

A History of the Hamilton Post Offices

From 1803 to 2016

In the 1700s, people in the Hamlet district of Ipswich (now Hamilton) received their mail at Brown's Tavern, which was at the north corner of Farms Road (now Cutler Road) and Main Street (now Bay Road). Stagecoaches made regular stops at the tavern.¹ Inside the tavern, there likely was a table, called a post table, on which the mail, brought there by a stagecoach, was left for people to claim.

In 1710, the stagecoaches began running through Hamilton. They traveled between Boston and Newburyport.¹³ As a stagecoach approached the tavern, the driver would blow a horn, letting people know that the coach was arriving and letters might be left on the post table.

In the 1700s, a letter was a folded sheet of paper, with the address placed on the outside of the folded

sheet that was sealed with wax.⁷ Some people impressed a personal seal into the wax, but most simply used a blob of candle wax.

Wax seals often broke during transit. The General Court's law for "preventing the miscarriage of letters ..." likely pertained to people reading letters sent to others, a broken seal allowing the letter to be read.

The senders took their letters to the local mail drop to dispatch them. The local mail drop most often was a public house (*tavern*).

There were no stamps. Those receiving the mail were asked to pay for the delivery. The number of sheets and distance traveled determined the cost. It was not unusual for letters to be refused by recipients, because the amount for delivering it was deemed too much.⁷

In 1711, Queen Anne established, in the colonies, the General Post Offices and appointed John Hamilton, son of Andrew, to manage the postal service. He served until 1721, and was followed by other appointees of the British government.⁶

Benjamin Franklin, who was the Joint Postmaster General of the colonies for the Crown Post (*the colonial mail system*), in 1753, established the first postal rate chart. It was based on distance and weight. Also, under Franklin, better, more direct routes were set up in the colonies and had milestones placed on the main roads.⁶

As tensions grew between the colonies and Britain, William Goddard established an independent American post office. This happened when the Crown Post began delaying or destroying newspapers and opening private mail to thwart communications among the colonies.⁶

Franklin, in 1775, became the chairman of a Committee of Investigation to establish a postal system. Later that year, the Continental Congress appointed Franklin the first Postmaster General.⁶

Article IX of the Articles of Confederation gave Congress "The sole and exclusive right and power . . . establishing and regulating post offices from one State to another . . . and exacting such postage on papers passing through the same as may be requisite to defray the expenses of the said office" ⁶

Following the adoption of the Constitution in May 1789, an act temporarily established a post office and created the Office of the Postmaster General. On September 26, 1789, George Washington appointed, under the Constitution, Samuel Osgood of Massachusetts as the first Postmaster General. Ironically, a picture of Osgood has never appeared on a stamp. ⁶

In 1792, Congress established the U.S. Post Office Dept., giving congress primary control of postal policies and routes. ⁶

Hamilton's First Postmaster

In 1793, the Hamlet became the Town of Hamilton. A decade later, 1803, Rev. Manasseh Cutler led the way for the town to receive a grant to establish an official U. S. post office at the tavern on the Post Road (*now Bay Road*). Daniel Brown was the first Postmaster. (*Note: The 200th anniversary of the Hamilton post office, in 2003, went unnoticed.*)

In 1825, during the time that Israel Brown was Postmaster, the Post Office Dept. established a Dead Letter Office. When a recipient did not pay for the delivery of a letter or a letter was not claimed, the "dead letters" were returned to the sender's post office. ²⁶ The former "Dead Letter Office" now is the Mail Recovery Center, in Atlanta, GA.

Beginning in 1836, Post Office Dept. required the Postmaster to live in the delivery area of the post of-

fice. This changed in 1971, when the Postmaster began to be selected through a merit system. ¹⁶

Brown's Tavern closed about 1840. For the next couple of years, the post office was in a small building a short way back on Farm's Road. Shortly after the turn of the century, it was kept at 109 Cutler Road. ² The Postmaster was Samuel Story, Jr. ¹

A private mail carrier service in New York City, the City Despatch Post, in 1842, did away with the pay-on-receipt mail system. People using the City Despatch Post had to use its stamps: the first adhesive postage stamp produced in the western hemisphere. The 3¢ stamp, printed on sheets of 42 stamps, had a rather rough drawing of George Washington. ¹⁷

Beginning in 1843, the post office was at George Appleton's blacksmith shop. It was north of his home at 560 Main St. He was Postmaster for 20 years. ¹

Prior to 1845, some people made envelopes to keep their mail from being easily opened. In 1845, Edwin Hill and Warren de la Rue obtained a British patent for the first envelope-making machine.

