

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 481

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“THE BRIGHTON AREA RECEIVES MAIL” continued

The U.S. Post Office department instituted Rural Free Delivery in 1896. The Brighton Post Office observed this centennial October 1, 1996. One of the honored guests was Art Schuman the oldest RFD carrier in Michigan, retiring in 1957. Others honored were James Appleton representing the Appleton family and Hildreth Bakhaus representing the Clark family (Rush and Irving Clark) in Green Oak Township.

With the inauguration of RFD, carrier routes were established, each with hundreds of stops. A February 20, 1901, clipping states that “...boxes put up by the patrons of RFD shall be of such a character as to be secure not only from the weather but from mischievous or malicious depredations”. Eventually the carriers sold stamps and money orders and parcel post was instituted. It was not unusual each spring to hear chicks, in their boxes, peeping in the post office awaiting delivery by the carrier.

Research of local RFD carriers and routes indicates Amos E. Hilton was assigned the first RFD Route #1, March 1, 1901. March 2, 1902, Herbert Dean was one of the first carriers for Route #2, retiring October 31, 1941. As various routes were mapped more carriers were assigned. Between 1901—1911, Carl C. Conrad (applied for Route #2, February, 1903), George Conrad, John Hunter, Howard Hunter (carrier for 15 years until 1925), Almon H. and Henry F. Maltby, Henry B. Appleton, Clark Rickett and Paul Sawyer were among the early carriers.

The early carriers used various forms of transportation: horseback, sleigh, buggy, horse and wagon, bicycle and motor vehicles, all owned by the carrier. Local historian Bill Pless has written “Howard Hunter was the first carrier in Brighton to use an automobile to carry mail. He had a little, two-cylinder Brush Runabout with the gasoline tank under the seat so when he came to Weicher’s Hill

(Brighton Road, west of Bauer Road) west of town, he had to turn around and back up the hill, as it was too steep for gasoline to flow to the engine while climbing forward on that hill.”

Later carriers included J.D. and S. Bert Appleton, Horace C. Birkenstock, Charles Case, Ardis E. Foust, Elmer Gage, Marian Goodchild, Ken Graham, Ellen F. Hill, Duane E. Hyne, Andrew W. Robertson, Robert O. Smith, Arthur Timmons and David A. Wenzel.

In November, 1922, the Postal Department required postmasters, Clio Case in Brighton, to go with the carrier over each route in April and October to note condition of boxes, etc. A September 9, 1971, note to rural patrons directed that the name and address was to be on the box. At that time the number of rural routes was increased from six to eight.

The 1875 Plat Map of Brighton City and period Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps together with newspaper clippings show the Post Office location as 128 W. Main Street until the WWI years. A March 8, 1911 clipping notes that a burglar had used nitroglycerin to wreck the post office safe at that site. It was also noted it was the third post office robbery in 15 months. In March, 1926, the post office was located at 401 W. Main at the rear of the building. In October, 1939, it was at 318 W. Main until 1959. To be continued.....

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: Bill Pless writings; “From Settlement to City, Brighton” by Carol McMacken; newspaper clippings. Additions/corrections requested. 810-229-6402.)