



~ Part 21 ~
Reflections on a Common Theme
Post Offices

To Read More about
Solomon Valley History
visit our website at
www.hwy24.org

CLOUD COUNTY

History of the Glasco Post Office

by Joan Nothern

The first permanent settlers arrived in the area that would become Glasco in 1865. Senator Edmund G. Ross stopped here in 1869 to establish the post office. Civil War veteran Captain H. C. Snyder was named the first postmaster. Ross's trip included surveying the Solomon Valley as a future railroad route, a prospect that seemed natural but never happened.

Early settler Isaac Biggs received a Land Grant from the U. S. government in recognition of his Civil War service. The Land Grant provided the site that would be developed into Glasco. Isaac Biggs was named the second postmaster in 1871. He was the proprietor of a dry goods store and the post office was located there.

In July 1871 the Del Ray Town Company was incorporated, providing the structure to develop the new community. It was known as Del Ray until 1878 when the name "Glasco" was adopted by the Kansas State Legislature. The name was submitted by the postmaster, an erroneous spelling of "Glasgow," chosen to honor the Hillhouse family, admired original settlers who came from Scotland. In 1879 Biggs had the first stone building erected on Main Street. It housed the post office in Ott Brothers Stationery and Dry Goods Store. Augustus E. Ott replaced Biggs as postmaster in 1879. The location of the post office changed with the appointment of postmasters, reflecting the political party of the president, until 1915. At that time a new brick building on the south side of Main, housing a grocery and dry goods store, provided a permanent post office site until 1961. This building now serves as the Senior Citizens West Room.

In 1961 Charles Wampler had the first building built especially to be the post office. It is contemporary beige brick, on the corner of Main Street and Railroad. The Wampler family continues to own and maintain the building.

The post office is an integral part of Glasco's history. Its hours have been 8:30-12:00, 1:15-4:15, Monday through Friday, and 8:30 to 9:30 on Saturday. However, reduced hours were put in place on February 7, 2015, reflecting the impact of declining first-class mail and the reduced rural population.

MITCHELL COUNTY

New Beloit Post Office

Newspaper articles provided by Linda Clover

"The Cornerstone is Laid," *Beloit Gazette*, October 1, 1913:

Fine Parade Held Not Withstanding Muddy Streets—1000 Children in Line
Much Valuable History Deposited in Copper Box Beneath the Corner Stone

The citizens of Beloit again demonstrated their public spiritedness last Monday at the laying of the cornerstone of the new post office building. The Beloit Post Office was established in 1871 [actually May 16, 1870], one year following organization of Mitchell County and one year prior to organization as a city of 3rd class. Notwithstanding the fact that the roads and streets were filled with mud a magnificent parade was conducted on the sidewalks. The children, at thousand strong from the city public and parochial schools, headed by the High School Band, formed the first section and to see these children marching waving their flags was in itself a most inspiring sight. They were followed by the G.A.R. Drum Corps, veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, and auxiliaries, fire department, Knights of Columbus, Sons & Daughters of Justice, A.O.U.W., M.W.A., I.O.O.F. with

their various co-ordinate bodies and the Masonic orders all of which formed a parade which far exceeded the expectations of all who witnessed it. J P Cadden, who acted as the mounted Marshal of the Day, deserves much credit for the promptness and precision with which every feature was carried out.

Not only will this elegant \$50,000 federal building be a marked step forward in the city's development but the unanimity with which the citizens and various societies, even to the school children, entered into the spirit of the ceremonies incident to the laying of its corner stone bespeaks the highest quality of loyalty and patriotism and opens a future full of promise for still greater achievements.

AC McClintic acted as Master of Ceremonies. Mayor John P Stack was main speaker. . . . This is indeed a great day for Beloit. It is a great day for Mitchell County. The people of Beloit and Mitchell County have accomplished many things in the past of which we may justly feel proud. We have improved our city and county until we today have the most beautiful city and the most productive county in the entire state of Kansas. We have replaced our humble cottages with comfortable homes and stately mansions. We have replaced our old courthouse with that splendid building our temple of justice. But today we feel that we have achieved another success. We feel that we have moved the hand that marks the progress of our city and county another round upon the great dial plate of time.

We are here today for the purpose of laying the cornerstone of this first federal building in the 6th Congressional District. Today we have reached another milestone in the march of progress. As I look over this audience I see gray haired men who years ago watched with interest and pride the erection of the little stone court house and the old brick High school building both having long ago served their time of usefulness and been razed to the ground.

