 people call Nantucket County home. When summer residents come to town, the population soars to 50,000, and that figure doesn't include day-trippers and hotel guests. Nantucket has found itself back on track, and through the years has had to build an airport and continuously upgrade its ferry fleet to keep up with her visitors.

Former whaling captain houses, factories, and mansions of the founding families are now more likely to be entered in the Yellow Pages as an inn. In fact, the former home of the Atlantic Silk Company can now be visited as the Sherburne Inn.

Whale hunting remains on the agenda - provided you bring a camera. A number of whale tour boats cruise the ocean just outside Nantucket with eco-tourists amongst their cargo. The right whale, nearly hunted to extinction, can now be seen in limited numbers, along with humpback, minke, and finback whales. Another key marine mammal attraction is the Gray Seals, also making a comeback from near extinction. In the 1960s, the seals were gobbling their way through the cod population, and a campaign to eradicate the seals equaled only a few pups spotted in the 1970s. Now 1,000 Gray Seals can be spotted during the tours.

Nantucket is served by a single New Deal era post office on the waterfront. Early postal history can be sorted into two categories – regular and whaling. Any whaling cover fetches a premium on the market, and a Nantucket postmark can be found on many of them.

Postmarks from the early days vacillate in value. There's a mix of expensive straight line and fancy oval marks, cheap manuscript and cheapish circles to pick out from this prolific post office. Whaling covers with the Sherburn postmark would be crucial to any Nantucket collection – if you want to buy one, just decide how many of your children will not be able to go to college.

Everyday business and local letters are fairly simple to find, even in the stampless era, but, again, anything with the Sherburn postmark would be desirable, but nearly impossible to find.

Commercial covers obviously abound in the market, and you have the enviable choice of setting the whaling industry or tourism as your focus.

New Bedford, Massachusetts

The City That Bounces Back Every Time

When Nantucket lost the title *Whaling Capital of the World*, their neighbors in New Bedford took over the job. The city would prosper for decades under the weight of the whale, but when the sun set on that industry, New Bedford, unlike Nantucket, was able to shift gears and find success in a drastically different industry. Not just once, but several times.

Along the way, New Bedford, Massachusetts has also picked up a title it will most likely always hold. The Bristol County city is considered the Portuguese capital of America, thanks to the immigrants from that nation and its colonies, all folks who came to New Bedford for a better life and found it. Today, over sixty percent of New Bedford's population claim Portuguese ancestry. You can tell. New Bedford abounds with Portuguese culture – from the annual Feast of the Blessed Sacrament parade to everyday culture, restaurants, and the occasional flamboyant festivals.

New Bedford had a similar beginning to Nantucket. The city's roots began among a cluster of fishing and farming villages on the mouth of the Acushnet River, just off Buzzard's Bay on Massachusetts' extreme southern Atlantic coastline. In the mid-1600s, this area was a refuge from Quakers fleeing Puritan persecution in Plymouth Colony and Rhode Island. They formed the town Old Dartmouth, which included the communities of Acushnet, Dartmouth and Westport.

One hundred years later, Joseph Russell purchased the part of Old Dartmouth that sprawled neglected on the west bank of the Acushnet, very near the river's mouth, and he began to aggressively develop the area. Soon, the area was dubbed New Bedford Village and became the area's dominant community.

The village became a town in 1765 when an even more assertive developer sailed into the harbor. Whale merchant Joseph Rotch, Jr. pegged the little harbor village as a perfect spot for his whaling business. Why? The harbor was deeper than Nantucket's and could accommodate larger ships – a fact that would eventually doom Nantucket.

Rotch came to New Bedford to cut out the middle man. Weary of dealing with the cartels that dictated the whaling trade, he decided to go into the total whale business himself – from harvest to market. After purchasing much of New Bedford Village from

Russell, he set about meshing New Bedford and Nantucket into the center for the American whaling trade. He aggressively pursued tradesmen to set up shop in New Bedford, including a shipyard and some of the prominent Nantucket whaling families. He was also able to keep both communities working together for decades.

In 1767, the first New Bedford whaler, the *Dartmouth*, went straight from the shipyard to the ocean in pursuit of riches. *Dartmouth* would later play an important role in American history – sadly, not the good kind for her owner. She was one of the ships boarded during the Boston Tea Party and her cargo of 114 chests of genuine East India Company tea was destroyed.

By 1775, New Bedford hosted fifty of the best whalers on the oceans. The shipyards would continue to produce heavy but agile ships equipped with onboard whale processing equipment.

The village barely survived its first hurdle – the Revolutionary War. Not only did they have the same problems as Nantucket – ships trapped in harbor by blockades and a new nation reticent to help the pacifist Quakers that weren't helping them – but the village suffered a major British invasion.

Throughout the war, the Acushnet River was a haven for privateers, which were basically pirates paid by Americans for the sole purpose of zipping out to sea to raid British ships. In September of 1778, a 2000-man force of British raiders swept through the Acushnet River Valley, burning, destroying, and killing. During their prolonged visit to New Bedford, the British destroyed 34 ships, torched eleven houses and much of the commercial district.

Perhaps that's why the New Bedford whaler, the *Bedford*, made a stop in Jolly Olde England in 1783. That's where the *Bedford's* master made sure to sail her straight up the Thames, proudly flying the rebel American flag all the way to London. She was the first American vessel to fly the stars and bars in England waters, signifying that our nation was here to stay.

The end of the war saw major rebuilding of New Bedford and its fortunes. So widespread was the restructuring, New Bedford was able to re-charter as a town in 1787. In 1789, New Bedford was tapped to become the headquarters for the Treasury Department's Tenth US Customs District, a job it continues today.

In 1791, New Bedford spread their wings even more when they sent the first ship to the relatively untapped Arctic region. By the time the *Rebecca* returned in 1793 with a full load of whale oil, New Bedford had its own post office, with William Tobey as postmaster. It would be interesting to know what kind of mail he had held for *Rebecca's* sailors – and what mail did the ship bring back for him to process?

The 1800s would see the town match, then exceed Nantucket in whale production. In 1827, New Bedford processed 5000 more barrels of whale oil than their neighbors on that little island that was already dealing with a silted up harbor. Nantucket would never exceed New Bedford production again.

Mainly, it was due to New Bedford's ships. As New Bedford adapted to the Arctic and Pacific hunting grounds, shipyards brought out heavier ships with steel reinforced hulls (the better to plow through the Arctic ice with). The heavier ships couldn't pass through Nantucket's sandbar, so New Bedford was the happening place for basing whaling fleets. It also didn't help that the town had direct access to the new fangled railroad system and its nifty way of whisking product to market.

By 1841, the new whaling capital employed 10,000 men in the whaling industry. From servicing ships to building them and everything in between, New Bedford was hiring anyone with two working hands. Even those with one leg and a grumpy attitude could drive a ship to the ends of the earth to find whales. Although Captain Ahab was fictional, *Moby Dick* author Herman Melville was one of the 10,000 employed in the 1840s whale trade, setting sail on his own whaling adventure in 1841. Loud, bustling New Bedford features prominently in the beginning pages of the whaling epic to beat all whaling epics.

Leaving whaling aside, New Bedford was important for American history as the nation struggled towards equality. The Quakers here provided safe haven (and jobs) for escaped slaves and free blacks alike. Frederick Douglass found refuge here, working on the wharfs from 1838 to 1841. New Bedford was the final spot on the Underground Railroad for Douglass and his future wife. Here they would marry and start their family, and here is where he began his famous anti-slavery speaking career. Long after New Bedford, he was fighting the good fight for African Americans, laying the foundation stones for equal rights.

The strong African American community here and throughout Massachusetts meant some blacks were able to own land – and activist Paul Cuffe secured the rights for black landowners to vote in 1783. When Cuffe was young, he refused to become the menial worker all blacks were expected to be. Instead, he turned to the seas, and not as an ordinary seaman. Cuffe studied mathematics and navigation, becoming a valuable asset to whaling ships. He parlayed his experience into becoming his own boss, and beyond, at one time owning shares in ten ships. He used his role as a wealthy whaler to promote African-American rights. He lived in neighboring Westport for most of his life.

In 1848, the whaling industry was boosted by the invention of the Temple toggle iron. Freed slave Lewis Temple was a blacksmith that listened to complaints whalers brought to his shop along with their broken harpoons. It was hard to get those early harpoons to hold struggling whales. Temple developed the toggle iron, which had a much more severe angle to it than the conventional barbed hook. Before long, his invention revolutionized the whaling industry.

The 1830s and 1840s also saw Portuguese men coming in to man the ships. Their culture spread through the town in short order, although the men and families from the Portuguese colonies in Cape Verde, the Azores and Madeira were sequestered with the African-Americans in a separate part of town.

In 1847, New Bedford was re-chartered as a city. Ten years later the New Bedford whaling industry peaked with mighty numbers. She was home to half the US whaling fleet that year, and they brought in 127,000 barrels of “regular” whale oil, 48,000 of the prime sperm whale oil, and over one million pounds of whalebone.

This wasn’t a good time for the whale oil market, though. Petroleum found in the Pennsylvania oil fields in the 1830s provided cheaper, more efficient kerosene lighting oil. Ironically, as Big Oil began to slaughter the whale industry, New Bedford became home for America’s first petroleum oil refinery.

The Civil War doomed the whaling industry. Again, ships were trapped in harbor, so much so that forty derelict ships were all but given to the American Navy, which towed them south to sink and block the Charleston and Savannah harbors. While the US whaling fleet began the decade with 167 whale ships, only 39 remained in 1867.

Not that whaling came to a grinding halt forever. New ships were built, new crews assembled. While whaling interests moved to the West Coast to source the Pacific for whales (mainly for whalebone by now), New Bedford still had a fairly striving whale business. However, 22 of her ships were lost in Alaska when ice came in earlier than expected, crushing the ships to pieces off Point Belcher and Wainright Inlet in 1871. Several years later, more New Bedford ships would be lost again to ice.

New Bedford once competed with Boston, Provincetown and San Francisco for whale sized bucks. By the end, she was the only American whaling center remaining, sending out her last ship in 1925.

But she wasn't out. As soon as the whaling industry began to wane, New Bedford shifted to the textile industry. In 1849, the Wamsutta Mills became the city's first textile mill. In 1875, the mill outpaced the year's whale oil production revenue by converting 19,000 bales of cotton into twenty million yards of high quality cloth; that cloth turned into nearly the same amount of bucks earned by the whaling industry that year. The mill would continue to produce at least twenty million yards of cloth annually, holding the record as the world's largest weaving mill until 1892.

Between 1880 and 1910, 28 massive textile mill concerns would be founded in New Bedford, making the city one of the largest producers of cotton and cloth in the country. In the same time period, population soared from 40,000 to 120,000. The industry gave thousands of fresh immigrants a start in the new world. Portuguese continued to flow in, along with Polish, Canadians, and Eastern European Jews.

Ninety percent of the city's manufacturing workforce was employed at the mills. By 1915, the city was home to 3.5 million spindles converting cotton fibers to thread, and 55,000 looms turning that thread into cloth sold around the world. Over forty thousand were employed in the industry.

It's said that the cloth produced here and throughout New England was better quality than that from the South. However, four major mills headed south in the 1920s, attracted by cheap labor. As the industry unspooled in New Bedford, unemployment soared.

So did frustration. In 1928, New Bedford was the site of America's first major textile industry strike. Angered by an unannounced 10 percent cut in pay, 30,000 workers at several mills walked out in late April. Initially, the strike was incited by the communist American Worker's Party to throw a general monkeywrench into America in general. The Communists made sure the workers got violent, creating chaos in the city.

When things got out of hand, a consortium of local, non-Communist unions stepped in to actually see about fixing the problem that sparked the strike. In September, workers returned to their machines when the unions were able to secure for them only a five-percent reduction in pay and a promise of 30 day's notice on any change in pay. Workers had also fought for a forty-hour workweek, but they didn't get it. The American textile industry would be rocked by later, more violent strikes in the future.

New Bedford wouldn't be a part of that textile future for much longer. Two dozen mills shuttered during the Great Depression, and by the late 1940s, the textile industry had left the city in the rearview mirror.

New Bedford picked itself up again. The Portuguese immigrants happened to include talented fishermen among their numbers. A booming commercial fishing industry

thrived in the area. For awhile. In 1996, environmental concerns shut down the city's main fishing hole, the Georges Banks.

So, the city shifted to seafood processing. For the first sixteen years of the 21rst century, New Bedford held the honor of top earning seafood port, with 124 million pounds of fish, worth $320,000,000, crossing its docks in 2015 alone. Most of the catch came from New Bedford's thriving scallop industry. Eco-tourism is also a big hit for those who want to hunt whales with their cameras.

New Bedford is served by three post offices. Of all the communities in this book, New Bedford has the most diverse collection opportunities. Whaling covers coming through or out of New Bedford would be worth mortgaging the house for, with items from Rotch and his descendants fetching at least a historical premium.

With its role as a Customs port, New Bedford had many more postal customers than an average town, so early postmarks are affordable. New Bedford's post office started business with an official straight line cancel displaying the town mark and the month; the day was filled in by hand. The office got into the circle and oval game in the early 1800s, with several changes to the dimensions and wording well into the 1850s. Duplex handstamps were used in the adhesive era, with machine cancels transitioning in later in the century.

If your budget tends to frown at whaling covers, a more cost effective field would obviously be the textile industry and the myriad of commercial covers just waiting for the collector to organize. You could spotlight one company, or the entire industry; either would keep you out of your better half's hair for quite some time. As the site for the Tenth Customs District, it's possible to find some nice government postal history from New Bedford – it'll be even better if they didn't use penalty covers to conduct their business, but it's possible to find a nice high value stamp clinging to the postmark. Tracing the Portuguese influence throughout the city's history and industries would make an interesting specialty collection.

Hudson, New York

The Whaling Capital...of New York?

The war was over. American had won.

That news sounded too good to be true.

Just ask the guys with Nantucket Navigation.

Even as peace was being negotiated in 1783, namely a peace treaty between the Americans and British that put the onus on the fact that America was now free, there were still those unwilling to believe that England was not going to come back and snatch up all the territory it had lost.

One such group of Doubting Thomases came out of New England whaling industry seeking a safe spot to harbor their ships and sit out the upcoming British invasion. Representing a group of Quaker whalers and merchants from Nantucket, Providence, Newport and Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket Navigation Company leaders Thomas and Seth Jenkins set their eyes on Hudson, New York – a safe 130 miles up the Hudson River, about as far as an ocean going ship could go at that time. It was a perfect harbor, too, a spit of land separated by the small North Bay and South Bay. Just be careful whilst boating – famed Dutch explorer Henry Hudson had no choice but "discover" the place when he ran aground here in 1609.

The land originally belonged to the Mohican people. A Dutch family, the Van Rensselaers, received the land in 1649 through a charter from the New Netherlands colony. Somehow, the Van Hoesen family acquired the same chunk of land from the Dutch authorities in 1662, and this is the claim the British honored when they took over the New York colony in 1667.

Imagine the fights between the neighbors in the ensuing years. In the meantime, farmers flowed into the area around the town site. By the 1700s, the area was known as Claverack Landing, and was part of the town of Claverock. A wharf and several buildings sat on the land when the Jenkins came looking for land. They purchased Claverock Landing, ending the feud for good.

Swiftly, a designed community went from the map to the ground – in fact, when it was named after Henry Hudson, Hudson was one of three planned communities in New York. There was a human for every spot in the new Columbia County community, between those already dedicated to moving out of New England (some even brought their existing homes, board by board, with them) and land speculators. Hudson was incorporated as a city in 1785, the third incorporated city in New York.

By then, Hudson already boasted hundreds of homes, several major wharves, a whale oil processing plant, a rum distillery, four large warehouses, a 600 foot ropewalk (rope factory), two tanneries, a shipyard and 25 vessels including a 30,000 ton schooner just built in Hudson. The fleet was a combination of whalers and – more importantly – merchant ships to haul to market goods made here and produce from local farms. Before long, Hudson was shipping to ports in the American South and in South America, and 1790 was given title of Port of Entry – many goods going west had to come in through here.

One year later, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison visited Hudson on their tour of the northern states. The future presidents came to see Seth Jenkins, who now ran a rum distillery, and begged him to stop using molasses from the West Indies for his rum. They suggested using French wine instead. The idea was to slowly but surely, industry by industry, to stop sending American money to England.

The post office came to town a year after the visitors left, carrying their message across the nation. Someone had to handle the messages Hudson sent around the world, and Cotton Gelston was the main man. He remained postmaster until 1802 when the staunch Federalist was accused of not getting along with the current Jefferson Republican administration. Simply, Gelston believed in a strong federal government dictating every aspect of American life as opposed to less federal government, more-local-government-the-better Republicans. A fight that continues today.

In 1794, a man was born in Hudson that would dictate the future of Texas. William J Worth was raised in Hudson, becoming a military man in time for the war of 1812. Worth was a Colonel under Zachary Taylor during the Mexican-American War. Worth led troops through many of the key American victories in that conflict, including the capture of Mexico City. He's the one who climbed atop the Presidential Palace to plant the Stars and Bars. Later, Worth served with the War Department in charge of the growing Texas Republic. He died in Texas in 1849, and thanks to the many honors he earned in life, Fort Worth was named after him.

Politics continued to catch fire in Hudson. One such fight made it to the courts in 1804 when Hudson journalist and Federalist Harry Croswell was arrested for libel after writing nasty things about Jefferson and New York Governor George Clinton. Basically, he called them untrustworthy.

Since he was an influential writer, folks were concerned Croswell could impact the 1806 election, so somebody better put the brakes on that guy! In a conspiracy that ran from Jefferson to the Columbia County sheriff, Croswell was arrested for libel and found guilty in a quickly processed trial. At that time, libel cases could be proven with very little evidence, and defendants weren't really allowed to defend themselves.

Croswell's case would end that. To begin with, his appeal ended up before the US Supreme Court. First, Croswell said he was only writing the truth. Second, and most

importantly, during the original trial he wasn't allowed to provide evidence that backed up what he had written. Basically, politicians are untrustworthy.

Although he was defended by Alexander Hamilton, Croswell lost before the Supreme Court. However, a year later, the New York legislature passed an innovative rule that a person facing libel could present documents that proved the written statements were true. This later became the basis that freedom of the press was built on.

Here's another tie to history. While representing Croswell before the Supreme Court, Hamilton was staying with friends. At dinner one night, he let fly some inflammatory remarks about the character of Aaron Burr. These very remarks were passed onto Burr and later motivated the famous duel that saw Hamilton dead and no longer saying nasty things about other people.

Let's get back to Croswell. Croswell later burned out on politics and left Hudson to follow a calling to preach the word of the Lord. As an Episcopalian minister, he soon became embroiled in another debate. This one was over separation of church and state. At the time, the Puritan denomination's Congregational church dominated New York as the official church of the state. They were using the state legislature to keep the Episcopalian (the new New World branch of the Church of England) out.

Here's a quick history lesson. Initially, English America was primarily settled by Puritans and they worshipped at the altar of the Congregational Church. In the 1600s, the Puritan religion was the official church for eight of the 13 colonies. All Congregational men were created equal, which meant a poor man could vote alongside a rich man. That equals one of the many ways America was born, although the vote didn't extend to everyone – just Congregational male landowners. Under the Congregational system, all citizens, regardless of faith, were required to pay taxes to the church. Church members were voted to government positions in one-man races. And, until the British Toleration Act of 1689, no other faiths were allowed to build their own churches in Congregational territory.

In the 1700s, the Anglican Church became the stronger church, maybe even the big man on campus in many places, including New York, until the revolution ended the long arm of the Church of England. Many freshly minted Americans thought the very idea of churches dictating government policy didn't tally with the American spirit. Plus, taking taxes from citizens to fund churches – that just wasn't cool and it needed to stop. It always comes down to money.