Independent mail carriers were not uncommon. Each had its own postal rates. However, in March 1845, Congress established uniform postal rates throughout the nation: 5¢ for a letter weighing less than an ounce and traveling less than 300 miles; and 10¢ for delivery to a location more than 300 miles, or a letter weighing more than an ounce. ¹⁹

In July 1845, the U.S. Post Office in New York City issued its first stamp. Soon after, there were stamps available in Boston and other cities thereafter. ¹⁴

There were two stamps: a 5¢, reddish-brown stamp depicting Benjamin Franklin; and a 10¢ stamp, in black, with a drawing of George Washington. Both were printed on adhesive backed sheets. As with all U.S. stamps until 1857, they were imperforate, and had to be cut from a sheet. ¹⁴



Old Tavern, 9 Farms Rd. was Hamilton's first post office. Samuel Story, Jr. was the first Postmaster, serving from 1803 to 1841. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

However, there was not a 2¢ stamp, the rate for letters that were dropped off (*mailed from*) and picked up at the same Post Office.¹⁴ Senders still could request that recipients pay for the delivery of a letter.¹⁴

The law made illegal the use of postage stamps not authorized by the Postmaster General, thus ending the sale of stamps by private carriers.¹⁴

By 1851, the U.S. Postal Service had become so profitable that Congress was able to reduce the common rate to 3¢ (*which remained unchanged for over 30 years*). This rate, however, only applied to prepaid mail: a letter sent without a stamp cost the recipient 5¢.¹⁶ Prepayment of postage became compulsory in 1855, but a stamp was not necessary.²⁷

By the mid 1800s, mail volume in Massachusetts was becoming quite large. Mail coaches no longer were the only means for distributing the mail. Trains had been carrying mail for more than 20 years.

*In September 1862, Eastern Railroad built a new depot, in Hamilton, next to the County Road. In 1864, the Post Office Department established the Railway Mail Service, whereby mail was sorted aboard moving trains, not just in post offices. After 113 years of railway post office (RPO) operation, the B&M ended its RPO in 1957.*⁴⁰

As mail volume increased, the post office replaced the post table with a box in which incoming mail was placed. People would browse through the box to see if they had a letter. Next, the post office began offering individual open compartments. Next, there were compartments with locked doors, for which individuals had a key. This service remains today.

The future of mail delivery began in 1863. A Cleveland postal employee, Joseph W. Briggs, began the first home mail delivery. Reportedly, Briggs came up with the idea during the previous winter, when he saw women waiting in the cold for letters from Civil War soldiers. He and other postal employees delivered mail to homes. That same year, home delivery spread to 49 northern offices.¹⁹

Briggs, at the request of the federal government, went to Washington and helped create a national home mail delivery system. At first, only cities with a minimum population of 20,000 had home delivery service. In 1887, the threshold dropped to cities with a population of at least 10,000 or with postal revenues of at least \$10,000.¹⁹ Hamilton, with a population of about 800, was well below the threshold for having home delivery of mail.

Initially, postmen hand-delivered mail. If a resident did not answer the carrier's knock or ring, the letter remained in the carrier's satchel to be redelivered when the customer was home. By 1912, new customers were required to provide mail slots or receptacles, and postmasters were urged to encourage existing customers to provide them as well. As late as

1914, First Assistant Postmaster General Daniel C. Roper estimated that a letter carrier spent 30 to 60 minutes each day waiting at doors to hand over letters. On Mar. 1, 1923, mail slots or receptacles were required for delivery service.³⁴

In 1864, the Post Office Dept. began classifying post offices into 4 classes. An office's receipts and mail volume determined its designation.³⁰ Hamilton's post office was 4th class, an indication that its gross receipts were less than \$1,900.

A 4th class postmaster's compensation consisted of box rents, commissions on postage-due stamps, postage stamps, official stamps, stamped envelopes, postcards, and newspaper and periodical stamps, and sale of waste paper, dead newspapers, printed matter, and twine.¹⁸

During the Civil War, with Camp Lander being in Wenham, the amount of mail coming to and sent from Hamilton was quite high. But, apparently still not high enough to change the its post office class.

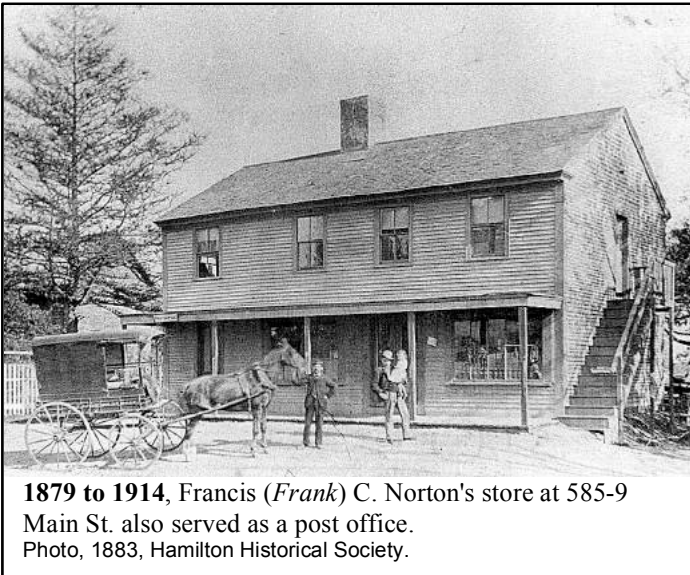
Bay Road Post Office Opened

In 1862, Hamilton's post office moved from Appleton's blacksmith barn to David M. Hoyt's general store, on the south corner of Main and Bridge streets.² (*In 2002, this became the site of Hamilton Gardens, 545 Bay Rd.*) Hoyt, who acted as the Postmaster, was the town's state-appointed liquor agent. This was not a tavern: Hoyt had a liquor license that allowed him to "purchase intoxicating liquors and to sell the same ... to be used in the arts, or for medicinal, chemical, and mechanical purposes and no other."² (*In 1852, Massachusetts enacted an alcohol prohibition act: it was repealed in 1862.*)