I also see younger men and women who remember when the present High School and the first building of the Industrial School were erected. These boys and girls remember the laying of the cornerstones of our splendid court house the third ward school building. And I wonder if when these children who are here today have become gray with age, if Beloit shall have out grown this building as she outgrew the little court house and the school buildings.

To whom are we indebted for this march of progress in our city? To the citizens who have dreamed dreams of the future. Citizens who have built castles in the air and by faith and perseverance have put foundations under them. Men who by their faith in the city's future have established large private business enterprises such as our banks with their million and one half dollars of deposits. The mill, elevators, newspapers and mercantile establishments. Our citizens who also recognized the value and importance of community enterprises, our public schools that now carry a course of study second only to the large universities, by the teaching of vocational subjects in the schools. There should not be so many lives spent in trying to do and not knowing how to do the work they are willing to do. Our numerous churches which are one of the best assets any city can have. The Women's Commercial Club that splendid organization that is doing so much for Beloit and her citizens by improving and beautifying the park. The Beloit Business Men's Club who caught the spirit of doing things from the Women's Commercial Club and are ever on the lookout for the best interests of the city. The Industrial School for girls which is a model institution of its kind and second to no other in the land.

This building when finished will stand as a monument not only to the men I have mentioned but also to the architect who planned it, to the man who is superintending its erection and to the men who are laboring upon it.

Back of every success and invention is the whisper of the great intelligence that prompted and inspired the mind. In everything can be seen the hand and in every intelligent thought can be heard the voice of the Master: and growing civilization is a monument not to man but to a living God who guides the steps of progress.

Why not strive to have the best and prettiest parks to be had, surrounded as they would be by the best residences to be seen in any city the size of ours?

Shall even this limit our vision and ambition? Nay verily. Why not go about at once for a YMCA building, with public gymnasiums, baths and swimming pools? Where many healthful and helpful hours may be enjoyed by the younger people of the town, rather than spending the time in the only other public places open to them—the smoky, dingy and often unhealthy halls of amusement seen on our streets today. Many other cities no larger than ours already have all such accommodations.

How would you like a city whose unsightly telephone and electric light poles would be seen no more, with their wires under miles of splendidly paved streets, over which "Great White Ways" would rival the day in the darkest night, with light and beauty? These and many other things are all within

our reach, if we but unitedly put our shoulders to the task, and stretch forth our hands to possess them, for then what now may seem visions, will soon become realizations.

I thank you.

The ceremonies of the laying of the stone were conducted by the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Kansas, with Grand Master Elrick C Cole officiating.

Items deposited in the Cornerstone of the New Federal Post Office Building, September 29th, 1913 included: Copy of revised Ordinances, City of Beloit, year 1912; Roster of City officers, 1913; Copy of Mitchell County Directory 1907-08; Copy of Rural Route Directory of Mitchell County, 1912; Copy of Beloit Telephone Directory, 1913; Collection of Post Card Views of Business and Public Bldgs; Picture of present Postoffice Postmaster Perdue and Employees; Illustrated program of 12th annual Beloit Chautauqua; Premium List of 11th Annual Mitchell County Fair; Official Program of Cornerstone event; History of Postoffice; Issue of Beloit Gazette of August 1, 1912; Issue of Beloit Daily Call; Issue of Beloit Gazette; Copy of 1913 High School Class Annual, "The Owl"; History of Girls; Industrial School; Sterling Silver trowel by Mt Vernon Masonic Lodge 145; Official log of Sunflower and other auto routes leading to Beloit; History of local Lodges, Societies, Clubs, etc.

NOTE: The cornerstone will be opened this spring/ summer.

ROOKS COUNTY

Rooks County Post Offices

by Roger Hrabe

As is probably true for most every county along the Highway 24 Heritage Alliance, post offices have undergone great changes over the last 100 years. Much like schools and cemeteries, because of travel limitations it seemed like there was a post office "around every corner."

In 1904 there were 14 post offices in Rooks County alone. Earlier, in the 1870s, it is shown in records compiled and published by Robert W. Baughman in *Kansas Post Offices, May 29, 1828-August 3, 1961*, that 19 post offices were located in Rooks County, with locations along the Solomon River and present Highway 24 at Rooks Centre, Raceburgh, Stockton, Webster, Ash Grove, and Alcona.

