

Harry Roe
Sheriff
1957-1964

Harry Roe served as sheriff from 1957 to 1964. The county population in the 1960 census was 108,240.



Sheriff Harry Roe
Roe Family Photo

In the last few months of his term Sheriff Lewis Menninger announced that he was resigning because of ill health, effective June 1, 1956. County Republican leaders immediately announced their support of Under-sheriff Harry Roe of Point Pleasant.

Mr. Roe served as acting sheriff until elected in the general election of 1956 by the people of Ocean County.

From unnamed and undated [Lakewood Citizen?] 1956 newspaper clipping in the possession of family members of Sheriff Roe

“Well Spoken, Mr. Roe!

Harry Roe, whose appointment as sheriff of Ocean County is being held up because of a political deadlock between Governor Meyner and Senator Mathis (a deal in which Mr. Roe, himself, is not involved), showed in a statement to the *Citizen* last week that he is no peanut politician.

Mr. Roe, asked about the failure of the governor to name him because of the tiff with the Ocean County Senator, said he was not too concerned about the appointment, adding, ‘I would rather be sheriff by the wishes of the voters.’

That, indeed, is the proper spirit. And Mr. Roe, in all probability, will have his chance to be passed upon by the people, for the Republican leaders are slated this month to name him as a candidate in place of Sheriff Menninger, who recently resigned. In the meantime he is serving as acting sheriff.

The Republicans couldn’t make a better choice. Mr. Roe, a former Lakewood resident, has served in public life for many years, occupying, among other things, the mayor’s chair at Point Pleasant Borough for eight years.

Apparently he is the type of man that people like.”

Harry Roe, son of Thomas H. Roe and Amy Estell Roe, was born in Ardena, Howell Township, Monmouth County, NJ., on November 18, 1902. His family moved to Lakewood in 1904. He married Florence Matthews, daughter of Harry Matthews of Lakewood, in 1925 and moved to Point Pleasant.

Mr. Roe was twice elected to the Pt. Pleasant Borough council and served from 1934 to 1939. He was elected mayor six terms for a two-year term each time, serving from 1939 to November 1948. He was County deputy sheriff from May 1944 until 1948 when his promotion to under-sheriff by Sheriff Menninger prompted his resignation as mayor.

Harry Roe continued as under-sheriff until his election as sheriff in 1956. Roe’s administration as sheriff covered a period of innovation and expansion reflecting the explosive growth of Ocean County’s population. The full time Ocean County Police Radio Network was established.

The department added a full time Criminal Identification Bureau. Correction officers were uniformed and given instruction by state and federal experts. Courses sponsored by the sheriff featured FBI instruction of deputies in photography, finger printing, firearms, defensive tactics and related subjects. Deputies were sent to Washington for training in narcotics investigation, and an educational program instituted to acquaint the people of Ocean County with the narcotics problem. A Sheriff’s Department Investigation Bureau was established to assist local police requesting the sheriff’s assistance.

The *New Jersey Courier* issue of March 5, 1959 gives details of the annual report of Sheriff Harry Roe for the year 1958. The itemized statement shows the services performed by the office, the number of persons cared for at the County jail, report of the Identification Bureau and Criminal Division, radio report, and a complete day by day report of the operation of the patrol boat.

The services of the office included 1540 civil processes, 1800 petit jury subpoenas and 105 grand jury subpoenas served, 230 levies made, and 100 sales of real and personal property. A total of \$5,878.89 in fines was collected.

A total of 1565 persons were committed to the county jail and 47,085 meals were served there. One thousand, one hundred and fifty-two persons visited the jail during the year.

The radio report shows a total of 29,038 calls for the year involving everything from automobile accidents and investigations for all kinds of offenses, to requests for blood and oxygen.

A patrol boat was operated by the sheriff's department mainly on weekends and holidays from July 25 to September 15. The report shows it was kept busy towing disabled motorboats and sailboats to shore, locating missing boats and persons and aiding other boats in distress.

In a 1963 news article Sheriff Roe pointed out that the Ocean County Sheriff's Department is the only law enforcement agency in New Jersey with bloodhounds available to all police departments at all hours of the day or night. The bloodhound operations are under the direction of Under-sheriff Oliver G. Osborne.



**Sheriff Roe, Tim Cagney, Buzz Osborne, and Under-sheriff Rutter
Homer and Lady**

Photo courtesy Tim Cagney

Sheriff Roe wanted his officers to be well trained and he called in experts to train them. The FBI gave instructions to the men on the police pistol range.



Ocean County Police Pistol Range
Roe Family Photo

Sheriff Roe was a member of the first Board of Directors of the Ocean County Police Academy. He also taught courses at the Academy.

On August 22, 1959 a fire in the jail claimed the loss of 8 inmates and injured 12 other people. Sheriff Harry Roe had been asking the County freeholders repeatedly for a new jail prior to the fire. This tragedy weighed heavily on Sheriff Roe and his health began to decline. He resigned for health reasons in 1964 and James N. Rutter, under-sheriff, was appointed sheriff on July 1, 1964 by Governor Richard J. Hughes to fill the unexpired term.

From the desk of Jack Lamping

Harry Roe 1957-1964 -- A local Point Pleasant Borough Mayor and under-sheriff, Harry finally succeeded Menninger as high sheriff on his own, serving some seven or eight years in that office. In his incumbency, the *Asbury Park Press* wanted space for a cub reporter, Sam Christopher of Lakewood, in the County seat. The organization provided space for a Teletype machine in the reception area of the sheriff's office in the sheriff's building, at the rear of Court House Square. Young Sam had a ringside seat at the sheriff's office to observe official and political activities.

Each day after filing his news dispatches on the old Teletype machine, Sam would crumple up his notes or dispatch and throw them in a wastebasket by the machine. It is said that the Sheriff's office was interested in these dispatches,

especially of a political nature, and may have acted to retrieve them so the organization could know what would be appearing in the *Asbury Park Press* the next day!



Sheriff Harry Roe
Roe Family Photo

Asbury Park Press July 6, 1980

Former Sheriff Dies -- Point Pleasant: Former Ocean County Sheriff Harry Roe, 77, died yesterday at Point Pleasant Hospital. Born in Ardena, NJ. 1903, he lived in Point Pleasant since 1927. Mr. Roe was the deputy sheriff of Ocean County from 1944 to 1948 and served as under sheriff from 1948 until he was named Ocean County Sheriff in 1956. He held that post until his retirement in 1964. Mr. Roe was Mayor of Point Pleasant from 1939 to 1948.

While Sheriff, Mr. Roe reorganized the fingerprint bureau at the Ocean County Sheriff's office under the supervision of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Roe was one of the founding members of the Ocean County Police Academy, where he served as a member of the board of directors. Interment at the White Lawn Cemetery in Point Pleasant.