

Arlington Area Postal Service

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To reinforce my personal knowledge of postal service in this area I first inquired of the Record Section of the Post Office Department and found their information began in 1927 so I decided to do a little further research at the National Archives. It was sheer delight to delve into those musty old records and compile a rough historical chart of our postal service. Unfortunately my time did not permit the quality of professional research which the subject deserved. I had only the short end of one day for my project and so I must warn, that while I have striven for accuracy, there could be discrepancies. There were some unexplainable lapses and indecipherable notations which I did not have the opportunity to verify through further research. Then, too, the records were written, to a large extent, in fancy Spencerian script, which was sometimes more attractive than legible. However, in the main, I am quite well pleased with my layman's attempt and delighted with the opportunity to share it with you.

It is interesting to note among those former postmasters, one Jeannie L. Ramsdell at Glencarlyn in 1902. Miss Ramsdell, was the great grandmother of our present assistant superintendent of mails, Monroe G. Chew IV.

Up to my elbows in history, I must confess I felt a glow of pride to have a small place in Arlington's postal record. My family has been on the scene in Alexandria since 1900, so I found some of the identifications of old offices familiar. Due to the short duration of their existence, many do not appear on my chart, but they may bring back a memory to some of you. For example, for less than two years, there was a post office known as "Halls Hill." Established in November of 1903, it was discontinued in August 1905. "Radio," "Barcroft," "Overlook," "Frazier" and "Camp Humphries" were all offices in the late 1800's and early 1900's. There was also a "Brick Haven," "Four Mile Run," "Nauck," "Diswood," "Vick" and "St. Elmo." I can even remember, though I probably shouldn't admit it, some of the general sites where these offices had been located. You probably recognize "Relee" as named for Robert E. Lee and have noted that it was continuous, through "South Washington," to our present Arlington office.

One recorder has annotated the staid Postal Chronicle with the unembellished statement "Gov. of Va. an Act March 17, 1920, abolishing

* Based on a speech given before the Arlington Historical Society, May 8, 1967.

ARLINGTON AREA POST OFFICES FROM 1885

ROSSLYN
ESTABLISHED MAR 17, 1888
POSTMASTERS
JOHN W. CLARK MAR 17, 1888
LOUIS SCHMIDT OCT 26, 1891
ROBT. B. HUNTER JUNE 24, 1897
JOHN R. GARRETT SEPT 19, 1900
ROBT. B. WALLIS DEC 19, 1908
CRANDALL MACKAY AUG 25, 1914
CRANDALL MACKAY JR. JAN. 30, 1915
BAYARD MACKAY JR. AUG. 16, 1918
BELLE MONTAGNE SEPT 5, 1918
BELLE E. THOMPSON SEPT 28, 1918
MAYLE B. MACKAY APR. 10, 1919
EDWARD MACKAY APR. 10, 1919
WALTER B. MACKAY JULY 30, 1919
WALTER B. MACKAY AUG. 2, 1919
WALTER B. MACKAY AUG. 15, 1919
JAMES S. MACKAY MAY 10, 1920
DISCONTINUED OCT. 3, 1923
MAIL TO ARLINGTON

BALLSTON
ESTABLISHED NOV. 18, 1886
POSTMASTERS
MARY E. WELSH NOV. 18, 1886
PEARL WILSON JULY 22, 1892
COLL WILSON JULY 22, 1904
GEO. T. WARRING DEC. 14, 1904
MARY W. WELBURN JULY 29, 1907
GRACE S. WHITE JAN. 29, 1910
CYNBERNE H. ROGERS JAN. 27, 1924
PAUL B. HILLIARD JULY 31, 1924
DISCONTINUED MAY 15, 1936
MAIL TO ARLINGTON

CHERRYDALE
ESTABLISHED AUG. 8, 1893
POSTMASTERS
SULAN WOODRUM AUG. 8, 1893
A. P. CHANNINGHAM JAN. 1, 1901
GEO. M. WOLF MAY 2, 1901
CHARLES RITTERSON DEC. 20, 1902
MARY C. TODD JAN. 11, 1917
DISCONTINUED APR. 30, 1918
MAIL TO WASHINGTON D. C.
REASSIGNED TO ARLINGTON JULY 1, 1936

ARLINGTON
ESTABLISHED MAR. 24, 1885
POSTMASTERS
MARIAN E. SPEER MAR. 24, 1885
SARAH J. SPAY APR. 23, 1889
MARGARET WILSON MAR. 5, 1895
GEO. W. FERGUSON APR. 15, 1894
IDA W. CORBETT JULY 31, 1899
HENRY B. TERRETT DEC. 18, 1902
NETTIE CARTWRIGHT APR. 13, 1904
CHARLES RICHARD JUN 6, 1905
CORA E. MCINTOSH SEP 1, 1905
VIVIAN A. SIMONS MAR. 11, 1914
GEORGE W. KING DEC. 26, 1919
MARY G. PEARSON NOV. 19, 1920
MR. AUBINE UPHOFF JAN. 26, 1921
MR. ELLI. H. JAMES JUL. 15, 1921
IDA W. CORBETT JUL. 7, 1922
W. S. DARDEN JAN. 5, 1923
PAUL D. MARNE OCT. 3, 1924
MS. JUMBA CHAMBERLAIN JUN. 2, 1925
DISCONTINUED AUG. 31, 1925
MAIL TO WASHINGTON D. C.
REASSIGNED TO ARLINGTON JUL. 1, 1936

