

April 11, 1974
 Subject: Hillsboro Post Office

Interviewer: Brent Lambert
 Informant: Fred Holzengel

Q: Would you give me a brief biographical background of yourself, please?

A: I was born in _____, Minnesota, May 24, 1888. First came to Oregon in the fall of that year and settled near Sherwood. In about 1896 my father bought a blacksmith shop. He had been a blacksmith in Minnesota and he bought a blacksmith shop in Sherwood and we lived there until I came to Hillsboro in 1912

Q: Can you tell me how you began with the post office?

A: In June, or the spring of 1912, the Argus carried a notice asking Persons to answer the postal civil service examination for three positions would be open in that office. On July 12, I think it was, I came and took the examination together with some others and I was one of the successful ones and got one of the positions. In due time I was called to the Portland, September 8, the following Sunday.

Q: Would you list some of your ^{previous} coworkers and the previous postmasters, please?

A. The other two who were selected to fill the positions were Arthur Davis who was some time previously employed by the postmaster who was now chosen to be the assistant postmaster. The other one was Miss Bētha Hesse, chosen as the third employee. We were requested to appear for duty on September 8 which happened the following Sunday. The persons who served as postmasters in the Hillsboro post office during my residence here ~~was~~, since 1912, were D. P. Cornelius, James C. Lamquin, from 1912 to 1921, Henry A. Ball 1921 to 1924, myself from 1924 to 1936, and Mr. McPeters who has been a pharmacist and banker from 1939 to 1950, followed by Robert L. Melphist for about two years and then in about 1952 Mr. Chest Armel was appointed to serve until about 1971. At present Ernest J. Loehden is the postmaster. He was taken from the post office first.

Q: Could you give me a run down on the post offices that are no longer in ~~the~~ service, that have been ^{planted} ~~supplanted~~ by the Hillsboro post office.

A. Well yes, since my time of year, the Orenco, OR ~~post office~~ ^{post offices}. The Buxton, Straussel, Timber, Scofield, and Cochran on the PIM Railway have been discontinued. And Roy, Gales Creek, and Laurel, and Multnomah, and Metzger, Garden Home ~~and~~ _____ in the eastern part of the county.

Q: How are those areas served

A: I think the western division is served by Portland and ~~the~~ Orenco is served by the local office. The rest are now served by local or ^{Star} County service.

Q: Was this beyond the Hillsboro Post office?

A: No, not necessarily. Most of them were on the railroad to Tillamook are served by the Forest Grove office altho Manning is still an office as a station of the Hillsboro po _____ and areas of Forest Grove served by the _____ po. ~~the~~ Multnomah and Metzger and Garden Home I think are served through the _____ office.

Q: Can you give me ^{an idea of} the significance of the post office or postal service was in the every day life of the farmers life in the early days?

A: What did you have in mind?

Q: (stop)

A: The people in the area here from as far off as 15 to 20 miles sometimes were served by group areas from this office, not only for mail but merchandise they received from ^{portland} important stores or from as far away as even Chicago. These stores were what we called mail order houses. We depended very much on the mail. If it was ~~xxx~~ ever late we would always hear from them.

/q: Can you go into some detail at all of some of the plans that were given at one point for considering Hillsboro as an alternative airport to Portlandan alternative to the Vancouver ffff field?

A. No I dont know too much about that I supposed I read about it when it was being talked about, but I cant tell you too much about that.

Q. When was that being considered?

A. It was in the early part when the airport here was first started and I don't have the date of that.

Q. Could you list for me the most significant changes in the post office that you've seen during your period of service?

A. The post office when I came here had what they called postal savings. People could deposit up to twenty-five hundred dollars and receive 2% interest on it, but it came on in 1911 and has been discontinued times I retired in 1957. Also the C O D Parcel Service, we had to collect the people would send merchandice C O D and we would have to collect the money to send it back them and that has been discontinued too just about the time I left here. We started out with two city carriers on Oct. 1, 1916 and as time went by we added to the carriers and now I think there must be some 30 odd current city carriers in the post office.. The office was made a first class office in 1940 so from 1912 to 1940 it developed very slowly. That was about the time of the war and then housing became scarce around here and alot of houses were built and the town developed and naturally the postal service had to keep up it.

Q. Would you describe for me a typical day at the post office when you began?

A. The day started at 7:00 in the morning and there were three of us employees and everybody had there job, but generally you did almost everything in there. The assistant Post Master assignment was to keep the books and help with the distribution of the mail and Miss Hesse was the distributor and a fast distributor and she could distribute the mail and could have a conversation with someone else at the same time. I had charge of the postal savings business, Miss Hesse also had charge of the money order business. About 9:00 or 9:30^{mail} and the Principal mail would come in and every body would have to distribute and sort through the mail to the carriers and to the boxes and to the general

delivery so by 11:00 usually a little before we had the mail distributed and we'd open the general windows in fact all the windows would be closed during the distribution. Then we would open the windows and there would be long lines of people calling for the mail and the office lobby would be full of people getting their mail from their boxes. We had 600 boxes. Then we received mail several times a day, all through out the day so there was always some distributing going on and you couldn't be idle you had to be doing something all the time. The Post Master was not at that time just the administrator he was also helped distribute the mail and prepare the mail for dispatch. The second Post Master we had Mr. Lakin, that's all he did was take the mail as it came into the office and cancel it and prepare it for dispatch. Then about 5:00 in the afternoon our last mail, which was the second largest we received during the day, would be distributed to the carriers and to the boxes and then the post office closed at 6:00.