Shortly after the Civil War, the post office moved up the street to Francis (*Frank*) C. Norton's store at 585-9 Main St.² Norton, a native of Essex, in 1879, was a partner of the store with Josiah Patch. A couple of years later, Austin A. Whipple was Norton's partner. Norton sold the store to William J. Daley of Peabody in 1916.³⁵ In 1913, Daley became the Postmaster, a position he would hold until 1940, when his son, Harold (*Hap*) succeeded him as the Postmaster.³⁸

During the years Norton had his store, employees often handled the post office duties. They included Annie E. Woodbury and Nellie E. Kimball. Woodbury was Hamilton's first woman Postmaster. In March 2016, Ryan V. DiEoreo was installed, as the 28th Postmaster of Hamilton.

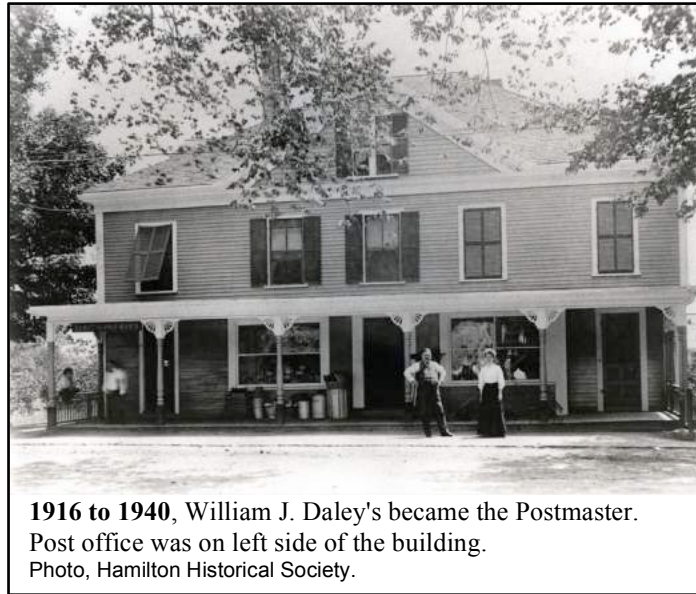
In 1985, the Hamilton post office almost had a bank in the building. Ipswich Savings Bank proposed opening a branch in the building. The Postal Service did not object, but the bank was unable to obtain necessary town approvals. Also, local residents objected, primarily because of concerns about increased traffic.⁴⁷



1879 to 1914, Francis (*Frank*) C. Norton's store at 585-9 Main St. also served as a post office.
Photo, 1883, Hamilton Historical Society.



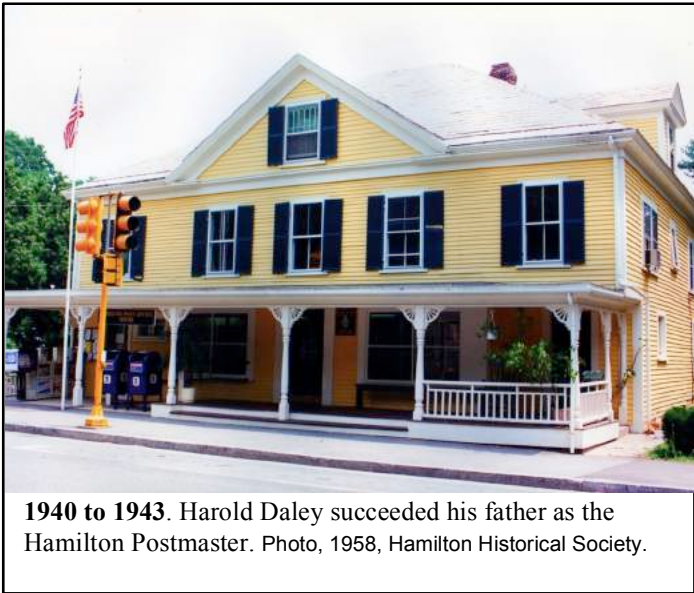
2016, Ryan V. DiEoreo was installed, as the 28th Postmaster of Hamilton. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.



1916 to 1940, William J. Daley's became the Postmaster. Post office was on left side of the building.
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.

Hamilton Post Office

589 Bay Rd.



1940 to 1943. Harold Daley succeeded his father as the Hamilton Postmaster. Photo, 1958, Hamilton Historical Society.