CARLIN
ESTABLISHED DEC. 16, 1889
POSTMASTERS
LAWSON E. CARTER DEC. 16, 1889
EMMA C. MORELL SEPT. 14, 1893
MARGARET WILSON MAR. 5, 1895
DISCONTINUED APR. 5, 1896
MAIL TO GLEN CARLIN

GLEN CARLIN
ESTABLISHED APR. 6, 1896
POSTMASTERS
MARGARET WILSON APR. 6, 1896
EMMA C. MORELL SEPT. 25, 1891
JEANNE L. MARDELL DEC. 25, 1891
LEANNE L. MARDELL DEC. 25, 1891
LOUISE M. YOUNG MAY 8, 1899
M. T. WASHINGTON SEPT. 27, 1918
PAULINE NORRIS FEB. 10, 1913
LURENE SHEPHERD SEPT. 28, 1913
DISCONTINUED JUNE 30, 1936
MAIL TO ARLINGTON

RELEE
ESTABLISHED NOV. 24, 1909
POSTMASTERS
HEDLEY V. BROWN NOV. 24, 1909
WM. A. COATES JAN. 11, 1911
DISCONTINUED APR. 14, 1914
MAIL TO SOUTH WASHINGTON

SOUTH WASHINGTON
ESTABLISHED APR. 14, 1914
POSTMASTER
WM. A. COATES APR. 14, 1914
DISCONTINUED JUNE 30, 1936
MAIL TO ARLINGTON

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA POST OFFICE
ESTABLISHED JULY 1, 1936
POSTMASTERS
WILLIAM A. COATES JULY 1, 1917
GEORGE SAMPSON JULY 1, 1943

EAST END
ESTABLISHED DEC. 9, 1891
POSTMASTERS
ENOCH J. LEWIS DEC. 9, 1891
JOHN N. LEBSON OCT. 30, 1893
E. F. ROYBECK SEPT. 30, 1898
E. R. MEYER JUNE 30, 1898
ROSE G. MOURSE DEC. 18, 1906
DISCONTINUED OCT. 16, 1903
MAIL TO BENT FALLS CHURCH

EAST FALLS CHURCH
ESTABLISHED OCT. 17, 1903
POSTMASTERS
ROSE G. MOURSE OCT. 17, 1903
PULLIP MOURSE APR. 28, 1930
REBE B. TURNER NOV. 1, 1933
DISCONTINUED JUNE 27, 1942
MAIL TO FALLS CHURCH
REASSIGNED TO ARLINGTON MAR. 1, 1952

BELAIR
ESTABLISHED DEC. 21, 1901
POSTMASTERS
HOBART A. SMOOT DEC. 21, 1901
WILLIAM H. SUITE SEPT. 16, 1902
DISCONTINUED MAY 3, 1907
MAIL TO CLARENDON

CLARENDON
ESTABLISHED MAY 3, 1907
POSTMASTERS
WILLIAM H. SUITE MAY 3, 1907
THOMAS J. HEALY SEPT. 17, 1908
EDWARD L. PAINNE DEC. 8, 1914
WILLARD D. BOYER SEPT. 14, 1917
DISCONTINUED SEPT. 15, 1918
MAIL TO WASHINGTON D. C.
REASSIGNED TO ARLINGTON JUL. 1, 1936

Alexandria Co. and establishing Arlington Co. instead." I did not research the authenticity of this cryptic comment.¹

But I had better tell you a little about your Arlington Post Office which was established July 1, 1936. Our office was, at that time, the largest consolidation of post offices ever attempted by the Post Office Department. Included were the independent offices of Rosslyn, South Washington, Ballston and Glencarly; the Arlington, Clarendon, and Cherrydale branches of the Washington, D.C. Post Office; and parts of territories served by Alexandria, Falls Church, and East Falls Church. The office served approximately 35,000 people within an area of about 25 square miles.² Arlington was then the fastest growing county in the United States. The Post Office employed 70 men and women with a payroll of \$140,000 a year and receipts of \$100,000. The first postmaster was William A. Coates who served until June 30, 1943. I took over the reins from Mr. Coates on July 1, 1943.

The cornerstone of the present main office building was laid May 15, 1937. The ceremony was attended by former Postmaster General, the Honorable James A. Farley, former Fourth Assistant Postmaster General, the Honorable Smith W. Purdum, the Honorable Howard W. Smith, M.C., and many other prominent officials.

