

Fair Oaks Post Office History

Jim Pearce, February 2022

A community doesn't have an identity without a post office. So, when Leonard Shelton arrived on the first excursion train to Fair Oaks from Chicago in November, 1895, with the intention of opening a general store, the second thing he did was apply for a Post Office with himself as Postmaster. The application was approved and he opened the post office in January, 1896 in his store at the corner of Main and California.



The post office remained at that location until 1914 when it moved to its own building on California Avenue across from Plaza Park, formerly the site of the Fair Oaks Temporary Bank. Ralph Gore was appointed Postmaster. The post office remained at that location for 30 years under a number of postmasters.

Lest you think that operating a Post Office was simply a community service, understand that when people came in to pick up their mail, they also shopped for supplies. When Ralph Gore became postmaster, he relocated the post office right next door to the Slocum-Gore general store.

A side note on Rural Free Delivery. The RFD system was started in the late 1800's, funded by the U.S. Postal Service. It was very controversial, with business groups opposed (it would make trips to the post office less frequent and thus hurt business) and the large mail order firms (Sears, Roebucks) understandably for it. Politicians were also for RFD as it would allow them to deliver their message directly to the farmer's mail boxes. Because of the politician's interests, RFD passed in 1893 but was not implemented in California until 1903. Fair Oaks implemented RFD in 1904 with Two routes, one south of the American River and one north. Jim Jones serviced both of the routes with horse and buggy until 1910 when Horace Massey took over the north route in his automobile. Massey served as postal delivery man until he retired in 1956 after 46 years of service.

The Post Office remained in the small California Avenue building until 1942 when it was moved to a new building in the Village at (now) 10139 Fair Oaks Blvd. It remained there for ten years until it moved to a new facility across from the Community Clubhouse. Ten years later it moved again to a building at the southwest corner of Sunrise Blvd. and

Winding Way, 7880 Winding Way, the site of the Fair Oaks Fruit Company complex which was torn down for the construction of the new Sunrise Blvd. highway.

In 1983, after a heavy downpour, the roof of the building collapsed, causing the Post Office to have to find temporary quarters. Fortunately the collapse didn't damage any mail and the workers were able to continue deliveries while looking for new quarters. An immediately available building was found at 3034 Gold Canal Drive south of Highway 50. The building wasn't large enough to house all of the facilities, so another sub-station was set up in East Fair Oaks at 5227 Hazel Avenue. These stations continued to operate while a new post office was constructed near the old Winding Way site.



The post office reopened at their new facility in 2000, 7862 Winding Way

References – originals at the Fair Oaks History Center, 10340 Fair Oaks Blvd.:

“Fair Oaks and San Juan Area Memories”

Dewey - 47
Holst – 103
Fowler – 10
Massey – 12
Webb – 13

Oral Histories

1991
Dick Gilmore
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Bill Hinsey
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Articles

Congressional Record
Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate
Journal of the Senate
Sacramento Union, Jan. 12, 1907

Sacramento Union, Jan. 27, 1906
Sacramento Bee, Dec. 29, 1983
Sacramento Bee, Feb. 2, 1984
Fair Oaks Post, Feb 1984
Orangevale News, March 21, 1984

Maps

Irrigation District – 1947
Irrigation District – 1949
Chamber 1960

Photos

Shelton Store and Post Office – 1896
Post Office Building – 1910 (temporary bank)

Postmasters

List, USPS Research