513 post office boxes are at the Hamilton Post Office. Photo, 2016, J. Hauck.



Asbury Grove post office, at entrance to the campground, opened in 1883 and closed in 1957. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1908.



Asbury Grove built a bank of mailboxes near the Asbury Grove dining hall, in 2013. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

Hamilton had a second post office, beginning in May 1878. It was at the entrance to the Asbury Grove Campground, in summer months and at the Postmaster's home during winter months.¹¹ It was only 4 years earlier that cottages were first built at the Grove. By 1878, there were more than 300 cottages.

The first Postmaster was Ella Rankins, who served until 1883: she was Hamilton's first female Postmaster. (*Postmistress* is not used because the "master" component of "Postmaster" refers to a person of authority and not gender.) The Asbury Grove post office closed on Oct. 31, 1957. The last Postmaster was Ruth T. Tilson.¹⁰

Today, for mail delivery, the Grove has a central mailbox station, with individual boxes for each residence. Built in 2013, it is on Pleasant Street, close to the dining hall. Sixty-three cottages and houses are winterized for year-round use.

The Grove's post office in the late 1800s and early 1900s was kept busy handling postcards mailed from the campgrounds. The cards were an inexpensive way for people to let friends know about their time at the Grove.

The U. S. Post Office introduced the first pre-stamped "penny postcards" in 1873: they soon became very profitable for the Post Office. No one else was allowed to print postcards, until May 19, 1898; however, they could not call them "postcards."²⁸

These "souvenir cards" had pictures on one side and were labeled "Private Mailing Cards." The Private Mailing Card Act was rescinded on Dec. 24, 1901: private companies could use the word "postcard," but users only could write on the front of the postcard. On Mar. 1, 1907 the Post Office allowed people to write on the address side of a postcard.²⁸

It was not just from postcards that the Post Office was making money. By the late 1800s, stamp collecting had become a major hobby. Philatelists were al-

ways eager to purchase newly issued stamps. This did not go unnoticed by the U. S. Post Office.

In 1893 the post office issued the first commemorative stamps. The stamps were issued to commemorate the World Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, in 1893. The stamps celebrated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage to the New World. The series consisted of 15 stamps with face values ranging from 1¢ to \$5.²⁹

Philatelists were not in favor of the commemorative postage stamps. They complained about the high cost of stamps. A Society for the Suppression of Speculative Stamps was formed in 1895. The organization soon faded away.⁴⁰ Today, the early commemoratives are highly prized by collectors. A mint-condition 1893 stamp now is worth as much as \$5,000.

A change in mail delivery began in the second half of the 1800s. Cities and large towns, starting about 1863, had home delivery. However, it was not until the end of the century that rural areas had the same.



Penny postcards, with picture on backside, were mailed from the Asbury Grove post office. Photo, Del Campe.

In 1898, the U. S. Post Office announced that any group of farmers could have rural farm delivery (*RFD*) by sending a petition, along with a description of their community and roads, to their congressman.²³ Hamilton did not make a request. Hamiltonians continued to go to the post office to get their mail. There were three post offices handling mail for Hamilton.

Janice Pulsifer in her book, *Changing Times*, wrote that Austin Brown in his diary reported the death, on Nov. 8, 1886 of "Siah" (*Josiah C.*) Patch, "the penny post for over the river folks," which suggests that some mail may have been delivered. "Penny post" was an old term for a postman, who delivered a letter for a penny.²

Depot Post Office Opened

In addition to Norton's general store and the Asbury Grove office, there was, beginning in 1884, John Merrill's grocery store at the train depot. Merrill was the Postmaster of what was considered a regional post office, serving parts of Wenham and Hamilton.¹

Four years later, 1888, Charles A. Hills¹ owned the grocery store and served as the Postmaster. A Hamilton resident, he sold his business, in 1894, to Lester E. Libby. He served as the Hamilton Postmaster for ten years.^{5, 45}

In 1907, the store, then owned by Lester Libby, became the South Hamilton Post Office.¹ The building, which now is Talbot's, had a central entrance. On the left, Charles R. Holmes had a store, whose sign read "Electric Repairs, Cigars, B-L Plug Tobacco, American Express Agency,"³ on the right, Lester E. Libby had a real estate and insurance business;² the post office was in the center,²

As a 4th-class post office, the Post Office Dept. only supplied Libby with an 8-oz. balance scale, plain facing slips for identifying the destinations of bundles of mail, canceling ink, a stamp pad, and a marking device. Libby had to supply twine and wrapping paper



Depot post office was between two stores in building that is now Talbot's women's clothing store.
Photo, Benjamin Conant, 1900.

and also a partition with a window.³⁰

The depot post office closed in 1914, when it needed more space. The Postmaster, at the time, was Douglas H. Knowlton. He also was Hamilton's assistant fire company chief.¹⁰

The post office moved across the street to the "brick block" building (*now the Black Cow restaurant*). Previously, this was the Cozy Corner ice cream parlor. Next to the post office was Robert Robertson's plumbing supplies and services store, 20 Main St.

