

Matteson was platted in 1855 and named in honor of the tenth governor of Illinois, Joel Aldrich Matteson. The area now known as “Old Matteson” began as an agricultural trade center at the junction of two railroads, the Joliet and Northern Indiana (later known as the Michigan Central) and the Illinois Central. By the late 1880s, the Elgin Joliet and Eastern Railway was running parallel to and about a mile south of the Michigan Central. By the time of its incorporation in 1889, Matteson had two hotels, two general stores, two saloons, a wagon and harness shop, a shoe shop, a blacksmith and a grain elevator. The 1890s and early 1900s brought about village improvements that included a two-story village hall and a streetcar line running from Joliet through “downtown” Matteson to Chicago Heights. In 1913, the Lincoln Highway made the same connections along the northern border of the village.

At the close of WWII, Matteson began its development into an important retail and commercial center for the southern suburbs of Chicago. “Old Matteson” immediately expanded with the construction of 300 houses. The first shopping center, E.J. Korvette, opened in 1963, at Crawford Avenue and Lincoln Highway just beyond the northwest corner of the original village. During the following decade, close to 1500 acres of land were annexed. In 1968, I-57 was completed as far as Kankakee and in 1973, the village celebrated the opening of Lincoln Mall at the intersection of Cicero and Lincoln Highway. It was in this post-war era that the center of the village began to shift to the west commercially, as well as residentially with the opening of the Matteson Farms and Glenridge subdivisions, in 1950 and 1961, respectively. Around 1990, the post office and police station moved from Old Matteson to the “Village Commons” area and a new public library was built a few blocks east in the Apple-Oak subdivision.

The Matteson Historical Society, founded in 1975, has designated twelve sites in Old Matteson as landmarks. One of them is a barbershop that has been in operation in the same building since 1896. In the 1980s, when the Michigan Central roadbed was abandoned, the village became an active participant in the development of the Old Plank Road Trail which is now a bike/hike path. Since all of this neighborhood is within walking or biking distance of the Metra station (formerly the Illinois Central), Old Matteson has been able to maintain its historic position as a transportation hub—formerly for grain and milk, now for commuters.

Timeline of Matteson History

- 1852 First Illinois Central train passes through “Matteson”
- 1855 The village of Matteson is platted and named for the then-current governor of Illinois, Joel Aldrich Matteson.
- 1856 First hotel is built in Matteson, “Matteson House.”
- 1860 Matteson Public School board holds its first election.

- 1869 Sedan Prairie School is built
- 1876 Elgin Joliet and Eastern RR lays tracks on south side of Matteson
- 1880 Farmers' Hotel, later known as Dettmering's Tavern, is built. Matteson now has two hotels, two general stores, two saloons, a wagon shop, a shoe shop, a blacksmith and a grain elevator.
- 1889 Matteson is incorporated as a village
- 1890 Trustees vote to build wooden sidewalks
- 1894 Volunteer Fire Department is organized
Nortmeier House is built
- 1896 Adam Barbershop opens for business
- 1898 An up-to-date village hall is built.
- 1904 The German-American Bank opens for business.
- 1908 Joliet and Southern Traction Company trolley line reaches Matteson
- 1920 Illinois Central elevates and electrifies tracks.
- 1926 I.C. commuter service is available to Matteson residents.
- 1948 Third village hall is dedicated.
- 1955 Matteson Centennial Celebration is held
- 1973 Lincoln Mall opens
- 1999 4th village hall is dedicated
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