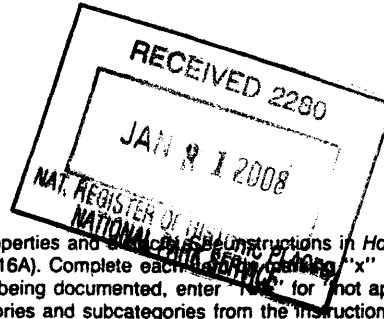


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and historic districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each section by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Belcoville Post Office

other names/site number Belcoville School; Roland Marsh Center

2. Location

street & number 1201 Madden Avenue not for publication

city or town Weymouth Township vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Atlantic code 01 zip code 08330

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Amy Cradic 12/21/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Edson H. Beall 3.14.08
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Belcoville Post Office
Name of Property

Atlantic County, NJ
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	2	objects
1	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/post office;
EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Neoclassical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls WOOD/weatherboard
roof ASPHALT/shingle
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

see attached continuation sheets

Belcoville Post Office
Name of Property

Atlantic County, NJ
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

A: military

Period of Significance

1918-1919

Significant Dates

1918

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Vivian (1886-1968)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Township of Weymouth Historical Society;
Atlantic Heritage Center

Belcoville Post Office
Name of Property

Atlantic County, NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.02 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	5 22 94 8	43 65 3 19
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

see attached continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

see attached continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Suzanne Smith

organization Township of Weymouth Historical Society date January 31, 2007

street & number 39 Hickory Lane telephone 609/909-5265

city or town Mays Landing state NJ zip code 08330-8902

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Township of Weymouth attn: Ms. Bonnie Yearsley, Municipal Clerk

street & number 45 South Jersey Avenue telephone 609/476-2633

city or town Dorothy state NJ zip code 08317

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, NJ

Narrative Description

Summary Description

Built in 1918, the Belcoville Post Office is a 1-story wood frame structure designed in the Neoclassical Revival style. The building has had few alterations to its historic exterior appearance and retains its rectangular main block with a rear (east) ell, along with its symmetrical façade (west elevation) dominated by a centrally-placed classical portico. [photo 3] Most of the original 6/6 double hung wood sash windows topped with 3-light transoms are extant.

The post office stands on a 2+-acre lot in the center of Belcoville, an unincorporated community located on the east side of State Route 50 in Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, New Jersey. The county seat, Mays Landing, is located about one mile to the northeast and the Great Egg Harbor River is located about 2/3 mile to the east. Set back about 90' from the street, the building faces west onto Madden Avenue and stands on level ground that has minimal landscaping. [photo #1] Modestly-sized asphalt-paved parking lots are located in front of (to the west) and on the north side of the building and are accessed by an asphalt driveway. On the south side of the building is an asphalt-paved basketball court that is enclosed with a chain link fence. To the rear are a baseball diamond and an open, grassy lot.

Neighboring buildings include the Belcoville Fire House (to the west), also built in 1918 but altered from its original appearance [photo #2], and houses that range in date from 1918 to the late 20th century, most of them small bungalows and ranch houses.

Exterior Description

The main block and rear ell of the building are covered with wood clapboard (German siding) that appears to be original. [photo #5] Both the main block and the rear ell stand on a poured concrete foundation and have a hip roof covered with modern asphalt shingles.

The main block has a rectangular footprint that is 90' wide by 30' deep. [photo #3] It is 9 bays wide and 3 bays deep; each bay, except for that in the center, consists of paired 6/6 wood double hung sash windows topped with 3-light wood transom windows, all of which appear to be original. Because the building is vacant, the windows are covered over with plywood for protection. The center bay contains the front entrance, which consists of a pair of modern wood doors comprised of panels topped with a semi-circular glazed opening. [photo #4 and #13] Over

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The Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, NJ

the doors is an original rectangular-shaped, glazed transom of multiple diamond-shaped lights, also covered with plywood. [photo #13]

A one-story, columned portico shelters the front doors and the paired windows on each side. The portico stands on a concrete foundation and features ten original wooden Doric columns which support the portico's hipped roof; the columns are arranged in groups of three in the northwest and southwest corners, with a pair flanking each side of the modern wrought iron hand rails along the concrete entry steps. A round-headed wood dormer, also original, is placed in the center of the portico roof; its original round-headed fanlight window has been replaced with a single pane of glass. [photo #4]

The rear (east) elevation of the north end of the main block has been altered with the introduction of a door into a window opening later in the 20th century. The northernmost window has been replaced with a modern paneled door (2/2/2) fronted by a concrete stoop and stairs with a metal pipe handrail; this door is protected from the elements by a metal hood over top. [photo #6] At the south end of the main block, a modern paneled door (2/2/2) in the center bay is also fronted by a concrete stoop and stairs with a metal pipe handrail. This door is topped with a metal hood which shelters the doorway. [photo #7]

The rear ell, placed in the center of the main block, is approximately 30' wide by 32' deep. [photo #6 and #7] The rear (east) elevation has a center door fronted by a wood handicapped-access ramp with wood railings. The door is topped with a metal hood identical to the others and is flanked by two pairs of 6/6 double hung wood windows topped with three light transoms. These windows are currently covered with plywood for protection. The side elevations (north and south) have an irregular fenestration pattern consisting of—from west to east—window, triple window, double window, single window. The westernmost window on the south elevation has a louvered exhaust fan placed within part of it. Similarly, a large metal exhaust pipe is vented through the triple window on the north elevation.

Tall brick chimney stacks, which appear to be original, are placed in both corners where the rear ell joins with the main block. [photo #6 and #7]

Interior Description

The interior features a dropped ceiling of acoustical tiles placed under the original plaster ceiling; these tiles are interspersed with fluorescent light fixtures. Walls are either plaster or wall board and the floors are of linoleum tile throughout. Stepped wood trim around windows and doors is approximately 4" wide, while 4" high wood baseboards are capped with ogee molding. Original

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The Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, NJ

The center of the main block consists of a spacious lobby. [photo #8] Two bathrooms are located in the northeast corner of the lobby; both have been modernized with new tile and fixtures. In the southeast corner of the lobby stands the original postmaster's office with its original mail counter and original, vertical sliding over-the-counter door intact; the door is operable but is now fastened in the open position. [photo #8] The postmaster's office contains a small kitchen with ca. 1960 wood cabinets, laminated counter tops, and a modern tile wainscot.

North of the lobby, in the north end of the main block, are four rooms separated by plaster or wallboard partition walls. [photo #11 and #12] South of the lobby is one large room, formerly used as a classroom. [photo #10] Another large room, formerly the school lunch room, is located in the rear ell behind the lobby. [photo #9] In the northwest corner of this room are a coat closet and a boiler room. Except for the easternmost window, windows on the north wall of the rear ell have been covered over on the interior with sheetrock or plaster, but are extant (and covered with plywood) on the exterior.

Original Appearance and Subsequent Alterations

The building's exterior has been minimally altered since it was built in 1918. Historic photographs show that the post office retains its original columned portico, most of its original 6/6 double hung wood sash windows topped with 3-light transoms, original multi-light transom over the front doorway, original siding, and original footprint. [see *Historic Photos and Supplemental Images*, figs. 1, 2, and 3] While the original round-headed dormer on the façade is extant, its original starburst window has been replaced with a single-light wood sash window. The original front entry doors are no longer extant, and the porch now stands on a poured concrete foundation instead of brick piers infilled with lattice as seen in historic photographs. [fig. 2]

In 1988, the old boiler system was replaced with gas heat, new water lines were installed, the electricity was upgraded, and the two bathrooms used by the "boys" and "girls" were modernized. The school kitchen area (formerly the postmaster's office) was updated, floors were retiled with linoleum squares, and partitions were added in the north end classroom to create offices. No structural changes were made to the building at this time.

Of the three doors on the rear elevation, that in the north end of the main block was added in the late 20th century, that in the south end of the main block is a single door replacement for what was originally a double door (see fig. 3, close-up), and that in the rear ell is a single-door replacement for the original (also a single door, see fig. 3, close-up). The original front doors

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The Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, NJ

were replaced in 1996 with those extant today. It is not known when the post office boxes, which were located on the west wall of what is now the kitchen, were removed.

Integrity

The building retains a high degree of integrity, having almost all of its original windows, its original massing, its original portico and Doric columns, and many of its interior finishes.

Non-contributing Objects

In front (to the west) of the post office are (1) a veteran's war memorial stone added to the site in 1982, and (2) a flagpole, installed in 1996 as a replacement for one located at that location originally. [photo #1]

Setting

The building stands on a 2.02-acre lot in the heart of the unincorporated village of Belcoville, Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, New Jersey. Set back about 90' from the street, the building faces west onto Madden Avenue and stands on level ground that has minimal landscaping. Fronting the portico are two pear trees (*Pyrus calleryana*) and in the northwest corner of the lot is a tall Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana L.*) Twenty feet north of the building's northwest corner is a tall pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*). Modestly-sized asphalt-paved parking lots are located in front of (to the west) and on the north side of the building, and are accessed by an asphalt driveway. On the south side of the building is an asphalt-paved basketball court that is enclosed with a chain link fence. Three short yew bushes (*Taxus bacata*) line the foundation of the building's south wall. To the rear of the post office are a sand lot, baseball diamond and an open, grassy lot.

To the building's immediate west is the Belcoville Fire House, built in 1918, which stands on a 3/4-acre lot. [photo #2] West of the Fire House is a 1.64-acre lot on which the first Belcoville school house once stood; a 1-story ca. 1970 office building now stands on the lot. Houses are scattered throughout the village and range in date from 1918 to ca. 2000. About 50% of the original houses were auctioned off and moved from their lots in the 1920s and 1930s; later, new houses were built on the vacant lots. Some of the original 2-story, Colonial Revival-style houses remain along the east side of State Route 50. None of the village's dormitories, shops, YMCA, theater, or other public buildings is extant except for the former post office and the fire house.

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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Summary Statement of Significance

The Belcoville Post Office, erected in 1918, was part of a public buildings complex that formed the core of the unincorporated village of Belcoville, a planned community erected during World War I to house workers employed at the nearby Bethlehem Loading Company munitions plant in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The village and its stores, movie theater, YMCA, bakery, school, fire house, dwellings, apartment complexes, and post office were constructed in less than seven months time and significantly reflect the large scale effort by government and private industry to meet the urgent national need for war goods. The amenities provided in the village were seen as crucial to keeping a satisfied and productive workforce, which numbered roughly 6,000 by the fall of 1918. Of the WWI-era public buildings in Belcoville, only the post office and fire house remain; of these two, the post office is the best preserved and least altered. For its role within this important planned community and because munitions production was one of the major contributions New Jersey made to the war effort, the Belcoville Post Office is of statewide significance and is eligible under criterion A/military.

Historical Background

The Bethlehem Steel Corporation

Bethlehem Steel was founded in 1857 as an iron works in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, an area rich in ore and fuels. After a few years and name changes, they started blast furnace operation by 1863. By 1890, the company was involved in ship building and ordnance manufacture, and held various contracts with the federal government for the production of such things as armor plate and gun forgings. In 1904, Charles M. Schwab came to the company which he incorporated as the Bethlehem Steel Company. He is credited with the expansion of plants and the development of numerous subsidiaries in places stateside, in Cuba and South America.¹ Many of these subsidiaries were directly related to company needs such as mining resources, conversion to materials, transporting company products by rail, and fulfilling contracts for shipbuilding, railways, and ordnance. Innovation of new flanged steel beams contributed to massive changes in building of ships, large steel structures and city skyscrapers, and the company became an industry leader.² In the early years of the twentieth century, Bethlehem Steel was the largest steel corporation in the nation.

¹ Souvenir History Book of the Borough of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1915; as found at <http://www.bethlehempaonline.com/bethsteel.html>

² Ibid.