World War 1 brought a lot of activity to the Hamilton post offices: 124 men from the town served their country. Following the war, mail volume continued to grow at the "brick block" office.

In 1917, the domestic postage rate rose to 3¢, probably due to World War 1. It dropped back to 2¢ in 1919. It would be nearly 100 years later, 2016, before it would be reduced again.

In 1924, the U. S. Post Office notified the town that the branch library space, which was at 20 Main St., had to be vacated, in order for the post office to expand.³¹ The combined post office space, according to the rental agreement, became 40 ft. wide and 54 ft. deep. The lease also included basement space, and the alley in the middle of the building.³⁸

Occupying both 16 and 20 Bay Rd., the expanded South Hamilton Post Office had a partition of post office boxes stretching across its width. A door in the center of the partition led to the mail sorting area. There were two standup desks in the front, for use by postal patrons.³³

Not surprising, a decline in mail volume at the three Hamilton post offices developed in the late 1920s and most of the 1930s. This was the time of the national depression.

Anna L. Mann, in 1940, retired as the Postmaster at the Asbury Grove post office. She became the Postmaster in 1902, after having worked there since 1897.¹¹ Her 43 years of service are the longest of anyone working at the 3 post offices in Hamilton.



Brick block post office opened in 1914 and closed in 1985, moving to Railroad Avenue.
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1984.

As happened during WW1, a surge in mail volume occurred during WW2. From Hamilton, 333 men and women served in the armed forces.

During WW2, to conserve bulk, V-mail was on 7-by 9-in. sheets that went through mail sensors before being photographed and transported as thumbnail-sized images as negative microfilm. Upon arrival at the destination, the negatives were enlarged to 4-¹/₄ by 5-3/16 in. printed sheets for distribution to the service men and women.

Mail to those in military service had Army Post Office (APO) numbers: by this means, the location of service people was not disclosed. About 1,000 different A.P.O.'s were in use from 1941 to 1946.

The post office, in the "brick block" building, handled most of the WW2 mail in Hamilton. John (*Jack*) F. Counihan, who lived on Willow Street, was Postmaster, from 1944 to 1968. For many years, Jack's wife, Mary, and his sister-in-law, Julie Wheatley, were clerks at the post office.⁴¹ Jack served more years in the post office than anyone else at the South Hamilton locations.

Home Delivery Began in 1958

In 1958, during Counihan's term as Postmaster, the Post Office Dept. upgraded the South Hamilton office from a 3rd- to a 1st-class site. With this change, home delivery of mail began for the town, except for those receiving mail via boxes at the post office in Daley's general store and the "brick block" office.⁹

There were 5 routes that had postmen making daily deliveries: 1, Dick Finnegan; 2, Revere "Puzz" Brooks; 3, *Milt* Dunham; 4, Jim Richards⁴¹ Another route was East Hamilton: Roger Washburn was the postman. He later, 1972, became a Hamilton teacher (*social studies*).⁴¹

Each morning, the mailmen would sort, at the post office, the incoming mail into bundles for their routes. A postman's knowledge of the people and addresses in his delivery route was key to his daily sorting of mail. A post office truck later brought the presorted bundles to the collection boxes, and also gathered letters dropped in them. At various points along his route – as many as 8 -- the postman would replenish his bag with mail from the collection boxes, to be delivered in the next section.⁴¹

A Philadelphia iron manufacturer, Albert Potts, patented the first collection box in 1858. Initially, the red boxes were mounted on lampposts. In 1909, the collection boxes were painted a dark green to avoid confusion with emergency and fire equipment, also mounted on lampposts. After World

War I, dark green gave way to olive drab green, when the U.S. Army donated a large supply of olive drab green paint to the Post Office Dept. This color, subsequently, became the standard color for all U.S. mail collection boxes. On Jul. 4, 1955, the Post Office Dept. began painting street collection boxes red, white, and blue. The United States Postal Service, in 1971, announced a solid, deep blue color for collection boxes. There now (2016) are 10 collection boxes in Hamilton.¹³

The South Hamilton Post Office, in 1958, began renting a blue Studebaker van for delivering mail to the collection boxes. The vehicle had the standard left-hand drive.⁴¹

The South Hamilton Post Office also had a right-hand drive Jeep truck for delivering mail to street-side mail boxes. The truck was a Jeep Dispatcher DJ: produced by Willys Motors, it was a two-wheel-drive variant of the CJ series.³⁹

The current vehicles have a lightweight aluminum body on a modified pickup-truck chassis, was purchased from 1987 to 1994. Most of the trucks are more than 21 years old.⁴²



Brick block post office: (left to right) Postmaster Stephen D'Arcy, Betty Chagnon, Peggy Cuff, Gladys Robinson, Richard Finnegan, Jim Richards, Revere Brooks, Jr., Steve Purdy behind Chagnon, and Neal German behind Finnegan. Photo,

The postman walking the streets is one of the great trappings of any town's history. Dressed in a blue uniform, wearing a blue service cap, and with a large leather bag hung from his shoulder, the postman would go door-to-door, inserting the day's mail through a slot at the front of each house. As the post office slogan goes, "neither snow, nor rain, nor gloom of night shall stray these couriers from their appointed rounds." Blocks, in Hamilton, were about 10 miles for each postman.⁴¹ (Note: the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings caused the closing on post offices for a time when the location of the bombers was unknown.)