It should be made clear right here that churches weren't actually running things (and sometimes, the US government was telling *them* what to do); it's just that the church, with their monopoly on political candidates, was seen as the talking face for the Federalist Government when Federalists were no longer the flavor of the month.

Despite being outlawed by the First Amendment of the US Constitution, the old church and state game continued into the Northern US well into the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

This returns us to Croswell. A sermon he gave at the statehouse in 1818 on the eve of an Assembly vote to disestablish the Congregational church from New York state began a successful battle leading to a constitution that separated the Congregational Church – and all churches - from the State of New York the following year. It had already happened in Connecticut and would happen in Maine when it separated from

Massachusetts. The churches had to rely on collection plates from then on, although Massachusetts waited until 1833 to disestablish from the church.

Let's change the subject and go back in time. In 1805, Hudson was tapped as county seat of Columbia County. Whaling fortunes began to wane, though. Hudson ships violated Napoleonic War blockades the British put over the ports of France and Germany, and ships were confiscated and/or their sailors were pressed into Royal Navy service. Well, there goes that idea of protecting ships from the British.

Marine trade in Hudson plummeted quickly, and even more losses came in the blockades of the War of 1812. Hudson's Port of Entry status was stripped away in 1815. The last Nantucket Navigation whaler left port in 1819. Still, in 1820, Hudson was the fourth largest city in the state.

The 1830s saw a momentary return to the whale market. In 1831, four whalers brought $80,000 worth of whale oil home. Hudson was also home to a growing steamboat fleet by the early 1830s. It was a fine time for those who plied the oceans for their wealth.

But…

First, the advent of kerosene for lighting nixed the whale trade by the end of the 1830s. Then the railroad began to render the port moot – just before destroying it altogether.

In 1849, the Hudson and Boston Railroad line entering Hudson from the north equaled a trestle built over the North Bay, sealing that section of the harbor from ocean access. Originally, the train was brought in to service the Gifford Iron Works, but the area around the mill soon filled with other industries. Another railroad coming from the south brought a trestle over the South Bay and the harbor was officially nixed. By the 1870s, slag and cinder waste from the Hudson Iron Company furnace was used to fill in both bays, and a railroad station and railroad yards soon covered up the old wharfs.

However, by then Hudson no longer depended on the harbor. After all, the railroad brought in everything the businesses needed and made it a cinch to send finished products to market.

The 1870s saw a bewildering amount of heavy industry, including: the Hudson Knitting mill, the Harder Knitting Company, the Clapp and Jones fire engine factory, the Phillips Spiral Corn Husker factory, the Hudson Paper Car Wheel railroad wheel factory, and the Gifford Furnace, which started out making water turbines but soon was making ice cutting and ice handling tools for the burgeoning Hudson River icehouse industry.

The area was also home to the Hudson River School of the Nineteenth Century. No, not a literal school, but a class of artists that created romanticized landscape paintings of the Hudson River Valley and surrounding areas. Their awe inspiring if not naïve artwork does just what it was intended to do – to show how God exists in the very landscape He created.

Hudson itself was home base for a number of the Hudson River School; Sanford Gifford and Ernest and Arthur Paston were born here; Frederick Edwin Church and Thomas Cole lived just outside of town. Ironically, the South Bay was a prominent feature of their paintings, even as it was changing forever, proving one of their other main themes ironic – that man and nature exist side by side in total cooperation.

While Hudson prospered in the late 19th Century, the same couldn't be said about the new century. Too many businesses moved elsewhere or gave up. Hudson entered a

strange, but very profitable way of staying in business. Literally, Hudson made its living from sex for the first half of the 20th Century. Brothels lined Diamond Street and customers lined up around the block. Hudson went from a Quaker community to a place known around the nation and world as a place of ill repute. Drugs and gambling fed the city coffers; and generations of police and city officials were on the payroll of the various madams and crime syndicates. This all ended with a State Police raid in 1950.

Hudson wasn't all vice all the time, though. The city played host to "The Army of the Hudson" in 1912. The group of women suffragettes was traveling from New York City to Albany to plead with the governor to support voting rights for women. They didn't come by car, by truck or train – these brave souls walked in not so pleasant New York December weather, stopping in Hudson on Christmas Day, where they were treated to a social ball. The group was led by so called "General" Jones, Rosalie Jones. Jones had given up a life of wealth and privilege to lead the women - oddly enough, her mother was a proud member of the New York State Anti-Suffrage Association.

The 1950 police raid and the closing of more industry socked Hudson in the gut. The town declined through the '60s and '70s, until antiques became cool.

Really.

Antique stores began popping up in empty downtown storefronts, and an effective campaign to add Hudson to every antiquer's travelogue made the city popular again. Today, over seventy antique stores draw folks in from around the nation.

Hudson is currently home to 6700 people, much less than half of its population at its 19th Century peak. Technically, the city is close enough to New York City to be considered a commuter town, but it's best known for its antique stores, hipster and gay community and a fun place to spend the weekend.

Hudson is served by a single 1911-built post office, a one story brick Federal style building with a grand, columned entrance. The postal system here began in Gelston's store on Warren Street, spent most of the 19th century in another store on Warren before eventually ending up in its current home. The post office was renovated in the 1930s under the New Deal, and the lobby features a New Deal mural "Scenes and Activities of Hudson" by painter George S. Picken.

Hudson offers much in postal history. There's the obvious whaling material – such items from a very small whaling market would be fairly rare but valuable for a specialty collection.

Stampless era postmarks abound in this riverside city, beginning with several straight line cancels in the 1790s. A fancy cancel was used in the early 1800s and a myriad of circle cancels saw use in the first half of the century.

The 19th century offers much in the way of commercial and railroad material. The less reputable aspect of Hudson history would make an extremely interesting specialty collection – look for mail sent from Diamond Street and do some investigating on the address you find. The city was also a popular hang out spot for gangsters, bootleggers and general flamboyant but not so nice folks – maybe they sent mom a postcard from Hudson.

And you can also wonder what you missed out in those early days of the antique stores. Stampless covers, maybe a cover from Mauritius plastered with two-penny blues?

Hudson also holds a somewhat special place in the hearts of coin collectors. In 1935, the ill-fated Hudson Half Dollar was released to celebrate the city's 150th birthday.

The large coin featured the Hudson City Seal on one side, Hudson's ship the 'Half Moon' on the obverse. There's suspicion someone paid off the US Treasury to OK the project. This wasn't the first time the US Mint had released commemorative coins alongside their normal products, but past offerings had been of national interest. There was little to no need to commemorate a town with 14,000 people.

That wasn't the worse act of dubious action behind the Hudson Half Dollar. The coins were supposed to be sold locally for one dollar each, but two coin dealers managed to snap up all 10,000 of the shiny beasts within four days. They proceeded to sell them for grossly inflated prices. Today, the Hudson Half Dollar is a challenge coin collectors would love to meet, but many don't.

Warwick, New York

Apple Town

Warwick, New York is a big hit with apple aficionados. Today, the small Orange County community plays host to not an orange celebration, but the annual Applefest. The festival is a natural pick for a township known for apples since the early days. There's even a patriotic reason behind the fruit's popularity in Warwick, but more on that later.

Warwick is a village inside the larger picture of Warwick Township, a containment of communities which in turn comprises the southern tip of Orange County. While the village and surrounding communities date from the mid-1700s, the township was founded in 1788. Along with the Village of Warwick are the villages of Florida and Greenwood Lake, and the hamlets of Amity, Bellvale, Edenville, Greenwood Forest Farms, Little York, New Milford, Pine Island and Sterling Forest. Today's population hovers around 22,000 – The Village of Warwick clocks in at around 6,700.

Originally, the rolling valley land below the Warwick Mountain and emptying into the Hudson River belonged to the Minsi Tribe of the Lenni Lenape people, who called it Wawayanda after the winding stream there. In 1703, a grant called the Wawayanda Patent was awarded to twelve land developers, who then created Orange County. The section signed over to Benjamin Aske comprises modern day Warwick. He called the resulting manor after his ancestral home of Warwick, England. He began selling land in 1719, although the Wisners from Switzerland were the first permanent settlers in the valley as far back as 1712.

Within 15 years, the little valley was booming. The rich soil attracted many English and Scots-Irish pioneer farmers to the area. The stream the Minsi named the area for provided water power for industry. Officially, the area belonged to the neighboring town of Goshen, but a separate identity was created for sure when Jonathon Townsend discovered a rich iron-ore pocket just south of Monroe in 1750. He created the Sterling Iron Works, establishing a blast furnace in Warwick to process the metal. The Sterling Iron Works would operate until 1842. Discovered in 1761, the Long Mine in the

Warwick area would provide 500 tons of ore annually to the business. This equaled jobs and prosperity for the Warwick valley.

An earlier steel business founded in 1745 had fallen victim to the Iron Act. Lawrence Scrauley had established a forge in Bellvale just before the act forbidding American iron production went into place. The British insisted the forge be shut down. When Scrauley refused, troops marched in and destroyed the forge.

Just another sign of British over-authority. In the shaky time between the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, England's short-lived attempt to take America out of the steel market was just one of many reasons why Warwick's communities became devout Patriots. They fought against the Stamp Act, many of the area's men signed the Revolutionary Pledge, and when the colonies rebelled against British goods by implementing the Non-Importation Pledge, Warwick's people also thought not using British products was a great idea.

Suddenly realizing that they were denying themselves of good imported Scotch bourbon, they turned to booze in the form of applejack. Entire Warwick orchards were emptied of their bounty, placed in barrels and fermented, the high yield alcohol drained off, distilled a bit and drank a lot. Warwick became known throughout the vicinity for their patriotic blend of applejack.

Many of Warwick's communities were founded in this time period. Warwick village came in 1764 with the construction of a house that still stands today. Second, the folks made sure to build the Baird's Tavern. Then came the war.

The war hit Warwickans hard. The valley itself was fairly safe and an important stop on the path taken by the Continental Army, but a group of volunteers paid the ultimate price.

In 1775, an Orange County militia was formed. The battalion in Goshen and the one in Warwick were headed up by the sons of the early Wisner family. The area dealt with raids from the Loyalist guerilla Claudius Smith. He, his sons, and a band of Native Americans led by Colonel Joseph Brant conducted raids in the area. Smith and two sons were captured in 1779 and hung.

Following a massacre west of Orange County by Brant's men, Warwick's volunteers were called into action. They were led by town tax assessor and schoolteacher John Hathorn. Although employed by the Crown, he became a Patriot early on. His friends included George Washington (a houseguest at least once during the war) and Lafayette.

After trailing Brant's force, Warwick's volunteers finally faced him July 22, 1779 in the Battle at Minisink. They faced an unusually interesting British officer. A Mohawk Indian, Brant had been converted to Christianity, then educated in England. A religious man, he had translated the Bible into Mohawk. Now he led a combined force of Iroquois Confederation men and freed slaves. They weren't a nice bunch of folks, raiding and massacring being their claim to fame. The two forces met in pitched battle. In the end, the Warwick battalion lost the battle and 43 men.

From here, the Warwick men would go on to prevent the British invasion of the lower Hudson valley via a strong stand at Rampono Pass. On the other hand, Brant's men would be run to ground by superior American forces that also indiscriminately forced innocent Native Americans out of their homes and out of Western New York.

Following the war, Hathorn became brigadier general of the Orange County militia, then major general for the state militia. He served eight terms in the State Assembly. Sadly, he was penniless late in life, having given his all to his country and neglecting his businesses. But he was proud to the end. Hathorn declined a dinner invitation from his old friend Lafayette because his clothes were tattered and he was too proud to borrow an outfit.

Back on the Revolution's home front, Warwick played another important part in the war. Before the war, those in charge understood a British assault up the Hudson would crush American defenses and lay a massive section of the new country bare. Henry Wisner, head of the local militia and a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, suggested something wild - place a chain across the river, creating a barrier that ships wouldn't be able to cross. The idea was hopped on, and four chains would eventually block the river, but only one was made of literal metal chains, and it was built in Warwick.

Sterling Iron Works, currently busy making anchors for ships, was tapped for the job. From Warwick's forges came the giant 114 pound, 2 foot length chain links. The links were floated 25 miles downriver, joined and set up at the tricky S-curve in the river just outside West Point. The 600 yard chain was pulled across the channel in April 1778. A series of pulleys, ropes and anchors kept the chain tight against the wild currents that made this section of river tricky to navigate.

The Royal Navy was able to get through a log chain downriver, capturing Fort Montgomery and Fort Clinton in the process. Next on their list was West Point. They thought they had this one licked, too. Fort commander Benedict Arnold had not only supplied the British with directions on how to seize the fort, he was nice enough to weaken the chain in anticipation of their arrival.

Ironically, Sally Peterson, cousin to Sterling Iron Work's owner, heard the plan and told her brother Robert Townsend, who happened to be in one of George Washington's Culper Spies. Arnold never got a chance to welcome the Brits and the Brits never took West Point.

A section of the Great Chain remains today – 13 links to represent the colonies that fought so hard for freedom.

Prosperity came to Warwick after the war. The valley was split from Goshen in 1788 and became the township. The post office followed soon after, with John Smith serving the people until 1800.

Into this community was born William Seward, future Secretary of State under Lincoln and Johnson. He was born in the village of Florida in 1801 and raised there. His family held slaves in a state that was already turning loose of the idea of owning humans. In fact, Warwick village's Margaret Vance freed her slaves in 1794.

One year before Seward's birth, New York had passed a rule stating that slave children born after July 1, 1799 would be set free by the age of 28. Later, the state abolished slavery altogether.

In Seward, the slaves found a strong voice. He became their advocate in the Republican Party's stance against slavery. He served in the assembly and became state governor in 1838. As governor, he signed several bills to advance the rights of African Americans and he protected abolitionism. In 1841, he repealed the "Nine-Month Law" that allowed slaveholders moving to New York to keep their slaves nine months before

setting them free. He also guaranteed jury trials for fugitive slaves and even used his position to secure freedom for free blacks that had been kidnapped and forced into slavery. He might have been president, but lost the nomination in 1855 and 1860 due in large part to his outspoken views on the topic of slavery – and, oops, his connection to the corrupt Boss Tweed of New York City.

He became Secretary of State under Lincoln and played a massive part in keeping England and France from joining the war on the Confederacy's side. He was also a target in the Lincoln assassination plot, receiving horrible wounds to his neck and face but escaping with his life.

Under Johnson, Seward tried to make recognition of the 13th Amendment one of the prerequisites Southern states had to meet before they would be allowed back into the Union. This part was ignored. Seward is perhaps most famous for the $7.2 million purchase of Alaska. It was called Seward's Folly in his lifetime, but it turned out to be a pretty good deal.

Warwick's men played a key role in the Civil War. They were Company D in the Orange Blossoms, the 124th New York State Volunteers. Their tour of duty included Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862, Houke's Ridge in the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Chancellorsburg, the Battle of the Wilderness, the siege of Petersburg, and finally the Appomattox Campaign that resulted in Lee's surrender.

The last half of the century saw Warwick an agricultural powerhouse. The introduction of the railroad through town in 1862 gave farmers many more markets to tap. The fresh flood of Irish that settled in the area in the 1840s through '60s sent potatoes to market. Plus, there were the aforementioned apples, along with rye and wheat and dairy.

It's not always easy to farm, so some of the Irish sold their land to Polish immigrants streaming into the area in the 1880s. These men and women drained marshes dotting the townscape, creating rich black dirt for onions, something else Warwick remains famous for (yes, there's a festival for that, too).

The railroad also brought passengers, namely wealthy New York City folks, to Warwick where they planted their massive summer and weekend homes or to at least stay at one of the many area hotels.

The 1920s came to Warwick, and when they left, times were hard. Farmers that once had guaranteed railroad markets now had competition from folks that used tractors to plant massive crops and trucks that could bring anything from anywhere - yet many Warwick farmers couldn't afford trucks and tractors themselves. The Crash of '29 took away many of the wealthy visitors.

In the 1930s, Warwick farmers began turning back to the apple crop. The Hudson River valley in general is famous for its apples – today, it helps New York be second in national apple production. Many heritage varieties are grown in Warwick, including the Esopus Spitzenburg, so ancient that Thomas Jefferson was a number one fan. Warwick's apple industry boomed officially in the 1950s and is a key crop in today's economy.

So are people. Around the same time that apple became king, Warwick began a transformation into suburbia. Not far from New York City (commutes run from an hour to seven days depending on traffic), former farmlands were cultivated into housing tracts. The area's population exploded every decade through the 1990s.

The population also explodes during the Applefest. 35,000 plus visitors descend on Warwick during the event held by the local Chamber of Commerce. And it's easy to find an apple tree in this small town – just start walking. Some of the orchards even offer U-pick apples and other crops, even petting zoos and distilleries.

Distilleries? Yes, applejack is still made in Warwick. The folks that produce it wouldn't mind seeing it replace bourbon again, either. Applejack has become popular as of late, so who knows?

Warwick is served by one post office.

A fancy cancel from 1827, a beautiful example with the village's name in an arc above the date, is worth big bucks. Later circles are relatively affordable, straight-lines in the 1850s not so much.

Postal historians should look for anything from the Wisner family – many famous folks have descended from the original Swiss farming family, including Gilded Age architect and two-time mayor Clinton Wheeler Wisner. Civil War mail is a certainty here with so many men serving the Union cause. Pre-1792 items will be even harder to find, but worth it.

Warwick's small but effective steel industry will offer some nice covers – those from the latter part of the Sterling Iron Work's reign would be easier to find. Also, look for anything from the wealthy families that visited at the turn-of-the-century. Mail sent home from immigrants in the late 1800s should offer some interesting international rate covers blessed with Warwick postmarks.

And, of course, apple related items in the modern postal history realm will add nice pops of color to your collection.

Rockaway, New Jersey

Iron Miners and Counterfeiters

Rockaway, New Jersey may qualify as a small town, with about 24,000 souls on board, but this town helped win the Revolutionary War. That's because Rockaway, nestled on the banks of the Rockaway River and at the foot of the Rampono Mountains, was not only the center for one of the first districts in America to mine and work iron ore, it was there when America needed to boot out England. Here is where everything from ammunition and cannon balls to axes and shovels went to the Continental Army.

Present day Rockaway requires a good road map. It's not only Rockaway (which is actually a borough of 6400 inside a larger township), but Rockaway Township, a town that also includes (take a deep breath!) the village and communities of Green Pond, Lake Telemark, Marcella, Hibernia, White Meadow Lake, Mount Hope, Fleetwood, Birchwood and Mount Pleasant, plus the Picatinny Arsenal, a 6500-acre Army base.

This community in Morris County all began long ago as home to the Lenni Lenape. They called their home *Rechcuwakie* or "place of sands" and the strange black rock they turned into tools was dubbed

The area first saw European settlers as part of the original land grants between William Penn and the Lenni Lenape. By the early 1700s, Dutch settlers had arrived in the area. So did John Ford, lured here by talk of the *Succasunna*, which he soon confirmed as rich iron ore. In 1710, Ford established Mount Hope Mine, the nation's second iron mine. Many more mines followed on his heels. That's because the Rampanos, a part of the Appalachian Mountain chain winding through Northeastern New Jersey and Southeastern New York, hold some of the richest iron deposits in the nation.

Ford began a tradition that would for the next 250 years peel apart the hills around Rockaway in pursuit of huge veins of magnetite, the purest iron ore known to man. By the 1740s, multiple mines and the blast furnaces needed to process the rock into iron dotted the Rockaway River. Rockaway itself was a small village dedicated to the ever increasing demands of the mines.

In 1764, the nation's largest mine came into being when Samuel Ford established Hibernia Mining Company. A total of seven mines operated to keep his other concern, the Hibernia Iron Works, going. In 1765, he suddenly sold two-thirds of his shares. He did this so he could make money.