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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

About 1910, the company's Ordnance Department started looking for an area within a 250 mile radius of Bethlehem, PA to develop a proving ground on which to test the ordnance it was manufacturing. Because of the vastness of flat ground unencumbered by villages, an 1800-acre parcel in Atlantic County seemed to be an ideal site that, if developed, would be the largest proving ground in the country.³ Over the next few years, the numerous individual lots comprising the site were surveyed and mapped.⁴ In 1915, Bethlehem Steel contracted with the Ocean City, NJ Real Estate firm of Massey & Edwards to quietly obtain ownership of the properties within the tract. To prevent inflation of value by owners, titles were recorded under the fictitious name of "Rolla Garretson" and the process of acquisition was begun.⁵

During 1916, some preliminary brush and land clearing began on the lower tract. By this time, whispers and conjecture about the site's potential use were more openly speculated upon by various citizens. There were even reports of industrial accidents found in the local newspaper. A Civil War veteran broke both legs and an ankle when a tree fell on him while clearing land at the Bethlehem Steel tract.⁶ Speculations were made on how a submarine base could be established because of the extensive waterways. The surrounding communities eagerly awaited the business that was anticipated--business related to housing, products, transportation, and real estate. There was also strong regional opposition to a proving ground: noise carried for miles which would surely deter tourism in the shore towns, there was the danger of firing mishaps and there was the threat of closing the waterways, which for some local watermen was a way of life.

Official announcements by the State Commission of Conservation and Development along with Bethlehem Steel reiterated their plans to develop the world's largest proving ground. Emphasis was placed on planned safety factors so detonations would be away from municipalities. Progress towards building the proving ground continued until the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917.⁷ At the time, Bethlehem Steel and its subsidiary companies were manufacturing products for other countries (England, France, and Russia), often shipping those products to Canada then overseas in order to circumvent the neutrality position of the United States.⁸

³ Letter, George Struble, Vice President, Bethlehem Loading Company to Colonel P.B. Lathbury, Director of Munitions Committee on Settlement of Certain Contracts Involving Construction of Plant Facilities, 1-13-1920, p. 2. (National Archives, as reproduced in attachment F-9 of the Defense Environment Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites [DERPS/FUDS] Archives Search Report and Findings for the Former Bethlehem Loading Company, I. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, 1997)

⁴ Ibid. p. 4.

⁵ Ibid. p. 3.

⁶ *Atlantic County Record*, December 1916.

⁷ *Atlantic County Gazette Review*, 10-04-1916; "World's Biggest Proving Ground in New Jersey", *The Bethlehem [PA] Times*, 10-5-1916.

⁸ The Person of the Century, Industry, Charles M. Schwab, [http://www.bethlehempaonline.com/schwab_bio.html].

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet
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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Mobilization for World War I

When America entered the war in April 1917, the call for business and manpower went into overdrive in order to start or maintain production of all goods required to support massive and widely spread military activity for the United States and allied countries. Representatives of all businesses, sciences, and professions provided expertise to this effort, coordinated by the recently formed Council of National Defense. One of the most important bodies in the Council was the War Industries Board.⁹

The urgency of this buildup was so great and the necessary capital in private industry so lacking that the government quickly appropriated funds to assist industries in the national war effort.¹⁰ Nationwide, existing plants were converted to war material production and new plants were built as necessary. Of the 20+ billion dollars approved by Congress for the war, more than \$3 billion was allocated for the artillery, heavy guns, ordnance and ammunition needed to support of the American army of over 2 million men fighting overseas.¹¹ Women joined the ranks of industrial workers to replace the men who were in the active fields. Rationing of items, particularly fuel, went into effect and some businesses closed an additional day a week to conserve resources.

New Jersey industries contributed to war-time production through copper refining, building and refitting of war vessels, machining, and storing and shipping products, tripling industrial output between 1914 and 1918.¹² War related activities in the state increased the economy and saw both the expansion and the establishment of military camps and installations that employed large numbers of civilians. New work places, shorter hours, better than average wages and social amenities helped ensure manpower for government owned or managed plants and plants with government contracts.

Up to this point, there were few facilities capable of mass producing munitions on a large scale. Several existing plants underwent major renovation to increase their capacity, but to meet the tremendous demand five new munitions plants were built: (1) Gillespie Loading Company at Morgan, New Jersey, (2) Atlantic Loading Company (Amatol) at Hammonton, New Jersey, (3) DuPont Engineering Company at Penniman, Virginia, (4) Bethlehem Loading Company at Mays Landing, New Jersey, and (5) J.D. Evans Engineering Corp./California Loading Company in Old Bridge, New Jersey. These new plants were built by private companies under contract to the

⁹ Francis March, History of the World War (Chicago: The United Publishers of the United States and Canada, 1919), p. 464-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 465.

¹¹ Charles Horne, ed., The Great Events of the Great War (National Alumni, 1923), Vol. V , p. 418-20.

¹² Mark Lender, One State in Arms: A Short Military History of New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1991), p.78.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet
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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

federal government, but because the government leased the lands with rights to fully purchase the facilities, they came to be known as "government loading plants."¹³

Two of the new government loading plants were built in Atlantic County, New Jersey—one in Hammonton (known as Amatol) by the Atlantic Loading Company and another in Mays Landing by the Bethlehem Loading Company, known as the Mays Landing Plant.

The Bethlehem Loading Company, Mays Landing Plant

For several years prior to the United States' entry into the war in December 1917, Bethlehem Steel Corporation and its ordnance department were producing a variety of ammunition products, manufacturing gun forgings, mountings, armaments, battle ship fittings etc. for the United States government as well as other countries. The company also exported large quantities of raw material, steel, and gunpowder to England and France to support their war material production needs. After the United States entered the war, Bethlehem Steel created a subsidiary company called the Bethlehem Loading Company.¹⁴ The new loading company oversaw operations at a shell packing plant that Bethlehem Steel established in 1915 in New Castle, Delaware, in addition to a plant for manufacturing fuses, shrapnel, and shells at Redington, PA., begun about the same time; both received new equipment to increase production.¹⁵

With the awarding of contracts for munitions productions to Bethlehem Steel, the company shifted its focus from establishing a proving ground outside of Mays Landing to building a munitions plant there that would produce munitions of specific sizes, mainly 75mm shells and 155 mm shells.¹⁶ The Mays Landing Plant was to be built from the ground up and was to be Bethlehem Loading Company's largest munitions producer.¹⁷ By war's end, the plant cost over \$12 million to build, \$3.6 million more than originally appropriated.¹⁸ A lease was signed on

¹³ N.a., *History of Artillery Projectiles, Army Ordnance 1917-1919* (No. 380) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 34.

¹⁴ Atlantic County Deed Book #621, p.490.

¹⁵ "Corporate History," Bethlehem Loading Company, p. 130 [The Bethlehem Steel Corporation Collection at the Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE. Accession #1699]

¹⁶ Letter, C. Williams, Major General, Chief of Ordnance, U. S. A. , War Department, to Secretary of War, 8-16-1918, p.1. (National Archives, as reproduced in attachment F-2 of the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites [DERP/FUDS] for OEW Project No.CO2NJ097301, Bethlehem Loading Company, Site No. CO2NJ0973, 12-09-1995.)

¹⁷ Bethlehem Loading Company Shell Report, 2-7-1919. [Bethlehem Steel Company Papers, Bethlehem Loading Company, Hagley Museum and Library]

¹⁸ "Appropriations for Construction and Expenditures, Mays Landing Plant," January 1919, Bethlehem Steel Company Papers, Bethlehem Loading Company.

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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

behalf of the United States Army with the company on January 1, 1918.¹⁹ The plant was considered to be a military installation with fences, armed guards and soldiers. For security purposes, there were to be no photos or visits by unauthorized persons.

Designs for the plant complex began in February 1918 under the direction of Vivian Smith, a local architect and engineer who was hired as Superintendent of Construction. A company village, known as Belcoville (an acronym taken from Bethlehem Loading Company), to house plant workers was also part of the plan; for safety reasons, the village was situated a few miles north of the plant complex. Construction of both the village and the plant was heralded in newspapers and later in the company's own bi-weekly publication, the *Belco News*. An extension of the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad was run from its existing line in Mays Landing (the county seat) to the village and the plant. Transportation of workers and materials arrived via rail and trucks. Construction began April 1st with thousands of civilian and military workers working shifts around the clock.²⁰ By June, many structures had been erected in the plant area including mess halls, warehouses, and shell loading buildings. On June 16th, a flag raising ceremony was held at the new Administration Building located near the plant complex.²¹

The Village of Belcoville

Construction of the workers' village was simultaneous with construction of the plant. The town, sited on a 950+-acre tract, was planned to house 400 families and 3,000 single persons, and to provide all the amenities needed to conduct daily life.²² The homes and public buildings were of wood frame construction and were erected on streets having either a north-south or east-west direction.²³ By May, the unpaved avenues were laid and named for company officials.²⁴ By mid-June, the village was about 50% complete and while housing and barracks were being built for 6,000 workmen, about 2,000 were already at work.²⁵ The buildings of the town center and many houses were completed by September and ready for use.²⁶ State Route 50, which runs from north to south along the village's western edge, was named the Boulevard, a name it retains

¹⁹ DERP/FUDS report, p.8, referring to document G-1.

²⁰ William Bradford Williams, Munitions Manufacture in the Philadelphia Ordnance District (Philadelphia, PA: A. Pomerantz & Co., p. 319.

²¹ "Flag Raising at Munitions Plant," *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, 6-17-1918, p.1.

²² Williams, p. 319; "Findings of Fact," Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites, [DERP/FUDS]; Findings and Determination of Eligibility, Bethlehem Loading Company, Mays Landing, New Jersey, Site No. CO2NJ0973.

²³ DERP/FUDS report, document E-1 referring to Part Site Plan C.

²⁴ *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, 5-19-1918.

²⁵ "Plant Covers 6,000 Acres," *New York Times*, 6-17-1918, p.19.

²⁶ Photos by the Bethlehem Loading Company.

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today.²⁷ The “town center” was truly in the center of town, dividing the north half of the village from the south half.

Facing the town center from the boulevard was a large, one-story school for grades K-8. Since this was considered a government installation, the school (which no longer stands) was not part of the Weymouth Township school system when built. All contracts for teachers and for sending high school students to outside districts were arranged by the company. The building was not quite complete when school opened September 23, so classes were held in the YMCA for few weeks.²⁸ Directly behind the school (to the east) was a small lot with a raised podium or band director stand. The ca. 1918 site plan [see fig. 7 in *Supplemental and Historic Images*] also shows a small plot behind that for a flagpole. On the next large lot continuing east through the center of town stands a triple-bay, two-story firehouse, which also shows on the site plan. The post office was placed on the easternmost lot in the center of town. Its T-shaped footprint appears on the site plan and on a ca. 1919 aero view drawing of the village. [figs. 5, 6, and 7]²⁹

Lining the east-west streets on either side of the town center (Francis and Darlington streets) were the theater for movies and shows, a bowling alley, a department store, a bakery, a grocery store, a drug store, a tailor shop, a barber, and a butcher shop, all within an easy walk from anywhere in the village. Fronting the boulevard on either side of the town center and school were seven 2-story, Colonial Revival style homes built for company officers and supervisors. [fig. 8] Throughout the rest of the village complex were the YMCA, an auditorium, an outdoor boxing ring, and a pool hall. While the theater was being built, use was made of a large assembly hall. There were dormitories for single men and women, quarters for ordnance inspectors, the town manager's office, a laundry, cafeteria, restaurants, commissary, and a heating plant for the village. Besides barracks for soldiers, there were apartments, single-family, duplex, and multi-family dwellings, all with baths and toilets. [fig. 9] The village had electricity, running water and sewerage, and its own pumping station. It was touted as having good wages, good housing, and good company stores along with low rental fees for housing and reasonably-priced entertainment.

