



EMPIRE STATE  
POSTAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

APS UNIT 28

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## ONLY THE NAME IS THE SAME

By Frank Braithwaite

Many New York state post office names belonged, at one time or another, to different counties. Some changed because of a boundary or a county name change (Queens to Nassau) and some were *given up* by a county and picked up by another. Riverdale belonged to three different counties before settling in the Bronx in 1945. The collector must be knowledgeable (or have Smith and Kay handy) to avoid purchasing a *wrong* town postmark.

I recently came across two covers that required a little detective work. Smith and Kay lists Roanoke (top left) in Genesee County from 1847–1859 and 1887–1888. In between, it lists Roanoke in Suffolk County from 1870 to 1872. With no date on the cover, I had to rely on the franking for my answer. The three-cent banknote was issued in 1870, eliminating the early Genesee date and making a case for the 1870–1872 period in Suffolk. The clincher was that the first class rate changed to two cents in 1883, eliminating the later Genesee period.

The Syosset cover (top right) is listed by Smith and Kay in Queens County from 1846–1848 and 1855–1899. While seeking the origin of the word Syosset, I came across a web site ([HTTP://SYOSSETSCRAPBOOK.FREESERVERS.COM](http://SYOSSETSCRAPBOOK.FREESERVERS.COM)) maintained by John Delin. He informed me that Syosset was likely derived from the Indian word *suwasset*, meaning *place in the pines*, and that the post office was established in 1855. I responded with a confident “according to Smith and Kay the office was established in 1846 and the proof is in the scan I sent with an 1847 date and Syosset postmark.” I was sure I was right. Mr. Delin politely responded with, “The hamlet of Oyster Bay was called Syosset between 1845 and 1848. OB gave up the name c. 1848. Our Syosset was called Eastwoods until the late 1840s. The residents of Eastwoods began calling their little town Syosset after OB gave up the name. The Syosset postmark is really what is now Oyster Bay.” I humbly thanked Mr. Delin for the information and moved the Syosset cover to the Oyster Bay section of my collection, a little embarrassed by my arrogance.