Literally. Ford grabbed the cash and darted across the ocean to Ireland, where he paid some of the world's best counterfeiters to forge the New Jersey bills of credit used as currency in the state at the time. He returned to the New World in 1766 with trunks of funny money and a new wife. But, oops, Ford neglected to tell his new wife he was already married. When she found out, his bride left him immediately. Bigamy was only the beginning of his bad acts. Ford was arrested for the counterfeit money in 1767, but there wasn't enough proof to keep him; a conviction would have netted him the death penalty.

In 1768, Ford found time to rob the Treasury in Perth Amboy. Together with Benjamin Cooper, son of a Morris County judge, and three soldiers quartered in the Treasury, the gang made off with 6000 pounds sterling. The band was arrested, but let go due to lack of proof.

The curtain fell in 1773 when Ford and Cooper, along with four others, were caught red handed with the counterfeit New Jersey bills. Ford was lodged in the Morris County jail for one night before he escaped. Although he all but hung out a welcome sign at his hideout in Hibernia, he was never captured, eventually making his way out of town to die of old age in Virginia.

Also wrapped up in the funny money arrest were Cooper and two other men who shared his job as Justices of the Peace, plus a local physician Dr. Rudd and a David Reynolds. Cooper's own father convicted the men and sent them to the gallows. The Justices of the Peace gang and Dr. Rudd received a reprieve on execution day – Reynolds hung on schedule.

When the American Revolution kicked off, Rockaway was a crucial smelting area. Along with neighboring Pennsylvania and New York, the Northeast had a monopoly on the American steel trade, and the region cashed in during a time wracked by English embargoes and later blockades on product entering the new nation. Hibernia and New Hope were kept busy producing material for the Patriot cause.

By this time, New Hope was manned by Swiss immigrant Jacob Faesch. Thanks to being German-speaking, he was given captured Hessian soldiers to help run New Hope. In fact, manpower was needed so badly in the mines that Faesch was able to encourage the New Jersey legislature to pass a rule that Rockaway miners were except from mandatory military service.

The time period also saw the advent of one General William Winds. He'd been around here awhile. A hero of the British Army's action in the French and Indian Wars, he had earned a royal commission to Morris County Justice of the Peace (he wasn't among the funny money gang). However, brutal British measures against the colonies soured him on his love for country. Not only was Winds a Patriot, as a county official, he refused to enforce the Stamp Act. He was chairman on the board that selected state delegates to the First and Second Continental Congresses – men who would sign the Declaration of Independence.

As head of the local militia in 1776, he arrested the New Jersey governor, who was a devout Loyalist despite being Benjamin Franklin's son. The war saw Winds holding the line in New York and raiding Loyalists in New York City. Later, he commanded armies side by side with Washington at the Battle of Monmouth, a key battle for the rebel cause.

Before Monmouth, rebels were seen as effective guerilla fighters but not so hot on the "official" battle line formation so revered by the British. The Americans lined up just right in this battle and that spelled the end for England.

The post war years saw a steady rise in Rockaway fortunes. Several new mines opened and by 1792, Rockaway village was growing. The first post office was run by Chillion Ford out of his general store. He operated the office until 1797.

His replacement served for nearly fifty years.

Colonel Joseph Jackson wasn't your ordinary postman. He was the son of Stephan Jackson, a shrewd businessman that by then owned much of Rockaway property – except for those parcels owned by Joseph himself. While Stephan owned the most marbles when he died in 1812, Jackson made the family fortune. With one brother, he owned the Swedes Mine, the Teabo and Allen Mines; with another brother he owned the nation's first steel rolling mill. The mill was first mainly because he developed the right technique to turn bars of iron into round 'uns. His first contract was for twenty tons of finished product sent to the New York navy shipyards for six cents a pound. The business would hold many important government contracts as the nation grew. Jackson also served as county judge, then three terms in the New Jersey Assembly. He was also a veteran of the War of 1812 and he founded and funded the Rockaway First Presbyterian Church.

Jackson was replaced as postmaster in 1843 by President Tyler. Legend has it Tyler didn't like him personally because Jackson thought the sun and moon set on another Jackson – Andrew Jackson.

Jackson's tenure as postmaster witnessed a slump in the iron business, then a sudden rise. In the early 19th century, iron became expensive to mine, what with rising fuel and transportation costs. For generations, the forges had depended on local timber for fuel. They ran out of trees. Transportation problems? It was a long trip down the old Rockaway River to deliver product.

In 1831, something new happened. The Morris Canal connected the heart of Rockaway to Newark and all markets beyond. Thanks to the canal, mines could now bring in Pennsylvania coal to power their plants. Action began with 25-ton capacity barges, but soon the canal was widened for giant 70-ton units. And, of course, businesses grew along the canal, bringing more people to Morris County.

The canal worked so well that Rockaway, and Morris County in general, grew too big, too fast. In 1844, the county decided to break the area into smaller chunks, and Rockaway Township came into being via the original village and parts of two other townships.

That era also saw a turbo charged addition to the transpo toolbox. The railroad steamed into town, and when it left, the trip to Newark took eight hours – the canal boats took five days.

The Civil War ramped up iron production. More railroads were connected to Rockaway, and this led to post war prosperity as well. By 1868, Mount Hope's nine mines alone were sending 72,000 tons of ore to market.

Then 1876 happened. That's when cheap surface iron ore was found in the Mesabi Region around Lake Superior. At the same time, Rockaway mines were spending too much money digging deeper and deeper to source their paychecks, and the aged blast furnaces needed heavy updates or expensive replacements. It just wasn't worth it to keep going. Many mines were closed by 1900.

But some good hauls were still waiting in the mines. Hibernia kept working so hard that a separate rail line was added in 1901. By 1913, though, Hibernia would close. Throughout her long career, five million tons of iron had been pulled from the hills. Mount Hope continued until 1944 – at closure, the mine had yielded a total of six million tons, making it the largest producer of iron ore in New Jersey history. The mine was reopened in 1946 with Hungarian miners. The already history making mine was only one of the three operating in the US at the time. It closed for good in 1959.

It's said there's still another six hundred million tons of iron ore in the hills around Rockaway.

Meanwhile, Rockaway – township and the former village – had shifted from an iron industry to a fairly prosperous vacation hotspot, a title it still holds today. The old village was reincorporated as Rockaway Borough in 1894.

The Township also plays host to the Picatinny Arsenal. Currently an Army base dedicated to research and development of armaments and training personnel in the same field, the arsenal was the War Department's first powder depot in 1879. The original facility sits atop the old Mount Hope Iron Works. In 1891, the site was the Naval Ordinance depot; by 1907, a gunpowder factory was hard at work. The ordinance made here fought in both World Wars. At the start of World War II, Picatinny was the only place that could make high-caliber ammunition. During the war, 8,000 men and women from the US, Australia and Canada were trained in weapons production. In 1977, the site became the official research and development facility for weapons technology.

Rockaway is served by one post office. Postal historians should make a stop in the borough. Prepare to do some heavy looking for early material, though. Circle postmarks didn't come about until the 1850s; manuscript marks have only been seen as far back as 1826.

Commercial covers will abound in nearly all eras – and items from the top mines (Hibernia, Mount Hope, Richard, Teabo, Allen, Swedes) will make fascinating side collection. If you find something from Samuel Ford, just make sure he didn't forge the postal markings. Commercial covers of other sorts (as in stores, hotels and other non-mining concerns) abound in the late 1800s. Look for something from the Riggots Hotel in the 1890s – Annie Oakley stayed there whenever Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show played New York City. Military history from the arsenal should be easier to find – keep your eyes peeled for international mail sent by the civilian trainees from Australia and Canada.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Oh Little Star of Bethlehem

Christmas City USA, industrial powerhouse, religious commune – Bethlehem, Pennsylvania has that sort of incredible history that could only happen in America. Today, the eastern Pennsylvania city straddles Lehigh and Northampton Counties and is home to around 75,000 residents. It sits in the center of the Lehigh Valley it played a big part in sculpting from wilderness to home for over 800,000 people. As hometown for Bethlehem Steel, the city was once known for playing a key part in the Industrial Revolution and the future of the country.

This future home to the massive Bethlehem Steel empire began as a simple, austere religious commune. To understand Bethlehem, we must first understand its founders, the German Moravian Brethren. They're the international religious order that established the city in 1741 as the American center of operations for their New World endeavors.

Also known as the *Unitas Fratum* or Unity of Brethren, the Moravians are the oldest organized Protestant denomination, founded in Moravia and Bohem in 1457. The Moravian that came to America were a new breed thanks to their patron, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. When the Moravians fled persecution in 1727, they found refuge on his estate in modern-day Germany. Zinzendorf was a Lutheran priest when they met, but he soon switched to their faith, and tweaked it even more.

He believed the spiritual relationship between each believer and God took precedence over mere obedience to the deity. He believed Christians living in a *Gemeinde* or faith based communal community with others of a like enlightened mind would earn a better understanding of the Savior than anyone who belonged to the political ecclesiastical religions of the time. This was an attitude many in Europe picked up on, leading to the Evangelical Revival that led to modern Protestantism.

Zinzendorf also believed in serving others. He's the one that got the Moravian into the missionary business. The order began with missions in the West Indies and Greenland...and those folks in the Thirteen Colonies.

Bethlehem's founders originally came to the New World in 1735. Pennsylvania was not their first stop. The group, led by Zinzendorf, originally settled in Georgia. However, when those with the pacifist organization refused to bear arms in the local militia, it was strongly urged that they leave. One more stop in the works… The group traveled to Nazareth, Pennsylvania to help operate a school for the orphaned children of slaves. Less than a year later, religious differences led to yet another suggestion that the group take their show on the road.

In 1741, the Moravians set up camp just outside Nazareth on a section of the east bank of Monocany Creek that meets the Lehigh River. Historically, this was home to the Lenape Nation of the Unami, Unalachtigo and Munsee tribes.

In a humble log cabin on 500 acres deeded to them by Pennsylvania Proprietor William Allen, the town of Bethlehem was created, appropriately enough, on Christmas Eve, 1741. After a group prayer to bless the spot, the Count decided a city named after the birthplace of Jesus Christ was appropriate for the task the group had ahead of them.

Rapid growth led to a successful community. An austere but comfortable community that encompasses the Moravian ideals, otherwise known as that faith based community Zinzendorf envisioned. Here, men and women of all races were created equal, all received the same education, and they had health care from cradle to grave. That also meant every individual's goal in life had better be centered on giving their all to help the community flourish.

A melting pot in miniature happened in early Bethlehem. Here, men and women from a number of European nations worked side by side with African Americans and converted Lenape Indians. However, this wasn't your standard village. The Moravians needed their structured communal environment. This started with sections of the community split into Choirs, groups that then required men, women and children to be further separated by sex, age, marital status, and talents. This living arrangement can still be seen today in the preserved 1740s vintage Brethren House, Sisters House and Widow House in Bethlehem's historic district.

The early settlers existed under a "General Economy", cashless system of bartering and working in unison for the common good of the community. With the advent of a saw mill followed by other industries, the young Bethlehem grew into the center the Moravians wanted for the New World Effort. From here, missionaries were cast to all points of the colonies and into the West Indies and eventually into South America.

Their mission: convert Native American populations to Christianity. Their approach was different than most European missions. With the Moravians, you only had to follow them if you liked what they were saying. Otherwise, go along and may God be with you. The Moravians weren't looking to "reform" villages and tribes. Just people.

Within years, Bethlehem was spearheading missions in places throughout South America, the West Indies, Netherland Indies, and their newly established communities in Ohio, Wisconsin, and North Carolina.

Bethlehem became a chartered township in 1746, a move which ironically involved bringing into the fold their erstwhile neighbors in Nazareth, plus nearby Freemansville. In the mid 1750s, the town provided refuge for European settlers and Native Americans fleeing the battlegrounds of the French and Indian Wars.

By 1762, the town sat on 2000 acres of well developed land. This is also the year the Moravian fathers opted to switch from the General Economy System, which meant a change to a cash society.

The main reason? Zinzendorf had given everything to his people, and when he died, he was all but penniless. The Count's debt ridden family asked the Moravians to help them out by taking on some of that debt. That meant folks had to start making money. It was a sad end to a system that had worked just fine.

It was at this time that families began pulling away from the "choir" system and began living as families. The faith remained, though, and the church continued to hold much of the land, leasing it out to church members for homes and small businesses. For now, though, non-Moravians were excluded from the leases.

And this was still the case when the post office came to town in 1792. That's not to say Bethlehem was an isolated, insular outpost. Before and after the Revolutionary War, Bethlehem was frequently visited by George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Sam Adams and Count de Lafeyette. In fact, while encamped at Valley Forge, Washington stored his belongings with a friend in Bethlehem.

During the final decade of the 18th Century, the community began a shift from Moravian-only to your typical melting pot American community. Already a key stopping point on postal roads, the post office was a natural pick for Bethlehem. On June 12, postmaster Joseph Horsfeld was installed. A saddler by trade, Horsfeld had already been involved in running the mail stage. He had also been a delegate to the state convention that ratified the American Constitution. And that's not all – he was also justice of the peace, notary public, superintendent of the first bridge over the Lehigh River, and in those two or three minutes he had left over, Horsfeld was the assistant summer time organist at the Central Moravian Church. He held the postmaster job for ten years.

In 1794, the bridge Horsfeld oversaw was built across the Lehigh River and by 1799 a stagecoach was running daily trips to Philadelphia. The Moravian community began the 19th century with a new church built to hold 1500 worshippers, but the town's population hovered at the 600 mark.

1806 saw a major shift in the community. The Central Moravian Church still had that new church smell when George Butz built a grist mill just outside of town. In too short of a time, Butz's business expanded, requiring the need for non-Moravian labor. Which came, saw, and settled the area. As Butz was joined by other major outsider businesses, the Moravian's grasp quite clearly slipped from city affairs. In 1844, the community itself was finally opened to non-Moravians and the church eventually allowed newcomers to lease church land.

Soon after, businessmen created the community of South Bethlehem south of existing Bethlehem. By the 1850s, the former southern hinterlands were home to the railroad branches and related buildings of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and the Northern Pennsylvania Railroad. To the west came West Bethlehem, primarily developed as housing for the millworkers.

What millworkers? Well, to the South also came the Lehigh Zinc Works and a certain steel mill dubbed Saucoma Iron Company. Between both mills and the railroads, hundreds were employed and by the Civil War, South Bethlehem soon dwarfed Bethlehem itself. Perhaps to honor the town of its birth, Saucoma was renamed

Bethlehem Rolling Mill and Iron Company. Eventually, the firm would be known simply as Bethlehem Steel and the city would never be the same.

At its peak, Bethlehem Steel was the second-largest American steel producer; a side effect of this equaled several more massive influxes of immigrants to the city. Bethlehem Steel is best known for producing the I-beam, which played a crucial part in the steel frame buildings and skyscrapers that changed America's landscape and power in the world. The firm also had five shipyards around the nation, along with a number of munitions factories. When war called in 1914 and 1939, they produced armor and munitions, along with 1100 warships.

But, let's return to the 1800s. By 1865, 3500 folks lived in South Bethlehem, most of them helping Bethlehem Steel make armor plating for the Navy and rails for the growing railroad market. 1870 saw a mind boggling 9,973 residents in the break-away republic of industry that straddled the small Moravian community. In South Bethlehem, workers had several steel mills to work at, or work could be found in a number of knitting mills and cigar factories. In fact, a new type of family dynamic happened here – men tended to work at the steel mills while women and children worked at the knitting mills and cigar factories.

By 1916, Bethlehem Steel's complex covered 600 acres and 20,000 were employed here, producing 2.3 million pounds of steel products annually. The following year, South Bethlehem, "regular" Bethlehem and West Bethlehem were combined into the Borough of Bethlehem, a term simplified the following year as the regular old city of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem Steel continued to dominate the city until the plant closed in 1995. Bethlehem Steel itself ran out of luck and was out of business by 2003.

But not before helping Bethlehem earn the title Christmas City, USA. Every year, the giant Christmas Star atop South Mountain is lit to celebrate Christmas. It's been that way since 1937. The city built the original cross, a wooden eight-sided affair that ran 60 feet high and 83 feet wide with 150 light bulbs fitted into the edges. It was first lit Christmas Eve, 1937 at the Bethlehem Hotel, a structure built in 1922 on the site of the Count's original cabin. Throwing the switch was the wife of Bethlehem Steels' president. In 1939, the cross was replaced by one made with Bethlehem Steel steel. This one came in at 53 feet by 81 feet. The cross lasted decades, lit every year except for World War 2 when it was observed that Bethlehem would make a great target, and the Star a swell beacon for German bombers.

In 1967, the star was replaced for the final time with a unit 91 feet tall, powered this time by 250 lightbulbs. Its bright light can be seen 20 miles away.

Today, Bethlehem continues to be a bustling cross section of American life. It's known as the Festival City, with ten major festivals and 150 mini-fests to their credit. The founding fathers would certainly have a problem with one new resident in town. In 2007, the Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem was built on part of the old Bethlehem Steel complex. The casino features 89 game tables and 3000 slot machines, and daily receipts very near the one-million dollar mark, making it one of the top casinos in Pennsylvania.

The Count and the other pioneers might appreciate another big concern in Bethlehem, though. The Just Born candy company operates from here, bringing to the world candies like Mike and Ike, Teenee Beenies, and that favorite Easter time treat, Peeps.

Today's Bethlehem is served by five post offices. The Main Post Office oversees the original and main part of town. South Bethlehem is served by a New Deal-era edifice, plus a Postal Store. Butztown, the section that sprang up around the Butz grist mill, and the section known as Westside have their own post offices. The postmasters may not have any horses requiring saddles, but the organ at the carefully restored 1806 Central Moravian Church remains an option…

Pre-1792 postmarks exist as transit and holding marks – but if George Washington ever mailed "I visited Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and all I got was this crummy piece of parchment" letter to Martha, even a return address would be the ultimate pre-Post-Office history item for this area, perhaps only topped by early German Moravian traffic.

Oval town marks appear in the 1820s, followed by circles in the late 1840s. Pre-steel mill era items will be harder to find. But, boy, are Bethlehem's offerings mouth-wateringly high in the decorative commercial cover department! A key thing to look for would be the various iterations of Bethlehem Steel from its beginnings as Saucoma Iron through various name changes until it became Bethlehem Steel Corporation. A receipt showing you won a ton of money at the casino whilst visiting the region's five post offices – well, that wouldn't be bad, either.

Reading, Pennsylvania

The Town and the Railroad

From the instant it was identified by Thomas and Richard Penn as a townsite in 1739, Reading, Pennsylvania was destined to be a commercial center. The site lay in the intersection of the Penn-Lebanon Valley and the Schuylkill River – and both said features had their beginnings in the Appalachian Mountains behind them. The mineral rich Appalachians held promise of iron and coal, and the waterways coursing from the mountains equaled power to create products and water to transport goods to market. It all equaled a one stop shopping enterprise.

The Penn expedition mounted throughout Pennsylvania in the late 1730s was intended to find ways to make the failing Pennsylvania Colony thrive. Thomas, Richard and their brother John had taken over their father William's nearly bankrupt 45,000 square mile adventure upon the elder's death earlier in the decade. In 1732, Thomas began playing the iron fist to get things right. First of all, the Native Americans were refusing to sell land to new settlers, claiming to not know anything about the deal William Penn negotiated with them in 1686. Thomas decided to play ball and set in motion the terms of the original treaty – start at the Delaware River and walk west and keep all the land you cross. Fast walkers were set forth, and although the Native Americans became chafed with the deal, the so called "Walking Purchase" was in effect as even more settlers poured into Pennsylvania.

That deal set in motion Reading and so many other communities that would become important in the growth of the nation. It also laid the seeds for the violent French and Indian War of the 1750s. The French already thought they held title to some of the Walking Purchase land. Native Americans displeased about their dealings with the Penns found a sympathetic ear with the French, creating alliances that would come back to terrorize America.

