

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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“THE BRIGHTON AREA RECEIVES MAIL”

Written communication, the transferring of information between people, governments, etc., has long been vital to individuals and governments alike. Carriers of this information have used a variety of means of delivery and various means of payment.

Great Britain was the major governing body ruling the colonies in North America in the 17/18th centuries. In 1863, Great Britain’s Charles II inaugurated the London Penny Post. British authorities could open any mail to ferret our political loyalties. This invasion of privacy was one of the reasons for the Colonies to revolt in 1776. This symbol of freedom became, for the 1782 Continental Congress, a critical issue regarding human dignity and one’s liberty.

Controlled by the Federal government the term ‘Post Road’ began to be used during the 1770s. The post road was designated as the route by which mail traveled. This could refer to roads, steam boats (1813), water ways (1823), the railroad (1838). Mail was transported by the lonely horseback rider and the stage coach, later the railroad, until 1901 when automobiles began to be used under contract with the Federal government. In 1914 government owned vehicles began to be used.

It was 1836 that uniform rates, envelopes and adhesive stamps were proposed in order to improve delivery and cover the expense. The recipient paid for the stamp prior to that time.

November 5, 1836, mail was delivered to Ore Creek by stage. Wilber Fisher was the first post master. Several theories are held as to the reason for the name change to Brighton, but February 13, 1838, mail was directed to Brighton Village. Towns where mail was delivered, on a weekly schedule, were along established stage lines; often to a general store or a tavern. A settler picking up any mail in town would also distribute neighbors’ mail.

July 24, 1837 (six months after statehood), settler Elijah Marsh was appointed post master for the Pleasant Valley Post Office. Mail could be picked up at his home on Hyne Road near Muir Road. It is written that after two years Marsh decided any extra income was not worth the bother and neighbor Peter Delamater took over. These sites are now part of the General Motors Proving Ground. By 1842, Melzer Bird, on Pleasant Valley Road, at Kensington Road, was post master for six years. The 1859 map of Brighton Township notes “North Brighton Post Office” on the corner of the Flint Road and McClements Road; five miles north of Brighton Village, convenient to local farmers. Rev. William Clark, who settled in the north-west corner of the township by 1838, also sorted mail for his neighbors, which were very few in number.

Settlers in Hamburg Township, in 1835, found it necessary to go to the post office at Whitmore Lake (on the Ann Arbor Road) for their mail. In Hamburg Village a post office was established c. 1840, with John F. Grissom as post master. Ferdinand Grissom served from 1861 except when R. S. Hall was post master during Johnson’s administration. In 1875, one finds a Hamburg Post Office on Chilson Road, one mile south of Chilson. D. S. Bennett may have been the post master. On the corner of Pettysville and Mercer Roads, 1863, Valentine Wiegand is the post master at the Pettysville Post Office. He served into the 1870s. *To be continued.*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: 1880 History of Livingston County; “From Settlement to City, Brighton, 1832-1945” by Carol McMacken; newspaper clippings. Additions/corrections requested. 810-229-6401.)