Until the mid 1950s, postmen could carry up to 50 pounds of letters at a time. Then, a carrier's weight limit was reduced to 35 pounds, which it still is.³⁴

Daily, there were two home mail deliveries and four to businesses until Apr. 17, 1950. Multiple deliveries to businesses were phased out over the next few decades.³⁴

There are many stories about the escapades, travels and poignant moments of postmen. Hamilton has its share.

When delivering mail through a mail slot, a postman felt the letters being pulled inside. Perhaps someone anxious to get a particular letter, he thought. The next day, the lady of the house met the postman at the front door by. She asked him not to put the mail through the slot: her dog had eaten the mail the previous day. She bought a mailbox.⁴¹

The residents from a particular neighbor went to the post office to question why letters people told them they had mailed were not delivered. "We deliver all the letters we get," was their answer. This went on for several months. The answer came when a sewer in the area was backing up onto the street. The road department found it was clogged with bunches of letters. Seems that the postman had been shortening his day by dumping letters.⁴¹



"Mounted delivery," the use of post office trucks to deliver mail, began in 1968. Houses had to have a regulation mailbox alongside the street. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.

It was not unusual for residents in one neighborhood to wait, at their front door, for the postman to arrive. They would spend several minutes with the postman to hear what was going on in their area. As a result, the time for the postman to complete his full route was very long.

1958 was a significant year for the Hamilton post office at Daley's market. Harold "Hap" Daley closed his store, and the entire area became the post office.⁴ The enlarged post office became a 2nd class location, with 500 mailboxes. The additional mailboxes allowed the office to eliminate 149 homes that previously were served by general delivery.³⁶

A further change to the Hamilton post office came in 1965. The U.S. Postal Service changed the post office to a contract station that only provided postboxes, stamps, and only accept letters and parcels.⁹

For people not wanting to have a box at one of the post offices, the South Hamilton post office, in 1968, began using trucks to deliver mail, the so-called "mounted delivery." All houses, in these areas, were required to have a regulation mailbox alongside the street.

At first, the post office rented a Chevrolet van for the mounted deliveries. It had a standard left-hand drive, thus requiring the driver to reach across to the right side to put mail into the street-side boxes.⁴¹

In March 1970, for the first time, U.S. postal carriers went on strike: it lasted 2-weeks. However, none of South Hamilton's postmen joined the strike.⁴¹ For the rest of the country, Pres. Richard Nixon called out the armed forces and the National Guard to distribute the mail.³²

A result of the strike was the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act. The Act abolished the U. S. Post-Office Department, and created the U. S. Postal Service, an independent agency, with an official monopoly on mail delivery. The act gave workers collective bargaining rights, but not the right to strike.³²



Curbside mail collection boxes hold mail for postman to deliver in next part of his route. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.

Railroad Avenue Post Office

The post office remained in the "brick block" until 1985, when it moved to Railroad Avenue. Stephen J. D'Arcy retired that year as the Postmaster at the South Hamilton Post Office (SHPO). He was the last Hamilton resident to be a Postmaster. Peter Wyman, of Chelmsford, was the first non-Hamilton resident to be the Postmaster at this post office.⁴¹

Originally, the Post Office Dept. planned to have the SHPO replace the office at 585-9 Bay Road. However, strong objections of town residents led to the Bay Road office not being closed. The Postal Service cited the existence of "three post offices within a mile on one road," as a primary reason to make changes.⁴⁵ This was the second time the Postal Service considered closing the Bay Road post office: a previous attempt was in 1977.⁴⁵

To distinguish between the two post offices, the Post Office Service designated the "brick block" Railroad Avenue post office as the "South Hamilton" post office. The Bay Road location retained the "Hamilton Post Office" name.

The Bay Road (*Hamilton*) post office always has been rented. In 2012, there were 32,741 post offices in the United States, of which the Postal Service rented nearly 90%.³³

The Postal Service followed through with moving most of its Hamilton operations, including all delivery operations, to the SHPO. All mail delivered in Hamilton carries the 01982 ZIP code. Only mail destined for P.O. Boxes at the Hamilton post office and a few nearby buildings still carry the 01936 area code.

For people who rented a box at the "brick block" post office, the move to Railroad Avenue necessitated two significant changes. Their box number was different and, instead of dialing a combination number to open their box, a key was used.⁴³

The Railroad Avenue post office replaced an auto repair garage owned by John (*Jock*) Wallace. It was



Combination post office boxes were replaced, at the SHPO, by boxes opened with a key. Photo, Alamy.com.