In the meantime, Reading was founded. The 1739 trip had found a spot on the Schuylkill dubbed Finney's Ford by the family that settled there. The single cabin spied by the Penns remains to this day in the same spot, surrounded by the buildings of Reading's downtown.

Thomas personally mapped out the townsite 1748 and gave the nod to aggressive settlement of the area. The town was named after the county seat of the Penn's ancestral home, and would become the seat of Berks County in 1752. Soon, Reading was involved in the French and Indian War as a hub for a line of forts along the Blue Mountains.

In the early days, the area was settled with Irish-Scots and folks from the southern and western German states, including the Amish, who built their first American community here.

Iron was already a big deal in the mountainous area Pennsylvania shared with New Jersey. Rich iron ore had been found in the early 1700s, and Pennsylvania's first iron forge was planted here in 1716.

Iron working was a new American industry with operations led by dozens of smelters in Philadelphia. That iron was used to build a new nation, and in the process, a much more effective iron smelting process was developed to create the high quality steel America soon became known for.

American craftsmen set aside the bloomery forge used by the British in favor of the more expensive but better yielding indirect method of smelting by blast furnace. Iron ore was heated at a much higher temperature, creating a rich liquefied iron on one side, slag (read junk) on the other side. That meant even poor iron ore could make quality products and that pure iron could be easily separated and poured into molds for the product of your choice. The New World had once been dependant on European iron – now they were shipping iron to their old suppliers. By 1775 the young America was the third largest iron producer in the world.

Reading had a mighty share of that market. Its proximity to the iron mines and a water highway to Philadelphia kept them busy. When war came and British blockades prevented iron shipments from coming into the US, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey were crucial to the Patriot cause. Reading worked overtime supplying the Continental Army with everything from cannon balls to shovels. They also supplied men for the army. The town itself became a transportation depot and houses held wounded soldiers.

The town was also given the job of looking after prisoners of war. They had Hessians and Brunswickers – basically Germans hired by the British to fight for them – and Redcoats. Although the Hessians and New Brunswickers were feared by the American soldiers they faced, the German-speaking majority of Reading civilians threw open their doors for the wayward lads, letting them stay in their homes, even letting them wander around town. The British were not treated as well. It didn't help that the boys in red took jobs at the mines and were always starting drunken brawls. When the war ended, some of the Hessians remained behind to live a better life. Apparently the British were told to go home.

It was around this time that the Reading post office was, technically, actually established. Early in the war, the Continental Congress bestowed upon Reading a post office; the first actual evidence of this comes only from the fact when a Franklin Ledger shows a Henry Haller as Reading postmaster.

Coal was discovered to the southeast in 1790. It was good timing. About the time Reading's post office was officially established with Gottlieb Jungman at the helm (until 1801), the giant blast furnaces were running out of their favorite fuel, namely the trees that were chopped down en mass, converted to charcoal then shoveled into the furnaces. Also, communities along the East Coast were running out of heating fuel – also known as trees. Coal became available to fix these problems, but creepily slow transportation on the lengthy river wasn't fulfilling everyone's needs quickly enough. Fuel prices climbed, and combined with a soft iron market and increasing transportation costs, a financial slump hit the area.

Then, Schuylkill Navigation came along. Put together by Philadelphia businessmen, the company created a canal system linking the new Pennsylvania Southern Anthracite Coal Region fields with Philadelphia. Completed in 1825, the canal also connected to Reading. The 108 mile course of 92 lift locks and a series of slack pools became the main artery for riches. Combined with the Union Canal running east-west through town, Reading industrialized in leaps and bounds.

And again when the railroad came through in 1837. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad provided even quicker access to the coal fields and to markets in general, plus it ended the expensive monopoly the canal system had created. Better known as 'the Reading' (as in the spot on the Monopoly game board), the P&R started with a horse drawn train in '37 and progressed to steam locomotives the following year. The tracks laid for their iron horse were among the first laid in America and the world. Some of the original paths remain in use today. The Reading began local, but soon owned or leased most of the tracks in the Schuylkill Region and even into the Northern Pennsylvania coal region.

As the railroad made Reading grow into a heavy industry town, the P&R grew. In 1871, it was the largest company in the world with $170 million in assets around the nation. Tracks began prowling into the Lehigh Valley steel region and then into New York City for a direct connect to the ports there.

At the head was Franklin Gowen. He was hired at the height of the post Civil War railroad boom that not only saw the rebuilding of the system wrecked during the war but massive expansion to untapped markets. Speculators drove the business, pouring money into railroad companies, money that was a pleasure to spend even if the men holding the checkbooks had to wonder if they were building too much, too fast. Gowen was one of those men who built too fast.

First he made it so the Reading controlled coal transportation – a little subterfuge at the state legislature enabled him to create a monopoly and get rid of those pesky smaller railroads. Then he got the Reading involved in the coal and iron business, snapping up 100,000 acres worth of mines and other properties. At the same time, he paid grossly inflated prices and would soon discover he had outstripped the company's resources. That's when he began to play nasty.

Due in large part to the railroad system gone wild, the American economy crashed in 1873, provoking a long, lean period in US history. During this time, a union called the Workingman's Benevolent Association veered into Gowen's crosshairs, demanding better pay. Gowen convinced the coal mine owners to create a board that would deal with labor matters on behalf of all owners, and he did this without mentioning why. Why? He

and his people headed the board, and by controlling labor relations, he was able to control the market, mainly by not allowing owners to negotiate with union pleas for more money.

Unable to get their message across, WBA workers launched the Long Strike of winter 1874-5. A public deprived of heating fuel and a Pinkerton agents slipped inside the WBA to incite violence crushed that union.

The next union would be a tougher target. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers had a strong chapter in Reading. Already suffering a series of pay cuts in these trying times, when cuts were announced again in 1877, they walked off the job and joined an already ensuing violent nationwide railroad strike. The Railroad Strike of 1877 saw violent confrontations between strikers and armed troops throughout the nation.

The Reading Railroad Massacre happened July 23, 1877. The day before, rioters had burned the bridge crossing the Schuylkill, trapping trains on the wrong side of the action. National Guard troops marched into a 30-foot deep, 300-foot long cut to rescue a train trapped by thousands of rioters. The 253 soldiers were pelted with rocks and stones from literally thousands of rioters. The soldiers opened fire. Ten civilians died.

The P&R (and Reading) got lucky. Strikers in Philadelphia had responded to an earlier massacre with an attack on the Pennsylvania Railroad, burning that company's buildings and destroying equipment. In Reading, strikers forced themselves to hold back, to not destroy their place of work.

In the long run, the strike was ended with give and take on both sides. The violent reaction by owners through Federal troops and hired gunmen only made the unions stronger. In fact, January of '78 saw the Knights of Labor hold their first union convention in Reading, the first step in a union building cause that remains in place today.

Through all this, Reading prospered. While the P&R would face a series of bankruptcies in the '80s and '90s, industry after industry began filling in the blank spots around Reading. As iron waned, textile mills took over. So did hardware and paint factories, even hat and glove makers.

And cars. Reading was home to three car makers in the early 1900s, the most famous being the Duryea Motor Wagon Company. Frank and Charles Duryea basically invented the American automobile when they unveiled their three-wheel horseless carriage in 1893. Based out of nearby Springfield, they made and sold their automobiles to an excited public. In fact, the first ten cars sold in the US were Duryeas. In the 1900s, the brothers split up. Charles came to Reading in 1902 and continued building the Duryeas, cranking out one car a week and employing fifty men by 1905. Each car was tested with a long drive up nearby Mount Penn, and the series of severe switchbacks exists today as Duryea Drive. The original company collapsed in 1907. Duryea tried again with a simplistic car designed for rural roads, but by 1917, he was out of the car game and Reading.

Reading was still a place where you could make it. A European immigrant named Solomon Boscov came to America in 1902 with $1.37 to his name. By the time he reached Reading, he had scraped together eight dollars, which he used to buy merchandise and embark on a traveling salesman career. Aided by the ability to speak Yiddish, he was able to hit it off the Pennsylvania Dutch folks dominating the region. In 1911, he opened a dry goods store. That store was just the beginning. Today, Boscov's

Department Stores had fifty locations along the east coast and is currently owned by Boscov's grandson.

The collapse of the anthracite coal industry in the 1950s and the shutdown of the P&R Railroad in the 1970s severely curtailed the city's fortunes, but they have succeeded in the light industry and retail field.

Today, Reading is home to nearly 90,000 folks spread out in 17 distinct neighborhoods. Call Reading what you will, but you can also call Reading the 'Outlet Capital of the World'. Really. The city trademarked the term in the 1990s. The concept of factories selling overstock items at cheep cheep prices began here in the 1960s when VF Corporation began selling overstocks of Berkshire and Vanity Fair items made in their Reading apparel factory. The concept caught on and the current VF location sells many name brands. They have plenty of competition in the many outlet stores scattered throughout the greater Reading urban area. Folks come from all over the world to shop for deals here.

This might appeal to the sensibilities of one of Reading's most famous modern residents. The late author John Updike was born here in 1932 and raised in nearby Shillington and Plowville. Reading features in his writing, especially in his famous five book Rabbit series about ordinary guy Henry "Rabbit" Angstrom. In these books, Reading is known as Brewer and Mount Penn features as the Mount Judge suburb. Updike's writing in general dwells upon the plight of the middle class businessman type trying to get by, which isn't easy, what with his family problems, marital problems, affairs, and kids wanting every shiny thing they see in the store. At least he could fix the latter problem with a trip to the nearest outlet store.

Reading is served by two official post offices. Until 2016, there were three. In late 2016, the downtown branch, a New Deal edifice, was closed and operations consolidated at the Gus Yatron facility as seen in the modern postmark. The downtown area is now served by a privately operated Contract Postal Unit.

Manuscript cancels were used until the late 1820s; a variety of circles pulled duty from then until the adhesive area.

Postal historians will find plenty to do in Reading. The usual suspects bear looking out for – early and later iron industry, the railroad, and the hundreds of commercial locations throughout Reading's history. For the car enthusiast, there's the Duryea Motor Wagon, Daniels Motor Company, and Reading-Standard Motor Company. Also, from 1973 to 2006, the Penske open-wheel race car team was based here alongside the truck rental business started by racecar driver Roger Penske. Tricky to find but worth it would be the letters captured Germans and British sent home during the Revolutionary War. Reading also sent many men to battle in the Civil War, equaling many letters traveling both ways during the conflict.

Frederica, Delaware

It's Bigger than it Appears

At first glance, Frederica, Delaware appears to be a sleepy port town. There it is, a town of 775 folks nestled six miles in from the Delaware Bay on Murderkill River. A picturesque, historic town with a small marina, not very far from the Killens Pond State Park. So much entwined with the marshes around it, Frederica is lovingly called Frogtown by it residents.

A postcard tiny town.

However, Frederica has earned a much larger presence in American history. Every early American town played a crucial role in building the America we enjoy now – and Frederica holds the puzzle piece that helped create the second largest Protestant church in America, Methodist United. But more about that later.

The town that would become Frederica began as a section of land called St. Collum on land parceled out by William Penn in the 1600s. A survey of potential waterfront took place in 1758, and the area was named Goforth's Landing. In 1772, landowner Jonathan Emerson began to plat out a town. Soon, this area would be dubbed, perhaps in honor of the town's founder, Johnny Cake Landing, a small port town built around a store and tavern.

In the beginning, and even before the beginning, Johnny Cake Landing was known for shipbuilding. The first ship, a small sloop called the *Hopewell* came off her slip in 1732. In 1758 came the 8-ton schooner *Happy Return*; the 15-ton *Dolphin* came in 1761 and 1774 saw the 20-ton schooner *Nancy*. Over the next 100 years, more than one hundred vessels would be built here.

In the meantime, Frederica became an agriculture port for the area surrounding her borders. Then she became much more important for millions beyond the farthest town boundary.

In 1780, local landowner Phillip Barratt sponsored the building of Barratt's Chapel for a local Anglican Methodist minister, handing over the service reins to a soon-to-be-powerful minister Francis Asbury. The original barn-like chapel sat 500 people on pews of rough hewn logs or the stools they brought from home.

Methodists may have been founded in England as a small group within the Church of England, but the modern denomination's roots came in America. Co-founder John Wesley came to the Colonies in the 1730s on behalf of the new religious order to convert Native Americans. Disillusioned by the general attitude of the colonists he found in the New World, he soon booked passage home. Coming home, he met up with German Moravian, the same folks we met earlier in this book. It was from their missionaries he acquired the kernel which Methodism would be built around – the fact that salvation comes from God's grace, not good deeds alone, and salvation comes from connecting one's self with the Lord.

Just prior to the Revolutionary War, Wesley sent eight English Methodist ministers to the colonies with a mission: install the Anglican form of Methodism in the colonies. When war was declared, all but two preachers returned to England. Why the runaway? For one thing, Wesley came out for the English cause, even declaring in his pamphlet *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* that rebels must stop this nonsense immediately, mainly because they were being duped by France into letting the Colonies fall into French hands. Many folks took issue with this stance by the Methodists and ensured said Methodists understood their feelings.

Of the two English Methodists who decided to not go home, only Francis Asbury remained full time at the pulpit. It was difficult being the only Brit in town, but nothing new for a man who had been born to religion – really. His mother wanted him to grow up to be the Archbishop of Canterbury and she groomed him as such. As a young man of 22, he met Wesley and was soon recruited as a traveling preacher. His job brought him to America in 1771, and he remained.

When Americans went to war against England, Asbury ended up the head of what American Methodism was left and he swung into the job full force. He insisted the American Methodists ministers and congregation remained neutral in the conflict, and urged no one to sign the Oath of Allegiance the Patriots were passing around. When Asbury refused to sign, though, he had to run or face persecution. He came to Delaware, where pledging allegiance was not a requirement, and sat out the war, still serving as unofficial head of the American organization, an organization that was already peeling away from the Anglican form of the church. While many Methodist refused the Oath of Allegiance (and didn't exactly admire Asbury for running away and leaving them to take the heat), many other members were our first American soldiers, others fought for the British.

In 1780, Barratt decided to build a chapel for Asbury. The two story brick church was placed directly on the main highway through Delaware and in many ways, served the 4000 or so Methodists that lived in the region. When the war ended, it was to Frederica that Wesley decided to send representatives to repair the chasm between the mother church and the colonies. It was time to resume ministering to New World.

On November 14, 1784, Wesley's representative came to the chapel. Thomas Coke, called the Father of Methodism for his work before and after this meeting, was supposed to meet Asbury alone. If he had, their meeting might have been a quiet, never remembered bull session. Not so. Since Asbury was late, Coke was invited to preach. He did so, even giving communion - the first time sacraments were given by an ordained Methodist minister in America. When Asbury arrived fashionably late, Asbury stepped

down from the pulpit and the men embraced. A star memorializing this event stands on the spot they met.

With that simple embrace, a tiny chapel in the Delaware marshes became the so-called 'Independence Hall of American Methodism.' Subsequent to that special Sunday service, the men agreed to call all American Methodist ministers to a meeting at the main church in Baltimore on Christmas Day. During the Christmas Conference of 1784, the details of an American-style Methodist church were hammered out. The final result became the Methodist Episcopal Church. The new movement spread across America like wildfire, and today, now known as Methodist United, the church is one of the largest denominations in America. Not to mention, with 12 million members worldwide, M-U is the largest Methodist denomination.

The chapel where it began remains in use today and is home to constant pilgrimages. On the second Sunday of every November, a major service celebrates the meeting that began it all.

Coke went on to do more important works at home and abroad. Although he remained based in England to oversee a massive mission campaign, he returned to the US eight more times, speaking against slavery and he was invited by George Washington to preach before Congress. He launched missions around the world, and in fact, passed away on a trip visiting missions in Ceylon.

For the next 32 years, Asbury led the Methodist Episcopal Church. Asbury spent the rest of his life not in Frederica but traveling the US, preaching and doing mission work. He traveled an average of 6000 miles a year. He preached in churches, tobacco houses, even an empty field – wherever anyone came with an open ear. Under his tutelage, the church grew from 1200 members to 214,000 members and 700 ordained ministers, including Richard Allen of Philadelphia, the nation's first African-American preacher. Asbury's last sermon came in Richmond, Virginia on March 24, 1816; he died days later.

Back to Johnny Cake Landing. By the way, it no longer went by that name. Back in 1790, with the area already well known as the birthplace of the Methodist Episcopal church, it was decided someone needed to come up with a more elegant and professional name than Johnny Cake Landing. Thus, Frederica entered the history books.

When Benjamin Comb became the first Frederica postmaster on June 12, 1792, the town was a key port for the Delaware region, providing a quick link to Philadelphia. Prosperity called this town home as ships streamed from here with manufactured goods, dairy and meat products, farm goods, and the area's large timber deposits soon became finished lumber and bark flowing down the waterway to build the nation. Shipbuilding was still big. Between 1844 and 1890, the Lank Shipyards built three dozen large two and three-masted schooners, plus many smaller boats.

A big bad mistake came to town just before the Civil War. In 1857, the Delaware Railroad was chugging through the region and wanted to add Frederica to their timetable. Local shipping interests quashed the idea. Almost immediately, the town lost the timber trade as much of that went to the train tracks. While the port would hang on thanks to the competitive rates set by the steamship firm of Frederica and Philadelphia Navigation Company, trade fell off even more when refrigerated boxcars gave farmers a quicker outlet for their perishable goods.

Over the next forty years, the city fathers scrambled to connect Frederica to the main line, but these efforts failed. Still, consider Frederica a strong port until the Great Depression of 1929 afflicted the nation. By the end of World War Two, Frederica had settled into a quiet existence.

Charter fishing is now a key component of the town. In fact, for decades, the late Captain John Donovan led the charter fishing efforts in the area, taking folks out to bottom fish for trout, flounder, sea bass, and more in his 65-foot vessel the "Reliable II". This courageous man even saved the lives of at least 15 mariners in distress. Not a bad American story.

Frederica has that Barratt Chapel tie to the past, but it's also home to modern history. Headquartered here is the firm ILC Dover, manufacturers of high-performance flexible materials that were used in the spacesuits worn on the moon, utilized in hazmat suits, even lighter-than-air craft (think blimps and you got it).

Frederica is served by a small post office on the waterfront. While postmarks aren't exactly found often on everyday mail, modern postmarks aren't considered rare. The stampless era appears to have seen manuscript postmarks until an oval mark appears around 1836, with circle postmarks from the 1850s on. Early mail volume would have been low, so you might have to open your wallet for a pre-1840s bit of history.

The past offers a rich bounty for the postmark and cover collector (and you don't even have to bottom fish for 'em!). A key component in American postal history would be anything Methodist church related flowing from Johnny Cake Landing – this would be seen in transit and holding markings, but valuable nonetheless. 1890 to present day postcards of the Barratt's Chapel mailed in Frederica by pilgrims will be an easier tie in to history and perhaps the most prevalent Frederica postmark available.

The last half of the 19th century is a gold mine, though! By the 1890s, Frederica was home to many industries, including the Reynold's and Postle's tomato cannery, at that time the largest tomato cannery in the US. All these businesses equal plenty of mail sent onwards and upwards – and that means decorative-era commercial covers! Since most early mail was sent by ship, the possibility exists for maritime covers with Frederica ties.

Port Tobacco, Maryland

The First Presidential Home

Just off Chesapeake Bay, Port Tobacco, Maryland is currently home to only 13 people, but it comes with a richly textured history. It was home to the nation's first president, John Hanson. It was also home to a man involved in the first presidential assassination plot, George Atzerodt. And that's not all. Declaration of Independence signer John Stone, Constitution signer Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, and the nation's first Surgeon General James Craik have all firmly entrenched Port Tobacco into our nation's history. It is also home to the oldest Catholic parish in the original thirteen colonies.