The Safety and Welfare Department of the Bethlehem Loading Company issued bi-weekly bulletins of many pages called the *Belco News*. The issues contained news of the village charms and conveniences, i.e. a new bank being built in the center of town, company and production achievements, general news of the war, and news on health issues praising the professionals for their extra precautions against contagion in the pandemic (influenza claimed two, no deaths from

²⁷ Bethlehem Loading Company Safety and Welfare Department, Dec. 5, 1918, *Belco News*, Volume 1 Number 3, p. 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1918, Volume 1 Number 1, p.10.

²⁹ Charles Wolfe, resident of Belcoville, Private Collection.

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typhoid, a few cases of measles). Entertainment activities for the workmen and women included dances, shows, and sports under the direction of the athletic association. Competitive sports were particularly popular and included boxing, baseball, and football, with local newspapers reporting team scores. The recreational and social well-being of the residents and workers was an integral part of the plant and village life.³⁰

The original construction order for the village--listed as order number A-1015--totaled \$1,978,590 to which was added \$72,000 for the school, the mess hall, and the heating system. Construction order A-1032 includes \$8,240 for the "U.S. Building," a term which refers to the Belcoville Post Office. By war's end, a total of \$2,086,590 had been appropriated to build the village, but expenditures totaled \$3,565,117.64.³¹

When completed, Belcoville was considered an attractive, convenient, and modern company village.³²

Other World War I Shell Loading Plant Villages

One of the largest war industries in New Jersey was the New York Shipbuilding Corporation, which had been operating on the Camden waterfront for years. The influx of workers and families crowded the market for housing. The War Department's answer was Yorkship Village, a planned community of a thousand homes just upstream from the shipyard. The community included schools, light and airy brick row homes with areas for garden and play, and areas for amusement. The village was designed by Electus Litchfield who drew on ideas from garden cities in the United Kingdom. The village of Yorkship (so-named after the company) included winding little streets, a central village square, and stylish homes with backyards. A church was centrally located. Waterways isolated and bordered the village giving it a quiet feel. Homes were rented to the workers at an affordable cost and eventually some of the employees bought the houses at auction. Even though that industry declined, the village, renamed Fairview, remained and is currently being revitalized.³³

The closest munitions plant and village to Belcoville was also in Atlantic County, in the Hammonton area. Operated by the Atlantic Loading Company, the village and plant were known as Amatol, named for one of the chemical components used in shell manufacturing. Fortunately,

³⁰ Bethlehem Loading Company, Safety and Welfare Department, *Belco News*, Volume 1, numbers 1,2,3.

³¹ Bethlehem Steel Corporation Collection at Hagley Museum and Library.

³² Williams, p. 319, 320.

³³ A Place Called Yorkship -Electus Litchfield's Plan, as found at <http://yorkship.home.comcast.net/yorkshipplan.htm>

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the site was documented by the company through a well-written book augmented with many photographs.³⁴ The book features illustrations of single and multi-family homes, with space between, and gently curving roads, along with stores, a YMCA, social venues, and places for entertainment and recreation. The town square, although not in the center of town, provided the shops, tailors, bakery in a "strip mall" arrangement. At the very end of the row was the post office, which appears to be quite small when compared to other buildings.³⁵ After the war's end, the plant buildings were sold off and most of the houses were abandoned. One of the metal lathe buildings was used by the Hammonton State Police for years, but is not suitable for use at this time. Some foundations remain, but buildings of the Amatol plant, village, and post office no longer stand.

During the war, a total of fourteen shell loading plants were operating in the United States. Of these fourteen, seven were in the state of New Jersey. In addition to the plants at Amatol and near Belcoville, New Jersey's plants included:³⁶

1. Sayreville (Middlesex County) Plant known as Morgan plant, operated by the T.A. Gillespie Loading Company as a Government owned plant; much of plant destroyed by huge explosion and loss of life in October 1918, and never got back into production. Worker cottages and some barracks were lost in explosion and nothing remains.³⁷ Area has been covered over, redeveloped. In 1998, some unexploded ordnance was discovered at the neighborhood school and the site was cleared of remnants and other debris.³⁸
2. Old Bridge (Middlesex County), operated by the J.D. Evans Engineering Corp.
 - a. There had been a small explosion with loss of life. No record of a munitions town;
 - b. Incomplete site plans that are available have no indications of a village.^{39,40}

³⁴ Victor Hammel, Construction and Operation of a Shell Loading Plant and the Town of Amatol. New Jersey (Philadelphia, Innes & Sons. 1918), Part I: Scope of the Work, [note pages are not numbered]; also <http://venus.atlantic.edu/amatol/amatolat> http://venus.atlantic.edu/amatol/amatol_book-home.html.

³⁵ Ibid: A personal examination of the privately held book arranged by the Library Dept. of Atlantic Cape Community College, Mays Landing Campus.

³⁶ America's Munitions, p. 122.

³⁷ "Plant Being Cleared, Ready for Rebuilding," *Perth Amboy Evening News*, 10-18-1918, p. 1.

³⁸ "Shell Parts on the Eisenhower School in Sayreville," *Home News Tribune*, Sunday, October 4, 1998; Ed Pytell, Historian at Sayreville Historical Society (Middlesex County), telephone interview, February 15, 2006 and personal letter February 18, 2006; U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, Alabama, Ordnance and Explosives Program Fact Sheets: Former Morgan Depot (1998) [www.had.usacc.army.mil/oew/fachshts/states/njfact.html]

³⁹ Pytell, telephone interview, February 15, 2006.

⁴⁰ J.D.Evans Engineering Corporation, Report of the Old Bridge Shell Loading Plant (privately published, 1919).

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3. Parlin (Middlesex County), operated by the T.A. Gillespie Company. A section of Sayreville, the village had been established prior to war entry by DuPont for smokeless powder.^{41,42} A post office was not documented and nothing remains.
4. Runyon (Middlesex County), T. A. Gillespie Loading Company. A small area partly in Sayreville and partly in Old Bridge, no munitions village established.⁴³
5. Kenilworth (Union County), operated by the American Can Company. No further information can be found at this time. The existing post office predates the war.⁴⁴

The other seven shell loading plants were:

(8&9) Penniman, VA (2 plants), operated as D and G- plants by DuPont Engineering Company. Near Williamsburg, currently part of a U. S. Navy Installation, Cheatham Annex. A complete village including a post office was established a distance away from the plants but there are no remains. The area was cleared and reforested, and is now part of National Colonial Park.^{45,46,47}

(10) New Castle, DE, operated by Bethlehem Loading Company. Was involved with munitions production prior to the war and required only an expansion of the plant. There was no village constructed and workers used nearby housing or were brought in by train from Wilmington and Philadelphia, PA.⁴⁸ There were orders to construct accommodations to house and feed the soldiers.⁴⁹ Property later sold and converted to other industrial uses.

(11) Texas, MD, established by Poole Engineering & Machine Company. No village was established and workers used local available housing at a nearby village.⁵⁰

(12) Brockton, MA, operated by Sterling Motor Car Company.⁵¹

⁴¹ Pytell, telephone interview, January 14, 2007.

⁴² Williams, p. 374.

⁴³ Pytell, January 14, 2006

⁴⁴ Jim Forte, "United States and Worldwide Postal History," Post Offices, New Jersey, Union County, retrieved from: www.postalhistory.com/state/new_jersey/index.

⁴⁵ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Health Consultation Outlining Various Exposure Issues From Initial Site Visit (a/k/a Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Cheatham Annex) Williamsburg, Virginia, as found at http://www.atsdc.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/cheatham/che_p1.html.

⁴⁶ Public Information Officer, Cheatham Annex, telephone interview, February 2006.

⁴⁷ site plans for Penniman, Hagley Museum and Library, within #1699.

⁴⁸ Procurement # P3859-1723A, Bethlehem Loading Company, New Castle Construction Orders, Hagley Museum and Library, #1699.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Miscellaneous Order # C-1002 and 1003.

⁵⁰ John W. McGrain, From Pig Iron to Cotton Duck, A History of Manufacturing Villages in Baltimore County, Volume I (Baltimore County Public Library, Maryland), 1985.

⁵¹ America's Munitions, p. 122.

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(13) Redington, PA, operated by Bethlehem Loading Company. An already established company, it was repaired and renovated. No recorded village establishment was found, except for an order to house and feed the soldiers.⁵²

(14) Rock Island, IL, since 1809, this had been a federal military reservation and was established as Rock Island Arsenal in 1862. During WW I, Shop L (building #250 today) was specifically built as a loading plant.⁵³ It remains today as a major Army installation and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁵⁴

Among the fourteen shell loading plants, only three established plant villages during WW I. As previously mentioned, two of these—Amatol and Belcoville—were in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The third village was established for the two plants at Penniman, Virginia by DuPont. Of those three villages built between 1917 and 1918, today only the unincorporated village of Belcoville has any presence. Still evident are a number of original inhabited homes (although about 60% were auctioned off after the war and moved out of the village), the original town firehouse (altered), and the original town post office. Of these structures, only that built to be the post office has been determined to be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.⁵⁵

Post Offices of the WW I Era

Mail delivery has been an important means of communication since the inception of this country. Whether delivered by courier, horseback, stagecoach, pony express, train, boat, or horseless carriage, mail has contributed to the establishment of post routes, roads, and towns. The arrangement of transporting mail, newspapers, parcels, and periodicals has always been a function of the federal government. The Post Office Department was established by Congress, which appoints the Post Master General, the first being Benjamin Franklin, who was appointed by the Continental Congress in 1775.⁵⁶ Some services added to post offices immediately prior to

⁵² Bethlehem Loading Company: Redington, Miscellaneous Orders 1001&1002, Hagley Museum and Library, #1699.

⁵³ "Early Rock Island History," provided by Kris Gayman Leinicke, Museum Director, Rock Island Arsenal Museum, Rock Island, IL.

⁵⁴ National Register of Historic Places, as found at: <http://www.nr.nps.gov/nrloc1.htm>.

⁵⁵ Belcoville Post Office (ID#4190), COE, 7/23/2003, NJ DEP-Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁶ "History of the US Postal Service 1775-1993," United States Postal Service, as found at: <http://www.usps.com/history/history/his1.htm>.

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WWI included delivery to villages in 1912, and in 1913, the delivery of parcel post, both important in rural areas.⁵⁷ Before the turn of the 20th century, mail service at train stops had also been approved.

In rural areas, post locations and appointments could be for a few months or a few years, and could be a family affair with relatives succeeding each other. Women were frequently appointed to smaller post offices beginning in the late 1800's. Sites would frequently be along an oft-traveled road or at a train's whistle stop. During the early 1900s, the rural country post offices in Atlantic County were serving populations of a few hundred or less. They could be found in a small corner of a home combined as a country store, like the one operated by Mr. Lee in nearby Egg Harbor Township at English Creek. The post offices in Weymouth Township, such as the one in Estellville, during that era and since, reflected that trend. About five miles away in the relatively more inhabited part of the township, the post office of Dorothy, by the Dorothy train station, and the Risley post office, "down the road a few" at the Risley train station, were already established and were incorporated in homes. Of those mentioned above, only that in Dorothy remains active.⁵⁸

Whether in cities or rural areas, requirements for the establishment of a post office were consistent. An applicant would petition Congress, which would send the request to the First Assistant Postmaster General at the Post Office Department (POD) in Washington, D.C.⁵⁹ Site applications required specific information including the name of the town, township and county, nearest rivers, railroad and exact distance from each as well as distance from the nearest post office. Instructions regarding the choice of name for post office were explicit: names should consist of one word, without prefixes or additions such as Old, East, Creek etc. However, the name could be changed at a later date if associated for a long period of time with a locality or historic events that occurred there. If located at a railroad station, it should bear the name of the station.⁶⁰

Historically, federal buildings have reflected the taste of the Washington heads of those respective departments. Some edifices were monumental and opulent, built of the most expensive, imported materials and they often incorporated private and public art collections.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Appointment of Postmasters 1832-September 30, 1971, New Jersey, Atlantic-Mercer*, Microfilm Publication, NARA Record Group 28, Series M841, Roll # 82. [Available at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives, Phila. PA.]