Here are some interesting post office notes from Baughman's book and records at the Rooks County Museum:

- Stockton was the first post office in the county, established April 25, 1872, with James Finnegan as postmaster.
- Rooks Centre, the second post office in the county with A. S. Avery as postmaster, was established October 8, 1872, and he was succeeded by John Shorthill, who operated the post office and small store in connection, situated at the mouth of Big Medicine Creek on the Solomon River.
- The Welcome post office was founded by Joseph A. Nixon, March 24, 1880, where he started a store, and soon afterward secured the establishment of a post office, first supplied from Plainville, but through instrumentality of Mr. Nixon, a mail route was established between Stockton and Motor, via Welcome.
- Raceburgh was an accommodation post office on the route between Bull City (now Alton) and Stockton, established December 10, 1875, and was among the first offices in the county. Mr. Race was first postmaster and succeeded by his wife in 1879.
- Stockton, Woodston, and Damar along Highway 24, as well as Palco and Plainville, still have post offices in Rooks County, despite the cuts made by the United States Postal Service over the last couple of years.

GRAHAM COUNTY
Gettysburgh Post Office
by Lowell Beecher

The first three villages platted in Graham territory—soon county—were speculative and ego-driven ventures; indeed, Roscoe, April 5, 1879; Millbrook, April 8, 1879; and Hill City, June 16, 1879, were founded and promoted by self-serving men.

George Higinbotham at Roscoe, N. C. Terrell at Millbrook, and W. R. Hill at Hill City had similar dreams: each man aspired to transpose his cluster of sod and magnesia—plus a few frame structures—into a county seat and, in doing so, reap both monetary and personal satisfaction.

The origin of Gettysburgh (July 2, 1879) was different: The town four miles west of Hill City was established merely as a spoke in a larger wheel, a significant piece of frontier-taming transportation and communication infrastructure.

When WaKeeney's A. J. Wheeler stretched his then-diminutive stagecoach line north toward Norton Center, thus connecting the two most important towns in both Trego and Norton counties, he sought stagecoach stops and developed the required "corrals" at Wakeeney, Happy Hollow, Millbrook, Gettysburgh, Smithfield, Scio, Lenora, and Finally, Norton Center.

Gettysburgh, a town of 31 structures—16 fieldstone and 15 frame—had been granted a post office as early as September 20, 1878, under the supervision of Joseph Gettys, who also managed a general store and, then came to operate Wheeler's WaKeeney and Norton Stage and Mail Line stop at Gettysburgh.

While not universally true on the frontier—but typically the case—postal services were accessed from private homes or general stores, but certainly not all were outfitted with the massive oaken cabinet which served at Gettysburgh.

Seven feet tall and weighing nearly 300 pounds, the "Gettysburgh post office" was divided into two parts: one-half of the cabinet was segmented into a number of pigeon-holes for sorted mail, envelopes, stamps, and sundry other postal supplies. The balance of the elaborate case served as a closet for the various postmasters' personal effects and winter wear.

While Gettysburgh the town displayed the most substantial structures in the county and had easy access to water, the town's unfortunate fate was sealed in July 1881 when Millbrook captured a simple majority of the county seat votes in a referendum between the two towns. Millbrookers had claimed falsely—that Gettysburgh had alkali water....

Gettysburgh's slide into obscurity began almost immediately: many of its frame buildings were transported across the South branch of the Solomon River to Millbrook. Most of the Fieldstone Structures were unceremoniously dismantled, Stone by stone, to become farmhouses and farmstead outbuildings.

Then, following seven postmasters and twelve years of continuous service, the "Gettysburgh post office," the elaborate oaken cabinet, was transferred to the new railroad town of Reford—later Penokee—just three miles west of the Gettysburgh site on April 27, 1889.

The post office at Penokee continued its general store existence until March 1895, when the Penokee assignment—not the cabinet which facilitated it—was closed and moved to Hill City. However, a postal assignment was re-established in Penokee's general store in February 1905.

A victim of progress, the oaken post office was moved into the back room of the general store when a magnesia limestone structure, replete with boxes and a service counter, was constructed early in the Twentieth Century.

Forgotten—or ignored—for several decades, the massive cabinet was subsequently purchased by a private citizen in the 1960s and was housed in a Hill City garage for a half-century before being purchased by the Graham County Historical Society. Cleaned, waxed, and placed on permanent display in the society's museum, the "Gettysburgh post office," a survivor of more than 135 years, is a "must see" GCHS exhibit.