How does today's ghost town in Charles County play such a role in history? Despite its appearance, Port Tobacco was once a prosperous harbor that rivaled the offerings in Alexandria, Georgetown, and Baltimore. As its name suggests, Port Tobacco once sent the products of this area's rich tobacco harvest to England and Europe from its sheltered harbor west of the Bay on the Port Tobacco River. Some of the biggest tobacco merchants in the world set up shop here, and the best trade goods came through this port.

The story really begins with the Potapoco people that started living here in 900 AD. The village was penciled in by explorer John Smith as friendly, so Jesuit priest Andrew White built a mission here in 1639 on 500 acres at the river's mouth. Eventually, the St. Ignatius Church and Port Tobacco Parish would be established, making this an important moment in the history of the Maryland Colony that had been established by charter owner the Lord of Baltimore as a New World refuge for Catholics.

By the mid-1660s, colonists flooded into this area of St. Charles's County for the simple reason no land was to be had at the colony's original site, St. Mary's City. The Jesuit mission land was divided into leaseholds in 1649. Also in 1649, a 3500 acre grant was given to Lieutenant William Lewis, who promptly sold the land to Job Chandler and Simon Oversee. Over the next few years, the two men bought up surrounding land that would soon be vast tobacco plantations and a town site. In the late 1650s, they were joined by Benjamin Rozer. By now, an unofficial town called Chandler's Town had grown around the port area.

In 1683, Maryland launched city creating decrees similar to those of Virginia's. The "Act for Advancing the Trade of Tobacco" created 62 town sites on navigable

waters. Chandler was asked to sell a piece of land large enough for a town site. He hopped on the opportunity. Chandler's Town was now on the map, although even then it was also known as Port Tobacco, a twist on both the Potapoco name and the port's obvious function. By the time the name Port Tobacco became official in 1720, the port was already a major point of entry for the tobacco trade and British Navy. Major tobacco houses had established branches here, bringing an international flair to the community. In 1720, Port Tobacco was declared St Charles county seat, yet another feather in this town's cap.

The beginning of the end was already evident. The heavy deforestation that created all that prime tobacco land also caused heavy soil erosion, culminating in massive silt build-up in the harbor's mouth. Somewhat noticed at the time, the idea someone should do something about all that soil erosion was ignored. And it was overlooked until it was too late…

Due to Port Tobacco's prosperity and international residents, the Revolutionary times and people are tightly clenched in this port. The United State's technical first president John Hanson was born here to a wealthy tobacco baron at 'Mulberry Manor.' In 1750, Hanson was elected Charles County Sheriff, a position he held until elected to represent the county in the lower house of the Maryland General Assembly. He soon found himself representing the earliest folks in America that had this revolutionary idea to place power in the hands of the people and not the Parliament and King. Hanson hated the Stamp Act and he even signed a resolution that boycotted British goods until the taxes were lifted. His career transitioned into all out Patriot, and in 1781, he was elected president of the Continental Congress, serving as the nation's president.

Declaration of Independence signer John Stone had emotional roots to the area. While he was born elsewhere in Charles County, he met and married wife Margaret here in 1768 when he started a law practice. He launched his own tobacco plantation, and then soon began what would be a 40-year political career. He and his family traveled to Pennsylvania to sign the Declaration of Independence. Sadly, Margaret almost died in a smallpox outbreak. He declined an appointment to the Senate, going home instead with his ailing wife. After the war, he served in Maryland's Senate, mainly to convince the state to sign the Articles of Confederation, of which Maryland was the last state to approve. As soon as he convinced them, the family moved back to Port Tobacco, where the still ailing Margaret would pass in 1787. Stone died less than four months later. It's said he died of a broken heart.

The Constitution ranks among its signers the Maryland delegate Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer. Despite the name, he was born in Port Tobacco. He was the justice of the peace along with belonging to that profession that could only be from tobacco country: he was a planter-lawyer. Jenifer represented Maryland in the Continental Congress while simultaneously serving as president of Maryland's first independent senate. Later, he managed the state's finances in the critical time between 1781 and 1785 when the economy tanked after the British stopped buying so much tobacco. Later, with his friends George Washington, John Madison, John Dickinson and George Mason, he helped iron out problems that had arisen under the Articles of Confederation, a process that soon led to developing the Constitution. He was one of the first to ink his name to the Constitution.

America's first Surgeon General once had a practice in Port Tobacco. James Craik was George Washington's personal doctor after the two met and became friends during the French and Indian Wars. After the war, he started his Port Tobacco practice. Eventually, though, he ended up in Alexandria. He was there as Washington's doctor, but followed him to the Revolution as the army's head surgeon. After the war, he was appointed Surgeon General. He stayed with Washington to the end, at the President's deathbed trying to save his life.

Port Tobacco itself became key in the Revolutionary War. It was a port for movement of troops; troops were also stationed here while in transition from one front to the next. Much of Port Tobacco's Patriot upper class were either high ranking military officers or in the highest echelon of politics. The British harassed the port many times, but the town was only attacked once. In the 1781 raid, some of the town was burned and the British made off with valuables from St. Ignatius.

The post-war era came with the exact problems faced by the rest of the state – major loss of tobacco revenue. The British had taken it as a clue to leave when their properties were confiscated early in the war. They didn't want to come back, and they for sure weren't interested in buying American tobacco. Between the slumped market, severe droughts, and continued silting of the harbor (folks were beginning to take notice now when they were busy moving wharfs further and further up the river), Port Tobacco was a virtual ghost town by 1792. The location was still crucial enough for the Post Office Department to install a post office. Eleazer Davis served as postmaster until 1795.

Some prosperity came to town through military use of the port during the War of 1812. A bail out from the state brought the port back to life in the 1820s and it was fairly prosperous during the time leading up to the Civil War, only to fall back down again when war visited the area yet again.

Although Maryland didn't secede from the Union, it was seen as a Confederate sympathizer hotbed – mainly because it was a Confederate sympathizer hotbed – and Union troops occupied Port Tobacco during the war. Despite this, Port Tobacco managed to be an effective place to smuggle spies and material to Virginia on the other side of the bay.

One such spy was Rose O'Neal Greenhow. Born in Port Tobacco, she went on to run a major Confederate spy ring in Washington DC. She is credited with providing the information that allowed the Confederates win the First Battle of Bull Run.

It was during this time that a German named George Atzerodt established a carriage manufacturing firm in Port Tobacco. It soon failed and when 1865 rolled around, he was listed as a house painter. John Wilkes Booth recruited him into the conspiracy to kill President Lincoln, Vice-President Johnson and Secretary-of-State Seward.

Atzerodt's job was to kill Johnson. It turns out he was the wrong man for the job. Instead of setting out to kill a man, Atzerodt spent the night getting drunk at the hotel bar before scraping up the nerve to run away.

Authorities tracked Booth and Atzerodt to Port Tobacco, but arrived too late. Booth met his famous end in Virginia and Atzerodt was arrested at a friend's town in Germantown, Maryland. Atzerodt would never come back to Port Tobacco, finding instead the wrong end of a hangman's rope.

Port Tobacco never recovered its grandeur. Despite the digging of a canal in 1870, the silt problem was too massive to overcome. By its end as a port town, wharfs

were more than three miles from town. Today, a massive swatch of marshland stands between Port Tobacco and the Chesapeake Bay.

The town's end was finalized 100 years after the post office was established. In 1892, the courthouse burned. This was just a few years after the Maryland and Potomac railroad bypassed Port Tobacco in favor of new upstart La Plata just three miles to the southwest. Before the courthouse burned, the county's residents were already begging to move General HQ to the better located and better developed La Plata. While a vote put before the public barely saved the town's status, Port Tobacco's own vote tally was a 167-167 tie.

In 1895, the county moved to La Plata rather than rebuild the courthouse. Port Tobacco dried up instantly. It got so bad that the folks over at the Christ Church took apart their new stone building and hauled it to La Plata. By the 1900s, the landscape was much as it looks now – a nice looking Catholic church over by the bay, a handful of buildings that seem like some crazy city planner placed them randomly about, except they used to have company in the shape of long ago ripped down buildings that were once so key to Maryland.

In the early 20th Century, the Jesuits ran the Hotel Bellview at Chapel Point, very near the St. Ignatius Church. In 1926, the hotel land was purchased by Ben Bowling Wills and turned into an amusement park. In the 1930 summer season, the Chapel Point State Park hosted 75,000 people. By 1936, Wills went bankrupt and the land was turned back to the Jesuits. Today it is still Chapel Point State Park, but now it's your regular 800-acre recreational park with trails cutting through the past of the nation's oldest Catholic parish.

In 2007, the Port Tobacco Archeology Project was formed. Today, archeologists are tracking down treasure troves of the Potapoco past and colonial era treats. Why is this a prime spot for historical treasures? Due to the fact Port Tobacco was a grand area that declined so rapidly, many artifacts were left in place rather than sold off or destroyed.

Much of Port Tobacco itself is known as Port Tobacco Village today. Port Tobacco is served by a tiny post office. Past postal history can be hard to find, but worth it. Two different circle type cancels saw use in the 1830s and 1840s – worth mentioning because one cancel had Port Tobacco spelled out the right way; the more expensive item reads Port-Tobaco. Manuscript marks start in the late 1790s and run through the 1830s.

Potential postal history abounds in pre-ghost town Port Tobacco. There's the obvious Founding Father connections, the tobacco trade in general, Charles County official business, and the merchants and hotels attached to the area. How about a cover from Atzerodt's Carriage Works? Later covers from the original Hotel Bellview and later the Chapel Point State Park would make nice modern history pieces.

Chaptico, Maryland

Rebel Town

The small Wicomico River village of Chaptico, Maryland shares many things with our previous tale. It was a tobacco port and port of entry, though at a much smaller scale. The harbor was abandoned when the river silted up. It was one of the 62 townsites enacted to aid the development of the colony. It was a Patriot stronghold during the Revolutionary War, gladly hosted Confederates and their cause during the Civil War. Check, check and check.

It was also home to two rebellious sorts. One launched a successful revolution, the other not so much.

Chaptico entered St. Mary's County history via a 1654 land grant transferred to a Thomas Gerrard in exchange for transporting six indentured servants to the New World. Other smaller grants clustered around Gerrard's, and soon a natural harbor tucked into the Wicomico River within eyeshot of the Potomac was put to use hauling the area's tobacco crops. Among the early settlers was Maryland Governor Thomas Notley.

And John Coode.

To understand Coode, we'll need to learn more about Maryland's initial beginning as a religious safe spot. Maryland was created by the former England Secretary of State George Calvert, the Baron Baltimore, after his dismissal from his royal position after he announced he was a Catholic. Not a good idea in a country dominated by the Anglican Church of England. In 1632, King Charles I gave Calvert's son a grant in the New World to establish a Catholic friendly colony. Job done, and even further. Calvert established the colony to be sanctuary not just for Catholics, but people of all religions. Until 1654, it was even illegal to maltreat a fellow citizen based on religious affiliation.

The late 1600s hit Maryland hard. The value of British-controlled tobacco had plummeted. Many, many poor Marylandians came about as a result. Also, Maryland had in the 1640s welcomed with open arms Puritans flowing in from Virginia, escaping persecution from the Anglican Church. The Puritans turned out to be vipers, and this

particular nest spread throughout the colony, kidnapping priests, robbing Catholics and just generally inoculating the populace with the idea that Puritans ran this show now and it was their way or the highway.

By the 1670s, things weren't looking well for the Catholic cause, by now a minority party in its own colony. Harsh laws that included the hanging of Puritan rebels and giving voting rights to major landowners (that also happened to only be Catholic) only staved off the inevitable until the waning years of the 1680s. Puritans were now well entrenched in the political machinery, only kept from total power by a 27-man Governor's council that only had eight Protestants on board, the rest Catholics.

Hopping on the opportunity that the current Lord of Baltimore was in England trying to get help for his struggling colony, and hopping on the 1688 overthrow of England's Catholic king, John Coode launched the Glorious Protestant Revolution.

Coode took his cue from the earlier Bacon Rebellion. A former Anglican priest who swapped his robes for a cushier job as husband of a wealthy woman, Coode was once the Justice of St. Mary's county before climbing the political ladder. He was involved in an unsuccessful revolt in 1681, but version 2.0 took off just fine.

Two facts assisted the cause. England was now ruled by King William III and Queen Mary II, but Maryland's powers that be hadn't accepted that fact, deferring instead to the lost Catholic king. So, the revolution was really needed to bring the colony into the proper English hands, wink wink. Two, Coode and his men spread gossip that the Catholics were hiring out Native Americans to swoop in and kill Protestants. Folks took up arms.

Coode and 700 men took on Calvert's army, winning with very little bloodshed. Coode was installed as governor and the experiment in religious tolerance was over, thanks to its own religious tolerance... By the time Coode stepped down for a royal appointed governor in 1691, Maryland was a proper British puppet colony. Coode returned to St. Mary's County. In between holding various political appointments, including County Sheriff, he became disillusioned with the new Anglican dominated government and launched two more minor rebellions. He was left alone until his 1699 conviction for 'speaking against Christ' and he faced a hefty 20-pound fine or having a hole burned through his tongue. At the last minute, he was pardoned when folks recalled what all he had done for them in the 1689 Revolution.

Chaptico benefited greatly from the revolution. In 1692, the "Act for the Service of Almighty God and the Establishment of the Protestant Religion within Maryland" equaled a number of churches (the Puritan's Congregational Church to begin with, Anglican after 1702) built throughout the colony, funded by taxes imposed on all Maryland citizens. Chaptico's Christ Church was planted amongst the commercial buildings on the waterfront in 1736. Funds were collected among the populace and given to vestry man (read tax collector) Phillip Key – grandfather to Francis Scott Key of *The Star Spangled Banner* fame.

The Revolutionary War saw Chaptico as an important storage and shipping hub for the Patriot cause.

Although a post office was originally established here in the 1680s, Chaptico's first US post office came in 1792. The first postmaster, Josiah Grindall, served until 1801.

Chaptico served as a shipping point for the United States in the War of 1812. Briefly, it was horrible a psychological battleground.

In some ways, what happened in July of 1814 may have led to the writing of *The Star Spangled Banner*. The July attack was the only British incursion on the town during the war, but they made this one stick. Admiral Cockburn's troops came ashore July 30th and wrecked up the town. Broke all the windows, set some fires, looted some stuff; the usual drill. Loot wise, they only procured 30 hogsheads barrels of tobacco. The emotional impact was awful. The village's women were stripped and made to stand at attention before British officers for an hour and a half. The Christ Church was desecrated. Stolen geese were plucked and cooked inside; the Communion table became a dinner table and was broken afterwards. The valuables were stolen. And – much, much worse, the graveyard and crypts were vandalized in the search for jewelry buried with the dead.

Special attention was given to the Key family vault. Francis's recently departed grandmother was thrown from her tomb, burial clothes removed and she was left for all to see.

It's hard to imagine that news of the attack on his ancestral home didn't affect Francis Scott Key one month later when he wrote about a country where things like this didn't happen.

The attack left Chaptico in ruins, sparking a population slide that reduced the area to nominal importance by the Civil War. Union troops occupied the unfriendly but Union state of Maryland, including Chaptico, but like Port Tobacco, the port was used to smuggle supplies across the river to the South.

Enter hometown boy Richard Thomas Zarvona, a man ripped straight from the pages of an action adventure novel. Born Richard Thomas, he grew up near Chaptico and his father was speaker of the House of Delegates and his uncle was governor. Thomas spent his early adulthood in Europe as a mercenary, fighting with Garibaldi in the Second War of Italian Independence, picking up the name Zarvona in the process.

During the early days of the American Civil War, Zarvona formed a volunteer Confederate Rifle Company. He visited the Virginia governor with a whacky plot to use his men to hijack a passenger ship and use the vessel to overtake and seize a particular menace on the Potomac waterfront, the USS *Pawnee*. The *Pawnee* was a gunship that supported troops, fired on Confederate batteries, worked the Union naval blockade and had recently forced a Confederate capitulation at Alexandria. She was a menace, so wouldn't she be a swell war prize for the Confederacy?

Zarvona was sent to do the job. In eccentric fashion, he got stuff done. On June 28, 1861, a band of men boarded the steamer *St Nicholas* in Baltimore, posing as cotton hands. Embarking passengers also included Madam LaForte of France and her brother. The ship chugged for Washington D.C.

Madam LaForte was said to be the hit of the show at dinner than night, retiring to her cabin late after dancing the night away with all the nice men. She was seen again in the very early morning of June 29, but Madam LaForte had transformed into Zarvona wearing a full Confederate uniform. The ship was taken over quietly. Armed Confederates joined the ship later in the morning and it was full speed ahead for the nearby *Pawnee.*

Which wasn't there. The day before, a rebel sniper killed her skipper and the *Pawnee* was taking his body back to Washington. Not to be stopped, Zarvona and his

swashbucklers spent the day chasing down and capturing three ships; the *Monticello* carrying 35,000 bags of coffee, the *Mary Pierce* loaded with ice, and to top off the shopping list, the coal schooner *Margaret*. Three ships in tow, the *St Nicholas* headed up the Rappahannock River and landed in Fredericksburg where the newly minted heroes were treat as, well, heroes. Zarvona was promoted to Colonel and feted with a giant party. At that party, he posed once more as a woman and got away with it…

The party soon ended. Zarvona immediately set off to seize more ships. Again, the plan was to board a passenger boat and seize her on the open waters. The target on July 7 was the passenger steamer *Mary Washington*. Zarvona and his men eased aboard, but Zarvona had picked the wrong time to dress like a man. He was handily identified by one of the *Mary Washington's* passengers, the recently deposed master of the *Margaret*. Oops.

Edward Case and his men were trying to get home after being set free from a Confederate prison several days before and coming back north. At one point, they had actually walked past the Thomas estate on Patuxent River. Upon spotting Zarvona, Case tracked down some cops and gladly blew the whistle on the man and his merry band. Zarvona tried to escape, but didn't. Ignobly, the man was found stuffed inside in the bottom drawer of a wardrobe in the lady's cabin. Zarvona languished in Union prisons for two years before finally being set free, coming out a hero for a lost cause. He would never recover from his imprisonment, dying a sick and weak man in 1875.

Despite playing host to Coode, Zarvona and a busy little port, silting up of the Wicomico in the early 1900s and final destruction of the river mouth by the Hurricane of 1938 effectively ended Chaptico's career as a port town. Today, Chaptico is home to a little over 1200 folks and is a bedroom community for the nearby town of Dover. The Wicomico Shores golf course community is near the old port.

Chaptico is served by a single post office. Early Chaptico postal history will be difficult to find. Manuscript postmarks were used until at least the 1850s and only a handful of mid-1850 circle postmarked covers have been identified. Keep looking, though! Pieces from the Coode and Thomas (Zarvona) families would be prize items. Pre-Revolutionary items are possible but, of course, scarce. The bulk of Chaptico's offerings, in all eras, are those items dealing with the shipping businesses; no factories or major hotels here. Entry level pieces from the turn-of-the-century shipping businesses, residential mail and tourist postcards aren't too unfriendly to your savings account.

Tappahannock, Virginia

The Richmond Junto

What appeared as a simple port town in early 19th century Virginia was actually hometown for three powerful men in American politics – the so-called Richmond Junto. The trio were the men behind President Thomas Jefferson, and they were three of the men that made the Republican Party dominant in American politics throughout the first half of the 19th Century.

Actually, Tappahannock, Virginia did begin life as a tobacco port on the Rappahannock River. It almost became more. Captain John Smith stopped here when he came to America with the first English settlers, but the Algonquin speaking natives that called the place home ambushed the initial landing party and Smith went on his way. One year later, that same group pulled into Jamestown.

