PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-09

Three names at once: Crum's Point, Crumtown and Crumstown, St. Joseph County, Indiana, 1875–1903

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SUMMARY

The Indiana place-name references give the post office of Crumstown, in Warren Township, St. Joseph County, three names in succession: Crum's Point from 1875, Crumtown from 1888 and Crumstown from 1893. Federal and trade records show the three names in use at the same time. The *Official Register of the United States* lists one postmaster, J. H. Pontius, at "Crum's Point" in 1887, at "Crumtown" in 1889 and 1893, and at "Crumstown" in 1895, so neither change came with a new postmaster. The Post Office Department's own *Official Postal Guide* of January 1889 prints the office as "Crumtown" in its list by states (p. 283) but as "Crumstown" in its alphabetical list (p. 55) and its list by counties (p. 485). *Bullinger's Postal and Shippers Guide* of 1892 lists the railroad station as "Crum's Point ... (Crumstown P O)" and the post office as "Crumstown ... (RR name Crum's Point)." The *Indianapolis Journal*'s pension lists place the same pensioner at "Crum's Point" in January 1888 and, as "Alexander Hemberlin," at "Crumtown" in May 1890. The register still has "Crumtown" on 1 July 1893 and the postal guide has "Crumstown" by January 1894; the telegraph office kept "Crum's Point" until October 1903, when the *Journal of the Telegraph* printed "Crum's Point, changed to Crumstown." The county paper at Walkerton was printing "Crumstown" by August 1888, six months after the post office became Crumtown. For about fifteen years the place was Crum's Point to the railroad, Crumtown to the post office and Crumstown in other use, and the change of 1893 brought the post office into line with a name already in print, as the new Board on Geographic Names had urged in 1892.

THE RECORD

1. ***Official Register of the United States*, 1 July 1887, vol. 2, p. 471, "Post-Offices and Postmasters—Indiana"**

   > *"Crum's Point … Saint Joseph … J. H. Pontius … 54 86."*

   Internet Archive (Serials in Microfilm) · See the record (https://archive.org/details/sim_united-states-official-register-of-the-united-states_1887-07-01_2/page/n482)

2. ***Official Register of the United States*, 1 July 1889, vol. 2, p. 528**

   > *"Crumtown … St. Joseph … Jno. H. Pontius … 72.88."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/officialregister86unit/page/n541)

3. ***United States Official Postal Guide*, January 1889, p. 55 ("Alphabetical List of Post Offices"), p. 283 ("Post Offices by States—Indiana") and p. 485 (by counties, St. Joseph)**

   > *p. 55: "Crumstown, St. Joseph, Ind." p. 283: "Crumtown … St. Joseph." p. 485: "Crumstown," first in the list for St. Joseph County.*

   Allen County Public Library copy; Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/unitedstatesoffi00unit/page/n80)

4. ***Bullinger's Postal and Shippers Guide for the United States and Canada* (New York, January 1892), p. 257**

   > *"Crum's Point, St. Joseph, Ind. … 140 (Crumstown P O) … National" and "Crumstown, St. Joseph, Ind. … 140 (RR name Crum's Point) … National."*

   University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign copy; Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/bullingerspostal1892unse/page/n278)

5. ***Official Register of the United States*, July 1893, vol. 2, p. 578**

   > *"Crumtown … St. Joseph … J. H. Pontius … 74.86."*

   Internet Archive (Serials in Microfilm) · See the record (https://archive.org/details/sim_united-states-official-register-of-the-united-states_1893-07_2/page/n581)

6. ***United States Official Postal Guide*, January 1894, p. 572 ("Post Offices by States and Counties—Indiana")**

> *"St. Joseph … Crumstown."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/unitedstatesoffi1894unit/page/n196)

7. ***Official Register of the United States*, 1 July 1895, vol. 2, p. 97**

> *"Crumstown … St. Joseph … J. H. Pontius … 79."*

Internet Archive (Serials in Microfilm) · See the record (https://archive.org/details/sim_united-states-official-register-of-the-united-states_1895-07_2/page/n102)

8. ***Indianapolis Journal*, 24 January 1888, p. 1, and 18 May 1890, p. 7 (pensions granted to Indianians)**

> *1888: "Alexander Emberlin, Crum's Point." 1890: "Alexander Hemberlin, Crumtown."*

Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82015679/1890-05-18/ed-1/?sp=7)

9. ***St. Joseph County Independent* (Walkerton), 25 August 1888, p. 2, and 22 June 1889, p. 2**

> *1888: "An old fashioned reunion was held at the residence of Josh Brown, near Crumstown, last Sunday." 1889: "The ball game between the Crumstown boys and Walkerton 'Swipers' on last Sunday was witnessed by a large crowd."*

Hoosier State Chronicles, Indiana State Library · See the record (https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=SJCI18880825.1.2)

10. ***Journal of the Telegraph*, 20 October 1903, p. 138 (changes in offices, Indiana)**

> *"284 Crum's Point, changed to Crumstown."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journal-of-the-telegraph-vols-34-36)

1. ***First Report of the United States Board on Geographic Names, 1890–1891* (Washington, 1892), pp. 5–6**

> *p. 5: "It frequently happens that railroads adopt names for their stations different from those of the towns or villages in which they are situated, and thus divide the usage. To a much greater extent, however, than the railroads has the Post-Office Department confused the nomenclature of the smaller towns and villages." p. 6: "The Board is agreed that in general the name which is in common local use at present should be adopted."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/firstreportofuni00unitrich)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The standard accounts (Jim Forte's postal history, Baker and Carmony's *From Needmore to Prosperity*, which dates the first change to 3 February 1888, and Howard's county history of 1907) treat the names as a plain succession, and Howard notes only that the place was "Crum's Point, or Crum's Town, as it is frequently called." The federal and trade records show the names overlapping: the Post Office's own guide printed two of them in the same edition within a year of the 1888 change; a shippers' guide in 1892 told customers that the station and the post office answered to different names; and the telegraph kept the earliest name for ten years after the post office had given it up. Because the postmaster did not change, the renamings were administrative, not a change of office. The pattern is the one the Board on Geographic Names described in its first report, railroads and the Post Office dividing the usage of small places, and the 1893 change fits the Board's rule of adopting the name in common local use.

LIMITS

The note does not find the reason for the change of 1888; the Post Office Department's orders for it have not been searched, and a suggestion that it was meant to stop mail

going astray to Crown Point remains untested. “In common local use” rests on the county paper’s usage from August 1888, the 1892 guide and Howard’s remark of 1907; the paper is one local voice, and no local letter of the period has been found. The two pension entries are identified as one man by the name and the place only. The page numbers are the printed ones; the Internet Archive leaf is given in each link. The 1891 register was not checked.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Jim Forte’s Postal History (Indiana, St. Joseph County); Baker and Carmony, *From Needmore to Prosperity* (1995); Howard (1907) and Chapman (1880); the Polk Indiana gazetteers of 1880–85; Wikipedia; the full text of the Internet Archive for “Crumtown,” “Crumstown” and “Crum’s Point”; the *Official Register* volumes of 1887, 1889, 1893 and 1895; the *Official Postal Guide* of 1889 and 1894; Bullinger’s guide of 1892; Chronicling America; Hoosier State Chronicles for “Crumtown,” “Crumstown” and “Crum’s Point,” 1880–1895; the first report of the Board on Geographic Names. No published account we found notes the overlapping names or the single postmaster.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Michael Urbanski, “Crumstown: The Point, the Partners and the Mastodon,” *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/crumstown/

2. Ronald L. Baker and Marvin Carmony, *From Needmore to Prosperity: Hoosier Place Names in Folklore and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), “Crumstown.” https://archive.org/details/fromneedmoretopr00bake
3. Jim Forte Postal History, post offices of St. Joseph County, Indiana. http://www.postalhistory.com/postoffices.asp?task=display&state=IN&county=Saint%20Joseph
4. Timothy Edward Howard, *A History of St. Joseph County, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1907). https://archive.org/details/ahistorystjosep00unkngoog
5. *History of St. Joseph County, Indiana* (Chicago: Chas. C. Chapman & Co., 1880). https://archive.org/details/historyofstjosep00chap

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THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in Crumstown: The Point, the Partners and the Mastodon (projectscroll.com/news/crumstown/). In the discoveries register:

- `crum-three-names` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#crum-three-names)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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CHANGES TO THIS NOTE

27 October 2026: Version 2: the county paper’s use of “Crumstown” in 1888 and 1889 added to the record; the summary and limits revised to match.