

HISTORY OF RAINIER POST OFFICE

BY GRACE REID

Following the explorations of Lewis and Clark, the Astor Company, and others, the reports and articles printed in the east brought an influx of trappers, traders, and settlers along the Lower Columbia, the Cowlitz Valley, and north to Nisqually plains. Prior to 1850 Vancouver had been the nearest center for collection and distribution of mail which haphazardly arrived via ship or overland traveler. This left the carrying of mail west and north to chance travelers, necessitating long delays. There was felt a distinct need for a closer mail center for the Lower Columbia Basin.

One answer to this need was the establishment of the "Eminence" postoffice in Washington County, Oregon Territory, on June 5, 1851. The following year on January 6, 1852, the name was changed to "Rainier" and not until the year 1854 did we assume the name of Columbia County.

The present Rainier townsite was divided between three donation land claims—the Fox donation land claim extending from Fox Creek to Nice Creek (Mr. Nice later bought the Fox property), the Minear donation land claim extending from Fox Creek to the eastern boundary (it was Mr. Minear who laid out a townsite and sold land and later a part of his holdings was acquired by Dean Blanchard). The Harris donation land claim was what is now known as Kentucky Flat.

The settlers depended on trapping and fishing for a living and fish was salted and packed in barrels and sent east by sailing vessels. It was Mr. Nice who established the first industry in Rainier when he built a fish house near the mouth of Fox Creek. This industry called for a second when F. C. Winchester came and built a cooperage shop to supply the neces-

sary barrels. Mr. Winchester's stepson, Nathan Johnson, worked with him and it was later in 1871 that George Moeck came to Rainier to work in this shop as a cooper. It was Mr. Nice who built the first dwelling of any size in Rainier, bringing the lumber around the Horn in a sailing vessel and he planted a sizeable orchard. This was located just north of the present Church of God property.

Mr. Fox built a crib wharf at Cedar Landing about where the Klepp shipyard stands, and as Charles E. Fox was appointed the first postmaster June 5, 1851, the first postoffice was located in his building nearby. It was usual to see the postmaster or his helper row out in a skiff and send out mail and receive the mail for his territory from the sailing vessel.

With the coming of the steamship era when a boat made a trip from Portland to Astoria and back each day, mail service out of Portland became a regular daily routine. There never has been any boat as beautiful as these early steamboats as they plied busily up and down the river and residents along the banks of the river learned to know each boat by its whistle. Such names as the Georgie Burton, Joseph Kellogg, Beaver, Sarah Dixon, Undine, Ione, Shaver, Harvest Queen, T. J. Potter, Hasalo, Telephone, Georgiana, America, and our own Iralda that docked here overnight and whose whistle awakened us each morning at six and greeted us each evening as she rounded the bend to dock for the night.

When rail service between Astoria and Portland was established in 1897, mail came daily by rail until rail service was discontinued several years back and the modern mail motor bus service began.

The Rainier postoffice has been

moved from one building to another throughout the years until last year, 1960, when the little postoffice at Goble was discontinued in favor of carrier service out of Rainier, and Rainier rated its first real postoffice building, modern in every detail.

In the early '90s two star route postoffices out of Rainier were established, one at Apiary with deliveries twice a week, and one at Hudson, Dent, Delena and Keyser with deliveries three times a week. This continued until 1923 when the routes were combined and made into a rural carrier route. Joe Hackenberg took the route over in January, 1924, and served until February, 1942, when he

went into war work. Joe had 27 miles of route with 150 boxes and 300 patrons and started with a team part way, then a car. Later he used a motorcycle. As roads improved he was able to use a car. When Joe gave up the route in 1942 it extended 77 miles, with about 315 boxes and 1500 patrons.

Victor Sundquist was a very capable substitute for a year or so after Mr. Hackenberg left. After Mr. Sundquist left there was quite a time finding a suitable carrier until after the war was over and men began to settle down again. This route now is 89 miles long with 515 boxes to be served.

SUCCESSION OF POSTMASTERS AT RAINIER

Charles E. Fox, Eminence, appointed June 5, 1851.

Name Eminence changed to Rainier Jan. 6, 1852.

Charles E. Fox, Rainier, Jan. 1, 1852.

Marshall B. Millard, Aug. 1, 1854.

County name changed to Columbia

William C. Moody, Sept. 17, 1855.

Ashley P. Minear, March 4, 1858.

Office discontinued March 1, 1863

Re-established Feb. 24, 1864

Dean Blanchard, Feb. 24, 1864

Henry Addis (didn't serve), Jan. 4, 1895.

George F. Moeck, April 10, 1895.

Andrew L. Clark, Dec. 11, 1897.

Frank Alvord, Jan. 13, 1906.

Lucien R. Farris (Rush), July 20, 1907.

Laud B. Rutherford, Dec. 14, 1908.

J. W. McMilan, March 8, 1910.

Elizabeth F. Moeck (didn't serve), June 23, 1915.

J. W. Stacy, Sept. 7, 1916.

N. N. Blumensaadt (acting), May 1, 1918.

Exel Vogel, Dec. 18, 1918.

Doris Gulker (acting), Jan. 21, 1921.

Lawrence F. Clark, Dec. 22, 1924.

Andrew L. Clark, Feb. 7, 1925.

Celia M. Tozier Victors, March 8, 1928.

Attla M. Lee, Sept. 30, 1933.

William Reid, March 19, 1935.

William Proctor, March 31, 1946.

William S. Dement, July 31, 1946.

Albert R. McCall, Dec. 31, 1947.

Margaret Lucker, Oct. 1, 1960.