

*Summer Issue 1997*

**MATAWAN-ABERDEEN  
HOMETOWN SHOPPER™**



*The Historic*  
**Poet's Inn**

Route 79 (*Freneau Avenue*) and Mill Road  
Matawan, New Jersey

*see article on page 4*

## MATAWAN-ABERDEEN HOMETOWN SHOPPER™

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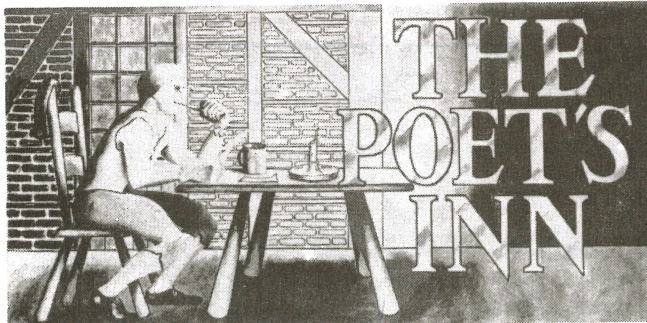
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*Welcome! I hail you to my glass.  
All welcome here you find;  
Here let the cloud of trouble pass,  
Here be all care resigned.*

*— These lines were penned by Philip Freneau  
to whom this Inn is dedicated.*



*This sign was designed and made by Robert Boyd, brother-in-law of the La Mura brothers, and is still mounted on the outside front of the building.*

*See the Poet's Inn ad on  
pages 49 - 50 and enjoy their money  
saving coupons while dining in a  
building that welcomed the traveler  
for over 200 years!*

## *The Historic Poet's Inn*

The Poet's Inn, located in the Freneau section of Matawan Borough, on Route 79 and Mill Road is a popular restaurant today as it was as a colonial inn over 200 years ago. The inn was a stopping point for travelers needing a place to rest on their long journeys. The property it occupies dates back to the pre-Revolutionary period. Built in 1774, the inn was originally known as the Mount Pleasant Hotel. It had many names some of which were the Pine Tree Inn, Dickson's Green Pump, Freneau Hotel, and the Matawan Inn.

During the post Revolutionary War days, the inn provided talk, drink and good food to farmers and travelers. It had a well-established business since the "Old Plank Road", now Route 79, was the main highway between Freehold and Keyport. The farmers used the road to bring their horse-drawn wagons containing produce to the docks on Keyport's bay for shipment to New York. After taking care of their business, they would sit around enjoying the companionship of their fellows while drinking a tankard of ale. The inn was noted for their old fashioned clam bakes and oxen roasts during the 1800's, and legends tell of pigeon shoots and cock fights. At one time, there was a toll gate at the inn, and no doubt, the traveler must have complained of the fee, but probably grateful for the plank road when wet weather turned highways into troughs of mud. The inn was the voting station for county freeholders and the local tax collector had his office in the lobby during the late 1800's.

Mr. and Mrs. Emil Klatt owned and operated the inn, known as the Matawan Inn, from 1939 to 1949. At the time the Klatts took over, it had been closed for a number of years. Mr. Klatt found several old pictures of the inn taken 30 or 40 years earlier. He also had a painting showing how it must have looked in the late 1920's when touring by motor car was coming into vogue. Shown are a number of cars and the word "garage" is painted on the stable roof. A sign indicates the "Dickson's Green Pump Inn". Another sign says "Tea & Chop House". It must have been a strategic point, just halfway between Lakewood and Newark and only two miles from Keyport's charming resort town; and at the end of a day's journey from Atlantic City. Its ten rooms on the second floor must have been filled with travelers and vacationers. (This picture and feature newspaper story of the long history of the Poet's Inn is presently mounted on the dining room wall of the restaurant. Be sure to see it on your next visit!)



*Klatt's Matawan Inn, 1939 - 1949*

At one time there were three wells on the property. One was on the side facing what is now Mill Road. This well had a windmill. Another was towards the rear. The well in front never ran dry. Old timers told Emil Klatt that when there was a drought, farmers would come in their wagons to get water from the well. It was eventually capped.

In December, 1961, the inn opened under the ownership of the La Mura brothers of this area and they chose to call their establishment The Poet's Inn to honor Philip Freneau, America's Revolutionary War poet and editor who lived until his death on the family estate, Mount Pleasant, in what is now the Freneau section of Matawan. Much of his patriotic verses were written and published by him here. A monument marking his grave stands not too far from the restaurant. The La Muras intended to operate the business as a package liquor store and bar. However, as the renovations proceeded, the charming rustic chestnut beams dating back more than 150 years were discovered and the antique brick walls with mud joints suggested to the La Muras the possibility of opening a restaurant for patrons they felt would appreciate dining leisurely in historical surroundings. Hatchet marks and wooden pegs were left visible in the massive chestnut beams and corner posts. The brick wall in the dining room was restored to show the joints used in the days before cement. Redecorating of the inn in an Early American theme complemented the renewed historical features. The exterior was done over with a brick front and paned windows, and the boundary was marked with a white split-rail fence. The La Mura brothers did all the restoration and remodeling work themselves. They were assisted by their wives in the selection of carpets, drapes and antique patterned wallpaper and lamps. Mrs. Alfred La Mura, hostess, knew the history of the area and enjoyed answering questions about Freneau's life and times. Waitresses in colonial costumes added a quaint touch to the restaurant. The La Muras had the restaurant for several years and sold it to George and Olga Vero of Perth Amboy who maintained the name of the Poet's Inn.

During the 1970's through the mid 1980's, the restaurant had other names and owners, but has been known as the Poet's Inn since 1986.

The Poet's Inn would probably have pleased Philip Freneau who was known to enjoy good food and drink in convivial surroundings.

*— Historical information and photos courtesy of Cynthia Hotaling Klatt, Matawan, Frank La Mura, Marlboro & Louise Martin, Matawan.*