

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**“THE BRIGHTON AREA RECEIVES MAIL” (Conclusion)**

Rural Free Delivery (RFD) in 1896, assured rural residents that mail would be delivered to their mailboxes, rain, snow or shine. However, village residents still had to go to the post office for their mail. A 1905 clipping reads “Post Master Blatchford requests that the calling by telephone to inquire if there is mail, be discontinued as he will not answer that question by phone from this date.”

It was during J. Al Bosworth’s tenure as acting Post Master, December 31, 1954/July 20, 1956, that delivery to city residents was instituted. The first city carrier was Frank Rodriguez. Other, later, carriers included Harry Jensen and Bob Lerchen. By 1972, stamps could be ordered through the carriers. Bosworth was officially appointed as Post Master July 20, 1956, serving until December 28, 1978.

July 1, 1956, Brighton was designated a first class post office. This was taken as evidence of progress and growth in the community. The Zip Code was initiated July 2, 1963. “... use our new zip code #48116...placed after city and state...enabling the post office to speed up delivery.” July 1, 1997, Zip Code #48114 was added. (There was a time when to receive mail only one’s name, city and state were necessary!)

A January 18, 1959 clipping affirmed that the Post Office Department had approved the bid of the Brighton Masonic Lodge to lease quarters for the post office at 315 W. North Street. “The most modern postal equipment available will be installed in the new office.” The dedication, October 24, 1959, invited the public to tour the new facility. Within 20 years enough room to work was at a premium and on July 2, 1980, post office space was expanded “...to accommodate the growth in business caused by growth in this area.” By 1989, customer service was moved to the Brookside Mall on W. Grand River with parcel post, etc., remaining at North Street.

“Post Office looking for a new site to deal with overcrowding” read the October 9, 1991 headline in the Brighton Argus. “We get tied

up every day trying to get mail out the door, we need more work space” Postmaster Emil Engel said. A four acre site on the north side of Meijer Drive (Charles Orndorf Drive) next to the Meijer store is proposed. With concerns about traffic congestion, because Meijer Drive was a dead end street at the time, Brighton City government objected to the proposal. However, by July 6, 1992, construction was begun on a building five times larger than the North Street site. September 1, 1993, the new post office is open for business, serving c. 14,000 people. By then there were 27 rural routes and ten city routes. After 39 years with the postal service, Postmaster Engel retired, March 3, 1995.

During the 1930’s a period of national joblessness and financial depression, the Federal Arts program, part of the Works Progress Administration was instituted in 1935. This provided artists with employment painting murals on the walls of post offices, reflecting the history, identity, attributes, etc., of the local community. Art was brought to the people with each visit to the local post office. Large cities with substantial buildings for post offices were often the recipients of such a mural. Small town Brighton was never so favored. A few of these murals remain around the country, but are few and far between.

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

**Corrections** to the “Brighton Receives Mail” sketches. The December, 2014 issue should have stated “In 1763 Britain’s King George III inaugurated the London Penny Post.” The March, 2015 issue should have stated “Later carriers included ...Ed C. Hynes...” (not his son, Duane). Thanks to observant readers who care to set the record straight.