The trowel used by Columbia Lodge No. 285, A.F.&A.M. in laying the cornerstone of the present building is the property of Alexandria Washington Lodge No. 22, A.F.&A.M., Alexandria, Virginia. The trowel was used by General George Washington, September 18, 1793, to lay the cornerstone of the Capitol of the United States of America at Washington, D.C. It was also used to lay the cornerstone of the Smithsonian Institution, May 1, 1837; the Washington National Monument, Washington, D.C., July 4, 1848; the Equestrian Statue, Richmond, Virginia, February 22, 1850; by President Theodore Roosevelt in laying the cornerstone of the new Masonic Temple, Detroit, Michigan, September 18, 1907; the cornerstone of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Temple by the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, assisted by Honorable Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States on November 1, 1923; by President Hoover in 1929 in laying the cornerstone of the Department of Commerce; and President Roosevelt in laying the cornerstone of the Interior Building in 1936.

The gavel used at the ceremonies was prepared for General George

¹ Editor's Note: The General Assembly enacted legislation in that year directing that the county theretofore known as Alexandria should thenceforth be known as Arlington.

² The re-naming of Arlington's streets accomplished in 1935 (cf. *Arlington Historical Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 3) was stimulated in large part by the desirability of having a central post office in the County.

Washington for the purpose of laying the cornerstone of the United States Capitol and was used by him for that purpose, September 18, 1793. It was also used at the cornerstone laying of the Washington Monument July 4, 1848, and at the dedication of that building, February 21, 1885. The gavel is the property of Potomac Lodge No. 5, A.F.&A.M. of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia.

My father, Albert M. Simpson, was the Postal Inspector who directed the consolidation of offices and the construction and establishment of our Arlington County service. The Arlington post office is designated as Federal Office Building No. 1. This explains references to "Federal Office Building No. 2"—The Pentagon! I often wonder what dad would think if he could view the sprawling establishment we operate today. Arlington Hall, Central, Courthouse, Eads, Fort Myer, Preston King, Shirlington, and South are now all stations of our office.³ In addition, we have a mail handling annex in Shirlington where all initial handling is afforded incoming and outgoing letter mail, as well as outgoing parcel post. In this location alone, we employ five times as many people as the original office. Our motor vehicle facility, also in the Shirlington area, services 110 vehicles for 16 perimeter post offices as far away as Harrisonburg, Elkton, and Luray, as well as our own fleet of some 50 trucks. In Arlington alone our trucks travel in excess of 700,000 miles a year.

When you are wondering about whether the postal service today is as efficient as the "good old days," you might consider that in this enlightened age, we process 166 million pieces of mail a year! In Dad's day, our receipts were roughly \$100,000; now they are \$3,000,000. We have now the third largest Post Office in the State of Virginia and are among the 200 largest in the entire country.

It is one of the oddities of our national life, however, that despite the phenomenal growth of our service, the public still compares our operation with the old grilled window in the country store. We get some pretty odd requests from time to time. Some really come to us from left field, but when we can't accommodate, and explain that the request is outside of any service we can render, the caller invariably will state, "Well, this is the Post Office, isn't it?" as though it is incredible that any request could be denied by this mecca of service.

Needless to say, whenever we can, we oblige. I still get a Christmas card each year from a lady in the Middle West who wrote us that her only son, who was stationed at Arlington Hall, was being shipped overseas. She was desolate because she couldn't be with him before he left, and wanted

³ Many of the early services began as "contract" stations. Furthermore the demands of the Post Office led to the naming of some areas in Arlington. Cherrydale was so chosen as was Glencarly.

some personal token given to him for her. She wanted to know if we would have baked an elaborate cake in the shape of a boat, inscribed with a dozen-word "bon voyage" message. We did have such a cake as she described baked and hand-delivered it to an amazed and slightly embarrassed young soldier. It did not seem strange to this distraught mother to turn to the Post Office for help. I'd be the last to say she was wrong. Despite our growth, mechanization and modernization, let's hope we are always as close to the people we serve.

I would like to bring to your attention a fringe benefit of our community postal service. Many of our young people have financed college educations through part time postal work during Christmas and summer vacations. I can assure you that conscious and concerted effort has been exercised over the years to accommodate the maximum number of these deserving and hard-working Arlington youngsters. It has been one of the compensations of my service to share the satisfaction our young men and women experience in financing a college education through postal employment. Our contribution to this effort was sharply defined for me last summer when I noticed a part time clerk whose face seemed vaguely familiar. I later found he was the son of a former part time employee who had worked with us for his college tuition. The son was earning his tuition in the same way. You feel an affinity with these good folks when you start training the second generation.

Serving as Postmaster of this community has been a rewarding experience. Not the least of the pleasures I have known, is the opportunity to meet with you today.