

The Caro Post Office—A Short History

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Many years ago Caro mail was delivered to Caro from Vassar and the Vassar Post Office.

William E. Sherman was Caro's first mail carrier.

He delivered the mail from Vassar.

Later he carried the mail from Watrousville to Centerville, which was what Caro was then called.

That was before 1859.

Mr. Sherman lived in Watrousville, but he moved to Centerville in 1859 where he built the Centerville House, which was a hotel and store.

From a hat that was not very large he distributed the mail from his Centerville House.

In 1861 a new rival town to Centerville sprang up in Almer Township just a mile away a short distance up along the Diagonal Road that is now called M-81.

The rival town was called Richland and the post office was called Burnside.

The mail route at that time was extended along the State Road or M-81 from East Saginaw to Sand Beach [known today as Harbor Beach] on the shores of Lake Huron.

In the mid-1860's, after the mail arrived at Burnside, a boy on horseback went from Centerville to the Burnside Office to gather the Centerville mail.

The young gentleman carried the Centerville mail in his pockets back to the Dewitt C. Bush Store.

The Bush Store soon became recognized as a more widely known point of rendezvous and mail distribution.

At the Bush Store the mail was piled on the counter.

Everyone who came to the store helped to sort the mail and then made their selection.

During the year 1866 the inhabitants of Centerville decided they wanted their own post office.

Their wish was granted, and the new post office was called Tuscola Center.

The first postmaster at Tuscola Center was Zenas Cook a minister who built a shanty to house the operation.

He also gathered cigar boxes to help pigeon-hole the mail.

For one year Mr. Cook was postmaster.

In 1867 Farley Crow became the new postmaster, and his salary was eventually increased to \$490 a year.

Mr. Crow moved the post office into his own store, and soon the Caro Post Office became very successful.



The Caro Post Office Mural

In June 1869 the name of the Tuscola Center Post Office was amended to the Caro Post Office.

At that time the Caro Post Office was allowed to write domestic money orders as there were no banks then in the Village of Caro.

By 1874 the salary of the postmaster became dependant on the number of stamps that that he clerk sold at their counter.

Mr. Craw was postmaster at the Caro Post Office for 20 years or somewhat more.

The next postmaster in Caro was Horace N. Montague, Jr., whose father was the local liveryman.

By 1897 William O. Luce, Jr., was the postmaster.

He was also the local druggist who would be known today as a pharmacist.

The post office at an early date moved frequently.

Its next location was the McNair Building, then the State Savings Bank, and then finally to its present site on Lincoln Street where it is today.

In 1939 the construction of a new, brick and grey limestone post office with hardwood counters and brass accessories was completed under the direction of Alfred Froede who lived in Pontiac, Michigan.

He was well known in Caro as he had grown up in Wells Township and in Caro.

The \$80,000 art deco building is the same building that we all know so well today as the Caro Post Office.

High over the postmaster's door at the Caro Post Office is a 12 by 6 foot mural titled *Mail on the Farm* that depicts life on an early local farm as seen through the eyes of David Fredenthal a Detroitier who painted the mural for the Caro Post Office in 1941.

Mr. Fredenthal was later an artist correspondent for *Life Magazine* in World War II.

Another well-known mail carrier at the Caro Post Office was William Gedro who served for 37 years from 1943 to 1980.

His time included a short longevity credit for being in the Army during World War II.

When he started Christmas cards sold for 3 cents apiece when sealed and 2 cents when unsealed.

At the time he retired his rural route had 600 mailboxes and was in length 8 miles.

During his time as a carrier there was a large increase in third class mail.

J. D. Gray was a noted employee at the Caro Post Office. In 1950 he was named assistant postmaster under Donald Ellwanger.

In 1977 Mr. Gray was named postmaster following John Turner.

Edgar Hodges also worked at the Caro Post Office first as a mail carrier, then as a clerk, and finally as a rural carrier.

Wendell Allen was a noted postman who worked from 1943 to 1983.

In the early 1980's the Caro Post Office was serving over 4,600 homes with six rural routes and four city routes.

The post office had then 23 employees and was responsible for food stamp distribution and draft registration.



The Caro Post Office

That was over 30 years ago.

Today along with passport, letter, and package services, the post office also provides online custom postages and tracking and confirming of mail along with a variety of other valuable services.

The Caro Post Office is still today one of the most beautiful and functional buildings in Caro.

On a tour of Caro's outstanding buildings you would rate the Caro Post Office extremely high.

It is a great pleasure to stop into this building to view the mural and the interior or to view the exterior as you drive by.