In 1645, the land in this area was deeded to Bartholomew Hoskins in a manorial grant, and he quickly installed a tobacco plantation.

In 1676, the area became part of the bigger picture. The port area had already been identified as a gateway to the Northern Neck region of Virginia, the eventually highly built up area between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers.

At the time, tobacco was already the prime product for Virginia and fortunes had six years before exploded Virginia's population to 40,000. Access to the Northern Neck was vital, and tobacco plantation owners Thomas and Benjamin Goodrich were in charge of the area, already operating a private wharf to ship their products and soon, that of others.

They were some of the few folks lucky enough to own property on the river, but their luck only ended up helping kick off to the first attack by American rebels on British authority.

It all started when a royal policy called the Great Neck Grant forbade the growing Virginia colony from issuing further land grants on the river. Therefore, when Virginia's population doubled in the 1650s, there was nowhere for anyone to go. Virginia expanded her borders west into Native American owned lands, thrusting the colony into a war for land rights.

Lucky landowners they may have been, but when things blew via the Bacon Rebellion in 1676, the Goodriches came in on the side of the rebels. Led by Nathanial Bacon, the Bacon Rebellion primarily began as an excuse to attack Native Americans that were harassing settlers – a privately manned attack rebels saw as necessary because the Virginian governor failed to provide military protection for settlers and planters in the new western territory.

The rebellion boiled from the west and into Jamestown itself when it became a revolt against high taxes imposed by the authorities on everyone else but the rich folks in Jamestown. Combined with low tobacco prices due to the British non-competition rule that said Virginia's cash crop could only be sold to the British, unfair taxation meant Virginia had to explode.

And it did. Before the revolt was over, Jamestown had been sacked and burned by rebels. While Governor Berkeley fled for his life, rebels plundered away some of those riches held by his wealthy supporters. The attempt to capture Berkeley in Northampton County spun out of control, and led to Berkeley coming out on top. Bacon wound up dead, and many of the leading rebels were executed.

The Crown became involved in the aftermath in an attempt to repair the chasm between the English Loyalists and rebels. First, the government took steps to regulate the tobacco trade through even more officials and customs houses. And, through the British Act of Co-Habitation, the Crown and Virginia's legislature, the House of Burgesses, decreed that Virginia begin developing communities throughout the colony, namely communities that would offer other resources than just tobacco growing, picking, hauling, and smoking.

Such as jobs in a port.

Twenty new Virginia communities came about through the Co-Habitation act. Including Tappahannock. In 1682, Thomas Goodrich was given 10,000 pounds of tobacco for the fifty-acre plot that would become Tappahannock. The ballast stones ejected from the ship that hauled the tobacco to Jolly Olde England can still be found lying in the river.

To begin with, the area was called Hobbs His Hole. As in 'who owns that? That's Hobbs', that's his hole.' The Hobbs in question was Jacob Hobbs, who operated a trading post here. At the same time, the county lines were redrawn, and while this area had been part of Rappahannock County, it became part of Essex County. Hobbs His Hole was tapped as county seat.

The area was actually chartered as New Plymouth and not Hobbs His Hole, but even that name changed to Tappahannock in 1705. In 1706, streets were mapped out, and the street names are still used today – which doesn't always happen in a town so old.

Does the name Tappahannock have meaning? Sure it does. The Algonquians called the river Rappahannock or 'rise and fall of water' and Tappahannock, the original name of the area, meant 'the place of the rise and fall of water'.

Tappahannock soon became a major tobacco port, bringing crops from the region together and shipping them along the coast and over the Atlantic. In 1730, the Crown established a set of inspection warehouses on the waterfront.

In 1765, Tappahannock again became part of the bigger picture during the colonies-wide revolt against the Stamp Act. Over four hundred protesters gathered here in the Essex County seat to make their voices heard.

The effort led wealthy merchant Archibald Ritchie to change his mind. As the fellow who controlled the trade in and out of the harbor, he initially thought the Stamp Act wasn't that bad of an idea. Faced by the crowd, he changed his mind and, as the years went by, became a staunch supporter of the revolt against England.

In the 1760s, the town became home for the Essex County Debtor's Prison, a hellish place where people who owed money were thrown into, made to work off their debt, or, if they got lucky, someone would cough up the money they needed. Oftentimes, debtors died of illness and malnutrition. Human rights finally became a big thing in the 1800s, abolishing the debtor prison system in the US. The building still stands. Ironically, it's home to the Essex County Treasurer's office.

With the new century came the Richmond Junto. Pals and backers of fellow Virginia boy President Jefferson, the three men in charge of the Virginia Republican party kept the Republican cause going for many years. The men were Republicans as in united in the effort to maintain an American republic. This was a difficult job in the times when the idea of democracy and freedom was cast into jeopardy by folks who still thought the King was keen, plus there were others who wanted states to succeed from the Union.

Someone needed to keep the country from slipping off track, and it worked until 1860 thanks in large part to three men from Tappahannock.

Spencer Roane, Chief Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, was primarily seen through his powerful political writings that set the mood of the day. Born and bred in Tappahannock but later settling in Richmond, he was the area's first representative in the Virginia House. He was also Thomas Jefferson's pick as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but the Congress gave the job to John Marshall.

Had he been awarded the job, things would have been interesting. As a jurist and one of the first men to build political America and heavy supporter of Jefferson's smaller federal government concept, Roane would have ensured rights remain with the states, not the federal government. Instead, John Marshall, a former classmate of Roane, gets the credit for giving the Federal Government its power.

If we take the premise of this book in account, a case against federal control of the post office coming before the Marshall controlled court would come up roses for the feds. Under Roane, states might have directed their own post offices, or at least he would have let the postmaster general run the department with minimal Congressional oversight.

Roane also wrote reams of articles explaining why Jeffersonian politics were better than anyone else's. He was also a supporter of Texas's controversial 1844 admission to the union and he opposed the Missouri Compromise. His voice on these topics and more were heard through the *Richmond Enquirer*, a newspaper edited by his cousin Thomas Ritchie, another Tappahannock native that fetched up in Richmond.

Archibald Ritchie's youngest son, Thomas Ritchie, is considered the father of modern American journalism. While he was for putting restrictions on freed slaves, he was also a heavy voice against South Carolina and Georgia's reopening of the transatlantic slave trade in the early 1800s. Later, he became a rabid supporter of America during the War of 1812, a decision that would soon come back to haunt his hometown…

The third man in the Junto was another cousin, John Brokenbough. Along with also being a key figure of the state Republican Party, Brokenbough was president of the

Bank of Virginia. Interestingly enough, the mansion this supporter of the Republic built in Richmond later became the White House of the Confederacy.

Meanwhile, back at home… Although virtually untouched during the Revolutionary War, Tappahannock only had a population of about 200 and was languishing when the post office was established in 1792. A post office had been established in 1765 and was shown on Benjamin Franklin's list of postal fees, but a "Mr. Stewart" is the first federally appointed postmaster. According to the spotty records of Tappahannock's early post office, Stewart reigned until October of 1792.

A little over twenty years later, Tappahannock was caught up in the hell of The War of 1812. Much of Virginia's coastline was set ablaze during England's famous plunder and leave tactics. Since Virginia was central to the new country and its coastal areas were weakly defended, the British Navy set up dozens of quick attacks along the Chesapeake Bay.

Their orders were to land, attack, and scamper away for high tea at sea before a larger force could attack them. December 2nd 1813 saw a small naval force entering the Rappahannock River. Not too well planned… Rear Admiral George Cockburn managed to run two schooners aground in the process. Still, Cockburn's men were able to pound Tappahannock with shellfire, chasing away the severely outgunned Essex Militia headed by Ritchie's brother, Archibald, Junior.

English forces landed December 4th to loot and pillage the waterfront. By the time the Brits pulled out, they had burned most of the downtown, including the customs house, the courthouse, two jails, several houses, and they blew up a tannery. At least they freed the area's slaves.

And…

They made sure to take time to desecrate the Ritchie family tomb, prying up coffins and flinging the contents around – especially the remains of the elder Archibald and his wife. It may have been revenge for Thomas Ritchie's stand on the war; it might have even been revenge for Archibald Senior's revolutionary work.

The post war years saw slow growth for the ruined community. In 1828, things snapped back in place with the establishment of steam boat service. Thanks to a new bank in town, Tappahannock soon became a financial hub for the area's farms. Later, the railroad allowed the area's markets to find customers. In 1927, the town was finally connected to the Upper Neck markets via the Downing Bridge, spelling an end to steamboat traffic.

A church has been a big part of Tappahannock history. In 1820, an Episcopal ministry was established in the town chapel. The chapel was deeded to the Episcopals and initially used by four denominations. In 1849, a new grand building replaced the original St. John's Church building, which remains today as a familiar landmark and well attended church. In 1927, St. John's opened a private boarding school for girls called St. Margaret's.

Today, and despite a destructive 2016 tornado, Tappahannock is home to nearly 2400 people. The original port has been replaced by the June Parker Marina, which includes the remains of the original customs house and the afore- mentioned ballast stones. Fishing and crabbing boats, charter services and pleasure craft now venture forth from the old tobacco port.

Fishing is a big hit in the area. Locally caught perch, croaker and rockfish, along with the Chesapeake Bay's offering of flounder, trout, and Spanish mackerel offer a nice variety for folks fishing for other things than postmarks. Since 1938, the family Lowery seafood restaurant has been on tap to share some of that watery wealth.

A single post office on the waterfront serves Tappahannock. For such a small service area, history has provided many lucrative chances at postal history gold. As always, pre-revolutionary items with transit marks or Tappahannock addresses would be fantastic finds, especially anything from the Goodriches or Hobbs. Ritchie family material can still be sourced. Anything from the Richmond Junto with a Tappahannock manuscript postmark would be historically significant. All three men were born in the area and maintained houses in town during their lives.

A circle postmark crops up in Tappahannock history in the 1830s and is affordable.

Urbanna, Virginia

The Home of the Rappahannock Oyster

If walls could talk, two ancient homes in the town of Urbanna, Virginia could tell tales about the early days of the commonwealth.

Yet another Tidewater town on the once superhighway of water known as the Rappahannock River, Urbanna owes its roots to two powerful tobacco planters who were numbered among the most powerful men in the Virginia Colony. The town still plays host to the homes they left behind.

The main plantation, Rosegill, was not only owned by the first man to settle the area, Ralph Wormeley, but from the early 1650s to sometimes in the 1670s it was home to the Virginia colony's first governor, Sir Henry Chicheley. Later, back in the Wormeley family, part of the plantation became Urbanna.

Built in 1678, Christopher Robinson's majestic original manor was called The Grange. Thanks his job – Secretary of State for Virginia 1692-95 – and being a member of the Governor's Council, Robinson's guests included many of the early Virginia Colony families who gathered here to meet up and discuss state affairs. It's safe to assume the folks didn't quite get around to talking about how courageous the Bacon rebels were, especially since Governor Berkeley was not only a regular visitor, but Robinson was once his personal secretary.

The Grange is now known as Hewick and joins Rosegill on the Historic Registry. Although both manor houses have been extensively remodeled since the 17th century, their original parts can still be seen.

The land that would become today's Urbanna was originally 3200 acres deeded to Ralph Wormeley in 1649. This prime property was placed right where the Rosegill Creek runs into the Rappahannock, creating a small deepwater port in the process.

Wormeley was one of the heavy movers and shakers in early Virginia and a staunch supporter of the Crown, which led to his job as Collector of His Majesty's Customs. He didn't enjoy the property long, dying in 1651. His widow married Chicheley

soon after, and a tobacco plantation was established on the banks of the Rappahannock. About twenty buildings were built, included the private port used to ship out the manor's tobacco.

By 1678, Ralph Wormeley II had inherited the land from his step-father, along with his father's old customs collecting gig. He took over Rosegill just in time for the House of Burgesses to pass the British Act of Co-Habitation. Wormeley was more than hip to the idea, so he found himself on the end of the co-habitation act that required he give up some land. In 1680, Wormeley coughed up fifty of his acres, and he was paid the standard 10,000 pounds of tobacco for his trouble.

Here's the funny part. While Wormeley gave up the land and took the tabbacy, he never signed the papers. It turns out he refused to sign until the Crown gave into his demands to run the town the way he wanted to, as in like a lord in control of a little fiefdom. Since fiefdoms were exactly what the Crown was trying to get away from (the better to appease the restless rebels with), he was never given what he wanted. Therefore, he never gave them a signature.

Technically, that means the Wormeley family still owns the town.

Urbanna soon became the first town in Middlesex County and served as county seat from 1748 to 1849. The acreage surrounding the port soon became a bustling tobacco port complete with a customs house and warehouses. British ships hauled away the tobacco in exchange for goods they brought to the area. Urbanna didn't get its name until 1705; Urbanna, which translates to "City of Anne", was named in honor of the English Queen.

Four Colonial era buildings remaining in Urbanna sum up the early days. There's the Customs House, the Tobacco warehouse of 1766, the courthouse from when Urbanna was the county seat of Middlesex County, and the tavern on King George Street. The folks running the tavern had it pretty good, as far as having steady customers was concerned. Tobacco buyers and people using the Courthouse needed a place to unwind when their business was done for the day. Overnight guests were only charged six pence or five pounds of tobacco. That cheep cheep rate didn't come from the bottom of the proprietor's heart, though. Although he must've been working overtime to smoke all that tobacco, rates at lodging houses in any colonial town with a customs house were capped by the Crown.

Even before the Revolution came to town, Urbanna resident Dr. John Mitchell played a large part in the postwar years. In 1754, the second Earl of Halifax hired Mitchell to help establish the border lines of each American colony. Mitchell produced a hand colored map that managed to extend Virginia's borders to Mississippi, claiming massive chunks of Indian territory. The magical map also took land from Canada. The Mitchell Map became a major part of the new United State's post war negotiations with England to establish the borders of the new nation.

Revolutionary War politics abounded in Urbanna. At one end of town, you had Ralph Wormeley IV, an unabashed supporter of every little thing King George III did, and his even more outspoken son. Number Five was so vocal about the dubious virtue of your average Patriot, he was shipped away during the war to keep him from meeting the wrong rebel in a dark alley.

Then there was future resident Arthur Lee. Although he didn't show up in town until 1790, he had earned plenty of street cred among the Urbannites who fought for

freedom. In October, 1776 Lee, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane went to France to negotiate for France's assistance in the war – as in, send in the troops help the Revolutionaries win this thing. It's a step France wasn't ready to take at the time, preferring to stick with the back door funding deals already in place.

Alone, Lee went to Spain and Berlin to request aid. Spain said OK if you don't want very much, Berlin told him to take a hike. In 1778, he and his original companions returned to France to sign agreements with France for troops and war material.

Later, Lee served in the Continental Congress from 1782 to 1785, and then he was on the Treasury Board.

Like everyone involved in creating our country, he had his own ideas. These ideas centered on not approving of the Constitution, still in the works at that time. It appears his stance on the subject led to hints about maybe going ahead and retiring from politics.

He came to Urbanna in 1790 and set about creating his very own tobacco plantation, Lansdowne. However, like another Urbanna area man interested in making a fortune in tobacco, he died two years later.

Allen and Benjamin Franklin didn't like each other whenever history thrust them together, but Lee might have had time to chat with Franklin about the gentleman's concept of a great post office system. Maybe not. In either case, Lee became familiar with the post office system in 1792 when Urbanna became official with its very own United States Post Office mere months before his death. Revolutionary War hero Colonel Peter Kemp was appointed postmaster. Interestingly enough, today's Urbanna Post Office sits next to Lansdowne.

When war called again, Urbanna paid a heavy price. The town was sacked in the War of 1812 and much of the town burned. The town rebuilt after the war, and many of those buildings remain, tucked in with the rare survivors of the attack.

In 1849, the county courthouse was moved to Saluda, knocking quite a bit of business off Urbanna's front door. In an ironic twist, the courthouse was given to the local Baptist and Methodists Churches, who shared the building for fifty-plus years. Why is that ironic? Because the courthouse is the same place where traveling preacher John Waller was tried and jailed in 1771 - for the heinous crime of coming to the Anglican Church led town to preach that the virtues of Baptism were so swell that Urbannites should let him construct a church in their town.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the port saw heavy use from the unique coastal schooners plying the river. The vessels might have been small, but they were sturdy. Once, a pint sized schooner brought in a load of sixty thousand bricks and 190,000 shingles from North Carolina.

The only thing holding the harbor back from true success was its relatively low draft that wouldn't allow the more modern deep draft steamers dock there. Finally, that changed later in the century when shallow draft steamers hit the market.

Urbanna hit the new century with two canneries, two pickle factories, a factory that made overalls, and another firm that ran the largest excelsior (a type of upholstery stuffing and packing material) factory in the South.

Oysters also became key to Urbanna's growth. The refrigerated boxcars invented in the late 19th century allowed Virginia's unexploited oyster beds to be sent shell by shell to the West Coast. At the peak of the industry in the early 1900s, Urbanna was host to three oyster houses, including the R. A. Davis House with 100 shuckers on staff.

Although the 1940s saw a fatal virus strike the oyster beds, Urbanna hung on tight with a fleet of packing houses, including the Davis, Kriete, Hunley and Lord Mott vegetable canneries.

Urbanna was saved by a renewed interest in the Rappahannock Oyster. Unique to the river, Rappahannock Oysters are considered the least salty of Chesapeake Bay oysters, thanks to the fairly fresh water they process. In the 1950s, Urbanna fishermen began harvesting the oysters in great numbers. Despite a depleted oyster population on a polluted river in the 1980s, the oyster industry has bounced back in recent years.

Rappahannock oysters are said to be good with any wine. They're also good enough for an annual festival. Every first weekend of November, Urbanna celebrates its favorite shellfish with the Urbanna Oyster Festival, Virginia's official Oyster Festival. It's a big deal – between 50 and 75,000 folks swarm the tiny town. The event features two parades, a world-known oyster shucking contest, the usual ton of booths offering merchandise and games, live music acts, and plenty of chances to eat oysters.

Hanging around by the oyster shucking contest might be a great way to snag on said oysters – and meet internationally known oyster shuckers. Some of the men and women that make opening an oyster with a knife look like they're cutting butter are regular participants at international contests.

All year, the town's giant Historical District is on view. 150 plus buildings are inside the district, and there are some interesting ones. Of course, there's the two old manor houses. Both were extensively redone in the 18th century, but maintain their majestic air. There are the aforementioned four commercial buildings, which belong to a set of seven colonial era buildings still in use today, and the Courthouse is one of only 11 colonial courthouses remaining in Virginia.

Then there's the house belonging to a Lord.

Called the Marble House because of its liberal use of the stone, salvaged from the Great Baltimore Fire, the home built around 1900 belonged to pickle factory and oyster house owner Lord Byron Van Wagerman. Actually, Wagerman was born and raised in the area, not a European castle.

Today's Urbanna is home to a little under 500 people and serves as the commercial hub for the oyster and crabbing industry and local corn, soybean, wheat and barley crops. A seafood factory and a number of seafood restaurants help emphasize the new role of this once flourishing tobacco port.

For many years, the old port had been given over to two large marinas. One marina burned in 2016 with the loss of two lives. The Urbanna Bridge Marina remains in place, and plans on developing the old marina.

Urbanna is served by a single post office. Pre-Revolutionary Postal history can begin and start in this town with just the Wormeley and Robinson families alone. Throw in anything from Arthur Lee, and you'll have a pretty good trifecta going.

Finding a circle mark from the stampless era may be impossible – it appears Urbanna used a manuscript cancel through the 1850s. They're not too expensive, and commercial covers from the 1700s to 1800s will offer up plenty of tobacco related firms, plus there's the courthouse business to keep in mind. How about a packet of important papers urgently mailed with a raft of US #2s to make sure the papers got there?

