

OTEGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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OFFICERS FOR 2017-2018

Chair: Irmabelle Sheldon

Co-Chair: Joyce Shultis

Secretary: Emily Longtin

Treasurer: Jan Lloyd



The Story of our Post Office

We all rely on the services of our Post Office in Otego and take its presence on River Street as a given. But Otego's Post Office has through the years been in several buildings. This was quite a revelation to me, because, the names of the "blocks" where the post office was moved to, no longer exist so the search got fairly confusing as the Post Office went from building to building.

Many of you already know that , Otego has had a few name changes. Otego has been Otego since 1831. But before that it was known as Huntsville and, earlier still, the village was called Hamburg.

In 1811 Otego, when known as Hamburg, received its first post office and Samuel Rott was appointed as the first postmaster.

"During the term of Postmaster Daniel Lawrence, the village name was changed to Huntsville and, in 1831, the name again was changed to Otego.

On September 15, 1900, C.B. Hull was appointed as the first rural carrier. His route was the first rural route in Otsego county. Rural Route



No.2 was established on October 1, 1902, with C.B. Fancher as carrier. On September 15, 1904, Rural Route No.3 was established with J.C. Hyatt as its carrier. On July 16, 1906 E. W. Thorpe was appointed carrier on Route No.4.

Other carriers since that time have been Edwin Hamilton, Charles Hawkins, Charles Tripp, Raymond Reddington, Edwin Harris and Oliver Shaw. Since 1942, four routes were combined



In 1901, Rural Mail Boxes were Standardized

Farmers helped by putting out boxes for the rural carriers – everything from lard pails and syrup cans to old apple, soap, and cigar boxes. Postal officials decided a standardized box would improve service and, in 1901, asked manufacturers to design boxes to the following specifications:

The box must be made of metal, 6 by 8 by 18 inches, and weather-proof.

Boxes should be constructed so they can be fastened to a post at a height convenient to the carrier without alighting.

Keys for customers' boxes should be easy to use by a carrier with "one gloved hand in the severest weather."³⁰

The earliest records indicate that the Post Office was housed in the Bundy block, (the building in the photograph)

It has been in many places. At one time it was housed in the Lines block, (no longer standing but would be where the school parking lot is now), then it was moved it to the "Burdick block (corner of River and Main Street where the Mercantile Shop is located.

On January 1, 1907, the Post Office moved across the street to the Cooke block, where the school now stands. . At that time it was advanced to a third class office with A. D. Annable as postmaster.

In 1928 the office was moved to the Masonic building (better known as Hesse's Auction House)

The present Post Office opened to the public on November 21, 1960.

The office of the early 1800's received mail, probably by stage and "Highway Post Office." In 1901 five mails per day came to Otego via train and two came daily from Franklin by stage.

**POST OFFICE SAFE
BROKEN INTO - 1883**

In the fall of 1883 the office was at that time was kept in the store known as the Otego Variety Store, under the firm name of Annable & Russell. It was broken into and thieves made good their escape with the booty secured. No trace of them was ever secured. Two safes were used but the marauders only succeeded in opening one of them. Fortunately it was the one that contained the least amount of cash. In the safe that they opened, there were between \$300 and \$400 in stamps, which, strangely were not taken by the thieves, who seemed to be after cash only. The second safe had been charged with explosives but withstood the force of the explosion. In that safe there was almost \$500 in cash.

No one heard the gang during the night and the burglary was not discovered until the store was opened the next morning. When an inspection was made, smoke was yet oozing from the crevices around the safe door, which had been damaged to such an extent that an expert from Albany had to be sent for to open the safe.

**THE BROOKFIELD COURIER
JAN. 24, 1917**

C. B. Hull, R. D. carrier on route No. 1, Otego, had quite an experience in the wind storm one day recently. When near the Quackenbush farm on the south side of the river the wind overturned his mail sleigh and pinned him underneath. With difficulty he managed to free himself and secured help to right his sleigh, but before he could get started on his trip again, the wind blew it over the second time. Fortunately Mr. Hull escaped with slight bruises.

***A very unusual
Advertisement for the
promotion of
Baby War Bonds
From Rural Times of Otego
February 19, 1918
OTEGO POST OFFICE***

Opens at 6:30a.m. Closes at 8 p.m.
West bound East bound
Train 302 9:30 am Train 305 9 pm
Train 306 6:45 pm Train 309 3 pm

Everybody ought to have one or more babies. They are the joy of your life and a comfort in old age. Friends may come and friends may go, but if you have a *war baby* you will always have a friend. It is very easy to have a *war baby* now. Save quarters for them until you have 16, then add 13 cents and buy a Baby War bond at the Post Office. \$4.13 buys Baby War bonds this month, the sooner you buy the more interest you get, redeemable at the Post Office at any time. Get busy and help Uncle Sam swat the Kaiser.

J. CEPERLEY, Post Master



A Presentation prepared by Carolee Byrnes. It was displayed at the Otsego County's Historical Association's Annual Meeting in Springfield Center, NY. She was assisted in formatting it by Mary Johnson-Butler and accompanied on April 29th to the event by Joyce Shultis

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- June 19 Big Chuck-Adventures in Upstate Museums
- July 17 Annual Picnic at Legion Pavilion—Organic Farming
- Aug 21 Houses of Otego Town & Village -Carolee Byrnes
- Sept. ? Mystery Trip and Lunch
- Oct. 16 Heirloom Veggies
Glenn Seroka
- Nov 20 Otego Civil War Veterans
Mary Johnson-Butler



Introducing our 2017 Officers

Jan Lloyd, Treasurer, Emily Longtin, Secretary,
Co-Chairs : Irmabelle Sheldon and Joyce Shultis