Q. You say you had to work on Sunday's what did you have to do on Sunday's ?

A. We distributed the morning mail that came in, we distributed it to the carriers and to the boxes and to the general delivery but the general delivery was not open on Sundays but people could come into the lobby and get their mail through the boxes and on holidays too.

Q. Would you discuss the various aspects of the rural carrying please?

A. There were four carriers and they carried their mail in horse drawn vehicles. When I came here until the roads were improved and the motor vehicle became in general use and then the carriers changed to delivering mail in motor vehicles. The routes, the several route was 24 miles at first and then later on when they changed to motor vehicles the several route was 30 miles and some of the other routes were 60 miles long. In the winter time especially during Christmas time the carriers would leave around 9:00 or 9:30 and they wouldn't be back again until 7:00 or later. With the auto mobile they could go faster and they still would be in as late as 5:30 or 6:00. They had a long day a head of them.

Q. What were the salary ranges?

A. Salaries for the dispatchers was \$600 a year and for the assistant Post Master \$700 a year for the first year and upon completion of a satisfactory service year the salary would be raised a \$100 per year. I don't know what the rural carries salaries were they were paid on a milage basis. They had a basic salary, they also, depending the length of the route they had milage additin. They do that now too.

Q. Did the government maintain the rural carriers vehicles or were they their own responsibility?

A. The rural carriers were required to buy and keep and keep their own vehicles. They get allowance for that now, they get milage allowance and up keep allowance.

Q. Was that true during the horse and buggy period too?

A. They had to furnish there horses and vehicles and they didn't get a very big salary either. They seemed to be glad to get what they got. I was glad to get what I got, but there was always a chance for an advancement there so I thought it was a good deal there for me.

Q. How were appointments made at the postal department?

A. Until 1972 or about that time, post masters were political appointees and came from various occupations, they were appointed for a period of four years each term. They had to be reappointed at the end of four years or if the administration changed then they might discontinue one post master and appoint another one. They came from all walks of life such as, sheet metal worker, former county school superintendant, pharmacist, banker and two of us were appointed from the postal service itself where

Q. Would you go into receipt of the mails by the post office from other post offices?

A. Originally the mails were received here over the Southern Pacific railroad service. Southern Pacific delivered their mail at 2nd street and they were brought to the office and carried to the trains by a man by the name of Henry Hesse. He used a horse and wagon for the purpose and when the Southern Pacific changed their mode of transportation to electric, they built a loop which started at 6th street, then went west on Main Street and connected with the P.R.&M. office and then on down back to the main office, up to Forest Grove, Mc Minnville and on to Corvallis.

Q. When you began with the post office you bached at the Tualatin Hotel, could you tell me something about the Tualatin Hotel, please?

A. It was run by a man by the name of John Shute and his wife. I paid \$22 a month for room and board. There were two of us that paid that. The proprietor said that he gave us that rate because he could depend on that and that would pay for his grocery bills for the month. Whatever else he took in would be for rebuilding I suppose. There were a lot or several people that would come in from the country to stay over the weekend just to be in town, just like what we do when we go into Portland to take in a show or something like that.

Q. What was the reputation of the hotel?

A. Well it was at that time the only hotel in the place. It had a good reputation. The accommodations were ordinary, not fancy. There was another hotel on the corner of 3rd and Main and traveling salesmen always put up at that hotel. It was made of cement block and they had a nice dinning room in there.

Q. What was the lay out of the Tualatin Hotel?

A. It was a two story frame building, had a porch in front, and you'd always see someone out there talking, and it had a veranda on the second floor. It wasn't as big as the store that stands there now, there was a space between that and where the store use to be. They could accommodate possibly 30 people, probably not more than that.

Q. Did they have a pretty steady business in boarders?

A. Yes, they had boarders, more so then what the other hotel had, because they had good meals there, and people liked to stay there. People living in or around the country, that's where they would stay.

Q. Coming in on holidays?

A. Well on holidays and on Saturday. They'd come in on Saturday and stay until Sunday and go back out again. One fella, Alec Griffith, would come out there from Laurel, he used to come in every Saturday, come in and stay over night, just to be around people he knew, I suppose, like to talk.

Q. What were the rates?

A. I can't say. I don't know what they charged outside of my own. It wasn't much, but I can't say just what they were.

Q. Were the meals served at individual tables or a large table or what?

A. They were served in family style.

Q. Was the price for all you could eat?

A. Yes. You could eat all you wanted. It was put on the table and you took what you wanted, but you can't do that anymore now, not for a long time.

Q. What color was the hotel painted when you were staying there?

A. As I recall it was sort of a grey color. It wasn't painted too well and it was in run down condition, but it wasn't painted every two or three years, I know that.

Q. I read somewhere that it had a reputation as being one of the finest hotels in the county early on, had that reputation been eclipsed from the time you stayed there?

A. I presume it had, yes, because at that time, this other hotel, which, was there when I came, and J. C. Tanner, he was a doctor, had built that hotel. He catered to all different types of people, but the old Tualatin was the, I presume, the only hotel here for a long long time.

Q. Why was it eventually torn down?

A. Wheels built their store there about 1927 as I recall.

Q. Had the hotel been losing money?

A. No I don't think so. This fella that had it moved away to Portland to become a policeman in Portland. He sold it to the Wheels and they tore it down. I don't think it was losing money, I think John in those times didn't make as much money as you do now and if they could make a living why that was it. They ran it themselves, they had very little outside help, he and his wife.