Turn-of-the-century cannery and packing house covers are super collectible, and Urbanna has beautiful offerings. Later oyster related material falls under very modern

postal history, but they sure would be colorful and interesting, right? A unique side collection would be mail sent out by the Oyster Festival organizers every year since 1958 on colorful stationary.

Kinsale, Virginia

A Proud Past

Our third stop in Virginia cinches down a pattern of the importance of a certain liquid highway along the Great Neck. Yes indeedy, we are still on the Rappahannock River. Kinsale, Virginia may be an unincorporated area now, but she was once yet another key port town on this important waterway to inner Virginia.

This port is not only a deep water port, but that deepness extended for quite a ways around this natural, protected harbor, giving plenty of room for big ships to maneuver into place – something our other two ports didn't permit.

Quite simply, no British ships ran aground when they came to sack Kinsale. Twice.

Before all that, Kinsale was settled by yet another tobacco planter. In 1667, Stephen Bailey was deeded the property that met the confluence of three major bodies of waters into the Rappahannock. Later, these waterways would be labeled Bailey's Mill Creek, Kinsale Branch and the West Yeocomico River. Perching a grand manor house, called the Great House, on a bluff overlooking the Yeocomico, Bailey went to work establishing the Kinsale tobacco plantation, with his very own private port soon entering the picture.

The property would also be affected by the Co-Habitation Act, but not in the usual way. The House of Burgesses simply laid out a town on part of the Kinsale Plantation in 1705, but there would be no real takers for the area's prime property until after the Revolutionary War. Although Kinsale was the official port for Westmoreland County, even the Crown's tobacco warehouse wasn't put there. While Kinsale did plenty

of direct trade with Scotland and the West Indies, the town remained a scattering of buildings around the port until the mid 1780s.

In 1784, Kinsale Plantation was sold to three men – Dr. Walter Jones, Catesby Jones and John Maund. The men developed the town site by splitting the land into half acre lots and selling them at public auction. With strings attached. Houses were required to be built of stone or brick within three years, and they must and shall only be 16 feet by 16 feet. Maybe these guys invented the first Homeowners Association.

In 1785, a tax inspection warehouse was finally sent to Kinsale, making the port finally lucrative enough to attract settlers and merchants, but not enough to eject the area from scattering of building status. In 1792, the fresh town was given a post office, manned at first by postmaster Thomas Collins. Collins died soon after and was replaced by William Richardson, who only served into 1793. The post office was likely in the general store operated by the Balletine brothers of Scotland.

Kinsale would be hit hard by the War of 1812.

The first attack came in 1813. A British naval detachment chased the US Navy's armed schooners *Asp* and *Scorpion* from the Chesapeake to within eyeshot of the Kinsale port. While the *Scorpion* was able to make good her escape, the *Asp* was beset by five ships that ran her aground just below Bailey's old manor house. The ship was boarded. When *Asp* commander Midshipman James R. Sigourney refused to surrender his vessel, the 23-year-old sailor was murdered.

And, since they were already in this certain neck of the woods, the British came on land, burned the manor house, then went on to see what they could loot and pillage in Kinsale. It's said there were only twenty buildings in the town at the time, but plenty of valuable cargo on the docks.

Sigourney's remains were taken by the Bailey family and interred with utmost respect in their family plot, where he remains to this day. The Great House was rebuilt after the war.

The British returned in 1814, sacking and burning the town again. The postwar era saw a town struggling to rebuild. There was also a new market to serve. With the appeal of tobacco waning, Kinsale found itself in an area transitioning into wheat farming. At last, Kinsale's deep port came in handy. Wheat was hauled by larger vessels, primarily steam ships, and Kinsale had the only port in these parts that could accommodate their girth. By the Civil War, Kinsale was prospering. Steam traffic called here as early as the 1820s, and by 1855, the steamship *Oceola* made weekly trips from Kinsale to Baltimore.

Thanks to that big port and a decent infrastructure, Kinsale became a war target in the Civil War. Not only was she providing a rare spot for Confederate sympathizers in the North to land much needed supplies for the troops, she was also a great spot for Confederate spies to sneak in and out of the North. The Union ships of the Potomac Flotilla shelled the town several times during the war. The city fathers did, however, find time to host at least one social ball for the Confederate officers stationed in the area.

Despite all the shells and fire, The Great House managed to escape the war unscathed. It's said the Bailey family respect for Sigourney's memory saved the house.

The Reconstruction Era saw Kinsale a burned out wreck. Much of the land was purchased in 1866 by Hiram Hardwick. Like the developers in 1784, he divided the town

into lots and began selling the chance to live in a port town. This time, there were many takers.

By the turn of the century, Kinsale was home to three hotels, several taverns, and four tomato canneries. In the 1920s, towns were judged by the number of car dealers they had, and Kinsale fared pretty well with a Chevrolet agency and a Ford dealer. In 1921, steamboats with the Potomac River Line were making three trips to Baltimore every week. The 1930s weren't so swell, though. The Great Depression with more expensive cans, federally set minimum wage and competition from California spelled the beginning of the end for the canning industry. Past the '30s, steamboat traffic fell off sharply as better developed roads negated the need for cargo ship traffic. In 1951, the final cannery closed.

Although Kinsale remains a commercial hub for the local soybean and grain industry, it is no longer a town. However, it features a well preserved downtown. Here, visitors will find a mixture of post Civil War, Victorian and twentieth century commercial buildings.

One of those buildings belongs to the Kinsale Post Office, the area's only postal facility. Kinsale's postal history has plenty to offer. A postmark first appears in 1835, a circle stamped in blue; manuscript marks were used before then. Although not considered rare, post-1850 Kinsale postmarked material won't be easy to find.

As with the two previous towns, anything from the founding families would be key items in a Kinsale collection. Items from the canneries, hotels, steamship business, and even the car dealers are well worth hunting for. Even at its height, Kinsale's population never went above the 400 mark, so this is one town where complete late 19th Century/early 20th Century covers from residents would actually be scarcer than commercial material. That should tap them up a bit in the desirability department.

Martinsburg, West Virginia

The Town That Voted No

The early history of Martinsburg, West Virginia came with many interesting characters – beginning with its founder.

Part of Virginia until 1863, Martinsburg sits in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, a narrow spit of land tucked between Virginia and Maryland and not very far from Pennsylvania. Quakers and Presbyterians came from Pennsylvania to farm this land in the 1740s; they were joined by the German-speaking Pennsylvania Dutch in the 1750s. During the French and Indian War, Mendenhall's Fort was placed here as part of George Washington's defense network.

The city's founder was also part of George Washington's colonial militia. Adam Stephens came to America in the 1750s as a Scottish political refugee, an honor he earned by being on the wrong side of a civil war there. A surgeon, he served aboard a Royal Navy hospital ship before joining the Virginia Brigade during the French and Indian War. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and served side by side with Washington in the early campaigns of the war. His medical training came in very handy – he saved his own life when he was wounded in a major battle. When the war ended in 1763 and Washington retired his own commission in the militia, Stephens took over the Virginia Brigade. He was instrumental in putting down several Native American rebellions and securing treaties with Native Americans in Virginia and Ohio.

In 1772, he purchased a chunk of prime real estate in the Eastern Panhandle, a chunk that came with its own fort. The land was bracketed on two sides by the Tuscarora Creek, and Stephens had ideas of placing a grist mill right along the swift current. Thusly was born another water-power industrial town. It also helped that the area was, as Stephens dubbed it, the Gateway to the Shenandoah Valley - meaning someone had to get supplies and merchandise in and out of the valley, and he was glad to be of service.

Stephens soon offered land to other folks, spurred on by the recently formed Berkeley County's decision to place the county seat near Stephen's mill. It probably helped that he donated the land, the stone to build the courthouse, and the name.

The name. Martinsburg was named after Stephens' friend Thomas Bryan Martin. Martin was land agent for his uncle, Lord Fairfax, and his massive holdings in the Great Neck region of Virginia – 5,000,000 acres stretching to the Potomac. Not only was Martin a land agent, he was a politician. In a political campaign backed by Lord Fairfax, he and George Washington were elected to the House of Burgesses in 1758. Martin would only serve two terms before deciding to retire. George did better.

As the Revolutionary War started, Martinsburg was just getting started, too. Settlers had moved in. The courthouse hadn't been built yet, but there was a jail, with legal and county proceedings taking place in Stephens' home. Stephens took time off to join the Continental Army. He was a commanding officer during the New York and New Jersey campaigns of 1776 and 1777. Later in '77, he was appointed major general in charge of defending Philadelphia. He didn't last long. Caught drunk during the key battle for Germantown, he was stripped of his rank and drummed out of the service.

Martin, a Loyalist, lay low during the war, but due to his connections didn't lose his property like so many other Loyalists did.

Post war, Martinsburg grew. The Virginia Assembly officially established the town in 1778. One year later, the courthouse was finally built. Stephens added an oil mill and wood mill to his holdings before his death in 1790. The town had already established its future – a mecca for flour. Bring your wheat here, we'll grind it and send it to market for ya! By the turn of the century, Martinsburg had become a major supplier of flour to Alexandria and Baltimore.

Religion came to Martinsburg as well. By 1800, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran-Reformed and Methodists had meeting houses in place.

The post office came to town, too. David Hunter was appointed first postmaster and served until August of 1793.

The Civil War began early in Martinsburg with two men involved on opposite sides of the slave controversy of the 1850s, one a politician, the other an escaped slave.

In the 1850s, there were about 2000 slaves in Berkeley County. One less as of Christmas Day, 1856. A week after his wife and children were sold to a new master, Robert Brown fled for freedom, running until he got to Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society to enlist their help in finding his family.

Even if he had been caught in the North, Brown would have been sent home. Until 1850, escaped slaves that reached the North were given immunity. However, a Martinsburg lawyer ended all that. As a state senator, Charles James Faulkner had introduced a bill in the Virginia Assembly that was later tweaked into shape as the national Fugitive Slave Act. Basically, no more immunity because the bill revoked that right and gave bounty hunters and authorities permission to seize escaped slaves wherever they were found, North or South, Alabama or Maine.

This created a whole new hell for African-Americans as even those that were born free would be gathered up by bounty hunters and sent south in the name of the law. It is one of the direct causes of the Civil War.

Faulkner went on to serve as US Representative before being sent to France as an ambassador. In 1861, he was caught trying to swing an arms deal between the Confederacy and France. Arrested, he was held until later that year when he was swapped for a New York congressman captured by the South at Bull Run, proving that even treasonous politicians have value.

The war was horrible to Martinsburg and her people. The city traded hands 37 times during the conflict, usually with too much violence and destruction. Since the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had placed a massive complex at Martinsburg in the 1840s, the city had become a major railroad hub.

While their neighboring communities dug the Confederate cause, Martinsburg voted against the succession of Virginia because they believed the Union would do a better job of protecting their best interest – the railroad. The day after the state-wide vote garnered a no vote from Martinsburg, the town was forcibly occupied by the Confederate Army. In June, Stonewall Jackson's men destroyed the B&O complex, the lines, and most of the trains.

Not long after, Martinsburg was captured by the Union. That day, July 4, 1861, was the genesis of a plucky female Confederate spy. Belle Boyd was born in town, her father was serving with Stonewall Jackson, and yet the fresh Union troops wanted her mother to hang a Union flag above the house. When soldiers got rough with Belle's mother, Belle shot and killed one of them. A military court found the shooting justified, but Boyd didn't find the Union Army's very existence justified.

So, she became a spy. She began an affair with Union Captain Daniel Kelly, pressing him for information. This information she sent to Confederate generals via a hollowed out watch case carried by her equally brave slave Eliza Hopewell.

Belle's big moment came when she eavesdropped on a meeting between General Shields and his staff. She quickly discovered that Shields and his army had been pulled from their post at Front Royal, leaving that section of the state barely defended. Belle ran the information to Stonewall Jackson's men, who were already advancing on Front Royal. Dodging gunfire and catching a couple bullet holes in her skirt, she was able to let the powers that be know that the area was even more poorly defended than they thought. Jackson's men marched in, took over, providing a key strategic victory for the cause. She would later be given the rank of captain and the Southern Cross of Honor.

Things stopped going so well between Belle and her lover in 1862. When he dumped her, she was caught out as a spy and imprisoned. Belle was locked up until 1864. Gaining her freedom, she left the country. She became an actress in England before returning to America in the late '60s. She found a career giving dramatic readings of her adventures for the South.

Even after the Unionist section of Virginia voted to join the Union as West Virginia, Martinsburg remained a ripe target for both sides. In 1863, the city was caught up in the Gettysburg battle when Union troops tried but failed to raid Martinsburg for much needed supplies. In 1864, Martinsburg became part of the bigger picture when Stephens' claim of Gateway to the Shenandoah came painfully obvious.

Southern general Jubal Early concocted a plan to divert Union troops with the promise of big battles in the valley, then sealing the gap at Martinsburg, thereby trapping Union troops there while the South went on to take Washington DC. It didn't quite work, and Martinsburg traded hands eleven times during that bloody campaign – three times in one day alone.

Martinsburg had plenty of rebuilding to do after the war. The national railroad industry was also doing a lot of rebuilding then, and Martinsburg prospered from a period of not only repair of war damage but immense growth as railroad companies expanded.

The 1870s saw the Pennsylvania Railway open a line here, and the founding of the Martinsburg and Potomac Line.

That was the early 1870s for you. Spurred on with money thrown on their desks by eager speculators, the railroads placed more and more lines on more and more territory, becoming the number-two industry in America after agriculture. A nation became dependant on the railroad only to see the national economy fall apart when the money ran out and railroads discovered they had over-extended themselves. The ensuing major national depression in the mid 1870s saw 13-percent unemployment and thousands of bankrupt businesses.

This is the era that grew unions, and the modern union cause pretty much began in Martinsburg in July of 1877. When wages for Martinsburg B&0 workers were cut for the third time that year, the workers refused to let trains run until the pay cut was revoked. Their rebellion quickly spread across Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, and Missouri. Violence was the order of the day. When twenty workers were killed by local militia in Pittsburgh, workers rioted in Pittsburgh, destroying major portions of that city's train system. The militia retaliated by killing 20 more the next day.

Those weren't the only horrific incidents of the 45 day strike. A regular report card of strife between local militias – sometimes just local mobs – and strikers got so bad that the Army and National Guard were called to the quell things.

Despite the violence, what began in Martinsburg led to so many things that are now taken for granted. Almost immediately, railroads began offering better wages, health care, coverage for illness and injury, and death benefits. B&O topped that by offering a pension plan. The strike also crafted big, powerful unions out of small unions. Things would not be easy for the union man in the beginning, but unions became more powerful in the ensuing decades. The 1880s alone saw 10,000 strikes or lockouts. In 1886, 700,000 workers were involved in strikes.

A better trained National Guard was born out of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Dismayed by the actions taken by local militias that just weren't up to the job, a nation demanded a better system than just sending in federal troops when things got bad. As a result, a military trained force was added to the nation's emergency response kit.

Things changed again when Martinsburg got electricity in 1890. Within two years, not only had industry slipped from water to power, but five major textile mills were connected to Martinsburg's power grid. Martinsburg entered the twentieth century as a major American textile center. The Middlesex Knitting Company, the Shenandoah Pants Company, Crawford Woolen Company, Interwoven Mills and Southern Merchant Tailoring Corp all called Martinsburg home.

The Second World War saw Martinsburg on the front again, this time as the home front when thousands of injured servicemen were cared for at the Newton D. Baker military hospital.

When jobs went overseas in the 1960s, Martinsburg was rocked by mill closures. By the 1970s, the city had shifted to lighter industry. Today, it remains a thriving area and is home to about 17,500 people.

Martinsburg is served by one main post office with several neighborhood branches. Postal history is fairly easy to locate. Martinsburg PO began with manuscript cancels that ran from the 1790s into the 1820s. Early hand stamps include a stylish fancy

cancel in 1840s, an 1840s straight line, a series of circles through the 1860s, and a special soldier's mail postmark in 1862.

Pre-1792 material will be more difficult to track down, of course, and will need to be verified by transit markings or return addresses, but some early commercial and Revolutionary War gems are yet to be found. The Nineteenth Century will be a goldmine for commercial and railroad material - and a cover slathered with Confederate stamps smacked around by the Soldier's Mail postmark wouldn't be a bad find, either – perhaps only topped by a letter from Belle Boyd. Military collectors will also want to keep an eye out for 1940s material sent by recuperating soldiers at the Baker hospital.

Salisbury, North Carolina

Textile Town

Salisbury, North Carolina is one of the very few June 12, 1792 communities that isn't on intimate terms with a river. No waterwheels or wharfs here, but transportation still played a role in the selection of this western North Carolina town. That's because Salisbury sits on the crossroads of the colonial overland highway, the Great Wagon Road, and the East West Trading Path running from Virginia.

Salisbury has more ancient roots than just the roads used to criss-cross from the ocean to western territories. It is the traditional home to the Saponi and Catawba peoples.

While the town traces its roots back to its founding in 1755, German and Scotch-Irish immigrants had been farming the area's rich soil since the 1740s. In 1753, Rowan County was created, with 40 acres in what would be known as Salisbury set aside for a county seat. In 1755, local landowner Earl Granville parceled out another 635 acres to create the town site. One purchaser, a surveyor named John Carter, was kind enough to lay out a town grid atop this acreage. Of course, he made sure to place all the prime locations in the lots he owned.

Salisbury quickly grew as a court town and a hub for the agriculture in the area. In 1765, North Carolina was split into six colonial judicial units and Salisbury was made head of the Salisbury District. One of the district judges, James Smith, served from 1770 to 1775 when he suddenly retired to openly support the Patriot movement.

The Revolutionary War came upon the small town fairly quickly. The town passed the Rowan Resolves, basically a document throwing their support behind Boston, persecuted at the time after the Boston Tea Party. Rowan County's residents told England they were going too far and they better watch it. By signing on the dotted line, Salisbury threw their weight behind the Revolutionary cause, making them one of the first North Carolina communities to publicly thumb their nose at King George III.

During the war, Salisbury served as a recruitment area for citizen soldiers, provided hospital care for the wounded, and operated a jail to house people who didn't dig the Patriot cause. Except for a two day occupation by English General Cornwallis in 1781, Salisburians only saw real action in 1776 when the town's North Carolina Light House Brigade was sent into the neighboring Washington district to put down resistance from the British-backed Cherokees.

The post war era found the town continuing to grow. Slowly. When George Washington passed through Salisbury in his 1791 tour of the southern states, he noted the town was awful small and backwards for a county seat. Still, the following year saw Salisbury picked as a post office location. George Laumann was appointed postmaster and served exactly 22 months.

Gold found in Gold Hill, not far from Salisbury, in 1799 added a boost to the town's commercial area. The real growth came with the North Carolina Railroad in 1855. Industry and commercial businesses hugged the line, creating a massive population growth for Salisbury. Salisbury became the trading center for the state's western region, and was also an important jumping off spot for westward migration.

In 1861, Salisbury entered the Civil War as an important part of the Confederate machinery. The town was a key railroad asset for moving troops, storing equipment and munitions, and providing hospital care. Unfortunately, the town was also tapped to provide a prison for captured Union troops. Despite vocal objection from the citizens, 1862 saw the Salisbury prison open at the abandoned Maxwell-Chambers textile mill. Originally housing 1500 prisoners in a space meant for 2500, the prison was humane enough until 1864. That's when too many Union troops were captured during the Atlanta and Richmond sieges. Ten thousand prisoners were forced into the prison at the wrong time in the war. With most of the South's vital goods going to the war effort, prisoners faced starvation and disease. This equaled horrible living conditions and a 28% death rate. A horrible place. While 300 POWs escaped during the war, many more were killed trying to escape. One escape attempt in November of '64 resulted in the death of 200 men.

