

A Story About a Post Office Location

By "Red Hill"

In the March issue you were presented with a story about one family that held every position at a small rural post office of Ottsville PA for years. This article adds additional expansion to this dynasty. This time the story is about the physical building in which the Post Office was located.

The village of Ottsville until the mid 1950's had two "general stores" -- one more modern and the other the old traditional general store. The second was like the old general stores seen in the movies and on TV that is set in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It contained a little of everything packed into a small space. This writer was unable to find out when the store actually opened, but several of the "old-timers" who are in their 80's and 90's remember the store always being there. One believed that the original store was opened in the early 1890's (maybe before) by the grandfather of last owner. Sometime before World War I the Post Office was setup in the rear of the store much like one sees today in movies from the 20's and 30's. It had a bank of 20 post office boxes with the old style number combination locks. The Postmaster was the store owner until he retired in the early 1920's. His son took over the store and also became the Postmaster. His son (grandson of the original owner) also worked at the store. The Post Office remained in the general store until 1938(?). In that year the local Ford dealer built a new sales and service facility. The old dealership's building was renovated. Three apartments were created from the storage areas and part of the service department. Two bays became the new local volunteer fire department. The old dealer's office was not renovated and remained vacant for a period of time..

The old-timers remember that the owner of the general store was not in good health and the toll of running a general store 12-14 hours a day, seven days a week did not help the situation. The Post Office had grown and was in need of additional space. Also, his son wanted to add more items to their inventory but there was no room to do either. A solution was found that satisfied all three issues. The Post Office would move to the vacant old Ford dealer's office, the vacated space in the general store would be used for more merchandise, the father would turn over the running of the general store to the third generation and he would become the full-time Postmaster.

The "new" Post Office was about twenty feet square. The number of locked boxes was expanded to 100. A lobby was created that was about 10 feet square. As one entered the room the service window was straight ahead, the boxes to the left and a large bulletin board was on the right. Behind the bulletin board was the sorting boxes used by the rural mail carrier (see previous article for more details). The father remained the only employee working in the post office until 1948 when a part-time clerk was hired. This arrangement remained the same until ill health finally caused the father to retire in 1953 (he died in 1954). The part-time clerk became the Postmistress (see previous article for details). By the way, the general store remained open until about 1958.

The Post Office remained in this location but gradually outgrew the space. In 1958 the lease was up and it was decided that a new location was needed. The Post Office Department requested bids for a new location. The new location had to be on one of the two main roads in the area, within 3 miles of the present location, be at least 750 square feet and for some reason not a new building.

The husband of the Postmistress owned some land that met the criteria except there was no building on the land. He also was a successful businessman with many political connections. He quickly built a one story 1800 square foot building and divided it into three stores. One was a motorcycle dealership and repair shop. A second small area became a realtor's office and the third remained vacant. He made a deal with the owner of the motorcycle business to place his some of his inventory and repair shop into the third store that happened to be a little over 750 square feet. Thus the area was not "new" to meet the final requirement. The

husband submitted his bid for the new Post Office location that meet all of the requirements. There was only one other bid that qualified. This other bid was rejected because the building was two stories and the second floor was apartments. The Post Office Department said they did not want apartments above the office for security reasons. Or, at least this was the reason given for rejecting the bid. Many local people “in-the-know” later reasoned that was only an excuse and the husband had used some of his political connections to get the bid. Thus, in late 1958 the third location for Ottsville’s Post Office was opened.

The dynasty was now expanded so the rural mail carrier was the father of the Postmistress, the father-in-law of the clerk and the building housing the Post Office owned by his son-in-law. Thus, the Post Office in Ottsville was a family affair until 1972 when the father retired after almost 50 years of delivering the mail.

As a little footnote, the post office is still at this location. The Postmistress and her husband owned the building until 1978 when it was sold. After several years, the motorcycle business moved to another location. The space was remodeled into a doctor’s office. Some years later the realtor moved to a larger office and the doctor expanded his office to include the realtors. So today, if you passed this building, one side is a doctor’s office, the other the Post Office.

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Left picture: New England Stamp, Robert Hausin. With Larry Stiles (middle)

Right picture: H&S Rogg, Sheldon Rogg.



Left picture Hunting through a treasure trove of covers at New England Stamp is Robert Fisher (far right).

Right picture: Collectors Exchange, John Latter. With Jean Lee (back) & Jim Archbold (front).



Left picture: The Stamp Professor, John Hunter

Right picture: L-R Randall Priest, Francis Ferguson, David Zambon (all in blue club shirts!)

*Pictures by
Don DeGraw*