⁵⁹ Beth M. Boland, "Historical and Architectural Development of Postal Services and Post Office Construction," *National Park Service: National Register Bulletin # 13, Part II*, 1984.

⁶⁰ "Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 28, Microfilm Publication, Series M1126, Roll 375, Washington, DC. Records of site locations are kept at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

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This applied also to post offices, which could be housed in individual structures or could share the building with other federal offices. Each Supervising Architect of the Treasury had his own preferred style and he often employed private architects, many of whom charged hefty fees. Because of the escalating costs for such projects, Congress enacted the 1913 Public Buildings Act.⁶¹ Among the provisions of the statute, construction of post offices in communities with less than \$10,000 expected revenue was prohibited.⁶²

Applying this act in 1915, the Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, W.C. McAdoo, instituted a classification system for federal buildings that ranged from highest order to lowest and were designated A, B, C, and D. Each class description included the definition "buildings that include a post office."⁶³ The definition for each class was specifically related the annual receipts, the site, and also the valuation of adjoining property. Each class also had a described "character of building," which included allowable building materials, interior finishes, and decorating. Class A buildings—those which generated over \$800,000 or more annually—could be made of marble or granite and have grandly-finished interiors and murals. Class A and B structures would be in a metropolitan area while Class C buildings, including post offices, were located in a second-class city. The Class D building included a post office with annual receipts of less than \$15,000. This class was to be of stock material and so modest that in the real estate valuation there would be very limited investment for improvements. Where advisable, it would be an ordinary building that would be a "reasonable investment in a small town."⁶⁴

It is not known if McAdoo's criteria were used when designing and constructing the Belcoville Post Office. But, if they were, the post office would have been classified as a Class D facility because it was not likely to generate anywhere near \$15,000 in revenue since it was located in a newly created town in a very rural area of Atlantic County.

The Belcoville Post Office

Work on the village and the plant was well under way by April 1918.⁶⁵ Vivian B. Smith, a local architect and engineer, was the Superintendent of Building Construction for both the munitions

⁶¹ Public Bill Number 432, *Statutes at Large of the LXII Congress, United States of America*, Vol. 27, March 4, 1913.

⁶² Beth M. Boland.

⁶³ *Ibid*, Appendix E: McAdoo's 1915 Classification System for Federal Buildings, [taken from the Secretary of the United States Treasury Department's *Annual Report on the Finances*, 1915 (Washington, D. C. : U. S. Government Printing Office, 1915)].

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ Williams, p. 319.

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complex and the village.⁶⁶ As seen in photos taken by the company of the village, many of the village's houses, apartment complexes, and support buildings were finished by the end of September 1918. [see figs. 1 through 4 in the *Historic and Supplemental Images* section] It is estimated that about 70% of the plant was built by November 11, 1918, a figure which probably compares to the completion of the village, too.⁶⁷ When magnified, one of the historic photos taken by the loading company clearly shows a sign on the Belcoville Post Office identifying it as such, thus providing irrefutable proof that it was designed and built to be the post office and that it was not one used previously for other purposes. [fig. 2] With its hipped roof line, paired windows, and classical portico, its style was consistent with other plant and village buildings designed by Smith, including the school, the administration building, and the police headquarters. As previously mentioned, \$8,240 was appropriated for its construction."⁶⁸

The application to establish the Belcoville Post Office was signed September 17, 1918 by the applicant for postmaster, Jeannette Clouting.⁶⁹ Clouting is shown in the 1910 federal census as residing with parents and family in Sea Isle City, Cape May County, N.J.⁷⁰ The name of the proposed office on the application was "Belcoville" and mail service to the village was expected to serve a population of 2,500. Miss Clouting was appointed Belcoville's first postmaster on October 3, 1918. This was followed by her commission October 18, 1918 and started service on that date.⁷¹ Miss Clouting received her Notary Public on October 12th, and this was reported in the *Belco News*.⁷² During her employment, there were three incoming and three outgoing mails a day. Hours of operation were from 8:30 A.M. to 7 P.M., with incoming mails at 8:30 and 11:45 A. M. and 2:00 P.M. Outgoing mails were at: 7:30 and 11 A.M. and 4:30 P.M.⁷³

At the time of its establishment, the Belcoville Post Office was considered a fourth class facility as defined by a revision of the Postal Laws and Regulations in the 1913 Public Buildings Act.⁷⁴ The Laws and Regulations specified the standards by which classification of each post office was

⁶⁶ *Table of Organization for the Bethlehem Loading Company, Mays Landing Plant*, Hagley Museum and Library, #1699.

⁶⁷ handwritten note on ca. 1918 site plan at the Atlantic County Park; George Flicker, Atlantic County Park, Estell Manor, Office of the Superintendent.

⁶⁸ *Mays Landing Construction Orders*, Hagley Museum and Library, #1699.

⁶⁹ "Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations," Microfilm Publication, NARA Record Group 28, Series M1126, Roll 375; as found at NARA, Washington, DC.

⁷⁰ 1910 census, Sea Isle City, Cape May County, NJ, Ward 2, sheet 5-B.

⁷¹ "Record Cards of Appointments of Postmasters, 1905-44," Index cards, Record Group 28, Records of the Post Office Department, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁷² *Belco News*, Vol.1, No. 2, November 15, 1918. p.19.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁷⁴ Postal Laws and Regulations of the United States of America, Edition of 1913 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913). As found at the library at office of Historian of the United States Postal Service, United States Postal Service, Washington, DC.

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derived and designation in classes one through three was directly related to the amount of gross receipts generated as well as the amount of compensation, including commissions, paid to the postmaster. New offices were automatically designated class four until gross receipts were tracked for a year.⁷⁵

Following the armistice of November 11, 1918, the Army ordered curtailment of construction at both the village and the plants; the construction crew was decreased, but because shell loading was still being done, social activities and daily life continued despite war's end. In February 1919, the government ordered that all of the Loading Company would be under the direction of the Government Ordnance Department effective February 15, 1919; however, the village was to continue as usual.⁷⁶ Miss Clouting operated the post office until resigning in May. Mrs. Catherine D. Bowman, formerly the editor of the *Belco News* and a company employee from Bethlehem, PA, was immediately appointed Postmaster on May 10th and commissioned on June 2, 1919. She assumed her duties on June 3, 1919 and maintained services until the office was discontinued on July 10, 1919. Effective July 15, 1919, postal services were transferred to the Mays Landing office. After operating for only nine months, the Belcoville post office closed.⁷⁷

Other WWI Munitions Plant Village Post Offices

Of the 13 other loading companies in operation during WWI, only two constructed a worker's village, and both had post offices.

The nearby Amatol village and plant had a class four post office instituted on August 7, 1918.⁷⁸ It was discontinued on July 5, 1919 and mail services were transferred to Hammonton, also in Atlantic County. Nothing of that plant or village remains except a deteriorating recycled building formerly used for police barracks.

The Penniman Post Office, which served over 30,000 employees at the Penniman, VA loading plant, was established on February 18, 1918.⁷⁹ It advanced from being a fourth class facility to a second class one on July 1, 1919. After the end of WWI, a decline in the revenues and quantity

⁷⁵ Postal Laws and Regulations of the United States of America, Edition of 1913, section 271-272. As found at Historian, United States Postal Service, Washington, DC.

⁷⁶ DERP/FUDS Report, p. F-5. Memorandum, C.S. Demarest, Major, U.S. Ordnance Department, 2-14-1919.

⁷⁷ "Records of Appointments of Postmasters 1832-September 30, 1971, New Jersey, Atlantic-Mercer," Microfilm Publication, NARA Record Group 28, Series, M841, Roll #82, as found at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives, Philadelphia, PA; "Record Cards of Appointments of Postmasters, 1905-44."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Records of Appointments of Postmasters."

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of mail handled relegated the office back to third class on July 1, 1920 and back further to fourth class on July, 1921. That post office began and ended as fourth class, as did those at Amato and Belcoville. After four years of service, the Penniman office was discontinued on May 31, 1922, and its mail was handled by the Williamsburg post office.⁸⁰ Nothing remains of DuPont's Penniman plant and village and the entire area has been reforested.

Subsequent Uses of the Belcoville Post Office Building

Following the Armistice in the fall of 1918, there was a gradual decrease of plant production, workers, and soldiers. After February 15, 1919, the Bethlehem Loading Company no longer operated the site and it became a federally-operated facility known as the Mays Landing General Ordnance Depot.⁸¹ Munitions loading ceased; resources were used for temporary munitions storage, and gradual deconstruction of manufacturing buildings and disassembly of much material was begun.⁸²

The Bethlehem Loading Company officially sold the village and its buildings, the munitions loading plant, and land south of the plant to the federal government on April 17, 1920.⁸³ The plant was being used as a temporary storage depot, and there was still work activity.⁸⁴

In the 1920 census, Belcoville was individually enumerated as district 46 and was noted as being "the US Proving Ground" in the place called "Belcoville." There were about 400 residents cited "as 94 families in 93 houses." The occupations of residents included: salvage, blacksmith, electrician, fireman for locomotive, fireman at fire department, house painter, railroad engineer, carpenter, and laborers. There were about 55 school age children, but the company no longer owned or staffed the school.

On October 5, 1920, the residents' organization, called the Belco Society of Belcoville, offered to the Weymouth Township Board of Education (BOE) to pay the salary for two teachers and to open the school building at Belcoville. The federally-built school building there was now closed and unused. The residents expected the government to turn the village homes and buildings to

⁸⁰ Ibid., issues, 1918, 1919, 1929, 1921, 1922.

⁸¹ Memorandum, C. S. Demarest, Major, U.S. Ordnance Department, 2-14-1919.

⁸² DERPS/FUDS Report, p. F-11, Memo, Chas. R. Baxter, Chairman, Ordnance Salvage Board to Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D. C., 5-10-1922.

⁸³ Atlantic County Deed Book 621, p. 490 DERPS/FUDS Report, p. F-11, Memo, Chas. R. Baxter, Chairman, Ordnance Salvage Board to Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D. C., 5-10-1922.

⁸⁴ DERPS/FUDS Report, p. F-11, Memo, Chas. R. Baxter, Chairman, Ordnance Salvage Board to Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D. C., 5-10-1922.

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private ownership in November.⁸⁵ At this time, the township BOE was having difficulty obtaining teachers and building classroom space for the students they already had. The village was still considered a government installation, therefore its students and the school could not be under the township jurisdiction. One month later, the residents assumed charge and re-opened the existing school for their own use.⁸⁶ In October 1922, the village, its buildings (including the vacant post office), and lands of the plant complex were sold by the federal government to the Mays Landing Water & Power Company.⁸⁷

Now under private ownership, the land, village buildings, and homes, were taxable and it became the responsibility of the township to provide education to the Belcoville students. Tax revenue was anticipated to be available to support their education. The disposition of the original school building is not known, but it would have been too large to maintain for the village's approximately 40 school-age students in 1922. The Water and Power Company and the Weymouth Township BOE entered into an agreement wherein the BOE rented the former post office space for two classrooms. The BOE agreed to pay the rent and supply the teachers, while the Water and Power Company was responsible for general upkeep and for providing such things as student desks, blackboards, and materials.

During the war, the heat was generated by Bethlehem's own plant. The BOE voted to buy a Smith heating system for the building even though all the other schools were still using wood burning stoves. The post office officially became the Belcoville school in September 1923 and was known simply as the Belcoville School. As recalled by many local residents who attended the school, the bank of rental mailboxes by the postmaster's window was retained. Miss Lucy Regine had grades 1-2-3 in one room, and Mr. Kraus had grades 4-5-6-7-8 in another room.⁸⁸ The rental arrangement between the Water and Power Company and the Weymouth Township BOE continued for many years. The fire company stayed viable, becoming the first fire company of the township.