Enough escaped to pass on the word about the hellish prison camp. One man hearing the stories was District of East Tennessee military leader, Union General Stoneman. He wanted to rescue the prisoners and he wanted to make Salisbury pay - also, it'd be nice to do something about the massive supplies the town held for the Confederate military, plus the troops could also take over the railroad bridge outside of town. In the Spring of '65, Stoneman was authorized to include Salisbury in his westward march from Tennessee with 5000 troops dubbed Stoneman's Raiders. Like Sherman, they were sweeping and burning their way to the ocean.

Mere days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the Raiders reached Salisbury. Meeting them on April 12th was a weak group of defenders that numbered about 500, including invalid soldiers, civilian government employees and 200 former Salisbury Prison inmates that came over to the rebel cause. These five hundred held Salisbury long enough for trains to whisk the bulk of people and material from the town. After Stoneman's Raiders stepped over the defenders, they swarmed Salisbury. They refused surrender from the mayor and swept through Salisbury, burning the military targets. Under Stoneman's orders, they left homes and non-military buildings alone – a rare stroke of kindness from the Union, perhaps motivated by word that the civilians themselves had despised the prison camp and tried their best to get rid of it themselves.

Stoneman was six weeks too late to liberate the prisoners; they had been transported out in February. The Union troops spent extra time destroying the vacant prison, then blew up the town's ammunition depot. Parts of Salisbury burned for days. Flames could be seen 15 miles away, exploding munitions heard 25 miles away.

On the 14th, Stoneman moved on the Yadkin River Bridge. Three miles east of town, the bridge was a vital piece of Confederate railway that crossed the Yadkin River. Years previous, substantial fortifications had been built to defend the bridge. These were put to use against Stoneman's Raiders. Confederate troops led by General Beauregard repulsed the Union attack, securing the last major victory of the war for the Confederates.

Later that night, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Not long after the assassination, President Jefferson Davis and his followers fled Richmond. They came through Salisbury on Easter Sunday, receiving a cold reception from angry townspeople. Begrudgingly, a rector at St. Luke's Episcopal Church allowed the party to spend the night on church grounds.

The troops guarding the Yadkin Bridge would outlast Davis. Only after his surrender did they lay down their swords.

Salisbury came through the Reconstruction Era fairly intact. Two additional railroad carriers pushed their lines through Salisbury. Combined with a Southern Railroad repair facility in the 1890s, this brought a population explosion. 1896 industries included three cotton mills, a knitting factory, a rope factory and a common theme for the town's future – the textile industry.

Salisbury is smack dab in the middle of the Piedmont area of North Carolina, and the Piedmont textile industry exploded in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The area's wealth in cheap raw materials and fuel equaled a no-brainer for national textile mills to move in. A mild climate provided high quality cotton nearly year round, the depressed rural areas provided cheap workers and the afore-mentioned railroad system kept everything rolling.

A great example of mills providing depth to a town can be seen at the historically registered landmark Kesler Manufacturing Company/Cannon Mills No. 7 District. Not only did a factory start there in 1895, but homes were built for the workers, creating overnight a new town inside Salisbury. The mill, along with three others, brought prosperity to Salisbury throughout the twentieth century.

Another form of prosperity came out of – and still does – from Salisbury. Salisbury is home to the African American college, Livingstone College. The college was founded in 1879 by a group of African American pastors and the African Episcopal Zion Church.

Founders Thomas Lomax, William Thurber, and Robert Rieves were merely attempting to visit parishioners in a college when they were turned away. Within eyeshot of that certain school, they resolved to fix the problem. Opened in 1879 in nearby Concord as the Zion Wesley Institute, it was only one of five North Carolina colleges serving African American higher education and the only one solely run by African Americans. In 1882, the college moved to a 40-acre Salisbury farm in 1882, a spot it still holds – along with nearly 300 more acres for a state-of-the-art college campus. The name was changed in 1887 to honor African explorer and missionary David Livingstone.

The college's first president in Salisbury was Joseph Charles Price, a nationally recognized leader of the black community. So dedicated was he to the idea of forming a strong African American college, Price turned down a post as US Consul to Liberia. Under his reign, the college solidified as an example that African Americans could help themselves – which was, sadly, a strange concept for the times.

The first graduating class included the first two African American women to earn a Bachelor's Degree in North Carolina. Initially founded to instruct seminary students and to teach technical skills in construction and masonry, Livingstone is now one of the top full course colleges in North Carolina. While the seminary disjoined from the college in 2002, both entities still offer full courses.

Today's Salisbury anchors the Salisbury Township, a combination of Salisbury, East Spenser, and a smidge of neighboring Granite Quarry.

Currently, Salisbury is known for two very modern institutions. It is hometown and only town for the strawberry soda called Cheerwine. Popular in the South, the soda is produced here by Carolina Beverage Corporation, the oldest soft drink company still owned by the same family. They started the company in 1917.

Salisbury is also home to the famous Southeastern grocery chain, Food Lion. It all began in 1957 with one Salisbury store; now over 1100 Food Lions serve the Southeast. The corporation's headquarters are still in Salisbury.

Present day Salisbury is home to 33,663 and served by a single main post office.

Manuscript postmarks, reasonably priced, were used until the 1840s. Circle postmarks dates back to the 1830s and are relatively inexpensive. An 1841 straight line cancel signed by then-new postmaster Benjamin Julian won't be as cheap, though.

As a county seat, Salisbury will be a treasure trove for court documents, some of which required the application of high-value postage – worth looking out for, who can pass up an urgent court document sent with a $5 Columbian? Items from the pioneering Livingstone College and pieces dealing with the early 18th-century Gold Rush, the western migration, and the Civil War would be key specialty items. The 1850s and up feature many possibilities in the commercial cover department in everything from textiles to alcohol distilleries and a couple carriage manufactures. The railroads running through town offer more for the popular railroad field of postal history collecting. The more modern Cheerwine and Food Lion examples would make an interesting side collection. For the uber-specialist – try finding material sent from workers living in the old Kesler/Cannon Mills company village.

SOURCES

POSTAL ACT OF 1792

1792 Postal Act – Smithsonian National Postal Museum
https://postal musueum.si.edu/exhibits/current/binding-the.../1792-postal-act.html

Hecht, Arthur – *Pennsylvania Postal History of the 18th Century*

This week in postal history: The Post Office and the Constitution
savethepostoffice.com/week-history-post-office-and-constitution

Kielbowicz, Richard B. *The Press, Post Office and the Flow of News in the Early Republic*

Devin, Leonard *Neither Snow Nor Rain: A history of the United States Postal Service*
New York Grove Press 2016

Gallagher, Winifred *How the Post Office Created America: A History*
Penguin Press, 2016

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

WINDSOR, VT

Windsor Village Historic District, Connecticut River Joint Commission

Windsor, Vermont – Upper Valley
uppervalleynhvt.com/windsor/vermont

"Vermont Town Struggles to Rebound." *NYTimes.com*
www.nytimes.com/1987/01/18/us/vermont-town-struggles...html

History – The Windsor Station Restaurant and Barroom
windsorstationvt.com/history/

American Precision Museum - Home
https://www.americanprecision.org/

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

VERGENNES, VT

History of Vergennes – Vergennes
www.vergennesdowntown.org/history-of-vergennes/

Hayward "Vergennes" *Gazetteer of Vermont*, 1849
Vergennes: RootsWeb – Ancestry.com
www.rootsweb.ancestry

Shipwrecks of Lake Champlain*: War of 1812 Wrecks*
Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
www.lcmm.org/shipwrecks_history/shipwrecks/war_1812_wrecks.htm

National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form (NRHPI NF):
Vergennes Downtown Historic District PH-0369497

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

MANCHESTER, VT

History – Manchester Village, Vermont
www.villageofmanchester.com/history.php

"Historic Manchester, Vermont – A Site on a Revolutionary War Trip"
www.ordinaryday.com/usroute7/manchester/default.htm

Early Times – Early History – Mount Equinox
www.equinoxmountain.com/earlytimes-inedex.php

"Equinox House" in *SAH Archipedia*, eds. Gabrielle Esperdy and Karen Kingsley,
Charlotteseville: University of Virginia Press, 2013 pp 36-37

Manchester, Vermont – CDAE 102 Spring 2016: Communities in Action
https*://blog.uvm.edu/kahayes-cdae102s16/2016/.../manchester-vermont.../abrown*

Wikipedia – various

NANTUCKET, MA

Brief History of Nantucket from the Nantucket Historical Association
https://nha.org/library/faq/briefhistory.html

History – Visit Historic Nantucket
www.visit-historic-nantucket.com/history.html

Heffernan, Thomas Farel "Stove by a Whale: Owen Chase and the Essex" *Wesleyan University Press*, 1990

Tristam Coffin (1608-1681) – WikiTree FREE Family Tree
https://wikitree.com/wiki/Coffin-221

Sherburne Inn – Home Page
www.sherburneinn.com

Nantucket Seal and Whale Watching – Discover Nantucket
www.discovernantucket.com/eco-tours.php

ArchiveGrid: Ships' papers of the Bark 'Oak' 1871
https://beta.world.org/archivegrid/collection/data/76960527

Wikipedia-various

NEW BEDFORD

History – Destination New Bedford
destinationnewbedford.org/history/

History of New Bedford – New Bedford Travel Guide
nbtravleguide.com/history-of-new-bedford

NRHP – Registration Form (RF) – Minoset Mills Historic District

NRHP – RF – Whitman Mills Historic District

Whaling Industry and Portuguese Immigration Centered in New Bedford
https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/bedford.html

The Spectacular Rise and Fall of US Whaling: An Innovation Story
https://theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/02/the..whaling.../253355

Frederick Douglass – The New Bedford historical Society
nbhistoricalsociety.org/Important Figures/frederick-douglass/

Paul Cuffe – New Bedford Historical Society
nbhistoricalsociety.org/Important-Figures/Paul Cuffe/

Lewis Temple, Inventor for the Whaling Industry
www.aaregistry.org/historic-events/view/lewis-temple-inventor-whaling-industry

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

HUDSON, NY

Osterink, Carole *Explore* the History of Our Hometown: Hudson, NY
www.gossipsofrivertown.blogspot.com

Hudson, New York: History – The Barlow Hotel
thebarlowhotel.com/the-hotel/history-of-hudson/

Thorn, Craig IV Early Hudson's Proud Past
Columbia County History and Heritage Summer 2003

NRHP – NF City of Hudson Multiple Resource Area

Hudson Valley Whaling Industry: A History of Claverock Landing
www.hvmag.com/.../pagetools.php...%2FHudson...2012%2Hudson/

Hudson Sesquicentennial Half Dollar Commemorative Coin
earlycommemorativecoins.com/hudson-sesquicentennial-half-dollar/

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

WARWICK, NY

Gardner, Sue *A Short History of the Warwick Valley*, 1999 Sue Gardner (including work from Hull, Dr. Richard W *History of Warwick, New York: Three Centuries of a Community 1696-1996,* Warwick, NY: Richard Hull 1996).

Warwick Village Historic District, Warwick Village, Orange County
www.livingplaces.com/NY/Orange.../Warwick-Village-Historic-District.html

Along the Trail to Pick the Perfect Warwick Valley Apples
www.twcnews.com/nys/new-york-state/...ny2015/.../apples-in-the-warwick

Gritman, Christine "The Changing Face of Hudson Valley Apples." *Valley Table*
https://www.valleytable.com/vt-article/changing-face-hudson-valley-apples

Newman, Kara "Could Applejack Replace Bourbon During a Brown Spirits Shortage?"
www.themalaymailonline.com/.../could-applejack-replace

Hull, Dr Richard W. John Hathorn, Warwick's Forgotten Patriot *Warwick Valley D!spatch* Aug. 4, 2004

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia – various entries used

BETHLEHEM, PA

City of Bethlehem – History
www.bethlehem-pa.gov/about/history.html

What To Do – City of Bethlehem
www.bethlehempa.org/visit-todo.html

Historic Moravian Bethlehem in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania – A National Historic Landmark
https://historicbethlehem.org/.../historic-moravian-bethlehem-a-national.../

NRHP – NF – Historic Moravian Bethlehem Historic District

NRHP – NF – Historic Sub-District A in the Historic District of Bethlehem, PA

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

READING, PA

The History of Reading | City of Reading, Pennsylvania
https://www.readingpa.gov/content/history-reading

Brief Economic History of the City of Reading | City of Reading ...
https://www.readingpa.gov/content/brief-economic-history-city-reading

Hessian Camp (Berks) - ExplorePAHistory.com
explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-174

Musical chairs in Reading PA leaves historic post office without a ...
savethepostoffice.com/musical-chairs-reading-pa-leaves-historic-post-office-without-p...

Iron Production – Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia
philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/arichive/iron-production

Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company
socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w6b60c84

Industrial Revolution: Schuylkill River Heritage Area
https://ww.schuylkill.org/Industrial-Revolution.aspx

"Outlet Capital in Reading, PA." *Knight-Ridder Tribune News* 1991

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

ROCKAWAY, NJ

Robison, Mary Electa *Remembering Rockaway : Rockaway Village: How It Grew*, 1994
History – Borough of Rockaway
www.rockawayborough.org/history

History of Rockaway Township – NY – NJ – CT Botany
nynjctbotany.org/njhltofc/rockawaytwn.html

Rockaway Township, New Jersey Revolutionary War Sites
www.revolutionarywarnewjersey.com/new-jersey.../rockaway-township-nj-revolutionary...

Samuel Ford, JR
thomasstephenneel.com/b-samuelford.html

Settlers of Morris County - John Ford - Bradley Rymph
www.bradleyrymph.com/genealogy_morris-county.pdf

Jackson, Joseph PA Roots
www.pa-roots.org/data/readp

William Winds: A Revolutionary General – Researching New Jersey History
https://newjerseyhistory.wordpress.com/2014/.../william-winds-a-revolutionary-general

Col. Chillion Ford (1757-1800) Find a Grave Memorial
hhtps://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=12221222

Wikipedia, various

FREDERICA, DE

History of Frederica, Delaware – Frederica Delaware Real Estate
www.cooperealty.com/Frederica-real-estate-php

Our History – Barratt's Chapel and Museum
www.barrattschapel.org/our-history.html

Scharf, J. Thomas *History of Delaware, 1609-1888 vol. 1*, L. J. Richards and Company, 1888

History – Frederica – Kent County, Delaware – Town of Frederica
frederica-delaware.gov/history/

"Everyone in Delaware Should Visit This Tiny Town." *Only in Your State*
www.onlyinyourstate.com/delaware/tiny-town-de/

Barratts Chapel: Independence Hall of American Methodism *United Methodist Communications video,* Nashville, TN
www.umc.org/who-we-are/barratts-chapel-independence-hall-of-american.../

Independence Hall and Wesley's Attitude Towards the Colonists
philawalk.org/independence/

"'Captain Jack' Makes Final Trip to the Delaware Bay." *Delaware State News*
delawarestatenews.net > News

NRHP NF Frederica Historic District

Wikipedia – various

PORT TOBACCO, MD

The History of Port Tobacco, Maryland
www.port-tobacco-trail.org/PT-historic.html

About the Port of Tobacco River
porttobaccoriver.org/about-the-port-tobacco-river

NRHP – RF – Port Tobacco Historic District

Wikipedia – various

CHAPTICO, MD

Chaptico – Chaptico – MD – US Historical Marker Project
www.historicalmarkerproject.com/markers/HMBEC-chaptico-Chaptico-MD.html

The Maddox Family – Chaptico's Church
maddaxfamilywebsite/maddox-maryland/chaptico-church

Richard Thomas Zarvona (1833-1875) - The Latin Library
www.thelatinlibrary.com/chron/civilwarnotes/zarvona.html

NRHP – NF – Chaptico Historic District

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

TAPPAHANNOCK, VA

History – Welcome to Tappahannock, Virginia
www.tappahannock-va.gov/history.html

Church of St. Johns – Tappahannock – A Brief History
www.stjohnstappahannock.org/history.htm

"Bacon's Rebellion in 1676." *Virginia Places*
www.virginiaplaces.org/military/baconsrebellion.html

Tappahannock – The House and Home Magazine
thehouseandhomemagazine.com/Articles/Issue12/Tappahannock/tabid/

Armour, Robert Alexander *The British Raid Essex County*
War of 1812 - Essex County - Essex County Museum
www.essexmuseum.org/archive/bulletin-vol-61-01-2014.pdf

Spencer Roane – Mahockney Plantation
https://mahockney/spencer-roane/

NRHP – NF – Tappahannock Historic District

Wikipedia – various

URBANNA, VA

Norris, Ruby Lee "A Colonial Seaport Town Sails Through the Twentieth Century."
Pleasant Living Nov/Dec 1991

Our Town: Urbanna, Virginia – Rosegill
www.rosegill.com/Library/OurTown/OurTown.html

History – Hewick Plantation Virginia's Premier Weddings and Event Venue
www.hewickplantation.com/Virginia-wedding-venues-history-asp

Getting to Know the Streets of Urbanna – Inn at Warner Hall
www.warnerhill.com/words-from-our.../getting-to-know...

History of Urbanna – Urbanna, VA – Official Website
urbanna.gov/URB-history.html

Urbanna Post Office Celebrate 225th Year – Southside Sentinel
www.sentinel.com/index.php/news/.../urbanna-post-office...

Welcome to Urbanna – Southside Sentinel
www.sentinel.com/index.php/news/.../welcome-to-urbanna

Rosegill – Home – Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/RosegillFarm

Historic Buildings in Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1775 – Rosegill
www.rosegill.com/Library/HistoricBuildingsHistory/History.html

Landsdowne/Arthur Lee House 1740 – Beverly-Stanard Historic Center
beverlystanardcenter.weebly.com/landsdownearthur-lee-house-1740.html

Rappahannock River Oysters – Chesapeake Bay – The Oyster Guide
www.oysterguide.com/maps/chesapeake/rappahannock-river/

NRHP – NF – Hewick Historic District

NRHP – RF – Urbanna Historic District

KINSALE, VA

County History – Westmoreland County
https://www.westmoreland-county.org/county-History

War of 1812 – Stratford and Westmoreland County – Stratford Hall
www.stratfordhall.org/...of-1812.../war-of-1812-stratford-and.../

"Kinsale and the Great House." *The Authentic Guidebook of Historic Northern Neck of Virginia*
"The Great House." *Old Virginia Houses – The Northern Peninsula*
From Articles on The Great House
www.lchr.org/a/38/h8/house2.html

NRHP – NF – Kinsale Historic District

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

MARTINSBURG, WV

Wood, Don C. Martinsburg e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia. 11 April 2016 web 19 July 2017

"West Virginia Divided." *Schurz Herald Mail*
articles.herald-mail.com/Collections > Slavery

NRHP – NF – East Martinsburg Historic District

NRHP – NF – Martinsburg Historic District

NRHP – NF – Aspen Hall Historic District

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

SALISBURY, NC

Salisbury, North Carolina – Carolana
www.carolana.com/NC/Towns/Salisbury-NC.html

Stoneman's Raid: Salisbury and the Yadkin River Bridge
www.trading-ford.org/stoneman.html

Brown, Louis A. *Confederate Prison (Salisbury)*

Rowan County (1753) – North Carolina History Project
northcarolinahistory.org > Encyclopedia Entry

NRHP – NF Kessler Manufacturing Co./Cannon Mills No. 7 Historic District

NRHP – NF Livingstone College Historic District

NRHP – NF – North Main Street Historic District

NRHP – NF – Salisbury Historic District

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - various entries used

POSTMARK INFORMATION

American Stampless Cover Catalog – The Standard Reference Catalog of American Postal History – Vol. 1 Fifth Edition David G. Phillips Publishing, Inc, 1997

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jake Wilhelm is a freelance reporter and also writes crime and horror fiction. He is a regular contributor to the Post Mark Collectors' Club *PMCC Bulletin*. He lives on the Oregon Coast and is a very busy stamp and postmark collector.