Progression of ZIP Codes

On Jul. 1, 1963, the U. S. Post Office introduced 5-digit postal ZIP codes. ZIP is an acronym for Zone Improvement Program.

The first digit designates a broad geographical area of the United States, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. The next 2 digits pinpoint population concentrations and those sectional centers accessible to common transportation networks. The final 2 digits designate small post offices or postal zones in larger zoned cities.²¹

South Hamilton's ZIP code became 01982. Hamilton's ZIP became 01936. In 1967, the Post Office required mailers of 2nd and 3rd class bulk mail to presort by ZIP Code.²¹

1965 -- Optical scanner (ZIP Code reader) for sorting mail; however, the Hamilton post office did not have the scanning equipment until 1970.³⁴

1983 -- To reduce the number of times a piece of mail was handled, the U. S. Post Office began testing a ZIP+4 code program. Barcode sorters now put mail in sequence for delivery.⁹

1991 -- Wide area barcode readers introduced.

2006 -- "Intelligent Mail" barcode reader introduced that provide exact mail delivery location.

(Note: If you are not sure of the zip code, leave it blank: mail goes to zip code even if it is wrong.)

built in 1955. Unlike other buildings on the street, the post office sits back from the sidewalk. It stands 28 ft. from the curb, of which 18 ft. are a brick-block patio, which the building's architect called a "mall." The town, in 2015, placed a metal bench, on the sidewalk, facing the post office.

Soon after moving to Railroad Avenue, the post office built an extension (760 sq. ft.) at the back of the building. In 1988, there was an addition to the side of the back section. Two years later, 1990, the back section was further expanded (830 sq. ft.). The expansions brought the building's area to 5,700 sq. ft.

Greatly increased mail volume, particularly bulk mail and packages, necessitated the expansions.⁴¹ Route sorting box files were along the SHPO walls. Now, several different types pre-sorted mail and package carts fill the post office.

In 1985, Postmaster D'Arcy estimated that the South Hamilton Post Office served, on average, 700 customers every day.⁴⁸ In 2015, the number was more than 4,500, according to Postmaster Tansey.⁴²

Mail delivered to the SHPO now comes from North Reading and Boston. About 90% is already sorted to the delivery location. Postmen sort, by hand, the balance. Only about 25% of the incoming mail is 1st class. The majority is packages, magazines, advertisements, catalogs and other printed material.⁴²

A large part of the packages are for Amazon customers. The SHPO also delivers, what have become known as "last-mile" packages, for UPS and Fedex.⁴²

The SHPO has 18 employees, including Postmaster Richard J. Tansey. He began with the post office service in 1987 and became the SHPO Postmaster in 2007. At present, none of the SHPO employees live in Hamilton.⁴² Additional workers are hired during December, the busiest month.

There are 9 mail delivery trucks at the SHPO. They are used to deliver mail to 3 routes in Wenham and 4 in Hamilton. All the Hamilton routes have sections where the postman walks.⁴² Wenham carriers have worked out of South Hamilton since 1986.⁴¹

Gone from the Hamilton streets are the mail drop-off boxes. Similar boxes, 10, are at curbsides to hold mail a postman will deliver to the next section of his or her route. Mail drop-off boxes now are only at the front of Hamilton's two post offices. Mail brought to the post offices now is forwarded to Boston. Previously, it went to North Reading. 95% of this mail is 1st class.⁴²

The mail trucks, known as "long-life vehicles, travel, in Hamilton and Wenham, about 20 miles/day.⁴² The bodies are designed to last for 25 years: engines are replaced, as needed. With repair costs rising, the Postal Service is looking to develop a new vehicle better suited to the job and have better fuel economy.

Sunday and holiday delivery of parcels began in December 2014, in the Boston area. In 2016, deliveries, in Hamilton, of Amazon parcels, are done by the post office in Beverly.⁴²

There are 280 PO boxes at SHPO.⁴² In the future, the postal service plans to send email notifications directly to customers with photos of their mail. Already available in some areas is an "Informed Delivery" service that daily alerts registered customers what mail they will be receiving that day. Packages and magazines may be added, at a later date.

The service counter, on average, the SHPO sells about \$6,000 of postage stamps each week. Money orders also are available. Passports are provided at the Wenham PO, but not either Hamilton PO.⁴²

Jack E. Hauck, May 2016

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Railroad Avenue post office (1), in 1988, was expanded with the addition (3) of an ell at the back of the building. In 1990, the ell was expanded (4). Photo, Bing, 2014.



Postmen, in the morning, use to sort mail for their route. Now, mail arrives sorted for each delivery location. Photo, U. S. Postal Service

South Hamilton Post Office Railroad Avenue



South Hamilton Post Office serves, on average in 2016, 4,500 customers every day. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.



Hamilton postmen walk about 10 miles each day delivering mail. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.



Hamilton Post Office service desk. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.



Cluster mailboxes reduce post office truck stops, save time, and reduced fuel cost. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.