In 1938, the Water Company sold approximately half of the houses at a public auction with the stipulation that they be removed from their original sites by the purchasers. Of the buildings that were sold, 49 were single family dwellings, one was a 6-family dwelling, and 38 were 2-family dwellings, most of which were 2-stories tall with "heat, bath, and electricity."⁸⁹ Some were sold and moved to other areas of the municipality, and some were moved by horses up the road to Mays Landing at the corner of SR40 & SR50. It appears that more homes north of Francis Street

⁸⁵ Weymouth Township Board of Education Minutes, 10-5-1920.

⁸⁶ Ibid. B.O.E. 11-11-1920.

⁸⁷ Atlantic County Deed Book 695, p. 122.

⁸⁸ B. O. E. minutes 10-23-1923.

⁸⁹ Public Auction Brochure, 1938, as found at Hamilton Township (Atlantic County) Historical Society.

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Belcoville Post Office
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and closer to SR 50 were removed. Today, about 60 of the original 206 dwellings remain within the unincorporated village, and although some are mostly unaltered from their original appearance, the majority has been heavily altered from their original appearance and configuration.

The Water and Power Company also sold the post office building, now the Belcoville School, to the Weymouth Township BOE for the sum of \$1.00 on February 1, 1941.⁹⁰ Several generations of families attended this school as it operated continuously from 1923 to 1974. In 1974, a new and larger school was built in Dorothy to serve all grades in one building.⁹¹ For a few years after that, the Belcoville School was rented to another municipality and used as a special services school.

On October 18, 1982, the BOE sold the building to Weymouth Township.⁹² The deed contains a reversion clause which states that the property was to be public grounds and if the municipality had no further use for, or abandoned the property, or removed it from public use, its ownership would revert back to the Weymouth Township Board of Education. The municipality agreed to provide insurance, utilities and all maintenance, and all expenses and duties subsequent to the transfer.⁹³

Funds were made available to Weymouth Township in 1988 from the Atlantic County Improvement Authority administering Community Development Block Grants, commonly known as Small Cities Grants. The old boiler system was replaced with gas heat, new water lines installed, electricity upgraded, the two bathrooms used by the "boys" and "girls" were redone. The kitchen area (formerly the postmaster's room) was updated, floors that had been tiled by the BOE were retiled, and added partitions were placed in the north wing, making a few small office spaces out of its classroom. These were all interior modifications with no structural changes. The following year The Atlantic County Improvement Authority bartered for the use of the newly created small office spaces, and the Township drafted rules for the use of the building by residents for private functions, parties, meetings, and baby showers. It was a multi-use building hosting meetings for the township Senior Citizens Committee, youth athletic groups, and art and gallery exhibits. At times, the rooms in the north wing were rented by some church groups for Sunday services, and at another time, the Office of Emergency Management moved into the north wing offices. The empty back part of the lot was reseeded for a ball park, and a basketball

⁹⁰ Atlantic County Deed Book 1115, p.342.

⁹¹ Weymouth Township Board of Education Minutes, 4-4-1974.

⁹² Ibid; Atlantic County Deed Book 3735, p. 275.

⁹³ Atlantic County Deed Book 3735. p. 276.

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Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

court was added. In 1997, the building was renamed the Roland L. Marsh Center in honor of the then Mayor.⁹⁴

In the year 2000, the Township Committee directed the Municipal Engineer to inspect the building and submit a report regarding the integrity of the building. The report of the visual inspection was prepared April 5, 2002, citing “damaged sill plates, joist ends and structural failure occurring.”⁹⁵ Based upon the report, the Township Committee closed the building to the public. Due to repeated vandalism of broken screens, windows, and attempts of entry, in 2004 all windows and exit doors were boarded, with the exception of the front and rear entrance doors.

Significance of the Belcoville Post Office

Within these contexts, then, the Belcoville Post Office significantly reflects the large scale effort by government and private industry to meet the urgent national need for war goods during WWI. It had a clear and close association with the emergence of a company town that resulted from the decision to construct a site for munitions loading by the Bethlehem Loading Company in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The post office importantly facilitated communication by mail between the federal government and the loading company, and served the community of workers employed at the plant. Its Neoclassical Revival style, while modest, was also used in such other important village and plant structures as the administration building and the police barracks, none of which survive.

Because munitions loading was one of the major contributions New Jersey made to the war effort, the construction of Belcoville was a significant event not only in Weymouth Township history, but in Atlantic County and New Jersey history also. Of the three post offices which were built to specifically serve munitions loading villages and plants during WWI, the Belcoville Post Office is the only one which still stands.

⁹⁴ A summary from Bonnie Yearsley, Municipal Clerk/ Business Administrator, to the Township of Weymouth Historical Society, Timeline of Activity Relative to the Roland Marsh Center, undated in 2006.

⁹⁵ Remington, Vernick & Walberg Engineers, Building Evaluation for the Roland L. Marsh Center Block 101, Lot 1, April 5, 2002. p.2

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Atlantic County, NJ

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Continuation Sheet**
Section number 10 Page 1

The Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary comprises block 101, lot 1, as shown on the current Weymouth Township tax map.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property is the one with which it has been associated since the unincorporated village of Belcoville was laid out in 1918.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
photographs**

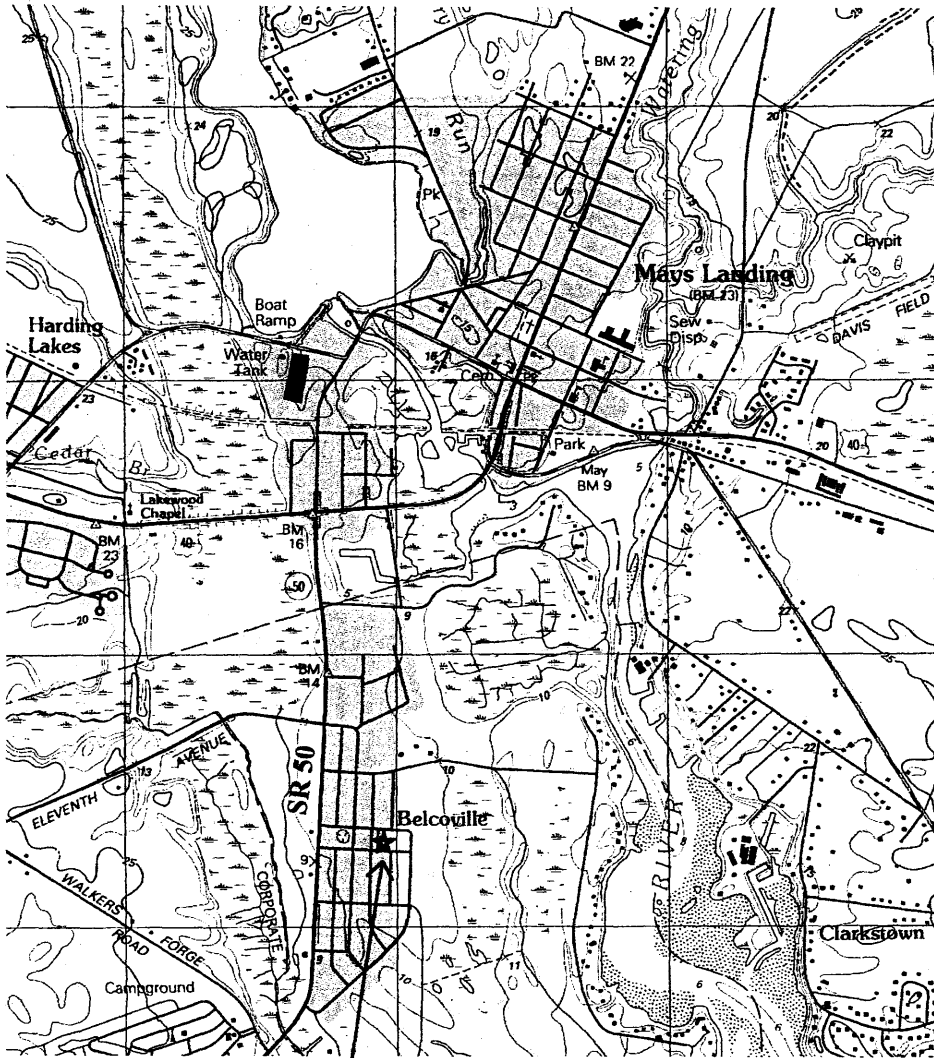
Belcoville Post Office
Atlantic County, NJ

Typical Information for All Photographs

1. Name of Property	Belcoville Post Office
2. County and State	Atlantic County, New Jersey
3. Photographer	Joan Berkey
4. Date of Photograph	Sept. 2005 (exteriors), Jan. 2007 (interiors)
5. Location of Negatives	n/a: digital/CD at SHPOs office

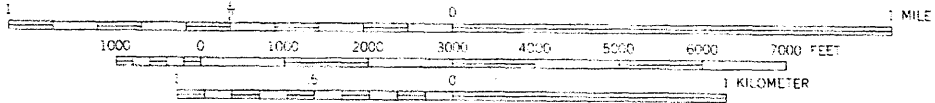
Photo # and Description of View

1. Exterior view showing setting and streetscape; looking south
2. Exterior view showing setting and Belcoville Firehouse; looking northeast
3. Exterior showing façade (west elevation) and side (north) elevation; looking southeast
4. Exterior, showing façade portico; looking northeast
5. Exterior, showing portico and siding; looking north
6. Exterior, showing north part of main block and rear ell; looking southwest
7. Exterior, showing south part of main block and rear ell; looking northwest
8. Interior, showing lobby and former mail counter; looking southeast
9. Interior, showing large room in rear ell; looking southwest
10. Interior, showing former classroom in south part of main block; looking southwest
11. Interior, showing former classroom in north part of main block; looking northeast
12. Interior, showing former office in north part of main block; looking west
13. Interior, showing façade (west elevation) wall and entry doors; looking southwest



USGS Map
Mays Landing Quad
 partial photocopy
 showing the location of the
 Belcoville Post Office

SCALE 1:24 000

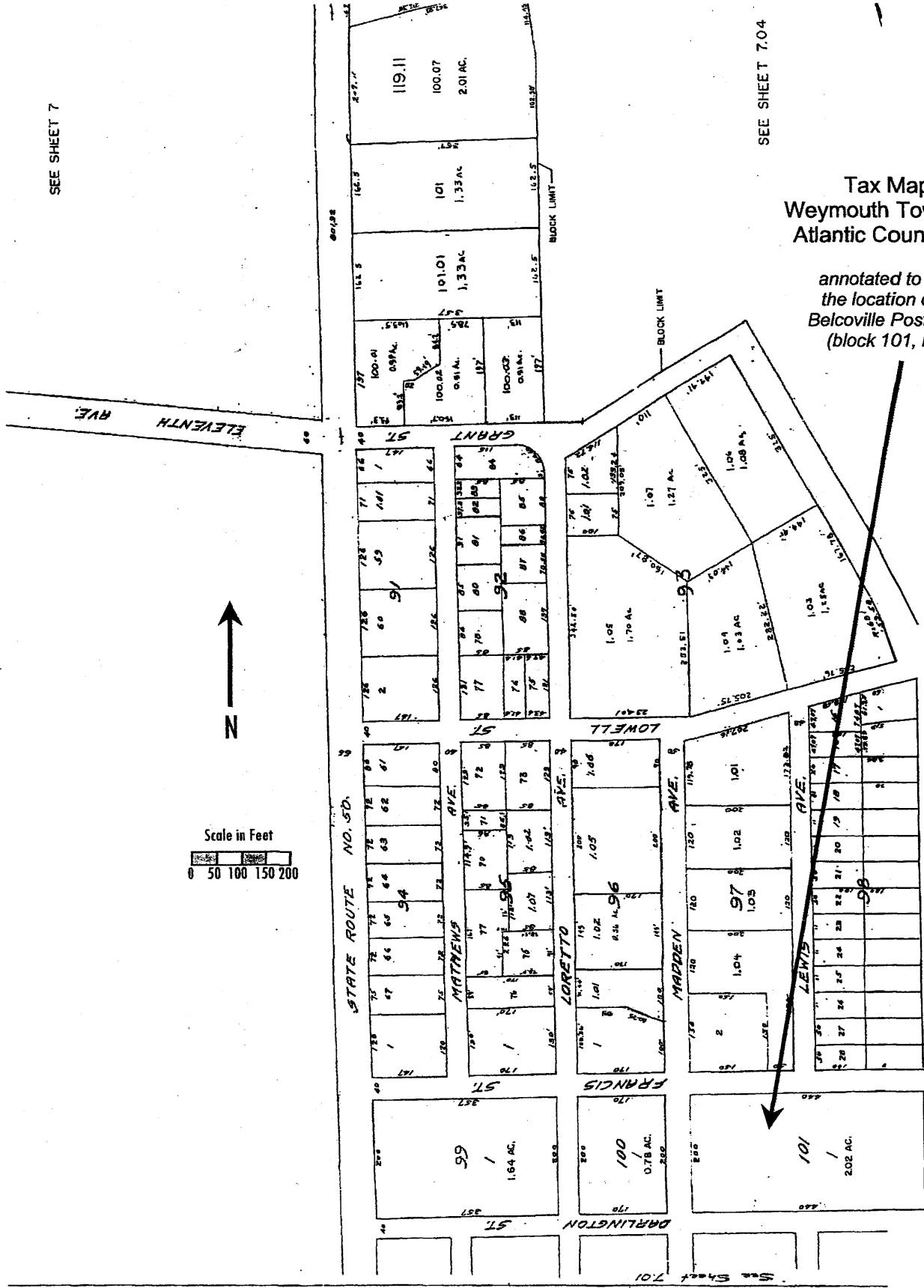
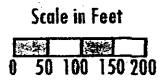


