

The Area's Postal History

In this day of electronic mail, there is still a lot of regular mail that arrives at your door or post office box. While most of it is junk, the occasional birthday or Christmas card is a welcome sight. Although not as central as it was in the past, the post office still plays a vital role in the community it serves. Many peoples' routines include a daily stop at the post office.

At one time, post offices were a way to legitimize a town. Since people began settling Montana, a post office was a way to communicate with the world and a plethora of post offices sprang up to serve the need. In the Headwaters area there have been eight different postal stations: Clarkston, Gallatin, Hyde, Logan, Madison, Three Forks, Trident and Willow Creek.

Willow Creek is one of the oldest continuously operating post offices, first commissioned in 1867 (except for an 18 day interruption of service in 1869). Gallatin City's post office opened the same year, but shut down in 1890.

Three Fork's post office opened in 1882. That would be Old Town Three Forks Post Office, which operated until 1903. It was re-established in 1907, but was moved about a mile shortly after the new town of Three Forks was established. For many years, the post office was housed in various stores and drug stores until it got its own building in 1961.

Madison Post Office was short-lived and there is no record of its postmasters. According to records, it operated from 1870 to 1873 a mile or two northeast of Old Town. I speculate that it was established by James Shedd, our area's most prolific bridge builder.

Canyon House, built in about 1867, was a mail stop on the stage coach road before there was a Logan, Montana. It served as a mail drop for the Northern Pacific from 1875 until Logan's post office became official in 1891. The post office, along with the general store that housed it, burned down in the devastating blaze of July, 1919. Postmaster Louis Bevier lost all of his merchandise and turned to farming and stock raising. Logan's post office was closed in 1960.

Trident's post office was established in 1909 and was run out of various homes until it was firmly established in the Trident Store run by the Carver family. Jennie Andriolo moved the post office to the front porch of her home until it was closed in 1978.

Clarkston's post office operated from 1910 to 1958. For a time, the post office was housed in the Circle S Store run by Jim and Mabel Corbett.



David Miller, postmaster at Trident from 1958-1968, at the window of the post office inside the Trident Store, 1963.

Photo courtesy of Holcim (US) Trident Plant.

The Hyde Post Office, located up the Madison Valley was officially recognized to be open 1892 to 1911, although there is a newspaper excerpt in the Headwaters Heritage History book telling of the marriage of the Hyde postmaster dated 1921. The marriage was performed with the bride and groom sitting in a buggy in front of the parsonage, the groom being so badly crippled by rheumatism.

Today just two post offices serve the area, reflecting the efficiency of our national transportation system. But they are no longer a social center, housed in neighborhood stores, where one could pick up the mail and the local "news" in a single stop.