

EARLY POST OFFICES

There were no post offices in South Carolina before 1791 except at Georgetown and Charleston. By 1797 when George Washington left office, there was one in this area. Chester Court House was designated a post office in 1794. In April of 1797 Lancaster Court House, the only point between Charlotte and Camden, began receiving stage coach service and mail delivery. York Court House was not on a mail route until 1803. By that time there were 46 post offices in South Carolina.

Except for the court house towns all of this area was rural and there was no rural free delivery before 1916. The post masters simply held the letters until they were called for in town.

Because there was a postmaster general from the beginning of the United States there are records of his appointments of post masters and the name of the post office. The post office name might reflect the name of the community, a store or tavern, or the name of the post master.

In Chester District the second post office was at Blackstock's (1804) where Ned Blackstock, an Irish emigrant, operated an inn 12 miles south of Chesterville. In 1811 Landsford and Rocky Mount, both located on the Catawba river, were established.

In Lancaster District the second post office was on McAlpine Creek in the most northern part of the Indian Land. In 1808 it was called Cairo and in 1812 the name was changed to Harrisburg. The third post office was in 1813 at Belair, also in Indian Land. The post master there was Fowler Williams, head of Belair Academy. The Waxhaws of Lancaster County is the oldest settlement in upcountry South Carolina but, strangely enough, did not have a post office until 1822.

York District's second post office was at Hill's Iron Works on Allison Creek in 1803. The third was at Thompson's Tan Yard near Hickory Grove. Alex Thompson was post master there from 1808 until 1829.

By 1819, York District (pop. 10,000) and Chester District (pop. 9,600) each had 7 post offices and Lancaster District (pop. 5,800) had 4.

There were no postage stamps for a half century. Letters were cancelled with pen and ink (often initialed by the post master) or stamped with a hand carved device that might, or not, give the name of the post office. Most of the early letters are one sheet of paper folded to leave an area just large enough to place the recipient's address.

Pre-Civil War envelopes have value to collectors. According to the Postal History and Illustrated Catalog of Postmarks (by Robert Stets, Jr. & Harvey Teal), a franked Beckhamville (Chester District) envelope is currently valued at \$40, as is a Chester C. H. in red and black, 1825-1853. A Bell Air (Belair, Lancaster County) written out by hand in the 1850s is listed as \$25. A Lancaster, S. C., 1825-1827, in brown and black, is listed at \$150. There are nine different stamps known to have been used at Yorkville from 1823 to 1850. Their value is listed at prices from \$40 to \$500. The last is for a 15 cent cancellation, ca. 1846.

Rock Hill's post office was created by the building of the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta (C.C.A.) Rail Road in 1852. Henry F. Broach was the first post master. Rock Hill even had a woman post master (or post mistress as they

were usually designated) as early as the 1860s - Miss Maria Rughtland served during the Civil War. Miss Buena Wood was appointed by President Grant in 1873 and served until 1892. She began as a clerk at the age of 18 and worked for the post office a total of 40 years. In her time the post office was in a house on West Main Street.

In 1907 the Rock Hill post office moved to the First Federal Building at the corner of Main and Caldwell streets. It also got an electric cancelling machine. At that time the post master (E. E. Poag) had 25 employees - all men. Their combined salaries came to \$14,200, a figure the newspaper called "an enormous sum."

Winthrop College had its own post office from the time it arrived in Rock Hill in 1895 and always did a thriving business, especially in those years when a girl arrived in September and stayed until June and a postage stamp only cost two cents and a postal card was a penny.

When Rock Hill's Cherry Road Station opened in 1960 it offered something new. The lobby was open for 24 hours a day in contrast to the downtown post office which was locked at the close of the business day. This attracted a large number of people and businesses to the Cherry Road Station.

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