SEE SHEET 7

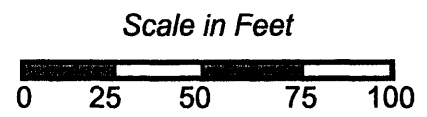
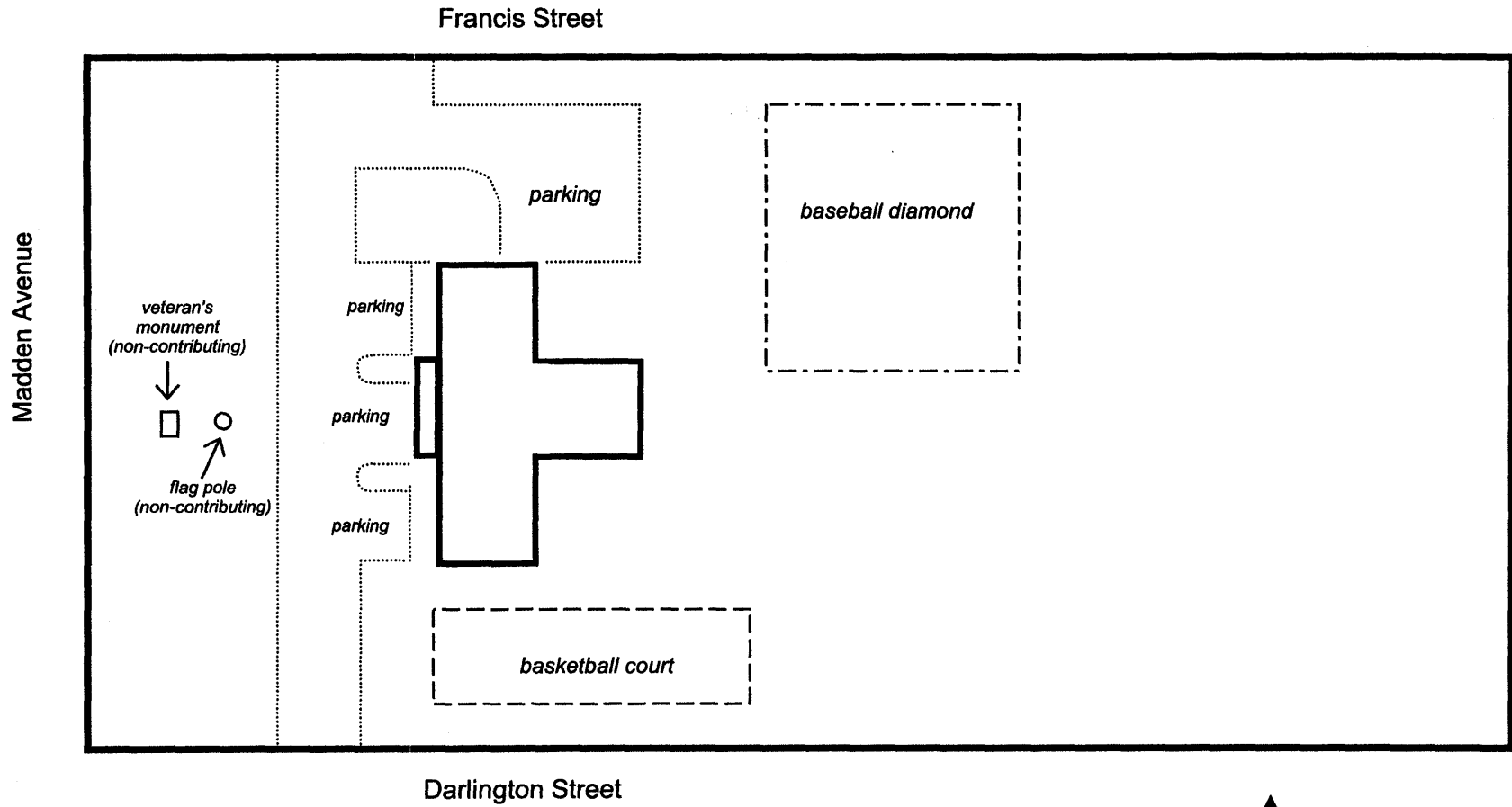
SEE SHEET 7.04

Tax Map Weymouth Township Atlantic County, NJ

annotated to show
the location of the
Belcoville Post Office
(block 101, lot 1)

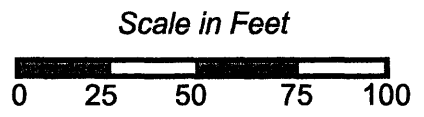
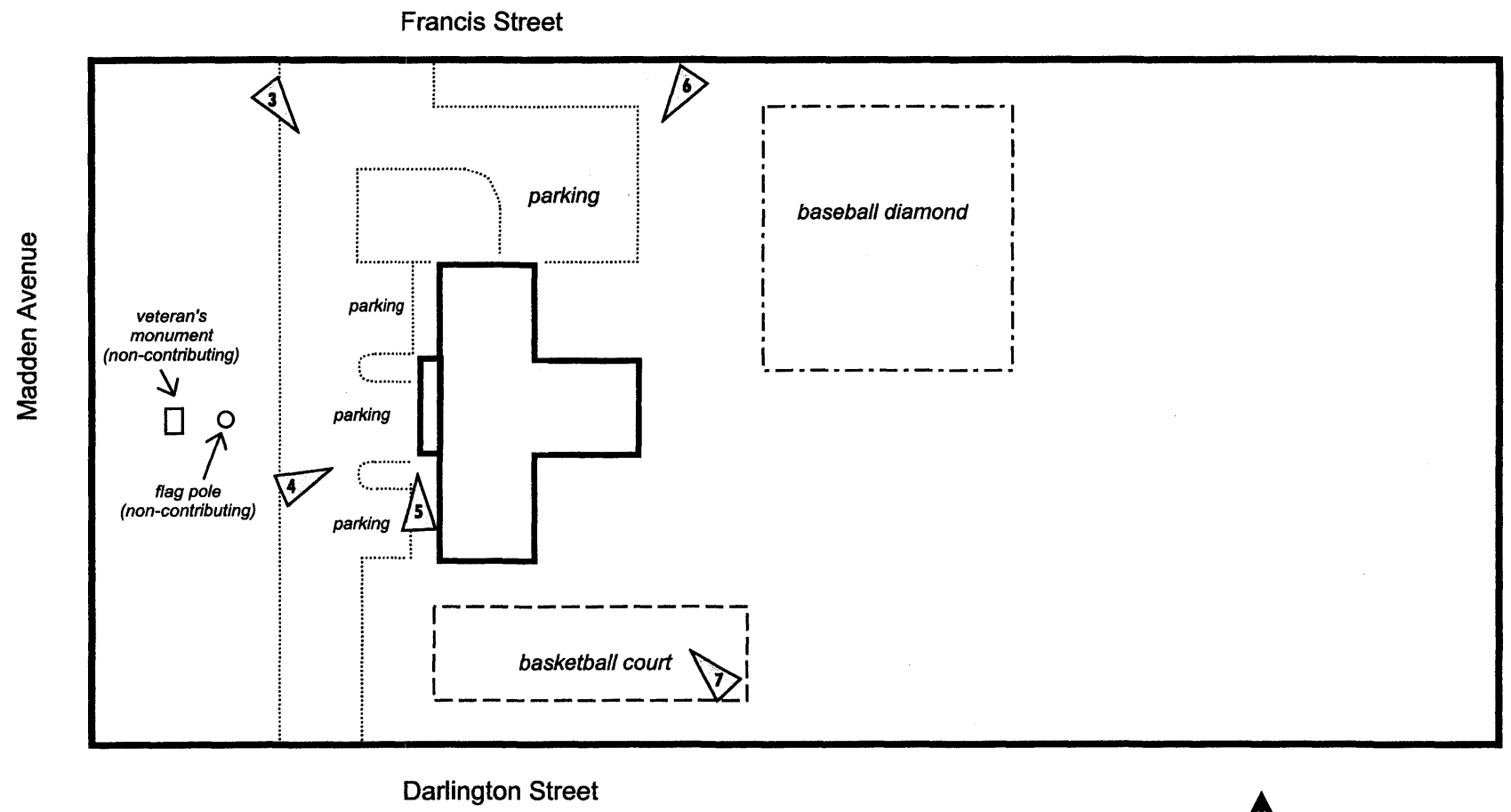


Site Plan
Belcoville Post Office
Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, NJ