POSTMASTERS AT HAMILTON POST OFFICES

Name	Title	Location	Class	Appointed	From
Ella Rankins	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1878/05/13	Hamilton
Benjamin F. Stone	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1883/04/02	Hamilton
Mary A. Putnam	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1885/09/02	Hamilton
Huldah D. Richardson	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1887/05/10	Hamilton
Andrew D. Trowt	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1890/04/30	Hamilton
Susan P. Thompson	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1890/06/01	Hamilton
John V. Emerson	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1897/04/02	Hamilton
Anna L. Mann	Postmaster	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1902/12/05	Hamilton
Mary O. Hawkins	Officer in Charge	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1940/02/01	Hamilton
John L. Yenches	Officer in Charge	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1940/11/05	Hamilton
Omer D. Dauphinais	Officer in Charge	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1940/11/20	Hamilton
Ruth T. Tillson	Officer in Charge	1 Pleasant St.	4 th	1943/04/14	Hamilton
Douglas H. Knowlton	Postmaster	16 Bay Rd.		1914/06/30	Hamilton
John F. Counihan	Acting Postmaster	16 Bay Rd.		1944/12/06	Hamilton
John F. Counihan	Postmaster	16 Bay Rd.	??	1945/10/27	Hamilton
Stephen J. D'Arcy	Acting Postmaster	49 Railroad Ave.	2 nd	1968/04/19	Hamilton
Stephen J. D'Arcy	Postmaster	49 Railroad Ave.	2 nd	1972/03/04	Hamilton
Peter S. Wyman	Postmaster	49 Railroad Ave.	2 nd	1985/11/23	Chelmsford
Eileen C. Bagarella	Officer-In-Charge	49 Railroad Ave.	2 nd	2006/12/14	Danvers
Richard J. Tansey	Postmaster	49 Railroad Ave.	2 nd	2007/03/31	Peabody
David M. Hoyt	Postmaster	545 Bay Rd.	---	1862/12/15	Hamilton
George Appleton	Postmaster	560 Bay Rd.	---	1843/06/29	Hamilton
John H. Gregory	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1867/03/30	Hamilton
David M. Hoyt	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1867/08/30	Hamilton
Francis C. Norton	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1869/01/08	Hamilton
Austin A. Whipple	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1870/03/11	Hamilton
Francis C. Norton	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1873/05/05	Hamilton
Nellie D. Kimball	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1894/06/18	Hamilton
Annie E. Woodbury	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1896/01/24	Hamilton
Bessie R. Brown	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1902/08/11	Hamilton
Hattie B. Warner	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1905/01/28	Hamilton
Andrew Haraden	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1905/12/29	Hamilton
Clara A. Appleton	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1906/03/30	Hamilton
Carrie D. Rankins	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1909/12/21	Hamilton
William J. Daley	Acting Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1913/02/01	Hamilton
William J. Daley	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1913/04/15	Hamilton
Harold A. Daley	Acting Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1940/01/31	Hamilton
Harold A. Daley	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1940/09/11	Hamilton
Wilma L. Foster	Acting Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1942/10/14	Hamilton
Wilma L. Foster	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1943/10/02	Hamilton
Donald P. Greeley	Acting Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	4 th	1950/09/15	Hamilton

Donald P. Greeley	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1951/10/19	Hamilton
David K. Wilson	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1972/06/30	
David K. Wilson	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1973/09/15	
Lillian M. Allen	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1978/06/30	Hamilton
Robert M. Irving	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1979/04/21	Beverly
Louis J. Pimpare	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1983/12/30	
Demosthenes Sofronas	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1984/03/31	
Shou Choy	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1991/10/18	Tewksbury
Patricia C. Carter	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1992/03/02	Essex
Patricia C. Carter	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	1997/06/21	Essex
Jan S. Flachbart	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2000/11/07	Danvers
Jan (<i>Flachbart</i>) Wilson	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2001/06/16	Danvers
Donna M. Bowden	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2011/07/30	Bridgewater
Brenda J. Avigian	Officer-In-Charge	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2012/06/30	Beverly
David M. Branga	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2012/12/29	Reading
Ryan V. DiEoreo	Postmaster	585-9 Bay Rd.	2 nd	2016/03/0	Derry, NH
Lester E. Libby (1894)	Postmaster	Depot	4 th	1894/03/28	Hamilton
John M. Merrill	Postmaster	Depot	4 th	1894/11/24	Hamilton
Charles A. Hills	Postmaster	Depot	4 th	1897/09/28	Hamilton
Douglas Knowlton	Postmaster	Depot	4 th	1914/06/30	Hamilton
Samuel Story, Jr.	Postmaster	Farms Rd.	---	1841/06/10	Hamilton
Daniel Brown	Postmaster	Main St. & Farms Rd.	---	1803/07/01	Hamilton
Isaac L. Brown	Postmaster	Main St. & Farms Rd.	---	1813/04/17	Hamilton
Israel D. Brown	Postmaster	Main St. & Farms Rd.	---	1818/07/22	Hamilton