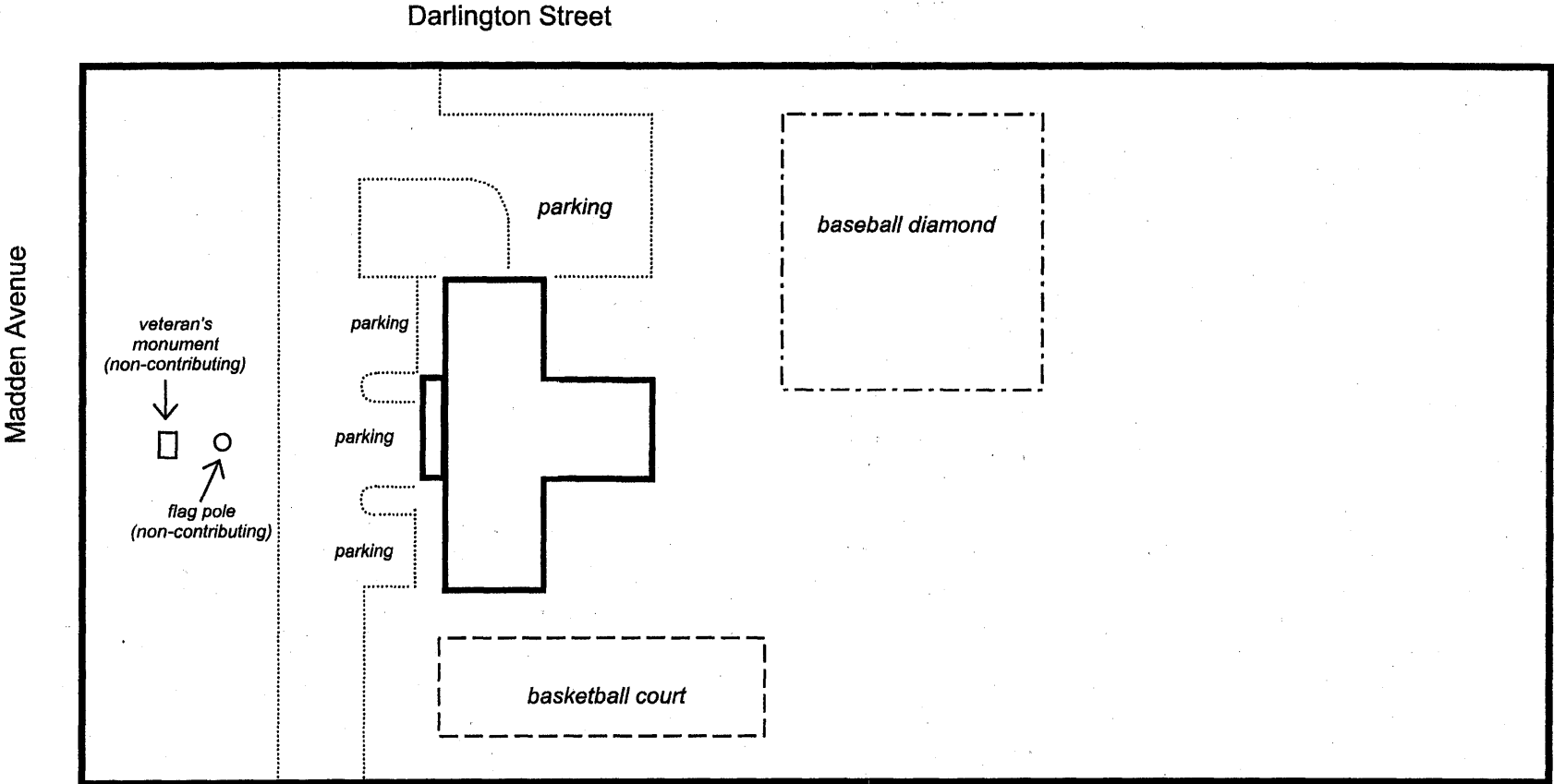


Site Plan
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Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, NJ

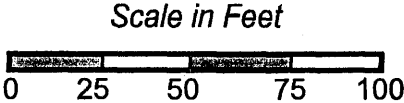
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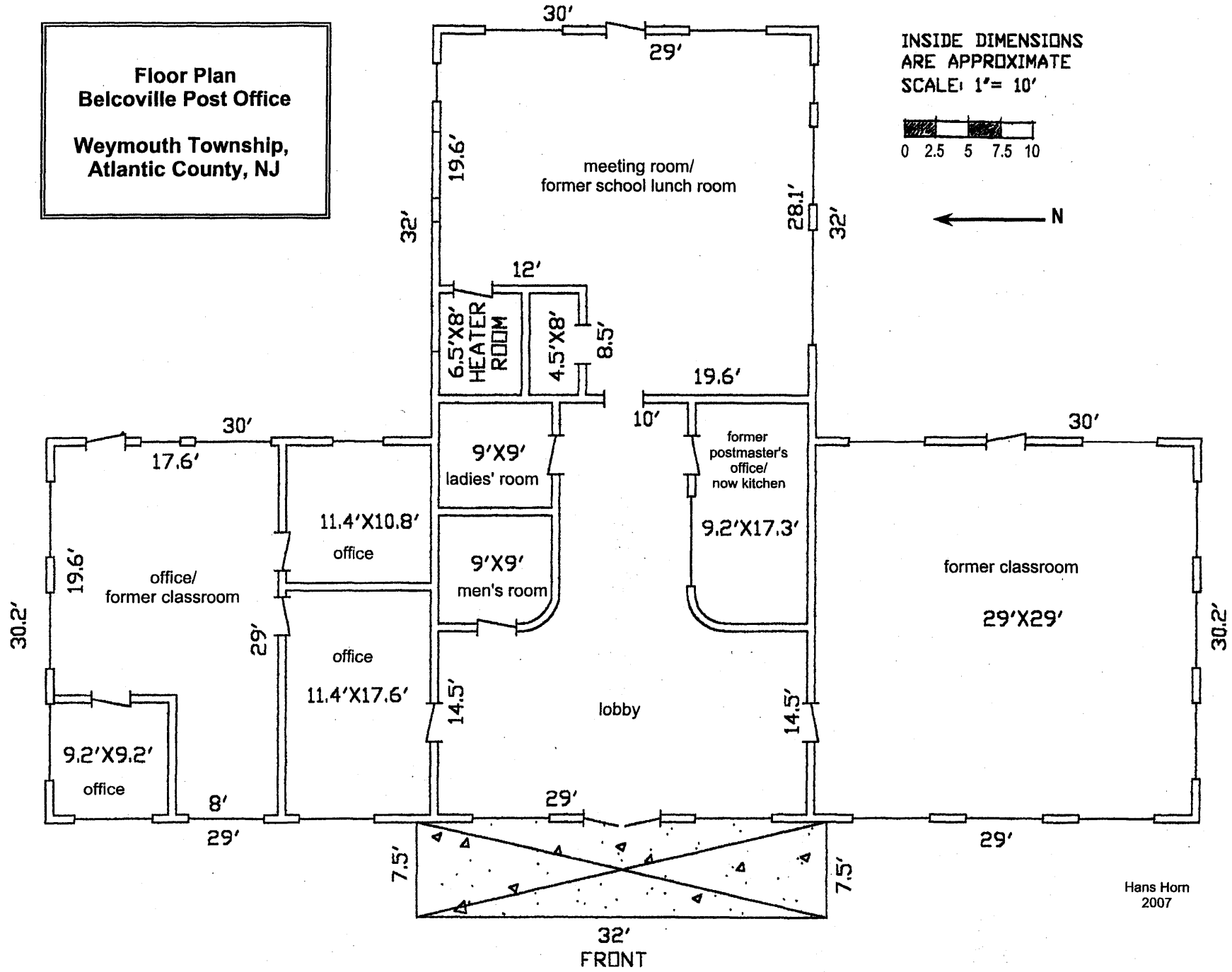
Site Plan
Belcoville Post Office
Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, NJ



Francis Street



**Floor Plan
Belcoville Post Office
Weymouth Township,
Atlantic County, NJ**



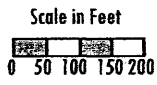
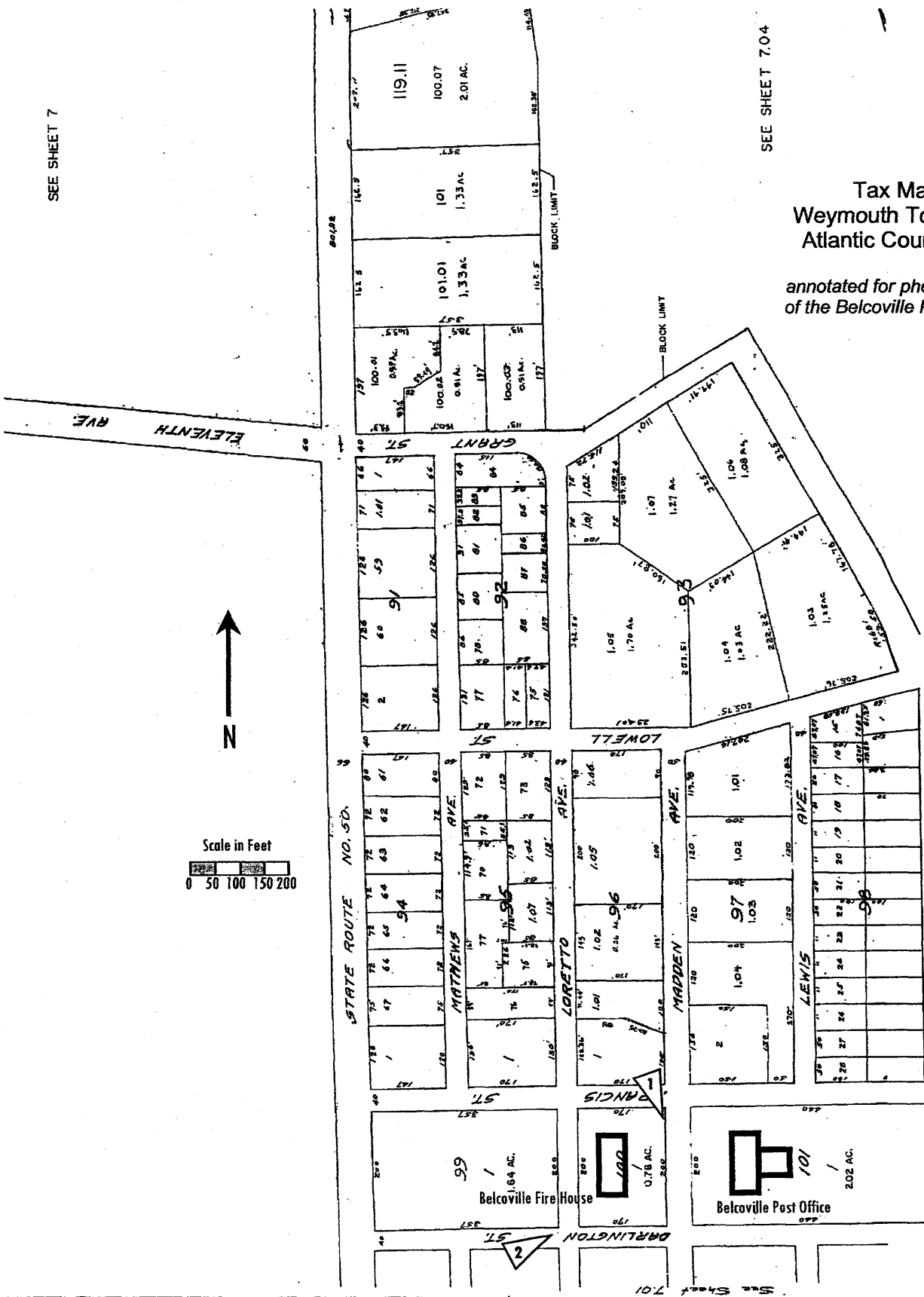
Hans Horn
2007

SEE SHEET 7

SEE SHEET 7.04

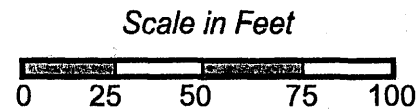
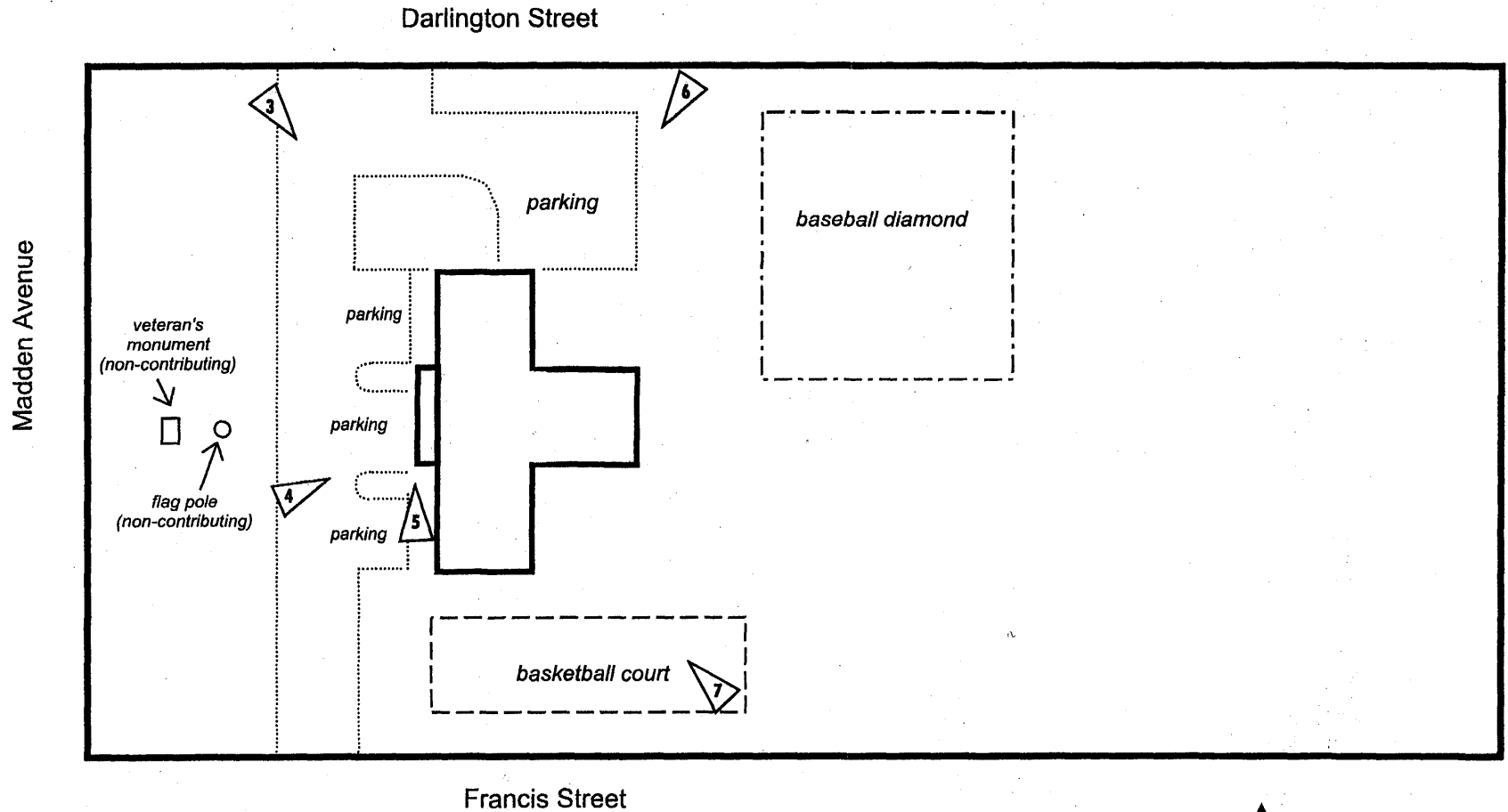
Tax Map Weymouth Township Atlantic County, NJ

annotated for photographs
of the Belcoville Post Office



Site Plan
Belcoville Post Office
Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, NJ

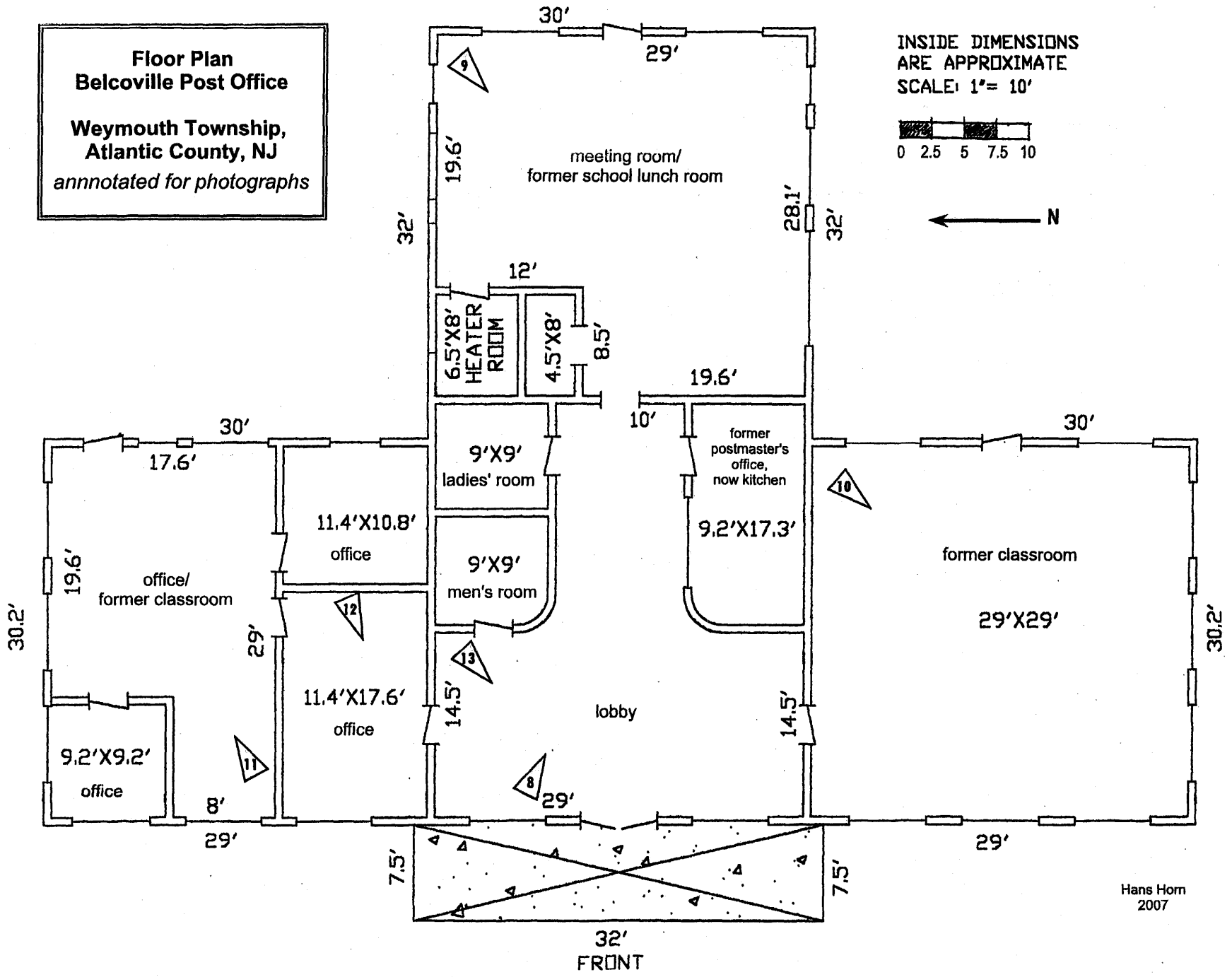
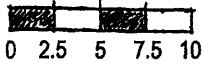
annotated for photographs



Floor Plan
Belcoville Post Office

Weymouth Township,
Atlantic County, NJ
annotated for photographs

INSIDE DIMENSIONS
 ARE APPROXIMATE
 SCALE: 1" = 10'



Hans Horn
 2007

Historic and Supplemental Images

Figure 1:
facade (west
elevation),
1918

The newly
completed
post office as
it appeared
immediately
after
construction.

[photo courtesy
of the Hagley
Museum and
Library]



Figure 2: close-up of the facade,
showing the post office sign

Note the brick piers infilled
with lattice, which originally
supported the portico.

[photo courtesy of the Hagley
Museum and Library]





Figure 3: aerial photo, taken in 1918 and looking west, showing the village of Belcoville, with close-up of the rear (east) elevation of the post office (below, right).

[photo courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library]

The majority of the buildings seen in this photo are no longer standing.





Figure 4: the Belkville Fire House, 1918.

Shown near completion. Note the post office behind it (to the right), under construction.

[photo courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library]

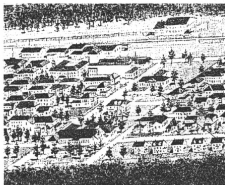


Figure 5: close-up of the ca. 1918 aeriaview drawing of Belkville, showing (from east to west) the post office, the fire house, and the school. Looking almost east.

[drawing courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library]

Figure 6: (below) ca. 1918 aeriaview drawing showing the entire planned town of Belkville. Looking east. Not all of the buildings shown here were built.



post office

Figure 7: site plan for Belcoville, ca. 1918, drawn for the Bethlehem Loading Company

[taken from the DERP-FUDS report, p. E-1]

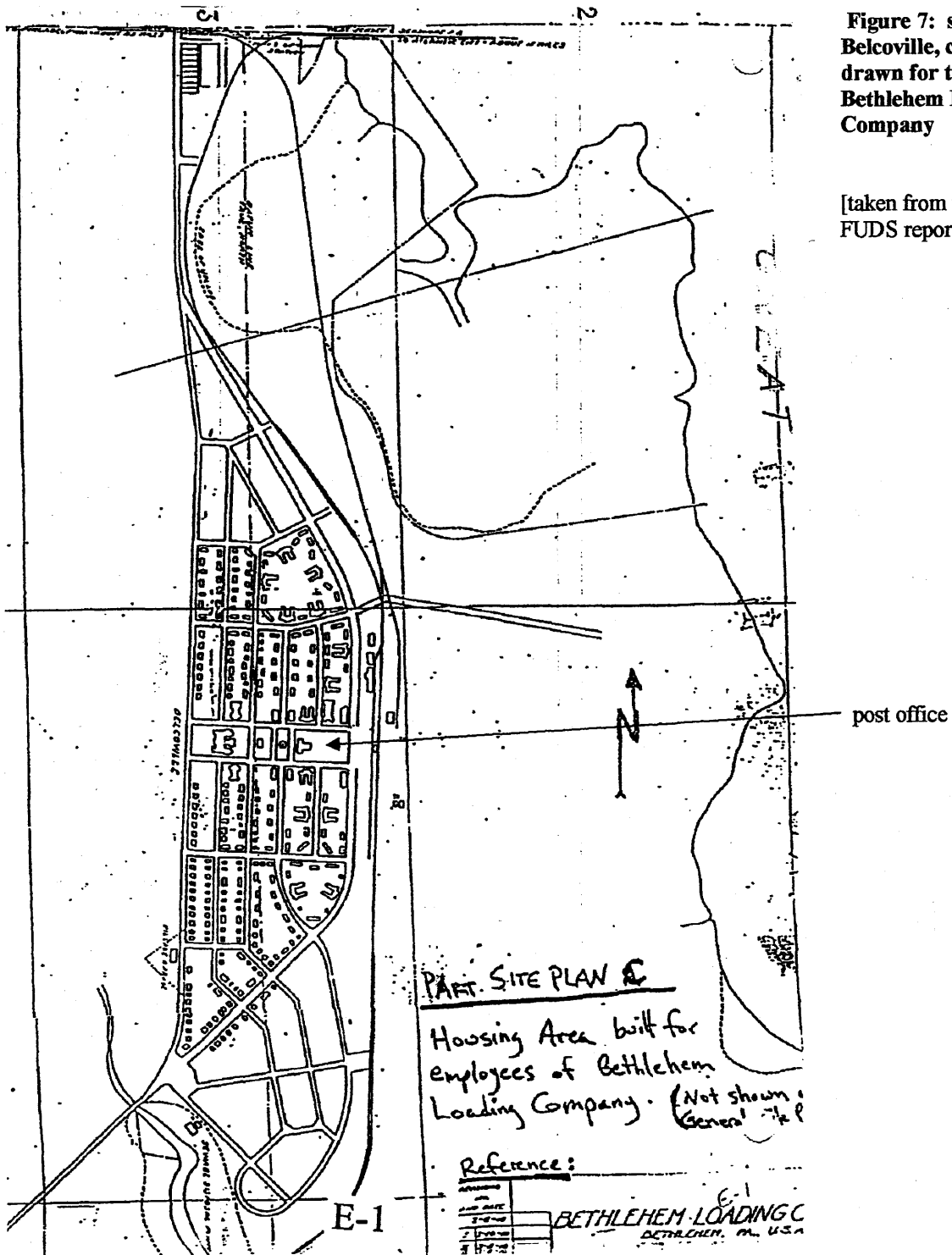




Figure 8: 2-story houses in Belcoville which line the east side of SR 50

These more substantial dwellings were erected for company executives. Many are still standing. View northeast.

[photo courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library]



Figure 9: a view down one of the streets in Belcoville, showing mostly 2-family houses, of which only a few still stand.

[photo courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library]